



ANCIENTS

350-320 BC Carthage, Ca. AV Stater NGC MS 5/5 - 4/5



Carthage, a Phoenician colony on the coast of North Africa, became a maritime powerhouse in the fifth century BC and challenged the Greek cities of Sicily and Southern Italy for control of the western Mediterranean. By the early third century BC, most of central North Africa, Spain and much of Sicily had fallen under Carthaginian control and mints were established at diverse places to produce coins used to pay the largely mercenary army. The stage was now set for the collision with Rome, newly dominant in Italy.

Starting in 265 BC, Carthage and Rome fought three titanic wars that produced more death and destruction than any other conflict before the 20th century. The first gold staters struck by Carthage between 350 and 320 BC were of a nearly pure alloy and weighed more than the ubiquitous gold staters of Philip II and Alexander the Great. As time went on, this coinage was debased with silver and reduced in weight, hence the much more numerous Carthage staters produced after circa 320 BC are now termed 'electrum'. This early stater, in pure gold, shows a delicacy of style that indicates the dies were created by a Greek engraver of consummate skill.

Bust of Tanit left, hair wreathed in barley ears, wearing triple pendant earring, and necklace with nine pendants; dotted border / Horse standing right on single exergual line; three pellets to lower right, dotted border. Jenkins & Lewis Group IIIg, 67. Boston 501.

