

Displaying Loyalty in the Midst of Rebellion: Jewish Loyalist Coins in the 1st Century



All Coins Courtesy of
Dr. John Wilson's Collection

Photographs Analyzed Using
RTI Technology

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Research and Presentation
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Goals of Research

- Analyze coin from the city of Sepphoris
- Develop a more holistic/balanced understanding of Israel in the 1st century
 - How widespread were the sentiments of the Jewish revolt, seen in Jerusalem, throughout larger Israel?
 - How was coinage used as ancient propaganda?
 - What new or corresponding information is shed on the First Jewish Revolt?

RTI Technology

- Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI)
- An image is photographed from numerous angles with a light source (flash) which is then analyzed and compiled by a computer
- Allows re-lighting and enhancement to the image
- Through this technology, data that was previously indiscernible or ambiguous can now be more carefully studied

The First Jewish Revolt

- 66 – 73 AD
- Years of tension between Jewish people and Roman leadership met its climax when the Temple was plundered
- Rome originally believed this to be a minor rebellion, but the defeat of Cestius Gallus and the Syrian Legion in the Battle of Beth Horon quickly led to reassessment
- The revolt's epicenter was Jerusalem. However, Jerusalem was as much involved in repelling Rome as it was in dealing with civil war
- Jerusalem eventually lost which led to the destruction of the Second Temple, scattering of the Jewish people, and development of post-temple Judaism

Jewish Revolt Coin (Obverse)



Lulav

Etrogs

Inscription: "Year 4" = 69 AD

Jewish Revolt Coin (Reverse)

Chalice with
Pearled Rim



Inscription: "To the Redemption of Zion" (Paleo Hebrew)

Sepphoris

- City in central Galilee
- One of the cities during the First Jewish Revolt that remained loyal to Rome
- Josephus's description of Sepphoris
 - “ornament of all Galilee”
 - “he [Cestius Gallus] was received by the strongest city of Galilee, which was Sepphoris, with acclamations of joy”
 - The people of Sepphoris promised to “assist him [Vespasian] against their own countrymen”
 - They received “Roman garrison... to oppose the incursion of Jews”
 - “it was the largest city of Galilee, and built in a place by nature very strong”

Sepphoris Coin (Obverse)



Two
Cornucopias

Caduceus

ΕΠΙ
ΟΥΕΣΠΑΙΑΝΟΥ
ΕΡΗΝΟΠΟΛΙ
ΝΕΡΩΝΙΑ
ΣΕΠΦΩ

Inscription: “In the time of Vespasian in
Irenopolis-Neroneas-Sepphoris”

Sepphoris Coin (Reverse)



Wreath

ΛΑΙ
ΝΕΡΩΝΟ
ΚΛΑΥΔΙΟΥ
ΚΑΙΣΑΡΟ
C

Inscription: “Year 14 of Nero Claudius Caesar”

Results

- Sepphoris is representative of Jewish cities and people that were not in favor of the Jewish revolt against Rome
- Jews perhaps from Sepphoris, or similar cities, may have been in Jerusalem to celebrate Passover when the revolt began
- Reinforces the Hellenization of Jews and the differing degrees of results of that process
- Josephus made more than one campaign to take Sepphoris, analogues of Jews in Jerusalem having to fight not only Romans, but fellow Jews
- Sepphoris used coinage as an influential medium to relay loyalty to Rome, to distinguish themselves from the people and events of Jerusalem
- Overall, Sepphoris illustrates the rather mixed opinions of the Jewish people which divided the cause