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New examples of a rare coin type of Gerasa in the Decapolis

Alexander Kaplun

Zusammenfassung: In diesem Beitrag werden drei neue Exemplare eines seltenen Münztyps aus Gerasa vorgestellt; er wurde unter Elagabal ausgegeben und zeigt auf der Rückseite Artemis in einem zweisäuligen Tempel. Die Anzahl der überlieferten Stücke erhöht sich damit auf sechs. Es handelt sich um den bislang einzigen bekannten Architekturtyp aus Gerasa. Die Zuweisung zu Gerasa wird durch die nun klar lesbare Legende mit dem Ethnikon im Genitiv Plural bestätigt. Für diese Verortung spricht auch die Verwendung eines Gegenstempels mit Bogen.

Schlagwörter: Numismatik, griechische Städteprägungen, Dekapolis, Münzikonografie

Abstract: We present three additional examples of an extremely rare coin type of Gerasa struck at the time of Elagabalus and depicting a statue of Artemis inside a distyle temple, bringing total number of known examples to six. The type is quite significant, being the only architectural type minted in Gerasa. The newly published examples allow to fully read the reverse inscription with the ethnic of the city in genitive plural form. One of the coins is bearing a bow shaped countermark known from two other coin types of Gerasa from the time of Elagabalus.

Key words: Numismatics, Roman Provincial coins, Decapolis, coin iconography

In 2003 Achim Lichtenberger has published two examples of an apparently new type of coin issued in Gerasa at the time of the rule of Elagabalus from the Numismatic Museum of the Jordan National Bank¹. The coins closely resemble contemporary issue of Bostra². In fact, the similarity is so significant that Arie Kindler has mistakenly included an example of this type (from Kadman Numismatic Pavilion, Tel Aviv) in his corpus of coins of Bostra as degraded version of type 32, see Plate III 32b. Unfortunately, quality of printing of the illustrated coin does not allow further analysis of this example. Lichtenberger pointed at few key characteristics of this issue allowing attribution to Gerasa. The inscription on one of the published coins is quite clear, and while partial, includes the entire name of the city. An additional significant feature is the posture of the depicted deity. Typically, images of deities in temple on Roman provincial coins were made after particular statues of these deities, thus different posture suggest different temple, hence different types of coins. Zeus Ammon

on the Bostra coin is shown with hand down, while the Gerasa coin has a figure with hand up, in position typical for Artemis depicted on multiple coins of Gerasa issued since the time of Hadrian, and the cult of this goddess is central for the city³.

No other coins of this type have been published in the literature or sales catalogues since 2003. Here we present three additional coins of this type (**figs. 1–3**), bringing the total number of known examples to six and reinforcing attribution of the type to Gerasa. One of the coins, the best-preserved example of the type so far, allows to read the whole inscription as ΓΕΡΑΧΝΩΝ (**fig. 1**), and a clear depiction of the deity in the temple, leaving no doubt that it is indeed Artemis with horned animal on her left and arrow (with quiver?) on the right. Another coin (**fig. 3**) bears a countermark in the

¹ Lichtenberger 2003, 197 no. 5; 453 nos. 108–109.

² Kindler 1983, type 32a.

³ Lichtenberger 2003, 195–197. 200–208 and Lichtenberger 2008.

shape of a bow. Such countermarks are known from two types of coins struck under Elagabalus in Gerasa⁴. It is not surprising since the bow is an attribute of Artemis. No other city in the region countermarked its coins with bow beside Gerasa. Basing on this evidence one can conclude that the type is indeed an issue of Gerasa by Elagabalus, likely the only one depicting the temple of Artemis. Two other Elagabalus types from Gerasa have typical weights of about 8 and about 6 g⁵. The architectural type can be thus the smallest denomination of this series.

In general, architectural types are very common in coinage of the Decapolis⁶, however it is not the case for Gerasa. In fact, this coin is so far the only architectural type known to be produced in Gerasa⁷, making it quite significant and allowing to connect numismatic and archaeological evidence.

Coins:

No. 1



17 mm, 4.20 g, 5 h

Obv: KAICAP ANTQ. Laureate bust of Elagabalus right.

Rev: ΓΕ-Ρ[]//ΝΩΝ. Distyle temple with statue of Artemis, holding bow in one hand and probably an arrow in another. Horned animal at the right foot.

No. 2



16 mm, 3.13 g, 12 h

Obv: []. Same as coin 1.

Rev: []. Same as coin 1.

No. 3



16 mm, 3.51 g, 6 h

Obv: Same as coin 1.

Rev: []PACH[]. Same as coin 1, to the right of Artemis countermark in the shape of bow.

All photographs made by A. Pashin in behalf of the author.

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⁴ Spijkerman 1978, types 33, 34; Howgego 1985, type 376 for the countermark.

⁵ Spijkerman 1987, 164–167 types 32–33 (Tyche) and types 34–35 (Alexander bust).

⁶ Bowsher 1987.

⁷ Lichtenberger 2003, 197.



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Fig. 1: Gerasa coin no. 1 (enlarged): 17 mm, 4.20 g, 5 h (photograph: A. Pashin)



Fig. 2: Gerasa coin no. 2 (enlarged): 16 mm, 3.13 g, 12 h (photograph: A. Pashin)



Fig. 3: Gerasa coin no. 3 (enlarged) with countermark: 16 mm, 3.51 g, 6 h (photograph: A. Pashin)

