

LESŁAW MORAWIECKI

Institute of History, The Rzeszów Pedagogical University  
Rzeszów

## COINS FROM COSSYRA

The poets wrote of this island, "*Cossyraque parva*."<sup>1</sup> And indeed, Cossyra (now Pantelleria) is a small island<sup>2</sup> of volcanic origin, with barely 83 square kilometers of surface area. Virtually its entire length – 13.7 km – is covered with hills that do not exceed several hundred meters (with the highest point at Montagna Grande, 836 meters above sea level).<sup>3</sup> From

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<sup>1</sup> Silius Italicus 14.272; cf. Ziegler, s.v. *Kossura*, RE Bd. XI, col. 1503–1504; for the varying forms of the name, see W. Pape, *Wörterbuch der griechischen Eigennamen*, Bd. I, Braunschweig 1884, p. 704; for Latin forms, see TLL Onom. C, col. 668–669.

<sup>2</sup> The population grew from ca. 7000, according to W.-N. Bouillet, *Dictionnaire universel d'histoire et de géographie*, Paris 1866, p. 1421, to 7900 (in 1981). The island was often used in antiquity and in modern times as a place of exile or a prison.

<sup>3</sup> For contemporary data on the island, see *Lessico Universale Italiano di lingua, lettere, arti, scienze e tecnica*, vol. 16, Roma 1976, p. 54, and *Conoscere L'Italia. Enciclopedia dell'Italia antica e moderna*, Sicilia 2, Novarra 1983, pp. 565–566.

the earliest times the island has suffered from a lack of potable water, and it was not without reason that Ovid referred to it as "Cossyra sterilis."<sup>4</sup> Inhabited since Neolithic times,<sup>5</sup> it was subject to Phoenician influences due to its position, 70 km from Africa, 100 km from Sicily. Diodorus writes that the Phoenicians founded many colonies in Sicily and on neighboring islands, not to mention Sardinia and the Iberian peninsula.<sup>6</sup> On this basis it is often said, with a greater or lesser degree of conviction, that there was Phoenician settlement on Cossyra.<sup>7</sup> There is no archeological evidence, however, to confirm this. The oldest traces of Phoenician presence on Cossyra do not date back any earlier than approximately the seventh century B.C., and are very scanty.<sup>8</sup>

Though the lack of archeological sources does not make it possible, then, to posit close ties between Cossyra and Carthage, everyone tacitly assumes that they existed. It is thus taken for granted that Cossyra belonged to Carthage to the very end of the 3rd century BC. To a certain extent this finds confirmation in the relation of Zonaras, who most likely based his account, at least in part, on the lost books of Cassius Dio. Zonaras<sup>9</sup> describes an episode that took place in 255 BC, when the Romans sent a fleet under the command of the consuls M. Aemilius and Fulvius Petinus to the assistance of their troops in Sicily and Africa. When they reached Sicily, the two consuls reinforced the Roman garrisons there, and then set sail for Africa. Caught by a winter gale, they arrived on Cossyra. Having plundered the island and established a garrison, they sailed on, after which they fought a fierce battle with the Carthaginians, probably near Cape Hermia (today Bonn).<sup>10</sup> Despite the fact that the Romans won the

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<sup>4</sup> Fasti 3.567.

<sup>5</sup> A. Mayr, "Pantelleria", in *Reallexikon der Vorgeschichte*, ed. M. Ebert, Bd. X, Berlin 1927–28, pp. 31–32.

<sup>6</sup> Diod. Sic. V.35.5.; on the Phoenician colonization of Malta and Gozo, see. Diod. Sic. V.12.2–4.

<sup>7</sup> G. Contenau, *La civilisation Phénicienne*, Paris 1949, p. 73.

<sup>8</sup> *The Phoenicians. The Exhibition of Palazzo Grossi*, directed by S. Moscati, Milan 1988, pp. 53 and 200; S. Moscati, *Świat Fenicjan*, Warsaw 1971, pp. 216–217. Recent investigations have uncovered generally artifacts from the Roman period; see R. J. A. Wilson, *Archaeology in Sicily 1988–1995, Archaeological Reports for 1995–1996*, 1996/42, p. 120.

<sup>9</sup> Zon. VIII.14.

<sup>10</sup> See the CAH VII.2, Cambridge 1989, pp. 556–557; T. Łoposzko, *Starożytne bitwy morskie*, Gdańsk 1992, pp. 256–258.

battle, and succeeded in evacuating their troops from Aspis, they nevertheless lost their fleet in a storm. And the Carthaginians quickly recovered Cossyra. Still, in tribute to their accomplishments, the two Roman consuls were awarded the right to a triumph *de Cossurensibus et Poeneis*, which took place on January 18 and 19, 254 BC.<sup>11</sup> In this context it is perfectly obvious that the temporary mastery of Cossyra had no military significance, and most likely occurred by the merest happenstance. The island owed its separate place in a Roman triumph not so much to its own status (to a certain extent independent, as Moscati argues), as to the fact that it was the site of a battle.

Cossyra was recaptured by the Romans in 217 BC. At that time, Cn. Servilius, operating with his squadron on the Libyan coast, on his way back to his base in Lilybaeum in Sicily, conquered the island and established a Roman garrison in the city of the same name.<sup>12</sup> From that time forward, Cossyra formed a piece of the Roman State, belonging administratively to the province of Sicily. In 82 BC, Cn. Papirius Carbo took shelter on Cossyra, where he was captured.<sup>13</sup> The island attracted somewhat more attention in 36 BC, when it was besieged by the forces of Sextus Pompey, who intended in this way to deprive M. Lepidus of a convenient port and simultaneously gain a support base for his operations against Sicily.<sup>14</sup> And this is just about all the written sources have to say about Cossyra.

All the greater hope is then invested in archeological sources. For lack of inscriptions, the coinage takes on particular significance.<sup>15</sup> The origin of these coins can be specified with complete certainty, since the name of the mint occurs in the legend. The interpretation of the images also arouses little controversy. What is open to question, however, is the date these coins were struck, the weight standard, and the denomi-

<sup>11</sup> CIL I<sup>2</sup>, p. 47, *Acta Triumphalia Capitolina*; cf. p. 173.

<sup>12</sup> Polybius III.96; cf. Livy XXII.31, who, writing of Servilius's campaign, says nothing about the conquest of Cossyra; cf. Münzer, s.v. *Servilius* 61, RE, Bd. II<sup>A</sup>, coll. 1794–1795.


<sup>13</sup> Liv. per. 89. Cf. Appian, BC I.96.449; Orosius, V.21.11; V.24.16; cf. M. Dreißmann-Merten, s.v. *Papirius* 16, KP. IV. coll. 489–490.

<sup>14</sup> Appian, BC V.97.405.

<sup>15</sup> See A. Mayr, *Die antiken Münzen der Inseln Malta, Gozo und Pantelleria*, München 1895; C. F. Hill, *Coins of Ancient Sicily*, London 1903; E. Gabrici, *Monetazione di bronzo nella Sicilia antica*, Palermo 1927.


nations. A separate problem is posed by the appearance of rather frequent countermarks. The general political and economic background associated with the appearance of these coins also remains unclear.

Cossyrian coins can be divided into three basic types:

1. Averse: head of the goddess Isis, turned to the right; behind her, a small figure of Nike standing to the right with a laurel crown.	Reverse: In an olive wreath,  (מנר). (SNG Cop. 447)	
1a. Averse: as above, but Isis's head is turned to the left; in front of her, a small figure of Nike standing to the right with a laurel wreath.	Reverse: as above	(SNG Cop. 449)
1b. Averse: head of goddess Isis turned to the right.	Reverse: as above	(Mayr 15)
2. Averse: head of the goddess Isis, turned to the right; behind her, a small figure of Nike standing to the right with a laurel crown.	Reverse: <i>Tanit</i> sign; later <b>COSSVRA</b> ; all within a laurel wreath.	Countermarks: <b>REG</b> ; eagle with wings spread to the right; capricorn to the right. (SNG Cop. 451)
3. Averse: head of the goddess Isis, turned to the left; in front of her, a small figure of Nike standing to the right with a laurel wreath.	Reverse: <b>COSSVRA</b> within a laurel wreath	Countermark: <b>DD</b> with branch between (SWG Cop. 452)

The identification of the goddess Isis, thanks to the modius, necklace, and wig worn on the head, is relatively certain and rather generally accepted. Only a few scholars maintain a certain reserve, placing a question mark before this identification, while those hypercritical scholars who see simply a woman's head here are exceptions.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> See H. Clay Lindgren, *Ancient Greek Bronze Coins: European Mints from the Lindgren Collection*, Berkeley 1989, no. 655.

Cossyrian coins are clearly differentiated thanks to the Phoenician and Latin legends on the reverse.<sup>17</sup> B. V. Head interpreted the Phoenician inscription as *insula filiorum* (sc. *Sadyci*).<sup>18</sup> This would presumably have referred to the Kabiri – Dioscuri, who were, among other things, the patrons of sailors, and in Phoenician mythology were indeed the sons of Sadycus.<sup>19</sup> Presently, however, the legend  = מנר = Iranim is regarded to be the proper name of the island from pre-Roman times.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, some have claimed to see a Phoenician etymology even in the classical name, *Cossyra*.

The differing languages used in the legend raises the problem of who emitted these coins, and when. Since Head's time it has generally been thought that Cossyra only began to issue its own coins under Roman rule. Thus the oldest type with Phoenician inscription is most often dated to the period after 217 BC,<sup>21</sup> or to the second century BC.<sup>22</sup> This opinion would find further support if we were to assume that the first Cossyrian coins (and the first emissions from Malta) belonged to the Roman sextantal system, perhaps only somewhat reduced.<sup>23</sup>

This assumption, however, is rather arbitrary. In accepting the existence of municipal coinage in Sicily, the Romans generally did not impose their weight standards in the case of bronze coins, so that the cities of Sicily were able to use their own, purely local systems. The state of affairs in Spain was similar. It cannot thus be precluded that Cossyra's

<sup>17</sup> To identify these coins as having Punic-Latin inscriptions, as Moscati does (p. 217), is of course erroneous, since this would suggest that the legends are bilingual.

<sup>18</sup> B. V. Head, *Historia numorum*, Oxford 1877, p. 743.

<sup>19</sup> Sadycus himself was also the father of Eshnum-Aesculapius. He was sometimes regarded as the god of the mountain called "Siddike" near Sidon; see Dussaud, s.v. *Sadykos*, RE I<sup>A</sup>, col. 1696; Höfer, s.v. *Sadikos*, in *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie*, ed. W. H. Roscher, Bd. IV, coll. 271–272.

<sup>20</sup> E. Acquaro, "Coins", in *The Phoenicians...*, p. 470; Moscati, p. 213.

<sup>21</sup> *SNG Hungary*, Budapest, Magyar Nemzeti Museum, Vol. 3/3, Sicily (ed. M. Torbágui), Milan 1993, p. 106, nos. 713–714, *SNG The British Academy*, Vol. X, Oxford 1995, no. 940 (End 3rd cent. B.C.).

<sup>22</sup> *SNG The British Academy*, Vol. VI, *The Lewis Collection in Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. Part I: The Greek and Hellenistic Coins (with Britain and Parthia)*, London 1972, no. 440.

<sup>23</sup> See E. Coleiro, "Maltese Coins of the Roman Period", *NCh* 1962, pp. 67–91; by the same author, "Rapporti di Malta con la Sicilia nell'era repubblicana, testimonianze numismatiche e letterarie", *Kokalos* 22–23 (1976–77), Vol. I, pp. 381–384.

first emissions were the effect of the application of the Phoenician-Carthaginian unit with a weight of ca. 8/9 grams, generally familiar in Spain and Punic Sicily. This would change our perspective on the emitter, which would be Cossyra, but under Carthaginian rule. It would then be easier to understand why the Phoenician name Iranim is placed on the coins, instead of the name Cossyra, known to the Romans at least since the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century BC. Analogies from Spain indicate that when there were Iberian and Roman names identifying the same locality, a bilingual legend was often used, e.g. Arse-Saguntum.<sup>24</sup>

The circumstances under which the first coins were struck on Cossyra are also not fully understood. An overview of provincial coinage inclines one to the conclusion that the Romans, after the Hannibalic War had ended and the newly reconquered areas of Carthaginian coinage had been liquidated, did not display much initiative in minting coins. Thus only certain Sicilian cities continued their own emissions, known already earlier, perhaps even from the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, wherever a tradition of coinage did not already exist, the production of coins was for the moment not initiated. Thus Sardinia and Corsica never had their own coinage.<sup>26</sup> Perhaps the establishment of a currency in local provincial centers was associated with the designation of these coins for the maintenance of the Roman garrisons and the functioning of the local fiscal structure. And in that case the Cossyrian coins may have appeared along with the wave of Sicilian coins which, though the chronology is uncertain, can be dated to the period beginning in the latter half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC.<sup>27</sup>

It would appear, then, that the idea of some sort of a close connection between the Roman conquest of the island and the appearance of its first coins should be abandoned. Thus either the first emission on Cossyra should be regarded as the result of Roman permission, and dated

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<sup>24</sup> See L. Villaronga, *Numismatica antigua de Hispania*, Barcelona 1979, p. 105, plate 194; L. Morawiecki, *Mennictwo celtyckie*, Kraków 1986, pp. 205–206.

<sup>25</sup> Especially the standing soldier type; see G. Manganaro, "Per una storia della Sicilia romana", *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* I.1, Berlin 1972, pp. 442–461.

<sup>26</sup> L. Morawiecki, "Polityka monetarna Rzymu wobec prowincji w okresie republiki", *Antiquitas* 21 (1995), 37–54.

<sup>27</sup> M. H. Crawford, *Coinage and Money under the Roman Republic: Italy and the Mediterranean Economy*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1985, p. 115.

to the latter half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, or the Phoenician legend Iranim should be taken as proof of Carthaginian sovereignty, and the coins should be dated to the period between 254 and 217 BC.

Despite many reservations, it must be admitted that the first solution more closely corresponds to the general style of the coin, is relatively consistent with the spread of the cult of Isis,<sup>28</sup> and finally better explains the preservation of a certain iconographic uniformity between this emission and the emissions with a Latin legend.

The time when the last two types of Cossyrian coins were struck is generally set at the latter half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, though for metrological reasons Type 2 seems earlier than Type 3.<sup>29</sup> This chronology has often been associated with the interpretation of the legend COSSVRA, which Michael Grant took for proof that this city had been granted the status of *municipium* (under the Lex Iulia). This enabled him to date the emission very precisely at 44–43 BC.<sup>30</sup> Such a dating is not, however, entirely a matter of course. It remains unproven that there was a simple connection between the language used on the legend and the status of the emitting city (Latin *colonia* or *municipium*). Many emissions in both the Eastern and Western parts of the Empire had Greek legends, which were accompanied by the names of the duovirs written in Latin, or in a mixed Latin-Greek alphabet. Furthermore, there is no historical evidence that a *municipium* was created on Cossyra, whether in the times of Julius Caesar, or Sextus Pompey, or Octavian. An additional factor making it difficult to determine the date of emission very precisely is the lack of hoards or prosopographical evidence, as well as the fluidity of paleographical and iconographic criteria. Still, the ascription of these coins to the period of the Second Triumvirate is not impossible.

For my part, I believe that new publications of Sicilian coins and countermarks have created certain possibilities to push the date of appearance for both issues up to the principate of Augustus. Their average

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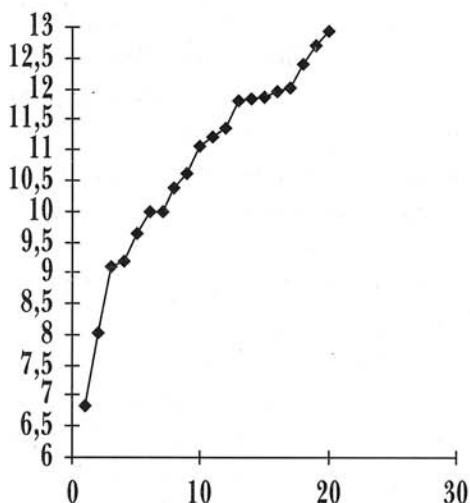
<sup>28</sup> R. J. A. Wilsin, *Sicily under the Roman Empire: The Archaeology of a Roman Province, 36 BC – AD 535*, Warminster 1990, pp. 298 ff.

<sup>29</sup> Lingren, p. 29, no. 656, dates Type 3 to “second century to early first century BC”. The SNG, Fabricius Collection, Aarhus University, Denmark, and The Royal Collection of Coins and Medals, Danish National Museum, Copenhagen 1987, no. 496, likewise dates this type to the 2<sup>nd</sup>/1<sup>st</sup> centuries BC. This is obviously a misunderstanding.

<sup>30</sup> FITA, pp. 191–192.

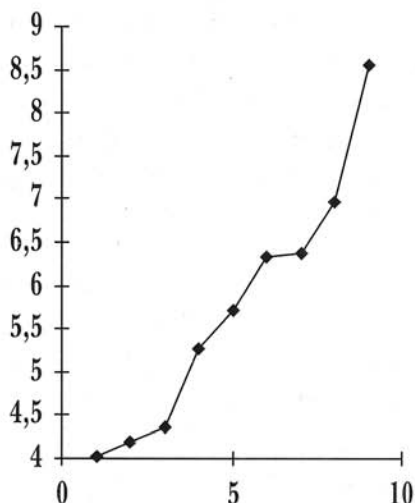


weights – 10.69 grams (Type 2) and 5.66 grams (Type 3)<sup>31</sup> – may suggest, to be sure, associations with the coinage of the triumvirs, or in rough approximation with the Sicilian units of Augustus's reign: the *as*, weighing about 9 grams, and the *semis*, at 4.5 g. A graph of the frequency of occurrence of these weights, however, indicates clearly that there is a close bond between the Cossyrian coins and the Sicilian coins of Augustus shown in dynamic development, broken down into two periods.



Frequency of occurrence of weights in Cossyrian coins

Type 2



Type 3

In the first period, in the years 27–2 BC, the weight of the Sicilian *ases* was approximately that of Roman Imperial units, ca. 11.40 g. In the second period (2 BC–AD 7) the average weight of the units fell to ca. 9.50 g, holding steady at the lower limits to the end of Augustus's reign. Under Tiberius this weight was also maintained (ca. 9.20 g), only to fall to ca. 8.40 g at the end of the reign.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Listed in A. Burnett, M. Amandry, and P. Ripollès, *Roman Provincial Coinage*, Vol. I.1, London and Paris 1992, pp. 180–181, nos. 675–676 (hereinafter cited as “RPC”). Further analysis based on the weight data contained therein, expanded by the specimens in the cited volumes of the SNG.

<sup>32</sup> Rodolfo Martini, “*Monetazione provinciale romana. I. Sicilia. Appendice II: Metrologia*”, *Glaux* 5 (1991), p. 163.



The phenomenon of countermarking displays a similar pattern. In the first phase, in the years 10–2 BC, countermarks were used in reaction to the appearance in circulation of new Augustan bronze units. In the second phase, which lasted to somewhere in the 30s AD, we see the development of this phenomenon, though many countermarks did not differ in any respect from the preceding. They very often occurred on coins that were countermarked far from the centers which had emitted them.<sup>33</sup>

The countermark REG is unresolved; it may be the abbreviation of the name of an official, e.g. REG(VLVS), an indication of approval of the coin, e.g. REG(VLARIS), i.e. “correct, in conformity with the regulations,” or it may have had yet another meaning. The *capricornus*, on the other hand, was not only associated with the iconography and ideology of Augustan coins,<sup>34</sup> but also constituted a rather common countermark. It occurs on the imperial *dupondii* of Augustus struck by C. Cassius Celer (16 BC) and P. Licinius Stolo (17 BC), and on other bronze coins, including provincial coins of Tiberian date.<sup>35</sup> The countermarks on the imitations of Augustan *dupondii* created in Sicily are probably the sign of Panormos.<sup>36</sup> The head of an eagle appears on a coin from Calaguris in Spain, probably from the reign of Tiberius, and not only. Finally, the sign of a palm branch between D(ecreto) D(ecurionum) is encountered on ases from Nemausus, most likely struck in the years 20–10 BC.<sup>37</sup>

It is not known for certain how long the interval lasted between the time when the Cossyrian coins were struck and when the countermarks were affixed. There is no reason to suppose that it was very long,<sup>38</sup> since the metrology of Cossyrian coins is approximately the same as that of Augustan coins.

<sup>33</sup> Martini, p. 160.

<sup>34</sup> See K. Kraft, “Zum Capricorn auf den Münzen des Augustus”, JNG 17 (1967), pp. 17–27.

<sup>35</sup> J.-B. Giard, *Bibliothèque Nationale. Catalogue des monnaies de l’empire romain. I. Auguste*, Paris 1976, pp. 34–35.

<sup>36</sup> RPC I, p. 166.

<sup>37</sup> RIC I.157; C. H. V. Sutherland and C. M. Kraay, *Catalogue of Coins of the Roman Empire in the Ashmolean Museum. I. Augustus*, Oxford 1975, nos. 410, 419–420; R. Martini, *Una collezione di monete Romane imperiali contromarcate nel Gabinetto Numismatico di Locarno, Koinon I. Materiali e studi numismatici*, Locarno 1993, pp. 57–58, no. 10; on the occurrence of this type of countermark in Nemausus, see H. Zehnacker, J.-C. Richard, and J. N. Barrandon, “La trouvaille de la Villeneuve-au-Châtelot (Aube)”, in *Trésors monétaires VI* (1984), 9–92, esp. pp. 77–78; R. Majurel, “Les contremarques sur as nimois”, *OGAM Tradition celtique* 17 (July–December 1965), 243–278.

<sup>38</sup> As argued by G. Förschner, *Die Münzen der Griechen in Italien und Sizilien. Die Bestände des Münzkabinetts*, Frankfurt-am-Main 1986, p. 212, no. 709.

The circumstances under which the Cossyrian coins were struck remain unclear, and need not be associated with a change in the city's administrative status. Neither does it appear that they had much economic significance. They were more an indication, in my opinion, of a certain increase in the prosperity of the island and its political aspirations. In the light of the archeological material, the only period of economic growth on Cossyra occurred precisely during the reign of Augustus. It was during this time that Cossyra established itself as a manufacturer of hand-made cooking vessels that retained heat for an extended period. Such Cossyrian vessels can be found in Cos, Ostia, Sabratha, and most likely in Sicily.<sup>39</sup> At least partially this trade was associated with the promulgation of Cossyrian basalt, which is found in Thurbo Maius and in numerous towns along the Tunesian coast, from Utica through Carthage to Thapsus. Some of the basalt stones may not necessarily have served as material for making mill stones, but could have constituted simply ship ballast.<sup>40</sup> The red-brown basalt from which the millstones found in Marsala and Mazara are made, as well as the hypocaust piles from the house in Capo Boeo (Marsala), is also thought to have come from Cossyra.

Since Cossyra administratively constituted a part of Sicily, its attempts to gain the status of a *municipium* or *colonia* could have coincided with the efforts of other Sicilian cities. The year 21 BC, when Augustus granted at least several Sicilian cities municipal rights and Roman colonies,<sup>41</sup> would seem to be a likely *terminus post quem* for the first Cossyrian coins with Latin legend. This does not mean, however, that Cossyra's efforts were crowned with success. Perhaps the Cossyrians only obtained consent to the striking of coins. Augustus's further administrative actions ca. 12 BC may be associated with the second and indeed final emission. This sort of chronology would correspond to some extent with the phases in which Augustus's countermarks appear, while the countermark from Nemausus would be evidence of the countermarking of Cossyrian coins, perhaps already in the reign of Tiberius.

Translated by BRUCE MAC QUEEN

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<sup>39</sup> Wilson, pp. 257–258.

<sup>40</sup> Wilson, p. 240.

<sup>41</sup> Wilson, pp. 35 ff.

## Monety Kossury

Monety Kossury tworzą trzy zasadnicze typy (tab.1). Najstarszy jest tradycyjnie datowany na okres po 217 r. p.n.e. lub na II w. p.n.e. Jednakże jest to postępowanie zbyt arbitralne. Nie można bowiem wykluczyć, że ten typ monet był efektem zastosowania punicko-kartagińskiej jednostki wagowej o ciężarze 9/8g, znanej szeroko w Hiszpanii i punickiej Sycylii. Fenicka legenda oznaczająca nazwę wyspy – Iranim, byłaby wówczas manifestacją kartagińskiej zwierzchności (254–217 r. .n.e.). Z drugiej strony pierwsze emisje Kossury mogły powstać w związku z powołaniem do życia pieniądza lokalnych ośrodków prowincjonalnych Sycylii oraz stworzeniem ich struktury fiskalnej. W takim razie pojawiłyby się one dopiero wraz z falą monet sycylijskich datowanych na 2 połowę II w. p.n.e.

Czas wybicia monet 2 i 3 typu określa się ogólnie na 2 połowę I w. p.n.e., przy czym typ 2 wydaje się być wcześniejszy od trzeciego. Tabela częstotliwości występowania wag tych monet Kossury (tab.2) oraz kontramarki sugerują jednak bliższy ich związek z sycylijskimi monetami Augusta. Ponieważ Kossura stanowiła administracyjnie część Sycylii, typ 2 mógł się pojawić ok. 21 r. p.n.e., kiedy to August nadał, przynajmniej kilku miastom Sycylii, prawa municypalne oraz kolonii rzymskich. Nie oznacza to jednak, że starania Kossury zostały w tym względzie zakończone powodzeniem. Być może jej mieszkańcy uzyskali tylko prawo wybicia monety. Dalsze działania administracyjne Augusta podjęte ok. 12 r. p.n.e. można natomiast powiązać z pojawieniem się typu 3.