Histoire de Poulpes

History of Octopuses

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(Plate VI)

SYRACUSE AND ADRANON

While classifying the coins of Syracuse of the American Numismatic Society, I encountered a bronze coin that I did not recognize. It bore on the obverse a head of Athena with a Corinthian helmet, on the reverse, an octopus. If there had been a legend, it was no longer legible (pl. VI n. 1). I found a piece from the same dies in a volume by Gabrici[1], then in other articles. I quickly realized that it was the same piece that was reproduced everywhere: it concerns a coin that is found in Glasgow published in the Catalogue of the Hunterian Museum and attributed to Syracuse[2]. Gabrici considered it as a tetras — quarter of a litra or three onkiai — and dated it to 344-317 BC.

To try to understand this coin, I first made natural history, then history. My researches began in the waters of the Mediterranean. I was keen to examine the small mollusk visible on the coins of Syracuse. It has a large head, two prominent eyes and eight feet of equal length, furnished with suckers. It belongs to the family of cephalopods, it is an octopus.

This octopus or pieuvre (octopus), has often been confused by numismatists with the cuttlefish (sepia, cuttlefish), which, itself, is a decapod and possesses, in addition to eight short arms, two long tentacles and, below the head, an oval body bordered by a fin.

Imhoof-Blumer describes and illustrates[3] seven coins with octopus and three with cuttlefish. H. Seyrig, speaking of the octopus on a coin of Eretria[4], says that it should not be taken for a cuttlefish. He shows that the Ancients knew very well how to engrave a squid when they wanted to.

Most numismatists, not content to confuse the octopus with the cuttlefish, have represented it upside down until recent times, with the arms floating in the air and the head at the bottom. However, the manner in which the engravers put the legend on the reverse of the first litrai, indicates the correct position of the octopus, as they also put the value marks on the first tetras and onkiai: so that none would be unaware.

[1]Gabrici, *Monetazione*, p. 62, n. 9.

[2]G. Macdonald, *Greek Coins in the Hunterian Collection*, Glasgow, 1899-1905, n. 106 et pl. XVII, n. 8.

[3]F. Imhoof-Blumer, *Tier- und Pflanzenbilder auf Münzen und Gemmen des klassischen Altertums*, Leipzig, 1884, p. 51 et 52 et pl. VIII, 16-22 describes and illustrates seven coins with octopus from Crotone, Syracuse, Populonia and Eretria, and from 23 to 25, three coins with cuttlefish from Koresia of Keos and from an uncertain workshop.

[4]H. Seyrig, *Poulpes et seiches sur les monnaies grecques*, in REA, 52, 1950, p. 372 = Scripta numismatica (1986), p. 4.

This octopus, let us see where and how the engravers of Syracuse represented it. We encounter it for the first time on silver litrai. These issues, although they were few in number compared to those of the tetradrachms, must have been very voluminous. E. Boehringer reports[5] about two series of group IV. 13, that out of 29 specimens from one find he was unable to find pieces issued from the same die.

We know little of these fractions, among others, because they often had to serve as blanks for later strikes. G. Manganaro mentions several cases of overstrike[6], an obol B. 365 on an obol B. 288, a litra of Syracuse on an obol of Aitna. In the collection of the ANS, there is also a litra of type B. 453, of 0.69 g, overstruck on an obol (pl. VI n. 2). This is also proof that no great importance was attached to the weight of the fractions. The weights of the obols range from 0.54[7] to 0.79 g[8], while the weights of the litrai described by E. Boehringer go from 0.60[9] to 0.85 g[10]. There is therefore a range where these two weights overlap.

CONSPECTUS OF THE OCTOPI

Type I.

We encounter the octopus at Syracuse for the first time on silver litrai of group IV. 13 of E. Boehringer, dated from 466 to 460 BC, the group that bears a ketos on the exergue of the rights. The fractions that accompany the preceding series, that of the Demareteion, are obols.

The first litrai have on the right an Arethusa who wears in her hair a crown of pearls, and, on the reverse, the octopus with undulating tentacles and turning in rings. We distinguish in this series two groups: one (B. 415 to 422) bears the legend ΣYPA on the right, written from top to bottom (pl. VI n. 3), the other (B. 423 to 427), on the reverse, the ΣY to the left of the octopus head, the P to the right, the A horizontal finally below the first right tentacle (pl. VI n. 4). It is the position of the legend on the reverses that indicates to us how to place the octopi: with the traditional position, not only the octopus, but also the characters would be upside down. The octopus of the second group has only seven tentacles visible.

In the following series (B. 449 to 467), almost similar to the preceding one, the legend is again found on the right (pl. VI n. 5-6).

Type II.

On the silver litrai B. 549-551, we find an octopus less schematized, with more detailed design. It has a more important fin, prominent eyes, more radiating tentacles that surround the entire head and from which the rings have disappeared. The style of the Arethusa heads on the right has evolved at the same time as the style of the tetradrachms. The legend ΣYPA is found again on the reverse, in semicircle from right to left (pl. VI n. 7).

[5] E. Boehringer, *Die Münzen von Syrakus*, Berlin-Leipzig, 1929. The letter B. before the Syracuse coins refers to this work.

[6] G. Manganaro, *Dai mikrà kermata di argento al chalkokratos kassiteros in Sicilia nel V sec. a. C.*, in JNG, 34, 1984, p. 23-4.

[7] B. 400.1, Naville 1 (Pozzi), 571.

[8] B. 404.1, Paris F. 1104.

[9] B. 430a. 28, Leningrad.

[10] B. 417.1, Berlin.

The unique silver tetras known (pl. VI n. 8, enlarged 2×) should undoubtedly be placed with these litrai. The octopus on the reverse is surrounded by three globules, indication of the value of the piece. The right bears the legend ΣYPA with simplified rho before the head of Arethusa, who resembles the nymph of the litrai. Boehringer notes[11] that the tetradrachm B. 547 bears the P while the corresponding litrai and obols bear the simplified P. It may perhaps be deduced that the fractions were engraved a little later than the large denominations, which are dated around 440 BC.

On the reverses of litrai B. 729 to 733 (pl. VI n. 9) which belong to group VI. 25 of Boehringer, with cricket, and which bear on the right the head of tetradrachm B. 726, we also find the octopus of type II. Before the head of Arethusa, there is here a dolphin and not the cricket, symbol of the series. The legend is placed on the reverse, in circle, in the direction of the hands of a watch, and begins either at the bottom, or at the top. This group is dated from 420-415 BC.

The following litra (pl. VI n. 10) bears before the face the olive leaf and fruit that we see under the exergue of the right of tetradrachms B. 719-725, of group VI. 24. But the shift exists here also between the symbol and the portrait: the head of Arethusa is no longer that of Boehringer's series, it approaches the Arethusae signed by Eumenes and described by Tudeer. And behind the head here also there is a signature, undoubtedly the only one that we know on a silver litra, an H. The only engraver whose name begins with H is Herakleidas, but until now we have had no proof of his activity at Syracuse. The octopus on the reverse is also very interesting, more disheveled, more supple than the previous ones, undoubtedly a passage from type II to type III.

The first bronzes of Syracuse also have octopi of type II on the reverse, the design a little simplified, surrounded by three globules. They bear on the right the heads of didrachm B. 606 and of drachma B. 607 with the famous coiffure in "krobylos," the hair raised in shells on top of the head, of which Robinson says[12] that it is particular to Nike (pl. VI n. 11). These tetras are dated ca. 425 BC. They are accompanied by onkiai which bear only one globule on the reverse.

These bronzes are followed by another series, also tetras, which have on the right a head almost frontal. Some coins bear the signature EΞ, attributed to Exakestidas, famous engraver, who created masterpieces at Camarina between 415 and 405 (pl. VI n. 12 and 13).

Type III.

We find a completely different octopus on silver litrai whose rights correspond to the heads of Arethusae engraved by signatory artists of their works. It is distinguished from the preceding ones by the position of its two lower tentacles which intertwine and tie themselves in a knot to emerge on the opposite side.

The Arethusa of one of these litrai (pl. VI n. 14) resembles that of the drachma signed by Eumenes and whose right represents the hero Leukaspis (pl. VI n. 15). On the drachma, the ethnique is written with an omicron, while the litra already bears the omega.

On another litra (pl. VI n. 16), the Arethusa is that of the 100 litrai gold piece Bérend 7[13] signed by Euainetos and whose ethnique is written with an omicron. The litra already bears the ethnique with the omega.

On two other litrai, we find the facing head of Eukleidas from tetradrachms Tudeer 58 and

[11] *Supra*, p. 5, 51.

[12] E.S.G. Robinson, *A Catalogue of the Calouste Gulbenkian Collection of Greek Coins*, Lisbonne, 1971, p. 97.

[13] D. Bérend, *Le monnayage d'or de Syracuse sous Denys I*, dans *Atti del VIII Convegno del Centro Internazionale di Studi Numismatici*, Naples, 1983, à paraître.

59[14]. Another still (pl. VI n. 17) bears the head of tetradrachm Tudeer 76[15]. On another (pl. VI n. 18), we find again the Arethusa of tetradrachm Tudeer 86, signed by Eukleidas. The ethnique of the last two tetradrachms is already written with an omega. The entire group — drachma, 100 litrai and tetradrachms — is dated between 405 and 395 BC.

The octopus of type III is also found on bronzes, this time always without globules. The model of the heads is that of tetradrachm Tudeer 86, and the legend on the right is limited to the first four letters of the city's name (pl. VI n. 19). Mini[16] mentions an example of this type which bears an E behind the head (pl. VI n. 20), signature that is generally attributed to Evainctos.

The head of a young horned and diademed river-god adorns the right of another bronze issue with octopus. The style of this head recalls that of the head of Amenanos that Evainctos engraved on a drachma of Catane (pl. VI n. 21). This coin should undoubtedly be placed after the beginning of the 4th century BC.

The last issue, where we encounter an octopus on bronzes of Syracuse, is situated under the reign of Dion (357-354). These bronzes bear on the right a head of bearded Zeus Eleutherios, with short hair: they weigh between 3 and 4 grams (pl. VI n. 22). The octopus on the reverse could be an indication of value. It could concern a litra, a fifth of a bronze drachma which has on the right the same head of Zeus, on the reverse a thunderbolt, and which weighs around 18 grams.

There still exists a much later issue, this time in electrum, where the octopus of type III is reproduced on the reverse. It concerns a 5 litrai piece, Jenkins a-a[17] weighing 0.73 g and dated 310-304 (pl. n. 23).

The following dates emerge from this classification:

Type I.	AR	466-440
Type II.	AR	440-415
	AE	425-405
Type III.	AR	410-395
	AE	400-354

For the silver fractions, I have always indicated the dates that suit the tetradrachms that served as their models. As we have noted, there must be a small time lag between the large denominations and the fractions. On several occasions, the orthography of the ethnique changes on the fractions, even if it has not yet changed on the tetradrachms of the same issue. This implies that the fractions were not engraved until somewhat after their models. This time lag is even greater between silver and bronze, but the evolution appears identical.

I then re-examined the ANS coin that was the starting point of this study and realized that it was difficult to attribute to Syracuse. I found the solution to my problem by leafing through the Sale Catalogue of the Virzi Collection[18], modern bible of the bronze coinage of Southern Italy and Sicily. I discovered there under the heading Hadranon[19] a coin from the same dies as that of the ANS. Its legend is this time partially legible: ΔPANΩN or rather: ΔPANON. The dating proposed in the catalogue is 344-336 and the description is followed by the mention: "Unpubliziertes

[14] *Auctiones*, 16, 1-2 10, 1986, 63-64.

[15] L. O. T. Tudeer, *Die Tetradrachmenprägung von Syrakus in der Periode der signierenden Künstler*, Berlin, 1913. The name Tudeer before Syracuse coins refers to this work.

[16] A. Mini, *Monete antiche di bronzo della zecca di Siracusa*, Novara, 1977, p. 22.

[17] G. K. Jenkins, *Electrum Coinage at Syracuse*, dans *Essays Robinson*, Oxford, 1968, p. 145-162.

[18] Leu 6, 1973.

[19] The orthography of the city's name poses a problem. Here is what Ziegler says, RE, (1912), s.v. Hadranon, p. 2164: "Die griechischen Autoren schreiben den Namen stets ohne Aspiration: Diod., Steph. Byz., Plut.,.... Hingegen ist der Name des Gottes, nach dem die Stadt benannt ist, mehrfach aspiriert überliefert und die Römer schreiben konstant Hadranum."

Unicum" (pl. VI n. 25).

The type of the obverse, helmeted Athena, belongs to very important bronze issues of Syracuse (pl. VI n. 24) whose beginning has always been placed around 344, after the arrival of Timoleon. The results of recent excavations at Motya[20] have however incited C. Boehringer[21] to move this group of bronzes back to the end of the 5th century. The octopus on the reverse, of type II, was undoubtedly copied when the bronzes of type II were in circulation at Syracuse.

But what about Hadranon? This Greek-Sikel city appeared in history only around 403 BC. Diodorus tells us that during the summer of 405, the Carthaginians besieged Gela. Denys, young tyrant of Syracuse, came to the aid of the city with an army of more than 40,000 men and 40 boats. When he arrived at the battlefield, the bulk of his army had already been defeated and was retreating. Denys withdrew to Gela then, followed by all its inhabitants, evacuated the city. During the retreat, a mutiny broke out within his army and they even attempted on Denys' life. The revolt entered first into Syracuse. The rebels pillaged the tyrant's house, situated in the arsenal, violated his wife, but Denys, who always surrounded himself with mercenaries out of prudence, arrived in the middle of the night with his mercenaries, and chased the Syracuse cavalry. When the bulk of the army entered the city, Denys was again master of the city.

The beaten cavalry withdrew to Aitna, where they found refuge. The Carthaginians settled under Syracuse and took possession of the city. But a plague epidemic broke out at Himera and Himilcon, their chief, having lost half of his men, made peace with Denys. This peace gave Denys time to fortify the city and allowed him to secure alliances and trusts. He prepared for war with great means, put his friends in key positions of the army and paid his mercenaries handsomely to attach them more surely. 60,000 men worked on the fortifications and in the naval shipyards. But before facing the Carthaginians, Denys secured friendships in the cities around and attacked his enemies. He besieged the neighboring city of Herbessos and called upon the cavalry of Aitna for his aid. Denys was victorious, but at 400, he failed to conquer Aitna, destroyed it and founded in its neighborhood, at the foot of Etna, the city of Hadranon.

Tradition holds that the small cities of Sicily did not have the right to strike coinage until 344 BC, when Timoleon installed democracy and they regained their independence. In a study, G. K. Jenkins[22] showed us that, some years after 400, Piakos and Adranon issued a common alliance coinage in silver.

The model of our obverse — our octopus disappeared from Syracuse around 405. We therefore have proof that when founding the city, Denys granted him the right to strike coinage — at least the right to strike bronze coins. And that the conclusions drawn from the Motya excavations are correct.

I would like to add further that the coin from the Virzi Collection is now at the British Museum. Another is part of the Morcom Collection (pl. VI n. 26). Yet another was sold at public auction in Zurich[23]. With that from Glasgow, two specimens from collection Y. and that, now reattributed, from the ANS, we know all the coins with octopus of Adranon that have reached us.

It is thus that by classifying the coins with octopus of Syracuse, we end up lifting the veil on an episode in the history of another city.

[20] A. Tusa Cutroni, *Le monete*, dans *Mozia 5. Rapporto preliminare della campagna di scavi 1968*, Roma, 1969 et *Mozia 7. Rapporto preliminare della campagna di scavi 1970*, Rome, 1972.

[21] Ch. Boehringer, *Zu Finanzpolitik und Münzprägung des Dionysios von Syrakus*, dans *Essays Thompson*, Wetteren, 1979, p. 9-32.

[22] G. K. Jenkins, *Piakos*, dans *SM*, 12, 1962, p. 17-20.

[23] Schweizer Bank Verein, Auction 1, 27 10. 77, n° 62. 4.19 g. Attributed and placed correctly, but dated to 344-336.



Plate VI

1. Adranon. AE 4.03 g. ANS.
2. Syracuse. Litra AR B. 449, ANS.
3. Syracuse. Litra AR 0.63 g. B. 417, SNG ANS 129.
4. Syracuse. Litra AR 0.83 g. B. 427-29 var., SNG ANS 132.
5. Syracuse. Litra AR 0.72 g. B. 453 (cet ex.), SNG ANS 138.
6. Syracuse. Litra AR 0.76 g. B. 463 (cet ex.), SNG ANS 141.
7. Syracuse. Litra AR 0.80 g. B. 549, Coll. part.
8. Syracuse. Tétras AR 0.18 g. Coll. part. Agrandi 2×.
9. Syracuse. Litra AR 0.81 g. B. 729-33, BM 1952-4-9. 4.
10. Syracuse. Litra AR 0.74 g. BM 1952-11-18 1.
11. Syracuse. Tétras AE B. Gr. XVIII, Coll. Virzi hors catalogue.
12. Syracuse. AE 2.17 g. Leu 38, 13 5. 1986, 39.
13. Syracuse. AE Coll. Virzi, hors catalogue.
14. Syracuse. Litra AR 0.78 g. SNG ANS 282.
15. Syracuse. Drachme AR 4.04 g. SNG ANS 304.
16. Syracuse. Litra AR 0.81 g. Coll. part.
17. Syracuse. Litra AR 0.75 g. Coll. part.
18. Syracuse. Litra AR 0.79 g. SNG ANS 293.
19. Syracuse. Tétras AE, Coll. Virzi hors catalogue.
20. Syracuse. Tétras AE 2.40 g. SNG ANS 392.
21. Syracuse. AE 4.74 g. SNG ANS 393.
22. Syracuse. AE Coll. Virzi hors catalogue.
23. Syracuse. EL 0.72 g. Lloyd 1436.
24. Syracuse. Litra AE 6.32 g. Liste Leu 20, oct. 1985, 39. L'Y de l'ethnique sur le droit est semblable à un X comme sur le droit des 100 litras en or signé par Kimon.
25. Adranon. AE 4.03 g. BM 1973-10-21 ex Leu 6, 8 5. 1973, 96.
26. Adranon. AE 5.03 g. Coll. Morcom.

R de no. 3 Agrandi 2×.
R de no. 4 Agrandi 2×.
R de no. 7 Agrandi 2×.
R de no. 17 Agrandi 2×.

27. Tasse à une anse, grecque ou sicilienne, fin du 5^{e} s. av. J.-C. *Tierbilder aus vier Jahrtausenden, Antiken der Sammlung Mildenberg*, Mainz, 1983, 126.
28. Amphore attique à figures noires, fin du 6^{e} s. av. J.-C. Cf. *Tierbilder. . .*, 103.



1 Æ 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 2x



9 10 11 Æ 12 Æ 13 Æ 14 15 16



17 18 19 Æ 20 Æ 21 Æ 22 Æ 23 EL 24 Æ

25 Æ

26 Æ



R3 2x R4 2x R7 2x R17 2x



27



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