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Bacchius Iudaeus: A Tamed Hyrcanian Tiger

by

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Bacchius Iudaeus: A Tamed Hyrcanian Tiger

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Abstract: The kneeling figure with camel on the reverse of the denarius of A. Plautius has generally been identified as Aristobulus II. It is argued here that he is identifiable as his brother Hyrcanus II instead. In addition to the argument of Hollstein in support of this identification, it is noted that the legend BACCHIVS facilitates a pun upon the name of Hyrcanus, literally meaning 'Hyrcanian'. As a 'Bacchic Hyrcanian', Hyrcanus is implicitly compared to the tamed Hyrcanian tigers used by Bacchus to draw his triumphal chariot, a fitting comparison because of his submission to Roman authority.



Fig. 1. Denarius of A. Plautius, 54 BC (17mm, 4.08g). *RRC* 431/1. (2x)
Ex Classical Numismatic Group, Triton XVII (7 January 2014), lot 551.
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As curule aedile A. Plautius struck a single type of denarius probably in 54 BC (*RRC* 431/1) (*Fig. 1*).[1] The obverse depicts a female head with turreted crown and the legend A·PLAVTIVS descending in front of it, and AED·CVR·S·C descending behind it. The similarity of this bust to that of Cybele on the obverse of a denarius struck by the curule aedile M. Plaetorius in 67 BC (*RRC* 409/2) suffices to prove that it is also a bust of Cybele, as is now generally agreed. The reverse depicts a kneeling figure holding the reins of a camel in his left hand and an olive branch outstretched in his right. The legend BACCHIVS occurs in the exergue immediately below this figure, while the legend IVDAEVS ascends before it. The identification of this figure and the significance of the accompanying legend have long been disputed, culminating in the recent publication of a whole book devoted to this subject.[2] The majority of modern commentators, including the author of this book, agree in identifying the kneeling figure as Aristobulus II, the High Priest and King of Judaea from 66 BC to

[1] Crawford, *RRC*, p. 454, dates it to 55 BC. However, H.B. Mattingly, 'The Mesagne hoard and the coinage of the Late Republic', *NC* 155 (1995), pp. 101–8, at 107, dates it to 54 BC.

[2] J.M. Scott, *Bacchius Iudaeus: a Denarius Commemorating Pompey's Victory over Judea*, Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus 104 (Göttingen, 2015). The author needs a whole book to discuss this coin because he engages in the exhaustive proof of much that is either incontrovertible or irrelevant. For two positive reviews accepting his main arguments, see M. Clover, *Journal of Theological Studies* 67 (2016), pp. 749-52; G.A. Keddie, *Review of Biblical Literature 2016 (www.bookreviews.org).* For a more critical review, see S. Günther, 'Wer ist der Bacchius Iudaeus?', *Numismatisches Nachrichtenblatt* 10 (2016), pp. 382-3.

63 BC.[3] The purpose of this note is to support the argument of Hollstein, overlooked by most modern commentators, that the kneeling figure is actually identifiable as Aristobulus' brother, Hyrcanus II, King of Judaea from 67 BC to 66 BC and High Priest for the periods 76-66 BC and 63-40 BC.[4] The main argument will be that this identification best explains the puzzling legend BACCHIVS IVDAEVS.

A Choice of Solutions

One normally expects the legend depicted in association with a figure on a coin to describe that figure in some way. In the case of *RRC* 431/1, therefore, the most probable interpretation of the legend BACCHIVS IVDAEVS is that it identifies the kneeling figure with which it is associated. Furthermore, since Bacchius was a relatively common Latin name, the obvious next step is to identify this figure as some Bacchius, 'Bacchius the Judaean/Jew'. However, none of the surviving literary sources name any Bacchius potentially identifiable as 'Bacchius the Judaean/Jew'. The obvious candidates for identification as *Bacchius Iudaeus*, because they were the two most prominent figures by far in Judaean politics during the 60s and 50s BC, are the brothers Aristobulus II and Hyrcanus II, but there is no evidence that either ever bore the name Bacchius. Hence it has been argued that the name Bacchius may represent a Latinisation of the Hebrew name Bucchi, but there is no evidence that either brother actually bore that name either.[5] Another attempted resolution of this problem argues that the name represents a Latinisation of that of some less significant figure such as Dionysius of Tripoli, a local tyrant slain by Pompey in 63 BC.[6] However, this does not convince, not only because there are no other examples of the alleged Latinisation of a name in this way, but because there is no evidence either that Dionysius was actually Judaean or Jewish. A third attempted resolution suggests that the Judaean or Jewish figure was not actually called Bacchius, but is only being compared to a Bacchius, the favoured candidate being a famous gladiator of that name.[7] This is ingenious, but seems a rather indirect way to convey a message that could easily have been made in a much clearer and more explicit fashion. Finally,

[3] See e.g. K. Kraft, 'Taten des Pompeius auf den Münzen', *JNG* 18 (1968), pp. 7-24, at 16-19; M. Harlan, *Roman Republican Moneyers and Their Coins 63BC-49BC* (London, 1995), p. 117; Y. Meshorer, *A Treasury of Jewish Coins* (Jerusalem, 2001), pp. 28-9; D. Hendin, 'Judaea and Rome: the early numismatic commentary, first century BCE', in P.G. Van Alfen, G. Bransbourg, and M. Amandry (eds), *Fides. Contributions to Numismatics in Honor of Richard B. Witschonke* (New York, 2015), pp. 427-33, at 429; Scott, *Bacchius Iudaeus*, pp. 82-83.

[4] W. Hollstein, *Die stadtrömische Münzprägung der Jahre 78-50 v. Chr. zwischen politischer Aktualität und Familienthematik: Kommentar und Bibliographie*, Quellen und Forschungen zur Antiken Welt 14 (Munich, 1993), pp. 326-33. For some rather lukewarm reviews, see J.H.C. Williams, *NC* 154 (1994), pp. 317-19; A. Burnett, *JRS* 85 (1995), pp. 275-6; J. DeRose Evans, *AJN* 7/8 (1995/96), pp. 289-93.

[5] See Duc de Luynes, 'Monnaies des Nabatéens', *RN* 1858, pp. 362-85, at 384.

[6] On Dionysius, see Josephus, *Ant. Jud.* 14.39. In support of the identification of Bacchius with Dionysius, see T. Reinach, *Les monnaies juives* (Paris, 1887), p. 29.

[7] P.G. Lever, 'On the Bacchius propaganda coin', *NumCirc* 96 (1988), p. 114, argues that the Jewish figure, whoever he is, probably either Aristobulus II or Hyrcanus II, is being compared to the gladiator Bacchius, famous for fighting the gladiator Bithus to their mutual deaths (Horace, *Sat.* 1.7.20). He argues that a moral lesson is being drawn for the inhabitants of Rome itself, that when factions within a state quarrel, they expose it to external threats. Yet some depiction of the personification Concordia would surely have made much the same point far more clearly.

a fourth possibility is that this Bacchius was a prominent Jewish leader whose name the sources have failed to preserve.[8] While this is not impossible, it is highly unlikely. The literary sources for Pompey's conquest of the East and of the kingdom of Judaea in particular are relatively good, and if they do not mention a prominent Jewish leader called Bacchius, the reality is that he was probably not that prominent after all, and certainly not prominent enough to have been mentioned on the coinage in the manner of *Bacchius Iudaeus*.

This failure to identify any prominent Judaean or Jewish figure by the name of Bacchius encourages a different approach, the reading of BACCHIVS as an adjective meaning 'Bacchic' rather than as a real name Bacchius. The standard adjectives for 'Bacchic' were *Baccheus* and *Bacchicus*, but the occurrence of forms such as *bacchia*, a type of drinking vessel, *bacchius*, a type of metre, and Bacchium, the name of a Greek island, prove the occasional use of *Bacchius* as a variant spelling of *Baccheus*.[9] Hence one may envisage the use of BACCHIVS here as an adjective also, referring to a 'Bacchic Judaean/Jew'. As to why Plautius should have described a Judaean/Jew as Bacchic also, the answer to that, as has been often argued, may lie in what seems to have been a common misconception that the Jews engaged in a form of Bacchic cult. Writing in the early second century AD, both Plutarch and Tacitus reveal a common Roman belief that the God worshipped by the Jews was identifiable as Dionysus or Liber, that is, Bacchus.[10] Since it is clear from the testimony of Tacitus that this belief was partly based on the fact that Aristobulus II had sent a golden vine worth five hundred talents to Pompey in 63 BC, a gift which Pompey had later deposited in the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus in Rome, it seems not unreasonable to assume that this belief was probably already current in Rome by the 50s BC.[11] However, this still does not solve the problem of the identity of this 'Bacchic Judaean/Jew', whether he is identifiable as Aristobulus II, Hyrcanus II, or somebody else altogether. Furthermore, the distinct lack of Bacchic symbols depicted in association with the kneeling figure – no ivy, grapes, or thyrsus - could raise some concern that Plautius, or his engraver, was not really interested in the alleged Bacchic nature of Jewish religion, and that something else was going on here instead. So what exactly is the correspondence between design and legend, if the design includes no obviously Bacchic elements?

Finally, one should note that the author of the most detailed recent study of this problem concludes that the legend BACCHIVS IVDAEVS should be translated as

[8] See e.g. F.W. Madden, *Coins of the Jews* (London, 1881), p. 94, n. 1: 'some Arabian chief of Jewish persuasion to whom Aulus Plautius dictated laws'; H.A. Grueber, *BMCRR* 1, p. 491: 'Bacchius may have held a high command in the army of his sovereign [Aristobulus], or may have been a petty Syrian prince'; H. St.J. Hart, 'Judaea and Rome: the official commentary', *Journal of Theological Studies* 3 (1952), pp. 172-98, at 179: 'some military leader of at least considerable local importance'; E.M. Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule*, Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity 20 (Leiden, 1976), p. 26, n. 16: 'a military leader otherwise unrecorded'.

[9] On the Latin *Bacchus* and its various cognates, see *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* II.7, cols 1660-67; P.G.W. Glare, *The Oxford Latin Dictionary*, 2nd ed (Oxford, 2012), pp. 244-45.

[10] Putarch, *Quaest. Conv*. 4.6.1-2 (*Mor*. 671C-672B); Tacitus, *Hist*. 5.5.4-5. See e.g. L.H. Feldman, 'The Jews as viewed by Plutarch', in idem, *Studies in Hellenistic Judaism*, Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums 30 (Leiden, 1996), pp. 529-52; E.S. Gruen, *Rethinking the Other* (Princeton, 2011), pp. 179-96.

[11] On this gift, see Josephus, *Ant. Jud*. 14.34-35.

'Judaean Bacchus', while the kneeling figure should be identified as the High Priest Aristobulus II acting in his capacity as this god's representative.[12] However, there are several serious problems with this interpretation, including the fact there is no numismatic parallel for this alleged depiction of the surrender of a regional god to Roman authority, despite the fact that Roman coins celebrate numerous defeats of a large variety of enemies. More importantly, this interpretation does not pay due attention to the implications of the nearest numismatic parallels to this type for its proper interpretation, as will be explained next.

Respecting Contemporary Artistic Conventions

Any attempt to understand who or what is being depicted on the reverse of *RRC* 431/1 ought to begin by setting this reverse type in its proper artistic and numismatic context, that is, by comparing and contrasting it to similar depictions of supplication on other late Republican Roman coins.[13] Two coins are relevant here. The earlier was a denarius struck by the two curule aediles M. Scaurus and P. Hypsaeus in 58 BC (*RRC* 422/1a-b) (*Fig. 2*). On the reverse, it depicts Jupiter driving a quadriga, with the reins in his left hand and a thunderbolt in his right. A scorpion is depicted beneath the raised forelegs of the horse. This type refers to the capture of Privernum by C. Plautius, consul in 329, claimed as an ancestor by P. Hypsaeus. However, it is the obverse that is of most interest here. It depicts a kneeling figure holding the reins of a camel in his left hand and an olive branch in his outstretched right hand. The legend MSCAVR / AED CVR occurs in two lines above the camel, while the legend REX ARETAS occurs in the exergue. The phrase EX SC is split on either side of the camel. This type refers to the submission to Rome of Aretas, the King of Nabataea *c*.84-62 BC following the campaign which M. Scaurus conducted against him in 62 BC.[14] This obverse type is of particular interest here because it is nearly identical to the reverse type under discussion. Apart from the legends, the most significant difference is that the olive branch offered by Aretas to the unseen Roman representative normally bears ribbons, while that proffered by the kneeling figure on the coin by Plautius never does.



Fig. 2. Denarius of M. Scaurus and P. Hypsaeus, 58 BC (18mm, 4.00g).
RRC 422/1b. (2x)
Ex Nomos, Auction 14 (17 May 2017), lot 254. © Nomos AG.

[12] Scott, *Bacchius Iudaeus*, pp. 82-83.

[13] For a description of the process of supplication, and analysis of this type, see F.S. Naiden, 'Supplication on Roman coins', *AJN* 15 (2003), pp. 41-52.

[14] Josephus, *Ant. Jud.* 14.80-81.

The second coin of relevance is a denarius struck by Faustus Cornelius Sulla in 56 BC (*RRC* 426/1) (*Fig. 3*). On the obverse, it depicts a draped and diademed bust of Luna, with a lituus to the left and the legend FAVSTVS descending to the right.[15] On the reverse, it depicts three small figures, a seated figure with right hand outstretched to receive an olive branch from a figure kneeling before him, while another kneeling figure waits to the side with his hands tied behind his back. The seated figure is identified by the legend FELIX descending behind him, but neither of the other two figures are identified by name. However, this is enough to identify the seated figure as the former dictator Lucius Cornelius Sulla Felix, the figure offering a branch to him as King Bocchus of Mauretania, and the figure with the hands tied behind his back as King Jugurtha of Numidia. The type depicts a famous event of 106 BC when Bocchus surrendered his son-in-law Jugurtha to Sulla, the quaestor of the Roman commander Gaius Marius, and so ended the war between Rome and Jugurtha that had begun in 112 BC.[16]



Fig. 3. Denarius of Faustus Cornelius Sulla, 56BC (20mm, 3.92g).
RRC 426/1.(2x)
Ex Classical Numismatic Group, Triton XX (10 January 2017), lot 534.
© Classical Numismatic Group, Inc.

Given that all three coins were struck in the same place, at Rome, within the same short period of time, about five years, it seems reasonable to assume that the artists or engravers responsible for the choice of design would have followed the same conventions in each case. In other words, one would expect the three figures depicted kneeling and offering olive branches to have been in similar situations in respect to the Roman state, and to have experienced similar outcomes to a process of submission depicted in the same way in each case. This is important because, as Hollstein recognised, the two figures whose identities are known, Bocchus and Aretas, did not suffer imprisonment or the indignity of being paraded in a triumphal procession at Rome following their submission, but were recognised as friends as allies of Rome and allowed to continue in a position of power. The same must be true of the kneeling figure depicted on Plautius' coin also. This prevents his identification as Aristobulus II because Pompey took him, together with most of his family, as

[15] There is some dispute over the identity of the goddess, whether she is Luna, Diana, or even Aphrodite, but this is not relevant here. In favour of Luna, see Hollstein, *Die stadtrömische Münzprägung*, pp. 276-8.

[16] See Plutarch, *Sulla* 3. Sulla took so much pride in this event that he had it depicted on his signet ring. Later, Bocchus (*Sulla* 6) even set up a monument on the Capitol Hill in Rome with a frieze depicting him surrendering Jugurtha to Sulla.

a prisoner back to Rome, paraded him in his triumph there in 61 BC, and never restored him to any position of authority.[17] In contrast, he recognised Hyrcanus II as High Priest once more and left him free in Judaea. It is clear, therefore, that the kneeling figure on Plautius' coin must be identifiable as Hyrcanus II rather than Aristobulus II.

A final point is necessary. The fact that the kneeling supplicant with camel on Plautius' coin imitates that on the coin of Scaurus so closely should not be taken to indicate any lack of artistic imagination on the part of Plautius or his engraver. Instead, it may be recognisable as a device intended to help identify this supplicant as Hyrcanus II. The interested viewer notes that the supplicant Judaean/Jew on the coin of Plautius is practically identical to King Aretas of the Nabataeans as depicted on the coin of Scaurus, and so wonders what the relationship between these two figures was. He then remembers that Aretas was closely allied to one particular Judaean/Jew, Hyrcanus II, and had assisted him greatly in his war against Aristobulus II, and so begins to think of Hyrcanus II rather than Aristobulus II as the main candidate for identification as *Bacchius Iudaeus*.[18]

A Problematic Name and a Hidden Pun

Whether one identifies the kneeling figure with Aristobulus II or Hyrcanus II, one still faces the same problem as to why it is that he was not clearly identified by means of his proper name. If Scaurus thought it necessary to identify the kneeling figure on his coin by including his name in the accompanying legend REX ARETAS, it is not clear why Plautius should not have followed suit. In the case of Aristobulus, there is no obvious reason why his name could not have been included upon the coin. In the case of Hyrcanus, however, the situation was very different, because his name posed a particular problem. Whether in Latin (*Hyrcanus*) or Greek (Ὑρκανός), it literally meant 'of Hyrcania, Hyrcanian', that is, it denoted belonging to a region to the south-east of the Caspian Sea.[19] Hence the inclusion of his name, whether alone or with some title of office, in a legend alongside the kneeling figure could have been seriously misleading. It might have led the unwary to believe that this type celebrated the submission to Roman authority of some Hyrcanian rather than a Judaean leader. It was in order to avoid this, therefore, that Plautius decided to refer to Hyrcanus simply as IVDAEVS 'The Judaean/Jew' rather than by his proper name. Of course, he could have increased the legend to read BACCHIVS HYRCANVS IVDAEVS, but that would not have helped much, since the unwary could still have read this as the 'Bacchic Hyrcanian Jew'. By restricting the legend to BACCHIVS IVDAEVS alone, however, Plautius ensured that even the most uninformed viewer of the coin would understand its basic message, that a Judaean/Jewish leader had submitted to Roman authority.

The next problem concerns the significance of the term BACCHIVS. Why identify Hyrcanus as 'Bacchic'? At one level, this could be a reference to the alleged Bacchic nature of Jewish religion as already noted above. However, it is not clear

[17] Josephus, *Ant. Jud*. 14.79; Appian. *Mith*. 117.

[18] On Aretas as the main ally of Hyrcanus, see Josephus, *Ant*. *Jud*. 14.19-33.

[19] See Glare, *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, p. 892.

why this should have been considered of much relevance to a scene depicting Hyrcanus submitting to Roman authority. After all, the legend accompanying the similar depiction of Aretas submitting to Roman authority does not mention his religion. The real answer to this question may lie instead in the meaning of the name Hyrcanus, 'Hyrcanian', and its associations in Roman culture. The key point here is that Hyrcania was known as a home to many wild animals, particularly the Hyrcanian tiger. So, for example, Virgil depicts the heart-broken Dido berating hard-hearted Aeneas for his determination to leave her as follows:

> 'False one, no goddess was your mother, nor was Dardanus founder of your line, but rugged Caucasus on his flinty rocks begot you, and Hyrcanian tigresses suckled you.' [20]

Indeed, Pliny singles out Hyrcania together with India as the two sources of tigers for the Roman world.[21] This is relevant because Roman art often depicted the god Dionysus, or Bacchus, either mounted upon a feline or riding in a chariot drawn by felines, very often a tiger.[22] Literature emphasized the same theme also. The poet Statius describes Bacchus riding in a chariot drawn specifically by Hyrcanian tigers.[23] On other occasions some equivalent description is used. Silius Italicus describes him riding in a chariot drawn by Caucasian tigers, while Claudian prefers the term Caspian instead, but these were both simply different ways of saying Hyrcanian tiger.[24] So a Bacchic tiger was a tiger that had been tamed and forced to serve its master Bacchus by carrying him or drawing him in a chariot, whether this tiger came from Hyrcania or India. Consequently, it is clear that the description of Hyrcanus as Bacchic, that is, as a 'Bacchic Hyrcanian', would almost immediately have suggested to the Roman mind the tamed tigers that Bacchus used as a means of transport, where this would have been regarded as particularly apposite and humorous because the Romans had forced Hyrcanus to submit to their authority and perform their will, so taming him also. In this way, Hyrcanus is being mocked as a tame tiger. Furthermore, this joke would have been all the more effective because the man responsible for forcing Hyrcanus into submission, Pompey the Great, did actually like to depict himself as a new Dionysus or Bacchus.[25] So the new Bacchus, Pompey, had tamed the Jewish High Priest Hyrcanus just as the original Bacchus had tamed his Hyrcanian tigers.[26]

[20] Vergil, *Aeneid* 4.365-67: *nec tibi diva parens*, *generis nec Dardanus auctor*,/ *perfide, sed duris genuit te cautibus horrens* / *Caucasus, Hyrcanaeque admorunt ubera tigres*. Text and translation from H.R. Fairclough, *Virgil. Eclogues. Georgics. Aeneid: Books 1-6*, Loeb Classical Library 63 (Cambridge, MA, 1916), pp. 446-7.

[21] Pliny, *NH* 8.66. In general on tigers, see K.F. Kitchell, *Animals in the Ancient World from A-Z* (Abingdon, 2014), pp. 183-5.

[22] In general, see P.M. Jácome, 'Bacchus and felines in Roman iconography: issues of gender and species', in A. Bernabé, M.H. de Jáuregui, A.I.J. San Cristóbal, and R.M. Hernández (eds), *Redefining Dionysos*, MythosEikonPoiesis 5 (Berlin, 2013), pp. 526-40. For some famous examples, see K. Dunbabin, 'The triumph of Dionysus on mosaics in North Africa', *PBSR* 39 (1971), pp. 52-65.

[23] Statius, *Thebaid* 4.657-58, 678-79.

[24] Silius Italicus*, Punica* 15.81; Claudian, *Panegyricus de Quarto Consulatu Honorii Augusti* 607-08.

[25] Scott, *Bacchius Iudaeus*, pp. 34-41.

[26] To claim that Hyrcanus was tamed does not necessarily imply that he had ever actively resisted the Romans in the manner of his brother Aristobulus. It emphasizes rather that a previously independent

It is my argument, therefore, that the primary reason for the inclusion of the term BACCCHIVS in the legend was to facilitate a pun upon the term *Hyrcanus*, which could be interpreted either as a real name, that of the High Priest of Judaea, or as adjective denoting origin from Hyrcania. As has long been realised, such humorous word play was a prominent feature of late Republican coinage.[27] However, there is an important difference here. The key term, the subject of the pun, is missing from the coin in this case. It has to be understood from the use of the term IVDAEVS in association with the depiction of an eastern suppliant. Hence the ideal viewer has to possess enough knowledge of current affairs in the East to recognise that these can only refer to the current Jewish High Priest, Hyrcanus. Yet the pun, if one was present, had traditionally been upon a real name, although upon that of the moneyer rather than of anyone else. So once it was clear that there was no pun upon the name of the moneyer in this case, the interested viewer would naturally have turned to a consideration of whether there was a pun upon some other real name instead, not least that of any figure prominently depicted upon the coin.[28]

Conclusion

The argument by Hollstein that the kneeling figure depicted upon the reverse of the denarius struck by A. Plautius is identifiable as Hyrcanus II rather than his brother Aristobulus II has been reinforced here by drawing attention both to the potential problem posed by the explicit use of the term HYRCANVS upon this coin and to the potential for humorous word play also should the moneyer manage to evoke this term in the minds of those viewing his coin without explicitly inscribing it on his coin. Plautius, if it was truly he that was responsible for such detail, managed a fine balancing act in identifying the Jewish High Priest Hyrcanus without specifically naming him, so preserving the potential for humorous wordplay. However, one suspects that the humour of this coin was lost upon many of those viewing it. It is probable that few would have recognised the kneeling figure as Hyrcanus, and not all of these even would necessarily have spotted the interplay between the literal meaning of his name and the description of him as Bacchic. However, that probably rendered the word play all the wittier to those who did recognise it. Not all jokes have to be immediately obvious to everyone.

ruler had submitted to Roman authority and was continuing to perform as required in the service of the Roman state. For example, he played an important role in supporting the successful Roman siege of Jerusalem in 63 BC (Josephus, *Bell*. *Jud*. 1.153). He also provided key logistical support to M. Scaurus against King Aretas of Nabataea in 62 BC (Josephus, *Ant*. *Jud*. 14.80), despite the fact that Aretas had previously been an ally in his civil war against Aristobulus (Josephus, *Ant*. *Jud*. 14.14-20). He provided vital support also to Gabinius when he marched into Egypt in order to restore Ptolemy XII Auletes to the throne in early 55 BC (Josephus, *Ant*. *Jud*. 14.99). Finally, one can also assume his willing support of the Romans against the various attempts of Aristobulus and his son Alexander to drive them out of Judaea, culminating in Gabinius' defeat of Alexander at Mount Tabor in late 55 BC (Josephus, *Ant*. *Jud*. 14.100-102).

[27] See e.g. *RRC* 238/2-3 (a jackdaw [*graculus*] depicted, punning upon the moneyer's cognomen Gragulus); *RRC* 342/1-2 (a mask of Pan depicted, punning upon the moneyer's name Pansa); *RRC* 474/1-6 (an adze [*acisculus*] depicted, punning upon the moneyer's name Acisculus; *RRC* 526/1-4 (a calf [*vitulus*] depicted. punning upon the moneyer's name Vitulus.

[28] On the Roman love of puns upon real names, see E.S. McCartney, 'Puns and plays on proper names', *Classical Journal* 14 (1919), pp. 343–58; A. Corbeill, *Controlling Laughter: Political Humor in the Late Roman Republic* (Princeton, 1996), pp. 85-97.