

[Ships and Galleys on Ancient Greek and Roman Coins](#)

The Seafaring Vessels of Ancient Times used for Trade War and Recreation

Ships



on Ancient Greek & Roman Coins

As you sit and marvel at the piece of history in your hand, you can almost place yourself inside the seafaring vessel and feel the feelings and almost see the sights the ancients went through. The ancient Greek and Roman empires and kingdoms were well inter-connected via the sea route and would have major trade going on between them. An example is that ancient Egypt was a major source of grain supply for the people of ancient Rome. They used ships and galleys to go between each place to spread culture, ideas, goods and even domination. The ancient Romans got major influences from the Greeks which they adapted via the trade and conquests they achieved hundreds of years BC. This article is meant to be as a survey of the types of ancient coins that depicted ships on them.

What is interesting is that there was a major turning point in Western history that had to do with a ship battle that emperor Augustus' general Agrippa fought against Mark Antony, whom was commanding the fleet of the famous Egyptian queen Cleopatra. This battle in 31 B.C. Actium was the turning point which left the power of the Roman Empire in the hands of one man alone, Augustus. It is interesting to note for example, that the only biological son that Julius Caesar had was growing up under the care of Cleopatra, and if orders were not sent to eliminate him, there would be a rival to the power Augustus had.

It is interesting to also note that ships were depicted on coins of many Greek cities, such as Sidon, Askalon and on coins of King Demetrios Poliorcetes of Macedon, and so much more. The study of ships all on its own could occupy many volumes. The topic had been the focal point of many ancient coin collections.

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[Just some of the Interesting Coins Depicting Ships on Ancient Coins](#)



Mark Antony - Silver Denarius

Struck at Actium 32-31 B.C. for Marc Antony's III Legion

ANT AVG III VIR R P C, Praetorian galley right.

LEG III, Legionary eagle between two standards.

This famous coin was struck for the battle of Actium in 31 B.C. where Mark Antony's ships came head to head with the forces of Augustus' general, Agrippa.



Greek city of Histiaia in Euboia

Silver Tetrobol 15mm (1.43 grams) Struck circa 300-200 B.C.

Reference: Sear 2496; B.M.C. 8. 47-8

Head of nymph Histiaia right, wreathed with vine, hair rolled.

ISTIAIEΩN, nymph Histiaia right on stern of galley, ornamented with wing, holding naval standard.

This type, commemorated the expulsion, with Athenian help of the pro-Macedonian tyrant Philistides in 340 B.C.



Constans - Roman Emperor: 337-350 A.D. -

Bronze AE3 18mm (2.96 grams) Thessalonica mint: 348-351 A.D.

Reference: RIC 109 (VIII, Thessalonica)

DN CONSTANS PF AVG - Diademed, draped and cuirassed bust right.

FEL TEMP REPARATIO Exe: TESΔ - Constans standing left on galley, holding Phoenix on globe and labarum tipped with the Chi-Rho (MONOGRAM of CHRIST); Victory seated to right, steering.



**Greek Ruler of
Macedonian Kingdom**

King Demetrius I Poliorcetes - 294-288 B.C.

Bronze 15mm (3.95 grams) Struck 294-288 B.C.

Reference: Sear 6775; Newell 20

Head of Demetrius right, wearing crested Corinthian helmet ornamented with bull's horn.

Prow of galley right; BA above, monogram beneath.



**Constantine I 'The Great'- Roman Emperor: 307-337 A.D. -
Founding of New Roman Capital Constantinople Commemorative**

Bronze AE3 17mm Siscia mint circa 330-333 A.D.

Reference: RIC 224 (VII, Siscia)

CONSTANTINOPOLIS - Constantinopolis helmeted, laureate bust left, holding scepter over shoulder.

No Legend Exe: .BSIS. - Victory standing left, stepping on galley prow, cradling scepter
and resting hand on shield.

By circa 330 A.D., Constantine the Great completed his new capital for the Roman empire called Constantinople. For this momentous occasion, he issued two commemorative coin types, one celebrating Rome and the other Constantinople. The type that [commemorated Rome](#) had the personification of Rome, Roma with the inscription VRBS ROMA and the founders of Rome, Romulus and Remus on the reverse suckling the she-wolf. The type that [commemorated Constantinople](#) had the personification of Constantinople on the obverse and Victory on a galley sailing with a shield. This was a great way for Constantine the Great to pay homage to both Rome and Constantinople.



Hadrian - Roman Emperor: 117-138 A.D. -

Bronze As 26mm (9.54 grams) Rome mint: 125-128 A.D.

Reference: RIC 673, Cohen 446 var., BMC 1342; Strack 619

Pedigree: Ex Gorny & Mosch

HADRIANVS AVGVSTVS, laureate head right.

COS III, galley with rowers & pilot right, SC below.

Reverse refers to Hadrian's travels around the empire on his first great tour.



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