Presented here is a general overview of the ancient Greek and Roman coins within the Smithsonian Institution’s National Numismatic Collection, held at the National Museum of American History. An assessment of these coins was performed over the course of three days in late October and early November, 2016 by Christian Cloke (Smithsonian Intern), Andrew Burnett (Former Deputy Director, British Museum), Emily Pearce Seigerman (Museum Specialist), and Jennifer Gloede (Outreach and Collections Specialist). This exercise was conducted quite rapidly, and while some coins were likely misidentified or miscounted, it has also resulted in the first holistic record of this part of the collection. This assessment has revealed some exceptional strengths of the collection, including world-class holdings of eastern Roman provincial and civic coin issues and a number of older hoards, the study of which may contribute much to our understanding of the chronology of ancient coinage and economic history. A fuller record of this assessment can be found in an excel file listing Greek coins in one table and Roman in another, available on the website of the National Numismatic Collection (http://americanhistory.si.edu/national-numismatic-collection).

The collection has a good representation of all areas of ancient coinage, totalling 26,972 pieces (far more than the 12,000–13,000 pieces it was estimated to contain prior to this assessment). The overall numbers of Greek and Roman coins we have tallied are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gold</th>
<th>Silver</th>
<th>Bronze</th>
<th>Unsorted/Mixed</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>4,775</td>
<td>15,999</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>20,905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>2,093</td>
<td>3,609</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>6,067</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen, the Greek collection is ultimately stronger and larger than the Roman collection, though both constitute substantial scholarly resources (and among the “Greek” coins are a great many of the Roman period, minted in the Greek eastern Mediterranean).

Although there are many pieces of Greek gold and silver, the collection is mostly of bronze coinage. The silver especially includes a number of forgeries and copies, often electrotypes, and it may be that more such pieces would be identified after a more careful study than was possible in this exercise. Non-genuine coins of one type or another include some ancient forgeries, as well as a range of early modern and modern copies, both those that were made with the intent to deceive and others made to serve as inexpensive copies of rare or remarkable pieces. This subset of the collection is perhaps interesting in its own right, and a more careful reckoning of the types and number of forgeries and copies would be worthwhile. Further notes about Roman copies and forgeries may be found below.
The Greek coinage, which includes pieces from throughout the ancient Mediterranean world, displayed several areas of considerable strength. One well-represented region was southern Italy and Sicily; in the collection of pieces from these areas were many silver tetradrachms of Messana (famous for being the site of the first major conflict between Rome and Carthage at the start of the First Punic War), and coins of Syracuse, possibly from a hoard.

An unexpected strength was the very extensive holdings of Greek city coinage, especially of the Roman imperial period, from the north-eastern Balkans, for example mints in Moesia and Thrace (numbering approximately 2,000 specimens). In the latter region, the mint of Hadrianopolis was represented by 61 bronze Roman imperial coins, possibly from a hoard. Many silver coins of Dyrrhachium (Durres in present-day Albania) may also constitute the remains of an ancient hoard.

Bronze provincial and city coinage from modern-day Turkey also made up a large part of the collection, particularly issues from the regions of Pontus, Paphlagonia, Bithynia (including coins from the cities of Nicaea and Nicomedia), Mysia (Adramytium, Cyzicus, and Pergamum), Troas (Alexandria), Aeolis (Cyme and Elaea), Ionia (Clazomenae, Colophon, Ephesus, Magnesia, Miletus, Smyrna, and Teos, as well as the nearby islands of Chios and Samos), Caria (Antioch, Aphrodisias, Cnidus, Halicarnassus, Stratonicea, and Tabae, as well as the island of Rhodes), Lydia (Germe, Philadelphia, Saitta, Sardis, Tralles, and several others), Phrygia (Cibyra, Hierapolis, and Laodicea), Pamphylia (Antioch, Aspendus, Perga, Selge, and Side), Cilicia (Anazarbus and Tarsus), and Cappadocia (chiefly Caesarea). The many hundreds of bronze coins from the mints of Asia Minor span the Hellenistic and Roman periods, although generally their state of preservation is less good. Nonetheless, coinage from this part of the Mediterranean is an outstanding strength of the collection and obviously represents donations and collecting activity by those with considerable interest and expertise in the region. Many pieces from this area no doubt make up hoards or large parts thereof, and would repay further study.

Other highlights of the Greek collection include large numbers of more standard things, such as Athenian coinage (both silver and bronze), and both silver tetradrachms and bronze issues of Alexander the Great. From farther afield, the collection includes a wealth of Indo-Greek and Kushan coinage, including the so-called Malakand Hoard of Kushan bronze (see Bopearachchi, O. 1993. Indo-Greek, Indo-Scythian and Indo-Parthian Coins in the Smithsonian Institution. Washington, D.C.).

Among the strengths of the Roman collection is a good series of gold aurei: nearly every emperor, even those who ruled quite briefly and whose coins are thus very rare, is represented by at least one or two specimens. The Roman material also includes at least two hoard groups: the earlier is a group of sestertii of the 3rd century AD, down to Gallienus in the 260s (with coins of the emperors Severus Alexander, Gordian III, and Philip present in large numbers); the second is the ‘Rosen Hoard’ (currently being prepared for publication by Cloke) of nearly 600 bronze nummi of the tetrarchic period, with an end date circa AD 312/313. Each of these large groups likely merits further study and publication.
There is a reasonable collection of Roman Republican coins, mostly silver, which are arranged following Sydenham’s catalogue, *The Coinage of the Roman Republic*.

Parallel to the representative sample of imperial Roman issues are a vast quantity of provincial issues of the Greek east, housed in the Greek coin cabinets (see the above discussion of Greek coins of the Balkans and modern Turkey). Also notable among these, in addition to the aforementioned regional groups, is a sizeable lot of bronze and debased silver issues from Egypt, which span the entirety of the principate and constitute a significant subset of Roman provincial coinage in the collection.

Lastly, the early imperial collection contains a significant number of forgeries, essentially of two categories: first, there are many bronzes, mostly cast, based on well-known Renaissance copies by Giovanni Cavino, and second are a good number of forgeries made by Carl Wilhelm Becker in the 19th century, struck both in gold and in white metal.

Anyone with an interest in consulting any of these coins is invited to email Ellen Feingold, curator of the National Numismatic Collection, at FeingoldE@si.edu or Jennifer Gloede, Outreach and Collections Specialist, at GloedeJ@si.edu.