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978-1-316-60369-7 - Roman Anniversary Issues: An Exploratory Study of the  
Numismatic and Medalllic Commemoration of Anniversary Years 49 B.C.-A.D. 375

Michael Grant

Excerpt

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# ROMAN ANNIVERSARY ISSUES

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE  
NUMISMATIC AND MEDALLIC COMMEMORATION  
OF ANNIVERSARY YEARS  
49 B.C. – A.D. 375

BY

MICHAEL GRANT

*Professor of Humanity, University of Edinburgh*



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TO  
MY MOTHER  
WITH LOVE AND GRATITUDE

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KEY TO PLATES<sup>1</sup>

PLATE I

AUGUSTUS AND TIBERIUS: RARE AND CONJECTURAL  
PIECES *facing page 20*

<i>Number</i>	<i>Collection</i>	<i>Reference in text</i>
1	Paris	p. 20 and n. 3
2	London <sup>2</sup>	p. 25 and n. 5
3 (obv.)	London	p. 35 and n. 7
4 (rev.)	Paris	" " "
5 (obv.)	Berlin	p. 42 and n. 5
6	London	p. 42 and n. 3
7	Paris	p. 42 and n. 4
8	London	p. 42 and n. 8
9	Paris	p. 57 and n. 7
10	Copenhagen	p. 62 and n. 2

PLATE II

TIBERIUS, CALIGULA AND CLAUDIUS: RARE AND CON-  
JECTURAL PIECES *facing page 62*

1	Berlin	p. 62 and n. 3
2	Athens	p. 65 and n. 4
3 (obv.)	Paris	p. 68 and n. 3
4 (rev.)	Berlin	" " "
5	Berlin	p. 68 and n. 4
6	London	p. 47 and n. 9
7 (obv.)	Budapest	p. 70 and n. 1
8 (obv.)	Budapest	" " "
9 (obv.)	London	p. 69 n. 3
10	Berlin	" "
11	Berlin	p. 77 and n. 2

1 As is explained in the Introduction, the coins shown here are not intended as representative illustrations of the anniversary theme, for which the time has not yet come. They are selected rather as pieces of special rarity, most of which do not occur in the principal catalogues or descriptive

works; and they are therefore chosen from the one period in which I have had to consider pieces omitted from those works, namely that of the Julio-Claudians. See also Appendix IV.

2 I.e. British Museum.

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## INTRODUCTION

This study was foreshadowed in my Inaugural Lecture at Edinburgh University in October 1948.<sup>1</sup> Its purpose is to show that a large number of Roman imperial coins and medallions owe their types, wholly or in part, to coincidences in date with important ‘anniversary years’.<sup>2</sup> These coincidences are either deliberately arranged, or are accidental coincidences of which advantage is taken for purposes of propaganda.

The ‘anniversary’ years which are thus signalled are the centenaries, or multiples or subdivisions of centenaries (or occasionally of 110-year *saecula*), of important happenings in the history of the State. These happenings include, *inter alia*, the births and deaths of Augustus and other leading persons; the various events that contributed to the inauguration of the imperial régime (Actium, the ‘restoration of the Republic’, etc.); and the foundation or dedication of temples and altars. Moreover, the sanctity of the mint and of its products (pp. 9 f.) enabled the process to be extended to the commemoration of the centenaries and half-centenaries of actual coinage: the numerous ‘restoration’ issues reveal a high degree of numismatic self-consciousness which was readily expressed by the selection of anniversaries for these repetitions.

The contention that coincidences with anniversary years so greatly influenced the coinage is one which may well provoke certain queries even from those who are, in principle, inclined to accept it. I propose in this Introduction to anticipate a few of these queries, and to endeavour to answer them.

First, is it not strange that these anniversaries should have been so carefully and so long remembered? It is strange in one sense, in that it reveals habits of thought alien from our own. It is not strange in another and less anachronistic sense, for it is entirely in harmony with the picture that modern research has given us of the mentality and customs of the ancient Romans. For example, we have abundant evidence of the meticulous observation, generally according to mathematical or political calculations based on 100- or 110-year

1 *PR.*; cf. also *AC.* (see Abbreviations).

2 For the use of this inexact but convenient phrase, and the distinction between the com-

memoration of ‘anniversary years’ and that of annually recurrent *days*, see p. 1.

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intervals, of successive *saecula* from the supposed date of the foundation of the city (p. 2).<sup>1</sup> It would, however, be most unreasonable to suppose that this must needs be the only such occasion commemorated in this way: the history and legend of Rome contained many highly venerated events besides its foundation, and antiquarian references to them are persistent and emphatic.<sup>2</sup> Again, we know that the *decennia* and *vicennia* of imperial accessions were punctiliously celebrated: it was only to be expected, therefore, that the first and greatest of all 'accessions', that of Augustus—his assumption of *imperium*, Actium, the 'restoration' of the Republic, the *aureum saeculum*—should be granted a recollection overlapping into the reigns of the devoted Augustans which his successors almost invariably professed themselves. Accessions, births and deaths were all long and scrupulously commemorated; the recently edited *Feriale* of Dura<sup>3</sup> has further revealed how extensive this process was, even in the remotest areas and even when the Principate was far advanced.

If I may repeat from the text (p. 171) a quotation from my lecture introducing this subject, "the Romans are seen to be a people with an abnormally developed sense, not only of the past, but of its single ritualistic landmarks. These are the people, we recall, who cherished dates in *Fasti*, who attributed divinity to single momentary happenings, to a voice that spoke once and saved them, or to the Fortune of an individual day; so it is not surprising that they outdo anything in our own experience in their elaborate and almost morbid attention to religious anniversaries. The institutions... were thought of... as linked with the remote past by an unbroken chain of continuity."<sup>4</sup> Altheim sees this peculiar stress on chronological landmarks as a characteristically Roman "emphasis on the temporal element.... The individual moment... was raised to an importance hitherto unknown.... Everything is concentrated on single decisive acts; the special quality of the different moments of history is persistently felt."<sup>5</sup>

1 Precisely centenary were the Secular Games of Claudius (A.D. 47) and Philip (A.D. 248); cf. a commemoration in 348, p. 153. For the divergent methods of calculation on other occasions see below, p. 12.

2 E.g. Toynbee, *An Imperial Institute of Archaeology as revealed by Roman Medallions*, *Archaeological Journal*, 1943, pp. 34 ff.

3 Fink, Hoey and Snyder, *YCS*. 1940. See below, Indices II and IV, ss.vv. 'Dura' and '*Ferialia*' respectively.

4 *PR*. pp. 239 ff.

5 *History of Roman Religion*, pp. 190 f.

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Altheim goes on to show how this attitude applies to temple-foundations. “For all Roman temples the year and day, not only of dedication, but also of vowing, lives on in memory.” Now anniversaries of the various stages of these temple-foundations seem to account for a considerable number of the coins and medallions that I am going to cite (see Indices III and IV, *s.v.* ‘temples’). It may at first appearance seem curious that the authorities retained so careful a memory of these dates. But that they did, in fact, retain this memory happens to be confirmed independently. For, as a result of the attitude to which Altheim refers, there has survived to this day—just as there survived throughout the Roman Principate—a record of the alleged dates at which very many temples were vowed, dedicated and consecrated.<sup>1</sup> This record was handed down from the early *pontifices*, and, at least among the upper classes from which the priestly colleges were drawn, it was clearly well known in historical times. And if it was well known to these people, it requires no stretch of the imagination—especially in thinking of a nation with the Romans’ attitude to past happenings—to suppose that they arranged for the important anniversaries of these dates to be duly celebrated. This being so, it is far from improbable that such anniversaries and celebrations were known of in advance to a circle at least wide enough to include the mint-authorities; so that the latter were able to signalise these occasions, either by issuing special coins and medallions or by adapting the types of those which were in any case due to be issued.

A modern reader, even if and when he has accepted the foregoing remarks, is likely to pause at this point and wonder about the general public. How could the general public be sufficiently well informed about this sort of thing for numismatic commemoration of such occasions to prove worth the government’s while? Here again, I submit that doubts would be anachronistic. Rome was a city which had *acta diurna*<sup>2</sup> and other means of communicating current events to its people; and inhabitants of the capital at least, as well as a number of Roman citizens in colonies and *municipia*,<sup>3</sup> could very easily have such anniversaries—and the ceremonies which are likely

1 Ibid. pp. 249 f.

2 For references see Balsdon, *OCD*. p. 6. Here is one reason why external evidence for this type of commemoration is lacking: one could hardly expect such *acta* to have survived.

3 The *Feriale Cumanum* gives a selection of Imperial anniversary days celebrated at a Roman colony: Snyder, *YCS*. 1940, pp. 305 f., n. 150. Cf. a Theveste inscription, *ibid.* pp. 297 ff.

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often to have accompanied them—brought to their attention by public announcement. Besides, one of the greatest gains in the study of Roman religion during the last decades has been the demonstration that the traditional cults were very far from forgotten during the Principate. There is nothing strange or forced about an assumption that the centenaries of great temples are likely to have been known to a wide enough circle to justify their commemoration on the coinage.<sup>1</sup>

Some readers, especially those familiar only with the literary tradition, might concede this point as regards the earlier part of the Principate, but find it less easy to envisage the same situation in the third and fourth centuries when religious tendencies of so very different a kind had taken root. But for those epochs, too, recent research has provided abundant evidence of the extreme tenacity of the traditional worship. In the third century “what our witnesses, one and all contemporary, reveal, is a vigorous emphasizing of Roman religion”:<sup>2</sup> the *Feriale Duranum*, and intensified numismatic study, have brought this home in impressive and decisive detail. Indeed, as the Chronographer of A.D. 354 (‘Philocalus’) bears witness, “it is clear that down to the fourth century A.D. it was widely held that the prosperity and even the safety of Rome depended on the accurate performance of traditional ceremonies”.<sup>3</sup> For these reasons it is no more surprising that official recollections of the early anniversaries occur in the fourth century, and abound in the third century, than that they are characteristic of the first and second centuries.

I have suggested that this celebration corresponded with, and was accompanied by, a considerable amount of justificatory public appreciation. But I would not, of course, suggest that anything like all the adult inhabitants of the empire, or even all those who understood Latin, possessed so high a degree of awareness. Many did, and many did not. Now it is this latter division of the population which provides the answer to a further question which sceptical or enquiring

1 The *accuracy* of the alleged foundation-dates is, of course, quite another matter. If the dates are wrong, then coinage commemorating their centenaries may be described as ‘pseudo-anniversary’; see below, p. 128 n. 2. But Altheim, loc. cit., is optimistic about the

reliability of these traditions. When they vary, this may sometimes be because one date refers to the foundation and one to the dedication; see pp. 12 f. and n. 7.

2 Altheim, loc. cit. p. 463.

3 Nock, *CAH*, x, p. 465.

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readers are likely to ask: if these coins and medallions owe their types, wholly or partly, to coincidences with anniversary years, why is it that, with the exception of Secular and *vota* coinages, this connection is practically never specified?<sup>1</sup>

This is only part of a wider, and demonstrable, circumstance, namely that any date whatever on a Roman imperial issue (other than that of a Regnal Year) is excessively rare.<sup>2</sup> One reason for this rarity, and for the corresponding absence of references to anniversaries, is that the authorities were intensely alive to the ‘propagandist’ importance of the coinage—which was very great owing to the ancients’ habit of *looking at* their money<sup>3</sup>—and wanted its types to appeal to the widest possible public.<sup>4</sup> If, in (say) making an issue on the half-millenary of the temple of *Salus*, they had specified the occasion, the allusion would have been lost on the thousands who had not heard of the anniversary and were not interested in it. But, by referring to *Salus* in general terms without any special allusion to the half-millenary, the government was aiming to secure the comprehension both of those who knew about the anniversary and those who did not.<sup>5</sup> The former would read into the general type a connection with the current anniversary occasion; and be it noted that since they mostly lived in or near Rome many of them would see the coinage at an early date, while the occasion in question was still topical.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand these coins would not reach many of the outlying subjects of the emperor until a long time afterwards, when

1 A partial analogy is provided by inscriptions celebrating anniversary *days*, for these likewise often (though not so often) omit to specify their occasions, cf. Snyder, *YCS*, 1940, p. 225; cf. below, p. 3 and n. 2.

2 Apart from Secular pieces (including one for a 1001st year, p. 111 n. 7) it appears that the *only* coin of such a character is Hadrian’s ANN. DCCCLXXXIII. NAT. VRB. P. CIR. CON., *BMC. Imp.* III, p. cxxxii, cf. W. Schmidt, *Geburtstag im Altertum*, p. 81 n. 1.

3 This can be safely concluded from the considerations indicated on p. 8. It would be interesting to collect external evidence pointing to the same conclusion (just as it would be to assess public interest in the series of commemorative postage-stamps issued by some governments to-day). Certain passages of ancient literature could be mobilised; but this is peculiarly ill-suited as evidence for

‘mass observation’, cf. Farrington, *Science and Politics in the Ancient World*, pp. 179 ff. However, the internal evidence is here adequate without the need for supplementation: it shows us three hundred years of unremitting changes and elaborations of coin-types made by a government hardly likely to do this just for fun.

4 This part of the Introduction has benefited from suggestions by Dr Toynbee.

5 Sutherland, *NC*, 1945, p. 67, makes a similar distinction: some points, “however much appreciated in the keen and suspicious political atmosphere of Rome, would probably be lost on the average provincial”.

6 But not topical enough for the coinage to be a very appropriate vehicle for the commemoration of annually recurrent *days* (p. 2): anniversary *years* suited this medium better.

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the anniversary had passed and was obsolete; but this did not matter, for in any case a large proportion of such people would not have understood, or been interested by, a reference to it. It is therefore for the benefit of this less educated and less Romanised section of the population that anniversary issues are made to omit any direct allusion to the occasions on which they were struck.

The result was a strong tendency to *generalise* coin-types. Plain PIETAS, for example, with a non-committal head, is preferred to any more explicit description. The word by itself conjured up from its rich store of semantic properties a whole host of different associations. One or more of these associations would occur to this person, one or more to that person, and thus the type would exercise the maximum effect (pp. 36–7; cf. pp. 54, 73, 168).<sup>1</sup> Such a procedure was more economical, and exercised a wider influence, than would have any explicit specification of occasions which possessed a less than universal significance; it is therefore easy to see why the Roman authorities preferred not to specify on their coins the anniversary occasions which contributed to their appearance and issue.<sup>2</sup>

But other critics of my theory may be less worried by this absence of specification than by a further lacuna, the deficiency of explicit references to the signalisation of anniversary years (other than Secular celebrations and *decennia* of emperors) in the literary authorities. I submit, however, that the whole trend of current investigations is against regarding this as a valid objection. It is only necessary to look at the Notes on Sources in the *Cambridge Ancient History*, Volumes x, xi and xii, and see how they stress, with ever sharply increasing emphasis, the extent of our dependence on non-literary records. The verdict of Baynes in the last volume is this: “for a period of history where our sources are so meagre the student must seek to base his chronology on all the available evidence, whether of inscriptions, papyri, coins or the dating of imperial ‘constitutions’.”<sup>3</sup>

1 The same motives were responsible for the alternative custom of depicting not a simple, generalised type but a highly complex and composite one (see Index IV, *s.v.* ‘composite types’). For example, a goddess can be represented syncretistically with several adjuncts and attributes of quite other divinities (pp. 70 ff.): by this method, as by that of

the generalised type, a correspondingly varied range of thought-associations was evoked in the minds of the general, or at least the educated, public. On these complex types see *CSNM*.

2 Cf. below, p. 3 and n. 1.

3 *CAH*. xii, p. 713. In *CAH*. xi, see pp. vi, 855, 857.



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And Mattingly has no difficulty in justifying a special claim on behalf of his own branch: “in the coins lies a treasure . . . which, failing new discoveries of inscriptions or manuscripts, offers almost our only chance of penetrating the thick darkness that still envelops so much of the history of the third century.”<sup>1</sup>

In selecting these quotations which stress the non-literary sources I would wish my attitude to be quite clear. I do not want to imply the slightest opposition or competition between the literary and non-literary branches of Latin studies. Nor is it my intention, or that of the distinguished authorities whom I have quoted, to aggrandise epigraphic, numismatic or papyrological research at the expense of attention to the literature.<sup>2</sup> Such an attempt would be entirely futile, for two reasons. First, because the vital task to-day is to consider all the various kinds of evidence *in conjunction*, or, where certain kinds fail, in mutual supplementation; and this aim would be ill served by any attempt to exalt one at the expense of the other.<sup>3</sup> Secondly, because the heart of Latin studies is manifestly Latin literature,<sup>4</sup> and historical fashions will never stray so far that serious students will try to displace it from that central position.

But a body contains other parts besides its heart; and it is unmistakably the student not of epigraphy or numismatics, but of the literature, who has right up to the present time been the worst offender in minimising the importance of the historical record derivable from sources other than his own. It is true that no one

1 *CAH*. xii, p. 720. Cf. Sutherland, *Royal Numismatic Society, Presidential Address*, 1948–9, p. 6: “surely, and clearly, numismatics have climbed into the rank of primary historical material, which a historian can neglect only at his own risk.”

2 Cf. the salutary words of A. E. Housman, *Introductory Lecture, University College, London*, 1892: “everyone has his favourite study, and he is therefore disposed to lay down, as the aim of learning in general, the aim which his favourite study seems specially fitted to achieve, and the recognition of which as the aim of learning in general would increase the popularity of that study and the importance of those who profess it.”

3 Numismatics especially suffers from being treated as a self-contained subject. This has long been deprecated (e.g. von Luschin, *NZ*. 1, 1869, cf. Loehr, *Numismatik und Geldge-*

*schichte*), but the tendency dies hard, and the recent warning of Sutherland is very timely: “the numismatist who ploughs his furrow independently of the historian is asking for disastrous trouble . . . the ideal before us is the return, in some degree, to the tradition of an earlier age, in which there was no arbitrary distinction between related branches of study” (loc. cit., pp. 7 f.). It is very true that the special techniques of a subject must be thoroughly applied before it is fit to associate with other branches (cf. Instinsky, *Hamburger Beiträge zur Numismatik*, 1, 1947, p. 81, on coins; and *AC*. on constitutional history): but the process of inter-relation must not be postponed too long. However, the numismatist need not feel exceptionally guilty in this matter, for many students of literature and *MSS.* are much worse offenders; see next paragraph of the text.

4 Cf. *PR*. p. 230.

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would now deny categorically that the ancient historian must derive many of his conclusions from non-literary sources. But this injunction is still much better known in theory than in practice, and still receives much more lip-service than active discipleship. Even some of the very latest historical writers operate at variance with it; for they quote a great deal of ancient literature—much of it more valuable as literature than as history—and exceedingly few of the inscriptions, coins or papyri which likewise require consideration.

These are the people who would be most worried by the sparseness of the literary tradition about anniversary years. But their worry would be no less illogical in quality than a claim by the numismatist that only the coins are worth studying. All sources are seriously inadequate, and no category is sufficient by itself; moreover, our surviving literary record, like other forms of record, only represents a very small proportion of what originally existed.<sup>1</sup> Just as the coins and inscriptions completely fail to tell us many things which we learn from literature, so too there are whole categories of investigation—such as the present study of anniversary years—for which we have to apply exclusively to non-literary records.

The facts which we thus know, but which the literature has *not* told us, include such necessary pieces of information as the very names of *Augusti* set up outside Rome,<sup>2</sup> not to speak of the dates and titles even of those in the capital.<sup>3</sup> But what is particularly important to our present purpose is the existence among the weakest points of the literary record of precisely the three main topics most relevant to our present study—coinage, imperial publicity and religion. Coinage of almost inconceivable bulk, and with corresponding variety of type, lasted for century after century; yet the surviving literary commentary on it is ludicrously sparse, fragmentary and obscure,<sup>4</sup> exemplifying thereby the singular indifference

1 The historian need only think of Cato's *Origines* (7 books), almost all speeches other than Cicero's, the *Histories* of Sallust and Pollio, Q. Mucius Scaevola's 18 books *De Iure Civili*, Varro's 45 books of *Antiquitates*, Livy, XLVI–CXLII, Claudius' *Histories of Carthage and Etruria* (of 8 and 20 books respectively), and the autobiographies and memoirs of many imperial personages and politicians.

2 E.g. L. Julius Aurelius Sulpicius Uranius

Antoninus in Syria (Delbrueck, *NC*, 1948, pp. 11 ff.), Domitianus in Gaul (Webb, *M. & S.* v, 2, p. 590), Carausius II and 'Censeris' in Britain (Sutherland, *NC*, 1945, pp. 125 ff., Hill, *ibid.* 1948, pp. 91 ff.), Salbannacus (*M. & S.* iv, 3, p. 105); cf. Dryantilla *Augusta* in Pannonia (Webb, *loc. cit.* p. 588).

3 Mattingly, *CAH*, xii, p. 717.

4 It is time that it was collected.

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of ancient writers to economics and public finance.<sup>1</sup> Equally striking is the failure of our surviving literary tradition, over a very large part of the period, to tell us the imperial point of view. We should not have at all a clear idea of how Augustus or Tiberius presented their policy if we had to depend on Suetonius, Dio and Tacitus.<sup>2</sup> For Claudius, “inscriptions and papyri now become of great importance and have helped to correct and ameliorate the traditional literary portrait.”<sup>3</sup> The coins entirely outstrip the literary record in informing us of the publicity of Domitian, Commodus, Pescennius Niger or Gallienus.<sup>4</sup>

It has long been notorious that the same discrepancy in value between the literary and non-literary sources exists in regard to Roman religion, and particularly to the early religion<sup>5</sup>—and to the ritual and routine of religious practice at all periods, which provides many of the occasions for anniversary celebration. Wissowa said of a non-literary record (the calendar): “hoc paene unum superest sincerum documentum.”<sup>6</sup> He was speaking of the early period; but for the religion of the empire, too, the best sources are, to an overwhelming extent, non-literary. “We learn it in the main from temple-foundations, from coin-types, from dedications by the *princeps* or the Arval Brothers, and from the actions of the *quindecimviri sacris faciundis*.”<sup>7</sup>

Thus for information neither about the coinage itself, nor about the imperial publicity and religion which are its chief concerns, can we rely primarily on the surviving literary sources. It was hardly, therefore, to be expected that a theme which partakes of all these subjects, the numismatic celebration of anniversary years, would be confirmed by the literary record. At all events, it is in no way surprising that this is not so. The most that we might expect would be that writers (like inscriptions) should fortuitously divulge facts which illustrate the importance attached by the Romans to

1 Cf. A. H. M. Jones, *Ancient Economic History* (University College, London, *Inaugural Lecture*, 1948), p. 3.

2 For Augustus it is only necessary to think of the *Res Gestae*. For Tiberius see Pippidi, *Autour de Tibère*, pp. 67 ff., 188; cf. *APT.*, Preface.

3 Charlesworth, *CAH.* x, p. 653 n.

4 Cf. the weakness of the literary sources in telling us of ancient political eras: Kubitschek, *PW.* 1, 610.

5 See now Rose, *Ancient Roman Religion*, pp. 11 ff.

6 *De Feriis*, p. 1; cf. Warde Fowler, *The Religious Experience of the Roman People*, pp. 14 ff., id. *Roman Festivals*, pp. 17 ff.

7 Nock, *CAH.* xii, p. 412. Snyder, *YCS.* 1940, p. 225, mentions the predominance of inscriptions over literary records as evidence for the celebration of anniversary days.

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anniversary years; and this proves to be the case (pp. 3–5). It would be wrong to feel surprised that they do not say more.

I have tried here very briefly to answer possible objections to my general contention that many coins and medallions owe all, or something, of their type or timing to anniversary years. But this has been a negative process, and it remains to carry out a positive demonstration of my thesis. This will be attempted in the main part of the book. Here it may be desirable to point to certain analogies from other parts of the empire. I have suggested in *From Imperium to Auctoritas* that this practice of numismatic commemoration of anniversary years is identifiable on a considerable scale in the coinages of provincial cities. Especially significant is the custom of Roman colonies and *municipia*. Let us take, for example, the Julio-Claudian period, not because it is peculiar in this respect but because a large proportion of the coinages of these cities is concentrated in it. On examination of these issues it becomes clear that many of them—at some cities most of them—were intended to celebrate important local anniversaries—the fifth, tenth, twenty-fifth, fiftieth or hundredth jubilees of their privileged status.<sup>1</sup> The only reviewers of my book who have commented on this theory, Mattingly<sup>2</sup> and Tourneur,<sup>3</sup> have quoted it as representing a fact. This evidence from Roman cities is worth bearing in mind from our present point of view, since we should not expect to find such a custom prevalent in them unless it was also known at the Roman city *par excellence*, the capital itself.

Indeed, the latter supposition is by no means a new one, for the existence of this custom in certain forms is a well-known fact. I have already referred to the commemorations of *saecula* of Rome, and of the *decennia* of emperors. The monetary and medallion issues made in connection with these celebrations have been widely recognised. But these are the only anniversary occasions which have received anything approaching systematic attention from numismatists. However, certain scholars have also, cursorily and in isolated contexts, hinted at the much more extensive range of such occasions to which I believe the types of coins and medallions to refer (cf. p. 9). For at least six writers have each identified a single coinage celebrating an anniversary year of some occasion. These writers include

1 *FITA*. p. 295 (summary).

2 *NC*. 1946, p. 129.

3 *Revue Belge de Numismatique*, 1947, p. 144.

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Laffranchi (p. 88), Strack (p. 101), Wruck (p. 65) and—less categorically—Gagé (p. 127) and Dobiaš (p. 73); Mattingly, too, adopts Laffranchi's interpretation and ascribes to two comparable occasions further mintages also (p. 74, Appendix III).

These writers have identified isolated numismatic commemorations of anniversaries of Actium, the “restoration of the Republic”, an emperor's birth, a prince's death, a great temple, and a coinage. Yet these are only six happenings, and no attempt has been made to bring even these into relation with each other; when this is done, the coins concerned add up to no more than a few dozen. But it is my aim to show that the anniversary years of some seventy-two different events and occasions were celebrated on the imperial coinage—often repeatedly on successive anniversaries—and that this commemoration was performed by means of many hundreds, or indeed perhaps thousands, of different coins, not to speak of a considerable number of medallions.

That is what I hope to show. The arrangement that I shall adopt is largely chronological.<sup>1</sup> That is to say, after a preliminary chapter, I shall proceed according to the chronological order of emperors. This has obvious advantages as regards orderliness; but it also has one disadvantage. Chronological order is clearly not identical with the order of arguments that would be most persuasive. So this book, as it is arranged, does not respond satisfactorily to any who still may doubt the plausibility of my thesis, or who consider that its probable scope is likely to be smaller than I have suggested. I would recommend these readers, and any others who may wish to obtain a general view of the subject without reading the book right through, to adopt a procedure which puts before them a selection of the material in a more cogent order. This procedure might take the following form:

(1) Read Chapter I (pp. 1–13), showing the non-numismatic evidence for the celebration of anniversary years, and indicating special features applying to the coinage.

(2) Read Chapter VIII, section i (pp. 160–8), summarising the extent of the numismatic evidence that I am putting forward.

(3)–(6). Next I would suggest attention to a few selected portions of the subject, classified under four different headings—individual

<sup>1</sup> Though not necessarily in chronological order *within* each principate.

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emperors, categories of coins and medallions, occasions chosen for anniversary commemoration, and types:

(3) Emperors. Among those whose issues illustrate my thesis (though some readers may find other periods more illuminating) are Claudius (pp. 70–8), Vespasian (pp. 88–91 and Appendix III), Antoninus Pius (pp. 104–6) and Septimius Severus (pp. 114–22).

(4) Categories of coins and medallions. Series in which an extremely high proportion of known issues coincide with anniversary years include (*inter alia*) the following:

(a) gold medallions (pp. 23–4, 59–60, 68, 95, 110, 124–6, 135 n., 140);

(b) silver medallions (pp. 94–5, 100–1, 117–18, 123–4, 126, 132, 151–2);

(c) gold and silver *quinarii* (Appendix I);

(d) Eastern tetradrachms (pp. 20 n., 61, 76–7, 83–5, 88, 92, 98, 101–2, 121 n., 125).<sup>1</sup>

(5) As examples of occasions chosen for anniversary celebration, it is perhaps possible to single out Actium and the capture of Egypt, and the death and deification of Augustus.<sup>2</sup>

(6) Instances of types habitually bearing this significance are those of legions (pp. 86, 107, 137) and *Tutela* (pp. 88ff., 138f.).

I hope that this selection of the evidence will demonstrate that the numismatic commemoration of anniversaries attained a considerable scale. I must stress, however, the exploratory character of this book. I am very far from regarding every argument that I have put forward here as infallible. It is possible, indeed probable, that this or that example cited by me may prove susceptible to refutation. These examples necessarily depend to some extent on *argumenta a silentio*, that is to say on apparent peculiarities of issues due to significant chronological gaps, e.g. gaps of exactly fifty or a hundred years, between them and their predecessors or successors. Arguments of this kind always contain an element of risk. For rare and little-known series like those of the colonies, this is particularly true; though even in such cases it does not invalidate a sufficiently powerful array of anniversary coincidences.<sup>3</sup> With regard to the great metropolitan series, the prodigious feats of listing that have been performed by

1 For summaries of (a), (b) and (d), see pp. 165–6, 169.

2 For summaries see pp. 163–5.

3 Cf. *CMG*.



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Mattingly and others have authorised us to feel nowadays that a very large percentage of the total major variants of this series have duly been included in our records.

The percentage may well be slightly lower in the case of some of the rarer categories, even of metropolitan mintage.<sup>1</sup> But I do not believe that future discoveries of major variants will invalidate my general interpretation or method. They will not be very many; only a small proportion of them will relate to my present material; and even if one of these effectively disposes of this or that significant gap between known issues, it will only have modified or destroyed one of a large number of cumulative pieces of evidence, without infringing the validity of any of the others. Even in the unlikely event of this happening thirty times, it is doubtful whether my general thesis would be adversely affected. In view of these considerations, based on the comparatively advanced state of our knowledge of the major variants,<sup>2</sup> I have not been afraid to make use—albeit tentatively and with the necessary mental reservations—of *argumenta a silentio*; and I hope that any that are demonstrably erroneous will be shown to possess this character as soon as possible (cf. Appendix IV).

This tentative, exploratory character of the book has another aspect also. For, just as I may have included certain evidence that may eventually be disproved, so I suspect that the examples of anniversary issues that I have quoted are very far from exhaustive. I hope that these processes of addition and subtraction will be attempted. In more general terms, I hope that some importance will be attached to this subject, in view of its repercussions on our understanding of coinage and of imperial publicity, and so of Roman history and religion.

Since, therefore, criticism and further information are needed before any degree of definitiveness can be claimed, I have not thought it desirable to try to assemble in my Plates a representative collection of illustrations; it seems better to wait until so unfrequented a subject has taken on a more definitive appearance. Instead I have merely chosen for reproduction here a few of the rarest coins of the Julio-Claudian period that are cited in the text (not necessarily those

1 For the distinction in kind between the commoner and rarer categories, a distinction stressed by Pink, Strack and Elmer, see below, p. 60. One of the rarer categories is that of the *quinarii*; see Appendix I.

2 That is to say, our knowledge of their existence and external appearance: I do not believe that our understanding of the significance of their types is nearly so advanced.

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which best illustrate the theme of the book), this being the one period for which I have needed to discuss coins absent from the leading catalogues and works of reference. For the rest, illustrations are rarely needed for my argument, and those who require them will need to use the book in conjunction with those fundamental works.<sup>1</sup> References to them and to other works are given in connection with each coin—indeed, my debt to published writings can be seen on every page; but the subject has received too fragmentary treatment hitherto for any bibliography to be possible. I hope, however, that the general and other Indices will facilitate reference to the bibliographical information that is included in the footnotes.

It remains for me to acknowledge the help, besides that of published works, which I have received in preparing this book. I owe gratitude to Dr J. M. C. Toynbee for a letter which has greatly assisted me to formulate the present Introduction; to Professor R. Syme and Dr C. H. V. Sutherland for reading the proofs and offering valuable suggestions, and to the latter for showing me an important forthcoming work in draft; and to Mr C. M. Kraay for information about Flavian coinage. I want to express my thanks to the British Museum and to the national collections at Athens, Berlin, Budapest, Copenhagen and Paris, for the casts which the Chiswick Press has reproduced here. I am indebted to the Turkish Director-General of Museums and Antiquities, Bay Hâmit Zubeir Koşay, for enabling me to see unpublished coins in provincial collections; to the *University of Edinburgh Journal* for allowing me to reproduce from it passages from my Inaugural Lecture; and to Vienna University and Professor A. Betz, and also Professor P. W. Duff, for various kinds of assistance. I am, too, very grateful to the Cambridge University Press for undertaking the publication of the book, and to the Master and Fellows of Trinity College for defraying the costs of its preparation and thereby adding another to their many acts of generosity towards me.

MICHAEL GRANT

EDINBURGH, 1949

1 See Abbreviations: Cohen, Gnechi, Mattingly, Mattingly-Sydenham-Sutherland-

Webb, Strack, Toynbee; also Alföldi, *Die Kontorniaten*, Budapest, 1942/3.