

Segesta, hybrid issues and the question of a central mint

Autor(en): **Rutter, N. Keith**

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N. KEITH RUTTER

SEGESTA, HYBRID ISSUES AND
THE QUESTION OF A CENTRAL MINT

PLATES 1–3

Silvia Hurter's study of the coinage of Segesta, *Die Didrachmenprägung von Segesta* (2008), based as it is on a detailed collection and ordering of the material, represents an outstanding contribution to the numismatics and the history of Sicily. It provides a major step forward and a secure foundation for future work. In my contribution to the volume in her memory I want to illustrate this by reference to two aspects of her work: her additions to and clarifications of the phenomenon of die-sharing in western Sicily and her contributions to iconographical studies. I hope to show that both these aspects have implications for the study not only of the numismatic problems involved but also for the history of western Sicily and of the wider Tyrrhenian world.

I begin my contribution with the observation that at about the same time in the last decade of the fifth century BCE, coinages both in western Sicily and in Campania were issued from a central mint. In Sicily the practice was fairly limited and short-lived, while in Campania it was far more elaborate and longer lasting. In western Sicily as in Campania the case for a central mint starts from the phenomenon of die-sharing. In the former area dies were shared between issues of Segesta, Motya and *sys* Panormus; Kenneth Jenkins proposed and Silvia accepted the identification of the central mint as Panormus¹. For various reasons I am uncomfortable with that proposal and subsequent investigation has led me to challenge it and to conclude that, yes, there was a central mint, but that it was situated at Segesta rather than Panormus. I set out my reasoning in this paper.

I. The evidence for a central mint

Kenneth Jenkins dated the beginning of coinage at Motya (didrachms with *obv.* Horse rider, *rev.* Female head surrounded by dolphins) around 425. The phenomenon of die-sharing occurred not long after that, since only seven obverse and eight reverse dies of Motya had been consumed before three of those reverse dies (R6, R7, R8), along with a further two (R9 and R10), were involved in it². Silvia, in line with more recent down-datings of Sicilian coinage in the fifth century, dated the die-sharing to around 410³. It took place in her

¹ G.K. JENKINS, *Coins of Punic Sicily*, SNR 50, 1971 (= CPS 1), p. 27; 57, 1978 (= CPS 4), p. 49; S. MANI HURTER, *Die Didrachmenprägung von Segesta*. SSN 1 (Zürich, 2008) (= MANI HURTER), pp. 46–47.

² CPS 1, p. 27.

³ MANI HURTER, pp. 46–47.

Reihe 9, which she placed *c.* 412/410, at the beginning of her Period IV after a short break in coining. Three obverse dies of Segesta in Reihe 9 (V45, V46, V47) are involved in die-sharing, as follows:

1. Segesta V45 coupled with Motya R10 (H1). MANI HURTER, p. 111, Pl. 21. *Pl. 1, 1–2.*
2. Segesta V46 coupled with Motya R9 (H2), then with $\varsigma\varsigma$ Rbb ($\varsigma\varsigma$ is engraved over the remains of [SEGESTA]ZIB)⁴ (H3), then (possibly) with a reverse (currently known only from a drawing) with $\varsigma\varsigma$ in large letters (H4). MANI HURTER, p. 112, Pl. 21. *Pl. 1, 3–6.*
3. Segesta V47 coupled with Motya R6, R7, R8 and R9 (H5–H8), then with $\varsigma\varsigma$ Rbb (see 2. above) (H9), and finally with $\varsigma\varsigma$ Raa (female head with three dolphins, $\varsigma\varsigma$) (H10). MANI HURTER, pp. 112–113, Pls. 21–22. *Pls. 1–2, 7–13.*

The following ‘hybrid’ issues are a little later in date:

4. Panormus/Segesta (H11, H12, 405/400). MANI HURTER, p. 114; Pl. 22. *Pl. 2, 14–15.*
5. Panormus/Motya (H13, 410/408). MANI HURTER, pp. 114–115; Pl. 22. *Pl. 2, 16.*

My concern here is with the die-sharing evidenced in nos. 1–3 above. As Kenneth pointed out (p. 28), there are two possible explanations for such die-sharing (Silvia refers to the coins involved as ‘hybrids’): either the dies were physically transported between the mints in question, or one mint was striking coins for the other(s). In the case before us the argument for the second hypothesis is strengthened by the fact that the work of the same engravers can be identified on coins minted for two, or even all three, of the cities involved. All the comparisons involve Segesta Reihe 11, also in Group IV, and Silvia lists them on p. 47:

Compare Segesta V54, V55 with Motya O10, O11 and with Panormus O3, O4. *Pl. 2, 17–22.*

Compare Segesta R99 with Motya R11 and Panormus R3, R4. *Pl. 2, 23–26.*

Compare Segesta R100 with Motya R13. *Pl. 2, 27–28.*

Compare Segesta R101 with Panormus R4. *Pl. 2, 29, 26.*

Silvia suggests that the same hand can be detected in the above comparisons; and the same engraver was certainly responsible for both the female heads with top-knot on the reverse of Segesta litra K28 (part of a group of small denominations associated with Period IV: MANI HURTER, pp. 126–127; Pl. 25) and on Motya R12 (JENKINS, Pl. 3). *Pl. 2, 30–31.*

II. The location of a central mint: Panormus?

As already mentioned, Silvia followed Kenneth Jenkins’ proposal to assign the ‘hybrid’ issues to Panormus. If that was the case, then let us, with Silvia (pp. 46–47), try to imagine how matters were arranged. Panormus had not operated a mint

⁴ I accept Kenneth’s arguments for the identification of $\varsigma\varsigma$ with Panormus.

before, and so to help to set it up, dies V45, V46, V47 were brought in from Segesta (itself just starting up again with Reihe 9, after a short gap), and also dies R6, R7 and R8 from Motya. Panormus itself re-used one reverse die of Segesta and a further reverse die was engraved for it. Not only dies, but engravers too were transferred to the new mint, as is shown by the evidence set out above for cooperation in minting parallel with Segesta Reihe 11 (the work of die-engravers for Reihe 11 can be recognized on coins made for Motya and *sys* Panormus, or both).

So Segesta Reihen 9 and 11 were involved in the joint minting. Where does that leave Reihe 10? Silvia regarded it as having been struck at Segesta itself (p. 47, 'In Segesta selbst in diesem kurzen Zeitpunkt, bei der Reihe 10...'). The obverses in particular of Reihe 10 seem to be of poorer quality and made by less experienced engravers. The assumption is that the better die-engravers were working at Panormus. On this scenario, then, Panormus was the place where joint minting took place involving Segesta Reihen 9 and 11; Segesta Reihe 10 meanwhile was struck at Segesta itself; and the joint minting ends shortly after 408, since the obverse dies of Segesta Reihe 12 introduce new obverse designs (hound and stag's head; hound and three barley ears) that have scarcely any parallels at the other two mints (the Segestan obverse V57, with hound and stag's head, was copied at Motya (O16, O17, O18).

All this seems to me somewhat strained, and matters are not clarified in the English summary of Silvia's arguments, where the date of the resumption of coinage in Period IV is given as 416/415, and the use of Segestan dies V46 and V47 for coins of *sys* Panormus is dated *c.* 410⁵. Then, the summary 'It can clearly be seen from the coins that the dies were first used *at* Segesta, then *at* Motya and last *at* Panormus' [my italics] is misleading since the text goes on to emphasise not the physical transfer of dies between the mints in question but the likelihood of a 'centralized mint', situated as Jenkins proposed at Panormus. What *does* matter is that the dies were first used *for* Segesta, *then* for Motya and last *for sys*.

III. The location of a central mint: Segesta

When he was considering the location of the central mint Kenneth Jenkins raised the possibility of Segesta, only to reject it:

'In fact the style, and the remains of the Segestan legend on Rbb, are factors which would agree well enough with the hypothesis that these *sys* dies were made by a Segestan engraver. But if so, it hardly seems plausible to think that the coins with the Punic legend *sys* were made for use at Segesta, since it was not a Punic city. As for Motya, the other city involved in the series, we know that its Punic name *mtv'* appeared shortly afterwards (in series II) so that it is most improbable that coins marked *sys* should have been intended for Motya either'⁶.

However, the whole point of a central mint is that it makes coins not just for itself but 'for the use of' other communities too. Segesta could have done that.

⁵ MANI HURTER, p. 51.

⁶ CPS 1, p. 28.

Kenneth returned to the problem in the final part of his magisterial work on Punic coinages:

‘...So far one could say that the *sys* coins Z1- 2 - 3 might as well simply have been produced at Segesta. However at this same juncture we find the obverse [Motya] O8 [= Segesta V47] being used in combination with Motya reverses R6-7-8. There would have been little point in bringing Motyan dies to Segesta, and even less in taking Segestan dies to Motya. But there would have been some point in taking dies from either one or both these mints to a place where no regular mint existed at that moment — namely Panormus’⁷.

Again Kenneth raises the possibility that the joint issues of *sys* and Segesta might have been produced at Segesta, only to reject it – to my mind for no good reason. Why would there have been ‘some point’ in bringing dies from two cities which had experience of minting (Motya and in particular Segesta) to one which had not? A much better case can be made for Segesta as the central mint.

The key numismatic point is that, as both Kenneth and Silvia recognized, the ‘hybrid’ die-transferences *start* with an issue of Segesta, then move on to one or the other of the other two mints involved. Furthermore in one case (Rbb) a die originally prepared for Segesta was re-engraved with the legend *sys*. It is clearly to be expected that the mint of Segesta should be the initiator, since it possessed long experience of minting, having issued didrachms and (from time to time) smaller denominations since *c.* 470. Motya’s experience of minting had been far shorter and much less varied, as outlined above, while hitherto Panormus had not had any experience of coining at all.

The next point to consider is the interpretation of the nature of minting in Reihen 9, 10 and 11 of Segesta. Silvia supposed that Reihen 9 and 11 were minted at Panormus, whither die-engravers also migrated, while Reihe 10 (of poorer quality) was minted at Segesta itself. But there is surely a simpler and more economical explanation for the phenomena described by Silvia. She characterised Reihe 9 (p. 31) as ‘Eine stark gedrängte Gruppe’ exhibiting some of the characteristics of a ‘Massenprägung’. She is right in that, and in these circumstances of increased demands on productive capacity the evidence for deterioration in the quality of some dies of this period at Segesta (in particular in Reihe 10) is entirely explicable. It does not need to be explained by supposing that the skilled engravers had migrated elsewhere.

It is a curious feature of Segesta V45 and V46 in Reihe 9 (and also V49 in Reihe 10) that a small female head above the hound on each die was at some point removed. The removal was effected not from the dies but from individual coins⁸. The timing of the removal is not certain, whether in the mint itself or at least not long after minting. Silvia suggests (p. 47) that the phenomenon could be best explained by the supposition that the mint operatives were not sure for which city the respective coins were to be designated. That would apply equally well whether the mint was located at Panormus or at Segesta.

⁷ CPS 4, p. 49.

⁸ MANI HURTER, p. 31.

There are good numismatic grounds, then, for thinking that the ‘hybrid’ issues we have been discussing were minted at Segesta rather than at Panormus. And that is where one should always begin, with the numismatic arguments. But the coins did not exist in a vacuum. The method of minting was a response to real circumstances, and I want to continue this contribution by exploring the possible circumstances for the issue of these coins. According to Silvia they were minted at the beginning of the last decade of the fifth century. What was happening at that time in western Sicily? The answer to that question is ‘a lot’. We are witnessing the preliminaries to and the actuality of the first Carthaginian invasion, and in these events Segesta was a key player.

Let us start with what the historian Diodorus Siculus has to say about the central role of Segesta in the recruitment and deployment of mercenaries, in particular of mercenaries from Campania (all references in the following account are to his *Bibliothēke*). Under the year 414, when the Athenians were on the point of laying siege to Syracuse, Diodorus relates (13.7.4) how 300 cavalry reached the Athenians from Segesta, and 250 from the Siceli; he adds that the total number of cavalry now available to the Athenians was 800. The figures as given by Diodorus do not add up, but rather than imputing an error of calculation to Diodorus (there may have been other sources of cavalry for the Athenians, including a few of their own; cf. Thuc. 6.43), the total of 800 seems to be the first hint in his account of the ‘800 Campanians’ he refers to several times later on (e.g. 13.44.1-2; see below). Segesta, then, sends cavalry to the Athenians in 414; already we have evidence for Segesta as a centre for the deployment of mercenaries, including Campanian mercenaries.

The next relevant events took place in 410 (13.43.3-4). Segesta is now at war with its neighbour Selinus and envoys of Segesta at Carthage offer to hand over their city; although the Carthaginians are eager to seize such a strategically situated (*eukairon*) city, they initially fear the Syracusans. Yet later in the same year 410 (13.44.1-6) the Carthaginians dispatched 5,000 Libyans and 800 Campanians to the Segestans, who routed the Selinuntines in a battle. At this point Diodorus explains the origin of these 800 Campanians: they had originally been hired by the Chalcidian cities of eastern Sicily to help the Athenians in their campaign at Syracuse, but found themselves unemployed after the Athenian defeat; the Carthaginians purchased horses for them, gave them high pay and sent them to Segesta. After giving this explanation Diodorus goes on to describe how both sides now sought assistance, the Selinuntines from Syracuse and the Segestans from Carthage. The latter prepared for war, which duly came in the following year 409 (13.54), when Hannibal landed at Lilybaeum and hauled his ships up in the bay of Motya. He supplemented his force with soldiers supplied by the Segestans and made his way towards Selinus in preparation for an attack; slightly later (13.61.2) he gathered troops at Motya.

Diodorus’ account thus makes clear the pivotal role played by Segesta in the events of 410–409. Among other points to note is the fact that among the Punic

centres it is Motya that Diodorus mentions, never Panormus. An even more important factor emphasised by Diodorus is one that had already played a part in Sicilian history and was destined to feature to an even greater extent in future years: the extensive employment by Sicilian war-lords of mercenaries, among whom Campanian mercenaries played a prominent part.

It is now time to return to the numismatics of Campanian connections. Near the beginning of this paper I made the point that in the last decade of the fifth century both western Sicily and Campania experienced the setting up of centralized minting arrangements. That is one important similarity between minting practices in each area. There are others, too, and my discussion of them likewise depends on the stimulus and insights provided by Silvia's study of Segesta.

The reverse design of the fifth century didrachms of Segesta represents the 'Trojan' Aigeste, in local mythology the consort of the river-god Krimisos, and in this way the obverse and the reverse of the coins portray respectively the father and the mother of the hero Aigestes⁹. The obverse portrayal of a river-god as a hound is unique in the coinage of Magna Graecia and Sicily (except of course when it is copied at mints such as Motya and Panormus), whereas the portrayal on a coin of the head of a local divinity is a familiar concept in both areas. Perhaps the best known example, and certainly the most influential, comes from Syracuse, whose coins featured almost from the beginning around 500 a head of Arethusa, the famous fresh-water spring situated right next to the salt waters of the Great Harbour there.

The influence of Syracuse can be traced on the coinage of Segesta throughout the fifth century, sometimes only superficially, but on other occasions very clearly. Here are three of the more striking examples:

Pl. 2, 32–33. Segesta, MANI HURTER R9 + BOEHRINGER, Syrakus¹⁰ R47

Pl. 3, 34–35. Segesta, R52 (no. 96) + BOEHRINGER, Syrakus R365

Pl. 3, 36–37. Segesta, R103 (no. 184) + BOEHRINGER, Syrakus R 463

Silvia's study offers many insights into the nature of Syracusan influence on the iconography of the coins of Segesta, among them the observation (p. 22) that the order in which the successive Syracusan styles were imitated at Segesta does not always follow the Syracusan order of minting. Another big question is: Why did it happen at all? Why did the engravers of Segestan coins consistently draw their inspiration from the types of Syracuse, some 200km away to the east? It might be that they were simply reflecting admiration for the artistically outstanding Syracusan designs: if the Segestans wanted to represent a female deity on their coins and chose to do so by showing her head, then the only exemplar among the coinages of the western Greeks in the early fifth century was Syracuse. However, imitation of Syracusan types was widespread not only in Sicily but in Italy too, particularly in areas such as Campania on the coast of the Tyrrhenian Sea.

⁹ MANI HURTER, pp. 21–22.

¹⁰ E. BOEHRINGER, *Die Münzen von Syrakus* (Berlin – Leipzig 1929).

At various points in my book *Campanian Coinages* I remarked on these influences and argued in particular that the flood of coinage in Campania in the last years of the fifth century (when there are also reflections of Syracusan styles) derived from the contemporary importance of the area as a recruiting ground for mercenary troops¹¹. That process probably began much earlier in the fifth century, in the time of the tyrants Gelon and Hieron of Syracuse, but the evidence is much fuller for the last years of the century, when we have the Diodoran narratives referred to above, with their focus on Segesta and on mercenaries from Campania. Examination of the interplay of influences on the coins, enhanced and clarified now by Silvia's study, gives us further insights. It allows us to identify not just the two linear channels of influence, between Syracuse and Campania on the one hand and Syracuse and Segesta on the other, but a further group of comparisons, between western Sicily and the Tyrrhenian coast of Italy. Thus we can now begin to speak rather of a *triangle* of influences connecting Syracuse, Segesta and the Tyrrhenian coast of Italy – a triangle that I suggest reflects the movement, employment and payment of mercenary soldiers.

The first group of stylistic relationships to consider are those between some obverses of Cumae and some reverses of Segesta. When I first saw the reverses of Segesta Groups 9–12 laid out on Plates 13–17 of *Die Didrachmenprägung*, I thought immediately of Campania. Of course, the female heads on the coins of both Campania and Segesta at this time shared a common dependency on Syracusan styles, but the closest comparisons seem to me to be with obverses of Group V of Cumae, with particular reference to 'the theme of curled hair on the crown, with strands of hair brushed up over the ear'¹². Compare the composition of the hair on Cumae KO98, KO128 and KO130 (*Pl. 3, 38*) with that on Segesta R102 (which surprisingly has the Greek form of the legend ending in *omega*) (*Pl. 3, 39*). A further comparison might be made between Cumae KO120 and KO121 (*Pl. 3, 40*) and Segesta R111 (*Pl. 3, 41*).

At around the same time, in the last decade of the fifth century, styles in the mint of Panormus too share some features with styles in Campania. Compare Panormus, CPS 1, Plate 6, no. 12, reverse 1 (*Pl. 3, 42*), with Cumae KO104 (Group 14 of Period V) (*Pl. 3, 43*). The latter is stylistically rather anomalous among its fellow Campanian dies, and might now be thought of as a 'Punicising' die. It is interesting to note also that on two of the early didrachm dies of Panormus (JENKINS, CPS 1, p. 38: R1 and R7) the form of the ethnic is *Panormitikon*. As far as I know the only parallel for that form in Magna Graecia and Sicily is the *Neopolitikon* on the obverse (O3) of a didrachm of Neapolis Period I, Group 3. The latter, though, is to be dated possibly in the 440s, at least 30 years earlier than the earliest issues of Panormus.

Perhaps rather surprisingly, the closest stylistic parallel between a western Sicilian and a Tyrrhenian mint in the period being studied seems to be between heads at

¹¹ N. K. RUTTER, *Campanian coinages: 475–380 BC* (Edinburgh, 1979), pp. 98–100.

¹² RUTTER, p. 40.

Segesta and Velia: compare Segesta, R93, R94, R95 (Period IV, Series 10) (*Pl. 3, 44–46*), with Velia R162, R163, O134 (Sections 43–4, early in Period IV (T Group) in Williams' arrangement, beginning *c.* 400) (*Pl. 3, 47–49*). Characteristic of both the Segestan and the Velian dies is the large loop of hair pressing on the neck.

Finally, some intriguing comparisons discussed by Suzanne Frey-Kupper¹³. In the late fifth century and early fourth several mints in western Sicily (Iaitas, Selinus and Entella) issued coins showing an image of a man-faced river-god, Achelous. Achelous had of course been the regular reverse type of coins of Neapolis from the beginning of its coinage, and later of associated mints in Campania, and the illustrations provided by Suzanne indicate close parallels not just in the type but also in the style: compare the reverse of Selinus (*Pl. 3, 50* = Frey-Kupper, fig. 10, 2) with Neapolis R35 (Period III, *Pl. 3, 51*)¹⁴. The reverse of Entella (with its stumpy front legs: *Pl. 3, 52* = Frey-Kupper, fig. 10, 3) could be at home in Campania: cf. for example, Hyria HR39 or HR57 (*Pl. 3, 53*).

Observing similarities and parallels is one thing; tracing influences is another: who was influencing whom? In such a tight-knit triangle of influences and in the present state of knowledge it is hardly possible to know with any accuracy, and it is a problem for future research.

The Greek coinages of Sicily and southern Italy are from many points of view quite different in character, for example in weight standards, techniques of coining or choice of denominations and designs. In this contribution however I have been exploring numismatic phenomena that link the two areas and help to create a Tyrrhenian dimension to minting activity, in particular the adoption of a centralized system of minting involving the transference of dies and the actual sharing of artistic influences between western Sicily and Campania. I am indeed grateful to Silvia for the stimulus to follow-up these problems, and deeply regret that I did not have the chance to continue the discussions I had with her before she died. I make this contribution with enormous respect for her published work in numismatics.

Abstract

This contribution starts from Silvia's recently published study of the didrachms of Segesta and in particular from her conclusion, shared with Kenneth Jenkins, that in the last decade of the fifth century BC a central mint operated in western Sicily. The paper challenges the conclusion of Silvia and Kenneth that the mint was situated at Panormus; rather, it was at Segesta itself.

First, the evidence for central minting is summarized and the arguments for Panormus outlined. Then the claim for Segesta starts with a discussion of the

¹³ Die antiken Fundmünzen vom Monte Iato (1971–1990). Ein Beitrag zur Geldgeschichte Westsiziliens. *Studia Ietina X* (Lausanne, forthcoming).

¹⁴ The dies refer to RUTTER (above n. 11).

interpretation of the crucial Reihen 9, 10 and 11 of the didrachms, and continues with an assessment of the historical circumstances of the time, in particular the central role of Segesta in the Carthaginian invasion of western Sicily in 410/409.

Western Sicily was not the only area in the Tyrrhenian to experience central minting at this time. The phenomenon also occurred in Campania, and the paper concludes with an examination of stylistic and other connections between coins of western Sicily and Campania at the turn of the fifth and fourth centuries. It is suggested that the background to these connections is the employment of mercenary soldiers.

Zusammenfassung

Dieser Beitrag geht aus von Silvias jüngst publizierter Untersuchung der Didrachmen von Segesta und speziell von ihrer mit Kenneth Jenkins geteilten Schlussfolgerung, dass im letzten Jahrzehnt des 5. Jahrhunderts v. Chr. in Westsizilien eine zentrale Münzstätte bestanden hat. Zu bezweifeln ist jedoch die Vermutung von Silvia und Kenneth, diese Münzstätte sei in Panormos zu lokalisieren; sie arbeitete wohl eher in Segesta selbst.

Zunächst werden die Argumente für die Existenz einer zentralen Münzproduktion zusammengefasst und umrissen, was für Panormus sprechen kann. Die Argumentation zugunsten von Segesta beginnt mit einer Diskussion der Interpretation der entscheidenden Didrachmenreihen 9, 10 und 11. Es folgt eine Übersicht über die historischen Gegebenheiten der betreffenden Zeit und speziell über die zentrale Rolle, die Segesta bei der karthaginischen Invasion in das westliche Sizilien in den Jahren 410/409 v. Chr. gespielt hat.

Westsizilien war nicht das einzige Gebiet im Umkreis des Tyrrhenischen Meeres, in dem zu dieser Zeit eine zentrale Münzstätte aktiv war. Das gleiche Phänomen lässt sich auch in Kampanien beobachten. Der Beitrag schliesst mit einer Untersuchung der stilistischen und anderer Verbindungen zwischen Münzen aus Westsizilien und Kampanien an der Wende vom 5. zum 4. Jahrhundert v. Chr. Es wird vermutet, im Hintergrund für diese Verbindungen habe der Einsatz von Soldtruppen gestanden.

N. Keith Rutter
School of History, Classics and Archaeology
David Hume Tower
George Square
Edinburgh EH8 9JX
Scotland

k.rutter@ed.ac.uk



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