

COINS
OF THE
ROMAN REVOLUTION
49BC-AD14

EVIDENCE WITHOUT HINDSIGHT



Edited by

Anton Powell

and

Andrew Burnett

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The Classical Press of Wales

First published in 2020 by
The Classical Press of Wales
15 Rosehill Terrace, Swansea SA1 6JN
classicalpressofwales@gmail.com
www.classicalpressofwales.co.uk

Distributor in North America. E-book distributor world-wide
ISD,
70 Enterprise Drive, Suite 2,
Bristol, CT 06010, USA
Tel: +1 (860) 584-6546
Fax: +1 (860) 516-4873
e-mail: orders@isdistribution.com
www.isdistribution.com

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ISBN hard-back 978-1-910589-76-2; ebook 978-1-910589-94-6

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Typeset by Louise Jones, and printed and bound in the UK by Gomer Press,
Llandysul, Ceredigion, Wales

The Classical Press of Wales, an independent venture, was founded in 1993, initially to support the work of classicists and ancient historians in Wales and their collaborators from further afield. It now publishes work initiated by scholars internationally, and welcomes contributions from all parts of the world.

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SCIPIO AND CATO IN 47–46 BC: IDEALS AND EXPECTATIONS SEEN THROUGH COINS

Claudia Devoto and Barbara Spigola

After the defeat of Pharsalus, Pompey's imperator Quintus Caecilius Metellus Pius Scipio Nasica fled to Africa. There he was reached by Marcus Porcius Cato and together they organized resistance against Caesar.

Metellus took the control of the troops, while Cato stayed in Utica and supervised the supply for the army (Plut. *Vit. Cat. Min.* 58.3).¹ Although they apparently had the same goal – defeating Caesar and his troops – they behaved in different ways, showing two strong, rigid personalities: in Plutarch's account,² Scipio appears to have been devoted to his own power, more than to the Republic, while Cato is depicted as a very conservative man, ready to renounce power in the name of Republican ideals. They appear often in conflict with each other, due to basic mutual incomprehension about the idea of power. It is quite evident, in the account of Plutarch, that the two men had no sympathy for each other. Even before the beginning of the civil war their lives had crossed since they loved the same woman, Aemilia Lepida, who later married Scipio:

When he [Cato] thought that he was old enough to marry – and up to that time he had consorted with no woman – he engaged himself to Lepida, who had formerly been betrothed to Metellus Scipio, but was now free, since Scipio had rejected her and the betrothal had been broken. However, before the marriage Scipio changed his mind again, and by dint of every effort got the maid. Cato was greatly exasperated and inflamed by this, and attempted to go to law about it; but his friends prevented this, and so, in his rage and youthful fervour, he betook himself to iambic verse, and heaped much scornful abuse upon Scipio, adopting the bitter tone of Archilochus, but avoiding his licence and puerility.

(Plut. *Cat. Min.* 7.1–2; translation by Perrin 1919)

In private life they were rivals, but in public they followed the same ideals, which were publicised in their metallic propaganda on coins. The ideals and the ambitions of these two eminent and so different personalities are well reflected in their coinages, which show not only a strong attention to the

Both authors contributed equally to this work. The section 'Copying from ancestors' is by B. Spigola, and the sections 'Rome and Africa' and 'Old and New Gods' are by C. Devoto.

interests of the Republican faction, but also to the sensitivity of their African ally Juba I, king of Numidia; nevertheless, their personalities are clearly visible through the choice of the style of their propaganda, as we shall try to explain.

The Coins of Cato and Scipio (Figs. 1–7)

Porcius Cato (Nos. 1–3)



1. *Denarius* (fig. 1)

Obv.: *ROMA M CATO PRO PR.* Draped female bust right, with the hair carefully tressed and drawn into a knot behind.

Rev.: *VICTRIX* in exergue; winged Victory seated on a throne, with long robes. She holds out a patera with her right hand and a palm branch on her left shoulder.

Bibl.: *BMCR* (Africa) 17; *RRC* 462/1a,³ Sydenham 1053.



2. *Denarius* (fig. 2)

Obv.: *M CATO PRO PR.* Draped female bust right, with the hair carefully tressed and drawn into a knot behind.

Rev.: *VICTRIX* in exergue; Victory seated right, holding patera with right hand and branch of palm tree in left hand.

Bibl.: *BMCR* (Africa) 15–16; *RRC* 462/1c; Sydenham 1052.



3. *Quinarius* (fig. 3)

Obv.: *M CATO PRO PR.* Male head right, with ivy crown.

Rev.: *VICTRIX*, in exergue, Victory seated right, holding crown with l. hand, and branch of palm tree in r. hand.

Bibl.: *BMCR* (Africa) 19–20; *RRC* 462/2; Sydenham 1054 / 1054

Q. Metellus Pius Scipio Nasica (Nos. 4–7)



4. *Denarius* (fig. 4)

Obv.: *Q METEL PIVS*. Laureate head of Jupiter right, in archaic style.

Rev.: *SCIPIO, IMP* in exergue; elephant walking right.

Bibl.: *BMCR* (Africa) 1–3, *RRC* 459/1; Sydenham 1046.

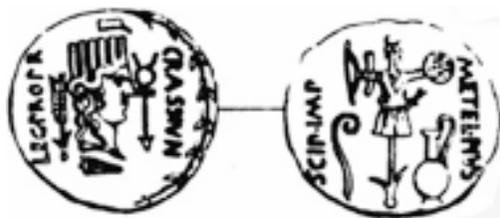


5. *Denarius*^A (fig. 5)

Obv.: *METEL PIVS – SCIP IMP*. Head of Jupiter right, hair tied with band, eagle's head and sceptre below.

Rev.: *P CRASS IVN – LEG PRO PR*. Curule chair between corn ear (left) and dragon's head or *carynx* (right), above: *cornucopiae* supporting scales. Border of dots.

Bibl.: *BMCR* (Africa) 4 – 5; *RRC* 460/2; Sydenham 1048.



6. *Denarius* (fig. 6)

Obv.: *CRASS IVN – LEG PRO PR*. Female head right, wearing turreted crown; on left: corn-ear and inscription; on right: *caduceus*; below: prow.

Rev.: *METEL PIVS – SCIP IMP*. Trophy between *lituus* and jug.

Bibl.: *BMCR* (Africa) 6–7; *RRC* 460/3; Sydenham 1049. The sketch is from Babelon 1885, 280.



7. *Denarius* (fig. 7)

Obv.: *P CRASSVS IVN – LEG PRO PR*. Victory standing left, holding winged caduceus in right hand, small round shield in left.

Rev.: *Q METEL PIVS – SCIPIO IMP*. Sekhmet standing facing, holding *ankh* in right hand.

Bibl.: *BMCR* (Africa) 8–9; *RRC* 460/4; Sydenham 1050.



8. *Denarius* (fig. 8)

Obv.: *Q METELL SCIPIO IMP*. Laureate head of Africa right in elephant headdress, ear of grain (right), below: plough.

Rev.: *E PPIVS – LEG F C*. Nude Hercules standing facing, resting right hand on hip and left arm on club draped with lion's skin and set on rock.

Bibl.: *BMCR* (Africa) 10–14; *RRC* 461/1; Sydenham 1051.

Copying from ancestors

Cato struck three main issues (coins 1–3), in Africa, as *propraetor*.⁵ He respected carefully this political office, to the point of refusing the overall command of the Pompeian troops in Africa. Scipio was, in fact, an ex-consul, consequently he had precedence over Cato, according to the Republican hierarchy:

And though all thought it meet that he should have the command, especially Scipio and Varus, who resigned and tendered to him the leadership, he refused to break the laws to support which they were waging war with one who broke them, nor, when a pro-consul was present, would he put himself, who was only a pro-praetor, above him. For Scipio had been made pro-consul, and the greater part of the army were emboldened by his name; they thought that they would be successful if a Scipio had command in Africa.⁶

(Plut. *Cat. Min.* 57.3; translation by Perrin 1919).

Cato, the conservative, showed himself ready to renounce power in the name of Republican ideals; on the other hand, Scipio accused Cato of cowardice for his refusal.

And once he wrote to Cato reproaching him with cowardice, seeing that he was not only well content to sit quietly in a walled city himself, but would not even allow others to carry out their plans with boldness as opportunity offered. To this Cato wrote in reply that he was ready to take the legionaries and the horsemen whom he himself had brought to Libya and cross the sea with them to Italy, thus forcing Caesar to change his plan of campaign, and turning him away from Scipio and Varus against himself.

(Plut. *Cat. Min.* 58.4–5; translation by Perrin 1919).

Mommsen dated coins Nos. 1–2 to 49 BC,⁷ when Cato was *propraetor* of Sicily, but as Cavedoni noticed first,⁸ Cato's role there lasted only a few months, since he was forced to flee by the arrival of Asinius Pollio. He did not have enough time to start minting coins (Plut. *Cat. Min.* 53.4). Furthermore, we do not know exactly if he went to Sicily as a *quaestor* or a *propraetor* (Plut. *Vit. Cat. Min.* 53.2). It is also worth noticing that Mommsen argues that Cato could not sign his coins since the highest magistrate in charge – in this case Scipio – was the only one allowed to. However some exceptions to the rule were admitted, as in the case of *Coponius*, who signed his issues alone under Pompey.⁹

Whatever is the date of this issues – and 47–46 BC seems most likely¹⁰ – the coin types chosen seem to require little explanation: they are indeed the exact copy of a previous issue by an ancestor of Cato (his father, in Babelon's opinion; another member of the family on Crawford's hypothesis).¹¹ On the obverse of No. 2 there is a female head, perhaps to be identified with *Libertas*. This head has the hair tied up, and has no attributes that allow a better understanding. The common identification is maybe due to the fact that the *gens Porcia* was traditionally tied to the Republican cause and many Republican *gentes* struck coins with *Libertas* as a coin type. For example, the *gens Cassia* and *gens Iunia* both adopted the head of *Libertas* as a coin type, but the two of them always put the legend *Libertas* next to it, which allows easy identification.¹² In Cato's case, the presence of the legend reading *ROMA* on issue No. 1 maybe signifies that the head on the coins is that of Roma itself: but the fact that this is not a classical iconography – since Roma is normally helmeted – is a bit odd. Maybe the head is the one of *Libertas*, while the legend *ROMA* should be read in strict connection with the one on the reverse: *ROMA VICTRIX*. The head has no particular feature: it is always turned right, hair tied up, surrounded by a border of dots. The name of Cato is monogrammed. Little can be said about the reverse, with the Victory seated on a throne and holding a *patera* and a palm branch: the Victory is in an archaic style, with a long, draped robe and a rigid posture.¹³

The issue No. 2 shows features that are very similar to the previous ones, but the iconography of the female head is quite crude and the style is rough (e.g. the plumage of the wings of the Victory are simply drawn as dots). It lacks the legend *ROMA* so, unlike what we suggested for the issue No. 1, the legend *VICTRIX*, on the reverse, cannot be related to the legend on the obverse of the coin. In this case the idea was maybe only to recall the issues of Cato's ancestor;¹⁴ like the issue of some *quinarii* (No. 3), which is a perfect copy of a previous one struck in 89 BC (*RRC* 343/2).

Cato's coins seem to mirror exactly his rigid and strong conservatism. He believes that Rome should have returned exactly to its previous situation, and so with his coin types he does not even try to imagine something new or different, but he simply copies the coins of his ancestor: a practice that was of course widely used by moneyers during the Republican period, but normally with the aim of exalting their own origins. In the case of Cato the whole coinage seems a sterile copy. The message he wants to convey is clear: the idea of *Libertas* – or *Roma*, as we saw – as the winner. Whoever is the deity on the obverse of his *denarii*, it is deliberately unsensational, respectfully adhering to traditional iconography.

Scipio, as well, took some important symbols from coins issued by eminent men: first of all on issues Nos. 4–5, he copied the head of *Jupiter Terminalis* from Pompey's coins (*RRC* 446–447). On Pompey's issue, the head is currently identified with Numa Pompilius, considered an ancestor of Pompey himself and here commemorated as the founder of the cult of *Juppiter*.¹⁵ Scipio achieved a double goal in using the same iconography as his son-in-law's coins:¹⁶ he signalled his Republican ideals, that were obviously strongly linked with Pompey himself, but he also underlined the importance of his family-in-law.

On the reverse of No. 4, the elephant can also be read in different ways. First of all, it was obviously connected with Africa,¹⁷ the theatre of Scipio's action in 46, and also the theatre of the victories of his ancestors, above all Scipio Africanus: a prophecy claimed indeed that the *Scipiones* were destined to win all their battles in Africa.¹⁸ Furthermore, Juba's elephants were an important element of Scipio's army: a good reason to put them on Scipio's coins now. The elephant was also the symbol of the Metelli, the adoptive family of Scipio,¹⁹ since 250 BC, when Lucius Caecilius Metellus won against Hasdrubal in Panormus and took possession of 120 elephants, bringing them to Rome for his triumph (*Sen. Brev. Vit.* 13.8; *Livy Per.* 19). The achievement was then commemorated by Q. Caecilius Metellus Caprarius who struck coins with a *biga* of elephants on the reverse. This issue is normally dated to 125 (*RRC* 269/1), and it is the first one bearing an elephant struck by a Metellus. The latest one was that of Scipio's adoptive father, issued in 81 (*RRC* 374/2). To sum up, the elephant was connected not only with the current

events Scipio was taking part in, but also with his personal and magnificent origins. In addition, Scipio's choice of the elephant was maybe due to the circumstance that Caesar had also put an elephant on some *denarii*, normally dated around 50–48 BC (*RRC* 443/1): in this case, the elephant probably represented Ariovistus,²⁰ the German general defeated by Caesar, but also, in some interpretations, the Punic name of the animal recalled the name of Caesar himself.²¹ It also seems quite clear, considering Caesar's issue, that Scipio's idea of putting an elephant on his coins was a sort of claim to ownership of the symbol itself.

Scipio's coins Nos. 4–5 are not just sterile copies of Pompey's (and maybe Caesar's) types, but give to the old symbols new significance. In contrast, Cato's coins (Nos. 1–3) seem to be a pure imitation of his ancestor's types that add no new meaning or idea to their significance, other than the fact of his own reactionary ideals. On the reverse of No. 5, different symbols are combined. Many scholars have studied these coins and proposed different interpretations. The curule chair is obviously connected with the *imperium*, while the scales balanced on *cornucopiae* are symbols of *iustitia* and *abundantia*. The corn-ear on the left symbolizes probably the richness in grain of Africa and alludes to the abundance that Pompeians were going to gain with their victory. Concerning the symbol on the right of the curule chair there are more doubts: some scholars have identified it with a *carnyx*, the Celtic war trumpet.²² In this case, the object could be referred to the adoptive father of Scipio, Metellus Pius, who had fought against Sertorius in Spain. The other hypothesis is that the object represents a dragon or a snake, which could symbolize Numidia.²³

In both cases, there is a possibility that some or all of these symbols are to be connected not, or not only, with Scipio, but also with the other moneyer Crassus Iunianus. Unfortunately we have no information about his life or duties, so at present it is not possible to verify any links between the symbols chosen for the coins and Iunianus. However, it is worth remembering that the curule chair was used by magistrates who functioned *pro consule* or *pro praetore*, such as Crassus Iunianus himself. Furthermore, the scales balanced on a *cornucopiae*, the ear of corn and the dragon are not so specific as to be necessarily linked with Scipio, but, on the contrary, they could be easily connected with the role of Crassus Iunianus. We can maybe imagine that they were chosen as a compromise, to represent both the moneyers. The snake/dragon appears also in Caesar's famous denarius with the elephant we described above (*RRC* 443/1), shown trampled by the elephant. In Caesar's coins, it perhaps represents the Pompeian party (and the elephant should obviously be interpreted as a symbol of Caesar's name):²⁴ in this case, it should be assumed that the snake had become a Republican symbol and for that reason was put on Scipio's coins.

Whatever interpretation we give, the point is that the language chosen mixes together elements linked with Pompeian propaganda (the head of Jupiter and maybe the snake/dragon), with others strictly connected with the *noblesse* of the *gens* of the moneyer, whoever he was.

Even copying from ancestors could bring different messages: in doing so, Cato is more static and mainly concentrated on Rome, Victory, war: the only aim he seems to have is to remember them, but he does it without enthusiasm or creativity. A weak reference to the *gens Porcia* can be found in the fact that the types had already appeared on the coins issued by a member of this *gens*, but this message does not seem to be Cato's priority. For his part, Scipio exalts not only the Republican ideals, which keep appearing under several aspects in the symbols he chooses. Nevertheless, Scipio also draws attention to his own origins and – through them – he underlines his own power and role in the war, interlacing strongly the present events with his personal life.

Rome and Africa

As we have seen, on issue No. 1 we can maybe identify the head of Roma. We are not sure that we are really dealing with Roma, but if a city is to be recognised on Cato's coins, it cannot but be Rome itself: the conservative Cato significantly never chose to represent Africa and its symbols on his coins. Scipio thought differently: we have already shown some allusions to Africa in issues Nos.4–5, but many others can be found in his coins.

On issue No. 6 of Scipio, a clear hint as to Scipio's and Cato's situation can be found in the (probable) head of Utica on the obverse: this would be one of the first representations of a city other than Rome as a coin type. Seeing this female turreted head as Utica would fit the fact this was the city where the troops of Scipio stood.²⁵ The *caduceus*, which occurs also on another issue by Scipio and Crassus Iunianus, was in Rome a symbol of peace: it was the staff of a protected office and the emblem of *pax*:²⁶ as such (Cic. *De Or.* 1.101) it appears on some Republican coins.²⁷ In the Late Republic, it came to signify also Victory, as suggested for example by the coins issued in 82 BC by Sulla (*RRC* 367), showing the latter on a *quadriga*, crowned by a Victory and holding a *caduceus* in his hand. So, in the first quarter of the 1st century BC, Hermes' staff came to signify Victory; Crawford argues that in this case the *caduceus* 'may be taken to indicate that Victory is hoped for rather than achieved'.²⁸ Linderski suggests reading the whole of the symbolism on this coin (ear of corn, *caduceus* and the prow under the head of Utica) as the political programme of the Republican party: *pax terra marique*, obtained of course through victory. In this context, we think of Welch's definition of the overall Pompeian strategy as 'an ethical civil war'.²⁹ She argues that 'rather than a bit player, a revised narrative of the clash between the Republicans and Caesar can

demonstrate that Sextus Pompeius inherited a cause and used an established strategy to fight for it'.³⁰ In this perspective, Pompey developed a naval blockade against Italy, before 49 BC, to confine Caesar and to control all the sea-lanes through naval supremacy, without need for bloodshed. In Pompeian minds, especially in the first phase of the war, it was evident that 'this war could not and should not be fought in the same way as other wars'.³¹ The claim of Pompeians was to limit violence, and it was clearly publicised by the *caduceus*. This hypothesis fits well with the interpretation of Scipio's and Crassus Iunianus' coins (Nos. 5–7), adding support perhaps to the idea that the symbols on the side with Crassus' legend are not necessary to be referred to Scipio but should at least be related to both of the moneyers.

Other problems concern the interpretation of the symbols on the reverse: the trophy with the *lituus* and the jug. First, the trophy: of course this was usually a symbol of victory, and this interpretation fits well with the *caduceus* on the other side of the coin. In this case, it maybe alluded to a specific battle won by Scipio, and Linderski rightly suggests that the quiver and bow of the trophy may allude to the victory³² over the Parthians in the Amanus Mountains.³³ A long debate is still open about the significance of the jug and *lituus*: while the jug is normally a symbol of sacrifice and so strictly connected with the *pontifices*, the *lituus* was a prerogative of the augurs. And indeed Scipio was a pontiff, but he was not an *augur*. So, while the jug can find an easy explanation, the question is: why represent a *lituus* on the coins? As Linderski argued, the *augures* were responsible not only for the auspices, but also they checked the legitimacy of command, which depended on the absence of *vitium* in the *auspicia* of the magistrates. (Any *vitium* resulted in wrong *auspicia*.) So their symbols, the *lituus* and the jug used in the procedure of the *sortitio*, 'on the coins of the commanders were like the stamps of approval (...) proclaimed *nihil obstat*: the path was open to proceed *diis iuvantibus*'.³⁴ The reverse of this issue hints both at the personal *cursus honorum* of the moneyer (Scipio's victory and his office of *pontifex*) and at his legal power, approved by the *respublica*.

Issue No. 8 offers more food for thought and a straight reference to Africa, represented as a female head wearing an elephant skin headdress. This image had already been used³⁵ as a coin type in Ptolemaic coinage,³⁶ but its appearance in Roman coinage is a Pompeian invention. Indeed it appears for the first time on an issue of *aurei* struck in the name of Pompey, with Pompey himself driving a triumphal *quadriga* on the reverse (*RRC* 402/1a,b for his triumph of 71 BC); though on this issue see now Woytek 2015. The female wearing elephant skin appears also in local North African coinage, on some issues of Hiarbas struck probably 108–81 BC (*SNG Cop.* 520–1) and on some issues struck by Juba I in 60–46 BC (*SNG Cop.* 526 and *SNG Cop.* 532–3; Pl. 15).

It is possible that the presence of personified Africa on the aureus of Pompeius Magnus was directly influenced by the coinage of Hiarbas, who had been defeated by Pompey in 80 BC.³⁷ So, after Pompey's issue, Scipio's coins present the second occurrence of the personification of Africa on Roman coins: a homage to Pompey and to Africa, of course, something Cato's coins are completely devoid of. Once again, this type blends different levels of significance: private life (Pompey as Scipio's father in law), Republican ideals (Pompey, again) and current situation were all remembered in a small flan.

On the other side of the coin, we find Hercules resting on a club draped with lion's skin. Sear acknowledges the difficulty of interpreting this type and suggests that Hercules should be identified with the Phoenician god Melkart, who had an extensive cult in North Africa and was honored as the primogenitor of the Numidian kings: thus the coin type should be intended as a compliment to Juba,³⁸ like the elephant on coin No. 4. But the ancient sources report that Pompey had a special devotion to Hercules: according to Appian, Pompey used 'Hercules the Unconquered' as the password for his troops before the battle of Pharsalus (App. *BC* 2.76). Hercules appeared also on a *denarius* of Faustus Cornelius Sulla, moneyer of 56 BC. This issue bears the head of Hercules with the lion skin on the obverse, and a globe surrounded by four wreaths on the reverse: three small wreaths, which stand for Pompey's three triumphs, and a large wreath, which stands for the *corona aurea* granted to Pompey in 63 BC (*RRC* 426/4). Once again, this coin type carries multiple messages, all concentrated in a small piece which was destined to pass from one hand to another, bearing a homage to Juba on one side, and the message of Pompeian propaganda on the other. Unfortunately we know nothing about the moneyer, Eppius: but it would be no surprise if the image of Hercules had some links with his family as well. The reverse of this coin poses another question, since there are different hypotheses about the legend *LEG F C*: Babelon read it as *legatus flandum curavit*,³⁹ Crawford as *legatus fisci castrensis*.⁴⁰ In any case, it is quite certain that the legend has something, now obscure, to do with the office of the unknown Eppius.

Some years later (ca. 43 BC), the *propraetor* of *Africa Vetus* Q. Cornificius used the same coin type (female head with elephant skin) for his own coins (*RRC* 509/4): in this case the reference is obviously to the province he was governing, and on the other side of the coin there is Cornificius with the *lituus* (he was an augur), crowned with a wreath by Juno Sospita, the goddess of his native city Lanuvium: in this coin we can find the same multi-level language we described for Scipio.

What would Roman Cato, custodian of the *mos maiorum* and so devoted to Rome, think of this adoption of foreign elements? Of course his role in the war did not force him to convince and motivate the African ally to participate,

as Scipio had to do as *proconsul* and chief of the Roman and non-Roman troops. The suspicion remains that Cato, in any case, would not have appreciated all those provincial references.

It is clear that, during the civil wars, Rome was gradually undergoing provincial influence in culture, art, religion, ideology and coinage: the African component in Scipio's coins (also in issue No. 7, see below) is a proof of this mixture with 'non-Roman' features. Surely the interpenetration of different cultures was not so easy, and the description of the battle of Actium given by Virgil (*Aen.* 8.671–728) is a demonstration of Roman reaction towards the 'barbarian' world. 'Virgil's scorn for the troublesome but defeated foreigner represents a deep vein of Roman xenophobia in the late Republic and early Empire, which often borders on racism'.⁴¹

Old and new gods

Cato's issue No. 3 bears a male head with an ivy crown on the obverse. It was, once again, a close copy of a previous one struck by Cato's ancestor in 89 BC (*RRC* 343/2): the same who struck the issue Nos.1–2. On the obverse, the male head with long hair and ivy wreath is commonly identified with *Liber*;⁴² this interpretation has been given to the issue of 89 and so adopted also for the coins of 47–46. No clues other than the ivy – not very visible in fact – can be used to identify the head on this coin. A similar iconography is used also on some coins struck around 80 BC by the otherwise unknown *M. Volteius M. F.* (*RRC* 385/3, 78 BC) and by *L. Cassius Q.F. Longinus* (*RRC* 386/1, 78 BC). The presence of *Liber* on Cato's coins, and generally on the coins of the *gens Porcia* is connected in Crawford's opinion with the *leges Porciae de provocatione*, concerning the *provocatio ad populum* and so strictly linked to the *plebs* (Livy, 2.32).⁴³ On the reverse of these coins, again we find a winged Victory sitting on a throne and holding a palm branch. On the one hand, the iconography is identical to that of the issue of 89 BC, but on the other, if Crawford is right, this type shows Cato's pride in his origins and perhaps amounts to a claim concerning his *gens'* connection with the *plebs* and the unquestionable importance of the *leges de provocatione*. (The message was perhaps somewhat obscure and in any case not so relevant in the context of the African war.) Again, we wonder what Cato – who chose to represent on his coins only ancient, traditional gods as *Libera* and *Liber*, in any case strictly linked to the *plebs* – must have thought about Scipio, who dared to represent the Egyptian goddess Sekhmet on his issue No. 7.

On the reverse of coin No. 7, we have the name of Scipio and a symbol that was absolutely new on Roman coinage: the lion-headed goddess Sekhmet. She is a hieratic figure and holds an *ankh*, the symbol of life. The significance of this image is given by the legend above, that reads *GTA: Genius Terrae Africae*.

This was one of the African *Genii* that protected the land of *Africa*. This deity was humanized in Roman times, when it was represented with a human, female head with lion skin.⁴⁴ So on the reverse of this coin a typical African iconography is used to represent an idea that was truly Roman: the *genius*. The innovation is all the more important because, just as there is no previous representation of a city goddess except *Roma* on Roman coinage, so there is no previous representation of a *genius*, save the *Genius* of the Roman People. This image is to be read in close connection with the other side of the coin, where we find a more classical Victory and a *caduceus*, again a symbol of forthcoming victory. This is maybe the most striking coin of the whole series issued by Scipio, because it clearly announces the political programme of the *imperator*: victory and peace in Africa. The double language used is itself an innovation, together with the object represented on the reverse. This is the first time that Rome is not the centre of the message, and that the theatre of the action is elsewhere. Once again, Scipio's ingenuity allowed him to find symbols that spoke not only to Romans (and, even then, with reference to their victory in Africa, of course), but also to the African allies, honoured by the choice of their own symbols on a precious Roman coin.⁴⁵

Cato's rejection of African symbols and hints was, as we have observed, not only due to his rigidity but also to the fact that his office did not require him to supervise the troops in every respect: he could easily keep his distance. However, we should not think that he disregarded Africa and Juba's alliance.⁴⁶ On the contrary, we know that he protected the *Uticenses* from Scipio's punishment.

When Scipio, however, after assuming the command, straightway desired to gratify Juba by putting all the people of Utica to death and demolishing their city, on the ground that it favoured the cause of Caesar, Cato would not suffer it, but by adjurations and loud outcries in the council, and by invoking the gods, with difficulty rescued the people from this cruelty; and partly at the request of the people, and partly at the instance of Scipio, he undertook to watch over the city, that it might not, either willingly or unwillingly, attach itself to Caesar.

(Plut. *Cat. Min.* 58.1–2; translation by Perrin 1919).

Cato's behaviour fits well with the Pompeian claim to limit violence, to save citizens fighting far from Italy and to respect life, in contrast to Caesar's explicit claim (Caes. *BCiv* 1.7) to be fighting civil war for the sake of his own *dignitas*.⁴⁷

Scipio and Cato through the lens of coins

The coinage of Metellus Scipio and M. Porcius Cato for the African campaign shows how both of them, in spite of their conflicting interests, used the same language for their propaganda, with very different results. They both

communicate indeed with a Republican vocabulary, made of symbols and codes that often need a translation or a glance to the historical context to be understood. However we can see how the style they each adopted is very different, reflecting perhaps their personalities, but also their role and formal responsibilities in the war.

Scipio's coins show a multi-level language, which moves on three different layers. The *imperator* shows proudly his close links with Pompey, his 'decorative' son-in-law,⁴⁸ and so at the same moment he indirectly reveals his political ideals, strictly connected with the Republican cause. But, in spite of his political expectations, Scipio's first aim seems clearly to be to point out the *nobilitas* of his family – of his two families, indeed – the *Scipiones* and the *Metelli*. And thus he uses many different ways to exalt his *noblesse*: his ingenuity, however, lay in choosing symbols that often fitted well with the political propaganda. So, the elephant is linked of course with the *Metelli*, but also with Africa – the place where the *Scipiones* could not lose – and with the coins struck by Caesar, the enemy of the Republic. With a single animal, Scipio kept alight the political propaganda, remembered his ancestors and exalted his current enterprises. The same things can be said, for example, for the Victory with the caduceus, linked with the head of Utica: as Linderski argued, the message below is a political programme: *pax terra marique*.⁴⁹

The third level of Scipio's communication concerns the geographical and political scenario of his action, which is often remembered on his coin types. In this respect, Scipio's coins are innovative and pave the way for some types that only after the Civil War will become usual, such as the representation of cities other than Rome (the turreted head of Utica), or of deities and personifications of places: it is the case of the *Genius Terrae Africae* (which is represented using the local iconography of *Sekhmet*) or of Africa itself, borrowed from a coin struck earlier under Pompey's authority. The three levels of Scipio's propaganda, as we tried to show, are strictly and closely interconnected, and often it is not easy to untie them.

Cato's coins follow another style. Unlike Scipio's coins, where the political propaganda for the Republic is only one – and not the first – of the elements, for Cato's coins the only aim seems to be the restoring of the Republic. Thus, Cato does not even try to imagine something new or different, but he simply imitates the coin types of his ancestor: maybe the aim was to exalt his ancestors as Scipio does on many occasions, but in this case the whole coin shows no new feature, appearing deliberately as a sterile copy. *Libertas* – or *Roma* – *Victrix*: the message is clear, indeed pointedly immovable, due to its repetition of iconography. On Cato's issues there is no explicit link to the present situation: no clear allusion either to Pompey or to Africa.

The different approach of the two men produces very different results,

even if the propaganda of both goes in much the same direction, towards the safety of the Roman Republic. Scipio and Cato were among the last heroes of the Republicans, but despite their desperate situation, we know that they argued on several occasions, due to the deep differences in their approach to the war they were fighting. Between them, they reflect well the divided nature of the Pompeian side: some of the Pompeians fought *against* Caesar to achieve their own glory, some others fought *for* the Republic, to defend the *mos maiorum*.

Scipio's coins show a new language that can be defined as 'provincial', where classical elements, such as the symbols of Republican power (the curule chair, the head of *Jupiter Terminalis*) acquire a new, personal significance and are combined with local insertions (*Sekhmet*, the head of Utica, the elephant skin). In contrast, Cato's coins show a conservative perception of Rome, through the traditional Roman iconography (*Roma*, *Libertas*, Victory). Scipio celebrated Utica on his coins, whereas for his colleague Cato such a reference might have amounted to unrepublican warlordism. For Cato, the importance of Utica was as a step towards traditional, Republican Rome. It was, then, by a supreme historical irony that, of the two, it was Cato who would become known as 'Uticensis'.

Acknowledgements

All the digital photos of coins come from <www.coinarchives.com>, <http://www.live.noble.com.au/>, <www.numisbids.com>, <www.numismatics.org/>. Many thanks to American Numismatic Society, Noble Numismatics Pty Ltd, Numismatica Ars Classica NAC AG and Roma Numismatics Ltd for granting the permission to use their images.

Notes

¹[Cato] saw that in military matters even more than elsewhere it was very important that the commander should have some legal precedence over the others, and therefore he willingly yielded [Scipio] the command and furthermore delivered to him the armies that he had brought there' (Dio Cass. 42.57.3; trans. E. Cary and H. B. Foster, 1916).

²For Plutarch see his *Cato the Younger*, trans. Perrin 1919.

³*RRC* 462/1b is very similar, so we choose not to give a separate description.

⁴We know also an *aureus* with the same coin types (*RRC* 460/1; Sydenham 1047) now preserved in the National Library in Paris.

⁵The mints are not indicated since we do not know them: probably Cato's coins were struck in Utica.

⁶Due to this prediction, Caesar put in the forefront of his troops a man named Scipio Salvito.

⁷Mommsen 1865–75, v. 2, 539.

⁸Cavedoni 1841, 13.

⁹ Cavedoni 1841, 13.

¹⁰ For this chronology see: *RRC*, 93; Woytek 2003, 239 ff.

¹¹ Babelon 1885, 374. For Crawford see *RRC*, 352.

¹² For example, *RRC* 385/3 and 386/1.

¹³ Cf. Bellinger and Berlincourt 1962, 47.

¹⁴ Another hypothesis to be considered is that in this case the Victory on the reverse should be connected with the temple of *Victoria Virgo* dedicated by Cato the Elder after his military success in Spain (Livy 35.9). This type is generally to be connected with the temple (Babelon 1885, 371).

¹⁵ Crawford identifies the obverse of *RRC* 446 with Numa and the one on *RRC* 447 with *Jupiter*.

¹⁶ Scipio's daughter, *Cornelia Metella*, had married Pompey after the death of her first husband, Crassus, in the battle of Carrhae in 53 BC. (App. *BC* 2.25; Cass. Dio 40.51.2–3). See Syme 1980.

¹⁷ Numidian nationality, for example, is evident in the type of the goddess with elephant skin headdress (cf. *SNG Copenhagen* 532). See Manfredi 2001.

¹⁸ See above.

¹⁹ He was born Publius Cornelius Scipio Nasica. His grandfather was the P. Cornelius Scipio Nasica Serapio *consul* in 111 BC, his father Publius Cornelius Scipio. He was adopted in adulthood through the testament of Quintus Caecilius Metellus Pius, *consul* in 80 BC and *pontifex maximus* (Cic. *Brut.* 212). Cf. Syme 1986, pl. 1.

²⁰ Nousek 2008. Crawford (*RRC*, 735) more generically writes that 'it was intended to symbolise victory over evil'.

²¹ Alföldi 1968.

²² *CRR*, 175, No. 1047.

²³ Schäfer 1989, 98–9.

²⁴ Crawford (*RRC*, 735) argues that 'It was intended to symbolize victory over evil'.

²⁵ See also *BMCRR* (Africa), 572. For the interpretation of this obverse as Cybele, see Calabria, Di Jorio and Pensabene 2005, 26.

²⁶ Linderski 1996, 173, note 150 gives the same interpretation.

²⁷ *RRC* 357/1; 367; 403; 440/1; 448/1; 460/4.

²⁸ Crawford in *RRC*, 387.

²⁹ Welch 2012, 26.

³⁰ Welch 2012, 43.

³¹ Welch 2012, 26.

³² But it should be remembered that in Caesar's opinion this victory was not so clear cut (*detrimentis quibusdam...acceptis*. Caes. *BCiv.* 3.31.1).

³³ Grueber argued that the trophy was made of Spanish weapons and so was linked with Metellus Pius' victory against Sertorius; while Taylor connected them with the victory of Caecilius Metellus over the Numidians. In both cases, it is worth remembering that none of those generals commemorated his own victory with an issue depicting a trophy; furthermore, it is hard to imagine that Metellus Pius Scipio wanted to refer to the victory of his ancestor over the Numidians, since Juba was now his ally against Caesar. (The whole discussion is in Linderski 1996, 172.)

³⁴ Linderski 1996, 170.

³⁵ Sear 1998, 33.

³⁶The *exuviae elephantis* appear often on Hellenistic coinage: Vanotti, Perassi 2004, 202.

³⁷Plut. *Vit. Pomp.* 12; Liv. *Epit.* 89.

³⁸*HCRI* 33.

³⁹Babelon 1885, v. 1, 477.

⁴⁰Since ‘the traditional resolution of the reverse legend as *legatus faciendum curavit* does not provide a title of a magistracy, which is what one would expect’ (*RRC*, 472).

⁴¹Barclay 2004, 109.

⁴²*BMCRR*, 575; *RRC*, 473.

⁴³*RRC*, 352.

⁴⁴In the 2nd century AD, the *Genius Terrae Africae* was officially worshipped at Lambaesis by the *Legio III Augusta*, as the famous sanctuary of *Aqua Septimiana* in Timgad bears witness. See Benseddik 2011, 176.

⁴⁵Some years later (42 BC) Cornuficius, *propraetor* of *Africa Vetus* put two African gods on his coins: Tanit-Ceres (*RRC* 509/5) and the Egyptian Ammon (*RRC* 509/1–2). See the chapter by de Méritens in this volume.

⁴⁶As already noted, some of the innovations in Scipio’s coins will be adopted in the imperial coin types. But well before the Roman Empire, the influence of these two moneyers appears clearly in an issue struck by Juba I, the Numidian ally of Scipio and Cato (App. *BC* 2.76; Caes. *BCiv.* 3.88; Cass. Dio 42). Juba struck *denarii* (*MAA* 29; SNG Copenhagen 523) that show on the obverse his own portrait and on the reverse a temple. These coins show for the first time the portrait of a Numidian king and bear a bilingual legend, in Latin on the obverse (*IVBA REX*) and in neo-Punic on the reverse (*Hmmmlkt – Ywb’Y*). Juba also struck *quinarii* (*MAA* 30; SNG Copenhagen 525), that show a horse with a neo-Punic legend on the reverse and a bust of a winged Victory with the legend *REX IVBA* on the obverse.

⁴⁷Welch 2012, 26.

⁴⁸Syme 1939, 45.

⁴⁹Linderski 1996, 173.

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MAA *see* Alexandropoulos, J. (above)

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