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THE ATTALID POLL-TAX

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## THE ATTALID POLL-TAX<sup>1</sup>

A well-known inscription first published by M.Segre, *Clara Rhodos IX* (Rhodes, 1938), pp. 190-207,<sup>2</sup> is a letter from Eumenes II of Pergamon to Artemidoros, the Attalid governor of Telmessos (modern Fethiye) on the extreme west coast of Lycia. Telmessos had been granted to the Attalids under the Peace of Apamea in 188 (Polybios 21.45,10-11; Livy 37.56,3-5; 38.39,16). The letter, which dates to 181 BC, grants certain tax-exemptions to some settlers in a nearby village, and provides the interesting information that the poll-tax (κόνταξις) was normally levied at an annual rate of four Rhodian drachms and one obol per adult:

καὶ ἐπεὶ τῆς συντάξεως δεῖ διορθοῦσθαι αὐτοὺς ἑκάστου κόματος ἐνηλίκου Ῥοδίασ δραχμάσ τεσσαρασ ὀβολόν, ἀσθενοῦντεσ δὲ τοῖσ ἰδίοισ βαρύνοντασ, τὰ τε παραγραφόμενα αὐτοῖσ ἐκ τοῦ ἐκκαϊδεκάτου ἔτουσ, ἐκ τούτων ἀφεῖναι, ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ ἐπτακκαϊδεκάτου ἔτουσ, Ῥοδίαν δραχμὴν καὶ ὀβολόν.

(lines 10-14)

The use of Rhodian money to specify sums payable at Telmessos in 181 BC occasions no surprise, for the importance of Rhodian coinage in the area in the Hellenistic period is easily demonstrated. For example, there are far more Rhodian coins, about 600, than coins of any other mint among the roughly 2,500 Greek coins of Hellenistic date held by Fethiye Museum as of the end of 1992 (publication is in hand of the Museum's ancient coins studied in 1992 and 1993 by John Casey, Melih Arslan, Tolga Tek and myself); note also the hoard of about 50 Hellenistic Rhodian didrachms found at Fethiye before 1925 and now in Istanbul (*IGCH* 1428). But why is the Attalid poll-tax expressed in the curiously unrounded and precise sum of four Rhodian drachms and an obol?

Unlike some other slightly later inscriptions, the letter from Eumenes II does not specify whether the Rhodian drachms concerned are "old drachms" (δραγμαί παλαιαί), i.e. drachms with unradiate facing head of Helios on obverse and no incuse square on the reverse (eg *SNG von Aulock* 2809-2815), or the succeeding "plinthophoric" drachms with radiate profile head of Helios on obverse and shallow square incuse (πλίνθος, literally a brick or an ingot) on the reverse (eg *SNG von Aulock* 2823-2828).<sup>3</sup> The change from the old

<sup>1</sup> This is a slightly adapted version of a note which appeared in Spink, *Numismatic Circular*, May 1994, pp. 159-160. It is printed here by kind permission of Spink & Son Ltd.

<sup>2</sup> Better text in F.Maier, *Griechische Mauerbauinschriften* 1 (Heidelberg, 1959), no. 76. See also M.Austin, *The Hellenistic World from Alexander to the Roman Conquest* (Cambridge, 1981), no. 202.

<sup>3</sup> For discussion of the "old drachms" and the plinthophoric drachms, see Louis Robert, *Études de numismatique grecque*, (Paris, 1951), pp. 166-176. He was the first to point out that the Rhodian δραχμάσ πλινθοφόρουσ of the Delian inventories (*Inscr. Délos* 461, Bb, 1.49; 1415, 1.3; 1422, 1.12; 1443, A I, 1.150-

format to the new plinthophoric style of Rhodian coinage probably took place around 190 or the early 180s BC, perhaps as a result of Rhodes' acquisition of most of Caria and Lycia under the Peace of Apamea in 188 BC. This date is strongly indicated by the fact that no fewer than six magistrates seem to have struck both Rhodian posthumous Alexander tetradrachms in the period c. 202-190 BC and some of the earliest plinthophoric issues, with a similar pattern of die-linking among the names in both series.<sup>4</sup> The earliest plinthophoric coinage is well represented in Fethiye Museum, not least by the 61 drachms of the Kargı hoard which show little sign of wear,<sup>5</sup> and it is clear that it circulated in the region almost as soon as it was minted on Rhodes. It is therefore likely that "Rhodian drachms" mentioned without further qualification in an inscription from Telmessos dated 181 BC were plinthophoric rather than earlier drachms.

Does the sum of four Rhodian plinthophoric drachms and an obol payable as poll-tax have any particular significance? The weight of the plinthophoric drachm of Jenkins Groups A-D (the later Jenkins Group E is on a significantly lower standard) has been the subject of some debate. In 1982, Hyla Troxell published a histogram of a limited number of plinthophoric drachms from Groups A-D which indicated a standard of about 3.00g. The table published by Jenkins in 1989, based on a much larger quantity of material, indicated a standard of about 2.85-2.90g. A table which I have drawn up on the basis of a yet larger number of coins (though still only a fraction of those surviving from this abundant series) indicates that Troxell's table was the more accurate. I suspect that Jenkins' results were skewed by his reliance on the 288 drachms in the 1948 Marmaris hoard (*IGCH* 1355) and on other drachms in the British Museum, many of which are worn, corroded or otherwise damaged. The following is a comparison of the tables established by Troxell, Jenkins, myself including British Museum material, and myself excluding British Museum material (I have converted Troxell's and Jenkins' tables from divisions of 0.05g to divisions of

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151; 1449, Aab II, l.12 and 24-25; 1450, A, l.97 and 103) are to be identified with the drachms having the profile radiate head of Helios and the shallow square incuse.

<sup>4</sup> See Ashton, *NC* 1986, p.10, n.10. G.K.Jenkins, "Rhodian Plinthophoroi - a Sketch" in G.Le Rider *et al.* (eds.), *Kraay-Mørkholm Essays* (Louvain-la-Neuve, 1989), pp.101-119, ignores (pp.101 and 104) the evidence of the Alexanders, and follows Melville-Jones (*RBN* 125, 1979, pp.53-4) in dating the start of the plinthophoroi to the 170s. The "overlap" magistrates are Ainetor, Agemachos, Stasion, Aristoboulos, Damatrios and Agatharchos. Their Alexander issues are those listed by M.J.Price (*The Coinage in the Name of Alexander the Great and Philip Arrhidaeus*, Zürich-London, 1991), at, respectively, nos. 2518/2519, 2525A, 2517, 2516/2516A, 2521, and 2525; for date and die-linking see F.Kleiner, *ANSMN* 17, 1971, pp.105-125 (the coins of Agemachos and Agatharchos came to light after his study). Their plinthophoric issues are all in the first half of Jenkins Group A, issue nos., respectively, 7/12, 8, 9/13, 10, 11, and 14: see the list and die-linking in Jenkins, p.106.

<sup>5</sup> M.Arslan in C.Lightfoot (ed.), *Recent Turkish Coin Hoards and Numismatic Studies* (Oxford, 1991), pp.59-69.

0.10g). At the end is a weight table of the Kargı hoard, reproduced separately because its coins, all from Jenkins' earliest Group A, are in particularly good condition.<sup>6</sup>

	<b>Troxell</b>	<b>Jenkins</b>	<b>Ashton</b>	<b>Ashton (less BM)</b>	<b>Kargı</b>
<b>3.40-3.49g</b>	1	1	-	-	-
<b>3.30-3.39</b>	-	1	7	5	3
<b>3.20-3.29</b>	4	6	14	11	3
<b>3.10-3.19</b>	12	16	38	30	7
<b>3.00-3.09</b>	27	52	104	85	20
<b>2.90-2.99</b>	29	133	193	117	17
<b>2.80-2.89</b>	18	177	188	94	7
<b>2.70-2.79</b>	14	119	133	63	2
<b>2.60-2.69</b>	9	87	78	30	1
<b>2.50-2.59</b>	10	53	48	25	-
<b>2.40-2.49</b>	4	22	23	9	1
<b>2.30-2.39</b>	3	22	13	8	-
<b>2.20-2.29</b>	-	9	8	3	-
<b>2.10-2.19</b>	-	13	2	-	-
<b>2.00-2.09</b>	1	3	2	2	-

It seems from the above that the standard of the earlier plinthophoric drachms was slightly over 3.00g. The four Rhodian drachms and an obol required in payment of the Attalid poll-tax in 181 BC would therefore weigh about 12.6g in silver. This is precisely the weight of the early cistophoric tetradrachm: see the table on p.128 of F.Kleiner and S.Noë, *The Early Cistophoric Coinage* (New York, 1977) (they include on the same page a weight table of Rhodian plinthophoric drachms similar in content and result to that of Troxell). It thus seems probable that the Attalid poll-tax in this period was assessed at one cistophoric tetradrachm. The reason for collecting it at Telmessos in Rhodian rather than cistophoric coin was presumably the fact that the cistophoroi rarely travelled outside Attalid territory where they enjoyed an overvalued status: see Kleiner and Noë, pp.18 and 124-5. Fethiye Museum in fact contains only a single cistophoric coin, a plated tetradrachm of so far undetermined mint and date. Telmessos had been assigned to Pergamon only seven years

<sup>6</sup> H.Troxell, *The Coinage of the Lycian League* (ANSNM 162, New York, 1982), p.28; Jenkins, p.115. The BM holdings include part of the Marmaris 1948 hoard on loan from the Ashmolean Museum. Apart from the BM holdings, my weight tables consist of material from the Ashmolean, *SNG Copenhagen*, *SNG von Aulock*, the Keckman collection, several smaller published and unpublished collections, and the Kargı hoard, together with a large number of coins from sale catalogues; they do not include the ANS holdings used by Troxell and, apparently, Jenkins. I excluded a few badly damaged coins.

before the letter of Eumenes II and was in 181 BC an enclave of Attalid territory, which was surrounded by the Rhodian-controlled lands of eastern Caria and western Lycia, and which made extensive use of Rhodian coinage.

If the above is accepted, it follows that the cistophoroi were in circulation by 181 BC, and probably by the preceding year (line 13 of our inscription refers to the poll-tax payable in the year before the date of Eumenes' letter). This helps to vindicate the arguments of those who prefer an early rather than a late date for the introduction of the new Attalid coinage: see R.Bauslaugh, *NC* 1990, pp.61-2, for a brief summary of the recent literature.

Finally, it is worth noting that the Rhodian plinthophoric drachms of Groups A-D appear to have weighed about the same as the rare early cistophoric drachms: the latter were struck to a standard of about 3.05g, exemplifying the common Hellenistic practice whereby drachms and didrachms were struck at less than one quarter and one half of the weight of the tetradrachm (Kleiner and Noe, pp.17-18 and 129). What this means, if anything, is beyond the scope of this note.

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