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Barbara Hiltmann, *Les cistophores de Marc Antoine: un monnayage hellénistique en contexte romain*. Numismatica antiqua, 14. Bordeaux: Ausonius Éditions, 2023. Pp. 240. ISBN 9782356135612.

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This slim volume (104 pages of main text, 36 of catalogue and 60 plates) is a revised version of the author's doctoral thesis submitted at the University of Lausanne in 2015, and subsequently updated to 2019. Following a methodological introduction, Chapter 1 outlines the broader historical background to the coinage of Mark Antony. Chapter 2 gives the background to the production of *cistophori*, before turning to description of the coinage of Mark Antony itself: its designs, inscriptions, weight-standard, mint attribution and other numismatic characteristics. Chapter 3 employs statistical methods to estimate the original size of the coinage (based on the full die study) and moves to questions of the purpose of the coinage and its circulation. Following a brief conclusion, a catalogue and die-study is presented of 826 specimens drawn from public and private collections, as well as from commerce. All die-combinations are illustrated in the black and white plates that follow.

This is an exemplary study: methodologically aware, meticulously compiled, and attractively presented by the publisher. The discussion is clear, the plates are legible, and colour maps and illustrations have been provided at various points to aid the reader. Furthermore, these fascinating coinages, contemporary evidence of Antony's policy in the East at a key moment in history, have never been the subject of detailed study before. What, then, can we take away from this important new work?

We may begin with the coinage itself. Two distinct types were produced. The first (Hiltmann's Type 1 = *RPC* 2201) has on the obverse a head of Antony wearing an ivy wreath, with a small *lituus* depicted below; all is encircled within a wreath of ivy and flowers. On its reverse is a draped bust of Octavia, with a *cista mystica* depicted below; these elements are flanked by two entwined snakes. The second (Hiltmann's Type 2

= *RPC* 2202) has a head of Antony and a bust of Octavia jugate on the obverse. On the reverse is the figure of Dionysus standing above a *cista mystica*; these elements are flanked by two entwined snakes. The legend on both types is identical: M ANTONIVS IMP COS DESIG ITER ET TER on the obverse, and III VIR R P C on the reverse. From a combination of the appearance of Octavia, whom Antony married in 40 BC, and the title Consul designate for the second and third time, which Antony received following the treaty of Misenum in summer 39 BC (Appian *Bell. Civ.* 5.73), it is certain that these coins began to be struck no earlier than 39 BC (33-4). It has, indeed, been suggested that the types were intended to commemorate the dynastic marriage of Antony and Octavia in the East.

Perhaps one of the most striking results of the die-study is that it transpires that, in addition to the two distinct types, there are two distinct mints involved in the production of both coinages. Hiltmann begins her study by highlighting a single element of epigraphic practice: some dies use an *alpha* with a broken bar, and some an *alpha* with a straight bar. At first sight this seems like a questionable element on which to base an analysis, but in fact it turns out to be highly significant: 'il n'y a pas de liaisons de revers entre les monnaies au droit au "A" brisé et celles au droit au "A" horizontal.' (p. 69). We thus have four separate coinages: Types 1 and 2 with straight bar; and Types 1 and 2 with broken bar. Hiltmann draws the obvious and surely correct conclusion that we are looking at two distinct mints at work, both producing Type 1 and 2 *cistophori*. In the past scholars have argued over the likely production place of these coins, some favouring of Ephesus, others Pergamum (70-72). Hiltmann has thus demonstrated that both might in fact be correct, though she cautiously notes that there remain insufficient grounds for assigning firm locations to either mint (72). Production across these two mints was closely co-ordinated. In addition to the typological and epigraphic homogeneity already noted, there is a clear correspondence in the weights of the coinages produced by the two mints, as weight tables demonstrate (46-53). In an important discussion Hiltmann goes on to note the reduction in weight that is evident in the Antonian coinage, compared to the earlier proconsular *cistophori* of the 50s BC. Set alongside the still parlous evidence for metallic composition of the *cistophori*, as well as for the *denarii* of Antony produced in the East, it may be possible to talk of a co-ordinated reduction in standard of the silver across both denominations, which were apparently valued at 3 *denarii* to a *cistophorus* (54).

The other extraordinary fact to emerge from the die-study is the enormous size of the Antonian cistophoric coinage. Hiltmann carefully presents the evidence for the numbers of specimens, dies and rates of representation of coins per die as the introduction to her consideration of the production and use of the coinage (73-83). From here she uses the statistical methods of both Giles Carter and Warren Esty to estimate the original sizes of the coinages in terms first of the numbers of obverse dies use to strike them. She then adopts the (not-uncontroversial) average figure of 20,000 coins struck per die to suggest

some estimates for numbers of coins produced. The latter range from 8.3 million to 12.75 million *cistophori*, or 24.9 million to 38.25 million *denarii*, or 4150-6375 Talents, or 87-134 tonnes of silver (81). Of course, these numbers may increase or decrease if different assumptions are made about the productivity of ancient dies, a subject on which there is still some debate. We are on safer ground with the estimates of numbers of obverse dies, and these suggest approximately 550 ± 15 original obverse dies by the Carter formula, or 640 ± 50 by the probably more accurate Esty method.

To the numismatist, such figures are particularly interesting, as they provide the potential to assess the rate of production of the Antonian mints. To proceed in this direction, of course, we need to know the duration of the coinage. As we have already noted, the coinage must postdate the marriage between Antony and Octavia and the agreement at Misenum of the summer of 39 BC. Moreover, it must also postdate the ejection of Labienus and the Parthians from western Asia Minor by Ventidius Basssus, in the summer of 39. So, the latter part of 39 is the probable *terminus post quem*. The *terminus ante quem* is a little more debatable. The coin legend refers only to Antony's first acclamation as imperator. The date of the second acclamation is unknown, but came probably no later than the victory over the Parthians at Gindarus in the summer of 38 BC. However, as Hiltmann rightly notes (87-8), this acclamation was never acknowledged on Antony's coinage. His third acclamation, which presumably came with the Parthian expedition of 36 BC, was noticed on coins, however, and may provide a *terminus ante quem* for the *cistophori*. We might add to this, the developing association between Antony and Cleopatra over 37 and 36 BC, and clear reluctance to allow Octavia into the eastern part of his *imperium* by Antony in 35. 36 BC thus becomes a very likely *terminus ante quem* for the *cistophori* that celebrate Antony and Octavia's marriage. We may therefore posit a maximum period of production of three years. Two further variables also need to be considered. First, there is the number of workstations (anvils) in use. As we have seen, we seem to have two distinct mints producing two different types. Therefore, a minimum of four anvils could have been in use simultaneously. Were there more? Hiltmann considers the possibility (86-8), but this seems unnecessary. Her charts of die-links (60, 63, 66 and 68) give no hint at all of multiple anvils at work on the same coinages, and we may safely assume that a maximum of four were in operation. Second, there is the question of how quickly a team operating each anvil could have produced coins. There is some experimental archaeological evidence available, which suggests a minimum of 1000 coins per day, but Hiltmann (86) is rightly cautious about accepting so low a figure: with slave labour, multiple teams exchanging place over the course of a 12-hour day, a figure of 2-3000 (4-6 coins per minute) may be more plausible (Hiltmann suggests 5000, which may be pushing things too far). These various production parameters may be tabulated as in Table1. The output figures, taking the estimates that result from the Esty method (640 ± 50) may then be compared in Table 2.

Coins per day	Coins per month	Months	Total/anvil	4 anvils
1,000	30,000	12	360,000	1,440,000
2,000	60,000	12	720,000	2,880,000
3,000	90,000	12	1,080,000	4,320,000
–	–	–	–	–
1,000	30,000	24	720,000	2,880,000
2,000	60,000	24	1,440,000	5,760,000
3,000	90,000	24	2,160,000	8,640,000
–	–	–	–	–
1,000	30,000	36	1,080,000	4,320,000
2,000	60,000	36	2,160,000	8,640,000
3,000	90,000	36	3,240,000	12,960,000

Table 1. Production parameters for Antonian cistophori

Dies	Coins per die	Total output
560	10,000	5,600,000
560	15,000	8,400,000
560	20,000	11,200,000
–	–	–
640	10,000	6,400,000
640	15,000	9,600,000
640	20,000	12,800,000
–	–	–
680	10,000	6,800,000
680	15,000	10,200,000
680	20,000	13,600,000

Table 2. Possible estimates for output for Antonine denarii

What emerges fairly clearly is that this coinage, whichever of the estimates from Table 2 we use, must have taken more than a year to produce: at the upper end of the estimates it would have required three years, operating at some 3000 coins per die at all four anvils. On the lowest estimate, it would have required a minimum of two years,

and strike rate in the order of 2000 dies per day at all anvils. The real figures are likely to lie somewhere between these extremes.

Hiltmann concludes by briefly considering the possible purposes and impact of this substantial coinage, and here is where the broader historical interest lies. A survey of the limited evidence of findspots, and of the contemporary Antonian coin issues in the East (91-100) suggests that the coinage and its iconographic messages were largely confined to Asia Minor. Hiltmann is cautious of reading too much into the Dionysiac imagery even there, since it was carried though from earlier cistophoric issues (100). What, then, was this coinage for? Hiltmann (88-91) comes down firmly in favour of a military explanation. This may well be correct, and while it may be the case that some of these coins moved eastwards with Antony's forces during his eastern campaigns, its primary use must have been to pay mercenaries and legionaries while in Asia.

But it now seems that something more may have been going on. The thin hoard evidence that we possess, notably the Halicarnassus 1975 hoard, suggests that down to the late 40s BC, the old *cistophori* of the Attalid kingdom, the early province of Asia, as well as the proconsular issues of the 50s BC were still circulating in Asia Minor. However, two recently published (and thus unknown to Hiltmann) hoards from Aizanoi in Phrygia, strongly suggest that by early in the reign of Augustus, the only *cistophori* in circulation were those of Antony and Augustus.[1] The implication is that Antony did not just issue large quantities of *cistophori* in the mid 30s BC, but also that he effectively replaced the old *cistophori* with his own. In fact, if we compare (Table 3) the relative outputs of the cistophoric mints before Antony, with those of Antony, we can see that his coinage was more than large enough to replace what must still have been in circulation by 39 BC.

Attalid	**Post Attalid**	**Proconsular**	**Antonian**
2232	3171	472	2560

Table 3. Cistophoric output in drachm dies[2]

If we assume a 2% attrition rate for the coin supply, calculated from the terminal date of each period until 40 BC, then the existing cistophorus-stock upon the arrival of Antony in 39 BC may have been in the order of 2700 drachm dies of output.

If we bear in mind too, that the weight standard of the earlier *cistophori* was roughly c. 0.5-1 gram per *cistophorus* heavier than Antony's coinage (to say nothing of their fineness), we can see that there would have been a clear fiscal advantage to the recall and replacement of the circulating coin stock with Antony's new coinage. This

combined with the extraordinary decision to insert the portraits of the *imperator* and his wife constituted a profound reshaping of the monetary landscape of *Provincia Asia*. It is thanks to Hiltmann's careful work that we can now appreciate this.

Notes

[1] Halikarnassos: B. Overbeck, *SNR* 57 (1978), pp. 164-173. Aizanoi: H. Köker, *Olba* 32 (2024), pp. 217-237.

[2] Figures from L. Carbone, *Hidden Power. Late Cistophoric Production and the Creation of Provincia Asia* (New York, 2020), p. 232 and Hiltmann.