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THE COINAGE OF THE CYPRUS CITY-KINGDOMS AS PRESENTED IN THE MUSEUM OF THE HISTORY OF CYPRIOT COINAGE

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The Museum of the History of Cypriot Coinage began as a small numismatic collection belonging to the Bank of Cyprus, one of the biggest private banks of the island, founded in 1899. When the Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation was set up in 1984, it inherited the coin collection with the objective to enrich it with a fully representative selection of coins from all periods of the history of Cyprus.

In 1995, the *Museum of the History of Cypriot Coinage* was inaugurated (fig. 1). The numismatic collection exhibited, covers the whole spectrum of Cypriot coinage from the 6th century BC, to the foundation of the Republic of Cyprus (1960), to the present day. The curators used the link between the history and the coins to exhibit the coinage to the visitor, in an attractive way. The coinage is exhibited in its historical context and the issuing authority becomes the numismatic testimony of the history of the island. Two thousand six hundred years of turbulent Cypriot history come alive through four hundred and twenty nine coins divided into nine chronological sections and exhibited in twenty one display cases.

On the screen of every display case, a title and a map of Cyprus with the mint marked, are incised (fig. 2). An enlarged photograph in the background is related to the historical period. These photographs help the visitor to conceive the successive historical sections at a glance. Simple historical texts accompanied with visual material and with pictures of the coins give the necessary information in order to draw the interest of the visitor. The majority of the visitors are children attending the educational programs, so the arrangement of the exhibits was conceived in such a way as to facilitate viewing by them.

At the entrance of the museum, there is an interactive "Roptron" information station with a touch screen (fig. 3). Images of all coins have been entered and different scenarios are created through hypothetical electronic tours of the museum. These scenarios include presentations of coins by chronological order, by issuing authority, by mint and by theme depicted on coins. There are also sound reproductions, moving images and explanatory texts.

Emphasis will be given to the different iconographic coin types of the Cyprus city-kingdoms' coinage. This well-developed coinage was issued within a specific period of time during the archaic and classical periods. At the end of the 6th century BC, the Cypriot kingdoms were the first in the

eastern Mediterranean to strike coins. Each Cyprus-kingdom struck its own coinage until the arrival of Alexander the Great in 332 BC. Alexander replaced the local coinage system with his own, and the issuing of local coinage became rare. The city-kingdoms were finally abolished by Ptolemy I in 310 BC and by 295 BC, Cyprus became a province of the Ptolemies of Egypt.

Each display case is dedicated to a city kingdom. In the kingdom of Salamis, situated on the east coast of Cyprus, one of the earliest mints of the island was set up, under the reign of King Evelthon (560-525 BC). A number of the first coins struck in Cyprus were found in an archaic tomb in the necropolis of Salamis. This particular tomb was decorated with mural paintings of Egyptian floral motifs (fig. 2). At that time, Cyprus was passing from the Egyptian to the Persian rule. The Cypriot kings paid tribute to the Great King of Persia but enjoyed a good measure of independence including the right to issue their own coinage. King Evelthon used oriental symbols on his coins: a lying ram or the head of a ram on the obverse (fig. 4.1). The reverse was firstly blank and later depicted an Egyptian symbol of life, the *ankh* (fig. 4.2).

The designs on coins are supplemented by inscriptions with the name and often with the title of the king. The inscriptions are in the Cypriot Syllabic script that was ill-suited to render the sounds of Greek language. Most of the names are abbreviated and many of them are known only through the inscriptions on coins. The abbreviated inscriptions and the fact that the name of the mint is almost never inscribed render the attribution of coins difficult.

The next display case is dedicated to the coinage struck, by an important political figure in the history of Cyprus, Evagoras I (411-373 BC) of Salamis, and by his successors. The kingdom of Salamis was a kingdom where the Hellenic ideals revived at a time when Cyprus was facing the danger of Persian despotism. King Evagoras issued a new type of coinage. On the obverse, a hero of the Greek mythology Hercules seated on a rock holds a horn of plenty. On the reverse there is a lying goat and the syllabic inscription is supplemented by the initial of Evagoras written with the Greek letter "E" (fig. 4.3). For the first time, the Greek alphabet appears on coins. It was progressively introduced on inscriptions during the 4th century BC. Evagoras was among the first rulers to issue gold coins in Cyprus (fig. 4.4).

The coins of his successors had both, on the obverse and reverse, Hellenic deities and by the end of 4th century BC the Greek alphabet gradually replaced the Cypriot syllabary (fig. 4.5). The Athenian influence is obvious. The coins of his son Nicocles (373-361 BC) were gold fractions with the head of Aphrodite on the obverse and the head of Athena in a Corinthian helmet on the reverse. Nicocles was succeeded by Evagoras II (361-351 BC) who retained the same type with Aphrodite now wearing a turreted

crown as protector of the city. Bronze coins appeared in his time. The next king was Pnytagoras (351-332 BC), who with other Cypriot kings helped Alexander the Great to capture Tyre. The coins of Pnytagoras and Nikocreon (331-310 BC), the last king of Salamis, retained Aphrodite on the obverse whilst Athena was to be replaced on the reverse by either Artemis or Apollo (fig. 4.5).

At the end of the 9th century BC, the ancient city of Kition, situated on the south coast, had been inhabited by the Phoenicians. During the 5th century, a strong dynasty was developed with the support of Persia. The names of the kings are known from the inscriptions in the Phoenician alphabet on the coins. The first king Baalmilk I (479-449 BC) introduced on the obverse of his coins the battling Heracles-Milquart and on the reverse a seated lion in an incuse square. His son Ozibaal (449-425 BC) changed the type of the reverse with the scene of a lion attacking a stag. This type remained the same until the end of the Kition dynasty in 312 BC. His successor, king Milkyaton (392-361 BC), introduced the first gold coins in Kition like his contemporary, the king of Salamis Evagoras I (fig. 4.6-7). The last king of the dynasty was Pumayyaton (361-312 BC). The gold coins of Pumayyaton are the only coins of that period to bear the regnal year. His bronze coins were found all over the kingdom and depict a marching lion on the obverse and a horse with the Phoenician symbol of Tanit in the field, on the reverse.

In the Greek mythology, Paphos was considered to be the birthplace of Aphrodite. The sanctuary of Aphrodite at Paphos was the main religious centre of the island. Kingship and priesthood were merged into one supreme authority and the Kinyrad kings bore the title of "King of Paphos and Priest of the temple." The coins of the 5th century BC depict an animal related to the sanctity of the kingdom, a standing bull with a winged solar disc in the field above. The head of an eagle appears on the reverse. From the middle of the 5th century, the type of the reverse changed to a flying eagle. In the left field, there is often an astragalus which referred to the consultation of oracles through the casting of dice. During the second half of the century, the eagle is shown standing with an olive branch in the right field (fig. 4.8-9). A rare coin is the silver siglos of king Timocharis dated 385 BC. On the reverse, the statue of Aphrodite-Nemesis is presented, holding a branch in the left hand and a phiale over a thymiaterion in the right. Another series of gold, silver and bronze coins of the 4th century attributed to king Timarchos have the head of Aphrodite and a dove, her sacred bird.

Amathus, situated on the southern coast, was easily accessible by sea and at the same time was near a rich countryside and mineral resources. Amathus was the city-kingdom of the indigenous population, the *Eteocypriots*, who used their own language written in the Cypriot Syllabic script, which is still undeciphered. Although Amathus followed a pro-

Persian policy during the classical period, the influence of Hellenism is obvious in art and in the names of the kings.

The standard type of coins issued in Amathus feature a recumbent lion on the obverse and the forepart of a lion on the reverse (fig. 4.10-11). On the coins of the 5th century BC, different symbols appear in the field above the lion. On the coins of the early 4th century BC, Greek names of kings are inscribed in the Cypriot syllabary like the Greek initial "E", "Pyrwos", "Zotimos", a name ending in "..timos", "Lyssandros", "Epipalos". Most of these names are known only through the inscriptions on the coins. In the field above the lying lion, an eagle is now flying. The silver coins of smaller denominations usually have no inscriptions with the exception of those bearing the syllable "Ro" on the reverse, for the name of Rhoikos.

On the North coast of Cyprus there are three city-kingdoms Marion, Soloi and Lapethos. On the top of a hill that is situated between Marion and Soloi are the remains of a palace. It was built in the 5th century BC by the pro-Persian King of Marion to house the military garrison meant to control the activities of pro-Hellenic Soloi. In the middle of the 5th century BC, when the Athenian general Kimon arrived in Cyprus, he dethroned the pro-Persian ruler of Marion replacing him with the pro-Hellenic king Stasioikos I. There was then a vigorous revival of Hellenic prototypes and the palace was transformed according to the type of Greek "megaron". The first known coins of Marion are dated in the first half of the 5th century BC and bear a syllabic inscription with the ethnic *Marieus* and the name of king Sasma. On the obverse there is a lion scratching the right foreleg and on the reverse a nude figure, probably Phrixus, clinging beside a ram. An important series of the 4th century BC, attributed to kings Stasioikos and Timocharis bears the abduction of Europa by Zeus in the shape of a bull (fig. 4.12). A series of bronze coins is associated to warfare iconography. On the obverse features either Athena wearing a Corinthian helmet or a shield or a spearhead. On the reverse, there is a head of a lion and the legend in the Greek alphabet ΜΑΠΙΕΥΣ that explicitly indicates that they were struck in Marion (fig. 4.13). They are attributed to king Stasioikos II and are dated at the end of the 4th century BC, during the war of the successors of Alexander the Great.

Although the written sources testify that Soloi was an important kingdom during the classical period, the coinage of this kingdom is not well known. A silver siglos of the early 5th century BC with the gorgoneion on the reverse is attributed to Soloi with some reserve. Gold coins of small weight with the head of Apollo laureate and the head of Aphrodite are attributed to Eunostos (330-310 BC), the last king of Soloi (fig. 4.14).

In the kingdom of Lapethos the Phoenician element coexisted with the Greek element among the population. This is proved by the inscriptions on the coins. The name of the mint, Lapethos, is inscribed on coins from the

middle of the 5th century BC. The depiction of Athena dominates in almost all types of coins from Lapethos (fig. 4.15).

A bronze tablet of the early 5th century BC from Idalion bears the longest text known in the Cypriot syllabary. It is about an agreement between the king of Idalion Stasikypros and the city on one hand, and a doctor of medicine and his brothers on the other, to tend the injured after a confrontation with the Phoenicians. This proves that Idalion had the most democratic system of all city kingdoms, since the king and the city are here equally involved. The Phoenicians conquered Idalion around the middle of the 5th century BC and incorporated it into the kingdom of Kition. The independent coinage of Idalion was then ended. The coins of Idalion basically feature a seated sphinx on one side and a lotus flower on the other (fig. 4.16).

Although during the 5th century BC the Cypriot coinage reflects the division of the island into independent city kingdoms, it is characterised by a monetary unity, based on the use of the same standard. The silver siglos, weighing approximately 11g, was the highest denomination. In the 4th century BC several mints adopted the Rhodian standard and there was a parallel introduction of gold coins in Salamis and Kition. From the middle of the 4th century BC all mints issued bronze coins. With the exception of Kition, all coins bear inscriptions in the Cypriot Syllabic script that was gradually replaced by the Greek alphabet in the 4th century BC. The hoards proved that this well developed coinage circulated in the island and the import of foreign coins was rare.

The animal kingdom and Greek mythology were the main sources of inspiration of the issuing authorities. The skill of the Cypriot engravers produced on the metal surface vivid figures and scenes that were established as standard coins types. These iconographic coin types, in their majority, testify the Greek presence and influence in the island.



Figure 1. Museum of the History of Cypriot Coinage.

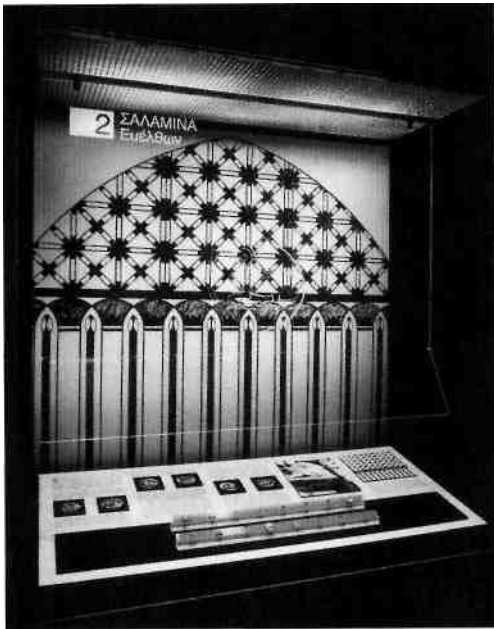


Figure 2. A display-case in the Museum.



Figure 3. "Roptron" information station.



4.1



4.2



4.3



4.4



4.5



4.6



4.7

Figure 4.

- 6 Salamis. Evelthon, ca.560-525 BC, silver siglos, 11.28g, 18mm. Obv.: Ram lying to left, syllabic inscription.
- 7 Salamis. Evelthon's successors, silver 1/6 of a siglos, ca.525-500 BC, 1.64g, 12mm. Rev.: Ankh symbol, syllabic inscription, in an incuse square.
- 8 Salamis. Evagoras I, 411-373 BC, silver siglos, 11.08g, 25mm. Rev.: Goat lying to right, syllabic inscription and the Greek letter "E", in a linear circle.
- 9 Salamis. Evagoras I, 411-373 BC, gold 1/4 of a stater, 0.72g, 9mm. Obv.: Head of Heracles facing, wearing lion's scalp, syllabic inscription.
- 10 Salamis. Nikokreon, 331-310 BC, silver didrachm, 6.08g, 18mm. Rev.: Head of Apollo laureate to left, alphabetic inscription.
- 6-7 Kition. Melikiathon, 392-361 BC, gold hemistater, 4.15g, 14mm. Obv.: Heracles advancing to right wearing lion's skin, in a dotted circle. Rev.: Lion bringing down stag, Phoenician inscription, in an incuse dotted square.

Figure 4

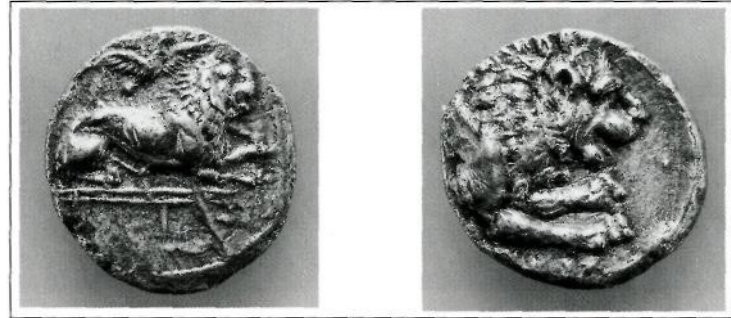
8-9. Paphos. Stassandros, 2nd half of 5th cent. BC, silver 1/3 of a siglos, 2.28g, 15mm. Obv.: Bull standing to left, winged solar disc above. Rev.: Eagle standing to left, syllabic inscription.



4.8

4.9

10-11. Amathus. Epipalos, 370-360 BC, silver didrachm, 6.19g, 20mm. Obv.: Lying lion to right and eagle above, syllabic inscription. Rev: Forepart of a lion to right.



4.10

4.11

12. Marion. Timocharis, beginning of 4th cent. BC, silver 1/6 of a siglos, 1.71g, 14mm. Rev: Europa abducted by Zeus, in the shape of a bull to right, syllabic inscription, in an incuse square.

13. Marion. Stasioikos II ca.321-312 BC, bronze, 16.8g, 24.5mm. Rev.: Head of a lion to left, alphabetic inscription.



4.12

14. Soloi. Eunostos, 330-310 BC, gold 1/10 of a siglos, 0.68g, 8mm. Obv.: Head of Aphrodite to right, syllabic inscription.



4.13

15. Lapethos. Unknown king, ca.425 BC, silver stater, 10.99g, 20mm. Obv.: Head of Athena to left, wearing Corinthian helmet.



4.14

16. Idalion. Stasiqypros, ca.460-450 BC, silver 1/3 of a siglos, 3.51g, 18mm. Obv.: Sphinx seated left, in a dotted circle.



4.15



4.16

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