

Overstruck Coins of Alexander Jannaeus (English)

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Abstract

This paper deals with the issue of overstruck coins associated with Jannaeus. The author makes a distinction between the main bronze Jannaeus coins whom some he refers to as "royal" and some "priestly". Overstruck minting is characterized by dies with priesthood models minted on coins with royal models in such a way that allows dating the order of their appearance. The author suggests a number of solutions for the overstruck phenomenon which will be detailed later on.

Overstriking – an additional minting on top of the original coin – was done by means of an additional die. This sort of minting appears on Jewish *prutah* coins, mainly on those of King Alexander Jannaeus ("Jonathan") as well as coins from the First Jewish Revolt, as will be elaborated below.

The author's examination of a sampling of about 350 overstruck coin types that were minted in Jerusalem during Alexander Jannaeus' time revealed that the minting was apparently done on coins that had been in circulation for some time before being recalled for re-striking. A small portion of these coins was minted on coins that had not yet left the mint (Meshorer 2001). Examples presented here of coins attributed to this group include those that a) were not yet in circulation; b) were in circulation; c) were minted on one side (Fig 2); d) were partially minted on the other side (Fig. 3); e) bore two overstrikes and additional double overstrike on the original coin. Coins in category a and b bear the name "YNTN" along with the title of high priest. It has been previously shown that the coins with the name "YNTN" were minted by king Alexander Jannaeus (Hendin and Shachar 2008).

Research has not sufficiently explained why these unique coins were minted. It is the author's opinion that this minting attests to a settlement between King Alexander Jannaeus and the Pharisees who had rebelled against him. During the struggle between King Alexander Jannaeus and the Pharisees, the latter demanded that Jannaeus cease leading as a Hellenistic king, which they believed contradicted his role as a high priest. His "royal" coins showed that he ignored the "Council of the Jews," i.e., the Sanhedrin, in contrast to his father Hyrcanus I and his brother Judah

Aristobulus I, who had featured the inscription “high priest and the Council of the Jews” in Paleo-Hebrew on coins minted during their reign.

With the invasion of Demetrius III into Judea, Alexander Jannaeus' approach to his enemies changed, eventually leading to reconciliation with the Pharisees and the people's representatives in order to end the civil war in Judea. Under the circumstances Alexander Jannaeus decided strategically to unite the people and re-mint his "royal" coins, placing in circulation coins overstruck with "priestly" symbols and a Paleo-Hebrew inscription noting the king's title as high priest, possibly as a means of fulfilling the wishes of both the Pharisees and the king to reform the high priesthood during his term in that office.

This meant using two new dies, one with a Hebrew inscription that included the title "high priest and the Council of the Jews" and another with the symbol of the cornucopia, staff and pomegranate, known symbols of the high priest. “High priest” – Jannaeus’ second title as he did not relinquish his title as king – appears over the previous minting of a "royal" lily with the Paleo-Hebrew inscription "King Yehonatan."

The new dies were minted on both sides of the existing coins. In these cases the previous minting was retained and not filed off or down—as was the case with Bar Kokhba coins in later times. (A number of scholars [Hendin and Shachar 2008: 89] claim that Jannaeus’ reconciliation efforts with the Pharisees were not successful.) These types of coins were of a combined minting – meaning that the basic minting of the first coin bears an additional overstrike with a different type of die. The author conducted an examination to determine whether there had been an attempt to file off the first minting on any of the coins, which would have meant that the authority of the Hasmonean king had been called into question. Not a single such coin was found.

It must be noted that the other side of the die, which bears the name YNTN, appears on Alexander Jannaeus' coins only with the title "high priest". The additional die with the name YNTN and the accompanying inscription appears separately on other types of coins as an original coin. The obverse and reverse die on the basic coin was done randomly on the sides of the original coin, while the cornucopia or the Paleo-Hebrew inscription appears over the lily flower or the anchor respectively. The author

conducted a number of samplings to examine whether a system was used during the minting process of the obverse and reverse die and the findings suggest no such system existed. Only a few coins were discovered with the additional minting on one side or part of one side of the coin. There were cases in which two additional mintings were made over the basic coin.

A few cases show an overstruck coin bearing the anchor on the obverse surrounded by the Greek inscription and traces of the previous minting of the cornucopia and the Hebrew inscription over an anchor / lily flower. The reverse shows a star with the inscription "King Jonathan" between the star's rays with traces of the previous minting (Hendin and Shachar 2008: 90-91).



Unpublished Coins

Fig. 1. Overstruck coins



Fig.1 a. were not yet in circulation



Fig.1 b. were in circulation



Fig 2. Overstruck coin minted on one side



Fig 3. Overstruck coin partially minted on the other side

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