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Processing coin finds data in Northern Italy: the case of Veneto and Verona

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The aim of this paper is to present the numismatic research of the Centro Regionale di Catalogazione dei Beni Numismatici del Veneto, a programme of cataloguing and processing coin finds and numismatic collections data in the region of Veneto, supervised by Prof. Giovanni Gorini of the University of Padua. The project takes place with the cooperation of both municipal and state museums, gathering together all the coins found in the region or belonging to historical collections. The coin finds are published in the multi-volume series of the *Ritrovamenti monetali di età romana in Veneto*, and the entire numismatic heritage of the museums of Veneto is catalogued in a numismatic computer database that will be available on the regional website. This paper offers some examples of the filing scheme for both the volumes and the database, illustrating research tools that can be used to find a specimen or to process data for further studies. Some results of these projects are also shown in the paper. The publication plan for coin finds and numismatic research in the town of Verona is also illustrated, in particular the forthcoming volume covering the coins found in the historical centre.

Since 1986 the Centro Regionale di Catalogazione dei Beni Numismatici del Veneto (Regional Centre for Cataloguing the Numismatic Heritage in Veneto) has promoted a wide programme of cataloguing and processing data concerning coin finds in the region of Veneto, supervised by Prof. Giovanni Gorini (University of Padua). This region is located in north-eastern Italy and coincides with the main part of what was known in Augustan *X Regio, Venetia et Histria*, and includes many important Roman towns such as Verona and Padua; the archaeological and ancient numismatic heritage is therefore of great importance. The project consists of two complementary features: the publication of a series of volumes concerning coin finds, and the realization of a computer database reflecting a complete numismatic heritage of the region.

Following the model of the series *Die Fundmünzen der Römischen Zeit in Deutschland* and *Die Fundmünzen der Römischen Zeit in Österreich*, our publishing project takes the name *Ritrovamenti monetali di età romana nel Veneto* (Coin finds of the Roman age in Veneto) – also known by the abbreviation *RMRVe*. It is the result of precise and patient work by the scholars of the Numismatic School of Padua University, who have collected and catalogued all the coins found in each town of the region and its provincial countryside.



Figure 1: Map of Veneto and its provinces. Roman numerals refer to the *RMRVe* volumes treating each province

The compilation of each volume requires the cooperation of the municipal and state museums in which the coins have been collected, from the end of the eighteenth century through to the present time. The coins do not come exclusively from regular excavations: many specimens found by local voluntary archaeological groups are included, and oral and written information about coins that are no longer extant is also reported, based on the patient survey of museum archives and archaeological publications. The majority of the catalogued coins belong to the Roman period, but pre-Roman Greek and Celtic coins along with barbaric-Byzantine coins minted after the fall of the western Roman Empire up to the end of the tenth century are also included.

Although the photographic illustration of the books is necessarily selective, the listings offer a very clear identification of each coin, with reference to the main numismatic repertories. The documentation is strictly divided by location, site and finding context, and catalogued with essential information, but without typological description to make it more easily consulted. The bibliographical reference, when available, is sufficient to recognize the specimens. Each chapter is divided by location, and the coin finds are catalogued according to the chronology of the issuing authorities.

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Ritrovamenti monetali di età romana nel Veneto

Autorità non determinata

9.	As?	I sec.?	Rm?	<i>RIC?</i>
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9. G 5,72; mm 29. Esempio molto corrosivo. D/ e R/ Illeggibili.

22/2

POVEGLIANO, CHITALÒ, FONDO POZZA

Nel corso di alcune ricerche di superficie effettuate negli anni del secolo scorso dai componenti dell'Associazione archeologi doro di Povegliano, in una zona probabilmente di abitato, si sono trovati vari oggetti di età romana, fra cui alcune monete.

SINGOLI RINVENIMENTI (sur.)

Moneta romana repubblicana

Autorità non determinata

1.	As (metà)	post 211	Rm	Tip. <i>RRC</i> 56/2
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Monete romane imperiali

Augusto

L. Naevius Surdinus

2.	As	15 a.C.	Rm	<i>RIC</i> 386
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Tiberio

3.	As	15-16	Rm	<i>RIC</i> 35
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1. G 8,09; mm 33.

Figure 2: Sample of the filing scheme of the volumes

Great importance has been given to the final indexes, which present a complete list of the specimens found based on the main numismatic categories, in particular metal, denomination and mint. This database can be of fundamental help for statistical studies dealing with the distribution of specific classes of currency in different times and contexts. The three main categories of finding contexts – hoards, votive deposits and necropolis – can be used for the development of statistical

analysis concerning not only numismatic and economical research, but also archaeological and anthropological studies of religious and funerary rituals.

		Indici	337
ELENCO DEI RIPOSTIGLI			
Ripostigli romani imperiali			
13/1(2)	:	Dolcè, Ceraïno	
15/2	:	Garda, Le Camille	
17/5(1)	:	Illasi, Sorcè di Sotto	
35/1	:	Sommacampagna, Custoza	
Ripostigli romani repubblicani e/o imperiali			
17/6(3)	:	Illasi, territorio	
Ripostiglio ?			
17/6(4)	:	Illasi, territorio	
ELENCO DELLE STIPI			
15/1	:	Garda, Bosco della Rocca, Villa Ca' Bianca	
32/6(1)	:	Sant'Ambrogio di Valpolicella, San Giorgio di Valpolicella-Il Cristo	
33/4	:	Sant'Anna d'Alfaedo, Covolo della Roba	
39/1	:	Velo Veronese, Covolo di Camposilvano	
ELENCO DELLE ZONE DI NECROPOLI			
1/2	:	Affi, Villa Poggi	
2/2	:	Arcole, Nogarole	
5/1	:	Brentino-Belluno	
6/1	:	Brenzone, Pozzo	
7/1	:	Bussolengo, Ventretti	
8/1	:	Caprino Veronese, Boi di Pesina	
8/2(1)	:	Caprino Veronese, Ceredello, Cerè Lungo	
8/2(2)	:	Caprino Veronese, Ceredello, Cerè Lungo	
8/3	:	Caprino Veronese, Cereole	
9/1	:	Castelnuovo del Garda, Oliosi, Valpezzon	
10/1	:	Cavaion Veronese, Bossema	
10/2(1)	:	Cavaion Veronese, Castagnar	
10/5	:	Cavaion Veronese, Naian	
10/6	:	Cavaion Veronese, Valquarole	
12/4	:	Costermano, Marciaga	
13/2	:	Dolcè, Volargne, Val Alta	
14/1(1)	:	Fumane, Breonio	
14/2	:	Fumane, Breonio, Officina Ca' del Vin	
14/3	:	Fumane, Breonio, Pra' Grande	

Figure 3: Index of the finding contexts

Another very useful research tool is offered by the final list of all unpublished variations of the main coin types in standard bibliographical references. Variants of the *Roman Imperial Coinage* repertory, for example, have revealed a remarkable number of new records (Callegher-Gorini, 2004, p. 24).

To date, approximately 35,000 coins have been catalogued in a series covering the entire chronology of ancient coinage in Veneto, from its introduction in the region up to the beginning of the mediaeval period. The series contains fourteen volumes of the eighteen scheduled in the original plan. The following have already been published, including many important Roman city finds: Altino (the Roman centre of *Latium*, preceding the foundation of Venice), three volumes edited by M. Asolati and C. Crisafulli; Vicenza (Roman *Vicetia*), two volumes edited by A. Bernardelli; Adria (Roman *Atria*) and Oderzo (Roman *Opiterngium*), two volumes edited by B. Callegher; Treviso (Roman *Tarvisum*), edited by A. Bernardelli, B. Callegher, G. Gorini and A. Saccocci; Belluno (Roman *Bellunum*), edited by J. Marcer, Feltre (Roman *Feltria*), edited by C. Galifi (Gorini-Callegher, 2004; Callegher-Gorini, 2004, pp. 18-27). Forthcoming volumes will treat the coins found in Padova, Concordia, Este (respectively Roman *Patavium*, *Iulia Concordia* and *Ateste*)

and finally Verona, one of the richest and most important Roman towns in the whole of Northern Italy. This urban centre was located along the ancient *Via Postumia*, a road constructed through the *Cisalpinga* region in 148 BC in order to connect the important harbours of *Genoa* (in the west) and *Aquileia* (in the east).

Three books concerning the coins found in the province of Verona have been published in recent years. The northern side (shown as the red part of the map in Figure 4) is covered by a volume edited by M.G. Pavoni (Pavoni, 2005), and the southern side (the yellow part of the same map) by F. Biondani (Biondani, 2007). There is also a special volume documenting a hoard of Roman Republican *denarii* found in the village of Casaleone-Sustinenza (over 2,100 specimens, dating from the third century BC to the mid-first century B.C.), edited by D. Modonesi (Modonesi, 2001). A new volume, concerning the coin finds of the centre of Verona (which coincides exactly with the centre of the ancient Roman town and is marked as the white centre of the map), is currently in preparation by A. Warzone, F. Biondani and the undersigned.

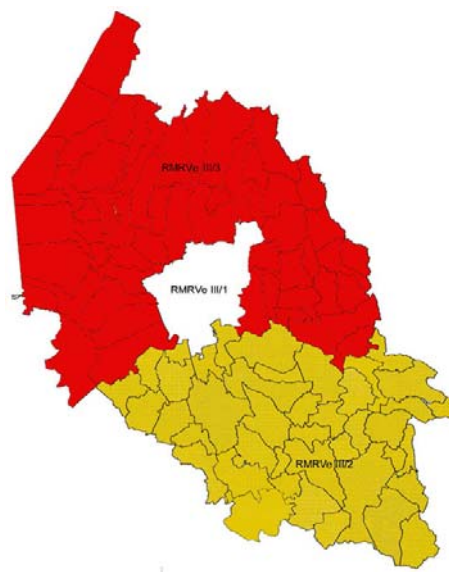


Figure 4: Map of the province of Verona, divided in the different parts treated in each volume

This work in central Verona is gradually revealing a huge number of coins. Over 5,500 specimens are collected partly in the Museo Civico of Castelvechio, where they were deposited until the beginning of the twentieth century together with the Civic Coin Cabinet, and partly in the office of the State Antiquities Service of Verona, where the coins from modern excavations are currently preserved.

Thanks to the excellent state of preservation of most of the Roman structures in the historical centre, it will be possible to process coin finds information strictly related to the original context in which they were deposited or simply lost. The location of the main Roman buildings in the city centre has been revealed, and each one has reported a remarkable amount of numismatic material. Among the most interesting data we can count 450 coins from the theatre, as well as more than 370 lead tokens (item 1 in Figure 5), over 880 coins from the *Forum Capitolium* (item 2), about 460 coins from the main urban necropolis (item 3), and over 1,900 coins from the river Adige (item 4), which crosses the modern town and used to define a physical boundary of the ancient one.



Figure 5: Map of distribution of coin finds in the centre of Verona (in red); the numbers show the most conspicuous lots

The huge river finds were discovered after the great flooding of the Adige in 1882, which required a complete dredging of the riverbed in order to restore its embankments. A specific section of the volume will be reserved for the several lots of coins found at different points of the riverbed; each of these will be classified as a self-standing micro-site in the original location where it was collected, according to nineteenth century archive documentation. New knowledge about the real nature of these different lots could possibly emerge after this study. We could, for example, have the opportunity to determine if they were accidental losses or intentional depositions, or rather hoards, like the hoard of 476 Roman imperial *denarii* already published (Arzone, 2001).

A very interesting comparison may also be made between the case of the Adige in Verona and that of the Tevere in Rome, in order to find possible analogies between similar types of coin finds. There is a great abundance of numismatic documentation, and a very wide range of possible thematic research, such as the role of the main mints operating in a specific area, or the different functions of currency in an urban or in a rural context. These specific kinds of analysis could lead to conjectures about likely coin finds according to a site's typology (Gorini, 2002, pp. 177-179).

In addition to this systematic process of publication, the University of Padua, in cooperation with the Museo Bottacin of Padua, where the Civic Coin Cabinet is located, has instituted the first regional project to record coins electronically in Italy. The Region of Veneto became involved in the project, subsidizing the adoption of a computerized numismatic database and developing a model file called "N" (for "Numismatica"), as an attachment to the common RA (Reperti Archeologici) file used to file all categories of archaeological material.

Then, after a long trial period, a new autonomous “NU” model, specifically conceived for recording coins, was developed as the basis of a new database application and officially presented in 2003 (Callegher-Gorini, 2004, pp. 15-17). A scientific committee, composed of some of the most authoritative Italian numismatists (including Prof. Giovanni Gorini of Padua, Dr. Ermanno Arslan of Milan and Dr. Silvana Balbi De Caro of Rome), was charged by the Italian Ministry of Culture with assembling the various fields and lexicons required for the new numismatic database. Since this new file is perfectly compatible with both the Regional Database of the Cultural Heritage and with the Central Institute of Cataloguing, the Museo Nazionale Romano, Civiche Raccolte Archeologiche e Numismatiche of Milan and the Museo Civico di Bologna also joined the project (Gorini-Callegher, 2004, pp. 71-72). As well as the Museo Bottacin of Padua, many other important state and civic museums have begun cataloguing their numismatic heritage through the adoption of the NU file, including the Museo Archeologico Nazionale of Venezia and the Museo Civico of Castelvecchio in Verona.

With the publication of these materials, the computer database aims to record the entire numismatic heritage of the region not only for research but also for the purposes of preservation and conservation, so it is for this reason that the archive includes coins both from excavations and from historical collections. For security reasons, both compilers and museum curators must enter their personal passwords in order to access the database, and it is necessary to work on-line to create new records as well as to consult existing ones. Curators and researchers from all over the world also have access to this catalogue of ancient, mediaeval and modern coins, from archaeological excavations or historical collections, just by asking for authorization to examine the materials.

Since each specimen of this archive must be clearly identified in order to be properly recorded, the filing scheme is much more detailed than the one used in the *RMRVe* series. Great importance is given to the place where the coin is held (town, province, museum); it is also necessary to specify if it is still present in the institute and to give an estimated value, based on its rarity and state of conservation.

Nevertheless, the most important part of the record is the description of the coin. Besides all the necessary technical information (such as metal, denomination, issuing authority, chronology, weight, diameter, die axis) there is a full and precise description of obverse and reverse type and transcription of legends, symbols and monograms (and also eventually countermarks). In addition, the more recent software allows a high definition colour image of both sides of the specimen to be attached to the record, and allows users to examine a zoomed image of the coin.

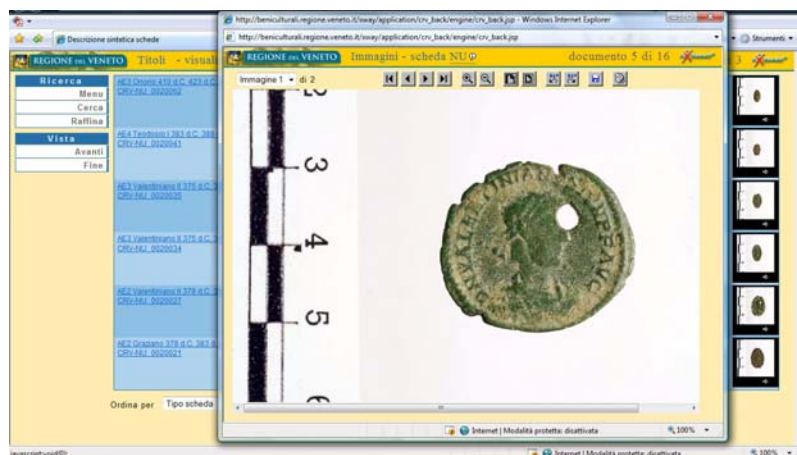


Figure 6: Sample of the digital picture attached to a numismatic file

A very useful feature of this application is the ability to choose between many ways of searching for records. The widest categories of choice might be the location where the coins have been collected, or the chronology and period of the issues.

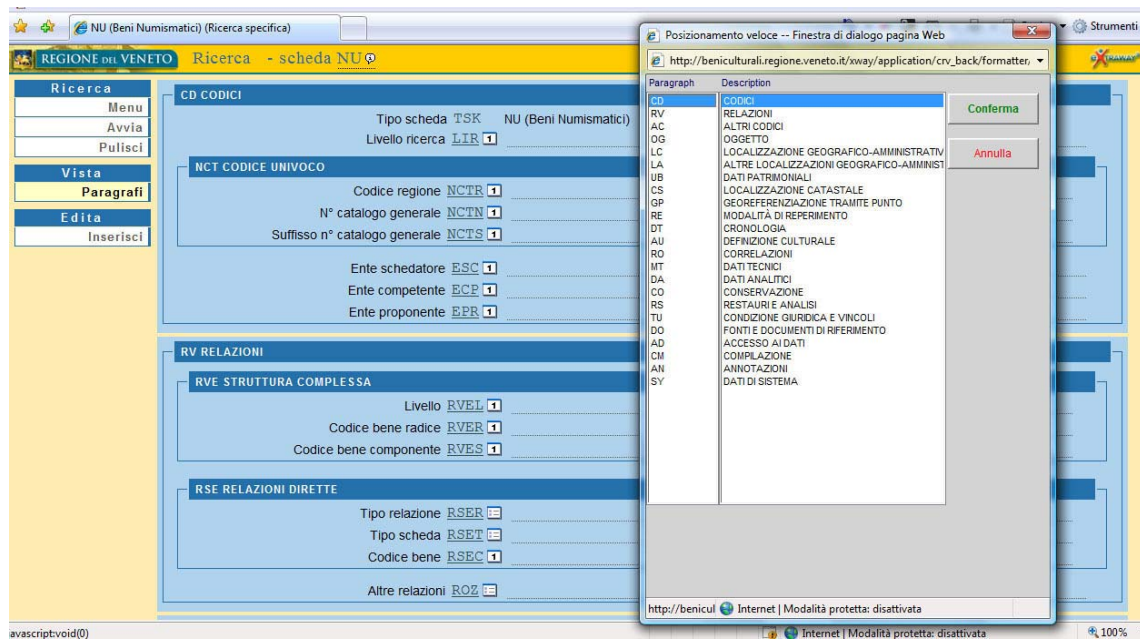


Figure 7: Sample of tools of research in the numismatic database

Searching for specific information, like mint or denomination, we can quickly obtain a list of all records that satisfy our search requests and then select the single file we are interested in. Moreover, most of the search fields offer a lexicon of relevant terms allowing us to choose a specific term from various possibilities.

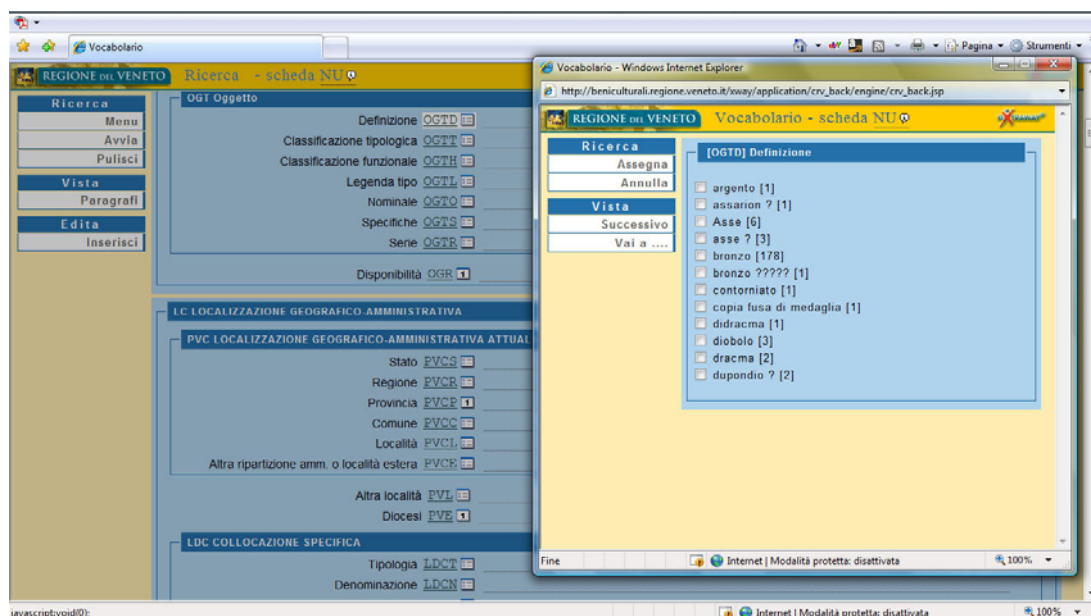


Figure 8: Sample of research lexicon in the numismatic database

Before opening the full record, it is possible to view a preview file with all the essential information necessary to identify the specimen as well as previewing the digital picture of the coin of interest. The complete visualization of the file offers a very detailed description of each coin, including

technical and historical information, full transcription of legends, symbols and mint marks, description of obverse and reverse type, digital images and reference to main bibliographical records. If necessary, the digital file can be converted into a ready-to-print PDF file. At the present time, this regional database contains some 32,000 coin records.

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