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A NEW COIN OF THE POMPEIAN PSEUDO-MINT
MULING EBUSUS AND ATHENS¹
(Tavole VIII–X)

A “pseudo-mint”, almost certainly based in Pompeii, struck large numbers of small bronze coins, probably from about 140/130 BC². These provided the bulk of Pompeii’s small change, along with many coins of the island of Ebusus (overwhelmingly CAMPO 1976, group XVIII, which have a standing figure of the god, Bes, on both faces). The Ebusan coins seem to have been brought to Pompeii in a single block, shortly before the pseudo-mint began striking³. A purse from the sewers of a Republican period bathhouse at *Insula* VIII.5.36, probably constructed c. 90–80 BC⁴, contained the pseudo-mint’s coins for about 60%, and canonical Ebusan coin for 9%⁵. It seems probable that these coins

¹ We thank Renata Cantilena, Jack Kroll, Suzanne Frey-Kupper, Enzo Lippolis and Nicola Parise, for reading and commenting on our draft.

² The term, “pseudo-mint”, was coined to denote the systematic imitation, by a single emitter, over a period of time, of an issue or issues of a foreign mint or a group of mints (STANNARD, FREY-KUPPER 2008). From the initial identification of “pseudo-Ebusan” coins in finds in central Italy (STANNARD 1998), Stannard has progressively identified other elements of the pseudo-mint’s production, and has identified Pompeii as the place where it was located (STANNARD 2005a; STANNARD 2005b; STANNARD, FREY-KUPPER 2008; STANNARD *forthcoming*; and RIBERA, SALAVERT, STANNARD *forthcoming*. The provisional dating here is based on the two latter papers.

³ The reasons for supposing that these coins came to Pompeii in a single block are discussed in STANNARD, FREY-KUPPER 2008, p. 372; FREY-KUPPER, STANNARD *forthcoming*; and STANNARD *forthcoming*.

⁴ FAGAN 1999, pp. 59–60.

⁵ First published by Laura Breglia, in a note to MAIURI 1950, p. 127 (with the pseudo-mint’s Ebusan imitations interpreted as being of an unidentified Gallic mint); by STAZIO 1955 (with the identification of the Ebusan types); by Michael H. Crawford in *RRCH*, p. 95, no. 245, dated to 91–79 BC; in FREY-KUPPER, STANNARD 2010, p. 132, tab. 3, and in STANNARD *forthcoming*, tab. 4 and associated discussion.

formed the bulk of the small change at Pompeii until the new *aes* of Augustus arrived. Specimens of both these groups of coin turn up even in strata of the first century AD, but they were probably residuals, at that late date.

The pseudo-mint used a variety of types that imitated other mints, and never struck with types that identified Pompeii, or an issuing authority. It drew for the main part on the types of Ebusan and Massaliot bronze coinage, but also imitated Roman gold, silver and bronze types, and perhaps those of other Italian mints, mixing these freely, in tightly die-linked groups⁶.

The presence of Ebusan coin at Pompeii, and the phenomenon of its imitation, does not appear to signify any especially close trade or other links with the island of Ebusus⁷. The importation of a block of Ebusan coin to Pompeii appears to be an isolated event, and the imitation of Ebusan types (as an integral part of the imitation of a wider group of mints) is a purely Italian phenomenon. This is borne out by the fact that pseudo-mint's coins are not found in Ibiza. Stannard has worked through the very large number of coins in the Museu Arqueològic d'Eivissa i Formentera, and did not find a single specimen. Nor are they present in the large, locally constituted Martín collection:

“Ahora, tras el examen de más de 7.000 piezas procedentes de la donación Martín Mañanes es seguro que las monedas Campo 1976 grupo XVI deben excluirse de la producción de *Ebusus*, así como las del grupo XVIII, que muestran un peso más reducido y un estilo tosco, pues no se ha encontrado ninguna de ellas entre las piezas de la mencionada donación”⁸.

Similarly, despite the frequent imitation of Massaliot types, only one coin in French cabinets can be shown to have been found in France, and

⁶ The first systematic discussion of the prototypes and catalogue of types is FREY-KUPPER, STANNARD 2010, pp. 115–130, updated and extended by STANNARD *forthcoming*.

⁷ STANNARD *forthcoming*, presents the evidence to support this assertion.

⁸ RIPOLLÈS *et al.* 2009. The two groups mentioned are products of the pseudo-mint: group XVI includes STANNARD *forthcoming*, *Catalogue*, tab. 3, TC-11 and TC-5, and the rudimentary style of group XVIII is TC-28.

the few other coins almost certainly travelled there with visitors returning from Italy in the 19th century⁹.

A new coin has now appeared (*Plate VIII*, 1–1a), on which the pseudo-mint mules its habitual Ebusan Bes type with an Athenian reverse type. It was sold on eBay in Spain¹⁰, but is unlikely to have been found there. The very few coins of the pseudo-mint that we have traced to Spain were probably all taken there for sale, as Spain is the natural market for “Spanish” coins.

Obv. Bes standing facing, his right hand raised, probably holding a hammer, and a serpent twined round his left arm.

Rev. A

Θ E; *plemochoe*¹¹; an ear of corn passed through each handle.

1. Æ 12 mm 1.39 g 300°

A number of coins, with provenances to Pompeii and central Italy, carry an image of Bes of similar style (*Plate VIII*, 2–5), very different to the styles found on Ebusan coin. The defining characteristic of these pieces is Bes’s clearly separated buttocks. This is not seen on other groups, either of canonical Ebusan coin, or of the pseudo-mint’s imitations¹².

Obv. Bes standing facing, his right hand raised, probably holding a hammer, and a serpent twined round his left arm; border of dots.

Rev. Same as obverse.

2. Æ 13 mm 2.02 g Naples, from old excavations at Pompeii; reverse obliterated.

⁹ FREY-KUPPER, STANNARD 2010, pp. 135–143, but note that the coin in fig. 16, is wrongly identified (pp. 141–142) as a coin of the pseudo-mint; it is, in fact, a coin of Avignon (FEUGÈRE, PY 2011, p. 182, AVI-2521).

¹⁰ The seller could provide no meaningful provenance.

¹¹ We use the term, *plemochoe*, throughout, without wishing to take a position as to exactly which vessel the term denoted, or the distinction between *kernoi* and *plemochoai*. For a discussion of the use of these two terms, in relation to the vases of the Eleusinian mysteries, see MITSOPOULOU 2010, pp. 149–165.

¹² Cfr. STANNARD 2005a, p. 132, n^{os} 78, 80 and 81 (all illustrated here), and STANNARD *forthcoming*, TC-28.

3. Æ 14 mm 1.85 g Gragnano 7219¹³; reverse obliterated.
4. Æ 13 mm 1.48 g Pompeii, Uffici Scavi 59137, probably from excavations in the Forum, for the installation of electric lighting¹⁴.
5. Æ 13 mm 2.00 g AAPP excavations in Pompeii¹⁵, 311,234#349; the reverse die is of a different style.

There are a number of possible prototypes for the *plemochoe* reverses in the Athenian bronze series (*Plate VIII*, 6–12)¹⁶.

c. 224/3–198 BC

KROLL, p. 62, n° 73, Æ 2 (18–23 mm, av. 5.36 g).

Obv. Head of Demeter right, wearing corn-wreath; border of dots.

Rev. A Θ

E ; *plemochoe*; an ear of corn passed through each handle; aplustre at right¹⁷.

6. Æ 20 mm 4.22 g 180° Paris FG 964

KROLL, p. 62, n° 74, Æ 2 (c. 20 mm, c. 4.97 g).

Obv. Similar.

Rev. Similar, but owl at right.

7. Æ 24 mm 6.89 g 330° Paris FG 963

¹³ A votive well in a Campanian sanctuary at Gragnano (Privati di Stabiae), at the foot of the Sorrentine peninsula, south of Pompeii, containing over 600 mainly bronze coins, with a sharp cut-off date in the early first century BC. A preliminary report was published in CANTILENA 1997. The assemblage includes 9.1% of Ebusan coin, 1.6% pseudo-Ebusan, and 0.7% pseudo-Massaliot (STANNARD 2005a, pp. 123–124).

¹⁴ ARTHUR 1986, p. 35. CARROLL, GODDEN 2000, pp. 750–751, supports the lower range of Arthur's dating—c. 80 BC—for the closure of the cisterns in which most of the coins were found.

¹⁵ Richard Hobbs is preparing the coins from the Anglo-American Project in Pompeii (AAPP) excavations (VI.1.14–18, 20–21) for publication, and has kindly provided me with a number of provisional results (HOBBS 2003, HOBBS 2005 and HOBBS forthcoming).

¹⁶ Cited in accordance with KROLL 1993.

¹⁷ There is also a type with Eleusis ring to right on the reverse (KROLL 1993, p. 61, no 72, Æ 2, c. 22 mm, c. 8.27 g), which we do not illustrate.

KROLL, p. 62, n° 75, Æ 4 (18–23 mm, av. 5.36 g).

Obv. *Plemochoe*; an ear of corn passed through each handle.

Rev. Θ

A E; Eleusis ring in corn-wreath.

8. Æ 13 mm 2.16 g 0° Classical Numismatic Group, ID 689052

c. 140s BC

KROLL, p. 76, n° 102, Æ 4 (10–13 mm, av. 1.63 g).

Obv. Head of Zeus right; border of dots.

Rev. A Θ

E ; *plemochoe*.

9. Æ 12 mm 1.93 g 0° Paris FG 973

KROLL, p. 77, n° 103, Æ 4 (c. 10–13 mm, av. 1.58 g).

Obv. Laureate head of Apollo right; border of dots.

Rev. Θ

A E; *plemochoe* all within corn-wreath.

10. Æ 11 mm 1.54 g 5° KROLL 1993, 103b = Athenian Agora N37183

c. 140–90 BC

KROLL, p. 77, n° 104¹⁸, Æ 4 (c. 10–12 mm, c. 1.25–1.50 g).

Obv. Head of Artemis right, quiver at shoulder; border of dots.

Rev. A Θ

E; *plemochoe* all within wreath.

11. Æ 11 mm 0.87 g 330° Paris FG 968

70s–40s BC

KROLL, p. 98, n° 129, Æ 4 (c. 14–17 mm, av. 4.09 g).

Obv. Dolphin on trident; border of dots.

Rev. A ΘE; *plemochoe*, an ear of corn passed through each handle; all in corn wreath.

12. Æ 17 mm 4.66 g 30° Paris FG 965

¹⁸ “The variety has been found in quantity in Delos. There can be little doubt that the variety was minted for use in the island. Weights show that the variety is later than [n° 103]”. KROLL 1993, p. 77.

Which of these coins could have been the prototype?

The *plemochoe* (πλημοχόη, from πλήμη, brimming over, and χέω, pour)¹⁹ on the Athenian coins is of an unusual shape, which seems specific to the Eleusinian Mysteries. The more usual form (*Plate IX, B*), is a vase with turned-in rim, high foot, without side handles, and with a flat lid with a tall spindle-shaped handle²⁰, while the Eleusinian type has a substantial neck, above a bulbous body, a large inverted-cup-shaped lid, and side handles, like these three 4th c. BC *plemochoai*, from the city Eleusinion of Athens (*Plate IX, A*). Christina Mitsopoulou argues that the name, *plemochoe*, refers specifically to such ritual vases, used in the context of the Eleusinian Mysteries, and that they were borne on the heads of young women in procession, as on the Ninnion Pinax of 400–350 BC (*Plate X, C*). Holes in the equatorial rim held the *plemochoai* on their heads (*Plate X, D*)²¹. The climax of the Mysteries, on the last day, involved the ritual upsetting of two *plemochoai*, to pour liquid East and West. This day was accordingly called “*plemochoai*”. Mitsopoulou illustrates a gold diadem²²,

“qui semble s’agir de la première représentation picturale du rituel final des mystères d’Éleusis, les *Plemochoai*, que nous ne connaissions jusqu’alors que par l’intermédiaire des textes”²³.

The *plemochoe* without a neck, on the other hand, was associated with bathing and funerary practices (*Plate X, E*).

On a number of the Athenian coins (n^{os} 6–8 and 9), the neck of the *plemochoe* is quite wide, though not quite as wide as with the vases of *Plate IX, A*. On n^{os} 9, 11 and 12, however, the neck has narrowed very considerably. On the pseudo-mint’s imitation, the neck is narrower yet, which might seem to suggest that the prototype is one of the coins showing a narrow-necked *plemochoe*. However, narrow-necked n^{os} 9,

¹⁹ RICHTER, MILNE 1935, p. 21.

²⁰ This is the only form that RICHTER, MILNE 1935 illustrates, fig. 146 and 147.

²¹ MITSOPOULOU 2010, pp. 165–172.

²² MITSOPOULOU 2010 169, fig. 8 and p. 171, fig. 9.

²³ Athenaios, XI, 495–496.

11 and 12 all have wreathed reverses, which is not the case of the imitation, and this would seem to exclude them, and remove all narrow-necked *plemochoai* from consideration.

The lay-out of the legend on the imitation is similar to the lay-out on both the earlier Athenian n^{os} 6 and 7, and the later n^{os} 9–12, but – where the ethnic is readable – the exact lay-out of the three letters is not found on coins from the Athenian Agora, from the house of the Comedians in Delos²⁴, or in Svoronos' corpus²⁵. The lay-out therefore gives no useful information.

The ears of corn through the handles of the *plemochoe* on the pseudo-mint's coin are found only on n^{os} 6–8, but these all are *plemochoai* with wide necks, which seems difficult to conjugate with the image on the imitative coin. Perhaps the die-sinker did not understand the Eleusinian type of *plemochoe*, and pictured the type with a spindle-handled lid instead.

The evidence is confusing, but KROLL n^{os} 72–75, of c. 224/3–198 BC (n^{os} 6–8), seems the most likely, because of the ears of corn.

The pseudo-mint drew its other types from a number of mints – certainly from Ebusus, Massalia and Rome, and possibly from Luceria or Venusia, and mixed them freely. In a few cases, not only the main types were copied, but the accompanying symbols or letters as well: this makes it possible to date some of the prototypes, and provides a *terminus post quem* for pseudo-mint's use of these types. The date range of the other prototypes copied by the pseudo-mint is as follows²⁶.

²⁴ HACKENS 1970, pl. 65, F178–237.

²⁵ SVORONOS 1923–1926.

²⁶ Most fully discussed in STANNARD *forthcoming*, but also in FREY-KUPPER STANNARD 2010, pp. 124–131.

	Mint	Types copied	Reference	Dates (BC)
A	Ebusus ²⁷	Bes / Butting bull	<i>Ebusus</i> , pp. 123–125, gr. XII, n ^{os} 14–17	c. 214–c. 195
B		Bes / Bes	<i>Ebusus</i> , pp. 127–129, gr. XVIII, n ^{os} 50–60 & 61–70	c. 214–last 3rd 2nd c. ²⁸
C	Massalia	Head of Apollo, 𐌆/O / Butting bull	FEUGÈRE, PY 2011, p. 124, PBM–40–4	c. 150–100
D		Head of Apollo / Butting bull, ΔA	FEUGÈRE, PY 2011, p. 124, PBM–47–9	c. 130 ²⁹ –100
E	Rome	Head of Mars / Bridled horse’s head	RRC, p. 141, n ^o 25/1 & 3 RRC, p. 154, n ^o 44/2	241–235 211–208
F		Head of Mars, √X		
G	(?)	Tortoise	RRC, p. 141, n ^o 24/7	265–252
J	Luceria (?)	Frog	<i>HN Italy</i> , p. 80, n ^o 682	c. 211–200
K	Venusia(?)		<i>HN Italy</i> , p. 83, n ^o 725	c. 210–200

Although the dates of the Roman prototypes are early, they are muled, often with shared dies, in a tightly interlinked group³⁰, with imitations of Ebusan prototypes A and B, and of Massaliot prototypes C and D. Because of this, Massaliot prototype D suggests a *terminus post quem* for the beginning of the mint, though it is possible, but unlikely, that some issues with Ebusan and Massaliot types only were earlier.

The only relevant stratigraphic evidence from excavations in Pompeii that we know is a coin of the Pseudo–mint found in a drainage canal running under tavern 50 on the Via della Fortuna, in a context dated by ceramics to c. 140–c. 120 BC³¹, and canonical coins of Ebusus in contexts of c. 160–140/130 BC, from the Casa di Arianna³². On the balance of the evidence, it is probable that the block of Ebusan coin

²⁷ Dated by CAMPO 1993.

²⁸ For the proposed date of the end of the emission, STANNARD *forthcoming*.

²⁹ “Avant 125, mais sans doute peu avant, car aucune autre attestation assurément aussi ancienne n’a été à notre connaissance publiée. Beaucoup des types en revanche sont datés par la stratigraphie dans le dernier quart du II^e s. ou plus généralement avant 100”. FEUGÈRE, PY 2011, p. 132.

³⁰ STANNARD *forthcoming*, TC–1 and 2, and 4–27.

³¹ RIBERA, SALAVERT, STANNARD *forthcoming*, coin n^o 13, and STANNARD *forthcoming*.

³² RIBERA, SALAVERT, STANNARD *forthcoming*, coins n^{os} 1–6, and STANNARD *forthcoming*.

arrived in the 140s or 130s BC, and that the pseudo-mint began striking in the 130s or 120s BC, to supply a growing need for small change.

The dates of the new Athenian type cannot therefore be used to date the pseudo-mint, which, like the Roman prototypes, dates from well before it began striking.

We know no Athenian coins from Pompeii, though we know of a number of Hellenistic Athenian bronzes from Minturnae, and one from Rome. In the context of known finds from Rome, Minturnae and Pompeii, Athenian bronze is neither particularly common nor uncommon³³. It should also be recalled that there have been few excavations below the AD 79 destruction layer at Pompeii. Similarly, coins from the west are not common in Athens: in the Agora excavations, there are nine Italian and Sicilian coins of the 4th to 2nd c. BC, and a single Roman coin. These should be placed in the context of over 1679 non-Athenian Greek coins of this period³⁴.

Nor is there evidence of the presence in significant quantity of Athenian ceramics of the Hellenistic period at Pompeii. Eastern Greek amphoras, particularly from Rhodes, Knidos and Kos, are common, and testify to the Pompeian taste for Greek wines³⁵. Athenian trade with central Italy does not appear to have been particularly important at the time.

There were, however, many opportunities for a prototype to have reached Pompeii. The 2nd c. BC saw the direct participation of Pompeian troops in Rome's eastern military³⁶ and of Pompeian merchants in

³³ STANNARD, FREY-KUPPER 2008, pp. 393–397, tab. 8, summarises such finds.

³⁴ KROLL 1993, pp. xviii–xxvi.

³⁵ PASCUAL, RIBERA, FINKIELSZTEJN 2007, pp. 508–513.

³⁶ “The removal of plaster from a statue base physically incorporated in the colonnade [of the temple of Apollo at Pompeii] reads in Oscan letters, right to left, L.MVMMIS.L.KASVL. *Lucius Mummius* son of *Lucius*, the sacker of Corinth in 146 BCE, is Oscanised in his name form [...], but remains a recognisable Roman consul. The dedication provides confirmation of the implicit link between urban expansion in second-century Italy and the spoils of eastern war. *Mummius*' numerous dedications in the cities of Italy around Rome were an acknowledgement of the obligation of Rome to its allies; in this case, the enhancement of the temple of Apollo, the god of Corinth, implies a direct Pompeian involvement in that campaign”. (WALLACE-HADRILL 2008, pp. 132–133). This inscription was first published in MARTELLI 2002.

Rome's commercial expansion, which brought huge wealth into Italy, to the benefit of local elites, including in Pompeii.

“Il II secolo a.C. è giustamente considerato il ‘periodo d’oro’ di Pompei. L’espansione romana in Oriente consentì anche alla comunità dei *socci* di affacciarsi verso i ricchi regni ellenistici d’Oriente, entrati ormai in un’irreversibile crisi politica. I *mercatores* pompeiani raggiunsero le coste e le città della Grecia e dell’Asia Minore, frequentando a partire dal 166 a.C. il porto franco di Delo, vero crocevia internazionale di merci e di uomini”³⁷.

Military and commercial opportunities aside, the Eleusinian Mysteries probably drew a greater crowd of foreigners (Italians included) to Athens than any other attraction the city had to offer.

Our knowledge of the Pompeian pseudo-mint is clearly incomplete, as new types keep appearing. All the previously known prototypes are from Italy or the western Mediterranean, and this is the first to testify to Pompeii’s eastern contacts.

It is unlikely that the pseudo-mint’s use of an Eleusinian type is more than casual, despite the fact that the Eleusinian myths were well known in Campania³⁸. We caution against jumping to conclusions: the pseudo-mint was promiscuous in its choice of types, and, without further evidence, we would not wish to attach any special importance to its imitation of an Athenian type.

³⁷ PESANDO, GUIDOBALDI 2006, p. 18. For a discussion of the implications of *Mummius*’ inscription, see also pp. 18–19.

³⁸ Professor Lippolis has drawn to our attention the continued contacts between Campania and the Eleusinian cult and the cult of Athenian Demeter, from at least the 5th c. BC. In fact, most images of the Eleusinian myths around Triptolemos come from Campania.

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TAVOLA VIII



A New Coin of the Pompeian Pseudo-Mint Muling Ebusus and Athens.

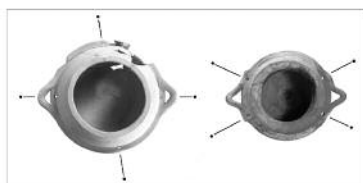


A New Coin of the Pompeian Pseudo-Mint Muling Ebusus and Athens
A: Athens Agora excavations, <http://www.agathe.gr>, from left to right, P 12148,
P 12138, P 12146); B: Metropolitan Museum, New York (www.metmuseum.org),
accession number: 06.1021.95a, b, late 6th c. BC.

TAVOLA X



C



D



E

A New Coin of the Pompeian Pseudo-Mint Muling Ebusus and Athens
C: Detail from Harvard University Library, Visual Information Access, record identifier: olwork300898; D: Adapted from MITSOPOULOU 2010, p. 161, fig. 4.
E: White-ground Attic *lekythos*, c. 440–430 BC, from Piraeus; Louvre, accession no. L 110 (MNB 620); image Marie-Lan Nguyen, Wikimedia Commons.



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