

Despite appearances, all look like this coin

An unusual case of master die doubling appears on a 10-lira coin from Italy

by **Mike Diamond**, Special to Coin World

A Class III doubled die (design hub doubling) occurs when two working hubs bearing different designs or design subtypes are used to fabricate the same working die. The differences between the two designs can be relatively modest, as in the 1960-D Lincoln, Small Date Over Large Date cent. The two designs can also be substantially different, as with the 1942/41 Winged Liberty Head dime.

Andrea Del Pup recently sent me images of a 1999 Italy 10-lira coin struck by a reverse die bearing overlapping design subtypes. The differences are most easily seen in the wheat ears, where longer awns (“spikes” or “hairs”) extend past or lie alongside shorter awns. The first letter of the engraver’s last name (ROMAGNOLI) is also strongly doubled.

But this is clearly not a Class III doubled die or any other type of doubled die because the doubling is pervasive and identical within this denomination.

Del Pup informs me that the Italian Mint introduced a new 10-lira reverse design in 1996 that features longer, thicker awns. Coins with either short awns or long awns can be found in 1996, 1997, and 1998. From 1999 to 2001, only long awns are present.

According to Del Pup, every long awn example shows the doubling seen here.



The notched 5 of this 1965 Lincoln cent probably represents master hub doubling.

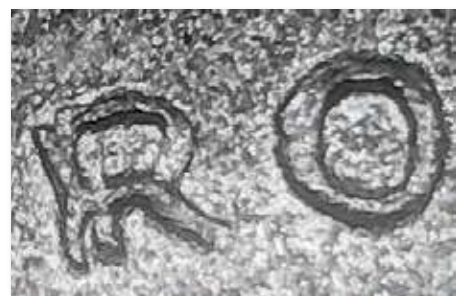
Images by of Jason Cuvellier.

Del Pup has theorized that this is a case of master die doubling. Two master dies — one with short awns and one with long awns — were used in transferring the master die’s design to a single working hub. Every working die derived from this working hub carried the superimposed design subtypes.

According to numista.com, almost 9 million 10-lira coins were struck between 1996 and 2001. For argument’s sake, let’s assume an average die life of 250,000 coins (significantly less for Proofs and Mint set coins). Let’s further ignore the existence of the short-awn subtype. Even with such generous parameters, this output would require the manufacture of only 36 working dies. A single working hub could certainly have produced this number.

While master die doubling seems the most likely explanation for the doubling seen here, there’s another possibility — master hub doubling. A single master die could have been fabricated using two different master hubs — one with short awns and one with long awns. This master die would then have been used to generate every working hub featuring the long awn design.

Master die doubling that doesn’t involve two design subtypes appears sporadically among U.S. coins, often in the form of faint furrows



This 1999 Italy 10-lira coin shows doubling in the wheat awns and first letter of the designer’s name. The doubling can probably be traced to a working hub that received the impressions of two master dies bearing different design subtypes.

Images by Mike Diamond.

and microscopic notches. However, some purported examples, like this 1965 Lincoln cent, probably represent master hub doubling. According to lincolncentsonline.com, every 1965 cent (all 1.5 billion) shows a notched 5. Assuming an average die life of 1 million coins, around 1500 working dies would have been employed. Many working hubs would have been required. ©

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