

2.1 Roman Republican Coins

The designs and minting of coins under the Roman Republic was the responsibility of the *triumvir aere argento auro flando feriundo* ("Three men for the casting and striking of bronze, silver and gold" often abbreviated to IIIV A A A F F). These three officials were some of the most junior positions within the Republic magistrates and were elected annually. On rare occasions a *quaestor* (a more senior magistrate) also involved himself in the minting of a coin type, often then marked with a "Q" in the reverse design.

Roman republican coinage can be basically divided into four parts:

Romano-Campanian (300-212 BC)

Rome begins to emerge on the western Mediterranean scene. Greek colonies in Italy are gradually absorbed. Period of the (Punic) wars with Carthage.

"Greek" looking silver *didrachms* with ROMANO or ROMA legends, large cast bronzes and some struck token bronze.

\$1200-3000 for a VF didrachm



Roma didrachm, 225-212 BC, ex Triton X lot 512

Middle Republican (211-140 BC)

Rome takes control of the Mediterranean. Macedonia becomes a Roman province. Roman interest in literature, history and philosophy is evident.

"Roma head" *denarii*, mainly with Dioscuri or chariot reverses. Coin types are fairly static; moneyers names appear around 154 BC. Some struck bronze, the *as* and its fractions.

\$100-170 for a VF denarius



"Anonymous" denarius, c156 BC

Later Republic (139-50 BC)

Roman wealth increased, literature flourished but social problems led to civil wars, e.g. the conflict between Marius and Sulla.

Denarii often display images referring to past events or Rome's foundation mythology, and glorifying the aristocratic families of the moneyers. Some bronze.

\$120-250 for a VF denarius



Caesia 1 denarius, 112/111 BC

Imperial Period (49-27 BC)

Corrupt and stagnant structures provided opportunities for ambitious figures and spelled the end of the republic. Pompey, Julius Caesar, Mark Antony and Octavian are important figures of this period.

Denarii with portraits of living Romans appear. Some gold *aureii* and bronze. Legends bearing name and titles appear.

\$600-2000 for a VF denarius



Julius Caesar denarius, 44 BC, ex Triton XVI Lot 903

Republican Denominations



"X" mark denarius, 154 BC



"X" mark denarius, 128 BC

Early Roman coinage was indistinct from Italo-Greek coinage of the time: gold *stateres*, silver *drachms* and *didrachms*. Their early bronze coinage was cast instead of struck, and appears large and "lumpy". When the denarius was introduced in 211 BC it was tariffed at 10 bronze *asses*, hence the X mark seen behind the helmeted head of Roma on the obverse. A silver *sestertius* tariffed at ¼ denarius was also in circulation between 211 and 208 BC. In 141 BC the denarius was marked up to represent 16 *asses*, and XVI (later reduced to the monogram X) now appeared next to the Roma head.

Collecting Roman Republican Coins

So, Roman Republican coins interest you, how do you collect them? Here are a few collection suggestions (the dollar symbols represent approximately the financial outlay for such a collection):

\$\$\$ = expect to spend a massive amount

\$\$ = cheaper, but still significant

\$ = a reasonable outlay

Every Denarius A huge collection of each denarius type issued each year between 211 and 50BC (the imperial period gets trickier as the moneyer system breaks down). \$\$\$

Each Year Smaller than the above because you are only interested in one type for each year between 211 and 50 BC – usually there are at least three to choose from, one for each moneyer each year. \$\$

A Gens Following Babelon's grouping, collect each type for a particular *gens* or family name, eg: Cassia 1 to 8. \$

Mythological Collect only those coins that represent a particular event from Rome's early history, such as the founding of the *Ludi Apollinares* on the denarii of L. Calpurnius Piso, or the killing of Tarpeia on L. Titurius Sabinus' denarii. \$\$

Republican Bronze The large cast bronze coins issued early in Rome's history make an impressive, if bulky, collection. \$\$\$

Famous Moneyers Some of those obscure young magistrates later grew up to be significant figures. L Appuleius Saturninus the demagogue was moneyer in 104 BC. Two of Julius Caesar's assassins were also moneyers: M Brutus in 54 BC and Decimus Brutus in 48 BC. The future triumvir M Aemilius Lepidus was one of the moneyers of 61 BC. \$\$

Architectural Some buildings and monuments are depicted on Republican coin reverses, such as the Columna Minucia on the denarii of C. Minucius Augurinus and the Temple of Capitoline Jupiter on the reverse of M Volteius. \$\$

The Organisation of Republican Coins

The first organisation of Roman Republican coins was by E Babelon in 1885. Because republican coins were not generally dated and only had the names of their obscure moneyers on them, it was impossible in those early days to organise them chronologically. Babelon organised them by what he did know: the moneyer's *gens* or family name and then numbered by every distinct coin type. Thus even today some republican coins are described as Calpurnia 11 or Claudia 1 or Tituria 4. In 1974 M H Crawford published his *Roman Republican Coinage* which made a fair attempt to assign each republican type to a moneyer and a year, based on all the discoveries since Babelon. Even so, whilst most of Crawford's dates are accepted, some are still disputed.

The best catalogue-price guides to Roman Republican coinage are David Sear's *Roman Coins and their Values Volume 1* and H A Seaby's *Roman Silver Coins Volume 1*.

