

THE COMMUNICATION OF THE EMPEROR'S VIRTUES*

By CARLOS F. NOREÑA

The Roman emperor served a number of functions within the Roman state. The emperor's public image reflected this diversity. Triumphal processions and imposing state monuments such as Trajan's Column or the Arch of Septimius Severus celebrated the military exploits and martial glory of the emperor. Distributions of grain and coin, public buildings, and spectacle entertainments in the city of Rome all advertised the emperor's patronage of the urban plebs, while imperial rescripts posted in every corner of the Empire stood as so many witnesses to the emperor's conscientious administration of law and justice. Imperial mediation between man and god was commemorated by a proliferation of sacrificial images that emphasized the emperor's central role in the act of sacrifice. Portrait groups of the imperial family were blunt assertions of dynasty and figured the emperor as the primary guarantor of *Roma aeterna*. Public sacrifices to deified emperors and the imagery of imperial apotheosis surrounded the emperor with an aura of divinity. An extraordinary array of rituals, images, and texts, then, gave visual and symbolic expression to the emperor's numerous functions and publicized the manifold benefits of imperial rule.¹

From the *clupeus virtutis* awarded to Augustus to the panegyrics of the later Empire, a broad current of imperial ideology ascribed these functions and benefits to the emperor's personal virtues.² The imperial virtues, moral qualities possessed by the 'good' emperor, were also represented visually in a range of official media and systematically communicated by the Roman state to the subjects of the Empire. It is the purpose of this paper to consider the nature of this representation and communication over the long term, from Vespasian to Severus Alexander (A.D. 69–235), and more specifically to examine the varying degrees to which the different imperial virtues were emphasized during this period.

* This article is based on part of my unpublished Ph.D. dissertation (University of Pennsylvania, 2001). It was written during a year-long stay at the American Academy in Rome, made possible by the Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman Fellowship in Classical Studies and Archaeology. For helpful criticisms of earlier drafts of this manuscript I wish to thank Brent D. Shaw, William E. Metcalf, Ann Kuttner and the Editorial Committee of *JRS*. I have also benefited from conversations with Chris Howgego, J. E. Lendon, Elizabeth A. Meyer, and Greg Woolf. I owe a special debt to Dr Metcalf, who very generously provided me with the hoard data on which much of this study is based.

¹ For the various functions of the Roman emperor, especially in the civil sphere, F. Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World* (1977/1992) is fundamental; see also J. B. Campbell, *The Emperor and the Roman Army, 31 B.C.–A.D. 235* (1984), for the emperor's military roles. On the importance of the 'symbolics of power' and the 'power of images' in the overall configuration of imperial power, authority, and legitimacy, see especially A. Alföldi, *Die monarchische Repräsentation im römischen Kaiserreiche* (1970) = *RömMitt* 49 (1934), 3–118 and *RömMitt* 50 (1935), 3–158 (citations from the 1970 edition); P. Veyne, *Le pain et le cirque* (1976), ch. 4; S. Price, *Rituals and*

Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor (1984); P. Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, transl. A. Shapiro (1988; German orig. 1987). Two recent studies that explore different aspects of the symbolics of imperial power are J. E. P. Davies, *Death and the Emperor: Roman Imperial Funerary Monuments from Augustus to Marcus Aurelius* (2000), and C. Ando, *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty in the Roman Empire* (2000).

² *Clupeus virtutis*: RG 34.2. For imperial virtues in the late antique panegyrics, see R. Seager, 'Some imperial virtues in the Latin prose panegyrics: the demands of propaganda and the dynamics of literary composition', *Papers of the Liverpool Latin Seminar* 4, 1983 (1984), 129–65; this topic is also addressed in many of the essays in M. Whitby (ed.), *The Propaganda of Power: The Role of Panegyric in Late Antiquity* (1998). On imperial virtues in general, see M. P. Charlesworth, 'The virtues of a Roman emperor: propaganda and the creation of belief', *PBA* 23 (1937), 105–33; A. Wallace-Hadrill, 'The emperor and his virtues', *Historia* 30 (1981), 298–323; J. R. Fears, 'The cult of virtues and Roman imperial ideology', *ANRW* II.17.2 (1981), 827–948; C. J. Classen, 'Virtutes Imperatoriae', *Arctos* 25 (1991), 17–39.

I. PROBLEM AND METHOD

The visual representation of the emperor's virtues appeared on a wide range of media, from monumental relief sculptures to small cameos. For this article I will focus primarily on one especially pervasive medium, the imperial coinage, and in particular on a set of reverse types that depicted the various imperial virtues. As a type of historical evidence, the imperial coinage has a number of advantages for the study of imperial imagery and communications. Each coin minted at Rome was an official document and as such represented an official expression of the emperor and his regime.³ In addition, the imperial coinage is the only type of evidence from the Roman Empire that historians can examine in an unbroken sequence for the entire duration of the Principate. This allows us to establish a complete typology of coin types. Finally, imperial coins were produced on a near-industrial scale and circulated throughout the whole of the Empire (and beyond its frontiers), and therefore reached the widest possible cross-section of the Empire's population. All of this is well known.⁴ More important for this study is the fact that imperial coins have survived in sufficient bulk to allow for quantitative analysis — an extremely rare opportunity for ancient historians. Numismatists and economic historians have indeed begun to exploit this mass of evidence, but the potential for quantitative treatment that this volume of data offers to the student of imperial imagery and ideology has been virtually ignored.⁵

Quantification in this context means equipping descriptive statements about the imperial coinage with numerical documentation. Too many scholars have spoken of 'the most important' or 'the largest' issues of an emperor's reign without introducing any empirical evidence for their claims. To write that 'Victoria is overwhelmingly the commonest of reverse themes at all periods of the Empire', without any quantification, is of limited value.⁶ While Victory types were certainly prominent on the imperial coinage, it is important to know to what degree this theme was stressed, and during what periods. What I propose, then, is a quantification of the different themes that appear on the imperial coinage. The purpose of this quantification is to measure the relative frequency with which those reverse types advertising the virtues of the emperor were minted. On the basis of this information it is possible to assess the degree to which the different imperial virtues were emphasized during the High Empire. Because the imperial coinage is more susceptible of quantification than other types of evidence, the tabulation of reverse types can then be used as an interpretive key to the wider range of evidence available for the representation and communication of the emperor's virtues. The coinage was not the only medium that could serve as a vehicle for imperial communications, but it is the one to which the historian has the most complete access.⁷

³ The authority to mint coins has traditionally been recognized as a prerogative of the state. See discussion in P. Grierson, *Numismatics* (1975), 95–7; for the ancient world, see briefly M. Crawford, 'Roman imperial coin types and the formation of public opinion', in C. Brooks *et al.* (eds), *Studies . . . Grierson* (1983), 51. Whether the types were chosen by the emperor himself or by a low-level bureaucrat has no bearing on the official character of imperial coins.

⁴ See, e.g., C. Howgego, *Ancient History from Coins* (1995), 62 ff.

⁵ For the application of statistical methods to the study of ancient coins, see C. Carcassone and T. Hackens (eds), *Statistics and Numismatics. Statistique et Numismatique. Paris, 17–19 sept. 1979* (1981). For economic studies based on large samples of imperial coins, see I. Carradice, *Coinage and Finances in the Reign of Domitian, A.D. 81–96*, BAR Int. Ser. 178 (1983); R. Duncan-Jones, *Money and Government in the Roman Empire* (1994), to be read with W. Metcalf's review in *RSN* 74 (1995), 145–59;

A. S. Hobley, *An Examination of Roman Bronze Coin Distribution in the Western Empire A.D. 81–192*, BAR Int. Ser. 688 (1998), on coin circulation.

⁶ The quotation is from A. Wallace-Hadrill, 'Image and authority in the coinage of Augustus', *JRS* 76 (1986), 66–87, at 69. Similarly, on the importance of the imperial virtues on the coinage of Vespasian, Fears, *op. cit.* (n. 2), 900, writes that 'in a quantitative sense, at least, the Virtues assumed a prominence far beyond their role in Augustan imperial imagery'. A statement of this sort simply cannot be sustained without the support of numerical evidence. On the need to quantify these sorts of claims in context, see discussion in P. Laslett, 'The wrong way through the telescope: a note on literary evidence in sociology and in historical sociology', *British Journal of Sociology* 27 (1976), 319–42.

⁷ See D. S. Potter, *Prophets and Emperors* (1994), 110–30, on the different forms of communication available to emperors.

Because mint records, the basic source of evidence available to modern numismatists, have not survived from the Roman Empire, the best available method for determining the relative frequency of imperial coin types is the simple tabulation of specimens known to us from published hoards. Other methods are flawed in one way or another. Sutherland, in the introduction to the revised edition of *RIC I*, writes, 'The first edition of this volume was criticized for its lack of indication of the frequency or rarity of the coins it listed. In the present volume, frequency-estimates of gold and silver coins are based on the number of specimens in the major collections — a rough and ready method but the only one generally possible'.⁸ But the number of specimens in the major collections is not an accurate indicator of frequency. The curators of most collections will, under normal circumstances, purchase the rare coin that adds to the diversity of the holdings rather than the common coin already well represented. The number of specimens in the major collections, then, instead of representing accurately the frequency or rarity of a coin in antiquity, will in fact have a 'levelling' effect which gives undue weight to the rarer coins.⁹ Extrapolation from the number of known dies, a procedure normally applied to the considerably more ambitious task of determining not the relative frequency of types but total mint output, is also somewhat problematic. The fundamental and unavoidable problem with this method is that we still do not know, and may never know, the number of coins struck per die. Estimates derived from die counts are unreliable for this reason alone.¹⁰ Dies may eventually provide a useful independent source of information to compare with the evidence from hoards, but until many more die-studies have been performed and published, attempts to measure the relative frequency of individual coin types will have to rely entirely on the hoard evidence.

The method that I propose for measuring the relative frequency of coin types — the tabulation of as many specimens as possible known to us from published hoards — is straightforward.¹¹ The combined evidence from a group of hoards provides a sample of the coinage produced by the imperial mint for the period between the earliest and latest coins in those hoards. The analytical value of such a sample for the study of imperial coin types rests on one crucial, but I think defensible, assumption. The assumption is that coins were not hoarded on the basis of their types. Some hoards were surely the products of careful selection, and attrition can distort hoard-generated estimates of the overall money supply, but neither of these factors affects the value of a hoard-based sample for the study of the relative frequency of reverse types. Coins were above all monetary objects, employed primarily as instruments of exchange, and as such were removed from circulation and hoarded on the basis of strictly economic concerns. There are a number of possible motivations for hoarding, ranging from war, insecurity,

⁸ *RIC I*² (1984), xxi–xxii. Sutherland provides a list of twenty-nine 'major collections' (xvii–xviii), but does not indicate which of these collections were consulted in order to produce the frequency-estimates.

⁹ On the unreliability of the major collections as indicators of frequency, see T. Volk, 'Mint output and coin hoards', in G. Depeyrot *et al.* (eds), *Rythmes de la production monétaire, de l'antiquité à nos jours* (1987), 141; I. Carradice, 'Towards a new introduction to the Flavian coinage', in M. Austin *et al.* (eds), *Modus Operandi: Essays . . . Rickman* (1998), 97. Duncan-Jones, *op. cit.* (n. 5), 134, n. 28, writes that the scarcity ratings in *RIC* 'depart wildly from what the hoards imply'.

¹⁰ See T. V. Buttrey, 'Calculating ancient coin production: facts and fantasies', *NC* 153 (1993), 335–51, at 338–45, and *idem*, 'Calculating ancient coin production II: why it cannot be done', *NC* 154 (1994), 342–52, on the 'intractable problem' of determining number of coins from number of dies. Buttrey exposes the absence of hard evidence behind the figure of 30,000 coins per die employed by M. Crawford, *Roman Republic Coinage* (1974), 694 (and by many

others since) to measure the annual production of Republican denarii, emphasizing that the rate of coin production per die is not a constant but a variable (which rules out extrapolation). C. Howgego, 'The supply and use of money in the Roman world 200 B.C. to A.D. 300', *JRS* 82 (1992), 3, notes that individual dies in England between 1281 and 1327 produced anywhere from 5,000 to 74,000 coins. This variability, from a comparable pre-industrial context for which mint records do survive, makes meaningful calculations based on die counts from the Roman world very difficult. This is the basic problem that F. De Callataf, 'Calculating ancient coin production: seeking a balance', *NC* 155 (1995), 289–311, cannot overcome in his response to Buttrey. For a recent attempt to measure production levels in relative terms, see K. Lockyear, 'Hoard structure and coin production in antiquity — an empirical investigation', *NC* 159 (1999), 215–43.

¹¹ This is the method that Carradice, in a preliminary study for a new edition of *RIC II* (*op. cit.* (n. 9)), has used to correct the first edition's classifications of rarity and commonness for Flavian coin types.

and political unrest to changes in the monetary system, but the common motivation underpinning every withdrawal of coin from circulation is the expectation that such a withdrawal will be economically beneficial to the coin's owner, whether the hidden coin will be protected from theft or loss or, under Gresham's Law, is considered undervalued and potentially worth more at a later date. Since there was no correlation between specific reverse types and precious-metal content in coins, it is reasonable to suppose that reverse types had nothing to do with such calculations.¹² It is, of course, possible that individual coins could be removed from circulation because of their types and saved as tokens or mementos, or even gathered together to form a private collection. We know that Augustus owned such a collection of old and foreign coins.¹³ But the existence of isolated collections will not have a significant impact on the overall profile of coin types that emerges from studying imperial coins *en masse*. Finally, it bears mentioning that of all the hoards once buried, we have access only to those hoards not recovered in antiquity. Non-recovery of hoards is a potentially significant variable for the study of circulation and monetization, but since there is no reason to expect a correlation between individual coin types and recovery/non-recovery of hoards, this particular variable should not invalidate the method employed here. There is, therefore, no *a priori* reason why a sample based on a number of hoards cannot be an accurate indicator of the relative frequency with which specific types were minted.¹⁴

For this study I have assembled a sample of 148,421 imperial denarii minted between A.D. 69 and 235. This sample is based on 105 hoards.¹⁵ Of these 148,421 denarii, 5,623 (about 4 per cent of the sample) were hybrids, forgeries, or unidentified coins. These coins were not included in the iconographic analysis, which is based on the remaining 142,798 denarii. I have not included gold coins in the sample because the forthcoming publication of the massive Trier hoard of over 2,500 imperial aurei might upset calculations based on currently published gold hoards.¹⁶ I have also omitted the imperial *aes* coinage from the study because the sources for base-metal coins are so different from those of precious-metal coins.¹⁷ The chronological parameters of the study have been determined largely by the nature of the numismatic evidence. Because the focus of this study is on the official representation of the emperor's virtues, I will concentrate on reverse types produced by the imperial mint at Rome. There is still no consensus on the dating of the imperial mint's transfer from Lugdunum to Rome, but

¹² Reverse types which happened to be on coins hoarded for economic value will naturally be better represented in the hoards, but the 'over-representation' of these types will be minimized both by the large number of reverse types in circulation at any one time and by the size and chronological spread of the sample. The division of hoards into 'circulation' hoards and 'savings' hoards is also irrelevant for this sample, and is in any case no longer considered tenable for the imperial period. See J. P. C. Kent, 'Interpreting coin-finds', in J. Casey and R. Reece (eds), *Coins and the Archaeologist*, BAR Int. Ser. 4 (1974), 185; M. Crawford, 'Numismatics', in idem (ed.), *Sources for Ancient History* (1983), 199 ff.; Volk, op. cit. (n. 9), 159, n. 3; Duncan-Jones, op. cit. (n. 5), 67 ff. On hoarding and coin finds in general, see Grierson, op. cit. (n. 3), 124–39, and for the ancient world, Crawford, op. cit., 187–207; see also T. V. Buttrey, 'The content and meaning of coin hoards', *JRA* 12 (1999), 526–32, a review of D. Backendorf, *Römische Münzschätze des zweiten und ersten Jahrhunderts v. Chr. vom italienischen Festland* (1998).

¹³ Suet., *Aug.* 75: 'modo munera dividebat . . . modo nummos omnis notae, etiam veteres regios ac peregrinos', 'sometimes he distributed favours . . . other

times he gave out coins of every type, even those of the old kings and foreign coins'.

¹⁴ See discussion in Carradice, op. cit. (n. 5), 57–60. For criticism of samples based on groups of hoards (sometimes referred to as 'aggregate' or 'composite' hoards), see R. Duncan-Jones, *Structure and Scale in the Roman Economy* (1990), 39; Buttrey, op. cit. (n. 10), 1993), 335 ff.; cf. Howgego, op. cit. (n. 10), 2–4, on limits to quantification in general. It cannot be stressed too much that these criticisms address the problems with using hoard-generated samples for economic and monetary, not iconographic analysis.

¹⁵ For the sources, see Appendix.

¹⁶ For a preliminary report on the Trier hoard, see K.-J. Gilles, 'Der grosse römischen Goldmünzenfund aus Trier', *KJ* 34 (1994), 9–24. Duncan-Jones, op. cit. (n. 5), App. 10, 266 ff., provides a list of published gold hoards.

¹⁷ Hobley, op. cit. (n. 5), for example, created a sample of c. 25,000 imperial *aes* coins largely on the basis of evidence from local museum collections, which are not necessarily representative of circulation patterns in antiquity; see my review, *AJN* 11 (1999), 160–4.

TABLE I. REGIONAL SOURCES FOR TABULATIONS OF IMPERIAL DENARII, A.D. 69–235

Region	Number of Hoards	Number of Coins / % of Total
Britain	34	16,276 / 11%
West Continent	17	16,016 / 11%
Italy/North Africa	3	1536 / 1%
Danube/Balkans	37	105,776 / 71%
The East	14	8817 / 6%
Total	105	148,421 / 100%

Sources: see Appendix.

Note: West Continent includes Germany, Gaul, and Spain; The East includes all Greek-speaking provinces. This classification follows S. Bolin, *State and Currency in the Roman Empire to 300 A.D.* (1958).

the move had certainly taken place by the accession of Vespasian.¹⁸ And in terms of iconography, it is really with Vespasian that the imperial coinage begins to show the diversity in type content that makes a study of this sort most illuminating.¹⁹ To conclude with the reign of Severus Alexander is perhaps more arbitrary, but at least has the analytical advantage of presenting the Severan dynasty as a whole.

It is a generally accepted principle of coin hoards that 'the larger the hoard, the better, in general, it is likely to reflect the currency pool from which it is drawn'.²⁰ The same principle applies to a sample based on a number of hoards. The figure of 148,421 denarii is more than sufficient as a database of reverse types, but it represents only a tiny fraction of the total volume of denarii produced by the imperial mint between A.D. 69 and 235.²¹ In order to assess the value of this sample for the study of reverse types, then, it is necessary to consider how representative of mint output this selection of denarii actually is.

Because coins were not hoarded on the basis of their types, as I have argued, the sample should not suffer any bias as a result of ancient selection. Modern recovery and publication of hoards is a different matter. The central methodological question concerning the validity of the sample is the geographical distribution of the hoards that have been used to generate it. This distribution is very uneven, with nearly three quarters of the coins in the sample coming from hoards along the Danube and in the Balkans (Table 1). This geographical imbalance might be suspected of introducing a regional bias to the data. The key variable for assessing potential bias is the degree to which imperial denarii circulated throughout the Empire. In brief, the more freely denarii circulated throughout the Empire — the more, that is, the Empire formed a single circulation area instead of a number of regional circulation areas — the more representative the sample will be of mint output, despite the fact that the hoards are so unevenly distributed. No consensus, however, has been reached on the typical circulation patterns of imperial coins, and discussion of this question has now become part of the larger debates about the nature of the Roman imperial economy and the

¹⁸ For convincing arguments associating the move with Nero's reform of the imperial coinage in A.D. 64, see W. Metcalf, 'Rome and Lugdunum again', *AJN* 1 (1989), 51–70, with earlier bibliography. It should be noted that mints outside of Rome were in operation during the period A.D. 69–235 and that some of the coins assigned in the catalogues to the Rome mint may in fact have been produced elsewhere. But since these coins were more or less indistinguishable from those of the Rome mint, they still in effect represented the 'official' image of the emperor and should not distort the present analysis.

¹⁹ See T. V. Buttrey, 'Vespasian as moneyer', *NC* 7 12 (1972), 89–109.

²⁰ Volk, op. cit. (n. 9), 159. Volk also quotes Thorde- man's law on the composition of coin hoards: 'The content of each coin-find stands in a certain ratio to the amount of the coinage during the period covered

by the find, and that according to the law of high numbers this proportion reaches increasing agreement the larger the find is numerically' (144). See also R. Reece, 'The "normal" hoard', in Carassone and Hackens, op. cit. (n. 5), 335–41. For the suggestion that large hoards might be particularly anomalous, see Lockyear, op. cit. (n. 10), 220.

²¹ The imperial mint's total volume of production is much debated and, on the available evidence, probably impossible to quantify. For a very rough sense of the order of magnitude, Duncan-Jones, op. cit. (n. 5), 168, has estimated that over half a billion denarii were produced under Septimius Severus alone (table 11.2). These calculations were based on a projection of '7,982 coins per silver die' (164), a figure which Duncan-Jones himself concedes is 'obviously elastic' (165).

degree to which the Empire was integrated economically and monetarily.²² In a much-cited article on taxes and trade in the Roman Empire, Hopkins argued that the flow of coin from tax-exporting provinces to the centre and the need for these provinces to earn coin back through trade (in order to pay the next round of taxes) had the effect of mixing coins in circulation and creating an integrated economy from c. A.D. 50 to 200. He cited as evidence for this mixing and integration the homogeneous fluctuations in the volume of coinage reflected in separate regions of the Empire.²³ In response Duncan-Jones argued that taxation was often levied not in money but in kind, that state expenditure in a combination of old and new coin might account for the mixing adduced by Hopkins, and that some local coin populations display marked dissimilarities.²⁴ On this view the imperial economy remained unintegrated in monetary terms.

Much of the debate about the integration of the imperial economy is only tangentially related to the validity of this sample. The archaeological record increasingly brings to light evidence for the long-distance movement of a wide range of commodities throughout the Empire, but whether this movement was the product of redistribution or market exchange — one of the central questions in the debate about the imperial economy — has no bearing on this study. The statistical validity of the sample depends only on the range of coin circulation, not on the modes by which coins circulated. And despite Duncan-Jones' assertion that denarii tended to circulate in regional clusters, giving rise to what he has identified as significant differences in the type content of regional coin populations, there is in fact good evidence from our period for the secondary movement of silver coinage throughout the Empire.²⁵ As a result of such secondary movements we should expect the randomization of the type content of regional coin populations, and in general this is what we find.²⁶ What is really striking, in fact, is that the type contents of coin populations from separate regions of the Empire are as similar as they are.²⁷ From the second half of the third century, when the Empire began to be supplied by a system of regional mints, hoard evidence does reveal a pattern of regional circulation for precious-metal coins, and it is unlikely that regional coin populations during the High Empire were ever completely homogeneous, but any dissimilarities that did exist were mostly negligible and surely not the product of

²² For concise introductions to the main problems involved, see K. Hopkins, 'Introduction', in P. Garnsey *et al.* (eds), *Trade in the Ancient Economy* (1983), ix–xxv; W. Harris, 'Between archaic and modern: some current problems in the history of the Roman economy', in idem (ed.), *The Inscribed Economy: Production and Distribution in the Roman Empire in Light of Instrumentum Domesticum*, JRA Suppl. 6 (1993), 11–29.

²³ K. Hopkins, 'Taxes and trade in the Roman Empire (200 B.C.–A.D. 400)', *JRS* 70 (1980), 101–25, at 112–16 (with fig. 4). Note also the explicit qualifications to this model which Hopkins makes (103–4), often ignored by those who attack it.

²⁴ Duncan-Jones, *op. cit.* (n. 14), 30–47 and 187 ff. on provincial taxation. Duncan-Jones has published a number of other studies arguing for regional as opposed to empire-wide coin circulation: 'Mobility and immobility of coin in the Roman Empire', *AIIN* 36 (1989), 121–37; *op. cit.* (n. 5), 172–9; 'Empire-wide patterns in coin-hoards', in C. E. King and D. Wigg (eds), *Coin-finds and Coin Use in the Roman World* (1996), 139–52; 'The monetization of the Roman Empire: regional variations in the supply of coin types', in G. M. Paul and M. Ierardi (eds), *Roman Coins and Public Life Under the Empire* (1999), 61–82. See below, n. 26, for some problems with Duncan-Jones' methods and conclusions.

²⁵ C. Howgego, 'Coin circulation and the integration of the Roman economy', *JRA* 7 (1994), 12–16, with references.

²⁶ The data that Duncan-Jones cites to show dissimilarities in regional coin populations, in fact, are often open to different interpretation. I cite two examples. The first is the representation of Trajanic *RIC* 147 in six hoards, as a percentage of all Trajanic denarii in those hoards (Duncan-Jones, *op. cit.* (n. 14), 41). The figures are: Tell Kalak (Syria): 1.3%; Reka Devnia (Lower Moesia): 0.8%; La Magura (Dacia): 1.8%; Stockstadt (Rhineland): 3.3%; Bristol (Britain): 3.3%; Londonthorpe (Britain): 4.0%. For Duncan-Jones these figures represent a 'strongly contrasting pattern' in the hoards from East and West, but these differences are almost negligible for the purposes of this study, which emphasizes much broader patterns. The second example is drawn from denarii of Marciana and Matidia (Duncan-Jones, *op. cit.* (n. 14), 41, repeated in *op. cit.* (n. 5), 175). Duncan-Jones notes that denarii of Marciana and Matidia do not appear in a sample of over 600 Trajanic denarii from four hoards in North-West Europe, and appear only once in a sample of over 1,900 denarii from three hoards in Italy, but do appear once for every 150 Trajanic denarii in hoards from Syria and Egypt (the total number of coins from the Syrian and Egyptian hoards, an important factor for the significance of this observation, is not provided). He sees strong evidence here of 'regional differences', but such uncommon coins really cannot support this type of argument. More and better evidence is needed to prove that silver coins circulated only in regional pools.

²⁷ Howgego, *op. cit.* (n. 25), 14.

deliberate policy.²⁸ Despite the uneven geographical distribution of the hoards used to generate the sample, there is no reason to suspect significant regional bias in the data.

The sample of just under 150,000 denarii, then, should be sufficient for measuring the relative frequency with which the different reverse types advertising the imperial virtues were minted. This information offers a uniquely quantitative perspective on the representation of the imperial virtues, which in turn provides the historian with an empirical base from which to assess the varying degrees of official emphasis on these virtues over the long term. It is to the representation and communication of the imperial virtues that we now turn.

II. THE IMPERIAL VIRTUES

The association of traditional Roman virtues with the figure of the emperor, already routine by the time of Vespasian's accession, is a prime example of how Augustus and his successors successfully appropriated and monopolized different forms of symbolic capital. Just as triumphs, large-scale building projects in Rome, and portraits on the state coinage became the exclusive prerogatives of the imperial house, so too did the official commemoration of a wide range of specific virtues figure the emperor as the paradigmatic holder of these virtues.²⁹ The process whereby general qualities became attached to prominent Romans began in the late Republic, when Q. Caecilius Metellus assumed the cognomen Pius and arrogated to himself a virtue, *pietas*, that had long been associated with the *populus Romanus* as a whole. Sulla's assumption of the cognomen Felix and consequent appropriation of the benefits and quality of *felicitas* was another step in this direction.³⁰ But the decisive stage in the individual usurpation of specific virtues and qualities came with Caesar's introduction of the cults of Victoria Caesaris, Fortuna Caesaris, and Clementia Caesaris. Worship of such traditional personifications as Victoria and Fortuna now embraced the person of Julius Caesar.³¹ It was upon this foundation that Augustus formalized the personification of specific virtues and qualities. This formalization, characterized by the new cult epithet 'Augusta', invested the institution of the Principate with a charismatic aspect and created the ideological context for the rapid proliferation of the 'imperial' virtues.

The personalization of Roman virtues under Augustus did not, however, give rise to any 'canon' of imperial virtues, nor did the particular virtues associated with Augustus correspond to any pre-existing canon. *Virtus*, *clementia*, *iustitia*, and *pietas* — the four virtues of the *clupeus virtutis* awarded to Augustus and the only virtues cited in the *Res Gestae* (34.2) — do not correspond to the four cardinal virtues of Greek philosophical thought on kingship, *andreia* (bravery), *sôphrosune* (temperance), *dikaïosune* (justice), and *sophia* (wisdom), and were never, as a group, the principal virtues of the Roman emperor.³² But it is precisely the absence of a canon of imperial virtues that makes close attention to the specific virtues emphasized under different

²⁸ Regional circulation of precious-metal coins in the third and fourth centuries: J.-P. Callu, *La politique monétaire des empereurs romains de 238 à 311* (1969), 390 ff.; idem, 'Structure des dépôts d'or au IV^e siècle (312–392)', in E. Frézouls (ed.), *Crise et redressement dans les provinces européennes de l'empire (milieu du III^e–milieu du IV^e siècle ap. J.-C.)* (1983), 157–74; J. P. C. Kent, *RIC VIII* (1981), 74–7, 96 ff.

²⁹ W. Eck, 'Senatorial self-representation: developments in the Augustan period', in F. Millar and E. Segal (eds), *Caesar Augustus: Seven Aspects* (1984), 129–67, discusses certain aspects of this process.

³⁰ For the significance of the honorific *cognomina* of Metellus and Sulla, see discussion in Fears, *op. cit.* (n. 2), 877–82. Fears also notes the earlier and informal associations of specific virtues and qualities with certain *gentes*, such as *virtus* with the Corneli Scipiones, *libertas* with the Junii, etc.

³¹ S. Weinstock, *Divus Julius* (1971), 80 ff., 233 ff.

³² For the notion of *virtus*, *clementia*, *iustitia*, and *pietas* as a canon of imperial virtues derived from Greek thought, see Charlesworth, *op. cit.* (n. 2); L. Wickert, 'Princeps (civitatis)', *RE* 22.2 (1954), 2231; Weinstock, *op. cit.* (n. 31), 228–30. This view is demonstrably incorrect, as Wallace-Hadrill, *op. cit.* (n. 2), and Classen, *op. cit.* (n. 2), have shown, among other reasons because the Roman term *pietas* has no Greek antecedent among the cardinal virtues of the king. Perhaps, as Wallace-Hadrill has suggested, it was simply the number of four which was meant to suggest a philosophical canon (303). On the *clupeus virtutis*, see K. Galinsky, *Augustan Culture* (1996), 80–90, esp. 84–8 on the four virtues.

emperors so important for the study of imperial ideology. As Potter has written in connection with the imperial virtues advertised in the *senatus consultum de Cn. Pisone patre* of A.D. 20 (*SCPP*), 'If [these virtues] cannot be shown to derive from some preset canon, then it follows that they were selected for advertisement because they sent a specific message about what it was that a specific emperor wanted his subjects to think about him'.³³ The specific virtues selected for advertisement in the official media of imperial publicity were not always as topical as those cited in the *SCPP*, of course, but fluctuations in emphasis on the different imperial virtues nevertheless reflect changing conceptions of what the ideal emperor was, and therefore provide an important insight into one of the long-term structures of imperial ideology.

The citation of specific virtues was a commonplace of imperial panegyric and biography, and public decrees such as the *SCPP* could also advertise imperial virtues, but it was only on the imperial coinage that the attachment of traditional Roman virtues to the figure of the emperor was communicated systematically. The collocation of the imperial portrait on the obverse with a personification of a virtue on the reverse, regularly glossed with the label *Augusta/Augusti* (or simply with the abbreviation *AUG*), invited the coin's user to associate the personified virtue with the emperor.³⁴ The combination of image and text, in fact, made this message clear and unambiguous.³⁵ The personification of abstract ideas had a long history in the Greco-Roman world, going back at least to Hesiod and the personification of concepts such as Nike, Eirene, and Dike, so this mode of representation will have been quite familiar to the Roman viewer.³⁶ It should be noted that deification often accompanied personification, and that at Rome many of these personified abstractions were the recipients of cult.³⁷ Most of the emperor's virtues, then, were deities in their own right, but deities 'of pure functional character' as Mattingly has called them.³⁸

It is important at this point to distinguish between 'personifications' and 'virtues' on imperial coins. Personifications on the imperial coinage may be understood as human figures that gave visual shape and concrete embodiment to a wide range of abstract ideas, from *Abundantia* to *Virtus*.³⁹ Among these personified abstract ideas or 'value concepts' (*Wertbegriffe*) were the virtues themselves. The virtues are moral qualities inherent in men — '*Virtus est animi habitus*', as Cicero put it (*Inv. rhet.* 2.53) — such as *clementia*, *liberalitas*, or *pietas*. Other personifications, such as *Annona*, *Libertas*, and *Pax*, although they, too, like the virtues proper, often took the label *Augusta/Augusti/AUG* on the imperial coinage, cannot be construed as qualities possessed by the emperor and cannot properly be referred to as imperial 'virtues'.⁴⁰

So the virtues were simply one type of personification represented on the imperial coinage. In order to provide an interpretive context for the official representation and communication of the emperor's virtues, it is best to begin with a synchronic survey of the imperial coinage for the period A.D. 69–235 as a whole, assessing the relative importance of the personifications/*Wertbegriffe* in general, and of the imperial virtues in particular. The reverse types on the imperial coinage can be divided iconographically into five broad categories: (1) personifications/*Wertbegriffe*; (2) gods, goddesses, and

³³ D. S. Potter, 'Political theory in the *senatus consultum Pisonianum*', *AJP* 120 (1999), 65–88, at 71.

³⁴ See Wallace-Hadrill, op. cit. (n. 6), on the importance of reading the obverse and the reverse of a coin as different parts of a single, unified message.

³⁵ On the synthesis of image and text in Roman visual culture, see e.g. T. Hölscher, 'Die Geschichtsauffassung in der römischen Repräsentationskunst', *JDAI* 95 (1980), 279–81; Eck, op. cit. (n. 29), 132–3; G. Woolf, 'Monumental writing and the expansion of Roman society in the early Empire', *JRS* 86 (1996), 27–9.

³⁶ Hes., *Theog.* 384 (Nike), 902 (Dike and Eirene); cf. 135 (Themis), 902 (Eunomia), 934 (Phobos). For the Greek background to the personification of abstract ideas, see H. A. Shapiro, *Personifications in Greek Art: The Representation of Abstract Concepts 600–400 B.C.* (1993). For the translation of this mode

of representation into Roman political culture, see Weinstock, op. cit. (n. 31), 228–30; Fears, op. cit. (n. 2), 828 ff., 875–7.

³⁷ See H. Mattingly, 'The Roman "Virtues"', *HTR* 30 (1937), 103–17, and Fears, op. cit. (n. 2), on the religious dimension of the imperial virtues, with emphasis on the virtues as recipients of cult. For Wallace-Hadrill, op. cit. (n. 2), this 'religious metaphor' serves to 'identif[y] the view of the emperor as a "charismatic" one' (315).

³⁸ Mattingly, op. cit. (n. 37), 107.

³⁹ This definition of 'personification' is borrowed and slightly adapted from that offered by J. C. M. Toynbee, 'Picture-language in Roman art and coinage', in R. A. G. Carson and C. H. V. Sutherland (eds), *Essays . . . Mattingly* (1956), 216.

⁴⁰ Wallace-Hadrill, op. cit. (n. 2), 308 ff.

minor deities; (3) inanimate objects and miscellaneous scenes; (4) depictions of the emperor and various members of the imperial family; and (5) provinces, cities, and rivers.⁴¹ Measuring the relative frequency of these five categories indicates that personifications were overwhelmingly the most common types (Table 2). Gods and goddesses were also fairly common, while types from each of the other categories were minted in relatively small numbers. These data reveal some fundamental facts about long-term modes of representation and communication in the Roman Empire. First, and most important, the use of personification to express imperial ideals and values and the various benefits of imperial rule was far more pervasive than other forms of expression, such as symbolism (e.g. clasped hands to represent *concordia*) or simple depictions of the emperor displaying certain qualities (e.g. sacrificing to express *pietas*). The predominance of this particular mode of representation, sustained for over a century and a half, cannot have been the result of conscious planning, but instead reflects a 'deep structure' of Roman thought.⁴² In fact, personification remained an important means of visual and symbolic expression well into the Middle Ages.⁴³ The explanation for this long-term tendency lies perhaps in the flexibility inherent in this mode of representation and the facility with which a wide range of complex ideas could be articulated and communicated in a common idiom. Attention to those iconographic categories not emphasized on the imperial coinage is also instructive. The relative infrequency of reverse types depicting the emperor himself might seem counter-intuitive, but there were so many other vehicles for disseminating the emperor's image — not the least of which were the obverses of the coins themselves — that the reverse images could be used to express other aspects of imperial ideology.⁴⁴ The rarity of inanimate objects and geographical/administrative classifications on imperial coins suggests that these things simply had less resonance than divine entities, whether these were the deities of the Capitoline triad or personified abstractions.

Personifications, then, predominated over other iconographic types and modes of representation on imperial denarii minted between Vespasian and Severus Alexander. It now remains to consider the relative importance of the imperial virtues among the numerous personification types. The personifications on the imperial coinage that I

⁴¹ These divisions are not conceptual and are only intended to isolate different iconographic categories; some of the 'inanimate objects', for example, may be read as symbols for one of the other categories (e.g. a club to represent Hercules). A few comments on the placement of certain types. Within the category of 'gods, goddesses, and minor deities' I have placed Genius types and those of the hero Hercules. The 'objects/miscellaneous' category includes inanimate objects (altars, buildings, military equipment, religious implements etc.), animals, events (e.g. *adventus*), imperial titlature and scenes not involving the emperor or members of the imperial family (e.g. a lictor burning debts). Depictions of the reigning emperor's predecessor have been included in the category of 'the emperor and the imperial family'. Finally, the 'provinces' category includes Hadrian's *Adventus*, *Exercitus* and *Restitutor* series.

⁴² On personification in Roman imagery see e.g. P. Hamberg, *Studies in Roman Imperial Art with Special Reference to the State Reliefs of the Second Century* (1945), 15–45; Toynbee, *op. cit.* (n. 39); Hölscher, *op. cit.* (n. 35), 273–9. A. Kuttner, *Dynasty and Empire in the Age of Augustus* (1995), 69 ff., discusses the importance of studying personifications not individually but in groups.

⁴³ A. Katzenellenbogen, *Allegories of the Virtues and Vices in Medieval Art* (1939); see also the references collected in E. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies* (1957), 114, n. 80.

⁴⁴ On the importance of the obverse portrait of the

emperor, see C. E. King, 'Roman portraiture: images of power?', in Paul and Ierardi, *op. cit.* (n. 24), 123–36. After the coinage, imperial portraiture was surely the most important medium for spreading the emperor's image. For the order of magnitude of imperial portrait production, see M. Pfanner, 'Über das Herstellen von Porträts: Ein Beitrag zu Rationalisierungsmaßnahmen und Produktionsmechanismen von Massenware im späten Hellenismus und in der römischen Kaiserzeit', *JDAI* 104 (1989), 157–257, who estimates (178–9) that between 25,000 and 50,000 portraits of Augustus were produced between 30 B.C. and A.D. 14, which corresponds roughly to an average production of between 500 and 1,000 portraits per year. Following G. Alföldy's figure of 1,000 cities in the Empire, Pfanner figures that each city would have received a new portrait of Augustus every one to two years (178). On the dissemination of the imperial image in general, see H. Kruse, *Studien zur offiziellen Geltung des Kaiserbildes im römischen Reiche* (1934); P. Zanker, 'Prinzipat und Herrscherbild', *Gymnasium* 86 (1979), 353–68; T. Pekáry, *Das römische Kaiserbildnis in Staat, Kult und Gesellschaft* (Das römische Herrscherbild III.5) (1985); C. B. Rose, *Dynastic Commemoration and Imperial Portraiture in the Julio-Claudian Period* (1997). For the role of statues and portraits in establishing an imperial 'presence' throughout the Empire, see also Price, *op. cit.* (n. 1), ch. 7; cf. K. Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves* (1978), 221 ff.

TABLE 2. RELATIVE FREQUENCY OF ICONOGRAPHIC CATEGORIES ON IMPERIAL DENARII, A.D. 69–235

Iconographic Category	Percentage of all Reverse Types (N = 142,798)
Personifications	55%
Gods, goddesses, and minor deities	29%
Objects/miscellaneous	9%
Emperor and imperial family	7%
Provinces, cities, and rivers	1%

Sources: see Appendix.

Note: percentages are rounded off to the nearest whole number.

have defined as 'virtues' are Aequitas, Clementia, Indulgentia, Iustitia, Liberalitas, Munificentia, Patientia, Pietas, Providentia, Pudicitia, and Virtus.⁴⁵ Unlike other personifications, such as Annona or Libertas, these were the personal qualities or virtues possessed by the emperor. For the period A.D. 69–235 as a whole, these eleven imperial virtues as a group represented about one quarter (23 per cent) of all personification types on denarii.⁴⁶ A reign-by-reign survey provides a diachronic perspective on this evidence (Fig. 1).⁴⁷ The imperial virtues, virtually absent from the denarii of the Flavians, only come to the fore with Nerva. Between Nerva and Severus Alexander the relative frequency of the imperial virtues as a group fluctuated between 18 and 29 per cent of all personification types, with one brief exception under Macrinus, when the figure fell to 10 per cent.⁴⁸ The relative prominence of the virtues under Nerva and Trajan militates against the view that a 'sudden upsurge of interest in virtues' occurred under Hadrian,

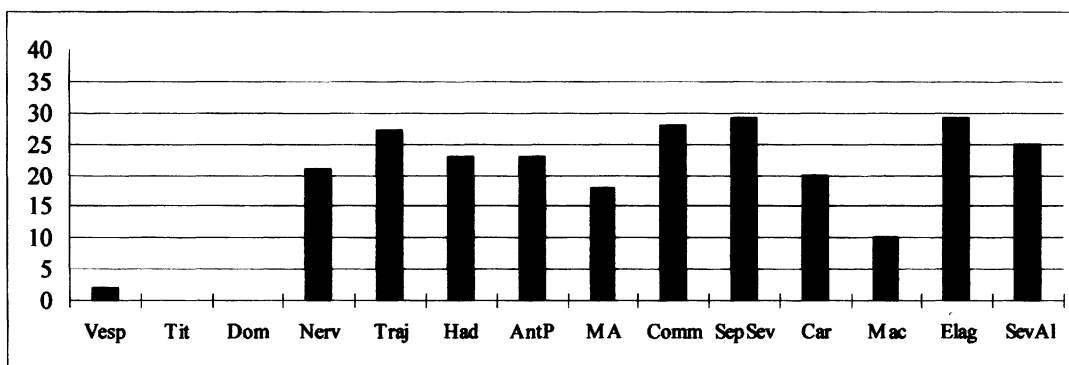


FIG. 1. RELATIVE FREQUENCY ON DENARII OF IMPERIAL VIRTUES AS A GROUP, EXPRESSED AS A PERCENTAGE OF ALL PERSONIFICATION TYPES BY REIGN (N = 77,853).

(Sources: see Appendix; Abbreviations: Vesp: Vespasian (A.D. 69–79); Tit: Titus (79–81); Dom: Domitian (81–96); Nerv: Nerva (96–98); Traj: Trajan (98–117); Had: Hadrian (117–138); AntP: Antoninus Pius (138–161); MA: Marcus Aurelius (161–180); Comm: Commodus (180–192); SepSev: Septimius Severus (193–211); Car: Caracalla (211–217); Mac: Macrinus (217–218); Elag: Elagabalus (218–222); SevAl: Severus Alexander (222–235).)

⁴⁵ This group of eleven virtues is the same as that provided by Wallace-Hadrill, *op. cit.* (n. 2), 310, n. 56, with the exception of Constantia, which was not minted between A.D. 69 and 235. For a tabular presentation of all the personifications minted by all emperors from Augustus to Constantine (without treatment of relative frequency), see F. Gnechi, 'Le personificazioni allegoriche sulle monete imperiali', *RIN* 18 (1905), 354–9. Fears, *op. cit.* (n. 2), 841–5, n. 67, provides a useful bibliography (through 1981) for most of these virtues.

⁴⁶ In addition to the eleven imperial virtues, the personifications which appeared on imperial denarii between A.D. 69 and 235 were: Abundantia, Aeternitas, Annona, Bonus Eventus, Concordia, Fecunditas, Felicitas, Fides, Fortuna, Hilaritas, Honos, Iuventas, Laetitia, Libertas, Moneta, Nobilitas, Pax, Perpetuitas, Salus, Securitas, Spes, Tranquillitas, and Victoria.

⁴⁷ All coins minted at Rome under the reigning emperor are included in that emperor's totals (e.g. coins of Titus and Domitian minted under Vespasian). The coinage of the imperial women has also been included under the totals for the reigning emperor. In those cases in which there were two (or more) emperors (e.g. Septimius Severus, Caracalla, and Geta), I have also tabulated all coins under the senior emperor. Finally, I have not included in Fig. 1 (or in the figures that follow) the tabulations for emperors whose reigns were too brief to make a significant impact on the Empire's coin population, or for whom there was not sufficient evidence.

⁴⁸ Whether this sudden drop is to be explained by the brevity of Macrinus' reign or by a new, 'non-senatorial' and 'non-traditional' representation of the Principate is unclear.

and that the imperial mint at that time was responding to contemporary interest in human virtues, reflected in texts such as Pliny's *Panegyricus* and the *Caesars* of Suetonius.⁴⁹ The quantitative evidence suggests instead that the state anticipated the educated élite in its attention to virtues. The immediate impact that Nerva's coinage had on a senator like Pliny, however, is difficult to know. Instead of seeking direct influence in either direction, it is better to see both the mint and Pliny as mirrors of some larger, discursive shift that took place around the beginning of the second century.

The imperial virtues as a group did not predominate on the coinage, then, but they were nevertheless prominent throughout the second century and well into the third century.⁵⁰ Now to the individual virtues. In order to assess the structural significance of the imperial virtues, I have isolated all the reverse types of these virtues and measured their relative frequency with respect to each other. The results are presented in Table 3. These data illuminate a long-term structure of imperial ideology by revealing which imperial virtues in particular were emphasized during our period and, more important, to what degree they were emphasized. The visual programmes of individual emperors could vary greatly, to be sure, but the information in Table 3 provides access to the deeper and slower-moving currents of imperial ideology that lay beneath the sudden and often ephemeral shifts in the emperor's public image.

TABLE 3. RELATIVE FREQUENCY ON DENARII OF INDIVIDUAL IMPERIAL VIRTUES, EXPRESSED AS A PERCENTAGE OF ALL IMPERIAL VIRTUES, A.D. 69–235 (N = 18,187)

Type	Percentage	Type	Percentage
Aequitas	24%	Patientia	< 1%
Clementia	2%	Pietas	20%
Indulgentia	4%	Providentia	12%
Iustitia	2%	Pudicitia	11%
Liberalitas	12%	Virtus	13%
Munificentia	< 1%		

Sources: see Appendix.

Note: for the tabulation of individual reverse types under the different virtues I have followed the identifications in *BMCRE*.

A number of observations about the emperor's public image can be made from these data. In addition to highlighting the main themes stressed on the coinage, the evidence presented in Table 3 also exposes those imperial virtues that were not prominent in the official representation and communication of imperial ideals and values. Clementia, Indulgentia, Iustitia, Munificentia, and Patientia types were all relatively rare on imperial denarii — the last two minted in such small numbers, in fact, that they do not even represent one per cent of all virtue types. Indulgentia and Munificentia advertised aspects of the emperor's personal generosity and may be considered along with the more frequent Liberalitas type (see below). Patientia, minted only under Hadrian, was not a Republican ideal and never emerged as a core imperial virtue.⁵¹ Among the virtues that were rare on imperial denarii this leaves only Clementia and Iustitia. The relative infrequency of these two types is more problematic.⁵²

Clementia and Iustitia types each represented less than five per cent of all imperial virtues on denarii minted during our period. This body of evidence is, to begin with,

⁴⁹ Wallace-Hadrill, *op. cit.* (n. 2), 311–14, argues that the virtues were first given prominence under Hadrian as an official reaction to the emphasis on human virtues in Pliny's *Panegyricus*: 'In offering a gallery of imperial virtues, the mint [sc. under Hadrian] responds to the mood of the times' (313).

⁵⁰ When Wallace-Hadrill, *op. cit.* (n. 2), writes that the virtues were 'at all times a secondary phenomenon on the coinage' (313), he is, *sensu stricto*, correct, but the quantitative evidence presented in Fig. 1 shows how much this sort of blanket statement can and should be refined.

⁵¹ B. D. Shaw, 'Body / power / identity: the passion of the martyrs', *JECs* 4 (1996), 269–312, examines

the development of *patientia* as an important philosophical and above all Christian virtue in the first three centuries A.D. (esp. 291 ff.).

⁵² It has been noted that Iustitia types were uncommon (by e.g. Charlesworth, *op. cit.* (n. 2), 113; B. Lichocka, *Justitia sur les monnaies impériales romaines* (1974)), but when scholars have referred to the 'infrequency' of the type they rely, it seems (their evidence for these claims is never explicitly cited), on the number of types found in the catalogues — not necessarily a reliable indicator of the actual frequency with which a given type was minted (see above). The quantitative evidence in this case serves to document what until now has only been inferred.

decisive against the view that the four virtues of the *clupeus virtutis* awarded to Augustus (*virtus, clementia, iustitia, pietas*) gave rise to a fixed 'canon' of imperial virtues. The absence of such a canon is now widely recognized, but the relative infrequency of coins advertising *clementia* ('clemency/mildness') and *iustitia* ('justice/fairness') is surprising. The emperor's judicial function was a core element of his civic role, and the popular conception of the princeps as a source of justice was fundamental to the emperor's public image.⁵³ I suggest two possible explanations for the infrequent representation of the 'judicial' virtues *clementia* and *iustitia* on the imperial coinage. The first concerns their inherent incompatibility. In a judicial context *clementia* meant 'leniency', 'mildness' or the avoidance of arbitrariness in the meting out of *poenae*.⁵⁴ *Iustitia* referred more generally to 'justice' or 'fairness'.⁵⁵ Because the claims of imperial *clementia* and *iustitia* must have come into conflict in some cases, the ideological tension between the two virtues might explain their infrequent representation on an official medium of communication such as the imperial coinage.⁵⁶ The other possible explanation concerns the overall shaping of the emperor's public image. The popular conception of the emperor as a source of justice has been abundantly documented. Published imperial edicts, imperial tribunals in the Forum, the giving of justice during the emperor's frequent journeys abroad and the imperial *rescripta* inscribed throughout the Empire all contributed to this conception. With so many other vehicles for the public expression of imperial *iustitia*, perhaps the imperial coinage was not needed to communicate this aspect of the emperor's function.⁵⁷

The second explanation is more plausible than the first, since the relative infrequency of *Clementia* and *Iustitia* types on imperial denarii could not have been the product, in my view, of a repeated series of conscious decisions made on the basis of the perceived ideological tension between *clementia* and *iustitia*, but was much more likely the result of a long-term tendency to advertise other virtues which did not, like the 'judicial' virtues, enjoy alternative avenues of public expression.⁵⁸ This solution, if correct, does imply some degree of sensitivity to the modes by which the emperor's public image was shaped, and even suggests an awareness of the correspondence between medium and message. Such correspondence between medium and message brings us to the first of the virtues that was widely advertised on the imperial coinage, *aequitas*.

Aequitas types by themselves represented about one quarter of all virtue types on denarii minted between A.D. 69 and 235. What exactly the *Aequitas* of the imperial coinage referred to has been the subject of much discussion. For some scholars, *aequitas*

⁵³ Millar, *op. cit.* (n. 1), 3–6, 228, 240, 252, 271, 469, 507, 516, 527–9, 535, 549, 636 ff. and *passim*. For the emperor's role as judge and the ideology of imperial justice, see also J. Béranger, *Recherches sur l'aspect idéologique du principat* (1953), 270 ff.; Wickert, *op. cit.* (n. 32), 2248–53.

⁵⁴ *TLL* III, 1334–5 (IA 1). Cf. Cic., *Part. or.* 2: 'aut saevitiam aut clementiam iudicis'. *Clementia* also had the wider sense of mercy toward those upon whom one takes vengeance. Seneca's definition captures both aspects, with emphasis on leniency in the exaction of *poenae*: 'clementia est temperantia animi in potestate ulciscendi vel lenitas superioris adversus inferiorem in constituendis poenis, inclinatio animi ad lenitatem in poena exigenda' (*Clem.* 2.3.1).

⁵⁵ *TLL* VII.2, 714–15 (esp. IA b). Cf. Ulp., *Dig.* 1.1.10: 'Iustitia est constans et perpetua voluntas ius suum cuique tribuendi'. See discussion in T. Adam, *Clementia Principis* (1970), 31–9, on the relationship between *clementia* and *iustitia* in Seneca's *De Clementia*.

⁵⁶ For the dichotomy between *iustitia* and *clementia*, cf. Sen., *Clem.* 1.20.2: 'hoc enim ad iustitiam, non ad clementiam pertinet'; see also Amm. Marc. 16.5.12 for contradictory demands on the emperor to show both *clementia* and *iustitia*. See Millar, *op. cit.* (n. 1),

516–17, on the potential conflict between these two virtues, and R. Saller, *Personal Patronage under the Early Empire* (1982), 56–7, on the related conflict between the emperor's obligation to give justice and to meet the demands of *amicitia*.

⁵⁷ The tentative conclusion of A. Wallace-Hadrill, 'Galba's *Aequitas*', *NC* 141 (1981), 37.

⁵⁸ Other explanations for the relative infrequency of *Clementia* and *Iustitia* types (based, as noted above, n. 52, on the potentially misleading number of types in the catalogues) tend to consider the types in isolation. Charlesworth, *op. cit.* (n. 2), 113, for example, argues that *clementia* was 'too much a despotic quality' for the Roman emperor. This view was accepted by Béranger, *op. cit.* (n. 53), 271, and Wickert, *op. cit.* (n. 32), 2243. The infrequency of *Iustitia* types is ascribed by Béranger to a shift in the meaning of *iustitia* from 'abstraction' of Justice to 'l'attitude personnelle' of the princeps (270–1). Another possibility worth considering is that these 'judicial' virtues were not under-represented on the imperial coinage, but were instead over-represented in other sources (especially in the epigraphic record, reflecting the incentive to make a public and permanent record of favourable judgements).

advertised imperial 'fairness', broadly conceived.⁵⁹ Such a definition naturally includes fairness in the judicial sphere and, if accepted, would mitigate to an extent the problem of the infrequency of *Clementia* and *Iustitia* types.⁶⁰ Others have argued that the *Aequitas* type referred more narrowly to the honest administration of the imperial mint.⁶¹ The numismatic evidence itself is quite clear. The *Aequitas* type is largely interchangeable with the *Moneta* type, both in terms of iconography and historical development, and the introduction of the type under Galba appears to respond to the *Moneta* theme on the rebel coinage of A.D. 68. At least from the perspective of the imperial mint, then, the more restricted sense of imperial *aequitas* as the just administration of the mint seems to be the principal message.⁶² This emphasis on *aequitas* reflects the importance of the Empire's finances and the emperor's just administration of them. Even though the administration of the mint was only one of the many civic roles of the emperor, this particular role, commemorated by the virtue *aequitas*, was especially emphasized on the imperial coinage, the product of the mint itself.⁶³ In this sense the *Aequitas* type represents a rational and effective correspondence of medium and message.

After *Aequitas* the next most common type was *Pietas*, which represented a fifth of all imperial virtue types minted during our period. *Pietas*, one of the oldest Roman virtues, referred in general to an attitude of devotion, respect and duty toward those to whom one was bound in any way. According to Mattingly, *Pietas* on the imperial coinage signalled devotion specifically toward the gods. On this reading, *pietas* will have advertised the virtue that the emperor displayed in his capacity as the head of the state religion, and the relative prominence of the *Pietas* type will appear as the natural counterpart to the proliferation of sacrificial images in numerous media that highlighted the emperor's role as chief priest.⁶⁴ Others, emphasizing the familial aspect of *pietas*, have argued that this virtue had a strong dynastic element.⁶⁵ Both interpretations assume that *pietas* was primarily an 'asymmetrical' virtue displayed toward superior powers (gods or parents), but *pietas* could also be a 'symmetrical' or 'reciprocal' virtue displayed by those in positions of power toward their dependents.⁶⁶ Imperial *pietas*, in other words, could also advertise the emperor's fulfilment of his obligations toward his subjects. But it is not necessary for us to choose between the multiple associations that the *Pietas* type could evoke, as if they were mutually exclusive. 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.

Another virtue that received commemoration on the imperial coinage was the emperor's personal generosity. This quality was advertised primarily by the *Liberalitas* type, which will be considered in more detail below, as well as by the *Indulgentia* and *Munificentia* types. *Indulgentia* had perhaps the widest semantic range of the three terms. It could signify not only 'generosity' in general but also 'goodwill' and 'leniency'. The term *indulgentia*, then, lay somewhere on the continuum between *liberalitas* and

⁵⁹ P. Strack, *Untersuchungen zur römischen Reichsprägungen des 2. Jahrhunderts I–III* (1931–1937), I, 154–64.

⁶⁰ See Wickert, *op. cit.* (n. 32), 2248–53, where *aequitas* and *iustitia* are treated as essentially interchangeable.

⁶¹ So Mattingly (*BMCRE* II, xlvi; III, xxxv ff.; IV, lvii). Cf. Wallace-Hadrill, *op. cit.* (n. 57), for a more recent statement of this view along with a summary of the debate and earlier bibliography.

⁶² Wallace-Hadrill, *op. cit.* (n. 57).

⁶³ Wallace-Hadrill concludes his analysis of the *Aequitas* type with the suggestion that the type 'conveys a message close to the hearts of the issuing authorities: that the administration of public finances is honest and specifically that the coin they issue is value for money' (*op. cit.* (n. 57), 37). This may be the case, but as Wallace-Hadrill himself notes in the same article, emperors were held responsible for what was

done under them (21, n. 8). The public finances fell under the authority of the emperor, and the emphasis on *aequitas*, regardless of the mint officials' putative attachment to this virtue, clearly redounded to the credit of the emperor himself.

⁶⁴ Mattingly, *BMCRE* III, xc. R. L. Gordon, 'The veil of power: emperors, sacrificers, benefactors', in M. Beard and J. North (eds), *Pagan Priests: Religion and Power in the Ancient World* (1990), 199–231, discusses sacrificial imagery and the iconographic emphasis on the emperor himself in the act of sacrifice.

⁶⁵ Strack, *op. cit.* (n. 59), I, 75 ff.; II, 51 ff., 169–71; III, 25 ff., 36 ff., 115–24. See also J. Beaujeu, *La religion romaine à l'apogée de l'empire I: la politique religieuse des Antonins (96–192)* (1955), 281 ff., esp. 285–6.

⁶⁶ The reciprocal nature of *pietas* is stressed by R. Saller, *Patriarchy, Property and Death in the Roman Family* (1994), ch. 5, esp. 105–14.

clementia.⁶⁷ The meaning of *munificentia*, a very rare virtue on the imperial coinage, was more restricted. The term referred in general to generosity in public benefaction, and often more specifically to generosity in the giving of public games.⁶⁸ As a group the Liberalitas, Indulgentia, and Munificentia types represented 16 per cent of all virtue types on imperial denarii from A.D. 69 to 235.

The other virtue types that were relatively common were Providentia (12 per cent), Pudicitia (11 per cent), and Virtus (13 per cent). *Providentia*, a Latin translation of the Greek *pronoia*, the divine providence that ordered the world according to Stoic doctrine, came by the late Republic to refer specifically to the foresight required to safeguard the state.⁶⁹ Under the Empire the principal applications of *providentia* were in suppressing conspiracies and in securing a peaceful succession — especially important after the events of A.D. 68–69. These applications of *providentia* depended on the foresight of the emperor himself, and as such symbolized at least in part the emperor's *cura rei publicae*.⁷⁰ *Pudicitia* had a narrower semantic range, referring mainly to sexual chastity.⁷¹ After its initial appearance on the coinage of Hadrian — on coins bearing an obverse portrait of the emperor — the *Pudicitia* type appears only on coins with obverse portraits of prominent female members of the imperial house.⁷² The regular collocation of *Pudicitia* with emperors' wives and sisters suggests strongly that the type was meant to advertise the modesty, propriety, and sexual chastity of the imperial women, all of which, of course, contributed ultimately to the honour of the emperor himself.⁷³ Finally, *virtus* was the quality of manly courage displayed in any public action, especially in the performance of military exploits on behalf of the state.⁷⁴

From this synchronic overview certain basic facts emerge about the official representation of the emperor's virtues. The first observation, fundamental to the approach employed in this article, is that not all imperial virtues were emphasized to the same degree. Some types were very common, other types were very rare, and as a consequence some imperial ideals and values played a much larger role than others in constructing the emperor's official public image. The second observation from the evidence presented in Table 3 is that six virtues in particular stand out as the core ideals commemorated on imperial denarii and communicated to the subjects of the Empire: *aequitas*, *pietas*, *virtus*, *liberalitas*, *providentia*, and *pudicitia*. Among this group the two that were especially emphasized were *aequitas* and *pietas*. The one advertised the honest administration of the mint and the value of the coins issued from it, the other gave symbolic expression to the emperor's fulfilment of his obligations to the gods, to his family, and to his subjects.

On the basis of this empirical evidence for the representation and communication of the emperor's virtues, then, we get a sense of the real shape of the Roman emperor's public image during the High Empire. One question regarding this public image is who, exactly, was responsible for selecting imperial coin types and determining mint output.

⁶⁷ *TLL* VII.1, 1246–50, esp. IB ('goodwill' or 'kindness'), IIA ('generosity'), and IID ('leniency'). For a general treatment, see J. Gaudemet, *Indulgentia Principis* (1962). See also H. Cotton, 'The concept of *indulgentia* under Trajan', *Chiron* 14 (1984), 245–66, for the term's establishment in the ideology of the Principate under Trajan, with particular attention to its 'paternalistic' aspect.

⁶⁸ *TLL* VIII, 1650–2, esp. IA1a (on public benefaction) and IA1β for the particular sense of *munificentia* as generosity in the giving of public games.

⁶⁹ Cicero, for example, ascribes the deliverance of the Republic from the 'great dangers' of the Catilinarian *conjuratio* to his own *providentia*: 'quod virtute consilio providentia mea res publica maximis periculis sit liberata' (*Cat.* 3.14).

⁷⁰ M. P. Charlesworth, 'Providentia and Aeternitas', *HTR* 29 (1936), 107–32. See also Béranger, *op. cit.* (n. 53), 210–17, on the relationship between *providentia* and *cura rei publicae*. Because these applications of *providentia* depended on the foresight of the emperor himself, simple *Providentia* types must be

distinguished from *Providentia Deorum* types, which have not been tabulated under this category.

⁷¹ cf. Sen., *Ep.* 94.26: 'improbum esse qui ab uxore pudicitiam exigit, ipse alienarum corruptor uxorum'. For a general treatment of *pudicitia* with ample bibliography, see C. Micaelli's introduction to Tertullian's *De Pudicitia* in the *Sources chrétiennes* series, vol. 394 (1993).

⁷² Between A.D. 69 and 235 the type appears on coins with obverse portraits of Sabina (under Hadrian), Faustina II (under Antoninus Pius), Lucilla (under Marcus Aurelius), Crispina (under Commodus), Julia Domna (under Septimius Severus and under Caracalla), and Julia Maesa (under Elagabalus).

⁷³ So Strack, *op. cit.* (n. 59), II, 117–18, *contra* Mattingly (*BMCRE* III, cxxxi), who makes *Pudicitia* the emblem of religious sanctity.

⁷⁴ On *virtus* see J. Hellegouarc'h, *Le vocabulaire latin des relations et des partis politiques sous la République* (1963), 244 ff.; D. C. Earl, *The Moral and Political Tradition of Rome* (1967), 20 ff.; Galinsky, *op. cit.* (n. 32), 84.

The significant imbalance in the relative frequencies of the different virtue types creates the strong impression that the output of types was the result of a deliberate choice, and further evidence discussed below regarding the *Liberalitas* type will show that the relative frequency with which this type was minted was not random, but these observations do not answer the question of who chose the types. The literary evidence for the selection of types is sparse and ambiguous, and it is unlikely that we will ever have a definitive answer to this question.⁷⁵ The narrow question of who actually chose the types and determined mint output, however, whether the emperor himself or a low-level mint bureaucrat, is not critically important for our interpretation of the emperor's public image. What is important is that coins minted at Rome were official documents, and therefore stood as official representations of the emperor and his virtues.

In more concrete terms what Table 3 illuminates is the long-term dissemination from the centre of different imperial ideals and values on an official medium of communication. And regardless of the processes by which the various types were chosen and output determined, this analysis reveals which virtues in particular the masses of the Empire were most likely to observe on imperial coins and to associate with their emperor.⁷⁶ The scale and rate at which these virtues were disseminated, however, were not constant. Only through attention to fluctuations in emphasis on these different imperial virtues, as measured by their variable relative frequency on the coinage of successive emperors, can the historian accurately assess the changing contours of the emperor's public image over time. It is beyond the scope of this article to examine the fluctuations in relative frequency for all of these types, so I would like to narrow the focus now and consider the long-term trajectory in the representation of just one of the emperor's core virtues, *liberalitas*.

III. LIBERALITAS PRINCIPIS

The personal generosity of the Roman emperor was fundamental to the structure of imperial ideology.⁷⁷ The notion that a ruler had a moral obligation to provide his subjects with material benefits had a long history in the ancient world, going back at least to Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*.⁷⁸ At Rome most of the characteristic expressions of imperial generosity were established already under Augustus, and the large-scale distribution of gifts and other *beneficia* in some ways defined what it meant to be a Roman emperor. Later generations readily associated the virtue of *liberalitas* with Augustus, who spent exorbitant sums from his personal wealth on handouts of cash and grain, the provision of games and spectacles, numerous public building projects, loans to senators, and subventions of the *aerarium*.⁷⁹ According to Suetonius, for example, Nero declared at the beginning of his reign that he would rule 'according to the precept

⁷⁵ Two passages from Suetonius (*Aug.* 94.12; *Ner.* 25.2) and one from Eusebius (*Vit. Const.* 15.1) have been adduced to support imperial choice of types, but both authors may be assuming that what was done for emperors was done by them. The author of the *De rebus bellicis* includes suggestions for coin types in his advice to the emperor (3.4), but this only reveals one man's assumption that the emperor selected the types. Finally, a casual reference in Statius' *Silvae* suggests that under the Flavians the procurator *a rationibus* was responsible for the supply of bullion to the mint and the volume of coinage produced (3.104–5), but this is not the same thing as responsibility for the selection of types. None of this evidence is compelling, and we cannot even discount the possibility that it was still the *tresviri monetales* who chose the types (the college of *tresviri monetales* survived at least through the reign of Severus Alexander: *CIL* X.3850 = *ILS* 1181). See R. Wolters, *Nummi Signati: Untersuchungen zur römischen Münzprägung und Geldwirtschaft*

(1999), 262–4, for a recent overview of the debate on the selection of types.

⁷⁶ As Wallace-Hadrill, *op. cit.* (n. 6), 86, notes, however imperial coin types were chosen, the understanding of the type, once the coin was in circulation, will have been exactly the same.

⁷⁷ H. Kloft, *Liberalitas Principis, Herkunft und Bedeutung: Studien zur Prinzipatsideologie* (1970) is basic. See also Veyne, *op. cit.* (n. 1), ch. 4; Millar, *op. cit.* (n. 1), 133–201.

⁷⁸ The *Cyropaedia* was allegedly read by Scipio Aemilianus (*Cic., Tusc.* 2.62, *Q. Fr.* 1.1.23) and by Caesar (*Suet., Iul.* 87). For the influence of the *Cyropaedia* on Roman Republican political thought, see briefly Kloft, *op. cit.* (n. 77), 20–2; E. Rawson, 'Scipio, Laelius, Furius and the ancestral religion', *JRS* 63 (1973), 164–5 (= *Roman Culture and Society* (1991), 86–7).

⁷⁹ Kloft, *op. cit.* (n. 77), ch. 3.

of Augustus', glossed as a rule imbued with *liberalitas*, *clementia*, and *comitas*.⁸⁰ Yet Augustus himself, who devotes nearly one quarter of the *Res Gestae* to his expenditures on behalf of the *res publica*, never employs the term *liberalitas*. In fact, *liberalitas* does not emerge as an officially recognized virtue until the second century, when it first appears on the imperial coinage under Hadrian. After Hadrian *Liberalitas* types become a fixture on the coinage, appearing under every emperor for the rest of our period (and beyond).⁸¹ How can we explain this strange pattern in the official representation of such a key imperial virtue as *liberalitas*?

There was a very good political reason why Augustus did not emphasize his *liberalitas* in a text as public as the *Res Gestae* and why the *Liberalitas* type never appeared on his coinage. Augustus' gifts to senators to help them meet the census requirement were substantial but, like his personal subventions of the *aerarium*, made clear the degree to which the central institutions of the state had come to depend on the generosity of the princeps. And the reality of senatorial subordination and dependence was obviously incompatible with the concept of *libera res publica restituta*.⁸² In this narrow sense imperial *liberalitas* represented the antithesis of Augustan ideology, and the absence of this virtue in the construction of Augustus' official public image is not surprising. It should also be noted that *liberalitas*, unlike other imperial virtues, was never the object of a state cult at Rome, and therefore did not translate easily into the idiom of imperial expression established under Augustus. This probably explains why *liberalitas* did not play a role in the official publicity of Augustus' direct political heirs, the emperors of the Julio-Claudian line. There is some evidence, though, that generosity and avarice did become political slogans in the struggles of A.D. 69. In the opposing speeches of Piso and Otho reported by Tacitus, *liberalitas* and *avaritia*, along with *luxuria* and *parsimonia*, emerge as key catchwords that distinguish the various contenders for the throne.⁸³ We may suspect some rhetorical embellishment here, but it is indeed likely that personal generosity was demanded of potential emperors, especially among the troops and the urban plebs of Rome. Yet *liberalitas* was not advertised on the coins of Galba, Otho, or Vitellius, and probably for this reason failed to enter into the circle of officially advertised imperial virtues under the Flavians.⁸⁴

Before the appearance of the *Liberalitas* type on the coinage of Hadrian, an earlier, formative period in its development as an official imperial virtue can be identified under Trajan. The celebration of the emperor's personal generosity is emphatically announced in Pliny's *Panegyricus*, in which the term *liberalitas* appears no less than a dozen times.⁸⁵ That this virtue was considered an appropriate one for Trajan is also shown by an alimentary inscription erected in Rome which explicitly connects the programme to the emperor's *liberalitas*.⁸⁶ Further evidence from the epigraphic record confirms the

⁸⁰ Suet., *Nero* 10.1: 'Atque ut certiolem adhuc indolem ostenderet, ex Augusti praescripto imperatorum se professus, neque liberalitatis neque clementiae, ne comitatis quidem exhibendae ullam occasionem amisit.'

⁸¹ See Gnechchi, op. cit. (n. 45), 354-59, for a list of the emperors on whose coinage the *Liberalitas* type appears.

⁸² So Kloft, op. cit. (n. 77), 79.

⁸³ Tac., *Hist.* 1.30.1: 'Falluntur quibus luxuria specie liberalitatis imponit', 'Those for whom (Otho's) extravagance takes on the appearance of *liberalitas* are deceived'; 1.37.4: 'falsis nominibus . . . parsimoniam pro avaritia . . . appellat', 'by mistaken names he (sc. Galba) calls it "thrift" instead of "greed"'; cf. 1.18.3 and 1.38.1 on Galba's stinginess.

⁸⁴ On the derivative nature of Vespasianic coin types, which borrow types and motifs even from 'bad'

emperors such as Nero and Vitellius, see Buttrey, op. cit. (n. 19).

⁸⁵ Plin., *Pan.* 3.4, 25.3, 25.5, 27.3, 28.4, 33.2, 34.3, 38.2, 38.4, 43.4, 51.5, 86.5.

⁸⁶ *CIL* VI.1492 = *ILS* 6106: SECUNDUM LIBERALITATEM EIUS. Two other alimentary inscriptions commemorate imperial *liberalitas*: *CIL* XI.5956 (Pitinum Mergens, A.D. 138-61) and *CIL* XI.5395 = *ILS* 6620 (Asisium, undated). Note that a range of virtues could be ascribed to Trajan in the alimentary inscriptions, such as *indulgentia* (*CIL* IX.1455 = *ILS* 6509, Ligures Baebiani), *munificentia* (*CIL* IX.5825, Auximum), and *providentia* (*CIL* VI.1492 = *ILS* 6106, Rome). See discussion in G. Woolf, 'Food, poverty and patronage: the significance of the epigraphy of the Roman alimentary schemes in early imperial Italy', *PBSR* 58 (1990), 224-5.

popular association of *liberalitas* with Trajan. In an inscription from A.D. 103, the thirty-five Roman tribes thank Trajan for adding seats to the Circus Maximus, ascribing a simple architectural improvement to the emperor's personal generosity.⁸⁷

IMP . . . TRAIANO AUG . . . TRIBUS XXXV QUOD LIBERALITATE OPTIMI PRINCIPIS COMMODA EARUM ETIAM LOCORUM ADIECTIONE AMPLIATA SINT.

The thirty-five tribes to the Emperor Trajan Augustus (full imperial title) . . . because through the *liberalitas* of the Optimus Princeps their interests have been extended by an addition of seats.

This is the first securely dated inscription to commemorate this particular imperial virtue, and a prime example of what Veyne calls a 'fausse évergésie', a routine administrative decision of the Roman state for which the emperor automatically receives credit simply by virtue of being emperor.⁸⁸ But perhaps the most striking evidence that Trajan's contemporaries associated the emperor with the virtue *liberalitas* comes from an honorific inscription to the emperor erected in the Markets of Trajan in Rome. In honouring Trajan the dedicators chose to praise the emperor as *liberalissimus*, 'most generous'.⁸⁹ Dedications to the emperor sometimes included these superlative epithets, but the use of the specific epithet *liberalissimus* was, as far as we know, unprecedented.⁹⁰ At least in Rome the notional connection between the emperor and the virtue of *liberalitas* became quite explicit during the reign of Trajan.

The full adoption of *liberalitas* into the official language of imperial expression takes place under Hadrian, on whose coinage the virtue first appears. Contemporary sensitivity to *liberalitas* is also reflected in Suetonius, whose schematization of 'good' and 'bad' emperors often pivots on public and private expenditure.⁹¹ In addition, a number of inscriptions set up during Hadrian's reign commemorate the emperor's *liberalitas*, continuing the trend which began under Trajan.⁹² An officially recognized and publicly advertised imperial virtue had been born.

This is the larger historical context in which the appearance of the Liberalitas type on the imperial coinage must be seen. In this particular case the imperial mint under Hadrian does seem to be responding to contemporary celebration of imperial *liberalitas* as reflected both in literary texts and in the epigraphic record. After Hadrian the type is routinely minted under all emperors for the rest of our period, and the history of its official representation after A.D. 117 might not be considered worth pursuing, but this is where the quantitative approach to the iconography of the imperial coinage becomes especially illuminating. Although the Liberalitas type appeared on the coinage of every emperor from Hadrian to Severus Alexander, the relative frequency with which it was minted varied considerably. The evidence presented in Fig. 2 shows how sharply this

⁸⁷ *CIL* VI.955 = *ILS* 286. On Trajan's building in the Circus Maximus, cf. Plin., *Pan.* 51.3–5; Dio 68.7.2; Paus. 5.12.6. M. Fell, *Optimus Princeps? Anspruch und Wirklichkeit der imperialen Programmatik Kaiser Trajans* (1992), 52–61, discusses the use of the title 'optimus princeps' before A.D. 114 (when it became an official cognomen).

⁸⁸ Veyne, *op. cit.* (n. 1), 621 ff. ('Les bienfaits du prince'), esp. 638–42 on public building.

⁸⁹ *CIL* VI.8.2 40493: [- - - NERV]AE TRAIAN[O - - -] / [- - -] LIBERALISSIMO [- - -]. The two fragments of this inscription, both found in the Markets of Trajan, were originally published separately by R. Paribeni in *NS* 1933, 503, n. 221 and 518, n. 283. The fragments were put together and the inscription properly restored and published by G. Alföldy in *CIL* VI.8.2 (1996). This inscription now represents the earliest evidence for the use of the superlative epithet 'liberalissimus', next attested under Hadrian: *AE* 1969/70, 167 (Beneventum, A.D. 125–126); *CIL* VIII.2534 (Lambaesis, A.D. 117–138).

⁹⁰ On superlative epithets in honorific inscriptions to

the emperor (down to Commodus), see R. Frei-Stolba, 'Inoffizielle Kaisertitulaturen im 1. und 2. Jahrhundert n. Chr.', *MH* 26 (1969), 18–39.

⁹¹ See A. Wallace-Hadrill, *Suetonius: The Scholar and his Caesars* (1983), 142–74, for a discussion of virtues and vices in Suetonius, esp. 166–71 on imperial expenditure; see also Kloft, *op. cit.* (n. 77), 155–6.

⁹² *CIL* VI.967 = *ILS* 309: HAC LIBERALITATE (Rome, A.D. 118); *CIL* VI.972: INDULGENTIA ET LIBERALITATE EIUS (Rome, A.D. 133); *CIL* XIV.95: INDULGENTIA ET LIBERALITATE EIUS (Ostia, A.D. 133); *CIL* XIV.4235 = *ILS* 318: [LIBE]RALITATES (Tibur, A.D. 136); *CIL* XIV.2460: [EX LI]BER[ALITATE] (Castrimoenium, A.D. 117–138); *AE* 1991, 694: LIBERALIT[ATE] (Caesarea, A.D. 117–138). For the use of the superlative epithet 'liberalissimus' in Hadrianic inscriptions, see above, n. 89. One inscription set up after A.D. 138 attributes *liberalitas* to Hadrian: *CIL* X.5963: PROFUSA LIBERALITA[TE] (Signia, post-A.D. 138).

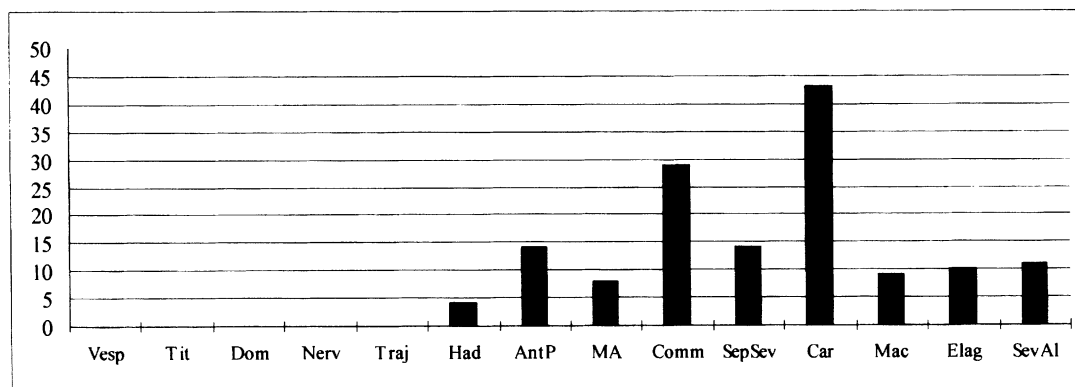


FIG. 2. RELATIVE FREQUENCY OF LIBERALITAS TYPES ON IMPERIAL DENARII, EXPRESSED AS A PERCENTAGE OF ALL IMPERIAL VIRTUE TYPES BY REIGN (N = 18,187). (Sources: See Appendix.)

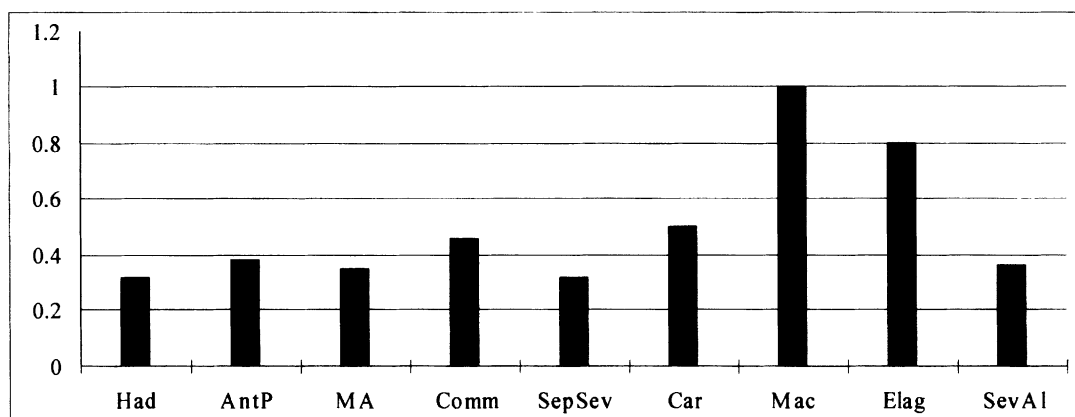


FIG. 3. NUMBER OF CONGIARIA PER REIGN-YEAR, HADRIAN TO SEVERUS ALEXANDER. (Source: Barbieri, 'Liberalitas', *DE IV*, 842-64.)

relative frequency could fluctuate between reigns. After its initial appearance under Hadrian, when it was minted in relatively small numbers with respect to the other virtue types, the relative frequency of the Liberalitas type shows successively higher peaks under Antoninus Pius, Commodus and Caracalla, punctuated by relative lows under Marcus Aurelius and Septimius Severus. The relative frequency of the type was much steadier from Macrinus to Severus Alexander. The data presented in Fig. 2, then, clarify what the coin catalogues obscure, namely the relative frequency with which a given type was minted. And it is only through an awareness of these long-term fluctuations in emphasis on *liberalitas* that we can properly assess its structural significance in the communication of the imperial virtues under each emperor.

The task that now confronts the historian is to attempt to explain what the shifts in emphasis recorded in Fig. 2 actually mean. One approach is to compare these fluctuations with a related phenomenon that is also susceptible of quantification. For the Liberalitas type this can be done with *congiaria*, distributions of money to the urban plebs. Already by the reign of Hadrian, imperial *liberalitas* had become so closely associated with imperial *congiaria* that the Liberalitas type was routinely accompanied by a serial number that recorded the number of these distributions.⁹³ And *congiaria*, like coin types, can also be quantified. In order to relate the number of these distributions to the number of Liberalitas issues, therefore, I have compared the relative frequency of the Liberalitas type on denarii to the number of *congiaria* per reign-year for all emperors

⁹³ On the attachment of serial numbers to the Liberalitas type and the resulting 'trivialization' of per-

sonal generosity as a moral concept, see Kloft, *op. cit.* (n. 77), 158-9.

on whose coinage the type appeared during our period (Fig. 3). The results of this comparison reveal a broad correlation between emphasis on the Liberalitas type and the number of *congiaria* given by successive emperors. This pattern is especially clear between Hadrian and Caracalla, when fluctuations in the number of *congiaria* per reign-year are very closely paralleled by greater fluctuations in the relative frequency of the Liberalitas type (Fig. 2). The only exceptions to this pattern are under Macrinus and Elagabalus, but the evidence for these two emperors is likely to be distorted somewhat because of the brevity of their reigns. Under Severus Alexander the correlation between the relative frequency of the Liberalitas type and number of *congiaria* per reign-year is again evident. This evidence indicates that the frequency with which the Liberalitas type was minted on denarii between A.D. 117 and 235 was not random but was demonstrably the product of imperial policy. It is also important to note that not all Liberalitas types came with a serial number. The pattern revealed by Figs 2 and 3 is in fact more meaningful for this reason, since what this evidence shows is that the emperor's *liberalitas* was proclaimed and advertised not only on the occasions of imperial *congiaria*, but was emphasized on the coinage to the degree that this virtue had actually been demonstrated in the material form of these distributions. That the Liberalitas type was minted in increasingly greater numbers with respect to *congiaria*, especially under Commodus and Caracalla, may reflect a growing stridency during our period in the claims made by the Roman government. The critical observation, though, is that this aspect of imperial publicity had some basis in reality.

So *liberalitas*, which began as a personal virtue with a strong moral dimension, was reduced in the official pronouncements of the Antonines to a sort of administrative shorthand for cash handouts. As such the Liberalitas type was faithfully reproduced under every emperor from Hadrian down to Severus Alexander (and beyond), and with each passing year the type became more routine and more banal. But it is really the banality of imperial *liberalitas* that should interest the student of imperial ideology. Through the sheer repetition and proliferation of the Liberalitas type the notion of the emperor's 'personal generosity' must have penetrated deeper and deeper into the consciousness — or, perhaps, into the collective *unconscious* — of the emperor's subjects. As Bourdieu put it in his much-quoted formulation, 'Every established order tends to produce (to very different degrees and with very different means) the naturalization of its own arbitrariness'.⁹⁴ For the modern historian, close attention to the rhythms in official emphasis on imperial *liberalitas* allows us to see part of this complex process at work.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The method employed in this article is quantitative and focuses on the long term, an approach normally associated with economic or demographic history. One goal of this study has been to show that such an approach can usefully be applied to the study of images and ideas as well. The great benefit of the quantitative method for the study of the iconography of the imperial coinage is that it allows us to move beyond unanswerable questions about agency and intent in the selection of types and away from the narrow question of whether or not imperial coins should be seen as vehicles of imperial 'propaganda'.⁹⁵ Imperial coins are quite distinct from other types of historical evidence simply because of the large numbers in which they have survived, and by taking advantage of this mass of evidence it is possible to pursue questions which can yield more conclusive answers, such as the relative frequency of reverse types. Fundamental to this approach is the belief that the iconography of the imperial coinage forms a

⁹⁴ P. Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, transl. R. Nice (1977), 164.

⁹⁵ As Howgego, *op. cit.* (n. 4), 71, writes, the lack of good evidence for many of the standard questions 'has

rendered the debate somewhat sterile'. For a recent and extensive survey of these questions and the attendant debates, with ample bibliography, see Wolters, *op. cit.* (n. 75), 255–339.

symbolic system. By measuring the interrelationships between this system's constituent parts — in this case, reverse types advertising the emperor's virtues — one can demonstrate how the system works, which in turn gives us a new way to read the 'visual language' of imperial imagery. As I hope to have shown in this study, this method can produce results which not only open up new perspectives on the official representation and communication of the emperor's virtues, but which also provide an empirical base from which to examine wider questions concerning both the Roman emperor's public image and the long-term structure of imperial ideology.

APPENDIX. SOURCES FOR TABULATIONS OF REVERSE TYPES

This appendix provides the sources for the tabulations of reverse types employed in this article. I wish to thank William E. Metcalf, former Chief Curator of the American Numismatic Society, for giving me access to the hoard data on which this study was based. Without this very generous offer this article would not have been possible. The appendix contains the following information: the conventional name of the hoard; the number of denarii found in the hoard minted at Rome between A.D. 69 and 235; its approximate burial date (based on internal evidence); and the reference. I have divided the 105 hoards into five regional zones, following S. Bolin, *State and Currency in the Roman Empire to 300 AD* (1958), and Duncan-Jones, *op. cit.* (n. 5), App. 10 (though I have added the data from the one North African hoard, Volubilis, to the figures for Italy, Zone C). Within each zone the hoards are listed by order of burial date.

Abbreviations

(See also *L'Année Philologique* for standard abbreviations)

AMN	<i>Acta Musei Napocensis</i>
BBCS	<i>Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies</i>
Besly and Bland 1983	E. Besly and R. Bland, <i>The Cunetio Treasure: Roman Coinage of the Third Century A.D.</i>
Carson 1979	R. A. G. Carson (ed.), <i>Recent Coin Hoards from Roman Britain</i>
CH	Coin Hoards (Royal Numismatic Society, London)
CHRB	<i>Coin Hoards of Roman Britain</i>
DM	<i>Deutsche Münzblätter</i>
FMRD	<i>Die Fundmünzen der römischen Zeit in Deutschland</i>
FMRÖ	<i>Die Fundmünzen der römischen Zeit in Österreich</i>
FMRSL	<i>Die Fundmünzen der römischen Zeit in Slowenien</i>
Göbl 1954	R. Göbl, <i>Der römische Münzschatzfund von Apetlon</i>
JIAN	<i>Journal international d'archéologie numismatique</i>
Krzyzanowska 1976	A. Krzyzanowska, <i>Skarb denarów rzymskich z Drzewicza</i>
Lightfoot 1991	C. S. Lightfoot (ed.), <i>Recent Turkish Coin Hoard and Numismatic Studies</i>
MA	<i>Memoria Antiquitatis</i>
Mihailescu-Bîrliba 1977	V. Mihailescu-Bîrliba, <i>Tezaurul de Magura</i>
Mitkowa-Szubert 1989	K. Mitkowa-Szubert, <i>The Nietulisko Male Hoards of Roman Denarii</i>
Mouchmov 1934	N. A. Mouchmov, <i>Le trésor numismatique de Réka Devnia (Marcianopolis)</i>
NK	<i>Numizmatikai Közlöny</i>
NSb	<i>Numismatický Sborník</i>
Ondrouch 1934	V. Ondrouch, <i>Der römische Denarfund von Vyskovce aus der Frühkaiserzeit</i>
PSAS	<i>Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland</i>
Robertson	A. S. Robertson, <i>An Inventory of Romano-British Coin Hoards</i> (forthcoming)
Schaad 1992	D. Schaad <i>et al.</i> , <i>Le trésor d'Eauze</i>
SCN	<i>Studii Si Cercetări de Numismatică</i>

TCWAAS	<i>Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society</i>
TM	<i>Trésors Monétaires</i>
van Es 1960	W. A. van Es, <i>De romeinse muntvondsten uit de drie noordelijke provincies</i>
VHAD	<i>Vjesnik Hrvatskoga Arkheološkoga Društva</i>
Weber 1932	S. H. Weber, <i>An Egyptian Coin Hoard of the Second Century A.D.</i>
WN	<i>Wiadomości Numizmatyczne</i>

Hoard	No. of Coins	Burial Date (A.D.)	Reference
Zone A: Britain			
Beck Row Mildenhall	105	80	<i>CHRB</i> 4 (1984), 15–24
Howe	31	87	<i>CHRB</i> 10 (1997), 62–3
Lavenham	160	103/111	<i>NC</i> ² 15 (1875), 140–3
Verulamium	26	112/117	<i>NC</i> ⁶ 20 (1960), 271–3
Ormskirk	77	119/122	<i>NC</i> ⁶ 8 (1948), 232
Hastings	42	125	<i>CHRB</i> 9 (1992), 34–8
Waddington	11	135	<i>CHRB</i> 9 (1992), 39–40
Mallerstang	102	136/138	<i>TCWAAS</i> 7 (1927), 205–17
Swaby	123	137/138	<i>NC</i> ⁵ 14 (1934), 216–19
Londonthorpe	398	153/154	Carson 1979, 9–25
Lawrence Weston	579	157	<i>CHRB</i> 8 (1988), 23–31
Allerton Bywater	271	162	<i>NC</i> ⁵ 5. (1925), 400–1
Barway	395	180	<i>CHRB</i> 10 (1997), 128–30
Ollerton (Edwinstowe)	404	180	<i>CHRB</i> 9 (1992), 46–9
Briglands	173	186/187	<i>PSAS</i> 90 (1956–57), 241–6
Bletchley	872	187	<i>CHRB</i> 9 (1992), 50–64
Postwick	171	192	<i>CHRB</i> 10 (1997), 131–4
Handley	414	194/195	<i>NC</i> ⁶ 10 (1950), 311–15
Abergele	317	201/206	<i>BBCS</i> 8 (1935–37), 188–201
Bristol	1388	208	<i>NC</i> ⁵ 18 (1938), 85–98
Mustwell Hill	633	209/210	<i>NC</i> ⁵ 9 (1929), 315–18
Much Hadham	89	210/211	<i>CHRB</i> 9 (1992), 73–80
Darfield II	469	215	<i>NC</i> ⁶ 8 (1948), 78–80
St Mary Cray	319	226	<i>NC</i> ⁶ 15 (1955), 62–6
Llanarmon	400	226/227	Robertson, no. 426
Falkirk	1828	230	<i>NC</i> ⁵ 14 (1934), 1–30
East England	3147	231/235	<i>NC</i> ³ 18 (1898), 126–84
Elveden	928	246/247	<i>NC</i> ⁶ 14 (1954), 204–8
Brickendonbury	369	251	<i>NC</i> ³ 16 (1896), 191–208
Dorchester	161	257	<i>NC</i> ⁵ 19 (1939), 21–61
Edlington Wood	422	258	<i>NC</i> ⁶ 5 (1945), 155–8
Stevenage	372	263	<i>CHRB</i> 8 (1988), 73–83
Caister-by-Yarmouth	482	263	<i>NC</i> ⁶ 7 (1947), 175–9
Cunetio	598	266/267	Besly and Bland 1983
Zone B: West Continent			
Middels Osterloog	77	140/143	<i>ZfN</i> 29 (1912), 207–41
Amiens XIII	42	148/149	<i>TM</i> 5 (1983), 125–30
Jever	328	162/163	<i>FMRD</i> 8.1, no. 3019
Stockstadt III	1337	167/168	<i>FMRD</i> 1.6, no. 6020
Neunkirchen	26	167/168	<i>NZ</i> 101 (1990), 17–28
Bargercompascuum	309	187/188	van Es 1960, 106–12
Obererbach	844	218/222	<i>FMRD</i> 4.5, no. 5028
Baden Baden	342	225	<i>FMRD</i> 2.2, no. 2196
Kirchmatting	1049	231	<i>FMRD</i> 1.2, no. 2116
Wiggensbach	382	233	<i>FMRD</i> 2.7, no. 7199

Niederachau	738	235	<i>FMRD</i> 1.1, no. 1229
Cologne	4303	236	<i>FMRD</i> 6.1.1, no. 1004, 1-3
Köngen	312	247	<i>FMRD</i> 2.4.n.1, no. 4135/1
Viuz-Faverges	1607	251/253	<i>TM</i> 3 (1981), 33-76
Wiesbach	337	253	<i>FMRD</i> 3, no. 1082
Nanterre	181	255	<i>RN</i> ⁵ 9 (1946), 47-8
Eauze	3802	261	Schaad 1992
Zone C: Italy and North Africa			
Volubilis	92	119/122	<i>AA</i> 12 (1978), 180-4
Castagnaro	730	126	<i>RIN</i> 27 (1914), 349-64
Rome, Via Tritone	714	244	<i>AIIN</i> 5 (1925), 57-72
Zone D: Danube			
Tiszanagyrev	48	134/138	<i>NK</i> 23-4 (1924-25), 38-40
Erla	451	136	<i>NZ</i> 82 (1967), 26-48
Dîmbau	129	140/143	<i>SCN</i> 1 (1957), 113-31
Vyskovce	1036	152/153	Ondrouch 1934
Salasuri	3097	157/158	<i>AMN</i> 2 (1965), 269-94
Visá	82	157/158	<i>NK</i> 7-8 (1908-09), 120
Mocsolad	1120	164/165	<i>NK</i> 4 (1905), 75-9
Kurd Gyulaji	1099	164/165	<i>NK</i> 34-35 (1935-36), 77-8
Osiek	1136	165	<i>DM</i> 12 (1937), 289-93, 311-17
Lengowo	209	165/166	<i>ZfN</i> 26 (1908), 304-16
Sotin	1617	165/166	<i>VHAD</i> 2 (1910-1911), 241-77
Carnuntum II	15	166	<i>FMRÖ</i> 3.1, 200-1
Apetlon II	77	166/167	Göbl 1954
Carnuntum III	102	168/169	<i>FMRÖ</i> 3.1, 201-3
Szombathely	966	176/177	<i>NK</i> 64-5 (1965-66), 69-70
Piatra Neamt I	443	177/178	<i>Carpica</i> 1 (1968), 209-31
Piatra Neamt II	241	177/178	<i>Carpica</i> 2 (1969), 157-78
Simonesti	100	177/178	<i>SCN</i> 4 (1968), 385-91
Gîrla Mare	297	179/180	<i>Historica</i> 3 (1974), 67-91
Butoiesti	157	180	<i>SCN</i> 9 (1989), 37-42
Prelazko	569	186	<i>FMRSI</i> 2, no. 353
Przewodowa	146	186/187	<i>WN</i> 9 (1965), 203-8
Saskut	779	187	<i>Bucurestii</i> 2 (1935), 218-32
Puriceni	1119	194	<i>MA</i> 4-5 (1972-3), 125-30
Nietulisko Male I	1357	195	Mitkova-Szubert 1989
Nietulisko Male II	3135	195	Mitkova-Szubert 1989
Magura	2758	196	Mihailescu-Bîrliba 1977
Drzewicz	1153	193/196	Krzyzanowska 1976
Vidin	329	201/206	<i>NSb</i> 4 (1957), 49-72
Mastacan	333	206/211	<i>SCN</i> 7 (1980), 83-93
Ercsi	363	228	<i>NK</i> 62-63 (1963-64), 9-17
Börgönd	546	230	<i>NK</i> 34-35 (1935-36), 24-35
Postojna	249	237	<i>FMRSI</i> 1, no. 91/2
Taga	940	239	<i>SCN</i> 4 (1968), 139-73
Plevna	540	251	<i>NC</i> ⁵ 3 (1923), 210-38
Rustschuk	1127	251	<i>NZ</i> 51 (1918), 43-51
Reka Devnia	77911	251	Mouchmov 1934 ⁹⁶

⁹⁶ The Reka Devnia hoard alone constitutes over one half of all the silver coins in the sample. The overwhelming size of this one hoard might be suspected of having an inordinate effect on the overall hoard profile, but a few test cases show that the composition of Reka Devnia, although far larger than other hoards, is remarkably similar to that of smaller hoards. The variable annual percentages of Trajanic denarii and

denarii of Severus Alexander in the Reka Devnia hoard, for example, closely mirror those of the via Braccianese hoard in Rome (6,409 denarii, unpublished), and the Elveden hoard in Britain, respectively (Duncan-Jones, *op. cit.* (n. 5), 114, fig. 8.2; 116, fig. 8.3). Caracalla's antoninianus, introduced in A.D. 215, represents 11.5 per cent of Caracalla's silver at Reka Devnia, and 12.2 per cent of his silver at Colchester

Zone E: The East

Acarmania	32	97	<i>CH</i> 4 (1978), 33
Sakha	255	114/117	Weber 1932
Murabba'at	37	119/122	<i>RN</i> ⁶ 1 (1958), 11-26
Eleutheropolis	128	128/132	<i>YIAN</i> 10 (1907), 230-48
Barbura	71	166?	<i>NK</i> 14 (1915), 70
Larnaka	448	183/184	<i>NC</i> ⁷ 19 (1979), 25-34
Syria	153	214	<i>AIIN</i> 5 (1925), 57-72
Kecel	2544	215	<i>Cumania</i> 9 (1986), 27-71
Tell Kalak	1942	222	<i>ANSMN</i> 20 (1975), 39-108
Sulakyurt	426	235/236	Lightfoot 1991, 213-47
Yatagan	184	243	Lightfoot 1991, 249-73
E. Turkey	1090	251	<i>NC</i> ⁷ 6 (1966), 165-70
Turkey	423	251/253	<i>CH</i> 2 (1976), 236; 3 (1977), 156
Haydere	1084	264	Lightfoot 1991, 91-180

Regional Totals

England	16,276
West Continent	16,016
Italy/North Africa	1,536
Danube	105,776
The East	8,817
TOTAL	148,421

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(Duncan-Jones, op. cit. (n. 5), 138). At least three other hoards, then, are demonstrably similar in composition to Reka Devnia, and the combined evidence

of these test cases suggests indeed that Reka Devnia 'should provide something like a directory of central silver coin-output' (Duncan-Jones, 133).