

A NEW WEIGHT FROM HISTRIA

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Keywords: *bronze weight, Histria, eighth of a mine, weight standard.*

Cuvinte cheie: *pond bronz, Histria, optime de mină, etalon ponderal.*

Abstract: *The author describes a bronze weight of one eighth of a mine (66,5 g) from Histria, present in the internet offer of an auction house. It seems to be produced using the same mold as a weight present in the Ashmolean Museum's collection. Both pieces fall within the 580 g weight standard used in Histria between 330 to 300 B.C.*

Rezumat: *Autorul descrie un pond de bronz de o optime de mină (66,5 g) de la Histria, prezent în oferta de pe internet a unei case de licitații. Acesta pare să fie confecționat cu același tipar ca al unei greutate din colecția Ashmolean Museum. Ambele piese se încadrează în standardul de greutate de 580 g, folosit la Histria în perioada anilor 330 - spre 300 a.Chr.*

Shortly after concluding an ample article on the metrology of the city of Istros and the stages of its weight evolution, we have accidentally found on the internet a new weight issued by this workshop. This convinced us once again that any attempt to exhaustively cover a subject is destined to fail from the start. The bronze weight doesn't bring important changes to the attempt of weight ordering; on the contrary it confirms the proposed evolution. Nevertheless, its presence must be highlighted in a few words. The bronze piece, of triangular form with equal sides, was displayed on sale on the site of an auction house, Malter Galleries Inc., along with two other objects of the same type¹. They are part of Paul Bessey's private collection.

Obv. Head of a bearded male figure, facing.

Rv. ΙΣ / ΟΓΔ[Ο]. Eagle with folded wings standing on a dolphin, to the left.

AE ↑ 66,5 g ; 50,8 × 50,8 × 50,8 mm; in the bottom corner, a round perforation.

The edges are plain, without a border.

This weight is very similar, if not identical, to another piece found in the collection of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford². The Bessey collection weight is much better preserved, with clear details of the representations, but with a much lighter weight than the one already published. Both weights seem to have been made using the same mold. The piece from the Ashmolean Museum although 71,24 g heavy, has much more reduced dimensions (45,5 × 46,5 ×

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¹ Malter 2011, p. 127.

² Meyer 2001/2003, p. 54, nr. 14.

9,4 mm) and a missing corner where the initial perforation took place. The first author claims that this corner was deliberately torn to correct the weight following the perforation. Its features are worn, the flattening of the details being obvious. The legend on the upper side of the reverse is incomplete and barely distinguishable. Because of its wear, in the previous study we have proposed a possible identification of the male figure on the obverse as Helios. However, against this new piece, we can only attribute this representation to another figure, usually shown bearded. This can be more probably the river god Istros, which appears on a series of Histrian bronze issues. But this remains only a hypothesis, as the local divinity is usually depicted with two horns between its strands of hair, which are not visible on the figure on this weight. We can think of Zeus, bearded and without corns, but he is not at all attested in the monetary iconography of the autonomous period of Histria.

In either case, the obvious wear of the details and the absent corner determine us to believe that the initial weight was greater than 71,24 g. The appearance of the second weight, the one in the Bessey collection, lighter, confirms that they fall in the same standard, of 580 g, used in Histria towards the end of the 4th century B.C.³. The weight difference between the two, probably made using the same mold, indicates the lack of the workers' concern about respecting the standard.

Between 330 to 300 B. C., we find that the weight standard of 580 g is used in the Milesian citadel. This is represented by a worn mine (506 g), discovered in the 1980's on the Histrian plateau⁴. Another piece, a triangular half mine, from the Ashmolean Museum⁵, was probably made in the same period. It was in use for a long time and its weight was adjusted in relation to the obvious and continuous decrease of the city's standard. Thus, its corners were cut, reaching the current 212,51 g, which means it was also used after the middle of the 3rd century B.C., when the Attic standard is adopted at Histria and in the whole Greek world. Other pieces which fall within this weight standard are leads of one eighth of a mine: another weight from the Ashmolean Museum, with the bust of Hermes on the obverse⁶; and an extremely worn weight, which will be reused later, in the roman-byzantine period⁷. In an internet auction, a one eighth of a mine piece is being sold; it presents a novel shape for the Histrian workshop, hexagonal⁸.

³ Gramaticu 2015.

⁴ Ocheșeanu 1992-1993, p. 244, nr. 3, pl. II.

⁵ Meyer 2001/2003, p. 55, nr. 18.

⁶ Meyer 2001/2003, p. 51, nr. 3.

⁷ Ocheșeanu 1992-1993, p. 244-245, nr. 4, pl. I-III.

⁸ Gorny, Mosch 2007, nr. 2854.

This weight standard seems to be in use towards the end of the 4th century B.C., when an exceptional situation takes place. In 313 B.C., Histria is involved in the uprising of the West-Pontic Greek cities, led by Callatis against the rule of Lysimachus. Its defeat shortly after the initiation of the conflict left marks in the economic life of the city and it is not excluded to be one of the causes for the decrease of the standard in the following period.

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Planșa I. Ponduri histriene de 1/8 mină, de etalon 580 g: (1) colecția Paul Bessey; (2) Ashmolean Museum.



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Plate I. Histrian weights of 1/8 mine, of 580 g standard:(1) Paul Bessey Collection; (2) Ashmolean Museum.