A PROPOS DES MONNAIES DIVISIONNAIRES DE CROTONE

On the fractional coins of Croton

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The Crotonian stater is a tridrachm weighing approximately 8.10 g; the drachm consequently weighs approximately 2.70 g., the triobol 1.35 g., the diobol 0.90 g. and the obol 0.45 g. These last three denominations all have the tripod of Croton on the obverse, but have on the reverse types that are not normally associated with Croton.

The coinage of Croton can be divided into two groups according to the form of the tripod that appears on the obverse of these coins. In the earlier group the rings serving as handles are fixed directly to the rim of the cauldron, in the more recent group (fourth century) these rings are located on a kind of neck emerging from the cauldron.

A 1. Triobol. Rv. Pegasus, wing curved, flying r. or l.; below ♀ Fig. 1 — Oxford. 1.29 g. This is by far the most common of the divisional coins of Croton; the tripod on the obverse is always of the earlier form without the neck. Most of the weights oscillate around 1.25 g. The type is clearly copied from the coins of Corinth, and it should be emphasized that the imitation went as far as copying the *Koppa*, undoubtedly because in this case this letter could signify Croton as well as Corinth.

A 2. Diobol. Rv. Protome of Pegasus, wing curved, flying l.; below, ◯◯ This rare division (BMC 58, SNG Cop. 1794) bears the value mark of a diobol, but its weight, like that of A 1, is slightly lower (0.82 g.). Both specimens have the tripod of the earlier type.

B. Triobol. Rv. Cuttlefish. Fig. 2 — Oxford. 1.21 g. These pieces are encountered with both types of tripods. Some of the earlier tripods are flanked either on the right or on the left by a crane, a common symbol on the staters. The weights tend to be lower than those of the triobols with the Pegasus reverse.

C. Triobol. Rv. Owl standing l.; to r. or l. ♀***PO*** (these letters appear to have been deliberately rounded so as to suggest the value mark of a triobol). BM (1.24 g.) — fig. 3; Naples (Santangelo 6417 1.10 g.) — fig. 4; H. Weber 1013 (1.32 g.).

Another very rare coin which always has the type of the earliest tripod.

D. Diobol. Rv. Hare running r.; above and below ♎. This type exists with both models of tripod, although the earlier type is much less common. The latter is generally flanked by a crane (E. S. G. Robinson — fig. 5; 0.82 g.; BMC 61, Jameson 427); the coins with the later tripods always have the reverse type surrounded by a linear border. The value marks are always present; the weight of the pieces oscillates around 0.75 g, which is somewhat low for diobols.

E 1. Triobol. Rv. Crab; below, inverted and retrograde, ♀⊧O; dotted border. Naples (Santangelo 6390) — fig. 6, 1.27 g.

E 2. Obol. Rv. Crab; below, ♀⊧O De Luynes 712. Both pieces E 1 and E 2 appear to be unique; the obol has its full weight (0.45 g.). The tripod of the triobol, with serpents between the feet, appears to be of a more archaic model than those of the other fractions.

F. Uncertain denomination. Rv. Rooster walking r.; above, *VVΛ* (?). 1.41 g. Formerly H. Weber 1006, now B. M. — fig. 7. The type of this unique coin is a careful copy of that of Himera, down to the uncertain letters found in the field above the rooster; the tripod is of the earlier type. The weight is surprising, not only because it exceeds the theoretical weight of the triobol (1.35 g.), but also the weight of all other known triobols; with the exception of SNG Cambridge 781 (1.40 g.), no other appears to exceed the weight of 1.33 g. One cannot rely too much on the weight of a single specimen, but there are reasons, set out below, which suggest that the unusual weight of this coin is not due to chance.

Divisional coins normally serve three purposes: 1st to provide a means of payment for small-scale retail trade, 2nd to make change when a large coin is given for goods of small value, and 3rd to make up the balance of a large sum. In the ancient world, however, numerous coins circulated side by side, all with intrinsic value, but belonging to different standards. One can presume, consequently, that small coins fulfilled a fourth function — that of facilitating exchange between different monetary systems. It is possible that this was the role of the Crotonian fractions in question.

During the first half of the 5th century, the staters and drachms of Croton ordinarily have as reverse type an incuse tripod or else, more rarely, an incuse eagle or helmet. The divisions, on the other hand, not only have types in relief, but these types are also inspired by certain well-known coinages. The Pegasus and the ♀ are borrowed from the Corinthian staters and drachms of the first half of the 5th century, the protome of Pegasus on the diobol from the Corinthian triobol. The octopus appears on the reverse of the litra of Syracuse issued on different occasions during the 5th century; a popular coin, it seems, judging from the relatively frequent number of semi-barbarous imitations (Bochringer, pl. 29). It should be noted that the litra does not have the same weight as the Crotonian triobol. The owl recalls Athens, the hare Messana or Rhegium after 480, the crab finally Agrigentum. The rooster is faithfully copied from those issues of Himera which were interrupted when this city fell under the control of Theron of Agrigentum, shortly before 480; even the mysterious letters or figures are repeated above the rooster at Croton.

The standard adopted by Croton and the other Achaean cities of southern Italy reveals itself as a variant of the Corinthian standard; it includes the typically Corinthian subdivision of the stater into three drachms, but the stater itself weighing approximately 8.1 g., is half a gram lighter than that of Corinth. All the divisional coins of Croton however, with the exception of that with the rooster, reproduce the types of cities which used either the Corinthian standard with a stater of 8.7 g., or the Euboic-Attic standard with a standard coin of double this weight (17.4 g.). The rooster of Himera is borrowed from the coinage prior to 480, when a drachm of 5.7 g. was in use; after 480 Himera conforms to the Euboic-Attic standard.

The staters of Croton were therefore not immediately convertible into coins of the principal systems in use in Sicily, but the Crotonian subdivisions bearing foreign types could be used for this purpose. The tetradrachms of Syracuse, Agrigentum, Messana or Athens weigh approximately 17.4 g., whereas two Crotonian staters weigh only 16.2 g. But the balance could be made by adding a Crotonian triobol which practically weighed approximately 1.25 g. In effect, this weight is

somewhat light for a triobol of Croton, whose theoretical weight would be approximately 1.35 g., but it is probable that the weight is deliberately low for the purpose of facilitating exchange between coins belonging to the Euboic standards and that of the Achaean cities in Magna Graecia. Like the reverse types, this weight indicates that the primary role of these divisions was to serve for the exchange of foreign coins rather than for the needs of internal commerce of Croton. Within the territories controlled by Croton, these divisional coins were probably accepted as credit coins and for this reason sometimes bear value marks.

Thus, the relationship of the systems of Corinth and Croton is established as follows:

Corinthe		*Crotone*
6 drachms (2 staters)	=	6 drachms (2 staters) + triobol
4 drachms	=	4 drachms + diobol
2 drachms	=	2 drachms + obol

There remains the unique piece with the rooster of Himera on the reverse. It alone among these divisional coins is derived from an issue which is not based on the Corinthian or Euboic standards. This circumstance probably explains its weight of 1.41 g. Originally, Himera used a drachm of 5.7 g., but from approximately 480, it changed its standard by adopting the usual Euboic-Attic system with its principal denominations of 8.7 and 17.4 g. Croton could proceed to exchange the latter in the manner already described, but the exchange of the 5.7 g. drachm remained a difficulty. It could be resolved by adding two divisional coins with the rooster to a drachm of Himera so as to bring it to the weight of a Corinthian stater (that is $5.7 + 1.45 + 1.45$ g. $= 8.6$ g.). The probable reason for not proceeding with the operation using a single fraction with a weight of 2.9 g. was to keep the coin with the rooster at a weight close to that of a Crotonian triobol, for which it could pass in internal commerce.

Among the divisional coins, that with Pegasus is by far the most common. It follows that the merchants of Croton commonly used the Pegasi of Corinth, both at home and in Sicily.

However, at first glance, the overstrikes made by Croton seem to contradict this observation. Unlike other cities of southern Italy, Croton has so to speak never overstruck on coins of Corinth. There exists only a single example among seventeen identified overstrikes. The reason is probably chronological. At the beginning of the 5th century, several Sicilian cities (particularly Agrigentum, Gela and Selinus) issued quantities of didrachms which lent themselves to overstriking and were in fact very often overstruck in southern Italy. But during the course of the century, following the example of Syracuse, numerous were the cities which abandoned the didrachm in favor of the tetradrachm. From this moment and until the supply of didrachms was exhausted, Sicily no longer provided flans susceptible to being overstruck in southern Italy. Since then, only the coins of Corinth were commonly used for this purpose. Toward the middle of the century, Croton seems to have suffered an economic eclipse and to have issued very few coins. Thus, the absence at Croton of overstruck Corinthian coins is explained by the drying up of coinage just at the moment when the supply of flans from Sicily stopped. The divisional coins of Croton prove however, that Corinthian coinage was as familiar to the merchants of Croton during the first half of the 5th century, as it indisputably was, in light of the overstrikes, to the merchants of Metapontum and Tarentum.

(Version française par Pierre Strauss.)




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