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## TWO FACETS OF ANCIENT MONETARY ECONOMY: CELTIC IMITATIONS AND ROMAN RIGID FORMALITY.

PATRICK BRUUN

Two books<sup>1</sup> of great general interest to those engaged in the monetary economy and the economic life of the ancient world, have recently been published by the Slovenian economist Ivo Lukanc, who in his retirement has devoted considerable time to numismatic research. The author deals on the one hand with the last centuries of the pre-Christian era on the fringes of the Empire, and, on the other with the dawn of the Late Roman Empire and the reign of the Dalmatian emperor Diocletian. His studies provided him with the opportunity and the means to visit and to avail himself of the collections of certain eastern countries, particularly of Roumania and Bulgaria. One hopes that the doors he has been able to open, will remain so for other scholars also. Formidable treasures may await description and publication.

It is probably correct to start with the earlier book, dealing with the gold coinage of the emperor Diocletian (AD 284-313/6). There the author has limited his task exclusively to the gold coins with an obverse of this emperor.

It is easy to make critical remarks both from the historian's and from the numismatist's point of view. The reign of Diocletian was of focal importance in the history of the Roman empire, yet the two volumes of RIC (the standard work, Roman Imperial Coinage, vols V/II and VI in this case) divide the coin material between them without succeeding in covering

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<sup>1</sup> Lukanc, Ivo:

(a) *Diocletianus, der römische Kaiser aus Dalmatien*. Edizioni Cultura, Wetteren 1991, 343 pp.

(b) *Les imitations des monnaies d'Alexandre le Grand et de Thasos*. Thèse de doctorat en histoire. École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris, mai 1995, 289 pp., Planches 174.

the entire field. The former concentrates on the early period, when Diocletian, as the sole emperor or the senior of two *augusti*, gave no inkling of the future collegiate rulership of the tetrarchy, whereas the latter volume starts with the monetary reform of AD 294/6, when the tetrarchy was a reality and the new provincial administration had been introduced. Dr Lukanc's book deals with the entire rule of Diocletian and the reviewer cannot escape a feeling of disappointment when he realises that exclusively coins, and more specifically, gold coins with obverses of Diocletian had been catalogued in the book. Yet, the tetrarchic system was created in order to put an end to the rivalries and the fights for the imperial throne. The tetrarchs were supposed to rule by consensus; edicts and laws were issued in the names of all the rulers, and recorded in the preamble in the protocol order. *Mutatis mutandis* this was valid for the production of coins also, although there were not many different ways of publicizing the existence of an Imperial college and even fewer of demonstrating the internal relations between the members of the college (seniority, for instance) without employing a series of coins. Sometimes the solution to this problem appears to have been suggested or ordered by the central (i.e. Diocletian) administration, being valid for the four parts of the empire. In other instances the same effect was achieved in different ways by the four individual imperial administrative organizations. Some instances could be mentioned as illustrations:

(1) The normal procedure seems to have been to connect the obverses of all four rulers with certain (identical) reverses (cf. aurei of Trier, RIC VI, 174, no. 93a-b, 94 a-b to the rev. VOT XX/AVGG NN).

(2) The rev. legend records the existence of a tetrarchy, cf. Trier RIC VI, no. 72a-b, 73, 74a-b (PIETAS AVGG-ET CAESS NN, p. 172).

These solutions are worked out in accordance with the protocol found in official inscriptions, instances of which are happily recorded and illustrated by Dr Lukanc (CIL V, 8010 from Padova, p. 53), an inscription from Castellum Yotvata at the *Limes Palaestinae* (p. 65), and another from the *Limes Arabicus* (p. 66), all three recording the four members of the first tetrarchy. There is also a restored dedication (p. 50) from the baths of Diocletian in Rome recording Diocletian and Maximianus as *seniores augusti*, i.e. retired after May 305, Constantius and Galerius as *augusti* and Severus and Maximinus as *caesares*. The time would be AD 305 or 306, before the death of Constantius.

I have dealt at some length with the collegiality of the tetrarchic system created by Diocletian because it has made its imprint felt on the coinages of its time, both when the colleagues were respected by one or more of them, and when one or more ruler had been ostentatiously ignored by one or more of his colleagues, thus conveying a state of consensus or dissension within the ruling college. By excluding tetrarchic coins of the Diocletian's tetrarchy with obverses other than those of Diocletian, the author has seriously limited the use and the usefulness of the numismatic material of this particular period.

Dr Sutherland in RIC VI carefully recorded the die identities he had found, for instance among the gold coins of Trier (cf. p. 168 f., rev. die-link of no. 39, obv. of Diocletian, with no. 41, obv. of Constantius; the notes to this gold coinage abound with references to die-linkages, which in the end may be able to explain the structure of the coinage and render a key to its interpretation).

In the volume on Diocletian's gold coins we can record

(1) Within the limits noted above, a total view of the Diocletianic gold coining, where the emperor himself is depicted on the obverse, is obtained by bringing together the material of RIC V/II and VI in addition to the coins of the period omitted by both volumes of RIC. Consequently, the author has been able to add considerably to the gold coin material published by RIC.

(2) The entire material from all the collections visited has been accounted for, at times with records of the provenance of the coins, and the number of collections consulted has been increased. The author writes (p.100): "Of 220 museums in 35 countries, 74 museums that keep Diocletian gold coins were found. " There was a total of 528 gold coins with an obv. of Diocletian from his 14 mints.

(3) There is a section with additions to RIC V/II and VI (pp. 109-116). Here the author includes references to specimens recorded in various sale catalogues, although such catalogues otherwise are not quoted as reliable sources. The coins, which are not described in detail, appear normally to represent slight variations of catalogued coins. Attention is drawn to the point of variation. Special attention is paid to the coins not included in either RIC volume, i.e. they were struck in the ten-year period before the monetary reform, the starting point of RIC VI.

The *corpus nummorum* proper (pp. 118-212) is organized in

accordance with the single collections. This section is followed by "Aufstellung aller Goldmünzen Diokletians aus den Museen nach Münzstätten" (pp. 213-235).

Two points should be made in this context:

(I) The author records an addition to the mint of Cyzicus of the reverse VIRTVTI HERCVLIS, depicting Hercules standing, leaning on his club with the lion's skin across his l. arm (p. 109, illustrated). The mint mark is SC, the obv. IMP C C VAL DIOCLETIANVS AVG, laur. bust, draped, seen from the back. RIC V/II, p. 291, no. 605 records three specimens of this type with the obv. IMP C MAXIMIANVS AVG. Dr Lukanc regards the Diocletianic obv. as a technical mistake; during the process of striking the Diocletianic die was presumably put on the anvil instead of the one of Maximianus. He argues that Hercules was the tutelary deity of Maximian, whereas Hercules' father, Jupiter, correspondingly was the protector of Diocletian.

We are familiar with the tetrarchy of rulers protected by a tetrarchy of gods forming two dynastic lines, the Jovian one and the Herculean one, the former for the senior augustus, the latter for the junior one, each with a junior ruler of Caesarian rank at his side. Normally, in the full blown tetrarchy, the emperors on the coins refer to their own tutelary god. On the other hand, at an early stage, Diocletian at Cyzicus invokes Jupiter (RIC V/II, no. 298, IOVI CONSERVATORI AVG, Mars, *ibid.*, no. 300 and Sol, *ibid.* no. 311), and further, at Antioch first (?) IOVI CONSERVATORI AVG (no. 310) and subsequently the same imagery is employed but with the rev. legend ending in AVGG (no. 319). On antoniniani of Antioch and Tripolis we get IOV ET HERCV CONSER AVGG (Antioch no. 323, Tripolis no. 327).

(ii) Obviously, the career of Diocletian should be studied in its historical context. It is clear that the idea of a ruling college of four could not have arisen until the historical and military circumstances so demanded. In AD 284 Diocletian held his first consulship; two years later Maximian appears in the *Fasti* as his colleague - the dyarchy had been created. Later in the same year two younger rulers were added to form a college of four, Constantius and Galerius, with the rank of Caesar.

In the years 284/6 Diocletian may well have invoked the protection of Hercules, although he later refrained from explicitly doing so. In the *corpus nummorum* (p. 110, Alexandria) the author records a coin with a

Diocletianic obverse of the rev. VIRTVTI AVGG, referring to three sale catalogues of the period 1895-1905. The rev. depicts Hercules with club and lion's skin. As the abbreviation AVGG shows, we are now in the dyarchic phase, when Diocletian was ceding the invocations expressly to Hercules to his fellow-ruler Maximian. Dr Lukanc remarks (p. 110) that Karl Pink was uncertain whether the coin should be regarded as genuine or not. If Pink's doubt was evoked solely by the imagery, it is hard to accept his suspicions as justified.

(4) Dr Lukanc has devoted a great deal of labour to the circulation of the gold coins on the numismatic market (pp. 239-279) according to the sale catalogues of the last 250 years (AD 1741-1990). The purpose of this part, it seems, is to provide an insight into the workings of the market and a picture, say, of the frequency of the same coin appearing again and again in the catalogues, and of new specimens entering the market until they rest within the protected ambiance of a public collection.

(5) Within the limits stipulated by the author, Dr Lukanc has produced a remarkable volume with an exceptionally diversified treatment of the coin material. The material as such will certainly serve in drawing a more complete picture of the creator of the tetrarchy, but to succeed in this we would need something similar for the other members of the tetrarchy. Where do we find the enthusiastic idealists prepared to sacrifice years of their lives in order to achieve this goal?

(6) While in possession of the book on Diocletian's gold coins and busily engaged in digesting its contents, I received a short note from Dr Lukanc stating that the following aurei of Cyzicus and Antioch were of identical *dies* (the catalogued numbers are those of RIC V/II):

	<i>Cyzicus</i>	<i>Antioch</i>
no.	285	307
	286	308
	287	310
	288	311
	292	313

If this is correct, a problem which long has awaited solution is about to be solved: When and where did Diocletian initiate his coinage, and what

parts did the mints of Cyzicus and Antioch, respectively, play as coining centres? The reviewer refrains from the arduous task of verifying Dr Lukanc's assertion because (a) the Key to Plates of RIC V/II does not specify the coins illustrated, and (b) Dr Lukanc illustrates the coins in conjunction with the *corpus nummorum* (i.e. along with the lists of the single collections) but does not note in the *Aufstellung* (i.e. the systematic catalogue following the RIC pattern) which coins he has illustrated. One would need the photographs of all the coins to put them alongside one another in order to be able to eliminate poor quality pictures and draw conclusions based on the high quality specimens and photographs. On the other hand, who would like to challenge the testimony of the expert witness, Dr Lukanc?

### **Tetradrachms and denarii**

In May 1995 Ivo Lukanc presented a doctoral thesis in History at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris. The thesis dealt with ancient coins classified as Celtic. They appear in the monetary history of the last pre-Christian centuries on the fringes of the Roman republic, and notably at a time characterized by Roman expansion in Europe.

The title of the book indicates that two different coinages will be studied, both comprising series of imitations of Greek coins (of Alexander the Great, and of coins of the island of Thasos). They were current in the Balkan countries including Bulgaria and Roumania, and appear largely to have served the needs of the local population. Dr Lukanc (p. 19) refuses to accept that these populations should be labelled "Celtic" or "East-Celts". He prefers to speak of the *Scordisci* i.e. local Balkan groups which could be identified as Thracians, *Getae*, Dacians and others - although the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* regards the *Scordisci* as a Celtic tribe.

The coins in question play a considerable part in the history or, rather, prehistory, and particularly in the economic history of these regions. Naturally, the major part of the coin material is to be found in private or public collections of the countries concerned. A major feat of Dr Lukanc's research is that he has succeeded in gaining access to the Bulgarian and Roumanian collections and in cataloguing no less than 17 and 14 collections, respectively in these countries, collections previously



jealously guarded by their custodians. Thus the material of known Thasos coins grew from 673 to 1,985, i.e. it has almost trebled. Equally important is the fact that the collections could contribute to the particulars of many hoards, which unquestionably and conclusively, it seems, showed the main areas of coin circulation.

The success of the visits to these countries was, very likely, due to Dr Lukanc's knowledge of the countries, his mastery of the language and his patience while waiting for permission and access to the collections. Thus the entire area, where the Thasian coins, original or imitations, had circulated, and partly at least had been produced, has been surveyed. We can now see that the material earlier analysed by numismatic scholars represented no more than a smattering when compared to the findings now made public by Dr Lukanc (cf. the table on p. 61).

The overview of the collected and analysed material suggested to the author a new classification of the Thasian coins, both genuine and imitation. When effectuating this he has referred to studies by Robert Göbl (1973), I. Prokopov (so far unpublished) and Al. Sasiano (1994; this study does not appear in the bibliography, but there is a reference to it on p. 59, n.44). A brief survey may clarify the issues according to Ivo Lukanc's classification.

Group (i) comprises, in accordance with Prokopov's manuscript, original Thasian tetradrachms until "barbarization" of the execution begins. They are dated to the first half of the second century BC. The coin production moved from the island of their origin to the continent in the north and further on across the Rhodope Mountains to Thrace proper; a small number found their way to the north of Bulgaria. Single specimens have been discovered in present-day Roumania, and even further to the west and the north.

Group (ii) comprises the first imitations, which presumably (Prokopov - Lukanc) were executed in the Rhodope region, which was rich in silver. From the point of view of style and metallurgical workmanship a series of hoards shows these coins to be very close to the Thasian models. They are dated to the second half of the second century.

Group (iii) represents the transition towards a mass-production of Thasian tetradrachms. It was not carried out by Celts or by Thracians but by the administrations of the Roman province of Macedonia. Dr Lukanc speaks of an almost industrialized production during the first century BC,

roughly to the middle of the century. The author refers once more to Prokopov, who suggests that about a half of the coins preserved were struck in Roman mints. This group is defined as coins of Thasian type, and classified as "monnayages militaires et strategiques romains" (p. 62). There are many divergent views on this point among "the old school" of numismatists.

Group (iv) also initiated and comprised the issues of the Roman questors. The point of departure was the fact that the Roman administration of the province reduced the production of tetradrachms of the Thasian type, as it seems, in relation to the production of Roman denarii. The local market, however, was accustomed to the heavier denomination, the production of which was therefore resuscitated. This time there was no ambition to imitate the genuine Thasian coins, but, it appears, to copy coins of the Thasian type from the first stage of barbarization. The hoards of this period did not maintain the homogeneous character of the preceding centuries. For numismatic research, the heterogeneous hoards are easier to date because of the insertion of, for instance, Roman denarii. The Thasian imitations are normally the most recently struck coins of the hoard in question, whereas the denarii had frequently been in circulation for at least 60 to 80 years (p. 64).

For a detailed confirmative analysis of the hoards, which play an important part in this context, we would need to study Prokopov's manuscript to which Dr Lukanc repeatedly refers.

The imitations of the coins of Alexander as well as of Philip II and Philip III Arrhidaios are, when compared with the Thasian imitations, scarce. The material comprises not more than 89 coins, and the otherwise rewarding visits to Bulgaria and Roumania did not yield more than 19 specimens (p. 6) against 1,412 Thasian ones, a surprising fact in view of how common the copies of the Alexander coins otherwise were (p. 9). A survey of the Macedonian coins, and a classification of the imitations is presented on pp. 20-24 (see further the short chapter on the metrology of the tetradrachms and drachms, p. 26 f.). It does not only elucidate the diversity of the coins in circulation, but also the small size of the single groups and the very limited representation of individual groups in the hoards. The span of time covered by these coins is from the turn of the century about 300 BC to, roughly, 70 BC, when the local mints switched to imitating Roman republican denarii (p. 29). The imitations of Alexander

proper, in the light of a very modest material (less than 40 coins, cf. p. 33), cease shortly (?) after 220 BC. The study of the hoards shows that imitations of Alexander do not coexist with tetradrachms of Thasos and other coinages later than the begin of the second century BC. Consequently, the imitations of Alexander are much older than the Thasian imitations. They would thus have been produced within the period 300-220 BC (p. 40).

Without doubt, Dr Lukanc's book opens new vistas in ancient history, in economic history and in numismatics with regard to the last two pre-Christian centuries. The orthodox practitioner of the history of Rome and of Roman numismatics receives a shock when reading that the Romans participated in, or controlled the production of imitations of Greek coins to satisfy the need of the Balkan peoples: "le maintien du poids de référence traduit une volonté de maintenir une stabilité monétaire qui implique une structure sociale utilisant ces espèces comme moyen d'échange, et très vraisemblablement un importance économique voire politique de ces monnaies"(General conclusion, p.138).

The author points out (p. 140) that this was not at all a novelty as far as administrative practices go. We have corresponding series in Gaul which copied both the Roman monetary imagery and weight standards; other Gallic issues survived the conquest of Gaul by Caesar.

Within the larger field of Roman numismatics, the issues of Greek imperials have been a vast but neglected subject. Only bits and pieces have been tackled by serious students until, in 1994, Andrew Burnett, Michel Amandry and Père Ripollès published two volumes of *Roman Provincial Coinage* (the death of Caesar to the death of Vitellius, 44 BC - AD 69, xvi + 812 pp., 195 plates and 7 maps). The Introduction by Andrew Burnett presents a survey of past endeavours and present methodological problems. With these volumes the discussion of the Roman monetary economy started anew. In 1995 McMaster University (Hamilton, Ont.) devoted a good deal

of the second E.T. Salmon conference to this and related topics.<sup>2</sup> The issues of Greek imperials show how the Romans integrated these coinages. The small denominations frequently continued to serve as local currencies without showing any traces of Roman political sovereignty. This conforms to the policy adopted by the Romans with regard to the Celts in Gaul. It may have served as a model for the Balkan area, as Dr Lukanc suggests (p. 140).

Ivo Lukanc's thesis is in many respects a heavyweight volume (289 pages and 174 plates = 3.2 kilograms) because of the printing technique employed, using simply one side of the paper. I counted 2,075 coins illustrated, 88 Alexander tetradrachms and drachms plus imitations, 1,940 Thasian tetradrachms and 47 coins in a supplement, recording coins in the British Museum in accordance with the Derek Allen catalogue I of 1987, published by John Kent and Melinda Mays. In the coin list Lukanc refers to the classification of I. Prokopov (no.1-4) and Göbl (no. 5-47). It is fascinating on the plates to see the coins and the imitations, how the latter with the passing of time from an organic presentation of human or divine heads on the obverses gradually develop into apparent abstractions, and the same goes for the presentation of the reverses, where the legends finally are reduced to a series of dots.

There is a short bibliography (pp. 282-5), recording first the abbreviations and then the most important studies, relevant for the student of today. The historically important reports of the past have not been incorporated with the reading list; they are mentioned in the footnotes of the Introduction and the text. References to journals normally lack page references. This and other minor matters do not essentially detract from

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<sup>2</sup> The general topic was: Roman coins and Roman society during the empire. Richard Duncan-Jones' paper dealt with "Coins and the Roman Imperial Economy", Anthony A. Barret's with "Currency Supply and Imperial Propaganda. A Test Case", largely with reference to his monograph published the preceding year *Money and Government in the Roman Empire*, and the reviewer with "Coins and the Roman Imperial Government". References were made to some earlier studies, which deserve to be mentioned in this context:

Burnett, Andrew: *The Authority to Coin in the Late Republic and Early Empire*, *Numismatic Chronicle* 1977, 37-63.

Harl, Kenneth W.: *Civic Coins and Civic Policies in the Roman East AD 180-275*, Berkeley 1987.

Howgego, C.J.: *Coinage and military finances: The Imperial bronze coinage of the Augustan East*, NC 1982, 1-20.

the value of the presentation. On balance there is a surprisingly impressive quantity of new material of two series of Greek coins and their imitations which seem to have satisfied the needs of the monetary market of the Balkan area. Of particular interest is the way in which the Roman authorities from the creation of the province of Macedonia took an active part in producing the monetary stock demanded not only by the masters of the area, but also by the native population, long accustomed to dealing with coined silver and with Greek currencies.

To conclude this numismatic review of two major studies dealing with two very different subjects and periods, four to five hundred years apart, it seems appropriate to point out an important common denominator - the functioning of the monetary economy on the fringes of the Roman empire.

The expanding empire confronted and conquered areas used to a monetary economy, but the Roman authorities were not constitutionally empowered nor from the administrative point of view permitted to produce a coinage of their own. The last century BC offers, however, many instances of dictators and revolutionary army commanders with *imperium* who struck coins both at home and abroad, mainly to satisfy the needs of the army. In Gaul and in the Balkan area the Romans accepted the means of payment used and produced locally, and Roman questors (Lukanc, *Les Imitations*, pp. 6, 268 f.) obviously in addition to the Roman denarii in *ad hoc* constituted mints, copied and struck imitations of Greek coins. Later Augustus in the urbanized Greek East created a precedent for the Greek imperial coinages, constituting mints in Spain and Gaul. In addition to the imperial series *aes* coins were produced for local circulation.

The end of this development came with Diocletian's reform AD 294/6, when the only surviving regional coinage, the Alexandrian one, was abolished. Thus the imperial administration controlled all Roman coin production; the imperial portrait was the imprint of officialdom. So the two books by Ivo Lukanc mark and elucidate the beginning and the end of an important epoch in the history of the ancient monetary economy.