

A Portrait Coin of Agrippa II Reconsidered

by Robert Deutsch

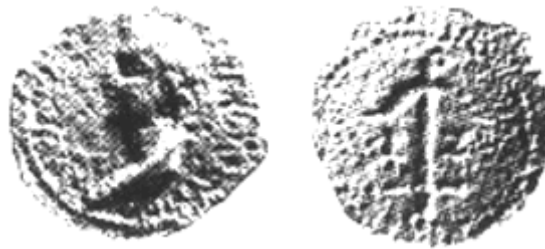
In 1862, H. C. Reichardt published the first example of a bronze coin bearing the bust of Agrippa II,

to left, on the obverse and an anchor on the reverse.

He suggested that the legend on the obverse reads [omitted] and read the date L I (= year 10) on the reverse.¹ His reading of the legend and date was accepted -- initially -- with some reservations.²

Controversies developed, however, over the question of when this coin was struck, i.e., to which era of Agrippa II should one attribute the date year 10.³ Additional specimens, published since then, were in relatively poor condition and Reichardt's readings remained unchallenged.⁴

An example of this type, which came to my attention recently, is well-preserved and reveals further information which shows that this coin belongs to the series issued by Agrippa I. Its description is in the adjacent box.



AE; 16-17 mm; 4.7g; |^ (Pl. 16:1). Obv.: Bust of young Agrippa II to left; legend from top "of Agrippa son of the king"; border of dots. Rev.: Anchor, inverted; in field left L, in field right Z (=year 7); border of dots.

The legend "of Agrippa son of the king" is very similar to the legend which appears on the reverse of a coin issued in the second year of Agrippa I (AD 37/8) which shows young Agrippa II riding a horse.⁵ A coin struck in the fifth year of the reign of Agrippa I (AD 40/41), bears the legend "Agrippa son of king Agrippa" and the bust of young Agrippa II, to left,⁶ as on our coin. The legend on the present coin thus proves that it belongs to the types of young Agrippa II struck during the reign of Agrippa I, this type in his seventh year (AD 42/3).

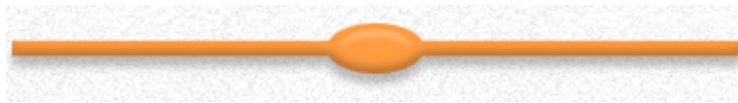
Agrippa II was seventeen years old upon the death of his father in AD 44.⁷ The first coin with his bust was issued in AD 40/41, when he was fourteen and the present type at the age of sixteen. A comparison between both types reveals obvious differences. On the coin from the fifth year of Agrippa I the bust of the prince is clearly of a youngster whilst on the type issued after an interval of about two years, the bust is that of a young man.

This is the first occurrence of an anchor in the coinage of Agrippa I. It is shown inverted, as is demonstrated by the position of the date L. Z.⁸ Agrippa I thus struck in his seventh year three denominations:

- Bust of Claudius to right / temple with three figures
- Bust of Agrippa I to right / Tyche of Caesarea
- Bust of Agrippa II to left/inverted anchor.

In his eighth and last year he issued the first two types again, dated L H (year 8).⁹ One may therefore postulate that the third type, with inverted anchor, was also issued in that year and that it may eventually also turn up with a clearly legible date of L. H.

Agrippa I issued coins with his own bust on the obverse in the second, seventh and eighth year of his reign.¹⁰ The coin type with anchor, formerly attributed to the reign of Agrippa II, can now be safely listed with the issues of Agrippa I. Agrippa II survived through the reign of eight Roman emperors, but although he retained the rank of king his position was considerably inferior to that of Agrippa I, which is also shown by the fact that he never issued coins with his own bust.¹¹



Discussion

1. Robert, what evidence is there that Agrippa II survived through the reign of eight Roman emperors? Given that Agrippa II's bust does not appear on any coins, can one be certain that Agrippa II did in fact issue any coins?

Geoff Hudson , 08/05, 11:19 AM

2. Dear Geoff

You will have to consult Meshorer's book and his opinion regarding the dates, and the double dates on the coins, and the inscriptions which do not mention the title of the "king"

RD

Robert, 08/05, 06:42 PM

3. Robert,

Thankyou for your reply. I have yet to purchase Meshorer's book. To me the record related to Agrippa II seems highly suspect.

I am wondering if you might have a ready answer to the following question. Some coins with inscriptions 'Year One', 'Year Two' or 'Year Three' are usually related to a period of Jewish rebellious independence. How can one be sure of the actual dates of these coins? The usual interpretation is that 'Year One' corresponds to the outbreak of the war in 66 CE. I am beginning to think this date for 'Year One' may not be correct, but that it was 68.

Geoff Hudson , 08/06, 11:05 AM

4. Geoff

We rely on archaeological data such as Masada, which shows very clearly that the hoards of the coins found there are from the Revolt period which according to Josephus (and you have to read it) ended in 73 AD

Robert, 08/06, 04:30 PM

Notes

¹ "Inedited Coins of Judaea", *NC, New Series 2*, 1862, p. 274f; idem, *NC, New Series 2*, (1864), p 178.

² "The cast I possess of this coin does not enable me to speak with any certainty as to the correctness of Mr. Reichardt's reading". *History of Jewish Coinage...* by F.W. Madden. London, 1864, p 115.

3 For a discussion and references see *Coins of the Jews*. by F. W. Madden. London, 1881, p 144f.

4 M. Narkiss: *Coins of Palestine, I, Jewish Coins*. Jerusalem, 1936, p.110, No.52, Pl. V:2 (Hebrew)

- *Reifenberg*, pp. 26, 49, No. 75, Pl. VI
- *Meshorer, JC*, p. 142. No. 98, Pl. XIII; A. Kindler: *Coins of the Land of Israel*, Jerusalem, 1974, p. 45, No. 57
- *Meshorer, AJC*, II, p. 250, No. 4, Pl. 11; J. Maltiel- Gerstenfeld: *260 Years of Ancient Jewish Coinage*, Tel-Aviv, 1982, p.158, No.147.

5 *Meshorer, AJC*, II, p.250, No. 1, Pl. 9. For the chronology see A. Stein: Some Notes on the Chronology of the Coins of Agrippa I, *INJ* 5 (1981), pp.22-26.

6 *Meshorer, ibid.*, No.4, Pl. 9.

7 Josephus: *Antiquities*, XIX, 9, 1 (=354).

8 The upright axis is characteristic for all issues of Agrippa I except for the small bronze coins with umbrella/three ears of corn (*Meshorer, AJC*, II, p.249, No.11, Pl. 10).

9 *Meshorer, AJC*, II, pp. 248f, Nos. 6, 8-10, Pls. 9-10.

10 *Ibid.*, pp. 247f., Nos. 1, 6, 7, 9.

11 Kindler, (above, n. 4), p.51, 68 describes a coin issued by Agrippa II, in his 34th year as bearing on the obverse a "Male head (Agrippa II?) to right, turreted". This suggestion seems most improbable and it is safer to follow the general view and identify the representation as head of Tyche.