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ELIZABETH J. PENDLETON

THE COINAGE OF PEIRASIA

PLATES 3-4

INTRODUCTION

To the student of Thessalian coinage, that of Peirasia is obscure almost to the point of invisibility.<sup>1</sup> It is absent from all the sylloges and from the catalogues of important collections such as McClean<sup>2</sup> and Pozzi;<sup>3</sup> Rogers knew of no examples of its bronze coinage, and it is lacking from the trays of most institutions. With two exceptions (one misattributed), all of the specimens known to the author are in private collections and none has ever been offered in auction catalogues and fixed price lists.

The town of Peirasia is located in the Thessaliotis, on the western bank of the river Enipeus, north of its confluence with the Apidanus<sup>4</sup> (*see map, p. 46*).<sup>5</sup> Close by, as Babelon mentioned,<sup>6</sup> was the city of Phyllos with its famous temple of Apollo Phylleios.

The first coin of Peirasia to be published was a trihemiobol (*Pl. 3, 1*) in Athens that both Head<sup>7</sup> and Babelon cite from an obscure article of 1866 by

*Bibliography*

- DECOURT J.-CL. DECOURT, *La Vallée de l'Énipeus en Thessalie: Études de topographie et de géographie antique* (Athens 1990)  
HERRMANN F. HERRMANN, *Die Silbermünzen von Larissa in Thessalien*, *ZfN* 35, 1924  
LAVVA S. LAVVA, *Die Münzprägung von Pharsalos* (Saarbrücken 2001)  
MOUSTAKA A. MOUSTAKA, *Kulte und Mythen auf thessalischen Münzen* (Würzburg 1983)  
ROGERS E. ROGERS, *The Copper Coinage of Thessaly* (London 1932)

<sup>1</sup> I am deeply indebted to Basil Demetriadi for his comments on this article and for valuable discussions of the coinage of Thessaly.

<sup>2</sup> S.W. GROSE, *Catalogue of the McClean Collection of Greek Coins* (Cambridge 1923-1929).

<sup>3</sup> S. BOUTIN, *Catalogue des monnaies grecques antiques de l'ancienne collection Pozzi: monnaies frappées en Europe* (Monaco 1992).

<sup>4</sup> R. STILLWELL (ed.), *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Classical Sites* (Princeton 1976), p. 684.

<sup>5</sup> *Map of Thessaly*, from H. KIEPERT, *Karten zur alten Geschichte* 5. Griechenland (Berlin n.d.).

<sup>6</sup> *Traité* 2 IV, p. 294.

<sup>7</sup> *HN*<sup>2</sup>, p. 303; *Traité* 2 IV, pp. 294-295, 519 (neither is illustrated)

Postolakas;<sup>8</sup> apparently no photograph of the coin has ever been previously published, although Postolakas supplied a clear line drawing (*Pl. 3, 1*).

The obols are a little less elusive. Schwabacher published a single specimen from the collection of G. Empedokles in 1939 (*Pl. 3, 14*).<sup>9</sup> Earlier, Sir Herman



*Map of Thessaly (see n. 5)*

<sup>8</sup> A. PNOSTOLAKAS, *Medaglie inedite del Nazionale Museo Numismatico di Athene*, *Annali dell'Ist. arch.* 1866, pp. 331-332, Monumenti VIII, pl. 32, 5; *here Pl. 3, 1*. MOUSTAKA includes the coin in her study, p. 105, 43, again without illustration. LAVVA publishes another trihemiobol of different dies, pl. 12, 264, but erroneously attributes it to Pharsalos.

<sup>9</sup> W. SCHWABACHER, *Contributions to Greek Numismatics*, s.v. Peirasia, NC 1939, pp. 12-13, pl. 1, 12; *here Pl. 3, 14*.

Weber had bought an obol from Prof. A. Rhousopoulos in 1897 (*Pl. 3, 19*), albeit one wrongly attributed to Demetrias; this erroneous attribution reappears, with due reservations, in Forrer's catalogue.<sup>10</sup> Moustaka attributed another specimen to Kierion (*Pl. 3, 13*).<sup>11</sup>

The bronze coinage of Peirasia has come to light more recently than the silver and has hitherto never been adequately published. Moustaka included a brief description of a bronze that she dated to the first half of the 4th century, but without dimensions or illustration;<sup>12</sup> otherwise there has been no mention of the bronze coinage of this city.

The purpose of this article is to draw together both the published and the inadequately published coinage of Peirasia so that its existence may be better recognised. The catalogue includes the very small number of known silver and bronze specimens. Finally the current state of knowledge about the history of the polis in antiquity will be summarized.

## CATALOGUE

### *I The Silver Coins*

#### *A Trihemioobols*

*Obv.* Head of Athena facing slightly left, wearing triple-crested Corinthian helmet, and with corkscrew ringlet(s).

*Rev.* Helmeted horseman in short tunic cantering right, raising his right arm to thrust a spear; horse with forelegs raised and hindlegs on ground-line; tail arched but not looped; mane erect.

T 1 O1 Ringlet on l. and r.; head tilted l.; hint of drapery (?) l.  
R1 Spear ends above mount's r. knee; ground-line ends below rider's foot. ΠΕΙ-ΡΑΣΙ-Ε clockwise; untidy letters, varying size.

a, 1.24 g, 12, Athens, NM inv. 1763. *Pl. 3, 1*

b, 1.24 g, 5, Private coll. A. *Pl. 3, 2; Pl. 4, 2A*

<sup>10</sup> Weber coll. II, 2804.

<sup>11</sup> MOUSTAKA, p. 128, 140.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105, 42.

- T 2 O2 As above, but head not tilted; ringlet only on l.  
 R2 As last but spear ends above horse's l. knee; short ground-line. ΠΕΙ-Ρ-Α-Σ-Ι counter-clockwise, partially retrograde.
- a, 1.40 g, 6, Private coll. A. *Pl. 3, 3*  
 b, 1.30 g, 2, Private coll. A. *Pl. 3, 4*  
 c, 1.30 g, 6, Private coll. A. *Pl. 3, 5*  
 d, 1.26 g, 9, Private coll. A. *Pl. 3, 6*  
 e, 1.21 g, 7, Private coll. A. *Pl. 3, 7*  
 f, 1.12 g, 1, Private coll. A. *Pl. 3, 8*  
 g, 1.07 g, 11 ANS 1944.100.1 7433 = LAVVA pl. 12, 264 (misattributed to Pharsalos). *Pl. 3, 9*  
 h, 1.06 g, 11, Private coll. B. *Pl. 3, 10*  
 i, 1.05 g, 8, Private coll. A. *Pl. 3, 11*  
 j, 1.03 g, 12, Private coll. A. *Pl. 3, 12*

*B Obols*

- Obv.* Young male head r. or l., hair bound by taenia; concave neck truncation.  
*Rev.* ΠΕΙ-ΡΑ-ΣΙ-ΕΟΝ (retrograde) or ΠΕ-ΡΑΣ-ΙΕ Naked warrior, helmeted, standing three-quarter l., seen from behind, shield on l. arm, spear levelled in r. hand, weight on advanced l. leg, r. leg back.

- O 1 O1 Head r., hair forms smooth profile.  
 R1  
 a, 0.80 g, 3, Private coll. A, ex Petsalis; see MOUSTAKA pl. 3, 140 ('Kierion'). *Pl. 3, 13*  
 b, 0.78 g, Empedokles coll. see NC 1939, pl. 1, 12. *Pl. 3, 14*
- O 2 O2 Head l.; hair forms a line of 'sausage' waves.  
 R2 Similar to last.
- a, 0.84 g, 6, Private coll. A. *Pl. 3, 15*  
 b, 0.81 g, 12, Private coll. A. *Pl. 3, 16*
- O 3 O3 Head l.; hair forms two lines of loose waves.  
 R3 As last, but with plumed helmet; ΠΕ-ΡΑΣ-ΙΕ
- a, 0.96 g, 8, Private coll. A. *Pl. 3, 17; Pl. OO, 17A*  
 b, 0.83 g, 8, Private coll. A. *Pl. 3, 18*  
 c, 0.79 g, 8, Private coll. A, ex Sotheby's 25 Oct. 1984 (Virgil M. Brand, part 7), 56, ex Weber 2804 ('Demetrias'), purchased from A. Rhousopoulos in 1897. *Pl. O, 19*

*II The Bronze Coins**A Small module bronzes (11 mm)*

- Obv.* Head of Athena r., wearing crested Corinthian helmet.  
*Rev.* Athena Itonia in long tunic and with crested helmet advancing r., her tunic hanging in folds between her widely spaced legs; she holds a spear above her shoulder and raises her shield.

- BS 1 O1 Border (of dots ?).  
 R1 ΠΕΙΡΑΣΙ- upwards l.; -ΩΝ downwards r.  
 a, 1.34 g, 12, Private coll. A. *Pl. 4, 1*

- BS 2 O2 Similar to last, border of dots.  
 R2 Similar to last.  
 a, 1.60 g, 12, Private coll. A. *Pl. 4, 2*

*B Large module bronzes (17–20 mm)*<sup>13</sup>

- BL 1 O1 Types as last.  
 R1 ΠΕΙΡΑΣΙ- upwards l., -Ε to r. of head, -ΩΝ downwards r.  
 a, 5.13 g, 6, Private coll. A. *Pl. 4, 3*

- BL 2 O1 As last.  
 R2 Similar to last. ΠΕΙΡΑΣΙ to r. of head, -ΩΝ downwards r.  
 a, 6.35 g, 12, Private coll. A. *Pl. 4, 4*  
 b, 4.94 g, 6, Private coll. A. *Pl. 4, 5*

- BL 3 O1 As last.  
 R3 Similar to last.  
 a, 6.15 g, 12, Private coll. A. *Pl. 4, 6*  
 b, 3.89 g, 6, Private coll. B. *Pl. 4, 7*

- BL 4 O2 Similar to last; no border of dots.  
 R2 As BL 2 above.  
 a, 6.56 g, 6, Private coll. A. *Pl. 4, 8*

- BL 5 O2 As last.  
 R3 As BL 3 above.  
 a, 6.33 g, 6, Private coll. A. *Pl. 4, 9*

<sup>13</sup> A worn large-module bronze is said to have appeared in trade recently but no details are available.

## COMMENTARY

*Trihemiobols**From unique to a dozen specimens*

Postolakas' description of the types of the then unique trihemiobol at Athens<sup>14</sup> sounded suspiciously similar to those of the well-known trihemiobols of Pharsalos.<sup>15</sup> Nothing is known of its find spot, but Postolakas recorded that it belonged to a certain Giorgio Manussi of Trieste.<sup>16</sup> The second specimen to come to light (*Pl. 3, 2*) is, however, also relatively well preserved, has a clear ethnic and shares its dies with the first. Clearly, these trihemiobols were struck in very small numbers.

This picture has been significantly altered by the recent appearance of a third specimen (*Pl. 3, 10*), which was initially attributed to Pharsalos even though it bore the clear letters ΠΕΙ. This new coin allows the secure attribution of a group of rather worn coins from the same dies to Peirasia rather than to Pharsalos, with the result that twelve trihemiobols of Peirasia have now been identified. It seems likely that a few more lurk unrecognised in public or private collections.

Lavva's study of Pharsalos, however, muddies the water further, as she illustrates a trihemiobol of Peirasia in the ANS as Pharsalos and lists a further four coins from the same dies (pl. 12, 264, V148/R182 on p. 210).<sup>17</sup> While she notes that the obverse differed from other Pharsalian trihemiobols, she did not notice that the rider on the reverse was thrusting a spear instead of swinging a Pharsalian lagobolon above his head.<sup>18</sup>

*Style and iconography*

As noted, the similarity of the Peirasian trihemiobols to those of Pharsalos is indeed striking. The types are nearly identical, a facing head of Athena wearing a triple-crested helmet and a horseman cantering right, wielding his weapon. There are minor differences in the treatment of the obverse head; the main difference, of course, is that the Pharsalian rider wields a lagobolon, not, as at Peirasia, a spear. Nevertheless, it is evident that Peirasia took its coin types from the nearby city of Pharsalos, the chief city of western Thessaly, which had strong associations with Athena and with horsemen types, as its abundant coinage shows.

<sup>14</sup> *Supra*, n. 8; Postolakas did not illustrate it, but he gives an accurate line drawing that could serve as a visual reference for further identification. DECOURT, p. 166 confirms this coin's existence but erroneously calls it a hemidrachm.

<sup>15</sup> For the trihemiobols of Pharsalos with similar types see LAVVA, pp. 209-211 and pl. 12, 260-263. But do note that pl. 12, 264 is Peirasia.

<sup>16</sup> The author has not been able to find out anything further about Manussi. DECOURT, p. 166 gives his name as Manucci.

<sup>17</sup> All five coins are included in the present catalogue: T 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d, 2g.

<sup>18</sup> These coins are worn and details are not easy to see, especially from photographs. The spear, however, is clearly visible on the ANS coin (*Pl. 3, 9*).

That neighbouring cities should share coin types was not unusual in ancient times. There are several examples of this phenomenon in Thessaly. In the first part of the 5<sup>th</sup> century we find two monetary leagues in Thessaly; one group employed the *taurokathapsia* types, while the other used the forepart of a horse and a grain of wheat.<sup>19</sup> In both cases a broad range of denominations was minted. Triikka copied types of the abundant coinage of the powerful city of Larissa. The obols of both cities bear figures of a nymph doing various things, such as bouncing a ball,<sup>20</sup> and both issued trihemioobols with a seated nymph looking into a mirror.<sup>21</sup>

That Peirasia copied the types of Pharsalos might also reflect a political alignment, but the types of the facing head and the horseman also occur on trihemioobols of Larissa.<sup>22</sup> This seems less likely than that the choice of types simply reflected local tastes.

### *Obols*

As noted above, Schwabacher correctly published an obol of Peirasia as long ago as 1939;<sup>23</sup> a further two were published and illustrated, but both were misattributed: to Demetrias by Forrer and to Kierion by Moustaka.<sup>24</sup> More specimens have come to light since then, mostly with a Thessalian provenance.

### *Dating the issue(s): Silver coins*

Since the Peirasian trihemioobols clearly imitate those of Pharsalos, it follows that they must postdate them, though perhaps not by very long. Pharsalian coins have traditionally been dated to the 4<sup>th</sup> century; Lavva, however, made the trihemioobols into a short-lived issue between 424 and 405/4 BC.<sup>25</sup> Her high dating has not met with general acceptance: it has been argued that it is preferable to retain a 4<sup>th</sup> century date, if only because the Pharsalian bronze coins with the facing head must clearly postdate Eukleidas' Syracusan tetradrachm of the late 5<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, a 4<sup>th</sup> century date fits in better with the

<sup>19</sup> K. LIAMPI, *Das Corpus der Obolen und Hemiobolen des thessalischen Bundes und die politische Geschichte Thessaliens im 2. Viertel des 5. Jahrhunderts v.Chr.*, in: W. LESCHHORN *et al.* (eds.), *Hellas und der griechische Osten. Festschrift für Peter Robert Franke* (Saarbrücken 1996), pp. 99–126, with earlier literature.

<sup>20</sup> Larissa: HERRMANN pl. 3, 13; Triikka: BMC 13, pl. 11, 11.

<sup>21</sup> Larissa: HERRMANN pl. 2, 12–13; Triikka: *Traité* 2/IV pl. 291, 18.

<sup>22</sup> HERRMANN pl. 6, 1; *Traité* 2/IV 724–725, pl. 299, 12–13; BABELON classifies them as obols.

<sup>23</sup> See *supra*, n. 9.

<sup>24</sup> Forrer, *Weber coll.* II 2804; MOUSTAKA p. 128, 140, with pl. 3, 140.

<sup>25</sup> LAVVA p. 209; see also p. 30.

<sup>26</sup> See the review by W. FISCHER-BOSSERT in *NC* 163, 2003, pp. 399–405, and another by C.C. LORBER, *SNR* 82, 2003, pp. 158–163.



iconographically similar trihemiobols of Larissa that seem to be contemporary, though they are probably slightly earlier than the later facing-head drachms.<sup>27</sup>

The present relative rarity of Peirasian trihemiobols indicates that the original issue must have been of small size. Even if a worn specimen or two are in collections misidentified as Pharsalian, this would not greatly increase their number or affect their relative rarity.

In 1939, Schwabacher dated the obol of Peirasia to the broad period c. 400–344 BC.<sup>28</sup> For the roughly contemporary obols of Methyion he opted for «c. 350 BC or later»,<sup>29</sup> while Brett dated them to 400–350 BC.<sup>30</sup> Moustaka dated the Peirasia obol to the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>31</sup> On general stylistic grounds the 4<sup>th</sup> century seems to be where the coin belongs.

The model for the warrior on the Peirasian obols was obviously provided by the drachms of the Opuntian Locrians, and here a recent die-study helps to narrow down the date.<sup>32</sup> The authors suggest that the first group of drachms bearing the legend ΟΠΟΝΤΙΩΝ and with the warrior seen from behind<sup>33</sup> can tentatively be assigned to the third quarter of the 4th century, before 338 BC, while the second group, with the legend ΛΟΚΡΩΝ and ΥΠΙΟ, was probably struck between either 338 (after the peace of Corinth) or 335 (when the peace was renewed by Alexander) and 270. This would suggest a date not earlier than the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century for the Peirasian obols.

### *Bronze coins*

The two different modules of the bronze coins clearly signal relative value. However, as is usual for Greek bronzes, the absolute value of the units and their relation to the silver is unknown. The flans are not carefully shaped – several are distinctly oval. But, as the small ones average 11 mm and the large ones c. 19 mm, there is never any doubt as to which denomination a coin belongs, and the unity of style and type shows that both were minted at the same time.

Until Rogers' book on Thessalian bronzes is updated to include the discoveries of the last seventy years or so, it will be difficult to comprehend the full range of bronze denominations favoured by Thessalian cities; but it is clear that cities not uncommonly produced a range of coins of different sizes. As with Peirasia, the city of Orthos issued two series of bronzes, using the same

<sup>27</sup> The early facing-head drachms of Larissa belong to the first quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> century and end in ca 370 BC. See C.C. LORBER, *The Early Facing Head Drachms of Thessalian Larissa*, in: H. NILSSON (ed.), *Florilegium Numismaticum, Studia in honorem U. Westermark edita* (Stockholm 1992), pp. 259–282. This suggests that the trihemiobols of Larissa must start no earlier than around 370.

<sup>28</sup> *Supra*, n. 9, p. 12.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>30</sup> Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. *Catalogue of Greek Coins* (Boston 1955), 909.

<sup>31</sup> MOUSTAKA, p. 128, 'Kierion'.

<sup>32</sup> By J. Morineau Humphris and D. Delbridge. I am indebted to Diana Delbridge's generosity for this information prior to publication.

<sup>33</sup> As *Traité 2/III 432*, pl. 207, 6 and Weber coll. 3145.

type for both denominations.<sup>34</sup> They are similar to the Peirasian bronzes in size, even if both modules are slightly larger, measuring c. 13–15 mm and c. 20–22 mm respectively.

Peirasia and Orthos used the same obverse type on their bronze issues, a head of Athena facing right, wearing a Corinthian helmet. The type was very likely copied from the gold coinage that Alexander the Great produced in Macedon in the 320s and which must have been well known to his contemporaries. It would not have been the only instance where a Thessalian city copied a Macedonian coin type. The trihemiohols and rare didrachms of Kierion bear on their obverse a majestic head of Zeus that closely resembles that on the tetradrachms of Philip II.<sup>35</sup>

What is striking is that Peirasia uses Athena for the reverse type as well as for the obverse on its bronzes. On the reverse, she is represented as Athena Itonia, familiar from the abundant later series of silver and bronze struck by the Thessalian League from 196 BC. Her figure very probably derived from the Macedonian Athena Alkidamos who was greatly venerated at Pella and who appears on a number of coins of Ptolemy I, Antigonos Gonatas and Philip V.<sup>36</sup> Athena Itonia's appeal in Thessaly was such that she was still present several hundred years later on the bronzes of Gallienus (AD 261–268)<sup>37</sup> and Pausanias relates that the Thessalians used «Itonia» as their battle cry.<sup>38</sup> The precise site of the temple of Athena Itonia was long uncertain, but recent excavations by D. Theocharis have located it at Philia near Karditsa, thanks to numerous votives and an inscription.<sup>39</sup>

The Hellenistic models for both coin types used on the Peirasian bronzes point to a 3<sup>rd</sup> century date for the issue. Moustaka dated them to the first half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century and suggested for the roughly contemporary bronzes of Orthos a date not before the last quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup>/beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century.<sup>40</sup> For Peirasia her date seems high while her date for Orthos is convincing. Rogers had dated the bronze coins of Orthos to 344–200 BC.<sup>41</sup> In any event, both issues

<sup>34</sup> ROGERS 421–422. For Orthos see M.H. HANSEN / TH.H. NIELSEN (eds.), *An Inventory of Archaic and Classical poleis* (Oxford 2004), pp. 698–699, 405. It should not be confused with the Homeric Orthe that later became Phalanna.

<sup>35</sup> Didrachms: *Traité* 2/IV pl. 289, 20–21, trihemiohols: SNG Lockett 1548; see also G. LE RIDER, *Le monnayage d'or et d'argent de Philippe II de Macédoine de 359–294* (Paris 1977), 27–35, early issues of the Pella mint.

<sup>36</sup> A. BALDWIN BRETT, Athena ΑΛΚΙΑΔΑΜΟΣ of Pella, *ANSMN* 4, 1950, pp. 55–72. The goddess on the coins is copied from a statue that stood in the temple at Pella. She first appeared on coins as a symbol on early tetradrachms of Alexander from a Macedonian mint, see M.J. PRICE, *The Coinage in the Name of Alexander the Great and Philip Arrhidaeus* (London/Zurich 1991), 105; and as a full reverse type for the first time on tetradrachms of Ptolemy I, BRETT pl. 11, 5–7.

<sup>37</sup> See MOUSTAKA pp. 29–30; for the Thessalian bronze of Gallienus see ROGERS pp. 126–129.

<sup>38</sup> Paus. 10,1,10.

<sup>39</sup> MOUSTAKA pp. 23–25; also LAVVA pp. 32–35, and C. MORGAN, *Early Greek States beyond the Polis* (London 2003), p. 141.

<sup>40</sup> MOUSTAKA, for Peirasia p. 105, 42; for Orthe p. 27, also pp. 104–105 with pl. 7, 30.

<sup>41</sup> ROGERS, p. 138.

cannot have predated Alexander's gold coinage, which supplied the model for the obverse type. Thus, at present, lacking any archaeological evidence to narrow down the time span, a date of c. 320/310 – 250/200 seems about right for these coins.

### THE ANCIENT SITE AND HISTORY OF PEIRASIA

It was not only numismatists such as Head and Babelon who speculated about the site of ancient Peirasia. The search for it started as early as the 1830s,<sup>42</sup> and it was only in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century that it was firmly located on the western bank of the Enipeus, north of its confluence with the Apidanus.<sup>43</sup>

Stephanos Byzantios had identified Peirasia with Homeric Asterion, though in historical times this name was only used for the citadel.<sup>44</sup> Asterion is included in the Catalogue of Ships as having supplied one under the leadership of Eurypylos, son of Euaemon.<sup>45</sup> Eustathius in his commentary on the Iliad does not mention the connection between Asterion and Peirasia.<sup>46</sup> Literary tradition, such as Apollonius Rhodius writing in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, speaks of the hero Asterion, son of Cometes, among the Argonauts.<sup>47</sup> A connection between Asterion and Peirasia is found in Hyginus,<sup>48</sup> who calls him either the son of Pyremus from Pelinna, or the son of Priscus from Piresia in Thessaly at the confluence of the Apidanus and Enipeus. Pyremus and Priscus are probably mere corruptions of Peirasia that have crept into the tradition. It should be noted that this Asterion is not the city's founder, but merely a hero who was born there or lived there.

These literary references could have some bearing on the coinage. If the inhabitants of Peirasia claimed in the 4<sup>th</sup> century that their town was the successor of the Homeric Asterion, then Eurypylos is a candidate for the warrior on the reverse of the obols. If the tradition of a hero called Asterion living at Peirasia predates Apollonius of Rhodes and is not his own embellishment of the Argonauts' legend, this shadowy figure is another candidate.

As for the history of Peirasia, we know next to nothing. It is almost completely absent from our sources and when it appears, there is a certain amount of confusion. Thukydides (II, 22, 3) includes the Peirasians in a list of Thessalian peoples who gave military assistance to Athens in 431 BC under the terms of a treaty. However, they appear twice: Πειράσιοι [var. Παρ-] Κρανώνιοι, and

<sup>42</sup> DECOURT, p. 182.

<sup>43</sup> PECS (*supra*, n. 4); DECOURT, p. 173, tentatively identified it with the modern village of Sykeiai, but see more recently, HANSEN/NIELSEN (*supra*, n. 34), p. 700.

<sup>44</sup> Ethnikon, s.v. Αστέριον, 'the present day Peiresia' (not Peirasia).

<sup>45</sup> Il. 2, 734–735. For the lack of correspondence between the Homeric names of Thessalian towns and those of the classical period see B. HELLY, Les cités antiques de la Thessalie, Les Dossiers d'Archéologie 159, Apr. 1991, p. 35 f.; also MORGAN (*supra*, n. 39), pp. 102ff.

<sup>46</sup> Eustathius (1827) I, p. 269, quoted in full by DECOURT, p. 163.

<sup>47</sup> Argonautica I, 35–39.

<sup>48</sup> End of 1<sup>st</sup> century BC.

Πυράσιοι [var. Πειρ-]. Presumably a copyist was at some stage confronted with two different spellings, did not recognise that they were in fact the same place and transmitted both. Peirasia is named by Livy (32, 13, 9) as one of the Thessalian towns laid waste by Philip V of Macedon after his defeat in 198 BC. But here emendation is necessary to read Peirasia. The MSS offer «Ita euastata oppida sunt Phacium, Iresiae, Euhydrium [...]». Given the geographical location of the other two towns mentioned, 'Iresia' is almost certainly a simple error for 'Peirasia'.

### CONCLUSIONS

Peirasia issued a silver coinage of trihemioobols and obols in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC. In view of the small number of surviving coins of each denomination, the original issue or issues could not have been large. Nevertheless, both denominations (but especially the trihemioobols) survive in considerably greater quantity than was previously realized. More than one die exists for the obverse and reverse of each issue, but the small sample size prevents any certain conclusions about die sequence. They were probably issued simultaneously; if anything, the trihemioobols could be a little earlier.

Peirasia also issued a bronze coinage in two denominations. While the date is uncertain, it surely postdates the coinage of Alexander the Great but is probably earlier than 200 BC. As with the silver coinage, several dies were made for its production but it was never minted in large quantities and, like the silver, was probably issued only for a short period. The appearance of Athena on both the trihemioobols and the bronzes suggest the importance of her cult within the *polis*.

So Peirasia remains a shadowy town. It is almost absent from the historical record and if it appears more frequently in the poetic tradition, the references, unfortunately, add little to our knowledge.

### Zusammenfassung

Peirasia, eine unbedeutende Stadt in Thessalien, ist fast nur von ihrer Münzprägung her bekannt. Diese bestand aus einer kleinen Emission von Trihemioobolen und Obolen, sowie aus einer Bronzeprägung, ebenfalls zweier Nominale. Die Silbermünzen stammen aus der 2. Hälfte des 4. Jhs. v. Chr. und folgen in ihren Typen, Athenakopf und Krieger zu Pferd, bzw. zu Fuss, denjenigen der grösseren Nachbarstadt Pharsalos. Die Bronzen, mit Athenakopf und Athena Itonia, setzen dagegen nicht vor dem Ende des 4. Jhs. ein.

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*Key to Plates 3–4*

*Pl. 3*

1-12 Peirasia, Trihemiobols, see catalogue pp. 47–48

1 Line-drawing from Postokaldas, see *supra*, n. 8

2 Photo S. Hurter

9 Photo courtesy ANS

Rest Photos author

13-19 Obols, see catalogue p. 48

Photos S. Hurter

*Pl. 4*

1-9 Peirasia, Bronzes, see catalogue p. 49

Photos author

2A Nr. 2, 2:1

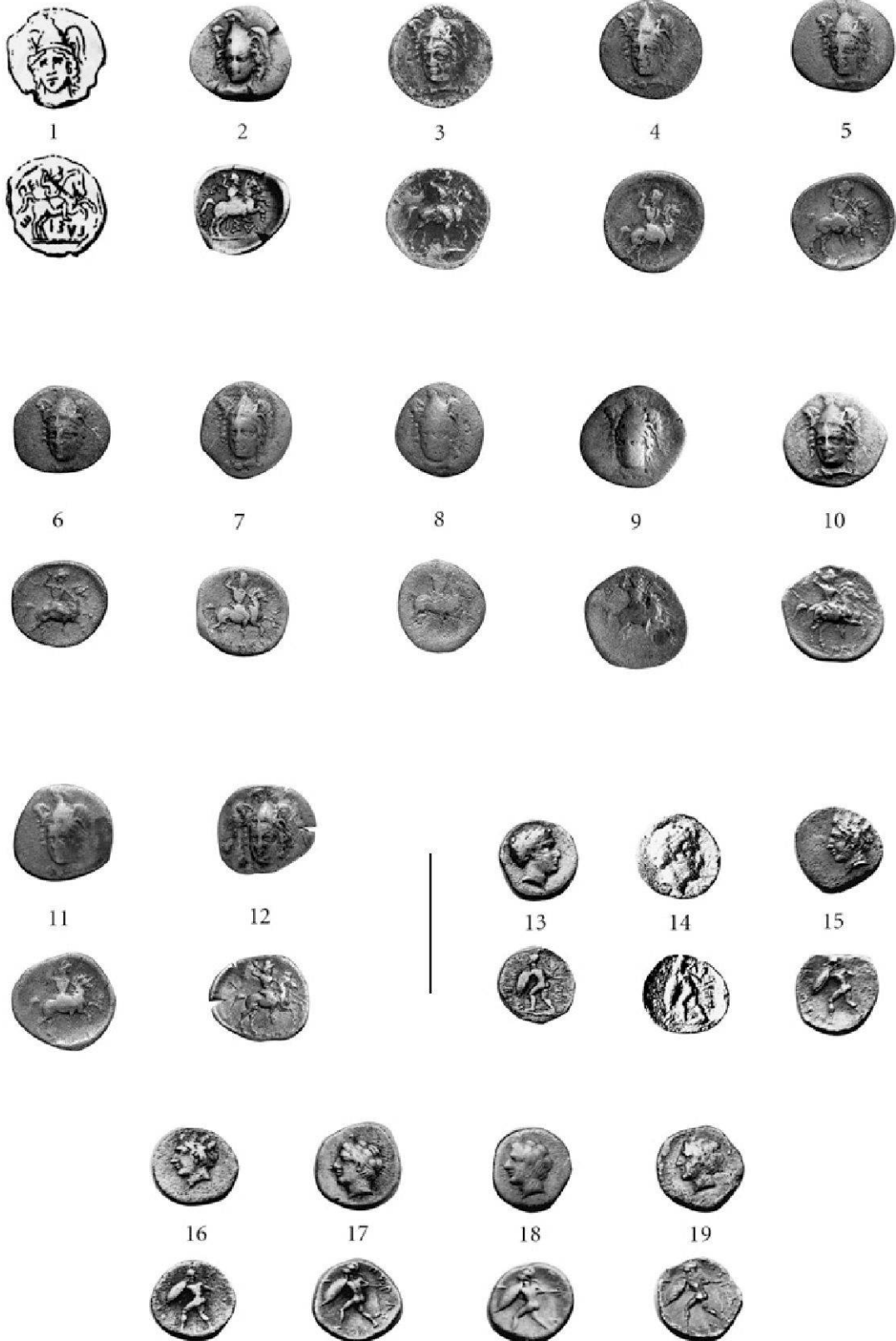
17A Nr. 17, 2:1

A Pharsalos, Trihemiobol, LAVVA p. 209, 260a. Dewing 1417 ex Lockett II, 1459 (SNG 1606) and Naville 6, 1924 (Bement), 936

B Methyion, Obol, 0.71 g. Private coll. A. Photo S. Hurter

C Lokroi, Half Stater. De Luynes 1960. Photo from *Traité* II pl. 207, 14

p. 46 Map of Thessaly



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The Coinage of Peirasia (1)





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The Coinage of Peirasia (2)



