

Cow-calf type Greek-Illyrian drachms from Apollonia and Dyrrhachium: Chronological questions

دراخمات من نوع البقرة والعجل من الليريا الإغريقية من أبولونيا وديرهاشيوم: تساؤلات زمنية

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ملخص:

أنتجت بلدتا أبولونيا وديرهاشيوم سلسلة طويلة من الدراخمات الفضية المتشابهة والتي تزن حوالي 3,3 جرام؛ وتحمل صورة لبقرة وعجل على وجه العملة ورسم لكوكب ثنائي على ظهرها. وحسب التسلسل الزمني المبدئي القائم على أساس نظرية 'النموذج المُركَّب' (الانطلاقات السنوية الجديدة في سلسلة متصلة)، صكت الدراخمات أثناء الحماية الرومانية على هاتين البلدتين؛ وانتهى هذا الإنتاج مع الحرب الأهلية الثانية في عامي 49/48 قبل الميلاد. بدأت بلدة ديرهاشيوم صك العملة عام 208 قبل الميلاد أو قبل ذلك بقليل؛ في حين أنه في الغالب قد تم صك جميع الدراخمات الأبولونية بعد الحرب الليرية الثالثة (168 قبل الميلاد). وجدت معظم العملات الأخيرة في مجموعات متعددة في منطقة شمال شرق البلقان. وقد تم تصديرها إلى هذه المنطقة لتحل محل الديناري، وهي العملة الجمهورية للدولة الرومانية والتي لم تكن تُنتج بأعداد كافية بين عامي 70 و50 قبل الميلاد.

Apollonia and Dyrrhachium produced a long series of similar silver drachms around 3.3 g; with cow and calf on the obverse and a double stellate pattern on the reverse. According to the tentative chronology based on the 'compact model' hypothesis (yearly new emissions in an uninterrupted series) the drachms were minted during the Roman protectorate of these towns; and the Second Civil War in 49/48 BCE terminated this production. Dyrrhachium stated minting in or a bit earlier than 208 BCE; while most probably all Apolloniate drachms were struck after the third Illyrian war (168 BCE). The majority of the late coins are found in numerous hoards in the north-east Balkan area. They were exported there to replace the role of the Roman republican denarii which were not produced in sufficient quantities between 70-50 BCE.

Introduction

Vast quantities of silver coins with cow and calf on the obverse and a double geometrical pattern on

the reverse weighing around 3.3 g turn up in the north-east Balkan region. These are the drachms of Apollonia and Dyrrhachium, two Greek settlements on the Illyrian coast of the Adriatic (now in Albania). Because of insufficient archaeological or documentary evidence, there have been several unanswered questions about this coinage.

Percy Gardner accepted Theodor Mommsen's idea (1856 AD) that these coins were produced during the era when the towns came under Roman protection, starting in 229 BCE but there is no evidence whatsoever that the drachm production started in that year. He put the end around 100 BCE based on the calculation from the number of emissions held in the British Museum collection.¹ Many decades later Ceka could list many more for both Apollonia and Dyrrhachium.² Despite renewed efforts by Niculae Conovici³ the chronological questions of this coinage remained uncertain.

Methods and working hypothesis

I have been collecting all available information on these coins from publications (books, journals, museum catalogues, auction catalogues), visited museums and corresponded with many collectors and created a database on all varieties. This database has continuously been updated on every new data emerging. The total number of variants reached 567; 132 from Apollonia and 435 from Dyrrhachium.

Meticulous examination of the hoard contents, observation of style, follow-up of name occurrences and coin weights helped redefine earlier suggestions on the chronological classes and create a rather probable relative chronological order of the last issues; as outlined in my previous publications;⁴⁻⁹ and on my updated website.¹⁰ Table 1 shows the chronological classes and important characteristics which form the basis of classification. The Figure helps visual appreciation of these differences. Note that there is no counterpart of Dyrrhachian Class 1a coins in Apollonia; and the classification of the Apolloniate drachms is different from that of in Dyrrhachium when Apollonia turned the cow to left.

I assumed that new coins were minted every year in an uninterrupted series throughout during the production period ('compact model' hypothesis). The annual issue (the emission) is characterised by the name on the reverse (the eponymous magistrate elected every year), which is connected to the symbols appearing on the obverse; the name on the obverse is of a lower rank official and several of them could work with the same eponymous magistrate during the same year.¹¹

Results

At present the number of verified emissions in my database is 164 from Dyrrhachium and 116 from Apollonia. This may not equal the total number of

years of drachm production of the towns; some rare pieces published with vague descriptions or without photo require further validation; on the other hand, the emergence of so far unknown emissions is also possible.

The production of this long series of similar and mutually accepted coins in these two towns would require lasting and stable politico-economical circumstances; the length of the series indicates that the drachms were produced during the Roman protectorate status of the towns beginning in 229 BCE.

There is no direct evidence that the drachm production started immediately or soon after this date. According to a recent suggestion, the Illyrian drachm production was not started earlier than 208 BCE¹². This seems to be acceptable in view of the number of emissions from Dyrrhachium and makes it more likely that the production ended during (indeed, because of) the Civil war in 48/49 BCE when Julius Caesar occupied Apollonia and Pompey held Dyrrhachium. Caesar's victory certainly changed the political status of the region bringing the region under direct Roman control that made the drachm minting obsolete and initiated the striking of the Apollo denarii in Apollonia in the weight of the Roman republican denarius.

While the end of the drachm production seems to be plausible, the start still requires further stipulation. The span between 208 and 48 BCE, 160-161 years is just a bit short for 164 emissions of Dyrrhachium. If the number is incorrect or the minting started few years before 208 BCE cannot be decided for the time being.

The major problem is the dating of the start of the drachm production in Apollonia where the number of emissions is only 116. The Apolloniate drachm output was smaller throughout therefore it is possible that they started the coin production nearly

fifty years later than in Dyrrhachium: the only known hoard with a long series of the very first dozens of emissions from Dyrrhachium contains very few early Apolloniate drachms. This coincides with my observation that there are no stylistic counterparts of Dyrrhachian Class 1a (abstract style) drachms in Apollonia, the latter all show the usual (classic) appearance of the cow-calf complex. Unfortunately, these observations suggest only a later start but are still insufficient to tell how the Apolloniate minting corresponds with the 'compact model' hypothesis. If it is true, all Apollonite116 emissions were produced between 163 and 48 BCE. This may also mean that with the possible emergence of few more emissions all Apolloniate drachms must have been produced after the third Illyrian war (168 BCE). The other possibility is that the production started earlier but at start coins were not issued every year. The correct answer would be very important for the dating of several coin hoards containing early Apolloniate pieces.

Other interesting chronological conclusions can also be drawn from the comparison of hoard contents and the closing emissions in these hoards. I am almost certain that we know all the emissions of the final decades and their exact chronology. Based on this, the closure of the hoards found in the North-east Balkan territories suggests that the Illyrian drachms arrived there to step in the role of the Roman republican denarii in times of short supply because of diminished denarius production between 70 – 50 BCE¹³⁻¹⁴. The influx of the Illyrian drachms was interrupted for a few years starting in 60 BCE and resumed in 56 BC to be continued to the end of the drachm minting at an even greater scale. The interruption could be caused by Burebista's campaigns.

Outlook

The chronological suggestions in this article are tentative. For reassurance I would be grateful for

any 'for and against' comments sent to me by email based on hard evidence from past or forthcoming archaeological material.¹⁵

(Table 1) Chronological classification of the cow-calf type drachms

Dyrrhachium

1. Abbreviated obverse name
 - 1a. Abstract style
 - 1b. Classic style
2. Name in full, no symbols
3. Symbol in the exergue
4. Multiple symbols & many obverse names with the same reverse name
5. One (exceptionally two) obverse name each year

Apollonia

R = cow to right, L = cow to left

R

1. R1 as in Dyrrhachium
2. R2 as in Dyrrhachium
3. R3 as in Dyrrhachium

L

4. Ls Plain sides of square
5. Lc Concave sides of square
5. Lc1 A-alpha, symbols
6. Lc2 A-alpha, no symbols (monograms may occur in the exergue)
 - Lc2a drumstick shape rays
 - Lc2b petal shape rays

(Table 2) Tentative ‘compact model’ chronology of the cow-calf type drachms

Dyrrhachium (164 emissions)

Class	Style	Obv. name	Symbol	Moneyer/year	Emissions	BCE
1a	Abstract	Abbreviated	None	Few	35	211-177
1b	Classic	Abbreviated	None	Few		
2	Classic	Full	None	Several	37	176-138
3	Classic	Full	1	Many	47	139-93
4	Classic	Full	>1	Many	33	92-60
5	Classic	Full	>1	1; max. 2	12	59-48

Apollonia (116 emissions)

Class	Cow	Square	Alpha	Rays	Symbol	Emissions	BCE
1 (R1)	R	■			None	21	163-143
2 (R2)	R	■			None	49	142-94
3 (R3)	R	■			1	9	93-85
4 (Ls)	L	■	Α		≥ 1	4	84-81
5 (Lc1)	L	◆	Α		≥ 1	22	80-59
6 (Lc2a)	L	◆	A	drumstick	(monogram)	5	58-54
7 (Lc2b)	L	◆	A	petal	(monogram)	6	53-48

Legend to Figure

Coin examples showing the typical characteristics of the different chronological classes in Dyrrhachium and Apollonia listed in Table 1.

Notes:

1. P. Gardner, *Thessaly to Aetolia, A catalogue of the Greek coins in The British Museum* 7 (London, 1883)
2. H. Ceka, *Questions de numismatique illyrienne* (Tirana, 1972).
3. N. Conovici, ‘Contribuții privind cronologia și circulația drahmelor de Dyrrhachium și Apollonia la Dunărea de Jos’, in *Cultură și civilizație la Dunărea de Jos*, (Călărași 1985) 35-43.
4. G. Petrányi, ‘Comments on the chronology of the final minting period of the Apollonian-Dyrrhachian drachms’, *Bulletinul Societății Numismatice Române* 86-87 (1992-1993), 67-75.
5. G. Petrányi, ‘On the position of the Aibatios/Chairenos issue in the sequence of Apollonian drachms’, *Studii și cercetări de numismatică* 11 (1995) 59-63.
6. G. Petrányi, ‘Relative chronology of the drachms of Apollonia and Dyrrhachium in the final period of minting’, *Numizmatikai Közlöny* 94-95 (1995-1996) 3-18 + 2 plates.
7. G. Petrányi, ‘Gardens of Alkinoos: Fact or fiction? On the reverse pattern of the silver coins from Corcyra, Apollonia and Dyrrhachium’, *The Celator* (11/1998), 22-24.
8. G. Petrányi, ‘The Greek-Illyrian drachms of Apollonia and Dyrrhachium - trade coins for the North-Eastern Balkan region in the early phase of the 1st century BC’, *Bulletin du cercle d’études numismatiques* 43 (2006), 263-267.
9. G. Petrányi, ‘Cow-calf type Greek-Illyrian drachms: Problems and facts’, in *Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on Numismatic History and Economy in Epirus during antiquity* (Kerma, accepted for publication).
10. <http://asklapiadas.ancients.info> (without ‘www’!)

11. G. Petrányi, 'Which name represents the eponymous magistrate on the drachms of Apollonia and Dyrrhachium?' *Numizmatikai Közlöny* 106-107 (2007-2008), 75-82.
12. Y. Stoyas, 'Roman victoriati in perspective from the other side of the Adriatic', in *Proceedings of the 4th International Numismatic Congress in Croatia (Stari Grad, 20-25 September 2004)* (Rijeka 2005), 232.
13. V. Mihăilescu-Birliba, *Dacia răsăriteană în secolele VI-I î.e.n.* (Iași, 1990), 98.
14. K. Lockyear, 'The supply of Roman Republican denarii to Romania', *Studii și Cercetări Numismatică* 11 (1995), 85-102.
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