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**A FEW OPINIONS CONCERNING THE APPEARANCE OF THE COIN'S
EVOLUTION DURING THE AUTONOMOUS PERIOD OF THE
COLONIES SITUATED IN WESTERN BLACK SEA, THROUGH THE
VIEWPOINT OF GREEK WORLD'S CONTEXT**

GABRIEL TALMAȚCHI

Key words: Dobrudja, Greek colonies, autonomous greek coins, monetary workshop.

Abstract: *The study of the monetary activity of the west-Pontic Dobrudjan cities during the autonomous period can obtain new directions and suggestions, offered by the great mass of the general theoretical structures and, in part practical, demonstrated or only stated, without omitting the danger of generalizing and interpreting the past starting from views that are composed of the information and of the manner in which the coin manifests during the present time.*

Rezumat: *Cercetarea activității monetare a orașelor vest-pontice dobrogene în epocă autonomă poate beneficia de noi direcții și sugestii puse la dispoziție de marea masă a structurilor teoretice generale și, în parte practice, demonstrate sau doar enunțate, fără a elimina din atenție pericolul generalizării și interpretării trecutului plecând de la considerații ce au în compunere informațiile și modul de manifestare al monedei din prezent.*

The metallic coin has appeared in the ancient world out of practical reasons, which regarded the simplification of the commercial transactions (means of exchange), the creation of a standard of value, of small dimensions, easily useable, the obtaining of a reserve of value (the hoarding), and the appearance of a means of payment (TESTART 2001, 12, 21). By means of the coin, one could pay or measure a merchandise from the point of view of the value, and it was accepted and guaranteed by a state or a city (through imposition), by the simple user or the merchant (through convention), as it was a direct expression of authority (GORINI 1980, 697), an assertion of prestige (CHAMOIX 1985, 175), sometimes within the limits of the administrative, economic, political and military supervision, other times beyond these fluctuating boundaries. Also, its moulding or striking pertained to a financial sovereignty of the emitter, to his decisions, depending on the momentary or of the future interests, with direct consequences on a set of economic and commercial actions. It remained up to the authorities to decide the epigraphic and iconographic details, the constitutive metal, the inner value etc.

The way it manifested in the ancient world, the coin was an approximately circular, imprinted piece of metal, “emitted by a public authority and utilized as a means of payment in the legal and commercial transactions” (MORRISSON 1992, 6); it remains one of the most important sources of information for the research and interpretation of the past.

Invented as a result of a lasting and non-linear process, at the end of the 7th century BC, probably in Lydia (BABELON 1949, 20-21; BABELON 1964, 21-22; GRIERSON 1975, 9-11; WENGER 1978, 7; DURR 1983, 8; CASEY 1986, 13; CRIBB 1986, 33), in the form of the electrum staters, the coin spread rapidly and then diversified, from the point of view of the metal and from the point of view of what an emitting centre means. Easy to transport, owing to the shape and to the handy dimensions, hard to destroy, available to everyone and last, but not least, divisible (MONTENEGRO 1996, XIII), the coin is an innovation with a Greek tradition (HOWGEGO 2002, 1), which has obtained different values, depending on the weight system that has underlain it.

From Lydia, it has spread vastly into continental Greece and southern Italy, on the shores of the Euxine Sea and then in other regions. Its use becomes common in the whole of the Greek world, engaging in its use local populations, interested in the economic and social aspect (PLANET 1992, 36). Depending on certain favourable economic and political conditions, some of the coins, chiefly the ones made of electrum, gold and sometimes silver, have acquired an “international” status, of broad recognition on vast areas (continental as well as maritime).

Starting with the 6th century BC, in continental Greece, and subsequently in Magna Graecia, silver (GRIERSON 1975, 12; CARRADICE, PRICE 1988, 30) becomes one of the most utilized metals for the forging of the coins; depending on the monetary system, had different monetary units and sub-units, reaching fractions of small value.

The bronze coin probably appears later, from the second half of the 5th century BC, and it is intensely exploited and issued starting with the 4th century BC (AMANDRY 1990, 7), along with the gold and silver pieces.

But in order for the coins to be produced, we must assume that there existed the availability of the said metal, chiefly a precious one. During the Greek period, a first form of possessing the metal was the hoarding into the temples (temple?) of various objects (crowns, receptacles, etc.) or of cult statuettes which could, when necessary, be melted and transformed into coins (BRIANT 2000, 270; HOWGEGO 2002, 26-27). The reutilization of the different objects that were made of precious

metal seems to be a common practice in the Greek world, the colonial one included, on our humble opinion.

A second form was the possessing and the extraction of the respective metals from mines, which is a delicate problem, no matter the point whence we look at it. Also, some of the most prolific city-states of the Greek period were the ones that had direct access to such native sources (CARRADICE, PRINCE 1988, 48).

From the current data, it is known that silver, as a metal in its pure state, could not be found in a natural manner. It could appear in a mineral, as argentiferous lead (ZISA 1995, 115), and it could only be obtained by refining it in optimal conditions, from a technical point of view (KRAAY 1975, 11-19; ROMIN 1977, 150-151; CONOPHAGOS 1980; FINETTI 1987, 9-16; CALTABIANO 2000, 24), by separating the lead oxide from the silver (DEL SOLDATO 1995, 125).

Following the metallographic analyses, made on some gold and silver coins that had been issued in continental Greece, or other investigations based on chemical methods (HALL 1972, 315-320), people could identify the origin of the metal and, implicitly, the mines. Thus, it seems that the mines of Laurion have fuelled Athens' monetary workshops, in Attica (PAVINI ROSATI 1963, 17; DAVIES 1994, 67-70; REBUFFAT 1996, 42-43). But one could also mention the gold and silver resources from the island of Siphos, Macedonia and the region of Thrace (CARRADICE, PRINCE 1988, 49), Asia Minor (CUBELLI, FORABOSCHI 2002, 6) etc. on the copper mines, we know a large number of them in Greece, Cyprus, Spain, the countries situated near the Danube etc. (REBUFFAT 1996, 55); if one alloys this metal with tin, bronze results. It may well be that the mints from the autonomous period of Histria and Tomis were the deposits for the cupriferous pyrite, existing also at the surface, from Altân Tepe (AVRAM, POENARU BORDEA, 2001, 544), but maybe it could have been the one from Somova, composed of copper, lead and zinc (ALBU, PETRESCU-BURLOIU 1969, 78).

A third form comprised the buying of the necessary precious metals from the commercial markets of the respective world, perhaps by bartering it with assorted merchandise (NOE 1984, 36), in the case of the west-Pontic Dobrudjan colonies, cereals and animal products, or even real live animals.

A fourth form consists in the melting of some foreign coins, circulating on the local monetary market, depending on the interests of the society (FLACELIÈRE 1976, 151; CUBELLI, FORABOSCHI 2002, 62).

A fifth form involves the capture of the precious metals from the enemies, following military conflicts (NOE 1984, 8).

Nonetheless, even if some of these forms seem to be ruled out in the case of the west-Pontic Dobrudjan cities, others, although it is hard to prove, could be suggested as methods of supplying their monetary workshops with metal.

The monetary workshop of the Greek cities was a necessary presence in the context of the economic and political life, and the monetary activity was supervised and organized by the official authority. The category of the monetary masters (PIERRE 2002, 29) included as specialists the artists, the proper craftsmen and the auxiliary workers. Besides that, the technological process of obtaining the coin involved the existence of all the necessary equipment, which is well-known, as a result of the numerous investigations of the last decades, present nowadays in the bibliography of speciality (HACKENS 1975, 3-7; SÉDILLOT 1989, 57; GERIN, GRANDJEAN, AMANDRY, DE CALATTAÏ 2001, 9-16; LE RIDER 2001, 18-19).

The manufacturing technique of the coin during the Greek period involved two procedures: first, the moulding (an initial practice, of short duration) (POENARU BORDEA 1971, 352), and then the striking (HACKENS 1975, 3-15; SÉDILLOT 1989, 57). These procedures, and mainly the last one, were performed by specialized personnel, and supervised by monetary magistrates, empowered by the local authority, guaranteeing the title of the metal and the observing of the metrological requirements for each monetary type, piece by piece.

Finally, most of this essential data are not applicable in all their totality, for all the areas that issued Greek coins, from the centuries that corresponded to the second half of the 1st millennium BC, but perhaps only partially.

The study of the monetary activity of the west-Pontic Dobrudjan cities during the autonomous period can obtain new directions and suggestions, offered by the great mass of the general theoretical structures and, in part practical, demonstrated or only stated, without omitting the danger of generalizing and interpreting the past starting from views that are composed of the information and of the manner in which the coin manifests during the present time.

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