

## CHAPTER FIVE

# POLYBIUS AND ACHAIAN COINAGE

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Thirteen European countries of the European Union have shared the same coins and banknotes since 2002 with the euro. Each coin has two faces: the European one and the national one, with stars symbolizing the Union. In Ancient Greece, such a coinage existed in Boeotia and later in the Peloponnese, during the first period when, as Polybius wrote ‘the Peloponnesians, who are above all men disposed to a quiet and sociable life’ were associated in a federal state, the Achaian *koinon* or community (Polyb. 5.106.4, translation W.R. Paton, Loeb, 1922).

Let us have a look at some Achaian silver coins ([FIGS. 1–3](#)): on the obverse, you will see the head of Zeus, presumably the federal Zeus *Hamarios* or *Homarios* whose sanctuary was located at Aigion; that is the unified face of these types of coin issued by many Peloponnesian cities more than 2000 years ago; on the reverse there are the initials A and X (for *Achaiōn*) in a floral wreath and various letters and symbols: [FIG. 1](#), with the letters MEΣ is a Messenian one, [FIG. 2](#), with the cap of the Dioscuri was issued at Sparta; [FIG. 3](#), with a syrinx (shepherd’s pipe) was issued at Megalopolis.

The Hellenistic Achaian *koinon* was founded c. 280 by four small *poleis* of Achaia in the northwest Peloponnese (Dyme, Patras, Pharai, Tritaia). In spite of the occasional opposition of the Antigonids, then kings of Macedonia, as well as that of both Aetolia and Sparta, the Achaian *koinon* managed to extend its authority to the whole Peloponnese and even to other areas in Central Greece such as Heraclea in Trachis and Megara.

The promoters of the *koinon*’s political expansion were successively Aratos of Sicyon, a peerless diplomat and Philopoemen of Megalopolis. In the late 3<sup>rd</sup> and early 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries BC the latter took advantage of the Roman alliance to put the entire Peloponnese under the authority of the *koinon*, while revitalizing its army and institutions which had been hitherto those of a minor state controlling one part of the north Peloponnese.

In spite of various attempts at secession by Sparta and Messene, the Peloponnese remained under the *koinon*’s dominance 192/91–146 BC. After its dissolution in 146 as a result of the Achaian War, the *koinon* was revived after a while but this later version included just a few Achaian and Arcadian cities.

Achaian institutions included assemblies and a Council whose nature and competence remain open to debate today. Each year they elected magistrates amongst whom the *strategoi* were the highest in rank: at first two and then, by the

mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century, just one (Strabo 8.7.3).<sup>1</sup> There also existed various assemblies of magistrates such as the *nomographoi* (those who drafted laws) of whom we possess two lists: the Epidaurus list, dating back to the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century, and the Aigion list from the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. These inscriptions reveal that the *nomographoi* were elected proportionally. The Epidaurus inscription may suggest that at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, the major cities appointed three *nomographoi*, the medium sized ones two and the smaller cities just one, probably in turn.

Athanassios Rizakis and other scholars have shown that each city was allowed some leeway to manage their own affairs, foreign relations included.<sup>2</sup> Cities would contribute through *eisphorai* to finance the army (Polyb. 4.60.4-10).<sup>3</sup>

The influence of both the core Achaian cities and of Megalopolis was strong. They provided most of the *koinon's* magistrates and hosted more assemblies than any other city. Megalopolis was the hometown of many of the *strategoi*– Philopoemen, Diophanes and Polybius's father Lycortas. No high-ranking magistrate was ever chosen from the citizenry of Sparta, Elis or Messene, whose loyalty was held in suspicion, nor did these cities ever host an assembly.<sup>4</sup>

The *poleis*, as well as the *koinon* that united them, were headed by wealthy landowners such as Polybius' father, Lycortas of Megalopolis, hence social tensions often arose due to the scarcity of land. This prompted them at one point to rally around Cleomenes III (235–222 BC) who enjoyed popular support for engineering successful reforms in Sparta.

Polybius, a Megalopolitan member of the Achaian *koinon*, is very likely to have produced a much-biased view of the unification of the Peloponnese. He thought the Spartans had failed to achieve its unification because they had relied on brute force alone, while, according to Polybius, the Achaian *koinon* had succeeded, however briefly, because it had favoured 'democracy', a system of equal rights between the member states based on agreement.

For while many have attempted in the past to induce the Peloponnesians to adopt a common policy, no one ever succeeding, as each was working not in the cause of general liberty, but for his own aggrandizement, this object has been so much advanced, and so nearly attained, in my own

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<sup>1</sup> The *strategos* stood at the head of the state and controlled diplomacy and foreign policy. He was also commander in chief with the assistance of the *hipparch* who was at the head of the cavalry and could occasionally replace the *strategoi* if necessary.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. in particular Rizakis 2003 and Roy 2003.

<sup>3</sup> The *koinon's* army also included civil units that were levied when necessary and whose fighting skills remained poor until Philopoemen equipped them with weapons similar to those of the Macedonian phalanx and adjoined them an effective cavalry force in 210-208. Like in a variety of other Greek states it also featured an elite corps known as *epilektoi* numbering 3,000 foot soldiers and 300 horsemen or so, garrisoned with mercenaries on a permanent basis on the border and in cities whose loyalty was deemed unreliable; Grandjean 2000.

<sup>4</sup> Aymard, 1928, 1938 a, b, 1967; Errington 1969; Lafond 1992; Larsen 1968, 1971; O'Neil 1984-1986; Rizakis 1995; Walbank 1933, 2002.

time that not only do they form an allied and friendly community (*symmachikēn kai philikēn koinōnian*), but they have the same laws, weights, measures and coinage, as well as the same magistrates, senate, and courts of justice, and the whole Peloponnesian only falls short of being a single city in the fact of its inhabitants not being enclosed by one wall, all other things being, both as regards the whole and as regards each separate town, very nearly identical.

Polyb. 2.37.9-11 (translation W.R. Paton, Loeb, 1922)

This is a famous quotation from Polybius which has drawn extensive comment concerning the notion of a Peloponnese united under Achaian rule. Sparta's unrelenting resistance, rooted in a deep-seated nationalism, and Messene's revolt against the *koinon* in 183/2 BC amply show that Polybius, a member of the ruling class, tends to convey a rosy picture of the Achaian *koinon* when he speaks of the Peloponnesian 'allied and friendly community'.

Furthermore, this passage has raised a number of questions concerning the nature and structures of the Achaian *koinon* which are still hotly debated by historians, especially in Germany where the history of the federal states has met with keen interest.<sup>5</sup>

Coins are conspicuously absent from research papers on the nature of the Achaian *koinon* and its institutions.<sup>6</sup> Before looking more closely at the subject, I would like to say a few things on what Polybius wrote about coinage, in order to shed some light on the place it occupied in the institutions of the Achaian *koinon*.

In this passage (2.37) Polybius mentions the union (*homonoia*, 3.3.7) of Peloponnesians in the Achaian *koinon*, he describes its common institutions which, according to him, makes the *koinon* closer to a city-state than to a community (*koinōnia*) based on alliance and friendship.<sup>7</sup>

No mention is made either of cults or of the federal army. This may be due to Polybius' religious views, and to the fact that at the time he wrote, the Sanctuary of Zeus at Aigion was no longer considered as the focal point of the *koinon* whilst military activity had declined sharply.

He tends to link together weights, measures and coinage on the one hand and genuine political institutions (such as laws, magistracies, councils and law-courts) on the other. Coupling coinage (*nomisma*) to law (*nomos*) underlines the essential link between the two words. *Nomisma* was originally the poetic double of *nomos* as Emmanuel Laroche has demonstrated. It also refers back to texts by Plato and

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<sup>5</sup> Corsten 1999; Lehmann 2001.

<sup>6</sup> Let us hope that the fine recent book by J. Warren (Warren 2007) will draw the attention of historians of the period to the importance of coinage.

<sup>7</sup> On Polybius as a theoretician of the federal state see Lehmann 2001.

Aristotle that were evidently familiar to Polybius.<sup>8</sup> Yet his, Polybius', thinking seems to extend beyond the philosophical quotation and be both personal and pragmatic.

His text (2.37) echoes the often quoted passage from Thucydides' *History* (1.141.6–1.142) where the Athenian historian reports Pericles as saying that the divisions between Peloponnesians kept them from looking to the common good and that their lack of financial resources would paralyse their efforts in the impending conflict, i.e. the Peloponnesian war. When Polybius claims that none before the Achaeans had managed to unite the Peloponnesians for “each would toil less for common freedom than in order to impose their own selfish domination”. He plainly refers to this passage and implicitly criticises the Spartans.

Incidentally in a passage in Book 6 (6.48.2–6.49.9), Polybius mentions the laws of Lycurgus and compares them with the Roman constitution. He praises their excellence in establishing harmony in the life of the city, and he further wishes that the law maker had also endowed the Spartans with the resources that would have made it possible for them to lead a grand policy beyond the confines of the Peloponnese, since this lack of money eventually led them, after the war, to sell the cities in Asia Minor.

The iron currency and Laconian resources proving insufficient, a *koinon nomisma* (common coinage) would have been required.<sup>9</sup>

As long as they aspired to rule over their neighbours or over the Peloponnesians alone, they found the supplies and resources furnished by Laconia itself adequate (...). But once they began to undertake naval expeditions and to make military campaigns outside the Peloponnese, it was evident that neither their iron currency nor the exchange of their crops for commodities which they lacked, as permitted by the legislation of Lycurgus, would suffice for their needs, since these enterprises demanded a common currency in universal circulation and supplies drawn from abroad.

Polyb. 6.49.7-10 (trans. Paton modified)

This passage conspicuously refers to Aristotle's comments about the perennial paucity of public finance in Sparta, when it came to military spending (*Pol.* 1271b15); what the legislator had achieved was opposed to the common interest by depriving the city of its wealth (*polin achrēmaton*) and fuelling its citizens' avidity for riches

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<sup>8</sup> 'In fact, money exists by agreement, as an exchangeable form of need. This is the reason for our calling it *nomisma*, because it does not exist naturally but through custom (*nomos*)...' Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 5.5.10–16 (1133a–b); 'There is a further law following all these, that no private person may possess gold or silver, and may have coinage... As for a common Hellenic coinage, for military expeditions and travel to other peoples, such as embassies or on such other missions as are needed by the state: for these occasions the state needs to have Hellenic money' Plato, *Leg.* 5.741e–742b; (transl. J. R. Melville Jones, *Testimonia Numaria*, London, 1993).

<sup>9</sup> Figueira 2002; Christien 2002.



(*philochrēmatous*). Yet he does not join in the standard criticism aimed at the notorious greed of the Spartans nor does he dwell on the stereotype opposing private wealth in gold and silver and public poverty.<sup>10</sup>

Polybius stands out among the ancients as one of those most interested in the economic factors in history, so he, on the contrary, summons the notion of collective greed, a lust for the money that would have allowed them to rule Greece.

He goes further in his parallel between the Roman and Spartan constitutions. Sparta's hybrid constitution compares favourably when it comes to defending its homeland and preserving independence; the Roman constitution fares better when it comes to making war, as Italy's resources are more abundant and available (6.50.5-6).<sup>11</sup>

Beyond this comparison between Sparta and Rome, which has constantly drawn comment, it seems to me that this passage could also be read in the light of what he writes on the institutions of the contemporary Achaian *koinon* which united the Peloponnese and created the *koinon nomisma*. Polybius makes as much of the parallel between Sparta and the Achaian *koinon* as he does about Aitolia and the Achaian *koinon* and Boiotia and the Achaian *koinon*. Of course his conclusions are always favourable to the Achaians, at least before the period of the Achaian War (150–146 BC).

This stands as a measure of just how important the issue of coinage was to Polybius, and how relevant it is to study monetary elements as a way of better understanding the political facts. Several questions may be raised about the structures of the *koinon* and they will be dealt with first in terms of coinage.

- i. How were competence and power shared between the authorities of the *koinon* and the cities?
- ii. How autonomous were the cities?

These are pivotal questions when it comes to studying a federal state. Polybius mentions (2.37) the time when the Peloponnese was united, that is the period 191–146 BC, but Heinrich Chantraine, following Paul Pedech and Frank Walbank, thinks that this timeframe actually begins with Philopoemen's reform of the *koinon* in 188 when Aigion lost its status as capital and when equality between the city members was enhanced, at least in theory. As for the *terminus ante quem*, the text was written, like books 1 to 30, in the present tense, that is to say probably during his Italian exile from 168 to his returning home in 146 BC.<sup>12</sup>

The Peloponnesian monetary system referred to by Polybius in this text is based on silver and bronze coinage with the types and ethnic hallmarks of the Achaian *koinon*.

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<sup>10</sup> Hodkinson 1995.

<sup>11</sup> Gianotti 2001.

<sup>12</sup> Pedech 1964, 378–379; F. W. Walbank 2002 *passim*; Thompson 1968; Chantraine 1972.

We will focus on the Hellenistic *koinon* coinage initiated in 281-280.<sup>13</sup> It consists mainly of small silver coins, hemidrachma or triobols and bronze coins that Heinrich Chantraine justly divided into two groups (*ältere* and *jüngere*).

# I. THE *ÄLTERE* GROUP

The *ältere* group is a small set of coins we know very little about. They are triobols or hemidrachma with the head of Zeus on the obverse and an AX monogram standing for *Achaiōn* in a laurel wreath on the reverse and nothing else. It also features bronze coins with a similar format and types. Like its counterpart of the Classical period, it was probably struck only in Achaia proper— maybe at Dyme— and in small quantities as only 5 obverse dies are known, which means that it was a small issue (illustrated by H. Nicolet-Pierre et M. Oikonomides, 'Le trésor de Zakynthos', *Quaderni Ticinesi di Numismatica e Antichità Classiche*, 20, 1991, pl. 3 n° 86-91 et pl. 4, n° 92-94).

These coins can be subdivided into two groups: the first one of Aeginetic weight and the second of reduced Aeginetic or Symmachic weight.<sup>14</sup> Whereas the former

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<sup>13</sup> Achaian coins were minted at different periods beginning with the Classical coinage documented through a small set of coins of Aeginetic weight – stater, drachma and hemidrachma – that must date back to the first half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, before 330, maybe between 367-362 after the end of the alliance with Sparta and during the short-lived democratic *koinon* while the Achaian oligarchs had taken refuge in Elis. (Walbank 2002, 137-152; Flensted-Jensen 2000: 19-33; Morgan and Hall 1996; Rizakis 1995, 28-29; Grandjean 2003: 28-32).

<sup>14</sup> Several inscriptions of late Hellenistic date from central Greece (Boeotia and Delphi), inventories from Delos and a manumission decree from Arcadian Orchomenos (*IG V<sup>2</sup> 345*) dated by epigraphists to the 70s BC (Ferrary 1988, 189 n. 228) mention this allied standard, used in minting coins and also for estimating the weight of *phialai*. G. Colin had already demonstrated on the basis of the inscriptions from Delphi that this standard was the same as that called by modern historians the Aeginetan Standard used by all the states of the Pyleo-Delphic Amphictyony with the exception of Athens (Colin 1903, 138–40). C. Doyen (2005) has recently reassessed this hypothesis, arguing that the Allied Standard was based on the Corinthian drachma of 2.9 g, which raises a problem: this would imply that coins following the Corinthian weight standard, which had not been struck at Corinth for a considerable period of time (the end of the Pegasuses is dated to 302 and the workshop thereafter struck tetradrachms of the Attic standard) and were not struck in central Greece, would have replaced the triobol of the Aeginetan standard in these areas. The coins issued are quite a bit lighter (2.10-2.30 g) than the Corinthian drachma, but would still have been drachmas. This leads one to ask about the decree *Syll.<sup>3</sup> 729* (second half of 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC) establishing an equivalence between the Attic drachma and the other drachmas. It is accepted that this measure acted in favour of the Athenians: if one follows Doyen's theory, the Athenians would have lost by the transaction. Why, if this were the case, was the decree inscribed on the Treasury of the Athenians at Delphi? Furthermore, if these coins of 2.1–2.3 g were nonetheless drachmas in use in the Peloponnese, why would Elis have struck drachmas weighing a little more than twice as much down to the start of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC? The origin of this *argyron symmachikon* (symmachic standard) remains more difficult to explain: A. Giovannini saw in it an expression, born after 146, to designate the coins of the Achaian *koinon*, which would have been extended thereafter to other coins of the same standard. It remains to note that the work of Paul Roesch has shown that the relevant Boeotian inscriptions were earlier than 146 BC. In an article published in 1995, I suggested, therefore, that one could see in the Allied Standard the standard of the

cannot be later than the period 230–220 BC when a variety of reduced Aeginetic coins tends to crop up everywhere, the latter could have appeared later.

This coinage hardly circulated outside core Achaia. H. Chantraine is therefore right to say it is not the common coinage mentioned by Polybius. Whether it was minted at Dyme or not, it is very likely to have been the coinage of the core of the Achaian *koinon*.

## II. THE JÜNGERE COINAGE

Polybius's Achaian coinage must be what Chantraine called the *jüngere* coinage which features hemidrachma or triobols of the reduced Aeginetic standard - or Symmachic standard - and also bronze coins (the bronze coins recently studied by J. Warren cf. note 6). The hemidrachma coins are the same as for the earlier series but have been further adorned with the specific symbols of each city (e.g. the Dioscuri cap for Sparta and the tripod for Messene) plus letters, names or monograms used as mint marks.

On bronze coins, the obverse features Zeus leaning on his sceptre and carrying a Nikē, while a female figure appears on the reverse which bears the inscription Achaiōn together with the polis ethnic mention in the genitive form and sometimes also a name (FIG. 4). To quote H. Chantraine's apt phrase we have here a Janus-like coinage- half federal, half civic- a frequent ambivalence in the productions of the *koina*, like the Beotian *koina* or the Lycian one for instance. We are back to Polybius who emphasized how similar the *koinon* was to a city-state.<sup>15</sup>

If we are to judge from the seminal works of Margaret Thompson and H. Chantraine on the Agrinion hoard, the coin production did not start before 195. Some other dates could be considered, especially 191 when the annexation of Elis and Messene completed the unification of the Peloponnese, or 188 when the *koinon* was reformed by Philopoemen and Aigion was no longer considered as the sole capital.

On the other hand, the date when they stopped being minted is still questioned today. Whereas numismatists agree to date the first two groups of *jüngere* coinage before 146, they disagree about the last group citing either the Achaian War or the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, because an Achaian *koinon* was restored after 146 and large quantities of triobols belonging to this category can be found in first century hoards. That is why I will deal here only with the first two groups.

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Hellenic Alliance which from 224/217 associated Antigonos Doson with a good number of *koina*, among them the Achaian *koinon* and the *koina* of Central Greece. Two arguments in support of this: Polybios applies the word alliance (*symmachia*) to the Achaian *koinon* just once, in the passage of interest here, and, it is quite evident, to show that the *koinon* is much more than an alliance (*symmachia*). Secondly, a progressive and continuous weakening of the weight of the triobols is to be observed in the Peloponnese from 250/230 BC onwards, as H. Nicolet has shown for Elis and J. Warren for Megalopolis.

<sup>15</sup> Lehmann 2001, 58-61; Troxell 1982; Salmon 1994.

Judging from what was found in excavations and hoards, these coins circulated over the whole territory of the *koinon* and were quite common. The coins from the Argos, Corinth and Mavromati excavations could indicate that it was mainly the coinage struck in the major mints of the *koinon* (particularly Patras, Antigoneia and Megara) which circulated throughout its territory. As far as the others are concerned, one can find Achaian coinage struck locally in Messenia, at Megalopolis in Arcadia and Olympia, and Achaian coins from northern and central Peloponnesian mints at Argos and Corinth.<sup>16</sup>

The Achaian coinage studied here circulated mainly in central and western Greece, often in relation with the Macedonian wars – as Yannis Touratsoglou and Eōs Tsourti have demonstrated– and Boiotian/Thessalian coinage can be found quite frequently in many Peloponnesian hoards.<sup>17</sup> These hoards, dating back to the later Hellenistic period, combine occasionally some old coins of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC with more recent ones, as is the case in contemporary hoards from central Greece. Most feature standard or reduced Aeginetic coins, but also earlier or more recent coins of Attic or Rhodian standards.

The Peloponnese did not form a limited monetary zone (a richly profitable domain for the state as was the case for the Ptolemaic or the Pergamene kingdoms) but was connected to a kind of monetary *koine* stretching from Thessaly to the Peloponnese and from western Greece to Euboea (with the exception of Attica). Associating minor coinages whose converging standards, achieved through metal clipping, made it easier to exchange different currencies,<sup>18</sup> which incidentally means that the *koinon* triobols cannot be equated with the modern euro. What is certain is that Achaian *koinon* cities struck only coinage of the reduced Aeginetic standard during this period.

From the 3<sup>rd</sup> century to the 190s BC and the war against Antiochos III, some of these cities minted posthumous Attic-standard Alexanders, but this production stopped when the *jüngere* coinage began with its federal standard, that is to say the reduced Aeginetic one.

Quite predictably, the cities which were the most at odds with the *koinon*, namely Sparta under kings Areus and Cleomenes III, then under Nabis and Messene when it revolted against the *koinon* in 183/2 BC struck autonomous tetradrachms of the Attic standard.<sup>19</sup>

It is more difficult to tackle the question of whether *koinon* cities simultaneously struck federal and autonomous triobols both of reduced Aeginetic standard, because putting a date on specific types of Megalopolitan and Spartan coins is still quite tricky (FIGS. 5 and 6, FIGS. 1 and 7– autonomous– issued at Messene with the same

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<sup>16</sup> Grandjean 2003, 239 .

<sup>17</sup> Touratsoglou and Tsourti 1991.

<sup>18</sup> See for example the hoards Thompson et al. 242, 246, 258, the Patras hoard Wartenberg et al. 1994, 454 and the hoards from Psalonia, Patras (Tsangari and Alexopoulou 2003; cf. Hackens 1968, 95; Giovannini 1978, etc.)

<sup>19</sup> Grunauer von Hoerschelmann 1978; Grandjean 2003.

obverse die). What is clear on the other hand is that some cities did strike simultaneously *koinon* and autonomous bronze coins (FIG. 8).<sup>20</sup>

Let us now consider what information we can infer from these coinages in terms of the statutory powers of both the cities and the federal state and as a consequence on the level of autonomy of the cities within the Achaian *koinon*.

	<i>Nomographoi</i> 191-182 in the Aigion Inscription	Number of obverse dies	
		195–168	160–150
ARCADIA			
Antigoneia	1	88	?
Ascheion	1		
Megalopolis	2	44	4
Heraia	1		
Phigalia	1		
Pallantion	1		?
Tegea	1		?
Orchomenos	1		
Kaphyai	1		6
Kleitōr	1		8+
Lousoi	1		
Pheneos			5
TRIPHYLIA			
Hypanai	1		
MESSEANIA			
Asine	1		
Korone	1	6	
Kyparissia	1		
Messene	2	21	7+
LACONIA			
Sparta	3	1	

TABLE 1: *nomographoi* c. 191–182 BC and issues in silver of the Achaian *koinon*

<sup>20</sup> The Messenians used a die which had been used to strike triobols of the Achaian *koinon* to strike their own first issue of their own types. Cf. also Warren 2008.

TABLE 1 lists the Arcadian, Laconian, Messenian and Triphylian cities as they appear on the fragmentary Aigion inscription dated 191-182 by Athanassios Rizakis. For each of them the number of *nomographoi* is given proportionately to its population. The second column lists the cities which struck Achaian *koinon*-type silver coinage 195–168 BC in the early period then 160–150 BC or so, together with the number of obverse dies known as a means of assessing monetary production.

Obviously the proportion of *nomographoi* does not apply to coinage. Antigoneia had only one *nomographos* but produced large numbers of coins; Megalopolis had two but produced half the number. Does that mean that cities were free to strike their own coinage as long as they agreed to use the *koinon*'s standard and monetary types? In other words was the minting privilege part of the statutory powers of cities? That is what Jennifer Warren has argued as far as striking bronze coins is concerned. I should not be so positive about silver coinage. Thus, if we take into account the different mints that issued such coinage before Pydna, we notice that there existed regional mints.<sup>21</sup>

Let us consider just the regions listed in the Aigion inscription, that means Patras in Achaia and Antigoneia/Mantineia in Arcadia. Over time, other mints appear on the map: new Achaian mints make up for the dwindling production of Patras and the same goes for Arcadia where Pallantion, Kleitor, Kaphyai, Tegea and Megalopolis supplement Antigoneia/Mantineia.

As for the overall production, it must have remained stable to judge from the number of dies documented: 209 c. 195–168 BC; 189 c. 160–150 BC.

I have had a hundred Achaian *koinon* and autonomous triobols of the 3<sup>rd</sup>–1<sup>st</sup> centuries BC, preserved in the BNF, analysed using the Orleans cyclotron and the first results point to some interesting developments. The weights of the Achaian *koinon* coins are more homogenous than those of autonomous triobols but the original silver weight of Achaian coins varies greatly. This means that federal authorities may well have controlled the end product. On the other hand, cities may have enjoyed unexpected freedom over the way the metal alloy was prepared. This was an essential stage in the manufacturing process of coins as their commercial value depended on their purity, which in antiquity was assayed using a touchstone. Furthermore, M. Thompson has shown that the silver coins of a number of cities were struck with common obverse dies, as for example some of the triobols from Patras and Elis. This does not seem consistent with the notion that cities were left free to mint. She also underlined the similarity in the features of Zeus on the triobols struck by Antigoneia, Megalopolis and Messene around 175–168 BC, which could come from one single mint maybe in Messene.

This could lead one to think that production was centralised and prompt us to reconsider the *syntelia* question and examine its validity in terms of numismatics. The notion once propounded by Aldo Ferrabino that the Achaian *koinon* was divided into military and tax districts was recently revived by Thomas Corsten and

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<sup>21</sup> Thompson 1968, 100-102 n. 124.

further considered by Gustav Adolf Lehmann and Athanasios Rizakis.<sup>22</sup> Basing his interpretation on a passage of Polybius (5.91.6–8 and 5.92.7–10) about the organisation of the army and fleet by Aratos in 217, Aldo Ferrabino claimed the *koinon* was at that time divided into three districts or *syntelies* focused on Argos, Megalopolis and Patras. Thomas Corsten calculated that there were at least five districts until 208/207 – the date mentioned in the Megalopolis inscription concerning Magnesia on the Meander (*Syll.*<sup>3</sup> 559). These districts were then redrawn into three more important districts around Patras, Megalopolis and Argos. A. Rizakis later showed that this theory may be shaky except as regards the Patras district, and the coins do agree with him.

Zinc is to be found very seldom in Peloponnesian coins. The only Achaian *koinon* coins analysed that contain some are the Achaian cities of Aigion, Dyme, and Patras together with an Elia coin, of which two dies are identical to the Patras coinage and a Corinthian triobol.

Given that autonomous triobols later minted in Patras also contain some zinc and as Patras was the most important mint in the northwest Peloponnese it might well seem that the alloy used by other mints was prepared there. This leads one in turn to wonder whether the Patras *syntelia* whose existence is attested in 217 and in 146 (Polyb. 4.59.1-60.10; 5.95.5-9; 38.16.4) was not also a monetary district.

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After a few small coin issues in the Classical period and in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, a good number of cities belonging to the Achaian *koinon* struck significant quantities of silver triobols using the reduced Aeginetan (or Allied) standard from the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, the moment when the whole of the Peloponnese passed under the control of the Achaian *koinon*. In spite of the importance of this coinage, the extent of its circulation and the variety of the workshops involved, it is plain that drawing a parallel between *jüngere* silver and bronze Achaian coinage and the euro suffers a number of limitations.

These ancient coins circulated with no monopoly. Nor had a central bank been established to issue them and devise the sort of monetary policy we know today. Yet the homogeneity of the silver coins could lead us to suppose that they were controlled in various ways by the federal state, hence the link made by Polybius between weights, measures and coins. The fact that there were common dies and central mints is evidence that production was at least partly conceived and planned at a higher level than that of the cities. Surviving documents certainly do not allow us to conclude whether this situation resulted from some federal decision or from agreements initiated by cities of their own free will.

Another question is that of the role these coinages played in the creation of a Peloponnese united under the authority of the Achaian *koinon*. Polybius presents

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<sup>22</sup> Ferrabino 1921, 217–21, 297–301; Corsten 1999; Lehmann 2001 ; Rizakis 2003; Roy 2003.

money both as an element underlying military power and as an important constituent in the creation of an 'allied and friendly community', in short a factor behind unification, just as much as the shared laws and magistracies. The absence of coinage had limited the power of Sparta, and that city had never succeeded in uniting the Peloponnese under its leadership, because it had not worked in the common interest, but for its own good motivated by avarice (just like the Macedonians or the Aetolians). In contrast, the Achaeans were so fully dedicated to the general interest that the Peloponnese was completely united and brought together by common friendship, like a single city. In fact, it dispensed everything which compounds the political unity of a city-state, and notably money, whose association with the totality of society the ancients knew only too well. As Aristotle wrote:

They settled upon a custom by which all these things might be bought, calling it silver coinage *nomisma* and using it; and by each giving the value of each thing, they created exchange with one another, and thus kept together the political association (*politikēn koinōnian*).  
Aristotle, *Mag. Mor.* 1.33.12 (1194a).

It is not certain, indeed, that the euro has enjoyed such virtues in Europe, but it can be said that in our case the attempt at monetary union preceded the creation of a United States of Europe.

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