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EGYPTIAN BRONZE COINS OF ANTIOCHUS IV OF SYRIA

Eckart Schlösser

During the 6. Syrian War (170–168 B.C.) Antiochus IV of Syria invaded Egypt twice. One question arising from these invasions is whether he had coins issued in his name for the Egyptian territory. Before considering this subject, the course of events has to be taken into account.

In 193 B.C. Ptolemaios V Epiphanes from Egypt married Cleopatra I, a daughter of Antiochus III of Syria. His death in 180 B.C. left his wife as regent for their three children Ptolemaios VI Philometor, Ptolemaios VIII Euergetes and Cleopatra II. When she died around 177/76 B.C.¹, the eunuch Eulaios together with the former slave Lenaios seized the power and run the Egyptian government as guardians for the child king Philometor. They crowned their unscrupulous and incompetent rule with a declaration of war against Syria in order to regain former possessions, in particular Coelesyria. They even claimed the whole of the Seleucid Empire for Egypt. Beforehand, Euergetes and Cleopatra II, who was also the wife of her brother Philometor, were proclaimed joint rulers of Philometor in 170 B.C. in the capital Alexandria^{2, 3}. Antiochus IV accepted the challenge and lead a strong army against Egypt. In a battle at a place between Mount Kasion and the fortress Pelusium the Egyptians were utterly defeated. This decisive encounter was formerly thought to have taken place in 169 B.C.¹, but new information from deciphered papyri indicates that this event occurred already in November of 170 B.C.⁴. Under cover of an armistice, Antiochus succeeded in obtaining possession of Pelusium, the key to Egypt. After this act of treachery, the land lay open to the invader. Most of the Egyptian army retreated to Alexandria, the residence of Euergetes and Cleopatra II. Antiochus tried to take possession of the metropolis, but without success. Due to the circumstances, Philometor had to accept the conditions of the victorious invader, mainly a renunciation of all claims to Syrian territory and more important the recognition of Antiochus as his protector, which meant a disguised sovereignty over Egypt. This agreement prompted the Alexandrines to throw off their allegiance to Philometor and they proclaimed Euergetes king of Egypt. Antiochus could now pose as supporter of the legitimate government of Philometor in opposition to the Alexandrines. In summer 169 B.C. Antiochus retired to take care of a jewish rebellion in Palestine. He might have hoped that Philometor and Euergetes would fight for supremacy, however, Philometors reconciliation with his brother and return to Alexandria forced the Seleucid to reconsider his position. When in spring 168 B.C. he again invaded Egypt he was faced with two alternatives. He could either pose as a purely military commander punishing the Egyptians for breach of a covenant or he could boldly claim the throne of Egypt

¹ Otto, Walter: Zur Geschichte der Zeit des 6. Ptolemäers. Abh. d. Bayr. Akad. d. Wiss. Phil.-Hist. Abt. NF 11, München (1934), 2, 40–42, 53–55, 58–59.

² Bikermann, Elie: Sur la chronologie de la Sixième Guerre de Syria. Chronique d’Egypte 27, (1952) 396–403.

³ Volkmann, Hans: Ptolemaios. In Pauly-Wissowa Realencyclopädie XXIII (1959) 1705–08.

⁴ Skeat, T. C.: Notes on Ptolemaic Chronology. II «The twelfth year which is also the first»: the invasion of Egypt by Antiochos Epiphanes. Journal of Egyptian Archaeology 47, (1961) 107–112.

by right of conquest. According to ancient sources ¹ he apparently chose the latter alternative and took the investiture as Pharaoh at Memphis, as Alexander the Great had done before him in 332 B.C. as well as most Roman Emperors would do in later years. Thereupon Philometor, who was once again supreme ruler of Egypt, sent a delegation to the Senate of Rome asking for assistance against Antiochus. The Romans just having won the final battle against Perseus of Macedonia in 168 B.C. at Pydna complied with the request. They sent the legate C. Popillius Laenus with an ultimatum for the Seleucid to retire from Egypt. He met with Antiochus at Eleusis, drew a circle around him with his walking stick and asked him to answer the ultimatum before leaving the circle. Antiochus, aware that the Roman army was free to act, thought it wise not to try the powerful Roman war machinery which had already cut the ambitious plans of his father Antiochus III in 190 B.C. in the decisive victory in Magnesia at the Meander. The crushing and final defeat of Perseus was an unmistakable signal to Antiochus, which he prudently followed. In this respect, the interesting suggestion that he was more interested in his eastern affairs than in Egypt ⁵ merits further consideration.

In regard to the question whether Antiochus had coins issued in his name for the Egyptian territory, the voluminous series of bronze coins with Serapis or Isis on the obverse ⁶ must be excluded, despite its apparent resemblance with coins common in Egypt. There are convincing arguments that they were issued by Antiochus at Antiocheia and were meant to circulate in Syria⁷. But there are two coins which must be attributed to the brief period of Seleucid presence in Egypt.

1 170/169 B.C.

Obv. Diad. head of Zeus Ammon r.

Rev. (A)NTIOXO(Y) (BAΣIΛEΩΣ) Two eagles standing l. on thunderbolt

Ref. Svoronos 1422, pl. 48, 7⁸



1



2



2 168 B.C.

Obv. Head of Cleopatra I as Isis r.

Rev. ANTIOXOY (BAΣIΛEΩΣ) One eagle standing l. on thunderbolt

Ref. SNG Copenhagen, Syria-Seleucid Kings No. 206

⁵ Tarn, W.W.: *The Greeks in Bactria and India*. Cambridge (1951), 187-190.

⁶ BMC (*Seleucid Kings*) p. 38, No. 42/7; Paris (*Bibliothèque Nationale*) No. 580/97.

⁷ Newell, E.T.: *The Seleucid Mint of Antioch* (1917), 26-27.

⁸ Svoronos, J.N.: *Τὰ Νομίσματα τοῦ κρατοῦς τῶν Πτολεμαίων*, Vol. I-IV, Athens (1904-08).

Coin No. 1 has already been attributed to Egypt⁷. The two eagles on the reverse are regarded as sign of a joint rule of Antiochus and Philometor¹. This interpretation seems to be intelligible as Philometor has issued coins with a similar reverse for an apparent joint rule with his brother Euergetes (Svoronos No. 1423-28 and 1430). In this case coin No. 1 must have been issued in 170/169 during the brief joint rule of Antiochus and Philometor, before the reconciliation of the latter with his brother Euergetes.

Coin No. 2 has only one eagle on the reverse, a possible indication of an undivided rule. It would be intelligible to attribute it to the period concomitant with the investiture of Antiochus as Pharaoh in 168 B.C.

Thus, the different designs on the reverse of the two coins seem to corroborate the historical events, that is first a joint rule of Antiochus and then undivided sovereignty. At which place were these coins minted? As Alexandria and thus the principal mint of Egypt was never in the possession of the Seleucid one has to look for a different city. During the brief joint rule of Antiochus and Philometor Memphis, the ancient metropolis of Egypt, was again seat of the government. Thus, the coins of Antiochus for Egypt were most likely minted at Memphis. Both coins are extremely rare. Either their output was very small or all available coins were melted down to exterminate any reminiscence of the «Syrian tyrant» Antiochus, comparable to the «damnatio memoriae» practiced in Roman times.

Acknowledgement: The photo of coin No. 2 was kindly provided by A. Kromann, curator of the Royal Collection of Coins and Medals at the Danish National Museum Copenhagen.

A COIN OF COROPASSUS IN LYCAONIA

Hyla A. Troxell

Greek Imperial coins from Coropissus in Cilicia Tracheia have long been known. They were struck between Hadrian and Valerian, and are inscribed ΚΟΡΟΠΙΣΣΕΩΝ or ΚΟΡΟΠΕΙΣΣΕΩΝ, with, where space permits, the addition of ΤΗC ΚΗΤΙC (or ΚΙΗΤΙC) ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΕΩC¹.

A similarly-named town, Coropassus in Lycaonia, has been known only from Strabo, who places it in the northeast of Lycaonia, on the major road from Ephesus to eastern Anatolia, 120 stades or 21¼ km west of Cappadocian Garsaura, modern Aksaray².

This article publishes the second bit of evidence for Coropassus, a coin. The piece was advertised quite correctly in 1940 by a Swiss dealer as being from the Lycaonian city, and was so understood by the purchaser, Edward T. Newell of the American Numismatic Society³. Unfortunately, at some unknown subsequent date the coin was placed in the Society's trays under Cilician Coropissus, where it was recognized only

¹ BMC Lycaonia etc., pp. lvi-lvii and 65; and W. H. Waddington, Numismatique de l'Isaurie et de la Lycaonie, RN 1883, pp. 31-36. The E's and Σ's are always lunate; the Ω often has the form W.

² Strabo XII. 6.1; XIV. 2.29. I have arbitrarily used Strabo's familiar spelling Coropassus, rather than the Coropessus which the coin indicates. Either is surely the same word as the Cilician Coropissus.

³ Münzhandlung Basel, Fixed Price List 29, March 1940, 46.