Thrace – Local Coinage and Regional Identity

Ulrike Peter
Vladimir F. Stolba
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THRACE, WITH ITS HETEROGENEOUS POPULATION; proximity to the Greek civilisation; and the long-lasting dominance of the Persians, Macedonians, and Romans that has impacted culture, language, and political institutions of this historical landscape, is a unique testing ground for studying regionalism and identity in antiquity. This book explores these topics through the lens of coinage, numismatic iconography, and coin circulation. Including a series of case studies and theoretical chapters, this volume does not offer a conclusive solution to all of the questions that emerge. Yet the articles presented here, both in their entirety and individually, show the intricacy and manifoldness of the problem and outline prospects for further research.

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Thrace – Local Coinage and Regional Identity

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17 Friends and 'Friends' in the Client Kingdom of Thrace

Charikleia Papageorgiadou – Maria-Gabriella G. Parissaki

Abstract

The emergence of the client kingdom of Thrace during the second half of the 1st century BC signalled a turning point in Rome's handling of Thracian affairs. Since the provincialization of neighbouring Macedonia in 146 BC and for almost a century thereafter, Rome tried to deal with the different tribes of inland Thrace on an individual basis, only to realize that even those alliances that could be qualified as more or less operative in its eyes could as easily turn against it (cf. Cicero's accusations in *In Pis.* 34.84). During this first period, the repulsion of Thracian attacks against the Roman province of Macedonia or the organization of preventive campaigns in inland Thrace became a major preoccupation for the Roman governors of Macedonia. But after the creation of the client kingdom of Thrace, which resulted from the unification of two major tribes of southern and eastern Thrace (the Sapaioi and the Astai), the handling of Thracian affairs was left to this new local power, with Rome intervening only in cases of serious disruption caused either by internal dynastic disputes or by serious rebellions. The precarious character of this new kingdom, combined with the limited information offered by ancient sources, still leaves many aspects of its history, territorial extent, and internal organization inadequately known. The aim of this paper is to combine the information offered by these sources, mainly ancient Greek and Roman authors, as well as a handful of inscribed texts, against that offered by the monetary production and coin circulation in order to address questions concerning the extent of its authority over the tribes of inland Thrace, the limits of its realm, and, finally, its very identity.

Keywords

Rome, Thrace, Thracian tribes, client kingdom, Rhoimetalkes, coin hoards

In the long series of so-called client or friendly kingdoms that developed on the eastern frontiers of the Roman Empire during the late Hellenistic and early Roman periods, the client kingdom of Thrace certainly represents an interesting case.[1] This can be maintained by evidence of its longevity, spanning from at least the third quarter of the 1st century BC and the time of Augustus to AD 46 and Thrace's provincialization under Claudius,[2] but also that of its supra-tribal and supra-regional importance. The

* In the following analysis, the first author contributed the numismatic data and the second the historical context.

1 For the terms 'client king' and 'friendly king', deriving from the related notions of *clientela* and *amicitia* respectively, see Braund 1984, 7, 23–24. No thorough analysis of the history of the client kingdom of Thrace exists up to this day, but the relevant material has been gathered in discussions over the genealogy of the ruling family or the kingdom's monetary production. For the genealogy, see Sullivan 1979, Tacheva 1985, Tacheva 1995 and, more recently, Dimitrova 2008, Kirov 2011, and Delev 2016, with further bibliography; for the monetary production, see mainly Youroukova 1976, Paunov 2013b, and Paunov 2018.

2 The efforts of Rome to create a nexus of client tribes in inland Thrace clearly predate the reign of Augustus, as indicated, for example, by Rome's relations with the Dentheletai (see *infra*, p. 3) or with the Astai in the

primary *raison-d'être* of this client kingdom that emerges fully fledged in our sources after the unification of the two tribes of the Astai (located in the region of south-eastern Thrace in modern Turkish territory) and of the Sapaioi (in the south-western Rhodopes, just to the north of the Greek cities of the north Aegean littoral) was to check the rebellious tribes of the Thracian interior. In doing so, it protected the neighbouring Roman province of Macedonia, which had suffered severely from the recurrent incursions of northern tribes during the period that preceded the formation of this client kingdom.[3]

Despite its importance, many aspects of this client kingdom remain inadequately known, including, among others, the actual extent of its realm. This is partly due to the fragmentary character of the information disclosed by ancient Greek and Roman authors, since there is no extant text that is comparable to the description of Sitalkes' realm given by Thucydides on the occasion of this Odrysian king's campaign against Macedonia in 429 BC (2.97). Kings of the client kingdom of Thrace are usually mentioned on the occasion of a serious dynastic strife or during some tribal rebellion, thus implicitly indicating that these tribes were a part of this kingdom before and after the rebellion. To this we should add our difficulty to locate all or at least some of these tribes on the map, even with a relative degree of certainty; this is the case with the Bessoi, for example. And, of course, one last line of caution is required: it must be emphasized that the extant sources reflect the 'official' view of the winning order; whatever 'rebellion' meant was defined by the Romans. Bearing this in mind, the importance of both inscriptions and coins as sources directly connected to the client kingdom becomes obvious. Thus, in what follows, we will try to combine the information offered by written sources on the one hand and coinage on the other in order to compare and, if possible, complement each other. In doing so, we will differentiate among the coastal zone of the north Aegean Sea, the Propontis, and the Euxine — that is the world of the ancient Greek *apoikiai* — and the tribal zone of the interior.

Cities Along the Thracian Littoral

In a fundamental article on the strategies of Thrace, i.e. the administrative units that emerged in the Thracian interior simultaneously with the client kingdom of Thrace, Gerov concluded that the Greek cities of the coasts were included into the *strategiai*

years preceding the unification with the Sapaioi under Augustus. For the demise of the client kingdom and the provincialization of Thrace in AD 46 under Claudius, see Kolendo 1998.

3 For this period of incursions and the role Rome played in the creation of the client kingdom of Thrace, see Parissaki 2013, with earlier bibliography.

and were thus put under the direct control of the Thracian kings. This view was based on two arguments: first, the mention of a στρατηγὸς Ἀγχιάλου in two dedicatory inscriptions from Razgrad and Burgas and, second, Pliny's information relating the strategy of Astice with Apollonia (*NH.* 4.45: 'Astice regio habuit oppidum Anthium, nunc est Apollonia').[4] In a communication previously presented in Athens,[5] we have tried to show that what sources attest for Anchialos and Apollonia should not be applied to all other cases, since these two closely-related Greek foundations on the Euxine shore had been treated in a punitive way by Rome for their resistance to the army of Lucullus. Such extrapolations would, moreover, discredit the often-attested capacity of Romans to adapt themselves to local variations. Inscriptions indicate that at least three other models of relations and of degrees of dependence between the client kingdom and the Greek cities of the coast may be suggested, as exemplified by Abdera and Maroneia on the Aegean littoral, Byzantion, and the cities of the Euxine coast.

(A) Two major epigraphic discoveries from the last 40 years – the treaty signed at the end of 167 BC between Rome and Maroneia in the immediate aftermath of the Third Macedonian War and the so-called eternal oath issued by the same city in the aftermath of the provincialization of Thrace under Claudius almost two centuries later – have helped clarify that Maroneia and quite probably the two other major cities of the Aegean coast, Abdera and Ainos, succeeded in keeping their status of *civitates liberae* throughout the two centuries that elapsed between the two texts.[6] The so-called eternal oath moreover revealed the city's fierce resistance to Mithridates' army; the great calamities inflicted upon the city by the Pontic troops, including the utter destruction of its city walls (l. 9-10: κατασκαφή); and Rome's subsequent rewards, which included the reinstatement of the city's rights. There is no reason to doubt, therefore, that throughout this period and just like on the neighbouring island of Thasos, where epigraphic material is much more abundant,[7] these cities' status remained unaltered. As a result, Rome would have had no reason to undo what had so effectively worked some decades earlier by replacing it with a kingdom whose stability was a question of constant concern. It is important to stress, however, that these considerations concern the official political status of these cities and

4 Gerov 1970.

5 Parissaki 2018.

6 See *IThrAeg* E168 and E180 respectively; for further discussion and bibliography on these two inscriptions, see Parissaki 2018. A third inscription found at Teos and pertaining to this period is currently being prepared for publication by Peter Thonemann.

7 For Thasos, see Fournier 2013.

should not be interpreted as meaning that nothing changed in their relations with the Thracian tribes of the interior. The fact that, for the first time after the Odrysian kingdom of the Classical and early Hellenistic era, Thracian tribes were finally put under check by a coalition of fellow tribesmen acknowledging Roman control not only meant that all were on the same side but also that, for the first time after a long period, the cities of the north Aegean coast would have felt secure from incursions from the north. It is from this perspective that we believe we should interpret the honourary inscriptions for the last Thracian kings set up by Abdera, Maroneia, and the Roman colony of Philippi.[8] The question can then be raised of how this new political reality affected the cities' currency relations. From the 2nd century BC onwards, two cities in the region – Maroneia and Thasos – played a significant role by supplying the main bulk of the necessary currency,[9] alongside the numerous Roman denarii and the coins of Macedonia,[10] especially for the regions of central and eastern Thrace, where the modern cities of Nova Zagora, Jambol, Sliven, and Veliko Tarnovo lay.[11] However, both cities ceased their production in the early years of the Principate; this is not surprising, since most of the cities in other regions of mainland Greece, with the exception of the Roman colonies in Achaea and Macedonia, seem to have been equally reluctant to produce coinage.[12] This resulted in a hiatus of currency, mostly covered by the Roman denarii, as can be deduced from the coin hoards.[13] An illustrative and characteristic example of the numismatic circulation that embraced the whole Aegean-Thracian littoral, as well as the southern regions of contemporary Bulgaria, is offered by the bronze coins unearthed during Maroneia's excavations. They comprise issues of the Macedonian *koinon*, coins of Roman colonies such as Pella or Philippi,

8 These are inscriptions *IThrAeg* E83 (Abdera), E207 (Maroneia), and *CIPh* II.1, 3 (Philippi). Only two inscriptions from south-western Thrace point to direct control of the client kingdom: an inscription from a quarry in the region of Nea Karvali (appr. 10 km east of Kavala) set up in honour of Rhoimetalkes III and his sons (Bakalakis 1935) and a dedication of king Kotys, son of Rhaiskouporis, to Heracles found in the region of modern Didymoteichon (*IThrAeg* E45); both these regions lay outside the *chorai* of the Greek colonies of the shore.

9 For the coinage of Maroneia, see Schönert-Geiss 1987 and Psoma 2008; for Thasos, see Prokopov 2006 and Callatay 2008.

10 See *CCCHBulg* III.

11 *IGCH* 529, 531, 679–680, 924, 933, 963–964 and 966.

12 Thus, only Amphipolis, Edessa, Pella, Philippi, and Thessalonika were active in Macedonia.

13 Under Augustus, only Imbros and Sestos seem to have issued a rather restricted coinage of problematic denominations, bearing the bare head of the emperor and local types accompanied by the ethnic; see *RPC* I, 317 nos. 1734–1737 (Imbros) and nos. 1739–1740 (Sestos). It is tempting to relate them to the refuge taken there by Rhoimetalkes I in 11 BC.

a few issues of Augustus, and those of some of the Julio-Claudians from the mint of Rome.[14]

In this framework of currency, the participation of the coinage of the client kingdom of Thrace in the coin circulation of Aegean Thrace offers interesting insights. Only a few isolated specimens of Rhoimetalkes I were unearthed during excavations by the local ephorates; his coins are not represented among the finds from Maroneia or Ainos, despite the fact that these cities did not produce their own coinage under Augustus,[15] and are to be found in significant numbers only at Abdera.[16] Taking into account the city's geographical proximity to the land of the Sapaioi and its close bonds with Roman negotiating families during the 2nd and 1st centuries BC – as indicated by the decrees in honour of the *Apustii* – it is possible that Rhoimetalkes exploited the potentialities offered. Since Abdera did not mint until Tiberius' reign,[17] the coins provided by Rhoimetalkes seem to have constituted a considerable part of the locally-circulating currency. The same figure of a loose relationship between the Greek cities of the littoral and the client kingdom is provided by the scarce presence of issues belonging to his heirs, also in accordance with their humble production. Two coins of Rhoimetalkes II and two coins of Rhoimetalkes III were found at Abdera, and one coin of Rhoimetalkes II was found at Maroneia.[18]

(B) Further east, Byzantion should be treated as a case of its own, as indicated by one inscription and some coin issues. The text mentions Rhoimetalkes I as the reigning king and a second person as μέραρχος, a term that also occurred in a very fragmentary, though slightly earlier, inscription from Bizye.[19] The lack of evidence does not permit speculation into the possible relation of μεραρχίαι and στρατηγίαι for the time being, though some scholars have suggested that the first were subdivisions of the second.[20] The possibility that they should be considered separately, indicating a difference in status should not be excluded, either. Be that as it may, the probable – though not ascertained – provenance of

14 See Karadima and Psoma 2007.

15 Maroneia started minting under Nero, while Ainos issued a pseudo-autonomous series dated to the 1st–2nd centuries AD; see *RPC* I, 316 nos. 1732–1733 and also Schönert-Geiss 1987, Psoma 2008, 95, and Tekin 2007, 597.

16 See Chryssanthaki-Nagle 2011, 111–133.

17 See *RPC* I, 315 no. 1727.

18 See Psoma 2008, 127, 252. In order to complement the picture of Aegean Thrace, we should mention a few specimens of Kotys and Rhaiskouporis from the citadel of Kalyva, although this lay outside the *chora* of the Greek cities of the coast, in a region that during this period should have been actual Sapaian territory; see Triantaphyllos 1988, 449.

19 For a thorough discussion of these two inscriptions, see *IK Byzantion* 324 and Lampousiadis 1938, 64 no. 16 respectively; this second inscription dates from before the creation of the united client kingdom.

20 Thus Moretti 1984, 263–266 (*SEG* 34 [1984] 701).

this text from Byzantion leads to interesting considerations further supported by the evidence of coins.

Byzantion issued silver coins in the name of Rhoimetalkes I, consisting of drachms and didrachms and representing the familiar type combining the royal and imperial portraits,[21] as well as smaller denominations in bronze that consistently displayed the king's monogram in a wreath.[22] As Youroukova has already suggested, Rhoimetalkes I issued his first festive silver coins in Byzantion in the Greek manner, as indicated by both legend and weight and denominations, when he finally ascended the throne.[23] At the same time, from his accession onwards, Rhoimetalkes was engaged in the minting of his well-known *aes* coinage, depicting the royal and imperial portraits and following the Roman metric system.[24] By reviewing the existing material and by taking into consideration the fact that Thracians traditionally issued regal and not ethnic coinage, it becomes quite tempting to wonder whether Byzantion[25] – and not the capital, Bizye – may have been this king's main mint. Apart from being an important mint for the whole region that also operated under king Lysimachos and was the preferred mint of Rhoimetalkes I to produce his coronation coins, Byzantion was also active for the whole period after Augustus' reign, under Tiberius, Caligula, and Claudius – the patrons of Rhoimetalkes II and III. This makes it the only Thracian mint that shows continuous activity all through the existence of the client kingdom.

(C) As indicated by the aforementioned cities of Anchialos and Apollonia, as well as by inscriptions referring to *strategoi* like the dedicatory inscription of the *strategos* Φάρσαλος Βείθυος found at the fort of Tirizis at the promontory of Kaliakra,[26] substantial parts of the western Pontic shore were put under the direct control of the client kings of Thrace. However, the two important cities

21 For the metric system followed, see the relevant discussion in *RPC* I, 311–312 and Paunov 2013a, 6; see also Crawford 1985, 239, who considers this coinage as 'a denarius coinage with subsidiary bronze'.

22 At the same time, the representation of local types on the obverse pronounces a more independent character of the city; see *RPC* I, 322 nos. 1774–1777. The same iconographic pattern is followed in Kalchedon's coinage (*RPC* I, 323 nos. 1783–1785), always closely related to that of neighbouring Byzantion.

23 Youroukova 1976, 56.

24 Consisting of all denominations corresponding to dupondii, asses, semises and quadrantes, although showing differences/discrepancies from the official Augustan currency system, with dupondii weighing 12.50 g, asses 11.00 g, and quadrantes 3.00 g, while the Neronian semises weighed around 3.25 g. It is interesting to note that his semises and quadrantes find parallels in the analogous coins of Imbros (*RPC* I, 317 nos. 1734–1737) and Sestos (*RPC* I1, 317–318 nos. 1740–1741), issued in the Augustan period and showing the imperial portrait alongside Greek legends, and local types on the reverse, while quadrantes also issued in Byzantion feature only local types (*RPC* I, 322 nos. 1771–1773).

25 Paunov 2013a, 238.

26 For this text, see *IGBulg* I², 12 and Parissaki 2009, 322–323 no. I/2. For Apollonia and Anchialos, see the discussion above.

> of the region south of the Haemus range, Odessos and Mesembria, once more display a different development. For strategic reasons, they were both declared *civitates foederatae* after the campaign of M. Terentius Varro Lucullus in 72–71 BC. Whether we accept the existence of a *praefectura orae maritimae* or not, relations with the Romans were regulated through the nearest Roman governor, i.e. the governor of Macedonia first and, from the early years of the 1st century AD onwards, that of nearby Moesia.[27]

Odessos possibly started minting from the time of Augustus,[28] thus making it one of the very few cities of Thrace that minted in his name. The mint also remained active under Tiberius, Caligula, and Claudius.[29] The rather restricted Augustan issues, dating to about 10 BC,[30] are heavily countermarked for the next years. As Bekov has pointed out, the Augustan issues usually display three different countermarks. Two of them, which always appear together, seem to represent Augustus and Rhoimetalkes I, while the third one, always isolated, is interpreted as a portrait of King Kotys IV, the son of Rhoimetalkes I. Mesembria's mint also started operating during Augustus' reign, as proven by Karayotov,[31] who, in a more recent study, attributed two extremely restricted issues to that period. A few specimens (*RPC Suppl.* S3-I-1790) display the characteristic Augustan iconography (the head of Augustus with the legend ΚΑΙCΑΡΟΣ ΣΕΒΑΣΤΟΥ and Apollo Kitharodos with the ethnic ΜΕΣΑΜΒΡΙΑΝΩΝ), while two more examples (*RPC Suppl.* S3-I-1789) belong to the well-known series of Rhoimetalkes that displays the king's portrait with the ethnic ΜΕΣΑΜΒΡΙΑΝΩΝ on one side and the imperial portrait with the legend ΚΑΙΣΑΡΟΣ ΣΕΒΑΣΤΟΥ on the other. Both issues are countermarked on the obverse with an ear of corn[32] and a female veiled or turreted head.

27 For the history of the region, see Minchev 2003, 228–230 and, more recently, Zahariade 2013 and Ruscu 2014, with earlier bibliography.

28 For the coinage of Odessos under Augustus, see *RPC* I, 324 no. 1801, Lazarenko 2011, and Bekov 2014. The coinage of both Odessos and Mesembria during the 1st century BC is closely related to the Mithridatic wars, either as payment to Thracian mercenaries recruited by the king of Pontus or as payment to garrisons installed by the king on the western cost of the Euxine; their circulation is, thus, mostly restricted to the area; see Callataÿ 1994, esp. 309. For such specimens in other regions, see, for instance, the two tetradrachms of Mesembria found in a hoard at Mindya in the region of Veliko Tărnovo (*IRRCH Bulg* 118 = *IGCH* 664), buried in the mid-1st century BC, and at Bolyarino, near Plovdiv (*IRRCH Bulg* 102 = *IGCH* 975), buried in the years after 44 BC.

29 This extremely productive mint continued operating until the reign of Gordian III.

30 One example is mentioned in *RPC* I, 325 no. 1801 and three more in *RPC I Supplement.* For the dating, see Lazarenko 2011, 57.

31 Karayotov 2009, also included in *RPC Suppl.* S3-I-1789–1790; however, these coins were already attributed to the city by Youroukova 1991.

32 Youroukova 1991 related this symbol to the iconography of the city's earlier issues; however, it could have also referred to the Black Sea grain commerce or the provision of the Roman army (*annona*), for which the client kings could be responsible.

A combination of literary sources, inscriptions, and coins therefore indicates yet another interesting political reality. In an article published in 2014,[33] Ligia Ruscu pointed out, quite correctly in our view, that 'the most conspicuous feature of the situation of the Western Pontic cities during the reign of Augustus and the early Julio-Claudians is their geographical separation, by land and by sea, from the closest Roman provincial soil extant at the time … It was thus sometimes deemed necessary to admit the presence of some form of Roman authority that would take care of things on the spot and would act as an intermediary between the ruled and the provincial governor'. At the time, that intermediary were the client-kings of Thrace. It is from this perspective, in our view, that we should interpret the coin issues mentioned above.

Tribes of the Interior

Moving inland and regarding the extent of the client kingdom towards the Thracian interior, ancient authors permit us to say at least three things with a fair degree of certainty:

(A) When describing the division of the kingdom of Thrace among the two heirs of Rhoimetalkes I under Augustus, Tacitus (*Ann.* 2.64-67) conveys a sense of dichotomy among a more developed part, described as consisting of 'agricultural lands, the towns, and the districts adjoining the Greek cities' and a second, more backward one consisting of 'a sterile soil, a wild population, with enemies at the very door'. This dichotomy is interestingly reflected in inscriptions, as well. The names of the strategies, that is of the administrative subdivisions that existed within the boundaries of the client kingdom of Thrace, point to the eastern and southern areas of Thrace; and so does the origin of the strategoi known up to this day.[34]

(B) Control seems to have been less secure moving westwards towards the western limit of the Hebrus/Maritza Plain and the convergence of the Haemus and Rhodopes Mountains. For example, the Bessoi, Koilaletoi, and Dioi, which are named by ancient sources as repeatedly challenging the authority of the Thracian kings, may have dwelled in this general area.

(C) Tribes located even further west – that is along the course of the upper Strymon River – may have developed their own communication channels with Rome and may have remained independent versus the client kingdom of Thrace.

33 See Ruscu 2014, 164.

34 See Parissaki 2009, 328.

The Dentheletai, generally located in and around modern Kyustendil, were allies of Rome from the middle of the 1st century BC onwards, as indicated by Cicero in his speech against the governor of Macedonia, L. Calpurnius Piso, delivered in the Senate in 55 BC (*In Pis.* 34.84) and also by Titus Livius, who mentions Rome's *foedus* with the Dentheletai and their blind king, Sitas, while describing the seminal campaign of the Macedonian governor, Marcus Licinius Crassus, against the Bastarnai in 29–28 BC (Dio Cass. *Ῥωμαϊκά* 51.23.2-5 and 51.25.4).[35] To their south, the Maidoi gained their notoriety through their constant aggression towards the Roman province of Macedonia. Though the number of these invasions clearly decreases after the emergence of the client kingdom of Thrace, their inclusion within this kingdom's boundaries should not be considered as ascertained. The only source that explicitly mentions them during the second half of the 1st century BC, though in a totally different context, is Varro, who differentiates the region of Maedica from the rest of Thrace in his *De Re Rustica* (2.1.5).

A dependent economy evolved in these regions during the 2nd–1st centuries BC, mostly based on any strong coinage of the period. This economic and financial situation also continued during the early years of the Principate, when the Thracian hinterland was still dependent on the Macedonian mints to acquire the currency needed. In this environment, the coinage of the client kings, and especially that of Rhoimetalkes I, played a significant role. The size of the numismatic production of this king – clearly more impressive than that of his heirs, as already demonstrated by Youroukova (1976) – has significantly increased in recent years by the addition of new finds from excavations, as well as by the auctioning and purchasing of new coins.[36] Two points seem important to highlight here: the character of these numismatic finds and their place of discovery. Coins of Rhoimetalkes I are found either isolated or in extremely few numbers in larger contexts, as in the case of the finds from Sivino and Sadievo (region of Sliven), where the coins of the king formed only a small part of the wider hoarding.[37] Hoards including or totally consisting of coins of Rhoimetalkes I,

35 According to a third passage of Cassius Dio (54.20.3), the Dentheletai, together with the Skordiskoi, invaded Macedonia in 16 BC. The author mentions Marcus Lollius' campaign and combines it with his settling of affairs within the client kingdom; this juxtaposition probably indicates that the Dentheletai were still outside the realm of the client kingdom of Thrace during this period.

36 See in general Paunov 2013a, with the relevant bibliography.

37 The find of Sivino, found during the excavations of a Thracian sanctuary at the region of Smolyan in the heart of the Rhodopes Mountains and in an area included in or, at least, adjacent to the tribal territory of the Sapaioi, consisted of one AE Rhoimetalkes I/Augustus, one drachm of Abdera and some AE coins of the 4th/3rd century, a number of Roman denarii (2nd–1st centuries BC), one denarius of Alexander Severus (222–235), and two AE of Constans (333–350); see *IRRCH Bulg* 155. For the find of Sadievo consisting of one AE Rhoimetalkes I, coins of Maroneia, and Roman denarii; see *IRRCH Bulg* 126.

on the other hand, are few in number but surely more impressive. This is the case of the coin hoard of Erma Reka in the region of Zlatograd, where a clay vase containing two to three kilograms or 200–500 *aes* coins of different types of Rhoimetalkes I was discovered (*CCCHBulg* III, p. 12). A second hoard, which consisted exclusively of 1,000 AE coins of Rhoimetalkes I and was formerly regarded as originating from the modern Greek part of Thrace, but is currently considered to have been found in the region of Dobrudja (*CH* III 85),[38] was unfortunately dispersed in the market; thirty coins are kept in the Athens Numismatic Museum as part of the Kyrou collection. The size of this hoard drove Michael Crawford to the assumption that Rhoimetalkes I had produced a large amount of money.[39]

Although the information about the coin finds is scanty, we could suppose that the first category of finds, those including isolated coins of the king, reflects the true circulation pattern and the involvement of the coins under discussion in the market activities. The second category of hoards, those consisting exclusively of Rhoimetalkes I's coins, may demonstrate their use for special occasions. This hypothesis can be sustained by the findspots of the hoards. Today, Erma Reka is the centre of intensive mining activity producing galena;[40] therefore, the find of the hoard could be related to possible mining activities in antiquity. On the other hand, the Dobrudja hoard was in all probability unearthed in the region of Razgrad, north of the Haemus Range, where the base of a *strategia* was located, as indicated by inscriptions. Therefore, the bulk of his coinage is found in the regions of contemporary southern and eastern Bulgaria, where the centre of the Sapaian and Odrysian/Astaian kingdom is traditionally placed. However, the most impressive finds are related to places of special interest, either of economic significance, such as the mines, or of an administrative one, such as the seat of *strategiae*. Coins of Rhoimetalkes I are scarcely found in other regions further west than Sliven, where the preponderance of the coins from Macedonian mints is clearly indicated by the finds.

The coinage of his heirs does not display the dynamic of the founder of their royal line. Paunov has identified three specimens attributed to the joint reign of Kotys IV and Rhaiskouporis III. No numismatic evidence exists for this ruler,[41] but his furious struggle with Kotys over the sovereignty of the whole kingdom allows us to suggest that he had adequate financial resources. The coinage of the next rulers is better

38 As Adonis Kyrou, who has purchased some pieces of the hoard, personally informed us. Lacking other information, however, Chryssanthaki-Nagle 2011, 131 had placed the findspot of this hoard in the Greek littoral regions, thus significantly raising the percentage of the coins of Rhoimetalkes I in the modern Greek part of ancient Thrace.

39 Crawford 1985, 239.

40 An ore from which lead and even silver can be extracted, easily elaborated and therefore greatly appreciated in antiquity.

41 Paunov 2013a, esp. 123 no. 37.

represented, although in smaller output. The consolidation of the Roman Empire, resulting in the increase of the imperial coin production and circulation,[42] as well as the reopening of the mints of the Greek cities, which resumed their activity from the time of Tiberius onward, might have resulted in diminished minting activity of the client kings. The restricted minting activity of Rhoimetalkes II under Tiberius is also reflected in the circulation of his coins, as, according to Youroukova,[43] there is possibly only one hoard attributed to him, which contains 449 *aes* coins and was found in Gruevo, Momchilgrad district. The coinage of Rhoimetalkes III, the last Thracian king before the provincialization of Thrace in AD 46 under Claudius, displays interesting features and eloquent diversity not otherwise known in the Thracian kingdom. His coins are, however, only found sporadically. The scarcity of these finds possibly indicates the limited power of his economic realm.

An indication for the size of the regal coinage and its financial power in the frame of the local economy is provided by the finds from Aquae Calidae. Situated on the Black Sea coast, near modern Burgas, this bath complex provided a large number of coins.[44] Among them, 181 Thracian coins are said to be of Rhoimetalkes I, though some of them could perhaps be of Rhoimetalkes II, which suggests that these were the *aes* coins that circulated most abundantly in this area under Augustus. A few specimens of his heirs were also present, including one of Kotys IV and Rhaiskouporis and two of Rhoimetalkes III.[45]

Conclusions

Both ancient authors and inscriptions alike indicate that the client kingdom of Thrace consisted of a nucleus of friends and allies of the Roman Empire. This network consisted of tribes such as the Astai/Odrysai and the Sapaioi, who somehow operated in consortium with Rome from the last quarter of the 1st century BC onward. Less reliable tribes such as the Bessoi, who are qualified here as 'friends', were also present within this network, but their loyalty was a matter of constant concern. The old Greek colonies of the northern Aegean shore, the Propontis, and the western shore of the

42 For the time of Tiberius, see Rodewald 1976, 52–57.

43 Youroukova 1976, 61–63.

44 See Rodewald 1976, 57: 'some three thousand were saved, 2,204 of which were not too damaged to be identified' and recently Paunov 2015.

45 Rodewald 1976, 124, no. 444, 'that circulated most abundantly in this area under Augustus; perhaps even until the reign of Claudius, though the fact that there are only one of Kotys IV and Rhaiskouporis and two of Rhoimetalkes III and Caligula might indicate that, during a period marked by dynastic strife and popular risings, there was a gradual fading away of these issues, which, following the cessation of the issues of Apollonia and Mesembria, led to an increasing demand for Roman aes, a demand for the satisfaction of which the presence of Roman troops in Moesia accidentally created a gradual increasing supply'.

Euxine developed their own channels of communications with the Romans, as well as varying degrees of political and/or economic dependence from the client kingdom of Thrace. This was determined by a number of factors, such as their loyalty to Rome or their proximity to Roman centres of administration, but actual inclusion within the limits of the client kingdom, as in the case of Anchialos and Apollonia, should be considered an exception.

This complex political reality can also be testified by the Thracian kingdom's monetary production and the region's coin circulation, especially of the first client king, Rhoimetalkes I. This king launched the most numerous coinage,[46] due not only to his long-lasting rule but also to local needs caused by the movements of the Roman troops and to Augustus' policy.[47] The most interesting feature of his coinage, however, was its propagandistic character, according to the best examples of the Julio-Claudians. Rhoimetalkes was the first to introduce the combination of the royal and the imperial portraits, a precedent followed by his heirs. Most importantly, the representation of his own portrait on the obverse constitutes a real revolution in the mentality and tradition of the imperial coinage and clearly shows the political ambition of the king, who wished to rank as equal, if not higher than the Roman emperor himself, at least in the eyes of his own subjects. Rome obviously allowed this deviation, not only because of these coins' local use, but also because of its desperate need to promote an alliance that aimed at controlling rebellious tribes without the involvement of the Roman army. The coinage of Rhoimetalkes I seems to have won the role of the counterpart of the Roman currency, circulating as supplementary to the Roman issues[48] and enhanced by the lack of serious minting activities of the Thracian cities during the Augustan era.[49] Significant numbers of his coins, sometimes as unique components of concealments as in the case of the Dobrudja hoard, are mostly unearthed in the eastern parts of Thrace. In the years to come, the pattern of the monetary circulation changed, first under Tiberius, when many of the Thracian cities started minting their own coinage that was enriched under the subsequent emperors. It is not surprising, therefore, that the coins

46 Paunov 2013a, 248.

47 Augustus was interested in the organization of the provinces, but he did not initially interfere with their monetary system, following the Roman republican tradition.

48 The pre-existing republican denarii and silver Thasian tetradrachms and their imitations were in circulation for many years afterwards.

49 This fact is not surprising, since most of the Greek cities of the other regions of mainland Greece seem to have been equally reluctant, except for the Roman colonies in Achaea and Macedonia. In Macedonia, only Amphipolis, Edessa, Pella, Philippoi, and Thessalonika were active, while in Moesia Inferior, Moesia Superior, and Thrace, only four major mints operated: Byzantion, Mesembria, Odessos, and Tomis (Imbros and Sestos displaying a 'special occasion' activity), which issued only small quantities of coins. In these conditions of currency shortage, it is evident that the huge amounts of republican denarii that previously circulated still kept their value, a fact proven by their presence in hoards buried many years later; see the relevant *IRRCHBulg* cases.

attributed to Rhoimetalkes II and III are not only less numerous and of less importance since they did not have a real cause to fulfil other than their propagandistic character, but also because they are scarcely represented in hoards. From this perspective, just like literary sources and epigraphic texts suggest, both the circulation and minting point to their preponderance in the eastern areas of the Thracian lands, alongside the Black Sea littoral, which were of importance for the Roman policy because they controlled the trade routes to the Black Sea.[50]

50 See Bounegru 2014.

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