

New Acquisitions

Two coins

Two coins that date back to the rule of Ptolemy are the latest acquisitions in the museum. The first dates back to 221/220-204/203 BCE the period during which Ptolemy IV, called Philopator, reigned in Egypt. Philopator, a wretched debauchee according to Bcvan, fared less well than his predecessors in Jewish history.

It is said that in 217 BCE Philopator paid a visit to Jerusalem with the intention of entering the Temple. God intervened and he was felled to the ground. On his return to Egypt, he took revenge by ordering the massacre of the Jews in the Alexandrian arena by a horde of elephants, but the beasts turned on the royal troops instead. (See *Judaica*, volume 13, p. 1348).

The coin attributed to the time of Philopator's reign has on its obverse Amon, the supreme deity in the Egyptian pantheon. Amon is portrayed either as a ram or a human being with a ram's head, a headdress of feathers having the form of the sun wheel, or a crown with the head of a cobra. (See *Judaica*, volume 2, p. 863). On the reverse, it portrays an eagle that is turned to the right, a rather unusual portrayal which is an innovation in the third class of coins cut during the reign of Ptolemy IV. Moreover, around its circumference is the inscription "ΠΤΟΛΕΜΑΙΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ".

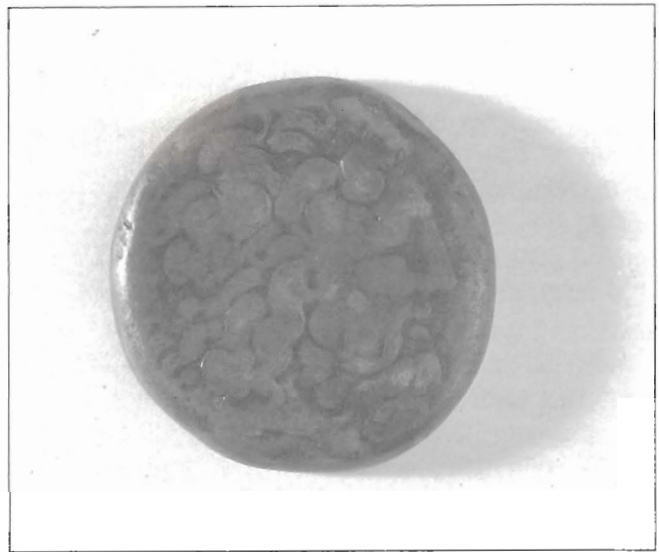
N. Svoronos, author of the book "The Coins of the State of Ptolemy" and director of the National Numismatic Museum on the turn of the 20th century maintains that it is probable that the coins of this class were cut in Cyrene.

The coin -that is made out of bronze and has diameter 40mm- is in a quite good condition.

The second coin which dates back to 181/180-145BCE, the period of the reign of Ptolemy VI, called Philometor, is also made out of bronze but is smaller in diameter and is in a rather bad condition. The coin belongs to class A of bronze coins which come out in various sizes and all carry the inscription "ΠΤΟΛΕΜΑΙΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ". The coin in case has on its obverse Amon and on its reverse two eagles turned to the left on top of thunder. According to Svoronos, there is a high chance that this coin was cut at the central mint of



Obverse of the bronze coin portraying Amon, attributed to the time of Philopator.



Reverse of the same coin

Egypt at the time of Queen Cleopatra's I reign from 180 up to 174 BCE.

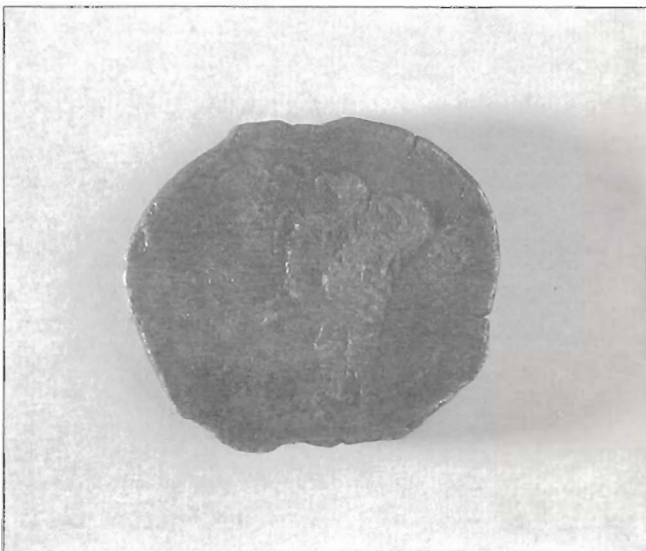
In contrast to Philopator, Philometor appears to have been generally well disposed toward the Jews, though he invaded Palestine to intervene in the disputes over the succession to the Syrian throne. His relations with Jonathan the Hasmonean were cordial. II Maccabees 1-10 states that Philometor's mentor was a Jewish philosopher and biblical exegete, Aristobulus by name. Under this same ruler the high priest Onias IV, having fled from Jerusalem, built a temple at Leontopolis (c. 161

BCE) while Philometor's military garrisons were commanded by two Jews, Onias and Dositheus (see *Judaica*, volume 13, p. 1348).

Numismatist Io Tsourti and Mrs. M. Lykiardopoulou were in charge of the identification and conservation respectively, working under the framework of the National Archeological Museum of Greece.

Concluding, the administration of our museum would like to thank Mr. Benjamin Gramm for his kind contribution to our collection.

Yvette Nahmia



Obverse of the bronze coin attributed to the time of Philometor



Reverse of the same coin