

Numismatic finds of the 4th-3rd centuries BC from Kale at Krševica (southeastern Serbia)

Petar POPOVIĆ

Izveček

Kale pri Krševici je do zdaj najsevernejše poznano najdišče z značilnostmi urbanega naselja iz 4. in prvih desetletij 3. st. pr. Kr. Novčene najdbe kraljev Filipa II., Aleksandra III., Kasandra, Demetrija Poliorketa in kovnice Pelagije kronološko sovpadajo z ostalimi arheološkimi najdbami, ki so bile odkrite pri dosedanjih raziskavah.

Ključne besede: osrednji Balkan, Kale - Krševica, naselje 4.-3. st. pr. Kr., numizmatične najdbe, Filip II., Aleksander III. Kasander, Demetrij Poliorket, Damastij, Pelagija

Abstract

Kale at Krševica is at present the northernmost site with the characteristics of an urban settlement from the 4th and first decades of the 3rd centuries BC. Finds of coins of Philip II, Alexander III, Cassander, Demetrios Poliorketes and Pelagia correspond in general to the chronological span of the archaeological material discovered so far in the course of excavations.

Keywords: Central Balkans, Kale-Krševica, settlement from the 4th-3rd centuries BC, numismatic finds, Philip II, Alexander III, Cassander, Demetrios Poliorketes, Damastion, Pelagia

Kale (the Turkish term for a fortification) is located on one of the last elevations that descend from the peaks of Rujan Mountain towards the Južna (South) Morava River and the Vranje valley. It had an exceptional strategic position, and the earliest finds on the plateau date from the Late Bronze and Early Iron Age, but the most important remains are the ramparts, buildings, and abundant archaeological material, all of which have the characteristics of an urban settlement from the 4th century and the first decades of the 3rd century BC. Its acropolis and suburbium, which extended down to the valley of the Krševička River, encompassed an area of around 4 hectares. At the foot of the hill are the present-day village houses and gardens, and ancient stone blocks taken from the nearby slope can often be seen in their walls. The settlement remains lay immediately beneath the present surface, and according to many indications, so do the graves of the cemetery of the ancient inhabitants (Popović 2005; id. 2006).

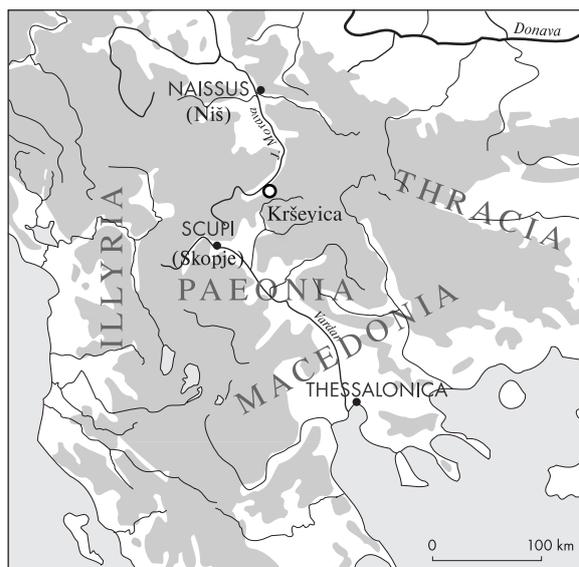


Fig. 1: Krševica - the position between the Južna Morava and Vardar River valleys.

Sl. 1: Krševica - lega med dolinama Južne Morave in Vardarja.



Fig. 2: Kale at Krševica. The *acropolis*, the complex of buildings on the central plateau (2005).
Sl. 2: Kale pri Krševici. Akropola, območje stavb na osrednjem platoju (2005).

The site in Krševica (*fig. 1*), around ten kilometers to the east of Bujanovac, was initially registered by Milan Jovanović, curator of the National Museum in Vranje, who in cooperation with Ivan Mikulčić from the University of Skopje

started rather small-scale test trenching and rescue excavations in 1966. A detailed report published in 1968 revealed the importance of this site, where fragments of architecture, Greek imported pottery, local pottery made after Greek models, and other



Fig. 3: Kale at Krševica. The *suburbium*, platforms with ramparts and buildings (2005).
Sl. 3: Kale pri Krševici. *Suburbium*, obzidane terase s stavbami (2005).



Fig. 4: Kale at Krševica. The site plan and numismatic finds (*cat. nos. 1-11*). Not to scale.
Sl. 4: Kale pri Krševici. Skica najdišča z novčnimi najdbami (*cat. nos. 1-11*). Brez merila.

finds dating generally from the 4th century BC had been discovered (Mikulčić, Jovanović 1968). The first information about the numismatic finds was obtained from the zone near the houses, which were cut into the slope. In the yard of P. Krstić a hoard was allegedly discovered containing many dozens of coins of the Macedonian rulers. At present we have from this location just one drachma of Alexander the Great (*cat. no. 2*) and two bronze specimens of Cassander (*cat. nos. 5, 6*).¹ Finally, I wish to add also the bronze coin of Philip II of

¹ The sole specimen of Cassander now in the National Museum in Vranje does not correspond completely to the specimen published by Mikulčić and Jovanović (1968, 356, Pl. 1: 4). The obverse depicts the head of a youth from the coins of Philip II instead of Apollo. If this represents yet another specimen, we could conditionally add it to this find, about which other information is lacking.

Macedon that was found in the yard in the vicinity of the houses of the Krstić family (*cat. no. 1*). All other specimens that I mention here are from the archaeological excavations in Krševica, which were resumed after a long interval in 2001.

During five years of excavations (2001-2005), the investigation was mostly concentrated on the acropolis, which was expected to provide the most important data about the settlement. The acropolis was protected on two sides by a wide ditch and rampart, while the remains of structures dating from different building phases, often disturbed by leveling horizons, were discovered on the plateau. A complex of buildings dating from the latest horizon was discovered in the central area (*fig. 2*). The eastern and northern buildings, consisting of several rooms, had been built of

stone and sun-dried bricks and covered with large roof tiles. Given the scope of these works, it is only too understandable that in addition to other archaeological material most of the numismatic finds also come from the plateau. The settlement also spread over the northeastern slope facing the river, but because of the dense vegetation the investigation of this area is still in the initial phase (Popović 2005). At the foot of the site and in the vicinity of the Krševička reka (Krševička River), we have also been investigating recently (2005) a rather large area where ramparts, stone platforms and a building were discovered, so the function of this entire complex is yet to be explicated (fig. 3) (Popović 2006, 525 f., Fig. 5, 7).

Owing to certain circumstances the coin finds on the acropolis have not been discovered in layers that could be directly connected to particular structures or building phases (fig. 4). The reasons for this are not only the intensive building activity but also the fact that there was a vineyard on the plateau at the end of the 1940s, so the soil cultivation inflicted considerable damage on the surface layers. In the trenches excavated towards the southwestern periphery of the plateau, and in which certain structures were encountered, two silver drachmae of Alexander III and one bronze coin of Demetrios Poliorketes (*cat. nos. 3, 4, 8*) have been found. Yet another bronze coin of Demetrios (*cat. no. 7*) was discovered in the central area also containing the northern building. In the surface layer to the southwest of this building a silver coin of Pelagia was found that also does not have any stratigraphic significance, but for the time being it is the only specimen of this kind discovered in the course of archaeological excavations (*cat. no. 9*). All other finds date from later periods and they were collected in the process of clearing the terrain at the foot of the site (*cat. nos. 10, 11*).

CATALOGUE

Abbreviations

Ivanišević: IVANIŠEVIĆ, V. 2001, *Novčarstvo srednjovekovne Srbije*. - Beograd.

May: MAY, J. M. F. 1939, *The Coinage of Damastion and the Lesser Coinages of the Illyro-Paeonian Region*. - London.

Newell: NEWELL, E. T. 1927, *The Coinage of Demetrius Poliorketes*. - London.

Price: PRICE, M. J. 1991, *The Coinage in the Name of Alexander the Great and Philip Arrhidaeus*. - London/Zurich.

RIC VIII: KENT, J. P. C. 1981, *The Roman imperial Coinage 8. The Family of Constantine I (A.D. 337 - 364)*. - London.

SNG ANS: The Collection of the American Numismatic Society 8. Macedonia 2: Alexander I to Philip II. - V: Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum, New York 1994.

SNG Cop.: The Royal Collection of Coins and Medals. Danish National Museum 9. Macedonia 2: Alexander I - Alexander III. Macedonia 3: Philip III - Philip VI. - V: Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum, Copenhagen 1943.

SNG Greece II: The Alpha Bank Collection. Macedonia 1: Alexander I - Perseus. - V: Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum, Athens 2000.

Philip II (359-336 BC) and posthumous issues

1. Obv. Young male head with taenia r.

Rev. Young naked rider on horse galloping l. ΦΙΛΙΠΠΟΥ, under horse Π

AE, Ø 18 mm, 6.23 g, *SNG ANS* 947, →

Foot of the site, chance find (owner B. Mijalković from Krševica).

Alexander III

Miletus, 325-323 BC

2. Obv. Beardless head of Herakles in lion skin r.

Rev. Zeus enthroned l. holding scepter in l. and eagle in extended r. hand. ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΥ,
below ⚡, l. thunderbolt

AR, Ø 16.5 mm, 4.19 g, Price 2088 ↗

Foot of the site, chance find (owner Č. Krstić from Vranje).

Babylon, 323-317 BC

3. As above, ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ .l. M, below ΛΥ
AR, Ø 15 mm, 4.12 g, Price 3693 ↗
Trench S 44 (2002).

Kolophon, 310-301 BC

4. As above, below Φ, l. Σ ?

AR, Ø 17-18 mm, 3.47 g, Price 1820, 1823, 1831 ↗

Trench S 44-47 (2002).

Cassander (306 BC)

5. Obv. Beardless head of Herakles in lion skin r.

Rev. Lion reclining ΚΑΣΣΑΝ - ΔΡΟΥ symbol ?

AE, Ø 16.5-17.5 mm, 4.13 g, *SNG Cop.* 1138-1141 ↘

Foot of the site, chance find (owner Č. Krstić from Vranje).

Cassander (306-297 BC)

6. Obv. Laureate head of Apollo r.

Rev. Tripod, ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ - ΚΑΣΣΑΝΔΡΟΥ

AE, Ø 17 mm, 5.63 g, *SNG Cop.* 1160 ↓

Foot of the site, chance find (National Museum, Vranje).

Demetrios Poliorketes

Amphipolis 294-288 BC

7. Obv. Macedonian shield with monogram ⚡ in boss

Rev. Crested helmet with cheek pieces. Below ΒΑ-ΣΙ

AE, Ø 15.5 mm, 4.30 g, Newell, pl. XIII. 13-18 ↘

Trench no. 20-21 (2002).

8. As above, on rev. l. bunch of grapes ?

AE, Ø 15 mm, 3.90 g, Newell, pl. XIII. 16; *SNG Greece II* 967 ↘

Trench S 44 (2002).

Pelagia

9. Obv. Barbarized head of youthful Herakles wearing lion skin l., border of dots

Rev. Fantastic tripod, above crescent, l. ⚡, r. knife, border of dots

AR, Ø 22 mm, 4.22 g, May, Pl. X 15 var. ↓

Trench N 27 (2002), (fig. 6: 3).

Constantius II

10. Obv. Bust, diadem, cuir. in palud. DN CONSTAN-
[TIVS PF AVG]

Rev. Helmeted soldier to. l., shield on l. arm, spearing falling
horseman. FEL TEMP REPARATIO (FH 3)

AE, Ø 20.5 mm, 2.65 g, undefined mint, minted 351-355
RIC VIII ? \

Eastern slope, chance find (2002).

Prizren mint (ca. 1378-ca. 1396)

11. Obv. IC - XC Christ, nimbate seated facing upon throne
without back: right hand raised in
blessing, left holds Gospels

Rev. ΠΙΠΣ – ΕΝΘ

Denar, ↓ 14.5 mm, 0.39 g, Ivanišević, p. 284, 41.2

Chance find, clearing of terrain at the foot of the site
(2005).



Fig. 5: Kale at Krševica. Numismatic finds. Scale 1:1

Sl. 5: Kale pri Krševici. Numizmatične najdbe. M. = 1:1.

The numismatic finds from Krševica look rather modest if we take into account that this was a rich settlement that provided large amounts of archaeological material. Most of the material is pottery, a smaller amount of which consists of fragments of vessels from Attic or north Aegean workshops dating from the end of the 5th to the first decades of the 3rd centuries BC, but most of the material comes from local workshops, which produced a rich repertory of table and kitchenware based on the Greek models. This is also confirmed by the stamp mark E (epsilon) impressed on many vessels discovered during the excavations. Small in quantity but important jewelry finds also date from the mentioned period (Popović 2005, 155-160; id. 2006, 528-529). The coins of Philip II, Alexander III, Cassander and Demetrios Poliorketes most probably reached the settlement at the end of the 4th century and in the first decades of the

3rd century BC, and this correlates to the date of construction of the most important structures on the acropolis and at the foot of the hill. The latest specimens issued by Demetrios (294-288) were the most poorly preserved and very worn, so they were identified only recently after conservation treatment.² These finds are of particular significance as they could be connected to the time preceding the cessation of life in the settlement. A larger number of the numismatic finds would, however, certainly provide a more sound chronological framework, as Hellenistic pottery is far less chronologically distinguishable. In terms of this problem, a real possibility should be mentioned that settlement at Krševica was destroyed in 280-279 BC during the Celtic invasion of Macedonia and Greece, but for

² M. Čolović from the National Museum in Belgrade was responsible for the conservation of the material. The photographs are by N. Borić, Institute of Archaeology, Belgrade.

this hypothesis at present we do not have reliable confirmation (Popović 2006, 532).

The most interesting numismatic find from the acropolis is certainly the silver coin of Pelagia. This is not the proper occasion to discuss the complex questions of the Damastion mint and related issues, but prompted by this find I cite an example of their relations on the basis of another two specimens from the National Museum in Belgrade. In a monograph published by J. M. F. May (1939), there are no direct analogies for any of these specimens. The first specimen of unknown origin (*fig. 6: 1*) has a head of Apollo with locks of hair covering the neck on the obverse. On the reverse is a tripod and the inscription ΔΑΜΑ- ΣΤΙΝΩ. This specimen according to the quality, stylistic characteristics, and weight (13.64 g) corresponds to the early groups generally dated in the first half of the 4th century BC (May 1939, 83 ff.). The site of discovery for the second specimen (*fig. 6: 2*) is noted as the Ibar valley in the vicinity of Sočanica and the ruins of the medieval fortification Galič around twenty kilometers to the north of Kosovska Mitrovica (Borić-Brešković 1994, 96, 165: 22/4). On the obverse is the head of Apollo with locks of hair covering the neck and a border of dots; it is also the work of a skillful master engraver. On the reverse, however, is a border of dots and a »fantastic tripod«, which on the left side depicts this symbol as a downward turned letter E with dots on the ends, while a knife is shown on the right side. This specimen with its unusual combination and weight of 6.68 g is identified as an issue of Pelagia because of the reverse representation (May 1939, 169 ff.). Finally the last specimen (*fig. 5: 9; 6: 3*) found at the acropolis and weighing 4.22 g has on the obverse a stylized representation of Hercules with a lion skin on his head (inspired by the coins of Alexander III), while the reverse is in many details similar to the previously described specimen. It should be attributed to class III of the Pelagia coins dating from the beginning of the 3rd century BC (May 1939, 182 ff.). On the whole, issues attributed to Pelagia are characterized by very diverse stylistic traits, a high degree of barbarization, the mediocre abilities of completely unskilled engravers, and non-uniform weights. Our specimen is the product of a local craftsman who had clear intentions and a steady hand, so we can classify it among the most beautiful specimens of barbarian coinage. The period of monetary activity initiated by the Greeks in the beginning of the 4th century was coming to an end with this specimen.



Fig. 6: Silver coins from Damastion (1) and Pelagia (2, 3) mints. 1 - of unknown origin (National Museum in Belgrade); 2 - from the medieval fortification Galič in the vicinity of Sočanica, the Ibar valley (National Museum in Belgrade); 3 - from Kale at Krševica (*cat. no. 9; fig. 5: 9*). Scale 1:1.

Sl. 6: Srebrniki iz kovnic Damastija (1) in Pelagije (2, 3). 1 - z neznanega najdišča (hrani Narodni Muzej v Beogradu); 2 - s srednjeveške utrdbe Galič v bližini Sočanice v dolini reke Ibar (hrani Narodni Muzej v Beogradu); 3 - z najdišča Kale pri Krševici (*kat. št. 9; sl. 5: 9*). M. = 1:1.

The above mentioned specimen raises certain issues, including chronological and stylistic problems and the system of functioning of the Damastion mint, and this inevitably leads us to the question of the location of this mining town in the Illyrian territory, which thanks to considerable resources minted silver coins for more than hundred years. Comprehensive literature on this issue exists and it is necessary to mention that in recent years it has been assumed merely on the basis of rich silver deposits that Damastion should be sought in the territory of Kosovo (Ujes 2002). It is important to mention here that the remains of the settlement in Krševica are situated in the vicinity of an ore-bearing zone extending northwards from Chalcidice to the region along the Serbian-Bulgarian border. The archaeological results have confirmed that this was an organized settlement and the sole urban center within rather large barbarian territory. It could have attracted ancient writers and the examples are the names mentioned by Strabo - an »ancient city« somewhere in the Dardanian territory and *Damastion* (Str. VII, 5, 7; 7, 8; VIII, 6, 16). To put it briefly, I think

that for the time being there are sufficient reasons for a hypothesis that the anonymous settlement at Krševica should be identified with Damastion, while the final answer to this question raised long ago will be resolved by future investigations (Popović 2006, 530-532).

The settlement at Krševica was located in the area that divided Illyria from Thrace and had close relations with the Aegean via the valleys of the Morava, Vardar and Struma Rivers. Luxurious goods arrived along these trade routes: Mediterranean products, wine from Thasos, from Mende or other centers, as well as jewelry and coins, and all this was intended to satisfy the needs of the highest classes of the population. Considering the architecture and large repertoires of other finds, the coins discovered in

the course of excavations do not exhibit an image that could be expected for a site of this character. It is still difficult to discuss the monetary circulation, but Macedonian coinage was much more intensive from the reign of Philip II and it is well illustrated by the finds from Krševica. In any case, they correspond to the chronological framework of the later building phases on the acropolis but also those at the foot of the site near the river. The bronze coin of Constantius II, found by chance, should not be considered surprising, as according to information from our colleagues in the National Museum in Vranje, an important Late Roman site was encountered in the neighboring village of Klinovac. The denar minted in Prizren is a rather rare specimen and was probably lost on the road running along the Krševička River valley.

BORIĆ-BREŠKOVIĆ, B. 1994, Tokovi srebrnog novca u predrimskom i rimskom periodu. - In: I. Popović (ed.), *Antičko srebro u Srbiji*, 33-44, Beograd.

MAY, J. M. F. 1939, *The Coinage of Damastion and the Lesser Coinages of the Illyro-Paeonian Region*. - London.

MIKULČIĆ, I. and M. JOVANOVIĆ 1968, Helenistički oppidum iz Krševice kod Vranja. - *Vranjski glasnik* 4, 355-375.

POPOVIĆ, P. 2005, Kale - Krševica: Investigations 2001-2004. Interim Report. - *Zbornik Narodnog muzeja* 18/1, 141-174.

POPOVIĆ, P. 2006, Central Balkans between the Greek and Celtic World: Case Study Kale Krševica. - In: N. Tasić, C. Grozdanov (eds.), *Homage to Milutin Garašanin*, 523-536, Beograd.

UJES, D. 2002, Recherche sur la localisation de Damastion et ses mines. - *Revue Numismatique* 158, 103-129.

Numizmatične najdbe 3. in 4. st. pr. Kr. z najdišča Kale pri Krševici (jugovzhodna Srbija)

Povzetek

Kale pri Krševici v bližini Bujanovca (jugovzhodna Srbija) predstavlja po današnjem vedenju najsevernejše najdišče z značilnostmi urbanega naselja iz 4. in prvih desetletij 3. st. pr. Kr.

Novci Filipa II., Aleksandra III. (Aleksandra Velikega), Kasandra, Demetrija Poliorketa in kovnice Pelagije v veliki meri kronološko sovpadajo z ostalimi arheološkimi najdbami, ki so bile odkrite pri dosedanjih raziskavah. Zaradi možnosti proučevanja stilnih in kronoloških posebnosti kovnice Pelagije je še posebej pomemben srebrnik te kovnice, ki je hkrati edini tovrstni primerek najden med arheološkimi raziskavami. Pomaga tudi pri proučevanju do zdaj še nelociranega rudniškega mesta

Damastija in istoimenske kovnice, ki je v 4. st. pr. Kr. kovala več serij srebrnega denarja.

Prevod: Alenka Miškec

Petar Popović
Arheološki institut
Knez Mihailova 35/IV
RS-11000 Beograd
p.pop@yubc.net

