

PRESENTATION

The international conference that Her Majesty The Queen of Spain has done us the honour of bringing to a close as part of the ceremony held at the CSIC has revolved around the theme *The Invention of Coinage. Barter, Money and Coinage in the Ancient Mediterranean*. Ms. Mercedes Elvira de Palacio, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Culture, Mr. Rafael Rodrigo, President of the Higher Council for Scientific Research (CSIC), Mr. Jean Pierre Étienne, Director of the Casa de Velázquez and Ms. M^a Paz García-Bellido, coordinator of the Conference, accompanied The Queen at the presidential table.

The closing lecture was held by Prof. Dr. John Kroll of the Universities of Texas and Oxford on «Money of the Greeks and their near Eastern neighbors before the advent of coinage and after».

This International Conference was held at Spain's Council for Scientific Research (CSIC) with the collaboration of Casa de Velázquez (France) in Madrid on 15-17 March, 2010. The coordinators were María Paz García-Bellido, Alicia Jiménez (Institute of History, CSIC) and Laurent Callegarin (Université de Pau et des Pays de l'Adour).

This was an extremely informative conference where numismatists, archaeologists and historians presented their recent work and gave an overview of coinage and trade in ancient Mediterranean from a comparative perspective, including the Near East, Greece, Italy, North Africa, Southern Gallia, Germania and Iberia. For this end a group of international specialists tackled common issues in different time frames, from the Late Bronze Age to the Roman Empire.

We have approached the transcendental steps that Humanity had to take to develop a monetary economy and the historical circumstances in which this, or rather, these, changes took place. It is a foremost topic which scholars from many different countries have been working on for years, although in a regional or territorial way. That is why we felt it was necessary for us to come together to bring and examine general approaches regarding the impact that the invention of money had on the different Mediterranean cultures.

Coinage is, together with writing, one of the greatest inventions in the history of Humankind. Writing has been essential in transmitting ideas and knowledge down through the ages, and money has played a huge role in fermenting the political and social evolution of human groups. Very few things have conditioned the economy as directly as coinage has, with its concomitant effects on the political ideologies of our universe. But during these three days in this conference we have limited ourselves to the study of only the first steps taken in the development of money, to what new things its invention brought in its wake and also to what it has left behind, since a better understanding of the history of money is essential to understand how and why the change took place. A large part of the debates that have taken place in this conference have had to do precisely with this historical background, because it is the less well known part of the process of monetization and because today it is at the forefront of research and discussion. We have confirmed that the invention of money never entailed a linear evolution from proto-monetary to monetary economies and also that it did not take place at the same rhythm in the different cultural spaces of the Mediterranean. This is one of the most important conclusions of our conference. From the invention of coinage in Lydia at the end of the 7th century BC, to the monetization of the Hispanic North-west, or of the interior of Gaul and Germania at the time of Augustus, 600 years spanning a whole chain of important historical events had to pass for monetization to become accepted in social, cultural and political economies, because the use of money, perhaps not in its origins but definitely afterwards, helped the *poleis* in their attempts to balance social equilibrium. Indeed, two hundred years after money was invented, Aristotle still philosophized about this, and he wrote that in relations of community exchange, the right to reciprocity maintains civil society, based on proportion and not on equality...it is the object that marks equitable justice and that is expressly given the word *nomisma*, which means

«what is owed», «what is proportional», «the correct measure».

The importance of the invention of money lies precisely in the change from the use of private proto-money to money emanating from the State. But the State needed a public treasury in order to be able to mint, which in turn meant that public funds were needed, which many cities did not have, and this was followed by regular taxation, and control of the issuing of coinage and many other political measures that made citizen institutions ever more complex and which of course demanded quick and precise legislation.

It was precisely this legal and political complexity that made the adoption of money a slow process in many of the Mediterranean cultures that we have studied during these three days. We have confirmed that the minting of state money induced social and political progress to a greater extent than economic progress, since in day-to-day transactions private proto-monetary objects still played a major role. Indeed, many of the important peoples that we have studied never came to mint coinage in Antiquity.

Philological study has led us to the same conclusions: the vocabulary relating to money-coinage, buying-selling and loan-interest shows that in Greek there was no lexical break when money objects were introduced. Neither were there differences in the ways of guarding wealth, at least in the Archaic age. It was the sanctuaries, as part of the *poleis*, that lent money to private parties at high interest rates, and that in turn received for their benefit the money from offerings. These sanctuaries are the oldest banking entities that we know of.

Another significant part of our discussion has focused on the major role the Greeks played in the dissemination of coinage through their closely woven network of colonies in the Mediterranean and their contacts in Etruria. We have seen this, particularly, in the example of many *poleis* in Sicily and Magna Grecia, in Massalia, Emporion and Rhode, and others. The study of how the monetization of these Greek colonies affected the human groups of the Hinterland seems to show that the use of money did not penetrate non-Greek populations readily.

This same situation was found in the populations furthest afield, the ones that did not border the Mediterranean circle, as was the case of Germania, the western part of Hispania and even Numidia, whose

different currencies in jewellery or other objects of bronze, gold or silver were not replaced by the knowledge of coinage. We know that in these provinces monetization did not occur until they became the scenarios for international wars of vast scope and whose main contenders were large powers that did have coinage. In particular for the West we must mention Carthage and Rome, two great powers whose internal wars obliged Hispania, Italia, Numidia and Germania to become monetized.

We have also dealt with new techniques, such as lead isotope analysis, which can specify the origins of the different argentiferous regions that were exploited for minting coins. This is a new path that is currently yielding advantageous results, such as indicating the presence of Hispanic silver in the Middle East, in Palestinian and Israeli territory, which attests to the trade that the literary and archaeological sources had been pointing to for years but which we can now specify with the availability of more data. We have addressed all these analyses in this Conference and they are providing us with information as to the origin of the silver used in the different mints, and the regional and international trade routes between these cities.

These three days of contact have opened up new paths for all of us. New, heretofore unpublished archaeological records; approaches discordant with respect to what we have been repeating over the years, now discordant also among ourselves; more nuanced interpretations of philological issues. All these issues provide us with an important wealth of knowledge but at the same time pose new questions, premises that will direct our future lines of research.

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