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#### **NUMISMATICS**

# IT'S A SWORD, IT'S A SCABBARD, IT'S TISNA COINS WITH DEPICTION OF PERSIAN AKINAKES

**Abstract:** In this study, a series of Tisna's coins dated to the 4th century BC are discussed. It is known that Tisna, a less known city of Aiolis which is one of the important Iron Age cultural regions of Western Anatolia, gained polis status in the  $4^{\rm th}$  century BC. The archaeological surveys we have been continuing in the site proved that Tisna was inhabited since the end of the  $3^{\rm rd}$  millennium BC. An item depicted in the coins, which are among the most important finds of the city, constitutes the main subject of this study. This item was often described as a sword or a scabbard in previous publications. However, when the object is examined iconographically, it is surprising that it is actually a Scythian-Persian sword, akinakes. As a result of our examinations and comparisons it has been suggested that coins with depiction of akinakes may be related to both Persian identity in the region and the cult of Ares.

**Keywords:** Tisna, Aiolis, Coin, Persian, Akinakes.

#### LOCATION

isna is within the boundaries of Aliağa District of Izmir Province. On the Güzelhisar Stream Valley, there is Uzunhasanlar District in the south of the settlement and Güzelhisar Dam in the north. The city, which is located between Myrina and Aigai, is on two separate hills, now known as Kocakale and Sarıkale Tepe, and its spreading area is quite wide<sup>1</sup>.

#### **COINS OF TISNA**

It is known that the city minted four series of bronze coins in the 4th century BC. On these coins reading one of the legends of TISNAI, TISNAIO, TISNAIOS and TISNAION, the 1st series, bears the head of the River God Tisnaios with horns on the front face to the left², a single-handled vessel on the reverse; the 2nd series, Tisnaios head facing left on obverse, spearhead

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> For the works about the city, see. DER KLEINE PAULY, 1481; RUBINSTEIN 2004, 1051. For trips to the city and scientific research See. CHRONIQUE D'ORIENT 1885, 107-109 (5.72-3); SAYCE 1882, 221 pp; DIEST 1889, 32-33; DIEST 1889,32-33; SCHUCHHARDT 1887, 1213; SCHUCHHART 1912, 102-103; CHRONIQUE D'ORIENT 1891, 20-23 (9.121-22); CONZE 1910a; CONZE 1910b; DOĞER 2017, 78-79; Since 2018, systematic scientific research has been carried out by a team under the presidency of Emre Erdan in the ancient city of Tisna. For detailed information about the preliminary results, see. ERDAN 2019.

 $<sup>^2\,</sup>$  Single handle vessel: IMHOOF BLUMER 1883, 239-240; BMC 1; Traité 2075-2077; SNG München 641; SNG Cop. 283.

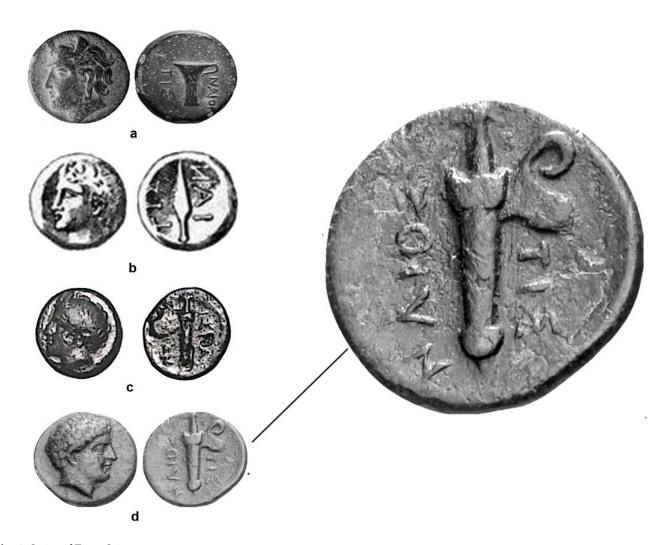


Fig. 1. Series of Tisna Coins.

The head of the River God Tisnaios with horns on the front face to the left, a single-handled vessel on the reverse. (SNG München 641; SNG Cop. 283).

Tisnaios head facing left on obverse, spearhead on back. (Imhoof-Blumer 1897, 284, XXIV).

Tisnaios head facing left on the obverse, akinakes on the back. (SNG von Aulock, 1981).

Young male head (Ares) facing right on the obverse and the akinakes on the back. (SNG Ashmolean, 1487).

on reverse<sup>3</sup>; the 3rd series, Tisnaios head facing left on the obverse, akinakes on the reverse4; the 4th series, there is a young male head facing right on the obverse and the akinakes on the reverse<sup>5</sup> (Fig. 1a-d).

When it comes to the reverse type of the last two series of coins that constitute the subject of this article, as the iconography is examined in depth, it is understood that what is briefly described as the English sword in sheath or the French *Epée dans son fourceau* is actually not an ordinary sword. This sword is the akinakes (ἀκῖνάκης) (Fig. 2), which we know very well from ancient sources<sup>6</sup>.

The sword, which measures 40-60 cm in average, is usually depicted in a scabbard, as on the Tisna issues that are the subject of our study. The material examples found in the excavations and examples on reliefs with depicting sword and scabbard reflect the general characteristics of akinakes. Although these have minor differences in each sample, they are essentially in an overlapping view7. According to this view, the sections forming an akinakes consist of roughly antenna-shaped double-edged hilt, a protruding doublewing shaped protection, a handle attached to the protection part, and an oval chape. However, the most important element of akinakes and its main feature that distinguishes it from all other swords and sheaths is the handle added next to the protection part. A single-handle cup-like handle has a hole in its corner. It has been formed as an intermediate attachment, through which the baldric passes, which would allow the sheath to be hung on the belt at the waist. In this way, it was aimed to create a "P" shaped scabbard, especially

Spearhead: IMHOOF-BLUMER 1897, 284, XXIV; TRAITÉ 1181/1182,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Tisnaios / Akinakes: IMHOOF-BLUMER 1883: 241; TRAITÉ 2074 and 2078: SNG von Aulock, 1981.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Ares / Sword: IMHOOF-BLUMER 1883: 242; TRAITÉ 1181, 2079; SNG Ashmolean, 1487.

For akinakes, see. DER KLEINE PAULY 1168-1169. Known to have been used until the 5th and 6th centuries AD, it is believed that the akinakes were first produced by the Scythians, then used by the Medes and finally by the Persians. Although it is a product of Scythian origin, it was the Persians who introduced the akinakes to the ancient world. However, controversy continues regarding the origin of akinakes. For the discussions of origins,

see. KANTOR 1960, 13; MUSCARELLA 1987,113-115,117.

For the differences between Persian and Median akinakes, See, LITVINSKIY/PICHIKIYAN 1981, 149.

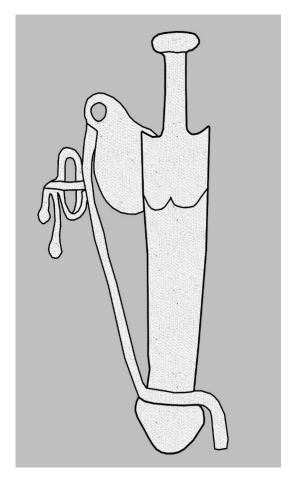


Fig. 2. Drawing of an akinakes after the reliefs of Persepolis. (E. Erdan).

to provide an advantage to the warriors with akinakes worn on the waist. Visual art elements depicting akinakes provide evidence of a use in this direction. The scabbard of akinakes is separated by all the samples in the Near East and Mediterranean examples in ancient times. This scabbard is of utmost importance at the point of cutting the metal contact of the legs that are curled when using the akinakes on the horseback riding or during riding8.

#### **AKINAKES IN ANCIENT TEXTS**

Ancient texts have brought different narratives about akinakes to the present day. Although limited, the information obtained from these narratives puts a strong emphasis on the fact that the akinakes were considered not only as a sword, but also as a status symbol, an ideal gift and an object of religious meaning, at least by the Persians at the time of their use9.

#### **ICONOGRAPHY**

Especially in the Achaemenid period Persian expansion area, these types of weapons itself and archaeological materials with the depiction of the same weapons were found in some sites. The best-known examples of the sword in question are the Persepolis reliefs10 (Fig. 3a-b) and the gold plates among the Oxus finds11 (Fig.3c). It is seen that the akinakes, which are also reflected as offering objects, are attached to the belt with a strap. An ivory figurine in the Louvre Museum also gives a clear idea that the akinakes was used directly on the belt (Fig. 3d)12. The most important depiction of akinakes in Anatolia is on the Çan (Altıkulaç) Sarcophagus (Fig. 4). 13 Here a possible local noble depicted as a horse rider in boar hunting and war scenes and his akinakes attached to his belt is shown clearly, should be linked to the need to reflect himself like Persian. In addition to these, there are descriptions of akinakes in the ancient Greek vase paintings (Fig. 5).14 The presence of akinakes itself which were found in the excavations of Deve Höyük<sup>15</sup>, Ayanis<sup>16</sup> and İmirler<sup>17</sup> in Anatolia, is noteworthy in a wide area from Tell-Defenneh in Egypt to Morawy in Poland<sup>18</sup>.

As can be seen, when coin iconography is evaluated with an interdisciplinary perspective, it is possible to make a more detailed and specific inference about the object or object that constitutes the type. Just as we try to show in this article that what is described in the catalogs as sword in sheath, sword or Epée dance last fourceau is actually an akinakes. Apart from Tisna, we see the sword depiction in the mints of more than a dozen cities<sup>19</sup>. The akinakes in the Tisna issues dated to the 4th century BC and the bronze coins with sword depictions on the reverse with three intertwined shields issued by the Macedonian commander Eupolemos, dated between 315-313 BC, in Mylasa are the earliest known examples of the image.20 In Pontus and Paphlagonia, in the cities of Amasia, Amisos, Cabeira, Chabacta, Gaziura, Laodikeia, Taulara, Amastris, Pimolisa and Sinope in the 2nd and 1st centuries BC, sword-depicted coins with a helmeted Ares head on the front were struck<sup>21</sup>. Contrary to what is expected in some city mints, it is seen that other gods are also preferred as the obverse type besides Ares. In the same centuries, the sword-depicted coins minted in Caunus bear the head of Athena and Apollo on the obverse<sup>22</sup>, and the head

STRONACH 2009, 233, fn. 33. In one of his passages, Herodotus mentions that the scabbard was dislodged while riding Cambyses II's horse and therefore pierced the thigh of the sword. Hdt. III. 64. In his comment on the subject, Dalton points out that such a wound would never occur if a long sword was used, and that the use of akinakes with an absolutely intact scabbard had such important consequences. DALTON 1964, 35.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Hdt. 3.118, 3.128, 4.62, 4.70, 7.54, 7.67, 8.120, 8.80, 9.107; Plat. Rep.  $8.553c; \ Xen. \ Cyrop. \ 7.3.13, \ 7.3.14; \ Xen. \ Anab. \ 1.2.27, \ 1.8.28; \ Dem. \ 24.$ 129; D. Chr. 2. 36; J. Aj. 20. 186; Cassius 49. 29; Paus. 1.27.1, 1.28.11; Procop. Pers. 1. 7. Statements regarding the akinakes as Persian sword: See; Plat. Rep. 8.553c; Statements regarding the akinakes as a votive object: See; Hdt. 7. 4; Statements regarding the akinakes as a honoring gift: See; Xen. Anab. 1.2.27, 1.8.28.

WALSER 1966, Taf. 30, 34-35, 56-57, 69, 83-XI, Falttafel 2.

SARRE 1922, Taf. 42; DALTON 1964, 35, Pl. XIV-48. For the gold akinakes scabbard found here, see BOARDMAN 2006.

<sup>12</sup> STUCKY 1985, 10, Kat. Nr. 5, Taf. 3-5 a-c.

SEVINÇ et. alii. 2001; Ma 2008.

FURTWÄNGLER/REICHHOLD 1909, 145, Taf. 88.

MOOREY 1980, 8, Fig. 9.

ÇILINGIROĞLU 2011, 87-91; ÇILINGIROĞLU 2012, 10, Res. 14-15; ERDEM 2019, 209-210.

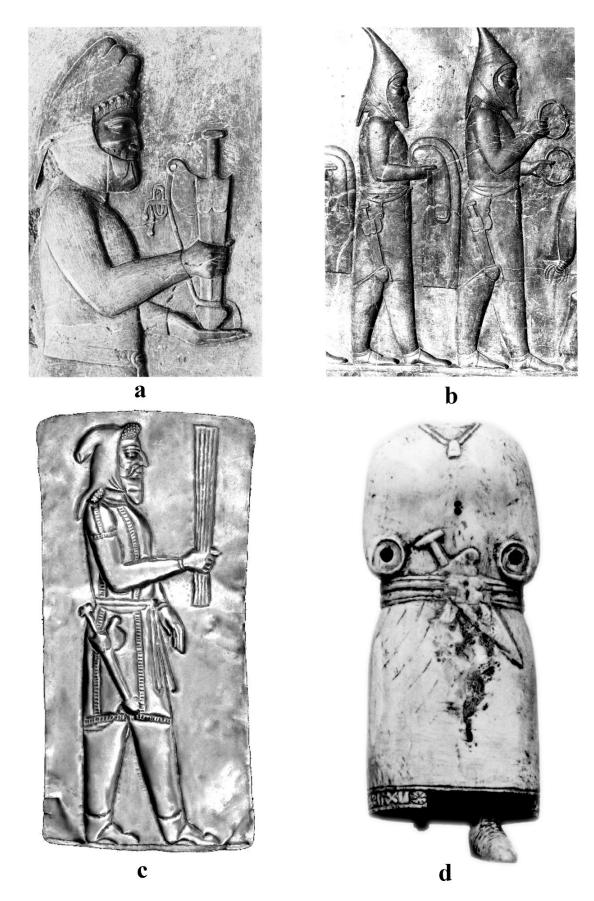
ÜNAL 1982, 66.

SULIMIRSKI 1954, 305,307.

ANSON 1911, 66-68; VACANO 1986, 428.

For the mints of Eupolemos See. DESCAT 1998, 170-174.

For these coins minted during the reign of the Pontus king Mithridates IV., See. IMHOOF-BLUMER 1912, 169-192; CALLATAY 2007, 277; Amasia: SNG Black Sea 1051; BMC 1; Rec. Gen. 3; Amisos: SNG Tuebingen 2045; SNG von Aulock 45; RecGen 1 (58); Chabacta: SNG Copenhagen 205-206; Gaziura: SNG BM Black Sea 1268; Laodikeia: SNG BM Black Sea 1271, Taulara: SNG v. Aulock 138; Amastris: SNG BM Black Sea 1311; Pimolisa: SNG BM Black Sea 1352-3; Sinope: SNG BM Black Sea 1529.



**Fig. 3.** Depictions of Akinakes. Akinakes depiction from Persepolis (WALSER 1966, Taf. 30). Akinakes depiction from Persepolis (WALSER 1966, Taf. 30). Gold plate from Oxus. (DALTON 1964, Pl. XIV-48). An ivory figurine from Louvre Museum (STUCKY 1985, Taf. 3-5a).



Fig. 4. Detail of the Çan (Altıkulaç) Sarcophagus (SEVINÇ et alii 2001, Fig. 11).

of Men struck in the Apollonia Mordiaeum in Pisidia.<sup>23</sup> In Epicteteis, one of the Phrygian cities, a military iconography was preferred, and a helmet was placed on the obverse, just like in the mints of Eupolemos.<sup>24</sup>

#### **CONCLUSION**

The coins of Tisna with akinakes depiction differ from all the centers mentioned above in terms of both history and typology. When examined from an iconographic perspective, the difference between the weapon depicted on the coins produced in other centers, which are mostly reflections of Greek swords and scabbards, and the Tisna samples is evident. As it is known, unlike the akinakes, which are evaluated over the Persian identity, there are sword types that match the identities of the Greek warriors. Among the Greek swords and daggers, whose names known through ancient texts, such as makhaira, xiphos, kopis25 can be counted, and swords depicted in coins dated to the 2nd and 1st centuries BC exhibit more similar characteristics with the examples belonging to the subgroups of these types.

If we examine the obverse iconography of Tisna coins with akinakes depiction on the reverse; it is seen that there are two different god depictions, just like the Caunus mints. One of them is the River God Tisnaios. The other is called the



Fig. 5. Description of an akinakes on a Archaic Greek Vase (FURTWÄNGLER/REICHHOLD 1909, 145, Taf. 88).

right-facing young male head. It seems that no idea has been put forward as to who it might be. The main reason for not being identified with Ares, the God of War, may be that the god is always remembered with a helmet and, moreover, Ares is always depicted with a helmet on the coins of Asia Minor. In my opinion, Ares is still the most suitable candidate for the front. Because Ares heads without helmet appear in the numismatic literature, albeit a little. For example, Ares is depicted with a laurel wreath on the obverse of Messenia coins in Italy<sup>26</sup>. In Greece, the head of Ares is naked, just like the Tisna coins, on the coins dated to the 4th century BC in the city of Phalanna<sup>27</sup> in Thessaly, where we know that it has a close cultural relationship with Aiolis. In this context, the akinakes on the reverse can be thought to appear as an attribution of Ares on the obverse of the coin. Although it is a Scythian tradition, the distinctive association of sword, scabbard and Ares on later coin samples in other centers, which is a reflection of an attribution adopted by many communities later on, is an indication that the same association can exist in Tisna coins. In the light of all this information, Tisna's coins with akinakes depiction should be date between Early 4th century BC to 330 BC, when the rule of Alexander the Great in Western Anatolia was accepted. Considered as a Persian status symbol, the presence of akinakes in Aiolis is thought to raise new questions about Persian identity and mobility in the region.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> SNG v. Aulock 1979.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> BMC Phrygia, 200, 5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> For details about these sword types, See: ROVER 2020.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> SNG ANS 399: HGC 2. 864.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> GARDNER 1884, 41, Pl. VIII-12.

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