

CONCEPT AND REPRESENTATION OF THE BODY IN THE COINS OF ANCIENT GREECE: GODS AND HOMERIC HEROES IN THE POLIS

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to reconstruct the nature and the function of the human figure represented in the Greek coins of the archaic and classic period through the semantic retrieval of numismatic icon as a historical source. The study has developed across a process of diachronic and diatopic search of the monetary images belonging to two iconographic schemes in which appears the figure of the charioteer and that of the warrior *promachos*. The basic prerequisite of this procedure and the consequent method of analysis, is the analogy between the verbal and the iconic language, according to a linguistic approach that considers the logical links existing among the different parts of the coin. Results indicate that the numismatic Greek language is a technical lexicon designed to assure a wide and effective communication, in that the human figure possesses a central role and an undoubted polysemic value. A language that takes as base the most archaic Hellenic religious feeling filtered and diffused in the troubled reality of the polis in the most various political forms. For these considerations, the human body represented in the Greek coins is identified outright by the concept of divinity and in what corresponds to the hero, submitted to the link of his supernatural luck, must be considered to be a divine personage.

Keywords: body, numismatics iconography, goods, ancient Greece, Homeric Age

INTRODUCTION

This paper deals with the study of the use of the human body representation in numismatics, a discipline rich in contents even though unconventional in history. The aim of this article is to reconstruct the nature and the function of human figure in the Greek coins of the archaic and classic period (whose finalization has been conventionally established in 336 BC, ascension date to the throne of Alexander the Great), through the analysis of two represented subjects of the 'human' categories: the charioteer and the warrior *promachos*. The first with its chariots as a symbol of a broad regional set of coins (of the Sicily of the V BC), as well as "iconographic style model, result of 'peer polity and culture interactions' between cities of full cultural emulation" (Howgego, 2002, p.18 and Carroccio, 2013, p. 72). The second because it is able to show the unique 'true' identity of a Homeric hero on the Greek coins of this period.

The study has been developed across the diachronic and diatopic research of the chosen iconographic types, which has allowed us to select one representative currency model to which we have submitted the corresponding interpretative analysis. This procedure is divided into three parts. Its combination and succession guarantees an exhaustive scientific research of this study: 1) Iconographic analysis: describes in an analytic way the purpose content of coin, the basic elements of plastic composition and probable relations between the human figure and other eventual elements present in the image. 2) Iconological analysis: study relationships and symbolic values of the represented subjects. It consists of interpretation of the formal message, which often presents aspects and rhetorical and symbolic contents. 3) Hermeneutic analysis: allows connecting the object of study to the historical context to which it belongs. The hermeneutics of representations of the human body in coins can only be in the presence of

other historical documents, whether primary or secondary sources (Finetti, 2015, pp. 35-36).

On this part 3 it is interesting to note how the understanding and interpretation of monetary images recently have had a significant impetus, after that the coins have been considered as a form of historical language. This hermeneutic change in numismatics research is no doubt due to the birth of the LIN project (*Léxicon Iconographicum Numismaticae*), necessitated by the need to develop a scientific method of reading monetary images according to objective criteria. The fundamental purpose of this method is the basic analogy between the verbal language and iconic language (the image as a word) according to a linguistic approach (Caccamo Caltabiano, 1998, 2000 and 2004). The suggested interpretative approach takes into account the logical links between the obverse and the reverse sides of the coin, between the main and secondary types and between the image and the legend that accompanies it by locating the historical spatial – temporal coordinates within which it has originated and developed the meaning of each icon. The final aim of this study is the semantic retrieval of the numismatic icon as historical source and its value as a parallel witness to the archaeological – literary source. In order to confront the different arguments set out in the text on coins in their context, we propose some interpretations of the historical and economic nature on the coin's origins and functions. The body and money represent two elements traditionally considered antithetical, which have often had a negative assessment in western history. The birth of the currency with its universe of symbolic representations is a phenomenon that testifies and justifies significantly the transformation of political and social institutions from the most archaic to the present and is closely related to the dissemination of abstract and rational thought. The Diaspora of the Eastern Greeks, the unions between metropolis and colony, and trade development were important factors for the coin circulation throughout the Mediterranean world. But the speed of imposition and circulation of the coin in the Hellenic world and its successful implementation explain whether, in addition to the set out factors, the development and transformation of the polis that has prepared the Hellenic world for the universal acceptance of coin (Howgego 2002).

Images and 'signs' constitute the iconic essence of a coin that strengthens the communicative function of the mint guaranteeing the sacred and legal values, in addition to the purchasing power. The monetary images express ideologies and beliefs extracted

from the cultural heritage of the peoples iconically reconverted until they would be able to formulate structured messages and complexes. The images, which in the case of the Greek world show a semantic evolution in accordance with a changeable institutional reality of the polis that, use them for their own self-representation.

THE FIGURE OF AURIGA

Bigas and chariots, while passing or running, represent a common subject in the ancient iconography in the documents of the coins, in the documents of plastic art or vascular paint. In the numismatic field the presence of chariots is justified with motivations of social and ideological nature, "recognizing them as a way of self-representation and auto calibration of aristocratic classes in power with clear political aims" (Tancke, K. 1990). Interpretive reason originated by the enormous popularity of the horse races in classical times, a social phenomenon that was exploited politically by various tyrannical governments.¹ The centre of this representation is the theme of the real identity of the Auriga, tackled by Caccamo Caltabiano (2000) who used exactly this argument as a methodological paradigm to promote the structuring of an iconographic lexicon based on a global reading of the numismatic image. Through the diachronic reconstruction of the subject is reflected how the quadriga appeared mainly in funerary contexts during the Archaic age, in ideal connection. It was used either in games in honor of the deceased, or in the epic themes of the Iliad (Caccamo Caltabiano, 2000). In the Classical age the belligerent polis make these manifestations as the highest expression of the new citizen aristocracy (the *Gamóroi*), composed by the great landowners and horse cattle ranchers. In the Hellenistic years, there is a trend to idealize and identify the racing car as a best way to facilitate the processes of self-legitimizing of the dynasties, as shown by the rock painting of a large number of tombstones. In this respect, it is necessary to remember how the games and horse competitions in particular are part of the same essence of the Greek religious feelings, whose implementation was one of the causes in support of the birth of Hellenic nationalism. Homer's feudal heroes commemorated with these manifestations the memory of their fallen comrades. In Olympia were held games in honor of local deity. These games were almost unknown long before that Elide lawmakers did such games as a national Hellenic solemnity: Olympic Games in 776 BC dedicated to Zeus.



Image: Numismatica Ars Clasica AG 66, n° 7

Picture 1. Sicily, Kamarina, ca. 410 BC Tetradrachm signed Exakestidas, AR, 16,99 g. A/ galloping quadriga right driven by Athena holding kentron in right hand, reins in left; Nike flying left above, holding in her extended hands a wreath tied with fillet which she places on Athena's head R/ KAMARINAION; Head of Herakles left, wearing lion skin headress; in the left field EXA - KES in a double plate. Jameson (Robert Jameson Collection) 524. Rizzo, 1946, t. 5, 12. Westermark & Jenkins, 1980, 145.

At the origin of this phenomenon it is not strange to observe the sanctity which is attributed to the horse that permeated the Greek society from the moment of its appearance. In the Sicilian chariots we also find "the accurate image of that terrifying 'new weapon' that before ten centuries had opened the way to the West for the Aryan peoples and which, although finally overcome as an instrument of war, remained, however, as an aristocratic attribute of Majesty and deity among the elegant descendants of the Indo-European primitive invaders" (Giacosa, 1973, pp. 37-38). But the supernatural dimension of the horse, and therefore the divine nature of the charioteer, can easier be understood by the diatopic analysis (but not exhaustive) of the Sicilian numismatists documents of V BC. From this set of coins has been clear the female charioteer, always as a divinity who takes the appearances of Athena, as in the coins of Aitna and Kamarina (pic. 1), those of Demeter, Henna and Segesta (Rizzo, 1946, t. 42, 16-17) or from Persephone to Syracuse (Rizzo, 1946, t. 43, 15-16).

Image: Numismatica Ars Clasica AG 84, n° 576

Picture 2. Sicily, Selinus, ca. 440 BC. Tetradrachm, AR, 17,44 g. A/ ΣΕΛΑΙΝ - Ο ΝΤ - [ΙΟΣ]; walking quadriga left driven by Artemis and Apollo, represented in the act of shooting an arrow. R / ΣΕΛΑΙΝ - Ο Σ; Naked fluvial divinity, shelf on the left, with a small boat in the right hand and an olive branch on the left, upon an altar where a rooster is represented; in the right bull statue up on a platform; a selinon leaf. Rizzo, 1946, t. 31, 13. SNG Locket (Sylogie Nummorum Graecorum - Locket collection), 861.

Less explicit is the image that derives from coins expressing a male identity, generally anonymous except in the case of Himera (Rizzo, 1946, t. 21, 16), where it was wanted to identify with the legend image 6 of the mythical Pelops, or of Selinunte, in which the guide is clearly recognized by the twins formed by Artemisia and Apollo (Pic. 2). In the image Apollo is busy in shooting an arrow against an invisible enemy². The symbols that accompany the chariots seem to have an important role in this semantic reconstruction of the image of the charioteer, and have moreover suggested suggestive hypotheses in the past. As an example is the case of the lion in race that appears exclusively in Syracuse coins in the series of the Δημαρέτειον (Demarcation) coined after the battle of Himera on 480 BC³ (pic. 3) and more precisely between 475 and 465 BC as suggested by Fick (s.f.), while the same lion was the type of 'speaker' type of the nearby town of Leontinoi.⁴



Image: Roma Numismatics Limited 6, n° 442

Picture 3. Sicily, Syracuse, Hiero I., 475-470 BC. Tetradrachm (from the series of Demareteion), AR, 17, 32 g, 26 mm Ø. A/ walking quadriga right with auriga holding kentron in right hand, reins in his left; Nike flying right to crown the horses; a lion springing to right in exergue R/ ΣΥΡΑΚΟΣΙΟΝ; Head of Arethusa right within linear circle, wearing olive wreath; four dolphins around. Boehringer, 1968, 382. Rizzo, 1946, t. 35, 4.



From the naive hypothesis formulated by Head (1874), who saw it as a symbol of the Carthaginian enemy in escape, we have now considered the association between the lion in the race and the chariot in relation to the likely military contribution offered to the Syracusans by Leontinoi (pic. 4) in the conflict against Carthage⁵ (Chantraine 1957 and Ross Holloway 1964). Besides, adopting a diametrically opposed view, considering it as an iconographic imposition of the Deinomenid dynasty (to which belonged Gelo I and Hiero, tyrants of Gela and Syracuse) that constituted its emblem.



Picture: *The New York Sale IV, n°56*

Picture 4. Sicily, Leontinoi, ca. 470 BC. Tetradrachm, AR, 17.25 g. A/ walking quadriga right with auriga holding kentron in right hand, reins in his left; above Nike flying right; a lion springing to right in exergue R/ LE - ON - TIN - ON; Female head right (Arethusa?) with long hair tied with a crown of myrtle; the whole head surrounded by four grain of barley. Rizzo, 1946, t. 22, 13. Ross Holloway 1964, t. 1, 2.



Image: *Numismatica Ars Clasica AG 54, n° 4*

Picture 6. Sicily, Zancle-Messana (Messana). Tetradrachm, 478-476 BC, AR, 17,00 g. A/ driving mule biga right, seated charioteer with auriga, holding reins and kentron; bay leaf in exergue; circle dots frame around. R / MESSEN ION; hare springing to right; around circle dots frame. Caccamo Caltabiano, 1993, D 41 / R -.



Image: *Gorny & Mosch Giessener Münzhandlung 159, n°34*

Picture 5. Sicily, Leontinoi, ca. 466 BC. Tetradrachm, 17,31 g. Walking quadriga right with auriga holding kentron in right hand and reins in his left; above Nike flying left to crown the auriga; a lion springing to right in exergue R/ LEONTI-(NON); the head of Apollo right wearing olive wreath; below a lion springing right. D.Knoepfler, SNR (Schweizerische Numismatische Rundschau) 71, t. 3, 25. SNG Lloyd (Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum - Lloyd Collection), 1046. Franke, P. R. - Hirmer, M., 18-19 . Boehringer (Leontinoi) t.11, 28. Rizzo, 1946, t. 22, 15.

In this way, we might propose their identification as a pure and simple divine attribute referring to Apollo based on the conceptual links established between all the recurring symbols in these coins, which often explicitly represent Apollo himself (pic.5) on reverses (Caccamo Caltabiano, 2000, pp. 181-184). In these examples we must add the cases in which there is a change of gender of the charioteer (auriga) within the set of coins of the same city. The most famous transformation is that which occurs in the polis of Messana where the unusual iconography of a biga towed by mule was chosen as a true 'state' symbol by the tyrant Anaxilas. The fame due to the attributed association between the first of these emissions and the Olympic victory achieved by the same Anaxilas in the Apene (in the 480 BC), episode that deserved until a mention of the great Aristotle reported by Julius Pollux (Onomasticon V, 568).

On the obverse of the coins appear the type of apene, which represents a walking mule chariot where only the animal is visible abroad and a brief profile of the inner mule, led by a mature bearded charioteer coated by a light floor length chiton (pic. 6). After the middle of the fifth century a. C., and probably as a result of the abolition of this Olympic competition (444 BC), the charioteer no longer appears in the own attitude of the race but with the knees together against the chest and seated with the legs redoubled in straight angle. At the same time, a process of transformation of the

chariot takes place, which becomes more like an agricultural or traveling chariot than an agonistic one. Regarding the charioteer identity, it has been suggested that he should represent the same Anaxilas (Mirone, 1921, pp. 9-10), an interpretation that is being recently revised. The first consideration corresponds to the presence of the laurel leaf in exergue, which in the coins of Magna Grecia is almost always associated with the head of Apollo or with other symbols explicitly referred to the same divinity (the tripod, etc.) and all because of the specific characteristic of the sun god, the protector of the plants growth and soil fertility. (Caccamo Caltabiano, 1993, pp. 34-36). The consideration that leads us to understand the charioteer more like a divinity of heliaca character, compatible with an old cult of analogous nature that already is documented in the same area of the Strait.



Image: Numismatica Ars Clasica AG 82, n° 44

Picture 7. Sicily, Zancle-Messana. Tetradrachm, ca. 420-413 BC, AR, 17.13 g. A/ ΜΕΣΣΑΝΑ; slow biga of mules driven right by charioteer, holding reins and kentron; in exergue, two dolphins swimming snout to snout. R/ ΠΑΝ; Youthful Pan seated left on rock on which a fawn's skin is thrown, holding a pedum in his left hand and a springing hare in his right hand. Rizzo, 1946, t. 26, 12. Caccamo Caltabiano, 1993, 508.1.

The second consideration corresponds to a rather radical evolution of the complete iconographic scheme (a process that matures in the last quarter of the V century BC), in which new spatial visions are experienced and to the male driver happens "the very personification of the city, clearly identified as ΜΕΣΣΑΝΑ (pic.7), the name that accompanies it" (Caccamo Caltabiano, 2003, p.139), so it appears as worthy heiress of the tyrant Anaxilas. The originality of this solution seems to consist not only in having entrusted the guide role of the biga of mule to the personification of the local worship, by pairing it with a youthful image of the god Pan (whose worship is widely demonstrated by the presence of his symbolic style in the reverse of the

coins of Messana); but to evoke a regenerative will or, in any case, represent a moment of great social importance such as the implementation of a new political line.

The fact that the name of a city coincides with the present personifications in the coins or in the most widespread official document of that time "puts the problem if whether the existence of a divine entity closely correlated with the polis and its direct emanation, would be already present in the cultural heritage of the Greek settlers at the time of the *imposizio nominis* to the cities that were founding" (Caccamo Caltabiano, 2003, p.140). The answer to this phenomenon, which sees city goddesses in the role of charioteer, may perhaps be better understood through comparison with italic Fortuna, polyhedral figures in which it is not difficult to distinguish the characteristics of the Mediterranean mother goddesses carrying the primordial fecundity of the earth rather than the human race.

In summary, in the contributions that try to demonstrate the real nature of biga and chariots, the difficulties that lead to a unique interpretation of their meaning are clear. The figure of the charioteer is not limited to represent the human driver of the car but is highly symbolic. The demonstrated symbolism by the diffuse presence of the role of female goddesses and by the numerous evidences that certify their social prestige beyond the political-religious meaning (it is representative of the race of carriages described during the funeral games in the song of the Iliad in honor of Patroclus, as well as the Olympic competitions where the same race was introduced in 680 BC). For this reason it has been thought that its meaning was to commemorate the victories obtained in the great panhellenic games, although in parallel they have intensified the hypothesis that it could be a true heraldic reason of the great rural aristocracy of Sicily in power on the V century BC. Thus the generalized adoption of this reason in numismatic iconography is closely "correlated with the ideology of Victory and integrated into a hierarchical semantic system, in which the leader is represented or in any case treated as the charioteer" (Caccamo Caltabiano, Castrizio, Puglisi, 2004, p.23). The political authority in Syracuse chooses as a form of self-representation the icon of the agonistic victory, which absolutely is identified with the chariot. Although this commemorative "function" of the chariots was relatively hidden in the most archaic examples, identical symbolism emerges strongly in the emission of the Demareteion and successively in

the decadrachms signed by Evainetos and Kimon, who celebrated the victory obtained by the Syracusans against the Athenians, in the conflict of 415-413 BC.

These episodes highlight the political issue in the semantic – numismatic debate. An influence well documented by the case of the lion in race represented in the coins of Syracuse and Leontinoi, symbol used by both polis like certificate of identity and discontinuity at the same time with the corresponding previous emissions⁶. The chariot motives demonstrates itself capable of describing and interpreting effectively the different areas of Hellenic reality, showing a ductility elaborated from its most archaic symbolism that promotes it as a vehicle of extraordinary character. Thanks to this "precondition" funded by religious sentiment, the same reason can be taken by any government, from the tyrannical to the democrat one, with political value and even commemorative of a specific event including the agonistic one.

THE WARRIOR PROMACHOS

If the chariot motives can be considered as the true paradigm of Greek monetary language because of the abundance of representations of the divinity, yet we do not find a variety of similar examples in heroic figures of mythological character in the same iconic universe. Nevertheless, the few existing testimonies, although extremely simple, remind us of the role and function of the Homeric hero regarding other ancient documents (Caccamo Caltabiano, 2007) and help us to formulate a more objective interpretation of Greek numismatics iconography.

Regarding the parameter of the research for the whole human figure, the only emission group that provides the profile of Homeric figure we find in the coins of Lucri that reproduces the warrior promachos, identified as Aias⁷ by the legend that accompanies it (fig 8). The figure recurrently presented in the ideal of Greek society, where the hero's mission is to be the best of all. The demonstration that will have to happen right in the battle, since "for the Homeric heroes, the life has no other horizon than the death in the battle, because only the life will make them fully reach the glory and the immortality" (Cabrera Bonet, 2005, p.23).



Image: The New York sale XXVII, n° 352

Picture 8. Locri (Lokri Opuntii). Stater, ca. 350-340 BC, AR, 12.13 g. A/ Head of Demeter left. R/ OΠΟΝΤΙΩΝ; naked warrior with Corinthian helmet, advancing right on rocky ground, holding short sword in his right hand, large round shield decorated on its interior with griffin prancing right in his left hand; between the legs, ΑΙΑΣ; Gulbenkian Collection 494; The collection catalogue BCD 76; M. F. A. Boston, 958.

In the diachronic and diatopic analysis of the numismatic image the most archaic example is found at the beginning of the V century BC in the city of Aspendos, in Pamphylia, where the armed warrior with shield and spear is accompanied by a triskeles of legs (in the reverse) and other different symbols (pic.9).



Image: London Ancient Coins 41, n° 62

Picture 9. Pamphylia, Aspendos, Stater, ca. 465-430 BC, AR, 10,75 g, 20 mm Ø. A/ Hoplite advancing right, holding large shield in his left and spear in right. R/ Triskeles on a lion left within incuse square SNG France (Cabinet des Médailles, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris), 13.

Triskeles that appears successively to the warrior promachos and also on the silver steelyard issued by Pericles, dynasty of Limyra, the next Lycia, in the first part of century IV BC (pic. 10). Emission closely linked to the figures of Leukaspis, legendary heroic figure represented in the reverse of Syracusan series (Rizzo, 1946, 42, 9-10 and 47, 1-2) and Pheraimon, immortalized in the same pose in some drachmas of Messana. (Caccamo Caltabiano, 1993, p 131). Drachmas that on the opposite side propose the portrait of

the giant Peloris, perfectly identified by the legend.



Image: The New York sale IV, n° 234

Picture 10. Lycia, Pericles de Lymira. Stater, ca. 380 a. C., AR, 9.71 g. A/ Bearded head of Perikle, with long and hair down. R/ - ΓΚΕ - Λ -; naked warrior with Corinthian helmet, advancing to the right, holding great shield in the left hand, and a raised spear in the right. In the field right, a star (above) and a triskeles (below), all within incuse square. SNG von Aulock 4252. Olcay and Mørkholm, 1971, 432.

However, the most representative set of this typology corresponds to the coin series in the region of Opuntia Locri (Ὀπούντιοι) approximately between 380 and 330 BC, in the period of the third and fourth Sacred Wars disputed between Greeks and Macedonians. About the reasons that facilitated such conspicuous and highly artistic minting, in a small area that never had a particular prominence in Greek political life, we refer to the considerations made by Seltman (1933) valid today⁸. In all cases (with the exception of Aspendos) the overall reading of the image shows a strong dualism that contrasts the armed warrior with a splendid female head with a clear siracusan matrix⁹, generally identified with Demeter. The consistent identity with the political-religious function developed by the goddess in the field of Amphictyony¹⁰.

Regarding the iconological analysis, the attempt to find a logical link between the soldier promachos and the symbolism that accompanies him for the moment has not given successful results¹¹, however he has allowed establishing with a certain approximation the sequence of minting of the different coin series. This result has been achieved

by confronting the disposition of the legend with the motives that decorate the inner part of the great shield (the aspis or hoplon), characterized by three different episema (ἐπίσημον): the snake, the lion and the griffin. Following this approach, the emissions of the Locri staters are divided into 3 main groups, within which it is possible to recognize numerous subsets defined by the presence of secondary symbols (Table n°1).

On the other hand, it is necessary to make some considerations on the real identity of the warrior, belonging to two distinct categories. The first, synthesized masterfully by Caccamo Caltabiano (2007), tends to demonstrate the solar nature of the figure. The valid theory in numerous contributions that certify the diffusion in the eastern area of an old conceptual nexus between lion and triskeles, symbols of power and solar dynamism. The connection of our warrior includes him in the category in which personal identity is defused in favor of gender identity with its corresponding function. An identity inherited by Helios represented armed in the Mycenaean age¹² which will be adopted by Apollo in the Pythagorean culture that will spread in Greece from the IV century BC.

The second category of observations comes up with the profound transformations introduced in the social structure of the polis due to the long Peloponnesian war¹³. They involved among others, the need to modify the traditional fighting technique and the composition of the hoplite phalanx in favor of a greater use of real elite bodies formed by highly trained and specialized troops in a specific type of fighting (Castrizio, n.d., par. 4).

In this sense the aspect of the warrior that appears in the coins of Locri seems quite 'dissonant' in front of Homer's description of Ajax in the Iliad, while his nudity is much more in line with the figures of the gymnast or the hoplite of the Boeotia, as described by the encyclopedic culture of the last century¹⁴. More than the figure of the old hero Homer, Locri coins would represent a 'contemporary' image, the snapshot of this new way of fighting.

le 1. Relation legend / symbols in the reverse of Locri staters

Disposition of the legend	Episema	Symbols secondary / legend	
OPON - TIQN	Snake	One or two spears, spearhead, Corinthian helmet, Phrygian or Boeotian, round shield, olive branch, Bunch of grape, ivy leaf, wreath, <i>Kantharos</i> , <i>Aphlaston</i> ,	
OPONT - I - QN	Lion	helmet, spear	
OPONTI - QN	Snake Griffin / Lion	helmet, spear, AIAΣ	
OPONTIQ - N	Griffin	Bunch of grape, star, Holding spear	
OPONTIQN	Lion Griffin	Spear Spear, laurel branch, <i>Lambda letters</i> ,	

Unfounded fighting way on the weight and the excessive costs of the panoply (heavy armed hoplite), but on agility, strength and mobility of a naked body strictly trained for a war of movement. If we would add to these specific military factors the delicate context of alliances that has been developed in the Peloponnesian war itself, which closely linked the powerful Syracusan coalition with the Anatolian

cities of Lycia and Pamphylia, is still better understood because the image of the warrior *promachos* represents the ideal relation between East and West, recovering ancestral representations preceding the time of the historical colonization. All these elements confirm Seltman's theory of the 'mercenary' origin of Locri's emissions, which

constitute the most consistent iconographic nucleus where is appeared the figure of the armed warrior.

A new thought on the identity of the Locri warrior emerges from this set of considerations and consequently an important question arises on the existence of a 'Homeric' authentic figure in the Greek monetary documents. A question supported by the limited presence in the same Greek coins of the two protagonists of this epic: Achilles and Odysseus¹⁵. On the other hand the question is confirmed by the fact which has been long observed, that the use of the Homeric hero in numismatic iconography remains associated with local traditions assigning the role of founder or city sovereign to this figure.

The image of the warrior in fighting is included in the traces of a long formal tradition and perfectly defines the concept of agon, but we must admit that its presence in the coin is quite sporadic and concentrated in historical moments characterized by a big conflict. That's why this image not only reproduces the Homeric hero, but also represents the contemporary values of his time producing a slow and complex semantic evolution of this icon that placed the educational values of the Homeric epic to one of secondary. However, the evolution has regenerated the sacred values linked with a primordial religious, the objective and urgent need to justify the use of weapons. A kind of work that is always blessed by Demeter, the mother – goddess of earth.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The numismatic Greek language is configured as an extremely technical lexicon designed to assure an effective communication, in that the human figure posses a central role and an undoubted polysemic value. A language that takes as 'incorruptible' base the most archaic religious feeling filtered eventually by the Homeric epic poem and diffused in the troubled reality of the polis in the most various political forms.

For these considerations, the human body represented on the Greek coins is absolutely identified by the concept of divinity, in which the hero (admitting that there is a representation of the heroic figure) submitted to the link of his supernatural luck must be considered a divine personage. In this global vision, both the charioteer and the warrior belong to the same system of conventions that regulate the use of images on the

coin, end up embodying a common solar symbology used each time with specific valences politic.

On the one hand we have the chariot which with his multitude of charioteers is configured as a privileged means of knowledge and dissemination of privileged divines, since the Greek cult 'in itself' does not always reveal the figure of God. On the other hand, the 'isolated' figure of Ajax in the promachos warrior dresses, which with his crested helmet of an eponymous hero presents himself as the modern successor of the archaic forms of religiosity. A unique expression of the most celebrated solar divinity (Apollo), the chariot can even fly, as in the coins of Akragas, and free of every terrestrial links to pass from reality to metaphor where the charioteer embodies the role of an 'epiphanic' revelator par excellence of the divinity. Less obvious, but equally well founded, is the solar progeny of the armed warrior, fruit of ancestral and bellicose cults of Anatolia, but shared by the Greeks of East and West. So far a semantic complexity low valued emerges from both iconographies that extend to summae, surviving cultural fossils that history, especially the history of art, has attributed universal fame of beauty and nobility.

References

Notes:

- 1) In addition to the example of the Syracusan aristocrats, we can mention the case of Anaxilas, tyrant of Rhegion and Messana, Olympic winner of the competition of mules towed by mules (Apene) in 480 BC.
- 2) The close relationship between the Selinunte and Himera coins during the V century BC is very significant. This relationship is based on the common choice of types, which depicted scenes of the race with the chariots on one side and sacrificial scenes on the other. A form of solidarity that goes back to 480 BC, when the two cities supported the Carthaginians in the fight against Akragas.
- 3) Battle conducted by the control of Sicily by a Greek coalition commanded by Gelón and Tyron (tyrants of Syracuse and Akragas) against the Carthaginian army led by Hamilcar.
- 4) The type of "Speaker" is a typical expression of numismatics. This indicates that the name of the subject represented in the coin corresponds to the name of the issuing city. Example: lion / Leontinoi.
- 5) Leontinoi was forced to organize a military alliance under the Syracusan influence, after being occupied by Hippocrates de Gela in 494 BC.
- 6) There is an extreme similarity between the installation of the Syracusan coin (pic.3), and the reverse of pic. 4, where only the grain of barley and the legend lead us to Leontinoi. This iconographic scheme was the result of an imposition confirmed by its immediate replacement, which occurred as a result of the death of Hieron I (467 BC), by the new type Apollo / Leon (pic. 5). These changes brought the citizens coin back to the traces of tradition and at the

same time the iconography shows us a new form of political relation concerning the neighboring and powerful Syracuse.

7) Ajax, son of Oileus (Αἴας Οἰλέως), king of the Lochidae, is described by Homer as short stature, extremely fast in the race and invincible to throw the javelin (Iliad chapter II). He is mentioned as the 'younger' to distinguish his from Ajax Telamon (older-the great).

8) The experts suggests that Locri mercenaries, after the peace of Antalcidas (387 BC), possessed a considerable amount of silver coined to withstand the continuous conflicts of which they were protagonists until their defeat in Chaeronea (338 BC) during the III Sacred War in which they were subdued by Macedonia.

9) An example that confirms the existence of true iconographic style and the 'professional' circulation of the artists in charge of sculpting the stamps.

10) Confederation of cities that had as main sanctuaries Apollo, Delphi and Demeter in Anthela near Thermopylae. Check Caccamo Caltabiano (2008, pp. 126-127) for the political-religious function developed by the goddess.

11) For this purpose, check the proposal of Caccamo Caltabiano (2007, pp. 115-118).

12) Check Caccamo Caltabiano (2007), p. 118, note 62.

13) War developed between Athenians and Spartans (with the corresponding coalitions: amphictyonies) between 431 and 404 BC.

14) The gymnasts (γυμνῆς) were soldiers of the Greek light infantry. Usually they were mercenaries belonging to the lower social classes, who practically fought naked and have used as a primary weapon a short sword (the xiphos) instead of the dory, the long spear of the hoplites. Cf., Fraccaro P. (1933). Gimneti. Treccani, Milan. Retrieved from

[http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/gimneti_\(Enciclopedia-Italiana\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/gimneti_(Enciclopedia-Italiana)/)

15) Affirmation based on the fact that the presence in the coins of the two heroes throughout the classic period is reduced to the portrait on the bronze series of Larisa (Achilles) and Ithaca (Odysseus) in the IV century BC.