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Studies

NUMISMATICS

A NEW ALABANDA PSEUDO-AUTONOMOUS COIN

Abstract: This paper covers a unique coin unearthed during the excavations in the Alabanda Agora, which has been dated for the first time through numismatic evaluation. After thorough analysis, it has been ascertained that the coin is a new pseudo-autonomous coin belonging to the Roman Period city of Alabanda. The depiction of Apollo on the obverse of the coin, which has no similar examples in coin catalogs and other publications, is largely similar to other Apollo-type Hellenistic and Roman Period coins minted by Alabanda. However, the emperor's depiction and the legend on the quadriga on the reverse exhibit rare characteristics. It is understood that the coin, which we date to the Caracalla period (198-217 AD) in terms of its reverse type and legend, was also used in the last years of the Severan Period due to the countermark on the obverse. As a result, it has been found that the coin is a new Alabanda pseudo-autonomous coin series. In addition, this dating reveals that it is the earliest dated coins among the known pseudo-autonomous mints of the city.

Keywords: *Alabanda, Agora, Coin, Pseudo-autonomous, Caracalla*

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INTRODUCTION

Alabanda, one of the central cities of the Caria Region in Antiquity, is located in the Araphisar neighborhood of Doğanıyurt village, 7 km west of the Çine district of Turkey's Aydın Province, and right next to the Çine (Marsyas) Stream¹ (Fig. 1). The first coinages belonging to Alabanda, which had been inhabited continuously since the Classical Period, are seen from the 3rd century BC and their number augment between the period when the region came under Roman rule as the Province of Asia in 129 BC.² However, after this period, the civic coinages did not display continuity until the Roman imperial period.³ Alabanda, which started to mint coins again during the Roman Imperial period, maintained to strike coins intermittently from the period of Augustus (27 BC to 14 AD) until the 3rd century AD.⁴ Compared to the Hellenistic Period, Alabanda coinages minted under the Roman rule are typologically more diverse. Pseudo-autonomous⁵ mints with

¹ EDHEM BEY 1905, 444; BEAN 1987, 215; AYDIN TAVUKÇU 2015, 224; AKKAN *et alii* 2017, 305; AKKURNAZ 2018, 299; AYDIN TAVUKÇU *et alii* 2019, 531.

² The first coinages of Mørkholm Alabanda are dated to the II. He stated that it is a gold stater series minted with Philippos type. However, there is no data on these coins. In the light of the available archaeological data, we can say that the earliest dated coin belonging to the city is the coin number 1606 in the SNG Turkey 1 catalogue. For Alabanda coins, see BMC Caria, XXVII; BEAN 1987, 218; WAGONER 1989, 283-299; MØRKHOLM 1991, 157; BAĞDATLI 2006, 225; AKKURNAZ 2018, 300.

³ BEAN 1987, 218; BEAN 2000, 192; BAĞDATLI 2006, 225.

⁴ BMC Caria, XXX; BEAN 1987, 220.

⁵ The terms *Pseudo-autonomous* or *Quasi-autonomous*, which express the city mints without the portraits of the emperor or his families on the obverse, are examples of civic coinages struck

local elements were added to this diversity with their obverse and legend types.⁶

Archaeological excavations in the ancient city of Alabanda have been continuing since 2015 and are carried out in the Agora, Bouleuterion, and Eastern Bath areas of the city (Fig. 2). These excavations provide many archaeological and new numismatic data that will shed light on the history of the city.⁷ This coin, which was found in the Agora area in 2018, points out a new pseudo-autonomous coin among the Alabanda civic coinages specific to the Roman Period (Fig. 3). The obverse of the coin, which has no similar examples in coin catalogs and other publications, is largely similar to other Apollo-type pseudo-autonomous coins minted by Alabanda. However, the depiction and legend on the quadriga on the reverse are different from other Alabanda coins. The coin was analyzed within the scope of the study, and dated for the first time by evaluating it in terms of numismatics. The present coin has a unique value as it is a new example among the pseudo-autonomous coins of the Roman Period belonging to the city of Alabanda.

DEFINITION AND DATING

Obverse: ΑΛΑΒΑΝΔΕΩΝ; Bust of Apollo right, laurel branch in front, Countermark: portrait (emperor's head?)

Reverse: M AYP ANTΩNINOC CЄBA; Emperor standing right on quadriga, where horses rear to left and right, holding scepter in right hand, globe in left hand (Fig. 3-4)

Denomination: AE (33mm), 18g., 12h

Reference: Alabanda Excavation Inv. no. ALA'18, LX11-ğ2.1; Aydin M. Inv. no. 2018-341 (20256).

Depicted as a bust from profile to the right on the front of the bronze coin found in the Alabanda Agora LX11 section and trench ğ2,⁸ Apollo's wavy hair was gathered with a band and a bun was made at the back and the lock of hair that fell over the right ear extended to his shoulders. The depiction of Apollo in this style on the Alabanda coinages is similar to the Hellenistic and Roman Period coinages of the city.⁹ On the coin, there is a countermark (Emperor's head?) under the neck and chin of Apollo. While there is a laurel branch depiction in the coin to the right of the countermark, the inscription "ΑΛΑΒΑ ΝΔΕΩΝ" is read on the two-part legend from left to right. The laurel branch is one of the symbols of Apollo,¹⁰ and it appears on some of the pseudo-autonomous coins of Alabanda with the depiction of Apollo.¹¹ Another detail is the depiction of the laurel branch

with local descriptions, with the permission of Rome. This definition can be misinterpreted as ignoring Roman domination in cities. But all such coins were minted under Roman authority. For details, see JOHNSTON 1985; MELVILLE JONES 2004, 31-32; HOWGEGO 2005, 15; HEUCHERT 2005, 47; KELEŞ 2019, 820; CEYLAN 2021, 190. In this study, the usual usage of "Pseudo-autonomous" was preferred.

⁶ CEYLAN 2021, 191, 194 Table 1.

⁷ AKKAN *et alii* 2017; AKKAN *et alii* 2018; TAVUKÇU *et alii* 2019; TAVUKÇU *et alii* 2020.

⁸ TAVUKÇU *et alii* 2020, 136, Picture 3.

⁹ BMC Caria 1-18, Pl. I, 1-11; SNG von Aul. Karien, 2385, 2389; RPC I, 2806, 2813-2815; RPC III (Supp. 5), 2020A/1-3; CEYLAN 2021, 194 Table 1.

¹⁰ GRIMAL 1997, 83.

¹¹ IMHOOF-BLUMER 1912, 193, 4, Taf. III 1; MARTINI 1993, 261, 1; RPC I (Supp. 5), 2818A-B; RPC IV.2, 920 (temp.); RPC IV.2, 8477 (temp.).

completely covering the coin circle on the reverse of the Alabanda coinages belonging to Julia Domna and Caracalla.¹² It is understood that these coins also include the symbol of the city god Apollo. In addition, the temple of Apollo in the city, the inscriptions about the cult of Apollo, and the coins with the depiction of Apollo used in civic coinages since the Hellenistic Period reveal that Apollo was of great importance in the city pantheon.¹³

On the reverse of the coin, there is a quadriga on which the horses rear to the left and right, and the emperor probably holds a globe in his right hand and a scepter in his left hand. The phrase "M AYP ANTΩNINOC CЄBA" in the legend refers to the emperor Caracalla. The depiction on the reverse shows some similarities with the coins depicting the god Helios on the quadriga minted in different periods and cities.¹⁴ Considering that Helios is one of the gods worshiped in Alabanda, it can be thought that Helios may have been depicted on this coin.¹⁵ However, when the details on the coin are examined carefully, it is understood that the person standing on the quadriga does not have the rays peculiar to the god Helios. Moreover, the Roman clothes, such as the armor and tunic on the image, do not match with the divine depictions. On the other hand, the depiction of the emperor on the quadriga on the reverse of an Iasos coin belonging to the period of Septimius Severus (193-211 AD) is almost exactly similar to the Alabanda coin.¹⁶ The type on the reverse of the coin is defined as the emperor. Consequently, the depiction on the reverse of the coin is a more accurate description of an emperor embroidered with a scepter and globe and divine elements. Therefore, based on the legend, this depiction on the reverse must be the emperor Caracalla. On the other hand, the legend on the reverse of the coin containing the names and titles of the emperor raises suspicion. It is not very common for the names and titles of the emperors to appear on the reverse of the civic coinages. However, there are examples of this style in some civic coinages in different provinces of Rome, albeit in small numbers.¹⁷ Another detail for the reverse legend is that the letter "B" is written as "R". The letter "B" in the legend ΑΛΑΒΑΝΔΕΩΝ on the obverse is written as "R" (Fig. 5). From this point of view, it is understood that the letter "B" in the cut part on the reverse side was written as "R". Moreover, some Alabanda coins dated to the Severan period have similar misspellings.¹⁸ Hence, it is possible to date the coin to the Caracalla Period (198-217 AD). Other pseudo-autonomous coins belonging to the city were minted between the 1st century AD and the end of the 2nd century AD.¹⁹ Considering the date of the new

¹² SNG Cop. Caria, 12, 15; SNG von Aul. Karien, 2397, 2401.

¹³ EDHEM BEY 1906, 419; LAUMONIER 1934, 298, 299; LAUMONIER 1958, 436; BAĞDATLI 2001, 17-24; BAĞDATLI 2006, 227; GÜRDAL 2007, 27-31; AYDIN TAVUKÇU 2015, 232-234; CEYLAN 2021, 191-193.

¹⁴ There are many examples of coins depicting Helios on the Quadriga. For some examples, see BMC Phrygia, 10 (Cotiaem); SNG von Aul. 3294; RPC VI 4504 (temp.), 6885; RPC VII.1, 486, 1-2.

¹⁵ BAĞDATLI 2001, 5, 6; BAĞDATLI 2006, 227 dn. 31. In addition, Helios and Selene statues were found during the 2018 Agora excavations. This was another evidence supporting the existence of the Helios cult in the city of Alabanda. TAVUKÇU *et alii* 2020, 136, Picture 2.

¹⁶ KRAFT 1972, 163, 6 Taf. 59, 6.

¹⁷ BMC Lydia 53, 56-60, Pl. XL 4, 6-9 (Tripolis); BMC Phrygia, 139, Pl. XI, 6 (Apameia); ROBINSON 1936, 291, Pl. XVII, 12; RPC I, 1368.

¹⁸ BMC Caria, 32-35.

¹⁹ CEYLAN 2021, 191, 194 Table 1. The countermark on the obverse of the

coin, it is seen that it constitutes the latest dated example of the existing Alabanda pseudo-autonomous mints. However, it is necessary to evaluate the countermark on the obverse of the coin's period of use. Inside the countermark on the coin, there is a depiction of what appears to be a portrait (emperor?). Similar countermarks on the Attouda civic coinages are attributed by Howgego to the Severan Period.²⁰ Türkoğlu, on the other hand, suggests in her latest study that this countermark may belong to the Elagabalus period.²¹ It is possible that the countermark on the Alabanda coin, which we date to the Caracalla Period, was minted after this period. Yet, it is very problematic to give an exact date without describing the portrait fully. Thus, it can be thought that the countermark may belong to the end of the Severan Period.

CONCLUSION

As a result of the analysis, it has been asserted that the aforementioned coin, is a new pseudo-autonomous coin belonging to the civic coinages of Alabanda. The coin, which differs from other pseudo-autonomous coins of the city in terms of type and legend structure on the reverse, was dated to the Emperor Caracalla Period. Although the countermark on the coin is not completely defined, we can say that it may belong to the end of the Severan Period. With this structure, the coin is both a new pseudo-autonomous civic coinage series and the latest pseudo-autonomous coin of Alabanda. New numismatic data will probably be obtained in the coming years thanks to the excavations carried out in the city.

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coin number 19 in the table is thought to belong to Geta (209-212 AD). However, the date of minting of the coin is doubtful. For the mentioned coin, see BMC Caria 20, Pl. II, 2; SNG Cop. Caria 9.

²⁰ HOWGEGO 1985, 82a.

²¹ TÜRKÖĞLU 2021, 333.

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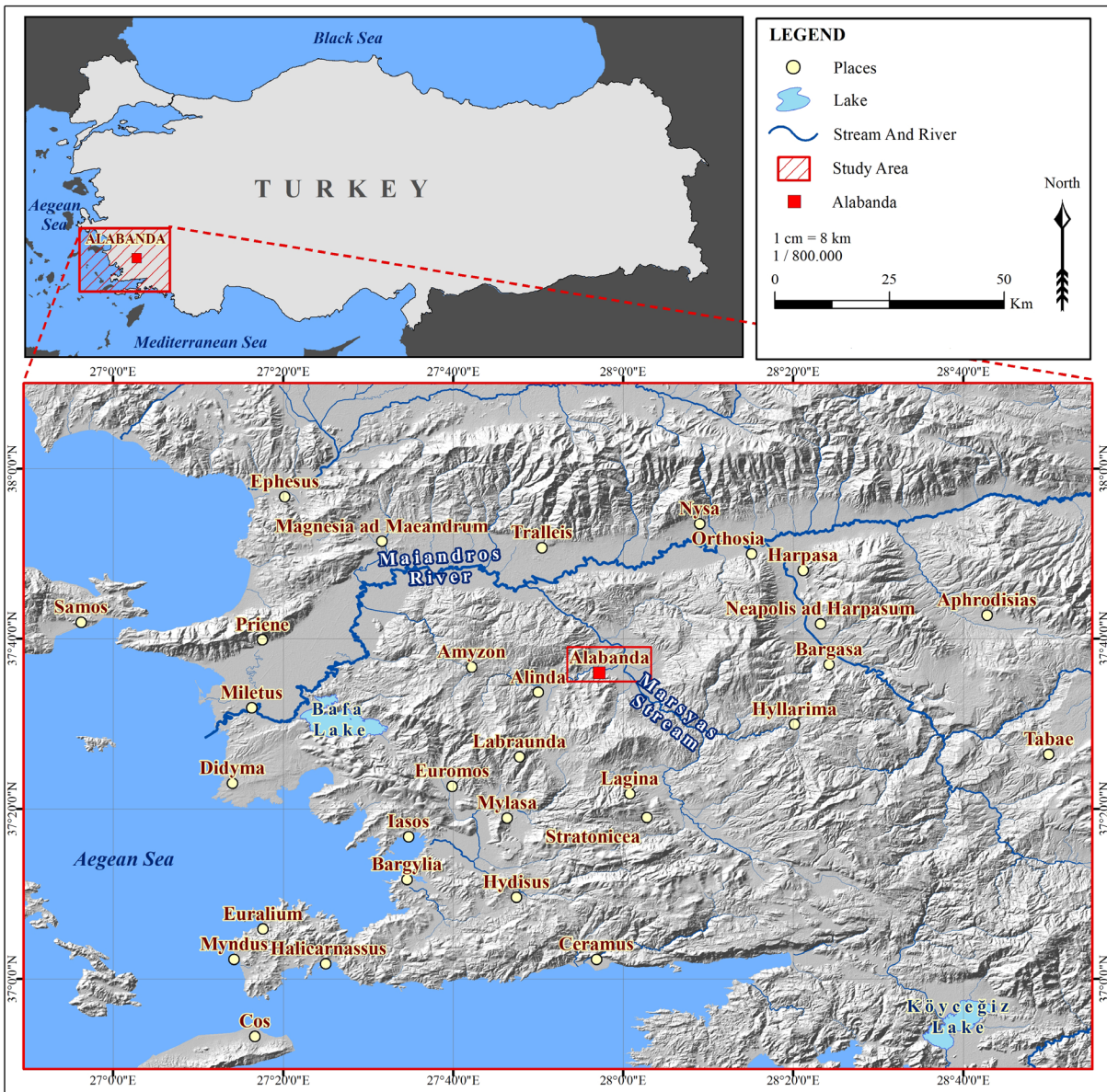


Fig. 1. Alabanda Ancient City and some ancient settlements around it.

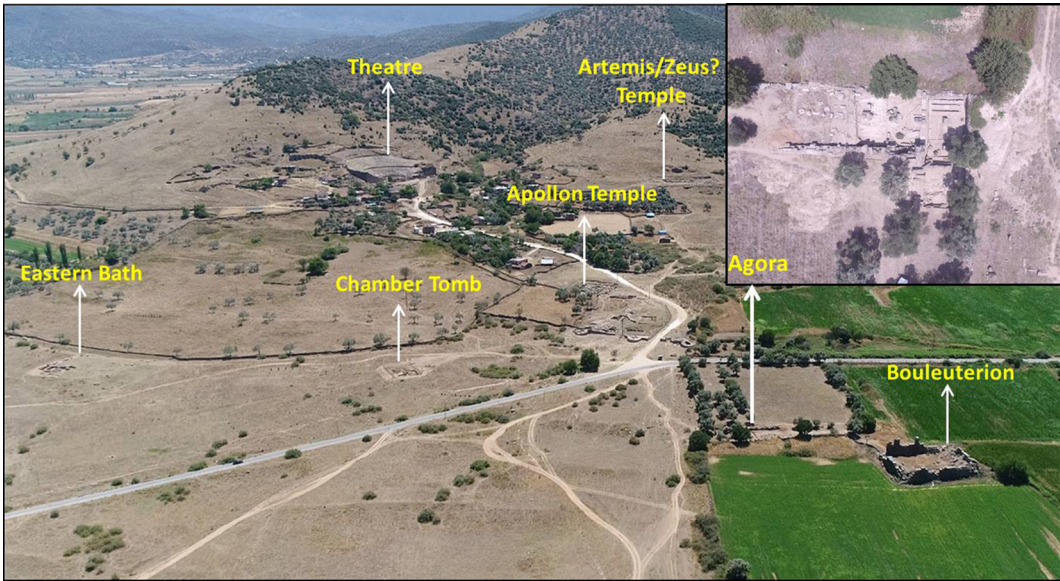


Fig. 2. Alabanda Agora and other significant structures.



Fig. 3. Alabanda coin



Fig. 4. Drawing of the coin (R. Gören).



Fig. 5. Detail of the letter “B” on the obverse and reverse of the coin.