

Circulating Imperial Ideology: Coins as Propaganda in the Roman World

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## **ABSTRACT**

Corey J. Ellithorpe: *Circulating Imperial Ideology: Coins as Propaganda in the Roman World.*  
(Under the direction of Richard J.A. Talbert)

This dissertation examines the role of Roman Imperial coinage in the communication of Roman ideology and propaganda. From a database of more than 300,000 Roman Imperial coins of the Principate, each containing detailed archaeological data and linked to GIS-mapping software, a variety of interconnected analyses are conducted to provide a better understanding of how Roman coinage was used a medium of Imperial propaganda.

The body of numismatic evidence of imperial Rome consists of millions of surviving individual coins, out of which thousands of iconographical combinations of type and corresponding inscriptions have been identified. I examine the role that coinage played as a mobile medium of politically persuasive communication for Rome to numerous groups.

Within a larger political propaganda program at work during the early Roman Empire, coinage functioned as the most ubiquitous, tangible, immediate, variable, and integrated element. I argue that coinage functioned as a conscious instrument of political propaganda that enabled varying messages to be purposefully disseminated to different geographical regions and to distinct ranks of Roman society. This was a structured and efficient communication machine capable of fine-tuning the presentation of a particular message to meet the emperor's current concerns. Moreover, I argue that a desire to manipulate public opinion is the mainspring for the vast range of coinage types found in Roman imperial coinage.

To my wife, Sarah. None of this could have been achieved without you.



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There are many people without whom this dissertation would not have been possible. I owe the greatest of thanks to my graduate advisor and chair of my dissertation committee, William Rand Kenan Distinguished Professor Richard J.A. Talbert.

It was during the fall of 2008 when I first made contact with him expressing keen interest in pursuing a PhD in ancient history under him at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. After a series of emails, he invited me to visit the campus, sit in on some classes, meet affiliated faculty, and more importantly to have the chance to meet face-to face to discuss my research interests and other matters related to the graduate program in greater depth. I immediately knew upon the beginning of this visit that UNC was the institution that I wanted to attend, and, more importantly, that I wanted to have the opportunity to be a student of Talbert's. He possessed all of the desired attributes that one seeks in a potential advisor: impressively erudite; heavily published; a regularly-cited scholar whose name is found in the bibliographies of some of the field's most important works; and one whose research demonstrates a long history of being involved in many projects at the cutting edge of the discipline. Yet, aside from possessing these rare qualities that place him in the company of a small handful of the most influential contemporary scholars of ancient history, it was a far rarer combination of attributes that made instantly clear just how lucky and privileged his students surely are: his approachability, kindness, deep care and concern for those training under him, and the overwhelming adoration that graduate students and undergrads at UNC hold for him. I should mention, that I owe a deep thanks to the graduate students of his in 2008 (Brian Turner; Lance

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I was not admitted into the program that next year, but Professor Talbert kept in contact with me, and regarding my application, informed me that I was not yet ready for graduate school. He told me that I should consider a post baccalaureate program in Greek and Latin to increase my ancient language training. I did just that. It was then that I attended the University of Pennsylvania for an intense year-and-half of intensive Greek and Latin training. I applied again to UNC, as well as to four terminal MA programs. I was accepted to all four and was wait-listed for the PhD program at UNC. Not surprisingly, those offered direct admission under Talbert accepted, and I had only the four MA programs before me. Still yet, Professor Talbert advised me regarding the potential MA programs. After a series of conversations with him, as well as my wife and family, UArizona was (rightly) believed to be the best next step.

During my two years at UArizona, Talbert and I maintained contact. During the application season for fall 2012, I had a variety of acceptances. There was no conflict in choices once I had heard back from UNC.

During the formative stages of this dissertation and throughout the various chapter drafts, Professor Talbert provided, always, the most thorough of commentary and suggestions. I should apologize to him for my (often) long-winded and periphrastic style, which he had to suffer through and propose countless edits in order to bring the dissertation to its current state. I cannot offer enough thanks nor express enough gratitude to him for his tireless and diligent efforts in ensuring that this dissertation arrives at the completed form that it has today.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AA</i>	<i>Advertising Age</i>
<i>AArchHung</i>	<i>Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae</i>
<i>AECR</i>	<i>Association pour l'étude de la civilisation romaine</i>
<i>AEMΘ</i>	<i>Αρχαιολογικό Έργο στη Μακεδονία και στη Θράκη</i>
<i>AfPro</i>	<i>Africa Proconsularis</i>
<i>AfRom</i>	<i>Africa Romana</i>
<i>AISC</i>	<i>Anuarul Institutului de Studii Clasice</i>
<i>AIIN</i>	<i>Annali dell'Istituto Italiano di Numismatica</i>
<i>AJA</i>	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
<i>AJ</i>	<i>Antiquaries Journal</i>
<i>AJN</i>	<i>The American Journal of Numismatics (2<sup>nd</sup> series)</i>
<i>AMIINum</i>	<i>Atti e memorie dell'Istituto Italiano di Numismatica</i>
<i>AMN</i>	<i>Acta Musei Napocensis</i>
<i>AMol</i>	<i>Arheologia Moldovei</i>
<i>AN</i>	<i>Acta Numismática</i>
<i>ANE</i>	<i>Asociación Numismática Española</i>
<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt, Geschichte und Kultur Roms in der neueren Forschung, II Principat</i>
<i>ANS</i>	<i>The American Numismatic Society</i>
<i>ANSMN</i>	<i>The American Numismatic Society, Museum Notes</i>
<i>Ant</i>	<i>Antichthon</i>
<i>ANum</i>	<i>Annotazioni Numismatiche</i>
<i>APAMP</i>	<i>Association pour la promotion du patrimoine archéologique et historique en Midi-Pyrénées</i>

<i>Arch</i>	<i>Archaeology Magazine</i>
<i>ARSR</i>	<i>Academiei Republicii Socialiste România</i>
<i>ASCSA</i>	<i>The American School of Classical Studies at Athens</i>
<i>BAAL</i>	<i>Bulletin d'Archéologie et d'Architecture Libanaises</i>
<i>BANE</i>	<i>Bulletin Alliance Numismatique Européenne</i>
<i>BAR</i>	<i>British Archaeological Reports</i>
<i>BCEN</i>	<i>Bulletin du Cercle d'Etudes Numismatiques</i>
<i>BCH</i>	<i>Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique</i>
<i>BCTH</i>	<i>Bulletin archéologique du Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques</i>
<i>BICAA</i>	<i>Bullettino dell'Istituto di Corrispondenza Archeologica per l'Anno</i>
<i>BICS</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies, University of London</i>
<i>BINS</i>	<i>Alon: Bulletin of the Israel Numismatic Society</i>
<i>BMB</i>	<i>Bulletin du Musée de Beyrouth</i>
<i>BMCR</i>	<i>Bryn Mawr Classical Review</i>
<i>BMCRE</i>	<i>Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum</i>
<i>BMCR</i>	<i>Coins of the Roman Republic in the British Museum</i>
<i>BMMB</i>	<i>Bucureştii: Muzeul Municipiului Bucuresti</i>
<i>BRGK</i>	<i>Die Berichte der Römisch-Germanischen Kommission</i>
<i>BSFN</i>	<i>Bulletin de la Société Française de Numismatique</i>
<i>BSGA</i>	<i>Bulletin de la Société de Géographie d'Alger et de l'Afrique du nord</i>
<i>BSM</i>	<i>Beiträge zur süddeutschen Münzgeschichte</i>
<i>BulSNR</i>	<i>Buletinul Societăţii numismatice române</i>
<i>BZNT</i>	<i>Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</i>
<i>CAH<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>Cambridge Ancient History (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)</i>
<i>CAR</i>	<i>Cahiers d'Archéologie Romande</i>

<i>Carin</i>	<i>Carinthia I: Mittheilungen des Geschichtsvereins für Kärnten</i>
<i>CCGG</i>	<i>Cahiers de Centre Gustave-Glotz</i>
<i>CCES</i>	<i>Comitetul de Cultură și Educație Socialistă al Județului Cluj, Muzeul de Istorie Turda</i>
<i>CH</i>	<i>Coin Hoards (Royal Numismatic Society)</i>
<i>CHI</i>	<i>Cambridge History of Iran</i>
<i>ChVa</i>	<i>Chronica Valachica</i>
<i>CIL</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i>
<i>CJ</i>	<i>The Classical Journal</i>
<i>CNum</i>	<i>Cahiers Numismatiques: Bulletin de la Société d'études numismatiques et archéologiques</i>
<i>Coh</i>	<i>Cohen, Henry. 1880–1892. Description des monnaies frappées sous l'empire romain communément appelées médailles imperials, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, vol. I–VIII. Paris: Rollin</i>
<i>CP</i>	<i>Classical Philology</i>
<i>CRH</i>	<i>Los campamentos romanos en Hispania</i>
<i>CQ</i>	<i>The Classical Quarterly</i>
<i>CR</i>	<i>Classical Review</i>
<i>CSCO</i>	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium</i>
<i>CTMAF</i>	<i>Corpus des trésors monétaires antiques de la France</i>
<i>CW</i>	<i>Coin World</i>
<i>Dacia</i>	<i>Revue d'archéologie et d'histoire ancienne</i>
<i>FaS</i>	<i>Fundberichte aus Schwaben</i>
<i>FHSO</i>	<i>Fédération historique du Sud-Ouest</i>
<i>FMRD</i>	<i>Die Fundmünzen der römischen Zeit in Deutschland</i>
<i>FMRHr</i>	<i>Die Fundmünzen der römischen Zeit in Kroatien</i>
<i>FMRL</i>	<i>Die Fundmünzen der römischen Zeit im Großherzogtum Luxemburg</i>

<i>FMRN</i>	<i>Die Fundmünzen der römischen Zeit in den Niederlanden</i>
<i>FMRÖ</i>	<i>Die Fundmünzen der römischen Zeit in Österreich</i>
<i>FMRP</i>	<i>Die Fundmünzen der römischen Zeit in Polen</i>
<i>FMRSl</i>	<i>Die Fundmünzen der römischen Zeit in Slowenien</i>
<i>FMRU</i>	<i>Die Fundmünzen der römischen Zeit in Ungarn</i>
<i>FRH</i>	<i>Fragments of the Roman Historians</i>
<i>GN</i>	<i>Gaceta Numismática</i>
<i>GR</i>	<i>Greece &amp; Rome (2<sup>nd</sup> series)</i>
<i>GZM</i>	<i>Glasnik Zemaljskog muzeja Bosne i Hercegovine (Nova Serija)</i>
<i>HBN</i>	<i>Hamburger Beiträge zur Numismatik</i>
<i>Herm</i>	<i>Hermes, Zeitschrift für klassische Philologie</i>
<i>Hesp</i>	<i>Hesperia</i>
<i>Hist</i>	<i>Historica</i>
<i>IEJ</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
<i>IGR</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae ad Res Romanas Pertinentes</i>
<i>ILS</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae</i>
<i>IMJ</i>	<i>The Israel Museum Journal</i>
<i>INJ</i>	<i>Israel Numismatic Journal</i>
<i>INR</i>	<i>Israel Numismatic Research</i>
<i>II.Annal</i>	<i>Istituto Italiano di Numismatica (Roma) Annali</i>
<i>JDAH</i>	<i>Journal of Dalmatian Archaeology and History</i>
<i>JIAN</i>	<i>Journal international d'archéologie numismatique</i>
<i>JNG</i>	<i>Jahrbuch für Numismatik und Geldgeschichte</i>
<i>JRGZM</i>	<i>Jahrbuch des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums Mainz</i>
<i>JRA</i>	<i>The Journal of Roman Archaeology</i>

<i>JRS</i>	<i>The Journal of Roman Studies</i>
<i>JSAS</i>	<i>The Journal of the Serbian Archaeological Society</i> (Гласник Српског Археолошког Друштва)
<i>LAÉ</i>	<i>Libyca: Archéologie, Épigraphie</i>
<i>LCM</i>	<i>Liverpool Classical Monthly</i>
<i>MA</i>	<i>Memoria Antiquitatis</i>
<i>MAAR</i>	<i>Memoirs of the American Academy at Rome</i>
<i>MAH</i>	<i>Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire</i>
<i>MDAI</i>	<i>Mémoires de la Délégation Archéologique en Iran</i>
<i>MIR</i>	<i>Moneta Imperii Romani</i>
<i>MJIAB</i>	<i>Muzeul Județean de Istorie și Artă, Bacău</i>
<i>MNZ</i>	<i>Münstersche numismatische Zeitung</i>
<i>NAC</i>	<i>Numismatica e Antichità Classiche</i>
<i>NC</i>	<i>The Numismatic Chronicle</i>
<i>NChr</i>	<i>Nomismatika Chronika</i>
<i>NCirc</i>	<i>Numismatic Circular</i>
<i>NCJRNS</i>	<i>The Numismatic Chronicle and Journal of the Royal Numismatic Society</i>
<i>NECJ</i>	<i>New England Classical Journal</i>
<i>NHRF</i>	<i>National Hellenic Research Foundation—Research Centre for Greek and Roman Antiquity</i>
<i>NIBull</i>	<i>Numismatic International Bulletin</i>
<i>NiE</i>	<i>Numizmatika i Epigrafika</i> (Нумизматика и Эпиграфика)
<i>NiS</i>	<i>Numizmatika i Sfragistika</i> (Нумизматика и Сфрагистика)
<i>NK</i>	<i>Numizmatikai Közlöny</i>
<i>NNÅ</i>	<i>Nordisk Numismatisk Årsskrift</i>
<i>NR</i>	<i>Numismatic Review</i>

<i>NSb</i>	<i>Numismatický Sborník</i>
<i>Num</i>	<i>The Numismatist</i>
<i>Numiz</i>	<i>Numizmatičar</i>
<i>Num.SIAEN</i>	<i>Numisma: Revista de la Sociedad Iberoamericana de Estudios Numismaticós</i>
<i>NZ</i>	<i>Numismatische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>ÖAW</i>	<i>Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften</i>
<i>OCD</i> <sup>4</sup>	<i>Oxford Classical Dictionary (4<sup>th</sup> edition)</i>
<i>OLD</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>Oxford Latin Dictionary (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)</i>
<i>PIR</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>Prosopographia Imperii Romani (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)</i>
<i>Pon</i>	<i>Pontica</i>
<i>Prag</i>	<i>Pragmateiai</i>
<i>ProcBA</i>	<i>Proceedings of the British Academy</i>
<i>QArLib</i>	<i>Quaderni di archeologia della Libia</i>
<i>RBN</i>	<i>Revue Belge de Numismatique</i>
<i>RNd</i>	<i>Revue du Nord</i>
<i>RE</i>	<i>Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i>
<i>RH</i>	<i>Revue Historique</i>
<i>RHV</i>	<i>Revue historique vaudoise</i>
<i>RIAP</i>	<i>Royal Irish Academy, Proceedings.</i>
<i>RIB</i>	<i>Roman Inscriptions of Britain</i>
<i>RIC</i>	<i>Roman Imperial Coinage</i>
<i>RINSA</i>	<i>Rivista Italiana di Numismatica e Science Affini</i>
<i>RIW</i>	<i>Review of Income and Wealth</i>
<i>RMRFVG</i>	<i>Ritrovamenti monetali di età romana nel Friuli Venezia Giulia</i>
<i>RMRLomb</i>	<i>Ritrovamenti monetali di età romana in Lombardia</i>

<i>RMRVe</i>	<i>Ritrovamenti monetali di età romana nel Veneto</i>
<i>RN</i>	<i>Revue Numismatique</i>
<i>RPC</i>	<i>Roman Provincial Coinage</i>
<i>RRC</i>	<i>Roman Republican Coinage</i>
<i>SAAC</i>	<i>Studies in Ancient Art and Civilization</i>
<i>SAN</i>	<i>Journal for the Society of Ancient Numismatics</i>
<i>SCN</i>	<i>Studii si Cercetări de Numismatică</i>
<i>SFMA</i>	<i>Studien zu Fundmünzen der Antike</i>
<i>SCSM</i>	<i>Studii și comunicări, Satu Mare</i>
<i>SFN</i>	<i>Société française de Numismatique</i>
<i>SM</i>	<i>Schweizer Münzblätter</i>
<i>SNR</i>	<i>Schweizerische numismatische Rundschau</i>
<i>SwNR</i>	<i>Swiss Numismatic Revue</i>
<i>SPRS</i>	<i>Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies</i>
<i>StEG</i>	<i>Studia Europaea Gnesnensia</i>
<i>Strack</i>	<i>Strack, Paul L. 1931–1937. Untersuchungen zur römischen Reichsprägung des zweiten Jahrhunderts. Bd. 1: Traian, Bd. 2: Hadrian, Bd. 3: Antoninus Pius. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer</i>
<i>TAF</i>	<i>Tübinger Archäologische Forschungen</i>
<i>TAPA</i>	<i>Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association</i>
<i>TLL</i>	<i>Thesaurus Linguae Latinae</i>
<i>TNRB</i>	<i>Thesaurus Nummorum Romanorum et Byzantinorum</i>
<i>TrMon</i>	<i>Trésors Monétaires</i>
<i>TvG</i>	<i>Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis</i>
<i>VAMZ</i>	<i>Vjesnik Arheološkog muzeja u Zagrebu</i>
<i>Vars</i>	<i>Van Arsdell, Robert D. 1989. Celtic Coinage of Britain. London: Spink</i>

<i>VigChr</i>	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
<i>VNK</i>	<i>Veröffentlichungen der Numismatischen Kommission</i>
<i>VÖAW</i>	<i>Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften</i>
<i>WN</i>	<i>Wiadomości Numizmatyczne</i>
<i>Zeph</i>	<i>Zephyrus</i>
<i>ZfN</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Numismatik</i>
<i>ZN</i>	<i>Zapiski Numizmatyczne</i>



## GLOSSARY<sup>1</sup>

### **AES:**

Bronze. In Roman documents the word *aes* is often used to refer to all coinage in non-precious metals but it can also refer to money of any kind, as *pecunia* does. The term is used here to refer to all base metal (bronze, copper, and orichalcum) coinages: the *as*, sestertius, dupondius, quadrans, and semis.

### **AGITATION (PROPAGANDA):**

A form of propaganda that seeks to change audience attitudes through blatant, aggressive, and often subversive means. The term was first coined by Jacques Ellul in his highly influential 1962 monograph *Propagandes*. Ellul argues that the purpose of agitation propaganda is to break one's perception of some issue only to then introduce the new perception. Agitation propaganda can only be of short duration, since it is dangerous for a state to have the populace kept too long in a frenzied and often angered state, where it is at "the highest level of sacrifice, conviction, and devotion" (1973, 72). Once agitation propaganda has achieved its goal, the propagandist, according to Ellul, must switch to **INTEGRATION** propaganda to bolster the new perception.

### **ANTONINIANUS:**

A Roman silver coin introduced by Caracalla (r. 198–217) in 215 as a means to ease the high demand for silver created by his father's pay increase for the army as well as his own increase. We are unaware of what term the coin went by in antiquity. Since Caracalla introduced it, modern scholars named it after him. The coin is also referred as a 'double denarius' on account of its intention to be considered by users to be equal to two denarii. Antoniniani, however, contained only 1.5 denarii worth of silver, a fact realized by users, who rapidly began **HOARDING** older, higher purity, denarii while using the newest antoniniani for transactions. Sellers, in attempts to avoid accumulating the lower intrinsic valued coin, raised prices to compensate their losses, thereby ushering in ever-increasing rates of inflation that would continue until Diocletian. Antoniniani are immediately distinguishable by the radiate crown that the emperor wears on the **OBVERSE** bust.

### **AUREUS (AV):**

Roman gold coin. In the Roman monetary system, the aureus is the denomination of highest value. Imperial aurei were, for most of the **PRINCIPATE**, pure gold and weighed ~7.7 g. Aurei saw only the slightest of weight reduction and **DEBASEMENT** under the emperor Elagabalus (r. 218–222), which continued under Alexander Severus (r. 222–235).

### **CONCIPIENTS:**

The individual(s) responsible for the design and character of coinage **TYPES**.

### **COUNTERMARK:**

Small punches applied to the face of a coin. They often are rectangular or round and contain their own **INSCRIPTION**.

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<sup>1</sup> First usage of the words in the dissertation is denoted with an asterisk (\*).

**DEBASEMENT:**

The act of reducing the percentage of valuable metal for a denomination.

**DENARIUS (AR):**

Roman silver coin. In the Roman monetary system, the denarius is the most common coin, but saw the greatest reduction of intrinsic value. The denarius was initially ~98% pure silver and maintained a silver percentage of more than 90% until midway through the reign of Antoninus Pius (r. 138–161), when it would drop to ~83.5% silver. During the Severan dynasty (193–235), it would drop again to ~50% to accommodate massive Severan-era pay increases for the army. By 274 the denarius was <4% silver.

**DIE LINK:**

Confirmation that two or more coins were struck by the same die.

**DISSEMINATION:**

The dispatch of coins from the mint to circulation pools.

**ELECTRUM:**

A natural alloy of gold and silver found in western Asia Minor. Electrum was the metal used for the first coins ever struck—Lydian Staters.

**ETHNIC:**

A mark typically found on a coin's **REVERSE**, that is commonly a monogram indicating a particular mint. The use of ethnics is far more common for Greek coinage than for Roman, but ethnics are found on some **PROVINCIAL** coinages and on some rare **ISSUES** from non-Roman **IMPERIAL** mints.

**EXERGUE:**

An **INSCRIPTION** on a coin that is not a part of the encircling **LEGEND**, but is, instead, horizontal across the lower portion of the **FIELD**.

**FABRIC:**

Refers to the general appearance of a coin as a piece of metal, encompassing shape, weight, diameter, and thickness. It also refers to the qualities of a coin's surface and its feel.

**FIELD:**

The area on the face of a coin around the portrait bust or **REVERSE** image, or the background of the coin.

**FINENESS:**

The percentage of valuable metal found within a coin related to its denomination. Fineness of **AUREI** refers to amount of their gold; fineness of **DENarii** or **ANTONINIANI** refers to amount of their silver; and the fineness of **AES** coinages refer to the amount of bronze, copper, or orichalcum, depending on which base metal coin is being discussed.

**FLAN:**

A coin blank before it is struck.

**GEONAMES:**

An open-source mapping website running on Google Earth that provides a unique 6–8 digit number corresponding to a specific location in the world.

**HOARD:**

A deposit of coins. Scholars distinguish four main types: emergency, savings, purse, and abandoned hoards. Emergency hoards are ones thought to have been deposited on account of some impending calamity, with the intent of later retrieval. They are characterized as being haphazardly comprised of various denominations and other random items (e.g., gems, jewelry). A savings hoard is often of one denomination (commonly silver), usually only coins of high intrinsic value, little worn, and minted heavy. A purse hoard is money that was being carried by a person, usually of smaller size and compact mass. An abandoned hoard is one which the depositor had no intentions of going back to retrieve later, such as a grave or shrine deposit or shipwreck.

**IMPERIAL (COINAGE):**

Refers to coins minted by the Roman Imperial authorities.

**INSCRIPTION:**

Text on a coin, which can take a variety of forms: encircle the outer rim of either side of the coin (**LEGEND**); run horizontally across the lower portion of the **FIELD**; be a mark indicating mintage (**ETHNIC**); be a text imprinted on the coin's surface from a punch mark (**COUNTERSTRIKE**), or even a text incorporated into the coin's iconography (e.g., writing on a shield or legionary banner).

**INTEGRATION (PROPAGANDA):**

A form of propaganda that seeks to reinforce existing audience attitude through diffuse and subtle techniques. The term was first coined by Jacques Ellul in his highly influential 1962 monograph *Propagandes*. Ellul argues that the purpose of integration propaganda is to “stabilize the social body,” by calcifying the desired perception in the minds of the audience (1973, 76). Integration propaganda is often long-term and slow. It follows implementation of **AGITATION** propaganda, which, if successful, creates conditions, according to Ellul, for the audience's minds to be receptive to a new concept.

**ISSUE:**

A ‘print run’ of coins of varying types and series connected by being of the same period of production indicated, commonly, by titular dates on the **OBVERSE**.

**LEGEND:**

The encircling inscription found on a coin's **OBVERSE** or **REVERSE**. When on the obverse it typically comprises the titles, attributes, and names of the emperor; when on the reverse it typically proclaims a statement that corresponds with the iconography.

**OBVERSE:**

The side of a coin that contains a portrait bust of the emperor. Typically, it is surrounded by an encircling **LEGEND** that further identifies the emperor. It is believed that the obverse **DIE** was placed in the anvil during the striking process, so that mint workers could change the reverse for a given **SERIES**, as needed.

**PROVINCIAL (COINAGE):**

Coinage minted in the Greek East during the Imperial period up to the time of Diocletian. Older publications refer to the coins as “Greek Imperials.” However, “Roman Provincial” is considered more appropriate, given that they are stylistically modeled on Roman coinage, often contain the bust of the emperor on their **OBVERSE**, and are typically confined, in a circulatory sense, to their respective province of issue. Aside from silver Asiatic cistophori, Provincial coins are always *AES* coinages. There are no known Provincial gold issues.

**REVERSE:**

The side of the coin opposite the portrait bust of the emperor. The reverse could contain another portrait bust but seldom did. The reverse imagery found on Roman coins is extremely varied: in particular, deities; personifications of virtues; varied portrayals of the emperor; architecture; animals; and commemoration of the army. The reverse typically contains an encircling **LEGEND** that most commonly either correlates with the iconography on the reverse or provides titulature details of the emperor's. In rare cases there is no **INSCRIPTION** on the reverse.

**SERIES:**

A particular design or motif used over a period of time. This can refer to a single denomination, or in some cases, several denominations.

**STATER:**

**ELECTRUM** staters from Lydia, in western Asia Minor, were the first coins ever made. They were a part of a system of weights and measures; the Greek word for weight is stater, signifying that the coin was of promised weight and contained the appropriate precious metal content.

**TETRADRACHM:**

A Greek silver coin.

**TYPE:**

The central device or motif on either face of the coin. Some scholars prefer the term "dominant design."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Arnold-Biucchi 2008: 3.

## INTRODUCTION

The body of numismatic evidence from imperial Rome consists of millions of surviving individual coins,<sup>3</sup> out of which thousands of iconographical combinations of type\* and associated inscriptions\* have been identified. In this dissertation I attempt to situate the role of Imperial coinage\* as both a mouthpiece for ideology and a vehicle of propaganda directed to numerous groups or communities. Particularly important to the regime (or potential usurper) were the senate, the urban populace at Rome, the Praetorian Guard, as well as the legionary armies and its commanders, by whom legitimacy was ultimately determined. It is essential that I clarify my view of what, exactly, constitutes ‘propaganda’: For the purposes of this dissertation I take it to imply information which is purposefully designed and intended to persuade or convince its audience. It is a form of communication which aims at influencing the attitude of a community towards a particular cause or position. It is also essential to state that I regard my use of the term of ‘ideology’ as a body of ideas that are characteristic of a particular social group or culture that can be employed to help legitimate a dominant political power. I assume that the reader will understand, however, that these terms, which are open to interpretation, are used here as a shorthand. Undue specificity should not be attached to them.

Roman coinage manifestly articulates imperial ideology. I argue that within a larger political propaganda program at work during the early Roman Empire, coinage functioned as a tangible, ubiquitous, immediate, and variable element.

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<sup>3</sup> Vagi 1999, 20.

Much happens to be currently unknown or under-investigated in the discipline of Roman numismatics; the same may be said about Roman propaganda. Further research could, therefore, aid us greatly by not only corroborating the existence of numismatic propaganda in the Roman world, but also by providing a clearer picture of how coinage functioned as an aspect of the “Imperial program of propaganda using material culture”<sup>4</sup> as a whole. While some scholars support the concept of such a program for not only Rome but the ancient world broadly conceived,<sup>5</sup> most adhere to perspectives that deny the existence of propaganda for the ancient world.<sup>6</sup> Those opposed to the concept typically highlight the limitations of pre-modern technologies; they maintain that imperial coins, statues, and monuments could never function as propaganda. This ‘primitivist’ interpretation goes so far as to argue that Imperial imagery lacked any persuasive content at all, claiming that such images were merely monarchic display, an irrational expression of power for its own sake. Paul Veyne, for instance, argues that “*l’imagerie et le faste monarchiques n’étaient pas propagande, mais expression*” (the imagery and monarchic display were not propaganda but expression).<sup>7</sup> This dissertation attempts to counter the current scholarly view that Rome lacked the capacity to regulate the various media of communications, including coinage.

The debate surrounding the notion of Roman propaganda, particularly with regards to coinage, has become somewhat sterile in recent scholarship; two reasons are paramount. First, challengers deny propaganda’s existence while seldom offering contrary interpretation of

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<sup>4</sup> Futrell 1997, 115.

<sup>5</sup> Syme 1939; Sutherland 1951; Sordi 1974; Hannestad 1986; Polanski 1992a–b.

<sup>6</sup> Levick 1982; Kennedy 1984; Wallace-Hadrill 1986; Zanker 1988; Veyne 1990a, 2002, 2005; Evans 1992; Howgego 1995; Galinsky 1996; Weber & Zimmerman 2003; Meyboom 2005; Lendon 2006.

<sup>7</sup> Veyne 1990b, 7.

available evidence, whereas its proponents continue to employ the term while largely imagining that no such debate exists. Second, and more significantly, neither side attempts to mobilize the vast archaeological and numismatic evidence in order to better understand Roman Imperial coinage. Such an endeavor would not only be a valuable contribution to the propaganda debate, but could also provide vital information on coinage distribution, circulation, production, regionality, quantity of varying types, as well as invaluable data regarding the Roman economy and monetization.

Though some scholars are especially hesitant to use the term ‘propaganda,’ it is neither controversial nor revolutionary to state that reverse\* types on Roman Imperial coinages were frequently topical.<sup>8</sup> This topicality, however, has unsurprisingly produced a variety of explanation and some debate. For instance, Harold Mattingly and Edward Sydenham interpret the regular display of current events on Roman coins as evidence that coins were “the newspapers of the day.”<sup>9</sup> On the other side are those that see topicality as not intended *at all* to inform users of recent events, but instead as part of a larger whole of monarchic display, in which concipients\* only refer to recent events as a convenient means to flatter and strengthen opinions of the emperor and his rule among viewers.<sup>10</sup> Reinhard Wolters, for example, argues:

“even if coins sometimes addressed events very directly, their purpose was not to inform persons of these events. Their function lay rather in strengthening perception: distinctions for the emperor, honors for members of his family, military successes, or the

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<sup>8</sup> The coin types that refer directly to contemporary events (e.g., triumphs; victories; marriages; consecrations; noteworthy games; (re)construction of temples, aqueducts, ports, and roads; return of legionary standards, etc.) are especially numerous. For some of the more noteworthy topical types from 44 BC to AD 69, for instance, see Sutherland 1986b.

<sup>9</sup> *RIC I* (1923), 22.

<sup>10</sup> Wallace-Hadrill 1986, 67; Zanker 1990, 3; Gallinsky 1996, 20–41.

erection of buildings in Rome were multiplied by representation on coins and fixed in memory by their circulation.”<sup>11</sup>

Even further from the imperialist perspective of Mattingly and Sydenham is Richard Duncan-Jones. Focusing on Trajanic issues,\* he argues that the low percentage of ‘news types’ and their uneven and disorderly distribution imply that conveyance of recent events to the general public was likely not a role of their design.<sup>12</sup> Duncan-Jones suggests, instead, that their presence and the high percentage of “traditional religious types” (more commonly ‘personifications’) suggest internal mint organization as the prime motive behind many type varieties.<sup>13</sup> He claims that “[t]he dominance of traditional religious types is so great that it may support the idea of their serving as markers or identifiers in the production process.”<sup>14</sup>

Numerous studies have demonstrated that Roman coins tended to circulate locally and thus rarely travelled far from the region to which they were initially distributed.<sup>15</sup> This insight stems from die links\* or locally-applied countermarks\* found within the hoard\* evidence.<sup>16</sup> It appears, however, that the circulation of gold coinage is not so limited, since its high intrinsic value and portability were more suited to both long-distance transport and payment of large debts, state or private. My database confirms this. Mapping of all bronze, silver, and gold Imperial coinage demonstrates just how far precious metal, especially gold, coinage travelled.

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<sup>11</sup> Wolters 2012, 342.

<sup>12</sup> Duncan-Jones 2005, 460.

<sup>13</sup> Duncan-Jones 2005, 467–469.

<sup>14</sup> Duncan-Jones 2005, 470.

<sup>15</sup> Reece 1977; Walker 1988; Duncan-Jones 1994, 1999, 2005; Hobley 1998; Kemmers 2006; Beckmann 2007.

<sup>16</sup> In short, many hoard deposits contain coins minted decades or centuries apart, yet countermarks applied on their initial arrival all correspond with one another and rarely, if ever, reveal countermarks applied elsewhere. Moreover, die links are found within the same or neighboring hoards, even if the date of deposition was far later.

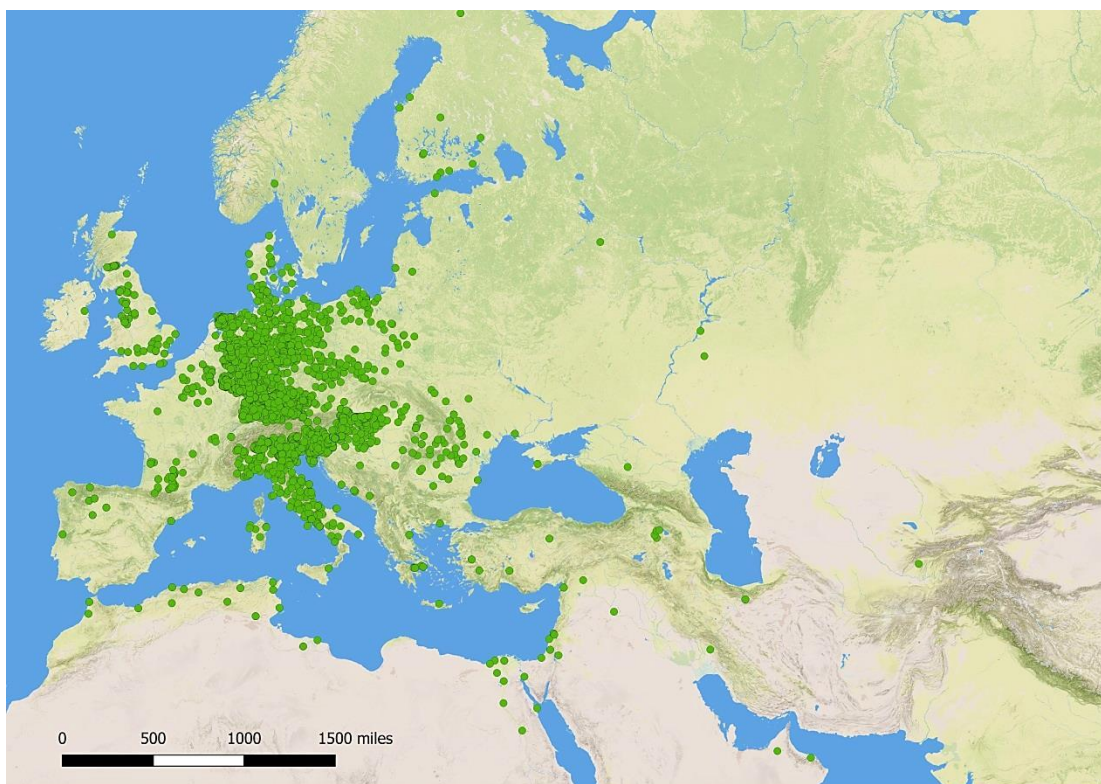


As the map of bronze (fig. 1) shows, it was tightly constrained to the central Empire like a column from Italy straight up through Germany. Only small pockets of bronze are found at the outer portions of the Empire. This is not surprising for the Greek East, which produced its own bronze, but this cannot explain the scarcity for Gaul, Spain, and Britain. Hardly any at all travelled outside of Roman territory. The map of all silver demonstrates that (fig. 2) not only it was more evenly disbursed but that a greater portion of it travelled outside of Roman territory. More dramatically, the map of all gold (fig. 3) indicates the extent that it may travel. 11% (737 out of 6,798) of all gold finds are from the Indian subcontinent.<sup>17</sup> Most of the Indian gold hoards were deposited during Julio-Claudian dynasty,<sup>18</sup> indicating that they travelled very far in a very short span of time.

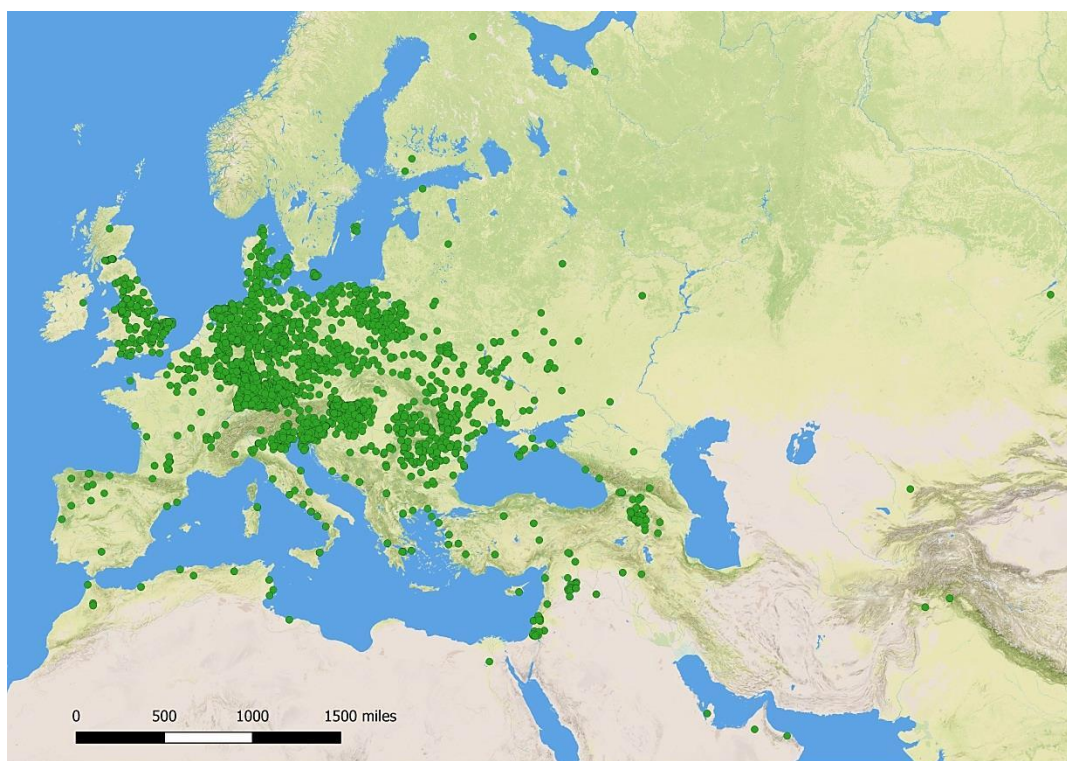
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<sup>17</sup> Such findings corroborate earlier studies emphasizing the mobility of precious metal. See Howgego 1996.

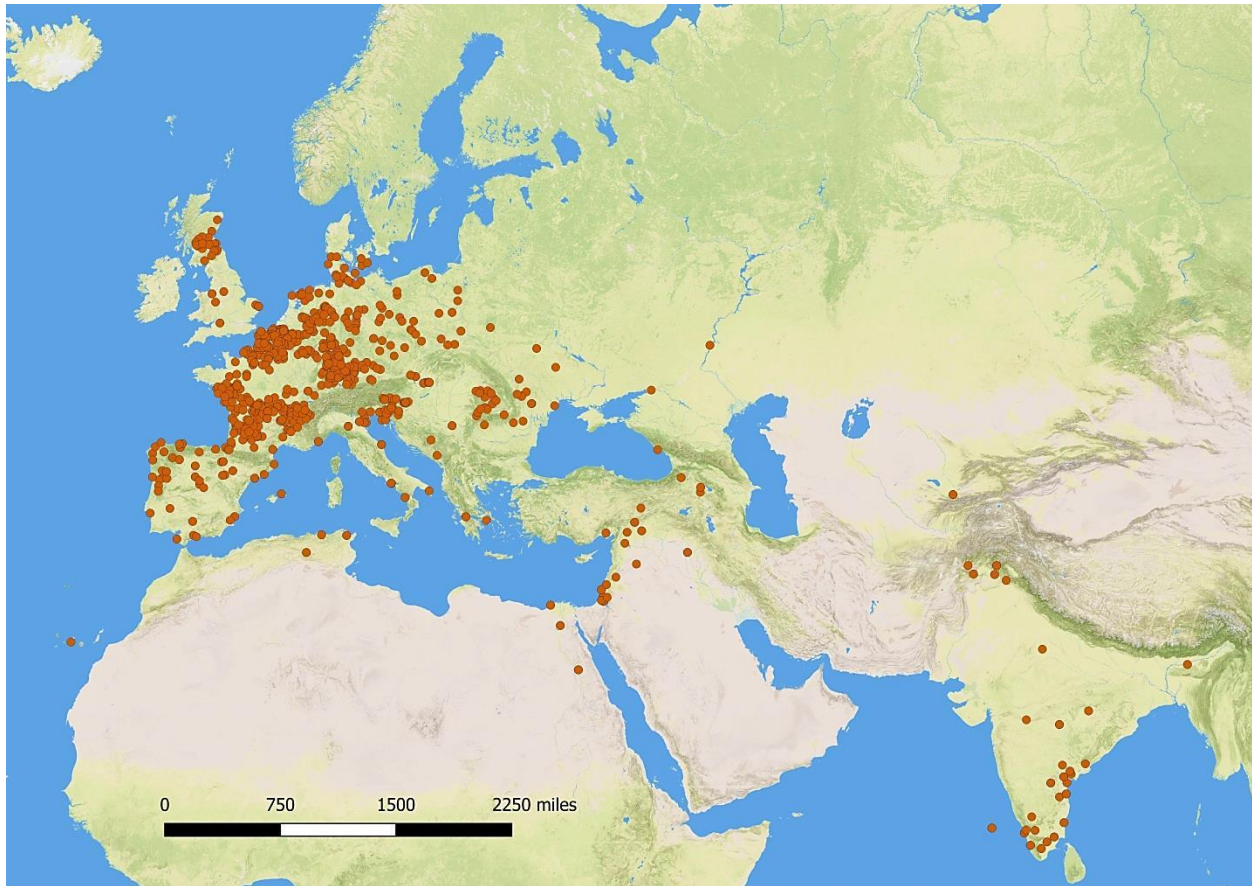
<sup>18</sup> The latest Roman gold hoard in India in the database is dated to the mid-second century.



**Figure 1.** Map of all Roman Imperial bronze coinage of the Principate known to the database (81,412 coins).



**Figure 2.** Map of all Roman Imperial silver coinage of the Principate known to the database (217,178 coins).



**Figure 3.** Map of all Roman Imperial gold coinage of the Principate known to the database (6,798 coins).

*Aes\** coinage, however, did not travel far, if at all, once introduced into circulation. Andrew Hobley’s monumental 1989 study on the circulatory patterns of Roman bronze concluded it did not travel far once introduced to a province, asserting that, “a bronze coin do[es] most of its traveling within a year or so of its minting, and then rattl[ed] around in a province until lost or melted down.”<sup>19</sup> He adds that, “even within a province, coins may not travel very far.”<sup>20</sup>

In spite of Hobley’s and others’ studies to the contrary, some scholars remain convinced Rome must have developed a ‘system’ to ensure that bronze stayed in the provinces, while

<sup>19</sup> Hobley 1989, 139.

<sup>20</sup> Hobley 1989, 139.

precious metal coinage maintained a constant revolving-door status with the mint at Rome. Such a system was outlined in a 1977 study by Richard Reece. Although his reasoning is unconvincing, and his view of Roman administration outdated, Reece's model continues to find acceptance in recent scholarship.<sup>21</sup> In his words:

“The army, especially in frontier provinces, was the main consumer of new precious coin, and the Civil Service would have been responsible for payments for public works and general running expenses. It seems likely that the portion of official salaries paid in gold or silver would have to be changed into bronze before being spent. This ensured that the precious metals returned to the hands of the state soon after being disseminated\* so that it [sic] might be returned to central authority and re-cycled.”<sup>22</sup>

It is important to stress that although silver would have been *recycled* through payment of taxes to Rome, it was not *restruck*. Recent metallurgical analyses have demonstrated that denarii\* were typically minted from fresh silver.<sup>23</sup> Silver would have returned to Rome as taxes, and been paid out again; often not returning to the same region from which it came. As such, silver coin could see wide travel across the Empire as it rotated through this process.

Regarding distribution, it appears that coins of all metals were distributed en masse to recipients. Analysis of the hoard evidence is revealing. Some examples: hoard (#636) at Sălaşuri contains reasonable numbers of varying issues of represented emperors, but contains massive numbers of few issues of Antoninus Pius, with whom the hoard ends for inventory; a hoard (#1001) at Bad Nauheim contains only Trajanic coins that are of his earliest issues; a hoard (#1148) at Pompeii contains only Neronian bronzes, of which 83% [49 and 51 of 121 respectively] are comprised of the two types (Victory and IANVM CLVSIT) of the same issue; a

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<sup>21</sup> Bourne 2001, 32–33; Butcher 2004, 143; Ariel and Fontanille 2012, 24.

<sup>22</sup> Reece 1977, 643–644.

<sup>23</sup> Butcher and Ponting 2015, 434–460.

hoard (#1012) at Düsseldorf contains *only* Augustan aurei\* of the same type (Gaius and Lucius types with: DESIG PRINC IVVENT) and of the same issue; a hoard (#1181) at Billingsgate of 138 denarii contains 122 of the same type (Providentia) and of the same issue of Septimius Severus; and a temple hoard (#27) within the Mithraeum at Trier, of which nine of the twelve deposited coins are Caligulan bronzes of the same issue of Vesta types.

Therefore, the coinage<sup>24</sup> found in a particular location may accurately indicate not only what was in circulation for a region, but also what coinage types were transmitted to it.

Traditional assessment, however, maintains that coin types were never targeted, that is to say aimed at a particular social class (e.g. senators, provincial elite, soldiers, Rome's city populace, the Praetorian Guard) or to specific regions within the Empire.<sup>25</sup> Rather, the argument goes that coins of varying type were distributed to varying locales with no concern for the iconography or inscription\* they bore. I challenge this view by arguing for geographical targeting of certain coin types at certain times. I argue that coinage could be exploited as a conscious instrument of communication that enabled varying messages to be purposefully circulated to different geographical regions and to distinct sectors of Roman society.<sup>26</sup> In other words, a structured and efficient communication system did exist, capable of fine-tuning the presentation of a particular message to meet the emperor's current concerns. I do not argue, however, that this was a constant practice, only that such planned dissemination\* occurred from time to time.

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<sup>24</sup> This is less true for gold coinages. As noted above, the mobility of Roman coin was an inverse relationship with its intrinsic value: the lower the denomination the less it traveled. While exceptions surely exist, a shorthand (and oversimplified) overview is that *aes* coinages circulated at the civic level, silver coinages circulated at the provincial level, and gold coinages circulated Empire-wide and beyond.

<sup>25</sup> Howgego 1995, 71; Noreña 2011, 33.

<sup>26</sup> For more on this see Chapter Five.



All coin images shown in this dissertation are *not* to scale and do not specify diameters unless coin size is germane. A representation of the various denominations discussed and their respective sizes is included below (fig. 4).



**Figure 4.** Representation of Roman Imperial denominations (to scale).

The images used for coins of a given type are selected based on state of preservation. Given the lesser daily use of gold coinages, many coin images present are gold. This alone should not imply that all issues represented by the image are, for instance, gold.

## OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

## **CHAPTER ONE**

Chapter One sets out to demonstrate that Romans were keenly aware of the imagery on their coinage, and that many did internalize and process the socio-political meaning of numismatic imagery. Analysis of numerous literary and epigraphic sources, as well as internal numismatic evidence, can collectively demonstrate that not only was the public in antiquity receptive to what iconography and legends\* were on their coins, but that they often saw Imperial coins as political statement by the emperor.

Additionally, we will see that the implications of what imagery appeared on a coin's reverse (and even at times which emperor's bust is on the obverse\*) could have a direct effect on how the coin was used for non-monetary purposes—such as ritualistic consumption and deposition. In short, this chapter emphasizes that coin imagery was noticed and considered by both elites and commoners as a vehicle for expressive and politically-charged statements by the emperor himself.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

Chapter Two is divided into two parts. Part one explores the administration and organization of the Roman mint, so far as it can be reconstructed and understood. While debate about these issues persists, all agree that the mint was important and carefully administered. 2.1 aims to provide insight into the manufacture and distribution mechanisms of Imperial coinage, so as to elucidate the framework within which it was minted. 2.2 focuses on the selection of coinage types, with particular attention to the controversial subject of the role of the emperor in type design and selection. Numerous case studies that seem to indicate direct Imperial involvement are given particular attention.

### **CHAPTER THREE**

Chapter Three explores the inter-relationship between disruptive political events and the employment of propagandistic typology on coinage. I examine the production and mintage of a variety of reverse type issues and assess how their production correlates with certain events that may account for them. I argue throughout that the design and dissemination of particular reverse types were purposefully executed to communicate an important and distinct message. During times of upheaval in particular, reverse type selection was not an incidental choice, but instead it aimed to change or calcify certain sentiments among varying audiences. In short, this chapter argues from the results of numerous analyses of case studies derived from the database of more than 300,000 coins (see below) that the regime did seek to mold public opinion through numismatic propaganda.

### **CHAPTER FOUR**

Chapter Four explores whether the regime ever sought to control the distribution, or limit the circulation, of certain coins to a particular geographic region based on their reverse type. Four case studies are explored for which both ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ geographical targeting can be clearly identified: the Clementia type of Tiberius, the RCC type of Caligula, the Judaea Capta types of Vespasian, and the *debellator* issues of Trajan. The utilization of the database combined with GIS mapping provides groundbreaking analyses. These indicate the level of complexity and precision that Rome was able to utilize in targeting coins of certain reverse type to a particular audience for propagandistic purposes.

### **CHAPTER FIVE**

Chapter Five examines whether Rome ever differentiated the messages on Imperial coinage based on the coin’s denomination with a view to targeting a particular audience, group,



or strata of Roman society. Analyses of individual reigns as well as for the entire Principate are conducted to determine if denominational targeting can be identified from internal evidence.

Nine separate studies examine *aes* coinages, denarii, and aurei.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

Chapter Six examines the reception and success of Imperial propaganda. To evaluate the success of propaganda for the Roman world is a challenge, but a variety of case studies can show that audiences understood, and responded to, certain propagandistic messages conveyed through Imperial coinage.

This chapter also addresses *damnatio memoriae* of coins, which involves both the image as well as the name of an emperor. *Damnatio* enacted both by individuals and by the state are analyzed, revealing that in both instances the imagery and inscription on coins mattered. Additionally, a case study of an enigmatic Roman Provincial\* series\* from Byzantium is explored and contextualized within a broader system of regional counter-propaganda.

## **THE DATABASE**

Prior to my research, the assemblage of numismatic coin-find data has been exceptionally limited. No attempt to create an exhaustive database of coin finds (let alone one linked to GIS mapping) has been undertaken. There have been limited attempts, most notably the UK Government's Portable Antiquities Scheme.<sup>27</sup> While this database is invaluable for a variety of reasons, it provides a very limited spread of evidence, as it is confined to new finds within the UK. The American Numismatic Society [ANS] has digitized most of its vast numismatic

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<sup>27</sup> <https://finds.org.uk/database>.

collection in a searchable database,<sup>28</sup> yet the “find spot” feature is largely useless since the provenance of almost the entire collection is unknown. The University of Oxford’s Coin Hoards of the Roman Empire Project [CHRE],<sup>29</sup> recently became publically accessible, yet search functionality is currently limited.<sup>30</sup> This is planned as a database of all known Roman hoards, and will no doubt prove invaluable when fully implemented. However, this database does not extend to single finds. These can provide a much fuller understanding of numismatic activity under the Empire.

Previous attempts to gauge and analyze ancient coin distribution drew on data from a small array of hoards—typically no more than a dozen. This dissertation, conversely, draws from an unprecedented database that I have created. It offers detailed archaeological data and provenance for over 300,000 Roman Imperial coins representing over 1,500 coin hoards and over 75,000 single finds from 57 countries. From such a comprehensive and expansive dataset analyses of numismatic evidence regarding coin circulation, distribution, and the possibility of geographical targeting can now be undertaken with greater confidence.

The database is compiled from hundreds of individual field reports, hoard lists, regional compendia, and articles that catalog finds at a particular location. Compilation of the database took nearly three years. I am its sole author. While I have gained an adequate grasp of many less-familiar languages for the purpose (Romanian, Norwegian, Polish, and Hebrew), I owe much gratitude to Vaclav Shatillo, who provided invaluable assistance in navigating the oft-ignored numismatic scholarship published in Russian (primarily of the Soviet era).

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<sup>28</sup> MANTIS, <http://numismatics.org/search/maps?>

<sup>29</sup> [http://oxrep.classics.ox.ac.uk/coin\\_hoards\\_of\\_the\\_roman\\_empire\\_project/](http://oxrep.classics.ox.ac.uk/coin_hoards_of_the_roman_empire_project/)

<sup>30</sup> One can search for an explicit RIC number but cannot blanket search for a reverse type or search for any wild-card term (!). Additionally, the lack of allowing any form of iconographic search to be employed is a serious defect that hopefully will be addressed in future updates.

My database contains only a small portion of coin finds that I examined. I do not include Republican, Provincial, or foreign (e.g., Celtic, Persian, Carthaginian) coins. The database is limited to Roman Imperial issues from 32 BC to AD 235. Roman coinage production and administration underwent major changes during the Third Century Crisis (AD 235–284) and again after Diocletian. Imperial mint(s), denominations, and circulatory aspects undergo significant changes, so too did the entire Imperial governmental apparatus, thereby creating considerable obstacles for a study of the Imperial propaganda for the entire Empire in the fourth century or later. *Barbarisierungen* and counterfeit coins were not included.

I include Roman Imperial coin finds minted during the Principate only if *all* the following information is provided:

1. Issuing Emperor
2. Denomination
3. Find type
4. Reverse type
5. Find location

Once the data was compiled into Excel, I revisited each entry and assigned each coin a unique GEONAME Identification Number that ties it to the precise GIS location of its find-spot. Ryan Horne of the Ancient World Mapping Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill then configured the database to link with the latest mapping software (QGIS).

Note Further:

1. Errors surely remain in the nearly 3.5 million individual entries (11 columns of detailed information for each of the 300,000+ coins in the database) that were entered manually. I take full responsibility for incorrect information.

2. Though some publications of coin finds provide a modern-day city or town from which they were found, problems may exist. For example, if the town was very small it may not have a GEONAMES\* ID. For such cases I assign it an ID from the nearest GEONAME location (never more than 3 miles away). Other cases were more problematic, such as small town names in former Soviet satellite countries that have otherwise undergone significant political changes in the past century, where various names may be used for a town.<sup>31</sup> Little hope to discern reliable provenance can be had in these cases. For these rare cases a centrally-located ‘node’ in said modern country was used. Notation was made that GIS location is a ‘node’ as well as the name of town cited.
3. Hoards ending after AD 235 do not include detailed information after Alexander Severus in most cases.<sup>32</sup> In the “find type” column, and in parentheses, I note how many more coins were within the hoard but are not listed. Mention is also made of the emperor with whom the hoard ends. This data is recorded as a notation for every coin of that hoard.
4. Context of find is included when known (e.g., “Roman fortress”; “town”; “near amphitheater”).
5. Some publications do not indicate what edition of RIC is being used. This is a problem as reference numbers between editions are incongruous. To address

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<sup>31</sup> Socialist Republic of Romania; People’s Republic of Hungary; Yugoslavia; Serbia and Montenegro; People’s Socialist Republic of Albania; Estonia; Latvia; Kazakhstan; Kyrgyzstan; Tajikistan; Belarus; Moldavia; Azerbaijan; Georgia; Croatia; Palestine; and Cyprus.

<sup>32</sup> Some hoards end with Gordian III, for example, and are included. Additionally many include a small amount of coins from later emperors and, in some cases, are all included for completion’s sake. For the whole database of more than 300,000 coins, no more than a few dozen post-235 coins are registered.

this, I include both reverse types that the coin *might be* and note that the publication does not specify an edition.<sup>33</sup>

6. The Italian *RMR* series is riddled with inconsistencies and bad data. (e.g., “Caligula, RIC 765” though no edition of RIC has Caligulan entries numbered over 200). Such coins are not included.
7. ‘H.Frag.’ indicates that the publication lists only a selection of coins from a much larger hoard. This is a problem especially for eighteenth century and older publications, as they often only describe aurei or coins that they find particularly interesting in great detail, and only remark “also included were 2,035 denarii.”
8. Some references in publications have different type data than listed. For instance, “Ant. Pius, S, RIC 608, Pietas,” although RIC 608 references “Juno Sospita” as the reverse type. For such cases *both* reverse types are listed in the database as “potential” reverse types.
9. Coins included in the database need not have a RIC number. There are many coins whose type is not known to RIC; in their ‘reference’ column “???” is recorded. These uncategorized coins, however, contain a detailed description of the reverse and legend. Additionally, other standard references (Cohen, BMCRE, Strack, etc.) are occasionally used to identify types.
10. Some exceptional types may be more easily recognizable than standard types, which could present potential bias in the publications from which the database is derived.

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<sup>33</sup> There are currently two editions for *RIC* I: Augustus to Vitellius (1923 and 1984). There also is a partial revised edition for *RIC* II: Vespasian to Hadrian (1926). The second edition of *RIC* II is planned to be divided into three new volumes. Only the first of these, *RIC* II.1: Vespasian to Domitian (2007), has been published. *RIC* II.2: Nerva to Trajan is expected by 2019.

## **CHAPTER ONE: PERCEPTION OF NUMISMATIC TYPOLOGY IN THE ROMAN WORLD**

State currencies, from the first electrum\* staters\* struck in Lydia in the late seventh century BC to modern ones, seldom demonstrate significant changes of design and of visual presentation. For instance, classical Greek poleis, Hellenistic kingdoms, Achaemenid Persia, Carthage, the chiefdoms of pre-Roman Gaul and Britain as well as the post-Roman European nations, all minted coinage whose reverse design was near-uniform and unchanging throughout their respective histories of mintage.

The imagery on most ancient coins was so standard and fixed for each minting authority that entire denominations were often referred to by their iconography. For example, Athenian tetradrachms\* were termed as ‘owls,’ Aeginetan staters ‘turtles,’ and Persian gold and silver coins ‘Darics’ (fig. 1).



**Figure 1.** Examples of non-Roman ancient coinages and their common shorthand label. Many of the beginning dates are approximations.

To further underscore the lack of typological diversity, it is commonplace that coinages minted at Greek colonies were typologically identical to issues minted at their respective mother city. The only variations present on these ‘colonial’ issues were minor indications of local mintage, often in the form of an ethnic\*, that may appear on the obverse, reverse, or perhaps on both (fig. 2).





(A)

Original Corinthian Pegasus Stater



(B)

Leukas



(C)

Syracuse



(D)

Anaktorion



(E)

Ambracia



(F)

Agros Amphiloichicum



(G)

Corcyra



(H)

Locri



(I)

Medma

**Figure 2.** A Corinthian Pegasus stater (A), and examples of staters minted at Corinthian colonies (B–I).



Ancient mints produced coinage for hundreds of years with little concern to alter numismatic typology, preferring instead homogeneity and consistency. In this respect, Roman coinage<sup>34</sup> is *extremely* anomalous. Here change is sometimes so common and frequent that even narrowing an examination to a matter of months can reveal the extremity of the phenomenon. The emperor Galba, for instance, reveals no less than 521 known typological combinations and variants of Imperial coinage during his 7 month reign (June 68–January 69). Even among Imperial issues of the Principate (31 BC–AD 235), we discover 12,982 known combinations of obverse and reverse iconography and inscription. It is worth note that many previously unknown combinations are reported by scholars each year.<sup>35</sup>

This sheer enormity of Roman typological variance necessitates explanation. My claim is that a desire to manipulate public opinion is the mainspring for the vast range and constantly-changing types; propaganda drove Imperial numismatic typology. However, before addressing the propagandistic nature of the iconography and inscriptions found on Roman Imperial coinages, it is imperative to address two fundamental issues: A) did the users of coinage in antiquity examine their coins? B) did they appear to notice and understand any of what was displayed on the obverse or reverse?

As noted in the Introduction, current scholarly opinion is disinclined to regard the various official media of communications as conduits of propaganda. Rather, it views Roman coins as no more than economic objects. Their iconography and inscriptions were chosen by a minor

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<sup>34</sup> Here “Roman” coins include those that are Republican, Imperial, and Provincial.

<sup>35</sup> Each successive edition of *RIC* presents an additional 20–40% of previously unknown known types per emperor.

official. They were little noticed, if at all, and usually misunderstood. Michael Crawford outlines the competing positions:

“at one extreme there is the view that the emperor himself paid particular attention to the choice of types for his coinage in order to draw attention to his virtues and his successes and that these types had a major impact on the population of the Roman Empire, at the other extreme the view that only a minor department of government was involved and that the pictorial types of the Imperial coinage were little noticed and often misunderstood.”<sup>36</sup>

Harold Mattingly and Carol Sutherland are the chief advocates of the former perspective,<sup>37</sup> while Hugo Jones, Michael Crawford, and most other scholars adopt the latter perspective.<sup>38</sup> The two perspectives were conveniently referred to as ‘imperialists’ and ‘economists’ in the Introduction above. Reaction against the imperialists came in 1956 from Hugo Jones, who outlined his reservations about propaganda on Romans coins in a *Festschrift* for Harold Mattingly.<sup>39</sup> More germane for the current discussion, Jones also argues that coin types and legends were rarely observed or understood in antiquity.<sup>40</sup> He argues that coin types and legends would have been incomprehensible for many, even if they did take notice. The argument goes that in the eastern regions of the Empire the Latin legends would have meant nothing; even in the west the illiterate would not have been able to understand them, and the educated “had something better to do;”<sup>41</sup> types would not have resonated with the common man,

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<sup>36</sup> Crawford 1983b, 47.

<sup>37</sup> Charlesworth 1937; Mattingly 1946, 1948; Sutherland 1951, 1959; Grant 1952; Wolters 2003.

<sup>38</sup> Jones 1956; Buttrey 1972; Belloni 1974, 1976; Wallace-Hadrill 1981a, 1981b; Levick 1982; Crawford 1983b;

<sup>39</sup> Jones famously remarks: “Some of the legends and types have a fairly obvious propaganda-value, celebrating imperial victories and benefactions. No doubt they were intended to be vehicles of propaganda, though their importance can be exaggerated” (1956, 14).

<sup>40</sup> Jones 1956, 15.

<sup>41</sup> Jones 1956, 13; Levick 1982, 105.

who would see the abstract ‘virtues’ as “excogitated by Greek intellectuals;”<sup>42</sup> coins are meaningless and benign artifacts, as such “there is no *suadere*, only *monere*,”<sup>43</sup> mint-masters paid no attention either, since coins were merely the end product of a manufacturing process;<sup>44</sup> and lastly and most significantly the ancient authors do not comment on the message that coins are thought to have carried.<sup>45</sup>

On this last point, Jones states that “if coin legends and types had possessed the importance that some numismatists attach to them, it would seem likely that some ancient author would have commented on them.”<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, he flatly states that “there is no literary evidence.”<sup>47</sup>

### **LITERARY EVIDENCE OF PERCEPTION OF NUMISMATIC TYPOLOGY**

In my opinion, however, the literary evidence clearly demonstrates that in antiquity coin types and legends were noticed, interpreted, and even at times evaluated as a means to communicate a political message to their users.

An instructive remark comes from a famous scene in the Gospel of Mark. When Jesus arrived at Jerusalem and began to preach against the hypocrisy of the chief priests there, they wished to arrest him but feared the crowd, so they sent some Pharisees and Herodians to try to trap him by asking him:

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<sup>42</sup> Wallace-Hadrill 1981a, 20; 1981b, 298.

<sup>43</sup> Belloni 1974, 997, 1018.

<sup>44</sup> Buttrey 1972, 89.

<sup>45</sup> Jones 1956, 15; Levick 1982, 105; Crawford 1983, 47.

<sup>46</sup> Jones 1956, 14.

<sup>47</sup> Jones 1956, 14.

Διδάσκαλε, οἶδαμεν ὅτι ἀληθὴς εἶ καὶ οὐ μέλει σοι περὶ οὐδενός,  
οὐ γὰρ βλέπεις εἰς πρόσωπον ἀνθρώπων, ἀλλ' ἐπ' ἀληθείας τὴν  
ὁδὸν τοῦ θεοῦ διδάσκεις: ἔξεστιν δοῦναι κῆνσον Καίσαρι ἢ οὐ;  
δῶμεν ἢ μὴ δῶμεν;

“Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality, but teach the way of God in accordance with truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not? Should we pay or should we not pay?”<sup>48</sup>

As a means to counter their trap, Jesus answered:

φέρετέ μοι δηνάριον ἵνα ἴδω. οἱ δὲ ἤνεγκαν. καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς  
Τίνος ἡ εἰκὼν αὕτη καὶ ἡ ἐπιγραφή; οἱ δὲ εἶπαν αὐτῷ Καίσαρος. ὁ  
δὲ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν Τὰ Καίσαρος ἀπόδοτε Καίσαρι καὶ τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ τῷ  
θεῷ.

“Bring me a denarius and let me see it.” They brought one. He said to them, “Whose head is this and whose title?” They answered, “The emperor’s.” Jesus replied to them, “Then render to the emperor what is the emperor’s, and render to God what is God’s.”<sup>49</sup>

There are several points to take note of from this passage. First, those in the audience were people of Jerusalem, and surely aside from the spies sent by the chief priests the crowd was an uneducated group. According to Jones, however, those in the East, even the educated, would not be capable of interpreting a Latin inscribed coin.<sup>50</sup> The respondents from the crowd, however, had no trouble interpreting the coin. Second, Jesus asked for a denarius (fig. 3). This request carries the implication that those present have knowledge of the Imperial denominations. Third, the question “whose head and whose title?” (Τίνος ἡ εἰκὼν αὕτη καὶ ἡ ἐπιγραφή;) <sup>51</sup> is purely

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<sup>48</sup> Mark 12:14.

<sup>49</sup> Mark 12:15–17.

<sup>50</sup> Jones 1956, 14: “Latin legends meant nothing to the eastern half of the empire, where anyone who was literate could read Greek only.” Though not stated by Jones, surely he would acknowledge that many Israelites could also read Hebrew.

<sup>51</sup> Mark 12:16.

rhetorical, as it is difficult to imagine the crowd did not know what was on the denarius. It is equally difficult to imagine that the respondent, or anyone present for that matter, would need to inspect the coin personally to see exactly what image and legend were on it.

The event need not have *actually* happened in order for the account in Mark to be significant. First, the author was himself a contemporary, which alone demonstrates that people *did* notice numismatic type and legend. Second, it is difficult to imagine that a scenario would have been conjured up whose essential visual prop readers could not instantly bring to mind. The Gospel account demonstrates that uneducated peoples from the East had ready access to Roman coinage and were well aware of their types and legends.



**Figure 3.** Tiberius. Rome mint. Denarius. Obv: TI CAESAR DIVI AVG F AVGVS TVS / Rev: PONTIF MAXIM. Livia seated r. on chair with ornamented legs, holding long vertical scepter and branch. RIC 29.<sup>52</sup>

Suetonius twice mentions Roman coin type and legend. First, he reports that, following a particularly positive visit with an astrologer, “Augustus was so confident of the greatness of his destiny, that he published his horoscope, and struck a silver coin, bearing upon it the sign of Capricorn, under the influence of which he was born” (*tantam mox fiduciam fati Augustus habuit, ut thema suum uulgauerit nummumque argenteum nota sideris Capricorni, quo natus est,*

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<sup>52</sup> This type is commonly referred to as a “tribute penny.” Tradition holds that it was this common denarius coin that most likely would have been the type featured in the Gospel of Mark.

*percusserit*).<sup>53</sup> This passage has additional significance since not only does Suetonius directly mention a reverse type of Augustus, but he also draws a connection between imperial prerogative and typology. Cassius Dio also makes note of the general event but does not directly mention the coin. Dio remarks: “Augustus in an edict made clear to all the conjunction of the stars under which he was conceived” ([Αὔγουστον] ἐκ προγραφῆς πᾶσι τὴν τῶν ἀστέρων διάταξιν, ὑφ’ ὧν ἐγγένητο, φανερωῖσαι).<sup>54</sup>



**Figure 4.** Augustus. Tarraco mint. Aureus.\* Obv: \*no legend\* / Rev: AVGVSTVS. Capricorn right, holding globe attached to rudder between front hooves; cornucopia above its back. RIC I<sup>2</sup> 125.

The role of the emperor in the selection of types is dealt with Chapter Two, Part Two. However, the very fact that Suetonius remarks that the emperor was behind the coin design highlights some notable aspects. First, it demonstrates that some Romans noticed reverses and questioned their motive and inspiration. Second, that an explanation for the reverse type is presented suggests that a certain interest in such matters existed for at least the upper classes. Whether the interest was real or falsely perceived by Suetonius and Dio is, again, irrelevant: They believed that their audience would appreciate the anecdote.

<sup>53</sup> Suet. *Aug.* 94.12.

<sup>54</sup> Cass. Dio 616.25.5.

In a second instance, Suetonius makes direct reference to an Imperial type and legend is in his *Life of Nero*. Numerous ancient sources relate that Nero frequently recited poetry and sang with his lyre publicly, dressed himself in the attire of Apollo Citharoedus, and even commissioned statues of himself as Apollo Citharoedus.<sup>55</sup> Suetonius, however, also reports that Nero “placed sacred crowns in his private quarters around his couches, as well as upon statues representing him in the guise of a lyre-player; he even had a coin struck with the same imagery” (*sacras coronas in cubiculis circum lectos posuit, item statuas suas citharoedico habitu, qua nota etiam nummum percussit*).<sup>56</sup> The Apollo Citharoedus<sup>57</sup> type (fig. 5), like the Capricorn type of Augustus mentioned above, shows Suetonius again applying agency of the emperor for a reverse type. The early emergence of the type most likely corresponds with the *Ludi Quinquennales*, held in 60, for which Nero was a victorious ‘competitor.’<sup>58</sup>



<sup>55</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 16.4.2; Cass. Dio 62.29.1; Suet. *Nero*. 10.2.

<sup>56</sup> Suet. *Nero*, 25.2.

<sup>57</sup> It was in this manner that Nero sang over burning Rome (Cass. Dio 62.18). For more on his appearances as such, see Tac. *Ann.* 14.14–15, 15.33–34, 16.4; Suet. *Nero* 21, 2; Cass. Dio 63.9. For the dress of Apollo, Virg. *Aen.* 6.645: *Nec non Threicius longa cum veste sacerdos / obloquitur numeris septem discrimina vocum / iamque eadem digitis iam pectine pulsat eburno*. For the applause of Nero, Cass. Dio 61.20: ὁ καλὸς Καῖσαρ, ὁ Ἀπόλλων, ὁ Αὔγουστος, εἰς ὥς Πύθιος.

<sup>58</sup> The wreath was for victors. For more, see Tac. *Ann.* 14.20, 16.4; Cass. Dio 61.21; Suet. *Nero*, 12.

**Figure 5.** Nero. Lugdunum mint. As. Obv: NERO CLAVD CAESAR AVG GERMANI / Rev: PONTIF MAX TR POT IMP PP –SC; I in exergue.\* Nero as Apollo Citharoedus advancing right, playing lyre. RIC I<sup>2</sup> 380.

The very same points are worth noting for Nero’s Apollo Citharoedus type as for Augustus’ Capricorn type noted above: a highlighted connection between imperial prerogative and typology; Romans noticed reverse types and sought to explain their iconography; and the topic was of seeming interest to Romans—at least so far as Suetonius perceived.

The final direct autopsy of a Roman coin found in the literary sources that I will present is, perhaps, not only the most notable instance of an ancient source describing a coin type and even imagining motive for its issuance, but also a very famous coin from the ancient world:

Brutus’ Eid Mar coin (fig. 10). Cassius Dio’s description of the coin:

Βροῦτος μὲν ταῦτά τε ἔπρασεν, καὶ ἐς τὰ νομίσματα ἃ ἐκόπτετο εἰκόνα τε αὐτοῦ καὶ πλῖον ξιφιδία τε δύο ἐνετύπου, δηλῶν ἐκ τε τούτου καὶ διὰ τῶν γραμμάτων ὅτι τὴν πατρίδα μετὰ τοῦ Κασσίου ἠλευθερωκὺς εἶη.

“Brutus was busy with these things, and on the coin which he struck he impressed his own image, and a Cap of Liberty and two daggers; by this and through the inscription he made plain that he, with Cassius, had liberated their fatherland.”<sup>59</sup>

This statement is a lucid description of the Eid Mar coin and demonstrates the most obvious, and arguably correct, interpretation of its meaning.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Cass. Dio 47.25.3.

<sup>60</sup> Ehrhardt 1984, 41.





**Figure 10.** Brutus. Mobile mint (N. Greece?). Aureus. Obv: BRVT IMP L PLAET CEST / Rev: EID MAR. Pileus between two daggers. RRC 508/3.

Michael Crawford offers the economist's perspective on Dio's commentary on the Eid Mar coin.<sup>61</sup> Crawford argues that neither Dio nor any of his sources actually saw this coin. He states:

“The description is tolerably accurate, but again there is no reason whatever to suppose that Dio or his sources ever saw one of these coins...Furthermore the description of the legend, with the involvement of Cassius, is not such as one would derive from an inspection of the coins, which bear no reference to Cassius. I think we may believe that Dio's record of the coin does not derive from autopsy by anyone, but from a chronicle of the activities of Brutus.”<sup>62</sup>

This statement by Crawford is bewildering. First, the description by Dio could not have been made clearer. Second, Crawford's claim that “the description of the legend, with the involvement of Cassius, is not such as one would derive from an inspection of the coins,” has been rightly called “a travesty.”<sup>63</sup> Christopher Ehrhardt aptly states that “Dio does not in fact

<sup>61</sup> Crawford 1983b.

<sup>62</sup> Crawford 1983b, 52–53.

<sup>63</sup> Ehrhardt 1984, 42.

mention the wording of the legend; the type makes plain Brutus' claim that the assassination on the Ides of March was done to liberate Rome."<sup>64</sup> Though the coin does not explicitly name Cassius, it must be remembered that "Brutus and Cassius" is an almost inevitable stock phrase.<sup>65</sup> If additional justification is needed for "μετὰ τοῦ Κασσίου" the iconography should be more than sufficient: the reverse shows two daggers indicating not *one* assassin but *two*. Moreover, the two daggers are of a deliberately dissimilar design (the right dagger is clearly lacking an additional crossbar at the butt of the hilt), indicating that it was likely not for symmetry's sake or to denote a plurality of assassins, but that it indicates *two* distinct assassins, of whom one was Brutus; who other than Cassius could be indicated for the second?

Regardless of the intended identities (if any at all) that the daggers may represent, economists have to grapple with Dio's thorough and correct description of the coin type. As follows, most absurd is Crawford's argument that the description of the coin "does not derive from autopsy by *anyone*," meaning that in order to support the economist's perception that ancients did not notice their coins, one has to accept that Dio managed to imagine the reverse of the coin out of pure imagination and get every detail completely accurate. How could Dio do this according to Crawford? Recall that Crawford wishes us to believe that Dio's description of the Eid Mar coin "does not derive from autopsy by anyone, but from a chronicle of the activities of Brutus."

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<sup>64</sup> Ehrhardt 1984, 42.

<sup>65</sup> Syme 1958, 557 n.7, highlights how Tacitus is "almost alone of the Latins insist[ing] on the order '*Cassius et Brutus*'...The author's hostility to convention and to 'ideologies' could not be more emphatically paraded." Syme notes that the *unconventional* order '*Cassius et Brutus*' is found three times in the oration of Cremutius Cordus (4.34) and again in his own person '*Cassius atque Brutus*' (3.76.2) and '*Cassii et Brutorum exitus*' (1.20.3). Syme, however, states that Tacitus is not flaunting conventional phraseology in using the form '*Remus Romulusque*' (13.58), however, as it is "good archaic usage, cf. Cassius Hermina, fr. 11; Cicero, *De legibus* I.8, &c."

Economists often attempt to buttress their arguments by citing Cicero's silence on coin types, particularly on coins issued for Pompey at Apollonia in 49 BC.<sup>66</sup> As if an *argumentum ex silentio* is not problematic enough, one has to call into question how economists interpret the sources that are not silent. As seen above, Crawford dismisses explicit comment in the sources when it does occur. It follows to ask, therefore, that even if Cicero *were to* comment on a coin type, what degree of detail (if that of Suetonius was insufficient) would suffice?

Aside from cases of detailed autopsy of coins in the literary record, numerous other examples survive that also demonstrate, fairly clearly, that numismatic iconography and inscription were noticed by ancient users. The *Historia Augusta* provides three notable examples. While any study of *Historia Augusta* is riddled with issues of fabrication and warranted caution, my purpose in exploring the source is for mere mention of noticed coin imagery, not for an accurate chronicle of events.

First, in the biography of one Trebellianus, it is stated that "[Trebellianus] even gave orders to strike coins" (*monetam etiam cudi iussit*).<sup>67</sup> It is worth note that no coins of his are known to exist, yet recent finds have managed to vindicate the especially-untrustworthy *SHA*, as a certain Domitianus was once thought to be fabrication until, now, two specimens of his coins have been found.<sup>68</sup> Trebellianus, however, seems more likely than not to be invention of the *SHA*, as the 'author' of the *tyranni triginta*, within which Trebellianus appears, is conveniently one Trebellus Pollio. Second, one Victoria, a reportedly influential woman who installed her son, grandson, and no less than four other soldiers as emperor, the last being Tetricus, had coins,

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<sup>66</sup> Crawford 1983b, 47, 54.

<sup>67</sup> *SHA, Tyrann. Trig.* 26.2.

<sup>68</sup> *RIC* V.2, 590; Okamura 1992; Benenson 2005.

according to the *SHA*, minted for her distinction. The *Historia Augusta* reports that, “coins of bronze, gold, and silver were also struck, and even today these types still exist among the Treviri” (*cusi sunt eius nummi aerie, aurei, et argenti, quorum hodieque forma exstat apud Treviros*).<sup>69</sup>

Whether Trebellianus or Victoria are a wholesale fabrication or not is, for our purposes here, rather inconsequential. The very mention that these usurpers minted coins underscores that for an ancient ruler the issuing of coinage is representative of legitimacy. If Romans were unaware of the imagery on coins, then a statement within the *Historia Augusta* attempting to increase the importance of a pretender by mention of his issuance of coins would fall flat, since readers would not be aware of who was the issuing authority in any scenario.

Lastly, the *Historia Augusta* offers an instructive anecdote in which the issues of legitimacy, memory, and political power are the subject of a fictitious debate. Recollection of four failed candidates is the focus:<sup>70</sup>

*Scis enim, mi Basse, quanta nobis contentio proxime fuerit cum amatore historiarum Marco Fonteio, cum ille diceret Firmum, qui Aureliani temporibus Aegyptum occupaverat, latrunculum fuisse non principem, contra ego mecumque Rufius Celsus et Ceionius Iulianus et Fabius Sossianus contenderet, dicentes illum et purpura usum et percussa moneta Augustum esse vocitatum, cum etiam nummos eius Severus Archontius protulit, de Graecis autem Aegyptiisque libris convicit illum αὐτοκράτορα in edictis suis esse vocatum.*

For you know, my dear Bassus, how great an argument we had only recently with Marcus Fonteius, that lover of history, when he asserted that Firmus, who had seized Egypt in the time of Aurelian, was not an emperor but merely a brigand, while I, and together with me Rufius Celsus and Ceionius Julianus and Fabius Sossianus, argued against him, maintaining that Firmus had both worn the purple and called himself Augustus on the coins that he

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<sup>69</sup> SHA, *Tyr. Trig.* 31.3.

<sup>70</sup> Ando 2012, 148.

struck, and Archontius Severus even brought out certain coins of his and proved, moreover, from Greek and Egyptian books that in his edicts he had called himself emperor.<sup>71</sup>

The report that Archontius Severus brought out coins from a collection is revealing. The implication that there were such collections is suggestive: first, that numismatic imagery was noticed, both reverse type and who issued the coin. Second, coins were seen as both valued treasures and historical documents worthy of accumulation for more than an economic store of wealth. While the debate is likely fabrication, it arguably holds an underlying realism; and even if not, that the author of the *Historia Augusta* would imagine such a scenario is still revealing.

The literary evidence, thus examined, clearly demonstrates that in antiquity coin type and legend were noticed, interpreted, and even at times evaluated as a means to communicate a political message to their users. Can we find evidence outside of the literary record?

### **EPIGRAPHIC EVIDENCE OF PERCEPTION OF NUMISMATIC TYPOLOGY**

Aside from literary evidence, a variety of other sources, too, indicate that coinages were noticed by ancient users. Epigraphic evidence, for instance, while not overly plentiful, offers additional support to the view that ancient coin users were keenly aware of imagery on their coinage. While many inscriptions survive from Classical and Hellenistic Greece that offer insight into the perception of numismatic imagery,<sup>72</sup> only one survives from the early Imperial period that can offer insight.

A bilingual Greek and Phoenician inscription dated to 211 from Palmyra suggests that beyond Rome's eastern borders not only had the pre-Neronian aureus been a favorite and

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<sup>71</sup> SHA, *Firm.* 2.1.

<sup>72</sup> Most notably, the second century BC inscription from Sestos, in northern Greece which mentions, among other points of interest, that the reason for their issuance of coinage was "so that the design of the city should be recognized" (νομειτεύεσθαι τὸν τῆς πόλεως χαρακτῆρα, *OGIS* 339.44). For more, see Burnett 1987, 66.

readily-accepted coin of Persian merchants, but that they even maintained large stocks of them.<sup>73</sup>

The dedicatory inscription at the base of a statue is for one Taimarsu, erected by his sons, who

“paid 300 ancient gold denarii” (τι αὐτοῖς χρυσᾶ παλαιὰ δηνάρια<ρι>[α] / τριακόσια

ἀναλω[μ]άτων).<sup>74</sup> Not only does the inscription suggest awareness of the higher purity of early

Imperial aurei, for which convenient shorthand for the Persian merchants would be notice of the

issuing authority, but also as rightly highlighted by Hugo Jones, the inscription “throws some

light on the curious fact that Julio-Claudian coins are far commoner in India than later ones.”<sup>75</sup>

My database has further verified this fact, as a staggering amount of Julio-Claudian aurei have a

provenance in India and as far as Sri Lanka. With consideration of the above-cited inscription

coupled with the vast archaeological data, it is safe to conclude that an astute and seasoned

eastern merchant would have been able to differentiate a Julio-Claudian aureus from others by

means of even brief autopsy.

Additionally, there are countless examples of inscriptions, the majority appearing to be

“gibberish, [a] meaningless collection of letters,”<sup>76</sup> scratched on coins.<sup>77</sup> Their original intent has

long been hypothesized as deriving from a wide range of motives: a mark of political or religious

significance; a sign of ownership; an attempt to transform the coin into a magical amulet; and

even as the result of boredom.<sup>78</sup> While it is most likely that a stable consensus will never be

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<sup>73</sup> Jones 1956, 30.

<sup>74</sup> *IGR* III, 1050.

<sup>75</sup> Jones 1956, 30.

<sup>76</sup> Crawford 1983b 50.

<sup>77</sup> Friedlaender 1876, 44–46; 1868, 146–147; Hill 1899, 197; *BMCR* I, 30; *ILLRP* I, 88, no. 114, no. 921; *ILLRP* I, 127, no. 191; *RRC* 419–436, NO. 408; Kraay 1976, 16–17; Seltman 121, 10, no. 218A.

<sup>78</sup> Vagi 1999, 164.

reached regarding the purpose of graffiti on coins, what is clear is that the inscriber added a mark to the coin so that, whether by man or god, it would not go unnoticed.

### **NUMISMATIC EVIDENCE OF PERCEPTION OF NUMISMATIC TYPOLOGY**

It is to the coins themselves that we now turn for support of the claim that numismatic iconography was noticed by users, that imagery carried an emblematic and important weight, and that the messages and symbolism thus conveyed were of measurable significance to their ancient audience.

The practice of *damnatio memoriae* has received a great deal of recent and thorough scholarly focus,<sup>79</sup> yet little work has been undertaken on the subject with regard to coinage. For the purposes of our current discussion, however, we will be concerned with how this practice on coinage can inform us of the perception of Roman Imperial coinage. Analysis of the practice of *damnatio memoriae* in its two forms (state-sanctioned/primary and private/secondary) and its deeper problems are dealt with extensively in Chapter Six. Suffice it say here regarding state-sanctioned *damnatio* that there exists tenuous, problematic, and inherently subjective support in the literary and archaeological record. Numismatic data, however, suggests that private *damnatio memoriae* is perceivable.

Anthony Barrett has rightly suggested that, given the impracticality of actually collecting and melting down all of an emperor's coins, it is reasonable to suppose that disfiguring his coins might have been a possible way for the common Roman to comply with a demonetization

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<sup>79</sup> Sijpesteijn 1974; López and Pilar 1976; Hedrick 2000; Varner 2004; Flower 2006; Calomino 2017.

order.<sup>80</sup> Regardless, plentiful examples exist that demonstrate a keen awareness of whose image was on the obverse of a defaced coin.<sup>81</sup> A few brief examples will suffice.

The supposed invalidation of Caligula's *aes* coinage under Claudius is perhaps the most famous example of demonetization in the Roman world,<sup>82</sup> and his coinages represent some of the most defaced within the numismatic corpus (fig. 11 & 12).<sup>83</sup>



**Figure 11.** Caligula. Ercavica mint. Provincial Aes. Obv: C CAESAR AVG GERMANICVS PP / Rev: C TER SVRA L LIC CRACILE II VIR. Wreath around: MVN ERCAVICA. \*\*Chisel marks across obverse; one mark across reverse. 'PP' is removed from Obverse. RPC 464.

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<sup>80</sup> Barrett 1999, 85.

<sup>81</sup> While my database of more than 300,000 Roman Imperial coins does contain a small quantity of known defaced coins, the simple fact that practically no archaeological field reports or publications of hoards mention anything more than the bare facts about a coin makes turning to such evidence inherently problematic and seldom effective. Online resources are especially valuable: <http://www.coinarchivespro.com>, for instance, is a vast database whose resources for any visually-minded numismatic study is indispensable.

<sup>82</sup> Kraft 1962; Sutherland 1986; Boon 1987; Barrett 1990; Melville Jones 1990, 84; Barrett 1999; Flower 2006, 157.

<sup>83</sup> The coins in figures 11 and 12 should be approached with caution, as the images come from auctions and do not, as is typical, contain any indication of provenance or archaeological context. As such, the particular coins featured here may have been ritually defaced before deposited in a sacred context. These images are presented as examples of the appearance of numismatic *damnatio memoriae*, given their high quality.





**Figure 12.** Caligula. Rome mint. Sestertius. Obv: C CAESAR AVG GERMANICVS PON M TR POT / Rev: SPQR / PP / OB CIVES / SERVATOS. Oak wreath encircles inscription in four lines. RIC I<sup>2</sup> 37.

Cassius Dio informs us of another *damnatio memoriae* whose traces are ubiquitous across the Empire and across various media.<sup>84</sup> Dio reports that Caracalla “exhibited his hatred for his brother by abolishing his birthday observance, venting anger upon the stones that supported his statues, and melted down coins portraying his features.” (ὅτι πολλὰ καὶ ἀργυρολογίας ἔνεκα ἐποίει. ὅτι καὶ μῖσος πρὸς τὸν τετελευτηκότα ἀδελφὸν ἐπεδείκνυτο καταλύσας τὴν τῶν γενεσίων αὐτοῦ τιμὴν, καὶ τοῖς τὰς εἰκόνας αὐτοῦ βαστάσασι λίθοις ὠργίζετο, καὶ τὸ νόμισμα τὸ προφέρον αὐτὸν συνεχώνευσεν).<sup>85</sup> Barrett’s theory that, while some coins may have been subject to actual collection and melting down, significant numbers would be privately defaced by their users, may explain the wide array of coins of Septimius Severus and Caracalla with Geta’s portion excised (fig. 13).

<sup>84</sup> The epigraphic evidence for Caracalla’s *damnatio memoriae* against Geta is vast; see, for example, *ILS* 458 and 459; Miller at CAH XII, 43.

<sup>85</sup> Cass. Dio 78.12.6.



**Figure 13.** Septimius Severus with Geta. Stratonicea mint. Provincial AES. Obv: ΘΕΟΥ / Rev: ΕΠΙ ΠΡ ΙΟΥΛΙΑ ΔΟΜΝΟ ΙΕΡΟΚΛΕΟΥΣ ΤΡΑΤΟΝΙΚ/ΕΩΝ. Zeus Panamaros on horseback, facing right. Howgego 536.

The purpose of *damnatio memoriae* is to remove a reviled figure from public memory and recollection. The very fact that numerous attempts included eradication of numismatic presence indicates that for the Imperial court numismatic iconography mattered. For them, at least, the general population was aware of coin imagery and what such symbolism represented. Certainly, the variety of specimens of private *damnatio memoriae* indicates that many coin users recognized the symbolic nature of Imperial coinage: most conspicuously, perhaps, the simple relationship of: presence on coinage=legitimacy.

Notably, we do not find private *damnatio memoriae* confined to ‘bad’ emperors, as Augustus, Trajan, Hadrian, Marcus Aurelius, and Lucius Verus all saw their coinages defaced in such a way. It is worth note that chop-marks or halving of coins are common when employed in sacred deposits. A lack of proper archaeological context complicates the interpretation of coins whose defacement is characteristic of both *damnatio* and ritual deposit.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE OF PERCEPTION OF NUMISMATIC TYPOLOGY

Archaeological evidence, too, can greatly illuminate the subject, particularly if deliberate deposition of coins based on their iconography or inscription can be securely identified. Some finds are curious, though far too small in number to be especially informative. For instance, in 1967 Peter Marsden reported that an *as* of Domitian with Fortuna on its reverse was discovered in the mast step of a Roman ship from Blackfriars, London.<sup>86</sup> This is interesting, and perhaps the deposition was intentional. But as the Fortuna type is an extremely common reverse motif, there is nothing to signify that this was meant to be any form of symbolic deposition; the coin simply could have been placed where it was to act as a shim during construction. Had there been dozens of nautical-themed coins incorporated throughout the ship, and no other types, then different conclusions could be drawn. Regardless, the case is worth noting, and perhaps if future discoveries uncover other Fortuna coins under the masts of Roman ships, then the Blackfriars find would gain significance. Numerous instances of what appear to be a conscious selection of coins by type have been identified through detailed analysis of my database. A few key instances will be presented here.

It is not uncommon to see hoards with an absence, or very low representation, of emperors who carry a negative impression. The attachment of moral value to coins on account of their iconography is attested by the philosopher Epictetus, who famously quipped: ‘whose image does this *sestertius* carry? Trajan’s? Give it to me. Nero? Throw it away, it is worthless, it is rotten!’ (‘τίνος ἔχει τὸν χαρακτῆρα τοῦτο τὸ τετράσσαρον,’ ‘Τραιανοῦ;’ ‘φέρε.’ ‘Νέρωνος;’ ‘ῥῆγμον ἔξω, ἀδόκιμόν ἐστιν, σαπρόν.’ οὕτως καὶ ἐνθάδε).<sup>87</sup> There are numerous examples of the

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<sup>86</sup> Marsden 1967.

<sup>87</sup> Arrian, *Disc. Epic.* 4.5.16. For more on Epictetus and the coinage of Nero, see Mabbott 1941.

deliberate exclusion or extreme reduction of particular coins within large hoards, a practice perhaps best referred to as ‘negative’ selection. Given the frequency of such a practice that has been found in my database, I will only present three examples of negative selection of Domitian in the hoard evidence.

First is Hoard #1046. It is the large Lawrence Weston hoard of 571 denarii deposited in Bristol, UK.<sup>88</sup> The coins represented range from Marc Antony to Antoninus Pius (tab. 1).

<b>Authority</b>	<b>Number of Denarii</b>
Marc Antony	2
Nero	5
Galba	2
Otho	3
Vitellius	4
Vespasian	102
Titus	66
Domitian	--
Nerva	21
Trajan	140
Hadrian	151
Antoninus Pius	75
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>571</b>

**Table 1.** Hoard #1046 reign-by-reign: denarii.

The likelihood that a random collection of 571 denarii within this particular date range should feature no coins of Domitian is implausible. Rather, a filter was applied by the depositor, who desired Domitian’s denarii to be excluded.

Second, is Hoard #877, 642 denarii deposited in Kreisfreie Stadt Kempten, Bayern, Germany.<sup>89</sup> The coins represented in the hoard range from Nero to Alexander Severus (tab. 2).

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<sup>88</sup> Carradice 1988a, 23–31.

<sup>89</sup> FMRD I.7.

<b>Authority</b>	<b>Number of Denarii</b>
Nero	1
Vitellius	3
Vespasian	39
Titus	9
Domitian	1
Nerva	3
Trajan	57
Hadrian	78
Antoninus Pius	146
Marcus Aurelius	78
Commodus	52
Clodius Albinus	1
Septimius Severus	38
Caracalla	46
Geta	16
Macrinus	3
Elagabalus	53
Alexander Severus	18
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>642</b>

**Table 2.** Hoard #877 reign-by-reign: denarii.

This hoard does have representation from Domitian, yet it is worth stressing that the number of Domitian issues is equal to that of the exceptionally rare Clodius Albinus, and that Macrinus (also very rare) has 3. Domitian's representation comprises only 0.1% of the hoard, while his representation for the entire database is around 3%.

That the hoard was deposited more than 100 years after Domitian's reign is of little consequence for a variety of reasons. First, all other emperors represented in the hoard, including those preceding Domitian, are adequately represented. All other hoard:database ratios are near 1:1. The only divergence is for Domitian alone, representing a ratio of 1:30. Second, Roman coins, especially precious metal coinage, had a very long circulatory life that commonly

ranged for hundreds of years. For instance, both hoards above contain an extremely large amount of coins that were minted more than 150 years prior to deposition.

Last, is Hoard #1044, an impressive one of 2,614 aurei deposited in a bronze cauldron in Trier, Germany.<sup>90</sup> The coins represented range from Nero to Septimius Severus (Table 3).

While this hoard presents another interesting case study to consider here, it is important to stress that it is not without controversy and problems: in short, it may be incomplete. The chaotic and disorganized circumstances surrounding its recovery complicate our understanding of it. It was presumably composed of individual bags of coin, and possibly some bags were not cataloged (or were stolen). Nonetheless, as far as the hoard can be reconstructed, it appears to be another example of some form of *damnatio* against Domitian and possibly Commodus.

<b>Authority</b>	<b>Number of Aurei</b>
Nero	833
Galba	15
Otho	11
Vitellius	19
Vespasian	899
Titus	120
Domitian	15
Nerva	1
Trajan	127
Hadrian	217
Antoninus Pius	302
Marcus Aurelius	49
Commodus	--
Didius Julianus	3
Septimius Severus	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,614</b>

**Table 3.** Hoard #1044 reign-by-reign: aurei.

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<sup>90</sup> Gilles 2013.

The aurei here present numbers that, so far as they can be accounted, suggest another example of negative selection. There exists an extreme reduction of coin representation for Domitian, in spite of the massive number of Vespasian and Titus coins as well as of High Empire coin. Though caution is called for when considering the exclusion of Commodus,<sup>91</sup> it is worth note that the extremely rare coinage of Didius Julianus features three times here—for aurei no less. Such numbers for Julianus are perhaps all the more striking when it is noted that only eight Didius Julianus aurei occur in my database. Estimates place the deposition of the hoard in later 193, which explains the presence of only three Septimius Severus aurei.

It is important to stress that fineness\* was likely not a factor in the coins selected for deposition. The purity of the Roman aureus was maintained throughout nearly the entire Principate, with the first notable reduction not occurring until around 215, when it dropped from its consistent weight of 7.2 g down to ~6.7 g. The aureus would continue to drop sharply as the Principate ended,<sup>92</sup> with a weight of ~4.5 g under Gordian III (r. 238–244), ~3.8 g under Trebonianus Gallus (r. 251–253), and a further reduction of as much as 65 percent under Valerian (r. 253–260).<sup>93</sup> For our period of focus, however, the aureus maintained a consistent weight, thereby eliminating the plausibility of metallurgical factors to explain the relative scarcity of Domitian and absence of Commodus. Some other filtering mechanism was utilized by the depositor of the hoard.

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<sup>91</sup> It is possible, however that Commodus' coins were not recovered properly; that this is a Marcus Aurelius hoard with a few later coins added later, explaining why Commodus was not featured.

<sup>92</sup> This reduction, it has long been believed, may be further indication of the substantial changes in Roman monetary practice as a whole that began to occur during this time.

<sup>93</sup> Though the gold was reduced heavily throughout the later third century, it is worth noting that compared to the silver of the same period, which contained almost no silver at all, the gold retained a relatively higher fineness. For more, see Bland 1996, 67–73; Morrison 1985, 82–84; Duncan-Jones 1994, 217, table 15.3.

Aside from hoards that suggest deliberate exclusion of certain emperors, there are also many hoards composed of entirely one emperor or with a dominating reverse motif represented. Three brief examples: First, Hoard #1181, a 142 denarii hoard (Marcus Aurelius to Geta) in Billingsgate, UK. 122 of the 138 (89%) are Providentia types. The remainder of the hoard is composed of 7 Libertas types (5%), and 9 other isolated types (6%).<sup>94</sup> The Providentia types in the hoard are from separate series of Septimius Severus issues and Diva Augusta issues, reducing the possibility that they were minted and shipped to Britain together, only to be swiftly hoarded. Furthermore, the Diva Augusta coins are believed to be “ancient forgeries” or “barbarous imitations,”<sup>95</sup> thereby removing the plausibility that the coins were simultaneously introduced to the depositor. The motive for hoarding Providentia types may be irrecoverable, but the filtering of deposited coins is, in itself, revealing.

Second, Hoard #1012, a 7 *aes* hoard in Bad Nauheim, Germany. The coins are a variety of *aes* denominations composed of 5 different reverse types,<sup>96</sup> but are all coins of Trajan. On account of titulature, the coins can be securely dated to one of three varying date ranges: 98–99; 103–111; or 114–117. For present purposes, it is the spread of dates for the reign of Trajan, coupled with the hoard’s exclusivity, that overshadows its small size. The mathematical odds of seven coins being randomly selected out of a pool of thirteen potential emperors, yet in all seven instances the same emperor, is 1:62,485,517. Logic dictates, therefore, that the Bad Nauheim hoard of 7 *aes* coins of Trajan is a deliberate collection and not the product of randomness.

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<sup>94</sup> The nine remaining types: Dea Caelestis; Indulgentia; Saeculi Felicitas; Pietas Publica; Victoria; Pax; Boni Eventus; Mars; and those commemorating a Parthian Victory.

<sup>95</sup> *RIC* IVa, 172, n.\*.

<sup>96</sup> Victory (x3); Roma; Debellator; Pax; and Trophy.



Third, Hoard #1148, a 118 *aes* hoard in Pompeii. The coins are a variety of *aes* coinage denominations, with 31 different reverse types identifiable. *All* of the coins are of Nero. All years from 62<sup>97</sup> onwards of the reign of Nero are represented among the 118 coins; most can be dated to a precise year of mintage. Undoubtedly, this hoard was deliberately filtered to be only Neronian bronze. Though Nero reduced the fineness of silver and gold coinages, he increased it for bronze. The deliberate choice for Neronian bronze, therefore, is likely due to his increase of the weight standard from ~11g to ~14.5g for, as well as to his favoring of orichalcum (a common alloy) rather than copper.<sup>98</sup>

#### **REVERSE-TYPE PREFERENCING FOR RITUALISTIC CONSUMPTION—OVERVIEW**

Next, I offer a case study of ritual deposition to determine if instances of deliberate selection of coins by reverse type can be identified. I seek to reinforce my claim that numismatic iconography was noticed by its users, that imagery carried an emblematic and important statement, and that the messages and symbolism thus conveyed were of measurable significance to their ancient audience. Furthermore, I claim that numismatic typology was often of such significance that users chose to consciously select or dismiss particular coins for non-economic use based on typology alone.

As noted above, the relevant body of numismatic evidence consists of millions of surviving individual coins, out of which thousands of iconographical combinations of type and corresponding inscriptions have been identified. Many of these types reveal scenes of ritualistic behavior or display the implements of religious practice. Some, too, might commemorate various temples of the gods or even exhibit the hopeful relationship between human and divine.

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<sup>97</sup> Nero reintroduced bronze coinage, which was temporarily suspended under Claudius.

<sup>98</sup> MacDowall 1979, 144.

Others still display the consecration of recently deceased members of the imperial family. Most reverse type analyses, however, focus on ‘secular’ coin hoards rather than on ‘sacred’ deposits at temples or as a part of funerary deposits even though a significant quantity of coin finds are categorized as having been intentionally deposited in ritualistic settings.<sup>99</sup>

For the purposes of this dissertation, ‘secular’ finds are those that appear to be devoid of any religious or ritualistic context. ‘Sacred’ finds, conversely, are those that appear to have been intentionally deposited for religious/ritualistic purposes and are, therefore, found within or near to some sacral context, such as a temple complex, religious shrine, burial, or as a part of a votive deposit. It is possible, however, that some designated as ‘secular’ finds were not accidental losses, but were intentional deposits for a sacral reason no longer visible or recoverable; equally, some finds designated as ‘secular’ may have been accidental losses at a religious site. Such caveats aside, the overwhelming majority of finds labelled as ‘secular’ and ‘sacred’ can be reasonably considered appropriately contextualized; the evidence, therefore, can be analyzed as such.

It is perhaps surprising that examination of the potential correspondence between coins found and their respective sacred context (*vis-à-vis* their reverse type) is only a rather modern scholarly development.<sup>100</sup> In 2009, Agnes Alföldy-Găzdac and Cristian Găzdac, for example, successfully demonstrated that a preference for ‘religious-benevolent monetary types’ existed for the site of Brigetio.<sup>101</sup> Additionally, Cristian Găzdac, in a more recent study,<sup>102</sup> has revealed that for the necropolises at Carnuntum, Aquincum, and Matricia the coin finds are suggestive of

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<sup>99</sup> Duncan-Jones 1999; Noreña 2001; Kemmers 2006a, 2006b; Barbato 2014.

<sup>100</sup> Koenig 1999; Perassi 1999; Alföldy-Găzdac and Găzdac 2009; Kaczynski and Nüsse 2009; Găzdac 2014.

<sup>101</sup> Alföldy-Găzdac and Găzdac 2009, 170–172.

<sup>102</sup> Găzdac 2010. See also Găzdac 2014.

reverse type preferencing. Conversely however, Boris Kaczynski and Michael Nüsse conducted a thorough study of the coin finds at both the Martberg and Castellberg sanctuaries. They cautiously concluded that although ‘indirect selection’<sup>103</sup> and ‘negative selection of certain coin types’ can be found, it is difficult to identify ‘positive selection’ for their test sites due to the ‘generally high frequencies of the types found in all contexts.’<sup>104</sup> Hence, there is a need for further exploration of the archaeological and numismatic evidence regarding sacral deposition.

My case study, therefore, aims at contributing to this important and developing conversation, while addressing the matter at hand of the reception of numismatic iconography. I will compare the relative frequencies of reverse types of Roman Imperial coins deposited in sacral contexts with secular stray finds in the immediate vicinity. My hope is to provide some clarity to the question of whether coins deposited in graves or dedicated in sanctuaries received some level of preferential treatment due to their typology.

Sacred and funerary deposits account, unsurprisingly, for a minority<sup>105</sup> of the find types (fig. 14a–b).<sup>106</sup> While such data sheds light on a variety of other aspects regarding circulatory and deposition habits, it is more revealing for our current discussion to notice how coins of certain emperors are seldom intentionally deposited in a hoard or for some sacred purpose. The graph below (fig. 12a), for instance, reveals that the coins of Caligula, Domitian, Didius Julianus,

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<sup>103</sup> They discovered that metrological selection (the preferencing of debased\* coins) drove choice for ritual deposits, thereby suggesting that had any form of reverse type selection been at play it was, largely, a secondary consideration.

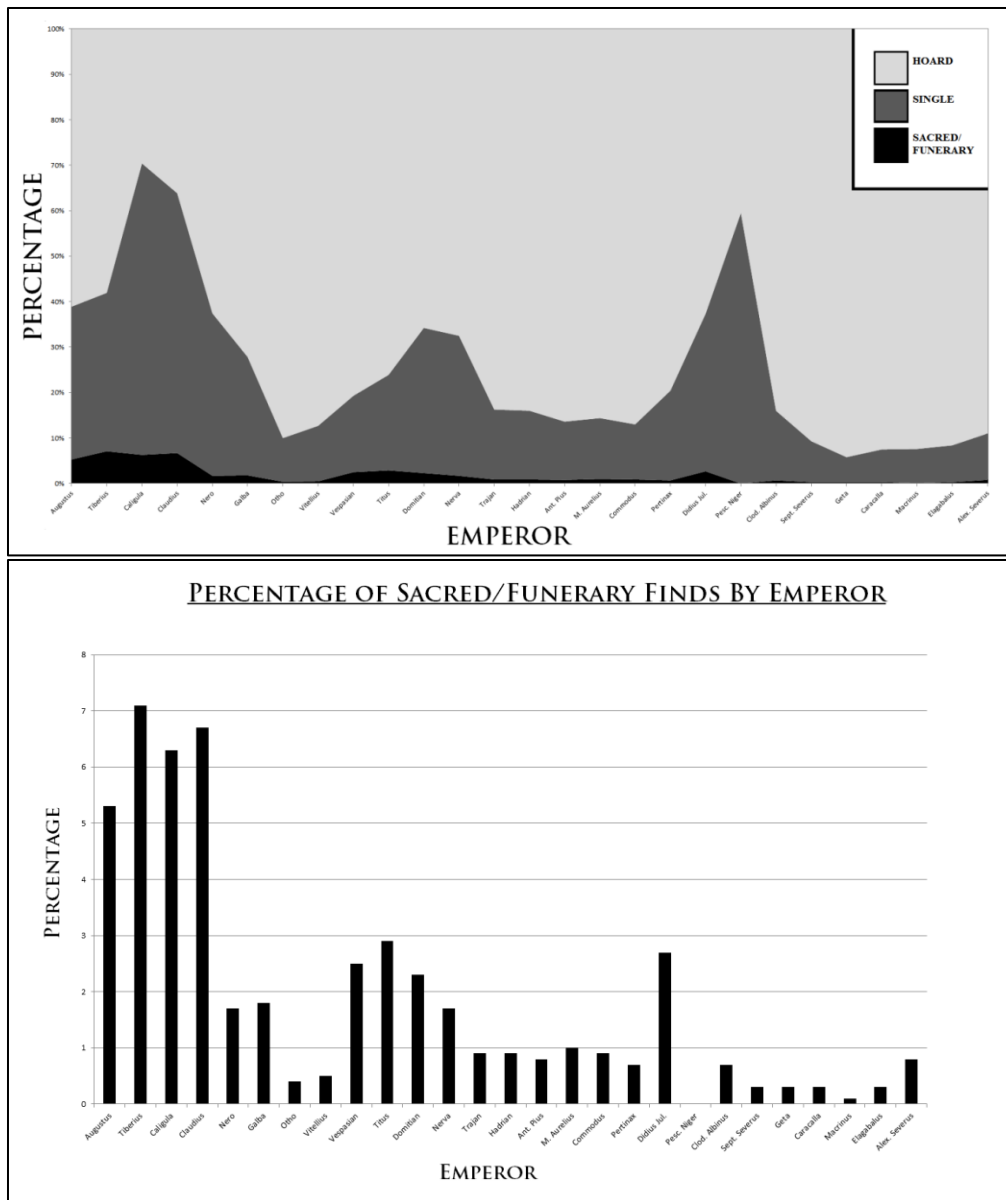
<sup>104</sup> Kaczynski and Nüsse 2009, 107.

<sup>105</sup> For the vast majority of published coin finds, be they hoard or single finds, context is rarely noted. More finds may actually have been deposited for some ritualistic purpose that was not noted by the scholar recording the find; or traces of a find’s intended deposition are lost. This should not suggest, however, that anything more than a marginal portion of secular finds ought be assigned otherwise, as some scholars would propose. The lack of certainty that a given find was *not* a sacred deposit provides no warrant to argue that any or all should be considered as such.

<sup>106</sup> 6,671 (2.2%).

and Pescennius Niger were infrequently subject to intentional deposition. This relationship can be observed when their coins are compared to their own period of mintage as well as to the entire Principate.

The unique archaeological context of sacred coin finds yields, perhaps, the most informative and tangible evidence for the potential of reverse type preferencing in coin deposits. The comprehensive and expansive dataset that I have compiled now permits exhaustive analyses of numismatic evidence regarding coin circulation, distribution, and regional variation to be undertaken with greater confidence.



**Figure 14.** (top) Relative frequency of coin find type by emperor from entire database of 305,521 coins; (bottom) Isolation of sacred/funerary coin finds by emperor from entire database of 305,521 coins.

My claim is that ancient audiences were keenly aware of the imagery found on their coins, of the thematic motif portrayed on their reverse, and even of implications due to the issuing authority represented on the obverse. As this latter point deals most directly with reception and with how the imagery on coins could influence audience attitudes towards them coins, it may prove valuable to briefly visit one such example.

The poet Statius' *Silvae*, composed at some point between 89–96, under the reign of Domitian, is revealing. Statius had previously sent a new book to a close friend, one Plotius Grypus. The book's subject was a contemporary work; it was produced on fresh paper, had new knobs on the rolls, and was beautifully manufactured, costing Statius ten *sestertii*. Plotius then reciprocated the offer, sending Statius a book in return. The gesture was not appreciated, as Statius comments that what *he* had received was shabby and eaten by insects, the subjects discussed were clichéd, and the book was only suitable for wrapping fish. Worst of all, it was purchased from a book dealer 'for more or less a Caligulan *as*' (*plus minus asse Gaiano, Silv.* 4.9.22). The emphasis of it being a 'Caligulan' *as* is used to emphatically underscore the worthlessness of the gift, and is a joke that would have likely been appreciated by a Roman audience.<sup>107</sup>

It reasonably follows, then, that a user might examine such imagery and attach particular significance and a deeper meaning to coins beyond a purely economic valuation. Assessment of whether such convictions and discriminations were at play for numismatic ritualistic consumption, through reverse type preferencing, would not only open up yet another layer to explore for reception studies, but would also provide a deeper understanding of coin use in sacred contexts.

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<sup>107</sup> Barrett 1999, 89.

## **REVERSE-TYPE PREFERENCING FOR RITUALISTIC CONSUMPTION—CASE STUDIES**

Numerous studies have demonstrated that Roman coinage largely tended to circulate locally and rarely travelled far from the region to which it was initially distributed.<sup>108</sup> This claim stems from the assessment of die links\* or locally-applied countermarks found within the hoard evidence. It appears, however, that gold coinage does not conform to this pattern so strictly, since its high intrinsic value and portability were more suited to both long-distance transport and payment of large debts, state or private. Scholars are divided on whether Rome developed a means to ensure that bronze stayed in the provinces, while precious metal coinage maintained a constant revolving-door status with Rome. This proposed means is best summarized by Reece:

“The army, especially in frontier provinces, was the main consumer of new precious coin, and the Civil Service would have been responsible for payments for public works and general running expenses. It seems likely that the portion of official salaries paid in gold or silver would have to be changed into bronze before being spent. This ensured that the precious metals returned to the hands of the state soon after being disseminated so that it might be returned to central authority and re-cycled.”<sup>109</sup>

Moreover, hoard evidence suggests that contemporary issues were distributed *en masse* to recipients.<sup>110</sup> Therefore, the coinage found in a particular location is representative of what types were transmitted to that region, and is an accurate snapshot of what was in circulation in that region. Furthermore, evaluation of the single finds for a particular region is generally believed to

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<sup>108</sup> Kraay 1956; Reece 1977; Walker 1988; Duncan-Jones 1994, 1999, 2005; Hobley 1998; Kemmers 2006; Beckmann 2007.

<sup>109</sup> Reece 1977, 643.

<sup>110</sup> The hoard at Sălaşuri, for example, contains reasonable numbers of varying issues of represented emperors, but also massive numbers of a few issues of Antoninus Pius, with whom the hoard ends. See Molnar and Winkler, 1965 for inventory.

be a 'better reflection of the coins actually in circulation than material from hoards.'<sup>111</sup> For such reasons, I offer analysis of relative frequencies of neighboring single finds in an attempt to gauge what would have been in general circulation for the regions in question. In so doing, I test for any deviation of reverse type frequency in sacral and funerary contexts.

As a case study, I take first the coin finds from Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa, Dacia's provincial capital, and Apulum, a military complex in Dacia. The two sites were selected because they are well-defined archaeological contexts (numerous temple complexes, civilian and military graves, and a large body of single finds from various locations within the vicinity) as well as offering a rich corpus of numismatic data for both sacred and secular coin finds.

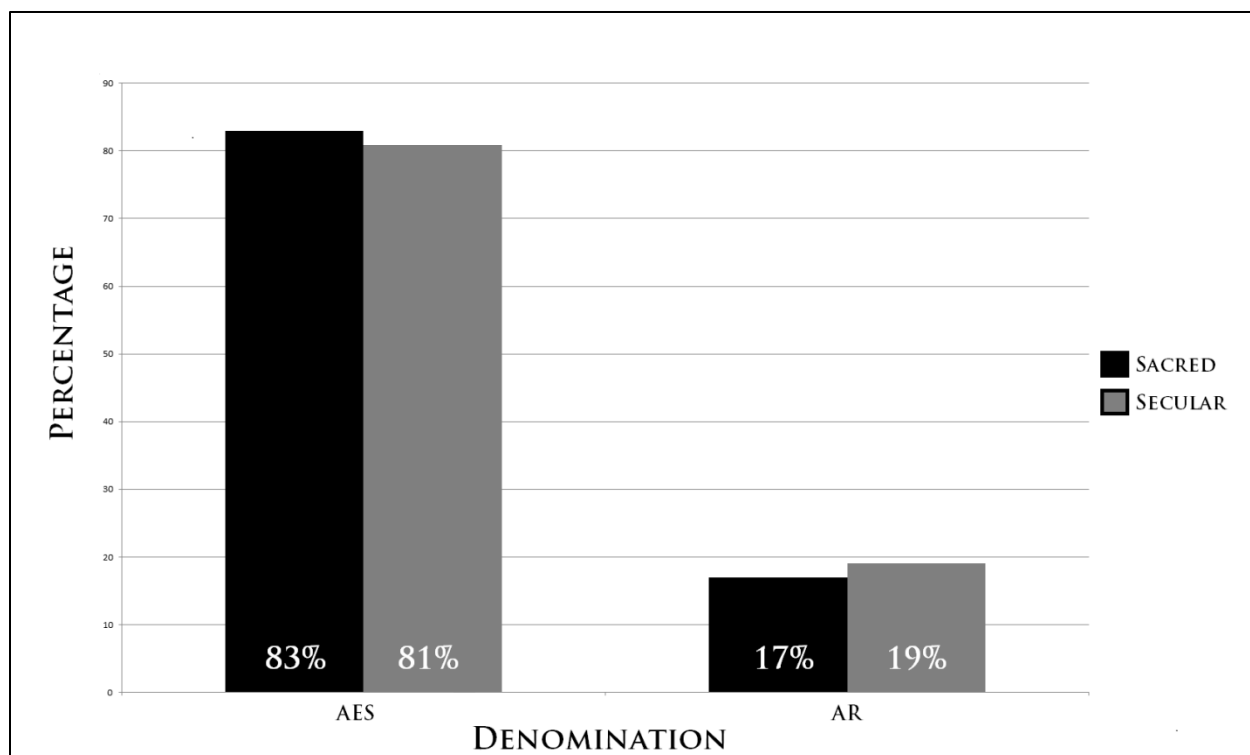
I analyzed only coins that are A) identifiable, B) Roman Imperial coinages, and C) whose provenance is known. As 97.1% of the finds from the two sites fall into these categories, the exclusion of the remaining 2.9% from the analysis had only the slightest, if any, impact on its results.<sup>112</sup> On the basis of these criteria, 854 coins (623 secular and 231 sacred) were taken into account. Coins of all denominations were included in the analysis. There was minimal deviation of relative frequencies between secular and sacred finds (fig. 15).

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<sup>111</sup> Wigg-Wolf 2009, 109.

<sup>112</sup> Those excluded were a small quantity of Republican and provincial issues.





**Figure 15.** Denominational comparison of coins at Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa [UTS] in general circulation (secular finds) and coins from sacred contexts.

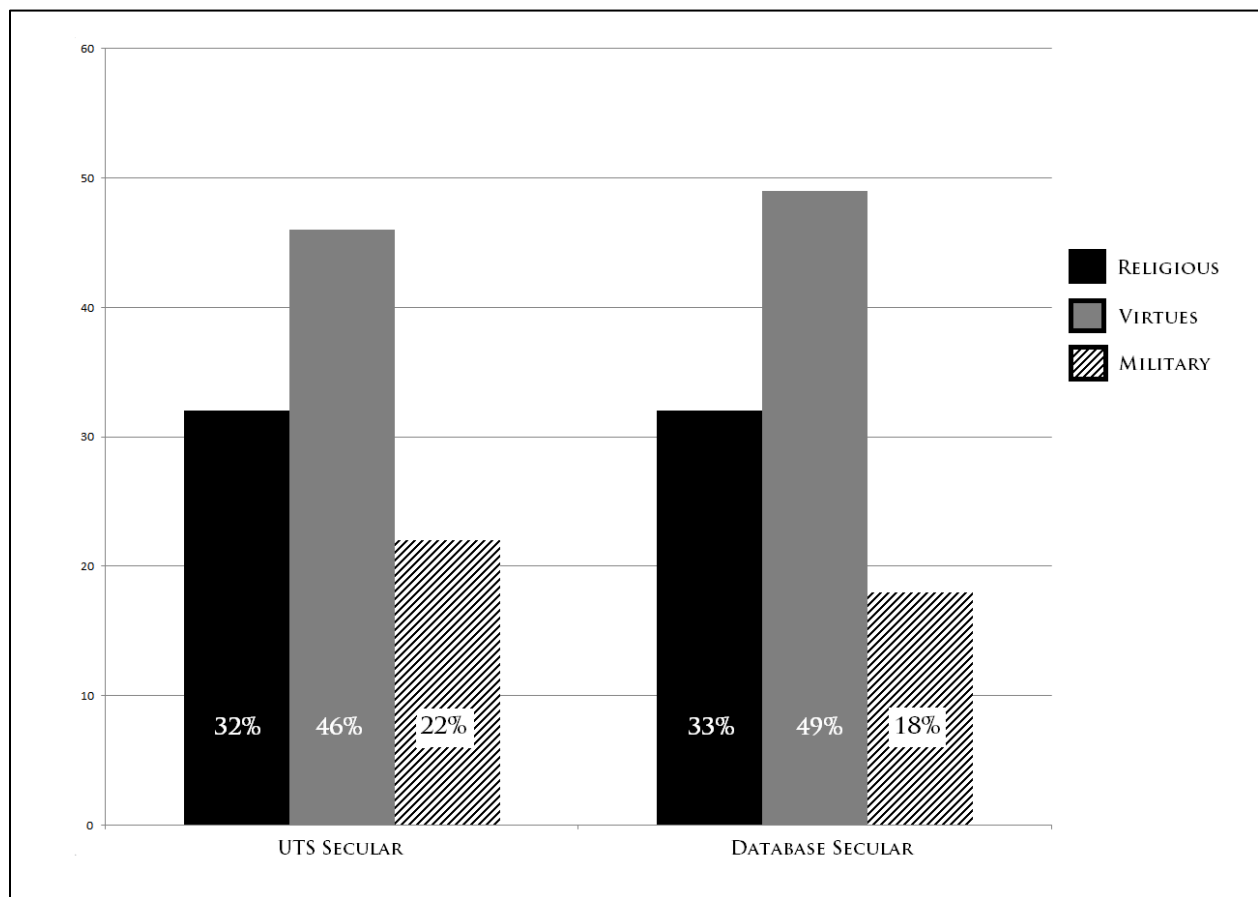
I divided the coin types into three broad categories (religious, imperial virtues, and military) based on the dominant theme that each employs.<sup>113</sup> It is important to stress that my interpretation of what ‘theme’ a given coin appeals to may very well *not* have been that which the ancient bearer of the coin had in mind—if they had any at all.<sup>114</sup> It reasonably follows that this division of dozens of various coinage types into three convenient categories is inherently imperfect and subjective. At least the categorization of the various reverse types utilized here

<sup>113</sup> Certain coin types, due to their ambiguous nature, do not fall into any of these categories (e.g. those with no pertinent legend and whose iconography is related to each division equally).

<sup>114</sup> For more on the problem with reception studies of iconography, see Elkins 2014.

largely conforms to that employed by other scholars in similar studies exploring the relative frequencies of reverse types.<sup>115</sup>

To date, 392 identifiable Roman Imperial coin finds from Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa have been catalogued.<sup>116</sup> The distribution of the assigned categories for the secular here is strikingly similar to the distribution that can be attested from the entire corpus of 298,850 secular finds in the database (fig. 16).

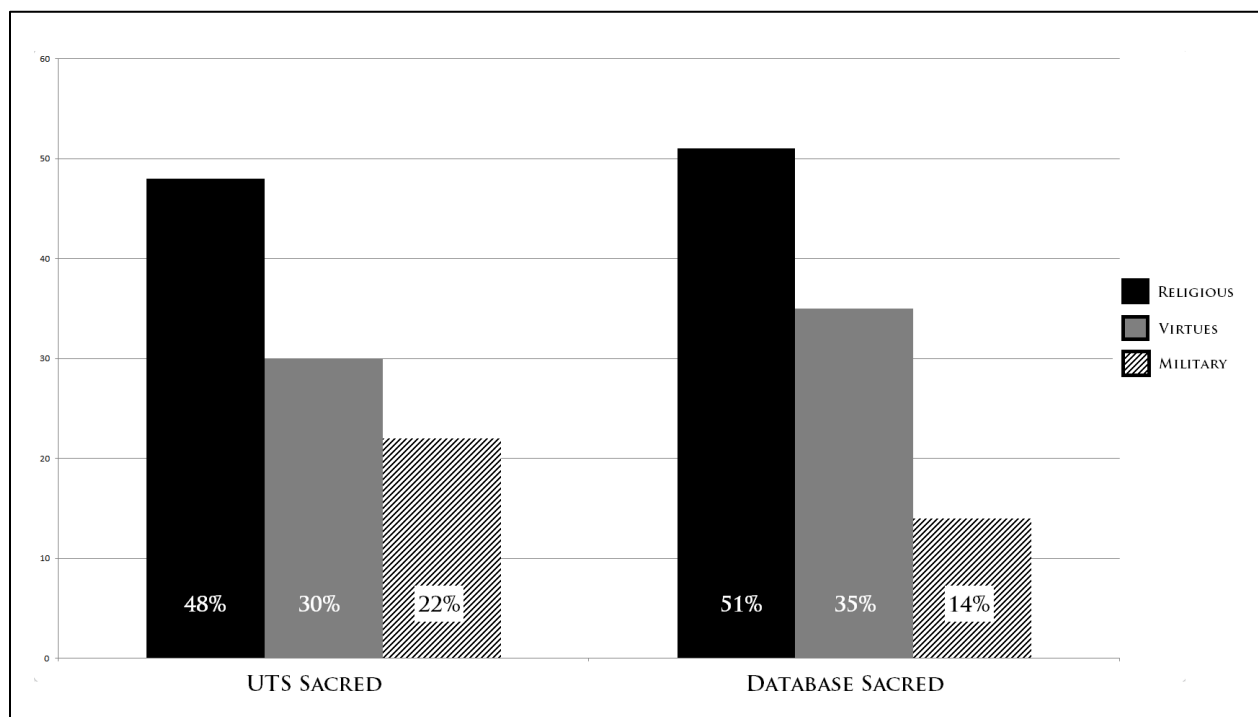


**Figure 16.** Comparison of relative frequency of secular coin finds from Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa [UTS] with secular coin finds from the entire database.

<sup>115</sup> Noreña 2001; Alföldy-Găzdac and Găzdac 2009; Kaczynski and Nüsse 2009; Manders 2012; Găzdac 2014.

<sup>116</sup> Găzdac and Cociș 2004.

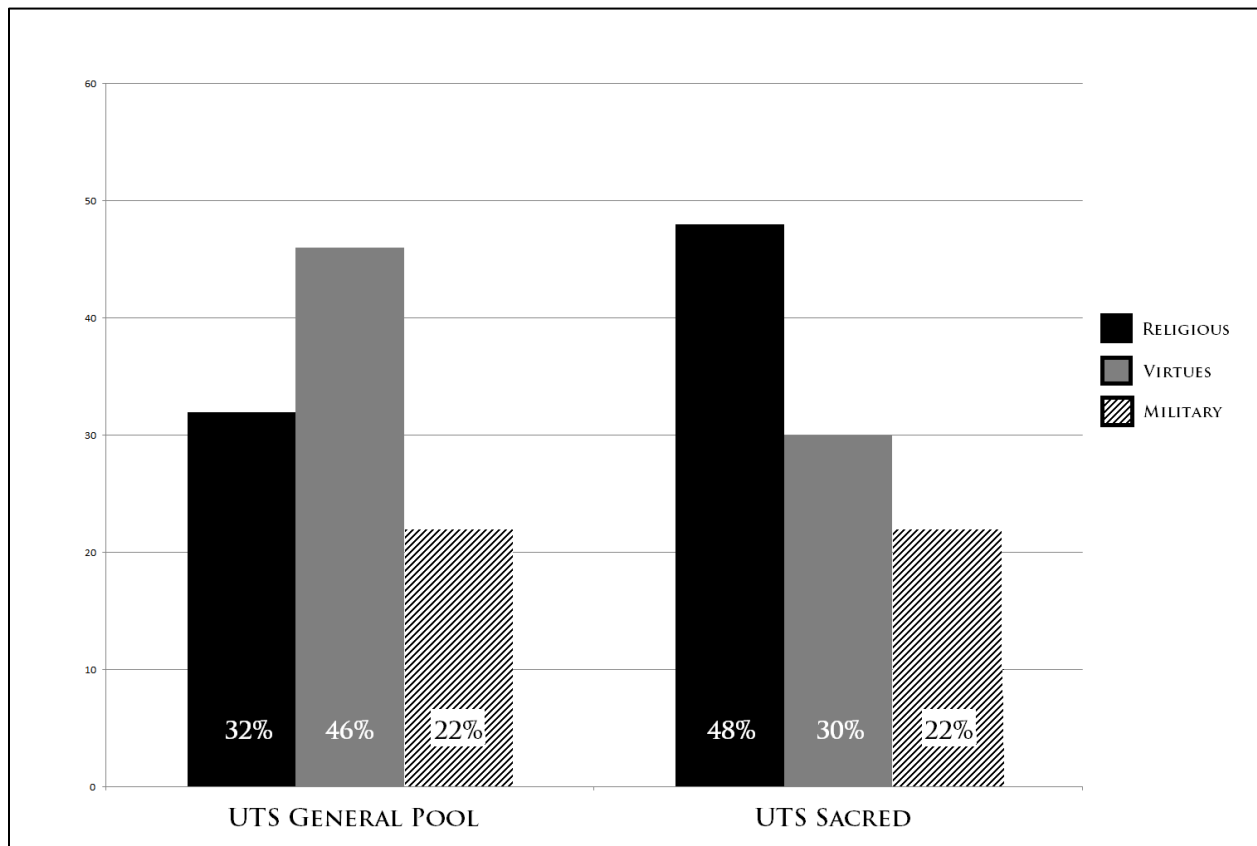
With a fair degree of certainty, therefore, it can be stated that the relative frequency of coinage types that were in circulation for Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa and the surrounding area corresponds to that of the empire as a whole, thereby providing validity to the small sample of 392 coins, which otherwise might not lend itself to statistical analysis. Likewise, when the 130 identifiable Roman Imperial coin finds from the numerous temples and graves from Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa are correspondingly compared to the 6,671 sacred finds in the database (fig. 17), similar statistical validity can be assumed to exist for the sacred coin finds as well, given that their relative frequencies too are analogous to those of the empire as a whole.



**Figure 17.** Comparison of relative frequency of sacred coin finds from Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa [UTS] with sacred coin finds from the entire database

A comparison of the relative frequencies of reverse types for the temple and funerary contexts at Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa to its secular finds reveals that preference seems to have been given to coins whose reverse type were religious in nature (fig. 18), a finding which deviates from the virtue-centric plurality of types that permeated the region. The preference for

religious-themed coinage at the temples and graves at Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa corroborates the findings of Alfödy-Găzdac and Găzdac in 2009, and of Găzdac in 2014.<sup>117</sup> What is not perceivable here, however, is the negative selection of coin with militaristic themes that these scholars demonstrated for the Martberg and Castellberg sanctuaries.<sup>118</sup> Rather, both the sacred and secular finds at Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa are composed of 22% military-themed coinages.



**Figure 18.** Comparison of relative frequency of sacred coin finds from Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa [UTS] with coin finds from the general circulation pool at Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa [UTS] by reverse type.

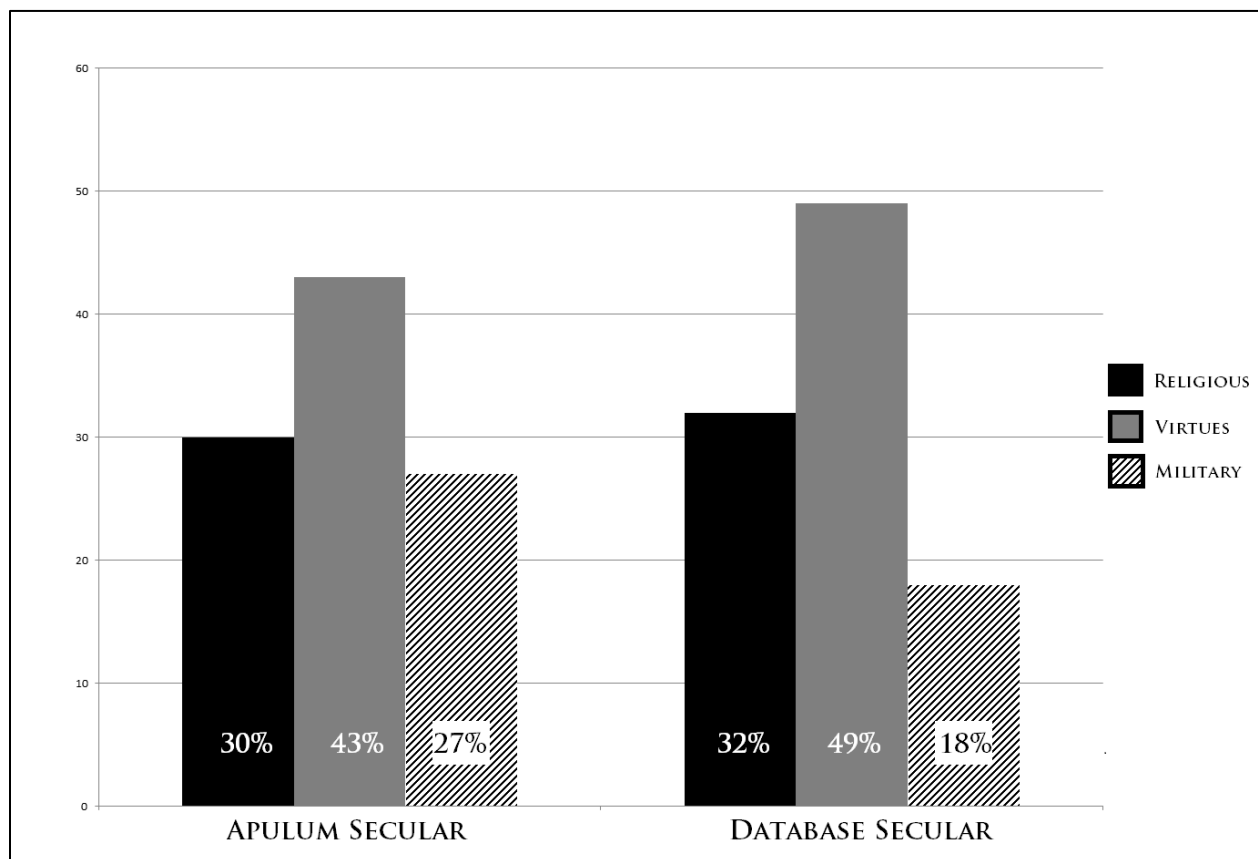
Additionally, it is perhaps worth note, though it is not susceptible to any form of statistical analysis nor should any serious conclusions be drawn on its account, that at Ulpia

<sup>117</sup> Alfödy-Găzdac and Găzdac 2009; Găzdac 2014.

<sup>118</sup> Kaczynski and Nüsse 2009, 107.

Traiana Sarmizegetusa one of only two known provenanced Asclepius *asses* of Caracalla was found in the Asclepeion.<sup>119</sup> The type is more often found on silver (62 Asclepius *denarii* are accounted for in the database with only two *asses*). More importantly they have their provenance almost solely in modern France, Algeria, and UK. The presence in Dacia is exceedingly rare for any denomination, let alone the exceptionally rare *as*, which was found in the Asclepeion.

Likewise, analysis of the 231 secular finds at Apulum produced results that also seem to indicate reverse type selection. When the relative frequencies of the secular finds for Apulum are compared to those of the 298,850 from the database (fig. 19), those that emphasize imperial virtues again emerge the plurality.



<sup>119</sup> RIC 553.

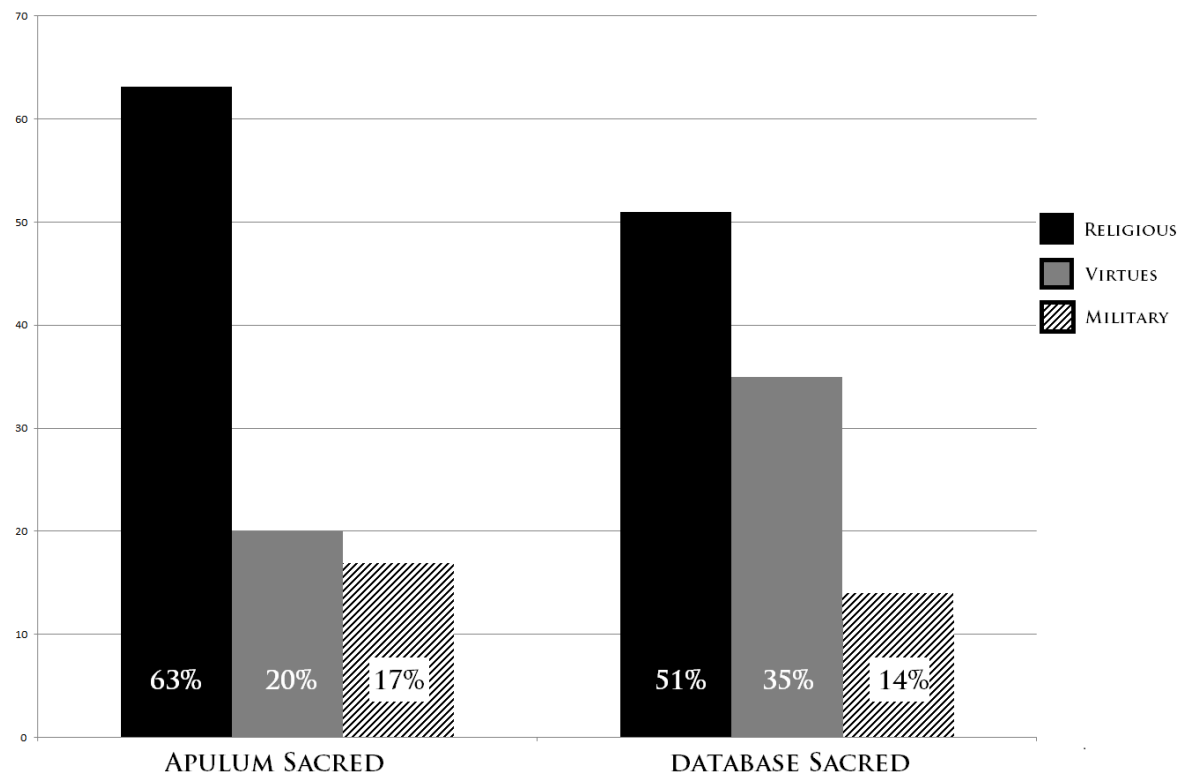
**Figure 19.** Comparison of relative frequency of secular coin finds from Apulum with secular coin finds from the entire database.

What is striking, however, is that for the military complex at Apulum the amount of militaristic coin types in the circulation pool appears to have been much higher than typical, with a percent difference of 40%. In light of recent work, this should not be surprising: for instance, Fleur Kemmers has effectively shown that military-themed coinage was heavily-preferenced at the fort complex at Nijmegen, while the immediate neighboring towns had very low frequencies of military-themed coins.<sup>120</sup>

Analysis of the 65 sacred finds at Apulum, from civilian graves, and from the *Liber Pater* shrine, has produced results that deviate from the findings for the sacred deposits at Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa and from the database, demonstrating a heightened preference for religious-themed coinage types in sacral deposits at Apulum (fig. 20).

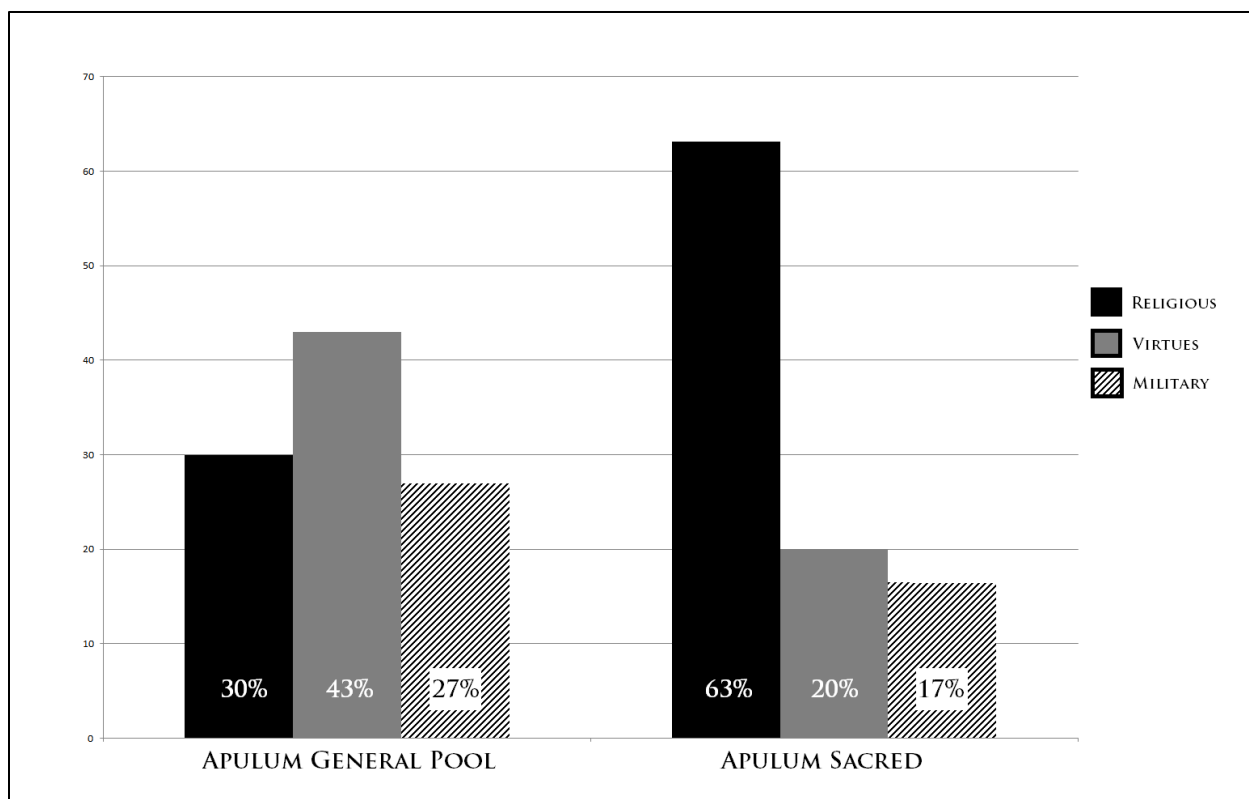
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<sup>120</sup> Kemmers 2006a.



**Figure 20.** Comparison of relative frequency of secular coin finds from Apulum with sacred coin finds from the entire database.

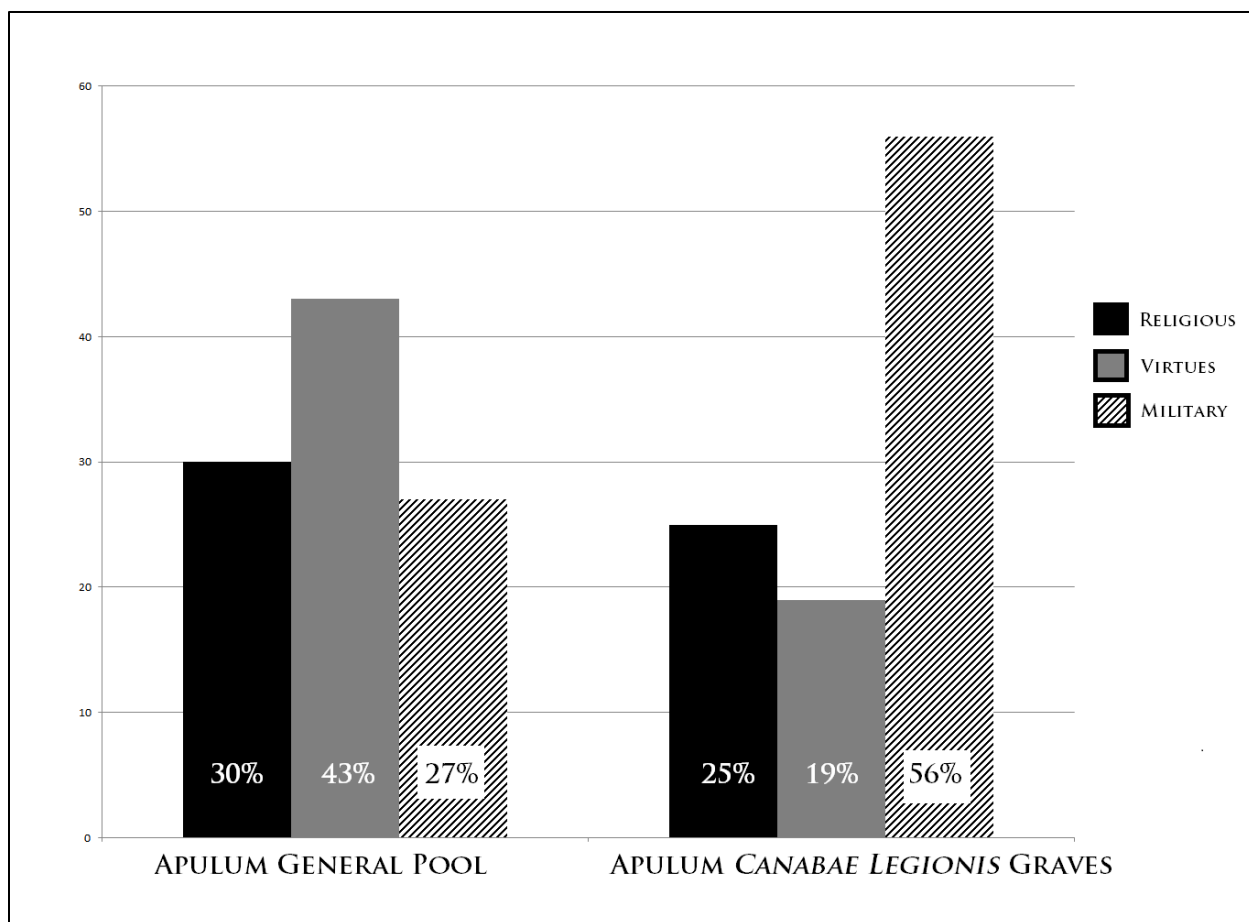
While religious-themed coinage is less frequent at Apulum in the general circulation pool, the results from comparing the relative frequencies of the pool to those deposited in sacral contexts is striking (fig. 21), demonstrating a pronounced 72.3 percent difference for religious-themed coinage.



**Figure 21.** Comparison of relative frequency of sacred coin finds from Apulum with coin finds from the general circulation pool at Apulum by reverse type.

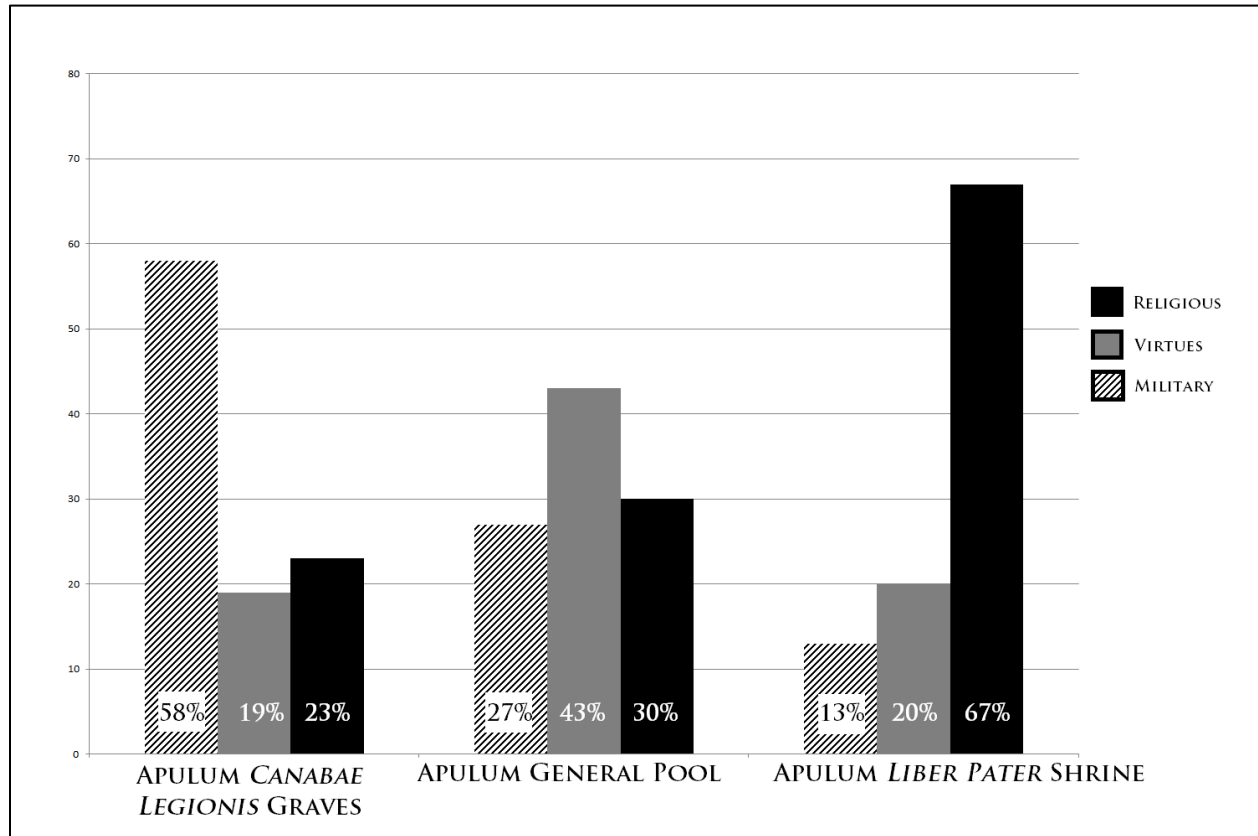
Perhaps the most extraordinary finding from Apulum regarding reverse type preferencing comes from analyzing the coin finds from the *canabae legionis* graves (fig. 22).





**Figure 22.** Comparison of relative frequency of *canabae legionis* grave finds at Apulum with coin finds from the general circulation pool at Apulum by reverse type.

A comparison of the relative frequencies of reverse types found in the *canabae legionis* graves with those dedicated at the shrine to *Liber Pater* (fig. 23), suggests that coins were not deposited at random. The coin find evidence from the *Liber Pater* shrine and the *canabae legionis* graves clearly demonstrate a deliberate preference for certain reverse types for use within each context; these types happen to be wholly unreflective of the coins that were in the general circulation pool (fig. 23).



**Figure 23.** Comparison of relative frequency of coin finds from the *canabae legionis* graves at Apulum, the *Liber Pater* shrine at Apulum, and coin finds from the general circulation pool at Apulum by reverse type.

Analysis of the relative frequencies of reverse types from the temple and funerary contexts at both Apulum and Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa suggests that deliberate ‘positive selection’<sup>121</sup> of certain reverse types can be identified for Roman Imperial coinage found within a ritualistic context.<sup>122</sup> Even if the practice is later shown to be a localized phenomenon, such a point would be irrelevant; regardless of whether or not this was a semi-regional phenomenon,

<sup>121</sup> Kaczynski and Nüsse 2009, 107.

<sup>122</sup> The sites tested were all within the Roman provinces of Dacia and Pannonia: Brigetio (Pannonia Superior, modern Szőny, Hungary); Carnuntum (Pannonia Superior, modern Petronell-Carnuntum, Austria); Aquincum (Pannonia Inferior, modern Budapest, Hungary); Matrica (Pannonia Inferior, modern Százhalombatta-Dunafüred, Hungary); Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa (Dacia, modern Sarmizegetusa, Romania); and Apulum (Dacia, modern Alba Iulia, Romania).

the very fact that it occurred anywhere at all for any reason remains especially significant. The conclusions from this analysis notably corroborate previous studies that produced similar findings.

Through such studies of numismatic context much can be elucidated regarding how coins functioned and operated in antiquity, thereby ‘giv[ing] coin finds a voice as historical sources.’<sup>123</sup> The conclusions can assist not only numismatists, but also archaeologists, anthropologists, and historians alike.<sup>124</sup> Fleur Kemmers aptly remarked that ‘this kind of intensive research is still in its infancy;’ one can only hope that further analyses will be made.

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<sup>123</sup> von Kaenel 2009, 9.

<sup>124</sup> Kemmers 2009, 7.

. COIN IMAGE ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND PERMISSIONS

- Figure 1a: Emporium Hamburg, Auction 78, Lot #83.  
Figure 1b: Numismatica Ars Classica, Auction 52, Lot #134.  
Figure 1c: Classical Numismatic Group, Triton XVII, Lot #231.  
Figure 1d: Classical Numismatic Group, Triton XX, Lot #376.  
Figure 1e: Classical Numismatic Group, Auction 23, Lot #1166.  
Figure 2a: The Coinshop, Lot #802141.  
Figure 2b: The Coinshop, Lot #802132.  
Figure 2c: The Coinshop, Lot #756905.  
Figure 2d: The Coinshop, Lot #768445.  
Figure 2e: Classical Numismatic Group, Auction 87, Lot #407.  
Figure 2f: Classical Numismatic Group, Auction 100, Lot #34.  
Figure 2g: Noble Numismatics PtyLtd, Auction 112, #3642.  
Figure 2h: Stack's Bowers & Ponterio, January 2017, NYINC, Lot #5024.  
Figure 2i: Classical Numismatic Group, Triton XX, Lot #35.  
Figure 3: Numismatica Ars Classica, Auction 33, Lot #408.  
Figure 4: Classical Numismatic Group, Triton XI, Lot #811.  
Figure 5: Classical Numismatic Group, Electronic Auction 276, Lot #379.  
Figure 6: Classical Numismatic Group, Mail Bid Sale 63, Lot#1538.  
Figure 7: Trustees of the British Museum. Museum Registration #: 1986, 0610.1.  
Figure 8: Classical Numismatic Group, Electronic Auction 386, Lot#634.  
Figure 9: Artemis Gallery, (Unnumbered) Online Auction, Item #: 108595.  
Figure 10: Numismatica Ars Classica, Auction 27, Lot #282.  
Figure 11: Classical Numismatic Group, Electronic Auction 379, Lot#270.  
Figure 12: Classical Numismatic Group, Electronic Auction 367, Lot#448.  
Figure 13: Classical Numismatic Group, Electronic Auction 306, Lot#251.

## CHAPTER TWO: ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTION OF THE ROMAN MINT. PART ONE: ADMINISTRATION OF THE MINT

In his contribution to the *Festschrift* for Harold Mattingly, Robert Carson asserted, without qualification, “it is certain that the Roman coinage like other things Roman *was* organized and was systematically produced.”<sup>125</sup> Consensus on the administrative and technical systems responsible for the production of Imperial coinage, however, is anything but conclusive. While the inner workings and organizational apparatus of the Roman mint are faintly visible in the Republic and the later Empire, during the first centuries of the Empire they are almost irrecoverable.

Although information relating to the Republic is limited, there exists a stable understanding of what officials were involved in a coinage’s design, development, and dissemination; the role of each of these officials within the mint; and the number and role of various *officinae*. Even the physical location(s) of mints appears to be recoverable.<sup>126</sup> Furthermore, a great deal of information has been derived from study of control marks on Republican denarii.<sup>127</sup> Likewise, control marks on Republican *aes* coinages, rare as they are, have also contributed valuable data.<sup>128</sup> So far as the later Empire is concerned, we have a rather clear picture of mint organization, due in large part to the return of control marks at some point

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<sup>125</sup> Carson 1956, 233.

<sup>126</sup> See further, Crawford 1983a, 610–620; Alföldi 1953, 389–391; Sydenham 1976, xlviii–l.

<sup>127</sup> Burnett 1977, 1998; Hollstein 1993, 2000; Mattingly 1995.

<sup>128</sup> Witschonke 2012.

during the mid-third century.<sup>129</sup> They ceased during the early 50s BC, and only reemerged again after the overthrow of the Severan dynasty in 230s. Therefore, the lack of these marks on Roman coinages for the intervening three centuries makes a fully satisfactory assessment of various aspects of the Roman mint difficult. Bernhard Woytek aptly states that since the minting authorities refrained from putting such marks on coinages during this phase, we are left “entirely in the dark regarding the number of dies used for specific coin types, the precise sequence in which they produced the various issues, [and] the internal structure of the minting establishment(s) in this period.”<sup>130</sup>

The reasoning for the initial lack of control marks for the early Empire is logical and understood. As the argument goes, the Roman Imperial coinages had “two different roots: the coinage produced at the Roman mint under the supervision of the *monetales* and the coinage struck by the imperators in the provinces...[and since] neither of these two classes of coins regularly bore control marks in the period of the civil wars of the final phase of the Republic, the coinage of the Principate was bound to start without any marking systems visible on the dies.”<sup>131</sup>

It is evident that when the marks return on Imperial coinages in the third century they indicate six *officinae* (workshops) were operating at the Roman mint. From this point forward, many aspects of the Imperial mints are fairly clear, as Imperial coins then bear overt administrative information. For the intervening period, one may ask whether information can be deduced from the likelihood that six *officinae* were functioning in the mid third century. In

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<sup>129</sup> The consensus was that during the reign of Phillip I (r. 244–249) *officina* marks returned on antoniniani,\* yet more recent scholarship has convincingly argued for their (re)appearance under Gordian III (r. 238–244). Regardless of when the marks returned on coinages, they are not present for the period investigated for this dissertation, which is confined to the Principate. See BMCRE VI, 7; Eddy 1967.

<sup>130</sup> Woytek 2012, 86.

<sup>131</sup> Woytek 2012, 88.

short, there are two options: that the appearance of the marks on Imperial coinages indicates a new method of visualizing a pre-existing system of multiple *officinae*, or that their sudden appearance indicates a new system altogether. Overwhelming scholarly opinion favors the former option.<sup>132</sup> What remains hotly debated, however, is the number of *officinae* utilized by Rome throughout the early Empire. Given the significant amount of attention and debate that this question has generated, I am obliged to engage with it, however briefly.

Numerous second-century inscriptions inform us of mint officials with the title *offinator*,<sup>133</sup> who are interpreted as the heads of *officinae*.<sup>134</sup> But as no less than sixteen men have this title at one time, scholars are rightly cautious about how to understand their role in the mint. It is fairly clear that either four<sup>135</sup> or six<sup>136</sup> *officinae* were utilized in the first century; and, as noted above, the evidence is clearer still that six *officinae* were utilized during the mid-third century, because *officina* marks appear on antoniniani\* in the form of Roman numerals I to VI or Greek numerals A to ζ.<sup>137</sup> Hence, some scholars assert that the mention of sixteen *offinatores* during the second century indicates that sixteen *officinae* were operating in Rome. Carson, for instance, interprets the sixteen *offinatores* not as heads of sixteen separate *officinae* in the Roman mint, but instead as heads of different divisions among the six *officinae*,<sup>138</sup> arguing that

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<sup>132</sup> Otto Voetter's analysis of the coinages of Maximinus Thrax (r. 235–238) has clearly shown that his coins can be divided cleanly by reverse type into six divisions (Voetter 1894, 387.)

<sup>133</sup> *CIL* VI 1607, 1625.

<sup>134</sup> Jongkees 1934, 185.

<sup>135</sup> Kraay 1956.

<sup>136</sup> Carson 1957, 249–249; MacDowell 1957, 269–273.

<sup>137</sup> Eddy 1967, 51–52.

<sup>138</sup> Oddly, some *officinae* would have had more *offinatores* than others within this system, as sixteen cannot be divided evenly by six.

the Roman mint was organized into six *officinae* from the reign of Augustus until the later third century under Diocletian; this hypothesis<sup>139</sup> has gained much support.<sup>140</sup> On the basis of what he termed a “very superficial” study of the coinage of Trajan, Marcus Aurelius, and Antoninus Pius, Carson detected six *officinae* at this stage of the second century.<sup>141</sup> His study may have conveniently found what he set out to find, but few have found much fault it.

Other examinations of the numismatic evidence in attempts to determine the number of active *officinae* have also confirmed that six appear to have been operating during the early Empire, though some scholars have argued for fewer.<sup>142</sup> For example, Paul-André Besombes recently conducted a study of Trajan’s precious metal coinage in efforts to identify the number of *officinae* for his reign. He argues that the two commonest legend varieties of the COS V period (AD 103–111), IMP TRAIANO AVG GER DAC P M TR P COS V PP (obv.) / SPQR OPTIMO PRINCIPI (rev.) and IMP TRAIANO AVG GER DAC P M TR P (obv.) / COS V PP SPQR OPTIMO PRINC (rev.) were the product of two separate *officinae*.<sup>143</sup> By contrast, in 1970 Philip Hill had argued for six *officinae* for the same period.<sup>144</sup> Hill’s assessment has been upheld by Woytek, who claims in a particularly scathing review<sup>145</sup> that “Besombes is demonstrably wrong.”<sup>146</sup> Woytek points out that the two legend varieties relied upon by Besombes were not

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<sup>139</sup> Voetter 1894, 387, 394–395; Pink 1935, 24–29; Mattingly 1939, 21–61; RIC IV.3, 15; RIC IV.3, xvi; RIC V.1, 15; BMCRE V, xxv, xxvii.

<sup>140</sup> Grant 1954, 55; Le Gentilhomme 1946, 24, 29–30; Eddy 1967, 51–53.

<sup>141</sup> Carson 1956, 239.

<sup>142</sup> Woytek 2012, 114.

<sup>143</sup> Besombes 2008, 17.

<sup>144</sup> Hill 1970, 3.

<sup>145</sup> Woytek 2009, 433.

<sup>146</sup> Woytek 2012, 114.



minted concurrently, but successively,<sup>147</sup> and that at least five *officinae* can be observed.<sup>148</sup>

Martin Beckmann's 2011 die-study of the COS V aurei also concluded that at least five *officinae* are observable.<sup>149</sup>

While debate may continue indefinitely regarding the quantity of *officinae* at the Roman mint, there happens to be solid consensus that each *officina* operated on the so-called 'cycle' theory of production.<sup>150</sup> Simply stated, this theory "implies that all the *officinae* produced coins of one denomination or metal simultaneously, followed by coins of another denomination or metal and so on."<sup>151</sup>

Numerous hoard and die studies over the last century have left little doubt among numismatists that each *officina* of the Roman mint produced only a single reverse type at a time, and likely of a particular denomination and for a particular figure of the imperial family.<sup>152</sup> As the argument goes, *officinae* would cycle through production of a given series until either the desired quantity of coins was struck or exhaustion of the dies occurred.<sup>153</sup>

### **LOCATION OF THE ROMAN MINT**

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<sup>147</sup> Woytek 2010, 34.

<sup>148</sup> Woytek 2010, 620.

<sup>149</sup> Beckmann 2011b, 177.

<sup>150</sup> Hill 2013, 39.

<sup>151</sup> Hill 1970, 4.

<sup>152</sup> Mattingly 1939, 21–61; 1960, 131; Carson 1956, 238–239; 1958, 198; ; Le Gentilhomme 1946, 24, 29–30; Grant 1954, 55 Eddy 1967, 51–53; *BMCRE* VI, 6–8.

<sup>153</sup> It has been argued that the mint officials in charge of determining the number of dies to be cut in order to reach the desired quota were exceptionally capable of making these calculations. Studies have demonstrated that occurrences of notable 'die wear' on imperial coinages were very low, indicating that only in rare cases were dies pushed further than optimal, and that it was deemed more economical to use the wearing dies rather than cut new ones. See further Hill (George) 1922; Vermeule 1954; Carson 1990; Gibbs 1993; Beckmann 2012.

Even the placement of the mint within Rome is controversial. According to Livy, during the Republic, it was on the Capitoline Hill, either in, or very near, the temple of Juno Moneta.<sup>154</sup> It is reasonable to suppose that the mint was maintained here for the earliest years of the Empire, yet during the time of Trajan (r. 98–117) a series of dedicatory inscriptions indicates the presence of a *moneta Caesaris* on the Caelian Hill near the site of the Church of San Clemente.<sup>155</sup> These inscriptions, aside from giving invaluable administrative information on mint officials and workmen (discussed below), provide striking evidence that the large first century building under the church was probably the Roman mint of the High Empire.<sup>156</sup> Literary evidence concurs, as sources report that the war of the moneyers under Felicissimus, the *a rationalis* under Aurelian, occurred on the Caelian Hill.<sup>157</sup> Archaeological analysis of the structure under the church suggests that construction was completed between AD 81 and 84.<sup>158</sup>

There is little evidence for the mint's administrative and technical organization.<sup>159</sup> Traces from the Republican mint do survive for the Imperial period, yet their survival often perplexes more than illuminates. For example, the names of the Republican mint officials, *tresviri aere argento auro flando feriundo* (*IIIviri a.a.a.f.f.*), the “moneyers”, cease to be found on coinage under Augustus,<sup>160</sup> yet epigraphic evidence proves that the post survived,<sup>161</sup> at least

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<sup>154</sup> Livy 6.20.13.

<sup>155</sup> *CIL* VI 42, 43, 44, 239, 791.

<sup>156</sup> Woytek 2012, 101.

<sup>157</sup> *SHA* Aurelian, 38.3–4; Aurel. Vict. *De Caes.* 25.

<sup>158</sup> Coarelli 1994, 47–61.

<sup>159</sup> For a detailed discussion, see Carson 1956; Wolters 1999, 85–99.

<sup>160</sup> Their last presence on Roman coinage is on precious metal issues of 12 BC and on the *aes* in 4 BC. For more, see BMCRE I, xcv.

<sup>161</sup> *CIL* X, 3850 = *ILS* 1181.

nominally, well into the third century.<sup>162</sup> Consensus holds that their role in the mint was rather minor during the Empire, particularly following the first century, as a new procuratorial position for the administration of the Roman mint was created no later than the reign of Nerva (r. 96–98).<sup>163</sup> It must be stressed, however, that it is risky to assume that a post was created only a short time before its earliest attestation. The first attested *procurator monetae* is the eques L. Vibius Lentulus, who held the post from AD 96–102.<sup>164</sup>

### **FUNCTIONING OF THE ROMAN MINT**

Consensus holds that it was the *a rationibus* who determined total mint output. This Imperial official was the overseer of the mint. By the second century AD at least, so far as can be ascertained from scant epigraphic evidence, the *procurator monetae* ranked below him.<sup>165</sup> This *procurator* was the official administrator of the mint, although the scope of his duties remains unclear.<sup>166</sup> For the actual operation of the mint, the *optio et exactor auri argenti et aeris* was evidently responsible, with an immediate subordinate, simply entitled *optio*.<sup>167</sup> Also involved were the *officinatores*, whose duties are nowhere explained in the source material, yet they were probably managers<sup>168</sup> who oversaw “quality control.”<sup>169</sup> A variety of artisans and workmen of the mint are also attested in the Trajanic inscriptions noted above. Here we find

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<sup>162</sup> Lenormant 1878, iii, 185; Jones 1970; Crawford 1983a, 599 n. 1.

<sup>163</sup> *CIL* VI, 1607 = *ILS* 450; *CIL* VI, 1625b = *ILS* 1340.

<sup>164</sup> Peachin 1986, 95.

<sup>165</sup> Woytek 2012, 101. Cf. *Stat. Silv.* 3.3.104–105.

<sup>166</sup> Noreña 2011, 191.

<sup>167</sup> *CIL* VI, 42, 43, 44; Carson 1990, 245.

<sup>168</sup> Woytek 2012, 103–104.

<sup>169</sup> Woytek 2012, 103.

*malliatores*, *signatores*, *scalptores*, *suppostores*, and *flaturae*: hammerers, die-cutters, master die-cutters, flan-handlers,\* and foundry workers, respectively.

Debate persists over how these five roles relate to daily practice, as well as over whether the terms *signatores* and *scalptores* are interchangeable, or denote varying degrees of skill, or signify different artisans.<sup>170</sup> Woytek has recently suggested that they were not artisans at all, and that *signatores* are not the same as *scalptores*, on the basis that their referencing in an inscription<sup>171</sup> is part of a dedication to Hercules not Apollo, the former being more appropriate for laborers, the latter for artists.<sup>172</sup> Others scholars see the *signatores* not as laborers or artisans, but as yet another administrative post with unknown duties.<sup>173</sup>

It is worth noting that Imperial mints were not always limited to Rome; other official mints were in operation elsewhere for brief periods of the Principate (fig. 1). The normal practice for the Julio-Claudian and Flavian dynasties was that Imperial *aes* coinages were struck at Rome, while precious metal coinages were primarily struck at Lugdunum. Lugdunum would cease operations, however, before the end of the reign of Vespasian in 79.<sup>174</sup> From 96 until 193, all Imperial coinages were struck exclusively at Rome. From 193 forward, Eastern mints began to strike Imperial coinages, on a small scale, and henceforth remained in production. It should be stressed that, aside from precious metal coinage of the early Empire minted at Lugdunum and

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<sup>170</sup> For the *signatores* –*scalptores* debate, see Sperling 1700, 238; Jobert 1739, vol. 2, 65; Mommsen 1887, 36 n.2: “Die auch vorkommenden *scalptores* sind ohne Zweifel identisch mit den *signatores*.”; Babelon 1901, col. 866; Hirschfeld 1905, 186; Hill 1922, 16–19; Regling 1930; Vermeule 1954, 18, 37, 47–51; Zehnacker 1973, 18–25; Crawford 1983a, 578 n. 5; Zwielerlein-Diehl 2007, 78–80. 50.

<sup>171</sup> *CIL* VI, 44.

<sup>172</sup> Woytek 2012, 107.

<sup>173</sup> Jongkees 1943, 187; Instinsky 1962, 50.

<sup>174</sup> The mint would briefly reemerge in 193, striking coins in the name of Clodius Albinus during his failed attempts to defeat Septimius Severus.

some later Severan issues from Eastern mints, all Imperial coins minted at non-Roman mints are *exceedingly* rare. This fact suggests that, beginning with Augustus, under whom a large number of foreign mints were closed after temporary production, centralization of Imperial coinage production was of importance to Rome. ‘External’ mintage of Imperial coin is far more representative of some impromptu and isolated concern, which warranted ad hoc mintage.

<b>Emperor</b>	<b>Other Imperial Mints in Operation (According to <i>RIC</i>)</b>
Augustus	Lugdunum; Antioch; Cyrenaica; Emerita Augusta; Ephesus; Nemausus; Northern Peloponnese; Pergamum; Samos; Treviri; Uncertain Spanish mints
Tiberius	Lugdunum; Caesarea Cappadociae; Commagene
Caligula	Lugdunum; Caesarea Cappadociae
Claudius	Lugdunum; Caesarea Cappadociae; Ephesus; Pergamum
Nero	Lugdunum; Caesarea Cappadociae; Uncertain Balkan Mint
Galba	Lugdunum; Gaul; Tarraco
Otho	
Vitellius	Lugdunum; Gaul; Tarraco
Vespasian	Lugdunum; Antioch; Alexandria; Asia Minor; Commagene; Poetovio
Titus	
Domitian	
Nerva	
Trajan	
Hadrian	
Antoninus Pius	
Marcus Aurelius	
Commodus	
Pertinax	
Didius Julianus	
Pescennius Niger	Antioch
Clodius Albinus	Lugdunum
Septimius Severus	Antioch; Emesa; Laodicea
Geta	Antioch; Emesa; Laodicea
Caracalla	Antioch; Emesa; Laodicea
Macrinus	Antioch
Elagabalus	Antioch; Nicomedia
Alexander Severus	Antioch

**Figure 1.** All known mints that produced Imperial coinages outside of Rome, by emperor, for the Principate.

Impossible as it is to reconstruct the administrative structure of the Roman mint for the Principate, what is still more vexing is that the appearance of more evidence can complicate the picture more than clarify it. One brief example will suffice: a fragmentary dedicatory inscription evidently of Trajan's time to Victoria Aug. set up by five *conductores* (contractors) of the *flatura argentaria monetae Caesaris*, the silver smelter of the mint.<sup>175</sup> What the inscription implies is that the Roman mint at this date<sup>176</sup> did not make the flans for silver coins,<sup>177</sup> but sub-contracted their production elsewhere.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> *CIL* VI, 791. For more epigraphic evidence concerning lessees of the mint, see: *CIL* VI, 8455, 8456; *CIL* XIV, 3642.

<sup>176</sup> Current assessment is AD 115. Mommsen's interpretation of it being from the third century is no longer supported. See Pink 1952.

<sup>177</sup> Woytek 2012, 113.

<sup>178</sup> Four of the five *conductores* are Ulpian, surely Trajanic freedmen.

## **CHAPTER TWO: ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTION OF THE ROMAN MINT. PART TWO: THE ROLE OF THE EMPEROR**

Thousands of iconographical combinations of type and corresponding inscriptions have been identified for the millions of surviving Roman Imperial coins. Many of these types represent ‘politic’ messages regarding the emperor and his regime. They might highlight recent military conquests, reflect foreign policy, or portray the emperor’s links with the army, senate, praetorians, and provincial elite. Other types might emphasize the emperor’s religious observances, upholding of traditional Roman virtues, munificence, maintenance of peace, or stress his vital role in the happiness and freedom of citizens. Other types still might present more pragmatic matters, such as the emperor’s dynastic ambitions and choice of successor. In short, imperial coinage communicated the particular qualities that a given regime valued, while unceasingly endorsing the emperor’s legitimacy.

For present purposes I take ‘propaganda’ to imply information which is purposefully designed and intended to persuade or convince its audience. It is a form of communication which aims at influencing the attitude of a community towards a particular cause or position, and is repeatedly dispersed (often over a wide variety of media) in order to create the desired result.

The question of who was ultimately responsible for the selection and crafting of numismatic ideology, in other words, who chose the types that appeared on Roman coinage, must be considered. In particular, what was the role of the emperor in the selection of coinage types from the imperial mints? While there are ancient texts that link a sovereign power and the

selection of coinage types,<sup>179</sup> assessment of type selection for Roman coinage, particularly imperial, is less straightforward.

It is evident that during the Republic the *triumviri monetales*,<sup>180</sup> also known as moneyers, along with the senate and quaestors managed the mint together, with type selection under the direction of the moneyers.<sup>181</sup> For a variety of reasons, the late second century BC saw a great degree of personalization of coins produced by the moneyers for self-advertising political purposes. Initially no identifier of the moneyer can be found on coins (fig. 1), then subtle and abbreviated reference to their identity begins to appear (fig.2) followed by inclusion of their full names (fig. 3). Additionally, many moneyers began to exhibit wholly new types that happen to allude to their own personal ancestry. Lesser known families demonstrated obscure events, such as a Roman soldier shielding a fallen comrade (fig. 4),<sup>182</sup> while more recognizable families, such as the Metelli, remind the coin user of their own heroic connection with the Punic Wars (fig. 5). As the iconography developed, the coin designs began not only to portray the moneyers' ancestral heritage and comment on contemporary events, but also, like so much else in Rome from the time of Marius, the moneyers rapidly came under the influence of the powerful military

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<sup>179</sup> For example, Aristotle's *Oeconomica*, includes among the four chief responsibilities of a king those regarding coinage. In a clarifying statement he remarks that "concerning coinage, I refer to what coin should be minted and when it should be of a high and low value" (Περὶ μὲν τὸ νόμισμα λέγω ποῖον καὶ πότε τίμιον ἢ εὖθρον ποιητέον, 1345b 20–23).

<sup>180</sup> More fully *tresviri auro argento aere flando feriundo* (abbreviated on coinage to IIIVIRI AAAFF).

<sup>181</sup> The senate established the annual budget, which could include a requirement for the provisions of new coin; the quaestors, who were in control of the *aerarium*, would transfer the bullion to the mint; the moneyers struck the coin. The technical specifications of Republican coinage were prescribed by law (e.g., *lex Clodia* of 100 BC; *lex Papiria* of 92 BC); the volume dictated by the senate; manufacturer and design by moneyers, with special issues occasionally delegated to curule aediles, quaestors, *praefecti urbi*, or praetors. The introduction of new standards and denominations appears to have been authorized by law (Pliny *NH.* 23.46).

<sup>182</sup> Crawford (1983a, 324–325) no. 319: remarks that the coin "doubtless allude[s] to an act of heroism by one the moneyer's ancestors." Crawford comments that previous attempts (Cavedoni 1845, 184–185) to try to identify the heroic figure, however, are "idle speculation."



elite associated with the end of the Republic. Coinage types then began to serve direct and ambitious political ends as they took on a more autocratic and propagandistic tone. Three brief examples will suffice. First, the coinage of Sulla (fig. 6), not only features quasi-regal symbolism,<sup>183</sup> but also includes for the first time the title ‘imperator.’ Second, the coinage of Julius Caesar (fig. 7), which for the first time portrays a living Roman on its obverse—very much in the manner of Hellenistic monarchs—provided a potent political statement that left little ambiguity regarding his political ambitions. Lastly, as hypocritical as it may seem, Brutus had himself portrayed on coins commemorating his role in the assassination of Julius Caesar. The loaded imagery and inscription of these infamous Eid Mar coins (fig. 8), introduced above, provide a potent propagandistic statement. Over three centuries later, the Roman historian Cassius Dio remarks on the coin, stating that Brutus minted it with its particular inscription and iconography in order to show that he and Cassius had liberated the fatherland.<sup>184</sup> With the precedent set, portraiture of the issuing authority, with its monarchic flavor, became commonplace in numismatic expression during the drift towards autocracy in the late Republic.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> His claim that both the power that he holds (assured by the symbols of the *auspica*) as well as his achievements as both magistrate and commander (his dual trophies and IMPER ITERVM) have the sanction of divinity (Venus) are standard thematic imagery found on Hellenistic and Eastern coinages. The title not only signified his exceptional position in the Roman world but also was a clear reminder that he had gained command of an army, won victories with it, and had effectively secured their loyalty.

<sup>184</sup> “In addition to these activities, Brutus stamped upon the coins which were being minted his own likeness, a cap and two daggers, indicating by this and by the inscription that he and Cassius had liberated the fatherland” (Βροῦτος μὲν ταῦτά τε ἔπρασσε, καὶ ἐς τὰ νομίσματα ἃ ἐκόπτετο εἰκόνα τε αὐτοῦ καὶ πῦλον ξιφίδια τε δύο ἐνετύπου, δηλῶν ἐκ τε τούτου καὶ διὰ τῶν γραμμάτων ὅτι τὴν πατρίδα μετὰ τοῦ Κασσίου ἡλευθερωκῶς εἶη, Cass. Dio, 47.25.3).

<sup>185</sup> Howgego 1995, 69.

The *triumviri monetales*, at least from the 130s onward,<sup>186</sup> must have played a central role in the selection of coinage types for the mint at Rome; otherwise the significant element of the typology which referred to the achievements and origins of their families would be wholly inexplicable. Additionally, the issuing authorities of the civil wars at the end of the Republic, whose types and choice of representation suggest personal involvement, have left clear markers of their role in type selection.<sup>187</sup> That the moneyers demonstrated a keen awareness of typological relevance in the part of those responsible is readily apparent.

For the Republic a clean line can be traced between issuing authority and numismatic typology. For Roman imperial coinage, however, the situation is less clear and necessitates further exploration. It should be noted that the late Republican precedent of the moneyers' direct involvement in type selection implies that Augustus<sup>188</sup> may very well have had a similar involvement too.

Regrettably, as seen above, our awareness of the inner workings of the imperial mint is quite limited. We know that *triumviri monetales* continued to make rare issues under Augustus, yet the post's direct minting role was eliminated under Augustus. The office nominally remained,<sup>189</sup> however: many scholars envision it as mere Republican display.<sup>190</sup> Career inscriptions up through the Severan period attest the office.<sup>191</sup> As noted above, it appears that the

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<sup>186</sup> For the earliest Republican coinage, the censor seemed to have played a pivotal role. See Crawford 1983a, 42–43.

<sup>187</sup> Pliny informs us of Marc Antony's minting of denarii (*NH* 33.46), explicitly indicated that Antony had full minting authority. For more on mint administration during the Republic, see Crawford 1983a, 598–620.

<sup>188</sup> If not involved directly, he might have been through a general program, as his administration was in many ways a continuation of the Republican, but revolving around one person over a length of time.

<sup>189</sup> Carson 1956.

<sup>190</sup> Vagi 1999, 34.

<sup>191</sup> *CIL* 10.3850 = *ILS* 1181 (near Capua, ca. 233 AD). For more on their reduced state of survival, see Jones 1970.

*a rationibus*, the overseer of Imperial finance, set total mint output. Coinage type selection, however, is never mentioned among his duties.<sup>192</sup> While we know that day-to-day functioning of the mint came to be administered by an equestrian *procurator monetae*, possibly under the reign of Nerva, his duties, as well, are completely unknown to us.<sup>193</sup>

This particular shortage of information is not unique to the functioning of the imperial mint, but is unfortunately characteristic of our understanding of Roman imperial administration broadly speaking. While most scholars acknowledge the irrecoverability of the inner functioning of imperial administration<sup>194</sup> and recognize that it was a collective effort,<sup>195</sup> others argue that the superficial picture provided by the ancient sources that the emperor was “all-powerful and always busy,”<sup>196</sup> has validity. Fergus Millar, for instance, envisioned the Emperor’s fingerprints on a plethora of administrative tasks and duties, arguing in 1967 that “all the evidence we have points in the same direction.”<sup>197</sup> This theme was developed in his monumental 1977 work *The Emperor in the Roman World*, which was criticized for its portrayal of an emperor personally involved in all aspects of daily administration.<sup>198</sup> Millar, in a 1992 reprint acknowledged in his

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<sup>192</sup> According to Pliny the Younger he was officially known as “guardian of the imperial wealth” (*custos principalium opum*, *Epist.* 8.6), but this provides little insight into actual responsibilities. Statius offers a, surely exaggerated, explanation of the post in his consolation of Claudius Etruscus on the death of his father, who had been *a rationibus* the prior year (*Stat. Silv.* 3.3.86–105). The selection of coin types is not included.

<sup>193</sup> Given that the office was held almost exclusively by military personnel with no prior financial experience, who did not then tend to go on to more senior financial positions (Burnett 1987, 27), it seems to have been purely administrative.

<sup>194</sup> Eck 2008, 205–261. Hopkins 1978, esp. 180.

<sup>195</sup> Eck 2008: “In reality the emperor relied on others in almost all aspects of his decision-making and actions (195).”

<sup>196</sup> Eck 2008, 195.

<sup>197</sup> Millar 1967 19.

<sup>198</sup> Hopkins 1978.

Afterword that the inner workings of the imperial administration *were*, in fact, “mysterious.”<sup>199</sup>

Notwithstanding, many leading numismatists envisage an environment at Rome in which the emperor played an active role in reverse type selection and overall coin design. Some take a mildly cautious approach, limiting the instances of imperial reach to the early stages of the Empire. Robert Carson, for instance, defends the possibility:

“It is not improbable that at least in the more stable reigns of the earlier empire, the designs of the imperial portrait on the coin obverse may have been submitted for the emperor’s formal approval in much the same fashion as obtains today in the case of coinage with a regal portrait. Such a practice indeed may have persisted into the late empire, for, according to Cassiodorus,<sup>200</sup> the *comes sacrarum largitionum* was charged with some responsibility for the appearance of the imperial portrait on coinage.”<sup>201</sup>

The opaque picture that survives of imperial administration, coupled with numerous literary sources naming the emperor as an active agent in the imperial mint (see below), led some scholars in the mid twentieth century to argue that the emperors were intimately involved in the type selection and design of their coinages, drawing particular attention to imperial virtues and successes.<sup>202</sup> Those few arguing for direct imperial involvement concede that such practices would have been implausible for the provincial mints, yet Humphrey Sutherland goes so far as to stress that ‘imperial reach’ existed, arguing that “acceptability of certain themes was officially known,” as evidenced by the example of the employment of the ‘Sphinx’ and ‘Capricorn’ types minted concurrently at more than one of Augustus’ cistophoric mints in Asia.<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> Millar 1992, 636.

<sup>200</sup> Cassiod. *Var.* 6.7: *ut figura vultus nostri metallis usualibus inprimatur, monetamque facis de nostris temporibus futura saecula commonere.*

<sup>201</sup> Carson 1990, 17.

<sup>202</sup> Charlesworth 1937, 111; Sutherland 1951; 1976, 96–121.

<sup>203</sup> Sutherland 1970, 112.

This so-called ‘imperialist’ perspective of Sutherland would lose fashion as the twentieth century progressed. Many scholars do not attempt to understand the process of imperial type selection at all, citing the inherent difficulties and fruitlessness of the endeavor.<sup>204</sup> Hugo Jones and Michael Crawford established what would become the orthodox ‘anti-imperialist’ approach,<sup>205</sup> whose interpretation would find continued scholarly support and supplementation.<sup>206</sup> Other than Sutherland, who continued to defend his interpretation until the 1980s,<sup>207</sup> few would subscribe to his reconstruction of the inner functioning of the imperial mint.<sup>208</sup> Consensus remained with the ‘anti-imperialists.’ In short, their argument goes that mint officials, acting on a “general directive” issued by an unknown agent, ultimately selected or designed new types, as the emperor had more important matters to attend to. Crawford even went so far as to claim that Sutherland’s contention that type selection for the Empire was one of “careful consideration” is “based on no reasoned argument,”<sup>209</sup> rather, he suggested that type selection was haphazard and illogical.

Problematic, however, for the ‘anti-imperialists’ is that no ancient sources suggest that such was the case; instead, not simply the majority, but also the entire corpus of literary evidence that comments on type selection, quite explicitly identify both deliberate choice and the direct

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<sup>204</sup> Peachin 1986; Woltors 1999; Manders 2007, 284; Longfellow 2011, 40.

<sup>205</sup> Jones 1956; Crawford 1974 (the revised 1983 reissue is listed in the bibliography below).

<sup>206</sup> Barbara Levick (1982, 108), for example, argues that type selection was made by mint officials, who ever sought to present the emperor with a flattering image of himself to curry favor. To interpret imperial type selection in such a way is quite problematic, since, as stressed by Ada Cheung “because there were much more immediate and less logistically complex means to sycophantic expression, and also for the tacit assumption that the princeps personally inspected the products of the major mints” (1998–1999, 53).

<sup>207</sup> Sutherland 1986.

<sup>208</sup> See Sutherland 1986, 89–93; Metcalf 2006, 42.

<sup>209</sup> Crawford 1983, 713 n.2

agency of the emperor. It is true that often what was done *in the name of* the emperor is stated as having been done *by* the emperor as literary shorthand. Yet, if all statements in the sources that assign some action to a princeps are dismissed as mere shorthand and are not meant to imply agency, we run the risk of taking an extreme position opposite that of Millar: the emperor *does nothing* and has *no concern* for policy or the administration of his rule whatsoever.

Furthermore, ‘anti-imperialists’ frequently attack a straw man—one brief example will suffice.<sup>210</sup> Christopher Howgego remarks that the existing literary evidence “is quite insufficient to demonstrate the hypothesis that emperors regularly chose or vetted all coin types;”<sup>211</sup> yet no ‘imperialist’ argues such an absolutist hypothesis that “all” types were chosen by the princeps. The ‘imperialist’ perspective is that various emperors at various times for various reasons were directly involved in the selection and design of their coin types; the argument is not that it was a consistent practice, or even one involving every emperor.

Before examining the literary evidence, it is important to mention two significant caveats. First, as noted above, we should not expect anything other than allusions to direct imperial agency for type selections, since it is reasonable to suppose that what was done in the name of the emperor by his agents could often be seen as having been done by the emperor personally;<sup>212</sup> as the work of imperial agents can easily be perceived as imperial agency. Second, the sources that happen to mention type selection are, more often than not, very distant from the period to which they refer. Cassius Dio may be trustworthy for his contemporary period, but is not authoritative for the late Republic,<sup>213</sup> which is the period for which he comments on type

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<sup>210</sup> See also Wallace-Hadrill 1986, 67.

<sup>211</sup> Howgego 1995, 70.

<sup>212</sup> Noreña 2011, 191, n.3.

<sup>213</sup> Millar 1964, 28–60.

selection.<sup>214</sup> Suetonius is famously sensationalistic, and should seldom be taken as an authority on any topic.<sup>215</sup> Ronald Syme aptly describes the *Historia Augusta*, one of the few extant sources for the third century, as “permeated with fraudulence.”<sup>216</sup>

Nevertheless, numerous literary sources indicate agency of the emperor. Suetonius reports that Augustus “minted” (*percusserit*, *Aug.* 94.12) denarii bearing a Capricorn to advertise his astrological sign, and that Nero “minted” a coin type (*percusserit*, *Nero* 25.2) to portray himself as Apollo Citharoedus. The author of the *Historia Augusta* relates that Gallienus, “ordered coins to be struck” (*monetam...cudi iussit*, *Gall.* 12.1) to commemorate his defeat of Shapur.

What is valuable from these random references regarding type selection is *not* that they suggest actual imperial agency, which I believe they do not, but instead that they demonstrate quite clearly that Romans interpreted the imperial coinage as bearing official statements of ideology and imperial attitude, for which *the emperor* is held accountable. The emperor was seen as communicating messages to his subjects by this means.<sup>217</sup>

A great deal of agency is perceivable when examining what might be termed as the coinage practice of an emperor. Augustus can be seen as conscientious and diligent in this respect. The entire corpus of Augustan coinage demonstrates an exceptional amount of

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<sup>214</sup> Cass. Dio, 47.25.3.

<sup>215</sup> Wardle, for instance, considers Suetonius to be “an authoritative source on the aspect of games under Augustus” (2015, 332). Some scholars have gone so far to state that Suetonius is no more reliable than a tabloid newspaper (Wright 1996, 14).

<sup>216</sup> Syme 1968, 1.

<sup>217</sup> Though beyond the chronological scope of this dissertation, it is worth noting that Eusebius, on three separate occasions (*Vit. Const.* 4.15; 4.73; 4.74) speaks of Constantine’s direct involvement in reverse type design. Also, Sozomen and Socrates Scholasticus imagine that Julian contrived (*πλέκω*) to put pagan imagery on his coins (Sozomen *HE* 5.19; Socrates *HE* 3.17). Lastly, the anonymous author of the fourth-century work, *De rebus bellicis*, offers advice to a prospective emperor regarding coin types that he should consider striking (*De rebus bellicis* 3.4) suggesting that it was the emperor who maintained agency.

topicality of types chosen. The dominant ones are the ‘founding honors’ bestowed on him (fig. 9), reminders of his ‘capture’ of Egypt (fig. 10), his unbreakable association with Julius Caesar (fig. 11), his military successes (fig. 12), and a conviction that his unique power in Rome was a family possession and that dynasty was at hand (fig. 13).<sup>218</sup>

By contrast, Tiberius’ coinage is rather uninformative, lacks topicality, and demonstrates almost a deliberate attempt to disengage from Augustus’ expressive ideological display.

Tiberius’ first coinage type (fig. 14)<sup>219</sup> was carried over from one of Augustus’ last, and though its minting ceased early in Tiberius’ reign, it was struck for the first two years.<sup>220</sup> The topical type likely persisted briefly for Tiberius, since it portrayed his successes in Germany after the setback there in AD 9. Additionally, it served immediate purposes for Tiberius regarding the mutinous legions of Pannonia upon the death of Augustus.<sup>221</sup> The majority of Tiberius’ coinage had little to do with the city of Rome, as the *entirety* of Tiberian aurei and denarii were struck at Lugdunum.<sup>222</sup> Furthermore, where hundreds of various types were employed during Augustus’ rule, the Imperial mint only struck one type for all of Tiberius’ aurei and denarii.<sup>223</sup> By the midpoint of his reign, however, when Sejanus was wielding significant influence in Rome, the *aes* coinage became both especially illustrative and topical,<sup>224</sup> as well as more plentiful than it had been. During this anomalous burst of topicality the types were pictorial and referred to

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<sup>218</sup> Sutherland 1976, 105. For greater detail, see Gagé 1932, 61.

<sup>219</sup> BMC 1–11.

<sup>220</sup> BMC 508–512.

<sup>221</sup> Cass. Dio 57.4.1.

<sup>222</sup> Sutherland 1976, 109.

<sup>223</sup> BMC 30–60.

<sup>224</sup> Sutherland 1976, 101.



contemporary events: Tiberius' aid to cities of Asia following an earthquake;<sup>225</sup> Livia's revived health, marked by a *supplicatio*;<sup>226</sup> reference to his son and heir, Drusus;<sup>227</sup> and the birth of his twin grandsons.<sup>228</sup> Earlier Tiberian coinage practice resumed, however, following the removal of Sejanus in 31 AD.

Agency regarding the mint and its practice persists throughout the Principate: the respective coinages and minting procedure appear to match traditional evaluations of varying reigns.<sup>229</sup> This should not imply that the emperor was personally directing his regime's representation. Instead, it makes fairly clear that some form of tone-setting was set by the imperial court and mint officials. Careful attention *was* paid regarding the construction of a distinct imperial image.

What has most frequently been cited as evidence for direct imperial involvement is the minting of three exceptional designs that appear to be so outside the usual vocabulary of types that they cannot be attributed to the routine dispositions of a moneyer.

Seneca,<sup>230</sup> Suetonius,<sup>231</sup> Cassius Dio,<sup>232</sup> and Josephus,<sup>233</sup> all allege that Caligula engaged in incestuous relations with his all three of his sisters, but especially Drusilla. The so-called

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<sup>225</sup> BMC 129.

<sup>226</sup> BMC 70.

<sup>227</sup> BMC 76.

<sup>228</sup> BMC 95.

<sup>229</sup> A variety of connections have been put forward. Caligula's coinage demonstrates excessive emphasis on familial heritage; Nero produced no *aes* coinage for the first 10 years of his reign, minting only aurei and denarii. Furthermore, many scholars have made the admittedly-subjective argument that under Nero, who famously ascribed to lofty ambitions and considered himself an artist (Champlin 2003, 53–83), there was a deliberate heightening of artistic expression and skill (Grant 1968, 28; Sutherland 1974, 158–169; Schwarz 1976, 42; Griffin 1984, 120; Kreitzer 1996, 115; Vagi 1999, 168; Alston 2014, 206). Alaric Watson argues similarly for the mid-third century coinage, stating that “the art of coin design and die-cutting reached unsurpassed heights in the 260s” (1999, 16).

<sup>230</sup> Sen. *ad Poly.* 27.4–6.

‘three sisters’ coinage type (fig. 16) of Caligula is one that leaves no confusion about his fondness for them. Agrippina (as *Securitas*) and Julia (as *Fortuna*) flank his favorite, Drusilla (as *Concordia*). This was the only time that coins depicted an emperor’s sister.<sup>234</sup> This type might at first appear to be a dangerous coin to mint without imperial directive, yet when appropriately contextualized it may seem predictable. Caligula bestowed excessive honors on his sisters, especially Drusilla. Upon her untimely death, she was not only granted divine honors, but was also consecrated, and worshipped as a goddess. Caligula erected a golden effigy of her in the senate house, as well as one in the Temple of Venus that rivaled that of the Venus; furthermore he was planning to construct a new temple complex for Drusilla.<sup>235</sup> A coinage type that flatters her and her sisters, raising them to the status of goddesses, thereby aggrandizing Caligula’s own familial image further, seems an obvious choice.

Second, some of Claudius’ earliest issues seemingly offer a reminder of his ignoble accession. The first issue, inscribed *IMPERator RECEPtus* (the emperor received) displays the gate of the camp of the praetorian guard (fig. 17),<sup>236</sup> while the second, inscribed *PRAETORianis RECEPtus* (accepted/acknowledged by the praetorians) portrays Claudius receiving the allegiance of the praetorians (fig. 18).<sup>237</sup> These two issues are the only examples of this type ever minted. Ada Cheung argues that “it would have a brave man indeed who chose so overtly

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<sup>231</sup> Suet. *Cal.* 24.1; 24,3; 36.1.

<sup>232</sup> Cass. Dio 59.3.6; 59.11.1; 59.26.5.

<sup>233</sup> Joseph. *AJ* 19.204.

<sup>234</sup> Other emperors would surely feature their (male) sibling on their own coinages, yet only as a potential heir, as in the case of Titus issuing coinage for Domitian. See RIC (Titus) 38–53; 96; 155–176; 238; 244.

<sup>235</sup> Barrett 1989, 87

<sup>236</sup> RIC<sup>2</sup> 7–8; 19–20; 25–26; 36–37.

<sup>237</sup> RIC<sup>2</sup> 11–12; 23–24; 29.

to advertise the true nature of Claudius' accession without specific instruction from the new princeps."<sup>238</sup> These coins are, however, rather uncontroversial and do little to disgrace Claudius through reference to the Praetorian Guard. It is not as if they display, for instance, Claudius cowering behind a curtain, or being raised onto the shoulders of the praetorians;<sup>239</sup> they are just plain acknowledgments of the Guard's prominent position. What is more significant on them is that they stress the existing concord between Claudius and the Praetorians—an important aspect to emphasize, given that Claudius' predecessor was assassinated by Cassius Chaerea, a tribune in the Praetorian Guard.

Third is a Neronian issue featuring the emperor on the reverse represented as Apollo Citharoedus (fig. 19), which is also the particular coin mentioned above referred to by Suetonius.<sup>240</sup> The iconography on this coinage is unprecedented. Citing the dangerous connotations that such imagery could stir, Christopher Ehrhardt argues that the type must have been decided on by the emperor himself.<sup>241</sup> However, given that Nero frequently recited poetry and sang with his lyre publicly, dressed himself in the attire of Apollo Citharoedus, and even had statues of himself as Apollo Citharoedus erected in his private rooms,<sup>242</sup> it hardly seems controversial to mint coins representing him in this guise without his direct command.

What these exceptional designs all share is that they are rare. If they happen not to be examples of direct imperial involvement, which I believe they are not, one might expect such rarity. If the princeps had *personally* made an effort to design or order a particular coinage type,

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<sup>238</sup> Cheung 1998–1999, 59.

<sup>239</sup> Cass. Dio 40.1.2–3.

<sup>240</sup> Suet. *Nero* 25.2. For more on Nero and his unique coinages and self-fashioning, see Levick 1999, 57.

<sup>241</sup> Ehrhardt 1984, 45.

<sup>242</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 16.4.2; Cass. Dio 62.29.1; Suet. *Nero* 10.2.

it reasonably follows that it would not be a rare issue, but that the mint would strike the coin in great numbers to ensure that this special type would be disseminated to more than just a minimal audience.

While it is unfortunate that we lack the evidence to elucidate the functioning of Roman imperial administration, it is highly problematic to assign a litany of administrative functions solely to the emperor, including the selection of coinage types minted during his reign. Ultimately, when assessing the issue of type selection, one must also ask: *how much does direct imperial agency matter?* What is most significant is that type selection was the prerogative of the political elite. Coinage was a highly communicative medium of official imperial pronouncement often laden with explicit propagandistic purpose. Every coin struck at an imperial mint can be considered “an official document and thus an official expression of imperial authority.”<sup>243</sup> Had the emperor himself or a member of the imperial court been the architect behind coinage types, the end result is the same: the coins are representative of whatever ideological statement the regime wishes to propagate.

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<sup>243</sup> Manders 2012, 32 citing Wallace-Hadrill 1986, 67; Noreña 2011, 147; Levick 1982, 68.

## FIGURES



**Figure 1.** Anonymous. Rome mint. Denarius. Obv: \*no legend;\* X in field\* behind helmeted head of Roma / Rev: \*no legend;\* ROMA in exergue. The Dioscuri galloping right. RRC 53/2.



**Figure 2.** Anonymous. Rome mint. Denarius. Obv: \*no legend;\* X in field behind helmeted head of Roma / Rev: \*no legend;\* ROMA in exergue; AR in field (unknown moneyer). The Dioscuri galloping right. RRC 53/2.





**Figure 3.** Cn. Lucretius Trio. Rome mint. Denarius. Obv: TRIO; X in field before helmeted head of Roma / Rev: \*no legend,\* CN LVCR - ROMA in exergue. The Dioscuri galloping right. RRC 237/1a.



**Figure 4.** Q. Minucius Thermus. Rome mint. Denarius. Obv: \*no legend\* / Rev: \*no legend; Q. THERM. MF in exergue. Roman soldier fighting barbarian soldier in protection of fallen comrade. RRC 319/1.



**Figure 5.** C. Caecilius Metellus Caprarius. Rome mint. Denarius. Obv: \*no legend;\* ROMA behind head of Roma in Phrygian helmet; X below chin of Roma / Rev: \*no legend;\* C METELLVS in exergue. Jupiter driving biga of elephants left; Victory flying above. RRC 269/1.



**Figure 6.** Lucius Sulla. Rome mint. Aureus. Obv: \*no legend;\* L SVLLA in exergue / Rev: \*no legend;\* IMPER ITERVM at upper and lower exergue. Jug and lituus between two trophies. RRC 359/1.





**Figure 7.** Julius Caesar. Rome mint. Denarius. Obv: DICT PERPETVO CAESAR / Rev: \*no legend; \* L BVCA (L. Aemilius Buca, moneyer) in exergue. Winged caduceus and fasces crossed in saltire; globe, clasped hands, and securis in three quarters. RRC 480/6.



**Figure 8. Figure 10.** Brutus. Mobile mint (N. Greece?). Aureus. Obv: BRVT IMP L PLAET CEST / Rev: EID MAR. Pileus between two daggers. RRC 508/3.





**Figure 9.** Augustus. Colonia Caesaraugusta. Denarius. Obv: CAESAR AVGVSTVS / Rev: \*no legend;\* OB CIVIS–SERVATOS in upper and lower exergue. Oak wreath with ties ascending vertically at the center. RIC I<sup>2</sup> 40a.



**Figure 10.** Augustus. Rome mint. Denarius. Obv: CAESAR COS VI / Rev: \*no legend;\* AEGVPTO–CAPTA in upper and lower exergue. Crocodile advancing r. RIC I<sup>2</sup> 275a.



**Figure 11.** Augustus. Colonia Caesaraugusta. Denarius. Obv: CAESAR AVGVSTVS / Rev: \*no legend;\* DIVVS IVLIVS crossing through eight-rayed comet with tail upwards. RIC I<sup>2</sup> 37a.



**Figure 12.** Augustus. Lugdunum. Aureus Obv: CAESAR AVGVSTVS DIVI F PATER PATRIAE / Rev: AVG F TR POT XV; TICAE SAR in exergue. Tiberius standing r. in triumphal quadriga, holding eagle-tipped scepter and laurel branch. RIC I<sup>2</sup> 221.





**Figure 13.** Augustus. Lugdunum. Denarius. Obv: CAESAR AVGVSTVS DIVI F PATER PATRIAE / Rev: AVGVSTI F COS DESIG PRINC IVVENT; C L CAESARES in exergue. Caius and Lucius standing facing and resting a hand on two shields set on ground. RIC I<sup>2</sup> 212.



**Figure 14.** Tiberius (Under Augustus). Lugdunum. Aureus. Obv: CAESAR AVGVSTVS DIVI F PATER PATRIAE / Rev: TI CAESAR AVGVSTVS F TR POT XV. Tiberius standing r. in triumphal quadriga of horses (of which two facing l. and two r.), holding eagle-tipped scepter and laurel branch. RIC I<sup>2</sup> 223.





**Figure 15.** Augustus. Tarraco mint. Aureus. Obv: \*no legend\* / Rev: AVGVSTVS. Capricorn right, holding globe attached to rudder between front hooves; cornucopia above its back. RIC I<sup>2</sup> 125.



**Figure 16.** Caligula. Rome mint. Sestertius. Obv: C CAESAR AVG GERMANICVS PON M TR POT / Rev: AGRIPPINA–DRVSILLA–IVLIA; SC in exergue. The sisters of Gaius standing facing: Agrippina, as Securitas, holds cornucopiae in r. hand resting on column, with l. hand on shoulder of Drusilla, as Concordia, who holds patera and cornucopiae; Julia, as Fortuna, holds rudder and cornucopiae. RIC I<sup>2</sup> 33.





**Figure 17.** Claudius. Rome mint. Aureus. Obv: TI CLAVD CAESAR AVG P M TR P IIII / Rev: \*no legend;\* IMPER RECEPT inscribed on praetorian camp. Soldier, spear in r., and Aquila in front, standing on battlemented wall enclosing praetorian camp. RIC I<sup>2</sup> 25.



**Figure 18.** Claudius. Lugdunum. Aureus. Obv: TI CLAVD CAESAR AVG P M TR P IIII / Rev: PRAETOR RECEPT. Claudius, togate, standing right, clasping hands with Praetorian Guardsman standing left and holding Aquila. RIC I<sup>2</sup> 11.



**Figure 19.** Nero. Lugdunum mint. As. Obv: NERO CLAVD CAESAR AVG GERMANI /  
Rev: PONTIF MAX TR POT IMP PP –SC; I in exergue. Nero as Apollo Citharoedus advancing  
right, playing lyre. RIC I<sup>2</sup> 380.

## **COIN IMAGE ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND PERMISSIONS**

- Figure 1: ArtCoins Roma, Auction 16, Lot# 315.  
Figure 2: Roma Numismatics Ltd, E-Sale 18, Lot #773  
Figure 3: Numismatica Ars Classica, Auction 78, Lot #579.  
Figure 4: ArtCoins Roma, Auction 4, Lot #829.  
Figure 5: <http://wildwinds.com/coins/sear5/s0145.html>  
Figure 6: Trustees of the British Museum. RR2p459.1  
Figure 7: Numismatik Lanz München, Auction 158, Lot #369  
Figure 8: Numismatica Ars Classica, Auction 27, Lot #282.  
Figure 9: Leu Numismatik AG, Auction 86, Lot #741  
Figure 10: Numismatica Ars Classica, Auction 51, Lot 140.  
Figure 11: Numismatica Ars Classica, Auction 86, Lot 52.  
Figure 12: Numismatica Ars Classica, Auction 84, Lot #1732.  
Figure 13: Numismatica Ars Classica, Auction 59, Lot #1846.  
Figure 14: Numismatica Ars Classica, Auction 25, Lot #349.  
Figure 15: Classical Numismatic Group, Triton XI, Lot #811.  
Figure 16: Numismatica Ars Classica, Auction 51, Lot #179.  
Figure 17: Numismatica Ars Classica, Auction 54, Lot #337.  
Figure 18: Fritz Rudolf Künker GmbH & Co. KG, Auction 236, Lot #942.  
Figure 19: Classical Numismatic Group, Electronic Auction 276, Lot #379.

### **CHAPTER THREE: A DIACHRONIC APPROACH TO PROPAGANDA AND TYPOLOGY**

In this chapter, I explore the inter-relationship between disruptive political events and the employment of propagandistic typology on coinage. I examine the production and mintage of a variety of reverse type issues and assess how their production correlates with certain events that can help to explain their seemingly erratic mintage. The design and dissemination of particular reverse types were purposefully executed to communicate a messages to users. I argue that during times of upheaval, reverse type selection was not an incidental choice; instead, certain choices had aims to strengthen or change distinct sentiments among varying groups to meet the current concerns of the emperor. In short, concerted efforts were taken by the regime to influence public opinion through numismatic propaganda. However, I do not suggest that the images and legends on coins were the foremost element in what I perceive as a larger ‘propaganda campaign’ at work during such times. Nor do I intend to imply that coinage was the initial, sole, or even the most important element in this communication. This said, its traces are clearly visible when the evidence is thoroughly examined.

Prior to this dissertation, no means had been available to undertake a comprehensive analysis of the numismatic corpus for such ends. Earlier endeavors relied on data derived purely from known types and years of mintage, and not from exhaustive assemblage of actual quantities of known specimens.<sup>244</sup> These studies were limited to a handful of large hoards or the collection

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<sup>244</sup> Ellithorpe 2012.



present at a given museum.<sup>245</sup> Moreover, no studies have ever assembled the far more important single finds into their analyses. The lack of attempts to do so is due to the fact that the data collection and assemblage of single find data are exceptionally arduous and time-consuming (my database took over three years of dedicated focus to compile). As noted in more depth in Chapter Four, single finds by their very nature may offer a better picture of coinage in circulation for a region;<sup>246</sup> to determine what was in active circulation *at a given time* it is imperative to have archaeological context, which single finds often do not possess. For the first time ever, my database of over 300,000 Roman Imperial coins, drawn from more than 1,500 hoards and 75,000 single finds, therefore provides the means to determine very reliable and secure quantification of actual coin issues.<sup>247</sup>

### **TOPICALITY OF ROMAN IMPERIAL COINAGES**

As stated in the Introduction, it is clearly evident that reverse types on Roman Imperial coinages were frequently topical.<sup>248</sup> The inferences of this topicality, however, have

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<sup>245</sup> For some of the more sizable recent studies, see Noreña 2011; Manders 2012; Rowan 2012. Hobley's significant 1998 study, while larger in scale than most (ca. 20,000 coins) and very important, was, by deliberate design so as to be manageable for his ten-year study, limited to *aes* of the west for the High Empire.

<sup>246</sup> Coins deliberately would all have been subject to some form of screening process by the depositor. Coins deposited in hoards, for instance, conform to Gresham's Law as various studies, and this dissertation, demonstrate: they consist of higher fineness. Precious metal coinage, particularly aurei, are almost non-existent in non-hoard deliberate depositions, as only 36 out of 6,805 aurei (0.5%) in the database come from all such deposits. Additionally, the *aes* deposited in graves, temples, or as some form of dedicatory offering show significant signs of deliberate selection based on their reverse type (see Chapter One). Accidental loss, therefore, provides the most accurate representation of what was actually in circulation.

<sup>247</sup> It should be noted, however, that the surviving numismatic corpus is not a *flawless* representation of relative quantities of types as they existed in antiquity. Surely, a variety of external factors could have played a role in affecting relative quantities of certain coinages. However, aside from limited and extreme cases (e.g., Caligulan bronze within Italy) what survives today, particularly when the body of evidence amounts to nearly 1/3 million specimens, allows for reasonable and justifiable conclusions.

<sup>248</sup> The amount of coin types that refer directly to contemporary events (e.g., triumphs; victories; marriages; consecrations; noteworthy games; (re)construction of temples, aqueducts, ports, and roads; return of legionary standards, etc.) are especially numerous. For a treatment of some of the more noteworthy topical types from 44 BC to AD 69, for instance, see Sutherland 1986b.

unsurprisingly produced a variety of explanations and some debate. At one extreme, Harold Mattingly and Edward Sydenham, in 1923, interpreted the regular display of current events on Roman coins as evidence that coins were “the newspapers of the day.”<sup>249</sup> Other scholars have seen topicality as not intended *at all* to inform users of recent events, but instead as parts of a larger whole of monarchic display, in which concipients only refer to recent events as a convenient means to strengthen Imperial perception among viewers.<sup>250</sup> Even further from the perspective of Mattingly and Sydenham is Richard Duncan-Jones. Focusing on Trajanic issues, he has argued that the low percentage of “news types” and their uneven and sporadic distribution imply that conveyance of recent events to the general public was likely not a role of their design.<sup>251</sup> Duncan-Jones suggests, instead, that their presence and the high percentage of “traditional religious types” (more commonly ‘personifications’) suggest internal mint organization<sup>252</sup> as the prime motive behind many type varieties.<sup>253</sup>

Roman state-sanctioned building and sculptural programs are commonly interpreted as intentionally communicative.<sup>254</sup> Coins, however, are viewed with skepticism as playing any role in ideological display, information transference, or as vehicles of propaganda.<sup>255</sup> This chapter will attempt, in part, to modify this view. First, I will explore the coinage minted during the two significant civil wars of the Principate (AD 69 and 193–195) to underscore its communicative

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<sup>249</sup> *RIC* I, 22.

<sup>250</sup> Zanker 1990; Wolters 2012; cf. Noreña 2001.

<sup>251</sup> Duncan-Jones 2005, 460.

<sup>252</sup> Duncan-Jones sees the intent of the designs as a means to aid, in part, orderliness and arrangement of coin issues as a cataloging mechanism for the mint.

<sup>253</sup> Duncan-Jones 2005, 460–464.

<sup>254</sup> Hölscher 1982; 1984; 2004; Zanker 1990; 1997; Elkins 2014.

<sup>255</sup> Jones 1956, especially 15–16; Duncan-Jones 2005.

and propagandistic aims. Then, as a case study, in a diachronic analysis, I will examine the relative frequency of two coinage types within my database that see regular production throughout the Principate. What I hope these studies will make clear is that, in these instances at least, reverse type selection was not incidental, but deliberate.

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF TYPES DURING THE CIVIL WAR OF 69**

What is striking about the civil war issues is that there are many types that see production *only* during the wars. Additionally, when these concurrent issues are examined horizontally, there emerge traces of an ideological battle waged on the reverses of an emperor's coinages against those of their rival(s). This 'propaganda war' was surely fought across a variety of media, yet coin iconography was likely one of the more important and effective means of communication during periods of upheaval, as coins, unlike monumental architecture, sculpture, and epigraphy, were especially mobile, mass-produced, and ready for dispersal and consumption immediately.<sup>256</sup>

For a case study, I examine a variety of the types of Galba in relation to those of Otho, Vitellius, and Vespasian. Galba issued a copious amount of coinage during his short reign,<sup>257</sup> and introduced a wide variety of unprecedented and rarely-reproduced types that remained almost exclusive to the civil war emperors. Galba, the governor of Hispania Tarraconensis, was acclaimed emperor by his troops at Carthago Nova on April 2, 68.<sup>258</sup> Controlling only one

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<sup>256</sup> Brilliant 2007, 8–9; Elkins 2014, 13.

<sup>257</sup> Of the 27 emperors of the Principate, Galba (adjusting for length of reign) had the sixth highest rate of production of coinage. Galba produced coinage at a rate of 1,731 coins per year. This is a meaningful yardstick in spite of the fact that he ruled for less than a year, as all other emperors who ruled for under a year have rates ca. 200 coins per year. His rate of minting is excessive and in no way comparable to that of other short-reigning emperors.

<sup>258</sup> Cass. Dio 64.6.

legion, though immediately conscripting a second,<sup>259</sup> he refused the titles of *Caesar* and *Augustus* until after the death of Nero on June 9.<sup>260</sup> Consequently, the chronology of Galba's coin issues can be securely established on account of the titulature employed. Iconography can further clarify sub-divisions of chronology even when titulature is lacking.<sup>261</sup> For instance, the so-called 'Horseman' issues are understood to be Galba's first issues. Rather than featuring a personalized bust on the obverse, a generic image of a man on a horse is employed, with the legend GALBA IMP (fig. 1a). Die cutters used sculptures from which they derived a portrait bust. Presumably, the mint at Tarraco, where Galba's first coins were struck, did not initially have a bust from which to design his obverse portrait; hence the use of a generic figure on a horse, identified conveniently for users as Galba.

Galba's first coins place emphasis on the source of his support and legitimacy: the provinces of Spain and Gaul, which would have been the first regions to receive his coins following his acclamation and departure for Rome in July 68.<sup>262</sup> These coins carry such legends as HISPANIA; TRES GALLIAE; GALLIA–HISPANIA; and HISPANIA CLVNIA SVL<sup>263</sup> (fig. 1).

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<sup>259</sup> VI *Victrix* already existed, VII *Galbiana* was conscripted following his acclamation.

<sup>260</sup> Suet. *Galb.* 10; Plut. *Galb.* 5.2; Cass. Dio 63.29.6.

<sup>261</sup> RIC I<sup>2</sup>, 216.

<sup>262</sup> During Galba's march from Spain to Rome he met the senate's delegation at Narbo Martius (Plut. *Galb.* 11.1; Tac. *Hist.* 2.3.2), passed through Vienne (Tac. *Hist.* 2.3.2). According to Cynthia Damon, would have distributed rewards and punishments to communities of Spain and Gaul that aided or resisted him (Suet. *Galb.* 12.1; Damon 2003, 107–108).

<sup>263</sup> The inscription reads as HISPANIA CLVNIA SVL*picia*. Colin Kraay states that although this type is difficult to interpret, "it must refer to the circumstances in which news of his accession reached Galba in a moment of despair and indecision at Clunia in Spain." Suetonius reports that Galba, on account of his doubts, visited a priest of Jupiter at Clunia. The priest informed Galba that he was told in a dream that the next emperor would come from Spain (Suet. *Galb.* 9.2). Cf. Plut. *Galb.* 6.4.



**Figure 1.** (A) Galba. Tarraco mint. Denarius. Obv: GALBA IMP / Rev: HISPANIA. Bust of Hispania; behind two javelins; below, round shield; before, two corn ears. RIC I<sup>2</sup> 2. (B) Galba. Tarraco mint. Denarius. Obv: SER GALBA IMP / Rev: \*no legend;\* TRES GALLIAE in exergue. Three busts over globes, each representing the divisions of Gaul. RIC I<sup>2</sup> 89. (C) Galba. Tarraco mint. Denarius. Obv: IMP SER GALBA AVG / Rev: GALLIA HISPANIA. Hispania on r. facing Gallia. Hands clasped. RIC I<sup>2</sup> 15. (D) Galba. Rome mint. Denarius. Obv: SER SVLPI GALBA IMP CAESAR AVG P M TR P / HISPANIA CLVNIA SVL-SC. Galba, seated in military dress on curule chair, extending r. hand to female figure. RIC I<sup>2</sup> 473.

All four of these Gallo-Spanish types are unprecedented in their typology. The message(s) appear to have resonated with two rival claimants, Otho and Vitellius. They, too, made ideological statements about their own connection with Spain. No other region is directly referenced on the coinages of 69. Vitellius, for instance, on his first series of coins, refers to the “agreement of the Spanish [cities or provinces]” (CONSENSVS HISPANIARVM) (fig. 2a).



**Figure 2.** (A) Vitellius. Lugdunum mint. Aureus. Obv: A VITELLIVS IMP GERMAN / Rev: CONSENSVS HISPANIARVM. Hispania standing, facing l., holding shield and two javelins in l. hand, raising crown in r. hand. RIC I<sup>2</sup> 48b, *addenda*. (B) Vespasian. Tarraco mint. Denarius. Obv: IMP CAESAR AVG VESPASIANVS / Rev: HISPANIA. Hispania standing l., with corn ears, shield, and javelin. RIC II<sup>2</sup> 1296.

While it appears that Galba had actual support in Spain to back up his claims, Vitellius' support there was less certain. When Galba left Spain, Cluvius Rufus assumed the command of all three Spanish provinces (Tarraconensis, Lusitania, Baetica), each typically under its own governor.<sup>264</sup> All of Spain remained under Rufus' authority during the entire reign of Vitellius.<sup>265</sup> Rufus first supported Otho following Galba's death—partially explaining, perhaps, a lack of reference to Spanish support on the coins of Otho, as the Spanish were in little need of convincing.<sup>266</sup> Rufus then became a nominal partisan of Vitellius, although accusations arose that he sought to secure Spain for himself.<sup>267</sup> The unstable situation with Rufus in Spain, coupled with the provinces' former support of Galba, suggests that the Hispania coins of Vitellius are best regarded as 'agitation\*' rather than 'integration\*' propaganda. Moreover,

<sup>264</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 2.65.1.

<sup>265</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 2.76.1; 2.91.1; 4.39.4.

<sup>266</sup> Otho's coinage is not only scarce, but also demonstrates a rather limited scope of typology. Otho's coinage, only known on aurei and denarii, yields six known types: Pax Orbis Terrarum; Securitas; Victoria Othonis; and a short run of personifications with the legend PONT MAX (Ceres; Aequitas; Jupiter; Vesta; Otho on horseback).

<sup>267</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 2.65.

Vitellius' coinage makes no mention of securely loyal provinces, even those that he won over following the death of Galba, such as all those in Gaul.<sup>268</sup>

The last time that *Hispania* is featured on the claimants' coinage is less than a year after it first appeared. Any reference to Spain all but disappears from Imperial coinage after its brief run from 68–69.<sup>269</sup> The *Hispania* type of Vespasian, on aurei and denarii, was also the first series he produced from the mint of Tarraco following the support of a legion in Spain hostile to Vitellius.<sup>270</sup>

A second type of the civil war of 69 that demonstrates the importance of a claimant's own numismatic iconography alongside that of a rival is the *Libertas Restituta* type (fig. 3). Like the *Hispania* type, it was also issued for the first time by Galba,<sup>271</sup> followed by Vitellius,<sup>272</sup> and then issued for its final time by Vespasian.<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> Lugdunum, the “virtual capital of the Three Gauls” (Drinkwater 1983, 21), followed its then governor, Junius Blaesus (Tac. *Hist.* 1.59.2), in joining the Vitellian cause (Tac. *Hist.* 1.64.3); the city contributed supplies to Valens and even served as a temporary capital for Vitellius (Tac. *Hist.* 2.59.3).

<sup>269</sup> Vespasian is the last emperor to mint the type, and aside from the all-encompassing ‘Provinces’ series of the High Empire (Hadrian, RIC 305–306; 851–852; 1077; Antoninus Pius, RIC 582), the type and legend disappear (fig. 2b).

<sup>270</sup> I *Adiutrix*. Additionally, Vespasian saw support in Britain from his former legion II *Augusta*, as well as XI *Claudia*.

<sup>271</sup> RIC I<sup>2</sup> 7–9, 479–480.

<sup>272</sup> RIC I<sup>2</sup> 9, 43–44.

<sup>273</sup> RIC II<sup>2</sup> 52, 88–89. The legend appears one other time, however, on an exceedingly rare Hadrianic sestertius (RIC 568) of a very different character, with imagery unrelated to that of 69 and has long confounded numismatists. Mattingly and Sydenham state: “What exact ‘restoration of Liberty’ is celebrated by the sestertius...is rather uncertain. Is there reference to Hadrian’s refusal to accept bequests from men who left sons behind them? The liberty will then be the freedom to make a will, unfettered by fear of the Emperor. Or to Hadrian’s decision that the children of a Roman citizen by a slave mother should be free? (1926, 322).”





**Figure 3.** (A) Galba. Tarraco mint. Aureus. Obv: GALBA IMPERATOR / Rev: LIBERTAS RESTITVTA. Libertas, holding pileus in r. hand, long rod in l. hand. RIC I<sup>2</sup> 37. (B) Vitellius. Rome mint. Aureus. Obv: IMP GERMANICVS A VITELLIVS / Rev: LIBERTAS RESTITVTA. Libertas, holding pileus in r. hand, long rod in l. hand. RIC I<sup>2</sup> 80. (C) Vespasian. Rome mint. Sestertius. Obv: IMP CAESAR VESPASIANVS AVG PM T P PP COS III / Rev: LIBERTAS RESTITVTA. Vespasian raising a kneeling Liberty; behind, Roma standing. RIC II<sup>2</sup> 88. (D) Hadrian. Rome mint. Sestertius. Obv: IMP CAESAR TRAIANVS HADRIANVS AVG / Rev: PONT MAX TR POT COS III-SC, exergue: LIBERTAS RES / TITVTA. Hadrian seated on platform extending r. hand. Facing him, woman presenting him child who reaches with both hands for Hadrian. Second child behind woman at her r. side. RIC 568.

The competing ideology of the *Libertas Restituta* type for Galba, Vitellius, and Vespasian is clear enough: each claims that he is the one healing the Roman state, following the collapse of the Julio-Claudian dynasty. This sentiment's message, perhaps unsurprisingly, is emphasized across a plurality of reverse types during the civil war. For instance, a second such type advertising a 'restoration' of Rome was also issued for the first time by Galba,<sup>274</sup> then by

<sup>274</sup> RIC I<sup>2</sup> 24–29, 40–43, 95, 194–204, 229–230.



Vitellius<sup>275</sup> and Vespasian.<sup>276</sup> The *Roma Renascens/Resurgens* type (fig. 4) is seen again briefly under Nerva (fig. 4d).<sup>277</sup> Nerva also issued a vast restitution series of coinage honoring only Augustus (unlike similar restitution series of other emperors that paid honor to many past emperors).<sup>278</sup>



**Figure 4.** (A) Galba. Tarraco mint. Aureus. Obv: GALBA IMP / Rev: ROMA RENASCENS. Roma w/Victory in hand. RIC I<sup>2</sup> 24. (B) Vitellius. Tarraco Mint. Denarius. Obv: A VITELLIVS IMP GERMAN / Rev: ROMA RENASCENS -SC. Roma w/Victory in hand. RIC I<sup>2</sup> 45. (C) Galba. Rome mint. Aureus. Obv: IMP CAESAR VESPASIANVS AVG / Rev: ROMA RESVRGENS. Vespasian lifting up kneeling Roma. RIC II<sup>2</sup> 1360. (D) Nerva.

<sup>275</sup> RIC I<sup>2</sup> 9, 45.

<sup>276</sup> RIC II<sup>2</sup> 1317; RESVRGE(NS): 196, 397, 439–440, 467, 483, 506, 619, 1360.

<sup>277</sup> RIC 67, 91.

<sup>278</sup> The traditional portrait bust of Augustus present on all other emperors' renditions of the type is not utilized for Nerva's. Nerva, instead, issued the 'Divus Augustus' type with an unmistakable bearing to himself rather than the standard Augustan bust.

Rome mint. Denarius. Obv: IMP NERVA CAES AVG P M TR P COS III P P / Rev: ROMA RENASCENS-SC. Seated Roma w/Victory. RIC 91 var.

The fact that the *Roma Renascens/Resurgens* type appears only on the coinages of three of the civil war emperors of 68–69, as well as on that of Nerva, indicates that the choice mattered. It is difficult to imagine mint officials for Galba, Vitellius, Vespasian, and later Nerva issuing the new and politically-advantageous type, merely as a means to control mint activity and output.

Aside from broad proclamations of policy, types appear during civil war periods that offer a direct and personal statement of the emperor's virtues. For example, a unique variant of the Victoria type, including the emperor's name specifically, first appeared under Galba with the reverse legend VICTORIA GALBAE AVG. Otho follows the type with VICTORIA OTHONIS, as does Vespasian with VICTORIA IMP VESPASIANI (fig. 5). The reverse legend formula of 'Victoria + cognomen' disappears with Vespasian, and only returns again on the coinages of Pescennius Niger and Septimius Severus during the civil war of 193–195. It returns one last time on reverses of Gordian III in 238.



**Figure 5.** (A) Galba. Narbo mint. Denarius. Obv: SER GALBA IMP CAESAR AVG P M T P / Rev: VICTORIA GALBAE AVG. Victory on globe w/wreath. RIC I<sup>2</sup> 132. (B) Otho. Rome mint. Aureus. Obv: IMP M OTHO CAESAR AVG TR P / Rev: VICTORIA OTHONIS. Victory on globe w/wreath. RIC I<sup>2</sup> 13. (C) Vespasian. Rome mint. Denarius. Obv: IMP CAESAR VESPASIANVS AVG / Rev: VICTORIA IMP VESPASIANI. Victory on globe w/wreath. BMC 362. (D) Pescennius Niger. Antioch mint. Denarius. Obv: IMP CAES C PESCE NIGER IVSTI AV / Rev: VICTOR IVSTI AVG. Victory on globe w/wreath. RIC 81c var. (E) Septimius Severus. Emesa mint. Denarius. Obv: MP CAE L SEP SEV PERT AVG COS II / Rev: VICTOR SEVER AVG. Victory on globe w/wreath. RIC 428. (F) Gordian III. Rome mint. Antoninianus. Obv: IMP GORDIANVS PIVS FEL AVG / Rev: VICTORIA GORDIANI AVG. Victory on globe w/wreath. RIC 219.

The connection between this unique reverse type and periods of upheaval with rival emperors is significant. Other periods of Imperial history saw usurpers, coups, revolts, and other challenges



to legitimacy, yet only when coinage is minted by a rival<sup>279</sup> during the Principate do concipients of reverse types return to the ‘Victoria + cognomen’ type.

The final coin type of the Civil War of 69 to be explored is two variants of the Concordia type, one that only occurs for Galba and another that only occurs for Vitellius (fig. 6). Galba, as we saw above, emphasized the source of his legitimacy and the region of his support: the provinces within Gaul and Spain. He minted a series of precious metal coins at Rome, Tarraco, and Lugdunum with the unique reverse legend proclaiming that he had CONCORDIA PROVINCIARVM.<sup>280</sup> Vitellius responded with the equally unique reverse legend CONCORDIA PRAETORIANORVM.<sup>281</sup>



**Figure 6.** (A) Galba. Tarraco mint. Denarius. Obv: P SER GALBA IMP CAESAR AVG P M TR / Rev: CONCORDIA PROVINCIARVM. Concordia standing. RIC I<sup>2</sup> 54. (B) Vitellius. Lugdunum mint. Denarius. Obv: A VITELLIVS IMP GERMAN / Rev: CONCORDIA PRAETORIANORVM. Concordia standing. RIC I<sup>2</sup> 55 (reverse only pictured).

<sup>279</sup> Pescennius Niger, while not officially recognized by the senate and declared an enemy of the state (*hostis*), had the support of the whole of the East and Egypt (Eutr. 8.18) as well as of King Vologaes IV (Herod. 3.2–3). Niger, too, produced Roman coinage as he both maintained control of the mint of Antioch (which produced denarii for Augustus, Hadrian, Aelius Caesar, and Sabina prior to Niger) and his coins, though scarce, are found in numerous hoards for centuries after his usurpation, indicating that it was recognized as legitimate currency.

<sup>280</sup> RIC I<sup>2</sup> 35, 49, 104, 149.

<sup>281</sup> RIC I<sup>2</sup> 19.

The anonymous series of so-called ‘Military’ coinage of the civil war of 68–69<sup>282</sup> has long been viewed as likely being that of Vitellius, but proof is lacking.<sup>283</sup> The only other appearance of *CONCORDIA PRAETORIANORVM* on coins belongs to this group, which displays as its obverse two clasped hands with the legend *FIDES EXERCITVVM* (fig. 7b). The issuing authority remains ‘anonymous.’ Colin Kraay argues that this particular group of anonymous coinage “could be an effective propaganda weapon only if the coins circulated among the praetorians,” and he therefore suggested that Vitellius’ general Fabius Valens minted the ‘anonymous’ coins in southern Gaul, Lugdunum, and Nemausus.<sup>284</sup> Why should Vitellius issue the *CONCORDIA PRAETORIANORVM* on some issues with his own image on the obverse, while making others anonymous? The argument goes that the former would have circulated among the general population, so as to (falsely) advertise their support of him. Those circulated among the praetorians would have been “in the name of ‘the armies’ (of the German provinces) and not in that of Vitellius, whose name was purposefully avoided.”<sup>285</sup>

The problem, however, has been to link the official Vitellian coinages and the anonymous ‘Military’ coinages. I have found relevant evidence: a die link between one of the anonymous “Military’ issues and a coin type of Vitellius, both of which employ the same *FIDES EXERCITVVM* die (fig. 7).

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<sup>282</sup> *RIC I*<sup>2</sup> Civil War, 118–129.

<sup>283</sup> *RIC I*<sup>2</sup> 200–201; Levick 1999a, 46.

<sup>284</sup> Kraay 1949, 78.

<sup>285</sup> *RIC I*<sup>2</sup> 201.



**Figure 7.** (A) Vitellius. Tarraco Mint. Denarius. Obv: A VITELLIVS IMP GERMAN / Rev: FIDES EXERCITVVM. RIC I<sup>2</sup> 29. (B) Anonymous (Civil War, AD 69). Uncertain mintage. Denarius. “Gaul Mint.” Obv: VESTA P R QVIRITIVM / Rev: FIDES EXERCITVVM. RIC I<sup>2</sup> 126. (C) close-up of linked dies.

What this die link demonstrates is that the concipients of Vitellius’ coinages, as Kraay and Sutherland have proposed, took deliberate steps to include and exclude Vitellius from issues whose message was deemed too sensitive and not best propagated with a direct tie to Vitellius. Instead, the message was conveyed in the name of the armies.

As we have seen in detail above and as Table 1 below makes clear, the concipients of Galba’s reverse types had a particular intent in mind when choosing how to fashion and

represent the emperor. The choice of novel iconographic representations, coupled with equally unprecedented legends, indicates a conscious effort to disengage with the recent Neronian past while still managing to convey a familiar sense of traditionalism, unanimity, and legitimacy. Otho, Vitellius, and Vespasian all noted these reverse types and either echoed or countered them. Whether the types were successful in promoting any ideologies beneficial to the issuing authority is, for the matter at hand, irrelevant.

The types certainly mattered to Galba, Otho, Vitellius, and Vespasian. The types of Otho, Vitellius, and Vespasian examined here were carefully designed to respond to the numismatic propaganda of Galba.

EARLIER EMPERORS	GALBA	OTHO	VITELLIUS	VESPASIAN	LATER EMPERORS
none	LIBERTAS RESTITVTA	none	LIBERTAS RESTITVTA	LIBERTAS RESTITVTA	<i>*Similar legend, different type altogether</i>
none	VICTORIA GALBAE AVG	VICTORIA OTHONIS	none	VICTORIA IMP VESPASIANI	Pescennius Niger (193–195) Sept. Severus (193–195) Gordian III (238)
none	ROMA RENASCENS	none	ROMA RENASCENS	ROMA RENASCENS <hr/> ROMA RESVRGE(NS)	<i>*Similar legend, different type altogether</i>
none	HISPANIA <hr/> GALLIA HISPANIA <hr/> HISPANIA CLUNIA SVL	none	CONSENSVS HISPANIARVM	HISPANIA	none
none	CONCORDIA PROVINCIA RV M	none	CONCORDIA PRAETORIANORVM	none	none

**Table 1.** The employment of propagandistic reverse types first minted in the civil war of AD 69. Shaded boxes indicate no mintage of the type in question.

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF TYPES DURING THE CIVIL WAR 193–195**

Many examples can be found from the civil war of 193–195 indicating deliberate attention to a rival's coinage. Two will suffice here. First, the coinage of Didius Julianus. During his reign of under three months in 193, his coinage can be identified as having two key phases: before and during the rival claim of Septimius Severus. For the first phase, 77% of



Julianus' 125 coins emphasize his virtues, while the rest encompass religious imagery, and a few stress the military. One month into his reign, by mid-April 193, Septimius Severus was a rival claimant with support of three legions and was closing in on Rome. It is at this time that Julianus made efforts to appease Severus, to whom he may have been distantly related. Julianus' father was Petronius Didius Severus,<sup>286</sup> which, along with his proposition to accept Severus as colleague,<sup>287</sup> prompted Julianus to add 'Severus' to his official titulature. The *Historia Augusta* mentions that Julianus demanded that his name be announced in the senate with "Severus" added to it.<sup>288</sup> Herodian and Cassius Dio remain silent on the matter. While one must be skeptical in taking this anecdote at face value, it seems plausible when combined with the numismatic evidence, which confirms that Julianus' later coinage (fig. 8b) includes SEV/SEVER in the obverse legend while his earlier coinage had not (fig. 8a).



**Figure 8.** (A) Didius Julianus. Rome mint. Aureus. Obv: IMP CAES M DID IVLIAN AVG / Rev: CONCORD MILIT. Concordia w/standards. RIC 1. (B) Didius Julianus. Rome mint. Aureus. Obv: IMP CAES M DID SEVER IVLIAN AVG / Rev: CONCORD MILIT. Concordia w/standards. RIC 5.

Two interesting facts emerge when the phases of Julianus' coinage are analyzed through the database. First, once the 'Severan' period of his coinage begins, the typology changes

<sup>286</sup> *PIR*<sup>2</sup> 279; *SHA Did. Jul.* 1.2.

<sup>287</sup> *SHA Did. Jul.* 15.

<sup>288</sup> *SHA Did. Jul.* 7.2.



dramatically. Military-themed coinage triples in representation and then comprises the majority of the typology. Not surprisingly, perhaps, almost all (98%) of Severus' coinage for this same period was military-themed. The concipients of Julianus' coinage, therefore, not only took care to include the name of Severus on the obverse, but also brought the typological focus closer to that of Severus.

Moreover, the distribution of Julianus' coinage is striking when the two periods are compared. For the distribution in the first, the coins were disseminated relatively evenly throughout the empire (map 1), with notable concentration along the northern frontier and Britain. Conversely, when his later, 'Severan' coinages are mapped, there emerges an irregular concentration around the Italian Alps and particularly in northeastern Italy (map 2). It is perhaps worth note that by the later phase of Julianus' reign, when he shifted to a Severan focus in legend and typology, Septimius Severus had seized the fleet at Ravenna and was encamped there. It was while Severus was at Ravenna that Julianus sent the praetorian prefect, Tullius Crispinus, to persuade Severus to come to terms.<sup>289</sup> Crispinus defected and joined Severus.<sup>290</sup> Didius Julianus again and again failed to placate Severus at Ravenna.<sup>291</sup> Meanwhile, the rest of the Guard and the senate, independent of Julianus, negotiated terms with Severus, proclaimed him emperor and executed Julianus.<sup>292</sup>

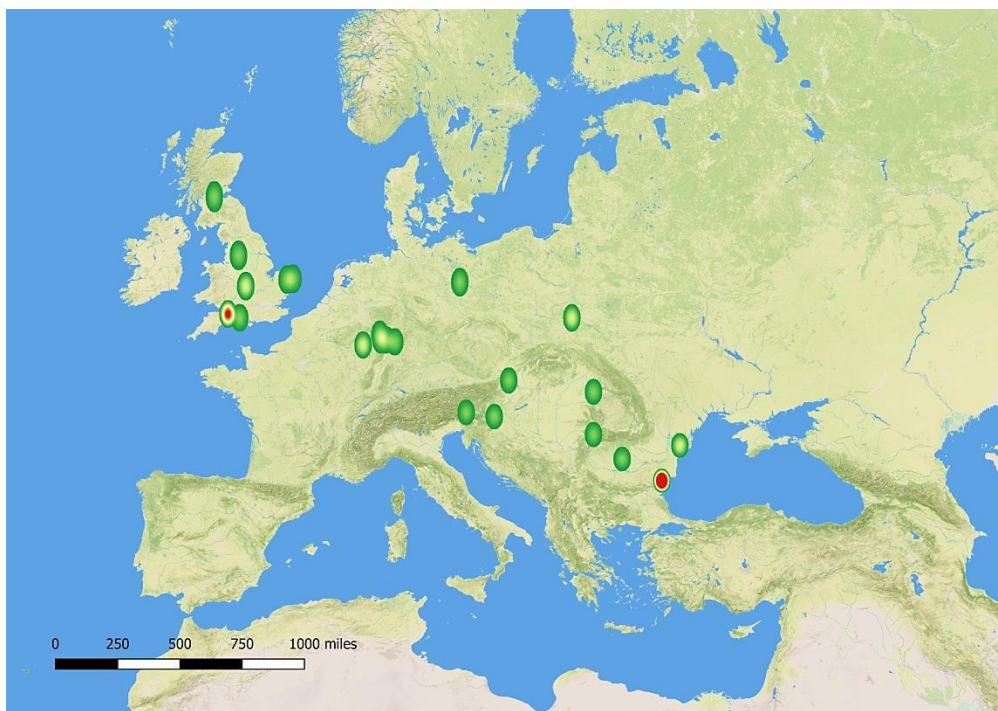
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<sup>289</sup> SHA *Did. Jul.* 6.4.

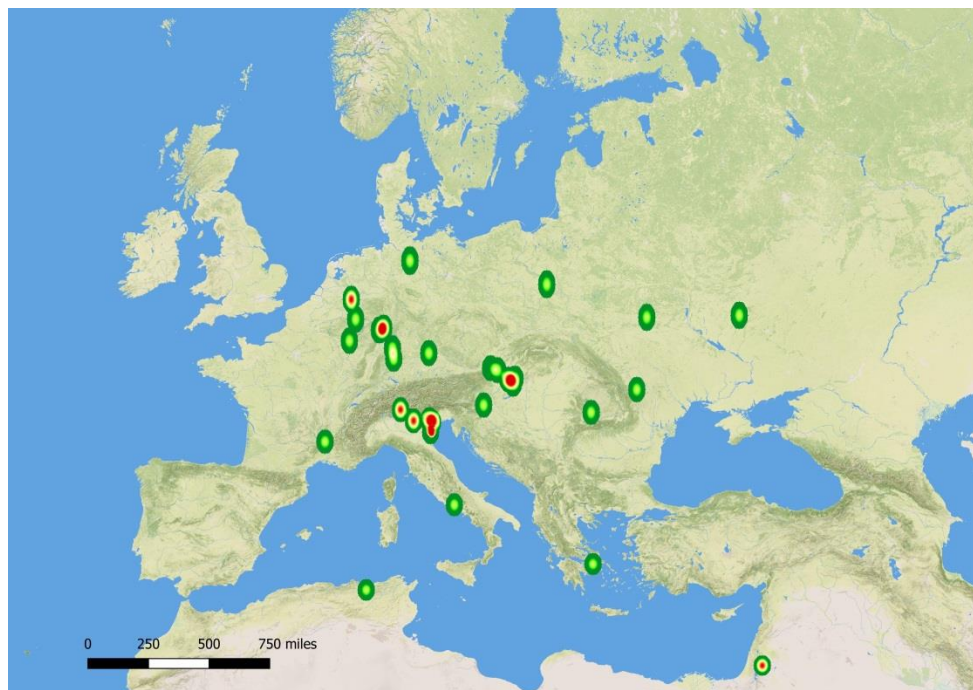
<sup>290</sup> Cass. Dio 74.17.1; SHA *Sept. Sev.* 5.6.

<sup>291</sup> Cass. Dio 74.17.2; SHA *Did. Jul.* 6.9; SHA *Sept. Sev.* 5.7; Herod. 2.12.3.

<sup>292</sup> Cass. Dio 74. 17.4; SHA *Did. Jul.* 8.7; Herod. 2.12.6.



**Map 1.** Heatmap distribution of all coinage of Didius Julianus for the first phase of his issues that do not include SEVER(VS) in its titulature.



**Map 2.** Heatmap distribution of all coinage of Didius Julianus for the second phase of his issues that includes SEVER(VS) in its titulature.

Didius Julianus' shift of numismatic typology and legend was a deliberate choice by the concipients of his coinage with clear intentions to communicate a new message. Additionally, its concentration geographically to where Severus was known to be during the later phase of Julianus' reign reinforces the notion of coins as an important bearer of ideological messages.

Second, I will examine the coinage of Pescennius Niger, with whom Severus was embroiled in a vicious two-year campaign in the East; this strife even continued for some years after Niger's defeat and death, as many cities refused to accept Severus.<sup>293</sup> Almost all of Niger's coinage (96.3% from the database) has an obverse legend that includes IVSTVS (fig. 9). He is the only known emperor or claimant to include the cognomen in his titulature. As noted above, he even includes it in his version of the 'Victoria + cognomen' type, which reads VICTORIA IVSTI AVG.<sup>294</sup> In response to the coinage of Niger, Septimius Severus offers not only the 'Victoria + cognomen' type with VICTORIA SEVER AVG,<sup>295</sup> but he even mints a direct imitation and counter of Niger's cognomen with VICTORIA IVST AVG (fig. 9).<sup>296</sup>

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<sup>293</sup> Most notably, Byzantium, which Severus would subject to excessive punishment following its eventual capitulation.

<sup>294</sup> RIC 81<sub>A-F</sub>.

<sup>295</sup> RIC 428–429; p. 139, n. 8.

<sup>296</sup> RIC 361–362, 427, 634<sub>A</sub>.



**Figure 9.** (A) Pescennius Niger. Antioch mint. Aureus. Obv: IMP CAES PESC NIGER IVST AVG / Rev: IVSTITIA AVG. Iustitia standing. RIC 48a. (B) Pescennius Niger. Antioch mint. Denarius. Obv: IMP CAES C PESCE NIGER IVSTI AV / Rev: VICTOR IVSTI AVG. Victory on globe w/wreath. RIC 81c var. (C) Septimius Severus. Emesa mint. Denarius. Obv: MP CAE L SEP SEV PERT AVG COS II / Rev: VICTOR SEVER AVG. Victory on globe w/wreath. RIC 428. (D) Septimius Severus. Emesa mint. Denarius. Obv: IMP CAE L SEP SEV PERT AVG COS II / VICTOR IVST AVG. RIC 427a.

Such issues minted by Severus in response to those of Niger come *exclusively* from the mint at Emesa, which supplied the eastern regions of the Empire, where Niger's support was strongest. That IVSTVS only ever appears in the titulature of Pescennius Niger as a supplementary cognomen, and reappears on very early Emesan issues of Septimius Severus (they cease after Niger's death in 195), furnishes rather clear evidence that numismatic imagery and legend were strategically used in wars of propaganda and ideology that ran parallel with civil war. Just as the concipients of Niger's Imperial presentation chose to include the unprecedented IVSTVS in his imperial title, so too did those planning the coinage of Severus deliberately counter such claims for Severus' eastern issues. Moreover, Severus' use of the 'Victoria + cognomen' type and any

internal references to IVSTVS promptly ceased once Niger and his support base in the East were eliminated by 195.

It is clear is that types could matter greatly, especially during periods of upheaval. Close attention was paid to how rivals self-fashioned and propagated their ideological message on their coinage. Duncan-Jones may be correct that type designs were selected as convenient organizational markers for controlling mint output, distribution, and other logistical matters. In my view, however, this was so *only* when the regime had nothing urgent to say.

### **DIACHRONIC ANALYSIS OF REVERSE TYPES**

For the last portion of this chapter, I will examine two reverse types that were not minted for just a few years or even months, but throughout the Principate. My aim is to provide a better understanding of the production and mintage of a variety of reverse type issues. I assess how their production correlates with certain events that may explain their seemingly erratic mintage and provide sound reasoning for their typology. Again it emerges that the design and dissemination of particular reverse types were *not* incidental, but formed part of a larger propaganda campaign.

The first to be analyzed is the FIDES (EXERCITVVM/MILITVM/LEGIONIS) types, henceforth referred to as the Fides type. When the 2,378 Fides coins from the database are charted by year of production (fig. 10), it can be seen that their production was anything but incidental. At 26 of the 27 times when the coin is minted events were occurring that explain a desire for the regime to either commemorate the soldiery or appeal to them for support. Rather than chronicle each event here, I provide the table below (tab. 2) as a reference to each instance of mintage of the Fides type.



**Figure 10.** Chronological production of FIDES types. Coins of precise dates are in red, coins of limited-range or multi-year production indicated in green. Horizontal scale=year; vertical scale=number of coins.



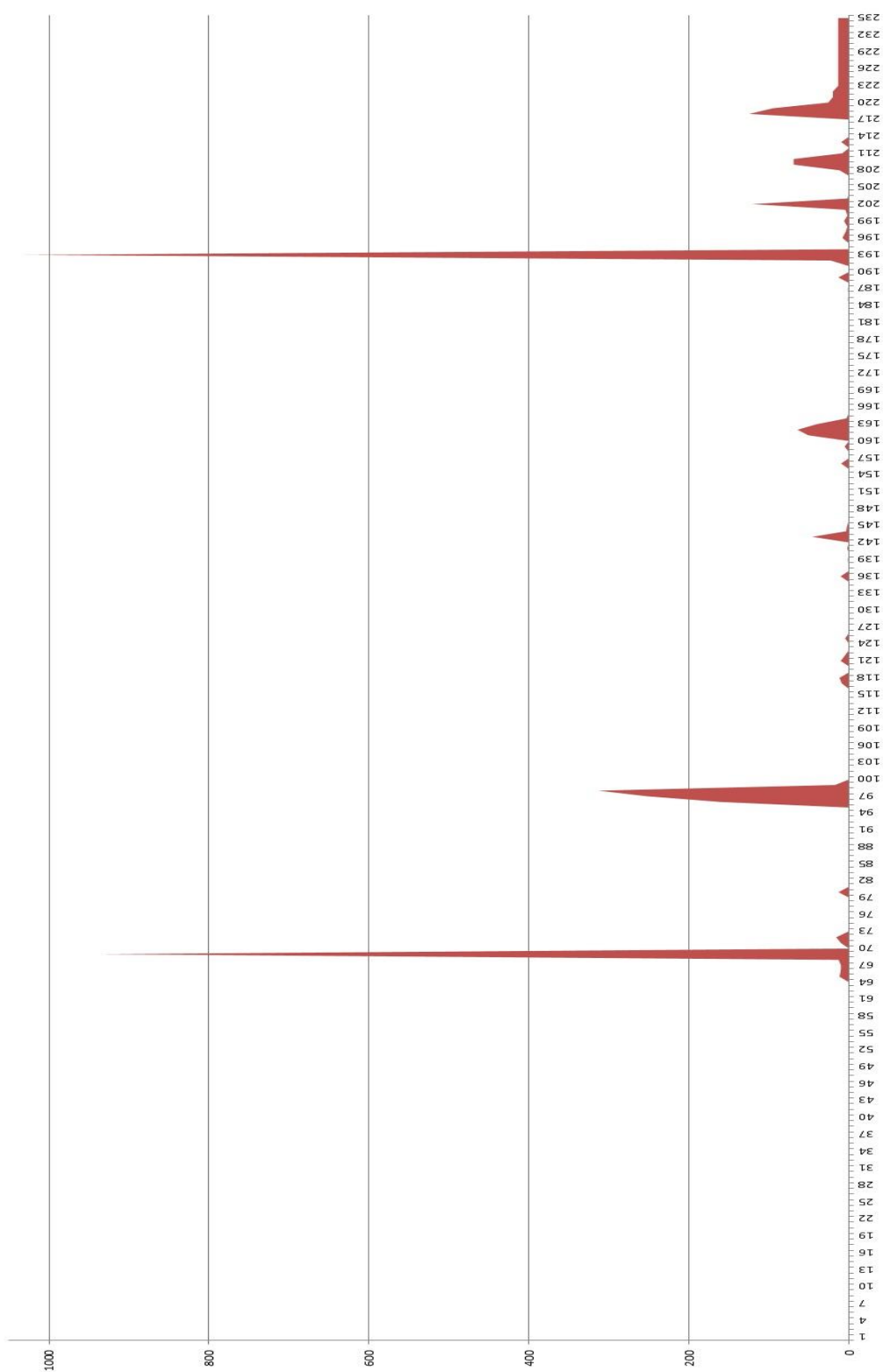
YEAR	EMPEROR	TYPE	RELATABLE EVENT
69	Vitellius	FIDES EXERCITVVM	• Civil War
71	Vespasian	FIDES EXERCITVVM	• War in Gaul against Civilis • Fall of Jerusalem • Revolt put down in Gaul • Triumph celebrated
79	Vespasian	FIDES FORTVNA	• Conspiracy of Caecina and Marcellus suppressed
103–6	Trajan	FIDES EXERCITVVM	• Dacian Wars
139	Antoninus Pius	FIDES MILITVM	• Outset of new reign
155–6	Antoninus Pius	FIDES EXERCITVVM	• Rising of Jews • Parthian War begins/ends
171	Marcus Aurelius	FIDES EXERCITVVM	• Victory over Marcomanni
177–9	Marcus Aurelius	FIDES MILITVM	• Renewed fighting on Danube • End of Marcomannic Wars • Decisive victories on Danube in 178 • Triumph <i>Germanis et Sarmatis</i>
185	Commodus	FIDES EXERCITVVM	• Perennis exposed/killed • Victories in Sarmatia
189	Commodus	FIDES EXERCITVVM	• Plot of Maternus suppressed
190	Commodus	FIDES COHORTIVM	• Prefect, Cleander, executed
192	Commodus	FIDES MILITVM	• Unravelling support
193	Pescennius Niger	FIDES EXERCITVVM	• Civil War
193	Septimius Severus	FIDES LEGIONIS	• Civil War
194–5	Clodius Albinus	FIDES LEGIONIS	• Civil War
211	Geta	FIDES EXERCITVVM	• Death of Septimius Severus • Outset of joint-rule with Caracalla
212–3	Caracalla	FIDES MILITVM	• Assassination of Geta • Pay raise for army
215	Caracalla	FIDES MILITVM	• Revolt at Alexandria • Travels with troops to East • Abgar X attacks Armenia
216–7	Macrinus	FIDES MILITVM	• Civil War
225	Alexander Severus	FIDES MILITVM	• <i>**Unclear**</i>
228	Alexander Severus	FIDES MILITVM	• Mutinies in Mesopotamia
231	Alexander Severus	FIDES MILITVM	• Campaign against Ardashir
235	Alexander Severus	FIDES MILITVM	• Collapsing support from armies

**Table 2.** Corresponding events with the mintage of Fides types for the Principate. Shaded boxes indicate reasons for appeal rather than commemoration of the army.

The overall production and utilization of the Fides type increases at the outset of the third century. This growth would not have occurred if A) reverse type design and selection had been an incidental and politically-disengaged choice; B) there had been no intention to offer commemoration or appeal to the soldiery in times of upheaval or civil unrest; and C) there had been no desire to communicate some ideological message on coins.

As a second such example, I will explore the Concordia type. When the 9,904 Concordia type coins from the database are charted by year of production (tab. 3), similar observations can be made as about the Fides type.





**Figure 11.** Chronological production of the Concordia type. Horizontal scale=year; vertical scale=number of coins.

YEAR	RELATABLE EVENT
64–65	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Great Fire of Rome</li> <li>• Pisonian Conspiracy</li> </ul>
69	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civil War</li> </ul>
71	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revolt and war in Gaul</li> <li>• Fall of Jerusalem</li> </ul>
79	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conspiracy of Caecina and Marcellus suppressed</li> </ul>
96–98	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collapse of Flavian dynasty</li> <li>• Anxiety and uncertainty of Nerva's reign</li> </ul>
117	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jewish revolt (Kitos War)</li> </ul>
121	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Near-outbreak of war against Parthia</li> </ul>
125	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plague across north Africa and Italy</li> </ul>
132–136	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bar Kokhba Revolt</li> </ul>
144	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uprising in Germany suppressed</li> </ul>
155	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parthian war against Vologases IV</li> <li>• Antonine Wall abandoned</li> </ul>
160–163	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• War with Armenia</li> </ul>
188	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plague in Rome</li> </ul>
193	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civil War</li> </ul>
202	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• African campaign</li> <li>• War against the Garamantes</li> </ul>
208–211	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• British Campaign</li> <li>• Geta given title of Augustus</li> </ul>
211	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Death of Septimius Severus</li> <li>• Beginning of rule of Caracalla and Geta</li> </ul>
217–221	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assassination of Caracalla</li> <li>• Civil war</li> <li>• Failed Parthian invasion</li> </ul>
221–235	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instability of Elagabalus</li> <li>• Unpopularity of Alexander Severus</li> <li>• Increasingly insecure borders to north and east</li> </ul>

**Table 3.** Corresponding events with the mintage of Concordia types for the Principate.

What is immediately recognizable when examining the production of the Concordia type is the spike of mintage during the civil wars of 69 and 193–195. Additionally, every instance of the type's presence in minting correlates with events that seem not to commemorate some state of harmony and concord, but rather correspond with phases of particular strain and upheaval. In

short, the rate of production of the Concordia type seems to reflect instability. The presence, therefore, of Concordia types makes oblique references to the lack of harmony and concord.<sup>297</sup>

The false propagation of harmony is not confined to Concordia types; other such false statements are fairly common on coinages. One brief example will suffice, that of Macrinus, the usurper of Caracalla: he was the first non-senatorial emperor, and his entire support base relied on the army. In his invasion of Parthia failed disastrously. At the close of a three-day battle at Nisibis, he sued for peace, surrendered all prisoners, and agreed to pay a large indemnity. His coins, however, present a rather different picture, as they boldly proclaim VICTORIA PARTHICA (fig. 12).



**Figure 12.** Macrinus. Rome mint. Denarius. Obv: IMP C M OPEL SEV MACRINVS AVG / Rev: VICTORIA PARTHICA. Victory w/wreath. RIC 97.

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<sup>297</sup> Lotz 2007, 201 n. 83.

## CONCLUSION

There is a clear correspondence between beneficial (and competing) ideological statements on the reverses of the coins of the emperors of the civil wars of 69 and 193–195. These types never appear at other times or for other emperors outside of civil war. The army is directly referenced on coin reverses when it would have been especially useful for the emperor to do so—either for commemoration of, or appeal to, the army. Statements propagating harmony and concord are found on the reverses of coins only when discord and strife are prevalent. The degree of correlation between numismatic typology and such contexts makes clear that these types *were* deliberate political communication and propaganda.

It is evident that claimants responded to their rivals' numismatic propaganda. It is also clear that the Imperial court regarded coinage as a useful means of spreading propaganda. Certainly it was a means that could be activated quickly and used repeatedly to broadcast a wide variety of messages. But were these messages broadcast widely, or can we discern that, in some circumstances at least, the minter sought to target a message to a particular audience? These questions will be addressed in the following two chapters, as I explore the potential for geographical (Chapter Four) and denominational targeting (Chapter Five).

## COIN IMAGE ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND PERMISSIONS

- Figure 1a: Trustees of the British Museum. 1922,1115.9.  
Figure 1b: Numismatica Ars Classica, Auction 80, Lot #72.  
Figure 1c: Marti Hervera / Soler & Llach, Auction 1075, Lot #283 .  
Figure 1d: Trustees of the British Museum. 1872,0709.457.  
Figure 2a: Numismatica Ars Classica, Auction 25, Lot #403.  
Figure 2b: Numismatica Ars Classica, Auction 78, Lot #879.  
Figure 3a: Gorny & Mosch Giessener Münzhandlung, Auction 159, Lot #384.  
Figure 3b: Heritage World Coin Auctions, CICC Signature Sale 3032, Lot #23562.  
Figure 3c: Trustees of the British Museum. 1846,0910.204.  
Figure 3d: A. Tkalec AG, Auction February 2012, Lot #194.  
Figure 4a: Numismatica Ars Classica, Auction 67, Lot #127.  
Figure 4b: Heritage World Coin Auctions, Long Beach Signature Sale 3015, Lot #26054.  
Figure 4c: Trustees of the British Museum. 1924,0308.15.  
Figure 4d: Numismatik Lanz München, Auction 128, Lot #362.  
Figure 5a: Gorny & Mosch Giessener Münzhandlung, Auction 176, Lot #2171.  
Figure 5b: Trustees of the British Museum. R.6333.  
Figure 5c: A. Tkalec AG, Auction October 2003, Lot #234.  
Figure 5d: Classical Numismatic Group, Electronic Auction 322, Lot #556.  
Figure 5e: Auktionshaus H. D. Rauch GmbH, Auction 81, Lot #457.  
Figure 5f: cgb.fr - Mail Bid Sale 36, Lot #584.  
Figure 6a: Numismatica Ars Classica, Auction 94, Lot #143.  
Figure 6b: Unclear.  
Figure 7a: Roma Numismatics Ltd, Auction 2, lot # 608.  
Figure 7b: Image: American Numismatic Society #: 1999.79.1.  
Figure 8a: Trustees of the British Museum. R1874,0715.81.  
Figure 8b: Numismatica Ars Classica, Auction 52, Lot #499.  
Figure 9a: Numismatica Ars Classica, Auction 84, Lot #1053  
Figure 9b: Classical Numismatic Group, Electronic Auction 322, Lot #556.  
Figure 9c: Auktionshaus H. D. Rauch GmbH, Auction 81, Lot #457.  
Figure 9d: Trustees of the British Museum. BNK,R.639  
Figure 12: Gorny & Mosch Giessener Münzhandlung, Auction 224, Lot #224.

## CHAPTER FOUR: GEOGRAPHICAL TARGETING

This chapter explores whether or not Rome ever sought to control the distribution, or limit the circulation, of certain coins to a particular geographic region based on their reverse type. The practice is referred to as geographical targeting. Rome might conceivably undertake it in either a ‘positive’ or ‘negative’ manner. Positive would be instances where Rome sent coins of a distinct reverse type to a particular location only, so as to communicate a tailored message to group(s) there. Negative would be instances where Rome appears to have sought to keep coins of a distinct and otherwise widely distributed reverse type *excluded from* a particular region. By utilizing negative geographical targeting Rome could restrict a particular group’s exposure to certain reverse types that might offend it.

Caution must be exercised, however, in any analysis of the relationship between a coinage’s geographic distribution and its notable characteristics. The danger lies in interpreting a seemingly irregular pattern of distribution of reverse types as having purposeful intent when none can be reasonably identified. Hence, only reverse types that offer a clear connection to those within a particular region, and whose find data demonstrates effort to target that region either positively or negatively, are considered here. Moreover, it is important to briefly revisit the nature of the Roman mint before assessing the geographic distribution of coinage, since the very organization of the mint and its system of distribution, as currently understood, can often explain many instances that offer ‘false positives’ of geographical targeting.

As we saw in Chapter Two, little is known on the internal organization of the mints. However, our picture is not entirely blank as some aspects of the workings of the mint that

pertain to our current discussion are positive. *Officinae*, for instance, regardless of their number, are believed to have operated on the ‘cycle’ theory of production.

Numerous hoard and die studies over the last century have left little doubt among numismatists that each *officina* of the Roman mint produced only a single reverse type at a time, and likely of a particular denomination and for a particular figure of the imperial family. As the argument goes, *officinae* would cycle through production of a given series until either the desired quantity of coins was struck or until exhaustion of the dies occurred. Given that even the scarcest of issues demonstrates the utilization of multiple dies,<sup>298</sup> whose total yield is estimated between 10,000–40,000 coins per die,<sup>299</sup> any issue was surely produced, stockpiled, organized, and prepared for circulation in whatever region was determined.

As cautioned above, this manner of production and distribution can produce ‘false positives’ for geographical targeting. Rarer issues of smaller production confined to a single year of minting are unlikely to be plentiful enough to be sent to multiple destinations. It is not at all surprising, then, that analyses of coin find data can demonstrate localized concentrations of certain reverse types due to the manner of mint production and coinage distribution. Thus, only reverse types that offer a clear connection to those within a particular region, and whose find data demonstrates focused effort to either positively or negatively target them, are considered here.

There are many cases that I have found for which most of these criteria are met, yet secure connections between the reverse type and groups near the concentrated find spots are not

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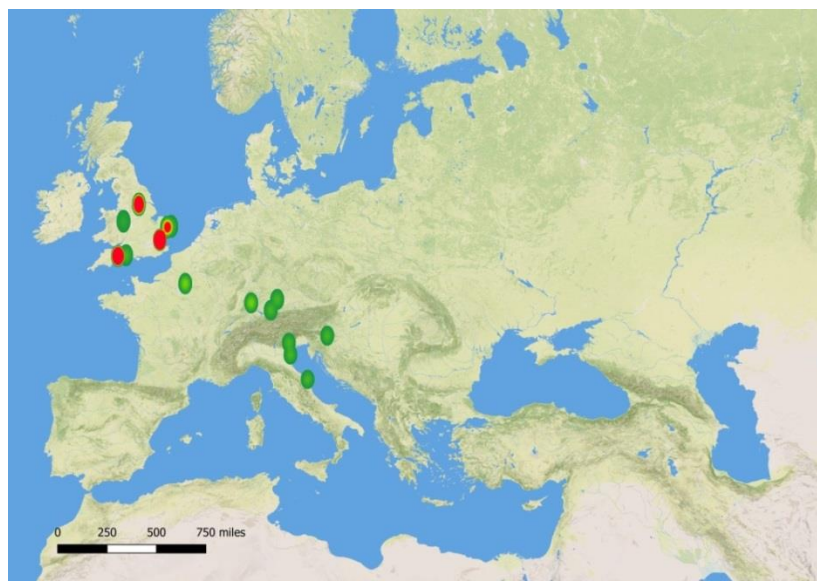
<sup>298</sup> In my unpublished die study (Ellithorpe 2012) of the aurei of Pertinax, Didius Julianus, Pescennius Niger, Clodius Albinus, and the first series of Septimius Severus demonstrated that at least two separate dies can be identified for each obverse or reverse type.

<sup>299</sup> For defense of high yield estimates, as well as a general overview of the debate, see de Callatay 1995; 2011. For a more detailed treatment and defense of the more skeptical side of the debate, see Buttrey 1993; 1994.

well defined. One brief example will suffice: the CLEMENTIAE dupondius of Tiberius (fig. 1). 134 of the 144 known coins (93.1%) have a provenance in Britain; the remaining 6.9% have a provenance not far from the English Channel. The anomalous distribution is all the more striking when distribution of all of coin finds of Tiberius (map 1) is compared to distribution of his Clementiae dupondii (map 2).



**Map 1.** Heatmap distribution of all coinage of Tiberius.



**Map 2.** Heatmap distribution of all Clementiae dupondii of Tiberius.



There is hardly a tenable reason to suppose that this coin was purposefully sent to Britain (which would not become a province for more than another twenty years) to advertise Tiberius' clemency to Britons.<sup>300</sup>



**Figure 1.** Tiberius. Rome mint. Dupondius. Obv: TI CAESAR DIVI AVG F AVGVST IMP VIII / Rev: CLEMENTIAE. Small bust of Tiberius within laurel wreath on round shield; in field, SC. RIC I<sup>2</sup> 38.

Although the concept of geographical targeting of coinage has been largely discounted by scholars, recent archaeological investigations have begun to question this dismissal. Most notably, David Walker revealed that 39 of the 40 known 'BRITANNIA' types of Hadrian minted at Rome were found in Britain.<sup>301</sup> This finding, however, has been largely dismissed as a "small exception,"<sup>302</sup> an "extreme case,"<sup>303</sup> or a "happy coincidence."<sup>304</sup> Further evidence of

<sup>300</sup> There is only the *weakest of links* between Tiberius and Britain. Tacitus reports that in AD 16 soldiers from the fleet of Germanicus became shipwrecked on the British coast and were taken hostage (Tac. *Ann.* 2.24). A certain British tribe, the Angrivarii, had secured the release of the Romans from another tribe that held them captive; the Angrivarii then transported them to safety. The CLEMENTIAE type's dissemination to Britain could be proposed as a way to commemorate the mercifulness of the Angrivarii in their treatment of the shipwrecked Romans.

<sup>301</sup> Walker 1988. Fleur Kemmers (2006) has shown that military-themed coinage was exclusive to the fort complex at Nijmegen, while the immediate neighboring towns had almost no military-themed coins.

<sup>302</sup> Duncan-Jones 1994, 178 n.23.

<sup>303</sup> Noreña 2011, 33.

geographical targeting would strongly suggest that the Roman authorities attempted it. The prevalent hindrance to any methodical examination of large-scale numismatic data is not one of quantity, but of consolidation and searchability of that data. This hurdle is overcome by my database of over 300,000 provenanced Roman Imperial coins.

### **GEOGRAPHICAL TARGETING CASE STUDY—CALIGULA’S RCC ISSUE**

The first two coins I examine are those of Caligula. Though his coinage is not especially plentiful (3,408 coins for the entire database), it is large enough to allow analysis. The distribution of Caligulan coinage across the empire is fairly even. It is perhaps surprising that, unlike other Julio-Claudians, Caligula’s coinage is not frequently found within Italy—comprising 23.7% of all of his known finds. Because questions of demonetization of Caligula’s coinage were treated in Chapter One, I will only reiterate here that too much evidence has come to light to give much credence to claims of wide-scale melting down of much of his *aes* coinage.<sup>305</sup> Scarceness of his coinage in Italy must be explained differently. Shortage of his coin also exists for the Iberian Peninsula, likely due, in part, to sufficient supply of all denominations during the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius. Germany has yielded a plurality of his coins (46.5%), but surprising quantities have also been found in the East and across North Africa.

During 38–39, the Roman mint produced a series of quadrantes recording the *remissa ducentesima*, commemorating the abolition of a sales tax imposed in Italy. The tax was initially a 1% sales tax (*centesima rerum venalium*) levied at Rome and throughout Italy on all goods sold or auctioned, intended to support the military treasury. Tacitus reports that Augustus introduced

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<sup>304</sup> Hobley 1998, 51.

<sup>305</sup> Cass. Dio 78.12.6.

it since the *aerarium Saturni* was exhausted by the civil wars.<sup>306</sup> However, since Cicero refers to the tax on numerous occasions,<sup>307</sup> it is more likely that it was introduced far earlier—perhaps due to an earlier civil war, such as that between Marius and Sulla. In 17, Tiberius reduced the tax by half a percent, as the new influx of revenue from Cappadocia’s incorporation into the Empire would be able to give some relief; he then, however, increased the tax to its original 1% in 31.<sup>308</sup> Caligula fully abolished it in 38,<sup>309</sup> by which time it had again been reduced to ½%.

The *remissa ducentesima* [RCC] quadrantes feature the *pileus*, or cap of liberty, on the obverse (fig. 3), demonstrating that Caligula had freed Italians from the tax. This message is conveyed in dramatic fashion, as the *pileus* as a reverse type was extremely rare,<sup>310</sup> with the only precedent being the infamous Eid Mar coin of Brutus (fig 4). The tax—and its reduction, reinstatement, then abolition—would have affected Italians only. It was they who enjoyed exemption from direct taxation until the reign of Diocletian.

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<sup>306</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 1.78.2; see also Cass. Dio 55.25.

<sup>307</sup> Cic. *ad Brut.* 18, *pro Rabir. Post.* 11; see also, *Dig.* 1.16.17.2.

<sup>308</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 2.42.6; Cass. Dio 58.16.2.

<sup>309</sup> Cass. Dio 59.9.6; Suet. *Cal.* 16.3. For more on this, see Lindsay 1993, 86; Hurley 1993, 58; Wardle 1994, 173.

<sup>310</sup> On a very rare non-Imperial anonymous coin (Vindex?) of the civil war period we do see the *pileus* as a type (*RIC* I<sup>2</sup> 24). Additionally, it is fairly common to see Libertas represented on coinage carrying a wide array of accoutrements, the *pileus* sometimes among them. The *pileus*, however, is usually tucked under the arm of Libertas and *RIC*, *BMCRE*, Cohen, and Strack often conflict over the same type whether or not Libertas holds a *pileus* or cornucopiae. Regardless, even if we can assume a *pileus* to be carried by Libertas on some types, it figures on the lowest level of significance. Eckhel has conjectured that the representation of the *pileus* refers to the restoration of the comitia, which had been abolished by Tiberius (Suet. *Cal.* 16; Cass. Dio 59.9).



**Figure 3.** Caligula. Rome mint. Quadrans. Obv: PON M TR P III PP COS TERT around RCC in field / Rev: C CAESAR DIVI AVG PRON AVG around pileus between S—C. RIC I<sup>2</sup> 52.



**Figure 4.** Brutus. Mobile mint (N. Greece?). Aureus. Obv: BRVT IMP L PLAET CEST / Rev: EID MAR. Pileus between two daggers. RRC 508/3.

Of all 174 known RCC coins of Caligula commemorating his tax relief to Italians, 149 (85.6%) have a provenance in Italy.<sup>311</sup> This high percentage is especially significant when no other type of Caligula has such prevalence there.<sup>312</sup> As noted above, Italy has provided only 23.7% of all

<sup>311</sup> Many of those outside of Italy were found in Croatia and Slovenia.

<sup>312</sup> The next Caligulan coin found most often in Italy is the scarce *Adlocutio* type, which sees 9 of the known 20 (45%) with a provenance in Italy. Caligula's *Adlocutio* type also makes geographical sense to be the second-most

known coin finds for Caligula, making the concentration of the RCC type suggestive that Rome sought to communicate to those within Rome and Italy that Caligula has been the one to relieve them of a tax burden. Additionally, the choice to mint the RCC type on the quadrans, being a coin that was tightly-confined to Italian circulation makes consideration of this type all the more telling.

#### **GEOGRAPHICAL TARGETING CASE STUDY—CALIGULA’S SIGNIS RECEPTIS DUPONDIVS**

The second coin of Caligula to be considered, is his Signis Receptis dupondius. It is an undated series of the Roman mint that depicts Germanicus in a triumphal quadriga on the obverse, with him also on the reverse saluting while holding one of the recovered standards (fig. 5).



**Figure 5.** Caligula. Rome mint. Dupondius. Obv: GERMANICVS CAESAR in field in two lines / Rev: SIGNIS—RECEPT DEVICTIS—GERM in field in two lines. Germanicus in triumphal quadriga on obverse. Germanicus raising right hand, holding aquila in left hand. RIC I<sup>2</sup> 57.

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frequent type of his found in Italy, as the praetorian audience that consensus holds Caligula is haranguing, resides in Italy.

Both the obverse and reverse recall the greatness of Germanicus and directly advertise the family of Caligula. The obverse, in portraying Germanicus as triumphator, is a reference to his triumph held in 17 for his victories in Germany.<sup>313</sup> It was during these victories that Germanicus recovered the standards lost by Varus,<sup>314</sup> thereby explaining the imagery on the reverse of the coin, in which he is shown as imperator, saluting with his right hand while holding a standard in his left. The *Signis Receptis dupondii* offer a message on both their obverse and their reverse of Roman strength, superiority, and determination at the expense of the Germans.

It is not straightforward, however, to ascertain the intended audience within Germany—Roman legionaries or the German populace. By the reign of Caligula, Germany had become monetized and had economic ties with Rome.<sup>315</sup> Celtic coinages, for instance, show striking similarities to both Roman and earlier Greek coinages, indicating that their designers were paying close attention to the iconography of Mediterranean coinages. The target audience for the *Signis Receptis dupondii* may have been Romans, however, as there was a notable legionary presence in Germany at this time; 11 legions were stationed throughout Germany.<sup>316</sup> Yet there is no reason to suppose that one group had to be the sole target, as both could quite likely have been seen as target audiences. It should not be forgotten that Caligula had a very close relationship with the German legions: his presence as a child helped to quell revolt and he was

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<sup>313</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 2.42; Cass. Dio 58.16.2. For the individual victories, see: Tac. *Ann.* 1.49–52, 55–71; 2.5–26. They were commemorated at the time in the form of a trophy of arms in Germany (Tac. *Ann.* 2.22), and an arch was even erected in Rome in honor of the recovery of the standards (Tac. *Ann.* 2.41). Germanicus was granted many posthumous honors as well (Tac. *Ann.* 2.71, 73, 82, 83).

<sup>314</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 1.60, 2.25; Cass. Dio 57.18.

<sup>315</sup> Dearne and Branigan 1995; Wilson 2009, 218; Wilson 2012, 150.

<sup>316</sup> Potter 2004, 125.



often present with his father, Germanicus, during campaigns.<sup>317</sup> Altogether, it is reasonable to assume that this was a clear choice by Caligula's court to appeal to a bond with the troops on the Rhine.

Regardless of the intended audience, the prevalence of a coin that offers this double-message and double commemoration of Rome's victory over Germany is significant. While Germany accounts for 46.5% of all Caligula's provenanced coinage, a striking 93.2% of the *Signis Receptis dupondii* were found in Germany (121 out of 130 known). This strongly suggests geographical targeting. The figure is especially telling when compared to the standard distribution of Caligulan coinage for Germany of 46.5%. The occurrence of the *Signis Receptis dupondii* is more than twice the relative frequency of all other types of Caligula for Germany.

#### **GEOGRAPHICAL TARGETING CASE STUDY—TRAJAN'S *DEBELLATOR* COINAGES**

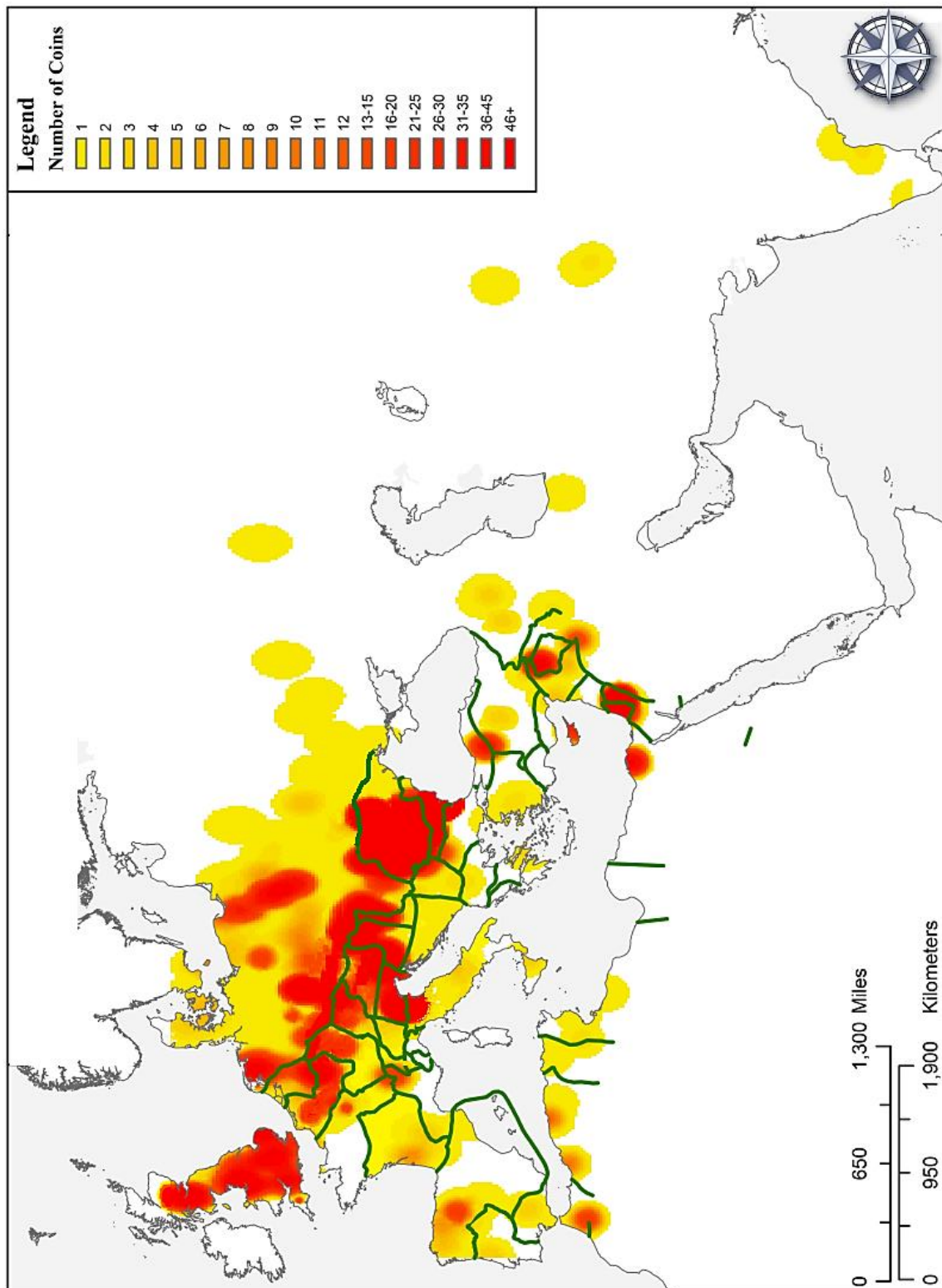
I next examine the role that Roman coinage played as a mobile medium of politically persuasive communication to the newly-incorporated populace of Dacia following Trajan's wars of conquest (101–102; 105–106 AD). For this analysis, the full potential of the database of more than 300,000 coin finds and of its GIS-mapping capabilities is realized. A subset of 22,180 GIS-mapped Imperial coins of Trajan can be extracted. The map of all find-spots for all Imperial coins minted under Trajan (map 1) demonstrates the distribution pattern.

Visualization is aided by abandonment of standard point-marking and the utilization of a heat map. A paucity of archaeological data for northern Turkey, Libya, and much of North Africa accounts for the minimal occurrence of Imperial coinage there. Even so, a solid band of

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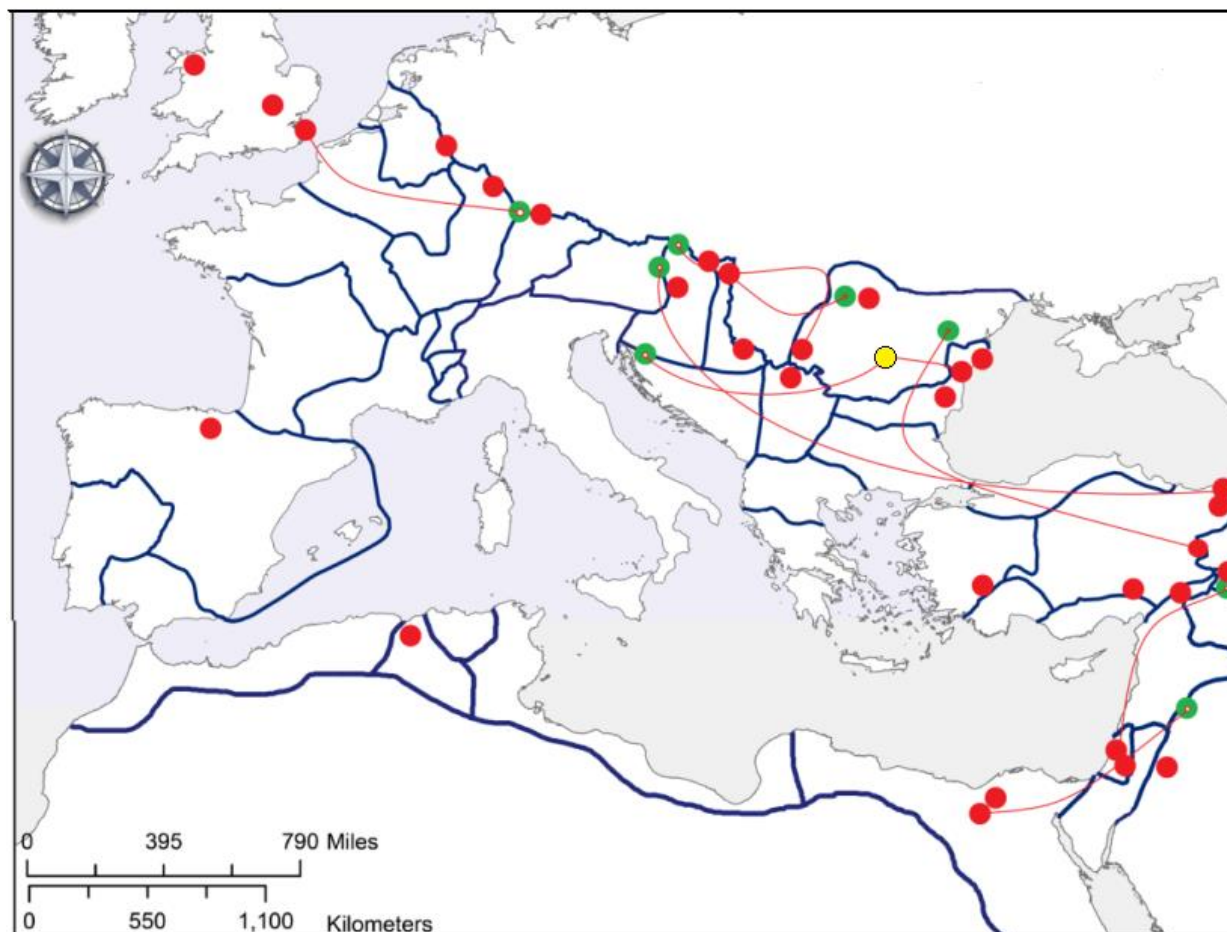
<sup>317</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 1.41–44; Suet. *Calig.* 9.

concentrated coin distribution across the entire northern Roman frontier is immediately recognizable.





**MAP 1.** Distribution of all recorded Imperial coinages minted under Trajan derived from database. 22,180 coins of Trajan represented at time of GIS plotting of find-spots.



**MAP 2.** Locations of all Roman legions during the reign of Trajan (98–117). Legions that were stationary under Trajan are represented by a single red dot. Those that relocated during Trajan’s reign are represented with green dots for their initial location and red for their final location. In instances where legions would move twice, yellow dots are used to indicate their second location. Lines connecting multiple locations are not meant to imply a route of travel, but merely to illustrate the sequence.

Not surprisingly, the locations of the legions under Trajan closely correspond to the areas where an especially focused quantity of Trajanic coinage has been discovered (map 2).<sup>318</sup>

<sup>318</sup> I ADIVTRIX in Dacia, then moved to Parthia from 114–116; I ITALICA in Dacia; I MINERVIA in Moesia at Bonna from 105; II ADIVTRIX from Dacia in 101–106, then Aquincum from 106; II AVGVSTA in Isca (Caerleon); II TRAIANA in Laodicea; an unknown legion in Parthia from 114–116, then in Judaea from 117; III AVGVSTA in Lambaesis; III CYRENAICA in Bostra, then in Egypt from 106; III GALLICA in Raphanea; IV FLAVIA in Singidunum; IV SCYTHICA in Zeugma; V MACEDONICA in Troesmis; VI FERRATA in Raphanea; VI VICTRIX in Novaesium; VII CLAVDIA in Viminacium; VII GEMINA, in Legio; VIII AVGVSTA in Argentoratum; IX HISPANIA in Britannia; X FRETENSIS in Jerusalem; X GEMINA in Aquincum; XI CLAVDIA

The needs of maintaining the army necessitated a constant flow of coin to the frontier regions of the empire: hoard evidence has long demonstrated that they were key initial distribution zones for new coin.<sup>319</sup> What remains unknown and largely unrecoverable are A) how newly minted coinage reached its destination; B) how decisions about which regions received new coin, and in what quantity, were made.

What emerges from the distribution map above (map 1) is that Dacia received no more preferential treatment in regards to overall coinage distribution than any other frontier province under Trajan. Trajanic coinage appears to have been distributed in an empire-encircling band of relatively uniform quantity. This model, however, looks considerably different when the distribution of certain coinage reverse types is taken into account.

One group of coinage issues minted under Trajan had a unique iconography and accompanying inscriptions that represent the recent conquest and annexation of Dacia while portraying the emperor as *debellator* [subduer].<sup>320</sup>

In my database 22,180 coins of Trajan are represented, with 3,977 of the *debellator* type, representing 18% of the Trajanic total. When the find spots of this particular type are

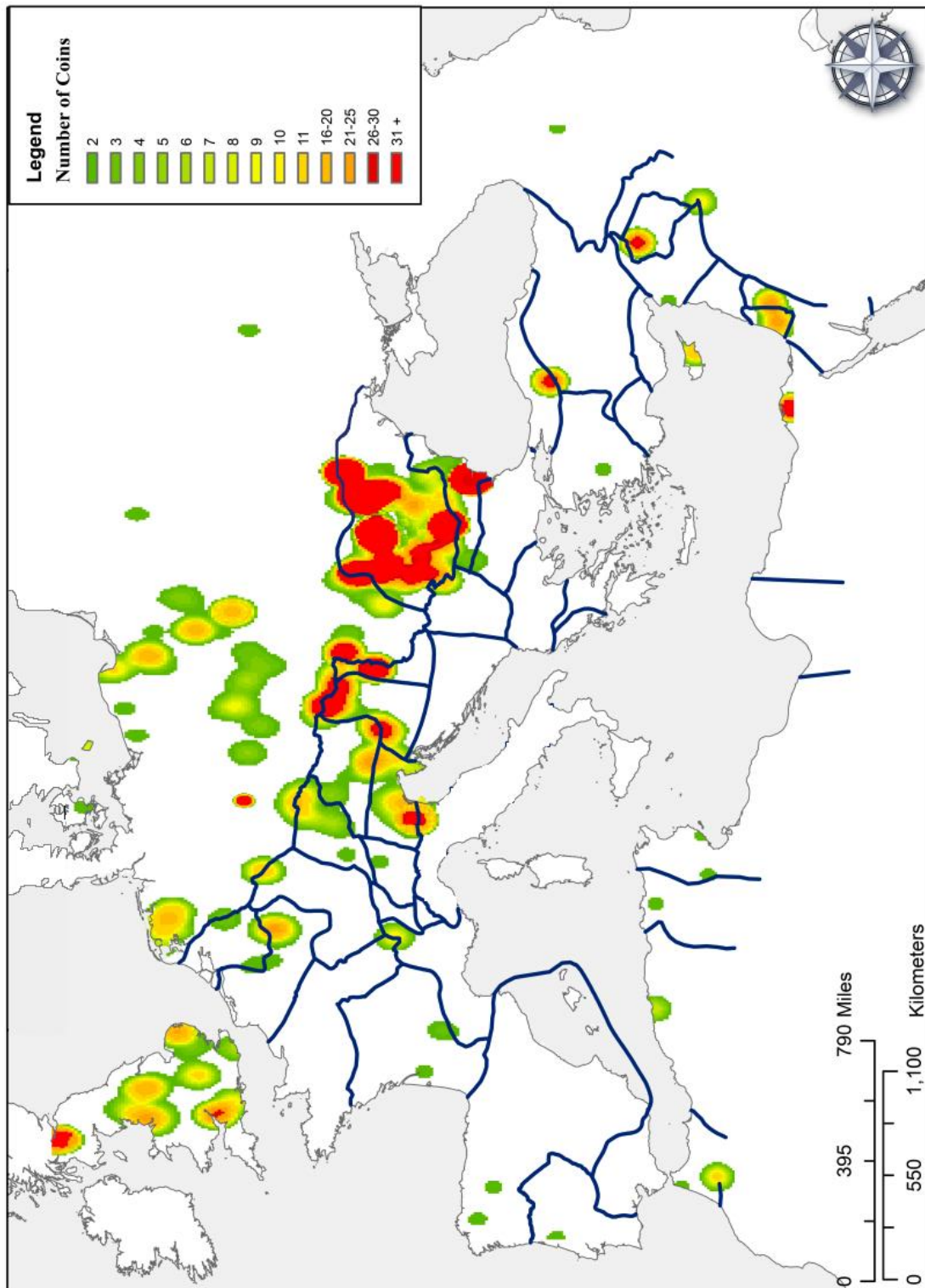
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in Brigetio in 101, then Oescus in 106 to Durostorum; XII FVLMINATA in Melitene; XIII GEMINA in Vindobona from 97–101, then Sarmizegetusa from 102–105, then Apulum from 106; XIV GEMINA in Vindobona, XV APOLLINAR in Carnuntum from 117–118, then Satala; XVI FLAVIA in Satala; XX VALERIA VICTRIX in Deva; XXII DEITOARIANA in Egypt; XXII PRIMIGE, in Mogontiacum; and XXX VLPIA in Brigetio from 103, then to Noviomagus.

<sup>319</sup> Reece 1977; Wigg-Wolf 1997.

<sup>320</sup> The following RIC entries comprise the *debellator* type: 46, 78, 89, 90, 96–102, 111, 118, 121, 130, 147, 155, 158, 159, 187–190, 208–210, 221–227, 234, 238–240, 259, 260, 266, 267, 286, 287, 292, 293, 307, 356, 447, 485, 531, 547, 556–565, 579, 580, 600–603, 620–623, 678–681. For my purposes here, the *debellator* series are those issues that commemorate the Roman victory over the Dacians in their iconography, and, in some instances, their inscriptions. Merely the inclusion of ‘DACICVS’ in the imperial title of Trajan on the coinage is not, on its own, enough to warrant inclusion in the *debellator* series as DACICVS remains in his titulature regardless. Rather, *debellator* coins are those that demonstrate clearly engagement with the recent memory of the Dacian Wars. Most such coins may also include ‘GERMANICVS’, yet to suppose a German audience for coinage engaging with the Dacian Wars to be purposeful is more than doubtful.

represented (map 3), their distribution reveals neither homogeneity, nor consistency with the model of distribution found for Trajan's Imperial coinage in its entirety. Instead, a clear preference for distribution in Dacia emerges.



**MAP 3.** Distribution of all *debellator* type Imperial coinages minted under Trajan derived from database. 3,977 *debellator* coins of Trajan represented at time of GIS plotting of find-spots

As the map demonstrates, a striking concentration of Trajanic coins referencing his victory over Dacia occurs in that region. 3,113 of the known 3,977 *debellator* types, or 78.3%, have a provenance within the province of Dacia.<sup>321</sup> The possibility that the *debellator* issues are found concentrated in Dacia simply due to coincidence—since the recent Roman conquest would be commemorated by the mint on Roman coinage at the same time that the newly-acquired Dacia would be undergoing extensive monetization—can be rejected in the light of their long production run. The *debellator* issues are produced at the mint in Rome steadily from 102–117, under various issues.<sup>322</sup> Thus, the *debellator* type was anything but a fleeting series; rather it encompassed numerous iconographical and thematic variants.

The most common variants found in Dacia portray a mourning Dacian sitting on a pile of arms (fig. 6),<sup>323</sup> a Dacian before the goddess Pax (fig. 7),<sup>324</sup> and the goddess Victory inscribing ‘VIC DAC’ on a shield (fig. 8).<sup>325</sup>

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<sup>321</sup> The modern countries that comprised ancient Dacia, in order of magnitude, are Romania, Moldova, Bulgaria, Serbia, Ukraine, Hungary, Slovakia, and Poland.

<sup>322</sup> For 102 the mint produced *debellator* issues for COS IIII DES V bearing the obverse IMP CAES NERVA TRAIAN AVG GERM DACICVS P M; for 103–111 the mint produced *debellator* issues for COS V bearing the obverse IMP CAES NERVA TRAIAN AVG GERM and IMP CAES NERVAE TRAIANO AVG GER DAC P M TR P COS V P P; for 112–117 the mint produced *debellator* issues for COS VI bearing the obverse IMP TRAIANO AVG GER DAC P M TR P, IMP TRAIANO AVG GER DAC P M TR P COS VI P P, and IMP CAES NERVAE TRAIANO AVG GER DAC P M TR P COS VI P P; for 114–117 the mint produced *debellator* issues for COS VI bearing the obverse IMP TRAIANO OPTIMO AVG GER DAC P M TR P, IMP CAES NER TRAIANO OPTIMO AVG GER DAC, and IMP CAES NER TRAIANO OPTIMO AVG GER DAC P M TR P COS VI P P.

<sup>323</sup> RIC 96.

<sup>324</sup> RIC 187.

<sup>325</sup> RIC 528.



**Figure 6.** Trajan. Rome mint. Denarius. Obv: IMP CAES NERVAE TRAIANO AVG GER DAC P M TR P COS V P P / Rev: COS V P P SPQR OPTIMO PRINC. Dacian seated on pile of shields, spears, and swords. DAC CAP in ex. RIC 96.



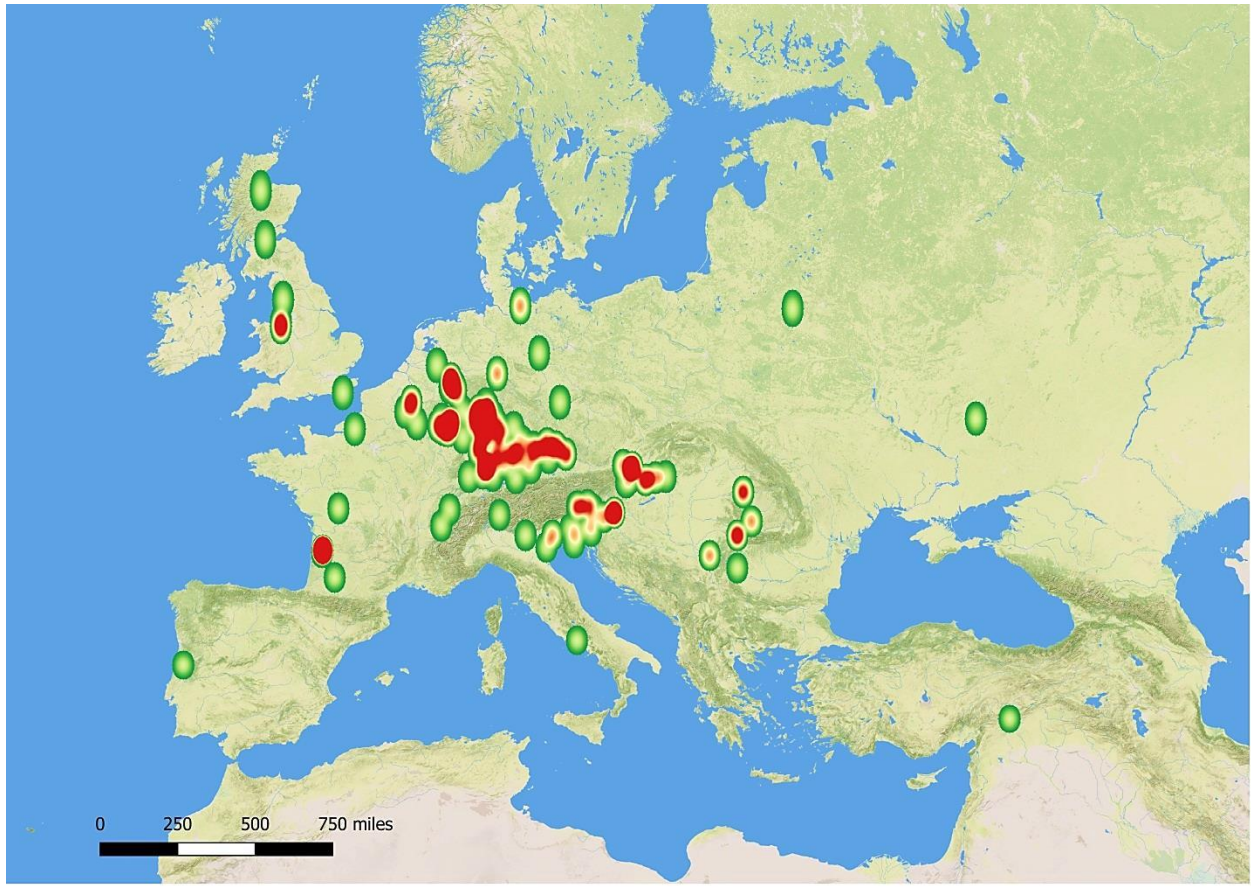
**Figure 7.** Trajan. Rome mint. Denarius. Obv: IMP TRAIANO AVG GER DAC P M TR P COS V P P / Rev: SPQR OPTIMO PRINCIPI. Pax seated left holding olive branch, Dacian kneeling in supplication before the goddess. RIC 187.





**Figure 8.** Trajan. Rome mint. Denarius. Obv: IMP CAES NERVAE TRAIANO AVGVGER DAC P M TR P COS V P P / Rev: SPQR OPTIMO PRINCIPI S-C. Victory standing right, inscribing VIC DAC on shield affixed to palm tree. RIC 528.

These variants are not restricted to the Dacian region. However, many *debellator* type variants found outside Dacia are never found in the province itself. It is the variants that depict excessive violence and humiliation of Dacians that are not found within Dacia; instead these are concentrated in Italy and Gaul (map 4).



**MAP 4.** Distribution of all *debellator* types containing excessive depictions of provocative humiliation or violence towards Dacians.

Most of these variants depict the emperor Trajan personally engaging in especially brutal or humiliating behavior towards Dacians. One variant shows Trajan thrusting a spear at a Dacian who is about to be trampled by the galloping horse the emperor rides (fig. 9);<sup>326</sup> another shows a dejected and submissive Dacian presenting his shield to Trajan (fig. 10);<sup>327</sup> another shows the emperor resting his foot on the severed head of a Dacian (fig. 11).<sup>328</sup> Additionally, all but two of the specimens showing Trajan directly using violence or humiliation towards Dacians are on

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<sup>326</sup> RIC 534.

<sup>327</sup> RIC 214; 447.

<sup>328</sup> RIC 547.



aurei;<sup>329</sup> these would have been near-exclusively circulated among affluent Romans, the provincial elite, and officers.



**Figure 9.** Trajan. Rome mint. Aureus. Obv: IMP TRAIANO AVG GER DAC P M TR P COS V P P / Rev: SPQR OPTIMO PRINCIPI. Trajan on horse, readying to impale trampled Dacian. RIC 534.



**Figure 10.** Trajan. Rome mint. Denarius. Obv: IMP CAES NERVA TRAIAN AVG GERM DACICVS PM / Rev: TR P VI IMP III COS III DES V PP – SC . Dacian kneeling and presenting shield to Trajan. RIC 447.

<sup>329</sup> RIC 208, 209, 210, and 547.



**Figure 11.** Trajan. Rome mint. Aureus. Obv: IMP TRAIANO AVG GER DAC P M TR P COS V P P / Rev: SPQR OPTIMO PRINCIPI. Trajan standing, resting foot on Dacian's head. RIC 547.

Direct agency by the emperor—let alone an exhibition of excessive violence or humiliation to Dacians—does not feature on any of the *debellator* types found in Dacia. Moreover, it is only far from Dacia that we find variants displaying the personification of the river Tiber forcing Dacia to the ground, apparently in preparation to rape her (fig. 12).<sup>330</sup>

<sup>330</sup> RIC 556. The imagery here is admittedly imprecise, as numerous violent acts could be interpreted. It has been suggested that Tiber is strangling Dacia or simply forcing her to the ground. I conclude, however, that Tiber is preparing to rape Dacia. It is worth noting Tiber's overall body language, particularly the placement of his left hand seemingly about to disrobe; this is highly suggestive of sexual violence.



**Figure 12.** Trajan. Rome mint. Sestertius. Obv: IMP TRAIANO AVG GER DAC P M TR P COS V P P / Rev: SPQR OPTIMO PRINCIPI -SC. Tiber preparing to rape Dacia. RIC 556.

The likely reason for keeping the most violent and humiliating *debellator* types out of Dacia is a concern not to communicate such a message to the newly incorporated Dacians. The standard *debellator* types, while perhaps still unpleasant in their message to Dacians, are a less extreme visualization of victory. The excessive *debellator* types, however, utilize either unprecedented reverse types or employ reverse types of extreme rarity that offer a belligerent, distasteful, or abusive image.

While Rome might have gone to lengths to exercise certain controls over what *debellator* types were distributed to which regions of the Empire, little could be done to control how far some of these types might travel once in circulation. One example of an excessive *debellator* type that has been found in Dacia may demonstrate Rome's desire to restrict the circulation of the more humiliating types (fig. 13). The coin is not only exceptional in that defacement of the



emperor's image is very rare on coinages,<sup>331</sup> but it is also the currently only known defaced coin of Trajan.



**Figure 13.** Trajan. Rome mint. Sestertius. Obv: IMP TRAIANO AVG GER DAC P M TR P COS V P P / Rev: SPQR OPTIMO PRINCIPI. Trajan on horse, readying to impale trampled Dacian. Nine gouge marks across obverse. RIC 534.

The messages that the *debellator* type variants communicated to the Dacians are: 1) Roman military superiority, 2) the pointlessness of further Dacian resistance, and 3) Roman coinage monetizes the local economy and incorporates it into the Roman world. It is notable that the exceptionally rare *Clementia* type<sup>332</sup> minted under Trajan has only been found in Dacia.<sup>333</sup> In short, Rome wanted to check the desire for resistance while promoting integration and assimilation. Simultaneously, the message to Romans was one that sought to integrate the ideology of Rome's unforgiving treatment of adversaries as well as to dissuade any potential

<sup>331</sup> Some have been found of Caligula's coins where his name is scratched off on those coins that do not have his bust. Few examples of Hadrianic coins being defaced also have been found in and around Israel. For more, see Chapter Six.

<sup>332</sup> RIC 409.

<sup>333</sup> One example of the 22,180 Trajanic coins has been found for which provenance is known. The specimen in question was excavated from the governor's palace complex in Apulum. See Găzdac, Suci, and Alföldy- Găzdac. (edd.) 2009.

usurpers or rebels by highlighting the consequences.<sup>334</sup> The latter message is further underscored by the fact that, as noted above, all but two of the specimens showing Trajan directly using violence or humiliation towards Dacians are on aurei;<sup>335</sup> these would have been primarily circulated among affluent Romans, provincial elite, and generals.

The *debellator* coinage was targeted at the Dacian populace not the Roman army, even though it was the army that would have been the first group to receive it. When the *debellator* coinage was minted can perhaps provide the most significant indicator of audience. Dacia was not fully incorporated into the Empire until 106, following the Second Dacian War; so if a large portion of the *debellator* coinage found in Dacia was minted prior to 106, it would be highly unlikely that the native population would be targeted for any form of imperial communication.

#### **ASSESSING THE PRIMARY AUDIENCE OF TRAJAN'S *DEBELLATOR* COINAGE IN DACIA**

It has long been recognized that the coinage of Trajan is in dire need of a comprehensive (re-)assessment, following “modern standards of numismatic analysis.”<sup>336</sup> Notable among the problems is assessment of his ‘COS V’ coinage. No substantive changes were recorded on Trajan’s coins from the period 103–111 aside from ‘COS V’, making nearly half of his reign

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<sup>334</sup> Trajan seems to have been rather concerned about the potential for revolt in the provinces. In his correspondence with Pliny while governor of Bithynia-Pontus, Trajan made objection to hosts inviting large numbers to celebrations, particularly when the guests were to receive gifts (*Ep.* 10.117); his *mandata* prompted local Christians to suspend many of their meetings (*Ep.* 10.96.7); Trajan denied the creation of an organization of firemen (*collegium fabrorum*) in Nicomedia, even after a large fire ruined much of the city (*Ep.* 10.33–34). His worries about cabals were so intense that he even remarked to Pliny that all groups of men bound together for a common purpose inevitably become “political factions” [*hetaeriae*] (*Ep.* 10.34). For the localized problem of such factions particular to Bithynia-Pontus, see Dio Chrys. *Or.* 45.8.

<sup>335</sup> RIC 208, 209, 210, and 547.

<sup>336</sup> Dahmen 2012, 352. Prior to Woytek, Mattingly’s 1926 study in *RIC*, and his later *BMCRE* series published in 1936 have stood alone as comprehensive studies of Trajan’s coinage aside from Strack’s 1931 *Untersuchungen zur römischen Reichsprägung des zweiten Jahrhunderts 1. Die Reichsprägung zur Zeit des Traian*.

chronologically undefined. Recent attempts have been largely unsuccessful, notably that by Paul-André Besombes.<sup>337</sup> However, Bernhard Woytek<sup>338</sup> has provided a detailed breakdown of all known Trajanic types. He assigned nearly all of them to a particular year of production based on cross-referencing obverses from issues of known years to those of the elusive ‘COS V’ type. In this way he has created a convincing timeline based on type stylistics, development, and physiognomic analysis.<sup>339</sup>

When the *debellator* Trajanic coin finds in Dacia are considered in relation to Woytek’s classification system (table 1), it becomes immediately recognizable that preference for this type only occurred after the outbreak of the second campaign, when the entire region was annexed. 90% of all *debellator* issues found in Dacia were minted after the Second Dacian War, during a period of cultural and political integration as well as intense monetization. We cannot know for certain at what point Trajan determined to annex Dacia, but it would more reasonably have been some time *after* the outbreak of the Second Dacian War. Consequently, given the finding that 8.7% of *debellator* issues were minted at some point *during* the Second Dacian War, it reasonably follows that some uncertain portion of the 8.7% were minted once Dacian incorporation began. Therefore, some indeterminate amount (between 90 and 98.7%) of the *debellator* corpus was struck once annexation was the aim. Such data thereby diminishes the plausibility that the Roman legions stationed in Dacia were the intended *primary* audience of the coinage.

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<sup>337</sup> Besombes 2008.

<sup>338</sup> Woytek 2010.

<sup>339</sup> Such criteria can be inherently subjective and problematic, but Woytek’s analyses have met with widespread approval, which I feel is warranted. See, for example, reviews by Beckmann (2011); Balbuza (2012); Clay (2012); Dahmen (2012); Metcalf (2011); Zawora (2012).

	Classification	MIR #	Quantity	Percentage
Pre-Dacian Wars (98–100)	A	(1–94)	0	0
First Dacian War (101–102)	B	(95–144)	14	0.5
Inter-War Period (103–104)	C	(145–187)	25	0.8
Second Dacian War (105–106)	D	(188–210)	261	8.7
Post-Dacian Wars (106–117)	E	(211+)	2671	90.0

**Table 1.** Distribution of minting for *debellator* coinages found in Dacia based on relationship to Dacian Wars.

However, to offer a nod to the army while communicating to the Dacians could have been seen as doubly beneficial to Rome. As noted above, the army acted as a distribution mechanism for new coin, and the imperial regime could still communicate a political message to more than one audience in the process. In this instance, the army was the first recipient group of the coin, but need not have been the sole audience for its message.

### **GEOGRAPHICAL TARGETING CASE STUDY—THREE ITALIC TYPES**

Three other examples of geographical preferencing of coin types appear under Trajan, signifying that the practice was not limited to the *debellator* type alone. First, the forum type,<sup>340</sup> which depicts Trajan's Forum in Rome on the reverse (fig. 14), has been found disproportionately in Italy; 91% of known specimens are from there.<sup>341</sup>

<sup>340</sup> RIC 246–248, 255–257, 617, 618, 630, 654; BMC 509.

<sup>341</sup> RIC 255. Babington, 1874; Rizzoli 1914; Jungwirth 1967; Sierra 2006; Valdés and Sendino 2006; Biondani 2007.



**Figure 14.** Trajan. Rome mint. Aureus. Obv: IMP TRAIANO AVG GER DAC P M TR P COS VIP P / Rev: FORVM TRAIAN. Trajan's Forum. RIC 255.

Second, 86% of Trajan's Congiarium types,<sup>342</sup> which depict and commemorate the emperor's largesse to the people of Rome, are found in Italy (fig. 15).<sup>343</sup> Third, all Emperor VII types,<sup>344</sup> which show Trajan on a platform with two attendants as he addresses troops, have their provenance solely in Italy (fig. 16).<sup>345</sup>



**Figure 15.** Trajan. Rome mint. Sestertius. Obv: IMP TRAIANO AVG GER DAC P M TR P COS V P P / Rev: CONGIARIVM TERTIVM. Trajan on platform, attendants beside him distribute largesse to man, below, in toga. RIC 469.

<sup>342</sup> RIC 450, 469.

<sup>343</sup> RIC 469. Rizzoli 1914; Callegher 1992; Sendino 2006.

<sup>344</sup> RIC 309.

<sup>345</sup> RIC 469. Rizzoli 1914.





**Figure 16.** Trajan. Rome mint. Aureus. Obv: IMP TRAIANO OPTIMO AVG GER DAC P M TR P / Rev: IMPERATOR VII. Trajan on platform, attended by aides, addressing troops (Praetorian Guard?). RIC 309.

In my view, the rationale to restrict distribution and circulation of these types to Italy is a matter of reception. The first two types would appeal more to audiences who would themselves have seen Trajan's forum and its accompanying monumental architecture, or who might have benefited from the emperor's largesse. The *Imperator* type, traditionally considered to depict the Praetorian Guard,<sup>346</sup> would serve as an imperial gesture of appreciation to a group that the princeps relied on heavily. It is difficult to imagine these three types having any perceivable impact on the provincial elite in Britain or soldiers stationed near the Euphrates. Much like the *debellator* type, these types too were deliberately designed for a particular audience.

Monumental architecture, epigraphy, literature, and numismatics all contributed to what may be termed a 'propaganda campaign' by Trajan regarding the Dacian Wars. Monumental

<sup>346</sup> Numerous scholars regularly indicate that all *adlocutio* style coins depict the Praetorians as the audience. For instance, see Davies 2010, 56.

architecture that celebrated Trajan's victory includes Trajan's Column in Rome, the centerpiece of Trajan's Forum; the Tropaeum Traiani near Adamclisi; Trajan's Bridge and the Tabula Traiana in Drobeta-Turnu Severin. Trajan also composed an account of the Dacian Wars, *Dacica* or *de bello Dacico*—supposedly in the style of Caesar's *Commentarii de bello Gallico*. Only a brief fragment survives.<sup>347</sup>

### **GEOGRAPHICAL TARGETING CASE STUDY—VESPASIAN'S IUDAEA CAPTA COINAGES**

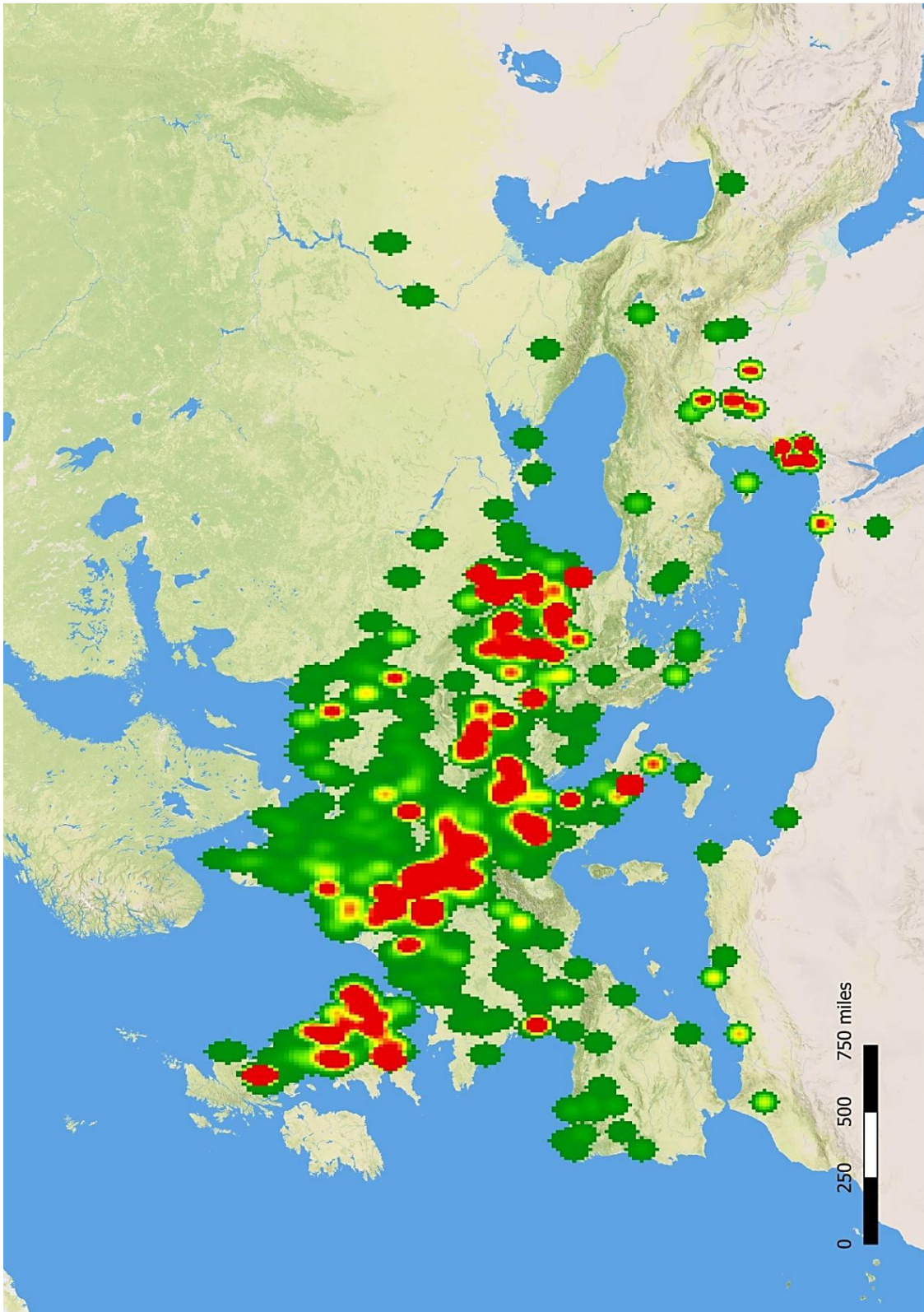
I next examine the Iudaea Capta types of Vespasian (fig. 17). These coins demonstrate what is best termed 'negative' geographical targeting, as the type is excluded from circulation in the Levant and neighboring East. Vespasianic coinage is well accounted for in the Levant and the East (map 5), yet the Iudaea Capta types are all but unknown to the area (map 6), with only 3 of the 838 (0.3%).



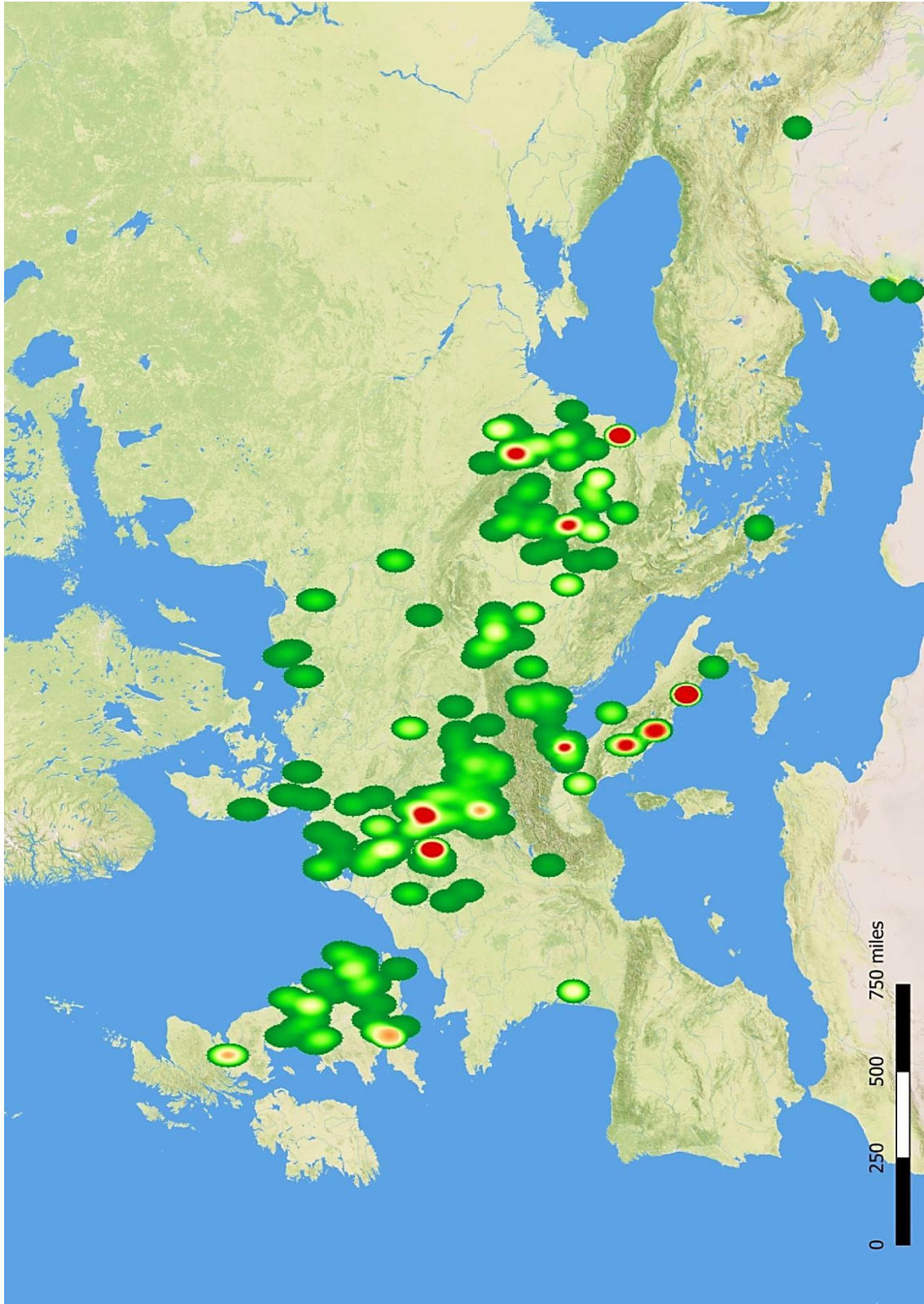
**Figure 17.** Vespasian. Rome mint. Sestertius. Obv: IMP CAES VESPASIAN AVG P M TR P P P COS III / Rev: IUDAEA CAPTA –SC. Vespasian standing r., foot on helmet, spear in r. hand; to right, palm tree with mourning Jewess seated below. RIC II<sup>2</sup> 167.

<sup>347</sup> FRH 96 = Prisc. GL 2.205.





**Map 5.** Heatmap distribution of all coinage of Vespasian of all denominations.



**Map 6.** Heatmap distribution of all Iudaea Capta types of Vespasian of all denominations.

These results are all the more striking when the metals of the coins are considered. It is to be fully expected that Imperial bronze would be found very sparingly in the East, while precious metals are more frequent. The Iudaea Capta types of Vespasian, however, are not more common in bronze than in precious metal. Of the 1,354 Iudaea Capta types of Vespasian analyzed here, 1,097 (81%) are precious metal coinages. This means that denominational factors cannot explain why the Iudaea Capta types of Vespasian, aside from 3 coins, are absent in the Levant or the East.

That presence of the Iudaea Capta types of Vespasian matches normal distribution patterns of Vespasianic coin (map 5) *for all other regions* of the Empire. That 81 % of all known Iudaea Capta types of Vespasian are on precious metal and that the Iudaea Capta was a common type produced throughout the entire reign of Vespasian (69–79) while only 3 specimens have been found indicates deliberate exclusion of the type from the Levant and the East.

When the archaeological and numismatic evidence is taken into account, the scope and sophistication of the Imperial program of propaganda are better understood. While I do not argue that geographical targeting of coinage types was a constant practice, I do maintain that the corpus of archaeological and numismatic evidence shows it to have been a practice undertaken at various times by various emperors in an attempt to best communicate a particular, and often sensitive, message to an audience.

## **COIN IMAGE ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND PERMISSIONS**

- Figure 1: Jean Elsen & ses Fils S.A., Auction 128, Lot #116.
- Figure 2: Gerhard Hirsch Nachfolger, Auction 284, Lot #2102.
- Figure 3: Romae Aeternae Numismatics, online sale, Lot # RC0646b.
- Figure 4: Numismatica Ars Classica, Auction 27, Lot #282.
- Figure 5: Numismatik Lanz München, Auction 159, Lot #341.
- Figure 6: Gitbud & Nauman, Auction 31, Lot #520.
- Figure 7: Dr. Busso Peus Nachfolger, Auction 414, Lot #176.
- Figure 8: Classical Numismatic Group, Electronic Auction 347, Lot #508.
- Figure 9: Numismatica Ars Classica, Auction 54, Lot #396.
- Figure 10: Classical Numismatic Group, Triton XVI, 3/4, Lot #1080.
- Figure 11: Dix Noonan Webb Ltd, 11 Feb 2015 Auction 128, Lot #15.
- Figure 12: Classical Numismatic Group, Electronic Auction 108, Lot #126.
- Figure 13: Classical Numismatic Group, Electronic Auction 349, Lot #398.
- Figure 14: Classical Numismatic Group, Electronic Auction 294, Lot #661.
- Figure 15: Classical Numismatic Group, Mail Bid Sale 67, Lot #1429.
- Figure 16: Gerhard Hirsch Nachfolger, Auction 261, Lot #631.
- Figure 17: Pecunem, Numismatik Naumann, Gitbud & Naumann Auction 38, Lot #795.



## CHAPTER FIVE: DENOMINATIONAL TARGETING OF NUMISMATIC PROPAGANDA

This chapter examines whether or not Rome ever differentiated the messages on Imperial coinage based on the coin's denomination so as to target a particular audience.<sup>348</sup> I refer to this practice as denominational targeting. It could take either 'exclusive', 'concentrated', or 'diversified' forms. Exclusive targeting would be instances of a reverse type minted *only* on a particular denomination.<sup>349</sup> Concentrated targeting would be instances of a particular reverse type mostly minted on a denomination. Diversified targeting would be instances where a reverse type is found across various denominations, yet the type's iconography and representation of message are *radically dissimilar* across denominations.

The first two forms (exclusive and concentrated targeting) aimed at relaying some distinct message to a group via a focused message on a denomination<sup>350</sup> believed to figure more prominently within that group. The latter form (diversified targeting) aimed at communicating a message indiscriminately to a universal audience on all denominations, yet thoughtful consideration appears to have been exercised by type concipients so as to present the message in terms that the assumed primary user of a given denomination would more readily understand.

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<sup>348</sup> Peter Lummel's distinction of the four *Zielgruppen* of Imperial propaganda is used here: the senate; the military; the *plebs urbana*; Italian and provincial populations (1991, 8).

<sup>349</sup> Gold=aurei; silver=denarii; bronze=all base metal coinages, commonly referred to as *aes* (e.g., sestertii, dupondii, as, semis, etc..)

<sup>350</sup> In such a 'system': gold for senators and provincial elite; silver for the army; and *aes* for general population and the lower classes. This crude understanding is not, of course, without some problems and obvious overlap; as more than just the upper classes would see precious metal coins, a rigid understanding of target groups is unrealistic. In short, "boundaries between different audiences must have been somewhat blurred" (Hekster 2003, 23.).



The question of whether or not Rome consciously employed denominational targeting is central to our understanding of Imperial propaganda and its broadcasting.<sup>351</sup> Evidence of the practice could indicate that type concipients felt that varied audiences required a varied approach to communicate a message effectively. The claim here is not that Rome was necessarily *successful* in communicating a tailored message to a defined audience,<sup>352</sup> but simply that internal numismatic evidence suggests that there *was a concerted effort* at certain times. Propaganda does not have to be successful for it to be attempted. Similarly, the choices of *how* to differentiate messages across denominations need not be sensible or prudent by today's standards.

Prior to this dissertation, denominational targeting has received exceedingly little study and analysis, though it has long been recognized as worthy of investigation. In 1956, Hugo Jones reflected that “[i]t would be a matter of some interest if numismatists could try to determine, on internal evidence, within the general probabilities of the situation, at what classes the propaganda on the coins was directed.”<sup>353</sup> Olivier Hekster has most recently commented on denominational targeting, stating that if analysis can show that different denominations conveyed different messages to different audiences, then “Jones’ challenge may have been met.”<sup>354</sup> Meeting it on Jones’ terms, however, has been an impediment for scholars. Numismatists and historians have long criticized the call by Jones as a futile task, one that he himself perceived would be insurmountable by explicitly calling for the employment of “internal evidence,”<sup>355</sup>

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<sup>351</sup> Hekster 2003, 21.

<sup>352</sup> Reception of Imperial numismatic propaganda is discussed in detail in Chapter Six.

<sup>353</sup> Jones 1956, 15.

<sup>354</sup> Hekster 2003, 21.

<sup>355</sup> Jones 1956, 15.

which has been the central obstacle.<sup>356</sup> This chapter will attempt to answer Jones' call, and more importantly it will do so *on his terms*. The implementation of my database provides,<sup>357</sup> for the first time, an effort not only utilizing internal evidence, but internal evidence on a grand scale. Consequently, this chapter will attempt to demonstrate that denominational targeting was employed by Rome in its efforts to communicate a particular ideological message to a specific audience.

To date, only William Metcalf's 1993 study has attempted to provide clarity on the subject of denominational targeting.<sup>358</sup> He examined the *Liberalitas* type of Hadrian and its variant across denominations in an attempt to uncover the means by which the emperor's expression of this virtue is communicated on his coinages.<sup>359</sup> Metcalf's study was, by design, just a litmus test (whose results *were* positive) for denominational targeting, and was not intended to be an exhaustive and authoritative study of the phenomenon. More recently, Hekster highlighted the problems and plausibility of denominational targeting, and rightly stressed that "[m]ore examples of coins of different values consistently broadcasting different messages within individual reigns are of course needed."<sup>360</sup>

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<sup>356</sup> Peter Lummel, for instance, aptly comments on the call by Jones: "However, after the question was formulated, efforts in this field remained completely inadequate. Above all, due to the fact that the Jones demanded 'internal evidence' [thereby] resulting in unsatisfactory efforts" (*Nach der Formulierung der Frage blieben die Anstrengungen auf diesem Gebiet allerdings unbefriedigend. Vor allem fällt auf, dass die von Jones geforderten "internal evidences" [sic] wenig berücksichtigt wurden*, 1991, 2).

<sup>357</sup> See 'Methodology,' below.

<sup>358</sup> The need for analysis is often stressed. See, Blamberg 1976; Levick 1982; Crawford 1983b; Wallace-Hadrill 1986; King 1999; Lummel 1991; Hekster 2003.

<sup>359</sup> Metcalf 1993.

<sup>360</sup> Hekster 2003, 29.

I hope that this chapter will begin to answer the call of Jones, Metcalf, and Hekster by bringing us much closer towards a structural analysis of the different typologies across different denominations through the Principate as a whole and within individual reigns.

### **STATE OF THE QUESTION**

Metcalf sought to “gain[] an insight into the working of imperial propaganda, and the specific address of numismatic types to the general public.”<sup>361</sup> His study demonstrates that the concept of the emperor’s liberality was advertised in different terms on different denominations. He shows that an emperor’s *Liberalitas* types minted on gold commonly depict *Liberalitas* as a personification, while *aes* coinages more commonly show a scene where the emperor is personally involved in the distribution of largesse. Metcalf suggests that such a choice by type concipients was derived from careful consideration of the imagery. The choice, as the argument goes, was driven by assumptions of how varied audiences might respond to varied presentations. Metcalf explains that “the educated (even if non-literate) mind responded more readily to visual abstractions of concepts,” whereas “[t]he urban mass, itself attuned to complex visual imagery, would be reminded directly of its ruler’s beneficence, both immediately and after the fact, by the scene of liberality in which many of them might have participated.”<sup>362</sup> In short, the educated upper classes could digest loaded abstract imagery, whereas the unsophisticated classes required the message to be clear and straightforward.

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<sup>361</sup> Metcalf 1993, 338.

<sup>362</sup> Metcalf 1993, 344–345.

Metcalf's conclusions are limited. He later observed informally that his study was "only two-thirds successful."<sup>363</sup> The hindrance is in his methodology: reliance on RIC entries rather than on quantifiable archaeological data. The pitfalls of such an approach are discussed below.

The claims of Metcalf's analysis *were* positive,<sup>364</sup> but as RIC entries are by nature equally weighted, any resulting conclusions are ultimately riddled with uncertainty. This problem is dealt with in detail below. Even so, the scope of Metcalf's study did not warrant the compilation of a dataset of the magnitude necessary to offer a more conclusive outcome.

What is needed to adequately assess the potential of denominational targeting of all forms, including whether or not the Liberalitas type was subject to (diversified) denominational targeting, is a comprehensive dataset of actual coins on the scale and scope that I have compiled.

## **METHODOLOGY**

My database provides an invaluable resource for such an examination. By including more than 300,000 Imperial coins from Augustus to Alexander Severus, it brings us far closer than before to determining relative frequencies and quantification of type production. By contrast, the analysis of denominational targeting by Metcalf, as well as the overview of the phenomenon by Hekster, relies solely on the catalogue of types in RIC. Consequently, these treatments can do little to offer functional and substantive conclusions and can only function, as noted above, as litmus tests.

It is difficult to assess relative frequency based on known variant quantities rather than on archaeological data. For instance, a single RIC entry might represent a particular type variant for

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<sup>363</sup> Metcalf 2011, a statement made during the question session following a presentation at the summer seminar at ANS, *Man into God: The Dead Emperor Lives*.

<sup>364</sup> Metcalf was able to show from RIC entry data that more known type variations exist for the distribution scene on *aes* than on gold; for gold, most known type variations portray a personification of Liberalitas.

which there are two, ten, or a thousand known specimens. This uncertainty does not even factor in the ongoing, and contentious, debate which seeks to understand quantification of production: how many coins *could* a single die produce?<sup>365</sup> Needless to say, the potential for relying upon a false impression is uncomfortably high when such a methodology is adopted. However, in many numismatic investigations the first step has been to follow RIC entries; prior to this dissertation, no comprehensive dataset existed to provide an alternative to using RIC as such or to draft one's own dataset.

Deriving data purely from RIC greatly skews and obfuscates relative frequencies, as each entry is assessed equally. Figure (fig. 1) illustrates the problem. Imagine a comparison of the number of aurei to denarii of the reverses of Macrinus with the reverse legend PONTIF MAX TR P II COS P P.

28		D	(2) b.	PONTIF. MAX. TR. P. II. COS. P. P. Jupiter, nude, stg. l., holding thunderbolt and sceptre.	Pl. 1, 5 Sydenham Coll.
29	Au		(2) a, b, c.	„ Annona seated l., holding corn-ears and cornucopiae; at her feet, modius.	Caruso Cat. 460. Cugnot Cat.(1912), 227. Vogel Cat. (1929), 909.

**Figure 1.** Sample from RIC IVa, Macrinus.

Reliance on RIC entries in such a study would result in entry 28 and entry 29 each providing one tick mark in the ‘denarii’ column and one tick mark in the ‘aurei’ column.

<sup>365</sup> Other burdensome questions attach themselves to any debate on this issue: was that die used to exhaustion, did it break early, and was it only intended to mint a small quantity?

However, the two entries are not equal, as entry 29, the aurei, is understood to be rare to the second degree ( $R^2$ ) while entry 28 is a common (C) coin.

As noted in the Introduction, each of the two revised editions of RIC has seen significant adjustment of commonality and rarity of a given type. In addition, from cursory evaluations from my database, I have found more than 100 types currently unknown to any version of RIC.<sup>366</sup> I have identified dozens of instances where coins regarded as ‘ $R^5$ ’ (the most rare) are found more commonly than those regarded as ‘S’ (scarce; in between those considered common and those subject to variations on the rarity scale [ $R^1$ – $R^5$ ]), and where coins seen as ‘S’ are completely unknown to my database of more than 300,000 coins, indicating that they might warrant placement on the ‘R-scale’ within RIC.<sup>367</sup> Such a method will not be utilized here, as my database renders reliance on RIC entries an obsolete and outmoded approach.

### **LIBERALITAS REVISITED**

To date, numismatic scholarship on denominational targeting begins and ends with the Liberalitas type (fig. 2), thereby making analysis of this reverse type an appropriate point of departure for this chapter. What emerges from Metcalf’s study is that mint officials produced two different versions of the same message—one primarily on precious metal for the upper classes, and another primarily on *aes* for the lower classes (fig. 2). Analysis of the database confirms Metcalf’s conclusions.

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<sup>366</sup> Most of these new types are slight variations of reverse legend or, more commonly, the appearance of a particular type on a previously unattested metal (e.g., type ‘x’ of an emperor previously only known to denarii, now found on an aureus). From this body of ‘new types’, too, are completely new and previously-unknown types that have been discovered during the compilation of my database, a significant portion of which are hybrids (e.g., an obverse and reverse from two different emperors or dynasties, some of considerable chronological expanse).

<sup>367</sup> There are numerous problems in ever being able to assess relative rarity of types. For instance, one must remember that, aside from extreme instances, assumptions that ancient coins survive to the present day in a state of uniform conservation and representation contribute to an already imperfect understanding.



(A)



(B)

**Figure 2.** Two variants of the Liberalitas types: platform scene and personification.  
 (A) Hadrian. Rome mint. Sestertius. Obv: HADRIANVS AVGVSTVS / Rev: LIBERALITAS AVG III. Hadrian seated on platform; Liberalitas pouring coins from cornucopiae into outstretched toga of man below. RIC 648.  
 (B) Hadrian. Rome mint. Aureus. Obv: HADRIANVS AVG COS III P P / Rev: LIBERALITAS AVG VII. Liberalitas holding abacus and cornucopiae. RIC 254.



While the *aes* coinage shows only a nominal preference for the ‘platform scene’ throughout the Principate, the precious metal coinage clearly demonstrates almost complete uniformity in bearing the ‘personification’ variant.

	<b>Personification</b>	<b>Platform Scene</b>
<b>Aes</b>	49.6% (260)	<b>50.4% (264)</b>
<b>AR/AV</b>	<b>96% (3,490)</b>	4% (147)

**Figure 3.** Percentages of Liberalitas motif minted on Imperial coinages in its two iconographic forms, for base metal coinage (Aes) and precious metal coinage (AR/AV). Values derived from 4,161 Liberalitas specimens from database. Coins represented are for the entire Principate (31 BC–AD 235). Shaded boxes denote maximum values for the base metal and precious metal coinages.

Analysis of the type across the entire Principate reveals a striking typological trend (fig. 3). Explanations for the overwhelming dominance of the ‘personification’ variant of the Liberalitas type on precious metal coinage echo Metcalf’s conclusions.

Possibly the *size* of the coins might be the decisive factor in determining that the less-intricate ‘platform scene’ seldom appears on precious metal coinage. It would have been more difficult to engrave the ‘platform scene’ with as much detail for an aureus (~20 mm diameter) as for the much larger bronze sestertius (~35 mm diameter) die (fig. 4).



**Figure 4.** Comparative size of Imperial aureus (left) and Imperial sestertius (right). Coins are in scale to one another, but image size is increased here to provide greater detail. (L.) Septimius Severus. Rome Mint. Aureus. Obv: IMPP INVICTI PII AVGG. RIC 311. (R.) Nero. Rome Mint. Sestertius. Obv: NERO CLAVD CAESAR AVG GER P M TR P IMP P P. RIC I<sup>2</sup> 438.

This said, many other factors call for explanation regarding the (smaller) precious metal Imperial coinages. Possibly the mint would more often than not choose simpler designs and more abbreviated legends for aurei than sestertii.<sup>368</sup> Such a notion, however, falls flat regarding both iconography and legend. For the latter, even a cursory examination of RIC demonstrates that most legends on precious metal coinages contain only trivial additional truncation of statements and make the most of available space. Moreover, numerous studies have shown that when aurei display especially shortened legends compared to their *aes* counterparts, the rationale

<sup>368</sup> Aurei and sestertii are the two represented sizes since they are the smallest and largest coins for the Principate, and conveniently have a vast difference in value. Denarii are typically the same size as Aurei; dupondii and *asses*, too, are not much larger than an Imperial aureus (~5 mm dia. difference).

appears to be intentionally ambiguous.<sup>369</sup> So far as iconography is concerned, we do not find that the Roman mint opts for simpler designs for aurei compared to larger *aes* coinage. The Liberalitas type is unique in this way, as many other intricate reverses are found for both base and precious metal coinages.

One brief example will suffice: the Rex Parthia<sup>370</sup> types of Trajan (fig. 5).



**Figure 5.** Comparison of Trajan’s Rex Parthia types on gold and *aes*.

(A) Trajan. Rome Mint. Aureus. Obv: IMP CAES NER TRAIANO OPTIMO AVG GER DAC / Rev: REX PARTHVS. Trajan seated on platform; officer at side; four soldiers with three standards stand behind a pleading Parthamasiris. RIC 310 var.

(B) Trajan. Rome Mint. Sestertius. Obv: IMP CAES NER TRAIANO OPTIMO AVG GER DAC PARTHICO P M TR P COS VI P P / Rev: REX PARTHIS DATVS SC. Trajan seated on platform; officer at side; Trajan crowns Parthaspates before a supplicating Parthia. RIC 667.

These types of Trajan are believed to depict the events related to the emperor receiving King Parthamasiris, son of Artabanes, and recognizing Parthaspates as king of Parthia. The aureus represents the interview granted at Elegea in AD 114, and corresponds with the detailed

<sup>369</sup> Olivier Hekster argues that smaller denomination issues of Commodus reading HERCVLI COMMODIANO, while aurei read HERC COM, was a deliberate choice. He asserts that this was done to “unequivocally impose[] the Hercules *Commodianus* on those who come to see the gold coin, a more ambiguous abbreviate was used. For the legend COM might bring to mind the word *comes* as well as (and in fact perhaps even better than) *Commodianus*” (2003, 32; see too n. 49). Clifford Ando argues similarly in a discussion of Vitellius’ employment of V AVG on his coins: Vitellius’ message “at once acknowledged and legitimated the transfer of charismatic power from Augustus and his family to the office that he had created. In this process the use of *Augustus* as a title, and the ambiguity inherent in Latin abbreviations can only have smoothed the way” (2000, 294; n. 73). Additionally, see Fishwick 2005, 464; Noreña 2011, 162; Manders 2012, 151.

<sup>370</sup> The shorthand “Rex Parthia types” is used to distinguish the coins that depict a scene related to a Parthian king and contains a legend that explicitly mentions a Parthian king. Their actual legends are REX PARTHVS and REX PARTHIS DATVS.

depiction of the event by Cassius Dio.<sup>371</sup> The sestertius depicts Trajan placing a diadem on the head of King Parthamaspatēs, Rome's new client, before a supplicating Parthia.<sup>372</sup>

The coins commemorate the same episode, albeit at a different moment, yet there is no indication that the Roman mint perceived a need to employ a 'simpler' iconography for the smaller aureus. In fact, evidence of 'simplification' appears more on the sestertius than the aureus—perhaps so as not to bombard the “less-educated” with too much imagery; instead they are presented with a very direct display. The gold, arguably, requires more attention to grasp the implications of the scene. Additionally, the ambiguity of REX PARTHVS (*Parthian King*) on the aureus suggests that type concipients felt users of aurei could properly interpret the iconography and legend. The brass sestertius, conversely, shows a very direct interaction between Trajan and Parthia (Trajan literally crowns a king for Parthia). Moreover, if the imagery on the sestertius is not clear enough, the legend, REX PARTHVS DATVS, explicitly tells its user what is happening—that Trajan *gave a king to the Parthians*.

While the smaller size of the Imperial aureus likely posed certain challenges for die-cutters, numismatic evidence suggests that the *officinae* responsible for design and production of aurei (and their similarly-sized denarii) were more than able to produce dies of equal complexity and detail. Furthermore, mint workers at precious metal *officinae* could have been at a higher skill-level and caliber than those at base metal *officinae*.

If the size of the coin had any relation to the level of detail and scope of scene portrayed, we might suspect that the largest Imperial coin, the sestertius (~35mm), would reflect this fact. It does not. In fact, when the 8,935 Imperial coins in the database featuring monumental

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<sup>371</sup> Cass. Dio, 68.19–20.

<sup>372</sup> Cass. Dio, 68.30; see too, 68.18.

architecture in fine detail are analyzed, it emerges that the sestertius is *not favored* by die-cutters. Sestertii represent a meagre 6.3% of such ‘monumental’ types. The smallest of the *aes* coinages, the *as* (~25mm), is favored by contrast, representing 91.9% of the ‘monumental’ types.

Size of an Imperial coin is irrelevant to the iconography portrayed. It would seem a more reasonable claim that, if any Imperial denomination necessitated reduced attention to detail, it would not be the gold due to its smaller size, but the far more plentiful *aes* coinages due to sheer volume of production and market demand. While not so apparent regarding iconography, rushed production is readily noticed on lower denominations by the overwhelming frequency of imperfect strikes; aurei are more-consistently centered. In the end, physical and dimensional constraints of Imperial dies fail to explain why 96% of precious metal coinage with the Liberalitas motif features the ‘personification’ variant.

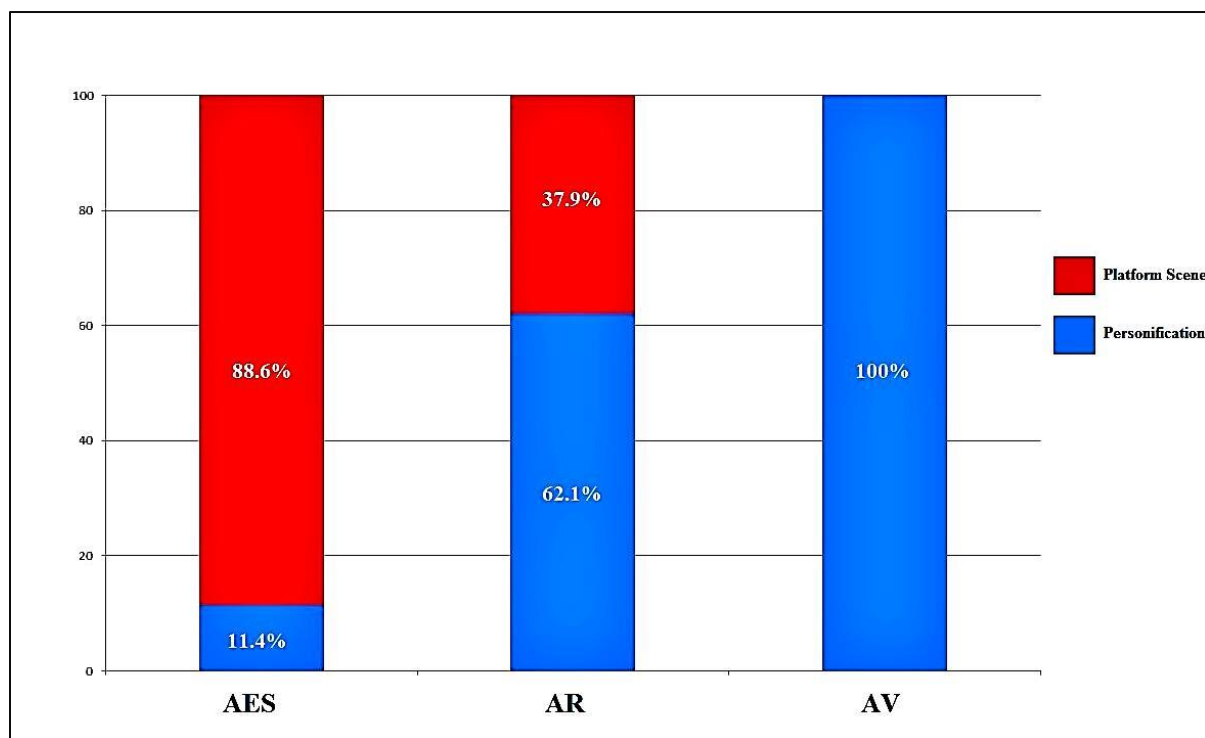
Mint officials were consistent throughout the Principate in their communication of the emperor’s liberality on precious metal. Questions remain, however, for the *aes* coins bearing the Liberalitas type on their reverse, as the divide between ‘personification’ and ‘platform scene’ variants is effectively equal for all bronze denominations. Individual reigns, however, demonstrate preference for type variants on bronze coins. An analysis of Hadrian’s Liberalitas coinage from within the database, for example, is particularly significant (fig. 6a).

Liberalitas issues minted under Hadrian demonstrate a clear case of diversified denominational targeting. The ‘platform scene’ variant is predominantly on *aes* coinages at 88.6%, drops to 37.9% for denarii, and is completely unknown on gold. The inverse relationship occurs for the ‘personification’ variant, as 100% of Liberalitas types on gold feature the abstract imagery; the majority of denarii employ this variant at 62.1%; yet only a meager 11.4% of

Liberalitas types on *aes* coinages are minted with the ‘personification’ variant, as the chart below visualizes (fig. 6b).

	Personification	Platform Scene
<b>Aes</b>	11.4% (13)	<b>88.6% (101)</b>
<b>AR</b>	<b>62.1% (131)</b>	37.9% (80)
<b>AV</b>	<b>100% (16)</b>	0

**Figure 6a.** Percentages of Hadrian’s Liberalitas motif minted on Imperial coinages in its two iconographic forms, for base metal coinage (Aes), silver coinage (AR), and gold coinage (AV). Values derived from 341 Liberalitas specimens of Hadrian from database. Shaded boxes denote maximum values.



**Figure 6b.** Percentages of Hadrian’s Liberalitas motif minted on Imperial coinages in its two iconographic forms, for base metal coinage (AES), silver coinage (AR), and gold coinage (AV). Values derived from 341 Liberalitas specimens of Hadrian from database.

There was an unmistakable degree of thoughtful consideration behind the Roman mint’s presentation of the Liberalitas type to its assumed audiences under Hadrian. His well-known reputation for generosity only further underscores the fact that type concipients paid particular attention to ensuring that his *liberalitas* be communicated as effectively as possible.



## CASE STUDY OF HADRIAN'S GENEROSITY/BENEFICENCE TYPES

Three other types that communicate Hadrian's generosity and beneficence utilize vivid 'platform scene' iconography for *aes* coinages. The three commemorate Hadrian's measures for the relief of the distressed and the cancelation of debts due to the *fiscus* totaling 900 million sesterces.<sup>373</sup> These types (fig. 7) are only known on *aes* coinage and, like the vast majority of Liberalitas types on *aes* (88.6%), their iconography demonstrates a vivid depiction of Hadrian directly participating in the act of generosity.



**Figure 7.**

(A) Hadrian. Rome mint. Sestertius. Obv: IMP CAESAR TRAIANVS HADRIANVS AVG P M TR P COS III / Rev: LOCVPLETATORI ORBIS TERRARVM SC. Hadrian seated on platform; Liberalitas pouring coins from cornucopiae into outstretched togas of citizens below. RIC 585.

(B) Hadrian. Rome mint. Sestertius. Obv: IMP CAESAR TRAIANVS HADRIANVS AVG P M TR P COS III / Rev: RESTITVTORI ORBIS TERRARVM SC. Hadrian standing, roll in l. hand, extending r. hand to raise up kneeling towered woman holding globe. RIC 594b.

<sup>373</sup> RIC II, 322.



(C.1) Hadrian. Rome mint. Sestertius. Obv: IMP CAESAR TRAIANVS HADRIANVS AVG P M TR P COS III / Rev: RELIQA VETERA HS NOVIES MILL ABOLITA SC. Hadrian holding fasces in l. hand, torching a pile of debt papers before a cheering crowd. RIC 592.  
 (C.2) Hadrian. Rome mint. Sestertius. Obv: IMP CAESAR TRAIANVS HADRIANVS AVG P M TR P COS III / Rev: RELIQA VETERA HS NOVIES MILL ABOLITA SC. Hadrian holding fasces in l. hand, torching a pile of debt papers. RIC 590.

The mintage of the three types provides examples of *exclusive* denominational targeting, as the types are confined to *aes* coinages. There is no controversy among numismatists that the three types are all directly interrelated, each advertising and memorializing the emperor's generosity.<sup>374</sup> The crucial act upon which they are believed to center took place in 118, when Hadrian cancelled all unpaid debts owed by individual citizens to the *aerarium Saturni* as well as the *fiscus*<sup>375</sup> during the past fifteen years.<sup>376</sup> The three types were minted in 119–121, when the immediate positive consequences would have been especially fresh in the minds of citizens.

The Reliqua type memorializes the cancelation, portraying the actual burning of debt records (fig. 7c.1, 7c.2) that took place in Trajan's Forum.<sup>377</sup> The Locupletator (fig. 7a) and Restitutor Orbis (fig. 7b) types emphasize how, in so doing, Hadrian is an *enricher/restorer of the whole world*.

By issuing these types, the Roman mint sought to propagate Hadrian's generosity and beneficence towards the plebs *urbana* and lower classes. They were only minted on Imperial *aes* issues, denominations that would have featured more prominently for such groups. The Liberalitas type, as well, which figures for 88.6% of the 'platform scene' variant, would surely have figured into this message. This connection is made all the clearer with comparison of the

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<sup>374</sup> RIC II, 322.

<sup>375</sup> Cass. Dio 69.8.1.

<sup>376</sup> ILS 309 = CIL VI 967.

<sup>377</sup> Cass. Dio 69.8.1, 71.32.2; SHA *Had.* 7.6–8; cf. SHA *Marc. Aurel.* 23.3.

iconography for the Locupletator types with the ‘platform scene’ Liberalitas types; their respective iconographies are effectively indistinguishable (fig. 8).



**Figure 8.** Enlargement and comparison of reverses for Hadrian’s Locupletator (L) and Liberalitas (R) types.  
 (L) Hadrian. Rome mint. Sestertius. Rev: LOCVPLETATORI ORBIS TERRARVM SC. Hadrian seated on platform; Liberalitas pouring coins from cornucopiae into outstretched togas of men below. RIC 585.  
 (R) Hadrian. Rome Mint. Sestertius. Rev: LIBERALITAS AVG IIII. Hadrian seated on platform; Liberalitas pouring coins from cornucopiae into outstretched toga of man below. RIC 648.

Undoubtedly, Hekster is right in stressing that “[m]ore examples of coins of different values consistently broadcasting different messages within individual reigns are of course needed.”<sup>378</sup> Thorough analysis of denominational biases for each individual reign is, however, beyond the scope of this Chapter. The discussion now, however, will turn to a broader question: can the evidence demonstrate that certain reverse types, whose iconography and legend are linked to certain groups,<sup>379</sup> appear more prominently on denominations believed to figure more significantly within that group?

<sup>378</sup> Hekster 2003, 29.

<sup>379</sup> The senate; the military; the *plebs urbana*; Italian and provincial populations (Lummel 1991, 8).

## **DOMINATING ‘TYPE TRENDS’ FOR THE PRINCIPATE—THE DENARIUS**

No doubt aurei circulated more commonly among the upper classes and *aes* coinages among the lower classes. Metcalf, for instance, assumes as much in his discussion of Liberalitas type variants. On this point, Hekster concludes that such a differentiation in types of audience *is* correct, but reminds us that lines between target audiences would have been blurred to some extent; yet one can “at least distinguish between primary and secondary audiences.”<sup>380</sup>

But what of the silver coinage, a denomination between aureus and *as*? Who can be supposed as *its* ‘primary’ audience to which the state may communicate some message of current interest? The denarius, it appears, would have been one of the most socially mobile denominations in the Roman economy with the blurriest of boundaries between target groups. As we will see, however, the Imperial mint appears to have identified the army as the ‘primary’ audience of the denarius. To be sure, the army was not really a collectivity that maintained a circulatory monopoly on the denarius; but the evidence indicates that the Imperial mint viewed it as such.

The largest expense for the Roman state was the army, constituting somewhere between 50% and 75% of the state budget;<sup>381</sup> troops were paid<sup>382</sup> three times a year.<sup>383</sup> The production

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<sup>380</sup> Hekster 2003, 23.

<sup>381</sup> For the lower end, at around 50%, see Hopkins 2002, 199–200; for upper end, at around 75%, see Duncan-Jones 1994, 45. These estimates do not, however, include discharge bonuses (*praemia*) [3,000–5,000 denarii] or cash bonuses (*donativa*) [varied, but typically at least 1,000 denarii] in their assessments, which if included would further inflate the army’s burden on the state budget.

<sup>382</sup> From the reign of Augustus, troops received an annual salary of 225 denarii; Domitian increased it to 300 denarii in 84 where it remained for more than 100 years until Septimius Severus increased it to 500 denarii, followed by Caracalla who raised it to 650 denarii a year.

<sup>383</sup> Aside from a brief implementation of four annual pay-days under Domitian, the sources are quite clear that troops were paid three times a year: January 1, May 1, and September 1. See Fink 1971, esp. 253.

and transport of the necessary quantity of cash to the armies far from Rome<sup>384</sup> surely placed a substantial burden on the state, not to mention on the Imperial mint at Rome. Such considerations combined with other factors, such as the high value:weight ratio of denarii, has led many scholars<sup>385</sup> to surmise that troops were paid in denarii.<sup>386</sup> A more plausible scenario, however, has been put forward in which such aspects were not quite as rigid: troops would have been paid in *both* denarii and *aes* coinages.<sup>387</sup> As the argument goes, gold, though extremely advantageous so far as value:weight, would have been far too burdensome on smaller frontier economies; as to *aes* coinages, the weight and sheer volume required would make their transport expensive, troublesome, and highly inefficient.<sup>388</sup> In all likelihood, however, soldiers were paid in a varying combination of denarii and *aes* drawn from both new and recycled coinages, all dependent on immediate availability.

Whichever denomination was actually issued to soldiers as payment and whichever denomination circulated more commonly among the legions, the following three analyses will make clear that, so far as the Imperial mint is concerned, the army was seen as the primary audience of the denarius.

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<sup>384</sup> In all likelihood, however, a small portion of military pay would have been drawn from old coin in the local circulation pool, potentially a mix of denominations, and not derived completely from new coins minted at *officinae* at Rome.

<sup>385</sup> Doppler 1989; Duncan-Jones 1994; Wolters 2001.

<sup>386</sup> The matter is not fully resolved, however, as archaeological analysis of a series of temporary forts (Oberaden; Haltern; Kalkriese; Geinsheim; Barenaue-Lutterkrug; Richborough; Saalburg; Zugmantel; Groß-Gerau; Öhringen) revealed that they, particularly during the Julio-Claudian period, saw circulation of the most recent *aes* coinages (Wigg 1997). For similar studies with corroborating results, see Peter 1996, 2001.

<sup>387</sup> Wigg-Wolf 2014; van Heesch 2014.

<sup>388</sup> Wolters 2001, 585–587.

### MILITARY-THEMED TYPES

There are 4,886 coins within the database whose reverses offer some form of direct commemoration of the army: Their legend and iconography explicitly refer to it (fig. 9).



**Figure 9.** Examples of Imperial coinages with military-themed reverse types.

- (A) Elagabalus. Rome mint. Denarius. Obv: IMP ANTONINVS PIVS AVG / Rev: FIDES MILITVM. Legionary eagle atop standard; flanked by two other standards; shield rests at base of each of three standards. RIC 78.
- (B) Macrinus. Rome mint. Denarius. Obv: IMP C M OPEL SEV MACRINVS AVG / Rev: FIDES MILITVM. Fides holding military standard in each hand. RIC 66.
- (C) Pescennius Niger. Rome mint. Denarius. Obv: IMP CAES C PESC NIGER IVST AVG / Rev: FIDEI EXERCITVI. Three standards topped by square flags; central standards bears a medallion inscribed: VIC AVG in two lines. RIC 19.
- (D) Septimius Severus. Rome mint. Denarius. Obv: IMP CAE L SEP SEV PERT AVG / Rev: LEG XIII GEM M V TR P COS. Legionary eagle between two standards. RIC 14.
- (E) Commodus. Rome mint. Denarius. Obv: M COMM ANT P FEL AVG BRIT P P / Rev: P M TR P XI IMP VII COS V P P FID EXERC. Commodus on platform, addressing soldiers w/standards. RIC 110a.
- (F) Pescennius Niger. Rome mint. Denarius. Obv: IMP CAES C PESC NIGER IVST AVG COS II (?) / Rev: INVIVTO IMP TROPAEA. Erected military trophy. RIC 37 var.
- (G) Anonymous Civil War 68–69. Rome mint. Denarius. Obv: MARS VLTOR / Rev: P–R, in exergue: SIGNA. Legionary eagle between two standards. RIC 51.
- (H) Caracalla. Rome mint. Denarius. Obv: ANTONINVS PIVS AVG BRIT / Rev: PROPECTIO AVG. Caracalla w/spear; two standards behind. RIC 225.

Of the 4,886 military-themed coinages known to the database, 89% are found on denarii, 10.3% on *aes*, and only 0.7% on aurei. To interpret it as sheer coincidence that consistently throughout the Principate the denomination most associated with the Roman military exhibits a monopoly on militaristic reverse types seems untenable. My findings reinforce a 2006 study of the fort complex at Nijmegen by Fleur Kemmers. She revealed that military-themed coinage was near-exclusive to the fort complex at Nijmegen, while the immediate neighboring towns reveal practically no military-themed coins in archaeological excavations.<sup>389</sup> Kemmers concludes that coinage displaying a distinct military reverse type (which my study reveals are found on denarii 89% of the time) was consciously and purposely disseminated to troops by the Imperial mint.

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<sup>389</sup> Kemmers 2006.



## **PRINCEPS IUVENTUTIS TYPE**

The honorary appellation *Princeps Iuventutis* lost any of its original Republican sense<sup>390</sup> during the Imperial period, as it was the title given to the Imperial heir.<sup>391</sup> Accordingly, one of the most emphatic means by which an emperor could present a new Caesar on coinage was to authorize the Imperial mint to issue coinage bearing the heir apparent's likeness while unambiguously declaring him PRINCEPS IUVENTVTIS. Of the 4,898 Princeps Iuventutis type coinages in the database, 90.3% are found on denarii, and there is a near-even divide between *aes* and aurei, at 5.1% and 4.6% respectively.

There is no debate that the principle of dynasty and hereditary succession had immense support from the Roman army.<sup>392</sup> Its concern is made all the clearer from examination of the reverse motifs employed on Princeps Iuventutis types, which are often laden with militaristic imagery (fig. 10). Even so, I did *not* include it in my preceding analysis of 'military-themed' types above, because although the imagery connotes a martial sentiment, the message conveyed by the reverse is abundantly clear: individual 'x' is identified as heir. Any commemoration of the army on the Princeps Iuventutis type is subordinate to this message. Likewise, these reverses examined for the military-themed analysis contain slogans directly referring to the army.<sup>393</sup>

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<sup>390</sup> Cic. *Vat.* 24; 2 *Verr.* 1.139; *Sulla* 34; *Vatin.* 24.

<sup>391</sup> Ovid, *Ars am.* 1.194; Aug. *RG* 14.2; Cass. Dio, 54.9.9.

<sup>392</sup> Cass. Dio 52.28–29; *CAH*<sup>2</sup> XII, 9, 29, 361; Mazza 1996.

<sup>393</sup> In the end, however, inclusion/seclusion of the two types from one another was a non-issue. The two types are found 89% and 90.3% of the time on denarii, thereby presenting essentially a nil effect on any calculations.





**Figure 10.** Examples of the Princeps Iuventutis type.

- (A) Commodus. Rome mint. Denarius. Obv: COMMODO CAES AVG FIL GERM / Rev: PRINC IVVENT. Commodus w/baton and spear; trophy behind. RIC 601.
- (B) Caracalla. Laodicaea Mint. Denarius. Obv: M AVR ANTON CAES PONTIF / Rev: PRINCIPI IVVENTVTIS. Caracalla w/ baton and scepter; trophy behind. RIC 329.
- (C) Domitian. Rome mint. Denarius. Obv: CAESAR AVG F DOMITIANVS COS VI / Rev: PRINCEPS IVVENTVTIS. Clasped hands over legionary eagle on prow. RIC 246.
- (D) Domitian. Rome mint. Denarius. Obv: CAESAR DIVI F DOMITIANVS COS VII / Rev: PRINCEPS IVVENTVTIS. Crested Corinthian helmet on draped pulvinar. RIC 271.
- (E) Diadumenianus. Rome mint. Sestertius. Obv: M OPEL ANTONINVS DIADVMEIANVS CAES / Rev: PRINC IVVENTVTIS. Diadumenianus in military dress, holding standard and scepter; standards behind. RIC 211.
- (F) Claudius. Rome mint. Denarius. Obv: TI CLAVD CAESAR AVG GERM P M TRIB POT P P / Rev: NERO CLAVD CAES DRVSVS GERM PRINC IVVENT. Bust of Nero. RIC 83.

## MARS TYPES

There are 2,339 coins from single find contexts within the database bearing a Mars reverse type, that is, with a legend which explicitly refers to Mars or whose iconography unmistakably displays Mars (fig. 11). Of these 2,339 Mars types, 63% are found on denarii, 36% on *aes*, and only 1% on aurei.



**Figure 11.** Examples of the Mars type.

(A) Caracalla. Rome mint. Denarius. Obv: ANTONINVS PIVS AVG BRIT / Rev: MARTI PROPVGNATORI. Mars advancing; holding spear and trophy. RIC 223.

(B) Alexander Severus. Rome mint. Denarius. Obv: IMP C M AVR SEV ALEXAND AVG / Rev: MARTI PACIFERO. Mars standing with spear and olive branch. RIC 160d.

(C) Titus. Rome mint. Sestertius. Obv: IMP T CAES DIVI VESP F AVG P M TR P P P COS VIII / Rev: SC. Mars, nude except for flowing cloak and helmet; spear in r. hand; trophy resting across l. shoulder. RIC 502.

(D) Antoninus Pius. Rome mint. Aureus. Obv: ANTONINVS AVG PIVS P P / Rev: TRIB POT COS III. Mars, nude except for flowing cloak and helmet, with spear and shield; descending through air to Rhea Silvia who rests on ground, bare to waist, propping head on l. hand set on rock. RIC 99.



While denarii are the preferred denomination for nearly 2/3 of Mars types, a comparison of relative frequencies with the types analyzed so far (89% for military-themed and 90.3% for Princeps Iuventutis) warrants a closer examination of the Mars types. Accordingly, in order to provide comparanda for the Mars types I analyzed all coins whose reverse types feature deities.<sup>394</sup> The results demonstrate that, of all deities, Mars is the only one whose majority of issues is on denarii (fig. 13).

	<b>AES</b>	<b>AR</b>	<b>AV</b>
<b>Jupiter</b>	<b>53%</b>	40%	7%
<b>Roma</b>	<b>74%</b>	23%	3%
<b>Minerva</b>	<b>74%</b>	25%	1%
<b>Venus</b>	<b>55%</b>	44%	1%
<b>Neptune</b>	<b>97%</b>	2%	1%
<b>Vesta</b>	<b>73%</b>	26%	1%
<b>Juno</b>	<b>64%</b>	35%	1%
<b>Mars</b>	36%	<b>63%</b>	1%
<b>Ceres</b>	<b>82%</b>	15%	3%
<b>Nemesis</b>	<b>45%</b>	22%	32%
<b>Apollo</b>	<b>55%</b>	43%	2%
<b>Diana</b>	<b>72%</b>	27%	1%
<b>Mercury</b>	<b>76%</b>	23%	1%
<b>Asclepius</b>	<b>63%</b>	38%	1%

**Figure 12.** Depiction of deities on Imperial reverses for the entire Principate (31BC–AD 235) across denominations. Values shown represent all single find coins from the database whose reverse features a given deity. Shaded boxes denote maximum values for the represented deity.

The only instance of deviation from what appears to be a standard relationship between *aes* coinages and deity reverse types is for Mars. The fact that the denarius, a coinage associated with the military, is the denomination for which this deviation occurs indicates denominational targeting.

<sup>394</sup> Personifications (e.g., Aequitas; Pax; Nobilitas; Felicitas; Pudicitia; Hilaritas) were not included, as they are far more representative of the flaunted virtues of the issuing emperor or Imperial family. While traditional deities may, of course, also contribute similarly, their symbolism and cultural roots run far deeper.

### NEPTUNE AND NEMESIS TYPES

Two additional examples of denominational targeting can be ascertained from minting relationships revealed during the analysis of other deity reverse types. First, my analysis showed that Neptune types were almost entirely minted on base metal coinage. As can be seen in the preceding table (fig. 12), the minting practices of these types, too, might reveal denominational targeting. 97% of the Neptune types are found on *aes* coinages, which may be no surprise given the connections between Neptune and the plebs *urbana*.

Second, my analysis showed that there was a substantial amount of Nemesis types issued on aurei. Though gold does not comprise a majority among denominations, Nemesis is the only deity that demonstrates anything more than a marginal amount of its types minted on gold. The 32% figure is perhaps all the more striking, given that aurei comprise the smallest (~ 7,000 or 2.3%) represented denomination for the entire database of more than 300,000 coins.<sup>395</sup> For gold, therefore, to figure so prominently for Nemesis types compared to the far more common *aes* and silver coinages is rather remarkable.

Historical approaches to the role of Nemesis within Roman society have lately been subject to reassessment. Recent studies have disproven earlier assumptions that she was a goddess largely venerated by slaves, gladiators, freedman, and other individuals of low status.<sup>396</sup> Instead, recent epigraphic evidence has revealed that her largest group of devotees came from the upper classes,<sup>397</sup> and that a direct connection with the emperor had developed.<sup>398</sup> The prevalence

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<sup>395</sup> When compared to their respective specimen bodies, Nemesis is the reverse type for 0.57% of all aurei, whereas Nemesis is the reverse type for 0.06% of all *aes* coinages. Nemesis, therefore, has a 9.5x more likely probability to be found on an aureus than a base metal coin. Additionally, the values comprise a staggering 739.6% change.

<sup>396</sup> Hornum 1993; Kyle 2001. For earlier treatments on Nemesis, see Levi 1952; Vollenweider 1964; Fears 1981.

<sup>397</sup> Recent evidence has demonstrated that the largest groups of those making dedications come from the elite and upper classes of Rome; often stressed are those of the civil government (e.g., *duoviri*), priests of the Imperial cult, and high-ranking military figures (Kyle 2001, 100; Hornum 1993, 19).

of her shrines within theaters and stadia is no longer seen as an indication of plebeian followers, but instead the reverse. The arena, so the argument goes, was symbolically where “a confirmation of the established state order was displayed in the slaughter of military enemies, criminals, [and] insolent slaves.”<sup>399</sup> “As a goddess of justice and righteous indignation who suppressed affronts to the Roman order, Nemesis was found at arenas where those who defied or threatened the social order or the majesty of Rome were degraded and punished.”<sup>400</sup> Accordingly, an explanation for why the Imperial mint favored minting Nemesis types on gold can be found in the strong associations between the goddess and the Roman elite and emperors.

#### **DOMINATING ‘TYPE TRENDS’ FOR THE PRINCIPATE—AES COINAGE**

My final analysis of denominational targeting related to *aes* coinages addresses a specific type noted by Olivier Hekster in 2003—the Annona/Ceres types. He examines the potential of denominational targeting by type and offers a proposal that he deems “is doomed to fail.”<sup>401</sup>

“Legend types like ANNONA or CERES, which one would expect to be more relevant for people in need of food, appear almost exclusively in lower denomination on coinage from the reigns of Claudius, Nero, Galba, Vitellius, Domitian, and Nerva, but they are prominently displayed on all types of coins (including aurei) in the reigns of Vespasian, Titus, Trajan, and Hadrian.”<sup>402</sup>

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<sup>398</sup> Hornum 1993, 15; 24–41, 62–70, 78–90.

<sup>399</sup> Kyle 2001, 100.

<sup>400</sup> Hornum 1993, 90.

<sup>401</sup> Hekster 2003, 23.

<sup>402</sup> Hekster 2003, 23.

Hekster's interpretation is a fair one, given that he evaluates the types only through a perusal of RIC, without any form of statistical analysis—let alone a database. He cannot be faulted for reaching the conclusion he did, as prior to my database there was no way to assess the vast numismatic body of evidence adequately.

Of the 9,894 Annona/Ceres types in my database, 69% are found on *aes* coinages, 30% on silver, and 1% on gold. As can be clearly observed, the overwhelming majority of Annona/Ceres types appear on low denomination Imperial coins, which are believed to circulate most commonly among the lower classes. This said, it remains a puzzle that the mint should emphasize the Annona/Ceres type on gold coinage during certain reigns (Vespasian, Titus, Trajan, and Hadrian).<sup>403</sup>

### **PROGRAMMATIC AUREI?**

In an analysis of the 6,947 Imperial gold coinages in my database I was able to identify the most frequent reverse typology utilized for each reign's aurei (fig. 13).

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<sup>403</sup> Harold Mattingly is not as optimistic, as he remarks of the type's first appearance on gold for Vespasian: "[t]he repeated references to Ceres and Annona at the end of his reign must have a special point, but unfortunately it is lost to us; it is most natural to think of a reorganization of the regular corn-distributions (*RIC* II, 6)."

<b>Emperor</b>	<b>Pct.</b>	<b>Dominating Theme on Aurei</b>
Augustus	53%	Dynasty and Legitimacy
Tiberius	94%	Dynasty and Legitimacy
Caligula	80%	Son of Agrippina/Germanicus; Legitimacy
Claudius	37%	Stability of Rule
Nero	46%	Divine Protection and Sanction
Galba	48%	Liberation of Rome
Otho	74%	Security
Vitellius	34%	Stability
Vespasian	38%	Virtues of Emperor
Titus	39%	Emperor as Victorious General
Domitian	50%	Minerva (patron goddess of Flavians)
Nerva	63%	Support of the Armies
Trajan	24%	Emperor as Victorious General
Hadrian	31%	Emperor as Benefactor to Empire
Antoninus Pius	30%	Religious Role of Emperor
Marcus Aurelius	58%	Virtues of Emperor
Commodus	30%	Benefits of Emperor's Rule
Pertinax	86%	Sanction of the Gods for Reign
Didius Julianus	50%	Happiness and Jubilation of the Time
Pescennius Niger	41%	The Eternity of Rome with Niger as Emperor
Clodius Albinus*	---	---
Septimius Severus	42%	Virtues of Emperor
Geta	64%	Relationship with Armies
Caracalla	23%	Relationship with Armies
Macrinus	50%	Relationship with Armies
Elagabalus	47%	Relationship with Armies
Alexander Severus	42%	Relationship with Armies

**Figure 13.** Table of dominating reverse typology on aurei for each individual reign of the Principate. \*Clodius Albinus aurei are far too rare (~15 known to database) to be subject to any form of critical analysis.

It emerges that the aurei for each reign present what may best be termed as a ‘programmatic’ statement. The most-prevalent reverse type theme appears to correspond with what one might expect to have been especially important for each emperor to stress to the upper classes.<sup>404</sup> In short, a propagandistic barometer of each reign dominates the Imperial gold.

<sup>404</sup> The inclusion of a table identifying the coin types per emperor that collectively identify a dominant theme on gold for that emperor would not be prudent. A few brief examples, however, should suffice: first, the 94% of Tiberius’ gold are Livia and Divus Augustus types; second, 80% of Caligula’s gold are Agrippina, Germanicus, or



Certain noticeable trends stand out. First, for the two civil wars (AD 69 and 193–197) we find messages of (false) hope and promises: liberation, security, stability, the joyfulness of the time, and Rome's eternity. Thus, an emperor embroiled in civil war will engage in 'agitation' propaganda, using coinage as one component of his effort. That we find such messages *only* for the losers of the civil wars highlights the rapidity with which an emperor's message can change to more pragmatic concerns once civil war is concluded. The dominating themes on aurei issued by the victors of these civil wars, Vespasian and Septimius Severus, do not demonstrate contentious propaganda but stress Imperial virtues. Second, the fact that the entire Severan dynasty places the army so centrally in its typology correlates well with the role of the army in politics during the early third century.

Rome differentiated the messages on Imperial coinage based on the coin's denomination so as to target a particular audience. The results of my expanded analysis of Metcalf's study confirm denominational targeting for the Liberalitas type. Additionally, they uncover further how the Roman mint diversified the broadcast of Imperial propaganda during individual reigns and for the entire Principate. Numerous original case studies help advance our understanding of how numismatic iconography was tailored for target audiences and reveal the significance of numismatic typology for the Principate. These analyses, hopefully, encourage a revived interest in typological study of Roman coinage. The introduction of my database and, undoubtedly, Oxford's CHRE, will aid numismatists immensely in such studies. While there is certainly far more analysis to be undertaken regarding denominational targeting, the original call by Jones has been at least partly answered here.

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Divus Augustus types; and lastly, 34% of Vitellius' gold coinage make claims of Security or Liberty Restored, or celebrate Vitellius' clemency and ability to reintroduce harmony, which all promise stability.

## **COIN IMAGE ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND PERMISSIONS**

- Figure 2a: Dr. Busso Peus Nachfolger, Auction 396 Lot #591.  
Figure 2b: Fritz Rudolf Künker GmbH & Co. KG, Auction 270, Lot #8738.  
Figure 4L: Fritz Rudolf Künker GmbH & Co. KG, Auction 277, Lot #136.  
Figure 4R: Numismatica Ars Classica, Auction 94, Lot #125.  
Figure 5a: A. Tkalec AG | Astarte S.A., Bolla Collection, Lot #32.  
Figure 5b: Numismatik Lanz München, Auction 161, Lot #295.  
Figure 7a: Numismatik Lanz München, Auction 106, Lot #404.  
Figure 7b: Stack's Bowers & Ponterio, Sale 174-NYINC Auction Ebert I & Sess. B, Lot #5173.  
Figure 7c.1: Numismatica Ars Classica, Auction 64, Lot #2587.  
Figure 7c.2: Stack's Bowers & Ponterio, Sale 174-NYINC Auction Ebert I & Sess. B, Lot #5170.  
Figure 8L: Numismatik Lanz München, Auction 106, Lot #404.  
Figure 8R: Dr. Busso Peus Nachfolger, Auction 396 Lot #591.  
Figure 9A: UBS Gold & Numismatics, Auction 83, Lot #300.  
Figure 9B: cgb.fr, Mail Bid Sale 59, Lot #395.  
Figure 9C: Gemini, LLC, Auction V, Lot #817.  
Figure 9D: Pecunem, Gitbud Numismatik GmbH, Gitbud Numismatik, Auction 38, Lot #859.  
Figure 9E: Pecunem, Gitbud Numismatik GmbH, Gitbud Numismatik, Auction 1, Lot #196.  
Figure 9F: Gerhard Hirsch Nachfolger, Auction 319, Lot #545.  
Figure 9G: Numismatica Ars Classica, Auction 86, Lot #138.  
Figure 9H: Roma Numismatics Ltd, E-Sale 26, Lot #811.  
Figure 10A: Pecunem, Gitbud Numismatik GmbH, Gitbud Numismatik, Auction 10, Lot #536.  
Figure 10B: Pecunem, Gitbud Numismatik GmbH, Gitbud Numismatik, Auction 8, Lot #367.  
Figure 10C: Bertolami Fine Arts—ACR Auctions, Auction 24, Lot #681.  
Figure 10D: Roma Numismatics Ltd, Auction XII, Lot #708.  
Figure 10E: Numismatica Ars Classica, Auction 98, Lot #1300.  
Figure 10F: Trustees of the British Museum, 1860,0330.39.  
Figure 11A: Harlan J. Berl, Ltd, Buy or Bid Sale 199, Lot #266.  
Figure 11B: cgb.fr, Mail Bid Sale 38, Lot #738.  
Figure 11C: Classical Numismatic Group, Triton XX, Lot #704.  
Figure 11D: Trustees of the British Museum, 1844,1015.92

## **CHAPTER SIX: RECEPTION AND SUCCESS OF ROMAN PROPAGANDA AND ITS RESULTING COUNTER-PROPAGANDA**

The over-arching argument put forward by this dissertation is that an orchestrated system of numismatic propaganda existed for the early Roman Empire. It is the very existence of propaganda, conventionally understood, that I argue for here. It would be a mistake, however, to assume from the analyses of the preceding chapters that Imperial coinage was successful at directly impacting public opinion in such endeavors. Propaganda does not have to be successful for it to exist, and it may not be implemented effectively in the first place.

The preceding chapters have argued that Roman Imperial coinage was a vehicle of state propaganda for Rome, directing messages towards targeted audiences. Now I will consider whether Imperial coins were interpreted by their users as conveying some form of statement from the regime. Furthermore, was Roman state propaganda on Imperial coinages effective? This chapter will attempt, therefore, to explore the reception and success of Roman numismatic propaganda.

### **ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PROPAGANDA**

Immense difficulties hinder attempts to gauge the relative success of any state's propaganda. Ian Kershaw, a leading expert on Nazi Germany, argues that:

“[t]rying to assess the reception of propaganda is of course an exercise considerably more difficult than the description of propaganda output. In the absence of public opinion surveys and other means of quantifying reactions to propaganda, accurate measurement is naturally impossible.”<sup>405</sup>

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<sup>405</sup> Kershaw 2014, 181.

Kershaw's examination focuses on a modern government with a Department of State Propaganda (*Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda*) as well as leaders who wrote extensively about the aims and prospects for their own brand of propaganda. Add to this that a considerable amount of Nazi propaganda survives in various forms for the historian to assess, and that for decades following the collapse of the Nazi regime millions<sup>406</sup> of Germans survived for the historian to question about the success of its propaganda. Nonetheless, Kershaw is still correct that assessment of the effectiveness of state propaganda is a difficult exercise to undertake.

My goal in this chapter is not to focus attention on the quixotic aim of determining the effectiveness of Roman numismatic propaganda, but rather to attempt an assessment of what may be more measurable: the *potential for success* of Roman numismatic propaganda as evidenced from a variety of source materials.

### **APPROACHING POTENTIAL SUCCESS OF PROPAGANDA**

In 1962, Jacques Ellul wrote his highly influential study of propaganda<sup>407</sup> that has become the definitive starting-point for examinations of the phenomenon. Although his study primarily focusses on the modern world, many of his theories and insights have been used in analyses of ancient propaganda. His typology of various forms of propaganda<sup>408</sup> has become standard vocabulary. For instance, ancient historians have found his distinction between

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<sup>406</sup> According to Volkszählung reports, Germany during the post-war period, East and West Germany combined, had populations totaling an average of 70-80 million.

<sup>407</sup> Originally published in French, as *Propagandes*.

<sup>408</sup> Ellul breaks down propaganda into a variety of overlapping categories: agitation and integration (discussed above); horizontal and vertical (emanating from a leader or government versus made within a group for that group); rational and irrational (reliance on factual information versus reliance on emotion); and white and black (emanating from an openly identified source versus emanating from an unknown source).

‘agitation’ and ‘integration’ propaganda especially useful. The former seeks to change attitudes through blatant, aggressive, and often subversive means,<sup>409</sup> whereas the latter uses more subtle and diffuse techniques to reinforce existing attitudes.<sup>410</sup>

Ellul also lays out a series of conditions necessary for the success of propaganda.<sup>411</sup> It is instructive and helpful to proceed on his bases. I find two known hypotheses in his monograph constructive for my purposes here. First, he argues that propaganda can *only* succeed when the media by which it are broadcast is both plentiful and ubiquitous.<sup>412</sup> How well did the Roman Empire meet such conditions? In terms of quantity, recent studies estimate that the Principate (31 BC–AD 235) saw mintage of nearly 14 billion Imperial silver coins alone, with no less than 7 billion denarii in active circulation at any given time.<sup>413</sup> These estimates are *only* for silver, and do not include the far more plentiful *aes* coinages, let alone gold issues.<sup>414</sup> While debate remains as to precisely *how* plentiful Imperial coinages may have been, the evidence is overwhelming that for the Roman Empire the magnitude is measurable in the billions of coins.<sup>415</sup>

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<sup>409</sup> Ellul 1973, 71–75.

<sup>410</sup> Gagarin 2009, 36.

<sup>411</sup> Ellul’s conditions, developed and advanced over a series of chapters, are far more complex than the paraphrasing here suggests.

<sup>412</sup> Ellul 1973, 103.

<sup>413</sup> Duncan-Jones 1994, 163–168. Cf. Buttrey 1993, 1994; Metcalf 1995; De Callataÿ 1995.

<sup>414</sup> Carlos Noreña calculates from Duncan-Jones’ study that “[u]nder Septimius Severus alone...the mint produced 532 million silver coins; under Antoninus Pius, 443 million” (2011, 193).

<sup>415</sup> As with all ancient artifacts, what survives to the present day is an extreme minority of the original total. Add to this that ancient coinages, functioning almost-always as intrinsic stores of wealth (though fiduciary coinages did exist at times during the Imperial period), would have been sought-out to be recycled, melted down, and re-struck for centuries later. This said, at the present time there are no less than 7 million Roman coins known from antiquity.

As to ubiquity, archaeological evidence informs us that Roman coinage was a deeply embedded and commonplace feature of daily life throughout the Roman Empire.<sup>416</sup> Furthermore, many ancient sources highlight how the absence of coinage and monetization are considered characteristic of uncivilized and backwards societies.<sup>417</sup> If any means of communication *were capable* of broadcasting propaganda throughout the Roman world with specific, topical messages transmitted by the Roman authorities, it was the Imperial coinage.<sup>418</sup>

This is not to imply, however, that steady and constant rates of circulatory practice of *new coin* existed in all reaches of the Empire. Rather, while Roman coins *were* ubiquitous, newest issues seem not to have entered circulation uniformly across the Empire. Numerous studies corroborate the hypothesis that the bulk of fresh coin was unevenly concentrated near military encampments<sup>419</sup> and urban centers (fig. 1). It must be remembered that the cumulative urban population of the Roman Empire is estimated at just above 10 percent,<sup>420</sup> thereby producing an obstacle for Rome to propagate the latest ideological message to all audiences rapidly. However, the audiences that were most likely to possess newest coinages (the senate, the military, the plebs *urbana*, urban populations in the provinces, and local settlements near military encampments) would arguably be the most important recipients of most broadcast messages.

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<sup>416</sup> Breglia 1950; Crawford 1970; Howgego 1992; Harl 1996; Duncan-Jones 2003; Kemmers 2006.

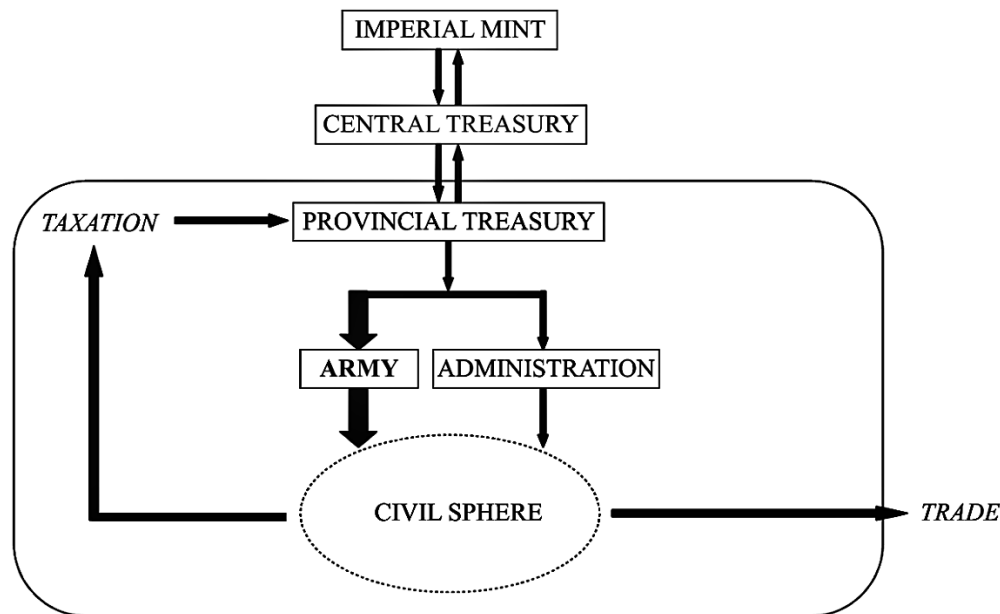
<sup>417</sup> Strabo 3.3–7, 7.5.5, 11.4.4; Plin. *NH* 5.15, 33.3; Tac. *Germ.* 5.3–5.

<sup>418</sup> Noreña 2001, 193.

<sup>419</sup> For more on the distribution of new coins to military encampments, see Chapter Five.

<sup>420</sup> Goldsmith 1984, 272, n. 49; *CAH*<sup>2</sup> *XI*, 813; Maddison 2007, 41.

Evidently, therefore, Imperial coinage was plentiful and ubiquitous, but *so too* was an ocean of older coinages, whose messages might well not represent the emperor's current concerns.



**Figure 1.** A theoretical model of coin circulation in the Roman Empire. (Image courtesy of Noreña 2011, 196, ill. 4.1).

Second, Ellul rightly argues that propaganda cannot succeed where its target audience has few or no cultural ties with the values of the propagandist.<sup>421</sup> From such a perspective, we can imagine any success of Roman propaganda on coinage being limited to the degree of its users' 'Romanization': the more the viewer is Romanized, the closer the common cultural ties upon which Imperial propaganda acts. To be sure, the term 'Romanization' is inherently problematic, as it assumes a systematic and deliberate mode of acculturation. In reality, the process appears to have varied by region and was often less intentional than the term might imply.<sup>422</sup> While many

<sup>421</sup> Ellul 1973, 108.

<sup>422</sup> Webster and Cooper 1996; Mattingly (David) 1997; Webster 2001; Woolf 1998; Hingley 2005.



ancient sources claim that Romans felt they had a mission to spread *humanitas*,<sup>423</sup> it was more often achieved through local elites as mediators. Roman coinage, and Roman Provincial coinage in particular, appears to be symptomatic of this process. The production of Roman Provincial coinages is particularly illustrative.

Roman Provincial coinages were minted from the time of Augustus to that of Diocletian. They were almost exclusively *aes* coinages designed for local circulation in the Greek East, and appear to be a cultural compromise between a Hellenistic and a Roman identity for Greeks during the early Empire. While the deeper implications of Helleno-Romano acculturation represented on Provincial issues are beyond the scope of this dissertation, we may note that all silver and gold in circulation for the Greek East were Imperial,<sup>424</sup> while the bronze issues were roughly an 80/20 split between Provincial/Imperial coinages. To judge by coinage, therefore, ‘Romanization’ of the Greek East occurred rather slowly and top-down within local communities.

However, on their obverse Provincial issues all displayed the image of the emperor encircled with standard titulature (in Latin or Greek). Though reverse motifs were localized in character and often contained references to local civic identity, their general style and mode of presentation adhered far more to a Roman numismatic model than to a Hellenistic or Classical Greek one. Thus, even in areas of the Roman Empire that were not ‘Romanized’ and that used locally designed and minted low denomination coinage, the coins in circulation still expressed regional identity in Roman terms.

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<sup>423</sup> Virg. *Aen.* 6.851–853; Pliny *NH.* 3.39; Tac. *Agric.* 21; Symm. *Orat.* 2.11–12.

<sup>424</sup> Excluding rare silver Asiatic cistophori.

Hence, Roman Imperial coinages did meet the conditions of *potential success* according to Ellul's model. The challenge for this chapter, however, is to explore the scant evidence in order to determine audience reception and to gauge the success of Imperial numismatic propaganda. First in this connection, it is important to consider what may best be termed the 'ocean' problem regarding successful spread of Imperial ideals through Imperial coinage.

### **THE 'OCEAN' PHENOMENON**

The abundance, ubiquity, and embeddedness of Imperial coinage undoubtedly made it a valuable medium for the Roman state to broadcast messages. However, the very profusion of the Imperial coinage creates problems. Two brief examples will suffice.

First, the sheer quantity of Imperial coinage no doubt presented significant obstacles for the communicative effectiveness of numismatic propaganda. As noted above, any newly-minted coins would have been "swallowed up by the ocean of coins circulating at the moment," potentially rendering any topical messages conveyed on new issues "diluted to the point of disappearance."<sup>425</sup> The immense variety of types found at any given moment in active circulation may also have complicated the success of any propaganda—especially new propaganda. With thousands of varying types in active circulation, something of a 'static field' may have existed for users, wherein the wide variety and heterogeneity of messages on coins could inadvertently serve to inhibit appropriate and adequate perception of any numismatic message. Second, *even if* new propaganda was noticed and interpreted as intended, earlier propaganda in circulation may still have undercut it.

Consequently, the 'ocean' phenomenon has led many scholars to conclude that coins had no communicative value or that they were not designed to broadcast Imperial propaganda. Yet,

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<sup>425</sup> Noreña 2011, 196.

despite the potential for failure to communicate messages, Rome may still have *attempted* to broadcast them.

### **THE LITERARY EVIDENCE**

For the Principate, no literary evidence exists referring to the efficacy of propaganda on coins. As we saw in Chapter One, numerous sources provide autopsies of coins. There also are many instances where coin types are described as bearing some form of socio-political statement. They do not, however, provide any insight into reception. The later literary record does provide an account of users rioting on account of a coin type<sup>426</sup> and the emperor's response,<sup>427</sup> yet these events fall in the late fourth century, well beyond the Principate.

The scarcity of literary evidence relating to reverse typology has led some scholars to turn their attention to the obverse. Michael Crawford, for instance, argues that it would be far more likely that the portraiture here would be noticed and internalized by users.<sup>428</sup> He is supported by Paul Zanker who believes, as do I, that the obverses of Imperial coinage contributed greatly to spreading knowledge of the Imperial image; he cites widespread copying of Imperial hairstyles through this medium.<sup>429</sup>

Because literary evidence has so little to say about the effectiveness of coinage in communicating Imperial ideology and propaganda, I will turn to the numismatic evidence itself.

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<sup>426</sup> Sozomen *HE* 5.19; Socrates *HE* 3.17; Ephraem the Syrian, *Contra Julianum*, i 16–19.

<sup>427</sup> Julian *Misop.* 355 d–356a.

<sup>428</sup> Crawford 1983b, 54–57.

<sup>429</sup> Zanker 1990, 292–295.

## NUMISMATIC DAMNATIO MEMORIAE

As noted in Chapter One, the phenomenon of *damnatio memoriae* has received much attention,<sup>430</sup> yet little has been said about the practice on coinage. I focus here on how numismatic *damnatio memoriae* might further reveal the degree of perceived receptivity and success of coins as a communicative medium.

To identify instances of numismatic *damnatio memoriae* can be problematic in itself, as a variety of reasons can lead to false positives. First, ancient coins will surely bear marks, gouges, and wear that may not have been deliberate (and thus not on account of *damnatio memoriae*). For instance, deep cuts might indicate that a coin was subjected to a purity test (more commonly on gold and silver issues) by a user. Additionally, it is common to find coins that are cut, bent, hammered, or quartered for some purpose, religious or otherwise. For the few case studies below, I aim to use only coins that seem very likely to reflect *damnatio memoriae*.

Signs of numismatic *damnatio memoriae* are surprisingly uncommon. When compared to sculptures and inscriptions, the proportion of Roman coins subjected to the practice is small.<sup>431</sup> This fact is all more remarkable when coins, unlike most other media that spread Imperial messages, always possessed the two central targets for memory sanctions: the name and the image of the emperor. Deliberate damage may have been discouraged by the fact that “coins were legal tender, their function being essentially economic...so any alteration of the official currency issued by the authority endangered its validity and the condition whereby it was accepted in transactions.”<sup>432</sup> Even so, the very existence of numismatic *damnatio memoriae*

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<sup>430</sup> Sijpesteijn 1974; López and Pilar 1976; Hedrick 2000; Varner 2004; Flower 2006; Calomino 2017.

<sup>431</sup> Hostein 2004, 234–235.

<sup>432</sup> Calomino 2017, 17.

(whether officially sanctioned or not) indicates that coins functioned as more than just economic instruments, and at times these concerns may have been paramount.<sup>433</sup>

There are numerous ways in which numismatic *damnatio memoriae* may occur. In its most direct and simplest form, coins would be recalled and melted down. Such was the case for the supposed invalidation of Caligula's *aes* coinage under Claudius.<sup>434</sup> It is difficult to know just how prevalent the practice was. Anthony Barrett reminds us that "occasional references in the literary sources, as well as inferences from the numismatic record do seem to suggest that it happened from time to time."<sup>435</sup> Dio, for instance, praises Vitellius for not engaging in the practice, but for instead recognizing the coinage of his rival predecessors.<sup>436</sup> Dio is again our source for later instances in the third century, as he says that Caracalla had Geta's coinage melted down.<sup>437</sup> While not explicitly stating it, both Dio and the *Historia Augusta* suggest similar treatment of Elagabalus' coinage following his assassination.<sup>438</sup>

It is difficult, in turn, to measure the effectiveness of such a step. Even for our strongest case, that of Caligula, problems arise. Dio reports that the senate, "despising the memory of Caligula, passed a decree that all the bronze that had his image stamped on it should be melted down" (τῇ δὲ δὴ τοῦ Γαίου μνήμη ἀχθόμενοι τὸ νόμισμα τὸ χαλκοῦν πᾶν, ὅσον τὴν εἰκόνα αὐτοῦ ἐντετυπωμένην εἶχε, συγχωνευθῆναι ἔγνωσαν).<sup>439</sup> Numismatists have long claimed that

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<sup>433</sup> Burnett 1987, 66–67.

<sup>434</sup> Kraft 1962; Barrett 1990; Melville-Jones 1990; Flower 2006.

<sup>435</sup> Barrett 1999, 83.

<sup>436</sup> Cass. Dio 65.5.3.

<sup>437</sup> Cass. Dio 78.12.6.

<sup>438</sup> SHA *Elag.* 17.4; Cass. Dio 80.21.2.

<sup>439</sup> Cass. Dio 60.22.3.

the low relative frequency of Caligulan *aes* coinage found within Italy is proof that the effort to collect and melt down his coinage was at least partially successful.

Analysis from my database shows that there is reason to support the claim that Caligulan coinage is relatively scarce in Italy.<sup>440</sup> For *aes* coinage provenanced in Italy: Tiberius 34.25%; Caligula 24.61%; Claudius 31.52%. Whether or not this scarcity is due to a *damnatio memoriae* or some other contributing factor, however, is still up for debate. Moreover, the further one expands the comparanda, the less Caligula's *aes* coinage appears an anomaly. Both Nero and Augustus have less *aes* provenanced within Italy than he does: 22.49% for Nero, and a shockingly low 10.1% for Augustus.

Regardless of whether or not the efforts of demonetization under Claudius were successful so far as melting-down is concerned, the very attempt is notable. As Barrett rightly suggests, disfigurement of Caligula's coins might have been a way for the common Roman to comply with the demonetization order.<sup>441</sup> Such an interpretation helps to explain the fact that, even though Caracalla is said to have melted down all coinage that displayed the features of Geta,<sup>442</sup> a surprising number of coins of Geta survive in a defaced condition nonetheless.

The defacement of Imperial coinage could take a variety of forms. Three are: cut marks to the obverse (fig. 2); name erasure (fig. 3); and complete re-working of imagery (fig. 4). Each variant serves the same purpose of re-fashioning Imperial propaganda and repurposing its message to meet new needs at the expense of a predecessor or rival.

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<sup>440</sup> Barrett 1999, 84.

<sup>441</sup> Barrett 1999, 85.

<sup>442</sup> Cass. Dio 78.12.6.



**Figure 2.** Examples of cut-marked *damnatio memoriae*.





**Figure 3.** Examples of name erasure *damnatio memoriae*.





(A) Original Coin



(B) Reworked Coin



(C) Reworked Coin

**Figure 4.** Example of re-worked *damnatio memoriae*.

Some generalized assessments can be made about these four variants. First, cut-marked coins are more probably the unauthorized initiative of private individuals. In the case of the

other two variants, it is more difficult to assign agency. Certainly, for name erasure variants that also bear a countermark, some official channel was presumably utilized.

Reworked coinages, however, present a puzzle: in the case of the sestertius of Maximinus Thrax (fig. 4), an individual with artistic skill as well as considerable motivation undertook the condemnation. The image of Maximinus was reworked by etching away the lower portion of his bust on the obverse, as well as the body of the standing figure of Victory on the reverse, presumably in order to represent the fate of Maximinus and his son Maximus as narrated by our sources.<sup>443</sup> The reworked coins show how their heads were placed on spikes and left to be exposed to wild beasts, as further demonstrated on the obverse of fig. 4B, upon which a bird and snake appear to be tormenting the severed head.<sup>444</sup>

It is difficult to assess how many of Maximinus' coins may have been altered in this way. The two presented above are the only known examples. An additional problem is that no provenance is known for the coins.

The act of numismatic *damnatio memoriae* is, in many ways, a re-fashioning of Imperial propaganda. That both the state and private individuals took to defacement of Imperial coinage indicates that its imagery mattered a great deal for many Romans and was impactful.

### **PROVINCIAL COUNTER-PROPAGANDA**

On Roman Provincial coinages many civic mints often display the city's founding myth, in which either Apollo or Zeus typically plays a role. Many reverses show a characteristic scene of the eagle of Zeus stealing a bone from a sacrificial altar. As the myth goes, the eagle would then fly directly to the location where Zeus desired those sacrificing to found their city. The

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<sup>443</sup> Herod 8.5.9; SHA, *Maximini* 23.5–7.

<sup>444</sup> Overbeck 1988; Alram 1989, 85; Wienand 2016; Calomino 2017.

founding scenes depict some standard aspects. Not all reverses, however, show Zeus' eagle stealing the sacrificial bone. Some depict the eagle holding it in its talon. One such issue was minted in Byzantium early in the joint reign of Septimius Severus and Caracalla (fig. 5).



**Figure 5.** Byzantium. Thrace mint. Provincial AES [minted AD 202-205]. Magistrate M. Av. Antoneinos. Obv: BYZΑΣ, helmeted and bearded head of Byzas right / Rev: ΕΠΙ Μ ΑΥ ΑΝΤΩΝΙ ΒΥΖΑΝΤΙΩΝ, eagle carrying bone in claw. Schönert-Geiss 2073-2074 var.

This coinage type has long perplexed numismatists, as Byzantium had not minted founding myth coins before and did not continue to do so.<sup>445</sup> So why would Byzantium do so during the early years of Septimius Severus' reign? The explanation may lie in counter-propaganda.

During the civil war of 193–197, Byzantium ardently supported Severus' rival from Syria, Pescennius Niger. It had held out against Severus' legions for two and a half years after Niger's death.<sup>446</sup> On its eventual capture, Severus imposed a harsh sentence: not only were the city's buildings and its formidable walls to be razed, but the magistrates and soldiers were to be slaughtered, and the privileges of the city suppressed. Byzantium had its civic status reduced,

<sup>445</sup> Nollé 2015.

<sup>446</sup> Cass. Dio 75.8.1–5; Herod. 3.6.9; SHA, *Sept. Sev.* 8.6; SHA, *Pesc. Nig.* 5.8.

now an undefended village (κώμη), and subject to the jurisdiction of Perinthus. These penalties matched Severus' treatment of Antioch for its support of Niger.<sup>447</sup>

One additional punishment that Severus meted out to Byzantium was to rename it Augusta Antoninia, after Caracalla.<sup>448</sup> It is perhaps due to such circumstances that the city felt prompted to issue coinage stressing its initial founding as Byzantium, so as to counter Severus' penalties. It should be remembered that Provincial coinage was a tool regularly used for broadcasting a city's identity and claims, as cities issuing their own provincial coinage had a unique, yet limited, opportunity to advertise their city.<sup>449</sup> Fergus Millar aptly describes provincial coinages as "the most deliberate of all symbols of public identity."<sup>450</sup>

### **CONCLUSION—GAUGING SUCCESS OF IMPERIAL PROPAGANDA?**

As noted at the outset of this chapter, immense difficulties hinder any attempt to measure the effectiveness of state propaganda for even the modern era, let alone for antiquity. While Roman Imperial coinages meet the basic challenges of *potential* success, any new propaganda would appear to have had considerable inertia to overcome.

There is an argument to be made, however, for the success of cumulative propaganda—the continued (re)issuance of types broadcasting the same (or an innately similar) message over many years and over a vast swath of types. For example, ROMAЕ AETERNAE types minted from Augustus to Alexander Severus could all progressively add strength and resonance to the concept of Imperial greatness, regardless of the current regime.

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<sup>447</sup> Cass. Dio 74.19.4.

<sup>448</sup> Suid. s. v. Ἀντωνία πόλις; Zosim. 2.30; Cedren *Hist. Comp.* 252; Hesyc. 38; Eckhel ii.32; *RE* 3.1 s.v. Byzantion.

<sup>449</sup> Stevenson 2001, 89.

<sup>450</sup> Millar 1993, 230.

While some unique types appear to have been internalized and interpreted by contemporaries according to the literary record, problems remain. In spite of direct mention of Imperial typology as politically communicative, we have to rely on modern inferences of original intent when evaluating autopsy of types by Roman users.

Examination of numismatic *damnatio memoriae* underscores the fact that coins were message bearers, and that both state and private individuals might seek to edit the propaganda on coins prior to putting them back into circulation.

There remains too much reasonable doubt to claim that Imperial propaganda was generally successful in achieving its aims. Even so, the Roman state persisted in its efforts to communicate a wide variety of messages.

## **COIN IMAGE ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND PERMISSIONS**

- Figure 2a: Heritage World Coin Auctions, NYINC Signature Sale 3051, Lot #34057.  
Figure 2b: Jean Elsen & ses Fils S.A., Auction 131, Lot #187.  
Figure 2c: Classical Numismatic Group, Electronic Auction 367, Lot #448.  
Figure 2d: Classical Numismatic Group, Electronic Auction 358, Lot #310.  
Figure 2e: Classical Numismatic Group, Electronic Auction 357, Lot #243.  
Figure 2f: Classical Numismatic Group, Electronic Auction 349, Lot #398.  
Figure 2g: Classical Numismatic Group, Electronic Auction 288, Lot #462.  
Figure 2h: Classical Numismatic Group, Electronic Auction 186, Lot #222.  
Figure 3a: Münzen & Medaillen Deutschland GmbH, Auction 44, Lot #382.  
Figure 3b: Classical Numismatic Group, Electronic Auction 336, Lot #254.  
Figure 3c: Jesus Vico S.A., Auction 132, Lot #507.  
Figure 3d: Jesus Vico S.A., Auction 131, Lot #497.  
Figure 3e: Numismatik Lanz München, Auction 125, Lot #669.  
Figure 3f: Classical Numismatic Group, Mail Bid Sale 70, Lot 531.  
Figure 3g: Fritz Rudolf Künker GmbH & Co. KG, Auction 257, Lot #8490.  
Figure 3h: Ira & Larry Goldberg Coins & Collectibles, Auction 72, Lot #4173.  
Figure 4a: Classical Numismatic Group, Electronic Auction 391, Lot #499.  
Figure 4b: Private Collection, Munich. Photo: Johannes Wienand (Wienand 2016, 418).  
Figure 4c: After Calomino 2016, 175, fig. 32.  
Figure 5: Helios Numismatik GmbH, Auction 2, Lot #56.



## CONCLUSION

This dissertation has aimed to examine the role of Roman coinage in the broadcast of Imperial propaganda during the Principate. Coinage was the preeminent vehicle of communication; its messages were dispersed uninterrupted across the entire Empire. Imperial coinage functioned as an unadulterated conduit through which the emperor addressed as broad or narrow an audience as necessary.

My examination has illustrated that the degree of orchestration of this communicative system was much greater than previously understood. Through various analyses using my database of more than 300,000 Roman Imperial coin finds of the Principate, it has proven possible to reveal many characteristics of what, for shorthand purposes, may best be termed a ‘system of Imperial propaganda.’ This system called for production of Imperial reverses directly linked with topical political matters. These might be, for instance, appeals to the army or other groups within Roman society by a claimant during civil war, or they might be misleading proclamations of some benefit to the current regime (e.g., stressing harmony and concord during periods of heightened anxiety or uncertainty).

Contrary to current consensus, I have been able to show that Rome was capable of targeting its messages to a regional audience. This occurred both ‘positively,’ as with Trajan’s *Debellator* coinage for Dacia, or ‘negatively,’ as with Vespasian’s *Judaea Capta* coins for the Levant. Additionally, the discovery that particular coins (chiefly of precious metal) *remained* either confined to, or excluded from, target areas, offers new insight. Previous assumptions

about the circulatory patterns of gold and silver coin during the early Roman Empire are now open to challenge.

This dissertation, finally, provides a response to the call made by Hugo Jones in 1956 to determine what classes of Roman society some types may have targeted. It has been shown that clear typological distinctions were made by the Imperial mint either to convey a message to a particular audience only (as Mars dominates the silver coinage associated with the army), or to utilize market segmentation for messages of broad appeal; thus Hadrian's Liberalitas type appears on all metals, but *how* it is portrayed varies according to denomination.

The implications of such control and orchestration provide compelling evidence for conclusions to be drawn that run counter to many assumptions currently favored by scholars. Three of the more prominent instances are: 1) propaganda devised by the Roman authorities can be clearly identified; 2) Roman coinage was a medium routinely used to spread such propaganda; and 3) this propaganda was so orchestrated that it could be effectively be targeted to a specific social group in a specific location; moreover, official understanding of circulation was so sharp that such divisions of distribution could be maintained for the coin's circulatory lifespan.

Looking forward, I hope to more fully address a variety of discoveries made during this research. For instance, the case of Tiberius' Clementia dupondii occurring almost-exclusively in Britain calls into question many assumptions regarding the circulation of pre-Claudian bronze there.

This dissertation is particularly significant as it is both the first and last of its kind. It is the first to depend on a database of such a scale (300,000+ coins compared to Hobley's ca. 23,000). It is also the last to require its author to self-construct a dataset of coin finds. Had this dissertation been proposed as a research topic not in 2014, as it had been, but today in 2017,

focus would likely be laid upon Oxford's CHRE Project as a dataset and little concern would be voiced regarding the insurmountable problem of data collection.

With the introduction of my database of 300,000+ coin-finds (in particular 75,000+ single finds) coupled with Oxford's CHRE Project for hoard data, it is reasonable to conclude that further new findings will continue to illuminate the Roman economy, as well as contribute to fuller understanding of communication and connectivity in the Roman world.

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