

The Coinage of the Peloponnese Under Septimius Severus

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The Coinage of the Peloponnese Under Septimius Severus

Thesis directed by Associate Professor Noel Lenski

During the reign of the emperor Septimius Severus the Peloponnese experienced a boom in civic minting. Prior to this, approximately ten cities had intermittently issued coins during the Imperial period, but under Severus that number grew to forty-three. I have compiled a catalog of 1113 published examples of Severan coins of the Peloponnese, which serves as the foundation for this study. In Chapter 2 I address the question of mint organization and conclude that Corinth, either by serving as a central mint or by supplying itinerant craftsmen, was responsible for much of the coinage struck during this period. In the next chapter, I argue that the reason for increased minting activity in the Peloponnese during this period may be a policy of decentralized bronze coinage production under Severus. Finally, I explore the iconography used on these coins, paying particular attention to the tendency of cities to choose “local” subjects.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

During the reign of Septimius Severus (A.D. 193-211) forty-three cities in the Peloponnese struck coins. Some of these cities, like Corinth, Patrai, and Argos had a long tradition of minting in the Roman period, others, however, like Boura, Aigosthena, Las, and Kyparissa had never before struck their own coins. On account of their poor state of preservation and relative rarity, few scholars have chosen to study the coins of the Peloponnese struck under Severus. Friedrich Imhoof-Blumer and Percy Gardner used many of these coins to illustrate and reconstruct the works described by Pausanias in their *A Numismatic Commentary on Pausanias*.¹ In “A Numismatic Riddle: The So-Called Greek Imperials,” an article that focused on provincial coinage as a whole, Tom Jones devoted a few pages to the Severan coins of the Peloponnese.² Here he first noted many peculiarities that would become the focus for future scholars, including the seemingly complex system of mint organization and the unusual circulation pattern of these coins. More recently, Susanne Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann briefly explored these issues in her “The Severan Emissions of the Peloponnese,” which was intended as a preliminary report that would underpin a forthcoming comprehensive study of the coins.³ Unfortunately, it seems that this project has been abandoned.

My research will address many of the questions raised by Jones and Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann as well as some new ones. In the Introduction I offer overviews of the common obverse and reverse types found on these coins and briefly discuss the issues of weight standards and denominations. The second chapter focuses on the organization of the Peloponnesian mints

¹ Friedrich Imhoof-Blumer and Percy Gardner, *A Numismatic Commentary on Pausanias*, 1887.

² Tom B. Jones, “A Numismatic Riddle: The So-Called Greek Imperials,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 107, no. 4 (1963): 308–347.

³ Susanne Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann, “The Severan Emissions of the Peloponnesus,” *Israel Numismatic Journal* 6–7 (1983): 39–47.

and the dating of the issues. In the third chapter I present a brief summary of the previously proposed reasons for striking and offer my own thoughts on the subject. Finally, in the fourth chapter I explore issues of civic identity and what these coins can tell us about these cities' relationships with Rome.

Figure 1: Cities of the Peloponnese that Struck Coins Under Septimius Severus



Historical Background

Septimius Severus was born in the African city of Lepcis Magna April 11 A.D. 145. His father, P. Septimius Geta, never held public office, but other family members of his father's generation, P. Septimius Aper and C. Septimius Severus, were senators.⁴ The sources on Severus' early career are incomplete and contradictory, but it seems that sometime around 162 he set off from Lepcis Magna to pursue a political career in Rome. He likely served as a *vigintivir* in 164, but, on account of the outbreak of the Antonine Plague in 165/6 and his being ineligible for the office of quaestor until his twenty-fifth birthday in 169, he returned to Africa shortly after completing his duties. Severus returned to Rome after his twenty-fifth birthday and served as quaestor in 170 or 171. His actions in the 170s and 180s are largely unrecorded, but around 175 Severus married a resident of Lepcis Magna named Paccia Marciana, who later died of natural causes in 186. Shortly thereafter Severus married Julia Domna, a Syrian princess descended from the royal house of Emesa. The couple had two sons, Lucius Septimius Bassianus (Caracalla) and Publius Septimius Geta, in 188 and 189 respectively.

In 191, Commodus gave Severus command of the legions in Pannonia, and it was from here that he marched on Rome having been proclaimed emperor by his troops in the wake of the assassinations of Commodus and Pertinax in 193. After securing his position in Rome, Severus set off for Syria to face his rival claimant, Pescennius Niger. Septimius Severus defeated Niger at the Battle of Issus in late 194 and spent the next couple of years campaigning against Parthian client kingdoms who had supported his rival during the civil war.

Severus' oldest son, Caracalla, was appointed Caesar in 196. At news of this, Severus' previous heir, Clodius Albinus, who was serving as governor of Britain, proclaimed himself emperor. This forced Septimius to return to the west and thus postpone his Parthian campaign.

⁴ Except where otherwise noted, the biographical information below is taken from Anthony Birley, *Septimius Severus: The African Emperor* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 1.

Albinus was quickly defeated at the Battle of Lugdunum in February 197, and after a brief stop in Rome, Severus again set off for the East to continue his Parthian campaign. In the latter part of 197, Severus declared his youngest son, Geta, Caesar, and a short while later, in early 198, Severus made Caracalla Augustus. Having wrapped up his Parthian war, Severus campaigned briefly in Africa in 202 and then returned to Rome. Also in 202, Severus had Caracalla married to Plautilla, the daughter of the Praetorian prefect Gaius Fulvius Plautianus. This was a very unhappy marriage, and in 205, when Plautianus was executed for plotting against the Severan family, Plautilla was sent into exile in Sicily. After spending a few years in Rome, Severus and his sons set out for Britain in hopes of conquering Caledonia. Their campaign was successful, and by 210, after little more than a year of fighting, the Caledonians sued for peace. While preparing to respond to a revolt in the region, Severus fell seriously ill. He died at Eboracum February 4, 211.

The Economy of the Peloponnese in the Severan Period

The Peloponnese of the Roman period was in many ways quite different than that of the Classical period. Particularly notable is the decline in rural habitation that is seen in the late Hellenistic and Roman periods. Through at least the early third century A.D., the frequency of rural settlements, particularly small sites, in the Peloponnese declines significantly.⁵ It also seems that there was a decline in the overall population of Greece during the Hellenistic and Roman periods that also contributed to the decline of rural settlements. This decline in the number of rural sites coincides with an increase in site size, which may suggest a move toward large estate farming during the Roman period.⁶ Interestingly, if this move toward estate farming did occur in the Roman period, it does not seem to have increased agricultural efficiency or output. For reasons that are not entirely understood, the boom in agricultural production that

⁵ Susan E Alcock, *Graecia Capta : The Landscapes of Roman Greece* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 73–74.

⁶ Ibid.

accompanies Roman occupation in other parts of the empire is not seen in the province of Achaia.⁷

The capital of the Roman province of Achaia was Corinth. For the first couple centuries after its refounding by Julius Caesar in 44 B.C., Corinth enjoyed considerable economic prosperity. The city was home to at least three marble workshops that are known to have been active in the production of portraits.⁸ Corinthian bronze was also very popular with wealthy Romans at this time, and there is a great deal of evidence suggesting that Corinth was a center of production for lamps and pottery.⁹ In addition to these manufacturing activities, the city was an important center for exchange both locally and as a hub for long distance trade between the East and West.¹⁰ It is also during this period before approximately A.D. 150 that we have the most evidence for new building in the city of Corinth.¹¹

In the mid-second century A.D. the economy of Corinth, and the Peloponnese more generally, reaches a plateau. New building projects slow, and by the early third century, they almost entirely cease. Donald Engels has attributed this economic slowdown to the long term effects of high taxes and decreased population as well as a tendency towards the localization of production.¹² As the manufacture of materials (e.g., pottery) became more local, there was less need for ports and marketplaces like Corinth. Susan Alcock believes that the decline in the vitality of the communities of Roman Achaia is the result of a variety of pressures, including, taxes, migration, and low population levels.¹³

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Donald W Engels, *Roman Corinth : An Alternative Model for the Classical City* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1990), 37–39.

⁹ Idem., 33–37.

¹⁰ Idem., 50–65.

¹¹ Idem., 62–63.

¹² Idem., 61–65.

¹³ Alcock, *Graecia Capta*, 151.

Methodology

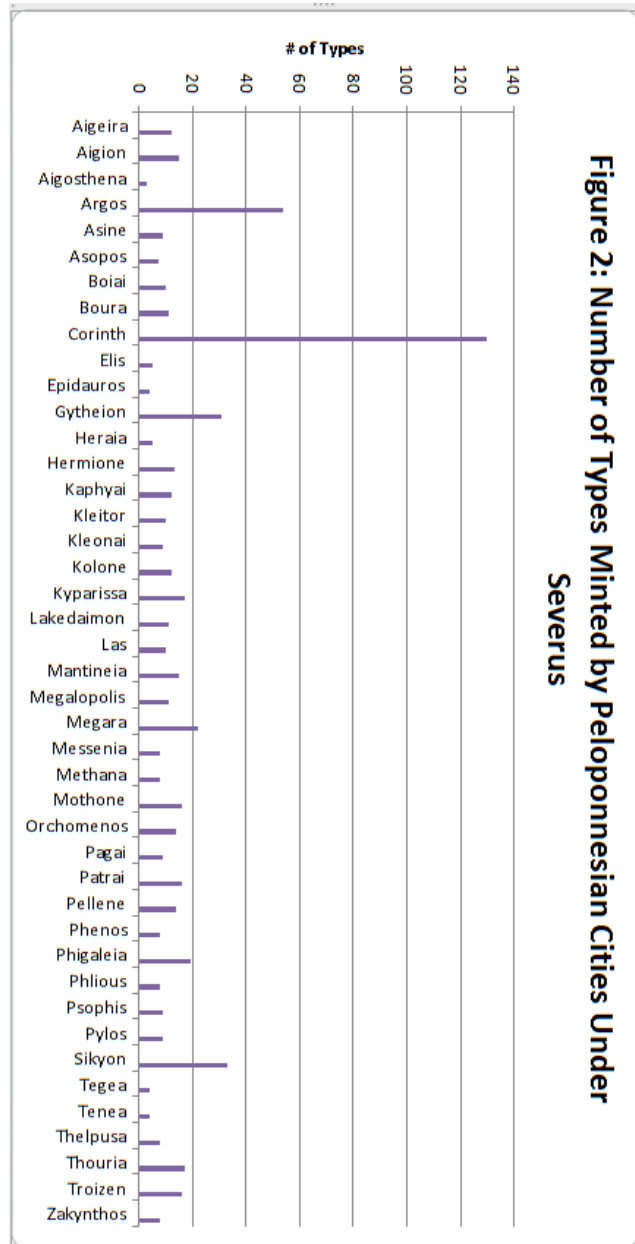
In compiling the catalog of the Severan coinage of the Peloponnese I have attempted to bring together all published examples of the coins. Only the coins of Caracalla from Patrai that were struck during his sole reign after the death of Severus are excluded. Coins with uncertain or questionable attributions have been included, and the uncertainties have been noted in the catalog (e.g., 1108). While the catalog is not comprehensive since it does not list pieces from unpublished collections – notably Berlin – I am confident that the examples I have collected do form a representative sample of the entire span of the coinage. The table below shows the number of types for each city present in the 1112 coins I have examined. In nearly every case, the number of types in my catalog is equal to or greater than the number known to Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann from her unpublished catalog of more than 2500 examples.

For ease of use I have chosen to arrange the catalog in alphabetical order by city rather than geographically. Within each city, entries are sorted first by reverse type, again in alphabetical order, and then by the obverse subject (i.e., Severus, Julia Domna, etc.) In addition to information on findspots, references to Pausanias, and notes on questionable attributions, the Notes column also includes information on die links with other coins in the catalog.

Table 1: Number of Types in the Catalog for Each City			
City	# of Types (every variant counted separately)	# of Types (only significant differences counted)	# of Types known by SGvH
Aigeira	12	10	8
Aigion	15	12	11
Aigosthena	3	2	2
Argos	54	39	45
Asine	9	8	10
Asopos	7	7	5
Boiai	10	10	7
Boura	11	11	11
Corinth	130	62	66
Elis	5	5	3
Epidauros	4	3	4

Gytheion	31	20	21
Heraia	5	4	4
Hermione	13	10	9
Kaphyai	12	9	7
Kleitor	10	6	6
Kleonai	9	8	8
Kolone	12	9	10
Kyparissa	17	11	7
Lakedaimon	11	11	11
Las	10	8	8
Mantineia	15	12	12
Megalopolis	11	9	10
Megara	22	17	16
Messenia	8	7	6
Methana	8	5	6
Mothone	16	11	11
Orchomenos	14	9	10
Pagai	9	8	9
Patrai	16	14	?
Pellene	14	9	9
Phenos	8	5	7
Phigaleia	19	13	14
Phlious	8	7	10
Psophis	9	8	7
Pylos	9	8	7
Sikyon	33	24	26
Tegea	4	4	5
Tenea	4	3	2
Thelpusa	8	7	8
Thouria	17	12	13
Troizen	16	9	17
Zakynthos	8	7	0

Figure 2: Number of Types Minted by Peloponnesian Cities Under Severus



Obverses

The obverses of all known Peloponnesian coins from this period depict busts of members of the imperial family: Septimius Severus, Julia Domna, Caracalla, Plautilla, and Geta.

Unsurprisingly, Septimius Severus seems to have been the most common choice for the obverse image, appearing on 382, or 34.3%, of the coins studied in this paper. Caracalla is the next most common, showing up on 223 coins, or 20.1% of those studied. He is followed by Plautilla with 188 examples (16.9%); Domna with 167 examples (15%); and finally Geta with 151 examples (13.6%). Based on this sample, it can be said with some confidence that Severus and Caracalla were the most common choices for the obverse types, but the numbers for the remaining family members are so close that I hesitate to suggest that any was more common than another.

Table 2: Coins per Dynast		
Person	# of Examples	% of total
Septimius	382	34.35%
Domna	167	15.02%
Caracalla	223	20.05%
Geta	151	13.58%
Plautilla	188	16.91%

A variety of portrait types are used for Septimius Severus and his family members. The laureate head facing right is the most common for Severus, appearing on almost half of his coins in the Peloponnese (Pl. I, 3-4). He is shown nearly as frequently with a laureate bust facing right wearing a cuirass and paludamentum (Pl. I, 5-6). Although rare, Severus is occasionally shown nude holding a spear in his right hand and a shield with his left (Pl. I, 1-2). This heroically nude bust, as it is often called, generally faces left rather than right. It is discussed in more detail below in the Mint Organization chapter.

The portraits of Julia Domna and Plautilla show much less variation than those of Severus. The portraits of the Severan women are exclusively bust length with full drapery on the shoulders. They tend to face right, though left facing portraits are not uncommon (Pl. II, 20-21, 24-25). The most notable feature of the portraiture of Domna and Plautilla in the Peloponnese is the small cornucopia that appears at the shoulder in roughly 15% of examples (Pl. II, 22-23, 26-27). The addition of the cornucopia to the portrait bust of Julia Domna and Plautilla does not appear on coinage outside the Peloponnese and may be a local innovation. The cornucopia bust type is also discussed in more detail in the Mint Organization chapter.

The portraiture of Caracalla and Geta on the coins of the Peloponnese is similar to that of their father. Before becoming co-Augustus with his father in A.D. 198, Caracalla was always shown with a bare head. His most common portrait type was a bare-headed bust with a paludamentum and a cuirass facing right (Pl. I, 12). During these early years Caracalla is also rarely shown with a right-facing head-length portrait lacking drapery and armor (Pl. I, 11). After being appointed Augustus in 198, Caracalla is always shown wearing a laurel wreath on his head. During this later period he is usually shown with a right-facing laureate bust wearing a paludamentum and cuirass (Pl. I, 14). At Corinth, the laureate, draped, and cuirassed bust is rarely shown facing left. Right facing laureate head portraits of Caracalla are also known, but they are much less common than the bust length portraits (Pl. I, 13). Since the coins of the Peloponnese for Geta were struck while he was Caesar, he is only shown with a bare head.¹⁴ As with Caracalla, the most common portrait of Geta is a right facing and bust length with a bare

¹⁴ A coin of Boiai from the Righetti collection (157), which is described as having a laureate head, may be an exception to this, though its description is questionable. The coin is poorly preserved, and the laurel wreath is not clearly visible in the photograph. On a coin of the same reverse type (legend in a wreath) from the BCD collection (156) Geta is shown with his usual bare head.

head and wearing a paludamentum and cuirass (Pl. I, 18). A couple examples of left facing busts are known from Thelpusa.

Reverses

The catalog lists more than 100 distinct deities, personifications, objects, people, and combinations thereof on the 1112 coins studied for this project. If all the architectural types and the various epithets of gods and goddess are counted separately, this number grows to more than 500. The most common figure shown on the coins of the Peloponnese during the Severan period is Tyche, who appears at at least thirty-five cities. The next most frequent deities are Asklepios, Artemis, Athena, and Dionysos, occurring on coins from twenty-six, twenty-five, twenty-three, and twenty-two cities respectively. While these Panhellenic deities and those like them are the most common, local figures do also appear regularly. This is a topic that is discussed in more detail in the final chapter.

The most common reverse legend formula employed is simply the genitive plural form of the city's name (e.g., ΘΕΛΦΟΥΣΙΩΝ "of the Thelpusians"). Unlike the coins in many other regions of the Greek East, magistrates' names are never included in the reverse legends. On the coins of Messenia (763-772), however, monograms are present in the reverse fields. These symbols are most commonly read as MAXW and AX, and they have been interpreted as abbreviations of magistrates' names by a number of scholars.¹⁵ The coins of Thouria have the letters Λ-A across the reverse fields (1049-1086). The authors of the British Museum Catalog suggested that this is a reference to Augustus' gift of the city of Thouria to Sparta as thanks for their support at the battle of Actium and as punishment for the Messenian's support of Antony.¹⁶

¹⁵ Neither the full names of these magistrates nor their specific offices are known. LHS Numismatics, *Coins of the Peloponnesos: The BCD Collection*, vol. 96 (Zurich: LHS Numismatics, 2006), sec. 765. Percy Gardner, *Catalogue of Greek Coins of the Peloponnesus : Excluding Corinth* (London: British Museum Press, 1887), 112.

¹⁶ Gardner, *Catalogue of Greek Coins of the Peloponnesus : Excluding Corinth*, xlv.

Two cities, Corinth (176-454) and Patrai (847-858), which had the status of Roman colonies, use Latin for their coin legends, as is the common practice. All coins of Corinth use the legend C(olonia) L(aus) I(ulia) COR(inthiensis). Although the frequent mistakes in rendering both the Latin letter forms and the order of letters in the legend suggests die-cutters without knowledge of Latin. At Patrai the legend COL(onia) A(ugusta) A(roe) PATR(ensis) is used. Here again mistakes in the Latin legends are quite common, suggesting local craftsmen at work.

Weight Standards and Denominations

Because of the state of preservation of most of the Peloponnesian coins, it is difficult to draw many conclusions about their weight standards. Generally speaking, the coins of the Severan period from this region were struck from a metal alloy that is very susceptible to corrosion.¹⁷ In fact, these coins are so prone to wear and corrosion that of the 2500 coins that Susanne Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann collected for her study of the Severan emission of the Peloponnese, only 10% were suitable for a die study.¹⁸ This has made it essentially impossible to determine the average weights of the coins at the time of their striking. At Corinth, for example, where the sample size is quite large, coins with weights ranging from 1.6 g to 12.12 g are known. During the Flavian period Corinth minted four denominations: 4-assaria (20.5 g), 2-assaria (14 g), 1-assarion (7.5 g), and ½-assarion (3.5 g).¹⁹ The wide range of weights for the Severan coins of Corinth is likely evidence of the continued production of multiple denominations, as tended to be the norm for large provincial mints in the Severan period.²⁰ As

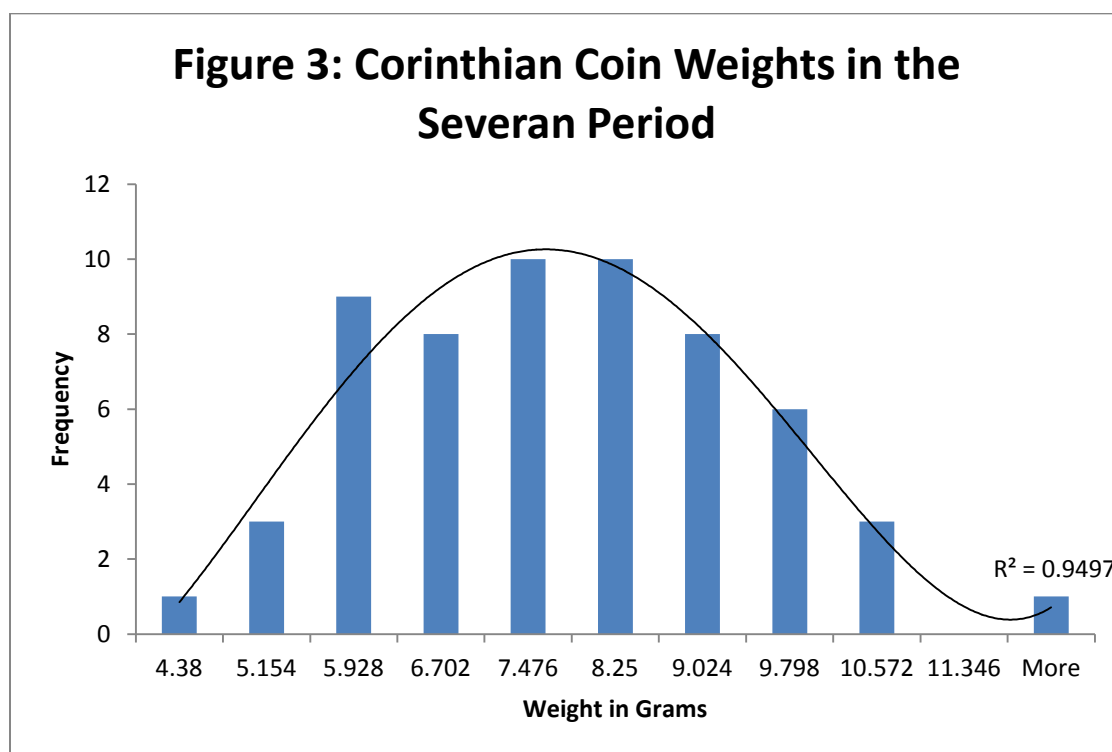
¹⁷ Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann, "The Severan Emissions of the Peloponnesus," 39.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Michel Amandry, Andrew M. Burnett, and Ian Carradice, *Roman Provincial Coinage, Volume II: From Vespasian to Domitian (AD 69-96)* (British Museum Press, 1999), 55.

²⁰ For example, Nikopolis ad Istrum and Markianopolis, the largest mints in Moesia Inferior, struck at least four denominations during the reign of Severus. Nina Hristova, Hans-Joachim Hoefft, and Gospodin Jekov, *The Coins of Moesia Inferior 1st-3rd C. AD: Nicopolis Ad Istrum* (Blagoevgrad: Southwestern University Press, 2012).

can be seen in the histogram below, however, the distribution of weights is relatively normal, making it difficult to determine what precisely the standards were during this period. Even if the exact weight standards are unknown, it is fairly certain that the principle denomination of Corinth and the other cities of the Peloponnese was the assarion.²¹ Coins struck for the other cities of the Peloponnese tend to be lighter than the Corinthian issues, as they were in the Flavian period, but their use of the assarion as the principle denomination seems to be confirmed by a coin from Mantinea (691) that contains an A in the upper left field of the reverse.²² This symbol has generally been taken as a mark of denomination similar to what we see on other provincial coins minted outside of Greece.²³



²¹ During the Severan period the weights of coins struck for cities other than Corinth tend to be slightly lighter than their Corinthian counterparts. *Idem.*, 55–57.

²² LHS Numismatics, *Coins of the Peloponnesos: The BCD Collection*, vol. 96, sec. 1503.

²³ e.g., on the coins of Gordian III from Nikopolis ad Istrum. *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 2

MINT ORGANIZATION AND DATING

Mint Organization

Minting in the Peloponnese during the Severan Period was carried out in large part either by itinerant craftsmen or stationary regional workshops, or possibly some combination of the two. Large cities with a strong tradition of minting (e.g. Corinth, Argos) likely had their own local permanent or semi-permanent mints, but smaller cities without a history of striking certainly relied on outside craftsmen.²⁴ It seems that in most cases these outside craftsmen were provided by the larger permanent mints. Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann preferred Corinth as the ultimate source of all Peloponnesian coinage for these small cities, saying "...either a single workshop at Corinth provided all dies cut for the different communities or a travelling staff or mint, beyond a doubt Corinthian, equipped with Roman model coins of the Severan family, moved across the Peloponnesus and coined wherever they got the order and the metal."²⁵ There are good reasons to believe that Corinth was in some way responsible for the coinage of a number of cities in the Peloponnese, but there is also evidence that other permanent mints may have been responsible for the coinage in other regions.

Among the best pieces of evidence for Corinth having a role in the minting of coins for other smaller cities in the region is the geographic distribution of different bust types. Two bust types in particular provide valuable information about the minting process: the nude, laureate, and armed bust of Severus and the draped busts of Domna and Plautilla with a cornucopia on the

²⁴ The minting system in the Peloponnese during this time seems to resemble that of Asia as described by Kraft. Here there seems to be cooperation between cities that struck coins either using itinerant workers or using a central workshop. Konrad Kraft, *Das System der kaiserzeitlichen Münzprägung in Kleinasien* (Gebr. Mann, 1972).

²⁵ Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann, "The Severan Emissions of the Peloponnesus," 42.

shoulder.²⁶ The heroically nude bust of Severus as it is often called, first appeared on medallions of Severus struck at Rome and dated IMP IIII (A.D. 194-195).²⁷ The first use of it in the Peloponnese was on coins struck at Corinth, the earliest of which are dated IMP VII, A.D. 195-196 (208, 297, 302, 339, 394). From Corinth, the use of the heroic bust of Severus spread to at least nine other cities in the Peloponnese.²⁸ Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann notes its use only on the coinage of four cities in Arcadia: Kleitor (565, 568, 570), Phigaleia, Tegea (1029, 1031), and Thelpusa (1037, 1047), but I have identified further exemplars from Sikyon (1024), Pellene (875), Messenia (771-772), Thouria (728), and Megara (1069).²⁹ These cities cover a rather large geographic range with Megara on the isthmus and Thouria near the coast in the southwestern corner of the Peloponnese. Even though these cities form a more or less continuous arc across the Peloponnese, there was no easily passable path connecting all of them. Therefore, as tempting as it may be, the distribution of these cities should not be viewed as strong evidence for a traveling workshop. Rather, the use of the heroic bust type by cities other than Corinth should simply be viewed as a sign of Corinthian involvement in minting, but on terms that are not clear from the coins themselves.³⁰ Given the absence of any earlier minting tradition at these cities, and thus the absence of trained die cutters and other mint workers, it seems unlikely to me that cities like Kleitor and Tegea would have set up independent local mints where these Corinthian types were simply copied. Whether the heroic bust type was produced by a traveling mint or was the product of a central workshop, it is undoubtedly a sign

²⁶ Idem., 39, 42.

²⁷ Francesco Gnecci, *I Medaglioni Romani*, vol. II (Forni, 1912), 77; Birley, *Septimius Severus*, 115–116.

²⁸ If Walker's broad strike dates for each of these cities are correct, use of the type outside of Corinth does not begin until A.D. 198 or later.

²⁹ It should be noted that the coins of Pellene show the heroic bust facing right whereas the coinage of all other cities named shows the portrait facing left. For a very brief discussion of this type on the coinage of Arcadia see: Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann, "The Severan Emissions of the Peloponnesus," 39, 42.

³⁰ Accuracy in the depictions of local statues and buildings might suggest traveling reverse die cutters, but it could also be the case that locals sent drawings or models to a central mint where they were copied onto dies.

of Corinthian involvement in the production of coinage throughout a large portion of the Peloponnese.

Turning to the cornucopia busts of Domna and Plautilla we see a similar distribution with examples coming from Argos, Sikyon, Aigeira, Aigion, Kleitor, and Orchomenos. Although Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann considered this a parallel type to the heroic portrait of Severus, it is unclear when precisely it was developed.³¹ Unlike the coins of Severus, the coins of Domna and Plautilla at Corinth are not dated, and it is unlikely that this question will be resolved until a full study of the Severan coinage from Corinth is complete. While the exact date of its development is not known, this type surely appeared first at Corinth. In contrast to the portrait of Severus discussed above, it has no antecedent on imperial coinage and must be a local invention. The distribution of this type does, however, offer us a similar picture of mint organization in the area surrounding Corinth. Again, while the cities are spread over a rather large geographic area, they remain a contiguous group. The cornucopia bust type, much like the heroic type, is surely a sign of some degree of Corinthian responsibility for minting in the region.³² In fact, because there is no imperial antecedent to the cornucopia bust, we can be even more confident in its being a sign of Corinthian influence.

Another indication that Peloponnesian minting during the Severan period had some regional component and was not carried out independently by individual cities comes from two coins formerly in the BCD collection. As Alan Walker notes, BCD 1689 (949), a coin of Septimius Severus from Psophis, and BCD 1767 (1042), a coin of Septimius Severus from

³¹ Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann, "The Severan Emissions of the Peloponnesus," 42.

³² Argos may be an exception to this – the city had a long tradition of minting and probably did not rely on Corinth for coinage or craftsmen. The use of the cornucopia bust here may be the result of Argive craftsmen copying Corinthian coins.

Thelpusa, share an obverse die (Pl. I, 9-10).³³ This is the only published die link between cities that produced coinage for the Severans in the Peloponnese. The existence of this link confirms the long-held supposition that the organizational system of minting in the Peloponnese was similar to that which Konrad Kraft described for Asia (i.e., striking was carried out either by central workshops or traveling mint staff rather than independent mints in each city).³⁴

Unfortunately, due to the absence of additional die links and the geographical proximity of Psophis and Thelpusa (15 km), it is difficult to draw detailed conclusions from this information. If the die link had come from cities that were located some distance apart and not from the neighboring cities of Thelpusa and Psophis, this could, because of the short lives of dies, suggest some form of centralized production. But since a die link between adjoining cities could be the result of either traveling craftsmen or a central workshop, or even traveling dies, the most that can be said is that die production was not local.

The argument has been made that another indication that die production and minting were largely non-local may come from the apparent confusion of reverse types on a handful of the Peloponnesian coins. Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann notes two cases in which the reverse images that appear on coins seem to have been intended for a city different than that named in the inscription.³⁵ The first case stems from the confusion of types between the cities of Mothone (802-4) and Methana (773-9). On this issue, Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann writes, “Isis was worshipped at Methana but appears as a coin type only at Mothone, whereas Artemis was worshipped at Mothone but appears commonly on coins of Methana.”³⁶ David Gill, in his catalog of the coinage of Methana, follows Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann in suggesting that this

³³ LHS Numismatics, *Coins of the Peloponnesos: The BCD Collection*.

³⁴ Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann, “The Severan Emissions of the Peloponnesus,” 42; Kraft, *Das System der kaiserzeitlichen Münzprägung in Kleinasien*.

³⁵ Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann, “The Severan Emissions of the Peloponnesus,” 44.

³⁶ Ibid. This is also noted by Imhoof-Blumer and Gardner, *A Numismatic Commentary on Pausanias*, 50.

apparent confusion is a sign of centralized production.³⁷ Depictions of Isis on the coinage of the Peloponnese during this period are relatively scarce, occurring at only eight cities, so it is understandable that her appearance should receive special attention. It does not follow, however, that because we have evidence for an Isis cult at Methana, that city must have struck coins showing Isis. Similarly, the absence of any further evidence for a cult of Isis at Mothone does not necessarily mean that one was not present or that the city did not commission coins with her image. Even more problematic is the notion that it is in some way peculiar that Artemis should be a common figure on the coinage of Methana. She is, after all, among the most common figures on the Severan coinage of the Peloponnese altogether, appearing at more than half of the cities for which there is coinage. In fact, aside from Tyche and Asklepios, no figure appears more frequently on coins of this period than Artemis.

The second case of type confusion suggested by Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann is more likely to be a mistake on the part of the die cutter or some other member of the mint staff. A figure who seems to be Isthmos, the personification of Corinth's two harbors, is found on a reverse of Mothone.³⁸ Unlike Isis and Artemis, Isthmos is a purely local type, and his appearance on coins outside of Corinth, especially at a city as distant as Mothone, must be the result of a minting error. If the coin discussed by Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann is authentic and does indeed show Isthmos, this would be a very strong indication that minting occurred at some central location, probably Corinth. For if production had been carried out locally, even by non-local craftsmen, it would be difficult to explain a mistake of this nature being made in the die cutting process and even more difficult to explain the die's actually being used to strike.

³⁷ David Gill, "Appendix 3: Coinage of Methana," in *Rough and Rocky Place: The Landscape and Settlement History of the Methana Peninsula, Greece*, ed. Christopher Mee Hamish Alexander Forbes Michael Patrick Atherton (Liverpool University Press, 1997).

³⁸ Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann, "The Severan Emissions of the Peloponnesus," 44.

Unfortunately, however, Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann does not illustrate the coin that she discusses, nor does she offer any information about its location or provenance. I have found no example of this type present in the references and collections that I have examined in compiling my database. Here again, therefore, what would seem nearly irrefutable proof of centralized minting is vitiated by breaks in the evidentiary chain.

Regardless of how much weight we can place on the two cases just discussed, it does seem that Corinth was responsible in some capacity for a large part of the Peloponnesian coinage. Given its long history of civic coinage and the absence of such a history for most other cities of the Peloponnese that minted under the Severans, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Corinth was in some way involved in the production of many of these coins. There is, however, evidence that other centers of production also existed during this period. For example, many of the cities with a tradition of minting (e.g. Argos, Patrai, Lakedaimon) continued to produce their own coinage independent of Corinth. BCD suggests on the basis of stylistic similarities in the portraits of Julia Domna that some issues from Argos, Mantinea, and Kaphyai may have been produced by the same craftsmen, presumably Argives.

Dating the Severan Emissions of the Peloponnese

The striking patterns for the coinage of the Peloponnese are complex, and it is not possible to offer precise dates for the coinage of every city. When all of the coinage is examined together, however, some generalizations can be made. The majority of scholars who have written on the topic agree on the *terminus post quem* and the *terminus ante quem* for the overall

series.³⁹ For cities without permanent mints, Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann proposes a date range of A.D. 196-208.⁴⁰ Alan Walker, who catalogued the BCD collection, offers a general date range for each city, and these dates are largely in line with those put forth by Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann.⁴¹

Among the most useful pieces of evidence available in determining strike dates for the Peloponnesian coins are the titles held by the imperial family. At Corinth some coins of Severus include Imperial titles in the obverse legend, which allow for very specific dating. Unfortunately, this practice is not seen outside of Corinth, so for other cities we must rely on the titulature of Severus' children, Caracalla and Geta. In all of the Peloponnesian coinage from non-permanent mints, Geta is never shown as Augustus.⁴² He appears as Caesar, a title that he held from A.D. 198-209. Where they appear, the coins of Geta as Caesar seem to be part of the latest emissions produced, and since we know that Geta became Augustus in A.D. 209, it can be concluded that for the non-permanent cities minting must have ceased sometime before this. Finally, at Corinth (176-454), Pagai (840-846), Heraia (519-527), Aigion (24-51), Orchomenos (813-839), and Megara (713-762), PERT(inax) is included as a title of Severus in the obverse legends of some early coins. Upon his ascension in A.D. 193, Severus took this name and began portraying himself as the avenger of his slain predecessor. This title last appears on imperial coinage during Severus' tenth Imperatorship in A.D. 197-198, so if we assume that the imperial titulature of the Peloponnesian coinage was consistent with imperial coinage, these coins must

³⁹ The conclusions in this section do not apply to the coins struck at Patrai for Caracalla during his sole reign. These are easily recognizable due to their more mature portrait and an overall style that is nearly indistinguishable from that at Rome.

⁴⁰ Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann, "The Severan Emissions of the Peloponnesus," 46.

⁴¹ LHS Numismatics, *Coins of the Peloponnesos: The BCD Collection*; Numismatik Lanz, *Münzen Von Korinth: Sammlung BCD*, vol. Auktion 105 (Munich: Numismatik Lanz, 2001).

⁴² Lakadaimon, a regular mint, reportedly did strike coins for Geta as Augustus, but no examples were present in the collections studied.

have been struck before A.D. 198.⁴³ This could, of course, also be an instance of numismatic immobilization.

In addition to the titles of the imperial family, we can also date the Peloponnesian issues based on the presence of coins depicting Plautilla, the daughter of Plautianus and the wife of Caracalla from A.D. 202-205. In the cases in which we have reverse die links between the coins Plautilla and the other members of the imperial family, we can safely date all linked coins to the years between A.D. 202-205. Given the relatively small number of coins produced for most Peloponnesian cities and the fairly consistent style across many of these issues, it seems that even when we lack die links, we should conjecture a date of A.D. 202-205 based on the presence of coins with Plautilla obverses. This argument is strengthened by the conclusions reached above that production was not carried out at the civic level but rather by either a central mint or by itinerant craftsmen. In the table of dates below I have indicated the cities for which I believe this to be the case by including “(probably 202-205)” after the broader, or maximum, date range.

Table 3: Approximate Strike Dates for the Severan Emissions of the Peloponnese (cities that struck coins in the Roman period before the reign of Severus in bold)	
<i>City</i>	<i>Date</i>
Aigeira	202-205
Aigion	196-208
Aigosthena	200-205
Argos	198-208
Asine	198-205
Asopos	202-205
Boiai	198-208 (probably 202-205)
Boura	198-205
Corinth	193-211
Elis	198-208
Epidauros	198-208
Gytheion	202-205
Heraia	193-209
Hermione	202-205

⁴³ Birley, *Septimius Severus*, 129–130.

Kaphyai	198-209
Kleitor	198-209
Kleonai	198-209 (probably 202-205)
Kolone	198-205
Kyparissa	198-208 (probably 202-205)
Lakedaimon	198-212
Las	202-205
Mantineia	198-208 (probably 202-205)
Megalopolis	198-209
Megara	193-200 and 202-205
Messenia	198-205
Methana	198-208
Mothone	198-205 (probably 202-205)
Orchomenos	193-209
Pagai	193-198
Patrai	198-205
Pellene	196-208 (probably 202-205)
Phenos	198-208 (probably 202-205)
Phigaleia	198-208 (probably 202-205)
Phlious	198-205
Psophis	198-209
Pylos	198-205 (probably 202-205)
Sikyon	198-205
Tegea	198-209
Tenea	198-208
Thelpusa	198-209 (probably 202-205)
Thouria	198-205
Troizen	198-208
Zakynthos	198-208

CHAPTER 3

REASON FOR STRIKING

Given the peculiar nature of the Peloponnesian coinage during the reign of Septimius Severus, it should not be surprising that the reason for its production is a hotly debated issue. Generally speaking, the proposed reasons for striking fall into two schools. The earlier of the two explanations is best summarized by Ulrich Kahrstedt in *Das wirtschaftliche Gesicht Griechenlands in der Kaiserzeit: Kleinstadt, Villa und Domäne*.⁴⁴ Here it is argued that the widespread minting that occurred in the Peloponnese during the Severan period, specifically the striking of coins for cities without an earlier tradition of minting, is the result of a decree by Severus that restored the right of Peloponnesian cities to coin money in order to generate economic prosperity.⁴⁵ The other explanation for the striking of the Severan Peloponnesian issues is put forth by Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann. Citing a lack of evidence in support of Kahrstedt's view, she proposes that the coins instead were struck to pay an *aurum coronarium* ordered by Severus.⁴⁶ In this section I will argue that, while both of these theories address very important issues, neither is entirely satisfactory. I propose instead that the production of these coins can be attributed to the need for "small change" brought about by the large increase in imperial silver and the significant decrease in imperial bronze coinage during the early years of Severus' reign. This explanation better accounts for geographical and temporal production patterns while avoiding some of the more serious problems raised by in prior suggestions.

The primary problem with Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann's proposal rests with the nature of the coinage itself. She suggests that these coins were produced to pay an *aurum coronarium*,

⁴⁴ Ulrich Kahrstedt, *Das wirtschaftliche Gesicht Griechenlands in der Kaiserzeit: Kleinstadt, Villa und Domäne*. (Bernae: A. Francke, 1954).

⁴⁵ Ibid.; Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann, "The Severan Emissions of the Peloponnesus," 42.

⁴⁶ Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann, "The Severan Emissions of the Peloponnesus," 42–46.

or imperial tax ordered by Severus.⁴⁷ The imperial administration, however, surely would have preferred payment in gold or silver rather than bronze.⁴⁸ Even if payment was made in bronze the fact still remains that these coins would have been of little use to the imperial government, which would have had to convert them into silver or gold in an environment flooded with bronze coins – and apparently not with silver or gold.⁴⁹ Additionally, the logistics of transporting tens of thousands of bronze coins would have been so complex that it seems highly unlikely that they would have been accepted as payment. Why then would the Peloponnesian cities go to the great expense of striking coins that Severus likely did not want?

Kahrstedt's suggestions are equally problematic. He views these issues as a sort of ancient stimulus package. While it is true that the economy of the late second and early third century A.D. Peloponnese was depressed to some degree, the idea of a centrally conceived economic stimulus package seems to be anachronistic.⁵⁰ A number of studies examining the reasons for minting in the Roman world, and in the ancient world more generally, have concluded that coins tended to be struck to meet financial obligations rather than economic needs.⁵¹ That is to say, Roman coins, both imperial and provincial, were struck to pay the bills rather than as part of some grand, overarching imperial economic policy.

Rather, these cities probably struck coins to meet their minimum needs for units of exchange to be employed at the local level. In the early years of Severus' reign, silver coinage

⁴⁷ *Idem.*, 41–46.

⁴⁸ Ian Morris and Walter Scheidel, *The Dynamics of Ancient Empires: State Power from Assyria to Byzantium* (Oxford University Press, 2008), 199–200.

⁴⁹ For information on Roman penalties for tax payments in bronze see: Kenneth W Harl, *Civic Coins and Civic Politics in the Roman East, A.D. 180-275*, Transformation of the Classical Heritage 12 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 122.

⁵⁰ Alcock, *Graecia Capta*, 73–76; Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann, “The Severan Emissions of the Peloponnesus,” 45–46.

⁵¹ Christopher Howgego, “Coin Circulation and the Integration of the Roman Economy,” *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 7 (1994): 5–21; Alain Bresson, “Coinage and Money Supply in the Hellenistic Age,” in *Making, Moving, and Managing: The New World of Ancient Economies, 323-31 BC*, ed. Zofia Archibald, John Davis, and Vincent Gabrielsen (Oxford: Oxbow, 2005), 44–73.

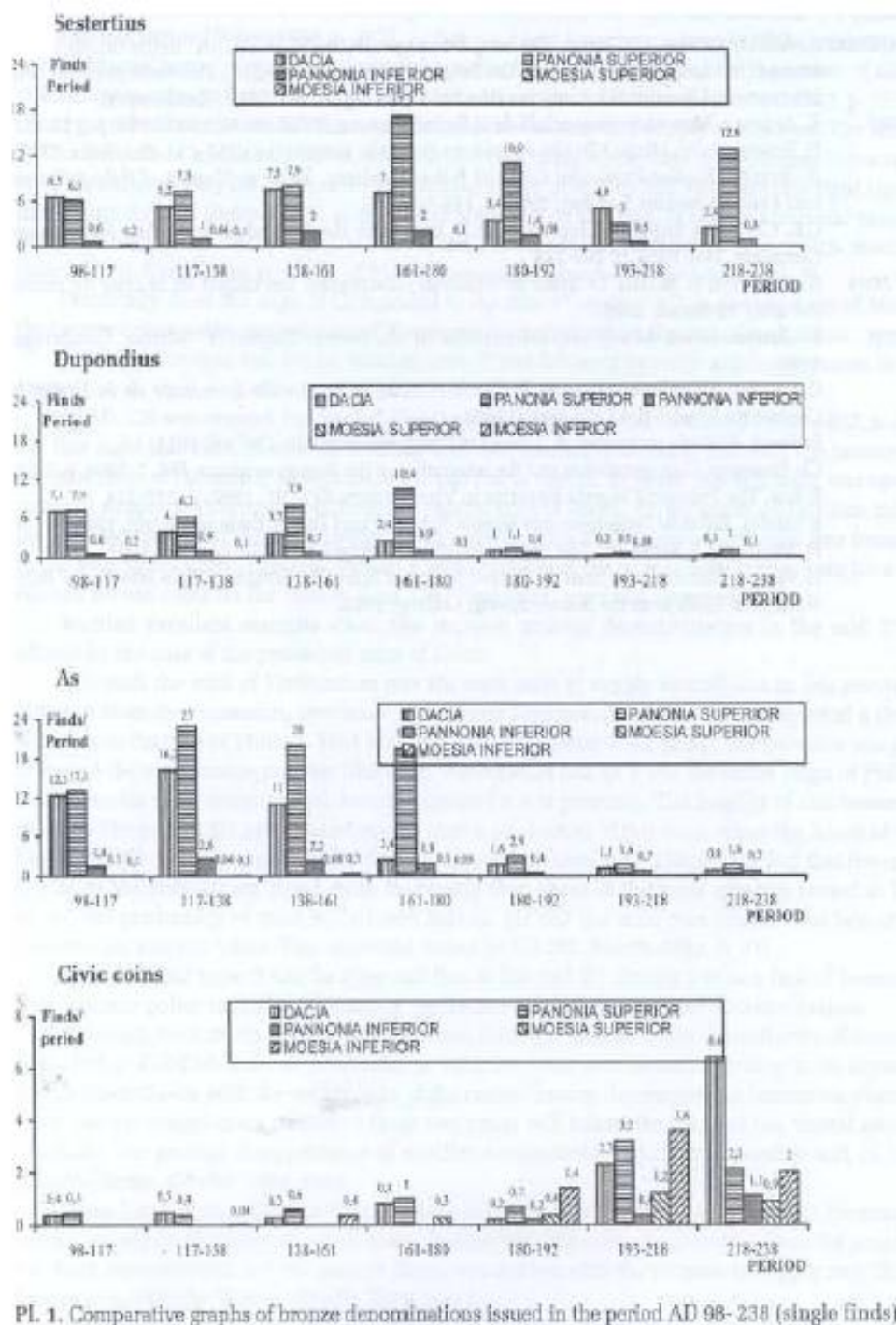
was debased and the amount of coinage produce was greatly increase, in large part on account of the need to maintain the loyalty of the legions and war with Pescennius Niger.⁵² This expansion of imperial silver production coincided with a lack of imperial bronze that began during the reign of Commodus but became more acute in the reign of Severus.⁵³ This decrease in imperial bronze production is reflected in the archaeological record of Britain, Greece, and the Danube region.⁵⁴ At approximately this same time, particularly the first years of the third century, the number of cities minting civic issues increased greatly, as did the volume of production.⁵⁵

⁵² Cristian Gazdac, "Center and Periphery: The Roman Monetary Policy Regarding the Lower Danube Provinces at the Mid 3rd Century AD," in *Centru Si Periferie: Lucrarile Colocviului National, Bistratia 23-25 Aprilie 2004* (Bistrita, Romania: Complexul Muzeal Județean Bistrița-Năsăud, 2004), 71–73; D. R. Walker, *The Metrology of the Roman Silver Coinage: From Pertinax to Uranius Antoninus* (British Archaeological Reports, 1978); Richard Duncan-Jones, *Money and Government in the Roman Empire* (Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁵³ Gazdac, "Center and Periphery: The Roman Monetary Policy Regarding the Lower Danube Provinces at the Mid 3rd Century AD," 71–73.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ The number of cities minting reached nearly 350 under Severus. Jones, "A Numismatic Riddle," 332.

Figure 5: Comparison of Bronze Denomination Finds A.D. 98-238⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Charts taken from Gazdac, "Center and Periphery: The Roman Monetary Policy Regarding the Lower Danube Provinces at the Mid 3rd Century AD," 74.

The clearest example of this increased volume can be seen in Thrace and Moesia Inferior. The major mints of these provinces (e.g., Nikopolis ad Istrum and Philippopolis) tend to include the names of the *legatus consularis* in the reverse legends of their large denomination bronze coins. Because we know the approximate dates of their service, we are able to date these coins with a fair amount of accuracy. The table below shows the number of signed dies known at Nikopolis ad Istrum for the coins of Severus.⁵⁷ There are more dies known for Aurelius Gallus (c. A.D. 201-204) than for all other *legati consulares* combined, and since the number of dies used correlates directly to the number of coins struck, we can say with certainty that Moesia Inferior also saw a boom in minting in the first years of the third century.⁵⁸

Table 4: Number of Signed Reverse Dies at Nikopolis ad Istrum for Septimius Severus	
Governor	Number of reverse dies for Septimius Severus
Pollenius Auspex (c. A.D. 193-195)	19
Cosconius Gentianus (c. A.D. 195-198)	11
C. Ovinus Tertullus (c. A.D. 198-201)	35
Aurelius Gallus (c. A.D. 201-204?)	111
Flavius Ulpianus (c. A.D. 210-211)	16

Given the timing of this increase in minting activity in the Peloponnese and elsewhere, it is tempting to connect it with the wedding of Caracalla and Plautilla in A.D. 202 or Severus'

⁵⁷ The only significant series of large denomination coins with unsigned reverse dies was produced under Pollenius Auspex. These die counts were produced from the data in Hristova, Hoeft, and Jekov, *The Coins of Moesia Inferior Ist-3rd C. AD: Nicopolis Ad Istrum..* Dates from D Boteva, "Legati Augusti Pro Praetore Moesiaie Inferioris A.D. 193-217/218," *Zeitschrift Für Papyrologie Und Epigraphik* 110 (1996): 239–247.

⁵⁸ There are a number of reasons to believe that minting in Moesia Inferior was coordinated to some degree at the level of the province. For example, when the production of large denomination bronze ceases at Nikopolis around A.D. 204, it significantly increases at Markianopolis, the other major mint in the province.

decennalia, which was celebrated in A.D. 203.⁵⁹ While these are possible occasions for an increase in minting or even for the granting of minting privileges to a greater number of polities, I believe that there are a couple of reasons to be cautious about this explanation. First, as argued above, any *aurum coronarium* demanded by Severus to celebrate the occasion will have been paid in uncoined precious metal rather than local bronze denominations.⁶⁰ This leaves only the possibility that these coins were struck to celebrate the wedding or Severus' *decennalia* in an attempt to curry favor with the emperor. There do exist examples of provincial coinages commemorating imperial events. For example, Nikopolis ad Istrum struck coins showing Caracalla and Plautilla clasping hands to commemorate their marriage in A.D. 202, but this marriage issue seems to have been quite small. If its dies and all other dies that possibly show an imperial message (e.g., an eagle standing on an altar between two standards) are subtracted from the tally for Gallus in the table above, the die total is still more than for all other *legati consulares* combined. Since it is unlikely that a city would mint coins to commemorate an event without making any reference to that event on the coins themselves, I believe that even though commemorative coins were struck, they cannot explain the boom in minting that took place during these years.⁶¹ This line of reasoning applies to the Peloponnesian issues as well. A variety of imperial celebratory types appear during the Severan period. Phigaleia struck a Caracalla and Plautilla wedding type (931); Pagai (846) and Tegea (1043) struck coins with Severus, Caracalla, and Geta on the reverse; eight cities struck coins with Severus on the reverse; etc., but these types make up a very small portion of the total output.

⁵⁹ Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann, "The Severan Emissions of the Peloponnesus," 46.

⁶⁰ Morris and Scheidel, *The Dynamics of Ancient Empires*, 199–200; Harl, *Civic Coins and Civic Politics in the Roman East, A.D. 180-275*, 122.

⁶¹ Obverse portraits should not be taken as a reference to a specific event in the life of the emperor depicted in this context.

Rather than any imperial celebrations, Cristian Gazdac has, rightly in my view, attributed this increased minting in Moesia to the general lack to bronze coinage discussed above.⁶² He has gone on to argue that the liberal grants of minting rights to cities along the Danube during the Severan period actually mark the beginning of the decentralized process of minting that is adopted in the late third century.⁶³ By taking up this policy, the imperial center was able to lighten the burden on the mint at Rome, which was, after all, charged with greatly increased silver production. This also, of course, allowed these provincial cities to produce coins advertising their own civic traditions, and as Gazdac states, "...issue coins to flatter the imperial house."⁶⁴ In support of this more utilitarian view of the reasons for the boom in provincial minting, Gazdac points to cities like Dionysopolis, Kallatis, and Tomis in Moesia Inferior. These cities originally had their minting rights taken away for supporting Niger during the civil war, but by the early third century they were again allowed to strike coins. Such a slight against Severus would not have been easily forgiven, and thus Gazdac believes, must be explained by this policy of a move toward decentralized minting.

Although Gazdac's study only examines the provinces of the Danube, I believe that the Severan emissions of the Peloponnese are best understood in the context of a trend toward decentralized minting. Just as in the Danube, the ratio of municipal bronze coins to imperial bronze coins in the archaeological record grows significantly under the Severans. For Marcus Aurelius and Commodus, finds of bronze coins at Corinth are essentially evenly divided between imperial and civic issues, with a ratio of .9 civic to imperial for Aurelius and 1.33 for

⁶² Gazdac, "Center and Periphery: The Roman Monetary Policy Regarding the Lower Danube Provinces at the Mid 3rd Century AD," 71–72.

⁶³ *Idem.*, 72.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

Commodus. The ratio of civic to imperial coins jumps to 12.86 for Septimius Severus and his family.⁶⁵

Table 5: Coins Found at Corinth			
Emperor	Imperial Bronze	Civic Bronze	Civic Bronze Coins/Imperial Bronze Coins
Hadrian	9	28	3.11
Antoninus Pius	16	36	2.25
Marcus Aurelius/Lucius Verus	29	26	0.90
Commodus	12	16	1.33
Severus/Caracalla/Geta	7	90	12.86

A sizable majority of the Severan civic coins found at Corinth were minted in the Peloponnese. The growth in coin production in the Peloponnese was the result of both increased output at permanent mints like Corinth and Argos as well as a dramatic rise in the number of cities striking.⁶⁶ Prior to the reign of Septimius Severus only ten Peloponnesian cities had minted coins in the Imperial period. Under Severus, however, that figure grew to forty-three. As table 3 above shows, the potential beginning and ending strike dates for the new mints are quite consistent, with only a few possible exceptions. This suggests that these new minting privileges, which were undoubtedly conferred by Severus himself, were given, if not all at once, then in a period of only two or three years. That these coins were circulating in such a great volume locally, as evidenced by the finds from Corinth, makes it unlikely that this boost in minting was intended to pay any sort of imperial tax. As I argued above, I also believe that the scarcity of imperial types among these issues suggests that, even if some of these coins were struck to commemorate imperial events like Caracalla and Plautilla's wedding or Severus *decenalía*, the

⁶⁵ Coin find figures in the table below are taken from: Engels, *Roman Corinth*, 159–166; Katharine M. Edwards, *Corinth: Results of Excavations. Coins : 1896-1929* (Harvard University Press, 1933); Katharine M. Edwards, "Report on the Coins Found in the Excavations at Corinth During the Years 1930-1935," *Hesperia: The Journal of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens* 6, no. 2 (January 1, 1937): 241–256.

⁶⁶ As discussed above in the section on mint organization, whether these new mints were striking coins locally or contracting out the process to a central mint like Corinth is still open to debate.

vast majority of the production increase must be attributed to another cause. The dramatic increase in the number of mints in the Peloponnese under Severus, which will have been initiated or at least approved by the emperor, together with the decrease in bronze production at Rome and the replacement of imperial bronze with civic bronze in the archaeological record strongly suggests a policy of decentralized bronze production on the part of the imperial administration. This transfer of responsibility from Rome to the provinces may be the result of a greater need for silver imperial coinage brought about by Severus' civil wars with Niger and Albinus and his Parthian campaigns. It seems that here under Septimius Severus we see the first signs of the imperial policy that eventually led to the total decentralization of minting under Valerian and Gallienus.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Harl, *Civic Coins and Civic Politics in the Roman East, A.D. 180-275*, 144.

CHAPTER 4

ICONOGRAPHY OF THE PELOPONNESIAN COINAGE

Even if the Severan emissions of the Peloponnese were struck in part to meet local economic need, we should not discount issues of civic pride and promotion. The most deliberate and explicit symbols of a city's identity were its coins.⁶⁸ Roman provincial coinage provides us with a rare window onto self-defined and overt demonstrations of local civic identity. From this evidence we can gather information on collective polis-level religious self definition, local cults, and the mythical and historical events used to construct collective narratives. We may also use these coins to learn more about the interplay between civic and imperial ideology. The coinage of the Peloponnese struck under the emperor Septimius Severus is a particularly valuable body of evidence because of the overall rarity of minting in this region during the Roman period. Only ten of the forty-three cities that minted coins under Severus had previously struck in the Roman period. In fact, nineteen of these cities had *never* before struck coins and would never strike again.

More than one hundred different deities, personifications, animals, various inanimate objects, and combinations thereof appear on the reverses of the coinage of these cities during the Severan period.⁶⁹ If individual buildings, monuments, and epithets of gods and goddesses are counted separately, this number grows to more than 500. Many of these images are standard Greek types that cannot be associated with any one city (e.g. Tyche holding a phiale and cornucopia), but a significant number are distinctly local images. The subjects of these local types include Panhellenic myths associated with the city, local variants of these myths, famous works of art located in the city, civic buildings and monuments, and a variety of representations

⁶⁸ Fergus Millar, *The Roman Near East: 31 BC - AD 337* (Harvard University Press, 1993), 230, 257.

⁶⁹ See the City-Type page in the attached Excel spreadsheet for information on cities' use of reverse subjects.

of local cults and cultic events. Overall, there is an overwhelming preference for “local” types. That is, the depiction of deities, personifications, and buildings that reference local religious practices, myths, and historical events is far more common than more generic Panhellenic types. Table 6 and figure 4 below show how frequently different gods, goddesses, personifications and other figures and objects are used by the cities of the Peloponnese. Of the 118 different figures and objects who are used on the reverses of these coins, seventy-nine (67%) appear at only one city. Many of these “local” types do express “Greekness” insofar as they tend to be drawn from a collective Greek religious, mythic, and historical tradition, but the fact remains that reverse subjects, even if taken from this broader tradition, are chosen overwhelmingly for local reasons.

That is not to say that there is no interest in showing Panhellenic deities. Five of the 118 reverse subjects are used by more than half of the forty-three Peloponnesian cities minting during the reign of Severus (Tyche, Asklepios, Artemis, Athena, and Dionysos).⁷⁰ It should be noted, however, that by this period, Tyche, the most common of these Panhellenic deities, was frequently used as a stand-in for the city itself.⁷¹

⁷⁰ See Table 6 below for a full list of subjects and their frequency.

⁷¹ Nino Luraghi, *The Ancient Messenians: Constructions of Ethnicity and Memory* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 281. And more generally: Eva Christof, *Das Glück der Stadt: Die Tyche von Antiochia und Andere Stadtttychen* (Lang, 2001).

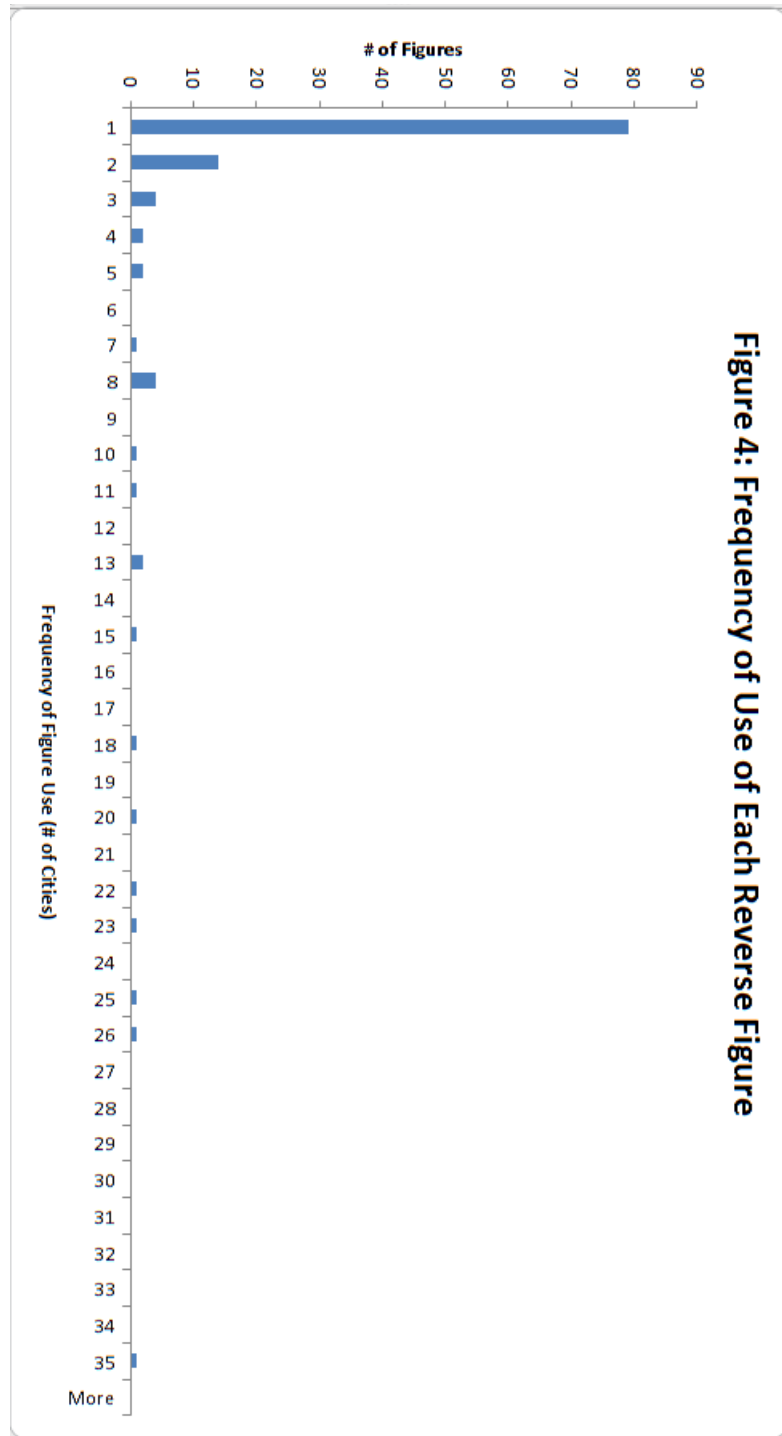
Table 6: Frequency of Reverse Figure Use	
Figure/Object	# of Cities
Tyche	35
Asklepios	26
Artemis	25
Athena	23
Dionysos	22
Zeus	20
Poseidon	18
Apollo	15
Aphrodite	13
Herakles	13
Hermes	11
Nike	10
Demeter	8
Hygieia	8
Isis	8
Severus	8
Legend in Wreath	7
Pan	5
River God	5
Asklepios / Hygieia	4
Dioscuri	4
Aphrodite / Eros	3
Hera	3
Nemesis	3
Satyr(s)	3
Ares	2
Asklepios / Isis	2
Athlete	2
Caracalla / Geta / Severus	2
Eileithuia	2
Fountain Nymph	2
Head / Horse	2
Hekate	2
Helios	2
Isthmos	2
Kybele	2
Perseus	2
Table	2
Tyche / Uncertain Male	2

Achaia	1
Amazonian (Artemis Astrateia?)	1
Aphrodite (?) / Isis	1
Aphrodite / Hermes	1
Aphrodite / Poseidon	1
Apollo / Asklepios(?)	1
Apollo / Leto / Artemis	1
Apollo / Pan	1
Artemis / Bellerophon	1
Asklepios / Goat / Shepherd	1
Atalanta	1
Athena / Demeter	1
Athena / Diomedes	1
Athena / Hera	1
Athena / Perseus	1
Athena / Tyche	1
Athlete / Melikertes	1
Bellerophon	1
Caracalla / Plautilla	1
Caracalla / Severus	1
Chimaera	1
Dionysos / Poseidon	1
Dionysos / Satyrs	1
Domna (?)	1
Eagle	1
Eagle / Standards	1
Eros	1
Eros / Tyche	1
Genius (?)	1
Geta	1
Geta / Nike	1
Goat	1
Goat / Infant	1
Hades	1
Herakles / Poseidon	1
Hippolytos	1
Horse	1
Hypsipyle	1
Ino	1
Ino / Isthmos	1
Kepheos	1
Kleobis / Biton	1

Leto / Chloris	1
Lion	1
Maenad	1
Man / Cow	1
Melikertes	1
Pegasos	1
Pelops (?) / Poseidon	1
Prize Crown / Branch	1

Ram	1
Serapis	1
Serpent	1
Severus / Athena	1
Suppliant Boy	1
Theseus	1
Wrestlers	1
Zakynthos	1

Figure 4: Frequency of Use of Each Reverse Figure



Among the best examples of this tendency to select local subjects from the greater Panhellenic tradition are the coins from Gytheion that show a distinctive rendition of that city's Temple of Asklepios (508-509, Pl. V, 64). Pausanias tells us that the Temple of Asklepios at Gytheion was roofless, and the unique composite view of the temple shown on these coins seems to be intended to represent this very feature.⁷² While temples of Asklepios and other deities commonly appear during the Roman period on the reverses of coins throughout the Greek world, they are typically shown from the front and without any noticeable local characteristics. The generic nature of these temples can largely be attributed to the origins and the intended message of these types. A number of scholars have pointed out that the depiction of buildings on coins is essentially a Roman innovation, and thus, at least to some degree can be viewed as a response to Rome, something that I will come back to later.⁷³ During both the republican and imperial periods in Rome putting a building on a coin was usually connected in some way to the dedication or restoration of that building by a powerful politician or the emperor.⁷⁴ In Greece, however, the practice seems to have been adapted. Here it is more commonly used as a reference to the cult itself, and it need not necessarily reference a specific building.⁷⁵ This use of temples on the reverses of provincial coins explains their generic appearance in most cities. It also suggests a conscious effort at Gytheion not just to represent the cult of Asklepios and thus its position within the broader context of Greek religion but also to set itself apart by distinguishing its local temple and thus its local cult. Gytheion's use of architecture on these coins in many ways blurs the lines between traditional notions of Greek and Roman portrayals of

⁷² Pausanias 3.21.8

⁷³ Christopher Howgego, Volhker Heuchert, and Andrew Burnett, eds., *Coinage and Identity in the Roman Provinces* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 4.

⁷⁴ Andrew Burnett, "Buildings and Monuments on Roman Coins," in *Roman Coins and Public Life Under the Empire*, ed. G.M Paul and M Ierardi (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 144.

⁷⁵ Howgego, Heuchert, and Burnett, *Coinage and Identity in the Roman Provinces*, 4.

buildings on coins. While there is no evidence connecting the issuance of this type with the refurbishment of a particular temple, as one expects on Roman coins, the interest in depicting the actual appearance of the temple is much more in line with the Roman tradition of fidelity to the details of a specific monument than the Greek tradition or more abstract depictions of a type. And if we consider the *polis* as taking the place of the Republican moneyer or the emperor, it becomes clear that the message of these coins is remarkably similar to that of Roman architectural types. The message being conveyed is not simply that we have a particular temple or monument, but rather that “We – or our ancestors and, by extension, we – are responsible for this.” By customizing the image of their temple, the city of Gytheion has found a way to work within both the Greek and Roman traditions.

Another example of the complex interplay between Greek identity, civic identity, and civic pride can be seen on the reverse of coins from Argos that show Praxiteles’ statue of Leto and Chloris. This statue, which does not survive today but is described by Pausanias, was the cult statue at the sanctuary of Leto at Argos. By choosing this piece of sculpture for the reverse of its coins, Argos is emphasizing a local account of the story of the Niobids in which two of Niobi’s children, Chloris and Amyclas are spared from slaughter on account of their prayers to Leto. In this version of the story, Chloris and Amyclas go on to found the Argive sanctuary of Leto. Not only is this telling of the myth unusual, but the very presence of a sanctuary of Leto at Argos is unexpected. Sanctuaries of Leto apart from her children Apollo and Artemis are relatively uncommon in the ancient world, and the sites where they do appear are closely associated with the myth of Leto, Apollo, and Artemis. While an in depth discussion of the topic is beyond the scope of this work, I believe that there may be reason to think that the presence of

the sanctuary of Leto at Argos is the result of a long tradition of venerating kourotrrophic figures in the region dating back to the Bronze Age.

In addition to displaying a local version of the Niobid myth and perhaps a longstanding local interest in kourotrrophic figures, Argos would also have been showing off its possession of a work by arguably the most renowned sculptor of the 4th century. This would have made a strong statement about the city's wealth and high level of culture both past and present.

The depiction of famous sculpture on coins as a means of display is not limited to Argos but is in fact quite common throughout much of the Roman East, both in the Severan period and others. Without leaving Praxiteles, we can see that during the reign of Domitian, Thespieae in Boeotia struck coins showing Praxiteles' statue of Aphrodite and Phryne and under the Antonines and the Severans, Philippopolis in Thrace and its neighboring Nikopolis ad Istrum struck coins with images of his Apollo Sauroktones on the reverse.

Finally, although less common, there is also an interest in showing "Romanness", or at least a desire to flatter the emperor, on the coinage of the Peloponnese. As discussed above, Gytheion adapted the Roman use of architectural types to express their own civic identity. In addition to this, the relationships of the minting Peloponnesian cities with Rome and the imperial administration are also referenced by other imagery chosen for these coins. Most notable among these reverse types are those that actually show Severus or another member of the imperial family. The majority of these imperial types show Severus on horseback either with his hand raised in an *adlocutio* pose or spearing a fallen enemy who lies below the horse. In addition to the Severus on horseback type, Phigaleia struck coins that show Caracalla and Plautilla clasping hands on the reverse (931), presumably a reference to their wedding. Pagai and Tenea issued coins that show statues of Severus, Caracalla, and Geta atop a triple-bayed arch (846, 1033), and

Sikyon used a reverse design that seems to show Severus and Caracalla clasping hands on the reverse (992).

The use of images of the emperor, particularly in the *adlocutio* pose, on provincial coinage has been connected to the emperor's presence in the region.⁷⁶ This does not seem to be the case, however, in the Peloponnese, as we have no evidence that Severus visited the region during his reign. It is quite possible that these imperial images are instead part of the flattery of the imperial house that was expected from provincial cities that were granted minting rights.⁷⁷ The more specific images like that of Caracalla and Plautilla from Phigaleia, which refers to their wedding, and that of Severus and Caracalla from Sikyon, which possibly refers to Caracalla's accession to the position of Augustus, should also be thought of as part of this flattery.

The cities of the Peloponnese that struck coins under the emperor Septimius Severus chose to communicate a number of messages with the reverse images that were selected for their coins. Some cities chose to show images of the imperial family members on the reverses of their coins, possibly as thanks for their new minting rights. With the depiction of Panhellenic deities like Apollo, Zeus, and Artemis, we see many cities celebrating their participation in the broader Greek religious traditions. Interestingly, however, it seems that the cities of the Peloponnese are most frequently interested in expressing their own civic pride and civic identity by featuring local cults or architecture.

⁷⁶ Bernhard Weisser, "Pergamum as Paradigm," in *Coinage and Identity in the Roman Provinces*, ed. Christopher Howgego, Andrew Burnett, and Volhker Heuchert (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 136.

⁷⁷ Gazdac, "Center and Periphery: The Roman Monetary Policy Regarding the Lower Danube Provinces at the Mid 3rd Century AD," 72.

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APPENDIX A

Key to Plates

Plate I

- 1: Septimius Severus, Corinth, Cat. 302 (BCD Korinth 860)
- 2: Septimius Severus, Pellene, Cat. 875 (BCD Peloponnese 618.1)
- 3: Septimius Severus, Corinth, Cat. 450 (BCD Korinth 851)
- 4: Septimius Severus, Thouria, Cat. 1054 (BCD Peloponnese 828)
- 5: Septimius Severus, Corinth, Cat. 176 (BCD Korinth 868)
- 6: Septimius Severus, Tenea, Cat. 1034 (BCD Peloponnese 75)
- 7: Septimius Severus, Corinth, Cat. 301 (BCD Korinth 859)
- 8: Septimius Severus, Boura, Cat. 169 (BCD Peloponnese 464)
- 9: Septimius Severus, Psophis, Cat. 949 (BCD Peloponnese 1689)
- 10: Septimius Severus, Thelpusa, Cat. 1042 (BCD Peloponnese 1767)
- 11: Caracalla, Corinth, Cat. 234 (BCD Korinth 945)
- 12: Caracalla, Megara, Cat. 718 (BCD Peloponnese 56)
- 13: Caracalla, Tenea, Cat. 1033 (BCD Peloponnese 76)
- 14: Caracalla, Corinth, Cat. 405 (BCD Korinth 939)
- 15: Caracalla, Corinth, Cat. 348 (BCD Korinth 922)
- 16: Caracalla, Corinth, Cat. 308 (BCD Korinth 932)
- 17: Geta, Phenos, Cat. 887 (BCD Peloponnese 1640)
- 18: Geta, Las, Cat. 665 (BCD Peloponnese 995)
- 19: Geta, Kleonai, Cat. 586 (SNG Hunterian 402)

Plate II

- 20: Julia Domna, Argos, Cat. 114 (BCD Peloponnese 1215)
- 21: Julia Domna, Corinth, Cat. 299 (BCD Korinth 903)
- 22: Julia Domna, Argos, Cat. 84 (BCD Peloponnese 1213)
- 23: Julia Domna, Corinth, Cat. 268 (BCD Korinth 901)
- 24: Plautilla, Corinth, Cat. 437 (BCD Korinth 973)
- 25: Plautilla, Hermione, Cat. 530 (BCD Peloponnese 1306)
- 26: Plautilla, Corinth, Cat. 158 (BCD Korinth 961)
- 27: Plautilla, Aigion, Cat. 46 (BCD Peloponnese 461)
- 28: Plautilla, Athena standing right, Aigeira, Cat. 7 (BCD Peloponnese 418)
- 29: Plautilla, Isis standing left, Aigeira, Cat. 15 (BCD Peloponnese 417)
- 30: Plautilla, Nike advancing right, Aigeira, Cat. 16 (BCD Peloponnese 415)
- 31: Septimius Severus, Artemis standing left, Aigion, Cat. 24 (BCD Peloponnese 452)
- 32: Julia Domna, Hygieia standing left, Aigion, Cat. 34 (BCD Peloponnese 456)
- 33: Septimius Severus, Severus on horseback, Aigion, Cat. 24 (BCD Peloponnese 452)
- 34: Geta, Infant suckled by goat, Aigosthena, Cat. 53 (BCD Peloponnese 63)

Plate III

- 35: Septimius Severus, Asklepios standing left, Argos, Cat. 61 (BCD Peloponnese 1205)
- 36: Caracalla, Leto and Chloris, Argos, Cat. 89 (BCD Peloponnese 1216)
- 37: Septimius Severus, Nemesis standing right, Argos, Cat. 96 (BCD Peloponnese 1204)
- 38: Septimius Severus, Head of Perseus, Argos, Cat. 72 (BCD Peloponnese 1203)
- 39: Septimius Severus, Perseus holding head of Medusa, Argos, Cat. 101

(BCD Peloponnese 1201)

- 40: Caracalla, Agonistic table, Argos, Cat. 109 (BCD Peloponnese 1217)
- 41: Julia Domna, Draped female figure on basis, Asine, Cat. 135 (BCD Peloponnese 770)
- 42: Plautilla, Snake on basis, Asine, Cat. 142 (BCD Peloponnese 773)
- 43: Caracalla, Hygieia and Asklepios, Boiai, Cat. 665 (BCD Peloponnese 955)
- 44: Septimius Severus, Legend in wreath, Boiai, Cat. 155 (BCD Peloponnese 953)
- 45: Geta, Akropolis of Boura with cave of Herakles, Boura, Cat. 175 (BCD Peloponnese 469)
- 46: Geta, Hermes within distyle shrine, Boura, Cat. 171 (BCD Peloponnese 468)
- 47: Septimius Severus, Uncertain female figure, Boura, Cat. 169 (BCD Peloponnese 464)
- 48: Caracalla, Multilevel shrine, Boura, Cat. 172 (BCD Peloponnese 466)

Plave IV

- 49: Septimius Severus, Achaia(?) seated left, Corinth, Cat. 176 (BCD Korinth 868)
- 50: Septimius Severus, Aphrodite in shrine atop Akrocorinth, Corinth, Cat. 243 (BCD Korinth 872)
- 51: Septimius Severus, Aphrodite and Poseidon standing, Corinth, Cat. 385 (BCD Korinth 956)
- 52: Septimius Severus, Athena and Tyche, Corinth, Cat. 226 (BCD Korinth 840)
- 53: Septimius Severus, Bellerophon on Pegasos spearing Chimaera, Corinth, Cat. 231 (BCD Korinth 866)
- 54: Septimius Severus, Melikertes riding on dolphin, Corinth, Cat. 302 (BCD Korinth 860)
- 55: Septimius Severus, Ino, Melikertes, and Isthmos, Corinth, Cat. 272 (BCD Korinth 854)
- 56: Plautilla, Isthmos, Corinth, Cat. 284 (BCD Korinth 966)
- 57: Julia Domna, Athlete walking left, Melikertes on dolphin behind, Corinth, Cat. 320 (BCD Korinth 909)
- 58: Septimius Severus, Nike driving biga, Corinth, Cat. 340 (BCD Korinth 848)
- 59: Plautilla, Nymph Peirene seated left, Corinth, Cat. 361 (BCD Korinth 967)
- 60: Caracalla, Zeus standing right, Corinth, Cat. 454 (BCD Korinth 914)
- 61: Caracalla, Asklepios seated left, Epidauros, Cat. 461 (BCD Peloponnese 1276)

Plate V

- 62: Septimius Severus, Apollo seated left, Gytheion, Cat. 472 (BCD Peloponnese 962)
- 63: Caracalla, Apollo standing right, Gytheion, Cat. 474 (BCD Peloponnese 970)
- 64: Geta, Temple of Asklepios, Gytheion, Cat. 509 (BCD Peloponnese 980)
- 65: Geta, Dionysos standing left, Gytheion, Cat. 415 (BCD Peloponnese 981)
- 66: Caracalla, Dioskouroi, Gytheion, Cat. 437 (BCD Peloponnese 973)
- 67: Geta, Terminal figure in shrine, Gytheion, Cat. 668 (BCD Peloponnese 990)
- 68: Septimius Severus, Hera standing right, Heraia, Cat. 521 (BCD Peloponnese 1374)
- 69: Plautilla, Male figure leading bull right, Hermione, Cat. 533 (BCD Peloponnese 1308)
- 70: Septimius Severus, Artemis advancing left, Kaphyai, Cat. 544 (BCD Peloponnese 1385)
- 71: Septimius Severus, Poseidon standing left, Kaphyai, Cat. 554 (BCD Peloponnese 1386)
- 72: Septimius Severus, Helios standing facing, Kleitor, Cat. 568 (BCD Peloponnese 1442)
- 73: Julia Domna, Eagle on cippus atop Mt. Apesas, Kleonai, Cat. 588 (BCD Peloponnese 1326)
- 74: Julia Domna, Tyche standing left, Kleonai, Cat. 593 (BCD Peloponnese 1327)

Plate VI

- 75: Caracalla, Apollo standing right, Kyparissia, Cat. 606 (BCD Peloponnese 795)
- 76: Caracalla, Terminal figure of Hermes, Kyparissia, Cat. 639 (BCD Peloponnese 797)
- 77: Caracalla, Tyche standing left, Kyparissia, Cat. 641 (BCD Peloponnese 799)
- 78: Septimius Severus, Herakles standing left, Las, Cat. 661 (BCD Peloponnese 988)

- 79: Caracalla, Terminal figure within shrine, Las, Cat. 668 (BCD Peloponnese 990)
- 80: Septimius Severus, Poseidon on hippocamps, Mantinea, Cat. 691 (BCD Peloponnese 1503)
- 81: Julia Domna, Artemis advancing right, Megalopolis, Cat. 699 (BCD Peloponnese 1570)
- 82: Septimius Severus, Wreath, Megalopolis, Cat. 711 (BCD Peloponnese 1569)
- 83: Septimius Severus, Artemis advancing left, Methana, Cat. 775 (BCD Peloponnese 1332)
- 84: Julia Domna, Aphrodite standing right, Mothone, Cat. 784 (BCD Peloponnese 807)
- 85: Caracalla, Harbor of Mothone, Mothone, Cat. 801 (BCD Peloponnese 809)
- 86: Plautilla, Female figure (kore?), Mothone, Cat. 800 (BCD Peloponnese 810)
- 87: Septimius Severus, Distyle temple, Pagai, Cat. 845 (BCD Peloponnese 68)
- 88: Caracalla, Three-bayed arch with statues, Pagai, Cat. 1033 (BCD Peloponnese 76)

Plate VII

- 89: Septimius Severus, Athena standing right, Pellene, Cat. 864 (BCD Peloponnese 608)
- 90: Caracalla, Laurel branch in prize crown, Pellene, Cat. 873 (BCD Peloponnese 613)
- 91: Septimius Severus, Severus on horseback, Pellene, Cat. 875 (BCD Peloponnese 618)
- 92: Julia Domna, Athlete walking left, Phenos, Cat. 885 (BCD Peloponnese 1635)
- 93: Caracalla, Hades seated left, Phenos, Cat. 893 (BCD Peloponnese 1637)
- 94: Julia Domna, Athena and Demeter standing, Phigaleia, Cat. 910 (BCD Peloponnese 1651)
- 95: Plautilla, Caracalla and Plautilla clasping hands, Phigaleia, Cat. 931 (BCD Peloponnese 1657)
- 96: Geta, Nymph Neda seated right, Phigaleia, Cat. 925 (BCD Peloponnese 1659)
- 97: Geta, Pan standing left, Psophis, Cat. 957 (BCD Peloponnese 1692)
- 98: Septimius Severus, Aphrodite standing right, Pylos, Cat. 959 (BCD Peloponnese 816)
- 99: Julia Domna, Sheep reclining on basis, Pylos, Cat. 973 (BCD Peloponnese 818)
- 100: Septimius Severus, Apollo standing left, Sikyon, Cat. 981 (BCD Peloponnese 356)
- 101: Septimius Severus, Eros on basis and Aphrodite standing, Sikyon, Cat. 986 (BCD Peloponnese 360)
- 102: Plautilla, Tetrastyle tomb flanked by herms and trees, Sikyon, Cat. 1014 (BCD Peloponnese 365)

Plate VIII

- 103: Julia Domna, Atalanta spearing Kalydonian Boar, Tegea, Cat. 1027 (BCD Peloponnese 1754)
- 104: Septimius Severus, Kepheos standing, Tegea, Cat. 1029 (BCD Peloponnese 1753)
- 105: Septimius Severus, Isis standing left, Thelpusa, Cat. 1042 (BCD Peloponnese 1767)
- 106: Septimius Severus, River-god Ladon reclining left, Thelpusa, Cat. 1046 (BCD Peloponnese 1769)
- 107: Geta, Nike crowing Geta, Thouria, Cat. 1072 (BCD Peloponnese 835)
- 108: Septimius Severus, Tyche standing left, Thouria, Cat. 207 (BCD Peloponnese 829)
- 109: Septimius Severus, Temple of Athena atop Akropolis, Troizen, Cat. 1098 (BCD Peloponnese 1344)
- 110: Septimius Severus, Tyche standing facing, Troizen, Cat. 1102 (BCD Peloponnese 1343)



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I: Obverse Types, Septimius 1-10, Caracalla 11-16, Geta 17-19



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II: Obverse Types, Julian Domna 20-23, Plautilla, 24-27; Aigeira 28-30, Aigion 31-33,



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III: Argos 35-40, Asine 41-42, Boiai 43-44, Boura 45-48



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IV: Corinth 49-60, Epidauros 61



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V: Gytheion 62-67, Heraia 68, Hermione 69, Kaphyai 70-71, Kleitor 72, Kleonai 73-74



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VI: Kyparissia 75-77, Las 78-79, Mantinea 80, Megalopolis 81-82, Methana 83, Mothone 84-



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VII: Pellene 89-91, Phenos 92-93, Phigaleia 94-96, Psophis 97, Pylos 98-99, Sikyon 100-102



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105



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107



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