

Much has been made over the extraordinary diversity of individual types issued from the Roman mint at Alexandria. In choosing to maintain the closed currency system of their Ptolemaic predecessors, Roman authorities managed to create an opportunity for the careful direction of images toward a specific provincial audience. While several authors and catalogue editors have commented on the exceptionally broad range of individuals, symbols, monuments, and deities referenced on the Alexandrian coinage, comparatively little focus has been placed on the degree of selectivity displayed by Roman administrators. The mandatory payment of certain taxes in coined money necessarily established the Alexandrian coinage as the lone medium for “Roman” ideas and imagery viewed by each and every provincial, and the ruling authority took full advantage. The intentional dissemination of certain themes and the appearance of select imperial family members on particular denominational classes reflect a keen awareness of the distribution and realms of use for billon and bronze issues throughout Alexandria and the province. The distinctions between Greco-Roman and native Egyptian religious iconography are especially revealing, both in the presence (or lack thereof) of accompanying Greek legends and in the exclusion of the latter from the billon denominations that were typically used for larger transactions in the more Hellenized urban centers. Moreover, this calculated presentation of native religious symbols and themes on Alexandrian types can be placed within the broader context of a pervasive attempt to compel Egyptian provincials to accept a Roman reinterpretation of their own religious culture.