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On the Trail of the *Triskeles*: from the McDonald Institute to Archaic Greek Sicily

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The McDonald Institute and this journal have adopted as their logo a three-legged symbol, with wings on each heel, known in Graeco-Roman antiquity as the triskeles. *The purpose of this article is to explore the meaning of the iconography of this emblem, and to investigate how and why it came to symbolize the islands of both Man and Sicily. It is suggested that the Isle of Man adopted the* triskeles *in 1266 when the control of the island passed from the Norse kings to Alexander III of Scotland; a possible connection with Sicily is tentatively explored. The Man* triskeles *is clothed in leg armour, however, and has spurs, not wings, on the ankles. In Sicily the* triskeles *is first attested in the seventh century* BC *and was gradually elaborated from the later fourth century* BC *onwards, first with the addition of wings to the feet, then with the use of a Medusa head at the centre, and finally with the adjunct of three barley ears to symbolize the agricultural fertility of the island. Widely adopted also on coinage in Athens and Asia Minor from the sixth century* BC, *the* triskeles *was probably in origin a sun symbol like the swastika.*

Readers of this journal, and recipients of communications from the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research at Cambridge, will be readily familiar with the logo which graces both the front cover of the former and the headed notepaper of the latter (Fig. 1). It is a version of the three-legged symbol known as the *triskeles*: the legs progress in clockwise direction with a circular plain disc at the centre, and wings are attached to the heel of each foot. The symbol will be familiar to many as a popular emblem of the Isle of Man; but it is also in very widespread use in Sicily as a *leitmotiv* of that very different island. The reason for the adoption of the *triskeles*[1] as the 'badge' of both the McDonald Institute and of its organ, *The Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, has not hitherto been explained in print, but I understand that it was chosen partly because of Dr McDonald's interest in coinage and metrology (and the *triskeles* often appears on ancient coins), and also because he lived on the Isle of Man towards the end of his life. The version chosen at Cambridge is, as we shall see, closer to the Sicilian *triskeles* than to the Manx one, but its adoption provides vivid evidence of the continuing potency and attraction of a symbol which has been around for more than two and a half millennia. The purpose of the present article is to explore the meaning of the iconography of this curious emblem, and to investigate how and why it came to symbolize the islands of both Man and Sicily.

Figure 1. *The logo of the McDonald Institute, University of Cambridge.*

The *triskeles* and the Isle of Man

Quite when the *triskeles* was adopted by the Isle of Man as its 'badge' is not absolutely certain, but it seems probable that it occurred in AD 1266 when the island came under the control of Alexander III, King of Scotland, after the long period of Norse domination (Kinvig 1975, 90–92). This is suggested above all by the frequent and repeated occurrence of the Three

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Figure 2. *Segar's Roll, seventeenth-century copy of a lost original of* c. AD *1280.*

Legs very soon afterwards in heraldic devices associated with Man (such as Walford's Roll, Herald's Roll, Camden Roll and Segar's Roll: Fig. 2), all of which were compiled between about 1270 and 1280. Later it turns up also on seals in Scandinavia as a by-product of Manx emigration to Scandinavia before the end of the thirteenth century.[2] By contrast, the seals of the Norse kings (the last of whom, Magnus, died in 1265) bore the non-heraldic devices of a ship in full sail and of a lion (Megaw 1959–60). Some scholars have suggested that the use of the Three Legs may have been introduced towards the end of the Norse period, a little before 1266 (Wagner 1959–60, 78; Kinvig 1975, 91), but there is no trace of them in the surviving manuscripts of heraldic devices. It is, therefore, more plausible to see 1266 as marking a fresh start and a decisive break with the past, on the occasion of the Isle of Man's transfer to Alexander III of Scotland. The available evidence is consistent with a date for the introduction of the Legs of Man after, rather than before, 1266.

A Norse origin has sometimes been claimed for the Three Legs on the basis of the alleged use of the *triskeles* on Hiberno-Norse coinage of the Kings of Northumbria in the tenth century (Wagner 1959–60, 77, followed by Young 1983, 1). The device in question appears on the issues of Sihtric (AD 921–6/7), Regnald (AD 943/4) and Anlaf (AD 941–4 and 949–52: Keary 1887, nos. 1079, 1081 & 1088–91; Fig. 3). The device depicted, however, is a compact knot-like trefoil decorated with dots: there are no legs, and it does not remotely resemble either the Manx version of the Three Legs emblem, as it suddenly appears in the third quarter of the thirteenth century, or indeed any earlier version of the *triskeles*. Even if one does accept the tenth-century numismatic device as providing an inspiration for the Three Legs of Man, there is a gap of some three centuries to explain before it became adopted by the Isle of Man, by which time the Hiberno-Norse coins were out of circulation and long forgotten.

Figure 3. *Hiberno-Norse coin of King Anlaf, mid-tenth century* AD *(British Museum).*

Some of the earliest examples of the heraldic use of the Legs of Man survive only in seventeenth-century copies, but the original of Herald's Roll (*c.* 1270/80) is still extant: it shows a rather awkward junction of the three legs, suggesting a lack of familiarity with the emblem at that stage (Wagner 1950, 9–14; 1959–60, pl. 240H; cf. also pl. 240I). The legs also are moving anticlockwise, rather than clockwise as on the 'standard' early version of the Three Legs. This Roll and other early examples show the legs covered with chain mail, as is usual in early heraldic devices, and this feature has remained a feature of the Legs to this day; they do not, however, at this early date, show spurs.

Another important early example of the Three Legs symbol is on the Manx Sword of State. This, the ceremonial sword still used in the Tynwald, is traditionally dated to the middle years of the thirteenth century.[3] The emblem occurs twice on the Sword: in a circular frame on the pommel (Fig. 4), and squeezed somewhat awkwardly into a triangular field on the escutcheon, the point of junction between the blade and the guard. Although the surface features are now considerably worn by handling, the version of the *triskeles* used for both shows the three legs apparently bare, facing clockwise, and with what I take to be a large flower (rather than a spur) emerging from each ankle. At the join of the three legs in the centre is a three-petalled flower. If correctly interpreted, the bare legs, the flower-like projections from the ankles, and the central flower, all suggest an early date for the Sword of State: it is not impossible that it was made for Alexander III himself in or soon after 1266. Interestingly, the legs are bare, and there are also what I take

Figure 4. *Manx Sword of State, thirteenth century (?): detail of decoration on pommel.*

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to be flowers at the ankles in another early example of the Legs of Man, that shown on the vestments of the recumbent stone figure (the so-called 'Prince's Tomb') at Beverley Minster in Yorkshire: that monument is believed to be that of Edward I's chaplain, de Grimsby, who died in *c.* 1310. There is no flower at the centre of the emblem but a triangular void, a feature which also (as it happens) appears in the fourteenth-century Pillar Cross in the churchyard at Kirk Maughold in the Isle of Man (Wagner 1959–60, 80, with pl. 239A–B). The spurs are prominently visible on the Pillar Cross, as is the armour plating of the legs, and it is clear from heraldic examples of the fourteenth century that by then the spurs have become a regular part of the emblem, along with the armour protecting the legs; a discreet triangle usually marks the junction at the centre between the three legs (e.g. Wagner 1959–60, pl. 240J, an example dated *c.* 1371–88). Later still, a Latin legend was also added, QVOCVNQVE IECERIS STABIT, 'whichever way you throw it will stand'. This had already appeared by the time of the earliest known Manx coinage, of 1662; the issue shown here (Fig. 5) is a little later (1733). This armoured version of the *triskeles* has remained the symbol of Man to this day.[4]

If, as already noted, we reject the idea that the origin of the Man *triskeles* lies in the Hiberno-Norse coins of the tenth century, the reason for the adoption of the emblem and its immediate and widespread use in Man soon after 1266 needs to be explained. Man, like Sicily, is an island, and with the eye of faith it could be said to be sub-triangular in shape (though markedly less so than in the case of Sicily). Primitive medieval cartography, indeed, may have made the island appear more triangular than it really is. More significantly, however, a possible Sicilian link is provided by Alexander III's nephew by marriage, Edmund of Lancaster, son of King Henry III: the English king was married to Alexander's sister.

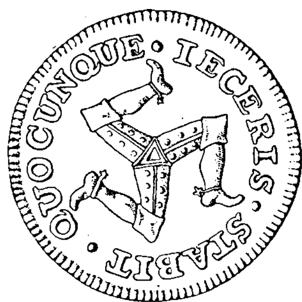

Figure 5. *Manx coin, 1733, showing the Legs of Man.*

In 1250, the Hohenstaufen emperor Frederick II, 'the Wonder of the World' (*stupor mundi*) as he was known, died after ruling 52 years over his beloved Sicily. A papal Legate, determined to assert the feudal rights of the papacy over the island in the unsettled period after the death of Frederick II, had formally invested the Sicilian kingdom in Henry III's son in 1254, even though at the time Edmund was only eight years old. For ten years thereafter Edmund styled himself 'King of Sicily by grace of God' (Mack Smith 1968, 66). Inevitably, in view of the age of Edmund, it is to the English King, Henry III, that we must ascribe this bizarre notion of aspiring to the Sicilian kingdom: both father and son even appeared in the Westminster Parliament wearing Apulian dress, as a mark of their pro-Italian sympathies. It may conceivably, therefore, have been through Henry III that his brother-in-law Alexander III of Scotland and Man first became aware of the *triskeles* emblem as a symbol of Sicily, and, twelve years after his nephew had assumed the title of 'King of Sicily', decided to adopt it for the Isle of Man when he gained control of that kingdom.

Other medieval uses of the Three Legs symbol

The main weakness with the above hypothesis is that there is no direct evidence that the *triskeles* was still being used in the thirteenth century as a symbol of Sicily; Frederick II, for example, adopted the eagle as his emblem.[5] Nevertheless evidence may still have been visible in thirteenth-century Sicily as a reminder of the *triskeles*' ancient role as the symbol of the island. Indirect support for this comes from a series of near-contemporary monuments in Austria, which appear to demonstrate that the symbol's connection with Sicily was not entirely forgotten.

At Heiligenkreuz bei Baden in Austria, southwest of Vienna, a fine Cistercian complex with church and ancillary buildings was erected between 1187 and 1295. One of these buildings is the octagonal Fountain House, almost certainly constructed during the 1280s (Hauser-Seutter 1982, 156–7). Around its interior, at socle level below the great windows, appears a continuous blind arcading, each side of the octagon being decorated with a triplet of pointed arches; each of those in turn frame a simple double 'window' decorated with tracery. In one of the blind arcades, in the apex of the left-hand pointed arch, is carved a *triskeles* in relief: it consists of three, joining, unclothed legs, without winged feet, and lacking also a head or disc at the centre (Fig. 6) (Hauser-Seutter 1982, 150–52). Other examples of the same date showing clear influence of the *triskeles* design include a carving on a choir stall at Maggenau, also Cistercian, depicting four men with a single central head and bent legs in *triskeles* fashion tied to a wheel; and three lightly-engraved sketches on the outside of a church wall at Ulrichskirchen next to a running

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Figure 6. *Heiligenkreuz bei Baden, Austria, Fountain House,* triskeles *in stone, late thirteenth century* AD.

Figure 7. *Ragusa, Palazzo del Municipio,* triskeles *in metalwork in the courtyard.*

lion (Hauser-Seutter 1982, 152–3). In the thirteenth century the occurrence of the *triskeles* in Austria can only be interpreted as a reference to Sicily, and the allusions are almost certainly a result of the activities of Frederick II himself, whose interest in this part of Austria was demonstrated by a number of strategic marriages between members of his family and various Austrian Dukes. A specific link with Heiligenkreuz is provided by his present to the Abbey, shortly before his death, of the Crown of Thorns given to him in 1248 by Louis IX, King of France.

One other medieval occurrence of the Three Legs emblem comes from the city of Füssen im Allgäu in the German Alps, which adopted it as a city 'badge' in the thirteenth century. Its use here was mainly intended as a pun on the name of the place (Fuß meaning 'foot' in German), but it may also reflect the Sicilian interests of the Hohenstaufen Henry II, into whose possession the city had fallen in 1191 (Hauser-Seutter 1982, 152). This *triskeles* differs from the Austrian examples so far considered in being not bare but clothed in leg-armour, so foreshadowing the version later adopted by the Isle of Man: but there is no reason to think of a direct link between Füssen and Man at this or any other date. The fact that in both cases the Three Legs are covered with mail is probably due to the tendency, already noted, for heraldic devices at this period to be so depicted.

The *triskeles* as symbol of Sicily: Hellenistic and Roman coinage

Quite apart from the ubiquitous use of the *triskeles* in Sicily today (in cheap tourist trinkets and postcards, for example, or in the metalwork of the gates of the Ragusa Municipio: Fig. 7), the three-legged symbol was in very widespread use in the island throughout the Hellenistic and Roman eras — a period, that is, of some seven hundred years from at least the middle of the fourth century BC to the fourth century AD. A couple of earlier instances of its use in Sicily (below pp. 47–8) did not on present evidence set a trend; but when the *triskeles* reappeared soon after the middle of the fourth century BC, it came to stay, and its popularity can be traced above all in the numismatic evidence. In particular it is through the coinage that three successive stages in the elaboration of the *triskeles* emblem can be detected, with the addition in turn of wings to the heels of each foot, of the Medusa head at the centre where all three legs join, and of three ears of barley, in that chronological order. Of these, as we have seen, the logo used by the McDonald Institute incorporates only the first. Let us trace the introduction of each of these in turn.

It is at present uncertain whether the introduction of the *triskeles* on coinage should be ascribed to Timoleon, who was active in Sicily between 344 and 336 BC, or to the period immediately after his death in 336. Two issues at Syracuse at this time feature a bearded head of Zeus Eleutherios on the obverse, one facing right and short-haired, the second and later version facing left and long-haired. A *triskeles*, without the addition of the winged feet, appears as

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Figure 8. *Syracuse, Zeus Eleutherios bronze coin, late fourth century* BC *(BM Syracuse 1927-3-2-7).*

one of the emblems on the reverse of the second series with the legend ΣΥΡΑΚΟΣΙΩΝ; it is known only in eight specimens (Fig. 8; Calciati 1986, 191–2, no. 82; Breitenstein 1942, pl. 16, no. 732. 55).[6] Interestingly, the same Zeus Eleutherios obverse die is found in association with a swastika on the reverse of another issue; the swastika has a certain bearing on the symbolism of the *triskeles*, as will be noted below (Calciati 1986, 192, no. 83). There has been much discussion about the precise date of the later of the two Zeus Eleutherios series (the first is usually accepted as Timoleontic): some scholars place it in the Timoleontic period (344–336 BC), others in the period of the 'third democracy' but after Timoleon's death (336–317 BC) (cf. Rutter 1997, 167–71). The precise date, therefore, of the first appearance of the *triskeles* on the Sicilian coinage remains uncertain, but it must have occurred either a little before or a little after 336 BC.

A related but probably slightly later coin issue of Syracuse has a head of Apollo (rather than Zeus) on the obverse, and the *triskeles* again on the reverse. Interestingly this version of the *triskeles* has the wings attached to the ankles of each foot, and this is probably the earliest issue ever to feature them. Unfortunately the chronology is once again unsure: Calciati, for example, is uncertain whether to place it in the period 336/317 BC or early in Agathocles' reign (317–289 BC) (Calciati 1986, 249, no. 121). Significantly, this particular coin still features a plain circular disc at the centre of the *triskeles* rather than a Medusa head (*gorgoneion*).

The numismatic employment of the *triskeles* on a significant, systematic and persistent scale is a characteristic of the reign of Agathocles, who adopted it as his personal emblem; it may have been chosen to symbolize Agathocles' ambitions of pan-Sicilian mastery (Fig. 9; Pareti *et al.* 1960, pl. 202; Gabrici 1927, 79 with Tav. V.3; Krauskopf 1988, 299, no. 152). It was now for the first time, on silver and bronze coins minted between 317 and 310 BC, that the three legs were combined with the head of Medusa (*gorgoneion*) at the centre. As is well known, the Medusa head was widely used in Graeco-Roman iconography as a magical charm to ward off evil, because of its mythical ability to turn those that looked on the image to stone. This important addition, still present in the version current in Sicily today, emphasized the motif's apotropaic power. These coins of Agathocles also regularly incorporate wings on the heels to symbolize speed, a feature which becomes the norm on the larger and mature examples of the emblem from now on: it too may represent a borrowing from Medusa iconography, although other mythological figures with a reputation for speedy movement (whether in the air or on the ground), such as Hermes and Perseus, also sport winged sandals or wings attached to the ankles.

Figure 9. *Syracuse, silver coin of Agathocles, with Medusa head at centre of* triskeles.

Whether the *triskeles* also appeared on the shields of the soldiers in Agathocles' army, we cannot say, but it would not be surprising. *Gorgoneia* are known to have decorated protective greaves (covering the vulnerable knee) on South Italian bronze armour in the second half of the sixth century BC;[7] and in the third century BC a poem in the Greek Anthology, written by the epigrammatist Dioscorides, demonstrates the apparent use of the *triskeles* (combined with the Medusa) as a shield device at that time (*Anth. Pal.* 6.126; Gow & Page 1965, I, 85 (Dioscorides XV); II, 245). Translated, it reads as follows:

> It was not without reason that the son of Polyttas, the impetuous Cretan, Hyllos, has had his shield emblazoned with this emblem: the Gorgon who changes you to stone, and the triple bent legs [literally 'knees']. This is what it seems to say to his enemies: 'You who brandish your spear against my shield, do not look at me, or else flee on triple legs from this speedy man'.

The mention of the *gorgoneion* and the triple legs together almost certainly indicates that the shield device had the Medusa head placed at its centre (so Gow & Page 1965, II, 245). The word order employed by the poet implies that the triple legs were intended to make the opponent flee as fast as possible from the bearer of the shield, although one might have thought that normally the function of the triple legs was to warn an opponent of the astonishing speed of the shield-bearer.

In 310/09, when a fresh silver coinage was

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Figure 10. *Syracuse, silver coin of Agathocles, with Nike standing by trophy* (triskeles *behind).*

Figure 11. *Syracuse, silver coin of Agathocles,* triskeles *above* quadriga *(Hunterian Museum, Glasgow).*

minted to commemorate Agathocles' victory over the Carthaginians, the reverse type chosen for the *tetradrachms* was a standing Nike in front of a trophy, accompanied also by the *triskeles*, which is placed either alongside her, underneath her wing, or else on the opposite side of the composition, behind the trophy (Fig. 10). Obviously when the device appears in miniature and in a secondary role, as here, the scale of the depiction of the *triskeles* precluded the showing of details such as the Medusa head at the centre of the emblem.[8] It was also during Agathocles' reign (rather than earlier) that the *triskeles* alone in the sky replaces the customary Nike above the *quadriga*, the chariot drawn by four galloping horses (Fig. 11; Head 1911, 181; Poole 1876, 191–9; Rutter 1997, fig. 197). Other Agathoclean issues likewise place the *triskeles* in a subsidiary role to the main emblem in the field, such as above the winged horse Pegasus (Fig. 12), or below a *biga* (two-horse chariot) (Fig. 13; Rutter 1997, 173, figs. 194–5).

The influence of Agathocles has also been claimed from the use of the *triskeles* on contemporary coinage elsewhere. At Metapontum in south Italy, for example, a coin type showing a bearded man wearing a helmet, possibly the city's founder Leucippus, was revived *c.* 300 BC with a *triskeles* alongside (Kraay 1976, 195). Terina, which throughout the fourth century had used a female head for the obverse closely modelled on the Arethusa of Syracusan coinage, introduced in its late-fourth-century issues a tiny *triskeles* inserted behind the head. This has been claimed as acknowledgement of Agathoclean supremacy, and of his installation *c.* 296 BC of a garrison at nearby Hipponion (Kraay 1976, 198). Not all the coinage of this period which bears the *triskeles*, however, can be associated with Agathoclean influence, or even more generally with Sicily: it appears too widely on third-century coinage in places beyond the political domination of Syracuse (for example, Eleia [Velia], Metapontum, Paestum, Suessa [Sessa Aurunca] and possibly Naples) for that to have been the case (Burnett 1977, 119–20). The *triskeles* appears rather to have been one of a number of stock devices, used apparently randomly on coinage, the precise significance of which in many cases eludes us. It seems likely that by the third century BC the symbol was taking on a general apotropaic significance, rather than a specific allusion to Sicily.

Figure 12. *Syracuse,* stater *of Agathocles,* triskeles *above Pegasus (British Museum).*

Figure 13. *Gold coin of Agathocles,* triskeles *below* biga *(Hunterian Museum, Glasgow).*

At some later stage, and certainly after the incorporation of Sicily as Rome's first province in 241 BC, a final addition was made to the *triskeles* image: to the central Medusa head with its three winged feet were added ears of barley, one between each pair of legs, although sometimes all three appear together between a single pair of legs. This was a clear allusion to the agricultural yields of Sicily and its importance as a grain supplier for Rome. The introduction of the barley ears cannot be precisely fixed, but they are generally believed to have appeared for the first time on the bronze coinage of Palermo with a head of Athena on the obverse, minted at some as yet uncertain time between 241 BC and 36 BC (Calciati 1983, 333, no. 15; cf. 335, nos. 29–30). But the earliest *closely* datable issue showing the *triskeles* with corn ears is that struck not in Sicily but in Rome for the consuls of 49 BC, L. Cornelius Lentulus Crus and C. Claudius Marcellus (Fig. 14). They chose the emblem of Sicily to indicate their alleged political control of the island and its grain supplies, and

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Figure 14. *Silver* denarius *of 49 BC showing* triskeles *with grain ears (BMCRR, Sicily 1).*

also because Claudius Marcellus was a descendant of the Marcellus who captured Syracuse and other cities in Hieron's kingdom in 213/211 BC.[9] It is indeed very likely that this was in fact the first issue ever to use the barley ears, and that the city coins of Palermo which also display the barley ears were struck in imitation of the Rome issue of 49 BC, and so belong to the years between then and 36 BC rather than earlier; but until more work is done on the dating of the Palermitan municipal coinage during the late Republic, this cannot be regarded as absolutely certain. It is possible that the grotesque Celtiberian issues of Ilturir/Iliberris in southern Baetica, the only example of Celtic coinage to use a fully anthropomorphized version of the *triskeles*, were also struck in imitation of the Roman *denarius* of 49 BC (Fig. 15). If so, they too must have been minted between that year and the cessation of Celtiberian coinage a few years later, when Augustus reorganized the Spanish provinces and the local Celtic mints were suppressed (Alvarez Burgos 1975, 121 nos. 918–20; Navascues 1969, nos. 594 & 598).[10]

From now on the three barley ears became a standard part of the *triskeles* iconography, along with the winged heels and the central *gorgoneion*. It is this version of the emblem which appears on the city coinages of Sicily struck during Augustus' reign at Palermo (Fig. 16), Iaitas and Agrigento (Burnett *et al.* 1992, nos. 641, 646 & 659, cf. also nos. 662–3; Calciati 1983, 334, no. 20; 384–8, no. 7; 229, no. 155; Martini 1991, nos. 240–307); on the coinage of the African pretender for the imperial throne, Clodius Macer, issued from an African mint in AD 68 (Fig. 17; Sutherland 1984, 195); and on imperial issues during later emperors' reigns, such as those minted by Hadrian (Fig. 18; Mattingly & Sydenham 1926, 450) and Antoninus Pius in the second century AD. On the other hand, the barley ears are missing on the gold coin issued by L. Aquillius Florus in 14 BC, which shows only the *triskeles* with the winged feet and a splendid Medusa head at the centre (Fig. 19). The reason for the choice of emblem in this case was that Aquillius Florus was a descendent of the Manlius Aquillius who had brought the Second Sicilian Slave

Figure 15. *Iliberris, Celtiberian issues with* triskeles.

Figure 16. *Palermo, municipal mint, Augustan: reverse:* triskeles.

Figure 17. *African mint, silver* denarius *of Clodius Macer, reverse:* triskeles, *legend SICILIA.*

Figure 18. *Rome,* aes *issue, Hadrianic, reverse:* triskeles, *legend SICILIA.*

Figure 19. *Rome, gold coin* (aureus) *of L. Aquillius Florus, 14 BC; reverse:* triskeles.

War to a successful conclusion in 100/99 BC. The absence of the barley ears may have been a conscious archaism, since they had not formed part of the *triskeles* emblem at the time of Florus' ancestor (Sutherland 1984, no. 310).

On these coins one whole die is occupied by the image of the *triskeles*, but the symbol also continued to be used in the field, or as an attribute, whenever a Sicilian allusion was called for. In these miniature versions of the *triskeles*, depiction of the Medusa head at the centre and of the barley ears was not

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Figure 20. *Sicilian mint, silver* denarius, *reverse: Trinacrus holding a* triskeles; *legend: A ALLIENVS PROCOS ('Aulus Allienus, governor') (BMCRR Sicily 5).*

Figure 21. *Italian mint, gold coin (*aureus*), 29/27 BC, reverse depicting a temple of Diana with* triskeles *in pediment.*

Figure 22. *Pompeii, fresco showing personifications of Sicilia (right) and Africa (?), now lost.*

normally attempted. One example is a *denarius* coined in Sicily in 47 BC by Julius Caesar and A. Allienus, with a reverse type showing the figure of Trinakros, eponymous king of Sicily, with foot on a prow and holding a *triskeles* (Fig. 20; Crawford 1974, no. 457; Wilson 1997).[11] A rather unusual use of the *triskeles* in this allusory role occurs on an *aureus* of 29/27 BC from an uncertain Italian mint, possibly Brindisi, which depicts a bust of Diana on the obverse, and a temple on the reverse in which a trophy mounted on a ship's prow is shown (Fig. 21) (Grueber 1910, 15, no. 4355; Wilson 1990, 290, fig. 249). The Sicilian location of the temple is indicated by a *triskeles* in the pediment, and the allusion must be to the Temple of Diana on the north coast of Sicily on the bay of Naulochus, where spoils were deposited by the victorious Octavian after the engagement off Naulochus with Sextus Pompey's forces in 36 BC. Here the use of the *triskeles* is convenient numismatic shorthand for indicating the location of the temple: it is most improbable that the *triskeles* actually appeared on the façade of the temple itself.

The *triskeles* as attribute of the personification of Sicily

The first attempt at personification of the island of Sicily was made in about 340 BC under Timoleon, when a female head on the Symmachikon coinage is specifically labelled as Sikelia (Wilson 1994; Gabrici 1927, 196, no. 1). She has no distinguishing attributes, nor are there any on the first Roman depiction of Sicilia, on a coin of 71 BC: here an abject, drooping, female figure is about to be raised to her feet by the conquering Roman general (Crawford 1974, no. 401/1; Toynbee 1934, pl. XVII.18; Ostrowski 1990, 200, no. 1).[12] In both cases identification of the female figure as the personification of the island is made possible by the legend alone. The earliest datable representation of Sicilia with the specific attribute of the *triskeles* behind her head is on a now-lost fresco from Pompeii, which must of course be earlier than AD 79: here the bust of the personification wears a mural crown from which corn ears fall, and there are more corn ears in her hair (Fig. 22; Ostrowski 1990, 201, no. 8). Only two legs hang down from either side of her head, but the *triskeles* is clearly intended, with the third leg perhaps envisaged as invisible behind the head (unless the artist did not understand his model). A two-pronged instrument (? a hayfork) passes diagonally behind her. The use of the mural crown is otherwise unparalleled in the iconography of Sicilia, but it is likely also to have occurred in the personification of Sicily on the third-century AD mosaic pavement from Belkis-Seleukia, where all ten of the surviving personifications of provinces wear mural crowns: Sicilia may well have featured in one of the estimated fourteen further roundels on this mosaic which have been lost (Parlasca 1983).

The few other secure representations of Sicilia during the Empire all have the identifying attribute of the *triskeles* behind the head, with all three legs showing, usually, but not always, facing in the same direction; she is normally shown with long hair. A female bust of Sicilia, from the Terme della Trinacria at Ostia, is a good example: probably of Hadrianic

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Figure 23. *Ostia, mosaic in the Terme della Trinacria, detail of Sicilia (*c. AD *120/140),* in situ.

Figure 24. *Rome,* sestertius, AD *126/7,* adventus *series, reverse: Sicilia with the emperor Hadrian; legend ADVENTVI AVG(usti) SICILIAE; S(enatus) C(onsultum) ('For the arrival of the Emperor in Sicily; decree of the Senate').*

Figure 25. *Rome,* sestertius, AD *134/5,* restitutor *series, reverse: Sicilia with the emperor Hadrian; legend RESTITVTORI SICILIAE; S(enatus) C(onsultum) ('To the Restorer of Sicily; decree of the Senate').*

date, she appears with mournful expression, with hair descending down the back of her neck and onto her shoulders, and the *triskeles* behind her head (Fig. 23) (Becatti 1961, no. 275). The Hadrianic period also saw the introduction of new versions of the Sicilia iconography: a Rome *sestertius* of AD 126 or 127 depicts Hadrian in travelling dress raising his right hand to greet Sicilia, identified as usual by the *triskeles* behind her head: she stands on the right holding a sacrificial dish in her right hand outstretched over the centrally-placed altar, and with corn ears in her left hand (Fig. 24) (Mattingly & Sydenham 1926, 456, no. 906). The legend indicates that the coin belongs to the *adventus* ('Arrival') series, commemorating Hadrian's visits to the provinces. Towards the end of his reign he visited Sicily again, a visit marked by a *restitutor* ('Restorer') issue, showing Hadrian in a toga helping a kneeling Sicilia to rise; again she has a *triskeles* behind her head and corn ears in her (right) hand (Fig. 25; Mattingly & Sydenham 1926, 467, nos. 965–6). Early in Antoninus Pius' reign, in 139, another *sestertius* (as well as a *dupondius*) shows a further full-length version of Sicilia, this time standing in traditional Greek dress of *chiton* and *himation* (appropriate in a province which never wholly shrugged off its Greek roots during the long centuries of Roman rule), holding a diadem in her right hand and an object of uncertain interpretation in her left; once more a *triskeles* is set behind her head to remove any doubt about the identification (Mattingly & Sydenham 1930, 106–7, nos. 589 & 595).[13]

Only three other certain representations of Sicilia with the *triskeles* are known to me. One is on a recently-published mosaic of the second half of the second century AD from El Djem in Tunisia, where a unique iconography for Sicilia is adopted (Aillagon 1995, 264–7; Blanchard-Lemée *et al.* 1996, 24–34 with figs. 6–10; Daoulatli 1996, 15, fig. 2). The pavement features seven personifications in hexagons enclosed within a guilloche border. Roma is at the centre, and in the surrounding six panels busts depicting Asia (?), Africa and Egypt alternate with full-length standing figures showing Spain, an unknown province, and Sicily (Fig. 26). Sicilia is depicted, exceptionally, in the guise of Diana the huntress: she is dressed in a short *chiton* which leaves her right shoulder and breast bare; her hair has a central parting, and is gathered into a bun at the back above her neck; she has a red mantle draped over her left arm; she carries a spear in her left hand and a stag's head in her right; and she wears hunting boots on her feet. Were it not for the *triskeles* behind her head, there would have been nothing in the iconography, by comparison with other representations of Sicilia, to suggest that this was indeed a personification of that province: for the iconography is unique, an African mosaicist's (or his patron's) interpretation of Sicily which viewed the island as good hunting country.

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Figure 26. *El Djem, mosaic of Rome and the provinces, detail (El Djem Museum, reserve collection).*

The second and third examples, both of stone, show more conventional representations of Sicilia. One is on a pedestal base once in Malta, recorded by Jean Houel in the eighteenth century in the fourth volume of his magnificent *Voyage Pittoresque dans les Isles de Sicile, de Lipari et de Malte*; it may now be lost (Fig. 27; Houel 1787, 94 with pl. cclvi; V. Sevcenko, in Briganti *et al.* 1989, 343 with pl. 249; De Witte 1842, 43; Holm 1871, 487). The main side of the base shows the bust of a woman (Houel calls it a man) with three legs emerging from the head, one shown clockwise, the other two anticlockwise. Houel notes that a previous antiquarian, Abela, recorded the monument as a statue base for Proserpina, an honoured goddess (like her mother) in the corn-rich province of Sicily, to which Malta administratively belonged in Roman times; but whether this was a genuinely ancient use for this base, or a post-antique one, is not clear. The other is a cylindrical marble base now in the Vatican, on which a short-haired Sicilia, wearing a tunic pinned on her shoulders, is depicted alongside a seated Roma and a standing Annona (personifying the Corn Supply); the latter is shown holding a distribution token (*tessera*) in her right hand and a rudder in the left (Ostrowski 1990, 201, no. 7; Wilson 1994, no. 8). Once again Sicilia is identified by the *triskeles* emerging from her hair, and once again not all the legs are shown in the same direction — two face clockwise, the third anticlockwise. If this base has been correctly ascribed to the fourth century AD, it is the latest representation of Sicilia known to us.

The use of the *triskeles* in other media

While representations of the personification of the province are few in total number, the employment of the device of the *triskeles* on its own to symbolize Sicily is not uncommon, especially during the Roman Empire. So far, we have seen examples of its use only on coins; but it occurs in a number of other media too — on pottery, loomweights, bricks, amphorae, terracotta and lead seals, gemstones and mosaics.

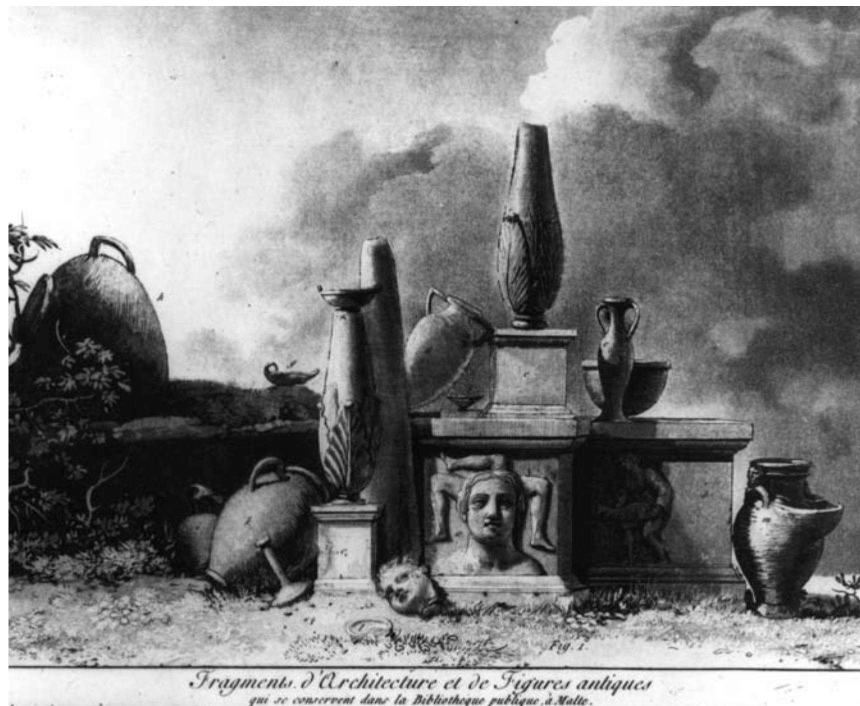

Figure 27. *Formerly Malta, sculptured base with personification of Sicilia, engraving of 1778.*

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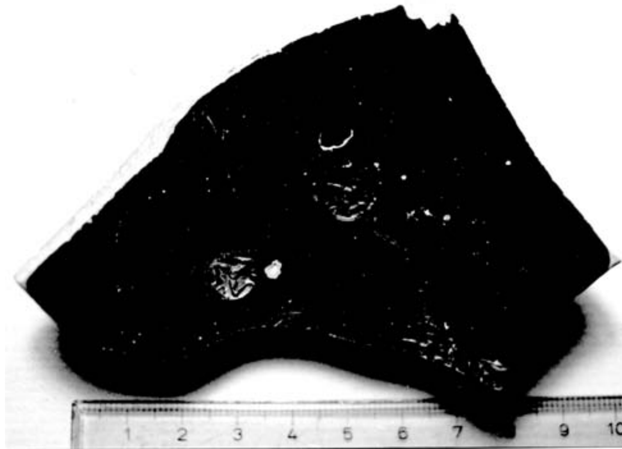

Figure 28. *Ensérune, Gard, France, fragment of black glaze pottery with* triskeles *stamps (Musée d'Ensérune).*

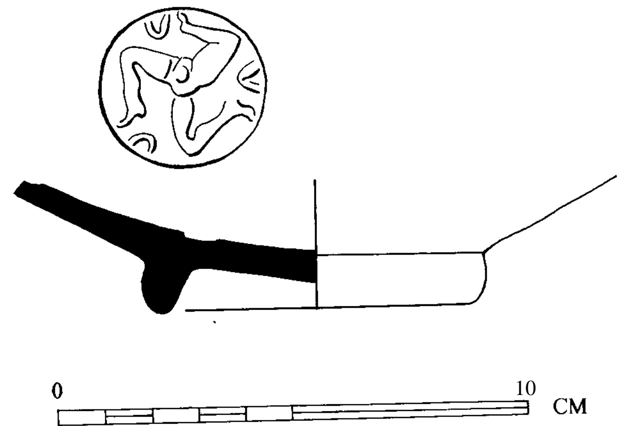

Figure 29. *Ensérune, Gard, France, profile of vessel shown in Figure 28, and drawing of stamp (Inv. no. S 656, without provenance within Ensérune; diameter at base 7.5 cm).*

Occurrences of the *triskeles* on pottery in the Hellenistic period are surprisingly rare, especially given the existence of a flourishing Hellenistic pottery industry in the island at Syracuse and elsewhere. One is an unpublished example of a *triskeles* on a red ware in the collections of Vibo Valentia museum in Calabria, each leg forming an indentation in the clay in a triangular arrangement. Its date and context are unknown, but it may come from a Sicilian potter's workshop of mid- or late Hellenistic date. In black glaze pottery I know of no published examples with a *triskeles* stamp from Sicily itself, but examples elsewhere include a vessel from Smirat in eastern Tunisia, and another from a third/second century BC necropolis at nearby Thapsus (Gobert & Cintas 1941, 103, fig. 4). A chance visit to the *oppidum* of Ensérune near Nîmes in the south of France revealed an unpublished example in a museum showcase there (Figs. 28 & 29). On the inside bottom of a bowl (Lamboglia form 27), covered with a bright black gloss of excellent quality, were three (originally four) small circular stamps, each 8.5 mm in diameter. The *triskeles* here consists of three legs in clockwise direction, with the hint of a wing at each ankle (the line deviates slightly in acknowledgement of it, but the wing is not shown as such). At the centre is a plain circular disk rather than a *gorgoneion*, not surprising in view of the tiny scale. Between each pair of legs, next to the edge of the circular stamp, is a u-shaped filling ornament of purely decorative significance. The fabric, very hard and beige-orange in colour, with minute particles of gold-coloured mica, indicates that this fragment belongs to Campana A pottery, and the presence of the symmetrically-set stamps indicates that it should be placed within the *atelier* of the '*petites estampilles*', working in Rome (according to Morel) in the first half of the third century BC (*c.* 305/265 BC) (Morel 1969; 1981, 48, with refs.). It is tempting to think that it was a Sicilian potter who chose to advertise his native land by introducing the *triskeles* into the repertoire of the Rome *atelier* where he worked; but in fact the *triskeles* is only one of a very wide range of motifs used for the stamps of the '*petites estampilles*' production series, and it was surely adopted for its general apotropaic associations rather than because of any specific Sicilian connection.

Another item on which the *triskeles* appears is on two faces of a loomweight, so far unpublished, which was looted during clandestine excavations, probably from the necropolis at Entella, and subsequently recovered by the police (Falsone 1988–89, 311 with n. 38). In the absence of a clear description or context, its precise date must remain unknown; but in view of Entella's demise in the early Empire, a Hellenistic date is the most likely.

Bricks, amphorae and seals also include the *triskeles* among their stamps (e.g. Lipari: Cavalier & Brugnone 1986, 272, no. 192; Licata: D'Orville 1764, pl. I). The *triskeles* stamped on an amphora handle in the Erice museum, of uncertain (Hellenistic?) date, is presumably intended as a clear indication of the Sicilian manufacture of its contents (wine? olive oil?), rather than simply as a good-luck symbol (Fig. 30); however, strictly speaking this is an example of what I call below a 'pseudo-*triskeles*', since the

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Figure 30. *Erice, amphora stamp of pseudo*-triskeles *(Erice, Museo Cordice).*

Figure 32. *Ostia, Terme Distrutte, black and white mosaic with* triskeles *symbol, mid-first century AD,* in situ.

Figure 31. *Formerly, London, Ionides Collection: cornelian, Roman, Medusa head with* triskeles.

emblem has been reduced to a stylized form in which the legs have become simple hooks.[14] The remarkable cache of 600 terracotta archive seals from Temple C at Selinunte also includes the *triskeles* (with winged ankles and small, indistinct central head) among the 438 types employed; it occurs twice (Salinas 1883, 485 with pl. XI no. cccli). The presence of the wings at the ankles indicates that the seal is unlikely to have been made earlier than the penultimate decade of the fourth century BC, when the wings as we have seen first appeared; and a *terminus ante quem* is provided by the mid-third-century BC destruction of Selinus when the terracotta seals were burnt.[15]

To the more private sphere belongs the choice of the *triskeles* on gemstones. The finest example, illustrated here (Fig. 31), was formerly in the Ionides Collection in London: it shows a particularly clear and striking depiction of the Medusa head in the centre, with snakes tied across her forehead; the barley ears are prominently visible, and the three legs are also present, one of them going in the opposite direction to the others (as on the Vatican and Malta reliefs discussed above) — an arrangement 'which a Sicilian would probably have regarded as a poor joke', in the view of the cornelian's publisher, Sir John Boardman (Boardman 1968, 97, no. 42).

Let us close this section on the use of the *triskeles* emblem on its own with three examples in mosaic, the third of which is hitherto unpublished. The first is a black and white pavement from the Terme Distrutte at Ostia, where a floor of *c.* AD 40/50 uses a rather crude representation of the *triskeles*, with central face (not specifically a Medusa) and the three legs with winged boots, one of which is shown clockwise, two anticlockwise; there are no corn ears (Fig. 32) (Becatti 1961, no. 68). This shorthand reference to Sicily occurs on a floor designed to record the principal food suppliers of the Roman world: the other panels in this particular group of four depict a personification of Spain (with olive wreath) and two winds, the latter represented by male bearded busts with wings in their hair. A balancing quartet of panels depicted Africa, Egypt and two further winds. Also of somewhat perfunctory standard is the black and white mosaic in a cubicle of the baths at Tindari on the north coast of Sicily (Fig. 33), part of a set of poorly executed mosaics proudly signed by the Sicilian mosaicist Neikias, slave of Dionysios (Von Boeselager 1983, 115–17; Wilson 1990, 2, fig. 2). The central head has untidy hair probably intended to represent snakes; the legs are shown clockwise but without wings at the ankles; and unusually all three corn ears are grouped below the head, rather than being spaced equally between each pair of legs. The

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Figure 33. *Tindari, baths, black and white mosaic showing* triskeles *symbol,* c. *AD 200,* in situ.

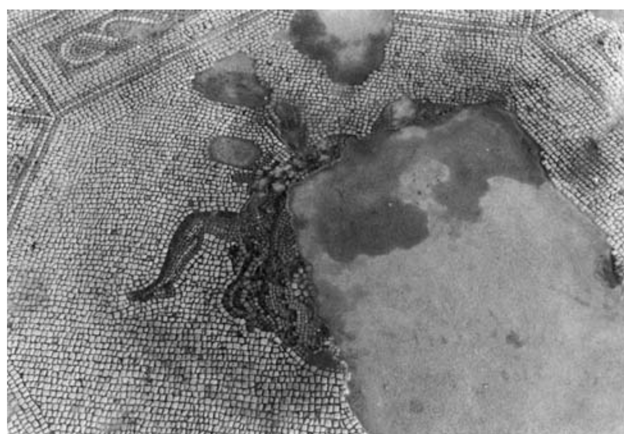

Figure 34. *Marsala, town-house, detail of polychrome mosaic, Medusa head with* triskeles, c. *AD 200,* in situ.

mosaic was probably laid late in the second century or early in the third century AD.

The third example of a mosaic *triskeles*, also in Sicily, is much more skilfully drawn, but is unfortunately very badly damaged. In a large and luxurious Roman town house near Capo Boeo at Marsala (Lilybaeum), excavated just before the last war but never published, one of the mosaics depicted a head of Medusa with the three legs at the centre, and four full-length seasons at the corners (Fig. 34; Von Boeselager 1983, 146 refers to it). The mosaic is probably approximately contemporary with (but much finer than) the Tindari one; it may have been laid shortly before or shortly after AD 200. Only the left-hand side of the head with a single protruding leg is clearly visible, but part of a second leg survives above the break which has removed the top of the head, as does also an ear of corn, standing up from the head between the two legs.

Figure 35. *Castellazzo di Palma di Montechiaro, near Agrigento, base of bowl (*dinos*) with* triskeles, c. *600 BC (Museo archeologico regionale, Agrigento).*

The origins of the *triskeles* in Sicily

So far we have seen the popularity of the *triskeles* as the emblem of Sicily in a variety of media in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, and its later medieval appearance in Germany, Austria and Man. But what of its uses before the Hellenistic period? Was it always from earliest times exclusively associated with Sicily? And what, above all, does the early evidence suggest were the meaning and significance of the three-legged symbol?

That the *triskeles* was intimately associated with Sicily from very early times is clear from the discovery in the early 1960s of an open bowl (*dinos*) at Castellazzo di Palma di Montechiaro in the province of Agrigento. The painted decoration on the exterior of the bowl consists of standard decoration from the Greek sub-geometric repertoire (solid and open lozenges, rays round the base), which, together with the associated material found with it, helps to place the vessel somewhere around 600 BC (Fig. 35) (De Miro 1962, 129, 132–3; Orlandini 1964, 13). That this was not an imported piece but the product of a local potter is shown not only by its fabric but also by the figural decoration on the exterior of the *dinos*' base: three legs facing clockwise (i.e. to the left) are depicted, attached to a circular plain disc at the centre.[16] This is the first recorded instance anywhere of the use of the *triskeles*; and there can be little doubt that already at this early period it was intended to symbolize the island of Sicily.

Shortly after the discovery of the Palma di Montechiaro *dinos*, excavations in 1964 in the archaic levels of the sanctuary of Demeter at Bitalemi, im-

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mediately east of the acropolis at Gela, discovered a second example of a pot decorated with the *triskeles*, in this instance on the inside of the vessel: the symbol is painted in brown on the yellowish clay, and is outlined with an incised line to make it stand out more clearly (Orlandini 1964; 1966, 26 with Tav. XXIV.2; Panvini 1996, Tav. 8). This is a more perfunctory rendering than the Palma di Montechiaro example, and there is no central disc marking the junction of the legs. The date is approximately contemporary with, or a little later than, the Palma di Montechiaro *dinos*: the associated pottery is of *c.* 625–550 BC.

After these two early occurrences, there appears on present evidence to have been a hiatus in the use of the *triskeles* in Sicily itself for more than two centuries. It is clear from extensive use of the emblem elsewhere in the Mediterranean in archaic and classical times, however, that its association with Sicily was not as exclusive at this period as it was to become later in antiquity. We need therefore to explore these other uses before we can come to any firm conclusions as to the precise significance of the *triskeles* symbol.

The *triskeles* at Athens in the sixth century BC

Soon after the two Sicilian *triskeleis*, the symbol turns up at Athens. On the earliest coins which can with confidence be ascribed to that city, the so-called *Wappenmünzen* or 'heraldic coins', the *triskeles* appears as one of the types, principally on *didrachms* (Fig. 36); other types include the amphora, the horse, the owl, the beetle and the wheel. They bear no legend, and Seltman suggested that each device represented the personal badge of those who were issuing the coins and controlling the mint; but it is much more likely that they refer to the Panathenaic games, the amphora symbolizing oil (the victor's prize), the horse and the wheel alluding to equestrian events, the *triskeles* standing for the speed of the foot-race, and so on (Seltman 1924, 20–22 & 33–4; Yalouris 1950, 52–4; Neils 1992, 190, no. 67). Seltman dated the earliest *triskeles* series to *c.* 595 BC, but the Panathenaic games did not commence until 566/5, and modern orthodoxy associates the first Athenian coinage with the Peisistratid tyrants, either just before the middle of the sixth century when Peisistratos first became tyrant, or just after the middle when he had driven out his enemies and established sole control. The *Wappenmünzen* predate the introduction of the first owl coinage, which most probably occurred after the expulsion of the tyrant Hippias in 510 BC. The *triskeles* issues are therefore most likely to have been struck between about 560 and 510 BC (Kraay 1976, 56–61).

Figure 36. *Athens, silver coin in the* Wappenmünzen *series,* triskeles *(BM Athens 1964-2-13-3).*

The *Wappenmünzen* issues with obverse *triskeles* depict the emblem with legs moving to the right, except on one issue where they move to the left; the later specimens, in both silver and electrum, have a letter *phi* between one pair of legs (Seltman 1924, 153, cat. no. 14, with pl. i, A8; 194, cat. nos. 312–14, & pl. xiv, A205–7). There is a simple plain circular or triangular disc at the centre where the three legs join. As we might expect at this early date, there are no wings on the ankles. All show the *triskeles* within a circular frame, sometimes taken to represent the outer edge of a shield. Even if that (as seems likely) is incorrect, the *triskeles* does most commonly appear in sixth-century Athens as a shield emblem.

An Athenian text of rather later date, Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* of 411 BC, may be of relevance here. Modern texts of the *Lysistrata* read the word *leukopodes*, 'white feet' in line 664, although this is a modern emendation, partly on metrical grounds, of *lukopodes*, 'wolf feet', which is what appears in all the manuscripts. The Scholia give two possible explanations for this term: that the spear-bearers of the tyrants were so called because they had wolf-skins on their feet to protect them (Aristotle fragment 394); or that 'wolf-feet' indicate that they had this image as their shield badge. The Scholia conclude that 'Aristophanes was here speaking of those known as the Alcmaeonidae; for they, when they were fighting the tyrant Hippias and the Peisistratidae [in 513 BC], fortified Leipsydrion'.[17] Hesychius, in his entry on *lukopodes*, confirms that the word 'means the Alcmaeonidae because they had white feet', a statement which does not in itself make sense: rather it strongly suggests that his entries on *lukopodes* and *leukopodes* have become inextricably corrupted in the process of manuscript transmission, and that Aristophanes originally wrote *leukopodes*. If that hypothesis is accepted as the most likely explanation for the confusion, then *leukopodes*, too, is a word which needs explaining. Henderson, for example, in his commentary on the play, wrote that 'the significance is obscure . . . white feet is perhaps an honorific way of referring to footsoldiers', (like bare, dusty

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Figure 37. *Attic black-figured amphora showing warrior mounting chariot, sixth century* BC *(Boston Museum of Fine Arts 63.473).*

or nimble-footed) 'designating the manly enduring of hardship' (Henderson 1987, 159). Alternatively, Sommerstein has suggested, on the basis of Hesychius' comment, that the wealthy anti-Peisistratid nobles were nick-named 'whitefeet' because their feet were always 'opulently shod and have never become dirty or suntanned' (Sommerstein 1990, 191). Alternatively, however, the Scholiast's second explanation for *lukopodes* may be relevant: the white feet may refer to the Alcmaeonid shield emblem or badge.

The three-legged symbol occurs as a shield device on a number of Attic black figure vases in the second half of the sixth century BC, especially on amphorae. Chase, in his study of Greek shield devices, lists a dozen examples (Chase 1902, 126), to which can be added a handful more (Seltman 1924, 22, n. 1). They follow no consistent pattern: a wide range of divinities and heroes is shown carrying shields with this device, including Athena, Ares, Hector, an Amazon, a giant, and attendants of Heracles and Ajax. In all cases the device consists simply of three white legs in silhouette without any circle or other distinguishing feature at the centre. Examples include an amphora of the Leagros group in the British Museum, where Ares holds the shield with the *triskeles* (*CVA Great Britain IV: British Museum 3*: amphora B158, with pl. 27.2a, from Vulci; cf. also Boardman 1974, pl. 204 for another); a hydria in Boston where Achilles grips the same, in the act of mounting his chariot to drag Hector's body around Troy (Fig. 37; Boardman 1974, pl. 203); and a Panathenaic neck amphora from Nola now in Naples, where Athena carries the shield with this emblem (*CVA Italia XX: Museo Nazionale di Napoli* 1, pl. 4.4). Whether these shield devices were chosen at random by the painters, or whether they display possible Alcmaeonid sympathies on the part of either customer or artist, is open to speculation; but the latter hypothesis seems on the whole unlikely and is in any case unprovable. On one Attic black figure vase, Athena holds a shield on which appear both the *triskeles* and a *gorgoneion* (Gerhard 1843, 173 & pl. cxli.3). This is the earliest direct association between the two symbols, but they were never combined into a single symbol before the late fourth century BC.

Figure 38. *Aspendos, silver coin,* triskeles *(BMC Aspendos 8).*

There can be little doubt that the function of the triple legs on the shield was to serve as an apotropaic symbol, to protect the bearer and to strike fear into the enemy, as in the poem written three centuries later by the epigrammatist Dioscorides, quoted above. That poem also demonstrates the continuing efficacy of the *triskeles* as an apotropaic shield device long after its first appearance in the sixth century BC.

The use of the *triskeles* in Asia Minor and the significance of the symbol

It was not only Athens which used the *triskeles* on its coins, although no other city employed it as early as Athens. Soon after 500 BC it appeared on the coinage of Aspendos in Pamphylia (Fig. 38), and it continued to feature on that city's coinage in one form or other down into the early third century BC. The fifth-century types have the *triskeles* occupying the whole of the reverse side, generally with legs to left (i.e. clockwise) and usually alone; occasionally the *triskeles* is superimposed on other figures, including a lion (Fig. 39; Hill 1897, 94, no. 9) and an eagle (Babelon 1907, 530, no. 868; cf. Cook 1914, 305, figs. 236–7). There is normally no distinguishing feature at the centre of the emblem where the legs join, although one issue has a small circle at the centre with a St Andrew's cross, giving it the appearance of the spokes of a wheel (Babelon 1893, II.1, 525 with pl. 23.12; 527 with pl. 23.16; cf. also Cook 1914, 305, fig. 235; Seltman 1924, 33, fig. 25). Towards the end of the fifth century a new stater appears, in which the *triskeles* is reduced to a symbol in the field (Kraay 1976, 277). The *triskeles* nevertheless remained the principal identifying badge of this wealthy city, and when Aspendos needed to countermark the coins of other cities of

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Figure 39. *Aspendos, silver coin,* triskeles *with lion (BMC Aspendos 9).*

Figure 40. *Lycia, silver coin, three hooks symbol (BMC Lycia 53).*

Figure 41. *Lycia, silver coin, four-hooked variant (BMC Lycia 105).*

Asia Minor, a practice common in the fourth century BC, it was the *triskeles* which was chosen to indicate that the countermarking mint was that of Aspendos (Kraay 1976, 286). Other cities in southern Asia Minor also adopted the *triskeles* on their coinage: at Side, for example, in the fourth century BC, where the emblem was later (as at Aspendos) reduced to a miniature version in the field; at Selge, on bronzes of second- and first-century BC date; at Adada (also first century BC); and also at Olba and Prostanna (Hill 1897, 263 with pl. XL.12; 171 with pl. XXX.2; Hill 1900, 124).[18] The *triskeles* is likewise found on other monuments in this region: one is carved in relief on the short side of a stone sarcophagus at Adada, probably of mid-imperial date, where once again the *triskeles* appears as a shield device, surrounded by a wreath and lying on top of a sword (Paribeni & Romanelli 1914, 165 with fig. 38 on 164).

It may be asked why the *triskeles* apparently enjoyed popularity in southern Asia Minor, an area geographically remote from Sicily. It is clear that the adoption of the *triskeles* here was completely independent of its association with Sicily.[19] The answer surely lies in the adoption of a related symbol on the coins of Lycia from *c.* 500 BC, where the normal reverse type for two centuries remained what has become known as 'the Lycian symbol' — a central ring from which spring three equally spaced hooked lines, the hooks all turning in the same direction (Fig. 40); four-hooked and even two-hooked versions are also known (Fig. 41) (Hill 1897, xxvii–xxviii; Vismara 1989; 1999 *passim*). Although this together with similar symbols is frequently referred to in modern literature as a *triskeles*, it is a misnomer which should be avoided, since the hooked lines are not legs. Occasionally one of the 'hooks' ends in the head of a snake or a griffin (?), and on other issues all three end in cockerels' or ducks' heads (Hill 1897, pl. XLIV.5; Babelon 1907, 498, no. 822), but the Lycian coins never (with one late exception) adopted the three-legged symbol which constitutes the *triskeles* proper (the exception is Babelon 1893, no. 548 with pl. XV, fig. 20, a semi-obol of *c.* 360 BC or later).

We do not know for certain why the Lycian coinage adopted this particular motif when it did soon after 500 BC. There is general agreement, however, that the hooked lines are intended to suggest movement, and that, together with its overall circular nature the motif is designed to symbolize the motion of the sun as it moves through the heavens (Hill 1897, xxviii; Babelon 1893, xc–xci). That the Lycian symbol was indeed intended to be a sun symbol is strongly supported by the fact that Lycian coins from the late fourth century BC onwards adopt the radiate head of the sun-god Helios as the constant type. Even after this, the simple three-hooked symbol continued to appear on coins and other monuments of the region.[20] If that is right, the *triskeles* can be seen as an anthropomorphized version of the same symbol, the version adopted by cities like Aspendos in neighbouring parts of Asia Minor. This refinement might easily have taken place independently in different parts of the Greek world: there is no need to suspect the presence at Aspendos, for example, of direct influence from either Athens or Sicily, and the same is true of other cities in the Greek world outside Asia Minor which occasionally chose to put the *triskeles* on their coinage in the later sixth or fifth century BC, such as Aegina, Phlius, Derrones, Melos and Hierapytna (Crete) (cf. Head 1911, 202, 397, 408, 468, 547, 892; Cook 1914, 300–310 with refs.). The popularity of the motif is shown by the distribution map, which indicates the location of mints of all periods which used the *triskeles* at some stage on their coinage, whether as the main motif or as a secondary device in the field (Fig. 42).

It seems likely, therefore, that the Sicilian *triskeles* was also viewed originally as a symbol of the sun. On present evidence it was the Sicilians who first anthropomorphized the symbol by turning the 'hooks' into legs, thereby greatly increasing its attractiveness. One recently discovered piece of Sicilian evidence, emphasizing the link between the

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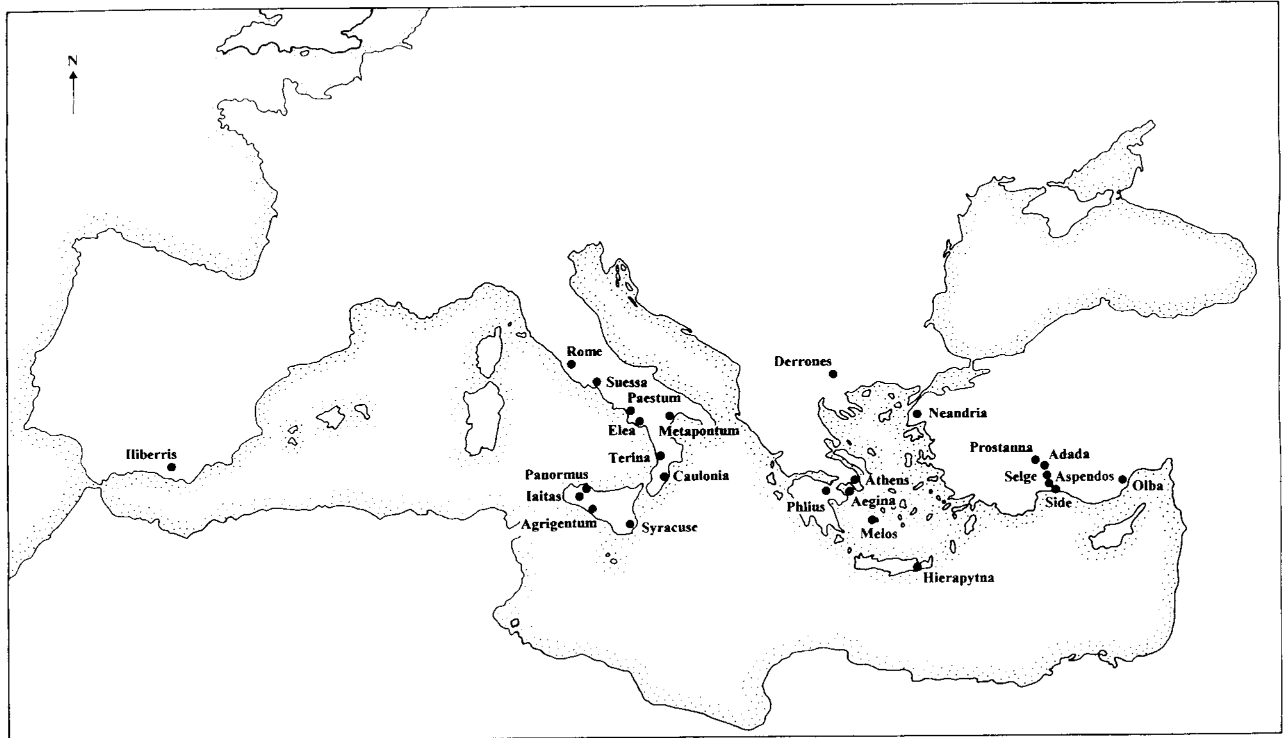

Figure 42. *Distribution map of all mints known to have issued coins in antiquity with the device of the* triskeles *(all periods). Coins of doubtful ascription and examples of pseudo*-triskeles *are omitted, as are mints which cannot be localized with precision, such as the African mint of Figure 17 and the Italian mint of Figure 21.*

triskeles and that other well known solar symbol, the swastika, occurs on the decoration of an indigenous painted oenochoe (a form of jug) from the eastern necropolis at Polizzello, a remarkable site in the mountainous interior of central southern Sicily.[21] Its date is probably contemporary with that of the *dinos* from Castellazzo already noted bearing the earliest known *triskeles*, i.e. the very end of the seventh century BC. The only decoration in the principal field is a swastika — nothing remarkable in that, one might think, except that the ends of the swastika are very obviously provided with feet, clearly to emphasize the sense of movement (Fig. 43). It may well have been from such beginnings that the symbol of the *triskeles* was born.

But there was probably another reason why the symbol of the *triskeles* caught on in Sicily — the triangular shape of the island, with its promontories at the northeast, southeast and (less well defined) western extremities of the island. Of the three principal Greek names for Sicily (Trinakria, Sikania and Sikelia), the first (in the form Thrinakie) is the oldest. Sicily is referred to thus, for example, in Homer (*Odyssey* XI.107; XII.127 & 135). The name derives from the Greek for 'three promontories', *akra* meaning a peak or headland. Trinacria in fact remained a common name for the island (especially in the Latin poets) down into Roman times. Any emblem, therefore, which could be said to encapsulate this essential feature of the island stood a good chance of being adopted as its symbol, and that is what happened, apparently as early as the late seventh century BC.

Figure 43. *Polizzello, east necropolis, detail of swastika decoration painted on an indigenous jug,* c. *600* BC.

The use of the triple 'hooked' device or triple spiral in Iron Age Europe

Two other societies which used versions of the *triskeles* remain to be discussed, those of Iron Age Europe and Punic North Africa. The use of triple designs, especially spirals, is a commonplace in the

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art of Iron Age Europe. In fact they occur occasionally much earlier too, in megalithic art (for example in the passage grave at Newgrange in the Boyne Valley, Ireland: O'Kelly 1982, 146–7 with pl. 14; 177, fig. 47; Meehan 1993, 24–54), or in the decorative repertoire of the Late Bronze Age Mediterranean, such as the bone discs from Pylos decorated with a simple triple-spiral design (Müller 1909, 283, Abb. 5). But it was only in the Iron Age, with its especial emphasis on triplism and the development of a vigorous and lively La Tène artistic tradition from the second half of the fifth century BC, that the use of curvilinear S- or J-decoration in a symmetrical triple arrangement became commonplace. This is erroneously described in modern literature as the *triskeles* or the *triquetra* — inappropriately because the Iron Age versions of it never anthropomorphized the symbol by substituting legs (with one exception, the coinage of Iliberris mentioned above). For want of a more convenient label, I refer to it here as a 'pseudo-*triskeles*'. Particularly striking is its use in flowing, continuous decorative schemes, as on the gold discs from Schwarzenbach near Birkenfeld in Germany (Megaw & Megaw 1989, fig. 51), or on the Amfreville helmet from France of the mid-fourth century BC (Meehan 1993, 89; Moscati *et al.* 1991, 201); but more obviously closer in spirit to the *triskeles* proper are examples of the motif on its own. They range from small-scale instances, like the terminal of the Clevedon torc from Somerset, England (e.g. Stead 1985, 32), or the horse pendant with a central openwork pseudo-*triskeles* from Stradonice in Bohemia (Moscati *et al.* 1991, 767, no. 541), to much larger items like the centrepiece of the silver *phalera* from Manerbio sul Mela, near Brescia, Italy (Megaw & Megaw 1989, fig. 265), or the elaborate centrepiece of the crescentic plaque from Llyn Cerrig Bach, in Anglesey (Fox 1945, 35–8; 1952, 47–8; Megaw & Megaw 1989, fig. 338). Both these last examples date to the first century BC. It is also used on Iron Age coinage from the third century BC, beginning in the middle Danube region of Hungary, where the type with the horseman, based on Macedonian tetradrachms of Philip II, has the symbol under the belly or front legs of the horse (Fig. 44: Allen 1980, 50 with pl. 5, no. 42; 1987, 57, nos. 118–23 with pl. VII; cf. nos. S119–S124, pl. XXIII); and later in Gaul, where the late third- or early second-century BC issues imitating gold staters of Philip II, replace the AP monogram of the original with a pseudo-*triskeles* (Allen 1980, 70–71 with pl. 13, no. 166). The same device appears on the '*à croix*' coinage, found largely in Aquitaine and minted between the mid-second century BC (or earlier) and the mid-first century BC, which was modelled on the coins of Rhode, the Greek colony (modern Rosas) in northeast Spain: a pseudo-*triskeles* is among the motifs used to fill one of the quadrants formed by the central cross on the reverse of these issues (Fig. 45; Déchelette 1914, 1564–5).[22]

Figure 44. *Middle Danube region, Celtic coin, horseman with pseudo-*triskeles *below (BMC Celtic 1, 119).*

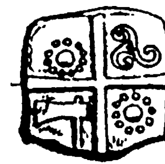

Figure 45. *Gaulish coin, 'à croix' series, with pseudo-*triskeles *in one of the quadrants.*

How do we explain the origin of this symbol in Iron Age art, and is it purely decorative or does it have any special significance? In view of the fact that the pseudo-*triskeles* was not used by Iron Age peoples before the later fifth century BC, and is at its most common from the third to the first centuries BC, there is a strong possibility that the motif ultimately represents a borrowing from classical lands, which was then freely adapted within the conventions of La Tène art (Déchelette 1927, 1025–6). We know that Celtic mercenaries, probably Senones, were recruited by Dionysius I of Syracuse and sent by him as part of an expeditionary force to Greece in 369/8 BC. During the later fourth century BC, and especially after the Danubian expansion and the spread of Galatians into Asia Minor in the early third century BC, the points of contact between the Celtic world and the Greeks of the Mediterranean became both numerous and frequent (Kruta 1996). Alternatively, of course, the device may have been a spontaneous creation of La Tène artists experimenting with a wide range of new curvilinear ornament. Be that as it may, the significance and meaning of the symbol in Iron Age society was no doubt very similar to that postulated above for the Greek world. Like the swastika, which as we have seen was another symbol whose very design suggests 'movement', it may well have started life as a solar symbol; and also like the swastika it later took on apotropaic, indeed magical, importance as a protection against evil, its popularity and efficacy enhanced by its essential triplism (cf. Green 1989, 164–205; 1991, 48–9; 1992, 214–16; Déchelette 1910, 453). As such the pseudo-*triskeles* can be found as a good-luck symbol

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Figure 46. *Saalburg Roman fort, Germany, openwork brooch with pseudo-*triskeles *design, copper alloy.*

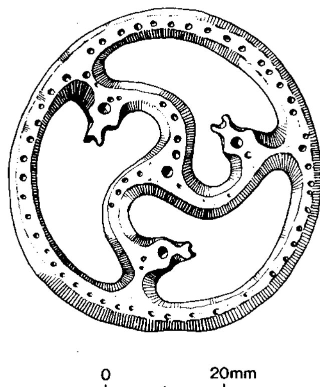

Figure 47. *Broughton Lodge, Nottinghamshire, Anglo-Saxon mount with pseudo-*triskeles *design, copper alloy (Nottingham University Museum).*

on items like a second- or third-century AD brooch from the Saalburg fort on the Roman frontier in Germany (with three snakes' heads arranged in a curvilinear pattern meeting at the centre: Fig. 46; Petrie 1930, pl. vii, F3; Von Cohausen & Jacobi 1882, 30),[23] and on weapons (Déchelette 1927, 818 with fig. 3a) and horse pendants as late as the sixth or seventh centuries AD (such as an example in the Nottingham University Museum from the Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Broughton Lodge, Nottinghamshire, of the late fifth or sixth century: Kinsley 1993, 29 (9/1); see Fig. 47); and it took on a new lease of life in a purely ornamental capacity in manuscripts such as the Book of Durrow and in metalwork during the sixth, seventh and eighth centuries AD (Megaw & Megaw 1989, figs. 416, 418 & 423–4).

The *triskeles* in North Africa

The final area of the ancient world to be considered which has also produced examples of the *triskeles* is North Africa. The symbol is attested there on only a handful of examples (just eight are known to me): all, however, are genuine *triskeleis* rather than the pseudo-examples of Iron Age art which we have just been considering. All of them occur on neo-Punic stelai dating from the second century BC to the second or third century AD, erected in honour of Baal/Saturn and/or his consort Tanit/Caelestis. One from Mididi in western Tunisia (Fig. 48) shows the offerand holding upright an object of uncertain interpretation (a torch? a staff?) below a boldly depicted *triskeles* with legs moving anticlockwise; above it are a horizontal bar, with three holes in it, and a crescent moon. The centre of the *triskeles* is damaged, but there is every reason to think that a face (based on a Medusa head) was depicted here. The inscription, in neo-Punic characters, probably of the first century AD, records a dedication to Baal Hammon by Baalshama son of Tmngm (Fantar 1986). Two further stelai with *triskeleis*, said to be not earlier than the second century BC, are so far unpublished, and details are therefore not available: they stand in the garden of the Gouvernat at Siliana (Fantar 1993–94, 220).

Our next three examples belong to the series of ex-votos of imperial date with a complex iconography which have come from various places in central Tunisia; the so-called Ghorfa series is the best known (M'Charek 1988). They are hard to date precisely, but probably belong to the second/third centuries AD. The offerand on these stelai is usually shown standing in an *aedicula* (niche) flanked by columns and surmounted by a pediment; other figures and a sacrificial victim are sometimes shown below (e.g. Fig. 49a). There is wide variety in the decoration of the top of these stelai, although a recurrent feature is what is taken to be an anthropomorphized version of the Punic goddess Tanit, who retains the triangular 'body' of the pre-Roman 'Tanit symbol' but now has a recognizably human face and hands (e.g. Fig. 49b, with outsize pomegranates and grapes on ei-

Figure 48. *Mididi, Tunisia, neo-Punic stele (Musée du Bardo).*

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ther side, dangling from the ends of cornucopiae). On one such stele, now in the Louvre, the apex is filled by a *triskeles* (with central face and legs facing anticlockwise) set within a wreath (Fig. 49b; Bisi 1978, 51, fig. 23; Cacan de Bissy & Petit 1982, 108, no. 154; Moscati 1988, 619, no. 209), while another in the British Museum shows a *triskeles* above crudely delineated animals and plants (Fig. 50) (Bisi 1978, 43–4, no. 22). On this latter example the head is especially prominent, with large staring eyes, and is, uniquely, separated from the legs by a circular band decorated with 'spokes' at intervals and irregular linear patterning in the panels between. The legs are set anticlockwise.

The example from Aïn-Barchouche (Fig. 51), near Althiburus in western Tunisia, is fragmentary (although more of it has recently been found):[24] above the niche with the dedicant is a pinecone or pineapple flanked by peacocks; above these are human heads set on the backs of animals, usually taken to be horses (although they surely have horns, and must rather be bulls); higher up are birds flanking a tree (a 'tree of life'?); and finally, at the top of the stele, are depicted a figure riding a dolphin on the left, and a *triskeles* on the right, the latter with a crude human head at its centre. The drawing published by Picard and reproduced here (Fig. 51) shows this as having only two legs, but recent re-examination of the stele shows in fact that there is also a third leg: this must therefore be regarded as a *triskeles*, and not as an exceptional *diskeles.*

Our last two examples are much more fragmentary. Of one from northwest Tunisia (there is doubt as to whether it was found at Le Kef or Beja), only a standing sacrificial bull survived, depicted in readiness for sacrifice to Baal-Saturn with a knife at its throat (Fig. 52); there is a *triskeles* above (with central face, and clockwise legs).[25] The final example comes from Sidi Bou Rouis near Gaafour, about 40 km southeast of Dougga in northern Tunisia (Fig. 53) and shows a more Romanized iconography: heads of Sol, Jupiter and Luna labelled in Latin appear along the top, and the figure of the *triskeles* occurs in a pediment below, with human face and corn-like braids in her hair (and unusu-

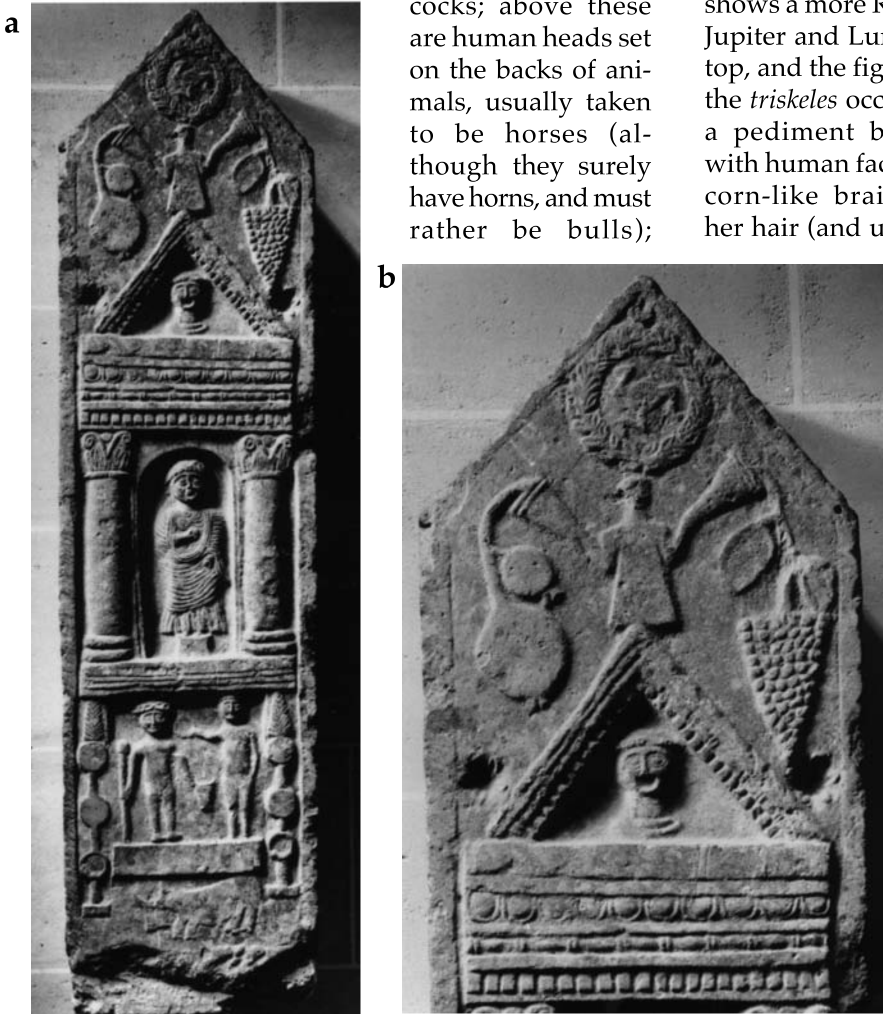

Figure 49. *Paris, Louvre MNB 898, neo-Punic stele (a: whole stele; b: detail).*

Figure 50. *London, British Museum WA125180, neo-Punic stele, detail.*

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ally fat thighs) (Carton 1905). The inscription in the band below the *triskeles* is not fully preserved, but includes the Latin word Fortuna (perhaps significantly in view of the known apotropaic associations of the symbol). Of the figures in the main field below, the two which flanked the central figure, who wear close-fitting skull caps and one of whom holds a staff with a cross-shaped star, must represent the Dioscuri.

Figure 51. *Ain-Barchouche, drawing of part of a neo-Punic stele (Musée du Bardo).*

The reason for the occurrence of the *triskeles* on these eight stelai is open to debate. Given the geographical proximity of Sicily to Africa, it is tempting to suggest that the dedicants in each case had some link with the island which they wanted to commemorate iconographically. It is also true to say that the version of the *triskeles* used in North Africa, with its prominent central face, is the one which ultimately derives from the model developed at Syracuse in the late fourth century BC, and which (as we have seen) was in common use in late Hellenistic and early imperial Sicily. But is the 'Sicilian connection' in fact the reason for the adoption of the *triskeles* in each case (Fantar 1993–94, 220)? It is perfectly possible, and (in my view) infinitely more probable, that its presence in North Africa is explicable purely in terms of the sun symbolism of the *triskeles*, and its efficacy as a good luck charm. In the case of the Mididi stele (Fig. 48), for example, one possible explanation for the *triskeles* is that it does indeed symbolize the sun, forming a pair with the crescent moon above; and a similar interpretation is possible on the fragmentary example from Le Kef/Beja, where the *triskeles* above the sacrificial bull, Saturn's creature, might well stand for the sun and/or the sky in general (Baal was above all a sky-god, and by extension lord of the universe and of all that is in it). Although not accompanied by moon symbols, there must be a strong likelihood that the *triskeleis* at the summit of both the Louvre and the British Museum stelai were also meant to represent the sun: do the 'spokes' radiating out from

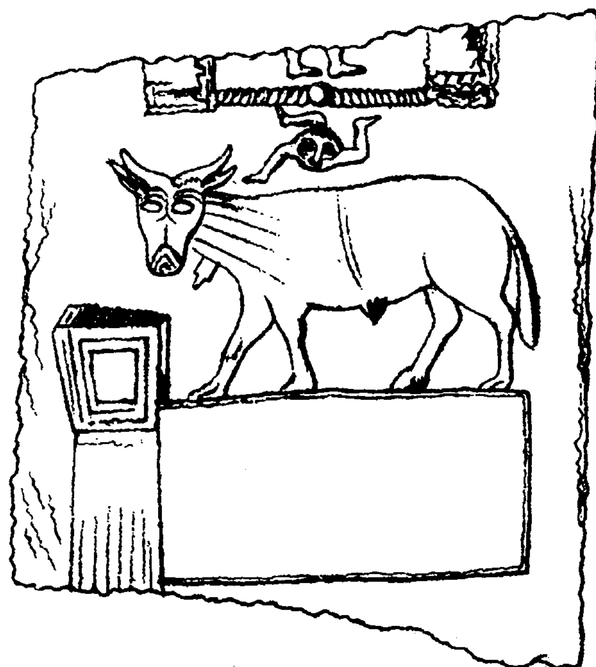

Figure 52. *Le Kef (or Béja?), fragmentary stele (formerly in Lyon, now lost).*

Figure 53. *Sidi Bou Rouis, Tunisia, neo-Punic stele.*

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the central head on the London slab in fact represent solar rays on an earlier model which have been misunderstood by the sculptor, who has here incorporated them into a decorative band (so too Bisi 1978, 65)?[26] In the case of the Sidi Bou Rouis stele, on the other hand, the *triskeles* cannot be meant as a sun symbol, since Sol is already depicted; here its presence may be explicable purely in terms of its apotropaic value, an explanation which gains support from the reference to Fortuna in the line below. Its presence on the stele from Aïn-Barchouche, however, is harder to explain. The significance of the figure at top left riding a dolphin now escapes us, but such ex-votos were often crowned, as we have seen, by the crescent moon and/or a sun symbol. Could the trio of representations here, the tree of life, the dolphin and the *triskeles*, be signifying respectively earth, water and air (or, perhaps better, Earth, Ocean and Heaven), the *triskeles* chosen once again as symbolizing the sun, and, by extension, the whole sky?

Conclusions

We have ranged far and wide in our search for examples of the *triskeles*, and seen that at various times and in various places in the ancient world the symbol enjoyed a wide currency and considerable popularity. The earliest examples, at the end of the seventh century BC, come from Sicily, and it is with Sicily that the symbol is most closely associated: the triangular shape of the island made, and still makes, a three-legged emblem particularly appropriate. It was also widely adopted, however, on coinage in Athens and Asia Minor from the sixth century BC onwards, and its relationship to the hooked symbol of Lycia probably indicates that it was in origin a sun symbol like the swastika. Other uses of the *triskeles* or pseudo-*triskeles* in Iron Age Europe, and especially in Punic and Roman North Africa, emphasize the connection with solar symbolism. Coupled with this was its early employment as an apotropaic symbol, seen especially in its use as a shield emblem in sixth-century Athens, and much of its general use and popularity can be explained in its application as an all-embracing good-luck symbol. In Sicily the basic arrangement of three legs meeting at the centre was gradually elaborated from the later fourth century BC onwards, first by the addition of wings to the feet, then by the use of a Medusa head at the centre, and finally by the adjunct of three barley ears to symbolize the agricultural fertility of Sicily. In post-antique times the symbol was taken up again in late twelfth-century Füssen and in thirteenth-century Austria, possibly through a connection with Sicily, and then became closely associated with the Isle of Man from the middle of the thirteenth century, in a version which clothed the legs in armour and by the fourteenth century had added spurs. The logo of the McDonald Institute borrows from Sicily the basic arrangement of the bare feet and the wings at the ankles, but adopts a plain circular disc at the centre in the spirit of the simpler Manx version (which, however, usually displays a triangle rather than a circle), in preference to the elaborate Medusa head of the developed Sicilian *triskeles*. Both the Sicilian and the Manx versions of the *triskeles* remain in widespread use in both Sicily and the Isle of Man as distinctive emblems of their respective islands, attesting to the continuing popularity of a symbol which is now some 2600 years old.

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McDonald Institute as its distinctive badge. Mr T.V. C. Young (Peel) freely gave me the benefit of his own researches into the Three Legs of Man, although he will probably not agree with my conclusions. All remaining errors of fact and interpretation are of course my own. I am especially grateful to M. Christian Olive of the Musée de l'Oppidum d'Ensérune for his generosity in allowing me to publish here for the first time a fragmentary black glaze bowl with a triple occurrence of the *triskeles* stamp, and for supplying me with a full documentary, graphic and photographic record of it.

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Notes

1. This is the correct form, rather than that frequently used in English-language publications, *triskele*, which does not exist. See H.G. Liddell & R. Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon* (9th. ed. 1940), 1822, s.v. *triskeles*, 'three-legged'. The form *triskelis*, also wrongly used to refer to our symbol, means specifically a 'three-legged fork' (Liddell & Scott, s.v.). Also erroneously applied to our symbol (e.g. Holm 1871) is the word *triquetra*, the feminine form (*sc. insula*) of *triquetrus*, 'three-cornered, triangular' (cf. *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, p. 1977). This is often used by the Latin poets to refer to Sicily, and alludes to the island's triangular *shape*, not to the three-legged symbol.
2. Man: Wagner 1950, 7–19; Wagner 1959–60. Scandinavia: Young (1983; n.d.) traces the use of the Three Legs there in admirable detail, with illustrations, e.g. of the seal of Sir Hallstein Torliesson (1303) and of Nils Hallsteinsson (1345).
3. Kinvig 1975, pl. 18b; Wagner 1959–60, pl. 239C–D. The pommel's diameter is one and three-eighths inches (35 mm). It is there suggested, because of the central flower, that the Sword may be as late as the fifteenth century, but the flower is at no stage a normal feature of the Three Legs. More significant are the attachments at the ankles: if these are really worn representations of spurs (cf. Megaw 1959–60 in his notes on pl. 239), then the Sword is unlikely to be earlier than the fourteenth century when spurs were first added to the Three Legs (see below).
4. Cf. Trevelyan 1995 on the (fortuitous) links between Man and Sicily, largely in the context of the Marsalan wine trade, one of whose leading lights, John Woodhouse, was married to a Manx woman.
5. Only in the nineteenth century did the *triskeles* come back into fashion as the official emblem of Sicily, when Napoleon put it on the arms of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, ruled from Naples. Its present widespread use dates only from the partial autonomy granted to Sicily by the Italian government in 1946.
6. A silver fraction of the Caulonia mint in the fifth century BC (*c.* 500/480 BC) was in fact the first coin in the West to feature the *triskeles*, long before Syracuse adopted it (Poole 1873, 336, no. 16 with figure), but this is an isolated occurrence.
7. Krauskopf 1988, 326 points out that no examples of shield devices with *gorgoneia* are actually known. Schauenberg 1955, 32–40, however, suggests otherwise: and cf. Krauskopf 1988, 300, no. 158 for a bronze shield device from the second half of the sixth century BC from Olympia, with central *gorgoneion* from which three curving wings emerge at symmetrical distances. The wings are not legs, but they are arranged in the same fashion as the *triskeles*, and the circular shape of the shield clearly accommodates well such an arrangement. For gorgons' heads as apotropaic devices on greaves, cf. Wilson 1988, 197, no. 263 (Ruvo), with references; and for a similar decoration on a horse's breastplate, also from Ruvo (fourth century BC), cf. Andreassi *et al.* 1996, 47.
8. There was a variety of different dies: some showing the Victory facing left (as Pareti *et al.* 1960, pl. 206), others facing right (Holloway 1991, 138, fig. 185, with *triskeles* behind trophy).
9. Crawford 1974, no. 445. It has also been suggested (Seltman 1924, 21, note 8) that the *triskeles* was an appropriate symbol for L. Cornelius Lentulus *Crus* ('Leg'), but that is surely fortuitous: it was the Sicilian ancestor of his colleague Marcellus which provided the real reason for choosing the *triskeles.*
10. Cook (1914, 309) suggests that the coins provide evidence for the Punic cult of Baal in this region introduced by the Carthaginians, so interpreting the *triskeles* here predominantly as a sun symbol; but the use of the *triskeles* in Punic North Africa is, as we shall see, limited.
11. Other examples in Roman coinage include the issues of 100 BC of P. Cornelius Lentulus Marcellinus, where a *triskeles* in front of a ship's prow alludes to the conquest of Hieron's former kingdom in 211 BC by his ancestor M. Claudius Marcellus; and a *denarius* of 50 BC featuring a portrait of the same ancestor with a *triskeles* behind him: for these cf. Crawford 1974, nos. 329 & 439.
12. This coin type was revived on a *denarius* of 14 BC naming the *tresvir monetalis* L. Aquillius Florus, a descendent of Manlius Aquillius named on the *denarius* of 71 BC: Sutherland 1984, no. 310; Toynbee 1934, pl. XVII.19; Ostrowski 1990, 200, no. 3.
13. The item being held in her left hand is quite uncertain. A poppy and a distribution *tessera* for the *annona* have been suggested (but the latter is normally shown as a rectangular object, whereas the item here in Sicilia's left hand is certainly rounded); others have

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suggested corn ears, which I have previously followed without minutely examining the coin (Wilson 1994, 759, no. 5 and 761 for references and discussion); but none of these interpretations seems likely. The object most resembles a small carrying purse, but if so this is unique in the iconography of Sicilia.

14. Bisi 1969, 43, no. 192. There are also examples of amphorae with *triskeles* stamps, unpublished, in the Syracuse museum (in store): personal observation. Dr Alan Johnston has kindly drawn my attention to another in Corfu (a true *triskeles*, without wings or central disc; it is not clear if this is a Sicilian imported amphora or has nothing to do with Sicily: Preka-Alexandre 1992, B1, pl. 100 st).
15. The *triskeles* with central head also appears on lead seals of Roman date, to indicate the Sicilian provenance of the goods to which they were fastened: Pace 1958, 419, fig. 175. There are others, unpublished, in Syracuse museum: Holm 1871, 488.
16. Careful re-examination of the *dinos* by myself in May 1997 confirmed that it is unlikely that there was ever a face at the centre of the composition, even though a curved darker painted line gives at first sight the impression of a mouth. As already shown (p. 39), the addition of a face, usually a Medusa head, to the previously plain central disc is not attested in *triskeles* symbolism anywhere before the late fourth century BC.
17. Σ Ar. *Lys.* 664; Hangard 1996, 35. I owe this latter reference to the kindness of Professor Alan Sommerstein.
18. The *triskeles* was also carved on one corner of a fortress at Karygelleis: Bent 1891, 209. For a list of other monuments with the *triskeles* in this region (at Corycus in Cilicia, Oryma in Pamphylia, and Sivri-Kalessi), see Paribeni & Romanelli 1914, col. 165.
19. It is, however, worth noting that the first-century BC coins of Selge (Hill 1897, 263 with pl. XL.12) have wings at the ankles, in imitation, ultimately, of the Syracusan Agathoclean model, as does also an issue of Velia in south Italy: Poole 1873, 315, nos. 103–4.
20. For example, accompanying an inscription to Zeus Olbios at Olba in Cilicia (Hicks 1891, 226) and on the coins of Olba issued by the Teucrid high priest and toparch, Ajax, in the second decade AD (*c.* AD 10/12–14/16): Burnett *et al.* 1992, nos. 3725–6 & 3732. For Helios radiant on fourth-century BC issues: Babelon 1907, col. 482; Cook 1914, 301.
21. Unpublished in detail, but the *oenochoe* and part of its decoration can be seen in De Miro 1988, Tav. XVI.1, third vase from left; De Miro 1988, 35–8 for the east necropolis and its finds. The *oenochoe* is on display in the Museo Archeologico, Caltanissetta.
22. For a general discussion of the '*à croix*' coinage, cf. Allen 1980, 54–7; 1990, 29–32. The pseudo-*triskeles* occurs also on coinage of the Sequani and the Leuci in the second century BC (Allen 1980, 76), and occasionally on first-century BC issues as well. Cf. also the 'whorl' motif below the horse, present on silver coins struck in the Poitou region of Gaul, which imitate late third- and early second-century BC silver issues of Emporion (Allen 1990, 56, nos. 145–8, with pl. V).
23. Cf. also a small disc-brooch from Brough, Cumbria, also Roman, with a repoussé design of a pseudo-*triskeles* with snakes' heads: Johns 1996, 183, fig. 7.24.
24. Du Coudray La Blanchère & Gauckler 1897, 64, no. C777; Picard 1956, 253, no. Cb 939 with pl. xcviii. Another portion of this stone has recently been found in the Bardo storerooms by Ms. Jennifer Moore (Hamilton, Ontario), who has kindly shown me her photograph of the two joining fragments. I am also grateful to her for demonstrating that the *triskeles* is indeed three-legged, and not two-legged as shown in Picard's illustration.
25. Holm 1871, 487; Cook 1914, 308, fig. 246, once in Lyon. I have been unable to find a more recent publication of this piece, which is now apparently lost: I am grateful to Madame Geneviève Galliano, Conservateur du Département des Antiquités, Musée des Beaux Arts, Lyon, for her exhaustive but vain efforts to trace this sculpture.
26. Some stelai do indeed show a radiate head, presumably a version of Helios, at precisely this position on the stone: cf. for example another stele from Aïn Barchouche (Musée du Bardo 3496): Cacan de Bissy & Petit 1982, 110, no. 157.

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