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**The Relationship Between Coin Types and Contemporary Events: a New Approach**

The degree of relationship between coin types and known historical events is a numismatic problem which has been often discussed. Most scholars, naturally enough, have taken history as their starting point and have then attempted to connect known historical events with specific coin types. The scarce references in the ancient sources to the numismatic awareness of the Greeks and Romans are often cited to reinforce the validity of this methodology. This paper approaches the question of the historicity of coin types from a different direction, by using a die study to establish firm type relationships, relative quantity, and chronology before moving on to evaluate the possible historical significance of the groups and sequences thus revealed.

The focus of this paper is the gold coinage of the emperor Trajan's early 6th consulship, AD 112-114. This coinage was subjected to a thorough die study, which allowed a relatively precise chronology to be established for the fifteen coin types used during this three-year period. Die links clearly show which types were directly related and which were not, while die counts indicate how popular any given type was. Finally, die linked sequences serve in many cases to indicate how long a given type stayed in use and under what circumstances production of the type ceased.

With these numismatic facts securely established, it was then possible to compare the message of the coin types with what is known of important historical events of the period. The years 112 to 114 saw three particularly significant events. The first was the dedication of Trajan's massive new forum complex early in January 112. The second was the death and deification of Marciana and the elevation of Matidia to the rank of Augusta in August of the same year. The third was the departure of Trajan for the east at the outbreak of the Parthian war in the fall of 113. The sequence established by the die study shows that certainly the first and most likely the second event received contemporary numismatic commemoration. Furthermore, it appears that the third event, the outbreak of the Parthian war, triggered an immediate and total replacement of all reverse types used on all gold coinage. Also, while the consecration of Marciana was commemorated on a separate series of coins, the sequence of linked dies suggests that this event may also have occasioned the minting of a series of coins showing deified Nerva and Trajan Senior on the reverse, with Trajan himself on the obverse.

This study also allows for some general remarks to be made on the practices followed by the Trajanic mint in selecting and issuing coin types. No evidence whatsoever was found to support the theory of a yearly system of 'substantive issues,' as hypothesised by Hill (Undated Coins of Rome, e.g. p.40). Nor does this study support Mattingly's tendency to organise types into groups based on obverse and reverse legend (BMC III, e.g. pp.lxxix-lxxx). Rather, it seems that the major governing factor in coin type selection was relevance to contemporary events. New events would occasion new types or groups of types, which would then endure for varying lengths of time. Types could be replaced one or two at a time within a longer sequence of issues or, if an event of appropriate significance occurred, all old types could be discarded and entirely new ones produced.