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e-mail: mega@edituramega.ro

AN UNKNOWN TYPE OF BRONZE COIN OF THE RULER OF THRACE – KAVAROS

Abstract: The subject of this article is a bronze coin, photographed in a German private collection, which, as will now be seen here below, turned out to be a coin of a completely unknown type, which is certainly a coin of the ruler of Thrace – Kavaros. In terms of style, the new and previously unknown type of bronze coin of the ruler Kavaros, which is presented here, is most similar to the earliest type of bronze coins of this ruler – with an oval shield on the reverse and with an additional symbol – lyre. Furthermore, the letters on the reverse of the unknown type of bronze coin are presented in the same style, with the letter sigma also having a lunate shape. For the new unknown type of bronze coins presented here, thanks to the other symbol, the lyre, on the reverse, it can also be said with certainty that they were also minted in the same mint where the type with the oval shield on the reverse was minted. This coin, presented here, was probably struck on the occasion of the enthronement of the ruler Kavaros.

The ruler Kavaros also minted other bronze coins at various mints in his state. Therefore, for clarity, the other bronze coins of the ruler Kavaros with his name and title are also presented here.

Keywords: *bronze coin, unknown type, ruler Kavaros, Thrace.*

The information about the campaigns of the Galatians in the Balkans and in Thrace, as well as in Asia Minor, reported by ancient authors, was known until recently in the scholarly literature mainly as presented with the most detailed comments by G. Nachtergaele¹. The information of ancient authors about the Celts in general has been published with the original ancient texts and the corresponding German translations by K. Tomaschitz², who has also given some brief and generally accepted comments regarding the Celtic kingdom in Thrace³.

The history of the state of the Galatians in Thrace so far provoked a lot of discussions as far in the past years researchers did not provide definitive answers to the most important questions of its existence, territorial scope and the first capital. Generally some hypotheses were built mainly because of the information in the work of Polybios⁴.

Recently, all these questions were answered in a book⁵. In this book, the bronze coins of the ruler Kavaros are gathered and presented in one place, as it was believed that other types of bronze coins of this ruler were unknown⁶.

Metodi MANOV

Bulgarian Academy of Sciences
National Institute of Archaeology
with Museum, Sofia, Bulgaria
hemusthegreat@abv.bg

Vassil DAMYANOV

Independent researcher, Sofia, Bulgaria
vassko_d@yahoo.com

¹ NACHTERGAEL 1977.

² TOMASCHITZ 2002.

³ TOMASCHITZ 2002, 139–141 with references.

⁴ Polyb. IV, 46; 52; VIII, 22.

⁵ MANOV 2017a.

⁶ MANOV 2017a, 171.

But very recently, in a German private collection, a bronze coin was photographed, which, as will now be seen here, turned out to be a coin of a completely unknown type, which is certainly a coin of the ruler of Thrace – Kavaros. Its description is as follows:

Obverse: Image of the ruler Kavaros with a laurel wreath as Apollo.

Reverse: Sword in a sheath. The sword points to the sky. Top right next to the sword – another symbol – a lyre. Legend: BACIAEΩC KAYAPOY. The letter sigma in the title is with a lunate shape.

This bronze coin has the following metric data: d. 13 mm, weight: 2.43 g (Fig. 1).

So far, the earliest bronze coins of the ruler Kavaros have been well represented, with an oval shield on the reverse and another symbol – a lyre (Fig. 2). For these earliest coins, it was established with certainty that they were minted in Apre/Apri⁷. In terms of style, the new and previously unknown type of bronze coin of the ruler Kavaros, which is presented here, is most similar to the earliest type of bronze coins of this ruler – with an oval shield on the reverse. Furthermore, the letters on the reverse of the unknown type of bronze coin are presented in the same style, with the letter sigma also having a lunate shape. Therefore, again, some things can be said about the earliest type of bronze coins of the ruler Kavaros.

The earliest bronze coins of the ruler Kavaros are of very rare issues, and this type of coins was formerly known as “Apollo laureate right/ Celtic shield”. As for the time and place of minting these bronze coins so far there were only different assumptions. For example, for the coin from the British Museum it is stated that has been struck at Cabyle and dated in the years between 225 – 200 BC⁸. For the coin from the collection of W. Stancomb is also shown that has probably been struck at Cabyle, dated in the years 230 – 200 BC⁹. For the coin of this type from the Coin cabinet of the State Museums in Berlin is also stated that it is probably from the years 230 – 200 BC, without given even any hypothetical place of striking¹⁰. But such dating presented is not consistent with the actual time of reign of the ruler Kavaros.

It must be pointed out that even back in 1895 has been published such a specimen bronze coin by de Renner, who has noticed the other additional symbol lyre on the reverse, but he presented it positioned horizontally without further comments, probably due to lack of other information¹¹. Later this another symbol lyre on the coins of this type already nobody noted and did not mention it at all, until a publication of 2013¹², and in various collections these coins are presented only as “Apollo laureate, right/ Celtic shield”. In this way are presented the coins published in the British volumes of *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum* – respectively from the collection of the British Museum¹³ and in the collection of W. Stancomb¹⁴.

⁷ MANOV 2017b.

⁸ SNG IX, 1993, No. 197.

⁹ SNG XI, 2000, No. 303.

¹⁰ Coin cabinet of the State Museums in Berlin, No. 18210571.

¹¹ DE RENNER 1895, 71, No. 925.

¹² MANOV/DAMYANOV 2013.

¹³ SNG IX, 1993, No. 197.

¹⁴ SNG XI, 2000, No. 303.

Some time ago another specimen of this type coins was published with current descriptions known: “Head of Apollo with a laurel wreath, right/ Celtic shield”, but it was paid special attention to the fact that on the reverse of this type bronze coins there is another symbol – lyre, and besides reverse of coins must be presented in another way – with the legend up and lyre symbol should also be viewed in the vertical position¹⁵. Years ago the identification of a new mint in Thrace has been done, where several bronze coins with the image of Celtic shield on the reverse together with the additional symbol lyre were presented, the legend being divided into two parts on both sides of the shield – ΑΠΠΗ/ΝΩΝ. It has been established that coins of this type were struck in the settlement named Apros/Apri, located in the region north of the Thracian Chersonese¹⁶.

When a comparison was made between the additional symbol lyre from the coins with the legend ΑΠΠΗ/ΝΩΝ of similar denomination and the coins of this type of the ruler Kavaros, it has already been shown well that the mint for these coins of the ruler Kavaros was the *polis* of Apre/Apri, but the presentation of their obverse as an image of Apollo remained¹⁷. The symbol lyre is also known as the basic image on the reverse of the bronze coins of Apre of the largest denomination¹⁸. It can be reasonably said about this symbol lyre that it was the main symbol of the *polis* Apre/Apri – most probably due to the cult of Apollo in this settlement. Recently, the earliest bronze coins of the ruler Kavaros were presented in the best possible way, given the fact that the obverse features the image of the ruler himself with a golden laurel wreath as Apollo, while at the same time the best chronology of these coins was given¹⁹.

Let us return again to the unknown bronze coin presented here. About this new unknown type of bronze coins presented here, thanks to the other symbol on the reverse – the lyre, it can be said with certainty that they were also struck at Apre. Furthermore, from the presented metric data it can be seen that this coin is of a smaller denomination compared to the earliest type of bronze coins of this ruler – with an oval shield on the reverse, so it is probably half the denomination of the mentioned coins, because the coins with an oval shield on the reverse have a diameter of about 16 – 17 mm, and weight of about 4.7 g.

In fact, the image of a sword on the reverse of bronze coins is very rare. Such an image was previously known from the reverse of bronze coins of the Bosporan ruler Leukon II²⁰, as well as on the reverse of bronze coins with the name of Eupolemos, general of Cassander, possibly struck at Mylasa in Caria in Asia Minor²¹.

Not long ago, an unknown bronze coin of an unknown ruler of the Celtic Kingdom in Thrace was presented, the reverse of which also bears an image of a sword in a scabbard²². But unlike the other mentioned bronze coins, the image of the sword on the reverse of the previously unknown

¹⁵ MANOV/DAMYANOV 2013, 14; 17.

¹⁶ DRAGANOV 2005.

¹⁷ MANOV/DAMYANOV 2013, 14.

¹⁸ See MANOV 2018, 570, Pl. II, Fig. 1.

¹⁹ MANOV 2017B.

²⁰ SNG IX, 1993, No. 959.

²¹ See BILLOWS 1989.

²² MANOV 2018, 569, Pl. I, Fig. 2.

bronze coin of the ruler Kavaros presented here is completely different, because this sword points to the sky.

Up to now no one knew exactly and the period of reign of the ruler of the Galatian Kingdom in Thrace – Kavaros. For this ruler only assumptions has been made being presented known coins with his name and title²³. With significant contributions for research are the works of Todor Gerassimov, who identified for the first time the mint of the silver tetradrachms with the name and title of the ruler Kavaros. Thanks to the specific image of Artemis with two torches on the reverse of these coins, T. Gerasimov established beyond reasonable doubt that the striking of these tetradrachms occurred at Cabyle at an unspecified time in the 3rd century BC²⁴. Some aspects of the coinage of the ruler Kavaros are also represented in the studies of other authors²⁵, while the tetradrachms with the name and with the title of the ruler Kavaros are presented in a book on the coinage of Cabyle²⁶. Very recently, a research was presented with a new approach to the study of silver and gold coins in the West Pontic area in the 3rd century BC, which pointed out that these were coins of the ruler Kavaros²⁷.

It should be noted that it had already been found the initial year of the foundation of the state of the Galatians in Thrace, which proved to be 279 BC, but exactly how the events occurred, are presented in a recent work²⁸. In this new work was clarified also the period of reign of the ruler avaros, as well as was specified the year of his enthronement as a ruler of the state of the Galatians in Thrace – this year was 257 BC. So it was established that officially the years of the reign of the ruler Kavaros were between 257 and 218 BC²⁹.

With the image of the lyre on the reverse of his earliest bronze coins struck at Apre/Apri – both these with the oval shield on the reverse, as well as these here presented – with a sword in a sheath, the ruler Kavaros stated well enough that he received the power and the title of *basileus* from Apollo.

Both the earliest two types of bronze coins of the king K – Kavaros – these with the most distinctive symbol on their reverse – an oval shield, as well as these with an image of a sword, both with another additional symbol – lyre, were struck in the ancient *polis* of Apre/Apri, located north of the Thracian Chersonese – on the route of the future Via Egnatia, the settlement being known in Roman times as a Roman colony – Colonia Claudia Aprestis, recorded in the well known Tabula Peutingeriana³⁰. Located on the most important road – the road coming from Thrace along the river Hebros (modern Maritsa) and going to the Thracian Chersonese and on to Asia Minor, and the road from Greece and Macedonia from the northern shores of the Aegean Sea to Byzantion – and then to Asia Minor, obviously Apre/Apri was not coincidentally the place of striking the earliest bronze coins of the ruler Kavaros. Because from that place could be controlled the two

most important routes to Asia Minor through both straits – the Dardanelles and the Thracian Bosphorus, as the Galatians had imposed their control even on the city of Byzantion³¹. It was from there that the Galatians managed to impose control and tax dependence on the cities of the Propontis and the Thracian Chersonese, for which the ancient author Livy mentions only briefly³².

As for the most important question – where exactly was located the first capital of the state of the Galatians in Thrace – already the answer is given in a new work, which presents also other very important facts – that the state of the Galatians in Thrace had more than one capital city and had simultaneously even three different capitals³³.

The ruler Kavaros also minted other bronze coins at various mints in his state. Therefore, for clarity, the other bronze coins of the ruler Kavaros with his name and title will also be presented here.

In later times of his reign, the ruler Kavaros began minting in Cabyle another type of bronze coins with complex composition of images. Probably due to the insufficient research of these coins, even with the first found and known coin of this type, despite some difficult-to-see letters on it, it was determined to have been minted by the Thracian Spartokos in Cabyle³⁴. Other specimens of the same coins, found mainly in Cabyle and its region, were also published, presented in one publication and dated between 279 and 277 BC³⁵. These bronze coins have so far been mistakenly attributed to the Thracian ruler Spartokos, but in fact they are different, their inscription is completely different, which is why both their presentation and dating – as will be seen – are completely different from the previous ones.

Here is another presentation: “Image of the ruler Kavaros with his helmet with a lion symbol / the goddess Artemis gives insignia to the ruler for the renewal of power” (Fig. 3). This type of coins was minted in Cabyle from 239 BC³⁶.

Another type of bronze coins, defined until recently as “Apollo laureate, right / Nike crowning the name of the ruler”, has actually been defined as “Nike laureate, right / Nike crowning the name of the ruler” (Fig. 4), being established with certainty that this type of coins was minted in Mesembria³⁷.

Another type of bronze coins of the ruler Kavaros has so far been presented as “Head of Zeus/Great God with a taenia / cornucopia”, but was determined as “Image of the ruler Kavaros with a taenia, represented as the Great God / cornucopia with overflowing fruits” (Fig. 5). This type of coins was found to have been minted in Odessos³⁸.

Another type of bronze coins, previously identified as “Head of Hermes with petasos, right / winged caduceus” was identified as “Image of the ruler Kavaros as Hermes with petasos / winged caduceus” (Fig. 6), and it was found that these coins were minted in Callatis³⁹.

²³ See MANOV 2010; LAZAROV 2010; MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2018.

²⁴ GERASSIMOV 1958; GERASSIMOV 1959.

²⁵ LAZAROV 2010; DIMITROV 2010.

²⁶ DRAGANOV 1993, 75–86.

²⁷ MANOV 2024.

²⁸ MANOV 2017A.

²⁹ MANOV 2017A, 92; 184; MANOV 2018, 565.

³⁰ See the information for Apros/Apri presented in: DRAGANOV 2005; see also MANOV/DAMYANOV 2013.

³¹ See the information in Polyb. IV, 45, 9 – 46, 1–4.

³² See Livy XXXVIII, 16.

³³ See MANOV 2017a, 179–182.

³⁴ GETOV 1980; DIMITROV 1980; DRAGANOV 1993, 11–24.

³⁵ DRAGANOV 1993, 11–24.

³⁶ MANOV 2017a, 169–170.

³⁷ MANOV 2017a, 164 with Figs. 65–67; 171.

³⁸ MANOV 2017a, 160, Figs. 60–61; 171.

³⁹ MANOV 2017a, 127, Fig. 42; 171.

In conclusion, it can be said that the new and previously unknown coin presented here is further evidence of the place of minting of the earliest bronze coins of the ruler Kavaros, as this place was also the first capital of the state of the Galatians in Thrace – Apre⁴⁰. This coin with a surely identified minting location is another significant confirmation of the events presented in the aforementioned 2017 book⁴¹. This coin, presented here, was probably struck on the occasion of the enthronement of the ruler Kavaros. The ruler Kavaros officially ruled the state in Thrace between 257 and 218 BC⁴². During the reign of this great ruler of Hellenism, the state reached its greatest territorial expansion, as well as its greatest heyday in terms of economy and development of arts⁴³.

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ABBREVIATIONS

SNG IX, 1993 = Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum, Volume IX: The British Museum, Part I: The Black Sea (M. Price ed.) (London: British Museum Press).

SNG XI, 2000 = Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum, Volume XI: The William Stancomb Collection of Coins of the Black Sea Region (Oxford: Oxford University Press and Spink & Son Limited).

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⁴⁰ See MANOV 2017a, 179–182.

⁴¹ MANOV 2017a.

⁴² MANOV 2017a, 92; 184; MANOV 2018, 565.

⁴³ MANOV 2017a, 186, Fig. 79.



Fig. 1. An unknown type of bronze coin of the ruler Kavaros – with sword in a sheath on the reverse, struck at Apre, d. 13 mm. Scale: 1,5: 1 (image: Vassil Damyanov).



Fig. 2. A bronze coin of the ruler Kavaros – with an oval shield on the reverse, struck at Apre, d. 16 mm (Münzkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin, Germany – No. 18210571; image: Lutz-Jürgen Lübke).



Fig. 3. A bronze coin of the ruler Kavaros, struck at Cabyle, d. 20 mm (image: Metodi Manov).



Fig. 4. A bronze coin of the ruler Kavaros, struck at Mesembria, d. 20 mm (image: Classical Numismatic Group, E-Auction 324, April 2014, lot 30).



Fig. 5. A bronze coin of the ruler Kavaros, struck at Odessos, d. 14 mm (image: Classical Numismatic Group, E-Auction 203, January 2009, lot 45 – with the permission of www.wildwinds.com).



Fig. 6. A bronze coin of the ruler Kavaros, struck at Callatis, d. 12 mm (image: Numismatik Naumann, Auction 79, 07.07.2019, lot 66).