1 Introduction

Tokens remain one of the most enigmatic and under-utilised bodies of evidence from antiquity. Monetiform objects of varying materials have been known from Rome since the eighteenth century and yet our understanding of these objects has made precious little progress in the years that have followed.[1] Many tokens remain unpublished, and the few individuals that have attempted the study of these objects have despaired at their elusive nature. Rostovtzeff, whose catalogue and doctoral dissertation on Roman lead tokens still remains the most detailed work on the topic to date, observed that the volume of the material, the wear on most of the pieces, as well as the seeming unending array of inscriptions and representations on these pieces are enough to warn anyone off studying them, especially when, as he noted, the study does not appear to have any scientific promise.[2] Rostovtzeff's frustration with the subject matter manifested into a hope that future studies might better elucidate the pieces he could not understand, noting that a better understanding of tokens in the East, particularly Athens, would likely result in a better understanding of these objects in Rome.

More than one hundred years later, and with the tokens of Athens now much better understood, this work resumes Rostovtzeff's study of tokens in Roman imperial Italy.[3] It is now clear that monetiform objects were manufactured and used in multiple regions in the Roman Empire, although the tokens from Rome and Ostia remain one of the largest corpora currently known. The sheer variety of designs on these tokens can indeed be bewildering at times and many of the legends remain enigmatic. The majority of tokens from Roman Italy are made of lead, which certainly does not last as well as other metals. But these same characteristics also reveal to us how these particular artefacts functioned: a profusion of designs reflects an abundance of makers and contexts, the enigmatic legends must have contributed to a sense of belonging to a particular group (who could understand the meaning), while the popularity of lead

[1] Ficoroni, 1740. [2] Rostovtzeff, 1905b: 9.

[3] The excavations of the Athenian Agora have contributed enormously to our understanding of how tokens worked in the city; see Lang and Crosby, 1964.

for these objects suggests that, in the main, tokens were created cheaply for use over a relatively short period of time. The challenges presented by this material are thus a gateway to better understanding their function.

It is hoped that this volume will demonstrate that the challenges of studying tokens are more than repaid by the insights gained. It is rare that a category of evidence from the Roman world has remained neglected for so long. An examination of the tokens of Roman Italy thus offers the opportunity to uncover new insights into Roman history and society. Tokens reveal acts of euergetism and different social groupings (cultic groups, *collegia*, Roman families and their networks). They shed light on particular Roman festivals, imagery and ideologies. They provide evidence for the imperial image and its reception, for particular identities and for the lived everyday experience of the ancient city. In sum, the potential of tokens as a source are manifold, and undoubtedly other ways in which tokens can be informative will come to light as the artefacts are once more integrated into mainstream scholarly discourse.

When the present author was studying these materials first hand, it became evident to her that Rostovtzeff's catalogue of this material (*Tesserarum urbis romae et suburbi plumbearum sylloge* = *TURS*) contained numerous errors and omissions. The work still remains a feat of scholarship, especially given the early date at which it was compiled.[4] Nonetheless, as part of research into the area, a new and updated catalogue has been made available in English online, and readers wishing to find further detail on particular types are encouraged to make use of the resource.[5] A database of images, specimens and finds has also been compiled, and photographs of numerous tokens (which for obvious reasons could not all be illustrated in this volume) are available online.[6]

Defining Roman Tokens

Rostovtzeff identified some of the lead pieces presented in his dissertation as the *tesserae* of ancient texts, picking up on the terminology used in the

[4] Rostovtzeff, 1903b, with a supplement published as Rostovtzeff, 1905c.

[5] https://coins.warwick.ac.uk/token-types/. Additional types not included in Rostovtzeff's original catalogue are given *TURS* (Supplement) numbers in this database.

[6] https://coins.warwick.ac.uk/token-specimens/. It should be noted that the tokens from Roman Italy in the BnF in Paris are now also online with images in Gallica (https://antiquitebnf.hypotheses.org/11049), and all the tokens of the British Museum are also photographed and available online through their online catalogue. For example, for the Roman lead tokens in the British Museum see www.britishmuseum.org/collection/search?keyword=bmcrlt.

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nineteenth century.[7] *Tessera*, derived from the ancient Greek word *tessares* or 'four', refers to an object that has four sides. As Rostovtzeff noted, *tesserae* encompassed different things (e.g. cubic pawns, dice, tablets), meaning the word was often qualified – as *tesserae nummariae*, for example, or *tesserae frumentariae*.[8] Since then various scholars have sought alternative identifications for these objects. Van Berchem, for example, argued that many of the monetiform lead pieces from Rome were *calculi* or reckoning pieces.[9] Thornton suggested they might have acted as emergency small change, a sort of 'peasant's money'.[10] More recently, scholarship has become more sceptical of a 'one size fits all' interpretation. Turcan, for example, observed that these objects likely served multiple uses, with the purpose of the vast majority of these pieces remaining unknown to us.[11] Virlouvet's exhaustive study, *Tessera Frumentaria*, noted that the word *tessera* possessed multiple meanings; she concluded that the monetiform lead objects we possess are not the *tesserae frumentariae* of our texts and that we should see these objects as private, rather than official, products.[12]

That we encounter issues in attempting to definitively define a 'token' is unsurprising. The enormous quantity and variety of work performed by tokens in societies across time is often overlooked, no doubt due to their unassuming nature.[13] Tokens are objects that represent something else: this might be people, objects, values, relationships, emotions, prestige, hierarchy or a particular entitlement. In ancient Greek a token was known as a *symbolon*.[14] In addition to *tesserae*, tokens might be described in Latin with the words *missilia* or *nomismata*. The former, which refers to things that might be thrown, is similar in sense to the French word for token, *jeton*, which derives from *jeter* (to throw, or to add up accounts). The words for token in Greek and Latin, as in modern languages today, embodied a large variety of objects and functions, some of which probably referenced the bronze and lead pieces that form the focus of this volume. But there can be no simple equation between a particular term mentioned in a classical text and these artefacts – tokens, after all, might also be

[7] Ruggiero, 1878: 149 ('tessere di piombo'); Dancoisne, 1891 ('tessères romaines de plomb'); de Belfort, 1892; Scholz, 1894 ('Römische Bleitesserae'); Rostovtzeff, 1905b: 4.

[8] Rostovtzeff, 1905b: 10; Crisà, Gkikaki and Rowan 2019a: 2. The term *tesserae nummariae* comes from Suetonius (*Aug.* 41) and is thought to refer to something akin to 'money tickets' or a medium to enable the distribution of certain sums. It is to be distinguished from *tesserae nummulariae*, rectangular labels thought to be attached to bags by financial officials to act as a guarantee of the contents within. On the latter see Herzog, 1919.

[9] van Berchem, 1936. [10] Thornton, 1980. [11] Turcan, 1987: 51.

[12] Virlouvet, 1995: 321, 362. [13] Crisà, Gkikaki and Rowan, 2019a.

[14] Crisà, Gkikaki and Rowan 2019a: 2.

metaphorical or imagined, spoken or written (e.g. *tessera* might also refer to a watchword written on a tablet). As a word that refers to the embodiment of something else, a definitive description of the term and its material manifestations in classical antiquity remains impossible and, realistically, undesirable. Indeed, tokens probably performed even more functions than our surviving texts indicate, since everyday objects and processes rarely formed the focus of classical literature.

This volume is focused on the bronze, brass and lead pieces from Roman imperial Italy, which are mainly, though not always, monetiform in nature. This material definition forms the parameters of the volume. These particular artefacts are different from other objects that have attracted the label *tesserae*, and we might better define Roman tokens by exploring what they are not. Our tokens are different from *tesserae hospitales*, for example. The latter were objects that recorded agreements of mutual assistance between individuals; they exist in bronze, ivory and, occasionally, silver, and come in a wide array of shapes.[15] *Tesserae nummulariae*, small ivory or bone rectangular objects that might be inscribed and which carry a hole in order to be attached to something, have been interpreted as artefacts that were attached to bags of money to indicate that the contents had been inspected and found to be sound.[16] Again, this is a very different category of object to the coin-like material presented here.

Similar in shape to the *tesserae nummulariae* (and indeed, at times often grouped with them) are the so-called *tesserae lusoriae* – rectangular bone or ivory pieces with a circular 'handle' at one end. These pieces are inscribed with playful words and numbers (the latter at times accompanied by an A or Λ).[17] The words mainly describe a person and can be positive or negative (e.g. *fortunate*, *amator*, *pernix*, *victor*); although found in 'sets' it seems there was no standard design for these pieces. *Tesserae lusoriae* are believed to have been used in a game or games of some kind and appear to be a phenomenon of the Roman Republic.[18] A further series of gaming pieces often labelled as *tesserae* (and at times conflated with the monetiform pieces that form the focus of this volume) are the circular bone and ivory pieces that carry a variety of designs in relief on one side (including imperial portraits and Egyptian imagery), with a legend identifying the image and a number (often in both Latin and Greek) incised on a flat surface on the other. Figure 1.1 is one example of this type of artefact: the bust of Nero is presented on one side,

[15] Sánchez-Moreno, 2001; Luschi, 2008.

[16] The objects often carry reference to a slave – *s(ervus)* – and carry the word *spectavit* (looked at or inspected). See Herzog, 1919; Andreau, 1999: 80–9; Kay, 2014: 125–6.

[17] Banducci, 2015: 203. [18] Rodríguez Martín, 2016: 207.

Figure 1.1 Bone gaming piece, 31 mm. Bare bust of Nero left / V | NEPWN | Ɛ.

while the other side names the image in Greek, with the number five given in both Latin and Greek. The discovery of a 'set' of these pieces in a child's tomb in Kerch in Crimea overthrew the traditional interpretation of these artefacts as theatre tickets and today they are accepted as gaming pieces, used in an unknown game.[19] Bone gaming pieces may also carry no imagery, or come in a variety of shapes without legends.[20]

Many of the bronze and brass monetiform pieces referred to as 'tokens' in this volume have traditionally been identified as gaming pieces. The presence of numbers on tokens of the Julio-Claudian period (some accompanied by an A) has been central to this argument. Figure 1.2 is one example of this series (further examples can be seen in Figures 4.12 and 4.14), which is characterised by numbers within a wreath on the reverse.[21] The obverses of this series carry a variety of designs, most famously Julio-Claudian imperial portraiture and sexual imagery. The latter series is frequently dubbed *spintriae* in modern scholarship, although these objects were not known as such in antiquity; an example of a *spintria* is reproduced here as Figure 1.3.[22] The discovery of a *spintria* (likely a contemporary imitation) covered in gold leaf in a tomb in

[19] Rostovtzeff, 1905a on the Kerch discovery, since then see the studies of Alföldi-Rosenbaum, 1971; Alföldi-Rosenbaum, 1976; Alföldi-Rosenbaum, 1980; Alföldi-Rosenbaum, 1984; Bianchi, 2015.

[20] Bianchi, 2015: 62 for circular pieces without imagery and simply numbers inscribed on the flattened side; Mlasowsky, 1991: nos. 113–210 provides a good illustration of the variety of this type of material.

[21] Some have identified the wreath as the *corona triumphalis*, see Martini, 1999: 13; Campana, 2009: 55.

[22] Campana, 2009: 43–4 on the term and 62–5 on the sexual scene shown in Figure 1.3.

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Figure 1.2 AE token, 22 mm, 4.52 g, 4 h, 27 BC–AD 57. Laureate head of Augustus right, FEL beneath, all within linear border and wreath / XIII within dotted border and wreath. Buttrey 1973, B5/XIII.

Figure 1.3 AE token (*spintria*), 22 mm, 4.92 g, 6 h, 27 BC–AD 57. Sexual scene. A man wearing a cape kneels on a *kline* and enters his partner from behind, who rests on her elbows. Drapery above, beneath the *kline* crouching figure on the left and jug on right / III within dotted border and wreath. Buttrey 1973, A9/III = Simonetta and Riva 1984 Scene 4.

Mutina dated to AD 22–57 provides a *terminus ante quem* for this series.[23] In a seminal work on these pieces in 1973, Buttrey suggested one possible use for these objects was as counters in gaming: this theory has since been developed by Campana.[24] In spite of the presence of numbers on these pieces and gaming counters, the current state of material evidence suggests that we should not interpret the so-called *spintriae* as gaming pieces. After all, these artefacts form a small subset of a broader collection of bronze, brass and lead monetiform pieces, of which only a few carry numbers. Moreover, objects

[23] Benassi, Giordani and Poggi 2003.

[24] Buttrey, 1973: 54; Campana, 2009: 55. The idea is also discussed by Küter, 2016: 87; Le Guennec, 2017: 425; Martínez Chico, 2019: 109.

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used as gaming pieces – the bone *tesserae* with numbers in Greek and Latin, the rectangular *tesserae lusoriae*, other circular bone and terracotta pieces – have been found as 'sets', gathered together ready for play.[25] We have no such find for the *spintriae* or the other monetiform objects discussed in this volume. Although an argument from silence, it does suggest that we should *not* interpret these pieces as counters used for gaming on a board; use in lotteries, however, cannot be ruled out.

It is evident from this brief overview that the word *tessera* not only had a variety of meanings in antiquity but has also been used as a 'catch all' term for numerous objects in modern scholarship. In many cases the application of the word *tesserae* to these objects in publications and museum collections does not reflect ancient usage. Indeed, since the word encompasses a bewildering array of objects (to say nothing of mosaic *tesserae*), the term can be downright unhelpful in the age of keyword searches in electronic catalogues. While *tesserae* might have occasionally been used to refer to tokens of brass, bronze and lead by ancient authors (specific instances will be discussed throughout the volume), there can be no simple equation of the term with these objects. A more fruitful approach is to define Roman tokens on a more material basis: identifying the common characteristics of these objects and the differences between tokens and other categories of artefact.

Since tokens look like coins, another obvious category of material to consider as a point of comparison to tokens is Roman coinage. Several scholars have interpreted the lead pieces found in Rome and Ostia as emergency small change.[26] How do we separate 'tokens' from imitation coinage, lead coinages or test pieces, pseudo-currencies or coin forgeries? While the tokens discussed in this volume may reference the materiality of coinage in terms of imagery, shape and (for some pieces) metal, it is also very clear that the creators of tokens took pains to ensure these artefacts could not easily be mistaken for official Roman currency. The widespread use of lead was an important factor here, as was the design of these pieces. Although tokens might reference particular Roman coin types, no token directly copies a full coin design – these are no imitations or forgeries. As will become clear throughout this volume, the majority of these pieces carry designs that clearly indicate they are products of individuals and groups outside the imperial government. By contrast, lead

[25] In addition to the 'set' published by Rostovtzeff, 1905a from Kerch, further 'sets' of circular bone gaming pieces with numbers are known from ancient Rudiae (*NSc.* 1886, 240) and Le Marche (Mercando, 1974: 103). A set of seventeen *tesserae lusoriae* was found in a second century BC tomb in Puglia, and another set of sixteen is known from a Hellenistic tomb from Perugia, see Banducci, 2015: 204. For an overview of the materiality of gaming see Dasen, 2019.

[26] Rostovtzeff, 1905b: 108; Dressel, 1922: 182; Thornton, 1980: 338.

test pieces and lead currencies in antiquity are struck from official dies or carry designs that clearly indicate a governmental authority.[27] Lead currencies might possess 'token' characteristics, in that they represent a value higher than their metal content, and may have been intended as a temporary issue, but they are materially different from the objects that form the focus of this volume.

Indeed, the efforts of token makers to distinguish their creations from official currency appear to have worked: tokens in Roman Italy are not found intentionally hoarded or stored alongside coinage. They were clearly seen as a different type of artefact by their users and treated accordingly. In this way tokens differ substantially from the 'pseudo-coinages' known to exist in Italy, particularly in Pompeii – these pieces have been found in purse hoards alongside official Roman currency, for example, and were clearly used as small change.[28] Another noticeable difference between imitations, pseudo-currencies and tokens is that of scale. While the former were produced in large quantities (as befitting a medium intended to be used to fill a lack of specie in the economy), the production of tokens was, by contrast, far more modest. They were simply not produced in sufficient quantity to have functioned as a replacement medium of small change in the bustling economies of imperial Rome and Ostia.

In terms of bronze and brass pieces, a definitive listing of all known token types has not yet been produced. For bronze tokens carrying numerals, Buttrey identified thirty-nine different scenes, although a few more designs are now known than presented there.[29] Bronze and brass tokens not carrying numbers are not as common but still known; in Cohen's nineteenth century catalogue under *Médailles sans le S.C.* we find some eighteen types that have not since been classified as official coinage (in earlier scholarship anonymous *quadrantes* and sometimes also provincial coinage were misidentified as *tesserae*).[30] Some additional bronze types are now known, but the number of these is not large.[31] Given that Cohen published some eight volumes of material, we might see here the relatively small amount of bronze and brass

[27] See de Callataÿ, 2010 for an overview of the different types of lead monetiform artefacts that exist from the classical world, including lead coinages and test strikes in lead.

[28] For example Stannard, 2019; the topic is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

[29] Buttrey, 1973: 60–2; Küter, 2019 includes more types (e.g. the MORA board game type, the Mitreius series).

[30] Cohen: vol. VIII, 271–3.

[31] For example, the so-called shipping *tesserae* published in Stannard, 2015b, another issue connected to Gaius Mitreius (published in the auction catalogue *The Thomas Ollive Mabbott Collection Part 2: Coins of the Roman World* no. 5264), a type showing a satyr (published in Arzone and Marinello, 2019: no. 353), and another a *venator* and bull (published in Martínez Chico, 2019: no. 44).

tokens produced in comparison to official coinage. This is also evident in terms of archaeological finds – bronze or brass tokens are not found frequently in excavation, and where they are found it is in small numbers. This suggests a small production in comparison with official coinage. Campana's preliminary catalogue of *spintriae* gathered together 322 examples, which he estimated was some two thirds of what exists today; the study identified thirty-one obverse dies for the tokens carrying sexual scenes.[32] Similar studies for other bronze or brass tokens remain to be performed. But the data suggests a relatively modest production.

By contrast, there are more than 3,750 known types for lead tokens created in Rome and Ostia. This number is very probably going to increase in future as excavations and the exploration of museum collections continue. As outlined below in this chapter, lead tokens in Rome and Ostia were produced from moulds that might carry several designs – a single casting may thus produce multiple different designs at once. It is thus difficult to know how to interpret the overall number of types known, but in comparison with other settlements in Italy (which have a much smaller number of known locally produced types, often just in the tens), Rome and its harbour stand out as a centre of token production. Although the study of tokens across the Roman world is still ongoing, we might identify already some other settlements with relatively large token production as a point of comparison. One of these is Lugdunum (Lyon): c. 2,700 tokens from the region were catalogued within the collection Récamier, with additional specimens published by Turcan.[33] In Palmyra more than 1,500 banqueting *tesserae* are known, while in Athens the excavations at the Agora have resulted in the publication of 900 identifiable lead tokens; further tokens have been found in excavations since and have also been found elsewhere in the city.[34]

How many lead tokens did this quantity of types actually produce in Rome and Ostia? Many types are only known from a single example. More rarely, we read reports of a particular token design being discovered in quantities of hundreds, as with Figure 5.2, discussed in Chapter 5. As this volume will go on to explore, it is likely that lead tokens were meant to be used in a singular context, and then melted down for reuse; the tokens that survive to be excavated are those that did not undergo this life cycle. Unlike coins, it seems that lead tokens did not circulate to be used again and again. When they do turn up in

[32] Campana, 2009: 56; de Callataÿ, 2021: 185 points out that most of the surviving *spintriae* seem to have been known before 1800.

[33] Dissard, 1905; Turcan, 1987; with discussion in Wilding, 2020: 166.

[34] Lang and Crosby, 1964: 76 (Athens); Raja, 2015: 165 (Palmyra). A detailed study of the tokens of Athens is in progress by Gkikaki, with a dedicated edited volume imminent: Gkikaki, in press.

archaeological excavation, it is predominately in contexts of fill or abandonment. We thus cannot know whether production in the hundreds was a regular occurrence for lead tokens or a rare one, or to what extent the volume of lead token production varied between issuers and issues.

Another category of material to consider in relation to tokens of the imperial period are contorniates. Contorniates are largely a phenomenon of late antiquity (mid-fourth to fifth century AD) and are monetiform objects that have been given their name due to their raised edges (*contorni*). So-called protocontorniates are known from the imperial period until the fourth century AD, created by people hammering the edges of coins or medallions to create a small raised ridge around the edge. It has been suggested these early pieces may have been converted in this way to serve as gaming pieces (the raised border would protect the design).[35] The contorniates proper of late antiquity, however, are made of bronze and carry designs that differ from the official coinage of the period; long-deceased emperors are portrayed and much of the imagery is related to the games and the circus.[36] Often luck-bringing signs are engraved onto contorniates, recalling the imagery of good luck on earlier tokens discussed in this volume.[37] One contorniate shows the consul of AD 433 and 443, Petronius Maximus, seated frontally holding a *mappa* as a sponsor of the games; Valentinian III is shown on the other side.[38] A unique representation for contorniates, the portrayal of game giver and emperor on a single object is very similar to earlier lead tokens that name the *curator* of the games on one side and portray the emperor on the other.[39]

The precise purpose of contorniates remains the subject of debate. Similar to tokens of the earlier imperial period, contorniates have been viewed as objects produced by private individuals, with some specimens perhaps issued in a more official, governmental capacity. Mittag has proposed that contorniates were multi-functional, used as gifts for a variety of recipients in a variety of contexts.[40] Those carrying representations of the emperor may have functioned as gifts during new year's festivities, while the group labelled

[35] Mittag, 1999: 19–25.

[36] Mittag, 1999; Mondello, 2019: 145. Mittag's catalogue collects contorniates that show Alexander the Great, Roma, theatre masks, authors (e.g. Euripides, Homer, Apuleius), emperors (e.g. Augustus, Caligula, Nero, Galba, Vespasian, Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, Caracalla, Philip the Arab and rulers of late antiquity), empresses (Agrippina, Faustina I, Faustina II, Lucilla), Antinous, chariot racers, scenes of *venatio* and scenes from the Circus Maximus. Scenes from myth (e.g. Hercules) are also shown.

[37] Mittag, 1999: 193–4.

[38] Mittag, 1999: 184–6, no. 204.

[39] See the example of Oinogenus, discussed in this chapter in the section 'Authority'.

[40] Mittag, 1999: 182–214.

as the 'Reparatio-Muneris-Serie' by Mittag are probably to be connected with the *munera* of AD 400.[41] Holden further suggested some contorniate gifting must have been connected to games and spectacles.[42] Indeed, one contorniate design appears to show the distribution of these objects to recipients before an event; the image has close similarities to a Palmyrene relief that has traditionally been interpreted as three men playing a board game but may actually represent three individuals distributing banqueting tokens.[43] It thus seems that late antique contorniates played similar roles to some of the imperial tokens explored here, in that they were material objects connected to ephemeral events and may have served as mementoes.

Recent scholarly work on tokens has begun to identify the characteristics of this category of artefact. Tokens represent something or someone and, as mentioned above, they might also exist within a text or a speech, or represent emotions, relationships or intentions, concepts beyond the purely material.[44] In this way they function as a form of information storage. When tokens are studied across time and space, one notices that they frequently have a cryptic nature: the heterogeneity of designs on tokens from the classical world forms a part of this, no doubt intended to prevent fraud in many cases. Tokens also frequently function as credentials: they might identify a particular individual or demonstrate that an individual belonged to a particular group, and/or was entitled to a particular privilege. Various examples of this function are presented in the following pages: the characteristic is also seen elsewhere in the classical world. Clay tokens from Athens carrying the names of military commanders were used to identify specific individuals (or their representatives) and as already mentioned, clay tokens from Roman Palmyra entitled the bearer to access a particular religious banquet.[45] Many tokens are utilised over a short period of time and in one-off exchange: in other words they are characterised by singularity. Tokens may represent a single object, may only be used once, or only amongst a small group of individuals. This singularity can create or reinforce social hierarchies.[46]

[41] Mittag, 1999: 213–14. [42] Holden, 2008: 123; Mondello, 2020b: 299.
[43] Albertson, 2014. An image of the relief can be found at https://collections.mfa.org/objects/151400 and the contorniate design at https://ikmk.smb.museum/object?id=18200483.
[44] Crisà, Gkikaki and Rowan 2019a: 2–3. [45] Kroll and Mitchel, 1980; Raja, 2015.
[46] Crisà, Gkikaki and Rowan 2019a: 6.

Material

This volume is focused on the bronze, brass and lead tokens from Roman Italy, since these survive in greatest number. But we need to acknowledge that tokens might also have been created in clay, bone, stone or wood. A terracotta token now housed in the library at Columbia University carries the image of a facing head of Jupiter Ammon on one side and on the other is inscribed TIBI ME | XXIII (?).[47] Terracotta tokens are known from other regions in classical antiquity (discussed in more detail below), but seem to be rare within Roman imperial Italy. The situation may be coloured by the fact that tokens have traditionally been published alongside other lead objects (e.g. seals), and museum storage practices often mean that terracotta objects are stored alongside other antiquities of the same material, while metal monetiform objects are placed within coins and medals departments.[48] But a search of existing literature does suggest that very few terracotta tokens from Roman imperial Italy have been uncovered.

Bone items are also normally stored and published in different places to lead or bronze objects, and while a bone token is known from Republican Italy (from Fregellae, discussed below), such artefacts also seem rare amongst the surviving material culture from the imperial period. The David Eugene Smith collection, now housed at Columbia University library, provides some intriguing artefacts in this regard. A circular bone piece with a hole in the centre is inscribed 'L. Lucius cons. II' on one side, with the number II incised on the other (flat) side. Further bone pieces are inscribed with references to legions on one side and a corresponding number on the other (LEG III and III, LEG VI and VI, LEG VIII and VIII, LEG XL and XL). Another shows a representation of the Circus Maximus on one side with the number III incised on the other; a piece that recalls the bone artefact showing the Colosseum reproduced here as Figure 2.14.[49] The functions of such pieces remain a mystery; they might

[47] Columbia University Library, David Eugene Smith Professional Papers, 1860–1944, Box D6, inv. no. 214. The accompanying ticket says 'Tessera found at Rome'. My deepest thanks to Evan Jewell for bringing this specimen and other Roman objects in this collection to my attention, and for supplying me with photographs and data.

[48] On lead tokens published as one of many lead items see, by way of example, Ficoroni, 1740; Turcan, 1987.

[49] Columbia University Library, David Eugene Smith Professional Papers, 1860–1944, Box D6, inv. nos. 260–4, 268, 271, 275. The piece showing the Circus Maximus (no. 261) is accompanied by a ticket that records 'Tessera found in the via Torrina, near the American Church, Rome'. See Murray, 2012: 70 for a photograph of all the *tesserae* in the collection.

have served similar purposes to the tokens that form the focus of this volume, but there are simply not enough examples known for a detailed discussion. After all, bone pieces would each need to be individually carved, a process that would have taken considerable time and skill. It is thus logical to conclude that the state of the evidence reflects the reality: these pieces were likely rarer in antiquity than, for example, the lead pieces presented below, which could be produced cheaply in large numbers.

A passage of Cassius Dio discussing the opening of the Colosseum suggests tokens might be made of wood. Dio describes wooden balls, each inscribed with a word referring to a different object, being thrown amongst the crowd by Titus – those who managed to obtain a ball could later exchange it for the article inscribed upon it.[50] This author knows of no surviving wooden tokens from the Roman world, however, even from regions where the natural climate and environment preserves this type of material. Tokens of stone are known from Aquileia.[51]

Although tokens existed in a variety of materials in the Roman world, the vast majority surviving from Italy are made of bronze, orichalcum (brass) or lead. To date, most scholarship on these pieces has focused either on those issued in bronze/orichalcum, or on those of lead.[52] But this division of material obscures the many similarities these tokens possess. Similar to the so-called *spintriae*, lead tokens exist that carry sexual imagery on one side and a number on the other, for example.[53] Further iconographic similarities are explored throughout this volume. Both lead and bronze tokens also carry similar legends (e.g. variations on *feliciter*).[54] The similarities go beyond imagery: a close study of tokens related to Roman youth organisations reveal that these groups issued tokens in differing materials – they are thus best studied together.

When Buttrey published his study of *spintriae* he noted that the pieces carrying sexual imagery and those bearing portraits of the Julio-Claudian imperial family were tightly die connected. The dies used to strike the reverses were used both for tokens carrying the imperial portraits and the tokens with sexual imagery. Buttrey interpreted this as evidence that the two

[50] Dio 66.25.5. Discussion in Virlouvet, 1995: 321.

[51] Scholz, 1894: 14; Mainardis, 2002: 572 (= *CIL* V, 8211).

[52] Sample of studies focused on (a subset) of bronze/brass tokens: de Belfort, 1892; Buttrey, 1973; Jacobelli, 1997; Martini, 1997; Campana, 2009; Küter, 2019. Focused only on lead: Rostovtzeff, 1897; Rostovtzeff, 1905b; Thornton, 1980; Spagnoli, 2017a.

[53] *TURS* 912 (II within wreath on side b), 913 (AI on side b, which recalls the series of *aes* tokens that carry a sexual scene on the obverse and the letter A before a number on the reverse, Simonetta and Riva, 1981: Groups A and B).

[54] Rowan, 2020b: 99.

series were produced at the same time and perhaps intended to be used together; he suggested the overall effect was a material manifestation of gossip surrounding the imperial family after Tiberius' retreat to Capri.[55] Since Buttrey's work, several more die links have been found, although an exhaustive study of the group is still needed. The reverse dies, carrying numbers or the legend AVG (referring to the emperor) within a wreath, were also used to create brass tokens that bear the image of two boys or men playing a board game on the obverse.[56] The dies were also used to create a series struck for a *magister iuventutis* named Gaius Mitreius.[57] Otherwise unknown, this magistrate produced a series of tokens carrying a Julio-Claudian period portrait on one side (which I suggest is Mitreius himself) and numbers within a wreath on the other (Figure 1.4).[58] He is also the authority behind another series that carried the same obverse with a reverse showing what is likely a basilica, with different numbers incised into the exergue (Figure 1.5).

Both sets of Mitreius' tokens carry numbers, but in different ways; one might see here two series. For one series an existing set of dies within the workshop were used (the numbers within wreath), while for the other series a different reverse design was desired, the basilica. Since this necessitated the creation of a new reverse die, the series was produced from one die

Figure 1.4 AE token, 19 mm, 3.61 g, 6 h, 27 BC – AD 57. Bare male head right, cornucopia (?) below, C. MITREIVS L. F. MAG. IVVENT around (NT ligate). Dotted border (same die as Figure 1.5) / I within dotted border within wreath.

[55] Buttrey, 1973: 56–8.

[56] Martínez Chico, 2018: 546; Rowan, 2020b: 107–8. The obverse type is Cohen: vol. VIII, 266 no. 6.

[57] Rowan, 2020b: 108.

[58] Rowan, 2020b: 101–5. Since the publication of that article a further specimen has come onto the market, with VI inscribed below the basilica in the exergue (CNG Electronic Auction 490, 21 April 2021, lot 245). Cristian Mondello has also kindly alerted me to a further token of this series with X within a wreath on the other side, now in Bologna.

Figure 1.5 AE token, 20 mm, 3.58 g, 6 h. Bare male head right, cornucopia (?) below, C. MITREIVS L. F. MAG. IVVENT around (NT ligate). Dotted border (same die as Figure 1.4) / A two-storey building with five columns on each floor (basilica?) and a curved roof. On the building, between each floor, L. SEXTILI· S.P. In the exergue, X incised. Rowan, 2020b: no. 10.

and then engraved with numbers after production – for what seems to have been an exceptionally small volume (less than c. ten specimens are known to the author), this was far cheaper and easier than producing a die for each number required.

Lead tokens also carry the names of magistrates associated with Roman youth organisations, some also carrying what is likely a portrait of the magistrate accompanied by a legend naming him. *TURS* 834, for example, carries a male portrait on one side accompanied by the legend P PETR SABI with the legend MAG | VIIII | IVV on the other – the token refers to a P. Petronius Sabinus, *magister iuvenum*, and carries the number nine.[59] One of the stone tokens from Aquileia (in 'giallo antico') also references a magistrate of the youth; one side is inscribed M | IVVEN | MAG. VI | I.[60] Tokens of differing materials were thus used by youth groups in Roman Italy; the example demonstrates the gains to be had by studying tokens of differing materials alongside each other.[61] Further parallels in the iconographic themes between tokens of differing materials are presented throughout this volume.

Manufacture

The reverse die connections between the Julio-Claudian bronze and brass tokens also suggest something about the method of production. These

[59] *TURS* Pl. V, 70 for an image, discussion in Rowan, 2020b: 104.
[60] *CIL* V, 8211; Mainardis, 2002: 572.
[61] A fact also acknowledged by Rostovtzeff, 1905b: 59–60.

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particular tokens must have been produced in the same workshop, which reused dies for different series. Given that the die connections are for the reverse (the side carrying numbers or the legend AVG), one might posit that for each customer requesting tokens, the workshop may have created a new obverse design, but then simply reused the numerical reverse dies. This would have been a cost and time saving measure in a production process that likely only ever resulted in a relatively small number of pieces (since larger productions would have required multiple reverse dies). Indeed, if differing numbers were integral to the use of these pieces, as seems to be the case, then the reuse of reverse dies was both economical and suited to the final function of these pieces. That a workshop reused reverse dies for different customers over time might also explain the fact that numbered brass and bronze tokens are known showing both the living and the deified Augustus.[62]

The high quality of these early imperial orichalcum tokens suggests that the workshop may have been in the Roman mint. At the very least the workshop appears to have employed highly skilled individuals. Martini suggested these tokens were an 'official' mint product, noting that orichalcum was used for the production of official small change in this period.[63] Küter, observing the similar iconographic emphasis of the imperial portrait tokens and the official coinage issue of AD 23 (which focused on the imperial dynasty under Tiberius), wondered whether the mint created these tokens as gaming pieces to be given away as gifts.[64] Without further information it is difficult to be definitive, but the presence of Mitreius on the tokens of this workshop suggests that (at least some of) these pieces were unlikely to be 'official' products. Figure 1.1 carries the legend FEL beneath the laureate head of Augustus; it is more likely that the good wishes (*feliciter*) of this token issue are directed towards the emperor, rather than from the emperor to the populace. This further suggests an authority other than the ruler.[65] Indeed, perhaps attempting to categorise these objects as official or not is not the best approach; like many monuments referencing the ruling authority (e.g. triumphal arches), these artefacts may have honoured the imperial family and contributed to their public image without having been 'officially' authored by the ruling power.[66]

Some of the lead tokens of Rome and Ostia also possess a high quality of design, and were obviously created by skilled artisans. Other lead tokens,

[62] Buttrey, 1973: cat. nos. 1–3 (Augustus laureate or bare headed), 4–6 (Augustus with radiate crown); see Rowan, 2020b: 109.

[63] Martini, 1999: 13. [64] Küter, 2019: 91–2. [65] Burnett, 2016: 77.

[66] On this phenomenon see most recently Russell and Hellström, 2020b.

however, carry imagery that is little more than stick figures, or, in the case of animals, might only be described as a quadruped.[67] The large variety in the quality of imagery on lead tokens must reflect the fact that manufacture of these objects was dispersed across the region, an observation also supported by the scattered finds of token manufacturing materials, discussed further below. Different workshops, and indeed different individuals and groups, must have contributed to the creation of token moulds. The diversity in manufacturing locations has resulted in a category of artefact that has far greater diversity in terms of image quality than other portable objects from Rome whose production was based in workshops of one kind or another (e.g. coins, lamps). The works of ancient authors describing, for example, portraits of the emperor that look nothing like their subjects, hints at the fact that this variety in image quality was characteristic of daily life in the Roman world.[68]

Tokens continued to be produced into late antiquity. In addition to the contorniates discussed above, other token objects of different materials and styles were produced, for different groups and contexts.[69] After the early Julio-Claudian period, imperial portraiture on tokens of bronze or orichalcum disappears, and the use of numbers becomes much less frequent. Information remains scarce, but one imagines these pieces continued to be produced in one or more workshops, which may or may not have been attached to the mint. One also imagines that the shift away from imperial representations and numbers may reflect the development of tokens as a medium, or their use in widening or changing contexts. We cannot know. But tokens do move away from their early Julio-Claudian precedents, and discussions of their purpose need to consider the broader picture: numbers, sexual imagery and imperial portraiture are only found on a portion of a much wider corpus.

Tokens in lead also appear to carry more Julio-Claudian imperial portraits than later emperors.[70] Lead tokens also carry numbers, although as with their bronze and orichalcum counterparts, many do not. Perhaps the

[67] For example, Rostovtzeff and Prou, 1900: no. 552 and 554, with images online at https://coins.warwick.ac.uk/token-specimens/id/bnf.rost.prou.552 and https://coins.warwick.ac.uk/token-specimens/id/bnf.rost.prou.584.

[68] For example, Arrian, *Periplus Ponti Euxini* 1.2–3 (statue of Hadrian); Fronto, *Ep.ad M. Caes.* 4.12.4 (portraits of Marcus Aurelius), with discussion in Rowan, 2020a: 247.

[69] Woytek, 2020a: 134 dates a bronze token referencing the Roman mint to the third or fourth centuries AD. The *vota publica* tokens of late antiquity are discussed in Alföldi, 1937; a new and revised catalogue is currently being prepared by Laurent Bricault and Cristian Mondello: see Bricault and Mondello, in press. Further publications of late antique token material can be found in Kulikowski, 2017; Mondello, 2020b; Mondello, 2021.

[70] Rowan, in press a.

closest parallel to the numbers found on the brass tokens discussed above are a lead series, all now housed in the Vatican Museums. This series all share the same design on one side – Concordia seated right holding a cornucopia and patera, flanked by two smaller figures identified as Cupids. On the other side are the legends CFP | I, CFP | II, CFP | VIIII, CFP | X, CFP | XI, or CFP | XII.[71] The meaning of CFP is unknown: C might refer to Concordia, or to a proper name (Gaius), but ultimately the abbreviation remains a mystery. Numbers, then, were clearly necessary for some functions of tokens, but their precise role cannot be known given current evidence. They might have been deployed on token series that had to fulfil multiple or differing roles, or which had to represent different objects or values, but this is speculative.

Some lead tokens from Rome and Ostia appear to have been struck or impressed with a die or stamp carrying a negative design. The vast majority, however, were cast from moulds.[72] The method of manufacture for lead tokens means it is not appropriate to use the standard numismatic terminology 'obverse' and 'reverse', since these terms connect to the use of dies and an anvil for production ('obverse' refers to the side of the coin produced by an obverse die, 'reverse' to the side produced by the reverse die). As an alternative, this volume uses the terms 'side a' and 'side b' to describe the designs on each side of a cast token.

Several of the moulds used to cast tokens survive to the present day; they are largely made of palombino marble (a material that allows finely detailed carving) and have been found throughout Rome and Ostia (Figure 1.6).[73] As mentioned above, the dispersed nature of the finds demonstrate that tokens were not artefacts produced in a single government workshop, but cast in multiple locations by different groups of people. The finds of casting waste from these moulds in different spots in Ostia further supports this idea.[74] The use of lead for many tokens is also likely the result of this dispersed manufacture – lead has a relatively low melting point (327.5 degrees Celsius), meaning that melting the required material, was, relatively speaking, much easier than melting

[71] *TURS* 1734–9, Pl. VI no. 64; Rowan, 2020b.

[72] For examples (not exhaustive) of struck issues see *TURS* 927 (Pl. X no. 29), 1542 (Pl. XI no. 54), 1701 (Pl. VIII no. 67; Rowan, 2020b: no. 69), 3170 (Rostovtzeff and Prou, 1900: no. 648).

[73] Rowan, 2019 provides an overview of known findspots.

[74] For example, lead casting waste from these moulds has been uncovered during the excavations of the Baths of the Swimmer from a room identified as a *popina* or wine bar (Carandini and Panella, 1977: 271; Rowan, 2019: 100–1).

Figure 1.6 Palombino marble mould half, 108 × 76 × 29 mm, 389.2 g. The mould would have cast seven circular tokens decorated with the image of Fortuna standing left.

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copper (1085 degrees) or silver (961.8 degrees). Lead was also much cheaper to obtain than other metals.[75]

Using marble moulds to manufacture lead tokens appears to be characteristic of the imperial capital and its port.[76] The overwhelming majority of token moulds have been found there, although there are scattered token moulds elsewhere in Italy. A token mould half now in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Firenze was reportedly found in Corneto (Tarquinia); two lead tokens (of different designs) were also reportedly found in the region.[77] A further token mould half was reported in Telesia, although Rostotovtzeff had doubts as to its authenticity.[78] Nineteenth century excavations in Como in Northern Italy also uncovered what was interpreted at the time as a soapstone mould half for round *tesserae* bearing the numbers IV, V, VII, VIII, VIIII, IX, X, XII and XIII; no associated tokens are known.[79] More mould halves might come to light as this material becomes better recognised. Most of these moulds have only been found as a single half, missing its counterpart, although some have been found fully intact.[80]

The moulds that survive to the present day reveal that at least one half was carved with channels for the lead to pour through, branching off into individual depressions into which the design of the token was carved. Figure 1.6 provides an example, with holes in the top right and lower left corners still containing the remains of the nails that would have tightly fastened the mould half to its partner. The use of nails (possibly consolidated with the use of wire wrapped around the mould once joined together) would ensure that the mould halves stayed together as the metal was poured; the use of fixed nail points would also ensure that each mould half was correctly aligned.[81]

[75] Boulakia, 1972: 139, 143.

[76] Other tokens from the Roman world were cast, but moulds similar to those presented here have not been found – the material and method was thus likely different. Many of the clay tokens from Palmyra, for example, were produced from moulds, but these moulds do not seem to have been found in the city or are not well published (Ingholt, Seyrig et al., 1955: iv; Raja, 2016: 346. Milne, 1945: 134–5 mentions that token moulds were found in Palmyra and that one entered the Ashmolean Museum collection, but the mould he mentions could not be located by the author).

[77] On the mould (inv. no. 79209), which produced tokens showing Mars and Hercules, see Mondello, 2020a. On the two tokens, both of the same design (L·AP / seated figure with patera) see *CIL* XI, 6722 no. 19; Rostovtzeff, 1903c: 217 no. 15.

[78] *TURS* 3599.

[79] Nogara, 1917. Thanks are due to Susann Lusnia for bringing this article to my attention.

[80] For example, Vatican Museums inv. nos. 64247.2.1–2, reproduced in Rowan, 2019: 96. Another mould with both halves is now housed in Ostia (inv. nos. 5920 a–b); see Spagnoli, 2001; Rowan, 2019: no. 51.

[81] Pardini et al., 2016: 652; Rowan, 2019: 95–6.

The top left corner of Figure 1.6 carries two finely etched concentric circles; the inner circle is c. 14 mm, the same size as the finished token cavities. The outer circle may be an error, or it may reveal the method by which the tokens were 'mapped out' on the mould before carving – this particular sketch was never finalised. Many moulds, including Figure 1.6, contain a deep central hole at the centre of each token design. These may have been used to plot the designs and ensure that each side of the mould aligned correctly (a similar process has been suggested for moulds that created coin flans). Alternatively, this deep impression may have been created by the tool used to carve each image.[82] The result is that lead tokens often carry a central protuberance (e.g. see Figure 1.8, which bears a central 'dot' in the centre of the token on the side carrying the text); although this is frequently included as an intentional part of the design in token catalogues we should see these marks as the result of the manufacturing process. A similar phenomenon can be seen on official coinage, where sometimes a central 'dot' can be seen on reverses where the design doesn't cover the centre of the coin (often on coins that contain only text).[83]

The manufacturing process required the intended design to be engraved into the mould as a mirror image. This was not always successful, resulting in several retrograde ('back to front') legends or letters amongst the corpus from Roman Italy.[84] For example Figure 2.3 carries a legend running around the outer edge of the token; the letters are neatly and correctly carved, with the exception of the 'S'. Despite the mechanisms designed to help align the mould halves, it is clear that not all token castings were successful – numerous specimens have one or both sides 'off-cast' – that is, off centre (see, for example, Figure 3.14, which is cast slightly off centre on both sides).[85] Indeed, the true number of rough castings may be hidden by the fact that most lead tokens today survive in major European museum collections; curators likely selected only the 'best' specimens to include.[86]

[82] Rostovtzeff, 1905b: 6; Kroll, unpublished: no. LT57; Rowan, 2019: 96–7. See Pilon, 2016: 56 for moulds used for flan casting, which display similar deep central cavities (with thanks to Bernhard Woytek for bringing this last to my attention).

[83] For example, some specimens of *RIC* II Trajan 149 (= Woytek, 2010: no. 225), for example the specimen in Paris https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b104487671.

[84] Examples of tokens that carry retrograde legends are too numerous to list here but include *TURS* 1313, 1124, 2431, 3081, 3329, 3357.

[85] Other representative examples are *BMCRLT* nos. 638, 2080–1.

[86] See, for example, the collection of tokens published from archaeological excavation in Spagnoli, 2017b. The collection currently housed at the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Palestrina, which has not been subjected to any 'selection' but was seized as the proceeds of illegal excavation activity, also contains far more 'rough' castings than other major museum collections.

The number of tokens moulds that survive is nowhere near the number of surviving token types, but nonetheless they provide a critical insight into lead token series. Although Rostovtzeff organised his catalogue of lead tokens into 'themes' (imperial portraits, types associated with spectacles, types associated with the *iuvenes*, *collegia*, gods, etc.), the surviving lead token moulds suggest that more than one design (indeed, more than one shape) might be cast from a single mould.[87] While some token moulds carry just one design (e.g. Figures 1.6–1.7), others produced tokens in a variety of sizes and shapes, and with varying designs. The complete mould now in the Vatican Museums, for example, would have originally produced eleven circular tokens with differing diameters, ranging from 9 to 12 mm. One half of the mould had cavities all decorated with the same image: standing Fortuna. Thus each token made from this mould would have carried the image of this goddess on one side. The other mould half carried two differing designs. Three cavities at the top of the mould (which were of larger diameter) were engraved with two figures standing facing each other, perhaps Mars and Venus. The remaining eight cavities were engraved with the image of an ant seen from above. A mould half found at 'Monte della Giustizia' (modern day Termini station in Rome) in the nineteenth century also demonstrates the variety that might exist in a single token series. The mould half carried designs for three circular tokens showing a standing ram and four triangular tokens carrying the letters PR.[88] Although the majority of lead tokens in Roman Italy are circular, other shapes also existed: quadrangles, triangles, diamonds and hexagons. Tokens in the shape of a *tabula ansata* or double-headed axe (*bipennis*) are also known.[89]

Because each token cavity was hand engraved, there is also the possibility for small differences to exist even between tokens carrying the same design cast from the same mould – the engraver may forget a small detail on one cavity, or add a small change or flourish on another. The Saturnalia tokens, discussed in Chapter 4, may form one such example of this, although small differences in design are not evident on surviving token moulds – the examples we have show a remarkable uniformity in design between each individual token cavity. Nonetheless there are tokens that are similar in design except for one small detail, and one is left to wonder whether they were cast from a mould that had a slight difference in one or more of the token cavities. The type *TURS* 2581, for example, carries the head of Janus

[87] Rowan, 2019 for an overview of moulds (although only those with known findspots).
[88] Ruggiero, 1878: no. 4; Rowan, 2019: no. 9, with further discussion on p. 98.
[89] *TURS* 1996; Giglioli, 1913.

on one side and the legend CCM on the other; one is tempted to see a variant in which the legend reads MCC as an error in engraving, although without a surviving mould it is impossible to know for certain.[90] A mould now in Milan also demonstrates that parts of a mould may be re-carved: on this piece one circular token cavity has a deeper hexagonal token cavity carved within it. While the other token cavities on the mould are decorated with a standing figure, the re-carved cavity is engraved with a phallus. Overbeck suggested the engraver was correcting an error here, although there is nothing to dismiss the suggestion that the mould might have been re-carved at a later stage to produce tokens of a different design.[91]

The ideal method to study lead tokens in Rome and Ostia would be to study them as issues cast by the same mould, but so few moulds survive that this task remains impossible. Indeed, even connecting individual tokens to the moulds that survive remains extremely difficult. Some token moulds, such as the two mould halves that once belonged to Wilhelm Fröhner and are now housed in the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), carry designs that have been found on no lead token to date. One mould half would have created triangular tokens with the legend R|VB, the other circular tokens of differing diameters and designs (blank, dolphin, a standing figure with the legend QA PIN ITIRO around).[92] No triangular tokens carrying the legend R|VB or circular tokens with a legend QA PIN ITIRO are currently known; the meaning of these legends remain a mystery. Similarly, the mould half found on the Esquiline Hill in Rome, intended to make tokens carrying the legend ANTONI (with ligate lettering) has no corresponding tokens.[93] Moreover, several mould halves carry the same designs (e.g. standing Fortuna, the Three Graces); this makes it difficult to connect tokens with relatively common imagery to particular moulds.[94] Although differing diameters may help to distinguish between the products of different moulds, the fact the majority of moulds do not survive means that assigning any commonly used imagery, like the Three Graces, to a particular mould half remains fraught.

That said, in some rare instances it is possible to connect tokens carrying a particularly unusual image or unique legend to a particular mould.

[90] Rowan, 2020b: 97 and no. 70. [91] Overbeck, 2001: 66 no. 626.

[92] BnF Froehner IV.127 = *CIL* XV.2 p. 996, recorded as found in Rome in 1883; BnF Froehner V.201.

[93] Cesano, 1904a: 209 no. 2.

[94] A mould now in the Museo Nazionale in Rome would have produced seven circular tokens of 17 mm carrying the image of the Three Graces (Cesano, 1904b: no. 1). A mould half now housed in the Casa Buonarroti in Florence was also designed to cast seven circular tokens carrying the image of the Three Graces, but the diameters of these tokens range between 14 and 15 mm (Mondello, 2020a).

Figure 1.7 Palombino mould half, 93 × 108 × 28 mm, 561 g. The mould would have created 5 circular tokens of c. 25 mm in diameter. *TURS* 3578 (Pl. XII, 6).

Figure 1.8 Pb token, 24 mm, 12 h, 5.04 g. M VALERI | M F | ETRVSC / Togate figure standing left holding a purse (?) in outstretched right hand. *TURS* 1327.

Figures 1.7 and 1.8 are one such example. The identification of token and mould was possible due to the unusual nature of the design: this is the only currently known token representation of a togate male figure holding what

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Figure 1.9 Pb token, 15 × 14 mm, 12 h, 4.61 g. Victory standing right / Wreath. *TURS* 1913.

appears to be a purse. The other mould half does not survive, one presumes this was the half that contained the channels for the lead to flow through to the cavities, since these do not exist on the piece we possess. That tokens survive and not their moulds, or vice versa, is a reflection of the partial survival of material from antiquity, particularly in the case of cheaply manufactured everyday goods. But the low survival rates may also reflect the use context of these tokens. As will be explored throughout this volume, lead tokens appear to have been manufactured for use in a particular moment in time, for a specific event or benefaction. One presumes that the lead tokens would normally have been melted down after use; those that survive seem to have escaped their normal life course through accidental loss or curation. It is also perhaps no accident that normally only a single mould half is found: moulds may have been reused, or disposed of in such a way to prevent forgery.

One can also identify tokens from the same mould when there are cracks or errors. Two quadrangular tokens now in Harvard Art Museums, decorated with Victory on one side and a wreath on the other, both have an extra casting ridge running through the centre of the token in precisely the same place on the wreath side; they were clearly cast from the same mould cavity (Figure 1.9).[95] Other tokens of the same design do not carry this fault and were perhaps cast from elsewhere in the mould.[96] This type of error, however, is surprisingly rare on surviving tokens.

[95] Harvard Art Museums 2008.116.31–2.
[96] Harvard Art Museums 2008.116.33; Rostovtzeff and Prou, 1900: nos. 227–9.

Figure 1.10 AE token, 18 mm, 6 h, 3.63 g. *Vexillum*, dotted border, two rectangular countermarks reading NO / Victory advancing right holding wreath in outstretched right hand and palm branch in left; dotted border. Cohen vol. VIII, 271 no. 47.

Countermarking

Tokens in Roman Italy were occasionally countermarked, although there are few studies of this phenomenon.[97] In terms of tokens in bronze and orichalcum, only two types appear to have been countermarked. The first belongs to a series characterised by the common use of a *vexillum*; this type is variously paired with Victory, Minerva or Mars.[98] On many of the tokens with Victory on the reverse, and, remarkably, seemingly *only* on these tokens, a rectangular countermark with the legend ON (or NO) appears twice, struck on either side of the standard (Figure 1.10). Mowat suggested the legend be read as NO and proposed that the countermark may be an abbreviation of *no(vo)* or *no(vata),* indicating that the token had been 'renewed' for a further use. If so, then the process must have occurred twice or required two countermarks, since the NO stamp is never found in the singular. Mowat further suggested an alternative reading might be *no(tata)*, recording that the token had undergone some sort of control or validation (*nota*).[99]

That the countermarking only occurs on tokens carrying the Victory type may provide clues to the method of manufacture. It may be that, similar to the model proposed above for the brass/bronze tokens with numbers, these tokens are the creation of a single workshop that reused one die (in this case the *vexillum*) as a cost saving measure to create a series of different tokens for different customers over time. For whatever reason, the issue of the '*vexillum* / Victory' tokens underwent countermarking. Although the double countermark is frequently found on tokens of this type, it is not present on all known specimens. This suggests that the

[97] Mowat, 1898. [98] Cohen: vol. VIII, 271–2 nos. 46–9. [99] Mowat, 1898: 24.

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countermarking took place after the tokens had been issued, perhaps to renew those 'collected' for use in a new context, or to indicate the token had been validated.[100] It may be that the tokens with Victory indicated a type of object or experience that was different to the tokens carrying Minerva or Mars (hence requiring countermarking in a way the other tokens did not).

The other known instance of countermarking on bronze tokens is found on a series characterised by the use of different letters as types (D, T, ligate TR, as well as a type showing a galley).[101] On some specimens of the type 'ligate TR / D', a rectangular countermark containing a ligate THR appears above the ligate TR.[102] Again the countermark only appears on a single subset of the series (the 'ligate TR / D' combination), but it is not found on *all* specimens of this type.[103] The context of the countermark then is likely to be similar, if not the same, as the '*vexillum* / Victory' type discussed above.

Countermarks on lead tokens from Rome and Ostia are similarly only found on a very small number of types. The countermarks might take the form of legends or images.[104] As with bronze tokens, on the rare occasions when countermarks occur they are not found on all the tokens of a series, although in several instances there is only one (countermarked) specimen of a type known.[105] For these examples, we cannot know if the entire series was originally countermarked or not. The textual countermarks may refer to names or numbers, while the figurative countermarks draw from an array of everyday imagery (e.g. Amor and Psyche, dolphin, elephant, crescent). Once again the impression is of a practice applied after the token series had been manufactured and distributed, perhaps to repurpose the token for a secondary context, or to indicate the token had been used. Overall, token countermarking remains relatively rare in comparison to other regions, particularly Roman Athens. In Athens tokens have been found together in assemblages with countermarks, and the same countermark has been found on tokens of different designs, which Crosby believed

[100] Rowan, 2020b: no. 11, for example, is not countermarked.

[101] Cohen: vol. VIII, 272–3 nos. 56–7, 60. Bronze tokens combining a ligate VL with various letters (e.g. Cohen: vol. VIII, 273 nos. 61–2) may be connected to this series, or may form a separate series. The bronze tokens with letters are currently the subject of a study by Bernhard Woytek.

[102] BnF inv. 1933,133; BM 1867,0101.2360; Berlin Münzkabinett 18203172 and Rowan, 2020b: no. 18 also appear to carry the countermark as well, but it is a fainter impression. See also Mowat, 1898: 24–5.

[103] For example, BnF inv. nos. 17074–5 are without the countermark.

[104] Rostovtzeff, 1903b: 423 provides a list of countermarks and graffiti found on tokens included in *TURS*.

[105] For example, *TURS* 450, 567, 775, 1842, 2414 are only known through a single specimen, which is countermarked.

was an indication they had been issued by the same authority.[106] No such similar assemblage, or use of a single countermark across multiple token types, has been found in Rome or Ostia. One imagines that when countermarking occurred, it was an unusual event, the precise circumstances of which remain elusive to us.

Authority

We are reliant on the tokens themselves to reveal who was responsible for their issue. Sometimes tokens carry detailed information in this regard, while other examples bear only an image or letter on each side, which makes it impossible for us to know the authority. Yet this is in itself revealing: it is evident that tokens were issued to small groups within particular contexts – unlike coinage or other media (e.g. triumphal arches), tokens did *not need to communicate their authority to a wide audience*. Rather, one imagines that tokens were given to people who already knew the issuer and the particular context in which the token was to be used. In such contexts, and given the dispersed nature of manufacture, intricate and detailed legends seem to have given way to pure imagery (which must have been chosen to enhance a particular occasion or communicate a particular identity), or abbreviations intended to spark recognition in the mind of a user who already knew the name of the issuer. There appears to be a widespread use of abbreviations, for example, which referred to particular *tria nomina*. Canting types, punning imagery referring to a particular Roman *gens*, also occur and are explored in Chapter 3.

Ancient texts reveal that the emperor produced tokens – for example, the wooden balls created on behalf of Titus mentioned by Cassius Dio. Bronze and lead tokens also carry portraits of the emperor, although we cannot presume that the emperor was the authority in every case. As explored in Chapter 2, it is evident that the imperial image might be chosen to decorate the tokens of a particular magistrate. An example is the token issue of one Oinogenus, *curator*, which carried the portrait of Tiberius on one side.[107] Given the varying quality of tokens carrying the imperial image without reference to another authority, we must also entertain the idea that the imperial image may have been chosen for the decoration of tokens

[106] Lang and Crosby, 1964: 83, 116; Gkikaki, 2019.
[107] *TURS* 514b; Franke, 1984; Harris, 2000.

issued by other sectors of Roman society, who may not have deemed it necessary to name themselves on their issues.

Tokens carrying reference to the imperial family, however, are a minority within the broader array of tokens from Roman Italy. The tokens themselves suggest they were issued by a wide variety of different groups and individuals, including women. As mentioned above, tokens can carry the names of magistrates associated with Roman youth groups, as well as *curatores*, generally thought to be curators of Roman games and spectacles.[108] Tokens also carry the names of male and female Roman individuals, as well as *collegia* and other organisations or establishments, for example individual bathhouses. The range of groups issuing tokens is also reflected in the distributed nature of token finds. The full variety of token issuers will be explored in more detail throughout this volume; the material forms an important glimpse into the experiences of multiple groups in Roman Italy, particularly in Rome and Ostia. It is worth drawing attention to the fact that such variety in terms of authority is not universally found elsewhere in the Roman Empire. In Roman Egypt, for example, tokens were anepigraphic or carried the name of particular settlements (e.g. Oxyrhynchus, Memphis).[109] In Palmyra, tokens seem to have largely been the preserve of priests in the city.[110] In Gaul (with the exception of Lugdunum) tokens carried the names of settlements or tribes.[111] Who issued tokens, then, was just as localised as the approach to manufacturing these items.

Date

Rostovtzeff believed that the Romans adopted tokens in the late Republic after having seen the medium in practice at Athens.[112] Tokens of varying sorts, however, existed in Italy from an early period; inspiration need not have come from Athens. In the city of Rhegion spherical terracotta tokens have been found carrying names and demes in Ionic or Chalcidean-Ionic script; they are believed to be connected to the functioning of the democracy in the city and are dated to the fifth century BC; similar spherical objects have been found in Sicily and are thought to have been used in sortition processes (e.g. distribution of land).[113] These pieces form an

[108] Rowan, in press b on the tokens issued in connection with imperial games by *curatores*.
[109] Milne, 1930; Milne, 1971; Wilding, 2020. [110] Raja, 2015: 178.
[111] Weiller, 2000; Wilding, 2020. [112] Rostovtzeff, 1900: 103; Rostovtzeff, 1905b: 27.
[113] *I.Rhegion* 26A–D. The pieces are now on display in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Reggio Calabria. For a good overview of the material in Sicily see Walthall and Souza, 2021.

interesting contrast to the far better known *symbola* associated with classical Athenian democracy. It may be that several Greek democracies made use of tokens, but the form tokens took in each city was unique.[114]

Monetiform objects carrying civic numismatic types made in lead and clay are also known in Magna Graecia.[115] The possible purpose of these artefacts remains unknown. Clive Stannard's work on the 'Italo-Baetican' assemblage demonstrates the use of lead tokens among business communities in central Italy in the late second and first centuries BC.[116] The name was given to this assemblage because of the similarities in design between the lead pieces from central Italy and those from Baetica in Spain; it is believed these pieces were used by Italians involved in mining or agriculture in Roman Hispania.

Fregellae, destroyed by the Romans in 125 BC, has also furnished tokens that date to the second century BC. During excavations of the site in 1987 a circular bone token was found, inscribed on one side with the word BALN (or BALIN, the LN is ligate) and on the other with the name L. Atin(ius) Mem(mianus) (L·ATIN | MEM, with IN ligate).[117] On the basis of palaeography and archaeological context the token has been dated to c. 150–125 BC. Five cast lead tokens were later found in the bathhouse at Fregellae, all decorated with the same design: the head of Mercury facing right with three pellets before him on one side, and on the other side a dolphin swimming right.[118] The tokens were found together in a small drain near the south entrance of the baths along with other finds that suggest the context was one of haphazard accumulation and later spoliation. The tokens are thought to date to around the middle of the second century BC. The use of Mercury and pellets recalls Roman Republican coinage from this period: the head of Mercury appeared on Roman bronze coinage in the third century BC, frequently with a prow design on the reverse. The design appeared on the *sextans* denomination (indicated by two pellets on the coin) and in the late third century on the *quadrans* (indicated by three pellets).[119] The three pellets on the lead tokens may thus have been intended to represent a value (perhaps the price of entry to the baths). But in spite of some similarities

[114] See also the use of lead strips at Camarina and differing shapes of clay tokens found at Mantinea (Robinson, 2002). The scholarship on tokens and democracy in classical Athens is large, but see by way of example, Lang, 1959; Lang and Crosby, 1964; Bubelis, 2011; Kroll, 2015. A new monograph exploring tokens in Athens is forthcoming by Mairi Gkikaki.

[115] Mannino, 1993; Siciliano, 1993; Siciliano, Natali and Boffi 1995.

[116] Stannard, 1995; Stannard, 2015a; Stannard et al., 2017; Stannard, Sinner and Ferrante 2019; Stannard, 2020.

[117] Sironen, 1990. [118] Pedroni, 1997. [119] For example, *RRC* 97/5c.

with Roman bronze coinage, the use of lead here, and the dolphin reverse, served to clearly distinguish these tokens from official money.

It is thus evident that Italy had a tradition of using tokens and Rome need not necessarily have taken inspiration only from Athens. But there is currently no archaeological evidence for the use of tokens in the city of Rome before the late Republic. Remarkably, many of the earliest tokens we can connect to Roman authorities were issued overseas. Lead tokens found in Athens carrying variations of the legend CEBACTOC (*sebastos*) and the image of a nude youth holding an aplustre and spear were connected to Augustus by Rostovtzeff on the basis of style; Rostovtzeff argued the image is likely a statue of the first *princeps*. A token with the legend CEBAC|TOY and corn-ears, and another with the legend KAI CAP and a laureate male head with a star before (identified as Apollo or the deified Caesar), have also been connected to Augustus' presence in Athens, and a grain distribution.[120] A token bearing the portrait of Marc Antony accompanied by a corn-ear or caduceus has also been found in Athens.[121] A further lead piece, likely from Carnuntum in Austria, displays the portrait of Antony accompanied by the remnants of the legend –NIVS IIIVIR; worn figures decorate the other side.[122] Seventy-eight tokens discovered by metal detecting, all from Fos-sur-Mer in Southern France, have tentatively been connected with Julius Caesar and his Gallic campaigns.[123] A token showing Augustus has also been found in Sardis.[124] Token use by the Romans, then, appears to have developed during the civil wars of the late Republic. It was at this time that Roman politics, patronage and euergetism was played out across the Mediterranean in a way previously not seen before.

Although there is no definitive evidence, some of the tokens from Rome also suggest use from the late Republic. The deified Julius Caesar appears on a token likely issued under Augustus in Italy, and tokens are known from the region bearing Augustus' portrait.[125] A token series bearing the name Sosius in Greek accompanied by a male portrait that looks Republican in style (although on worn tokens style can be difficult to discern) is likely connected to Gaius Sosius, who supported Antony in

[120] Postolacca, 1868: no. 174; Rostovtzeff and Prou, 1900: 50; Rostovtzeff, 1903a. Hoff, 1992 suggests the tokens may have been connected to a grain distribution in Athens in 31 BC (which, if correct, is the earliest known evidence for Augustus' public connection to Apollo).

[121] Rostovtzeff, 1903a: 309. [122] Dembski, 1973/4. [123] Sciallano, 1987; Wilding, 2020.

[124] DeRose Evans, 2018: no. 216.5 (the portrait is accompanied by the legend S C).

[125] Julius Caesar: Rostovtzeff and Prou, 1900: 33, the portrait is reportedly accompanied by a star, *lituus* and the legend DIVI IVLI. For Augustus see the orichalcum pieces published in Buttrey, 1973, and for the lead see Overbeck, 2001: nos. 1–4 (no. 1 may be a coin forgery).

the civil wars before changing sides and returning to Rome to build the temple of Apollo Sosianus (see Figure 3.21).[126] In spite of the Greek legend, the fabric of the tokens suggests it was manufactured in Italy. Another token, purchased by Rostovtzeff in Rome, carries on one side a male figure carrying another on their shoulders, while the other side is decorated with an oath scene, in which two soldiers flank a kneeling figure carrying a pig.[127] Both scenes are also found on Republican coinage. The former image is either one of the Catanaean brothers or Aeneas with Anchises.[128] The oath scene occurs on coins of the later third century BC, on issues of 137 BC, as well as on coins struck by the Italians during the Social War.[129] Although the imagery might have been used on the token well after the coins were issued, it is possible this piece was made in the later Republican period.

It is thus evident that tokens were used by Romans from the late Republic. The first archaeological evidence of their use and manufacture in Rome comes from the early imperial period. Two mould halves were excavated from the *Curiae Veteres* on the Palatine from Neronian *strata*, which provides a *terminus ante quem.*[130] As mentioned above, both bronze and lead tokens carry reference to the Julio-Claudian dynasty. A fragment of a token mould from the Baths of the Swimmer in Ostia demonstrates that lead tokens were still being manufactured in the third century AD.[131] A token that carries the name CARINVS in Greek and Latin was connected by Rostovtzeff to the emperor of the same name; if correct this is further evidence for the continued production of lead cast tokens into the second half of the third century. A rough date range for the production of the majority of lead tokens in Rome and Ostia might thus be given as c. AD 1–300. Token use continued into late antiquity, when it seems specimens were largely made out of bronze rather than lead. Woytek dated a bronze token showing a scene of minting and the *tres Monetae* to between AD 290 and 350 on the basis of comparative iconography.[132] The latest excavation context of bronze or brass tokens known to the author is an orichalcum token decorated with a *modius* on one side and cantharus on the other (for

[126] Ficoroni believed the portrait was of Antony (Ficoroni, 1740: 89), but Sosius is just as likely, given that the medium is a token, not a coin.
[127] *TURS* 2014a.
[128] *RRC* 458/1 (47–46 BC), 494/3a–b (42 BC), with discussion in Zarrow, 2003.
[129] *RRC* 28/1–2 (225–212 BC), 29/1–2 (225–214 BC), 234/1 (137 BC); *HN Italy* nos. 425, 428.
[130] Pardini et al., 2016: 656.
[131] Found in Stratum I of 'Ambiente XVI', which dates from the middle of the third century AD to the middle of the fourth century; Carandini and Panella, 1977: 271.
[132] Woytek, 2013: 249.

the type see Figure 5.15), found in a hypogeum in Lepcis Magna that ceased to be used around the middle of the second century.[133] But the iconography of several bronze tokens, which carry representations of late antique emperors and in some cases incorporate Christian motifs, suggest token use continued into at least the fifth and sixth centuries AD.[134] This volume focuses on brass and bronze tokens that were (likely) created in the imperial period before c. AD 300.

As already mentioned, the vast majority of tokens in Roman Italy come from Rome and Ostia; finds from other Italian cities are known, but are smaller in number. Not every settlement seems to have produced tokens. The biggest lacunae in this regard are Pompeii and Herculaneum – no lead or bronze tokens have been found among the excavations in these cities, although bone gaming pieces have often been mistakenly published as Pompeian *tesserae* or theatre tickets. Without further data we cannot know the reason behind the absence of tokens in these now infamous settlements – it may be that Pompeii used a media other than tokens in daily life, or tokens made out of a perishable material like wood. Token use may have reached its zenith after Vesuvius' eruption; much of the data from Ostia, for example, seems connected to the flourishing of the town in the second century AD.

Tokens in the Roman Empire

The piecemeal adoption of tokens by settlements in Roman Italy is paralleled by uneven token use across the Roman Empire. Not all cities made or used tokens. Indeed, token use seems particularly scarce (although not unknown) along the northern frontier and in the more northern provinces.[135] But even within a single province there appears to be significant variation: in Syria, for example, hundreds of tokens have been excavated in Palmyra, while at nearby Dura Europos not a single token has been found.

During the Roman imperial period, relatively large bodies of tokens can be connected with Athens, Ephesus, Lugdunum, Palmyra and towns in

[133] Di Vita-Evrard et al., 1996: 129. Several tokens of the same type were found in tombs dating to roughly this period, see Chapter 5.

[134] Kulikowski, 2017; Mondello, 2020b; Mondello, 2021.

[135] Britain: *RIB* 2408.2–3 with discussion in Boon, 1986; Mattingly, 1932; Wilding, 2020. Liberchies, Belgium: van Heesch, 2000. Dalheim, Luxembourg: Weiller, 1994; Henrich, 2009. Carnuntum: Dembski, 1973/4. Lavant, Austria: Kainrath, 2005.

Egypt (e.g. Oxyrhynchus).[136] The picture will no doubt change as the material becomes better recognised and hence better published; for example there are many more tokens associated with Caesarea Maritima than have been published to date.[137] Smaller numbers of tokens have been connected to numerous other settlements, too numerous to detail here.[138] Tokens, for example, have been excavated at Sardis and at a variety of different sites in Gaul.[139] The current state of the evidence is still incomplete, but it nonetheless does allow us to situate the tokens of Roman Italy within a broader context of token use across the Empire.

What the evidence from the Roman imperial period reveals is that where tokens were used, the design and manufacture of these pieces occurred in a very localised manner. The designs, materials and manufacturing techniques of tokens varied from region to region, and even from settlement to settlement. The palombino moulds of Rome and Ostia, for example, are not found beyond Italy. While the tokens of Lugdunum are characterised by very small diameters and the use of a three-letter legend, those of Roman Athens are often anepigraphic. The majority of tokens from Palmyra are made of terracotta rather than lead; many of the lead pieces from Ephesus are uniface (single sided). The tokens of a particular region carry imagery that is particularly local, and were manufactured in accordance with local traditions. Rome and Ostia are also local in the design and manufacture of tokens. This grants the historian an archive of material directly related to the local communities, ideologies and events in the imperial capital and its harbour.

Although our knowledge of tokens will undoubtedly change in future years, the relative absence of tokens in Britain and along the northern frontiers is likely to be a reality. This, in addition to the abundance of tokens in cities like Rome, Athens and Ephesus, provides evidence for one of the main contentions of this volume: that tokens were used for euergetism, to aid in community distributions and communal events. Such events occurred with lesser intensity along the northern frontier, and communal

[136] Athens: Lang and Crosby, 1964. Ephesus: Gülbay and Kireç, 2008. Lugdunum: Dissard, 1905. Palmyra: Du Mesnil du Buisson, 1944; Ingholt, Seyrig and Starcky 1955. Egypt: Milne, 1971: nos. 5276–447 (5280–319 Oxyrhynchus); Dattari, 1901: nos. 6412–547.

[137] Communication of Dr Yoav Farhi. Only a small number of tokens from Caesarea have been published to date, see Oestreicher, 1962; Hamburger, 1986.

[138] Postolacca, 1868 includes find information for tokens where it is available, including locations in Greece outside Athens; de Callataÿ, 2010 brings together various studies in a general discussion.

[139] Sardis: Buttrey et al., 1981: 223, nos. 1–14; DeRose Evans, 2018: nos. L1, L3–L10, L24, 113.1, 114.1, 216.5. Gaul: Le Brazidec-Berdeaux, 1999; Dubuis and de Muylder, 2014; Weiller, 2000; Hollard, Le Brazidec and Gendre 2015; with discussion and synthesis in Wilding, 2020.

events may have not required the medium of tokens if they took place in the small, closed communities found within a Roman fortress.

Tokens and Social Life in Roman Imperial Italy

The designs and findspots of tokens in Roman Italy, particularly in Rome and Ostia, reveal them to be artefacts of everyday life, created by an assortment of groups to facilitate communal events. As local artefacts, the designs chosen for these objects offer an insight into how the inhabitants of Italy adapted the imagery that surrounded them to shape identities, experience and feelings of belonging. The imagery *not chosen* is just as important to our understanding of the process as that selected – what imagery is appropriated and made one's 'own', and what is ignored?[140] Once created, tokens and their imagery would have served to consolidate feelings of belonging to a particular group. This would be further underscored by the fact that some would possess tokens and others would not. Tokens often seem to have been used during group events; they might bestow wealth or prestige on a person as they were exchanged for a particular good or service. The excavations of Ostia suggest they were spread throughout the settlement, acting to reinforce the particular beliefs of their owners, even unconsciously.

This volume explores four key aspects of tokens in Roman Italy. The use of tokens as expressions of relations between the imperial family and the population of Italy form the focus of Chapter 2. Tokens carrying imperial portraiture, both those likely issued by emperors and those issued by others, are discussed here. The material opens up new understandings of the imperial image and its semantic flexibility.[141] I then move on, in Chapter 3, to consider the identity of token issuers and users, and the role of tokens in fostering feelings of community and connection. In the fourth chapter, the volume considers the tokens that carry chants or imagery related to Roman festivals. Festivals and spectacles were popular motifs on objects of daily life in Roman Italy, and the prevalence of this imagery must have served to shape the anticipation and memory of particular events. The fifth chapter turns to the idea, often put forward in modern scholarship, that at least some of these tokens served as emergency small change. There is simply no evidence that these objects acted in the

[140] de Certeau, 1984: 97–101.

[141] On the social dynamics of the imperial image see most recently Russell and Hellström, 2020b.

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same way as other alternative currencies from antiquity; nonetheless their existence may have eased the burden on supplies of small change in Rome and its environs. This chapter examines the possible exchange contexts of these artefacts (e.g. to access Roman bathing facilities) and in doing so highlights once again how these unassuming artefacts shaped everyday experience in antiquity.

Although Roman economic historians may be disappointed not to have discovered a previously unstudied cache of circulating small change, the existence and materiality of these tokens does offer an important insight into the impact of Roman currency on its users. While much work on Roman coinage has highlighted the communicative potential of these objects (and indeed the author herself has been active in this regard), evidence of the reception of numismatic imagery remains slim: we are reliant on the mention of coin types in particular texts, for example, or the scattered reuse of coins as stamps or jewellery. The tokens of Roman Italy provide an important new source: the circular shape of the majority of these tokens, the use of portraits with encircling legends, and the adaptation of numismatic imagery (particularly the reproduction of the images of deities that are otherwise known from coinage), all provide concrete confirmation of the role of money in shaping Roman identities and mentalities.

This volume is offered in the context of a resurgence of token studies in modern scholarship; the themes explored here form only a selection of what this material can tell us.[142] As material manifestations of human relationships, as objects that can represent emotions, value, or identities, tokens have played powerful roles throughout human society, whether this be contributing to the invention of writing and abstract number, or facilitating democracy.[143] The role and impact of tokens in the Roman world has only just begun to be understood; despite Rostovtzeff's reservations the artefacts hold enormous promise.

[142] See Arzone and Marinello, 2019; Crisà, Gkikaki et al., 2019b; Martínez Chico, 2019; Raja, 2019; Gkikaki, 2020; Mondello, 2020b; Raja, 2020; Rowan, 2020b; Rowan, 2020a; Mondello, 2021 for a selection of the most recent work on tokens from classical antiquity.

[143] Lang and Crosby, 1964; Schmandt-Besserat, 2010.