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MARKING COIN ISSUES: MINT ADMINISTRATION AND MINT ARCHIVES IN ANTIQUITY
(BRUSSELS, 13/V/2011)

CONFERENCE PAPERS

INTRODUCTION

THIS IS THE THIRD TIME THAT THE COIN CABINET OF THE ROYAL LIBRARY of Belgium has organized an international one-day conference. Cross-cultural, thematic topics have always been chosen to strongly connect numismatics and history: on 17/V/2005, *The transport of coins throughout the ages* — on 13/VI/2008, *From mints to markets: The mechanisms of coin transformation in ancient times* — and now on 13/V/2011, *Marking coin issues: Mint administration and mint archives in Antiquity.*

'Marking coin issues' intends to concentrate on the way coins were marked with what are now often incomprehensible signs and signatures and tries to reveal the way mints and mint archives were managed. Minting is often presented as a fairly simple activity and the organization needed to run a mint is unappreciated. Still it would be surprising if important cities, kingdoms or large empires did not have a very accurate system to control the actual minting operations and ways to verify and control the production of coinage.

Was the ancient economy an archaic one, rather embedded in an almost frozen social pattern as some believe, or was it much more sophisticated? Surely the administration of the Greeks and the Romans cannot be compared with the complicated machinery of modern government. The learned contributions in this volume cover: ancient Greece (two papers), the Hellenistic World (one paper), and the central and provincial Roman issues from the early days of coinage till the fall of the Empire (five papers). They show that in societies where surviving archives are nearly non-existent, much can be learned from a detailed analysis of the coins.

It is our pleasant duty to express our thanks first of all to Professor Patrick Lefèvre, Director General of the Royal Library of Belgium. He not only has to manage a national library with tens of thousands of demanding readers, but also the Library as a research institution. Finding a balance between these two core businesses is not easy. We are very grateful for his encouragement towards us and our colleagues and his appreciation of our research and its resulting

publication. We are grateful also to the *Fonds National de Recherche Scientifique* for its financial support, to the Royal Numismatic Society of Belgium for publishing these contributions in its *RBN*, to the staff of the Coin Cabinet for its help, and of course to all speakers and those who assisted the conference and participated in the discussions.

François DE CALLATAŸ & Johan VAN HEESCH