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# *Annotazioni Numismatiche*

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## CONTRIBUTI

**A plated *denarius* brockage of L-RVSTI**

Clive STANNARD

A brockage results when a coin sticks to one of the dies, and strikes the next coin, creating a piece with the same design on the two sides, once in relief, and once incuse. Most are 'obverse brockages' (that is, the coin has stuck to the upper, or trussel die), because 'a coin attached to the lower anvil obverse die would be more likely to be seen and removed'<sup>(1)</sup>. Brockages occur most often during intense, high-speed production, when the operator works on without noticing the error. They are particularly common in the Roman Republic: 'the overall impression is of a coinage produced carelessly and in haste ... Given the scale on which the Republican coinage was produced, we should not be surprised'<sup>(2)</sup>.



Fig. 1

(Twice illustrated: from casts, to show the form;  
and from the piece itself, to show where the plating has come away)

Another common phenomenon of the Republican silver coinage is the high number of plated pieces. Crawford has maintained<sup>(3)</sup> — it seems to me conclusively — that all are forgeries. The best evidence for plated coins as an official mint product would be the identification of plated pieces from the same dies as good silver pieces; but he has argued that the apparent examples were made by forgers mechanically reproducing dies; moreover, even if plated coins were shown to share dies with good silver pieces,

(1) J.P. GODDARD, "Roman Brockages: a Preliminary Survey of their Frequency and Type", in M.M. Archibald and M.R. Cowell (eds.), *Metallurgy in Numismatics, Volume 3*, (1993), p. 76.

(2) M.H. CRAWFORD, *Roman Republican Coinage* (1974), p. 583.

(3) *Ibid.*, pp. 560-566. In 'The hub from ancient Spain reconsidered', *NC* 148 (1988), pp. 141-143, I commented on a forger's cast hub for mechanically copying dies.

they could very well be the product of fraud in the mint, by workmen stealing dies, or bringing in plated flans for striking. The contention that the Roman state mixed plated pieces into issues is therefore not susceptible of positive proof from the numismatic evidence, though the inferential negative argument from the many aberrant mules and mistakes, and from the existence of forgers' hoards of all plated pieces, is strong.

The existence of brockage fakes might seem improbable, on *prima facie* grounds: it is unlikely that forgers would be working in volumes and at rhythms such as to give rise to brockages; I imagine, moreover, that they would carefully inspect their output for pieces that might give them away, and that brockages must be spotted<sup>(4)</sup>. However, I illustrate is an obverse brockage of a *denarius* of Cr. 389/1, **L·RVSTI**, 76 BC (2.99 g); I know of no other plated brockage<sup>(5)</sup>. A number of untestable hypotheses could be formulated to explain it; it is better at present merely to record the piece, in case it can be of relevance in later discussions.

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(4) Though, as good silver brockages obviously passed current, there would be no absolute reason to withdraw them.

(5) 'I do not know of any other plated brockage. When I went through the lists of Republican hoards to estimate frequency, I would have remembered and noted any specimen like yours. After the *MIN* 3 article appeared, I got a nice letter from an eminent scholar-collector of the Republican series, listing details of over 100 Republican brockages, but no mention of a plated one' (Goddard, personal message on 31 March 1998).