

CHAPTER 23

ANTONINE COINAGE

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UNDER the Antonine emperors, imperial and provincial coinage both largely follow the pattern of prior periods. Nevertheless, there are certain significant developments both in minting practices and iconographic representations; the period can be understood as one of transition, linking the high empire with the third century. There is a trend of decline in the weight and fineness of the denarius and a similar decline in the weight of the aureus; at the same time, smaller bronze denominations are minted with less frequency at Rome. Even more provincial mints appear, and there is significant production of precious metal coinage at regional centers like Caesarea in Cappadocia. Notably, from 147/148, imperial coins consistently record the tribunician year of the emperor, and coinage in the name of the empresses markedly increases. These major changes and the other hallmarks of Antonine coinage can be contextualized within three interlinking categories: coin production and output, changes in the presentation of the emperor and his family, and Rome's changing relationship with the provinces and the interrelationships between provincial cities. Here, greater attention is given to the latter two categories, and particular emphasis is placed on the utility of investigating provincial and imperial coinage in tandem.

The definitive treatment of the provincial coinage, the fourth volume in the *Roman Provincial Coinage* series, is still forthcoming, but the cataloguing of specimens is complete, and the database can be accessed online (<http://rpc.ashmus.ox.ac.uk>). The volume itself will follow the model of earlier volumes in the series and thus provide detailed discussion of each mint and region. The temporary ID numbers used on the online database will be replaced with a systematic numbering system that reflects mint attribution and the chronology of the coinage. The imperial coinage is treated in the third volume of *RIC*. Although *RIC* was intended as a standard typological catalogue, *BMCRE IV* has come to be preferred by many, given its

extensive plates, more careful descriptions, and more detailed introductory sections. Also of particular value is the well-illustrated catalogue of the Glasgow collection, which contains a conspectus of types that takes into account published material and specimens examined in other cabinets in addition to the Glasgow collection (Robertson 1971). This conspectus brought to light a number of types not covered by Mattingly or older catalogues and also takes into account Hill's research on the undated coinage from the first 10 years of Pius's reign (Hill 1970). Szaivert's more recent catalogue of the coinage of Marcus Aurelius, Lucius Verus, and Commodus has been criticized for both conceptual and practical difficulties and need only concern those interested in the debate over the organization of the Roman mint (Szaivert 1986; Metcalf 1988). Those engaged in more advanced study will still want to be familiar with Strack's landmark treatment of the coins of Antoninus Pius (1937).

PRODUCTION

Since AD 85, the denarius had retained a purity of approximately 93% silver but was reduced to 84% in 148 and then continued to slide until 195, when it was substantially reduced to a little over 50% (Walker 1977). Although such figures derive from surface analyses, which have been shown to suggest greater variation in quality than was in fact the case and to overestimate silver content (Butcher and Ponting 1997), the overall trend toward a reduction in fineness is beyond doubt.

Besides reductions in silver quantity, the Roman mint also managed to conserve silver through reducing the weight of the coins produced. This is generally expressed as a ratio of coins to the Roman pound. During most of the Antonine period, the denarius was struck at 96 to the pound, as it had been in the preceding period as well. However, based on evidence of the Viuz hoard (Pflaum 1981) it appears that there were serious changes under Commodus, with targets of 102 to the pound in 180–186 and 114 in 187–192. Also under Commodus, the target weight of the aureus drops from 44 to the pound to 44.5 to the pound (of 322.8 g: Duncan-Jones 1994: 214 with 2001: 77 n. 8).

It is possible that a desire to conserve precious metals also accounts for the unique ratio of gold to silver in the minting of quinarii under Antoninus Pius. For his reign there are 41 known gold types and only 8 silver. His is the only reign in which gold outnumbers silver. One possible explanation is that the gold quinarius may have been used as a donative in certain cases where recipients might have otherwise received an aureus (King 2007).

It is usually argued that such monetary manipulations reflect increased state expenditure (Howgego 1995: 115–121). Reasons for increased state expenditure need not be limited to military campaigns, but may also include extensive benefactions such as those associated with the ascension of a new emperor and key anniversaries.

Fluctuations in the availability of precious metals may also have played a part. Regular substantial payments to peoples beyond the borders of the empire were used from the first century to buy off threatened attacks, and the frequency of this practice seems to have increased from the time of Marcus Aurelius onward. Such expenditure reduced the quantity of precious metals in circulation, and thus available for recoinage. Perhaps more critical was reduced mining or access to mines. The silver mining settlement at Riotinto (Spain) collapsed around 160–170, and the Marcomannic invasion of 167 led to the abandonment of key gold mines in Dacia (Howgego 1992; and now Wilson 2007). The Antonine plague has been suggested as a possible cause of the collapse of mining in Spain and perhaps had a wider effect on coin production in this period (Duncan-Jones 1996), but the evidence is thus far inconclusive.

The overall pattern of decline was, of course, obvious to those handling the coin, but it is more difficult to assert how aware individuals would be of each specific change. Fronto in a letter to Marcus uses coinage as an elaborate metaphor for why the emperor should prefer more traditional vocabulary in his speeches and edicts: "Stick to the old coinage. Coins of lead and debased in whatever way are more common in these recent issues than in old ones, produced by ancient skills and stamped then with the name of Perperna [sc. Republican coinage]. What then? Should I not prefer for myself a coin of Marcus or Verus or Pius, impure as it is, contaminated, wretched and spotty, in fact spottier than a nurse's apron?" (quoted in Duncan-Jones 2005: 464, where it is used to argue that the emperor had little to do with the production of coin). Duncan-Jones assumes that a reference to debasement would otherwise be shameful and insulting, but we must be careful in reconstructing the nuances of court manners, especially when considering elaborate rhetorical statements. Note that the comparison is over a very wide chronological scale. Fronto is not suggesting that the coin of the Antonine age is markedly worse than its immediate predecessors, but only that it is not as valuable as the earliest of Roman coins, indeed most of which had already been driven out of circulation in accordance with Gresham's law.

The debasement and weight reductions of the denarii in the Antonine period fit the overall pattern of Roman coinage in the first three centuries of the empire, in which the rising production of debased silver denominations leads to a reduction in the bronze coinage. The Antonine period is a midpoint in this process, during which the denarius takes on a more dominant role in the coinage. Dupondii and asses had become increasingly rare, and the last semisses bearing the emperor's portrait are minted under Pius. It is theorized that the asses continued to be minted only for ceremonial purpose, particularly for largesse at the New Year. There is still, of course, regular minting of the sestertius.

As to provincial coinage, four groups can be differentiated: coins of "client kings," "provincial issues," *koinon* coins, and civic coins (Heuchert 2005: 30). Bronze was struck in all four groups, and by far the most plentiful provincial coins are the civic bronzes (Butcher 1988). Provincial issues were produced in sufficient quantities to supply much of the silver for large parts of the eastern empire. The denarius was a universal coin, circulating throughout the empire, but provincial silver coin-

age in other denominations tended to circulate within limited regional areas. There is a strong correlation between military campaigns and the production of provincial silver. Presumably this coinage was under imperial or provincial control and on occasion soldiers were paid with these regional currencies. Precious metal was also coined by client kings, but frequency and type of production varied from kingdom to kingdom. On occasion civic authorities also struck silver, but with great irregularity and in small quantities. *Koina* (federations of cities) were primarily concerned with the imperial cult, a fact reflected on some of their coinage, but largely their coinage follows the same patterns as civic coinage.

Alexandria continued in the steady production of both base metal coinage and debased precious metal coinage, often referred to as billon. These provincial issues served the closed economic system of Egypt. Only two developments in the Antonine period deserve particular note here: the last nome coins are minted under Antoninus Pius in the eighth regnal year, and there is an unprecedented break in the production of billon under Marcus for regnal years 11–20 inclusive (170/171–179/810), with the exception of year 17, in which there are issues for both Marcus and Commodus (Milne 1971). The inclusion of regnal years and steady production makes the mint at Alexandria an important source of comparative data when studying the imperial coinage.

Besides Alexandria, by far the most substantial “provincial issues” of the Antonine period are those associated with Caesarea in Cappadocia. These coins have Greek legends, imperial portraiture on the obverse, and most typically a representation of Mount Argaeus on the reverse, but no ethnic. The standard denomination is the didrachm, but drachms are minted under Pius, and tridrachms are minted briefly in about 175/176 under Marcus and Commodus as Caesar. Up to the sole reign of Commodus, the didrachm was minted on an approximate 6.6 g standard, but then it was lightened by about 33%. This adjustment may have been an attempt to maintain parity between the Cappadocian drachm and the denarius, which (as already noted) had been steadily declining in purity. Notable are the coins issued under Marcus and Verus between 161 and 169. The pattern of die linkages indicates a very intensive coinage closely concentrated in time, and the sheer size of the issue makes it the largest produced for Cappadocia up to this date. It seems reasonable to connect this increase in production with the military campaigns of the period. A similar pattern of obverse types and a similarity of usage with respect to die axis have led to the suggestion that these coins were struck at Rome and transported to Cappadocia. It has been demonstrated via hybrids (specimens with imperial obverse types and Caesarean reverse types) that in earlier periods the Roman mint did indeed produce such “provincial issues” (Metcalf 1996).

The other silver provincial issues of the Antonine period are much more sporadic. A substantial series of tetradrachms are associated with Antioch on the Orontes (McAlee 2007). Although these tetradrachms are significantly lighter than those issued under Hadrian and Trajan, 12.65 g as compared to 14.00 or 14.60 g, they are 80% silver, an improvement on the 65–70% fineness under Hadrian, but still below the Trajanic levels of 85% purity (Harl 1996: table 5.2 after Walker 1977). The standard

reverse design is an eagle standing on the leg and thigh of an animal. The obverses display portraits of Marcus or a youthful Commodus. The inclusion of tribunician years on most of the types allows us to date the silver to 175–179 (fig. 23.1). By contrast, there are bronze issues of Antioch on the Orontes from the whole of the Antonine period, some pseudo-autonomous, some with imperial portraits on both sides. This limited minting of silver in Syria during this period is perhaps attributable to the still ample supply of Trajanic tetradrachms in the region.

Another short-lived series of provincial silver is a series of coins produced in Mesopotamia near the end of the Parthian War. The obverses have well-rendered imperial portraits of Marcus, Verus, Faustina II, or Lucilla, with the imperial titulature in Greek. The reverse types are for the most part standing female divinities or a personification of captured Armenia, a direct echo of a type produced by the imperial mint. The reverse legends celebrate a victory of the Romans, $\Upsilon\text{ΠΕΡ ΝΙΚΗΣ ΡΩΜΑΙΩΝ}$ or $\Upsilon\text{ΠΕΡ ΝΙΚΗΣ ΤΩΝ ΚΥΡΙΩΝ}$. Some 37 types are known from over 50 specimens (fig. 23.2). The denomination is not obvious. Based on Walker’s analyses, these coins with 2.24 g of silver content would be significantly overvalued if they were tarified as denarii, given that the denarius does not fall below 2.50 g of silver content during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, but they would have slightly more silver than the Cappadocian drachms minted at the same time (1977: 111).

The only gold minted outside Rome in the Antonine period was issued by the Bosporan kings, Eupator (154–170) and Sauromates II (174–210). The standard type has a portrait of the king on the obverse and a portrait of the emperor on the reverse. The obverse legend gives the king’s name and title, but the emperor is not identified by legend, and instead the reverse legend bears a date (fig. 23.3). There are at least 47 known types identified from over 300 specimens. Types are extant from nearly every year of both reigns, but there is a noticeable gap between the reigns. The last known coins of Eupator are dated ΖΕΥ (local era year 467 = 170) and the first known coins of Sauromates II are dated ΑΟΥ (local era year 471 = 174). The Bosporan kings



Fig. 23.1



Fig. 23.2



Fig. 23.3

minted no silver but did produce an undated pseudo-autonomous bronze coinage. Roman coins do not seem to have circulated in the Bosporus, and few coins of the Bosporus are found outside the region. Metallurgical analysis shows some fluctuation in the purity of the gold, but this seems to reflect local events rather than empire-wide trends. Frolova concludes that the currency of the Bosporus "reflected the financial and economic policy of each of the Bosporan rulers, and in all likelihood did not depend upon the general course of the evolution of the currency of Rome" (1979: 74).

We can contrast this regular independent minting, with the evidence from Edessa, the only other client kingdom minting in the Antonine period. Although the Abgarid dynasty had controlled the city since the mid-first century BC, there was no numismatic production there until the Parthians took control of the city and installed a puppet ruler, Wa'el bar Sahru (163–165). The bronze coinage of Wa'el bar Sahru (*BMC Mesopotamia* 1–3) has legends in Estranghelo (Syriac) and ruler portraits that bear a close resemblance to the earliest coins of Ma'nu VIII after his restoration by the Romans (*RPC IV* temp. nos. 6484–6485; figs. 23.4). While Ma'nu VIII and his successors were clearly influenced by the Parthian suzerainty in the style of their bronze coinage, there is an equally clear Roman influence in the short-lived silver coinage of Edessa. Ma'nu VIII produced a series of silver coins, perhaps valued as denarii although they are underweight, around 167–169. The obverses have well-rendered imperial portraits of Marcus, Verus, Faustina II, or Lucilla, but the imperial titulature is given in Greek. The reverses display familiar standing divinities such as Ceres and Juno with clear identifying attributes, but the reverse legends read ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΜΑΝΝΟΣ ΦΙΛΟΡΩΜΑΙΣ, thus celebrating Ma'nu's status as a friend of the Romans (*BMC Mesopotamia* 5–9, pl. XIII.10–13; fig. 23.5). Since the beginning of the last century scholars have wanted to see a connection between this issue and the provincial silver coinage of the uncertain Mesopotamian mint discussed above, but no definitive connections, such as die links, have been found (Hill 1916, followed by Walker 1977).



Fig. 23.4



Fig. 23.5

Generalizing about the production of civic coinage is notoriously difficult (Harl 1996: 106–117, 1997). Under the Antonines, more than 380 mints were operating in the eastern half of the empire, approximately a hundred more mints than in the preceding period under the adoptive emperors. As mentioned, civic coinage was almost exclusively bronze. Only five civic mints struck silver in the Antonine period, and these on a very limited basis: Amisus in Pontus in 137/138 under Pius, Stratonicea in Caria under Pius, Nicopolis in Epirus under Pius and for the deified Faustina I, Mopsus in Cilicia under Pius, Marcus, and Verus, and Germe in Mysia for Faustina II. The period saw the beginning of two broad shifts in the production of civic bronzes. First, there appears to be a change at many cities from a Greek denominational system based on the obol to a more Roman system based on the assarion. The best understood instance of this phenomenon is the conversion of the obol into a 2-assaria piece at Smyrna under Antoninus Pius (Klose 1987: 103–115). Chios is one of the few cities to label its denominations; here under the Antonines we see the two systems coexisting (Mavrogordato 1915–1918). By the third century, the Greek system would completely give way to the Roman (Johnston 2007). Second, the emergence of a workshop system is correlated with the growing number of cities producing coinage (Kraft 1972: 60–66). Although more fully developed in the Severan period, by 175 die sharing was established in northwest Asia Minor and by the end of the reign of Commodus was well established from Nicomedia in the north to Ephesus in the south (Johnston 1982–1983: map 1).

On the whole, however, civic mints operated independently and sometimes sporadically, reacting to local concerns that are often no longer recoverable from the numismatic or historical record (Weiss 2000, 2005). Nevertheless, within this period scholars have had some success identifying regional numismatic responses to military-political phenomena. Ziegler has demonstrated a correlation between troop movements and minting by cities along the principal roads (1996). The sudden influx of people and wealth in the form of imperial precious metal coinage created in turn a demand for small change that was met by the local mints. Because of the number of mints in northern Asia Minor and Cilicia that date their coins, the close correlation can be established for both west-east movement of troops for Lucius Verus's Parthian War and the east-west movements required by the Marcommanic War of Marcus Aurelius. Less definitive evidence has been found for a numismatic response to Marcus Aurelius's visit to the east following the revolt of C. Avidius Cassius (Gitler 1990–1991).

DEVELOPING THE DYNASTY

After Hadrian's chosen heir, L. Aelius Caesar, died on the last day of 137, Hadrian selected as his new successor T. Aurelius Fulvus Boionius Arrius Antoninus, a distinguished but by no means exceptional senator. Antoninus was a mature man of 51

when he was adopted by the 61-year-old Hadrian on 25 February 138. To further provide for the succession, Hadrian had Antoninus adopt two young men of prestigious lineage; neither was a biological relation of Antoninus or Hadrian. One was the approximately eight-year-old son of the recently deceased Aelius, the future emperor Lucius Verus. The other, the future emperor Marcus Aurelius, was 17 at the time of his adoption and the grandson of M. Annius Verus, the only man to have held three consulships under Hadrian. Antoninus had previously married M. Annius Verus's daughter, Annia Faustina, and thus he was already the uncle by marriage of this second young man. Hadrian had envisioned that Antoninus's only surviving daughter, Faustina II, would eventually marry Verus, but in fact she married Aurelius, and their daughter, Lucilla, married Verus. Commodus, the son of Marcus Aurelius and Faustina II, was the only successor to the imperial throne in this period to have a biological relation with his predecessors. This family was almost wholly Hadrian's construction, connected more via adoption and marriage than biology (Garzetti 1974). Nevertheless, the dynasty went to great lengths to represent themselves as a cohesive and exemplary Roman family, and these types of representations were readily adopted in the provinces as well.

After Hadrian's death, Antoninus faced serious senatorial opposition; the senate sought to nullify all of Hadrian's acts and block his deification. Hill has documented how this left a noticeable impact on the imperial coinage (1970: 78–89). The most complex aspect of the imperial coinage of the first year of Antoninus's reign is deducing the chronological arrangement of the obverse titulature. Immediately after Hadrian's death, the mint produced coins that celebrate Antoninus's honors, including his designation for a second consulship, assumption of the role of Pontifex Maximus, and the title of Augustus. As the conflict with the senate reached its height, all these honors disappear from the coinage: if Hadrian's acts are invalid, Antoninus was neither legal heir nor consul designate. After a threat to abdicate, the Senate relented. First, Augustus and Pontifex Maximus reappear on the coins. Then Antoninus starts using the name Hadrianus and is granted the name Pius. Finally, he is redesignated consul for the year 139.

After the conflict with the Senate was resolved, a very limited issue of aurei and denarii appears with consecration imagery (*BMCRE* 32–35); notably, there is no accompanying bronze. As Mattingly has well observed, the reverse types—an eagle atop a globe or Hadrian being carried heavenward by an eagle—commemorate only the change in status and not the earthly celebrations. This may be contrasted with the elaborate numismatic references to the funerary celebrations and memorial building projects at the death of subsequent emperors and empresses. (For the deified Antoninus, see *BMCRE* 41–77, 870–893; for the deified Verus, *BMCRE* 502–505, 1358–1370; for the deified Marcus, *BMCRE* 11–28, 385–405. For general discussion, see Schulten 1979.)

Damascus is the only provincial mint known to have directly celebrated Hadrian's deification on its coinage with an obverse type of ΘΕΟΣ ΑΔΡΙΑΝΟΣ (*RPC IV* temp. no. 8598 and 8614; fig. 23.6). This issue of Damascus is made more exceptional by the lack of provincial coinage celebrating the deification of any subsequent



Fig. 23.6

Antonine emperor, although there are a number that commemorate the deified Faustina I. In 138/139, the mint at Alexandria employed a reverse type for Pius depicting a phoenix crowned with a nimbus and the legend ΑΙΩΝ (*RPC IV* temp. no. 16127, 14232, 13418–13419, and 13414); this should also be connected with the deification of Hadrian. Similarly, there may be a rare type of Pius from the imperial mint with a personification of *aeternitas* (*BMCRE*, li, 11). A small number of provincial mints seem to assimilate Pius's portrait to that of Hadrian (*RPC IV* temp. no. 3595, 5073, 10697, 10761). In some cases, this may just be a byproduct of the slow dissemination of new portrait types, but in others it may potentially be a celebration of the connection between the old and new emperors.

Other numismatic attempts to emphasize the relationship between Hadrian and Pius are more subtle. As a recent study has shown, *pietas* is a consistently prevalent reverse type; no doubt because “all three aspects of imperial *pietas*—the religious, the dynastic, and what might be termed the paternalistic—expressed values that in one way or another served as justifications of imperial rule” (Noreña 2001: 158). That is to say, *pietas* encompassed the emperor's responsibilities to the gods, to his “father” and predecessors on the imperial throne, and to his social dependents, namely all those living under imperial rule. We may presume that Antoninus was pleased that his new name, Pius, evoked all these aspects, but it was certainly widely understood that he had been awarded the name as a sign of his filial devotion. Given this, it is probably correct to attribute special significance the appearance of *pietas* on the early coins of his reign. Some confirmation may be found in the unusual break from tradition in the reverse types of the Cappadocian didrachms; for a short time at the beginning of Antoninus's reign we find *eusebeia* used instead of Mount Argaeus (*RPC IV* temp. nos. 6898, 6913, and 6916–6919; fig. 23.7). The personification of the Greek equivalent to *pietas* is named in the legend so as to remove any doubt as to her identity.



Fig. 23.7

The strongest dynastic influence on the coins is seen in references to the crown princes and the women of the imperial household. Marcus was Caesar for the whole of Pius's reign, and this allowed for the development of an elaborate coinage in his name both at Rome and in the provinces; 56% of the provincial mints that issued coins during the reign of Pius also at some point during that reign produced types representing Marcus as Caesar. By contrast, Commodus was only Caesar for two years, 175–177, before being elevated to Augustus; thus while only 17% of the total mints active under Marcus struck coins for Commodus as Caesar, 42% struck for Commodus at some point prior to his sole reign.

Although minting with the prospective heir on the obverse is clearly supporting a dynastic program in itself (on portrait development see Fittschen 1999), there are a number of types that more emphatically connect the reigning Augustus and his chosen successor. In 139 and 140, before Marcus appears on the obverse, his portrait is used extensively as a reverse type for Pius on both the precious and base metal denominations of the imperial mint (*BMCRE* 125–131, 146–171, 1208–1225; figs. 23.8). This type influenced a relatively small number of provincial mints, including provincial issues from Alexandria (Egypt), Antioch (Syria), and Cyprus, and a handful of civic issues (fig. 23.9). Much rarer are imperial issues under Marcus with Commodus's portrait as the reverse type (*BMCRE* 625); only Aelia Capitolina is known to have directly imitated this type in the provinces. Other representations on provincial coinage of Marcus as Caesar as a reverse type for Pius seem to have no direct precedent on the imperial coinage. In 143/144 and again in 147/148, Alexandria produced types depicting Pius and Marcus clasping hands (*RPC IV* temp. no. 13514, 13612, 14266, 14845, 14846, 14896), and Alexandria,



Fig. 23.8

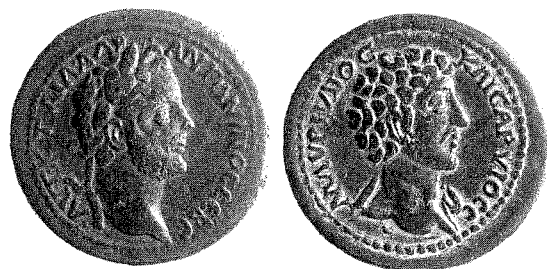


Fig. 23.9

Amastris, Ephesus, and Nicaea all produced reverse types showing Marcus on horseback. The imperial mint also issued a few innovative types; notable are the representations of Pius with Marcus and Verus in a triumphal procession (*BMCRE* 239; fig. 23.10) and Marcus and Pius as joint consuls (*BMCRE* 1293–1297). The former is a very rare numismatic reference to Verus prior to his elevation to the status of co-emperor by Marcus.



Fig. 23.10

In the latter half of Hadrian's reign, perhaps from his *decennalia* onward, the Roman mint began producing substantial coinage in the name of the Augusta. This pattern continued and accelerated under the Antonines. Duncan-Jones has used hoard evidence to attempt to quantify the scale of production (2006; table 23.1 reproduces his results).

Roughly summarized, under Hadrian and Commodus about one in seven coins was minted for the Augusta, but under Pius and Marcus this doubled to about two in seven. Duncan-Jones speculates that this pattern might be attributable to there being coinage for two imperial women under Pius (Faustina I and II) and Marcus (Faustina II and Lucilla), whereas under Hadrian and Commodus there was only one Augusta (Sabina and Crispina, respectively). There is no analogous published hoard evidence to supply a direct comparison, but some idea of production patterns can be ascertained from the data collected for *RPC IV*.

Table 23.2 reveals that almost half of the provincial mints operating during the reign of Pius and Marcus produced coins bearing the portrait of the Augusta, but less than a quarter of those under Commodus did so. However, far fewer types were produced that this might suggest. Under Pius and Marcus about one in seven provincial coin types had a female on the obverse, and this drops by about half under Commodus to one in fourteen. Most striking is the way the halving of the production of "female" coin under Commodus appears consistent across the imperial and provincial mints. Moreover, the sharp reduction in the number of provincial mints choosing to mint for the Augusta at all suggests that the reason for the downturn may have less to do with the number of Augustae and more to do with the degree to

Table 23.1 "Female" coin as a percentage of all coin in four reigns

	Silver	Bronze	Gold
Hadrian 128–138	14	7	16
Pius	39	30	30
Marcus	34	42	29
Commodus	12	15	3

Source: After Duncan-Jones 2006: table 1.

Table 23.2 Percent of observed "female" to "male" provincial coinage per reign

	Pius	Marcus	Commodus
Mints	48	47	23
Types	13	14	6
Specimens*	14	13	6

* The RPC database recorded each observed specimen in the 10 core collections (New York, London, Oxford, Cambridge, Glasgow, Copenhagen, Paris, Berlin, Munich, and Vienna) and in the published literature. However, as has long been observed, a museum collection is not a random sampling, as a curator will choose rarer specimens over those already represented in the collection. Thus, they are poor substitute for hoard evidence to deduce the scale of production.

which the role of the female members of the imperial house was publicly emphasized.

The dating of "female" coins presents a particular challenge, given the lack of tribunician years and other dating criteria such as consulships and other honors recorded on these coins. The ever-changing hairstyles of women of the imperial house provide perhaps the best hope for a relative, and perhaps even absolute, chronology (Fittschen 1996; Bartman 2001). Fittschen's landmark study of the nine hairstyles of Faustina II correlates each new type to the birth of a child (1982). His typology has been widely acclaimed even when his exact dating has been criticized (Ameling 1992; da Costa 1999). It may prove that the dated provincial coinage help to refine the use of hairstyles for dating: Costa notes that coins of Ascalon bearing the date BEC (local era year 262 = 158/159; see Kushnir-Stein 2005 for discussion of city eras) show Faustina II with the seventh hairstyle, which Fittschen had associated with 161 and the birth of the twins L. Aurelius Commodus and T. Aurelius Fulvus (1999: 7; *RPC IV* temp no. 6394).

The dated coins of Alexandria may also help critique studies of the imperial mint alone. Mattingly suggested that the longer legend LVCILLAE AVG ANTONINI AVG F might have postdated the death of Verus, given the way it stresses Lucilla's relationship with Marcus (1968: cxiii), but legends modeled on this longer title are used at Alexandria for Lucilla throughout Verus's life. Similarly, coins for Lucilla only begin at Alexandria in 165/166 after her marriage to Verus, making unlikely Szaivert's hypothesis that the imperial coinage begins some five years earlier with her betrothal (1980). Although Lucilla's coinage at Alexandria does not continue beyond the death of Verus, other eastern mints did strike for her through the end of Marcus's reign. (175: Smyrna under strategos P. Ail. Arizelos and Byzantium under second archon Memmios Markos Heros; 177: Lysias under Fla. Attalos and Byzantium also commemorating the deified Faustina II; 178: Byzantium under Ailios Pontikos Heros; 178–180: Tomis based on shared dies.)

It is usually assumed that the glorification of the female members of the imperial house is linked primarily to the succession, that is, their role in producing biological heirs or marrying adoptive ones. In such a framework, any representation

of a female member of the imperial house takes on dynastic significance. Like the continued minting for Lucilla after the death of Verus, the case of Faustina I and her extensive posthumous coinage requires a more nuanced interpretation. Her posthumous commemoration demonstrates that the role of the emperor's wife was not simply to produce an heir but also to connect the family in other ways: she was the mother of Faustina the younger and the aunt of Marcus Aurelius. The consecration types of Faustina I and Faustina II last long after their deaths, stretching to the end of their respective husbands' reigns. This means that consecration types in the name of the Augustae are far more numerous in this period than those for the emperors. This is true not only at the imperial mint but also in the provinces; while there is little to no trace of deified emperors on provincial coinage, at least 15 mints struck for the deified Faustina I. While commemoration of one's predecessor was part of one's filial obligation and could smooth the succession, each emperor also needed to establish his own merit. By contrast, the Augusta as a member of the imperial household was virtually an extension of the emperor himself, part of his identity. The celebration of the Augusta allowed the emperor to associate the imperial household with certain Roman virtues (Keltanen 2002). The correlation between the emperor, his household, and these virtues was in no way weakened if emphasized on posthumous coinage. To a certain extent, death provided additional opportunities to celebrate the Augusta's characteristics and the *pietas* of the emperor in commemorating them.

Three key examples will suffice. Shortly after the death of Faustina I, Pius established the *puellae Faustinianae*, a group of girls eligible for alimentary support (*SHA Pius* 8.1). This public benefaction was celebrated on both the gold and silver coinage of the deified Faustina I (*BMCRE* 324–325; fig. 23.11). Both the deification and the charitable establishment demonstrate Pius's *pietas* in respect to his dead wife. The nature of the public benefaction perhaps celebrates certain charitable virtues of Faustina, but the coin type implicitly emphasizes how Pius's own generosity benefits the Roman public. A sestertius from Pius's third consulship displays on the reverse the emperor and Faustina I clasping hands (*BMCRE* 1236–1240; fig. 23.12). The emperor holds a statue of *concordia*, the identification being confirmed by the legend. Under the clasped hands of the imperial couple a much smaller Roman couple is represented clasping hands over an altar. That the imperial couple continued to be promoted as an exemplum of *concordia* for all Romans even after the death of Faustina I is confirmed by epigraphic evidence (*Decurionum imp. Caesari T. Aelio Hadriano Antonino Aug. Pio Imp. et divae Faustinae ob insignem eorum concordiam ubique in ara virgines quae in colonia nubent item mariti eorum supplicent. CIL xiv 5326* (Ostia), quoted by Mattingly 1968: lx n. 2). Faustina II is the first Augusta to bear the title *mater castrorum*, "mother of the camps." Although the title appears on coins before her death, a new corresponding reverse type—Faustina II seated before the legionary standards holding a phoenix—is developed after her death (*BMCRE* 704–705, 1554–1557; cf. 929–931; fig. 23.13). The phoenix takes on a double meaning, alluding at one and the same time to the eternity of the deified Augusta and to the eternity of

Roman rule. In her deified form Faustina II becomes a patron deity for the troops and thus promotes an even more intimate connection between the emperor and his troops.

Ample treatment has been given elsewhere to the types associated with the Augustae (Keltanen 2002 with bibliography of earlier scholarship). Here it remains only to draw attention to those types inspired by the fecundity of Faustina II and the way these images spread from the imperial mint to the provincial ones. These include numerous images of a standing female figure accompanied by two, four, or six children. The accompanying legends variously identify the figure as *pietas* (BMCRE 1012–1015), *felicitas* (BMCRE 155–158), or *fecunditas* (BMCRE 89–95). The last is sometimes labeled *fecunditas Augustae*, thus making the connection even more explicit. Phocaea, Pautalia, Galatian Ancyra, and Ephesus all adopt this reverse type (RPC IV temp. nos. Ancyra 10043, 6234, 6223, 5855, Ephesus 2759, Pautalia 8776, Phocaea 2940). Personifications are very rare on provincial coinage, and RPC IV is most probably correct to interpret this standing figure on the provincial coins as a representation of Faustina II herself, perhaps in the guise of *fecunditas*. At Ancyra the figure is even labeled EVTEKNIAN, “blessed with children” (fig. 23.14). A related dynastic image, the infant imperial twins seated on a



Fig. 23.11



Fig. 23.12



Fig. 23.13



Fig. 23.14



Fig. 23.15



Fig. 23.16

pulvinar (divine throne), also appears at provincial mints (BMCRE 136–140; cf. RPC IV temp no. 8343, 3498; figs. 23.15, 23.16). At the imperial mint, these types are often accompanied by legends such as SAECVLI FELICIT or TEMPOR FELIC, which directly connect the continuation of the dynasty with the establishment of a blessed age or time. The strength of this rhetoric is reflected by the adoption of analogous types at provincial mints, where normally reverse types were reserved for themes of local significance.

A whole new type of numismatic imagery was required for the first co-emperors of the Principate at the start of the joint reigns of Marcus and Verus. It is only with his becoming Augustus that Verus adopts the name “Verus,” which had been Marcus’s original cognomen; this new identity, so prominent on the coin legends, emphasizes the familial connection between the co-emperors. In the first year of their reign, the imperial mint experimented with a variety of appropriate reverse imagery: the two emperors seated on a platform with the legend LIB(eralitas) AVGVSTOR(um; BMCRE 12 and 32; cf. 40), the seated personification of CONCORD(ia) AVG(ustorum; BMCRE 1–6 and 25–28), and a pair of types one showing Marcus togate holding a globe and role and the other showing Verus in the same manner (BMCRE 29 and p. 389n.). However, by far the most influential

image was that of the two emperors clasping hands, with the legend *CONCORD(ia) AVGVSTOR(um)*; fig. 23.17). As we have seen, this clasping of hands and the legend *concordia* is already familiar iconography from coins celebrating marital relations with the imperial household. Other than the imperial portrait, this is probably the most copied image in the history of provincial coinage (fig. 23.18). Moreover, at most mints not only is the image adopted but so is the legend, *OMONOIA AVTOKPATOPEC*; unlike the imperial mint, it is very unusual for provincial mints to use legends to identify the corresponding iconography. The significant adoption of this imagery by provincial mints has been noted by Heuchert (2005: 53 and table 3.5); he observes that 31 mints, some 15% of those active at the time, utilized this imagery, sometimes moving it to the obverse for added emphasis. Most striking is his example from Laodicea, where the design is modified to incorporate the cult image of the local divinity (*RPC IV* temp. no. 2254).

The association of members of the imperial family with specific divinities was common throughout the Principate (Price 1984: 183–184). At the simplest level, an association could be implied simply by the juxtaposition of a divinity on the reverse and the imperial portrait on the obverse. More sophisticated instances occur when the emperor (or a member of his family) is represented with the attributes of a divinity or in the guise of a divinity. The same effect is also brought about when the features of a divinity are assimilated to those of a member of the imperial house. The distinction between these two types of association might seem meaningless in many artistic contexts, but in numismatics it is often possible to speak precisely, given the presence of identifying legends. A clear example is a pair of types from Hierapolis-Castabala in Cilicia (*RPC IV* temp. no. 10440 = *SNGSchweiz* 1562 and *RIC IV* temp. no. 6183; fig. 23.19). On one type the obverse has a portrait of Faustina II



Fig. 23.17

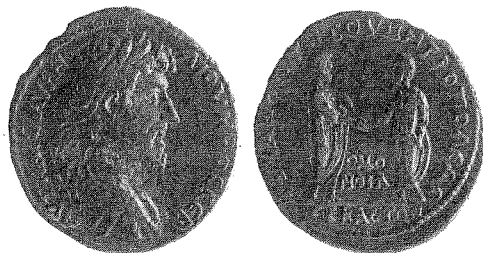


Fig. 23.18

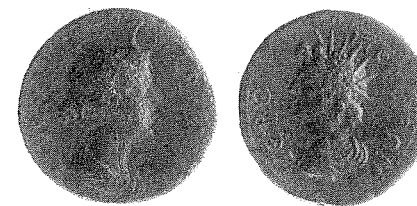


Fig. 23.19

in the guise of Selene, wearing the crescent. The legend clearly identifies her. On the reverse is a bust of Helios, but the god's features of are assimilated to those of Marcus. There is no legend beyond the city ethnic. On the other type, the model is reversed, and Marcus occupies the obverse in the guise of Helios, and Selene with her features appropriately assimilated to Faustina II is on the reverse. Together the two types play with the different means of associating the imperial family with the gods.

At the extreme end of the spectrum is Commodus's choice to represent himself as the Roman Hercules, a reincarnation of the god on earth. The numismatic manifestations of this self-representation at the imperial mint have been exhaustively studied (*BMCRE* 711–725; Kaiser-Raiß 1980; Hekster 2002 with bibliography of earlier scholarship). Given that Commodus did not adopt the title *Invictus Romanus Hercules* until 192, it is not surprising that there is so little provincial coinage with analogous imagery (see Speidel 1993 for dating of titulature). At approximately the same time, Commodus adopts the title *Pacator Orbis*. The exceptions are thus made all the more notable. Alexandria celebrated Commodus as Hercules only as a reverse type (*RPC IV* temp. no. 16437, 15618, 14533). Cyzicus, however, struck a spectacular series under the Archon T. Ail. Eteoneus (fig. 23.20). All the known types are over 40 mm in diameter and have on the obverse a laureate bust of Commodus wearing the lion skin. His complete final titulature is given: *AV KAI Λ AV KOMMOΔOC AVT CEB EVT ΠΩΜΑΙOC ΗΡΑΚΛΗΣ*, *Autocrator Kaisar Lukios Aurelios Kommodos Augustos Sebastos Eutyches Romaïos Herakles*. The reverse designs bear no direct connection but instead display divinities of local significance with legends that celebrate the



Fig. 23.20

city's neorate status. (It may be that Dionysopolis in Moesia also produced an obverse type of Commodus wearing the lion skin, but the only known specimen is unclear: *RPC IV* temp no. 8339. For earlier medallions depicting Commodus as Janus and Jupiter, Kaiser-Raiß 1980: 61–63 and Hekster 2002: 99–103. Kaiser-Raiß 1980: pl. 30.3 illustrates a sestertius from the Paris collection with a bust of Hadrian wearing a lion skin.)

Although these types from Commodus's last year, both provincial and imperial, are uniquely spectacular, they still must be contextualized via the earlier use of divine attributes and assimilations. There is remarkably little at the imperial mint unless one wishes to emphasize the very occasional incorporation of the aegis, a protective attribute of Jupiter and Minerva, into obverse portraiture. There are bust types with the aegis for all four Antonine emperors, but the types are rare and the iconography relatively subtle. One might even argue that the aegis, like the radiate crown, has lost most of its connotations as a strictly divine attribute. By contrast, the civic issues of the provinces seem freer to experiment with linking the imperial family to the divine. *TYCHES* and other city goddesses are often assimilated to the portrait of the Augusta. At Antioch at Pisidia there are pseudo-autonomous types with the head of Mercury assimilated to that of Caesar; one can date these types by the way Mercury takes on first the features of Marcus as Caesar and then later those of Commodus as Caesar (Krzyżanowska 1970). Such experimentation integrated local cult with imperial dynastic imagery. Communities could thus simultaneously express both their Roman and civic identities.

CONNECTIONS AND COMMEMORATIONS

The coin types of the Antonine period, both imperial and provincial, reflect a variety of events and interactions that the producers deemed of particular sociopolitical significance. This commemorative, even monumentalizing, function of Roman coinage had by the Antonine period a well-established tradition (Meadows and Williams 2001). Recognition of this commemorative habit has inspired some scholars to attempt to reconstruct the historical inspiration behind types that might otherwise be viewed as straightforward representations of virtues and divinities (Grant 1950). While we must always guard against overambitious reconstruction and the resulting historical fantasies, there is still ample room for the meaningful decoding and contextualization of many types (Ranieri 1997, 2001; Méthy 1997, 1999). The other danger is to give the false impression that types are normative when their commemorative function means that they are in fact an unusual, often limited, issue (Duncan-Jones 2005). The objective here is not to discuss all commemorative types but instead to highlight those that are widespread, innovative, or distinctive of the Antonine period. Of course, much of what has been discussed in the previous

section could also be reasonably termed commemorative, and thus there will be little discussion of dynastic types in what follows.

Pius is the first emperor to celebrate his *decennalia*, the 10-year anniversary of his reign, on his coinage (Rachet 1981; *BMCRE* 629–735, 1817); the type is a simple legend, *PRIMI DECEN COS IIII*, enclosed in an oak wreath. This set a lasting numismatic precedent for such commemoration, although some confusion can arise for the potential for these celebrations to occur every 9 or 10 years, depending on whether the counting is inclusive or exclusive. Pius's first *decennalia* is the occasion on which the coins begin to bear tribunician years; most have assumed that this is not a coincidence, and some have wanted to hypothesize that the *decennalia* of other rulers was a time associated with numismatic shifts (Duncan-Jones 2006: app. 1).

Pius's first *decennalia* also coincides with his fifth *liberalitas*, that is to say the fifth occasion when he distributed coin to the urban plebs. Metcalf has observed that *liberalitas* has two coin types, the distribution scene and the personification, the former being more common on the bronze and the latter on the precious metal issues (1993). After Hadrian, nearly all *liberalitates* are commemorated on coins; that the intention is to recall a specific event, not a generic virtue or sporadic activity, is made clear through the inclusion of numbers in the legends.

Earlier in Pius's reign and the associated years 140–144, the period in which Pius had been consul for the third, but not yet a fourth time, there is a group of mythological images, largely unprecedented on imperial coins. These include the familiar wolf and twins and Aeneas leading Ascanius and carrying Anchises, as well the more unusual sow suckling eight piglets, Mars approaching Rhea Silvia, and Romulus carrying a trophy (*BMCRE* 1300, 1292, 1298, 1370, 1286; figs. 23.21–23.25). Also perhaps to be associated with this group is the representation of the Tiber (*BMCRE* 1387). Historically, these images have been related to the celebration of the nine hundredth anniversary of Rome (Toynbee 1925). Although by most calculations the anniversary should have fallen some years later, about the time of Pius's *decennalia*, the types are still seen as having been chosen in anticipation of this event. Our literary evidence for the reign of Pius is greatly weakened by the loss of Cassius Dio, and his biography makes no mention of the anniversary (*SHA Pius*). All we have is a very short note in Aurelius Victor's *Lives of the Caesars: celebrato*



Fig. 23.21



Fig. 23.22



Fig. 23.23

Fig. 23.24



Fig. 23.25

magnifice urbis nongentesimo (15.4). Four words of testimony from an author 200 years removed from the events in question is slim evidence on which to base a reconstruction of the motivations for these types. Other hypotheses include linking a revived interest in the foundations of Rome with the finishing of the temple of Roma and Venus or Pius's interest in his Latin birthplace. An individual type such as that of Aeneas could be linked to the dynastic themes of piety explored elsewhere on the coinage.

Roman foundational legends are also commemorated on provincial coinage. The Aeneas reverse type is found at two colonies (Corinth and Patras) and two cities in the Troad (Dardania and Ilium). Obviously all four communities are attempting to assert a connection with Rome, but the same image emphasizes a different type of relationship depending on the type of community in question. The colonies wanted to emphasize the way they were extensions of Rome itself and thus could partake in the same foundation legends, whereas the communities in the Troad sought to capitalize on their geographical connection with the myth itself. Fifteen civic mints and the provincial mint at Alexandria issued types depicting the wolf and twins. Unsurprisingly, 10 of those civic mints are colonies. The five noncolonies—Ancyra, Ilium, Nicopolis ad Istrum, Nicomedia, and Philippopolis—reveal no particular pattern, although it is perhaps noteworthy that Ilium is the only non-colony that chooses to partake of both of Rome's foundation legends (fig. 23.26 for Aeneas, Bellinger 1961: 52 no. T151 for the wolf and twins). The Alexandrian types almost all date to 150/151, with the exception of one type from 174/175. At the other mints, the types come from the reigns of all four emperors. Thus it is unlikely that these should be linked in any way to the nine hundredth anniversary.

Local foundation legends are certainly prominent on civic coinage, but it is difficult to summarize the extent of their occurrence, partly because of variation in



Fig. 23.26

subject matter from mint to mint and partly because of our sheer ignorance of most local narratives. When a city such as Ilium has a rich and famous mythological tradition, we have no difficulty identifying the wealth of types; Hector, Ganymede, and Priam all figure prominently on the city's coinage from the Antonine period, and are often labeled to ensure the image is correctly identified. Use of the legend *ton ktistēn* plus either the founder's name or the ethnic, and very occasionally both, is found at Cius, Prusa, Tium, Midaeum, and Miletopolis, but it is most common on the coinage of Nicaea. At Bithynian Nicaea, Dionysus (five types), Heracles (ten types), and Asclepius (one type) are all honored as *ktistēs*, founder, on the coins (figs. 23.27–23.29), but we only have a surviving narrative for Dionysus (Memnon 28.9). Without the chance survival of this local myth, we would have had difficulty identifying the numerous coin types depicting Nicaea, the nymph Dionysus seduced. This type of plurality of founding legends is not uncommon; compare the types of Smyrna depicting the two Nemeses who inspired Alexander the Great to found the



Fig. 23.27



Fig. 23.28



Fig. 23.29

city, Symna the Amazon founder, and Pelops. In this symbolic repertoire, it is meaningless to distinguish between mythic and historic commemorations. When Pompeiopolis celebrates Pompey on its coinage, it, too, is connecting with a heroic past and glorifying its foundation through the fame of its founder. The plurality of the legendary past allowed communities to evoke those narratives that reflected their present self-identification and best served their relations with other communities (Price 2005).

Provincial coinage also reflects intercity relations through alliance coinage and agonistic types. Types that celebrated the *homonoia*, or "alliance," of two or more cities are struck by 25 mints in the Antonine period. Most of these mints only celebrate a single instance of *homonoia*, but there are notable exceptions, such as Ephesus with six different alliances, Laodicea with five, and Smyrna with four alliances commemorated on 33 different types. What precisely it meant for two cities to establish *homonoia* is poorly understood, in part because it seems to have been a flexible institution. It could mark the introduction of the cult of one city's deity in another, the end of a dispute, or the resolution of the negotiation of relative status. The iconography is largely consistent: the patron deities clasp hands, and the legend gives the name of both cities, occasionally augmented by the word *homonoia* (Franke and Nollé 1997; Kampmann 1996, 1998; fig. 23.30).

Festivals and games were a means by which cities of the empire competed with each other for both status and economic benefits. Not only was the privilege of hosting games a sought-after honor, but large and successful games could also generate great revenue (Dio Chryst. 35.16). Although such games had long played a role in provincial life, the Antonine period marks a turning point in their numismatic commemoration. Periodically an athlete will be depicted, but agonistic types usually emphasize the prizes, either individually or displayed on a table. Under Commodus we have the first representations of the large distinctive prize crowns. Some 12 mints are known to have struck agonistic types; many are those associated with long-established festivals, such as the Isthmian (Corinth), Nemean (Argos), Pythian (Delphi), and Panathenaic (Athens) games. Other cities with newer festivals sought to augment their games by seeking a special status and by connecting them to the



Fig. 23.30

emperor. On the coins, Nicaea's games are celebrated as "holy," and the whole festival is renamed the "Komodeia" (fig. 23.31). Tarsus's games are described as *oikoumenika*, or "universal," and the obverse shows Commodus in the robes of the *demiourgos*, or master of the games (fig. 23.32). These imperial connections also served as trump cards in local rivalries, Nicaea with Nicomedia and Tarsus with Anazarbus (Klose 2005).

Lucian's treatise *Alexander the False-Prophet* gives unique insight into how the emperor might be drawn into matters relating to local coinage. In high rhetorical style Lucian writes:

Was it not also a great piece of impudence on the part of Alexander that he should petition the Emperor to change the name of Abonoteichus and call it Ionopolis, and to strike a new coin bearing on one side the likeness of Glykon and on the other that of Alexander, wearing the fillets of his grand-father Asclepius and holding the falchion of his maternal ancestor Perseus? (58)

Alexander was a physician turned cult founder who built his reputation around a new manifestation of the worship of Asclepius that centered on a human-headed snake named Glykon. According to Lucian, Glykon was an elaborate, but effective, puppet charade. As yet there are no known obverse types with Alexander's portrait, and indeed there are no known portraits of any local dignitaries from the civic coinage of the Antonine period. However, the coinage of Abonoteichus does change in much the way Lucian describes, but in stages. First, under Pius, Glykon appears as a reverse type identified by name in the legend and with the ethnic ABONOTEIXEITON (RPC IV temp. no. 4881 and 5359). Then under Marcus and Verus, the city ethnic



Fig. 23.31



Fig. 23.32

* - This is incorrect. Such portraits are exceptionally rare, but are known, cf. RPC IV temp. no. 1787, 1792 and 3145.



Fig. 23.33

changes for all the coins to ΙΩΝΟΠΟΛΕΙΤΩΝ , and again there are extant Glykon types (*RPC IV* temp. no. 5364; fig. 23.33).

Civic coinage provides us with information on how quickly the cult of Glykon spread. Tium and Pergamum mint coins with Glykon in the reign of Pius, Smyrna during the joint reign of Marcus and Verus, and Thyatira under Commodus (*RPC IV* temp. no. 5562, 3197, 273, and 1569; fig. 23.34). Communicating these intercity connections is not the explicit function of these coin types, but certainly an implicit concept. Forty-five different mints struck coins bearing the image of Artemis of Ephesus. Each time one city chose to partake in the iconography of another, be it the new cult of Glykon or the age-old Artemis of Ephesus, that city implicitly commemorated the connectivity of empire.

The connections commemorated by the imperial mint focus on the relationship between center and periphery. In the depiction of the relationship between Rome and the provinces, there is a dichotomy between the glorification of conquest and peaceable relations (Méthy 1992). Yet regardless of this dichotomy, the top-down power dynamic is always made clear; Mattingly saw this as a shift in imperial stance away from the more inclusive policies of Hadrian (1968: lxxx). Echoing Hadrian's provincial series, at the very beginning of his reign Pius issued an elaborate series of bronzes each showing a province with identifying attributes bearing a crown (*BMCRE* 1175–1203; fig. 23.36). The crown, some especially elaborate, represents the *aurum coronarium*, gold-crown, that each province presented to the emperor on his ascension; Pius returned half of the provinces' contributions and all of Italy's (*SHA Pius* 6.10). If the Italia type is correctly included in this series, then the numismatic imagery make clear the status distinction by showing her seated on



Fig. 23.35



Fig. 23.34

a globe holding a scepter instead of a bearing a crown like the others (*RIC* 594; cf. *BMCRE* 1641–1646). The coin series simultaneously conveys three messages: the loyal subservience of the provinces, the munificence of Pius, and the breadth and diversity of the empire, which is thus unified through a common relationship with the emperor.

The other representations of provinces nearly all relate to conquest or diplomatic settlements.

Pius is represented investing the new kings for the Armenians and Quadi (*BMCRE* 1272–1274; fig. 23.37). The die cutter uses clear hierarchy of scale to illustrate the superiority of the Roman emperor. The victories in Britain are recorded with types personifying victory and Britannia. Mattingly, perhaps himself not untouched by patriotism, notes that the seated personification of Britain as an "Amazon war-goddess" is not represented as captive but as "*fida et vigil*" ("loyal and vigilant"; 1968: lxxxv). The type, however, echoes that found on Hadrian's coinage (*BMCRE* 1637–1640; cf. under Hadrian 1174, 1723–1724). All of Pius's types depicting the provinces are found on the bronze coinage, whereas the captive Armenia types of Marcus and Verus from 163–165 are also struck in gold and silver (*BMCRE* 233–241, 278; fig. 23.38). The titulature of Marcus, Verus, and Commodus on the coins also reflects new conquests through the adoption of such names as Armeniacus, Parthicus Maximus, Germanicus, Sarmaticus, and Britannicus.

At the very end of Commodus's reign, at the same time he is constructing himself as the Roman Hercules, there appears on the coinage an apparent shift in the representation of the emperor's relationship to the empire. One reverse type shared by gold, silver, and bronze denominations shows a nude Commodus as Hercules, with his foot on a prow, receiving grain from Africa, who is identified by her elephant-skin headdress and the sistrum, a rattle associated with the cult of Isis

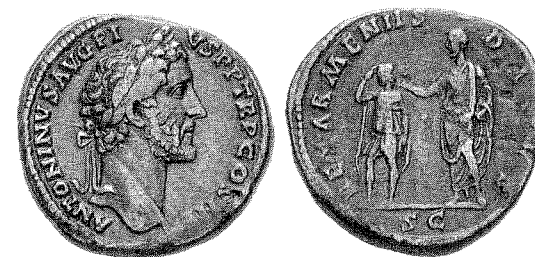


Fig. 23.36



Fig. 23.37

(*BMCRE* 718; fig. 23.38). The legend reads *PROVIDENTIAE AVG*, "the foresight of the emperor." The simplest interpretation is an assurance that the emperor can secure the grain supply for Rome. Yet what the image evokes is markedly different from the "province types" of the earlier Antonine emperors. On Pius's coins, the provinces of their own volition present bounty that is returned; when the emperor initiates the interaction, it is to give kings to unruly territory. On the coins of Marcus and Verus, rebellious provinces are shown subdued through the agency of the emperor. By contrast, Commodus's agency is celebrated in relation to smooth exchange of goods between the regions of empire.

That Commodus was beginning to construct himself as having a new relationship to the empire as a whole and that that entailed a reformulation of the place of Rome within the empire is most clearly demonstrated through the bronze coin types celebrating the refounding of Rome as a colony, *Colonia Commodiana* (A.D. 190; *BMCRE* 643–644 and 658–659). As we have seen, foundation themes are known from mints throughout the empire. Moreover, the type, a priest plowing the sacred boundary of the new foundation with a pair of oxen, was regularly used by colonies throughout the empire to celebrate their own foundations. By this refounding, Commodus not only gained the status of founder but also changed the status of the city, moving it closer to the provincial foundations (Aymard 1936; Hekster 2002). According to Cassius Dio, Commodus renamed the city *athanaton eutychē kolōnian tēs oikoumenēs*, "the immortal blessed colony of the entire world" (73.15.2). Thus, Rome's new colonial status is directly linked to its relationship with the rest of the (boundless) empire.

Needless to say, Commodus's reconstruction of his own identity, and consequently those of nearly all major imperial institutions, did not prove popular. He was murdered on the last day of December 192. Civil war erupted, and eventually the Severan dynasty emerged.



Fig. 23.38

The numismatic trends observed in the Antonine period continued to develop under the Severans. Provincial bronze production increased further; silver content continued to decline. The Severans fully exploited and expanded on the methods of dynastic representation formulated under the Antonines. In addition, the connections between cities, as well as between center and periphery,

became even more evident on the coinage. Thus the Severan age brings the culmination of the transitional developments observed in the Antonine coinage.

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 Fig. 23.38. *NAC* 49, October 21, 2008, 301.

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