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# CHARON COINS FOUND IN PARION CHAMBER TOMB 5\*

The object of the study was a small complex of 14 coins of Charon found in tomb 5 of the Eastern necropolis of Parion. Coins that attracted our attention were released in Coela (2), Perinthos (1), and Parion (11). Consequently, the Parionites preferred to leave the coins of their own polis in the tomb. It is noteworthy that the earliest artifacts are about three centuries older than the latest ones. Moreover, the earliest of them, issued under Julius Caesar and Claudius I, are worn out much more than the others. There is every reason to believe that they have been in circulation for a long time. The rest of the coins date back to the period from Antoninus Pius to Gallienus. The conclusion is that the burials in the tomb took place over a period of about a century, or rather, from 130 until 260 CE.

**Key words:** Parion, chamber tomb, coin, province of Rome, Charon.

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# Фатьма Кизильялчин Оярчин, Коркмаз Мерал

# МОНЕТЫ ХАРОНА, НАЙДЕННЫЕ В ГРОБНИЦЕ 5 ПАРИОНА

Объектом исследования стал небольшой комплекс из 14 монет Харона, найденных в гробнице 5 Восточного некрополя Париона. Привлекшие наше внимание артефакты были выпущены в Коэле (2), Перинфе (1) и в Парионе (11). Следовательно, париониты предпочитали оставлять в гробнице монеты своего полиса. Примечательно, что самые ранние артефакты примерно на 3 века старше позднейших. Причём самые ранние из них, выпущенные при Юлии Цезаре и Клавдии I, изношены куда сильнее прочих. Есть все основания полагать, что они долгое время находились в обращении. Остальные монеты датируются периодом от Антонина Пия до Галлиена. Приходим к выводу, что захоронения в гробнице 5 происходили на протяжении примерно столетия, а, точнее, в 130—260 гг. н. э.

Ключевые слова: Парион, камерная гробница, монета, римская провинция, Харон.

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# Introduction

The ruins of the city of Parion, located in the village of Kemer within the borders of the Biga district of Çanakkale province in the north of the Troad Region, are concentrated on the Bodrum Cape, which extends like a tongue towards the sea to the northeast of the village, and on the coasts

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(Fig. 1; Başaran 1999: 349; 2001: 19; 2006: 185; 2008: 133; 2012: 297; Keleş, Oyarçin 2019a: 337; 2019b: 191; 2021: 392; 2022: 1). As a result of the excavations carried out in the city of Parion to date, a total of 9 chamber tombs have been unearthed (Çırak et al. 2019: 127—142). Among these nine chamber tombs, Chamber Tombs 1—5 are located in the Toprak Kuleler Area; Chamber Tomb 6 is located on the western slope of the hill where the aqueduct of the city is located; Chamber Tomb 7 is located on the northern slope of the hill overlooking the Marmara Sea in the area known as Taşkule; and Chamber Tomb 8 and Chamber Tomb 9 are located in the South (Tavşandere) Necropolis (Sulan 2018: 19).



Fig. 1. Parion City Aerial Photograph (Parion Excavation Archive).

Chamber Tomb 5, where the Charon coins are found, is located in the southeast of Parion, at the location called Toprak Kuleler, within the Eastern Necropolis of the city. The Eastern Necropolis of Parion is situated in a valley that provides access to the city over a small stream bed running along the outside of the city wall. This area houses four other chamber tombs that are architecturally similar and located in the north-south direction (Fig. 2).

Chamber Tomb 5, one of the five tombs built in the north-south direction in the Eastern Necropolis of Parion, was unearthed for the first time during the excavations in 2017. It measures  $3.06 \times 3.00$  m and has a height of 2.65 m the tomb's interior is organized as a single space measuring  $1.86 \times 1.80$  m and divided into sections (Keleş 2020: 523—534). The floor of the chamber tomb was formed after the bedrock was shaved and levelled. In Chamber Tomb 5, the tomb interior contexts have been disturbed from 0.90 m above the floor and severely damaged architecturally (Sulan 2018: 44). In Chamber Tomb 5, which probably belonged to a family from Parion, the skeletons of many individuals buried at certain time intervals were recovered (Çırak et al. 2019: 127—142; Kaba et al. 2019: 487—506; Şarbak et al. 2021: 1467—1472).



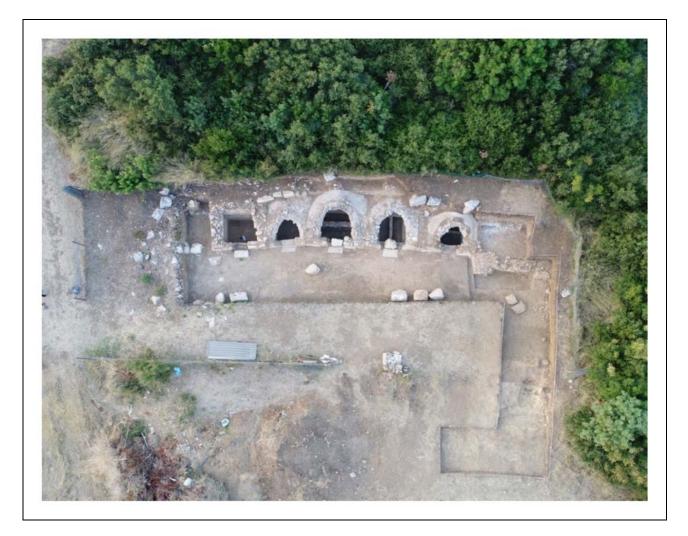


Fig. 2. Parion East Necropolis Chamber Tombs General View (Parion Excavation Archive).

In the northeast corner of the tomb, where 33 individuals were buried at different times, bone fragments belonging to previous burials were found piled at the bottom of the wall to make room for new individuals for multiple burials (Fig. 3). There is no unity of direction in the skeletons inside the tomb; some of them are oriented in the south-north direction while others are oriented in the north-south direction. Grave gifts were also found next to some skeletons (Cırak et al. 2019: 127—142).

Paleodemographic analyses of the skeletons from Parion Chamber Tomb 5 revealed the exact ages of many individuals, while the exact age ranges of others could not be determined due to extreme damage. In Parion Chamber Tomb 5, the youngest individual was nine months old, while the oldest female was 57. The oldest male individual in the tomb was 56 years old. The results of the gender analysis on the skeletons from Chamber Tomb 5 revealed that; 13 of the 33 individuals were female, 13 were male, 5 were children, and 2 were infants (Fig. 4). This equality between male and female sexes suggests that the individuals in this tomb may have been spouses. The spouses were likely buried in the same grave (Çırak et al. 2019: 127—142).



Fig. 3. Parion East Necropolis Chamber Tomb 5 (Parion Excavation Archive).

Depending on the morphological structure and usage of the individuals in Room Tomb 5, it was also determined that some diseases occurred in their teeth. Depending on the tooth morphology, some pathologies differ in both male and female individuals. The dental pathology examinations of individuals evinced the following pathologies; 3.6% had dental caries, 17.95% had tartar, 6.4% had antemortem tooth loss, 21.17% had hypoplasia, and 59.72% had alveolar bone loss rate. Antemortem tooth loss rates were 6.45% in males and 5.12% in females (Şarbak et al. 2021: 1467—1472).

In addition to the 33 individuals found in Parion Chamber Tomb 5, many grave gifts and a total of 14 coins belonging to Coela (2), Perinthos (1), and Parion (11) were found in the tomb (Cat. No. 1—14; Pl. 1). These 14 Charon coins belong to a wide date range of about three centuries from Iulius Caesar to Gallienus. The fact that some of the skeletons in Chamber Tomb 5 were collected and moved to the corner for new burials indicates that the tomb was used for many years (Çırak et al. 2019: 127—142; Kaba et al. 2019: 487—506; Şarbak et al. 2021: 1467—1472). The contextual finds found together with the coins are further data supporting this result (Keleş 2020: 523—534).

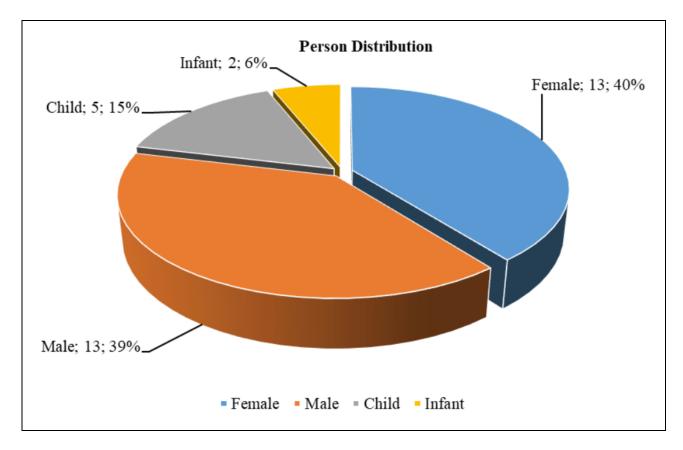


Fig. 4. Percentage Distribution of the Number of Individuals in Chamber Tomb 5 Community.

All 14 Charon coins recovered from Parion Chamber Tomb 5 are Roman provincial coins. The coins date between 45 BCE and 253—268 CE and include examples belonging to 11 different emperors/emperor queens. The distribution of the Parion coins found in Chamber Tomb 5 per the emperors showed that Iulius Caesar was represented by (1) coin, Claudius I by (1), Antoninus Pius by (2), Commodus by (1), Geta by (2), Elagabalus by (1), Gordian III by (1), Philip I by (1) and Gallienus by (1). The obverse of the Iulius Caesar coin shows a woman's head wearing Stephane and the ethnicon [C G I P], while the reverse shows Praefericulum and D on both sides. While seven of the remaining ten coins depict the Priest-Shepherd, two depict Artemis Phosphoros, and one shows she-wolf Lupa standing, r., looking back and feeding twins (Remus and Romulus).

On the reverse of the Perinthian coin of the Tranquillina Period, represented by a single example in Room Tomb 5, Homonoia is standing, holding a patera and cornucopia. Of the two Coela coins recovered from the tomb, one dates to the reign of Severus Alexander and the other to that of Gordian III. A ship's prow and cornucopia on it constitute the reverse side of both coins.

The excavations to uncover the other 4 Chamber Tombs located just east of Parion Chamber Tomb 5 yielded 13 coins (Fig. 5).

Only 8 of the 13 coins in Chamber Tombs 1—4, which had fewer burials compared to Chamber Tomb 5, are Charon coins. The earliest Charon coin in Chamber Tomb 4 belongs to the reign of Iulius Caesar (45 BCE), while the latest to that of Gordian III (238—244 CE). There is only one coin in Chamber Tomb 3, dated to the reign of Antoninus Pius (138—161 CE). The earliest coins in Chamber Tomb 2 belong to the reign of Claudius I (41—54 CE), while the latest belong to that of Caracalla (198—217 CE). A comparison of the coins in Chamber Tomb 5 and Chamber Tombs 1—4 periodically shows that the earliest dated coins belong to 45 BCE during the reign of Iulius Caesar. When we take into account the coins discovered in the four additional Chamber Tombs, the most recently dated coin is the one from the Gallienus Period found in Chamber Tomb 5. This finding aligns with the observation that this particular coin was in circulation for a longer time.

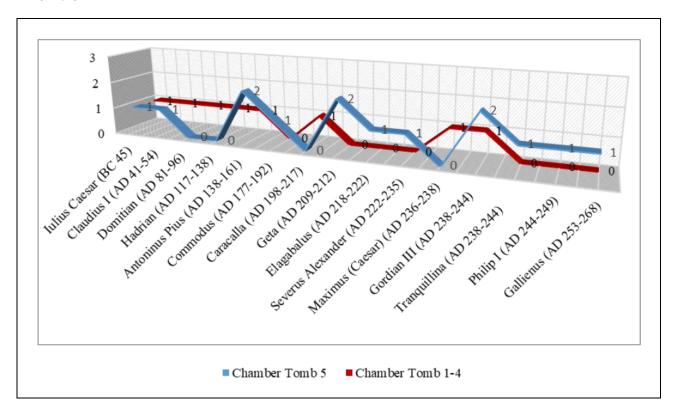


Fig. 5. Distribution of Roman state coins found in Chamber Tombs 1—5 according to their minting years.

It is observed that all of the Charon coins recovered from the Chamber Tombs are Roman provincial coins. The primary reason for this is that during the Early Roman Period (1<sup>st</sup> — 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE) in Parion, the bronze coins circulated were mostly city mints instead of imperial ones (Kızılyalçın Oyarçin 2023: 76). Furthermore, the fact that 11 of the 14 coins recovered from Room Tomb 5 were minted in Parion indicates that Parionites preferred to use their own coins as Charon coins. Regarding the characteristics of the Charon coin tradition, the coins left in the mouths of individuals in tombs were generally of low value, placed at the time of death, and left to be given to Charon (Stewens 1991: 216; Keleş 2014: 121). An important finding from the bronze Parion Roman provincial coins recovered from the chamber tombs of the Eastern Necropolis is that some of them were covered with a very thin gold leaf (Fig. 6). The same practice was observed on the coin recovered from the mouth of an adult female skeleton in the TSM 1 grave in the South (Tavşandere) Necropolis of Parion (Kasapoğlu 2013: 120), which indicates that this tradition, uncommon in Anatolia, was practised as a burial custom in Parion (Kızılyalçın Oyarçin 2023: 79).



Fig. 6. Gold leaf coin recovered from Parion East Necropolis Chamber Tomb (Parion Excavation Archive).

#### Conclusion

A general examination of the Parion Charon coin tradition evinced that the coins placed in the tombs were bronze coins belonging to the city of Parion or neighbouring cities with low purchasing power. Although coins belonging to different cities have been found in the tombs of Parion as Charon coins, nearly 90% of the coins consist of Parion's own mints. This indicates that Parionites mostly preferred to leave their own coins as Charon coins.

It is also remarkable regarding the Charon coins recovered from the Chamber Tombs and the South (Tavşandere) Necropolis that some bronze coins were covered with a very thin gold leaf. These Roman provincial coins were probably covered with a thin gold leaf before being left in the tomb as part of a burial tradition by the Parionites, who were financially middle class and above. Besides this custom, low-weight imitation/fake gold coins obtained from coins minted from precious metal by imprinting their image on gold leaf were also used as Charon coins. These were found in some tombs considered to belong to the nobility of Parion due to the large number of finds inside. The two traditions of plating a bronze city coin with a thin gold leaf and placing it in the tomb as a Charon coin and using imitation fake gold coins minted with gold leaf as Charon coins are mostly encountered in the tombs of Thracia and Macedonia. These two Charon coin traditions constitute important archaeological data showing Parion's strong ties with Thracia and Macedonia Regions.

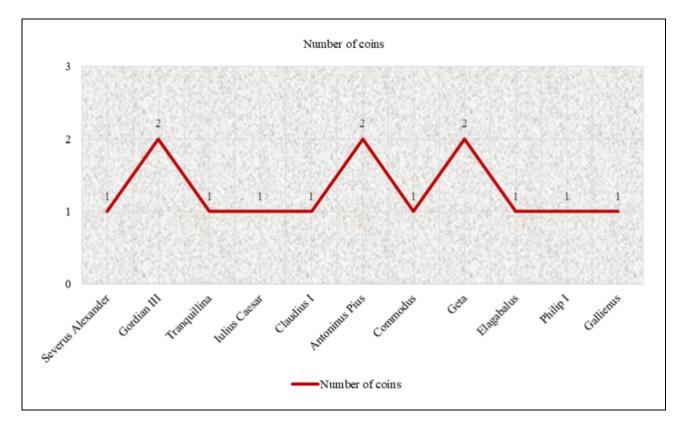


Fig. 7. Distribution of Charon coins found in Parion Chamber Tomb 5 according to Emperors/Empresses.

Among the 14 Charon coins found in Parion Chamber Tomb 5, the coins of Iulius Caesar and Claudius I are quite worn compared to others, suggesting that these coins were the first coins placed in the tomb in the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE after a long period of circulation. The other coins found in Chamber Tomb 5, dated between the reigns of Antoninus Pius and Gallienus, represent the tomb's periods of use (Fig. 7). Apart from the coins, an oil lamp found on the hip of the individual lying dorsally on the floor in the east-west direction dated to the first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE, a lagynos found on the chest of the same individual dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE, two glass unguentarium

found on different individuals dated to the  $2^{nd} - 3^{rd}$  century CE, a gold earring dated to the  $2^{nd}$  century CE, beads dated to the  $2^{nd} - 3^{rd}$  century CE and many terracotta artefacts dated to the  $2^{nd}$  century CE (Sulan 2018: 44—55) were unearthed from the tomb. Therefore, finds other than the coins recovered from Chamber Tomb 5 support our idea that the tomb was used between the reigns of Antoninus Pius and Gallienus ( $2^{nd}$  century CE and the first half of the  $3^{rd}$  century CE). In conclusion, the Charon coins found in Chamber Tomb 5 of the Parion East Necropolis, which is probably a Parionite family tomb, when evaluated together with the anthropological and archaeological data from the tomb, indicate that 33 individuals were buried in the tomb at certain time intervals over a period of about a century.

#### **CATALOGUE**

### **Province of Thrace**

### Coela

### Severus Alexander, 222—235

Obv. [] [ALEXANDER]

Laureate, draped and cuirassed bust of Severus Alexander, r.

Rev. AEL MVNICIP COELA

Prow of galley, r., above Cornucopiae.

Ref. Moushmov 5579.

1. AE, 18mm, 3.12g, 6h, 2018/Chamber Tomb 5, Excavation Code Number: CJL 035.

# Gordian III, 238-244

Obv. IMP C[A] [M AN] GORDIANVS

Laureate, draped and cuirassed bust of Gordian III, r.

Rev. AEL MVNI CVIL

Prow of galley, r., above Cornucopiae.

Ref. RPC VII.2: no. 558; SNG Turkey: pl. 2: 18.

2. AE, 18mm, 3.12g, 6h, 2018/Chamber Tomb 5, Excavation Code Number: CJL 039.

#### **Perinthos**

# Tranquillina, 238—244

Obv. CABEINIA TPAN[ΚΥΛΛΕΙΝΑ]

Diademed and draped bust of Tranquillina, r.

Rev.  $[\Pi EPIN\Theta I]\Omega N - \Delta IC NE\Omega KO[P\Omega]$ 

Homonoia standing l., holding patera and Cornucopiae.

Ref. RPC VII.2: no. 624; Schönert 1965: no. 870.

3. AE, 24mm, 5.79g, 2h, 2018/Chamber Tomb 5, Excavation Code Number: CJL 028.

#### **Province of Asia**

# **Troas Region**

#### **Parion**

Pseudo-Autonomous, Iulius Caesar, BCE 45

Obv. [C G I P]

Female head wearing Stephane, r.

Rev. Praefericulum, D D

Ref. SNG France: no. 1415—1418; RPC I: no. 2259; SNG Turkey: pl. 7: 89—95.

4. AE, 15mm, 3.20g, 6h, 2018/Chamber Tomb 5, Excavation Code Number: CJL 045.

### Claudius I, 41—54

Obv. [TI CLAV AVG]

Head bare of I. Claudius, I., Countermark: Capricorn. Rev. No legend. Two priests ploughing with two oxen, r.

Ref. SNG Cop.: pl. 7: 285; SNG France: no. 1458.

5. AE, 17mm, 3.51g, 6h, 2018/Chamber Tomb 5, Excavation Code Number: CJL 054.

# Antoninus Pius, 138—161

Obv. [ANTONINVS] AVG

Laureate, draped and cuirassed bust of Antoninus Pius, l.

Rev. [C] G I [H P]

Founder as priest ploughing with two oxen, r.

Ref. RPC IV.1: no 6143.

6. AE, 16mm, 3.09g, 6h, 2018/Chamber Tomb 5, Excavation Code Number: CJL 053.

Obv. []

Bare-headed bust of Antoninus Pius wearing cuirass and paludamentum, 1.

Rev. [C G I H P]

Founder as priest ploughing with two oxen, r.

Ref. RPC IV.2: no. 7326.

7. AE, 17mm, 2.39g, 6h, 2018/Chamber Tomb 5, Excavation Code Number: CJL 052.

### Commodus, 177—192

Obv. [COMODV]S

Bare-headed bust of Commodus wearing cuirass and paludamentum, r.

Rev. [C G I H P]

Founder as priest ploughing with two oxen, r.

Ref. RPC IV.2: no. 9181.

8. AE, 16.5mm, 2.61g, 12h, 2018/Chamber Tomb 5, Excavation Code Number: CJL 049.

### Geta, 209—212 (198—209 as Caesar)

Obv. SEP GETAS CAI

Bare-headed bust of Geta wearing cuirass and paludamentum, r.

Rev. CGIH/PA

Founder as priest ploughing with two oxen, r.

Ref. SNG Deutschland: pl. 41: 1341.

9. AE, 15mm, 1.86g, 6h, 2016/Chamber Tomb 5, Excavation Code Number: CFM 007.

Obv. SEP GE — TAS CAE

Bare-headed bust of Geta wearing cuirass and paludamentum, r.

Rev. CGIH/PA

Founder as priest ploughing with two oxen, r.

Ref. SNG Cop. Mysia: pl. 7: 298.

10. AE, 15mm, 1.50g, 12h, 2018/Chamber Tomb 5, Excavation Code Number: CJL 055.

### Elagabalus, 218—222

Obv. ANTONINVS PIVS FEL A

Laureate, draped and cuirassed bust of Elagabalus, r.

Rev. [C G I] H PA

Artemis Phosphoros advancing, r., holding torch in each hand.

Ref. RPC VI: no. 3866.

11. AE, 19mm, 3.62g, 3h, 2017/Chamber Tomb 5, Excavation Code Number: CJL 008.

# **Gordian III, 238—244**

Obv. IM GOR — DIANV

Laureate, draped and cuirassed bust of III. Gordianus, r.

Rev. C G I H — PAR

Artemis Phosphoros advancing, r., holding torch in each hand.

Ref. RPC VII.1: no. 52; BMC Mysia: no. 113.

12. AE, 17mm, 3.44g, 7h, 2019/Chamber Tomb 5, Excavation Code Number: CJL 056.

#### Philip I, 244—249

Obv. []

Laureate, draped and cuirassed bust of I. Philippus, r.

Rev. C G I H PA

Founder as priest ploughing with two oxen, r.

Ref. RPC VIII: no. 42651.

13. AE, 17mm, 2.33g, 6h, 2018/Chamber Tomb 5, Excavation Code Number: CJL 051.

# **Gallienus**, 253—268

Obv. IMP P LIC GALLIENVS AVG

Laureate, draped and cuirassed bust of Gallienus, r.

Rev. C G I H P

Wolf, r., suckling Twins.

Ref. BMC Mysia: no. 118, (Variation).

14. AE, 21mm, 3.59g, 6h, 2018/Chamber Tomb 5, Excavation Code Number: CJL 017.

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Plate 1. Coela (1, 2), Perinthos (3) and Parion (4-14) coins.