

AN OFFICIAL *mna* WEIGHT AT THE *MUSEUM BIBLICUM*, MONTSERRAT

This remarkable piece was acquired by Father Bonaventura Ubach (1879-1960) for the *Museum Biblicum* at the Benedictine Abbey of Montserrat. During his productive trips to the Near East<sup>1</sup> he bought a very rich collection of objects. The main purpose of his many acquisitions of antiquities was the illustration of the text of the Bible. Since the *mna* is one of the weights appearing in both the *OT* and the *NT* (for example *Esd.* 2, 68, or *Lc* 19, 24), it was to be expected that this piece would call his attention.

The Montserrat official *mna* (inv. no. 440.100) is a 743 gr bronze<sup>2</sup> piece, 12 cm in diameter. It features three concentric circles in relief on the verso. In the Museum files it is stated that it comes from Antiochia<sup>3</sup>, probably the place where Ubach bought it. However, following Gatier (1991, 439) it seems more likely that it originates from Seleucia and can be dated to the year 106/105 BC.



Transcript

Inside the frame:

ΕΤΟΥΣ Δ  
ΔΗΜΟΣΙΑ

After these words, one finds on the left a God's head (Hermes Agoraios?)<sup>4</sup> standing on a weighing scale<sup>5</sup>. To the right of this head, there are two *cornua copiae* in mirror shape crossing each other, and the ear of a wheat stalk.

MNA

Outside the frame, written around the edge of the weight:

ZHNO[B]IOY

<sup>1</sup> Bonaventura Ubach, *El Sinai: Viatge per l'Aràbia Pètria cercant les petjades d'Israel*; Abadia de Montserrat; Barcelona, 1955.

<sup>2</sup> For the determination of the metal the pieces are made of we rely on the indications given by various sources.

<sup>3</sup> Gatier (1991) 439-440: "l'adjectif δημόσιον ou δημόσια, pour désigner le poids, paraît réservé aux deux cités d'Antiochia et Seleucie".

<sup>4</sup> Hermes Agoraios is the patron of the *agoranomoi*, officials in charge of controlling, i.a., the standard weights in the local market. The Zenobios mentioned on this *mna* was probably such an *agoranomos* (cf., e.g., M.G. Raschke, "The Office of Agoranomos in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt", *Akten des XIII. Internationalen Papyrologenkongresses Marburg/Lahn 1971*, München 1974, pp. 349-356).

<sup>5</sup> We have plenty of examples of this kind of scale from Greek and Roman times. See the article "Schnellwaage" in *Der Neue Pauly*, vol. 11, 199-203.

The space where the B of ZHNOBIOY should have stood looks as if the weight has been restored and there is a discontinuation of the decoration which goes all around. This explains the absence of the letter. The parallel pieces do present it and no other reading can be suggested.

This particular type of weight has been described and dated by Gatier (1991). Our aim is to update his list of parallel pieces<sup>6</sup>, not only with the Montserrat piece (= number 4 in our chart), but also with the piece from Malibu (= number 9). The basic difference between these pieces is their weight, as the decoration and the manufacturing are practically identical. Variations in weight oscillate between 544 - 925 gr. In fact, the weight of the piece at Montserrat (743 gr) comes pretty close to the weight of the copy kept in Paris (= number 3; 721 or 752 gr; cf. Gatier, 1991, 438, top).

In the following chart we have organized the pieces by weight and give details about their location and relevant bibliography.

1.	IGLS IV 1273	± 10.5 cm	± 500 gr	Lost	Jalabert - Mouterde 1955, no. 1273, p. 34.
2.	Jerusalem, Conv. Saint Anne	11.8 x 1 cm	615 gr	Verso three concentric circles	<i>Jerusalem</i> , 89-90, photo fig. 35 = SEG 41, 1991, 1536; Gatier 1991, 435-437
3.	Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris (coll. Froehner) XII 7633, inv. Babelon 931	11.8 x 1 cm	721 gr (inv.: 752?)		Gatier, 1991, 437-8, photo p. 437 fig. 2
4.	Montserrat, Museum Biblicum 440.100	12 cm	743 gr	Verso three concentric circles	
5.	BM gr. 1925, 7-20, 1 <sup>7</sup>	11.7 x 1.2 cm	784.4 gr Lead		Cook 1987, 46-47, no. 38 = SEG 37, 1987, no. 1748
6.	Nicosia Museum (purchased from the Jeladgian collection)	11.5 cm	790 gr		Mitford 1961, 142-143 = SEG 20, 1964 no. 322
7.	Guillaume Poche, Aleppo	± 10 cm	840 gr	Verso flat	Jalabert - Mouterde 1950, 1
8.	Jerusalem, Israel Museum 79.32.99 <sup>8</sup>	12 cm	843.5 gr		<i>Israel Museum News</i> , 1980, p. 36
9.	Getty Museum at Malibu 96.AI.198 <sup>9</sup>	12 x 0.8-0.9 cm	885 gr Lead?	Verso concentric circles	True - Hamma 1994, 307-308, no. 160
10.	Guillaume Poche, Aleppo	± 10 cm	925 gr	Verso two concentric circles	Jalabert - Mouterde 1950, 1
11.	??			Lost	Michon, 317

Furthermore, there exists a 2-mina piece from Seleucia: 1143 gr. (> 1 mina = 572 gr.); see Gatier (1991) 439.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Gatier (1991) 440: "ce poids de Séleucie est connu en six exemplaires au moins, et sans doute beaucoup plus".

<sup>7</sup> We would like to thank Mr. Donald Bailey for producing the details about this piece in the British Museum.

<sup>8</sup> We would like to thank Mr. Javier del Barco for providing the details about this piece in the Israel Museum of Jerusalem. We have been informed that there is a similar weight in the Rockefeller Museum (Jerusalem), but we have not been successful in establishing contact with this institution and thus cannot provide any further details.

<sup>9</sup> We would like to thank Mrs. Carrie Tovar for providing a photograph and all the details about this piece in the Malibu Getty Museum.

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