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Neutrons and Numismatics. A cooperation to uncover ancient history

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Numismatics is a discipline extremely open to different influxes and approaches, spanning from archaeology to history, from statistics to economics. While for certain ages we have enough documentary sources to understand social and economic processes behind the production of coins, for other historical periods we need different research approaches. In these cases, materials whose coins are made could reveal large amounts of data otherwise inaccessible.

In this presentation some case studies will be shown, in order to offer a brief but complete overview of the issues a numismatist could face with the help of neutron-based techniques. Particular emphasis will be given to a research project concerning Iron-age coins produced by pre-Roman tribes settled in northern Italy. A selection of different types of silver drachmas coming from public and private collections has been analysed with neutron diffraction (ND-TOF) and neutron activation (PGAA) techniques. The results obtained have been related with the military efforts of pre-Roman peoples in the decades around the second Punic war and, afterwards, with the increasing influence of Rome in the Po valley.

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