

Types

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a new inscription at Carthage, dating probably to the early second century B.C.⁸; this inscription records the opening of a new street in the city, mentions the collaboration of diverse classes of the people, and imposes fines for damage to the inscription which would be payable to «our MHSBM». The latter are clearly officials charged with the public finances, on the general analogy of Roman quaestors, as Dupont-Sommer remarks. It is known from Livy that there were at Carthage magistrates to whom he refers precisely as «quaestors» and whose importance in the state was such that they had the right of automatic entry on expiry of office to the all-powerful *ordo iudicum*⁹. Were the MHSBM of our coins these same «quaestors» or were they some purely local officials?

It is of course known that most of the Phoenician cities in the west had similar constitutional features and that for instance there were suffetes (shofetim) not only at Carthage but at Gades and elsewhere, including many smaller towns in Africa; there is also mention of a «quaestor» at Gades¹⁰. Likely enough the Punic cities in Sicily had similar institutions. However there is no indication from the coins that the MHSBM we are concerned with were any kind of local magistrates, and it seems unavoidable to reflect that the coins are those of the Carthaginian state and not of any local city. Should it not therefore follow that the MHSBM on the coins are indeed the «quaestors» of the Carthaginian state? No doubt it fell within their scope to provide pay for the army, *inter alia*, but there seems little indication that they were merely «army paymasters» and they must surely have had wider responsibilities as civil magistrates also. If it were otherwise, there seems little point in the distinction of the two kinds of legend on the coins.

While a coinage in the name of the «people of the army» still went on (series 5 a), it is perhaps relevant to observe that it was at precisely this time, c. 300 B.C., that the civic coinages of ŞYŞ and RSMLQRT had apparently come to an end. At the same date we have the appearance of the Carthaginian coins signed MHSBM. We can only speculate whether these events were at all connected – as if the «quaestors» of the Carthaginian state were in a general financial sense somehow filling the place left by civic authorities which had ceased to emit coins? If so, it may be a sign of some closer and more direct control of the Sicilian territory by the Carthaginian state.

Types

There is little need to discuss again here the type of the horse's head the main and most consistent type of the present and preceding series (ser. 3). In part 2 it was mentioned that, following Ferron and others, the horse's head is to be regarded as an

⁸ Dupont-Sommer, CRAI 1968, 116–132; the date of the inscription is suggested in a final note by Carcopino.

⁹ Gsell II, 201, 275.

¹⁰ Gsell II, 193 ff.

emblem connected with Ba'al Hammon¹¹; in part 3 reference was made to a more recent discussion by C. Picard where it was argued that the possible connection with Ba'al Hammon does not of course exclude the connection with Tanit-Juno as indicated by Vergil¹². So far as concerns series 5, we now find the horse head coupled with the head of Melqart, with whom it has no direct connection. This underlines the fact that we must evidently regard the horse head as it appears on the coins as an element of symbolism which is used independently and by no means as intimately linked with the corresponding obverse type, such as the Kore of series 2–3. The horse is not a representation often found on Punic stelai, though there are a few examples from El Hofra; the commentary on those stresses the solar nature of the horse¹³, also mentioning its relevance to Hadad (Ares).

As regards the head of Melqart-Herakles which dominates series 5, there is at least no problem. It is well known that Melqart, the chief god of Tyre, was assimilated by the Greeks to Herakles, and there are plenty of subsequent examples of a purely Greek Herakles serving as equivalent for Melqart. The present coin series must be the first example of this. It seems doubtful however whether we can see any specific historical or cult reasons for the adoption of the Herakles type – from the coinage of Alexander, as mentioned above. It seems unlikely that historical developments at Carthage at the end of the fourth century which could help us to account for the Melqart type; there appears to have been some political change after the defeat of Bomilcar's attempt at tyranny (308 B.C.), which resulted in the supersession of the kingship and brought in the heyday of oligarchic power which made Carthage «a sort of Venice of the ancients, an aristocratic republic»¹⁴. But it seems difficult to use this as any kind of explanation for the production of coins with the new type in Sicily, especially as at Carthage itself the coinage continued to make use of the Kore type as before.

The cult of Melqart had always been followed at Carthage as at other Phoenician cities in the west, notably Gades¹⁵. Although the bulk of our evidence on the cults of Carthage is that derived from the tophet stelai mainly concerned with Tanit and Ba'al Hammon, this may give a one-sided view when considering the importance of other cults, among which that of Melqart certainly held an important place. The temple of Melqart is mentioned in one inscription¹⁶, and personal names which are compounds of Melqart are very frequent at Carthage (Abdmelqart, servant of Melqart – whence Hamilcar; Bodmelqart, in the hand of Melqart, whence Bomilcar)¹⁷. Each year the Carthaginians sent offerings to the temple of Melqart at Tyre; a special

¹¹ SNR 1974, 27.

¹² Karthago, XVII, 1976, 104.

¹³ El Hofra 197 ff.

¹⁴ Picard 1968, 125.

¹⁵ Gsell IV, 301 ff.

¹⁶ CIS 264.

¹⁷ Halff, Karthago XII, 1963–1964, 130 ('bdmlqrt); do., 95 (bdmlqrt).

offering was sent in 310 after Agathokles' landing in Africa as in the panic of the moment the Carthaginians feared they had neglected the cult¹⁸. It seems likely, as Picard thinks, that the Melqart cult attained a special importance at a later period and especially under the Barcids in Spain. However none of this suggests any special reason why the Herakles-Melqart head should suddenly appear on Punic coins minted in Sicily around 300 B.C.

Since in fact it is beyond question that the type of the coins was adapted from the coinage of Alexander (and not from any other Greek prototype) the explanation is probably quite a simple and practical one. Earlier Carthaginian coins (series 2–3) were largely modelled on the prototypes provided by the coins of Syracuse, the great western power. Before the end of the fourth century, the impact of Alexander's conquests had changed the world and his coinage quickly came to dominate Greece and the near-east. Carthage remained in close touch with her metropolis Tyre – where a Carthaginian embassy was present at the time of Alexander's siege¹⁹ – and must have been fully cognisant of the new developments. Possibly too the fall of Tyre gave the Carthaginians some impulse towards regarding themselves as now in a sense filling the vacant place as leader of the Phoenician nation. At all events they seem at this period to have had a wider vision of themselves as a Mediterranean «great power» dominating the west, complemented in the early third century by an alliance with Ptolemy in the east²⁰. In the circumstances, what could be more logical for Carthage than to use for their own coinage the new model of «great power» coinage, that of Alexander himself?

The new prototype coins were not hard to seek in any case, as a number of Sicilian hoards of the period contain specimens, showing that the Alexander coins were reaching Sicily as well as other regions of the mediterranean. In view of Carthage's wide commercial connections, not least with Phoenicia, where several mints had been pouring out Alexander tetradrachms for some time, it is not a little tempting to think that Carthaginian trade may have done much to bring such coins to the west. Sicilian hoards of our period containing some Alexanders are:

- IGCH 2151 Pachino 1957 (3 Amphipolis; 3 Babylon, two of which are after 317 B.C.; Myriandros; Arados)
- IGCH 2154 Cefalú (Amphipolis c. 318)
- IGCH 2180 Megara Hyblaia 1966 (Babylon; Lycia-Pamphylia)
- IGCH 2183 Capo Soprano (Myriandros)
- IGCH 2191 Syracuse 1927 (Amphipolis; Tarsos)

Other hoards containing Alexander tetradrachms, of which we do not have details, are:

- IGCH 2159 Buccheri 2160 Aidone 2186 Pachino 1921

¹⁸ Diod. Sic. XX. 14.

¹⁹ Picard 1968, 167.

²⁰ Picard 171 ff.

In addition to these, a new hoard has been reported («Sicily 1976/77»), which contained a number of Carthage series 3 and 5, Agathokles quadriga tetradrachms, Athens IV c tetradrachms, but most of all a large number («300 +») of Alexander tetradrachms, among which the Alexandria «rose» issue (Demanhur 4610) was said to be very prominent, though there is reason to believe that numerous other varieties of Alexander coins were probably included also. This new hoard of which few details are yet known is of special interest simply on account of its profusion of Alexander coins, never before met with in a Sicilian hoard. Another new hoard («S. E. Sicily» 1977) also contained many Alexanders of a variety of mints, and at least one Alexander came in a very recent hoard («S. Sicily 1978»). From the information we have so far, then, it is clear that there was an abundance of possible prototypes from numerous Alexander mints for the engravers of Carthage series 5 to draw on.

Commentary

Series 5 a (Plates 1–6)

Nos. 273–275

It is not easy to find any plausible position for this short sequence and it is here given at the beginning of series 5 a largely for convenience. The die-linkages are as follows:

O 86 O 87 O 87
R 227 — R 227 R 228

The Herakles head of O 86–87 are not particularly close to any others of series 5 a although it would be clear from the style alone that it is to this series that they must belong. The peculiar rendering of the horse's mane on R 227 with a parting is a feature that recalls the horse head of 176, 178 in series 3, though without any close stylistic resemblance apart from that. The sudden contrast with the «curvaceous» horse of R 228 is very striking. The latter, anticipated in series 3 (R. 187) is the typical rendering in series 5 a. The general shape of the horse head, also the palm tree with raised branches, recall perhaps those of 224 (series 3).