

# ASTRONOMICAL SYMBOLS ON ANCIENT GREEK AND ROMAN COINS RELATED TO THE MYTH OF PERSEUS

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*Abstract.* The fascinating myth of Perseus, who decapitated Medusa and saved Andromeda from Cetus, had affected all kinds of Arts from antiquity till today, among which the ancient coinage. So, themes from this myth were found in many ancient Greek and Roman coins, where not only *Perseus* himself but also *Medusa*, *Pegasus*, *Andromeda*, *Cetus* and even his weapon, *harpy*, were presented. From the really large number of these coins, those on which an astronomical symbol was also shown were chosen and presented here.

*Key words:* History of Astronomy – Astronomy Culture – Greek Mythology – Ancient coins.

## 1. PROLOGUE

In general, ancient Greek and/or Roman moneyers used very much Greek mythology in their work, *nomismatocopy*. So, it was natural the fascinating myth of Perseus and his great achievements to inspire some of them. As a result, one can find many coins related to Perseus' myth. Because according to mythology, Perseus' life, from the way of his birth till his two big achievements, ie the beheading of gorgon Medusa, and the killing of a Cetus, (Apollodoros *The Library* 2.4.1), were extremely interesting.

All these, made Perseus well known not only in the narrow space of his nationhood, but all over the known at his times world, as he and all others related to his myth became constellations. Indeed, the constellations: *Perseus*; the flying horse *Pegasus* that came out from Medusa's cutting head together with the huge Chrysaor, (Apollodoros 2.4.2); *Andromeda*, the princess of Ethiopia who Perseus saved from a Cetus; *Cepheus* and *Cassiopeia* i.e. Andromeda's parents; and finally the *Cetus* all are related to the myth of Perseus.

On the other hand, except the foregoing mentioned persons and/or animals and/or monsters, even Perseus' special sword used to behead Medusa, ie his *harpy*, was used in coinage. So, the field from which moneyers could choose their themes from Perseus' myth was really very wide and rich.

A book with all coins relative to the myth of Perseus were collected and published some years ago, (Livaniou-Rovithis<sup>[1]</sup> & Rovithis, 2012). This collection includes coins from the 6th-5th century BC till the 4th AD coming from almost all places of the known ancient world. Coins with *Perseus*; *Perseus killing Medusa*; *Perseus saving Andromeda from Cetus*; *Pegasus*; *Cetus* and finally *harpy* were included there.

In all of his representations Perseus is always appeared wearing his characteristic Phrygian hat, while *harpy* is shown always on his shoulders. From this collection of coins it was realized that Medusa's cutting head and *Pegasus* were much more than the others; regarding the latter very possible because is also related to Belerophon, (Apollodoros 2.3.1; Hesiod *Women's Catalogue* Fr. 5(7b); Pausanias *Tour of Greece* 2.4.1). Besides, it was found out that among these coins there were some on which an astronomical symbol was present, too; a few of these have been shown in Rovithis-Livaniou & Rovithis, (2016), hereafter referred as Paper I.

Moreover, on a recent paper hereafter referred as Paper II, Perseus' myth was briefly described, (Rovithis-Livaniou & Rovithis, 2020). In this, some very nice coins showing our hero's big achievements were presented, but there was not any astronomical symbol on them. On the contrary, the aim of the present work is the presentation of the coins related to the myth of Perseus and on which an astronomical symbol is also appeared avoid to include the coins already shown in Paper I, and try to keep a chronological order.

## 2. GODDESS ATHENA - GORGONEION AND AEGIS

According to Mythology, Perseus after beheading Medusa offered her cutting head to the goddess Athena, recognizing that she had offered him too much help without which he would not be able to carry out his great achievement. On the other hand, it is also referred that Medusa was killed by Athena herself, (Hyginus *Poetica Astronomica* II.12). Independently of **who** killed Medusa, Athena put her cutting head in the middle of her shield, (Apollodoros 2.4.3), to frighten enemies, (Fig. 1, left). Later a reproduction of Medusa's cutting head was used, known as *gorgoneion*, (Fig. 1, right).

Except Medusa's head in the centre of Athena's shield, the goddess is always appeared to have on her chest a piece of she-goat skin with a *gorgoneion*. The she-goat skin is called *aegis*, from the Greek word *αίγα*=she-goat, while when *aegis* is not well shown its presence is denoted with one or more snakes, as in the down coin in Fig. 3.

Thus, in all goddess' presentations she is always wears *aegis* on her chest, while in almost all cases her shield is shown with the ugly and horrible Medusa's head in

the centre.

In the foregoing, it was mentioned that Athena's shield in almost all cases is decorated with Medusa's cutting head, because there exist some cases, mainly on coins, where Athena's shield is differently decorated.

Later *gorgoneion* and/or *aegis* were widely spread and used by almost everybody as talisman. For this reason, it was thought worthwhile to give some information of **how** all this started; and how from goddess Athena was spread among the Greeks and later to Romans.



Fig. 1 – Left: Athena's shield decorated with Medusa's cutting head in the centre<sup>[2]</sup>; Right: Gorgoneion, (British Museum).

Regarding coins, which are generally small, Athena's shield appears even smaller on them. So, it is difficult to be ascribed well and usually Medusa's head is not clearly shown on most of them. Besides, if Medusa's head is some how clearly shown, as for example on the coins from Bithynia issued by kings Prusias I & II, there is not any astronomical symbol on them; so, these coins were not included here. On the other hand, there are a few on which Medusa's head in the middle of the goddess' shield is clearly shown and on them there is an astronomical symbol, too. Such are some coins of Julius Caesar, as for example the right coin of Fig. 22 in Rovithis-Livaniou & Rovithis, (2015).

Even so, it is worthwhile one to notice ancient moneyers' efforts to describe as better as possible and as they could Medusa's head in the centre of Athena's shield, as well as *aegis* on her chest. A small sample is given in Figs. 2 & 3, where on two of the 3 coins of Fig. 2 a star is also shown.



Fig. 2 – Up left & right: Reverse sides of coins of the kings Pyrrus of Epirus (319/8–272) BC & Antigonos Gonatas of Macedonia, respectively. Athena Alkis standing wearing *aegis* of Zeus holding spear & shield decorated with Medusa’s head, legend with the corresponding king’s name in Greek;  
Down: Coin of king *Λυσίμαχος*, Lysimachos, Obverse: Head of Alexander the Great as Ammon Zeus. Reverse: Athena seated, holding Nike, star beneath the throne, shield decorated with Medusa’s head.



Fig. 3 – Up: Coin of king Prusias I of Bithynia, Obverse: Laureate head of Apollo, Reverse: Athena-Nike standing, her shield decorated with Medusa’s head, legend sidewise with king’s name in Greek;  
Down: Coin from Iconium, Hadrian epoch, Obverse: Head of Hadrian, legend around, Reverse: Athena’s bust wearing her *aegis* from which snakes are coming out, legend around.

### 3. COINS FROM PERSEUS MYTH WITH GORGONEION AND/OR AEGIS

#### 3.1. WHO WEAR GORGONEION AND/OR AEGIS

It seems that the oldest coins from the myth of Perseus are these with *gorgoneion*, and/or *aegis*, because both these symbols were widely spread and used as an amulet: Firstly by kings and soldiers, then by ordinary people and later by the Romans. So, except goddess Athena many others appeared to wear *aegis* or *gorgoneion* as a talisman for their protection.

For example, all kings of the Ptolemy dynasty in Egypt appeared on coins to wear *aegis*, which is obvious from the snakes close to their throat. Among them there are a few on which there is an astronomical symbol and thus they can be included here. From them one was chosen and given, (Up left coin of Fig. 4).

This *custom* was continued and many others were represented on coins wearing *gorgoneion* and/or *aegis*, as is shown from the coins in Fig.4.



Fig. 4 – Up left: Coin of Ptolemy H', 182–116 BC, Obverse: Head of Ptolemy H' with *aegis* denoted by the snake, Reverse: Eagle, stars in the left and right fields, monographs, legend; Up right:

Tetra-drachmae of king Amyntas<sup>[3]</sup>, Bactria, 80–65 BC, Obverse: King or soldier with *aegis* on his shoulder, legend denoting king's name in Greek; Reverse: Zeus seated on his throne holding Nike with his right hand and sceptre with the other, star inside square below his right hand, legend in Bactrian; Down: Coin of Trajan from Egypt, 115–116 AD, Obverse: Bust of Emperor with star in front, legend, Reverse: Head of Zeus.

Similarly, many of the Roman Emperors wearing *aegis*, as are for example all members of the Severan dynasty, (193–235) AD, and many others before -as Nero, Tiberius, Trajan - or after it, as Gordian III, Galienus etc. From them, these on which there is an astronomical symbol, too, were depicted and given in Fig. 5.





Fig. 5 – Up left: Coin from Parion<sup>[4]</sup>, Severus Alexander's epoch, 193–211 AD; Up right: Coin, aureus, of Probus<sup>[5]</sup>, Rome mint, 276 - 282 AD, Down: Coin of Carinus<sup>[6]</sup>, Antioch mint, 282/3 AD; Obverses: Bust of the corresponding emperor with *aegis* on chest, legend denoting his name; Reverse Up left: Cornucopia on Capricorn's back, globe between legs, legend CGIHP; Reverse Up right: Head of god Helios, legend SOL IINVICTO; Reverse Down: Emperor Carus offers Nike to his son Carinus, star above, Z down, legend.

The down coin in Fig. 5 is given as example, since there are similar from the same city and with exactly the same reverse issued by other emperors as Caracalla and Gallienus and not presented here although they could. Because, on the busts of the corresponding emperor *aegis* was shown and having similar reverses as the lup left coin of Fig. 5 an astronomical symbol was present, too. Even so, these coins did not appear here as they could not add something more, except the bust of a different Emperor and the legend with his name.

### 3.2. COMBINATION OF GORGONEION AND/OR AEGIS WITH ANIMALS AND OTHER THINGS

It seems that coins from Parion, issued between 520 and 480 BC as well as later, had *gorgoneion* as main theme, as the left and middle coins in Fig. 6, from which the former is from the *Fine Arts Museum*, Boston, USA. Similarly *gorgoneion* is presented on some coins from Kempren, in the wider area of Misia, with a Ram on their obverse. Coins similar to these of Kempren were found in Cyprus, too, as the right coin in Fig. 6.

Later, coins from Parion had *gorgoneion* on one side and a bull/cow on the other, while on some there were also various symbols either above or below the bull. For example in some cases above the bull there is a *flight Nike*, a *bell* etc, while in others under the cow there is a *rose*, a *bee*, a *club*, a *branch of graves* etc. Finally, there are cases where either above or beneath the bull there is a star, or a crescent



Fig. 6 – Left & Middle: Coin from Parion, Mysia, N-W Asia M., 6th-5th century BC; Right: Silver hemi-drachma of 5th century BC from Cyprus. Obverse: Ram's head, Reverse: *Gorgoneion* in obscure square.

moon as on the coins of figure 7.



Fig. 7 – Silver semi-drachma of (400-300) BC from Parion, Obverses: *Gorgoneion*; Reverses: Bull/Cow with letters Π & Α above and P & I below it, denoting city's name. A star is shown above the bull, or beneath it, in the up left coin, and in the down one, respectively; while, a crescent is seen below the bull in the up right coin.

One can also notice that above the bull on the coins of figure 7 there are a capital Greek Π and Α, and below it P and I indicating the name of the city from which O is missing. Besides, is mentioned that there are some coins on which an

annulet is shown beneath the bull.

Quite old coins from the myth of Perseus are also these with gorgoneion in the middle of a Macedonian shield. The wonderful decoration of these shields with stars and/or crescents, *meniscus*, made them to be included here as was already referred. Besides, here will be presented coins not appeared in Paper I, as are those given in Figs. 8.



Fig. 8 – Coins of, Up left: Assandros<sup>[7]</sup>, 323-317 BC, from Macedonia; Up right: Demetrius Poliorketes<sup>[8]</sup>, 323-315 BC, from Salamis<sup>[9]</sup>, Cyprus; Down: Antiochus I<sup>[10]</sup>, the Great, 223-187 BC; Obverses: Macedonian shield with *gorgoneion* in the middle and a wonderful decoration of crescents; Reverses Up left & right: Macedonian helmet, letters B & A in the left and right fields, respectively, other symbols and monograms; Reverse Down: Elephant, anchor above, legend ΒΑΣΙΛΕ[ΩΣ] in Greek ie KING's.

Moreover, *gorgoneion* was shown on the obverses of some coins from Etruria, Italy, as well as on the reverse of some coins issued by Roman Emperors Valerian and his son Gallienus (Fig. 9). Regarding the latter coin, *gorgoneion* is in the middle of the Zodiac, while as concerns this from Etruria is mentioned that there are similar where on their reverses there is nothing, ie they are without any design at all.

Finally, it is worthwhile to mention that some ancient coins were sealed with one or more countermarks that show either their origin, or their genuineness. There are at least two such coins, anonymous issued and circulated at Pontus between 130-100 BC, with two and three countermarks, one of which is *gorgoneion*. The countermarks are on their obverses where a man's head having wings is shown, ie similar to Perseus' head.





Fig. 9 – Left: Didrachma from Populonia, Etruria, Italy, Obverse: *Gorgoneion*, Reverse: Six stars; Right: Coin of Valerian and his son Gallienus from Aegae, Cilicia, 235-260 AD, Obverse: Head of Valerian holding serpent entwined sceptre, legend with his name and position in Greek, Reverse: *Gorgoneion* in the middle of a double circle, letters in a separate box each giving the citizens' name and similarly some others with a star between two of them, and between last and first A; the 12 Zodiac signs in separate box each.

#### 4. COINS WITH PERSEUS HIMSELF

King Philip E' of Macedonia and his son Perseus issued coins on obverses of which the head of hero Perseus was represented in the middle of a Macedonian shield decorated with stars and crescents; while on their reverses the club of Hercules within a wreath of oaks is shown. Two of such coins, not given in Paper I, are presented here in Fig. 10, (Up left & right coins), where one can notice the small differences on their reverses, as are for example the symbols in their left fields, the monograms etc.

Similarly, some coins issued by king Perseus, ie the last king of Macedonia before its occupation by Romans, the head of hero Perseus is shown on their obverses and an eagle on their reverses. On these coins the eagle is generally shown with open wings and standing on the Zeus thunderbolt. Besides, there are some on which a star is also seen below, as is for example the down coin of Fig. 10.

Moreover, there are some coins from various cities of Pontus, like Amisos for example, where on their obverse the king's head is presented winged, ie like Perseus', while on their reverse Dioscuroi's hats with stars above them are shown with a cornucopia between. These coins are not presented here.

The head of Perseus is also shown on the obverse side of a coin from Panticapaeun<sup>[11]</sup>, Thrace, (Fig.11). It is included here, because the Phrygian hat of our hero is decorated with stars, (see Discussion section for details). Besides, above hero's head there is a star inside crescent, ie the symbol of the kingdom of Pontus.



Fig. 10 – Up left & right: Tetra-drachmae of Philip E', 220-179 BC; Obverses: Head of hero Perseus in the centre of a Macedonian shield decorated with stars and crescents. The hero wears his special Phrygian cap with wings, while his harpy is shown, too, Reverses: Club of hero Hercules within a wreath of oaks, legend ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΦΙΛΙΠΠΟΥ in Greek; Down: Bronze coin of the king of Macedonia Perseus, Obverse: Head of hero Perseus with wing Phrygian hat and harpy, Reverse: Eagle stands on Zeus' thunderbolt, letters in left & right field, star below.



Fig. 11 – Coin from Panticapaeun, Thrace; Obverse: Head of hero Perseus with Phrygian skin hat decorated with stars, monograms down and in the right field, star inside crescent, Reverse: God Dionysus holding a bunch of grapes and thyrsus, legend with the citizens' name in Greek.

## 5. COINS WITH PEGASUS

It was already referred that *Pegasus* is shown on many coins, because it is related not only to Perseus, but also to the king of Corinth Bellerofontes. Although the number of coins with *Pegasus*, or forepart of it, is extremely big, only on very few of them there is an astronomical symbol; so, most of them can not be included in the present work.

On the other hand, *Pegasus* and an astronomical symbol there exist on coins given on Figs. 12, 13 & 14.



Fig. 12 – Up: Bronze coin from Lampsacos, Misia, 350-200 BC, Obverse: Head of woman wearing necklace & earrings, Reverse: Forepart of *Pegasus*, sun/star below; Middle: Coin of the king of Illyrians Ballaeus, Obverse: Macedonian shield decorated with crescents, Reverse: *Pegasus* and the 3 first letters from the king's name in Greek; Down: Coin from Lampsacos, Misia, (190-85) BC, Obverse: Head of god Priapus, Reverse: Forepart of *Pegasus*, star in front, half legend up and half down forms the citizens' name in Greek.

The up and down coins of Fig. 12 are from Lampsacos, Misia, while the middle is of the king Ballaeus of Illyrians<sup>[12]</sup>, who issued coins where *Pegasus* is combined with a Macedonian shield. Although the decoration of the shield is not rich with stars, as usually, and what is seen are only some crescents it is given here.

On the other hand, it is known that the symbol of the kingdom of Pontus is a star inside a crescent, which is present on one side of its coins. Thus, one can say that all coins of this kingdom related to Perseus' myth can be presented here, as on all of them there is an astronomical symbol. This holds for example for some coins issued by king Mithradates VI, the Great or *Eupator* as is also known, where *Pegasus* is shown on their reverses, (up left coin of Fig. 13). Similar coins issued by his son king Ariarathes IX, as is the up right coin in Fig. 13. Besides, is mentioned that there are coins with the same obverses, but on their reverses a *stag* instead of *Pegasus* is presented.

Furthermore, *Pegasus* was found on coins to decorate Athena's helmet. On most of these coins there is not any astronomical symbol; but there are some where such a symbol exists, as are for example some tetra-drachmae of 154/153 BC from Athens, where the caps of Dioscuroi with stars above are presented, (down coin of Fig. 13). Again, one can say that all coins with Dioscuroi's caps and related to Perseus' myth could be presented here, as on most of them there are stars above their caps.



Fig. 13 – Up left & right: Silver tetra-drachma of Mithradates VI & Ariarathes IX, respectively; Obverses: Head of Mithradates VI, Kingdom of Pontus 90 BC & Ariarathes IX, Cappadocia (101-87) BC, respectively; Reverses: *Pegasus*, legends with the kings names and their nick names up and below it, star inside crescent in the left field, monograms in the right, all in a wreath from leaves and rosettes; Down: Tetra-drachmae of 154/153 BC from Athens, Obverse: Head of Athena with helmet decorated with *Pegasus*, Reverse: Owl standing on amphora, letters & monograms and the caps of Dioscuri with stars above in the right field, all in a wreath from olive tree.

## 6. COINS WITH CETUS AND PERSEUS' HARPY

The last king of Macedonia Perseus, son of Philip E', issued coins with our hero's *harpy* either alone, or in combination with Hercules' club. Besides, he issued coins where hero's *harpy* is shown on the reverse of coins with either the Macedonian shield on obverse, or king's head. From these, those not given in paper I, are shown here, (up left & middle coins in Fig. 14).

Hero Perseus's *harpy* in combination with Hercules' club is also shown on coins from Olba, Cilicia. None of these coins are presented here, due to the absence of any astronomical symbol on them, except the down coin of Fig. 14, where Perseus' *harpy* is between the hats of Dioscuri with stars above.

As regards *Cetus*, or especially a *sea dragon*, is shown in many coins from various Greek colonies in Sicily, none of which is appropriate to be presented here for various reasons each. On the other hand, on some coins of Caria the head of *Cetus* is shown on obverse and a star on their reverses, as are all coins of Fig. 15.





Fig. 14 – Up & Middle: Coins of king Perseus of Macedonia; Down: Coin from Olba, Cilicia, 54 AD, under Romans; Obverse Up: Macedonia shield decorated with crescents, Reverse: Hero Perseus' *harpy*, various letters in left & right fields; Obverse middle: Head of king Perseus, Reverse: Hero Perseus' *harpy* within a wreath, star in out left field, legend in two lines with king's name; Obverse down: Head of Athena, Reverse: Hero Perseus' *harpy* between the caps of Dioskouroi with stars above, legend with citizens' name in Greek.



Fig. 15 – Samian coins, *diobols*, of (510–480) BC from Caria; Obverses: Head of *Cetus*, Reverses: Star with 8 or more rays and dot in the centre, alone or within a simple or decorated obscure square.

## 7. DISCUSSION

Scope of the present was to show coins from the myth of hero Perseus on which an astronomical symbol was also presented. On these coins either the hero himself,



or one of these related to his myth as *Medusa*, *Pegasus*, *Andromeda*, *Cetus* and even the hero's weapon ie his *harpy* were shown. Such coins were either found and/or issued in Greece as well as in the various Greek colonies, mainly those founded by people coming from places somehow related with the hero. The latter, continued to issue similar coins even under Roman occupation, especially when characterized autonomous or semi-autonomous.

Concerning Medusa, **whoever** decapitated her Perseus or Athena, her cutting head was put in the middle of the goddess' shield. So, the shield of the goddess is in most cases decorated with Medusa's head. On the other hand, it is worthwhile to be mentioned that on some Macedonian coins Athena's shield is decorated with a *star* in its centre instead of the head of Medusa, very possible *Vergina's star*, (Andronickos, 1994). Similarly, on some others it is decorated with a lion, (as some issued by king Lysimachus).

Medusa's decapitation had a huge affection and is said that the well-known ancient Greek sculpture Pheidias elaborated Medusa's head. Unfortunately, this head was lost, but as is said *Medusa of Rondanini*, now in the Munich Museum, is an exact copy of that of Pheidias.

Similarly, the fragment from the post-Roman reproduction of Athena's shield is also a result of this affection. It was made in the third century AD and now kept in the British Museum. In the centre there is Medusa's head and around pictures from the Amazons' Battle.

The cutting Medusa's head in the centre of Athena's shield can be seen on all coins of Fig. 2, as well as on the up coin of Fig. 3.

Later, a reproduction of Medusa's cutting head, known as *gorgoneion*, or as *aegis* if put on a piece of she-goat's leather, were widely spread and used as amulets. For example all kings of the Ptolemy dynasty in Egypt appeared on coins to wear *aegis*, the presence of which is denoted by the snakes close to their throat, as on the up left coin of Fig. 4.

Similarly, *aegis* on the chest of goddess Athena, if not clearly seen, is sometimes denoted by one or more snakes below the goddess' chin, as on the down coin of Fig. 3. The number of similar coins is extremely huge and out of the scope of the present work. What presented here was only to understand how the custom of wearing *aegis*, starting from Athena was widely spread and used by every body and every where.

Moreover, *gorgoneion* and/or *aegis* are seen on the soldiers' shields, on their chests and/or around their throats or even on their shoulders. The same holds for generals, kings etc, as the up right coin of Fig. 4; or for Roman Emperors, as is for example the down coin of figure 4 and all coins of figure 5. While, regarding the places where coins with *gorgoneion* and/or *aegis* were issued and/or found, these presented here were from: Cyprus; Parion; Aegae, Cilicia; Seleuceia, Syria and Pon-

tus.

Parion was colony of Eretria and Paros; Aegae founded by the Macedonians; Seleuceia by Seleucus, one of Alexander's the Great successors. So, it is easily understood that the myth of Perseus was known at these places. Concerning Cyprus and Pontus, on the other hand, it is possible that either Perseus himself had travelled to these places since he was a great sailor, or his myth was spread by others being there. For the same reasons, *gorgoneion* was used as countermark on some coins from the cities of Pontus, as already mentioned.

Besides, and for the completeness of our task, is mentioned that *gorgoneion* is shown in the middle of: a) triskeles on coins from some cities of Sicily; where triskeles comes from the Greek words *τρία*=three and *σκέλος*=foot, from which its meaning is easily understood; and b) *aegis* on coins from Amphipolis, Macedonia; from various cities of Pontus like Amisoss, Synope, Komana, etc, as well as from other cities of Asia Minor. None of these coins were given here because of the lack of any astronomical symbol on them.

Moreover, *gorgoneion* was shown on the obverses of some coins from Populonia, Etruria, Italy. On the reverses of most of these coins there is nothing, ie they are without any design at all, but there are some with **6 stars** on their reverses. The most possible explanation is that they represent Pleiades, because their seventh star is not so easily seen by naked eye, depending both on the observer as well as on the observational conditions. Besides, for Pleiades is said that People think they are 7, but 6 can be seen by the human eye, (Aratos, 254-267). Much more information for how Mythology explains the *disappearance of the seventh sister* can be found in Avgoloupes & Mavropoulos, (2007, pp. 388-392).

Finally, from the so far given coins one can notice that the figure of *gorgoneion* in some cases is extremely ugly and terrible while not in others, where it appears with somehow more gentle characteristics. It seems that this happened gradually.

Regarding the coins with Perseus himself, these presented here are from Thessalonica, Macedonia and Thrace, (Figs. 10 & 11).

These from Macedonia are of king Philip E' and his son king Perseus, who issued coins with the head of hero Perseus in the middle of a Macedonian shield, and Hercules' club, (up left & right coins of Fig. 10), as well as with an eagle, ie Zeus' lovely bird and symbol, but symbol of Macedonia, too, (down coin of Fig. 10). As regards the presence of Hercules' club on both the upper coins of Fig. 10, this is because -as many other Macedonian kings- Philip E' and his son wanted to emphasize the connection of their royal family with Argos and its royal family from which both heroes Perseus and Hercules were originated.

Similarly, one can find *gorgoneion* in the middle of a Macedonian shield on coins issued by some Roman Emperors when Macedonia had become Roman Province. On these coins the shield with *gorgoneion* is on their reverses, since the head of Em-

peror/Empress was always represented on their obverse sides. Although such coins exist and found, they do not have the rich decoration with stars and/or crescents of the corresponding old ones, and for this reason were not presented here. They are mentioned only for the completeness of our task.

Concerning the coin from Panticapaeun, Thrace, (Fig. 11), one can notice that the Phrygian cap the man presented on this coin wears is not winged, as is usually our hero's although not always, and it has an excellent decoration with stars. These make one to assume that the head belongs to either a god or a very important person and perhaps not to Perseus.

Regarding gods, he could be the Phrygian lunar god Men who was also appeared with a Phrygian cap and always with a crescent moon around his shoulders. For more see for example number 21 in Appendix, as well as the middle coin of Fig. 6 in Rovithis-Livaniou & Rovithis, (2018). On the other hand, from Fig. 11 one can notice that there is not a crescent around the man's shoulders. So, there are agreements in favour and against Perseus to be the man seen on this coin.

Against Perseus, one could only say that in Fig. 11 *harpy* is not shown on his shoulders and that the Phrygian cap is not winged, although as already mentioned this is not always so. In favour of Perseus is that: a) except of great hero, he was also a god, (Kakrides, 1986; Graves 1979-1988 & 1998); b) there is not a *crescent* on the shoulders of the figure shown on this coin, and c) there are coins from Panticapaeun on which *Pegasus*, which is directly connected with *Medusa* and Perseus' first great achievement, is shown on their reverses. (Such are for example some coins of the 4th century BC with god Pan, and some others of the first century BC with god Apollo on their obverse, respectively). So, believing that on this coin hero Perseus is shown, it was included here.

As regards the coins with *Pegasus* it was explained why they are much more than the others. Here they are given in Figs. 12-14, where various combinations are noticed: *Pegasus*/Macedonian shield, god Priapus/*Pegasus*, and the heads of some kings of Pontus and Kappadokia with *Pegasus*. In the latter coins the astronomical symbol is a star inside crescent that is the symbol of the kingdom of Pontus. So, some of these coins should not be given here, since on them there is not any other astronomical symbol except the *talking symbol* of the kingdom of Pontus. On the other hand, the presence of this symbol on the coin from Panticapaeun, tells us that this city *belonged*, for a short or longer period to this kingdom.

Besides, and for the completeness of our task, is mentioned that although they could be included here they were not presented coins with *Pegasus* on their reverses from Thyron, Acarnania, of 350–250 BC and Stratonikeia, Caria, of 125–85 BC, respectively. As regards their astronomical symbol is referred that on the obverses of the former coins the head of Athena with a beautiful earring behind where its clip is decorated with a star, while on those of the latter Hekate as goddess of the Moon

with a crescent on her head was shown.

Furthermore, *Pegasus*, or part of it, is presented on the reverses of some coins but it is not their main theme. Such coins were firstly circulated by Alexander the Great, who issued coins with the head of Hercules in lion's skin on their obverses and Zeus seated on throne holding eagle and sceptre on their reverses; while *Pegasus*, or forepart of it, is shown in their left field. These coins are not given here, since there is not any astronomical symbol on them.

On the other hand, coins with exactly the same themes on their both sides were circulated even after Alexander's the Great death. From them, there are some tetra-drachma and drachma issued by the king of Thrace Lysimachus, that present a crescent below a *figure* that according to some is part of *Pegasus*, or according to others part of a lion. For this reason, these coins were not given here.

Finally, *Pegasus* is shown on some coins to decorate Athena's helmet, as one can see on a coin from Athens, (Fig. 13, down coin). On many other coins from various places there is such a decoration, as are for example coins from Lucania of the 5th century BC; from Heracleia Pontica after 165 BC; from Crete, etc. Except *Pegasus*, Athena's helmet on coins is shown to be decorated with a star, a snake, animals or monsters like Scylla, Gripe, etc.

The astronomical symbol on the down coin of Fig. 13 is the stars above the caps of Dioscuroi. It is worthwhile to mention that this happens in most cases, although there are also cases where there is nothing above their caps and others with a palm branch above, as happens in the coins from Bactria for example.

Concerning Perseus' *harpy*, except that it is almost always shown on his shoulders, it was also found either combined with Hercules' club, or as here in combination with king Perseus, the Macedonian shield or with the caps of Dioscuroi. These combinations very possible want to denote the familiar connection existed between Perseus, Hercules and Dioscuroi, as both the latter's and Hercules were grand-grand sons of Perseus; while as regards king Perseus is known that all kings of Macedonia wanted to emphasize their connection with the *city-country* of Argos from where their first king Karanos as well as hero Perseus had their origin.

Finally, as regards *Cetus* the coins on which it was presented here are from the sea-costs of Caria, although according to Mythology Andromeda as princess of Ethiopia should have been left at one of its coasts. That Andromeda was bund in chains is referred by various ancient authors, but they do not agree for the place. For example, Hyginus (*Poetica Astronomica* II.9-10), refers that this happened at an Ethiopian coast, while Stravo, (1.2.35), refers that this took place at the city Joppa in Israel. With the latter agrees Pausanias, (4.35.9-10), adding that the water near Joppa is red, because Perseus washed his hands there after killing the *Cetus*.

A possible and simple explanation is that the *Cetus* shown on figures of Caria is not this killed by Perseus to free Andromeda, but another one. Especially, as

according to Mythology there was another Cetus ravaged the sea-coasts of Caria, but it is connected with Hercules<sup>[13]</sup> and not with Perseus.

Actually, there are many things connecting these two heroes, except that they were relatives: Both of them were sons of Zeus; both are connected with Atlas and the *golden apples of Hesperides*; both are related to Amazons' myths and as was previously referred both faced a *Cetus*. Although according to others Perseus free Andromeda not from a *Cetus* but from a *see Dragon*, (*Lucian Maritime Dialogues, Triton and Nereids*).

The above mentioned are mainly coming from the fact that for each myth, except its basic part, various acceptations there exist, too. So, a myth is continuously changing, because if things around changed, the myth has also to change in order to survive, (Graf, 2018). In the myth of Perseus there are many acceptations which being out of the scope of the present work were not referred, except of these that Hyginus reports. The latter, in his works describes differently Polydectes' behaviour to Danae and Perseus describing it as very good, (*Fab.* 63), while he is the only one to refer that not Perseus but Athena herself beheaded Medusa, (*Poetica Astronomica* II.12).

Here, the most acceptable scenario was followed, ie that Perseus killed Medusa and that he free Andromeda from a *Cetus*. So, the coins presented here were from his two great achievements, but on which there was an astronomical symbol, too.

## 8. APPENDIX

[1] Because of the Greek way of writing, where for a married woman the surname of her father's family is referred first and her husband's follows. So, Livaniou-Rovithis E. and Rovithis-Livaniou E. is the same person.

[2] Fragment from a post-Romanian copy of goddess Athena's shield, 3rd century AD. It is now kept in the British Museum.

[3] *Amyntas*, *Ἀμύντας*: King of a big part of Asia Minor, (Galata, Pisidia, Pamphilia and part of Lycaonia), follower of Consult Antonio; but, some time before the Action Navy War, he abandoned him and went with Octavian. Thus, he kept his kingdom till his death in 25 BC.

[4] *Parion*, *Πάριον*: Ancient city at the North Mysia, colony of Eretria and Paros from which its name comes. During the Hellenistic period Parion was included for a short period in king's Lysimachus kingdom, and much later in the kingdom of Pergamon, (See Strabo I C 487.7).

[5] *Probus*: Roman Emperor, (276 – 282) AD.

[6] *Carinus*: Roman Emperor, (283 – 285) AD. He was son of Carus, who served as Emperor for a few months in 282 AD.



[7] *Assandros*: It is not known to whom Assandros exactly this coin belongs. Even so, from its date it is concluded that it refers to the son of Agathon, who after Alexander's the Great death had become satrap of Karia.

[8] *Demetrios Poliorketes*: 337 – 283 BC. A well known general and son of the king of Macedonia Antigonos Gonatas. When he marched against Cyprus, he got the nick name *Poliorketes*=Besieger. He became king of Macedonia in 294 and governed till he was defeated by Lysimachos and Pyrrhos. He built the city Demetrias in Thessaly that was named so from his name. He died in Syria at the age of 54 years in 283 BC.

[9] *Salamis, Σαλαμίς*: Ancient city of Cyprus built by Teucros, son of Telamon. He, after the Trojan War went to Cyprus instead of returning to his island Salamis, because his father consider him responsible for the death of his brother Aias. At Cyprus Teucros chooses the area close to the ancient city of Alasia the distance of which was equal from the sea and the main land to built his city. Salamis became a well known and was an important city of Cyprus till it was destroyed firstly by Demetrios in 306 BC, and later by an earthquake.

[10] *Antiochus the Great, Αντίοχος Γ΄*, (242-187) BC. Son of Seleucus A' he was king of the Seleucids' kingdom after the murder of his brother's Seleucus B', the *Soter*, whom he succeeded in 222 BC. Being friend with the king of Pontus Mithradates, he married his daughter Laodike. He trusted Asia's Minor control in his uncle Achaïos, who managed to limit the sovereignty of Attalus around Pergamos and Ptolemy at Ephesus and Samos. In autumn of 192 BC, having Aetolians in his side, he went to Demetrias and announced the freedom of Greeks from the Romans.

[11] *Panticapeun*: Colony of the Melesians, (Strabo C C 309.4), while its heavy winters are described also by him, (Strabo A G-74.16).

[12] So they were called the Greeks occupied the Illyrian coasts, lived and developed there.

[13] *Hercules, Ηρακλής*: The hero Hercules, son of Zeus and Alcmene and grand-grand son of Perseus; according to the Greek Mythology there are other persons with the same name.

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