

Was there a mint at Eboda?

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WAS THERE A MINT AT EBODA ?

Yaakov Meshorer

In 1837, T. E. Mionnet published a coin he related with Esbus¹. His description is as follows:

Obv.: Head of Nero

Rev.: ΗΣΕΒΗ, woman holding palm branch and wreath.

F. de Saulcy published this coin again in 1874². He mentions that he follows Mionnet and Dumersan. De Saulcy quotes Mionnet exactly, and does not make any comment or illustration of his own, ascribing it again to Esbus.

¹ T. E. Mionnet, Description de Médailles Antiques, Grecques et Romaines, Supplément, Tome 8, Paris 1837, p. 387. This coin was first described by M. Dumersan: Description du Cabinet Allier de Hauteroche (1829), p. 114, and Mionnet apparently quoted this publication.

² F. de Saulcy, Numismatique de la Terre-Sainte (Paris) 1874, p. 394.

After de Saulcy, F. Imhoof-Blumer shed new light on this coin in 1883³. For the first time it is described in detail:



Bronze 16 mm

Obv.: Head of Nero, r. laureate, Inscription (NEPΩN) ΚΛΑΥΔΙΟΣ ΚΑΙΣ

Rev.: Nike Apteros, half nude, standing, holding wreath in her r. hand and a palm branch in her l.

Inscription: EBΩ-(Δ) ΗΣ

Imhoof-Blumer says that this could be the same coin ascribed by Mionnet and Dumersan to Ebusus. He adds that this attribution was accepted by de Saulcy with reservations, and adds some comments: The rev. inscription is divided EBΩ (on the left) – . . ΗΣ (on the right). Before the H appears a letter that might represent a Δ one angle of which is quite visible. Thus, instead of HE – HBΩ he read: EBΩ [Δ] ΗΣ, the genitive form of the name of the city Ἐβώδη or Ἐβώδα.

Imhoof-Blumer adds that although the rev. is careless in style, the head of Nero on the obv. is clear. As this coin fits into the general context of the coins of Arabia, he does not hesitate to attribute it to Eboda, the Nabataean city in South Palestine.

B. V. Head, in 1887⁴ and later in 1911⁵ quoted Imhoof-Blumer to attribute the piece to Eboda, without any further comment or remark.

G. F. Hill followed them in 1922⁶. For the first time an illustration is given⁷, apparently of the only existing specimen, from the Imhoof-Blumer Collection, Berlin. It seems as if this very coin was previously in the Cabinet Allier de Haute-roche, and had been purchased subsequently by Imhoof-Blumer who sent a cast of it to G. F. Hill⁸. Hill was the first to express reservations, and wrote:

«The occurrence of a coinage in this district as early as the time of Nero is surprising; but it must be remembered that the relations of Eboda with Gaza (being situated half-way between Gaza and Petra) must have been fairly close; and Gaza had coinage at this time.»

He rightly observed that it is surprising to find a coin of this time at this place; but he apparently was so convinced of Imhoof's reading that he accepted the attribution to Eboda, adding that this city had close connections with Gaza. His statement that Gaza struck coins at this time is not absolutely correct, as no Gaza coins of Nero are known, whereas earlier and later coins do exist⁹.

The comparison of these two cities, however, is not relevant at all, because we know that Avdat – Eboda during this period had been a part of the Nabataean

³ F. Imhoof-Blumer, *Monnaies Grecques*, Amsterdam (1883), p. 450.

⁴ B. V. Head, *Historia Numorum*, Oxford 1887 (first edition), p. 687.

⁵ B. V. Head, *Historia Numorum*, Oxford 1911 (second revised edition), p. 812.

⁶ G. F. Hill, *Catalogue of the Greek Coins in the British Museum, Arabia, Mesopotamia and Persia*, London 1922, p. xxxii. See also Note 2. This coin is mentioned also previously in non numismatic publications.

⁷ *Op. cit.* Pl. XLIX 17.

⁸ Hill, *ibid.* p. xxxii, note no. 2.

⁹ De Saulcy published coins of Caligula and Claudius, see *op.cit.* pp. 213–214, bearing the dates LP (year 100 = 37 A.D.) and LPI (year 110 = 47 A.D.).

kingdom¹⁰, and no Nabataean cities minted Roman imperial coins of their own. During the period discussed, i.e. in Nero's time, Nabataean coins of Malichus II had been minted in Petra for all the Nabataean districts, in silver and bronze¹¹. Eboda never struck any coins, not even in the later periods. After 106, when the Provincia Arabia was established, many cities which were previously part of Nabataea started, sooner or later, to issue their own coins in the names of the various Roman Emperors¹². Eboda did not produce any coins in that time; it is very unlikely that a city, believed to have struck coins under Nabataean rule, should not have had any coinage after 106 A.D.

During the last decades not one additional specimen of this type has been found, not even during the long period of excavations in Avdat from 1950–1960. All these reasons raised in us doubts as to the identification.

In spring 1972 I had the opportunity to examine this coin during my visit to the Coin Cabinet in Berlin¹². I saw that «EBΩ (Δ) ΗΣ» is a reconstruction. Some letters are obscured by spots of dirt or incrustation. I therefore propose to read the reverse legend ΓΑΒΗ ΝΩΝ(N). The main difficulty is in the letter Γ which appears to form, with one or two additional horizontal lines, some kind of E; these two strokes are not part of the letter but additional substance (dirt). They should be removed.

As we have mentioned before, coins of Eboda of earlier or later date do not exist, but, to Gaba such a coin would fit perfectly; there are coins from this city dated apparently to the first century B.C.E.¹³ depicting similar types of Nike. Another early coin of Gaba has recently been published by M. J. Price¹⁴ dating back to 36 B.C. depicting a bull. The closest comparison to our coin is a coin of Gaba in the Rosenberger Collection¹⁵ (p. 43, coin no. 2):



Obv.: Veiled head r. inscription ΚΛΑΟΥΥ CEBAC

Rev.: Nike, winged, standing to l. holding wreath in her outstretched r. hand.

Down l. inscription: ΓΑΒΗ (ΝΩΝ)? in field date: ΠΛ ς = 136 = 76 A.D.

This coin was struck in Gaba a few years later than the coin in question, and bears several similarities to it. The crude style, particularly of the inscription; apart from the letter Σ, which appears as a C in the Rosenberger coin, the other letters are similar. Although Nike appears unwinged on the Nero coin, this is not absolutely

¹⁰ Excavations took place in this site and yielded a typical Nabataean flourishing city, see A. Negev: The Chronology of Middle Nabataean Period, Palestine Exploration Quarterly 1969.

¹¹ Y. Meshorer, Nabataean Coins, Qedem 3, Jerusalem (1975).

¹² I would like to thank Mr. and Mrs. H. D. Schultz of the Staatliche Museum in Berlin, who kindly enabled me to study their material.

¹³ B. M. C. Galatia Cappadocia and Syria, London 1899, p. 300.

¹⁴ SNG Fitzwilliam Museum, Leake and General Collections. Vol. IV, part VIII, Syria and Nabataea, London 1971, pl., 5975.

¹⁵ M. Rosenberger, City-Coins of Palestine, II. Jerusalem (1975) p. 43, no. 3. This very coin is now in the Israel Museum, Jerusalem.

clear, since traces of wings appear in the field to r.; due to the crudeness of style the question is hard to decide.

The type of Nike is very popular at Gaba, appearing on its first coinage in the first century B. C. E. continuing with our two coins in the first century A. D. Coins of Domitian bear the date PNB = 142 = 82 A. D. Nike is popular also on the coins of the second century A. D.: Trajan dated AOP = 171 = 111 and Hadrian, ZOP = 177 = 117 A. D. and ΓIIP = 183 = 123 A. D.

The rarity of several Gaba coins such as our specimen, the Fitzwilliam Museum specimen and others, all this fits to the fact that during the last decade not a single additional specimen of the above discussed type has been discovered. Therefore we suggest that Eboda should be eliminated from the gazetteer of the mints and the coin in question should be identified as issued at Gaba.

NOTE SUR LE TRESOR DU IV^e SIECLE DU COL DU CHAT (SAVOIE, FRANCE)

Georges Depeyrot

Le site savoyard du Col du Chat, connu pour son sanctuaire édifié au lieu de passage du col¹ fut en 1939 le théâtre d'une découverte de trésor dont l'inventaire est resté inédit, malgré deux petites notes². Il comprenait au moment de la découverte environ 250 monnaies. 197 auraient été déposées dans un musée local et deux lots conservés par MM. Duc et Rivollier, respectivement de 40 et 11 monnaies. Ils ont eu l'aimabilité de nous confier leurs pièces pour étude. Nous en donnons ici un inventaire, sous forme succincte.

D'après ces quelques monnaies, l'on pourrait penser que le trésor aurait peut-être été constitué vers 310–313, notre dernière pièce datant de 309–310. Parmi elles se trouvait une de Constantin, de Lyon, présentant une césure inédite (no 35).



Le peu de monnaies étudiées (environ 1/5) interdit toute analyse. Contentons-nous de noter la prédominance de l'atelier de Lyon, explicable par la proximité des lieux.

¹ A. Grenier, Manuel d'archéologie gallo-romaine, tome IV, Paris, 1960, 2^e partie, p. 529.

² P. Wuillemier, Dépôt de monnaies romaines au Col du Chat (Savoie), RN, 1944–1945, pp. 193–194; L. Lagier-Bruno, Deux cachettes monétaires proches de la voie romaine Chamberry-Yenne-Belley, Le Buguey, 1973, 59, tiré à part; selon P. Wuillemier, le nombre de monnaies serait de 254. Le lot Morel (6 monnaies) semble avoir disparu et 10 pièces ont été perdues. Le lot principal serait encore au musée d'Aix, ce dont nous n'avons pu avoir confirmation. L'inventaire fait état de monnaies de Constantin II dans les deux lots étudiés, confusion avec celles de Constantin I César.