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THE CREATION OF NEW IDENTITIES IN THE COINAGE OF GREEK SICILY

INTRODUCTION

The beginning of minting by non-Greek people in Sicily during the vth and ivth centuries BC is a clear case of religious convergence and interaction. These coins were minted by Greek workers using Greek iconographical elements, so these workers took part in the construction of new cultural identities. They produced iconographic representations which were used to create a completely different message for people from the Elymian, Punic and Sikel areas. These depictions used elements from the Greek pantheon and iconography to represent the local gods and beliefs of these peoples.

These new iconographical messages mainly used the figure of water nymphs and river-gods, a common feature of Greek and non-Greek Sicilian numismatics. However, in the case of Punic coinage, gods from the Greek pantheon, like Poseidon, Heracles and Demeter appeared too to represent the divinities from the Punic pantheon such as Baal, Tanit or Melqart. To create these identities, they also used other iconographical elements, like animals or plants, in order to convey these local messages through a new communicating channel: the coinage. As an official document from the state or the *polis*, the coinage, represents in its meaning the combination of beliefs from the town which mints the coinage.

But some of these new cultural identities also connect the mythical origin of the town with both the Greek myths and the local coinage. This connection can be seen in the first Elymian minting and with Aeneas's presence in Sicily or the different depictions of Heracles in the coinage of Sikel, Elymian and Greek towns alluding to the hero's tour in Sicily.

THE SICILIAN NATIVE SETTLEMENTS BEFORE GREEK ARRIVAL

Concerning the knowledge of Sicilian native settlements before Greek arrivals, the main ancient source is Thucydides¹, who describes the different populations of Sicily when he talks about the island and the first Greek colonies which were established, as well as Diodorus Siculus² in his work *Bibliotheca Historica*. Thucydides's text divides the island in different territories, placing the Elymians in the western area together with the Phoenician towns, the Sikels in the eastern area and the Sicans in the central zone of the island.

But when we analyze the text, we must keep in mind that the creation and the name of the *ethne* of Sicily are more likely an appropriation and a rationalization process by the Greeks over a territory destined to be home to their *poleis* and to become an economic area³. No argument points to the fact that these settlements considered themselves as "Sikels", "Sicans" and "Elymians", or that they distinguished themselves from each other. In the case of the Sikel identity, it is likely that it wasn't created or configured like that until the arrival of Ducetio in the vth century BC, when this Sikel and Hellenized warlord incarnated the elaboration of an ethnic discourse by native elites.

¹ Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian war*, VI, 2.

² Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica*, V, 6.

³ A. Domínguez Monedero, «Dos religiones en contacto en ambiente colonial, Griegos y no griegos en la Sicilia antigua», *Polifemo*, 10, 2010, p. 132.

What we can understand from other texts – as Diodorus Siculus' one⁴, based upon the texts written by the Sicilian historian Timeus – is that we are facing a territory where there was a lord in each town, which shows us societies based on agriculture and livestock. So, it is natural that the first manifestation of the religiousness of the ancient settlers of the island, the Sikels, was referred more or less directly to vegetation and telluric phenomena⁵.

The presence of Greek settlements in Sicily must have had an effect on several aspects, including the religious ambit. However, it is important to consider that only about four per cent of the cultivable territory belonged to the natives, therefore it would prove slow interaction rates. So, this would explain that the first testimonies, which show an important change in the religious behavior of the natives, are quite subsequent to the beginning of the Greek presence in Sicily⁶.

By the VIIth century BC the native deity had undergone the process of anthropomorphism, and was individualized, process in which the ideas and thoughts transmitted by the Greek settlements in Sicily must have played an important role. The religious ambit is developed by imitation of the practices in the Greek sphere. The profits are obtained from the trade or the exchanges, mainly with the local elites who needed an ideological support to establish their power as intermediaries between their communities and the Greek *poleis*. The following stage of this adaptation process was the use of buildings in Greek style to assign inside them places of worship⁷.

So, during the IVth century BC we cannot be sure if native settlements were the ones who developed these religious concepts focused on specific divinities on their own or, on the contrary, if the Greeks developed their own perception of the native religion, which would include the native theogony based on the Greek ideological constructions⁸.

ELYMIANS

Concerning Elymian settlements, their first minting started before the beginning of the second third of the Vth century BC, in their two main towns, Segesta and Eryx. Regarding the coinage of Segesta, which was likely the first to be minted, it started around 480-460 BC, or not later than 450 BC, with the minting of a series of didrachms and litrae on which we can observe the head of the local nymph accompanied by an inscription in Elymian language – but with Greek letters – on the obverse, and the figure of a dog on the reverse⁹.

Both images allude to the main water deities of the Elymian pantheon, the eponymous nymph Segesta and the river-god Krimissos. Regarding the water nymph, her depiction follows iconographic parallels which had already been seen in the coinage of the Greek towns of the island. These depictions are mainly featured by the lack of iconographic elements belonging to the female deities of the Greek pantheon.

However, the dog is a new figure among the Sicilian coinages, which alludes directly to the foundation myth of the town of Segesta¹⁰ narrated and described by several ancient authors¹¹, as Aelian or Virgil. They describe how the river Krimissos became a dog and

⁴ Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica*, V, 6.2.

⁵ A. Domínguez Monedero, «Dos religiones en contacto en ambiente colonial», p. 136; E. Ciaceri, *Culti e miti nella storia dell'Antica Sicilia*, Messina, Arnaldo Forni, 1908, p. 2.

⁶ A. Domínguez Monedero, *ibid.*, p. 138.

⁷ A. Domínguez Monedero, *ibid.*, p. 140-141.

⁸ A. Domínguez Monedero, *ibid.*, p. 150.

⁹ Didracma: Triton I, New York, Auction December 2-3, 1997, n. 291; Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum McClean collection, n. 2530; Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum Copenhagen 571. Litra: The New York Sale, Auction XIV, Lot. 60 (10 January 2007).

¹⁰ G. E. Rizzo, *Monete greche della Sicilia*, Bologna, Forni, 1946, p. 289-291.

¹¹ Tzetzes, *Alexandra de Lycophron*, v. 471, 953; Virgil, *The Aeneid*, I, v. 550, V, v. 37,300.

impregnated Segesta, who gave birth to Acestes or Egestes, the eponymous hero and mythical founder of the town. And in the case of Virgil, there is also a reference to Aeneas's presence in Sicily¹². Regarding the figure of the dog in the coinage of Segesta, there are also interpretations by different modern authors that explain the particular metamorphosis of Krimissos into a dog. These authors further develop that Krimissos may be a water male deity; Aelian indeed collected information about a worship carried out by the Segestans to a river called Krimissos¹³. So, these authors linked canine metamorphosis to Trojan elements, like Hecabe's metamorphosis into a ghost dog, or connected it to other dogs such as Cerberus or Orthos in their roles of hunting dogs and protectors¹⁴. The reference to the canine element could attribute a fierce aspect to the local hero, reminding people of a primitive and wild time, before urbanization¹⁵, due to the presence of the dog which makes reference to a founding typology different from the Greek one. Other authors, like Marconi, explain that this could happen because the society of the native world attributed great importance to practical activities such as hunting¹⁶. Furthermore, the connotation of fierceness appears explicitly in Virgil's text in a more detailed version of the myth¹⁷.

Concerning Eryx, the second Elymian town which minted coinage, it started to mint litrae and hemilitrae from 470 BC. We can establish two clear groups, a first one with iconographic elements from the near Greek towns like the eagle and the crab¹⁸ of Akragas, the parsley leaf¹⁹ of Selinus and the dog and the nymph²⁰ of Segesta; and a second group with new iconographic elements and scenes where Aphrodite, the main deity of the Ercian pantheon, appears sitting on a throne accompanied by others characters like Eros²¹ and Eryx²², this last one alluding to the foundation myth of the city and its inclusion in the Heraklean tour²³.

SIKELS AND SICANS

Concerning the Sikel and Sican settlements in Sicily, they must be analyzed together as we cannot define a clear geographic or cultural differentiation between them, neither in the classic references nor the archaeological researches. For all these towns we can establish the first minting period, very clearly, from 480 to 440 BC. This period includes the coinage minted in the towns of Sergentium, Morgantina, Galaria, Abacaenum, Agyrion and Henna. These first coins are classified in two groups regarding their iconographic elements: a first group with the coinage of Sergentium, Galaria, Agyrion and Henna, on which we have depictions of the main gods of the Greek pantheon, copying models from the nearby Greek towns; and a second group with the mintings of Morgantina and Abacaenum, on which effigies of water male deities are depicted.

¹² Virgil, *The Aeneid*, V. v. 387.

¹³ A. D'Aleo, «Elymoi: Morfologia di ecisti troiani», *Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni*, 80, 2/2014, p. 652; Aelian. *Varia Historia*, II, 33.

¹⁴ A. D'Aleo, *ibid.*, p. 653.

¹⁵ A. D'Aleo, *ibid.*, p. 657.

¹⁶ A. D'Aleo, *ibid.*, p. 659; C. Marconi, «Storie di caccia in Sicilia occidentale», *Secondo Giornate Internazionali di Studi Sull'Area Elymiana, Gibellina 22-26 ottobre 1994, Atti II*, 1997, p. 418.

¹⁷ A. D'Aleo, *ibid.*, p. 661.

¹⁸ R. S. Poole, *A Catalogue of Greek Coins in The British Museum. Sicily*, London, The trustees of the British Museum, 1876, p. 61.2-3; Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum American Numismatic Society, n. 1340.

¹⁹ British Museum, online catalogue, n. 1949-2-1-1; Altes Museum Berlin, Münzkabinett, n. 6799.

²⁰ R. S. Poole, *A Catalogue of Greek Coins*, p. 62.4; Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum American Numismatic Society, n. 1342.

²¹ R. S. Poole, *A Catalogue of Greek Coins in The British Museum. Sicily*, p. 63.13; Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum American Numismatic Society, n. 1346.

²² Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum American Numismatic Society n 1347.

²³ Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica*, IV, 83.1; IV, 23.

Concerning the first group of these towns, we must keep in mind their geographic proximity to Greek settlements which were already minting coinage. In the case of Sergentium, which minted its first coins around 480 BC, historiography locates it in the area of the Greek city of Naxos, in the region of Mount Etna²⁴. Dionysus seems to be the main deity of the Sergentinum pantheon since he is the only divinity depicted on its coinage²⁵. He appears on the obverse of the didrachms standing, naked and holding two of his iconographic elements, the kantharos and an ivy branch, close to the style of the pinakes from Locri²⁶. The other depiction of the god in the Sergentinum diobols²⁷ reminds the drachms of Naxos, from which the types could be imported. The influence of Naxos can also be seen in the iconographic elements chosen for its coinage, the Dionysus effigy on the obverse and a bunch of grapes on the reverse.

The following town which depicted Dionysus in its coinage was Galaria in 460 BC, where the god is clearly identified on the reverse of a litra²⁸ holding two of his iconographic attributes, the ivy bunch and the kantharos. Both attributes as well as the god appear also in the coins of Naxos – from which those images could come – having an essential change in the scene, since the god appears standing and facing imitating the style of water deities as the nymph of Himera or the river-gods of Selinus. On the obverse of this same litra, Zeus appears seated on a throne, an image clearly imported from the coinage of Catania-Aetna. This import is likely due to the geographic distance between these towns, sixty kilometers if we place Galaria, as archaeologists say, in the Mount San Mauro²⁹.

The following town which minted coinage was Agyrion, in which we see not the depiction of Zeus but of one of his symbols, the eagle³⁰. This is an iconographic element from the coinage of the Greek town of Akragas that appears also in the coinage of other non-Greek cities like Eryx³¹ and Motya³².

Finally, the town of Henna depicted the Greek goddess Demeter on the obverse of its first minted litrae³³ in 440 BC. The goddess appears driving a *quadriga* while holding a torch. The image recalls the second Homeric Hymn³⁴, where the goddess departs in her carriage looking

²⁴ These coins, usually assigned to an unknown town from Bruttium, have been attributed by E. Pais (*Ancient Italy: Historical and Geographical investigations in central Italy, Magna Graecia, Sicily and Sardinia*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1908, p. 117) and J. De Foville (« Les débuts de L'Art monétaire en Sicile » *Revue Numismatique*, 1906, p. 445) to Sergentium in Sicily. The low weight of the didrachm, supposing an Attic weight, is remarkable. The M instead of the Σ in the inscription can be linked to the influence of the Chalcidian town of Naxos, since the influence of the iconographic types of Dionysian nature is obvious.

²⁵ G. E. Rizzo, *Monete greche della Sicilia*, p. 278.

²⁶ Reggio Calabria, Museo Nazionale, inv. 58729.

²⁷ G. E. Rizzo, *Monete greche della Sicilia*, p. 278; V. Barclay Head, *Historia Numorum*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1887, p. 169.

²⁸ G. K. Jenkins, «The Coinage of Enna, Galaria, Pichos, Imachara, Kephalaion, Longane, in le emissioni dei centri siculi fino all'epoca di Timoleonte e I loro rapporti con la monetazione delle colonie greche in Sicilia», *Atti del IV Convegno del Centro Internazionale di Studi Numismatici. Napoli 1973*, XX, suppl., 1975, p. 77-103; G. E. Rizzo, *Monete greche della Sicilia*, p. 266, pl. 59, 19; *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum American Numismatic Society*, n. 1.

²⁹ E. Pais, «Il rilievo greco arcaico in Monte s. Mauro», *Ricerche storiche e geografiche sull'Italia antica*, XIV, 1908, p. 185-187; G. E. Rizzo, *Monete greche della Sicilia*, p. 67; J. T. Dunbabin, *The Western Greeks*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1948, p. 116; S. Consolo Langher, *Contributo alla storia della antica moneta bronzea in Sicilia*, Milano, Giuffrè, 1964, p. 138-139.

³⁰ R. Calciatti, *Corpus Nummorum Siculorum. The Bronze Coinage III*, Milan, Edizioni G. M., 1983, p. 128. n. 1.

³¹ R. S. Poole, *A Catalogue of Greek Coins in The British Museum. Sicily*, p. 61.2-3; *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum American Numismatic Society*, n. 1340.

³² G. K. Jenkins, «Coins of Punic Sicily, part 1», *Revue Suisse de numismatique*, 50, 1971, p. 74, n. 1, pl. 23.1; R. S. Poole, *A Catalogue of Greek Coins in The British Museum. Sicily*, p. 115.1.

³³ *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum Lloyd Collection*, n. 931.

³⁴ Homer, *Homeric Hymns*, II, v. 48.

for her daughter, holding one of her symbols, the torch. This element, the torch, was used by Demeter to go into the underworld in addition of being previously lit in the fires of the Mount Etna³⁵, the volcano which dominates the plain of Henna. The scene with the goddess driving the *quadriga* evokes the myth of her daughter's kidnapping³⁶. However, it is Ovid who links for the first time Demeter in her carriage to the territory of Henna³⁷. The torch serves as the element that puts into context and identifies in a better way the image of the goddess. Furthermore, we have the evidence narrated by Cicero of Demeter statues in Henna³⁸. The reverse of the first coins of Henna shows a female character holding a torch and making a sacrifice in front of an altar dedicated to Demeter from whose base two snakes stand out. This character can be classified inside a religious context which begins to be spread over Sicily, the worship of water deities who appear depicted offering a sacrifice on the reverses of the coins. The clearest examples are the coinage of Himera and Selinus, on which the eponymous local deities appear on the obverses of their tetradrachms and didrachms, making a sacrifice in front of an altar. From what we deduce of these iconographic parallels, the character on the reverse of the first coins of Henna must be its eponymous nymph making a sacrifice to the main deity of the local Henean pantheon.

In the second group of minting, we include the coinage of Morgantina and Abacaenum. On these coins, the effigies of water male deities appear in a new iconographic type, since they are depicted bearded and diademed or laureate, and they are linked to elements related to the fertility of the land, like the wheat ear or the boar³⁹. One reference which could be interesting to keep in mind when we try to identify this image of a river-god would be Strabo's text⁴⁰, in which he mentions the origin of the settlement of Morgantina from the area of Rhegium. We can thus connect the depictions of the man-headed bull, a local river-god in the first period of Rhegium's coinage, with the first ones of Morgantina. Furthermore, it must be linked to the depictions of a river-god in the coinage of the other native Sicilian town which represents it in the same period, Abacaenum. In the first coinage of this mint the effigy of a river-god appears laureate on the obverses in addition of being depicted the figure of a boar on the reverses of the *litrae*⁴¹. This animal is an iconographic element which would have to be interpreted as a representative or typical animal from the area of Abacaenum. Nevertheless, the fact that the sow appears with her piglet on the reverse of the rest of the *litrae*⁴² of Abacaenum with the figure of the local nymph on the obverse creates a parallel whereby the boar is also a representative element of the fertility of the local territory. In addition to all the deities we must mention briefly the first depictions alluding to founding heroes and *oikistès* linked in some cases to the Heraklean tour in Sicily. But these depictions were produced in later periods, the first ones appearing at the end of the 5th century BC in Syracuse⁴³ and surviving

³⁵ Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica*, V, 4.3.

³⁶ Hyginus, *De Astronomia*, II, 14; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, V, 502, 643; Cicero, *In Verrem*, II, IV, 106; Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica*, IV, 23.4; V, 4.1; Strabo, *Geography*, 256; T. J. Dunbabin, *The Western Greeks*, p. 180.

³⁷ Ovid, *Fasti*, IV, v. 495.

³⁸ Cicero, *In Verrem*, IV, 49; V. Barclay Head, *Historia Numorum*, p. 119.

³⁹ Morgantina: Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum American Numismatic Society, n. 463; Abacaenum: Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum American Numismatic Society, n. 897.

⁴⁰ Strabón, *Geography*, VI, 1.6.2.

⁴¹ R. S. Poole, *A Catalogue of Greek Coins in The British Museum. Sicily*, p. 1.4.

⁴² Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum American Numismatic Society, n. 1293.

⁴³ Leukaspis: Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum American Numismatic Society, n. 304; Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum Manchester University Collection, 468.; Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum Fitzwilliam Museum, 1260, 1261; Archias: R. Calciatti, *Corpus Nummorum Siculorum II. The Bronze Coinage*, Syracuse, n. 77/5; Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum American Numismatic Society, n. 525; Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum Copenhagen, n. 723; Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum München, n. 1170.

only in Greek towns like Zancle-Messana⁴⁴ and Gela⁴⁵. In the case of the coinage of Syracuse, the depiction of an indigenous hero such as Leukaspis and of an *oikistès* like Archias can be seen on a silver drachm from the last decade of the vth century BC and a bronze coin from the middle ivth century BC respectively. Leukaspis is a local hero with a Sikel origin⁴⁶: he is mentioned in the Heraklean tour narrated by Diodorus Siculus⁴⁷. The fact that Heracles appears depicted for the first time in the coinage of Syracuse at the same time as Leukaspis could establish a relation between both characters. The period in which these drachms were minted, the tyranny of Dionysius I of Syracuse, is an unsettling period. The depiction of Leukaspis could refer to the defense of the *polis* against the enemy, in this case, the Athenian and Carthaginian armies, possibly searching for the support of the nearby Sikel towns⁴⁸. It could also be referring to the role as indigenous population, the role as the Greeks from Sicily could consider after four centuries of settlement. So the figure of Heracles could represent the Greek invader (Athens), since the references to the mythical local past are common to acclaim and motivate the local inhabitants facing the war occurrences in the Greek culture. Archias, on the other hand, was the mythical founder of Syracuse. His depiction wearing a Corinthian helmet could be understood as an identification of the metropolis of Syracuse, Corinth, and be related to the presence of Timoleon of Corinth as savior of Syracuse. The reason for this depiction could be a reference to the mythical founder since Timoleon was sent by Corinth in the same way this city sent Archias to set up Syracuse. Nevertheless, we can't exclude the existence of a worship of the *polis* founder, although no direct reference to it can be found: however, we have indirect ones, as this is a very common custom in Greek colonies.

The coinage of Zancle-Messana represents Pheraimon. He was a local hero from the city and appears on drachms from 410 BC. The myth of Pheraimon as son of Aeolos, god of the wind, is narrated in Diodorus Siculus work⁴⁹, where he is named as Lord of Sicily in the same way as his brother Iocastos was Lord of the territory of Rhegium. The depiction of Pheraimon is similar to other heroes from the mythical local past in Sicily. We may compare it to Leukaspis in the coinage of Syracuse, with the representation of a naked hero in a combat attitude, or the figure of Acestes on the coins of Segesta. The presence of the Corinthian helmet with Kyne characterizes Pheraimon as *strategos* of the *polis*⁵⁰, as well as Lord of the Peloro's territory⁵¹. This depiction of Pheraimon is important to understand his representation because it could be due to a warlike situation. The depiction of the local hero coincides with an increase in the volume of minting, mainly with high nominals like tetradrachms and gold coins. So, the figure of Pheraimon could symbolise, the same as Leukaspis in Syracuse, an attempt of alluding to the local heroes for the protection of their territory. Finally, the warrior who appears depicted in the coinage of Gela could be Antiphemos⁵². He was the founder of Gela⁵³, and his depiction could be a reference to the foundation rite of the town, linked to the

⁴⁴ Pheraimon: M. Caccamo Caltabiano, *La monetazione di Messana*, Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 1993, p. 306-307, n. 642-646; R. S. Poole, *A Catalogue of Greek Coins in The British Museum. Sicily*, p. 106, n. 59; G. E. Rizzo, *Monete greche della Sicilia*, pl. XXVII, n. 11.

⁴⁵ Antiphemos: G. K. Jenkins, *The Coinage of Gela*, Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 1970, p. 283, n. 552, pl. 32, n. 552; R. S. Poole, *A Catalogue of Greek Coins in The British Museum. Sicily*, p. 75, n. 79.

⁴⁶ G. K. Jenkins, *Ancient Greek Coins*, London, Seaby, 1972, p. 99.

⁴⁷ Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica*, IV, 23, 4-5.

⁴⁸ N. K. Rutter, *Greek Coinages of southern Italy and Sicily*, London, Spink, 1997, p. 146.

⁴⁹ Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica*, V, 8.

⁵⁰ D. Castrizio, *L'elmo quale insegna del potere*, Reggio Calabria, Falzea Editore, 2007, p. 22.

⁵¹ D. Castrizio, *ibid.*, p. 130.

⁵² G. F. Hill, *Coins of Ancient Sicily*, Westminster, Archibald Constable & Co, 1903, p. 167.

⁵³ G. K. Jenkins, *The Coinage of Gela*, p. 114; G. F. Hill, *ibid.*, p. 169; D. Castrizio, *L'elmo quale insegna del potere*, p. 130-131; Id., *La monetazione mercenariale in Sicilia. Strategie economiche e territoriale tra Dionisio I e Timoleonte*, Soveria Mannelli, 2000; C. Arnold-Biucchi, *LIMC I*. Zürich-München, Ed. H. C. Ackermann, 1981, p. 860-861.

new founder, Gorgo. After the Carthaginian conquest in 405 BC, Gela did not recover its independence until the victory in the Krimissos river battle⁵⁴ in 339 BC, when the new *oikistès*, Gorgo, native from the island of Kea, founded the *polis* again. This scene tries to create a continuity line between the old and the new Gela, celebrating the reestablishment of the town. It is completed with the figure of a horse prancing with a star over it on the reverse, a symbol of freedom and democracy related to Zeus Eleutherios.

PUNICS

Concerning the first minting of the three Punic towns in Sicily, Panormo, Motya and Solus, they used iconographic elements originating from the coinage of Greek and Elymian neighbouring towns. These depictions were the crab of Akragas, the cock and the *apobates* of Himera, the dog and the nymph of Segesta or the river-god and the gorgon of Selinus. But we can also observe a change in the coinage: they introduced new iconographic types and scenes like Poseidon, the man-headed bull and the river-god standing at an altar. However, even though they came from the Greek iconography, we must identify them as divinities from the Punic pantheon of these villages. We must also understand the iconographic elements of the first minting as a state emblem where the selected elements would represent the whole local population or, at least, their ruling classes. Thus, the interpretation of these new iconographic elements would have to be directed towards the divinities of the Punic pantheon, as water deities like river-gods and nymphs did not exist in this pantheon. Furthermore, the representations of Greek gods like Poseidon, Demeter and Herakles were recognized as the main gods of the Punic pantheon⁵⁵, Baal, Tanit and Melqart. This kind of assimilation among Greek, Elymian and Punic iconography was the result of employing workers from the neighbour Greek and Elymian towns to make these first Punic minting, since the coinage is visibly Greek or better Sicilian from both a technical and an iconographic perspective⁵⁶. These workers designed new iconographic scenes using elements from the Greek imaginary, but based on the features and attributes of Punic deities. They also used elements in common like the fields as protectors of sailors and the fertility of the land to connect the Punic gods with the Greek gods and iconography.

CONCLUSIONS

We can observe how the first minting from the non-Greek towns in Sicily during the vth century BC follow a very similar pattern. They use two kinds of depictions: either the direct copy of iconographic elements from near Greek towns, which already had their own coinage; or the creation of new iconographic elements or scenes, always using iconographic elements of a Greek origin, which are reinterpreted as the main deities of the local pantheon.

The reuse of Greek iconographic elements is likely due to the workers from Greek near cities who were employed to make these first minting. The reason was that Sikel, Elymian and Punic towns did not have neither coinage nor local workers who could produce it.

Furthermore, the presence of Greek settlements in Sicily must have had an effect on several aspects, including the religious ambit. And this religious ambit was developed by

⁵⁴ Plutarch, *Parallel Lives*, Timoleon, XXXV.

⁵⁵ S. Frey-Kupper, «Coins and their use in the Punic Mediterranean: case-studies from Carthage to Italy (the fourth to the first centuries BC)», J. C. Quinn, N. C. Vella (dir.), *The Punic Mediterranean: identities and identification from Phoenician settlement to Roman rule, British School at Rome studies*, London, Cambridge University Press, 2014, p. 96.

⁵⁶ J. Prag, «Siculo-Punic coinage and Siculo-Punic interactions», *Bolletino di Archeologia on line*, Reg. Tribunale Roma 05.08.2010 n. 330 ISSN 2039 – 0076, p. 2.

imitation of the practices in the Greek sphere, so this process could also suppose the use or adaptation of Greek iconography in their first minting.

Concerning the new iconographic elements and scenes, they were also in a Greek style and using Greek iconography. But because of this adaptation and assimilation process of the Greek culture they also assimilated their local pantheon with elements belonging to Greek ideology like nymphs and river-gods. Moreover, they also used elements in common like the field as protectors of the fertility of their territory to connect their local divinities with the Greek gods and iconography.

But the use of Greek iconographic elements was determined by the nearby Greek towns. The geographic proximity to Greek settlements which were already minting coinage had the main influence in their first minting, since they copied iconographic elements from the Greek towns which were in their commercial sphere.

In addition, we must add the presentation of important mythological and historical figures in the coinage of Greek towns, although only the depiction of Leukaspis belongs to an indigenous mythological figure. The representation of these characters was used with specific intentions. The figure of Leukaspis and Pheraimon alluded to the defence and protection of the territory while the depiction of *oikistès* as Archias and Antiphemos had a political use. In the case of Archias, it was linked to the arrival of Timoleon as saviour of Syracuse, and the depiction of Antiphemos is related to the new founder of Gela, Gorgo.

These local heroes and divinities were depicted in the local coinage by the assimilation of the Greek ideology and iconography. This assimilation also caused the appearance of Greek nymphs and river-gods in syncretism with the previous worships to water deities in these native settlements. This process also occurred with the depictions of Tanit and Baal in the case of the Punic coinage. Furthermore, it is important to remark that these deities are linked to the fertility of the land and the fertility cycles of nature as shown by the iconographic elements accompanying them, from the local flora or fauna.

In this period, as some modern authors have expressed, there is a representative style in Sicily and Magna Graecia of foundation legends, placing an emphasis on water male deities, hero-*oikistès* and eponymous nymphs, besides the acknowledgment of an iconographic diagram distribution for the depiction of the eponymous nymph in Sicily⁵⁷. In the Punic case, however, the assimilation among Greek, Elymian and Punic iconography was due to the employment of workers from the nearby towns who produced the first Punic coinage, since these first coins are visibly Greek or better Sicilian from both a technical and an iconographic perspective⁵⁸.

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⁵⁷ G. Salamone, *Una e molteplici: la ninfa epònima di città*, Reggio Calabria, Falzea Editore, 2013, p. 23; C. Arnold-Biucchi, *LIMC I*, p. 355-357.

⁵⁸ J. Prag, «Siculo-Punic coinage and Siculo-Punic interactions», p.2.

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