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...κοινὸς Ἑρμῆς...

Menander, *Epitrepontes* 284

Sharing the Luck: An Introduction to *KOINON* IV with Recourse to Hermes



c. 4th to 3rd century bronze unit from an uncertain mint. Courtesy of Agora Numismatiek.

Hermes might be the most dynamic of all the Greek deities—a marginal figure in the truest sense, he is both a trickster and thief, yet also a source for ingenuity and insight. He is associated with peace, eroticism, relationships, hermeneutics (of course), and even comedy, to name just a few of his many attributes. At home in both Olympus and Hades, or among men or women, he is as pervasive in Greek culture as he is mysterious and difficult to pin down. What I learned in researching the opening phrase of this edition, ‘κοινὸς Ἑρμῆς,’ is that he is also associated with luck. In antiquity, should a group happen upon a chance find of, let’s say, coins, the phrase ‘κοινὸς Ἑρμῆς’ was pronounced with the understanding that the lucky find should be shared among all those present (and perhaps there is a thread leading into the debates of cultural patrimony here). Somewhat equivalent to our phrase ‘halfies,’ and occasionally translated that way, the idea is that such a lucky windfall is a gift from the gods and ought to be shared. But even if such luck was restricted to treasure in antiquity, I believe there is an important element of luck in the art and science of numismatic scholarship. I experience it all the time. When Dr. Sisci and I were studying the case of Acheloios and the river gods, I chanced upon an essay about Apollo’s epithets and—eureka!—a truly lucky insight came. When I was researching Judaeon coinage for my essay in this volume, I happened upon a most peculiar object that reinforced virtually everything I had been thinking and also seemed to confirm the theory of a scholar writing over 100 years ago. Pure luck. I could go on and on—the entire enterprise of *KOINON* is founded upon luck and what we’ve made of it, in common. By studying coins, and I mean really studying them, beyond just dates and catalog numbers, we chance upon so many treasures that further enlighten our understanding of antiquity. And with that lucky windfall comes the obligation that such newfound wealth is shared: κοινὸς Ἑρμῆς!

This volume is an example of sharing such newfound treasures. Keeping with our commitment to publishing a high quality, well-rounded journal, this year we have eleven different essays to enjoy that cover a truly vast array of topics. To begin, we were fortunate to have three essays on Greek coinage by Dr. Lloyd Taylor. As is the norm, they are all written at the highest level of expertise, and we are so fortunate that Lloyd has chosen *KOINON* as their home, for clearly, he is at a pinnacle of his numismatic journey. His first essay concerns the iconography of Sophystes' helmet, the second concerns Seleukid politics, and the third, the infamous Alexander decadrachms. All are treasures to behold and I am sure the reader will enjoy them immensely.

Following the Greek section, we have our first-ever essay on Judaeian coinage and I am the contributor. It consists of my own interpretation of the double cornucopia appearing on Hasmonian coinage—an essay that looks back into the religious and cultic practices operative in the historical journey of the Jewish people to shed light on the iconographic motif. I hope this can be of service to students of Judaeian coinage because (if I may be so bold) I really think I inadvertently stuck gold while researching something entirely unrelated (Thales!) for another project. Again, pure luck.

We were again lucky to have so many contributions in the field of Roman coinage, which had been lacking in past issues. First, we have an essay by doctoral student Tyler Holman concerning the iconography of Silenus—a deity beloved by all—on Alexandrian coinage. It is fun, engaging, and sure to please. I'm so excited to watch Tyler grow as a scholar and honored that *KOINON* can be of service to him. Next, we have Prof. Edward Dandrow's superb analysis of a peculiar iconographic motif appearing on a medallion of Elagabalus from Edessa. The depth of research and level of sophistication make for a well-rounded and beautiful contribution. Again, it was pure luck that Edward and I connected on Twitter, and I'm really grateful for that. Next up is Prof. Gavin Richardson's account of Constantine's SOL INVICTO COMITI coinage. It is thorough, fascinating, and an absolute joy to read, and I am so glad that he has finally succumbed to my pleas that he write an essay for the journal, despite his busy schedule (and so, lucky me). Following this essay we have the fruits of Zheny Marinkevich's massive study of Antonine iconographic fluctuations—it is clear, detailed, and highly important, to say the least, and will be particularly important to those interested in the smaller details that round out so much of our knowledge of the past. Finally, we have another submission by the *KOINON*-regular Andrei Bontas, this time concerning Tacitus, whose coinage has never been featured in our journal before. His essay, like the others, shows a level of appreciation for ancient coinage that is special and unique, and I'm honored to have it appear in our pages.

In the Medieval and Early modern section we have two essays to share. The first is a continuation of David Speciner's new methodology concerning number forms on Medieval coinage. It is both interesting and important, and I am happy that David has continued to advance this new model and that *KOINON* can share in that adventure. Next, we have a second essay by Andrei Bontas, this one concerning the possible pedigree of a 14th century *blanc tournois*—'possible' here being, in my estimation, quite modest, since the essay is thoroughly convincing. Finally, we end with the catalog of new varieties, which features very many new and interesting coins from both Greek and Roman times.

We are all very lucky to have found ancient coins at some point along our journey. For me it was getting swindled on a few 'crummy' late Roman bronzes, and I'm sure others have similar

tales. But just as Hermes is the god of trickery, who was no doubt out and about that day many years ago, there is another side to the coin, and the price paid was well worth the windfall that I've experienced ever since—so, indeed, I was truly lucky to be tricked. Ultimately, when all is said and done, let's celebrate how fortunate we are, keep an eye out for that lucky insight, and, as is our obligation to the gods and each other, share the wealth with others—for that is what *KOINON* is really all about.

Vivat Achelous!

Dr. Nicholas J. Molinari, General Editor
Societas De Tauro Cum Facie Humana

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GREEK COINAGE

