

Edward ZARROW

Gendered Ideology: Flavian Politics and the 'femina capta'

Two works from 1952 have shaped the methods with which current scholarship continues to approach the Judaea Capta coin types of Vespasian and Titus as well as subsequent issues depicting women, often bound, in the act of mourning. A. C. Levi (*Barbarians on Roman Imperial Coins and Sculpture*, NNM 123) and H. St. J. Hart (*Judaea and Rome: The Official Commentary*, JTS 3) address with diligence the role of the barbarian as an attribute which reflects the personal sensibilities of the mint magistrate or emperor who commissioned the coins production. However, to date the gender specific constructs of such imagery have yet to be explored. Contemporary numismatic chroniclers, including Levi and Hart, have been reluctant to denote the distinctions between barbarian men and women, as well as those shown in the attitude of supplication or subjugation, preferring to classify all such representations within a single conquered corpus of the barbarian. An examination of this deliberate differentiation, a gendered ideology, may serve to refute the long standing view that the coinage of Vespasian and Titus was both reassuringly predictable and banal (B. Levick, *Vespasian* [London, 1999], 65) rather than innovative. Furthermore, an analysis of the representations of mourning women on the coins of the Flavians will enable us to conjure a more accurate assessment of Vespasians and Titus reaction to the Jewish War of C.E. 66-70 and provide a fairer estimate of the role that women themselves played in the Jewish insurrection.

The Flavian methodology of numismatic, gender-based humiliation scorned the members of the insurrection that, so utterly devastated, their women were forced to sue for peace. Linking the figural imagery of the mourning femina capta with associations of victory extends that victory beyond the public sphere and into the private and familial, a construct to a Roman and Judaeian effectively symbolized by the woman and not the man. While focusing on the Judaea Capta and Judaea Devicta issues, particularly provincial types which have received insufficient attention, my primary goal is to classify gender-specific and attitude-specific barbarian representations on Flavian coins. This will strengthen the arguments of scholars who maintain that the inconceivable cruelty against the Jews following the siege of Jerusalem is at least a partial product of Titus volition.

Also, in accordance with the leading erotic theories of modern philologists, we may recognize that indifference towards gender specificity in the examination of Roman imperial art and literature are equally precarious: To deny gender is to deny the social relations of gender that constitute and validate the social oppression of women (T. de Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender* [Bloomington, 1987], 15). Casting off the shroud of this gender blindness reveals, according to such parameters, that Vespasian and Titus wished to herald the victory over the Jews as one of great intimacy. And through such alarming representations, the Judaeian people may have been reminded that a price is always to be paid for indiscretion, an indiscretion which in the eyes of the Flavian dynasty was rooted as much in their military insurgence as in their personal religious and social heritage.