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COINS OF PUNIC SICILY *

Part 3 **

CARTHAGE SERIES 2-4

Abbreviations

ANSCV	American Numismatic Society, Centennial Volume (New York 1958)
Bisi Stele	Bisi, A. M., <i>Le Stele Puniche</i> (Studi Semitici 27, Rome 1967)
Cintas Manuel	Cintas, P., <i>Manuel d'Archéologie Punique I</i> (Paris 1970)
CIS	Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum (Paris 1881-)
Crawford RRC	Crawford, M., <i>Roman Republican Coinage</i> (Cambridge 1974)
El Hofra	Berthier, A. and Charlier, R., <i>Le Sanctuaire Punique d'El Hofra à Constantine</i> (Paris 1955)
Gsell	Gsell, S., <i>Histoire Ancienne de l'Afrique du Nord</i> (Paris 1913-1928)
Harden	Harden, D., <i>The Phoenicians</i> (London 1971)
Hours-Miedan	Hours-Miedan, M., <i>Les Représentations figurées sur les stèles de Carthage, Cahiers de Byrsa I</i> , 1951
Kraay ACGC	Kraay, C. M., <i>Archaic and Classical Greek Coins</i> (London 1977)
Moscatti	Moscatti, S., <i>The World of the Phoenicians</i> (London 1973)

Introduction

The present article continues the treatment of the Carthaginian silver coinage, of which series I (horse/palm-tree) belonging to the years 410-390 B.C. was covered in the previous instalment (SNR 1974, 23 ff.). Here will be dealt with three further series: series 2 (head of goddess/horse with palm-tree, plates 1-9), series 3 (head of goddess/horse head with palm-tree, plates 9-21) and finally series 4 (head in Phrygian cap/lion and palm-tree, plate 22). Series 4, as discussed below, represents a parallel issue with part of series 3 and not a continuation of it. The final series 5 (Melqart head/horse head and palm-tree, here Fig. 1) will be covered in a subsequent article.

Series 1 terminated about 390 B.C., as was established in SNR 1974, 23 ff. A considerable interval must have followed before minting was resumed. It will be shown from hoard evidence that the coinage of series 2 can hardly have begun before about 350/340 – and thus more or less at the same time with the beginning of the regular gold series from the mint of Carthage itself. The size of the issues of series 2 and 3, which together form the bulk of the present article, while considerable is not extraordinary; and it may well be that the total resources of the Carthaginian state in

* Publication started in SNR 50, 1971, 25 ff. (part 1) and continued in SNR 53, 1974, 23 ff. (part 2). The present instalment (part 3) will be followed by the final article (part 4).

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Sicily were further augmented by the coinage of the city mint of Rsmlqrt (SNR 1971, 53 ff.) which also began to operate at about the same time. In addition, the mint of Panormos – SYS (SNR 1971, 38 ff.) – was active continuously from the late fifth to the late fourth century.

The period in question, 350/340 B.C., was that of the great Greek revival in Sicily under Timoleon who refounded Syracuse in 344. On the other side, Carthage was quick to see the challenge and mounted several great armadas in Sicily, remaining at open war with Syracuse until the battle of the Krimissos in 339. Perhaps even more significantly it was at this same period that Carthage concluded the second treaty with Rome (348 B.C.) in which her policy of «mare clausum» in the western Mediterranean appears to have been reasserted and strengthened – a sign that Carthage was in any case mobilising herself to a more active policy concerning her whole strategic position ¹.

After 339 conditions in Sicily returned to the status quo, with the Carthaginian frontier at the Halykos (mod. Plátani). There is no further sign of open conflict until the time of Agathokles at Syracuse (317–289) when once again Carthage was embroiled with the Greeks in a varied and dramatic series of hostilities including Agathokles' invasion of Africa, until once again peace was restored in 306.

From the beginning of series 2 of the Carthaginian coinage, minting continued without a break into series 3 which is marked by the appearance of the legend 'MMHNT (people of the camp), a variant of MHNT' which was common in series 1; this comes in around the time of the rise of Agathokles at Syracuse (317) and this series, though not always the full legend, continued until towards the end of the century, at least until the peace of 306. Coin hoards buried at the end of the fourth



Fig. 1

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

¹ Diodoros XVI. 66 ff. – For the treaty cf. Moscati 163 f.

century represent the coinage of Carthage as far as the end of series 3 along with the «quadriga» tetradrachms of Agathokles (Fig. 2). The subsequent phase both of Carthage and Syracuse is to be found only in later hoards containing together the Agathokles Kore/Nike and trophy coins (Fig. 3) and those of Carthage series 5 (Fig. 1).

Types

The basic type of the horse or horse's head with palm tree was discussed for series 1 (SNR 1974, 27) as symbol of Ba'al Hammon; this does not exclude the horse as symbol of Tanit as recently emphasised by C. Picard (Karthago XVII 1976, 104). The obverse of series 2 and 3 consists of the head of a goddess. She has often been identified as Tanit, the chief female deity of the Carthaginian pantheon²; for instance, Harden calls her «Tanit in the guise of the Sicilian Persephone»³. This may be so, though others prefer to regard her simply as Kore-Persephone⁴. Tanit «Pene Ba'al» (= the face of Ba'al) was the consort of Baal Hammon and by her title might be thought to have been inferior to him. That she was in fact the more important of the pair is clear from the religious dedications from Carthage itself and from numerous other sites, in which she is named first, before Ba'al (the opposite being exceptional, as at El-Hofra near Constantine)⁵. Were the head on the coins to be regarded as Tanit, it would seem at first sight to offer a convenient expression of the same concept, the supreme goddess accompanied on the reverse by the symbols of Ba'al Hammon, the horse and palm.

In fact the matter is far from simple. A preliminary caution seems imposed by our comparative ignorance of how Tanit could be expected to be shown, at this period, in terms of any Punic iconography; here there is a considerable dearth of evidence, allowing for the fact that the sign so commonly represented on the numerous stelai is generally regarded as a symbol of Tanit, whether in its more geometrical form or a more humanised form. In any case that sign has been much discussed and good authorities have expressed great reserve as to its precise origin and significance. Anyhow the so-called «sign of Tanit» hardly helps to envisage any possible iconography in terms of figured art. What is clear however is that in Greek terms we have little option but to think of the goddess whose head is shown on the coins as being any other than Kore-Persephone, as Acquaro has recently argued⁶. At least in series 2 there are a number of issues, including the first ones of the series, where particular

² However Cintas, Manuel 313 questions whether Tanit and Ba'al Hammon were necessarily the chief deities of Carthage: cf. J. G. Février, *Cahiers de Byrsa* VI 1956, 13 ff., for the view that the supreme deity was Ba'alsamin as the equivalent of Zeus in the «oath of Hannibal».

³ Harden 158.

⁴ Müller; recently Acquaro, note 6 below.

⁵ El-Hofra, *passim*, esp. p. 183.

⁶ E. Acquaro, *Sulla lettura di un tipo monetale punico*, *RIN* 1971, 25 ff.