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Ancient Marcus Aurelius Coin

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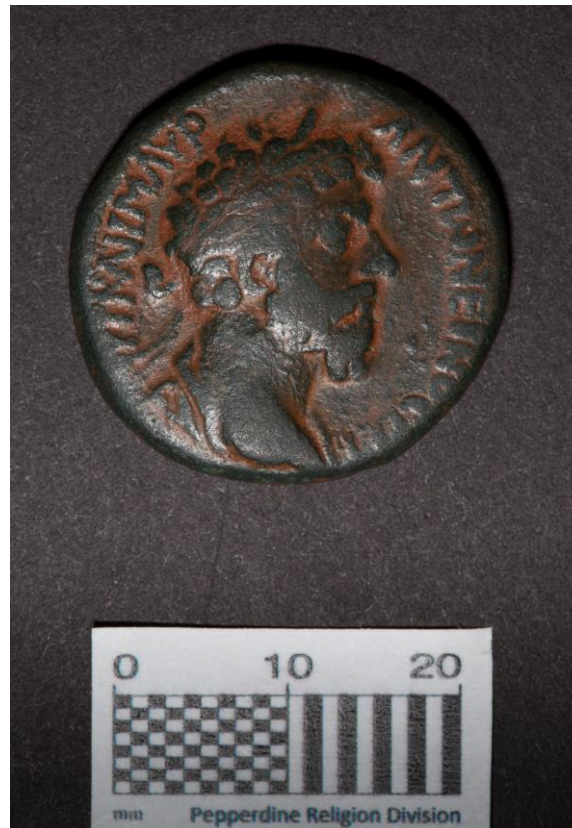
Ancient Marcus Aurelius Coin

Tawni Gurney and Andrew Hirsch



Abstract: Upon glancing at coins, people generally overlook their historical aspect of the coins and simply look at their monetary value. In our seminar class, however, we were interested in so much more than money when it came to studying our particular coin. We wanted to know what this particular coin could tell us about the history of the time when it was minted. We deciphered what was on the coin and researched the significance of each aspect. We also studied similar coins to confirm our interpretations. We compared the writings on the coins and the images themselves. Additionally, we photographed our coin using Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI) technology so that we could better study details on the coin that were too difficult to see to the naked eye. We were able to answer most of our questions and our results are explained here.

Obverse: Pictured on the obverse of the coin is a bust of Marcus Aurelius who was the Roman Emperor from 169-177. He minted this coin in Caesarea Paneas, also known as Caesarea of Philippi. Caesarea Paneas is a region south west of Mount Hermon that was first settled during the Hellenistic period. We know that this coin shows Hellenistic influence because although it was minted in Israel, a Jewish region, the writing on it is in Greek. The writing on the front can be interpreted when broken down into the Greek abbreviations. AUT usually stands for *autokrator* (*imperator*-Latin) which has a meaning implying a self-empowered ruler. KAI signifies a place of refuge and MAUR is an abbreviation for Markus himself-M for *Marcus* and AUR for *Aurleias*. ANTWNEINOC means *Antonius* and CEB is an abbreviation for *Sebaste*. Marcus Aurelius was a very powerful and proud ruler which is why he is pictured on this coin minted under his rule.



Obverse Facts

-Marcus Aurelius is the bust on the front

General Data

- Greek Writing along the perimeter
- 13.44 grams in weight
- 24 millimeters
- bronze

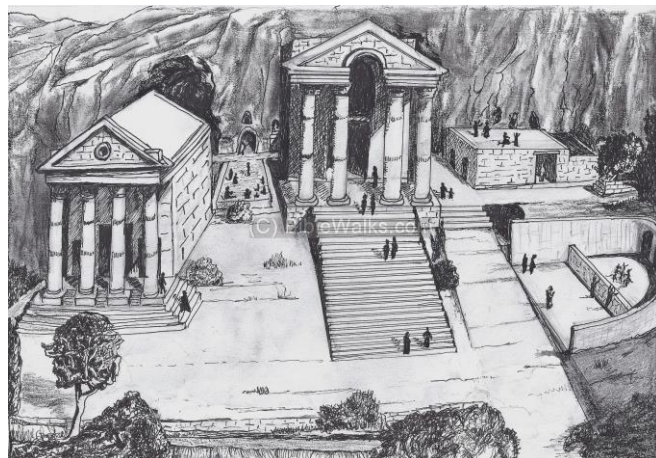
Grotto at Paneas. Source: "Banias - Caesarea Philippi - Overview Page." *Banias - Caesarea Philippi - Overview Page*. N.p., 14 Jan. 2013. Web. 11 Nov. 2013.



Reverse Facts

- Pan is Greek god playing a flute and leaning on a tree stump/staff
- the year 172 is written in Greek (PO to Pan's right, B to his left), referring to the number of years since the founding of Caesarea Philippi in 3 BCE, making the mint date probably 169 CE.

Reverse: Pictured on the reverse of the coin is the Greek god, Pan. He is seen playing a flute and leaning against a staff or tree trunk. He is also possibly playing a flute. Pan literally means *to pasture* and is the god of nature, wildlife, shepherds, flocks, goats, mountains, etc. He is on this coin because he was worshiped in Caesarea Paneas. This region was very dependent upon the land and had springs/marshes (integral to supplying the Jordan River), which is why Pan had such an influence here. The letters on the reverse of the coin are also written in Greek and can be translated through their abbreviated meanings. KAI-Caesar, CEB-*Sebaste* (*Augustus*). Some cities in this region were also given names that were associated with honor, including "holy" and "city of refuge." This was true for this region of Caesarea Paneas, so we have *Caesarea Sebastos*-priestly indicated by IEP, and (KAI) a *place of refuge*-ASU/(LOS). PANEIW-*Panneas* is also on the back as a tribute to Pan himself. Pan was a cultic form of worship to the Greeks but very important because of what he has "power" over. To worship Pan, the people of Caesarea Paneas named part of their city after him, had shrines dedicated to Pan, and also pictured him on the reverse of their currency.



Pans standing against a pillar. "Apollo," *a Greek and Roman God*. N.p., n.d. Web. 11 Nov. 2013