

THE ICONOGRAPHY OF TWO GROUPS OF STRUCK LEAD
FROM CENTRAL ITALY AND BAETICA IN THE SECOND
AND FIRST CENTURIES BC

CLIVE STANNARD

PROCEEDINGS OF THE
XIVth INTERNATIONAL NUMISMATIC CONGRESS

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THE ICONOGRAPHY OF TWO GROUPS OF STRUCK LEAD FROM CENTRAL ITALY AND BAETICA IN THE SECOND AND FIRST CENTURIES BC

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Introduction

Struck lead¹ is found in the River Liri at Minturnae in quantity, with a mass of Roman and ‘Greek’ bronze coin (see Fig. 1). Dominic Ruegg² and Mechtild Overbeck³ have published some pieces from underwater excavations, near the bridge of the Via Appia crossing the river.⁴ I have, over years, built up a database of bronze and lead pieces that can be provenanced to the Liri.

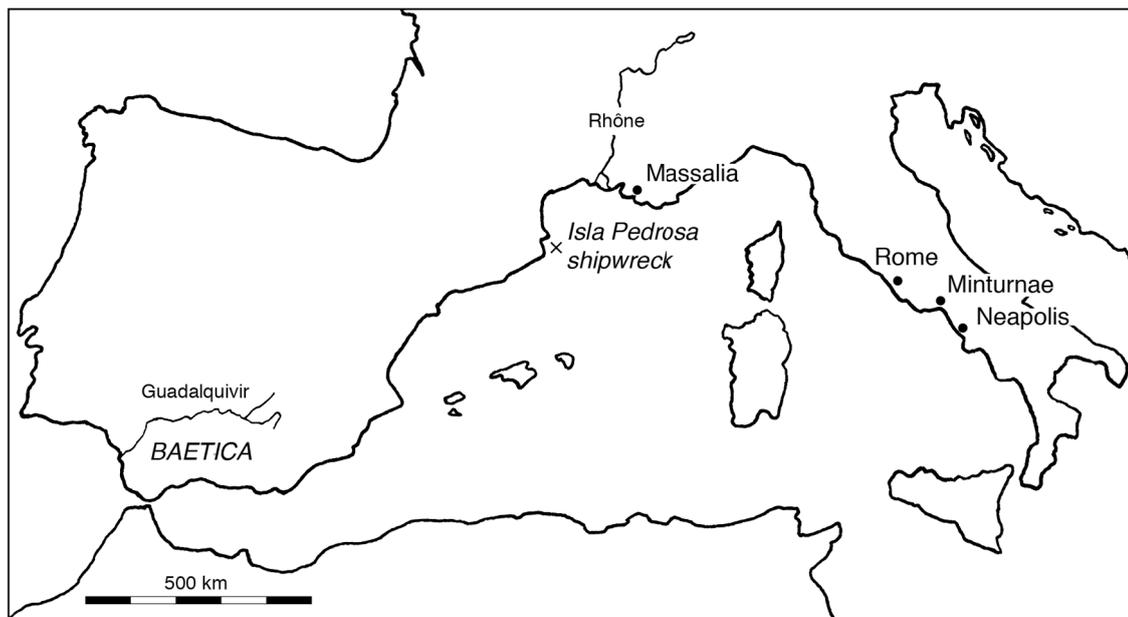


Fig. 1. Location of find-spots of struck lead

Much of the Liri assemblage uses certain rare ‘Italo-Baetican’ types,⁵ in particular: a man with a ‘shovel’ on his shoulder, often carrying an *askos*; a pair of strigils and an *aryballos* hanging from a carrying-ring, or tied together, alone, or carried by a dog or a man; and Vulcan. These types were used both in central Italy (southern Latium or northern Campania) and in Baetica, Spain,⁶ in two separate but linked assemblages, in the late 2nd and early 1st centuries BC. In central Italy, many

¹ ‘PbS’ in the catalogue.

² Ruegg 1995.

³ In Vol. II (1998) of Bellini 1996-2000: material from Ruegg’s excavations.

⁴ Die-struck lead is a separate phenomenon from the cast *tesserae* of imperial times, which are cast in moulds. In the Liri material, lead and bronze are occasionally struck from the same dies.

⁵ Documented in Stannard 1995 & 2005.

⁶ Including struck lead on flans of 50 mm. diameter or more, often described as *grandes plomos de la minas* (Casariego *et al.* 1987). Claude Domergue, however, informs me (personal communication) that he knows no evidence for these pieces being linked to mining; that the same types are used in central Italy, where a tie to mining is not suspected, reinforces this.

such issues are struck by members of the *Annia gens*, with the AN of the name written ligate, as *AV*.

No finds of the central Italian pieces have been reported from Baetica. Very few Baetican pieces are known from the Liri. Some central Italian struck lead was recovered from a shipwreck off Isla Pedrosa, in Catalonia (see Fig. 1), with coins of the Roman Republic, Naples, Massalia and the Narbonne-Béziers region.⁷

A central task is to understand their nature, in particular who issued them and why. They are clearly not a state coinage. They may have been struck as a ‘company coinage’ issued by a *publica societas* exploiting oil-production in Baetica.⁸ Many issues - including the struck lead - seem to have had a monetary value, as they often bear value-marks. With two exceptions in Baetica,⁹ all the legends are Latin.

I here discuss the iconography, in Italy and Baetica, of two groups of struck lead. The first, of theatre images, may refer to mimes staged within the context of the *publica societas*. The second, of locusts, may refer to public control measures during plagues.

The Theatre

Catalogue (Plates I and II)

- Head of Mercury, wearing winged *petasus*, right; • behind; border of dots.
Rev. Actor in toga standing right, right hand on hip, looking at a mask in his left hand; Q to right.
1. PbS 16mm 30° 6.05g Liri 17.017
- Obv.* Bearded, male, theatre mask right; border of dots(?).
Rev. Hercules striding left, with a club downward in his outstretched right hand; • to left; border of dots(?).
2. PbS 21mm 60° Liri 100.202
- Obv.* As 2.
Rev. Winged thunderbolt.
3. PbS 11mm 150° 1.71g Liri 18.061
- Obv.* As 2, but linear border.
Rev. Composite figure formed of an eagle right, looking back, its legs replaced by a naked and kneeling male torso, from the waist down; • to left; • to right; linear border.
4. PbS 16mm 90° 3.87g 18.062
5. PbS 16mm 0° 4.51g Liri 23.012
- Obv.* Hercules walking right, a club on his shoulder, the lion’s skin dangling behind him; border of dots.
Rev. Eagle with open wings, and human legs running right; border of dots.
6. Æ 17mm 150° 2.81g 0.232 Copenhagen uncertain
7. Æ 20mm 150° 2.94g 0.240 Copenhagen uncertain
- Obv.* As 6 and 7.
Rev. Figure striding right, or throwing something.

⁷ Richard / Villaronga 1975, and Stannard 1995 & 2005.

⁸ Paz-Bellido 1986, 42, interprets Γ·S on our no. 17 and other Baetican types as *publica societas*.

⁹ *CNH* p. 115, Emisión con leyenda Fenicia ‘LBT’, 3, with a Punic

legend, is perhaps part of these issues. A bronze of Salacia (man with shovel/dolphin) has a South Lusitanian legend; it will be no. 1025 of the next edition of *CNH*.

8. Æ 19mm 240° 3.42g Liri 13.028
 Obv. As 2.
 Rev. Mouse standing up left with his paws on the lip of an oil-lamp.
9. PbS 16mm 300° 2.59g Isla Pedrosa 14
10. PbS 16mm 2.27g Liri 23.069
 Rev. The lamp, turned into an axe.
11. PbS 20mm 180° 3.53g Liri 23.041
 Obv. Head of Janus; border of dots.
 Rev. Man in a short tunic advancing right, an *askos* in his left hand, a ‘shovel’ over his shoulder; *A* behind¹⁰ border of dots.
12. Æ 13mm 150° 1.89g 0.330 Berlin Löbbecke
 Obv. As 12; *Æ* (off flan) to left.
 Rev. Man in short tunic advancing right, an *askos* in his left hand, a ‘shovel’ on his shoulder; border of dots.
- 13.¹¹ PbS 21mm 270° 7.35g Liri 30.009
14. Æ 14mm 210° 0.86g Liri 11.001
 Obv. Head of Vulcan, wearing *pileus*, right; tongs on shoulder; border of dots.
 Rev. Bearded male figure in short tunic, phallus hanging down, advancing right, holding a ‘shovel’ before him; *askos* before; border of dots.
15. PbS 20mm 180° 3.53g Liri 23.041
 Obv. Naked man striding right, a ‘shovel’ over his shoulder; to right, a ring with two strigils and an *aryballos*.¹²
 Rev. CELTE; *askos*(?) below; wreath(?) above.
16. PbS 26mm 210° 8.69g Colección Gago 138, Seville; Casariego et al. 1987, p. 8 (Celti), no. 2
 Obv. Naked man striding left, holding out a bell in his right hand, a ‘shovel’ inscribed PRUM over his left shoulder; *Γ*· S on either side; all in a laurel-wreath tied below.
 Rev. Naked man, standing right, his left leg forwards, pouring water from an *askos*; winged phallus downwards to right; Q·CO· ILI·Q· around; LVSO on linear tablet in exergue; all in a laurel-wreath with berries, tied below.
17. PbS 53mm 180° 123.39g Madrid; Casariego et al. 1987, p. 26, 1; Alfaro 2003, p. 74
 Obv. Naked man, with large erect phallus and comically large testicles hanging below the knees, walking right, a ‘shovel’ on his left shoulder; NONACI IO MINVS around; SJ between legs.
 Rev. AAT L·AN in two lines; border of dots.

¹⁰Note the *Annia gens*.

¹¹Nos. 13 and 14 are lead and bronze struck from the same dies.

¹²Another diagnostic Italo-Baetican type.

18. PbS 51mm 120° Cayón collection; Casariego et al. 1987, p. 27, no. 4
Obv. Beardless male head right; man wearing a short tunic striding right, a 'shovel' over his shoulder; L·HERENI·C before.
Rev. Beardless male head right; ...ARCI·C around.
19. PbS 49mm 150° 115.06g Pliego stock, Seville; Casariego et al. 1987, p. 32, no. 25
Obv. Beardless male head right.
Rev. Man walking right, on an exergual line, carrying an askos; C·AVE up behind; border of dots.
20. PbS 16mm 150° 2.46g Liri 18.073
21. PbS 14mm 270° 4.19g Liri 17.014

Discussion

In central Italy, a number of issues (nos. 1-5 & 9-11) show theatre masks.¹³

The reverse type of nos. 4-7 - a conjoined eagle's torso and human legs - is particularly interesting. This figure kneels on the lead (nos. 4 & 5), and runs on the bronze (nos. 6 & 7). That there are two specimens of the bronze type shows that the image is not merely the result of a banal overstrike.

What can this strange image be? As it is used in association with the theatre mask, I suggest that it may be a whole-body mask, worn by an actor, similar to the costumes for Aristophanes' *The Birds* (**PI. I, A**)¹⁴ shown on Attic pottery, but without movable wings. If its origin is in myth, it could represent the moment of metamorphosis from man to bird, but this would not seem to fit the running type of nos. 6 and 7.

The obverse die of nos. 6 and 7 is also used in combination with another reverse, to overstrike a Roman *quadrans* of the 2nd century BC, with C.... above on the reverse; the reverse overtype is weakly struck, which makes it appear as if the figure is standing on the prow of the undertype (no. 8).

Specimens of a further theatre-mask issue come from both the Isla Pedrosa shipwreck (no. 9), and the Liri (nos. 10 and 11), but I believe the issue is central Italian. I know no parallel for the charming reverse type of a mouse and oil-lamp. The reverse die deteriorated badly and was reworked into an axe, by cutting a handle through the lamp (no. 11).

Nos. 12-15 and 20 & 21, from the Liri, and nos. 16-19, from Baetica, show the man with a 'shovel' - one of the most widely used of the Italo-Baetican types.¹⁵ This also appears to be a theatre type: the most frequent iconic convention is a walking man, naked or wearing a short tunic, carrying the 'shovel' (a conventional term; it is unclear what this is; see the very various shapes in the illustrations, and the inscription on the 'blade' in no. 17) over his shoulder. In the Italian material, he often also carries an *askos* (nos. 12-14; cf. the *askos* in no. 15), in the Baetican, a bell (no. 17).

Note the flaccid phallus of no. 15. The Baetican figure (no. 18) is often generously ithyphallic. Both images appear to show a comic, as on the Apulian pot in **PI. III, B**,¹⁶ in a mime. 'The Roman mime differed from Greek Comedy in that actors did not wear masks',¹⁷ as in the images on the struck lead. The actors wore 'a pair of loose-fitting drawers, grotesquely padded and hung with an oversized phallus. The latter was scarcely concealed by the inadequate length of an ill-fitting tunic worn on the upper part of the body'.¹⁸

¹³Note the value marks on nos. 1, 4 & 5.

1995 & 2005.

¹⁴From an Attic red figure kylix krater, c. 415-400 BC; Boardman 1989, 314.

¹⁶From an Apulian bell-krater of c. 380 BC (*BM Cat. Vases* F151).

¹⁷Jenkins 1986, p. 54.

¹⁵Used in both central Italy and Baetica on bronze as well; Stannard

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 55

What can the function of this icon be? I suggest that the provision of such mimes was a liturgy of whoever made these pieces. If struck within the context of a *publica societas*, these persons could have been members of the company, or its agents. This would imply some public corporate role for the company, in both central Italy and Baetica.

The Baetican piece, no. 19, combines portrait heads with the man with a 'shovel' (behind the head on the right hand image of no. 19): this may commemorate the persons paying for the mime. The style of the central Italian pieces, nos. 20 & 21, is so similar that I wonder if they did not have a similar function.

Locusts

Catalogue (Plate III)

Obv. Man striding left, his left arm flung back, over which hangs a cloak, his right hand reaching for a locust on top of a small plant; linear border.

Rev. Dancing Silenus facing, right knee up, left hand raised above his shoulder; linear border.

22. PbS 13mm 300° 2.83g Liri 25.004

23. PbS 13mm 150° 2.87g Liri 17.008

Rev. Three pellets have been added to the design: above left, between the figure's legs, and right.

24. PbS 15mm 30° 5.25g Liri 18.042

25. PbS 16mm 120° 5.24g Liri 18.041

Obv. Scylla facing.

Rev. Locust right.

26. Æ 12mm 30° 2.09g Liri 100.032

27. Æ 17mm 30° 2.45g Paris Z3154

Obv. Head of Vulcan right; tongs on shoulder; border of dots.

Rev. Head of Mercury, wearing petasus right; ∞ before; border of dots.

28. Æ 22mm 270° 4.30g Milan, M.986.14.119

Discussion

Silvia Mani Hurter reviewed the many Greek coins with grasshoppers, cicadas and locusts as a symbol, pointing out that it is frequently difficult to distinguish them, and that the descriptions in numismatic literature are often imprecise.¹⁹

The locust or grasshopper as a symbol is commonest at Metapontum (cf. **Pl. III, C**).²⁰ I know only one case where a locust is part of the main type, at Tyndaris: a cockerel catching the insect (**Pl. III, D**).²¹ The locust (or grasshopper) as a symbol is also found on various denarii of the Roman Republic (cf. **Pl. III, E**), at dates similar to those of the struck lead:²²

¹⁹Mani Hurter 2004. I had the pleasure to be able to discuss the struck lead I illustrate here with Silvia.

²⁰Lucania, Metapontum, stater, 540-510BC. *HN Italy*, no. 1472. Numismatic Ars Classical Auction 51, no. 507.

²¹Sicily, Tyndaris, *hexas*, c. 254-214. Gábrici 1927, p. 193, nos 15-17; Calciati 1993, p. 81, 14. Numismatic Ars Classical Auction 48, no. 55.

²²RRC 361/1c, P-CREPVSI, denarius, 82 BC. Classical Numismatic Group, Mail Bid Sale 62, no. 1358.

Locust plagues were frequent and severe in Antiquity:

‘Les invasions de criquets ont constitué des désastres majeurs, ainsi en 203 à Capoue, durant la deuxième Guerre punique où le phénomène fut perçu comme un prodige annonciateur de catastrophe, en 173 dans la région des marais pontins, en 172 en Apulie, pour ne citer que les plus marquantes’.²³

The most effective response was to dig up and destroy the egg-pods:²⁴

‘[...] dans les régions régulièrement soumises à la menace des migrations, des efforts, sur lesquels Pline l’Ancien est un de nos meilleurs informateurs, ont été entrepris pour organiser de façon permanente la lutte antiacridienne. Ils consistaient à prévenir la prolifération excessive des criquets par la récolte systématique des oeufs et des larves. À Cyrène, par exemple, qui fut frappée, notamment en 125 avant J.-C., par une des pires catastrophes de ce type, la loi prescrivait le ramassage annuel des oeufs, des larves et, finalement, des adultes qui avaient échappé aux prélèvements successifs. Des amendes frappaient ceux qui se dérobaient à ce devoir d’intérêt général. Dans l’île de Lemnos, chaque homme adulte avait à présenter aux magistrats une quantité déterminée de criquets morts [...] Une autre tactique, lente et onéreuse, consistait à ramasser les criquets et à les détruire. Elle fut instaurée, par exemple, en Apulie lors de l’invasion de 173 à l’initiative du magistrat qui avait reçu les pleins pouvoirs pour organiser le combat’.²⁵

The authorities adopted very similar measures during a major locust upsurge in Sicily in 1832.²⁶ We have comparable information from Cyprus - which suffered greatly from both the migratory desert locust (*Schistocerca gregaria*) and the sedentary Moroccan locust (*Dociostaurus maroccanus*) under Turkish and British rule in the 19th century:

‘One of the measures which proved most successful was the simple expedient of compelling each ratepayer to collect sufficient eggs to fill a large measure, which were then destroyed by being buried in deep pits or by being burned. [...] In 1880] If the measure fixed by the Government was not filled, a fine was imposed, and by this means a trade in locusts’ eggs sprang up, the searchers who were not lucky, and those who had no taste for locusts’-egg hunting buying their share from their more fortunate industrious brethren. The quantity collected in 1879 was about 26 tons: in the following year it reached the enormous total of 336 tons’.²⁷

‘[...] in 1881, up to the end of October, 1,600,000,000 egg-cases had been that season collected and destroyed, each case containing a considerable number of eggs. By the end of the season the weight of eggs col-

²³Bodson 1991, p. 60.

²⁴Females lay two pods, each containing thirty to forty eggs, the position of which is visible as a slimy, shining spot.

²⁵*Ibid*, pp. 63-64.

²⁶Zanghi 1835.

²⁷*Brisbane Courier* 1883, p. 2.

²⁸Harmer 1991, p. 292.

lected and made away with amounted to over 1300 tons, and, notwithstanding this, no less than 5,076,000,000 egg-cases were, it is believed, deposited in the island in 1883'.²⁸

The struck lead pieces from the Liri appear to show men collecting locusts from vegetation. I suggest that these pieces have to do with public arrangements for locust control during a plague, and were perhaps used as receipts to show that persons on whom the obligation to collect egg-pods had been imposed had fulfilled their quotas. The modification of the reverse die of no. 23 by the inclusion of dots (on nos. 24 and 25) may have been to distinguish successive phases of the campaign.

The locust also occurs on some bronze *tesserae* from the Liri, as a main type (nos. 26 & 27). No. 27 is struck over a coin of the Italo-Baetican issues, with the characteristic Vulcan, and a legend of the *Annia gens* (as in **Pl. III, 28**),²⁹ which ties it into the same context as the Italo-Baetican assemblage.

Silvia Mani Hurter also illustrated 'a delightful gem in Berlin [that] shows Amor sneaking up on a grasshopper to put it in a special cage that hangs on a nearby tree'.³⁰ I illustrate a struck lead piece (**Pl. III, F**),³¹ which is not part of the Liri material, with a similar image. Such images are probably part of the iconography of Cupid, and distinct from the human figure collecting locusts.

Conclusions

Our review of the struck lead theatre types suggests a public corporate life for the entity in the context of which they were issued. The value marks that occur on some pieces suggest that some lead had a monetary function in that entity, probably a *publica societas*.

It is tempting to try to associate locusts as a coin symbol with specific known upsurges. These struck lead pieces aside, I am sceptical, as coin symbols were used, for the most part, simply to differentiate dies. Supporting evidence of some kind would be necessary.

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²⁹ Stannard 1995, no. 75.

³⁰ *Loc. cit.*, p. 11 and pl. II, 8.

³¹ BM 1930 6-22-26 (no provenance); Gryllos/Cupid stooping to pick up a grasshopper.

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PLATE I

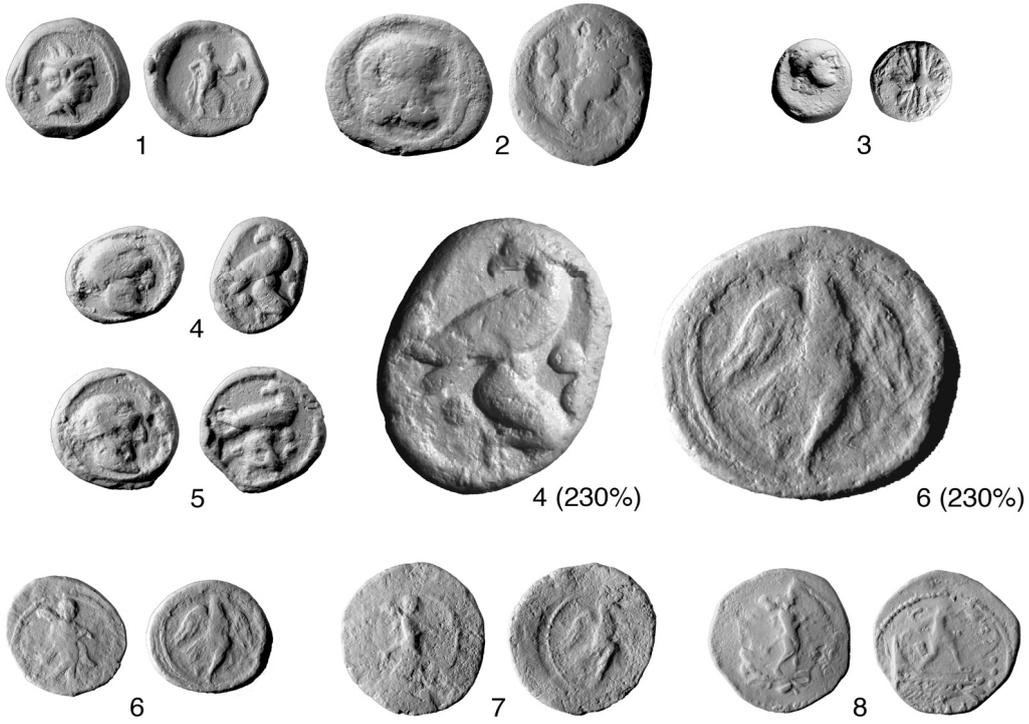


PLATE II

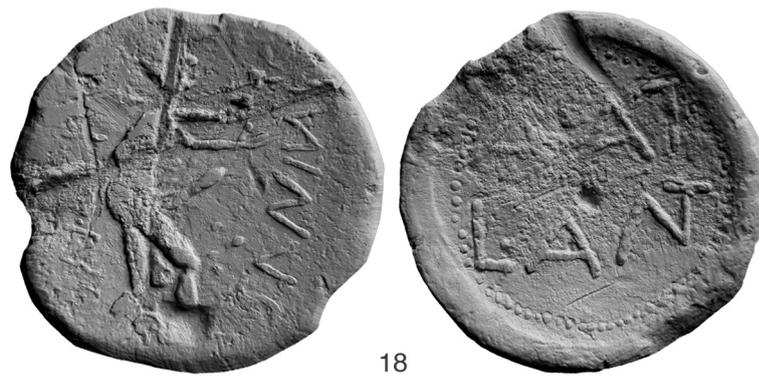


PLATE III



25.004



17.008



18.042



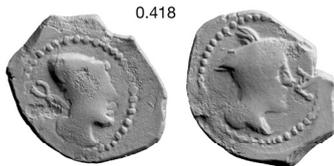
18.041



100.032



0.149



0.418



0.800