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RHODIAN-TYPE SILVER COINAGES FROM CRETE¹

Richard H.J. Ashton

In two articles about the 1966 Gortyn hoard (IGCH 338), Martin Price and Tony Hackens² have argued that several silver coin issues with Rhodian types were struck on, or for use on, Crete. The present article briefly confirms the Cretan associations of those issues, adds other issues to the list, and discusses why and by whom they were struck.

- 1 Obv. Head of Medusa three-quarters facing r.; tie beneath chin.
Rev. Rose flanked by P-O, ΓΟΡΓΟΣ above, eight-pointed star l., bud r.; the whole in a border of dots.
Recorded weight range: 3.16 g–4.95 g, with the bulk lying between 4.00 g and 4.60 g.
Plate A, 1.

¹ I am grateful to Philip Kinns for discussion of various points in this article. All ancient dates are B.C.

² M. Price, A Hoard from Gortyn, RN 1966, 128–143 (= Price); T. Hackens, L’Influence rhodienne en Crète aux III^e et II^e s. av.J.-C. et le trésor de Gortyne, 1966, RBN 1970, 37–58 (= Hackens).

These coins, which are usually countermarked with a winged bust of Nike r., have been conclusively associated with Crete by both Price and Hackens. I should prefer to regard them as severely reduced didrachms rather than Rhodian-weight trihemidrachms (Hackens), because of the existence of many contemporary Rhodian-type drachms on Crete of more or less half their weight (issue nos. 2, 3A, 4-10 below). Normal Rhodian drachms struck by Gorgos (BMC 164-169) can be dated to the end of the third century or the first decade or so of the second by virtue of their frequent die-links to drachms struck by Ainetor and Stasion, who can be dated to that period on independent grounds³. The head of Medusa on our issue 1, without precedent on normal Rhodian coins, is doubtless a pun on Gorgos-Gorgo.

2 Obv. Head of Helios three-quarters facing l.; tie beneath chin.
Rev. Rose flanked by P-O, ΓΟΡΓΟΣ above, butterfly l., bud r.; the whole in a border of dots.
Recorded weights: 1.54 g, 1.71 g, 1.74 g, 1.75 g, 1.91 g, 1.96 g, 2.10 g, 2.19 g, 2.28 g, 2.32 g. Plate A, 2.

These drachms have clear stylistic affinities to the Gorgos + star coins, and have the same thin, often concave, fabric. These points, taken in conjunction with the fact that the only recorded provenances for drachms of issue 2 are Cretan⁴, confirm the association with Crete suggested by Price (p. 130).

3A Obv. Head of Helios three-quarters facing r.; tie beneath chin.
Rev. (i) Rose flanked by P-O, ΣΤΡΑΤΩΝ above, dolphin l., bud r.; the whole in a border of dots.
or (ii) Rose with ΣΤΡΑΤΩΝ above and dolphin on either side of stalk; the whole in a border of dots. No ethnic or bud.
Recorded weights: 1.63 g, 1.66 g, 1.70 g, 1.8 g, 1.85 g, 1.88 g, 1.96 g, 1.97 g, 1.98 g, 2.15 g, 2.19 g, 2.20 g, 2.21 g, 2.30 g, 2.38 g, 2.40 g, 2.69 g. Plate A, 3-4.

3B Obv. As 3A above.
Rev. As 3A (ii) above.
Recorded weight: 0.84 g. This is an issue of hemidrachms of which only one survives. Plate A, 5.

All the drachms of issue 3A were struck from a single obverse die which thus unites those with and those without the ethnic. The head of Helios on the drachms and hemidrachm closely resembles the Medusa on the Gorgos + star didrachms (issue 1), while the reverse dies of all three denominations appear likewise to have been cut by the same hand. Issues 3A and 3B have the same thin fabric as issues 1 and 2, and are invariably concave. These similarities, taken with the evidence of provenances (two drachms of issue 3A [ii] seen by me on the Herakleion market in 1971; two of the same variety in

³ R. Ashton, NC 1986, 10, note 10.

⁴ Seven from tombs excavated in 1978/9 on the site of the present medical faculty of the University of Crete at Herakleion (now in Herakleion museum); one found at Knossos (now in Herakleion museum); one from the sanctuary of Demeter at Knossos (A. Jackson in N. Coldstream, Knossos: the Sanctuary of Demeter, Annual of the British School at Athens Suppl. 8 (1973) p. 105, no. 143: "magistrate's name illegible". I have seen the coin and can confirm that it belongs to the Gorgos + butterfly issue); one seen by me on the Herakleion market in 1971; and two in the British Museum from the Seager collection, which was formed on Crete.

Herakleion museum), indicate strongly that these coins were also struck on, or for use on, Crete. The name Straton does not occur on normal Rhodian coins⁵.

4A Obv. Head of Helios three-quarters facing l.
Rev. Rose with ΣΤΡΑΤΩΝ or ΚΤΡΑΤΩΝ above; caduceus l.; P-O flanking rose and one bud r., or PO r. and a bud on either side of rose.
Recorded weights: 2.04 g, 2.12 g, 2.17 g, 2.17 g, 2.37 g. Plate A, 6-7.

4B Obv. Head of Helios three-quarters facing r.
Rev. Rose flanked by P-O; ΣΤΡΑΤΩΝ above; caduceus and boukranion l.; bud r.
Recorded weight: 2.05 g (chipped). Plate A, 8.

5 Obv. Head of Helios three-quarters facing r.
Rev. Rose flanked by P-O; ΣΩΣΙΚΡΑΤΗΣ above; caduceus and boukranion l.; bud r.
Recorded weight: 2.52 g. Plate A, 9.

The Straton drachms of issues 4A and 4B (six known altogether) are notably cruder in style than the Straton + dolphin coins of issues 3A and 3B. One drachm of issue 4A (with caduceus symbol alone) appears to be die-linked to an Ainetor + caduceus and boukranion drachm (issue 6B below), while the sole surviving specimen of issue 4B (with caduceus and boukranion) is die-linked to another Ainetor + caduceus and boukranion drachm, and to the unique Sosikrates + caduceus and boukranion drachm of issue 5 (for these die-links, see, respectively, plate A, 6 and B, 26, and plate A, 8, 9 and 27.). Although no provenances are recorded for the drachms of issues 4A, 4B and 5, their close connections (die-linkage, shared symbols and general stylistic similarity) with the Ainetor issue 6B, whose Cretan associations are well attested (p. 32 below), ensure that they too were struck on, or for use on, Crete. The name Sosikrates, like Straton, does not occur on normal Rhodian coinage.

6A Obv. Head of Helios three-quarters facing l., often with tie beneath chin.
Rev. Rose flanked by P-O; ΑΙΝΗΤΩΡ above; caduceus l.; bud r. The caduceus is accompanied occasionally by the letter K, or, on one unique coin (plate B, 21), by the monogram ΑΡ (Apelta? See p. 34 and n. 16 below). In some rare instances the P-O is replaced by Ξ-O, Ξ-O or P-E.
Recorded weight range: 1.36 g-2.96 g, with the bulk lying between 2.00 and 2.50 g. Plate A, 10-14; B, 15-24.

6B Obv. Head of Helios three-quarters facing l. or r.
Rev. Rose flanked by P-O; ΑΙΝΗΤΩΡ above; caduceus and boukranion l.; bud r.
Recorded weights: 2.37 g, 2.41 g, 2.45 g. Plate B, 25-27.

⁵ Drachms of type SNG Copenhagen 919 with Straton + bunch of grapes and no ethnic are ancient imitations struck in Thessaly: see R. Ashton, NC 1988 (forthcoming). There are also three forged “drachms”, from the same pair of dies, with a wreathed head of Apollo three-quarters facing r. on obverse, and on reverse a rose with P-O flanking, a boukranion l., and the name Straton above: sale Kricheldorf XI (11 November 1962), 187; Warsaw 106459; and Reinhart Heynen coll. 97 (P.R. Franke/I. Paar, Die antiken Münzen der Sammlung Heynen [1976]). They are condemned on the grounds of their obverse portrait, chunky fabric, and bizarre weights: 3.70 g, 4.00 g and 4.74 g respectively.

6C Obv. Head of Helios three-quarters facing l.

Rev. Rose flanked by P-O (with Φ in field r. on one die) or with P O Δ I variously arranged in the field; AINHTΩP above; deer (?) r.; bud l.

Recorded weights: 1.88 g, 2.12 g, 2.28 g, 2.30 g, 2.32 g, 2.40 g, 2.44 g, 2.50 g, 2.52 g, 2.55 g, 2.62 g. Plate B, 28-29; C, 30-31.

The drachms of issue 6A are by far the most common of the coinages discussed here. I have so far recorded 75 obverse dies, many of which closely resemble in their Medusa-like style those of the Gorgos + butterfly and Herakleitos + palm-tree drachms (issues 2 above and 7 below). Their Cretan origin is further supported by their common occurrence on the Cretan market and in Cretan museums (Herakleion and Rethymno); by the occurrence of at least one specimen in the 1966 Gortyn hoard (Hackens, pp. 37-38), and of two in a hoard from Hierapytna (see under issue 7 below)⁶; by the apparently Cretan countermarks occasionally found on them⁷; and by the Polyrhenian overstrike SNG Copenhagen, Argolis-Aegean Islands 537 (see pl. A, 14).

The Cretan origin of issue 6B is assured by a die-link to issue 6A (plate B, 18 and 25); by the general stylistic similarity of its obverses with many of those from issue 6A; by the Ainetor + caduceus combination which it shares with that issue; and by the presence of the Pan-head countermark on one of its four surviving members (plate B, 27).

Issue 6C is cruder in style, but there are some similarities with certain drachms of issue 6A (compare, for example, the obverses of plate B, 16 and 28), and a Cretan origin is likely, though not certain⁸.

Ainetor occurs commonly on normal Rhodian issues dating to c. 200-185⁹.

7 Obv. Head of Helios three-quarters facing l.

Rev. Rose; HPAKΛΕΙΤΟΣ above; palm-tree l.; bud r.; the whole in a border of dots. No ethnic.

Recorded weights: 1.54 g, 1.92 g, 2.05 g, 2.15 g. Plate C, 32.

Six of these drachms are known: two in the ANS; two in a private collection in Athens; and two seen by myself on the Herakleion market in 1971. Their obverses are very similar indeed to those of the Gorgos + butterfly drachms (issue 2), and of many of the Ainetor + caduceus drachms (issue 6A). The provenance of the two coins in the private Athenian collection was a hoard said to have been found in 1977 or early 1978 in the Hierapetra (ancient Hierapytna) area of Crete (the hoard also contained two drachms of issue 6A: see above). Given that the palm-tree is the usual reverse type of

⁶ It is however worth noting that drachms of issue 6A occur in hoards from central and northern Greece of the 170s and early 160s: the 1965 Thebes hoard = IGCH 233 (1 example); the 1902 Oreus hoard = IGCH 232 (68 examples); the 1889 Grammenon hoard = IGCH 228 (1 example); the 1985/86 Thessaly hoard (CH 8, forthcoming) (1 example); the 1983 Macedonia hoard (CH 8, forthcoming) (1 example = plate B, 21). But these and other hoards of the same date from the same general area also contain much higher numbers of normal Rhodian drachms struck on Rhodes and of imitations struck on mainland Greece. It is not surprising to find some of our coins from Crete represented in these hoards; they may have been brought to the mainland by the Cretan mercenaries who served in Perseus' army.

⁷ Pan-head (= Eleutherna?): see R. Ashton, NC 1987, 20. Boukraniion (= Polyrhenion?): British Museum, acq. 1969 (see plate B, 15, and compare plate A, 6).

⁸ The only provenance recorded for drachms of issue 6C is the 1902 Oreus hoard, which contained 23 examples (including plate B, 29 and C, 30). But see note 6 above.

⁹ See p. 30 and note 3 above.

the coins of Hierapytna, it is reasonable to assume that our issue 7 with its palm-tree symbol was struck at, or for use at, Hierapytna¹⁰. Herakleitos does not occur on normal Rhodian coins.

8 Obv. Head of Helios three-quarters facing l.

Rev. Rose with bud on either side; ΚΑΛΛΙΠΠΟΣ or ΚΑΛΛΙΠΟΣ above; prow l. by stalk of rose. No ethnic.

Recorded weights: 2.06 g, 2.47 g.

Plate C, 33-34.

Only two specimens survive, both in the British Museum (BMC 204 and 205). BMC 205 has an obverse very similar indeed to the obverses of many drachms of issue 6A (the same hand must have cut the dies), and in addition bears the Cretan Pan-head countermark. Kallippos does not occur on normal Rhodian coinage.

9 Obv. Head of Helios three-quarters facing r.

Rev. Rose with bud on either side; ΒΟΥΛΑΚΡΑΤΗΣ above; prow l. by stalk of rose, or no symbol at all. No ethnic.

Recorded weights: 2.56 g, 2.59 g, 2.66 g.

Plate C, 35-36.

The similarity between the reverse of one of the issue 9 drachms and the reverses of the issue 8 drachms, in particular the unusual position of the prow symbol and the arrangement of the buds (compare plate C, 33 and 34 with 35), encourages the hypothesis that issue 9 too was struck on, or for use on, Crete. The occurrence of three of the four known specimens in the 1902 Oreus hoard need not represent an argument against this view, since that hoard also contained other Rhodian-type drachms from Crete (notes 6 and 8 above). Boulakrates does not occur on normal Rhodian coinage.

We have seen that, although Ainetor and Gorgos struck normal Rhodian coins during the period from the end of the third century to c.185, the remaining five names from the issues described above (Straton, Sosikrates, Herakleitos, Kallippos and Boulakrates) are not attested on normal Rhodian coinage. However, all five of these names are very well attested on Rhodes in non-numismatic contexts, and very rare or non-existent on Crete¹¹. It is therefore likely that all the names which appear on our issues belong to Rhodians rather than to Cretans.

What then is the explanation for the striking of our issues? Three hypotheses are worth considering.

a) They might be imitations of normal Rhodian drachms, struck by a Cretan city or cities. This would imply that Straton, Sosikrates, Herakleitos, Kallippos and Boulakrates had in fact struck coins on Rhodes which the Cretans had imitated. To this, however, may be raised the serious objection that, given the vast quantity of normal

¹⁰ See also note 14 below.

¹¹ Information from the Lexicon of Greek Personal Names (LGPN), volume 1 (Aegean Islands and Cyrenaica), Oxford, 1987 (forthcoming). I am grateful to Peter Fraser for pre-publication data. In LGPN 1, Straton occurs in 114 instances, 22 from Rhodes, 1 from Crete; Sosikrates in 59 instances, 37 from Rhodes, 1 from Crete; Herakleitos in 130 instances, 16 from Rhodes, 2 from Crete; Kallippos in 71 instances, 7 from Rhodes, 1 from Crete; Boulakrates in 3 instances (1 from Nisyros, 2 from Rhodes, all third century B.C.; none from Crete).

Rhodian coinage which has been preserved from the third and second centuries, the non-survival of coins bearing any of these five names would be very odd indeed¹².

b) Our issues might have been struck on Rhodes for use on Crete (a possibility mentioned by Hackens, p. 49 ad fin.). However, the peculiarities of style, weight¹³ and (in the case of issue 1) type, which distinguish our issues from all other products of the Rhodian mint, make this hypothesis unlikely.

c) More probable is the hypothesis that our issues were struck on an ad hoc basis to pay Cretan mercenaries by Rhodian commanders operating on Crete around 200 B.C.: this was first suggested, for issue 1, by Hackens (pp. 51–52), who cites some important epigraphic evidence¹⁴. In this case, the five names on our issues which are not numismatically attested on Rhodes are more likely to belong to the Rhodian commanders themselves than to Rhodian coin “magistrates” whose regular Rhodian coinage has not survived (see under a) above).

One further issue of Rhodian-type drachms is worth discussing here.

10 Obv. Head of Helios three-quarters facing r.; tie beneath chin.
Rev. Rose flanked by P-O; ΣΤΑΣΙΩΝ above; bud. l. No symbol.
Recorded weights: 1.79 g (chipped), 1.97 g, 2.06 g, 2.10 g. Plate C, 37–42.

The irregular die-axes (see below), low weights (see n. 13 above), odd style and lack of symbol indicate that these drachms are not a normal Rhodian issue. Four of the six known specimens have probable or certain Cretan provenances: one is in Herakleion museum; one is in Chania museum; the third, now in the British Museum, is from the Seager collection and was bought on Crete; the fourth, also now in the British Museum, is from the Cameron collection, much of which was formed on Crete¹⁵. The Chania and Seager coins have in a round countermark the monogram , which may well stand for Aptera¹⁶. It is, therefore, probable that these coins were struck on, or for use on, Crete.

This issue is, however, distinct in both obverse and reverse style from the preceding issues. Moreover, whereas five of the six surviving specimens have irregular die-axes (75°, 210°, 210°, 270° and 270°), the coins from all the preceding issues have, with

¹² It should, however, be noted that the name Straton was used on pseudo-Rhodian drachms struck in Thessaly at some time between the 180s and the early 160s (R. Ashton, NC 1988 [forthcoming], cited in note 5 above). The fact that the name is used on two coinages of different dates and places of issue might argue in favour of its original occurrence on normal Rhodian coinage which has not survived. However, an alternative explanation would be that the Thessalian pseudo-Rhodian drachms took Straton’s name from Rhodian-type issues struck for use on Crete and brought later by Cretan mercenaries to mainland Greece.

¹³ Compare the weights of issues 2, 3A and 4–9 above with the weight table for Rhodian old-style drachms in R. Ashton, NC 1987, p. 21 (forthcoming).

¹⁴ The evidence consists of two treaties, dating c. 201/200, between Rhodes and, respectively, Hierapytna and Olous. They set out the rates of pay, in Rhodian currency, for mercenaries from both Cretan cities. Note that there is other evidence for associating our issue 7 with Hierapytna: see page 32 s. above.

¹⁵ G. K. Jenkins, NC 1949, p. 36.

¹⁶ Plate C, 38 and 39. Chania, ancient Kydonia, is not far from the site of ancient Aptera. The Chania coin shares a reverse die with the coin in Herakleion museum. For what appears to be an almost identical countermark on a bronze of Eleutherna, see SNG Copenhagen 435. See also page 31 above and plate B, 21 for a similar monogram (part of the type, not a countermark) on an Ainetor + caduceus drachm of issue 6A.

very rare exceptions, die-axes at, or close to, 0° . Normal Rhodian coins generally have die-axes at, or close to, 0° , and pseudo-Rhodian drachms from the first few decades of the second century can often, though by no means invariably, be identified as such by, among other factors, irregularity of die-axis. Thus, whereas issues 1-9 with their regular die-axes may well have been semi-official Rhodian emissions struck on Crete, issue 10 with its irregular die-axes and unusual style may have been a local Cretan emission struck in imitation of Rhodian coinage.

Stasion occurs commonly on normal Rhodian coins dating to c. 200-185¹⁷, and on some imitations struck on mainland Greece during the two succeeding decades¹⁸.

Key to plates

1. Issue 1. Oxford, acq. 1969; from the 1966 Gortyn hoard (IGCH 338). 0° , 4.18 g.
2. Issue 2. Paris 1476; Mionnet III, 418, 166. 0° , 2.10 g.
3. Issue 3A(i). Paris 1473; Mionnet III, 419, 178. 0° , 2.30 g.
4. Issue 3A(ii). Ashton coll., acq. 1987; C.T. Trechmann coll.; sale Naville 5 (18 June 1923), 2671. 0° , 2.38 g.
5. Issue 3B. Moscow, State Historical Museum 6474. 0° , 0.84 g.
6. Issue 4A ($\Sigma\Tau\Pat\Omega\N$, P-O flanking rose). Munich. 0° , 2.17 g. In round countermark on obverse, boukranion.
7. Issue 4A ($\CT\Tau\Pat\Omega\N$, PO r.). Paris 1475; Mionnet III, 419, 179. 0° , 2.12 g.
8. Issue 4B. Ashton coll., acq. 1984. 0° , 2.05 g (chipped).
9. Issue 5. BMC 185; Payne Knight. 0° , 2.52 g.
10. Issue 6A. Rhethymno museum. 0° .
11. Issue 6A. Sale Naville 5 (18 June 1923), 2665. 0° , 2.55 g.
12. Issue 6A. London market 1972; C.T. Trechmann coll. 0° , 2.50 g.
13. Issue 6A. Herakleion museum. 0° . In round countermark on obverse, head of Pan profile r.
14. Issue 6A. SNG Copenhagen, Argolis-Aegean Islands 537; Lambros 1890. 0° , 2.37 g. Overstruck by drachm of Polyrhenion.
15. Issue 6A. British Museum, acq. 1969. 0° , 2.07 g. In round countermark on obverse, boukranion.
16. Issue 6A. ANS. 0° , 2.52 g.
17. Issue 6A. Oxford, Milne gift 1924; sale Sotheby 11 July 1912, 44. 30°, 2.49 g.
18. Issue 6A. L. Ciani, Fixed Price List October 1929, 139; Aréthuse Suppl. 1 (1924: L. Ciani), 512.
19. Issue 6A (with K). BMC 161; Payne Knight. 0° , 2.47 g.
20. Issue 6A (with K). Athens; ex 1902 Oreus hoard (IGCH 232). 0° , 2.43 g.
21. Issue 6A (with Δ). British Museum, acq. 1985; from 1983 Macedonia hoard (Coin Hoards 8, forthcoming). 0° , 2.39 g.
22. Issue 6A (with Ζ-O). Paris 1455. 330°, 2.20 g. Holed.
23. Issue 6A (with Ζ-O). Athens; ex 1902 Oreus hoard (IGCH 232). 330°, 2.49 g.
24. Issue 6A (with P-E). Paris market 1972. 0° , 2.33 g.
25. Issue 6B (Helios three-quarters facing l.). Leningrad 16,458. 2.41 g.
26. Issue 6B (Helios three-quarters facing l.). Berlin; Prokesch-Osten coll. 0° , 2.45 g.
27. Issue 6B (Helios three-quarters facing r.). Paris 1456A; Mionnet III, 417, 150. 0° , 2.37 g. In round countermark on obverse, head of Pan profile r.
28. Issue 6C (with P-O). ANS. 330°, 2.52 g.
29. Issue 6C (with P-O). Athens; ex 1902 Oreus hoard (IGCH 232). 0° , 2.40 g.
30. Issue 6C (with P-O; Φ r.). Athens; ex 1902 Oreus hoard (IGCH 232). 0° , 2.30 g.
31. Issue 6C (with P-O Δ-I). Athens; ex 1902 Oreus hoard (IGCH 232). 0° , 2.62 g.
32. Issue 7. Private collection, Athens; from a hoard found in the Hieraptyna area in 1977 or early 1978. 30°, 2.15 g.

¹⁷ See p. 30 and note 3 above.

¹⁸ See R. Ashton, NC 1988 (forthcoming).

33. Issue 8 (with ΚΑΛΛΙΠΟΣ). BMC 205; acq. 1872. 30° , 2.06 g. In round countermark on obverse, head of Pan profile r.
34. Issue 8 (with ΚΑΛΛΙΠΠΟΣ). BMC 204; acq. 1885. 0° , 2.47 g.
35. Issue 9 (with prow). Athens; ex 1902 Oreus hoard (IGCH 232). 0° , 2.59 g.
36. Issue 9 (no symbol). Athens; ex 1902 Oreus hoard (IGCH 232). 0° , 2.56 g.
37. Issue 10. Herakleion museum. 75° .
38. Issue 10. Chania museum. 270° . Holed. In round countermark on obverse, \triangle .
39. Issue 10. British Museum, acq. 1926; Seager bequest; bought on Crete. 0° , 1.97 g. In round countermark on obverse, \triangle .
40. Issue 10. British Museum, acq. 1947; Cameron bequest. 210° , 1.79 g (chipped).
41. Issue 10. Paris 1418; Mionnet III, 419, 181. 210° , 2.10 g.
42. Issue 10. McClean coll. 8606. 270° , 2.06 g.



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