

Marin Zaninović

## Herakleia on the Island of Hvar

UDK: 904:711.424(497.5)''-04''

Faculty of Philosophy, Department  
for Archaeology, Zagreb

There are about thirty Herakleias known in the ancient world. One of them situated in the Adriatic Sea is mentioned in the *Periplus* by Pseudo Scylax. After the mention of Histria he describes the sailing through Liburnia and continues in the chapter 22:

“After the Liburni there come the Illyrian people. The Illyrii dwell by the sea as far as Chaonia which lies opposite Corcyra, the island of Alcinous. There is situated the Greek city called Herakleia with a harbor. There dwell the Lotus-eaters, barbarian peoples with the names Hierastamnae, Bulini and Hylli, who are neighbors of Bulini. This people tell that Hyllus, the son of Hercules has his dwelling among them. They are a barbarian people occupying a peninsula a little smaller than the Peloponnesus. After leaving the peninsula the navigation is in the straight line. Here are living the Bulini who are also an Illyrian people. The voyage along the land of the Bulini as far as the river Nestos takes one day.”<sup>1</sup>

The location of the site of this Herakleia with a harbor is a matter of discussion of the Croatian, as well as of the other archaeologists and historians since the time of discovery of the coin hoard near the village of Vrbanj in the central plain of the island of Hvar in 1835 (Fig. 1). This was the chora or the territory of the polis of Pharos, present-day Štari Grad, well known for its ancient remains.<sup>2</sup> The hoard consisted of 162 bronze coins, of these 113 large denominations of Pharos, 55 of which were overstruck with DI and Ionio emissions, and 49 belong to Herakleia. On the obverse of this coin there is the head of Hercules and the bow and the club on the reverse (Fig. 2).<sup>3</sup> The authors looked for the site of our Herakleia on the Illyrian littoral from

<sup>1</sup> Scylacis Caryandensis *Periplus*, *Geographi Graeci Minores*, vol. 1, pp. 15-96. M. Suić, The east Adriatic coast in the *Periplus* of Pseudo Scylax, *Rad Jugoslavenske Akademije*, vol. 306, Zagreb 1955, 121-181.

<sup>2</sup> J. Jeličić Radonić et al., *Pharos, Ancient Štari Grad, Catalogue of Exhibition*, Zagreb 1995. M. Zaninović, Hvar od prapovijesti do dolaska Hrvata, in M. Mihovilović et al., *Otok Hvar*, Matica Hrvatska, Zagreb 1995, 139-168. M. Zaninović, The Ancient Greeks on the eastern (Croatian) Adriatic coast, *Arheološki radovi i rasprave*, 14, Zagreb 2004, 1-57. B. Kirigin, *Pharos, Parian Settlement. Contribution to the Study of the Greek Civilization in Dalmatia*, *Vjesnik za arheologiju i historiju dalmatinsku*, 96, Split 2004, 9-302.

<sup>3</sup> J. Brunšmid, *Die Inschriften und Münzen der griechische Städte Dalmatiens*, Wien 1898, 54-58. M. Bonačić Mandinić, The coinage of Herakleia in the Archaeological Museum in Split, *Vjesnik za arheologiju i historiju dalmatinsku*, 81, Split 1988, 65-80.

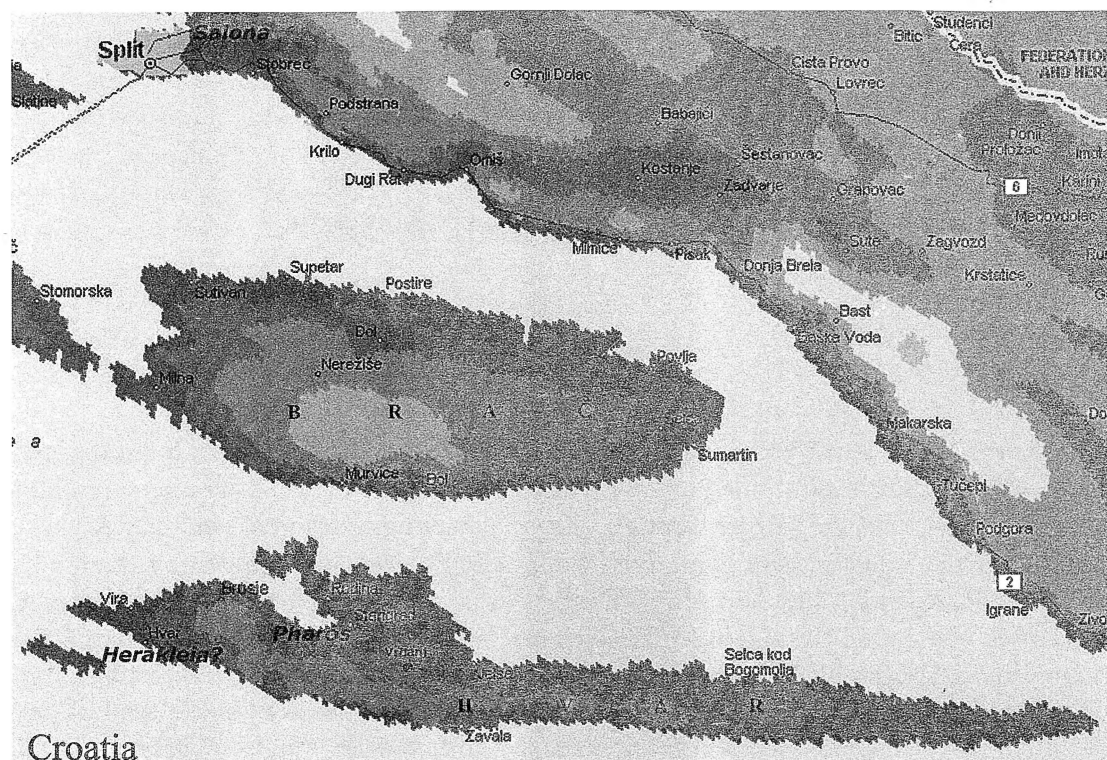


Fig. 1

the Hyllic peninsula to the area of the island of Corfou.<sup>4</sup> The text of Periplus for that part of our coast has been dated after the period of the Syracusan domination in the Adriatic from 398-344 B.C., i.e. before 330 B.C.<sup>5</sup> This is the time when after the political and strategical postsyracusan vacuum in this part of the Adriatic appears the new political force with the arrival of the Illyrian tribe of the Ardiaei. According to Theopompus after the defeat by the Celts in 359/358 B.C., they descended on the Adriatic littoral and spread from the estuary of the Naron river to the lake of Scodra on the south. The impact of their arrival has been felt by the Greeks in this area. Especially the polis of Pharos as all the island of Hvar, whose eastern tip is very near to the mainland and to the Naron river area, so easily accessible and without the protection of the Syracusan navy.<sup>6</sup>

This new historical situation induced the modern authors, who treated these events, to date this hoard from the middle to the end of the 4th century B.C. Today are known about three hundred pieces of the Herakleian coins. They are found mostly on the island of Hvar, in the town of Hvar and in the area of the polis of Pharos (Stari Grad).

<sup>4</sup> M. Suić, o.c., 212.

<sup>5</sup> F. Gisinger, *Skylax*, PWRE V HB, Stuttgart 1927, col. 645. Idem, *Skymno*, PWRE V HB, Stuttgart 1927, col. 662-687. M Suić, o.c., 149.

<sup>6</sup> M. Zaninović, *The Illyrian tribe of the Dalmatae*, Godišnjak CBI, 4, Sarajevo 1966, 70-76. Idem, *The Navy of the Ardiaeans as the base of their power*, *Opuscula archaeologica*, 16, Zagreb 1992, 103-115. Idem, *Celts on the Adriatic Sea*, *Opuscula archaeologica*, 25, Zagreb 2001, 57-63. J. Wilkes, *Dalmatia*, London 1969, 15 and passim.

Some are found in several places along the coast.<sup>7</sup> As the majority of these coins have been found on the island of Hvar in its two main settlements from prehistory till today, we have to place their mint on the island. Already J. Brunšmid in his classical work about the inscriptions and numismatic of the Greek cities in Dalmatia supposed this solution for the site of Herakleia, but his proposition was somehow lost by the later authors. In my paper about the site of Herakleia published in 1992, I tried to locate it

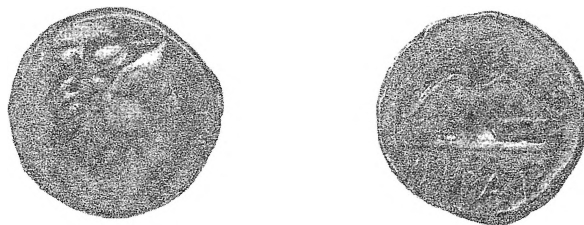


Fig. 2

in the harbor of today's town of Hvar in the western part of the island.<sup>8</sup> The island of Hvar is 68 km long in the E-W direction, and his mountain range divides the island in the separate areas, the western, the central and the eastern one. The same range steeply divides its northern and southern side, where cliffs in some parts are making the passage impossible. Before the construction of the modern road in 1938 one has to travel nearly five hours by walking or mule riding from Hvar to Stari Grad, same as in the antiquity. The sea travel took about 3-4 hours depending on the weather and the wind. For this reason these settlements, about 16 miles distant from each other, were always rather separate entities in their historical development.

In my explorations around the town of Hvar in the summer of 1990, I have discovered the new native hill-fort settlement over the harbor of Hvar. Together with other pre-Greek and Greek archaeological remains this site strongly accentuates the importance of this harbor and the dominant position of native Illyrian strongholds. From that new hill-fort the whole central Adriatic Sea, from Italy to the Illyrian mainland could be controlled. This may be the answer why the colonists from Pharos have settled in the central part of the island. Most probably, the local inhabitants did not permit them to stay in their harbor.<sup>9</sup>

The well known fact is that the port of Hvar is situated on the main maritime route along the eastern Adriatic coast. The fertile fields to the east of the town as well as the

<sup>7</sup> J. Brunšmid, I.c. M. Bonačić Mandinić, o.c. D. Rendić Miočević, O pitanju prekova u emisijama grčko-ilirskih kovnica na Jadranu, Iliri i antički svijet - The Illyrians and the Ancient World, Split 1989, 381-390. There are other numismatic papers of prof. Rendić Miočević. G. Gorini, Monete greche riconiate in Illiria, Actes du 9ème Congrès intern. de numismatique, Berne, Sept. 1979, Louvain-le-Neuve. Luxembourg 1982, 141-146. P. Visonà, Early Greek Bronze Coinage in Dalmatia and the Škudljivac Hoard, A Reappraisal of IGGH, 418-420, Proceedings of the 9th Intern. Congr. de numismatique, Berne, Sept. 1979, Louvain-le-Neuve. Luxembourg 1982, 681-689. I. Mirmik, Coin Hoards in Yugoslavia, Oxford 1981, 34-35.

<sup>8</sup> M. Zaninović, Heraclea Pharia, Vjesnik Arheološkog muzeja u Zagrebu, 24-25, Zagreb 1992, 35-48. Idem, The Ancient Geeks on the eastern (Croatian) Adriatic coast, Arheološki radovi i rasprave, 14, Zagreb 2004, 17-18.

<sup>9</sup> M. Zaninović, Hvar-The Island's Hill-forts as a Defensive System in the Protohistory and Antiquity, Histria Antiqua, 6, Pula 2000, 39-41. Idem, Heraclea Pharia, 41-42.

water springs, made the site of Hvar the obligatory anchorage for all the ships which have to pass by. This traffic is confirmed by several ancient wrecks in the surrounding sea. The other finds also attest the intensity of ancient life in this part of the island. There are also numerous finds of coins from many ancient Greek cities. Among them, naturally, there are coins of Pharos, Herakleia, coins overstruck with the letters DI, DIM, as well as the still unsolved personality of Ionios. It is not accidental that after taking it in possession the republic of Venice chose Hvar as the main port for the supply of her navy, sailing toward east and as such it functioned from 1409-1740. Still today in this port you can find all sorts of vessels especially in the summer. So, who ruled over this port from prehistory onwards always profited, and that is the answer why in the particular historical situation, although for the short period of time, existed the settlement that minted the coins with the name of Herakleia. According to the opinions of the majority of the specialists who wrote about these coins like Bruunšmidt, Rendič Miočević, Mirmik, Gorini, Visona and others, they were minted in the second half of the 4th century B.C.<sup>10</sup> Prof. G. Gorini who wrote several papers about the Greek monetary circulation in our area, in his last treaty on this theme from the year 1999, expressly stated that the emissions of Ionios, Pharos and Herakleia were circulating simultaneously as confirmed by the hoards from Škudljivac and Stari Grad. These hoards are the result of the disturbed postsyracusan period. The metrological and stylistical content of these coins is similar to the syracusan emissions of Zeus Eleutherios/the lightning which are now dated in posttimoleontean period i.e. after 337 B.C.<sup>11</sup>

The *Periplus*, a practical naval manual by Ps. Scylax with his mention of the Greek city of Herakleia with a harbor, is in the chronological concordance with the minting of Herakleian coins. As these coins are mostly found on the island of Hvar, especially in the town of the same name and in Stari Grad (Pharos), I think that the site of this short lived Herakleia has to be placed in the harbor of Hvar, because of its naval and historical position. This name we can not attribute to Pharos because its mint functioned in the same time and continued in the 3rd century B.C. So the logical solution is to look for Herakleia in the important harbor and settlement of present-day town of Hvar.

Taken together all historical and archaeological, maritime and strategical as well as economic reasons, I am convinced that our short lived, let us name it Herakleia Pharia, has to be placed in a harbor of today's Hvar. The growing dominance of the neighboring Issa under the protection of the Romans as the appearance of the Ardiaean state and thalassocracy have, most probably, erased its existence.<sup>12</sup>

To my dear colleague, once my student, dr. Vera Bitrakova Grozdanova from the classical Macedonia with the splendid city of Herakleia Lyncestis, I from Herakleia Pharia, dedicate this paper with sincere wishes for her always fruitful research of the glorious ancient roots of her beautiful homeland!

<sup>10</sup> See notes 3 and 7.

<sup>11</sup> G. Gorini, *Aspetti della presenza di moneta greca in Adriatico, La Dalmazia e l'altra sponda - Problemi di archaiologia adriatica*, Firenze (Leo S. Olschki), 1999, 171-173. Differently B. Kirigin in the same volume p. 150, against prevalent opinions for the second part for the 4th century. The same in a paper in the note 3, p. 89.

<sup>12</sup> M. Zaninović, *Heraclea Pharia*, p. 40, *Idem*, *The navy of the Ardiaeans as the Base of their Power*, pp. 108-109.