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ITALO VECCHI

THE COINAGE OF THE RASNA PART V*

Plates 1-4

I VETULONIA (*vatl*)

INTRODUCTION

The hill town of Poggio Colonna, now named Vetulonia after Falchi identified the site with the help of coin finds from the 3rd century, goes back to Villanovan times. The citadel town, one of the twelve of the Etruscan federation, was first mentioned by Dionysius of Halicarnassus (3, 51) as being in a military alliance with Clusium, Volaterrae, Rusellae and the Latins against Tarquinius Priscus, by tradition the fifth king of Rome who is said to have reigned from 616-578. Another indication of Vetulonia's early pre-eminence comes from the poet Silius Italicus (Punica 8, 484-489) who informs us that in Roman tradition Vetulonia was best known as a city of Lydian origin from which Rome adopted the *fasces*, the *sella curulis*, the purple toga, and the trumpet, *tuba*; this tradition is confirmed in part by the iron *fasces* dating to c. 600 BC found in the 'Tomba del littore' at Vetulonia. The symbol of royal power, to scourge with rods and execute with axes, was first borrowed by the Roman kings and then later by the magistrates of the republic.

The abundance of archaeological material from the rich tombs of the area show Vetulonia, as well as Populonia, grew wealthy by exploiting the iron, lead and silver deposits of Massa Marittima, Elba and Sardinia; it also testifies to the exceptional skill of its metal-workers, including highly skilled goldsmiths who produced fine gold jewellery by using the techniques of granulation and filigrana. Vetulonia was a rich and powerful city with a strong agricultural base, and which conducted trade on a grand scale importing luxury goods from the east, the finest Greek vases from the south and amber from the north.

The ancient sources do not refer to Vetulonia as a maritime city, but they do mention the Lacus Prilius which Etruscan canal technology had rendered navigable and vital to its economy. By the 5th century this was in decline, probably owing to the receding of the sea and the consequent development of the malarial marshes which became the Padule di Castiglione, see p. 6, *Fig. 1*.

* Parts I-IV appeared in SNR 67, 1988; 69, 1990; 71, 1992, and 72, 1993.

Literature

- Atti Napoli Contributi introduttivi allo studio della monetazione etrusca, Atti del V Convegno del CISN, Napoli 1975, Suppl. AIIN 22, 1976.
CAMILLI L. CAMILLI, Le monete a leggenda *vatl*, Atti Napoli, p. 181-197.
FALCHI I. FALCHI, Vetulonia e la sua necropoli antichissima (Florence 1891).
SAMBON A. SAMBON, Les monnaies antiques de l'Italie (Paris 1903)

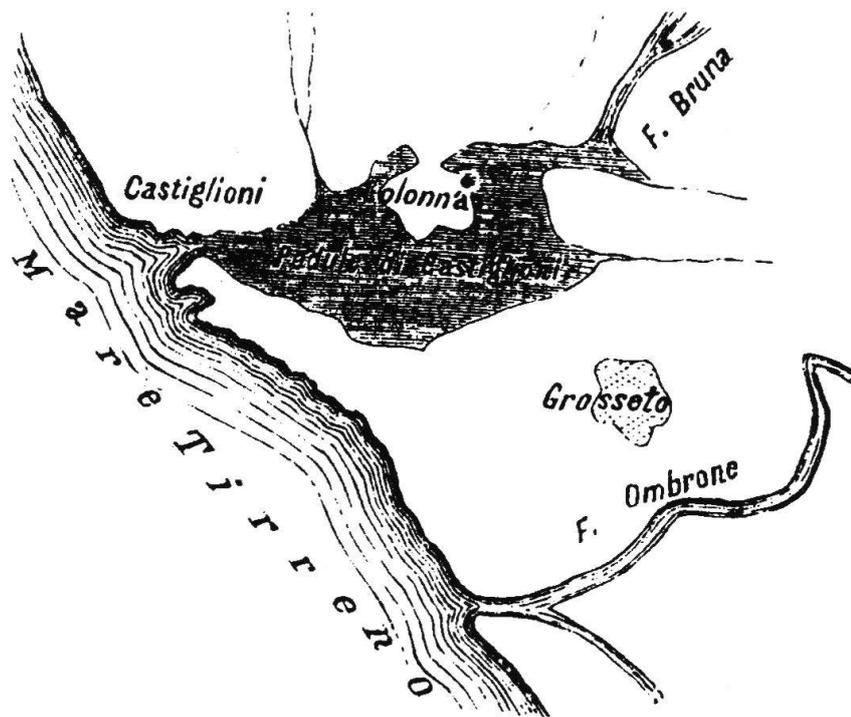


Fig. 1

We know nothing concerning the Roman occupation of Vetulonia; this had apparently happened peacefully by about 241 BC, when the Via Aurelia was built, along which Vetulonia held a dominant position. Vetulonia's economic revival and former nautical glory is reflected on the «throne of Claudius» of the 1st century AD found at Caere and now in the Vatican, which shows Vetulonia personified as a young nude hero standing by a tree, holding a steering oar or *gubernaculum* over his shoulder, evidence, as with the city's coinage, that long after its age of great prosperity Vetulonia found nautical symbols relevant.¹

The Mediterranean is fundamental to understanding Etruscan economic history. Early accounts of the Tyrrhenians mention their «thalassocracy», domination of the sea, and Diodorus Siculus wrote that they «were masters of the sea over a long period, they caused the sea along Italy to be named Tyrrhenian after them». The hymn to Dionysus attributed to Homer² relates how one day the god was captured by Tyrrhenian pirates, and only managed to escape by changing his captors into a shoal of dolphins. Pliny, quoting a Greek source, informs us that Tyrrhenian Pisae invented the beak, or *rostrum*, with which a ship could ram an enemy vessel; the anchor is also said to be an Etruscan invention. Arrian, writing in the second century AD, confirmed their piratical reputation when an Etruscan embassy received by Alexander the Great on his return to Babylon in 323 BC was warned to give up piracy at sea.

¹ See «il trono di Claudio» from Caere, 1st century AD, now at the Vatican; M. PALLOTTINO, *Etruscologia*, VII ed. (Milano 1990), p. 258 and pl. 49.

² Homeric Hymns VII. 8.

The coinage of Vetulonia³ and the hippocamp series metrologically parallel the period of Populonia's semilibral and triental weight standard and are typically Etruscan in originality, alluding to Greek mythology, as is also seen in Etruscan tomb paintings and mirror engravings. Thalassa, Amphitrite/Salacia, Hephaestus-Vulcanus (*Sethluns*), Poseidon-Neptune (*Nethuns*), Delphinos, *cetus*, hippocampus, anchors and tridents are all represented and generally relate to a maritime mythology.⁴

CATALOGUE

I VETULONIA (*vatl*)

Bronze, semilibral as period, c. 217-215

Uncia

- 1 O 1 Female head r., hair in *korymbos*, with small crab's claw on forehead; behind, *vatl*.
R Plain
- 1 9.00 Florence, Museo Arch. = FALCHI pl. 1,1 = Atti Napoli pl. 48, 8.
2* 7.81 London, BM = CAMILLI pl. 32, 5
3* 8.60 London, BM = CAMILLI pl. 32, 6.
4 7.55 NAC 7, 1994, 111.
5 8.57 NAC 7, 1994, 112.
6 8.57 New York, SNG ANS 98.
- 2 O 1 As last
R 1 Caduceus.
- 1 11.78 NAC 2, 1990, 18.
2* 7.75 NAC 7, 1994, 110 = Spink 82, 1991, 436.

The female head could possibly be Amphitrite, daughter of Nereus, Neptune/*Nethuns*' second wife and queen of the sea, who wears a similar device on the coinage of the Brettii.⁵ *Nethuns*' Italic cult-partner Salacia, goddess of spring water, is also identified with Amphitrite and could therefore be the subject of this coin. Oceanus, the father of the Oceanids and of river-gods, also wears crab's claws and holds an oar on a 3rd century AD bronze of Valerian from Tyre.⁶

³ For an analysis see CAMILLI, p. 181-197.

⁴ For a discussion see M. CRISTOFANI, Problemi iconografici ed epigrafico-linguistici, Atti Napoli, p. 349-354.

⁵ SNG ANS 8-10.

⁶ BMC Phoenicia 464.

Semuncia

- 3 O 2 Head of *Sethluns* r., wearing pileus; behind, *vatl.* Linear border.
R Plain
- 1 5.90 Florence, Museo Arch. = FALCHI p. 19, 2.
2* 6.15 New York, SNG ANS 99.
- 4 O 2 As no. 3.
R 2 Steering oar within linear border.
- 1 5.25 Florence, Museo Arch. = FALCHI p. 19, 3 = Atti Napoli pl. 48, 9.
2* 5.35 NAC 7, 1994, 113.
- 5 O 3 Female head r.
R Plain
- 1 7.45 Florence.
2* 5.57 NAC 7, 1994, 114 = Spink 82, 1991, 436.

Silver, triental as period, c. 215-211

Quinarius

- 6 O 4 Head of *Sethluns* r., wearing pileus; behind, *vatl.*; dotted border.
R 3 Ornamental trident between two dolphins.
- 1* 3.75 NAC 7, 1994, 115 = Jameson 2380 = CAMILLI pl. 32, 8.
- 7 O 4 Head of *Sethluns* r., wearing pileus; behind, *vatl.*; dotted border.
R Plain
- 1* 3.90 NAC 13, 1998, 18 = Basel 18 = Ratto 1926, 142 = Jameson 2379
= CAMILLI pl. 32, 7.

This issue is on the same triental as standard as Populonia, see *Rasna* III, 1-6.

Sethluns (Vulcanus-Hephaestus), depicted as a beardless young man wearing a conical bonnet, is the personification of celestial fire, the divine blacksmith, the artisan, and, obviously, the patron of the mint and the local metal manufacturing industry.

At the Vulcanalia, the festival in his honor, little fish were thrown into fires as offerings representing human lives and made to spare humans from death. See also the *pufluna ca vetalu* sextans issued at Populonia in c. 215.⁷

*Sextans*⁸

- 8 O 5 Male head r., wearing *cetus* headdress; behind, *vatl*, and beneath, two pellets.
R 4 Ornamental trident between two dolphins and two pellets.
- 1* 10.25 Berlin (inv. 6671).
2 13.55 London BMC 32.
- 9 O 5 Similar to no. 8.
R 3 Similar to no. 8.
- 1 10.99 Berlin (inv. 5435).
2* 11.24 Private coll.
3 Turin 130.
- 10 O 7 Similar to nos. 8-9.
R 5 Similar to nos. 8-9.
- 1 10.72 Berlin (Rauch)
2 10.16 Berlin (Fox, 1873)
3 9.16 Spink 82, 1991, 438.
4* Turin 133.
- 11 O 8 Similar to nos. 8-10.
R 6 Similar to nos. 8-10.
- 1 10.12 Berlin (inv. 363/1885).
2 BMC 14/12.
3* 12.03 Munich, SNG 7.
4 Turin 127.
- 12 O 9 Similar to nos. 8-11.
R 7 Similar to nos. 8-11.
- 1* 7.67 Milan, SNG 26.
- 13 O 10 Similar to nos. 8-12.
R 8 Similar to nos. 8-12.
- 1* 12.92 London, BM

⁷ *Rasna* part IV, SNR 72, 1993, p. 64, 1-2.

⁸ See M.H. CRAWFORD, *Roman Republican Coin Hoards* (London 1969) 129.

Sextans

14 O 11 Male head r., wearing *cetus* headdress; behind, two pellets and beneath, *vall.*

R 9 Ornamental trident between two dolphins.

- 1* 9.94 London, BM,
- 2 9.73 Florence 111.
- 3 8.46 New York. SNG ANS 100, ex Ratto 1926, 146.
- 4 8.15 Turin 127.

15 O 12 Male head r., wearing *cetus* headdress; behind, two pellets.

R 10 Ornamental trident between two dolphins and two pellets.

- 1 Atti Napoli, pl. 47, 4.
- 2* 16.36 Paris, BN 40.

16 O 13 Similar to no. 15.

R 11 Similar to no. 15.

- 1* 7.89 Berlin (Löbbecke, 1906).
- 2 10.75 NAC 7, 1994, 120.
- 3 13.18 Spink 82, 1991, 437.
- 4 9.00 Weber coll. 78.

17 O 13 As last

R 14 Similar to nos. 14-16.

- 1* 9.32 London, BM.

18 O 13 As last

R 15 Similar to nos. 14-17.

- 1* 14.33 Paris, BN 41 = SAMBON 121a.

19 O 13 As last

R 16 Similar to nos. 14-18.

- 1 8.20 Berlin (Rauch, cat. 6).
- 2 10.25 Venturi Ginori 26.

20 O 14 Similar to nos. 14-19.

R 17 Similar to no. 14.

- 1 10.89 Copenhagen, SNG 9.
- 2* 9.32 London, BM.
- 3 10.16 Rome, Museo Nazionale 121.

Uncia

- 21 O 15 Male head r., wearing *cetus* headdress; beneath *vail*; dotted border.
R 18 Ornamental trident between two dolphins.

- 1* 5.28 London, BM.
2 Ratto list 1933, 194.
3 5.93 Stockholm.
4 5.50 Vatican.

- 22 O 15 Similar to no. 21.
R 19 Similar to no. 21.

- 1* 5.01 Florence 116.

- 23 O 16 Similar to nos. 21-22.
R 20 Similar to 21.

- 1 4.99 London, BM.
2* 5.88 Private collection.

- 24 O 16 As last
R 21 Similar to nos. 21-23.

- 1* 6.10 Leiden 15.

- 25 O 17 Similar to nos. 21-24.
R 22 Similar to nos. 21-24.

- 1* 4.99 NAC 7, 1994, 121.

- 26 O 18 Similar to nos. 21-25.
R 23 Similar to nos. 21-25.

- 1* 6.48 Berlin (Rauch, cat. 7).

- 27 O 19 Similar to nos. 21-26.
R 24 Similar to nos. 21-26.

- 1* 5.46 Spink 82, 1991, 439.

- 28 O 20 Similar to nos. 21-27.
R 25 Similar to nos. 21-27.

- 1* 6.99 Milan, SNG 27.

As in the case of Populonia,⁹ the weight standards of this series correspond to the same diversity of weight standards at Rome, which gradually decline from the post semilibral to the sextantal as standard of about 211. The quadrantal standard sextans was theoretically of about 13.5 g.

The male head on the obverse of this issue is obviously influenced by the beardless Hercules wearing boar-skin/bull charging r. issue of the Republic.¹⁰ It could conceivably represent Hercules wearing the spoils of the sea-monster *cetus* which he killed, or more probably *Nethuns*/Poseidon who had sent *cetus* to ravage the land of king Laomedon for not paying his wage for building the walls of Troy. The head of a similar but bearded deity wearing the spoils of *cetus* can be seen in the incuse bronze issue of Populonia.¹¹ *Cetus* seems also to have been one of *Nethuns*'/Neptune's means of transport as is sculpturally depicted on an altar of Neptune in Rome, now in Munich, where he is seen riding over the sea to the marriage feast with Amphitrite/Salacia, while she is carried by a hippocamp (*Fig. 2*).¹²

The Italic god of water known to the Etruscans as *Nethun[u]s* and to the Romans as Neptune, was very important and his name occupied two compartments on the Liver of Piacenza. *Nethuns*/Neptune was later identified with Poseidon, son of Cronus, a god worshipped by the earliest Aryan invaders of Europe in c. 2000 BC. This sky-god and thunderer, was also known as Hippios, the creator and Lord of the Horses whose hooves thunder on the earth. In Homer he is the «earthshaker», and «possessor of the earth», while many legends show him in equine guise. However, with a later arrival of Aryans in c. 1450 BC he was displaced by another sky-god and thunderer, Zeus, seen as his older brother, and Poseidon came to be revered solely as a marine divinity, displacing the more ancient Nereus. Horses, the sea-monster *cetus*, the sea horse (hippocampus), dolphins, anchors, tridents, oars all play supporting roles in the many adventures of *Nethuns* which so enthralled the Etruscans.



Fig. 2

⁹ See RASNA IV, SNR 72, 1993, p. 1-23.

¹⁰ CRAWFORD, RRC, 42/2.

¹¹ RASNA IV, nos. 26-27

¹² The «Altar of Domitius Ahenobarbus», now in Munich, entered the Palazzo S. Croce in 1639; see D.E.E. KLEINER, *Roman Sculpture* (New Haven/London 1992), p. 49 and fig. 30. It may have been a base from a hellenistic temple situated in Piazza S. Salvatore in Rome. The reliefs, depicting a marine *thiasos*, date to the early 1st century BC.

Sextantal as period, c. 211-206

Quadrans

29 O 1 Head of Delphinos r., covered by dolphin l.; above, three pellets.

R 1 Anchor; to l., three pellets; to r., <+. A.

1* 14.19 London, BMC 14/11 = SAMBON 126 = Atti Napoli pl. 48, 5.

2* Florence = FALCHI p. 19, 6 = Atti Napoli pl. 48, 6.

30 O 1 As last.

R 2 Similar to no. 29

1* Florence. SAMBON 126. GARRUCCI pl. 74, 14. Atti Napoli pl. 48, 7.

Falchi found three at Vetulonia, see p. 225-6 and pl. 19,6

Delphinos, here personified with a dolphin on his head, played a central role in convincing Amphitrite, daughter of the ancient sea-god Nereus, to accept Poseidon's marriage proposal; in gratitude, he placed Delphinos' image among the stars, as the constellation of the dolphin.

II UNCERTAIN MINT (Vetulonia?)

This mint issuing silver on the same semilibral and sextantal as standards of Populonia, but with a different system of marks of value, is conceivably Vetulonia; instead of X, CC equals 10, while C or < is as that of Populonia. The fractional units of the series are of about 0.70 g. and have no mark of value at all. Although Vetulonia has a large bronze series it strangely lacks a sextantal as silver series similar to that of Populonia, and which could have been issued for specific military or commercial needs during the Second Punic war, such as the supplying of Scipio's fleet against Carthage in 205. The engraving technique of the second series is almost Celtic in its flow and presents a type quite different to Populonia's more conventional hippocamp of the same period.¹³ A fascinating small hoard of 10-asses of the above type was found in 1985 at Gattaiola (Lucca) together with fractions depicting a goose (or swan) looking backward.¹⁴ The find location was, unfortunately, not helpful in identifying the issuing mint.

Hippocampus, the sea-horse with the forepart of a horse and the tail of a sea-serpent, was extremely popular in Etruscan art.¹⁵ Amphitrite commonly rode one, as

¹³ see *Rasna* IV, no. 24.

¹⁴ G. GIAMPOLTRINI, *Le monete etrusche del romito di Pozzuolo (Lucca)*, RIN 94, 1992, p. 28-31. A short notice of the find appeared had in RIN 87, 1985, p. 273-274.

¹⁵ See LIMC VIII/1, p. 634.

¹⁶ SNG ANS 14.



Fig. 3

on the reverse of the Second Punic War gold drachm of Bruttium;¹⁶ she is depicted riding on a hippocamp on a panel on the altar in Munich, where in another panel, Neptune was carried by *cetus*.¹⁷ A popular scene on South Italian vases is the hippocamp carrying a nereid over the sea, see *Fig. 3*.¹⁸

The hippocamp can be considered a symbol of Poseidon Hippios, «Lord of horses», whose cult was especially Thessalian, and in general is closely connected with the the Ionians who transmitted it to the sea-faring Etruscans.

Silver series, c. 217-215

5-asses

- 31 O Hippocamp r., surrounded by four dolphins; in field r, < . Linear border.
 R Cerberus within linear square.

1* 5.36 London, BM = SAMBON 22 = GARRUCCI pl. 71, 30.

The weight standard is based on a silver as of one scruple of about 1.13 g, corresponding to a bronze semilibral as.

¹⁷ See above, n. 12.

¹⁸ LIMC VIII/2, p. 392, 6 (photo from LIMC).

As

- 32 O Cerberus standing r. Linear border.
R Plain
1* 0.74 Jameson 2377 (Venturi Ginori)

Gold series, c. 211-200

50-asses

- 33 O Hippocamp r; below, IA (for ↑). Border of dots.
R Plain
1* 2.77 New York, SNG ANS 10 = Strozzi 529 = SAMBON 8.

12 1/2-asses

- 34 O Hippocamp l.; below, X I I C . Border of dots.
R Plain
1* 0.75 Florence, Museo Arch. (inv. 84015) = Milani 1912 (Piccione coll.)
187, cf. Atti Napoli p. 284, found at Vetulonia.

As

- 35 O Anchor
R Plain
1* 0.59 Florence, Museo Arch. (inv. 36432) = CATALLI 25.

The weight standard is similar to that of Populonia for the sextantal as period. They were possibly produced at Vetulonia.

Silver series, c. 211-200

10-asses (denarius)

- 36 O Hippocamp r., above, dolphin and CC; below, dolphin r. Border of dots.
R Plain
1* 4.72 New York, SNG ANS 17 = Strozzi 543.
2 4.26 NAC 13, 1998, 19 = Basel 19.

- 37 O Similar to no. 6
R Plain
- 1 4.51 Auctiones 8, 1978, 5.
2 4.35 Gattaiola hoard 1.
3. 4.49 Gattaiola hoard 2.
4 4.25 Münzen und Medaillen 52, 1975, 3.
5 4.20 SAMBON 24 (Gotha)
6* 3.97 Sternberg 20, 1988, 10.
- 38 O Similar to nos. 6-7.
R Plain
- 1 4.19 London, BMC p. 7, 2.
2* 4.12 Spink 82, 1991, 427.
- 39 O Similar to nos. 6-8.
R Plain
- 1* 4.29 Hess 247, 1978, 1 = NFA 2, 1976, 2 = Sotheby, May 1974, 275
= Leu 7, 1973, 10.
- 40 O Similar to nos. 6-9.
R Plain
- 1 4.46 Gattaiola hoard 3.
2* 4.02 Leu 28, 1981, 1 = Hess-Leu 49, 1971, 6.
- 41 O Similar to nos. 6-10.
R Plain
- 1* 3.98 Spink 82, 1991, 426.

5-asses

- 42 O Hippocamp r., above, dolphin and star; below, C. Border of dots.
R Plain
- 1 2.24 Campana coll.
2 2.09 Hess-Leu 49, 1971, 9.
3 2.05 Leu 7, 1973, 11.
4 2.16 NAC 7, 1994, 142.
5 2.14 NAC 7, 1994, 143 = NAC 1, 1989, 23.
6* 2.25 New York, SNG ANS 18.
7 2.05 NFA 4, 1977, 2.
8 2.04 Private coll.

- 9 2.09 Spink 82, 1991, 428.
 10 2.18 Spink 82, 1991, 429.
 11* 2.30 Sternberg 15, 1985, 76.
- 43 O Similar to no. 12.
 R Plain
- 1* 2.04 Sternberg 20, 1988, 11.
- 44 O Hippocamp r., above, C and below, dolphin. Border of dots. Very finely engraved die.
 R Plain
- 1* 2.08 Berlin (625/1903).
- 45 O Hippocamp l.; above, C and below, dolphin. Border of dots. Very finely engraved die.
 R Plain
- 1 2.55 London, BM = Sambon 23
 2* 2.25 SAMBON 23 (Six, cast in Winterthur).

2 1/2-asses

- 46 O Dolphin l.; below, CII.
 R Plain
- 1* 0.75 Florence, Museo Arch. (inv 73299), found at Vetulonia.

As (?)

- 47 O Goose (or swan) standing r., looking back; border of dots.
 R Plain
- 1* 0.23 Gattaiola hoard 4.
 2* 0.25 Gattaiola hoard 5.
 3* 0.22 Gattaiola hoard 6.
 4* 0.21 Gattaiola hoard 7.
 5* 0.24 Gattaiola hoard 8.
 6* 0.71 NAC 1, 1989, 24
 7 0.67 Trinci coll.

The above coins of this issue are all from different dies.

Italo Vecchi, 396 Upper Richmond Rd., GB-London SW15 6JN



1/2



1/3



2/2



3/2



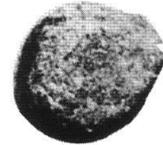
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6



7



8/1



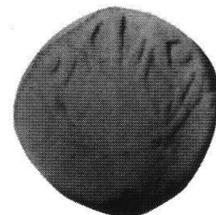
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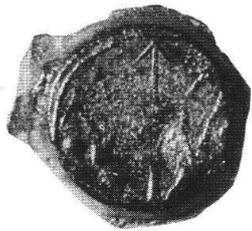
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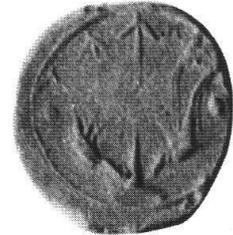
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30



