

The Payment of the *ekklesiastikon* at Iasos in the Light of New Evidence

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Coins in precious metal could be used for a wide range of transactions, or could be put aside for safe-keeping as coins in gold or more commonly silver would always retain their bullion value. Bronze coinage, on the other hand, did not enjoy the same level of confidence among users and was even regarded with suspicion when it was first introduced towards the end of the fifth century¹. In c. 425-375 we witness a general move towards bronze coinage all across the Greek world. It is generally believed that it was a practical response to the increasing use of coinage in everyday transactions². Tiny silver coins were being replaced by bigger coins made of bronze whose bullion value was a fraction to that of silver. During the first wave of bronze issues, however, not all ancient mints struck chunky bronze coins³. In Asia Minor, for instance, the earliest bronze coins were almost as small as the silver fractions they were replacing⁴. This is a remarkable development which still calls for an explanation. We have to admit that we are usually unable to explain why an ancient city decided to issue a specific type of coinage. Mint records have been lost and coinage itself rarely records the reason for its issue. Of course, we do speculate and try to provide explanations as to why this or that mint struck this or that coin in this or that circumstance. Chief and foremost reasons for minting are state expenditure (which were obviously multiple), military expenditure, there are also reasons which directly pertain to trade and exchange which coins are supposed to facilitate⁵. Others believe that coins were at times struck by the state to make a profit. We also know examples of new coins minted to replace older ones especially in the case of a coinage reform.

¹ All ancient dates are BC. In mid-fifth century Athens, for instance, one Dionysios proposed a law to replace the impractical small fractions in silver by a coinage in bronze. The law failed to meet approval and Dionysios was nicknamed 'Chalkous' as the Athenians preferred to maintain the reputation of their fine silver coinage : Deipn. 15.669d. Towards the end of the third century, the citizens of Gortyn in Crete were apparently so reluctant to use the new bronze coins of their city that a law became necessary to force them to accept these bronzes as legal tender under pain of a fine of five silver staters (note that the fine is levied in silver!) : *IC*, iv, 63.

² For a discussion of early Greek bronze coinages, see Price 1979 and Price 1968.

³ South Italian and Sicilian mints, among the first to strike bronze coins, produced heavy coins, some of which were cast. The same applies to Black Sea mints such as Olbia and Istros.

⁴ Hundreds of these small early bronze coins were included in the Phygela hoard, see *SNG Kayhan*, index 6; Ashton 2006, 2, n. 5 ; P. Kinns, *NC* 2004, pp. 71-72.

⁵ For these questions, see Howegego 1990 and Howegego 1995.

These wide-ranging explanations are obviously handy but they are not always convenient or satisfying when one looks at specific coinages.

One example of a specific coinage whose precise *raison d'être* was recently explained is a series of bronze coins struck by the city of Iasos in the later part of the fourth century. Fabrice Delrieux suggested that these coins might have been minted at Iasos specifically for the payment of the assembly fee, the *ekklesiastikon*, the details of which are described in an interesting inscription re-edited in 1990 by Philippe Gauthier⁶. This inscription, which prompted Delrieux's suggestion, was first seen on an island of the Iasic Gulf by Bernard Haussoullier and was later recorded by Paton⁷. Both made copies of it and the inscription on a marble slab is today lost. Several editions have been based on these copies until 1987 when a squeeze made by Haussoullier re-surfaced in Lyon. This gave the opportunity to Gauthier to publish a more complete and reliable edition of the inscription. For a number of internal and external reasons, he dated the inscription to the years 330-325. It is indeed a most remarkable inscription for it is the only one known for the Greek world to detail the organisation and the method of payment of the fee due to citizens attending the assembly. Here is a summary of its content: on the sixth day of each month, which is the regular day for the assembly, at daybreak a water-clock is to be set-up in the form of a vessel holding one metrete (about 40 litres) placed 7 feet from the ground, with a hole the size of a bean, and the water set running as soon as the sun is up. The *neopoiai* (whose principal duty was to care for the upkeep of the temple), six in number, probably one for each tribe (although this is a matter of speculation as we do not know how many tribes there were at Iasos, see below) are to take their seats each with a box in front of him having a slot of two finger's length; the boxes shall be previously sealed by the *prostatai*. Each citizen as he enters is to give to the *neopoies* of his own tribe a *pepos* inscribed with his and his father's names, which the *neopoies* shall put into the box. The inscription breaks off at this point so we do not know how or when the *misthos* was actually paid; but it is evident that no citizen arriving after the water had run out was entitled to any pay. While the sum can be reconstructed with some confidence (the figure is 180), we lack the coin denomination. The sum was most probably expressed in drachms. Philippe Gauthier rightly pointed out that had the sum been expressed in *chrysoi*, this would have represented the equivalent of 3600 drachms per month or just over 7 talents per year. Such a large sum seems unlikely for a city like Iasos which had limited revenues. If the inscription is

⁶ Delrieux 2001 ; Gauthier 1990.

⁷ Haussoullier 1884 ; Paton's transcription was used by Hicks 1887.

rightly dated to the time of Alexander the Great as Gauthier argued, then these drachms should be regarded as Alexander's drachms which were struck in great numbers on the coastal mints of Western Asia Minor (Magnesia on the Maeander, Miletos, Mylasa, the elusive Kolophon and Teos). This identification is far from certain as is argued below. Gauthier reckons that it would have taken a little over half an hour for the water to run out. He further adds that this length of time would have allowed sixty citizens to register with each *neopoies*, making a total of 360 citizens as there were in all likelihood six *neopoiiai*, one for each *phyle*⁸. This estimate would make sense with the sum given in the inscription, as 180 drachms for 360 citizens would work out at three obols for each citizen, a fee already in practice at Athens⁹.

The difficulty with this construction is the way a fixed sum (180 drachms) was to be paid each month to a number of citizens which was obviously variable. Gauthier suggested that there might have been a first come first served system, the sum not covering all citizens arriving on time. Gauthier mentioned a suggestion made by Olivier Picard to overcome the problem of distributing a fixed sum to a variable number of citizens. Picard proposed that the sum expressed in silver in the inscription might have been distributed in bronze coins, which would have allowed greater flexibility. Thus the 180 drachms would have been enough regardless of the number of citizens, even if at times many turned up on time to attend the *ekklesia*. In that case each citizen would have received a smaller number of bronze coins. If we examine further the assumption of the *ekklesiastikon* being paid in bronze coins, a sum of 180 drachms would make 8640 *chalkoi*. According to the Macedonian system there were 8 *chalkoi* to the obol or 48 *chalkoi* to the drachm. Using *chalkoi* might well provide greater flexibility but certainly not greater practicality. One can only be surprised that such a low value coin should have been struck to pay the assembly fee. One imagines how difficult it would have been to handle 8640 little coins and distribute them to a small number of citizens, around 360.

⁸ Fabiani, however, argues in her contribution in this volume that the number of *phylai* might have been different. It is only natural that this number would have varied through time, but the number of six *phylai* is highly plausible as far as the *ekklesiastikon* inscription is concerned.

⁹ At Athens, assembly pay was introduced in the early fourth century by Agyrrhios. Originally the amount was one obol; but it was later increased, by Herakleides of Clazomenai, to two obols, and ultimately, again by Agyrrhios, to three obols : Ar., *AP*, 41.3.

Delrieux, attracted by Picard's bronze explanation, tentatively identified the *ekklesiastikon* coinage. Delrieux reminds us of the troubled period which Iasos underwent during the early Hellenistic period¹⁰. As Strabo tells us, the soil of Iasos being poor, the inhabitants lived mainly by the produce of the sea. Part of its eastern land and sea, called the Little Sea had been confiscated, presumably by Alexander the Great to punish the Iasians for having contributed one ship to the Persian fleet when Alexander arrived in 334 and laid siege to Miletos. The ship was captured in a minor engagement. Later on, two citizens of Iasos, Gorgos and Minnion persuaded Alexander the Great to restore to the city possession of the "Little Sea". For a city depended on its fisheries the matter was of importance and the two citizens were suitably rewarded with immunity from taxation and a front seat in the theatre. Gorgos was part of Alexander's inner circle as he became his armoury-commander, his hoplophylax. It is probably in that troubled context that Iasos minted a series of bronze coins, almost certainly *chalkoi*, with on the obverse a laureate head of Apollo and on the reverse a prawn above a shell identified as a pecten (hereafter called prawn-pecten coins)¹¹. The obverse type, which is very common, is in sharp contrast with the rarely used reverse type. The city of Priapos in Mysia is the only other mint of Asia Minor known to me to have used a prawn as a main coin type¹². At a later date Priapos also used a lobster and a crab as reverse types, but the prawn type is more common. For Priapos, I have no explanation for the choice of a prawn; for Iasos, we have an ancient source which tells us that the city's waters were famous precisely for the quality of its prawns : Archestratos, a Sicilian gastronomer of the fourth century, observes that the visitor to Iasos will find *karades* of great size but scarce in the market¹³.

Delrieux suggested that the exceptional reverse type of the bronze coins may refer to the restitution of the Little Sea by Alexander the Great and that these *chalkoi* were minted to pay the fee to the Iasians attending the assembly: "il est apparu que celles-ci étaient étroitement liées à l'histoire politique et institutionnelle de la cité. En effet, compte tenu des événements dont Iasos fut le théâtre à la fin du IV^e siècle, les bronzes aux fruits de mer, tels que nous les

¹⁰ Delrieux 2001.

¹¹ Delrieux gives a list of the specimens known to him. At least two coins of this series were included in *IGCH* 1289 whose closing date is the early third century. To the 6 specimens recorded by Delrieux, we may now add two more to his Group A : (A) CNG Triton V (2002), 441 (1.36g ; 12H, miscatalogued as Priapos, **Plate ?**). (B) Muharrem Kayhan collection, MK 1633 (1.16g ; 11H).

¹² For Priapos, see *SNG France* 5, 536; prawns could also be used as a secondary device, see for instance the 'Kran' issues : Beden and Mannucci 1994.

¹³ Athenaios, III.105e.

connaissions aujourd'hui, avaient alors le double avantage d'affirmer, par le type utilisé, certains droits territoriaux, et de permettre, par la frappe elle-même, l'application d'une loi nouvelle"¹⁴. Perhaps the English abstract in Delrieux's article is more revealing: "In the IVth century B.C., the Carian city of Iasos struck a little bronze coinage with shrimp and shell. It was probably a production realized by the Iasians Gorgos and Minnion, friends of Alexander the Great, about 334-323, in order to recall Iasians rights on the "Little Sea" confiscated by Alexander, and to pay the *ekklestastikon* in a newly democratic city." Delrieux's assumption is now challenged by a number of previously unrecorded silver fractions which have surfaced over the past few years. They can be ascribed to Iasos with confidence thanks to the letters ioata alpha sigma and the depiction of a prawn on their reverse. Four specimens are known to me, two of which bear the three-letter ethnic. The anepigraphic coins are perhaps earlier on account of the sharper and deeper square on their reverse.

Obv. Head of boar right.

Rev. Prawn right.

1. O1/R1 a. 0.24 g 09H Private coll.

2. O2/R2 a. 0.30g 09H Private coll.

Obv. Forepart of boar right, neck truncation dotted.

Rev. Prawn right ; above, IA ; below, Σ (retrograde).

3. O1/R1 a. 0.11g 12H Private coll.

Obv. Forepart of boar right.

Rev. Prawn right ; above, IA ; below, Σ.

4. O1/R1 a. 0.26g 12H Izmir, Yavuz Tatış collection.

The weights are consistent with *tetartemoria* (quarter obols) on the reduced Milesian standard which was commonly used in Karia in the late fifth and fourth centuries¹⁵. As for the time of issue, the use of a square incuse and the shape of the letters would point to the late fifth century. It is also worth noting that a similar boar's forepart is depicted on hemiobols and *tetartemoria* from nearby Euromos, struck perhaps a little later.¹⁶ These newly discovered fractions are evidence that the prawn as a coin type does not have any link with the handing back to the Iasians of the Little Sea by Alexander. The bronze prawn-pecten coins of later date which seemingly provided grounds for such a connection were simply modelled after earlier coins with a prawn as a reverse type. These early *tetartemoria* which first used the

¹⁴ Delrieux 2001, 182-183.

¹⁵ See Konuk 1998, 30-34 ; Konuk 2007 ; Ashton 2003, 33.

¹⁶ Ashton 2003, 32-36.

prawn as a reverse type predate of about a century the events involving Alexander and the restitution of the Little Sea to the Iasians; in other words the shrimp-pecten type was not used by Iasians to make a political statement!

Now that the prawn-pecten – Alexander the Great equation is no longer tenable, I would like to use another series of coins to demonstrate that the *ekklesiastikon* was probably not paid in bronze coins. These new *chalkoi* were unknown until the discovery of a hoard of early bronzes which I named the Phygela hoard and whose burial date is *c.* 400. The Phygela hoard is a very important document for the beginning of bronze coinage in Asia Minor as it included the first wave of bronze coins from various mints of Ionia and Karia¹⁷. Two of these *chalkoi* are from the Phygela hoard, the third one might also belong to the same hoard, but there can be no certainty. Two groups may be distinguished, both depict on the obverse a laureate head of Apollo right, but they differ in the position of the prawn and of the legend.

Group A

Obv. Laureate head of Apollo right.

Rev. Prawn right ; below, IA.

5. O1/R1 a. 0.78g 06H Private coll. From the Phygela hoard.

6. O2/R2 a. 0.74g 03H Private coll. From the Phygela hoard.

Group B

Obv. Laureate head of Apollo right.

Rev. Prawn left ; above, IA.

7. O1/R1 a. 1.02g 03H Private coll.

These early *chalkoi* most probably fall in the period between the silver fractions and the later prawn-pecten *chalkoi*, which they preceded of about half a century. All in all, the prawn-pecten series was not the earliest bronze coinage of Iasos and it seems obvious now that these *chalkoi* should no longer be regarded as an exceptional coinage; its type had been in use at Iasos long before Alexander the Great. In addition, there is a further new bronze coin type for Iasos and it is also earlier than the prawn-pecten coins. A single specimen is known to me.

Obv. Head of Apollo three quarter facing left ; linear border.

Rev. Female head in sakkos with a prawn below chin ; behind, IAΣE.

8. O1/R1 a. 0.87g 12H Izmir, Yavuz Tatış collection.

¹⁷ See above n. 4.

Finally, I would like to draw attention on some fourth century silver coins of Iasos which tend to be overlooked. These Rhodian-weight drachms and hemidrachms have a head of Apollo on the obverse and a kithara on the reverse. Two groups may be distinguished. One group, represented by drachms and hemidrachms, depicts on the obverse a head of Apollo which resembles that found on the ΣΥΝ coinage of Iasos¹⁸. The occasion and the date of the ΣΥΝ coinage was last discussed in the publication of the Hecatommus hoard which favoured the high dating of 405/404¹⁹. Group B is represented by hemidrachms only and the head of Apollo is turned right on the anepigraphic obverse; the reverse depicts a kithara with the first three letters or the full ethnic.

Group A

Drachms

Obv. Head of laureate Apollo left ; on either side of neck, I-A.

Rev. Kithara ; around, ΕΠΙΛΑΤ-ΕΜΙ-ΔΩΠΟ ; all within square incuse.

9. O1/R1 a. 3.52g 12H Muharrem Kayhan collection, MK 1766 (acquired locally in 2008).
 b. 3.59 06H *Winterthur*, 3367.

Hemidrachm

Obv. As last.

Rev. Kithara with no legend visible.

10. O1/R1 a. 1.74g 12H *SNG Kayhan*, 784 (acquired locally in 2000).

Group B (only hemidrachms)

Obv. Head of laureate Apollo right.

Rev. Kithara ; on right, upwards, ΙΑΣΕ ; on left, ΩΝ ; all within square incuse.

11. O1/R1 a. 1.79g 03H Muharrem Kayhan collection, MK 1702 (acquired in Europe in 2008).

Obv. As last.

Rev. Kithara ; on right, downwards, ΙΑΣΕ ; on left, ΩΝ and prawn ; all within square incuse.

12. O2/R2 a. 1.82g 09H London, BM 1922.4.25.29 ; *Weber*, 6521.
 b. 1.85g 03H Vienna ; Imhoof-Blumer 1883, 311, 54.

Obv. As last.

Rev. Kithara ; on right, downwards, ΙΑΣΕ ; all within square incuse.

13. O3/R3 a. 1.66g 09H *SNG Kayhan*, 783 ; Leu 76 (1999), 183.
 14. O4/R4 a. 1.62g 09H BM 1919.11.20.104 ; *Weber*, 6520.
 b. 1.69g 03H *SNG Copenhagen*, 408.

¹⁸ Only two staters of the ΣΥΝ coinage for Iasos are known to me : one in Berlin, Imhoof-Blumer 1883, 311, 63 (10.73g, 03H) and the other in New York : Hurter 1999, 17. The Berlin stater depicts the head of Apollo with I - [A]? around his neck, much like on our drachms and hemidrachm.

¹⁹ Ashton *et al.* (2002).

- c. 1.81g *Boston*, 1966 ; Warren, 1174.
- d. 1.82g 09H Paris BNF 736; *Waddington*, 2433.
- e. 1.82 03H Berlin 336/1873
- f. 1.77g 09H Berlin, Imhoof-Blumer, 1900.

In the course of the fourth century, the Rhodian-weight standard imposed itself as the main coin standard throughout the mints western Asia Minor. In Group B, only hemidrachms (triobols) are attested so far and one wonders if that particular denomination might not be connected with the payment of the assembly fee at Iasos. As we have seen the triobol is the most probable *misthos* for those attending the assembly and arriving on time. Group B hemidrachms should not necessarily be regarded as contemporary with Group A coins, they could have been issued later. How far apart they are time wise is difficult to say at this stage. Might there be a connection between the decision of minting only triobols and the assembly fee, or is this just a mere coincidence? It is entirely conceivable that an assembly fee had already been a common practice at Iasos before the *ekklesiastikon* regulation of circa 330-325.

There is no denying that those studying coins are all too often frustrated for not being able to provide precise answers to historians eager to know what the specific purposes of a coinage were. This sometimes leads to a great reliance on the reconstruction of modern scholars who might imprint modern notions of the economy on antiquity. Experience shows that attempts to correlate coin types and political events are often misleading and unsuccessful. After all, what we have to work with are bits and pieces. It is of course tempting to patch together the little we have and present a theory or an explanation which would make sense with what we may know of the historical context surrounding a city or a mint. We may do that and it is what we are supposed to do after all, but insofar as coins and inscriptions are concerned the constant flow of new material should force us to adopt a more careful attitude in our interpretations.

ABBREVIATIONS

- BMC Caria* Head, B. V. (1897) : *Catalogue of the Greek Coins in The British Museum, Greek Coins of Caria, Cos, Rhodes, & c.*, London.
- Boston* Brett, A. B. (1955) : *Catalogue of Greek Coins, Boston Museum of Fine Arts*, Boston.
- IGCH* Thompson, M., Mørkholm, O. and Kraay, C. M. (1973) : *An Inventory of Greek Coin Hoards*, New York.
- SNG Copenhagen* (1947) : *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum: The Royal Collection of Coins and Medals, Danish National Museum*, vol. 26, Copenhagen.
- SNG France 5* Levante, E. (2001) : *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum, France 5, Mysie, Département des monnaies, médailles et antiques*, Paris-Zurich.

<i>SNG Kayhan</i>	Konuk, K. (2002) : <i>Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum, Turkey I, The Muharrem Kayhan Collection</i> , Istanbul-Bordeaux.
<i>SNG von Aulock</i>	von Aulock, H. (1962) : <i>Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum, Deutschland: Sammlung von Aulock, Karien</i> , Berlin.
<i>SNG Keckman</i>	Westermarck, U. and Ashton, R. (1994) : <i>Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum, Finland, The Erkki Keckman Collection in the Skopbank, Helsinki, Part I Karia</i> , Helsinki.
<i>Waddington</i>	Babelon, E. (1897) : <i>Inventaire sommaire de la collection Waddington acquise par l'Etat en 1897</i> , Paris.
<i>Warren</i>	Regling, K. (1906) : <i>Die griechischen Münzen der Sammlung Warren</i> , Berlin.
<i>Weber</i>	Forrer, L. (1929) : <i>Descriptive Catalogue of thz Collection of Greek Coins formed by Sir Hermann Weber M.D.</i> , vol. 3, London.
<i>Winterthur</i>	Bloesch, H. (1997) : <i>Griechische Münzen in Winterthur, Part 2, Winterthur</i> .

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