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Σωκράτης: ὦ φίλε Πάν τε καὶ ἄλλοι ὅσοι τῇδε θεοί, δοίητέ μοι καλῶ γενέσθαι τ'ἀνδοθεν: ἔξωθεν δὲ ὅσα ἔχω, τοῖς ἐντὸς εἶναί μοι φίλια. πλούσιον δὲ νομίζοιμι τὸν σοφόν: τὸ δὲ χρυσοῦ πλῆθος εἴη μοι ὅσον μήτε φέρειν μήτε ἄγειν δύναιτο ἄλλος ἢ ὁ σώφρων.

ἔτ' ἄλλου του δεόμεθα, ὦ Φαῖδρε; ἐμοὶ μὲν γὰρ μετρίως ἡῦκται.

Φαῖδρος: καὶ ἐμοὶ ταῦτα συνεύχου: κοινὰ γὰρ τὰ τῶν φίλων.

-Plato, *Phaedrus* (closing prayer), 279b-c

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Numismatic evidence (or not) for the *aphippodroma* horse race at Larisa

ROSANAGH MACK¹

The horse featured prominently on the coinage of the Thessalian city of Larisa, a reflection of its role in daily life, legend, and as an economic product. Among an issue of drachmas with the profile head of the nymph Larisa on the obverse, is a particularly unusual reverse type which depicts a horseman standing behind, and restraining a horse. This issue was short-lived, dated to c. 404 BC, and the type reappears again c. 370s-360s, with the facing head of Larisa on the obverse.² This reverse type has generally been seen as a horseman about to mount,³ but it is also often cited as evidence for the race known as the *aphippodroma*, during which the horseman is presumed to have dismounted and remounted his galloping horse.⁴ Gallis sees this type as the representation of this race, commenting that 'its importance as a Thessalian tradition and also as an event with great appeal to the public can be seen in the fact that it was represented on Larisaeian coins of the fourth century BC.'⁵ In his definition of the *aphippodroma*, Golden explains that this was the 'dismounting horse race' in which the rider dismounted and mounted in the course of the race, and that it is depicted on the coins of Larisa in Thessaly.⁶

However, in this article it will be shown that this is in fact erroneous, and I will argue for a different interpretation that places this type in the context of equestrian practice in Thessaly. At first glance, it is easy to see why the scene has been taken to be a horserace. On many of the coins the details are obscured, either as a result of wear, or because they were struck off centre, but if we look closely at a range of examples, a different reading emerges. In his seminal survey of the silver coinage of Larisa, Herrmann briefly noted the similarities of this type with a section of the Parthenon frieze,⁷ potentially supporting a different interpretation, thus the correspondences will be discussed in greater detail. So firstly, the actual evidence for the *aphippodroma* will be examined, followed by an analysis of the numismatic evidence in order to explain why it is not a scene from a race that is being depicted. The discussion will then turn to a consideration of the factors that may have influenced the choice of this type, in particular, art, horse training, and politics.

¹ I would like to express grateful appreciation to my doctoral supervisor, Emma Aston, for her valuable advice and comments during the preparation of this article. Many thanks are also due to Simon Glenn for his comments on a draft, and assistance with photography at the Heberden Coin Room of the Ashmolean Museum. I would also like to thank Glenn Bugh for his thoughts on an early draft. All errors remain my own. r.m.b.mack@pgr.reading.ac.uk

² Lorber (2014): 22-23. Herrmann (1925): Group VII D, Pl. VI. 7-8; Lorber (2000): 13, 6 and Pl. 1, 6.

³ An early description of this type with a profile head obverse comes from Gardner (1883): 29.51: Rev. 'Youth r. wearing petasus and chlamys, holding whip and the rein of a horse he is about to mount.' (and shown on Pl. V. 11).

⁴ Gallis (1988): 220; Golden (2004):12; Pendleton (2004): 25; Stamatopoulou (2007): 335, n.163.

⁵ Gallis (1988): 220.

⁶ Golden (2012): 12.

⁷ Herrmann (1925): 38 and n.2.

I. THE APHIPPODROMA

The earliest recorded evidence for the *aphippodroma* comes from inscriptions dated to the 2nd and 1st century BC, in the form of victory lists presumed to be from the festival for Zeus Eleutherios. It is thought that the cult and festival of Zeus Eleutherios was established at Larisa following the liberation of Thessaly from Macedonian rule by T. Quinctius Flaminius, with a tentative date of 196 BC.⁸ Graninger finds that there is strong evidence to suggest that the Eleutheria followed the Olympic model, and were held every four years.⁹ Several of the fragmentary victory lists found at Larisa record the winner of the *aphippodroma* race, one of the three events that were part of Thessalian tradition; the *aphippodroma*, the *aphippolampas*, a mounted torch race, and the *taurokathapsia*, or *taurotheria*, the bull hunting contest.¹⁰

Local games at which the *taurokathapsia* was held might have been more frequent, but the evidence is scant.¹¹ We do know that a festival, known as the *Petraia*, was held in honour of Poseidon *Petraios*. The scholiast on Pindar *Pythian* 4.246 ends by telling us: ‘φασὶ δὲ καὶ ἀγῶνα διατίθεσθαι τῷ Πετραίῳ Ποσειδῶνι, ὅμου ἀπὸ τῆς πέτρας ἐξεπήδησεν ὁ πρῶτος ἵππος.’¹² ‘and they say there was a festival established in worship of Poseidon *Petraios* at the place where the first horse leapt forth’. This refers to the horse named *Skyphios*, and the place is presumed to have been *Tempe*, however we do not know the exact location of the sanctuary.¹³ The importance of this legend to Thessalian identity can be seen through its representation on coinage issued in the second quarter of the 5th century BC, and again in the first half of the 4th, in the name ‘of the Thessalians’.¹⁴ A fragmentary ode for *Kleoptolemos*, winner of the chariot race, shows that hippic events were held at the *Petraia*.¹⁵ Beyond the chariot race, and plausibly the *taurokathapsia*, we do not know the full programme of events at this festival.

There is very little evidence of Thessalian participation in equestrian events at the major games between 464-310 BC, and as Aston and Kerr have shown, it is not until the Hellenistic period that we can detect the interest and presence of Thessalians at the major festivals.¹⁶ However, a race that tested the agility of the horseman might have appealed to the Thessalians. We have clear evidence for the *taurokathapsia*, the bull hunting contest, which is attested on early Thessalian coinage from the cities of Larisa, Krannon, Pherai,

⁸ Graninger (2011): 74-76, and for discussion of the cult and the festival, see also Gallis (1988): 217-235. There is also evidence of another festival held at Larisa, the *Stena*, cf. Graninger (2011):78.n.124. On local games see also Gallis (1988): 226-227; Stamatopoulou (2007): 333-337.

⁹ Graninger (2011): 168.

¹⁰ IG 9.2, 528 (90-70 BC), IG 9.2, 534 (100-50 BC), IG 9.2,527 and IG 9.2, 531 (both late 1st century BC – early 1st century AD). See Graninger (2011):159-182. See also Axenides (1947): 13-14, and more recently, Christesen (2019): 57-58, for discussion of these inscriptions and the *aphippodroma*.

¹¹ For discussion see Stamatopoulou (2007): 309-341; Zafiropoulou (2004): for a catalogue and commentary on the material evidence held mainly at the museums of Volos and Larisa. On Greece as a whole, see the recent study of games and sanctuaries by Valavanis (2017).

¹² Schol. Pind. *Pyth.* 4. 246.

¹³ Poseidon is said to have split the rocks at *Tempe* so draining the Thessalian plains (Hdt. 7.129.3-4). Poseidon is also said to have created the first horse, *Skyphios* by smiting the rocks with his trident, or through an emission of semen (Schol. Pind. *Pyth.*). Also *Et. Mag.* 473.42 in which the name of the horse is given as *Sisyphos*. On the cult of Poseidon *Petraios* see Aston and Kerr (2018):11-13; Mili (2015):234-39.

¹⁴ On this see Franke (1970): 85-93.

¹⁵ Bacchyl. *Ep.* 14. 19-23.

¹⁶ Aston and Kerr (2018): 3-6, and concluding remarks, 25-28.

Pelinna, Pharkadon, Triikka, Skotoussa, and perioikic Perrhaibia.¹⁷ From this it could be presumed that there might be numismatic evidence for the other races which formed the triad of events. There is some fifth century literary evidence for the *aphippolampas*, but it is from Athens, not Thessaly. At the beginning of the *Republic*, Plato mentions a new torch race on horseback at the festival for the Thracian goddess, Bendis, in the form of a relay, and held at night.¹⁸ This suggests a contest for teams, whereas the victory lists at Larisa record single victors.¹⁹ Also beyond Thessaly, there is evidence of a race which involved dismounting, known as the *kalpē*. According to Pausanias, the *kalpē* was a trotting race for mares which involved dismounting during the race, first held at the Olympics in 496 BC, together with the *apēnē*, the mule-car race.²⁰ It was not held at the other major games, the Pythian, Isthmian, or Nemean, and was dropped from the Olympic programme in 440 BC.²¹

There is no evidence of the *aphippodroma*, by this name, outside Thessaly, and the exact nature of this race is unknown. Graninger suggests that the etymology of the word, *aphippodroma*, implies that the race involved mounting and dismounting.²² The victory lists dated to the 2nd and 1st century BC, place the *aphippodroma* together with the *aphippolampas* and *taurokathapsia*. Later lists, dated from the late 1st century BC to the 1st century AD, place the *aphippodromas* in a different section of events, following the *apobatēs* race for four horse chariots, and the *sunōris tou apobantos* for two horse chariots.²³ The *apobatēs* race also involved dismounting and mounting, but from a moving four-horse chariot, and is presumed to be depicted on the Parthenon frieze.²⁴ For these types of race, we have possible evidence from the 2nd century BC. A fragment of a marble relief found near Larisa, depicts a charioteer driving two horses, and a warrior with panoply and shield, beside him.²⁵ This cannot represent a scene from warfare, as they did not use chariots at this time, neither can it represent the *sunōris*, the race for two horse chariots, as there is a passenger beside the driver. Therefore we can be fairly certain that this is not the *apobatēs*, but the *sunōris tou apobantos*, the dismounting race for two horse chariots.²⁶ From this evidence we can safely assume that that *aphippodroma* was one of the races that demanded a similar display of agility.

¹⁷ The city of Atrax issued *taurokathapsia* coinage in the 4th century BC in bronze.

¹⁸ Plato, *Rep.* 1.327a –1.328a. The inaugural festival has been dated to c. 430/429 BC. Due to the strategic importance of Thrace at this time, the cult of Bendis was a concession to the Thracians residing in Athens. For discussion see Janouchová (2013): 95–106.

¹⁹ IG 9.2, 528 l.17; IG 9.2, 534 l.10.

²⁰ Paus. 5.9.1–2. See Christesen (2019) for discussion of the *kalpē* and related contests.

²¹ Paus. 5.9.1.

²² Graninger (2011):80.

²³ IG 9.2, 527. It is notable that on the more complete of the two lists, IG 9.2, 531, the *taurotheria* takes pride of place as the first event mentioned. For the popularity of this event in the Roman world see Graninger (2011):79; Gallis (1988): 225. The skills of a Thessalian in capturing bulls are also attested through Philip of Thessaloniki, *Ath. Pal.* 9.423 in the 1st century AD, and the 4th century AD novel of Heliodoros, *Aithiopika*, 10.28–30.

²⁴ See Kyle (1987):188–189; Bell (1989): 173, 179–180; Reed (1990): 306–317.

²⁵ Volos, Archaeological Museum Λ 64. Biesantz (1965):32, 126–127. Pl.50.L56.

²⁶ See Bell (1989):180.

II. THE NUMISMATIC EVIDENCE

The examples chosen for analysis are taken from the first appearance of this type, dated to c. 404 BC, Figure 1, and from its reuse in the middle facing head series, c. 370s-360s, Figures 2-4. These coins are all drachmas struck on the Aiginetan standard.²⁷



Figure 1. Thessaly, Larisa, AR drachma, c. 400 BC.²⁸



Figure 2. Thessaly, Larisa, AR drachma, c. 370s-360s BC.²⁹

²⁷ The drachma was the highest denomination struck at Larisa at this time.

²⁸ SNG Ashmolean 3872. 5.91g.

²⁹ SNG Ashmolean 3875. 5.88g.



Figure 3. Thessaly, Larisa, AR drachma, c. 370s-360s BC.³⁰



Figure 4. Thessaly, Larisa, AR drachma, c. 370s-360s BC.³¹

Firstly, we must consider the movement of the horse. Speed is a general requisite for any race, but here the horse appears almost static. Although the exact position of the forelegs is unclear in Figure 1, and that of the hind legs in Figures 2 and 3, in Figure 4 the leg position is clear. There is no sense of urgency or excitement and three legs of the horse are on the exergual line, representative of the ground. This is a characteristic of all coins in this series. Pendleton posits that the horse of this type is depicted in a ‘flying gallop’, as seen in scenes of horse racing in vase painting.³² These scenes invariably show the horse with both hind and forelegs extended. We also see the horse in a ‘flying gallop’ on the Thessalian 5th century reverse types depicting the bull hunting contest, the *taurokathapsia*, Figure 5. While there are similarities with the movement found in vase painting, the forelegs of the horses on Thessalian coins are always flexed at the knee. The die engravers have duplicated the movement of the bull in the movement of the horse, but have conveyed the elasticity of the leg movement of the horse through the flexion of the leg joints. Through the use of this artistic convention, the die engravers could convey both spatial and temporal connectivity

³⁰ CNG Triton XV Lot 291. 6.04g.

³¹ CNG Triton XV Lot 291. 6.21g.

³² See Pendleton (2004): 26.

between the image on the obverse and the reverse. Towards the end of the 5th century, the horse of the *taurokathapsia* issues begins to be depicted in a more realistic canter, as shown in Figure 6. Of the 18 reverse dies in the die study of the early profile heads by Lorber, all the horses are depicted with elevated forelegs, both of which are bent at the knee.³³ If the horse in Figures 1-4 was meant to be moving at speed, both forelegs would be similarly raised off the ground with bent knees, as seen in Figures 5 and 6, but it is stationary, bar the lifting of one foreleg.



Figure 5. Thessaly, Larisa, AR drachma. Early to mid-fourth century BC.³⁴



Figure 6. Thessaly, Larisa, AR drachma c. 400 BC.³⁵

Secondly, the attitude and movement of the horseman must be considered. As shown in Figure 1, the horseman is holding a whip in his right hand. Many of the examples from the second period of issue are worn, as in Figure 2, but from Figure 3 it is evident that the horseman is still holding a whip in his right hand. From this it can be deduced that the horseman has used the whip to place

³³ Lorber (2014): Plates 1-5. On seven of her reverse dies, the horses are depicted leaping forward with their hind legs behind, as in Figure 3, and on eleven, the horse is depicted in a more realistic canter with the hind legs underneath, as Figure 4. Whilst not conclusive, this does suggest that change to a more realistic representation was afoot.

³⁴ CNG Triton XV Lot 172. 6.05g.

³⁵ CNG Triton XV Lot 181. 6.06g.

the hind legs behind the horse, and keeps his right hand with the whip in place in order to maintain the position of the hind legs, while he attends to the placement of the forelegs. He could not mount from this position; holding a whip, and with his hand on the far side of the horse, on the sloping ribcage, would make mounting at this moment impossible due to lack of leverage.³⁶

Regarding the presentation of the horseman, he is looking downwards, and his left toe is in contact with the toe of the near foreleg of the horse. If the intention was to show a man about to mount in a race, we would expect his weight to be on the foot nearest the head of the horse, with the farther foot possibly off the ground. In addition, if the horseman was intended to be running beside a cantering or galloping horse, following similar depictions of the *taurokathapsia* types, the *chlamys* would be billowing behind, and his *petasos* would be behind his head. These two points can be seen on the obverse of Figure 5, where the die engraver has expressed the forward movement of the bull wrestler. In addition, we might expect the horseman to have been placed nearest the viewer, but instead it is the horse that is foregrounded.³⁷

As a consequence, the identity of the horseman must be considered. In auction catalogues, he is often identified as the Thessalian mythical hero, Thessalos.³⁸ This is a natural presumption as it is often thought that this legendary figure is the one wrestling with the bull on the issues of *taurokathapsia* coinage.³⁹ There are various traditions regarding the genealogy of Thessalos, which make him either the son of Herakles, the son of Jason and Medea, or the son of Pelasgos.⁴⁰ As such, he is a fitting hero, but this interpretation has been questioned. Pindar mentions the ploughing contest between Aietes and Jason in which he has to harness and plough with a team of fire-breathing oxen.⁴¹ Kagan sees Jason, as the bullfighting hero, as a natural progression from the earlier types issued at Larisa.⁴² In her discussion of possible identities for this figure, Moustaka suggested that it might have been Jason, but at the same time she admits that the interpretation of the bullfighting hero is fraught with difficulty.⁴³ However, apart from a *chlamys* and *petasos*, the bull wrestler of Thessalian coinage is invariably portrayed as naked but this does not necessarily mean that we should seek to connect him with a known legendary hero. The competitors in Greek athletic contests were naked, and it was an artistic convention to depict all athletes naked, so it is not necessary to presume that this is a state of athletic or even heroic nudity.⁴⁴ Although there were

³⁶ Kelenderis, Cilicia, issued staters from the late 5th to the early 4th century which depict a naked horseman dismounting from either a galloping horse, or one being brought to a halt with the hindquarters well underneath and elevated forelegs. For example, *BMC Lycaonia* (1900):54.20, the obverse depicts the horse right, the youth sits sideways, and his right hand, with splayed fingers, is placed on the hindquarters as he prepares to leap to the ground. This rider also holds a goad in his right hand, differentiated from a simple whip by the bifurcate thong seen on many scenes of racing in vase painting. Although Hemingway cites these staters as possible evidence of the *aphippodroma* (2004):126, the hindquarters are so far underneath the mid-part of the horse, that the rider could equally be pulling up victorious at the end of a normal *kelēs* race.

³⁷ Hence Lorber (2000):13, describes the reverse of her coin number 5 as 'bridled horse prancing left, superimposed on dismounted horseman.'

³⁸ For example, CNG Triton XV Lot 179; Lot 290; Lot 291.

³⁹ As Kraay (1976):115. Liampi, *LIMC*, s. v. 'Thessalos'.

⁴⁰ Pherekydes, *FGrH* 3 F 78, son of Herakles and a princess from Kos; Diod. 4.54-5 and Dionysios Styrtochrion *FGrH* 32 F 14, son of Jason and Medea; Strabo, 9.5.23, son of Pelasgos. For discussion of Thessalos' genealogy see Mili (2015):220-225; Sprawski (2014):267-272; Fowler (2013):230-234.

⁴¹ Pind. *Pyth.* 4. 224-248.

⁴² Kagan (2004):81.

⁴³ Moustaka (1983):74-76, who cites evidence of depictions of Jason from Roman sarcophagi, and also considers other figures such as Herakles who fought the Cretan bull.

⁴⁴ For discussion of athletic nudity see Christesen (2014):226-229, and on heroic nudity see Hurwit (2007):35-60.

obvious dangers associated with this contest and the victorious participants might well have been accorded heroic status, the die engraver may simply have depicted a generic male Thessalian.

As with the bull wrestler, if this type was a representation of the *aphippodroma*, the horseman might have been portrayed in a state of athletic nudity.⁴⁵ However, the male horseman is definitely wearing a *chiton*, the hemline visible below the belly of the horse, a *petasos*, and in Figure 4, footwear. Although athletes competed naked, it is likely that competitors in the hippic events, and also in the *taurokathapsia*, were clothed. On an issue of the *taurokathapsia* coinage of Larisa, early to mid-fourth century BC, for the first time we see on the obverse, a mounted horseman dressed in *chiton*, *chlamys*, *petasos* and boots, chasing the bull that gallops on the reverse.⁴⁶ This is a possible reflection of the trend towards naturalism, thus we cannot rule out the possibility that the horseman of Figures 1, 2, 3 and 4 was preparing to mount *before* taking part in agonal activity. However, the die engraver has not included any other indications that might have established a connection with a festival, and this scene appears more as a reflection of daily life.

Lastly, and conclusively, from a logical perspective this cannot be a scene from a race. If it were, the horseman would not waste time by stretching the legs of the horse, but simply vault on. This leads us to the realisation that an entirely different reading of this reverse type must be put forward, and that it is significant evidence for everyday equestrian practice in Thessaly through the training of a young horse. In the first place, this is strongly suggested by the physiological appearance of the horse. Pendleton points to the weakness of the horse's hindquarters.⁴⁷ With the quarters placed in this extended position, they will not appear as muscular as when they are with the horse in a more balanced position, but could also be indicative of the age of the horse; a young horse, as yet un-muscled, receiving training.

Furthermore, if we compare this reverse type with another ancient artefact, our theory is further reinforced. Herrmann makes brief mention of the similarity between this type and the west frieze of the Parthenon in a footnote, but does not go into any detail.⁴⁸ As a whole, the consensus of opinion is that the Parthenon frieze presents an idealized citizen body during the Panathenaic procession for the goddess Athena, in which the cavalry take up much space, possibly a reflection of Perikles' improvements to this force.⁴⁹ Although the west frieze comprises seven pairs of mounted horsemen depicted in a lively canter, there are nine unmounted horses, with their riders and attendants in various stages of preparation prior to joining the procession proper. The image in question is found on slab W XIII, shown in Figure 7, which depicts the stage prior to that on the drachmas of Larisa. The similarity is striking and cannot be accidental. A dismounted horseman, here nearest the viewer, is looking down at his horse's forelegs. Having moved the near foreleg forwards, he is now nudging the heels of the off foreleg with the side of his foot, asking the horse to move. The hind legs appear to have already been set behind the horse, but the hindquarters

⁴⁵ The athletic horsemen on the coinage of Sicily, Taras and Kelenderis are depicted naked.

⁴⁶ For example, CNG Triton XV, Lot 186.

⁴⁷ Pendleton (2004):25, Pl.1.6.

⁴⁸ Herrmann (1925):38 on Group IVa, Reverse1, 'Die Rs. mit dem Thessaler der sein Pferd besteigen will', and n.2, 'Es ist hier das ὑποβιβάζεσθαι wiedergegeben, das Zurecktrücken des Pferdes, das sein klassisches Vorbild am Parthenon-westfries hat.' See also Pl.IV.4 and description of this coin on p.36.

⁴⁹ There is a vast amount of scholarship on the sculptural programme of the Parthenon. For discussion and assessment of earlier scholarship, especially the hippic sections of the frieze, see Jenkins (2005):147-162. See also Moore (2003):31-43; Niels (2001); Spence (1993):267-71; Bugh (1988):77-78.



**Figure 7. Athens, Parthenon west frieze, slab W XIII, plaster cast.
© The Trustees of the British Museum.**

are partly obscured by the adjacent horse. This young horseman has a strong hold on the reins to restrain his horse, but there is no evidence of a whip, plausibly because his horse has already been trained in this manoeuvre. If we compare this image with the reverse types of Figures 1, 2, 3 and 4, it is evident that this is the stage prior to that on the coins in which the horseman has already asked the horse to move the leg forwards. In both cases, the horsemen are looking down to check that the horse obeys the command.

For both these images, Figures 1-4, and 7, we can refer to Xenophon, who advises that the groom should know how to make the horse lower himself, using the verb ὑποβιβάζεσθαι.⁵⁰ Pollux interpreted this as the horse being made to sit on its haunches.⁵¹ However, on both the coin and the relief, it is evident that the rider is making the horse ready to mount by encouraging the horse to crouch like a cat; the extension of the legs creating an elongated body and consequently lowered back. Placing the horse in this position does lower the back of the horse slightly, facilitating mounting. Based on osteological data, Schwartz suggests that the average height of the ancient Greek male was 162-165 cm.⁵² The ancient Greek horse was fairly small, averaging about 135-140

⁵⁰ Xen. *PH*, 6.16. Niels (2001):127 suggests that the horse is being 'parked up' ready for inspection, as in a modern American show class, but this is incorrect.

⁵¹ Pollux, 1.213. Anderson (1961):83 rightly pointed out that that was erroneous and suggested that the horse goes down on its knees, possibly influenced by Curtius Rufus, who related that the horse of Alexander, Boucephalos, went down on his knees to enable his master to mount (*Hist. Alex. Mag.*, 6.5.18). However, this is not the method of which Xenophon writes.

⁵² Schwartz (2013):166-167.

cm, or 13-14 hands,⁵³ and it would have been relatively easy for a man of this height to mount a horse of this size.⁵⁴ However, I suggest that this manoeuvre had an added advantage for the rider in maintaining control of his horse. The horse would need to take several steps in order to regain balance and forward impulsion; the horse cannot rush forward as soon as the rider's feet leave the ground.

Of course, practice was important and in both his treatises, *Hipparchikos* and *Peri Hippikēs*, Xenophon emphasizes the importance of training cavalymen in mounting the horse.⁵⁵ In a fragment from the comedy *Hippotrophos*, by Mnesimachos, the slave, Manes, is sent to the area of the Athenian *agora* known as the Herms where the hipparch Pheidon trains young men in the art of mounting and dismounting.⁵⁶ Xenophon points out that the ability to mount with ease has saved the lives of many men.⁵⁷ Practice in the art of mounting was essential for the horseman in order to make a hasty getaway from the battlefield. When Jason of Pherai was assassinated, one of his guards was caught and killed while mounting his horse, but the rest leaped on their horses and escaped.⁵⁸ The Sicilian horsemen who aided the Lacedaimonians in 369 BC, dismounted between attacks on the enemy but if anyone attacked them while dismounted, they would jump easily onto their horses and move away.⁵⁹

The act of mounting is rarely found in art, and only in vase painting dating to the early 5th century BC. A red-figured krater depicts a small boy clambering inelegantly onto a horse,⁶⁰ and a red-figured cup suggests that a youth is preparing to mount by using a spear.⁶¹

The act of dismounting was much more popular and is found on the coinage of Sicily and South Italy. The obverse of a series of litrai from the Sicilian city of Gela, dated to 430-410 BC, depicts a horseman with a raised right knee, seemingly in the process of dismounting.⁶² Although the hippic sport of chariot racing features prolifically on the coinage of this city, this series should be seen in a martial, rather than a sporting, context, as the horseman holds a spear and a shield, and other contemporary issues depict a mounted horseman spearing a fallen foe. Gela had a tradition of cavalry and the horseman featured on the first types, c. 500 BC.⁶³ In the mid-fifth century, Himera issued didrachms, dated to 465-460 BC, which depict a naked horseman in the process of dismounting, sitting sideways, in readiness for the leap to the ground.⁶⁴ It is plausible that this

⁵³ For useful discussion of the size of ancient Greek horses see Blaineau (2015):42-50 and Table 1.

⁵⁴ For discussion of mounting in ancient Greece see Anderson (1961):82-84: the author emphasizes that it is easy for a grown man, even an un-athletic one, to mount a small horse bareback.

⁵⁵ Xen. *Hipp.* 1.17, 6.5; *PH*, 6.16, 7.1-3.

⁵⁶ Mnesimachos, *Hippotrophos*, 4-7, Frg. 4 (Kassel-Austin). See Papachrysostomou (2008):193-197, where a date of the mid-fourth century BC is suggested. This fragment is from a comedy, so there is a double entendre, but at the same time does reflect reality. Xenophon suggests that if a hipparch provides an instructor in the art of mounting, he will be praised (*Hipp.* 1.17).

⁵⁷ Xen. *Hipp.* 1.5, and *Mem.* 3.3.5-6, where an unnamed cavalry commander is in discussion with Socrates.

⁵⁸ Xen. *Hell.* 6.4.32.

⁵⁹ Xen. *Hell.* 7.1.21.

⁶⁰ Red-figured column krater, c. 450-400 BC, small boy climbing onto stallion, assisted by a man, watched by a youth wearing a himation. London, British Museum, GR 1836. 2-24.192

⁶¹ Attica, red-figured cup, attributed to the Onesimos painter, c. 500-475 BC. Naked youth on horseback holding a second horse which another naked youth is about to mount with the aid of a spear, Munich, Staatliche Antikensammlungen und Glyptothek, 2639.

⁶² Jenkins (1970): Group VI, 401-53. On the horsemen of Gela on coinage see Giacosa (1973):28-31.

⁶³ For the Sicilian cavalry in the 5th century BC see Gaebel (2004):82-83; Spence (1993):30-32.

⁶⁴ For example ANS 1944.100.8503. See Salamone (2012):121 and no.127; for the naked horseman see Caccamo-Caltabiano(2005) especially 17-24, and in an agonal context, see Maul-Mandelartz (1990):162-167.

type may have been issued as a result of a victory in the *kalpē*, following similar issues by Gela and notably Syracuse, in chariot races.⁶⁵ The coinage of southern Italy, notably Tarentum, includes depictions of acrobatic horsemen, frequently shown dismounting.⁶⁶

This section has shown that this is not a horseman about to mount in a race. Instead, this reverse type depicts an almost stationary horse, being prepared for mounting through the stretching out of both fore and hind legs. From the start of the fourth century, there is a noticeable trend among the die engravers of Larisa to infuse their dies with realism, drawing on scenes from daily life.⁶⁷ The reverse dies start to depict horses grazing and drinking in their natural surroundings, and this reverse fits in well with this scheme as the training of horses would plausibly have been a daily occurrence. Therefore, we must now turn to a consideration of the possible reasons behind the choice of this particular reverse type.

III. CHOICE OF COIN TYPE: ART, TRAINING OF THE HORSE, POLITICS

1. Art

The choice of this type could be seen as an attempt to keep up with trends in art. Martin suggests that the change from the *taurokathapsia* coinage to the use of the profile and facing head on the obverse of Larisaian coinage, was probably a response to current trends in numismatic art.⁶⁸ The wealth of the Thessalians is well attested in the ancient sources, and at the end of the 5th century BC, was used to attract philosophers, such as Gorgias of Leontini.⁶⁹ This wealth would have been attractive to itinerant craftsman. The influence of numismatic art from Magna Grecia is obvious from the obverse of Larisaian coinage, both in the profile head and the facing head of the eponymous nymph, Larisa.⁷⁰ However, the influence of Sicilian art on the obverse does not appear to have extended to the reverse.

So who was behind the choice of this reverse type, the die engraver or the minting authority? We must consider that Thessalians would have seen the Parthenon frieze for themselves.⁷¹ Thessaly had a tradition of, and high reputation for, cavalry, so it is plausible that Thessalian visitors to Athens would have had great interest in the representation of the Athenian cavalry on the frieze. Thucydides tells us of a skirmish at Phrygia in the summer of 431 BC, in which the Athenian cavalry

⁶⁵ See Giacosa (1973):51-54. For more recent discussion of the role of coinage and chariot racing in the construction of the Syracusan monarchy see Morgan (2015):61-69. On sport in Sicily and South Italy see Antonaccio (2014):192-208.

⁶⁶ For the horsemen of Tarentum on coinage see Maul-Mandelartz (1990):165-167; Rutter (1997):56; Giacosa (1973):54-60; Evans (1889):1-228. For the correspondences between this coinage and votive plaques, and in a Spartan context, see Christesen (2019):63-75.

⁶⁷ See Pendleton (2004):23-32; Giacosa (1973):60-62.

⁶⁸ Martin (1983):33 and (1985):38.

⁶⁹ Plato, *Meno*, 70a-b: the Thessalians were noted for their riches and their horsemanship, but now also for their wisdom due to Gorgias; Isok. 8.117: riches and abundant territory, and at 15.155 relates that Gorgias visited Thessaly at a time when the Thessalians were the most prosperous people in Greece.

⁷⁰ Herrmann (1925):39-40 arranged his chronology of the facing heads of Larisa on the basis that they were derived from the Arethusa of Kimon. Martin (1983):1-24 presented a new chronology which shows that the style of the facing head of Larisa evolved over time. For discussion of the arguments, and adjustments to the chronology, see Lorber (2008):119-142. See also Demetriadi (2004):18 who points to the presence of renowned artists at the court of the Macedonian king, Archelaos, at the end of the fifth century, who might then have moved south to Larisa, and these might have included artists from Magna Graecia.

⁷¹ I would like to thank Glenn Bugh for drawing my attention to this point.

was assisted by Thessalian horsemen, including a contingent from Larisa led by Polymedes and Aristonous.⁷² At this time, the frieze would have been largely complete, and it is plausible that it would have been of great interest to the Thessalian horsemen, including the Larisaians.

However, it is more likely that the suggestion came from the die engraver. Here we must not assume that the choice of type was down to the die engraver alone.⁷³ As Pafford observes, a coin was commissioned by the state with whom responsibility lay for choosing and approving the subject matter, but at the same time allowed the die engraver some space for innovation.⁷⁴ The minting authority would also, to some degree, be reliant on the knowledge of the die engraver regarding the latest trends in art generally. The stylistic details of the large number of grave stelai found in Larisa and nearby cities from this period, suggests the influence of craftsmen who had been working elsewhere, including Attica.⁷⁵ De Callataj makes the pertinent point that there would not have been enough work at one mint, consequently a die engraver would have needed to move from mint to mint.⁷⁶ An itinerant die engraver, who had moved up from the south of Greece, possibly Athens, would have had knowledge of the sculptural programme of the Acropolis. Hence, it is plausible that the minting authority at Larisa might have requested a die that both reflected daily equestrian life but was stylistically up to date, and this particular scene fulfilled both briefs.

Further evidence of this particular scene from the Parthenon frieze is found on an Athenian red-figure *pelike*, found at Nola, Italy, and dated to c. 430 BC.⁷⁷ This shows a similar image to that of Figure 7, and given the approximate date, we might presume that the subject for this vase was inspired by the frieze.⁷⁸ This image appears on Larisaian coinage roughly thirty years after the completion of the Parthenon, but as Kraay has shown, retrospection was not unusual in numismatic art.⁷⁹ However, Niels finds the spate of images of the *apobatēs* race on vase painting of the late 5th and early 4th century BC significant evidence for the influence of the Parthenon frieze, but makes the important point that these are adapted from the frieze, and not direct copies.⁸⁰ This can also be applied to the reverse type of Larisa, which as has been shown, is based on a section of the west frieze.

⁷² Thuc. 2.22. The Thessalian cavalry supported Athens under the terms of the old alliance, a reference to the treaty of 462/1 BC between Athens, the Thessalians and Argos (Thuc.1.102). The Thessalians reneged on this alliance by changing allegiance to the Spartans during the battle of Tanagra in 457 BC (Thuc. 1.107-108).

⁷³ De Callataj (2012):251.

⁷⁴ Pafford (2017):98. See also this chapter for an interesting discussion regarding the conventions of artistic composition on coins.

⁷⁵ Biesantz (1965):43 and n. 22, sees a definite change in Thessalian funerary art by the 4th century BC, from the severe style to one that is more fluid, and observes that the traditional motifs are given new treatment. He notes that there are parallels in Attic funerary art, and suggests that non-Attic sculptors who had gone through the 'Parthenon *schule*,' were now changing to this leading style.

⁷⁶ De Callataj (2012):250. One of the middle facing head examples of this reverse type carries the small letters 'ΕΠ' below the belly of the horse, Nomos 3, Lot 1133, and a late profile head drachma with the reverse depicting a horse in an elevated trot, has the letters 'ΕΠΙ' in the same position, Triton XV, Lot 183. These same letters, similarly placed, are also found on a drachma from Pharsalos, Lavva (2001):163 V.76/R.96. We should be wary of assuming that 'ΕΠ' and 'ΕΠΙ' indicate the same craftsman. As 'ΕΠΙ' worked at two cities it is safe to assume he was a die engraver and not a magistrate. On the trotting horse reverses see Lorber (2008):129, and for discussion of artists signatures on the facing head obverses of Larisa see Lorber (1992):261. For discussion of the signing artists on Pharsalian coinage see Lavva (2001):54-93, but see also the reservations of Fischer-Bossert (2003):400-402.

⁷⁷ Niels (2001):208 and Figure 144. Beazley Archive 215018.

⁷⁸ Niels (2001):204, comments that vase paintings that most resemble the Parthenon frieze are dated to around 430 BC. For discussion of images on pots exported from Athens, see Osborne (2007):85-95.

⁷⁹ Kraay (1976):118-119.

⁸⁰ Niels (2001):208.



Figure 8. Side A of Athenian red-figure *pelike*, c. 430 BC. Berlin, Antikensammlung F2357. © Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preussischer Kulturbesitz. Photo: Johannes Laurentius.

Taking the evidence together, the sculptural relief of the frieze, vase painting and coinage, raises the possibility that this particular image was more popular than extant evidence would suggest.

2. Training of the horse

It is important to see this coin type in the context of daily life. In Euripides' 5th century play *Elektra*, Thessalians are reputed for their prowess both with training horses and butchering a bull.⁸¹ Evidence from the early 4th century work, the *Dissoi Logoi*, 2.11 (fr.2 Diels), echoes this practical approach:

Θεσσαλοῖσι δὲ καλὸν τὼς ἵππῳς ἐκ τᾶς ἀγέλας λαβόντι αὐτῷ δαμάσαι καὶ τὼς ὀρέας-βῶν τε λαβόντι αὐτῷ σφάζαι καὶ ἐκδεῖραι καὶ κατακόψαι, ἐν Σικελίαι δὲ αἵσχροδὸν καὶ δώλων ἔργα.

⁸¹ Eur. *El.* 815-8.

To the Thessalians it is seemly for a man to select horses and mules from a herd himself and train them, and also to take one of the cattle and slaughter, skin, and cut it up himself, but in Sicily these tasks are disgraceful and the work of slaves.⁸²

Riding and the training of horses was an integral part of daily life for a Thessalian man. As Aston and Kerr put it, the relationship between man and horse was one of 'functional equestrianism'.⁸³ In contrast, Xenophon recommends that Athenian cavalymen, both young and old, send a young horse to professionals for its basic education.⁸⁴ As mentioned above, it is significant that the horseman preparing his horse on the Parthenon frieze does not carry a whip; his horse is already trained in this procedure. Thus, it is plausible that the intention of these types was to show the Thessalian horseman in the process of training his horse, and attests to the thoroughness of this training by the horsemen themselves. Hence, to try and identify specific reasons for cavalry training, we must examine the political context in which these dies were struck.

3. Politics

As discussed above, the implementation of the head of the nymph Larisa on the obverse may have been an effort to keep up with trends in numismatic art, but there is another factor. In her die study of the early profile head issues of Larisa, Lorber makes the plausible connection between the beginning of the profile head issues and military operations, and gives an approximate date of 404 BC.⁸⁵ According to our sources, this was a turbulent period beset by civil strife, and the end of the fifth century saw the rise of Lykophron of Pherai.⁸⁶ Xenophon tells us that in 404 BC, he defeated in battle those who opposed him, including Larisaans.⁸⁷ Aristippos of Larisa, a member of the Aleuada family and possibly the main opponent of Lykophron, was bound by *xenia* with the Persian ruling house and requested aid from Cyrus the Younger 'being oppressed by his enemies in his native country', 'πνεζόμενος ὑπὸ τῶν οἴκοι ἀντιστασιωτῶν', asking for three months' pay for two thousand mercenaries, but Cyrus gave him six months' pay for four thousand mercenaries.⁸⁸ This evidence suggests political turmoil, and is possibly reflected in estimates of coin production at Larisa. In her die study, Lorber demonstrates that the early profile head issues were produced in two Series, on a minimum of two anvils, and places the reverse die under discussion in Series One, as one of the first produced.⁸⁹ Based on the work of de Callataÿ, who estimated that four obverse dies for tetradrachms represent one month's production, Lorber substitutes drachms for tetradrachms and suggests that the seven obverse dies of Series One implies seven weeks of minting.⁹⁰ She found

⁸² Trans. Sprague (1972):282. For discussion of livestock in ancient Thessaly see Howe (2011): 19-21.

⁸³ Aston and Kerr (2018):25, who suggest that the horse would likely have been used for herding as well.

⁸⁴ Xen. *PH*. 2.1. Xenophon might have written *Peri Hippikēs* in the early 350s, so after the issue of these coins, but close enough to be a useful guide. An earlier work on horsemanship by Simon of Athens, dated to the 420s, is only extant in very fragmentary form. Unfortunately, there is no extant work on horsemanship by a Thessalian.

⁸⁵ Lorber (2014):26.

⁸⁶ For Thessaly at the end of the 5th century see Sprawski (1999):34-38; Martin (1985):85-88.

⁸⁷ Xen. *Hell*. 2.3.4. On Lykophron see Sprawski (2004):446-448, and (1999):38-39.

⁸⁸ Xen. *Anab*. 1.1.10. The Aleuads were the leading family of Larisa. For discussion see Helly (1995):12-24. Sprawski (1999):40, points out that it cannot be excluded that the enemies of Aristippos were internal factions within the city of Larisa. On mercenaries in this period see Trundle (2004).

⁸⁹ Lorber (2014):22-24. Series One comprises seven obverse dies and fourteen reverse dies, and Series Two comprises four obverse and nine reverse dies.

⁹⁰ Ibid. 25; De Callataÿ (1995):300-301. Based on tetradrachms, de Callataÿ (2011):9, 12-13, 23 gives an estimate of average

that ‘this short period of production, halved by the use of two anvils, suggests we are dealing with an emergency coinage.’⁹¹ Although the calculations should be approached with caution, the use of several anvils does suggest an emphasis on speed of production.⁹²

It is perhaps not by chance that this reverse type appears again in the first half of the 4th century, placed in the second of the two groups of middle facing head drachms, so c. 370- 360.⁹³ After the death of Jason of Pherai in 370 BC, his brothers, Polydoros and Polyphron, assumed the office of *tagos*, but Polydoros was murdered leaving Polyphron to rule alone.⁹⁴ According to Xenophon, Polyphron ruled like a tyrant, executing nine of the leading citizens of Pharsalos, and driving many from Larisa into exile, but in the following year, 369 BC, the Pheraian nephew of Jason, Alexander, slew Polyphron and took over the *tageia*.⁹⁵ Diodoros tells us that Alexander was hated for his violent methods of rule.⁹⁶ As Sprawski points out, it appears that the Aleuadae of Larisa sought assistance from the Macedonian king, Alexander II, almost immediately after he had taken power, for both political and economic reasons, the latter concerning control of the port of Pagasai by Pherai.⁹⁷ The Macedonian king and the exiled Larisaans removed Pheraian control of Larisa, but installed a Macedonian garrison in the city.⁹⁸ Hostilities continued throughout the 360s, during which many men were lost.⁹⁹ Although horses might have been lost in combat, they would also have been put out of action through injury.¹⁰⁰ Consequently, in times of political unrest there would have been a greater need for a supply of mounts. In contrast to other areas of Greece, the proportion of Thessalian cavalry to hoplites was high, approximately 1:2.¹⁰¹ Definite references to cavalry action are found on the reverse types depicting an armed horseman, struck at Larisa in the second half of the 5th century, and again in the 4th century, in the later series of middle facing heads.¹⁰²

Bronze coinage began to be issued at Larisa c. 400 BC, and the majority of reverse types appear in similar form on both silver and bronze coinage. It is significant that this type is only found on silver drachms, both with the profile head, and with the facing head, obverse. These issues may have been used in part for military purposes, either to pay civic contingents, or mercenaries. Martin surmised that one didrachm was ‘most likely’ to have been the horseman’s daily pay.¹⁰³ The presumption that the daily pay was one didrachm is taken from Xenophon’s account of the Spartan proposal to allow cities to contribute money to them instead of troops in 388 BC: three Aeginetan

obverse die productivity of 20,000 coins, and Marchetti (1999):109 gives a slightly lower estimate of 15,000 coins, which equates to a total estimated emission of 220,000 or 165,000 coins. For the possibility of calculating coin production and the methods employed, see the concerns of Buttrey and Buttrey (1997):129-134 on de Callataj (1995), and more recently see Buttrey (2011):105-112.

⁹¹ Lorber (2014):25.

⁹² I would like to thank Simon Glenn for this observation.

⁹³ Lorber (2000):8, also Lorber (2008):127; Herrmann (1925) Series B-H.

⁹⁴ Xen. *Hell.* 6.4.33. Xenophon comments that it was thought that Polydoros murdered his brother, Polyphron.

⁹⁵ Xen. *Hell.* 6.4.34-35.

⁹⁶ Diod. 15.61.2.

⁹⁷ Sprawski (2006):139-140. Diod. 15.61.3-4.

⁹⁸ Diod. 15.61.5.

⁹⁹ Diod. 15.80.1.

¹⁰⁰ Thuc. 7.27 relates that the horses of the Athenian cavalry were injured in combat and lamed by the hard ground. On the health of the ancient Greek warhorse see Hyland (2013):497-504.

¹⁰¹ Aston and Kerr (2018):6, and 6-11 for discussion of the Thessalian cavalry. See also Strootman (2010-2011):51-67.

¹⁰² For a fifth-century example, Triton XV, Lot 158, and for the fourth century, Triton XV, Lot 292.

¹⁰³ Martin (1983):28. See also Sprawski (1999):113. The didrachm was the largest denomination issued by Larisa, dated tentatively to c. 370 BC by Martin (1983):27-29, but Lorber (2000):11 prefers a slightly later date.

obols for a hoplite and four times that amount for a horseman.¹⁰⁴ We cannot be certain that these rates were also applicable in Thessaly, but it is highly plausible that, before the didrachm, horsemen were paid in drachms. The reverse type under discussion was an indirect advertisement for the Thessalian horse, specifically the Larisaian, and sits well among the other types of the fourth century which emphasize their well-fed young stock, fertile brood mares and horses trained to a high degree.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

To conclude, what this reverse type from Larisa does not provide, is evidence for the *aphippodroma*. However, what it does show is rare evidence for the training of a horse. This discussion has demonstrated that this reverse type cannot be taken as evidence for a man mounting his horse during the horse race known as the *aphippodroma* but instead is a snapshot of daily life; a horseman training a horse in readiness for mounting. It has been suggested that this coin type served several purposes. For the minting authority of Larisa, it was a means of keeping abreast of trends in art, and it also attested to the thorough and personal training of their horses. Finally, it was issued during a time of intense military activity for Larisa, due to civil war with the tyrants of Pherai, Lykophron and Alexander. We must not fall into the trap of the circular argument, seeking to make the evidence fit political events, but the fact that this type appears at times when there was intense military activity at Larisa, is significant. Unfortunately, beyond the inscriptions, earlier evidence for the *aphippodroma* continues to elude us.

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¹⁰⁴ Xen. *Hell.* 5.2.21.

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