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**FINDS OF ILLYRIAN COIN HOARDS FROM THE TERRITORIES OF GREEK ILLYRIA.
AN ATTEMPT AT RECONSTRUCTING THE CIRCULATION OF COINAGE
BASED ON THE RANGE OF PARTICULAR EMISSIONS¹**

ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to reconstruct the circulation of coinage through an analysis of finds of hoards of ‘Illyrian coins’ from the territory of Greek Illyria in the period from the 4th to the 1st century BC. To this end, hoards from modern-day Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Kosovo, and Serbia, that is the maximum territorial extent of the so-called ‘Illyrian state’, were compiled in a catalogue. This catalogue of hoards of Illyrian coins served as a basis for producing dedicated maps which present data in

a cumulative form, as well as sorted by date and place of issue. Distribution of finds in relation to terrain and settlement patterns was studied in order to locate concentrations of coins of given centres in different periods. Additionally, important observations concerned places in which coin hoards are absent or very scarce. The catalogue was also useful for tracing patterns in the composition of the hoards – those consisting of coins most commonly minted together and those dominated by coins of differing provenance.

Keywords: Illyria, Greek-Illyrian coinage, coin hoards, circulation of coinage, Balkan Peninsula

The term ‘Illyrians’ refers to tribes that inhabited the Balkan Peninsula from the 4th century BC onwards. The name ‘Illyria’ comes from the Greek language and is of a mythological origin.² Its interpretation is a subject of dispute among modern historians, who propose various hypotheses as to the provenance and original meaning of this word. Researchers have also attempted to reconstruct the political and economic history of Illyria based on Classical, mainly Roman, sources. As for local texts, none have survived. It is unknown whether the Illyrians had their own writing system. Another disputed matter is the territory inhabited by Illyrian tribes.³ The situation is made more difficult by the fact that the

Illyrians did not form a ‘state’ with an established territory and clearly-defined borders.⁴

Numismatists conducting research on the ‘Illyrian coinage’⁵ lack sufficient archaeological data in the form of coin finds. Most works about the Illyrian coinage focus on describing emissions or particular types of coins.⁶ Currently, there is only one book whose author collected hoards of ‘Illyrian’ and Roman coins. However, she took into account only finds from the territory of present Albania.⁷

At the beginning, the coinage in the Balkans in the 4th century BC was dominated by Greek mints. Greek colonists were immigrating to the territory of the

¹ The present article was based on an MA thesis prepared in 2017 at the Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw, under the supervision of Dr Renata Ciolek. It is an outcome of the project no. 2016/21/B/HS3/00021 funded by the National Science Centre titled *Monetary circulation in Moesia and Illyria. The case of finds from Novae (Bulgaria) and Risan (Montenegro)*.

² Stipčević 1989, 15.

³ In this article, the boundaries of the area inhabited by Illyrian tribes were taken from Pająkowski 1981.

⁴ The Illyrians forged a statehood based on a confederation of tribes, the strongest of which had supreme power over the

others. In this paper, the term ‘Illyrian state’ was used for the sake of convenience, but it is always placed between quotation marks in order to accentuate its inaccuracy.

⁵ The ‘Illyrian coinage’, actually the ‘Greek-Illyrian coinage’, was inspired by Greek colonists. It had traits characteristic for Greek coins, *i.e.* a legend in Greek and allusions to Greek mythology, combined with typically Illyrian symbols like the Illyrian galley.

⁶ Evans 1880, 269–302; Ceka 1972; Brunšmid 1998.

⁷ Gjonecaj-Vangjeli 2014.

northern Adriatic Sea, mainly inhabiting the islands and the coast. They were founding towns along with the first mints in the Balkans (Apollonia, Dyrrhachium). Thus, the largest Illyrian mints were of the Greek origin. At the beginning of this period (4th century), the indigenous population did not strike their own coins. The first Illyrian emissions appeared under the influence of the Greek coinage. This is why, speaking of the 'Illyrian coinage', the literature often refers to mints of Greek origin, for example Issos or Faros, but also those typically Illyrian, for instance Skodra or Rhizon.

The main criterion for the division of the 'Illyrian coinage' is the type of ore used for manufacturing coins. Two metals were exploited in Illyria: silver and bronze. Bronze coins were in common use. Most of the antique mints only struck bronze coins (mints on the Adriatic islands, Byllis, Orikos, and Genthios). Silver coins had a much higher value. They were struck only in Dyrrhachium and Damastion.

As I mentioned before, the 'Illyrian coinage' derives strictly from its Greek predecessor. The first mints in the territory of the Balkan Peninsula were founded in Greek colonies on the Adriatic islands. The first Illyrian emissions appeared under the influence of the Greek coinage. Coin hoards are a premise for a conclusion that coins were a form of thesaurisation. But was it so everywhere? There are still many unanswered questions. Were the coins of various mints a fully-fledged currency on the territory of ancient Illyria? Here, another question arises, one about the function of coins in the life of the local population. Did they serve as a means of payment everywhere? Did the Illyrian inhabitants know the function of money during the Pre-Roman Period? It is not known whether the Illyrians were aware of the function of currency as an intermediary of exchange. This topic requires further studies, which should include individual finds.

The coinage of the two largest mints in the Balkans, *i.e.* Apollonia and Dyrrhachium, is currently known best as their coins clearly dominated the circulation. Issues of other Illyrian centres were often ephemeral and low-intensity, and from the 1st century BC onwards they were replaced by Roman *denarii*, which completely eliminated local coin production. The latter causes contribute to the inadequate state of research on the history and coinage

of Illyria, hindering the reconstruction of its chronology and coin circulation.

The MA thesis that forms the basis for the present paper called for a thorough library survey, including a visit to the Römisch-Germanische Kommission library in Frankfurt on the Main. This library houses the largest collection of periodicals of Balkan museums and archaeological institutions in which one can find information on Illyrian coin finds. The collected material was presented in a catalogue form as a part of the MA thesis.⁸ Such attempts have already been made but on a selected material, never including all finds from the entire Balkan Peninsula.⁹

A useful analytical method proved to be the mapping of 'Illyrian' coin finds. The hoards were divided by issue, date, and mint in order to gauge the situation on the coin market in a given period and to observe the differences from one period to the next. On this basis, it was possible to conduct an analysis of the circulation of coinage and to determine the range of the occurrence of coins of each mint and their time in circulation.

The consulted scholarly works on numismatics yielded data on 78 published Illyrian hoards from the territories of modern-day Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Kosovo, and Serbia, which constituted the maximum territorial extent of the so-called 'Illyrian state' (Fig. 1). They were divided into four categories according to the coins' dates of issue (Fig. 2). In the case of two hoards, the publications do not offer any dating (Dobra Voda, cat. nos 23 and 24); therefore, they were excluded from the analysis. Each assemblage was represented with a symbol proportional in size to the number of objects it included. It should be noted that the article focuses exclusively on the so-called Pre-Roman Period¹⁰ in the 'Illyrian coinage', and that the finds included in the scope of the research come from the territory of the so-called 'Greek Illyria'.¹¹

Hoards dated to the 4th/3rd centuries BC (to 230 BC)

The 4th century BC was a time of consolidation of Illyrian tribes. The heartland of the newly emerging

⁸ The catalogue included in the MA thesis is titled "Znaleziska skarbów monet iliryskich z terenów greckiej Ilirii. Próba rekonstrukcji obiegu monetarnego", and it was prepared by the author in 2017 at the Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw, under the supervision of Dr Renata Ciołek.

⁹ Thompson *et al.* 1973; Mirnik 1981; Crawford 1985; Brunšmid 1998; Ujes 2001; Gjongecaj-Vangjeli 2014.

¹⁰ This term was used by R. Ciołek to denote the time of existence of the so-called 'Illyrian state', which survived until 168 BC, *i.e.* the end of the Third Roman-Illyrian War.

¹¹ Greek Illyria is a region on the eastern Adriatic coast, inhabited by the Illyrian tribes and partly colonised by the Greeks. It is an area of mixed Greek and Illyrian influence and from the 4th century BC a sphere of influence of Greek colonists.



Fig. 1. Topographical map of the Balkans with marked locations of hoards containing Illyrian coins (compiled by M. Daniel).

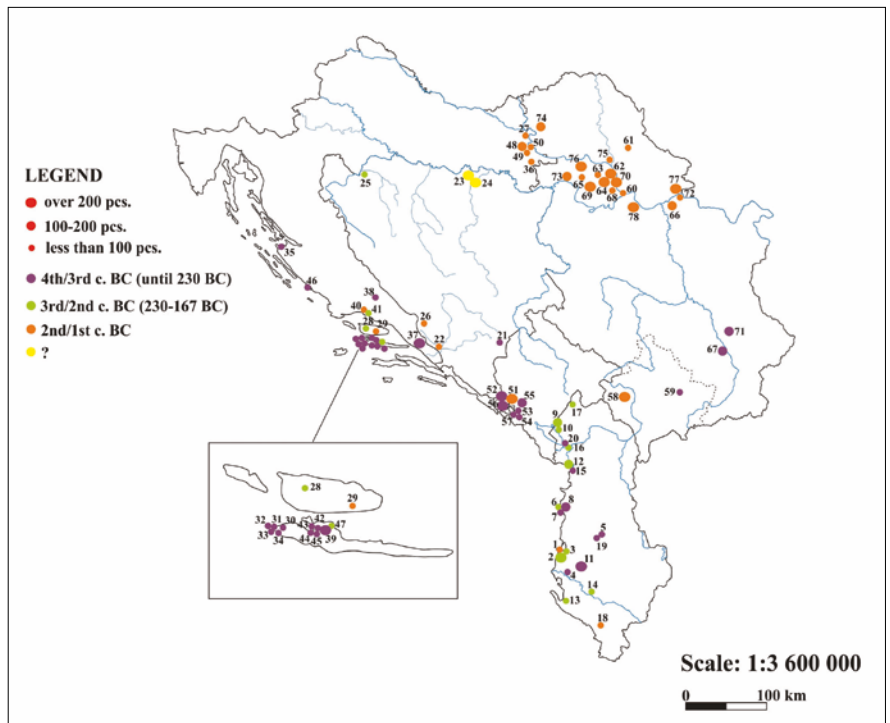


Fig. 2. All catalogued Illyrian hoards divided by date of issue (4th–1st centuries BC) (compiled by M. Daniel).

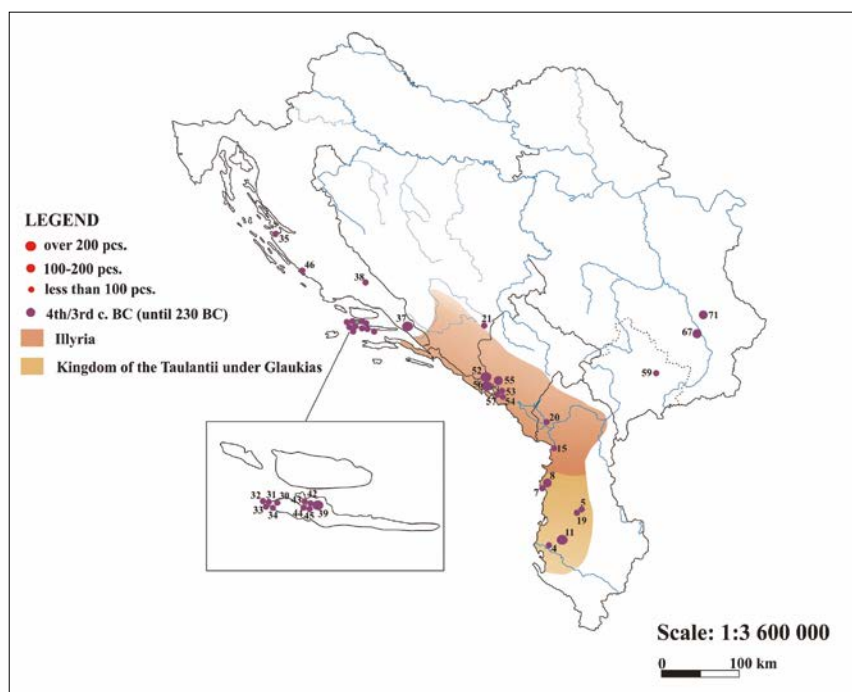


Fig. 3. Illyria in the late 4th and early 3rd centuries BC with marked locations of the hoards dated to the 4th/3rd centuries BC (compiled by M. Daniel).

polity was the Mediterranean coast between the town of Lissos in the south and the river Naretva in the north.¹² In the mid-4th century, this territory was ruled by Bardylis I, identified in modern scholarship as the first Illyrian ruler.¹³ He united most of the tribes and expanded the territory of Illyria. For some time, he also had the supreme power over the Taulantii. In the second half of the 4th and in the early 3rd century, Illyria included territories from the Naretva in the north to the river Vjosa in the south.¹⁴ Hoards dated to the 4th/3rd centuries BC are found within the Illyrian territory of that period, as well as outside its borders (Fig. 3).

Spatial distribution of finds from the 4th/3rd centuries BC shows three clearly-defined clusters. The first consists of hoards from the territory of modern-day Albania composed primarily of issues of Apollonia and Dyrrhachium. A century earlier, the dominant coinage in this territory was foreign, namely that of Athens and Corcyra,¹⁵ but by the 4th century BC Apollonia and Dyrrhachium slowly began to establish their hegemony on the coin market (Fig. 4). Of eight hoards found in Albania as many as seven contained coins issued by these centres. It seems that these issues were used primarily in local trade. In hoards of this period one can also observe a predominance of the issues of Dyrrhachium (461 pcs) over the

production of Apollonia (3 pcs). The coins of Apollonia and Dyrrhachium co-occurred in these assemblages with coins of, among others, Monunius, Corcyra, Corinth, and Macedonian rulers: Philip II and Cassander, one of the *diadochoi*.

The second cluster of hoards dated to the 4th/3rd centuries BC was located on the coast of modern-day Croatia and the Adriatic islands. Dominant in this group were coins of Greek colonies founded on Croatian islands and of towns whose location is unknown but most likely within the same area: Pharos (five hoards), Issa (one hoard), Illyrian Heraclea (seven hoards), the town of ΔI(M) (one hoard), and Corcyra Nigra (one pc.). A characteristic trait of the coins of these centres is their occurrence in a confined area; they are found exclusively on the Adriatic islands. An exception is Illyrian Heraclea, whose coins were also found in a single homogeneous hoard found in Nin, a locality near Zadar.¹⁶ Another salient feature of this group is that the specimens co-occur solely with other specimens belonging to the same group, while coins of coastal centres are lacking. This may mean that there were no meaningful commercial ties with the mainland, and that the coins were used predominantly in the local economy.

¹² Pająkowski 1981, 119.

¹³ Hammond 1966, 243; Pająkowski 1981, 122; Stipčević 1989, 36; Wilkes 1992, 117–177; Ceka 2005, 81–83; Daniel 2016, 6.

¹⁴ Pająkowski 1981.

¹⁵ Gjongecaj 1986, 145.

¹⁶ Bonačić-Mandinić 1988, 65–80; Šeparović 2012, 525–536; Nađ 2013, 396.

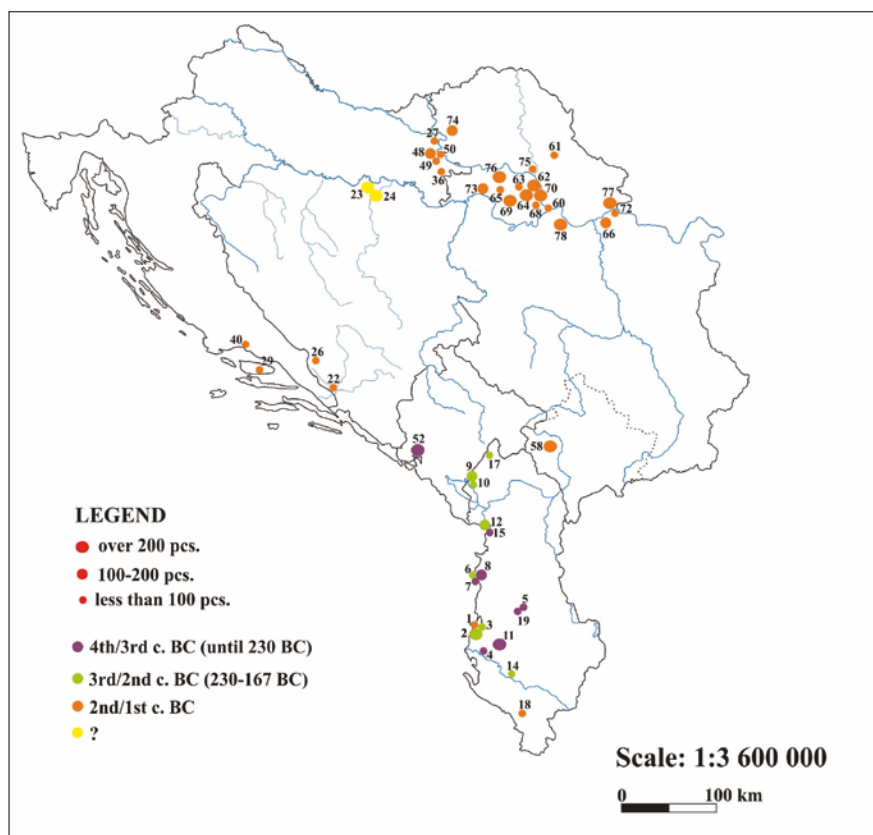


Fig. 4. Hoards containing coins of Apollonia and Dyrrhachium (compiled by M. Daniel).

The coinage of Ballaeus (dated to 260–230 BC)¹⁷ is split between two of the abovementioned clusters. A part of them is found on Hvar Island and on the coast, and the rest, with two exceptions (Shkodër, cat. no. 20 and Avtovac, cat. no. 21), on the Bay of Kotor in Montenegro. Three hoards with coins of Ballaeus were found on Hvar, one on the coast and five in modern-day Risan. It is noteworthy that most hoards featuring the Ballaeus specimens are homogeneous.

In the modern town of Risan (the third cluster), besides numismatic finds struck under Ballaeus, there were also autonomous issues of the town of Rhizon dated to the first half of the 3rd century BC (Risan, cat. no. 53). The hoard contained 10 such coins. It is the only find of autonomous issues of Rhizon in the entire catalogue.

The last of the distinguished clusters consists of hoards found in southern Serbia and the territory of Kosovo. The group consists of only three sites (Janjevo, cat. no. 59; Kutina, cat. no. 67; Prva Kutina, cat. no. 71), which yielded almost exclusively coins of Damastion. The spatial distribution of hoards containing issues of Damastion seemingly does not feature any clusters. Besides the finds mentioned above, they also occur in one

homogenous hoard from the territory of Croatia (Sinj, cat. no. 38) and in one mixed hoard from Montenegro (Risan, cat. no. 52). Useful for the analysis of the coins of Damastion was the work of D. Ujes in which the author catalogued all the known specimens (both hoard finds and individual pieces).¹⁸ Most of these were concentrated in the territory of modern-day Kosovo, which led Ujes to conclude that Damastion must have been located somewhere in this area, near the local silver mines. Thus, it was concluded on the basis of these prerequisites that hoards from the sites of Janjevo (cat. no. 59), Kutina (cat. no. 67), and Prva Kutina (cat. no. 71) constitute a distinct cluster, while the discoveries of Damastion coins in the towns of Sinj (cat. no. 38) and Risan (cat. no. 52) are incidental. As in the case of the coins of Ballaeus, hoards containing issues of Damastion are often homogeneous.

Based on the collected material, it may be concluded that in the late 4th/early 3rd centuries BC the most vigorous coin production among the civic issuers was conducted by Dyrrhachium. However, considering all the issuers of this period, the most numerous finds are the coins signed with the name of Ballaeus. The number of specimens found to date exceeds 5500, while the coinage

¹⁷ Ciolek 2011.

¹⁸ Ujes 2002, 111–120.

of Dyrrhachium, the second most numerous in hoards of the 4th/3rd centuries BC, is represented by over 461 pieces. Such a disproportion between the two issuers may be due to differences in the state of research on their coinage. A salient feature of the 4th century BC is a large share of foreign coins (*e.g.* from Corinth or Corcyra), which were in fairly widespread use. Characteristic for this period is also a large share of silver coins as compared to bronzes. Silver was used by centres throughout the Balkans, both in the territory of Illyria and beyond. This metal was utilised in Apollonia, Dyrrhachium, Rhizon, Damastion, Pharos, and Illyrian Heraclea. Damastion, located most likely outside Illyria, issued only silver coins, which was a peculiarity in the ancient world.

It also has to be pointed out that coins of some centres, namely the issues of the towns of Dyrrhachium, Illyrian Heraclea, and Damastion, as well as of king Ballaeus, tend to occur independently, in homogeneous assemblages. It is difficult to determine what caused this phenomenon. Why do coins of some centres occur in mixed hoards more often than others? This question requires further investigation using a broader source base.

Hoard dated to the period from the reign of Agron and Teuta to 167 BC (3rd/2nd centuries BC)

During the reign of Agron and Teuta in *c.* 230 BC, Illyria reached its greatest territorial extent. Its original area encompassed the lands between the river Naretva in the north and the town of Lissos in the south. As the power of the rulers increased, so did the political activity of the Illyrians abroad. The ruling couple gained control of the Adriatic islands (except Issa), as well as of Dalmatia,¹⁹ Aetolia, and Epirus. The distribution of hoards dated to the 3rd/2nd centuries BC largely coincides with the maximum territorial extent of Illyria (Fig. 5). Only one of them was found far beyond its 'borders' (Japra, cat. no. 25).

The turn of the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC is marked by the increased minting activity of Apollonia. At the same time, Dyrrhachium sustained its production on the same level as in the previous period (Fig. 4). Thus, the number of coin finds from these two centres is very similar. Seven out of eight hoards include pieces from both Apollonia and Dyrrhachium. One of them, however, is composed exclusively of coins from Apollonia. Investigation of the assemblages of coins originating from Apollonia and Dyrrhachium helps trace the participation of Greek *poleis* in the local and long-distance trade – in one assemblage, they co-occurred with coins of Skodra, Lissos, Byllis,

and Thasos, as well as Athens (Bakërr, cat. no. 2). The population also traded with Epirote towns, as indicated by the presence of issues of Cassope, Ambracia, and the Epirote League (Bakërr, cat. no. 2 and Qesarat, cat. no. 14).

The find-spots of coins from Pharos did not change since the previous period – they were still found on Hvar, but their number dropped significantly. In addition, one hoard was found on the eastern Adriatic coast. Exchange in Pharos most likely still took place on the local level.

As in the previous period, only one hoard dated to the 3rd/2nd centuries BC contained coins of Issa (Donji Humac, cat. no. 28), and even this find is uncertain. The coins of Issa co-occurred with the only coin of Illyrian Heraclea found in a 3rd century hoard. In turn, issues of the towns of ΔI(M), Corcyra Nigra, Rhizon, and Damastion no longer occurred in this period.

Two hoards from the north-western part of modern-day Albania contained autonomous and 'royal' issues of Skodra and Lissos. All coins of Skodra, Lissos, and Genthius known from hoards were part of assemblages found in Rentzi (cat. no. 16) and Selci (cat. no. 17). The fact that they occurred together may be explained by Genthius' domestic policy. This ruler made Skodra and Lissos the capital towns of his emerging 'state'. He introduced a monetary reform, changing the symbols and legends on the coins and using currency for self-promotion.²⁰ The process of minting new forms was short-lived, as indicated by the dates of Genthius' reign. It is likely that there was not enough time to withdraw autonomous coins from circulation, so their use was contemporary to royal issues. This explains their co-occurrence in hoards.

The towns of Byllis and Orikos were founded on the edge of the sphere of influence of Apollonia and Dyrrhachium, as well as of Epirus. Coin finds representing these centres are sporadic at best. Specimens struck by Byllis occurred in only one hoard (Qesarat, cat. no. 14, Tab. 11) found in southern Albania, while Orikos was represented in two hoards (Orikos, cat. no. 13; Senicë, cat. no. 18). The example of the coinage of Byllis and Orikos shows the intermingling of northern and southern traditions. A perfect illustration of this is the Qesarat assemblage (cat. no. 14), which is a combination of Byllis coins with issues of Apollonia and Dyrrhachium, as well as Epirote Ambracia. Similarly, the hoard from Orikos (cat. no. 13) consists of specimens originating from Orikos and from the Epirote League.

In the late 3rd and early 2nd centuries BC, coin production developed in modern-day Albania. New mints, such as Skodra, Lissos, Byllis, and Orikos, emerged,

¹⁹ Wilkes 1969, 15; Ceka 2005, 121–122.

²⁰ Daniel 2016, 9–18.

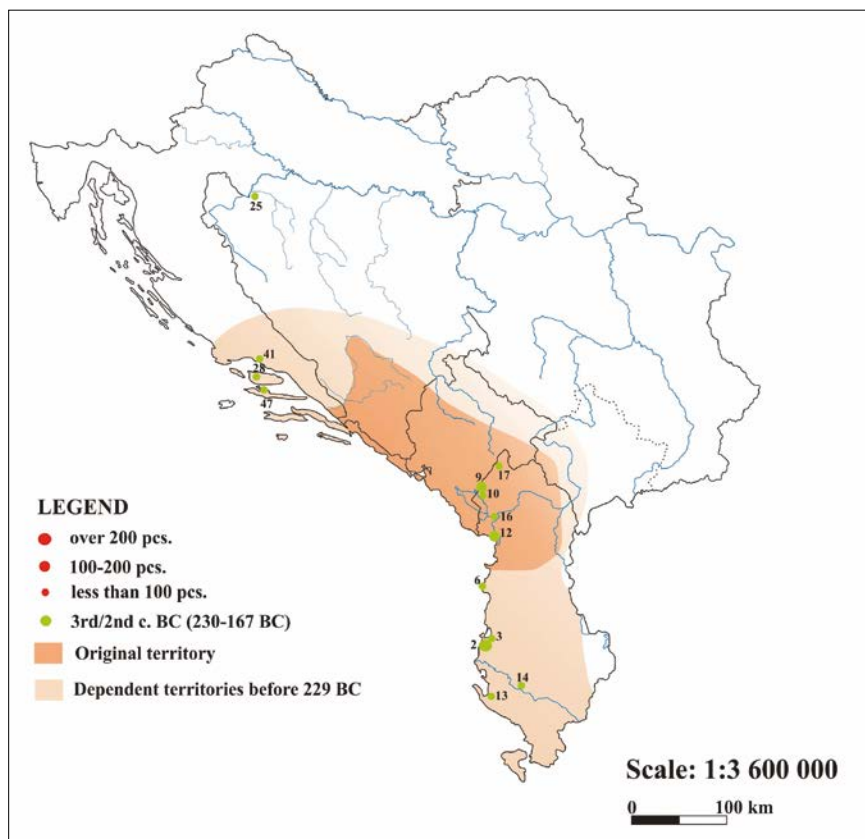


Fig. 5. Illyria during the reign of Agron and Teuta before the first war against Rome in 229 BC with marked locations of the hoards dated to the 3rd or 2nd century BC (compiled by M. Daniel).

but the territorial extent of their issues was limited. Coins of Skodra and Lissos dominated in the vicinity of Lake Skodra, while Byllis and Orikos prevailed near the Illyrian-Epirote border. In this period, the share of coins of Greek origin decreased. Coinage was increasingly common among the Illyrians, and bronze became the most frequently-used metal. Silver coins were only struck in Apollonia and Dyrrhachium.

It is puzzling that the Illyrian dynasty, so strong under Agron and Teuta, did not issue their own coins. The royal couple was able to unite a vast territory but did not establish a single mint. In Rhizon, where Teuta resided, no coins indicating issue attempts in this period have been found to date. Meanwhile, a century later, a much weaker ruler, Genthius, struck coins with his own legend not in one but two centres.

Hoard of Illyrian coins from the period after 167 BC (2nd/1st centuries BC)

The demise of King Genthius during the Third Roman-Illyrian War in 167 BC brought an end to the

Illyrian statehood. The peace treaty stipulated that the Illyrian territory be divided into three parts, and some of its population came under the Roman rule.²¹ The borders of the territory inhabited by the Illyrian tribes between the late 2nd and the early 1st century changed very dynamically in response to military campaigns of the Senate against the still independent Dalmatians, Ardiaioi, and Pleraiioi.²² Until 135 BC, Roman Illyria consisted of the coastal regions near Rhizon, areas around Skodra and Lissos, and Apollonia and Dyrrhachium in the south. In subsequent years, Rome expanded the area under its control; ultimately, it came to include the territory from the river Naretva in the north to the latitude of Orikos in the south (Fig. 6).²³

A map of the spatial distribution of hoards dated to the 2nd and 1st centuries shows that nearly all the assemblages were found outside the territory of *Illyricum* (Fig. 6). Of 31 finds dated to between the late 2nd and the early 1st century BC only two were unearthed on the Illyrian soil (Apollonia, cat. no. 1; Risan, cat. no. 51).

The period between the 2nd and 1st centuries BC is characterised by an unquestioned domination of coins of Apollonia and Dyrrhachium in the Balkans (Fig. 4).²⁴

²¹ Wilkes 1969, 27; Daniel 2016, 7.

²² Pająkowski 1981, 232–235.

²³ Pająkowski 1981, 238.

²⁴ Gjongecaj 1986, 149–150.

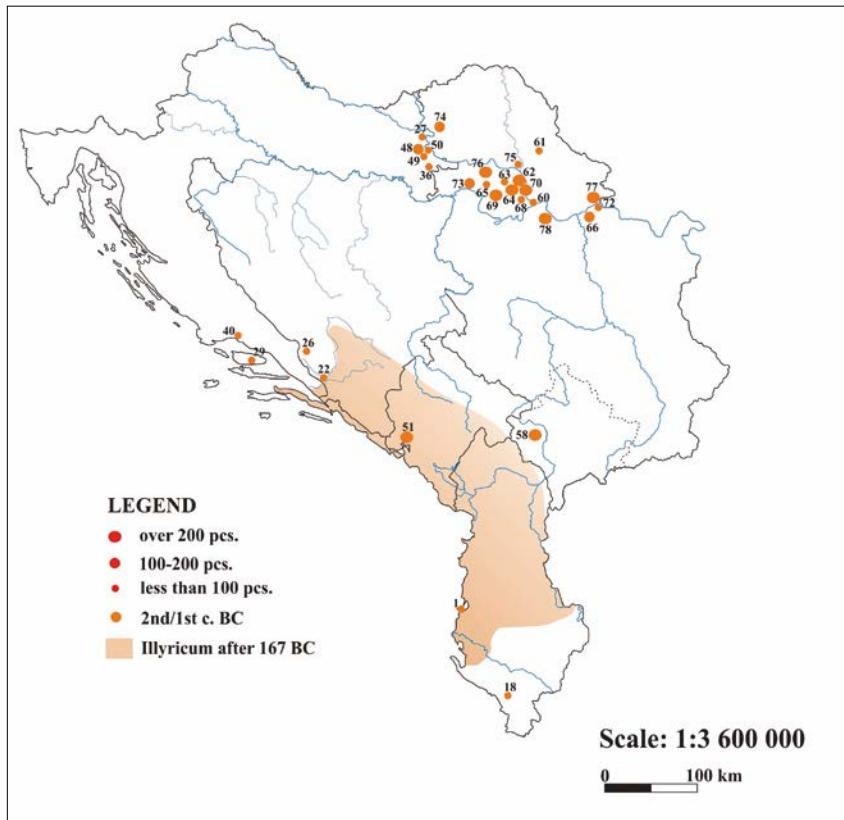


Fig. 6. Illyria after 167 BC with marked locations of the hoards dated to the 2nd or 1st centuries BC (compiled by M. Daniel).

Of 31 finds, only one lacks issues of these two centres (Risan, cat. no. 51). Also the territorial extent of their occurrence expanded. The balance point shifted to the lands beyond the Illyrian 'border'. An analysis of the distribution of hoards from this period clearly indicates a cluster in the region of northern Serbia and northeast Croatia (Fig. 6). As many as 22 out of 31 hoards were found in this region, located far from other assemblages and from the Illyrian territory. On the other hand, nearly all of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as central Serbia, are devoid of finds, most likely due to topographical reasons. These regions feature high mountains which hinder settlement and transportation and constitute a natural barrier between the north and the south (Fig. 1).

Issues of Apollonia and Dyrrhachium most likely changed function, becoming universal currencies used in long-distance trade. The fact that coins of these centres have not been found in the *Illyricum* is puzzling (Fig. 6). Possibly, they had already been replaced by the Roman *denarius* in this area but remained in use in regions still beyond the expanding Roman control.

Through coinage one can observe the Illyrians' gradual loss of independence. Issues of towns attested in the previous periods, such as Skodra, Lissos, Byllis, Pharos, Issa, and Illyrian Heraclea, disappeared. The catalogued assemblages also lack foreign coins of Greece and Epirus. An exception is a hoard from Seničë (cat. no. 18). In the

second half of the 2nd century BC, and especially the 1st century BC, the coinage in circulation is remarkably uniform. Most finds are mixed sets consisting of specimens from Apollonia and Dyrrhachium, sometimes co-occurring with Republican *denarii* (Vukovar, cat. no. 48; Indija, cat. no. 63; Stara Pazova, cat. no. 64; Vračevgaj, cat. no. 77) or their local imitations (Orolik, cat. no. 36; Čelopek, cat. no. 58; Stara Pazova, cat. no. 64; Kostolac, cat. no. 66; Titel, cat. no. 75). The 1st century BC was the time of the most intensive minting activity of Apollonia and Dyrrhachium, gradual introduction of the new Roman currency, and local circulation of imitations struck in the region. Another difference in comparison with the previous periods is the dominance of silver as the metal used in coin production of both Greek towns and Rome. The establishment of the Roman province of *Illyricum* after the failure of the Pannonian uprising (6–9 AD) entailed the imposition of the Imperial coinage in the Balkans and a definitive end of the independent Illyrian-Greek coin production.

Coin circulation in the late 4th/early 3rd centuries BC

In the late 4th or the early 3rd century BC, exchange most likely occurred primarily on the local level. Exceptions were foreign coins of Greek and Macedonian

origin (Corinth, Corcyra, Philip II, and Cassander). Their presence in the 'Illyrian' hoards is easy to explain. They occurred in assemblages together with specimens from Apollonia and Dyrrhachium, colonies of Corinth and Corcyra which still maintained strong economic ties with their mother towns. Coins of Macedonian rulers, in turn, come from the period of the Macedonian conquest of Illyria in the second half of the 4th century BC. The relatively small number of foreign coins in circulation at that time testifies to the weak position of Apollonia and Dyrrhachium, which were still dependent on their *metropoleis*.²⁵ The exchange on the local level is attested by the territorial extent of occurrences of coins of Apollonia and Dyrrhachium, which was limited mostly to the territory of modern-day Albania (Fig. 4).

An analogous situation is observable on the islands and the eastern Adriatic coast. The catalogued hoards permit to observe that the mints operating in that area – Pharos, Issa, Illyrian Heraclea, the town ΔΙ(M), and Corcyra Nigra – established relations resulting in exchange. These contacts were, however, limited to the territory of the islands. Only the issues of Illyrian Heraclea were found in homogeneous hoards on the mainland coast (Nin, cat. no. 35; Tisno, cat. no. 46). It is worth noting that coins of the island centres never co-occurred with mainland issues. It seems, therefore, that exchange took place exclusively on the local level. The Greek colonies were most likely not interested in establishing economic ties with centres in other parts of the Balkan Peninsula.

The coinage of Ballaeus clearly stands out among the other issues. Its distinctive character lies not only in the difficulty of determining who Ballaeus actually was and when he struck his coins. What is most baffling is the number of specimens found to date (over 5500 pcs)²⁶ which are scattered over a vast area (from Pharos in the north to Lake Skodra in the south) among the clusters identified above. The coins of Ballaeus were found mainly on Pharos and in the vicinity of modern-day Risan. The research of R. Ciołek showed that Ballaeus must have initially resided in the town of Pharos, where he established the first mint, and after some time he moved to Rhizon.²⁷ The Pharos and Rhizon types differ in iconography, legends, and workmanship. It is interesting that nearly all hoards containing specimens of Ballaeus are homogeneous. These coins do not co-occur with issues of other towns, as if they were not used in exchange but still satisfied the needs of the local population.

In the late 4th/early 3rd centuries also the issues of Damastion were in circulation. They were diffused over

a vast area: besides the territory of modern Kosovo and southern Serbia, where their finds are clearly the most numerous,²⁸ they occurred also near the Bay of Kotor (Risan, cat. no. 52) and in southern Croatia (Sinj, cat. no. 38). As in the case of Ballaeus, most hoards containing coins of Damastion are homogeneous. An exception is the hoard from Risan (cat. no. 52), where these coins co-occur with specimens from Corinth. It is possible that in the vicinity of Risan silver issues of Damastion competed with the Corinthian currency, better known in this region and made of the same raw material. May argues that the assemblage no. 52 reached Rhizon, as a part of a cargo of precious metal dispatched from Damastion.²⁹ The discovery of coins from Damastion on the mainland coast indicates that this town established ties with this region.

In the late 4th/early 3rd centuries BC, exchange on the local level clearly dominated, among others, in Pharos, Issa, Illyrian Heraclea, and Corcyra Nigra. A broader scope of operation is attested for Dyrrhachium, Damastion, and Ballaeus. The issues of Damastion and Ballaeus were used across a very large area. Dyrrhachium in this period is still dependent on its metropolis, but its coinage is found far from the town, near the Bay of Kotor.

Coin circulation in the late 3rd/early 2nd centuries BC

In this period, the number of issuers increased, resulting in greater diversity of coins in circulation. The extent of circulation of 'Illyrian' coins includes territories from the Adriatic islands in the north to the Illyrian-Epirote border region in the south (Fig. 5). In the late 3rd and early 2nd centuries, the largest number of specimens was issued by Apollonia and Dyrrhachium. The situation of Dyrrhachium did not change since the previous period. In hoards, the town is represented by a similar number of coins, whose distribution corresponds approximately to the territory of modern-day Albania (Fig. 4). A major change occurred in the case of Apollonia. The centre significantly intensified its coin production, which rose to match that of Dyrrhachium. The area of circulation of coins from Apollonia corresponds to the territory of modern-day Albania.

In the late 3rd and early 2nd centuries BC, Apollonia and Dyrrhachium were no longer interested solely in exchange on the local level. They significantly expand their area of influence and established ties with the Greek *po-*
leis of Thasos and Athens (Bakërr, cat. no. 2), as well as

²⁵ Gjongecaj 1986, 146.

²⁶ Dr Renata Ciołek (Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw) personal communication.

²⁷ Ciołek 2011.

²⁸ Ujes 2002, 103–129.

²⁹ May 1939.

with the Epirote towns of Cassope, Ambracia, and the Epirote League (Bakërr, cat. no. 2; Qesarat, cat. no. 14). According to Sh. Gjongecaj, there were two routes along which foreign issues reached the southern Illyrian territory: the maritime (western) route, through which came the coins of Greece proper, and the land (eastern) route, which brought specimens of coinage of Macedonia, Epirus, Thessaly, and Thrace.³⁰

On the Adriatic islands, the situation remained unchanged since the previous period. Local exchange dominated, and no contacts with coastal towns were recorded. However, the number of hoards decreased compared to the late 4th and early 3rd centuries BC. Four assemblages dated to the late 3rd/early 2nd centuries BC have been found, and they contained coins of Pharos, Issa, and Illyrian Heraclea. In this period, the issues of the town ΔΙ(Μ) and Corcyra Nigra disappeared.

As already mentioned, in the late 3rd and early 2nd centuries BC new coins struck by the Illyrian towns of Skodra, Lissos, Byllis, and Orikos, as well as by King Genthius, were brought into circulation.³¹ Their range of occurrence is clearly limited to local exchange circuits. According to Sh. Gjongecaj, the intensification of domestic coin production was a result of establishing contacts between the towns.³² Coins of Skodra, Lissos, and Genthius were likely used only in the region around Lake Skodra and the town of Lissos. In the catalogue, these coins are found only in two hoards found in Rentzi (cat. no. 16) and Selci (cat. no. 17). Their limited area of operation may have been due to their short-lived circulation and low production intensity.

The situation is similar in the case of Byllis and Orikos. Their issues are found in small numbers solely in the region of southern Albania, in the vicinity of these centres. In the catalogue, only one hoard contains coins of Byllis (Qesarat, cat. no. 14) and two feature coins of Orikos (Orikos, cat. no. 13; Seničë, cat. no. 18). They seem to have been used solely by the local population. These towns were located on the Illyrian-Epirote border, not far from Apollonia and Dyrrhachium. The above-mentioned hoards illustrate the mixing of northern and southern influences in this area. Among the coins in circulation were issues of Apollonia and Dyrrhachium, as well as those of Epirote Ambracia and specimens struck by the Epirote League. Circulation in this region also featured issues of Amantia, an Illyrian town that struck its own coins and surpassed Byllis and Orikos in the intensity of production.³³ Amantia was an important economic and political

centre, which produced autonomous coins in the late 3rd and early 2nd centuries BC.³⁴ Like Byllis and Orikos, it remained under a strong influence of Epirus. All four towns engaged in intensive trade with one another; it is therefore puzzling that not a single coin from Amantia was found in the discovered hoards.

In the late 3rd/early 2nd centuries BC, the sphere of influence of Apollonia and Dyrrhachium expanded, which resulted in the establishment of contacts with towns outside Illyria. Simultaneously, new mints active on the local level emerged in order to satisfy the population's demand for coinage. In Illyria, one can observe the occurrence of foreign issues; however, they did not replace domestic production, which remained dominant in the local circulation.³⁵ In this period, the diversity of issues and the intensity of production testify to a dynamic economic development of the regions inhabited by the Illyrians.

Coin circulation in the late 2nd/early 1st centuries BC

The political events taking place in Illyria in the second half of the 2nd century BC radically changed the situation on the coin market. After Genthius succumbed to Rome during the Third Illyrian War, the Senate decreed the annexation of most of the Illyrian territory and thus gained control over the major towns and their mints. The fate of these centres varied. Skodra still issued coins after 167 BC but did it under the Roman influence, while Lissos, Byllis, and Orikos stopped producing coins altogether. The most important towns of the region, Apollonia and Dyrrhachium, already had prior ties with Rome; therefore, in their case, the political change was not as momentous. Their coinage does not differ significantly from that of the earlier periods, with the exception of the placement of names of officials on the reverse imitating Roman models. What is more, the production of coins in Apollonia and Dyrrhachium developed further, until in the mid-1st century BC it reached its most intensive stage.³⁶

In the late 2nd and early 1st centuries, the dominant issues in circulation were those of Apollonia and Dyrrhachium. Unlike in the previous period, their range of occurrence broadened significantly, extending beyond the borders of modern Albania (Fig. 4). The coins of Apollonia and Dyrrhachium crossed the Dinaric Alps all the way to lowland Vojvodina. According to M. Crawford, during the 2nd and 1st centuries BC, the

³⁰ Gjongecaj 1986, 148.

³¹ Rendić-Miočević 1969, 1–7.

³² Rendić-Miočević 1969, 1–7.

³³ Ciolek 2011, 176–186.

³⁴ Ciolek 2011, 176.

³⁵ Gjongecaj 1986, 149–150.

³⁶ Gjongecaj, Picard 2000, 137–138; Ujes-Morgan 2012, 369–370.

coinage of Apollonia and Dyrrhachium financed the Roman military presence in the Balkan Peninsula.³⁷ This is the reason why there are many hoards found in the area of the Danube basin, which contains only coins of these two mints. Crawford suggests that the revenues obtained from the latifundia in Epirus were converted into coinage by Apollonia and Dyrrhachium and exported to the Danube basin, where they were used to finance the army. The Roman army, conquering the northern areas of the Balkan Peninsula, provided landowners with a steady stream of slaves needed to work in the latifundia.

The small number of hoards containing coins of Apollonia and Dyrrhachium found in the territory of Illyricum calls for a moment of reflection. Possibly after the Roman conquest, the Senate began to introduce its own coinage, while in the north-eastern part of the Balkan Peninsula, in areas beyond the Roman control, Greek coins were still in use.

The population of the independent part of Illyria and the lands further to the north and east used the coinage of Apollonia and Dyrrhachium but also made attempts to issue their own coins. In hoards, this is indicated by the presence of local imitations alongside the originals (Orolik, cat. no. 36; Čelopek, cat. no. 58; Stara Pazova, cat. no. 64; Kostolac, cat. no. 66; Titel, cat. no. 75). Possibly, the access to coins was hindered, and their volume on the market did not satisfy the local needs. One can surmise that these areas were experiencing a period of economic growth.

On the other hand, the Republican *denarii* appeared in circulation in the 1st century BC. Interestingly, they were only found in the assemblages discovered in the territory of Vojvodina. They may have arrived there from the south, but what is puzzling is their absence in the hoards closer to *Illyricum*. The inclusion of loose finds in the study might help explain this phenomenon, but the analysis conducted thus far is based solely on the catalogue of hoards of 'Illyrian' coins known to date.

The catalogue of hoards shows that in the late 2nd century and through the 1st century BC, the coins in circulation were mainly the issues of Apollonia and Dyrrhachium, which sometimes co-occurred with local imitations or the Republican *denarii*. The Roman coinage of the 1st century BC was still of lesser significance than the other issues, but in the following century it dominated the circulation and became the only currency in operation.

Concluding remarks

This paper attempted to analyse coin assemblages by scrutinising the types of issues and the range of their

occurrence within three distinct periods: the 4th/3rd centuries BC, the 3rd/2nd centuries BC, and the 2nd/1st centuries BC. In addition, an attempt was made to describe the coin circulation, although it bears admitting that the results were based solely on an analysis of the finds of 'Illyrian' coin hoards from the territories of selected Balkan states compiled in the form of a catalogue. Due to the vast scope of this topic, it was decided to omit individual loose finds. Data on the political situation of the 'Illyrian state' were also helpful for formulating conclusions.

On the basis of the cartographic analysis of the collected data on hoards, it can be concluded that the factor that determined their location was access to the sea, which enabled maritime trade. Illyrians were known for their fondness of travelling by ship, and they were characterised in ancient sources as highly-skilled sailors.³⁸ The second important criterion influencing the distribution of the hoards was topography (Fig. 1). Finds were chiefly located in lowland areas, on the coastline, as well as in river valleys.

From the collected data it may be concluded that in the 4th through the 3rd century BC the most dynamic minting activity was undertaken by Ballaeus. The second most active mint was Dyrrhachium, whose issues were found in eight hoards dated to this period. Other trends observable in the 4th through the 3rd century are the dominance of the local over the long-distance exchange (production on a larger scale was conducted by Dyrrhachium, Damastion, and Ballaeus) and the presence of foreign coins, mainly of Greek and Macedonian origin. Also characteristic for this period was the production of silver coinage and the occurrence of issues of some centres (Dyrrhachium, Illyrian Heraclea, Ballaeus, and the town of Damastion) in homogeneous assemblages.

The period of the 3rd through the 2nd century brought the intensification of the coin production of Apollonia, which rose to match that of Dyrrhachium. These centres expanded their sphere of influence by establishing ties with towns outside Illyria. In hoards from this period the share of issues of Greek colonies on the Adriatic islands, such as Pharos, Issa, and Illyrian Heraclea, decreased significantly. The coins of the town of ΔΙ(Μ) and Corcyra Nigra disappeared from the assemblages, but new mints of Skodra, Lissos, Byllis, and Orikos emerged across the territory of modern-day Albania. They produced coins for the regional market to meet the needs of the local population. The share of foreign issues decreased and included primarily Greek and Epirote coins. In the 2nd through the 1st century BC, one can observe a growing popularity of coinage among the Illyrians. The main raw material used for coin production was bronze, with the

³⁷ Crawford 1985, 225.

³⁸ Polyb. 2. 4. 8.

exception of Apollonia and Dyrrhachium, which struck silver coins. In turn, the lack of issues of Amantia in the hoards is puzzling, since it surpassed Byllis and Orikos, among others, in the volume of production, but while the latter two centres appear in the catalogue, Amantia does not. Another research question is the reason why no mints of Agron and Teuta are known to date. This royal couple was able to unite the largest territory in the Illyrian history under their rule, but according to the current state of research, they did not issue any coins of their own, while a much weaker ruler, Genthius, issued coins with his own legend in two towns, Skodra and Lissos.

Coinage of the 2nd and 1st centuries BC was the least diverse. After the Third Illyrian-Roman War, many towns ceased to issue coins, among them Skodra, Lissos, Byllis, Orikos, Pharos, Issus, and Illyrian Heraclea. Money in circulation was dominated by emissions of Apollonia and Dyrrhachium. Their range of operation also increased – they appear in large quantities in the territory of Vojvodina. On the other hand, the small number of the ‘Illyrian’ hoards found in *Illyricum* witnesses the gradual introduction of the Republican *denarius*. The Roman coinage appeared for the first time in hoards in the 1st century BC. Its presence, however, was negligible, and the situation did not change until the turn of the eras, when the *denarius* replaced the issues of Apollonia and Dyrrhachium. Several assemblages dated to this period also feature coins identified as local imitations. It is possible that the native population attempted to produce

their own coins modelled on the issues of Apollonia and Dyrrhachium. The main raw material used in monetary production was again silver.

Looking at the presented materials, it is not possible to say whether ‘Greek Illyria’ actually saw any sort of ‘monetary circulation’. It seems that in the territory of the Balkan Peninsula there could be two monetary circulations. The first of those, the ‘official’, consisted of coins of Apollonia and Dyrrhachium. These issues have the largest range, being probably used by both Greeks and Illyrians. In the hoards, they were mixed with Greek (Corinth, Korkyra, Philip II, Cassander, and Athens) as well as Illyrian coins (Lissos, Skodra, and Orikos). The second circulation, the ‘local’, can be observed on the example of Skodra, Lissos, Byllis, Orikos, and Ballaeus coins. They were of local importance, limited to the area inhabited by the Illyrians. They were probably minted to meet the needs of the local community.

This study is merely an introduction to the broad topic of coin circulation in Illyria. The research problem requires further investigation, which should also include individual finds. Such a broader study could help verify the conclusions reached to date. In addition, one has to keep in mind the varied state of archaeological research in the Balkans, which may distort the picture of the economic situation in ancient Illyria. Thus, further archaeological investigation is particularly crucial as it may supply further material for analysis and thus considerably broaden our knowledge of ancient Illyria.

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