

PECUNIA OMNES VINCIT

THE COINS AS AN EVIDENCE OF PROPAGANDA,
REORGANIZATION AND FORGERY

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS
OF THE 2ND INTERNATIONAL
NUMISMATIC CONFERENCE

KRAKOW 29-30 MAY 2015



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Introduction

We would like to present 12 articles by young researchers from Poland, Italy, and Hungary concerning numismatics and particular aspects thereof. The publication is a summary of the Second International Numismatic Conference '*Pecunia Omnes Vincit. The coins as an evidence of propaganda, reorganization and forgery*', held at the Emeryk Hutten-Czapski Museum and Institute of Archaeology, Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Poland, 29–30 May, 2015.

The articles direct the reader's attention to various issues involving aspects of numismatics such as propaganda, the circulation of coins in certain territories, and forgeries. The subject matter of this publication focuses on antiquity as well as mediaeval and modern times.

The first group features articles about propaganda, beginning with a paper on the coinage of Seleucus I Nicator, emphasising the importance of this ruler's military expedition to the East and constituting part of the legitimisation of his reign, after the death of Alexander the Great. A similar theme is reflected in an article about the victory of Pyrrhus at Heraclea and proclamation of this event in Sicilian coinage.

The next group of articles is focused on Roman provincial coinage. The coins from the Roman colony of Philippi depicted common symbols, including, but not limited to, the plough and legionary standards. Effigies of Augustus and Julius Caesar are among the main motives. The propaganda of the imperial cult and *neokoros* on the coins of Pergamum is the topic of the next paper, an analysis of changes in the iconography of coins during the reigns of Augustus, Trajan, and Caracalla, as well as information related to them and directed towards citizens.

The next group of papers focuses on the circulation and influx of coins in particular territories and on coin finds. An article about Roman coin finds in Cisalpine Gaul includes an analysis of their influx and function within this region. One of the articles presents an unpublished coin from the excavation at the Paphian Agora in Cyprus as evidence of the presence there of Jewish rebels. Preliminary analysis of 10 Roman coin finds from excavations in San Vincenzo, the site of the discovery of a villa from the period of the Roman Empire, is the topic of the next paper.

A study of chemical and microstructural characterisation, based on research using scanning electron microscopy (SEM) on the coins and medal discovered in Alberone di Ro near Ferrara, represents another category of the articles presented in this publication.

Another interesting problem of numismatics is forgeries. Denarii subaerati form part of a discussion on counterfeiting vs legal activity, and constitute one type of coin

finds on Polish soil. Coin counterfeiting workshops in Hungary in the Middle and Early Modern Ages are the subject of an article including an analysis of archaeological sites, various archaeological finds, and archaeometric research on coins.

The next article draws our attention to the iconography on medals from the Early Modern Age. The final topic included in the publication is a study of ceramic containers in the context of early mediaeval hoards.

The articles presented here constitute careful analyses of various numismatic aspects from the ancient, mediaeval and modern periods. We hope that these articles will offer an opportunity to expand and supplement existing knowledge, or draw attention to and stimulate discussion on some issues. We would like to extend special thanks to Dr hab. Jarosław Bodzek, for scientific mentoring, and to our reviewers: Prof. Dr hab. Jerzy Ciecieląg, Dr Arkadiusz Dymowski, Dr Kamil Kopij, Dr Piotr Jaworski, Dr Witold Garbaczewski, and Mateusz Woźniak, M.Sc., and Mateusz Biborski, M.Sc., for substantive correction of individual papers.

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A COIN OF JEWISH REBELS FROM THE PAPHIAN AGORA

Abstract: *When we look at the surfaces of ancient coins, it is generally obvious that they represent legal authority. However, this is not always true, as in the example of coins of the First Jewish War against Rome, minted by local authorities rebelling against their Roman occupiers. These emissions presented slogans of political freedom as well as of religious redemption, written in paleo-Hebrew script and referring to the Unified Kingdom of David. They were minted in silver to emphasise the independence of the rebels, and in bronze to obtain the widest possible circulation. Interestingly, these issues can be found not only in Judea, but also in other locations, such as Nea Paphos, where one prutah of the second year was found during the excavations of the Paphos Agora Project.*

Keywords: *Jewish First War, symbolic meaning, propaganda, Jewish coinage*

Nobody needs to be convinced that coinage was used as a tool to spread ideas. From the very beginning, symbols and legends related to the authority of governors, their rights and sovereignty, were minted on the surfaces of coins. These symbols, easily recognised by the user or owner of any coin, proclaimed the ideas of their minters in everyday life. The same assumptions were made by the Jewish minters in the times of the First Jewish War who produced these small propaganda tools. One of their coins was found during the Season 2011 of the Paphos Agora Project, a Jagiellonian University archaeological excavation of the agora of Nea Paphos, Cyprus.¹

Historical background

It is always difficult to determine the reasons things happen, and this applies to the beginning of the First Jewish War against Rome. According to Flavius Josephus,² the war began due to the ethnic and religious problems of the Jewish community from Caesarea Maritima under the procurator Florus.³ Moreover, members of this community believed,

¹ The project in years 2011–2014 was granted by Narodowe Centrum Nauki (NCN – National Science Centre, Poland), grant OPUS NCN 2011/01/B/HS3/01282, from 2015 is granted by grant MAESTRO NCN 2014/14/A/HS 3/00283.

² BJ 2.280–410.

³ Byra 2011: 35; Ciecieląg 2011: 379–382.

in accordance with the Jewish way of thinking, that with the help of their God, their only ruler, they could defeat any enemy irrespective of its power. This belief had been strengthened by the victory of the Maccabees over the Seleucid Empire and by the apocalyptic ideas current in the first century AD. As well, the economic status of many people did not contribute to stabilising the situation, but rather led to an increase in the level of banditry.⁴ Many self-styled prophets and messiahs exploited the situation and called for an uprising against the Roman invaders. More fuel was added to the fire by the terror caused by the activity of the Sicarii, who were assassinating and kidnapping nobles cooperating with the Romans.⁵ All of these reasons led to the outbreak of war in the summer of 66 AD.

Coins of the rebels

The war that started in 66 AD was waged on at least two levels. The basic level involved military operations and battles with Roman armies. Also very important were activities involving the dissemination of material, which included the minting of coins to demonstrate the recovery of the Jews' autonomy and their desire for an autonomous nation.⁶ As has been suggested by several researchers,⁷ the coins of the First Jewish War can be regarded as the first fully independent coinage in Jewish history. The 'Yehud' coins were only satrapal issues, similar to coins from local Ptolemaic mints. Even Hasmonean coinage was minted by high priests and kings under Seleucid control. Later, after the Maccabean Revolt, the Hasmonean kings, who were not authorised to issue silver coins, minted only small bronze coins, as did Herod the Great. The authorities behind the revolt not only decided to mint coins in silver, but also struck coins of very good quality in order to create a good impression of themselves.⁸ Thus, if we regard the minting of coins in silver as a manifestation of independence, we can agree with Hendin's statement that the coinage of the First Jewish War was the first fully independent coinage in the history of the Jews.

Due to a religious prohibition against making an 'image or picture of anything in heaven or on the earth or in the waters under the earth',⁹ Jews could not present any people or living creatures on their coins. Thus they adopted symbols originally used by the Greeks and Romans, such as cornucopias, anchors, vessels, and floral motifs. In the very beginning, many of these, such as the cornucopia, had 'pagan' religious connotations. Here it is worth considering how much of this primaevial meaning was still known to the users of these coins. It is probable that by the first century AD the images

⁴ Byra 2011: 12–22.

⁵ Horsley 1979: 439.

⁶ Roth 1962: 34; Hendin 2012: 142.

⁷ Ibidem: 123.

⁸ Ibidem: 140.

⁹ Ex 20,4; Deut 5,8.

had lost their religious meanings and presented only symbolic significance (cornucopia = wealth and prosperity). Their use by Jewish authorities and minters enables us to assume a non-religious interpretation.

Two very important questions related to these coins are still unanswered: who minted them and where the minting was done. After analysing the legends on their surfaces, it is possible to offer a few ideas. All of them were inscribed in paleo-Hebrew, a language that had not been in use for several hundred years prior to the beginning of the war;¹⁰ only the Temple aristocracy, priests, and scribes were able to use it.¹¹ At this time, though the paleo-Hebrew script was used, very few legends with nationalistic connotations were written in it.¹² On the other hand, most of the inhabitants of Judaea were illiterate, so the use of paleo-Hebrew presented no greater problem for them than Greek or Aramaic inscriptions; the oral tradition of transmitting verbal information probably supplemented the incomprehensible written messages.¹³ The inscriptions also refer to Jerusalem; thus some researchers¹⁴ suggest that the mint may have been located there. It is more likely that these inscriptions refer not to the minting location but to a more ideological significance. For the Jews, their capital was very important, not only for political reasons, but also because it was the only place chosen by God for the construction of the Temple and the offering of sacrifices. In many psalms¹⁵ and hymns the Jews pray for its prosperity and 'seek its good'. It was the spiritual heart of the whole nation and possessed many theological connotations. As Goodman¹⁶ has suggested, Jerusalem may have represented a new political entity. It should also be remembered that Jerusalem was very important in messianic theology and ideology.

As stated by Deutsch,¹⁷ three types of inscriptions were used on the coins. The first encompasses religious messages and ideological slogans referring to the holy city and to the idea of redemption. The second type expresses a revival of ideas from Biblical times through the renewed usage of terms such as *Israel* or *shekel*. *Israel*, especially, had great meaning for the rebels, because it referred to the era of kings who had ruled independently over them. King David was also a symbol of the messiah, a good king and high priest who would liberate the Israelites from the Roman occupation. *Israel* also recalled the times of Moses, when the Twelve Tribes left Egypt and began to be integrated into a nation. The third type of inscription, counting the years from the

¹⁰ Hendin 2012: 131.

¹¹ Deutsch 2012: 113.

¹² Naveh 1987: 119.

¹³ Goodblatt 2006: 33.

¹⁴ Mildenberg 1984: 61–62; Hendin 2012: 127.

¹⁵ E.g. Ps 122,9; 128,5.

¹⁶ Goodman 2007: 14.

¹⁷ Deutsch 2012: 116.

beginning of the revolt, may also refer to the same period. It appears as if the minting authority wished to proclaim a new era of freedom and liberation. These inscriptions may recall the words of Exodus: 'Let this month be to you the first of months, the first month of the year'.¹⁸ Just as in the days of Moses this 'new beginning of time' initiated the era of freedom from Egyptian slavery, in the times of the War it indicated a new period of independence. Thus it may also imply a relationship with the Passover tradition so important to Jewish identity. It is worth mentioning that the same idea was used by minters in the times of Bar Kokhba, who also started to count the time from the beginning of the revolt.¹⁹

The coin from the Paphian Agora

Coin PAP/FR 31/2011 is a *prutah*. This term is used in later rabbinic books to identify small bronze coins and has also been applied to earlier periods.²⁰ The *prutah* was an equivalent of the Seleucid *chalkous*, worth one pomegranate. It is also related to the 'widow's mite' known from the Gospels.²¹

Researchers have been discussing the meaning of the amphora and vine leaf presented on the surfaces of this coin for many years. Both of these symbols were also used on earlier Roman coins, e.g. the issue of Valerius Gratus, and both possess an imperial meaning.²² It is an interesting question why local authority, fighting against Roman occupancy, decided to use the same symbols. Meshorer²³ has suggested that the amphora from the rebel coins is different in terms of style from the Graeco-Roman models presented on the coins of Gratus. In his opinion, it represents the antithesis of the Roman symbol, which was related to the deified emperor and his family: the Jewish version symbolised the sacred libation of wine in the Temple. This interpretation also is supported by coins of Year Three, on which the amphora is covered with a lid; in Mishnaic sources, it is mentioned that only water and wine needed to be covered.²⁴ The vine leaf also suggests a relationship to the Jewish liturgy, in which grapes and wine were very important.²⁵ It is also worth mentioning that the vine also possesses a Biblical meaning. From the times of the prophet Isaiah, the vineyard, an ancient symbol of love, also symbolised the whole nation of Israel, which 'brought forth wild grapes' to the owner who took care of it.²⁶ This symbol is also related to the idea of the messiah, who would

¹⁸ Ex 12,2.

¹⁹ Deutsch 2012: 121.

²⁰ Hendin 2009: 106; Waclawik 2016: 57.

²¹ Mk 12, 42; Łk 21, 1–4.

²² Waclawik 2016.

²³ Meshorer 1982: 112.

²⁴ Romanoff 1971: 31.

²⁵ Hendin 2012: 135.

²⁶ Is 5,1–7.

be ‘a rod out of the stem of Jesse,’²⁷ explaining the meaning of the vine in the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth²⁸ only a few decades earlier. According to these sources, we can also assume that both the amphora and vine leaf were used on the coins of the First War to emphasise the nationalistic and messianic ideas associated with the recovery of independence.

Like the symbols, the legends also have several possible interpretations. The basic question is whether they are two parts of a single sentence, or two separate sentences. It is possible to read them together as ‘Year Two of the Freedom of Zion’ as is known from coins of Year Four, but the presence of a prefix ל (*le-*) suggests the other possibility. As suggested by Deutsch,²⁹ this change was probably made by a new minting authority, but there is insufficient evidence to support this theory. Regardless of whether the two sentences are read together or separately, the slogan bears the same connotations. ‘Year Two’ relates to the new beginning discussed in the previous part of the article. The word *Zion* refers to Mt Zion, where the Temple was built, or, in a broader sense, to the holy city of Jerusalem.³⁰ Even in ancient times, in the prophecies of Zechariah,³¹ *Zion* had been mentioned interchangeably with *Jerusalem*. This relationship, mentioned even in the modern anthem of Israel,³² was evident in the time of the rebels, as we can see in Gospels, which were written during that period. Their authors used this phrase in relation to Jesus of Nazareth and his entry to the city.³³ Jerusalem itself was the spiritual and religious centre of the Jewish nation³⁴, the place chosen by God from the very beginning of Jewish history for sacrifices made to Him. In those hills Abraham had been obliged to sacrifice his son;³⁵ the Temple had been built there; and in this area David had decided to establish the capital of his kingdom. Because of this, the city, especially Mt Zion itself, was also a messianic symbol and the place where the new order would be established at the end of days. This impression was reinforced by the use of the term *freedom*, which was related not only to political liberty but also to the messianic vision of redemption at the end of days as well as to purity and holiness, which were to be the basis of that freedom.³⁶

²⁷ Is 11,1.

²⁸ E.g. J 15,1–11.

²⁹ Deutsch 2012: 124.

³⁰ Goodblatt 2006: 202; Deutsch 2012: 119.

³¹ Za 9,9.

³² מְלִלַת יְרוּשָׁלַיִם וְיִצְחָק (The land of Zion and Jerusalem).

³³ Mt 21:5; J12:15.

³⁴ Deutsch 2012: 119.

³⁵ Gen 22.

³⁶ Kanael 1953: 20; Hengel 1989: 118–122.

The way to the Agora of Nea Paphos

How it is possible that such an anti-Roman coin was found in an area quite far from the rebellious area, especially when we remember that rebel currency was illegal in the Roman Empire? It is possible that such a small coin was passed from hand to hand by merchants who were insufficiently careful about what they carried in their pockets. This theory is also supported by the finding of a similar coin in the House of Dionysus, which is believed to have been a palace for the Roman governor of Cyprus.³⁷ On the other hand, we know that coins of the Bar Kokhba Revolt were treated as mementoes for patriotic Jews and used as jewellery.³⁸ It is possible that something similar was done with earlier coins, especially if we take into account that coin hoards containing coins of both the First War and Bar Kokhba Revolt have been found in Te'omim Cave in the hills of western Jerusalem and in Horvat 'Ethri in the Judean Shephelah.³⁹ It can be assumed that a few rebels found refuge in the Jewish community in Paphos, bringing with them a small reminder of their dream of freedom that had been crushed along with the Temple by the eagles of Rome.

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³⁷ Nicolau 1990: 84.

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³⁹ Zissu and Hendin 2012.

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Illustrations

Prutah of Year Two (67 AD), AE, 17,08 mm; 2,7g; Meshorer 1967, p. 153

Inv no. FR 31/2011, Trench II, Context 103

Obv. Amphora. Paleo-Hebrew legend: Year Two. Surface worn out

Rev. Vine leaf. Paleo-Hebrew legend: Freedom of Zion. Surface worn out.

FR 31/2011



Photo by M. Iwan, the Paphos Agora Project archive



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