Volume 25

# Journal of the Numismatic Association of Australia

# Contents

# Experiencing the Republican Empire: a numismatic perspective

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**Abstract:**

*This article takes three case studies of 'Republican provincial coinage' in the eastern Mediterranean as a starting point to examine what provincial coinage in the Roman Republic can reveal about Roman hegemony in this period. The case studies demonstrate the divergent experience of Roman power before the rule of Augustus; while in Boeotia Roman contact appears to have brought about a decline in minting, within Achaea production continued as the Romans used local coinage for their own (likely military) purposes. Finally an examination of the currency of Crete and Cyrenaica reveals how numismatic iconography from this period can reflect Roman conceptions of power, and the Roman perception of the regions they had conquered. These three case studies reveal the potential of this type of evidence, traditionally the prerogative of 'Greek' numismatists, in aiding our understanding of Roman expansion and Roman ideologies.*

Rome had an empire well before she ever possessed an emperor, which raises the question: how was the Roman Empire understood and visualised by Romans and their subjects before Augustus became an ideological focal point? What were the experiences of those who lived under the Republican Empire? The motivations, ideologies and events that drove Rome during her expansion have been the focus of intense scholarly debate, but to date this discussion has not made full use of the relevant numismatic evidence.[1] And yet the renewed focus on the provincial coinage of the Roman Empire stemming from the *Roman Provincial Coinage* project has highlighted the capacity of ancient coinage to reveal local experiences, attitudes, and reactions to Roman power in the imperial period.[2] By extension, the provincial coinage of the Republican Empire can

1 Literature on this topic is large, but see, by way of example, A.M. Eckstein, *Mediterranean Anarchy, Interstate War, and the Rise of Rome* (Berkeley, 2006), E. Gruen, *The Hellenistic World and the Coming of Rome* (Berkeley, 1984), R.M. Kallet-Marx, *Hegemony to Empire. The Development of the Roman Imperium in the East from 148-62 BC* (Berkeley, 1995), M. Lavan, *Slaves to Rome. Paradigms of Empire in Roman Culture* (Cambridge, 2013), and J. Richardson, *The Language of Empire: Rome and the Idea of Empire from the Third Century BC to the Second Century AD* (Cambridge, 2011).

2 e.g. A. Burnett, 'The Augustan revolution seen from the mints of the provinces' *Journal of Roman Studies* 101 (2011) 1-30, and C. Howgego, V. Heuchert & A. Burnett, *Coinage and Identity in the Roman Provinces* (Oxford, 2005).

also provide information about the ideologies and experiences of Roman control before the reign of Augustus.

This paper presents three case studies from Boeotia, Achaea, Crete and Cyrenaica that highlight the differing provincial experiences of the Republican Empire, and the role played by coinage in the consolidation of Roman power. The overall theme that emerges from these studies is one of difference: there were discrepant experiences of Roman conquest.[3] These differences might be connected in part to the varied treatment of different regions by the Romans, but they may also reflect the changing understanding of the Roman Empire on behalf of the Romans themselves.

## Boeotia and Thebes

In order to understand the changes that Roman conquest brought to Boeotia and in particular to Thebes during the 2nd century B.C., it is first necessary to examine the monetary situation prior to this event. The Classical period (510-323 B.C.) serves as a good starting point, since it is here that our evidence is the most plentiful.

The picture of Theban coinage during the Classical period, peaking with Thebes' prominent position in Hellas following the Battle of Leuctra (371 B.C.), is one of standard uniformity. Drachms were minted in Boeotian centres, mainly Thebes, Tanagra and Thespiae, by local magistrates (see Fig.1). These drachms commonly displayed the so-called 'dipylon' shield[4] on the obverse – either a mythological piece of armour meant to be wielded by a god(dess) or a real shield developed by the Boeotians for warfare, possibly for use in the famed Sacred Band. The former is the likelier possibility given that the dipylon shield does not seem to have an extensive presence in the archaeological record beyond its depiction on vases.[5] On


Fig. 1: Boeotian AR stater, showing dipylon shield on the obverse and amphora with magistrate's name and club on the reverse. 379-338 B.C., 21.5mm, 12.18g. (Reproduced courtesy of Yale University Art Gallery, Ruth Elizabeth White Fund. 2004.6.1928)

3 This discrepancy in the way Roman power may have been experienced has also recently been explored in A.M. Eckstein, 'What is an empire and how do you know when you have one? Rome and the Greek states after 188 BC', *Antichthon* 47 (2013) 173-90.

4 This type of shield appears on coinage and in vase painting, and is called either the Boeotian shield, or, because its shape is oval with two distinctive scallops, the 'Dipylon' shield. See P. de Souza, 'Arms and Armor' in *The Oxford Handbook of Warfare in the Classical World*, ed. B. Campbell & L.A. Tritle (Oxford, 2013) 398-9.

5 See particularly J. Obert, 'Numismatic Iconography in Ancient Greece' *Ancient Planet Online Journal* 4 (2013) 143-55 and N.G.L. Hammond, 'Political developments in Boeotia' *The Classical Quarterly* 50 (2000) 80-93.

the reverse of these drachms, the *poleis* of Boeotia minted local symbols as a sign of their autonomy within the wider Boeotian confederacy. With the exception of minor separatist movements and the gradual disappearance of archaic incuse stamps (see Fig.2, a lingering monument to the influence of Aegina on coinage in this region), this trend continues throughout the period.


Fig 2: Boeotian AR stater (Thebes) showing dipylon shield on the obverse, and incuse stamp on the reverse. 6th century B.C., 15.1mm, 6.19g. (Reproduced courtesy of Yale University Art Gallery; Transfer from Sterling Memorial Library. 2001.87.6522)

However, by the turn of the 3rd century BC, as Boeotia and the neighbouring Aetolian and Achaean Leagues came into contact with Rome, the frequency of this type of coinage diminishes and, although other designs are struck, coinage is never produced in the same quantity. It is unlikely that silver coinage was produced in Boeotia from the second century B.C. onwards. A coin hoard from Thebes with a *terminus post quem* of 168 B.C. helps to shed light on the situation.[6] Alongside silver coinage from a variety of mints (including Rome), the hoard contained 42 bronze Boeotian coins, many of which were overstruck on older coins of the Macedonian regent Antigonus Doson (229-211B.C.). This should not be surprising in itself, since Boeotia, disenfranchised from the other Greek leagues, was compelled to seek a political alliance with Macedon.[7] Yet it seems somewhat doubtful that one of the conditions of this arrangement was for Boeotia to cease minting her original dipylon types.

Instead the decline of Boeotian coinage must have had another cause. The bronzes in the aforementioned hoard are perhaps better explained by Crawford, who suggests that the overstriking may have been an attempt by some individual(s) to remove Macedonian coinage from circulation (precious metal Macedonian coinage is also markedly absent from the region).[8] In addition to this political motive, there may have been an economic one; overstriking the Macedonian coins may have led to a profit for the local minting authority (since bronze is regularly overvalued within local exchange systems in antiquity) or may have been an economical way of ensuring a supply of small change.

The decline of precious metal coinage production in Boeotia, and the presence of silver coinage from numerous other mints within *IGCH* 233, calls for explanation.

6 IGCH 233, T. Hackens, 'La circulation monétaire dans la Béotie hellénistique: trésors de Thèbes 1935 et 1965'*Bulletin de correspondance hellénique* 93, 712-29.

7 Polybius. 20.5, 20.6, 22.4, 27.1, 27.5, 39.8, 39.9. See also B. V. Head, *On the Chronological Sequence of the Coins of Boeotia* (London, 1881).

8 M.H. Crawford, *Coinage and Money under the Roman Republic* (London, 1985) 124, and Appendix 40 (p.316), naming three other hoards.

Polybius observes that the region entered a period of decline in the third century B.C.[9] The derogatory picture of the Boeotians may well be a literary device instead of an accurate historical account, but epigraphic evidence seems to support Polybius' view here.[10] One inscription presents a set of accounts of the hipparch Pompidas, and dates between 170-150 B.C. As part of his transactions Pompidas purchases 110 drachms of silver from an individual named Caphisodorus, paying 137 ½ drachms in bronze for the coinage. Melville-Jones suggests this demonstrates that if transactions were to take place in bronze (rather than silver) drachms, then 25% more had to be paid.[11] The use of bronze coinage as drachms may have developed as a result of the lack of Boeotian precious metal currency at this time.

The suggestion of economic decline in the region is supported by archaeological surveys of Boeotia.[12] Surveys conducted in the 1980s revealed a remarkable decrease in the number of active settlements: a drop from 69 identified sites in the Archaic and Early Hellenistic period to just 32 during the Late Hellenistic and Roman period. Alcock further observes that not only is there a general contraction of settlements during this period, but there was also a decrease in activity at those which remained inhabited.[13] The literary sources make no mention of plague or crop failure, nor did the survey encounter mass graves. We might then conclude that the abandonment of Boeotia may have been a voluntary affair, connected to Roman activity in the region. Boeotia suffered serious repercussions for siding with Macedon against Rome. The Boeotian League was formally dissolved by the Roman government in 146 B.C., and the population of Thebes fled – possibly, in some cases, to make a last stand for the Hellenic cause in Corinth.[14] Pausanias mentions the 100 talent fine imposed by the Roman general Lucius Mummius on Boeotia for transgressions against Heracleia and Euboea.[15] Smaller fines were also imposed by Flamininus in 196 B.C.[16] Although the fines of Mummius were later forgiven, this could not have been anticipated by the Boeotians, and the perceived financial burden may have contributed to depopulation in the region.

9 Polybius. 20.6. On the reliability of Polybius see F. Walbank, 'A Greek looks at Rome: Polybius VI revisited', in *Polybius, Rome and the Hellenistic World: Essays and Reflections* (Cambridge, 2002) 277-92.

10 *IG* VII, 1743, first published in U.V. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, ‚Abrechnung eines Boiotischen Hipparchen' *Hermes* 8, 431-441. Text and English translation can be found in J.R. Melville-Jones, *Testimonia Numaria* (London, 1993) no. 292.

11 J.R. Melville-Jones, *op. cit.* vol 2, (London, 2007), 177.

12 A.M. Sondgrass and J.L. Bintliff, 'The Cambridge/Bradford Boeotian Expedition: The First Four Years' *Journal of Field Archaeology* 12 (1985) 123-61, E. Farinetti, *Boeotian Landscapes. A GIS Based Study for the Reconstruction and Interpretation of the Archaeological Datasets of Ancient Boeotia* (Leiden, 2009).

13 S.E. Alcock, *Graecia Capta: The Landscapes of Roman Greece* (Cambridge, 1993) 38.

14 Polybius 39.9; Pausanias 7.16.10.

15 Pausanias 7.16.10.

16 B.V. Head, *op.cit.* 88-89.

The presence of the Romans in the region would also have diverted or disrupted bullion supplies: the temporary closure of the Macedonian mines would have suspended a major source of supply for the Boeotian market.[17] Ironically, this would have hindered Boeotian efforts to mint or obtain coin or bullion to pay Rome. Although the Macedonian mines resumed work in 158 B.C., their main output seems to have been used to pay for the assistance of Thracian tribes, or to ensure a steady supply of bullion to Rome.[18] In either case the regional contraction continued and it is not until the Late Roman period (4th century A.D. onwards), that habitation in Boeotia once again flourished. This was no doubt the result of the restructuring of the Roman Empire with an eastern seat at Byzantium.[19]

By looking at the coinage and accompanying archaeology of Boeotia during the 2nd century B.C., we can observe an aspect of the Roman invasion of Greece not commonly mentioned in the surviving literary sources. The coming of Rome may have contributed to the eventual cessation of silver coinage, and led to depopulation. The fines and resources absorbed by Rome no doubt had a negative effect on the region, seen in the archaeology.

## Same coinage, new masters? The Achaean League

A different picture emerges when we turn to the coinage of the Achaean League. This was a confederation of cities that had existed well before the Macedonian or Roman domination of Greece, which grew in power after the defeat of Macedonia by Rome in the 3rd and 2nd centuries B.C.[20] Beyond the obvious advantages of the League in terms of consolidating military and political power, the League facilitated economic growth and unity. Although not the core purpose of the league, this unity was nonetheless important to the League's self-identity and understanding, perhaps best highlighted by Polybius' statement that the diverse cities had 'the same laws, weights, measures and coinage'.[21] The coinage struck by cities in the League bore a common iconography: the head of Zeus Hamarios on the obverse, and a monogram of AX within a wreath on the reverse (Fig. 3).

Fig. 3: AR Achaean League hemidrachm of Elis showing the laureate head of Zeus Hamarios on the obverse, and on the reverse a monogram of AX, with F – A on either side, monogram of ΠΧΥΡΕ above, and NI above thunderbolt below. All within laurel wreath. c. 86 B.C., 14mm, 2.6g. (Reproduced courtesy of Pecunem Gitbud & Naumann, Auction 5, lot 105)

17 M.H. Crawford, *op.cit.* 131.

18 M.H. Crawford, 'Rome and the Greek world: economic relationships' *Economic History Review* 30 (1977), 42 ff.

19 A.M. Snodgrass & J.L. Bintliff, *op.cit.*123-61.

20 S.M. Benner, *Achaian League Coinage of the 3rd through 1st centuries B.C.E.* (Lancaster, 2008) 1.

21 Polybius 2.37.10.

Traditionally, the coinage of the Achaean League was believed to have ceased with the defeat of the League and the fall of Corinth in 146 B.C. Pausanias records that heavy fines were imposed on the League by Rome, and 146 B.C. seems to have marked the end of the Achaean League as an independent economic entity.[22] More recently, however, it is becoming increasingly accepted that the Achaean League continued to strike coinage after their defeat in 146 B.C., with some issues being struck between 167-30 B.C., and others in the period between c. 88 B.C. and the battle of Actium.[23] The latter production coincides with the first Mithridatic War (88-84 B.C.), when Rome was militarily active in the area. This in turn suggests that Rome may have taken control of Achaean League coinage production, initially restricting it since they associated it with military expenditure,[24] and then allowing production to serve their own military needs. The use of local currency by the Romans would have meant that the coinage was easily accepted by merchants, and perhaps was more attractive to the intended recipients (auxiliaries or perhaps even Roman soldiers).

This situation finds a parallel in the Sullan use of the mint of Athens during his campaigns against Mithridates. Kroll observes that Sulla's minting of Athenian tetradrachms may have been concurrent with a release of Achaean silver coinage, also used to finance the war.[25] Rome's use of local currencies is also recorded in Plutarch's life of Lucullus. Lucullus went east with Sulla in connection with the Mithridatic War and managed the mint of the general. Plutarch observes that 'most of the money used in Peloponnesus during the Mithridatic War was coined by him, and was called Lucullan after him'.[26] Later on in his account Plutarch notes that Lucullus collected and re-struck the 20,000 talents Sulla extracted from Asia; one imagines that at least part of this wealth was converted into local coin.[27] Recent analysis of other precious metal currencies in the region both before and after the Mithridatic War suggest that these 'local' precious metal issues could be, and were, produced by cities for use by Rome.[28] A lack of denarii

22 Pausanias 7.16.9-10.

23 S.M. Benner, *op.cit.* 18-21. See also C. Boehringer, 'Zu Chronologie und Interpretation der Münzprägung der achaischen Liga nach 146 v. Chr.', *Topoi* 7 (1997) 103-8, J.A. Warren, 'After the Boehringer revolution. The 'new landscape' in the coinage of the Peloponnese', *Topoi* 7 (1997) 109-14, J.A. Warren, 'The Achaian League silver coinage controversy resolved: a summary', *Numismatic Chronicle* 159 (1999) 99-109.

24 E.L. Cascio, 'State and coinage in the late Roman Republic and early Empire', *Journal of Roman Studies* 71 (1981) 76.

25 J. Kroll, 'Coinage as an index of Romanization' in M.C. Hoff & S.I. Rotroff (eds), *The Romanization of Athens*, (Oxford, 1997) 135-50; see page 140.

26 Plutarch *Lucullus* 2.2.

27 *ibid*. 4.1.

28 F. de Callataÿ, 'More than it would seem: the use of coinage by the Romans in Late Hellenistic Asia Minor (133-63 BC)', *American Journal of Numismatics* 23 (2011) 55-86.

in a region can no longer be taken as an indication that the Romans were not active in the area.

Thus the coinage of the Achaean League continued to be struck and circulated with unchanged iconography even after the defeat of the League by Rome, and is found in hoards from this later period.[29] As an established precious metal currency of the region, it would be counter-intuitive of the Romans to change the iconography of the money. Thus the iconography of the currency does not carry an Achaean reaction to Roman power, but the existence of these coins reveals how the Romans made use of existing structures and currencies.[30]

We now turn to a consideration of an example of what can be learnt from numismatic iconography in this period.

## Images of Power: The Late Republican coinage of Crete and Cyrenaica

The area of Cyrenaica was bequeathed to Rome by Ptolemy Apion upon his death in 96 B.C. The Romans, however, did not begin to assert their power over the region until c.75 B.C.[31] There is little direct evidence to explain this delay, but the increasing problem with piracy in the Mediterranean may have compelled the Romans to take control of the region: Cyrenaica could serve as an area through which the Romans could control activities on the sea. The Romans were also aware of the prosperous crop growth in the region,[32] which could assist with the food shortages that plagued other provinces as a result of the disturbances of the pirates on Roman food supplies.[33] Regardless of the situation, no coinage seems to have been struck after the death of Ptolemy Apion until the merging of Cyrenaica with Crete in 67 B.C.[34]

Crete, which had served as a safe harbour for pirates in the area,[35] was conquered by the Roman general Metellus in 67/66 B.C,[36] and seems to have been almost immediately

29 e.g. IGCH 270, 271

30 Other currencies likely used by the Romans are the so-called 'tetrobols' of Histiaea, the coinage of Dyrrachium, and the silver coinage of Macedonia, amongst others. A detailed examination is forthcoming by de Callataÿ in the *New Research on Roman Republican Coinage Colloquium* (Dresden 2014) proceedings.

31 A. Burnett, M. Amandry, and P.P. Ripolles, *Roman Provincial Coinage Vol 1* (London, 1992) 217.

32 C.G.C. Hyslop, and S. Applebaum, *Cyrene and Ancient Cyrenaica: A Guide Book* (Tripolitania, 1945) 4.

33 R.M. Kallet-Marx, *op.cit.* 306, 376.

34 T.V. Buttrey, 'Part I: The coins from the sanctuary of Demeter and Persephone' in T.V. Buttrey and I. McPhee (eds), *The Extramural Sanctuary of Demeter and Persephone at Cyrene, Libya Final Reports.* Volume VI (Philadelphia, 1997) 47.

35 R.M. Kallet-Marx, *op.cit.* 306-7, 367.

36 Ibid. 319-20.

linked with Cyrenaica as a joint province. An issue of tetradrachms[37] from Gortyn show the helmeted head of Roma on the obverse. The issue bears the legend ΡΩΜΑΣ and Roma's helmet distinctly shows the head of an elephant, an allusion to the Metellus family.[38] This issue is thought to commemorate Metellus' conquest of Crete, and appears to be one of the last issues struck for Crete before the creation of the joint province. After the merging of Crete with Cyrenaica the coinage of both regions was closely connected until 34 B.C., when Cleopatra Selene received Cyrenaica.[39]

Fig. 4: AE coin of L. Lollius showing Zeus Diktaios on the obverse and a *sella curulis* on the reverse. 37-34 BC, 30mm, 22.84g (Reproduced courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group Inc., Mail Bid Sale 78, lot 1243) (www.cngcoins.com)

Fig. 5: AE coin of L. Lollius showing Zeus Ammon on the obverse and a *sella curulis* on the reverse. 37-34 B.C., 32mm, 24.16g (Reproduced courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group Inc., Electronic Auction 294, lot 512) (www.cngcoins.com)

One of the most remarkable issues of the joint province was struck under L. Lollius, with one series of bronze coins struck at Cnossus and another at Cyrene.[40] Zeus, closely associated with Crete as this was his birthplace,[41] is shown on the obverse of both issues. Zeus Diktaios is shown on the Cretan series (Fig. 4) and Zeus Ammon on the Cyrenaican (Fig. 5).[42] The reverse of both units shows a *sella curulis*, the chair on which Roman magistrates sat if they held *imperium*.[43] The half-units of these issues show Artemis Diktyanna with a stag on the Cretan series, and Apollo with a dromedary on the Cyrenaican series (Fig. 6), both

37 RPC 1 901-3.

38 The Metellus family adopted the elephant after the victory of L. Caecilius Metellus over Carthaginian elephants in 251 B.C. See J. Linderski, 'Q. Scipio Imperator' in J. Linderski (ed.), *Imperium Sine Fine: T. Robert S. Broughton and the Roman Republic* (Stuttgart, 1996) 145-85.

39 P. Jaworski, 'Alexandrian bronze coins of Cleopatra VII and Augustus found in Ptolemais, Cyrenaica' *Archeologia* 60 (2011) 2.

40 RPC 1 908-913.

41 W. Wroth, *Catalogue of the Greek Coins of Crete and the Aegean Islands* (Bologna, 1963) xxv.

42 RPC 1 908, 911. E.S.G. Robinson, *Catalogue of the Greek Coins of Cyrenaica* (Bologna, 1965) ccxiv notes that the image here is difficult to interpret; it has been identified as Apion, Battus, Antony as Neos Dionysos or even Antony as Zeus Velchanos. W. Wroth *op.cit.* xxv observes the popularity of Zeus Diktaios in this area, and this identification has been adopted in the RPC.

43 On *imperium* in this period see J. Richardson, *op.cit*.

being types which have clear associations with their respective regions.[44] The head of Libya on the quarter-unit of the Cyrenaican series is also a local type, as is the club of Hercules which appears on the Cretan version (Fig. 7), a reference to the hero's seventh labour, the Cretan bull.[45]

Fig. 6: AE coin of L. Lollius showing Apollo on the obverse and dromedary on the reverse. 37-34 B.C., 28mm, 12.43g. (Reproduced courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group Inc., Triton XI, lot 540) (www.cngcoins.com)

Fig. 7: AE coin of L. Lollius showing the club of Hercules on the obverse and laurel wreath on the reverse. 37-34 B.C., 18mm, 4.39g (Reproduced courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group Inc., Mail Bid Sale 78, lot 1246) (www.cngcoins.com)

It is obvious that the types on the smaller denominations of this issue are references to the local regions, while the *sella curulis* clearly references the position of power held by the magistrate. This mix of local imagery with allusions to the dominant political order can also be seen on modern currency. For example, the bank notes of the British East African Currency Board in colonial Kenya included the portrait of the British monarch, as well as references to local animals or landscapes.[46] But Mwangi's analysis of these notes shows that the 'local' imagery on currency is often an ideal that the ruling power associates with a region, not necessarily a representation of what the local inhabitants themselves identified with. This concept, that 'local' numismatic iconography can represent the dominant power's vision of a region they have just conquered, rather than form a statement of local identity, can also be applied to the ancient coinage of Crete and Cyrenaica. The inclusion of the *sella curulis* on the coinage of both Crete and Cyrenaica reflects the Roman conception of power in this period: in the Republic the Empire was not a territorial entity, but rather *imperium* was associated with the power of individual office holders, with their *provincia* being the delineated assignments of their office. This conception of Empire is visualised through the display of imagery associated with particular Roman offices, and the titles of the Roman magistrates concerned.[47] The references to Hercules, the dromedary, and the cult of Zeus may reflect the Roman perception of the region under their control rather

44 RPC 1 909, 912. Artemis Diktyanna was worshipped on Crete as a goddess of the hunt. W. Wroth, *op.cit*. xxix claims that she may have also been worshipped as a lunar goddess.

45 RPC 1 910, 913.

46 W. Mwangi, 'The lion, the native and the coffee plant: political imagery and the ambiguous art of currency design in colonial Kenya', *Geopolitics* 7 (2002) 8.

47 Richardson, *op.cit*.

than form a statement of local identity. Combined, the imagery is a Roman vision of power, empire, and the areas they had conquered.

The issue of Lollius also reflects the Roman 'vision' of each region through its use of different languages: Latin is used on the Cretan series, and Greek on the Cyrenaican. Latin was likely chosen for the Cretan series due to the fact that Cnossus had become a Roman colony after the conquest of Crete; Latin was the language most appropriate to a colony in the Roman mind-set.[48] Cyrenaica, on the other hand, was 'seen' by the Romans as a Greek speaking province.

The imagery and language on the coins of Lollius provide a window into the developing Roman ideology of Empire, but to what extent did these issues also impact upon their users? Finds from the excavations at the sanctuary of Demeter and Persephone at Cyrene suggest that these coin issues were relatively small, undermining any communicative role we might attribute to them. The vast majority of the coinages found at the sanctuary were Ptolemaic bronzes from the period between 145 B.C. and the death of Ptolemy Apion in 96 B.C.[49] Of the few hundred coins found that were struck after this period, only five were from the time between the creation of the joint province and the end of the civil war. Two of the five found were from Lollius' Cyrenaican series, two were from an issue struck by Crassus at Cyrene between 37-30 B.C., and one was a coin struck by Pupius Rufus between 34-31 B.C.[50]

The Crassus issue found at the site is particularly interesting as, much like the double issue struck by Lollius, it consisted of two series of coinage, one for each region of the joint province. It too used Latin on the Cretan series and Greek on the Cyrenaican, but instead of showing particularly 'Roman' types on the Cyrenaican issues, Crassus chose local imagery, seen in the example of one of his smaller denominations, which has the head of Libya on the obverse and the silphium plant on the reverse (Fig. 8).[51] The silphium plant image had been a traditional coin type in the region, and its selection here may have been made in the context of the Roman interest in older coin

Fig. 8: AE coin of Crassus showing the head of Libya on the obverse and silphium plant on the reverse, 37-30 B.C., 15mm, 2.94g. (Reproduced courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group Inc., Mail Bid Sale 78, lot 1518) (www.cngcoins.com)

48 W. Wroth, *op.cit.* xx.

49 T.V. Buttrey, *op.cit*. 10-30.

50 T.V. Buttrey, *op.cit*. 27-28. The rough dates given here are explained in RPC 1, 218-221.

51 RPC 1 917. Legend has it that when Battus founded Cyrene, the local inhabitants dedicated the silphium to him as it was the most beautiful and useful of their plants. For centuries the silphium plant appeared on the coinage of this region, along with the head of either Zeus Ammon or the ruling king. See J.R. Melville-Jones, *op.cit*. Vol. 1, 241, 461.

types, both in Rome and the regions they conquered – it was thus a 'local' image, but selected within a very Roman context.[52] Pupius Rufus' issue again alludes to the particularly Republican conception of empire, while at the same time referencing more 'local' themes. The half-unit found at the sanctuary reportedly shows a ram on the obverse and a *sella quaestoria*, *hasta* and *sacculus* on the reverse, the traditional attributes of a Roman *quaestor* (Fig. 9). [53]

Fig. 9: AE coin of P. Rufus showing a ram on the obverse and a *sella quaestoria*, *hasta* and *sacculus* on the reverse, 34-31 B.C., 21mm, 5.11g. (Reproduced courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group Inc., Mail Bid Sale 78, lot 1521) (www.cngcoins.com)

The fact that so few of these coins were actually found in the sanctuary at Cyrene suggests that the coins were never used as the main functioning currency, but instead the older Ptolemaic bronzes continued to provide the bulk of the bronze coinage in the monetary system. Admittedly, the sanctuary did not have clear stratigraphic contexts, and so it is difficult to know whether the lack of Roman provincial coins reflects the circulating currency in this period, or whether the small number of these coins is rather reflective of a gradual decrease in worship at the sanctuary.[54] Only future finds will shed light on this problem.

The coinage of the Roman magistrates in this region appears to have been relatively small in quantity, and was perhaps commemorative in nature, marking each magistrate's appointment to office. The display of the paraphernalia of office, and the selection of 'appropriate local' imagery may have been made by the magistrate himself or one of his (perhaps local) advisors. The imagery on these issues changed as the magistrates did, demonstrating that they probably had an influence on the coin types. By examining these issues we can gain a deeper understanding of the Roman vision of Crete and Cyrenaica.

## Conclusions: discrepant experiences in the Republican Empire

The above case studies demonstrate the discrepant provincial experiences that existed in the Republican Empire, and the differing roles coinage had in the process of Roman conquest and consolidation. While Roman presence in Thebes and Boeotia likely led to a decline in minting as part of a more general depopulation of the region, in other areas the Roman presence provided an impetus for new coin series and iconography.

52 See J. Kroll, 'Two hoards of first-century B.C. Athenian bronze coins', ΑΡΧΑΙΟΛΟΓΙΚΟΝ ΔΕΛΤΙΟΝ 27 (1972) 98 on this phenomenon in Athens.

53 T.V. Buttrey *op.cit.* 28, RPC 1 921-2.

54 T.V. Buttrey *op.cit.* 1.

Alongside provincial reactions to Roman control, coinage in this period also bears imagery associated with the Roman perspective: the Roman perception of Empire at this time, and their vision of the regions they conquered, demonstrated by the changing iconography of the magistrates appointed to Crete and Cyrenaica. Alongside new iconography was the continuation of older, established precious metal coinage, which was likely now being struck for Rome. Although the iconography of these types, like the Achaean League issues, remained the same, one must wonder whether the associations of the numismatic imagery in the mind of its users changed to reflect the new political situation.

These three case studies each demonstrate a different effect that the Roman presence had on coinage in regions in the east. They also demonstrate the potential information to be gained from an analysis of Roman Republican provincial coinage. Although these issues have traditionally been the concern of 'Greek' rather than 'Roman' numismatists, the coins and their iconography have much to offer the Roman historian. The growth of the Roman Empire was a complex process, which led to the entanglement of 'Roman' and 'local' ideologies and currencies. By acknowledging this entanglement we can better identify the multiple roles coinage had in the Empire's creation.[55]

**Acknowledgements**

Funding for this research was generously provided by the *Warwick Undergraduate Research Internships* scheme, and we would like to thank all those involved, as well as the University of Warwick, for their support. We would also like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments, which greatly improved the final piece.

**Abbreviations:**

*IGCH*: M. Thompson, O. Mørkholm and C. M. Kraay. *An Inventory of Greek Coins Hoards* (New York, 1973).

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55 On the role of currency in the creation of empire see most recently C. Howgego, 'The monetization of temperate Europe', *Journal of Roman Studies* 103 (2013) 1-30.

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