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**INTERACTION AND PROBLEMATICS OF
THE BRONZE COINAGE MINTED FOR
APOLLONIA PONTICA AT THE EDGE OF
THE 4TH TOWARDS THE 3RD CENTURY BC**

HRISTINA IVANOVA-ANAPLIOTI

ВЗАИМОДЕЙСТВИЯ И ПРОБЛЕМИ НА
БРОНЗОВОТО МОНЕТОСЕЧЕНЕ
НА АПОЛОНИЯ ПОНТИКА ОТ КРАЯ
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ХРИСТИНА ИВАНОВА-АНАПЛИОТИ

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Interaction and problematics of the bronze coinage minted for Apollonia Pontica at the edge of the 4th towards the 3rd century BC

Hristina IVANOVA-ANAPLIOTI

Universität Zürich
hristina.ivanova-anaplioti@uzh.ch
ORCID: 0000-0001-8671-540X

Взаимодействия и проблеми на бронзовото монетосечене на Аполония Понтика от края на IV - началото на III в. пр. Хр.

Христина ИВАНОВА-АНАПЛИОТИ

Университет Цюрих
hristina.ivanova-anaplioti@uzh.ch
ORCID: 0000-0001-8671-540X

Abstract: The bronze issue of Apollonia Pontica depicting a seated Apollo on an omphalos has been indisputably connected for decades to the Seleucid presence in Thrace and, based on its iconography, dated to the middle of the 3rd century BC. Most of the remaining bronze issues have been placed in a vague chronological order before or after due to lack of solid evidence. Discrepancies of stylistic and stratigraphic chronology demanded a broad review of the many types often represented by only a few examples. An arrangement through die links and a review of the interactions in a denomination system may help fill the gaps in the chronology. Furthermore, all relevant characteristics of Classical and Hellenistic art shall be considered in this paper to reattribute the issues and bridge the gap between these periods. The discussion emphasizes the weight of each chronological feature that should be contemplated, since they are applied not only in numismatics but also in other small finds disciplines.

Keywords: Apollonia Pontica, Bronze coinage, Apollo on omphalos type, Interaction



Type Apollo on Omphalos and Subtypes

Among the bronze emissions of the Pontic mint of Apollonia, the coin type known as the Apollo on omphalos is the best known. The main complexities of the type lie within the interpretation of its iconography. For the purpose of this paper, a detailed description and distinction of the separate components is needed. Most of the coins are rather worn out and countermarked, but they all share the same iconography (**Figs. 1–3**).¹ On the obverse, the figure of Apollo is depicted seated to the left on an omphalos. The figure is identified as Apollo by the bow in front of

¹ See also a coin with a very well preserved obverse at ANS Id. [1944.100.15561](https://www.ansmuse.org/objects/1944.100.15561).

him, on which he rests his right hand. The left hand supports the figure while laying behind him on the omphalos. The hairstyle is a so-called *Haarkranz*,² with long strands of hair falling on his back. The omphalos has a vertically-horizontally latticed *agrenon*, or wool net on it³ (Bötticher 1859, 10). A garment covers the legs, whereby the left leg is slightly in front of the back right. The obverse is occasionally countermarked with an eight-rayed star. The reverse shows the typical *parasemon* of the city—the upturned anchor. The depicted example shows the *ethnikon* “A” under the left fluke and a crustacean under the right fluke. While this is the usual depiction and is most commonly supplemented by the magistrate’s name on the left, there are a few rare examples of the inverted depiction of those symbols (see below n. 1 and 2). This inverted version will from here on be referred to as *subtype 1*. The subtype with the typical arrangement, but not bearing a magistrate’s name would then be *subtype 2*. Five further certain subtypes are known to bear a magistrate’s name. They display the same so-called *Haarkranz*-hairstyle with the long strands falling on the back. The leaves of a wreath are also visible. On the reverse, it can be observed that, when depicting a magistrate, the *ethnikon* “A” stands on the left side and the crustacean on the right. The names known from this emission next to ΘΑΛΗΣ (*subtype 3*) are ΜΥΣ (*subtype 4*), ΑΚΟΥΣΙΛΕΩΣ (*subtype 5*), ΕΥΚΥΔΗΣ (*subtype 6*), and ΖΩΠΥΡΟΣ (*subtype 7*). While Thales is obviously Milesian, a recent study shows a strong Ionian impact on the magistrate’s names on the coinage in general (Dana, Dana 2021, 49–50). From the known subtypes, the following specimens are published or known:

Subtype 1. Rev. → A right no magistrate

1. 6.09 g, 6 h; obv. countermark star. New York, ANS, Inv. [1944.100.15561](#) (Bequest von E. T. Newell)
2. 19.1 mm; 4.93 g; 9 h; commerce (Agora 27, 24.02.2015, n. 29; Agora 44, 03.11.2015, n. 20)

Subtype 2. Rev. → A left⁴ no magistrate

3. 18–19 mm, 4.55 g, 5 h, Devizes, priv. coll. W. M. Stancomb (CN [6328](#); Hirsch 227, 08.09.05.2003, n. 57)
4. 17.9–18.9 mm, 3.55 g, T 2.8 mm, 12 h. Location: Thracian fort, Cherni vrah; Burgas, RAM, Inv. A44
5. 15.1–17.6 mm, 3.44 g, T 2.8 mm, 9 h. Location: Varna region; Burgas, RAM, Inv. A1215
6. 16.5–19.1 mm, 4.67 g, T 3.4 mm, 6 h. Location: Thracian fort, Cherni vrah; Burgas, RAM, Inv. A1793
7. 16–17 mm, 4.53 g, T 2 mm, 1 h; obv. countermark star. Vienna, KHM, Inv. GR 032485
8. 16.1–17.4 mm, 4.22 g, T 3.4 mm, 5 h; obv. countermark star. Location: Thracian fort, Cherni vrah; Burgas, RAM, Inv. A45
9. No technical data. Location: Hoard Sveta Marina; Sozopol, AM (Baralis et al., 2019, 464, n. 9)
10. No technical data. Location: Hoard Sveta Marina; Sozopol, AM (Baralis et al., 2019, 465, n. 5)
11. No technical data. Location: Hoard Sveta Marina; Sozopol, AM (Baralis et al., 2019, 465,

² This was already a canonical depiction of Apollo’s hairstyle since the 6th century BC, as seen on a bronze statuette from Athens (NM 12349) or a marble head in Copenhagen (Ny Carlsberg 2330) (LIMC Apollon 199, 81m pl. 190. LIMC Apollon 217, n. 431. Bremer 1911, 36–37; Gkikaki 2011, 15–17. 322–323. 586)

³ The *agrenon* is almost always depicted on the omphalos. On the early Hellenistic altar of Magnesia, net garments have been identified as an *agrenon* and thus the figure as Apollo Pythios. (Ridgway 1990, 119. 137 Note 52). For an interpretation as the garment of priests and foretellers as well as further bibliography, see iDAI.Objects Arachne Nr. [199702](#).

⁴ Twenty-five further specimens without a magistrate are part of the hoard from 2012 (Панайотова et al., 2013, 232).

- n. 9)
12. 20.5 mm, 5.12 g, T 3.5 mm; Obv. countermark star. Location: Burgas region; Bulgaria, priv. coll. (Топалов, 2007, 481, Fig. 1.3)
 13. No technical data. Obv. countermark star. Location: Burgas region; Bulgaria, priv. coll. (Топалов, 2007, 481, Fig. 1.5)
 14. No technical data. Obv. countermark star. Location: Sozopol, Necropolis Kalfata Grave 35 (1997, with cantharus, red-figured lekythos, local ware, fragments of lead vessels; grave dated 350–325 BC); Sozopol, AM (Yordanova, 2017, 15. 28, Fig. 6)
 15. 17–19 mm, 4.75 g; priv. coll. Chatkovski (Egger 69, Fürsten Ch. u. A., 07.01.1908, n. 271 Steinwand, 1910, 39, n. 67.2)
 16. 17–19 mm, 4.14 g; T 3 mm; countermark star. Location: Burgas region; priv. coll. Stavri Topalov (Топалов, 2007, 481, Fig. 1.4)
 17. 15.5–17 mm, 3.43 g, T 3 mm, 3 h; location: Sveta Marina (PIN 69, Q MB 102, Raum 2, under the stone composition in the room); Sozopol, AM, Inv. 77 (41235) (Baralis et al., 2019, 462, Fig. 1)
 18. 17.3–19.8 mm, 3.97 g, T 2.6 mm; Obv. countermark star. Location: Hoard Sveta Marina; Sozopol, AM, Inv. 62 (Baralis et al., 2019, 462, Fig. 6)
 19. 16.5–17 mm, 5.05 g; pierced. Sofia, Inv. 24226 (bought in Sozopolis [Steinwand]) (Steinwand, 1910, 39, n. 67.4; Tacchella, 1898, 212, n. 9, Fig. 8)
 20. 16–17.2 mm, 4.51 g, T 3 mm, 6 h; Burgas, RAM, Inv. 2238
 21. 16 mm, 4.47 g; commerce (eBay i55382)
 22. 16–17.5 mm, 3.84 g, 12 h; Ruse, NM, Inv. 466 (SNG Ruse Apollonia Pontica, n. 466)
 23. 17–18 mm; location: Sozopol, Mesarite, Grave 4 (containing also a rooftile with inscription ΣΤΡΑ, grave dated: 2nd quarter 3rd century BC (Богданова et al., 2016, 381–382, Fig. 3)
 24. 17.2–19.3 mm, 5.09 g, T 4.4 mm, 1 h; Obv. countermark star. Location: Hoard Sveta Marina; Sozopol, AM, Inv. prov. 69 (Baralis et al., 2019, 463, n. 9)
 25. No technical data. Location: Hoard Sveta Marina; Sozopol, AM (Baralis et al., 2019, 464, n. 2)
 26. 17 mm; Gotha, Schloss Friedenstern, Münzkabinett, Inv. 1.Ko. 3455
 27. 15 mm, 4.36 g; Obv. countermark star. Commerce (Snible)
 28. 15.4–16.4 mm, 2.53 g, T 2.5 mm; Obv. countermark star. Sozopol, AM, no inv.
 29. 18 mm; Obv. countermark star. Gotha, Schloss Friedenstern, Münzkabinett, Inv. 1.Ko. 3435
 30. 18 mm; Obv. countermark star. Location: Sozopol, Necropolis Kalfata, Grave 719 (in between bones, grave dated: 3rd quarter 3rd century BC) Sofia (Герасимов, 1963, 337, n. 1214)
 31. 5.15 g, 12 h; New York, ANS, Inv. [1944.100.15560](#) (Bequest von E. T. Newell)
 32. 16.5–17 mm, 4.65 g, 6 h; Ruse, NM, Inv. 461 (SNG Ruse Apollonia Pontica n. 461)
 33. No technical data. Sofia, NAIM, Inv. 4478 (Project Symbols, Coins, Monuments [2015])
 34. 15 mm; Location: Sozopol, Necropolis Kalfata; Sofia (Герасимов, 1963, 337, n. 1215, pl. 180, Fig. 1212)

Subtype 3. Rev. → A// ↑ ΘΑΛΗΣ

35. 15.7–16.9 mm, 5.22 g, T 3.3 mm, 6 h. Location: Voditza; Varna, RHM, Inv. I.140 (**Fig. 1**)
36. 19 mm, 5.53 g, 11 h; obv. countermark star. Berlin, SMB, Inv. [18246698](#) (1902/1071 – Previous owner Handjieff; found in Sozopol) (CN 10178; Steinwand, 1910, 38, nn. 66, 1–1)
37. 17 mm, 4.46 g, T 2 mm, 11 h; Obv. countermark star. London, BM, Inv. 1900.0606.23 (1900, Jean Lambros) (SNG BM Black Sea 188; Steinwand, 1910, 38, n. 66.2; Σβορώνος, 1906, 285; Wroth, 1900, 280, n-80.9, pl. XIII, Fig. 9)

Subtype 4 Rev. → A // ↑ ΜΥΣ⁵

38. 17.7 mm, 4.54 g, T 3.4 mm, 6 h; Obv. countermark star. Varna, RHM, Inv. I.4824 (**Fig. 2**)
39. 17 mm, 4.42 g, 6 h; Ruse, NM, Inv. 462 (SNG Ruse Apollonia Pontica n. 462)
40. 18.8–19.6 mm, 5.78 g, T 3.7 mm; 1 h. Location: Mineral baths Burgas (Captage 1994); Burgas, RAM, Inv. A2299
41. 17.5 mm, 4.38 g, 3 h; Ruse, NM, Inv. 465 (SNG Ruse Apollonia Pontica n. 465)
42. 19 mm; commerce (Hirsch 263, 22. –26.09.2009, n. 2133)
43. 17.5–18 mm, 4.53 g, 12 h; Ruse, NM, Inv. 463 (SNG Ruse Apollonia Pontica n. 463)
44. 6,25 g; Paris, BnF, Waddington; Fonds général [269](#); Waddington 1017 (CN 11291)
45. 17.1–17.5 mm; Sofia, Inv. 3597
46. 18 mm, 6.07 g, 1 h; Obv. countermark star. Berlin, SMB, Inv. [18246697](#) (1902–1072 - Previous owner Handjieff) (CN 10177; Steinwand, 1910, 39, n. 67.1)
47. 5.99 g, 9 h; New York, ANS, Inv. [1944.100.15559](#) (Bequest von E. T. Newell)
48. 17 mm, 4.67 g; commerce (Naumann 54, 04.06.2017, n. 51)
49. 4.71 g, 12 h; Obv. countermark star. New York, ANS, Inv. [1944.100.15563](#) (Bequest von E. T. Newell)
50. 18 mm, 4.97 g; obv. countermark star. Commerce; ref.: Numisaclub
51. 18–18.9 mm, 6.01 g, T 2.6 mm, 6 h; Berlin, BBAW (ex G. Hourmouziadis 5673, bestowed 06.2019) (Hourmouziadis, n.d., n. 5673; Pecunem 26, 07.12.2014, n. 54; Roma IV, 30.09.-01.10.2012, n. 1301)
52. 17 mm, 4.08 g, 6 h; Ruse, NM, Inv. 464; ref.: SNG Ruse Apollonia Pontica n. 464
53. 17–18 mm, 5.82 g, 7 h; Devizes, priv. coll. W. M. Stancomb (CN [6325](#); Roma 68, 27.02.2020, n. 7)
54. 18 mm, 4.33 g; commerce (Naumann 55, 02.07.2017, n. 70)
55. No technical data. Location: Hoard Sveta Marina; Sozopol, AM (Baralis et al., 2019, 465 n. 8)
56. 5.16 g; commerce (CNG E 73, 17.09.2003, n. 12; CNG Mail 60, 22.05.2002, n. 416)
57. 17.8 mm, 6.305 g, 3 h; commerce (Forvm Ancient Coins, Web Shop, GB66595)
58. 19 mm, 5.95 g; priv. coll. Stavri Topalov (Топалов, 2007, 416, Fig. 5.2)
59. 17 mm, 3.64 g; commerce (Rauch Summer, 11.09.2007, n. 96; Rauch Mail 11, 12.09.2006, n. 270)
60. 16 mm, 5.37 g; commerce (Solidus 58, 17.05.2020, n. 148)
61. No technical data. Location: Hoard Sveta Marina; Sozopol, AM (Baralis et al., 2019, 465, n. 6)
62. 17–19 mm, 4.88 g; Sofia, Inv. 3597 (Steinwand, 1910, 39, n. 67.5)
63. 18 mm. Location: Sozopol, Necropolis Kalfata, Grave 734 (in mouth together with a similar coin, grave dated: 260–240 BC); Sofia (Герасимов, 1963, 337, n. 1211)

Subtype 5. Rev. → A // ↑ ΑΚΟΥΣΙΑΕΩΣ⁶

64. 5.73 g, 2 h; obv. countermark star. New York, ANS, Inv. [1944.100.15562](#) (Bequest von E. T. Newell)
65. 18–19 mm, 4.78 g, 7 h; obv. countermark star. Devizes, priv. coll. W. M. Stancomb (G&M, 05.-06.03.2013, n. 1242; CN [6327](#))

⁵ Twenty-five further specimens with the magistrate ΜΥΣ in the hoard of 2012 (Панайотова et al., 2013, 232).

⁶ Nine further specimens with the magistrate ΑΚΟΥΣΙΑΕΩΣ in the hoard of 2012 (Панайотова et al., 2013, 232).

66. 18 mm, 4.58 g, 6 h; commerce (CNG E 269, 30.11.2011, n. 11)
67. 19 mm, 3.93 g; commerce (Naumann 70, 07.10.2018, n. 57)
68. 17 mm, 6.3 g. Location: Sozopol, Necropolis Kalfata; Sofia, NAIM, Inv. 9128 (Герасимов, 1963, 336, n. 1209, pl. 180, Fig. 1209)
69. 19 mm, 5.51 g, 9 h; pierced. Berlin, SMB, Inv. [18246650](#) (1900 Imhoof-Blumer – previous owner Imhoof-Blumer) (CN 10175; Imhoof-Blumer, 1883, 236 n. 45; Steinwand, 1910, n. 64.2)
70. No technical data. Location: Hoard Sveta Marina; Sozopol, AM (Baralis et al., 2019, 465 n. 1)
71. 16–17 mm, 4.5 g; commerce (Naumann 11, 29.12.2013, n. 46)
72. 16–18 mm; Sofia, Abramov coll. (Steinwand, 1910, 38, n. 64.1)
73. 18 mm, 7.2 g; B. Shanov (Топалов, 2007, 414, Fig. 1.2)
- Subtype 6. Rev. → A// ↑ ΕΥΚΥΔΗΣ⁷
74. 18 mm, 5.67 g, 11 h; Obv. countermark star. New York, ANS, Inv. [1953.171.442](#)
75. 17 mm, 4.7 g; Obv. countermark star. Commerce (eBay i40122)
76. 17–17.2 mm; Abramov coll. (Steinwand, 1910, n. 65.1)
77. 18–18.5 mm, 5.37 g, 1 h; Obv. countermark star. Devizes, priv. coll. W. M. Stancomb (CN [6326](#); Helios 7, 12. – 13.12.2011, n. 236)
78. 18–18.7 mm, 6.29 g, 11 h; Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, Inv. 1538 (SNG Lockett, n.d., 402, n. 1538, pl. XXVI)
79. 17 mm, 5 g. Location: Sozopol, Necropolis Kalfata (grave dated: 300–150 BC); Sofia, Inv. 9129 (Герасимов, 1963, 336, n. 1210, pl. 180, Fig. 1210)
80. 16–17 mm, 2.82 g, T 2.7 mm. Location: Burgas Region; priv. coll. O. Gavrilov (Топалов, 2007, 415, Fig. 3.2)
81. 17.5–18 mm, 4.66 g, T 3.2 mm. Location: Burgas Region; priv. coll. O. Gavrilov (Топалов, 2007, 417, Fig. 8.2)
82. 19 mm, 4.94 g, 6 h; Berlin, SMB, Inv. [18246696](#) (1910/1095 - previous owner Tacchella) (CN 10176)
83. 18.7–19.9 mm, 5.4 g, T 2.1 mm, 9 h; Obv. countermark star. Berlin, BBAW (ex G. Hourmouziadis 5438, bestowed 6.2019) (Hourmouziadis, n.d., n. 5438; Pecunem 12, 02.02.2014, n. 57)
84. 15–17 mm, 4.18 g, T 2 mm, 6 h; London, BM, Inv. 1847.0619.61 (1847, from Joseph Curt) (SNG BM Black Sea, n. 189; BMC Greek Coins Mysia 10, n. 17)
85. No technical data. Location: Hoard Sveta Marina; Sozopol, AM (Baralis et al., 2019, 465, n. 3)
- Subtype 7. Rev. → A// ↑ ΖΩΠΥΡΟΣ⁸
86. 18 mm, 5.029 g, 12 h; Obv. countermark star. Commerce (Forvm Ancient Coins, Web Shop, 27167: 82103)
87. 18 mm, 6.08 g; commerce; ref.: Naumann 81, 01.09.2019, n. 35 (**Fig. 3**)

There are two other subtypes known, which are however not to be placed in the same production flow as the earlier ones. These are just two coins with a clearly straightened posture of the figure of the obverse and a rather different style of an anchor on the reverse. No crustacean

⁷ Eleven further specimens with the magistrate ΕΥΚΥΔΗΣ in the hoard of 2012 (Панайотова et al. 2013, 232).

⁸ Two further specimens with the magistrate ΖΩΠΥΡΟΣ in the hoard from 2012. (Панайотова et al. 2013, 232).

appears, and the legend reads Δ-I with a variation of the magistrate's name ΦQ-I, read as ΦQNIΓO by Gerasimov (*subtype 8*) and a variation with the magistrate ΙΣΤ-ΙQNO (*subtype 9*).

Subtype 8. Rs.: → Δ - I / ΦQ - I

88. 17 mm, 3.26 g, 6 h; Berlin, SMB, Inv. [18246699](#) (1902/1073 – previous owner Handjjeff) (CN 10179)

Subtype 9. Rs.: → Δ - I / ΙΣΤ-ΙQNO

89. 15.4–18.3 mm, 2.74 g, T 2.8 mm, 12 h; Burgas, RAM, Inv. A1414

90. 16 mm. Location: Sozopol, Necropolis Kalfata, grave with roof tiles 415 (containing also rooftile with inscription ΠΟΣΙ, coin found in the mouth, a similar coin at the pelvis, black glazed pottery, grave dated: 250–225 BC); Sofia (Герасимов, 1963, 337, no. 1213, pl. 180, Fig. 1211)

Circulation and Archaeological Context

When observing the circulation of the emissions based on the gathered data above there is a clear dispersion of the finds (Fig. 4). The distribution can be narrowed to the polis, to the north at a Thracian fort near the village of Cherni vrah, Burgas (n. 4, 6, 8), and in Aquae Calidae.⁹ Then a gap follows from this point to the northern slope of the Balkan Mountains. A possible explanation for this occurrence is that this area was in the influence radius of Mesambria.¹⁰ Amazingly, however, in the hinterland of Odessos and Dionysopolis, two specimens are found without a magistrate (n. 5) and with the magistrate Thales (n. 35). While most of the coins are from random findings, there are some specimens that come from excavations. Long known are the finds from the main necropolis of the polis of Apollonia, known nowadays as Kalfata, and the results of the excavations were published by Ivan Venedikov with a special numismatic contribution by Todor Gerasimov (Герасимов 1963; Венедиков et al. 1963). The dating of those types,¹¹ however, can be based solely on the pottery found on site (classified after the publications in those days), just like the earliest would be from Grave 35 with red-figured and local ware from the end of the 4th century BC (n. 14), followed by Grave 719 dated already to the 3rd century BC (n. 30) and then Grave 734 dated to the middle of the 3rd century BC (n. 63). While these give us some basic information about the usage of these large denominations in domestic rituals, recent excavations and their reports shed light on the coverage beyond the polis itself. The research on the localities of Mesarite and Sveta Marina again brought to light a coin from Grave 4 in Mesarite (n. 23), also dated in the 3rd century BC; one specimen from room 2 (n. 17) in Sveta Marina; and, of course, the very significant hoard find from Sveta Marina published by Martin Gyuzelev (n. 9–11, 18, 24, 25, 55, 61, 85).¹²

The later specimens from *subtype 9* include one from the necropolis Kalfata - Grave 415, dated to the second half of the 3rd century BC (n. 90).

Other Emissions: Classical and Hellenistic

While the circulation characterizes the role of this denomination, it still functions in correlation to other synchronous denominations and later emissions. It is so embedded in a large environment of bronze coinages and, of course, the much more abundant silver ones. Considering the bronze ones, there are two types with the Apollo head to the right or left, which are of a similar size to the emissions discussed above.¹³ Accordingly, a type with a head of Apollo to the left and

⁹ The so-called mineral baths close to that site, see n. 40.

¹⁰ In the hinterland both Apollonia and Mesambria had their own settlements conditioning the trade. (Op-permann 2004, 92–3).

¹¹ There were some coins that were attributed solely to the necropolis, but not to a certain grave; see n. 34 and 68.

¹² In the exhibition volume from 2019 (Baralis et al. 2019, 461–465).

¹³ See ANS, Inv. [1944.100.15556](#) or other specimens with the head of Apollo to the right, such as CN [6004](#)

then to the right exists, which has a long stylistic development and is certainly a *dichalkos*,¹⁴ on which basis the other bronze denominations are clear. The same types appear as an even smaller denomination, which is to be assumed to be the *chalkos*.¹⁵

Continuing the emissions with the head to right of the larger denomination, the same type without a crustacean or an *ethnikon*, but with the legend Δ-I, exists.¹⁶ One specimen uses the same reverse die as one of the few examples of the seated Apollo with the Δ-I legend, mentioned above as *subtypes* 8 and 9. This is a sign of a revival of the types, probably due to a shortage of circulating material. There must have been a transitional period towards the beginning of the 3rd-century BC. Probably around the same time, the standing Apollo/anchor emissions appeared,¹⁷ which are similarly large as a *dichalkos*, as well as the *dichalkoi* with the Legends A-PI and IH.¹⁸ These series are countermarked by a tripod and an upright standing bird, which signifies an eagle. A small denomination with a standing Apollo also appears in a few examples.¹⁹

Surely Hellenistic are the emissions depicting the naked Apollon letros with a laurel branch and a bird (a raven) on it in his right hand and a bow and arrows in his left, once with the magistrate Kallistratos.²⁰ They were often discussed by Ivan Karayotov and other researchers. Attributed to Apollonia by Igor Lazarenko was also the type with a lyre and the legend I-H (Лазаренко 2011, 61–67). A smaller and more widespread denomination is the type with an anchor on the reverse.²¹ For the first time, those coins have a complete attribution to the god²². Because of the type with a lyre, a smaller denomination could actually be Apollonian, even though it was attributed to an unknown Asia Minor mint in the publication of Farmakida.²³ However, it is a common type that also appears on Seleucid coinage.²⁴ Two coins of a standing Apollo, which can hardly be identified and from the reports seem to be from a Classical context,²⁵ most probably belong to the proper Hellenistic period, rather than the transitional one. These interconnected series have a functioning *tetrachalkos*, and all of their countermarks of Apollonia are either an Apollo or Artemis head to the right or a crustacean, but never an eight-rayed star. The emissions of the seated Apollo could not belong to the period of these series.

and others from the Hoard Sveta Marina, Farmakida, and from the necropolis Kalfata (Baralis et al. 2019, 463, nn. 3-4. 464, 3; Hristov, Pantov 2016, 288; Yordanova 2017, 5, pl. 2. 28, Fig. 3).

¹⁴ Several examples from the NM Ruse without or with the denomination named in the legend, e.g. NM Ruse, Inv. 420, 12.5 mm; 2.14 g; 6 h (SNG Ruse Apollonia Pontica n. 420).

¹⁵ A specimen at the coin cabinet in Berlin of 11 mm; 1.16 g; 5 h, see IKMK, SMB, Inv. [18246709](#).

¹⁶ See Berlin, SMB, Inv. [18246755](#) (1909/430 – previous owner Philipsen) 16 mm; 3.54 g; 6 h (CN 10208).

¹⁷ For instance, a coin in London, BM, Inv. 1921.0213.80, 12–14 mm; 2.53 g; T 2 mm, 6 h (SNG BM Black Sea 191).

¹⁸ Berlin, SMB, Inv. [18246771](#) (1902/1077 – previous owner by Handjiev) 13 mm; 1.58 g; 1 h (CN 10216); with an eagle countermark on the obverse and found in the area around Burgas, priv. coll. Stavri Topalov, 14–15.5 mm, 1.92 g, T 2.5 mm (Топалов 2007, 517, Fig. 1).

¹⁹ See a specimen from the same private collection of Stavri Topalov found in Sozopol, 12 mm, 0.93 g, T 2 mm (Топалов 2007, 512, Fig. 2).

²⁰ A well-known specimen with a countermark of an Athena head with a helmet to the right on the reverse, found at Malkoto kale, Sozopol, AM, Inv. 1 (245 HΦ), 25.3–26.1 mm, 9.41 g, T 3.3 mm; 11 h (Baralis et al. 2019, 80 n. 70; Карайотов 1976, 58–60).

²¹ A coin with a countermark of Artemis' head to the right with a quiver on her back is known from the private collection of W. M. Stancomb, 19–20 mm, 4.82 g, 11 h (CN [6332](#); Roma E 66, 09.01.2020, n. 9; Hirsch 227, 08.-09.05.2003, n. 57).

²² I-H being the abbreviation of letros.

²³ From the excavation at Farmakida in the south-west wall of the fort in the hoard KI, Primorsko, AM, Inv. 47/19, KI-23, 13.7–14.8 mm, 2.3 g, T 2.2 mm, 12 h and Primorsko, AM, Inv. 47/20, KI-19, 12.7–13.3 mm, 2.28 g, T 2.9 mm, 12 h (Hristov, Pantov 2016, 288).

²⁴ Several types are possible (Houghton et al. 2002, n. 528).

²⁵ One of the coins was found with another badly corroded small bronze denomination in a large domestic house near the cultural house of Sozopol from the 2nd half of the 4th century or the end of the 4th century until the 2nd century BC. The early finds include black-glazed and local pottery. Sozopol, AM, no. inv., 11.8–11.9 mm, 1.42 g, T 2.1 mm, 1 h (Нешева et al. 2016, 383. 386, Fig. 3).

Allocation into a Denomination System

The only option for a denominational correlation is between the type of the seated Apollo and the first mentioned emissions with Apollo's head on the obverse. The original emissions of Apollo on an omphalos could only belong to the Late Classical issues. The two exceptional coins with the legend Δ -I clearly belong to the aforementioned transitional period among the other types with this legend.

For the certain attribution of types with a portrait of Apollo to the right and left belonging to the same denomination, the coherence of diameter and weight are of great importance. Since bronzes tend to not have stable technical features, and we know from the silver coinage that Apollonia changes its standard quite often, it is reasonable to follow the development of those parameters by die-linkage order, rather than with a histogram. The diameter range is especially unsteady in the omphalos types without the magistrate and portrait to the right. The range is between 15 and 20 mm.²⁶ But in general, they seem to be the same size. The same applies to the very precarious weights (**Fig. 5**). Bearing in mind that many of those coins had circulated a longer period and some are roughly corroded, this deviation is not atypical.²⁷

This interaction within the bronzes determines their synchronous production, but for a sequence the magistrates are the decisive element. This magistrate ΜΥΣ, as well as ΖΩΠΥΡΟΣ, also appear on the so-called tetradrachms,²⁸ and while names can reappear, the style of the reverses seems identical. The names are written in both legends with a cut Π (usually referred to as Archaic or Classical),²⁹ which does not give any epigraphical dating as such but does indicate some synchrony within the coinage. The same feature interconnects both the bronzes and the tetradrachms with the tetrobols. And while the latter probably circulated for quite a long time, the tetradrachms could not have been minted after Alexander III due to their weight, shape, and many stylistic features.³⁰ As a matter of fact, no massive commercial production of silver coinage is known from Apollonia in the Hellenistic period. A wrongly minted silver coin with the dies of a *dichalkos* at the Archaeological Museum in Sofia³¹ is an important piece of evidence, which proves that both silver and bronze coinage was minted at the same workshop, and the *dichalkoi* must also coincide with the period of intense production.

Iconographic Dating and Controversies

Leaving aside those fundamental issues, there is one main controversy of the attribution of the Apollo on omphalos bronzes to the Hellenistic period. It lies in the main argument for this dating, which would be the iconographic loan of the type from the Seleucid coinage or the imposed iconography by the Seleucids during their presence in Thrace.³² When observing some of the earliest images from the Apollo on omphalos type, which does remain quite constant, there are some obvious differences coming back to the detailed description. Beginning from the top, the hairstyle differs. It does not include a hair bun like many Hellenistic portraits of Apollo. He lies his right hand on the bow and does not hold any arrows or support himself on the bow behind him. The garment covers his legs completely. The *agrenon* of the omphalos is not diagonally depicted

²⁶ Detailed analysis to be published in my dissertation.

²⁷ Because they are very worn, it is hard to determine the dies when studying those emissions. Small details in the depiction of Apollo might be lost due to corrosion. However, it is still possible to recognise some aspects. Through my work on these emissions, it seems that there are only two obverse dies. That said, one of the reverse dies without a magistrate seems quite similar to one with the portrait to left.

²⁸ This correlation has been already discussed by Ivanova (2017, 369–375).

²⁹ For a general overview of shapes see: McLean 2002, 41.

³⁰ For the standard see: Paunov 2017; Psoma 2015, 99.

³¹ Sofia, NAIM, Inv. 8328 (Project Symbols, Coins, Monuments 2015).

³² Герасимов 1963, 333–334. Gerasimov's argument is based on the depiction of the arrow in the right hand of Apollo in one of the specimens (Герасимов 1963, 333–334.). Unfortunately, an arrow can be spotted on none of the figures, and its depiction is plausible, but not proven. This option had been adopted and also continued circulating in recent publications (Йорданова 2017).

as in most other executions of similar images, such as in the coinage of the amphictyony.³³ One big difference is that the image appears on the obverse and does not bear any Hellenistic characteristics or Seleucid markers such as the legend with the king's name, which is the case in Seleucid coinages in other mints, e.g. Lysimachia, where the legend appears next to a local motif.³⁴ However, it is worth mentioning the similar motif appearing in Istrus, where Apollo is sitting on a cippus and holding arrows while leaning back on a bow.³⁵ This image has been dated from the 4th until the 2nd century BC. Another relevant theory presented by Panagiotis Iossif and others is that this imagery was chosen by the Seleucids, who leaned on the oriental iconography of the archer combined with Hellenistic statuary posture (Iossif 2011, 258–259, 266, 274).

Archaeological Dating and its Complexities

Further refutation of this dating is the archaeological context. Older coinage can have a very long circulation life up to a century and more,³⁶ and it can find its way into a later securely dated entity. We underestimate the span of circulation in general when a polis has a stable political position. There are three particularly important finds of the emissions discussed. The first is the hoard of the rural residence close to Apollonia, known as Sveta Marina. M. Gyuzelev dated the find to the middle of the 3rd century BC,³⁷ following the common assumption for chronology. However, without referring to this building per se, Gyuzelev, Alexandre Baralis, Teodora Bogdanova, and Krastina Panayotova generally date the abandonment of that type of building to the end of the 4th century BC (Baralis et al. 2019, 447, 454–456). In addition, the so-called area of Mesarite belongs to those kinds of external urban complexes, where graves were incorporated after its abandonment. According to the latest publication, they appeared in a short period of time at the end of the 4th century and the first quarter of the 3rd century BC (Baralis et al. 2019, 466–470). According to the report, a coin of the Apollo on omphalos type (n. 23) originates from one of those graves (n. 4) from the urban complex Mesarite. Another important find is the still-unpublished large 2012 hoard of 225 coins from the necropolis at Budzhaka (Панайотова et al. 2013, 232). The preliminary report names magistrates ΜΥΣ, ΑΚΟΥΣΙΑΕΩ, ΕΥΚΙΔΗΣ, and ΖΟΠΥΡΟΣ, and the press release shows the inclusion of the other *tetrachalkoi* types as well as *dichalkoi*.

These finds again show the connection between all *tetrachalkoi* types and *dichalkoi*. That is why it is of the utmost relevance to consider the findings of the portrait-type *tetrachalkoi* as synchronous to the ones with Apollo on the omphalos. As mentioned, in Sveta Marina one of them was also found. The second is a coin found in Grave 7 from 2007, with published context information by Yordanova (Yordanova 2017, 17, 28 Fig. 3). It was found together with several coins of Philipp II and Alexander III, as well as Apollonian diobols. A more problematic example is one found in the tyraxis of Farmakida together with coins of Alexander III and 4th century Abdera bronzes, but also coins of Mostis and Hellenistic Apollonian bronzes. This serves as a reminder to consider even more the long circulation and disruption of contexts.³⁸

The earliest archaeological finds were, however, from the excavation in the necropolis during the 1940s. In the publication, the context in four graves containing a specimen of the Apollo on omphalos emissions is described by Venedikov, and none contains any good diagnostic materi-

³³ See e.g. Berlin, IKMK, SMB Inv. [18208219](#).

³⁴ For Lysimachia, see: ANS, Inv. [1944.100.78297](#). Also in Abydos BnF, Louis De Clercq 41 and many more especially from Asia Minor.

³⁵ For the type in Istrus see: CN [25607](#).

³⁶ The long circulation time has been noticed by Olivier Picard with bronze coinage in Thasos, where coins from the beginning of the 4th century BC were still around in the first half of the 3rd century BC (Picard, 1998, 17). The continued known type was a method that facilitated the transition to the heavier Hellenistic coins.

³⁷ The site has been dated between the 3rd quarter of the 4th century BC and around the middle of the 3rd century BC. The mentioned reason for the abandonment of the complex is the conflict between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids in the Thracian territory (Гюзелев et al. 2012, 248–250).

³⁸ It concerns the type of the Apollo head *tetrachalkos* (Hristov and Pantov 2016, 124–138).

al.³⁹ The dating of the numismatic material in that publication by Gerasimov comprises one period for larger coins in the mid-3rd century BC and another for small denominations in the second half of the 4th century BC. This is based on the interpretations that *dichalkoi* with a legend should have circulated at the same time as the diobols. The emissions of Apollo on the omphalos are dated only based on iconography, and the Hellenistic ones on style. This led to a discrepancy in the comparison of graves in the same area, which when dated only with pottery were 50 to 70 years earlier.⁴⁰ But even if there were a connection to firmly dated ceramics in the same context, that pottery is initially dated by connecting it to historical events conveyed by ancient sources.⁴¹

Historical Dating

The Seleucid presence in the hinterland area of Apollonia is a fact. There was coinage of Antiochos I found in Kalfata in the 1940s (Герасимов 1963, 333) and of Antiochos II more recently (Yordanova 2017, 18). Coins of Antiochos II are found in Seuthopolis (Delev 2015, 61) and were massively countermarked by the mint of Cabyle, as well as by Lysimachia (Paunov 2015, 271–272). The tripod as a countermark might have been connected to Seleucid branding, and it appears next to the Apollonian Δ-I coin as well as on coins of Adaios, Lysimachia, and on Antiochos' II coinage from Cabyle (Iliev 2013, 217). But if the presence is so noticeable in Cabyle, where are the Seleucid coins with an eight-rayed star countermark? Furthermore, are there other media that can represent iconographic influence by Seleucid ideology? There are, of course, some epigraphical sources such as one decree (IgBulg I² 388). It was interpreted as evidence that Antiochos II sent a garrison to the area Astike to fight locals with the help of Callatis (Avram 2012, 182). But it was also interpreted as an occupation of the Asti in Strandzha during the reign of Antiochos III (Oppermann 2004, 146). Those are all episodic occurrences and do not lead to permanent interventions, which would be more radical.

Conclusions

Considering the complexities of the emissions, the iconography is rather a general motif related to the Pontic archer idea of Apollo Ietros. It had a synchronous circulation as the tetradrachms and tetrobols due to typographical and stylistic similarities of the anchor, as well as with the *dichalkoi*, which fit metrologically into the same system. The star countermark should not undoubtedly be interpreted as Apollonian, but rather as Macedonian or Odrysian, where the sign appears often,⁴² and can be dated to the last third of the 4th century BC. Due to the long circulation, archaeological context can't always be reliable. The occurrence of bronze issues was most probably initiated by competition and cooperation with Thracian and other dynasts. The former had predominantly bronze⁴³ issues and were strongly interconnected by the progressive mints of Aegean Thrace. The transitional phase in early Hellenism was a revival for a resupply. Any of the dating proposals, however, must be further questioned and cannot be accepted without comparison to other mints and especially not without considering the reflection of the zeitgeist on other media.

³⁹ Grave 17, where the coin was found in the mouth with pearls, rosettes, and bronze leaves from a wreath was dated to 260–240 BC. In Grave 719, the coin was found in between the bones, and it also contained an astragalos and iron nails. It was dated to the 3rd quarter of the 3rd century BC. In Grave 734, the coin was found again in the mouth together with a similar coin and was also dated to 260–240 BC. In Grave 632, the coin was in between bones with a similar coin and 40 unidentified small bronzes where the large denominations were dated to 260–240 BC and the smaller ones to 350–300 BC (Венедиков et al. 1963, 20. 56. 62).

⁴⁰ Compare the datings of Venedikov (Венедиков et al. 1963, 346).

⁴¹ For instance, Corinthian pottery relies conclusively on the presumed foundation dates of colonies in Magna Graecia.

⁴² CN 37019; see also: Echt et al. 2004, 121. 171, n. 225.13. 172, n. 225.17; Martinez and Agre 2015, 181, n. 141; Peter 1997, 181, n. 1.

⁴³ See the large amount of found bronze coinage in Cabyle containing mostly bronzes of Odrysian kings (Balabanov 2000, 95).



Fig. 1. Tetrachalkos with the magistrate Thales, Varna, RHM, Inv. I.140 (Photo by: H. Ivanova-Anaplioti).



Fig. 2. Tetrachalkos with the magistrate Mys, Varna, RHM, Inv. I.4824 (Photo by: H. Ivanova-Anaplioti).



Fig. 3. Tetrachalkos with the magistrate Zopyros, Naumann 81, 01.09.2019, n. 35.

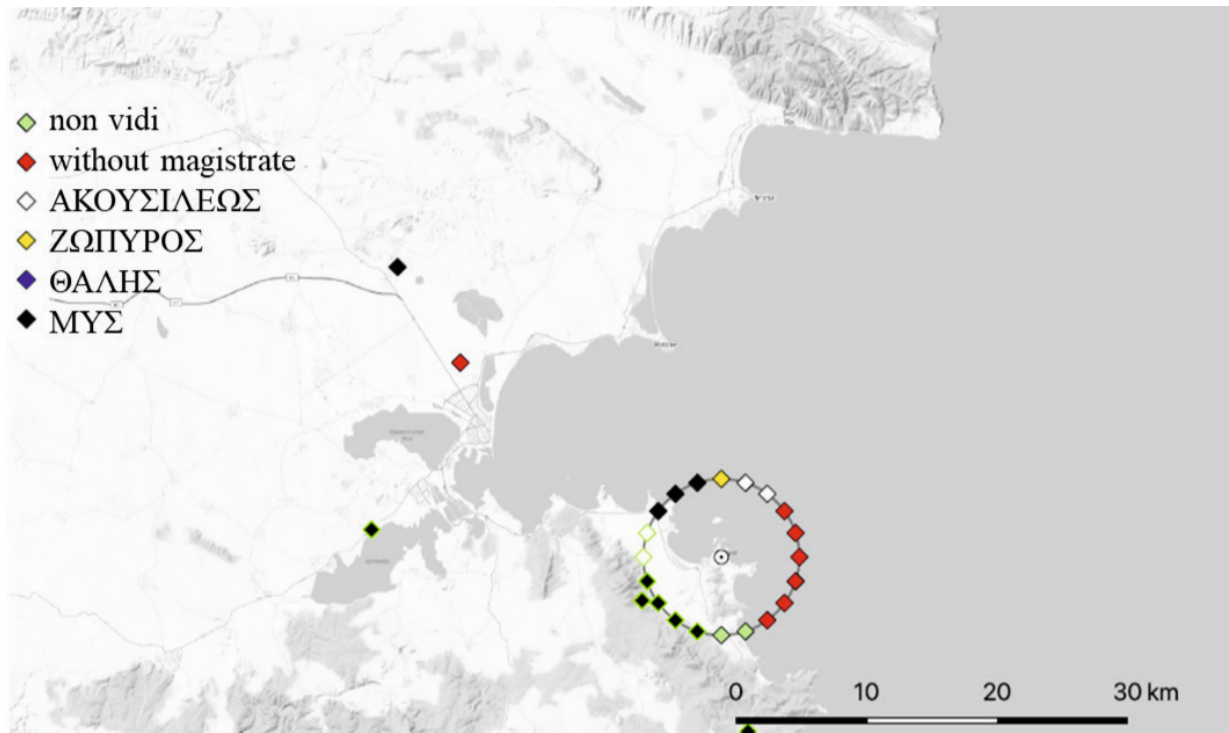


Fig. 4. Distribution of the *tetrachalkoi* of the type with Apollo on omphalos in and in the area around Apollonia Pontica. Excluded are n. 5 and 35 in the hinterland of Odessos in Northern Bulgaria. (Map by Alexander Hoer).

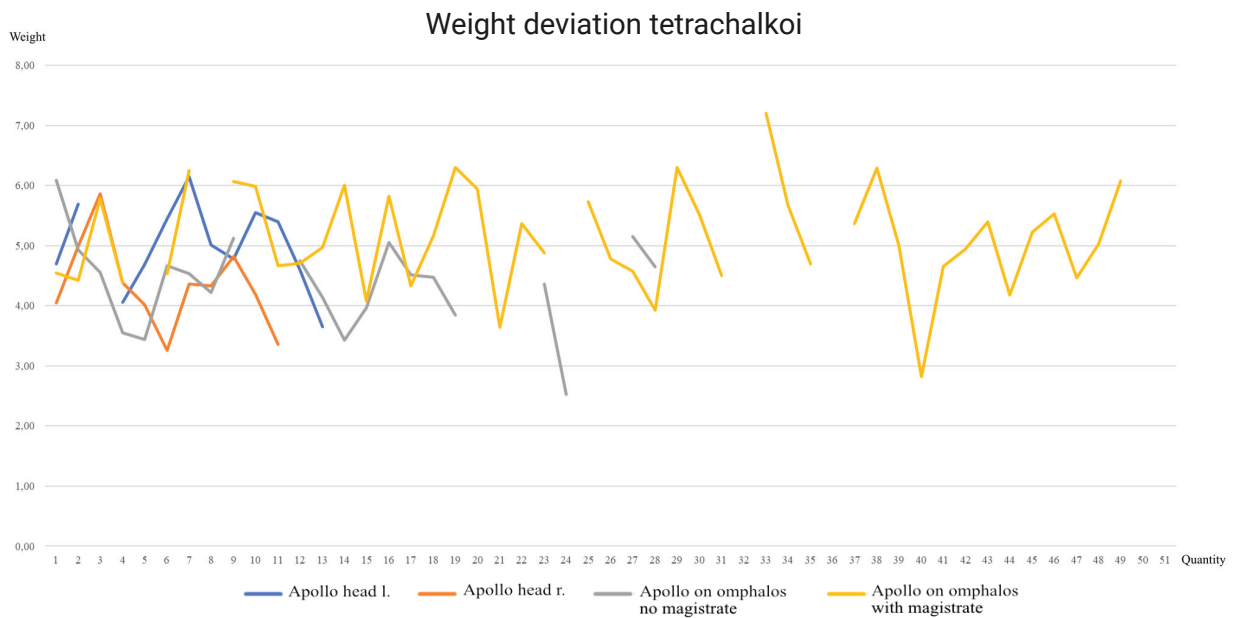


Fig. 5. Comparison of the weight of all *tetrachalkoi* emissions of Apollonia Pontica in the Classical period.

Abbreviated Auction Houses:

CNG Classical Numismatic Group

G&M Gorny und Mosch

Abbreviated Institutions and Portals:

ANS American Numismatic Society

AM Archaeological Museum

BnF Bibliothèque nationale de France

BM British Museum

CN Corpus Nummorum

KHM Kunsthistorisches Museum

NM Numismatic Museum

RAM Regional Archaeological Museum

RHM Regional Historical Museum

IKMK SMB Interaktiver Münzkatalog, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

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