



Pre-Columbian Old World Coins in America: An Examination of the Evidence [and Comments and Reply]

Author(s): Jeremiah F. Epstein, Donal B. Buchanan, T. V. Buttrey, George F. Carter, Warren L. Cook, Cyclone Covey, Stephen C. Jett, Thomas A. Lee, Jr., Balaji Mundkur, Allison C. Paulsen, Hanns J. Prem, Jonathan E. Reyman, Miguel Rivera Dorado and Norman Totten

Source: *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (Feb., 1980), pp. 1-20

Published by: [The University of Chicago Press](#) on behalf of [Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2741739>

Accessed: 10-09-2015 17:43 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



The University of Chicago Press and Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Current Anthropology*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

Pre-Columbian Old World Coins in America: An Examination of the Evidence¹

by Jeremiah F. Epstein

WITHIN THE LAST THREE DECADES, a number of pre-Columbian Old World coins have been found in the United States. In most cases, the coins were not found in clearly definable contexts and the documentation that surrounds the discoveries is far from adequate. The significance of these individual finds is not obvious. Diffusionists argue that, even without contextual data, some form of pre-Columbian contact is suggested. Professional anthropologists studiously avoid drawing any conclusions from the limited data available.

Yet a sufficient number of finds have been made to permit a detailed study of the subject. The data are scattered in newspaper reports or literature not normally read by anthropologists. The information presented here came to my attention as a result of wide newspaper coverage linking me with a Roman follis said to be from an Indian mound in central Texas. Many persons who had found ancient coins wrote to me about them, often sending the coins to me for identification. Others sent me references that could easily have been overlooked. Thanks to these generous and helpful individuals, I have been able to collect information on some 40 coin discoveries. While the size of the sample is not impressive, it is large enough to analyze, and some conclusions can be drawn from it as to the nature, extent, patterning, and significance of pre-Columbian Old World coins found in America.

This is not the first study of ancient coins in America.

¹ Without the unstinting help of Jack Kroll, Department of Classics, University of Texas at Austin, and Yaakov Meshorer, Chief Curator of the Bronfman Archaeological Museum, the Israel Museum of Jerusalem, this paper could not have been written. Kroll checked the manuscript for accuracy regarding the descriptions and identifications of coins cited in other literature. Both scholars identified the coins I sent them and generously permitted me to quote them. Obviously, they are not responsible for the errors that occur in this study.

JEREMIAH F. EPSTEIN is Professor of Anthropology at the University of Texas at Austin (Austin, Tex. 78712, U.S.A.). Born in 1924, he was educated at the University of Illinois (B.S., 1949; M.A., 1951) and at the University of Pennsylvania (Ph.D., 1957). He has taught at Texas since 1960. His research interests are Mesoamerican archaeology, early man in the New World, and problems of transoceanic contact. His publications include "Burins from Texas" (*American Antiquity* 26:93-97); "Centipede and Damp Caves: Excavations in Val Verde County, Texas, 1958" (*Bulletin of the Texas Archaeological Society* 33:1-128); "Towards the Systematic Description of Chipped Stone," in *Proceedings of the 35th International Congress of Americanists, Mexico, 1962*, vol. 1, pp. 155-69; and *The San Isidro Site: An Early Man Campsite in Nuevo León, Mexico* (University of Texas at Austin Department of Anthropology, Anthropology Series 7).

The present paper was submitted in final form 29 I 79.

Unquestionably one of the best is that of Pohl (1973), who combed a good share of the literature and newspaper accounts and cited eight separate coin reports. Pohl concludes (p. 35) that the scattered nature of the evidence is more suggestive of drift voyages made in Roman ships than of planned expeditions. Mahan and Braithwaite (1975) have added four new items to the list. My study differs from these others, I hope, in being more analytical and in presenting more data. It deals, inter alia, with the discovery, or purported discovery, of coins both genuine and counterfeit and with reports of coins lost as well as found.

BACKGROUND

Reports of the discovery of Roman coins in America go back to the 16th century. The earliest account is that of Marineo Siculo (1533), who claimed that a coin bearing the image of Augustus was found in the gold mines of Panama. No further discoveries of Roman coins were mentioned for 250 years. In the early 19th century, finds were reported at separate but neighboring localities in Tennessee. Atwater (1820) was the first scholar to discuss this material, and his attitude was decidedly hostile. His contemporary Haywood (1823) was not so sceptical; he published a list of objects suggestive of transoceanic contact, including four Roman coins from the area around Fayetteville. The earliest notice of a Hebrew coin, as well as the first account of a coin reputed to have come from an Indian mound, is in a letter published by Schoolcraft (1854). The only other 19th-century find of which I am aware is a bronze coin of Greco-Syrian origin, commemorating Antiochus, reported from Cass County, Illinois (*Scientific American* 1882:382).

Discoveries in the 20th century are comparatively abundant. Starting in 1913, when a Macedonian tetradrachma minted about 350-336 B.C. was found in the digging of a house foundation in Montana (Pohl 1973), coin discoveries increase at an almost geometric rate. My research uncovered 31 reports for this century, but I am convinced that many more lie hidden in the files of the nation's newspapers.

The major problem in making sense of the coin discoveries is in finding patterns in the temporal/spatial distribution of the coins themselves. Accordingly, the 40 reports that form the body of this paper have been analyzed in various ways. In table 1, the reports are listed alphabetically by the state in which they were found and then numbered consecutively; the two reports from outside the United States end the list. For each report are recorded the date, the place of origin of the coin, its type or denomination where known, its date, the circumstances

TABLE 1
ROMAN, GREEK, AND HEBREW COINS FOUND IN THE NEW WORLD

ITEM	STATE OR COUNTRY	CITY, COUNTY	REPORT/ DISCOVERY DATE	COIN ORIGIN	APPROXIMATE MINT DATE	DENOMINATION	COMMEMORATING	CIRCUMSTANCES REPORTED	REFERENCE
1....	Alabama	Phenix City	1957	Syracuse	490 B.C.	Syracusan	?	Surface, in field	Mahan and Braithwaite (1975)
2....	Arkansas	Cauthron	1973	Carthage	146 B.C.	?	?	6' below surface	Farley (1977), Totten (1977)
3....	Connecticut	Long Island Sound	ca. 1965	Rome	A.D. 161-80	Sesterterius	Marcus Aurelius	Scuba diving	Collins, personal communication
4....	Georgia	Columbus	1945	Rome	?	?	?	Digging flowerbed	Mahan and Braithwaite (1975)
5....	Georgia	St. Simons Island	ca. 1970	Rome-Alexandria	A.D. 98-117	?	Trajan	19th-century well	Fairbanks (1976)
6....	Georgia	St. Simons Island	ca. 1970	Rome	?	Copy of Corinthian coin	-	19th-century well	Fairbanks (1976)
7....	Georgia	Royston	ca. 1961	Rome	A.D. 270	Tetradrachma	Aurelian	Laying driveway	Pohl (1973)
8....	Illinois	Cass County	ca. 1880	Greco-Syrian	173-64 B.C.	?	Antiochus IV	Farm, surface	<i>Scientific American</i> (1882)
9....	Illinois	?	ca. 1913	Rome-Egypt	A.D. 296-97	?	Domitius Domitianus	In Indian mound	<i>Records of the Past</i> (1913)
10....	Indiana	Lafayette	1960	Rome-Cyzicus	A.D. 293	Antoninianus	Maximus Hercules	Digging in back yard	Kirkpatrick, personal communication
11....	Kentucky	Louisville	1932	Israel	A.D. 133	-	Bar Kokhba	Digging in back yard	Gordon (1971)
12....	Kentucky	Clay City	1952	Israel	A.D. 133	-	Bar Kokhba	Pigpen, surface	Gordon (1971)
13....	Kentucky	Hopkinsville	1967	Israel	A.D. 133	-	Bar Kokhba	Plowing	Gordon (1971)
14....	Louisiana	Fort Hudson	ca. 1970	Rome-Antioch	A.D. 594	Follis	Maurice Tiberius	Souvenir hunting, battlefield	Goodwin, personal communication
15....	Louisiana	Baton Rouge	ca. 1970	Rome	A.D. 238	Sesterterius	Pupienus	In ruins of bus station	Goodwin, personal communication
16....	Maryland	Queen Annes County	ca. 1960	Rome	A.D. 64	Sesterterius	Nero Augustus Caesar	In collection of colonial artifacts	Noel-Hume (1974)
17....	Massachusetts	Plum Island	1950	Rome	A.D. 238	?	Gordianus	Shoreline, near old ship timber	Pohl (1973)
18....	Mississippi	?	1977	Rome	A.D. 313	Quadrans	Constantine	In garden	Goodwin, personal communication
19....	Montana	Deer Lake	1913	Macedonia	350-36 B.C.	Tetradrachma	Philip II	3' below surface, virgin ground	Pohl (1973)
20....	Nebraska	Naponee	1975	Rome	A.D. 194	Sesterterius	Septimius Severus	Surface, near house after rain	Mrs. Don Melton, personal communication
21....	New Jersey	Princeton	ca. 1970	Rome/Byzantium	A.D. 700-800	Solidus	?	Digging in garden	Buttrey, personal communication

TABLE 1 (Continued)

ITEM	STATE OR COUNTRY	CITY, COUNTY	REPORT/ DISCOVERY DATE	COIN ORIGIN	APPROXIMATE MINT DATE	DENOMINATION	COMMEMORATING	CIRCUMSTANCES REPORTED	REFERENCE
22....	North Carolina	Black Mountain	1967	Rome	A.D. 253-68	Gallienus	?	Stream bed	Mahan and Braithwaite (1975)
23....	North Carolina	Woodstock	ca. 1960	Greece/Southern Italy	300-200 B.C.	?	?	In box of colonial artifacts	Noel-Hume (1974)
24....	Oklahoma	Heavener	1976	Rome	A.D. 63	?	Nero Augustus Caesar	In ditch, stuck to pop bottle	Farley (1977)
25....	Tennessee	Nashville	1818	Rome	A.D. 100-200	?	?	Digging house foundation	Warsavsky (1961)
26....	Tennessee	Fayetteville	1819	Rome	A.D. 137	Denarius?	?	Digging cellar, 5' down	Haywood (1823, 1959)
27....	Tennessee	Fayetteville	ca. 1819	Rome	A.D. 191	?	Commodus	Surface, in gully	Haywood (1823, 1959)
28....	Tennessee	Fayetteville	1823	Rome	A.D. 41-54	Quadrans	Claudius	Junk left by Mr. Colter	Haywood (1823, 1959)
29....	Tennessee	Fayetteville	1823	Rome	A.D. 300	Follis/ Antoninianus	?	Junk left by Mr. Colter	Haywood (1823, 1959)
30....	Tennessee	Nashville	1819	Rome	?	?	?	In cave	Atwater (1820)
31....	Texas	Round Rock	1964	Rome/London	A.D. 313-14	Follis	Constantine	Burned-rock midden, 3' below surface	Horton, personal communication
32....	Texas	St. Joseph Island	ca. 1970	Rome/Southern Gaul	A.D. 270-73	Follis	Tetricus II	In sand dunes facing ocean	Duckworth, personal communication
33....	Texas	Amarillo	1962	Rome/Siscia	A.D. 364-67	Antoninianus	Valens	Surface, Amarillo Air Base	Packard, personal communication
34....	Virginia	Gloucester County	1956	Rome	?	?	?	Along coast	Noel-Hume (1974)
35....	Wisconsin	Elkhart Lake	1905	Rome	A.D. 152-53	Antoninianus	Pius	Digging barn foundation, 18'-22" below surface	Pohl (1973)
36....	Wisconsin	Oconomowoc	1928	Rome	ca. A.D. 300	?	?	Near Milwaukee River	Pohl (1973)
37....	Wisconsin	Shawano	1933	Rome	?	?	?	?	Pohl (1973)
38....	Wisconsin	Wausaukee	1943	Rome	?	?	?	Plowing	Pohl (1973)
39....	Panama		1533	Rome	27 B.C.- A.D. 14	?	Augustus	In gold mine	Marineo Siculo (1533), Gilbert (1567)
40....	Venezuela		ca. 1950-60	Rome	27 B.C.- A.D. 350	All	All	In beach sand	Irwin (1963)

in which it was found, and the source. Tables 2-5 abstract this table according to discovery dates, minting dates, geographic distribution, and the circumstances of the discovery. If there is any patterning in the data, the analysis will presumably show it.

The study then proceeds to a critical evaluation of finds claimed to be especially significant either because they were associated with Indian sites or because they have received attention in the literature. The data analysis ends with a discussion of material that I believe puts the coin discoveries in a larger perspective, including information on counterfeits, modern patterns of loss of ancient coins, and finds of Chinese and Japanese coins obtained from aboriginal sites on the American Northwest Coast.

PATTERNS IN THE DATA

As I have said, the 20th century saw a dramatic increase in reports of coin discoveries. The various finds are listed in table 2 in order of their discovery or first reporting. We see that in the 13-year period between the beginning of the present century and World War I, there are only three reports. Between World War I and World War II, there are also only three. The striking increase in coin discoveries comes after World War II; there are 25 notices in this period. This coincides with a time when Americans, whether as inductees or as tourists, traveled to Europe in great numbers, and it seems reasonable to suppose that most of the coins found since 1914 had been lost by Americans who had brought them back from Europe. The number of coins purchased by Americans is hard to estimate, but it must be quite large. For example, in the early stages of this research I met a man whose brother had purchased 20 Constantine folles while stationed in Italy in 1944. Coin collectors and dealers tell me that the growth of coin collecting in America is essentially a post-World War II phenomenon. In short, the pattern of coin discoveries in this century correlates

well with the extent of foreign travel. What of the 16th- and 19th-century accounts? The long period of time between the first report, in 1576, and the next, in 1818, should arouse suspicion. If they were valid, one would imagine that ancient coins would have shown up in increasing numbers as America became settled. The time factor also raises suspicions about the Tennessee discoveries. All occurred between 1818 and 1823, and no discoveries have been reported in the state since then. These suspicions will be examined in more detail later.

The dates when the coins were minted are presented in table 3. The significant aspect of the chart is that it shows little duplication of dates. Instead of a cluster of coins for any particular period, we see that the dates are spread across much of Greek and Roman history with almost no overlapping. (The main exceptions are the Bar Kokhba coins that have been reported from Kentucky. As will be shown, at least one of these coins is counterfeit.)

The minting dates do not support the diffusionist position. If there had been contact through European exploration, we would expect it to have been more frequent in one period of Greek or Roman history than in another. Similarly, if the coins came to the New World as a result of drift voyages, the incidence of drifts should correlate more or less with periods of intensive Roman shipping. In either case, we would expect to find more coins that were struck during the periods of greater maritime activity. These expectations are not met in the information assembled in this table.

The geographical distribution of finds within the United States is given in table 4. The data are grouped into three major sets: interior vs. coastal states, states located east or west of the Mississippi River, and northern vs. southern states. The distributional information is equivocal, and both proponents and opponents of the diffusionist position can find some comfort in it.

For the diffusionist, the greater concentration of coins in the South seems to correlate with what is known of the ocean currents from Africa to America. In the light of Heyerdahl's Ra

TABLE 2
COIN DISCOVERIES OF TABLE 1
ARRANGED CHRONOLOGICALLY

YEAR	ITEM
1533.....	39
1818.....	25
1819.....	26, 27, 30
1823.....	28, 29
1880.....	8
1905.....	35
1913.....	9, 19
1928.....	36
1932.....	11
1933.....	37
1943.....	38
1945.....	4
1950.....	17
1953.....	12
1956.....	34
1957.....	1
1960.....	10, 16*, 23*
1961.....	7
1962.....	33
1963.....	40
1964.....	31
1965.....	3*
1967.....	13, 22
1970.....	5*, 6*, 14*, 15*, 21*, 32*
1973.....	2
1975.....	20
1976.....	24
1977.....	18

* Precise discovery date uncertain.

TABLE 3
MINT DATES OF COINS OF TABLE 1
ARRANGED CHRONOLOGICALLY

DATES (APPROX.)	ITEM
B.C. 490.....	1
350-36.....	19
300-200.....	23
173-64.....	8
146.....	2
27-A.D. 14.....	39
A.D. 41-54.....	28
63-64.....	16, 24
98-117.....	5
100-200.....	25
133.....	11, 12, 13
137.....	26
152-53.....	35
161-80.....	3
191.....	27
194.....	20
238.....	15, 17
253-68.....	22
270-73.....	32, 7
293.....	10
296-97.....	9
300.....	29, 36
313-14.....	31, 18
364-67.....	33
594.....	14
700-800.....	21

NOTE: Items 4, 6, 30, 34, 37, 38, and 40, all of which are of uncertain dating, are excluded.

expeditions, these would tend to take a drifting vessel in the direction of the southern states. Also, the fact that most of the European coins were found in states east of the Mississippi argues for Atlantic seafarer/drifters.

The best argument against the drift voyage/migration thesis is reflected in the interior vs. coastal distribution. If Mediterranean ships had landed in America, it is likely that the survivors would have remained along the coast rather than moving far inland. If drift vessels landed with no living crew member, the coins looted from them should be more common along the coast, although some might well have been traded inland. The data in table 4 do not confirm these expectations; slightly more than half of the coins reported come from interior states.

The only concentration of coins in a specific locality is in Tennessee, where six reports occur. As will be shown later, however, it is probable that fraud is involved here. The multiple reports for Kentucky, Wisconsin, and Texas may be the result of newspaper publicity that encouraged the reporting of finds that would ordinarily have gone unnoticed.

In summary, the distributional evidence is inconclusive. I would have expected a more or less random geographical distribution, and this is far from the case. The absence of reports from the West Coast and the Southwest is a surprise, as is the lack of information from New York. Perhaps there is a direct relationship between newspaper coverage and the sophistication of the local populace. The southeastern United States, which long

nourished ideas about the lost tribes of Israel and the mound-builder race, would perhaps be more receptive to such reports than either California or New York.

The circumstances or context in which the coins were found are presented in table 5. The material is arranged in categories that are *not* mutually exclusive in order to illustrate the range of situations recorded. It is apparent that ancient Mediterranean coins have been found in back yards of both small and large towns and in pigpens, open fields, gullies, and city streets. They have been spotted in drainage ditches and while excavating house foundations. Except for the coins said to have come from Indian mounds, to be examined in detail later, none of the finds have pre-Columbian associations. Most come from the surface or were turned up while gardening or rooting in the back yard. As for the coins that showed up while excavating house foundations, two reports from the early 19th century are probably, as will be shown later, deliberately fraudulent. The other two, both from this century, lack the necessary information on geological-archaeological contexts that would make interpretation possible. The rural categories (i.e., small town, farm) are included in the table because of the prevailing notion that coins found in such environments are more significant for transoceanic contact than those from urban settings. Obviously, a Roman coin picked off the street in Chicago or New York would not excite diffusionist speculation, whereas one shoveled out of a back yard in central Nebraska might well do so. The presence of the 14 coins of our sample (38%) that fit into the rural category is not easily dismissed. I shall try to deal with this matter later.

Perhaps most tantalizing are the pieces that were found in beach sands, near rivers, and at the bottom of Long Island Sound. It takes little imagination to conjure an image of the coins being lost by (a) Roman explorers as they landed on the coast or (b) aborigines as they looted a drifted Roman hulk. However fetching such notions may be, there are other viable interpretations. For example, it is just as likely that these were once incorporated in the ballast of 18th- and 19th-century sailing ships and subsequently unloaded in America. One instance of this has been documented for a strange mix of materials found in Florida (Noel-Hume 1974: 122-24), and, according to

TABLE 4
GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF COIN
DISCOVERIES IN THE UNITED STATES
FROM TABLE 1

REGION	NUMBER OF STATES	NUMBER OF REPORTS
Coastal	11	18
Interior	9	20
North	10	14
South	10	24
East	14	27
West	6	11

TABLE 5
CIRCUMSTANCES OR CONTEXTS OF COIN DISCOVERIES OF TABLE 1

	ITEM	TOTAL
Interior		
Small town	1, 2, 7, 12, 13, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 31, 36, 37, 38	14
Farm, field	1, 2	2
Digging (garden, yard), plowing	4, 10, 11, 13, 18, 21, 38	7
Excavations for house, barn, driveway	7, 19, 25, 26, 35	5
Stream bed, gully	22, 27	2
2' deep or more	19, 25, 26, 31	4
6" below surface	2, 32	2
Surface	1, 8, 20, 22, 24, 27, 33	7
Maritime		
On the bottom of Long Island Sound	3	1
Along the coast, in beach sand	17, 32, 43	3
On an island	5, 6, 17, 32	4
Near a river	36	1
Historic		
Abandoned well	5, 6	2
1812 battlefield	14	1
Bus station	15	1
Among collection of historic artifacts	16, 23, 28, 29	4
Stuck to pop bottle	24	1
Air Force base	33	1
Pre-Columbian		
Indian mound, midden	9, 31	2
Cave	30	1

Craig Sheldon, the same explanation applies to some Roman pottery fragments recently found near Brunswick, Georgia (Associated Press, November 8, 1976).

Up to this point, the data analysis has been concerned with the patterning of the 40 reports. While the tables are revealing, they have their limitations. The fact that they include materials from historic or modern contexts tends to obscure what may prove most useful for demonstrating pre-Columbian trans-Atlantic contact. This deficiency, I hope, is corrected in the following discussion.

ASSESSMENT OF INDIVIDUAL FINDS

THE COIN FROM THE GOLD MINES IN PANAMA

The earliest notice of a Roman coin in the New World is found in the writings of Lucio Marineo Siculo (1460–1533), an Italian humanist-historian who played a significant role in the renaissance of Spanish literature (*Enciclopedia Universal Ilustrada*, s.v. "Marineo Siculo, Lucio"). The coin account appears in his *De Las Cosas Memorables de España* (1533), a highly fanciful work which includes, inter alia, an imaginative description of the miracles that occurred when King Ferdinand was born. The paragraph containing the coin story is as follows (folio 61, translation mine):²

The Catholic kings, having subjugated the Canaries and established the divine religion, sent Pedro Colón with 35 ships (called caravels) and a great number of people to other islands, much larger, that have gold mines, not so much because of the gold (which is abundant and of high quality there), but for the salvation and repair of their souls. Having sailed almost 60 days, they finally came to lands very far away from our own. All of those who come from there assert that these are the Antipodes (known to us as the Indies), below our own hemisphere, and that there are regions there that look more like mainland than islands. Since much has been written about these places, both in Spanish and in Italian, there is no need for me to write about them. However, there is one thing worth noting, which others have not (I think) written about or mentioned. That is that in a region commonly called *tierra firme* (where the Franciscan bishop Father Juan de Quevedo was), a coin with the name and image of Caesar Augustus was found by those who go to the mines to take out the gold. Don Juan Ruffo, archbishop of Cosencia, had this coin and sent it to the pope as a marvellous thing. This takes the glory away from those who, in our day, claim to have found the Indies, for it shows that the Romans arrived there long before.

The account is so brief that one is tempted to reject it out of hand. As far as I can determine, the only contemporary to accept it was Gilbert (1576), who used it as evidence for Atlantis. Oviedo (1944[1535]) finds the paragraph full of inaccuracies and takes Marineo Siculo to task point by point. The events to

² Aviendo los Principes Catolicos sojuzgado a Canaria y aviendola puesto en el culto divino/embiaron a Pedro Colon con treynta y cinco naos (q̄ dizen Caravelas) y con gran numero de gente a otras yslas mucho mayores q̄ tienen minas de oro no tanto por causa del oro (lo qual en ellas se saca mucho y muy bueno) quanto por la salvacion y remedio de las animas que en aq̄llas partes estavan. El qual como navegasse quasi sesenta dias vinieron finalmēte a tierras muy apartadas de la nuestra. En las quales todos los que de allí vienen afirman q̄ ay Antipodes (los que por nosotros son dichas yndias) debajo de nuestro hemisperio y que ay regiones de tanta grandeza/que mas parescen tierra firme/q̄ yslas. Y por q̄ de estas yslas muchos un escripto muchas cosas/unos en lengua Castellana/otros en latina/no ay necesidad que yo escriba. Empero uno cosa que no es digna de dexar por olvido dire/de la qual (segun pienso) otros que de estas regiones escrivieron no hizieron mencio. Allí que es que en una region/que vulgarmente se llama tierra firme (de donde era Obispo Fray Juã de Quevedo de la ordē de sant Francisco) fue hallada una moneda coel nõbre y imagē de Cesar Augusto/por los q̄ andavã en las minas a sacar oro. La qual ovo dō Juã Ruffo, Arcobispo de Cosencia/y como cosa maravillosa la embio a Roma al Summo Põtifico. La cual cosa a los q̄ en nuestro tiempo se j(?)actavan aver hallado las yndias y ser los primeros q̄ a ellas oviesen navegado quito la gloria y fama q̄ avia alcãzado. Por aquella moneda consta que los Romanos avian llegado grande tiempo avia a los yndios.

which he is referring, Oviedo tells us, occurred in Santa Maria del Antigua del Darien, which is above the equator, not in the antipodes, and Pedro Colón is confused with Cristóbal Colón. (Here I suspect that Marineo Siculo meant Pedro Arias de Ávila, whose ill-fated expedition set out with Bishop Quevedo and 25 ships to colonize Terra Firme [i.e., Panama] in 1514.) As for the coin story, Oviedo rejects it completely. He recalls that he was in Darién at the same time Bishop Quevedo was, where his job was to oversee the gold mines. If such a coin had been found, he says, he would have been the first to know about it. Furthermore, there was a death penalty for anyone who concealed such information. Oviedo's arguments are so telling that there is no reason to add to them. Clearly, the Roman coin found in the gold mines of Panama is a figment of Marineo Siculo's imagination.

THE VENEZUELAN COLLECTION

The only report of a hoard of Roman coins in America is that of Irwin (1963:258):

On the coast of Venezuela, where the waves of the Caribbean wash the northern bulge of South America, a most unusual find was made: a jar containing several hundred Roman coins. The coins date from the reign of Augustus to about 350 A.D. and cover every intervening period. Now in the possession of Mendel Peterson of the Smithsonian Institution, the coins include many duplicates from which it has been inferred that they were not the misplaced collection of a numismatist, but were probably once a Roman trader's ready cash, carefully buried in the sand by their owner or washed ashore after a shipwreck.

It is lamentable that Irwin does not supply more information. One would like to know who found the coins and under what circumstances and whether the container was a ceramic amphora or a pickle jar. It is of interest that Mendel Peterson has not published on this discovery.

The possible pre-Columbian significance of this report depends upon whether or not the coins are a hoard. Irwin's arguments are not convincing. None of the hundreds of hoards known in the Old World have coins from every intervening period between Augustus and A.D. 350. Complete coverage of this kind is a feature of very specialized collections, and in all such assemblages duplicates invariably occur. Therefore, it is most likely that the Venezuelan hoard was the work of a numismatist. Since coin collecting was essentially unknown before the 14th century (Clain-Stephanelli 1965:13), it is most improbable that the coins came from a pre-Columbian context. If there is any truth to the story at all, the collection may have arrived in Venezuela perhaps a hundred years before Columbus, yet this taxes credulity. The idea of a 14th- or 15th-century Spanish, Portuguese, or Venetian numismatist traveling the high seas with his precious collection makes little sense.

In short, the Venezuelan report is hard to take, and I suspect that the details of the discovery were misrepresented to Irwin.

COINS FROM INDIAN SITES

The Seip Mound token. The Seip mound group in the southwestern part of Ross County, Ohio, is, depending on how one views it, the largest or the second largest known group of earthworks of the Hopewell culture. The site was excavated by Shetrone in 1925, but a detailed map of the locality had been made much earlier by Squier and Davis (1848). The major mound was known for its abundance of spectacular grave goods, and it seems noteworthy that Shetrone himself was nearly killed by a landslide while excavating it. About two-thirds of the mound was eventually excavated, and after it had been rebuilt the work was shut down. Two men, Isaac Abrahms and another, unidentified, are said to have examined the site at this time and to have kicked up a clump of earth containing the piece now known as the Seip Mound coin. The piece was heavily corroded, so details of it were not clearly identifiable. A

delightful description of the original perception of that coin and its final resolution has recently been given by Keeler (1972), who cleaned it and made positive identification of it. In its uncleaned state, the coin showed faintly what appeared to be a winged figure in a pose common to Roman coins of the reign of Maximus, ca. A.D. 235. After cleaning and careful comparisons, that winged figure turned out to be a portrayal of Father Time, which appeared on an Elgin Watch Company token commemorating the Chicago Exposition of 1874.

The Round Rock follis. In the latter part of 1976, one of my students told me of a professional surveyor who had found a Roman coin in an Indian mound near Round Rock in central Texas. Shortly afterwards, I contacted Walter L. Horton, Jr., who graciously offered to let me borrow the coin. He apologized for the fact that his notes were not available but responded to my questions with detailed information about the mound and the provenience of the coin. The coin was said to have lain 3 ft. below the mound's surface, which, judging from the nature of the soil profile, was at or close to the original ground level upon which the mound was built. Before leaving, I requested some character references, and Horton gave me the names of two persons, one of whom is a member of my department.

I subsequently checked with my colleague, who said that he had known Horton since high school, where they both had studied under a teacher whose particular interest was local prehistory. In their youth, they had even dug or tested some sites together. The matter of the Roman coin was a surprise to my colleague, who said he would check it out for me. This he did, informing me the next day that Horton was indeed serious about the coin and that he believed him. The coin was then shown to Jack Kroll, Department of Classics, University of Texas, who identified it as a follis, minted in London about A.D. 314. The coin commemorates Constantine the Great (see Brunn 1966:97). In view of the comments of my colleague and Kroll's positive identification of the coin, I informed the press of the discovery.

It was almost three months before Horton was able to take me to the site. He noted that the topography of the area had changed as a result of the construction of Interstate Highway 35, and the mound itself was almost totally destroyed. Enough remained, however, to indicate that few details of the mound jibed with the information originally supplied. These discrepancies may perhaps be explained as a memory lapse, for it was 12 years since he had dug there, but I couldn't help being suspicious. Even if the identification of the site is accepted, there is enough information on the mound to reject the claim for a pre-Columbian context for the coin. The mound and a number of others close by have long been known to local professional and amateur archaeologists and relic collectors, who were forbidden to dig there by the landowner. When the property was purchased for highway construction, it became accessible to the public. Apparently Horton was one of the first to arrive, but very shortly afterwards there were more. Among the multitude were students from the Department of Anthropology, University of Texas, and members of the Travis County Archaeological Society. These conscientious individuals took notes, which were filed in the office of the Texas Archaeological Survey at the Balcones Research Center, University of Texas at Austin. Although they were able to spend less than one full day at the site, they recorded information on soil stratigraphy and collected a series of projectile points. In terms of our present knowledge of Central Texas prehistory, the points that came from the site are older than the coin. If the coin came from the original ground level, as Horton claims, then the cultural stratigraphy at the site was obviously jumbled when he dug there in 1964. Any claim for a pre-Columbian association of the coin is, therefore, unfounded. It seems more probable that the coin lay on the surface of the mound in historic times and eventually worked its way to the bottom through the action of rodents and tree roots. That historic material can work itself

into the ground in this way has been well documented in a recent study by Prewitt (n.d.).

The Indiana shekel. The earliest report of a coin said to have come from an Indian mound was published by Schoolcraft (1854:149-50), who, as far as I can determine, includes it among his documents but does not comment on it:

Sir: I send you a brief and somewhat hurried description of a very great curiosity, which was found not far from Laporte, Ind. on the direction towards Michigan City. . . . It was picked up among the bones of an Indian, as is supposed, having been dug out of an Indian mound, by a person in quest of treasures which he supposed to be there interred. Subsequently it was offered as a piece of money coin by the laborer who had found it, at a grocers counter, and rejected as not being worth a penny. A person at hand stepped forward, and gave the man a penny in exchange for it; and afterwards, coming into the possession of our fellow citizen, Dr. Zina Pitcher, it was brought by him to me to decipher its character.

On examination I find it to be a well defined and distinctly marked specimen of the ancient Holy Shekel of the Jews. On one side is estamped a vase, with smoke ascending from it, and in very handsome Hebrew letters, the words Shekel Israel. On the reverse, is an olive tree or branch, with the words Hakedose Jerusalem, in Hebrew character, but nothing to indicate the date of its origin.

It appears to be a weight, rather than a money coin, and so far as I have been able to give the matter any reflection, seems to correspond nearer to the ancient holy shekel of the Jews which were of the first or second year of the reign of Simon Maccabeus, than anything I can see in any collections of coin or numatological treatises to which I have access on this subject. The piece weighs 8 grains Troy weight which reduced to the Parisian standard (1,219 Troy) makes it 233-232 Parisian grains. The weight of the shekel varies somewhat—the heaviest being 271 3/4 Parisian grains.

The Hebrew characters mean "Shekel of Israel" on the one side and "the Holy Jerusalem" on the other. I cannot think its antiquity is of the date of the ancient Maccabean coin, though the metal is tin, and not so liable as iron to be corroded by rust. Nor do I think it to be one of the tokens given by the Jesuits to the Indians, as there is no sign of the cross upon it. My opinion inclines to the supposition that it may have been a Jewish weight, in the possession probably of some Jewish trader, who accompanied the early Spanish adventurers in their search for gold, and which may have forced its way into the possession of some Indian, and been buried with him according to the custom of his tribe—or possibly it may have been buried with the trader himself.

I have caused plaster casts of the coin or weight to be prepared by Mr. Zeni, the Italian artist, residing near the German Catholic Church, of whom specimens can be obtained by all who are at all anxious to investigate the matter further. [signed] George Duffield

Duffield's letter is a masterful example of how to keep the reader hanging in mid-air. He suspects that the object is not really a coin but a weight and suggests that it is a post-Columbian introduction buried with an Indian or possibly even with the trader himself. Yet the piece is reputed to come from an Indian mound and is in the style of Maccabean coins, albeit slightly lighter. At a time when the lost tribes of Israel figured strongly in the literature of a mound-builder race, the significance of this report could not be easily ignored.

I sent copies of the published drawings of the coin to Yaakov Meshorer of the Israel Museum, Jerusalem. He replied as follows:

The coin concerned is a well known "imaginative shekel." From the sixteenth century onwards, such shekels were produced in Europe and offered to collectors, pilgrims, and others concerned with the history of the Holy Land and the life of Jesus. They were claimed to be the original shekels that Judas Iscariot received as payment for his betrayal. Most of these fakes were produced in Gerlitz, Germany, and are therefore sometimes called "Gerlitz shekels." They are copied from literary descriptions of genuine shekels which appeared in Jewish literary sources of medieval times, and therefore do not even resemble the genuine shekels struck by the Jews in the Jewish War against Rome. Even the regional sixteenth-century forgeries were later imitated, and the one shown in the paper you sent me is ap-

parently an eighteenth-century type—somebody must have lost it in Indiana.

The Roman coin from Illinois. In 1913, a Roman coin was said to have been found in a mound in Illinois. Apparently accounts of the event appeared in some newspapers, but the only information I could find is that of Emerson (*Records of the Past* 1913): Early in the year a Roman coin 3/4 in. in diameter was reported as discovered in one of the mounds in Illinois and was submitted to Alfred Emerson, Ph.D. of the Art Institute of Chicago. As he had been misquoted in the press, we take pleasure in printing a portion of his letter to us regarding the coin.

“Editor Records of the Past, Washington.

Dear Sir: The indications are that the coin is of the rare mintage of Domitius Domitianus, emperor in Egypt. As to its discovery in an Illinois mound, the responsibility for that lies with the discoverer and owner. For my part, I consider the find to show the mound was either posterior to white ranging of this continent, or that the coin reached the mound after its erection. Having expressed myself pretty clearly in this sense to reporters I was not surprised to be quoted as an illustrious person holding the opposite view. . . . It will be a pleasure to clear myself of the foolishness imputed to me by these irresponsibles by a short notice in Records of the Past.” [signed] A. Emerson

Of the four coin-in-Indian-site reports, this last is the most troublesome. One would like to dismiss it because of the absence of precise provenience data, witnesses, etc., but such an approach would never satisfy the avid diffusionist. What makes so little sense is the exceptional rarity of the coin. Why should a coin that is seldom, if ever, found outside of Egypt pop up in Illinois? It is tempting to suspect fraud, but it is difficult to explain why anyone would use a rare piece for that purpose—unless, of course, he did not appreciate its value. It is comforting to know that this piece left Fort (1973:160) equally perplexed: But what strikes me here is that a joker should not have been satisfied with an ordinary Roman coin. Where did he get a rare coin, and why was it not missed from some collection? I have looked over numismatic journals enough to accept that the whereabouts of every rare coin in anyone’s possession is known to coin collectors. Seems to me nothing left but to call this another “identification.”

THE COINS FROM THE FAYETTEVILLE REGION, TENNESSEE

In the early 19th century, Tennessee became known as an area where Roman coins were being found with some frequency. The earliest report of which I am aware occurs in the *Nils Register* (Baltimore) for August 1818. Here it is reported that a Nashville correspondent noted the discovery of a 2d-century-A.D. coin of Roman origin while digging the foundation for a building (Warshavsky 1961:107, citing Armstrong 1950). The coin was said to have come from a depth of 5 ft. How many such discoveries were made is not known, but there were certainly enough to infuriate Atwater (1820:120–21), who wrote, in regard to several Roman coins claimed to have been found in a cave near Nashville, Tennessee:

That some persons have purposely lost coins, medals, etc. in caves which they knew were about to be explored, or deposited them in tunnels, which they knew were about to be opened, is a well known fact which occurred at several places in this western country. In one word, I will venture to assert that there never had been a medal or coin or monument in all North America . . . that did not belong to Europeans or their descendents, and had been brought or made here since the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus.

The most detailed information on coin discoveries of all kinds was supplied by Haywood in his *Natural and Aboriginal History of Tennessee* (1823). Haywood was clearly obsessed with the idea that Hebrews, Romans, et al., had arrived in the New World and played a role in producing American Indian culture. He backed this up with a long list of discoveries, none of which were examined critically. His information on two Roman coins is as follows (1959[1823]:162–64):

About the year 1819 in digging a cellar at Mr. Norris’ in Fayetteville, on Elk River, which falls into Tennessee, and about two hundred

yards from a creek which empties into Elk, and not far from the ruins of a very ancient fortification on the creek, was found a small piece of silver coin of the size of a ninepenny piece. On the one side of this coin is the image of an old man, projected considerably from the superficies, with a large Roman nose, his head covered apparently with a cap of curled hair; and on this side, on the edge, in old Roman letters, not so neat by far as on our modern coins, are the words *Antoninus Aug: Pius*. PP. RI. III cos. On the other side, the projected image apparently 18 or 20 years of age; and on the edge, *Aurelius Caesar.*, AUGP. III cos. The U is made V. PP. perhaps are the initials of princeps pontifex: RI. *Romanorum Imperator*. It was coined in the third year of the reign of Antoninus, which was in the year of our Lord 137, and must in a few years afterwards have been deposited where it was lately found. The prominent images are not in the least impaired, nor in any way defaced, nor made dim or dull by rubbing with other money; neither are the letters on the edges. . . .

Besides this coin impressed with the figures of Antoninus and Aurelius, another was also found in a gully washed by torrents, about two and a half miles from Fayetteville. . . . It was about four feet below the surface. The silver was very pure, as was also the silver of the other piece; evidently much more so than the silver coins of the present day. The letters are rough. Some of them seem worn. On the one side is the image of a man, in a high relief apparently of the age of 25 or 30. And on the coin, near the edge, were these words and letters: *Commodus*. The C is defaced and hardly visible. AVG. HEREL. On the other side, TR. IMP. III. COS. II. PP. On this latter side also is the figure of a woman, with a horn in her right hand. She is seated in a square box on the inside of which, touching each side and resting on the ground is a *wheel*. Her left arm, from the shoulder to the elbow, lies on her side, from the elbow is raised, a little above the top; and across a small distaff, proceeding from the hand, is a handle, to which is added a trident with the teeth or prongs parallel to each other. It is supposed that Faustina, the mother of Commodus, who was deified after her death by her husband Marcus Aurelius, with the attributes of Venus, Juno and Ceres is represented by this figure. The neck of Commodus is bare. . . . This piece of money was probably coined in the year of our Lord 191.

Haywood ends his book with the description of two additional coins which, since they were found in 1823, had probably come to his attention just before his book went to press (1959 [1823]:407–8):

Two pieces of copper coin, one of which is undoubtedly Roman, and probably the other likewise, were lately found in the year 1823, at Fayetteville, amongst other curiosities left there by Mr. Colter, when he removed to Alabama. The smaller piece is the diameter of the four-penny pieces now current, but more than twice as thick, covered with a deep and dark aerugo, which renders the letters and devices difficult to be seen. On the one side of the small piece, is a pair of scales in the centre, suspended from the ends of the beam, and between the two scales the letters PNR. and in the legend, LAVDIVS. III. The C which precedes the L is not visible. On the other side are the letters SC. about the centre, coarsely made; and on the legend, MI. COS.

On one side of the larger piece, the diameter of which is little less than an inch is the head of a man or woman, with the face to the right, with three projecting prominences rising from the back and top of the head one-fourth of an inch, in small blunt prongs, and from a cap which covers the head to the temples, where a riband descends from the forehead to the hinder parts of the head, and there ends in a small knot. Before the face in the legend, are the letters CARTFN. On the other side is a human figure naked, with his body and face turned to the left, one leg straight to the ground, the right leg raised so as by the leg and thigh to make an angle of seventy degrees. In his right hand . . . is something held, which is not at this time distinguishable; and in the left hand . . . a barbed instrument. . . . This instrument is in the shape of a spear; the barbed part touching the ground. . . .

There are a number of reasons for believing that the finds mentioned by Haywood were deliberate plants and that Atwater’s suspicion was well founded. Perhaps the most obvious is that all of the Tennessee discoveries seem to have occurred between the years 1818 and 1823, and no Roman, Greek, or Hebrew coins have been discovered there since. Also suspicious is the fact that all four of the coins mentioned by Haywood come from the area around Fayetteville. Except for claims of discovering a hoard, the pattern of finding more than two coins from the same general locality does not occur elsewhere in the

New World. Finally, Haywood appears to be pointing to the culprit when he says that two of the coins had been "left there by Mr. Colter, when he removed to Alabama." Why he mentions these coins at all is strange, for neither apparently came with provenience data. By describing them, Haywood implies they are significant—perhaps because he knew Colter personally or because of his compulsion to compile evidence for transoceanic contact. The fact that Colter had discarded the two coins demonstrates, as noted earlier, how little value Roman coins had in the early 19th century. One cannot help but wonder whether Colter, by way of farewell to Tennessee, was not trying to wipe the slate clean and tell Haywood something. Whether this is true or not, it is most curious that the discoveries of Roman coins around Fayetteville, and, for that matter, in all of Tennessee, seem to have stopped abruptly after Mr. Colter left for Alabama in 1823.

THE BAR KOKHBA COINS FROM KENTUCKY

Three separate finds of Hebrew coins in Kentucky have been used as supportive evidence for the view that Hebrews or Canaanites reached the Americas. According to Gordon (1971: 176–79):

Other contacts with the Roman Mediterranean of the second century A.D. have meanwhile come to light in Kentucky, where inscribed Hebrew coins of Bar Kokhba's rebellion against Rome (A.D. 132–135) were dug up in Louisville, Hopkinsville, and Clay City. The assorted coins were found at different times and in widely separated areas: at Louisville in 1932, at Clay City in 1952, and Hopkinsville in 1967. These coins have been examined and identified by Professor Israel T. Naamani of the University of Louisville (see *The Courier-Journal*, Louisville, of July 12, 1953, March 14, 1967, March 20, 1967). There is no difficulty in identifying these Bar Kokhba coins. The Clay City coin was sent to the late Professor Ralph Marcus of the University of Chicago who had no trouble in reading "Simon" (Bar Kokhba's personal name) on one side, and "Year 2 of the Freedom of Israel" (i.e., A.D. 133) on the other.

This brief discussion is both inadequate and misleading. Gordon supplies no information on the circumstances of the finds and fails to mention exactly how many coins were obtained. Since about 18 different Bar Kokhba coins are shown on pp. 176–78, the impression given is that a great number of coins, if not several hoards, were found. The *Courier-Journal* articles, however, discuss only three coins, none of which are illustrated by Gordon.

The basic details of the newspaper reports are as follows: In the *Courier-Journal and Louisville Times Sunday Magazine* of July 12, 1953, a copyrighted article by staff writer Joe Creason details Robert Cox's discovery some 18 months earlier of a Bar Kokhba coin in a pigpen near Clay City, Kentucky. The piece was in an earth clod, apparently rooted up by the pigs. There are good photographs of both obverse and reverse and of the place where the coin was found. This was the specimen identified by Ralph Marcus of the University of Chicago. According to a later article by Christine Eade, cited below, Israel Naamani identified the piece as a Hebrew overstrike of a Roman coin.

The *Courier-Journal* of March 14, 1967, carries a copyrighted article by staff writer Kenneth Loomis about another copper Bar Kokhba coin that was turned up by a farmer near Hopkinsville, Kentucky. The latter brought the specimen to Naamani for verification. After Naamani had identified it, the farmer left hurriedly, without giving his name, taking the coin with him.

A third copyrighted article appeared in the March 20, 1967, *Courier-Journal* and was written by staff writer Christine Eade. This discusses a Bar Kokhba coin that came from the city of Louisville in 1932. The find was made by Joseph Bray, then eight years old, while digging in his back yard. A photo shows the coin, held between Bray's thumb and forefinger, with the obverse side facing the camera. The details are clearly visible.

Since Bar Kokhba coins were minted during a very short period, ca. A.D. 132–35, and relatively few were produced, the discovery of three within the same state calls for comment. In view of the ever-present possibility of counterfeits, I sent a photocopy of the Clay City piece to Meshorer for identification. He wrote me as follows (March 3, 1978):

The coin illustrated in the paper you sent me is a forgery from the beginning of this century... in the 19th century—mainly during its second half—many pilgrims and other Holy Land tourists visited the holy places in Palestine, thus starting the period of tourism and raising the demand for souvenirs; and this too was the time when the first forgeries of Jewish antiquities began to supply the market's demand. Around 1900 there were already twenty principal Jewish coins which were forged and sold as original "genuine Jewish Souvenirs" of the Holy Land.

Meshorer's identification of the Clay City coin should end the matter, but Naamani (personal communication) continues to accept Marcus's judgment. Both Meshorer and Marcus are experts on the Bar Kokhba period. Marcus was (he died in 1956) an outstanding expert on Josephus and had written on the Dead Sea Scrolls as well as on other subjects. Meshorer's *Jewish Coins of the Second Temple Period* (1967) is considered authoritative. Marcus personally examined the Clay City coin; Meshorer only had a photocopy of a newspaper article to work with. I am inclined to accept Meshorer's opinion, and therefore I am sceptical of the Bar Kokhba coin found by Bray in Louisville in 1932. The details on the obverse of this piece, as shown in the *Courier-Journal*, seem identical to those observed on the Bar Kokhba forgery found by Ken Lyles near Alcolu, South Carolina (see below), which was also identified by Meshorer. If I am correct, then two of the three coins discussed by Gordon are frauds.

It would be satisfying to dispose of all the Bar Kokhba coins as forgeries, but this is hardly necessary. They were found either on the surface or close enough to it to be rooted out by pigs or dug up by a small boy playing in his garden. There is no context in any way suggestive of their being pre-Columbian. In this connection, it is worth noting that Naamani said, both in the *Courier-Journal* articles and in his correspondence with me, that he thought the coins were recent introductions, probably lost by some minister, priest, or layman who had acquired them while on a trip to the Holy Land. No explanation seems to fit the facts better.

COUNTERFEITS AND WHAT THEY HAVE TO TELL US

It is unfortunate, but not surprising, that there is little information on the discovery of counterfeit coins. The only published report of which I am aware is that by Noel-Hume (1974), who discusses two finds from Virginia. The engaging quality of a fraud, at least from the anthropological viewpoint, is that, once identified, it cannot be seriously taken as evidence of pre-Columbian contact. Furthermore, while a Roman coin said to come from an Indian mound may suggest ancient trans-Atlantic contact, a counterfeit in the same context is unequivocal evidence of deception. For the purpose of this study, the distributional evidence is especially revealing. Earlier it was observed that a number of genuine coins had been found in rural settings. The data, sparse as they are, indicate that counterfeits are also found in such contexts. Of the six counterfeit discoveries that I know about, none came from urban settings. Since counterfeit Roman and Greek coins are found in rural areas, just as are their prototypes, it follows that the size of the town in which the discovery was made has no implications for transoceanic contact.

What has been termed "a bronze medallion, minted in the

Athenian colony of Thurium" (Covey 1975:7), was found encrusted in red clay during the summer of 1954 or 1955 by a schoolboy while crossing a field a couple of miles from the Red River at Terral, Oklahoma. The medallion has four small metal rings attached to it, presumably for suspension (p. 8). The obverse side shows a helmeted head of Athena, while the reverse has a charging bull over a dolphin and a series of seven Greek letters spelling out the name of the colony. Inconsistencies in the normal Greek letters are explained by Covey as "a Roman die-cutter's confusion . . . which . . . suggests a less literate period indefinitely after 200 B.C."

Color slides of both sides of this piece, graciously sent to me by Gloria Farley, were examined by Kroll, who characterized it as a poorly produced imitation of a 4th-century-B.C. silver "distater" of the Greek city of Thurium. Among his reasons for this judgment, Kroll noted that the inscription above the bull is blundered, showing that the forger did not understand Greek letters—letter 1, a theta, lacks a dot in the center; letter 4, a rho, is blundered to form a kappa; letter 6, omega, is blundered to form a lambda, and the original letter 7, a nu, is omitted. Furthermore, the "medallion" is gold or golden, whereas the prototype and all other coins in precious metals from Thurium are of silver. Ancient medallions, official mementos of coinlike shape, were not used until the Roman period. Thus none could be suspected of having been struck at Thurium. Details indicate that the coin and the four attached rings had been cast in one piece. Greek coins were not cast, but stamped or struck, and if the piece had been intended as an item of jewelry the rings would have had to have been soldered. Finally, the amateurish copying of the face of Athena lacks the graceful contours and subtle plastic modelling of the Greek original. Stylistically, this piece is not even a good copy of the prototype (for examples of the latter, see Kraay and Hirmer 1966: pl. 87, no. 252; pl. 88, no. 254).

A Hebrew coin in the style of those minted during the Bar Kokhba period (ca. A.D. 133) was found in November 1976 about 4 in. below the surface of the churchyard in the town of Alcolu, some 17 miles south of Sumter, South Carolina (*Sumter Daily Item*, January 4, 1977). The finder, Ken Lyles, supplied me with excellent photographs of both sides of the coin. Because of certain anomalies in the depiction of the ark and the absence of letters on the right side of the ark, I sent copies of the photograph to Meshorer, and he identified it as a 50–60-year-old forgery.

In late 1976 or the early part of 1977, a schoolboy found a coin in a field within the city limits of Round Rock, Texas (pop. 7,000). The coin was shown to me and to Kroll, who identified it as a counterfeit in the style of 3d-century-B.C. Ptolemaic Egypt. Prototypes of this piece are illustrated in Kraay and Hirmer (1966: pls. 20, 219).

In 1975 or 1976, Mr. and Mrs. R. M. Miller found a coin near a trailer park in Temple, Texas. This was identified by Kroll as a modern copy of a 4th-century-B.C. coin from Aspendus, a Greek city of Pamphylia.

Two forgeries, one of a denarius of the emperor Augustus, of a type minted between 25 and 22 B.C., the other of uncertain denomination (it had the head of Octavian on one side and that of Mark Antony on the other, which, if it had been genuine, would have dated it about 40–36 B.C.) were reported to have been found on the south side of the James River, close to the James River Bridge (Noel-Hume 1974:122, fig. 54). Noel-Hume notes that many good-quality forgeries were minted by 18th-century counterfeiters to supply the growing antiquarian market. He implies that these pieces may have entered the estuary of the James River as a result of the use of trash as ballast. As an example, he cites a collection of pottery, tobacco pipes, bricks, drainpipes, and kiln equipment from the River Thames that was found near the mouth of the St. Marys River near Jacksonville, Florida.

THE LOSS OF COINS TODAY

During the early stages of this study, I received a letter from a proponent of transoceanic contact who argued that the wide distribution of Roman coins in America, even though not in pre-Columbian context, must mean something simply because people just do not lose such things. My correspondent assumed that coins so rare are kept under lock and key. This assumption is not valid. The coins that have been found in America are not that precious. Most of the Roman folles can be bought today for less than \$10 each. Before World War II, a follis could be picked up for \$1 or less. In short, until recently most ancient coins had more historical than commercial value. This is indicated by the fact that they were kept as lucky pieces, worn as amulets, and simply carried in wallets as *curiosa*. The reason for what may seem a lighthearted attitude towards these antiques is that they were produced in vast numbers and are easily obtained. I asked several coin dealers for a rough estimate of the number of coins of Roman mintage that have been brought to America, and all said they could not make even an approximate guess. When I suggested numbers ranging upwards from 1,000, all thought that there were over 1,000,000 Roman coins in America today. With such a large number of coins available, it seems probable that a few will be lost.

Do people actually lose them? The answer is, unequivocally, yes. The evidence is of various kinds. Perhaps most important are the statements of the losers themselves. Dealers were asked if they had ever lost ancient coins, and all said that they had—many of them reporting losses of coins that were highly valued. Some also recalled losses by customers. Hoping for further information on the subject, I wrote to *Coin World* requesting reports from readers on coins both lost and found. My letter, printed May 18, 1977, received a fair response but unfortunately little that dealt specifically with pre-Columbian coinage. The only data relevant to this paper were provided by Karol W. Stoker, who wrote from Mali, and Charles H. Langdon, who called from Tennessee. Listed below are the recent coin losses that have come to my attention. While there are not many, they demonstrate clearly that 20th-century Americans do indeed lose ancient coins.

A coin identified as a Syracusan, dating from about 490 B.C., was found by a small boy in 1957 in a field on the outskirts of Phenix City, Alabama. The coin was traded for 15 cents' worth of candy and eventually reached the hands of Preston Blackwell of the University of Georgia, who sent it to the Hogg Museum for identification. Blackwell kept the coin in his wallet, and, while he was hospitalized, the wallet was stolen (Mahan and Braithwaite 1975).

A denarius commemorating Antoninus Pius was lost by Karol W. Stoker while visiting in Glenwood Springs, Colorado, in 1967. The coin was in very good condition and had been used as a pendant (Stoker, personal communication, 1977).

A Greek coin, showing Athena on the obverse and a horse on the reverse, was lost by Charles H. Langdon of Chattanooga, Tennessee, while skin diving in Barbados in 1970. Langdon had originally picked up the coin while in Tripoli and had worn it around his neck as a charm since 1960 (Langdon, personal communication, 1977).

A Phoenician tetradrachma of Antony and Cleopatra, carried as a souvenir in a coin purse, was lost in a New York City bus station in 1955 by T. V. Buttrey (personal communication, 1977).

The circumstances of discovery of several of the coins in our sample strongly suggest loss in modern times. For example, three Roman coins were found by professional archaeologists in a well on St. Simons Island, Georgia. One was minted during the reign of Trajan (A.D. 98–117); another appears to be a Roman copy in orichalcum of a Greek coin from Corinth. The last, a North African coin, is undescribed. Apparently all came from the collection of the plantation owner, John Cooper, or

his family, which was scattered when Northern troops occupied the property during the Civil War (Fairbanks 1976). A Roman sestertius of Pupienus, who reigned for a short time in A.D. 238, was found by Harry Stockman and Don Miller in the rubbish of two bus stations that had been torn down to make room for the Baton Rouge Centro-Complex Auditorium in Louisiana. The coin was a C (Cohen) #24, which showed Pax seated left (Louis R. Goodwin, personal communication, 1977). In 1962, G. W. Packard found a Roman coin near the front door of the service club at the Amarillo Air Base (personal communication, 1977). The piece is an antoninianus, minted in Siscia (now northern Yugoslavia) about A.D. 364–67, with a portrait of the emperor Valens.

CHINESE AND JAPANESE COINS FROM THE NORTHWEST COAST

Since the publication of Brooks's (1875) landmark study of Japanese drift voyages, archaeologists have waited for reasonably well-documented reports of Oriental artifacts in America. While such material is known, most comes from historic Northwest Coast sites, and surprisingly little of it is from Japan. Only four Japanese coins have been reported. These, all found in Oregon, are Kuan-*ei* square-holed coins, with Chinese characters, and were minted from the latter part of the 17th to the mid-19th century (Beals 1975, 1977). In contrast, Chinese coins are comparatively abundant, and most occur in 18th- and 19th-century aboriginal contexts. The data are entirely consistent with what is known about the Northwest Coast Indians; at that time, they were actively involved in the fur trade with the Orient and acquired Chinese coins in large quantities. Coins were sewn to clothing, baskets, and wooden artifacts. Some of this material has ended up in museum collections in Canada (Keddie 1978) and the United States (Phebus 1974).

Of the several hundred Chinese coins found so far, most were minted in the 17th and 18th centuries (Beals 1976). A few are pre-Columbian in date. Those collected by professional archaeologists consist of a Sung Dynasty piece, ca. A.D. 1125, found in the 18th-century Chinlac Village site in British Columbia (Borden 1952) and a Yung Lo coin, ca. 1402–10, picked up by the Smithsonian Institution from Memaloose Island, Oregon (Beals 1977). Another Sung Dynasty piece, but of the Yuan Feng period (ca. 1078–85), is in a private collection and is said to have come from a burial in an Indian site in Oregon (Beals 1977). Quite recently a Ming Dynasty issue of the Hung Wu period (1368–98) was found in Oregon. This came from an area known for Chinese gold-mining activity (Beals 1977) and indicates that very old Chinese coins were introduced by late 19th-century Chinese immigrants (Beals, personal communication, 1977). The presence of 11th-, 12th-, and 15th-century coins in historic contexts is not unexpected, for the Chinese often took coins out of circulation and then recirculated them at a much later time (Keddie 1978).

In the examples listed so far, the New World associations are clearly post-Columbian, but two caches have been reported in which the phrasings imply greater antiquity. MacMillan-Brown (1927:67) reports that "a Russian farmer dug up when ploughing virgin soil in 1913 a large stone lamp with a Buddha-like figure rising from the bottom: it is in the Juneau Museum, and in the same case with it are large Chinese coins also found beneath the soil, and these, from their interpretation, belong to the reign of an Emperor in the eighth century." According to Larson (1966:44), "in 1882 a cache of Chinese brass coins said to have been dated 1200 B.C. was dug up by miners at a place called Cassier in British Columbia, along with a bronze fan bearing Chinese characters." Like the Roman coin accounts, these lack pre-Columbian context and are difficult to verify. Larson supplies no reference for his story, and my two inquiries

to the Juneau Museum have not been answered. The early dates assigned to both caches, however, are probably wrong. Larson's claim for a 1200 B.C. date is an obvious error, for no coins were being minted in China or anywhere else at that time. As for MacMillan-Brown's report, it is noteworthy that these pieces bear no resemblance to the standard Kai Yuan issues minted extensively and in continuous use from A.D. 618 to 907. Beals (personal communication) suggests that they are not coins at all, but amulets, and points out that similar objects served as eyes in a mid-19th-century mask taken from a Chilicat medicine man's grave (Bolles 1892).

This brief examination of the Oriental coin data brings out a number of points that are relevant to our study of Mediterranean coinage. Although Brooks (1875) has shown that Japanese drift voyages to America occurred with some frequency, Japanese coins are exceptionally rare in the West, and all that have been found so far are post-Columbian and are associated with Chinese coins. Presumably Japanese drift vessels and, by extension, drift voyages in general had little role in depositing artifacts in America.

All of the reports of Oriental coins in America appear to be confined to the West Coast, which, of course, is where we would expect to find them. The abundant evidence of Chinese coins along the Pacific littoral contrasts sharply with the relatively few, yet widely distributed, Roman, Greek, and Hebrew coins in the East and Midwest. It is clear that where we have documented examples of contact, the coins do not move too far from the point of introduction. It therefore follows that the Mediterranean coins were not lost by ancient Romans, Greeks, or Hebrews, but rather by their 19th- and 20th-century descendants. It is also apparent that when contact situations exist, as in the case of the Chinese–Northwest Coast fur trade, the coin evidence for contact is abundant. The same holds true in Ceylon and India, where Roman contact is well documented—finds of coins, both in caches and individually, are relatively common. The Roman, Greek, and Hebrew coins found in America just do not fit this pattern.

SUMMARY

The significance of the occasional discovery of a Roman, Greek, or Hebrew coin in America is hard to assess, largely because such discoveries are comparatively rare and seldom adequately documented. This study attempts to evaluate the historic value of the finds by employing various approaches in a search for patterning in the data. The patterns that have been found indicate that, insofar as coins are concerned, no case can be made for pre-Columbian contact between America and the Mediterranean.

When one examines the dates of the coin discoveries, the distribution of the finds, and the times when the coins were minted, the most plausible interpretation is that the coins were lost recently. In fact, most of them appear to have been lost since World War II. It is also apparent that, in spite of their age and their historic significance, Roman and Greek coins are frequently lost, in both urban and rural settings. The fact that a coin is turned up in a hitherto unplowed field proves nothing other than that it was once lost there. Confirmation of these interpretations comes from England, where Alexandrian coins occur with some frequency. According to Robert Carson, Department of Coins and Medals, British Museum (personal communication):

The Roman coinage of Alexandria was destined for local circulation, and as such did not fit readily into the general empirewide monetary system. I am not aware of Alexandrian coins appearing in the records of excavated coins in Britain, and I certainly have never excavated an example myself. Alexandrian coins, however, are commonly produced

here for identification with reports of their having been found in gardens, etc. . . . Such Alexandrian coins are, or at least were, very commonly offered for sale to tourists in Egypt, and those commonly seen in Britain almost certainly have been brought back by servicemen and tourists: as also is reported to be the case in Australia.

The biggest stumbling block in the way of giving these coins pre-Columbian status is that none have been found in documented prehistoric contexts. In those cases where ancient coins have been found in Indian sites, the contexts are those of the historic Northwest Coast tribes. In these instances the coins come from China, and it is significant that the patterns of density, minting dates, and distribution are quite different from those of their Mediterranean counterparts. Chinese coins are comparatively more abundant and are concentrated in the Northwest, where Chinese contact with the Indians, through the fur trade, was extensive. In contrast, Roman and Greek coins are scattered over two-thirds of the United States.

Within the last few decades, a number of books and articles have appeared in the diffusionist literature citing one coin discovery or another as being especially important. A review of these finds shows that there is virtually nothing in the data to give them credence. We are dealing either with instances of deliberate fraud or with claims that are so totally inconsistent with what we know of human behavior, past or present, that they must be disregarded.

Comments

by DONAL B. BUCHANAN

2040 Lord Fairfax Rd., Vienna, Va. 22180, U.S.A. 16 VIII 79
Sunderland (1979) has called for an analytical study of the discovery of exotic coins in the New World. Epstein's article is a good beginning and an extremely useful compilation of the data available. Its tone, however, is somewhat more negative than the data warrant, and several important finds are missing from his excellent tables.

The coin listed as Item 1 in his table 1 (found in Alabama and called "Syracusan") is identical in every respect with the bronze coin found near Cauthron, Arkansas (Item 2)—lacking only the single perforation and exhibiting less wear. Thus, the Alabama coin should be classified as Carthaginian and similarly dated. Totten (1978) has stated that the two coins came from the same die. At the Castleton Conference whose proceedings I have just cited, Totten and Farley both reported that a third coin, identical with the two above, was found at a depth of 6" in a field near Franklin, Kansas, in 1976. The site was near a tributary of the Spring River. Totten has also reported that a "Grade I Romano-Celtic Minim" dated to the 4th century A.D. was found by a boy in Champaign, Illinois, in 1885. The coin was in a lump of clay thrown out of a trench being dug by the city; above the clay layer in which it was found was a thick layer of black soil. Totten, by the way, asserts that the so-called follis found near Round Rock, Texas (Item 31), is not a follis at all, but a "smaller bronze type." As for the medallion from Thurium found in Oklahoma and reported by Covey, it is reported, according to Totten, that another coin from Thurium, virtually identical but lacking the attachments, was found in Black Gum, about 3 mi. east of Tenkiller Dam in eastern Oklahoma.

It is true that *on the basis of coin finds alone* no valid case for pre-Columbian contact can be made. The discovery of a coin with no accompanying pre-Columbian artifacts tells us only that somebody—sometime after the coin was minted—lost it. The finds, where fraud and post-Columbian loss can somehow be determined inoperative, can best be indicators of where one might look for other evidence of contact. In line with this view, the Scientific Exploration and Archaeology Society is mounting a joint expedition in 1979 with the Early Sites Research Society

to investigate the possibility that a Roman shipwreck might lie in the waters off Plum Island, Massachusetts (see Item 17).

In connection with Epstein's remarks concerning "interior vs. coastal distribution," it might be worth considering how many of the coins found in the interior were located on or close to major waterways or tributaries of major waterways (the likeliest route for ancient explorers).

I repeat: Epstein's article is useful and a good beginning—but only a beginning.

by T. V. BUTTREY

Department of Classical Studies, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Mich. 48109, U.S.A. 26 VII 79

This is an important contribution to the understanding of a phenomenon which has had far more superficial than real importance. What is immediately striking from Epstein's survey is the poor quality of the evidence:

1. Archaeological control: Only one European coin has ever been found in the Americas in a controlled pre-Columbian archaeological context—the Viking coin recently found in Maine (Seaby 1978). Supposed finds of Greek, Roman, or Hebrew coins are invariably described to others who were not present and often appear as newspaper accounts rather than scholarly studies. Such coins are regularly brought to me in Michigan. On inquiry, "It was found in our garden" frequently means "It is from Granddad's wallet. I think he once remarked that Grandma found it in the garden." Modern loss, or misunderstanding, is the regular explanation. (Fraud is possible, as in the case of a Roman coin recently discovered during water-pipe excavations. The homeowner laboriously did his own work, and his neighbour, a professor of classics, made it more interesting by planting an inexpensive Roman coin where it could easily be dug up—as it was.)

2. Amateur description: In no case was the coin first handled by anyone with professional numismatic skills. The amateur, understandably, does not know how to read a coin. I was recently brought a Syracusan decadrachm of 5th-century-B.C. type, but brass rather than silver and plainly reading "Tiffany" as an additional legend. Such modern imitations and forgeries of ancient coins are common. Again, the numismatists have often had to work from descriptions, sketches, or photographs. Gross modern forgeries can sometimes be caught in this way, but the better fakes, such as good casts from ancient specimens, can only be perceived on direct examination.

Also, some identifications may have been more doubtful than now appears, and the coins are no longer available for reexamination. Much is made of the rarity of the coin of Domitius Domitianus found in Illinois, but was it struck by this ephemeral emperor? Emerson said, "The indications are that the coinage is of the rare mintage of Domitius Domitianus," which I assume means that the reading was not certain. His types were identical with those of Diocletian, and their obverse legends both begin IMP C . . . and end . . . AVG. On a worn specimen the scholar would have to make out DOMITIANVS as against DIOCLETIANVS, not always easy. Emerson's identification of the coin in 1913 would have depended either on Cohen (1888-92) or Maurice (1908-12), both inadequate and confused and now well out of date. Anyhow, the rarity of these coins is overstated. Domitius is sought by collectors because of his short reign, but Sutherland (1967:649-50) now remarks in his standard work, "Coins with the name of Domitius [are] common with short legend."

3. Chronological distribution: Although Greek and Roman coins were produced in incredible quantity and variety, at any given moment or place the actual circulation was normally limited to certain denominations, types, and mints and to one specific monetary system. The composition of the alleged Venezuelan hoard—"coins . . . from the reign of Augustus to

about 350 A.D. and [covering] every intervening period . . . a Roman trader's ready cash"—is contrary to the plentiful evidence on ancient monetary circulation. Epstein speaks of "hundreds of [Roman] hoards" known to us; read, rather, "tens of thousands." Not one—literally—is known with such a composition; it would be equivalent to a hoard of American coins, "a Yankee trader's ready cash," consisting of coins from the Massachusetts Bay Colony of 1652 down to the Eisenhower silver dollar and covering every intervening period. Epstein's table 3 reveals the same difficulty with respect to all the finds taken together. It is not possible that these could have circulated together in antiquity, so that on the diffusionist argument there would have had to be trip after trip to the Western Hemisphere during which these particular pieces were deposited, after they first were struck but before they had passed out of circulation.

In sum, Epstein has made a solid case against taking this material seriously. Ancient coins have been brought to the Western Hemisphere in post-Columbian times by the hundreds of thousands. Some have subsequently been lost or stolen; the touristic origin of others has been forgotten. Their appearance in odd corners of the United States therefore says nothing of their earlier history. Certain pre-Columbian contexts are wanting, actual contexts are uncertain or ill-defined, identification of the coins as genuinely ancient or modern imitations or modern fakes is very much up in the air. Whatever the merits of the diffusionists' case, the numismatic evidence will not support it.

by GEORGE F. CARTER

Department of Geography, Texas A and M University, College Station, Tex. 77840, U.S.A. 17 VIII 79

As one of those who sent in coin references to Epstein, I was rewarded by his giving an early version of this excellent paper before my graduate seminar. My critical comments are minor; my admiration for this contribution to clearing away of a lot of rubbish is major.

After the counterfeit-coin evidence is used to clear away a mountain of finds and point up the perils of unexcavated finds, there remains a residue that perhaps should not be too quickly discarded. This seems to apply to the Tennessee finds, where the evidence meets Epstein's own requirements, in part, for a genuine find. The coins are found in a restricted area, the dates on the coins are concentrated in time, and the time coincides with the peak of Roman influence. Although he doesn't mention it, a Roman head of this period (2d century A.D.) has been found in Mexico, and a pineapple of the same time (end of the 1st century A.D.) is painted on the walls of Pompeii. This points to deliberate two-way voyages between the Mediterranean and America at this time. Epstein seems to underrate deliberate voyaging and overemphasize drift voyages.

One might do a bit more with the cumulative data that Epstein presents. The more coins brought to America, the more coins will be lost in America and the more coins will be found in America. This is apparent in Epstein's table, where the rate of finds goes from one per century in the early period to one per year in the latter part of the 20th century. There is a very clear buildup of finds through time, with a great acceleration in the 20th century. With perhaps a million coins brought to America in this century, the number of lost coins found is minute in comparison with the potential. Apparently the chance of a Roman coin's being lost and found is about one in a million. If coins reached America before A.D. 1500, the expectable number would be very small, the lost number smaller, and the number likely to be found still smaller. We will be very fortunate if we ever find one in archaeological context, but the recent reports on the Norse coin found in such context in Maine indicate that the possibility is there.

by WARREN L. COOK

Castleton State College, Castleton, Vt. 05735, U.S.A. 13 VIII 79

Epstein's careful compilation, in useful tables, of a body of information never previously assembled will fascinate those interested in possible transoceanic contacts before the Vikings. The evidence does not lead with any certainty, however, to the conclusions he would extract. The dichotomy set up at the outset between "diffusionists" and "professional anthropologists" suggests a mind-set prevailing throughout.

Epstein is so convinced that European coins found in America cannot have arrived in ancient times that he must find ways to discredit them, accepting some very tenuous arguments in the process. *Tierra firme* referred to such a large area that Oviedo's dismissal of *Marineo Siculo* because he had never heard of such a find is hardly conclusive. The coins-as-ballast theory bends over backwards to discount diffusion. Meshorer's labelling a Kentucky Bar Kokhba coin a forgery on the basis of a photocopied newspaper article illustration is unconvincing, yet Epstein is ready to condemn similar coins on such authority.

That the concentration of finds in the period since 1914 suggests losses from coin collections is a weak hypothesis, despite instances of coin disappearances. Some of the coins in question are far too rare to have escaped documentation in the numismatic literature. Totten (1978:45) describes an Oklahoma find "virtually identical" to the "Thurium" Athena medallion, but without the four rings, and asks, "Is it really possible that a collector of ancient Thurium coins has gone about scattering his material all over eastern Oklahoma, to be dug up by farmboys and chickens?" The most significant pattern in ancient coin finds, as Epstein admits, is their nonrandom distribution, which belies the collectors' losses theory. That many were found far inland and (excepting the Montana example) only from Texas eastward argues against modern loss and in favor of penetration of North America's great rivers, as other evidence suggests, to search out copper and gold. That Asian coins found in America occur only along the Pacific littoral cannot be used as evidence against the importance of European finds deep within eastern North America.

The table of minting dates suggests contact during many centuries. As Carter (1978:85) has remarked,

We used to have put upon us the demand for naming *the* man who arrived in what year, at what port, by what boat, and precisely what species of beings did he bring or not bring to America, etc. . . . It was a false model, because the model that you are seeing is not *a* voyage at *a* time, but a model which says that America was reached over an enormous length of time—a very great many people who came across both the Atlantic and the Pacific, bearing boatloads of ideas, bringing great quantities of cultural material, and that is ultimately the explanation for the origin of the American Indian civilization.

Coin finds do not prove the case for ancient voyages to America, but they support other categories of evidence for such events.

by CYCLONE COVEY

Department of History, Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, N.C. 27109, U.S.A. 29 VIII 79

Our expectations, our credulity, and the "known" have hardly ever held up as adequate criteria for historic or scientific truth. Not to be able to explain baffling evidence does not negate it, but I could think of possibilities other than those Epstein begrudges, such as the river-highway provenance of the coin finds even for central Texas, which would make some sense of their "random" distribution. If the Venezuelan cache included an 8th-century Arab coin (can't the collection be checked?), why not consider an Arab merchant-numismatist as well as a 14th-century Venetian? The postantiquity, pre-Columbian introduction of maize into Eurasia and the medieval Chinese

geographers' accounts of Arab voyages to South America from Portugal or Morocco would fit the Venezuelan evidence as well as a post-Columbian deposit.

How scientific is it to exclude epigraphic, linguistic, ceramic, cultic, and astronomical or henge evidence, which is harder to plant and which poses the same interpretive problems as coins? For example, in the cases of the pre-Columbian Mimbres bowl depicting a catfish captioned "catfish" in Libyan script and the head of a Roman figurine excavated in pre-Columbian context at Calixtlahuaca, what if, instead of by the respective celebrated archaeologists, they had been discovered by the honest farm woman Mrs. Joe Hearn or by a possibly dissimulating public servant? Would the artifacts automatically change to fiction?

Perhaps a proliferation of discoveries since World War II correlates with fraud, but it correlates no less with the proliferation of metal detectors, land development, knowledge, communication, concentrated searching, leisure, and facilities—i.e., opportunities for discovery. Probably no group has had to revise its presuppositions more radically since World War II than the vanguard anthropologists. Most of the known Miocene-through-Pleistocene fossils have been discovered since World War II, as have such significant ancient settlements as Beidha, Ganjdareh, PPNA Jericho, Chatal Hüyük, Khirrokia, Ebla, the palace at Kato Zakros, the "first Maya city" El Mirador, etc.

It was not until 1973 that the *Monitor* was discovered. By Epstein's theory of diabolism, this ought to be gravely suspicious. The metal might assay right, and the style of mustard bottle, but why believe that the ship now lies where it originally sank (merely because that is the simple, obvious explanation)? Further, it was discovered the same year that a man with the improbable name of James Bond, who also must be disqualified because he has collected American coins, found a marl-encased copper coin from the reign of Claudius on the same North Carolina shore. The Smithsonian authenticates it as a Roman coin, but let us not rashly jump to the conclusion that there is any connection between a Roman coin and Roman voyagers. In the laborious contriving of epicycles against the mounting evidence, there does, however, lie to hand this simple explanation for the occurrence of Roman coins over many centuries along American waterways.

by STEPHEN C. JETT

Department of Geography, University of California, Davis, Davis, Calif. 95616, U.S.A. 3 VIII 79

Although "diffusionists" and "professional anthropologists" are no longer mutually exclusive categories as Epstein implies, it is true that it has been mainly amateurs or diffusionists in fields other than anthropology or cultural geography who have attributed significance to coin finds. Professionals have not put much weight on coins, mainly because they have not been discovered under controlled circumstances.

The great increase in coin discovery reports since World War II is meaningful, and the correlation with the growth of foreign travel and coin collecting is no doubt valid. Besides the spread of Euro-American settlement, factors possibly contributing to the increasing number of reports are increased educational levels, leading to recognition of old coins as significant; the development of archaeology, yielding a rise in public interest in antiquities; an increasing number of outlets for reports; and the postwar resurgence of interest in questions of pre-Columbian transoceanic contacts (e.g., Ekholm 1950, Heyerdahl 1950). Further, since many of Epstein's data come from recent newspaper clippings and personal communications, his sample is biased toward more recent finds.

Epstein makes the point that a clustering of minting dates would be expected if coins found reflected periods of especially

TABLE 1

TEMPORAL CLUSTERS OF COIN FINDS

CLUSTER	% OF TOTAL FINDS	MINIMUM-MAXIMUM TIME SPAN
Cluster 1 (28, 16, 24)	10	9-23
Cluster 2 (25, 11, 12, 13, 26)	15	4-37
Cluster 3 (22, 32, 7)	10	5-20
Cluster 4 (29, 36, 31, 18)	12	13-14

NOTE: Adding Item 35 to Cluster 2 would increase the percentage to 18 and yield a time span of 20-53 years; adding Items 15 and 17 to Cluster 3 would make the percentage 15 and the time span 32-35 years; adding Items 10 and 9 to Cluster 4 would make the percentage 18 and the time span 20-21.

great maritime activity (although such periods are not identified). He sees little clustering except for the dubious Bar Kokhba coins from Kentucky. One cannot expect much clustering in a sample of 33 coins, but additional clusters are identifiable (table 1). These temporal clusters would have more meaning if there were associated geographical clustering (Jett 1971:40-44). Cluster 1 shows no such grouping. Cluster 2 does (Tennessee and Kentucky), but includes the two counterfeit(?) Bar Kokhba coins and one of the questionable Fayetteville occurrences. All but one of the Cluster 3 coins are from the Southeast, but one is from a "box of colonial artifacts" and one from the ruins of a bus station. Cluster 4 includes three from the Midwest, including one from "an Indian mound," but the other finds were widely scattered. Further, no cluster correlates with coastal locality or consistent occurrence on or near major rivers (the likely routes of inland exploration). Thus the temporal clusters cannot be considered particularly significant.

I have further tabulated (1) locations of coin finds, using more refined regional categories than Epstein's; (2) sites (not states) distinguished as coastal, on or near major rivers, or interior; and (3) minting dates (table 2). The greatest regional concentration (14 finds) is in the "Bible Belt" Upland South (eastern Oklahoma to western North Carolina), followed by the Deep South (lowland Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana; 7 finds) and the Midwest (Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin; 7 finds); no other region has yielded significant numbers. Of these three regions, only in the Deep South were most finds coastal or on or near principal rivers. Minting-date clustering is exhibited only for the Upland South. The latter seems an unlikely region to be frequented by Mediterranean explorers, but it also is probably not a center for latter-day coin-collectors. Perhaps Epstein's hypothesis about "the sophistication of the local populace" has merit. (Of course, if the Fayetteville coins were "plants" and the two Bar Kokhba coins counterfeits, the region's number of finds drops to 8 and the clustering of dates disappears.) The only obvious "diffusionist" possibility is that Mediterraneans sought the highlands in search of minerals.

Respecting the Venezuelan "hoard" of coins, Epstein cites Irwin (1963:258) instead of Gordon (1971:68). The latter reports that the collection included two 8th-century-A.D. Arab coins, which would preclude deposition by classical voyagers. Further, this extends the span of coin dates in the collection even more, supporting the idea that it was a numismatist's accumulation.

To me, the most striking refutation of the alleged importance of the coin finds is that although they are almost all from the Greco-Roman world, the areas of their discovery do not correspond with New World regions showing cultural evidence of possible classical links, viz., the Central Andean region and, to a lesser degree, the Teotihuacán zone (Jett 1978:629, 631-32). Conversely, I know of no coin reports from those regions. Excepting the Northwest Coast Chinese coin finds, which

TABLE 2

LOCATIONS AND MINTING DATES OF COIN FINDS

REGION	LOCALE TYPE ^a	MINTING DATE
Deep South		
Georgia	r	?
Georgia	c	?
Georgia	c	+98-117
Alabama	r	-490
Mississippi	?	+313
Louisiana	?	+594
Louisiana	r	+238
Upland South		
Oklahoma	i	+63
Arkansas	?	-146
Kentucky	r	+133
Kentucky	(r)	+133
Kentucky	i	+133
Tennessee	i	+137
Tennessee	r	+100-200
Tennessee	i	+191
Tennessee	i	+41-54
Tennessee	i	+300
Tennessee	r	?
North Carolina	i	+253-68
North Carolina	?	-300-200
Chesapeake Bay		
Virginia	c	?
Maryland	c	+64
Northeast		
New Jersey	i	+700-800
Connecticut	c	+161-80
Massachusetts	c	+238
Midwest		
Wisconsin	i	+152-53
Wisconsin	i	+ca. 300
Wisconsin	i	?
Wisconsin	i	?
Illinois	(r)	-173-64
Illinois	?	-296-97
Indiana	r	+293
Plains		
Texas	(r)	+313-14
Texas	c	+364-67
Texas	i	+270-73
Nebraska	r	+194
Montana	?	-359-36

^a c, coastal; r and (r), on or near a major river; i, interior.

occur in a different context, Epstein's hypothesis that most or all of the coins discovered represent post-Columbian losses by collectors or souvenir-seekers seems as plausible as any.

by THOMAS A. LEE, JR.

New World Archaeological Foundation, Apartado Postal 140, San Cristóbal Las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico. 23 VII 79

Epstein is to be commended for spending his time and effort on what can only be labelled a dirty but necessary job. What he debunks is only a step away from the recent flood of absurd, quasi-mystical interpretations of valid archaeological remains which is being spoon-fed to a greedy, undiscerning public purely for motives of profit. This undesirable movement of fiction must not go unanswered. What good does it do for governments, universities, and foundations to provide funds for legitimate research projects into the nature of prehistory if the results of these projects can, with impunity, be turned into tales that would have made even the Grimm brothers laugh? It is doubly unfortunate that the refuting of these recently developed myths must be undertaken by those best qualified, since it will cost as much as would significant original research

and will prevent these individuals from making valid advances in knowledge.

More work like Epstein's must be carried out on a whole host of topics, and even this will not be enough. The fight must be carried to the street, where it will be ultimately won or lost. We can no longer hide behind the severe façades of our professional journals and monograph series; we must also present the results of our research in economical, attractive, and interesting formats which command the attention of the general public. Unfortunately, some who have tried to popularize their research results have been seriously rebuked by their peers for "conduct unbecoming a scholar." I believe, however, that our ultimate responsibility is to the general public that pays the bill and that if we do not fulfill our social obligations we will eventually find ourselves in the same predicament as the dinosaur, the battleship, and the chamberpot.

by BALAJI MUNDKUR

University of Connecticut, Box U-42, Storrs, Conn. 06268, U.S.A. 26 VIII 79

One need not be a numismatist to realize that Epstein has attempted a dispassionate, commendably methodical analysis of a difficult theme. The data to be sifted must initially have involved more intangibles than one ordinarily encounters in a review based, for example, chiefly on a survey of literature. Epstein's sleuthing is of a different sort, he acknowledges the limitations carefully, and his conclusions are consistent with the information at hand.

His theme impinges upon an important aspect of modern, "popular" culture. Lopsided notions of political, and especially social, history are to some extent inevitable among hobbyists so numerous, diverse, and avid as coin collectors. They have their own journals, some of which, I assume, are responsibly edited on behalf of a small minority of serious numismatists, but the vast majority of less specialized collectors and the general public are apt to be misled by the kind of uncritical reports that Epstein has closely pursued. One need only keep in mind the immense influence of television and newspapers in perpetuating serious beliefs in the "Bermuda Triangle," "unidentified flying objects," Atlantis, the occult, and the like, so widely prevalent among intelligent, if gullible, people. Precisely the same kinds of groundless notions lurk amidst the archaeological interests stimulated by popular literature and modern museums, even though the popularization, particularly by museums, is usually in responsible directions unrelated to coins or the problems of pre-Columbian transoceanic culture diffusion.

One with an interest in Egyptology, for instance, could thoughtlessly yield to speculations aroused by press and television coverage like that accorded Heyerdahl's Ra expeditions, to which Epstein makes fleeting reference. Egyptians, Phoenicians, "white Semites," Negroes, Libyans, Hindus and Buddhists from India and Southeast Asia, Polynesians, Shang-period Chinese, Japanese of the Neolithic mid-Jomon period—all have been envisioned by various writers since the mid-16th century as settlers in the Western Hemisphere through accident or design who bequeathed some of their cultural traits to American indigenes. The Micmacs and related Algonquins, for example, are alleged to have invented a system of writing traceable to Egyptian and Libyan hieroglyphs (Fell 1976:253-85).

Heyerdahl has speculated on details that are somewhat different from those of other diffusionists. Various elaborations have been generated, however, by his belief (1971:123-40) that colonists from the eastern Mediterranean, including "representatives of the intellectual elite . . . with ample knowledge of both Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilizations," were

numerous enough that, by dint of precept, they were "capable of founding a culture like that of the Olmecs." But he has also regretted, and properly so, "the tendency on the part of too many Diffusionists to draw far-reaching conclusions on the basis of detached, individual pieces of evidence [that have been] justifiably criticized by the Isolationists, who gain something of an upper hand in the debate merely through the default of their opponents." The differences among the diffusionists are less important than the irony of Heyerdahl's statement that "the Isolationist position rests on searching out flaws in the Diffusionists' arguments. . . ."

Critical "diffusionists" and "isolationists" alike, I believe, will welcome Epstein's marshalling of some of these flaws. He has brought them to our attention in a manner rarely, if ever, attempted in newspaper and television reports or, regrettably, in diffusionists' evaluations of their own data on the subject of coins. On the contrary, aided by the news services, they may unwittingly be contributing to the premature establishment of "facts" in the minds of the general populace and, sometimes, of scholars remote from the actual problems of demonstrating acceptable evidences of pre-Columbian transoceanic diffusion of culture.

by ALLISON C. PAULSEN

Yager Museum, Hartwick College, Oneonta, N.Y. 13820, U.S.A. 7 IX 79

When there is more than preliminary information and there is close examination of the evidence, major transoceanic diffusionist theories tend to yield to alternative explanations (Cole and Godfrey 1979:41). Epstein's article is a welcome addition to a growing list of such refutations of popularly appealing but unscientific claims. However, extreme particularism is always hard to refute—there is always one more particular to explain away!—and here his method of presentation is especially ingenious. First he describes each item in the words of the original report of its discovery, and then he extracts the essential facts of that discovery—provenience, discovery date and context, coin origin, denomination, and commemoration—and correlates these data in a series of tables. These in turn graphically reveal three of his concerns: the nature, extent, and patterning of pre-Columbian Old World coins found in America. The tables speak for themselves, and for etic science, and their succinctness contrasts effectively with the prolixity of the unsubstantiated claims for pre-Columbian deposition.

Epstein has one more announced aim: to draw conclusions about the significance of the diffusionist claims. I am sorry that he does not go very far into this aspect of his subject. He might have viewed the matter in the context of broader diffusionism, or hyperdiffusionism, perhaps against the background of recent excursions into what has been called cult archaeology (Cole 1978:2–3), which is part of an alarming trend in present-day science. These notions could have led to speculations about the anthropology of anthropology and of archaeology, a neglected field that remains to be explored by those enterprising anthropologists who can recognize an interesting and complex subculture when they see one.

by HANNS J. PREM

Institut für Völkerkunde und Afrikanistik, Universität München, Schellingstrasse 33, D-8000 München 40, Federal Republic of Germany. 18 IX 79

There is obviously a vast difference of opinion between scholars favouring diffusionist theories and their opponents. Arguments based on cultural similarities are widely used by the former and viewed sceptically by the latter. The only evidence that might be accepted as conclusive by both sides seems to be artifacts manufactured in the Old World and encountered in undeniable

pre-Columbian contexts in the Americas. However, as Epstein's paper shows beyond doubt, there are a lot of pitfalls here as well. Coins are probably the best example to demonstrate this, because they are accepted in Old World archaeology as a primary tool for the dating of associated finds and, to some degree, as indicators of cultural contact. Yet Epstein is able to convince his readers that there is a nearly unlimited number of ways in which artifacts like European coins minted in pre-Columbian times may have found their way in more or less recent times into American soil. The spatial and temporal configuration of his large sample of Roman, Greek, and Hebrew coins does not allow any serious explanation other than accidental losses in modern times. Nevertheless, some 10% of the coins had managed to work down into archaeologically relevant strata and to get into pre-Columbian context (or at least to be so reported). Every experienced archaeologist knows that these things happen with isolated objects (although he frequently does not know how) and will recall similar examples of his own. Epstein's study will, I feel, strengthen the well-founded scepticism of existing sceptics, but I wonder if he will be so lucky as to convince even a single diffusionist. In the diffusionist's eyes his arguments will lack the final proof, for in not a single case has he been able to pin down convincingly the whole history of a particular coin: who brought it to America, who lost it under what circumstances, and so on. In every instance there are more questions remaining than answers.

What, then, is the result of Epstein's study? He makes it evident that ancient European coins have been recently lost in America more often than one might be inclined to assume and that none of the reported finds as such has any relevance to the discussion of pre-Columbian contacts. Thus the burden of evidence continues to lie with the minute investigation of every further find. There is, however, another result: Epstein's work discourages any attempt to identify objects less unambiguous than coins, for example, ceramic artifacts. European origin and undisturbed location in a pre-Columbian burial have been claimed by Heine-Geldern (1961), on the basis of García Payón (1961), for a clay head from Calixtlahuaca (Mexico). In the light of Epstein's study there seems to be little chance of a convincing identification of such objects, which therefore definitely cease to be valid pieces of evidence.

by JONATHAN E. REYMAN

Anthropology Program, Illinois State University, Normal, Ill. 61761, U.S.A. 6 VIII 79

This paper is valuable for four reasons: (1) Epstein provides the most complete compilation, to date, of data on pre-Columbian Old World coins, real and counterfeit, found in the Americas; (2) he demonstrates that *none* of the coins are from indisputably pre-Columbian New World archaeological contexts; (3) he argues convincingly that the distribution, per se, of the coins in time and space is evidence for post-Columbian deposition; and (4) his research indicates that, whatever other evidence may exist for such interaction, these coins do not constitute reliable support for the hypothesis of pre-Columbian transoceanic contacts.

There is, however, an important problem which Epstein only briefly discusses. In reference to the 1913 find in Illinois of a rare Roman coin, he correctly states, "One would like to dismiss it because of the absence of precise provenience data, witnesses, etc., but such an approach would never satisfy the avid diffusionist." Avid diffusionists will hardly be satisfied with Epstein's other explanations either. The problem is that avid diffusionists such as Fell, von Däniken, and even Heyerdahl simply ignore the archaeological context and any other data which do not fit their various notions. It is the existence of the artifact and how much it looks like what they expect to find that count; authenticity, provenience, and other data pertaining to the archaeo-

logical context are irrelevant. In short, that pre-Columbian Old World coins are found on or in aboriginal New World sites is sufficient proof for these writers that pre-Columbian transoceanic voyages were made. Unfortunately, members of the lay public, at whom their work is aimed, probably never read analyses such as Epstein's; or his work may be misrepresented by the diffusionists as just one more example of narrow research by what they see as closed-minded archaeologists. In either case, the public is not likely to benefit from Epstein's study. One hopes that he will publish a paper in the popular press summarizing his results and their implications.

by MIGUEL RIVERA DORADO

Departamento de Antropología de América, Universidad Complutense, Ciudad Universitaria, Madrid 3, Spain. 25 VIII 79

Este artículo tiene el enorme mérito de sintetizar de forma ordenada, y según tres criterios básicos—distribución de los hallazgos, circunstancias de los mismos y momento histórico-sociológico en que tales descubrimientos se producen—el ya abultado dossier de las monedas de la antigüedad occidental recuperadas en América. Aunque la orientación de sus comentarios apunta hacia la descalificación del dato en sí, la lectura del texto se convierte en estímulo para planteamientos más generales, y a ellos me voy a referir brevemente, por cuanto en lo demás me considero en total acuerdo con el procedimiento y conclusiones a que llega el autor.

Parece innecesario señalar hoy que oponerse al difusionismo no es equivalente a rechazar la difusión. Este es un fenómeno de transmisión cultural reconocible desde los remotos tiempos paleolíticos hasta nuestros días, pero como tal, fuera de ser un síntoma de cambio, y de la curiosidad erudita derivada de su constatación, no aporta avance alguno en el objetivo principal de explicar cómo y por qué razones ha tenido lugar la transformación observada, y bajo qué condiciones los resultados de ese proceso pueden ser elevados a la categoría de ley. He escrito en otro lugar (Rivera 1976) que lo que puede ser explicativo es el análisis de los mecanismos de adaptación de componentes culturales a contextos distintos del que los inventó, que el interés del investigador debe centrarse en averiguar las motivaciones de la difusión y las causas de la integración del elemento en la cultura receptora.

El trabajo de Epstein, útil como creo que es, es también una lanzada a toro muerto, porque nadie que esté al corriente de los intereses de la antropología contemporánea puede encontrar justificación para derrochar su esfuerzo en probar que varias monedas griegas o romanas encontradas en América llegaron efectivamente desde el Mediterráneo en la época de su acuñación. ¿A dónde nos conduciría el verificar semejante supuesto? Quizás a afirmar la fuerza de las corrientes oceánicas, o la capacidad como navegantes de los viejos marinos europeos, pero ninguna otra deducción podría hacerse sin pruebas suficientes, y científicamente obtenidas, de que esa difusión pudo implicar modificaciones significativas en las tradiciones culturales del Nuevo Mundo. Ese es el verdadero problema del arqueólogo, el de explicar la asimilación o el rechazo del rasgo difundido, y sus consecuencias, a la luz de las características del contexto receptor. En el caso de las monedas, no sólo están muy lejos los difusiónistas de este tipo de planteamientos sino que tampoco se han propuesto discernir con un mínimo de rigor las condiciones en que vale la pena hacer siquiera mención de los hallazgos.

En el trabajo que comento está implícito el hecho de que es precisamente en Estados Unidos donde aparecen un número relativamente elevado de monedas antiguas, mientras que están ausentes por el contrario las ánforas, los exvotos, las lucernas, las espadas o los broches de cinturón. Ninguno de estos objetos se adquiere con facilidad en un viaje turístico, son pocos los coleccionistas, y por su forma y volumen se extravían con dificultad. Dejemos, pues, a un lado el inacabable tema de los

rasgos exóticos difundidos y, si de difusión se trata, abordemos el estudio de los procesos debido a los cuales fueron transmitidas las innovaciones y de aquellos otros que aconsejaron o permitieron la adopción de elementos culturales extraños. No es que la crítica a los entusiastas descubridores de monedas del Viejo Mundo en la América precolombina sea superflua; es que, sencillamente, carece de interés, al menos dada la forma en que aquellos presentan el asunto, más propia del sensacionalismo de los periodicos locales, lugar donde, probablemente, sería más justo hacerles las adecuadas reconvenções.

[Epstein's article has the enormous merit of synthesizing in an orderly way, according to three basic criteria—distribution of finds, their circumstances, and the historical-sociological moment in which the discoveries took place—the now large dossier of ancient Western coins recovered in America. Although his remarks are oriented toward the disqualification of the data themselves, reading of the text stimulates more general approaches. Because for the rest I agree fully with the author's procedures and conclusions, I am going to discuss these briefly.

It seems unnecessary to point out today that opposing diffusionism is not equivalent to rejecting diffusion. This is a phenomenon of cultural transmission observable from remote Paleolithic times to the present, but apart from being a symptom of change and apart from the scholarly curiosity aroused by its verification it does not introduce anything new with regard to the main objective of explaining how and why the observed transformation took place and under what conditions the results of that process may be elevated to the status of a law. As I have discussed elsewhere (Rivera 1976), an explanation may lie in the analysis of the mechanisms of adaptation of cultural components to contexts different from the one that produced them. I have argued that the researcher's interest must focus on discovering the motivations for the diffusion and the causes of the integration of the element into the receiving culture.

Epstein's article, useful as I consider it to be, seems like beating a dead horse. No one familiar with contemporary anthropology can find any justification for wasting his/her efforts to prove that the various Greek or Roman coins found in America came from the Mediterranean in the period of their minting. What would be the purpose of verifying such an assumption? Perhaps it would show the strength of the ocean currents or the navigation skills of the old European sailors, but no other inference could be drawn without sufficient (and scientifically obtained) evidence that such diffusion could have implied significant modifications in the cultural traditions of the New World. This is the archeologist's real problem: how to explain the assimilation or rejection of the diffused feature and its consequences in the light of the characteristics of the receiving context. In the case of coins, not only are the diffusionists very far from this type of approach, but they have not attempted to specify with any rigor the conditions under which it is even worth talking about the finds.

The article under review implicitly acknowledges the fact that it is precisely in the United States that a relatively great number of ancient coins has been found while, in contrast, there is a lack of amphorae, votive offerings, candlesticks, swords, and belt buckles. None of these latter articles can be easily acquired on a tourist trip, there are few collectors of them, and they do not get lost easily because of their form and volume. We must set aside, then, the inexhaustible theme of diffused foreign traits and, if we want to talk about diffusion, undertake the study of the processes by which innovations were transmitted and the processes that recommended or permitted adoption of those innovations. It is not that criticism of the enthusiastic discoverers of Old World coins in pre-Columbian America is superfluous, but simply that it is uninteresting,

at least given the way in which they present the matter. This perspective more properly belongs to the headlines of local newspapers—which probably would be a more appropriate place for the reproaches that are called for.]

by NORMAN TOTTEN

16 Belmont St., Newton, Mass. 02158, U.S.A. 17 VII 79

Epstein has brought together a good listing of pre-Columbian coins found in America. As he notes, documentation is sparse. A few other finds have been reported (Seaby 1978, Totten 1978). The virtues of his article are many, including significant speculations on the authenticity of several coins, and my overwhelming reaction is gratitude for his effort. But is his case against the diffusion of coins to America before Columbus a strong one? I believe not.

First, regarding distributions of finds, his argument that ships and their coins would have stayed on the coasts rather than moving inland has only limited validity. Naturally some ships, passengers, and goods would remain coastal, but rivers were the primary highways in pre-Columbian America and Europe. Shallow-draft vessels, such as those of the Vikings, could easily negotiate rivers as well as seas. Even the Spaniards, whose caravels were unsuitable for river navigation, moved in from the coasts once they arrived. Moreover, there is a vast abundance of evidence for movement of artifacts, motifs, and peoples over wide areas in ancient times.

Second, the author has misunderstood the antiquity of coin collecting, believing it to have begun only in the 14th century. This has considerably weakened his critique of the hoard of Roman coins found in Venezuela. From the scant information available I would agree that the coins seem to have been assembled typologically, that is, to have formed a collection. However, there is no valid reason to assume that art-collecting Greeks and Romans, who treated many coinages as art, never made type collections (for artistic, historic, and minting reasons) and that a collection of 1st–4th-century Roman coins must have been assembled 1,000 or more years later. Coin and medal collections were made in classical times; a good example of one in gold is in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

Third, though this article deals only with coins, coins constitute but one kind of material remain among many. Other monetary forms related by type or script to the Old World have been found in America: the oxhide ingot shape in various places and cultures (Totten 1978:45), an Ohio token imitating, apparently, an unknown coin type of Evion (Fell 1978:74), and a stone token inscribed in Libyan found in Tennessee in the early 1890s (Whitehall 1978:37–38).

Fourth, clearer distinctions need to be made between finds and published reports of finds. Having studied coins for many years, I know that most coins (wherever found) are never officially reported, much less published. The same is true for other kinds of ancient artifacts discovered outside archeological excavations. There are a variety of reasons for this, but only a few need concern us here. As Epstein points out, coin collecting in America has increased dramatically since World War I, meaning inevitably more losses from collections. But the population has about doubled, meaning more building excavations and more people looking, some now with metal detectors. Even more significantly, literacy and general education in rural America have increased appreciably. Such once widely held ideas as that old bronze coins are worthless have changed, and people much more frequently seek identification of their finds. At least some of the reasons people report and do not report their discoveries have to do with the attitudes of authorities whom they consult, or would consult. The currently popular view that ancient coins found in America must come from modern losses creates little reason or opportunity to publish them.

What is hoped for is not that one's working bias be changed for this reason, but that finds of ancient coins be recorded for their possible importance rather than dismissed as inconsequential. Though the majority of anthropologists today are skeptical about significant Old World influence in America during the 1,000 or so years before Columbus, this might change as other forms of data, particularly linguistic, are amassed and analyzed. A little foresight is better than hindsight with regrets. Published reports can be evaluated at any time, but findings dismissed and never recorded soon cease to exist.

Fifth, correct classification of coins, including authenticity, is a problem Epstein has meaningfully addressed but hardly solved. Published descriptions are usually inadequate, and the competency of persons making identifications is often conjectural. Even photographs, though most helpful, do not adequately substitute for examinations of coins themselves. Most of the finds I have been asked to look at have, indeed, been fantasy pieces, trade tokens, talismans, and coins dating since 1500. This sorting out may obscure but does not alter the fact that some ancient coins seem to have been in America for a very long time. The circumstances surrounding such coins, including their discovery, should not be disregarded. The coin I have most fully reported, found in Arkansas, is listed second in Epstein's table 1. It is the same type as his first listing, found in Alabama and misattributed by the Fogg. Other examples of this very rare type are now known from Kansas and Connecticut. While I cannot summarize the data here, suffice it to say that had they been discovered in similar contexts in the western Mediterranean no one would suppose them to represent modern losses.

I believe that the evidence of ancient coins found in America, set within the context of other data, suggests but does not prove pre-Columbian contacts. Epstein, in making the opposite case, squeezes the ambiguous and inadequate information too hard. He states that the evidence involves either "deliberate fraud" or claims "so totally inconsistent with what we know of human behavior, past or present, that they must be disregarded." Such far-reaching conclusions seem inconsistent with his statement that "professional anthropologists studiously avoid drawing any conclusions from the limited data available."

Reply

by JEREMIAH F. EPSTEIN

Austin, Tex., U.S.A. 10 x 79

I would like to remark at the outset that I consider my study to be a methodological contribution rather than a debunking effort. I have gathered as many data on the coins as I could and analyzed them in various ways in order to see what kind of patterning occurs. The absence of any pattern that would suggest Roman contact is, I believe, inherent in the data, not in my mind-set. If others can take this same information and use it to build a convincing argument for a Roman connection, let them do so. The fact that Jett tried and came up with the same conclusions as I is most gratifying. Like all material that lacks archaeological context, the coin discoveries are intriguing. Data of this kind should not be ignored; the problem is how to handle them. I hope the procedures developed here have wider applicability.

It is a pleasure to find colleagues who appreciate one's efforts. Since both Buttrey and Jett have added new information, I would like to comment on their contributions. As a classical scholar and a leading authority on Roman coinage, Buttrey offers a viewpoint that is most helpful. His comments on the possible confusion between coins of Domitian and of Diocletian and the overstated rarity of the former put my discussion of the coin supposedly found in an Indian mound in

Illinois in proper perspective. Both Buttrey and Jett address themselves to the problem of the Venezuelan hoard. Jett notes that I missed Gordon's (1971:68) statement about two 8th-century Arab coins in the collection, which preclude the hoard's being part of a Roman trader's ready cash as Irwin asserted. In this connection it is of interest that Gordon thought of that hoard as ready cash, too, but from a Moor's ship. He cites the fact that Roman coins continued in use in medieval times. That this cannot be so is underlined by Buttrey's remark that such a range of coinage is not in accord with what we know about monetary circulation in ancient times. Jett makes the important observation that it is in the Andean region and at Teotihuacán that one might expect to find evidence of Roman connections if they occurred. The apparent absence of Roman coins in these areas, compared with their comparative abundance in the United States, makes little sense in the light of a Roman presence.

While my critics consider my compendium useful, they are in fundamental disagreement with my conclusions. At issue here is what constitutes acceptable proof of Roman contact with pre-Columbian America. The criteria employed by sceptics cause them to reject virtually all claims for a Roman connection. The heart of the matter is the absence of a pre-Columbian archaeological context for the putative evidence of Romans in America. Those who marshal data for contact must therefore use other kinds of arguments, and since some have been made here by Buchanan, Carter, Cook, Covey, and Totten I would like to respond to them:

1. Assuming what has yet to be demonstrated: Totten notes that the coins he has described from Arkansas and Alabama, if found in similar contexts in the western Mediterranean, would not be viewed as modern losses. He implies that since an early context is not required for every Roman coin found in the Mediterranean it is unreasonable to demand one for similar coins found in the United States. What he overlooks is that Roman influence throughout the Mediterranean has been abundantly documented, and so Roman coins, even if found out of context, are not surprising. Roman contact with the New World has not been demonstrated, and therefore modern losses appear to be the most likely explanation.

2. Confirmation from other kinds of data: Buchanan asserts, "Coin finds do not prove the case for ancient voyages to America, but they support other categories of evidence for such events." While he offers no examples, Carter and Covey do. This kind of thinking is extraordinarily seductive. If it is followed, one is soon overwhelmed by evidence, each piece reinforcing the next but few capable of standing on their own. It is necessary to clear the air—to separate what is solid from what is suggestive and to discard what has no value. I have concentrated on coins because any digression would diffuse that argument.

3. The exalted professional versus "the people": Professional archaeologists have long been accused of hiding information from the public (see, for example, Gladwin 1947). In this connection, Covey asks if certain discoveries would turn to fiction had they been made by a farm woman or a dissimulating public servant rather than an archaeologist. The problem is not who makes the find, but its nature. If a coin were found in a verifiable pre-Columbian context by a farm woman trained to distinguish disturbed deposits whose excavating techniques were meticulous and whose field notes and documentation were impeccable, then the discovery would pass inspection. I doubt, however, if I would be as confident if the discovery were made by a dissimulating servant, public or no.

Throughout these discussions, I have stressed that no Roman coin has been excavated under controlled archaeological conditions. Recently I have found that I was mistaken in this. Thanks to Carl Compton of *The Interamerican* and Andrew

Rothovius of the New England Antiquities Research Association, who sent me copies of newspaper clippings, and George Hamell, Associate Curator of Anthropology, Rochester Museum and Science Center, who supplied copies of field notes, reports, and photographs, it is now possible to talk about the discovery of such a coin at the Great Gully site, a historic Upper Cayuga Iroquois village first described by Skinner (1921:55-68). Three cemeteries are known for this location, all containing historic materials. In 1928-29, excavations were carried out there by Harrison C. Follett and George Selden, whose work was largely concentrated on the excavation of burials. The clear association of the coin with historic materials is evident from Follett's field notes (1929:12-13):

Skeleton 33 and 34. Below this area at a depth of 20 inches two probably male skulls of a person around 17 years, heads west, close together in south side of grave skulls crushed pelvis and what was left of femur and tibia lay eight inches lower down. In the soil above pelvis remains of AP 34 a coin 3 horses and chariot on one side and human head on opposite side, At the head of 33 a small chunk of hematite, an earthen or clay ball, near this a large brass button with pieces of apparent beaver hair mass around it, one long red glass bead lay over the button, In the soil on the north wall two iron nails two small glass beads and a small unknown iron implement, In the southeast corner of the grave and next to the wall a horn spoon.

The coin, later identified as commemorating Emperor Antonius Pius, was minted about A.D. 165. Since this village was located only 2 mi. from the Cayuga Mission, it is speculated that Father René Ménard (1605-61) may have given the coin to one of his charges. That he could have had such a coin is indicated by the fact that he had previously spent four years studying theology at Bourges, France, the site of a Roman military camp (Stewart 1934). In summary, even when we have an aboriginal archaeological context for a Roman coin in America, the associations are all post-Columbian.

References Cited

- ATWATER, CALEB. 1820. *Archaeologia Americana. Transactions of the American Antiquarian Society* 1:66-313.
- BEALS, HERB. 1975. Japanese coins on the Northwest Coast. *Screenings* 24(4):2-3.
- . 1976. Chinese coins and Pacific Northwest archaeology. *Screenings* 24(4)12-3.
- . 1977. Chinese coins: New evidence. *Screenings* 26(8):2-4.
- BOLES, T. DIX. 1893. Chinese relics in Alaska. *Proceedings of the U.S. National Museum for 1892* 15:221-22.
- BORDEN, C. E. 1952. Results of archaeological investigations in central British Columbia. *Anthropology in British Columbia* 3:31-43.
- BROOKS, C. W. 1875. Reports of Japanese vessels wrecked in the North Pacific: From the earliest records to the present time. *Proceedings of the California Academy of Science* 6:50-66.
- BRUNN, P. M. 1966. *The Roman imperial coinage. Vol. 7. Constantine and Licinius, A.D. 313-337*. London: Spink.
- CARTER, GEORGE. 1978. "Commentators on [Barry] Fell address." *Ancient Vermont: Proceedings of the Castleton Conference, Castleton State College, October 14-15, 1977*. Edited by Warren L. Cook, p. 85. Rutland, Vt.: Academy Books. [WLC]
- CLAIN-STEPHANELLI, ELVIRA E. 1965. *Numismatics: An ancient science*. Contributions from the Museum of History and Technology 32.
- COHEN, HENRI. 1888-92. 2d edition. *Monnaies impériales*. Paris: Rollin et Feuermann. (TVB)
- COLE, JOHN R. 1978. Barry Fell, America, B.C., and a cargo cult in archaeology. *Bulletin of the New York State Archaeological Association* 74:1-10. [ACP]
- COLE, JOHN R., and LAURIE R. GODFREY. 1979. Biological analogy, diffusionism, and archaeology, *American Anthropologist* 81:37-44. [ACP]
- COVEY, CYCLONE. 1975. *Calalus: A Roman Jewish colony in America from the time of Charlemagne through Alfred the Great*. New York: Vantage Press.

- EKHOLM, GORDON F. 1950. Is American Indian culture Asiatic? *Natural History* 59:344-51, 382. [SCJ]
- FAIRBANKS, CHARLES H. 1976. Spaniards, planters, ships, and slaves: Historical archaeology in Florida and Georgia. *Archaeology* 29: 164-72.
- FARLEY, GLORIA. 1977. Ancient coins found. *Oklahoma Today* 27(2): 31.
- FELL, B. 1976. *America B.C.: Ancient settlers in the New World*. New York: Quadrangle Books. [BM]
- . 1978. "Vermont's ancient sites and the larger picture of trans-Atlantic visitations to America, B.C.," in *Ancient Vermont: Proceedings of the Castleton Conference, Castleton State College, October 14-15, 1977*. Edited by Warren L. Cook. Rutland, Vt.: Academy Books. [NT]
- FOLLETT, HARRISON C. 1929. Site field notes for excavations. MS, Rochester Museum, Rochester, N.Y.
- FORT, CHARLES. 1973. *The book of the damned*. London: Abacus.
- GARCÍA PAYÓN, JOSÉ. 1961. Una cabecita de barro, de extraño fisionomía. *Boletín del Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia* 6:1-2. [HJP]
- GILBERT, SIR HUMPHREY. 1576. *A discourse of a discourie for a new passage to Cataia*. London: Henry Middleton.
- GLADWIN, HAROLD S. 1947. *Men out of Asia*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- GORDON, CYRUS H. 1971. *Before Columbus: Links between the Old World and ancient America*. New York: Crown.
- HAYWOOD, JOHN. 1823. *The natural and aboriginal history of Tennessee up to the final settlements therein by the white people in the year 1768*. Nashville: George Wilson.
- . 1959 (1823). *The natural and aboriginal history of Tennessee up to the final settlement therein by the white people in the year 1768: Including archaeological, geological, and historical annotations bringing the ancient account into focus with present-day knowledge and an introductory sketch of the author, John Haywood, by Mary U. Rothrock, editor*. Jackson: McCowat-Mercer.
- HEINE-GELDERN, ROBERT V. 1961. Ein römischer Fund aus dem vorkolumbischen Mexiko. *Anzeiger der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, phil.-hist. Klasse* 98:117-19. [HJP]
- HEYERDAHL, THOR. 1950. *The Kon-Tiki expedition*. London: George Allen and Unwin. [SCJ]
- . 1971. "Isolationist or Diffusionist?" in *The quest for America*. Edited by G. Ashe. New York: Praeger. [BM]
- IRWIN, CONSTANCE. 1963. *Fair gods and stone faces*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- JETT, STEPHEN C. 1971. "Diffusion versus independent invention: The bases of controversy," in *Man across the sea: Problems of pre-Columbian contacts*. Edited by Carroll L. Riley, J. Charles Kelly, Campbell Pennington, and Robert L. Rands, pp. 5-53. Austin: University of Texas Press. [SCJ]
- . "Pre-Columbian transoceanic influences," in *Ancient Native Americans*. Edited by Jesse D. Jennings, pp. 592-650. San Francisco: Freeman. [SCJ]
- KEDDIE, GRANT. 1978. The reliability of dating archaeological and ethnographic materials with associated Chinese coins. *Datum* 3(2):1-2.
- KEELER, CLYDE E. 1972. The Seip Mound "coin" identified. *New England Antiquities Research Association Newsletter* 7(2):22-24.
- KRAAY, C. M., and M. HIRMER. 1966. *Greek coins*. New York: Harry N. Abrams.
- LARSON, R. 1966. Was America the wonderful land of Fusang? *American Heritage* 17:106-9.
- MACMILLAN-BROWN, J. 1927. *Peoples and problems of the Pacific*. London: T. Fisher Unwin.
- MAHAN, J., and D. BRAITHWAITE. 1975. Discovery of ancient coins in the United States. *Anthropological Journal of Canada* 13(2): 15-18.
- MARINEO SICULO, LUCIO. 1530. *De las cosas memorables de España*. Alcalá.
- MAURICE, JULES. 1908-12. *Numismatique constantinienne*. Paris: Leroux. [TVB]
- MESHORER, YAAKOV. 1967. *Jewish coins of the Second Temple period*. Tel Aviv.
- NOEL-HUME, IVOR. 1974. *All the best rubbish*. New York: Harper and Row.
- OVIDIO Y VALDES, GONSALO FERNANDEZ DE. 1944(1535). *Historia general y natural de las Indias*. Asunción del Paraguay: Guaranía.
- PHEBUS, GEORGE E. 1974. "Konapee's money?" elicits Smithsonian response. *Screenings* 23(2):2-3.
- POHL, FREDERICK J. 1973. Did ancient Romans reach America? *The New Diffusionist* 3(10):23-26.
- PREWITT, ELTON R. n.d. *The Rogers Springs site: 1974 investigations*. Texas Archaeological Survey Research Report 54.
- Records of the Past*. 1913. A Roman coin from one of the mounds in Illinois. 12:182-83.
- RIVERA, MIGUEL. 1976. Crítica de la arqueología difusionista. *Anuario Científico* (Universidad Central del Este, San Pedro de Macoris, República Dominicana) 1:155-65. [MR]
- SCHOOLCRAFT, HENRY R. 1854. *Historical and statistical information respecting the history, condition and prospects of the Indian tribes of the United States*. Vol. 4. Philadelphia: Lippincott, Brambo.
- Scientific American*. 1882. 46(24):382.
- SEABY, PETER. 1978. The first datable Norse find from North America? *Seaby Coin and Medal Bulletin*, no. 724 (December 1978), pp. 369-70, 377-82. [TVB,NT]
- SKINNER, ALANSON. 1921. *Notes on Iroquois archeology*. Museum of the American Indian Heye Foundation, Indian Notes and Monographs.
- SQUIER, E. G., and E. H. DAVIS. *Ancient mounds of the Mississippi Valley*. Smithsonian Institution Contributions to Knowledge 1.
- STEWART, ALEXANDER MCGINN. 1934. *René Ménard 1605-1661*. Privately printed.
- SUNDERLAND, RILEY. 1979. Silver tetradrachm of Philip II in Montana: Coin find or lost coin? *Occasional Publications of the Epigraphic Society* 7(174). [DBB]
- SUTHERLAND, C. H. V. 1967. *The Roman imperial coinage*. Vol. 6. London: Spink. [TVB]
- TOTTEN, NORMAN. 1977. Carthaginian coins found in Arkansas and Alabama. *Occasional Publications of the Epigraphic Society* 4(88): 1-7.
- . 1978. "Numismatic evidence for pre-Columbian voyages." *Ancient Vermont: Proceedings of the Castleton Conference, Castleton State College, October 14-15, 1977*. Edited by Warren L. Cook, p. 45. Rutland, Vt.: Academy Books. [DBB,WLC,NT]
- WARSHAVSKY, DR. 1961. Letter to Editor. *New World Antiquity* 8(7):106-7.
- WHITTALL, JAMES P., II. 1978. An inscribed token from a necropolis in Tennessee. *Early Sites Research Society Bulletin* 6(1). [NT]