

LIBERATING CORINTH. FROM CASSANDER TO DEMETRIOS. ABOUT A RARE ALEXANDER TYPE STATER

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Cuvinte-cheie: *stater, Alexandru, Corint, Demetrios, Cassandros.*

Abstract: *The authors present an Alexander type stater struck in Peloponnesus, at Corinth. Apparently unknown, having of course the classic aspect of the Alexander type staters, the coin presents as symbol, on the reverse (left field) Nike to the right, with wreath and palm. It seems to be the first of this type having a perfect similarity with the tetradrachms Price 675-676 (considered first to be from Sicyon), the same symbol being on the reverse of both types. It was found in Serbia, at Banatska Palanka, southern part of the village, on the left bank of the Danube. It was struck around 303-302 BC by Demetrios Poliorctes, the coin arriving in Banat region probably as a payment for mercenaries involved in the conflict between Cassandros and Demetrios. During the last few years, there are some interesting discoveries in NW Bulgaria, Southern Romania and now in Serbian Banat too containing Alexander type staters or imitations from Cassander period. All of them are significant proves of large scale local mercenaries presence in the conflicts for Macedonian throne.*

Rezumat: *Autorii prezintă un stater de tip Alexandru cel Mare bătut la Corint, în Pelopones. Aparent necunoscut, el are reprezentările clasice ale unui stater de acest tip, având însă ca simbol, în câmpul stânga al reversului, pe Nike spre dreapta, cu cunună și ramură. Pare să fie primul stater de acest tip, cu analogii perfecte cu tetradrahmele de tip Alexandru Price 675-676 (considerate inițial ca fiind bătute la Sicyon). Piesa a fost găsită la Banatska Palanka, pe malul stâng al Dunării. Ea a fost bătută la Corint, în jurul anilor 303-302 a.Chr. de către Demetrios Poliorctes, moneda ajungând în regiunea Banatului foarte probabil ca plată pentru mercenarii locali participanți la războiul dintre Cassandros și Demetrios Poliorctes. În ultimii ani au apărut câteva descoperiri interesante de stateri de tip Alexandru sau imitații ale acestora, din perioada lui Cassandros, în NV Bulgariei, Sudul României, acum în Banat, toate fiind dovezi semnificative ale implicării mercenarilor locali în conflictul pentru tronul Macedoniei.*

One year ago, in 2018, it was discovered in Banatska Palanka (Serbia), in the Southern part of the city, somewhere on the Danube border, an apparently unique coin. It is a Peloponesian Alexander type stater having on the reverse, as a symbol, Nike

* Numismatic Department from the Library of the Romanian Academy.

** Vrsac Museum, Serbia.

standing to the right with wreath and palm. We have only the photo of the coin, but no technical data about it; however, because of its high degree of rarity and because of the remarkable historical importance we decided to publish it anyway.

PELOPONESUS
CORINTH
ALEXANDER THE GREAT TYPE



Fig. 1. Alexander the Great stater from Corinth

Stater

Obv. Head of Athena right, wearing Corinthian helmet decorated with coiled snake.

Rv. ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΥ

Nike standing to the left, holding wreath and stylis; left figure, Nike standing to the right with wreath and palm.

AV 18 mm; fig. 1 (1,5×1).

Price, - ; see Price, p. 156, nrs. 675-676 (tetradrachms).

Despite the fact that there is no Alexander type stater having Nike as a symbol in the standard catalogue of M. J. Price¹, we have several analogies on Corinthian tetradrachms – Price 675 (pl. I, 4)² and Price 676 (pl. I, 5)³ – each time Nike appearing together with different monograms under Zeus' throne (⚡ and NO). Despite the high degree of rarity of the coins with Nike as a symbol (staters or tetradrachms), the assignment of the mint to Corinth seems to be certain. We know until now only two gold Alexanders from this city. The first of them (Price 667; pl. I, 1) came from the collection of the American Numismatic Society⁴, having on the reverse an upward trident-head (left of the figure) and monogram AY under the right wing. Another sample of the same type Price 667 (considered from Priene) and apparently lost was part of the Count Prokesch-Osten collection during the last decades of the 19th century⁵. Recently, a second type appeared in a public auction, having the same upward trident-head placed under the left wing and the same monogram AY left of the figure⁶ (pl. I,

¹ Price 1991.

² Numismatik Naumann, Auction 70, 7 October 2018, lot 70.


³ Leu Numismatik AG, Web Auction 1, 25 June 2017, lot 302.

⁴ ANS 1944.100.38430; 9 h; 8,50 g; 17,5 mm; bequest of E. T. Newell.

⁵ Prokesch-Osten 1869, p. 34, no. 27.

⁶ CNG, Male Bid Sale 57, April 4th 2001, lot 175; 8,54 g; 18 mm.

2). So, we know today three different samples of gold Alexanders from Corinth, none of them bearing the royal title on the reverse, each of them unique, having no connecting obverse or reverse die-links. However, we notice that two of them (Price 667 and the CNG sample) have common elements – the trident and the monogram AY – while the third one (with Nike to the right) seems to belong to a distinct group. In the same time, Price noticed that “the letters AY also find a Corinthian parallel on a group of (silver) staters struck toward the end of Ravel’s period V...and the trident is a symbol taken from the autonomous coinage of the city”⁷. Moreover, the same two coins show “the neckguard of the helmet and the hair curling...exactly as they appear on the silver stater of Corinth”⁸. Considering all these and remembering that none of the gold Alexanders bear the royal title, it becomes obvious that Price 667 and CNG samples inaugurate the Alexander type gold coinage from Corinth⁹ followed by the issue having Nike to the right as a symbol on the reverse (pl. I, 3). The absence of the royal title on gold Alexanders from Corinth corresponds with the situation of the silver Alexanders, where we have two groups of tetradrachms, bearing or not the royal title on the reverse¹⁰.

There is an enough large group of Alexander tetradrachms from Corinth bearing no royal title (Price 674-685), having a lot of symbols on the reverse – wreath (Price 674 but also on 673 with royal title), Nike with wreath and palm (Price 675-676), chimaera (Price 677-678), elpis (Price 479), Herakles (Price 480), aplustre (Price 681-682, 485 but also 486 with royal title), tripod (Price 483) and cock (Price 484) – and a lot of monograms too: Δ (Price 674 but also on 673 with royal title),  (Price 675), NO (Price 676, 677, 679, 681), HP legated (Price 678 but also 687 with royal title), API (Price 680, AP legated), ΔO (Price 682-684), ΔE (Price 685 but also 686 with royal title). Apparently, there are no common symbols and monograms between staters and tetradrachms except those with Nike to the right, with wreath and palm. As far as we know and we can say today about the Alexander gold coins from Corinth, it seems to be clear that these gold issues apparently have no connection with the tetradrachms, with the exception of the the sample with Nike to the right, which is a symbolic one, struck in a special moment, celebrating a victory, both of them (gold and silver) being the first in a series. Accepting the opinions of M J. Price concerning the relation between the first series of gold staters and the last autonomous series of silver staters from Corinth¹¹, we wonder if the first series of gold Alexanders (Price 667 and the CNG variant), a usual one, having traditional Macedonian symbols, couldn’t belong in fact to Cassander’s¹² and only the second one with Nike as a symbol and of course the tetradrachms to Demetrios¹³? In this situation, we suggest that the gold Alexander with Nike (pl. I, 3) celebrates in fact the conquest of Corinth by Demetrios at the beginning of his war against Cassander for the Macedonian kingdom. The events are not so clear. “When the year

⁷ Price 1991, p. 156.

⁸ Price 1991, p. 156.

⁹ Price 1991, p. 156.

¹⁰ Price 1991, p. 156-157, nos. 668-698.

¹¹ Price 1991, p. 156.

¹² The Ptolemaic occupation of Corinth seems to lasted between 308 and 306 BC (Troxell 1971, p. 47; Lorber 2005, p. 46) or even 305-304 BC (Mørkholm 1980, p. 156; Mørkholm 1991, p. 65).

¹³ It seems that the earliest tetradrachms from Corinth were struck under Cassander (306-303 BC), but they could belong as well to Demetrios time (Troxell 1971, p. 48).

came to an end” as Diodor says, when Leostatus was archon in Athens (303-302 BC) and Servius Cornelius and Lucius Genucius were consuls in Rome (303 BC), Demetrius starts his campaign against Cassander¹⁴. We have some stories of how the Ptolemaic garrison from Sicyon surrendered to Demetrios Poliorcetes in 303, the latter leaving after this moment to Corinth and liberating the city from Prepelaus, one of Cassander generals, suggesting that a Ptolemaic occupation of Corinth could have been no longer than 306-304 BC¹⁵. So, it seems now to be clear why there are no connections between the staters Price 667 / Price 667 var. (CNG) and the stater having Nike as a symbol on the reverse. Also, it seems to be acceptable that the last one was struck at the end of 303-beginning of 302, with a very special occasion, celebrating the liberation of Corinth.

The absence on tetradrachms series of any coin having as symbol the trident or monogram AY could be another argument supporting the idea that the staters Price 667 and coming from CNG were not struck by Demetrios. In the meantime, there are several tetradrachms having the same Nike on the reverse (Price 675-676, the silver pair of our stater). Observing that there are two groups of tetradrachms, having or not the royal title on the reverse, we notice that in many cases the same monograms are present on both groups, suggesting a compact series.

This apparently strange discovery from the Serbian Banat represents a part of a more and more representative horizon of gold coin hoards and even isolated finds from the Lower Danube¹⁶. Having also the same nature and dating from the last part of the 4th century BC, all these burials were generated by the conflict between Cassander and Demetrios Poliorcetes for the Macedonian kingship as follows: one Philip III Arridaeus from Lampsacus stater from Albești-Muru (Albești-Paleologu, Prahova county)¹⁷, another one struck in Abydos from Reșca (Dobrosloveni, Olt county)¹⁸; an Alexander stater from Sardes came from Cățunu (Cornești, Dâmbovița county) or Cojasca (the same region)¹⁹ and a second one from the same mint was discovered in Cocorăștii Mislui (Prahova county)²⁰; from Trivalea-Moșteni (Alexandria county) we have an Alexander stater from Pella²¹. Even if the Banat area is not as well represented, we know few discoveries; so, in 1905 an Alexander type stater of Philip III Arridaeus (or ancient barbarian imitation²²) was found at Bencecu de Sus (Pișchia, Timiș county)²³; also, probably from Lugoj comes an Alexander type stater bought by the Timișoara Museum from Elena Sepsy, but belonging to her father, dr. Arthur Trauffellner, city counselor in Lugoj²⁴; from Milcoveni (Berliște, Caraș-Severin

¹⁴ Diodorus, 20, 102, 1-3 and 20, 103, 1.

¹⁵ See note 10.

¹⁶ Vilcu 2015, p. 193-208; Vilcu, Petac 2018, p. 128-129; Petac, Niculescu 2018, p. 140-141.

¹⁷ Mitrea 1978, p. 365, nr. 1; Vilcu 2015, p. 198; Petac, Guțică 2018, p. 168.

¹⁸ Mitrea 1961, p. 585, nr. 9; Vilcu 2015, p. 198; Petac, Guțică 2018, p. 168.

¹⁹ Mitrea 1984, p. 185, nr. 7; Petac, Guțică 2018, p. 168.

²⁰ Petac, Guțică 2018, p. 167-170.

²¹ Petac, Niculescu 2018, p. 133-142.

²² For local imitations of Alexander staters, see Yordanova 2010, p. 25-27, nos. 2-3 and CNG, Electronic Auction 365, December 16th, 2015, nr. 102; Petac, Niculescu 2018, p. 141.

²³ It was considered by Berkeszi as a Phillip II stater but having Athena on the obverse and Nike on the reverse, with the legend $\Phi\Upsilon\Upsilon\Delta\text{POY}$ (local imitation?), so it is obvious that it could be only Phillip III, type Alexander, maybe a local imitation; Berkeszi 1907, p. 10; Mitrea 1945, p. 28, no. 2; Medeleț 1994, p. 251, no. 13.

²⁴ Medeleț 1994, p. 267, no. 86 J.

county) we have another Alexander the Great type stater, discovered around 1870 and taken by Bela Crkva museum²⁵; in the spring of 1906, Timișoara museum bought an Alexander stater found in Remetea Mare (Timiș county)²⁶, lost today; finally, another Alexander stater comes from Vrincev Gaj (Serbia)²⁷. These ones together with the recent discovery from Banatska Palanka belong to the same horizon, having the same explanation. In the same situation are the coin hoards discovered at Codlea (Brașov county; IGCH 409)²⁸, Galați, (Galați county; IGCH 799)²⁹, Gâldău (Călărași county; IGCH 774)³⁰, Lărguța (Cantemir, Rep. Moldova; IGCH 800)³¹, but also Jasna Poljana (IGCH 777)³², Dobroudja 1954 (IGCH 796?)³³, Samovodene (IGCH 395)³⁴, Rousse 1979³⁵, Todorovo³⁶ from Bulgaria, Drencova (Berzasca, Caraș-Severin county)³⁷, where it was discovered in 1882 a treasure containing around 200 Alexander type staters, from 325-320 BC or few years later and Novo Milosevo (Serbia)³⁸, where an Alexander stater from a possible hoard discovered in 1846 came. The most reasonable explanation consists in the large scale participation of local mercenaries from the Lower Danube to the military conflicts of the period³⁹, the ancient authors writing about the presence of 1000 Thracians in the Antigonid cavalry in the battle from Paraetacene, near Persepolis (November 317 BC)⁴⁰ and Gabiene (January 316 BC)⁴¹.

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²⁵ Medeleț 1994, p. 267, no. 93 A.

²⁶ Medeleț 1994, p. 280, no. 121, A..

²⁷ Milleker 1894, p. 37 and 1897, p. 190; Berkeszi 1907, p. 48; Mitrea 1945, p. 47, no. 6.

²⁸ Mitrea 1982, p. 65-73; Vilcu, Petac 2018, p. 129; Petac, Niculescu 2018, p. 140-141.

²⁹ Vilcu, Petac 2018, p. 127-131.

³⁰ Mitrea 1965, p. 73-79; Mitrea 1968, p. 327-330; Vilcu 2015, p. 194-196 and p. 205-206; Petac, Niculescu 2018, p. 141.

³¹ Nudelman 1969, p. 129-133; Le Rider 1977, p. 264-266; Vilcu 2014, p. 13-16; Vilcu, Petac 2018, p. 129.

³² Le Rider 1977, p. 266-267.

³³ Rousseva 2005, p. 253-258; Vilcu, Petac 2018, p. 129.

³⁴ Le Rider 1972, p. 259-261; Rousseva 1990, p. 17-27; Vilcu, Petac 2018, p. 129.

³⁵ Rousseva 1990, p. 26; Vilcu, Petac 2018, p. 129.

³⁶ CH IV, 28; Dima 2014, p. 52-56; Vilcu 2015, p. 198-200; Petac, Niculescu 2018, p. 141.

³⁷ Berkeszi 1907, p. 2, no. 17; Mitrea 1945, p. 47, nr. 4; Medeleț 1994, p. 260, no. 45.

³⁸ Seidl 1849, p. 182; Mitrea 1945, p. 47, no. 1.

³⁹ Vilcu, Petac 2018, p. 129; Petac, Niculescu 2018, p. 141.

⁴⁰ Diodorus, 19, 29, 4; Petac, Guțică 2018, p. 168.

⁴¹ Diodorus, 19, 40; Petac, Guțică 2018, p. 168.

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Fig. 1. Alexander the Great type stater from Corinth (1,5×1).

Fig. 1. Stater de tip Alexandru cel Mare emis la Corinth (1,5×1).

Plate I. Alexander type staters and tetradrachms from Corinth having Nike as symbol.

Planşa I. Stateri şi tetradrahme de tip Alexandru cel Mare de la Corinth având pe Nike ca simbol.

1. ANS 1944.100.38430.

2. CNG, Male Bid Sale 57, April 4th 2001, lot 175.

3. Private collection.

4. Numismatik Naumann, Auction 70, 7 October 2018, lot 70.

5. Leu Numismatik AG, Web Auction 1, 25 June 2017, lot 302.



Pl. I. Alexander type staters and tetradrachms from Corinth having Nike as symbol: 1. ANS 1944.100.38430 (1,5×1); 2. CNG, Male Bid Sale 57, April 4th 2001, lot 175 (1,5×1); 3. Private collection (1,5×1); 4. Numismatik Naumann, Auction 70, 7 October 2018, lot 70; 5. Leu Numismatik AG, Web Auction 1, 25 June 2017, lot 302.