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A New Roman Provincial Coin from Pella*

During the summer of 1976, excavations in the Roman colony of Dium continued at the southern end of the square of the city's *forum*. The bronze coin under discussion was discovered at the eastern part of the southern edge of the complex, later proven to be the south porticus of the *forum* (fig. 1).¹

The coin weighs 3.90 gms, has a diameter of 18 mm and its die axis is 8h. On the obverse there is the bust of a woman, veiled and draped, with a turreted crown (?) on her head. The bust features curved edges, which highlight the neck and the cloth; the legend COLO-[NIA] is inscribed clockwise around the head. The reverse depicts a standing facing male figure stepping with his left foot on a pile of rocks (?) and holding a *syrix* in his right hand and a *lagobolon* (*pedum*) in his left. The ethnic of the issuing city, PELLE-NSI[S] or PELLE-NSI[VM], can be read clockwise (figs 2-3).

By the time of Amyntas III (393/2-369/8 BC), Pella was “the greatest city” of the kingdom of Macedon (Xen. *Hell.* 5.2.13) and served as the seat of the royal family at least since the first quarter of the 4th century BC.² The city

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1. The excavation sector was named “Central section” and the trenches were named after the Greek letters $\pi\rho\Xi$ to $\pi\rho\Pi$, as sub-sectors. The coin was found in the sub-sector $\pi\rho\omicron$, at a depth of 0.58 m. and at a distance of 0.40 m. from the south side of the trench and 0.30 m. from the west side. Several architectural fragments were unearthed at various other depths, including a marble piece from an unfluted column, another part of which was discovered two days earlier. Traces of two small walls were also detected.

2. For the transfer of the Macedonian capital from Aegae to Pella by Archelaus, see Borza 1990, 166-171, 296; Greenwalt 1999, 158-183; Lilimpaki-Akamati, 2002, 83-90;

had minted coins for the Macedonian kings until the defeat of Perseus by the Romans at Pydna and the abolishment of the monarchy in 168 BC. The division of the country into districts endured under Roman rule, and Pella became the capital of the Third Macedonian district (*meris*).³ During this period, Pella issued a bronze coinage with a varied iconography.⁴

As the name of the city on its coinage suggests, *Colonia Iulia Pella* (or *Pellensis*) was founded during the Triumviral period, whereas the city was among those re-founded by Octavian after the battle of Actium in 31 BC. During the reign of Augustus (27 BC - AD 14), Pella issued bronze coins in three denominations in the names of the *duumviri quinquennales* of the colony, Nonius and Sulpicius.⁵ There is a gap in the numismatic production of the city for the remainder of the Julio-Claudian and the Flavian dynasties. Coinage resumed under Trajan (AD 98-117) and the new coins of the colony depicted the head of the emperor on the obverse and a new type on the reverse: the god Pan seated naked on a rock with his right hand raised over his head and his left arm resting on a *syrinx*.⁶ This type was also used for the city's coinage under Hadrian (AD 117-138) and was issued in two denominations (**fig. 4**).⁷ Pan featured on the reverse of the coinage of the colony until the end of the city's coin production under the emperor Philip I (AD 244-249).⁸

Akamatis 2011, 393. This view has been challenged by Hatzopoulos, Loukopoulou 1987, 42-44 and after them Psoma 2011, 124, placing the transfer later, during Amyntas III's reign. Arguments against this revised dating have been put forward by Lane Fox 2011, 229-230.

3. For the administrative division of Macedonia in four *merides* under the Antigonids, see Hatzopoulos 1996 I, 231-260 and Ferrary 2018; contra, Juhel 2011, his arguments being contested by Hatzopoulos, *BullÉpigr* 2012, no. 265. See also, Eckstein 2010, 245-248 with further bibliography. On the Roman province of Macedonia, see Vanderspoel 2010.

4. *RPC* I, 296. For the ambiguous bronze coinage of Amphipolis, Thessalonike and Pella during this period, see the view stated by Touratsoglou 1987, 55-59, but also that in Kourempas 2011. For a recent revision of the discussion, see Kremydi 2018, 286-289.

5. *RPC* I, 1548-1550 and commentary on p. 296.

6. *RPC* III, 606.

7. *RPC* III, 607-608.

8. *SNG ANS* 7, 642-644; *SNG Cop.* (Macedonia), 288-289.

The only so-far known coins of Pella without the imperial portrait have been dated to the reign of Augustus. In *RPC I* only one issue is mentioned that bears a *sella curulis* on the obverse and a plough on the reverse.⁹ This issue belongs to the smallest of the three denominations minted in this period, as shown by its weight and diameter (6.74 gms, 16-17 mm). The legends on the coins with and without the imperial portrait are in Latin following the pattern of all Roman colonies.

The woman's bust on the obverse of the coin under discussion most probably represents the Tyche of the colony,¹⁰ a usual choice for provincial cities under Roman rule¹¹ and a common figure in the provincial coinage of Thessalonike (fig. 5).¹² Furthermore, a seated Tyche appeared on the reverse of some coins of Pella that bear the imperial portrait on the obverse.¹³

The *syrinx* and the *lagobolon* held by the figure on the reverse of the new coin identify him as the Greek god Pan. The worship of Pan in Macedonia is attested in literary sources since the end of the 5th century BC. Pliny the Elder (*HN* 35.62) mentions that the famous painter Zeuxis offered king Archelaus a painting of Pan. Epigraphic evidence offers further proof; an engraved stele was found at Pydna, dated by the form of letters in the second half of the 5th century BC. In two lines, *stoichedon*, the letters ΠΑΝΝ | ΑΙΟΣ are visible. According to the proposal of K. Tsantsanoglou, the stele was probably erected as a *horos* of a rustic sanctuary dedicated to Pan ('Πάν Νάιος').¹⁴ It is, furthermore,

9. *RPC I*, 1550. *RPC I*, 1548, that belongs to the same Augustan series as 1549, bears a standing figure identified with Augustus by the iconographic type and the legend.

10. 'Tyche' is implied as a personification of the city/colony, in accordance with the Hellenistic tradition, and not as the Roman deity Fortuna.

11. The representation of the turreted Tyche of a city is, however, older and well widespread since the Hellenistic period, especially in the Greek East; see Papageorgiou 1997.

12. Touratsoglou 1988, 326 ff. A small issue of Thessalonike depicting Pan ἀποσκοπῶν on the obverse and the name of the city on the reverse is worth mentioning (Touratsoglou 1988, 323-324). Pan is otherwise not used in the numismatic iconography of Thessalonike; nevertheless, in this case we have an obverse in Thessalonike with a usual iconographic type of Pella, and in Pella an iconographic type (Tyche) regularly used in Thessalonike.

13. *SNG Cop.* (Macedonia), 287.

14. Tsantsanoglou 2001.

known that Pan was one of the major deities worshipped in Macedonia ever since King Antigonus II Gonatas (277-274/272-239 BC) chose the head of the god as the *episema* on the Macedonian shield that was depicted on the obverse of his silver coinage.¹⁵ Although it is not certain to which military victory of Antigonus this type refers to, the story about the panic that the god inflicted upon the Gauls when they attacked the sanctuary of Delphi in 279/8 BC is well known (Pausanias 10.23.7-8).¹⁶ Two years later, in 277, Antigonus himself faced the Gauls in Lysimacheia,¹⁷ but no ancient source mentions the contribution of Pan to the king's victory.¹⁸

Regardless of the precise origins of the story, the worship of Pan in Macedonia continued well into the Roman period, and Pella, following the practice of other cities that emphasized their mythological heritage through coinage, revived this traditional cult from its historical past by choosing it as an iconographic type for its bronze coinage.¹⁹ It is worth noting that the head of Pan was engraved on the earlier hellenistic issues of the city, after the Roman conquest and before the foundation of the Roman colony.²⁰

The posture of Pan on the new coin of Pella is unusual. The god is not depicted seated, as on the issues bearing the imperial portrait, but standing and stepping as a conqueror on an object that cannot be securely defined, most probably a pile of rocks. Although Pan is otherwise attested in human form,²¹ this posture is unknown for him. In art iconography he is usually resting on a rock, dancing (alone or as a member of the Dionysiac *thiasos*) or just standing,

15. SNG Alpha Bank (Macedonia), 983, 986-989. Pan erecting a trophy is the reverse type chosen for one of Antigonus' bronze issues (SNG Alpha Bank [Macedonia], 1010-1045).

16. Panagopoulou 2005-2006, 168-169 re-assessed the possibility that this episode is the reason for the depiction of Pan on the coinage of Antigonus Gonatas.

17. Usener 1874, 406-410 was the first to suggest that this victory was commemorated on the coinage of Antigonus.

18. For a recent discussion and earlier bibliography on the iconography of Pan on the silver and bronze coinage of Antigonus Gonatas, see Voutiras 2018, 405-406.

19. On the numismatic iconography employed by provincial cities in the eastern part of the Empire and the depiction of local deities, see Bellinger 1956, Papageorgiadou-Bani 2004 and Howgego 2005. Specifically on Roman Macedonia, see Kremydi-Sicilianou 2005.

20. SNG ANS 7, 573-578, 620.

21. Voutiras 2018, 397-398.

holding his attributes and keeping watch of his flock (ἀποσκοπῶν).²² His posture here strongly reminds ‘Augustus stepping on a prow’ on an early issue of Pella.²³

Regarding the inscription of the coin, the only unusual element is the use of the complete form of the word ‘colonia’, which is otherwise usually abbreviated (‘COL’).²⁴ Furthermore, what is also worth noting is the division of the title of the city between the obverse and the reverse, whereas in most cases it is inscribed fully on the one side of the coin.

As already mentioned, the type of Pan on the reverse of the coins of Pella was introduced under Trajan and it is, therefore, reasonable to assume that the reign of this emperor might be a *terminus post quem* for the dating of this coin which bears no imperial portrait. The bust of Tyche with the turreted crown in nearby Thessalonike was also introduced at about the same period²⁵, and remained in use until the end of the city’s coinage. However, in these early issues of Thessalonike Tyche is depicted with a turreted crown but not veiled; this feature was added later, during the reign of Commodus.²⁶ Moreover, iconographic parallels with Pan standing are found in abundance from the mid-2nd and during the 3rd century AD,²⁷ when the theme of Pan became

22. *LIMC* VIII (Suppl.), 923, 940-941; 612-635. To my knowledge, the only parallel in posture that can be mentioned is a bronze statuette found in Andritsaina (Peloponnese); Pan is standing r., with his r. hand at his waist and his l. arm resting on the thigh of his raised l. leg (*LIMC* VIII [Suppl.], 926, no. 55).

23. *RPC* I, 1548.

24. It should be noted that, under Augustus, there is an issue bearing his portrait on the obverse and the legend COLONIAE PELLENSIS on the reverse (*RPC* I, no. 1549), whereas the issue without the imperial portrait bears the title COLONIA PELLA on the reverse (*RPC* I, no. 1550). However, the iconographic, epigraphic and archaeological evidence of the coin presented in this article do not support an early dating.

25. Touratsoglou 1988, 326-327.

26. Touratsoglou 1988, 332 ff.

27. See, for example, Caesarea Paneas (Caesarea Philippi) in Syria during the reign of Marcus Aurelius (AD 161-180), where Pan is depicted naked standing right and leaning against a tree trunk, legs crossed, playing the flute (*SNG ANS* 6, 862). Also see a bronze issue from Perge in Pamphylia with the portrait of Salonina on the obverse and Pan standing, holding his attributes on the reverse (*Lindgren* III, no. 656).

more popular in the numismatic iconography of the cities of the Greek East.²⁸ Last but not least, on the coins of Pella that bear the imperial portrait, the *lagobolon* was added as an attribute of Pan from the reign of Severus Alexander (AD 222-235) onwards (**fig. 6**),²⁹ whereas on earlier coins the god was depicted only with the syrinx.

Further assumptions on the dating of the coin are more tentative. The style of the engraving and the form of the letters point towards a date within the 3rd century AD, and more specifically around the reigns of Maximinus I Thrax (AD 235-238) and Gordian III (AD 238-244) (**fig. 7**).³⁰ All letters are serified; for example, one should pay attention to the horizontal bar in 'L' and the lowest one in 'E' that both have their edges serified, while the upper bar of 'E' is also serified, at least at its one end. The excavation data offer some further evidence on chronology, although they give no definite answer, since the deposit in which the coin was discovered was not sealed. Nonetheless, it is worth stressing that the coin was found at the *forum* of Dium, near the floor level, and since the *forum* is usually dated to the period of the Severans,³¹ the discovery of the coin in this complex is another indication of a 3rd century dating. Furthermore, the low weight and the small diameter of the coin show that, as most issues without imperial portrait, the coin of Pella belonged to the smallest denomination.

A rare issue of Edessa without imperial portrait, known by only two surviving examples, is worth mentioning in the context of our discussion. Although its iconography is different –the issue of Edessa bears Poseidon standing on the obverse, and a club and the legend ΕΔΕΣ-ΣΑΙΩΝ on the reverse–, the

28. Pan, standing or seated, appears on the coinage of numerous cities this period, especially in the region of Asia. The *RPC* volumes, printed or online, provide a full record. See *RPC* III: Pella, Delphi, Alexandria, Apollonia Mordiaem; *RPC* IV online: Pella, Nicaea, Creteia-Flaviopolis, Thyatira, Attalea, Apollonia ad Rhyndacum, Pappa Tiberia, Andeda, Sagalassus, Cerasus, Caesarea Paneas, Zakyntus; *RPC* VI online: Nicaea, Nicomedia, Tium, Apollonia Salbace, Magnesia ad Maeandrum, Nysa, Thyatira, Apollonia ad Rhyndacum, Perge, Seleuceia; *RPC* VII.1: Nysa, Apollonia ad Rhyndacum.

29. *SNG ANS* 7, 632.

30. *SNG Sweden* II.2, 924.

31. For the *forum* of Dium, see Evangelidis 2010, 199-211 with earlier bibliography.

diameter of the coin is similar to that of Pella (ca. 17-18 mm), and E. Papaefthymiou has tentatively dated it within the 3rd century AD.³²

The new provincial coin of Pella presented in this paper remains, for the time being, unique and open to scholarly discussion. Additional evidence is needed to securely place it among the numismatic series of the city and the abundant numismatic production of the eastern Roman provinces.

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Summary

The purpose of this article is to present a unique bronze coin of the Roman colony of Pella in Macedonia that was discovered during excavations of the Aristotle University at Dion. The coin belongs to a so-far unpublished issue and bears a female head on the obverse and a standing Pan on the reverse. The article discusses the iconographic types, the denomination and the dating of this issue that does not bear an imperial portrait. A dating in the 3rd century AD is suggested for its production.

32. Papaefthymiou 2002, pl. 12; Gorny, Mosch 212 (5-6 March 2013), no. 2377 = Paris CM 2013.110.

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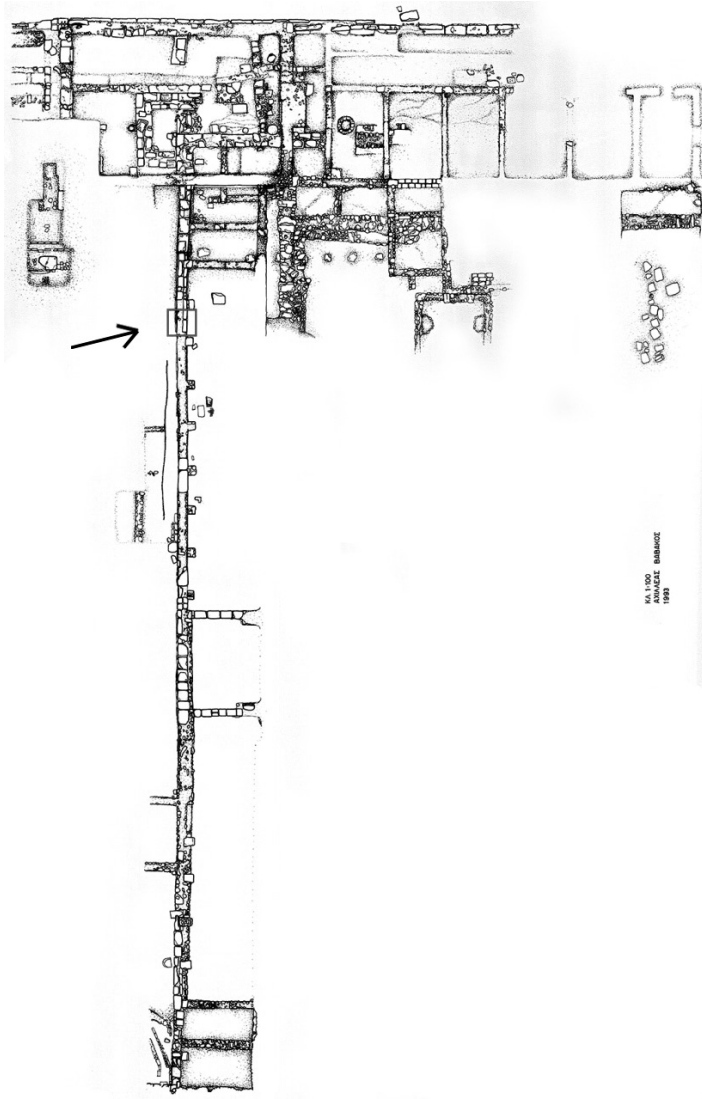


Fig. 1. Plan of the southern edge of the *forum Romanum* in Dium; the findspot of the coin is indicated with an arrow (Drawing by Achilles Vavakos, 1993; courtesy of S. Pingiatoglou).



Fig. 2. AE, Pella, Roman Imperial times (3rd century AD), actual size (Photo by M. Iatrou; courtesy of S. Pingiatoglou).



Fig. 3. AE, Pella, Roman Imperial times (3rd century AD), enlargement.



Fig. 4. AE, Pella, Hadrian (AD 117-138) (Photo: SNG Cop. Macedonia, 278).



Fig. 5. AE, Thessalonike, Roman Imperial times (Photo: SNG Cop. Macedonia, 388).

A NEW ROMAN PROVINCIAL COIN FROM PELLA



Fig. 6. AE, Pella, Severus Alexander (AD 222-235)
(Photo: SNG Cop. Macedonia, 284).



Fig. 7. AE, Pella, Gordian III (AD 238-244)
(Photo: Numismatik Lanz 102, no. 874).

