

The circulation of the gold coinage of Vespasian struck in the East¹

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There has been great progress in recent decades in the recording of finds of Roman gold coins and the analysis of that data. The role of gold coinage has been considered on the basis of the contexts in which it is found, of the patterns of distribution of the finds, and of the limited literary and documentary evidence for its use.² Less attention has been paid to inter-regional circulation, which is clearly an important aspect of the definition of the role of gold. The inter-regional circulation of silver coinage, where it is visible, can be brought to bear on the important debate about the extent of the integration of the Roman economy.³ So what about gold?

The reason for the lack of discussion is obvious. Centralized production, whether at Rome or Lugdunum, does not allow us to differentiate between distribution from the centre and subsequent inter-regional movement. It is only when routine decentralized production at identifiable mints develops from the middle of the third century AD onwards that systematic analysis of inter-regional movement becomes possible. More work of this type on later periods would be valuable.⁴ Such studies cannot, however, be used to illuminate earlier periods, as major changes in the role of gold within the economy are evident both in the third and in the fourth centuries.⁵ The rare earlier episodes of decentralized production of gold thus present important opportunities to see what was going on, but are harder to exploit than for silver as the surviving evidence is very much less.

For silver, episodes of production in the East, and the extent to which eastern silver moved to the West, have proved particularly illuminating. The aurei produced in the East under Vespasian constitute the only gold coinage produced there between the reigns of Augustus and of Pescennius Niger and Septimius Severus,⁶ and thus seem worthy of investigation. The rarity of such aurei is at first sight discouraging. Only three specimens for Vespasian's mint at Ephesus are recorded in *RPC*, none of them with provenances. The total of 45 specimens gathered in *RPC* for the combined mints of Egypt (?), Syria, and Judaea, of which only one has a provenance, is also not encouraging, but the addition of new and unlisted material makes for a surprisingly interesting picture.

¹ I am grateful for help and advice to Roger Bland, Paul Booth, Kevin Butcher, Martin Colman, Martin Goodman, Anthony Hands, Ben Hellings, Martin Henig, Johan van Heesch, Hans-Markus von Kaenel, Barbara Levick, Jerome Mairat, William Metcalf, Sam Moorhead, Eberhard Sauer, Melinda Torbágyi, Philippa Walton, and Bernhard Woytek.

² X. Lorient, 'Réflexions sur l'usage et les usagers de la monnaie d'or sous l'Empire romain', *RN* 159 (2003), 57–74; J. van Heesch, 'Paying the Roman soldiers in the East (1st-2nd century AD)', in M. Reddé (ed.), *De l'or pour les braves! Soldes, armées et circulation monétaire dans le monde romain* (Bordeaux, 2014), 139–59.

³ C. Howgego 'Coin circulation and the integration of the Roman economy', *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 7 (1994), 5–21.

⁴ See J.-P. Callu, 'Structure des dépôts d'or au IV^e siècle (312-392)', in E. Frézouls, *Crise et redressement dans les provinces européennes de l'empire (milieu du III^e-milieu du IV^e siècle ap. J.-C.): actes du colloque de Strasbourg,*

décembre 1981 (Strasbourg, 1983), 157–74; R. Bland and X. Lorient, *Roman and Early Byzantine Gold Coins Found in Britain and Ireland* (London, 2010), 81–2; Howgego, 'Coin circulation', 19.

⁵ See, for example, Lorient, *RN* 2003, 67–8; J. Kent, 'Gold coinage in the Late Roman Empire', in R. Carson and C.H.V. Sutherland, *Essays in Roman Coinage Presented to Harold Mattingly* (London, 1956), 190–204. J. Banaji, 'State and aristocracy in the economic evolution of the late Empire', in *Eleventh International Economic History Congress* (Milan, 1994), 107–17.

⁶ K. Butcher, *Coinage in Roman Syria: Northern Syria, 64 BC–AD 253* (London, 2004), 95–108; Pescennius Niger: J. van Heesch, 'Les ateliers monétaires de Pescennius Niger', *RBN* 124 (1978), 57–72; R. Bland, A. Burnett, and S. Bendall, 'The Mints of Pescennius Niger', *NC* 147 (1987), 67–83. Septimius Severus: Butcher, *Coinage in Roman Syria*, 98–108. Eastern denarii for Hadrian, but apparently not aurei: Butcher, *Coinage in Roman Syria*, 98.

Vespasian's aurei from Egypt (?), Syria, and Judaea have been classified into four groups.⁷ All belong to the start of the reign: Group 1 is attributed to Alexandria or Syria in AD 69–70, Group 2 to Judaea / Tyre in AD 70, Group 3 to Antioch (?) in AD 70,⁸ and Group 4 to Antioch in AD 72–73. Groups 3 and 4 include denarii as well as aurei. The attributions to mint are based on stylistic comparisons with local silver and bronze coinages, and, in the case of Group 2, on the heavy emphasis on Titus.⁹ The classifications are not set in stone, and an earlier date for part of what is currently Group 4 is suggested below on the basis of additional material. Precise attributions to mints may also be tentative, but the allocation of these groups to the East seems secure.

The contexts of the production and issue of Vespasian's eastern aurei are perhaps better documented than for any other Roman gold coinage. Vespasian had been the Roman commander sent to suppress the Jewish Revolt in Judaea when he was proclaimed emperor at the beginning of July AD 69, at the close of the civil wars which followed the death of Nero. Tacitus explicitly notes that gold and silver were struck under Vespasian at Antioch in the context of the levying of troops, the recall of veterans, and the manufacture of arms.¹⁰ In October Vespasian left first for Egypt, not returning to Rome until September AD 70.¹¹ Production of gold at the start of a reign is a well established phenomenon,¹² so the minting of gold for Vespasian either in Syria or in Egypt makes sense of the first group. The specifically military context is also significant. Vespasian left Titus to prosecute the war. Titus held a parade to intimidate the enemy within Jerusalem. It happens to be one of the very few accounts we have of how soldiers received their pay.¹³

“The appointed day having arrived for the distribution of the soldiers' pay, he ordered his officers to parade the forces and count out the money to each man in full view of the enemy. So the troops, as was their custom, drew forth their arms from the cases in which till now they had been covered and advanced clad in mail, the cavalry leading their horses which were richly caparisoned. The area in front of the city gleamed far and wide with silver and gold, and nothing was more gratifying to the Romans, or more awe-inspiring to the enemy, than that spectacle.”¹⁴

In August AD 70 Jerusalem was sacked and the Temple burned. Titus was duly acclaimed as *Imperator* by his troops. Titus had supposedly tried to persuade the soldiers to extinguish the fire, but they were distracted by the hope of plunder ‘seeing that all the surroundings were made of gold’.¹⁵ Josephus, the great Jewish historian who participated in events, and went over from the Jewish side to the Roman, tells us that so much gold was plundered from Jerusalem that gold coin in Syria passed for half its usual value in terms of silver coin.¹⁶ The liberation of gold from Jerusalem is surely part of the background to the minting at least of Group 2 (probably) in Judaea, on which Titus is described as *Imperator*.

⁷ Group numbering follows *RPC*.

⁸ Butcher, *Coinage in Roman Syria*, 96; group 3 (‘Antioch’ 70) need not be Syrian. For our purposes uncertainties about the attribution of Group 3 may be set aside as no finds from that group are known.

⁹ W. E. Metcalf, ‘The Flavians in the East’, in T. Hackens and R. Weiller (eds.), *Actes du 9ème Congrès international de numismatique, Berne, septembre 1979* (Louvain-La-Neuve, 1982), 321–39; *RPC* I pp. 270–3; *RIC* II, 2nd edn., 45–7; Butcher, *Coinage in Roman Syria*, 95–7.

¹⁰ Tac., *Hist.* 2, 82.

¹¹ B. Levick, *Vespasian* (London, 1999), 91.

¹² R. Bland, ‘What happened to gold coinage in the 3rd c. A.D.?’ , *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 26 (2013), 263–80.

¹³ Levick, *Vespasian*, 117.

¹⁴ Joseph. *BJ* 5. 348–51 (trans. Thackeray); M. Goodman, *Rome & Jerusalem. The Clash of Ancient Civilizations* (London, 2007), 24–5.

¹⁵ Joseph. *BJ* 6. 252–9; 261–6 (trans. Thackeray); Goodman, *Rome & Jerusalem*, 442–3.

¹⁶ Joseph. *BJ* 5, 550–551 (trans. Thackeray).

After the Temple was destroyed, the most impressive objects to survive were transported to Rome to be displayed first in Titus's triumphal procession, as depicted on the Arch of Titus, and then in the Temple of Pax, which was dedicated in AD 75.¹⁷ These surviving pieces can have accounted for only a very small proportion of the Temple's treasures. Because all Jews worshipped in one Temple their wealth was concentrated in one institution. The contemporary historian Josephus recorded how impressive this wealth was, and how much of it was of gold, mentioning among other things an array of golden utensils, a decorative golden vine at the Temple's entrance, and votive offerings such as the great golden chain which had been dedicated by king Agrippa I.¹⁸ The Temple also functioned as a sort of bank, in which individuals deposited their property for safe-keeping in the form of precious metals. Much of this gold may have become available for minting in AD 70 because it was melted down accidentally in the course of the Temple's destruction. Titus required funds to pay his large body of troops who needed rewards both for their services against the Jews and for their loyalty during the civil war. Presumably some of the gold was minted for disbursement on the spot, but much, either in coined or uncoined form, may have accompanied the more spectacular treasures to Rome.

Once Jerusalem was taken the 'European' legions involved in the Jewish War (XV Apollinaris and V Macedonica) were despatched to Pannonia and Moesia on the Danube.¹⁹ Booty, including gold, went to Rome. The strategic priorities now were to settle the situation on the Lower Rhine following the Batavian Revolt and then to renew the full-scale conquest of Britain, after the setback of the Boudiccan Revolt.²⁰ Britain was well known to Vespasian, who had participated in the conquest under Claudius. XIV Gemina had recently been withdrawn from Britain to meet the Batavian threat.²¹ After the collapse of the Batavian cause, the Roman commander on the Rhine, Q. Petillius Cerealis, was sent to Britain, probably taking a replacement legion (II Adiutrix) with him.²² Auxiliary cavalry and infantry units were transferred from the Rhine to Britain too.²³ Once in Britain, Cerealis moved first against the Brigantian kingdom in the north. He was succeeded in 73 or 74 by Sextus Julius Frontinus who advanced against the Silures in South Wales.²⁴

It is evident that the broad shifts in strategic priorities in the early years of Vespasian's reign led to changes in military dispositions. Money will have moved too, either with the soldiers or to supply and pay them. So, in the light of this broader context, what happened to the gold coins from the East? Where are they found?

In fact there appear to be no recorded finds of the eastern aurei of Vespasian from the East itself,²⁵ unless there was one in the Diyarbakir (Mardin) hoard, in which one of the 38 coins of the reign of Vespasian has a description which could fit a coin minted in Rome or in Syria.²⁶ Nor are there any among the few aurei of the reign of Vespasian found in India.²⁷ This lack of eastern finds is unsurprising given the very low level of recording of eastern finds in general. It is at least some comfort that one example of Group 1 was bought by the American numismatist Edward

¹⁷ Goodman, *Rome & Jerusalem*, 450–3.

¹⁸ Jos. *A.J.* 15. 392; 394–6; Goodman, *Rome & Jerusalem*, 62.

¹⁹ Levick, *Vespasian*, 119–20.

²⁰ Tac. *Agr.* 17; Tac., *Hist.* 3, 45.

²¹ Tac. *Hist.* 2, 66; 4, 68.

²² Levick, *Vespasian*, 113; 158. The date of the transfer of II Adiutrix is not absolutely certain: G. de la Bédoyère, 'The Roman Army in Britain', <http://www.romanbritain.freeserve.co.uk/Legions.htm>.

²³ Levick, *Vespasian*, 113 with 242 n. 17.

²⁴ D. Mattingly, *An Imperial Possession: Britain in the Roman Empire, 54 BC – AD 409* (London, 2006), 115–16.

²⁵ Gold finds from the East are conveniently listed by van Heesch, 'Paying the Roman soldiers', 158–9 (Appendices I–II).

²⁶ K. Regling, 'Der Schatz römischer Goldmünzen von Diarbekir (Mardin)', *Blätter für Münzfreunde* 66 (1931), 353–65, no. 95 = *RPC* 1919 = *RIC* II, 2nd edn, 1545 (Antioch), but also = 44 (Rome).

²⁷ P. Turner, *Roman Coins from India* (London, 1989).

Newell at the American Colony Store in Jerusalem, in August 1929.²⁸ The evidence for gold in the East is so poor that it hard to trace the process by which Roman gold came to be used there at all,²⁹ but, as van Heesch has pointed out, the very fact that Vespasian and Pescennius Niger chose to strike gold there implies a normative role for aurei in military pay.³⁰

In so far as it has been possible to check records, there are only seven confirmed findspots of Vespasian's eastern aurei (details are given in the Appendix). These are unevenly distributed in the West. The pattern of finds is likely to be significant given our increasingly good record of gold coins as single finds and in hoards in the West, but the paucity of evidence means that only in one area will the evidence bear any weight. It would be unwise to make any clear distinction here between single finds and hoards, except in so far as hoards allow us to date when the coins were withdrawn from circulation. Gold coins were so valuable that single coins may in effect have been hoards, and in some regions at least they do indeed behave more like hoards.³¹

Three examples of Vespasian's eastern aurei are known from Continental Europe. Two were found in a hoard from Rome (Via Po) discovered in 1927 (Appendix nos. 5; 6, **Fig. 2**). This hoard contained 378 aurei ending in AD 164/5, of which 88 were of the reign of Vespasian. One might have expected finds from Rome, given that we know that much Jewish gold was taken there, but no significance can be attached to that in the absence of further evidence. As the hoard was not buried until at least AD 164/5 the coins had had plenty of time to circulate so that their paths to Rome may well have been complex.

The location of the other continental find is highly interesting: in the *aedes principiorum* (shrine of the standards) of the *Ala II Flavia milliaria* in their camp at Aalen on the *limes* in Raetia (Appendix no. 7, **Fig. 2**). The coin was found in the floor screed and has been interpreted as a foundation deposit. It may therefore have had a particular significance. This is intriguing as the *Ala* itself was formed on the Rhine in the aftermath of the Batavian Revolt. It would be fanciful to speculate that the coin originally arrived in that context (although it may have done!) as it was actually found in the unit's later base in Raetia, of which the construction in stone dates from AD 150–5 onwards.³² It is likely to be significant, however, that a coin of Vespasian (Titus Flavius Vespasianus) was chosen to deposit with the standards of a cavalry unit named after him.

The other four known finds all come from Britain. The **IVSTITIA IMP** aureus (Appendix no. 1, **Fig. 2**) certainly belongs to Group 2 (AD 70). The other three British finds, all of which have the obverse legend **IMP CAESAR VESPASIANVS AVG** (Appendix nos. 2–4, **Fig. 2**), would on current classifications be attributed to Group 4, and so to AD 72–3, but the date should arguably be earlier:

1. The 'Group 4' aurei with **IMP CAESAR VESPASIANVS AVG** form a tight group in themselves, and may be dissociated from the other aurei of Group 4 which have a different obverse legend (**IMP CAES VESP AVG P M**).
2. The legend **IMP CAESAR VESPASIANVS AVG** was the form used for gold at Rome at the start of the reign, and so would permit an earlier date.
3. The portrait, as well as the obverse legend, of the coin from Didcot with **LIBERTAS AVG** (Appendix no. 3, **Fig. 2**) is quite unlike the rest of the aurei dated to AD 72–3 in *RPC* and *RIC*.

²⁸ ANS 1944.100.39964, purchased for \$60 (the meaning of the code 8.AC on Newell's ticket, according to W.E. Metcalf, pers. comm.). The coin is now in the ANS (Group 1: Head of Vespasian / Head of Titus).

²⁹ Butcher, *Coinage in Roman Syria*, 195.

³⁰ van Heesch, 'Paying the Roman soldiers', 150.

³¹ J. Hiernard, 'Les découverts de monnaies d'or romaines en

Poitou, Limousin, Saintonge et Angoumois: typologie des sites et circulation', in C. Brenot and X. Loriot (eds.), *L'or monnayé III. Trouvailles de monnaies d'or dans l'occident romain* (Paris, 1992), 101–110, at 106; Bland and Loriot, *Roman and Early Byzantine Gold Coins*, 80–1.

³² http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kastell_Aalen.

The closest parallel is provided by tetradrachms of AD 69/70.³³ The discussion in *RIC* does indeed allow that it might be earlier than AD 72/3.³⁴ *Libertas* as a reverse type is also appropriate for the earlier date: it occurs as a reverse on aurei of Group 1 already in AD 69/70.³⁵

4. The dates of the other two British finds, the types of which are not included in *RPC* or *RIC*, hang on the Didcot coin.
5. The coin with **VIRTUS AVG** (Appendix no. 4, **Fig. 2**) is not extant, but it shares its type with a neglected coin from the hoard found in Rome in 1927 (Appendix no. 5, **Fig. 2**) which has the same obverse die as the Didcot coin. The same reverse type with a variant legend (**VIRTUS AVGVST**) is found in Group 3, which also has an obverse inscription **IMP CAESAR VESPASIANVS AVG**, and which is dated to AD 70.
6. The third coin, with **IVSTITIA AVG** (Appendix no. 2, **Fig. 2**), was attributed because of its stylistic similarity to the Didcot coin. Not only that, but it is the only type under Vespasian in any metal at any time in his reign to carry a *Justitia* type, apart from the Group 2 aureus of AD 70 already mentioned and also found in Britain. Might they not belong at the same date?

The division of Vespasian's eastern aurei into groups should presumably be revised to give an earlier date (AD 70?) to those currently under Group 4 with the obverse **IMP CAESAR VESPASIANVS AVG**.³⁶ These have a strong association with Britain: three of the four finds of this group come from Britain, and three of the four eastern aurei of Vespasian found in Britain are of this group.³⁷

Even though a total of four finds from Britain is not a lot, they are statistically significant. In British single finds there are now three eastern coins among the 62 aurei of Vespasian.³⁸ By contrast there are none among the 196 aurei of the reign of Vespasian found as single finds in the Gallic, German, and Alpine provinces.³⁹ There are also none recorded for Spain, Italy (parts), Pannonia / Noricum (including Carnuntum), Moesia, Thrace, or Dacia, and only one for Raetia (see above).⁴⁰ In British hoards there is also one eastern aureus among the 131 aurei of the reign

³³ *RPC* 1971 (e.g. pl. 88, 1971/38).

³⁴ *RIC* II, 2nd edn., p. 46, associating a denarius, *RIC* II, 2nd edn., no. 1547 = *RPC* 1921 which also has the obverse legend **IMP CAESAR VESPASIANVS AVG**.

³⁵ *RIC* II, 2nd edn., no. 1522 = *RPC* 1901.

³⁶ The date at which Metcalf originally placed that inscription at Antioch: W. E. Metcalf, 'The Flavians in the East', in T. Hackens and R. Weiller (eds.), *Actes du 9ème Congrès international de numismatique, Berne, septembre 1979* (Louvain-La-Neuve, 1982), 321–39; at 324; 336.

³⁷ For such an association compare the concentration within Britain of a group of gold coins or medallions (1.5 solidi) in the name of Licinius of AD 313–15 from the mint of Trier: S. Moorhead and D. Stuttard, *The Romans Who Shaped Britain* (London, 2012), 196.

³⁸ Bland and Lorient, *Roman and Early Byzantine Gold*, xxv, total of 61 to which the eastern aureus of Vespasian from North Lincolnshire (Appendix below, no. 2) should be added.

³⁹ Including coins potentially of the reign of Vespasian (undated Titus and Domitian). Statistics from a database kindly provided by Roger Bland incorporating data from J.-P. Callu and X. Lorient, *L'or monnayé II. La dispersion des aurei en Gaule romaine sous l'empire* (Juan-les-Pins, 1990); and X. Lorient, 'Vingt ans après... Supplément à l'inventaire des trouvailles de monnaies d'or isolées faites en Gaule

romaine (44 av. – 491 apr. J.C.)', *Trésors Monétaires* 25 (2011–12), 257–340.

⁴⁰ C. Brenot, and X. Lorient (eds.), *L'or monnayé III. Trouvailles de monnaies d'or dans l'occident romain* (Paris, 1992), which includes: J.-P. Bost, M. Campo, and J. Gurt, 'Trouvailles d'aurei et de solidi dans la péninsule Ibérique', 33–89; G. Gorini, 'Trouvailles de monnaies d'or de la X Regio Venetia-Histria (Ier s. av. J.C. –VIIe s. ap. J.C.)', 155–214; and E. Ercolani Cocchi, 'Trouvailles de monnaies d'or romaines en Émilie', 129–54; and also X. Lorient, 'Trouvailles isolées de monnaies d'or romaines dans la province de Rétie (Ier –Ve siècles)', in P. Kos and Ž. Demo (eds.), *Studia Numismatica Labacensia Alexandro Jelocnik Oblata* (Ljubljana, 1988), 53–98; C. Gazdac, F. Hummer, and E. Pollhammer, *In the Shadow of the Heathens' Gate. The Black Book of the Gold Coins from Carnuntum* (Cluj-Napoca, 2014); *Die Fundmünzen der römischen Zeit in Österreich; Die Fundmünzen der römischen Zeit in Slowenien; Die Fundmünzen der römischen Zeit in Kroatien; Die Fundmünzen der römischen Zeit in Ungarn*; E. Paunov, 'Roman aurei in Moesia and Thrace from Augustus to Trajan', *Novensia* 23 (2012), 145–58; G. Depeyrot, 'Les monnaies d'or antiques en Roumanie: or versus argent', *Bulletin du Cercle d'Études numismatiques* 46, 1 (jan.–avril 2009), 106–14; and *ibid.*, 46, 2 (9 mai–aout 2009), 139–52.



Fig. 1. Finds of Vespasian's eastern aurei in Britain.

of Vespasian.⁴¹ By contrast, the hoard from Rome apart, such aurei are missing from continental hoards, including those with a strong representation of aurei of Vespasian.⁴² It is particularly notable that there were none in the Trier hoard (Germany, reign of Vespasian: 819 specimens) or the hoard from Liberchies (Belgium, reign of Vespasian: 82).⁴³ There were none among the two groups of coins associated with skeleton 27 from the Villa of Lucius Licinius Crassus at

⁴¹ Bland and Loriot, *Roman and Early Byzantine Gold*, xxv; 75–83.

⁴² Hoards of gold listed in K. Regling, 'Der Schatz römischer Goldmünzen von Diarbekir (Mardin)', *Blätter für Münzfreunde* 66 (1931), 375–381; M. Thirion, *Le trésor de Liberchies: aurei des Ier et IIe siècles* (Brussels, 1972),

77–83 gold hoards AD 64–217 from the Roman Empire – supplement to Regling; 86–9 gold hoards from Belgium; K.-J. Gilles, *Der römische Goldmünzenschatz aus der Feldstraße in Trier* (Trier, 2013), 76–9.

⁴³ Gilles, *Der römische Goldmünzenschatz*; M. Thirion, *Le trésor de Liberchies*.

Oplontis (Italy, reign of Vespasian: 90 aurei).⁴⁴ There were also none in the Pompeii (La Casa del Bracciale d'Oro) hoard (reign of Vespasian: 33), Villach (Austria, reign of Vespasian: 32), Austria (reign of Vespasian: 32), Cirkovci (Slovenia, reign of Vespasian: 23), Braga II (Portugal, reign of Vespasian: 23), Pompeii V (Italy, reign of Vespasian: 16), or Erla (Austria, reign of Vespasian: 10).⁴⁵ There might or might not have been some in the Santiponce (1898) hoard from Spain, but we cannot know.⁴⁶

The concentration of finds in Britain does, therefore, appear to be significant. The contrast with the absence of more generalized circulation on the Continent suggests that the coins are likely to have come to Britain soon after they were struck. This is partially confirmed by the condition of the coins, which is known for three of the four finds (coin 4 is not extant, and the publication of the find does not include an illustration). Coin 3 (**Fig. 2**) is worn and could in principle have arrived at any time between AD 70 and *c.* AD 159, the date of the latest coin in the hoard in which it was found. The condition of coin 2 (**Fig. 2**, unworn) and coin 1 (**Fig. 2**, lightly worn), by contrast, makes it likely that they at least reached Britain soon after being struck.

The locations of the British finds are also potentially illuminating (Fig. 1). One (Old Winteringham) was from what may have been a military supply base on the Humber in the North-East. Two were in Oxfordshire, one (Finstock) at or close to a way station on Akeman Street, the Roman road from St. Albans to Cirencester, and so presumably on the military route west into south Wales, the other from Didcot. Oxfordshire was of military significance in the conquest period, and there was a fort and military parade ground at Alchester on Akeman Street, and also a fort at Dorchester (not far from Didcot).⁴⁷ Alchester might have had a military presence as late as the 70s, and military activity at Dorchester dates to *c.* AD 60–90.⁴⁸ The fourth eastern aureus of Vespasian was found at St. Briavels in Gloucestershire between the legionary camp at Gloucester (*Glevum*), to which the II Augusta had been moved in preparation for an attack on Wales,⁴⁹ and the new legionary camp founded in AD 75 at Caerleon (*Isca*) by Frontinus in the territory of the Silures on his advance into Wales.

These locations have different evidential value. As the Didcot coin is from a hoard ending in AD 159 it might have circulated widely after it reached Britain. The condition of the coin from St. Briavels is unknown and there is no way of knowing whether it went to ground under Vespasian or later. So although these provenances would fit military activity under Vespasian, we cannot know whether the coins reached these areas under Vespasian or later. The coins from Old Winteringham and Finstock, by contrast, are both in good condition and so may have been lost or deposited soon after import. It is unlikely to be a coincidence that location of the first

⁴⁴ Oplontis: P. G. Guzzo, and M. Mastroroberto, *Storie da un'eruzione. Pompei, Ercolano, Oplontis* (Milan, 2003), 174–97. The coins were partly in a little box, and partly in a bag, which did not survive, held at the top of the thorax.

⁴⁵ Pompeii (La Casa del Bracciale d'Oro): d'Ambrosio, Guzzo, and Mastroroberto, *Storie da un'eruzione*, 407–20; Villach: W. Görlich, 'Der Münzfund von Villach', *Carinthia* I, 147 (1957), 140–5; Austria (before 1995): Auktionhaus H. D. Rauch 56 Münzenauktion, 5 Feb 1996, Nachtrag zu Katalog 1 = Gilles, *Goldmünzenschatz*, 78 no. 50; Cirkovci (Ptuj): *Fundmünzen der römischen Zeit in Slowenien* vol. 2, 151–6 no. 417; Braga II: R. M. S. Centeno, 'Un tesouro de aurei do norte de Portugal', *Nummus*, 2nd series, 1 (1978), 37–98 (pl. I–IX); Pompeii V: E. Pozzi, 'Tesoretto di età

Flavia da Pompei', *AJN* 5–6 (1958–1959), 211–30 (pls. IX–XII); Erla: H. Jungwirth, 'Der Münzschatzfund von Erla', *NZ* 82 (1967), 26–48 (pl. 1–5).

⁴⁶ Of the 34 aurei described from the reign of Vespasian four could be eastern or western as the same types were produced in both places: H. Willers, 'Römische Goldmünzen nebst Gold- und Silberbarren aus Italica bei Sevilla', *NZ* 34 (1902), 29–48, at 34 nos. 66–8; 83.

⁴⁷ M. Henig and P. Booth, *Roman Oxfordshire* (Stroud, 2000), 52–63.

⁴⁸ E. Sauer, 'Inscriptions from Alchester: Vespasian's base of the Second Augustan Legion (?)', *Britannia* 36 (2005), 101–33, at 124–5.

⁴⁹ Levick, *Vespasian*, 157.

may be associated with the campaign by Cerealis against the Brigantes from AD 71, and of the second with the advance by Frontinus against the Silures from 73 or 74. It is rare even to be able consider this level of granularity in the interpretation of coin circulation. It would be good to have more evidence to substantiate the detailed pattern, so it will be well worth keeping an eye out for finds in the future.

The evidence is therefore consistent with the suggestion that the coins arrived in Britain shortly after AD 70 in a military context, presumably as some sort of military or financial transfer, direct or indirect, from Judaea or Syria to Britain as the focus of military activity shifted from one side of the Empire to the other.

The picture of a military transfer of gold in the context of the Roman advance into Brigantia in the north and then into South Wales is plausible, as it fits what we know of the contexts of the production and deposition of gold coin in this period. The coins were evidently struck in a well-defined military context in the East. It is reasonable to suppose that gold would have been required for renewed conquest in Britain. The army which conquered Britain cost Rome the equivalent of 2 metric tons of gold each year.⁵⁰ In the West the role of gold in circulation in a military context is evident from the Varus military disaster site of AD 9 at Kalkriese, where aurei amounted to 49 per cent of the total coin by value.⁵¹ The essential role of the army in the circulation of gold is clear on the Rhine and Danube.⁵² Within Britain itself, gold coins of the first two centuries AD found in known contexts have a much higher incidence on military sites than in towns. In fact military sites, including the civilian settlements attached to legionary camps (*canabae*), account for no less than 42% of single gold coins of the first century AD from known Roman sites in Britain.⁵³ In the light of our evidence it might be worth considering military routes as military sites too.⁵⁴ Just as the gold found in *canabae* may bear witness to interaction with soldiers in the camps, so gold found near military routes may have resulted from contact with the military on the march, unless they are to be associated with some form of deposition by the soldiers themselves. None of this should be taken to imply a solely military function for gold coinage in Britain or elsewhere. It is worth bearing in mind that aurei represented almost two-thirds of the total value of currency at the civilian disaster site of Pompeii in AD 79.⁵⁵ The strong association of the supply of gold coinage with the military in the western provinces is, however, evident.

In relation to British finds of coins struck between 215 BC and AD 41 (mostly silver denarii, but with some bronze and rare gold), most but not all of which are likely to have been deposited in the mid to late first century AD, Walton has observed a correlation between find patterns and areas of intensive but transient military activity in the first century AD.⁵⁶ In the light of this the pattern for Vespasian's eastern gold in Britain is perhaps not wholly surprising.

⁵⁰ M. Millett, *Roman Britain* (London, 1995), 78.

⁵¹ H.-M. von Kaenel, 'Zum Münzumschlag im augusteischen Rom anhand der Funde aus dem Tiber. Mit einem Nachtrag zur geldgeschichtlichen Bedeutung der Münzfunde in Kalkriese', in W. Schlüter and R. Wiegels (eds.), *Rom, Germanien und die Ausgrabungen von Kalkriese* (Osnabrück, 1999), 363–379; F. Kemmers, *Coins for a Legion: an Analysis of the Coin Finds from Augustan Legionary Fortress and Flavian Canabae Legionis at Nijmegen* (Mainz am Rhein, 2006), 144–6; F. Berger, 'The key to the Varus defeat: the Roman coin finds from Kalkriese', in N. Holmes (ed.), *Proceedings of the 14th International Numismatic Congress, Glasgow 2009* (Glasgow, 2011), vol. 1, 527–37; R. Wolters, 'Bronze, silver or gold?: coin finds and the pay of the Roman army',

Zephyrus 53–4 (2000–2001), 579–588.

⁵² Lorient, *RN* 2003, 60–1; Callu and Lorient, *L'or monnayé II*, 97–9; Lorient, 'Trouvailles isolées', 59.

⁵³ Bland and Lorient, *Roman and Early Byzantine Gold*, ch. 7

⁵⁴ For gold on routes see Bland and Lorient, *Roman and Early Byzantine Gold*, 51–2; D. Nony, 'A propos des monnaies d'or romaines isolées en Aquitaine méridionale atlantique', in Brenot and Lorient, *L'or monnayé III*, at 116.

⁵⁵ R. Duncan-Jones, 'Roman coin circulation and the cities of Vesuvius', in: E. Lo Cascio (ed.), *Credito e Moneta nel mondo romano* (Bari, 2003), 161–80, at 165.

⁵⁶ P. Walton, *Rethinking Roman Britain: Coinage and Archaeology* (Wetteren, 2012), 57–78.

Moving back from this close focus, the general picture is also important. The eastern aurei of Vespasian provide a unique opportunity to test the extent to which gold might move from East to West in the first two centuries AD. This evidence is precious. Seven finds are admittedly not much on which to base a picture, but they act like a tracer dye to reveal the flow of gold at scale. The finds in Britain certainly suggest that one reason for the initial long distance movement of coin might be military, and it is worth noting that the find in Raetia was in a military context too, but such modalities will have been complex and must be a matter of interpretation. At a more general level, the finds of aurei from the East in Italy, Raetia, and Britain bear witness to a degree of connectivity within the Roman Empire which adds to our picture of how the Roman world worked in the first two centuries AD.

Appendix

Finds of Vespasian's eastern aurei

[Fig. 2]

Group 2, Judaea / Tyre, AD 70

1. Finstock SP3616 (Britain, Oxfordshire), about 1850

IMP VESPA CAESAR AVGVS; laureate head r.

IVSTITIA[E??] IMP; Justitia standing left, holding an uncertain object (perhaps a jug) and a sceptre.

7.49g. Axis: 12.

Location: Private collection (Martin Colman). On loan to the Ashmolean Museum, LI997.1.

Reference: RIC II, 2nd edn., 1532 (this coin). C. Howgego, *The Ashmolean* 44 (Spring 2003), 2–4; Bland and Loriot, *Roman and Early Byzantine Gold* no. 490. It is intended to publish a more extended discussion of this coin elsewhere.

Discussion: The IMP of the reverse must refer to Titus. The reverse shows traces of guidelines for cutting a different legend. The traces of JETAS [suggest an original intention to engrave PIETAS. For circular guidelines for cutting the legend on eastern aurei see W.E. Metcalf in *Coin Hoards from Roman Britain* vol. 10, 95; id., ‘The Flavians in the East’, in T. Hackens and R. Weiller (eds.), *Actes du 9ème Congrès international de numismatique, Berne, septembre 1979* (Louvain-La-Neuve, 1982), 321–39, at 324; Butcher, *Coinage in Roman Syria*, 128. Guidelines for cutting letters would normally have been obliterated when the letters were cut, except for the punched letter points. Here they are visible because the die-engraver cut a different inscription than the one originally envisaged. There are traces of guidelines for letters also on the reverses of BMCRE 523 and of 524 (in the form of drill marks for the termination of the letters on the latter).

Provenance: A label with the coin, in the hand of its original collector, Martha Spriggs (1777–1866), reads:

Finstock abt 3 miles from the Roman Villa at Northleigh Oxon where about 1850 my Roman gold coin of Vespasian was dug up by a poor man whilst ploughing in a field.

Finstock itself is not particularly plausible, as no other Roman coins have been found there, with the exception of secondary losses on the playing fields of a school. But Wilcote, roughly three miles from the North Leigh villa and close to (in sight of) Finstock, is a strong candidate.

Wilcote was not a villa but a roadside settlement on Akeman Street, the Roman road which ran from Cirencester to St Albans. It flourished already in the conquest period, and had quarries associated with the building of the road. It became a military, and increasingly a civilian, staging post. Although the excavated structures are not impressive, the number of early Roman coins, the quality of the pottery, and the quantity of the amphorae exceed the finds from the nearby villa at Shakenoak. Specifically, first century coins account for under half of one per cent of the coins at Shakenoak, but for thirty five per cent at Wilcote. So Wilcote and its environs would be a plausible context for a first century Roman gold coin.

For Wilcote, see: M. Henig and P. Booth, *Roman Oxfordshire* (Stroud, 2000), 66; A.R. Hands, *The Romano-British Roadside Settlement at Wilcote, Oxfordshire*, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1993–2004); vol. 2, 45 for the coins. For the comparative material from Shakenoak: A.C.C. Brodrigg, A.R. Hands, and D.R. Walker, *Excavations at Shakenoak Farm, near Wilcote, Oxfordshire* (Oxford, 1968).

IMP CAESAR VESPASIANVS AVG ‘Group 4, Antioch, AD 72–73’ but probably earlier (AD 70?)

2. North Lincolnshire, 2011?

IMP CAESAR VESPASIANVS AVG; laureate head right.

IVSTITIA AVG; Justitia seated right, holding a sceptre and corn ears.

7.53 g. Axis: 1.

Location: Ashmolean Museum, HCR8632, ex St. James’s Auctions 21 (19 April 2012), 52. Purchased with funds generously donated by The Carl and Eileen Subak Family Foundation and with the assistance of Baron Lorne Thyssen-Bornemisza and the Classical Numismatic Group, Inc.

Reference: *RPC* -; *RIC* -; *BMCRE* II, p. 75, no. *.

Discussion: The coin is now unique. A second example was known once, in the civic collection at Lyon, but it appears to have been stolen, or perhaps melted down, in 1794 during the French Revolution (M. Dissard ‘L’ancien médaillier de la ville de Lyon’, *RBN* 38 (1882), 395–413, at 403). C. Howgego, *The Ashmolean* 64 (Summer 2012), 14–15.

Provenance: Found at a metal detector rally in North Lincolnshire and reported through the Portable Antiquities Scheme: <http://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/465909>

For the site see Walton, *Rethinking Roman Britain*, 64–5 (Parish of Old Winteringham on the Humber). This is likely to have been a military installation, probably a supply base on the Humber.

3. Didcot hoard, SU5090 (126 aurei to AD 159), 1995

IMP CAESAR VESPASIANVS AVG; laureate head r.

LIBERTAS AVG; Libertas standing left with pileus and rod.

7.30g. Axis: 12.

Location: BM 1996-3-16-30.

Reference: *RPC* 1917; *RIC* II, 2nd edn., 1543. Bland and Loriot, *Roman and Early Byzantine Gold* no. 497; R. Bland and J. Orna-Ornstein, *Coin Hoards from Roman Britain* 10, 91–100, no. 30.

4. St Briavels, SO5604 (Britain, Gloucestershire), shortly before 1881.

IMP CAESAR VESPASIANVS AVG; laureate head r.

VIRTUS AVG; Virtus standing right, left foot on prow, with spear and parazonium; shield against right leg.

Reference: Bland and Loriot, *Roman and Early Byzantine Gold*, no.208.

Discussion: Bland and Lorient restore the reverse legend as **VIRTVS AVG[VST]** to conform with *RIC* 1552 var., but this is unlikely to be correct as the obverse legend differs too. The original publication gives only **VIRTVS AVG**. The coin was presumably of the same type as coin 5 below (from Rome (Via Po) hoard), which is missing from *RIC*.

5. Rome, Via Po, hoard (378 aurei to AD 164/5), 1927

IMP CAESAR VESPASIANVS AVG; laureate head r.

[VIRTV]S AVG; Virtus standing right, left foot on prow, with spear and parazonium; shield against right leg.

7.30 g.

Reference: S. Cesano, 'Ripostiglio di aurei imperiali rinvenuto à Roma', *Bullettino della Commissione archeologica comunale di Roma* 57 (1929), 5–119; no. 130 Antioch.

Discussion: The obverse is from the same die as *RIC* 1543 = *RPC* 1917 (coin 3 above, from Didcot). The reverse is also found on Group 3: *RPC* 1916 = *RIC* II, 2nd edn., 1542 (same design but with **VIRTVS AVGVST**).

Group 4, Antioch, AD 72–73

6. Rome, Via Po, hoard (378 aurei to AD 164/5), 1927

IMP CAES VESP AVG P M; laureate head r.

NEP RED; Neptune standing left, foot on globe, with acrostolium and sceptre.

7.10 g.

Reference: *RPC* 1919 = *RIC* II, 2nd edn., 1545 (Antioch), rather than 44 (Rome). S. L. Cesano, 'Ripostiglio di aurei imperiali rinvenuto à Roma', *Bullettino della Commissione archeologica comunale di Roma* 57 (1929), 5–119; no. 116 (pl. II).

Discussion: This coin is attributed to Rome in the original publication, but it is from the same obverse die, and same reverse (?) as *BMCRE* 502, which was attributed to Antioch by Mattingly in *BMCRE*, followed by *RPC* and *RIC*. The eastern attribution rests on the similarity of the obverse to *RPC* 1918 (= *RIC* II, 2nd edn., 1544), the reverse of which (a head of Titus) is very close to that on *RPC* 1922, which is certainly eastern (compare its obverse with Syrian tetradrachms of group 8 = *RPC* 1973–5). The **NEP RED** reverse type also occurs on later eastern issues (obverse **IMP CAES VESP AVG PM COS IIII**, *RPC* 1928). The 'eastern' **IMP CAES VESP AVG P M** / **NEP RED** coins fall slightly outside the range of the coins with the same types and inscriptions normally attributed to Rome, both in their portrait style and in the way the obverse legend continues over the head without a significant break around the tip of the laurel wreath. For a range of aurei with this obverse legend from the mint of Rome see Gilles, *Der römische Goldmünzenschatz*, 186–7, nos. 960–78. Attribution to the East is tentatively accepted here, but it could be questioned as there is nothing diagnostically eastern about the **IMP CAES VESP AVG P M** / **NEP RED** coins in themselves (no close comparison with other eastern issues, no guidelines for the letters).

7. Aalen (Raetia), 1984

IMP VESPAS AVG P M TRI P P P COS IIII; laureate head left, with drapery on left shoulder. PAX AVGVSTI; Vespasian, naked, standing left, with spear, raising Tyche (here *Orbis Terrarum*, the world?),⁵⁷ kneeling right.

7.26 g.

Reference: *RIC* II 1st edn. 356 = *RIC* 2nd edn. 1550 (Antioch) = *RPC* 1924.

X. Lorient, 'Trouvailles isolées de monnaies d'or romaines dans la province de Rétié (Ier –Ve siècles)', in Kos and Demo, *Studia Numismatica Labacensia* 53–98, at 81 no. 50 Aalen (Bez. Stuttgart); U. Klein, 'Fundmünzen aus Württemberg', *Archäologische Ausgrabungen in Baden-Württemberg* 1984, 265–72, at 268–9, fig. 240/k; D. Planck, *Die Römer in Baden-Württemberg: Römerstätten und Museen von Aalen bis Zwiefalten* (Stuttgart, 2005), 13–14; R. Wolters, 'Münzen und Geldumlauf: Die Einführung der Geldwirtschaft in Südwestdeutschland', in *Imperium Romanum – Roms Provinzen an Neckar, Rhein und Donau* (Stuttgart, 2005), 435–439, at 435 fig. 585.

Rome (incorrectly attributed to the East)

Rome 1. Komárom-Szőny (Hungary) hoard (118 aurei to c. AD 196), 1959

IMP CAES VESP AVG P M; laureate head r.

NEP RED; Neptune standing left, foot on globe, with acrostolium and sceptre.

Location: Hungarian National Museum, coin collection, NMM 53 1960 25. I am grateful to Dr Melinda Torbágyi for supplying the image of this coin.

Reference: *RPC* 1919 = *RIC* II, 2nd edn., 1545 = *BMCRE* 502. *Die Fundmünzen der römischen Zeit in Ungarn* vol. 3, 209–12, Schatzfund 1, 210, coin 22. Of the original 118 coins, 114 are in the Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum (Hungarian National Museum). The other four are missing.

Discussion: Listed as Rome (*RIC* II, 1st edn., no. 35) in the original publication: Komárom-Szőny: L. Barkóczi and K. B. Sey, 'Brigetioi aranyletet', *NK* 62–63 (1963–1964), 3–8 (pl. 1–2), but attributed to Antioch in *Die Fundmünzen der römischen Zeit in Ungarn* vol. 3, 209–12, Schatzfund 1, 210, coin 22. The obverse falls within the stylistic range of Rome, see Gilles, *Der römische Goldmünzenschatz*, nos. 960–78 (obverses) and the reverse die is identical with Gilles no. 970.

Note on provenance: The hoard was found south of the legionary camp of Brigetio, located on the right side of the Danube.

⁵⁷ For Tyche here as *Orbis Terrarum* see W. E. Metcalf, 'The Flavians in the East', in T. Hackens and R. Weiller (eds.), *Actes du 9ème Congrès international de numismatique*,

Berne, septembre 1979 (Louvain-La-Neuve, 1982), 321–39 at 333.



Rome 1

Fig. 2

