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Miscellaneous Provincials

by

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[PLATE 6]

THE FOLLOWING five coins are all quite poorly-preserved, and although the only things that link them are their condition, their residence in private hands and their status as Roman provincial coins, they nevertheless merit some discussion. Some are new types, others new specimens of imperfectly-recorded types. If nothing else they illustrate the fact that close examination of smaller denominations in indifferent states of preservation can yield dividends.

Hierapolis-Comana, Nero

Obverse: ΝΕΡΩΝ ... ΚΑΙΣΑΡΟΣ ΚΕΒΑΚΤΟΥ. Laureate, draped bust of Nero right. Countermark: NE / ·Z· in circular incuse.

Reverse: ΙΕΡΟΠΟΛΙΤΩΝ ΤΩΝ ... Mountain with twin peaks, below, retrograde B.

RPC I, 3661. **Plate 6, 1.**

1. AE, 19mm, 7.01g, 5h.

The type was first published in *RPC I*, when a single specimen was known (our specimen appears to be from different dies). There it was tentatively proposed that the letter B on the reverse was a date ('year 2'), with reservations, because - unusually - there was no formula for 'year' preceding the number. A larger denomination with similar types, but with B at the end of the obverse legend, was published in the *RPC Supplement I*, S-3661A. The likelihood that B is indeed a date is reinforced by the new countermark on our specimen, which presumably refers to regnal year seven of Nero (NE[PΩNOC] Z: **Plate 6, 2**). If this interpretation is correct, the coinage with 'year 2' was produced in the first years of Nero's reign, between c.AD 54-56 (Nero's portrait is clearly a young one), and the countermark 'year 7' between c.AD 59-61.¹

Uncertain Caesarea, year 3

Obverse: ΚΑΙΣΑΡΕ... Bust of Apollo, with bow behind shoulder, right.

Reverse: Tripod; to left, upwards, ΕΤΟΥΚ, to right, upwards, Γ.

RPC Supplement I S-3658A. **Plate 6, 4.**

¹ Another specimen of this coin type, with the same countermark, appeared in an auction (Gorny & Mosch 160, 9 October 2007, lot 2018, where the countermark was misread as MEZ).

2. AE, 15mm, 3.35g, 1h.

This type was first published by Balázs Kaposy, who assigned it to Caesarea in Cappadocia.² In the *RPC Supplement I* this attribution was tentatively followed.³ However, as noted there, the attribution is not without problems: the ethnic and letter forms suggest an early imperial date, but very little bronze was issued at Caesarea under the Julio-Claudian emperors (the only dated issues are those of Claudius, of year 8 = AD 48, *RPC I* 3655-3658). It is possible that this type should still be assigned to Caesarea and is post-Julio-Claudian, but an alternative identification suggests itself, again from the reign of Claudius.

There are some enigmatic bronze coins with a portrait of Claudius dated 'year 3' and 'year 5' with the ethnic KAICAPEΩN which seem to belong to an otherwise unknown Caesarea (*RPC I* 4084-4086, 'Uncertain Caesarea(s)'). Of these, the issue dated year 3 (*RPC I* 4084, **Plate 6, 3**) has the same letter forms as our coin, including the line above the number Γ, while those of year 5 (*RPC I* 4085 and 4086, **Plate 6, 6-7**) have a square C and E instead of a lunate C and €̄. Provenances for one of the types of year 5, *RPC I* 4086, strongly suggest a location in eastern Cilicia or northern Syria. There can be little doubt that the two types of year 5 go together; and it is quite possible that one of the major Cilician cities such as Anazarbus temporarily bore the name Caesarea and began using a new era, striking coins in years 3 and 5 (the problems of attribution are discussed in *RPC I*, *ad loc.*).

However, a relationship between the two types known for year 5 and the single type of year 3 is not proved, because no provenances are known for the year 3 coins and there are stylistic differences between the issues. It is possible that those of year 3 are from a different mint than those of year 5 (*RPC I*, p. 599). This, however, would not affect what is proposed below.

A stylistic match between our coin and the Claudian issue of year 3 (*RPC I* 4084) is hard to prove because of the differences in types but the similarity of the letter forms makes the link between the two types plausible. The mean weight for eight specimens of *RPC I* 4084 is 6.04g. The *RPC Supplement I* gives the mean weight of our type as 3.56g, a little heavier than half the weight of *RPC I* 4084, but this is the average of the London and Bern specimens only (London, 3.54g; Bern, 3.57g), and with the addition of our coin and a fourth specimen⁴ the mean weight becomes 3.26g, closer to half the weight of the larger denomination. Again, this evidence, while vaguely suggestive, hardly constitutes proof of a link between the two types.

For what it is worth, our specimen was recorded with a large group of coins mainly from eastern Cilicia, of Tarsus, Anazarbus, Mallus, Hierapolis, Aegeae etc., and the lot included a specimen of *RPC I* 4086, of year 5. An attribution of our coin to the 'Uncertain Caesarea(s)' of eastern Cilicia under Claudius may therefore seem preferable to Caesarea in Cappadocia, and it is tentatively suggested that our coin constitutes a smaller denomination accompanying *RPC I* 4084.

² B. Kaposy, *Römische Provinzialmünzen aus Kleinasien in Bern* (Milan, 1995), p. 121, no. 182.

³ *RPC Supplement I*, p. 39; on the specimen in the British Museum the date is not clear (**Plate 6, 5**).

⁴ Gorny & Mosch 160, lot 2019: 2.59g.

‘Sistripia’, Augustus (?)

Obverse: Bare (?) head right. Inscription, if any, obliterated.

Reverse: Two altars (?), side by side, lit; double line beneath. Above, CICTPII€Ω...; below, THC I€PAC. **Plate 6, 9.**

3. AE, 17mm, 4.40g, 1h.

The above coin appears to be a new type, a smaller denomination accompanying *RPC I 4087* which bears a portrait of Augustus with the obverse legend ΘΕΟΥ ΥΙΟΥ ΚΑΙΣΑΡΟΣ and a figure of Nike on the reverse (**Plate 6, 8**). On none of the specimens of *RPC I 4087* was the reverse legend clear, but C.J. Howgego’s suggested reading CICTPII€ΩΝ was adopted, although it was unclear whether the Π was indeed a letter or part of the drapery on the figure of Nike. The reverse legend on the new type is much clearer, however, and must read something like CICTPII€ΩΝ (or just possibly €ICTPII€ΩΝ; see enlargement at **Plate 6, 10**). No ethnic remotely like this can be identified in the ancient sources (including Stephanus of Byzantium), even allowing for differences in spelling. The authors of *RPC I* presented two possibilities: ‘that the coin was made by an otherwise unknown city (unlikely?), or perhaps that the legend has been badly blundered so that it is unrecognisable (the lettering is, in general, very poorly formed)’ (*RPC I*, p. 600). The discovery of a new type with the same reverse legend and letter forms perhaps makes the latter option a little less likely, but falling back on the former interpretation (an unknown city) would seem to present us with a totally unknown political entity, probably located in eastern Cilicia, called something like Sistripia, Sistrife, Eistripia, Istripia, *etc.*

The obverse of our coin is too poorly preserved for one to be certain about the identity of the portrait head. It is not unlike that of Augustus on *RPC I 4087*, and there are traces of what may be a legend, but a clearer identification will have to await the appearance of a better-preserved specimen.

The reverse type is difficult to identify with certainty, and the identification of two altars offered here may be disproved by the discovery of a better specimen.

Nicopolis Seleucidis, Caracalla

Obverse: ...MAYPCEΟΥ ANTΩNINONC.. Laureate, draped, cuirassed bust of Caracalla right.

Reverse: ΝΙΚΟΠΟΛΙΤΩΝ C€ΛΕΥΚΙΑΔΟC. Draped throne, on which, wreath. In exergue, €.
Plate 6, 11.

4. AE, 26mm, 10.41g, 6h.

The coins of Nicopolis are remarkable for their series of value marks, which appear to be denominated in obols and chalcoi.⁵ This coin appears to present us with a new denomination, and a type that was previously unknown for Caracalla (a similar reverse has been recorded for Commodus and Severus Alexander: *CRS* p. 432, no. 5a; p. 434, no. 14). The epsilon in the exergue is fairly clear and identical

⁵ K. Butcher, *Coinage in Roman Syria* (London, 2004), pp. 207-9 (hereafter *CRS*).

in size and form to other epsilons in the obverse and reverse legends, so there can be little doubt about the identity of the letter. Though only slightly smaller in diameter than a contemporary denomination from this city marked S (= 6: *CRS*, pp. 432-3, no. 8), the new coin is about half the weight.⁶ Not much can be concluded from the weight of a single specimen, although it is worth noting that there are coins of Severus Alexander from Antioch marked Δ (= 4) of similar size and weight (10.6g: *CRS* p. 392, no. 489). The discovery of this new denomination offers hope that there are other types of Nicopolis yet to be described, and that the city's coinage may provide further evidence about denominations in Roman Syria.

Raphanea, Elagabalus

Obverse: ... ΑΝΤΩΝΙΝΟ ... Radiate head right.

Reverse: ΠΕΦΑ ... ΩΝ. Zebu standing right. **Plate 6, 12.**

5. AE, 14mm, 2.48g, 12h.

Raphanea in the Orontes Valley was the headquarters of the Legio III Gallica, which in the third century AD was the garrison of Syria Phoenice. It presumably developed from a legionary base into a polis at some point in the second or early third century. It produced coins only during the reign of Elagabalus, and these bore portraits of Elagabalus or Severus Alexander Caesar. Although the coinage of Raphanea has never been the subject of a detailed study,⁷ specimens are not especially rare, and there are many dies involved, suggesting that production was probably on a reasonably large scale. There appear to have been at least two issues, one with the ethnic rendered ΠΕΦΑΝΕΩΝ and the other with ΠΕΦΑΝΕΩΤΩΝ. Some of the latter coins bear a date, ΒΛΦ, which is presumably according to the Seleucid era, so that the issue of dated coins, if not the entire coinage, falls in AD 220-221.

The main reverse type employed shows a male figure standing left, wearing a turreted crown on his head and clad in a himation, holding a cornucopia and making an offering with a phiale; he is presumably a Genius of the city. A zebu stands beside him and the whole ensemble is flanked by a pair of (legionary?) eagles. Some variants show the Genius figure seated (*e.g.* *BMC* 1).

All previously published coins of Raphanea seem to be of a single denomination of about 23mm. Our coin appears to be an unrecorded smaller denomination for this city. A similar pattern - where the deity appears with attributes and an animal on the larger denominations, and the animal appears by itself on smaller denominations - may be noted on the coinages of other Syrian cities (*e.g.* Hierapolis, *CRS*, pp. 448-53, nos 22-24, 51-54, 59-61, 63-64).

⁶ The mean weight of *CRS* no. 8 is here calculated to be 20.5g (based on three specimens: ANS 73.191.158, 21.74g; Münzen & Medaillen Deutschland Auction 14 (2004), lot 677, 21.35g = Kölner Münzkabinet Auction 56 (1992), lot 459; Helios Auction 3 (2008), lot 729, 18.42g).

⁷ Such a study is currently being prepared by J. Nurpetlian as part of a wider study of civic issues in the Orontes valley region.

List of illustrations

1. *RPC I 3661*, Hierapolis-Comana, Nero / Mountain. Private collection.
2. Enlargement of countermark on the obverse of 1, with countermark.
3. *RPC I 4084*, Uncertain Caesarea, year 3, Claudius / Bust of city goddess. Private collection.
4. *RPC S-3658A*, Uncertain Caesarea, year 3, Apollo / Tripod. Private collection.
5. *RPC S-3658A*, Uncertain Caesarea, year 3, Apollo / Tripod. BM 1995 6-5-97 (P. Thackray)
6. *RPC I 4085*, Uncertain Caesarea, year 5, Claudius / Zeus seated left. BM 1979 1-1-2706 (H. von Aulock).
7. *RPC I 4086*, Uncertain Caesarea, year 5, Claudius / City goddess seated right. BM 1912 1-1-10.
8. *RPC I 4087*, 'Sistripia', Augustus / Nike advancing right. BM 1991 1-30-104.
9. 'Sistripia', Augustus (?) / Two altars (?). Private collection.
10. Enlargement of the reverse of 8.
11. Nicopolis Seleucidis, Caracalla / draped throne, € in exergue. Private collection.
12. Raphanea, Elagabalus / Zebu. Private collection.

