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# KOINON

## The International Journal of Classical Numismatic Studies

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Nicholas J. Molinari, MA, MEd, is a doctoral candidate in Humanities at Salve Regina University in Newport, Rhode Island. His dissertation, in preparation, concerns Acheloios in relation to Thales and the origin of philosophy, and incorporates archaeological and numismatic evidence to paint a more robust picture of Thales and the emergence of philosophical activity. He is the co-author, with Dr. Nicola Sisci, of *ΠΙΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios. A Comprehensive Catalog of the Bronze Coinage of the Man-Faced Bull, with Essays on Origin and Identity* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2016).

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The International Journal of Classical  
Numismatic Studies

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The International Journal of Classical Numismatic Studies

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## **Why a New Journal in Classical Numismatics?: The Rationale for *KOINON* and Some Introductory Comments**

“But why is it prohibited?” asked the Savage. In the excitement of meeting a man who had read Shakespeare he had momentarily forgotten everything else.

The Controller shrugged his shoulders. “Because it’s old; that’s the chief reason. We haven’t any use for old things here.”

“Even when they’re beautiful?”

“Particularly when they’re beautiful. Beauty’s attractive, and we don’t want people to be attracted by old things. We want them to like the new ones.”

From Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*

I had the great benefit of reading some dystopian novels during my summer graduate work, specifically Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* and George Orwell’s *1984*. Initially, when I sat down to write this brief introduction and welcome message to *KOINON*, I laid out a grand philosophical justification for its existence based on the lessons from these two works. In the final analysis, it was just ok (it was actually a bit much, if I’m being honest). We all know that totalitarianism is a danger even now and that many attempts have been made throughout history at erasing the past, so there is really no need for me to go on and on about it. And, likewise, we all also know that rampant consumerism à la *Brave New World* will ultimately destroy us, so we need to take time and appreciate things instead of always moving on to the next thing, coins included. *KOINON* was, in my initial speculations, a noble attempt at keeping historic scholarship alive and well in the face of unprecedented social progress, all through the study of numismatics. Moreover, by participating in the journal, we would all make the world a better place. While there is not anything particularly wrong with that sort of justification, it ignores the real reason for *KOINON*, namely, the fact that I love studying and writing about ancient coins, and so do many of you. Ultimately, then, the real purpose of *KOINON* is to offer a venue for taking a closer look at the past, because so much knowledge about antiquity can be regained through the study of numismatics. This journal is here to help people do precisely that.

In terms of the content of this inaugural volume you will find a wide variety of material that should be of interest to just about everyone, and I hope that by reading these essays some of you will get new ideas about articles you might consider writing for the journal. We begin with my own essay. I was hesitant to start with my own work so as not to appear too egotistical, but I decided that I need to take the lead as the editor and put myself out there, flaws and all. That essay purports to shine a new light on a very old play using ancient coins to justify a new interpretation, and I hope readers find it enjoyable. Dr. Voukelatos’ essay appears next, and shows that provenance research can be thrilling and informative, and the characters that collect and study ancient coins are an integral part of numismatic research, often times as interesting as the coins themselves. The Greek section also greatly benefits from the inclusion of an interesting die study by Lloyd Taylor concerning the coinage of Philip III and the ritual reuse of dies in antiquity. It is an essay that reminds us not to assume the

ancients conceived of the world as we do, and were heavily influenced by the prevailing superstitious beliefs of the time period. Finally, we round out that section with a detailed analysis of a charming coin from Arados by Martin Rowe, whose passion for Phoenician coinage is sure to fill pages of *KOINON* for years to come.

The Roman section is just as interesting. It begins with a fascinating study by Luigi Pedroni concerning the Aegis of Minerva, written in Italian, and featuring some truly breathtaking coins. That essay is followed by a persuasive argument in favor of the legitimacy of a particular Republican denarius by Jordan Montgomery and Richard Schaefer—an important argument to say the least. Next we have Shawn Caza's detailed study of Nepotian's usurpation and the coinage of Magnentius, which validates a dating scheme originally put forth by Curtis Clay and gives the reader a more comprehensive understanding of that tumultuous time period. The Roman section ends with a newly discovered coin type of Constantine I—a truly rare occurrence these days—from the Roman mint of Arles.

I was pleasantly surprised to have three outstanding essays to include in the Oriental section. First is a detailed analysis from a long-time professional numismatist, Wilhelm Müseler, which offers a compelling new account of some enigmatic Persid coins. That essay is followed by N.J.C. Smith's explanation of some Kilwa coins, an essay which demonstrates the incredible depth of history surrounding what appear at first glance as some modest bronze coins nearly lost to time. Finally, we have Robert Langas' important overview of Parthian fractionals, a small area of numismatics that has gone almost completely ignored until now. The final section of essays concerns Medieval and Early Modern coinage, and here I am delighted to include Andrei Bontas' account of a *denaro tornese*, an area of numismatics I personally had no experience with, but an essay I nonetheless really enjoyed.

The final part of the journal is dedicated to new varieties of coinage. I was excited to have so many contributions and I am hopeful that this section will greatly expand in the future. As I see it, it is the perfect gateway into numismatic publishing. I say this because it requires a detailed study of all the literature that might list a coin variety as well as an analysis of where it would belong in the standard references, and this skill-set is essential to developing further, more comprehensive numismatic studies. If you know of an unpublished variety, no matter how small a variant, I encourage you to contribute in the future.

Before closing, there are many people to thank. I was very lucky when assembling the advisory board to have many notable figures in numismatics volunteer to help out. That says a lot, I think, about the type of people that really love ancient coins. They are some of the most generous people I have ever met, and I am greatly indebted to them for offering their expertise. I am also particularly grateful to Lloyd Taylor and Shawn Caza, who agreed to serve as Associate Editors when I realized I was in over my head. Moreover, when I originally embarked on this project, I'd planned to publish this journal independently, but I quickly realized I am not skilled enough to do so. I am therefore also very grateful to Archaeopress for offering to take the reins and provide me with much-needed assistance. More and more research in numismatics is appearing in their stock and the reader would be very wise to browse their offerings. They have become an indispensable source for quality material about antiquity and I am thrilled that *KOINON* can be a small part of that enterprise.

Finally, I'd like to close with an insight from a scholar I am happy to call my friend, David MacDonald. Sometimes we ask ourselves, when starting or finishing such a long, arduous process

like publishing a journal, what is the point of it all? This is the question I initially sat down to answer and, indeed, the same question I asked myself after finishing *IOTAMIKON*. It is also a question David reflected on when I congratulated him on his excellent new book on colonial French Illinois. His profound response was this: “It keeps me off the streets and for that the neighbors are grateful!” That is probably true, and not just for David, but for everyone. If we are not engaged in good and meaningful activities such as *KOINON*, we are bound to get ourselves in trouble, and that simple lesson is the same one at the heart of the dystopian novels I decided not to write about.

Vivat Achelous!

Nicholas J. Molinari, General Editor  
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# Sophocles' *Trachiniae* and the Apotheosis of Herakles: The Importance of Acheloios and Some Numismatic Confirmations

NICHOLAS J. MOLINARI<sup>1</sup>

Although the *Trachiniae* receives relatively little attention among commentators and is considered by many to be inferior to Sophocles' other plays,<sup>2</sup> I believe this lack of attention and regard results from a misunderstanding of the role of Acheloios in the play.<sup>3</sup> The *Trachiniae* was probably written in the second half of the fifth century B.C.E.,<sup>4</sup> though we do not know precisely when. While I will offer no evidence about its dating (I follow Segal, so c. 430 B.C.E.),<sup>5</sup> I will make it clear that Acheloios is essential to understanding the apotheosis of Herakles, and, moreover, we gain further insight about the *mythos* of Acheloios from Sophocles' treatment. To do this, in Part I of this essay, I will review some of my earlier work (written with Dr. Nicola Sisci) that explains some important elements of the cult of Acheloios and its surrounding *mythos*. In Parts II-V, I will exhibit many passages from the *Trachiniae* and argue that they are directly related to the Acheloios tradition. In doing so, I will try to demonstrate that the connection of the apotheosis of Herakles to Acheloios is not just a creative interpretation on my part, but a clear, deliberate strategy employed by Sophocles to situate Acheloios in his role as psychopomp. Moreover, I will argue that a careful reading of the play reveals how Acheloios functions as the expiatory sacrifice necessary for Herakles' transition to divinity, and that process involves the assimilation of Herakles with Acheloios. Part of this discussion will also involve the general notion of impiety as it relates to the cults of Acheloios and Kypris and how this impiety reinforces Herakles' need for redemption as a prerequisite to apotheosis. Finally, in Part VI, I will examine some coins from Tarsos, in Cilicia, and show how two particular varieties reinforce my interpretation of Acheloios' role in Herakles' apotheosis. Ultimately, by focusing my interpretation of the play on Acheloios and reinforcing that interpretation with numismatic evidence, I hope to prompt others to see what a treasure the *Trachiniae* truly is.

<sup>1</sup> I'd like to dedicate this essay to my friend and collaborator, Dr. Nicola Sisci. It was his brilliant insights into the role of Acheloios as psychopomp that inspired this essay, an insight which unlocks the door to interpreting Sophocles' play closer to what I think was the original intent. In addition, I'd like to thank Prof. Gavin Richardson, who provided many corrections to an early draft of the essay and has contributed to making me appear much smarter than I actually am. Finally, this essay has also benefitted from the thoughtful commentary of my industrious colleague Eamon Cunningham, my wise and patient doctoral advisor Prof. Sean O'Callaghan, and the gentleman and scholar Prof. Radcliffe Edmonds III. I am truly indebted to all of them. Nonetheless, all mistakes are my own.

<sup>2</sup> T.F. Hoey, "The Date of the *Trachiniae*," *Phoenix* 33, 3 (1979), 210; F.R. Earp, *The Style of Sophocles* (Cambridge, 1944), 161ff; G.M. Kirkwood, *A Study of Sophoclean Drama* (Ithaca, 1958), 289ff; Karl Reinhardt, *Sophokles*, 3rd Edition (Frankfurt, 1947) 42ff; Ernst-Richard Schwinge, *Die Stellung der Trachinierinnen im Werk des Sophokles* (Göttingen, 1962), *passim* (according to Hoey).

<sup>3</sup> Naomi Rood noticed the same lack of attention to Acheloios in her remarks at the Classical Association of the Middle and Southwest (CAMSW) 2006 meeting, when she read her paper "Achelous and the Divine in Sophocles' *Trachiniae*".

<sup>4</sup> Hoey, "The Date of the *Trachiniae*," 232.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Segal, *Tragedy and Civilization: An Interpretation of Sophocles* (Norman, Oklahoma: Oklahoma UP, 1999), 60.

## NICHOLAS J. MOLINARI

## I. ON ACHELOIOS

Before we can have a meaningful discussion of the relation of Acheloios to Sophocles, we must first present an overview of Acheloios, particularly because he is relatively obscure. Acheloios' obscurity is due to the fact that so much of the core content of his tradition was foreign in derivation and became integrated into the western world in various stages, over a long period of time, and covering a truly vast area.<sup>6</sup> It is therefore difficult to give a comprehensive summary of Acheloios, especially during the Iron Age into Archaic times, since different areas emphasized different aspects. The cultic practices, core mythology, and iconography of Acheloios undoubtedly derive from earlier Near Eastern traditions, with Sardinians, Cypro-Phoenicians, Ionians, and Carians acting as the leading exponents from East to West (mercenaries and seers were particularly important).<sup>7</sup> In Archaic Etruria, where we find the oldest cultic attestations of Acheloios proper, he operates as a liminal figure often accompanied by or in the context of chthonic and/or celestial motifs, and specific emphasis was placed on his apotropaic nature.<sup>8</sup> In the Archaic Eastern Greek world (Anatolia), his role in purification and agriculture was more prominent.<sup>9</sup> During the Classical era, in which we have more literature to assist us, his *mythos* appears to become nearly all encompassing: lustratio rituals and other koureion rituals intimately related to individual and civic identity; a strong apotropaic dimension in which he is a protector of mercenaries and, indeed, entire cities; a chthonic dimension tied to notions of rebirth and the transmigration of the soul; agriculture and wealth related of course to the cornucopia and with it, the notion of expiatory sacrifice.<sup>10</sup> In both Archaic and Classical times, Acheloios was seen by some as the source of all fresh water, indeed sometimes all water, but by late Hellenistic times he was mostly relegated to a particular river in Akarnania that flows into the Mediterranean at Oiniadai (this transition was more-or-less first suggested by Wilamowitz).<sup>11</sup> In his *Saturnalia*, Macrobius was the first to offer a detailed account that the “most ancient Greeks” (*antiquissimorum Graecorum*) identified Acheloios with water.<sup>12</sup> It is relatively late that evidence of a distinct cult of Acheloios appears in Greece proper, c. early fifth century B.C.E., there depicted in female dress<sup>13</sup> and later

<sup>6</sup> The most recent, comprehensive account of Acheloios and his earlier influences is found in my earlier work, Nicholas J. Molinari and Nicola Sisci, *ΠΙΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios. A Comprehensive Catalog of the Bronze Coinage of the Man-Faced Bull, with Essays on Origin and Identity* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2016).

<sup>7</sup> See *ibid.*, chapters 2 and 3, for the modes of transfusion of the iconography and accompanying religious practices into the West.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 48-55. He appears on shields and helmets, or as a rampant man-faced bull on multiple antefixes, for instance.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 55-66. Acheloios and Herakles are represented together in the early Eastern Greek world and later in Greece proper, which differs from his appearance in Etruria, where Acheloios is usually depicted alone, most frequently as a mask.

<sup>10</sup> The notion of Acheloios as expiatory sacrifice—i.e. one sacrificed for the sake of atonement, should be evident by the end of the essay, but see also *ibid.*, chapter 4, for Acheloios in the Greek and Roman worlds. The reader is also advised to consult Rabun Taylor's excellent work, Rabun Taylor, “River Raptures: Containment and Control of Water in Greek and Roman Constructions of Identity,” *The Nature and Function of Water, Baths, Bathing, and Hygiene from Antiquity through the Renaissance* (Leiden: Brill, 2009). For Acheloios as the symbol of regulated rivers, see Helga Di Giuseppe, “Acheloos e le acque deviate,” *I riti del costruire nelle acque violate. Atti del Convegno Internazionale. Roma 12-14 giugno 2008* (Roma: Scienze e Lettere, 2010): 79-86. The basic characterization of Acheloios as regulated river stems from Strabo's interpretation of the myth of Herakles and Acheloios, but the history is much deeper (Strabo, *Geographica*, 10.458). Regulated rivers and accompanying man-faced bull iconography emerge first in the fifth to fourth millennium B.C.E., and consistently appear throughout various Mediterranean civilizations (and those immediately adjacent) for some five thousand years (Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΙΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 97-9, for an overview). It is unclear if rivers were regulated in Old Europe, but they certainly were in Mesopotamia by the end of the first quarter of the Fourth Millennium. (*ibid.*, Chapter 1).

<sup>11</sup> Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Möllendorff, *Der Glaube der Hellenen* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1931), I, 219. He claimed, however, that Acheloios was the original Hellenic god replaced by the Carian Okeanos.

<sup>12</sup> Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, 5.18.3-12.

<sup>13</sup> M. M. Lee, “Acheloos Peplophoros. A lost statuette of a River God in Feminine Dress,” *Hesperia* 75, No. 3 (2006): 319.

## SOPHOCLES' TRACHINIAE AND THE APOTHEOSIS OF HERAKLES

(c. 430 B.C.E.) on coinage in Akarnania as a man-faced bull.<sup>14</sup> The first place for cultic worship in Greece was likely earlier in Dodona, where nearly all patrons were instructed to make a sacrifice to Acheloios,<sup>15</sup> and this could not have been established later than the fifth century.<sup>16</sup>

In the Eastern Greek world, Acheloios was worshipped as an object of cult since at least the mid sixth century. We know this because in Ionia there was a workshop that manufactured *balsamarii* in the form of the head of Acheloios, dating to about the mid sixth century, and these are found distributed all over the Greek world. (Some were manufactured independently in Etruria, as early as c. 590 B.C.E.).<sup>17</sup> These objects were part of the grave goods in burials and probably had some sort of final cleansing role for the deceased. Scholia T of the *Iliad* also attests to a cult of Acheloios at nearby Rhodes.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, the two most enthusiastic issuers of coinage featuring Acheloios (in terms of sheer output) were Neapolis and Gela, both of which have early ties to Rhodian colonists.<sup>19</sup> It is likely that Rhodes adopted the iconography of the man-faced bull and related mytho-religious traditions directly from the orient; there is textual evidence from Herodotus and Diodorus of Ionian and Carian mercenaries working for an Assyrian vassal king, Psammetichus I, in Egypt in the mid 7th century B.C.E.<sup>20</sup> These mercenaries were instrumental in the transmission and development of the cult of Acheloios in the west.<sup>21</sup> This phenomenon of mercenaries using Acheloios iconography in art is seen continuously all over the Greek world in the following centuries, helping establish a common *mythos*.<sup>22</sup>

There are a few key fifth-century passages that equate Acheloios with fresh water, indicating an early tradition in which Acheloios was more widely venerated and less the obscure river god most are familiar with: Sophocles (*Fr.* 5, Pearson) οἴνω παρ' ἡμῖν ἀχελῷος ἄρα νᾶ; Euripides (*Bacchae* 625), δμῶσιν Ἀχελῷον φέρειν ἐννέπων; Achaeus (*Athens* 4.9), μῶν Ἀχελῷος ἦν χειραμένος πολύς; Aristophanes (*Lys.* 381), σὸν ἔργον ὄχελῷε. In the earlier sources, there is more discrepancy. In Hesiod, Acheloios is merely mentioned along with other rivers as the son of Okeanos and Tethys (*Th.* 337f).<sup>23</sup> However, in Homer, an earlier version of the *Iliad* excluded *Il.*21.195 (italicized below), making Acheloios the antecedent of the relative pronoun and thus the source of all water:

<sup>14</sup> O. Dany, *Akarnanien in Hellenismus. Geschichte und Völkerrecht in Nordwestgriechenland* (Munich: Verlag C.H.Beck, 1999), 276ff, 311ff.

<sup>15</sup> Ephorus, *FgrH* 27= Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, v.18.6.

<sup>16</sup> Giovan B. D'Alessio, "Textual Fluctuations and Cosmic Streams: Ocean and Acheloios," *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, No. 124 (London: The Council for the Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies, 2004): 32, for dating.

<sup>17</sup> For a review of the literature concerning dating and places of manufacture of these *balsamarii*, see Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 56-8.

<sup>18</sup> Schol. T of *Iliad* 24.616.

<sup>19</sup> For Neapolis, see Strabo, *Geographica*, 14.2.10; for Gela, see Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, 6.4.3 and Polybius 9.27.7f.

<sup>20</sup> See Herodotus, *Histories*, 2.152-4; Diodorus, *The Library of History*, 1.66.12-67.2. For coverage of western mercenaries in the east with an extensive overview of the literature, see Wolfgang-Dietrich Niemeier, "Archaic Greeks in the Orient: Textual and Archaeological Evidence," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, 322 (2001): 11-32, especially 16ff.

<sup>21</sup> Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, Chapter 2. We follow W. Burkert, *The Orientalizing Revolution: Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age*, translated by Margaret E. Pindar and Walter Burkert (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1992) and Niemeier, "Archaic Greeks in the Orient: Textual and Archaeological Evidence," 24, in arguing mercenaries "became...mediators in the continuing Oriental influx to Greece."

<sup>22</sup> Some examples of mercenaries issuing man-faced bull coinage include, for Sicily: Agrigium, Gela, and Panormos, as well as the Kersini, Sileraians, and Sergetaians. Likewise, nearly the entire corpus of Campanian coinage fits this description, as first identified by Keith Rutter, who linked the spread of coinage to mercenaries, but did not discuss the relevance of the mythos of Acheloios. See N. Keith Rutter, *Campanian Coinages 475-380 BC* (Edinburgh: UP, 1979), and Chapter 6 (Historical Conclusions), especially 100. In Greece proper, Methylinion is an obvious example.

<sup>23</sup> In *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ*, we suggest this lowering of Acheloios was a deliberate move because Hesiod hated mercenaries. Indeed, in the later, classical Attic thinkers, mercenaries are still frowned upon for their employment by tyrants.

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τῷ οὐδὲ κρείων Ἀχελώϊος ἰσοφαρίζει,  
 οὐδὲ βαθυρρεῖται μέγα σθένοσ Ὠκεανοῖο,  
 ἐξ οὔ περ πάντες ποταμοὶ καὶ πᾶσα θάλασσα  
 καὶ πᾶσαι κρήναι καὶ φρεῖατα μακρὰ νάουσιν

“Him not even Lord Acheloios equals,  
 nor the great might of deep-flowing Okeanos,  
 from whom, indeed, all rivers and all sea  
 and all springs and deep wells flow”<sup>24</sup>

In fact, Zenodotus, the first librarian at the Library of Alexander, athetized the line, and it was also lacking from Megakleides’ text.<sup>25</sup> Likewise, in *Il.* 24.614 Acheloios is referred to in a general way: ὅθι φασὶ θεάων ἔμμεναι εὐνὰς νυμφάων, αἶ τ’ ἀμφ’ Ἀχελώϊον ἐρρώσαντο (his association with the nymphs indicates an identification with water in general).<sup>26</sup> According to Servius, Orpheus is the original source for the equating of Acheloios with water: *nam, sicut Orpheus docet, generaliter aquam veteres Acheloum vocabant.*<sup>27</sup>

Acheloios’ watery nature naturally leads to the idea of shape-shifting, which is a core aspect represented in his descriptions in literature and in iconography. For the literary illustrations of this idea, the earliest to survive is Sophocles (*Trachiniae*, 9-14):

... Ἀχελῶον λέγω, ὅς μ’ ἐν τρισὶν μορφαῖσιν ἐξήτει πατρός, φοιτῶν ἐναργῆς ταῦρος, ἄλλοτ’ αἰόλος δράκων ἐλικτός, ἄλλοτ’ ἀνδρείῳ κύτει βούπρωρος· ἐκ δὲ δασκίου γενειάδος κρουνοὶ διερραίνοντο κρηναίου ποτοῦ.

...I mean Achelous, who came in three shapes to ask my father for me, at some times manifest as a bull, at others as a darting, coiling serpent, and again at others with a man’s trunk and a bull’s head; and from his shaggy beard there poured streams of water from his springs.<sup>28</sup>

On coinage he is almost always represented as a man-faced bull, far and away his most popular form, with the sole exception being the early fifth-century stater from Metapontion that shows him depicted as a bearded man with bovine ears and horns (somewhat akin to Sophocles’ description, above), and

<sup>24</sup> Trans. G.S. Kirk, J.E. Raven, and M. Schoefield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, Second Edition (Cambridge: UP, 2004), 10. For the argument, see D’Alessio, “Textual Fluctuations and Cosmic Streams: Ocean and Acheloios,” 16-37. See also a summary of evidence by Michael Fowler in *Early Greek Mythography*, Vol. II (Oxford: University Press, 2013), 2-12.

<sup>25</sup> D’Alessio, “Textual Fluctuations and Cosmic Streams: Ocean and Acheloios,” 20ff; Fowler, *Early Greek Mythography*, 12. Naturally, I think Sophocles was familiar with this earlier version of the text.

<sup>26</sup> Later traditions might have played on this. In many accounts Acheloios is seen as the father of the sirens. See, for example, Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca*, 1.18, 1.63; Hyginus, *Fabulae Praefatio*, 141; Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica*, 4.892ff.

<sup>27</sup> See Servius *fr.* 344 Kern, as cited in D’Alessio, “Textual Fluctuations and Cosmic Streams,” 22.

<sup>28</sup> Translation Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Sophocles: Antigone, Women of Trachis, Philoctetes, Oedipus at Colonus*, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 132-3.



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holding a discus.<sup>29</sup> The designer apparently chose the human body in order to accompany the discus and make this an ΑΧΕΛΟΙΟ ΑΕΘΛΟΝ, as the inscription indicates.<sup>30</sup>

By the fifth century, when he was often being identified in literature with water itself, his cult was widespread across the entire Greek world, as exhibited through a study of numismatics. There has been a long debate about the identity of the man-faced bull on Greek coinage, with the contemporary debate divided into two primary schools of thought: those who believe the man-faced bull is Acheloios, and those who believe the man-faced bull is a representation of a local river, Acheloios being one among many. Recently, however, I published (with Dr. Nicola Sisci) a theory of local embodiments of Acheloios, in which the man-faced bulls on Greek coinage are seen as sinews of Acheloios, sometimes displaying the appropriate qualifying locative epithet: Acheloios Gelas (Gela) (Figure 1), Acheloios Palagkaios (Agyrion), and so on and so forth. This position finds support in *P.Derveni* XXIII, 11-12, ἵνας δ' ἐγκατ[έλε]ξ' Ἀχελωῖου ἀργυ[ρ]οδίε[ω; τῶ[ι] ὕδα[τι] ὄλ[ος] τίθη[σι] Ἀχελῶιον ὄνομα. ὅτι δὲ<sup>31</sup> (“the sinews of silver-eddyng Acheloios; to the waters the name Acheloios”);<sup>32</sup> *P. Oxy* 0221, IX, 1-3, ἵνας[ ἐ]γκατέλεξα / Ἀχελωῖου ἀργυροδνεω, ἐξ οὔ πᾶσα θάλασσα (“the sinews of silver-eddyng Acheloios, from where the whole sea [originates]”);<sup>33</sup> and, in my reading, *P. Oxy* 0221, IX, 8-11, πῶ[ς] δ' ἐπορ[ε]ύθη[ς] ῥεῦμα Ἀ[χ]ελ[ω]ίου ἀργυ[ρ]οδίνα, Ὀκεανοῦ ποταμοῖο [δι'] εὐρέος ὑγ[ρ]ᾶ κέλευθα (“How did you cross the stream of silver-eddyng Acheloios? Through River Ocean’s wet paths?”),<sup>34</sup> in which there is a conflation between Okeanos and Acheloios, but emphasis is on the more fundamental Acheloios. Incidentally, the earliest man-faced bull on coinage in Italy is from Rhegion, c. 510 B.C.E., and probably features Acheloios Apsias, which we connected etymologically with the Near Eastern “Apsu” (i.e. Asallúhi Apsu - Acheloios Apsias).<sup>35</sup> Ultimately, this solution alleviated the dichotomy of the two schools of thought by incorporating both positions in a way consistent with Greek religion, a framework in which a god without an epithet is but an “artifact of language.”<sup>36</sup>

Approximately seventy-one mints issued some variety of coinage featuring a local embodiment of Acheloios as a man-faced bull, covering millions of square miles.<sup>37</sup> The westernmost mint employing Acheloios is Emporion,<sup>38</sup> in modern Spain, and the easternmost hails from Ai Khanoum,<sup>39</sup> in modern Afghanistan. (There is an enormous dead-zone with no coinage featuring Acheloios between there and Cilicia). The northernmost mint is Istros,<sup>40</sup> on the northwestern shore of the Black Sea, and the

<sup>29</sup> BnF De Luynes 466.

<sup>30</sup> *IGASM* IV 84.

<sup>31</sup> Ed. D’Alessio.

<sup>32</sup> Gábor Betegh translates line 12 as “He does [not give] the name Achelous to water,” by inserting οὐ after ὕδα[τι]. Gábor Betegh, *The Derveni Papyrus. Cosmology, Theology and Interpretation* (Cambridge: UP, 2004), 48-9, and discussion on 215ff. Betegh was not aware of D’Alessio’s work, *op. cit.*, which Janko pointed out in his review. See Richard Janko, “Review: Gábor Betegh, *The Derveni Papyrus. Cosmology, Theology and Interpretation*,” *BMCR* 2005.01.07. I know of no scholar that accepts this translation.

<sup>33</sup> Ed. D’Alessio, “Textual Fluctuations and Cosmic Streams,” 20-1.

<sup>34</sup> Ed. D’Alessio.

<sup>35</sup> Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 93.

<sup>36</sup> Pierre Brulé, “Le langage des épicleses dans le polythéisme hellénique,” *Kernos*, 11 (1998): 18-19 (trans. Jenny Wallensten, “Personal protection and tailor-made deities: the use of individual epithets,” *Kernos*, 21 (2008): 82).

<sup>37</sup> For a comprehensive overview of the distribution of the iconography on coinage, covering all metals, see *ibid.*, 69-78.

<sup>38</sup> L. Villaronga, “La troballa de l’Emporda,” in *Acta Numismatica* 33 (2003), no.7-13.

<sup>39</sup> A. Houghton and C. Lorber, *Seleucid Coins: A Comprehensive Catalog* (Lancaster: CNG, 2002), no. 283 A.

<sup>40</sup> Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, no. 491-494.

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southernmost hails from Kyrene,<sup>41</sup> in North Africa. The earliest type (c. 550 B.C.E.) is a stater from Miletos,<sup>42</sup> and the latest (Greek) type is probably a civic issue from Akarnania (c. 160 B.C.E.).<sup>43</sup>

## II. OVERVIEW OF THE PLAY

Quite generally, Sophocles'<sup>44</sup> play tells the story of Herakles' apotheosis. Herakles' wife, Deianeira, whom Herakles took from Acheloios in an epic battle mentioned in the opening lines, is at their home waiting for his return from his labors, when she learns that he is on his way from Euboea. It was there that Herakles utterly ravaged the place and unjustly stole all its women. (Deianeira was originally told a different story from what actually transpired.) After Deianeira learns that Herakles has fallen in love with a young maiden from Euboea, named Iole,<sup>45</sup> she devises a plan to win back his love. However, her plan is based on the deceitful advice she received from the centaur Nessus in an earlier episode. (Nessus tried to rape Deianeira and Herakles shot him with an arrow.) As Nessus was dying midstream, he told Deianeira to take some of his blood, and that if Herakles ever fell for another woman, anoint something with it and give it to him and it would essentially break the spell—As we

<sup>41</sup> Nancy Waggoner, *Early Greek Coins from the Collection of Jonathan P. Rosen*, Ancient Coins in North American Collections, 5 (New York: ANS, 1983), no. 765.

<sup>42</sup> Charles Seltman, *Greek Coins: A History of Metallic Currency and Coinage down to the Fall of the Hellenistic Kingdoms* (London: Methuen, 1955), Plate I, no. 25. Now part of Gulbenkian collection. Jenkins, in cataloguing that collection, wrote, "The man-faced bull as Acheloos is well known in Greek art and not least in the coins (cf. Isler, Acheloos 80 ff.; Jenkins, The Coinage of Gela 165 ff). But this version of the bull with wings is not so usual and may not necessarily be reckoned as an Acheloos figure; the wings, here and on some Lykian coins hark back to the winged bulls of the older near eastern cultures, in particular Assyria and Achaemenid Persia. There, the man-faced bull *is not a water-god* but a shed or guardian deity, the god of waters being depicted in quite other ways. The specific mint of this type cannot be determined, it is certainly Ionian, however, and along with a number of other types, may, it has been suggested, be a coinage of Miletos (Seltman, GC p. 87 ff. Kraay, ACGC p. 25)." (G. Kenneth Jenkins and Mário de Castro Hipólito, *A catalogue of the Calouste Gulbenkian collection of Greek coins* Part II (Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1989), 81-82). However, he was relying on Isler's assessment of the Near Eastern predecessors to Acheloios, which we demonstrated in *ΠΙΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ* certainly had an aquatic dimension in many cases. For that matter, the inclusion in the coin design of a dolphin just above Acheloios indicates his watery nature.

<sup>43</sup> Dany, *Akarnanien in Hellenismus. Geschichte und Völkerrecht in Nordwestgriechenland*, 311ff.

<sup>44</sup> The fact that mercenaries and seer-healers found Acheloios particularly appealing—indeed, these figures formulated the original *mythos* of Acheloios—is the first clue in offering a new interpretation of the play. Those who have not studied Sophocles beyond an initial reading of the Theban Plays might be surprised to find out that he served as a general right beside Thucydides and even mighty Perikles (Plutarch, *Nicias* 15.2; Plutarch, *Pericles*, 8.8; Scholiast to Sophocles, *Electra* 831; Cicero, *De Officiis* 1.144; Strobæus, *Anthology* 3.17.18; Valerius Maximus, *Factorum ac Dictorum Memorabilium Libri IX*, 4.3 ext. 1; Pliny, *Natural History* 37.40; Scholiast to Aristides 485.28; Strabo, *Geography of Greece*, 638c; Justin, *Historiae Philippicae* 3.6.12; Aristodemus *Fr.* 104 F 1.15.4; Σ Hermogenes *Rhetores Graeci* 5.388; *Vita Sophoclis* 1; *The Suda* M 496; Aristophanes *Argumentum* I to Sophocles *Antigone*). This fact is important: no general in charge of a navy employed virtually anywhere in the Mediterranean in the mid 5th century B.C.E. would have been unfamiliar with the Acheloios tradition as it developed from earlier mercenary traditions. For that matter, Sophocles' knowledge of military matters reaches back further than his employment as a general—his own father appears to have owned slaves that operated as blacksmiths producing weapons and armor, and thus his family profited from the arms trade, so much so that some thought Sophocles' father was a blacksmith (*Life of Sophocles* 1, but he himself was not a craftsman as Aristoxenos (fr. 115 Wehrli) and Ister (Fr. 334 F 33) maintained. Cf. Blake Tyrell, "The Suda's Life of Sophocles (Sigma 815): Translation and Commentary with Sources," *Electronic Antiquity* 9.1 (Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 2006), 103.) Sophocles also achieved notoriety for his piety, especially to Herakles and Asclepius. He constructed a shrine to Herakles the Revealer after the god appeared to him in a dream and helped find a stolen treasure, for instance. (Libanius, *Letters* 390.9; *Life of Socrates* 12). He also often praised Eros (cf. Sophocles, *Antigone* 781-805); indeed much of the *Trachiniae* is overseen by Kypris. Asclepius, a Greek god of healing, has very clear Near Eastern roots. (Plutarch, *Moralia* 1103A; *Etymologicum Magnum* 256.6; Plutarch, *Numa* 4.8; *Life of Sophocles* 11; *IG II/III*<sup>2</sup> 1252-3). His connection to Asclepius indicates, beyond the obvious forthcoming evidence from the play, that Sophocles was well aware of the traditions of Archaic seer-healers and their roles as leading exponents of many of the Near Eastern religious traditions. (Cf., e.g., Burkert, *The Orientalizing Revolution*, 75-9). Indeed, Sophocles is referred to as one of the initiated. (Sophocles fr. 837 Radt (753 Nauck), Plutarch, *Moralia* 21 E.).

<sup>45</sup> An anonymous reader for the journal pointed out the similarity between this story and Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*.

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will see, he left out some important details. Deianeira does this when the time comes, anointing a robe that is then delivered to Herakles, who was delayed by a crowd and the performance of sacrifices. As soon as the robe is put on, the fire from the sacrifice causes Herakles to sweat, which binds the now-activated cloak to his torso, and there begins the hundreds of very graphic lines recounting the tortuous, grueling death of Herakles. After begging for his son, Hyllos—or in fact anyone—to kill him, Herakles finally convinces Hyllos to carry him to Mt. Oeta and build a pyre and burn him. Hyllos does this, with help, and this pyre is depicted on the coin from Tarsos, which we will soon discuss.

## III. IMPIETY TOWARD ACHELOIOS

Before we get to the coinage, we ought to investigate Acheloios' role in the play. Throughout the first half of the play, before Herakles is given the robe from Deianeira, there are repeated references to impiety relating to Acheloios and the rituals associated with him and queen Kypris, with whom Acheloios has very close affiliations.<sup>46</sup> This is evident right from the opening stanzas: Acheloios, identified with water itself, was a key figure in pre-nuptial lustratio rituals.<sup>47</sup>

Sophocles, *Trachiniae*, 6-9:

ἦ τις πατρός μὲν ἐν δόμοισιν Οἰνέως  
 ναίουσ' ἔτ' ἐν Πλευρῶνι νυμφείων ὄκνον  
 ἄλγιστον ἔσχον, εἴ τις Αἰτωλὶς γυνή.  
 μνηστήρ γὰρ ἦν μοι ποταμός, Ἀχελῶον λέγω...

While I still lived in the house of my father Oeneus, in Pleuron, I suffered painful affliction in the matter of my wedding, if any Aetolian woman did. For I had as a wooer a river, I mean Achelous...<sup>48</sup>

Opening with the marriage of Deianeira is a deliberate narrative strategy: Herakles is openly fighting Acheloios for his bride, and in doing so violating the will of the god instrumental in pre-nuptial ritual, thus a double, or reinforced violation occurs here. (Even the Greek words for husband and wife share a common origin with Acheloios.)<sup>49</sup> The underlying theme of the lustratio rituals is suggested also at *Trach.* 148 (παρθένου γυνή), in which παρθένος refers to a maiden, deriving its name from Parthenope, Acheloios' own daughter, and γυνή to a (married) woman. In fact, later we learn that Deianeira is a “bride without wedding” (*Trach.* 893ff), essentially indicating a breach of ritual propriety, and presumably this description would have carried an obvious link to Acheloios for the audience. In other words, Herakles' “marriage” to Deianeira was not proper, because he took her from Acheloios and thus the proper involvement of Acheloios in ritual could not occur.

<sup>46</sup> For an overview of Acheloios and Cyprus, from where Kypris-Aphrodite originates, see Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΙΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios, passim*, but especially chapter 2.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>48</sup> Trans. Hugh Lloyd-Jones.

<sup>49</sup> For discussion of the etymology of ‘husband’ (ἀκοίτης) and ‘wife’ (ἄκοιτις) in relation to the Acheloios tradition, see Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΙΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 94. For an example in ancient art of the early roots of man-faced bull iconography and lustratio rituals involving women, see Urs Winter, *Frau und Göttin: Exegetische und ikonographische Studien zum weiblichen Gottesbild im Alten Israel und in dessen Umwelt* (Tübingen, 1983), no. 74, which depicts two man-faced bulls surrounding a woman and holding (presumably) a pot of water over her head.

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The physical location of the bulk of the play is also particularly revealing. In the play, Herakles was marching against Euboea (Εὐβοία),<sup>50</sup> which in Greek literally means “good ox”: the prefix εὖ, meaning “well” or “good,” is attached to a derivative of βούς, meaning “bull, ox, or cow.” This is of the utmost importance, and so far as I can determine, has gone unacknowledged in the literature. The choice of Euboea was not random, but deliberate on Sophocles’ part insofar as it adds another layer to the atrocities committed by Herakles. In my reading, Herakles’ transgressions in Euboea are transgressions against the ‘good ox.’ The Acheloius-Euboea link is strengthened by the fact that the earliest extant cultic representation of Acheloius in Greece proper comes from Oichalia in Euboea, dating to the second quarter of the fifth century B.C.E.<sup>51</sup> And in the play, even the meadow in which Lichas tells the story of Herakles’ shameful activities in Euboea is one in which the “cows graze” (βουθερεῖ, *Trach.* 188ff). Thus, the physical context of the bulk of the play is situated within Euboea, which the audience would connect with Acheloius. Modern readers would presumably miss this connection because they are introduced to Acheloius largely through Deianeira’s description, which, as in other cases, is not entirely accurate (she sees Acheloius as a horrible monster). Granted, her fear of being wed to a shape-shifting deity that appears in various, terrifying forms, is certainly legitimate. But we must be cautious not to misinterpret the play by filtering Acheloius entirely through Deianeira’s perception.

Other references to “sins” against Acheloius are even more blatant. Indeed, Herakles is going to sacrifice an ox(!)<sup>52</sup> on the shore of that sacred landscape (*Trach.* 237ff), repeated later for emphasis at *Trach.* 609 and *Trach.* 754ff. As Lichas tells us, Herakles has destroyed the land of these women (*Trach.* 240f: εὐχαῖς ὅθ’ ἦρει τῶνδ’ ἀνάστατον δοριχώραν γυναικῶν ὧν ὄραξ ἐν ὄμμασιν/ “Because of a vow, since he has conquered and devastated the land of these women whom you see with your own eyes”).<sup>53</sup> The connotation, to me, is something like “Herakles devastated and conquered the land of the good ox,” which again summons up the notion of Acheloius, who opened the play and is always operating at a sub-textual level as water itself. I say this because the land of these woman is the land of the “good ox.” Indeed, Herakles did not just destroy the place, he even stole the women from Euboea (*Trach.* 293ff), just as he stole Deianeira from Acheloius. He even killed the king (Eurystus) and stole his daughter.<sup>54</sup> This connection is emphasized when Lichas is not forthcoming with Iole’s name to Deianeira, instead insisting she is “one from Euboea!” (Εὐβοίης, *Trach.* 401). Sophocles, it seems, cleverly devised the original, false tale to add textual elements such as this, in which Iole is emphatically linked with the “good ox.” Thus, in an important sense, Herakles’ savagery violates those things sacred to Acheloius: the rituals associated with him, “his” daughters (παρθένου), and even himself, associated with the country in which these episodes take place.<sup>55</sup> This might also explain why Sophocles describes Acheloius as βούπρωρος in the opening stanzas, as opposed to something like βουγενῆ ἀνδρόπρωρα<sup>56</sup> or τάυρους ἀνθρώπων κεφαλάς ἔχοντα<sup>57</sup> (a man-faced bull), which is his standard iconic representation. Later on in the play as Herakles begins to realize the function of

<sup>50</sup> *Trach.* 74.

<sup>51</sup> M. M. Lee, “Acheloois Peplophoros. A lost statuette of a River God in Feminine Dress,” *Hesperia* 75, No. 3 (2006).

<sup>52</sup> We will see below that this is an impious act as it relates to Kypris and Acheloius, at least according to my understanding of Empedokles.

<sup>53</sup> Trans. Hugh Lloyd Jones, *Women of Trachis*, 155.

<sup>54</sup> *Trach.* 360ff.

<sup>55</sup> It should be noted that Acheloius was not strictly linked to the river in Akarnania in Archaic times. See Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloius*, 96, for references.

<sup>56</sup> Empedokles, Fr. 61, *Aelian Nat. anim.* XVI, 29.

<sup>57</sup> Berosus, *FGrHist* 680 F 1, fr. 12 Schnabel.

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the deadly robe and what this means in terms of the oracles concerning his fate, he demands to be removed from the area: “let me not die *here!*” (*Trach.* 802). Ultimately, all of this evidence reinforces the importance of Sophocles’ choice of Euboea as the setting for desecration and thus the critical need for redemption, in which Acheloios plays an essential role.<sup>58</sup>

***Kypris and Eros***

Queen Kypris, who also plays an important role in the play, further emphasizes these violations of the sacred. In fact, Kypris functions as an overseer of the entire *Trachiniae*. In *Trach.* 354f, for instance, Eros is identified as the cause of all the strife (Ἐρως δέ νιν μόνος θεῶν θέλξειεν αἰχμάσαι τάδε/ “and that it was Eros alone among the gods that bewitched him [Herakles] into this deed of arms”).<sup>59</sup> This is reinforced at *Trach.* 441: Ἐρωτι μὲν νυν ὅστις ἀντανίσταται, πύκτης ὅπως ἐς χεῖρας, οὐ καλῶς φρονεῖ: οὗτος γὰρ ἄρχει καὶ θεῶν ὅπως θέλει / “Whoever stands up to Eros like a boxer is a fool, for he rules even the gods as he pleases.”<sup>60</sup> And at *Trach.* 489 we learn that it is Eros, agent (or force) of Kypris-Aphrodite, that vanquishes Herakles: “For he who in all other matters has excelled in might has been altogether vanquished by his passion (ἔρωτος) for this girl.” This becomes even more explicit when Sophocles refers to the Cypriot Queen directly at *Trach.* 497ff: μέγα τι σθένος ἂ Κύπρις ἐκφέρεται νίκας ἀεὶ/ “A mighty power is the Cyprian!”<sup>61</sup> Indeed, Kypris is called the umpire of the battle between Herakles and Acheloios at *Trach.* 515: μόνα δ’ εὐλεκτρος ἐν μέσῳ Κύπρις ῥαβδονόμει ξυνοῦσα/ “and alone in the center the beautiful Cyprian was there to umpire in the contest.”<sup>62</sup> Later in the play the mighty queen is reintroduced (*Trach.* 860): ἂ δ’ ἀμφίπολος Κύπρις ἀναυδος φανερά τῶνδ’ ἐφάνη πράκτωρ/ “And the Cyprian, silent in attendance, is revealed as the doer of these things.”<sup>63</sup> Thus the role of Kypris and Eros is clear and unambiguous: the overseer of the battle and its driving force.

It is critically important at this juncture to point out that Kypris and Acheloios share an intimate bond.<sup>64</sup> Aside from the archaeological evidence (early coinage from Paphos featuring Acheloios; a long history of androcephalic bulls on the island, etc.), we find interesting parallels in Empedokles, who has a direct link to the Acheloios tradition.<sup>65</sup> He discusses the Cyprian Queen in some fragments, and advocates against the killing of “sacred animals” (specifically ταύρων) while discussing the cult of Kypris:

Empedokles, ΚΑΘΑΡΜΟΙ, 118(128)

οὐδέ τις ἦν κείνοισιν Ἄρης θεὸς οὐδὲ Κυδοιμὸς οὐδὲ Ζεὺς Βασιλεὺς οὐδὲ Κρόνος οὐδὲ Ποσειδῶν, ἀλλὰ Κύπρις βασιλεία ... ταύρων δ’ (ἀκρίτοισι?) φόνους οὐ δεύετο βωμὸς, ἀλλὰ μύσος τοῦτ’ ἔσκεν ἐν ἀνθρώποισι μέγιστον, θυμὸν ἀπορραΐσαντας ἐέδμεναι ἠέα γυῖα.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Contra G.M.A. Grube, *The Drama of Euripides* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1961), 5: “The gods are taken for granted in Sophoclean tragedy which centers upon human characters.”

<sup>59</sup> Trans. Hugh Lloyd Jones, *Women of Trachis*, 165.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. *Trach.* 465 (beauty destroyed her life)

<sup>61</sup> Trans. Hugh Lloyd Jones, *Women of Trachis*, 179.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 181. Note that different words are used in the description, “Zeus the god of contests decided well,” in *Trach.* 26.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 209.

<sup>64</sup> One of the earliest representations of Acheloios on Greek coinage comes from Paphos, and there are clear iconographic similarities between the Cypriot coins and slightly later Italian types. For discussion, see Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, Chapter 5.

<sup>65</sup> For the link, see Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 24-5.

<sup>66</sup> Fragments from Porphyry *abst.* 2.20 (1-8), 2.27 (8-10).

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They did not have Ares as a god or Kydoimos, nor king Zeus nor Kronos nor Poseidon, but the queen Kypris. ... Their altar was not drenched by the (unspeakable?) slaughter of bulls, but this was the greatest defilement among men—to bereave of life and eat noble limbs.<sup>67</sup>

According to my reading of the play, Sophocles must have been aware of these traditions, as were (presumably) the audience members. I say this because the employment of specific themes—Acheloios, Euboea, Kypris, and the sacrifice of bulls—serves a very clear purpose in establishing the parameters for understanding Herakles' violations of the sacred and, as we will soon see, his redemption. Incidentally, even the centaur Nessus, who plays a pivotal role in the poisoning of Herakles, is a reference to bulls, “centaur” coming from the Greek Κεντάυρου, meaning “like bull,” and used by Sophocles in place of his name for added emphasis: Κεντάυρου (*Trach.* 831); Κένταυρος (*Trach.* 1162). As explained in our previous work, following Semerano, the word probably stems from Semitic *ken-* (as well as, such as) and *tora* (bull).<sup>68</sup> Indeed, there are many Cypriot “bull centaurs” and corresponding examples of Acheloios as a centaur in early Greek art.<sup>69</sup> In fact, Levy, in her analysis, refers to Nessus as “the double of Acheloös.”<sup>70</sup>

## IV. DODONA, LOCRI, AND ASSIMILATION

The repeated references to Euboea and the Cypriot Queen are not the only links to Acheloios by any means. Another essential link is the connection to Dodona, which plays a pivotal role in the play, for the oracles of Dodona tell Herakles his fate. We learn from Ephorus that at Dodona nearly all patrons were instructed to make a sacrifice to Acheloios.<sup>71</sup> As we will entertain throughout the remainder of this section, Herakles is becoming intermixed with Acheloios in the play, becoming in a sense the expiatory sacrifice necessary for his own apotheosis, Acheloios being (in my view, at least) the ultimate pre-Christian symbol of expiatory sacrifice. The first case in which Dodona is mentioned is *Trach.* 170ff, in which it is prophesied by the “doves” (oracles) of Dodona that Herakles will see an end to his suffering, possibly through death, after he'd been absent three years. The second reference comes at *Trach.* 1167ff; here Herakles himself recounts receiving the oracle from the Selli (another name for the priests of Dodona), concerning the end to his suffering—τὸ δ' ἦν ἄρ' οὐδὲν ἄλλο πλὴν θανεῖν ἐμέ. τοῖς γὰρ θανοῦσι μόχθος οὐ προσγίγνεται/ “But it meant no more than that I should die; for the dead do not have to labour.”<sup>72</sup> The link to Acheloios best explains why Sophocles uses the oracles from Dodona, as opposed to the more common Delphi. This explanation may have

<sup>67</sup> Trans. M.R. Wright, *Empedocles: The Extant Fragments* (London: Bristol Classic Press, 1981), 282.

<sup>68</sup> G.Semerano, *L'infinito. Un Equivoco Millenario. Le antiche civiltà del Vicino Oriente e le origini del pensiero Greco* (Milano: Mondadori, 2001), 14.

<sup>69</sup> H.P. Isler, *Acheloos: Eine Monographie* (Bern: Francke, 1970), no. 74-76 and no. 85. The man-faced bull quickly overshadowed the bull centaur iconography and became the standard representation for Acheloios in the Greek world.

<sup>70</sup> G. Rachel Levy, “The Oriental Origin of Herakles,” *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 54, Part 1 (1934): 44.

<sup>71</sup> Ephorus, *FgrH* 27= Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, v.18.6: τοῖς μὲν οὖν ἄλλοις ποταμοῖς οἱ πλησιόχωροι μόνον θύουσι, τὸν δὲ Ἀχελῶον μόνον ἅπαντας ἀνθρώπους συμβέβηκε τιμᾶν· (οὐ τοῖς κοινοῖς ὀνόμασιν ἀντὶ τῶν ιδέων gloss.) τοῦ Ἀχελῶου τὴν ἰδίαν ἐπωνυμίαν ἐπὶ τὸ κοινὸν μεταφέροντας· τὸ μὲν γὰρ ὕδωρ ὄλωσ, ὅπερ ἐστὶ κοινὸν ὄνομα, ἀπὸ τῆς ἰδίας ἐκείνου προσηγορίας Ἀχελῶον καλοῦμεν· τῶν δὲ ἄλλων ὀνομάτων τὰ κοινὰ πολλάκις ἀντὶ τῶν ἰδίων ὀνομάζομεν, τοὺς μὲν Ἀθηναίους Ἑλληνας, τοὺς δὲ Λακεδαιμονίους Πελοποννησίους ἀποκαλοῦντες. Τούτου δὲ ἀπορήματος οὐδὲν ἔχομεν αἰτιώτατον εἰπεῖν ἢ τοὺς ἐκ Δωδώνης χρησμούς· σχεδὸν γὰρ ἐφ' ἅπασιν αὐτοῖς προσάγειν ὁ θεὸς εἴωθεν Ἀχελῶφ θύειν· ὥστε πολλοὶ νομίζοντες οὐ τὸν ποταμὸν τὸν διὰ τῆς ἀκαρνανίας ρέοντα, ἀλλὰ τὸ σύνολον ὕδωρ Ἀχελῶον ὑπὸ τοῦ χρησμοῦ καλεῖσθαι, ἰδιοῦνται τὰς τοῦ θεοῦ προσηγορίας· σημεῖον δέ· ὅτι πρὸς τὸ θεῖον ἀναφέροντες οὕτω λέγειν εἰώθαμεν· μάλιστα γὰρ τὸ ὕδωρ Ἀχελῶον προσαγορεύομεν ἐν τοῖς ὄρχοις, καὶ ἐν ταῖς εὐχαῖς καὶ ἐν ταῖς θυσίαις ἅπερ πάντα περὶ τοῦ θεοῦ.

<sup>72</sup> *Trach.* 1172f, Trans. Hugh Lloyd Jones, *Women of Trachis*, 239.

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escaped notice in the extensive scholarship on Sophocles because commentators have been focused exclusively on Zeus.<sup>73</sup>

Another essential, seemingly overlooked link to Acheloios is the mention of Herakles' screams heard from Locris to Euboea:

*Trach.* 786ff:

ἐσπᾶτο γὰρ πέδονδε καὶ μετάρσιος,  
βοῶν, ἰύζων: ἀμφὶ δ' ἐκτύπουν πέτραι,  
Λοκρῶν τ' ὄρειοι πρῶνες Εὐβοίας τ' ἄκραι.

For the pain dragged him downwards and upwards  
shouting and screaming; and the rocks around resounded,  
the mountain promontories of Locri and the Euboean peaks.

This is not the Locris near Delphi, in my opinion. This is a reference to Locri Epizephyrii (modern day Calabria), which is one of the most important cultic sites for Acheloios in the entire ancient world, and a substantial part of the section on Greek man-faced bulls found in *ΠΙΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ* was devoted to some archaeological discoveries there.<sup>74</sup> For instance, there were sixteen arulas featuring not just Acheloios, but Acheloios battling Herakles, uncovered at the site (Figure 2). These were in some cases used as the walls for tombs, indicating the psychopompic nature of Acheloios, which is occasionally exhibited on coins: at Panormos, for example, we see a man riding on the back of Acheloios Orethos (Figure 3).<sup>75</sup> Likewise, at Katane, a man with Selin-like features also holds the horns of Acheloios Amenanos.<sup>76</sup> These rituals evolved from earlier Nuragic Sardinian practices (among others) in which the deceased traveled to the afterlife, usually in a boat with bull protome attached.<sup>77</sup> Sophocles' use of Locri Epizephyrii would skillfully reinforce Acheloios' role as an agent in Herakles' apotheosis, akin to his general role as psychopomp, as exhibited in the arulas of Locri itself.

The notion of assimilation is paramount to understanding Acheloios' role in the apotheosis, beyond a mere role as an adversary for the hand of Deianeira. The most important indication of this comes from the following passage, a pivotal turning point in the text in which Herakles transitions from one who happily sacrifices one hundred cattle (the preceding line!) to sacrificial victim (*Trach.* 763-771):

<sup>73</sup> Cf. e.g., Tycho von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Die dramatische technik des Sophokles* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1917), 89-164. Surprisingly, although Dodona is mentioned repeatedly in his treatment, Acheloios is barely mentioned, despite the fact that Tycho's father, Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff contributed to the text, and he argued, in *Der Glaube Der Hellenen*, that Acheloios was the original Hellenic god of all water who was displaced by the Carian Okeanos (Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Der Glaube Der Hellenen* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1931), 219). Perhaps Ulrich's opinion on Acheloios as the original Hellenic god developed after his son Tycho published his commentary. See also Sir Richard Jebb, *Sophocles: The Plays and Fragments, with Critical Notes, Commentary, and Translation in English Prose. Part V: The Trachiniae* (Cambridge: UP, 1902); Bruce Heiden, "Trachiniae," in *Brill's Companion to Sophocles* (London: Brill, 2012), 129-148 (or any other contribution in that important resources, for that matter); Charles Segal, "The Oracles of Sophocles' "Trachiniae": Convergence or Confusion?," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 101 (2000), 151-71, etc.

<sup>74</sup> Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΙΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 66-8.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. F. Imhoof-Blumer, "Fluß- und Meergötter auf griechischen und römischen Münzen. (Personifikationen der Gewässer)," Pl.II, no.12a.

<sup>76</sup> H.P. Isler, *Acheloos*, no. 345; C. Arnold-Biucchi, *The Randazzo Hoard 1980 and Sicilian Chronology in the Early Fifth Century B.C.* (New York: ANS, 1990), 22-24.

<sup>77</sup> Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΙΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 36-41.

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καὶ πρῶτα μὲν δειλαιοὺς ἴλεφ φρενί,  
κόσμῳ τε χαίρων καὶ στολῆ, κατηύχετο:  
ὅπως δὲ σεμνῶν ὀργίων ἐδαίετο  
φλοῦξ αἵματηρὰ κάπῳ πείρας δρυός,  
ιδρῶς ἀνήει χρωτί, καὶ προσπτύσσεται  
πλευραῖσιν ἀρτίκολλος, ὥστε τέκτονος,  
χιτῶν ἅπαν κατ' ἄρθρον: ἦλθε δ' ὀστέων  
ἀδαγμὸς ἀντίσπαστος: εἶτα φοινίας  
ἐχθρᾶς ἐχίδνης ἰὸς ὧς ἐδαίνυτο.

At first, poor man, he spoke the prayer cheerfully, rejoicing in the fine attire. But when the resinous pine blazed up, *the sweat came up upon his body*, and the thing clung closely to his sides, as a carpenter's tunic might, at every joint; and a biting pain came, tearing at his bones; then a bloody poison like that of a hateful serpent fed upon him.<sup>78</sup>

The key word here is ἰδρῶς (sweat), related of course to ὕδωρ (water, usually fresh water unless employing an epithet).<sup>79</sup> As was explained above, Acheloios is equated with water itself; indeed Sophocles is one of our sources for this (*Fr.* 4, quoted in full above). In the depiction of Herakles' demise, we should regard Acheloios as the active agent transforming Herakles into the sacrificial victim since it is the water, as sweat, that makes the cloak stick to Herakles and consume his flesh.<sup>80</sup> It is therefore the internal moisture, the ἵνας...Ἀχελωΐου, that binds the punishment to Herakles—a punishment for his many sins, especially those against Acheloios. Indeed, this notion of assimilation has been brought up in a similar fashion in Segal's brilliant essay: "The victor, a new sacrifice in a new robe (611-612), will roar (805) like the bulls he immolates; the devouring disease (*diaboros nosos*, 1084) turns the celebrant into the animal which is eaten after the sacrifice."<sup>81</sup>

As Segal indicated, the assimilation is further emphasized by this βρυχώμενον (bellowing) of Herakles, much like a sacrificial bull. In Sophocles' *Ajax* (322) βρυχώμενον is used precisely this way: ταῦρος ὧς βρυχώμενος. Segal also suggests that the manner in which Herakles woos Iole is animalistic. The secret bed (*Trach.* 360: κρύφιον ὡς ἔχει λέχος) relates to the raw, sexual nature of Herakles' desire for Iole, and his pursuit of her is more savage than Acheloios' of Deianeira.<sup>82</sup> After all, Acheloios approached Deianeira's father multiple times (*Trach.* 10ff), whereas Herakles killed Iole's father after the first attempt (*Trach.* 360ff). For Segal, Herakles, despite his laborious purification of savagery from the world, is reverting to savagery himself: "This figure is not the 'hero-god,' as Pindar calls him (*Nem.* 3.22) or the 'divine man' of the Stoics, but the hero-beast."<sup>83</sup> I'm tempted to go one step further than Segal, however, and claim Herakles is all three: man, beast, and god, with man and beast purged on the pyre.

<sup>78</sup> Translation Hugh Lloyd Jones, *Women of Trachis*, 201-3.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Richard Cunliffe, *A Lexicon of the Homeric Dialectic*, 185, following LSJ's initial observation.

<sup>80</sup> Charles Segal, *Tragedy and Civilization: An Interpretation of Sophocles* (Norman, Oklahoma: Oklahoma UP, 1999), 67: "But here too the ritual backfires. Instead of dispelling that impurity, it intensifies it. Instead of desacralizing Heracles, it makes him *sacer*—as the victim, not the celebrant."

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 61



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In any case, a further note on assimilation is the role of the πέπλον (the robe Deianeira gives Herakles), which can refer to any piece of cloth including those draped over the deceased, but in some cases is used specifically for women. This is how it appears on the earliest cultic statue of Acheloios in Greece proper, Acheloios Peplophoros.<sup>84</sup> In fact, that artifact comes from Euboea. Taylor thinks this statue indicates the emasculation suffered by Acheloios when Herakles snatched his horn.<sup>85</sup> Likewise, Sophocles appears to be playing on that same theme: Herakles is being emasculated for his impiety—rather than getting Iole, the object of his sexual desire, he will suffer a horrible, painful death. Indeed, when Herakles was a slave of Omphale he was forced to dress (and act) as a woman,<sup>86</sup> which, when coupled with the example in cult, is another indication that Sophocles is alluding to assimilation between Herakles and Acheloios. In fact, at one point Herakles is described as a weeping girl (*Trach.* 1071), and Herakles' priest at Kos wore women's clothes. As we'll discuss later, one early scholar connects the Tarsian Sandan to Herakles via the "Sandyx," the dress worn by Herakles in service to Omphale. We should also mention in this general context an Etruscan mirror dating to the mid fourth century that features Herakles battling Acheloios, labeled AXΛAE and HEPAKΛE.<sup>87</sup> On this piece Acheloios is clearly depicted with a feminine face (no beard) and long, flowing hair, so the phenomenon of a feminine Acheloios was not isolated to Greece proper and the eastern colonies.

The roots of the notion of Herakles' assimilation with Acheloios run very deep, stemming from his Near Eastern predecessors. In Mesopotamian traditions the winged man-faced bulls that stood on either side of an entranceway, or flanking a throne, served as apotropaic devices.<sup>88</sup> Annus suggested that these winged man-faced bulls often represented the king's vanquished enemies,<sup>89</sup> which in *IOTAMIKON* we related to the aforementioned Greek mercenary tradition under Psametticus I (those figures that served as exponents of the man-faced bull tradition).<sup>90</sup> There is also some indication of this assimilation among the Nuragic Sardinians, often depicted wearing horned helmets, and later Italic traditions that were influenced by them.<sup>91</sup> In fact, assimilation between man and god is reflected in the earlier Cypriot traditions that were influential in the western Mediterranean, among Sardinians, Italians, and Sicilians.<sup>92</sup> For instance, there are artifacts featuring Cypro-Phoenician priests wearing masks of androcephalic bulls, and also rituals in which priests shouted "I am Asallúhi!" (Asallúhi being Acheloios' closest Near Eastern predecessor).<sup>93</sup> Another example, contemporaneous with Sophocles, is Euthymos of Locri (Epizephyrii), who won three Olympic boxing titles in the fifth century B.C.E.

<sup>84</sup> Lee, "Acheloos Peplophoros. A lost statuette of a River God in Feminine Dress," 319

<sup>85</sup> Taylor, "River Raptures: Containment and Control of Water in Greek and Roman Constructions of Identity," 36.

<sup>86</sup> Taylor, "River Raptures: Containment and Control of Water in Greek and Roman Constructions of Identity," 36. See also Nicole Lorax, *The Experiences of Tiresias: The Feminine and the Greek Man*, trans. P. Wissing (Princeton: UP, 1995), 116-39; Monica S. Cyrino, "Heroes in D[u]ress: Transvestism and Power in Myths of Herakles and Achilles," *Arethusa* 31 (1997), 207-41; Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones, "Herakles Re-dressed: Gender, Clothing, and the Construction of a Greek Hero," in *Herakles and Hercules: Exploring a Greco-Roman Divinity*, ed. Louis Rawlings and Hugh Bowden (Swansea, 2005), 51-69.

<sup>87</sup> Isler, "Acheloos," *LIMC*, 26, 47, no. 230.

<sup>88</sup> Molinari and Sisci, *IOTAMIKON: Sinews of Acheloios*, 5-15. Man-faced bulls represented various deities in Mesopotamian cultures, though often times the characteristics would overlap. In virtually every case discussed through the cited pages, the deity served an apotropaic function.

<sup>89</sup> A. Annus, *The God Ninurta: in the Mythology and Royal Ideology of Ancient Mesopotamia* (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2002), 117.

<sup>90</sup> Molinari and Sisci, *IOTAMIKON: Sinews of Acheloios*, 26-8.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 44-5, especially note 156. They also had bull head-shaped entrances to their various shrines, which indicates a liminal passage in which the patron assimilates with the god.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

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He was actually depicted there as a man-faced bull on some votive tablets dating to the fourth century, assimilating with Acheloios, in our interpretation, to become Acheloios Kaikinos Euthymos.<sup>94</sup> As Taylor puts it generally, “The crux of deification by water is not, perhaps, that the sacrificial victim, or the river, achieves divinity. The crux is that the body of water becomes assimilated to some kind of a sacrificial victim, which it seizes, purifies, and dissolves into itself.”<sup>95</sup>

## V. HERAKLES’ PUTRID PURIFICATION

There is no ambiguity in the play that Herakles is being punished for his sins, which the careful reader will note are violations against Acheloios, and this punishment is brought about in part by an agent of Acheloios, the bull-like Nessus. Since Acheloios is the governing source of all water, Nessus, as a watery figure attempting to rape Deianeira in a stream, falls under the domain of Acheloios.<sup>96</sup> It is worthwhile to take the time to appreciate Sophocles’ language concerning Herakles’ “punishment,” because it drives home the gravity of his violations. Sophocles paints a picture of βαρεῖαν ξυμφορὰν (dire calamity),<sup>97</sup> witnessed first-hand by his own son, Hyllos. At first it is described as a “biting pain...tearing at his bones”...as though “a hateful serpent fed upon him” (*Trach.* 768ff). The mention of a serpent is surely another “hidden” reference to Acheloios, who in the beginning of the play (and, indeed, in ancient vase paintings)<sup>98</sup> is described as a serpent (here ἐχίδνης, but cf. *Trach.* 12, δράκων). Again, Herakles’ pain is such that he throws himself to the ground and screams so loud that it can be heard in the land of the “good ox” and the area where he is most vehemently worshipped as a liminal figure, Locri (*Trach.* 788ff), which to me represents a rather clear vindication of Acheloios. Indeed, the pain at some points is referred to as ἄσπετόν θέαμα (a sight unspeakable, *Trach.* 961), as though all other vivid descriptions fall short of the stark reality of the event. Nonetheless, there are plenty of other well-chosen words: it is ὠμόφρονος (savage, *Trach.* 974);<sup>99</sup> ἀγρία νόσος (a cruel plague, *Trach.* 1030); ἄτης σπασμὸς ἀρτίως (spasms of torture, *Trach.* 1083);<sup>100</sup> μίαν βρῦκει (the putrid disease consumes him, *Trach.* 987). At one point, the pain is so bad Herakles begs to be decapitated:

*Trach.* 1014ff:

ἔέ,  
οὐδ’ ἀπαράξαι <μου> κρᾶτα βία θέλει  
μολῶν τοῦ στυγεροῦ; φεῦ φεῦ.

Ah, ah! Will no one come and lop off my head,  
ending the misery of my life? Ah, ah!

Such is the state of Herakles as his fate begins to unfold. To an Acheloios enthusiast, it reads like pure poetic justice. Of all his trials and tribulations (he mentions his labors, giants, monsters, etc.) nothing comes close

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 87-8, 96.

<sup>95</sup> Taylor, “River Raptures: Containment and Control of Water in Greek and Roman Constructions of Identity,” 34.

<sup>96</sup> In her essay, Levy refers to Nessus as Acheloios’ “double.” See Levy, “The Oriental Origin of Herakles,” 44.

<sup>97</sup> Trans. Hugh Lloyd Jones.

<sup>98</sup> British Museum 1971, 1101.1; Isler, “Acheloos,” LIMC, no. 245.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. with Segal’s treatment of this theme: Segal, *Tragedy and Civilization: An Interpretation of Sophocles*, 71-2.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. LSJ re ἄτη, related to Ἄτη, “personified, the goddess of mischief, author of rash actions,” etc. (emphasis added). This is a well-chosen word in terms of Herakles’ behavior.

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to this episode and the horrible *δειλαία* (evil, wretched thing)<sup>101</sup> that consumes him. His various labors are repeated slightly later, cf. *Trach.* 1089-1111, and again as paling in comparison to the present episode.

This idea of a wretched disease that will bring about redemption also has early roots, stemming (so far as Dr. Sisci and I could trace it) to the binary nature of early man-faced bulls. Most notably, there are two figures, the Lamassu and Sēdu (both probably depicted as winged man-faced bulls), traditionally representing a good protective deity and a demon of disease, respectively.<sup>102</sup> However, in at least one extant ritual text, both are labeled as agents of good:<sup>103</sup> “you shall write ‘who repels the evil constables’ and on his left ‘who causes to enter the sēdu of good and the lamassu of good’—you shall make”... “To block the entry of the enemy in someone’s house.”<sup>104</sup> This notion of pollution and consecration has been explored in depth in terms of the Greek world by Dougherty: “The Greeks conceptualize defilement as the inversion of a positive religious value; it still carries religious force. Blood and dust can bring pollution, but they can also consecrate.”<sup>105</sup> Sophocles apparently plays on this general theme of ambiguity from the very first lines (*Trach.* 1-3):

λόγος μὲν ἔστ’ ἀρχαῖος ἀνθρώπων φανείς,  
ὡς οὐκ ἂν αἰῶν’ ἐκμάθοις βροτῶν, πρὶν ἂν  
θάνῃ τις, οὔτ’ εἰ χρηστὸς οὔτ’ εἶ τῳ κακός

There is an ancient saying among men, once revealed to them, that you cannot understand a man’s life before he is dead, so as to know whether he has a good or a bad one.<sup>106</sup>

That is to say, the ambiguity surrounding consecration and desecration, including the use of *φαρμακεὺς* to refer to Nessus,<sup>107</sup> is an important hermeneutical layer in the same manner as the initial moral ambiguity, as is the ambiguity surrounding Deianeira’s mistake (i.e. giving the robe to Herakles). Was it truly a mistake? She did not intend for Herakles to be tortured, but if it was necessary for his apotheosis, then in the end we know it was good. Thus, it is not until the end of the play—the final scenes of Herakles’ life before becoming a god—that we come to truly understand the necessity of his tortuous final hours in bringing about his apotheosis. In other words, it is through the torture that Herakles can be redeemed, and we the audience can make sense of the whole business. Ultimately, Herakles is purified through the vindication of Acheloios.

### ***Herakles’ “Death”***

Recapping the end of the play is the perfect segue into the following discussion of some important numismatic considerations: Herakles’ death comes about after his realization of the true meaning of the Selli of Dodona’s prophecy that his labor would end. As Herakles realizes, it means he will die: “But it meant no more than that I should die; for the dead do not have labour.”<sup>108</sup> Starting at

<sup>101</sup> *Trach.* 1027.

<sup>102</sup> Jeremy Black and Anthony Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia: An Illustrated Dictionary* (Texas: UP, 2011), 115.

<sup>103</sup> For discussion, see Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 12.

<sup>104</sup> F.A.M. Wiggerman, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 11 (lines 122-3).

<sup>105</sup> C. Dougherty, “It’s Murder to Found A Colony,” *Cultural Poetics in Archaic Greece: Cult, Performance, Politics*, edited by C. Dougherty and Leslie Kurke (New York, 1993), 186.

<sup>106</sup> Trans. Hugh Lloyd Jones.

<sup>107</sup> *Trach.* 1140; Cf. Segal, *Tragedy and Civilization: An Interpretation of Sophocles*, 72.

<sup>108</sup> *Trach.* 1072f.

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*Trach.* 1195ff Herakles instructs Hyllos to bring his body to Mt. Oeta, build a pyre, and place him atop it. Hyllos agrees, save for lighting the actual fire, and verbally reinforces the notion that Acheloios and Nessus (being of Acheloios) are the cause: ἀλαστόρων (“of avenging deities,” note the plural, *Trach.* 1235). If Sophocles meant only Nessus, the target of Herakles’ arrow, he would have used the genitive singular.

## VI. NUMISMATIC EVIDENCE

Although the labors of Herakles have been depicted on coins, particularly the beautiful Roman Egyptian series of Antoninus Pius,<sup>109</sup> this episode, the culmination of his life and his transition into divinity, appears only at Tarsos, and there with some ambiguity. Recognition of this reverse type as representing Herakles (or Herakles-Sandan) on the funeral pyre is longstanding. Hill<sup>110</sup> made this identification in cataloguing the British Museum Collection and Ramsay commented on it in his famous study of St. Paul (who hailed from Tarsos).<sup>111</sup> Likewise, Levy, in her important study of Herakles’ eastern origins, makes references to the same coin.<sup>112</sup> What none of these earlier studies observed, however, was that the figure under Herakles on some rare varieties is a (winged) man-faced bull—Acheloios. Instead, all the earlier accounts associate the “creature” with the Sandan tradition exclusively, since Sandan is often depicted above a horned lion (cf. e.g., SNG France 1307-1343, and 1433-4, where one notices the figure beneath Herakles-Sandan is anything but a winged man-faced bull: often a winged, horned creature, so e.g., Figure 7,<sup>113</sup> but many times the figure is unidentifiable, so e.g., Figure 8.)<sup>114</sup> In writing *ΠΙΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ*, Dr. Sisci and I discovered the peculiar Acheloios variety of this bronze “Burning Sandas” type from Tarsos (Figure 4a).<sup>115</sup> There are eight extant specimens that feature Acheloios as a winged man-faced bull, with two distinct varieties differentiated by the field marks. I have personally examined three. Variety one (cf. Figure 4a-4h), which I date earliest due in part to the quality of the die engravings, has ⚡ over ⚡ in field to left. Variety two (Figure 5a & 5b) features ⚡ over ⚡ in field to left. Supporting the attribution of variety two to a later date is a transitional piece, Figure 6, which features ⚡ over ⚡ in field to left, but the figure is clearly not a winged man-faced bull; it is not androcephalic, but perhaps bovine. I therefore date all subsequent non-Acheloios types after this transitional piece. The problem with the account in *ΠΙΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ* is that it did not properly address the significance of this issue in relation to the actual story of Herakles’ apotheosis, and moreover listed the wrong local river: not “Acheloios Kalykadnos,” but “Acheloios Kydnos,” presumably.<sup>116</sup>

Tarsos, of course, was allegedly founded by Herakles, as we learn from Dio Chrysostom, and they honored him every year by lighting a pyre with his effigy: “If, I ask you, your own founder,

<sup>109</sup> Cf. e.g., K. Emmett, *Alexandrian Coins* (Lodi, 2001), no. 1555.4 (Nemean Lion), no. 1545.5 (Lernaean Hydra), no. 1547.4 (Cerynean Hind), no. 1543.6 (Stymphalian Birds), no. 1550.6 (Cretan Bull), no. 1553.6 (Mares of Diomedes), no. 1540.5 (Golden Girdle of Hippolyte), no. 1542.4 (Cattle of Geryon), no. 1554.10 (Apples of Hesperides), no. 1557.5 (Capture of Kerberos).

<sup>110</sup> G. F. Hill, *British Museum Cat. of Greek Coins: Lycaonia, Isauria, and Cilicia* (London, 1900), lxxxvi.

<sup>111</sup> W. M. Ramsay, *The Cities of St. Paul* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1907), 148.

<sup>112</sup> G. Rachel Levy, “The Oriental Origin of Herakles,” *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 54, Part 1 (1934), 40-53, but especially 51-2.

<sup>113</sup> CNG eAuction 261, lot 126. Special thanks to Ed Snible for the SNG France references.

<sup>114</sup> CNG eAuction 354, lot 199.

<sup>115</sup> Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΙΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 289. Catalog reference: MSP I, 501 (CNG, Triton VII, 329)=SNG Levante 947 (this coin)

<sup>116</sup> This might be a unique instance in which a local embodiment is not intended.

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Herakles, should visit you (attracted, let us say, by a funeral pyre such as you construct with special magnificence in his honour)...<sup>117</sup> Moreover, there is relatively early evidence for a conflation between Herakles and Sandan; Levy provided the sources in her work, but they are worth repeating. For instance, Syncellus, a ninth-century Byzantine Scholar, in his *Chronographia*, mentions: Ἡρακλέα τινές φασιν ἐν Φοινίκῃ γνωρίζεσαι (Δι)σάνδαν ἐπιλεγόμενον, ὡς καὶ μέχρι νῦν ὑπὸ Καππαδοκίων καὶ Κιλικίων.<sup>118</sup> An even earlier scholar, Nonnus, makes the Herakles-Sandan connection without the mistaken (Δι) addition: ὄθεν Κιλικίων ἐνὶ γαίῃ Σάνδης Ἡρακλῆς κυκλήσκειται.<sup>119</sup> One of the more interesting commentaries, as mentioned above, comes from Lydus, a sixth-century Byzantine antiquarian, who connects the name Sandan to Herakles' robe, the "Sandyx" he wore when enslaved by Omphale.<sup>120</sup> This is an interesting idea, especially since the πέπλον is an essential part of Herakles' apotheosis, and, indeed, the notion of the emasculation of both Herakles and Acheloios plays an important part in their shared *mythos*. (As mentioned above, even the priest of Herakles at Kos had to wear a woman's robe.)<sup>121</sup>

The final piece of literary evidence offered by Levy is most interesting. She quotes Berossus, a third-century Babylonian priest, as also equating the two: Σάνδην δὲ τὸν Ἡρακλέα.<sup>122</sup> Moreover, since the ideogram for Marduk is used to translate Sandan,<sup>123</sup> this passage confirms the Marduk-Sandan-Herakles link.<sup>124</sup> What we can presently add to this chain of scholarship is the following: Berossus<sup>125</sup> claimed that images of ταύρους ἀνθρώπων κεφαλὰς ἔχοντας (bulls with human faces) "were set up (ἀνακεῖσθαι) in the temple of Βῆλος (Marduk)."<sup>126</sup> This fact, then, confirms that man-faced bull iconography would have been perfectly natural for Marduk (and probably Sandan, as well). But this should not be construed to mean that the man-faced bull beneath Herakles-Sandan is something other than Acheloios (especially for the Greek observer). What it does confirm, rather, is that man-faced bull iconography is in no way incompatible with Sandan because his oriental equivalent, Marduk, was associated with the iconography in Babylon. Indeed, according to the Weidener god list, Asallúhi, arguably the closest relative to Acheloios, was listed right after Marduk.<sup>127</sup>

In this regard another coin should be pointed out, from nearby Mallos, in which we find a winged, two-faced man holding a solar disc above the forepart of Acheloios (Figure 9). This might be Herakles-Marduk: Levy suggests a double bust in the Vatican<sup>128</sup> might represent the two aspects of Herakles (youthful and "dying-god") and points out that Marduk is featured as two-faced on Akkadian seals.<sup>129</sup> Indeed, the solar disc would make terrific sense in this scenario insofar as Herakles'

<sup>117</sup> Dio Chrysostom, *Discourses* 33.47. See also Dio Chrysostom, *Discourses* 33.1; 33.45.

<sup>118</sup> Transcription of Syncellus, *Chronographia*, I, p. 290 (via Frazer, *Adonis, Attis, Osiris: Studies in the History of Oriental Religion* Volume I (London: MacMillan, 1990), 125, no. 3.)

<sup>119</sup> Nonnus, *Dionysiaca*, XXXIV, 19. (per Levy)

<sup>120</sup> ταύτη καὶ Σάνδων Ἡρακλῆς ἀνηνέχθη, Lydus, *de Magistr. Roman.* III, 64. (per Levy)

<sup>121</sup> Plutarch, *Quaest. Gr.* LVIII. (per Levy)

<sup>122</sup> Berossus, *Fragm.* p. 51 (Richter). (per Levy)

<sup>123</sup> *KUB.* IX, 31, ii, 22; I, 36 (= HT. I, I, 29); Albrecht Götze, *Kulturgeschichte des Alten Orients*, III, I: *Kleinasien* (Munich, 1933), 127. (per Levy)

<sup>124</sup> Levy, "The Oriental Origin of Herakles," 52.

<sup>125</sup> *FGrHist* 680 F 1, fr. 12 Schnabel.

<sup>126</sup> For discussion in relation to Tiamat and the *Enūma Eliš*, from which the Greek tale stems, see D'Alessio, "Textual Fluctuations and Cosmic Streams," 26.

<sup>127</sup> Egbert Von Weiher, "SpTU 3, 108," *CDLI* P348712 (1988), transliterating a Hellenistic period cuneiform tablet from Uruk.

<sup>128</sup> E.Q. Visconti, *Musée Pie-Clémentin* (Milan, 1821), vi. 100, 102, pl. 13, 2.

<sup>129</sup> Levy, "The Oriental Origin of Herakles," 44.

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solar dimension is seemingly related to the Marduk tradition in which the character represents the “imprisoned sun,” released when Ninurta shoots the bird-god Zu.<sup>130</sup> For that matter, the reverse of the coin features a bird, though of course it could have no relation. Another type, also from Mallos, features the head of the janiform figure on obverse and forepart of Acheloios on the reverse.<sup>131</sup>

In any event, archaeological attempts to find the pyre itself have failed,<sup>132</sup> though they have uncovered some enlightening artifacts: terracotta plaques featuring pyramidal “monuments” with Sandan, similar to the coins. Originally Goldman differentiated the structures appearing on the coins and plaques, but later argued both show the pyre.<sup>133</sup> These plaques have been interpreted as cheap offerings at the shrine (or pyre) of Sandan-Herakles. According to Goldman, all of the plaques show a horned lion, though he acknowledges that none are complete. On the same hill where archaeologists found these plaques, which is presumably the same hill housing the original pyre, archaeologists found terracotta figurines of Hellenic Herakles, with no semblance of Sandan in the iconography and no objects relating to Sandan in the group.<sup>134</sup> This indicates that there was distinct worship of Hellenic Herakles at Tarsos.<sup>135</sup> Since the Bronze Age, a particular god would have many different forms within the same city, which is why distinct forms of Sandan and Herakles could be found here.<sup>136</sup> So the idea that a distinctly Hellenic Herakles might be worshipped in one ritual context right alongside Herakles-Sandan is perfectly normal, for Tarsos, at least. The same must hold true for Acheloios and the theriomorphic creatures appearing on later varieties.

Ultimately, all this evidence suggests that the change in iconography is rather commonplace, since the three figures—Marduk, Sandan, and Herakles—often overlapped in cult, and the same can be assumed for their respective iconographies. But this analysis leaves two unanswered questions. First—Who is the horned lion, or the other mixanthropic creature, depicted below Herakles-Sandan<sup>137</sup> on the other varieties?<sup>138</sup> Should we equate it with Acheloios? That would be a mistake, in my opinion. There is no evidence of Acheloios represented as a horned, winged lion. There is, however, plenty of evidence of earlier figures that influenced the iconography of Sandan from the region, specifically Teshub and his earlier counterpart Adad (both being depicted standing atop bulls or lions, or even a “dragon lion,” but none are androcephalic).<sup>139</sup> Therefore, the horned lion (or similar theriomorphic

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 45, for discussion.

<sup>131</sup> SNG Levante 137.

<sup>132</sup> Hetty Goldman, “The Sandon Monument of Tarsus,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 60, 4 (1940): 544.). Goldman believes the creature below “Sandan” is always a horned lion, comparing it to other representations in earlier oriental art (Goldman, “The Sandon Monument of Tarsus,” 546, 550; citing Heuzey, *Les Origines orientales de l’art*, 239).

<sup>133</sup> Cf. Hetty Goldman, “Excavations at Gözlü Kule, Tarsus, 1936,” *AJA* 41 (1937), 274-276. On later observations Goldman claims the plaques and the coins do show the same structure—a pyre in both cases. See H. Goldman, “Sandon and Herakles,” *Hesperia Supplements* 8, Commemorative Studies in Honor of Theodore Leslie Shear (1949): 164.

<sup>134</sup> Goldman, “The Sandon Monument of Tarsus,” 545; Hetty Goldman, “Excavations at Gözlü Kule, Tarsus, 1938,” *AJA* 44 (1940): 72, Figure 22; Hetty Goldman, “Preliminary Expedition to Cilicia, 1934 and Excavations at Gözlü Kule, Tarsus, 1935,” *AJA* 39 (1935): 529f.

<sup>135</sup> Phoenician Melcarth was also burned in a pyre each year. Goldman, “The Sandon Monument of Tarsus,” 545; Goldman, “Excavations at Gözlü Kule, Tarsus, 1938,” 72.

<sup>136</sup> For early Bronze Age conflations, in which local variations of some gods occurred even in the same city, see Beatrice Teissier, *Egyptian Iconography on Syro-Palestinian Cylinder Seals of the Middle Bronze Age*, Orbis biblicus et orientalis 11 (Fribourg: University Press, 1996), 44. The same is true of the Greek world.

<sup>137</sup> I would not separate the two, despite the aforementioned distinct worship of Hellenic Herakles.

<sup>138</sup> For examples without the pyre, cf. e.g., SNG France 1270-1276, 1295-1306, and 1344-1353.

<sup>139</sup> For the conflation of Sandan and Teshub quite generally, see A.R.W. Green, *The Storm-god in the Ancient Near East* (Eisenbrauns, 2003), 170. For the iconography of Adad, see D. Schwemer, “The storm-gods of the ancient Near East: summary, synthesis, recent studies, part II,” *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 8 (2008): 1-44. For an example of Teshub, see E. Larouche, “Le dieu anatolien Sarruma,” *Syria* 40 (1963): 262f.

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creature) represents the creature often depicted beneath Sandan's other oriental predecessor Teshub, but so far as I can determine, carries no decipherable meaning concerning the Hellenic Herakles' myth. To the Greek observer living in Tarsos, the difference would be noticeable, just as the "native" inhabitant of Tarsos would not confuse the statues of Hellenic Herakles for Sandan.

The other question still remaining is: How do we know the reverse featuring a man-faced bull alludes to the Hellenic myth? I think the answer lies in the original artist's intent. Let's consider one final piece of evidence—the eagle atop the pyre on the coin, a numismatic device seemingly reflecting Sophocles' ominous final lines of the play, *κοῦδὲν τούτων ὅ τι μὴ Ζεὺς* / "and none of these things is not Zeus!"<sup>140</sup> Recall, for instance, that Herakles does not vanquish Acheloios by his own might in the beginning of the play. Quite the contrary—we learn from Deianeira at *Trach.* 26, *τέλος δ' ἔθηκε Ζεὺς ἀγώνιος καλῶς, εἰ δὴ καλῶς* / "But in the end Zeus the god of contests decided well, if it was well."<sup>141</sup> Thus it is Zeus' intervention at the outset that initiates the process of Herakles' apotheosis through the first "profane" act against Acheloios. And Herakles' ultimate consecration through the desecration of Acheloios positions Acheloios as the expiatory sacrifice needed for the apotheosis, which occurs via assimilation. Thus Sophocles ties all the loose ends together with his final line, driving home the notion that Acheloios operates as an agent of Zeus, just like at Dodona—and, indeed, a sacrifice to Acheloios will be made! This explanation ties the coin iconography together, makes sense of the confusing final lines of the play that seemingly emerge from nowhere, and positions Acheloios in his historical role as expiatory sacrifice.<sup>142</sup> Moreover, this final piece of evidence suggests that the die designer was well aware of Sophocles' play, incorporating all the essential elements into a reverse design in which Acheloios and Herakles are sacrificed on the pyre together. And why shouldn't the designer be aware of this myth?<sup>143</sup> For the people of Tarsos celebrated Herakles' apotheosis every year.

In the final analysis, then, I suggest the following scenario: When the Acheloios varieties were struck, probably in the second quarter of the second century B.C.E., the dies were carefully carved with a particular emphasis on the myth's Hellenic version,<sup>144</sup> in which Acheloios is clearly an essential component. It is still Herakles-*Sandan* over Acheloios, judging from the double axe he holds. But the iconography takes on a more native (oriental) flavor, hence the winged, horned lion or other ambiguous creature on later varieties. Dio tells us that Tarsos was particularly well administered in the past, and it wasn't until his time, in the second half of the first century C.E., that public affairs were quite messy and the people of Tarsos divided into the *ἐκκλησιασταί* and the *πολίται*.<sup>145</sup> So I think these first few series (Acheloios and non-Acheloios) exhibit differentiation because of a differentiated populous of occidental and oriental cultures and a minting authority that was sensitive to the competing myths in such a population. And as we know from the Hellenic Herakles figures, it

<sup>140</sup> *Trach.* 1278 (Trans. Hugh Lloyd Jones).

<sup>141</sup> Trans. Hugh Lloyd-Jones.

<sup>142</sup> It was Dr. Rabun Taylor who first pointed out, in a private correspondence, that the iconic image of Acheloios "swimming" was actually him kneeling in assent to being sacrificed. See Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΙΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 13, not 195.

<sup>143</sup> Later dies not featuring Acheloios presumably copied the original motif.

<sup>144</sup> Of course, Greek man-faced bull iconography stems from earlier Near Eastern versions, but by this late date the iconography was thoroughly Greek, especially when accompanying Herakles.

<sup>145</sup> Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 34, 21ff. For discussion, see T. Callander, "The Tarsian Orations of Dio Chrysostom," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 24 (1904), 65f.

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would be perfectly acceptable to highlight one myth over another depending on the circumstances—numismatics being no exception.

### VII. CONCLUSION

This essay serves a few purposes. On the one hand, it should be clear that Acheloios is of the utmost importance in understanding the *Trachiniae*, yet he has gone largely overlooked. He is there at the outset to battle Herakles, and throughout the play we are constantly reminded of his underlying presence and the urgent call for Herakles' redemption. In the pivotal shift of the play, in which Herakles transitions from ritual officiate to sacrificial victim, it is Acheloios, assimilated with Herakles and emerging through Herakles' own sweat, that orchestrates the process of purification through defilement. Thus the *Trachiniae*, in an important sense, is also the story of the vindication of Acheloios, which is inseparable from Herakles' apotheosis; this is an important reason why the two are often paired together in art. Furthermore, this essay provides us with a new account of two particular varieties of bronze coinage from Tarsos by demonstrating how the iconography fits nicely with our reading of the play and the evidence we have about the city. The employment of Acheloios iconography is indeed a reference to Herakles' "rebirth,"<sup>146</sup> but now our understanding of what that entails is much richer: The coins feature Herakles-Sandan on his funeral pyre. Beneath him is Acheloios, who operates as an essential, underlying agent in the story of his apotheosis.

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<sup>146</sup> Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΙΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 289.



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Figure 1: Forepart of Acheloios Gelas as a man-faced bull, Gela, Sicily, c. 490 B.C.E.<sup>147</sup>

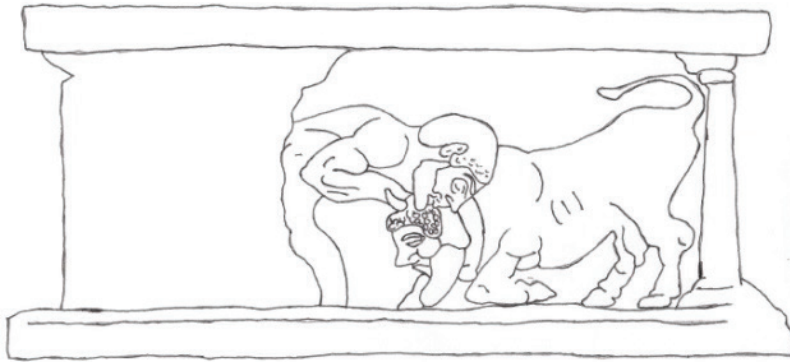


Figure 2: Arula from Locri, mid 6th century B.C.E.<sup>148</sup>



Figure 3: Litra of Panormos featuring Acheloios Orethos acting as a psychopomp.<sup>149</sup>

<sup>147</sup> Private collection. Photo courtesy of CNG.

<sup>148</sup> Line drawing from Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, Figure 70.

<sup>149</sup> Hunter, Plate 24, 6=Jenkins *Punic*, Plate 2, Y.

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Figure 4a: Bronze Unit from Tarsos featuring Herakles over Acheloios<sup>150</sup>



Figure 4b: Enlargement of Acheloios as a Winged Man-Faced Bull



Figure 4c: As last, same dies<sup>151</sup>

<sup>150</sup> CNG Triton VII, lot 329, 14.82g

<sup>151</sup> Savoca Numismatik, Live Online Auction 12, Lot 265, 7.43g.

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Figure 4d: As last, new obverse die.<sup>152</sup>



Figure 4e: As last, new, cruder reverse die.<sup>153</sup>



Figure 4f: As last.<sup>154</sup>

<sup>152</sup> Private collection= LAC Guttus Auction 11, lot 61, 6.00g.

<sup>153</sup> HessDivo, The Lugdunum Sale 13, Lot 1080, 8.00g.

<sup>154</sup> CNG eAuction 203, lot 176, 7.48g

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Figure 4g: As last.<sup>155</sup>Figure 4h: As last.<sup>156</sup>Fig 5a: Herakles and Achelios, Variety Two.<sup>157</sup>

<sup>155</sup> BnF 1966.453, 7.42g

<sup>156</sup> Private collection

<sup>157</sup> Private collection.

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Figure 5b: As last, new obverse and reverse dies (perhaps Acheloios).<sup>158</sup>



Figure 6: Transitional piece, new reverse die (not Acheloios).<sup>159</sup>



Figure 7: Herakles-Sandan over the winged, horned creature (often a lion)<sup>160</sup>

<sup>158</sup> CNG eAuction 384, lot 297, 7.47g

<sup>159</sup> CNG 66, lot 621, 8.65g

<sup>160</sup> CNG eAuction 261, lot 126.

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Figure 8: Herakles-Sandan over a creature with unclear features<sup>161</sup>



Figure 9: Cilicia, Mallos.<sup>162</sup>

<sup>161</sup> CNG eAuction 354, lot 199.

<sup>162</sup> CNG eAuction 299, lot 122.

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# Redating Nepotian's Usurpation and the Coinage of Magnentius

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## Summary

A re-examination of the historical sources, based on an idea put forward in April 2010 by Curtis Clay, supports the possibility that the date of the brief rebellion of Nepotian at Rome should be changed from the traditionally accepted June 350 to May-June 351.<sup>1</sup> Such a change appears to provide for a closer match with many historical sources, better fits the sequence of other historical events, and better explains the distribution and layout of the coinage of Magnentius. Such a change necessitates a redating of most of the phases of Magnentius' coinage, from those outlined by Pierre Bastien in his *magnus opus* *Le monayage de Magnence*, and a revision of several other numismatic assumptions. This article lays out the justification for changing the date of Nepotian's rebellion and provides a revised dating for Magnentius' bronze coinage.

## Historical Introduction

On 18 January 350, Flavius Magnus Magnentius, a Roman army commander in Gaul, declared himself Emperor of the western part of the Empire and had the legitimate western Emperor Constans hunted down and murdered.

While Magnentius exercised immediate control over the Prefecture of Gaul, comprising modern France, Britain and Spain, a power vacuum was left in the rest of Constans' territories. Italy found itself effectively under self-administration for the month or so until Magnentius' forces moved in to take control at the end of February 350. The Balkans, which had also been part of Constans' territory, fell under the control of Constans' *magister peditum* (commander of infantry) Vetranio.

Magnentius displayed no intention of wanting to conquer the entire Empire but instead hoped to gain recognition as the legitimate Emperor of the West from Constans' surviving brother Constantius II, who ruled the East. While Magnentius replaced Constans with himself on the coinage, he continued to also strike coins in the name of Constantius II, at the mints of Arelate, Aquileia and Rome.

Meanwhile, Vetranio, with the help of Constantina, sister of Constantius II, proclaimed himself Emperor in the Balkans in order to resist Magnentius. Magnentius tried to lure Vetranio to his side with offers of cooperation but was not successful. Vetranio remained in control of the Balkans throughout 350, and then turned over all power to Constantius and retired when the latter arrived from the East on 25 December 350.

<sup>1</sup> Curtis Clay posting on 15 April 2010, on the Forum Ancient Coins website: <http://www.forumancientcoins.com/board/index.php?topic=62201.0>. My work has benefitted from frequent correspondence and commentary by Curtis Clay over the last several years. The argument for redating Nepotian's rebellion originates with Clay.

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Faced with the prospect of war on two fronts, Constantius promoted his nephew Constantius Gallus to the rank of Caesar on 15 March 351.<sup>2</sup> Gallus was then sent by Constantius to Antioch to lead the defence against the Persians, while Constantius remained in the Balkans to deal with Magnentius.

By the middle of 351 Magnentius gave up all hope of gaining acceptance from Constantius and moved his army eastwards, taking Siscia (Sisak, Croatia) in August 351. The Battle of Mursa (Osijek, Croatia) on 28 September 351, between the forces of Magnentius and Constantius, was one of the bloodiest civil war battles in Roman history, leaving an estimated 50,000 dead. The battle was effectively a draw, but Magnentius decided to retreat westwards, back to Italy. Constantius followed him westwards and re-took Siscia. Magnentius retreated from Italy over the Alps into Gaul in September 352. Constantius remained in northern Italy for some time until finally crossing into Gaul in July 353 and defeating Magnentius in August.

### Nepotian and His Rebellion

Sometime during this period a short lived rebellion against Magnentius, led by an usurper named Nepotian, occurred at Rome. Relatively little is known about Nepotian. His full name was Flavius Popilius Nepotianus. He was a relative of Constantius II - reportedly the son of Eutropia, who was the daughter of Constantius II's grandfather Constantius I Chlorus. A certain Virius Nepotianus, believed to be Nepotian's father, served as Consul under Constantine I in 336.<sup>3</sup>

The dating almost universally accepted among historians and numismatists today is that Nepotian's rebellion occurred between 3 and 30 June 350. This is the dating found, for example, in AHM Jones' *The Late Roman Empire*, Paul Stephenson's *Constantine, The Cambridge Ancient History* (volume XIII), Stevenson's 1889 *Dictionary of Roman Coins*, Carson, Hill and Kent's *Late Roman Bronze Coinage*, Kent's *The Roman Imperial Coinage* (volume VIII), Carson's *Coins of the Roman Empire*, and Bastien's *Le monayage de Magnence*.

In fact, this traditional dating is based on an entry in the *Consularia Constantinopolitana*.<sup>4</sup> As will be demonstrated, this date makes little sense when other ancient sources and the numismatic evidence are examined and when the other historical events are considered. It is much more likely that the surviving version of the *Consularia Constantinopolitana* contains an error, not an uncommon occurrence in ancient manuscripts, and that this date has simply been accepted by historians and numismatists since.

### What the Ancient Sources Say

Many other ancient sources discuss Nepotian's rebellion. However, none of these other sources give a specific date. Instead they simply describe the events of the time in sequence.

All of these ancient sources agree on two key facts about the rebellion; that it followed Vetrician's taking of the purple on 1 March 350, and that it occurred prior to the battle of Mursa on 28 September 351. The sources also agree that Nepotian had a very short reign and was defeated

<sup>2</sup> R.W. Burgess, ed, *The Chronicle of Hydatius and the Consularia Constantinopolitana: Two Contemporary Accounts of the Final Years of the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 237.

<sup>3</sup> "The Chronography of 354. Part 8: Consular feasts from the fall of the kings to AD 354. MGH Chronica Minora I (1892), pp.50-61.", accessed 18 November 2017, [http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/chronography\\_of\\_354\\_08\\_fasti.htm](http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/chronography_of_354_08_fasti.htm).

<sup>4</sup> Burgess, *The Chronicle of Hydatius and the Consularia Constantinopolitana*, 237.

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by forces commanded by Magnentius' general Marcellinus before the rebellion had spread beyond Rome. Where the ancient sources differ is on whether Nepotian's rebellion occurs before or after Vetranio's retirement on 25 December 350.

Two ancient historians, Zosimus and Socrates Scholasticus, outline events in a sequence that matches the currently accepted chronological order.<sup>5</sup> In Zosimus' *Historia Nova* (II.43.2-4) the description of Vetranio's rise is followed by that of Nepotian's short-lived rebellion, which is followed by the end of Vetranio's power. Socrates' *Historia Ecclesiastica* follows the same order (II.25) but then adds Constantius' appointment of Gallus Caesar (II.28) and the Battle of Mursa (II.32).

In other words, both of these sources describe Nepotian's rebellion between Vetranio's accession on 1 March 350 and his abdication on 25 December 350. However, it should be noted that neither of these sources provide the 3 June date adopted by modern historians for Nepotian's rebellion as found in the *Consularia Constantinopolitana*.

Other ancient historians outline events in an order which differs from that of Zosimus and Socrates. In Aurelius Victor's *Liber de Caesaribus* the entry on Nepotian (42.6) follows that on Vetranio's rise and fall (41.26).<sup>6</sup> Victor then goes on (42.9) to state that Magnentius made Decentius Caesar, and Constantius made Gallus Caesar, *before* Nepotian's rebellion.

The *Epitome de Caesaribus*, sometimes ascribed to Aurelius Victor, but likely not written by him, provides a similar outline.<sup>7</sup> Its entry on Nepotian (42.3) comes after the description of Vetranio's reign, including his abdication to Constantius II (41.25), Constantius naming Gallus Caesar (42.1), and Magnentius naming Decentius Caesar (42.2). However, the *Epitome* does not state explicitly that the events occur in the order described. The entry on Nepotian begins with the words "In these days", as does the entry describing the battle of Mursa (42.4).

Eutropius' *Breviarum ab urbe condita* follows the same general pattern.<sup>8</sup> Vetranio is made Emperor (X.10.3) and then hands over power to Constantius (X.11.1). Nepotian's rebellion is then described with the words, "at the same time" (X.11.2). Magnentius is then defeated at the Battle of Mursa "not long afterwards" (X.12.1).

Orosius' *Historiarum Adversum Paganos Libri* once again follows the same pattern.<sup>9</sup> Vetranio's rise and fall is detailed (VII.29.9-10), followed by Nepotian's rebellion (VII.29.11), followed by Magnentius' loss at Mursa (VII.29.12).

In other words, Aurelius Victor, the *Epitome*, Eutropius and Orosius all describe Nepotian's rebellion after they describe Vetranio's abdication (25 December 350). Though Aurelius Victor is the only one who explicitly states that event occurred in this order, there does not seem to be any reason for the other three sources to describe the events out of chronological order.

<sup>5</sup> "Zosimus. *New History, Translated from the original Greek, with the notes of the Oxford Edition*. London: W. Green & T. Chaplin (1814)." Accessed 18 November 2017. [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/New\\_History](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/New_History), and "Socrates Scholasticus. *The Historia Ecclesiastica*. Translated by A.C. Zenos. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Vol. 2. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1890.) Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight." Accessed 18 November 2017. <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2601.htm>.

<sup>6</sup> "Aurelius Victor. *Liber de caesaribus, alternately titled Historiae abbreviatae*. Ed. Franz Pichlmayr. Teubner 1911." Accessed 18 November 2017. [http://www.forumromanum.org/literature/victor\\_caes.html](http://www.forumromanum.org/literature/victor_caes.html).

<sup>7</sup> "Epitome de Caesaribus. Translated by Thomas M. Banchich. *Canisius College Translated Texts*. 2009, 2nd edition." Accessed 18 November 2017. <https://www.roman-emperors.org/epitome.htm>.

<sup>8</sup> "Eutropius. *Breviarium ab urbe condita*. Translated, with notes, by the Rev. John Selby Watson. London, 1853." Accessed 18 November 2017. <http://www.forumromanum.org/literature/eutropius/>.

<sup>9</sup> "Paulus Orosius. *Historiarum Adversum Paganos Libri VII*. As edited by C. Zangemeister." Accessed 18 November 2017. <http://www.attalus.org/latin/orosius.html>.

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The phrase “in these days” in the Epitome offers no clarity either way. It is used for both Nepotian's rebellion and the later Battle of Mursa (28 September 351). Eutropius' phrase “at the same time” likewise offers little clarity. It follows a sentence which describes Vetrano's complete tenure (March to December 350). He describes the Battle of Mursa (28 September 351) as occurring “not long after” Nepotian's rebellion.

### The Prefects of Rome

An important piece of evidence for untangling this issue is found in the terms of office of the Prefects of Rome during this period. The attested terms are as follows.<sup>10</sup>

Prefect of Rome	Term of Office	Duration
Hermogenes	20 May 349 - 27 February 350	9 months, 7 days
Fabius Titianus	27 February 350 - 1 March 351	12 months, 2 days
Aurelius Celsinus	1 March 351 - 12 May 351	2 months, 11 days
Caelius Probatas	12 May 351 - 7 June 351	26 days
Clodius Adelfius	7 June 351 - 18 December 351	6 months, 11 days
Valerius Proculus	18 December 351 - 9 September 352	8 months, 22 days
Septimius Mnaesa	9 September 352 - 26 September 352	17 days
Naeratius Cerealis	26 September 352 - 8 December 353	14 months, 12 days

Hermogenes was Constans' last prefect and was ousted when Magnentius' forces took control of Rome and installed Fabius Titianus, who had previously worked for Constans but had joined with Magnentius in January 350. Naeratius Cerealis was Constantius' first appointee after Magnentius was ousted from Italy. Thus the prefects from Fabius Titianus to Septimius Mnaesa cover the period of Magnentius' control over Rome and Italy, including the brief rebellion of Nepotian.

An examination of the terms of the Prefects of Rome shows that if the rebellion occurred on the traditionally accepted dates of 3 - 30 June 350, then Fabius Titianus, a prefect loyal to, and appointed by, Magnentius held his position throughout the rebellion and, indeed, for eight months afterwards. This contrasts with the version of events outlined by Aurelius Victor who reports (42.6) that the Prefect of Rome was killed defending the city against Nepotian's rebellion. In order to reconcile these two facts, some scholars have therefore posited a complicated scenario in which Victor was mistaken when he reported that the official who was killed was the Prefect of Rome. These scholars posit that the official who was killed must actually have been the Praetorian Prefect, and that the Prefect of Rome, Titianus, simply left Rome during Nepotian's rebellion only to return after Nepotian's defeat.<sup>11</sup> However, none of these elements are reported in any ancient source. It is much simpler for us to

<sup>10</sup> “*The Chronography of 354. Part 8: Consular feasts from the fall of the kings to AD 354. MGH Chronica Minora I (1892), pp.50-61.*” Accessed 18 November 2017. [http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/chronography\\_of\\_354\\_08\\_fasti.htm](http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/chronography_of_354_08_fasti.htm).

<sup>11</sup> Bastien notes Lenain de Tillemont and Andre Chastagnol as key proponents of this theory. Pierre Bastien, *Le monnayage de Magnence (350-353)*, 2nd ed, (Wetteren: Éditions Numismatique Romaine, 1983), 12.

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accept Victor's assertion at face value. Victor's narrative is internally consistent given that, as noted above, Victor did not assign a date of 350 to Nepotian's rebellion. The problem in accepting Victor's version of events only arises for those who are wedded, despite the evidence to the contrary, to the June 350 dating found in the *Consularia Constantinopolitana*.

If, on the other hand, we examine the dates of the prefects that came after Titianus we see that one of them, Caelius Probatus, held his position for 26 days, from 12 May to 7 June 351. The similarity of Probatus' 26 day term of office to the 28 day reign of Nepotian, the period specifically mentioned in both the *Epitome* and Eutropius, is more than mere coincidence.<sup>12</sup> Dating Nepotian's rebellion to the period of Probatus' term of office places it after the retirement of Vetricianus on 25 December 350, thereby better matching the majority of ancient sources as noted above. Victor's version of events regarding the death of a Prefect can be fleshed out - Probatus' predecessor Aurelius Celsinus was the Prefect of Rome killed while defending the city gates from Nepotian's forces.

Clay posited a scenario whereby Nepotian began his rebellion on 10 May 351 and named the otherwise unknown Caelius Probatus as Prefect of Rome on 12 May, replacing Magnentius' second Prefect Aurelius Celsinus. In this scenario Probatus was replaced with Clodius Adelphus, presumably a Magnentius loyalist, when Nepotian was defeated by the general Marcellinus on 7 June.

### Magnentius' Medallions

Another piece of evidence regarding the dating of Nepotian's rebellion can be found in the titulature of Magnentius' early medallions. Clay has been able to show, from the imperial titles on second century bronze medallions, that virtually all of them were struck November to December of each year, but were dated ahead to 1 January for use as New Year's gifts. He believes that bronze medallions and contorniates were overwhelmingly produced at the same time of the year for the same purpose through the third and fourth centuries as well.<sup>13</sup> This means that Magnentius' early medallions are problematic if we assume the traditional dating of Nepotian's rebellion.

The obverse legend on Magnentius' regular coinage at Rome starts, in late February 350, as IMP CAES MAGNENTIVS AVG but changed with the introduction of his GLORIA ROMANORVM *Mounted emperor riding down captive* type, which the sequence of coinage makes clear was issued before and briefly after Nepotian's rebellion, to D N MAGNENTIVS P F AVG. The obverse legend of Magnentius' first medallions, however, is IMP CAES MAGNENTIVS AVG, matching that of the early coinage. So those medallions must have been struck some time before the rebellion of Nepotian as the legend had already changed to D N MAGNENTIVS P F AVG prior to the rebellion.

Using the traditional chronology, these medallions would have to have been struck during the late-February to early-June 350 timeframe, meaning that they broke the centuries-long pattern of medallion issuance. Using the new chronology, Nepotian didn't rebel until late May 351, so Magnentius' medallions with the IMP CAES MAGNENTIVS AVG obverse legend could easily have been struck in late 350 for a planned issuance in January 351 and thus matched the regular pattern of medallion issuance.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Curtis Clay posting on 15 April 2010, on the Forum Ancient Coins.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Curtis Clay, Email to the author, December 20, 2017.

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**Decentius and The Sequence of Coinage at Rome**

Yet another piece of evidence regarding the dating of Nepotian's rebellion can be found in Magnentius' elevation of his brother Decentius as Caesar. In order to understand this evidence it is necessary to review the sequence of the coinage immediately before and after Nepotian's rebellion.

Upon taking control of Rome, Magnentius struck two types, VICTORIA AVG LIB ROMANOR for himself and the FEL TEMP REPARATIO *Falling horseman* for Constantius. Then, sometime prior to Nepotian's rebellion, these were replaced by a new Magnentian type that was struck across his territory - GLORIA ROMANORVM *Mounted emperor riding down captive*.

Nepotian continued at first to strike Magnentius' GLORIA ROMANORVM type for himself and Constantius immediately after he seized power in Rome. This type is extremely rare for Nepotian and was likely struck for only a few days. Nepotian then introduced a new VRBS ROMA type for himself and Constantius. The type uses the traditional image of the Goddess Roma seated on a cuirass and was likely meant to display Nepotian's loyalty to the line of Constantine and to Constantius as the legitimate Emperor, and to rally support of the Roman citizens against the Gallic invader.

Nepotian's VRBS ROMA type was struck in two series. The first used the obverse legend FL POP NEPOTIANVS PF AVG and showed Nepotian with bare head. The second issue used the obverse legend FL NEP CONSTANTINVS AVG and showed Nepotian with a rosette diadem. This latter legend was clearly intended to emphasize Nepotian's familial links to Constantine.

Upon defeating Nepotian, Magnentius struck a brief continuation of Nepotian's VRBS ROMA type. These coins are very rare today and must constitute a very short-lived issue. While this type was not reported for Decentius in LRBC or RIC-VIII, a hitherto unknown example for Decentius was published in *Cahiers Numismatiques* by Daniel Gricourt.<sup>15</sup> This important coin gives us a *terminus ante quem* for Decentius' nomination as Caesar of the weeks after the end of Nepotian's rebellion, and raises the possibility that Magnentius made Decentius Caesar somewhat earlier. As noted above, Aurelius Victor stated (42.9) that Magnentius made Decentius Caesar before Nepotian's rebellion. The existence, therefore, of this coin makes it impossible to maintain that there was a nine-month gap between the end of Nepotian's coinage and the elevation of, and beginning of the coinage for, Decentius as argued by those who date Nepotian's rebellion to June 350 and Decentius elevation "in response to Constantius' proclamation of Gallus, 15 March 351".<sup>16</sup>

Magnentius quickly replaced Nepotian's VRBS ROMA type with a new type that maintained the same design but changed the legend to RENOBATIO VRBIS ROMAE. This type is also very rare and was likely not struck for very long. In RIC-VIII, Kent placed this type alongside the VICTORIA AVG LIB ROMANOR type and therefore well before Nepotian's revolt.<sup>17</sup> However, the type clearly fits much better as a continuation of Nepotian's VRBS ROMA type than as a part of a broken sequence of use, replacement by another design, and then re-use. In addition, the legend itself indicates a renewal of Rome, and well fits the re-assertion of control by Magnentius. It makes little sense to place the RENOBATIO VRBIS ROMAE type anywhere else.

<sup>15</sup> Daniel Gricourt, "Une maiorina inédite et exceptionnelle ou nom de Décence (Rome, année 350)." *Cahiers Numismatiques*, no. 85 (1985): 72.

<sup>16</sup> J.P.C. Kent, *The Roman Imperial Coinage, volume VIII, The Family of Constantine I, 337-364* (London: Spink, 1981), 11.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, 13.

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Coin type sequence in Kent's Roman Imperial Coinage VIII.



Coin type sequence with RENOBATIO VRBIS ROMAE in proposed new position.

The sequence of coinage at Rome as just outlined raises a problem concerning Decentius' first consulship. Decentius assumed the consulship in the West on 1 January 352.<sup>18</sup> The long established tradition was for newly appointed Caesars of mature age to be appointed to the consulship beginning the January after they were appointed Caesar. The dating of Decentius first consulship in 352 therefore implies that he was named Caesar sometime in 351 and not earlier.

As we have seen above, Decentius was named Caesar, at the latest, immediately after Nepotian's rebellion. The modified dating for Nepotian's rebellion (May to June 351) therefore offers a much better explanation for why Decentius was consul in 352 and not 351, than the traditional dating (June 350) does.

This revised dating also better matches the wording of Aurelius Victor and the *Epitome de caesaribus* which both report that Decentius became Caesar at around the same time that Constantius Gallus became Caesar. We have the date 15 March 351 for Gallus' accession. The new dating therefore has Decentius named Caesar a couple of months after Constantius Gallus, rather than as many as nine months before.

Finally, it should also be noted that no historical text details any activities by Decentius prior to him becoming Consul in January 352.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Bastien, *Le monnayage de Magnence*, 12, (especially footnote 114).

<sup>19</sup> Bastien, *Le monnayage de Magnence*, 21.



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### Summary of Evidence

The re-examination of the historical sources and the terms of the Prefects of Rome, combined with evidence from Magnentius' medallions, and Decentius' coinage and consulship, leads to a high probability that we can date Nepotian's rebellion to 351 and not 350. Such a conclusion forces us to re-examine and re-date not only Nepotian's rare coinage but much of the Magnentian coinage.

### Bastien's Scheme for Magnentian Coinage

Before proposing changes to the currently accepted dating of Magnentius' coinage it is important to summarize this dating schema and how it is derived. To account for the distribution and structure of Magnentius' bronze coinage Bastien divided Magnentius' short rule into seven phases as follows.

Phase One: When Magnentius seized power he continued to strike two types of *Constans* and *Constantius II* (FEL TEMP REPARATIO *Galley* at Treveri and FEL TEMP REPARATIO *Falling horseman* at Arelate) and added a very rare third type based on these two types (the new FEL TEMP REPARATIO *Emperor with labarum* at Lugdunum). As these types were not struck at mints in Italy, with the exception of a *Falling horseman* issued later at Rome, Bastien dated this phase from Magnentius' usurpation on 18 January 350 to when he gained control of Italy on 27 February 350.<sup>20</sup>



Phase Two: Magnentius introduced new types, one at his Gallic mints (FELICITAS REIPUBLICAE at Treveri, Lugdunum and Arelate) and several others in Italy (GLORIA ROMANORVM *Emperor with labarum and two captives* at Aquileia and VICTORIA AVG LIB ROMANOR at Rome). Magnentius also struck a rare GLORIA ROMANORVM *Emperor dragging captive* at Aquileia and a rare FEL TEMP REPARATIO *Falling horseman* for Constantius at Rome. Bastien dated this phase from Magnentius' invasion of Italy on 27 February 350 to early May 350. His dating of the end of this phase was not based on any specific historical event, but instead on the fact that it had to end long enough before Nepotian's rebellion, which Bastien dated to June 350, in order to allow for Magnentius' first issue of the GLORIA ROMANORVM *Mounted Emperor riding down captive* type which clearly pre-dated the rebellion.

<sup>20</sup> Known from the date he installed his own Urban Prefect, Fabius Titianus, at Rome.

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Phase Three: Magnentius introduced a new type for use across his territory (*GLORIA ROMANORVM Mounted Emperor riding down captive*). Very rare types were also struck at Rome (*RENOBATIO VRBIS ROMAE*), Aquileia (*BEATITVDO PVBLICA* and *VIRTVS EXERCITVS*) and Siscia (*VICTORIA AVG ET CAESS*). This phase also includes the coinage of Nepotian and the subsequent modifications to Nepotian's type made by Magnentius, as described above. Bastien dated this phase from early May to August 350. This dating was also based on numismatic evidence and not on any fixed historical date. It was based on the fact that the *GLORIA ROMANORVM Mounted Emperor riding down captive* type was struck both prior to, and immediately after, Nepotian's rebellion, which Bastien dated to June 350.

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Phases Four, Five and Six: Magnentius introduced a new universal type *VICTORIAE DD NN AVG ET CAES Two Victories with Wreath*, which is found in three variations: wreath on *cippus*, wreath without *cippus*, and wreath with a *chi-rho* on top. Bastien established separate phases for each variation: phase four from August to the end of 350, phase five from January 351 to August 352, and phase six from September to the end of 352. Bastien's dating for these three phases was based on numismatic evidence - the ratio amongst the known examples of the three variants of this coin type.



Phase Seven: Magnentius instituted a coinage reform introducing a new large denomination (*SALVS DD NN AVG ET CAES Large chi-rho*). A variation of this, with the legend *SALVS AVG NOSTRI*, was struck briefly in the name of Constantius at Treveri. Bastien dated this phase from January 353 to Magnentius' defeat in August 353. It is unclear exactly why he dated the beginning of this phase to January 353. As the type was only struck in Gaul it must date from after Magnentius retreated from Italy in September 352. January may have seemed like a likely date for a new denomination and type. Though not a medallion, an introduction date of early January would be apt for a new

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denomination whose size rivals that of some medallions. This type was struck in several decreasing weight standards.



As can be seen, most of the dates of Bastien's phases are linked to numismatic indicators and not historical events. Thus the redating of Nepotian's rebellion, and the changes to Magnentius' coinage that this necessitates, results in significant redating of Bastien's phases.

#### Redating Bastien's Phases

The new dating for Nepotian's rebellion affects most of Bastien's phases, not just the third phase into which the rebellion and Nepotian's own coinage actually falls.

Phase 1: The dates of Bastien's phase 1 do not require any adjustment. The phase ends just prior to Magnentius' seizure of Aquileia and Rome.

Phase 2: While the start date of Bastien's phase 2 does not require a change, the end date must be extended. Bastien based the end of phase 2 on the need to allow some time during phase 3 for the GLORIA ROMANORVM coins to be struck for Magnentius alone prior to Nepotian's usurpation. The end date of phase 2 is therefore really the start date of phase 3.

Phase 3: The start and end dates of Bastien's phase 3 must move to accommodate the new dating of Nepotian's usurpation, which occurs during this phase. Bastien dated the start of phase 3 approximately one month prior to his date for Nepotian's usurpation (3 June 350) in order to allow some time for Magnentius' first GLORIA ROMANORVM issue. Magnentius struck the GLORIA ROMANORVM for Constantius II using Rome's first to third officinae, and for himself using Rome's fourth to sixth officinae. Nepotian then took over Magnentius' GLORIA ROMANORVM type for a brief issue. He continued to strike it for Constantius II at Rome's first to third officinae, but struck it for himself at the fourth to sixth officinae.

Similarly, Bastien dated the end of phase 3 to a couple of months after his date for the end of Nepotian's usurpation (30 June 350) in order to allow for Magnentius' three post-Nepotian issues at Rome - the very brief continuation of Nepotian's VRBS ROMA type, a brief issue of the very similar

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RENOBATIO VRBIS ROMAE type, and a final issue of the GLORIA ROMANORVM type, which was still being struck at all of Magnentius' other mints.

We therefore have to adjust the dates of phase 3 based on the revised dates for Nepotian's rebellion, 10 May to 7 June 351. Based on the timing and rarity of Magnentius' three post-Nepotian issues at Rome it makes sense to maintain a similar period of time in phase 3 after Nepotian's fall. Bastien allowed approximately two months from 30 June to August 350. A similar period of time would take us from the new date of 7 June 351 into early August 351.

To determine the start of phase 3 we need to examine the duration of phases 2 and 3. In Bastien's system phases 2 and 3 accounted for approximately 6 months (27 February to August 350). With our redating they last approximately 18 months (27 February 350 to August 351). If we examine the quantity of coinage from these two periods we see that they appear to be roughly equal. Though not equivalent to a full survey of all known coinage, Bastien's extensive survey yielded the following figures for phase 2 versus phase 3 at Magnentius' active mints:<sup>21</sup>

Mint	Phase 2	Phase 3
Treveri	78	89
Lugdunum	57	59
Arelate	37	40
Rome	149	104 +
Aquileia	49	51
Total	370	343

Thus we see that the number of coins appears to be fairly equal, though slightly more come from phase 2. If we apply this to the new 18 month duration of phases 2 and 3 we would have two nine month periods. If we applied this exactly, we would have a break between phases 2 and 3 at the end of November 350. However, given that there is no known historical event of any importance around this time, and that it is an odd time to apply a major change to coinage types, it would make more sense to date the change to the beginning of the new year. This corresponds well with Bastien's figures which give slightly more for phase 2 than phase 3. Thus I have chosen to make phase 2 last just over 10 months from 27 February 350 to the end of 350, and phase 3 last approximately 8 months from the beginning of 351 to August 351. This dating also has the advantage of placing the change of phases, and thus coin types, to just after Vetrician's abdication on 25 December 350 - the only known historical event of any import around this time.

This redating of Bastien's phase 3 from May 350 to January 351 also matches the evidence regarding the titulature of Magnentius' medallions and coinage. The introduction of the GLORIA ROMANORVM *Mounted emperor riding down captive* type, with its D N MAGNENTIUS P F AVG obverse legend, must date to after the issuance of Magnentius' medallions with earlier-style the IMP CAE MAGNENTIUS AVG obverse legend. As noted above, these medallions were apparently

<sup>21</sup> For Rome, Bastien lists 94 examples under Magnentius, plus 10 for Nepotian. However, he notes that his listing of coins for Nepotian is not complete. Bastien, *Le monnayage de Magnence*, 207 - 209.

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produced in late 350 for distribution as New Year's gifts on 1 January 351. Magnentius' phase 3 can therefore no longer be dated to mid-350.<sup>22</sup> The obverse legend therefore changed to D N MAGNENTIVS P F AVG at the beginning of 351, shortly after the medallions, the last issue to use IMP CAE MAGNENTIVS AVG, were struck.

Given these new dates, Magnentius' VRBS ROMA type should now be dated to mid-late June 351, not July 350 as in Bastien. This was Nepotian's main type and was struck briefly for Magnentius, and, we now know, for Decentius, immediately after Nepotian's defeat.

Magnentius' RENOBATIO VRBIS ROMAE type should be dated to late June or early July 351, not mid-late July 350 as in Bastien. This brief type used the same design as the VRBS ROMA type, which it immediately followed, but changed the legend.

Magnentius' GLORIA ROMANORVM *Mounted emperor riding down captive* type was still being struck in August 351, and did not end in August 350 as per Bastien. In addition to the reasons outlined above, the type was struck at Rome for both Magnentius and Decentius, and thus had to have been struck after the VRBS ROMA and RENOBATIO VRBIS ROMAE types.

The redating of phase 3 also necessitates a redating of the opening of Magnentius' mint at Ambianum (Amiens, France). Bastien, using the Croydon Hoard, dated the opening of Ambianum to May 350, at the start of the new GLORIA ROMANORVM *Mounted emperor riding down captive* type.<sup>23</sup> We should therefore re-date the opening of the mint of Ambianum to January 351, our new date for the start of the GLORIA ROMANORVM type.

Phase 4 to 6: The dates of Bastien's phase 4 must also shift. Based on the new date for the end of phase 3, our phase 4 now begins August 351. However, its end date, both dates of phase 5, and the start date of phase 6 require an examination of the distribution ratio of the entire *Two Victories* coinage.

In Bastien's schema, these three phases totalled 28-29 months, from August 350 to the end of 352. With our new dating, these three phases have to fit into a shorter period, roughly 16-17 months, from August 351 to the end of 352. Once again we need to examine the quantity of coinage from these three periods. We find that Bastien's figures for the active mints yield:

Mint	Phase 4	Phase 5	Phase 6
Treveri	48	66	62
Ambianum	18	39	47
Lugdunum	42	142	29
Arelate	15	91	16
Total	123	338	154

Thus we can see that phase 4 accounts for 20% of the coinage, phase 5 for 55%, and phase 6 for 25%. If we apply this to the 16 - 17 months duration of the three phases we would have roughly 3 months for phase 4, 9 months for phase 5, and 4 months for phase 6. We also need to consider the fact that

<sup>22</sup> Curtis Clay, Email to the author, March 6, 2018.

<sup>23</sup> Bastien, *Le monnayage de Magnence*, 34.

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examples of the phase 6 *wreath with Chi-rho* sub-type are known from Aquileia and Rome, though they are rare. This means that phase 6 must start before late September 352 when Magnentius lost both of these mints to Constantius' forces. We should therefore push the end of phase 5 back a month to August 352. This remains consistent with the coin distribution figures given above. If we apply this to the dates of the three phases - August 351 to the end of 352 - we get:

Phase 4: VICTORIAE DD AVG ET CAES (wreath on *cippus*). September 351 to the end of 351.

Phase 5: VICTORIAE DD AVG ET CAES (wreath without *cippus*). The beginning of 352 to August 352.

Phase 6: VICTORIAE DD AVG ET CAES (wreath with a *chi-rho* on top). September 352 to the end of 352.

Bastien dated the VICT DD NN AVG ET CAES legend variant of the *Two Victories* type, struck at Lugdunum, to the last three months of phase 5, June - August 352. As our phase 5 is now substantially shorter, but still ends in August 352, we can probably redate this type to July - August 352.

Phase 7: The dating of Bastien's phase 7 does not require any adjustment. The phase begins after the loss of the Italian mints and is not affected by the change in the dating of Nepotian's usurpation.

### A New Schema for Magnentius' Bronze Coinage

Based on the discussion above we get the following schema:

Phase	Bastien's Phases	Duration	Adjusted Phases	Duration
1	18 January to 27 February 350	5 weeks	18 January to 27 February 350	5 weeks
2	27 February to Early May 350	2 - 2 1/2 months	27 February to End 350	10 months
3	Early May to August 350	3 - 4 months	January to August 351	8 months
4	August to End 350	4 - 4 1/2 months	September to End 351	4 months
5	January 351 to August 352	20 months	January to August 352	8 months
6	September to End 352	4 months	September to End 352	4 months
7	January to August 353	8 months	January to August 353	8 months

Note: As my dating of phases 2 and 3, and of phases 4 to 6, is based in large part on Bastien's survey of coins, it would have to be adjusted if any new information alters significantly the known ratios for the distribution of coinage during these phases.

### Magnentius' Recognition of Constantius

The redating of Nepotian's usurpation also requires us to redate the coinage Magnentius struck in Constantius' name, which Bastien believed ended during his phase 3 (May to August 350).

Bastien lists FEL TEMP REPARATIO *Falling horseman* type coins struck by Magnentius for Constantius during phase 3 at Arelate and Aquileia. For Rome, Bastien lists Magnentius as striking the GLORIA ROMANORVM *Mounted emperor riding down captive* type for Constantius with mint mark \*/RP. Bastien believed that these coins for Constantius were not only struck prior to Nepotian's usurpation, but also afterwards when Magnentius again struck the GLORIA ROMANORVM type for himself.

My redating shifts the dating of phase 3 from May to August 350, to January to August 351. Genuine military hostilities between Magnentius and Constantius began in July 351, after Magnentius moved into the Balkans. As it is very unlikely that Magnentius would have struck coinage for Constantius beyond this date, we should date the end of his coinage for Constantius at Arelate, Rome and Aquileia to July 351, slightly before the end of phase 3. This means that it is unlikely that any of the GLORIA ROMANORVM coins for Constantius were struck after Nepotian's rebellion.

This change substantially extends the amount of time that Magnentius recognized Constantius on his coinage. Instead of ending by August 350, as Bastien thought, it means that Magnentius recognized him until well after Vetrician's abdication, and indeed right up to the eve of direct military hostilities between the two sides in July 351.

### Coinage reform - weight reduction

The redating of Magnentius' coinage phases provides insight into the timing of Magnentius' coin weight reduction. Under Bastien's original schema all three sub-types of the *Two Victories* type, which show a declining weight, were believed to have been issued well before Constantius' weight reduction in September 352. The weight reduction was, therefore, thought to have been Magnentius' policy, which was followed, around a year later, by Constantius. However, with the redated coinage it is clear that the weight reductions in the two parts of the Empire occurred much closer together. Magnentius' large denomination coins began to slide in January 352, at the start of the second *Two Victories* (without *cippus*) type, and reached the 1/72 of a Roman pound standard in September 352, at the start of the third *Two Victories* (with *chi-rho*) type. Constantius' large denomination coins began to slide in January 351, with the introduction of his third series (marked Γ or III), and reached the 1/72 of a Roman pound standard in mid-late September 352, with the introduction of the fourth series (marked LXXII or Δ).<sup>24</sup>

Therefore the relationship between the two weight reductions is very different from what Bastien believed. Constantius' coins began to decrease in weight well before Magnentius'. For most of 351 Magnentius' coins were slightly heavier than Constantius'. Then, beginning in 352,

<sup>24</sup> Details on the weight reductions of the coinage of this period come from a study of many sources. I have relied mainly on Georges Depyrot, "Le système monétaire de Dioclétien à la fin de l'empire romain," *Revue Belge de Numismatique et de Sigillographie*, CXXXVIII (1992): 66; and Pierre Bastien, *Le monnayage de l'atelier de Lyon: de la mort de Constantin à la mort de Julien (337-363)*, (Wettern: Éditions Numismatique Romaine, 1985), 92 - 96; but also on Lawrence H. Cope, *The Metallurgical Development of the Roman Imperial Coinage during the first Five Centuries A.D.*, (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Department of Chemistry, Liverpool Polytechnic, 1974), 231; Miloje R. Vasić, "Le trésor de Boljetin (IVe siècle)", *Sirmium VIII: École Française de Rome*, (1978), 140; and Carson, *Late Roman Bronze Coinage* 1990, 241.



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Magnentius' coins also started to decrease in weight. The new official 1/72 of a Roman pound weight standard appears to have been introduced at around the same time by both Constantius and Magnentius. The introduction of this new weight standard was therefore not a case of Constantius following Magnentius' lead, but of both Emperors acting around the same time.

### Conclusion

As noted above, the revised dating of Nepotian's rebellion from June 350 to May - June 351 better reflects the majority of ancient sources, the known tenures of the Prefects of Rome, the evidence of Magnentius' medallions and coinage, and the dating of Decentius' consulship. It also provides for a more logical sequence of the historical events of this period.

The traditional June 350 dating for Nepotian's rebellion provides little explanation for, or context to, his rebellion. The rebellion simply arises five months after Magnentius' usurpation but well before any other historical event of importance. The modified dating of May – June 351, on the other hand, places Nepotian's rebellion into a much more logical and understandable sequence of events. The rebellion occurs after Constantius II's arrival in the Balkans and replacement of Vetricius. Constantius' appointment of Gallus as Caesar late that winter (15 March 351), and subsequent sending of Gallus to take command of the forces in the East, indicated that the initiative might be moving to his side. It would have been clear to many observers that Constantius intended to soon move westward to confront Magnentius. A rebellion, "behind the lines" in Rome, makes much more sense in such a context. Unlike June 350, the belief that a rebellion might succeed and last long enough to welcome the arrival of Constantius' forces was not unrealistic in the summer of 351.

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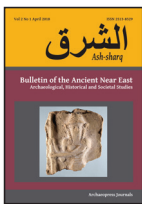
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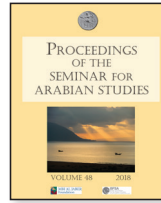
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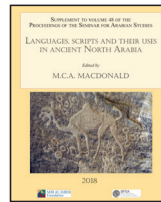
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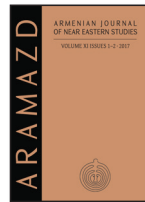
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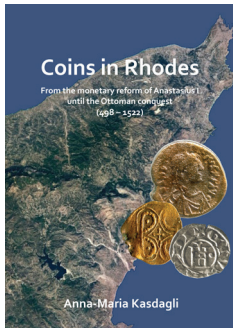
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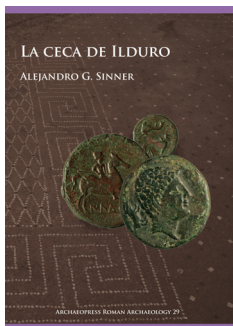
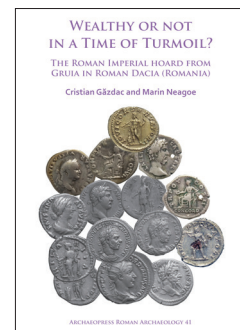
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**Wealthy or Not in a Time of Turmoil? The Roman Imperial Hoard from Gruia in Roman Dacia (Romania)** by Cristian Gazdac and Marin Neagoe. Archaeopress Roman Archaeology 41, 2018. ISBN 9781784918477. £30.00. (eBook ISBN 9781784918484, from £16 +VAT if applicable)

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**La ceca de Ilduro** by Alejandro G. Sinner. Archaeopress Roman Archaeology 29, 2017. ISBN 9781784917234. £38.00. (eBook ISBN 9781784917241, from £16 +VAT if applicable)

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This book is exclusively devoted to the mint of Ilduro, its main goal being to study not only the issues produced by the workshop in detail, but also the role that this coinage had in the monetization of a changing society, that of the Laietani, which had never previously needed to use coinage.

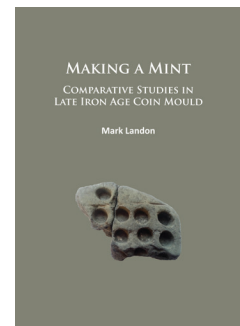
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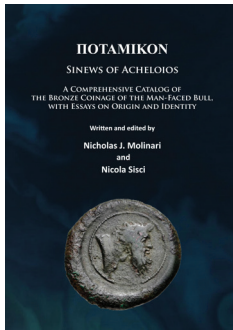
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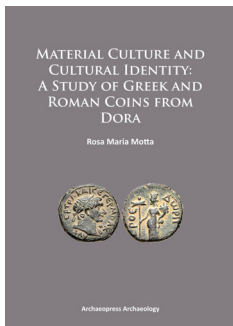
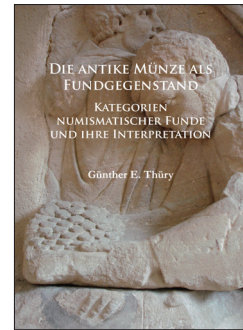
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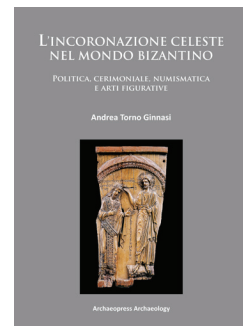
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**L'incoronazione celeste nel mondo Bizantino** *Politica, cerimoniale, numismatica e arti figurative* by Andrea Torno Ginnasi. 2014. ISBN 9781905739974. £40.00. (eBook ISBN 9781905739981, from £16.00 + VAT if applicable)

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