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# ACTA NUMISMATICA HUNGARICA

## I

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# Celtic coins from the Middle Tisza Region (Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok County, East Hungary)

MELINDA TORBÁGYI – PÉTER F. KOVÁCS

On the territory of Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok County (East Hungary) occurrence of Celtic coins are relatively rare. By this time, the only two coins were known, being part of the collection of Viktor Hild (journalist, art collector 1855–1929). Unfortunately these coins had been lost during the World War II, and only the descriptions and the notes have been preserved.<sup>1</sup> These were published and edited by Andrea Vaday.<sup>2</sup> The description of these coins is:

One of the two II Philip tetradrachms was found during trench digging in the vicinity of Jászberény at the part of Alsó-Muszály in the Kis-Német Mihály homestead.

*„Előlap: Zeus jobbra tekintő szakállas feje gyöngykörzetben. Hátlap: homorú. Jobbra haladó ló, melyen egy kis emberi alak ül. Körülötte a „ΦΙΛΙΠΠΙΟΥ” olvashatatlanul gyarló utánzata. A ló alatt Zeus villámainak kötege. Anyaga: ezüst. Sulya: 13,61 g. Átmérője: 25 mm. Vastagsága: 2,3 mm.”<sup>3</sup>*

“Obverse: laureate head of Zeus right in circle of dots. Reverse: concave. A small human figure seated on a horse advancing right. Around, the illegibly blundered ‘ΦΙΛΙΠΠΙΟΥ’. Below the horse is Zeus’ thunderbolt. Material: silver. Weight: 13.61 g. Diameter 25 mm. Thickness: 2.3 mm.”

The find context of the second coin is much more uncertain. According to Hild’s diary it was found at Kerekudvar (aggregated homestead group) which is now the part of the Jászberény town administrative district. We don’t have other information about its find context. The following lines were written on this coin:

*„II. Fülöp (macedoniai), (i. e. 359-336) tetradrachmájának ezüst barbár utánzata. Előlap: Zeus jobbra tekintő szakállas fejéből csak a szemöldökig és a fülig terjedő rész ismerhető fel, a többi alakatlan. Hátlap: kissé homorú, csakis a balra haladó ló vehető ki, de a lovas csupán a fej, a törzsnek csekély nyoma és egy parányi láb által van jelezve. A „ΦΙΛΙΠΠΙΟΥ” köriratot néhány zavaros vonás helyettesíti. Anyaga: ezüst. Sulya: 12,75 gr. Átmérője: 23 mm. Vastagsága: 2-4 mm.”<sup>4</sup>*

“Silver Barbarian imitation of Philip II’s (of Macedon) (359–336 B.C.) tetradrachm. Obverse: only a part from the eyebrow to the ear of the bearded head of Zeus looking right is recognizable, the rest is shapeless. Reverse: slightly concave, only the horse advancing left is recognizable, but the horseman is indicated by the head, small hint of the body, and a single, tiny leg only. The ‘ΦΙΛΙΠΠΙΟΥ’ inscription is substituted with a few incoherent lines. Material: silver. Weight: 12.75 g. Diameter: 23 mm. Thickness: 2–4 mm.”

1 HILD VIKTOR: Régészeti Napló. See also STANCZIK1975.

2 H. VADAY 1975

3 H. VADAY 1975, 4.

4 H. VADAY 1975, 4.

Despite the great volume of excavations conducted by the Damjanich János Museum, the third coin was discovered 116 years later! Surprisingly it wasn't found at the area of Jászság, which is known as the most populated area by the people of La Tène culture, but at the vicinity of Bagimajor which is an administrative part of the Kengyel village.

The so called “Kengyel fishpond” was a watercourse of the ancient Tisza. On its riverbank János Cseh during field surveys and field walks identified numerous La Tène, Sarmatian and Gepid sites, settlements, and cemeteries as well.<sup>5</sup> He completed his surveys with the supervisions of the small scale contractions, rescue excavations and small scale excavations too. During a supervision J. Cseh identified a sporadic site of La Tène culture and during the regular control survey was found a Celtic silver coin on the same site called Kengyel-Baghymajor-Büge oldal. The site was partly covered with mowed chaff and we couldn't collect pottery shreds. The coin was -40 cm under the surface. After the discovery of the Celtic tetradrachm we started to focus more on the closer and wider area of Kengyel. Unfortunately no more Celtic coins have been found so far.

Description of the coin from Kengyel-Baghymajor-Büge oldal

*Obv.*: Laureate head of Zeus right.

*Rev.*: Naked youth holding palm (Olympic victor type) on horseback right; above, +ΛΙΙΙ – ΠΥ. Torch or bucranium below horse, E below front leg. Cuts on reverse.

Silver, weight: 14.07 g, diameter: 23.9 x 23.0 mm, thickness: 4.6 mm.



*Fig. 1. (Photo: Damjanich János Museum Szolnok)*

According to its weight and style the coin is an early imitation of Philip II of Macedon, which are dated to the late 4th century – mid-3rd century B.C. by Preda.<sup>6</sup> These early imitations are known from stray finds on the Balkans and the Lower Danubian area, but relatively rare within the Carpathian Mountains. The mint-marks of the original Greek coin can be well identified on the reverse: the torch or bucranium (a Lambda, not visible because of the cut, was presumably above) combined with E is definitely referring to the last period of the Amphipolis mint, which is dated to 316/315 – 295/294 B.C. by Le Rider.<sup>7</sup> There is an early imitation of Philip II in the Dessewffy collection with the same combination of marks, but the style of the obverse is entirely different (Dessewffy 848). There are also two intersecting cuts on the reverse, its weight is 13.18 g, its diameter is 24 x 26 mm, its provenance is not known. These cuts are mostly typical for the coins used in Transylvania, thus it can be presumed, that the coin found at Kengyel came to the Great Hungarian Plain from there.

On the other hand the two Philip II imitations of the Hild collection cannot be attributed with certainty. The first one likely belongs to the group of the earliest Celtic coins, as the legend was partly legible, furthermore its weight is well above 13 grams. The dating of the second coin can be based only on its weight: presumably it was struck in the late 3rd – early 2nd century B.C.

5 CSEH 1993, 1996a, 1996b, 2001a, 2009 and 2011.

6 PREDA 1973, 441–442.

7 LE RIDER 1977, 125.

During the autumn of 2016 another Celtic coin was found in the vicinity of Tiszaföldvár–Martfű. The coin was found in the Csessz-dűlő however, we do not know its place exactly. In this area six different archaeological sites are known and Gáva culture, Sarmatian, Árpáadian periods have been recorded. The only Late Iron Age settlement is located further the Tiszaföldvár-Téglagyár site excavated by Andrea Vaday.

Celtic drachm of the so called Baumreiter type. The coins is most likely the production of the Syrmian group. Cf. Pink 134–135, first half of the 2nd century B.C.

Silver, weight: 3.19 g, diameter 13.2 x 13.9 mm, thickness 3.9 mm.



Fig. 2. (Photo: Damjanich János Museum Szolnok)

The third coin was given to the museum after the news of the earlier coins. The benefactor found the coin during gardening in his property at Újszász–Védgátsor 3. Before this, in a further part of the town during ditch digging Pál Raczký documented two disturbed Celtic graves. According to his report these contained pottery shreds and a graphited situla.<sup>8</sup>

Early Celtic tetradrachm. Pink 141, first half of the 2nd century B.C.

Silver, weight: 13.71 g, diameter: 24.3 x 21.5 mm, thickness 6.2 mm.

It can be derived from the *Baumreiter mit Bartkranzavers* type, which was minted in the northern part of Transylvania, but the origin of this type is probably Syrmia, where the Transylvanian Celts moved as a result of Dacian pressure. A similar coin is known from Hetes, Tolna County. Later imitations derived from the Baumreiter type are known from the North Hungarian Mountains, Syrmia, just like the southern Transdanubian Kapostal types.



Fig. 3. (Photo: Damjanich János Museum Szolnok)

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