

ANIMALS ON ROMAN COINS

by T.R. McIntosh

One of my most interesting collections combines two of my enthusiasms: Roman coins and the love of animals. I was impressed by the number of Roman coins with animal designs, so I decided to see how many different animals I could collect.

First, I went after animals as the main design. After finding only about three dozen of these, I decided to branch out. So I added mythological creatures, then animals as details—particularly those associated with various gods and goddesses, or those used as moneyers' symbols on Republican coins.

Finally, I decided to take on the challenge of the many examples of figures on horseback, or animals used to pull various vehicles. Now, I have spent twenty years on this collection, and more thousands of dollars than I would like to remember, but it has been a great source of entertainment along with the thrill of research.

I shall attempt to list the main finds in each of the above categories. Here are the examples of animals as the main design element:

Lion	Panther	Elephant
Stag	Hippo	Rhinoceros
Arabian camel		
Bactrian camel		

Horse	Mules	Ram
Goat	Cretan goat	
Ox/Oxen		
Wild Boar	Bull	Brahma bull
Cow	Calf	Boar pig
Sow pig w/piglets		Dog
Hound	Wolf	Bear
Peacock	Stork	Ibis
Owl	Eagle	Hawk
Ostrich	Dove	Raven
Cockerel (rooster)		Dolphin
Tuna fish	Snake/serpent	
Crocodile		
Tortoise	Frog	Scorpion



Two of the animal coins in the author's collection depict bears. The one on the left is on the reverse of an Æ 15 issued by Geta in Nikopolis, Moesia Inferior. The image on the right is from a very rare coin (Æ 25) of Septimius Severus, also from Nikopolis, that depicts a small bear by the seated figure of Istrus, the local river-god. Both images are enlarged and courtesy of the author.

An interesting sidelight to this category is coins with two or more animals. Julius Caesar issued his famous coin with both an elephant and a snake, and Hadrian issued rare coins with a peacock, an owl and an eagle—all side-by-side.

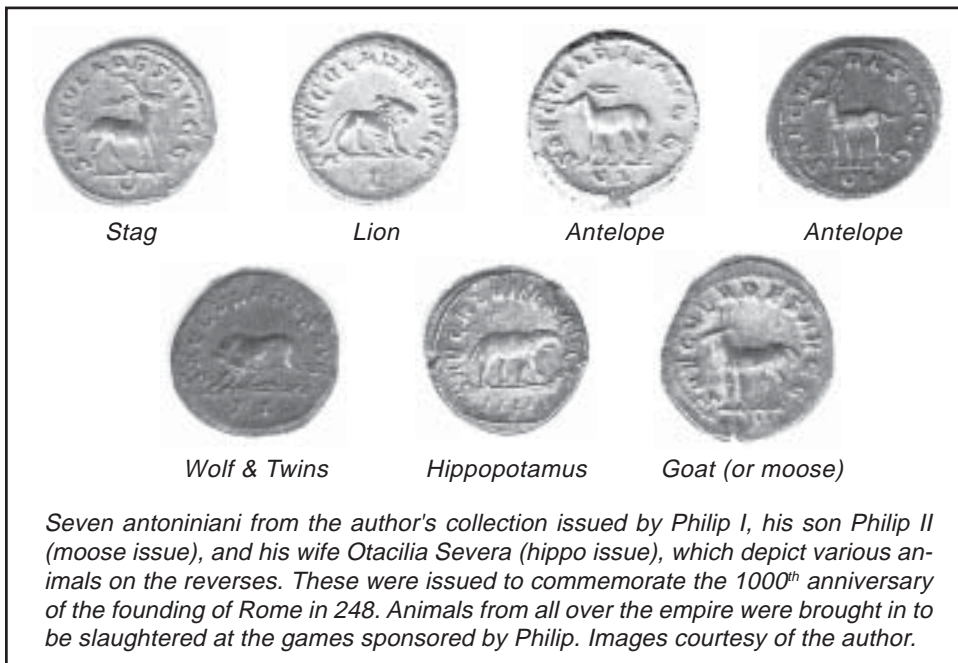
Before continuing, I should mention that my collection encompasses three major categories of Roman coins: Republican issues and Imperial issues intended for the whole Empire, and Roman Provincial coins issued by various local authorities or cities with the coining privilege during the first three centuries of the Empire. This has added great scope to my collection, as the varieties of these are almost endless.

Here are the mythological animals that appear as the main design element:

- Winged horse (called Pegasus)
- Sphinx
- Griffin
- Capricorn
- Phoenix
- Man-headed bull

In the animals as details category, the possibilities are, again, almost endless, so I shall include only the more common ones. First, those associated with various deities:

- Jupiter with eagle
- Hermes with rooster
- Juno with peacock
- Minerva with owl



Seven antoniniani from the author's collection issued by Philip I, his son Philip II (moose issue), and his wife Otacilia Severa (hippo issue), which depict various animals on the reverses. These were issued to commemorate the 1000th anniversary of the founding of Rome in 248. Animals from all over the empire were brought in to be slaughtered at the games sponsored by Philip. Images courtesy of the author.



The denarius of Septimius Severus depicting a galley under sail in the Circus Maximus with various animals and four quadrigas around it. RIC IV 274, RSC 253. Enlarged photo courtesy of CNG, Inc.

- Pietas with stork
- Diana with hound
- Diana with stags
- Ulysses with his dog Argus
- Cupid on a goat
- Dionysus/Bacchus with a panther
- Cybele with lions
- Atargatis with lion
- Europa with bull
- Dea Caelestis with a lion
- Hermes with sheep
- Valeria Luperca with heifer
- Nilus with hippo & crocodile
- Cupid with dolphin
- Neptune with dolphin
- Tyche with a dove
- Salus with a snake
- Castor and Pollux with their horses
- Genius with eagle
- Africa with lion
- Hercules (as a baby) with a doe
- Men with rooster
- Apollo with raven
- Roma with she-wolf and Romulus and Remus

There are also certain animals associated with provinces in the Empire. The most interesting is a series issued by Hadrian. It is included in this list of animals as details:

- Aegyptus (Egypt) with an ibis
- Africa with scorpion
- Hispania with a rabbit
- Mauretania with a horse
- Africa with lion
- Arabia with camel
- Moesia with a bull and lion
- Dacia with an eagle and a lion

One of the most interesting coins in this category features a whole menagerie. It was issued by Septimius Severus and his son Caracalla as co-emperor to commemorate the spectacular Secular Games held circa 204 AD. A ship is unloading a cargo of exotic animals including a bird,

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lion, three tigers (or panthers), a stag and a bull. Four quadrigas also appear in the background. (More about quadrigas later.) This is a rather scarce coin, and when it comes up for sale, which isn't very often, you would expect to pay \$500 or more for it.

One other category in the animals as details area has to do with the tiny moneyers' symbols, which appear on Roman Republican coins. Here are some of those:

Rat	Fly	Grasshopper
Tortoise		Prawn
Murex shell		
Fox	Wasp	Wren
Frog	Stork	Scorpion
Crab	Butterfly	

Now for the final major category: animals being ridden or pulling various vehicles. First, the vehicles:

Biga—pulled by two horses or other animals

Triga—pulled by three horses or other animals

Quadriga—pulled by four horses or other animals

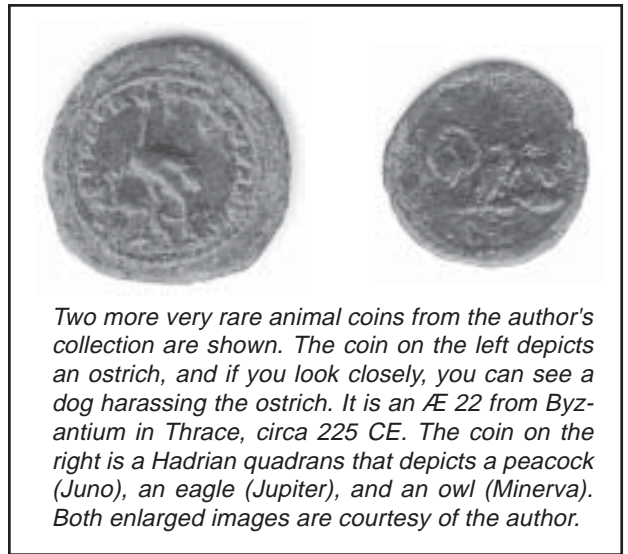
Carpentum—two-wheeled funeral vehicle pulled by two mules

Chariot—two-wheeled vehicle

The usual draft animals used to pull bigas are horses. Coins of the Republic have mostly female passengers in the biga, including Victory, Roma, Luna, Venus and Juno. But some bigas are powered by goats, elephants, lions, bulls, stags or even serpents. A related category is a yoke (pair) of oxen pulling a plow, guided by a priest, a farmer or the Emperor.

The most common triga coin features horses driven by Victory. Quadriga horse chariots contain almost the whole Roman pantheon on one or another, including Minerva, Sol, Jupiter, Libertas, Mars, Victory, Saturn, Apollo and various deified emperors.

Various living emperors are also shown on quadrigas. Some quadrigas are powered by lions or elephants. Two Roman minor gods, Castor and Pollux, called the Dioscuri, are usually shown with their horses, sometimes riding and sometimes standing beside them. Some of the more artistic coins with quadrigas show Sol, the god of the sun, in a facing view, which is still



Two more very rare animal coins from the author's collection are shown. The coin on the left depicts an ostrich, and if you look closely, you can see a dog harassing the ostrich. It is an Æ 22 from Byzantium in Thrace, circa 225 CE. The coin on the right is a Hadrian quadrans that depicts a peacock (Juno), an eagle (Jupiter), and an owl (Minerva). Both enlarged images are courtesy of the author.

a difficult feat, as can be seen on the 1982 American commemorative coin honoring George Washington, facing while on horseback.

A few of the Emperors are also shown on horseback, sometimes just riding, sometimes spearing enemies, and sometimes hunting lions or other animals. It is safe to say that more horses appear on Roman coins than any other animal. The eagle would be in second place, and probably the famous she-wolf that nursed Romulus and Remus, the mythical founders of Rome, would come in third.

As can be seen in this brief account of my collection of Roman and Roman Provincial coins with animals, this is certainly a very interesting and challenging pursuit. I would highly recommend it to anyone willing to try.

This article first appeared in the *Clarion* (Vol. 23, No. 3, December 2006), the official journal of the Pennsylvania Association of Numismatists or PAN.

About the author—T.R. McIntosh is a retired schoolteacher from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, where he taught social studies and anthropology for 43 years.



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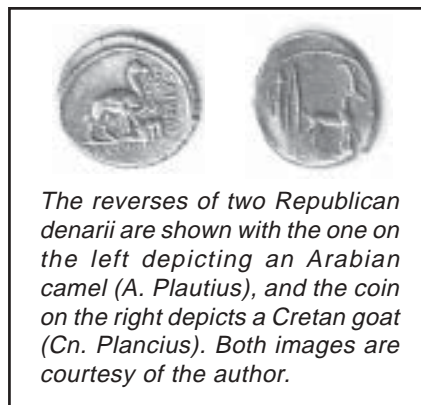
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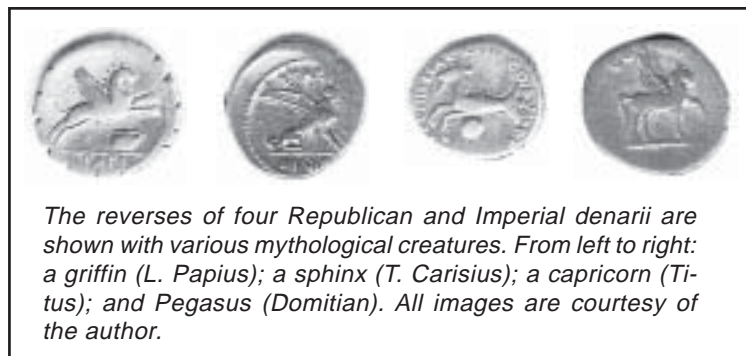
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The reverses of two Republican denarii are shown with the one on the left depicting an Arabian camel (A. Plautius), and the coin on the right depicts a Cretan goat (Cn. Plancius). Both images are courtesy of the author.



The reverses of four Republican and Imperial denarii are shown with various mythological creatures. From left to right: a griffin (L. Papius); a sphinx (T. Carisius); a capricorn (Titus); and Pegasus (Domitian). All images are courtesy of the author.