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LEUNCLAVIUS' NOTES ON EUROPEAN AND ORIENTAL COINS

Johannes Leunclavius (Löwenklau or Lewenklaw), a Westphalian who lived from 1533 to 1593, is best known as a translator of the later Greek and Byzantine historians and writers on jurisprudence. His *Pandecte Historiae Turcicae*, however, from which the following chapters are taken, was a work of another sort, an appendix to his translation into Latin of the *Annales Sultanorum Othmanidorum*. This Turkish chronicle had been brought back from Constantinople in 1551 by Jerome Beck, the ambassador of Ferdinand I, and had previously been translated into German, for a more restricted circle of readers, by Johan Spiegel.

The *Pandecte*, or 'Compendium' as it might be called, consists of notes on a number of subjects connected with Turkish history and affairs, and was intended to serve to some extent as a glossary to the *Annales*, and to the *Historiae de Origine ac Rebus Gestis Turcorum* of Laonicus Chalcondyles, to which they formed a sequel. But Leunclavius, who had returned from a visit to Constantinople in 1585, also included information on a number of other

topics, with the aim of producing a work which might be useful to students of Turkish and Byzantine affairs, based on his own observations and on the studies of earlier writers: in this passage, he mentions the *Commentari dell' Origine de' Principi Turchi* of Theodore Spandugino, the *Speculum Historicum* of Vincent of Beauvais and the notes on it by Reinhard Reyneke, and the works of Peter Belon.

Leunclavius' notes are of interest not only because of the names of coins which they preserve (left in their Latin forms in the translation which follows), but also because they provide evidence for a continued decline in the value of Turkish silver coinage in relation to the silver of Western Europe. This has already been well documented for the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century, and was caused by a gradual decrease in the quality of the coins issued by the Ottoman minting authorities.¹

A small part of what is translated here was quoted by F.W. Hasluck in his study of Levantine coins fifty years ago, but the passages as a whole have never been studied. The present translation is therefore offered in order to put them on record, and make them available to numismatists or economic historians who may find them useful.²

«1. *Pandecte Historiae Turcicae*, chapter 18: De Variis Monetis.

On various coins, explaining *Manguri*, *Aspri*, *Siderocapsia*, *Hyperpera*, *Hyperpyrarii*, *Dramae*, *Scachi*, *Sultanini*, *Seraphini*, *Byzantii*, *Chrysini*, *Altumler*. The system of Egyptian and Syrian coinage.

We must here deal with various kinds of Greek, Turkish and Egyptian coins, to make our remarks available to the reader in one place. Firstly, to give some idea of the value of the different ones used by the Turks, it should be noted that forty or fifty years ago, when Theodore Spandugino wrote his *Turkish History*, eight bronze *manguri* were worth one silver *aspros*, four *aspri* made one *drama*, and nine *dramae* equalled the value of a German thaler, which was worth thirty-six *aspri*; while the gold *Sultaninus* was valued at 54 *aspri*, being equal both in weight and in fineness of gold to the Venetian zecchino or ducat, that is, to one and a half German thalers.

1. See T. Bertelè, "L'iperpero bizantino dal 1261 al 1453" in *Rivista italiana di numismatica* 1957, 70-89 and "Appunto sulle monete del *Rechenbuch* edito da Hunger-Vogel" in *Byz. Zeitschr.* 1963, 321-27.

2. F.W. Hasluck, "Levantine Coins" in *The Numismatic Chronicle* 1921, 39-91. I am grateful to Mr. Philip Grierson for drawing my attention to this article.

Afterwards the value of a thaler remained stable for a long time at forty *aspri*, and of Sultanini or ducats at sixty *aspri*. But when we were in Constantinople,³ their value had risen so much, because of the burdens of the Persian War to some extent, and for other reasons which need not be gone into here, that twenty-four *manguri* were being changed for one *aspros*, five *aspri* made one *drama*, twelve *dramae* one German thaler, and one and a half thalers one Venetian *zecchino*, that is, ninety *aspri*; and the value of a Sultaninus was slightly less. In this way the *drama*, standing at five *aspri*, was worth six of our *cruciati* or Venetian *quarantini*; ten *dramae* or fifty *aspri* made a German *florenus*; sixty *aspri* or twelve *dramae*, one of our thalers. And these values were later increased so much, that I understand that one thaler was later valued at eighty *aspri*.

After explaining the value of each, let us now add some facts about the coins themselves which will, I hope, be of interest to the reader. Firstly, bronze *manguri* followed in the place of the small coins which the ancients called *asses*. Next in order to these there were struck the silver coins which the Greeks called *aspri* and the Turks *acse*. Reyneke in his appendix to Vincent of Beauvais incorrectly writes 'asper'. In the same place he mentions a sum of fifty *iperpira*, and adds that this is a form of Tauric money. I feel that both of these should be considered as Greek coins. The Greek *aspri* and the Turkish *acse* were so called from their whiteness, as the Italians have their *bianchi* and the French *les blancs*, which certainly and without any doubt are kinds of money; just as the Greek for 'black' is 'mauros', from which our countrymen and the Italians call the Ethiopians 'Moors', so the colour white is called by the same people 'aspros'. And that this is not a very recent usage appears from the ancient glossary which explains the word 'aspratura' by the Greek *kollybos*, that is, a small coin.⁴ *Aspri* or *bianchi* are in fact the most common coins of this kind, with which money-changers used to give change for larger denominations in silver or gold. When I say 'aspri', I make the word agree with the Latin 'numuli', which is understood. The Greeks also say 'aspra'.

There are two kinds of these, the larger and the smaller. The smaller one is in general circulation, and the larger have a special name, 'siderocapsia'. Siderocapsa is the name of a town situated in the region of Thasos, near the Holy Mount mentioned earlier.⁵ In this there are mines of silver and gold

3. Leunclavius was in Constantinople about 1585.

4. This is not in fact correct; both these terms refer to the fee paid to a money-changer for his services.

5. For the mint of Siderocapsa, see G.C. Miles, *The Athenian Agora IX. The Islamic Coins* (Princeton, 1962), p. 9.

(for which reason Bellonius thinks it to be the Chrysites of Livy), and *aspra* are coined, larger than the rest, which up to the present time retain the name of 'siderocapsia' from the town. The Sultan of the Turks accepts these only, and puts them into his treasury, and pays out the same coins as wages for his soldiers and ministers. He does not accept the smaller ones in payment of debts due to him.

Concerning *iperpira*, the incorrect spelling should first be noted: 'hyperpera', not 'iperpera' should be written. Pulologus has the form 'hyperperon'. Manuel Musicius the Athenian, when I asked him what he thought to be the value of a hyperperon, answered that it was approximately equal in value to a Venetian silver *marcellus*. Some think that it may be considered equal to the Italian *Julius*. For my part, reckoning up the value accurately, I find that a *hyperperon* is worth nine *cruciati* or *quarantini*.

The inhabitants of the kingdom of Cyprus, before they passed beneath the yoke of the barbarians, were distributed among five classes. Omitting the rest, I shall explain the names of those relevant to our present study. The lowest class were called the Pariki, men of slave class, and so completely in the power of their masters that these had almost the power of life or death over them. The name Pariki comes from the Greek *paroikoi*, just as Justinian Augustus' *paroikikon nomimon* is a *ius colonarium*. The next after these are called in common speech *Lefteri*, and were originally part of the Pariki or Coloni; but through money, or the favour of their masters, or in some other way, they won their freedom, under differing conditions: some were set completely free, but others, although they had freedom of person, were still bound to their masters in respect of their property, and would pay each year, for example, fifteen or sixteen 'perpyra' (this being the corrupt term in use) or a greater or lesser sum to the princes or nobles. Because the money was reckoned in *perpyra* they were called 'Perpyriarii'. The reader will, I am sure, identify these corrupt terms, which should be 'hyperpera', and 'Eleutheri' for the freed men, and 'Hyperpyriarii', who paid *hyperpera* each year.

If, finally, anyone should wish to know the value of a *hyperperon*, let him consider these words of Vincent of Beauvais (Book XXX, chapter 143):

The territory of the Sultan was worth

400,000 *iperpera* to him every day,

that is, 57,000 silver *marcae*.

First, however, a clerical error must be corrected, and we should write 5,700 instead of 57,000. And even so, this sum for a daily revenue seems so large that it can hardly inspire confidence.

But we must pass to other things. What we called the *drama*, the reader should take as the name of a weight among the Turks, a mutilated form of the Greek 'drachma'. We have already expounded the calculation of its weight in *aspri*. But we feel ourselves bound not to discuss now whether the Turkish weight corresponds to the Greek one, in case we weary the reader by too much digression.

Scachi are extremely frequent in Turkey at this time, a coinage of the Persian 'Scach' or king, a bitter enemy of the Turks, and taking their name from him. Each of them is worth eight Turkish *aspri*. *Sultanini*, formerly called *Soldani*, are of gold. Thus we read in Vincent of Beauvais, in the place already mentioned, that the produce of a silver mine at Lebena, not far from Sebastia, was three *rotæ* of purified silver, that is, three thousand *Soldani*. Of the same weight and value as the *Soldani* were the coins which in the time of the Greek emperors were called *Byzantii* or *Byzantini*; they differed, however, in the types represented on them. The same applies to the *Seraphini*, which Melech-seraph was the first sultan of Egypt to strike, and from whom they took their name. The Greeks use the term *chrysini* from 'chrysos', as we use *aurei* from 'aurum'. The Turks imitated this, and call their ducats (a term which, I imagine came from the Venetian dukes) or *Sultanini* by the name of *Altumler*, from 'altum'. The term *chrysini* is to be observed on a number of ancient Greek and Asian monuments, which our readers will find dealt with elsewhere.

In the case of Egyptian, Arabian and Syrian coins, their system has also changed now, as may be seen from the records of Hieronymus Beck of Leopoldsdorf, who noted the value of each of them as they were in the year 1551, when he was travelling in those countries. The *zibit*, very small coins of bronze, are tokens rather than money. Two of them make a *direm*, which is also a bronze coin. Two *direm* make a *nuccarus*, a larger bronze coin with Arabic letters. Four *nuccari* make the larger silver coin which they call a *maidinus* or *catta*. The *maidinus* or *catta* is worth an *osmannus* and a half, and is valued at four Venetian *marchetti*, or eight *bezzii*, or black German coins, of which three make a *cruciatu*s. *Scachi* are large silver coins, each of which is worth four *maidini*, and ten make a Turkish aureus. The altum, or Turkish aureus, was at this time worth forty *maidini*, or sixty *aspri*. The value of *aurum coronatum* was thirty-four *maidini*. From these figures the reader may gather how much their values have risen now.

Incidentally, in these explanatory notes on coins, it may be added that the sultans of the Turks on anniversaries of their accession, as Spandugino records, or to celebrate notable victories or the birth of male heirs (many ex-

amples of which will be found in these *Annals* of ours) are accustomed to strike new *aspri*. When this has been done, they prohibit the use of the old ones by public decree. Therefore the old ones are brought in by everyone to the officials in charge of the mint, who pay out ten new ones for every twelve old ones, this being a source of considerable profit to the sultans. Inspectors are also appointed to watch for anyone who keeps the old *aspri*. These engage in many fraudulent offences and activities. For the sake of this profit, Muchemet II, who captured Constantinople, struck new *aspri* every ten years. Perhaps, however, he may be considered to have done this in imitation of the ancient Romans, whose coinage so often celebrates vows on the occasion of decennalia, vicennalia or tricennalia; for there is no doubt that Muchemet II was eager to imitate many things in the earlier Augusti who had preceded him, and thought of himself as the actual successor to their throne.

2. *Pandecte Historiae Turcicae*, chapter 55: Causa Prohibitae Veteris Monetae apud Turcos.

It is not difficult to explain the reason (or rather pretext) which was found by their Mullahs, extremely devout and strict observers of the law of Mahomet, to reject the use of earlier coins. The law of Mahomet, as is well known, forbade statues, portraits and carved and painted images, as being prohibited by divine ordinance, and it is known with what zeal the Mahommedans mutilate, break and destroy Christian images in churches. Therefore, when they saw the images of Greek and Roman emperors represented on *nummi* and *aspri*, they complained that the law of the prophet was being violated, and set about abolishing the ancient coinage. For a while, however, wicked impostors profited under the cloak of religion, as the Turks themselves admit quite openly. Today, this religious prejudice does not affect the Turks any longer, or make them reject coins with the stamp of Christian rulers upon them. On the contrary, they greatly prefer Venetian *nummi* or ducats, on which are stamped the images forbidden by the law of Mahomet, to their own *Sultanini*, which do not break the law in any way, since they are marked only with Arabic letters. They are also so far from being hostile to German thalers, particularly those on which there are represented the face of the Emperor himself, or of the Archduke Ferdinand, or the rulers of Saxony, that they most eagerly seek them out, although they are forbidden to them, recognising them by the portraits; and they have no hesitation in lowering their regular prices by a quarter or a third, once they understand that they are to receive these in return

for their goods. Nor do they test the weight of them, as they usually do in the case of coins of their own sultans, and others to which they are accustomed.»

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