

Zeitschrift: Schweizer Münzblätter = Gazette numismatique suisse = Gazzetta numismatica svizzera

Herausgeber: Schweizerische Numismatische Gesellschaft

Band: 33-37 (1983-1987)

Heft: 140

Artikel: Greek legends and Roman types : a Neronian enigma

Autor: Howgego, Chris J.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-171360>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 03.05.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

GREEK LEGENDS AND ROMAN TYPES: A NERONIAN ENIGMA*

Chris J. Howgego

The imperial coinage of Nero has recently been the object of much discussion¹. The purpose of this note is to draw attention to a small group of coins which has not been noticed, probably because it is unclear whether they should be regarded as imperial or provincial. The coins have imperial types and do not record ethnics, but their legends are in Greek.

The terms «imperial» and «provincial» are in some ways inadequate to describe the coinage of the Roman Empire. In general it is the authority behind the coins which is taken as the decisive factor: imperial coins were struck by the Roman government and provincial coins by the provincial *Koina*, cities, or client kings. At the time of the first edition of *Roman Imperial Coinage* (RIC) it was considered that the vast majority of the imperial coinage of the first century AD was struck at Rome and that it was supplemented from a few mints in the provinces, notably Lugdunum. There is now increasing awareness that the provinces played a greater role. However, even when it can be shown that some issues circulated only in certain provinces it can be hard to decide whether the issue was struck in Rome and despatched to those provinces or struck locally (perhaps from dies sent from Rome and even by mint-workers sent from Rome)².

In some cases it is certain that greater emphasis should be placed on provincial mints. The major eastern imperial *aes* coinage, the SC series struck at Syrian Antioch, was omitted from *Roman Imperial Coinage*, a mistake which has been rectified in the second edition³. A number of small issues of coins with Latin legends and copying or adapting Roman types have recently been attributed to the Balkans or Asia Minor: under Claudius in Thrace, under Nero in Moesia, and under the Flavians in Asia Minor⁴.

* I am grateful to Miriam Griffin, Andrew Burnett, Hans-Markus von Kaenel, and David Walker for discussing these coins with me.

Abbreviations: GIC = C.J. Howgego, *Greek Imperial Countermarks. Studies in the Provincial Coinage of the Roman Empire*, Royal Numismatic Society Special Publication No. 17, (1985); MacDowall, Nero = D.W. MacDowall, *The Western Coinages of Nero*, ANS NNM 161, (1979).

¹ MacDowall, Nero; C.L. Clay, «Die Münzprägung des Kaisers Nero in Rom und Lugdunum», NZ 96 (1982), 7-52, to be continued; C.H.V. Sutherland, RIC, vol. 1, 2nd ed. (1984); M.T. Griffin, Nero. *The End of A Dynasty*, (1984).

² See the forthcoming studies by H.-M. von Kaenel, *Münzprägung und Münzbildnis des Claudius*, AMUGS 9; and D.R. Walker, in his publication of the coins found in the excavations at Bath.

³ See also C.J. Howgego, «Coinage and Military Finance: The imperial bronze coinage of the Augustan east», NC 142 (1982), 1-20; id., GIC pp. 21-4 on the imperial bronze coinages of the east.

⁴ H.-M. von Kaenel, «Britannicus, Agrippina Minor und Nero in Thrakien», SNR 63 (1984), 127-166; D.W. MacDowall, «Two Roman countermarks of A.D. 68», NC⁶ 20 (1960), 102-12; C.M. Kraay, «An unattributed Flavian issue, A.D. 77-78», in *Studia Paulo Naster Oblata*, 1. *Numismatica Antica*, ed. S. Scheers, (1982), pp. 175-86; H.A. Cahn, «An imperial mint in Bithynia», *Israel Numismatic Journal* (forthcoming).



1a



2a



3a



4a



4b



A



B



C



In administrative terms our group of Neronian coins seems to belong somewhere between the last three coinages mentioned and the issues from Bithynia under Domitian which have Greek legends and no ethnics (or sometimes monograms only), but whose types do not simply copy imperial ones⁵.

Our group consists of one type of sestertius and three types of what are presumably dupondii. The portraits follow closely their western imperial models, retaining the difference in the treatment of the hair between right and left facing busts⁶.

1 Sestertius.

Obv. Laureate bust of Nero facing left.

...] ΙΟΣ ΚΑΙΣΑΡ ΣΕΒ [. . .

Rev. Nero on horseback advancing to the right, followed by a soldier on horseback.

In the exergue: ΚΑΙΣΑΡ.

a) Howgego collection, 17.95 g, ex Dorotheum auction no. 405 (6-8 March 1981), no. 115.

Countermarked: ΠΡ. (GIC no. 557).

2 Dupondius.

Obv. Radiate head of Nero facing left.

...] ΑΥΔΙΟΣ ΚΑΙΣΑΡ ΣΕΒΑΣΤΟΣ ΓΕ [. .

Rev. Nike (Victoria) advancing to left.

ΝΕ [ΙΚΗ ΣΕ] ΒΑΣΤΗ.

a) Munich 18 (under Caesarea, Cappadocia), 11.42 g.

Countermarked: ΓΑΑΥ (GIC no. 525).

Wrongly described as a silver coin by E. A. Sydenham, *The Coinage of Caesarea in Cappadocia* (1933), p. 41 no. 84.

3 Dupondius.

Obv. Radiate head of Nero facing right.

...] Ν ΚΛΑΥΔΙΟΣ ΚΑΙΣΑΡ ΣΕΒΑ [. . .

Rev. Poppea as Securitas seated to left.

ΠΟΠΠΑΙΑ [. . .

a) Cast in Winterthur marked: 1905 Osman.

4 Dupondius.

Obv. Radiate head of Nero facing right.

ΝΕΡΩΝ ΚΛΑΥΔΙΟΣ ΚΑΙΣΑΡ ΣΕΒΑΣΤΟΣ ΓΕ (ρμάνικος).

Rev. Statilia Messalina as Securitas seated to right.

ΜΕΣΣΑΛΙΝΑ ΓΥΝΕ ΣΕΒΑΣΤΟΥ.

a) Paris, 11.48 g, ex private collection in Beirut.

H. Seyrig, *RN*⁶ 6 (1964), 54-5, fig. 9.

b) Vienna 27322, 12.39 g (under Incerti).

Countermarked: GALBA (GIC no. 591).

c) Berlin (not seen): Seyrig, *RN*⁶ 6 (1964), 54.

J. Millingen, *Sylloge of Ancient Unedited Coins* (1837), p. 64 pl. 3, 38.

⁵ F. Imhoof-Blumer, «Zur griechischen und römischen Münzkunde», *SNR* 13 (1905), 179-181 (19-21); M. J. Price, «Countermarks at Prusias ad Hypium», *NC*⁷ 7 (1967), 37-42; one of the countermarks published by Price (GIC no. 608) is also found on a group of Domitianic coins with no ethnic, which records: ΓΕΡΜΑΝΙΑ ΔΕΔΟΥΛΩΜΕΝΗ ΣΕΒΑ ΔΟΜΙΤΙΑΝΩ (e.g. Berlin 869/1901, 7.42 g; 232/1907, 5.27 g; and Munich Leihgabe, 7.75 g).

⁶ MacDowall, *Nero* p. 128.

The reverses of 1 and 2 are those associated with the legends DECVRVSIO and VICTORIA AVGVSTI on the western imperial *aes*. The figure of Securitas on 3 and 4 was copied from coins with the legend SECVRITAS AVGVSTI but the altar on the western imperial coins has been omitted⁷.

The coins therefore belong between AD 63, when their Roman prototypes were first struck, and AD 68, when Nero died. Their date may be narrowed down by the references to Poppaea, who died in AD 65, and to Statilia Messalina, whom Nero married in AD 66⁸. They may therefore be attributed to c. AD 65–66 on the reasonable (but unproven) assumption that the coins belong to a tightly knit group.

A nice parallel occurred at Ephesus, where coins were struck for Nero and Poppaea, and for Messalina, all under the same magistrate (Αἰχμοκλῆς) and all during the proconsulship of Aviola⁹.

Three of our coins bear countermarks. The countermark on the sestertius is similar to, but not the same as, a countermark on a Neronian coin of Prusa (fig. A)¹⁰. The countermark naming Galba in Greek, which was applied to coin 2a, has also been found on two Neronian coins of Nicomedia (figs. B and C)¹¹. The countermark naming Galba in Latin on coin 4b is not otherwise recorded but may well belong in the same context as the Greek version on coin 2a (Nicomedia?) or as a different Greek version applied at Perinthus just across the Hellespont¹².

The recorded provenances are doubtful but seem at least to confirm that the coins circulated in the east. Coin 4a was once in Beirut, coin 1a was auctioned in Vienna, and coin 3a, known only from a cast marked «1905 Osman», is likely to have been brought from Turkey by that dealer.

While it is just possible that the coins were struck in Rome and then despatched to the east, that would require two consignments (freshly minted coins of Poppaea and Statilia Messalina would hardly have been despatched together). A mint in the provinces is much more plausible.

It may be noted that the coins were contemporary with the bronzes attributed to Moesia by MacDowall,¹³ and it remains possible that they themselves were struck in Moesia or Thrace. The countermarks, however, make it much more likely that the mint was in the western part of Bithynia¹⁴. An attribution to Bithynia is supported by the observations that provincial coins of sestertius size are known only from Bithynia at this time, and that the rare form of the obverse legend is also known there, as are radiate heads of Nero, which are otherwise very rare outside Greece¹⁵.

⁷ For these types see MacDowall, Nero p. 156 (foldout section) nos. 25; 37; 38. These types suggest a terminus post quem for our group of AD 63 (MacDowall, Nero pp. 134; 152).

⁸ Messalina received little commemoration on the coinage: D. Sellwood, «Nero's third wife», N. Circular (Spink) 74 (1966), 307–8; R. Münsterberg, NZ 59 (1926), 10.

⁹ Nero and Poppaea: BMC 213; Messalina: F. Imhoof-Blumer, Griechische Münzen, (1890), p. 639 (115), no. 286; E. Babelon, Inventaire sommaire de la collection Waddington (1898), no. 1620.

¹⁰ GIC no. 556; compare the monogram on some Bithynian coins under Domitian: SNR 13 (1905), 179–80 (19–20).

¹¹ GIC no. 525. For a discussion of the countermarking of coins of Nero in AD 68–9 see GIC pp. 5–6.

¹² Perinthus: GIC nos. 526 and 527.

¹³ Above, n. 4.

¹⁴ When Seyrig raised the possibility of an attribution of type 4 to Syria/Commagene (RN⁶ 6 [1964], 54–5) he was unaware of the other coins in the group.

¹⁵ I owe these observations to Andrew Burnett. See W. Waddington, E. Babelon, and Th. Reinach, Recueil général des monnaies grecques d'Asie Mineure, (1904–12), sestertii: e.g. Nicaea nos. 37, 39–40; obverse legend: e.g. Nicaea nos. 37; 39–40; radiate head: e.g. Prusa no. 6.

It is just possible that the coins should be viewed as coins of Nicomedia which happen to lack ethnics¹⁶. However, although Nicomedia was in the habit of drastically abbreviating its ethnic into a monogram, the total absence of an ethnic combined with the Roman types and style seems to require a different explanation.

It is interesting to recall that Roman imperial *aes* and issues with Greek legends but no ethnics were struck in Bithynia in the Flavian period¹⁷. Whether the Neronian group should be viewed as an antecedent to the imperial mint or to the later issues of the provincial *Koinon* remains a matter for debate.

¹⁶ Andrew Burnett has pointed out to me that «Nicomedia is crying out for a Neronian coinage: the couple of scraps it has are no comparison with what we have for Nicaea».

¹⁷ Above, n. 5.

MONNAIES TROUVÉES LORS DE LA RESTAURATION DE L'ÉGLISE SAINT-VINCENT À MONTREUX

Fritz Aubert

La construction de l'église paroissiale actuelle de Montreux, dédiée à saint Vincent, a commencé dans la seconde moitié du XV^e siècle et fut terminée au début du XVI^e. C'est la troisième église édifiée sur le même emplacement, la première au VIII^e ou IX^e siècle.

De 1969 à 1971, d'importants travaux en ont bouleversé l'intérieur. A cette occasion, des fouilles minutieuses ont permis de découvrir les fondations des édifices antérieurs ainsi que de très nombreuses tombes. Tous les déblais ont été soigneusement criblés. Ils nous ont livré quelques menus objets sans grande valeur mais surtout 224 monnaies éparpillées dans la plus grande partie du sous-sol.

Les plus anciennes sont deux très petits bronzes en mauvais état du Bas-Empire, l'un probablement de Constance II (437-361). A relever que ce sont les deux seules pièces retrouvées antérieures à la fin du XIII^e siècle. Les plus nombreuses sont de la fin du XV^e et de la première moitié du XVI^e, puis diminuent ensuite rapidement. La diminution des monnaies postérieures à l'occupation bernoise ne veut pas dire que la coutume de l'obole à Caron a disparu avec la Réforme; c'est plutôt l'interdiction d'ensevelir les morts dans les églises qui en est la cause. Ce privilège fut réservé à quelques notables et ecclésiastiques.

Comme l'église ne pouvait abriter qu'un nombre limité de tombes, on peut penser que plusieurs monnaies accompagnaient chaque mort. Elles nous donnent un aperçu de l'origine des petites monnaies en usage dans la région de Montreux:

Evêché de Lausanne (78 pièces)

Godefroi de Lucinge (1343-1346) (attribués à)	1 denier au T lunaire	Dolivo
		26
	1 obole au T lunaire	27
Aymon de Cossonay (1355-1375)	1 obole	29