

Warsaw, 12. November 2019

Prof. dr hab. Aleksander Bursche

Uniwersytet Warszawski

ul. Krakowskie Przedmieście 26/28

00-927 Warszawa

Review of postdoctoral dissertation (*Habilitation*) by dr. Jiří Militký

*Oppidum Hradiště u Stradonic ve světle mincovních. Komentovaný katalog mincovních
nálezů a dokladů mincovní výroby, Prague 2015*

The substantial contribution by dr. Jiří Militký is a long-awaited monograph on Boii coins and evidence of coin production retrieved at Hradiště near Stradonice, a major Celtic oppidum of Central Europe.

The subtitle of this book – “Commented Catalogue” is excessively modest in my view. Although the catalogue actually accounts for 70% of this book of 735 pages, its analytical part complete with the bibliography, numbers close to 200 pages, and effectively would make a separate volume. There is this too note also, that given the sheer weight of the whole (over 5 kg), for purely technical reasons, this would have made it easier to handle and read this section. However, what is more relevant here is not the volume of the book itself but its factual content.

The choice of the numismatic materials from the oppidum of Stradonice, definitely one of the most crucial categories of sources represented in the archaeological record, as a subject matter of a postdoctoral dissertation in the field of archaeology of Europe is valid in itself. In the opening section Militký discusses the results of rather modest archaeological fieldwork conducted on the site of this fortified settlement of over 90 hectares. The surface

survey was carried out with the Author's participation. Where possible an attempt is made to reconstruct and interpret the context of the coin finds, three of which derive from hoards discovered back in the nineteenth century, two of these deposits previously were unknown. More significantly, a detailed analysis is made of full body of archaeological evidence on the remarkably intensive coin production – bars of precious metal, coin blanks, moulds for casting them, semi-products and coin dies.

The Author's impressive experience and acumen in source studies is demonstrated by a chapter dedicated to the typological and chronological analysis of his pool of finds. This section reflects extraordinary penetration in negotiating the complexity of the links in his copious material, which on many occasions differs only in secondary details, and at the same time, his breathtaking erudition, precision, lucidity and logic of disquisition in ordering his material. Of major interest are comparative analyses which help to refine the relative chronology within the frames of development of the archaeological La Tène culture of the Oppidum Period (LT C2/D1-D2), and to confine the absolute dating to the period 130/120-40/20 BC. A conclusion of key importance for Europewide research is the reconstruction of the coinage system in Bohemia during the Oppidum Period (Plates 1-33), which after the publication of the study under review ought to be named after its author. I fully agree with Jiří Militký's argument that the number of finds associated with coin production confirms a high level of monetization of the local Celtic community, where coin definitely played a major role in the economy of a means of exchange. At the same time we must not overlook its other parallel function, for instance, as means of payment, including worship or taxes, or of a value guarantee.

A section of major interest is the one with the discussion of a pool of more than 400 finds of imported coins, some of them Celtic, but minted outside Bohemia and representing a greater part of the Celtic world, and Mediterranean – Greek and Roman Republican. The

Author used this opportunity to trace outside contacts of the community inhabiting the oppidum of Stradonice, ones that cannot be reconstructed using other archaeological sources. What attracts attention are lively contacts with the Vindelici of Manching, various Celtic tribes living in Gaul, including the more remote areas of the north-west, and what is extremely interesting, with the kingdom of Numidia. The circumstances of these relations are inspected by the Author at more depth.

Assessing the contribution of Jiří Militký's study to the domestic and international research let me reiterate that the volume under review is a long-awaited and at the same time comprehensive analysis of the Boii coinage from the oppidum of Stradonice examined skilfully within its pan-European context; not only the coins themselves, but also the material evidence of the local coinage activity, except for the oppidum of Manching probably the most productive on the European continent. For many years to come the scholarly publication under review here will be a key reference for researchers with interest in numismatics and Celtic archaeology of the Oppidum Period.

Having examined the scholarly work under review from the perspective of methodological and formal criteria I find that the methods used are fully appropriate for the material analysed. The author is at present the leading specialist in the Boii numismatics, and as I mentioned earlier, the introduction of a new classification system for Stradonice coinage of the late period LTC2-LTD, both gold coin (except for stater), and silver, its division into types, groups, and in the case of obols, into subgroups, is borne out fully by the impressive pool of finds presented in his study. The only imperfection found by this reviewer is that he found no convincing explanation for the introduction to the system of Boii gold coinage of the unique denomination with a weight of 1/24 stater.

The structure of the work is precise and logical. The subject matter of the study is introduced lucidly, is followed by an overview of pre-existing research, analysis, synthesis

and an appendix presenting the unpublished archival record on finds from 1877, closing with the Catalogue and the bibliography.

The Catalogue, illustrated wherever possible, is the result of a demanding, painstaking many years' work needed to assemble the source material from abundant published literature, auction catalogues and archival records, many public, local and private collections in and outside the Czech Republic, and eliciting information from the amateur metal detector community. Without using this last pool of sources which derive from searches made over the last twenty years the material brought together in Jiří Militký's work would have been much less abundant modest. Admittedly, the disadvantage of finds deriving from amateur metal detector activity is that as a rule they lack information about their archaeological context. However, let us me make this clear, this is something true of almost all the materials published in auction catalogues and most of the finds now found in collections, particularly earlier ones, to which the coins were added back in the nineteenth century.

A total of close to 2500 single coin finds is recorded in the Catalogue. As I noted earlier, this is the richest list of coins recovered on the oppida of Central Europe, both local and imported. The Catalogue follows in its structure international standards adopted in numismatics. In this the Author certainly must have drawn on experience gained during his work on *Syllogae Nummorum Graecorum*. A major asset of the Catalogue is that many entries include information about the metal content. However, it is important to note that while the non-destructive analytical XRF method is reliable for gold coinage it may not necessarily be so for silver coins because of the expertise of ancient goldsmiths who knew how to take off silver from core into the cover. Furthermore, this method is in fact useless for gold- and silver-plated, and copper alloy coins. Nevertheless we are aware that all other methods require sophisticated equipment and major financial outlay that were not available to

the Author. A major asset of the Catalogue is that the vast majority of the coins is illustrated, in actual size and in magnification.

For obvious reasons it is hard for me to evaluate the language of the study. While on this subject, I can only say that the findings and observations contained in this work vital enough that from the perspective of reader who are not familiar with the Czech language, potentially over 95% of the population with interest in the presented subject, it would have been much more useful for the work to be written fully in English or in German. The digest of less than fifteen pages included at the end is inadequate in this respect, all the more so as the figures and plates in the analytical section have captions only in Czech. On the other hand, I am not sure whether a study written in a language other than Czech would meet the formal requirements set before postdoctoral dissertations. It is good that at least some portions of the book had been published in the past in a conference language as separate research articles. Nevertheless, I still think that the work should be published in one of the conference languages.

The habilitation candidate is well versed in the research literature of relevance to his subject, both Czech and international, cites it correctly, and the list of his sourced included at the end is almost flawless. In short, the entire study is a fine piece of scholarship.

In conclusion to the foregoing remarks, I find that the book under review is a work of excellence, and most certainly one that not only meets, but even exceeds the requirements set before postdoctoral dissertations in archaeology.

In giving my highly positive evaluation I am persuaded also by other scholarly contributions and organizational activities of dr. Jiří Militký. Since defending his first doctoral thesis in 2005 he has completed three research projects, one of them in an international cooperation, organize six exhibitions and seven international conferences, and participated in more than 50. He is stupendously hard working and prolific scholar: since 2005 he has

published over 250 articles, half of them with other author/s, mostly in German or English, in the first place, on numismatic subjects, but also on archaeology. Furthermore he is an author of eight monographs, among them the prestigious *Sylogae Nummorum Graecorum* and of an inventory in three volumes of finds of Roman coins from the Czech Republic. He is a brilliant archaeologist and numismatist, specialising both in antique and medieval finds. Last but not least, dr. Jiří Militký is definitely – and this is something I mentioned earlier as well – the leading specialist worldwide on Boii coinage, the subject of his postdoctoral dissertation evaluated here.

In view of what was said earlier, I acknowledge that his study "Oppidum Hradiště u Stradonic ve světle mincovních. Komentovaný katalog mincovních nálezů a dokladů mincovní výroby" make dr. Jiří Militký eligible to move to the next stage of the habilitation procedure.

Prof. dr hab. Aleksander Bursche