

Pero Josifovski

## The Beginnings of Minting Among the Paeonians (Derrones)

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Museum of Macedonia  
Ćurćiska b.b., Skopje  
pj Josifovski@yahoo.com

Soon after the issuing of the first coins (second half of the 7th century BC in Asia Minor) the inhabitants of Antique Macedonia also had an opportunity to gain their first experience in using money as means of payment. In the beginning, they used coins of foreign origin, but soon began to mint their own. The abandoning of simple exchange and the beginning of the use of money largely alleviated trading and accelerated economic development.

The Paeonian tribes which settled the territory dominated by the rivers Vardar, Bregalnica, Struma and nearby regions started minting their own coins fairly early. This was possible due to abundant natural resources, especially the rich reserves of ore. In other words, they could exploit the then highly prized silver (the mines in Mt. Pangaia and the Zletovo-Kratovo region). All this made possible the early beginning of coin minting in Paeonian communities, eventually growing into an activity that played a very important role in the Paeonian economic, military, political and cultural life. The presence and exploitation of precious metals, and especially silver, ensured economical and safe coin minting. Even today, after 2,500 years, the only testimony to their existence are the coins they minted.

Due to the extensive issues of coins and the size of the territory they settled - which largely coincides with the territory of present-day Republic of Macedonia - of special interest to us are the coins issued by the Derrones. It is well known that they minted silver coins of high value: dodecadrachms (tetrastraters), decadrachms and tetradrachms, and of those of smaller value, tetrobols and obols. However, in the last six or seven years, the number of newly discovered Paeonian coins of smaller denominations has increased. They originate from the sites in the vicinity of the cities of Štip and Sveti Nikole, a territory considered central and primal in relation to the tribe of the Derrones. For the purpose of this article, among the several dozens of newly discovered specimens, we managed to gather and analyze 21. The coins come from two public and one private collection (the National Bank of the Republic of Macedonia - 6, Bank of Ohrid - 4 and specimens from the private collection of Ćaslav

Kuzmanović.<sup>1</sup> Only three of these specimens have previously been published; the other 18 are published for the first time in this article.

## Catalogue of the coins

### GROUP A

ca. 530/25 - ca. 510/500 BC

1. **Obv.** Bull standing right; above, symbol (dolphin?)  
**Rev.** The same, incuse  
Hemiobol, 0.31 grams; 16.1 mm; find from Krivid Dol, Štip  
Bank of Ohrid (Ohridska Banka), inv. no. 04/30-1/7-2
2. **Obv.** As previous; part of dotted circle, lines in some segments  
**Rev.** No impression  
Obol, 0.48 grams; 17.9 mm  
Kuzmanović Collection. Skopje; find from Bogoslovec, Sveti Nikole
3. **Obv.** As previous, solar symbol in upper segment  
**Rev.** As previous  
Obol, 0.62 grams; 14.4 mm; find from Crnilište, Sveti Nikole  
Kuzmanović Collection, Skopje
4. **Obv.** As previous  
**Rev.** No impression  
Obol, 0.64 grams; 15 mm; find from Bogoslovec, Sveti Nikole  
Kuzmanović Collection, Skopje
5. **Obv.** As previous; dotted circle  
**Rev.** The same, incuse  
Hemiobol, 0.32 grams; 16 mm; find from the site of Krstot, Krivi Dol, Štip  
National Bank of the Republic of Macedonia, inv. no. 04/4/27  
Lit. : NBRM Coll. 10 (hemiobol); ex Šeldarov Coll., no. 68 (same specimen)
6. **Obv.** As previous  
**Rev.** As previous  
Hemiobol, 0.41 grams; 16 mm; find from Crnilište, Sveti Nikole  
Kuzmanović Collection, Skopje

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to use this occasion to extend my gratitude to Časlav Kuzmanović, member of the Numismatic Society in Skopje for his kindness and willingness to loan me the material from his private collection, which made possible the preparation of this text.

7. **Obv.** As the previous  
**Rev.** As the previous  
 Obol, 0.58 grams; 16 mm; ↑; find from the vicinity of Štip (Krivi Dol?)  
 National Bank of the Republic of Macedonia, inv. no. 99/23/2-4  
 Lit.: HBPM, MPI, 2 (obol, same specimen)
8. **Obv.** As previous; segment of dotted circle  
**Rev.** As previous  
 Obol, 0.52 grams; 16.2 mm; find from Krivi Dol, Štip  
 Bank of Ohrid, inv. no. 04/30-1/7-1
9. **Obv.** As previous; dotted circle  
**Rev.** As previous  
 Obol, 0.77 grams; 17.9 mm; ↑; find from the vicinity of Štip (Krivi Dol?)  
 Bank of Ohrid, inv. no. 04/30-1/9
10. **Obv.** As previous; segment of dotted circle  
**Rev.** As previous  
 Obol or trihemiobol?, 0.87 grams; 15.5 mm; find from the vicinity of Štip  
 National Bank of the Republic of Macedonia, inv. no. 03/1/16
11. **Obv.** As previous, dotted circle  
**Rev.** No impression  
 Obol, 0.73 grams, 17.1 mm  
 Kuzmanović Collection, Skopje; find from Krivi Dol, Štip
12. **Obv.** As previous  
**Rev.** Uncertain punched symbol  
 Obol or trhemiobol?, 0.89 grams; 16.5 mm  
 Kuzmanović Collection, Skopje; find from Bogoslovec, Sveti Nikole  
 Lit.: Svoronos, Pl. II, no. 20; Gaebler, 142, no. 46 (obverse)
13. **Obv.** As previous; floral motif in lower right segment; dotted circle  
**Rev.** Bull standing right, dotted circle  
 Diobol, 1.21 grams; 15.9 mm  
 Kuzmanović Collection, Skopje; find from Gorno Crnilište, Sveti Nikole
- Ca. 500 BC
14. **Obv.** Bull standing right on dotted ground line, bird (eagle?) in upper segment, floral motif? in lower right segment; dotted circle  
**Rev.** Crested helmet right (the coin is cut, a segment missing)  
 Diobol, 1.06 grams; 19 mm; ↓; find from Gorno Crniliste, Sveti Nikole  
 Kuzmanovic Collection, Skopje  
 Lit.: Svoronos, Pl. II, no. 18; SNG, ANS, Macedonia, I, no. 936

## GROUP B

*Derronian issues from late 6th to early 5th century BC ("Dokimos" type)*

1. **Obv.** Bull kneeling left, head reverted; floral motif in upper segment; dotted circle  
**Rev.** Flat, no impression  
 Diobol, 1.02 grams; 19 mm  
 Kuzmanović Collection, Skopje; find from Bogoslovec, Sveti Nikole
2. **Obv.** As previous; floral motif (rose) in upper segment  
**Rev.** Crested helmet right  
 Diobol, 1.22 grams; 18.2 mm; (pierced)  
 Kuzmanović Collection, Skopje; find from Bogoslovec, Sveti Nikole  
 Lit.: cf. Svoronos, Pl. II., No. 11; cf. Gaebler, 145, no. 5
3. **Obv.** As previous; solar symbol in upper segment; grain between legs in lower segment; segment of dotted circle  
**Rev.** Crested helmet left in shallow punched square  
 Triobol, 1.82 grams; 17 mm; find from the vicinity of Štip  
 National Bank of the Republic of Macedonia, inv. no. 02/1/31  
 Lit.: NBRM, MPI, 1 (tetrobol, same specimen)
4. **Obv.** Bull kneeling right, head reverted; floral motif in upper segment  
**Rev.** As previous  
 Diobol, 1.33 grams; 16.4 mm; → ; find from the vicinity of Štip (Krivi Dol?)  
 Bank of Ohrid, inv. no. 04/30-1/8  
 Lit.: Svoronos, Pl. II/15
5. **Obv.** As the previous; floral motif (rose) in upper segment  
**Rev.** Crested helmet right  
 Diobol, 1.45 grams; 16 mm; → ; find from the vicinity of Štip  
 National Bank of the Republic of Macedonia, inv. no. 03/1/4  
 Lit.: SNG, ANS, Macedonia, I, no. 932-934; cf. Svoronos, Pl. II/10; cf. Gaebler, 145, no. 4; BMCG, Macedonia, 152, no. 4-5

## GROUP C

1. **Obv.** Protome of bull right, head reverted; dotted circle  
**Rev.** Crested helmet right  
 Obol, 0.76 grams; 13.33 mm; ← ; find from Bogoslovec, Sveti Nikole  
 Kuzmanović Collection, Skopje  
 Lit.: Gaebler, 145, no. 7

2. Obv. Protome of bull right, head reverted; dotted circle

*Rev.* As previous

Obol, 0.80 grams; 14.5 mm; ↗; find from the vicinity of Štip  
National Bank of the Republic of Macedonia, inv. no. 02/3/14

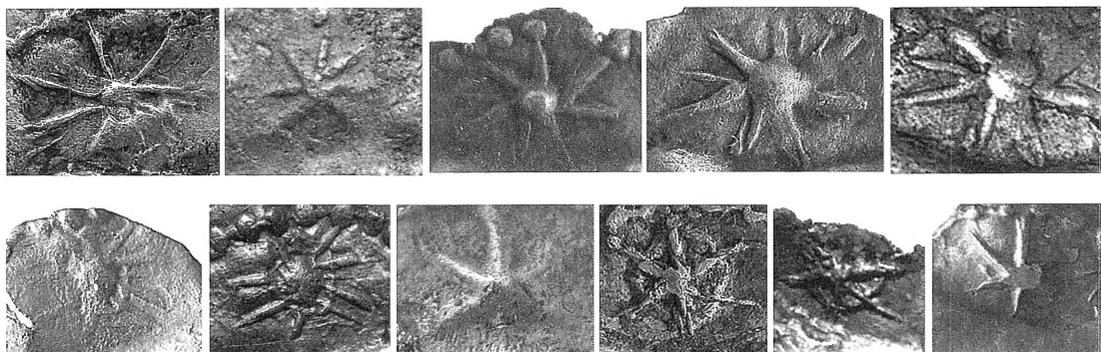
In terms of typology and chronology, and for the purpose of better insight, the coins described are distributed in three groups (A, B and C). Although the central depiction on all the coins is bull Group A (14 specimens) includes coins which depict on obverse a standing bull. The second group (5 specimens) depicts a kneeling bull with reverted head, and the third group (2 specimens) shows the protome of a bull. The coins from Group A with a depiction of a standing bull customarily also have a solar symbol; in these coins, the depiction is static and with few details. The figure of the bull in some specimens is stylized to such an extent that its head is shown only as a beaded protrusion (A 5, 6, 7). In other specimens the form and the shape of the bull are much more realistic and demonstrate much greater skill (A 12, 14). This type of coin is of simple iconography inspired by local folklore and beliefs. The depictions indicate birth, soil and certain activities of the tribal settlements. In later specimens, the bull often appears on coins from various issues and with depictions much richer in content and quality.<sup>2</sup> In the coins from earlier issues of Group B the depiction is slightly changed: the bull is kneeling, and its head is reverted. The depictions of the animal shown to the left (B 1, 2, 3) or to the right (B 4, 5) customarily have floral symbols (rose) or, rarely, a solar symbol (B 3). Unlike the coins from Group A, the reverse of the coins from Group B have a crested helmet (B1, whose reverse is flat, is an exception). The helmet, which to the Derrones was an allusion to Ares, is shown in two varieties, to the left and to the right. It also appears on the reverses of the two specimens from Group C, but here the animal depicted on the obverse is shown with its forepart (protome).

These early Derronian issues are marked with various symbols in which the solar symbols prevail; they are encountered in the issues of other tribes as well. The cult of the Sun that was manifested much earlier through various forms of the so-called "Macedonian bronzes",<sup>3</sup> now found its expression in minting through the impressed solar symbols. In 12 specimens from Group A, the coins show depictions of the solar symbol in several varieties (see Fig. 1). It is commonly depicted as a Sun with 4, 6, 7 or 8 rays and sometimes the rays are shown on a disk (A 11 and 12). The differences in the depiction of the solar symbol are probably the result of the skill and art of those who made the dies. The Paeonians had venerated the Sun and created its cult in much earlier times, a fact recorded by ancient writers (Maximus Tyros, II 8). Now it found its expression in the placing of solar symbols on the coins from the first Derronian issues.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> M. Price, *Coins of the Macedonians*, London, 1974, 7-8.

<sup>3</sup> Д. Митревски, *Карактеристични форми „Македонски бронзи“ по долината на Вардар*, *Maced. acta archeol.*, 9 (1988), 83 ff.

<sup>4</sup> See more on solar symbols in: Svoronos, *op. cit.*, 17-19; В. Соколовска, *Сончеви симболи на пајонските монети*, *Macedonian Numismatic Journal*, 1 (1994), 21-26.



*Fig. 1*

Solar symbols were also used on various later issues of different denominations minted by the tribes. On coin A 1, instead of the solar symbol, we encounter a depiction that resembles a dolphin. It has been recorded on certain undefined issues, although the motives for its inclusion remain uncertain.<sup>5</sup> The symbol on coin A 14, described as a flying bird, is much clearer. It is an eagle which, as a symbol, is encountered on later Derronian issues of high denomination (tetrastaters, dodecadrachms).<sup>6</sup> In several coins, a characteristic symbol appears: it is a floral motif, i.e., the rose as a universal symbol of the Sun and fertility; the rose is sometimes highly stylized, and sometimes clearly outlined (A 13, 14; B 1, 2, 4, 5). The rose as a floral symbol, a symbol of fertility and an allusion to the fertility of the soil is also encountered in later Paeonian issues.<sup>7</sup>

According to scholarly literature, the first locally minted silver coins on the Paeonian territory appeared around 525 BC (of the so-called *Lete* type).<sup>8</sup> Then, as the next stage, ca. 513-480/479 BC, the first coins of the Derrones, Orrescii, Edones, Laiai and other tribes appeared in the most important period of coin minting among the Paeonians.<sup>9</sup> This is the period of the Persian presence and domination in the Aegean region, including Paeonia and Macedonia, a period when tribal coin minting was in expansion and the minting of coins of different issues, types and denominations extremely increased. This is primarily associated with the military and political events towards the end of the 6th and the beginning of the 5th centuries BC, as well as with the introduction of taxes by the Persians, which the tribes paid in silver coins. This

<sup>5</sup> Catalogue of the Greek Coins in the British Museum (BMCG), London, 1979, Macedonia, 152, no. 1-2 avers; SNG, ANS, Macedonia, 984 obvers.

<sup>6</sup> See more on certain interpretations of this symbol in Ѓ. Юркова, Монетите на тракийските племена и владетели, София, 1992, 13; И. Венедиков, Хермес и дероните, Нумизматика, 2, 1979, 3 ff.

<sup>7</sup> Price, *op. cit.*, 6-8.

<sup>8</sup> I. Carradice/M. Price, *Coinage in the Greek world*, London 1988, 39-40; M. Price/N. Waggoner, *Archaic Greek silver coinage: the "Asyut" hoard*, London, 1975, 34-35.

<sup>9</sup> On coin minting among the Paeonian tribes in general, see J. N. Svoronos, *L'hellénisme primitif de la Macédonie, prouvé par la numismatique et l'or du Pangée*, Athen 1918/19 (reprint), 1-159; G. K. Jenkins, *Ancient Greek Coins*, London 1990 (reprint), 31, 34-37; and Д. Драганов, Монетите на македонските царе, I, Ямбол 2000, 27-56.

production of coins of high value is especially evident in the Derronian issues; these issues are considered the first and the earliest in this tribe.<sup>10</sup>

It was precisely because of their significance that the attention of the Paeonian numismatics was focused on issues of high value (decadrachms, octodrachms, and tetradrachms). The increasing number of small-value coins made of thin silver leaf-like segments which have been discovered on Derronian territory raises several questions and dilemmas concerning their appearance and significance. It was becoming clear that the well-known Derronian issues of high denomination discovered even in territories far away from the domestic Paeonian region (in hoards in Asia Minor, Syria and Egypt) had their precursors; these, although of smaller value and of more primitive craftsmanship, provided the much-needed experience with which the Derrones began their own minting. These Late Archaic issues mark the beginning of coin minting in the largest Paeonian tribe, the Derrones.

This early tribal minting of coins appeared simultaneously with that in most of the neighbouring colonies and, generally, throughout the Aegean region, in the second half of the 6th century BC, when the minting of silver coins gained in intensity. It is a tendency that corresponded with the beginning of coin minting among the Derrones, marked with the minting of coins from Group A (1-13) which we date to the period ca. 530/25 - 510/500 BC. The upper time limit for these issues coincides at least with the dating of the Lete type of coins, while the lower time limit is marked by the years of the Persian military campaign of 512/510 BC.<sup>11</sup> The coins from Group A (1-13) from the period between ca. 530/25 - 510/500 BC, in fact, represent this first, the earliest phase in coin minting among the Derrones. We know that the Derronian issues from the next phase (ca. 500-480 BC) were intended for use primarily outside the Derronian territory, and their production was motivated with the need for paying taxes to and trading with the Persians. In contrast, the coins of smaller value were intended for local use and were minted during their first attempts to mint their own coins. If we assume that the first phases in the production of coins of high value required the assistance of experienced masters from the neighbouring colonies, then the first attempts by the Derrones to mint coins of smaller value were authentically Derronian (this is evident in the style, technique and the purpose of these coins). We designate the coins from Groups B and C, dated to the late 6th and 5th centuries BC, all anepigraphic, as Derronian issues of the Dokimos type. The existence of coins of the "kneeling bull/helmet" type, but with the lettering ΔOKI have long been known and are attributed to the Derronian ruler Dokimos.<sup>12</sup> The newly discovered specimens of coins of this type (anepigraphic), all found on Derronian territory, as well as one such specimen found in

<sup>10</sup> In the absence of relevant historical data, tribal issues are dated mainly on the basis of finds from dozens of hoards with Archaic coins that also contained coins minted by these tribes. Perhaps the most significant among them is the Egyptian hoard in Asyut dated to 475 BC which contained Derronian coins (15 specimens). More on the survey, content and dating of these hoards in Price/Waggoner, op. cit. 13-16.

<sup>11</sup> This specimen exhibits craftsmanship of much higher quality. SNG, ANS, Macedonia, I, no. 936; Svoronos, op. cit., 15, no. 31 (pl. II, no. 18).

<sup>12</sup> Svoronos, op. cit., 14, no. 21-22; BMCG, Macedonia, 151-152, no. 1-2; H. Gaebler, *Die Antike Münzen Nord-Griechenlands: Makedonia und Paionia*, III.2, Berlin, 1935, 144, no. 2-3.

an Archaic grave in the vicinity of Štip,<sup>13</sup> testify to the Derronian provenance of these coins. Dokimos' coins were minted after the example of the anepigraphic Derronian issues with the simple addition of his name.

The special feature of these coins that is particularly intriguing and designates them as special issues is the material and the technique used. Of the total number of coins, as many as 16 of them were minted on a thin silver flan (A 1-12; B 1-2; C 1), 2 on a semi-thin flan (A 13; C 2) and only 3 coins on standard flan (B 3, 4, 5). Although, as types, these Paeonian coins have been recorded in scholarly literature (see References in Catalogue),<sup>14</sup> most of the previously recorded coins were minted on standard flans and are much heavier (customarily tetrobols). The flans that were used for the minting of these 16 coins are very thin silver leaf-shaped pieces over which the depiction was impressed. The thickness of the previously prepared flans was less than 0.50 mm. They were cut out from the previously prepared larger pieces of silver sheets (sheet metal) with scissors, then they were shaped, finished and prepared for the weight standard. A survey of the finished pieces reveals that, although they tried, the artisans did not always achieve the desired circular form. Coin A 1 illustrates how far they sometimes were from the desired form. Their thinness made them prone to various deformations (even in the process of minting itself): the blank coins cracked, coiled and creased. Coins A 13 and C 2 are made on semi-thin flan, and coins B 3, 4 and 5, on standard flan, which clearly shows the progress that had already been made.

In this early phase, the Derrones, using a specific technique, minted coins known as *incuse*, in which the obverse is raised, and the reverse is recessed. In all these 'incuse coins', 7 specimens (A 1, 5-10) in our case, the shape of the depiction on the reverse is the same as that on the obverse, but as a negative. In 5 specimens (A 2, 3, 4, 11; B 1) the depiction is impressed only on the obverse, while the reverse is flat and without any impression. It is evident that for these so-called one-sided coins only one die was used.

The 21 specimens that we analyzed were discovered on the following sites: 4 coins in Krivi Dol, Štip; 6 coins in Bogoslovec, Sveti Nikole; 4 coins in Gorno Crnilište, Sveti Nikole; 7 coins in the vicinity of Štip, but without data on their original site (see Fig. 2). All specimens originate from sites located on the territory considered to have been settled by the Paeonian tribal community of the Derrones. It occupied the central Derronian area which stretches along the lower course of the river Bregalnica (Astibos) and the river Svetinikolska, the space surrounded by the present-day cities of Štip, Sveti Nikole and Veles. It is only part of a wider territory that was settled by the Derrones. Krivi Dol, Bogoslovec and Gorno Crnilište are recorded in scholarly literature;<sup>15</sup> numerous sites, however, lie near these places and in their vicinity. This

<sup>13</sup> И. Микулчић, Илирско-архајски гробови из околине Штипа, Старинар XIII-XIV/1962-1963, Београд, 1965, 201 (Fig. 14).

<sup>14</sup> Specimens of coins such as those presented in our Catalogue were published in the Republic of Macedonia for the first time in Numismatic Collection of National Bank of the Republic of Macedonia, Скопје 1999, no. 10; Македонија, Парите и историјата, Скопје 2002, no. 1-2; Macedonia and Paeonia, Šeldarov Collection, Скопје 2003, no. 68.

<sup>15</sup> Археолошка карта на Република Македонија, II, Скопје 1996, see: Криви Дол, 436; Богословец, 346; Горно Црнилиште, 346.

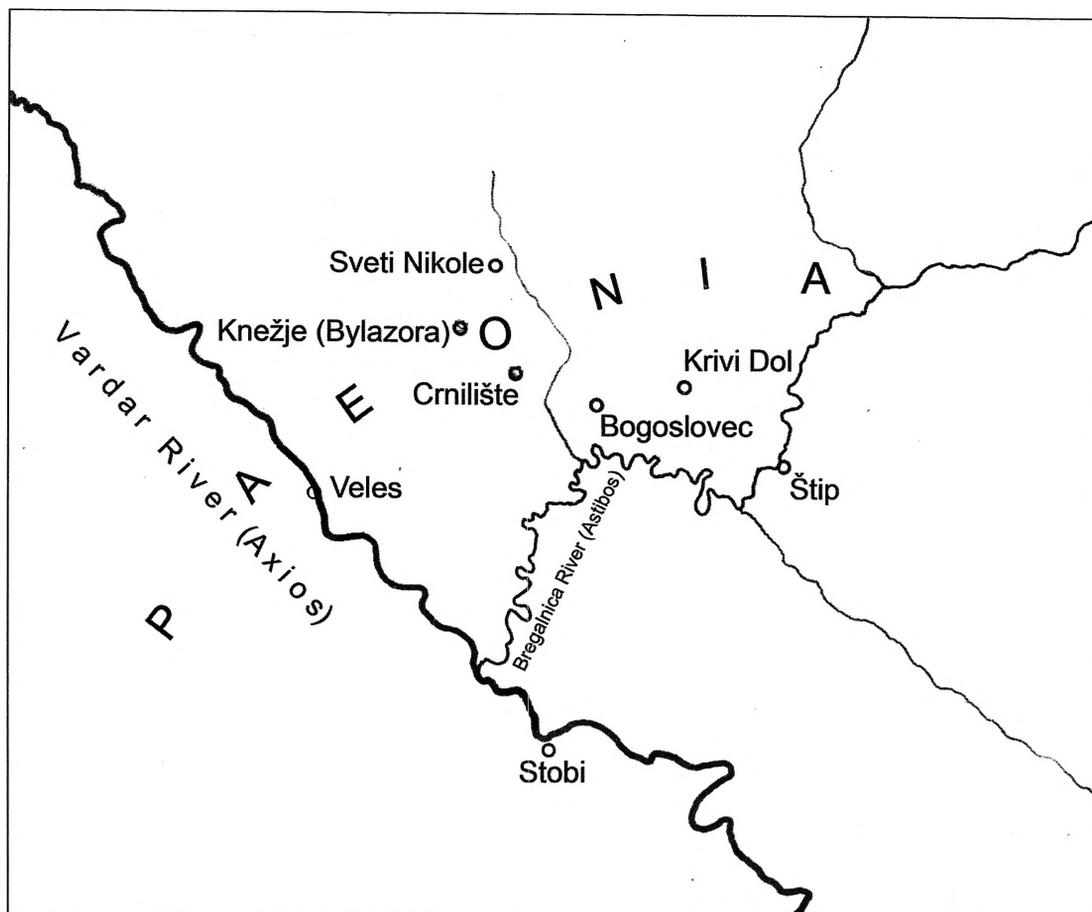


Fig. 2

area (the village of Knežje) has also been suggested as the site of Byzlazora, the “largest Paeonian city.” The fact that all the coins have been found on Derronian territory and that their nominal value is small is sufficient evidence that they were intended exclusively for local use and did not circulate outside the Derronian territory. Coins of this type and value have so far been found only on the Paeonian (Derronian) territory of origin.

It is well known that the Paeonian tribes used a complicated system of weights. Its study has shown that it was complex and emphatically local in character. It was conceived by the tribes in this region for the use of both Oriental and Greek denominations (different names are used for this system in scholarly literature, but it should be called simply *Paeonian*). Within it, three parallel series of weights existed: the Oriental, ‘Light’ Greek and ‘Heavy’ Greek system. The complexity of the system, as well as the fact that the number of coins is insufficient to allow statistical analysis, makes the determination of the nominal value of Derronian coins fairly difficult. Comparing the weight of the specimens described and the existing knowledge about the so-called Thracio-Macedonian weight standard,<sup>16</sup> we determined their value as follows:

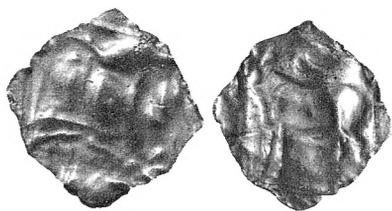
<sup>16</sup> Price, op. cit., 3-4; D. Raymond, *Macedonian Regal Coinage to 413 B.C.*, New York, 1953, 18 ff.

3 hemiobols (the lightest 0.31 grams, the heaviest 0.41 grams); 11 obols (the lightest 0.48 grams, the heaviest 0.77 or 0.89 grams);<sup>17</sup> 6 diobols (the lightest 1.02 grams, the heaviest 1.45 grams) and 1 triobol (1.82 grams). Bearing in mind the variations in the weight of the coins with the same nominal value and the insufficient statistical basis, the values obtained are still a firm confirmation of the existence of minting coins of small value (hemiobols, obols, diobols and trihemiobols), especially due to the fact that they testify to the fact that coin minting among the Derrones began precisely with minting coins of such small values.

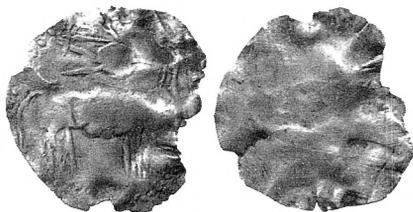
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<sup>17</sup> Two of them could even be classified as trihemiobols (A 10, 12).

GROUP A



1



2



3



4



5



6



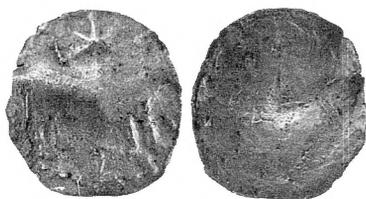
7



8



9



10

Enlarged 1:1.5



11



12



13



14

GROUP B



1



2



3



4



5

GROUP C



1

Enlarged 1:1.5



2