

II. DISCUȚII ȘI NOTE

*About a possible reattribution of the Odessos Alexander type stater Price 1132 to the Babylon mint**

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It became obvious that one of the most appropriate and significant method sustaining a relevant progress in the numismatic research of the Hellenistic period consists in the study of dies, making possible the successful investigation of the coins without any symbol or monogram on the reverse and having as one of the most spectacular results their attribution to one mint or another. Continuing our efforts from the last years to correct and rearrange the gold issues of the West Pontic Greek cities during the early Hellenistic period¹, we have decided to analyze the situation of an Alexander type stater – Price 1132 – considered by its editor to be struck in Odessos somewhere around 280 BC². Describing this stater as an usual Alexander type one having no symbol on the reverse (pl. I, 1), M. Price insists to include this coin in the series of the first gold issues from Odessos. The reason of this attribution and chronology is “the recent recognition of a die-link between 1132A and 1138”³. In fact, 1132A is an Alexander type tetradrachm, while 1138 is a stater. Discussion starts from the recognition by K. Dimitrov of a die-link between an Alexander type tetradrachm without monogram from the Armenak hoard (no. 147⁴; pl. I, 2) and another two tetradrachms

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¹ E. Petac, *From the types of Alexander the Great to Lysimachus: the chronology of some Mesembrian and other West Pontic staters*, AJN², 23, 2011, p. 7-14; E. Petac, A. Vilcu, *A significant reconsideration of Price 963: not Istros, but a Seleucid mint*, SCN, S.N., 2 (14), 2011, p. 143-146; A. Vilcu, E. Petac, *Political rivalry and military conflicts at Lower*

Danube during the IIIrd century BC reflected by the gold staters of Alexander the Great type struck at Kallatis, Eastern and Central European Studies, Vienna, 2012, under press; A. Vilcu, E. Petac, *The Second Syrian Wars and Gold Staters of Alexander type struck at Istros*, AJN², 24, 2012, p. 53-60; E. Petac, A. Vilcu, *Syrian Wars and the beginning of Lysimachus type staters at Tomis*, Istros, 18, 2012, p. 61-63.

² M.J. Price, *The Coinage in the name of Alexander the Great and Philip Arrhidaeus*, Zurich-London, 1991, p. 191.

³ *Ibidem*; despite the fact that the considerations concerning the introduction of the Alexander the Great type coinage at Odessos in a date earlier than the Armenak hoard seems to be correct, the attribution to K. Dimitrov of the recognition of a die-link between a tetradrachm (Price 1132A) and a stater (Price 1132) belongs only to M. Price.

⁴ Margaret Thompson, *The Armenak hoard (IGCH 1423)*, ANSMN, 31, 1986, p. 63-106.

(not present in Price catalogue), struck with the same obverse die as Armenak 147 tetradrachm, having on the reverse legend [A]ΛΕΞΑΝΔ[ΡΟΥ] and the monogram , belonging to the city of Odessos⁵. The latter coins come from the Botevo hoard (nos. 4-5; Varna Museum collection, inv. 3062-3063)⁶. They haven't an equivalent in Price catalogue. Despite the fact that this Botevo tetradrachms are not the perfect "pairs" of the Odessos stater Price 1138 (Pick 2109) – having the same city monogram in the same position (left figure), but the reverse legend ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΥ – observing also that there are maybe variants of the tetradrachms Price 1141, 1145, 1145A or 1146 (having the same city monogram in the same position, no royal title, but presenting a secondary monogram), there are much closer of them than the stater Price 1132 is with the tetradrachm Price 1132A. The apparent proximity between 1132 and 1132A is inappropriate and only formal, because their single connection seems to be the fact that they have no symbols or monograms on the reverse. Probably the linguistic difficulties are the cause of M. Price confusion, the standard catalogue ignoring these coins from Botevo but mentioning K. Dimitrov study from 1987.

We still not have today an appropriate, updated and completely illustrated publication of the Botevo hoard⁷. The most comprehensive list of the 26 preserved coins from the hoard was published 25 years ago by K. Dimitrov⁸. Despite the bad conservation of the Odessitan tetradrachms and despite their completely unsatisfactory photos⁹, making real difficult to have a firm point of view, we are agree that there are significant chances that the Armenak 147 / Price 1132A (without monogram) and Botevo tetradrachms nos. 4-5/18-19 (Varna Museum collection, inv. 3062, 3063)¹⁰ had been struck with the same obverse die or at least there are almost the same in style and execution, so we can suppose that there are in fact from the same mint and period.

The situation is quite different for the stater Price 1132. Only because it have no symbol on the reverse (and also no royal title), it was considered as the first gold issue from Odessos in Price catalogue, apparently the only reason being the analogical judgment based on the situation of the tetradrachm Price 1132A (Armenak hoard 147). Though for the latter we have a die-link (or a significant similarity) with two tetradrachms having on the reverse the monogram and belonging definitely to the Odessos mint, this is not the case of Price 1132 stater. The most intriguing is the style of the obverse, completely different of any other Alexander type stater from Odessos (Price 1133-1140, 1142-1144, 1161), but reflecting significant similarities in style with a particular Alexander type stater from Babylon (Price 3748 / Houghton, Lorber I, 81.2).

In fact, the type Price 3748 includes an entire series of coins struck with a lot of dies; some of them have a very similar obverse die with Price 1132¹¹ (pl. I, 3-6), others not¹² (pl. I, 7-10), but presenting all each time on the reverse the letters MI under the left wing, monogram in wreath under the right wing and also bearing the royal title. Considered by Nancy Waggoner and M. J. Price as a civic issue struck at Babylon after the resumption of power by Seleucos in 311 BC and produced until 305¹³, this so-called

⁵ K. Dimitrov, *The first coins of Alexandrian kind stamped on the west coast of the Black Sea*, MPK, 27, 1987, 4, p. 55, nos. 4-5 (in Bulgarian).

⁶ *Ibidem*; idem, *Early Hellenistic Hoards of Alexander-type silver coins from the Museum of History and Art in Varna*, Études balkaniques, 25, 1989, 3, p. 87-88 (in English).

⁷ For the first publication see K. Dimitrov, *The first coins . . .*, nos. 4-5.

⁸ Idem, *Early Hellenistic Hoards . . .*, p. 99-101.

⁹ Idem, *The first coins . . .*, p. 57, no. 4 (Varna Museum, inv. 3062); idem, *Early Hellenistic Hoards . . .*, p. 88, no. 19 (Varna Museum, inv. 3063); they were struck with the same pair of dies.

¹⁰ The same Odessos tetradrachms were called nos. 4-5 in 1987 publication and nos. 18-19 in 1989 K. Dimitrov's study.

¹¹ CNG, Auction 93, 22.05.2013, lot 486; Spink, Auction 13012, 26.03.2013, lot 8; Roma Numismatics Ltd, Auction IV, 30.09.2012, lot 226; Fritz Rudolf Künker GmbH&Co.KG, Auction 216, 08.10.2012, lot 288.

¹² Pecunem Gitbud and Naumann, Auction 1, 10.03.2013, lot 20; CNG, Triton XVI, Session 1 and 2, 08.01.2013, lot 536; Ira & Larry Goldberg Coins & Collectibles, Auction 70, 04.09.2012, lot 3053; Nomos AG, Auction 5, 25.10.2011, lot 141.

¹³ Cf. M.J. Price, *op. cit.*, p. 455.



Plate I. 1: Alexander type stater Price 1132 (ANS collection); 2: Alexander type tetradrachm from Armenak hoard (no. 147) struck at Odessos; 3-6: Alexander type staters from Babylon (Price 3748); obverse dies similar in style with Price 1132; 7-10: Alexander type staters from Babylon (Price 3748); different style obverse dies; 11-13: Alexander type staters from Babylon (Price 3748) very close in style with Price 1132 (“Odessos”).

“MI group¹⁴” was reconsidered recently by B. Kritt and A. Houghton, who extend the period until 300 BC¹⁵. Few samples are particularly significant, especially the stater type Price 3748 sold in October 2012 at Künker¹⁶ (pl. I, 11) and that sold in September 2012 at Roma Numismatics¹⁷ (pl. I, 12). Although they were not struck with the same obverse die, there are so similar that it is possible to be in fact the same engraver realizing the dies for these coins – dated somewhere between 311 and 300 BC. It seems that the coin Price 1132 (“Odessos”; pl. I, 13) without royal title or monogram, presents the same stylistic features for the hairstyle and helmet with some of the “royal title” coins from Price 3748 Babylon series. It could be struck soon before the Price 3748 issue and also just before the “MI group”, probably the last struck at Babylon – from 311 to a date around 300 BC when the entire mint was moved to Seleucia¹⁸. The diversity of the obverse dies used to strike the same type Price 3748 seems to sustain the minting of this issue over an entire decade.

So, we suggest that there is not a single connection between Price 1132 and Odessos mint. If the attribution of the tetradrachm Price 1132A to the Odessos mint seems to be proved, it is not the same situation for the stater Price 1132. More probably this Alexander type stater was struck in Babylon, not long time before the issue Price 3748 (around 311 BC?). The beginning of the gold minting of the Odessos Alexander’s could be different than that of the silver one.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*; see also B. Kritt, *The Early Seleucid Mint of Susa*, Classical Numismatic Studies, 2, Lancaster, 1997, p. 86, calling it “Babylon II”.

¹⁵ B. Kritt, *op. cit.*, p. 85-86 considered it as the last large issue from Babylon, before the opening of Seleucia mint, around 300 BC (see also p. 102-103); A. Houghton, Catharine Lorber, *Seleucid Coins. A Comprehensive Catalogue, Part 1.*

From Seleucus I to Antiochus III, I, Lancaster-London, 2002, p. 40.

¹⁶ Fritz Rudolf Künker GmbH&Co.KG, Auction 216, 08.10.2012, lot 288.

¹⁷ Roma Numismatics Ltd, Auction IV, 30.09.2012, lot 226.

¹⁸ B. Kritt, *op. cit.*, p. 85-86 and p. 102-103.