

FROM
IMPERIUM TO AUCTORITAS

A HISTORICAL STUDY OF
AES COINAGE IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE

49 B.C.—A.D. 14

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12. MELITA

A small issue at this mint presents problems that are not wholly soluble. The legends are ΜΕΛΙΤΑΙΩΝ and C. ARRVTANVS BALBVS PRO PR.; the types a veiled female head and *sella curulis*.¹ It is unique in possessing completely the features both of local and of official currency: the ethnic appears in its fullest form and in Greek, and yet there is the name of a Roman official, with the title of his rank, written in Latin. Technically, then, this is a perfect example of co-operation between the commander and the city to produce a coinage. The closest parallel—though there the ethnic is only monogrammatic—is the issue of Sosius at Zacynthus. Nor is the resemblance fortuitous. To the realms of Sex. Pompeius, and of Octavian after him, Melita had precisely the same strategic position as Zacynthus bore to the dominions of Antony; it was, as it is still, the key to Sicily and the Straits of Tunis. It is therefore very likely that the coins indicate the presence of a fleet-station and served its monetary needs. Probably, then, Arruntanus was not governor of Sicily, but held a position analogous to that of Sosius.

The upper limit for this issue is 36 B.C., when Octavian suppressed a colony at Melita which a unique coin shows to have been founded by Murcus in 42 B.C. (p. 234). The numismatic history of this period provides a further reason for the coinage of Arruntanus. Issues of Entella, Lilybaeum and Agrigentum (p. 392) indicate that the end of the Sicilian war was marked by the imposition on the Sextian communities of a vast indemnity,² for whose extortion a number of officers were sent the round of the island. Of these, Sosius and Atratinus, as will be shown, ordered the local authorities to pay in *aes* coinage, whose occasion is marked by the appearance of the extortioners' names in Greek characters. Arruntanus, however, who signs these pieces in Latin, apparently took over the control of his mint, but still permitted the Melitan authorities a share in its administration. It will be shown elsewhere that soon after his special commission the mint was transferred to the *quaestor* of eastern Sicily (p. 68).

13. MAURETANIA CAESARIENSIS (IOL?)

The *praenomen imperatoris*, exceptionally omitted on the group of *aes* and *denarii* with CAESAR DIVI F. (p. 49), appears on inscriptions of c. 36–32 B.C.³ It is also found on the last Octavianic coinage before Actium, which bears the legends IMP. CAESAR. DIVI F. This series creates a break in the succession of purely military groups, recalling the more indirect purpose of the 'foundation' currencies.

¹ Glasgow; *Hu.* III, p. 605. 30 ff.; cf. *PIR.* ² I, 220. ³ *ILS.* 77, 128, 8893; *CIL.* I, p. 28; cf. Schön, *PW.* VI, 2031 ff.

² A principal citizen of Melita, A. Licinius Ariston-
1122.

teles, was a strong Republican; cf. *Cic. Fam.* XIII, 52.
PW. VI, 2031 ff.

3. MELITA(?)

Another commentary on the transitional naval arrangements of this period may be provided by a series of little coins with Q,¹ whose half-Greek and half-African style is characteristic of the Libyan islands. It has been variously attributed to Gaulus,² Cossura³ and Melita,⁴ and seems, for stylistic and administrative reasons, to be most suitable to the last of these. Within the last years before the principate the exact date of the issue cannot be determined. It is clear, however, that, since the special commission of Arruntanus Balbus at the island in c. 36 (p. 59), the mint has reverted to an official with the lower rank of *quaestor*—no doubt the *quaestor* of eastern Sicily, to whose jurisdiction Melita fell.⁵ Possibly this coinage was made before 31; but the analogy of C. Proculius shows that the fleet-stations were not immediately abandoned after Actium. On the contrary, the huge flotillas employed in the campaign needed extensive repairs which, at Ithaca and Cephallenia(?), were even accompanied by coinage. It seems, on the whole, most consistent with historical and stylistic probabilities that these issues recall a similar concentration of forces at Melita under the supervision of the *quaestor* to whose sphere the island belonged.

4. ALEXANDRIA

At about the same time an equestrian official inaugurated Octavian's coinage in Egypt.⁶ This is at first in no way constructive in character, but adheres to the monetary system of the last years of Ptolemaic rule. The first issue comprises two denominations, marked Λ and Μ, of 80 and 40 copper drachmas⁷—corresponding to an obol and half an obol of the silver standard—in direct continuation of the depreciated coinage of Cleopatra.⁸ Both coins bear the head of the new ruler; on the reverse is an eagle on a thunderbolt—both Jovian types.⁹ The legend ΚΑΙΣΑΡΟΣ ΑΥΤΟΚΡΑΤΟΡΟΣ—ΘΕΟΥ ΥΙΟΥ is couched in the Genitive customary to Hellenistic rulers.¹⁰ It also shows that Octavian at once accepted the imperfect Greek translation of *Imperator* for official use in Egypt.

These coins were issued by the first *praefectus*, the great C. Cornelius Gallus, who, like his friend Proculius,¹¹ was a knight in Octavian's closest confidence, until his fall and suicide in 27 or 26.¹² Now Alexandria had always been administratively separate

¹ Bahrfieldt, *RS.* xii, 1904, p. 439. 97 ff.; BM, etc.

² Mayr, *Die antiken Münzen der Inseln Malta*; Muller iii, p. 140.

³ Landolina-Paterno, *Cat. Fischer coll.* pp. 36 f.

⁴ Bahrfieldt, l.c.

⁵ Pliny, *NH.* iii, 92.

⁶ Milne, *JEA.* 1927, Group 1.

⁷ Regling, *ZfN.* 1901, p. 115.

⁸ Cf. Johnson, *AJA.* 1934, pp. 49 ff.

⁹ Cf. Jacobsthal, *Der Blitz in der Kunst*, Diss. Bonn, 1906, p. 12.

¹⁰ Vogt, *Alexandrinische Münzen*, p. 13.

¹¹ Dio lxxxiv, 24. 2.

¹² Cf. Stuart Jones, *CAH.* x, p. 134; Syme, *RR.* pp. 300, 334; id., *Actes du Ve Congrès de Papyrologie*, p. 460.

gests appointment not before 43, when Plancus, previously a Republican,¹ had deserted to Antony and Octavian.² If this is so, the coin—and probably the *constitutio*—will belong (like the second issue of Panormus) to the last months of that year, when the cities prematurely believed that their Julian *civitas* was an established fact. The fact that both Henna and Panormus are *municipia*, not colonies, points to a generalisation: we have no record of Sicilian colonies at this date, and a similar mass enfranchisement of Cisalpine Gaul had been primarily municipal.³

The coinages of two other cities have a close connection with the issues described and with each other. Pieces of Halaesa with HALAESA ARCHONIDA and M. CASSIVS M. ANT.⁴ or CAEC. RVF. IIVIR⁵ do not resemble the Augustan municipal mintages of the same town (p. 195). On the other hand, style and fabric recall the inauguratory coins of Henna, which, like Halaesa,⁶ became stipendiary under Octavian; and at Panormus, in just the same way, a foundation-issue signed by two *duoviri* is followed at a short interval by a single coinage only—signed by one. M. Cassius and M. Antonius are to be considered the first magistrates of Roman Halaesa, and probably—by the analogy of other issues on which the *duoviral* titles are omitted (p. 235)—its *adsignatores*. The fact that there is time for a second issue from the foundation-fund, with a different signature, suggests that the inauguration and inaugural coinage can be placed as early as 44. The moneyer of the second coin was probably a freedman of L. Caecilius Rufus, *praetor urbanus* in 57 B.C.⁷

Assorus, too, is stipendiary in Pliny,⁸ but has a Latin issue which suggests a municipal foundation in 44–43. This includes a head of Apollo⁹ which is exactly duplicated on the inaugural coinage of Halaesa,¹⁰ and a reverse type (CRVSAS¹¹) which strongly recalls that of Henna.¹² Another type at Assorus is a yoke of oxen:¹³ this does not invalidate attribution to a *municipium*, but indicates that, as at many others (p. 324), allotments were made. No doubt some of the numerous Caesarian veterans were accommodated in this way at more than one of the new Sicilian *municipia*.

Other isolated Latin issues of similar appearance were made at Agrigentum,¹⁴ and the island communities of Cossura¹⁵ and Melita.¹⁶ The whole group is clearly to be

¹ Cf. Plut. *Brut.* 19; Cic. *II Phil.* 78; Hanslik, *PW.* xvi, 546.

² Cf. Charlesworth, *CAH.* x, p. 17. For negotiations of c. Dec. 44, vide Cic. *XIII Phil.* 44; Bardt, *Hermes*, XLIV, 1909, pp. 576 f.

³ Cic. *Att.* v, 2–3; cf. Rudolph, *Stadt und Staat im römischen Italien*, p. 97.

⁴ Holm 729.

⁵ Ibid. 752; Palermo (Gabrici, p. 136. 16).

⁶ Pliny, *NH.* iii, 91.

⁷ Asconius, *ap.* Cic. *pro Milone*; cf. Stella Maranca, *Memorie della R. Acc. dei Lincei (sc.-mor.)*, v, 1926, p. 330.

⁸ L.c.

⁹ BMC. i.

¹⁰ E.g. BM.

¹¹ Head, *HN.* p. 127; cf. Cic. *Verr.* iv, 44.

¹² BMC. ii. ¹³ BMC. 2; Holm 759.

¹⁴ Holm 735a; Mommsen, *Mzw.* p. 664. Torremuzza, *Siciliae populorum, etc., veteres nummi*, p. 7, pl. VI, 19, cites from Lucca mus. a very dubious silver coin of the same type. But cf. Hadrumetum (p. 227).

¹⁵ Holm 733; Mommsen, *CIL.* x, p. 776.

¹⁶ BM; cf. Mayr, *Die Insel Malta*, p. 106. 6. This city was enfranchised as a *municipium* (ibid. p. 106; cf. Kubitschek, *Imp.* p. 132, *pace* Mommsen, *CIL.* x, p. 773) like other cities of the province.

9. PROVINCIA MARITIMA: Melita(?)

There is reason to believe that Melita, a community usually within the jurisdiction of Sicily,¹ received a colony while attached to a special maritime province during the Civil Wars. This conclusion is derived from the following unpublished and apparently unique coin:—

TADI. veiled female head to right.

MARI. *sella quaestoria* (p. 13) and staff (Pl. VII, 25).²

The style is unmistakably that of the Maltese group of islands, and the type of the head recalls coinage of Melita itself during the last century B.C.:³ the issue may confidently be ascribed to the city on that island. The stylistic probability of an early date is confirmed by the close imitation of the reverse type from a *quinarius* of L. Sestius,⁴ who was *pro quaestore* of Macedonia-Achaia under Brutus and Q. Hortensius in 44–42 (p. 33). This resemblance is proved not to be fortuitous by the treatment of the head on the obverse, which is derived from a second coin of the same official.⁵

These similarities make it necessary to conclude that the authorities who issued these coins were of Republican sympathies. Now Melita was not omitted from the general enfranchisement of Sicily which, begun in 44, was continued under Sex. Pompeius (p. 193). But it is unlikely that Sextus himself was responsible for the present issue, since, although he professed to be an ally of the Republicans,⁶ he failed to co-operate with them;⁷ he could scarcely have desired the implication of subordination to Brutus carried by these types. But, early in 42, the Republican leaders could lay claim to more active supporters on their Western flank: Q. Cornuficius had won independent control of Africa,⁸ and L. Staius Murcus had his headquarters at the south point of the Peloponnese.⁹ The latter of these is the more likely to have been the agent for this coinage. It is very doubtful whether Cornuficius considered himself subordinate to Brutus's *imperium maius*¹⁰—and the types of our coin indicate some such allegiance—and, in any case, we hear nothing of his conquests outside Africa. Murcus, on the other hand, was in complete control of the seas.¹¹ He blockaded Brundisium,¹² and, collaborating with Ahenobarbus, dominated the Adriatic and Ionian seas:¹³ yet his base was as far south as the Laconian Gulf. His ships were everywhere:¹⁴ Cassius could

¹ Pliny, *NH.* III, 92.

² BM.

³ E.g. Glasgow (*Hu.* III, 605. 15), Cambridge (*McLean* 10,015).

⁴ *BMCR.* II, p. 473. 47. This composition is not found elsewhere, though the types occasionally occur (e.g. *BMC. Cyrenaica*, pl. XLIII, 4, and above, p. 13).

⁵ *BMCR.* II, pp. 472 f.; Bahrheldt, *NZ.* 1896, pl. VII, 166.

⁶ Cf. Ganter, *Philologus*, LIII, 1894, pp. 144 f.

⁷ Cf. Charlesworth, *CAH.* x, p. 23.

⁸ Ganter, l.c. pp. 141 ff. ⁹ Appian, *BC.* IV, 74.

¹⁰ Cf. Ganter, l.c. p. 142, and Cicero's tact in *Fam.* XII, 22, 28, 30.

¹¹ Cf. Münzer, *PW.* (2R.), III, 2138.

¹² Appian, *BC.* IV, 82; Dio XLVII, 47.

¹³ Appian, *BC.* IV, 100, 108, V, 2.

¹⁴ Cf. *ibid.* IV, 86.

rightly claim that the Eastern Mediterranean was a Republican lake.¹ It is in the highest degree probable that Murcus occupied Melita—of which a principal citizen, A. Licinius Aristoteles, is described by Cicero as a man who outdid all in loyalty to the Republic.² Murcus was subordinate to the *imperium maius* of Brutus and Cassius,³ but retained his *imperium* as *praefectus classis*.⁴

The names Tadi. Mari. could either be the signatures, on official coinage, of a commander and his lieutenant—like Stati. Trebo. at Lipara (p. 53)—or those of a pair of *duoviri*. Similar pairs of names without qualifying titles appear on the coinages of a contemporary Republican colony at Rhodes (p. 243), on issues at Paestum from the forties and thirties (pp. 202, 284) and at a triumviral settlement at Tingis (p. 175): in all these cases it is necessary to interpret the signatures as those of *duoviri*. At another transient Republican colony, at Cyrene, a single name appears, again unqualified (p. 240). These analogies make it necessary to conclude that the present coinage is likewise colonial: Melita was an ephemeral garrison-colony of Brutus and Cassius like Cyrene and Rhodes. It is possible to go farther, and to guess that this issue commemorated its foundation. At Rhodes, Tingis and Paestum alike the undefined pairs of magistrates are *duoviri coloniae deducendae (urbis moeniundae)*, while at Cyrene—as at Venafrum (p. 285)—only the senior member of the college, the *deductor*, is mentioned.

Tadius and Marius, then—neither of whom are identifiable—collaborated in the *deductio* of Melita, previously of municipal rank, near the beginning of 42 B.C. When Murcus, after Philippi, transferred his allegiance to Sex. Pompeius⁵ (who soon killed him⁶), the island no doubt passed, with the command of the seas⁷ and of the rest of *provincia* Sicilia, to the latter; and there is no reason to suppose that Sextus suppressed so valuable a colony as well as its originator. A coin with Greek ethnic and the name, in Latin, of C. Arruntanus Balbus *pro pr.* (p. 59) indicates that it was Octavian who degraded the city to peregrine status; he installed an officer to superintend its subjugation, collect an indemnity, and fortify the island against the new public menace, Antony.

10. SICILY: [Tauromenium], Tyndaris, Thermae Himeraeae (?)

No colonies can be attributed to the period of general enfranchisement which came to an end in 36 B.C. (p. 193). To the rest of our period can be ascribed only three colonial issues, and, as in the municipal series, each of these commemorates a foundation.

The first issue recalls the degradation and punishment of the island which followed

¹ Appian, *BC.* iv, 100, 108.

² *Fam.* XIII, 52.

⁵ Appian, *BC.* v, 2.

³ Appian, *BC.* iv, 59.

⁶ Dio XLVIII, 19.

⁴ *BMCR.* II, 485 (IMP.); cf. Dio XLVII, 28. 4; Münzer, l.c.

⁷ *Ibid.*; cf. Kromayer, *Philologus*, LVI, 1897, pp. 426 ff.