Nero's Alexandrian Coinage: The Olympic Series of 66/67 and 67/68 CE and its Achaean Context

Samantha Doleno
Nero’s Alexandrian Coinage:
The Olympic Series of 66/67 and 67/68 CE and its Achaean Context
by
Samantha Dolenô

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Samantha Doleno

Washington University in St. Louis

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Introduction

The coinage of the Roman emperor Nero (54-68 CE) is considered by some the height of artistic excellence and innovation, and was strongly influenced by Nero’s own philhellenism.¹

Alexandria minted coinage on an unprecedented scale during Nero’s reign, especially in the last five years, and there are “no contemporary parallels to the Alexandrian reverses among other imperial mints.”² Currency under Nero in Egypt included both silver and bronze issues, including the introduction of the two largest bronze denominations of 30mm and 35mm, but no gold coinage was struck.³ Nero’s tetradrachms remained in circulation and dominated the Egyptian economy for over a century after his death.⁴

The overall purpose of this thesis is to explore why the Olympic series, a series of billon tetradrachms minted in 66/67 and 67/68 CE and thought to commemorate Nero’s victories in Greece, was minted, despite Alexandria not being affected by Nero’s journey to Greece. I will argue that the Olympic series was minted as a philhellenic connection to Nero, commemorating his recent victories in the Greek games, and as a way to show the superiority of the Greek population of Alexandria over the Jewish population. This was especially important considering the recent ethnic conflicts during both Nero’s reign and the Julio-Claudian’s as a whole. Despite lack of scholarship on the Olympic series itself, it is clear that it was a series of great economic, political, and cultural significance. Because it was not only minted in 66/67 CE but also 67/68 CE, there must have been some significant reason behind its iconography for so many coins to be struck, especially as the obverse and reverses bear the same images. Chapter I will provide a

¹ Sydenham (1916), 34.
² Christiansen (1988), 98.
³ Burnett, Amandry, and Ripollès, eds. (1992), 704. The coinage in Rome and the other Eastern provinces was different than Egypt’s.
⁴ Christiansen (2004), 98.
survey of Nero’s presence at the six Panhellenic sanctuaries, the Achaean coinage which commemorated Nero’s actions in Greece, and a discussion of which cities did not mint coinage, in order to have a point of comparison for the Olympic series in Egypt. This will become significant when exploring why Alexandria, a city not affected by Nero’s actions in Greece, minted such coinage, while other mints in Greece which were directly involved did not. Chapter II will investigate the situation in Egypt under Nero, and the relevant history of the province since Octavian conquered it in 30 BCE. Here I will argue that the Olympic series was minted as a way for the Alexandrian Greek population, supported by the prefect Tiberius Julius Alexander, to demonstrate its superiority in light of the pogrom in 66 CE, while also ingratiating itself to Nero through commemorating his victories. Chapter III will provide a die study of one type of the Olympic series, which will allow a statistical analysis to estimate the total number of dies and coinage produced. These numbers will then provide insight into some aspects of how the mint functioned during this time period and also into the economic state of Egypt during the reign of Nero.

1.1 The Olympic Series
Billon tetradrachms, following a hiatus since they were struck by the last Ptolemaic monarchs, were reintroduced to Egypt under Tiberius in 20/21 CE after fifty years of no production and were a provincial denomination of coinage made from a silver alloy. While they were equal to one imperial denarius in value, their silver content was repeatedly debased over time. Before Nero’s reign the silver bullion content was 23%, but starting in 56 CE this declined to a range of 15-19% silver bullion during the reign of Nero, with years 66/67 and 67/68 CE ranging from 15-

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5 Geissen (2012), 566.
17% silver.\textsuperscript{6} It is only because of Egypt’s closed currency system that this equivalence in value was made possible, as Egyptian currency was not legal tender in other provinces due at least to its low silver content with respect to other silver coinage of the eastern provinces.\textsuperscript{7} Any foreign money needed to be exchanged at the border, and no Egyptian currency left the province. Octavian, after he conquered Egypt and turned it into an imperial province in 30 BCE, maintained this practice from the Ptolemaic dynasty, which remained in place until Diocletian’s reform in 296 CE.\textsuperscript{8} The imperial silver in Rome was debased under Nero as well, going from 100% silver at the beginning of his reign to 80% silver in 64 CE, in which the silver content declined from 3.65g to 2.76g.\textsuperscript{9} Some scholars argue that this silver debasement in 64 CE allowed the tetradrachm to be close in value to the denarius, 2.34g and 2.62g respectively, and that the coinage reform in Rome was not independent from the Alexandrian tetradrachm’s debasement.\textsuperscript{10}

Among Nero’s unparalleled reverses in Alexandria is a series of billon tetradrachms from regnal year (RY) 13 (66/67 CE) and RY 14 (67/68 CE).\textsuperscript{11} This series of Alexandrian coins stand out because they feature portraits of Olympian gods on the reverse - Olympian Zeus, Nemean Zeus, Isthmian Poseidon, Pythian Apollo, Actian Apollo, and Argive Hera. These deities represent the four great Panhellenic festivals in Greece, plus the addition of the Argive and

\textsuperscript{6} Schwei (2017), 108.
\textsuperscript{7} Christiansen (1988), 13; Butcher and Ponting (2005), 121-2. Augustus did not mint any silver coinage in Egypt, though the Ptolemaic silver coins were still in circulation, although thoroughly debased. Schwei (2017), 116: Under Tiberius the tetradrachm’s overall weight was 13.33g and 3.37g of this was silver. Under Claudius the tetradrachm was reduced to an average weight of 13.25g and the silver content was reduced to 3.03g of silver.
\textsuperscript{8} For Octavian see: Geissen (2012), 561; Christiansen (1988), 11. For the chronology of Diocletian’s coinage reform, see: Sutherland (1955), 116–18.
\textsuperscript{9} Butcher and Ponting (2015), 701.
\textsuperscript{10} Butcher and Ponting (2005), 94, 121.
\textsuperscript{11} See Geissen (2012), 562 for a summary of the Egyptian dating system.
Actian games, as they are the gods worshipped at these festivals. Because of this, modern scholarship sometimes refers to them as the “Olympic” series.\textsuperscript{12}

The Olympic series consists of nineteen issues over a period of two years. The obverse image remains the same for all of the coins, the only difference being the date mark ΛΙΓ for regnal year 13 and ΛΙΔ for regnal year 14. The legend reads ΝΕΡΩ ΚΛΑΥ ΚΑΙΣ ΣΕΒ ΓΕΡ ΑΥ, the Latin equivalent being NERO CLAVD KAIS AVG GER IMP, which translates to “Nero Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus Imperator.”\textsuperscript{13} Issuing coinage was a privilege granted to provinces by the emperor, however some mints, such as Antioch, were granted senatorial permission.\textsuperscript{14} Because of this, the obverses of most provincial coinage include imperial nomenclature and imperial portraits, as is seen here.\textsuperscript{15} Nero is depicted radiate, with the aegis, facing left. The radiate crown on the obverse seems to have been introduced sometime in regnal year 10 (63/64 CE).\textsuperscript{16} The coinage for regnal year 13 is as follows:\textsuperscript{17}

\begin{itemize}
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{12} Christiansen (1988) is the principal scholar to use this name to refer to the series when discussing his hoard evidence and so is followed here.

\textsuperscript{13} Sear (2001), xi-xxi.

\textsuperscript{14} Provinces with senatorial permission include Syria and its mint Antioch, where bronze coinage, for example, features “SC” on its reverse. See Burnett, Amandry, and Ripollès (1992), 620ff. for a survey of this coinage.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid. xi. See Sear (2001) for a list of the most common nomenclature on provincial Greek coin legends and their various abbreviations. Imperial portraiture: Burnett, Amandry, and Ripollès (1992), 39ff.: The portrait of the emperor occupies, although not exclusively, provincial coinage, starting with Augustus. With the advent of the imperial portrait, imperial titles followed in the legends in order to identify the figure. Most legends were simple, although Egypt is known for including full names and titles.

\textsuperscript{16} Christiansen (1988), 91. All coin types from year 10 onwards exhibit the radiate crown on the obverse. Coin types before year 10 include Nero seated, bust of Agrippina, bust of Octavia, Demeter standing, Dikaioyne standing, Eirene standing, Homonoia seated, Roma seated, the Demos of the Romans standing, Agathodaemon, Elpis standing, but of Poppaea, Hippopotamus, and Corn. The coin types which do exhibit the radiate crown are bust of Poppaea, bust of Sarapis, bust of Nilus, Eagle standing, bust of Alexandria, bust of Apollo, bust of Roma, head of Augustus, head of Tiberius, bust of Zeus Olympios, bust of Zeus Nemeios, bust of Poseidon Isthmios, bust of Hera Argeia, bust of Apollo Aktios, bust of Apollo Pythios, and Ship. See Christiansen (1988), 34-110 for a full survey of Nero’s coinage.

\textsuperscript{17} The – symbol means that there is no information available for that entry, and the // symbol means it is the same information as the previous entry. The information in all of the tables, such as the average size and weight of the coinage, comes from Burnett, Amandry, and Ripollès, eds. (1992), 709-710.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>RPC No.</th>
<th>Size (mm.)</th>
<th>Weight (grams)</th>
<th>Obverse</th>
<th>Reverse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>5297</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12.52</td>
<td>ΝΕΡΩ ΚΑΙΝ ΚΑΙΣ ΣΕΒ ΓΕΡ ΑΥ, ΛΙΔ; radiate Nero with aegis l.</td>
<td>ΔΙΟΣ ΟΛΥΜΠΙΟΥ; laureate Olympian Zeus r.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5298</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12.85</td>
<td>//</td>
<td>ΝΕΜΕΙΟΣ ΖΕΥΣ; bust of Nemean Zeus with aegis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5299</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12.80</td>
<td>//</td>
<td>ΗΡΑ ΑΡΓΕΙΑ; veiled bust of Hera Argeia, r.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5300</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12.84</td>
<td>//</td>
<td>ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ ΙΣΘΜΙΟΣ; head of Poseidon with drapery on l. shoulder and trident, r.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5300A</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13.08</td>
<td>//</td>
<td>ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ ΙΣΘΜΙΟΣ; bust of Poseidon with trident, l.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5301</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13.50</td>
<td>//</td>
<td>ΑΚΤΙΟΣ ΑΠΟΛΛΩΝ; laureate bust of Actian Apollo with quiver, r.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5302</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12.69</td>
<td>//</td>
<td>ΠΥΘΙΟΣ ΑΠΟΛΛΩΝ; laureate bust of Pythian Apollo with quiver, r.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: The Olympic Series Year 13

The second set of coins from the Olympic series is split into two series – one with a star symbol on the bottom right corner of the reverse (RPC 5313-5318), and one without (RPC 5307-5312). The star symbol and its significance will be discussed later in Chapter Three.\(^{18}\) While RPC lists the series without the star first in the catalogue, the order of production for these issues has yet to be determined. The Olympic series for regnal year 14 is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>RPC No.</th>
<th>Size (mm.)</th>
<th>Weight (grams)</th>
<th>Obverse</th>
<th>Reverse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>5307</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>11.47</td>
<td>ΝΕΡΩ ΚΑΙΝ ΚΑΙΣ ΣΕΒ ΓΕΡ ΑΥ, ΛΙΔ; radiate bust of Nero with aegis, l.</td>
<td>ΔΙΟΣ ΟΛΥΜΠΙΟΥ; laureate bust of Olympian Zeus, r.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{18}\) Christiansen (1988), 92. The star symbol is seen on some other Alexandrian coins from Nero’s reign, such as a series of coins from year 9 (62/63 CE) which feature Poppaea, Dikaiosyne, a hippopotamus, and four ears of corn (RPC I 5267-5270). This star symbol also appears in Galba’s reign (RPC I 5336-9), although it is not always in the lower left corner of the reverse.
| 5308 | 26 | - | // | ΝΕΜΕΙΟΣ ΖΕΥΣ; bust of Nemean Zeus with aegis, r. |
| 5309 | 25 | - | // | ΗΡΑ ΑΡΓΕΙΑ; veiled bust of Hera Argeia, r. |
| 5310 | 25 | - | // | ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ ΙΣΘΜΙΟΣ; head of Poseidon with drapery on l. shoulder and trident, r. |
| 5311 | 25 | - | // | ΑΚΤΙΟΣ ΑΠΟΛΛΩΝ; laureate bust of Actian Apollo with quiver, r. |
| 5312 | 25 | - | // | ΠΥΘ(Ε)ΙΟΣ ΑΠΟΛΛΩΝ; laureate bust of Pythian Apollo with quiver, r. |
| 5313 | - | - | // | ΔΙΟΣ ΟΛΥΜΠΙΟΥ; laureate bust of Olympian Zeus, r., star symbol |
| 5314 | - | - | // | ΝΕΜΕΙΟΣ ΖΕΥΣ; bust of Nemean Zeus with aegis, r., star symbol |
| 5315 | 25 | - | // | ΗΡΑ ΑΡΓΕΙΑ; veiled bust of Hera Argeia, r., star symbol |
| 5316 | 24 | - | // | ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ ΙΣΘΜΙΟΣ; bust of Poseidon with trident, r., star symbol |
| 5317 | 25 | - | // | ΑΚΤΙΟΣ ΑΠΟΛΛΩΝ; laureate bust of Actian Apollo with quiver, r., star symbol |
| 5318 | 24 | - | // | ΠΥΘ(Ε)ΙΟΣ ΑΠΟΛΛΩΝ; laureate bust of Pythian Apollo with quiver, r., star symbol |

**Figure 2: The Olympic Series Year 14**

The reverses of the coins without the star symbol are the same as their counterparts in year 13, except for Isthmian Poseidon. The difference is that Isthmian Poseidon in year 14 only has one type, the head of Poseidon facing left, with drapery on his shoulder and a trident, and the legend ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ ΙΣΘΜΙΟΣ. *RPC I 5300A* does not have a matching type in year 14 without the star symbol.
There are three known overstrikes total from both years 13 and 14.\textsuperscript{19} The reverse of Apollo Aktios is struck over the reverse of Hera Argeia in all three cases.\textsuperscript{20} Two of these coins do not have the star symbol on the reverse, and one coin has the star symbol. These overstrikes may shed light on the mint production during this time. As discovered in Chapter Three, a monumental amount of coinage was minted in the last two years of Nero’s reign. These overstrikes may be a result of this mass production, as the haste in which the coins needed to be struck may have made it easy to accidentally use the already struck coins of Hera Argeia as flans for Apollo Aktios.

The second half of the series from regnal year 14 features a star symbol on the reverse. The obverse of the coins is the same as both year 13 and the series of year 14 without the star. However, there are slight differences on the reverse. The reverse for Isthmian Poseidon is different from the reverse without a star. This coin type features the legend ΠΙΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ ΙΣΘΜΙΟΣ, and depicts Poseidon facing right, not left as in year 13 (RPC 5300A), with a trident and a star symbol in the lower right quadrant of the coin. Pythian Apollo also shares the same legend as the reverse without the star, ΠΥΘ(Ε)ΙΟΣ ΑΠΟΛΛΩΝ, which is different from year 13, which lacks the extra E seen in some dies of this series in year 14. For both years 13 and 14 the distribution of the reverse types is uneven, and the overstrikes in year 14 are extremely rare.

\textbf{1.2 Context}

What is the significance behind the Olympic series? Because Nero travelled to Greece in 66-67 CE and participated in the Panhellenic festivals while there, some scholars, beginning with Joseph Eckhel in 1792, believe that these coins commemorate his victories in these competitions.

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\textsuperscript{19} All three overstrikes are listed in the die study in Chapter Three of this thesis.
\textsuperscript{20} Christiansen (1988), 74.
The reasons given for this assumption are scarce, and at times no reasoning is given at all for the association. Eckhel states “Omnes hi numi adludant ad Neronis in Graeciam profectionem ludorum causa susceptam,” thereby relating the Greek games to the gods pictured on the coins.\textsuperscript{21} Joseph Vogt, in his 1924 survey of Alexandrian coinage, also argues that the Alexandrians must have known about Nero’s trip to Greece and published the series as a manifestation of his foreign policy and his liberation of the Greeks.\textsuperscript{22} Christiansen argues that the Olympic series reflects Nero’s journey to Greece, but that we only know this because sources tell us Nero was in Greece in 66/67 CE.\textsuperscript{23} There is evidence that Nero planned to visit Alexandria after his journey in Greece (Suet. Ner. 19; Cass. Dio 63.27; Tac. Ann. 15.36), discussed in Chapter Three, but these plans never came to fruition.\textsuperscript{24} While Christiansen’s survey helps to advance our knowledge of the evolution of Nero’s coinage, his partial study of the coinage is only a starting point to gaining an accurate picture of the total estimated coinage and its implications.

Couvalis argues that Alexandria, and more specifically the prefect Tiberius Julius Alexander, minted these coins to gain favor from Nero and the Alexandrian Greeks because of the growing discontent and riots with the Jewish population. He contends that these Alexandrian Greeks were threatened by Jewish claims to their privileges in Egypt and wanted to affirm their Greekness, and thus that they commemorated on their coinage Nero’s participation in the Greek

\textsuperscript{21} Eckhel (1792), 53.
\textsuperscript{22} Vogt (1924), 32-37. See Christiansen (1988), 38, for a critique of Vogt’s argument and evidence, as Vogt only considered coins in collections for his study.
\textsuperscript{23} Christiansen (2004), 93. See Chapter Two of this thesis for a survey of Nero’s journey in Greece and the evidence, both literary and material, of his presence there.
\textsuperscript{24} Suet. Ner. 19 Peregri nationes duas omnino suscepit, Alexandrinam et Achaicam; sed Alexandrina ipso profectionis die destitit turbatus religionse simul ac periculo. Nam cum circumitis templis in aede Vestae resedisset, consurgenti ei primum lacinia obhaesit, dein tanta oborta caligo est, ut dispicere non posset; Cass. Dio 63.27 Ὑπὸ πάντων δὲ ὁμοίως ἐγκυκλευθέντος ἠργολόσπετο μὲν τοὺς τε βουλευταίς ἀποκτέναι καὶ τὴν πόλιν καταπρήσατε ἐξ τῆς Ἀλεξάνδρειας πλέσαν; Tac. Ann. 15.36 cum Vestae quoque templum inisset, repente cunctos per artus tremens, seu numine exerrente, seu facinorum recordatione numquam timore vacus, deseruit inceptum, cunctas sibi curas amore patriae leviores dictitans. All direct citations of the text have the text referenced in the bibliography.
games.\textsuperscript{25} Couvalis’ argument brings to light questions concerning the agency of minting in Alexandria, and how involved the prefect and Nero himself might have been in the process. However, as discussed later in Chapter Three, Couvalis does not include several important factors in his argument, such as why Alexandria did not mint coinage concerning other festivals and victories of Nero, and the possible Jewish sympathies of Nero’s late wife Poppaea Sabina.

Furthermore, many scholars only refer to the Olympic series tangentially when discussing Nero’s Greek coinage. Eleni Papaefthymiou briefly mentions the coinage of Alexandria as a city not visited by Nero who still minted coinage in his honor, but does not argue why specifically Alexandria did this.\textsuperscript{26} In spite of this, the article provides a detailed survey of the Greek coinage commemorating Nero’s visit to Greece, and raises questions as to why certain mints chose to mint certain types of coinage. Brooks Levy also briefly addresses these Alexandrian coins in two different articles, the first arguing how Argos, Delphi, and Olympia did not produce coinage of the Greek games, but the games were commemorated on Neronian coins of Alexandria.\textsuperscript{27} The second article argues that Alexandria referred to the Greek games on its coinage more explicitly than Greece itself, and this must have had something to do with Nero’s plans to visit Egypt.\textsuperscript{28} These brief discussions of the Alexandrian coinage do not do much to advance our knowledge of the Olympic series’ overall purpose, but they do raise questions about why Alexandria minted the most explicit reference to Nero’s actions in Greece, despite not being affected by said actions.

The Panhellenic festivals were not the only reason Nero travelled to Greece, as he also liberated the Achaean in 66 or 67 CE, meaning that he freed them from paying tribute and

\textsuperscript{25} Couvalis (2007), 113-22.
\textsuperscript{26} Papaefthymiou (2005), 915–25.
\textsuperscript{27} Levy (1985), 41.
\textsuperscript{28} Levy (1984), 168.
allowed them to govern their own internal affairs, started construction on the Isthmus Canal, and re-founded two Greek cities – Nikopolis and Patras. The mints of Achaea which struck coinage relating to Nero’s journey to Greece include Corinth, Sicyon, Patras, Nikopolis, Buthrotum, Phoenice in Epirus, and the Koinon of Thessaly.  Missing from this list are Olympia, Delphi, and Argos, all Panhellenic sanctuaries which Nero visited, and yet produced no record of Neronian coinage. There are a variety of events, not just Nero’s games, relating to Nero’s journey to Greece commemorated by these mints, and some mints employed a variety of types while others only alluded to a single event. These categories include commemorating the liberation of Greece in 66 or 67 CE by Nero (Corinth, Sicyon, Patras, Nicopolis, and Phoenice in Epirus), Nero’s participation in the games (Corinth, Sicyon, Patras, Nicopolis, and the Koinon of Thessaly), and the refoundation of cities in Greece (Patras and Nicopolis).  Alexandria, Buthrotum, Phoenice in Epirus, and the Koinon of Thessaly were not visited by Nero, yet still minted coinage commemorating his victory in the Greek games. In total, out of the 109 coin types from Achaea minted during Nero’s reign, 49 of them can be traced back to Nero’s visit to Greece in 66/67 CE.

Although Alexandria minted coinage with six deities related to major games, there is no extant evidence for festivals relating to these specific deities in 1st c. CE Alexandria. There is evidence, however, proving that Alexandrians competed at the Greek festivals and competitions. The Panhellenic games flourished under Augustus and the Romans, and the Greek games

30 Papaefthymiou (2005), 922.
31 Manders and Slootjes (2015), 1000.
32 Papaefthymiou (2005), 922. Imagery for the liberation includes imagery of Jupiter Liberator/Zeus Eleutherios and in Corinth, where Nero gave his liberation address, coinage with a representation of Nero giving his speech on the reverse. For Nero’s participation in the games, coins feature images of young men on horses and Apollo playing the lyre. Reverse legends that list the new city name commemorate Nero’s refoundation of two cities. All of these coin types are discussed in detail in Chapter Two.
33 Manders and Slootjes (2015), 1001.
included athletes from Alexandria and the East. At the 204th Olympiad (37 CE), Sarapion of Alexandria won the stadion, for example. Sarapion was the sixth Alexandrian to win the stadion, the next being Straton of Alexandria at the 214th Olympiad (77 CE). Nero himself took part in the 211th Olympiad, where he is listed by Eusebius as winning the contest for heralds, tragic actors, singing to the kithara, and chariot racing, whereas Tryphon of Philadelphia was listed as the stadion winner. The Eleans, who kept their own records of Olympic victors, struck Nero’s Olympiad from the list because of the humiliation they suffered in being forced to let Nero win the contests. The lack of evidence for the Panhellenic deities possessing cult in Alexandria is surprising, especially in light of the evidence that the Alexandrians participated in, and won, numerous games throughout the centuries.

Alexandria may have had athletes and envoys at the Panhellenic games, as seen in the victor lists, but they were not known to have been involved with Nero’s participation in these festivals or his liberation of Achaea in 66 or 67 CE. So, the question remains why Alexandria minted such a large amount of coinage commemorating Nero’s trip to Greece. To further understand the purpose of the Olympic series, I will investigate multiple interrelated phenomena, including the iconography of this coinage and its comparison to the Achaean coinage, the role played by Tiberius Julius Alexander in Alexandria, the meaning behind the star symbol, and the estimated size of the coinage. Nero already had a special interest in Alexandria because Alexandrians are said by Suetonius to have cheered on his performances in Naples in 64 CE.

34 Gardiner (1930), 49-51.  
35 The winners before Sarapion are Perigenes in 272 BCE, Ammonios in 256 BCE, Demetrios in 228 BCE, Krates in 212 BCE, and Skamandros in 36 BCE. Alexandrians also won events such as the pankration, wrestling, boxing, and the diaulos.  
36 Christesen (2007), 402. Christesen uses Eusebius’ Olympic victor list as evidence for who the victors were in Nero’s reign. Philadelphia is in Lydia, near Sardis. This will be discussed in Chapter Two.  
37 Ibid., 82.  
After the conquest of Egypt by Octavian in 30 BCE, Alexandrian Greeks were given special privileges in Egypt, and since the reign of Caligula (37-41 CE), there were serious ethnic conflicts between the Alexandrian Greeks and Jews.\textsuperscript{39} The prefect at the end of Nero’s reign, Tiberius Julius Alexander, sided with the Alexandrian Greeks, despite coming from a Jewish family. The commemoration of Nero’s victories would presumably strengthen the Greeks’ favor with the emperor. This rising tension in Alexandria most likely has played into the choice of iconography and the focus on Greek themes, especially if the Alexandrians believed that Nero was planning on visiting Egypt after Greece, and the prefect in charge favored the Greeks.

Additionally, Alexandria decided to commemorate only Nero’s Greek games, and not any of his Roman festivals such as the quinquennial Neronia, which occurred in Rome in 60 and 65 CE. The imperial mints of Rome and Lugdunum did mint semisses and sestertii alluding to Nero’s trip to Greece as well as the Neronia.\textsuperscript{40} This includes the “Adlocutio” type which either represents Nero’s address as he sets out from Rome or his address to the praetorians in Corinth for his project of digging the Isthmus Canal.\textsuperscript{41} The Olympic series of coins was struck for two years, so there was time to mint coinage in Alexandria representing other festivals, especially since the Neronia took place twice before Nero went to Greece. While there was perhaps not much coinage minted in Alexandria at the beginning of Nero’s reign, the date of the second Neronia, 65 CE, falls into the last five years of an unprecedented amount of coin production. The Alexandrians had the time and means, therefore, to include the Neronia in their coinage, but only the Greek games to commemorate. The monumental size of the Olympic series, and the

\textsuperscript{39} Couvalis (2007), 120; See Segré (1946), 127–36 for more general information on this conflict and Atkinson (2006), 31–54 for the specific pogroms of Caligula’s reign.
\textsuperscript{40} MacDowall (1958), 192–94.
\textsuperscript{41} \textit{RIC} I Nero 95; Sydenham (1917), 57-58.
lack of commemoration of other events during Nero’s reign, demonstrate that there was some significance behind the meaning of this coinage.

I aim to offer a thorough study of the Olympic series, focusing on the cultural, religious, ideological, and political significance of the reverse iconography, to examine why Alexandria commemorated Nero’s Greek games. The methods used to conduct this research will employ numismatic, epigraphical, papyrological, archaeological, and literary evidence beyond the Olympic series. While Nero’s image underwent damnatio memoriae in many areas across the empire following his death in 68 CE, ample surviving material and literary evidence illuminates many aspects of his reign. This will include the monetary context of Nero’s reign, both in Alexandria and across the Empire, especially in relation to the coinage of Achaea which also commemorates Nero’s visit to Greece. I will compare the iconography of the Olympic series to the Greek coinage of Nero in 66-68 CE in order to understand the difference in how Alexandria and Greece represented Nero’s visit to Greece and what aspects of his visit that they focused on. Alexandria, while not involved in Nero’s actions, refers to the Greek games more definitively than any other mint which commemorates him, including mints within Greece. The possible meanings behind the star symbol on the reverse of some of the issues of the Olympic series will be investigated, and I will argue that, contrary to the opinion of some, the star symbol does not represent a date marker, but instead was used as a mint mark of certain officinae producing coinage.

In order to investigate this star symbol, a die study of one of the six deities’ issues will provide insight. Based on the results from the die study, a statistical analysis will provide an

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42 Christesen (2007), 82. As an example of Nero’s damnatio memoriae, Elis both omitted the 211th Olympiad from their records and erased his name from a dedicatory inscription (IvO 287 [68 CE]), which is discussed further in Chapter Two.  
43 Christiansen (1988), 92.
estimate of how many of these coins were minted, or at least how many overall dies were created. From the estimated number of dies, an estimate of the total amount of coinage produced can be made, and how much silver this would have required. To calculate this, a die study of a large sample is necessary, as is Warren Esty’s formula \( e = \left( \frac{d}{c_{est}} \right) \left( 1 + \frac{d_1}{d} \right) \), from which other calculations may be made to find the original number of dies. In this formula “d” is equal to the number of dies observed in the sample, and \( d_1 \) equals the number of dies only represented once in the sample.\(^{44}\) To estimate the coverage of the sample, we then use the formula \( c_{est} = 1 - \frac{d_1}{n} \), where \( d_1 \) represents the number of dies represented by exactly one coin in the sample and \( n \) equals the number of coins in the sample.\(^{45}\) Once the original number of dies is estimated, we can then estimate the number of total coins produced. Since a complete die study which looks at both the obverse and reverse has not been completed before for Nero’s Alexandrian coinage, even this estimation of one issue will prove essential to understanding more about the Roman-Egyptian economy during this time. While the die study will not be as helpful in regard to the Olympic series’ relation to the coinage of Achaea, it will provide valuable information on the star symbol, the size of the coinage, and provide some insight into the economic state of Alexandria and the economic crisis under Tiberius Julius Alexander.

Greek and Egyptian material culture and literature is also essential regarding the history of the six sanctuaries of the Greek games during the Julio-Claudian period, the participants of these games, and how Alexandria functioned under Claudius and Nero. Evidence concerning the ethnic conflict in Alexandria will be significant in helping to further understand the reasoning behind the Olympic series. The papyri of Claudius and Nero, discussed in Chapter Two, will

\(^{44}\) Esty (2006), 359-360.
\(^{45}\) Ibid. 359.
help us better understand the communication between Egypt and the emperor, and the works of
Josephus will help us understand the impact of the ethnic conflicts and the government’s
subsequent response. Some scholars argue that there was an economic crisis in Egypt during this
time, and Tiberius Julius Alexander’s edict from 68 CE will also serve as a primary source with
regard to what was happening in Egypt while the Olympic series was minted.46 This edict may
also help explain the size of the coinage at the end of Nero’s reign, and why so much needed to
be minted at once. The purpose of this thesis finally is to advance previous research and to
explore in depth why the Olympic series was minted in Alexandria, a city which was not
involved with Nero’s actions in Greece. Nero minted an unprecedented amount of coinage in the
last four years of his reign, leaving a lasting impact on the Roman Egyptian economy, but the
question remains as to why so much coinage needed to be minted in such a short time frame.

46 Bell (1938), 1–8; Chalon (1964).
Chapter 1: Nero’s Achaean Coinage

In the autumn of 66 CE, the emperor Nero embarked on a trip to the province of Achaea, not knowing that he would be forced to return to Rome in December 67 CE because of revolts in the Western empire. The trip was originally intended to continue after Nero’s time in Greece, the first stop on an Eastern Mediterranean expedition, as there were plans for future conquests.¹

Nero took an extensive retinue with him, including both important political figures and imperial freedmen, and traveled across Greece in order to create a canal through the Isthmus, participate in the athletic and artistic festivals, and give freedom to the province in regards to the payment of taxes and the handling of internal issues.² Numerous cities in Achaea commemorated his visit by minting coinage related to these events. Some of these mints were not involved with Nero’s actions, such as Phoenice in Epirus, the Koinon of Thessaly, and Buthrotum. This chapter will discuss Nero’s itinerary and retinue in Greece, the evidence for Nero’s participation in the games of the six major sanctuaries, the coinage minted by cities in Achaea, and the possible implications behind why certain mints commemorated his visit and other mints did not. I will explore the juridical use of Latin versus Greek on the various coinages, especially concerning the mints of Patras and Nicopolis, cities which were both founded by Augustus but used different languages for their coinage. I argue that the use of Latin legends in the coinage of certain cities demonstrates a strong Roman influence on their government structure and population in relation to the cities which used Greek legends, or did not mint at all. This investigation will both help to

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¹ Bradley (1979), 154.
² Levy (1984), 166.
further understand the significance of Alexandria minting the Olympic series, and provide a point of comparison for the coinage’s Greek iconography.

1.1 Nero’s Itinerary in Greece
Nero left for Greece somewhere between June 19th and September 14th, 66 CE.\(^3\) Cassius Dio gives the fullest account of his retinue for the journey, and speaks disparagingly against Nero’s actions,

\[
καίτοι πός ἃν τις καὶ ἀκοῦσας, μὴ ὅτι ἰδεῖν, ύπομείναεν ἁνдрα Ρωμαῖον βουλευτῆν εὐπατρίδην ἄρχερεα Καίσαρα αὐτοκράτορα Αὔγουστον ἐξ τὸ λεύκωμα ἐν τοῖς ἁγωνισταῖς ἐγγραφόμενον…
\]

“and indeed how could someone even bear to hear, much less to see, a Roman man, a senator, a patrician, a pontifex maximus, a Caesar, an emperor, an Augustus written on the register among the contestants…”\(^4\)

Notable members of his entourage included the prefect of the praetorian guard Ofonius Tigellinus, Nero’s “spouses” Sporus and Pythagoras, his freedman Phoebus, ex-consul Cluvius Rufus, and the future emperor Vespasian.\(^5\) Vespasian is also attested as part of this retinue in Josephus, which demonstrates that Nero and Vespasian were closely connected during this time.\(^6\)

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\(^3\) Bradley (1978), 63.
\(^4\) All translations are my own unless stated otherwise; Cass. Dio 63.9.1; At the core of the criticisms leveled at Nero (other examples being matricide, his possible involvement in the Great Fire, and his excessive building programs such as the Domus Aurea) was the Roman upper class’s belief that actors were immoral, artificial, and disrupted society. Their profession was unsavory, and they were thought to have loose morals which the upper-class thought would degrade Rome. Thus, for Nero to travel to Greece for the main purpose of performing in the Greek games might be a further slight to his reputation with the Senate and upper class of Rome. Cassius Dio is not the only author to speak out against Nero’s love for performance, as writers such as Juvenal (8.198-199) and Pliny the Elder (NH 7.45-46) also aligned his love of performance and his reign in general.

\(^5\) For Tigellinus: Cass. Dio 63.12.3; Sporus and Pythagoras: Cass. Dio 63.13; Phoebus: Cass. Dio 63.10.2; Cluvius Rufus: Cass. Dio 63.14.3; and Vespasian: Cass. Dio 66.11.2. Freedmen dominate the retinue list given by Dio, but one notable freedman missing here is Epaphroditus. Both Sporus and Pythagoras are considered “spouses” of Nero by Suetonius (Ner. 28.1) and Tacitus (Ann. 15.37) as both authors use the verb *denubo* “to marry” in their descriptions of their relationships. Nero married Sporus in 67 CE because he was said to have looked like Nero’s deceased second wife Poppaea Sabina, castrated him, and forced him to dress like a woman in public in order to resemble her more (Suet. Ner. 28.1). Nero also married the freedman Pythagoras in a ceremony where Nero took the place of the bride (Tac. Ann. 15.37). See Champlin (2003) for more information on the controversy surrounding Nero and Pythagoras. Despite Sporus and Pythagoras, the actual third wife of Nero was Statilia Messalina, who was Nero’s wife until his death in 68 CE.

\(^6\) Joseph. BJ 3.1.3; Nero appointed Vespasian to suppress the Jewish War which broke out in 66 CE, and Vespasian later won the civil war which broke out after Nero’s forced suicide in 68 CE and became emperor from 69-79 CE.
Between government officials and imperial freedmen, there was a wide variety of people surrounding Nero, and as they were so far removed from the Senate in Rome, they formed their own pseudo-government body while abroad.\(^7\) Nero left the freedman Helius in charge in Rome, which caused outrage among the Senate and elite members of society since, according to Cassius Dio, Helius was given complete authority and the power to make any decision he wanted without notifying Nero beforehand.\(^8\) These decisions – the political status of his retinue and the absolute authority given to Helius - likely contributed to the decline of Nero’s reputation with the Senate and led to his eventual death in 68 CE.

The exact chronology of Nero’s activities in Greece is unknown, but a chronology can be reconstructed through surviving material evidence, including coinage and inscriptions, and the traditional timeline of the Panhellenic games. Nero’s arrival in Greece is commemorated on the coinage of Patras, Corinth, and Nicopolis, which all minted coins whose reverses bear the legend ADVENTUS.\(^9\) These coins may have been struck prior to his visit to Greece, however, as Alexandria also minted coinage anticipating Nero’s visit, featuring a galley with ΣΕΒΑΣΤΟΦΟΡΟΣ as the legend.\(^10\) Concerning the normal dates for the games in Greece, the Isthmian games were in April or May, the Nemean games were in July, the Olympian games in July through September, and the Pythian games were in late summer, in August or September.\(^11\)

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\(^{7}\) Bradley (1979), 156. Nero still needed to make decisions while abroad, as some of these decisions could only be made by the emperor himself. The governors of Upper and Lower Germany and Syria were all appointed by Nero during his time abroad, and Vespasian was appointed to deal with the Jewish War in 67 CE. It is reasonable to assume that the retinue Nero surrounded himself with would have had major influence over Nero’s decisions since he was so far removed from Rome and the Senate while he was travelling.

\(^{8}\) Cass. Dio 63.12.1-2: Helius had complete authority, and even had the power to banish or execute citizens, including senators, without asking Nero. Helius still did alert Nero to issues in Rome, and Suetonius gives evidence that Nero received regular correspondence (Ner. 23.1).

\(^{9}\) These coins will be discussed in greater detail later in the chapter.

\(^{10}\) Papaefthymiou (2005), 915-916.

\(^{11}\) Gallivan (1973), 231-232.
The Isthmian and Pythian games were expected next in 67 CE, the Nemean games in 68 CE, and the Olympic games were expected in 69 CE.

There is no evidence whether Nero stuck to these traditional times of the year. But he did order that the years of the festivals be brought together so that he could perform the entire Panhellenic circuit while in Greece, as they occurred in different years than one another on a rotating calendar.\(^\text{12}\) Philostratus records that Nero moved the date of the Olympic games to accommodate his visit to Greece, so instead of occurring in 65 CE as expected, the games were moved to the end of 66 CE.\(^\text{13}\) K.R. Bradley suggests that the Isthmian, Pythian, and Actian games were held twice, and if Nero arrived in Rome before September, he would have been able to participate in the Actian and Pythian festivals in 66 CE. He gives a possible chronology of Nero’s participation in the games: First Actian, First Pythian, First Isthmian, Nemean, Olympian, Second Actian, Second Pythian, Second Isthmian.\(^\text{14}\)

Bradley does not treat the Argive games, but Nero most likely participated in the games there, especially since the Argive games shared the same stadium as the Nemean games in the Imperial period.\(^\text{15}\) N.M. Kennell states that while there is no direct literary evidence that Nero was in Argos for the games, he must have visited the city.\(^\text{16}\) Because of the shared location of the stadium and a dedication of Nero at Argos discussed later this chapter, and the Olympic series of Alexandrian coinage which depicts both Zeus Nemeios and Hera Argeia, we can assume Nero also competed in the Argive games. The date for the Argive games remains

\(^{12}\) Bradley (1978), 64-65; Suet. Ner. 23.1: *Nam et quae diversissimorum temporum sunt, cogi in unum annum, quibusdam etiam iteratis, iussit et Olympiae quoque praeter consuetudinem musicum agona commisit.*

\(^{13}\) Phil. VA 5.7.

\(^{14}\) Bradley (1978), 65; Bradley’s argument goes against that of Paul Gallivan, who believed that the Isthmian and Pythian games were only held once, and that the Olympic and Nemean games were held twice. Bradley disagrees because of evidence from Jerome (*BJ* 3.540), who does not mention the Olympic and Nemean festivals.

\(^{15}\) Paus. 2.24. In addition to sharing the same stadium, the two festivals also shared the same *agonothete*, for which see Kennell (1988), 241, no. 11.

\(^{16}\) Ibid., 241.
uncertain, though scholars such as George Thomson and Thomas Scanlon believe that it occurred around the same time as the Olympic games.\textsuperscript{17} Since the Nemean games and the Argives games were held at the same stadium, and the Olympic games occurred after the Nemean, based off of Thomson and Scanlon’s evidence we can put the Argive games in between these two. Thus, we end up with a possible itinerary of First Actian, First Pythian, First Isthmian, Nemean, Argive, Olympic, Second Actian, Second Pythian, Second Isthmian.\textsuperscript{18}

The main debate concerning the chronology of Nero’s trip to Greece concerns the liberation of Achaea and whether it occurred on November 28\textsuperscript{th} 66 or 67 CE. The liberation was both political and economic – Achaea no longer had to give tribute to Rome and they were able to govern their own affairs.\textsuperscript{19} Because the Senate was losing control of such a powerful province, Nero had to change Sardinia from an imperial province to a senatorial.\textsuperscript{20} In November 67 CE Nero was in Corinth to begin his project of building a canal through the Isthmus.\textsuperscript{21} An inscription found in Acraephia, a polis in Boeotia, \textit{IG VII 2713}, provides epigraphic evidence for Nero’s liberation and the speech he gave, along with a decree from the people of Acraephia giving thanks. The liberation itself does not receive much attention in our surviving ancient sources, and is only briefly mentioned in Suetonius and Cassius Dio, and so this inscription is our main source of information concerning the liberation.\textsuperscript{22} Since Corinth was the seat of the Roman government in the province, it makes sense that Nero would choose Corinth to give this speech. Nero’s speech runs as follows:

1 (I) Αὐτοκράτωρ Καίσαρ λέγει· τῆς εἴς με εὐνοί-

\textsuperscript{17} Thomson (1943), 60; Scanlon (2014).
\textsuperscript{18} This only includes the main festivals that Nero participated in, as there is evidence he participated in multiple other local festivals across Greece.
\textsuperscript{19} Levy (1984), 166.
\textsuperscript{20} Paus. VII 17.3; Bradley (1978), 68.
\textsuperscript{21} This project was ultimately unsuccessful due to Nero’s death, which stalled the project.
\textsuperscript{22} Suet. Ner. 24.2; Cass. Dio 63.11.1.
ας τε καὶ εὐσεβείας ἀμείψασθαι θέλων τὴν εὐγε-
νεστάτην Ἐλλάδα κελεύω πλείστους καθ’ ὁ[σ]ο[ν]
ένδέχεται ἐκ ταύτης τῆς ἐπαρχείας παρῖναι
5 ἵνα Κόρινθον τῇ πρὸ τεσσάρων Καλαννόν Δε-
κεμβρίων.
(II) συνελθόντων τῶν ὄχλων ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ προσεφώ-
νησεν τὰ ὑπογεγραμμένα.
10 ἀπροσδόκητον ὑμεῖς, ἄνδρες Ἕλληνες, δωρεάν,
eἰ καὶ μηδὲν παρὰ τῆς ἐμῆς μεγαλοφροσύνης
ἀνέλπιστον, χαρίζομαι, τοσαύτην, ὅσην οὐκ ἐχωρή-
σατε αἰτεῖσθαι. πάντες οἱ τὴν Ἀχαίαν καὶ τὴν ἔως
νῦν Πελοπόννησον κατοικοῦντες Ἐλληνες
λάβετ’ ἐλευθερίαν ἀνισφορίαν, ἣν οὐδ’ ἐν τοῖς εὑτ-
χεστάτοις ὑμῶν πάντες χρόνος ἔσχετε·
15 ἢ γὰρ ἄλλοτρος ἢ ἄλληλοις ἐδουλεύσατε.
εἴθε μὲν οὖν ἀκμαζούσης τῆς Ἐλλάδος παρειχό-
μην ταύτην τὴν δωρεάν, ἵνα μου πλείονες ἄπολ-
λισσὶ τῆς χάριτος· διὸ καὶ μέμφομαι τὸν αἰῶνα
20 προδαπανήσαντά μου τὸ μέγεθος τῆς χάριτος.
καὶ νῦν δὲ οὐ δι’ ἐλεον ὑμᾶς, ἀλλὰ δι’ ἐνυπαρ-
γετό, <ἀ>μείβομαι δὲ τοὺς θεοὺς ὑμῶν ὅν καὶ διὰ
γῆς καὶ διὰ χαλάττης αἰεὶ μου προνοομένων πε-
πείραμαι, ὃτι μοι τὴλικαῦτα εὑριστεῖν παρέσχον.
25 πόλεις μὲν γὰρ καὶ ἄλλοι ἠλευθέρωσαν ἠγεμόνες,
[Nέρων δὲ ὅλη]ν ἐπαρχείαν.

Emperor Caesar proclaims:
Since it is my desire to requite most glorious Greece for its loyalty and respect toward
me, I bid all persons of this province, so far as possible, to assemble at Corinth on
November 29.
When the people had gathered in an assembly, he delivered the following oration.
I bestow upon you, men of Hellas, a gift such as you never hoped for, even though
my generosity knows no bounds, a gift so great that it never occurred to you to ask for it.
All Greeks living in Achaea and what until now has been known as the Peloponnesus,
receive your liberty and freedom from taxation, a freedom which you never had even in
your most glorious days, for you were subject either to foreigners or to one another.
Would that I could have conferred this boon when Hellas was in her prime, that greater
numbers might enjoy this favor; and for that reason I find fault with the age, in that it
already has minimized the extent of my grant. And now I bestow this boon not from pity,
but from good will, and I am requiting your gods, whose constant care for me I have
experienced both by land and by sea, that they have granted to me to confer such benefits.
Other princes have given cities their freedom; Nero alone has set free an entire province.
(trans. Chester et al. [1961])
One correction to this translation is that the date should read November 28th.\textsuperscript{23} The real controversy of the inscription stems from what year this speech was given, as it does not give a year, and thus 66 or 67 CE could fit.

Patras, Sicyon, Nicopolis, and Corinth all commemorate this liberation with coinage bearing the legend Zeus Eleutherios – Zeus the Liberator. Phoenice in Epirus’s coinage features the image of Zeus with fulmen and sceptre on the reverse to represent the liberation, instead of the legend with his name.\textsuperscript{24} But these coins cannot provide us with the date of the liberation, as they could have been minted as a commemorative issue at a later date. The duoviri named on the Corinthian coinage also cannot help with the timeline, because while they were magistrates together, there is no way to know if they were magistrates in 66 or 67 CE, or after Nero’s reign entirely.

The date of Nero’s liberation greatly affects how we view Nero’s visit to Greece and his purpose there. If Nero liberated Achaea in 66 CE, Levy believes that this may be seen as one of his primary reasons for going to Greece, since it would have been one of the first things he did there. This liberation would then be celebrated at the various festivals in which he participated. If he liberated Achaea in November 67 CE, it would have been one of the last things he did before returning to Rome. This may be seen as a gift to the Greeks from Nero for their welcome of him and his victories in the games.\textsuperscript{25} The date of November 28, 67 CE seems to fit his overall program and timeline in Greece the best, the reasons for which are discussed below. Following the chronology of the games, Nero would have been in Isthmia in November to participate in the

\textsuperscript{23} All other translations and commentaries use the date November 28\textsuperscript{th}, as the Greek says in ll. 5-6 “the fourth day before the Kalends of December.” See Holleaux (1888) for a commentary on the inscription.

\textsuperscript{24} Phoenice in Epirus will be discussed later this chapter. While the coinage does not feature the legend Zeus Eleutherios like the other cities, Roman Provincial Coinage still believes it to represent the liberation of Achaea.

\textsuperscript{25} Levy (1984), 166-167. Levy argues for the earlier date of 66 CE.
games, so it would have been possible for him to give this speech in Corinth at this time.

Suetonius also briefly attests that “departing, he gave the entire province freedom and simultaneously gave the judges Roman citizenship and a large sum of money” (*Decedens deinde provinciam universam libertate donavit simulque iudices civitate Romana et pecunia grandi*, Suet. *Ner. 24.2*).

Suetonius is an essential source on Nero’s journey, but his writing cannot always be trusted. Levy cites one other date-related error that Suetonius made, specifically the closure of the doors on the Temple of Janus, to show that the above passage may also be wrong. However, there is numismatic evidence which proves Levy’s claim about the Temple of Janus, but nothing which proves that Suetonius is wrong in saying that Nero liberated the Greeks in 67 CE. Furthermore, while there is an inscription from Sardinia, *CIL X 7852*, which records that the province switched from procurators to proconsuls in the summer of 67 CE, this cannot be used as definitive evidence that the liberation occurred in 66 CE. Nero may have made this change in Sardinia in anticipation of the liberation he was about to give.

Nero was back in Rome by January 1st, 68 CE. Upon his return to the city, he entered with a triumphal procession, adorned with the crowns and prizes of the games he competed in, and rode in the chariot that Augustus once used for his triumphs, and ended at the Temple of Apollo, according to Suetonius. This celebratory mood did not last long, however, as Nero eventually

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26 Ibid., n. 20.
27 Ibid., n. 20 – Suetonius *Ner.* 13.2 states that the doors of the Temple of Janus were closed in 66 CE, while there is numismatic evidence of the doors closing in 64/65 CE.
29 Bradley (1978), 71.
30 Suet. *Ner.* 25.1: *sed et Romam eo curru, quo Augustus olim triumphaverat, et in veste purpurea distinctaque stellis aureis chlamyde coronamque capite gerens Olympiacam, dextra manu Pythiam, praeente pompa ceterarum cum titulis, ubi et quos quo cantionum quove fabularum argumento vicisset.*
learned of the serious nature of the uprisings in the provinces. He started preparing a campaign to the provinces, and in the process, his lavish demands alienated him from the Senate and the elite of Rome. Eventually, the Senate declared him an enemy of the state, and he was forced to flee Rome, where he then took his own life on June 9th, 68 CE.

1.2 The Greek Games and their Coinage
While Nero was in Greece, he visited all four Panhellenic sanctuaries – Olympia, Isthmia, Nemea, and Delphi, along with two other festivals, the Actian games in Nicopolis and the Argive games in Argos. According to Dio, Nero competed in every city which held games, except for Athens and Sparta, which he did not visit at all. While before the Roman period only the main four festivals (the Olympian, Nemean, Isthmian, and Pythian games) were considered Panhellenic, in the early Imperial period all six festivals that Nero competed in were considered part of the periods, the Olympic circuit. Nero’s goal was to become a περιοδονίκης, or a circuit victor, by winning all of the Panhellenic games. While the prestige of the Olympic games had diminished in the second and first centuries BCE, the Imperial period saw them gain back prestige and become “the pride of hellenism.”

His presence at these sites is attested not only by literary evidence but also by some material remains of dedications and inscriptions. However, material remains are scarce, especially...
as Nero’s image underwent *damnatio memoriae* after his death, and most occurrences of his name were destroyed or struck out from writing.\(^{35}\)

In addition to epigraphical and literary evidence, the coinage of Achaea under Nero shows a divide between mints using Latin legends, Greek legends, or not minting any coinage commemorating Nero. The cities which mint Latin coinage (Corinth, Patras, and Buthrotum) illustrate a more Romanized population and government, highlighting their status as a Roman colony. While it is expected for Roman colonies and cities to use Latin for their coin legends, and the Greek cities to use Greek, there is an exception in Nicopolis, which will be discussed later this chapter. Mints which used Greek legends (Nicopolis, Sicyon, the Koinon of Thessaly, and Phoenice in Epirus) had stronger Hellenic influence, and while they still may have supported Nero’s presence in Greece, they did not feel the same need as the Roman cities to use Latin.\(^{36}\) Lastly, I explore possible reasons why Delphi and Olympia did not mint any coinage under Nero, and its implications.\(^{37}\)

The first games in which Nero would have participated, using Bradley’s chronology, would have been the Actian games in Nicopolis during the 211\(^{th}\) Olympiad.\(^{38}\) Augustus founded Nicopolis to commemorate his victory in the Battle of Actium and reinstituted the Actian games there.\(^{39}\) These games received great prestige from Augustus, and according to some inscriptions were added to the *periodos*, along with the Argive games, which is not mentioned in the

\(^{35}\)F. Nero suffered *damnatio memoriae* when he was declared an enemy of the state shortly before his death (Suet. Ner. 49.2); *Damnatio memoriae* is presumed for the Acraephia inscription, especially concerning l. 26, in which multiple versions of Nero’s name have been attributed to the erasure; See Oliver (1989), 575 for a brief review of all of the different versions. *Damnatio memoriae* will also be discussed later this chapter in Elis.

\(^{36}\)The Koinon of Thessaly presumably minted its coinage in Larisa, its capital. See Burnett, Amandry, and Ripollès, eds. (1992), 280-281.

\(^{37}\)While Delphi and Elis, the city which controlled Olympia, did not mint coinage until Hadrian, I explore the possible reasons why this is at the end of the chapter.

\(^{38}\)Papaefthymiou (2005), 918.

\(^{39}\)Cass. Dio 51.1; Suet. Ner. 18.2.
inscription. Jerome notes that Nero was victorious here in tragedy, playing the *kithara*, and as a herald. The main source of evidence for Nero’s participation in the Actian games is the coinage of Nicopolis, which minted bronze coinage with one obverse and three different reverse types and legends:

**RPC 1368**  
*Obv.* ΝΕΡΩΝΟΝΙΚΟΠΟΛΙΣ Η ΠΡΟΣ ΑΚΤ. Winged Tyche, r.  
*Rev.* ΝΕΡΩΝΟΣ ΑΥΤΟΚΡΑ ΣΕΒΑ, ΕΠΙΦΑΝΙΑ. Galley, r.

**RPC 1369**  
*Obv.* ΝΕΡΩΝΟΝΙΚΟΠΟΛΙΣ Η ΠΡΟΣ ΑΚΤ. Winged Tyche, r.  
*Rev.* ΝΕΡΩΝΟΣ ΕΠΙΦΑΝΙΑ; Galley, r.

**RPC 1370**  
*Obv.* ΝΕΡΩΝΟΝΙΚΟΠΟΛΙΣ Η ΠΡΟΣ ΑΚΤ. Winged Tyche, r.  
*Rev.* ΝΕΡΩ[ΝΟΣ]; Nike standing, l., with wreath

RPC 1368-9 is the Greek version of the ADVENTUS AUGUSTI and appears to have commemorated Nero’s arrival in Greece, similar perhaps to Alexandria’s ΣΕΒΑΣΤΟΦΟΡΟΣ coinage, which I will discuss in the next chapter. RPC 1370, featuring Nike on the reverse, appears to refer to Nero’s victories at the Actian games. This is important because Nicopolis is the only city to mint coins alluding to his victory, and not just his participation in the games themselves.

However, despite the city being founded by Augustus, Nicopolis did not use Latin legends on their coinage. Glen Bowersock has argued that there was nothing Roman about this foundation, and Augustus did not plan on Romanizing the city when he established it. Yet Ruscu has argued that there was a Roman colony settled in Nicopolis. It was in fact a double community, where a

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40 Kennell (1988), 242; *IGLSyr* 4 1265 ll. 10-11, found in Laodikaiia in 214 CE: “Αὐγοῦστου Ἀκτια ἐν Νεικόπολει τῆς περιόδου / παιδῶν πυγμήν...”

41 Hieron. *Chron.* a.2084 *rursum Nero isthmia, pythia, actia celebrans, inter cerycas, tragoedos, et citharistas coronatur*. Note that Jerome was writing in the 2nd-3rd c. CE, and is translating Eusebius’ *Chronicon*, who was writing in the early 4th c. Because they are so far removed from Nero’s reign, we must question the validity of their information.

42 Papaefthymiou (2005), 918.

43 Bowersock (1965), 94.
Greek polis and a Roman colony co-existed within Nicopolis. Despite there being a Roman colony present, it seems that only the Greek polis minted coinage, possibly because “nor did the thoroughly Greek environment into which they were set help matters for them, with its emphasis on the city’s Greek character, the membership of Nicopolis in the Amphycctionic league and the Panhellenic status aimed at by the Actian games.” Furthermore, as discussed below, Nicopolis was refounded by Nero during his visit, but did not switch to using a Latin legend as would be expected from a Roman city. For example, Patras, the other city originally founded by Augustus and refounded by Nero, used Latin legends for their own coinage. Nicopolis’ use of Greek demonstrates that while it is expected that Roman colonies use Latin for their coinage, as they were more heavily influenced by Roman culture and politics, it was not always followed or possible.

Nicopolis might have further coinage under Nero, as there are certain coins once attributed to Apollonia which are controversial. The two types, BMC 84 and 85, have the obverse legend ΝΕΡΩΝΙ ΑΠΟΛΛΩΝΙ ΚΤΙΣΤΗ, with Nero as Apollo r., playing the lyre. These coins have previously been attributed to Apollonia because of the obverse legend, that was previously believed it to read “To Apollo, the Founder,” but Andrew Burnett suggests that these coins belong to Nicopolis, and the legend actually reads “To Nero Apollo, the Founder.” The expected legend for Apollonia, if they used their full ethnic, would be the genitive ΑΠΟΛΛΩΝΙΑΤΑΝ. ΑΠΟΛΛΩΝΙ is not an abbreviation of this ethnic, but the dative form, and thus does not match. Nero refounded Nicopolis upon his arrival, naming it ΝΕΡΩΝΟΝΙΚΟΠΩΛΙΣ, so ΚΤΙΣΤΗ makes sense in this context on the obverse. ΚΤΙΣΤΗ is the dative κτίστη, “to the founder,” and

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44 Ruscu (2006), 252-254. Both Pliny (NH 4.1.5) and Tacitus (Ann. 5.10.4) use the word *colonia* when describing Nicopolis.
45 Ibid., 255.
46 Burnett, Amandry, and Ripollès eds. (1992), 258.
47 Burnett (1984), 84.
otherwise would not make sense on the coinage of Apollonia since Nero did not found anything there. The reverse of the one series, featuring Nike, is also similar to RPC 1370 of Nicopolis, for the reason that Nike is facing left and holding a wreath in both series.

Others such as Brooks Levy are skeptical, as the Apollonia coinage has no mintmark on it, while the coinage from Nicopolis does, and it would be unusual to mint both marked and unmarked at the same time. Levy suggests that the series was a joint issue from Achaea, and was not the product of a single mint, but a consortium. After Nero’s death, the name of Neronikopolis was subsequently changed back to Nicopolis, most likely due to his damnatio memoriae. Coins reverted to imagery of Augustus’ founding of the city, and “Nero’s visit to the Actian Games was an episode to be forgotten.” The use of Greek instead of Latin legends on this coinage highlights the fact that Nicopolis was not demonstrating any Romanitas for Nero, despite his refoundation of their city and their status as part Roman colony, and was easily able to erase his presence after his death.

Nero also participated in the Nemean games and Argive games, held during the Roman period in the same stadium, that of the Argive Heraion in Argos, and also had the same agonothetes. The Nemean games were permanently moved to Argos sometime in the 270s BCE. There is no known building activity at Nemea from the Hellenistic period through the 5th century CE, and the sanctuary at Nemea was virtually abandoned in the move of the games to Argos. The Argive Heraion was not abandoned and was maintained throughout the Roman

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49 See Levy (1985) for a full explanation of where the Apollonia coinage could belong to.
50 Burnett (1984), 85.
51 Kennell (1988), 241; Laurence (2012), 176-77: The Nemean games were transferred to Argos from the Temple of Zeus at Nemea during the Hellenistic period. The agonothetes was the superintendent of the games.
52 Laurence (2012), 179.
53 Ibid., 179.
period, and in the time of Pausanias, the cult chryselephantine statues were still present, and the
temple itself was in good condition. Pausanias states that Nero left dedications at the temple
consisting of a golden crown and a purple robe (κείται δὲ καὶ στέφανος χρυσοῦς καὶ πέπλος
πορφύρας, Νέρωνος ταύτα ἀναθήματα, Paus. 2.17.6). Pausanias is brief in his description of the
Nemean games, and only mentions that there was a sanctuary to Nemean Zeus near the agora and
that the stadium for both the Nemean and Argive games was on the side of the acropolis of
Larisa. While the games were not held at the Argive Heraion itself, Nero’s dedications at the
temple help prove that he did in fact participate in these games and visited the city.

Concerning the coinage related to the Nemean and Argive games, the coinage of Sicyon is
associated with Nero’s victories in the Nemean games. The only relevant imperial coinage
minted was during Nero’s reign, specifically in relation to his visit to Greece. The coinage from
Sicyon, which consists entirely of bronze asses, is as follows:

RPC 1238-40 Obv. N(E) K(Al) ZEYC ELEYTHEPIOC; laureate head of Nero
  Rev. EΠΙ Γ ΙΟΥ ΠΩΛΑΙΝΟΥ ΔΑ, CI below horse; man on horse
  wearing a chlamys

RPC 1241-44 Obv. N(E) K(Al) ZEYC ELEYTHEPIOC; laureate head of Nero
  Rev. EΠΙ Γ ΙΟΥ ΠΩΛΑΙΝΟΥ, ΔΑ, CI(KY) below horse; naked figure,
  wearing cloak, and holding out arms

The two reverse types feature a figure on horseback, most likely Nero or a local hero, and a young
man with outstretched hands, alluding perhaps to Nero’s athletic and equestrian contests in the
Nemean games. The reverse legend of both issues mentions the magistrate Gaius Julius

54 Amandry (1980), 250.
55 Paus. 2.24.2: Τὴν δὲ ἀκρόπολιν Λάρισαν μὲν καλοῦσιν…ἀνήντων δὲ ἐς τὴν ἀκρόπολιν ἔστι μὲν τῆς Ἀκραῖας Ἀρας
  τὸ ἱερόν…ἔξεται δὲ τὸ στάδιον, ἐν ὧν τὸν ἀγώνα τῷ Νεμέῳ Δί καὶ τῇ Ἐραίᾳ ἄγουσιν.
56 Papaefthymiou (2005), 916; Manders and Slootjes (2015), 1000.
57 Burnett, Amandry, and Ripollès eds. (1992), 258.
58 Levy (1989), 65; Papaefthymiou (2005), 916.
Polyaenus, who was also a *duovir* at Corinth less than a decade prior. The obverse legend ΖΕΥϹ ΕΛΕΥΘΕΡΙΟϹ illustrates that this coinage was minted after Nero’s liberation of Achaea.\(^{59}\) Thus, Sicyon commemorated not only Nero’s participation in the games but also his liberation of Greece.

Corinth was the last Achaean city to mint coinage commemorating Nero’s visit, namely for the Isthmian games. When Corinth and the sanctuary of Poseidon were destroyed in 146 BCE by Lucius Mummius and his troops, the Isthmian games were transferred to Sicyon, and only returned to Corinth after Julius Caesar refounded the city in 44 BCE as *Colonia Laus Julia Corinthiensis*.\(^{60}\) However, excavations of the Temple of Poseidon at Isthmia show that the Isthmian games were probably not held at the sanctuary until the mid-1\(^{st}\) century CE, and were probably held in Corinth itself along with the Sebastea and Caesarea.\(^{61}\) This time period may coincide with Nero’s reign, and in fact “ceramic, architectural, and numismatic evidence does not reappear in the sanctuary itself until the Claudian or Neronian periods…”\(^{62}\) A Roman circus at Corinth has been identified as the presumable location for the equestrian contests of these games and was an integral part of the cityscape. Built around the mid to late Augustan period, it was utilized into the 6\(^{th}\) century.\(^{63}\)

Almost a decade before Nero’s trip to Greece, a list of victors in the Sebastea, Caesarea, and Isthmian games from 57 CE was inscribed on a marble herm at Corinth. This inscription is significant because it proves Nero’s interest in the Isthmian games, discussed below, but also names the *duoviri* in office, which helps us to date the later coinage of Sicyon which names them.

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\(^{59}\) The coinage of Nero is the only coinage for Sicyon that I could find which features ΖΕΥϹ ΕΛΕΥΘΕΡΙΟϹ.

\(^{60}\) Wiseman (2015), 193-194, 234.

\(^{61}\) Laurence (2012), 211. Gebhard (1993), 82-89 proposes the date of 55 or 57 CE for the return of the games; The Caesarea was a local festival held in honor of Augustus’ victory at the Battle of Actium in 31 BCE, and the Sebastea was an imperial contest named after the emperor.

\(^{62}\) Laurence (2012), 212.

\(^{63}\) Ibid., 210.
The inscription, SEG 65.184, was found on a marble herm, and might have originally been established on the grounds or upper plateau of the gymnasium at Corinth, where other victor lists have been found.\(^{64}\) The herm has been badly damaged, as not only is the head missing, but there is also deterioration and destruction of certain letters, most likely a deliberate act of damnatio memoriae against Nero. The inscription reads:

\[\text{ἀγαθ[η] τύχ[η]}
\]
\[\text{ἔτους [ΖΠ ἀπὸ τῆς]}
\]
\[\text{[ἐν Ἀκτίῳ Καῖσαρος γίγης}
\]
\[\text{Αὐτὸ[κρ]άτορι Νέρωγι}
\]
5  
\[\text{Κλαυδίῳ Καίσαρι Σ[ε]βαστῷ Γερμανικῷ τὸ βʹ}
\]
\[\text{και Λ. Κελ[πουρνίῳ Πίσαρων υπάτω[ε]}
\]
\[\text{ἀγονοβέτου}
\]
\[\text{Τι[βερί]ίῳ Κλεο[δίῳ Πουβλίου υ[δ]οῦ Δεινίπ[το]]}
\]
\[\text{Νεροβενν[ον Κλεοδή[ν Καισαρή[ν Σεβασ[τήν]}
\]
10  
\[\text{Γερμανική[η] και Ισθμί[α] καὶ Καισαρ[ή]ν}
\]
\[\text{ἐλληνο[δικ]ο[ν] δὲ}
\]
\]
\[\text{Α. Οὐστρον[ν] Δαβ[έ]ωνος, Δ. Αιμ[λί[ου [.]ν[υκ[ο[ν] [..].}
\]
\[\text{Π. Ταδ[ίο ν] Άλει[η] [.ην[ου, Τι[κ]λ[α][δ[ί[ου Μα[ζ][μου,}
\]
15  
\[\text{Κ. Κορ[νη][λί[ου Α[ί[ο ν, Π. Κορ[νη][λί[ου [.].]ο[ν] [.].]
\]
\[\text{Κ. Φαδ[ίο ν] Ιρτιανο[ν, [- - - - 10-12 [- - - [-λ[ι] [ν] Πολυαί[νου}
\]
\[\text{εἰσαγαγ[έ]ς}
\]
\[\text{Κ. Φαδ[ίο ν] Κυ[νή Θάλλ][ου}
\]
\[\text{ἐξωτάρχ[ου]
\]
20  
\[\text{Γν. Βαβ[βίου Ιταλικο[ν}
\]
\[\text{vacat}
\]
\[\text{vacat}
\]
\]
\[\text{[π][αιδή] δ[ρό][μ][ο[ν], Μ. Αντο[γ]ιος [.].].]τος Κορ[νίθ][ος}
\]
25  
\[\text{ἀγε[ει]ν[ον δ[ρό][μ][ο[ν, Λ. Ιο[λ][ιος Θ[π].].].].]ο[ς Κ[θ]ρ[θ][ο[ς[ε]
\]
\[\text{ἀγ[δρό]ν δ[ρό][μ][ο[ν, [.].].].].]ο[ν [.].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].].}.}]

\(^{64}\) Ibid., 200.
Given the remains of l. six, there can be no doubt that it is L. Calpurnius Piso named as consul.⁶⁵

Piso was consul with Nero in 57 CE, which provides further evidence that the Isthmia and Caesarea were held in 57 CE in an odd-numbered year.⁶⁶ For the games to be held in an odd-numbered year is significant because it proves that the “Isthmia and Caesarea (which words are clear in line 10) were held only in odd-numbered years A.D. and that the biennial cycle of earlier times was still in use.”⁶⁷ As discussed in Part I of this chapter, the Isthmian games were expected to occur in 67 CE, which continues to follow this pattern of a biennial game in an odd-numbered year. The agonothetes was the highest office in Corinth, even above the duoviris quinquennalis, one of two magistrates in the government who held joint office. The duoviri are named on Corinthian coinage, and the series of their names helps with dating coins for the years for which we have record of who served. Wiseman suggests the name in line sixteen should be read as that of Gaius Julius Polyaenus, who was probably the duovir with Gaius Julius Optatus in 57/58 or 58/59 CE and the same man named on the coinage of Sicyon a decade later (RPC 1238-44).⁶⁸

In l. 19 the term ξυστάρχος appears, the first use of this term in a Corinthian inscription. The title xystarchos was awarded by the emperor to extraordinary victors in these games, and most often those who were a periodonikēs (περιοδονίκης), or had won sacred games. This was

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⁶⁵ L. Antistius Vetus was consul with Nero in 55 CE, L. Calpurnius Piso in 57 CE, M. Valerius Messalla Corvinus in 58 CE, Cossus Cornelius Lentulus in 60 CE, and Ti. Catius Asconius Silius Italicus and P. Galerius Trachalus in 68 CE.

⁶⁶ Wiseman (2015), 212; See Wiseman for an in-depth discussion of the inscription, including conventions of the translation, and both an epigraphic and a general commentary of the text.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 212.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 219-220.
such an honorable title that men of this status had their own guild and were tasked with
supervising athletic contests and making sure athletes followed the rules of the competitions.\(^{69}\)
Since someone has been named a *xystarches* (ξυστάρχος) in this inscription, this means that
Nero would have had to grant this title in 57 CE, the date of the inscription. Thus, Nero, even
from an early age both in his life and his reign, was paying attention to the victorious athletes in
the provinces in order to grant these honors.

Since Nero was most likely in Corinth in both 66 and 67 CE, Corinth minted a large
number of coins relating to his visit to Greece, and in total produced twenty-one coin types
during Nero’s reign.\(^{70}\) The coin types relating to Nero’s visit to Greece cover three categories:
the ADVENTUS type, the liberation of Greece, and commemoration of Nero’s victories in the
games:

**RPC 1203**  
*Obv.* NERO CAE(S)(A)(R) AVG (GERM) IMP; laureate head of Nero, r.  
*Rev.* L R(V)(T) PISONE II(VI)(R) Q(V)(I) COR or P M CLEAN(DRO)  
(II)(V) Q(V)(I) COR; ADVE (or ADVE) AVG (or AVG) (in field); galley, l.

**RPC 1204**  
*Obv.* NERO CAE(SAR) AVG (or AVG) IMP; radiate head of Nero, r. or l.  
*Rev.* L R(V)(T) PISONE II(VI)(R) Q(V)(I) COR or P M CLEAN(DRO)  
(II)(V) Q(V)(I) COR; ADVE (or ADVE) AVG (or AVG) (in field); galley, l.

**RPC 1205**  
*Obv.* NERO CAE(S)(A)(R) AVG (GERM) IMP; laureate Nero, r. or l.  
*Rev.* L RVTI PISONE II(VI)(R) Q(V)(IN) (COR) or P MEM(IO)  
CLEANDRO (II)(VIR) Q(V)(I)(IN)(Q) CO(R); in field, AD LO/AV G;  
emperor, his r. hand raised, holding scroll, standing l., on *suggestum*

**RPC 1206**  
*Obv.* NERO CAE(SAR) AVG (or AVG) IMP; radiate head of Nero, r. or l.

\(^{69}\) Ibid., 221.  
\(^{70}\) Manders and Slootjes (2015), 999. See Walbank (2003), 337-349 for an overview of Corinthian coinage during
this time.
One important aspect to note is that the legends are in Latin. Patras and Buthrotum are the other cities which minted legends in Latin, and will be discussed later on. Corinth, because of its refoundation by Caesar in 44 BCE, was a true Roman colony, unlike Nicopolis which was part Greek polis and part Roman colony. The government structure and population would have been heavily influenced by Rome, as magistrates needed to be full Roman citizens, leading to their coinage using Latin instead of Greek.71 Furthermore, because the government officials were Romans, “the political and judicial power of the governor…would reinforce the elite’s view that social advancement and prestige was identified with the Latin language and Roman culture.”72

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71 Engels (1990), 67.
72 Ibid., 69.
Concerning the coin types, RPC 1203 and 1204 are the ADVENTUS type, and commemorate Nero’s arrival in Greece with the image of a galley on the reverse. This type would have either anticipated his arrival, like the ΣΕΒΑΣΤΟΦΟΡΟΣ type in Alexandria, or celebrate his arrival with the image of the ship.\(^73\) RPC 1205 and 1206 feature a truncated form of the legend ADLOCUTIO AUGUSTI, and refer to Nero’s liberation of Achaea, as the figure of the emperor with his hand raised refers to the speech he gave in Corinth. The names on the reverse of these coins are those of the duoviri in Corinth at the time, which are L. Rutilius Piso and P. Memmius Cleander in 66/67 CE.\(^74\) The duoviri for 67/68 CE were Ti. Claudius Anaxilaus and P. Ventidius Fronto, as identified by the legend on the reverse of RPC 1207-1209. These coins commemorate Nero’s participation and victory in the Isthmian games.

Patras is another mint which used Latin instead of Greek for its legends. The mint struck coinage commemorating Nero’s adventus in Greece, his liberation of Achaea, his participation in the games, and the refoundation of their city by Nero.\(^75\) The coinage is as follows:

RPC 1258  Obv. NERO CAESAR AVG GERM; radiate head of Nero, r.  
Rev. GEN COL NER PAT; Genius with patera over altar and cornucopia

RPC 1259  Obv. NERO CAESAR AVG GERM; radiate head of Nero, l.  
Rev. GEN COL NER PAT; Genius with patera over altar and cornucopia, lituus in field

RPC 1260  Obv. NERO CAESAR AVG GERM IM P P; radiate head of Nero, l.  
Rev. GEN COL NER PAT; Genius with patera over altar and cornucopia, lituus in field

RPC 1261  Obv. NERO CAESAR AVG GERM IMP; radiate head of Nero, r.

\(^73\) The ΣΕΒΑΣΤΟΦΟΡΟΣ coinage will be discussed in the next chapter.

\(^74\) Papaefthymiou (2005), 916-917. Some scholars suggest that since the coins alluding to the liberation are from Piso and Cleander, Nero liberated Greece in 66 instead of 67 CE, since they were duumvirs at this time. For a liberation in 66 CE: Vogt (1924), 34-35; Meloni (1966), 23; Levy (1981), 189-1914.

\(^75\) Papaefthymiou (2005), 921-2.
Rev. GEN COL NER PAT; Genius with *patera* over altar and cornucopia, *lituus* in field

**RPC 1262**  *Obv.* NERO CAESAR AVG GERM[; radiate head of Nero, l.  
*Rev.* GEN COL NER PAT; Genius with *patera* over altar and cornucopia, *lituus* in field

**RPC 1263**  *Obv.* [NERO] CAESAR AVG GERM[; radiate head of Nero, l.  
*Rev.* PORTVS FRVGIFERA, C P; male figure standing, l., with rudder and cornucopiae

**RPC 1264-5**  *Obv.* NERO CAESAR AVG GERM; laureate head of Nero, l.  
*Rev.* ADVENTVS AVGVSTI, C P; galley, l.

**RPC 1266**  *Obv.* NERO CEASAR AVG GER[M?]; laureate head of Nero, r.  
*Rev.* ADVENTVS AVGVSTI, C P; galley, l.

**RPC 1267**  *Obv.* NERO CEASAR AVG GERM IMP; radiate head of Nero, r.  
*Rev.* ADVENTVS AVGVSTI, C P; galley, l.

**RPC 1268**  *Obv.* IMP NERO CAESAR; radiate head of Nero, l.  
*Rev.* ADVENTVS AVGVSTI, C P; galley, l.

**RPC 1269**  *Obv.* IMP NERO CAESAR AVG GERM IMP P; laureate head of Nero, l.  
*Rev.* ADVENTVS AVGVSTI, C P; galley, l.

**RPC 1270**  *Obv.* NERO CAESAR (?); laureate (?) head of Nero, l.  
*Rev.* ADVENTVS AVGVSTI, C P; galley, l.

**RPC 1271**  *Obv.* NERO CAESAR AVG GERM IMP; radiate head of Nero, l.  
*Rev.* ADVENTVS AVGVSTI, C (above) P (below); galley, l.

**RPC 1272**  *Obv.* NERO CAESAR AVG GERM IMP; laureate head of Nero, r.  
*Rev.* ADVENTVS AVGVSTI, C (above) P (below); galley, l.

**RPC 1273**  *Obv.* NERO CAESAR AVG GERM; radiate head of Nero, l.  
*Rev.* ADVENTVS AVGVSTI, C (above) P (below); galley, l.

**RPC 1274**  *Obv.* NERO CAESAR AVG GERM IMP P; radiate head of Nero, l.  
*Rev.* ADVENTVS AVGVSTI, C (above) P (below); galley, l.

**RPC 1275**  *Obv.* IMP NERO CAESAR; laureate head of Nero, l.  
*Rev.* APOLLO AVGVST, C P; Apollo standing, r., playing lyre

**RPC 1279**  *Obv.* NERO CAESAR AVG GERM; radiate head of Nero, l.
Again, like Corinth, Patras minted coinage with Latin legends. *RPC* 1258-1262 all represent the refoundation of the city by Nero. Next, *RPC* 1263-74 represent Nero’s arrival in Greece or anticipated his arrival. There are a large number of variations found in this series, especially concerning Nero’s imperial titles on the obverse legend. *RPC* 1275 alludes to Nero’s participation in the games, as Nero associated himself with Apollo Citharoedus, Apollo the kitharode player. Lastly, *RPC* 1279-1280 represent Nero’s liberation of Greece by featuring Jupiter Liberator (the Latin equivalent of Zeus Eleutherios) on the reverse. Patras was founded as a Roman colony in 14 BCE with veterans from the tenth and twelfth legions. As seen in the coin descriptions above, there were many different types struck, highlighting slight variations of Nero’s imperial titulature. Patras is in direct comparison with Nicopolis, the other Roman city which was refounded by Nero, but chose to use Greek legends for their coinage.

Nero also competed in the Olympic games, whose festival provides the most abundant evidence attesting to his presence in Achaea. Nero was not the first member of the imperial family to visit Olympia, as Agrippa financed renovations on the Temple of Zeus and set up a colossal statue of Augustus, and Tiberius also competed in the Olympic games in which he won the chariot race. Unlike other Panhellenic sites such as Isthmia or Nemea which had to move

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76 Cass. Dio 62.20.5 associates Nero with Apollo; Roman imperial coinage under Nero also alluded to Nero as Apollo Citharoedus, see RIC I Nero 211 which features a bust of radiate Nero on the obverse and Apollo Citharoedus, laureate, holding a lyre on the reverse; Sen. Apocol. 4.22-32 and Luc. 1.47-50 both compare Nero to being equal to Apollo.

77 Burnett, Amandry, and Ripollès, eds. (1992), 258.

78 *Syll.* 3782
locations, Olympia remained under the control of Elis and the games never changed locations, and the Olympic games held their role as the most significant athletic festival in the Greek world.\textsuperscript{79} Ancient sources do not paint a positive picture of Nero’s time in Olympia. Suetonius claims that Nero did not allow spectators to leave while he was performing, causing some to fake their death to escape, and also that while he was driving a ten-horse chariot, he was thrown from the cart, but was given the crown anyways (Suet. \textit{Ner.} 23-24).\textsuperscript{80} This humiliation could be a reason why he is not attested as having a statue placed in the Metroön, which in the early Imperial period housed statues of the Julio-Claudians and Flavians.\textsuperscript{81}

Nero’s \textit{damnatio memoriae} runs deep in Elis and the Olympic Games. Not only did he force Elis to change the date of their games to fit his own schedule, but he also added musical competitions and performances, something the Olympics previously did not have, and Elis had to incorporate in order to please Nero.\textsuperscript{82} Elis kept records of all of the Olympic victors, and after Nero’s death Elis completely struck his entire Olympiad from its list. Paul Christesen states that Elis tended to ignore humiliating moments in the history of the Olympics, and since Nero died only a year after his performance in their games, the Eleans most likely found it easiest to completely remove him from the record.\textsuperscript{83} Thus, the 211\textsuperscript{th} Olympiad was struck, and they also erased Nero’s name from the dedicatory inscription \textit{IvO} 287 (68 CE). The dedication was made in part by a man named Dionysios, who was a \textit{theokole}, or priest, during the time when Nero was

\textsuperscript{79} Laurence (2012), 72.
\textsuperscript{80} For a description of Nero’s actions in Olympia see: Suet. \textit{Ner.} 22.3, 24.2, 25.1; Paus. 5.25.8, 5.26.3; Philostratus \textit{VA} 4.24, 5.7-8; [Lucian] \textit{Nero} 2, 6; Cassius Dio 63.9.3, 63.10.1, 63.14.1, 63.20.2, 63.20.5.
\textsuperscript{81} Laurence (2012), 75. This temple over time included a colossal statue of Augustus, and statues of Claudius, Agrippina the Younger, Titus, Domitian, Domitia, and Julia Titi, combining the Julio-Claudian and Flavian dynasties.
\textsuperscript{82} Christesen (2007), no. 81.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., 82.
in Olympia. Dionysios and the other priests most likely donated a water facility within the sanctuary since the dedication was found on the side of a water basin:\(^{84}\)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{[οἱ ἐπὶ τοῦ δευτέρου ἀπὸ τῆς Ἕρωνος] \hspace{1em} \text{Καῖσαρος ἐπιδήμονας} \\
\text{[μίας ἐνιαυτοῦ θεοκόλοι Ἀλπαίος Ἐπινικός Μ[— — — —]} \\
\text{[— — — — — Διονύσιος Ὀλυμπίος ἄνεθηκαν].}
\end{align*}
\]

As seen in l. 1, Νέρωνος has been completely removed from this inscription.

However, while Elis may have struck the 211th Olympiad and Nero from its own records, it still circulated in the *Olympionikai*, as the Eusebian victor list still contains Nero’s games:\(^{85}\)

\[
\text{Διακοσιοστὴ ἀγοράς. Ὁὐκ ἔχθη, Νέρωνος ἀναβαλλόμενου}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{εἰς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ ἐπιδημίαν. μετὰ δὲ ἔτη δύο ἀγοράς}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{αὐτῆς, στάδιον μὲν Ἰσημήνος Ὀλυμπίος ἐπιδήμονας ἐνίκα,}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Νέρων δὲ κηρύκων ἀγοράς ἐπιδημίας ἐπιστρεφόμενος, τραγῳδοῦς,}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{κιθαρωδοῦς, ἀρμα πωλικόν, καὶ τέλειον καὶ δεκάπωλον.}
\end{align*}
\]

211th: The games were not held (at the usual time) because Nero put them off until his visit. They were held two years late. Tryphon of Philadelphia won the stadion, Nero was crowned in the contests for heralds, tragic actors, singing to the kithara, and in the chariot races for colts, horses, and ten colts. (trans. Christesen and Martirosova-Torlone [2006]).

In contrast with Corinth, Sicyon, Nicopolis, and Patras, Olympia, under the control of Elis, did not mint any coinage relating to Nero’s visit.

The last Panhellenic sanctuary to consider is the Pythian games at Delphi. Like Olympia, Delphi did not mint any coinage commemorating Nero’s visit to Greece, and in fact only started minting coinage under Hadrian during the Roman period. Further, similar to Olympia being controlled by Elis, Delphi was still controlled by its ancestral amphictyony of Greek poleis.\(^{86}\)

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\(^{84}\) Zoumbaki (2001), 260-261.

\(^{85}\) Christesen and Martirosova-Torlone (2006), 78-79. This article provides the full text of the Olympic victor list.

\(^{86}\) See Sanchez (2001) for an in-depth exploration of the Delphic Amphictyony.
Augustus gave a majority of the power of this league to Nicopolis, a city which he founded in 29 BCE after the Battle of Actium, and was able to diminish the authority and power the city once held while still ostensibly promoting panhellenism. Nero further changed the power of the amphictyony by giving a majority of its power to the Koinon of Thessaly. Like many other Greek sanctuaries, Delphi was sacked by Sulla in 86 BCE, but Delphi did not play a role in negotiations with Rome in the Hellenistic period, and since the city itself has not been excavated, little is known about Delphi in the Imperial period outside of the sanctuary. There is also little evidence of the imperial cult at Delphi, unlike other cult sites such as Olympia where there were statues to the imperial family.

One literary attestation that survives is Nero’s own sack of Delphi. Pausanias relates that Delphi was fated to suffer because of the irreverence of Nero, who stole five hundred bronze statues from Delphi and thus Apollo (ἐμέλλε δὲ ἄρα οὐδὲ τὴς Νέρωνος ἐς πάντα ὀλιγορίας ἀπειράτως ἔξειν, ὡς τὸν Ἀπόλλωνα πεντακοσίας θεῶν τε ἀναμίξις ἀφείλετο καὶ ἀνθρώπων εἰκόνας χάλκας, Paus. 7.7.1). These statues were brought to Rome, where they decorated his infamous Domus Aurea, a monumental palace in the center of the city.

Concerning the Delphic Amphictyony, the Koinon of Thessaly is one region which minted coinage commemorating Nero’s visit to Greece that was not directly involved in any of his actions. Thessaly had many poleis which were members of the amphictyony, and the coinage was minted by the Thessalian Koinon. One series comes from the magistrate Aristion, who minted coinage featuring Nero with the attributes of Apollo:

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88 Laurence (2012), 140.
89 Paus. 10.27.3-5; Segala and Sciortino (1999), 41.
The other magistrate, Laouchos, minted coinage with and without the imperial portrait:

**RPC 1444**  
*Obv.* ΝΕΡΩΝ ΚΑΙΣΑΡ ΘΕΣΣΑΛΩΝ; laureate head of Nero, r.  
*Rev.* ΣΤΡΑΤΗΓΟΥ ΛΑΟΥΧΟΥ; Apollo, radiate, standing r., with hand over side or by side, and lyre on lap

**RPC 1449**  
*Obv.* ΕΙΡΗΝΗ ΣΕΒΑΣΤΗ ΘΕΣΣΑΛΩΝ; wreathed bust of Eirene, r.  
*Rev.* ΣΤΡΑΤΗΓΟΥ ΛΑΟΥΧΟΥ; Apollo seated, r., playing lyre

**RPC 1451-2**  
*Obv.* ΕΙΡΗΝΗ ΣΕΒΑΣΤΗ ΘΕΣΣΑΛΩΝ; wreathed bust of Eirene, r.  
*Rev.* ΣΤΡΑΤΗΓΟΥ ΛΑΟΥΧΟΥ; Nike on globe, l., holding wreath and palm branch

Delphi, as part of this amphictyony, may possibly be included in the Koinon of Thessaly’s coinage commemorating Nero, as will be discussed later this chapter.

Buthrotum also minted one series of coinage commemorating his visit that deserves mention because they were not directly affected by Nero’s actions in Greece, and also struck its coinage with Latin legends, similar to Corinth and Patras:

**RPC 1415**  
*Obv.* NE[RO CL]AVDI[VS] CAES[AR]; radiate head of Nero, r.  
*Rev.* EX C[ ]; Victory walking r., holding out wreath and palm.

Buthrotum was re-founded as a Roman veterans’ colony in 44 BCE, and only minted coinage through Nero’s reign. Not only did the mint base its denominations on the base metal coinage at Rome, but it also followed the Roman convention of adding the imperial bust on all of its denominations. Since Buthrotum was a Latin colony, and followed Roman practices with their coinage, it is expected that they would also use Latin legends, instead of Greek. While Buthrotum was not visited by Nero during his trip to Greece, the city still demonstrated their

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90 Abdy (2012), 1.  
91 Ibid., 3.
support of Nero and their own *Romanitas* through their Latin legends and imagery on the coinage.

Phoenice in Epirus is the last Achaean city to mint coinage commemorating Nero, even though Nero never visited the city. The radiate head of Nero’s bust suggests that this coinage represents Nero’s visit to Greece.\(^92\) The first issue, *RPC* I 1418, is thought to represent the liberation of Achaea, as it is interpreted as Zeus holding a thunderbolt and sceptre, although it is missing the legend Zeus Eleutherios/Jupiter Liberator that the other liberation issues use.\(^93\) *RPC* I 1419 may depict Artemis on the reverse, however it is not clear. The coinage is as follows:

**RPC 1418** *Obv.* ΝΕΡΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΚΑΙ ΚΕ(ΒΑ) ΓΕΡΜΑ; radiate head of Nero, r.  
*Rev.* ΦΟΙΝΕΙΚΑ ΑΠΟ ΗΠ; naked figure, standing facing, holding fulmen (?) and sceptre

**RPC 1419** *Obv.* ΝΕΡΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΚΑΙ ΚΕ ΓΕΡΜΑΝΙ; radiate head of Nero, r.  
*Rev.* ΦΟΙΝΕΙΚΑ ΑΠΟ ΗΠΕΙ; female head, r.

It is significant to note that Phoenice does not mint any other coinage under the Julio-Claudians, and the only coinage that it did mint commemorates Nero’s liberation of Achaea.\(^94\)

The question remains as to why Olympia and Delphi, two sanctuaries that Nero definitively visited, did not mint coinage relating to his visit, but other areas in Greece who were not affected by his liberation of Greece or his participation in the games did. As discussed earlier, Olympia and Elis especially were humiliated by Nero’s actions at their respective Panhellenic games. If the Eleans were able to strike the entire record of his presence there, it is a possibility that Elis would also not want to commemorate his visit with coinage. Concerning Delphi, its role in the amphictyony is significant, because any coinage from the Koinon of

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\(^{92}\) Burnett, Amandry, and Ripollès, eds. (1992), 279.  
\(^{93}\) Ibid., 279-280.  
\(^{94}\) Ibid., 279.
Thessaly as leader of the Delphic Amphictyony could potentially be seen as a joint issue from the league, which included Delphi. The amphictyony was also in charge of the sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi, where the Pythian games were held.\(^95\) This may be a reason why Delphi did not mint any coinage under Nero. However, Nicopolis was also a member of the amphictyony, and minted their own coinage commemorating Nero. It is also possible that Delphi may have condemned Nero for stealing five hundred statues from their sanctuary and refused to mint coinage in his honor.

Both Elis and Delphi at one point minted coinage relating to their respective festivals. Elis until the end of the 4\(^{th}\) c. BCE produced an issue of festival coinage for each Olympiad, and Delphi in the 5\(^{th}\) c. BCE struck the oldest known coinage related to a sanctuary.\(^96\) While this is very far removed from the time of Nero in the 1\(^{st}\) c. CE, it does show that Elis and Delphi were capable of and at one point did mint coinage for their sanctuaries, especially since Elis was minting coinage until 43 BCE.\(^97\) Furthermore, more than one mint in Achaea, Sicyon and Phoenice, only produced coinage under Nero during the Julio-Claudian period, and specifically in relation to his visit to Greece. Thus, for Delphi and Olympia, the two sanctuaries most humiliated by Nero’s actions in Greece, to not mint coinage commemorating his visit is significant. Other mints not at all involved in Nero’s visit went out of their way to produce coinage, and so the lack of coinage at Olympia and Delphi, two of the most important Panhellenic sites, seems purposeful. Agency may play a role in this issue, as there is no evidence either way on whether these cities received imperial permission to mint coinage, or had the

\(^{95}\) Psoma (2008), 242.
\(^{96}\) Ibid., 241-2.
\(^{97}\) Gardner (1879), 266.
means to do so. There are a multitude of reasons for why a polis may not be able to mint coinage, and perhaps their relative fiscal poverty prohibited them from being able to mint.

It is notable that the two most Hellenic sanctuaries did not mint (Olympia and Delphi), while the more Romanized sites (Corinth, Patras, and Buthrotum) did. Nicopolis, because it was founded by Augustus and subsequently refounded by Nero, would most likely be expected to mint Latin coinage, but instead minted in Greek, despite a Roman colony residing there. The use of Greek versus Latin legends allows us to better understand the needs of the population at that time and how strongly Roman politics influenced them. However, this does not mean that these Greek poleis were not influenced by Roman culture, or did not support Nero, especially when we consider Nero’s own philhellenic attitude and policies.

Various cities and colonies across Greece minted coinage in commemoration of Nero’s visit to Greece in 66-67 CE. Nero travelled to Achaea as the first stop on an Eastern Mediterranean tour, but the rest of his trip was never realized. While in Greece, Nero’s main actions were building a canal through the Isthmus, liberating Achaea, and participating in the Panhellenic festivals. Nero competed in a variety of festivals, including the Actian, Isthmian, Nemean, Argive, Olympian, and Pythian games, in order to complete the full Panhellenic circuit. Various pieces of material and literary evidence attest to Nero’s presence at each of these games. The use of Latin versus Greek legends demonstrates a divide between Greek and Roman government structures, however the presence of this coinage illustrates that all of these cities were in some way influenced by Roman attitudes. Olympia and Delphi did not mint any coinage under Nero, perhaps feeling slighted by Nero’s actions at their sanctuaries, or perhaps did not have the fiscal means or permission to do so. Thessaly, Buthrotum, and Phoenice, on the other hand, minted coinage even though Nero never visited them. Alexandria is another city which
minted coinage in connection to Nero’s trip to Greece despite not being involved or affected by his actions. Greek legends were used on Alexandrian coinage, and this can be related to the Latin and Greek legends of Achaea and how they represent their cities’ population. Alexandria went through a series of ethnic conflicts during the Julio-Claudian period, and their use of Greek legends, going off of the argument made in this chapter, would illustrate a stronger connection to Greek culture. Alexandria’s coinage and this possible Greek connection will be discussed in the next chapter.
Chapter 2: Nero’s Alexandrian Coinage

Alexandria, the capital of the imperial province of Egypt, was not just a provincial city in a territory outside of Rome. Egypt became essential to Roman wealth and power, both because of its strategic location and because of its vast resources that it could distribute to the rest of the empire. Founded in 331 BCE by Alexander the Great, Alexandria had a rich history under the Ptolemies and was a center of civilization long before it came under Roman rule. Considered the “first city of the civilized world,” in the 1st century BCE by Diodorus, Alexandria was a powerful city in antiquity. Primary sources such as Suetonius and Cassius Dio have us believe that Nero was planning to visit Alexandria after his tour through Greece, but this plan never came to fruition because of his forced return to Rome in 67 CE and his suicide later in 68 CE. Nero’s itinerary in Greece, his actions while there, including his liberation of the province and his participation in the Panhellenic games, and the subsequent coinage commemorating his visit is discussed in the previous chapter. Since Alexandria anticipated his visit, the city minted coinage regarding his arrival in the city. I will argue that the Olympic series was struck not only to commemorate his participation and victory in the Greek games, but also to illustrate the superiority of the Greek population of Alexandria, who wished to ingratiate themselves through Nero’s philhellenism.

2.1 Historical Background

After the victory of Octavian in the Battle of Actium on September 2, 31 BCE against the combined forces of Marc Antony and Cleopatra, Cleopatra’s subsequent suicide in August 30 BCE brought about Roman rule in Egypt later that month. Egypt became an imperial province,

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1 Elmaghrabi (2021), 46.
2 Diodorus 17.53.5.
3 See Herklotz (2012) on how Egypt came under Roman rule and the role of Augustus in this process.
meaning that it was under the direct control and supervision of the emperor, unlike all other provinces which were under the control of the Senate.\textsuperscript{4} Egypt was too important of a resource for the Roman Emperor to lose control of and was placed directly under imperial control by Augustus upon his conquest, as Tacitus claims it was “a province which was difficult to access, prolific in grain, full of superstition and licentiousness and sudden civil discord, unknowing of the laws, and ignorant of magistrates” \textit{(provinciam aditu difficilem, annonae fecundam, superstitione ac lascivia discordem et mobilem, insciam legum, ignaram magistratum)...} Tac. Hist. 1.11).

To further his control over Egypt, Augustus did not put a senator in charge of the province and instead appointed an equestrian prefect, and even prohibited senators and other \textit{equites} from travelling to Egypt without his permission.\textsuperscript{5} Most Ptolemaic titles and offices disappeared as Egypt took up the Roman administration system, and magistrates were on short-term appointments.\textsuperscript{6} Furthermore, three legions were stationed there, two of which were deployed in 66 CE against the Jewish population of Alexandria by the prefect Tiberius Julius Alexander, which will be discussed later in this chapter.\textsuperscript{7} Most importantly for its coinage was that Roman Egypt kept the closed currency system of the Ptolemaic dynasty and made the tetradrachm’s value equal to that of the denarius.\textsuperscript{8}

Alexandrian citizenship and the status of Alexandria’s population are complex. Not every person who lived in Alexandria was an Alexandrian citizen, and depending on one’s social, legal, or religious status certain special privileges were awarded, both under the Ptolemies

\textsuperscript{4} Egypt was the only imperial province; all other Roman provinces, including Achaea, were senatorial.
\textsuperscript{5} Bowman and Rathbone (1992), 110.
\textsuperscript{6} Ibid., 110; Elmaghrabi (2021), 46-47.
\textsuperscript{7} Joseph. BJ 2.490-493.
\textsuperscript{8} Bowman and Rathbone (1992), 110-111. See this article for a full description of the changes to Egypt’s administration system.
and the Roman empire.\textsuperscript{9} These special privileges were a source of conflict between the different social groups in Alexandria, mainly the Alexandrian Greeks and the Jewish population. Citizens were exempted from paying poll taxes, exempt from compulsory service outside their native city, and gained certain immunities in regard to corporal punishments.\textsuperscript{10} The ruling elite in Roman Egypt mostly consisted of Greeks or Hellenized Egyptians who were “convinced of the superiority of Greek culture and assiduously strove to perpetuate it in an alien environment.”\textsuperscript{11}

In conflict with the Alexandrian Greeks was the Jewish population. Josephus informs us that Jews were part of the original settlers, and the Jewish population at the very least was well-established by the middle of the 3\textsuperscript{rd} century BCE.\textsuperscript{12} The Alexandrian Jews were not considered citizens under the Roman administration of Egypt, and were not exempt from paying taxes, leading to them losing some of the high status they had under the Ptolemies.\textsuperscript{13} However, the Jewish population did have some special privileges that the Alexandrian Greeks did not, such as their own councils and law courts, while the Greeks were denied their requests for privileges. The Jews helped Julius Caesar and Cleopatra against an uprising in 47 BCE, and made peace with Octavian after Actium, which led to Octavian granting them their special privileges while denying the Alexandrian Greeks the right to a senate.\textsuperscript{14} This act by Octavian would become a

\textsuperscript{9} See Delia (1991) for a full break down of how citizenship worked in Alexandria and its changes throughout the Roman Empire.

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., 31-33. Some of these privileges were shared with other cities in Egypt, but evidence is scarce. Ptolemais and Naukratis had their own councils, civic magistrates, and laws. Antinoopolis also enjoyed these rights after 130 CE.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 36.

\textsuperscript{12} Bell (1941), 1.

\textsuperscript{13} Bagnall (2021), 103. Jews in the Ptolemaic era had a high status and favor from the monarchy because they were seen as supportive of their authority, since many of them served in the military, and also because they were economically valuable to Egypt.

\textsuperscript{14} Joseph. \textit{AJ} 19.280-285 contains an edict from Claudius concerning the Jews of Alexandria from 41 CE which says that Augustus and his various prefects safeguarded the Jews’ rights, sections 19.282-283 report: καὶ μετὰ τὸ τὴ ἡμετέρᾳ ἡγημονίᾳ Ἀλεξανδρείαν ὑπὸ τοῦ Σεβαστοῦ ὑποταγήθηκα περὶ αὐτῶν τὰ δίκαια ὑπὸ τῶν περιφερέντων ἐπάρχον κατὰ διαφόρους χρόνους μηδὲμίαν τε ἀμφισβήτησιν περὶ τούτων γενομένην τῶν δικαίων αὐτῶς. Bell (1941),
major source of conflict between the two groups, and they would repeatedly break into civil
discord with one another while both tried to gain more privileges from the current emperor.

The first large conflict under the Julio-Claudians between the Alexandrian Greeks and
Jews broke out in 38 CE, during the reign of Caligula. Herod Agrippa, the grandson of Herod
the Great, was a Jewish king who stopped in Alexandria in the early summer of 68 CE on his
way to Palestine.\(^\text{15}\) His royal reception by the Alexandrian Jews was too much for the Greeks,
and they openly mocked him, forgetting that he and his family were long time friends with the
Julio-Claudians. To distract from their mistake, the Greeks decided to make Caligula angry with
the Jews instead. Caligula had recently deified himself, and ordered his subjects to worship him
as a god, which went against the religious beliefs of the Jews. The Greeks went to the prefect,
Flaccus, to have them erect statues of Caligula in their synagogues, knowing the Jews would
refuse. Flaccus had previously been in conflict with the Alexandrian elite, but with the accession
of Caligula his position felt uncertain, and so he sided with the Alexandrian Greeks against the
Jews.\(^\text{16}\) The Jews’ refusal led to the devastation of the Jewish people, their belongings, and their
synagogues.\(^\text{17}\)

Caligula was then brought into the conflict, having heard of what happened in
Alexandria. He summoned Flaccus back to Rome, and allowed for embassies from both groups
to petition him, where the Jews were unsuccessful in being granted citizenship.\(^\text{18}\) Upon
Claudius’ accession to the throne, in 41 CE he issued two edicts, recorded in Josephus, which

\begin{itemize}
\item \(^4\) Bell does not give specific dates for when Octavian granted privileges to the Jews, just that it occurred sometime after the Battle of Actium.
\item \(^5\) Bell (1941), 5.
\item \(^6\) Bagnall (2021), 103.
\item \(^7\) Atkinson (2006), 37.
\item \(^8\) Tiberius Julius Alexander, the prefect of Alexandria at the end of Nero’s reign, had an uncle, Philo, who was part of this embassy.
\end{itemize}
confirmed all of the rights of the Alexandrian Jews, and then subsequently for Jews throughout the entire Roman empire. However, the Alexandrian Jews had not waited for him to act, and after hearing of Caligula’s death, attacked the Greeks.\textsuperscript{19} He needed to suppress another civil war, and was forced to send instructions to the prefect on what to do. Embassies were once again sent to petition the emperor because the Alexandrians asked for a senate and the Jews wanted full Alexandrian citizenship.\textsuperscript{20} Claudius’s response to the Alexandrians is recorded in a letter, and because a tax collector from Philadelphia copied it onto a tax register, his response survives on papyrus.\textsuperscript{21} In the letter, Claudius declares that the Alexandrines ought to show themselves kindly to the Jews and not go against their traditional worship and permit them to observe their customs, and the Jews to not hope for any further privileges.\textsuperscript{22} While these conflicts did not work out in the Jews’ favor, it does illustrate that there was a line of communication open between the emperors and Alexandria.\textsuperscript{23}

\textbf{2.2 Nero \& Alexandria}

There is no extant evidence of any communication between Nero and Alexandria in 66/67 and 67/68 CE, when the Olympic series was minted. However, there is evidence from early 55 CE, as we have the remains of a letter (\textit{P.Med. Inv. 70.01 verso}), found copied onto the reverse of a scroll with a Greek literary text, that Nero sent to the Arsinoite nome, to what Orsolina Montevecchi believes to be the city of Ptolemais Euergetis.\textsuperscript{24} The “6475” mentioned in \textit{l. 11-13}


\textsuperscript{20} Bell (1941), 9-10.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 10. The letter does not have a specific addressee whom Claudius calls out by name; but rather just the Alexandrians, most likely in this case the Alexandrian Greeks.

\textsuperscript{22} \textit{P.Lond} 6.1912v, British Library Papyrus 2248.

\textsuperscript{23} See Harker (2008) for more information on the embassies sent to Caligula and Claudius and their responses to Alexandria.

\textsuperscript{24} Montevecchi (1970), 6-8. While the date of the letter is believed to be early 55 CE, the exact date is unknown since parts of the letter are missing.
of the letter refer to the elite population of the Arsinoite nome, descended from the early Greek settlers. It follows a consistent pattern: Nero states he received the ambassadors, Aeacidas son of Ptolemaeus, Antenor, Nibytas son of Nibytas, Polycrates son of Didymus, and Themison, and praises the good disposition manifested by the tributes he received. He accepts some of their honors, denies others and gives a reason why, and then confirms any privileges, answers problems, names the ambassadors, gives a greeting and then finally the date:

1 [ἐ]κ δὲ τὸν ἀπολειπομέ[ν]ον δῶρον τὸν τε ναὸν σου παρητη- σάμην, δειὰ τὸ θεοῖς μόνοις ταύτην τὴν τειμήν ὑπ’ ἀν-
15 ..... 

---

Column II

1 καὶ κυνὴ πάγων ὑμῶν καὶ κα- 
tὰ μέρος ἐκάστου, καὶ ἀνηβρίστους

---

26 Ibid., 125.
27 Montevecchi (1970), 12.
καὶ ἀνηπερεάστους διαφυ[λ.]άσιν
ὑμᾶς, ὃσπερ κ[α]ὶ ὁ θεὸς πατήρ μου
5 ἐβουλήθης, ὃ μαρτυρῶντας ὑμᾶς
ἐφ’ ἀπασιν οἷς παρέσχηκεν τῇ τε
πόλι καὶ τοὺς ἐξαικεδιόσις τετρα-
κοσίους ἐβδο[μή]κοντα πέντε
ἐπαινῶ καὶ ἢ[να]βέλο[μαι]. οἱ πρεσ-
10 βεδόντες [ἦσαν· Αἰ]ακίδας Πτολεμαίου,
Ἀυτήνωρ [ 3-4 ]έθου, Νειβύτας
Νειβύτου, Πο[λυκρά]της Δειδύμου,
[ ]ισιο[ ]Θεμίσων

“but of the two remaining offers, I declined a temple because this honor is assigned to the
gods alone by men; and for the gold crown that you sent, I will gratefully hand it back, as
I do not want to burden you at the beginning of my principate. All that together with the
6475 you received from the emperors before me and had…and of every one of you in
common and of each individually, and unaffected from injury and molestation, just as my
divine father wished. For you bear witness to everything that he presented to the city and
to the 6475, I praise and command you. The ambassadors were Aeacidas son of
Ptolemaeus, Antenor son of ----, Nibytas son of Nibytas, Polycrates son of Didymus, ----
Themison ----”

Montevecchi states that this letter should be placed with those that showcase some of the policies
of the emperors toward the Egyptian population, namely recognition of the superiority of the
Greek or Hellenized aspects of society.28 Nero, already at the beginning of his reign, had
positive relations with the elite Greek population of Egypt.

Nero planned visits to Alexandria twice, further illustrating his good relationship with
Alexandria. Various sources attest to his plans, Suetonius the most explicit about Nero’s
intentions in Ner.19:

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28 Montevecchi (1970), 30. Other surviving edicts and proclamations concerning Alexandria from the Julio-
Claudians include no. 5, 16-7, and App. 4-5 in Oliver (1989).
Peregrinationes duas omnino suscepit, Alexandrinam et Achaicam; sed Alexandrina ipso profectionis die destitit turbatus religione simul ac periculo. Nam cum circumitis templis in aede Vestae resedisset, consurgenti ei primum lacinia obhaesit, dein tanta oborta caligo est, ut discipere non posset.

He took up two sojourns abroad, Alexandria and Achaea; but on the very day of his departure to Alexandria he remained, disturbed by a dangerous portent. For when he was travelling around the temples he sat down in the sanctuary of Vesta, first when he stood up the hem of his clothing remained stuck, then so great a darkness appeared that he was not able to see.

Tacitus states a similar reason for why Nero cancelled his trip to Alexandria, as in Ann. 15.36 he claims:

cum Vestae quoque templum inisset, repente cunctos per artus tremens, seu numine exterrente, seu facinorum recordatione numquam timore vacuus, deseruit inceptum, cunctas sibi curas amore patriae leviore dictitans.

when he entered the temple of Vesta, he began to tremble in all of his limbs, whether because he was frightened by the divinity, or because the recollection of his crimes never made him fearless, he deserted his project, saying that the rest of his cares were lighter for him than the love of his fatherland.

Clearly, at one point Nero had plans to travel to Alexandria, even if it never happened.

Nero’s fondness for Alexandria and Egypt as a whole was so great, that he was supposedly willing to both give up his power as emperor and take extreme measures to make it there. Suetonius claims that upon hearing about the revolts in the provinces in 68 CE, Nero wondered if they could not allow him the prefecture of Egypt instead of killing him.29 Cassius Dio also mentions Egypt when describing Nero’s reaction to finding out about the revolts in the provinces and Galba being proclaimed emperor, saying “having been abandoned by everyone alike he devised a plan to kill the senators, burn down the city, and sail to Alexandria.”30

29 Suet. Ner. 47. varie agitavit, Parthosne an Galbam supplex peteret, an atratus prodiret in publicum proque rostris quanta maxima posset miseratone veniam praeteritorum precaretur, ac ni flexisset animos, vel Aegypti praefecturam concedi sibi oraret.
30 Cass. Dio 63.27. Ὑπὸ πάντων δὲ ὁμοίως ἐγκαταλειφθεὶς ἐβουλεύσατο μὲν τοὺς τε βουλεύσατε ἀποκτήναι καὶ τὴν πόλιν καταπηρήσαι ἐς τὴν Ἀλεξάνδρειαν πλέσαι.
his final days, Nero was willing to do anything, even burn down Rome, in order to make it to Alexandria.

Anticipation of Nero’s journey East can be seen in Alexandria’s coinage. In both 66/67 and 67/68 CE the mint produced the ΣΕΒΑΣΤΟΦΟΡΟΣ type, “Emperor-Bearer,” which differ only in the regnal date they bear:

RPC 5296  
*Obv.* ΝΕΡΩ ΚΛΑV ΚΑΙΣ ΣΕΒ ΓΕΡ ΑV, LΙΓ, radiate bust of Nero with aegis, l.
*Rev.* ΣΕΒΑΣΤΟΦΟΡΟΣ, sailing ship, r.

RPC 5306  
*Obv.* ΝΕΡΩ ΚΛΑV ΚΑΙΣ ΣΕΒ ΓΕΡ ΑV, LΙΔ; radiate bust of Nero with aegis, l.
*Rev.* ΣΕΒΑΣΤΟΦΟΡΟΣ, sailing ship, r.

The traditional view held by scholars is that this type is an allusion to Nero’s trip to Greece, including the authors of *Roman Provincial Coinage*. But it could also represent anticipation of Nero’s arrival in Alexandria, since the first issue of this was struck in 66/67 CE, before Nero travelled to Greece and participated in the games. The mint must have heard of his plans to stop in Alexandria after his tour of Greece, and subsequently celebrated his journey East and future arrival on their coinage, as the ship would be bringing him to Egypt. There is some contention concerning this type, as Levy has argued that the ship shown on the reverse is not the oared galley that Nero travelled on to Greece, but a freighter. Levy argues that this type may allude to some longer journey, perhaps from Greece to Alexandria. Since Nero did not even finish competing in the Greek games until 67 CE, it is possible that this second issue (RPC 5306) still anticipates his visit, although there was a significant decrease in production the second year. This implies that the Alexandrians, or at the very least the prefect, were aware of Nero’s itinerary.

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31 Burnett, Amandry, and Ripollès, eds. (1992), 706.
32 Boyce (1949), 182.
34 Ibid., 102-117.
and travels throughout Greece, as in order to anticipate his visit and continue minting the ΣΕΒΑΣΤΟΦΟΡΟΣ type, the city would have needed an idea of when he would be arriving.

Furthering the idea that Alexandrian officials were aware of Nero’s itinerary in Greece is the Olympic series, which features the six deities of the Panhellenic games in which Nero competed. The Olympic series consists of nineteen different issues, listed here for reference. The obverse legend remains the same on all of them, the only difference being the date for year 13 and 14, which appears before:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>RPC No.</th>
<th>Size (mm.)</th>
<th>Weight (grams)</th>
<th>Obverse</th>
<th>Reverse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>5297</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12.52</td>
<td>ΝΕΡΩ ΚΛΑV ΚΑΙΣ ΣΕΒ ΓΕΡ ΑV, LΙΤ; radiate Nero with aegis l.</td>
<td>ΔΙΟΣ ΟΛΥΜΠΙΟΥ; laureate Olympian Zeus r.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5298</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12.85</td>
<td>//</td>
<td>ΝΕΜΕΙΟΣ ΖΕΥΣ; bust of Nemean Zeus with aegis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5299</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12.80</td>
<td>//</td>
<td>ΗΡΑ ΑΡΓΕΙΑ; veiled bust of Hera Argeia, r.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5300</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12.84</td>
<td>//</td>
<td>ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ ΙΣΘΜΙΟΣ; head of Poseidon with drapery on l. shoulder and trident, r.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5300A</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13.08</td>
<td>//</td>
<td>ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ ΙΣΘΜΙΟΣ; bust of Poseidon with trident, l.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5301</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13.50</td>
<td>//</td>
<td>ΑΚΤΙΟΣ ΑΠΟΛΛΩΝ; laureate bust of Actian Apollo with quiver, r.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5302</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12.69</td>
<td>//</td>
<td>ΠΥΘΙΟΣ ΑΠΟΛΛΩΝ; laureate bust of Pythian Apollo with quiver, r.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3: The Olympic Series Year 13

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35 See Chapter Two for Nero’s itinerary in Greece and the games he participated in.
36 See the Introduction for a more detailed description of this series.
37 The numbers in column two correlate to the numbers in Roman Provincial Coinage Volume One. The – symbol in the table means that there is no information available in the Roman Provincial Coinage catalogue for this coin type. The // means that the information is the same as the previous entry.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>RPC No.</th>
<th>Size (mm.)</th>
<th>Weight (grams)</th>
<th>Obverse</th>
<th>Reverse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>5307</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>11.47</td>
<td>ΝΕΡΩ ΚΛΑΥ ΚΑΙΣ ΣΕΒ ΓΕΡ ΑΥ, ΛΙΔ; radiate bust of Nero with aegis, l.</td>
<td>ΔΙΟΣ ΟΛΥΜΠΙΟΥ; laureate bust of Olympian Zeus, r.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5308</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>//</td>
<td>ΝΕΜΕΙΟΣ ΖΕΥΣ; bust of Nemean Zeus with aegis, r.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5309</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>//</td>
<td>ΗΡΑ ΑΡΓΕΙΑ; veiled bust of Hera Argeia, r.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5310</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>//</td>
<td>ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ ΣΘΜΙΟΣ; head of Poseidon with drapery on l. shoulder and trident, r.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5311</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>//</td>
<td>ΑΚΤΙΟΣ ΑΠΟΛΛΩΝ; laureate bust of Actian Apollo with quiver, r.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5312</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>//</td>
<td>ΠΥΘ(Ε)ΙΟΣ ΑΠΟΛΛΩΝ; laureate bust of Pythian Apollo with quiver, r.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5313</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>//</td>
<td>ΔΙΟΣ ΟΛΥΜΠΙΟΥ; laureate bust of Olympian Zeus, r., star</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5314</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>//</td>
<td>ΝΕΜΕΙΟΣ ΖΕΥΣ; bust of Nemean Zeus with aegis, r., star</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5315</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>//</td>
<td>ΗΡΑ ΑΡΓΕΙΑ; veiled bust of Hera Argeia, r., star</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5316</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>//</td>
<td>ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ ΣΘΜΙΟΣ; bust of Poseidon with trident, r., star</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5317</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>//</td>
<td>ΑΚΤΙΟΣ ΑΠΟΛΛΩΝ; laureate bust of Actian Apollo with quiver, r., star</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5318</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>//</td>
<td>ΠΥΘ(Ε)ΙΟΣ ΑΠΟΛΛΩΝ; laureate bust of Pythian Apollo with quiver, r., star</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4: The Olympic Series Year 14

The last few years of Nero’s reign saw an unprecedented amount of coinage minted, but little is known about how exactly the Alexandrian mint functioned during this time.38

Information on the mints during the reign of Diocletian for example does exist, but because

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38 Butcher and Ponting (2015), 639.
Diocletian reigned over two centuries after Nero, we must be cautious with accepting that the processes were the same or similar at all. The only Egyptian city that appeared as a mint in Egypt was Alexandria, and under Diocletian there were many different officinae, or shops, at work striking coins. Milne presumes that extra officinae were opened when there were unusually large issues being produced. Since the last years of Nero’s reign included an extremely large volume of coins struck, as discovered in Chapter 3, it seems likely that there were multiple officinae in Alexandria working to produce this coinage. One thing completely different from Diocletian’s coin production is that the reverses of Nero’s coinage do not contain letters in the exergue which refer to an officina’s number, as they usually do on Diocletian’s coinage.

As for who made decisions on minting, coinage produced in the provinces was controlled from Rome by at least the 1st century CE. The magistrate in charge of this process was the idios logos, who was the highest financial official. This magistrate would answer directly to the praefectus Alexandreae, the prefect of Egypt and representative of the emperor. The prefect of the province had absolute authority concerning financial matters. Tiberius Julius Alexander, the prefect of Egypt at the end of Nero’s reign, would have been in charge of the minting of the Olympic series in 66/67 and 67/68 CE. However, since Egypt was an imperial

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39 Officinae were like different shops all working under the same Alexandrian mint.
40 Milne (1916), 209.
41 Ibid., 210-216.
42 Geissen (2012), 564.
43 Ibid., 564.
44 Geissen (2012), 564. Since Egypt was an imperial province, officials would need some sort of imperial permission to mint coinage. See Brunt (1975) for the prefects of Egypt throughout the Empire and their experience.
45 Elmaghrabi (2021), 50.
province, it is plausible, if not probable, that Nero would have been involved in these decisions, especially because of the massive scale of minting required.\textsuperscript{46}

To understand why the Olympic series was minted, we need to further understand both the situation in Alexandria under Nero and the city’s relationship with Rome. The major event which affected Egypt and Alexandria during Nero’s reign was the revolt in Jerusalem in 66 CE which began the Great Jewish Revolt (66-74 CE). Josephus is our fullest narrative source of this event, however we must be careful in taking Josephus at his word, especially as he blames most of the violence on the Jewish community.\textsuperscript{47} This revolt greatly increased the tensions between the Alexandrian Greeks and the Jewish population.\textsuperscript{48} In 66 CE, Alexandrian Greeks gathered together to discuss sending an embassy to Nero, most likely to pledge their loyalty to him in light of the recent Jewish revolt.\textsuperscript{49} They discovered Jews within the crowd, which triggered a mob that intended to lynch and burn them alive. The Jews fought back and attacked the Greeks, even trying to burn the amphitheater down with everyone inside.\textsuperscript{50}

Tiberius Julius Alexander was forced to deal with this revolt. While he himself came from an extremely wealthy and influential Jewish family, being the son of Alexander the Alabarch and the nephew of Philo according to Josephus, he at some point abandoned Judaism.\textsuperscript{51} He at first tried to reason with the Jews to not provoke the Roman army during such a tumultuous time, but he realized that a severe lesson was needed. He deployed two Roman

\textsuperscript{46} Possible imperial agency over the coinage will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter.
\textsuperscript{47} Bagnall (2021), 105.
\textsuperscript{48} Bell (1941), 13.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 13.
\textsuperscript{50} Joseph. BJ 2.490-493.
\textsuperscript{51} Joseph. AJ 20.100 τοίς γάρ πατρίοις οὐκ ἐνέμενεν οὗτος ἔθεσιν; Bell (1941), 13; Schafer (2003), Alexander the Alabarch was a wealthy Jewish aristocrat in Alexandria. His brother, Philo of Alexandria, was a Jewish philosopher.
And death of all sorts was theirs, some of them were caught in the plain, others forced into their homes. And the Romans set fire to them after plundering inside, and there was neither mercy for infants nor respect of the elderly, but they slaughtered people of every age, until the entire district was flooded with blood and the heaps of corpses numbered fifty thousand.

If Nero was planning on coming to Alexandria, it would have been in the aftermath of this violence.

Why did Nero, through the prefect Tiberius Julius Alexander, mint the Olympic series in 66/67 and 67/68 CE? As discussed in the Introduction, the general consensus reached by scholars is that these coins commemorate Nero’s victories and participation in the Greek games and his actions in Greece overall. However, even though these coins have been discussed by numerous scholars, the reasoning behind how they represented the Greek games and why Tiberius Julius Alexander chose to commemorate Nero’s actions in Greece is limited. I am partially expanding on Couvalis’ thesis that Tiberius Julius Alexander was attempting to curry favor with Nero and the Alexandrian Greeks through minting this series, and that the Alexandrian Greeks were trying to “affirm that Alexandria was truly Greek as they felt threatened by Jewish claims to equal privileges.” This attempt to gain favor resulted in the Olympic series being struck, as the deities pictured on the reverse of these coins are the same as

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52 Figures from ancient historians must be believed with caution.
53 See the Introduction for a literature review of the main sources which discuss this issue.
54 Couvalis (2007), 113.
those worshipped at the Panhellenic festivals in which Nero actively competed in 66/67 and 67/68 CE. Along with the ΣΕΒΑΣΤΟΦΟΡΟΣ type which anticipated his arrival, the Olympic series was thus an attempt to appeal to Nero’s philhellenic tendencies and honor his victories abroad. The distinctly Greek imagery on these coins, while minted in Egypt, promulgates the superiority of the Alexandrian Greek population in the eyes of Nero and his subordinates in Egypt.

There are a few aspects related to the Olympic series that Couvalis does not examine, however. As discussed previously, the Jewish population wanted citizenship, and to deny the Jews this legal privilege would be a significant reason for the Greek population to want to gain the favor of Nero. The Greeks would lose their superiority as Alexandrian citizens if the Jewish population also gained citizenship or further privileges from the emperor. Furthermore, Couvalis does not analyze the reasons why Alexandria did not commemorate any of Nero’s other games, or address Poppaea Sabina’s, Nero’s second wife, possible Jewish tendencies. The coinage minted in 66/67 and 67/68 CE that is not part of the Olympic series must also be discussed because it further highlights Greek themes on the coinage.

The main issue with Couvalis’ argument is that he credits the entire decision-making process to Tiberius Julius Alexander. While Tiberius Julius Alexander as prefect had the authority to make these financial decisions, the question of imperial agency needs to be addressed. No matter what initiative Tiberius Julius Alexander took, it is Nero who is truly most responsible for minting this coinage. As seen in Chapter 3, the Olympic series was minted on a massive scale, and produced hundreds of millions of coins within two years. Not much is known on how the mint functioned during this time, but it is likely that the unprecedented amount of

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55 Smallwood (1959), 329-335. These tendencies will be discussed later in the chapter.
minting that took place at the end of Nero’s reign would require Nero’s approval, if not initiative, as it is likely that multiple officinae would need to be opened to assist in production.\footnote{Butcher and Ponting (2015), 606ff. The previous Julio-Claudians minted nowhere near the same amount of coinage. Augustus did not mint any silver coinage, and the tetradrachm was only minted starting in 20/21 CE. Caligula did not mint any coinage, and Claudius only struck silver the first six years of his reign.} The sheer amount of wealth involved, which I will show in Chapter 3 was on the order of what was produced at the imperial mint in Rome itself, if not more, would not have been permitted without imperial authority for to coin such an amount of wealth without imperial initiative might easily constitute an act of usurpation or rebellion. There is no evidence of any correspondence between Tiberius Julius Alexander and Nero, but a comparison can be made with the letters of Trajan and Pliny in the early 2\textsuperscript{nd} century CE.

According to Noreña, “the Roman imperial state, like all states, depended in part on the regulated flow of information among its officials in order to maintain control over the persons and resources in the territory under its rule.”\footnote{Noreña (2007), 239.} Pliny the Younger was governor of Bithynia around 110-113 CE, and preserved in his corpus of correspondence seventy three letters to Emperor Trajan, who has fifty one letters published in response.\footnote{These letters make up Book 10 of Pliny’s \textit{Epistles}. The letters cover a variety of topics, such as requests to grant leave, permission to commence building projects, granting citizenship, and what Pliny should do about the Christians.} These letters, while somewhat familiar in tone with Trajan, address him in his capacity as emperor. A similar situation with Tiberius Julius Alexander and Nero is most likely to have occurred, where Nero would grant permission or advice to his prefect. As discussed in the Introduction, Egypt was made an imperial province so that the emperor would have better control over it. Tiberius Julius Alexander would not be able to make these big decisions himself, and Nero, despite his bad reputation, was actively involved in the running of the empire.\footnote{See Thornton (1973) for Nero’s admirable actions as emperor.} Thus, while the Olympic series
still may have been minted as a way to ingratiate the Greek Alexandrians to Nero, Tiberius Julius Alexander was not the absolute authority on its production.

Outside of attempting to appeal to a philhellenic Nero, the Olympic series represented the Greek Panhellenic games, in which Alexandrians also participated, as I discussed in the Introduction.\textsuperscript{60} Many Egyptian winners have been recorded on the Olympic victors list, which permits us to assume that there were also some Egyptian winners at the other Panhellenic festivals. Examples of victors close in time to Nero’s reign are an Alexandrian named Sarapion who won the stadion at the 204\textsuperscript{th} Olympiad in 37 CE, and Straton who won the stadion in 77 CE.\textsuperscript{61} While there is no evidence of a victor from Alexandria during Nero’s Olympiad, it would not be unusual for the city to wish to commemorate victories of its own athletes, especially as Sarapion won right before the first bout of ethnic violence against the Jews in 38 CE. Nero’s initiative in minting the Olympic series would not only appeal to his own philhellenism and recent victories, but bring to mind past Alexandrian victories and the Greeks’ superiority over the Jews.

Alexandria is the only province outside of Greece to commemorate these games, if this interpretation is correct, and Brooks Levy argues that “they do so more explicitly than any other issue of the mainland itself. Whatever the explanation, it must be connected with the planned but unrealized extension of Nero’s trip to Egypt.”\textsuperscript{62} As shown in Chapter One, the Alexandrian coins differ greatly from the Achaean coins which commemorate Nero’s actions in Greece. Not only do the Alexandrian issues make the most explicit references to the games themselves, but

\textsuperscript{60} Chapter 2 discusses Nero’s trip to Greece and his participation and presence at the six Panhellenic sanctuaries and their festivals.
\textsuperscript{61} Christesen and Martirosova-Torlone (2006), 78-79.
\textsuperscript{62} Levy (1984), 168.
the series itself is much larger than most of the Greek issues, featuring nineteen different reverse types over two years. However, the Achaean issues do have far more diverse types commemorating Nero. The Olympic series also uses Greek for the legends, as does all of Alexandria’s coinage, because Greek was the administrative language of Egypt. This use of Greek illustrates the large Hellene population of Alexandria and how they felt more connected to this identity than they did to any other, whether it be Roman, Egyptian, or Jewish. Furthermore, Vogt believes that the issues of Alexandrian coins from 66/67 which feature the deified Augustus and Tiberius on the reverse indirectly refer to the liberation of Achaea, though Andrew Burnett has argued against this.\(^{63}\) The Alexandrian coins are as follows:\(^ {64}\)

**RPC 5294**  
*Obv.* ΝΕΡΩ ΚΛΑV ΚΑΙΣ ΣΕΒ ΓΕΡ ΑV, ΛΙΓ; radiate bust of Nero with aegis, l.  
*Rev.* ΘΕΟΣ ΣΕΒΑΣΤΟΣ; radiate head of Augustus, r.

**RPC 5295**  
*Obv.* ΝΕΡΩ ΚΛΑV ΚΑΙΣ ΣΕΒ ΓΕΡ ΑV, ΛΙΓ; radiate bust of Nero with aegis, l.  
*Rev.* ΤΙΒΕΡΙΟΣ ΚΑΙΣΑΡ; laureate head of Tiberius, r.

Alexandria would not have been directly affected by Nero’s liberation of Achaea, so the city’s possible allusion to said liberation, if we believe Vogt, must have been tied into Tiberius Julius Alexander’s need for a further philhellene connection. Burnett argues that the Augustus and Tiberius types were struck as a replacement for those emperors’ previous coinage, which were demonetized, in order to retain their images on the new coinage.\(^{65}\) This view that these types were struck due to the demonetization of Augustus’ and Tiberius’ coinage seems most likely, as there is actual evidence of this demonetization occurring around this time.\(^{66}\) However, if these

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\(^{63}\) Vogt (1924), 36; Burnett, Amandry, and Ripollès, eds. (1992), 705.  
\(^{64}\) Note that while *Roman Provincial Coinage* lists 5305A as a Deified Augustus type from 67/68 CE, the catalogue specifies that these specimens are all contemporary forgeries.  
\(^{65}\) Burnett, Amandry, and Ripollès, eds. (1992), 705.  
\(^{66}\) Christiansen (2004), 97; Burnett, Amandry, and Ripollès, eds. (1992), 705; Butcher and Ponting (2015), 615.
Alexandrian coins did represent the freedom of Achaea, they would be extremely different from the Achaean coinage, which featured Jupiter Liberator/Zeus Eleutherios.

Why did Tiberius Julius Alexander specifically want a philhellenic connection to Nero? If he wanted to gain favor and special privileges from Nero, why did he only commemorate Nero’s recent Greek games? Nero established multiple games which were held in Rome and were based off of Greek games and festivals. One example is the Neronia, a quinquennial festival which was held in 60 and 65 CE, and had its own coinage minted in Rome to commemorate the festival.\(^{67}\) Perhaps these festivals were deemed too Roman, or not recent enough, and thus would not be helpful in presenting a united Hellenic identity in Alexandria to Nero. If Tiberius Julius Alexander was also trying to gain favor with the Greeks, as Couvalis argues, focusing on Nero’s actions in Greece would have the most powerful impact, rather than including Greek-influenced festivals that occurred in Rome. There are coins which feature Greco-Egyptian deities struck under Nero, listed below, which would appease the Greek population and Nero, but the Olympic series’ purely Greek connection and commemoration of Nero’s recent victories would have a stronger impact on both the Greek population and Nero. Perhaps this is why the Olympic series made up most of the tetradrachms minted, while the more Greco-Egyptian themes were relegated to the bronze coinage.

The rest of the Alexandrian coinage from 66/67 and 67/68 CE is as follows, and may also have some influence on Tiberius Julius Alexander’s plans to gain Greek favor:\(^{68}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>RPC No.</th>
<th>Size (mm.)</th>
<th>Metal</th>
<th>Obverse</th>
<th>Reverse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>The information in this table comes from <em>Roman Provincial Coinage</em>. The – symbol means there is no information available, and the // symbol means it is the same information as the previous entry. There are no weights listed, as they were not given by RPC.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Ref.</td>
<td>Mintage</td>
<td>Metal</td>
<td>Obverse</td>
<td>Reverse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>5292</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Silver</td>
<td>ΝΕΡΩ ΚΛΑΒ ΚΑΙΣ ΣΕΒ ΓΕΡ; radiate bust of Nero with aegis, r.</td>
<td>ΑΥΤΟΚΡΑ, ΛΙΓ; bust of Apollo, r.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5293</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Silver</td>
<td>//</td>
<td>ΑΥΤΟΚΡΑ, ΛΙΓ; helmeted bust of Roma, r.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5294</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Silver</td>
<td>ΝΕΡΩ ΚΛΑΒ ΚΑΙΣ ΣΕΒ ΓΕΡ ΑV, ΛΙΓ; radiate bust of Nero with aegis, l.</td>
<td>ΘΕΟΣ ΣΕΒΑΣΤΟΣ; radiate head of Augustus, r.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5295</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Silver</td>
<td>//</td>
<td>ΤΙΒΕΡΙΟΣ ΚΑΙΣΑΡ; laureate head of Tiberius, r.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5296</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Silver</td>
<td>//</td>
<td>ΣΕΒΑΣΤΟΦΟΡΟΣ; sailing ship, r.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5303</td>
<td>1Æ Diobol</td>
<td>ΝΕΡΩ ΚΛΑΒ ΚΑΙΣ ΣΕΒ ΓΕΡ AV; laureate head of Nero, r.</td>
<td>ΛΙΓ; Agathodaemon serpent with poppies and ears of corn, r.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5304</td>
<td>25 Æ Diobol</td>
<td>ΝΕΡΩ ΚΛΑΒ ΚΑΙΣ ΣΕΒ ΓΕΡ; laureate head of Nero, r.</td>
<td>ΑΥΤΟΚΡΑ, ΛΙΓ; eagle, r.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5305</td>
<td>21 Æ Obol</td>
<td>ΝΕΡΩ ΚΛΑΒ ΚΑΙΣ ΣΕΒ ΓΕΡ AV, ΛΙΔ; radiate bust of Nero with aegis, l.</td>
<td>ΑΥΤΟΚΡΑ, ΛΙΓ; five ears of corn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>5305A</td>
<td>24 Silver</td>
<td>ΝΕΡΩ ΚΛΑΒ ΚΑΙΣ ΣΕΒ ΓΕΡ AV, ΛΙΔ; radiate bust of Nero with aegis, l.</td>
<td>ΘΕΟΣ ΣΕΒΑΣΤΟΣ; radiate head of Augustus, r.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5306</td>
<td>- Silver</td>
<td>//</td>
<td>ΣΕΒΑΣΤΟΦΟΡΟΣ; sailing ship, r.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5318A</td>
<td>39 Δrachm</td>
<td>ΝΕΡΩ ΚΛΑΒ ΚΑΙΣ ΣΕΒ ΓΕΡ AV; laureate head of Nero, r.</td>
<td>ΖΕΥΣ ΚΑΠΕ[ΤΩΛ]ΙΟΣ, ΛΙΔ; Zeus seated, l.; Nike</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5318B</td>
<td>35 Δrachm</td>
<td>//</td>
<td>ΛΙΔ; Sarapis seated, l. with sceptre; Cerberus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5319</td>
<td>30 Δr Hemi-Drachm</td>
<td>//</td>
<td>ΛΙΔ; Tyche standing, l. with rudder and cornucopia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5319A</td>
<td>30 Δr Hemi-Drachm</td>
<td>//</td>
<td>ΛΙΔ; Nike advancing, r. with wreath and palm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5320</td>
<td>26 Δr Diobol</td>
<td>//</td>
<td>ΛΙΔ; agathodaemon serpent, r.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5321</td>
<td>27 Δr Diobol</td>
<td>//</td>
<td>ΛΙΔ; Uraeus serpent, r.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5322</td>
<td>26 Δr Diobol</td>
<td>//</td>
<td>ΛΙΔ; vase</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The rest of Nero’s coinage for 66/67 and 67/68 CE is a mix of billon tetradrachms and bronze denominations. As seen from the reverse types in the table, there seems to be more Greek and Egyptian influence on the coins than Roman, if we define Roman here as specific to the city of Rome and the imperial Latin-speaking culture that it generated while acknowledging that Egypt and its various populations were fully part of the Roman Empire even if they did not possess Roman citizenship. The only direct allusions to Roman themes are RPC 5293-95 and 5318A, which feature Roma, the deified emperors Augustus and Tiberius, and Zeus Kapetolios (Jupiter Capitolinus) with Nike. The eagle, a common reverse image on Alexandrian coinage and also a symbol of the Roman Empire, goes back to the Ptolemaic dynasty and was used on Alexandrian coinage until the reform of Diocletian. The rest of the coins feature distinctly Greek or Egyptian symbols, especially Sarapis and the agathadaemon spirit, two Greco-Egyptian deities. It is typically the smaller denominations which are in bronze, and they were most likely minted much less frequently than the tetradrachm.

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69 Jupiter Capitolinus was a principal deity of Rome. Capitolia were temples dedicated to Jupiter Optimus Maximus, Juno Regina, and Minerva Augusta, and were common in Roman colonies, especially in North Africa. Evidence of these temples mainly belongs to the 2nd and early 3rd centuries CE during the Antonine period, and while there is no evidence of Alexandria having one, this coin of Zeus Kapetolios illustrates that Alexandria was familiar with the Capitoline Triad. See Quinn and Wilson (2013), 117–73.

70 Boyce (1949), 181.

71 Burnett, Amandry, and Ripollès, eds. (1992), 704: “No bronze coinage was produced until some rare small denominations of years 5 and 6; it was minted thereafter in every year from year 8, though in small quantities except for years 8 and 13-14.”
It is reasonable that the Alexandrian Greeks felt threatened by the Jewish population and their privileges. Josephus claims in his *Vita* that when he travelled to Rome in order to free imprisoned priests, he was able to meet Poppaea after being introduced by Aliturus, a Jewish actor who was favored by Nero. After meeting him, Poppaea released the prisoners, and gave him many expensive gifts. Poppaea had also successfully pleaded on behalf of the Jews to Nero over an altercation in Judaea c. 60-62 CE. Because of this, some scholars believe that she either adhered to the Jewish faith or was a Jewish sympathizer. These incidents are only attested to in Josephus, but scholars such as Smallwood and Williams believe without a doubt that they did occur. While Poppaea died before Nero’s journey to the East, she was his favorite wife, and these tendencies might have affected Nero’s own beliefs moving forward. Because of these possible Jewish sympathies, minting the Olympic series would have reminded Nero of Alexandria’s Greek roots and identity.

Another reason Tiberius Julius Alexander needed the favor of Nero was that it was getting more and more difficult to handle the demands of the Roman government. In 68 CE Tiberius Julius Alexander issued an economic edict which addressed a multitude of issues that Egypt was facing, but was mainly addressed toward the Alexandrians. Scholars have differing

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73 Joseph. *AJ* 20.189-196. “ἀλλὰ καὶ συνεχώρησαν ἓν ὅπως τὴν οἰκοδομιάν, τῇ γυναικὶ Ποππαίᾳ, θεοσεβής γὰρ ἦν, ὑπὲρ τῶν Ἰουδαίων δεηθείση χαριζόμενος.” The altercation was between Agrippa II and the priests of Judaea. Agrippa II built a dining room overlooking where the priests worked, and they in turn built a wall. Agrippa and Festus, the procurator of Judaea, wanted the wall torn down, but the priests refused, so the matter was brought to Nero. Smallwood (1959), 330; Williams (1988), 97–111 agrees that this altercation did occur and that Poppaea intervened, but calls Smallwood’s argument that Poppaea was an adherent of the Jewish faith a radical argument.
74 Poppaea Sabina died in 65 CE. Ancient sources claim that while pregnant, she argued with Nero over how much time he spent at the races, causing him to kick her in a fit of rage and kill her (Suet. *Ner.* 35.3). Tacitus has a similar story, saying that the kick was an outburst of rage from Nero (*Ann.* 16.6). Given the bias that both authors have toward Nero, many modern scholars believe that her death was most likely due to a miscarriage or complication in childbirth. Nero was obsessed with Poppaea, and after her death found a man who looked remarkably like her, Sporus, had him castrated, married him, and made him dress like an empress. See Champlin (2003), 108-109.
75 See Chalon (1964) for a full copy of the original Greek edict, a French translation, and commentary on the text.
opinions on for whom this edict was actually written. Some scholars, such as Gérard Chalon, believe it was written for Galba and his new administration, as the opening of the edict gives praise to Galba.\textsuperscript{77} However, the edict had to have been written while Nero was still emperor, as Egypt only learned of Nero’s death on June 9\textsuperscript{th} and Galba’s accession to the throne 27 days later, on July 6\textsuperscript{th} – the same day this edict was published.\textsuperscript{78} Unless Tiberius Julius Alexander was forewarned about Galba becoming emperor, there would not have been sufficient time for him to write this after Nero’s death, except for adding a brief text in praise of Galba at the beginning. Scholars such as J.G. Milne and H.I. Bell do not agree that it was written for Galba’s reign.\textsuperscript{79}

Chalon states that this edict accurately portrays society at this time, namely that Tiberius Julius Alexander was not reacting to imagined problems. The edict itself is only a series of his responses to different petitions, as Tiberius Julius Alexander states in the beginning.\textsuperscript{80} Much of the edict addresses issues pertaining to taxes and tax farming (sections two and four), where he declares that in the future no one will be forced into tax farming and upholds the tax reductions and exemptions petitioned by some under a ruling by Claudius. As discussed previously, Alexandrian citizens were exempt from certain taxes. If Egypt was struggling to meet tax quotas, citizens would presumably want to be reassured that they still had their special privileges. Tiberius Julius Alexander published this edict in order to attempt to fix some of these issues, and in the words of Chalon, was for “maintien des privilèges (εὐεργεσία) et la lutte contre

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., 53.
\textsuperscript{78} Duncan-Jones (1990), 7-10.
\textsuperscript{79} Milne (1936), 113; Bell (1938), 1-8.
\textsuperscript{80} Chalon (1964), 54. Tiberius Julius Alexander states that since the beginning of his entry into the city, he has been entreated by petitioners in large and small groups, complaining about their recent abuses.
l’oppression fiscale (εἰσπράξεις), tels sont donc les deux motifs dominants de l’ordonnance, dont ils expriment pour ainsi dire l’esprit.”

If Egypt was in the middle of an economic crisis when Nero was supposed to visit, this crisis would be another reason to try and appeal to the emperor. According to Tiberius Julius Alexander’s edict, economic privileges were being violated, and the grant of privileges in Alexandria had caused multiple episodes of violent civil discord in the past, as recently as two years before the edict. Tiberius Julius Alexander was prefect of Egypt and was allowed to make certain decisions regarding the government, but he was appointed by the emperor, and since Egypt was an imperial province, ultimately it was under Nero’s control. As Couvalis argues, Tiberius Julius Alexander wanted to gain the favor of the Alexandrian Greeks, perhaps to have them forget about his own Jewish ancestry, and maintaining the special privileges of Alexandrians would be essential to doing this.

The desire for special privileges and favor from Nero seems to be one of the principal reasons behind the minting of the Olympic series. There had been at least three large episodes of civil discord between the Greeks and the Jews in Alexandria during the Julio-Claudian dynasty, and the granting of privileges was a driving factor behind them. Tiberius Julius Alexander, who sided with the Greek population during the episode in 66 CE, perhaps would have wanted Alexandria to seem as Greek as possible leading up to Nero’s visit, in order to appeal to Nero’s love of Greek culture. This would have especially been important because while Nero was a philhellene, he had shown some benevolence to the Jewish population of Judaea in the past because of his second wife Poppaea Sabina.

81 Ibid., 67. “The maintenance of privileges (εὔεργεσίαι) and the fight against tax oppression (εἰσπράξεις), these therefore are the two dominant reasons of the edict, of which they express, so to speak, the spirit.”
Conclusions
In sum, the Olympic series was minted in Alexandria in 66/67 and 67/68 CE in order to appeal to Nero’s philhellenic tendencies and gain further privileges for the Alexandrian Greek population. The Julio-Claudian dynasty has a long history of civil strife between the Greek and Jewish populations of Alexandria, centering around their citizenship and the privileges granted by the emperor. In 66 CE another episode of violence broke out between these two groups, leading Tiberius Julius Alexander to violently suppress the Jews. It is probable that the minting of the Olympic series and the commemoration of Nero’s victories in the Panhellenic games was initiated by Nero himself, and was one way in which he, through the prefect Tiberius Julius Alexander, promulgated the superiority of the Alexandrian Greek population. This is especially important in light of the economic crisis seen in Tiberius Julius Alexander’s edict from 68 CE, where certain privileges were being ignored, and the Alexandrian Greeks would most likely want to affirm their rights as citizens. As seen in the next chapter, hundreds of millions of coins were produced in the last two years of Nero’s reign. The reasoning behind this is not certain, but the economic crisis in Egypt, and the lack of coinage in general before Nero’s reign, may have caused Egypt to need to mint more coinage. Because of this monumental coin production in the last years of Nero’s reign, the question of imperial agency needs to be considered, as while there is no evidence of correspondence between Nero and Tiberius Julius Alexander, it is probable that the prefect would have needed Nero’s permission, if not initiative, to mint on this scale.
Chapter 3: A Die Study of Apollo Aktios

Nero’s Alexandrian coinage has managed to survive in large quantities, making up 15.1% of the billon hoard evidence that is sufficiently known to us at the time of Erik Christiansen’s 1988 survey.¹ Most of this coinage comes from years 10-14 (63/64 CE – 67/68 CE), where Nero minted unprecedented amounts of coinage.² This coinage would form “the backbone of Egyptian silver currency for the next 200 years.”³ While the peak of his coinage is believed to come in year 12 (65/66 CE), a die study of one type of the Olympic series, Apollo Aktios, demonstrates that a vast amount of coinage was still produced in 66/67 and 67/68 CE.⁴ Through this die study, using Warren Esty’s formulae for statistical analysis, we can estimate the total number of dies used for this series of coinage, and from this estimate the overall amount of coinage produced. With these estimates, the significance of the Olympic series will become clearer, as the large size of the coinage illustrates the importance of the message behind its iconography, discussed in the previous chapter, in comparison to smaller sized issues. The results from this die study will be able to shed light on the monetary production of Roman Egypt and how the Alexandrian mint produced coinage.

3.1 Methodology

Apollo Aktios is the deity chosen from the Olympic series for the die study. According to Keith Emmett’s summary of Alexandrian coins, Apollo Aktios was a rare type in 66/67 CE and extremely common in 67/68 CE. Emmett also gives year 12 (65/66 CE) an extremely rare rating, meaning there was at least one coin of Apollo Aktios in 65/66 CE, although he does not mention

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¹ Christiansen (1988), 90. See Christiansen’s work for a full breakdown of Alexandrian coin hoards.
² Ibid., 96. Christiansen estimates that the production for years 10-14 would be c. 600 million coins.
³ Duncan-Jones (1994), 211.
⁴ This die study will come later in the chapter.
which collection houses the coin or in which sale it appeared and so it remains untraceable. The reason I chose Apollo Aktios is that Milne’s *Catalogue of Alexandrian Coins in the British Museum* lists three overstrikes of Apollo Aktios over Hera Argeia. Overstrikes are very rare in Alexandrian coinage, and while I was not able to find die links with any of the overstruck coins, it still tells us that the mint was striking multiple deities of the Olympic series at the same time and this is information that we did not previously know or have reason to suspect.

As the quantity of Nero’s coinage is immense, a large number of collections were consulted to gather information and images of these coins. Not only were museums and university-owned collections consulted, but also private collections, auction catalogues, and online retailers. All of the collections and locations of the coinage are cited in the die study with their relevant information. This die study is provisional, as I was not able to consult any auction catalogs before 1997, and so my coverage is not complete. Unfortunately, information for these coins is not always available or complete, and so in some cases weight, diameter, die axis, or a combination of these are missing for the relevant coins.

Weight, an important consideration for Nero’s coinage, was based on a standard weight system, and fluctuated during Nero’s reign as he reformed the currency across the empire. The percentage of silver was debased in Rome, going from 100% silver to 80% in 64 CE, and in

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5 Emmett (2001), 14.
6 Milne (1933), 8. These overstrikes can be seen in both the die study and plates later on in this chapter.
7 This will be discussed later on in the chapter.
8 Thank you to the many museum and collection curators for providing images and/or updated information on Apollo Aktios coins in their collection.
9 While I have looked in a variety of places and contacted collection curators for unpublished coins, there are undoubtedly many specimens of Apollo Aktios that I am missing. Furthermore, I was unable to acquire photos of the coins from SNG Copenhagen, and so these specimens are missing from the die study.
10 Many auction catalogue databases do not have information pre-1997, and so for future research on this topic I will consult catalogues published before this date.
11 Nero’s coinage was debased not only in Egypt, but also in Rome and the East. See Butcher and Ponting (2015) for an in depth analysis on metallurgy and the metal content of coinage and how this also played into monetary production. See Schwe (2017) for more information on Nero’s debasement of silver coinage across the empire.
Alexandria the percentage went from 23% pre-Nero to 19% in 56/7 CE, to 18% in 63 CE and 17% in 68 CE.\textsuperscript{12} The last Tyrian shekel was struck in 64/5 CE, yet Antioch raised its silver content from 50% to 70%.\textsuperscript{13} Schwei argues that these changes occurred in order to fix the exchange rates across the empire and eliminate the Tyrian shekel.\textsuperscript{14} Butcher and Ponting suggest for year 10 that there was an average weight of 13.23g for the tetradrachm, and that this remained stable for the rest of Nero’s reign.\textsuperscript{15} For years 13 and 14, they suggest average weights of 13.15g and 13.05g respectively.\textsuperscript{16} Billon tetradrachms are susceptible to corrosion, which causes weight loss, because of their lower silver content in comparison to other contemporary silver coinage.\textsuperscript{17} This may explain the data below, which shows the weights of the coins used in the die study:

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure6.png}
\caption{Weight Distribution of Nero’s Apollo Aktios Type in Year 13 (66/67 CE) n=21}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{12} Schwei (2017), 108.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 108-109.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 107.
\textsuperscript{15} Butcher and Ponting (2015), 627 referencing their work from 2005. The number of specimens for Year 10 is 46.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 638. Year 13 had 115 specimens and Year 14 had 62 specimens.
\textsuperscript{17} Butcher and Ponting (2015), 616.
There are only twenty one coins with weight recorded for 66/67 CE, and fourteen have weights below thirteen grams. One coin even weighs in at 9.80g, over three grams less than the average weight recorded by Butcher and Ponting. The average weight for this issue is 12.54g, making it .61g, or 4.64%, lower than Butcher and Ponting’s average weight of 13.15g. The median value is 12.82g. Since this type is rare in year 13, there are no repeated weights to show a curve in the frequency. However, year 14 produced much more of the Olympic series coinage according to Emmett’s data, and thus has more coins to pull from:

![Weight Distribution of Nero’s Year 14 (67/68 CE) Apollo Aktios Type with No Star on the Reverse n=49](image)

There are 49 specimens for Year 14 with no star on the reverse. The average weight of this series is 12.41g, and the median value is 12.66g. This makes the issue 4.91% lower than Butcher and Ponting’s average weight. While no coins weighed exactly 13.05g, five coins were within
.05g of the mean weight. However, similar to year 13, there are a few coins well below the average, one weighing in at 9.82g. For coin 34, I accept the CNG weight of 13.03g as it is closer to the proposed average weight of 13.05g that Butcher and Ponting calculated. Year 14 coins with the star on the reverse have even more reduced weight specimens, in part because this is the most common survivor.

As seen above, the most frequent weight is 12.26g and 13.21g with three coins each. The average weight for this issue is 12.54g, making it 3.91% lower than Butcher and Ponting’s average weight. The median value is 12.68g. Table Four, on the next page, shows all of the weights for both years. The data illustrates a wide array of different weights, reflecting the imprecision the mint had in minting coins on the same weight. Since such a large number of

Figure 8: Weight Distribution of Nero’s Year 14 (67/68 CE) Apollo Aktios Type with Star on Reverse n=100

As seen above, the most frequent weight is 12.26g and 13.21g with three coins each. The average weight for this issue is 12.54g, making it 3.91% lower than Butcher and Ponting’s average weight. The median value is 12.68g. Table Four, on the next page, shows all of the weights for both years. The data illustrates a wide array of different weights, reflecting the imprecision the mint had in minting coins on the same weight. Since such a large number of
coins were minted in a short period of time, the weights may be imprecise because of mass coin production.
Figure 9: Weight Distribution of Apollo Aktios Year 13 & Year 14 (66/67 & 67/68 CE, n=161)
In addition to looking at the weight of the Apollo Aktios type, I looked specifically at the
details on the obverses and reverses. In order to find die links, it is essential to study the
complex details which would change from die to die and not be affected by something such as
die wear. For the obverse, details such as the curls of Nero’s hair, the position of the legend
relative to his bust, and the placement of the date under his chin were important factors in
determining die links. For the reverse, the star and the placement of its rays were crucial, as well
as the placement of Apollo’s quiver of arrows and the twine of his hair. From these details I was
able to find multiple die links within the Apollo Aktios type. Where there are no die links
present, the coins are organized from highest to lowest weight, except in the case of die links
between types, in which case the first coin is at the end of its respective table.

3.2 The Die Study

Type 1: Year 13 (66/67 CE): Plates 1-2

Obv. ΝΕΡΩ ΚΛΑΒ ΚΑΙΣ ΣΕΒ ΓΕΡ ΑV, LΙΓ; radiate Nero with aegis, l.
Rev. ΑΚΤΙΟΣ ΑΠΟΛΛΩΝ; laureate bust of Actian Apollo with quiver, r.

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**Type 2: Year 14 (67/68 CE) Apollo Aktios with No Star: Plates 3-5**

Obv. ΝΕΡΩ ΚΛΑΥ ΚΑΪΣ ΣΕΒ ΓΕΡ ΑV, ΛΙΔ; radiate bust of Nero with aegis, l.

Rev. ΑΚΤΙΟΣ ΑΠΟΛΛΩΝ; laureate bust of Actian Apollo with quiver, r.
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Type 3: Year 14 (67/68 CE) Apollo Aktios with Star on Reverse: Plates 6-12

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Rev. ΑΚΤΙΟΣ ΑΠΟΛΛΩΝ; laureate bust of Actian Apollo with quiver, r., star in lower right.

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### 3.3 Analysis

The die study produced 176 different obverse dies and 178 reverse dies, with eight different die links occurring in year 14, and none in year 13. With this data we can use Warren Esty’s formulae for estimating the original number of dies and the overall production of the coinage. However, there are some problems with estimating these coinage sizes through statistical analysis which must be kept in mind. The main difficulty is that many hypotheses were developed with the belief that dies wore out at the same rate and produced equal numbers of coins.\(^{18}\) This is unrealistic, as there are a variety of factors that could cause a die to wear out more quickly. Chris Howgego suggests that the average production from each obverse die was between 23,000 and 47,000 coins, and between 11,000 and 28,000 coins for the reverse dies.\(^{19}\) I will use his minimum estimates to estimate the production of Apollo Aktios. However, Howgego’s estimate is based off of a 4\(^{th}\) c. BCE text of the Delphic amphictyony, which struck staters on a different weight standard.\(^{20}\) Billon tetradrachms have a softer metal content than

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\(^{18}\) Esty (1984), 180.

\(^{19}\) Howgego (1995), 32.

\(^{20}\) *FD III 5* no.49 (=*CID 2* no.75).
these staters, and thus we can reasonably assume that they would have a longer die life.

However, there is no surviving data for the die life of billon tetradrachms, and so we must use the Delphic amphictyony’s numbers and assume the estimated production was larger than calculated.

First, the coverage of the sample must be estimated. This requires the formula $C_{\text{est}} = 1 - \frac{d_1}{n}$, where $d_1$ is the number of dies represented by exactly one coin in the sample and $n$ equals the number of coins in the sample.\(^{21}\) The number of varieties observed exactly once is 168 coins, and there are 184 coins total in the sample. This leaves us with an estimated coverage of 8.8%. Coverage is the probability that the next coin will be a match to a previous die, and as coverage increases, the sample becomes more and more complete.\(^{22}\) Here we have an extremely small coverage, meaning that we only have a small percentage of the overall production of this coinage.

$$C_{\text{est}} = 1 - \frac{d_1}{n}$$

$d_1$= the number of specimens represented by only one coin in the sample

$$C_{\text{est}} = 1 - \frac{165}{184}$$

$n$= the total number of coins in the sample

$C_{\text{est}} = .088$

Estimated Coverage = 8.8%

Figure 10: Estimated Coverage of the Sample

Next, we can estimate the original number of dies by using the estimated coverage and the formula $D_{\text{est}} = \left(\frac{d}{C_{\text{est}}}\right)\left(1 + \frac{d_1}{2d}\right)$.\(^{23}\) Here $d$ equals the number of dies observed in the sample and $d_1$ equals the number of singletons.

\(^{21}\) Esty (2006), 359.

\(^{22}\) Ibid., 360.

\(^{23}\) Ibid., 359.
With this formula, we get 3,943.18 estimated obverse dies. If we multiply this by 23,000, Howgego’s minimum estimate of the average amount of coins one obverse die could produce, we get an overall production of 90,693,140 estimated coins. Since the die life for billon tetradrachms is likely higher than Howgego’s estimates, if we multiply by 43,000, the maximum number of coins produced per die, we get an overall production of 169,583,400 coins. For the reverse, the minimum estimate is 11,000 coins per die, producing a total of 44,124,960 estimated coins. The maximum number by Howgego’s estimate is 112,318,080 coins from the reverse dies.

I will use the minimum estimates of coin production calculated, because even though Alexandria’s die life differed from the Delphic amphictyony’s, with a conservative estimate we can know that the minimum amount of coinage calculated was actually minted. I will also use the reverse die estimates of coin production over the obverse die production for this same reason, as the reverse is much lower. The minimum obverse die production is almost twice that of the reverse, but as will be discussed later, there is evidence of obverse dies being shared across multiple deities. Furthermore, there were die breaks on some of the obverse dies, such as coins
73 and 74. Both of these factors may have lowered the total amount of coinage produced, though by how much is uncertain.

Based on Butcher and Ponting’s data concerning the amount of silver in the tetradrachm throughout Nero’s reign, if we accept the minimum estimate based on Howgego’s figures and Esty’s formulae, it is possible to estimate the total amount of silver required to mint the Apollo Aktios type.\textsuperscript{24} For Year 13 there is 2.02g of silver in the billon tetradrachm, and in Year 14 there is 2.19g of silver.\textsuperscript{25} If we multiply the lower, or the minimum amount of silver needed of these two amounts (2.02g), by the minimum total number of coins produced from the reverse dies, it would require at least 89,132,419.2g of silver. This would be equal to 2,395.39 Roman talents of silver.\textsuperscript{26} This is a significant amount of silver for one issue of coinage, especially since Egypt had no silver deposits of its own, and had to import it.\textsuperscript{27}

The Olympic Series is not the most numerous coinage of Nero. Butcher and Ponting state that the main coin types of Nero were Poppaea and Serapis from year 10 and 11, the Ptolemaic eagle in year 11, Alexandria in year 12, and Divus Augustus and Tiberius from year 13.\textsuperscript{28} This furthers the belief that Nero’s coinage was immense – the Apollo Aktios type had an estimated 44,124,960 coins produced from the reverse dies, and it was not even one of the most numerous types of Nero’s reign. However, the Olympic series is normally overlooked in the various analyses of coins from years 10-14 of Nero’s reign, and so with this new data, it may actually be one of the more numerous types.

\textsuperscript{24} Butcher and Ponting (2015), 643.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 643.
\textsuperscript{26} A Roman talent was worth 32.71kg. It was equal to one Roman \textit{libra}, and an aureus was 1/44 of a libra at 7.44g each.
\textsuperscript{27} Butcher and Ponting (2015), 606.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 638.
Nero’s coinage circulated widely throughout Egypt, and is found in various hoards stretching all the way to the praesidia and Oases.29 One such example is Trimithis, now called Amheida, which was a settlement in the Dakhleh Oasis. In a temple in Area 4.1, a hoard of 855 coins, ranging in date from Claudius to Marcus Aurelius, was discovered that contained 240 coins of Nero alone.30 The coins show a wide range of weight distributions, most likely due to corrosion, one Alexandrian billon tetradrachm with the reverse of Roma from 66/67 weighing only 6.62g, and the coins of Apollo Aktios were unable to be included in this chapter’s die study because of their corrosion and wear.31 Another coin hoard from Xeron, a praesidium in the Eastern desert, uncovered 47 coins, 5 of which belong to Nero, along with a coin belonging to Constantius II, who reigned from 346-360 CE.32 This illustrates the wide circulation and longevity of Neronian coinage in the Egyptian economy.

Another thing to note is that there is evidence of obverse dies being shared between different deities of the Olympic series. Milne’s catalogue cites two cases of this happening in the Olympic series, once between Hera Argeia and Apollo Pythios, and once between Zeus Olympios and Apollo Aktios.33 This would affect the total number of coins produced for each deity, as not only could there be die links within each type but also throughout the entire series. Sharing obverse dies would cause them to wear out faster, and thus reduces the total number of coins that could be produced for each deity overall. Thus, the estimated number of overall coinage produced through Esty’s analysis is most likely lower for the obverse die coin

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29 See Cuvigny and Lach-Urgacz (2020) for more information on the use of coinage in the praesidia and Nero’s presence in the hoard data.
30 Thank you to Dr. Thomas Faucher for sharing the hoard data and coin images from Amheida. Dr. Faucher will soon publish this hoard data.
31 The coin of Roma with a weight of 6.62g is 14767 in the Amheida hoard database.
33 Milne (1933), 8.
production estimate. As for why the obverse dies were shared across multiple deities, the obverse is the same across the entire Olympic series, except the aegis facing left versus right on some coins, and so perhaps it would not be necessary to switch obverse dies when the reverse dies of a type ran out, and instead just switch to the next deity’s reverse. It is also possible that the obverse die was sent to another officinae to use if they were out of obverse dies, although it would presumably be easier to send a die not already in use for this purpose. Despite this impact on the total amount of coinage produced, these shared dies tell us that the six deities were not minted separately, and at least two were produced at the same time and at the same mint as one another.

The overstrikes of Apollo Aktios over Hera Argeia, seen in the die study above, also prove that multiple types of the Olympic series were being minted simultaneously. Hera Argeia and Apollo Aktios would have had to have been minted at the same time and in the same place to be able to make this overstrike possible, as certain conditions need to be met to strike coins, such as the metal being heated in order to become malleable.\(^{34}\) Since Hera Argeia is the image underneath Apollo Aktios, Hera Argeia was minted first.\(^{35}\) Hera Argeia’s coinage also could have been recycled to make Apollo Aktios’, but Hera Argeia’s coinage also circulated widely, and so it was not recalled to mint a different type. These overstrikes, along with the massive production of the Olympic series, may suggest that there was a great haste to produce this coinage within two years. Perhaps these overstrikes were mistakes made because of the speed of minting needed, or even used as a means to meet production quotas, ignoring that the coin has

\(^{34}\) Metcalf (2012), 5.

\(^{35}\) Hersh (1953), 35. The overstruck type must have been minted previously, and thus after deciding which type was overstruck, one can determine which type came first chronologically.
already been struck. There is a possibility of finding die links between the Hera Argeia and Apollo Aktios issues because of these overstrikes, but none were found in this die study.

The most important aspect that this die study gives insight into is the star symbol on the lower right corner of year 14’s reverse. Little is known about this star symbol and its significance, but one theory was that it was some sort of mint mark.36 Others, such as Dattari, believe it represents a subdivision of the year. This die study gives credence to the belief that the star symbol was minted last in Nero’s coinage.37 As seen in the die study above, there is a die link between Type 2 and Type 3, in which an obverse is shared between a reverse with a star and a reverse without a star symbol. This proves that these two reverse types were minted simultaneously, as they share a die. However, even though the star symbol was minted last in year 14, when we take into consideration other coinage that used the star symbol, it seems most likely that the star was a mint mark of some sort. It is possible that one officinae was using the reverse die without the star, and when that reverse wore out, they did not have any replacements, and so the obverse was sent to another officina, which used the star on the reverse. As for why only year 14 used the star symbol, perhaps the massive volume of coinage which Alexandria needed to produce caused them to need more officinae in year 14, leading to the star symbol on some reverse dies through these new officinae.

Other coinage which uses the star symbol includes year 9 of Nero’s reign, in which all four types use the star symbol, and year 2 (68/69 CE) of Galba’s reign, which had 5 types with a star on the reverse.38 Since year 9 of Nero’s coinage all use the star symbol, and it comes before the increase in minting in years 10-14, it is possible that one officina minted this series, and so

36 Milne (1933), xix; Christiansen (1988), 92.
37 Christiansen (1988), 92; Butcher and Ponting (2015), 635.
38 Nero year 9 (62/63 CE): Poppaea, Dikaiosyne, a hippopotamus, and four ears of corn (RPC I 5267-5270); Galba: RPC I 5336-9, although the star is not always in the lower left corner of the reverse.
they all share the star symbol. Galba’s coinage is more difficult to analyze as there is not as much research on it, but there are multiple versions of the coins with the star, some without the star, some with the star, and some with a *simpulum*. Since Galba did not reign a full second year, it would not make sense for the star to be a date marker in this context. Since there are multiple different symbols on his coinage, the star, along with the *simpulum* in this case, are presumably officinae markers. If the star symbol on Galba’s coinage is most likely a mint marker, it would make sense that the star symbol on Nero’s coinage is also a mint marker.

To relate this die study to the arguments made throughout the rest of this thesis, the massive amount of coinage produced for the Olympic series is significant. This large estimate illustrates the importance of the iconography behind the Olympic series, as Tiberius Julius Alexander took care to mint hundreds of millions of coins of this one specific series across only two years. The Olympic series became the dominant tetradrachm type in year 14 as well, with only two other types in comparison to the Olympic series’ six.\(^{39}\) If this series was small and little coinage was produced from it, the message would not hold the same sway. However, as a conservative estimate, if we multiply the minimum reverse die coin production by six, the number of deities in the series, we get 264,749,760 coins. This immense amount illustrates that there was something important occurring in Egypt, because in Rome Duncan-Jones estimates that from 64-68 CE, only 32 million denarii were minted.\(^ {40} \) Duncan-Jones’ estimate seems extremely low, especially in light of his debasement lowering the amount of silver, and the money need to reconstruct the city after the Great Fire of 64 CE. However, even Vespasian’s estimated 357 million denarii over ten years does not compete with the over 600 million

\(^{39}\) I am not counting the star reverse type as a separate type here, and instead just focusing on the six overall deities.

\(^{40}\) Duncan-Jones (1994), 168.
tetradrachms estimated to have been produced in the last four years of Nero’s reign.\textsuperscript{41} Nero wanted the Greek identity and culture of Alexandria to be known through this coinage, and wanted to commemorate his victories and demonstrate his own philhellenism on a massive scale. He was successful, as this coinage circulated for 200 years in Egypt after his death.

Nero’s coinage was evidently produced on a massive scale, and the die study of Apollo Aktios analyzes only a small part of the coinage minted in Alexandria. The sheer volume of coinage, not only of Apollo Aktios, illustrates how it was able to survive in such large quantities in hoards across Egypt for several centuries. The weight distribution of Nero’s coinage depicts the new standard introduced during his reign. Despite this new standard, there is a large range of both heavily reduced and slightly heavier than average coinage. While no die links were found in year 13, the die links discovered in year 14 give insight into how the mint produced coinage in Alexandria. The obverse die link between Type 2 and Type 3, in conjunction with the coinage of Nero’s year 9 and Galba’s year 2, illustrates that the star featured as a mint marker for the various officinae needed to mint this amount of coinage. The hundreds of millions of coins minted of the Olympic series illustrate the significance Nero placed on commemorating his victories in Greece, and the strong Hellenic identity and culture of Alexandria.

\textsuperscript{41} Christiansen (1988), 96.
Conclusion

The emperor Nero’s coinage was not only an artistic innovation but a political and technological one as well, and because such vast quantities were minted, his coinage circulated for more than two centuries after his death in 68 CE. The iconography on his coins was highly propagandistic, and in many cases referred to historical events, monuments, members of the Julio-Claudian family, and symbols of imperial power. The coinage of Alexandria, an imperial province under Nero, remains unprecedented in the number of types of reverses minted during his reign. The Olympic series, minted in 66/67 and 67/68 CE, is one such example of Alexandrian coinage which refers to events from Nero’s reign – his participation in the Greek Panhellenic games. This thesis demonstrates that the huge volume of coinage estimated to have been produced for the Olympic series reflects both Alexandria’s massive commitment to pro-Hellenic ethnic propaganda and that said pro-Hellenic message makes this series far more similar to the Latin legend coinage of Achaea discussed in Chapter 1 than previously realized.

The die study completed in Chapter 3 of the Apollo Aktios type illustrates the sheer volume of coinage minted. A staggering 44,124,960 coins at a minimum were estimated to be produced from the reverse dies. As a complete die study of both obverses and reverses has not been fully completed before, these results give an unprecedented look into Alexandria’s monetary economy during this time period.¹ There are 19 different types in the entire Olympic series, and Apollo Aktios covers three of them. Thus, this estimated amount of produced coinage is only a small number of what the Olympic series actually entailed. The total amount would have been monumental in size, since if we multiply the minimum production of the

¹ Christiansen (1988), 95: Christiansen does perform a die study of multiple types of Nero’s coinage in year 3 and year 12. However, he states that the number of coins was so large that he restricted himself to the reverses only.
Apollo Aktios type by the six deities, we get a total of 264,749,760 coins at a minimum. Considering the Apollo Aktios type is the rarest of the series, and the conservative estimate was used, this total in reality was likely much higher. The large variation in weights seen in comparison to Butcher and Ponting’s own averages may be an indicator that they were minting on a mass scale. The star symbol may also help prove this, as new officinae may have needed to be opened in year 14 to deal with the speed of production needed.

One thing that this die study definitively shows us is that in year 14 the reverse type without a star and with a star were minted simultaneously, one after the other as one die wore out. The star is considered by some such as Dattari and Christiansen to be an indicator of the date, while others such as Milne believe it is a mint marker. Taking into consideration the other coinage which uses the star symbol, especially Galba’s, it is more likely that it was a mint mark. Additionally, the overstruck coins of Apollo Aktios over Hera Argeia prove that multiple types of the Olympic series were most likely being minted within the same officinae. The shared obverse between Apollo Aktios and Zeus Olympios also tells us that the total estimate of obverse dies for the Apollo Aktios series will be lower than calculated. If the Apollo Aktios series is sharing dies with other deities, that die will be able to make less coins for each series, and its total production for one deity will decrease. Despite this, there was still an extremely large number of coins minted of the Olympic series overall.

The next step includes two more die studies. The first die study must be of Zeus Olympios, who shares an obverse die with the Apollo Aktios series. Here we could potentially find other die links between the two series. This may help in estimating just how many obverse dies were shared between deities, and how this affects the total amount of coinage produced. The next die study would be a coin type from year 12, most likely Alexandria, a female figure
wearing an elephant headress. Alexandria is considered to be one of the most numerous types, and would compromise a massive die study. However, the results would be essential to estimating the total amount of coinage produced in the last years of Nero’s reign, and how the Alexandria type compares to the Olympic series in terms of total dies and coins produced.\(^2\) Perhaps these two new die studies will provide further insight into why Nero needed to mint hundreds of millions of coins in the last four years of his reign, a totally unprecedented amount.

Even with these die links between deities, the estimate of coin production is still enormous, and brings the question of why Alexandria felt the need to both mint this coinage, and so much of it. The longstanding ethnic conflict in Alexandria between the Greek and Jewish populations seems to be the catalyst for the Olympic series. Both the Greeks and Jews put effort into trying to gain special favor and privileges from the current emperor, and the reign of Nero was no different. The pogrom in 66 CE, and the start of the Jewish War the same year, did not help ease tensions in Alexandria, and Tiberius Julius Alexander was forced to violently suppress the Jews. It is believed that Nero was planning on travelling to Egypt after his journey throughout Greece, both through Suetonius and the ΣΕΒΑΣΤΟΦΟΡΟΣ series of coins which was struck in 66/67 CE and 67/68 CE. Nero is most responsible for the Olympic series, as Tiberius Julius Alexander would have needed imperial initiative to mint any coinage on this scale, and he promoted the superiority of the Greek population of Alexandria through the commemoration of his participation and victories in the Panhellenic games, as the six deities on the Olympic series correlate to the six main Panhellenic festivals that he took part in. This series would remind both Nero and Egypt of Alexandria’s Greek identity, especially in light of Poppaea Sabina’s supposed

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\(^2\) Christiansen (1988) includes Alexandria in his partial die study, but including the obverses may provide further insight.
Jewish sympathies in earlier years. No evidence remains of any correspondence between Nero and Tiberius Julius Alexander, but Tiberius Julius Alexander would not be able to initiate a project of this size on his own without it being seen as an act of usurpation. In the end, Nero never made it to Egypt, and neither group was able to receive any special favor from him before his death.

As for the size of the coinage, the Olympic series was not even the most prolific, since the coinages of Year 12 are believed to be the largest. However, the large volume does suggest that the Alexandrians found the message behind the Olympic series significant enough to mint hundreds of millions of coins, especially as they were in a closed currency system and their coinage rarely left Egypt. The pro-Hellenic message behind the coins, namely commemorating Nero’s actions in Greece, in order to gain special privileges from him was something Tiberius Julius Alexander was committed to portraying on a massive scale.

The meaning behind the Olympic series coinage also sheds light on the Latin-legend coinage of Achaea minted while Nero was visiting Greece in 66/67 CE. While the Alexandrian coinage used Greek legends and iconography to push their pro-Hellenic agenda, as Greek was the administrative language of Egypt, this coinage is in fact very similar to the Latin legend coinage of both Corinth, Patras, and Buthrotum. Corinth, Patras, and Buthrotum were cities in Greece that were heavily Romanized, and their coinage is a testament to this, being the only cities to use Latin on their coinage under Nero. While all three were Latin colonies and thus expected to use Latin, the city of Nicopolis, like Patras, was originally founded by Augustus and was refounded by Nero while he was visiting, and yet stuck to using Greek legends on their coinage. Thus, these Latin legend cities are similar to the Alexandrians’ coinage in that they
used their coins to highlight their city’s linguistic and cultural identity and show support to the emperor.

Most of the mints in Greece who commemorated Nero’s visit did so with Greek legends, and Olympia and Delphi did not mint any coinage at all despite Nero’s visit to their sanctuaries and participation in the games. This difference highlights the values of certain Achaean cities, namely, that while they were part of the Roman Empire, they were not Roman cities in the same way that Corinth, Patras, or Buthrotum were. While Delphi and Olympia, under the control of Elis, minted festival coinage in the Classical period, they might not have had the fiscal means to do so during the 1st c. CE. The use of Greek versus Latin legends allows us to better understand the needs and values of the different populations in Achaea, and whether they felt any strong connection to Rome.

A wealth of material and literary evidence survives concerning Emperor Nero which helps to explain his interactions with the provinces, the coinage being the most prolific. The Olympic series produced a staggering amount of billon tetradrachms which commemorated Nero’s participation in the Greek games. The coinage of Achaea had an extremely diverse range of types in Greek and Latin concerning multiple aspects of Nero’s journey to Greece, including his arrival, participation in the Panhellenic games, his liberation of Achaea, and his refoundation of certain cities. The coins’ context within their respective cities allows us to further understand the propaganda of Nero’s reign and the identities of cities within the various provinces of the Roman Empire.
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*See the Die Study for the exact location and/or reference number of each coin

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124. Freiburg, Seminar für Alte Geschichte der Universität Nomisma Vault.
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