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Four Notes Regarding Reattribution of some City Coins of Arabia, Galilee and the Decapolis

Alexander Kaplun

Abstract: State of preservation and rarity of some ancient coins sometimes deceive the researchers who describe them, leading to attribution to wrong mint or period. Discovery of additional examples and reanalysis of already published coins allowed us to reattribute three Roman Provincial coin types reported as minted in Cyrene, Adraa and Tiberias to, respectively, Bostra, Petra and Epidaurus. Another type of Faustina Junior from Gerasa was reattributed to Crispina.

Key words: Ancient Numismatics, Roman Provincials, Tiberias, Bostra, Petra, Adraa, Epidaurus, Gerasa, Legio III Cyrenaica

Zusammenfassung: Werden neue Münzen bekannt, besteht die Möglichkeit, Deutungen und Zuweisungen von seltenen und schlecht erhaltenen Münzen neu zu hinterfragen und eventuell zu revidieren. In diesem Beitrag können nun anhand von neuem Material für drei Typen die bisher angenommenen Prägestätten Kyrene, Adraa und Tiberias zugunsten von Bostra, Petra und Epidauros korrigiert werden. Ein weiterer Münztyp lässt sich so statt der Faustina iunior nun Crispina zuweisen.

Schlagwörter: Antike Numismatik, kaiserzeitliche Städteprägungen, Tiberias, Bostra, Petra, Adraa, Epidauros, Gerasa, Legio III Cyrenaica

Note 1: From Cyrene to Bostra

A coin of Faustina Senior, with head of Zeus Ammon on the reverse¹, has been known for over a century since it has been published by Ludvig Müller² who attributed it to Cyrene, which produced multiple issues depicting Ammon. The only currently known specimen of this type is from Lindgren collection and is now in the collection of the American Numismatic Society (**fig. 1a**)³.

The style of this coin is very different from other Cyrene issues, and actually very similar to a coin of Antoninus Pius from Bostra (Arabia), presumably struck for the Legio III Cyrenaica⁴.

Here we report another example of this type (**fig. 1b**). Most likely this coin was struck in Bostra in parallel with the issue in the name of Antoninus Pius, which has the same reverse type, probably struck with the same die (**fig. 1c**)⁵. Moreover, this type shares the obverse die with a published coin of Faustina depicting

Tyche and with the legend BOCTPA on the reverse (**fig. 1d**)⁶. Thus, it is now certain that this is a coin of Bostra and not of Cyrene.

Several posthumous issues of Faustina Senior were struck in Bostra⁷, all featuring ΘΕΑ in front of the empress name. In addition, the empress portrait on the posthumous issues is veiled. The obverse legend of the coin in **fig. 1d** (Kindler type 7) is ΦΑΥΣΤΕΙΝΑ ΚΕΒΑΚΤ, suggesting that it is most likely a lifetime is-

¹ [RPC IV.1 \(online\) temp. no. 3608](#).

² Müller et al. 1860 Volume I, p. 172, type 449.

³ [Inv. no. 1998.18.177](#); previously Lindgren collection: Lindgren III p. 86, no. 1590.

⁴ Kindler 1983 p. 93, type 21.

⁵ Meshorer 2013 p. 149 Bostra 10.

⁶ [New York, American Numismatic Society, inv. no. 1944.100.69247](#); see Kindler 1983 p. 107, type 7.

⁷ Kindler 1983 pp. 107–108, types 8–11; RPC IV.3 (online) temp. nos. 6700–6702, 6704–6706, 6365.



Fig. 1a: Coin of Faustina Senior from the collection of the [American Numismatic Society \(1998.18.177\)](#)



Fig. 1b: Additional specimen of the same type, from private collection



Fig. 1c: Coin of Bostra from Sofaer collection (Meshorer 2013 p. 149 Bostra 10) sharing reverse die with the Faustina coins shown on 1a and 1b



Fig. 1d: Coin of Bostra from the collection of the [American Numismatic Society \(1944.100.69247\)](#) sharing obverse die with the Faustina coins shown on 1a and 1b



sue⁸. This new attribution allows to narrow down the timeframe of the production of the Zeus-Ammon type to AD 138–140, effectively brings to conclusion the discussion started by Arie Kindler⁹ who was only able to date the Antoninus Pius/Zeus-Ammon issue to the reign of Antoninus Pius. All four obverse/reverse combinations are very scarce, supporting limited emission of these types likely intended to show connection of Legio III Cyrenaica with the city of Bostra. Furthermore, Kindler has suggested that the type of Antoninus Pius/Zeus Ammon, despite having legends in Greek, is actually a part of Legio III emission of three denominations. The two bigger denominations bear Latin inscriptions which allow to date them to the third consulate of Antoninus Pius, relating to the time period AD 140 to 143. If indeed these coins were struck at the same time, the date of the Faustina/Zeus-Ammon issue can be further narrowed down to AD 140.

*

Note 2: From Adraa to Petra

The following type is not entirely unknown as well. It has been published by Ya'akov Meshorer et al. as part of the Sofaer Collection and mistakenly attributed to Adraa¹⁰, and described as depicting seated Heracles holding club, with reference to Augustus Spijkerman's catalogue¹¹, indeed depicting Heracles. The state of preservation of the two coins in the Sofaer Collection does not allow to read the legends with confidence. Since that publication at least 10 additional coins of this type have surfaced on the numismatic market: CNG auctions¹², Shick VCoins¹³ (**fig. 2**), eBay pharaoh_crypt, and 6 more illustrated below, most struck with the same pair of dies. Combining visible details of available coins allows identifying the image on the reverse as seated Tyche holding a trophy, typical for issues of Petra¹⁴. She is holding the trophy with her left hand over her shoulder. Her empty right hand is stretched forward. The reverse legend is retrograde and mixed Greek/Latin: PETA COANIA. This issue



Fig. 2: Coin of Petra, Obv. Elagabalus, Rev. Seated Tyche holding a trophy (VCoins Shick, as Caracalla)



could coincide with the very common founder type of Elagabalus¹⁵ and with significantly scarcer smaller denomination depicting Tyche seated in a distyle temple¹⁶. The weight of the latter type is usually between 6.5 and 8 grams, suggesting that the coins without temple (with typical weight of just over 4 grams) belong to a different denomination or at least a separate issue, and are not just a variety of the Tyche in temple type.

The majority of known coins of the founder type are of degraded style, some to the extreme degree with completely unreadable legend

⁸ [RPC IV.3 \(online\) temp. no. 6699](#) dates c. AD 138–140.

⁹ Kindler 1983 pp. 91–94.

¹⁰ Meshorer 2013 p. 145 Adraa 12, 13.

¹¹ Spijkerman 1978 p. 62 Adraa 13.

¹² Classical Numismatic Group, Inc., see <https://cngcoins.com/Coin.aspx?CoinID=131599>

¹³ https://www.vcoins.com/en/stores/shick_coins/202/product/decapolis_petra_caracalla_198217_ad_seated_tyche/445284/Default.aspx

¹⁴ Lichtenberger 2011.

¹⁵ Spijkerman 1978 p. 236, Petra 56.

¹⁶ Spijkerman 1978 p. 236, Petra 55.





Fig. 3: Coin of Petra, Obv. Elagabalus, Rev. Seated Tyche holding a trophy (from private collection)



Fig. 4: Coin of Petra, Obv. Elagabalus, Rev. Seated Tyche holding a trophy (from private collection)



Fig. 5: Coin of Petra, Obv. Elagabalus Rev. Seated Tyche holding a trophy (from private collection)



Fig. 6: Coin of Petra, Obv. Elagabalus Rev. Seated Tyche holding a trophy (from private collection)



Fig. 7: Coin of Petra, Obv. Elagabalus, Rev. Seated Tyche holding a trophy (from private collection). Small flan



Fig. 8: Coin of Petra, Obv. Elagabalus, Rev. Seated Tyche holding a trophy (from private collection). Crude style

and very crude style. Interestingly, two of the coins of the new type (struck with the same dies, Sofaer collection 13¹⁷ and **fig. 8**) are of ›barbaric‹ style as well.

*

Note 3: From Tiberias to Epidaurus in Achaea

In the first corpus of coins of Tiberias¹⁸ published in 1961, Kindler included a coin from the collection of Vienna Kunsthistorisches Mu-



Fig. 9: Coin of Antoninus Pius from the collection of Vienna Kunsthistorisches Museum (GR 22478), © KHM



seum, GR 22478 (**fig. 9**). The coin depicts the laureate head of Antoninus Pius on the obverse and a temple with four columns enclosing a

seated statue of a deity, which Kindler attributed as Zeus, on the reverse. While the coin is rather worn and corroded, Kindler suggested reading of the reverse legend as [TIB] CLA. The attribution of Kindler is commonly accepted¹⁹, despite the fact that no additional coins of this type have been identified since Kindler’s original report. Coins of Tiberias struck after the time of Hadrianus are very rare, with most of the types represented by less than five specimens, and therefore the absence of additional examples was not particularly surprising.

However, close examination of the coin published by Kindler allows to suggest an alternative reading of the inscription. On the left of the temple one can read IEPAC (**fig.**



Fig. 10: Reading of the legend on the reverse, left of the temple

10), which should state for IEPAC, ›Holy‹, or IEP(AC) AC(VAOV), ›Holy with the right of Asylum‹. Both readings make attribution to Tiberias highly unlikely since there is no evidence that this city carried any of these titles at the

¹⁷ Meshorer 2013 p. 145 Adraa 13.

¹⁸ Kindler 1961.

¹⁹ See [RPC IV.3 \(online\) temp. no. 7284](#).





Fig. 11: Coin of Epidaurus, Obv. Antoninus Pius, Rev. Asclepius seated left within tetrastyle temple
([Dr. Busso Peus Nachfolger, Auction 378 \[2020-04-28\] lot 1024](#))

time of Antoninus Pius²⁰. Moreover, this reading allows us to identify the coin published by Kindler as one of Epidaurus in Achaea, RPC IV.1, 4637 (**fig. 11**)²¹. Comparison of the two coins reveals that they are clearly belonging to the same type. This new attribution widens the period in which coins were not struck in Tiberias to nearly seven decades, from the emission in the name of Hadrian dated to the local era AP [101] (AD 119/120) until that of Commodus dated PΞZ [167] (AD 185/186).

*

Note 4: From Faustina Junior to Crispina

A coin of Gerasa attributed to Faustina Junior has been published by Spijkerman with reference to the Rosenberger collection²² (**fig. 12**). This coin is quite worn and only three last



Fig. 12: Coin of Gerasa illustrating type 14 (Faustina Junior) in the book of Spijkerman (Spijkerman 1978 plate 33, type 14)

letters of the eminent name are visible, ...INA. Multiple additional examples of the type have been reported since, including one in RPC²³

and few more in trade. The type of draped bust of empress/draped bust of Artemis has been struck in Gerasa for Lucilla²⁴, Crispina²⁵ and Julia Domna²⁶ and existence of the same type for Faustina Junior would not be unexpected. However, examination of available



Fig. 13: Coin of Gerasa of Crispina, misattributed as Faustina Junior ([Roma Numismatics Ltd., e-sale 52 \[2019-01-10\] lot 539](#))

images of the coins attributed to this type reveals that in all of the cases the name is either worn and could not be read (such as in case of the coin illustrated by Spijkerman), or it can be clearly recognized as the well-known type of

²⁰ See Rigsby 1996, who does not list Tiberias under Antonine asylum-cities.

²¹ [RPC IV.1 \(online\) temp. no. 4637](#).

²² Spijkerman 1978 p. 160, type 14; Rosenberger 1978 Gerasa 18.

²³ [RPC IV.3 \(online\) temp. no. 6596](#) (2020-08-25). The specimens were currently checked for validation.

²⁴ Spijkerman 1978 p. 162, type 19; [RPC IV.3 \(online\) temp. no 6601](#).

²⁵ Spijkerman 1978 p. 164, type 27; [RPC IV.3 \(online\) temp. no 6613](#).

²⁶ Lichtenberger 2003, MZ106.



Crispina²⁷ (an example from one of the recent sales is illustrated in **fig. 13**)²⁸. So far, no specimen that can clearly be attributed to Faustina Junior has been published or appeared on numismatic market, and until such example surfaces the type of Faustina Junior/Bust of Artemis should be either excluded from the corpus of Gerasa coins or at least marked as questionable.

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Appendix: Coins

No. 1 (fig. 1b)

Bostra, Faustina Senior.

Obv: ΦΑΥΣΤΕΙΝΑ ΣΕΒΑΚΤ. Veiled and draped bust of Faustina Senior to right.

Rev: [ΑΜΜ]ΩΝ. Draped bust of Zeus-Ammon to right, with ram's horn.



20 mm, 5.16 g, 6 h

No. 2 (figs. 3–8)

Petra, Elagabalus

Obv: IMP M AV ANTΩNIN. Laureate bust of Elagabalus right, undraped.

Rev: PETA COΛNIA (retrograde). Tyche seated on rocks, holding trophy with her left hand over her shoulder. Her empty right hand is stretched forward.



16.5 mm, 4.89 g, 6 h (fig. 3)

²⁷ For example: [Roma Numismatics Ltd., E-Sale 36 \(2017-05-27\), lot 213](#); [Ira & Larry Goldberg Coins & Collectibles Inc., Auction 98 \(2017-06-06\), lot 1757](#); [Classical Numismatic Group, Inc., E-Auction 307 \(2013-07-24\), lot 204](#) and more.

²⁸ [Roma Numismatics Ltd., E-Sale 52 \(2019-01-10\), lot 539](#).



16.5 mm, 4.19 g, 6 h (**fig. 4**)15.8 mm, 4.70 g, 12 h (**fig. 5**)16.2 mm, 5.14 g, 12 h (**fig. 6**)12.6 mm, 2.15 g, 6 h (small flan, **fig. 7**)15.1 mm, 4.01 g, 6 h (different dies of crude style, unreadable legends, **fig. 8**)

Photographs of figs. 1b, 3–8 by A. Pashin

Figures in the appendix are shown in 1:1 scale.

Coins in the text are enlarged for a better iconographic recognition.