

THE CITY OF DYME PUNISHES MONETARY FRAUD

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An inscription which gives some information about monetary offences committed in Dyme in Hellenistic times was published first by J. Martha in 1878¹ and some years later by R. Weil². It has been included by W. Dittenberger in *Syll.*³ (530), by O. Hoffmann in *SGDI* (1613), by C. Michel in his *Recueil* (1339) and by H. W. Pleket in his *Epigraphica I* (11)⁴. Some remarks about the text are also found in J. Bingen, "Inscriptions d'Achaïe", *BCH* 78, 1954, 87. I first give the text as it has been edited by Pleket:

[Ἐπὶ θεο]κόλον Φιλοκλέος, | [γραμ]ματιστᾶ Δαμοκρᾶ[τον,
5 βουλ]άρχον Κλέωνος, | [τούδε] ἡ πόλις κατέκριν|[ε θανά]τον,
ὅτι ἰεροφάρεον | [καὶ νό]μισμα ἔκποτον χάλ|[κεον]. Θραικίων
εἴτε Ἀντί[οχος] ὄνομα αὐτῶι ἐστι, | [Κεά]τιν τὸν χευσοχόν, ||
10 [Κυλλά]νιον ἡ εἰ Πανταλέ[ων] ἡ εἰ τι ἄλλο ὄνομα, | [Μο]σχό-
λαον Μοσχολάον.
[ἐπὶ Εὖ]φάνεος βουλάρχον | [Ασκλα]πιάδας Δρόμα. ||
15 [ἐπὶ βο]υλάρχον [Φ]ιλέα| ... ιας Ὁλυμπίχον.

The inscription comes from Dyme, the westernmost Achaean city, which had taken part in the (new)foundation of the Achaean League in 280 B.C., and is written in the Peloponnesian Doric *κοινή* of Hellenistic times. It was found inserted in the staircase of a modern private house and when it was reexamined by Bingen in the early fifties most of the text had become illegible.

In the preamble are mentioned the eponym magistrate of Dyme, the *θεοκόλος*⁴, the *γραμματιστής* and the *βουλάρχος*, the president of the

¹ "Inscriptions d'Achaie (1)", *BCH* 2, 1878, 98 v.

² "Das Münzwesen des Achäischen Bundes", *Zeitschr. f. Numism.* 9, 1882, 235.

³ *Epigraphica I, Texts on the Economic History of the Greek World*, Leiden 1964, 11.

⁴ This magistrate, who was especially in charge of the cult of the gods, occurs in several Greek cities, sometimes as eponym. See Dittenberger, *Syll.*³ on nr 529; G. Busolt, *Griechische Staatskunde I*, München 1920, 500; L. Ziehen, *RE V A*(1934), 1998 f.

city council⁵; these magistrates are also mentioned in the preamble of *Syll.*⁶, 529 of 219 B.C. In ll. 14 f. two other boularchs are mentioned; probably theokolos and grammatices were yet the same persons as in ll. 1 ff., and the boularchs changed several times during the civic year⁷.

The city of Dyme thought the matter at issue important enough to record the death sentences on stone⁸. But it is not quite clear what exactly the crime was which the condemned had committed. The text speaks of temple robbery and of the coining of bronze money. It has been suggested that, because according to Polybius⁹ the Achaean League had reserved to itself the right of coinage, the condemned had struck coins in Dyme in contravention of the regulations of the League¹⁰. However, one should not press too much the idealizing image of Achaean unity offered by Polybius¹¹. Moreover, just as the members of the League retained their own magistrates, they also struck the federal coins in their own mints. On the coins of the Achaean League of the third and earlier second centuries B.C., small silver coins and bronze coins, the unitarian devices of the League are accompanied by the name of the city where the coin had been struck and/or by its badge, e.g. the wolf

⁵ See Busolt, *op. cit.*, 478.

⁶ Dittenberger *ad 1.*

⁷ If publication on stone merely took place because the condemned had managed to escape execution (cp. Weil, *Zeitschr. f. Numism.* 9, 238), it is hardly conceivable that the publication was postponed till the names of the persons who were convicted later in the year could be added; moreover, it would be remarkable that all condemned persons had escaped the execution of the sentence.

⁸ 2, 37, 10/1 he says of the Achaean League:

10 τοιαύτην καὶ τηλικαθην ἐν τοῖς καθ'

ἡμᾶς καιροῖς ἔσχε προκοπὴν καὶ συντέλειαν τοῦτο τὸ
μέρος, ὅστε μὴ μόνον συμμαχιὴν καὶ φιλικὴν κοινωνίαν
γεγονέναι πραγμάτων περὶ αὐτούς, ἀλλὰ καὶ νόμοις
χρῆσθαι τοῖς αὐτοῖς καὶ σταθμοῖς καὶ μέτροις καὶ νομίσ-
μασι, πρὸς δὲ τούτοις ἄρχοντις βούλευταις δικασταῖς τοῖς
αὐτοῖς, 11 καθόλου δὲ τούτῳ μόνῳ διαλλάττειν τοῦ μὴ
μιᾶς πόλεως διάθεσιν ἔχειν σχεδὸν τὴν σύμπασαν Πελο-
πόννησον, τῷ μὴ τὸν αὐτὸν περίβολον ὑπάρχειν τοῖς
κατοικοῦσιν αὐτήν, τάλλα δ' εἶναι καὶ κοινῇ καὶ κατὰ
πόλεις ἐκάστοις ταῦτα καὶ παραπλήσια.

⁹ Dittenberger *ad 1.*: res ipsae foederis achaici leges indicant, quibus ius nummos cudendi foederi reservabatur (wrongly attributing this opinion to Weil).

¹⁰ See A. Aymard, *Les assemblées de la Confédération achaienne*, Bordeaux 1938, 166 ff.; P. Pédech, *Polybe. Histoires, Livre II*, Paris 1970, 83 n. 1.

of Argos, the Pegasus of Corinth, the pigeon of Sicyon, the fish of Dyme¹¹. Besides, several members of the League also struck coins of their own, and that has also been the case with Dyme, which issued its own bronze coins¹². Thus, coining in itself cannot have been an illegal act in Dyme, nor can this have been the case with the striking of bronze coins, for there are preserved specimens of federal bronze coins from Dyme¹³ as well as pieces of purely local bronze money closely resembling the coins of the Achaean League¹⁴.

Therefore the striking of bronze coins can have been a crime only if it had taken place in an illegal way. The fraud can hardly have consisted in debasement of the metal value of the coins, for then the text could hardly have spoken of bronze coins in stead of coins which consisted largely of e.g. iron or lead, and in stead of *κόπτειν* which is the normal word for regular striking of money, one would have expected e.g. *παρακόπτειν* or *παραχαράττειν*¹⁵. Moreover, bronze money was small change, was token money and was of a relatively small value. Counterfeiting of it would hardly have been profitable unless it took place on a very large scale or unless the forgers could avail themselves of very cheap copper, or copper to be had free of charge.

The latter may be the case if we combine the two charges, temple robbery and (illegal) coining. The condemned may have stolen copper or bronze from temple deposits and have made their profit not by selling it, but by striking bronze coins from it¹⁶. Now because the case concerned a temple deposit and thus constituted a case of sacrilege, the government of Dyme took a stern view of the matter, even if the sums

¹¹ See Weil, *Zeitschr. f. Numism.* 9, 207 ff.; 243 ff.; P. Gardner-R. Stuart Poole, *A Catalogue of the Greek Coins in the British Museum 10, Peloponnesus* (1887, repr. Bologna 1963), 3 f.; B. V. Head, *Historia nummorum*, Oxford 1911^a, 417; Aymard, *op. cit.*, 166 ff.; M. Thompson, "A Hoard of Greek Federal Silver", *Hesperia* 1939, 136; C. T. Seltman, *Greek Coins*, London 1955^a, 255 f.; F. W. Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius I*, Oxford 1957, 218.

¹² See R. Weil, "Nordpeloponnesische Münzen", *Zeitschr. f. Numism.* 7, 1880, 366; F. Imhoof Blumer, *Monnaies grecques*, Amsterdam 1883, 163, nr 32 f.; Gardner-Stuart Poole, *op. cit.*, XXVI f.; M. O. B. Caspari, "A Survey of Greek Federal Coinage", *JHS* 37, 1917, 169; Aymard, *op. cit.*, 168.

¹³ See Weil, *Zeitschr. f. Numism.* 9, 245 nr 11.

¹⁴ See Weil, *Zeitschr. f. Numism.* 7, 366; Imhoof Blumer, *op. cit.*, 163.

¹⁵ See for monetary terminology i.a. J. Hangard, *Monetaire en daarmee verwante metaforen*, Groningen 1963.

¹⁶ A possibility suggested already by Weil, *Zeitschr. f. Numism.* 9, 236.

involved may have been rather modest, and death sentences were duly pronounced¹⁷ and published.

The names of the condemned seem to belong to the fringe of the civic body or below. Three persons are mentioned without mentioning their father's name and two of them are known by two or more names, which is unimaginable in the case of citizens or respectable strangers. The goldsmith Kratis, who may have possessed the skill required for coining activities, may have been a slave or foreigner; it is not impossible even that he, and perhaps also other condemned persons, belonged to the personnel of the Dymean mint¹⁸.

It is noteworthy that the two persons who were condemned later in the same year, but apparently in the same case¹⁹, are mentioned with their father's name and therefore may have been citizens of Dyme. Their guilt may have come to light later on, or they may, by procedural means, have been able to delay the final verdict in their case.

¹⁷ Death penalties seem to have been normal in Greece for the counterfeiting of money; cp. Dem. 20, 167; 24, 212: — δι τον νόμος ἐστιν ἀπάσαις ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν ταῖς πόλεσιν, έάν τις τὸ νόμισμα διαφεύγῃ, θάνατον τὴν ζημίαν είναι. and the well-known monetary pact between Mytilene and Phocaea (H. Bengtson, *Die Staatsverträge des Altertums II*, München-Berlin 1962, 228; Pleket, *op. cit.* 6), ll.14 f. But it is dubious whether the condemned in Dyme had debased the alloy of the coins. In the monetary pact mentioned above, the death penalty was provided just for wilful debasing by which the state may have incurred serious damage and Demosthenes speaks in both passages quoted of *corruption* of the money. In Rome (cp. R. Taubenschlag s.v. *Münzverbrechen* in RE 16, 1 (1933), 455 ff.) the death penalty was pronounced in cases of counterfeiting of money only against slaves (*Dig.* 48, 10, 1, 13; cp. *Dig.* 48, 10, 9).

¹⁸ About connections between goldsmiths and mint personnel see Weil, *Zeitschr. f. Numism.* 9, 236 n. 1.

¹⁹ It seems very improbable that there would have been two other cases of sacrilege and illegal coining during the same year in a relatively small city.