

### Silver Denarii of Marc Antony, 37-30 BC

Plutarch notes of Marc Antony:

. . . There was a noble dignity about Antony's appearance. His beard was well grown, his forehead broad, his nose aquiline, and these features combined to give him a certain bold and masculine look, which is found in the statues and portraits of Hercules . . . It was moreover a tradition that the Antonys were descended from Hercules, by a son of his called Anton.



*42 cm basalt head found in Egypt, probably of Marc Antony, c. 35 BC.*

The portrait denarii of Marc Antony struck in the East during the period 40-31 BC have a portrait style that shifts over time. While Crawford calls the mint for all of these Eastern coins "Mobile Mint," the last three issues were apparently struck at Paphos. A mint traveling or elsewhere in the East was eventually transferred to Paphos. A variety of issues have similar style characteristics of both the late and earlier issues. Which mint are they from?

Let us consider the three latest Eastern Antony (Paphos) portrait issues first, as well as the contemporary Legionary denarii, which are from a different but contemporary Eastern mint. The three final portrait issues are: 1) Cleopatra obverse, 2) P. hidden in hair. / 2 line legend, and 3) Victory in wreath. The three Paphos issues have dotted borders and 12:00 die axis, a somewhat unusual feature in Roman coinage. Because of the high relief obverse, closed striking cracks are fairly common. The style is clumsy, average at best. One or more issues have a hidden P. behind the ear. The reverse themes are all propaganda for Antony and his family.

An important issue of denarii features the obverse portrait of Cleopatra with a small prow before, and the reverse portrait of Antony (Crawford 543). The clumsy-style Latin obverse legend translates as, "of Cleopatra, Queen of Kings, (and) of (her) sons, who are Kings." Unlike most Imperial denarii, the coin has 12:00 die axis. Both sides have a dotted border. The hair of the portrait is shown as several heavy locks. The neck terminates in a graceful curve. There is some resemblance to the Armenian cap denarii (Crawford 539/1) of 37 or 36 BC. The reverse Latin legend translates as, "of Antony, since Armenia has been defeated."

Of all Cleopatra's coinage, this issue most clearly proclaims the dynastic ambitions set forth by Antony in the "Donations of Alexandria." Antony's "Donations of Alexandria" listed a number of regions as the kingdoms of Cleopatra and her children. This is the only issue of denarii for Cleopatra, and her only issue with Latin legends, not Greek. The preferential placement of Cleopatra's portrait on the more convex obverse of this issue suggests that the mint officials placed their Queen above her consort, Marc Antony. Of this type Sear writes,

Careless engraving and shoddy execution . . . together with the imprecise form of the Latin, is consistent with their production by a mint which was unaccustomed to striking Roman coinage (i.e. Alexandria) . . . connected to Antony's triumph in 34 BC.

However, Paphos had inexpensive wood for fuel, more experience in minting silver and a location where denarii could have been utilized. In Alexandria, wood and metal workers were scarce imports. Denarii were acceptable to Roman legionaries, but not to local merchants. As a Ptolemaic mint with Roman influence, the coins could be from Paphos instead. Roman denarii were occasionally used on Cyprus. Wood for charcoal was accessible. The prow before the bust of Cleopatra honors the ships supplied by the Ptolemaic Kingdom to the alliance of Antony and Cleopatra. While Alexandria was the larger city, Paphos was a ship building center, and the main port of the Ptolemaic navy. Strabo described Paphos as "a triple harbor safe in all winds." The prow could be a symbol of either port. Paphos was probably the mint for this issue.

Crawford notes that this issue immediately preceded the legionary denarii, in 32 BC. Like the legionary denarii, it is also found plated and with banker's marks. The frequency of the banker's marks indicates that ancient merchants were aware that this issue was often plated. However, the issue is generally not of base silver, and should be considered as separate from the legionary denarii.



*Cleopatra appears on the obverse of this denarius, not Antony. (3.43g)*

Very late in the reign of Cleopatra, in 34, 33 or 32 BC, a mint described in some references as "Mint-moving with M. Antonius," or "mobile mint traveling with Antony," or "Athens" struck silver denarii with a large portrait of Marc Antony. The issue also has 12:00 die axis, and dotted borders. The hair is likewise drawn as several heavy locks. The neck terminates in a curve. The reverse has his titles, or those of his Pro-quaestor M. Silanus (Crawford 542/2; 542/1). The letter "P." appears behind the ear of obverses with both reverses. Since the initial discovery of this letter in a 1920 auction catalogue, the "P." has been assumed to be the signature of an engraver, unique among Republican issues. However, an engraver had signed no other dies for 200 years. Those were in Southern Italy. "P." is probably a reference to Paphos, the mint.

Two other ancient issues are known with letters hidden in the hair, that is not an engraver signature. Both were struck at Paphos. Back in 322 BC, the minute letters ΝΙΚΟΚΛΕΟΥΣ were hidden in the hair on Alexander the Great tetradrachms from Paphos (Price 3118-3123). The letters are sufficiently subtle that numismatists studying this series did not take note of the letters until 1919 (Newell, "Myriandros"). Price notes:

. . . seven different [Paphos obverse] dies. The variance in the styles of the dies makes it certain that the name is not that of an engraver, and the conclusion that it must be that of [Nikokles] the king of Paphos is inescapable. The clandestine manner in which the inscription has been engraved suggests that it was not intended that it should be read by all . . . There was little chance that it would have been spotted in ancient times.

The second issues with a hidden letter occurs on silver issues of Ptolemy I Soter, some of which have the ΠΑ Paphos mintmark.<sup>50</sup> The letter delta is hidden on the upper portion of the aegis of silver from c. 310-305 BC, and behind the ear of all silver and gold after the recovery of Cyprus in 294 BC. Whatever delta means, it is not the signature of the die engraver. Even over 290 years, the idea of a subtle message hidden in the hair of portrait was familiar to engravers in Paphos.

Engravers at Paphos had been marking their silver ΠΑ since the time of Nikokles in 322 BC. The same mintmark was used on many tetradrachms of the early Ptolemies. On a few Ptolemaic tetradrachms of Paphos, just the letter Π is the mintmark. The denarii of c. 32 BC were early Latin legend issues from Paphos. Greek Π became Latin P. The portrait style is not of special artistic merit, even by Roman standards; instead it is rather clumsy and vulgar. The portrait is quite similar to that of the Triumvir on the Cleopatra and Antony denarii, although the larger portrait fills more of the fields. Crawford, extrapolating from the numbers of dies in similar issues, notes that less than thirty obverse dies and less than thirty-three reverse dies for each of the two portions of this issue are known. This figure is probably inaccurate, but certainly there are many dies. All lack the “individual touch” that Classical and Hellenistic Greek signed dies exhibit. The dies are not special works that an artist would break tradition to sign. Every obverse die has the P.



*The P. behind the ear of this denarius, previously interpreted as the signature of an artist, may be a mintmark for Paphos. Note the flan crack. (3.45g)*

Antony's penultimate (32-31 BC) issue of silver denarii, now debased, has a galley on the obverse and legionary standards on the reverse (Crawford 544). Gold aurei of this type are also known. Twenty-two or twenty-three individual legions were named on these coins, as well as two special cohorts. This issue was of base silver. Pliny notes, “Antonius as Triumvir mixed iron (sic) into his denarii,” where iron is an error for copper, the actual metal used. As with Cleopatra's debased tetradrachms, the silver content of this issue was lower than that of any other contemporary denarii. Crawford gives figures from 78-91% silver. Vagi notes that

<sup>50</sup> The second, and far less certain issue with a hidden letter is the coinage of Ptolemy I as Satrap and Ptolemy I as King. The letter Δ is on the top of the aegis and later behind the ear. (c. 310 - 285 BC). From the use of Alexander III mint symbols, the many dies of these issues are apparently from Paphos, Salamis, Soli and other mints. What does Δ really stand for?



*A tetradrachm of Ptolemy I as Satrap, attributed to Salamis here, Soli elsewhere, with the “signature” of Delta at the top of the aegis. Could Delta stand for something else?*

Another similar tetradrachm (Svor. 253) shares the same symbols as a bronze from Paphos. A third has been attributed to a mint in Asia Minor. Unless Delta traveled or shipped his work, only one mint attribution is possible. While generally attributed to Alexandria, arguments for Cyprus include: 1) access to fuel, 2) use of Alexandrian mintmarks, and 3) the loss of Cyprus from 305 to 294 compares with the abrupt change in tetradrachm weight and style.

legionary denarii “often were fourée.” In addition, the weight standard was slightly lower than that of prior denarii.

The legionary issue was by far the largest single issue of the Republic and Imperial Period. No Ptolemaic billon tetradrachms were produced in Year 21 (32-31 BC), perhaps because silver was diverted to production of other denarii, and / or Legionary denarii at another mint, perhaps Patrae.

Despite their low silver content, legionary denarii were valued at the full denarii in their time. The issue was produced quickly, with variable die-axis. Striking while hot gave the coins a more silvery look, as the more fluid silver went to the surfaces. Alternatively, the blanks were pickled to produce the same effect. Over time, other denarii with better silver content were withdrawn for hoards or for melting. The application of Gresham’s Law kept the legionary denarii in circulation for many generations. Today, many are found in very worn condition, with banker’s marks.



*Legionary denarii and aurei were not struck on Cyprus. (3.50g)*

Millions of the base-silver legionary denarii were struck as payment for the massive force Antony amassed against Octavian before the Battle of Actium. The mint is uncertain, but must have had: 1) a position fairly near the troops of Antony, 2) access to silver, and 3) experience with alloying and minting debased silver coins. Paphos seems like a very slim candidate for this issue, because access to the troops by sea would have ended after the blockade of Agrippa, Octavian’s admiral. Antioch, Pergamum, or Ephesos would have been even further from the troops.

It is considered likely that the nearby Greek mint at Patrae struck the issue. A modest issue of silver had recently been struck there, with a portrait that looks like Cleopatra.<sup>51</sup> Patrae would have had a closer position to the troops. This mint attribution fits the rather sloppily produced issue well. The legionary denarii circulated alongside other Roman denarii into Severan times.

Another less-common denarius issue has a similar portrait of Antony paired with reverse Victory in a wreath. (Crawford 545) Antony's titles include Consul for the 4th time, which dates the issue to 31 BC, the last issue of Marc Antony. The portrait is stylistically closer to the P. signed issues of Antony and M. Silanus than any other issue. The more compact style is slightly improved. However, the art is average by standards of the time. This issue also has 12:00 die axis, and dotted obverse border. The IMP IIII and COS TERT in the obverse legend are essentially lies. Like the other issues of the period, Crawford attributes this to "Mint-moving with M. Antonius," while Sear suggests "Actium (?)." The appearance of Victory on this coin of Antony, struck right before, or shortly after, the battle of Actium, is ironic. The monogram of Decimus Turullius, one of the assassins of Julius Caesar, appears on part of this issue. The issue of Turullius was struck of normal silver, rather than the base silver of the legionary denarii, which were issued at the same time. It is difficult to accept that the same mint would use two different silver standards, and two different standards of workmanship. This strongly suggests a mint further away from the legions, and the legionary denarius mint. For this issue, an attribution separate from the legionary denarius mint is certainly, "Mint-NOT moving with M. Antonius." Based on comparison with other Antony portrait denarii and the possible post-Actium date, Paphos seems like the likely mint.

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5.01g

2.37g LHS Num.

A bronze 21 mm of Patrae that names Queen Cleopatra and a silver hemidrachm of the same city and time with a similar portrait.

BMC 2-3 are dated to 250-146 BC with weights of 2.33 and 2.29 g. The obverse portrait is called "Head of Aphrodite right, wearing stephane," but some experts see Cleopatra's image. The reverse has magistrate name ΔΑ ΜΑCΙΑC with a large ΠΑΤΡΕ monogram, all inside a wreath. Bronze coins with the title "Queen Cleopatra" and her portrait are known from this city (BMC 9; RPC 1245), c. 32-31 BC. Since the publication of BMC, the silver issue has been considerably down-dated. Dio 50.9.3 notes that Antony and Cleopatra wintered at Patrae. Of this issue, LHS Numismatics writes in their May '06 BCD auction:

The silver issue produced by Damasias must have been enormous and must have been produced in relative haste. The dies are generally fairly crudely made, almost all known specimens seem to have been struck by dies that were heavily used and marred by die rust or die breaks, and the minting process itself often resulted in badly struck coins (among other faults the obverses are usually weakly struck, while the reverses are often very sharp). The coins must have circulated for a considerable length of time (many known specimens are quite worn). A date in the mid to late 30s, in conjunction with Antony's preparations for the coming war with Octavian, makes good sense for this issue. The head of Aphrodite is very close to that of Cleopatra, which appears on the slightly later hemiobols minted by *Agias Lysonos*.

There are several similarities between this attribution and those suggested in this book. The dating suggested by BMC is considerably down-dated. A portrait of "Aphrodite" is connected to the time and place of Cleopatra VII based, in part, on the connection to a larger bronze with her name.



*The Antony denarii of Turullius are from the same time as the legionary denarii, but must be from a different mint, perhaps Paphos. (3.82g)*



*Denarii with the portraits of Antony and Octavian have fine style. The issue was struck before Antony met Cleopatra. It is not from Paphos. (4.09g)*



*Denarii with the portraits of Antony and Octavian (Crawford 517/8), both with Antony-like features, is perhaps too early to be from Paphos. (3.98g)*



*A denarius of 38 BC (Crawford 533/2) with Antony standing in priestly garb and reverse head of Sol may be from the same Eastern mint or Paphos. (3.92g)*



*The portrait style of the Military Trophy denarii (Crawford 536/3, 536/4) of 37 BC is similarly crude like the two line legend reverse, perhaps by the same untrained hand. (3.79g)*



*Note the resemblance of the Armenian cap denarii (Crawford 539/1) of 37 or 36 BC. Some examples may have a P behind the ear. (3.55g)*

Earlier issues of Antony denarii, some Fleet Coinage and some aurei seem to have stylistic links to these Paphos issues.

The silver issues follow bronze "Fleet Coinage" with the titles and portrait of Antony paired with an untitled female traditionally called "Octavia." If this was meant to be Octavia who was the rival of Cleopatra, an attribution to Ptolemaic Cyprus is not possible.<sup>30</sup> The final denarius issues include one with the titles and portraits of Cleopatra and Antony. Most of the issues between these two double portrait ones, show similar titles for Antony. Attributions in other references include Athens and a traveling mint. Operation of a long-term traveling mint would have been expensive. The stylistic links and reverse themes suggest that some or all may have been struck on Cyprus.

The bronze Fleet Coinage of Bibulus with Antony portrait has similar style portrait. They have been found on Cyprus. There are several denominations of the Fleet Coinage of Bibulus. All have 9:00 die axis. This argument is expanded in the endnotes.<sup>30a</sup>



*Marc Antony dupondius struck by Bibulus has Antony similar portrait style to denarii attributed to Cyprus. (16.25g)*



*Marc Antony semis struck by Bibulus has Latin legend and Antony portrait similar to denarii of Cyprus, including a possible P behind the ear of Antony. (5.39g)*

A modest issue of gold aurei also seems to have similar style. The issue is dated to mid-34 BC, immediately before or during "the Donations of Alexandria." On these gold coins, portraits of Marc Antony are paired with that of his son, 9 year-old Marc Antony Junior (C 541/1-2, Vagi 194-195, Sear 1514). On one die, the boy is on the obverse of the coin, as determined by concavity (C541/1, Vagi 195). The style of the Antony portrait is similar to that of the Armenian cap and Cleopatra and Antony denarii. While other mints that have been suggested for this rare issue, Paphos seems a more likely origin than a Traveling Mint, Alexandria, Syria or Armenia.

The portrait denarii of Marc Antony struck during the period 37-31 BC all have similar portrait style. All have dotted borders. Most have die orientation tending toward 12:00. The reverse themes are all propaganda. Style is average at best. One or more issues have a hidden P. behind the ear.<sup>52</sup> Previous attributions include Athens and a traveling mint. There are stylistic and reverse theme links. Flan cracks are common. Portrait denarii of Antony with a hidden P. mark and similar style portrait denarii without P. seem to be from Paphos.



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*Reverse of a Cleopatra / Antony denarius that seems to show a P behind the ear of Antony.*

Features of Eastern Marc Antony denarii, some probably Cypriot

	Octavian	Sol Head	Trophy	Arm. Cap	Cleopatra	P. / Leg.	Antyllus	Victory
Crawford#	517	533	536	539	543	542	541	545
Die Axis	~12	~12	~12	~12	~12	~12	~12	~12
Peak Wt.	3.85g	3.80g	3.85g	3.85g	3.85g	n/a	8.0(AV)	3.85g
Obv. Border	dots	dots	dots	dots	dots	dots	dots	dots
Rev. Border	dots	dots	dots	dots	dots	dots	dots	wreath
P. style	no	n/a	maybe	yes?	yes	yes	yes	yes
Q. Military Rev.	yes	yes	yes	yes?	no	no	yes	yes

### Cypriot Coinage under Augustus, 30-22 BC

Suetonius gives a telling account of Octavian's visit to Egypt and the tomb of Alexander the Great.

At this time he had a desire to see the sarcophagus and body of Alexander the Great, which, for that purpose, were taken out of the cell in which they rested; and after viewing them for some time, he paid honors to the memory of that prince, by offering a golden crown, and scattering flowers upon the body. Being asked if he wished to see the tombs of the Ptolemies also; he replied, I wished to see a king, not dead men.



*A 30 cm bronze head of Augustus, dated c. 27-25 BC, found in Meroe Sudan, probably taken from Egypt, now in the British Museum.*

After Actium and Egypt, Octavian visited Cyprus. In January of 30 BC, he left the island when a mutiny among veterans in Italy threatened. Called Augustus in 27 BC, he ruled both Egypt and Cyprus without the nominal authority of the Senate, as his personal fiefs, adding to his immense personal wealth by direct and indirect taxation. No new colonies were founded. No cities were granted either full Civitas or limited privileges. The rapid Romanization of Cyprus was reflected in the new names for the calendar months on the island: Augustus, Agrippa, Livia, Octavia, Julia, Nero, Drusus, Aphrodite, Anchises, Rome, Aeneas, and Capitol. The Latin legends of Roman Cypriot coinage reflect the abrupt Romanization of Cyprus, while retaining the Cypriot denominations in which obligations were paid.

In the Roman system of denominations, of the later Republic and onward, complex calculations could be made quickly in Base-2, with each denomination valued at twice that of the next smallest: denarius, quinarius, sestertius, dupondius, as, semis, quadrans. The complex math behind business transactions could be done quickly, anywhere in the empire. A simple abacus served as a calculator. On Cyprus, the mints struck bronze, brass and silver coinage.

### Cypriot Bronze of Augustus - CA Coinage

The Romanized Cypriot mint(s) under Augustus produced five Imperial denominations of brass and bronze, between 27 and 22 BC. RPC attributes some of these as probably Cyprus and others as probably Asia Minor, while RIC attributes them to Asia Minor, perhaps Pergamum and Ephesos. The flans were cast from two-part moulds, creating flans quite different from those from earlier single-part moulds. The rims were filed. The first obverse legend includes the unusual spelling CAISAR paired with a portrait of particularly fine style, with delicately rendered hair. Sydenham notes:

On the C.A coins, the head is rather long and narrow, and the hair, instead of falling in loose locks, is arranged symmetrically in close curls. The muscles of the neck are apparently not indicated, and the lower line of the neck is treated in a distinctive curve.

Sydenham also notes, "It is probable that the coins were struck at more than one mint, since they exhibit minor differences in the style of the portrait."

The reverse types features C.A inside either: a rostral wreath, *corona rostrata* or an oak wreath, *corona civica*. Others have AVGVSTVS in the *corona civica*, similar to later Antioch Mint S.C coinage. The *corona rostrata* commemorates the naval victory at Actium. The *corona civica* celebrates "Saving the Lives of Citizens," not only for his decisive victory over Antony and Cleopatra, but also for his clemency in sparing the lives of his enemies after Actium. Augustus had received both crowns from the Senate. "C.A" was an abbreviation for Caesar Augustus, the issuing authority, which is sometimes spelled out AVGVSTVS instead. Suetonius tells us that this name assumed in 27 BC:

. . . was not only new, but much more considerable than Quirenus or Romulus, which some of his friends wanted him to assume, because religious places and those wherein was anything consecrated by augury was called Augusta.

Augustus was the sole ruler of Cyprus, which he ruled as his personal estate, with no input from the Roman Senate. As Kraay notes, the reign of Augustus "above all . . . involved constitutionalism - an observance and not too obvious manipulation of Republican forms." The C.A coinage is an example of this "inside the law" approach.

Of the beginnings of Roman administration, Mattingly's "Roman Imperial Civilisation" notes:

Augustus found a vast task awaiting him . . . What had he to direct his actions? [There were] lessons to be drawn from the kingdoms of the Greek East. From them something might be learned. The kings of Syria had a long experience in administrating the affairs of an extensive kingdom. The Ptolemies of Egypt had shown how a country might be run on the lines of a profitable private estate. From both these sources Augustus may have learned much. Again, he could draw upon the experience of Roman private life, the way in which Roman nobles handled their often complicated affairs. But what taught him most was the task itself with its urgent necessities. The tasks to be done could be seen clearly and it soon became obvious to Augustus what kind of instruments he required for them.

Cyprus provided a large profit directly to Augustus. The island continued to be a steady supplier of copper, a product for which Cyprus had been named. Augustus sold some Cypriot