

Four Unpublished Coins of the Decapolis and Provincia Arabia in the Second Century AD

The publishing of inedited coins or new varieties has many advantages, since each coin may shed a new light on our knowledge. Mainly, new coins provide us with varied informative data on the history, economy and religion or even on the geographical aspect. Publishing such new coins will stimulate other scholars and encourage collectors to publish new material from their collections. On the other hand, presenting and publishing these four coins will contribute and facilitate the eventual arrangement of a complete corpus of the coinages of the cities of the Decapolis and Provincia Arabia.

In this respect, the writer runs an intensive survey to figure-out "inedited coins" or a new variety in his collection, and consulted many available publications and major works,* though some related literature are inaccessible. Such academic approach is helpful to deduce whether these coins had been published in the vast numismatic literature or not. Anyhow, if any of the coins described below happened to have been published in other publications, including auction catalogues, this will change its classification from an inedited coin or a new variety into an extremely rare coin.

The present work offers a new contribution to the coins of Transjordan (the Decapolis and Provincia Arabia), and includes four unpublished coins described below from the writer's collection.

The Gerasa Coins

Gerasa, ancient Jarash, lies in a deep valley among the mountains of Gilead. Gerasa is said to have been founded by Alexander the Great, whose bust is found on one of its coins. Also inscriptions found in its ruins attribute its founding to Alexander the Great (Franciscan 1984: 190).

According to Pliny, Gerasa was one of the Decapolis

cities handed over to Provincia Arabia in AD 106 by the Emperor Trajan (Harding 1967: 49).

Hadrian visited Gerasa at the period it was known as Antiochia on Chrysorrhoas (Golden River) (Spijkerman 1978: 156). This may mean that it was one of the Seleucid Kings, probably Antiochus IV (175-163 BC) who made the original village into a great centre (Franciscan 1984: 190). Most Probably it received the title "Colony" at the time of Caracalla, and became a Roman Colony with the name of Colonia Aurelia Antoniniana (Spijkerman 1978: 156). Gerasa struck quasi-autonomus coinage and colonial coins from the times of Nero (AD 54-68) to Elagabalus (AD 218-222), who was the last ruler on its coins (Qedar 1996: 311).

The prevailing type on the coins of Gerasa is the bust of Artemis as Tyche of the city. The coins of Gerasa bear no date except for two coins of Elagabalus with Tyche on the reverse, these coins are dated according to the Pompeian era which was also in use on inscriptions at that time.

Coins Nos. 1-2 (FIGS. 1-2) are new varieties produced from two different dies. The obverse of both coins bear the bust of Marcus Aurelius to the right in contrast to Spijkerman's coin No. 9 where the bust is to the left. The reverse of the two coins is struck by two different dies which differ from that of Spijkerman's coin No. 9.

Coin No. 3 (FIG. 3) is an unpublished coin of Commodus. It measures 9mm in diameter and might indicate a new denomination. This type is known and issued at Gerasa under the same emperor with larger modules varying from 16-20mm in diameter (see coin No. 22 in Spijkerman's catalogue). On the reverse, Tyche wearing a turreted crown seated on a rock, upper part of body is turned right, holding in both hands ears of barely. Part of inscription only on flan, X G E.

* Hill, G., *Catalogue of the Greek Coins of Palestine*, London, The British Museum, 1914; Rosenberger, M., *The Coinage of Eastern Palestine and Legionary Countermarks, Bar-Cochba Overstrucks*, Jerusalem, 1978; Spijkerman, A., *The Coins of the Decapolis and*

Provincia Arabia, Jerusalem, Franciscan Printing Press, 1978; Burnett, A. et. al., *Roman Provincial Coinage*, Vol. I, Parts I -II, London, The Trustees of the British Museum, 1992.



1.a. Coin No. 1 with the bust of Marcus Aurelius, obverse.



1.b. Reverse of coin No. 1.



2.a. Obverse of coin No. 2, with bust of Marcus Aurelius.



2.b. Reverse of coin No. 2.



3.a. Obverse of coin No. 3.



3.b. Reverse of coin No. 3.

TABLE 1. Description of coins No. 1, 2 and 3.

No.	Wt.	Metal size	Obverse	Inscription	Ax.	Reverse	Inscription
1.	10.8	23/25	Marcus Aruelius Bust right	AVTKAICM AVPANTW	↑	Tyche, wearing turreted crown and long chiton, standing l. on half figure of river-god, resting r. on rudder, l. holding cornucopiae; behind her at r. male figure, togate, standing to front, looking r., r. hand holding spear.	ANTWIP XPTWIPΓE
2.	12.8	23	Similar	Similar	↑	Similar	
3.	0.6	9	Commodus. Bust right M	←	Tyche, wearing turreted crown, veil and long chiton, seated on rock upper part of body turned r. holding in both hands ears of barley, below half-figure of river-god swimming l.	X ΓE

The Petra Coins

In AD 106, the Nabataean Kingdom was annexed by the governor of Syria, Cornelius Palma, into the Roman Provincia Arabia. The capital, Petra, flourished as a Roman city and the tomb of one of its Roman governors has an inscription mentioning that he was responsible for coin minting, which was modelled on the Greek and Roman types (Harding, 1967: 125).

The Emperor Hadrian visited the city and bestowed on the city the titles *Hadriana* and *Metropolis* (Spijkerman 1978: 218). In the time of the emperor Elagabalus it became a Roman Colony. Consequently, Petra struck the founder type to commemorate that event.

Its coinage under the Roman Empire extends from Hadrian to Elagabalus. The chief type of the Petra coins, during the Roman period, is the city-goddess Fortuna, called Tyche by the Greeks. She was mostly worshiped

by the Romans rather than by the Greeks, and was represented in various cities which each had its own Tyche. Usually adorned with mural crown sheltering the inhabitants of the city as if they were her children, and also was represented with different attributes with a rudder, a ball, and cornucopiae (Larouse 1964: 187).

Coin No. 4 (FIG. 4) is a new variety of coins Nos. 7, 8 and 9 in *"The Coin of Decapolis and Provincia Arabia"* is described below (TABLE 2), in which the bust of Tyche appears for the first time on the Petra coins without the turreted crown. This reminds us of the Nabataean Tyche appearing on al-Khaznah in Petra. Both lack the mural crown and reflects a re-emergence of earlier local tradition which might indicate that the city of Petra had almost no walls surrounding it as a means of protection due to its natural fortifications.



4.a. Obverse of coin No. 4.



4.b. Reverse of coin No. 4.

TABLE 2. Description of coin No. 4.

No.	WT.	Metal size	Obvers	Inscription	AX	Reverse	Inscription
4.	6.3	19	Hadrianus bust r. Laur.wearing Paludamentum and cuirass.	ΑΥΤΟΚΡΑΤΩΡ ΚΑΙ ΚΕΙΣΑΡ ΤΡΑΙΑΝΟC ΑΔΡΙΑΝΟC ΣΕΒΑΣΤΟC	↖	Bust of Tyche r. draped and veiled.	ΑΔΡΙΑΝΗ ΠΕ ΤΡΑΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΤΙC

References

Burnet, A., Amandry, M. and Pau Repollés, P. 1992. *Roman Provincial Coinage* Vol. 1 , Parts I-II. London.
 Franciscan Fathers, 1984. *Guide to Jordan*. Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press.
 Harding, G. L. 1967. *Antiquities of Jordan*. London: Lutterworth Press
 Meshorer, Y. 1981. *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum, The Collection of the American Numismatic Society, part 6, Pal-*

estine-South Arabia. New York: The American Numismatic Society.
 Hill, G. 1981. *Catalogue of Greek Coins of Arabia Mesopotamia and Persia*. Arnaldo Forni.
Larouse Encyclopedia of Mythology, 1964. London: Paul Hamlyn.
 Rosenberger, M. 1978. *The Coinage of Eastern Palestine and Legionary Countermarks, Bar-Kochba Overstrucks*. Jerusalem.
 Spijkerman, A. 1978. *The Coins of the Decapolis and Provincia Arabia*. Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press.