

Dal basileus Agathocle a Roma : le monetazioni siciliane d'età ellenistica [Benedetto Carroccio]

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Benedetto Carroccio

Dal basileus Agathocle a Roma: Le monetazioni siciliane d'età ellenistica

Messina, 2004. pp. 291, 36 pls. ISBN 88-8268-013-X € 70.

Carroccio (C.) has undertaken a most ambitious task and often with considerable success. But, as will become apparent, it is marred by serious errors of judgement. From Agathocles to the fifth Syracusan Democracy he could build on sound foundations laid by other scholars and on his own distinguished research. But at times he is curiously tentative. Why for instance does he separate in date the wide flan Poseidon/Trident bronzes from the laureate Hieron/Horseman series?¹ The Polizzi Generosa hoard (see below) and the Morgantina site-finds (p. 114) surely show that they ran together from *c.*241 to *c.*225, as I have argued.² But C. dates them 263-218 and 241-230 or 230-218 respectively.

C. presents a vast variety of numismatic material, much of it in a series of Tables (*prospetti*) – covering points of style, typology, metrology, allusions, iconography. It is just a pity that his Index is not more help in hunting down particular points discussed. Too often he gives only a list of page references without further guidance. His book is handsomely and fully illustrated with 36 plates for all the coinages covered and usually with fine reproductions, even of the bronze. His *catalogo* (pp. 43-94) gives dates (approximate or more precise) for all the issues, although – apart from the coinage of Eunios at Enna in 138-134 – he dates no issue after 179 BC. This is strange since his study comes down to the First Slave War (pp. 25 and 120).

C. pays much attention to marks of value and other indications of denominations. The first seem limited to the period 215-185 (*Prospetto I*, pp. 150-153). But the Hispanorum coinage, *pace* Caltabiano, on whom C. relies,³ was struck not in this time bracket, but *c.*150-100 BC.⁴ More seriously, *prospetto I* is based on the theory – derived from Marchetti and Caltabiano – that from 215 Rhegion, the Mamertini and many Sicilian mints struck on the Roman standard – sextantal from 215, uncial from 211 and semiuncial from 204. Crawford rightly would have none of this.⁵ C. cites the Minturno hoard in support of his theory, but Crawford, dating that *c.*200 rather than 191, has argued that its semiuncial pieces are characteristic of the first phase of the denarius system: the Sicilian mints struck many pieces well under the sextantal standard.⁶ All our evidence shows that the uncial standard was reached *c.*150 after a long steady decline, and the semiuncial by law in 90/89.⁷

¹ *Catalogo* p. 84, no. 60 f.

² SNR 79, 2000, p. 43.

³ Sulla cronologia e la metrologia delle serie *Hispanorum*, NACQT 14, 1985, pp. 159-169.

⁴ K. ERIM, *Morgantina Studies II*, 1989, pp. 39, 64-66.

⁵ *Coinage and Money under the Roman Republic* (1985), p. 110, no. 15.

⁶ RRC p. 15.

⁷ RRC pp. 612-615.

On pp. 115-120 C. discusses the value of hoards for establishing chronology and makes sound points about treating them with care. But I find his handling of hoards disconcerting. Here are some of the chief examples.

1 *Megara Hyblaia*

C. dates its contents before c.200, following Caltabiano's attribution of its duoviral Enna coin to 216-214 BC.⁸ Now a Roman *municipium* in Sicily in the Hannibalic War is hard to accept. Moreover, the hoard was found in a destruction layer, apparently from the end of the city.⁹

2 *Cava dei Tyrrheni*

C. puts it in the First Punic War (p. 120). But three libral prow pieces and one semi-libral impose the dating c.217 BC.

3 *Polizzi Generosa*

Tusa dated it c.258-250 and Crawford essentially agreed.¹⁰ C. (p. 120) accepted Carbè's dating of some of its Tauromenion pieces to the Hannibalic War and argued that, since much of the hoard was lost, its value for dating was lost too. In SNR 79, 2000, p. 43, I showed cause for dating the hoard in the 230s.

4 *Bisanquino*

C. would date it c.150 (pp. 120 and 250), but he missed Crawford's judgement that the worn *asses* required a late second/early first century date.¹¹

5 *Biancavilla*

C. challenges its right to be considered a hoard (p. 117), but Crawford showed it to be a fairly normal hoard of c.150 (last *as* is C. Maiani, RRC 203).¹²

6 *Campobello di Licata*

C. wants it c.150 BC (pp. 120 and 157, n. 73). The *asses* must come much later. The sestertius of L. Naevius Surdinus brings the hoard down to c.15 BC.¹³

One of the great virtues of C.'s book and his *Catalogo* should be to throw light on the dating and arrangement of the great volume of bronze coinage from 212 BC to the late second century. Unfortunately such clarity is largely lacking and we do not often discover on what criteria his datings rest. But something can be done. For the mint of Catania C. was able to rely on the impressive study by Mina Casabona.¹⁴ He

⁸ Hestiasis V, 1988, pp. 349-375.

⁹ See my review in SNR 79, 2000, p. 36; for further support of F. Villard's c.40 BC dating: *Mél.Ecol.Fran.Rome* 63, 1951, pp. 47 f. and 34.

¹⁰ TUSA, *AIIN* 7-8, 1960/61, pp. 78-90; CRAWFORD, *supra* n. 5, p. 107 f.

¹¹ CRAWFORD, *supra* n. 5, p. 307; *id.*, *BAR Int. Series* 326 (1987), p. 43.

¹² *Roman Republican Coin Hoards* (henceforward RRCH) 129 with Table IX.

¹³ *Ibid* 494; SUTHERLAND, *RIC* I², pp. 31 f. 70 f.

¹⁴ *RIN* 100, 1999, pp. 13-46.

has incorporated all her arrangement in his *Catalogo*, pp. 46-48. I reproduce her scheme with some necessary changes.

Apollo / Goddess X	c.212 on	
Sarapis-Isis / Apollo X	c.200 on	
Sarapis-Isis / Two corn-ears		
Poseidon / Dolphin XII		
Dionysos / Dolphin XI		
Grapes / Dolphin		
Silenos / Grapes XI		
Dionysos / Two Catana brothers		monogram
Catana brother / Other brother	}	same three monograms
Sarapis bifrons / Demeter		
Sarapis / Isis with Harpokrates		
Zeus Ammon / Isis Diakosyne	}	same three monograms
Hermes / Nike		
Dionysos / Young dancer (maenad ?)		
Dionysos / Panther car		
River god reclining / Two pilei and stars: lion.		2 monograms
River god reclining / Two pilei and stars: owl over monogram		

Apollo/Goddess is found in Dep. 60 at Morgantina of 211 BC and is abundant always later; Casabona wrongly put it sixth. The Sarapis-Isis type is borrowed from tetradrachms of Ptolemy IV of c.211 or of Ptolemy V of c.200 BC.¹⁵ Casabona and Carroccio prefer the former, I plump for the latter.

The Dionysos/Catana brothers type was overstruck by Sarapis bifrons;¹⁶ this was not noted by Casabona and Carroccio, who put it near the end of the coinage. They correctly saw that the River god/2 pilei and owl issue was copied from Athens New Style issue 10. M. Thompson's 186/5 dating must be brought down to 153/2.¹⁷ C. dates the River god issue 186-170 which is quite impossible (p. 217). He and Casabona want to put the two late Dionysos types before 186 because, with Caltabiano, they believe that the *SC de Bacchanalibus* would have banned reference to the cult of Dionysos in Sicily (p. 209 f.). But this is uncertain. It may be that repression was confined to Roman Italy and that is all that our sources know. In any event these two late Catana issues must be much closer to 160 than 186.

There was certainly much celebration of Egyptian cults at Catana. Indeed there is little trace of them elsewhere in Sicily. We have Serapis/Nike in biga at Menainon, and Zeus/Isis and Isis/Uraeus at Syracuse. The rest listed in *Prospetto* 19 (p. 234 f.) from Agyrrhion, Panormos and Syracuse are very doubtful. The coinage of Menainon is very homogenous in style. C. dates the series 204/190; but there were specimens of the Apollo issue in the Aidone and Grammichele hoard of 212

¹⁵ See O. MØRKHOLM, EHC (1991), p. 109; Coin Hoards VII, 90.

¹⁶ Morgantina Studies II, p. 82 and on no. 136.

¹⁷ See my arguments in NC 1990, pp. 67-74 and M. PRICE, BAR Int. Series 326 (1987), pp. 74-77 with n. 28.

BC.¹⁸ Isis Dikaiosyne and Harpokrates seem to appear later in the Delos evidence than in Sicily: the first is first found in 115/4 BC, the latter in the early years of Athenian administration (160s).¹⁹

How did C. come by his often close dating of post 212 Sicilian bronze? Clearly one criterion is style. This can at least establish probable contemporaneity of issues. For instance, on p. 217 f. he argues that the very small and similar busts of Hermes at a number of mints could suggest a common mint or at least closeness in time. I would carry this approach further. I offer a number of parallel issues to show what perhaps can be done.

1 *Kallakte*, owl on amphora (*Catalogo* no. 46, no. 4). An unmistakable copy of Athens New Style. C. does not discuss it, but shows it on Pl. 2. He dates it 205?-190. But New Style began, we now know in 164/3 and not in 196/5. His dating makes no sense.

2 The *Romano-Sicilian* issues, with 'wolf and twins' reverse were probably taken from the Roman collateral semi-libral sextans (RRC 39) of 217-215. A specimen was found in the Sicilian hoard from Mandinici of c.211 BC (RRCH 71). A specimen of Romano-Sicilian no. 41 was found in the excavation around Hieron's altar c.210 BC.²⁰

3 The *Hispanorum* issue with Male head/Apex is so like Syracuse 102 that Erim suggested the possibility of a common mint.²¹ It must be dated c.100 BC and the Syracusan coin must come down as late – not 208-204. There is also a coin of Leontinoi with Apollo/Apex, which C. shows on Pl. VII, but does not discuss. It is extremely like the other two.

4 *Menainon* no. 4, Demeter/Crossed torches. This is so like Syracuse 113 that both could come from the same mint.²² C. dates Menainon 204-190 and Syracuse 209-200. Menainon should probably take the Syracusan coin back to c.212.

5 The radiate Artemis of *Iaeta* (no. 6, Pl. VII) is strikingly like Syracuse 108 (Pl. XXXI). C. dates Iaeta 200-180 and Syracuse 211-200? They must be put close together.

6 *Akrai*. Kore/Demeter is very like Syracuse 104 (Kore/Demeter), see pl. I and XXXI. C. dates both post 212. But Syracuse 104 was found in the Megara Hyblaia hoard, which must be dated c.40 BC. At that date it can tell us much about Sicilian second / first century BC bronze coinage. There were 23 speci-

¹⁸ See CRAWFORD, *supra*, n. 5, p. 11.

¹⁹ See ID 2079, 2103 and 2117.

²⁰ See Not.Scavi 1954, p. 365.

²¹ Morgantina Studies II, p. 63.

²² See *ibid.*, p. 143 on no. 212 and p. 149 on no. 396.

mens of Syracuse 104 out of the hoard's 47 coins and they should be put in the first century BC, as the hoard's latest component. The 12 hoard specimens of Zeus/Nike in biga (Syracuse 100) would fit *c.*100 BC, since three specimens were found in Morgantina Stratum 46 of *c.*84 BC. The 8 specimens of Sarapis/Isis (Syracuse 116) must be put some time before *c.*140 BC, since a specimen of the surely contemporary Zeus/Tyche (Syracuse 102) was in Morgantina Hoard 43. The two Catana specimens of Zeus/Isis Dikaiosyne (Catana 13) are likewise shown to be before *c.*140 BC by the same hoard, which also contains a specimen of River god/Two pilei and owl (Catana 16). As we have seen, the earliest date of that is *c.*153/2 BC.

These are just a few suggestions of how stylistic links might be used to organise better the mass of post-212 material. Evidence of typology and metrology might help further to build up a firmer picture of this rather dark age of Sicilian numismatics. B. Carroccio has deserved well by bringing so much material together and I must not end this somewhat critical review without praising the care and devotion with which he has assembled for our benefit so much widely spread and often intractable evidence on a long period of critical numismatic history.

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