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DIRECTEURS :

TONY HACKENS, LUC SMOLDEREN,
RAF VAN LAERE, FRANÇOIS DE CALLATAÿ

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CHARIKLEIA PAPAGEORGIADOU - BANIS

KOINON OF THE KEIANS ? THE NUMISMATIC EVIDENCE (*)

The study of the early history of the Cycladic islands is beset by considerable difficulties. The environmental and historical peculiarities of the region, and the absence of adequate literary evidence make the task difficult. The evidence provided by an examination of the island coinages, however, is significant, and throws some light on a number of problems.

Kea (ancient Keos) is the westernmost Cycladic island. It is close to Attica and Euboea and shares in their history. An important feature of ancient Keos was the co-existence of four autonomous poleis⁽¹⁾. Although they were politically independent, the development of inter-city relations was inevitable, as were the presence of political and financial problems provoked by their co-existence. Inscriptions tell us only a little about these relations and problems⁽²⁾, and it is then necessary to place greater reliance on other sources of information, including coins⁽³⁾.

The 6th/5th Century B.C.

Only three of the four Keian cities seem to have issued coins: Koressia, Ioulis and Karthaia. There is no evidence for a mint at Poiessa⁽⁴⁾. The three cities began minting during the same period,

(*) I should like to express my warmest thanks to Dr. Kenneth Sheedy for his valuable help.

(1) I. N. PSYLLAS, *History of the Island of Kea*, Athens, 1920.

(2) *IG* XII.5, 1-2, 526-650.

(3) For the problems of the Keian coinage, Ch. PAPAGEORGIADOU, *Kea II. The Coinage of Kea*, Athens, 1988 (unpublished dissertation).

(4) For a supposed numismatic activity of Poiessa, see the tables worked out by Svoronos and included in Psyllas' history of Kea. For an even older rendering, P. O. BRÖNSTED, *Voyages dans la Grèce, accompagnés de recherches archéologiques et suivis d'un aperçu sur toutes les entreprises scientifiques qui ont eu lieu en Grèce depuis Pausanias jusqu'à nos jours*, Paris, 1826.

the last quarter of the 6th century, and continued until a little after 480 B.C. Each mint adopted its own emblem. Koressia was represented by the cuttle-fish, Ioulis by the bunch of grapes, and Karthaia by the amphora. In the last decade of the 6th century, however, a small dolphin was added to each of the above obverse emblems⁽⁵⁾. At the end of the archaic period the dolphin became the main emblem on the smaller denominations, while the original device became secondary. Agnes Brett concluded that the addition of the dolphin reflects a political union of the cities⁽⁶⁾, and this view seems convincing.

Clearly the co-existence of the four cities in the restricted area of the island, the presence of common political aspirations, of shared religious traditions, and the need for a common policy towards foreigners, all worked in favour of the cities joining in a common organization⁽⁷⁾. The evidence for such an organization at an early date, however, depends solely on our interpretation of the iconography of the coins, and this evidence suggests that a union of the Keian cities was in existence by the end of the 6th century B.C.

An important event for this discussion is the enlisting of Keos within the Delian Confederacy⁽⁸⁾. That the payment of tribute was made by Keos (and not by the individual cities), points to the existence of a *synteleia*, as has been pointed out by Swoboda⁽⁹⁾ and Meritt, Wade-Gery and McGregor⁽¹⁰⁾. P. Brun has recently ex-

(5) As a *terminus ante quem* for the addition of the dolphin is taken from the dating of the Taranto hoard, where a triobol of Karthaia was included; see E. BABELON, *Trouaille de Tarente*, in *RN*, s.4, 16, 1912, p.1-40; and more recently, M. J. PRICE, N. WAGGONER, *Archaic Greek Silver Coinage. The Asyut Hoard*, London, 1975, p.19, where a dating at 500-490 B.C. is proposed.

(6) A. BALDWIN BRETT, *Catalogue of Greek Coins. Museum of Fine Arts. Boston*, Boston, 1955, p.170, no.1286.

(7) G. TÉNÉKIDÈS, *La notion juridique de l'indépendance et la tradition hellénique. Autonomie et fédéralisme aux v^e et iv^e s. av. J.C.* (Collection de l'Institut français d'Athènes, 83), Athènes, 1954, p.45-46; O. PICARD, *Chalcis et la confédération eubéenne. Étude de numismatique et d'histoire (iv^e-i^{er} s.)* (Befar, 234), Athènes, 1979, p.221; J. DUCAT, *La confédération béotienne et l'expansion thébaine à l'époque archaïque*, in *BCH*, 97, 1973, p.60-61.

(8) P. CLOCHÉ, *La politique étrangère d'Athènes de 404 à 38 av. J.C.*, Paris, 1934; R. MEIGGS, *The Athenian Empire*, Oxford, 1972; R. OSBORNE, *The Classical Landscape with Figures*, London, 1987, p.132.

(9) H. SWOBODA, in *Sitzungsberichte der Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Wien*, 199, 1923, p.43.

(10) B. D. MERITT, H. D. WADE-GERY, M. F. MCGREGOR, *The Athenian Tribute Lists*, Cambridge Mass., 1939.

pressed the view that a union of cities, of «ethnique» character, already existed in the 5th century, and that this was turned into a *synteleia* in 454 B.C. (11). Nevertheless, we are still unable to determine the existence or nature of such a union before 377 B.C. when the poleis of Keos entered separately into the Second Athenian Confederacy (12).

The 4th/3rd Centuries

The political climate throughout the 4th century remained uncertain (13). On the Sandwich Marble, dated ca. 377-373 B.C., the Keians are recorded as a single entity. In 368 B.C. the independence of the Greek cities was proclaimed at the Congress at Delphi (14). The well known treaties of *isopoliteia* with Eretria and Istiaia also cite common institutions of the Keians (15). These two epigraphical testimonies are the most explicit evidence for a common organization of the Keian poleis at some point during the 4th century (16). This political status can be confirmed by the numismatic evidence. A small series of bronze coins minted at the end of the 4th century B.C. or beginning of the 3rd (17), depicts a male head, possibly of Aristaios, on the obverse, and a bunch of grapes and the legend ΚΕΙ(ΩΝ) on the reverse. There are only 15 coins remaining from this series, produced by 14 obverse and 13 reverse dies. Their weight is 1.00-3.09 g., and their diameter 10-14 mm. The

(11) P. BRUN, *L'île de Kéos et ses cités au IV^e s. av. J.C.*, in *ZPE*, 76, 1989, p. 130.

(12) J. CARGILL, *The Second Athenian League*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1981, p. 189.

(13) For all the relevant problems, see the very interesting article of P. Brun mentioned above, p. 121-138.

(14) D. M. ROBINSON, *A Hoard of Silver Coins from Carystus* (NNM, 124), New York, 1952. At the same period towards 350 B.C., a similar politic was adopted by Mausolus of Caria, see S. HORNBLOWER, *Mausolus*, Oxford, 1982, p. 206.

(15) D. M. LEWIS, *The Federal Constitution of Keos*, in *BSA*, 57, 1962, p. 1-4; Ch. DUNANT, J. THOMOPOULOS, *Inscriptions de Céos*, in *BCH*, 78, 1954, p. 316-348.

(16) For parallels, see P. SALMON, *Droits et devoirs des cités dans la confédération béotienne (476-386)* (Colloques Internationaux du CNRS «La Béotie antique»), Paris, 1985, p. 301-306.

(17) M. J. PRICE, *The Introduction of Bronze Coinage and its Particular Development at Corinth*, Cambridge University PhD, 1967.

same types were used by Ioulis and Karthaia for an equally small series of coins during the same period, but these carry different legends: KAP for Karthaia and IOY KE for Ioulis. Unfortunately, die links have not been discovered, but we can establish a « schema » dividing coins with the same types according to a) the ethnic of the polis; b) the ethnic of the polis and of the islanders; c) the ethnic of the islanders. In this case we have two possibilities: 1) that the series KEI(ΩN) was minted simultaneously, or almost, with the relevant series of the cities, the distinction being made by the legend only, or 2) if they occurred in succession then the coins of Karthaia must be first, followed by those of Ioulis, and at the end, the coins of KEI(ΩN). This suggests that the Karthaia referred only to their polis, but sometime towards the end of the 4th century Ioulis decided to promote an island identity. The next step was evidently the sole use of the general ethnic KEI(ΩN).

* The possible unification of the Keian cities within a short time during the 4th century can be linked with the island's exit from the Second Athenian Confederacy, prompted by Eretria and under the leadership of Ioulis⁽¹⁸⁾. On this occasion Aristaïos, a mythical figure held in common by all Keians, was an appropriate symbol for their coinage; on the reverse was the emblem of Ioulis itself. During the first stage the leadership of Ioulis was promoted by the legend IOY KEI⁽¹⁹⁾, and in the next Ioulis went further by minting for all Keians. On the other hand, Karthaia, which perhaps started by taking part in an anti-Athenian movement, used the same iconography, but never declared itself openly against Athens, as can be deduced from the epigraphical evidence, which shows that in relation to the other Keian cities Karthaia had a rather different policy toward Athens⁽²⁰⁾. The suppression of the revolt by the Athenians put an end to this coinage, and was followed by a more drastic interference in the affairs of Keos⁽²¹⁾.

(18) J. BUCKLER, *The Theban Hegemony, 371-362 B.C.*, Cambridge Mass., London, 1980, p. 173.

(19) If to these series we add the silver issues with the legend IOY KI, although very doubtful, then we have an overall view of the minting of Ioulis at this moment. If this is the case, then the silver series could have been struck as commemorative of the union of the cities.

(20) *IG* II. 2, 404; cf. ΤΟΔ, *GHI*, 142.

(21) Among them the term « πολιτεύεσθαι κατὰ πόλεις » was included.

The 2nd Century

The ethnic KEI(ΩN) reappears on coins of the 2nd century B.C. The two bronze series are the only evidence of minting on Kea during this period. The earlier obverse type, the head of Aristaios, is retained. There are two denominations. The heavier and larger denomination is known from 145 coins, struck from 102 obverse and 120 reverse dies. It is possible to distinguish two emissions from the weight and size of the coins (the types Aristaios/Seirius KEIΩN remain the same). In the first group are coins weighing between 5.24-5.35 g. and with a diameter of 14-19 mm. In the second group the weight is between 3.30-5.20 g. and the diameter is 15-18 mm. The coins of the second, smaller denomination weigh 1.40-2.98 g. and measure 12-15 mm. They display a different reverse type (to indicate their smaller value)⁽²²⁾, an 8-ray star, a simplification of the Dog star Seirius, and the legend KEI. We might infer that the heavier coins were in circulation at first, and that they were later replaced by the lighter coins which kept the original iconography.

It is significant that the coinage of this period, like that of the preceding period, reveals the use of types already employed at an earlier date by the cities. Among the coins of the first series there are two which were struck with obverse dies previously used for the coins of Karthaia⁽²³⁾. This means that for a while at least the Keians employed the dies of Karthaia before moving to use their own dies.

There are various problems associated with this phase of Keian coinage:

1. *Problems of dating*

The only worthwhile evidence for dating these series is provided by archaeology; stylistic criteria are here imprecise, and die-links prove of little help (as the same dies were rarely used for more than one emission). Keian coins have been found in contexts at the exca-

(22) The simplification of the type as an indication of smaller value is well known, see e.g., C. M. KRAAY, *Archaic and Classical Greek Coins*, London, 1976, pl. 9, nos. 163, 164, 166, 167.

(23) Ch. PAPAGEORGIOUDOU, (*supra* note 3), p. 80, notes 261, 262.

vations of Tenos⁽²⁴⁾ and Athens⁽²⁵⁾ which point to a date in the 2nd century B.C. The historical evidence, however, suggests an earlier dating. A union of the cities of Keos is attested in the 3rd century B.C., from decrees of isopoliteia with the Aitolian Confederacy (240 B.C.) and Naupaktos (220 B.C.), where the Boulè, Demos and the « politeia » of the Keians are cited⁽²⁶⁾. But inscriptions from the island show that at this time the poleis had their own institutions, and remained politically independent. Therefore, in the 3rd century B.C. we have mention of the cities of Kea acting independently, and as a political body. We should also keep in mind that in 217 B.C. Philip V proclaimed the independence of the Greek cities from the Aitolians, dissolving all the existing koina and confederacies⁽²⁷⁾, and consequently in an inscription from Magnesia ad Maeandrum dated 207/206 B.C. the cities are mentioned separately⁽²⁸⁾. This leaves only a short period of time for the union of Keians, between 240 and 217 B.C. But this is unlikely to be sufficient time for the bulk of the coinage under consideration (though it might be enough for the first series of the Keians, the one held in common with Karthaia). On the other hand, the existence of the poleis as independent political units presupposes a coinage of their own, and this does not seem to be the case.

The 2nd century remains problematic in this context. After the plenitude of civil decrees of the 3rd century B.C., there is a marked decrease in material from the 2nd century B.C.⁽²⁹⁾; the few inscriptions from this century are usually votive or funerary. It seems certain that the cities of Keos stopped functioning as civil units during the 2nd century. Was the synoikismos, mentioned by Strabo⁽³⁰⁾ in the 1st century (but evidently in reference to earlier events) responsible for this change?

(24) R. ÉTIENNE, *Ténos et les Cyclades du milieu du IV^e s. av. J.C. au milieu du III^e s. ap. J.C.*, (BEFAR, 263), I, 12, Paris, 1990, p. 498, no. 67, 68, pl. 156.

(25) R. S. YOUNG, *An Industrial District of Ancient Athens*, in *Hesperia*, 20, 1951, p. 263; F. S. KLEINER, *The Agora Excavations and Athenian Bronze Coinage 200-86 B.C.*, in *Hesperia*, 45, 1976, p. 19.

(26) *IG* XII.5, 1-2, 526-532; *CIG* 2350-2352.

(27) W. THOMPSON, *Philip V and the Islanders*, in *TAPhA*, 102, 1971, p. 615-620.

(28) O. KERN, *Inscripfen von Magnesia*, 50 = *SIG*³, 562.

(29) As can be deduced by the inscriptions published in *IG* XII.5.

(30) Strabo, X. 486; P. GRAINDOR, *Kykladika*, in *MB*, 25, 1921, p. 119-125.

It seems then that the archaeological evidence is most telling in providing a date for the coinage. If one were to argue for a date in the 3rd century B.C. a number of problems arise: 1) the sizeable quantity of coins which seems inappropriate for the needs of the island whatever the historical or financial conditions; 2) the lack of any other coinage which could be assigned to the 2nd century B.C. If one were to accept a 3rd century date the absence of inscriptions from the 2nd c. would suggest a total collapse of civil procedures, or a severe crisis, and this does not appear to have been the case.

2. Organization and Seat of the « Koinon »

The political status of the union of the cities also remains doubtful. As Francotte points out in his remarkable book⁽³¹⁾, in the case of confederacy the cities retain their own autonomy, but at the same time there exists the « droit de la cité fédérale ». In the case of synoikismos, however, the cities are no longer autonomous and only the common politeia is relevant⁽³²⁾. In our case the lack of epigraphic evidence concerning the civil status of this union presents a problem which seems to be insuperable. But the very absence of political texts from the cities would seem to indicate that the poleis of Keos had lost their autonomy in favour of a common political unit. One might then conclude that synoikismos, in its broad sense (and not just topographical), had occurred on Keos during the 2nd century B.C.

The seat of the so-called Koinon is not certain. From the numismatic point of view the choice of Karthaia is appealing. The use of Seirios, its symbol, suggests a leading place for the city in this union, a place which was already established through its relations with the envoys of the Hellenistic kingdoms. Furthermore, Karthaia had already produced a range of coins, so that it was capable of undertaking this task⁽³³⁾. On the other hand, surprisingly

(31) H. FRANCOTTE, *La polis grecque*, Paderborn, 1907, p. 141-144. For another opinion, see Brun cited above.

(32) M. MOGGI, *Συνοικίζειν in Tucidide*, in *AnnPisa*, 1975, III, IV, 3, p. 918-919 and, *I sinecismi interstatali greci*, Pisa, 1976, vol. I, p. 333-341. For a more recent approach at the neighbouring Euboea, D. KNOEPFLER, *Contribution à l'épigraphie de Chalcis*, in *BCH*, 114, 1990, p. 447-448, 497-498.

(33) W. WALLACE, *The Euboean League* (NNM, 134) New York, 1956; O. PICARD, *supra* note 7, p. 221, n. 4.

enough, when in the 1st century the coinage of the Keians stops, it is Ioulis which begins a new coinage. Does this mean that it had gained power from the preceding century as the result of being the centre of the Koinon? This alternative should be kept in mind. It seems possible that events unknown to us, which took place in the 2nd century B.C., perhaps related to the Rhodian Monarchy (?) and the new Koinon of Nesiotes, altered the image and balance of power at Keos which had been in force during the 3rd century B.C.

Conclusion

The existence of a common organization (a koinon) of Keian cities during several periods in the history of the island, can be argued from the study of numismatic evidence. While it must be admitted that the evidence is not decisive, the following conclusions may be drawn. It seems that a koinon of the Keians first came into existence towards the end of the 6th century B.C. There is further numismatic evidence for the existence of a koinon for a brief period during the 4th century, when the islanders decided to leave the Second Athenian Confederacy. Finally, the coins indicate the existence of another koinon in the 2nd century B.C., rather than in the 3rd.

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Postscript. The following publication came to my attention after the completion of my manuscript: J.F. CHERRY, J.L. DAVIS & E. MANTZOURANI, *Landscape Archaeology as Long-Term History: Northern Keos in the Cycladic Islands*, Los Angeles, UCLA, Institute of Archaeology.