What is the importance of establishing the location of a mint? In the Roman world these were "not grand structures with dedicated functions" (Burnett 2001:45). Minting was a simple activity, and could be set up to take place almost anywhere. The institution of "the mint" becomes even more difficult to envisage when we realize that Herod did not mint coins regularly (section 1.4 above). Nevertheless, identifying the mint of a coinage has traditionally been a pursuit of numismatists, as it is generally assumed that a ruler's choice of mint locations reflected somewhat the importance or economic centrality of the various cities under his control. No doubt the subject of mint location is more significant when the alternatives are distant from each other.

It had universally been accepted that Herod's mint was located, in continuity with the Hasmonean mint, in Jerusalem. However, since 1936 when Narkiss suggested Trachonitis as the mint of the year three (ΩΓ) coin series (Narkiss 1936:33–34), that group's mint location has been the subject of much speculation. This chapter analyzes the earlier opinions on the topic and offers at least an operative solution.

Before looking at the proposed alternatives for the mint's location, one may consider the possibility that these coins were not struck in one place at all, but rather derived from a traveling mint. In the Roman sphere, traveling mints (for silver) were a natural development of Roman republican coinage policy (Sutherland 1951:10). Harl determined that traveling mints were first created by the Sullans (the 80s BCE; Harl 1996:53). One of the datings for the ΩΓ coins would seriously support such an idea. In year three of the most commonly accepted 40 BCE regnal era (i.e., 38/37 BCE) Herod had not yet conquered Jerusalem, and was besieging the capital for a good part of the year. Could the ΩΓ coins have been minted in the winter or spring of 37 BCE in a traveling mint?

The intrinsic evidence for positing a traveling mint during war is usually the military types on the coins themselves, their generally irregular fabric and the uneven quality of the dies. These characteristics suggest the absence of a single, stable mint location—the likes of which apparently produced more orderly currencies. While there are some military types on the ΩΓ coins, these coins do not have irregularly executed dies or inconsistent fabrics.

One of the advantages of a traveling mint was that the minting authority could keep close control over the precious metals being handled (Burnett 2001:46). Crawford (RRC) referred to Roman mints moving with Pompey, Caesar, Brutus, Cassius, Antony, and Octavian, among others (and see also Mørkholm 1982:211); all were precious-metal mints.

With the ΩΓ coins of Herod, however, we are dealing with a mint of bronze coins. Houghton and Lorber have identified a number of mobile bronze mints, for example one "traveling with the Seleucid army during the Fifth Syrian War, staffed by one or two competent engravers aided by semi-skilled auxiliary workers" (Houghton and Lorber 2000–2002:47). Considering the military support Herod received from Roman forces, it is not impossible that Herod called upon skilled artisans attached to those forces to assist him in minting coins in his name.

Nevertheless, Rappaport was probably correct in rejecting the possibility that these coins were minted in a traveling mint before Herod's capture of Jerusalem (Rappaport 1981:364 n. 51). Any discussion, however, of the place in which the ΩΓ coins of Herod were minted must be preceded by consideration of the absolute date to be assigned to them.

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1 When referring to an archaeological or historical site the English transliteration of the Hebrew has been preferred. However, when the mint itself is the subject, the English transliteration of the Greek has been used.
5.1. Dating the \( \Gamma \) Coins

The \( \Gamma \) coins, with a variety of absolute dates put forward by scholars, have been extensively used in discussions regarding Herod’s reign. For example, Edwards relied heavily on the \( \Gamma \) date to bolster his view of the Herodian calendar (Edwards 1982:29).

The dating systems employed on earlier Hellenistic coins in the region illustrate the two main alternative systems in use at the time. In the Seleucid coinage, dates almost exclusively referred to the Seleucid era, while on Ptolemaic coinage, they generally denoted regnal years. Beginning with the break-up of those empires, year-dates found on coins normally followed one of these two systems: dating by either the local era, evoking the Seleucid system, or according to the beginning of a ruler’s reign, as in Ptolemaic practice. No dynastic era was relevant for Herod’s coins; consequently, the regnal era must be indicated. Methodologically, when the minting authority is a king and his status is clearly indicated on his coins, it is mistaken to prefer a date other than that king’s elevation to the throne as the starting point for dating, unless it can be shown that dating those coins according to the regnal era is not possible. As will be seen in the following, this methodological principle was honored in the breach by many scholars.

In spite of the variety of absolute dates previously proposed (below) for the \( \Gamma \) coins, it has generally been recognized that Herod’s \( \Gamma \) coins should be placed early in his reign. There is no consensus, however, regarding their exact dating.

**Dating by Herod’s coronation (era: 40 BCE)**

The first to suggest this era for the date of Herod’s \( \Gamma \) coins was Eckhel (1794:486). Counting three years from Josephus’ date of Herod’s coronation according to the Roman calendar (714) he gave \( \Gamma \) as 36 BCE. de Saulcy followed the same argument and concluded the date was 37 BCE, and refined the date with the following: “Il est indubitale qu’elle a été frappée aussitôt après la prise de Jérusalem...” (de Saulcy 1854:128). Madden counted three years from the coronation (714) to reach the Roman date of 716, which he equated to 38 BCE (Madden 1864:84; 1903:108).

The regnal dating, yielding 38/37 BCE for \( \Gamma \), is the most commonly accepted date today. The central problem is that we do not know what calendar was employed for counting Herod’s regnal years. Following Schürer’s adoption of a calendar beginning in the spring (assuming Herod died in early spring of 4 BCE; Schürer 1973:290 n. 9), many have accepted that \( \Gamma \) ended in the spring of 37 BCE. When Kushnir-Stein presented the case for Herod’s death in winter 4/3 BCE (section 1.2 above), the matter of which calendar—spring or autumn—was used was reopened. Both calendars are possible, but—as will be seen—only the autumn calendar enables Herod’s \( \Gamma \) coins to be minted in Jerusalem (Kushnir-Stein 2002:3).

**Dating by Herod’s appointment as tetrarch (era: latter part of 42 or first part of 41 BCE)**

Meshorer (TJC:62) claimed \( \Gamma \) should be reckoned by Herod’s tetrarchy, together with the idea that the monogram in the right field of the \( \Gamma \) coins should be interpreted as τετράρχης (below, section 7.3, No. 9). Ptolemy, king of Chalcis, also was a tetrarch and had an identical monogram on his coins (Kindler 1993:286, No. 6). Based upon this convergence, and the supposition, according to Meshorer, that the third year of Herod’s tetrarchy coincided with the year of his coronation, he concluded the \( \Gamma \) on Herod’s coins should be dated to 40 BCE (meaning 40/39 BCE).

Meshorer added that Herod “knew well the strong impact the minting of sovereign coins would have on the population” (AJC 2:10). Meshorer explained that Herod “saw his appointment to the kingship in 40 BCE as simply a continuation of his ruling position” (AJC 2:10).

Although the dating of coins according to a tetrarchic appointment is known (two of Herod’s sons employed tetrarchic dates), there are a great many problems with Meshorer’s theory. Richardson (1996:212) gave six reasons why this dating is not likely. The more compelling ones are: (1) Herod’s appointment as tetrarch may have actually been in 41/40 BCE (and not 42/41 BCE; see also Udoh 2006:109), (3) reference to Herod’s tetrarchic appointment on coins dating after his coronation would certainly have been an offense to the