

PHROURION AND COINS IN CENTRAL SICILY (6th-3rd CENTURY BCE)¹

Viviana Lo Monaco*

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*Pós-doutoranda em História, Faculdade de Ciências Humanas e Sociais, Universidade Estadual Paulista “Júlio de Mesquita Filho”, Franca.

viviana.lomonaco@gmail.com



ABSTRACT: Since its appearance, the minted coin has been an indicator of Greek presence in the Ancient Mediterranean. Despite being a revolutionary notion in the economy of the ancient world, the adoption of the monetary system was not always unanimous, especially among indigenous peoples outside the Hellenic context. This dissension happened because coins, besides the intrinsic value in the metal of which they are made, carry symbolic values intimately linked to the society that produced them. The presence or absence of coins in certain archaeological contexts informs us of their reception among native communities. These objects, accepted by external consumers in adopting them to their everyday life or rituals, were thus also accepted in that they were given new meanings. The case of Sikan *phrouria* in central Sicily is quite interesting. The circulation of Greek coins was scarce in this territory. Its intensity, however, varied over time, and space. These differences allow us to observe the social changes that occurred in Sikan communities between the 6th and 3rd centuries BCE, as well as to understand coins as active agents in cultural transformation. The contextual material analysis carried out in this paper focuses on the different perceptions of Economy among Greeks and Sikans. The latter showed, in turn, a certain resistance to coins, favouring more traditional forms of exchange.

KEYWORDS: Ancient Mediterranean; Greek numismatic; Sikan *Phrouria* towns; economy and identity; agency of coins.

O PHROURION E A MOEDA NA
SICÍLIA CENTRAL (VI-III SÉC. A.C.)

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RESUMO: Desde o seu surgimento, a moeda cunhada tem sido um indicador da presença grega no Mediterrâneo antigo. Apesar de ser uma ideia revolucionária na economia do mundo antigo, a adoção do sistema monetário nem sempre foi unânime, principalmente entre os povos indígenas fora do contexto helênico. Essa discrepância ocorreu porque a moeda, além de seu valor intrínseco devido ao metal de que é feita, carrega valores simbólicos intimamente ligados à sociedade que a produziu. A presença ou ausência de moedas em certos contextos arqueológicos nos informa, portanto, de sua recepção entre as comunidades nativas, que aceitavam objetos de consumo externos adotando-os no cotidiano ou nos rituais e carregando-os de novos significados. O caso dos frúria sicânios, no centro da Sicília, é muito interessante. Nesse território, a circulação de moedas gregas era escassa, mas sua intensidade variava ao longo do tempo e do espaço. Essas diferenças nos permitem observar as mudanças sociais nas comunidades sicânias entre os séculos VI e III a.C. e entender as moedas como agentes ativos na transformação cultural. A análise do material contextual realizada neste trabalho enfoca as diferentes percepções da economia entre gregos e sicânios, que mostraram certa resistência à moeda, favorecendo formas de troca mais tradicionais.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Mediterrâneo antigo; numismática grega; *Frúria* da Sicania; economia e identidade; agência da moeda.

INTRODUCTION

This paper will discuss the impact caused by the introduction of coins in the inner territory of Sicily with the provision of certain case studies. The analyzed territory comprises the area between the middle valley of the Salso River and the middle valley of the Platani River (Fig. 1), a territory that once belonged to Ancient Sikania. From the 7th century² onwards, the Greek *apoikoi* from Gela and Akragas extended their *chorai* towards the interior of Sicily and encountered communities inhabiting this region since the Neolithic era. Interactions between Greeks and non-Greeks in this area occurred in different forms and degrees, depending on the economic and political circumstances that characterized the history of Sicily between the Archaic and Hellenistic periods (6th-4th centuries) (Miccichè, 2011).

To observe this phenomenon, we usually resort to written and material sources. In the case of Central Sicily, however, written sources are extremely rare. The territory examined in this paper is quite absent from textual sources.³ The written tradition on non-Greek populations⁴ is a Greek construction which therefore reflects a view that is not always

² All dates here must be considered BCE.

³ Sources about Sikans and pre-Hellenic populations in Sicily are dated from the 5th century. The most quoted authors are Thucydides, Strabo and Diodorus Siculus (see Anello, 1997).

⁴ Traditionally, the people of Sicily were divided into three ethnocities: the Sikels occupied the eastern area, the Sikans the central area and the Elymians the western area. Such subdivision and denomination were created by the Greeks who tried to reconstruct the history of Sicily before the 8th century.

objective and sometimes laden with a certain prejudice – a *topos* constituted in Greek culture that must not be neglected when working with textual sources (Gazzano, 2009). Historians and archaeologists invite us to reflect on the difficulty of relying solely on textual or material sources. As Pancucci (2006, p. 109 ff.) points out, when only relying on textual sources, the risk is to reconstruct a history filtered by an interpretive model – shaped by Greek historians – applied to a world already distant in time and “nebulous in fact”. Regarding material sources interpreted by archaeologists, we cannot always account for the various factors that led to the formation of certain contexts nor escape modern conditionings. Accordingly, Albanese Procelli (2003a, p. 23) states that it is insidious to identify ‘cultures’ (phases) with *ethne* (Antonaccio, 2004, p. 61). Ancient textual sources with their Hellenocentric point of view were in general not interested in the history of pre-Hellenic peoples (Anello, 1997, p. 539; Galvagno, 2006, p. 28; Miccichè, 2011, p. 24) and therefore reported manipulated information at times. However, both textual and material sources,⁵ while providing some challenges to interpretation, are fundamental allies that help scholars put together the pieces of the variegated puzzle of ancient Sicily and its inhabitants. For example, among the cities here considered, only Mytistraton – cited by Diodorus Siculus (XXIII, 9, 3) and other sources (see Hansen; Nielsen, 2004, p. 217) – was correctly identified in Monte Castellazzo di Marianopoli, thanks to numismatic and epigraphic evidences (Sole, 2012, p. 96-126; Manganaro, 1964, p. 436). It is hard to determine the name of other indigenous towns (without specifying their location), since we only have the written source to state definitive attributions. This is the case of Motyon, which was cited by Diodorus (XI, 91, 4) as a *phourion* under the control of Akragas: many scholars have ventured into trying to attribute this name to the town Vassallaggi or the one in Sabucina, without ever reaching a conclusion.⁶

Artefacts are therefore essential for reading social dynamics. Particularly coins have a special condition among the items of material culture: they carry a range of meanings that result from the intrinsic value of the metal itself and from the representative value of identity and power of the issuing city as well as they play a role as mediators of spiritual and material values. For this reason, they are among the several objects that are present in sacred spaces (such as temple offerings or grave goods in the necropolises) and in quotidian contexts (such as abandoned goods in homes or lost in places of negotiation).

The coin, as a metallic disk bearing signs and symbols, originated and was diffused in the Greek world in the 7th century.⁷ Before its invention in the Mediterranean context, some forms of coins consisted of precious metals (bronze, silver, gold and electro) and were weighed following established standards (Howgego, 2002, p. 15) to be cut and forged into ingots or instruments. Coins represented a revolutionary technological innovation in that

⁵ With the expression “material sources” I mean all artifacts from manual processing and technology in a society. Thanks to such objects (ranging from ceramics to metal products, architectural buildings and organization of space) and to the comparison with written sources, we are often able to attempt an interpretation of the past.

⁶ About the debate on Motyon, see Lo Monaco, 2018, p. 193-4.

⁷ For a scientific debate on the origins of coins, see Florenzano, 2001.

they enabled agile handling of value and exchange: their size facilitated the transportation of metal with purchasing power; their weight and types established a universal language in transactions; and the officiality was guaranteed by the authority that produced it, conferring beyond a real value a nominal value. That is why the coin became the most accepted form of money over the centuries. Nevertheless, it has not always been this way.

In the case of Sikania, between the 6th and 4th centuries, coins did not exist in the main and were apparently rejected by the local people who ran their own economy differently from the Greeks. Even so, the documentation shows a preponderant presence of coins from Akragas and Syracuse between the 5th and 4th centuries, revealing the importance of this territory for both *poleis* at that time. Coins can therefore have an important role in the construction of identity. Recognizing the ability of coins to convey identity values helps to understand the social changes that occurred throughout the period in which Greeks settled on Sicily: after an initial phase of apparent rejection of the Greek monetary system by the indigenous population (between the end of the 6th and the beginning of the 5th centuries), coins began to have a larger circulation between the 5th and 4th centuries, when the division between Greeks and non-Greeks was weakened.

COINS IN SIKANIA

Metallurgical production in Sicily is known to have begun as early as the second half of the 4th millennium BCE. The oldest material attestation is a melting furnace fragment found in Lipara (Giardino, 1997, p. 405). It was, however, mainly in late Bronze Age that metallurgy reached quite an advanced technological state, as can be seen from the presence of sets of metal objects (mainly bronze) throughout the island, which demonstrates the growing specialization in this production. At this time, metals gained a significant economic value. In Lipara, for example, a hoard of bronze objects weighing 75kg was found inside the city walls, which is a sign of integration of metallurgy and its artisans within the social structure (Giardino, 1997, p. 409). The increase in production, especially in the end of the Bronze Age, was surely linked to the progress in agriculture, logging and cattle raising, which also meant a definition in social stratification (Albanese Procelli, 2003b, p. 11).

Sets of bronze objects were found both in Sabucina and in Polizzello (Albanese Procelli, 2003b). In metallurgical production, on top of the raw materials of local origin, artisans resorted to melt ingots and discarded bronze objects. Bronze assemblies and intentional fractures in ingots and objects reveal the need to dispose of metal quickly, either for the production of tools, vessels and jewellery or as a good of trade (Sole, 2009). Although metal, in its raw or worked form, was considered an object of barter, there are no apparent weighted reference values, resulting in the fact that we cannot conjecture a predetermined system of exchange (Albanese Procelli, 2003a, p. 95). Metal in the late Bronze and Iron ages on Sicily had therefore no value as a standardized instrument of exchange – a concept that was later introduced by the Greeks in the 6th century with the issuing of coins.

Before entering the discussion on coins and their role in Central Sicily, it is necessary to clarify the meaning of *phourion* in this article. In classical sources, *phourion* is a fortress that houses soldiers with the purpose to protect borders or critical areas of the *chora* (Winter, 1971, p. 42-3; Fredericksen, 2011, p. 13-5). Be that as it may, I am using *phourion* in the same manner as Diodorus Siculus, that is, as that which names the ancient indigenous towns on Sicily, inhabited mostly by Sikel and Sikan communities. This use is also widespread among Sicilian scholars.⁸

The data in this study come from a group of ancient indigenous Sikan cities⁹ in a territory between the middle valley of the Salso River and the middle valley of the Platani River, that is, in the very core of Sicily (Fig. 1) called *Mesogeia*.

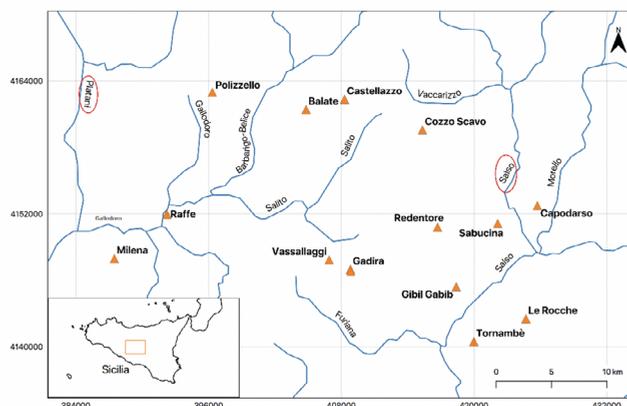


FIGURE 1 – Hydrographic map of Central Sicily between the Salso River (right) and the Platani River (left). The area is crossed by streams nearby where the surveyed archaeological sites are distributed. Credit: Javier Ruiz-Perez.

The basis of the numismatic survey conducted in this research is Lavinia Sole's monograph *Gli Indigeni e la moneta. Rinvenimenti monetali e associazioni contestuali dai centri dell'entroterra siciliano* (2012). This work encloses a detailed catalogue of coins found at the archaeological sites of Central Sicily, especially the ones in the territory of Caltanissetta district. In this text, the numismatic record can be 1) contextual, i.e., coming from excavations; 2) sporadic, as being found on the surface during a visit or other contingencies; 3) from hoards.

The data presented here is divided into “hoards” (when available) and “monetary findings”. A brief commentary on data from hoards is necessary. Coin hoards do not

⁸ About *phourion*, see Lo Monaco, 2020.

⁹ Gadira; Gibil Gabib; Sabucina; Milena; Balate; Monte Castellazzo di Marianopoli; Polizzello; Raffe; Vassallaggi e Cozzo Scavo. Except for Monte Castellazzo (Palermo), the other sites are in the administrative territory of the province of Caltanissetta.

necessarily reflect the reality of the coins in circulation, depending on the very nature of the hoard as an archaeological document. Sets of coins intended for the accumulation of money of a particular intrinsic value bring together specimens from different times and places. It is not always know how or why such sets were formed. Nor can we know who lost or buried them – perhaps members of the community who, in an emergency, had to hide their money, or passing visitors who, for unknown reasons, had to dispose of the money they were carrying with them (Stazio, 1983b, p. 68; Florenzano, 1988; Grandjean, 2015, p. 6). In order to visualize the temporal distribution of coins and their origin, the available data has here been organised and a synoptic graphics created. The first diagram (chart 1) shows the presence of the mints that make up the numismatic data of the research territory. The highest percentages are represented by the Akragantine (42%, 195 coins) and Syracusan (35%, 164 coins) coins, followed by Siculo-Punic Mints (7%, 35 coins) and KAINON¹⁰ (7%, 34 coins).

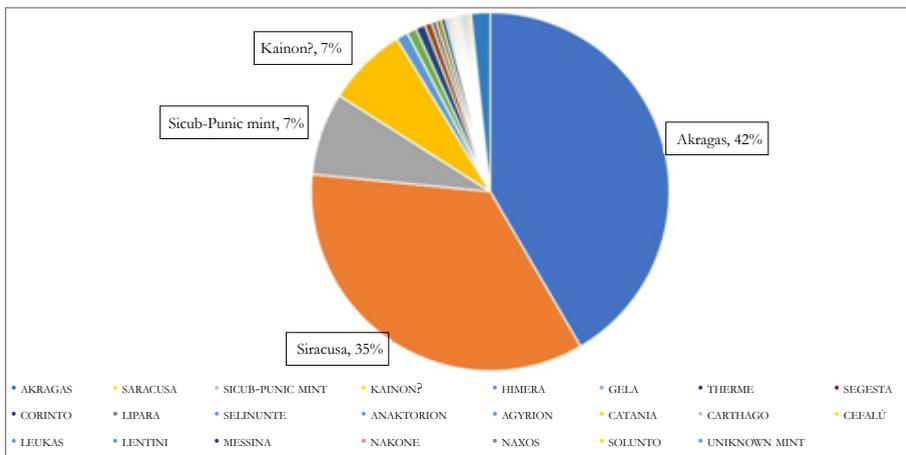


CHART 1 – Total presence of monetary findings.

The second and third diagrams show the temporal distribution of coins. In chart 2, each column shows the presence of coins at each site for periods of 25 years. The count begins with the earliest recorded date of 510 (which corresponds to an Akragantine coin from 510-472 found in Vassallaggi) and ends with the latest recorded date of 240 (corresponding to one Syracusan coin from 269-240, found in Castellazzo).

¹⁰ The issuing of coins bearing the legend KAINON is complex and continues to be debated. Numismatists have already proposed numerous interpretations (emissions from a city in western Sicily; an emission from Punic mercenaries, or from 4th century Akragas). However, a solution to this question has not yet been found. Numismatic evidence and the archaeological contexts of the findings allow experts to conclude that the KAINON issue can be placed chronologically in the first half of the 4th century (Campana, 1999).

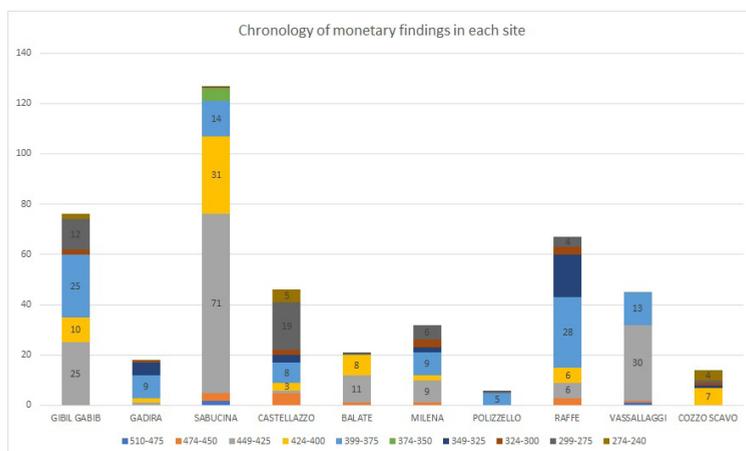


CHART 2 – Chronology of monetary findings in each site

Graph 3 shows the chronological distribution of the findings more clearly. In this case, the periods are divided into 25 years as well, from 510 to 240.

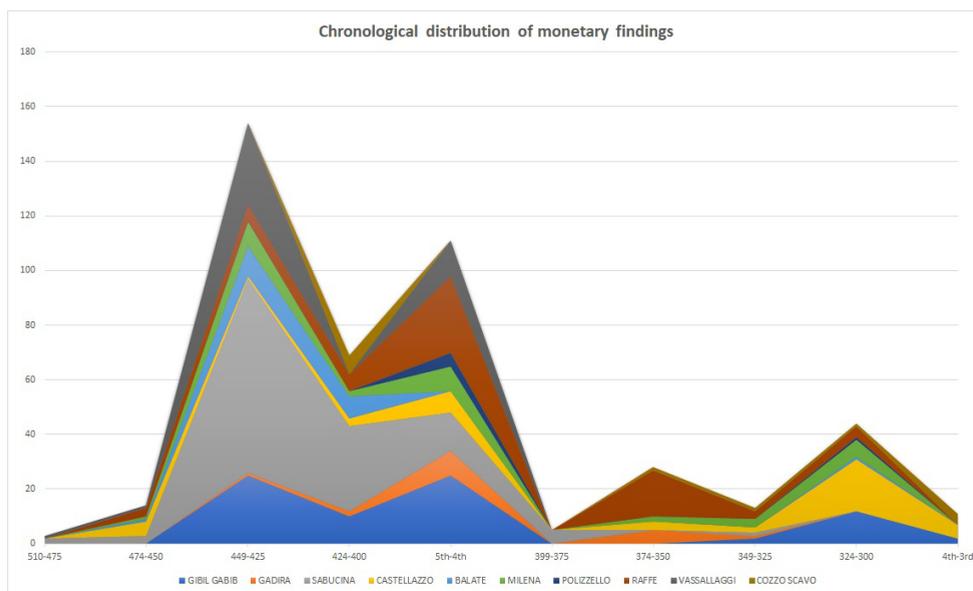


CHART 3 – Chronological distribution of monetary findings

The next two charts (4 and 5) show the locations of the mints. In chart 4, the preponderance of the Akragantine and Syracusan mints is evident. Graph 5 shows the presence of mints in each hoard. The 1928 Gibil Gabib hoard contains the largest variety, with specimens from eleven mints.



CHART 4 – Distribution of mints findings by sites

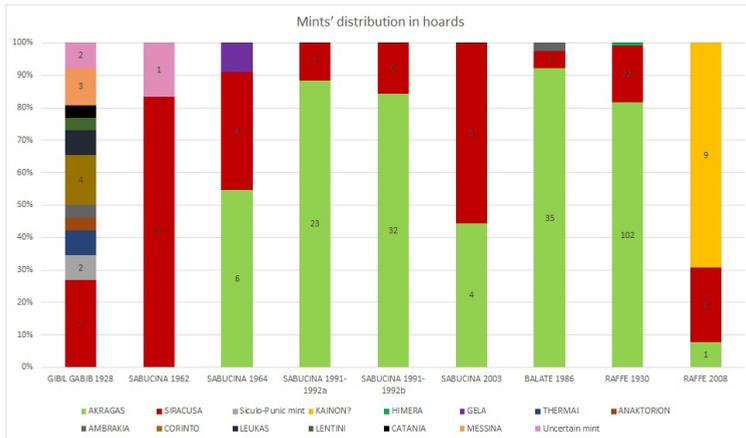


CHART 5 – Mints' distribution in hoards

In chart 6, each column records a mint and the colours mark the time sequences. Here, instead of dividing the timeline into periods of 25 years, all recorded dates were considered.

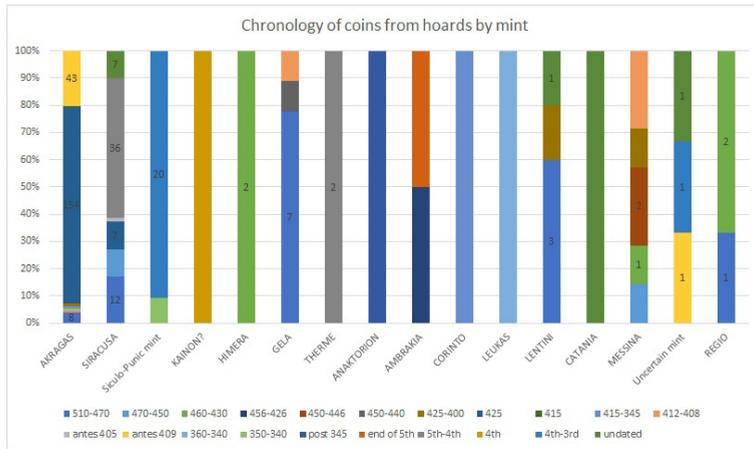


CHART 6 – Chronology of coins from hoards by mint

Graph 7 shows the distribution of coins. The highest concentration is recorded between 425 and 409, with a peak between the end of the 5th and the beginning of the 4th centuries.

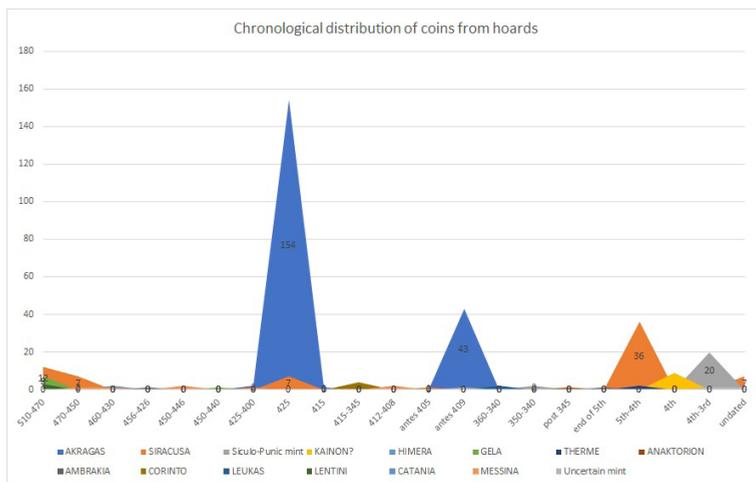


CHART 7 – Chronological distribution of coins from hoards

Analysis of monetary circulation in Sikania indicates the prevalence of coins from Akragas and Syracuse (charts 1 and 4). The presence of Punic coins and coins bearing the legend KAINON is also important. In general, the coins from this geographical area are made of bronze dating from the second half to the end of the 5th century, and from the second half of the 4th century (chart 3). Chart 2 shows the prevalence of coins from the last quarter of the 5th century at almost every site, and of coins from the first quarter of

the 4th century at the sites of Gibil Gabib and Raffe, where a period of demographic and cultural growth took place according to archaeological contexts. The mints of Akragas and Syracuse are also represented in large numbers in the hoards (chart 5), with a prevalence of specimens from the second quarter of the 5th century and the beginning of the 4th century (charts 6 and 7).

Dealing with the history and significance of Siceliot emissions here would be a vast and complicated matter. It will, therefore, be enough to consider some aspects of the circulation of coins outside of the circumscribed *asty* range and their impact on indigenous communities.

The perception of the Greek monetary system by native populations in Southern Italy and Sicily has been a long-debated topic (Stazio, 1983a; Sole, 2015b). Recent studies (Caltabiano; Puglisi, 2004) have shown how, generally in the context of *chorai*, coins from the Siceliot *poleis* were rarely minted to meet the demands of a currency-enabled market. The problem of accepting the monetary system would thus not only be restricted to the indigenous people but would affect the entire “colonial” context of Sicily:

The constant variability in the location and the number of mints active in Sicily [...] compels one to wonder about the real function of currency issued on the island from the 6th century BCE to the Imperial age. The alternative is to identify this function in socioeconomic instances that see in the coin, based on Aristotelian thought, an instrument of social justice for the distribution of wealth, the payment of activities and services, fees, taxes, customs and tolls; or to mainly recognize in it a means of payment for the military expenses required by the policies of conquest, control and defence of territory [...] (Caltabiano; Puglisi, 2004, p. 335. Author’s translation).

A function that is mainly linked to commercial and military demands seems to be grounded in the numismatic evidence of the interior of the island where Akragas, Himera and Selinunte had expanded their *chorai*. Akragas, in the 5th century, was a very prosperous city mainly because of its agricultural economy (Diod. XIII, 81, 4-5). The *polis* minted heavy bronze coins bearing an eagle on the obverse and a crab on the reverse (Fig. 2). These coins spread mainly inside the *chora*, where a continuity of use is also documented after their official issuance (sometimes retaining its political value through countermarks). For this reason, some scholars consider them a “border issuance”, that is, coins issued in border cities (Caltabiano *et al.*, 2006, p. 657), that are able to dialogue with those inhabiting this territory who primarily focused on agricultural activities. In this regard, we should recall that the Siceliot bronze coins used a peculiar unit of measurement common in the Greek world, the *litra*, whose fractions were calculated on the basis of silver to provide the same purchasing power and which probably originated in the Italian peninsula (Caltabiano *et al.*, 2006, p. 656). The capillary diffusion of Akragantine bronze in *Mesogeia* can be explained by the ancient habit of native populations using metal as a bartering tool. In some hoards

(Sabucina, 2003, Raffe, 1930 e Raffe, 2008 apud Sole, 2012 – see below), arrowheads¹¹ and coins were found together. This probably occurred because of the equivalence between the two metallic objects, due to the intrinsic value of the metal itself (Sole, 2015a, p. 269; 2015b, p. 780). The silver coins from the first half of the 5th century, on the other hand, are found mainly (but still in small quantities) in the hoards buried in early 4th century, showing thus a preference for bronze for business transactions and silver as metal to be stocked.



FIGURE 2 – Heavy bronze coin from Akragas (*onkia*, ca. 406). Source: coinarchives.com (Gorny & Mosch Giessener Münzhandlung > Auction 265. Lot number: 74. Auction date: 14 October 2019)

From the end of the 5th century, the conflicts on Sicily were amplified mainly because of the politics of Dionysus I and the attacks of the Carthaginians. The island was populated by troops of mercenaries (Diod. XIV, 7), many of which settled in the inland of the *chorai*. According to some scholars, the *Mesogeia* assumed the aspect of a war frontier during this period (Sole, 2012, p. 340) because it was an intersection between the *chorai* of Syracuse, Himera and Akragas, and the Punic epicracy. The presence of coins in this area, mainly bronze ones, intensified, and coins from Carthage and Siculo-Punic mints began to circulate in parallel with the Greek ones.

A COIN NETWORK: SOME CASE STUDIES AND HOARDS

To better understand the use of coinage and the perception of a monetary system in *Mesogeia*, it seems wise to observe the distribution of monetary findings inside and outside of the towns. Most of the coins were found in urban centres and, to a lesser extent, in sacred areas, whereas findings in the necropolises and near the walls are few. In sacred contexts, coins only assume the symbolic value of *ex-voto* at an early stage of contact (end of the 6th-beginning of 5th centuries), whereas it is difficult to determine their use in successive centuries. The same thing can be said for the necropolises (Sole, 2012, p. 323). Coins found in the context of the urban centre inform us mainly about their use in business transactions.

¹¹ All arrowheads weigh about 2 g. This standardisation of weight would be a confirmation of its double function as a tool as well as a coin.

The data from Vassallaggi¹² is fascinating. In its sacred area, built in the 6th century, coins were found in the buildings around the *temenos* and the temple. According to the interpretations, the oldest ones¹³ would have been used as votive offerings in the foundations of a service room connected to a cult. The more recent ones may, in my view, have a certain relevance to the productive and commercial functions of the structures around the *temenos*¹⁴ (Fig. 3).



FIGURE 3 – Ortophoto of the sacred area at Vassallaggi archaeological site. Surrounding the small temple *in antis* (built in the 6th century) is a network of buildings that most likely had a productive and commercial function linked to the activities of the temple itself which welcomed the faithfuls.

A complete panorama of circulating coins is undoubtedly offered by Sabucina, in which a consistent numismatic documentation has been retrieved. Eight kilometres North-East from the city of Caltanissetta there are two calcarenite mountains, Sabucina and Capodarso, on the top of which two ancient cities were founded. The sides of the mountains

¹² Vassallaggi is a hill between the cities of San Cataldo and Serradifalco (Caltanissetta), where an ancient city was founded. During the 5th century, this city was one of the most important centres of internal Sikania, due to its close connection with the *polis* of Akragas.

¹³ One silver didrachm from Akragas bearing the eagle / crab-images dated from 510-472, and one bronze hemilitron from Himera Gorgoneion / six globules dated from 450-430 (Sole, 2012, p. 293).

¹⁴ In this regard, it can be recalled that in the 2003 excavation, in some rooms of the northern area of the *temenos*, large buried *pithoi* were found, associated with a system of channels (for runoff of water) and structures that ended in a clay bank. The arrangement of the spaces, the reconstruction of the system and the material context led to the interpretation of the area as a ceramic workshop (Sanfilippo Chiarello, 2004-2005).

that go down to the Salso River create a bottleneck in its course (Fig. 4), allowing full control of the passage. Salso is a long river connecting the northern and southern coasts of Sicily. It is for this reason that particularly Sabucina (inhabited from the ancient Eneolithic era until the beginning of the 4th century) had a significant strategic importance.

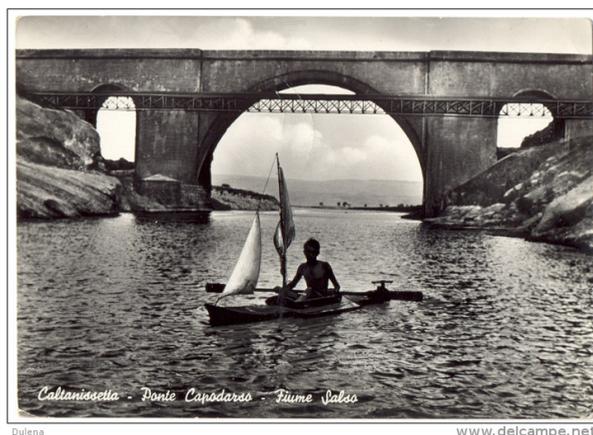


FIGURE 4 – A 1950s picture of Salso River, Capodarso Bridge.

Sabucina is, so far, the site in Central Sicily in which the largest number of coins was found (chart 8), with the total of 219 coins. Among these, 90 coins come from five different hoards. Coins date from the beginning of the 5th until the second half of the 4th century and are predominantly bronze (only the oldest coin is silver).

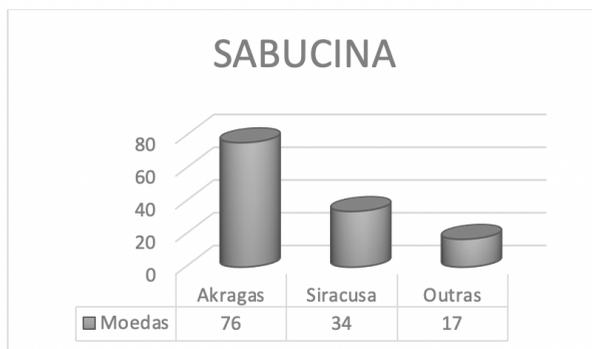


CHART 8 – Graphical representation of Sabucina’s monetary findings. Among the *poleis* represented in the numismatic documentation there are: Akragas (77); Syracuse (35); Segesta (1); Selinunte (2); Himera (3); Thermai (2); Messina (1); Lentini (1); Nakone (1); Gela (2); Siculo-Punic mints (1); Kainon (2); Leukas (1) (SOLE, 2012, p. 185-282).

Archaeological research showed that the town in Sabucina reached its full development in the 5th century but was gradually abandoned during the 4th century (Miccichè, 2011, p. 89 ff.). Monetary evidence seems to confirm this data. In fact, the specimens dating from the end of the 5th and the beginning of the 4th centuries are in preponderant numbers. Among them, many heavy Akragas bronzes with the eagle / crab inscription, with or without countermarks, were found, while coins from the 4th century are few.

In cities that continued to thrive in the 4th century (Gadira, Gibil Gabib, Raffe, Castellazzo and Cozzo Scavo), monetary findings in sacred areas and necropolises are extremely scarce and are mainly concentrated in urban centres. The few coins found in Polizzello date from the early 4th century and suggest the presence of a small group, perhaps mercenaries, who temporarily could have occupied the place (Palermo, 2009, p. 311). In this period, mercenaries played indeed a significant role in the life of the towns in Central Sicily. Wars between Siceliots and Carthaginians turned the central area of the island into a place of transitions and negotiations. Castellazzo is the town where most numerous Siculo-Punic coins have been found.

Castellazzo Mountain is located North-East of Marianopoli¹⁵ and is on the shores of the Madonie Mountains. This site was inhabited from the Neolithic era until the 3rd century and was probably called *Mytistraton*, as numismatic evidence suggests: some coins bearing the legend MY, MYTISTPATON, MYTY were found in the town. Unfortunately, their provenience is only known through excavation reports since they were dispersed in antiquity market (see SOLE, 2012, p. 106, with bibliography).

The coins from Castellazzo are all bronze and date from the end of the 5th to the first half of the 3rd centuries. Coins from the end of the 4th to the beginning of the 3rd centuries are prevalent, and the Siculo-Punic coins are present in high numbers, as opposed to the other cities (Chart 9).

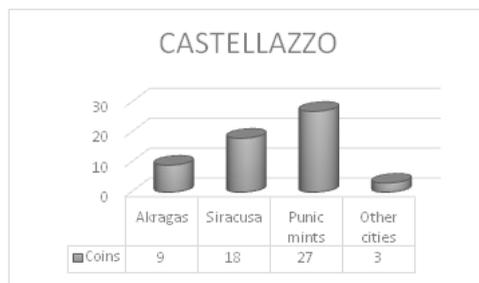


CHART 9 – Graphical representation of the monetary findings of Castellazzo. Among the *poleis* represented in the numismatic documentation are Akragas (9); Syracuse (18); Siculo-Punic (27); Kainon (1); Lipara (1); Thermai (1); *Mytistraton* (unknown number) (Sole, 2012, p. 96-126).

¹⁵ This is a little city in the administrative district of Caltanissetta. The mountain of Castellazzo – despite being a few kilometres away from it – is part of the territory administrated by the province of Palermo.

In the south-East of Castellazzo, there is a small town in Cozzo Scavo (Santa Caterina Villarmosa). Archaeological evidence in this town points to the presence of a group of Campanian mercenaries who had intense trade with Carthaginians, between the 4th and 3rd centuries (Acquaro; Fariselli, 1997), but no coins have been found here. It would seem that the communities of mercenaries at Castellazzo and Cozzo Scavo could have kept contact during Hellenistic age, but both cities were destroyed and abandoned in the first half of the 3rd century. Diodorus Siculus (XXIII, 9, 3) reports that, during the first Punic war (264-241), *Mytistraton* was invaded by the Roman army twice (in 261 and in 259), because it was a Carthaginian *phourion*. On the other hand, according to scholars (Acquaro; Fariselli, 1997, p. 9), Cozzo Scavo was invaded and destroyed by Pyrrhus, between 278 and 276. Nevertheless, it is safe to say that the current state of archaeological researches cannot provide a definitive conclusion about the chronology, which leads to the conclusion that it is not so improbable that the ending of the two towns was due to the same cause. It is then possible to assume that either the mercenaries in Cozzo Scavo left the place shortly after the turmoil caused by the Pyrrhus invasion in 278-277, and joined the *Mytistraton* mercenaries; or, at the time of the Roman invasion, the two cities joined battle and suffered the same fate in 259.

We can observe that the monetary findings mainly date from the second half of the 5th century: hoards were found in the whole area of Central Sicily (Sole, 2012) and are dated between the end of the 5th and the beginning of the 3rd centuries. We can distinguish two types of hoards: “emergency hoards” and “saving hoard”.

Saving hoards contain specimens with a particular intrinsic value in a wide chronological range – a symptom of the wish to collect and store precious metal. Consequently, these hardly reflect a picture of monetary circulation from the moment they were hidden or lost. Hoards of Caltanissetta 1948 (Sole, 2012, p. 40 ff.), Balate 1986 (Sole, 2012, p. 68 ff.), Sabucina 1964 (Sole, 2012, p. 215 ff.), Gibil Gabib 1928 (Sole, 2012, p. 142 ff.), and Santa Caterina Villarmosa 1955 (Sole, 2012, p. 309 ff.) are considered saving hoards. The hoard of Caltanissetta only contained silver coins from Akragas, Camarina, Catane, and Gela, dating from 510-472 to 415-405. The hoard of Santa Caterina Villarmosa 1955 was also only composed of silver coins from various Siceliot *poleis* and Athens, dating from 510-472 to c. 420. The loss of the two hoards may therefore have happened in the second half of the 5th century. In the other two saving hoards listed above, along with the silver coins, there were bronze coins that perhaps were added right before hiding the money (Sole, 2012, p. 326).

Emergency hoards contain mainly coeval coins which were not necessarily of high intrinsic value and reflect the monetary circulation of the time when they were lost. We could imagine an individual, in a moment of imminent danger, that collected his finances for hiding, thinking he would recover them later. Emergency hoards found in *Mesogeia* contain especially heavy bronze coins from Akragas with or without countermarks (issued in the middle of the 5th century but still circulating in Central Sicily for their high intrinsic value), Syracuse (from Dionysus I emissions), and Sicilian and African Punic mints. They are: Raffe 1930 (Sole, 2012, p. 163 ff.), Sabucina 1962 (Sole, 2012, p. 214 ff.), Sabucina 1991-1992 (a) and 1991-1992 (b) (Sole, 2012, p. 218 ff.), Sabucina 2003 (Sole, 2012, p. 216 ff.). In the

hoards of Raffe 1930 and Sabucina 2003, the coins were deposited with bronze objects and arrowheads, all weighing 2 grams, which had evidently lost their function as weapon to acquire a currency value. The two Sabucina hoards were found in the south-western off-wall sacred area within two cave environments intended for the *ex-voto* deposit. Except for those found in Sabucina, emergency hoards were interpreted as *misthoi*¹⁶ of mercenaries. The most recent emergency hoards are Raffe 2008 (Sole, 2012, p. 172 ff.) and Santa Caterina Villarmosa 2008 (Sole, 2012, p. 315 ff.), both lost between the end of the 4th and the beginning of the 3rd centuries. They contain mainly coins bearing the KAINON legend and Punic coins, and it is for this very reason they were interpreted as *misthoi* of mercenaries hired by the Carthaginians.

CONCLUSIONS

In the inner cities, specimens of the first Siceliot coins (late 6th century) are not present as mediators in the barter but are used mainly for their symbolic value. Nevertheless, we do find a few examples of this in indigenous contexts in the first half of the 5th century. It is possible to interpret this absence as a difficulty by the Sikan world in adopting coins, being such a controversial object in terms of symbolic meanings, as an interpreter of its own magical and sacred universe (see Florenzano, 2009, p. 19).

The shortage of coins until the middle of the 5th century reveals the distance of the Sikans from the idea of an economy ruled by weighted systems based on values which were probably unrelated to their culture. After all, using Polanyi's words (1968, p. 179): «No *one* rule is universally valid, except for the very general, but no less significant, rule that money-uses are distributed between a multiplicity of different objects». It is probably because of a lack of this sense of understanding that Akragas, even at the beginning of the 5th century, did not have a strong currency comparable to the city's achievements in the production of consumer goods and architectural forms. The first significant change comes shortly after the Ducetius revolt (Galvagno, 2000), where Akragas is decisively present using coins as a vehicle of power. For instance, the increased presence of Greek coins – especially the ones from Akragas – in Sabucina (chart 8) and generally in the interior is revealing. The coin in this case clearly plays the role of a transformative agent in this new phase of life of the

¹⁶ In the classical period, the *misthos* emerged in Athens as a public salary that was assigned to citizens who held a political position as members of a popular assembly (the *boule*) or as judges. It was introduced to encourage participation in public life. The *sitos* was an allowance for the food that the archons and a few other officials received (Gallo, 1984). Moreover, *misthos* was the name of the payment of mercenaries: "A man who earned money in the service of [the] Athenian state was called *misthophoros*, a word that was identified with mercenary service" (Trundle, 2004, p. 80). The *sitos*, in this case, refers to the supplies for troops that would last for thirty days (*ibid.*, p. 85). Griffith (1968, p. 264-5) argues that, over time, *sitos* became a cash payment and mercenaries received both payments, but at different times: the *sitos* were distributed in advance, since it was the initial money with which the soldier could prepare for battle; while the *misthos* was the payment for the service rendered and thus only received at the end of the service.

Siceliot *poleis*, their *chorai*, and the cities involved in their policies. Trades and transactions need a common language, that is, a sign of a completed social transformation. Coins, as an aspect of political expression, were fully adopted in this territory thanks to the settlement of mercenaries in the 4th and 3rd centuries, who accumulated their *misthoi* and use *sitos* as a form of internal and external barter.

Mercenaries issued coins as minted money in the many cities founded or occupied by them, not only to make transactions possible, but also to convey their identity as political entities and citizens. That being said, it is essential to highlight that mercenaries “often come from the *polis* and in the *polis* they intend to return, so they do not stand as an alternative to membership; if they are away, it is by chance and for a possibly limited time” (Bettalli, 2006, p. 56).

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