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A LEAD TRIAL PIECE OF THE FIFTH CENTURY B.C. FROM GREEK SOUTHERN ITALY?

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A

Towards the end of the seventh century B.C. the Greeks of Achaia in the northwestern Peloponnese embarked on a great colonial movement focussed on Southern Italy. The most populous and successful *apoikiai*, homes away from home, were Sybaris planted on the east coast of Lucania close to the Krathis (modern Crati) and Sybaris (Coscile) rivers and Kroton to Sybaris' south in the vicinity of modern Croton. Less significant foundations included Pandosia established on three hills beside the river Acheron (Moccone), one of the Krathis' eastern tributaries!

In 511/10 according to conventional wisdom,² in fact probably a decade later,³ Sybaris which had attained unrivalled wealth and prosperity was unexpectedly and catastrophically defeated in a war with Kroton; tradition had it that the victors went so far as to divert the course of the Krathis over the homes and public buildings of their defeated rival.⁴ The majority of the vanquished fled to Laos and Skidros, Sybarite sub-colonies on the opposite Tyrrhenian sea coast;⁵ a few survivors together in all probability with a group of exiles whose flight to Kroton from the dictator Telys had contributed to the outbreak of hostilities⁶ continued to reside on Krotoniate sufference in the vicinity of their obliterated city.

The puppet Sybaris thus constituted was placed under the supervision of a Krotoniate noble name Kylon.⁷ Eventually it issued a few incuse silver staters, all struck from a single obverse die, which bear forceful witness to

Kroton's hegemony (plate, no. 3). The obverse type is the tripod of Kroton, familiar from her own incuse staters (plate, no. 2), accompanied by the abbreviated Krotoniate ethnic $\varphi\rho\rho$ in the local Achaean script. The backward turned bull, obverse and 'mirror' reverse type of the incuse staters struck by Sybaris in her heyday (plate, no. 1), figures only on the subordinate reverse accompanied by the truncated Sybarite ethnic MV .

By the time of her destruction Sybaris had become the mistress of a regional empire whose constituent communities, some of them originally independent Greek foundations, others Sybarite sub-colonies, others again more or less hellenised native townships and villages,⁸ fell like Sybaris herself under Kroton's sway. One of Kroton's acquisitions was Pandosia; a series of staters consuming at least four anvil dies tells the story (plate, no. 4). Their obverse features the tripod of Kroton accompanied by the ethnic $\varphi\rho\rho$. The reverse type is a backward turned bull of Sybarite type in relief facing either right or left and set within an incuse square; square and bull are surrounded by a wide, striated incuse border; the accompanying legend is the abbreviated Pandosine ethnic $\Gamma\Lambda\text{M}\Delta\text{O}$ incised partly above and partly below the incuse square.

Eventually, perhaps as the result of one of several serious political disturbances at Kroton attested for the first half of the fifth century,⁹ Pandosia regained her long lost independence. Her restored autonomy was underlined by the

1. For detailed discussion and references to the ancient sources see T. J. Dunbabin, *The Western Greeks* (Oxford 1948), 24-35 and 157-58.
2. Based on Diodoros of Sicily 11.88.1 and 90.3.
3. I intend to argue the case for 500/499 B.C. in a subsequent publication.
4. Herodotos 5.44-45; Diodoros 12.8.2-10.1; Strabo 6.1.13 (263).
5. Herodotos 6.21.1.
6. Diodoros 12.8.2-4.
7. Iamblichos, *de vita Pythagorica* 74.
8. According to Strabo (6.1.13) there were twenty-five subject cities in all. At least four of them, Aminaia, Pyxous and Sirinos (in conjunction) and a community whose abbreviated ethnic is M (*san*) O issued incuse staters bearing the Sybarite *parasonon* accompanied by their own names.
9. For discussion of these and reference to the ancient evidence see especially E. L. Minar, *Early Pythagorean Politics in Practice and Theory* (Baltimore 1942), 50-86 and J. S. Morrison, *CQ* n.s.6 (1956) 135-156.

issue of a silver stater of extreme rarity¹⁰ entirely without trace of Krotoniate influence. The obverse features an attractive female head facing right with an olive wreath above and the ethnic ΠΑΝΔΟΣΙΑ spelled out below in full in Achaean script. On the reverse is depicted a naked male figure facing left; he holds a bowl in his outstretched right hand and an olive branch in his left which remains at his side; the presence of the legend ΚΡΑΘΙΣΜ makes it clear that the god of the Krathis river is anthropomorphically represented

B

The Brandis collection of coins now part of the holdings of the Civic Museum and Gallery of Ancient and Modern Art at Udine in north-eastern Italy includes a remarkable struck disk of lead (plate, no. 5), badly worn and apparently ancient, which deserves more attention than it has hitherto received.

The object's maximum and minimum diameters are 32 and 30 mm respectively. Its weight is 42.44 gm. The lead blank employed was disproportionately large given the width of the striking dies with the result that in places a considerable amount of superfluous metal surrounds the impressed area.

The reverse type is a backward turned bull in relief within an incuse square itself surrounded by a wide, striated incuse border. The general configuration exactly resembles that of the reverses of the Kroton-Pandosia staters described in the previous section. Careful comparison reveals that dimensions, intrinsic and relational, of design components closely correspond and that even relatively minor details, such as a frame of dots around the bull, are common property. Not in evidence on the Udine reverse is the Pandosine ethnic. If it were present one would not hesitate to entertain the possibility of its having been stamped with a punch die deployed in the minting of the Kroton-Pandosia series.

Unlike the reverse the obverse of the Udine disk is decidedly neoteric. True the type is the tripod of Kroton but the multiple curved struts

(?) between its legs are quite unparallelled in Krotoniate and related issues and instead of three neat surmounting rings, one above each leg, there are only two, one of which is not only disproportionately large but assymmetrically positioned. To the tripod's left is inscribed orthodox and inwards the abbreviated ethnic ΠΑΝΔ with the untailed *nu* and curved *delta* resembling counterparts of the female head/Krathis river Pandosine staters more closely than those of the Kroton-Pandosia series. To the tripod's right appear four further letters, somewhat larger than those of the ethnic, again orthodox and inwards and, due to the object's wear, far from easy to make out. Assuming that the script is still Achaean, the first is either *heta* (H) or a botched *san* (M); the second *epsilon* (E); the third *omicron* (O) corresponding either to *omicron* or *omega* of the familiar Ionic alphabet; while the candidates for the fourth are, in descending order of probability according to my estimation, *nu* (N), *san* (M), *lambda* (Λ) and *gamma* (Γ).

How is the Udine disk to be explained? If we exclude identification, as we surely must in view of the enormous weight, as the core of a plated official coin or forgery whose coating has disappeared there are, it seems to me, only two realistic possibilities. Either we are confronted with the first example (as far as I am aware) from the ancient Greek world of an authentic lead trial piece impressed with two dies cut for the purpose of striking official coins,¹¹ or it is a case of a lead proof struck up by the dies of an early forger. I incline to the former solution basically because I cannot conceive of a forger combining an accurately copied reverse with a fictive obverse containing so many unprecedented features.

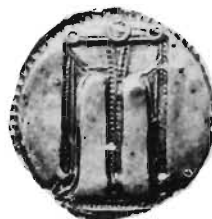
If the disk is indeed a lead trial piece stamped with dies prepared for striking coins, presumably silver staters, then either no coins were actually struck from the dies concerned or none has so far come to light. Given that no specimens of at least two issues, the gold Demareteion struck by Gelon of Syracuse in

10. The British Museum holds one of the extant specimens.

11. For no period are more than a few examples extant. Two from tenth century A.D. York are illustrated on P. 6 of Richard Hall's *The Excavations of York; the Viking Dig* (London 1984). In both cases irregularly shaped scraps of metal are pressed into service. In the case of one of these, a corrugated strip, upper and lower dies are impressed on the same surface side by side. More comparable with the Udine proof in respect of both format and tidyness is a lead trial piece, at present on display in the Winchester Museum, struck up by a die-cutter producing dies for Aestan, one of the moneyers of Edward the Confessor.



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9

480 B.C.¹² and the fourth century B.C. tin coinage of Dionysios, another Syracusan dictator,¹³ are yet in evidence and that others survive only in single exemplars¹⁴ the second alternative cannot be ruled out of court.

As to the historical context of putative staters minted from the lead proof's dies, the following scenario is not difficult to envisage. After a period of direct rule from Kroton evidenced by the Kroton-Pandosia starters Pandosia was accorded a greater measure of autonomy within Kroton's empire. The new relationship between the two states was reflected in a small issue of Pandosine staters struck from a reverse die either similar to those of the previous series or, more likely, from one actually deployed within that series but with the legend excised, and a new, rather crude obverse still featuring the Krotoniate tripod but with ΓAND displacing $\Phi\rho\text{O}$ from its dominant position. Such a syndrome has a close parallel. Another of Kroton's satellites or

possessions in the early fifth century B.C. was a community named Temesa probably located west of the modern Nocera Terinese on a hill above the mouth of the Savuto river!¹⁵ Staters (plate, no. 6) survive whose obverse type is the tripod of Kroton accompanied by two abbreviated ethnics, $\Phi\rho\text{O}$ to its left and TE to its right, and whose reverse depicts a helmet, Temesas' *parasemon*, together with the single legend $\Phi\rho\text{O}$. Also extant are later issues of the same denomination (plate, no. 7) with the same obverse and reverse types both accompanied by the single ethnic TEM .

There remains for attention the mysterious group of letters to the right of the tripod on the lead disk's obverse. At present I have no interpretation to offer and confine myself to pointing out that equally inscrutable letter combinations, namely Γ (gamma) A and D (or $\text{I}\rho$) A , in addition to the ethnic $\Phi\rho\text{O}$ appear on some of the earliest double relief staters of Kroton struck no later than the 450s B.C. (plate, no's 8 and 9).

12. See Diodoros 11.26.3 together with C. M. Kraay, *Greek Coins and History* (London 1967), 19-42.

13. See (Aristotle), *Economics* 2.2.20 and Pollux, *Onomastikon* 9.79.

14. For example, the Kroton-Sybaris-Laos stater discussed by Kraay at *NC* 1958, 32-36.

15. See Dunbabin, *The Western Greeks*, 162.

PROVENIENCE AND WEIGHTS OF ILLUSTRATED PIECES

(All except no. 5 are silver staters struck on the Achaean standard with the size of the reproduction conforming to that of the original coin. No. 5 is magnified x 1.7.)

1. Sybaris; Brussels; 7.99 gm.
2. Kroton; Berlin (ex Linhoof Blumer); 8.07 gm.
3. Kroton-Sybaris; Berlin 165; 7.79 gm.
4. Kroton-Pandosia; Berlin (ex Löbbbeke); 7.33 gm.
5. Pandosia; lead trial piece; Udine; 42.44 gm.
6. Kroton-Temesa; Berlin (ex Löbbbeke); 7.99 gm.
7. Temesa; British Museum; 7.95 gm.
8. Kroton; Berlin (ex Peytrignet); 7.84 gm.
9. Kroton; Berlin (ex Peytrignet); 7.63 gm.