

CLASSICAL POETS' REPRESENTATION ON HELLENISTIC AND ROMAN COINS

In the pre-Hellenistic times coins of Greek city-states were depicting a unique symbol or feature that represented their city and promoted the prestige of their state. The Corinthian stater for example, depicted Pegasus the mythological winged horse with the hero Bellerophon riding it. The coins of Ephesus were depicting the bee sacred to Artemis; drachmas of Athens were depicting the owl of the god Athena etc.

The most striking new thing of Hellenistic coins is the use of the living kings and queens. This practice had begun in Sicily, the rulers of the Ptolemaic and Seleucid kingdoms had already awarded themselves the divine status. This established a pattern for coins which has persisted ever since: a portrait of the king in profile, usually, on the obverse, with his name beside, and other symbols of state on the reverse.

It is an interesting matter to see that some of the classical poets were depicted on Hellenistic coins; the paper will focus on these poets because of their important role in the Greek society, beginning with Homer who played an important role in forming the religious and cultural thinking in the society.

Concerning the depiction of a poet or of any other intellectual on the coins we may ask some questions which we will try to answer in this paper, such as, why some of the classical poets were represented in Hellenistic time, and others not?, is their depiction in Hellenistic art different from their depiction in the classical period or not?, have the depictions of the same poet in sculpture the same features and symbols as on coins or different ones?, were there any kind of poets' cults or were the depictions only used for memorizing their memory?

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