3
Archaeologies of coinage

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Coinage materialised empire under Rome in many ways. The topic is approached here under four headings. *An empire of coinages* looks at the evolving structure of coinage within the empire and the extent to which imperial forms replaced local or regional forms. *An empire of money* explores how money was used and controlled within the empire. *An empire of monuments* examines the Roman attitude to coins as circulating monuments, how imperial power was presented on the regularly changing coin types, and whether the imperial 'messages' on coins were targeted. Finally, *The archaeology of coinage* outlines some of the current debates about how to interpret coin finds in the archaeological record throughout the empire.

An empire of coinages

Rome expanded into worlds with different kinds of coinage. The Greek-style coinage of much of the Mediterranean was broadly similar to the Roman. By contrast, the coinage of Iron-Age temperate Europe ('Celtic') was originally different in nature, but Roman-style coin use spread there to some extent in advance of conquest (Howgego 2013). The Roman features adopted in the north before conquest include silver coinage (which tended to replace the earlier gold), the development of coinages in multiple metals and structured denominations, and the selective appropriation of Roman iconography and of writing. This early influence from Rome helps to demonstrate Roman 'soft power' in the north-west: the advance of Rome through trade and cultural contact prior to conquest.

Figure 3.1 Iberian denarius (Bolskan, *c*.150–100 BC). Photo: Classical Numismatic Group LLC.

During Rome's first phase of expansion, into Italy and Sicily in the third century BCE, Roman coinage had replaced existing Greek-style civic and royal precious metal coinages (some limited civic bronze coinages continued) (Burnett 2012: 305–8). By contrast, following later phases of expansion beyond Italy and Sicily the penetration of Roman coinage might be slow and it did not necessarily replace local coinages (Crawford 1985). This may be because at least until the mid-first century BCE there was no compelling model of Roman provincial material culture to follow in general (Woolf 1998: 181–5; 238–41; Wallace-Hadrill 2008), so there may have been no perceived pressure from outside or inside local communities to make local coinages 'conform'. Local coinages using local languages might even be introduced after conquest. So Iberian script was used for Iberian and Celtiberian languages on silver and bronze coins produced by peoples in Spain in the process of developing their own discrete identities after conquest, from the first quarter of second century BCE (but in quantity only from *c*.133 BCE) until the 70s BCE (Ripollés 2005) (Figure 3.1).

Local coinages ended much earlier in the West than they did in the East, perhaps because from the mid-first century BCE onwards culture in the West tended to follow the model of Rome. In the East, Greek culture flourished and was valued by the Romans, so the maintenance and development of Greek forms are not surprising (Howgego 1995: 58–9; 2005: 14; Burnett 2005: 171–80). Rome at first manipulated local style coinages in the East, sometimes adding some, often minor, Roman elements (de Callataÿ 2011) (Figure 3.2). Local coinages in bronze and silver (in modern scholarship termed 'Roman provincial

Figure 3.2 Greek-style cistophorus with the name of a Roman governor (proconsul) added in Latin (Asia, Pergamon, 57–55 BC). Photo: Classical Numismatic Group LLC.

Figure 3.3 Roman provincial coin with the local myth of Hero and Leander on the reverse (Abydus, Septimius Severus, 193–211 CE). Photo: Classical Numismatic Group LLC.

coinages') were a vibrant phenomenon in the East until the later third century CE (Howgego et al. 2005). Local civic coinages were increasingly influenced by Roman imperial coinage – their iconography became more varied (like the Roman), their denominations larger (like the Roman) and Roman themes became more prevalent – but their reverses remained predominantly local until the end (Heuchert 2005; Burnett 2011) (Figure 3.3).

The Romans certainly debated imposing a monopoly of imperial coinage, although it is not clear to which period the debate in Dio quoted below applies (it is set in the Augustan period but was written in the third century CE):

> None of the cities should be allowed to have its own separate coinage or system of weights and measures; they should all be required to use ours. (Dio 52.30.9; speech of Maecenas)

The imposition of a monopoly of imperial coinage cannot have been an ideological imperative, however, as the full displacement of local coinages took over five hundred years to be completed. It was only in the 290s CE that the Roman world finally moved to a monopoly of standardised imperial coinage in Latin (Abdy 2012a). The new empire-wide system developed an organisational separation between gold mints (moving with the emperor) and regional small change mints (Hendy 1985: 371–94).

Coinages in the Roman world were state coinages. They were produced by imperial or provincial authorities, cities or client kings. There was no significant minting by or for individuals, by contrast with the western Middle Ages (de Callataÿ 2005). One should not, however, be too categorical about this. At times of shortages of supply of imperial small change, imitative coinages were produced locally (King 1996; Abdy 2012b: 504). It is mostly unclear whether these were public or private, and whether they were official, tolerated or simply illicit.

An empire of money

Roman imperial coinage evolved into a structured system in gold, silver and bronze (Table 3.1). The face value of the most valuable coin (the gold ‘aureus’) was 1,600 times greater than the smallest (the copper ‘quadrans’), allowing considerable flexibility in use (Wolters 2012: 336–40). Civic bronze coinage in the East was also produced in a wide range of denominations, of bewildering variety (Johnston 2007).

The predominant model for coinage entering circulation was by state expenditure, the most important of which was military. The age-structure of hoards in Britain shows that silver denarii were introduced into circulation in military areas rather than at the commercial capital of Londinium (Creighton 2014). The supply of coinage to the military is also evident in large-scale finds of coinage on military sites in the

West (Kemmers 2006). These are mostly of bronze coins, but it is safe to assume that gold and silver was supplied in substantial quantities too (Wolters 2000–1). Precious metal coinages are normally heavily under-represented in site finds (unlike hoards), but disaster sites can be revealing. At the military disaster site of Kalkriese, which gives an idea of the currency with soldiers on the move in 9 CE, 98 per cent by value was in gold and silver (von Kaenel 1999).

Monetisation was galvanised by the military and was spread by urbanisation (Howgego 2013: 38–44). It took longer to penetrate the countryside. The general pattern has been validated by cluster analysis of the relative chronology of coin finds by type of site in Britain (Lockyear 2000). Ancient authors imply that coin use became normative for the Roman world, for example:

> The use of coins is inherent to our existence, it regulates everything in life. Each time we want to buy or sell something, it is done by means of coins. (John Chrysostom, *In Principium Actorum* 4, 3; writing in the Roman East in the fourth century CE)

This general picture is confirmed by documentary sources (Howgego 1992: 16–22) but needs testing in the archaeological evidence, which is also crucial for developing a more variegated and dynamic history of monetisation (see below).

Money became embedded in the structure of the economy (Howgego 1992): it played a role alongside agricultural produce in taxation, rents, wages and credit. It was the normal mode of exchange, at least in cities. Money was critically linked to the Roman state redistributive cycle of taxation and expenditure (Hopkins 1995/6). Taxation and army pay were important drivers of the long-distance movement of coinage around the empire, but we do not really know what proportion of taxation was actually sent to Rome (Millar 1991) or how much army pay was actually delivered to the army camps (possibly as little as one third in some contexts) (Wolters 2000–1). Long-distance movement of coin was also driven by trade, the flow of rents, loans, and the movement of people. There remains a debate about whether we should view the Roman economy as integrated or cellular, but we can at least measure the impressive movement of coin around the empire, including from one side of the empire to the other (Howgego 1994).

High levels of monetisation were enabled by the production of coinage on a massive scale (see below). The supply of metal for coinage was in turn ensured by a high degree of imperial control and oversight of important mining enterprises (Hirt 2010; 2020). For silver, relative production

	Denomination	*Metal*	*Denarii*	*Asses*
	Aureus	Gold	25	400
	Denarius	Silver	1	16
	Sestertius	Brass	0.25	4
	Dupondius	Brass		2
	As	Copper		1

Table 3.1 Early imperial denominations (illustrated with coins of Nero, 64–6 CE). Photos: Classical Numismatic Group LLC. *(cont)*

	Denomination	*Metal*	*Denarii*	*Asses*
	Semis	Brass		0.5
	Quadrans	Copper		0.25

Table 3.1 Early imperial denominations (illustrated with coins of Nero, 64–6 CE). Photos: Classical Numismatic Group LLC.

levels can be traced through sub-annually resolved measurements of lead pollution in Greenland ice (McConnell et al. 2018). The assumption is that European lead emissions largely from mining and smelting of lead-silver sulphide ores (e.g. galena) dominated other sources during antiquity. Emissions reached a sustained maximum during the Roman Empire, at a level not matched again for more than five centuries. Levels plunged in the second century coincident with the Antonine Plague, and remained low. The correlation of the dramatic fall in lead pollution levels with the decline in the fineness of the silver coinage suggests a strong connection between silver mining and refining and the output of silver coinage. It is significant that the recycling of old denarii to make new coin seems to have begun already under Nero, replacing a pattern of sourcing bullion more directly from the mines (Butcher and Ponting 2014: 224–6).

Debasement of the silver coinages (by lowering their silver content and/or decreasing weight standards) was systemic in the imperial period from 64 CE onwards. By the 260s CE the silver coinage fell to only 2 per cent pure (Figure 3.4). The significance of such dramatic debasement is debated: was debasement driven primarily by fiscal inadequacy (not enough precious metal to pay the army) or by a monetary policy seeking

Figure 3.4 Heavily debased silver radiate (Gallienus, 268 CE). Photo: Classical Numismatic Group LLC.

to address the problem of maintaining bimetallism with changing bullion values for gold and silver? Both forces were certainly at play. The sheer scale of the decline makes it hard not to allocate a significant role to fiscal inadequacy (Howgego 1992: 4–8; 1995: 115–21). It is likely that declining supplies of precious metal were a significant factor in that inadequacy, alongside the need for increased military and diplomatic expenditure to meet external threats. On the other hand, a shift of the monetary regime from 64 CE onwards to what has been termed a 'limping bimetallism' (that is, with the value of the gold coinage being more or less fully backed by its metallic content, but the silver coinage only partially) is also plausible. It may be this which opened the way for the progressive debasement of the silver (Butcher and Ponting 2014).

The reconstruction of 'monetary policy', largely in default of contemporary commentary in the ancient sources, remains conjectural, but it is clear that the Romans could control their currency both in theory (legally) and to some extent in practice. The currency was controlled in turn by law, decree of the senate and imperial pronouncement. In terms of practical control, hoard evidence allows us to trace major changes, such as the withdrawal from circulation of earlier and finer denarii in the late first and early second centuries CE (although one cannot formally prove that this was all official rather than partially private) (Duncan-Jones 1994: 194–200). In the fourth century, epigraphic and legal sources show that emperors were able to double or halve the value of coins in circulation, to demonetise coins, and to impose penalties for using obsolete coins (*pecuniae vetitae*) (Erim et al. 1971; Hendy 1985).

Figure 3.5 Republican denarius with iconography relating to the family of the moneyer (135 BCE, descendants paying religious honours to an ancestor by the Columna Minucia). Photo: Classical Numismatic Group LLC.

An empire of monuments

Under the Republic, from the 130s BCE, the Romans abandoned relative uniformity of coinage in favour of annually changing types, which increasingly reflected the family traditions of the yearly board of three in charge of the coinage (Figure 3.5). The practice of regularly changing types is highly unusual in the history of numismatics, where conservatism of types in the interests of maintaining confidence in the currency is more normal. Iconography which reflects individuals who are not heads of state is also highly unusual. This development was part of an aggressive appropriation of the public sphere by private families, which also included the erection of statues and monuments in the city of Rome (Wallace-Hadrill 2008: 218–25). It was part of a broader emphasis on the individual which eventually put an end to the Republic.

At this time the Romans came to regard their coins as little monuments (Meadows and Williams 2001; Clark 2007: 135–41; Rowan 2012: 28–31). Their view of coins as monuments does not imply that the messages on coins were not political, as 'monumentalisation' or 'memorialisation' was a Roman way of doing politics. Family based memory devices were an essential component of the political culture of the Roman Republic at a time when a citizen's vote actually counted (Morstein-Marx 2004: 85; Flower 2006: 51–5). In the same way, 'Roman rhetoric expressed its debates in terms of the past, within culturally determined frameworks of praise or blame of past individuals'

Figure 3.6 Coin of Tiberius (14–37 CE) with an inscription on the reverse stating that it was restored by the emperor Titus (79–81 CE). Photo: Classical Numismatic Group LLC.

(Flower 2006: 60; cf. Morstein-Marx 2004; Wallace-Hadrill 2008: 225–9). The period which saw the invasion of the coinage by private themes also witnessed an explosion of history creation connected with family traditions (Meadows and Williams 2001: 45–8). Alongside the prominence of family ancestry went an increasing emphasis on current politics. It has been estimated that nearly half the post-Sullan denarius coinage referred to contemporary events in some way, however allusive (Hollstein 1993: 388–9; Woytek 2012: 325–9).

Both the practice of frequently changing types and the view of coins as monuments survived the change from Republic to Empire. Emperors even 'restored' older coins when they were being withdrawn, just as they restored old buildings or other edifices (Komnick 2001; Woytek 2022). The restoration of coinage took various forms, but in its purest mode consisted of striking new coins identical in their types and inscriptions with the old coins being restored, but with the addition of an inscription stating that the emperor had restored them (Figure 3.6).

What was being memorialised on the coinage in the imperial period was naturally the achievements and qualities of the emperor as head of state, with some emphasis on his family as ensuring dynastic stability. Comparison of the 'messages' on the coinage with other sources of imperial communication, like the *Res Gestae* of Augustus, shows that the coinage normally reflects imperial self-presentation (Sutherland 1951; 1987; Rowan 2012; Elkins 2017). This need not have been the case in all periods. For example, it has been demonstrated that some of the iconography of the coinage under the 'Gallic Empire' reflected the themes of earlier coinage

Figure 3.7 Even low-value coins could be of amazingly high quality (brass Sestertius of Nero, 66 CE). Photo: Classical Numismatic Group LLC.

and was not all relevant to contemporary concerns (Mairat 2014). This may have been the result of mint workers simply copying old coins brought to the mint for re-striking. The strong impression remains that for most of the time the messages on the coins were carefully considered.

In the imperial period the imagery became less recondite and more standardised, using a well-defined visual language (Hölscher 1984), and with more explanation through the inscriptions on the coins. As the meanings of images and the related inscriptions did not coincide precisely, the combination allowed great flexibility and precision of expression (Hölscher 1980; 1982; Howgego 1995: 75–7). These developments will have aided interpretation, especially beyond the city of Rome itself.

Reception is a notoriously difficult subject, but the quantity, penetration and quality of the coinage suggest a considerable impact on people across the empire. Coins will have been handled routinely by almost everyone. Coin striking uniquely allowed the mass production of high-quality images, rather as printing and digital technologies did later. There might be high-quality sculptural and painted images in civic centres and rich villas (although not all were high quality), but it is important to realise that coins will have been by far the best-made objects which most people ever had in their hands or in their houses (Figure 3.7). Today we have become accustomed to inundation by masses of high-quality images, but the impact of such images in a world without printing and digital media will surely have been greater. It is indicative that the quality of Roman coins surprised scholars in the western Renaissance, who thought they must have been commemorative medals rather than coins (Cunnally 1999: 136–8). In this, Renaissance

Figure 3.8 Jupiter as *Conservator* (IOVI CONSERVATORI, denarius of Macrinus, 217 CE). Photo: Classical Numismatic Group LLC.

scholars were picking up on the commemorative aspect of Roman coinage, which, as we have already seen, the Romans came to regard as monuments in their own right.

Interpretation of the 'messages' on coins will have been cued for Roman audiences, especially for those at Rome itself, by the iteration of the same themes at games, theatrical performances, triumphal processions, public speeches and the like, and by a political life that was lived out in public (Wiseman 1985: 32–4; 1998; 2009: ch. 8; Morstein-Marx 2004, ch. 3). It will have been facilitated by a visual repertoire shared with other monuments (Hölscher 1980; 1982; 1984) and by the shared language of monumental inscriptions (Pearce, Chapter 2 this volume). To some extent, the interpretation of coins will have been cued and facilitated in similar ways for audiences in the cities across the empire. But how most people (mis)interpreted what they saw is largely beyond us.

Coins, as mass-produced objects, allow a quantitative approach to the presentation of Power through the analysis of relative frequency in hoards. For the imperial period quantification demonstrates a greater emphasis on the charismatic qualities of the emperor justifying his rule than on his achievements (Noreña 2001; 2011). Imperial 'virtues' or 'qualities' accounted for 55 per cent of all silver coins between 69 CE and 235 CE (Figure 3.9a). The period from the 180s CE onwards saw a shift from charismatic qualities to divine sanction by particular gods, who were often presented as Preservers (*Conservatores*) (Figure 3.8) or Companions (*Comites*) of emperors (Rowan 2012). This later played out in the emphasis placed on the Sun god by Aurelian and in the eventual emergence of Christianity as a state religion.

a b

Figure 3.9 (a) Liberalitas personified as a woman (denarius of Geta, 211 CE). Photo: Classical Numismatic Group LLC. (b) Liberalitas scene showing the distribution of coins to citizens (sestertius of Hadrian, 118 CE). Photo: Classical Numismatic Group LLC.

There is only a little evidence for the targeting of particular messages on imperial coinage at particular groups of people or places, perhaps because the point was monumentalisation rather than propaganda in the modern sense. Targeting might, in principle, have been accomplished by selecting different types for different denominations, on the assumption that different denominations were intended for different recipients, or by variable distribution geographically of the same denomination(s) with different types. These are discussed in turn.

As an example of targeting by denomination, it has been argued that *Liberalitas* (Liberality, Generosity) was presented differently on precious metal coinages than on base metal because the different metals were targeted at different audiences (Metcalf 1993). On the other hand, it could be that the compact representation of Liberalitas, personified in the form of a woman, tended to be used on the smaller gold and silver coins precisely because they were smaller, and the full scene of the emperor handing out cash to the People tended to be used on larger bronze coins simply because they were larger (Figure 3.9). The iconographies of precious metal and bronze denominations were unquestionably different from each other at certain periods, but patterns are not consistent. Sometimes audience targeting seems a plausible explanation (Marzano 2009; Wolters 2012: 342–6), but often this is not evident (Hekster 2003).

Variable distribution geographically of the same denomination(s) with different types can be measured from site finds or hoards. Again, alternative explanations are possible. For example, a particular batch of existing coinage might be sent from the Mint (or Treasury) to a particular region because of the need for money there, such as a military campaign, without any intention to target the particular iconography on that batch of coins at the region concerned. We detect targeting when the iconography seems appropriate to us: so the identification of 'targeting' is, to some extent, a matter of interpretation.

An assessment of bronze coin distribution in the Western Empire between 81 CE and 192 CE found variation between regions but little evidence for appropriate targeting by iconography, beyond the association of Britannia types with Britain already noted by Walker (Walker 1988; Hobley 1998, esp. 131). This suggests that geographical targeting was not the norm. It is also significant that during the parallel coin production at Rome and Lugdunum under Nero, there was little systematic difference between the two mints in terms of iconography, despite the fact that the two mints supplied different regions (the coins of Lugdunum are not surprisingly mainly found north of the Alps) (Sutherland 1976: 118–19; for limited variation: MacDowall 1979: 130). By contrast, in the Flavian period the iconography of the two mints does vary somewhat (Kemmers 2006: 241–2). This again suggests that concern for geographical targeting was not a dominant or consistent feature, although it may have been a factor at times.

Examples can be cited to support geographical targeting in some contexts, especially from the Flavio-Trajanic period. It has been demonstrated, for example, that bronze in 71 CE tended to have iconography weighted towards military types in military regions (Lower Rhine: Securitas, Victoria, Aequitas; Wales: Aquila [Eagle], Victoria, Securitas) whereas bronze from Italy consisted of a higher proportion of peaceable types (Roma, Aequitas, Pax, Concordia, Judaea) (Kemmers 2006: 219–44; 2014). This analysis is somewhat skewed because comparisons are not like for like, in that the mixed bronze coins in Italy had a higher percentage of the largest denomination (sestertii) and relatively fewer of the lower value asses and dupondii found in substantial quantities in military contexts, so we are not looking at a purely geographical phenomenon. The difference, however, remains significant and interesting, and other cases have been detected (Elkins 2011; 2017).

The topic of targeting is clearly important in helping us to understand the intent behind, and potentially also the effect of, the dissemination of imperial images. A reasonable conclusion would be that geographical targeting was occasional rather than systematic. It is interesting that the majority of plausible examples identified so far belong to the Flavio-Trajanic period. It is notable that this is also the period in which there is most evidence for the mint of Rome producing local-style coinages, sometimes in Greek, for circulation in the East, and for similar centralised production of coinage for other regions at Antioch and Alexandria (*RPC* II: p.11; *RPC* III: p.798; Howgego 1994: 16; Butcher 2004: 34–7, 77–8, 81–92). It has been plausibly suggested, in this connection, that the need to recall and remint silver coinage intensively in this period may have led to a particular concern for, and expertise in, the distribution of coinage (Butcher and Woytek 2018: 272–5). So perhaps the Flavio-Trajanic concern with coin distribution also led to an exceptional level of audience targeting at the same time. Both the extent and chronological development of targeting clearly warrant larger and more systematic investigation.

New coins were mixed with a mass of old coinage in circulation, although whether this resulted in new messages being diluted or being reinforced by being set in a tradition of similar messages is a moot point. Whatever the case, the immense production of coin at the start of reigns clearly suggests a need to publicise the new emperor, presumably in connection with accession donatives. The scale might be staggering. The thousand obverse dies used for the gold and silver coinage of the short-lived emperor Otho suggest that the mint of Rome was able to produce something like 20 million coins in a period no longer than 94 days (Butcher et al. 2009). Calculations for the reign of Victorinus (269–71 CE) suggest a production level for radiates of the order of 48 million a week (Bland 2012: 521).

The archaeology of coinage

Coins stand in the archaeological record for whole systems of doing things, for ways people relate to each other and to things, and for ways of conceptualising the world (Howgego 2013: 19). It is therefore potentially of great interest to explore their archaeology. There are now online databases for hoards (https://chre.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/) for the whole Empire and for single finds for Britain (https://finds.org.uk/) and good explorations in print of how to interpret them (e.g. Walton 2012; Guest 2015; Mairat et al. 2022). Archaeological site finds are another matter.

Archaeological sites mostly produce bronze coins to the extent that archaeological numismatics has been branded ‘small change studies’ (Butcher 2016: 225). Precious metal coinages are systematically under-represented, owing to the greater care taken not to lose them and the trouble taken to recover them. This is not the case with hoards, which provide the vast majority of surviving gold and silver coins. Disaster sites are also relatively immune (not, of course, wholly immune) from the bias towards bronze coins, revealing the dominance of gold and silver by value. Accordingly, precious metal accounted for 98 per cent by value of the coinage at the military disaster site at Kalkriese in 9 CE, with gold and silver making an equal contribution, and at the volcanic eruption site at Pompeii of 79 CE precious metal accounted for 93 per cent by value, with gold at 61 per cent and silver at 32 per cent (von Kaenel 1999). A disaster site such as Pompeii may also reveal coins in use contexts which are not preserved elsewhere: bodies with purses, strong boxes from villas, tills from shops or inns, and the like (Duncan-Jones 2003; Andreau 2008).

Contextual studies of coin finds are potentially of considerable interest for illuminating coin use, but they face formidable challenges. Some such studies are very helpful. For example, coin finds from the civilian settlement attached to the army camp at Nijmegen, 70–105 CE, reveal an association of coins with houses and with roads, presumably in connection with shops (Kemmers 2006), and the detailed study of one insula at Pompeii demonstrates the heaviest coin loss in areas of commercial transactions (bars, workshops, shops), with coins present, but in smaller numbers, in domestic spaces (Hobbs 2013). This type of study is not unproblematic. It is clear that the process of site formation may be critical, with finds dictated by building and demolition phases (Butcher 2003: 28, 29, 107; Ellis 2016; Stroobants 2017; 2018). Disturbances of various kinds make residuality (coins not found in the original context of deposition) a serious problem. Thus, the potential of contextual archaeology remains unclear. In general, the benefits of such studies are more readily apparent for contexts with mud rather than paved floors, as the coins dropped were more likely to remain *in situ*. This is another area of study which would repay systematic consideration.

Analysis of coin finds by category of site is potentially illuminating for the Roman world, as it has been for the Iron Age (Haselgrove 2005). For example, the Rural Settlement of Roman Britain Project has been able to document a hierarchy of coin use in the countryside (Smith et al. 2016: 12, 397, and e.g. 185–8). Coins were found at 86 per cent of villas, villages and roadside settlements, but at only 42 per cent of farmsteads (small rural settlements without 'villa' architecture). Among farmsteads, coins were more likely to be found at complex farmsteads than at the simpler category of enclosed farm. The degree to which coins were associated with excavated rural sites also varied by region, being much lower to the north and north-west of Britain than in the south. This type of approach allows a more nuanced appreciation of rural monetisation than would be possible from documentary sources alone (Howgego 1992: 20–2).

Finally, it may be worth asking if one could one tell from coins that you were *outside* the empire. The answer is broadly 'Yes'. You would find coins still in use that had long disappeared from circulation within the empire, much less small change, a range of local imitations primarily in silver, and far more coins pierced for use as adornment (Bursche et al. 2008).

Conclusion

The fact that coin profiles are significantly different outside the Roman Empire reinforces the credibility of the attempt, here and elsewhere, to characterise that Empire through its coinage. As a material expression of money, coinage was implicated in everything from the conceptual and symbolic to the practical and behavioural. Four main approaches have been briefly essayed here: the structure of coinage (for much of the time including both imperial and local elements); how money was used and controlled; how imperial power was presented on the coinage; and the significance of coinage in the archaeological record for illuminating variation and change in coin use in different contexts throughout the empire. Together these approaches help to elucidate the multiple ways in which the Roman Empire was materialised through its coinages.

Illustrations

All illustrations of coins are taken from the archives of the Classical Numismatic Group, with their kind permission. Further details can be found in the following permanent links:

Figure 3.1: http://www.coinarchives.com/a/openlink.php?l=517958|929|6|98a8aa29a31de39f132e2e5bdb4a8be6

Figure 3.2: http://www.coinarchives.com/a/openlink.php?l=92521|99|381|321354882c0ad3d627cebd93b031bda0

Figure 3.3: http://www.coinarchives.com/a/openlink.php?l=164708|202|661|4ce88147eccf3e2aa45b66635f764de9

Figure 3.4: http://www.coinarchives.com/a/openlink.php?l=269687|408|135|a2cb7a8294da13dc1959e45bedfb57f9

Figure 3.5: http://www.coinarchives.com/a/openlink.php?l=629772|1147|505|11b1e4abc4b164e30078f0ae0770f4c6

Figure 3.6: http://www.coinarchives.com/a/openlink.php?l=667499|1222|749|fc2a133e35fd1c9099a0d6677563bac9

Figure 3.7: http://www.coinarchives.com/a/openlink.php?l=629921|1147|654|cd49951184ed14c957f55050bc5c7fd2

Figure 3.8: http://www.coinarchives.com/a/openlink.php?l=388047|700|768|9ae2ecad047bf21dee98556fe7c0d313

Figure 3.9a: http://www.coinarchives.com/a/openlink.php?l=729247|1350|266|af220d87f2ac178872921084327b74ca

Figure 3.9b: http://www.coinarchives.com/a/openlink.php?l=151916|181|891|08c0bd0303052ea10aa7a2e30fe03a10

Table 3.1 Aureus: http://www.coinarchives.com/a/openlink.php?l=1160254|2332|577|24a1ba7f15a09a9b79446f30913bcafd

Denarius: http://www.coinarchives.com/a/openlink.php?l=958739|1858|594|42c604f93ae985d777084608896597df

Sestertius: http://www.coinarchives.com/a/openlink.php?l=1382039|2796|367|28934ecd91f21943f20c05c3c3c20aa8

Dupondius: http://www.coinarchives.com/a/openlink.php?l=951482|1839|674|1b83c54dbc709165cce31f879e771e74

As: http://www.coinarchives.com/a/openlink.php?l=846604|1591|498|8e07b77e13aabe6a23723588341f883a

Semis: http://www.coinarchives.com/a/openlink.php?l=48855|52|1247|35bb97f361bcca162714c1c41fcfa775

Quadrans: http://www.coinarchives.com/a/openlink.php?l=397489|719|379|24b8d54851518c1fdba93cc0573a9852

Abbreviations

RPC II: Andrew Burnett, Michel Amandry and Ian Carradice, 1999. *Roman Provincial Coinage, vol. II*: *From Vespasian to Domitian (AD 69–96)*. London/Paris: The British Museum Press and the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

RPC III: Michel Amandry and Andrew Burnett. 2015. *Roman Provincial Coinage, vol. III: Nerva, Trajan and Hadrian (AD 96–138)*. London/Paris: The British Museum Press and the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

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