

## REGARDING A RARE ISTRIAN BRONZE ISSUE FROM THE 2<sup>ND</sup> CENTURY BC

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**Keywords:** *Istros, Dionysopolis, Apollonia Pontica, Prusias I of Bithynia, Eumenes II, Cyzicus, countermark, bunch of grape, Artemis, tripod, lyre.*

**Cuvinte cheie:** *Istros, Dionysopolis, Apollonia Pontica, Prusias I, Eumenes II, Cyzic, contramarcă, ciorchine de strugure, Artemis, tripod, liră.*

**Abstract:** *Among a few archival notes we have discovered a photo of a bronze coin minted in Istros, as we can tell from the image, on the reverse, of an eagle standing on a dolphin. Unfortunately, there are no technical specifications or any information regarding its origin. The coin displays the head of Apollo to the right, wearing the taenia. On the right side, a countermark of 5×10 mm, that seems to be a lyre, was applied. The countermark is blurry, perhaps due to the fact that the punch was moved during striking. The reverse displays the legend ΙΣΤΡΠΙΗ above an eagle with folded wings on a dolphin to the left. By comparing it to Greek coins from the south-western Black Sea region it appears that the mintage of such Istrian issues began in the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. Later issues have also been published in the literature, which differ from our coin, as the obverse displays Apollo alongside an attribute, probably an arrow. The more recent issues reveal the continuity of this monetary type, minted in several variants until the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC. They remained in circulation until the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD when they were countermarked with the image of a bunch of grapes. Such dies were applied by the city of Dionysopolis during the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD.*

**Rezumat:** *Între câteva notițe păstrate de-a lungul timpului, noi am descoperit o fotografie a unei monede de bronz emisă la Istros, așa cum reiese din reprezentarea de pe revers a acvilei stând pe un delfin. Din nefericire, nu dispunem de date tehnice sau de informații referitoare la proveniența ei. Piesa poartă capul lui Apollo purtând taenia spre dreapta. În partea dreaptă, a fost aplicată o contramarcă de circa 5×10 mm, cu un atribut ce pare a fi o liră. Aceasta este neclară datorită și faptului că poansonul a fost mișcat în timpul baterii. Pe revers, este redată legenda ΙΣΤΡΠΙΗ, deasupra unei acvile cu aripile strânse stând pe un delfin spre stânga. Prin comparația cu monede grecești din sud-vestul Mării Negre, reiese că începutul acestei emisiuni histriene a avut loc la începutul sec. II a.Chr. În literatura de specialitate, au fost editate și exemplare mai târzii ce diferă de piesa noastră prin faptul că Apollo este redat cu un atribut pe avers, probabil o săgeată. Emisiunile mai recente relevă continuitatea acestui tip monetar bătut în mai multe variante până în sec. I a.Chr. Ele au continuat să circule*

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*și mai târziu, în sec. I p.Chr., când au fost contramarcate cu un ciorchine de strugure. Acest poanson a fost aplicat de Dionysopolis în prima jumătate a sec. I p.Chr.*

Among a few archival notes we have discovered a photo of a bronze coin minted in Istros, as we can tell from the image, on the reverse, of an eagle standing on a dolphin. Unfortunately, there are no technical specifications or any information regarding its origin. But we think that its publishing is necessary, because it belongs to an extremely scarce, or maybe even unique issue.

Obv. Head of Apollo to the right, wearing the taenia. On the right side, a countermark of  $5 \times 10$  mm, bearing the stamp of an attribute that seems to be a lyre. The stamp is blurry, perhaps due to the fact that the punch was moved during the struck.

Rv. ΙΣΤΡΙΑΙ. An eagle with folded wings on a dolphin to the left. The picture is placed in the lower side of the flan.

1. Technical specifications and origin unknown.

Talmațchi, Bujduveanu 2009, p. 197-198, for the general type. If we compare to the coins discussed in the article, we can assume that our coin measures 20 mm and weights over 4.5 g. Pl. I, 1.

The coin belongs to an extremely scarce Istros issue, only two pieces being published until present<sup>1</sup>. Both coins have on the obverse the head of Apollo to right, with an unidentified attribute behind him, and the emblem of the polis on the reverse: the eagle standing on a dolphin. They measure 20 mm in diameter and present various weights. The first piece (pl. I, 2) weights 7.44 g, while the second has only 4.53 g (pl. I, 3). This significant difference could be explained by the poor preservation of the latter, which seems to be more recent having in view the countermark on the obverse, presenting a bunch of grapes. Despite obvious deterioration, the fact that it results from another pair of dies, manufactured at a later date, is visible. The first coin was found around Sinoe village, Mihai Viteazu commune, Constanța County<sup>2</sup>. G. Talmațchi presumes that it could come from the shores of a bay of the Zmeica lake, where archeological evidence from the 5<sup>th</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> centuries BC were discovered: ruins of houses, hellenistic tiles, local ceramic worked with the wheel or by hand, imported Greek ceramic vases<sup>3</sup>. The second issue was discovered outside the territory of Istros, in Constanța, during the years 2002-2003, probably in the area where the Tomis Mall is today, in a Hellenistic tomb. The fact that the coin was found in a grave indicates that it was in circulation for a long time, until its face value has dropped. Another coin is mentioned in a private collection in Constanța and was found near Istros, but there is no information about it.

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<sup>1</sup> Talmațchi, Bujduveanu 2009, p. 197-198.

<sup>2</sup> Talmațchi, Bujduveanu 2009, p. 197.

<sup>3</sup> Talmațchi, Bujduveanu 2009, p. 198.

When compared to our above mentioned coin, these pieces seem to come from a later issue, because they are different in one detail, namely an unidentified attribute struck on the obverse, behind the god. The authors who studied the attribute describe it as a “linear dotted object”<sup>4</sup>. We think that this attribute might be an arrow, considering that Apollo was the god of archers and one of his attributes was the bow and arrows<sup>5</sup>. The attribute – the arrow – is missing on our coin, therefore we have analyzed more attentively the style of the published items. Despite the fact that our piece, as well as the other two, are very similar, we can notice different features of the god’s face, proving that they were struck with different dies over a longer period of time.

In conclusion, there are several issues, of a limited number each, which are chronologically distributed as follows: the first is our coin, followed by the other two items, the latest being the coin countermarked with a punch from the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC.

On its obverse there can be seen a countermark of 5 mm, representing a bunch of grapes, which was apply by Dionysopolis especially on its own issues, in the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. As an example, we have chosen here two coins thus struck, by this manufacturer<sup>6</sup>. As seen in pl. I (4, 5) they are issues of various denominations, with different images, which seem to date from the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, from the stylistic point of view. They were not struck at Dionysopolis during the same time, even though they are similar, there is a time gap between their issue. This fact is suggested by the various punches of the countermarks with a bunch of grapes and the way of writing the name of the city on the reverse: ΔΙΟ – ΝΥ/CO – ΠΙΟ/ΛΕ – ΙΤΩ/Ν on the first coin (Pl. I, 4), with the letter I barely visible<sup>7</sup> and ΔΙΟΝΥ/COΠΙΟ/ΑΙΤΩ/Ν on the second issue (Pl. I, 5). The first coin of these two is much earlier than the other, as it is proven by the countermark very similar to that on the Istros coin. In order to get the whole picture, we have to mention that in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD there were other cities that struck a countermark with a bunch of grapes<sup>8</sup>. In the Black Sea region, Tyras apply on the coins issued during Domitian's time (81-96 AD) with a different punch from a stylistic point of view, from that used at Dionysopolis<sup>9</sup>.

As a result of this analysis, we were able to ascertain that at Istros there were several issues, at different moments in time, resembling our coin. Despite the lack of technical specifications, in comparison with the two coins abovementioned, we can assume that it measures 20 mm and weights more than 4.50 g. On the obverse, a pretty blurred countermark was struck, apparently a lyre. It is possible that it being blurred is due to a later countermark struck, barely visible now, representing a head profile right. This fact determined us to search for the coin in the numismatic literature and on the

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<sup>4</sup> Talmaçhi, Bujduveanu 2009, p. 198.

<sup>5</sup> EAIVR, I, p. 80 (Apollo).

<sup>6</sup> Classical Numismatic Group Inc., Electronic Auction 293/19 Dec. 2012, lot 176: Dionysopolis, pseudo-autonomous issue, dating from the II-nd century AD: AE 6.26 g; 20 mm (Pl. I, 4); Gorny & Mosch Giessener Munzhandlung, Auction 237/ 7 Mar. 2016, lot 1626: Dionysopolis, pseudo-autonomous issue, dated in the I-II centuries AD: AE 6.43 g; 25 mm (Pl. I, 5).

<sup>7</sup> We wonder if the legend could be even ΔΙΟ – ΝΥ/CO – ΠΙΟ/ΛΕ – ΤΩ/Ν.

<sup>8</sup> Howgego 1985, p. 184-185, no. 411-416. Dionysopolis in Phrygia apply a bunch of grapes on its coins in the time of the emperor Tiberius (14-37 AD).

<sup>9</sup> Howgego 1985, p. 184, no. 411.

online antiquities trade. The search was fruitless in the former direction, while in the later we found several coins belonging to the king Prusias I of Bithynia (238-183 BC), struck with a countermark with a lyre. The countermark is very similar in style with that on the Istrian coin, even though it is blurred. This similarity is very significant, because it shows a contact between the two issues, some historical conjuncture whereby the respective coins came into a close contact. The coins minted by Prusias I, the king of Bithynia, were countermarked with several punches whose succession could show us a mirror of historical events of his time.

Prusias I followed his father Ziaelas at the head of the kingdom of Bithynia between 230-227 BC<sup>10</sup> The exact moment of his ascension to the throne is not known for sure, but this event took place before the great earthquake in Rhodes, certainly dated in 227 BC The king is mentioned in the list of benefactors who helped the island after the tragedy. His name reappears in the local history in 220 BC, when the Rhodians, unhappy with the tolls that the city of Byzantium imposed for the crossing of the Bosphorus, called war against the Megarian colony. Prusias I becomes the ally of the Rhodians, and conquers all the Asian territories belonging to Byzantium. The attempt of the Byzantines to instigate Zipoites, Prusias I's uncle, against him fails short, because Zipoites died before confronting the king. Prusias I, in turn, stirs up the thracian tribes against Byzantium, who, scared, asks for help from the celtic king Cavarus. Following this armed intervention, the Rhodians accept to negotiate with the Byzantines and Prusias I withdraws his troops from the formerly occupied territories belonging to the Byzantines.

In 216 BC, the king of Bithynia gets involved in the war with Celtic mercenaries called by Attalus I in order to fight against Ptolemaios and Antiochos. But the disobedience of the Celts made the king of Pergamon to give up their services, as they had become a danger in the region.

From 209-208 BC, Prusias I intervenes in the battles between Attalus I and Philip V, on the side of the Macedonian king. His participation in the battles is due, on the one hand, to the fact that he was member of a *symmachia* of Greek cities around Philip V, and on the other hand to his wish to expand the boundaries of the kingdom of Bithynia<sup>11</sup>. Therefore, in the context of the second Macedonian war (200-197 BC), the king of Bithynia takes over the city of Chios, which was destroyed in the conflict, and rebuilds it from the foundations. The city, enjoying a strategical economic position on the Silk Road, will be renamed Prusias ad Mare, to honor the king. In the same time, Prusias will conquer Mysia, as referenced in Polybius, XXI, 45, 10 and Titus Livius, XXXVIII, 39, 15<sup>12</sup>. Even though the exact date of the conquest was not mentioned, it is convened that it could be placed in 198 BC, between the war from Achaïos and Attalus I (216-213 BC) and the beginning of the Romans' war against Antiochos III (197/6 BC). The possession of Mysia will continue to be disputed later by Prusias I and Eumenes II,

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<sup>10</sup> Will 2003, p. 45.

<sup>11</sup> Will 2003, p. 95.

<sup>12</sup> Will 2003, p. 180. The sources mention it as Mysia, but it was assumed also that it could have been Phrygia Epictetus.

king of Pergamon, between 186-183 BC<sup>13</sup> In spite of the fact that during the Roman war against Antiochos III, the bithynian king has been asking the Romans to guarantee the integrity of his country in exchange for his non-intervention, they soon allowed Eumenes II to raise claims over parts of Mysia. Despite him being helped by the Galates and Philip V, Prusias I will be in the end defeated by Eumenes II, who was allied with the Greek cities of Cyzicus and Heracleea Pontica. At the moment of his death, occurred in 183 BC, the king had lost the disputed territory and also a part of Bithynia.

Moments of Prusias I's actions are mirrored by the countermarks applied on a bronze issue which bears his name. Here we have listed several coins from the on-line antiquities market, which are relevant for the historical evolution.

Obv. Laureate head of Apollo to the left. Two countermarks were struck on the obverse:

- in the bottom-left field, a circular countermark of 7 mm, with Artemis head to the left, bearing the bow and quiver on the right shoulder,
- in the middle, an oval countermark, 6 × 10 mm, with a lyre.

Rv. ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ / ΠΡΟΥΣΙΟΥ. Winged Athena-Nike, wearing helmet and shield, standing to the left, crowns the king's name with a wreath. In the left field, a partial visible monogram.

2. AE ↑ 9.75 g; 29 mm. Classical Numismatic Group, web shop, no. 762943. SNG Copenhagen, no. 626 (with three countermarks); SNG von Aulock 6881. Pl. II, 6.

Obv. Laureate head of Apollo to the left. In the bottom field was struck a circular countermark of 7 mm, with head of Artemis to the left, bearing the bow and the quiver on the right shoulder.

Rv. ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ / ΠΡΟΥΣΙΟΥ. Winged Athena-Nike, wearing helmet and shield, standing to the left, crowns the king's name with a wreath. In the left field, a monogram.

3. AE 9.09 g; 27 mm. Classical Numismatic Group, Triton V, 15 Jan. 2002, lot no. 423. SNG Copenhagen 627; SNG von Aulock 6880. Pl. II, 7.

Obv. Laureate head of Apollo to the left. Two countermarks were struck on the obverse:

- in the bottom field, a circular countermark of 7 mm, with head of Artemis to the left, bearing the bow and the quiver on the right shoulder,
- in the bottom-right field, an oval countermark, 6 × 10 mm, with a lyre.

Rv. ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ / ΠΡΟΥΣΙΟΥ. Winged Athena-Nike, wearing helmet and shield, standing to the left, crowns the king's name with a wreath. In the left field, a wiped monogram.

4. AE 10.25 g; 27 mm. Freeman & Sear, Mail Bid Sale 13, 25 Aug. 2006, lot no. 708. SNG von Aulock, 6881. Pl. II, 8.

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<sup>13</sup> Will 2003, p. 286.

Obv. Laureate head of Apollo to the left. Three countermarks were struck on the obverse:

- in the bottom-left field, a circular countermark of 7 mm, with head of Artemis to the left, bearing the bow and the quiver on the right shoulder,
- in the upper-right field, a rectangle countermark, 6,5 × 8 mm, with a tripod,
- in the bottom-right field, an oval countermark, 7 × 10 mm, with a lyre.

Rv. ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ / ΠΡΟΥΣΙΟΥ. Winged Athena-Nike, wearing helmet and shield, standing to the left, crowns the king's name with a wreath. In the left field, a wiped monogram.

5. AE 9.83 g; Roland Müller collection, St. Gallen. Münzen & Medaillen GmbH, Auction 30, 28 May 2009, lot no. 323.  
SNG Copenhagen 626. Pl. II, 9.

Obv. Laureate head of Apollo to the left. Three countermarks were struck on the obverse:

- in the bottom field, a circular countermark of 7 mm, with head of Artemis to the left, bearing the bow and the quiver on the right shoulder,
- in the middle, a rectangle countermark, 8 × 10 mm, with a tripod,
- in the bottom-right field, a rectangle countermark, 8 × 8.30 mm, with a lyre.

Rv. ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ / ΠΡΟΥΣΙΟΥ. Winged Athena-Nike, wearing helmet and shield, standing to the left, crowns the king's name with a wreath. In the left field, a wiped monogram.

6. AE ↑ 8.69 g; 26.5 mm. CGB.fr, Monnaies 49, 30 June 2011, lot no. 197.  
SNG Copenhagen 626. Pl. II, 10.

The analysis of the coins minted by Prusias I allows us to notice that the first item analyzed bears a rectangle countermark with a lyre, which is very similar with that on our Istrian coin described above. Despite the fact that the print on our coin is blurred, a similarity between the two punches can be seen. Therefore, we have tried to find out when these countermarks were struck and what are the circumstances in which the Istrian coin arrived in this region.

Considering the existence of several countermarks on Prusias I's issues, one can notice from the succession of the coins illustrated here what was the order of their countermarking. This issue, artistically distinctive, is made up of coins of upper value, with the significant image of a winged Athena-Nike who crowns the king's name with the laurel wreath. The moment of her issue appears to be in the first part of the reign, when Prusias I takes part in the war of 220 BC against Byzantium, as an ally of the Rhodians, occupying temporarily the Byzantine possessions on the Asian side of the straits.

The first countermark is the head of Artemis to left, wearing the bow and the quiver on the right shoulder. An apparent resemblance can be seen between the style of representing Apollo on the obverse of Prusias I coin and that of the countermark with Artemis, betraying the same moneyer hand. The style similarities between the head of Artemis with the head of Apollo on the coins made us consider that the countermark

with Artemis was struck by the same workshop where the coins of Prusias I were minted. The reason for its stamping is not clear; it might be the result of an action to revalidate the old money in circulation on the city's market at a certain moment, perhaps around 200 BC, during the second Macedonian war.

Initially, we thought that the countermark could have been struck by Apollonia Pontica, which used such a punch of bigger size on its own issues, with the head of Artemis bearing the quiver with arrows on the shoulder, to the right<sup>14</sup>. T. Gerasimov had wrongly identified this to be Apollo<sup>15</sup>. Several such coins were found in the necropolis of Apollonia and were dated by the author between 300-150 BC<sup>16</sup>. But the style of the iconography on the Bithynian coins has convinced us that the issuer is the same as the one which later struck the countermarks. There is also another argument in favor of this conclusion. During the reign of Prusias I, there was minted an issue with head of Artemis to the right on the obverse and a quiver and a bow on the reverse (SNG Copenhagen 628-629, SNG von Aulock 250). However, this later issue has a lower nominal than the coins with head of Apollo, weighing circa 4.30-4.70 g and measuring 17-18 mm. Therefore, the struck of the countermark with head of Artemis on the first issues from Prusias I might be just a confirmation of their validity on the market of the city, during the second part of his reign.

The second countermark seems to be the tripod, as it is shown on the coins in plate II (9, 10); it is covered on its edges by the countermark with a lyre. If we analyze the coin issues of the Greek cities in the south-western Black Sea, we will see that a workshop which issues coins with a tripod on the reverse is Cyzicus (pl. III, 13-15)<sup>17</sup>. This city minted bronze coins of superior nominal with the head of Kore Soteira to the right, wearing a wheat wreath on the obverse and a tripod alongside to the name of the city, KYEI/KHNQN on the reverse<sup>18</sup>. They are dated largely starting with the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC toward 1<sup>st</sup> century BC. In our opinion, it is possible that the punch with the tripod have been applied by Cyzicus, during the successive wars in 186-183 BC between Prusias I and Eumenes II, the king of Pergamon<sup>19</sup>. Being allied with Eumenes II, the city of Cyzicus is directly involved in the conflict and struck on the Bithynian coins the countermark with a tripod, allowing them to be used on the own market.

In these circumstances, a coin minted by Apollonia Pontica was stamped with this punch (pl. II, 11)<sup>20</sup>. It is a bronze piece of lower value, belonging to an issue

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<sup>14</sup> Classical Numismatic Group, Inc.; Electronic Auction 223/ 02.12.2009; lot 7: AE ↑ 6.14 g; 20 mm; Numismatik Naumann (formerly Gitbud & Naumann, Auction 10/ 01.12.2013, lot 55: AE Weight: 4.1 g; 21 mm, with reference to SNG IX Black Sea, 187.

<sup>15</sup> Gerasimov 1946, p. 64, no. 6, pl. 26.5.

<sup>16</sup> Gerasimov 1962-1963, p. 337-338, no. 1225-1229.

<sup>17</sup> UBS Gold & Numismatics, Auction 59, 27 Jan. 2004, lot 5648: AE 11.87 g; 28 mm; The Lakeview Collection of Ancient Coins, no. 5648, with reference to SNG von Aulock 1242 var. (pl. III, 13); Nomos AG, Auction 14, July 2017, lot 133: AE 10.82 g; 29 mm, with reference to BMC 167 var. (pl. III, 14); Forum Ancient Coins, Ancient Coins, 20 July 2017, lot GB72168: AE ↑ 12.53 g; 28.2 mm; with reference to SNG Copenhagen 83-84 (pl. III, 15).

<sup>18</sup> BMC Mysia 165-167; SNG Copenhagen 83-84; SNG von Aulock 1242-1243.

<sup>19</sup> Will 2003, p. 261.

<sup>20</sup> Gerasimov 1946, p. 75-76, pl. 29, 4.

measuring 13-15 mm<sup>21</sup>, with the laureate head of Apollo to the right on the obverse and an anchor on the reverse, dated uncertain from the 4<sup>th</sup> century until the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC (pl. II, 12<sup>22</sup>). The presence of the countermark is random, apparently the coin arriving in the area by chance, given its low value and the big distance between the cities. Another example from Apollonia, mentioned by T. Gerasimov, is that of an issue from the 3<sup>rd</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> centuries BC with Apollo standing frontal on the obverse, holding a branch and a bow, and an anchor, the emblem of the city, on the reverse<sup>23</sup>. The coin, of 15-16 mm, was countermarked on the obverse with a folded winged eagle to the right. The countermark was applied by Abydos, being similar from the stylistic point of view with the reverse of an issue of the city of lower nominal, minted between the 4<sup>th</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC<sup>24</sup>. The lower value emissions of Apollonia Pontica, countermarked by Cyzicus or Abydos, have reached the south Black Sea region following the movement of people and merchandises in the context of the trade between the Greek cities, or as a consequence of the political events of the 3<sup>rd</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> centuries BC.

The third countermark on the Prusias I coins is that with a lyre; it seems that it was struck shortly after that with the tripod, toward the end of the king's reign. It was struck later than the others, because sometimes it overlaps the edges of the punch with tripod (pl. II, 9-10). This assumption is also supported by the existence of bronze emissions, which have a lyre on the reverse, dated in the second half of Prusias' reign. The first issue, consisting of 17-19 mm coins, have the laureate head of Apollo to the right on the obverse and a lyre on the reverse (pl. III, 16)<sup>25</sup>. The other one, slightly larger, of 21 mm, has on the obverse the head of Hermes to the right, wearing a petasos and the same attribute on the reverse (pl. III, 17)<sup>26</sup>. In the numismatic literature there is known such a coin which was countermarked on the obverse with a tripod, allowing its minting to be dated before 186 BC (the beginning of the conflict between Prusias I and Eumenes II, allied with Cyzicus)<sup>27</sup>. Apart this attribute, there were later struck two other punches, one earlier with a spread wings eagle to the right, which belongs to Abydos<sup>28</sup>, over which was struck a caduceus stamped by the same workshop that issued the coin. The dating of the Bithynian issues with the lyre on the reverse before 186 BC, as indicates the presence of the tripod countermark, determined us to believe that the countermarking with the lyre took place shortly after the beginning of the conflict

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<sup>21</sup> SNG IX Black Sea, 179.

<sup>22</sup> Numismatik Naumann (formerly Gitbud & Naumann), Auction 11, 29.12.2013, lot 48: AE 3.30 g; 17 mm.

<sup>23</sup> Gerasimov 1946, p. 73, pl. 29, 1. As an example, see SNG IX Black Sea, 190.

<sup>24</sup> SNG Copenhagen 34.

<sup>25</sup> Gerhard Hirsch Nachfolger, Auction 306, 12 Feb. 2015, lot 1785: AE 19 mm, with reference to SNG Copenhagen 630, cf. SNG von Aulock 249.

<sup>26</sup> Numismatik Naumann (formerly Gitbud & Naumann), Auction 42, 3 Apr. 2016, lot 182: AE 6.55 g; 21 mm, with reference to Waddington 1908, p. 224, no. 21 (four monograms).

<sup>27</sup> Waddington 1908, p. 224, no. 21, where a coin of type Hermes/lyre is illustrated; it has three countermarks: a tripod, a spread wings eagle to the right, over which a caduceus was applied.

<sup>28</sup> Such countermarks, with a spread wings eagle, are present also on bronze coins from Cyzicus, of type Kore Soteira/tripod (SNG Copenhagen 83-84; SNG von Aulock 1242-1243), coins available in the offers of on-line auction houses (Roma Numismatics Limited, Auction E-Sale 46/ 05.06.2018, lot 203: AE ₤ 6.53 g; 28 mm; Savoca Numismatik, Live Online Auction 12/ 22.01.2017, lot 190: AE 8.60 g; 26 mm.



between Prusias I and Eumenes II, the king of Pergamon, during the years 186-183 BC. In these circumstances, the remaining old coins from the city market were countermarked, both the local ones type Apollo/Athena-Nike, and the foreign issues arrived by chance in the city, in order to allow them all to circulate, no matter the nominal or value.

The coin from Istros, described at the beginning of the article, appears to have been countermarked with quite a blurry lyre, in the same context. The question is how this humble coin from the western Black Sea region arrived in Bithynia. A first way of answering takes into consideration the movement of people and merchandises in the context of the trade between the cities on the Black Sea shore. On the other hand, there is an historical event during that time, which linked the west-pontic city to the south-west seashore.

At the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, Istros sent military help, under Hegesagoras of Monimos command, at the request of the Apollonia Pontica<sup>29</sup>. Messambria has been attacking the small city of Anchialos, located under the authority of Apollonia, in order to conquer it. The armed support from Istros decided in favor of Apollonia, which succeeded to keep Anchialos.

The Istrian coin countermarked with a lyre is an indirect testimony which confirms the date of this event at the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. In the same time, the presence of the countermark helps to date the Istrian issue, more precisely the start of its minting, at the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. The later items, which bear on the obverse an attribute identified by us as being an arrow, reveals the continuity of this type of coin, struck in several variants up until the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC.

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<sup>29</sup> ISM I, 64; Pippidi, Popescu 1959, p. 235-258.

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Plate I. Coins issued at Istros (1-3) and Dionysopolis (4-5).



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Plate II. Coins issued at Istros (1), Apollonia Pontica (11-12) and by Prusias I of Bithynia (6-10).



Plate III. Coins issued at Cyzicus (13-15) and by Prusias I of Bithynia (16-17); the countermarks applied in Bithynia during the reign of king Prusias I: the head of Artemis to the left, with the bow and the quiver on the right shoulder and a lyre; the countermark applied by Cyzicus: tripod.