



TWIN CITIES ANCIENT COIN CLUB

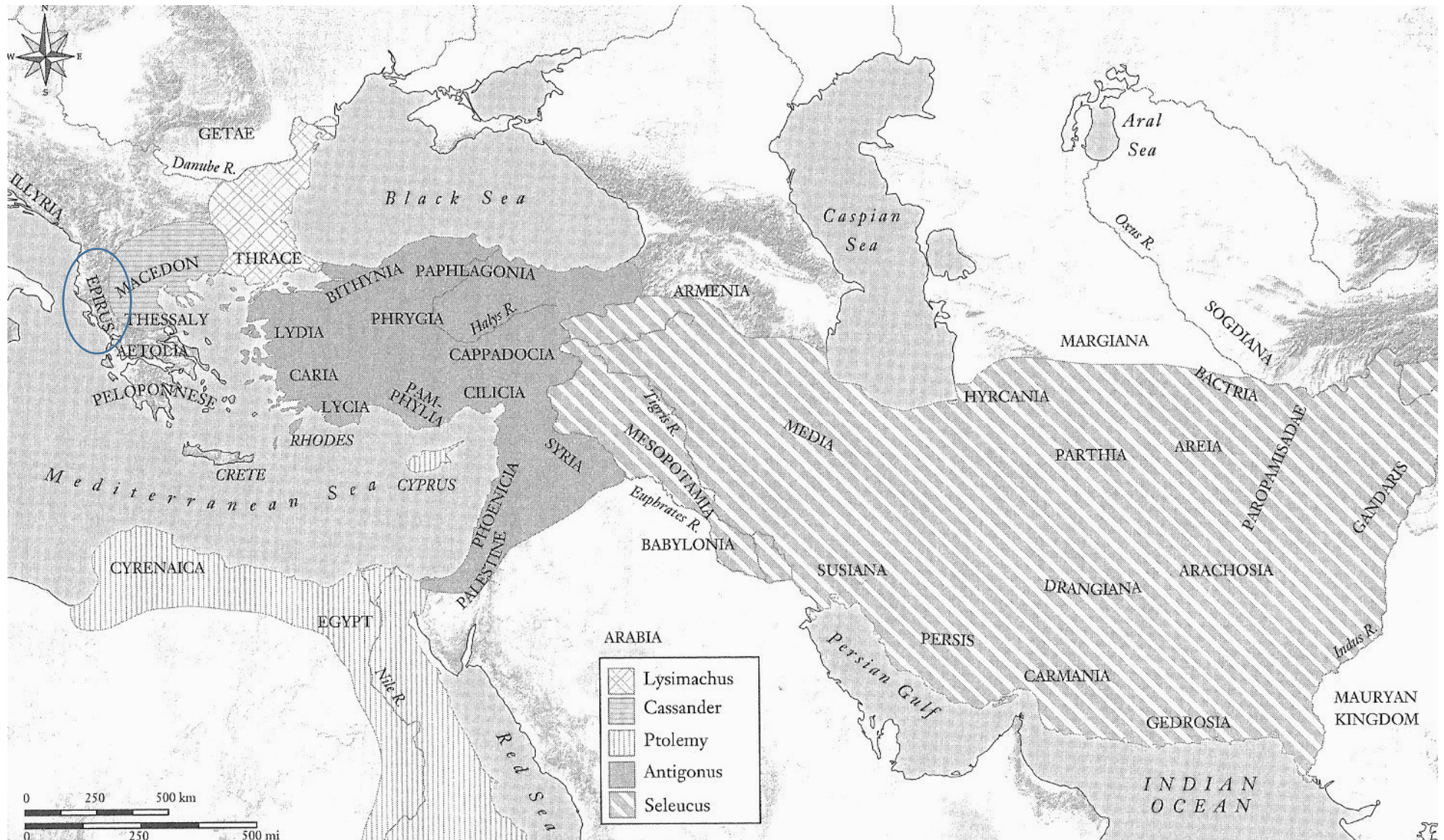
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PYRRHOS

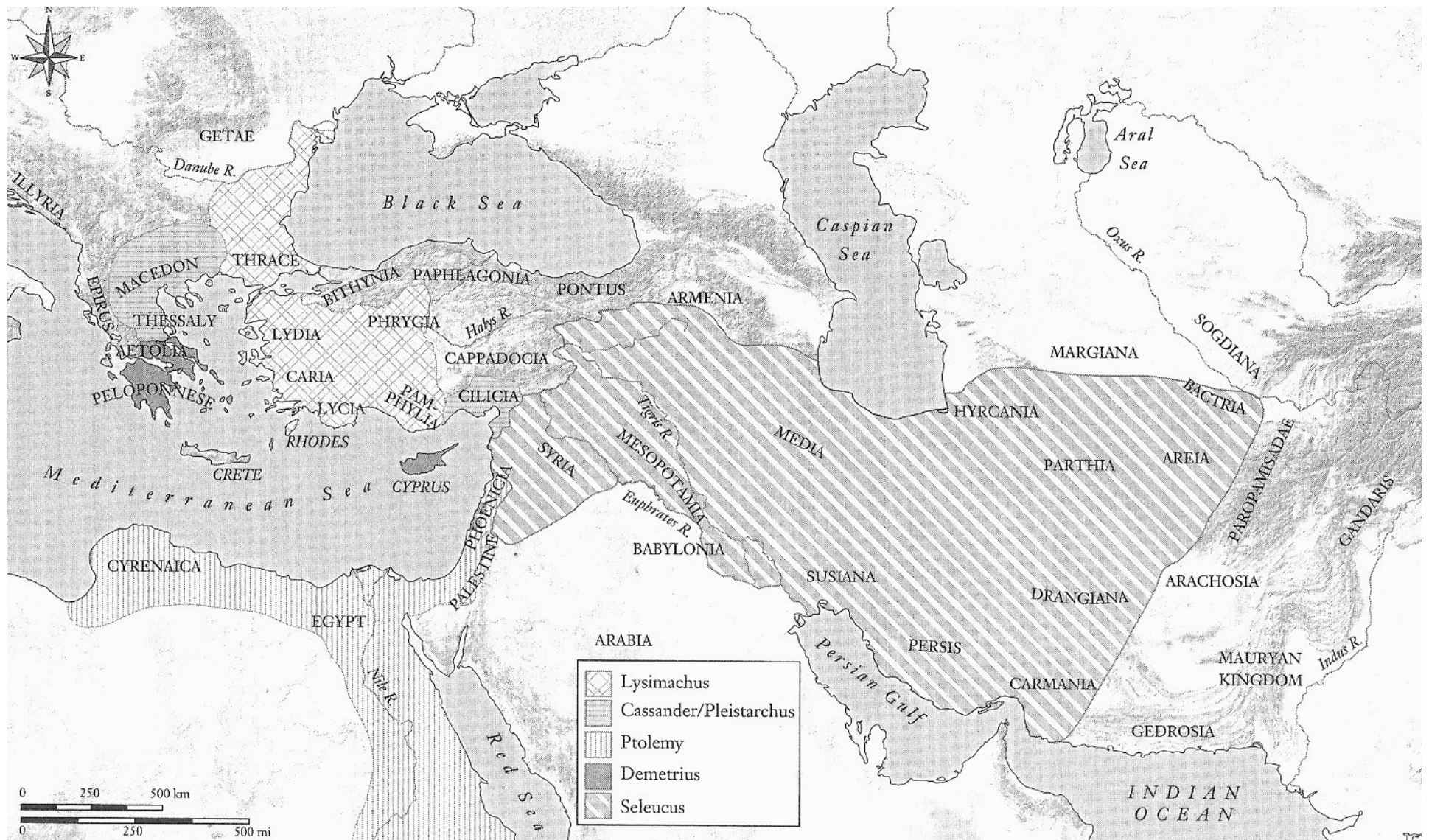
A King in Search of a Kingdom



The Greek World in 311 BC



The Greek World in 301 BC



Pyrrhos' Early Years

- **319 BC** – Pyrrhos was born in Epeiros, the son of Aeacides and Phthia; a second cousin of Alexander the Great (on his mother, Olympia's, side of the family)
- **317** – Pyrrhos' father was dethroned
- Family took refuge with a nearby Illyrian tribal king Glaukias
- **306** – Glaukias restored Pyrrhos to the throne of Epeiros (age 13)
- **302** – Cassander banished Pyrrhos from Epeiros, and he went to serve under Demetrius Poliorcetes (his brother-in-law) in his war against the other successors.
- **301** – Fights alongside Demetrius and his father Antigonas I at **Battle of Ipsus** (in Asia Minor) who are defeated by the combined forces of Lysimachos, Kassander, and Seleukos.
- **298** – Pyrrhos taken hostage to Alexandria under terms of a peace treaty between Demetrius and Ptolemy I. Pyrrhos marries Ptolemy's daughter.

Pyrrhos in Epeiros

- **297** – Pyrrhos is restored to the throne of Epeiros with aid from Ptolemy; Pyrrhos has his co-ruler (and 2nd cousin) Neoptolemos murdered.

No coinage struck at Epeiros at this time can be attributed to Pyrrhos. Italian mints are used to strike the coinage circulated in Epeiros.

- **295** – Pyrrhos goes to war in Macedon against his brother-in-law Demetrius
- **292** – Pyrrhos invades Thessaly but is repulsed.
- **287** – Pyrrhos attacks Macedon from the west, Lysimachos attacks from the east. Pyrrhos gains control of half of Macedon from Demetrius.



It is during this interregnum period in Macedon that Pyrrhos' impact on coinage is first seen

Pyrrhos' Coinage in Macedon

287-286 – Pyrrhos controls all of Macedon. No silver struck. Most bronzes are anonymous, but a few have the name of Pyrrhos in monogram-form on the obverse shield.



AE 18
287-286 BC
(perhaps also 274-272 BC)

Obv: Shield, ΠΥΡ monogram
Rev: Macedonian helmet;
BA ΣΙ

ΠΥΡ = Pyr

Pyrrhos Heads West

- **286** – Aetolia and Athens side with Lysimachos against Pyrrhos. Pyrrhos once again becomes allies with Demetrius against Lysimachos.
- **284** – Pyrrhos is driven out of Macedon by Lysimachos; returns to Epeiros.
- **282** – After a Roman fleet enters the sea to aid Thurii, it is attacked by forces from Taras (Tarentum).



- **281** – Taras invites Pyrrhos to lead their war against Roman expansion in Southern Italy.
- **280** – Pyrrhos forms an alliance with Ptolemy Keraunos, King of Macedon. Then heads to Italy after consulting the oracle at Delphi.



280 BC

- Pyrrhos brings his army of 3000 cavalry, 2000 archers, 500 slingers, 20,000 infantry, and 20 elephants (loaned from Ptolemy II)
- Pyrrhos defeats the Romans at the **Battle of Heraklea**
- Both sides suffer tremendous losses of life
- Pyrrhos offers a peace treaty but is rejected by the Romans

Roman Republic
AR didrachm
ca 280-276 BC
(Mars/horse's head)
Period of Carthaginian
alliance with Rome
against Pyrrhos



- Greek cities and tribes align with Pyrrhos after the victory: *Lucani, Brutti, Messapians, Croton, Locri.*

Pyrrhos Fights for Italy

- **279** – Pyrrhos wins a costly victory at **Battle of Asculum** against Roman commander Publius Decius Mus---the famous “Pyrrhic Victory.”

“If we are victorious in one more battle with the Romans, we shall be utterly ruined.”



- **278** – Pyrrhos receives two offers:
 - (1) from Sicily to come to Sicily to drive the Carthaginians off the island;
 - (2) from Macedon—King Ptolemy Keraunos had been killed by Gauls (Celtic Tribes), Macedonian army was defeated, and Keraunos’ head displayed on a spear; Macedonians request Pyrrhos to return and take the Macedonian throne.
- Seeing more potential for an empire in Sicily, Pyrrhos transfers his army to Sicily.

Pyrrhos' Coinage in Italy

Pyrrhos struck coinage at Italian mints for use in Italy and Epeiros



AR tetradrachm
Struck at Locri
Epizephyrioi, Italy
ca 280 BC

Obv: Zeus Dodonaios
Rev: Dione enthroned;
ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΠΥΡΡΟΥ

Pyrrhos is welcomed to Italy

Less than 100 known. Same type from Prospero Collection sold for \$50,000 (2012)



AR didrachm
Struck at Locri, Italy
ca 280 BC

Obv: Achilles
Rev: Thetis (Achilles' mother) on
hippocamp holding shield of
Achilles; ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΠΥΡΡΟΥ

Prospero Collection (2012), \$25,000

Contemporary Coinage in Italy



AU 1/10 stater

Struck at Locri Epizephyrioi, Italy
ca 280 BC

Obv: Eagle's head; ΛΟ

Rev: Winged thunderbolt

Extraordinary gold coinage struck in time of
emergency (war)



AU tetrobol

Struck at Metapontum, Italy
ca 280-279 BC

Obv: Eagle's head; ΛΕΥΚΙΠΠΟ (founder)

Rev: Barley ears

Extraordinary gold coinage struck in time of
emergency (war)

Likely intended to pay mercenaries who were familiar with Macedonian coinage



AU stater
Struck at Taras, Italy
ca. 280 BC

Obv: Zeus
Rev: Eagle; TAPANTINΩN

Prospero Collection (2012), \$37,500



AU ½ stater
Struck at Taras, Italy
ca. 280 BC

Obv: Herakles
Rev: Poseidon driving chariot;
TAPANTINΩN

Pyrrhos in Sicily

- **278** – Pyrrhos arrives in Sicily and is proclaimed King of Sicily.

Plans for his son Helenus to inherit the kingdom of Sicily and his son Alexander to inherit Italy.

- **277** – Pyrrhos captures the city of Eryx, the strongest Carthaginian fortress in Sicily. The rest of the Carthaginian-controlled cities defect to Pyrrhos.
- **276** – Pyrrhos demands that Carthage abandon all of Sicily. Greek cities oppose peace because Carthage still controls Lilybaeum---a powerful fortress.

Pyrrhos breaks off peace negotiations and attacks Lilybaeum. Requests money and manpower to form a naval blockade; enforces compulsory contributions; declares a military dictatorship and installs garrisons in Sicilian cities.

Greek cities switch sides and support Carthage!

Pyrrhos abandons Sicily and returns to Italy at request of Taras, the only city not yet conquered by Rome.



AU dekadrachm
Struck at Syracuse, Sicily
under Hiketas
278 BC

Obv: Persephone; ΣΥΡΑΚΟΣΙΩΝ
Rev: Nike in biga; ΕΠΙ ΗΚΕΤΑ

Struck prior to Pyrrhos' arrival; Hiketas ruled Syracuse, but was defeated by Carthaginians



AU dekadrachm
Struck at Syracuse, Sicily
278 BC

Obv: Persephone; ΣΥΡΑΚΟΣΙΩΝ
Rev: Nike in biga; inscription
removed from die.

Hiketas was expelled from Syracuse by Thoinon, one of his officers. Name removed from die.

Pyrrhos' Coinage in Sicily

Pyrrhos struck coinage at Sicilian mints for use in Sicily and Epeiros



AR oktobol
Struck at Syracuse, Sicily
278-276 BC

Obv: Persephone
Rev: Athena Alkidemos;
ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΠΥΡΡΟΥ



AR oktobol
Struck at Syracuse, Sicily
278-276 BC

Obv: Persephone
Rev: Athena Promachos;
ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΠΥΡΡΟΥ



AU dekadrachm
Struck at Syracuse, Sicily(?)
278-276 BC

Obv: Artemis
Rev: Nike carrying trophy;
ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΠΥΡΡΟΥ



AU stater
Struck at Syracuse, Sicily(?)
278-276 BC

Obv: Athena
Rev: Nike carrying trophy;
ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΠΥΡΡΟΥ

Prospero Collection (2012), \$180,000



AE 26

Struck at Syracuse, Sicily
278-276 BC

Obv: Veiled head of goddess
Phthia

Rev: Thunderbolt; ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ
ΠΥΡΡΟΥ

Phthia was the name of Pyrrhos' mother, and the name of a region from which Pyrrhos traced the origin of his family (and home of Achilles)



AE 23

Struck at Syracuse, Sicily
278-276 BC

Obv: Persephone

Rev: Demeter enthroned;
ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΠΥΡΡΟΥ



AE 18 (hemilitron)
Struck at Syracuse, Sicily
278-276 BC

Obv: Athena

Rev: Corn ear in wreath;
ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΠΥΡΡΟΥ



AE 26
Struck at Syracuse, Sicily
278-276 BC

Obv: Zeus Dodonaeos

Rev: Thunderbolt; ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ
ΠΥΡΡΟΥ



AE 23
Struck at Syracuse, Sicily
278-276 BC

Obv: Herakles
Rev: Athena Promachos



AE 23
Struck at Syracuse, Sicily
278-276 BC

Obv: Herakles
Rev: Athena Promachos;
ΣΥΡΑΚΟΣΙΩΝ

Daehn Collection (2013), \$123

Pyrrhos Abandons the West

- **275** – Pyrrhos is back in Italy. Roman have rebuilt their army. Pyrrhos finds his army is vastly out-numbered.

Battle of Beneventum---

Pyrrhos is soundly defeated. Romans had learned how to battle elephants (wounding them in the side with spears).

Pyrrhos is out of money. Appeals to Antigonos Gonatas of Macedon who refuses to help.

Pyrrhos ends his campaign in Italy, forfeits all his Italian holdings, and returns to Epeiros.





AR stater (7.1 gm)
Struck at Locri Epizephyrioi, Italy
ca 275 BC

Obv: Zeus; monogram NE

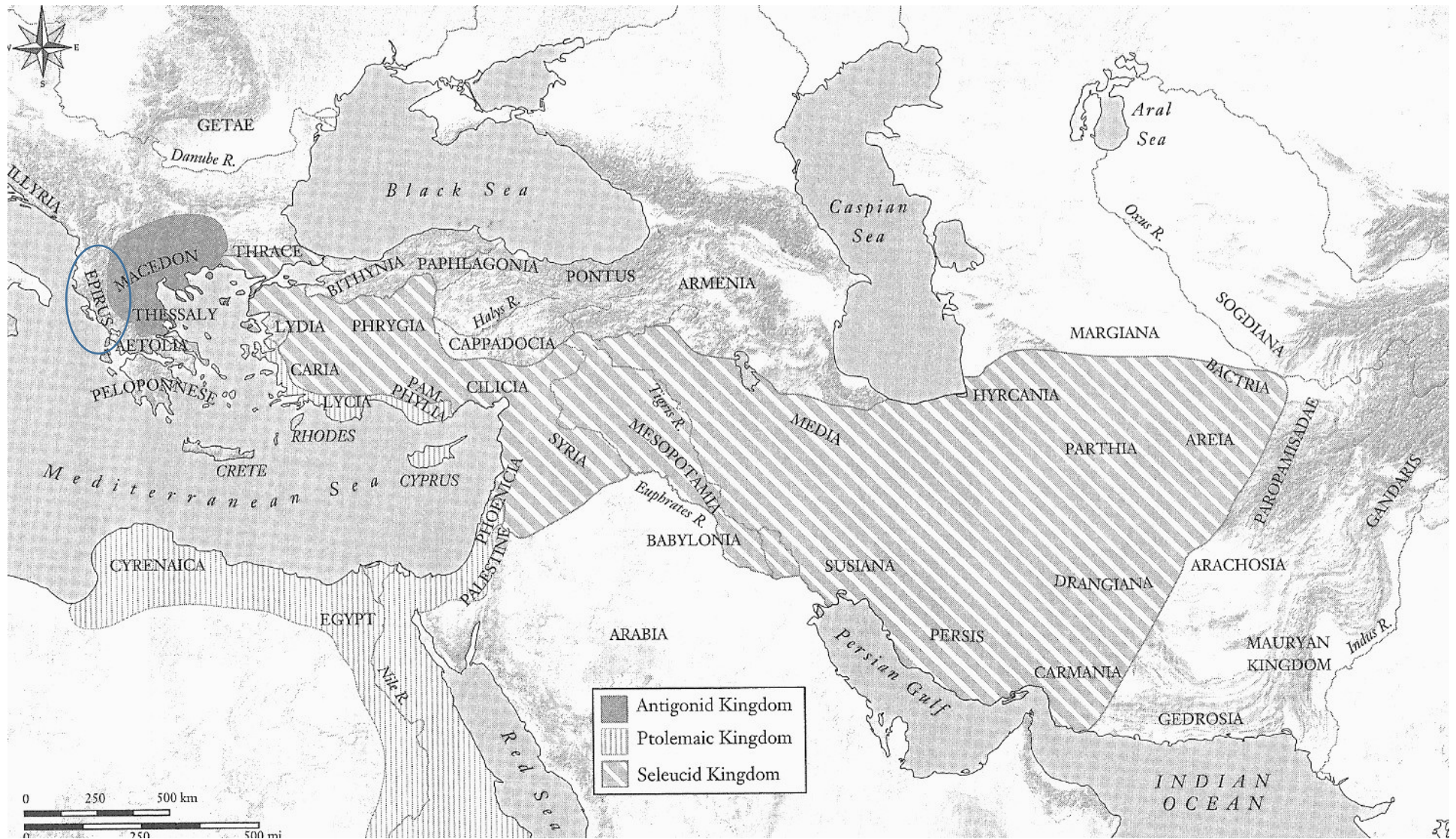
Rev: Roma seated left on low throne. Lokri, as Pistis the personification of Faithfulness, standing left crowning Roma with a wreath. ΛΟΚΡΩΝ
ΡΟΜΑ ΠΙΣΤΙΣ



Struck to celebrate the expulsion of Pyrrhos from Italy and Locri's alliance with Rome.

Locri had fought with Pyrrhos against Rome, but changed sides and was well treated by the Romans in return.

The Greek World in 275 BC



Return to Epeiros

- **275** – Pyrrhos is back in Epeiros.

Antigonos Gonatas, son of Demetrius Poliorcetes, controls Macedon.

- **274** – Pyrrhos attacks Macedon and defeats Antigonos and his Galatian allies, whose troops hail him as King of Macedon.



Coins Commemorating the Victory?

Struck at Syracuse 278-276 BC? Or at Epeiros or field mint 274-3 BC?



AU dekadrachm

Obv: Artemis

Rev: Nike carrying trophy with
Galatian shield; ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ
ΠΥΡΡΟΥ



AU stater

Obv: Athena

Rev: Nike carrying trophy with
Galatian shield; ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ
ΠΥΡΡΟΥ

Pyrrhos or Philip II?

(or is it Caracalla?)



*Gold medallion found near
Tarsos; 3rd century AD*



Pyrrhos' Final Battles

- **274** – Continues his attempts to take control of central and southern Greece.



- **272** – A rebel Spartan asks Pyrrhos to intervene in Sparta to settle a dispute over succession to the throne. He meets strong resistance and retreats. His son Ptolemy is killed in the retreat.

Pyrrhos is asked to intervene in a civic dispute in Argos. Antigonos Gonatas is also on his way to Argos. A battle for control of the Peloponnese is looming.

Argos



- **272** – Pyrrhos' forces enter the city and find it crowded with troops of Antigonos Gonatas.



Death of Pyrrhos

- **272** – Pyrrhos battles in the crowded city streets...



...and is killed!

The story is told by Plutarch

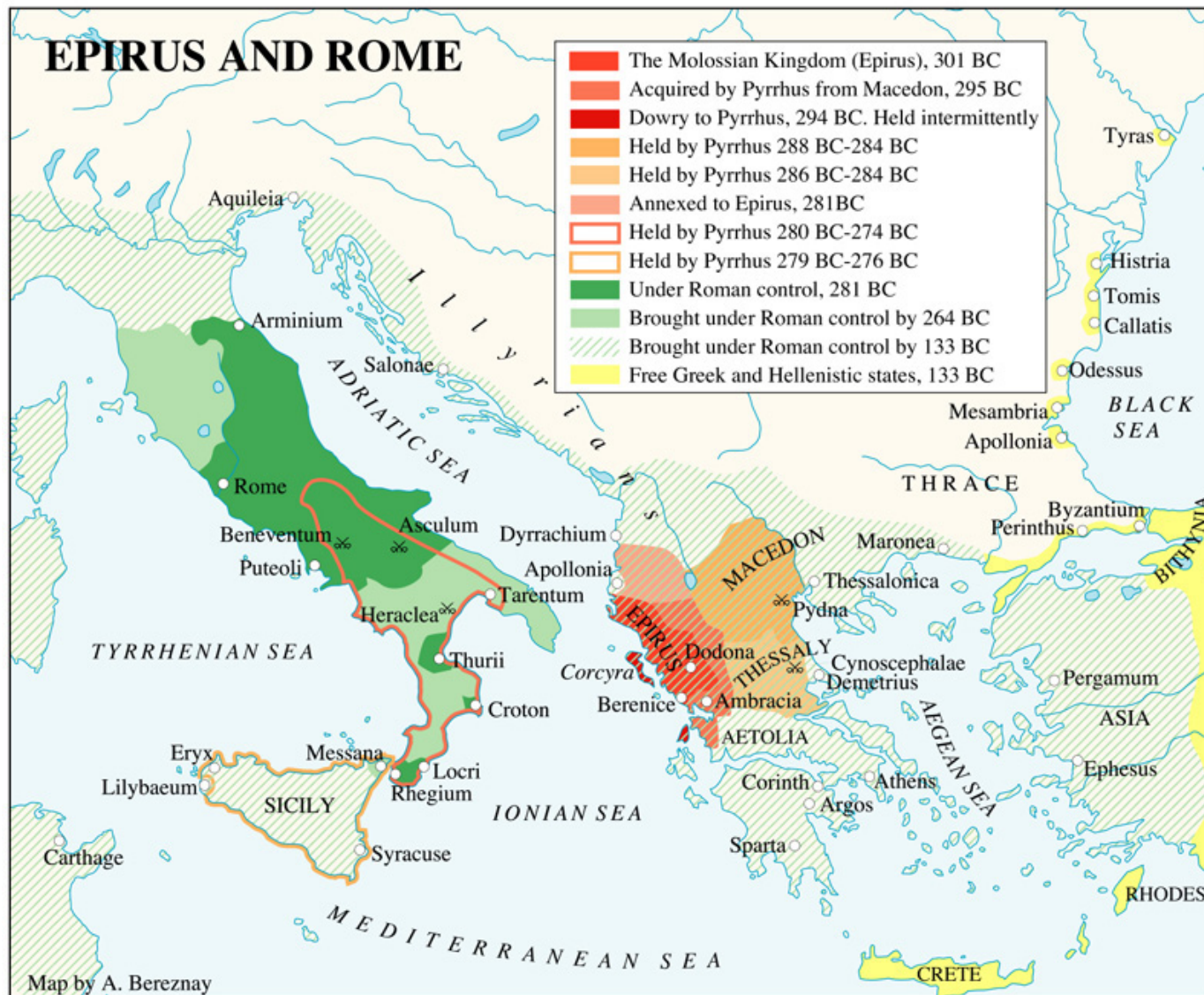




Was this the cause of Pyrrhos' distraction?

272 – Antigonos sends Pyrrhos' ashes back to Epeiros with all honors.

Hearing of Pyrrhos' death, Taras surrenders to Rome.



123.

PYRRHVS REX.



*Apud Fulvium Vrsinum
in orbe argenteo.*

123.

According to Plutarch:

*Hannibal ranked Pyrrhos as the greatest
commander the world had ever seen.*



The Legacy of Pyrrhos

