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The Numismatic Evidence on the Roman Harbour of Patrai

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The Numismatic Evidence on the Roman Harbour of Patrai

The foundation by Augustus of a roman colony at the site of Patrai was a wise as well as an inevitable choice. The city was located on a pivotal point along the itinerary joining the Italian coasts with the Aegean and the Orient markets, frequented by a lot of travellers since the earlier times.¹ In addition, it held a favourable position for the control not only of the northern Peloponnesian coastline but also the routes in the Aetolia and Locris regions.²

Although conceived as a maritime trade station, the references to its harbour³ is very scanty, excepting the citation of an ὕφορμος μέτριος by Strabo (8.7.5) and a λιμήν by Pausanias (7.21.7), while its ancient remains are almost totally destroyed by the modern city's expansion. I. Papapostolou identifies the remnants of a bulky and extended pavement in *opus caementicum* as part of a portal construction, possibly a mole, dating after the second half of the 2nd cent. AD, while another also paved area ending in a strong wall as probably the breakwater of the port. Near the place where these structures were located, the primary road (following today's Gounari Avenue) of the city seems to have reached its end, as can be deduced by the remaining ruins.⁴

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1. A. Rizakis, “Il Porto di Patrasso a la Communicazione con l'Italia Durante l'Era Republican”, in N. Moschonas (ed.), *Studi di Storia Italo-ellenica* (Athens 1998) 25-38.

2. R. Baladié, *Le Péloponnèse de Strabon, Etude de Géographie Historique* (Paris 1980) 267.

3. Although there are differences between “harbour” and “port”, both terms will be used in this article because their special characteristics mostly coexist in structures of ancient times.

4. I.A. Papapostolou, “Θέματα τοπογραφίας και πολεοδομίας των Πατρών κατά τη ρωμαϊκή περίοδο”, in A.D. Rizakis (ed.), *Achaea und Elis in der Antike, Akten des 1. Internationalen Symposiums*, Athen, 19-21/5/1989, (Μελετήματα 13; Athens 1991) 305-320, 315. M. Petropoulos, “Ρωμαϊκές παρεμβάσεις στο πολεοδομικό σχέδιο της Πάτρας”, *Patrasso colonia di Augusto, Atti del Convegno Internazionale*, Patrasso 23-24 marzo 2006 (Athens 2009) 39-77, 55, 61-62.

However, the installations of an important harbour can be also attested in the numismatic evidence, offered here by two, extremely limited, issues dated to the reign of Commodus⁵ and Geta (figs. 1, 2).⁶ The numismatic evidence seems to corroborate the hypothesis of a construction programme including the city's harbour undertaken in the second half of the 2nd century AD. It is not surprising that the numismatic evidence coincide with the archaeological one supporting the idea of a project to restore, enlarge or reconstruct the port during at least the reign of Commodus (180-192). On the other hand, the short and unfortunate reign of Geta (209-211) has not left strong evidence of his policy, and even less of his provincial coinage. However, as local needs could have met by local authorities, a renewal of the city's harbour cannot be excluded and therefore the issues struck under Geta might have been commemorative, to honour perhaps an anniversary of the Commodian benefaction to the colony.

On the coins of Commodus, the harbour is represented in a rather peculiar way, avoiding or failing to emphasize its circular form, as is the usual pattern, although the presence of a mole on the left – as well as possibly on the right – out of the coin's flan could finally give the impression of a close harbour. The figure is organized in a relatively horizontal way, while attention is driven to two different central themes arranged in two levels. The first is occupied by a male statue flanked by two boats. The second, well-defined by a line composed by the legend COL A A PATR, by a series of buildings consisting of a stoic construction or

5. Roma, 10.70 gr. sharing the same dies with the coin (formerly in Leiden, currently in Utrecht); Athens, 13.40 gr.; Berlin 143, 11.60 gr. (NCP, Q 22) and British Museum 1920.9-9-15, 8.83 gr. = *Roman Provincial Coinage* vol. IV: AD 138-192, Online, 5235 (<http://rpc.ashmox.ox.ac.uk/coins/4/5235>); see M.J. Price and Bluma Trell, *Coins and Their Cities: Architecture on the Ancient Coins of Greece, Rome, and Palestine* (London 1977) 41, no. 60.

6. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale 1327, 10.47 gr. sharing the same dies with the coin at Berlin 194 (v. Rauch), 8.36 gr.; see Price and Trell, *Coins and Their Cities* (see n. 5) 41, no. 61. One more specimen dated to the reign of Severus and attributed to Patrai is illustrated in D. Sestini, *Descrizione di altre medaglie greche del Museo del Signore Carlo d'Ottavio Fontana di Trieste* (Florence 1829) 39, T.II, no. 11 and F. Imhoof-Blumer and P. Gardner, *A Numismatic Commentary on Pausanias* (London 1887) reprinted with additions by A.N. Oikonomides (Chicago 1964) under the title, *Ancient Coins Illustrating Lost Masterpieces of Greek Art* (cited as NCP) 81, Q XXIII, showing temples in the foreground, vessels in a middle zone and mole surmounted by tower with an equestrian statue in the upper part. However, this coin is not found in the Vienna Numismatic Collection and is not recorded elsewhere.

shipyards acting as a base for the whole and one central hexastyle temple, frontally rendered, flanked by two smaller temples or civic buildings.

The coin of Geta shows a rather artistic rendering, more elliptic, yet also arranged in two clearly confined horizontal levels. The ethnic, written in the exergue, does not form an integral feature in the depiction of the harbour which consists of a long building seen from the side, possibly the same temple depicted on the Commodus' coins, while a statue can be discerned in front of it. Two vessels are depicted in the basin of the port on the front level.

It is clear that the rendering of the coins of Commodus is far more realistic and certainly more detailed, enabling even the identification of the monuments depicted (fig. 3).

The statue in the front level shows a male figure, possibly naked; the left leg slightly backwards, the right bent hand holding an unidentified object; the left hand downwards, also holding an object which cannot be discerned due to the corrosion of the coins. The position of the body is an exact copy of the stance of the Genius of the city,⁷ depicted in the traditional way of pouring libations with a *phiale* over a burning altar, while resting the other hand on a conical box on an ornate pedestal (fig. 4).⁸ It is shown on an issue sharing the same obverse die with coins depicting the harbour.⁹ The similar rendering of the torso is probably due to the same engraver's hand and not merely to an intention to reproduce the Genius figure after a common and well established style.

The same torso rendering, but in a lesser artistic level, is also depicted on another coin of Commodus,¹⁰ of smaller denomination, where a male statue is represented on a low base, holding a small Nike in the right extended hand and a branch or ear-of-grain downwards to the left (fig. 5). These two figures, on the Ashmolean Museum coin and on the harbour coins are almost identical, carrying their attributes in the same way and being produced in the same years, as it can be concluded from the characteristics of the emperor's portrait. The same position and rendering of the torso follows a largely popular artistic convention,

7. Berlin 140 (Löbbecke) 11.34 gr.

8. The box is usually interpreted as that brought by Eurypylus from Troy and described by Pausanias (7.19.1-10).

9. Berlin, 11.58 gr.; RPC IV Online (see n. 5) 1970 (<http://rpc.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/coins/4/1970/>) and Athens NM, 13.40 gr. (exhibition).

10. Ashmolean, 5.00 gr. = RPC IV Online (see n. 5) 9646 (<http://rpc.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/coins/4/9646/>).

applied both in male and female figures as can be seen on a series of coins from Peloponnesian mints, an observation suggesting that itinerant artists may have been responsible for more than one city's issues.¹¹

The identification of the figure is rather problematic since the combination of a branch and a Nike is not common in the iconography,¹² and the figure *per se* remains unique in the Patrai repertoire and cannot be linked to any known tradition of the city itself. However, on a coin of Commodus from the mint of Rome¹³ Genius is represented holding a *patera* and ears-of-grain. Therefore the identification of the figure as the Genius of the harbour or a personification of the Portus should not be excluded.

Both these personifications are represented, in a more elaborate way, on the Torlonia relief,¹⁴ dated to the Severan period, while the depiction of these minor deities is uncommon in the relevant numismatic iconography, where a tendency towards more recognizable major deities is attested.

This is the case of Corinth for instance; the testimonies for its harbours, Lechaion and Kenchreai are plentiful, not only because Pausanias clearly described their remnants but also because extended excavations exposed the ruins of the harbour constructions. The remains from Kenchreai seem to coincide with the numismatic representation of the port, though not of high artistic value, struck under Antoninus Pius. On these coins, except for the depiction of specific

11. See for instance, *Coins of Peloponnesos, The BCD LHS, Auction LHS 96, 8-9 May 2006*, LHS Numismatics, nos. 358, 360.2, p. 101 (Sicyon); J.H. Kroll, "Hemibols to Assaria: The bronze coinage of Roman Aigion", *NC* 156 (1996) nos. 59.1 and 37.2 (Aigion). For a figure of Apollo holding a laurel branch downwards on coins of Argos, see C. Flament and P. Marchetti, *Le monnayage argien d'époque romaine (d'Hadrien à Gallien)* (EFA 2011) 72. For a possible organization and standardization of coin production in the Peloponnesian issuing coins in the same mint or by the same engraver, see C. Flament, "Die et engraver-sharing dans le Péloponnèse entre le règne d'Hadrien et celui de Septime Sévère", *BCH* 131 (2007) 559-614.

12. The so-called branch cannot be identified as a short thunderbolt, hence a Zeus figure, as this has never been held in such a way. However, there is a representation of Jupiter as OPTIME MAXIME, on a denarius of Commodus, dated to 186-189, holding a branch and long sceptre; see H. Mattingly and E. Sydenham, *The Roman Imperial Coinage*, Vol. III, *Antoninus Pius to Commodus* (London 1930) no. 192, 387.

13. H. Mattingly and E. Sydenham, *Roman Imperial Coinage*. Vol. III: *Antoninus Pius to Commodus* (London 1930) no. 167, 384 (denarius), and no. 518, 426 (as), Rome mint, 187-188 AD; Genius standing front, head left, *patera* in right, ears-of-grain in left.

14. K.D. Marshall, *The Torlonia Relief. An Iconographical Study* (Wheaton College 1960).

buildings, such as port constructions and temples, a huge statue of Neptune – also represented on issues of the same period – holding a dolphin on his extended right hand and the trident in his left,¹⁵ occupies the centre of the harbour. Alternatively, instead of Neptune, Isis as Pelagia is also represented. Her temple, as goddess of the sailors, was erected near the port¹⁶ and can be identified as one of the buildings shown on the coins.

It is worthy of notice that in the case of Patrai there is also a tradition of depicting Poseidon¹⁷ on coins, repeatedly represented in an invariable form during the reign of Domitian,¹⁸ Hadrian,¹⁹ and Marcus Aurelius²⁰ up to Septimius Severus (figs. 6, 7).²¹ The selection of a minor deity, not attested – at least in this form – in the local pantheon, instead of the patron of the seas as expected in a harbour scene,²² is strange enough for a provincial issue.

The unique, for the entire numismatic iconographic tradition of Patrai, figure refers mostly to Roman prototypes, which aimed mainly to illustrate the emperor's

15. In a conventional manner mostly followed throughout the Empire; *RPC IV Online* (see n. 5) 5098 (<http://rpc.ashmox.ox.ac.uk/coins/4/5098/>).

16. N.D. Papachatzis, *Πανσανίου Ελλάδος Περιήγησις. Βιβλίο 2 and 3. Κορινθιακά και Λακωνικά* (Athens 1976) 43-47.

17. See below for more representations of Poseidon on coins of Peloponnesian cities. Also *BCD LHS* (see n. 11) *passim*.

18. Neptune, standing l., holding trident, foot on prow, r. hand/elbow resting on r. foot: Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale 1256, 7.00 gr., and 1257, 8.37 gr. = A. Burnett, M. Amandry and I. Carradice, *Roman Provincial Coinage*, Vol. II: *From Vespasian to Domitian (AD 69-96)* (London 1999) 244; Berlin (Imhoof-Blumer) 8.19 gr. = *RPC II*, 245; Bologna (Col. Palagi) 8.30 gr.; Ashmolean, 8.45 gr. and 7.57 gr., which shares common obverse and reverse dies with Berlin (Löbbecke) 9.72 gr. = *RPC II*, 246.

19. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale 1265, 5.97 gr. and Berlin (no acc. no.) 7.77 gr., sharing the same dies.

20. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale 1268a (S. de Ricci) 5.18 gr.; right hand holding small dolphin, and ANS, 10.12 gr.; Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale 1270, 12.34 gr. See also, *RPC IV Online* (see n. 5) 9645 (<http://rpc.ashmox.ox.ac.uk/coins/4/9645/>) (Lucius Verus).

21. Berlin (no acc. no.) 6.70 gr.

22. See for instance, the Nero's Ostia harbour coins, where the representation of a statue surmounting a base in the front opening of the port image is also attested. C.H.V. Sutherland, *The Roman Imperial Coinage, volume I, revised edition, 31 BC - AD 69* (London 1984) 1999, nos. 178-183, 440-441, 513-514, 586-589.

efforts to provide the grain needed for feeding the population, a task which proved to be more difficult especially during and after the famine of AD 189.²³

Erecting statues in harbours was apparently a common practice for the ancient cities that can be also testified by their depiction on their local issues, the famous Neronian Ostia coins being the most characteristic example.²⁴ In these cases the statue is not related to the lighthouse but is depicted as standing free and by itself in the entrance of the harbour, between the two closing moles, as can also be seen on the Patrai coins. If they ever existed and were not meant to represent simply a personification or the benevolent presence of a god,²⁵ these statues could have been erected on the moles, possibly upon their edge, as it seems to be the case at Kenchreai,²⁶ where the bronze image of Poseidon²⁷ is attested.

On the other hand, archaeological data confirm that in the same place between the two moles, lighthouses could also be erected, as at the Claudius harbour in Rome, where a lighthouse was built on top of an island, in fact an isolated mole according to ancient writers.²⁸ This artificial island at the entrance of the harbour acted as a breakwater as well, providing a safe passage to ships entering from

23. See for instance, RIC III (see n. 13) no. 325, p. 405-406; Annona standing l., holding statuette (of Concordia?) and *cornucopiae*: to l., *modius* and corn-ears, to r. ship, on which are two figures and a Victory, dated to AD 181-182. See also, LAETITIAE AVG, Laetitia standing l., holding corn-ears and rudder on globe; probably 189 AD, no. 201, p. 388, in almost the same style as on the Patrai specimen.

24. Probably issued in 64 AD to celebrate the completion of the work initiated by Claudius or a few years later in order to celebrate its 10th anniversary. For the dating and the causes for the issuing of Nero's "Ostia" sestertii, see Miriam T. Griffin, *Nero: The End of a Dynasty* (Batsford, Routledge 1984) 107. For the harbour itself and the construction works, see M. K. and R. L. Thornton: *Julio-Claudian Building Programs: a Quantitative Study in Political Management* (Bolchazy-Carducci 1989) 87.

25. To support this hypothesis the existence of a coin of Kenchreai portraying another deity and not Poseidon can be mentioned; see R.L. Hohlfelder, "Pausanias, II,2,3: A collation of archaeological and numismatic evidence", *Hesperia* 39 (1970) 326-31, p. 326, n. 2 and lately, L. Bricault and R. Veymiers, "Isis in Corinth: The Numismatic Evidence. City, Image and Religion", in *Nile into Tiber. Egypt in the Roman World. Proceedings of the IIIrd International Conference of Isis Studies*, Leiden, May 11-14 2005 (Brill 2007) 392-416, esp. 406-412.

26. Papachatzis, *Κορινθιακά και Λακωνικά* (see n. 16) 45.

27. Hohlfelder, "Pausanias, II,2,3" (see n. 25).

28. Suet. *The Twelve Caesars*, Book V: *Claudius* 20.

either side. Therefore, the statue depicted on the coins of Patrai could also have been erected as part of the lighthouse of the harbour.

The only reservation in accepting this identification is the fact that the statues standing on the lighthouses bear specific features appropriate to the emperor himself, since the whole rendering reminds more of the imperial statues representing the emperor in a heroic position, holding in one hand, a long spear and in the other, a scroll, a *patera*, or other attributes.

Such figures of imperial grandiose are also depicted in the coins of Patrai. On three of them, also dated to the reign of Commodus,²⁹ a male statue is represented facing, on a round, high, base, surmounting a wider but shorter one. The male figure keeps its right hand down, slightly extended, holding perhaps a *patera* while his upright left is carrying a long spear, sceptre or trident (fig. 8).³⁰ A unique coin of Elagabalus³¹ shows the same arrangement on a bipartite base but the statue on top cannot be discerned due to corrosion effect. In any case, this statue had to be a short one, as there is not enough space available on the flan of the coin (fig. 9). However, since it seems plausible that a famous monumental statue was meant to be depicted, this could very well resemble either the lighthouse of Ostia, as depicted on the Neronian coins, or the upper part of the lighthouse of Alexandria, as shown on coins of Hadrian (117-138).³² In both cases, there is a tall construction functioning as a lighthouse, surmounted by a disproportionately small statue.

29. Bologna (no acc. no.) 11.90 gr. sharing common dies with Ashmolean (no acc. no.) 14.40 gr. and British Museum 1920-8-5-1064, 9.82 gr. See also, *RPC* IV Online (see n. 5) 5244 (<http://rpc.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/coins/4/5244/>).

30. The same arrangement of a statue surmounting two superposed bases can be seen on earlier coins of Domitian (Athens, 8.72, 6.83 gr.; Berlin, 8.52 gr. = *RPC* II (see n. 18) 235; British Museum 1906-10-7-23, 8.50 gr.; see Price and Trell, *Coins and Their Cities* [see n. 5] 45, no. 74; Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale 1260, 6.16 gr. = *RPC* II (see n. 18) 234; Napoli, 7.10 gr. and Bologna), which has been identified as a fountain. See also, C.S. Berkovitz, "An Imperial Fountain at Patrai: The Numismatic Evidence", *AJA* 77 (1973) 206.

31. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale 1019, 8.20 gr.

32. See *BMC*, 103 no. 885. This disproportioned arrangement is a common concept in Roman iconography, as can be also testified by the commemorative issue of Marcus Aurelius to honour Antoninus as DIVO (PIO); see *RIC* III (see n. 13) no. 439, 247, pl. IX, 189. This could possibly be explained by the fact that the main interest lay on the base where the honorary inscription was engraved or that it was an effort to render a kind of perspective. For a greek version of this arrangement, see Corinth, *NCP* C XLVIII.

Anyhow, the issues representing the city's harbour effectively reflect the imperial policy of the period, which is defined by Chester Starr as follows: "If we look back over all the Greek imperial issues which may relate to naval activity, it is apparent that they become more frequent with the Severi or, indeed with Commodus." "The journeys of Marcus Aurelius and Commodus...were noted on imperial coinage, the effect of which on local issues must also be considered. But I would suggest that more generally the presence of naval types in coastal towns may indicate a renewed pride of their inhabitants in their geographic and economic position...".³³

The second level of the harbour is defined by the horizontal axe consisting of a long "stoic" building surmounted by three temples.³⁴ The central one is an imposing hexastyle temple rendered in a rather conventional, concise and rough way.³⁵

The temple on the harbour coin recalls the hexastyle temple on top of a three-step *crepis* on a previous issue of Hadrian (fig. 10).³⁶ There is a clear configuration of the *aetoma* showing the *tympanon*, while the roof is decorated with a frontal quadriga on the top and two figures, possibly Victories, as *akroteria*. In the middle of the front columns a circular object can be discerned but not easily identified. It could be an "aspis" bearing the bust of the emperor, as it is seen on a coin of Julia Domna,³⁷ also depicting a temple. There, the bust of the empress decorates the *aetoma* while the two female deities at the *akroteria* are identified as *Spes* (fig. 11).

Although there is no reference of a Hadrianic building program at Patrai, including the erection of a specific temple, there was evidently an earlier Hadrianic (?) temple, a point of reference for the city, which might have been renovated by the time of Commodus. If the Severan temple on Domna's coins was a new construction or an enlargement of the existing one is hard to say.

However, the temple on the harbour coins appears to be an important and famous local building, probably dominant in the city's port. Considering that

33. C.A. Starr, "Naval Activity in Greek Imperial Issues", *Essays on Ancient History: A Selection of Articles and Reviews* (Leiden 1979) 278-284; 281-283.

34. Petropoulos, "Ρωμαϊκές παρεμβάσεις" (see n. 4) 62, referring to a "λατρευτική ζώνη" (cult area).

35. See for instance a coin struck in the same period in Nikomedia, *RPC IV Online* (see n. 5) 5637 (<http://rpc.ashmuss.ox.ac.uk/coins/4/5637/>).

36. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale 1264, 11.88 gr.

37. Berlin 163 (Imhoof-Blumer), 9.43 gr.

this temple had to be devoted to a major divinity, possibly to Poseidon, one of the most significant gods of the Greek pantheon and associated primarily with sea-orientated states,³⁸ it could be argued that this temple may be identified with that which Pausanias (7.21.7-8) placed near the harbour. On the other hand, the *temenos* of Aphrodite, also noted by him, could be represented as one of the minor structures.³⁹

The series of the market stoic buildings or shipyards displayed in a row as the base of the temples on top is a recurrent feature in the numismatic iconography of the harbours, as they were part of the harbour infrastructure and played a really important role in the activities there. Regarding the coins of Patrai, the section of the stoic construction alongside the temples with which they form a tight unit, were characteristic of the harbour and offered the first impression to travellers and sailors approaching and entering it. In addition, these colonnades comprise a significant element of the pattern organizing the whole theme by defining it in two separate levels, thus dividing the sea from the land.

In contrast, the two vessels depicted in the first level, rendered as an extension of the two moles and flanking the central statue, seem to be of a minor importance, since they are shown in a rather concise form with only the rows and sail, while the main interest apparently lies in the surrounding view of the city. Different types of boats appeared on Roman coins,⁴⁰ conveying the sea, a voyage or as symbols of naval power.

38. Poseidon is also depicted on the city's coins dated to the reigns of Domitian, Hadrian, Commodus and Septimius Severus.

39. A parallel to Patrai's issue can be found on coins of Nikomedia also struck under Commodus (BMC 34; see Price and Trell, *Coins and Their Cities* [see n. 5] 213, no. 446), where two eight-column Corinthian temples are depicted, referring to the right given to Nikomedians to hold a contest and build a temple honouring Commodus, as well as below them, a galley representing the city's port.

40. Boats or galleys are not very often depicted on coins and when they do they are not referring to the importance of the issuing city for sea communications, rather they allude to specific historical events. For instance, the issues of Dyme, under Tiberius (14-37), showing a prow to left, RPC I 1288, refer to the naval victory of Augustus at Aktion/or to the colony's piratical past. The issues of Patrai or Corinth representing a galley are connected to the famous *adventus augusti* of Nero at Achaea. See also, U. Schaaff, *Münzen der römischen Kaiserzeit mit Schniffsdersrellungen im Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseum* (Mainz 2003). In this collection, alongside those coins depicting roman ships and vessels, are also specimens representing harbours, though in a lower percentage than the former.

The image depicted on Commodus' coins exhibits a sense of an utmost balance. As it is already mentioned, the whole scene is divided in two horizontal levels while at the same time there is a strict arrangement in vertical axes. Thus, the main temple continues to the statue – of the god worshipped at the temple? – in the middle of the harbour, whereas the two flanking buildings correspond to the two vessels flanking the statue. The whole concept gives an accurate view of the architectural environment of the harbour in a very well-defined frame.

The coins of Geta on the other hand display a rather artistic rendering, though more precise than its commodian counterpart, well-confined in two clearly divided levels as well (fig. 12).⁴¹ The upper, executed in perspective, shows a temple seen from the side while a statue is depicted in front of it to the right. As this part of the coins cannot be discerned due to the corrosion, it can be only deduced that the figure represented is a male holding a spear or long sceptre or a trident in one hand while extending the other in front. The figure cannot be identified with certainty but obviously has nothing in common with the statue on the coins of Commodus. It could be a representation of either the emperor himself, who was usually represented in a military attire holding branch and spear (see for instance *RIC* 16b, dated to 200-202, as Caesar) or a statue of Poseidon.

As Pausanias also referred to a cult statue of the god standing, in his temple (7.21.7-8: Πρὸς δὲ τῷ λιμένι Ποσειδῶνός τε ναὸς καὶ ἄγαλμά ἐστιν δρθὸν λίθου),⁴² it could be plausible to suggest that it is the same as that seen on the coins. Although this is not the usual depiction of the god on the Patrai coins, who is usually represented standing but posing one foot on a base or rock, it could be considered as a new type of artistic conception appeared in the times of Commodus. In fact, Poseidon is shown holding trident and dolphin on another coin of Commodus,⁴³ which also closely resembles the above mentioned male statue standing on a bipartite base. This type, which will be finally established in the Severan period,

41. Another coin, also dated to the reign of Geta, issued in Pagae, reproduces an equally extravagant view of the city's harbour; see Price and Trell, *Coins and Their Cities* (see n. 5) 220, fig. 482. These series could be attributed to a wider innovative tendency prevailing in the Peloponnesian mints during the short span of the emperor's reign in 198-211. It could be assumed that this is due to a specific atelier master engraver working in this period, although there is no firm evidence to sustain that hypothesis.

42. Imhoof-Blumer and Gardner, *Numismatic Commentary* (see n. 6) 81.

43. *BCD LHS* (see n. 11) no. 560.1, 150.

falls more into the widespread tendency towards a more heroic rendering of Poseidon observed in many Peloponnesian mints.

The front level, the basin of the harbour, is occupied by two merchant ships of different size. The bigger one, on the left, is shown in detail with its sail wide open and a man on the stern.

The coins of Geta apparently offer a less imposing view of the harbour than those of Commodus, displaying rather a scene of everyday life across the sea. Nevertheless, the presence of the temple of Poseidon constitutes a very important and constant point of reference for the city and its harbour, while other constructions in its vicinity contribute to a realistic view of the port as well as of the neighbouring areas, in a manner often employed in the numismatic iconography.

Few Greek cities depict their harbours on their coins, most of them located in the region of the Peloponnese and dated to the Antonine and the Severi period. In all cases, the engraver aimed to recreate the impression given to the traveller when entering the harbour and to render its view surrounded by monumental buildings and temples. Although, several of the Peloponnesian harbours had a long life even since the Bronze Age, most of them underwent extensive reconstructions during Roman times and were transformed into major centres in the naval and commercial network of the period. The existing archaeological indications point, with regards to most of them, to a Roman interest and reconstruction project dating in around the 2nd and the 3rd centuries. As A. Boyce cited, “literary evidence and inscriptions show that the construction or restoration of harbours was part of a broad policy put into action by Pius... following in the steps of Trajan and Hadrian, had great concern for the condition of the Empire’s harbours.”⁴⁴ Due to either the imperial impetus or the local desire these renovating actions resulted in the emergence of a new role for the coastal cities within the maritime communications network.

It seems that the flourishing of some Peloponnesian cities as commercial centres was the real trigger for the issuing of these coins promoting their predominance in the sea routes. However, this was not the sole motivation as most of the cities issuing these coins are the same the harbours of which are mentioned and described by Pausanias, during his travels between 166 and 174: Patrai, Kenchreai, Aegina, and

44. Abigale A. Boyce, “The Harbour of Pompeiopolis”, *AJA* 62.1 (1958) 67-78 and especially 76. Boyce thoroughly discusses the figures on several numismatic issues and provides a wide list of coins representing harbours in areas outside Greece such as Soli Pompeiopolis, Caesarea Germanica, Ephesos under Gordian III; *passim* and plates 10, and 13-15, including specimens from Sicily to Greece, Thrace and Asia Minor to Egypt.

Methone. It is therefore plausible that local pride coexists with the actual construction works in the ports, carried out by imperial initiative. Furthermore, these coastal towns were those renowned for their harbours at least in the second half of the 2nd cent., and they apparently maintained their importance in the years to come.

In fact a network of harbours⁴⁵ was developed in the northern Peloponnesian coast (**fig. 13**), extending from Patrai to the west including Aigeira⁴⁶ eastwards to Corinth and its ports Lechaion and Kenchreai, facilitating sea transports and travels, because open sea conditions made the *periplous* of the Peloponnes from the south extremely difficult.

This protected sea route was of extreme importance not only for the communications between the Roman territories and the eastern markets but also for the circulation of men and goods towards the cities of central Greece, like Megara, Kreusis or, Naupaktos.

Moreover, many of these cities had important industrial production, such as the tissues of Patrai or the salt flats mostly around sites in the north-eastern Peloponnes and the opposite coast.⁴⁷

Corinth always played an important historical role in the affairs of the ancient world due to its two strategic harbours (Str. 8.C378.20).⁴⁸

45. Very useful information is gathered from the sites www.limenoscope.ntua.gr and <http://www2.rgzm.de/Navis2/Home/HarbourFullTextOutput.cfm?HarbourNR>.

46. The artificial harbour of the city is a typical example of a roman construction regarding its technique and the extensive use of concrete. It can be dated to the reign of Emperor Maximinus Thrax (236-238 AD), coinciding with the town's period of prosperity, although its use could be dated to earlier days. There are few remnants of the roman harbour installations and segments of breakwater and mole are located today on land. As the city was destroyed most probably by an earthquake and was abandoned during the late 3rd century, its harbour also never recovered since. See W. Alzinger and Veronica Mitsopoulos-Leon, "Aigeira 1972", AAA 6 (1973) 193-200; W. Alzinger, "Aigeira's Excavations", *Idem* 7 (1974) 157-162 and *id.*, "Aigeira", *Idem* 9 (1976) 162-165. See also, S.C. Stiros, "Archaeological Evidence for Unusually Rapid Holocene Uplift Rates in an Active Normal Faulting Terrain: Roman Harbour of Aigeira, Gulf of Corinth, Greece", *Geoarchaeology* 13.7 (1998) 731-741.

47. Cristina Carusi, *Il Sale nel Mondo Greco (VI a.C. - III d.C.). Luoghi di Produzione, Circolazione Commerciale, Regimi di Sfruttamento nel Contesto del Mediterraneo Antico* (Bari 2008) 317, fig. 2.

48. "The beginning of the seaboard on the two sides is on the one side, Lechaion and on the other, Kenchreai, a village and a harbour within a distance of about seventy stadia from Corinth. The latter was used for trade from Asia and Lechaion for that from Italy".

The harbour of Lechaion⁴⁹ was of primary importance since it offered access to the Gulf of Corinth and served the trade routes to Italy and the rest of Europe. The harbour was in use since the Archaic period and underwent different phases of reconstruction, the major one being during the Roman period, until it was abandoned in ca. 521 or 551 AD following strong earthquakes.

The Roman harbour complex, whose remains are visible today, including two moles, an entrance channel leading to an elongated inner harbour basin and the ruins of an ancient quay wall,⁵⁰ seems to have been unique in Greece and offers an example of the similar technical achievements displayed at the harbours of Ostia, Caesarea, and Carthage.

The harbour of Kenchreai,⁵¹ situated on the eastern side of the Isthmus of Corinth, dominated the eastern way out of ancient Corinth to the Saronic Gulf (Aegean Sea) at a site that controlled the passage between central Greece and the Peloponnese. During the Roman period, a new harbour was developed and became a major trade centre. Situated in a semi-circular bay, it was enclosed by massive concrete breakwaters and protected by sea walls.⁵² Excavations revealed remains of several port constructions, like fish tanks, warehouses, lighthouse, etc., while extensive traces of impressive buildings at the north and south ends of the

49. Str. 8.6.20-23.

50. H. Hanna, A. Vött, B. Koster, M. Mathes-Schmidt, T. Mattern, K. Ntageretzi, K. Reicherter, D. Sakellariou and T. Willershäuser, "Lechaion, the Ancient Harbour of Corinth (Peloponnese, Greece) destroyed by Tsunamigenic Impact", in 2nd INQUA-IGCP-567 International Workshop on Active Tectonics, Earthquake Geology, Archaeology and Engineering, Corinth, Greece (2011) INQUA Paleoseismology and Active Tectonics Earthquake Archaeology 70, http://www.nug.rwth-aachen.de/media/Corinth/20_Hadler.pdf (3/3/2014). R. Rothaus, "Lechaion, Western Port of Corinth: a Preliminary Archaeology and History", *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 14.3 (1995) 293-306. From the inscription on the plinth of a statue, for instance, it is clear that during the 4th cent. AD the Corinthians honoured, "Φλάβιον Ἐρμογένην τὸν λαμπρότατον ἀνθύπατον... τὸν εὐεργέτην καὶ κτίστην τοῦ λιμένος...", J.H. Kent, *Corinth VIII,iii, The inscriptions 1926-1950* (Princeton 1966) 164, pl. 42.

51. Str. 6.20 [378], 6.22 [380] and Paus. (2.2.3). A.D. Rizakis, "Roman Colonies in the Province of Achaea: Territories, Land and Population", in S.E. Alcock (ed.), *The Early Roman Empire in the East* (Oxford 1997) 17-36.

52. Alice Alexouli-Leivaditi, S.E. Poulos, G. Leivaditis, P.D. Andris and Fotini Pomoni, "An Investigation of Natural Processes and Human Impact in the Coastal Area Surrounding the Ancient Harbour of Kenchreai (Saronikos Gulf)", *Δελτίο Ελληνικής Γεωλογικής Εταιρίας* XLIVII (2008) 1-6.

harbour possibly belong to the monumental complexes of the sanctuaries of Aphrodite and Isis, whose cults are attested in Pausanias.⁵³

A series of coins represents the harbour of Kenchreai, where Pausanias locates a temple and a statue of Aphrodite, a bronze image of Poseidon on the mole and sanctuaries of Asklepius and of Isis.⁵⁴ The coin, dated to Antoninus Pius' time, shows a semicircular harbour with temples standing at the edge of both moles, connected by a colonnade or even a series of ship or landing slips. Between the moles and the temples stands a statue of Poseidon, holding a trident and dolphin. In the basin, there are three ships. It is noteworthy that these coins, which display an apsidal arrangement emphasising the semicircular given by a close bay-harbour and focusing on the port itself, are used as prototypes for an issue of Methone dated to later years. In addition, the Kenchreai coin alongside a series dated to the reign of Commodus depicting a lighthouse is a rare example for Corinth. Even though the city manifested its pride for its crucial position on maritime routes and owned two ports on Isthmus,⁵⁵ the personifications of the two harbours and Isthmus itself rather than a realistic rendering of the ports are predominant in the coins iconography. This is a strange choice as the colonial coinage of Corinth is unique in displaying a vast repertoire, covering the most of the city's monuments and sight attractions. As Pausanias (2.2.6) mentioned: Λόγου δὲ ἄξια ἐν τῇ πόλει τὰ μὲν λειπόμενα ἔτι τῶν ἀρχαίων ἔστιν, τὰ δὲ πολλὰ αὐτῶν ἐπὶ τῆς ἀκμῆς ἐποιήθη τῆς ὕστερον.

One specimen of Aegina, issued in the name of Julia Domna, is closely related to the Patrai coins, following the same concept behind the arrangement in two levels – the harbour itself and the monumental buildings. The harbour is defined by two

53. R.L. Scranton and E.S. Ramage: "South of this are two heavy concrete foundations with a similar orientation, possibly representing a building 7 m. wide. Between them are traces of parallel heavy concrete foundations, which are only partially uncovered, but so far as exposed at least would be consistent with the plan of a Roman temple. They could conceivably represent the Temple of Aphrodite mentioned by Pausanias, though that temple might have been on the mole or on higher ground to the north", in "Investigations at Corinthian Kenchreai," *Hesperia* 36 (1967) 124-186.

54. Hohlfelder, "Pausanias, II,2,3" (see n. 25) 326-331, pl. 80.

55. Paus. 2.1.5: Καθήκει δὲ ὁ τῶν Κορινθίων ἴσθμὸς τῇ μὲν ἐς τὴν ἐπὶ Κεγχρέας, τῇ δὲ ἐς τὴν ἐπὶ Λεχαίω θάλασσαν.

short moles, with a boat in it. In the distance, there is a building, which “looks less like a temple than a theatre, market, or wharf”.⁵⁶

At the south-western end of the Peloponnese, Methoni in Messenia owned a harbour on the Ionian Sea in use, according to the extremely scant surviving remnants, between the 2nd and the 3rd centuries AD.⁵⁷ The city's harbour⁵⁸ is depicted on a series dated to the reign of Caracalla (198-217) and is “shown as a semicircular colonnaded wharf, with, at each end, a square distyle building containing a statue; at the centre of the harbour, statue of Tyche to left; at the harbour entrance, galley with towers to left”.⁵⁹ The whole rendering looks as a dull copy, a replica, of the harbour depicted on the aforementioned Corinthian issue under Antoninus Pius.

Besides the above mentioned coastal centres depicting their famous harbours on their coins, there are also certain seaside cities with port installations open to commerce and naval activities⁶⁰ that represented on their coins themes related to the sea, thus implying their importance in maritime traffic and commerce or simply their dependence on sea wealth.

The harbour of Gytheion on the southern corner of the Peloponnese and the north-western coast of the Laconian Gulf, giving access to the Aegean and further to Crete, played a crucial role to the trade of the entire region since the

56. Imhoof-Blumer and Gardner, *Numismatic Commentary* (see n. 6) L.I, 44-45, where the harbour depicted is identified as the secret harbour, “near which was a large theatre”. The building could also be the temple of Aphrodite, mentioned by Pausanias as being erected close to – a second – harbour $\epsilon\nu\ \tilde{\phi}\ \mu\acute{a}li\sigma\tau\alpha\ \delta\acute{r}\mu\zeta\sigma\eta\tau\alpha$ (Paus. 2.29.6). See Price and Trell, *Coin and Their Cities* (see n. 5) 41, fig. 59. Temples showing the monumental staircases is a common feature of corinthian issues; see for instance NCP F CXVII. However, as this “temple” resembles to those depicted on Levantine coins, see for instance H.C. Lindgren and F.L. Kovaks, *Ancient Bronze Coins of Asia Minor and Levant* (California 1985) nos. 2267, 2310, 2355, the attribution of the specific coin to Aegina remains doubtful, especially as it cannot be localized in any collection more recently.

57. J.C. Kraft and S.E. Aschenbrenner, “Paleographic Reconstructions in the Methoni Embayment in Greece”, *JFA* 4 (1977) 19-44 and especially, 30.

58. Paus. 4.35.1.

59. NCP, P VIII and Price and Trell, *Coin and Their Cities* (see n. 5) 208, fig. 484.

60. Although almost an island, Peloponnese was actually deprived from important maritime centres. In the whole region of a coastal length of 1.378,7 km there are only a few cities that deserve such a characterisation. See also Baladié, *Péloponnèse de Strabon* (see n. 2) 235-248.

Bronze Age. In addition, it had been the centre for the exportation of the Lapis Lacaedemonius, which was quarried locally at the nearby cities of Krokeai and Psophis, until 374-375 AD,⁶¹ when an earthquake destroyed it together with the city. However, the latter did not represent its harbour on local issues, although a series dated to Caracallas' reign, depicting Poseidon in the usual position, standing, holding dolphin and trident,⁶² possibly alludes not only to its crucial position but also to a building program referring to the harbour.

Argos⁶³ providing an excellent bay and owing two harbours was situated at a favourable spot on the route ways to the Gulf and the Isthmus of Corinth and the centre of the Peloponnese. In addition, the destruction of Corinth in 146 BC made the Argive isthmus a pivotal point on the itinerary from Italy across the Aegean Sea, to Rhodes and Syria.⁶⁴ The city issued coins representing Poseidon in the type of the Patrai mint; resting his foot on rock, under Hadrian, Lucius Verus and Septimius Severus.⁶⁵

Alongside the more important maritime and commercial centres, the humble Pylos, Epidavros and Methana⁶⁶ also issued coins referring to their sea orientation. It must be noted that almost the total of these issues are dated to the 2nd/3rd cent. and can be related to the flourishing of the Greek provinces under the Severi as well as the whole reorganization of the empire's financial structures.

However, for reasons unknown, cities with significant ports located in crucial points for the exploitation of the hinterland never issued coins

61. From the Roman times, few remnants of the harbour are preserved, such as traces of walls probably belonging to the foundations of ship sheds, an evidence of its function as a commercial harbour (Str. 8.5.2). See N. Skoufopoulos and G. McKernan, "Underwater Survey of Ancient Gythion", *International Journal of Nautical Archaeology* 4.1 (1975) 103-116, especially 111.

62. NCP, O III.

63. One series bearing the figure of Poseidon comes also from Aigion, issued under Caracalla (198-217), SNG Cop 139.

64. D. van Berchem, "Les Italiens d'Argos et le déclin de Délos", *BCH* 86.1 (1962) 305-313, especially 306.

65. See Flament and Marchetti, *Le monnayage argien* (see n. 11) 76. *Idem*, 13, R 42 (Hadrian); 23, R20 = *RPC* IV Online (see n. 5) 10633 (<http://rpc.ashmox.ac.uk/coins/4/10633/>) (Lucius Verus); 32, R 64 (Septimius Severus).

66. Pylos, under Geta (209-212), *BCD LHS* (see n. 11) no. 814.5, 206. Epidavros, under Septimius Severus (193-211), *BMC* 31; Methana, under Septimius Severus (193-211), *BCD LHS* (see n. 11) no. 1332.2, 316 = *NCP*, 50.

representing their harbour. One of the most characteristic cases is that of Kyllene, which became a “convenient landfall for mariners sailing the trade routes of the Eastern Adriatic and to merchantmen approaching the Gulf of Corinth... The only useful harbour in the plain of Elis...” from where the agricultural production could be exported. Few remains of the Late Roman harbour are revealed, like the moles and traces of the basin.⁶⁷

The relevant scarcity of the coins depicting harbours and the rather limited numbers of issues could confirm that these pieces were possibly meant to celebrate or commemorate a construction program referring to the city's port under the auspices of the emperor and his representatives.

The representations of harbours on the Peloponnesian coins show certain characteristics which refer to their construction technique. It seems that the prototype for all of them was the port of Ostia, built under Claudius.⁶⁸ Taking into advantage the natural bay, a huge basin was dug out and was protected by two curved moles. In addition, a lighthouse was erected as well as a series of other related structures, while commercial buildings were developed alongside residential areas and expanded around the harbour.

The expansion of the Roman territory under the *Imperium* and the intensification of commerce had as a consequence either the construction of new ports or the re-development of those already existing.⁶⁹ In that way, beside the large-scale harbours, such as the Roman *Portus* and Caesarea Maritima, several medium- and small-sized urban ports and in some regions even villa ports were also built in order to serve the increased volume of maritime traffic and economy. Special officials were appointed, responsible for the maintenance of the moles and the lighthouse and for patrolling the harbour, like *Lucius*

67. See G.D.R. Sanders and I.K. Whitbread, “Central Places and Major Roads in the Peloponnese”, *BSA* 85 (1990) 333-361 and 348.

68. The size of the basin of Claudius was more than 200 hectares. The northern mole was 1.600 metres long, the southern one c. 1.320. C. Morelli, A. Marinucci and A. Arnoldus-Huyzendveld, “Porto di Claudio: Nuove Scoperte”, in S. Keay and L. Paroli (eds.), *Portus and its Hinterland: Recent Archaeological Research* (London 2011) 47-65.

69. For the organization of maritime commerce in the eastern Mediterranean under Roman rule, see D. Rathbone, “Merchant Networks in the Greek World: The Impact of Rome”, in I. Malkin, Christy Constantakopoulou and Katerina Panagopoulou (eds.), *Greek and Roman Networks in the Mediterranean* (London, New York 2009) 299- 310.

Creperius Madalianus, who was *consul(aris) molium phari at(que) purgatae* in the years 334-345 AD.⁷⁰

In the Greek regions, the maritime centres developed according to regional and local dynamics never reached the size and the importance of harbours as Alexandria, Caesareia Maritima, Kition, Side and Tyros or Marseilles in the west. However, the Peloponnesian harbours achieved a prominent position by serving both as stop-overs on the sea routes developed under the empire and as centres of export-orientated local productions. Among them, Corinth, also situated on the highway leading towards the interior,⁷¹ seems to have been the most renowned and greatly esteemed, while Patrai's fame was mostly confined within the region.

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70. <http://www.ostia-antica.org/portus/c001.htm> (3/3/2014).

71. Apul. *Met.* X, 19: *Atubi partim terrestri, partim maritimo itinere confecto Corinthum accessimus... .* See also, R. Chevalier, *Roman Roads* (London 1976) 23, 140, 192.

Summary

Patrae held a favourable position along the itinerary joining the Italian coasts with the Aegean and the Orient markets, controlling the northern Peloponnesian coastline and the routes in the Aetolia and Locris. The installations of the city's important roman harbour, almost totally destroyed by the modern city's expansion, can be attested in the numismatic evidence, offered by the issues dated to the reign of Commodus and Geta. The rendering of the coins of Commodus is realistic and detailed, enabling even the identification of the monuments depicted. The whole scene is organized according to well distinctive horizontal and vertical axes, depicting three main buildings, a statue in the middle of the harbour, where two vessels are floating, providing gives an accurate view of the architectural environment of the harbour in a very well-defined frame.

The issue of Geta on the other hand display a rather artistic rendering, more elliptic, although well-confined in clearly divided levels as well, offering a less imposing view of the harbour than those of Commodus, displaying rather a scene of everyday life across the sea. Nevertheless, the presence of the temple, possibly of Poseidon, constitutes a very important and constant point of reference for the city and its harbour, while other constructions in its vicinity contribute to a realistic view of the port as well as of the neighbouring areas. Two merchant ships are shown sailing in the basin of the harbour, at the front level.

Few Greek cities depict their harbours on their coins, most of them located in the region of the Peloponnese and dated to the Antonine and the Severi period. In all cases, the engraver aimed to recreate the impression given to the traveller when entering the harbour and to render its view surrounded by monumental buildings and temples. These issues effectively reflect the imperial policy of the period as well as renewed pride of the coastal cities in their geographic and economic position.



Figure 1: Commodus, Athens Numismatic Museum



Figure 2: Geta, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale 1327



Figure 3: Enlarged reverse of Commodus
(see fig. 1)

Figure 4: Commodus, Berlin
(Löbbecke collection)

THE NUMISMATIC EVIDENCE ON THE ROMAN HARBOUR OF PATRAI



Figure 5: Commodus, Ashmolean Museum



Figure 6: Domitian, Paris,
Bibliothèque Nationale 1256



Figure 7: Hadrian, Paris,
Bibliothèque Nationale 1265



Figure 8: Commodus, Bologna



Figure 9: Elagabalus, Paris,
Bibliothèque Nationale 1019



Figure 10: Hadrian, Paris,
Bibliothèque Nationale 1264



Figure 11: Julia Domna, Berlin
(Imhoof-Blumer)



Figure 12: enlarged reverse of Geta (see fig. 2)



Figure 13: Map of Peloponnese http://www.tageo.com/get_map.php?lat=38.244&long=21.734&name=Patrai&tag=1