

## Acarnian Astacus: new numismatic evidence

One of the most important ports of ancient Acarnania was Astacus<sup>1</sup> on the west coast of Greece. Its geographical position secured control of communications and commercial transactions of the western and southern part of Acarnania, from the Ambracian to the Corinthian gulf. Heuzey<sup>2</sup> identified the ancient town of Astacus with the modern village called Dragamesto based on a fragment of a stamped roof tile bearing the last four letters of the ethnic (ΑΣΤΑ).

According to Stephanus Byzantius<sup>3</sup>, Astacus was a colony of the Cephallenians. There are no literary sources identifying it as a Corinthian colony<sup>4</sup>. According to Thucydides<sup>5</sup>, during the Peloponnesian War, a tyrant Euarchos, who had been temporarily exiled from the city, reclaimed his throne with the help and strength of the Corinthians. Thucydides<sup>6</sup> tells us that the city soon passed into the sphere of Athenian influence, under the admiral Phormion, as did almost all of the Acarnanian towns. Finally, Astacus was a member of the Acarnanian League, and an inscription<sup>7</sup> informs us that it remained a member at least until the middle of the second century B.C. Another important source is the list of Theorodokoi<sup>8</sup> in the Asklepieion of Epidaurus, which is dated to 354 B.C. and proves the autonomy of the town at that time. In 206 B.C., peace is reached between Philip V and the Aetolians. It is during this time that the main leading powers in the area are recognized and Astacus<sup>9</sup> is included among the Acarnanian cities under the Aetolian control. From then on, there is no other reference to Astacus in the epigraphical or literary sources.

As can be seen, the few sources at our disposal provide us with only a fragmentary picture of Astacus' history. However, through a study of its numismatic production, new information can be drawn, providing valuable insight into its monetary and economic activity<sup>10</sup>. So far, only one period of coin-minting activity is known from Astacus and this can be dated to the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.

In order to present the coinage of the town, we will initially refer to its silver output and then present five unpublished bronze coins, that provide new types of particular interest. The silver coins of the mint are divided into two groups.

I would like to express my warmest thanks to the Associate Professor of the University of Ioannina, Dr. K. Liampi for her valuable suggestions in the writing of this article and to Mr. B. Demetriadi for the useful comments and his permission to use his library. I would also like to thank the Royal Numismatic Society, because it honoured me with the Martin Prize Fund, a very important financial aid for my participation in the 13<sup>th</sup> INC. For information about excavations in the area of Astacus, I thank the General Director of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage of the Ministry of Culture, Dr L. Kolonas. In the area of Ēniadē (ancient agora-cemetery), I thank the Associate Professor of the University of Athens, Dr. E. Serbeti. I would also like to thank Dr. A. Meadows for sending casts and photos of numismatic material kept at the Department of Coins and Medals of the British Museum, as well as Dr. K. Papaevangelou-Genakou, Mr. Y. Stoyas and Mr. Chr. Valassiadis for their help. Finally, for the photography of the plaster casts, I would like to express my sincere thanks to Mr. P. Magoulas.

1. Strab. X, 459. Heuzey, L.: *Le mont Olympe et l'Acarnanie*, Paris, 1860, pp. 417-422. Oberhummer, E.: *Akarnanien, Ambrakia, Amphilochien, Leukas im Alterum*, Munich, 1887, pp. 35, 49. Oberhummer, E. in *RE* II, 2 (Stuttgart, 1896), col. 1774, s.v. *Astakos*. Murray, W.: *The Coastal Sites of Western Akarnania: A Topographical Historical Survey*, Diss. Pennsylvania, 1982, pp. 66-81. Wacker, Chr.: "Astakos", in *AKARNANIEN. Eine Landschaft im Antiken Griechenland*, (eds. P. Berktold, I. Schmid, C. Wacker, Oberhummer-Gesellschaft E. V. München), Würzburg, 1996, pp. 99-103. Katopodis, G. S.: *Αρχαία Ακαρνανία*, Agrinio, 1987, p. 45.
2. Heuzey, loc. cit., p. 418. Rhomaios, 'Ανά τὴν 'Ακαρνανίαν, *AD*, 4, 1918 (1921), p. 117, pl. 1.
3. Ps. Scylax. 34. Steph. Byz. 'Αστακός. Oberhummer, loc. cit., p. 49.
4. Wacker, loc. cit., p. 99, n. 4 (with earlier bibliography).
5. Thuc. II, 30, 1 and 33, 1. Gomme, A. W.: *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides*, vol. II, Oxford, 1956, pp. 91-92, 94. Hornblower, S.: *A Commentary on Thucydides*, vol. I, Oxford, 1991, pp. 289, 291. Dany, O.: *Akarnanien im Hellenismus*. (Geschichte und Volkerrecht in Nordwestgriechenland, Münchener Beiträge zur Papyrusforschung und Antiken Rechtsgeschichte, 89. Heft), Munich, 1999, pp. 11-12, 244.
6. Thuc. II, 102, 1. Gomme, loc. cit., p. 249. Hornblower, loc. cit., p. 377. Oberhummer, loc. cit., p. 195.
7. IG IX<sup>2</sup>. 1. 208 a. Murray, loc. cit., p. 356, n. 1. Dany, loc. cit., p. 202-203, n. 4, p. 271.
8. IG IV<sup>2</sup>. 1. 94/95. Hiller, F.: 'Επιγραφαὶ ἐκ τοῦ ἱεροῦ τῆς Ἐπιδαύρου, *AE*, 1925-1926, pp. 76-83. *SEG* vol. XLV (1995), no. 275: Epidaurus. Asklepieion. List of Theorodokoi.
9. Murray, loc. cit., p. 342. Dany, loc. cit., p. 165.
10. Babelon, E.: *Traité des monnaies grecques et romaines* II 4, Paris, 1932, pp. 31-36. BMC (*Corinth, Colonies of Corinth etc.*), p. 123, no. 1. BMC (*Thessaly to Aetolia*), p. 173. Imhoof-Blumer, F.: *Die Münzen Akarnaniens*, Vienna, 1878, pp. 97-99. Head, B. V.: *Historia Numorum*, London, 1911<sup>2</sup>, pp. 329, 406. Dany, loc. cit., pp. 277-278. For the coins attributed to the mint of Astacus in the framework of the Acarnanian League, see Dany, loc. cit., pp. 304-305. Liampi, K.: *Ζητήματα χρονολόγησης των νομισματικών εκδόσεων του Ακαρνανικού Κοινού*, in Β' Διεθνές Αρχαιολογικό Ιστορικό Συνέδριο Αιτωλό-Ακαρνανίας, Agrinio 2002 (lecture).

*Catalogue**Silver**Group I*

- Obv.: Pegasus with pointed wing, flying r.  
 Rev.: Head of Athena with Corinthian helmet r. In the field ΑΣ. to l., crayfish.  
 22mm - 8.40g  
 1. BMC (*Corinth, Colonies of Corinth etc.*), p. 123, no. 1.

The first group includes staters of Corinthian types<sup>11</sup>. On the obverse behind the head of Athena is depicted as a symbol a cray-fish and the initial letters of the ethnic ΑΣ. On the basis of these two elements, the inscription and the symbol, these rare coins were attributed to Astacus by Imhoof-Blumer<sup>12</sup>. They are dated to the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Kraay connects the issues with Timoleons' Sicilian expedition<sup>13</sup> (c. 344 B.C.).

*Group II*

Perhaps slightly earlier or at the same time as the first group, the mint of the city produces silver issues with its own types, which are identified with certainty to the mint of Astacus since they bear the first few letters of the ethnic. This second group is represented by the following two extremely rare coins.

- Obv.: Head of Asclepius to r., crowned with laurel wreath  
 Rev.: ΑΣΤΑ. Cupping-vessel. In the field to l. scalpel  
 9mm - 0.47g  
 2. Pozzi Collection, no. 3071.  
 Babelon, E.: Une obole d'Astacos en Acarnanie.  
 La ventouse, *REG XXXII*, 1919 (1921), pp. 10-15.  
 Babelon, E.: *Traité des monnaies grecques et romaines II*<sup>4</sup>, Paris 1932, pp. 31-32, no. 28, pl. CCLXXII, no. 1.
- Obv.: Free horse cantering to r.  
 Rev.: ΑΣΤΑ. Cupping-vessel. In field to r. pair of tongs.  
 11mm 9<sup>oo</sup> 0.64g Pl. I, I  
 3. BM 1922-10-20-10. Ex Weber Collection no. 2794.  
 Babelon, E.: *Traité des monnaies grecques et romaines II*<sup>4</sup>, Paris 1932, pp. 31-32, no. 28a, pl. CCLXXII, no. 2.

The first coin of this second group (Cat. No. 2)<sup>14</sup>, formerly in the Pozzi Collection<sup>15</sup>, weighs 0.47g. It bears on the obverse a bearded head of Asklepius to the left. The reverse is inscribed ΑΣΤΑ and bears a cupping-vessel and a scalpel, as a symbol. Babelon was the first to attribute this coin to the mint of Astacus, on the basis of its inscription. Depicted on the obverse of the second silver

coin (Cat. No. 3)<sup>16</sup> is a horse galloping to the left. On the reverse again are the letters ΑΣΤΑ and a cupping-vessel, this time with a forceps as a symbol. The coin weighs 0.64g.

These two silver coins, which form the second group, have the following weights: 0.47g and 0.64g. The different weights and diameters, as well as the different iconographical types, indicate that these coins do not belong to the same denomination. In spite of the difficulty encountered in the recognition of the weight standard from an examination of the weights of only these two coins and by means of a comparison with the general picture presented by the Acarnanian mints, we may conclude that they correspond to the Corinthian<sup>17</sup> weight standard.

The two coins are dated to the first half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C., on the basis of stylistic and typological parallels. The rendering of the head on the obverse shows a noticeable stylistic and typological relation to the coins of Epidaurus<sup>18</sup>, where the head of the cult statue of Asklepius is depicted<sup>19</sup>: according to the literary sources, the Parian sculptor Thrasymedes produced a statue of Asklepius and it is likely that the heads on the coins of Epidaurus were meant to copy this statue. The depiction of the horse on the obverse of the second coin is of no great surprise since we know from literary sources that the Acarnanians, as the Thessalians, were renowned in antiquity for the breeding of horses<sup>20</sup>. Iconographical and especially stylistic parallels can also

11. Calciati, R.: *Pegasi*, vol. II, Mortara, 1990, p. 559. Kraay, C. M.: *Archaic and Classical Greek Coins*, Berkeley-Los Angeles, 1976, pp. 127-128.
12. Imhoof-Blumer, loc. cit., pp. 97-99.
13. Kraay, loc. cit., pp. 127-128. Kraay, C. M.: Timoleon and Corinthian Coinage in Sicily, in *Proceedings of the 8<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Numismatics, New York - Washington, September 1973*, Paris, 1976, pp. 99-105, pl. 8. Dany, loc. cit., pp. 278-279.
14. Babelon, E.: Une obole d'Astacos en Acarnanie. La ventouse, *REG XXXII*, 1919 (1921), pp. 10-15. Malbois, A.: Mélanges et documents, *RN 24*, 1921, p. 204. Babelon, loc. cit., pp. 31-32, nos. 28-28a, pl. CCLXXII, nos. 1-2.
15. Boutin, S.: *Catalogue des Monnaies Grecques Antiques de l'ancienne Collection Pozzi. Monnaies frappées en Europe*, Pay-Bas, 1979, p. 171, no. 3071, pl. CXXXVI, no. 3071.
16. Forrer, L.: *The Weber Collection, vol. II: Greek coins, Macedon - Thrace - Thessaly - North Western - Central and Southern Greece*, London, 1924, pp. 206-207, no. 2794, pl. 108.
17. Babelon, loc. cit., pp. 31-32. Puglisi, M.: Monetazione corinzia: le Frazioni argentea, in *XII. International Numismatischer Kongress, Berlin 1997, Akten I*, Berlin, 2000, pp. 203-211.
18. BMC (*Peloponnesus*), p. 156, no. 7, pl. 29, no. 14. For stylistical parallels, see Holtzmann, B.: in *LIMC II, I* (Zurich-Munich 1984), p. 874, no. 84, s.v. *Asklepius*.
19. Babelon, loc. cit., p. 33-34. Krause, B.: Zum Asklepius-Kultbild des Thrasymedes in Epidauros, *AA*, 1972, pp. 240-257. Holtzmann, B.: in *LIMC II, I* (Zurich-Munich 1984), p. 871, no. 44, s.v. *Asklepius*.
20. Strab. VIII, 8, 1. Xen. Hell. IV, 6, 4, 6. Oberhammer, loc. cit., p. 239.

be found in the Thessalian numismatic tradition. Specifically, corresponding examples from Thessaly are known from the mints of Kierion and Pelinna<sup>21</sup>. Moreover, the motif of the horse is a great favourite in regal Macedonian coinage, where it occurs for the first time on the issues of Perdiccas II<sup>22</sup> (c. 452 (?)-413 B.C.). It was used as a type by subsequent rulers as well. The Astacus horse type shows a close resemblance to the coins of Alexander II<sup>23</sup> (c. 370-369/8 B.C.) which date to the second quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. A comparison can also be drawn from the area of Akarnania and specifically with the mint of Palairos<sup>24</sup>, dated to the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.

On the basis of the above evidence, we may conclude that the coins are dated approximately from the second to the third quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Up to now, scholarly research has not recognised other silver coins attributable to this city, while the small number of coins known were probably associated with two single issues.

#### Bronzes

To date, no bronze coins have been attributed to the mint of Astacus. The purpose of this paper is to present unknown numismatic evidence consisting of three groups of bronze coins, which provide a picture of the 4<sup>th</sup> century production of the city. There are five known bronze coins, having a similar iconographical reverse type, with the central image of the cupping-vessel (*cucurbita*), but different obverses. Four of them are unpublished, whereas the fifth has been mistakenly attributed to Thessalian Atrax.

#### Group I

Obv.: Female facing head.  
Rev.: Cupping-vessel. In the field to l. forceps.

4. OI RI a. Private Collection 17mm 5<sup>00</sup> 4,77g *Pl.I,2*  
b. Patras<sup>25</sup>, N49/38 16mm 3<sup>00</sup> 4,75g *Pl.I,3*  
Georgiou, E.: *Νομίσματα από τάφους του νεκροταφείου των αρχαίων Ονιασδών*, in Β' *Διεθνές Αρχαιολογικό Ιστορικό Συνέδριο Αιτωλό-Ακαρνανίας*, Agrinio 2002 (in print).

The first group consists of two coins (Cat. Nos. 4a-b) bearing the same types: a female facing head on the obverse and a cupping-vessel on the reverse. The first (Cat. No. 4a) weighs 4.77g and the second (Cat. No. 4b) 4.75g. The two coins are badly corroded, so that the inscriptions on the reverse are nearly illegible. On

the first coin, the letters ΑΣ can be discerned in the field to the right, which suggests an attribution of these coins to Astacus. Moreover, as will be discussed below, one of these coins was found in a burial hoard.

The two bronze coins presented here were struck from the same obverse and reverse dies. The flan is thick, a characteristic of coins of an early date, corresponding to the technique being used for the Acarnanian coins. The head has stylistic parallels to the Apollo head on the coins of Amphipolis<sup>26</sup>, as well as to Sicilian models<sup>27</sup>. Moreover, there are stylistic and typological parallels in the depiction of Persephone from the mint of Elea<sup>28</sup> and Thesproti<sup>29</sup> in Epirus and from Anactorium<sup>30</sup> and Leucas<sup>31</sup> in Acarnania. There are also similarities with the coins of Corinth and especially with the issues bearing the facing head of the nymph Peirene<sup>32</sup>, with her hair flying loose. Apart from the region of Western Greece, similar examples come from the area of Thessaly. More specifically, we can cite an example with the head of the Maenad from the mint of Eureka<sup>33</sup>, the head of Hera from the mint of Gomphi<sup>34</sup> and the mint of Perrhaiboi<sup>35</sup>, all dated to the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. It is also worth noting the coinage of Thessalian Pharsalus<sup>36</sup>, depicting the face of Athena, dated to the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C., according to recent research.

The interpretation of the iconography on the obverse is difficult, since the figure cannot be easily discerned. Nonetheless, it is tempting to correlate the representation

21. Papaevangelou, K.: *Θεσσαλικά τριημιβάβλια με ιππέα και οβολοί με άλογο. Η «συνέχεια» της Θεσσαλικής νομισματικής ένωσης κατά το β' μισό του 5ου αιώνα π.Χ.*, *Periarte*, 1, 1998, pp. 41-46.  
22. SNG München (*Makedonische Könige*), no. 16.  
23. SNG München (*Makedonische Könige*), nos. 58 - 59.  
24. Ralli - Photopoulou, E.: Bronze tetradrachmes and drachms from Palairos Acarnania, *NomKbron*, 19, 2000, pp. 39 - 54, pls I-II.  
25. The coin is kept in the 6<sup>th</sup> Ephorate of Praehistoric and Classical Antiquities of the Ministry of Culture in Patras.  
26. Lorber, C. C.: *Amphipolis. The civic coinage in silver and gold*, Los Angeles, 1990, pp. 116 -118, nos. 1-3.  
27. Baldwin, A.: Facing heads on greek coins, *AJN*, XLIII, 1908-9, pp. 113-131, pls. 9-10.  
28. SNG Cop. (*Epirus-Acarnania*), nos. 49-50. Franke, P. R.: *Die Antiken Münzen von Epirus*, Wiesbaden, 1961, pp. 40-46, pl. 4, V7-14.  
29. Franke, loc. cit., pp. 51, pl. 4, V1-4.  
30. SNG Cop. (*Epirus-Acarnania*), nos. 301, 305.  
31. SNG Cop. (*Epirus-Acarnania*), no. 364.  
32. BMC (*Corinth*), p. 19, no. 196, pl. V, no. 15. Babelon, loc. cit., pp. 411-412, no. 514, pl. CCX, figs. 22-23.  
33. Rogers, loc. cit., pp. 74-75, nos. 210-211a, fig. 89.  
34. Rogers, loc. cit., pp. 76-77, nos. 214-217, figs. 92-95.  
35. Rogers, loc. cit., pp. 143-144, nos. 438, fig. 238.  
36. Lavva, S.: *Die Münzprägung von Pharsalos* (Saarbrücker Studien zur Archäologie und alten Geschichte), (eds. A. Furtwängler, P. R. Franke, C. R. Reinsberg), Saarbrücken, 2001, pp. 213-214, nos. 265-268. For the different opinion of the authors' for dating the bronze issues, see the review of Fischer-Bossert, W.: *NC* 163, 2003, pp. 399-405.

of the cupping-vessel on the reverse with the image on the obverse and to suggest that this head may be a specific figure from the family of Asklepius, possibly one of his daughters or Epione, his wife. The type could also be interpreted as the head of a nymph. The fact that there is no source referring to the existence of a nymph connected with Astacus creates, however, an initial difficulty in such an interpretation. Yet it should be noted that similar representations of nymphs from other Acarnanian mints, such as the facing head of the nymph Callirhoë on the coins of the Acarnanian League<sup>37</sup>, which appears as early as the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C., make such an interpretation plausible. Another possible explanation of the figure is that it represents a female goddess. The goddess Artemis is known to have been worshipped at Astacus; epigraphical and archaeological evidence attest a cult of Artemis *Agrotera*<sup>38</sup>. It is unfortunate that despite these possible interpretations, the condition of the coin has obliterated any distinguishing features that would allow for an accurate identification.

The elements analysed above, the provenance, the flan, the iconographical similarity with the silver coinage of the city and local cults but especially the inscription support the attribution of these coins to the town of Astacus. A further corroborating factor for the association of these coins with the mint of Astacus is the discovery of one of them in a hoard. The coin (Cat. No. 4b) was found in a lead box, pyxis, in grave XIV of the cemetery of ancient *Āniadā*<sup>39</sup>. The hoard consisted of 13 coins, issued by local mints, namely Argos Amphiloichicum, *Āniadā* and the Acarnanian League. The coins of Argos date to the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C., while the rest are datable to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.

It should be noted that due to corrosion it is difficult to provide a specific date for the above bronze coins of Astacus. Nonetheless, the flan, their technical parallels as well as the fact that one of the two was found within a hoard, leads to the conclusion that they belong to the second or third quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.

### Group II

Obv.: Female head l. wearing earrings.  
 Rev.: ΑΣΤΑ (retrograde). Cupping-vessel. In the field to r. forceps.  
 9mm - 2.63g Pl. I, 4

5. BM 1866-12-1-4268.

Rogers, E.: *The Copper coinage of Thessaly*, London 1932, p. 62, no. 159, fig. 64.

One more bronze coin, due to its reverse inscription, can be attributed to this Acarnanian city. It weighs 2.63g. On the obverse of the coin (Cat. No. 5) is a female head to the left, wearing earrings. On the reverse is a cupping-vessel and as a symbol a forceps. I had the opportunity of examining a cast of the coin and I noticed that the retrograde inscription consists of the four letters of the ethnic of the people of Astacus ΑΣΤΑ. The correct reading leaves no room for doubt that the issuing authority is Astacus. Edgar Rogers<sup>40</sup>, however, in his monography *The Copper Coinage of Thessaly* suggested that it was issued by the Thessalian Atrax. He mistakenly read the inscription as ATRA and apparently connected it with sources that mention Asklepius' provenance from Atrax.

Of great importance for the dating of the coin, is the hair style (*Melonenfrisur*) of the female figure. It also occurs on the head of Artemis depicted on the coins of the Macedonian king Philip II, dated to 342/1-329/8 B.C.<sup>41</sup>. Furthermore, strong typological and stylistic similarities can be found on the coins of the Thessalian mint of Ekkara<sup>42</sup>, dated from the second to the third quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. The female head can be interpreted as the goddess Artemis, whose worship, as mentioned above, is attested at Astacus. Moreover, the type combination of Artemis and the cupping-vessel, can also be justified, since Artemis is related to Asklepius, as she is the sister of Apollo, the father of the healing god.

37. Imhoof-Blumer, loc. cit., p. 14, nos. 1-2. Liampi, K.: *Ζητήματα χρονολόγησης των νομισματικών εκδόσεων του Ακαρνανικού Κοινού*, in Β' Διεθνές Αρχαιολογικό Ιστορικό Συνέδριο Αιτωλο-Ακαρνανίας, Agrinio 2002 (lecture).

38. Rhomaios, K. *Ἀνὰ τὴν Ἀκαρνανίαν*, AD, 4, 1918 (1921), pp. 120-121. Tzouvara-Souli, Chr.: *Κορινθιακές λατρείες στην Ἠπειρο καὶ στην Αιτωλοακαρνανία*, in Πρακτικά Α' Αρχαιολογικού καὶ Ιστορικού Συνεδρίου Αιτωλοακαρνανίας, Αἰγρινίῳ 21-23 Οκτωβρίου 1988, Agrinio, 1991, p. 155.

39. Serbeti, E.: *Οἰτιάδες. Δημόσια Οικοδομήματα ἀπὸ τὴν ἀρχαία Ἀγορά*, Athens, 2001, passim. Georgiou E.: *Νομίσματα ἀπὸ τάφους τοῦ νεκροταφείου τῶν ἀρχαίων Οἰνιαδῶν*, in Β' Διεθνές Αρχαιολογικό Ιστορικό Συνέδριο Αιτωλο-Ακαρνανίας, Agrinio, 2002 (in print).

40. Rogers, loc. cit., p. 62, no. 159, fig. 64. (Fig. 63: showing a bearded head to the l. on the obverse, is probably another issue of Astacus -TA as the ending of the ethnic is clear-. However, until a physical examination of the coin takes place it's impossible to be sure of the complete reading).

41. Le Rider, G.: *Le monnayage et finances de Philippe II. En état de la question (MELETEMATIA 23)*, Athens, 1996, pp. 22, 29, pl. 4, nos. 16-17.

42. Liampi, K.: Ekkara, eine Stadt der Achaia Phthiotis: Ihre Lage nach den numismatischen Zeugnissen, in *Stephanos Nomismatikos. Edith Schönert-Geiss zum 65. Geburtstag* (ed. U. Peter) (Griechisches Münzwerk), Berlin, 1998, pp. 417-433, pls. 1-6.

## Group III

Obv.: Female head r.  
Rev.: Cupping-vessel. In the field to l. forceps.

6. OI RI a. Private Collection 16 mm 2<sup>oo</sup> 3.58g *Pl. I, 5*  
7. OI RI a. Vienna, ex Sammlung Vierdorf 15mm - 2.79g  
Münsterberg, R.: Neuerwerbungen der Sammlung  
antiker Münzen 1920 bis 1924, *NZ* 58 (Neue Folge  
18), 1925, p. 29, pl. 12, no. 4.

The third and final group presented here consists of two (Cat. Nos. 6-7) bronze coins. On the obverse they bear a female head to the right, with earrings and rolled hair. Depicted on the reverse, is a cupping-vessel and a forceps with the first four letters of the ethnic **ΑΣΤΑ**. The weight of the coins is 3.58g and 2.79g respectively. They were struck from two obverse and two reverse dies. The first one (Cat. No. 6) is so worn that the letters of the inscription are not discernible. The second one (Cat. No.7), however, which is preserved in good condition, enables us to read the ethnic **ΑΣΤΑ**. The relative iconography of the reverse, but even more importantly the inscription, indicates that the coins belong to Astacus.

The depiction of the female features is different from that of the two previous groups. This however does not signify any chronological gap between them, since the characteristics of the female head goes back to the prototypes of the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. There are typological and stylistic similarities with the depictions of the nymph Callirhoë of neighbouring Stratus<sup>43</sup>, of the Thessalian nymph Larissa<sup>44</sup>, coins from the cities of the Chalkidice peninsula<sup>45</sup> as well as the Macedonian royal issues<sup>46</sup>, all of which are dated to the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.

Having securely attributed to Astacus the above bronze coins bearing the cupping-vessel and a forceps, further evidence of the cult of Asklepius in the region must be sought. From the Acarnanian region the only information about the worship of the god is that given by Heuzey<sup>47</sup>, who refers to a relief with a depiction of Asklepius and Hygeia found in Alyzia. Unfortunately, the relief is lost to us today. Consequently, since there is no epigraphical, literary or archaeological evidence<sup>48</sup> for the cult of the god in Astacus, the only strong testimony is provided by the coinage of the city, both silver and bronze.

Cupping-vessels are often depicted in art; both on relief and vase-paintings, but originals have been preserved<sup>49</sup> as well. In addition, they occur as numismatic types on the coins of Epidaurus<sup>50</sup>, Kos and the issues of Ægiale<sup>51</sup>, a town in the island of Amorgos.

With the new numismatic evidence provided by the bronze coins that have been attributed to the city, the picture of the mint production at Astacus may be seen in a new light. As mentioned above, on the basis of stylistic evidence and the dates provided from the burial hoard, the bronzes are dated to around the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. It is unfortunate that we cannot connect and interpret this output with a specific historical event since we lack literary and epigraphical evidence. It is tempting, however, to suggest that this numismatic activity coincides with the time of the conquest of Acarnania by the Macedonian king Philip II and before the expansion of the Aetolian League in this area. The political situation apparently created the appropriate conditions for the mint of Astacus to issue these bronze coins in order to facilitate the daily transactions of its citizens.

43. Babelon, loc. cit., pp. 27-28, no. 27, pl. CCLXXI, no. 25.

44. Rogers, loc. cit., p. 79, no. 226 (Gonnoi); p. 97, nos. 293-294 (Larissa); p. 128, no. 391 (Meliboia). Lavva, S.: Συμβολή στη μελέτη της νομισματοκοπίας της Τρίκκης, in *Πρακτικά Ιου Συμposium Τρικαλιών Σπουδών, Τρίκαλα - Καλαμπάκα - Μετέωρα, 6-8 Νοεμβρίου 1987*, *Trikalina*, 1988, p. 292, no. 14. Georgiou, E.: Το νομισματοκοπείο της Λαμίας, in *Πρακτικά της Γ' Επιστημονικής συνάντησης των Φίλων του Νομισματικού Μουσείου. «Το νόμισμα στο Θεσσαλικό χώρο»*, Βόλος, 24-27 Μαΐου 2001, *Ovolos* 7, Athens 2004, pp. 157-172, pls 1-2.

45. Gaebler, H.: *Die Antiken Münzen Nord - Griechenlands III*, 2, Berlin, 1935, p. 59, nos. 11-12, pl. XIII, 22-23 (Dikaia); p. 109, nos. 8-13, pl. XXI, 16-21 (Skione); pp. 83-84, no. 1, pl. II, 1 (Olophyxos).

46. Hersch, Ch.: Three Unpublished Macedonian Regal Coins of the Decade 360's, *NomKbron*, 15, 1996, pp. 7-12.

47. Heuzey, loc. cit., p. 412, pl. XII.

48. Very little archaeological exploration has been undertaken in the area of Astacus. The few references noted here makes this clear: *AD* 45 (1990), *Chronika* B1, p. 142 (G. Alexopoulou). *AD* 49 (1994), *Chronika* B1, p. 248 (M. Stavropoulou-Gatsi). Touchais, G.: *Chroniques des Fouilles en Grèce: Astakos, BCH*, 112, 1980, II, p. 639. Petropoulos, M.: Η Αιτωλοακαρνανία κατά τη ρωμαϊκή περίοδο, in *Πρακτικά Α' Αρχαιολογικού και Ιστορικού Συνεδρίου Αιτωλο-Ακαρνανίας, Αγρινίου 21-23 Οκτωβρίου 1988*, Agrinio, 1991, p. 106.

49. Berger, E.: *Das Basler Arztrelief. Studien zum griechischen Grab-und Votivrelief um 500 v.Chr. und zur vorhippokratischen Medizin*, Mainz, 1970, pp. 63-85, figs. 60-80, 85-100, 103-106.

50. SNG *Cop. (Argolis-Aegean Islands)*, nos 122, 125-126.

51. Liampi, K.: The coinage of Amorgos: Aigiale, Arkesine, Minoa and the Koinon of the Amorgians, *RN*, 2003 (in print).



I



2



3



4



5



I (enlargement)