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Nergal and the Amazon: A tale of three cities

W. Müsseler

In an article published in the German journal JNG in 2015 the author has examined the different coinages of the local dynasts of Tarsos with the name or the title *Syennesis* from the late 5th to the beginning of the 4th century BC¹. In this context all the early civic issues from Tarsos were taken into account but treated only somewhat summarily. The recent appearance in trade of several completely new types connected to the coinage of Tarsos as well as to that of Soloi renders a reappraisal of all the related series necessary.

One of the new coin-types is represented by three different specimens from the same pair of dies so far. On two of the coins the dies appear a little bit more worn than on the remaining one. The first coin appeared in the summer-sale 2016 of CNG² (*Figure 1*), to be followed fairly soon by the second specimen in an electronic-sale of the same house³ and by a third in a sale of Roma Numismatics in the fall of 2017⁴ (*Figure 2*). The coins are silver staters of the so-called Persian standard used in Cilicia with a weight of 10,76 g, 10,51 g and of 10,70 g respectively. On the obverse there is a human figure turned to the right in the kneeling-running position inspired by Achaemenid regal coinage and adapted on different civic issues from Southern Asia Minor of the late 5th and the early 4th century BC⁵. The figure, which appears to be male, is naked except for a girdled loin-cloth. It wears a skull-cap or crestless helmet with cheek and neck protection. On its left side it carries a huge *gorytos* attached to the girdle and a long unidentified object on the shoulder. The apparently quite heavy object, which may be a club or an axe, is held in place by the left hand. The right hand is extended behind the back of the figure and is holding a bow. In the right field in front of the figure there are traces of an unidentifiable rectangular or oval symbol; another unidentifiable object is placed in the left field near the lower end of the bow. No traces of any inscription are visible. The reverse shows a lion jumping to the right attacking a bull turned to the left and breaking down to its knees, a motif known from coins of Tarsos and of other places in Southern Asia Minor belonging to the 5th century BC⁶. The whole scene is lined with a pearled rim and placed in an incuse square with already somewhat deteriorating borders. There is no ethnic or toponym visible, but in the right field above the animal-scene there is an Aramaic inscription consisting of the letters *nun*, *resh*, *gimel* and *lameth*. Read from right to left it spells the name of the god *Nergal*, whose cult had its roots in Babylonia (*Figure A–B*)⁷. From Mesopotamia it had spread to the West, where it eventually merged with local religious traditions. In Syria and the Levant the Babylonian war-god was first identified with the Phoenician Reshef-Melqart and later on also with the Greek Herakles⁸.

The name of *Nergal* is repeatedly mentioned together with a rather broad range of various humanoid figures intended to represent the syncretistic deity on early coins from Tarsos. Several of these representations have already been treated by Leo Mildenberg in an essay dedicated to Hansjörg Bloesch⁹. Presumably the earliest appearance of the god on a Cilician coin is on a stater of the so called

1 MÜSELER 2015, pp. 9–30.

2 CNG 103, 2016, 344 (10,76 g).

3 CNG E-sale 386, 2016, 313 (10,51 g).

4 Roma XIII, 2017, 371 (10,70 g).

5 BABELON, *Traité* II/2, 120–128; SNG BN 123–137; 372–383; 398–401; SNG Ashmolean 1728–1731.

6 Cilicia (Tarsos): SNG BN 199–203; SNG Ashmolean 1826–1829. Lycia (Kuprilli): SNG Ashmolean 1174; MÜSELER 2016, IV, pp. 64–66.

7 A: PORADA – BASMACHI 1951, pp. 66–68: Cylinder seal 42×27 mm, black steatite, Iraq Museum Baghdad, IM 15 218; B: COLLON 1986, 404: Cylinder seal 30×15 mm, magnetite hematite, British Museum London 103 314.

8 See for example SEYRIG 1944, pp. 62–80 and Conrad 1971, pp. 157–164.

9 MILDENBERG 1973, pp. 78–80.

W. Müseler: Nergal and the Amazon: A tale of three cities, SM 69, 2019, S. 63–78.

- 10 A genuine Lycian origin of the Bellerophon myth as supposed by some earlier scholars is, however, to be doubted: See KOLB 2018, p. 56 sqq.
- 11 Staters; SNG Ashmolean 1834 (9,01 g); Roma XII, 2016, 344 (10,78 g); Roma XVI, 2018, 331 (10,71 g)* Tetrobols: BM 1922, 0302.1 (3,43 g), published by G.F. HILL in NC 1923, p. 234, 42; Baldwin 37, 2004, 725 (2,93 g).
- 12 KONUK 1997, p. 171 sqq.
- 13 NAC 25, 2003, 201 (10,35 g)*; Triton XXI, 2018, 513 (10,55 g); Roma XV, 2018, 513 (10,70 g).
- 14 C. HURTER 1979, p. 100, 6 = PN 324, 1989, 213 = SNG Cop. Suppl. 460 (8,42 g). The exact dating of this coin is still a matter of discussion: While the author has favoured the period after the return of Tissaphernes into the Lydian satrapy and the function of a *karanos* in Western Anatolia after 400 BC, others have preferred his previous term of office between 413 and 408 BC. In any case, the Inscribed Pillar of Xanthos renders a date for the respective issue before 410 BC rather improbable (see MÜSELER – SCHÜRR 2018).
- 15 KRAAY 1976, p. 280 sq; KRAAY 1984 p. 7 sq., subsequently rejected by CASABONNE 1997, pp. 40–44 but defended by MÜSELER 2015, p. 18 with reference to ELAYI – ELAYI 2009, p. 205 sqq and p. 338 sqq.
- 16 For example: SNG BN 226–231. It is by no means ascertained that rule and coinage of the *Syenneseis* has ended as an immediate result of the failed campaign of the younger Cyrus or before the establishment of the Persian naval command at Tarsos under Pharnabazos in ca. 394 BC: See MÜSELER 2018 a, p. 60 sq.
- 17 Roma XVI, 2018, 330* (10,66 g); CNG E-sale 430, 2018, 177 (10,80 g).

“Bellerophon Group”, whose principal type refers to a myth associated with the early history of Lycia in the Greek tradition¹⁰. There are two differing series belonging to this category: One is consisting of staters and tetrobols, which bear no legend. They display on the obverse an image of the legendary hero Bellerophon riding the winged horse Pegasus in flight to the right while brandishing a short spear; on the reverse the same scene is repeated but turned to the other side and placed in an incuse square lined with a pearled rim (*Figure 3*)¹¹. On both sides there is a small trident in the field together with a prominent key-symbol below the winged horse, allegedly an emblem of Achaemenid rule¹². Of the other series only staters are known so far. On the obverse those show the riding hero to the left side holding a long lance and spearing with it the monster Chimaera crouching below. On the reverse there is a figure clad in a long *himation* and wearing the *kyrbasia*, the typical headdress of a Persian official with protruding visor and a long neckpiece advancing to the left. A long bow is hanging from its left shoulder and it is holding a double-axe in its left hand, while the open right hand is extended from the body. In the field in front of the figure there is a huge ear of barley and above the Aramaic legend *tav-resch-zajin* (TaRZ) for Tarsos. In the field behind its back there is a small foliate tree and above the legend *nun-resch-gimel-lameth*, the name of the god (NeRGaL). The whole scene is once again lined with a pearled rim and set in an incuse square (*Figure 4*)¹³.

Other representations of *Nergal* can be found on coins belonging to the so-called “Tissaphernes-Group”. This name was chosen by the author for a class of Tarsian coins showing on their obverses a rider in Persian garb with a lotus flower in the hand on a slowly parading horse in flamboyant tack, based on the similarity of those issues with the famous “Tissaphernes-stater” from Xanthos in Lycia (*Figure C*)¹⁴. The original purpose for the creation of this subdivision was to distinguish these coins with their reverse-types derived from an Iranian or Mesopotamian canon clearly from the issues with the rider on a galloping horse with their rather Hellenised iconography, which was labelled “*Syennesis-Group*” by the author. While the antagonism between Oriental and Greek elements on the coins of those two groups remains a highly significant feature, the alleged sequence of the issues and the dating of the “Tissaphernes-Group” to the time after the anabasis of the younger Cyrus, thus dividing it from the rest of the early Tarsian coinage, can no longer be maintained. In fact, new material has provided so many typological links between the issues of the “Tissaphernes-Group” and other early series from Tarsos that all the respective coinages have to be considered as more or less contemporaneous. What has to be kept up, however, is the late dating of the major part of the early coinage of Tarsos to the last two decades of the 5th century BC in accordance with the approach of Colin Kraay, since the close relationship with Phoenician issues of the same period can hardly be dismissed¹⁵. Some issues of the “*Syennesis-Group*” even seem to be a little younger and should therefore be assigned to the early nineties of the 4th century BC¹⁶.

The rearrangement of the various series is mainly required due to the discovery of a new type belonging to the “Tissaphernes-Group”¹⁷. On the obverse there is

the rider in Persian garb wearing the *kyrbasia* and holding a lotus flower on a horse walking to the left with the key-symbol below. On the reverse a bearded figure, clad in wide trousers and a short jacket and wearing a *kidaris* on its head, is depicted; it is advancing to the left and carries a long spear in its left hand and a bow in an ornate *gorytos*, decorated with long dangling garlands, slung over the left shoulder while the right hand holds a lotus flower¹⁸. The whole scene is again lined by a rectangular pearled rim and placed inside an incuse square. In the right field behind the figure there is a small tree with rich foliage and in the left field there is the Aramaic legend *lameth-nun-resh-gimel-lameth* (Le NeRGaL) written vertically upwards (*Figure 5*). The very same figure, only advancing to the other side and accompanied by a huge ear of barley instead of the tree, appears likewise on the backside of staters with the marine deity of Tyros riding on a hippocamp over waves¹⁹ as well as of one showing a lion jumping to the right and bringing down a bull turned to the left²⁰. On these coins the name of *Nergal* is not mentioned; they only carry the Aramaic legend *tav-resh-zajin* (TaRZ) in the field behind the advancing figure (*Figures 6 and 7*). But the close relationship between all the three issues is clearly attested by the choice of this particular reverse motif.

An interesting variant of this representation of *Nergal*, which rather evokes the image of the deity on certain *tesserae* from Palmyra²¹, is found on another stater from the “Tissaphernes-Group”²². Here the Persian rider with the lotus-flower on the obverse is advancing to the right side. On the reverse the god is shown, walking in the same direction. He is wearing a sleeveless shirt over the wide girdled trousers as well as a *kidaris* on his head. The outstretched left arm is holding a bow, while the right arm is drawn back and holding a long spear. Under the feet of the figure lies a small lion turned to the right, and in the left field there is a small tree. In the right field the Aramaic legend *nun-resh-gimel-lameth* and *tav-resh-zajin* (NeRGaL TaRZ) is arranged in two lines (*Figure 8*).

The most common representation of the deity on coins of the “Tissaphernes-Group”, however, is somewhat simpler: The bearded figure of *Nergal*, always turned to the right, is bareheaded with a long-pointed beard and with the hair knotted to a bun in the neck. The god is wearing the sleeveless shirt over the girdled trousers while advancing and holding a bow and a spear in his hands (*Figure 9*)²³ or kneeling with bow and arrow in the shooting position (*Figures 10*)²⁴. There is an amazing number of different die-pairs with various small additions made to the principal types: In the field behind the rider the figure of a sitting or a flying eagle may appear. Next to the archer, who occasionally is wearing a *kidaris* or carrying a *gorytos* decorated with garlands, there is sometimes a tree set in the field. (*Figures 11–13*)²⁵. The key symbol is often added to both sides. But the reverse legends of all respective staters are composed of the letters *tav-resh-zajin* (TaRZ) only. That at least the advancing archer is nevertheless meant to be an image of *Nergal* is demonstrated by some fractional issues (third-staters or tetrobols) displaying the same figure on their reverse together with the legend *lameth-nun-resh-gimel-lameth* (Le NeRGaL) or just *nun-resh-gimel-lameth* (NeRGaL) (*Figure 14*)²⁶.

W. Möseler: Nergal and the Amazon: A tale of three cities, SM 69, 2019, S. 63–78.

18 What the cataloguer has seen as a lion-skin draped around the shoulders of the figure are rather garlands attached to the ornate *gorytos*.

19 SNG BN 199 (9,65 g); Roma E-sale 16, 2015, 181* (11,17 g).

20 SNG Ashmolean 1826* (10,40 g); CNG E-sale 388, 2016, 143 (10,19 g); CNG E-sale 390, 2017, 178 (10,60 g); CNG E-sale 398, 2017, 296 (9,99 g); Roma E-sale 36, 2017, 161 (10,55 g); Roma E-sale 38, 2017, 270 (10,47 g).

21 SEYRIG 1944, p. 66, 13 & 15.

22 BM 1970.0707.1 (10,49 g), published by G.K. JENKINS in RN 6, 1973, pl. I, 1; CNG E-sale 430, 2018, 176* (10,55 g).

23 SNG Ashmolean 1832* (10,54 g); CNG E-sale 430, 2018, 175 (10,59 g).

24 PN 396, 2008, 404 (10,50 g).

25 SNG BN 213; Schmidt Coll. = CNG 97, 2014, 267* (10,74); Naumann 71, 2018, 253* (10,95 g); Naumann 71, 2018, 254* (10,71 g); CNG E-sale 432, 2018, 92 (10,59 g); Roma E-sale 53, 2019, 364 (10,83 g).

26 BM 1896.0902.1, published in MILDENBERG 1973, pl. XIV, 3* (3,36 g); SNG BN 204 (3,20 g).

W. Müsseler: Nergal and the Amazon: A tale of three cities, SM 69, 2019, S. 63–78.

Notwithstanding the different representations of the deity, the coins with the name of Nergal in their legends have formed quite a compact group of issues so far, – apparently all belonging to Tarsos and datable to the period between 420 and 400 BC. However, the coin-types described at the beginning of this article with the dedication to the same god, show different and highly remarkable features: Although the reverse motif with the lion attacking the bull occurs also on various early issues from the city of Tarsos (*Figure 7* and *Figures 15 and 16*)²⁷, the kneeling-running figure of the obverses is by no means in line with any known Tarsian issue: It rather resembles the representation of the so-called “Amazon” testing her bow from the coins of Soloi (*Figures 17–19*)²⁸, although there is usually no club or any other weapon attached to this figure. But the posture, the garment and the skull-cap as well as the huge *gorytos*, which is attached horizontally to the girdle, are all common features of the “Amazons” from Soloi and the figure on the obverse of the new coin-type.

In the fifth section of his short survey to the various “Amazon” issues from Soloi James Brindley had assembled three coins, two die-identical staters and one tetrobol, with a somewhat differing representation of the principal figure and/or with another reverse motif (*Figures 20–21*)²⁹. Here the kneeling-running personage on the obverses is not holding out and testing the bow with both hands. Instead the weapon is held with the right hand close to the side of the body, while the extended left hand is actually holding a small double-axe. In the right obverse-field of the staters there is a “key-symbol” added like on numerous issues of the “Tissaphernes-Group” from Tarsos. On the reverse of the staters there is a single bunch of grapes, the traditional emblem of Soloi, but on the reverse of the tetrobol a large ear of barley like on the coins from the “Lion and bull series” of Tarsos is added and placed beside the grapes. In recent years yet another stater has appeared in a Kuenker sale, which – though once more different – is connected to the same group by the Aramaic legend in the reverse-field (*Figure 22*)³⁰. The “Amazon” on this coin is once again testing the bow and not holding any other object in her hands, but in place of the pointed skull-cap she is wearing a large and crested Korinthisan helmet.

The highly significant common feature of all those abnormal types, however, is the fact that the legend in the reverse fields is neither the word ΣΟΛΕΩΝ, which would be normally expected on coins of such a type, nor is it Greek at all. In all three cases it is one and the same word consisting of four Aramaic letters, which are somewhat coarsely executed³¹. The word has been read downwards as *'gdh* (*aleph-gimel-daleth-he*) by most researchers and has been translated as “band” or “company” following a suggestion of E.S.G. Robinson. This legend was explained as the expression of an alliance between Soloi and Tarsos in accordance with the blend of pictorial elements taken from the coinages of both cities.

The recent discovery of a stater of similar type but with a different legend in Greek has finally provided the key for the understanding of the whole issue. The coin in question had been offered first in 2012 by Gorny & Mosch and reappeared 2018 in a sale of Solidus at Munich (*Figure 23*)³². On both occasions it had not

27 SNG BN 200 (10,84 g), 201 (10,32 g) and 202 (10,27 g); SNG Ashmolean 1826 (10,40 g), 1827 (10,66 g) and 1828 (10,57 g); Roma E-sale 13, 2014, 168* (10,64 g) and 169* (10,64 g).

28 SNG BN 124 (10,71 g), 127 (10,61 g) and 128 (10,62 g); Roma E-sale 13, 2014, 167* (10,69 g); Naumann 72, 2018, 224* (10,56 g); Roma XV, 2018, 271* (10,74 g).

29 BRINDLEY 1994, p. 265, 5 a + b. The coins are: BM 1947.0706.2 (10,74 g), published by E.S.G. ROBINSON in NC 1948, pp. 56–57, and ANS 1970.67.2 (3,74 g), published by Hyla TROXELL and William SPENGLER in ANS MN 15, 1969, p. 8 sqq.

30 Kuenker 257, 2014, 8248 (10,62 g).

31 James Brindley, who did not recognize the first letter as an *aleph* of unusual form, meant to see two separate letters at the beginning of the word, which he read as *'ngdh*, opposing the reading of the same letters as *'gdh* by E.S.G. Robinson, Hyla Troxell and William Spengler. The legend of the piece from the Kuenker sale is clearer and has likewise been read as *'gdh* by the compiler of that catalogue.

32 GM 208, 2012, 1608 = Solidus 27, 2018, 294 (10,19 g).

been properly understood and therefore not been allocated correctly. The principal type is identical with that of coins from Soloi: On the obverse there is the well-known “Amazon”, a kneeling-running female figure turned to the left, which is wearing a loin cloth with a huge *gorytos* attached to the girdle and a pointed skull-cap and is testing a bow with both hands. In the right field behind the figure there is a small animal with four legs seen from above, – probably a frog. The reverse once again shows the bunch of grapes in an incuse square. In the right field there is a small mask of a Silenus like on issues from Soloi. However, the legend in the right field does not spell ΣΟΛΕΩΝ but ΑΓΧΙΑΛΑ. This is a toponym, – the name of the settlement An(g)chiale mentioned by Strabo as being located above the coast between Tarsos and Soloi³³. Based on that inscription also the strange Aramaic legend of the coins mixing pictorial elements from Soloi and from Tarsos can be read and interpreted in another, much more plausible way: The third letter from above is not a dalet h but a kaf, which appears in coin-legends written in an almost identical form³⁴. Thus, the legend has to be read as *ʾgkh* (*aleph-gimel-kaf-he*), apparently forming an attempt to spell a nasalised g (ḡ) followed by an aspirated guttural like the Greek chi³⁵.

According to Strabo (or to his source Aristoboulos of Kassandreia) Anchiale was originally an Assyrian settlement, founded by king Assurbanipal (669–631 BC), who allegedly was buried there or who had at least a large monument erected at this place³⁶. Since the entire area had partly been colonized by settlers from Argos and from Lindos on Rhodes in the course of the 8th century BC, a significant part of its inhabitants must have been of Greek origin, forming a mixed population similar to the one of nearby Soloi, whose semi-barbarian *creole* had become proverbial within the Greek world³⁷. Arrian reports that the town already lay in ruins, when the army of Alexander advanced through the alluvial plain of Eastern Cilicia³⁸. Since it had struck coins in its own name only a couple of decades earlier and the remains were still of considerable size, its destruction and abandonment had obviously happened not so long before the time of Alexander's campaign, probably towards the end of the 5th century BC. The reason for this otherwise unreported event can only have been some major local conflict, which has left no trace in the remaining literary tradition. It is certainly no coincidence that the coin-production of Anchiale has ceased at about the same time, when the autonomous coinages of important centres in Cilicia Pedias like Soloi, Mallos or Issos with their specific local designs underwent a sudden interruption. But while the minting activity at all the latter places was resumed a little later with the striking of new series, which rather show the growing influence of the Persian naval command established at Mallos and Tarsos after the failed coup of the younger Cyrus³⁹, no further issues from Anchiale are known.

Towards the end of the 5th century BC the cult of Nergal had apparently expanded from its centre at Tarsos over a larger part of Cilicia Pedias, the coastal basin between the Syrian and the Anatolian highlands. The transfer of features like the name of Nergal or of related symbols such as the double-axe, the ear of barley or the lion attacking the bull from Tarsian coin-issues to the ones of other surrounding cities points to a significant extension of the cultural and political

W. Müsseler: Nergal and the Amazon: A tale of three cities, SM 69, 2019, S. 63–78.

33 Strabo XIV,5,9.

34 See for example the legends on the Tarsian issues of Datames, which have been read erroneously as **tdnmw* or **trdmw* instead of the correct **trkmw*.

35 Even in English the phoneme expressed by the Greek letter *chi* is often transcribed as *-kh*.

36 The expressions used in the original Assyrian inscription of the stele, a form of *carpe diem*, were apparently quite drastic: Aristoboulos, as rendered by Strabo and by Arrian, was anxious to provide a translation using more decent terms.

37 LOCHNER V. HÜTTENBACH 1976, pp. 336–345.

38 Arrian, Anab. II,5,2–5.

39 MÜSELER 2018 a, p. 57 sqq and p. 71 sqq.

W. Müseler: Nergal and the Amazon: A tale of three cities, SM 69, 2019, S. 63–78.

dominance of Tarsos. There must have been a gradual cutting back on autonomous local structures still remaining in the neighbourhood under the rule of the Syenneseis, the members of the dynastic clan that had been entrusted with the deputy rulership over the entire region by the Achaemenid Great Kings. This policy was later on continued by subsequent Persian governors based at Tarsos⁴⁰. But already in 401 BC when the army of the younger Cyrus stood before the Cilician Gates demanding free passage into the coastal plain and access to its resources the only authority eligible for negotiations in Cilicia was in fact the Syennesis of Tarsos. All other cities, no matter how large or important, were only marginally referred to in the report of these events by Xenophon⁴¹.

But what had happened at Anchiāle must have been of an entirely different quality. Our literary tradition is silent about Cilician affairs apart from events directly connected to the campaigns of the younger Cyrus and later on of Alexander the Great; apparently also the original informant, Aristoboulos of Kassandreia, who had visited the ruins in person and reported on the stele of Assurbanipal with its curious cuneiform inscription still erect, has had no knowledge of the particular circumstances that had led to the destruction of the place. However, the numismatic record may once again provide additional information.

The most spectacular discovery of recent years was yet another coin belonging to the “Tissaphernes-Group” of Tarsos (*Figure 24*)⁴²: The obverse of this stater displays the usual rider in Persian garb holding a lotus-flower on a slow walking horse with ornate tack to the left and the key-symbol in the field below. But in difference to the other coins of this group the rider is not wearing a *kyrbasia*, the headdress of the Persian official with the protruding vizor and the long neck- and cheek-protection. Instead he is bareheaded and wearing his long hair knotted in a bun at the back of the head. On the reverse, however, is a scene that is completely unparalleled in Cilician coinage: Set within an incuse square there is a (male?) figure turned to the left, which apparently has collapsed to the ground but still keeps a semi-upright position by supporting itself with its left arm. The figure appears to be half-naked or wearing a closefitting cuirass over a girdled loin cloth with a huge *gorytos* attached to the belt. The head is protected by a large crested helmet. The right hand grabs the leg of its opponent, who is in the course of placing a foot on the outstretched right leg of the fallen figure. The opponent is a bareheaded figure with a pointed beard and the long hair held together in a bun, standing to the right. It is wearing a *himation* over the wide trouser-skirt in the Persian fashion and is carrying a bow and a *gorytos* slung over the right shoulder. It has raised the booted left leg to trample on the body of the figure on the ground. The outstretched left arm is grabbing the crest of the opponent's helmet, while the right arm is pulled back holding an uncertain object in the hand. The whole posture of the standing figure suggests that the object is probably a short sword or a dagger. Apparently, the scene is showing a Persian in the process of stabbing a Greek warrior to death.

As far as we know up to now there has been no precedent for such a scene on any coin of this period. In a number of Graeco-Persian reliefs of the late 5th and

40 On the Tarsian coinage of the Sidonian prince Ba'ana belonging to this period see MILDENBERG 1973, p. 79, note 12 and MILDENBERG 1987, pp. 28–35. The Ba'ana series is once again discussed by MÜSELER 2018 a, pp. 57–61.

41 Xenophon, Anab. II,5.

42 Roma XVI, 2018, 325 (10,70 g).

early 4th century BC from Lycia (*Figures D–F*)⁴³ as well as on some late Achaemenid seals (*Figures G–H*)⁴⁴ similar images of fighting warriors can be found, which are executed in quite the same way. But in a numismatic context such a representation appears only on a post-Alexandrine drachm from Persepolis, which must be dated to the early 3rd century BC and might even have been inspired by the newly discovered coin from Cilicia (*Figure I*)⁴⁵. The common feature of all the various images is the arrangement and the posture of the figures involved in the action: The defeated person, always equipped with attributes of a warrior, is squatting or kneeling on the ground while the standing opponent grabs his victim by the head and wields a spear or a dagger in the other hand, apparently ready for the kill. Occasionally the victorious combatant also places a foot on the body of the loser in a gesture of dominance. The particular violence and the realism of the scene is definitely something else than the conventional staging of the royal-hero in the ritual act of slaying an animal or a monster rather common in Achaemenid art (*Figures J–K*)⁴⁶.

In an article published in the proceedings of a colloquium on the pictorial representation of war and victory from Antiquity to the Middle Ages several years ago Jürgen Borchhardt has underlined the narrative quality of such representations, which are typical for the coalescence of Greek and Persian iconographic traditions in Anatolia and the Levant. With special emphasis on the monumental reliefs from Lycia Borchhardt has demonstrated, how battle-scenes of this type from Southern Asia minor have rarely been of a mere generic character or were just connected to a mythological context of some sort. Much more often they were intended as depictions of specific historical events, which were meant to be recognized by the beholders⁴⁷. A similar observation was made by John Boardman in examining representations of fighting human figures on Graeco-Persian seals belonging to the same chronological if not geographical setting: On these seals the combatants are repeatedly identified by their dresses as belonging to different ethnic groups, which rather indicates that real historical encounters are alluded to⁴⁸. The most striking example, however, is the later coin from Persis, first published by the author several years ago in the course of a completely different study: The image of a Persian noble slaying a kneeling warrior in Greek armour from behind is linked by the legend of the coin to a particular event in the history of the region, that has by mere chance been likewise transmitted by the rudimentary literary tradition still extant⁴⁹.

It is, therefore, not completely futile to search for additional clues leading to a better understanding of the historical background of this remarkable issue. Most revealing are the attributes of the victim: There is neither a large round shield nor an armour or some kind of weapon, which may have been used in a hand-to-hand combat preceding the killing scene. Instead the victim is still wearing its helmet, which is rather unusual for representations of the kind, and it is equipped with a huge *gorytos* attached to its belt. The similarity with the helmeted “Amazon” depicted on a coin from Anchiāle (*Figure 22*) can hardly be ignored. Likewise, the figure in Persian garb shows features characteristic of the god Nergal as depicted on some of the Tarsian coins discussed above.

W. Mūseler: Nergal and the Amazon: A tale of three cities, SM 69, 2019, S. 63–78.

43 D Limyra, Necropolis II, Relief from the tomb of Xuwata*, BORCHARDT – GORECKI 2012, pl. 27, 28; E Heroon of Trysa, Western enclosure (Naval invasion), block I. 450* (Landskron 2016, pl. 72, 1); F block I. 454* (LANDSKRON 2016, pl. 78, 4).

44 G BOARDMAN 2000, p. 160, 5.7: Cylinder seal, 5th/4th century BC, 24 × 12 mm, chalcedony, Bibliothèque Nationale de France (Seyrig Coll. 1972, 1343.5)*; H BOARDMAN 2001, p. 352, 851: Stamp seal (Scaraboid), 24,5 mm, blue chalcedony, British Museum (Oxus Treasure 113) (BM 1897.1231.113)*.

45 I PN 316, 1986, 259 (4,22 g); New York Sale XXXVII, 2016, 241 (4,24 g)*. Coins from Persepolis of the early 3rd century BC have occasionally been influenced by motifs of late Achaemenid issues from the Levant: See MUSELER 2005/2006, p. 84 sqq.

46 J BRANDT, AGD I, 1 226: Stamp seal, early 5th century BC, 24 mm, grey chalcedony, Bayerische Staatssammlung München; K Stater, ca. 400/395 BC, Tarsos, Würzburg (Wellhöfer Coll.) Ka 1331 / H 6698 (10,68 g).

47 BORCHARDT 1997, pp. 81–136, in particular p. 131 sqq.

48 BOARDMAN 2000, p. 158 sq.

49 The respective issue has been once more treated by MUSELER 2018 b.

W. Müsseler: Nergal and the Amazon: A tale of three cities, SM 69, 2019, S. 63–78.

A helmeted “Amazon” subdued by a victorious opponent and collapsed to the ground is shown on yet another recently discovered coin, that has been assigned to an uncertain mint either in Cilicia or in Cyprus (*Figure 25*)⁵⁰. The figure, which is depicted in a frontal position with the head turned to the left, is naked except for a loin cloth and a large Korinthian helmet; it is definitely female. The right hand is holding the leg of the advancing opponent. There seems to be no *gorytos*, although it is not perceptible on any of the known specimens, whether the cowering figure is holding anything in its left hand. The presumed “Amazon” is attacked by a naked male figure advancing to the right side, which is grabbing with its left arm the victim by the crest of the helmet. With the right arm it is swinging an uncertain object over its head. Through the field behind the attacker there runs an undefined diagonal line descending from the left to the right, which is not attached to any of the two figures. It can hardly be a die-break, since it does not interfere with the image in any way. It must therefore be seen as a separate object, possibly a large branch placed in the background of the scene. On the reverse there is a bull with ribbons tied to its tail walking to the right framed by a pearl-rim in an incuse square.

The compilers of the auction catalogues featuring the three specimens known so far have assumed that the scene on the obverse must be a rendering of the encounter between Herakles and Hippolyte, queen of the Amazons. This assumption was mainly based on the observation, that the nakedness as well as the general posture of the male figure is clearly reminiscent of representations of Herakles swinging a club on more or less contemporaneous coins from Kition on Cyprus and from Phaistos on Crete (*Figures L–N*)⁵¹. But this is by no means cogent: On all the coins quoted for comparison Herakles is always wearing the skin of the Nemean lion, either on the head or draped over his arms and shoulders. This is not visible here, and the object that the naked figure is wielding above its head cannot be identified.

There is a small group of coins, which show a very similar naked male figure surrounded by trees as it is advancing to the right in full stride and swinging a weapon over its head. The reverses of these issues show either a walking or a butting bull turned to the right under a foliate branch and placed in an incuse square (*Figures 26 and 27*)⁵². Last not least because of the supposed similarity of the naked striding figure on the obverses with the Herakles from Kition the piece kept in the *Bibliothèque Nationale* has been attributed to an uncertain mint in Cyprus by Michel Amandry⁵³. But Edoardo Levante, compiler of the respective volume of *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum*, had classified the very same specimen as the striking of an uncertain mint in Cilicia. And only recently the present author has associated coins of this type and some other “*Incerti Ciliciae*” with the series issued by the Phoenician prince Ba’ana at Tarsos for the construction and equipment of the Persian war-fleet⁵⁴.

In fact, a closer inspection of the coins reveals that the striding naked figure is wielding not a club but a double-axe, the emblematic weapon of the god Nergal. On the other hand, coins of the “Ba’ana-Group” from Tarsos and possibly from

50 Cilicia: Roma XVI, 2018, 334 (10,76 g)*; Roma XVII, 2019, 525 (10,61 g); Cyprus: CNG E-sale 430, 2018, 193 (10,67 g).

51 L Cyprus, Kition, King Azba'al, Stater 449/425 BC, CNG E-sale 441, 2019, 164 (11,12 g); M Crete, Phaistos, Stater 320/300 BC, Würzburg (Wellhöfer Coll.) Ka 1160 / H 6526 (11,41 g); N Crete, Phaistos, Stater 300/280 BC, Würzburg (Wellhöfer Coll.) Ka 1158 / H 6524 (11,44 g).

52 SNG BN 441* (10,77 g); BM 1947,0706.1 (10,44 g), published by E.S.G. ROBINSON in NC 1948, pl. V,1; Roma XVII, 2019, 542* (10,72 g).

53 AMANDRY 1992, p. 20, 4.

54 MÜSELER 2018 a, p. 59.

Nagidos (*Figures 28 and 29*)⁵⁵ have images of Herakles complete with club and even with lion-skin but rendered in a most unusual way: The hero in fighting stance to the right is holding a small lion hanging upside down by its tail like a kitten, – a rather peculiar design, which is known from Palmyrene tesserae with the god Nergal and from Persian seals showing the royal-hero overwhelming lions and other animals⁵⁶.

Probably the male figures on the reverses of all the coins described here, whether clad in garments of Persian style or shown naked in the Greek fashion, whether shooting with a bow or swinging a double-axe or a club, whether accompanied by a small lion or by trees, have to be seen as nothing else than different manifestations of one and the same divine entity. This is neither the original Nergal, the Mesopotamian god of war, draught, pestilence and other calamities, nor is it the deified hero from Greek mythology, who is wonderfully characterized in one of the auction-catalogues as “a flawed individual, driven by the whims of the gods, by misfortune and by his own violent nature to commit terrible crimes and acts of slaughter”⁵⁷. It is a local warrior-god that was developed in Syria and along the Levantine coast by blending characteristic properties of various deities of Oriental and of European descent in an area marked by the intersection of several cultural traditions. This way it became compatible with the religious concepts of different ethnic groups. The various representations of the god are quasi summarized on a stater from the Tarsian “*Syennesis-Group*” with an armed rider on a galloping horse on the obverse (*Figure 30*)⁵⁸: On the reverse appears an archer kneeling in shooting position to the right between an ear of barley and a knuckle-bone in the field. The figure is wearing a *kidaris* on its head but it appears to be naked otherwise, – a feature highly unusual for an oriental deity but quite in line with renderings of Herakles and other mythical heroes on Greek coins (*Figure O*)⁵⁹.

Notwithstanding the apparent Syrian, Phoenician and Cypriot influences, the worship of this syncretistic deity in Cilicia appears to have been centred around Tarsos and in particular connected with the rule of the *Syenneseis*, the local dynastic clan. The entire related coinage discussed above should therefore be assigned to that city. The helmeted male or female figure with or without *gorytos*, which is subdued by the Tarsian war-god on several of the coins discussed here, has most probably to be associated with Soloi and Anchiäle near the coastal strip partly colonized by Greek settlers already since the 8th century BC⁶⁰. Conventionally the female person has been addressed as an “Amazon”, although the figure is more likely derived from myths of a local brand as well. Anyhow, the coins seem to reflect a larger and violent but otherwise unattested conflict between Tarsos and other cities in Cilicia Pedias, which probably took place towards the end of the 5th century BC. It was certainly induced by the political claim of the *Syennesis-Clan*, supported by the Persians, to tighten their control over Cilicia; but in addition to this there may well have been a cultural or ethnic antagonism in the background.

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55 SNG BN 436 (11,06 g), 439 (10,51 g).

56 See above note 21 and GARRISON – ROOT 2001, p. 256 sqq.

57 Roma XVII, p. 500.

58 SNG BN 214 (10,15 g); Schmidt Coll. = Rauch 96, 2014, 108* (10,68 g).

59 O Boeotia, Thebes, Stater 446/440 BC, MzK Berlin 18206 874 (12,65 g).

60 See BLUMENTHAL 1963, p. 120 sqq.

W. Müsseler: Nergal and the
Amazon: A tale of three
cities, SM 69, 2019,
S. 63–78.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9



Fig. 10



Fig. 11



Fig. 12



Fig. 13



Fig. 14



W. Müsseler: Nergal and the
Amazon: A tale of three
cities, SM 69, 2019,
S. 63–78.



Fig. 15



Fig. 16



Fig. 17



Fig. 18



Fig. 19



Fig. 20



Fig. 21



Fig. 22



Fig. 23



Fig. 24



Fig. 25



Fig. 26



Fig. 27



Fig. 28



Fig. 29



Fig. 30

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Fig. A



Fig. B



Fig. C

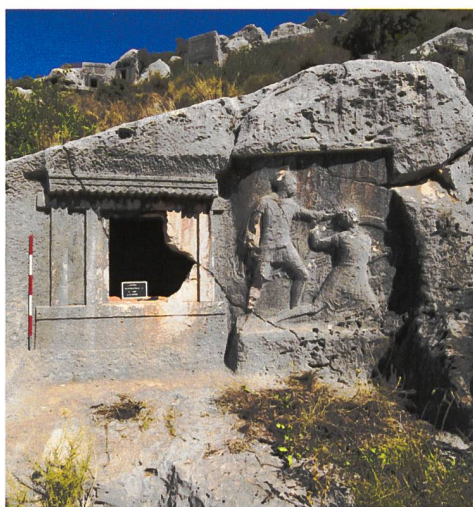


Fig. D



Fig. E

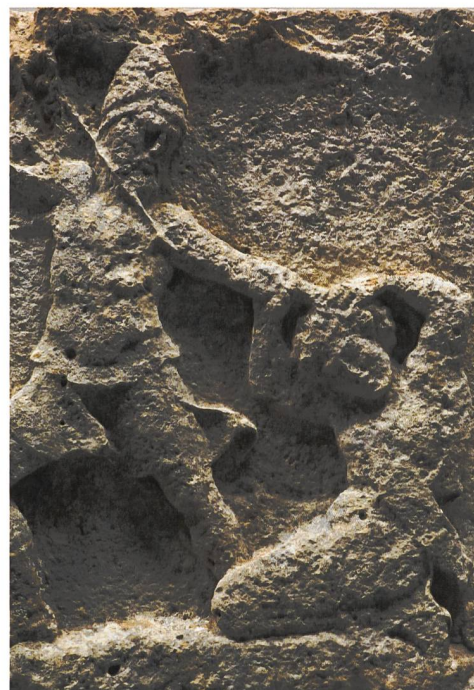


Fig. F



Fig. I



Fig. K



Fig. M



Fig. O



Fig. G



Fig. H



Fig. J



Fig. L



Fig. N

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