

# Ancient Coinage of the Macedonian Region



## EARLY TIMES AND THE KINGS OF MACEDON

Macedonia is the region north/northeast of the Greek peninsula centered on the Thermaic Gulf. As a political entity, its boundaries shifted and changed over time. The indigenous Thracio-macedonian population was influenced by Greek colonization and was characterized by independent city-states until the area was conquered and controlled by the Persian kings Darius and Xerxes. Coinage in Macedonia is believed to have begun in the mid-6th century BCE. The political identity of Macedonia was forged by the Kings of Macedon, beginning with Alexander I, who, allied with the Persians, fought the Greeks. The kings of Macedon endured from 490 BCE until the advent of Roman Republican rule, which began in 168 BCE with the capitulation of the Antigonid dynasty. Prominent among the kings were Archelaus, Philip II and his son Alexander III (The Great). Perseus was the last of the Antigonid line.

Coining cities included:

**Pella** (the capital of Philip II), **Aigai** (Vergina, the capital of Alexander I), **Thessalonike** (named after the half sister of Alexander the Great and the site of the Pythian Games), **Aiane**, **Olynthos** (destroyed by Philip II in 348 BCE), **Amphipolis** (originally an Athenian colony founded in 457 BCE), **Dion**, **Philippi** (originally called **Krenides**), and **Beroia** (which became the center of the Macedonian Koinon under Roman imperial rule).

## UNDER ROME

As a Republican province, Macedonia was joined with Achaea (the Greek peninsula). In 27 BCE Macedonia became a Senatorial Province and was separated from Achaea by order of the Princeps Augustus Caesar. From then on, Roman Provincial AE coins were struck in profusion, reaching a high point under the Severan Dynasty (193-235 CE). By the time of Gallienus (d. 268 CE), with the Empire in turmoil, the provincial coinage had all but ceased. With the creation of the Tetrarchy in 293 CE, Thessalonica became the headquarters of Galerius Caesar and coinage resumed in Macedonia under the terms of the coinage reforms initiated by Diocletian. Henceforth, Thessalonica was to be the only mint city in Macedonia.

## LATE ROMAN AND BYZANTINE MACEDONIA

Thessalonica continued to mint prodigiously under the Constantinian and Theodosian dynasties (307-450 CE). After the post-Constantinian currency collapse, its output was primarily tiny AE4 modules and gold solidi, with some few larger AE exceptions. From the time of Anastasius' AE currency reform (491-518 CE) until the reign of Andronicus II Palaeologus (1282-1328 CE), it continued to be an important mint. After 1330, under pressure from the Serbs, the Bulgarians and the Turks, Thessalonica became one of the last outposts of a fragmented Byzantine authority until it was finally conquered by the Turkish sultan Murad II in 1430. The city was a scene of ritual slaughter and despoliation in which thousands died or were enslaved, and the churches and tombs ransacked and plundered. Twenty-three years later, the same spectacle was to be replayed at Constantinople at the hand of Mehmet II.



Mende, AR Stater, Gorgon 500 BCE



Amphipolis, AR Obol, Male head 400 BCE



Philip II AR Tetradrachm, Pella 340 BCE



Philip V, AE 16, 210 BCE



Roman Rule, AR Tetradrachm 155 BCE



Augustus, AE 25, Philippi, 10 BCE



Galerius Caesar, AR Argenteus 300 CE



Justinian I, AE 16 Nummi ca. 550 CE