

# A pseudo-Rhodian drachm from Kaunos

Autor(en): **Ashton, Richard H.J.**

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# A PSEUDO-RHODIAN DRACHM FROM KAUNOS<sup>1</sup>

Richard H. J. Ashton

In 1972 W. Sheridan attempted to revive Barclay Head's suggestion that the extensive series of pseudo-Rhodian drachms distinguished by an eagle on the cheek of the Helios head on their obverses should be assigned to Kaunos. His argument was refuted by L. Robert who reaffirmed A. Akarca's convincing attribution of these coins to Mylasa<sup>2</sup>. There is however one issue of pseudo-Rhodian drachms, represented by a sole surviving example, which can with some plausibility be given to Kaunos:

Obv. Head of Helios three-quarters facing r.

Rev. Rose; bud r.; indistinct symbol l.; ΜΕΓΙΣΤΟΣ above; [P]-Q around stalk of rose.

2,19 g, 360° Berlin (Prokesch-Osten). In rectangular countermark on obv., chimera r.<sup>3</sup> Fig. A.

The assumption that this coin is an imitation rather than a genuinely Rhodian old-style drachm is based on the following arguments which, though individually inconclusive, seem cumulatively compelling: (i) the presence of a countermark (genuine old-style drachms are rarely countermarked); (ii) the coin's odd style (in particular the luxuriantly wild hair-arrangement on the obverse), without parallel on regular products of the Rhodian mint; (iii) its low weight, well below the 2,50–2,80 g range normal for old-style drachms<sup>4</sup>; and (iv) the name Megistos, which is otherwise unknown on Rhodian coinage (most names on genuinely Rhodian old-style drachms also occur on other contemporary denominations and/or on the succeeding early plinthophoroi).

I have argued elsewhere<sup>5</sup> that the chimera countermark was applied to Rhodian-type drachms in Lycia in the late 180s or 170s during one of the two Lycian revolts against Rhodian suzerainty, and that it foreshadowed or reflected the reverse type of one of the Lycian League's first bronze coinages. Although the majority of drachms so countermarked came from Crete or mainland Greece, a number (those with names Mousaios and Iason) were struck in Caria or Lycia. At all events, the presence of the chimera countermark on our Megistos drachm demonstrates that it had at least circulated in Lycia.

Megistos is a very rare name<sup>6</sup>, which does, however, occur on certain post-167 coins of Kaunos. I have not attempted an exhaustive list of these Kaunian coins, but have noted one from the rare Zeus/thunderbolt series of plinthophoric drachms and three

<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Philip Kinns for discussion of various points in this article. All ancient dates are BC.

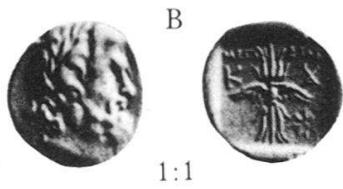
<sup>2</sup> W. Sheridan, *ANS MN* 18, 1972, 5–15, esp. 5–7; B. Head, *HN*<sup>2</sup>, 613; L. Robert, *RN* 19, 1977, 32 n. 119; A. Akarca, *Les monnaies grecques de Mylasa* (Paris 1959) 85–100.

<sup>3</sup> See also R. Ashton, *Pseudo-Rhodian Drachms and the Beginning of the Lycian League Coinage*, *NC* 147, 1987, 8–25, pl. 2–3; 23 no. 17.

<sup>4</sup> See the weight table at Ashton, loc. cit., 21.

<sup>5</sup> Ashton, loc. cit., 14–15; 18–20.

<sup>6</sup> As a personal name it does not occur in *RE* or *Pape-Benseler*. F. Bechtel, *Die historischen Personennamen des Griechischen bis zur Kaiserzeit* (Halle a.d.S. 1917) cites only *IG XII* (8) 309, 21 (Thasos), but this should in fact read *Megisteus*: see *LGPN* 1, s.v. (3). *Megistos* is



from the more common Athena/sheathed sword series of hemidrachms<sup>7</sup>. It is worth pointing out here that, although the symbol on our pseudo-Rhodian drachm is partly obscured by the effects of the countermark on the obverse, it looks as if it might be a sheathed sword, albeit upside-down, like those on the Kaunian hemidrachms.

Given the rarity of the name, the possible sheathed sword symbol, and the relative proximity of Kaunos to Rhodes, there is thus a good, though not irrefutable, case for assigning our coin to Kaunos, and for comparing it with other pseudo-Rhodian old-style drachms struck in or off South-West Asia Minor in the two decades after 188. These comprise the eagle-on-cheek drachms from Mylasa (which must have continued well down into the second century), the Mousaios and Iason drachms from undetermined localities in Caria or Lycia, drachms with the name Babon struck at Miletos, and a unique drachm with symbol crab and ethnic ΚΩ, which must have been struck on or for Kos<sup>8</sup>.

### *Dating*

Although the chimera countermarks appear to have been applied in Lycia in the late 180s or 170s, the coins which bear them may of course have been struck considerably earlier. It may moreover be argued that, if the Rhodian plinthophoroi (which probably began in the early 180s) had been in circulation much before the start of the Megistos issue, the authority which minted the latter would probably have imitated the plinthophoroi rather than the preplinthophoric old-style drachms<sup>9</sup>. Even allowing for an interval between the first minting of the Rhodian plinthophoroi and their cir-

represented in LGPN 1 (Aegean Islands, Cyprus, Cyrenaica) only by reference to the Berlin coin (attributed to Rhodes) and to a fourth century inscription from Mytilene. P.M. Fraser, Chairman of the LGPN project, kindly informs me that the name does not occur in the material so far processed for future volumes.

<sup>7</sup> Drachm: SNG v. Aulock 8102 (2,71 g. Eight-pointed star as symbol on rev.). Hemidrachms: a. Lanz 24, 25 April 1983, 338 (1,23 g, 330°. Two six-pointed stars as symbols on rev.); b. BM, acq. 1982 (1,13 g, 360°. Wing (?) symbol on rev.) (Megistou); c. Hess 18 March 1918, 685 = J. Hirsch 25, 29 November 1909 (Philipsen), 2311 (1,0 g. No symbol visible on rev.). See Fig. B, C, D and E respectively.

<sup>8</sup> Two examples of the Babon drachms struck at Miletos are known: BMC Rhodes 198 (2,49 g, 360°; ex Woodhouse 1866. See also F. Imhoof-Blumer, *Monnaies Grecques* [Paris-Leipzig 1883], 322-3); and H. Weber 6735 (now Ashton coll., acq. 1982. 2,40 g, 360°). See Fig. F and G respectively. They were struck from one obverse and two reverse dies. They were overlooked by B. Deppert-Lippitz, *Die Münzprägung Milets vom vierten bis ersten Jahrhundert v. Chr.*, Typos 5 (Aarau-Frankfurt am Main-Salzburg 1984). Dr. Kinns, who has produced a detailed review of this book (NC 146, 1986, 233-60: see, in particular, 238) tells me that, on the basis of their monograms, he would assign the pseudo-Rhodian drachms of Miletos to c. 190-180: note in particular that the precise monogram form  $\kappa$  on the Weber/Ashton drachm seems to occur otherwise at Miletos only on a posthumous Alexander tetradrachm (Auctiones AG 15, 18 September 1985, 79) which in Kinns' view is one of the earliest post-Mektepini (IGCH 1410) issues. For the unique Koan drachm, see *Hesperia Art* FPL XXXIV (1965), 105, reproduced here as Fig. H. This is almost certainly the same coin as the unillustrated drachm offered in Stack 6 September 1973, 444. *Hesperia Art* reads the name above the rose as «... PATO», Stack as «... Mragos». The weight of the coin is 2,62 g (Stack).

<sup>9</sup> For the application, with supporting references, of the same argument to the eagle-on-cheek, Mousaios and Iason pseudo-Rhodian drachms, see Ashton, (n. 3), 18. As noted above (p. 67 and n. 7), Kaunos itself struck drachms which adopt the Rhodian plinthophoric format.

culatation on the mainland of South-West Asia Minor, it is not easy to imagine our Megistos issue being struck much later than, say, 170. Moreover, the later of the two Lycian revolts, during one or both of which the chimera countermark was probably applied, may well have been over by 171<sup>10</sup>. On the other hand, the rare Kaunian plinthophoric drachms and the relatively abundant Athena/sheathed sword Kaunian hemidrachms belong more comfortably after Kaunos' liberation from Rhodes in 166 than to the period of its subjection to Rhodes *c.* 191/190–166<sup>11</sup>. On balance, therefore, if the name Megistos on the pseudo-Rhodian drachm and on the autonomous Kaunian coins belongs to the same man, the pseudo-Rhodian drachm will probably have been struck late in the period of Rhodian domination over Kaunos, and the autonomous Kaunian coins soon after Kaunos' liberation.

During the period of its subjection, Kaunos produced for Rhodes a large annual revenue, and was judged important enough to warrant the appointment of a separate ἀγερῶν ἐπὶ Καύνου<sup>12</sup>. In 167 it revolted, but was defeated by Rhodian forces<sup>13</sup>. It was however liberated by order of the Roman senate early the following year<sup>14</sup>. Since the second Lycian revolt was certainly over by 167<sup>15</sup>, our pseudo-Rhodian Megistos drachm with its Lycian countermark probably cannot be interpreted as part of a war coinage struck by the Kaunians in 167 to finance their own rebellion. It may have been part of a pre-167 peacetime issue which the Rhodians authorised the Kaunians to strike for local use.

<sup>10</sup> P.M. Fraser–G.E. Bean, *The Rhodian Peraea and Islands* (Oxford 1954), 116 and n. 2.

<sup>11</sup> For the dates, see Fraser–Bean, *op. cit.*, 105–7, and F.W. Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius Vol. 3* (Oxford 1979) 457 *ad* Polybius 30.31.6.

The following arguments indicate the relative abundance of the Athena/sheathed sword hemidrachms: a. they were struck in the names of at least 8 «magistrates» (ANTAI, EIPHNIA, KTHTOΣ, MEN[I]ΠΠΙΟΣ (SNG v. Aulock 2565–72, all now BM), MNH (J. Hirsch 25, 29 November 1909, 2312), ΣΩΤΑΣ (SNG v. Aulock 8103), ΦΑΡΟΣ (SNG v. Aulock 2573–6), and Megistos); b. I have not attempted a die-study of this series as a whole, but there are no die-links among the three Megistos hemidrachms noted; c. the 1954 «Dalyan» hoard (IGCH 1345) is reported to have contained around 2000 of these hemidrachms, though this does not of course necessarily mean a large number of dies. A further 30+ are reported in *Coin Hoards* 4, 48 (Marmaris, 1976; implausibly dated to the late third century).

<sup>12</sup> Revenue: according to Polybius 30.31.7, Kaunos and Stratonikeia produced a total of 120 talents revenue annually for Rhodes, though the division of this sum between the two subject cities is not recorded; 120 talents seems however an extraordinarily high figure, and one wonders if there is not some corruption in the text of Polybius. Ἀγερῶν ἐπὶ Καύνου: Fraser–Bean, (n. 10), 88–9.

<sup>13</sup> Polybius 30.5.11–15.

<sup>14</sup> Polybius 30.21.3.

<sup>15</sup> Fraser–Bean, (n. 10) 117.