

Some aspects of countermarked coins from the time of the Julio-Claudian dynasty in Pannonia

Two factors require consideration in the study of the monetary system and its particularities during the Julio-Claudian dynasty in the region of Pannonia (fig. 1). Firstly, that the region of the Roman province Pannonia currently extends over five countries: Austria, Hungary, Croatia, Slovenia and the state of Serbia and Montenegro. Consequently, the level of research and published material varies from region to region. Data are available for the northern part of Hungary, for instance the Danubian *limes* (FMRU 1, 2, 3). Information about Sallo is also available (Redő, 2003). The sites of Carnuntum (FMRÖ 3/1; Göbl, 1987) and Vindobona (FMRÖ 9) are published separately. The greatest amount of information is available for the Slovenian section of Pannonia, as the finds from Poetovio and Neviodunum are included in FMRSI I-IV. The Croatian and Serbian sections represent the greatest problem, as there are no systematic publications. Only recently have lists of select materials preserved in Croatian museums been prepared.

The second factor is the status of the province and its origins. The province of Pannonia became autonomous following the Pannonian-Dalmatian revolt, approximately in the year 9-10 AD (Mócsy, 1974, 31-52). The civic organized province with its own system of self-government became Pannonia only during the reign of Vespasian; this is when the first *municipiae* were founded. Of course, the Roman troops had already established themselves in Pannonia with their legions or auxiliary units by then (Šašel, 1989, 57). Coin finds dating to the Julio-Claudian dynasty from the region of Pannonia are thus chiefly related to the army.

During the Julio-Claudian dynasty the majority of coin circulation finds are bronze (*aes*) denominations, primarily *asses*, which from the seven researched sites in Pannonia represents between 70-80% of all coinage in the monetary system. Table 1 shows that *denarii* comprise 5%, *sestertii* 10% and *dupondii* 5-10%.

As regards the Augustan period, only coins from Carnuntum and Poetovio form a decent sample of coins (table 2). The relatively scarce sample of coins from other sites, ranging between 4 and 17 examples, is insufficient for an objective analysis. The number of *asses* from the Augustan period also predominates, and there is also a large percentage of *quadrantes*, which represent small denominations.

The phenomenon of countermarked coins from the time of the Julio-Claudian dynasty is especially interesting. As the table 3 evidences, the largest number of countermarked Augustan coins in Pannonia originate from Carnuntum, Mursa and Siscia. The most common countermarks are A/G, AVG and CAE.

The countermarks AL·AR and APOL are both interpreted as Pannonian. Peter Kos (Kos, 1984) explains the AL·AR countermark as an abbreviation for *Ala Arvacorum*; he associates it with the auxiliary military unit stationed in the Pannonian region during the 1st century. Kos classifies this countermark to the late Tiberian period, or the early Claudian period at the latest. Countermarking can be attributed, according to Kos, to the Mursa-Teutoburgium area. The function of the AL·AR countermark was most likely to change the value of the countermarked coin, and then it could be used as a *donativa*.

P. Kos (Kos, Šemrov, 1995, 56) interprets the APOL countermark as the mark of the legion XV Apollinaris. This countermark is known on three examples from two Pannonian sites, one of the sites being Siscia, where the legion XV Apollinaris had its winter camp situated.

The most frequent countermark throughout Pannonia is A/G. Already in the 1960s, MacDowall (MacDowall, 1966) classified the A/G countermark, in this distinctive form with AV in ligature, as a Pannonian countermark, or more precisely, as a countermark from the Carnuntum region of Pannonia. In terms of chronology,

he attributed it to the early reign of Tiberius. Chantraine (Chantraine, 1982, 34-38) used coins from Novaesium to justify his classification of the A/G countermark to two different chronological periods—or perhaps even less likely, that the A/G countermark was in use for a period of 25 years. Those found on moneys' Asses, Nemausus Asses and First Altar Asses undoubtedly belong to the Augustan period. Furthermore, the production of the A/G countermark is not exclusive of Carnuntum. The majority of authors cite the chronological classification of the late Augustan or early Tiberian periods. However, Martini (Martini, 2003, 142, 213-216) set the use of this countermark to a later period, either Caius or even Claudius I. At the same time, he distinguished two basic countermark variations on the basis of form: large and small. And each of these forms has two different writing styles: A/G and A/C. Martini justifies his dating of the A/G countermark on the basis of the late foundation of the fortress at Carnuntum, which M. Grünewald (Grünewald, 1979, 81-82) dates to the Claudian period.

Evidence up-to-date demonstrates that A/G countermarks are known from numerous sites: largely from along the frontier region (in Germania and Raetia) and also from along important routes of communication leading from Italy eastwards (in Noricum and Pannonia).

In addition to the 19 Asses with the A/G countermark from Carnuntum, at least another 50 coins with this same countermark were documented in Noricum and Pannonia. These coins were found in the southeastern Alpine region along the Sava, Drava and Danube rivers, for example at Nauportus, Emona, Magdalensberg, Celeia, Poetovio, Siscia, Mursa, Sirmium, Acumincum, Rittium and Taurunum (fig. 1). In most cases the countermarks were on moneys' asses. However they were seldom present on other bronze denominations. The A/G countermark is absent from all coins documented in this region and originating from the Lugdunum and Nemausus mints. There are only two examples of this countermark on earlier coins—two CA asses struck in Asia—found in Mursa and Celeia. The latest coin with the A/G countermark found in Pannonia dates to the year 6 BC.

In order to comprehend countermarking and their respective datings, it is essential to understand the function of a countermark and the role of countermarked coinage in circulation. As such, in the instan-

ce of the A/G countermark, the main question is “Why stamp a coin, which already bears the portrait of Augustus and a legend with his name, with the name AVGUSTUS, only in the abbreviated form of A/G?”

The list of A/G countermarked coins sets the countermark in the Augustan period (table 4). It is present on moneys' asses, Nemausus asses and First Altar asses, as well as on select coins struck in Asia. These issues were by far the most copious during the Augustan period. These issues were ended by the year 6 BC. The mint in Rome only continued with aes coinage in the year 10 AD, and the Lugdunum mint a year earlier. So, for a period of more than 15 years, *aes* coinage was not struck; at least, not in the mints that had been producing the largest issues. With the introduction of the new imperial issue in the year 10 AD, the names of the moneys were dropped. Did the A/G countermark perhaps prolong the value of older issues in circulation when an entirely new emission was brought in? This is perhaps the intent of the A/G countermark, which certainly means AVGUSTUS; perhaps by countermarking his own name, Augustus aimed to fortify his own authority. However, one should take caution in the case of the A/G countermark on the first series Nemausus as from Rödgen (Simon, 1976, 52-53), which was abandoned already in the year 8 BC. This countermark is quite different stylistically: it is smaller and enclosed in a rectangle of pearls and stamped on the reverse. The obverse has two countermarks: a wheel and the number VI. A similar combination of three countermarks—A/G, IMP and a wheel—is also known on an as from Haltern (FMRD VI 4057-161), which was abandoned in the year 9 AD.

One generally accepted explanation, which would account for more than 90% of countermarks on bronze coinage in the early imperial period throughout the Rhine and Danube regions, is that countermarking was used to designate *donativa* from a private treasury (Chantraine, 1982, 33; Speidel, 1993, 14), while this is unlikely true of countermarks with names of emperors. García-Bellido (García-Bellido, 1999, 69-70) proffered another opinion: that countermarking denominated coins as property of the legion and therefore ensured a minimal supply of coins to remain in the military fortress. However, in such a case the circulation of countermarked coins would be limited to a specific region; and this contradicts the basic principles of monetary economy.

What can be said of countermarks dating to the late Augustan period as regards Pannonian sites? Particularly as concerns Carnuntum. Archaeological finds from Carnuntum indicate that the fortress could not have existed before the year 40 AD. It seems that the fortress could have been established around the year 50 AD, when the *legio XV Apollinaris* was transferred there (Kandler, 2003). However, this certainly does not exclude the possibility that Augustan moneyers' asses were already countermarked with A/G. Assuming that the A/G countermark is of an earlier date, then coins from Carnuntum merely exclude Carnuntum as being a center of production of this countermark. If Carnuntum truly were a center of production of this countermark and as such this countermark would date to the Claudian period, why then are there no Tiberius, Caius or Claudius coins with this same countermark?

On the other hand, we know from Tacitus' report (Ann. I 16-29) on the rebellion of the Pannonian legions after the death of Augustus in 14 AD that three legions had a summer camp somewhere in Pannonia. These were the *IX Hispana*, *VIII Augusta* and *XV Apollinaris*. The *legio IX Hispana* was probably near the boundary of the province, most likely in Sirmium. The winter camp of the *XV Apollinaris* could have been in the vicinity of Siscia, and the legion is later known to have been in Scarbantia and Carnuntum. Veterans of the *VIII Augusta* are known from epigraphic monuments found in Emona and Poetovio (Šašel Kos, 1995, 236-237).

Furthermore, a small vexillation of the Pannonian legion *VIII Augusta* was stationed in the Augustan period at Magdalensberg which, together with a detachment of the *cohortes Montanorum prima* constituted the most important garrison in the country (Šašel Kos, 1997, 33).

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	AU	Cist.	D	Q	S	Dp	As	Sem	Quad	AE	Total
Carnuntum	0.47	0.23	5.19	0.23	7.31	6.61	72.17	0.95	6.84		100
Vindobona			3.03		12.12	6.06	69.7			9.09	100
Scarbantia					20	5	75				100
Solva					3.64	12.73	83.63				100
Brigetio	1.89		15.09		7.55	3.77	67.92	1.89		1.89	100
Poetovio	1.34		4.03		8.31	5.36	75.61	0.8	3.21	1.34	100
Neviodunum			6.45		9.68		79.04		1.61	3.22	100

Table 1: Percentages of the Julio-Claudian dynasty coin denominations

	AU	Cist.	D	Q	S	Dp	As	Sem	Quad	AE	Total
Carnuntum		0.87	12.28	0.87	2.64	6.15	64.91	0.87	11.41		100
Poetovio	2.12		14.9		4.25	6.39	57.44		8.51	6.39	100

Table 2: Percentages of Augustan period coin denominations in Carnuntum and Poetovio

	A/G, A/C	AVG,AVC	CAES	CAE	TIB	A/C.T.	IMP.A/C	A	IMP	AL-AR	APOL	Total
Acumincum	5	I			I							7
Bononia				I								1
Brigetio		I										1
Carnuntum	19		I									20
Cornacum											2	2
Győr		2			I							3
Mursa	7	2		I	I		I					12
Poetovio	1				I	I						3
Rittium	3											3
Siscia	2			4				I	I		I	9
Sirmium	2			3								5
Solva		5										5
Taurunum	1											1
Teutoburgium										2		2
Total	40	11	1	9	4	1	1	1	1	2	3	

Table 3: Countermarks on Augustan coins from Pannonian sites

No.	Denom.	Obv.	Rev.	RIC	Mint	Date	Site
1	As		A/C	484	Asia	25 pr.Kr.	Mursa
2	Dp		A/C	324	Rom	18 pr.Kr.	Siscia
3	As	A/G		373	Rom	16 pr.Kr.	Carnuntum
4	As	A/C		376	Rom	16 pr.Kr.	Rittium
5	As	A/C		379	Rom	16 pr.Kr.	Carnuntum
6	As	A/C		382	Rom	15 pr.Kr.	Carnuntum
7	As	A/C		389	Rom	15 pr.Kr.	Poetovio
8	As		A/C	389	Rom	15 pr.Kr.	Carnuntum
9	As	A/G		- (ad 389)	-	po 15 pr.Kr.	Carnuntum
10	As	A/G		427	Rom	7 pr.Kr.	Carnuntum
11	As	A/C		427	Rom	7 pr.Kr.	Carnuntum
12	As	A/C		427	Rom	7 pr.Kr.	Carnuntum
13	As	A/C		427	Rom	7 pr.Kr.	Carnuntum
14	As	A/C		427	Rom	7 pr.Kr.	Carnuntum
15	As	A/G		427	Rom	7 pr.Kr.	Carnuntum
16	As	A/C		427	Rom	7 pr.Kr.	Acumincum
17	As	A/C		427	Rom	7 pr.Kr.	Acumincum
18	As	A/C		427	Rom	7 pr.Kr.	Sirmium
19	As	A/C		431	Rom	7 pr.Kr.	Rittium
20	As	A/C		431	Rom	7 pr.Kr.	Rittium
21	As	A/C		431	Rom	7 pr.Kr.	Mursa
22	As	A/C		432	Rom	7 pr.Kr.	Carnuntum
23	As	A/C		432	Rom	7 pr.Kr.	Carnuntum
24	As	A/C		432	Rom	7 pr.Kr.	Acumincum
25	As	A/G		432	Rom	7 pr.Kr.	Mursa
26	As	A/G		435	Rom	7 pr.Kr.	Acumincum
27	As	A/C		435	Rom	7 pr.Kr.	Bijelać
28	As	A/C		435	Rom	7 pr.Kr.	Mursa
29	As	A/C		435	Rom	7 pr.Kr.	Carnuntum
30	As	A/C		435	Rom	7 pr.Kr.	Carnuntum
31	As		A/C	435	Rom	7 pr.Kr.	Carnuntum
32	As	A/C		436	Rom	7 pr.Kr.	Carnuntum
33	As		A/C	436	Rom	7 pr.Kr.	Carnuntum
34	As		A/C	437	Rom	6 pr.Kr.	Taurunum
35	As	A/C		439	Rom	6 pr.Kr.	Mursa
36	As	A/C		?	Rom	16-6 pr.Kr.	Sirmium
37	As	A/C		?	Rom	16-6 pr.Kr.	Mursa
38	As	A/C		?	Rom	?	Mursa

Table 4: A/G countermarked coins in Pannonia

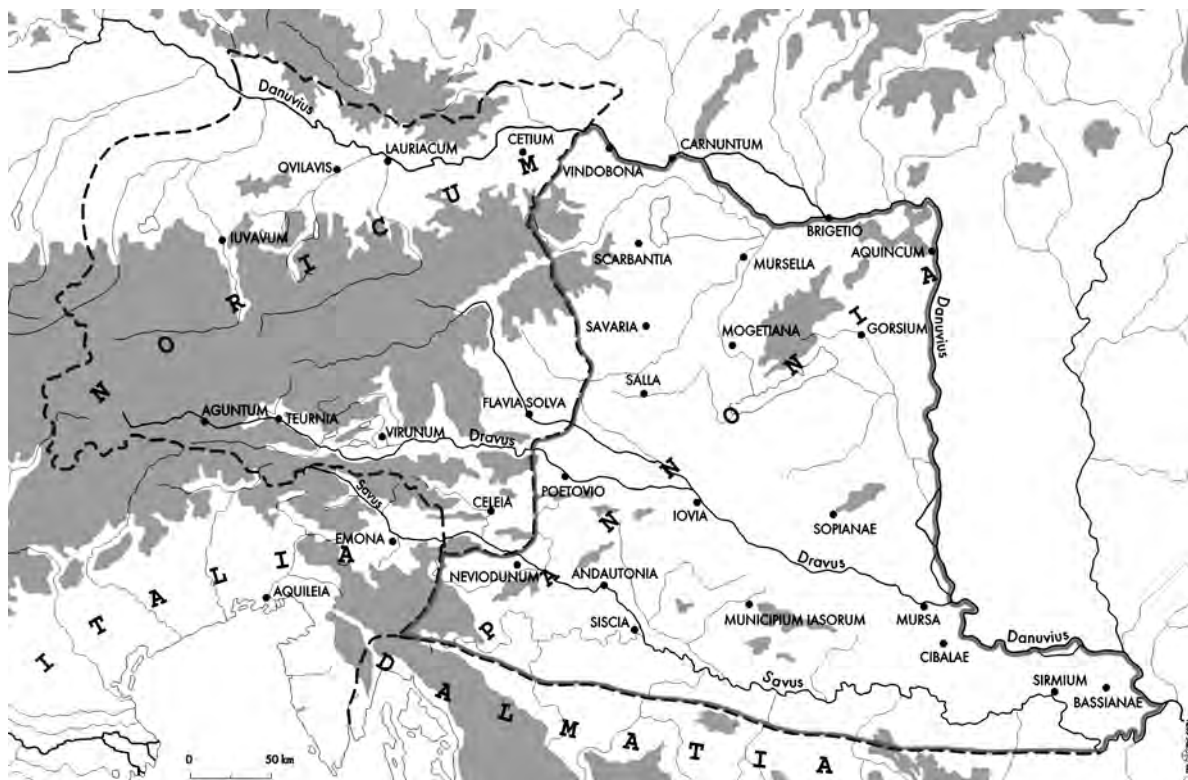


Fig. 1: Pannonia and Noricum (from *The autonomous towns of Noricum and Pannonia. Noricum*, Ljubljana, 2002)