

Mapping the Mints of the Roman Empire

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Introduction

The purpose of this project was to create a database of the known locations of Roman coinage mints and utilize ArcGIS to create a map to visualize where each mint was located throughout the Roman Empire. Prior to this project, there have been no holistic maps made of the mints of the Roman empire, only maps focusing on specific regions or displaying the locations of a handful of prominent mints. Therefore, the aim of this project was to create the first holistic map of the coinage mints of the Roman Empire during each of its three periods: The Period of Kings (625-510 BC), Republican Rome (510-31 BC), and Imperial Rome (31 BC-AD 476) to establish potential relationships between mints and major cities and/or transportation hubs.

Research Objectives

Our research objectives were to investigate where the mints of the Roman Empire were located, how the locations of coinage mints are distributed by period, and what the geospatial relationship between coinage mints, and major transportation hubs such as roads, rivers, and ports is.

Methodology

In terms of methodology first we poured through numismatic-affiliated databases and pre-existing partial coinage mint maps to consolidate known mint names, years of operations, and materials used. We then logged all the information in an excel sheet, cross referenced the data with other sources to eliminate duplicates, and ultimately ended up with a database of 238 mints. We then formatted the database to be ArcGIS compatible so it could be easily uploaded for visualization and analysis. This is not a complete accounting of the coinage mints of the Roman Empire as there were mobile mints and known mints that do not have exact location and are only known by region, but this is the most complete visualization yet.



References

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Link to interactive map: <https://arcg.is/1baCjeD>

Results

Following the mapping of the mints, our results reflected our previous assumptions. The Romans constructed their mints following a similar pattern; mints were typically erected on flat plots of low elevated land, near a water source which was typically a lake, sea, or river. The mints were also located along Roman roads, or at an intersection point. Today there are many modern-day cities where Roman cities and in turn mints use to be. There was a pattern of mint construction following the expansion of Rome's borders. As the Roman Empire expanded throughout Europe, Africa, and Asia, the mint sites propped up farther and farther away from the City of Rome itself. Interestingly, more Mints were constructed during the Republican period (510 – 31 BC) of Rome than the Imperial (31 BC – 476 AD).

Conclusion

What we generated is the most complete and detailed map and list of known mints throughout the Roman Empire. This project is meant to be exhaustive, and while tedious, provides an excellent data set and visualization to the study of Roman coins, buildings, and other areas of Roman history. It is our hope that future researches utilize our work to aid them on their endeavors and create a more perfected understanding of these topics.