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### LEGIONARY COINS IN THE YEAR OF THE FOUR EMPERORS

**Abstract:** Every imperial claimant in the 68–69 CE civil wars minted coins showing on their reverse a legionary eagle between standards. Their iconography is usually read as an allusion to Mark Antony’s legionary coins. While accurate, that reading only scratches the surface. By situating the iconography in the broader coinage of the minting emperor and his contemporary rivals, this article shows how that iconography reemerged in the Year of the Four Emperors as the lynchpin of various claimants’ messages to their army and as a way for those claimants to frame the relationship between themselves and their rivals or predecessors. For Nero, the iconography stressed his military might and descent from Antony. For Galba, it connected his army to liberty, the Roman people, and the provinces. Clodius Macer used the same iconography to claim that he rather than Galba would be Rome’s liberator. Vitellius and Vespasian used the iconography to position themselves as Galba’s rightful successors. Vitellius may also have minted a small, hitherto unrecognized series of legionary coins when paying his legions a donative.

**Keywords:** *Legions, Year of the Four Emperors, Nero, Galba, Clodius Macer.*

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As Rome’s legions marched to civil war in 68–69 CE, the legionary eagle appeared between military standards on the coins of every imperial claimant save Otho.<sup>1</sup> Though the iconography of the legionary eagle had not been used on imperial coins for decades, it would have been familiar to any Romans who paid attention to the images on their coins, as it had previously appeared on Mark Antony’s superabundant series of legionary coins. Scholars accordingly view these civil war coins as allusions to Antony.<sup>2</sup> While accurate, that reading only scratches the surface. This article demonstrates how legionary coins could allude to past leaders like Antony but also respond to both present events and the contemporary iconography of a rival’s coinage. On Galba’s coins, the eagle and standards connected disparate messages about liberty, the people, and the provinces. Clodius Macer’s legionary coins positioned Macer as an alternative to Galba, while Vitellius and Vespasian used the same iconography to present themselves as Galba’s successors. Vitellius may also have paid a donative in a hitherto unrecognized series of legionary coins. To show this, the article describes Antony’s often imitated legionary coins and explains the iconography’s scarcity in the early empire through the uncomfortable memory of Antony before proceeding chronologically through the iconography’s reappearance in 68–69.

<sup>1</sup> *RIC I*<sup>2</sup> Nero nos. 68, Civil Wars nos. 39, 45, 50–51, 57, 63–64, 70A–B, 80, 101, Galba nos. 297–304, 329, 428–431, 508–509, Clodius Macer nos. 1–21, Vitellius no. 153; *RIC II*, <sup>1</sup> Vespasian nos. 136, 320–321, 403–404, 449, 593, 632, 1389. Unless otherwise noted, all dates are CE.

<sup>2</sup> E.g., MATTINGLY *BMCRE I*, clxxxviii on Macer’s coins: “There is sufficient similarity of circumstance [between Antony and Macer] to explain the borrowing of the type,” cf. BELLONI 1974, 1056; GARA 1970, 72n25; MOWAT 1902, 189; VERMEEREN 1991, 72.

## FROM MARK ANTONY'S LEGIONARY COINS TO THE JULIO-CLAUDIANS

In the leadup to Actium, Antony minted *denarii* for his praetorians, *speculatores*, and twenty-three legions (Fig. 1). *Legiones IV, VI, XII, XIII, XIV, and XIX* and the praetorians also featured on *aurei*. The reverse showed the legionary eagle (*aquila*) between standards (*signa*). The obverse showed a galley and read ANT(ONIVS) AVG(VR) IIIVIR (R(EI) P(VBLICAE) C(ONSTITVENDAE) (“Antony, augur, triumvir for restoring the republic”). The *speculatores* scouts received the same obverse, but their reverse replaced the eagle and standards with three standards on prows. Since the *speculatores* were not a legion, they had no eagle (Fig. 2).<sup>3</sup> Antony’s legate Pinarius Scarpus also minted coins with similar reverses for the praetorians, *speculatores*, and *legiones XII Antiqua, XVII Libyca, and XVIII Classica*.<sup>4</sup>



**Fig. 1.** Denarius of Mark Antony, unknown mint, 32–31 BCE (RRC no. 544/19). Obverse: galley, ANT AVG III VIR R P C. Reverse: eagle between standards, LEG VI (courtesy of the American Numismatic Society, no. 1944.100.6320).



**Fig. 2.** Denarius of Mark Antony, unknown mint, 32–31 BCE (RRC no. 544/12). Obverse: galley, ANT AVG III VIR R P C. Reverse: three standards on prows (courtesy of the American Numismatic Society, no. 1944.100.6311).

Though not the first appearance of the eagle between standards iconography,<sup>5</sup> Antony’s coins overwhelmed previous instances of the iconography because of the sheer volume in which they were struck. Hoard evidence suggests they outnumbered Octavian’s contemporary coins ten to one,<sup>6</sup> and their prominence was undiminished by Antony’s defeat. Octavian paid retirement bonuses after Actium in Antony’s legionary coins, as their prevalence in hoards from Italian veteran colonies shows.<sup>7</sup> Antony, based in the East, had minted the coins to match the lower cistophoric purity standard. Reminting these coins of 92.2% silver to the 96.84% standard of Octavian’s other coins would have meant losing money.<sup>8</sup> In the long term, the coins’ lower purity meant that, as imperial coinage was debased and earlier, better coins fell out of circulation, Antony’s remained. In the reign of Vespasian a century after Actium, 20% of circulating

silver was legionary coins. Though eventually worn to unintelligibility, they continued to circulate in large numbers into the third century.<sup>9</sup> The abundance of Antony’s legionary coins means that a viewer seeing an eagle and standards on a coin would think of Antony rather than earlier uses of the iconography.

Coins recalling Antony’s would come in three principal varieties. Coins naming a legion are henceforth termed “legionary coins.” Coins reprising Antony’s imagery without naming a legion are called “eagle and standards coins.” Though far more common, eagle and standards types are less famous than legionary coins and are often left out of studies of them. The result is otherwise strong studies that examine how legionary coins reacted to past legionary coins without considering their reaction to contemporary coins with identical iconography.<sup>10</sup> Finally, coins emulating Antony’s iconography for the *speculatores* are referred to as “three standards coins.”

Augustus’ mint produced no legionary coins but did twice use the iconography as part of another scene. *Aurei* and *denarii* showed the eagle and standards between the columns of the Temple of Mars Ultor, where Augustus deposited the standards he recovered from the Parthians (Fig. 3).<sup>11</sup> Other coins showed on their reverse Gaius Caesar riding past an eagle between standards (Fig. 4).<sup>12</sup>



**Fig. 3.** denarius of Augustus, Colonia Patricia, 18 BCE (RIC I<sup>2</sup> Augustus no. 105A). Obverse: head of Augustus, CAESARI AVGVSTO. Reverse: hexastyle domed temple with eagle and standards inside, MARS VLT (courtesy of the American Numismatic Society, no. 1937.158.417).



**Fig. 4.** Aureus of Augustus, Lugdunum, 9 BCE (RIC I<sup>2</sup> Augustus no. 198). Obverse: head of Augustus, AVGVSTVS DIVI F. Reverse: Gaius Caesar galloping with sword and shield and, in the background, eagle and standards, C CAES AVGVVS G (courtesy of the American Numismatic Society, no. 1909.78.22).

After 9 BCE, the imperial coinage eschewed the eagle and standards iconography until Nero. The Julio-Claudians generally did not spotlight the army on coins,<sup>13</sup> but the eagle and standards also had the particular problem of its most famous issuer, whose memory was fraught. Julio-Claudian

<sup>3</sup> RRC nos. 544/1–39. *Speculatores*: LE BOHEC 2020, 215. All translations are my own.

<sup>4</sup> KEPPIE 2000, 79–80; ROWAN 2018, 110; SÁNCHEZ 2010, 124–130.

<sup>5</sup> Previous uses: RRC nos. 365/1, 444/1, 497/3, 525/3–4.

<sup>6</sup> DILLON 2007, 39.

<sup>7</sup> DILLON 2007, 41–45, building on KEPPIE 2000, 80.

<sup>8</sup> DILLON 2007, 45; ROWAN 2018, 114; WOYTEK 2007, 508–509.

<sup>9</sup> WOYTEK 2007, 511–518.

<sup>10</sup> E.g., VERMEEREN 1991.

<sup>11</sup> RIC I<sup>2</sup> Augustus 103–106. For the relationship between the depicted temple and the Temple of Mars Ultor, see ELKINS 2015, 61–63.

<sup>12</sup> RIC I<sup>2</sup> Augustus 198–199. See POLLINI 1985; ROWAN 2018, 163.

<sup>13</sup> LUMMEL 1991, 21; TÖPFER 2011, 205.

literary sources are almost uniformly hostile to Antony. The Tiberian historian Velleius Paterculus, for instance, scapegoats Antony for the civil war.<sup>14</sup> Antony's descendants included the emperors Caligula, Claudius, Nero, and many other notable members of the Julio-Claudian dynasty. Nonetheless, his birthday was—unlike the birthdays of other prominent ancestors of the emperors—not celebrated until Claudius took power in 41 CE, almost a century after Antony's death.<sup>15</sup>

### THE EAGLE AND STANDARDS IN 68

In the year 68, sixty-nine years after the imperial mint had last produced coins with the eagle between standards, two eagle and standards types appeared in rapid succession (Figs. 5–6). This section argues that Nero resurrected Antony's iconography to stress his military power and legitimacy in the face of the rebellion of Vindex and Galba, only for those rebels to appropriate that iconography for their message of the Roman people and provinces united in the cause of liberty against Nero.



**Fig. 5.** Denarius of Nero, Rome, 68 (RIC I<sup>2</sup> Nero no. 68). Obverse: head of Nero, IMP NERO CAESAR AVG P P. Reverse: eagle between standards (courtesy of the American Numismatic Society, no. 1944.100.39429).



**Fig. 6.** Anonymous aureus, unknown mint, 68 (RIC I<sup>2</sup> Civil Wars no. 51). Obverse: head of Mars, MARS VLTOR. Reverse: eagle between standards with altar, SIGNA P R (courtesy of Münzkabinett Berlin, no. 18228371).

The date and purpose of Nero's eagle and standards have been debated. Its use of the praenomen *Imperator* gives a *terminus post quem* of 66 CE.<sup>16</sup> Harold Mattingly suggests it responded to Vindex's rebellion.<sup>17</sup> Colin Kraay, however, points out chronological difficulties.<sup>18</sup> The rebels also minted an eagle and standards type, traditionally assigned to Vindex and clearly in dialogue with Nero's eagle and standards.<sup>19</sup> Vindex rebelled on or around the 11<sup>th</sup> of March and died

in April or May,<sup>20</sup> leaving little time for Nero's eagle and standards to be minted and for those eagle and standards to reach Gaul in time to inspire what was—judging by the quantity of surviving specimens—Vindex's most common type.<sup>21</sup> To Kraay, Nero's coin was rather an attempt to inspire military loyalty wavering after the execution in winter 66/67 of P. Sulpicius Scribonius Proculus, his brother Rufus, and Cn. Domitius Corbulo.<sup>22</sup> If brought to bear on the question, however, recent findings vindicate Mattingly's idea of a civil war coin.

The rebel eagle and standards need not have died with Vindex. Peter Hugo Martin's iconographic analysis and die study of the anonymous coins disputes the traditional assignments of groups of coins to different authorities, such as the eagle and standards to Vindex, and suggests that all the anonymous coins were minted under Galba.<sup>23</sup> Kevin Butcher and Matthew Ponting's metrological analysis refines this. They identify two groups of coins, one with Spanish lead isotope signatures and another with lead isotope signatures suggesting either mixed or, more probably, Gallic bullion.<sup>24</sup> The Gallic coins, eagle and standards included, could have been minted under Galba as well as Vindex. Whoever began minting them, the eagle and standards type could have remained in production after Vindex's death until Galba began minting in his own name. The *terminus post quem* for that was around the 16<sup>th</sup> of June, when news of Nero's death reached Galba.<sup>25</sup> It is clear from early coins in Galba's name but without the title Caesar that he began minting in his own name before August when he met a senatorial embassy in Narbo and when Dio says he first called himself Caesar.<sup>26</sup> The *terminus ante quem* for the rebels' eagle and standards is, then, not April or May but June. The extra month or two helps explain the sheer quantity of rebel eagle and standards coins.

Metrology also clarifies the date of Nero's eagle and standards. Nero's currency reform began in 64 and went through four stages. The eagle and standards coin comes from the fourth, which Butcher and Ponting date to 68.<sup>27</sup> If the coins were a response to executions in winter 66/67, why did the mint wait a year after the executions before minting the coins?

<sup>14</sup> VELL. PAT. 2.66. Memory of Antony: FLOWER 2006, 116–120; HUZAR 1978, 237–246.  
<sup>15</sup> SUET. CAES. 11.3.  
<sup>16</sup> SUTHERLAND RIC I<sup>2</sup>, 133.  
<sup>17</sup> MATTINGLY BMCRE I, clxxv; MATTINGLY 1914, 112. Similarly: SUTHERLAND RIC I<sup>2</sup>, 147. To GRANT 1954, 200, these commemorated the centenary of Antony's legionary coins. The anniversary may have pleased moneyers, but one doubts it was foremost in the minds of soldiers. Grant's reading also struggles to explain later examples of the iconography.  
<sup>18</sup> KRAAY 1949, 134–135, followed by MARTIN 1974, 59.  
<sup>19</sup> RIC I<sup>2</sup> Civil Wars nos. 39, 45, 50–51, 57, 63–64, 70A–B, 80.

<sup>20</sup> MURISON 1993, 4–5, 21–26 and SHOTTER 1975, cf. BESSONE 1978; BRUNT 1959, 540–541; HAINSWORTH 1962, 86–87; KRAAY 1949, 139n5 (death in June); LEVICK 1985, 326; MATTINGLY 1954, 33–34; MORGAN 2006, 24; RAOSS 1960, 97–98.  
<sup>21</sup> KRAAY 1949, 130. Similarly: MARTIN 1974, 59.  
<sup>22</sup> Executions: DIO 62[63].17.  
<sup>23</sup> MARTIN 1974, 44–46.  
<sup>24</sup> BUTCHER/PONTING 2014, 302–5, 311–315.  
<sup>25</sup> PLUT. GALBA 6.4–7.3; SUET. GALBA 11.  
<sup>26</sup> Narbo: PLUT. GALBA 11.1. Avoidance of Caesar: DIO 63.29.6, preferable to SUET. GALBA 11, which says Galba adopted the title after Nero's death, but which clashes with Caesar-less coins: RIC I<sup>2</sup> Galba nos. 1–51, 68–71, 77–79, 82, 85–116. See BUTCHER/PONTING 2014, 271; KRAAY 1956, 8–9; MURISON 1993, 41–42. SUTHERLAND RIC I<sup>2</sup>, 216–217, 219 suggests Galba started minting those coins when his troops acclaimed him in April, but minting them alongside the anonymous coins would defeat the point of the latter. DEL CASTILLO 2002 argues Galba titled himself Caesar before Narbo and while still in Spain.  
<sup>27</sup> BUTCHER/PONTING 2014, 211–220, building on MACDOWALL 1979, 32–35.

In 68, Nero needed money to counter the rebellion. Exacerbating the army's ever-present need for pay were Nero's preparations for war, including a levy in Rome and the promotion of marines from the Misenum fleet to legionaries, which entailed them to a legionary's higher pay. Hand-in-hand with preparations for war came special taxes to pay for those preparations.<sup>28</sup> Money raised through extraordinary means to pay new soldiers is the ideal candidate for the military iconography of the eagle and standards.

Understanding what message iconography conveyed requires considering who chose it. Though scholars once considered the emperor the obvious agent behind coin designs, differing schools of thought suggest other actors designed coins and the emperor was among their audiences, explaining their close similarity with poetry, panegyric, and honorary monuments dedicated to the emperor.<sup>29</sup> The emperor, though, was not the sole audience of mass-produced coins. Literary sources are unanimous in their belief that the emperor picked coin types.<sup>30</sup> This does not prove that the emperor picked coin types. As Andrew Burnett observes, "under any regime any action, however trivial, is often attributed to the leader, whether or not he was closely involved."<sup>31</sup> Nonetheless, the sources evidence a contemporary belief that the emperor picked coin types. Whether or not they were actually chosen by the emperor, coins communicated a message viewers thought was his, so whoever picked the types probably did so with one eye toward the emperor and another toward what message others would think was coming from him.

Most obviously to any Roman aware of the legionary coins from Antony that made up such a high percentage of their silver coins, Nero's eagle and standards connected him to Antony. Nero's descent from Antony was a lineage with which Vindex could not compete and which was certainly a match for even the heritage Galba was so proud of.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, Nero may have been the Julio-Claudian most sympathetic toward Antony. Edward Champlin compares their philhellenism, populism, and extravagance, commonalities that birthed a rash of stories our sources tell of both men, such as their penchant for going among the people in a disguise at night.<sup>33</sup>

The soldier looking at Nero's eagle and standards coin also saw the emperor paired with the iconic symbols of the Roman legion. The pairing framed Nero as the army's rightful emperor, his opponents as mere pretenders. Rendering the rebels vulnerable to that delegitimizing

narrative was that Vindex's whole force and Galba's new *legio VII Galbiana* and auxiliaries were illegal levies.<sup>34</sup> The reverse of Nero's eagle and standards type had no legend. In that, it resembled Octavian's 42 BCE eagle and standards type, which needed no legend to clarify to whom the represented army was loyal because the obverse showed Octavian's name and portrait (Fig. 7). That the primary allusion of Nero's coin was, however, Antony and not Octavian/Augustus is clear not only from how much more common Antony's legionary coins were but also from how Nero's coin lacks the trophy, temple, or horseman that Octavian/Augustus added to the iconography.



**Fig. 7.** Denarius of Octavian, unknown mint, 42 BCE (RRC no. 497/3). Obverse: helmeted head of Mars with spear, CAESAR III VIR R P C. Reverse: eagle with trophy between standards, S C (courtesy of the American Numismatic Society, no. 1944.100.4538).

The anonymous rebel eagle and standards differed from Nero's in several ways, starting with the open hand (*manus*) atop the standards (Fig. 6).<sup>35</sup> Sources often associate right hands with loyalty (*fides*). According to Pliny the Elder, for instance, "there is a certain sanctity in other body parts, such as in right hands: we kiss their backs, we extend them for a pledge (*in fide*)."<sup>36</sup> In a military context, the right hand referred to the soldier's loyalty to the emperor and recalled the soldier's swearing of the loyalty oath (*sacramentum*).<sup>37</sup> The rebels' hand can be seen as a part of the first stirrings on coins of the discourse of military loyalty that, after being absent from Julio-Claudian coins, proliferated with the iconography of clasped hands on the coins of Vitellius and the Flavian emperors who followed the civil war's end.<sup>38</sup> The hand also reaffirms that the thought behind the rebel eagle and standards type went beyond copying Antony, for, while some late republican coins used clasped hands to convey *fides*, the standards on Antony's (and Nero's) coins were topped with spearpoints rather than hands.<sup>39</sup> Hands on standards had, however, appeared during the reigns of Tiberius and

<sup>28</sup> Levy and taxes: SUET. *NERO* 44. Marine legion: DIO 63.1.1–2; PLUT. *GALBA* 15.3; SUET. *GALBA* 12.2; TAC. *HIST.* 1.6. See MORGAN 2006, 28.

<sup>29</sup> Chosen by the emperor: BECKMANN 2012, 415–418; EHRHARDT 1984, 45; GRANT 1952; HEKSTER 2003; MATTINGLY 1948; PRICE 1979; SUTHERLAND 1986. Chosen for the emperor: CHEUNG 1998; CLAES 2014; CRAWFORD 1983, 59; ELKINS 2017, 4–12; ELKINS 2018/2019; LEVICK 1982 and LEVICK 1999; NOREÑA 2011, 191; WALLACE-HADRILL 1986; WOLTERS 1999, 290–308.

<sup>30</sup> SUET. *AUG.* 94.12, *NERO* 25.12, and, for further examples, ANDO 2000, 215–216.

<sup>31</sup> BURNETT 1987, 70.

<sup>32</sup> Galba's familial pride: SUET. *GALBA* 2–3.

<sup>33</sup> CHAMPLIN 2003, 171–176 on PLUT. *ANT.* 29.4; SUET. *NERO* 26; TAC. *ANN.* 13.25. For other ways Nero may have modelled himself on Antony, see CIZEK 1992, 116–126.

<sup>34</sup> PLUT. *GALBA* 4.3; SUET. *GALBA* 10.2; MORGAN 2006, 20–22.

<sup>35</sup> KRAAY 1949, 135–136 thinks the hand identified these as the standards of *legio VI Victrix*, but hands atop standards were common: TÖPFER 2011, 68–69, cf. MARTIN 1974, 59.

<sup>36</sup> PLIN. *NH* 11.251: *inest et aliis partibus quaedam religio, sicut in dextera: oculis aversa adpetitur, in fide porrigitur*, cf. CAES. *BG* 7.50; CIC. *DEIOT.* 8, *RED. SEN.* 24; LIV. 1.1.8, 1.58.7, 23.9.3, 29.4.3; OV. *HER.* 2.30–32, *MET.* 6.506; SALL. *IUG.* 10.3; SERV. *AD AEN.* 3.607; TAC. *HIST.* 1.54, 2.8; TER. *AN.* 289; VAL. *MAX.* 6.6.pr. See GONZENBACH 1951, 7–8; IHM 1909, 2282–2283; STOCKS 2019, 23–32.

<sup>37</sup> GONZENBACH 1951 and PETRIKOVITS 1983, cf. DOMASZEWSKI 1885, 53; HEBBLEWHITE 2017, 165–166; KRAAY 1949, 135; MATTHEW 2020, 136; TAYLOR 2022, 75; WEBSTER 1998, 137. TÖPFER 2011, 69–70 dislikes equating the hands on standards with *fides*, as it implies units without a hand on their standards did not proclaim *fides* and so insulted the emperor. That kind of reading would mean that, if spearpoints on standards symbolized strength, those without spearpoints symbolized weakness.

<sup>38</sup> Later *fides* coins: GONZENBACH 1951, 8–12; STOCKS 2019, 22–23.

<sup>39</sup> RRC nos. 450/2, 451/1, 494/10–12; STOCKS 2019, 33–34.

Caligula on provincial coins from Caesaraugusta in Spain, which could have given the rebels the idea.<sup>40</sup>

The rebels also added an altar between the eagle and the right standard. It evoked the worship of the standards, and even suggested it was pious to follow these standards and their cause, not Nero's.<sup>41</sup> It also complements Suetonius' detail that a ship arriving in Spain laden with weapons but devoid of crew was interpreted to mean that "the war was just, pious, and undertaken with divine favor."<sup>42</sup> Above the altar are a series of dots, usually interpreted as smoke from a sacrificial fire, but which Martin argues is rather a wreath hanging from the eagle's beak.<sup>43</sup>

The largest deviation from Nero's coin, though, is the legend: SIGNA P(OPVLI) R(OMANI) ("the standards of the Roman people"). In other words, the rebel soldiers accepting these coins were, unlike Nero's, said to be the Roman people's army.<sup>44</sup> This republicanizing move was standard for the rebels; they changed, for instance, Nero's VICTORIA AVGVSTI ("victory of Augustus") to VICTORIA P(OPVLI) R(OMANI) ("victory of the Roman People), while Galba called himself not emperor but "Legate of the Senate and People of Rome."<sup>45</sup>

Further cementing the eagle and standards' place in the centre of the rebels' messaging are its links to numerous obverses: an anepigraphic Mars bust; a bust labelled GENIVS P(OPVLI) R(OMANI) (Spirit of the Roman People); a helmeted MARS VLTOR ("Mars the Avenger") (Fig. 6); clasped hands and the legend PAX ET LIBERTAS ("peace and liberty"); a helmeted Roma reading ROMA RESTITVTA ("Rome restored"); a woman with spear, shield, and the legend SALVS ET LIBERTAS ("salvation and liberty"); a victory on a globe with the legend SALVS GENERIS HVMANI ("salvation of the human race"); and VOLKANVS VLTOR ("Vulcan the Avenger").<sup>46</sup> The eagle and standards motif was connected, then, to all the major themes of the rebellion, including multiple shades of liberty.<sup>47</sup> These connections frame the standards, and through the standards the rebels' army, as instruments: the eagle and standards coins identify the rebels' goals on the obverse and celebrate the soldiers by whom those goals can be obtained on the reverse.

<sup>40</sup> RPC I nos. 345, 368–369.

<sup>41</sup> KRAAY 1949, 136; MATTINGLY *BMCRE* I, cxcvi; MARTIN 1974, 59. Revising his earlier opinion, MATTINGLY 1954, 37–38 suggests the altar referred to Lugdunum and that Verginius Rufus minted the type. Assigning Verginius the most common anonymous reverse would require rewriting our understanding of the rebels' coinage in a manner irreconcilable with the coins' connections to Galba's self-representation.

<sup>42</sup> Suet. *GALB.* 10.4: *esset iustum piumpue et faventibus diis bellum suscipi*, cf. DIO 63[64].1.2.

<sup>43</sup> Smoke: MATTINGLY *BMCRE* I, cxcvi. Wreath: MARTIN 1974, 59–60, whose comparison with the Sword of Tiberius (British Museum 1866.0806.1) is suggestive. In photographs, however, the specimens he cites as showing recognizable wreaths (Münzkabinett Berlin no. 18228324; HIRSCH 1909, no. 1109) are indistinct. NICOLAS 1979, 1304 reads the dots as incense or grain sprinkled on the fire, but this is unsatisfying without a depicted sprinkler.

<sup>44</sup> KRAAY 1949, 135; MARTIN 1974, 59.

<sup>45</sup> *RIC* I<sup>2</sup> Nero nos. 115–120, 196–204, 346, 377–379, 409–413, 447–450, 452, 523–525, 600–604, Civil Wars nos. 12, 15. Title: PLUT. *GALBA* 5.2; Suet. *GALBA* 10.1; DIO 63.23, 63.27.1; FLAIG 2019, 277.

<sup>46</sup> *RIC* I<sup>2</sup> Civil Wars nos. 39, 45, 50–51, 57, 63–64, 70A–B, 80.

<sup>47</sup> On the rebels' *libertas*: GALLIA 2012, 12–46, cf. BELLONI 1974, 1056–1057; CAVAGNA 2014; KRAAY 1949; MARTIN 1974, 47–63.

## CLODIUS MACER'S LEGIONARY COINS

Even before 69 itself, the infamous Year of the Four Emperors, began, Galba's bid for imperial power was contested by L. Clodius Macer.<sup>48</sup> An unknown proconsul governed Africa, but it was Macer as the *legatus Augusti pro praetore exercitus Africae* who commanded the province's armed forces, principally *legio III Augusta*. His rebellion only appears on the margin of our literary sources, since Suetonius and Plutarch were writing biographies of Galba rather than broader histories of 68, and Tacitus began his *Histories* in 69. Dio's account is so fragmentary that it omits Macer entirely. As a result of these poor sources, scholars have seen Macer as an imperial claimant,<sup>49</sup> an African separatist,<sup>50</sup> a would-be restorer of the republic,<sup>51</sup> or even a Neronian loyalist.<sup>52</sup> Macer's coins are the only remnant of his rebellion unfiltered by hostile and often disinterested sources. The coins depict Macer as an imperial claimant, a third pole between Galba and Nero, but not one equally between them. On the contrary, Macer's coins responded to and adapted the iconography of Galba's coins to depict Macer as an alternative replacement for Nero.

Macer's coins gave his legions pride of place in the messaging on his coins. His were the first imperial coins since Antony to not only use the eagle and standards iconography but also name particular legions. Judging by the number of surviving specimens, legionary coins comprised half of his overall output and far outnumbered any other type. *Legio III Augusta*, which predated Macer's rebellion and so was around from its beginning, received more than twice as many coins as his newly levied *legio I Macriana*.<sup>53</sup> Like Galba's rebellious eagle and standards, Macer's legionary coins were closely tied to the main ideas of Macer's other coins.



**Fig. 8.** Denarius of Clodius Macer, Carthage, 68 (*RIC* I<sup>2</sup> Clodius Macer no. 9). Obverse: lion's head, L CLODI MACRI S C. Reverse: eagle between standards, LIB LEG III (courtesy of Münzkabinett Berlin, no. 18227150).

<sup>48</sup> Timing: PLUT. *GALBA* 6; TAC. *HIST.* 1.70, 73; MORGAN 2000, 468; MURISON 1993, 14–15.

<sup>49</sup> BESSONE 1979, 52–53 (or supporting Nymphidius Sabinus); COSME 2012, 39; FLAIG 2019, 283; GREENHALGH 1975, 22–23; LEO 1990, 64–65; PARKER 1971, 106; NICOLAS 1979, 237; RAOSS 1960, 72–73.

<sup>50</sup> BENABOU 1976, 97; BURIAN 1960, 173; SCHILLER 1872, 468.

<sup>51</sup> MOMMSEN 1878, 96; MOWAT 1902, 189 (as would-be triumvir); PROSKEY/MABBOTT 1943, 31; SIRAGO 1978, 302–303

<sup>52</sup> MORGAN 2000.

<sup>53</sup> *RIC* I<sup>2</sup> Clodius Macer nos. 1–21. HEWITT 1983, 74 calculates the ratio as 5/2 in III Augusta's favor, which he suggests reflects the legions' disparate strengths. Though followed by EATON 2020, 20 and VERMEEREN 1991, 73, this is problematic. While the new *legio I Macriana* was probably smaller, HEWITT 1983, 66 says earlier issues were weighted toward III Augusta, later more balanced. The unequal number of coins might then merely reflect III Augusta's earlier foundation rather than its strength.



**Fig. 9.** Denarius of Clodius Macer, Carthage, 68 (RIC I<sup>2</sup> Clodius Macer no. 6). Obverse: head of Africa wearing elephant-skin headdress, L CLODI MACRI LIBERATRIX S C. Reverse: eagle between standards, MACRIANA LIB LEG I (courtesy of Münzkabinett Wien, no. RÖ 43774).

Some of Macer’s legionary coins had a lion (Fig. 8) or a bust of Africa, identifiable by her elephant skin headdress, on their obverse (Fig. 9). These obverses connected the legions to their province, a message particularly effective for the locally recruited *legio I Macriana*. Along with Galba’s contemporary lionization of Spain and Gaul on his anonymous coins, Macer’s were the first Roman imperial coins to depict the provinces as participants in Roman power and presaged Hadrian’s future glorification of the provinces far more than they did Vespasian’s iconography of captured Judaea in 71.<sup>54</sup> That Macer’s coins were a glorification of Roman Africa, not a call for African separatism, is clear from his coins showing Roma.<sup>55</sup>

Similarly attempting to rally local pride was another type of Macer’s that showed on its obverse a bust of Carthage, the capital of the province Africa (Fig. 10).<sup>56</sup> The reverse reads SICILIA (“Sicily”) and shows an ear of grain and the head of Medusa on a triskelis, a symbol of that island. Though Macer did not control Sicily, scholars suggest he planned to gain control of it to further his plan to starve Rome.<sup>57</sup>



**Fig. 10.** Denarius of Clodius Macer, Carthage, 68 (RIC I<sup>2</sup> Clodius Macer no. 28). Obverse: turreted and draped head of Carthage with cornucopia, L CLODI MACRI CARTHAGO S C. Reverse: Medusa on triskelis with grain, SICILIA (courtesy of Münzkabinett Berlin, no. 18227152).

With their consistent description of Macer’s legions as liberators and the pairing of legionary reverses with obverses showing Libertas, Macer’s legionary coins also showcased his republican rhetoric. His coins even styled Africa herself *Liberatrix*.<sup>58</sup> Indeed, Macer cloaked himself in

the same republican discourse as Galba. With one exception, his coins, like Galba’s, omit his portrait. Whereas Galba called himself “Legate of the Senate and People of Rome,” Macer styled himself *propraetor* of Africa. His avoidance of “legate,” despite it having been his actual office, likely came from a desire to not repeat Galba while avoiding either taking the title Augustus or appearing as the legate of another Augustus. That Macer chose *propraetor* rather than the more prestigious *proconsul* must mean he was not yet consular and did not wish to sully his allusions to republican magistracies by usurping one.<sup>59</sup>

In some ways, Macer’s coins were even more republican than Galba’s. His legends ostentatiously deferred to the senate by including S(ENATVS) C(ONSVLTO) (“by decree of the senate”), though his coins were silver and S C was normally for bronzes. Save one type, they also put his name not in the nominative normal for imperial titulature but in the republic’s customary genitive.<sup>60</sup> By contrast, Galba’s coins only occasionally used S C and the genitive.<sup>61</sup>

Liberty, if not closely tied to the emperor, was revolutionary. In 68, it was the language of the revolution raging in Spain and Gaul. What Macer’s republicanism advocated was replacing a tyrant with a better emperor. Scholars who read his coins as republican, neutral, or even loyal to Nero miss their context.<sup>62</sup> While these coins resembled republican coins, no such coins had been made in a century. Unlike Galba’s, Macer’s coins included his name, and one obverse type also included his portrait.<sup>63</sup> These were imperial prerogatives, as, indeed, was the paying, levying, and naming after oneself of legions. By this point in the empire, senators had been accused of treason for bribing soldiers or even the comparatively minor offence of offering them better seats at games.<sup>64</sup>

Macer’s legionary coins entered into an established conversation. The most common explanation is that they

<sup>59</sup> Galba: PLUT. *GALBA* 5.2; Suet. *GALBA* 10.1; DIO 63.23, 63.27.1; FLAIG 2019, 277. Macer: RIC I<sup>2</sup> Clodius Macer nos. 33–42; MATTINGLY *BMCRE* I, clxxxvii; MOWAT 1902, 185–186.

<sup>60</sup> HEWITT 1983, 65, cf. BELLONI 1974, 1055; BURIAN 1960, 169; MATTINGLY *BMCRE* I, clxxxvii–clxxxviii; LE BOHEC 1989, 82, 351; LEO 1990, 65; MORGAN 2000, 479; MOWAT 1902, 184; NICOLAS 1979, 483. Pace GARA 1970, 69–71, the S C on Macer’s coins need not mean the senate actually sanctioned him.

<sup>61</sup> RIC I<sup>2</sup> Civil Wars nos. 135–6, Galba nos. 515–517, 519–521. Galba’s coins with S C and his name in the genitive were once assigned on stylistic grounds to the Carthage mint before Macer gained control of it: MATTINGLY *BMCRE* I, cxcciii; MATTINGLY 1914, 115–116; NICOLAS 1979, 483; RAOSS 1960, 73; MATTINGLY/SYDENHAM *RIC* I, 179; SUTHERLAND *RIC* I<sup>2</sup>, 202; SANCERY 1983, 59–60. The argument fails because of the anonymous coins’ variation in style within the proposed groups and the iconographic and stylistic connections between groups: MARTIN 1974, 46, cf. HEWITT 1983, 64n2; FLAIG 2019, 281. Metallurgical analysis of one of these coins (BUTCHER/PONTING: 2014, 69–70) shows it was made with the same bullion as Spanish coins but 2.5% less silver. Considering the shared bullion, a single coin’s comparative lack of fineness seems to me insufficient to prove a distinct group.

<sup>62</sup> Pace MORGAN 2000, 480: “Macer’s coins [...] are orthodox, almost colorless, by the standards of the time,” cf. GARA 1970, 76n36. MORGAN 2000, 477–478 defends the legitimacy of Macer’s levy and coins by comparing him to Galba—another usurper! Galba’s dismissal of Macer’s legion further suggests Macer acted on his own illegitimate initiative, not Nero’s. Nero’s marine legion was not disbanded (DIO 55.24.2; TAC. *HIST.* 1.31, 36), a contrast BRUNT 1959, 540n3 notes.

<sup>63</sup> RIC I<sup>2</sup> Clodius Macer nos. 32–42.

<sup>64</sup> DIO 58.18.3–4; TAC. *ANN.* 2.55, 2.81, 6.3.

<sup>54</sup> RIC I<sup>2</sup> Civil Wars nos. 15, 23, Clodius Macer nos. 30–31, RIC II, 1<sup>2</sup> Vespasian nos. 51, 81, 134, 159–169, 233–236, 271, 303–308, 1134, 1357, RIC II, 3<sup>2</sup> Hadrian nos. 1475–1539, 1552–1586, 1592–1607, 1608–1694, 1715–1874, 1881–1898, 2871, 2890, 3132–3135, 3151, 3168, 3173–3174. See ANDO 2000, 313–320; SONCINI 1971, 68–69; VOJVODA/TAPAVIČKI-ILIĆ 2010.

<sup>55</sup> Roma: RIC I<sup>2</sup> Clodius Macer nos. 30–31.

<sup>56</sup> RIC I<sup>2</sup> Clodius Macer nos. 22–29; BESSONE 1979, 53–54; HEWITT 1983, 66–67; MATTINGLY 1914, 119–120; MORGAN 2000, 483; NICOLAS 1979, 483.

<sup>57</sup> BESSONE 1979, 53–54; BRADLEY 1972, 457; FLAIG 2019, 283; HAINSWORTH 1962, 93; LE BOHEC 1989, 82; LEO 1990, 65; MORGAN 2000, 481; MOWAT 1902, 186–188; RAOSS 1960, 73–74.

<sup>58</sup> RIC I<sup>2</sup> Clodius Macer nos. 1–6.

allude to Antony.<sup>65</sup> That some of Macer's other coins also reprised Antony's galley confirms that his coins did allude to Antony (Fig. 11),<sup>66</sup> but Antony was the beginning rather than the end of Macer's message. Even the allusion to Antony itself cannot be divorced from the context of that same allusion on the coins of Nero and the rebels. More broadly, the republicanism and provincial connections on Macer's legionary coins refashioned the message of the rebel eagle and standards, as the rebel eagle and standards had refashioned Nero's: the Roman people would be liberated from Nero not by Galba but by Macer's legions fighting not from Spain or Gaul but from Africa.



**Fig. 11.** Denarius of Clodius Macer, Carthage, 68 (RIC I<sup>2</sup> Clodius Macer no. 34). Obverse: head of Macer, L CLODIVS MACER S C. Reverse: galley, PROPRAE AFRICAE (courtesy of Münzkabinett Wien, no. RÖ 43773).

Macer's coins' reaction to messages on Galba's coins and the occasional S C and genitive on Galba's raise the possibility that influence was not unidirectional, but, in the absence of further evidence, it is safer to think Galba's coins responded to Nero's and Macer's to Galba's. Galba, whose rebellion predated Macer's, had more pressing problems than Macer, and Galba's greater success means Macer and his mint were likelier to be exposed to Galba and Vindex's messaging than the reverse. Vindex's appeals to other governors mirrored the language of the rebels' coins and doubtless reached Africa, while Egypt soon espoused the Galban cause.<sup>67</sup> Still, that the only coins of Macer's not found in Africa are fourteen coins from Spain<sup>68</sup> suggests the possibility that someone in Galba's mint may have been aware of Macer's coins.

**THE EAGLE AND STANDARDS IN THE YEAR OF THE FOUR EMPERORS**

Galba's imperial coins included his titulature and portrait, but their reverses continued many of the themes found on the coins of the rebellion, including the eagle and standards. His mint now also broadened the type, applying the eagle and standards iconography to messages to the entire armed forces and the *speculatores* rather than just the legions. When Galba's reign ended prematurely, those iconographic innovations were appropriated by the mints of his opponents and successors.

<sup>65</sup> Antony: see note 2 above. HEWITT 1983, 68 compares Macer's legionary coins to Nero's eagle and standards, GRANT 1954, 200 and TÖPFER 2011, 206 to Nero's and Galba's; none of them consider what Macer's coins expressed with such an allusion.  
<sup>66</sup> Galley: RIC I<sup>2</sup> Clodius Macer nos. 32–42.  
<sup>67</sup> Vindex: PLUT. GALBA 4.2; SUET. GALBA 9.2. Egypt: OGIS 669.  
<sup>68</sup> HEWITT 1983, 66.



**Fig. 12.** As of Galba, Rome, 68–69 (RIC I<sup>2</sup> Galba no. 302). Obverse: head of Galba, SER GALBA IMP CAES AVG TR P. Reverse: eagle between standards, S C (courtesy of the American Numismatic Society, no. 1995.11.1800).

Galba's mint produced an eagle and standards type reminiscent of Nero's eagle and standards in its lack of a hand or altar (Fig. 12).<sup>69</sup> That Galba's eagle and standards resemble less the rebels' anonymous eagle and standards than Nero's or Antony's probably comes from the engravers at the Rome mint being more familiar with the design they had recently made for Nero. Unlike previous eagle and standards coins, these were *asses*, though this need not mean they were no longer for soldiers.<sup>70</sup> Since the obverse portrait and titulature identified Galba as the standards' commander, they, like Nero's and Octavian's before him, omitted a descriptive legend.



**Fig. 13.** As of Galba, Rome, 68–69 (RIC I<sup>2</sup> Galba no. 304). Obverse: head of Galba, SER GALBA IMP CAES AVG TR P. Reverse: eagle between standards on prows, S C (courtesy of the American Numismatic Society, no. 1944.100.39879).

Galba's mint also reprised the type that Antony had used for his *speculatores* with three standards on prows (Fig. 13).<sup>71</sup> Kai Töpfer shows that the inclusion of the prows turns the design from legionary standards to a composite standard representing the whole army.<sup>72</sup> This is preferable to L. Rossi's explanation. According to Rossi, standards on coins celebrated the foundation of a new legion, with Galba's eagle and standards referring to his recruitment of *Legio VII Galbiana* in Spain and his three standards coin referring to the legion of marines.<sup>73</sup> While the formation of a legion could certainly be an occasion for military iconography, the theory struggles to explain standards on coins when legions were not being formed or the long duration of types like Galba's three standards type years and even emperors after a legion's formation. It would also be surprising for

<sup>69</sup> RIC I<sup>2</sup> Galba nos. 297–302. Similar to Nero's: MATTINGLY *BMCRE* I, ccvii; ROSSI 1965, 52.  
<sup>70</sup> Bronze for soldiers: KEMMERS 2006, 193–194 and KEMMERS 2014, 236.  
<sup>71</sup> RIC I<sup>2</sup> Galba nos. 303–304, 507–509. MATTINGLY *BMCRE* I, ccxvii and MATTINGLY/SYDENHAM *RIC* I, 197 consider some of these posthumous Galba coins minted by Vespasian, an idea now rightly dismissed: KRAAY 1956, 53n69; SUTHERLAND *RIC* I<sup>2</sup>, 222–223.  
<sup>72</sup> TÖPFER 2011, 207.  
<sup>73</sup> ROSSI 1965, 52–55, cf. O'REILLY 1976 but doubted by RAOSS 1958 110–111. SUTHERLAND 1987, 116–118 alternatively suggests that the prows referred to an otherwise unattested naval victory of Galba over Macer.

Galba to give such emphasis to the legion of marines that Nero had founded and that Galba had first massacred and then distrusted.<sup>74</sup> A call to the Roman army at large, on the other hand, was of obvious relevance to a regime trying to discourage further civil war. If one unit was singled out, it was not the legion of marines but, in the choice of which image of Antony's to reprise, the *speculatores*.<sup>75</sup> Already guards at imperial banquets, *speculatores* likely received an expanded role as bodyguards when Galba dismissed Nero's German bodyguards.<sup>76</sup>

Galba's reign did not last long. Otho, Galba's killer, unsurprisingly refrained from echoing Galba's self-representation, but Otho's opponents Vitellius and Vespasian took the opportunity to frame themselves as Galba's avengers, even if Vitellius had himself rebelled while Galba was still emperor.<sup>77</sup> The moneymen of Vitellius and Vespasian reused the type and even dies of Galba's three standards coins, thus proclaiming both their military support and that they had inherited that support from Galba.<sup>78</sup> Vespasian's coins were also innovative in how they rendered more obvious the loyalty part of the message, which had always been implicit in the standards and had already been emphasized by the anonymous coins' hand, by superimposing clasped hands for *fides* on the eagle and standards (Fig. 14). Variants read *CONCORDIA EXERCITVVM* ("concord of the armies").<sup>79</sup>



**Fig. 14.** *Denarius* of Vespasian, unknown mint, 69–71 (*RIC* II, 1<sup>2</sup> Vespasian no. 1389). Obverse: head of Vespasian, *IMP CAESAR VESPASIANVS AVG*. Reverse: clasped hands over an eagle between standards (courtesy of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, no. ark:/12148/btv1b104463419)

### VITELLIUS' LEGIONARY COINS

There are also two anonymous legionary types from 69. Though problematic, they suggest Vitellius also issued a small series of legionary coins.

<sup>74</sup> See note 27.

<sup>75</sup> GRANT 1954, 318, doubted by ROSSI 1965, 54 because the eagle had to refer to a legion. TÖPFER's 2011 idea of a composite standard obviates that objection.

<sup>76</sup> Germans dismissed: SUET. *GALBA* 12.2. *Speculatores* bodyguards: SUET. *CLAUD.* 35, *GALBA* 18, *OTHO* 5; TAC. *HIST.* 1.24, 27, 2.11; FRANK 1965, 26–27; FUHRMANN 2012, 128; SPEIDEL 1994, 43. Skepticism: CHILVER 1979, 87; LE BOHEC 2020.

<sup>77</sup> PLUT. *OTHO* 6.1; SUET. *GALBA* 23; *VIT.* 10.1; TAC. *HIST.* 1.44, 2.55, 2.88, 3.7, 3.85, 4.40.

<sup>78</sup> *RIC* I<sup>2</sup> Vitellius no. 153; *RIC* II, I<sup>2</sup> Vespasian nos. 136, 320; KRAAY 1956, 53. ROSSI 1965, 55 explains the prows as Vespasian accepting *legiones I* and *II Adiutrices* into his army from Galba's, but did he not take over every legion?

<sup>79</sup> *RIC* II, I<sup>2</sup> Vespasian no. 1389, cf. nos. 70–72, 156, 229, 1080–1081, 1351, 1365, 1381–1382, 1389. See ELKINS 2017, 42; MATTINGLY *BMCRE* II, lvi, lx, lviii; TÖPFER 2011, 209.



**Fig. 15.** Anonymous *denarius*, unknown mint, 68–69 (*RIC* I<sup>2</sup> Civil Wars no. 101). Obverse: head of Augustus. Reverse: running lion, *LEG XVI* (courtesy of Münzkabine Berlin, no. 18228616).

The first type has caused confusion for over a century (Fig. 15). The reverse's running lion and *LEG(IO) XVI* legend initially saw it attributed to Antony by comparison with his legionary coins and lion type, but already in the nineteenth century scholars realized that the head was Augustus, not Antony.<sup>80</sup> Mattingly was the first to suggest the type was one of the rebel types minted with Augustus' portrait in 68–69, which fits its low weight: our three specimens are 2.19, 2.22, 3.30, and 3.37g.<sup>81</sup> Most scholars accept Mattingly's identification.<sup>82</sup> Christopher Ehrhardt, however, considers the whole Augustus group ancient forgeries, since specimens are scant and often plated.<sup>83</sup>

The history of *legio XVI* causes further difficulties. Stationed in Gaul, it fought for Verginius Rufus against Vindex. The legion then supported Vitellius' rebellion against Galba before losing to Julius Civilis' Batavian Revolt in 69–70, after which Vespasian disbanded the disgraced unit.<sup>84</sup> This history leaves no occasion on which Galba could have paid *legio XVI* with anonymous coins.

If genuine, then the coin must be Vitellius', probably minted for the seventy-five-*denarii* donative he paid legionaries marching to Rome.<sup>85</sup> This reading supports the standard attribution to Vitellius of some of the anonymous and sometimes plated coins (the so-called "military" series), an attribution challenged by Peter-Hugo Martin but recently defended by Dorian Bocciarelli, who demonstrates die links between some anonymous coins and coins struck in Vitellius' name.<sup>86</sup> That the legionary coin is only known from four specimens, one of which is plated, hardly inspires confidence. On the other hand, the two Berlin specimens appear to share neither an obverse nor a reverse die, as evidenced

<sup>80</sup> *RIC* I<sup>2</sup> Civil Wars no. 101, cf. *RRC* no. 489/5–6 (Antony's lion). Antony: ECKHEL 1796, 51. Augustus: FRIEDLAENDER 1875, cf. COHEN 1880, 89 no. 187; GRUEBER *BMCR* II, 417n1; MATTINGLY/SYDENHAM *RIC* I, 92; WILLERS 1902, 83.

<sup>81</sup> MATTINGLY *BMCRE* I, 56n. In addition to the two Münzkabine Berlin (nos. 18228616, 18228816) and one Vatican specimens noted by SUTHERLAND *RIC* I<sup>2</sup>, 211n101, one specimen is in private hands: Leu Auction 9, 24 October 2021, lot 1154.

<sup>82</sup> NICOLAS 1979, 1326–1327; MARTIN 1974, 62; SUTHERLAND *RIC* I<sup>2</sup> Civil Wars no. 101; VERMEEREN 1991, 66n5.

<sup>83</sup> EHRHARDT 2000, citing CRAWFORD 1968 for skepticism about plated coins. Yet CRAWFORD 1968, 59n1 makes an exception for "certain irregular coinages, produced in periods of civil war."

<sup>84</sup> TAC. *HIST.* 1.55, 2.100, 3.22, 4.26, 62; MORGAN 2006, 299. NICOLAS 1979, 1327 suggests the legion minted the coin itself to demonstrate its loyalty after its defeat in the Batavian Revolt.

<sup>85</sup> Donative: TAC. *HIST.* 1.66; FLAIG 2019, 450.

<sup>86</sup> BOCCIARELLI 2014, cf. MATTINGLY *BMCRE* I, cxviii, 129–131; KRAAY 1952; MATTINGLY/SYDENHAM *RIC* I, 180; SUTHERLAND *RIC* I<sup>2</sup>, 200–201. MARTIN 1974, 44–46, 62 objects but without noting the unit's problematic history. BUTCHER/PONTING 2014, 303, 305, 309 attribute the coin to Vitellius but on stylistic grounds, since metallurgy cannot distinguish between Galban or Vitellian coins made with Gallic bullion.

by the additional lines in Augustus' hair and slimmer lion in Fig. 16. The small sample size precludes certainty, and some dies did break almost immediately. Still, that most dies produced thousands of coins means that the use of at least two obverse and reverse dies suggests the sixteenth legion type was produced in some quantity.



**Fig. 16.** Anonymous denarius, unknown mint, 68–69 (RIC I<sup>2</sup> Civil Wars no. 101). Obverse: head of Augustus. Reverse: running lion, LEG XVI (courtesy of Münzkabinett Berlin, no. 18228816).

A unique *denarius* in the Evans Collection offers similar possibilities and difficulties. Its obverse shows a helmeted youth with the legend ADSERTOR LIBERTATIS (“Avenger of Liberty”), its reverse victory and trophy with the legend LEGION XV PRIM. Traditionally, it has been assigned to Batavian rebels celebrating their defeat of *legio XV Primigenia*.<sup>87</sup> Martin argues persuasively, however, that the Batavians did not mint coins, since the coins attributed to them resemble the year’s other anonymous coins and lack any indication of being minted by separatist rebels. Martin’s argument that the coin was therefore minted by Galba is less persuasive because it does not consider the unit’s history.<sup>88</sup> Like *legio XVI*, *legio XV Primigenia* followed Verginius Rufus and Vitellius before losing to Civilis.<sup>89</sup> That history suggests the type was another of Vitellius’.

The problems in the attribution of the two legionary coins from 69 make any conclusions tentative, but they appear to be the remnants of an otherwise lost legionary series. The rarity of the two types suggests that the number of coins minted for each legion was comparatively small, making it less surprising that coins for Vitellius’ other legions are unknown. *Legio XVI*’s lion and perhaps also *XV Primigenia*’s victory and trophy are also significant because they appear to be the earliest instances of legionary emblems on coins.<sup>90</sup>

### CONCLUSION

Legionary coins glorified the depicted soldiers while tying together the political programs of the issuing emperors. Nero’s revival of the eagle and standards, the adaptation of it on Vindex and Galba’s coins, the way that Macer’s coins tweaked their message, and the reprisal of Galba’s eagle and standards by Vitellius and Vespasian all show the awareness of emperors or at least their moneyers

<sup>87</sup> RIC I<sup>2</sup> Civil Wars no. 130. See MATTINGLY *BMCRI*, cci; ROSSI 1965, 55–56; SUTHERLAND *RIC I*<sup>2</sup>, 214; WIEDEMANN 1996, 282n14; ZEHACKER 1986, 347.

<sup>88</sup> MARTIN 1974, 46.

<sup>89</sup> TAC. *HIST.* 1.55, 2.100, 3.22–23, 4.35–36, 60; LE BOHEC 2000; MORGAN 2006, 299.

<sup>90</sup> MARTIN 1974, 62. On emblems: TÖPFER 2011, 20–25, cf. DOMASZEWSKI 1885, 55; PARKER 1971, 261–263; WEBSTER 1998, 134–136.

that by putting standards on coins they were in dialogue both with predecessors like Antony or, more immediately, Galba and with present rivals.

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