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## REVIEW

ALBANA META, *Le monnayage d'argent de Dyrrachion, 375–60/55 av. J.-C.*,  
Recherches archéologiques franco-albanaises 1.  
(SOPHIA KREMYDI)

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ALBANA META, *Le monnayage d'argent de Dyrrachion, 375–60/55 av. J.-C.*, Recherches archéologiques franco-albanaises 1, (Paris/Athens: École française d'Athènes, 2015), 321 pages. 81 plates. ISBN: 9782869582729.

The monograph of Dr Albana Meta on the coinage of Dyrrhachium is the first volume in the series of Franco-Albanian archaeological publications of the French School in Athens and derives from her doctoral thesis submitted at the Sorbonne University. It was followed by a second volume in the same series devoted to coin hoards discovered in the territory of modern Albania that brings together the abundant individual publications of S. Gjonegecaj-Vangeli and O. Picard, while also adding some new material.<sup>1</sup> These two recent, complementary, volumes have considerably contributed to our understanding of the coinages of the two Greek colonies in southern Illyria, Dyrrhachium, and Apollonia.

Dyrrhachium (Epidamnos), was a joint foundation of the Corinthians and the Corcyreans on the eastern coast of the Adriatic. The city held a strategic position that controlled the naval passage to Italy while, at the same time, providing access to the Illyrian hinterland. Its coinage was one of the largest civic coinages of the Hellenistic period and an overview of this coinage, based on Meta's catalogue, can be found in the table below.

As most numismatic corpora this monograph consists of two parts: part 1 is a meticulously prepared catalogue, in which the coinage of Dyrrhachium is classified in three series, divided into groups and issues, whereas part 2 is a numismatic and historical commentary in four chapters. The first three chapters contain discussion of the three numismatic series of the coinage, their chronology, metrology, and historical context, whereas the fourth chapter concerns monetary circulation and economy. The short conclusion presents some data concerning the output of the coinage. The book is completed by two annexes. The first is a list of the hoards containing silver issues of Dyrrhachium (and not only the drachms as stated in the title) with a very short description of their contents and their dating, their *Inventary of Greek Coin Hoards* or *Coin Hoards* number but no reference to publications. The second annex is an alphabetic list of the pairs of names found on the drachms of series III with references to the groups and issues on which they appear. The text is followed by 81 plates with good quality photographs.

The catalogue gathers a large amount of material, including many coins from the coin collection in Tirana, specimens from the numerous recently published hoards and from major international coin collections and sales catalogues. It is based on a careful die study of this vast amount of material that covers a large chronological period, from the fifth to the first century BC. It is very clearly laid out and is easy to consult. The classification of a large number of very similar coins, with no mint marks or other characteristics to distinguish issues, at least for series I and II is not an easy task; this has been undertaken with great care and the succession of

<sup>1</sup> S. Gjonegecaj-Vangeli, *Trésors des monnaies antiques trouvées en Albanie (Ve-I<sup>er</sup> s. av. J.-Chr.)*, Recherches archéologiques franco-albanaises 2, (Paris/Athens: École française d'Athènes, 2019). For a review of this book see A. Meadows at: <https://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/2021/2021.08.03/>.

issues, as discussed in the commentary that follows the catalogue, has been very prudently suggested. For Series I and II the numeration of dies is continuous for each denomination, a practice that helps the reader obtain an overview of the number of dies used. In Series III names and symbols appear on both the obverse and reverse of the coins and issues can, therefore, be distinguished; here the die numbers restart with each issue and are numbered continuously for both the drachms and the hemidrachms, a fact that deprives the reader of the necessary overview and makes quantification more difficult. The dies are numbered but neither the die-pairs nor the individual specimens listed under each pair are given a number, something that complicates the citation of the catalogue. All pairs of dies are illustrated in the plates.

The silver coinage of Dyrrhachium followed the types and weight standards of its two *metropoleis*, namely Corinth and Corcyra. The author convincingly argues that the two early anepigraphic issues of Corinthian-type staters (with a club and, later, an E for the city's Greek name Epidamnos) should be attributed to Dyrrhachium but were probably minted in Corinth, and she prudently excludes this fifth century coinage from the timespan given in the title of her book (375–60/55 BC). Her suggestion that these early issues were the city's contributions to the Corinthians during the battle of Salamis and the early phases of the Peloponnesian war is interesting (p. 137–141). The much larger fourth century issues of Corinthian-type staters that bear the ethnic of the city have been the subject of long discussions. Their discovery in numerous hoards in Southern Italy and Sicily together with other Corinthian and Corinthian-type staters, has been the object of much debate; originally considered a 'trade' currency, they were later connected with Timotheus' expedition against Carthage in Sicily, an interpretation followed by the author. In a recent study on the history of Corcyra and its coinage, Selene Psoma<sup>2</sup> accepts and further develops the arguments put forward some twenty years ago by MacDonald<sup>3</sup> and Fischer-Bossert<sup>4</sup> that connected the movement of the Corinthian-type staters to the west with grain trade. So, the reason for the issuing of these coins and their circulation pattern remains open.

The Corcyrean-type coinage of Dyrrhachium was larger and more long-lived than the Corinthian-type and can be divided into two different periods with different characteristics, distinguished by the author as different series. Series II ('Series I' being the Corinthian-type coinage) includes staters, quarters, eights, and sixteenths. The staters copy the Corcyrean types of a suckling cow on the obverse and a floral motif on the reverse, whereas the fractions follow an original, local, iconography. Series III uses the same 'Corcyrean' iconography but changes the denomination to a new silver coin of c. 3.4 g usually called a drachm, complemented by hemidrachms. These new drachms show a completely different circulation pattern, since they are found in very large numbers in hoards from the Balkans and are certainly related to the Roman presence in the western Balkans after the late third century.

<sup>2</sup> S. Psoma, *Corcyra: A City at the Edge of two Greek Worlds* (Meletemata 83) Athens, 2022, 100–104.

<sup>3</sup> D. MacDonald, "Sicilian and Italian Overstrikes on Pegasi", *Nomismatika Chronika* 21 (2002), 55–64.

<sup>4</sup> W. Fischer-Bossert, *Chronologie der Didrachmprägung von Tarent, 510-280 v. Chr.*, Berlin/New York 1999, 222–224; 253–254.

The inauguration date of the Corcyrean-type staters of Series II is not easy to assess and various dates have been suggested ranging from the fifth century to the late fourth century.<sup>5</sup> Although fifth century dates are certainly to be excluded, their precise dating in the fourth century remains uncertain. Meta rejects the proposal of Ceka that the coins were produced during the period of Cassander's intervention in Illyria in the late fourth century and proposes a date in the 380s (p. 158). Direct evidence for their dating is very scarce since the only known contexts are the Khreshpan and Corfu hoards that include Corcyrean and Corcyrean-type coinages. The only way to date the issues of Dyrrhachium, therefore, is through their comparison with the Corcyrean coins. Based on such evidence Gjonegecaj-Vangeli prudently dated them to the second half of the fourth century, after 340<sup>6</sup>, whereas Selene Psoma<sup>7</sup> returns to the dating suggested by Ceka in 313/312. It may be, then, that the date suggested by Meta is too early.

One of the most interesting features of Series II is the addition of the name and title of the Illyrian King Monounios on the latest staters. Meta has shown that the civic and the 'royal' issues are die-linked, this is clearly the same coinage, and the author correctly integrates them in her catalogue as a continuity of the civic issues. This is a rare case of a living king 'adopting' a civic coinage that retained its ethnic, a fact that must reflect some kind of co-operation between the king and city. In this context the author also discusses some bronze issues of Monounios struck at Dyrrhachium and Apollonia and mentions hitherto unknown quarters of staters in the name of the king discovered in the excavations of Dyrrhachium. Unfortunately, no more information could be provided for these coins. Meta also brings into the discussion and illustrates (pl. 81, fig. 1) an Alexander tetradrachm with the name of King Monounios known from only one specimen in the Paris collection. Her attribution (p. 167) of the Alexander issue to another, homonymous, king who reigned around lake Lychnis, on the borders with Macedonia, should be viewed with caution. The discovery of a helmet from the king's army<sup>8</sup> in this area cannot be considered an indication that the area belonged to the territory of the king, since royal armies very often fought outside their own territory. Even though the Alexanders did not circulate in Illyria, as Meta correctly underlines, a short issue of Alexanders by Monounios for some specific, probably military, payment in the early third century would not be surprising. The Alexander issue of King Areus of Sparta provides a clear parallel.

The contribution of Meta's monograph concerning the fractional denominations is important: she has shown that the quarter staters formed a very important part of the city's coinage and has underlined the coincidence of their weights to a denomination inaugurated by Philip II and continued down to the late fourth century that Le Rider has identified as 'fifths of the tetradrachm'; this is an interesting denomination that clearly needs to be further studied. The quarters circulated regionally, and one might

<sup>5</sup> Summarised by Meta, pp. 156–158.

<sup>6</sup> Gjonegecaj-Vangeli, *op. cit.*, 322–324.

<sup>7</sup> Psoma, *op. cit.*, 107–109.

<sup>8</sup> Weapons with the name of a King identify the royal workshops where these were produced and not the owner of the weapon. We also know of shields with ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΔΗΜΗΤΡΙΟΥ or bullets inscribed ΦΙΛΙΠΠΟΥ from Olynthos.

Table: Conspectus of the Coinage of Dyrrhachium

| SERIES     | TYPES                       | DENOM.                  | WEIGHTS      | DATES <sup>9</sup>      | DIES                       | SPECIMENS            |
|------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>I</b>   | Flying Pegasus / Athena     | Stater                  | 8.40-8.60    | 480                     | 1 O/1 R                    | 1                    |
|            |                             |                         |              | 436-435                 | 2 O/2 R                    | 4                    |
|            |                             |                         |              | Post 350                | 44 O/75 R                  | 333                  |
|            | Maenad / Walking Pegasus    | Drachm                  | 2.80         |                         | 1 O/1 R                    | 1                    |
| <b>II</b>  | Suckling cow / Floral motif | Stater                  | 10.60-10.70  | 375-280                 | 103 O/159 R                | 466                  |
|            | Same types, King Monounios  | Stater                  |              | 280-270                 | 15 O/20 R                  | 77 + 2 <sup>10</sup> |
|            | Herakles / Flying Pegasus   | 1/4 stater              | 2.20-2.30    | 315/4-270               | 158 O/199 R                | 314 + 45             |
|            | Hermes / Half Pegasus       | 1/8 stater              | 1.40         |                         | 2 O/2 R                    | 2                    |
|            | Herakles / Flying Pegasus   | 1/16 stater             | 0.43         |                         | 4 O/4 R                    | 4                    |
| <b>III</b> | Suckling cow / Floral motif | Drachms,<br>1/2 drachms | 3.40<br>1.60 | <i>post</i> 270-230/225 | 96 O / 107 R <sup>11</sup> | 137 + 2              |
|            |                             |                         |              | 230/225-168             | 94 O / 98 R                | 303 + 3              |
|            |                             |                         |              | 168-120                 | 78 O / 113 R               | 217 + 5              |
|            |                             |                         |              | 120-80/70               | 516 O / 645 R              | 829 + 7              |
|            |                             |                         |              | 80/70-60/55             | 274 O / 267 R              | 448 + 5              |

<sup>9</sup> As suggested by Meta.<sup>10</sup> In this table the second number refers to specimens that have been described in the catalogue as ancient forgeries (*monnaies fourrées*).<sup>11</sup> The number of dies and specimens of Series III in this table refer to the drachms and the hemidrachms together, following the method of the catalogue.

wonder whether the 45 coins of low alloy (*'monnaies fourrées'*) that have been listed in the catalogue separately as ancient forgeries, could not have been products of the official mint, as, for example, were the low alloy staters of Amyntas III in Macedonia. The eighths and sixteenths were practically unknown before their inclusion in the Dyrhachium corpus and show a highly monetised economy in the region. Very few specimens for these coins have survived, but the fact that each known specimen derives from different dies suggests that their production may have been important.

The drachms of Series III are an enormous coinage and could have easily been the subject of a separate monograph. The choice of the new denomination and its possible relation to the *victoriatas*, as mentioned by Pliny, are discussed by the author as is the circulation pattern of these coins. Meta has classified the coins in five successive groups on the bases of their typology and their presence in hoards and has made an admirable effort to provide a pattern for their succession.

A better treatment of two topics in the book would have certainly provided a considerable added value to this important study. The first concerns the presentation of the hoard evidence. In the text the author mentions the hoards with their findspot and a reference to their publication is usually given in the footnotes. In the annex the hoards are classified according to their inventory number, not mentioned in the text, and references to publications are absent. This makes the discussion of the hoard evidence very hard to follow unless one is familiar with the contents of the hoards, something quite improbable for most readers. A chronological annex of the hoards with a number referred to in the text is a very simple method that would provide a much better outline of the hoard evidence. The second point concerns the overview of the evidence on quantification. Neither in the catalogue, nor in the commentary do we find a systematic synopsis of the number of specimens and dies for each series, denominations and issues, although such information is, in certain cases, scattered throughout the text. This information is crucial for understanding a coinage, even if the author chooses not to develop quantification analysis.

On the whole, however, one could conclude that in her meticulous study on the coinage of Dyrhachium Meta has managed to untangle a large amount of material and to lay a very solid foundation for one the most important civic mints of the Hellenistic period in the Balkans, while at the same time advancing our understanding of the function of coinage in Illyria. It is certainly a very valuable book.

SOPHIA KREMYDI

