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The Carthage aes nummi of the first tetrarchy

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The first rough classification of the eight Carthage aes nummi issues of the first tetrarchy with their unique and specific reverse types¹ was proposed by Voetter in 1893.² Since then the aes coinage of the mint of Carthage has been studied in detail and elaborated on the basis of some new criteria by Elmer and Sutherland.³ A suggested relative sequence of nummi issues of the first tetrarchy will be presented here only schematically.

The mint began striking the initial issue of the aes nummi with the reverse legend FELIX ADVENT AVGG NN (standing Africa) and the mint-mark PKP-T in three officinae, the first and the second being reserved exclusively for Diocletian and Maximian respectively (with a long obverse legend IMP C ... P F AVG), and the third operating both for Constantius and Galerius. The following issue, introducing shorter obverse legends for both Augusti (IMP ... P F AVG) but retaining the same reverse type and legend, extended its operation to four officinae (PKP-Q), the third and the fourth being divided between Constantius and Galerius respectively. The third issue with the same obverse legends and reverse type and legend is characterized by the introduction of additional mint-marks in Greek lettering in the field $\frac{A-\Delta}{PKP-Q}$. In the fourth issue the Greek letters were replaced by the Jovian initial for Diocletian and Galerius and the Herculan for Maximian and Constantius respectively ($\frac{I-H}{PKP-Q}$). The only change in the following fifth issue is the use of Greek numbering for the officinae $\frac{I-H}{PKA-\Delta}$. In the sixth issue with Greek numbering of the officinae (A-Δ), the new reverse type with a standing Carthage was introduced. According to Elmer and Sutherland⁴

¹ C. H. V. SUTHERLAND, 'Some Political Notions in Coins Types between 294 and 313', *JRS* 53, 1963, 16.

² O. VOETTER, 'Römische Kupferprägung in Carthago', *Mitteilungen des Clubs der Münz- und Medaillen-Freunde in Wien* 41, 1893, 405.

³ G. ELMER, 'Die Prägungen des staatlichen römischen Münzamt in Karthago', *NZ* 65, 1932, 23-36 - hereafter ELMER. C. H. V. SUTHERLAND, *RIC* 6, London 1967, 411 ff. - hereafter SUTHERLAND.

⁴ ELMER 27. SUTHERLAND 415.

both reverse legends SALVIS AVGG ET CAESS AVCTA KART and SALVIS AVGG ET CAESS FEL KART were being struck simultaneously in this issue. In the seventh issue, characterized by larger portrait heads, the reverse legend SALVIS AVGG ET CAESS AVCTA KART ceased to be minted. The final issue of the first tetrarchy aes nummi with the SALVIS AVGG ET CAESS FEL KART reverse legend reintroduces in the field the letters denoting membership of the Jovian and Herculan houses $\frac{I-H}{A-\Delta}$.

However, there are certain points concerning the absolute chronology as well as the sequence of issues of the first tetrarchy which deserve our careful reconsideration.

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According to Elmer and Sutherland⁵ the striking of the first issue of the aes nummi began in ca. 296 when the mint of Carthage was opened at the time of Maximian's arrival in Africa to suppress the revolt of the Quinquegentiani.

However, it is certain that the opening of the mint of Carthage did not occur before the arrival of Maximian in Africa (Adventus type). This happened only in the spring of 297⁶ after he had concluded the campaign in Spain in the autumn of 296.⁷ The mint of Carthage was undoubtedly established with the help of personnel from the mint of Rome⁸ as the Roman portraiture style is reflected on its coinage.⁹ Elmer noted that in the mint of Rome the number of officinae minting aes nummi soon decreased from nine to four and connected this phenomenon with the opening of the new mint in Carthage.¹⁰ The reduction of the number of officinae in Rome occurred during its third emission which can be placed chronologically in ca. 297/298.¹¹ This accords well with Maximian's arrival in Africa and the simultaneous establishment of the mint of Carthage in the spring of 297.¹²

On the other hand, Sutherland hypothesized that the minting of the last aes nummi issue of the first tetrarchy »perhaps did not extend beyond 303«. ¹³ The evidence, however, contradicts his assumption. The first aes nummi issue of the second tetrarchy evidently retained the reverse type and the mint-mark of the last issue of the first tetrarchy but with the obverse legends of the members of the second tetrarchy. The sequence of both issues must have been uninterrupted as is also shown by the analysis of hoards containing a high percentage of Carthage

⁵ ELMER 24. SUTHERLAND 425.

⁶ Pan. Lat. 8 (5).

⁷ P. ARGENT, 480, 1 verso 3. T. D. BARNES, *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine*, Cambridge 1982, 59. See also ANNA PASQUALINI, *Massimiano Erculius. Per un' interpretazione della figure e dell' opera*, Roma 1979, 64 ff.

⁸ K. PINK, 'Die Silberprägung der Diocletianischen Tetrarchie', *NZ* 63, 1930, 18. Id., 'Die Goldprägung des Diocletianus und seiner Mitregenten', *NZ* 64, 1931, 22.

⁹ SUTHERLAND 411.

¹⁰ ELMER 24.

¹¹ SUTHERLAND 331, 358 ff. See also A. JELOČNIK, 'Kleine Beiträge zur Numismatik der Diocletianischen Tetrarchie', *NZ* 87/88, 1972, 79, who sets the third issue of Rome in 296 on the basis of Sutherland's datation of the opening of the mint of Carthage.

¹² G. FABRE, M. MAINJONET, 'Les trésors de Montbouy (Loiret)', *Gallia suppl.* 12, 1958, 127, n. 12, on the other hand, date the opening of the mint to 298 when Maximian marched into the city.

¹³ SUTHERLAND 415.

aes nummi.¹⁴ The last issue of the first tetrarchy is only rarely represented in hoards deposited between 308–310 in which specimens of the first issue of the second tetrarchy are, on the other hand, already well represented. This clearly proves that the last issue of the first tetrarchy must have been minted for a very short time before the very end of the first tetrarchy and that afterwards its striking continued without interruption in the names of the new rulers of the second tetrarchy.

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It was more than 40 years ago that a 10.77 gr. heavy aes nummus of Constantius (CONSTANTIVS NOB CAES) with a very long reverse legend SALVIS AVGG ET CAESS FELIX KARTHAGO and the mint mark Γ, found in a hoard at Fyfield in Britain, was published.¹⁵ It shows a medium-large portrait head on the obverse and a thin tall personification of Carthage on the reverse (Pl. 1:2). The specimen was only briefly mentioned by Carson and Kent as »an exceptional piece«¹⁶ but remained unconsidered by Sutherland.

There, however, exist five more specimens distinctly showing other reverse legends as noted which were not taken into consideration by Elmer and Sutherland.¹⁷

In 1980, an aes nummus weighing 9.92 gr. exhibiting the same obverse and reverse legends as the Fyfield specimen, was bought for the collection of P. Zanchi in Switzerland (Pl. 1:1).¹⁸ The reverses of both specimens are die linked.

Another aes nummus of Constantius which was found in the Isny I hoard is kept in the Württembergisches Landesmuseum in Stuttgart.¹⁹ A medium-large portrait head is accompanied by the obverse legend CONSTANTIVS NOB CAES. On the reverse of the 9.49 gr. specimen is the legend SALVIS AVGG ET CAESS AVCTA KARTHAGO, a Γ mint-mark and a tall, slim figure of Carthage (Pl. 1:3).

¹⁴ See evidence collected by P. KOS in J. GARBSCH – P. KOS, *Zwei Schatzfunde der frühen 4. Jahrhunderts. Das spätromische Kastell Vermania bei Isny I.* (Münchner Beiträge zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte, Bd. 44), München 1988, Tabelle 5.

¹⁵ E. T. LEEDS, *A Hoard of Roman Folles from Diocletian's Reform (AD 296) to Constantine Caesar Found at Fyfield, Berks.*, Oxford 1946, II, 50, Pl. II, 16.

¹⁶ R. A. G. CARSON, J. P. C. KENT, 'Constantinian Hoards and Other Studies in the Later Roman Bronze Coinage', *NC* 16, 1956, 115.

¹⁷ The Carthage aes nummi in the numismatic collections in Athens (Numismatic Museum), Beograd (Narodni muzej), Berlin (Staatliche Museen), Bruxelles (Bibliothèque Royale Albert Ier), Budapest (Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum), Carthage (Musée de Carthage), Ljubljana (Narodni muzej), London (British Museum), Milano (Civiche Raccolte Numismatiche and Collezioni di Brera e del Comune), München (Staatliche Münzsammlung), New York (The American Numismatic Society), Oxford (Ashmolean Museum), Paris (Bibliothèque Nationale), Princeton (University), Stockholm (Kungl. Myntkabinettet), Tunis (Musée de Bardo), Vienna (Münzkabinett) and Zagreb (Arheološki muzej) have been considered owing to the kindness of the following curators: J. Touratsoglou, Bojana Borić, H.-D. Schulz, Jacqueline Lallemand, Katalin Biro-Sey, M. Enabli, P. A. van der Vin, John Kent, Rodolfo Martini, Bernhard Overbeck, William E. Metcalf, Cathy King, Michel Amandry, Brooks Levy, Harald Nilsson, Khaled ben Romdhane, Günther Dembski and Ivan Mirnik. The study of the comparative material in Tunisia was made possible by a generous grant of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut in Berlin through the kindness of the Director Professor Edmond Buchner.

¹⁸ Aes Rude – Chiasso, April 1980. I owe this information to the kindness of G. GAUTIER.

¹⁹ P. Kos, op. cit. (n. 14), 75, Cat. No. 4.



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9



10



The obverses of the Zanchi and the Isny specimens are die linked. Both, significantly enough, are also die linked with the obverse of the aes nummus with the reverse legend SALVIS AVGG ET CAESS AVCTA KART from the Čentur-C hoard in Istria (Pl. 1:7).²⁰ A further specimen of Constantius (CONSTANTIVS NOB CAES) of the third Carthaginian officina (I') with the very short reverse legend SALVIS AVGG ET CAESS AVCT KAR is held by the Münzkabinett in Vienna (Pl. 1:4). In the British Museum is an aes nummus of Galerius (MAXIMIANVS NOB CAES) with an identical reverse legend and a Δ mint-mark (Pl. 1:5), whereas a worn specimen with die linked obverse and reverse is in the Zagreb collection (Pl. 1:6). The former two specimens weigh 10.84 gr. and 9.84 gr. respectively, and the latter 9.53 gr., all showing medium-large portrait heads and medium-large figures of Carthage holding different kinds of plant attributes in the hands.

All six specimens are, I believe, the scarce representatives of hitherto unrecognized issues²¹ which call for a revision of the relative sequence of the first tetrarchy aes nummi.

Several criteria were proposed as being important for the sequence of aes issues in the mint of Carthage. A very significant one is the position of the wreath-ties: at the very beginning of striking two ribbons hang down but later, the front ribbon is lying forward onto the neck and the shorter rear ribbon is dangling down.²² The criterium of smaller portrait heads being superseded by larger ones²³ is less relevant as it is valuable only for its extreme variants. For medium-large portrait heads the subjectivity of the observer plays too great a role.

After the initial reverse type showing standing Africa with her attributes, a new reverse type was introduced and struck until late 306. It shows the personification of Carthage with a wreath on her head, wearing a long chiton and holding various plant attributes²⁴ (ears of corn, fruit of various kinds) in both hands.²⁵ It has been argued that the reverse figures developed from small, thin ones to very tall, bulky ones.²⁶ It was also believed that the plant attributes in the hands of Carthage were very soon transposed between the hands after having shown fruit in the right and wheat in the left hand at the beginning of the SALVIS AVGG ET CAESS AVCTA KART issue.²⁷

The numismatic evidence, however, partly invalidates the definite value of the latter criterium. There are four kinds of plant attributes in the hands of Carthage which occur in six combinations (Fig. 1):

²⁰ A. JELOČNIK – P. KOS, *The Čentur-C Hoard. Folles of Maxentius and of the Tetrarchy* (= Situla 23), Ljubljana 1983, Pl. 11, 320.

²¹ For the definition of issue, see R. GÖBL, 'Eckhelianum II', NZ 98, 1984, 7–18.

²² ELMER 24, SUTHERLAND 413.

²³ ELMER 24, SUTHERLAND 415.

²⁴ ELMER 27, SUTHERLAND 426 ff.

²⁵ For the description of the personification of Carthage, see J. W. SALOMONSON, 'Kunstgeschichtliche und Ikonographische Untersuchungen zu einem Tonfragment der Sammlung Benaki in Athen', *Archaeologische Studien van het Nederlands Instituut te Rome. Scripta minora* III, 1973, 66.

²⁶ ELMER 27.

²⁷ R. A. G. CARSON, J. P. C. KENT, op. cit. (n. 16) 115.

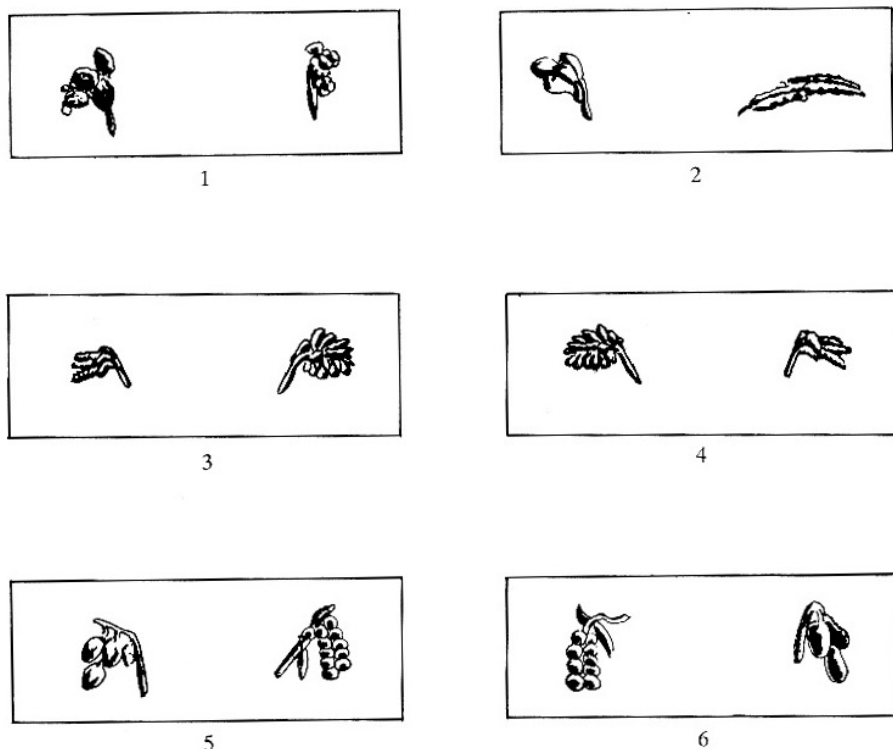


Fig. 1

With a small, thin figure of Carthage combination 2 evidently predominates (Pl. 1:8–10), while with a tall and bulky reverse figure combination 6 (Pl. 2: 1,2,4) slightly exceeds in number combination 5²⁸ (Pl. 2:3), all combinations appearing either with SALVIS AVGG ET CAESS AVCTA KART or SALVIS AVGG ET CAESS FEL KART reverse legends. Even in the last issue of the first tetrarchy (solely SALVIS AVGG ET CAESS FEL KART) with the mint-mark $\frac{\text{I-H}}{\text{A-}\Delta}$ both combinations 5 and 6 occur (Pl. 2:5–7).

Both SALVIS AVGG ET CAESS AVCTA KART and SALVIS AVGG ET CAESS FEL KART issues show a clear development of the reverse figures from small, thin ones to tall and bulky ones. The evidence implies, therefore, the independent development of the reverse figures either with the SALVIS AVGG ET CAESS AVCTA KART or with the SALVIS AVGG ET CAESS FEL KART reverse legends. This could, plausibly enough, be interpreted as an argument for the simultaneous striking of aes nummi with both reverse legends not only in the

²⁸ For instance, of 57 specimens with SALVIS AVGG ET CAESS FEL KART in Vienna 25 specimens show combination 6 and 22 specimens combination 5.



sixth issue, as Elmer and Sutherland have suggested,²⁹ but in their seventh issue as well. One would hesitate to accept the idea of the simultaneous striking of nummi with both reverse legends in the same officinae denoted with the same mint-marks since it would render the control of the mint output extremely difficult

²⁹ ELMER 27. SUTHERLAND 415.

and hence seems most unlikely. Such striking would theoretically also result in an approximately even percentage of minted coins with both reverse legends. On the contrary, the analysis of hoards shows a tremendously uneven output of specimens with the SALVIS AVGG ET CAESS AVCTA KART and the SALVIS AVGG ET CAESS FEL KART reverse legends (ca. 18 and 77 per cent. of all Carthage aes nummi of the first tetrarchy respectively)³⁰ and suggests a much scarcer striking of coins with the former legend.³¹

However, a detailed analysis of the Isny II hoard, buried in the province of Raetia and containing a unique and enormous percentage of the Carthaginian aes nummi (54.16 %),³² is crucial for our understanding of the present problem. Out of the 60 aes nummi with the reverse legend SALVIS AVGG ET CAESS AVCTA KART there are 20 specimens (33.3 %) with combination 1, 39 specimens (65 %) with combination 2 and 1 specimen (1.6 %) with combination 3 (only nummi with distinguishable reverse figures and attributes are considered). Out of the 272 aes nummi with the reverse legend SALVIS AVGG ET CAESS FEL KART there are 129 specimens (47.42 %) showing combination 1, 137 specimens (50.36 %) with combination 2 and 6 specimens (2.20 %) with combination 3. All specimens in the hoard exhibit small, thin figures of Carthage.³³ This evidence definitely proves the simultaneous striking of aes nummi with both reverse legends from the very beginning of the sixth issue up to the introduction of the last issue of the first tetrarchy.

There is a further important criterium for establishing the sequence of issues that must be seriously taken into consideration. The relative sequence of argentei issues of the first tetrarchy evidently shows that in the mint of Carthage the shortening of the reverse legend is also an important element for establishing the sequence of issues. The initial argentei issue FELIX ADVENT AVGG NN was superseded by the shorter FEL ADVENT AVGG NN and finally by a very short F ADVENT AVGG NN.³⁴ The same criterium must certainly be taken into consideration for the aes issues as well.³⁵ I propose, therefore, the following sequence of the first tetrarchy aes nummi issues.

After the initial five FELIX ADVENT AVGG NN aes issues with standing Africa, the new reverse type of standing Carthage was introduced. In the sixth issue the figure of Carthage was accompanied by a very long reverse legend SALVIS AVGG ET CAESS FELIX KARTHAGO. This legend is known for Constantius alone and the issue must have been very small. The die linking of the obverses of aes nummi with reverse legends SALVIS AVGG ET CAESS

³⁰ P. Kos, op. cit. (n. 14), Tabelle 5.

³¹ According to VOETTER, op. cit. (n. 2), the striking of coins with the reverse legends SALVIS AVGG ET CAESS AVCTA KART and FEL KART was not simultaneous. See also R. A. G. CARSON, J. P. C. KENT, op. cit. (n. 16).

³² Compare P. Kos, op. cit. (n. 14), Tabelle 2.

³³ Regretfully, a study of die links could not be performed since the coins were badly damaged during their cleaning.

³⁴ SUTHERLAND 412, 423 ff.

³⁵ The comparative metrological study of numismatic material from Carthage does not contribute much to the problem of the relative sequence of issues since there is too much variation within the issues. See also C. KING, A. SPAER, 'A Hoard of Folles from Northern Sinai', *NC* 17, 1977, 79.

FELIX KARTHAGO and SALVIS AVGG ET CAESS AVCTA KARTHAGO³⁶ indicates simultaneous striking of aes nummi with both reverse legends in the same officinae in this issue. The legend SALVIS AVGG ET CAESS AVCTA KARTHAGO is known for Constantius alone and must have been very small as well. The obverse die linking of both long reverse legends and of the specimen with the shorter reverse legend SALVIS AVGG ET CAESS AVCTA KART³⁷ further confirms a very limited striking of coins with both very long reverse legends and indicates the successive minting of coins with shorter reverse legends. Thus, in the seventh issue the aes nummi with shorter reverse legends SALVIS AVGG ET CAESS FEL KART and SALVIS AVGG ET CAESS AVCTA KART were minted simultaneously. The evidence shows that coins with both reverse legends were struck for all four rulers. The issue of nummi with the legend SALVIS AVGG ET CAESS AVCTA KART must have been relatively small considering its minor percentage representation in various hoards.³⁸ In the eighth issue this legend was replaced by a very short one, SALVIS AVGG ET CAESS AVCT KAR. It is known only for Constantius and Galerius and must again have been a very small one. Simultaneously, the minting of aes nummi with the reverse legend SALVIS AVGG ET CAESS FEL KART proceeded uninterrupted in this issue. The striking of coins with the reverse legend SALVIS AVGG ET CAESS FEL KART continues in the final ninth issue of the first tetrarchy exhibiting the new mint-mark $\frac{I-H}{A-\Delta}$. These characteristics were utilized further in the second tetrarchy, however in the name of the new rulers.

KEY TO THE PLATES

Pl. 1

- 1 Constantius, RIC -, 9.92 gr., ↓, Coll. P. Zanchi
- 2 Constantius, RIC -, 10.77 gr., ↓, Oxford (Fyfield hoard)
- 3 Constantius, RIC -, 9.49 gr., ↓, Stuttgart (Isny I hoard)
- 4 Constantius, RIC -, 10.84 gr., ↑, Wien 62100
- 5 Galerius, RIC -, 9.84 gr., ↑, BM 1499
- 6 Galerius, RIC -, 9.53 gr., ↓, Zagreb 13412
- 7 Constantius, RIC 28 a, 9.69 gr., ↑, Ljubljana (Centur-C hoard No. 320)
- 8 Diocletianus, RIC 27 a, 9.97 gr., ↓, Stuttgart (Isny II hoard)
- 9 Constantius, RIC 30 a, 9.38 gr., ↑, Ljubljana (Centur hoard No. 275)
- 10 Galerius, RIC 30 b, 9.91 gr., ↓, Stuttgart (Isny II hoard)

³⁶ See above, p. 101.

³⁷ See above, p. 103.

³⁸ Ca. 18 per cent. of all Carthage coins of the first tetrarchy. See P. Kos, op. cit. (n. 14).

Pl. 2

- 1 Diocletianus, RIC 27 a, 9.44 gr., ↙, Ljubljana (Čentur hoard No. 271)
- 2 Diocletianus, RIC 27 a, 9.09 gr., ↑, Stockholm
- 3 Constantius, RIC 30 a, 8.37 gr., ↓, Ljubljana (Čentur hoard No. 275)
- 4 Maximianus, RIC 29 b, 9.70 gr., ↑, Ljubljana (Čentur hoard No. 274)
- 5 Constantius, RIC 34 a, 10.41 gr., ↑, Ljubljana (Čentur-C hoard No. 328)
- 6 Diocletianus, RIC 33 a, 8.79 gr., ↓, Ljubljana (Čentur-C hoard No. 326)
- 7 Constantius, RIC 34 a, 9.70 gr., ↙, Stockholm