

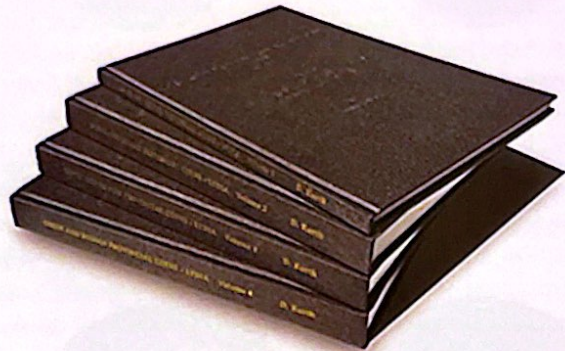
BOOK REVIEWS

D. Kurth, *Greek and Roman Provincial Coins. Lydia.* 4 vols. Sunrise Publications. ISBN (4-vol. set): 978-605-7673-24-4. Istanbul, 2020. €449 (\$525).

This set of volumes, whose genesis is traced on pp. ix-xii, began with an attempt to describe the provincial coins of Lydia, and later expanded to include Classical, Hellenistic, and imperial silver coins of the region. Its ambition is huge, and the realization, within limits, commendable.

The work amounts to a kind of union catalogue that combines all the published resources with many private and public collections. The total number of coins comes to over 6,300, far more than in all the published collections combined. Moreover, the number of specimens reflects the number of varieties (in the case of the imperial coins), which makes it a much richer resource. It invites comparison with *Roman Provincial Coinage*, which documents coins from the 10 “core collections” as well as others available in the literature. I have not checked to see whether the criteria for segregating a variety are identical in the two works, and occasionally this one duplicates varieties; and of course *RPC* includes many times the number of coins. But for the moment *RPC* is incomplete, with volumes 5 (the Severans), 8 (Philip I) and X (Valerian–end) inaccessible, so this is a valuable resource. Still, there are numbers of coins which are not to be found here at all, so the reader should not be surprised to find his own coin lacking. The Berlin collection, important for both the Löbbecke and multiple Imhoof-Blumer collections, is hardly mentioned except as the latter is represented in Imhoof’s various works, and the rich Vienna collection is mentioned mostly from secondary works.

I have one quibble. The citation format can be misleading. I take as an example a coin from my own current area of interest, *RPC* 10 (Valerian-Diocletian). Nysa no. 246 is a common enough copper of Valerian, rev. ΘΕΟΓΑΜΙΑ in wreath. The citations include Regling’s *Die Münzen von Nysa* no. 190; two citations from Mionnet (included in Regling), coins from SNG Copenhagen and Munich, and Paris 891 (which is presumably one of the Mionnet coins). But there are two more specimens in Berlin, not cited (though mentioned



by Regling), one of which (no. 445/1896) is the best preserved. (As an indication of the ephemerality of all things, I now see that a better coin still was sold earlier this year by Naumann, sale 85, 5 Jan. 2020, lot 289). And the reader will be hard-put to know that the illustrated specimen is Paris 891. An asterisk against the illustrated coin in each entry would have been helpful.

The book will be extremely useful to the serious collector; even when there are missing varieties the catalogue gives an excellent overview of the mints surveyed. The photographs are splendid; the text is largely error-free, and the production is lavish. This will, unfortunately, limit the circulation of the work to those who can afford \$525.00.

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R. Barkay. *Coinage of the Nabataeans.* Qedem 58. The Institute of Archaeology: The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. ISSN 0333-5844. 2019. \$72.

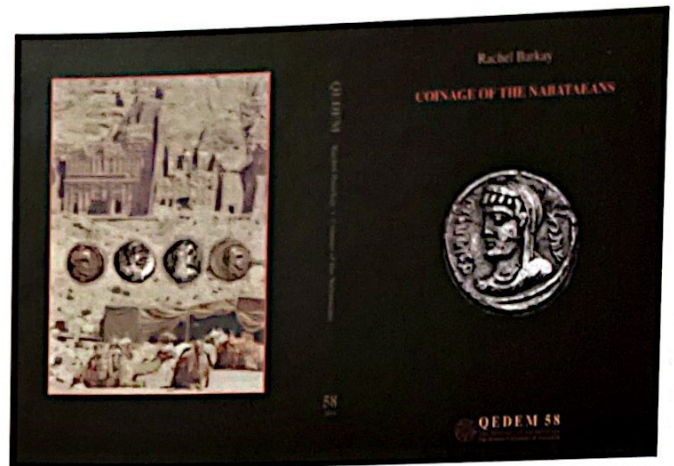
From both a numismatic and historical perspective, Nabataea has primarily been discussed in terms of its geographic and temporal relevance to other nearby civilizations. The history of the Nabataean people has been but a footnote to the stories of these better-known kingdoms and empires. Judea collaborated and warred with the nearby Nabataeans, the transfer of spices from the East to the West was facilitated by Nabataean traders, and the Roman Empire reached its apex of expansion under Trajan by absorbing Nabataea, one of several Arabian kingdoms. These perspectives fail to recognize the Nabataean Kingdom as an independent society with a unique culture, religion, mores, and coinage.

Officially published in 2019 but first appearing in early 2020, this book is a long-awaited source on both the coinage and history of the Nabataean Kingdom. Barkay offers the numismatic and archaeological community a treatise that truly delights and enlightens. She provides insight and perspective that greatly add to our understanding and enjoyment of this ancient society.

The Nabateans were primarily nomadic during most of their existence as an independent kingdom, nominally from the third to second century BCE to the end of the first century CE, culminating in their integration into the Roman Empire in 106 CE. The predominant issuance of Nabataean coinage occurred over a bit longer than two centuries, from the easy to remember period of approximately 100 BCE–100 CE. Towards the end of this period, their nomadic lifestyle shifted to a more agrarian economy, particularly as the Romans took over the spice trade, leaving little else to commercially maintain the Nabatean people.

The literature describing Nabatean coinage to date has been quite limited. The first serious study focused solely on Nabataean coinage was by the Israeli numismatist Ya'akov Meshorer, who sadly passed in 2004. His book, *Nabataean Coins* (Qedem 3), was published in 1975, and was the English translation of his PhD dissertation.¹ Meshorer's book has been the standard reference in the field but has become somewhat dated over time. Beyond a few highly regarded articles by Karl Schmitt-Korte in the 1990s and Barkay, Martin Huth, and Oliver Hoover over the past decade, little material has been published to assist the interested collector and antiquarian in understanding the numismatic nature of Nabataea. It is also worth noting that the American Numismatic Society is fortunate to own a significant collection of Nabataean coins, as described in Oliver Hoover's 2011 *ANS Magazine* article.²

The book is comprised of 12 chapters, an extensive bibliography, and a catalog of coins, plates, and provenances. The catalog describes each of the individual



241 coin types—237 numerically ordered coin types and four supplementary coin types organized in chronological order by each king's reign, silver before bronze within each category within the reign. The first two chapters review the history and coinage of the early anonymous period of Nabataea as a kingdom. Starting from Obodas I and ending with the last king, Rabbel II, each of the following eight chapters describe the history of one of the kings or the single usurper (Syllaeus). The last two chapters are different from the first ten chapters. The penultimate chapter is written by Oliver Hoover and examines a group of scarce lead coins (or tokens) attributed to the Nabataeans during the reign of Aretas IV, the longest reigning king of the Nabataeans (9/8 BCE–40 CE). These intriguing lead coins are especially noteworthy since they emerged several decades after the brief appearance of the lead coins of Alexander Janneus, king of Judea from 103–76 BCE.³ The final chapter of the book summarizes the entirety of Nabataean coinage and discusses certain topics close to the heart of the author, such as the queens of Nabataea (note the cover coin of the book, Queen Hagaru I, wife of Obodas II). The coin catalog follows the chapters and is well designed for the collector or historian. The catalog provides a clear description of each of the 241 coins by describing the obverse and reverse design as well as the inscription in English, Hebrew, and ancient Aramaic. This catalog is followed by fifteen plates composed of high quality photographs of nearly all of the 241 coin types (three coins are drawn or not pictured because a photograph of the coin was unavailable). The 149 page book closes

1. Y. Meshorer, *Nabataean Coins Qedem 3*, The Institute of Archaeology, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1975.

2. Oliver Hoover. 2011. "Petra on the Hudson: The Nabataeans and their Coins at the America Numismatic Society," *ANS Magazine* 10.1: 20–27.

3. Oliver Hoover (2006), "A Reassessment of Nabataean Lead Coinage in Light of New Discoveries," *Numismatic Chronicle* 166: 105–119; and (2012) "More New Nabatean Lead Issues of Aretas IV," *Israel Numismatic Research* 7: 107–113.

with a list of the name of the source and photographer of each coin illustrated in the plates.

In each chapter, a short history of the king's reign, family members, political intrigues, and relationship with the nearby kingdoms such as Judea, the Seleucid Empire, Ptolemaic Egypt, Parthia, and of course Rome is described. This discussion is followed by a nicely organized description of the coins including the types, inscriptions, years of issue, denominations, and obverse and reverse designs. The many tables distributed throughout each chapter are particularly useful. These tables outline the year, inscription, and design of each coin type. Nabataean coins are often worn and off center, making these coins difficult to attribute. The year of issue is particularly important and often difficult to discern. The information provided in these tables greatly assists the reader in combining partial information culled from a coin such as portions of the obverse and reverse inscriptions and details of the image to produce an accurate attribution.

Key and often controversial issues in Nabataean numismatics are cogently clarified and convincingly presented in proper context. Barkay discusses these issues chronologically, consistent with the flow of the book, such as recent discoveries of new coin types from the time of Obodas I (ca. 99–82 BCE). These coins are designated as Sup. 1 and Sup. 2 and are the earliest known coins minted in Nabataea with an inscription of the name of a king. Sup. 1 is a unique coin based on the classic Alexander the Great tetradrachm with the name of Obodas (rather than Alexander) on the reverse. Sup. 2 (one of two known) is of Ptolemaic derivation with the standard Ptolemaic eagle on the reverse of the coin. Combined with the early anonymous coins of Nabataea which follow Seleucid design practices, these coins clearly demonstrate the Nabataean kingdom being caught in the crosswinds of powerful and nearby empires.

An important and rare coin type (only three known) is the Dushara coin type of Obodas II (30–9 BCE). Dushara, the primary god of the Nabataean pantheon, was syncretically combined with Zeus, as depicted in type #47. Hints of the Nabataean belief system also appear in the consort of Dushara, the primary Nabataean goddess, Allat, symbolized by the headdress on several later Nabataean queens. It is worth noting that Zeus-Dushara reappears on certain lead tokens during the reign of Aretas IV, as discussed in Chapter 11.

An important example of the importance of numismatics to archaeology in general and Nabataean history in particular is exemplified by the discovery, based on an insightful analysis of the numismatic material, that Obodas II ruled Nabataea between Malichus I (59–30 BCE) and

Syllaeus (9–6 BCE).⁴ It was previously believed that a father-son pair, Obodas II and Obodas III, had sequentially ruled Nabataea. The transitional coins from Obodas II to Syllaeus to Aretas IV are quite helpful in this analysis and are wonderful examples of the changing nature and image of a ruler during his reign (somewhat reminiscent of the evolving portrayal of Nero or Caracalla on their coinage).

The aforementioned lead coins (or *tesserae*) in Nabataean numismatics represent something of a quandary. The reason and timing for their issue remain elusive although Hoover (see n. 2) provides a sensible structure for interpreting much of the chronology and imagery of these likely tokens. From a collector's perspective, it would have been preferable if these lead coins or tokens were fully integrated into the catalog of Nabataean coins, both in the catalog of coin types and the plates. It is noteworthy how few of these coins exist (several hundred) and that the bulk of these tokens were found at the same time and place.

A possible enhancement to the book would have been a short description of several transitional coin types minted by the Roman authority but utilizing standard devices common to Nabataean coinage. These few coin types would have made a nice ending as Roman influence took root; although the question as to whether these coins are truly Nabataean (vs. Roman) supports the reasoning for not being included within the series. It is important to note that the author of the book recently published a corrigendum⁵ for any discovered errors.

This book is an outstanding addition to the field of Nabataean archaeology, history, and numismatics. It updates the field in a significant way, integrating recently discovered knowledge, material, and insight into a single volume. For the collector of Nabataean coins, we now have an up-to-date description and catalog of the coinage of the Kingdom coupled with supporting historical and archaeological sources. The book greatly enhances our current knowledge of the field, and is a welcome addition to anyone interested in better understanding the history of Nabataea and its neighbors as well as to collectors who are excited about the coinage of this perplexing, enigmatic, and poorly understood kingdom.

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4. Martin Huth (2010), "Some Nabataean Questions Reconsidered," pp. 213–216, in M. Huth and P. G. van Alfen (eds.), *Coins of the Caravan Kingdoms, Studies in Ancient Arabian Monetization*.

5. R. Barkay, "Addendum to 'Coins of the Nabataeans'," *Israel Numismatic Research*, Volume 15, pp. 127–145, Plates 6–8, 2020