

When the study of ancient coins reveals patterns and regularities in their types and legends, it is natural to infer that they were the result of planning by a central authority, conceived with a purpose, often to convey a message to the people. Using examples from the Flavian period, this paper will look at evidence to support that thesis as well as grounds to believe that people paid sufficient attention to what was on their coins to understand the intended messages.

Among the minting patterns in the Flavian period is the congruence of types and Latin legends on aurei struck for Vespasian in 70 in both the East and the West. It seems unlikely that very many, if any, individuals would have noticed this congruence, but clearly someone was coordinating mint decisions, particularly the use of Latin legends, empire-wide. Another meaningful, but potentially unnoticed, decision was to have Vespasian share some precious metal reverse dies with Titus, but not with Domitian, a distinction that marked out Titus as his father's colleague in power and his heir designate. Certain reverse types were targeted for use in particular regions, such as Pax sacrificing on dupondii of Lugdunum, a type originally struck at this mint by Galba. In the Flavians' reprise of the type, the pointed allusion was to Galba's unsuccessful efforts to establish peace. Lastly, some reverse designs were utilized for specific denominations, like those of the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus. Asses struck under Vespasian, regardless of when or where, depicted the temple before its reconstruction, while sestertii showed its completed state.

Perhaps more readily noticeable to the average viewer would have been the coin types minted to coincide with specific occasions. One of numerous cases is the striking of the laurel tree denarii in 74; because laurel had an apotropaic function, it was used in the *lustrum* performed at the conclusion of a census, precisely the situation in 74. Another is Titus's issuance of the Restoration bronzes for Vespasian's *consecratio*, all of which carry some form of the word *restituit*, explicitly stating that Titus was restoring earlier coins. By inserting himself in the numismatic representations of his predecessors, Titus placed both himself and his father, the new Divus, in the long stream of history beside a select group of other worthy individuals.

I will conclude with a discussion of how Nero's reputation is reflected in the treatment of his coinage, based on coin finds in Pompeii. Of 16 hoards of bronze coins found there, four of them have substantial quantities of Neronian coins, but 12 contain none of his coins whatsoever. Particularly interesting is the hoard of over 1300 bronzes from a bar in insula 1.8, where Nero's coins amazingly constituted less than 1%. Recalling Epictetus's directive that coins bearing Nero's portrait should be thrown out as his character was unacceptable, this hoard dramatically demonstrates that one bar owner, at least, paid close attention to his currency and adjusted his actions based on its images and legends.