

The adoption of Dionysus as a patron deity by Mark Antony and his subsequent representation as the 'New Dionysus' have coloured the understanding of the cistophoric coin types produced by Antony around 39 BC (RPC 2201 and 2202). The interpretation of the imagery on these coins has been limited to his self representation as the 'New Dionysus' and a celebration of his recent marriage to Octavia (Roman Provincial Coinage, Vol.1). These interpretations, while on the surface explain the choice of motifs, fail to take into account the context in which these coins were produced, their intended recipients, or the traditional types employed on the cistophorus denomination.

This paper seeks to explore the numismatic tradition of the cistophorus type and its relation to the issue by Antony. The cistophorus was an innovation of the Attalid dynasty and circulated almost exclusively within Pergamum and later the Roman province of Asia. The denomination had consistent iconography which continued down through the minor changes made by Roman provincial governors. Traditional motifs such as the ivy wreath, *cista mystica*, snakes and bow case will be examined to determine their mythological associations and links to Dionysus (note the only recent re-examination of the type by Kosmetatou [1998]). Once a careful reading of the images and their transmission has been explored, it will then be possible to relate them to the purposes of Antony in the creation of his cistophorus types. It will be observed that the primary criteria for attributing the representation of Antony as the 'New Dionysus' on the issue has been based on the use of traditional cistophoric motifs. Thus, rather than understanding these images as self representation as the god, it will be argued that Antony chose the images in order to create an issue which would provide an acceptable and recognisable currency for circulation in Asia Minor.

The identification of Antony as the 'New Dionysus' emerges from literary sources which paint a largely hostile portrait of Antony's personal life and drinking habits (Velleius Paterculus, Seneca the Elder, Plutarch and Dio Cassius). While many of the accounts can be linked to the propaganda battle between Antony and Octavian in the lead up to the Battle of Actium (Scott [1933]), the accounts have been understood to represent a large-scale appropriation of the god in Antony's personal and political associations. However, numismatic and epigraphic evidence suggest the contrary. Epigraphic evidence confirms Antony's association with Dionysus only in Athens. Numismatic evidence verifies this, but suggests no programme of widespread identification with Dionysus. Antony's coinage fails to feature any examples of Dionysiac imagery other than that which occurs on the aforementioned cistophori during his rule over the Eastern Empire. Thus the contemporary evidence fails to corroborate the propagandistic elements of the literary accounts. The most colourful portrayal of Antony as Dionysus is produced by Plutarch in his *Life of Antony*. His rendering of the vices of the pair Demetrius and Antony include their respective depictions as 'New Dionysus'. Brenk (1995) confirms that Plutarch's depiction of Demetrius as Dionysus, like Antony, is not corroborated by any numismatic evidence. The latter in fact suggests Demetrius' affiliation with Poseidon. Thus Plutarch, in his overall depictions of Demetrius and Antony as the 'New Dionysus', cannot be substantiated in non-literary evidence.

The re-examination of the cistophori issue of Mark Antony provides no further evidence for his adoption of the title 'New Dionysus'. The association is evident in the contemporary sources only for his visits to Athens and suggests no widespread imitation or assimilation with Dionysus.