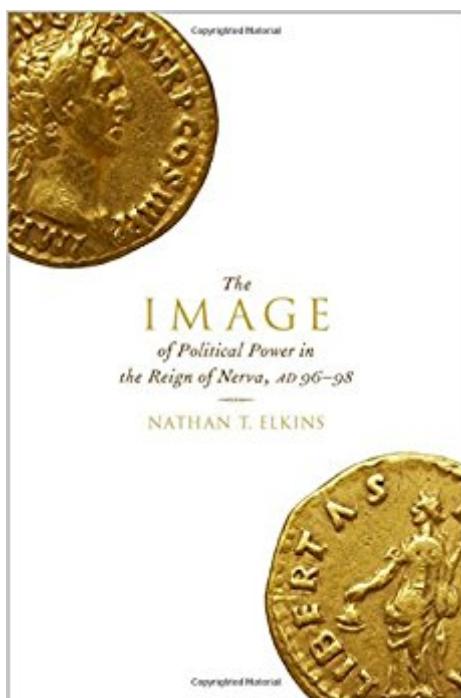


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The Image Of Political Power In The Reign Of Nerva, AD 96-98



Synopsis

At age 65, Nerva assumed the role of emperor of Rome; just sixteen months later, his reign ended with his death. Nerva's short reign robbed his regime of the opportunity for the emperor's imperial image to be defined in building or monumental art, leaving seemingly little for the art historian or archaeologist to consider. In view of this paucity, studies of Nerva primarily focus on the historical circumstances governing his reign with respect to the few relevant literary sources. *The Image of Political Power in the Reign of Nerva, AD 96-98*, by contrast, takes the entire imperial coinage program issued by the mint of Rome to examine the "self-representation," and, by extension, the policies and ideals of Nerva's regime. The brevity of Nerva's reign and the problems of retrospection caused by privileging posthumous literary sources make coinage one of the only ways of reconstructing anything of his image and ideology as it was disseminated and developed at the end of the first century during the emperor's lifetime. The iconography of this coinage, and the popularity and spread of different iconographic types-as determined by study of hoards and finds, and as targeted towards different ancient constituencies-offers a more positive take on a little-studied emperor. Across three chapters, Elkins traces the different reverse types and how they would have resonated with their intended audiences, concluding with an examination of the parallels between text and coin iconography with previous and subsequent emperors. *The Image of Political Power in the Reign of Nerva, AD 96-98* thus offers significant new perspectives on the agents behind the selection and formulation of iconography in the late first and early second century, showing how coinage can act as a visual panegyric similar to contemporary laudatory texts by tapping into how the inner circle of Nerva's regime wished the emperor to be seen.

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Customer Reviews

"An excellent, detailed study of late first century CE Roman coin types, distribution patterns, and the dynamic roles of mint officials. Elkins' work is a must-have for scholars and students alike interested in Roman numismatics and political iconography produced during the brief but critical reign of Nerva." Diane Attnally Conlin, University of Colorado Boulder "This book is essential for any student of the late first century AD. Rejecting received opinions of Nerva's principate, based on hostile writers, Elkins uses the coinage of Nerva himself, subjects it as a medium of art (akin to the poetry, panegyric, inscriptions and monuments lacking for this short reign) to thorough and sophisticated analysis and finds in it nothing apologetic. This is a different Nerva from the weak and failing emperor of the few works previously devoted to him. But Elkins' book has a wider scope. Putting Nerva up against predecessors and successors and finding him presented just as confident and unassailable as they entails discussion, no less illuminating, of notorious problems such as 'propaganda,' the emperor's role in choosing coin types, and the elucidation of imperial 'virtues.'" Barbara Levick, Oxford University "A much needed reassessment of Nerva's reign through the lens of coinage. Elkins provides new insights into the coinage of Nerva, and sets the ideology of this period in context." Clare Rowan, University of Warwick

Nathan T. Elkins is Associate Professor of Art History (Greek and Roman) at Baylor University. He is a Fellow of the American Numismatic Society (New York) and a Fellow of the Royal Numismatic Society (London).

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