

*A significant reconsideration of Price 963: not Istros, but a Seleucid mint**

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The effort of the last year's researches to begin to establish a correct arrangement — typological, chronological, die-links — of the West Pontic gold issues¹ was mainly sustained by the very significant materials published by many auction houses in the last ten or 15 years². It was made possible also by a much easier access to the specific database of the public, private or auction houses collections³. So it became possible the reexamination of the older or recent standard catalogues. The Alexander the Great type stater Price 963, considered by the author as an Istros issue⁴, represents one of the most interesting situations and a preliminary presentation of the conclusions is necessary. Martin Price describes this stater as follows:

In field to left, quiver; below wing to left, Δ ; below wing to right, E ; ANS collection⁵.
Pridik 45-46 (where Δ and E).

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¹ E. Petac, *Noi date privind tezaurile de monede de aur din perioada elenistică descoperite în Dobrogea: o nouă cronologie a tezaurului de la Dăeni, jud. Tulcea*, BSNR, 98-103, 2004-2009, p. 9-20; E. Petac, *Istros numismatic repertory — from the Alexander the Great staters to the Lysimachus type*, in *Antiquitas Istro-Pontica. Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire ancienne offerts à Alexandru Suceveanu*, Cluj-Napoca, 2011, p. 569-572; A. Vîlcu, E. Petac, B. Constantinescu, Gh. Niculescu, *Considerations regarding the Greek gold coins struck during the 4th to the 1st centuries BC in the light of the XRF analysis*, *Peuce*, S.N., 9, 2011, p. 501-512; E. Petac, *From the types of Alexander to Lysimachus: the chronology of some Mesembrian and other West Pontic*

staters, *AJN*², 23, 2011, p. 7-14; A. Vîlcu, E. Petac, *Political rivalry and military conflicts at Lower Danube during the IInd century BC reflected by the Gold staters of Alexander the Great type struck at Kallatis*, in *Eastern and Central European Studies*, under press.

² CNG 115, 25 May, 2005, lot 35; LHS Numismatik AG 95, 25 Oct., 2005, lot 555; Gorny & Mosch 159, 8 Oct., 2007, lot 67-68; 199, 10 Oct., 2011, lot 155; A. Tkalec AG, 27 Oct., 2011, lot 46 (Tomis); Gorny & Mosch 122, 10-11 March, 2003, lot 1181-1182; 138, 7 March, 2005, lot 1181; 151, 9 Oct., 2006, lot 127 (Istros).

³ It is the right place to mention the importance of open access database from British Museum (www.britishmuseum.org), SNG Committee and the Fitzwilliam Museum (<http://www.sylloge-nummorum-graecorum.org/>) and also the web resources from Coinarchives (<http://www.coinarchives.com/>), ACSearch (www.acsearch.info), and VCoins (<http://www.vcoins.com/>).

⁴ M.J. Price, *The Coinage in the name of Alexander the Great and Philip Arrhidaeus*, I, London-Zürich, 1991, p. 180, no. 963.

⁵ *Ibidem*.

This coin type was present in the Anadol hoard⁶ and the single sample known today belongs to the ANS collection; there is no photo for this coin in the standard catalogue. The identity between the second monogram of Price 963 (Ϸ or ⚡) and the same one appearing on the reverse of some other staters definitely struck in Istros mint (Price 964 and even 965) suggest to the author the same attribution.

The reexamination of this stater shows in fact an important difference: the monogram under the left wing is ⚡, not ⚡ (that means ΓΑ, not ΑΓ). Therefore, the correct description is:

In field to left, quiver with strap; below wing to left, ⚡; below wing to right, Ϸ
 AV 12 h; 8,51 g; 19 mm (pl. I, 1).
 ANS collection, 1944.100.36015; bequest E.T. Newell

In 1871, von Prokesch Osten published a similar Alexander type stater, having also monogram ΓΑ on the reverse; he notes the apparition of the letters in monogram at Amphipolis, Pella and Thessalonica, but considered it (because of the monogram and also because of the oriental style of the coin) as an issue from Gabala, in Cappadocia⁷. If this monogram represents the name of the city, we suggest that Gaziura could be also a possibility, but if not, Ephesus could be interesting, considering the quiver and bow that appears on the reverse of his coins⁸ (pl. I, 2); a more detailed study about the possible attribution of Price 963 coin will follow soon.

The second important fact consists in a very significant obverse die-link between Price 963 and Price 965, from the British Museum collection. The standard description of this second coin is:

In field to left, ΙΣ; below wing to right, Ϸ
 AV 12 h; 8,45 g; 19 mm (pl. I, 3).
 British Museum 1928.0608.8.
 Price 965.
 Pridik 506-508; Spink (1928).

We have a rare occasion to observe the movement of a mint from an Eastern city using monogram ⚡ and striking Alexander type staters with a quiver on the reverse (in Asia Minor more probable, maybe Gabala, Gaziura or even Ephesus) to Istros, at least with one obverse die (pl. I, 4) and one member of the technical staff (Ϸ), consequence of a top level political decision, as it happens — a classic example — at Abydos, Ilium and Alexandria Troas⁹, using probably successively the same obverse die during the reign of Antiochus II.

It seems to be clear now that Ϸ and ⚡ are in fact one and the same person and also it looks like a Seleucid mint from Asia Minor was moved to Istros in a specific political context, somewhere during the Second Syrian War, possible 257-255 BC. The Seleucid tetradrachms having the letters ΙΣ on the reverse (Houghton, Lorber, I, 484-486, considered from Lampsacus or a Hellespont mint¹⁰) could be attributed to Istros that seems more plausible in this new context. We noticed that historical sources mention the participation of Istros together with Kallatis in the conflict against Byzantion, in fact a part of the

⁶ E.M. Pridik, *Anadol'skii klad zolotykh staterov 1895 goda*, Sankt-Petersburg, 1902, p. 9, nos. 45-46.

⁷ Von Prokesch Osten, *Suite des monnaies inédites d'or et d'argent d'Alexandre le Grand*, NZ, 3, 1871, p. 56, no. 12.

⁸ CNG, Triton XIV, 4 Jan. 2011, lot 52.

⁹ A. Houghton, Catharine Lorber, *Seleucid Coins. A Comprehensive Catalogue, Part 1. From Seleucus I to Antiochus III*, I, Lancaster-London, 2002, p. 175-176, nos. 487, 488 and 491.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 175.



Plate I. 1: Alexander type stater Price 483 (ANS collection; 2:1); 2: Lysimachus type stater from Ephesus (2:1; CNG, Triton XIV, 4 Jan. 2011, lot 52); 3: Alexander type stater Price 485 (British Museum collection; 2:1); 4: Same obverse die for Price 483 and Price 485 (3:1).

Second Syrian War¹¹. However, the study on the gold staters of Alexander type struck in the middle of 3rd century by the West Pontic cities reveal an alliance sustained by the Seleucid Empire and constituted against Byzantion and the Ptolemaic kingdom¹². In this context, Istros issued gold staters of Alexander type and probably the Seleucid tetradrachms with ΙΣ on the reverse.

¹¹ A. Avram, *Antiochos II Théos, Ptolémée II Philadelphie et la Mer Noire*, Comptes-rendus des séances de l'année — Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 147, 2003, no. 3, 1181-1213.

¹² A. Vîlcu, E. Petac, *op. cit.*