The aim of this book is to discuss, first, the non-numismatic evidence for the financial aspects of the Civil Wars between the outbreak of war in pre-Julian 49 BC and the defeat of the Liberators in 42 BC; second, the chronology and place of production of the coinages of the period. It is impeccably produced, beautifully illustrated, and comprehensively indexed; it is also provided with tables that helpfully summarise the differences from the chronology and mint-attributions of Roman Republican Coinage (1974), hereafter RRC. Given the aim of the work, each substantive chapter (49–48, 48–45, and 45–42 BC) is divided into two parts, the first dealing with the financing of the war, the second with the issues of coinage of the period in question. (The remarks about the office of moneyer on pp. 83–6 seem rather elementary and do not sufficiently emphasise the fact that the epigraphic evidence cited is much later.) I have not been able to identify a case where the discussion in the first part of any chapter has a substantive impact on that in the second.

W. excludes from this work the coinage of Sextus Pompey, as being beyond his terminus post quem, relying on ‘The Sicilian coinage of Sextus Pompeius’ by J. De Rose Evans, MusN 32 (1987) pp. 97–157, and his own earlier article, JNG 45 (1995) pp. 79–94, ‘MAG PIVS IMP ITER’, neither with access to useable hoard evidence. But the Messina hoard, in addition to the two commonest of the three denarius issues of Sextus Pompey, contains the issues of Rome of 44 and 42 BC, issues of the Liberators, and issues of M. Antonius of 41 BC (M. A. Mastelonl, in Quaderni dell’attività didattica del Museo Regionale di Messina 6 (1997) pp. 95–118. (The Neuville-Ferrières hoard, Corpus IV, p. 35, is useless.) Some of the coins of Sextus Pompey have seen significant circulation, and I would still want to begin his issues in 42 BC; I do not know how long they lasted, but would guess not longer than three years or so.

If this is right, there are some problems to be faced: circulation of the silver coinage of Sextus Pompey outside Sicily is nugatory (contra Anton Powell, Virgil the Partisan (Swansea 2008) p. 69), and all hoards with a significant representation of it are Sicilian; it was presumably the only coinage available for the whole period down to 35 BC, yet much of the hoard material has seen little circulation. Did Sextus Pompey go over to a fiscal system in kind? And what was the effect on the Sicilian economy? Or did he after the first few years produce bronze coinage only? And what were the implications of that? (I hope to return elsewhere to the problems of his bronze coinage.)

Despite the presence of the word ‘Finanzgeschichte’ in W.’s subtitle, he is curiously uninterested in quantitative aspects of the study of ancient coinages, in effect liquidating the problem in one footnote, p. 6, n. 21, where he cites, but does not discuss K. Lockyear’s article of 1999, which demonstrated that the main hoard table in RRC has been a very accurate predictor of the relative presence of Republican issues in groups of hoards discovered after its composition. Lockyear’s article leaves in ruins the work cited on pp. 152–3.
W. has devoted much energy to attempting to identify overstrikes (p. 107, n. 409), but it is not clear that this has been time well spent. At least 95% of Republican overstrikes are on bronze and of the period of the Second Punic War, when Roman allies such as Rhegium also engage in substantial overstriking. The phenomenon is one of either using foreign coins, presumably acquired as booty, or one’s own coins of an abandoned weight standard, and in an emergency situation overstriking rather than melting down. Of the five late and silver overstrikes listed in RRC, two were either on a piece of the same issue or on a piece of the same year (of the other three, one was identified by Charles Hersh as a denarius of M. Plaetorius Cestianus as moneyer on a denarius of L. Iulius Bursio, one was a denarius of Brutus as moneyer on an early Dioscuri denarius, one was of M. Antonius on a plated forgery of Cn. Lentulus). Coinage and Money under the Roman Republic in 1985 added one of L. Memmius on C. Fonteius, of perhaps five years earlier, and one of T. Carisius on A. Licinius Nerva, of the previous year. In 1987, Hersh added C. Pansa C.f. C.n. on C. Pansa C.f. C.n. and Capito-linus on Capitolinus (for the latter, see also W., p. 445, n. 580). W. has now added C. Considius Paetus on Mn. Cordius Rufus (same year: p. 259, n. 412), Acisculus on Acisculus (same year: p. 308), and P. Sepullius Macer on T. Carisius (just two years earlier: p. 421). The phenomenon is presumably one of coins which were for whatever reason, even by the low standards of Roman mints, judged unacceptable and overstruck the same or following year, or of the odd coin that got buried under someone’s papers and dumped back into the production process without being melted down. In these circumstances, I should now want to attribute M. Tullius and M. Fourius Philus to the same year (Goodman Collection 1121).

I am perfectly happy to accept the fragility (W., pp. 237–8) of the suggestion (RRC, p. 472, ‘perhaps’) that LEG. F. C. might stand for legatus fiscus castrensis, rather than legatus faciundum / flandum / feriundum curavit. It is not clear to me that at [A. Hirtius,] de bello Gallico VIII, 4, 1 (where condonaturum is a conjecture) it is necessary to obelise †tot†, rather than understanding that Caesar promised the soldiers 200 HS, the centurions as many thousand HS. More in general, W. wants to be at the literal-minded end of the spectrum in the interpretation of the literary sources, as with the claim of Suetonius (DJ 26, 3) that Caesar doubled legionary pay (p. 538): it is widely believed among educated people in the UK that decimalisation caused a doubling in prices, among educated people in the Euro-zone that the introduction of the Euro had a similar effect, and it is mere wishful thinking to suppose that Suetonius was being more precise. And it is in my view absurd to suppose that Polybius wished to do anything more than give (all of) his Greek readers a rough idea of Roman legionary pay, etc. The attempt to infer a pre-Caesarian rate of legionary pay from Bell.Hisp. 22, 7, piles hypothesis on hypothesis like Pelion on Ossa; W. also brushes aside the widely held, and possibly correct view, that the standard silver coin of the Achaean League was a trichobol.

After a number of general remarks, I propose to discuss those cases where W. proposes a substantial revision of the chronology or attribution in RRC.

The period was one of the movement of vast armies from one end of the Mediterranean to the other, and of no doubt large numbers of refugees, and of army
units scattered to the wind: although it is outside W.’s period, it is instructive to follow the dispersal of the debris of M. Antonius’ army after Actium by way of the hoards that close with the Legionary issue, often in very large quantities. And how did two aurei, of L. Plancus (RRC 475/1a) of 45 BC and of Caesar with COS QVINC (RRC 481/1) of 44 BC, end up in Panticapaeum (VDI 2 (205) (1993) pp. 53–6)? I now think that RRC was insufficiently radical in following earlier scholarship and attempting to assign mints to the military issues of the Civil Wars: in ‘normal’ times, a mint is embedded in a local institutional, social and economic structure, but in this period, what matters is the campaign for which an issue was produced, not the precise location of the workshop or workshops. I should now want the identification of the campaign to be the primary attribution, with cases where the personnel of an existing mint is taken over serving as evidence for this attribution. W., p. 219, n. 273, rightly draws attention to the inconcinnity between saying that the Aeneas carrying Anchises issue of Caesar (RRC 458) was ‘struck ... for the campaign in Africa’ and assigning it to a mint in Africa; I should now want the latter formulation to be an unhappy survival of the wrong way of thinking about the coinage of the period. I should even want to replace ‘mint moving with’ by ‘struck for such-and-such a campaign’. In hankering after ‘exact (mint) attributions’, W.E. Metcalf (SNR 85 (2006) pp. 222–30, also reviewing W.) is looking for the end of the rainbow.

A corollary of this approach is that the evidence of the die-axis of an issue is to be used with caution. I come later to further arguments for W.’s view, against RRC, that the Aeneas and Anchises issue was produced in Greece; but its regular die-axis, characteristic of the Greek world (pp. 221–2), is not in itself a strong argument: craftsmen, like soldiers, could be swept up in the maelstrom of civil war.

Similarly with hoards. I shall make considerable use of them in what follows; but it may be that they also often ‘floated’ above normal patterns of circulation. And in periods of rapid movement of troops, coinage may also move quickly away from its place of production. W. rejects the traditional attribution of the issue of Cn. Nerius as Q.urb. to the mint of Rome in favour of Illyria, perhaps Apollonia. No-one has ever doubted that it was used by the Pompeian army, which found itself in 49 BC rather briskly expelled from Italy to the other side of the Adriatic, and circulated there. I continue to doubt that a man would have advertised himself as Q.urb. if in fact striking in Apollonia; but, more importantly, the question, Rome or Apollonia, now seems to me an unreal one. Similarly, an attempt at a more precise localisation of the issues of Cn. Piso and Varro than somewhere east of the Adriatic seems to me misguided, and I see no reason to prefer 48 to 49 BC as the date. (W. of course rightly rejects the proposal of L. Amela Valverde, Gaceta Numismatica 134 (1999) pp. 15–23, to restore the issues to Spain.)

W. on the CAESAR Elephant issue (RRC 443), the first put into circulation by Caesar after the beginning of the Civil War, needs to be read with his article in SNR 85 (2006) pp. 69–95, ‘Die Verwendung von Mehrfachstempeln’, where he shows that at any rate part of the issue was produced with a number of anvil dies mounted together, a technique characteristic of local issues of Gaul and Spain in the period. Since it was mostly the Elephant dies that were mounted, W. deduces
correctly that they mostly formed the obverse (and the fact that the same type
did not always form the obverse is presumably testimony to the conditions in
which the issue was produced); but W. also holds that the entire issue was pro-
duced in Gaul or Spain. This does not follow, since the phenomenon can be ob-
served for only a part of the issue; and since it is known in any case that Caesar
was in (Cisalpine) Gaul when the war began, the issue could have been produced
anywhere in the Roman world by craftsmen serving with Caesar, who had learnt
the technique in the land of their origin. There is a fragment of hoard closing
with the CAESAR Elephant issue from Conversano in Apulia (V. L’Abbate,
Norba (Bari 1979) p. 91), as well as the hoard to which I now come, and Apulia
is an area worth watching for further evidence for the production and circulation
of Caesar’s first coinage.

W. also, instead of leaving the issue of Q. Sicinius with C. Coponius (RRC
444) to a mint moving with Pompey, assigns it to Asia; there is, however, a large
hoard of 363 denarii from Apulia in the Museo Nazionale di Taranto, which as
far as I know remains unpublished, but which includes the issue in question as its
only Pompeian issue, along with the issue of Mn. Acilius, the CAESAR Elephant
issue, and what is perhaps the first moneyer’s issue of 48 BC, of L. Hostilius
Saserna; I should guess that Sicinius and Coponius began to strike while still in
Italy, just as I hold that part of the CAESAR Elephant issue was produced there.

On the bronze coinage, W., p. 273 and p. 275, opts to associate the issues of C.
Clauius and Q. Oppius, and to place them both in Italy; but leaving aside the
fact that the available analyses do not suggest that their metal content is the same
and that PRAEF is unlikely to indicate the same office as PR, one has only to see
and handle the two issues to realise that association is the least likely hypothesis.
And a provenance for Q. Oppius from Herdonia, up country from Brundisium
(Ordona VIII (1988) p. 242, no. 95), certainly does not speak against eastern
Mediterranean production. As for the specimen in the (presumably University)
Museum at Pavia, it is important to realise that that collection is unique in Italy
for its high proportion of (rather worn) Roman Provincial coins of eastern ori-
gen: the collection was presumably formed in part somewhere like Venice. (The
coin from Antemnae, L. Quilici & S. Quilici Gigli, Antemnae (Florence 1978) n.
519, is probably mis-described.) As for the issue of C. Claudius, certainly pro-
duced somewhere in Italy, we need a proper collection of the evidence for
provenance.

One issue of Caesar has always seemed straightforwardly datable, that with
Trophy and the figure LII, RRC 452, namely to the period after Caesar reached
the age of 52 on 13 July 48 BC. W. is of course right to say that Romans could
described themselves as 52 when in their 52nd year; but as he admits, this is not
the usage of the issues of M. Antonius with XL and XLI, presumably modelled
on that of Caesar; and the arguments for dating the LII issue to the second quar-
ter of 48 BC are a series of hypotheses piled on top of each other (pp. 142–53),
and with localisation of the issue in Illyria based on the unargued assumption
that Caesar must have been present at the time of striking: there is no likelihood
that he at all times personally supervised his arms factory (Dio XI, 60, 1)! The
second issue of Caesar for which W. proposes a significantly different date
and place is RRC 458, Aeneas carrying Anchises, for the chronology of which
neither 40 years ago nor now is there good hoard evidence (it is about time that the hoard from Morgantina, down to M. Cato Propr. (47–46 BC), was published: a brief reference in AJA 64 (1960) p. 130), and which I attributed to the African campaign of 47–46 BC; ignoring stylistic and typological considerations, the use of fixed dies may suggest an eastern origin, but W. rightly draws attention to the presence of 5 out of 62 in the ‘Halicarnassus’ hoard, to which I return below, and of 251 out of 1874 in the Apollonia hoard. The inference can be strengthened by the Flores hoard (To nomisma sto makedoniko choro (Obolos 4, Thessaloniki 2000) pp. 127–55, with 9 out of 125, a hoard to which I also I return below. On the other hand, W. again assumes without argument (pp. 323–4) that the issue must have been struck in Caesar’s presence; I cannot think of any reason why this should be the case and would simply attribute the issue to the east and to the period 47–46 BC.

Given the limited size of the issue of A. Allienus, I am happy with the notion that Caesar financed the African campaign largely with the very large COS TERT DICT ITER issue of denarii (RRC 467), while remaining agnostic about its ‘mint’; W. (pp. 248–53) also argues that the letters D and M are engravers’ signatures, in which role they would join the letter L on a later issue of Brutus and the letter P on a later issue of M. Antonius. But the case of the letter L is very uncertain, and the embedding of the letters D and M in the design of the types in my view makes W.’s hypothesis unattractive.

Perhaps most radically, W., p. 442, exchanges the college of 43 BC, in RRC, of L. Flaminius Chilo, P. Aecoleius Lariscolus and Petillius Capitolinus, with the college of 41 BC, in RRC, of C. Clodius Vestalis, M. Arrius Secundus, C. Numonius Vaala and L. Seruius Rufus, largely on the grounds that the ‘portrait’ of Brutus on the denarius of Rufus (RRC 515/2) would be unimaginable in 41 BC. I can see that in RRC, dealing with some 250 years of coinage in less than 1,000 pages, I may have been a bit brisk with the problem. But the ‘portrait’ is of course anonymous: it could have spoken clandestinely to sympathisers and Rufus could always have said ‘Oh, no, that’s my uncle Fred’.

And the Flores hoard, not known to W. (even less defensibly not known to A. Savio, Acme 62, 3 (2007) pp. 84–98, ‘Destini diversi: ‘denarii’ di Antonio e ‘denarii’ di Bruto’, speaks decisively against his view: apart from earlier issues, including the Aeneas and Anchises denarii mentioned above and a denarius of Caesar of 46–45 BC (RRC 468/1), the hoard contained Rome issues of 44 BC and 42 BC, and numerous issues of the Liberators, including EID MAR; it also contained 1 denarius of Chilo and 2 of Capitolinus, which are rather unlikely to have crossed the Adriatic, eventually to join the rest of the material, any later than 43 BC. The arrangement in RRC should stand: even without the evidence of the Flores hoard, I find the discussion of the Alvignano and other hoards acrobatic rather than convincing. (There are three hoards too small to be helpful: Ferran 1853 (Abbé Verguet, Monnaies romaines (Carcassonne 1864)), with L. Flaminius Chilo, but no coins of 44 BC; San Marino (G. Bottazzi & P. Bigi, Domagnano (San Marino 2001)), with L. Flaminius Chilo, but no coins of 44 BC; Rossano Calabro, from a ‘villa rustica’, in a pot (A. Polosa, Museo Archeologico Nazionale della Sibaritide. Il Medagliere (2009)), 96 denarii closing with coins of 44 BC and 42 BC. On the coinage of the Liberators, I would again not want to
follow W. in worrying about individual mints, pp. 509–27, discussing the ‘Hallicarnassus’ hoard.)

Finally, leaving Chilo and with him the ‘Pasquariello’ hoard in 43 BC removes the basis for W.’s assignation of the issues of Q. Nasidius, RRC 483, to 42 BC and later (pp. 502–5); the argument on the basis of the appropriateness of the types is inevitably circular. I would not now particularly want to maintain the attribution to a mint at Massalia, for the reasons already given, while noting again that die-axis is not a powerful criterion in the circumstances of the production of a civil war coinage.


Ramsay MacMullen has once likened the period from 193 to 284 AD to a long tunnel through the Alps: «On the earlier edge of the least-known stretch of imperial history, one feels first its chilly shadow like a traveler approaching the Alps toward the close of an autumn day. No more than a setting sun shines on the Antonines; Severan times grow darker yet; and of their end, with the murder of the young Alexander in 235, blackness settles down. The historian thereafter pursues his way through what he feels to be a complex mass of many vast events almost hidden from him by the obscurity of his sources. He emerges into a gradually clearing light, but into a different country – as if he had entered the depths of Monte Bianco and discovered an exit from Mont Blanc. Before and After differ, that much he can see.»


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