

**DAVID M. JACOBSON, NIKOS KOKKINOS (EDS.), *JUDAEA AND ROME IN COINS 65 BCE – 135 CE. PAPERS PRESENTED AT THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE HOSTED BY SPINK, 13<sup>TH</sup>-14<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2010, SPINK, LONDON 2012, PP. 243, COLOUR AND B/W ILL., MAPS; ISBN 978-1-907427-22-0***

Owing to the wealth of information provided by numismatic sources, their value for historical research cannot be overestimated. In a great deal of cases they are an important complement to the information in written sources, but they are frequently also the only evidence of past events. However, it is not always easy to use numismatic sources, as extensive specialist knowledge is often called upon. This is especially the case with Judaea, where numismatic evidence is extremely diverse. As a result, numismatic research is very important for adding to what we know about the past of Judaea.

The results of research on the coins minted in Judaea carried out in recent years at various academic centres were presented, alongside discussion on contentious issues, at the international numismatic conference “Judaea and Rome in Coins” held in London in autumn 2010. The conference was organised by David M. Jacobson and Nikos Kokkinos under the patronage of the Institute of Jewish Studies at University College London and the world-renowned numismatic company Spink & Son Ltd. There were over a dozen participants, from Austria, the Netherlands, Israel, the USA and the United Kingdom, whose papers are published here. A particularly interesting subject for participants was the coins minted in Judaea by various issuers between 65 BCE and 135 CE. This selection of time frame was dictated by historical events, which had a profound influence on the fortunes of this land and its inhabitants. These were determined both by Pompey’s interference in the affairs of Judaea which led to the loss of political independence of the Jewish state formed by the Hasmoneans, and by the failure of the Bar Kokhba revolt, following that the role of the Jewish population in Judaea was marginalised. This period, extremely rich in historical events, produced a huge number of issues of coins minted by rulers belonging to the Herodian dynasty, Jewish insurrectionary authorities and Roman provincial administration. All of these coins are extremely valuable to us owing to their ideological contents. These can be found in both the legends and the images portrayed on the coins. Understanding and interpreting the symbolism concealed in these elements is a very difficult task because of their ambiguity. Yet it is well worth the effort, as the contents expressed through coins is not always reflected in contemporary written sources. Studying numismatic evidence also allows us to become aware of the technique used in their production, is useful in determining chronology of events, and contributes to an understanding of economic phenomena. For the conference participants, the relations between Judaea and Rome seen from the perspective of numismatic sources were also important.

This volume comprises 14 articles arranged in chronological order, which seems an obvious decision, if only owing to the character of the problems analysed. This arrangement has the advantage that readers can easily find articles of interest in the table of

contents: A. Burnett, *The Herodian Coinage Viewed against the Wider Perspective of Roman Coinage* (pp. 1-18); R. Barkay, *Roman Influence on Jewish Coins* (pp. 19-26); A. Lykke, *The Use of Languages and Scripts In Ancient Jewish Coinage: An Aid In Defining the Role of the Jewish Temple until its Destruction In 70 CE* (pp. 27-50); D. Syon, *Galilean Mints in Early Roman Period: Politics, Economy and Ethnicity* (pp. 51-64); R. Bracey, *On the Graphical Interpretation of Herod's Year 3 Coins* (pp. 65-83); N. Kokkinos, *The Prefects of Judaea 6-48 CE and the Coins from the Misty Period 6-36 CE* (pp. 84-111); R. Deutsch, *The Coinage of the Great Jewish Revolt against Rome: Script, Language and Inscriptions* (pp. 113-122); D. Hendin, *Jewish Coinage of the Two Wars, Aims and Meaning* (pp. 123-144); D.M. Jacobson, *The Significance of the Caduceus between facing Cornucopias in Herodian and Roman Coinage* (pp. 145-161); T.V. Buttrey, *Vespasian's Roman Orichalcum: An Unrecognised Celebratory Coinage* (pp. 163-186); M. Heemstra, *The Interpretation and Wider Context of Nerva's Fiscus Judaicus Sestertius* (pp. 187-201); K. Butcher, *The Silver Coinage of Roman Arabia* (pp. 203-213); B. Zissu, D. Hendin, *Further Remarks on Coins in Circulation during the Bar Kokhba War: Te'omim Cave and Horvat Ethri Coin Hoards* (pp. 215-228); L.J. Kreitzer, *Hadrian as Nero Redivivus: Some Supporting Evidence from Corinth* (pp. 229-242).

The titles of the articles show that some of the authors are attempting not for the first time to interpret issues that have been controversial for some time (an example being Herod's issue of coins with the date "Year 3"), while others analyse the ideological contents contained in elements of the iconography of the obverse and reverse sides, demonstrate the connections between the minting of Judaea and Rome, present important new discoveries, point to reflections of events in Judaea or connected to Jews, in the minting of the Roman emperors and the monetary production of provincial mints. There is no doubt that each of the texts is important in its way, due not only to the problem it analyses, but also to the proposed conclusions. Still, it is worth devoting a few words more to at least some of them. Anne Lykke, in her analysis of Jewish minting from Persian times until the Bar Kokhba revolt, shows that it has an important common feature. Although the iconography of coins minted by various issuers contained individual ideological contents, it always also bore a common element referring to Jewish religious and national symbolism. This common feature characteristic of most of Jewish minting was the use of paleo-Hebrew writing in the legends of coins.<sup>1</sup> Robert Deutsch and David Hendin's deductions based on their analyses of the minting from the two Jewish uprisings confirm the correctness of this important conclusion. The discussion on the meaning of the legend FISCI IVDAICI CALVMNIA SVBLATA, which can be found on the sestertius of Emperor Nerva minted in 96 CE, has been going on for a very long time, with none of the proposed interpretations achieving general recognition. It is therefore worth taking heed of the latest one, suggested by Marius Heemstra. By referring to sources by Roman and Christian authors, evidence concerning the legal position of the Jewish population and their relations with Christians at the close of the 1st century CE, he demonstrates that

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<sup>1</sup> *The reasons why specific language and scripts were put to use at certain times and not at others, over the lifetime of ancient Jewish coinage, should be sought in the identity of the minting authorities and their relation to the administration of the Jewish temple. The legends would vary, with their changing contexts, but essentially the use of this script held specific nationalistic and religious connotations, hence its use also on amongst others the pre-Hasmonaean stamps* (p. 44-45).

the most important criterion of Jewishness for the Roman authorities, with which was linked the obligation imposed by Vespasian to pay a special tax, was participation in religious practices including elements characteristic of Judaism. According to Heemstra, the legend of the Nerva coin is convincing proof of the fact that in the final years of the 1st century CE the Roman authorities possessed knowledge allowing them to perceive the difference between Jews and Christians. This led them to change their approach to all subjects for whom the similarity of their religious practices to Jewish customs meant that they were treated as Jews and wrongly forced to pay the new tax. From the time of Nerva, the *fiscus Iudaicus* tax was to be paid solely by those subjects who had declared themselves to be followers of Judaism (see pp. 192-195, 198). Numismatic sources allow us to throw new light on many issues and provide arguments aiding in solving various problems, but they can also give researchers taxing puzzles like the three recently discovered, and probably hidden at the time of the Bar Kokhba revolt, treasuries of coins and archaeological finds of coins from Horvat Ethri described by Boaz Zissu and David Hendin. The unique nature of these discoveries is expressed in their composition. Coins from the revolt were found alongside gold and silver Roman coins. For the first time too, as well as Bar Kokhba coins, those from the time of the Jewish War (66-73 CE) were unearthed (Hoard B from Te'onim Cave, Zissu & Hendin, p. 217). A silver half-shekel dated "Year 3" found in the context of the remains of the Bar Kokhba revolt in Horvat Ethri (Zissu & Hendin, p. 225) dates to the same period. These finds gave rise to a host of questions on both ideological and economic matters, which at present it is by no means easy to answer.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the great variety of issues depicted by the conference participants, it is noticeable that the same topics arise in the texts of more than one author. Of course, it is difficult to avoid such repetitions when various questions are being interpreted using the same group of coins as examples. The reader of this book should also be aware that the dates used in its title are only approximate. The authors of at least several articles refer to the coinage of the Hasmonians, its symbolism and Herod's influence on it. This means that the book must also be recommended to all researchers interested in Hasmonian minting.

The volume *Judaea and Rome in Coins* is not addressed exclusively to numismatists; it ought also to have a place on the desk of any historian and archaeologist using numismatic evidence in research on the history of Judaea in the period from the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE. It may happen that some of the conclusions offered will be subject to change in future, but still there is no doubt that many of the opinions and

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Zissu & Hendin, p. 226: *Not a single Bar Kokhba bronze coin was found in the three hoards of the Te'onim Cave, even though several provincial bronze coins were found there. This is a bit mysterious, especially when one note that until now Bar Kokhba hoards or assemblages seem to contain either Bar Kokhba bronze or silver coins, but not both. (...) This separation of Bar Kokhba bronze and silver coins may simply result from the relative wealth of the original owners of the coins, but is interesting nevertheless. (...) Did Jews of the Bar Kokhba period save or collect earlier Judaean coins for nationalistic reasons? (...) Future discoveries in archaeological context may reveal more information about this phenomenon. (...) Bar Kokhba coin hoards or assemblages discovered so far consist either purely of Bar Kokhba coins or Bar Kokhba coins together with other contemporaneous circulating coins. (...) But the question of whether Roman and Roman provincial coins, as well as earlier issues, circulated together with the Bar Kokhba coins within Judaea remains unanswered at this time.*

interpretations presented help to show contentious issues in a new light and allow us to see the context of certain historical events differently, as well as to perceive the ideological similarities visible in the propaganda of the various centres of power existing in Judaea at the time. A further important functional merit of the book is its numerous and excellent-quality reproductions of the coins that are discussed.

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