James M. Scott

BACCHIUS IUDAEUS

A Denarius Commemorating Pompey's Victory over Judea

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Once again, for Gail

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Preface

This book is part of a larger project on Dionysus and the Jews that I have been conducting over the past several years. In the course of this research, I have encountered many texts and several artifacts that are either not generally known or are seldom considered by scholars of early Jewish literature and of the New Testament. Symptomatic of this situation is the dearth of information on Dionysus and the Jews in the standard reference works in these fields. The denarius under discussion in this book is a case in point. This coin is not widely known, and when it is referred to, it tends to be treated as a sidelight rather than the focus of concerted study.

Given the specialized nature of their subject matter, my findings on this coin are being published as a separate study. It may seem extravagant to devote a whole book to one coin, but the importance of the "Bacchius Iudaeus" denarius is commensurate with its apparent connection with the beginning of the Roman occupation of Judea in 63 BCE. Hence, if we can set this coin in its proper context and show its manifold connections within both Palestine and Rome, then we gain access to yet another piece of the puzzle that will hopefully help to complete the historical picture. Moreover, since this coin contributes to our understanding of the broader subject of Dionysus and the Jews, we now have further evidence from the history of religions to contextualize that linkage. It is particularly gratifying that numismatic evidence, which is underutilized by scholars oriented on ancient literary texts, should be useful for this purpose.

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Introduction

Our subject is a denarius minted in Rome in 55 BCE which is visually fascinating but conceptually enigmatic. On its obverse, around the head of a female figure with turreted crown, appears the name A. Plautius, who held the office of *aedilis curulis* in that year; on its reverse is a camel, in front of which a male figure kneels on his right leg, holding the camel's reins in his left hand and extending a branch in his right hand; the legend reads: *BACCHIVS IVDAEVS* (Fig. 1).

M. Crawford summarizes the interpretations that have most frequently been offered for this coin:[1]

> The obverse type doubtless refers to the Ludi Megalenses, celebrated by the Curule Aediles. The reverse type presumably refers to the surrender of an Eastern ruler, doubtless in the course of Pompey's campaigns; it matters little whether the legend refers to Dionysius of Tripoli (Josephus, *Ant*. xiv, 3, 2; so Th. Reinach, *Les Monnaies juives*, 29; A. Kindler, *SCMB* 1951, 53) or Aristobulus the High Priest (so Duc

1 M.H. Crawford, *Roman Republican Coinage* (2 vol.; rev. edn; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 1.454–55 (no. 431/1), Pl. LII, 7. (Hereafter, Crawford, *CRR*, with item number, will be used.) For proponents of the view that Bacchius Iudaeus is a military leader otherwise unrecorded in history, see, e.g., E.M. Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule: From Pompey to Diocletian* (SJLA 20; Leiden: Brill, 1976), 26 n. 16; M. Goodman, *The Roman World 44 BC – AD 180* (Routledge History of the Ancient World; London: Routledge, 1997), 251–53; M.O. Wise, *Thunder in Gemini* (JSPSup 15; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 215: "Bacchius was an otherwise unrecorded leader in the Jewish revolt, more prominent in the actual warfare than was the imprisoned Aristobulus. He probably led the forces within the temple. Here then is a man who was perhaps the most important Jewish leader of the war from the perspective of the Roman leadership, yet he did not merit even a mention in Josephus' accounts. That fact is a salutary reminder that we really know very little about the detailed course of these events." See further E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.–A.D. 135)* (3 vol. in 4; rev. edn; Edinburgh: Clark, 1973–87), 1.237 n. 14; R. Turcan, *Numismatique romaine du culte métroaque* (EPRO 97; Leiden: Brill, 1983), 12–13; T. Reinach, *Jewish Coins* (Chicago: Argonaut, 1966), 29–30; H.St.J. Hart, "Judaea and Rome: The Official Commentary", *JTS* n.s. 3 (1952) 172–98, on p. 178–79; [E.] Klebs, "Bakchios Iudaeus", *PW* II.2 (1896) 2789; P.G. Lever, "On the Bacchius Propaganda Coin", *Numismatic Circular* 96 (1988) 114; O. Keel, "Die kultischen Maßnahmen Antiochus' IV. Religionsverfolgung und/oder Reformversuch?", in O. Keel and U. Staub, *Hellenismus und Judentum. Vier Studien zu Daniel 7 und zur Religionsnot unter Antiochus IV* (OBO 178; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 2000) 87–121, on p. 115: "Die Münze ist wohl ein weiteres Zeugnis dafür, dass manche Vertreter der griechisch-römischen Welt die jüdische Religion als Bacchusreligion zu verstehen versuchten."

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Fig. 1. Denarius. Rome, 55 BCE. (Crawford, RRC, no. 431/1)

de Luynes, *RN* 1858, 382–4; E. Babelon, *RBN* 1891, 5; K. Kraft, *JNG* 1968, 16–19, citing Josephus, *Ant.* xiv, 34–6 as evidence for the Roman assimilation of Jehovah and Bacchus); neither explanation is altogether free from difficulties.

Given these difficulties, Y. Meshorer takes another tack, attributing the coin to twofold confusion on the part of the Romans relating to the Hebrew name of Aristobulus, on the one hand, and to the nature of the Jewish cult, on the other:[2]

> In the first place, the name Bacchius is indeed the Latin form of Dionysius but this does not explain the epithet "the Jew," since he [sc. Dionysius of Tripoli] was not a Jew. On the other hand, the difficulty in identifying the submissive figure as Aristobulus stems from the epithet "Bacchius," since its relationship to him is unexplained. Nevertheless, it seems to us that "Bacchius the Jew" can be identified with Aristobulus II. If we follow most scholars in assuming that his Hebrew name was Yehudah, like that of Aristobulus I, the epithet "the Jew" can be attributed to the fact that he was the ruler of the territory of "YHWDH" (Judah). This apparently confused the Romans who perhaps held the view that his name "YHWDH" was none other than his title as ruler of Yehudah (Judah), and they therefore termed him "the Jew" (*Ivdaevs*). In order to explain the strange epithet "Bacchius" associated with Bacchus, we must again turn to Josephus who relates the following about the present given by Aristobulus to Pompey (in 64 B.C.E.):
>
> "When Pompey not long afterward came to Damascus and was advancing into Coele-Syria, there came to him envoys from all of Syria and Egypt and Judaea. Aristobulus, for example, sent him a fine gift, which was a golden vine worth five hundred talents. This gift is also mentioned by Strabo of Cappadocia in the

2 Y. Meshorer, *A Treasury of Jewish Coins From the Persian Period to Bar Kokhba* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi Press; Nyack, NY: Amphora, 2001) 28–29.

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following words. 'There also came from Egypt an embassy and a crown worth four thousand pieces of gold, and from Judaea either a vine or garden; *terpōlē* (delight) is what they called this work of art. Moreover we ourselves have examined this gift, which has been set up in the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus at Rome, and has an inscription reading, 'From Alexander, the king of the Jews.' It was valued at five hundred talents. And it is said to have been sent by Aristobulus, the ruler of the Jews.'"

From this it follows that the gift of a man named Yehudah, who was the ruler of Judah and therefore called "the Jew," was well known in Rome. This gift, a golden vine, was regarded by the Romans as representing his cult or a cultural trait of his. Since the Romans considered the vine to be connected with Bacchus, the god of wine, they readily arrived at the epithet "Bacchius," which can be translated "master of the vine." If this coin was indeed minted to mark the conquest of Judah by Pompey, and the oriental figure on it is Aristobulus II, it suggests that his Hebrew name was Yehudah, and it is therefore possible to attribute the "YHWDH HKHN HGDWL WḤBR HYHWDYM" ["Yehudah the high priest and the council of the Jews"] coins to him. This is certainly not conclusive evidence, but it does corroborate our view that "YHWDH" coins were minted by Aristobulus II.

The problem with this suggestion is that we do not know the Hebrew name of Aristobulus II, so the idea that *IVDAEVS* is based on Roman confusion with his alleged Hebrew name remains speculation.[3] And yet, as the following additional arguments show, the connection between Aristobulus' gift of the golden vine and the Roman identification of the Jewish cult as Bacchic seems quite promising:

Josephus describes the beginning of the Roman era in Judea with a short narrative: When Aretas was compelled by Antipater to raise an army of 50,000 troops in order to attack Aristobulus and thereby force the return of Hyrcanus to the kingship in Jerusalem, Scaurus, who had been sent into Syria by Pompey, intervened at the very moment when Aristobulus, besieged in Jerusalem, was about to succumb to Aretas' superior forces (*JW* 1.124–30). Subsequently, both Hyrcanus and Aristobulus brought their quarrel before Pompey in Damascus, where Aristobulus presented the Roman general with a munificent gift: a golden vine worth 500 talents (*Ant.* 14.34). In further describing the gift, Josephus (*Ant.* 14.35–36) cites Strabo: "There also came from Egypt an embassy and a crown worth four hundred pieces of gold, and from Judaea either a vine or garden (εἴτε ἄμπελος εἴτε κῆπος); 'delight' (τερπωλή) is what they called this work of art. Moreover we ourselves

3 Cf. J.C. VanderKam, *From Joshua to Caiaphas: High Priests after the Exile* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress; Assen, the Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 2004), 342 n. 266 and 345 n. 274; T. Ilan, *Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity, Part I: Palestine 330 BCE–200 CE* (TSAJ 91; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2002), s.v. Ἀριστόβουλος–Aristobulus [2], 266–67; idem, "The Greek Names of the Hasmoneans", *JQR* 78 (1987) 1–20, on p. 13. See further S. Ostermann, *Die Münzen der Hasmonäer. Ein kritischer Bericht zur Systematik und Chronologie* (NTOA 55; Fribourg: Academic Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 5, 8 et passim.

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have examined this gift, which has been set up in the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus at Rome, and has an inscription reading, 'From Alexander, the king of the Jews.' It was valued at five hundred talents. And it is said to have been sent by Aristobulus, the ruler of the Jews.'"[4] The collocation of terms ἄμπελος and τερπωλή here recalls the etiological tale told by Nonnus about Dionysus' lover Ampelos, the beautiful satyr youth whose untimely death the wine god mourned, thereby turning his body into a grape vine and creating wine from his blood: "Ampelos (Ἄμπελε), you have brought mourning to Dionysos who never mourns—yes, that when your honeydropping wine shall grow, you may bring its delight (τερπωλήν) to all the four quarters of the world (ὅλῳ τετράζυγι κόσμῳ), a libation for the Blessed, and for Dionysos a heart of merry cheer. Lord Bacchos has wept tears, that he may wipe away man's tears!" (Nonnus, *Dion*. 12.167–69). A version of the tale is known already to Ovid (*Fasti* 3.403–14), so it seems reasonable to suppose that Nonnus, who preserves much ancient lore about Dionysus,[5] employs a well-known collocation of terms here.[6]

Although the Maccabees reacted strongly against Antiochus IV's Hellenistic reforms, it was not long before the Hasmoneans themselves became thoroughgoing "philhellenes" ("lovers of things Greek"), and Aristobulus I even proudly adopted the sobriquet "Philhellene" during his short reign in 104/3 BCE (Jos. *Ant*. 13.318: χρηματίσας μὲν Φιλέλλην). Hence, the same Hasmoneans who adopted so many Hellenistic ways—names, dress, emblems, monuments, coinage, titulature, military tactics—could easily have also adopted a Greek name for a prominent work of art, replete with Dionysian associations.[7]

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4 Cf. VanderKam, *From Joshua to Caiaphas*, 342 n. 266: "Only *Antiquities* mentions Aristobulus's spectacular gift to Pompey, valued at five hundred talents, although, in quoting Strabo about the present, Josephus includes his statement that 'Alexander, the king of the Jews' had sent it (14.3, 1 [§§ 34–36]). Why the statement mentions Alexander rather than Aristobulus is puzzling."

5 Dating from the mid-fifth century CE, the *Dionysiaca* of Nonnus, the massive, 48-book epic on the life of Dionysus, is a palimpsest to be read against earlier mythical material. Cf., e.g., G. Bowersock, "Dionysus as an Epic Hero", in N. Hopkinson (ed.), *Studies in the Dionysiaca of Nonnos* (Cambridge Philosophical Society Supplements; Cambridge: Cambridge Philosophical Society, 1994), 156–66, on p. 160. Note, for example, the continuity in Bacchic funerary rites as expressed in the epigram of the Hellenistic poet Dioscorides (*Anth. Pal*. 7.485 [mid-second century BCE]) and Nonnus, *Dion*. 19.162–98 many centuries later. Cf. F. Graf/S. I. Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife: Orpheus and the Bacchic Gold Tablets* (London/New York: Routledge, 2007), 162.

6 Cf. F. Graf, "Ampelus [4]", *BNP*, 1 (2002) 597: "Depictions show that this figure with its telling Dionysian name was pre-Hellenistic." See also M. A. Zagdoun, "Ampelus", *LIMC* I/1 (1981) 689–70. Since the point of the collocation is based on the Greek meaning of the terms, there is no need to speculate about a possible Hebrew name behind the object. Cf. R. Marcus, LCL, 466 n. *a* (on *Ant*. 14.35): "From the description of the object as a vine or garden it may be conjectured that its Heb. name was *ʿēden* = 'delight.'"

7 Just as there was a centrifugal force of the Hasmoneans seeking to embrace the broader Hellenistic world in almost every respect, so also the Romans, who burst on the scene in 63 BCE, would apply a centripetal force seeking to incorporate Judea within its world. The "*Bacchius Iudaeus*" denarius can be understood as the result of the interaction of these forces on each other. See the conclusion for further reflections along this line.

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We may surmise that Aristobulus' gift to Pompey was taken from the Hasmonean Temple, since a golden vine(s) was also located in the Herodian Temple (cf. Jos. *JW* 5.210; *Ant.* 15.395; *m. Middot* 3:8), and the golden vine of the Temple may have been a symbol on the Bar Kokhba coins.[8] Patrich suggests that the inscription on the vine given to Pompey, "From Alexander, King of the Jews" (Jos. *Ant.* 14.36), indicates that Aristobulus looted this exemplar from the treasury of the Temple in Jerusalem, where it was kept, to which it was donated as an offering by Alexander Jannaeus.[9] If, as E. P. Sanders suggests, the vine and grape clusters at the entrance to the Temple were meant to recall a glorious moment in Israel's history, the enormous cluster of grapes brought back by those who spied out the land at the time of Moses (Num 13:21–27),[10] that might provide a further connection with Dionysus, insofar as the scene also evoked the image of the Oschophoria, an Athenian vintage festival dedicated jointly to Athena and Dionysus commemorating the ritual carrying in procession of vine branches hung with bunches of grapes.[11]

With this additional evidence, the oft-suggested connection between Aristobulus' gift of the golden vine (from the Temple) and the "*Bacchius Iudaeus*" denarius does indeed seem to merit further investigation.

Whether Aristobulus is therefore the kneeling figure portrayed on the coin is a question that needs additional consideration. The most we can say at the moment is that Aristobulus gave a Dionysian gift to Pompey, that he was the Jewish/Judean high priest who surrendered to Pompey in 63 BCE, and that he was paraded through Rome in Pompey's triumphal procession in 61 BCE.

In the following, we shall investigate the question from two angles. First, we will examine Pompey's own agenda. It will be shown that the year our denarius appeared, 55 BCE, was the same year in which Pompey dedicated his spectacular theater-temple in Rome, and, furthermore, that these very public displays are related as expressions of Pompey's Dionysian pretensions. Second, we will examine each element of the denarius in question, looking for clues as to the meaning of *Bacchius Iudaeus*. It will be shown that the Latin inscription refers first and foremost to the god Bacchus/Dionysus via an *interpretatio Romana*. Finally, we will explore the possible implications of our investigation for the precise date of the fall of Jerusalem in 63 BCE.

8 Cf. J. Patrich, "The Golden Vine, the Sanctuary Portal, and Its Depiction on the Bar-Kokhba Coins", *Jewish Art* 19/20 (1993–94) 56–61.

9 Patrich, "The Golden Vine, the Sanctuary Portal, and Its Depiction on the Bar-Kokhba Coins", 58.

10 Cf. E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 BCE–66 CE* (London: SCM; Philadelphia, PA: Trinity Press International, 1992), 244.

11 On the Oschophoria, see further in chapter 3.

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Chapter 1: Pompey

Coins Commemorating Pompey's Conquests

It is our thesis that the minting of the "*Bacchius Iudaeus*" denarius was not a stand-alone event. Rather, it must be seen in light of Pompey's overall military and political agenda during this period of time. The coin is, in fact, part of a whole series of other denarii designed to throw a spotlight on Pompey's triumphal procession in 61 BCE and his other conquests in the run-up to the dedication of his spectacular theater-temple complex in Rome.

The first thing we need to recognize is that, as the numismatist K. Kraft has demonstrated, our denarius is part of a series of six denarii minted in Rome within the very short time frame of c. 55/4 BCE, the reverses of which were designed to publicize Pompey's conquests in Asia, for which he had celebrated a triumph in 61 BCE.[1] For example, to underscore the fact that his third triumph was a celebration of Pompey the Great as world conqueror, three different denarii were issued during this time frame in Rome:[2] one portrays Victoria with a palm frond and surrounded by four wreaths; another features a globe surrounded by four wreaths, which recalls the globe carried in the triumphal procession of 61 BCE;[3] and yet another contains three trophies,[4] corresponding to the three continents of the earth over which Pompey had triumphed—Libya/Africa (81 or 80 BCE), Europa (71 BCE), and Asia (61 BCE)—thereby encompass-

1 K. Kraft, "Taten des Pompeius auf den Münzen", *JNG* 18 (1968) 7–24.

2 Cf. Kraft, "Taten des Pompeius", 20, with Taf. 1.6–8. See also M. Beard, *The Roman Triumph* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 20–21, with fig. 4.

3 See further in chapter 3 (with Fig. 11 there). Cf. Kraft, "Taten des Pompeius", 15: "Schon seit langem ist erkannt, daß die drei gleichartigen Kränze auf diesen beiden Denartypen nur auf die drei Triumphe des Pompeius anspielen können und daß der vierte Kranz mit den Bändern jenen goldenen Kranz meinen muß, der dem Pompeius durch Volksbeschluß zum Gebrauch im Theater zugestanden wurde." On this coin and the globe carried in the triumphal procession of 61 BCE, see also C. Nicolet, *Space, Geography, and Politics in the Early Roman Empire* (Jerome Lectures 19; Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1991), 37; Beard, *The Roman Triumph*, 20 (fig. 4), 30.

4 Pompey reportedly had a signet ring with three trophies of victory carved on it, the presentation of which was used to confirm his death to Caesar (Dio 42.18.3: "Even when he had died, they did not believe it for a long time, not, in fact, until they saw his signet ring that had been sent; it had three trophies carved on it, as had that of Sulla"). Cf. Beard, *The Roman Triumph*, 14–15.

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ing the whole *oikoumene*.[5] In keeping with his self-image as a world conqueror, Pompey paraded his identification with Alexander the Great, from whom he derived the surname *Magnus* ("the Great"), reportedly wearing a cloak that had once belonged to Alexander himself during his third and final triumph (App. *Mith.* 117).[6] He also later displayed a portrait of Alexander by the

5 Cf. Plut. *Pomp.* 45.5: "The greatest factor in his glory, and something that had never happened to any Roman before, was that he celebrated his third triumph over the third continent. For others before him had triumphed three times. But he held his first triumph over Africa, his second over Europe, and his final one over Asia, and so in a way he seemed to have brought the whole world under his power in his three triumphs." K. M. Girardet, "Der Triumph des Pompeius im Jahre 61 v. Chr.—*ex Asia*?", *ZPE* 89 (1991) 201–15, on p. 210. Lucan (6.817–18) refers to Pompey's triumphs over Europe, Africa and Asia, and to the irony that he and his two sons each died on one of those continents: "O pitiable wretches, you must fear Europe and Africa and Asia: Fortune divides your graves among the lands you triumphed over" (*Europam, miseri, Libyamque Asiamque timete: distribuit tumulos vestris fortuna triumphis*). For other statements that Pompey triumphed over "Asia" and/or the whole inhabited earth, see further Girardet, "Der Triumph des Pompeius", 210 n. 39, 211, 214 with n. 54, 215; D. Feeney, *Caesar's Calendar: Ancient Time and the Beginning of History* (Sather Classical Lectures 65; Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 59–67. See further Nicolet, *Space, Geography, and Politics*, 31–33. The Roman historian, Cassius Dio, refers to one trophy carried in the third triumph as "huge and expensively decorated, with an inscription attached to say 'this is a trophy of the whole world'" (Dio 37.21.2).

6 Cf. P. Green, "Caesar and Alexander: Aemulatio, Imitatio, Comparatio", *AJAH* 3 (1978) 1–26, esp. on pp. 4–5, 9, 10, 16; A. Kühnen, *Die imitatio Alexandri in der römischen Politik (1 Jh. v. Chr. bis 3 Jh. n. Chr.)* (Münster: Rhema, 2008); D. Michel, *Alexander als Vorbild für Pompeius, Caesar und Marcus Antonius. Archäologische Untersuchungen* (Collection Latomus 94; Bruxelles: Latomus, revue d'études latines, 1967); R. R. R. Smith, *Hellenistic Royal Portraits* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 136. Green ("Caesar and Alexander," 4–5 et passim) argues that Pompey (rather than Caesar) consciously modeled himself on Alexander and promoted himself as the New Dionysus. Note, however, that in view of his triumphs celebrated in 46 BCE and his subsequent apotheosis, Virgil (*Aen.* 1.286–90) praises Julius Caesar as "loaded with the spoils of the East (*spoliis Orientis onustum*), thus comparing Caesar with the originator of the triumph, Dionysus, himself an example of a god who had entered heaven after earthly successes." Cf. N. Holmes, "Nero and Caesar: Lucan 1.33–66", *CP* 94 (1999) 75–81, on pp. 79–80; P. Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus* (Jerome Lectures; Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1988), 44: "For Pompey, the comparison with Dionysus or Heracles was still understood as a metaphor for the splendors of his military victories in the East. But Julius Caesar was perfectly open in proclaiming himself a demigod." After Augustus, cultic veneration of the emperor became fashionable, and the competent, virtuous emperor was expected to emulate Dionysus and the like. Cf. Tac. *Ann.* 4.38: "Most regarded it as an indication of his lack of self-confidence, and certain people interpreted it as a sign of his degenerate nature. The best of mortals, went the argument, were desirous of the greatest heights; so it came about that Hercules and Liber (= Dionysus) among the Greeks and Quirinus [Romulus] among us had been added to the number of the gods. Augustus had done better because he had set his hopes on it. All other things were immediately available for the principes: only for one thing should they prepare insatiably, that their memory should be bountiful, for if they spurned fame, they spurned their accomplishments of virtue."

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fourth-century-BCE painter, Nicias of Athens, in the portico of his theater-temple complex (Plin. *HN* 35.132).

Besides these denarii depicting Pompey's conquest of the whole inhabited earth, Kraft argues, there are other coins that portray acts of individual submission: the surrender of Tigranes of Armenia (a warrior with a spear leads a horse by a tether; a round shield lies next to the warrior's left foot)[7] and the subjugation of Aristobulus of Judea.[8] The final denarius that Kraft includes in this series of coins dating to around 55/4 BCE commemorating Pompey's victories pertains to the war against the pirates—a sea trophy flanked by two men (presumably pirates taken as prisoners).[9]

Kraft explained this sudden flurry of denarii minted in Rome around 55/4 BCE to commemorate Pompey's conquests as a consequence of the fact that Pompey's power was then at its zenith, at least in terms of the political office that he held at that time if not his popularity. It is certainly noteworthy that publicity for Pompey's conquests did not take place immediately after the triumph of 61 BCE, but rather six years later. This corresponds precisely with the development of Pompey's political power. For immediately after the triumph, Pompey was in a relatively weak position: he had to fight hard for provisions for his veterans, and his arrangement of affairs in the East succeeded only after the alliance with Caesar and Crassus against the opposition of the senate majority. By 55/54 BCE, however, Pompey had come into his own, at least in terms of the political office that he held at the time. In 55, he was elected, together with Crassus, to consul amidst turbulent circumstances, with the help of soldiers taken from Caesar's army. These strong-arm tactics did not set well with either the elite or the populace. However, while Crassus went to the East to conduct the war with the Persians in 55 BCE, Pompey remained in Rome, enabling him to attempt to consolidate his power and influence there, with the ambition for personal domination over Rome.[10] It was during these heady days of Pompey's waxing political influence, Kraft argues, that moneyers who were adherents of Pompey or who were promised advancement by him, including the A. Plautius who issued the denarius in question,[11] emphasized the great deeds of the one who was expected soon

7 Kraft, "Taten des Pompeius", 10–15, 20, with Taf. 1.2.

8 Kraft, "Taten des Pompeius", 16–19, with Taf. 1.3.

9 Kraft, "Taten des Pompeius", 8–10, with Taf. 1.1.

10 On Pompey's ambition for personal domination over Rome, which he tried to disguise and deny, see J. Leach, "Pompey's 'Principate': Third Consulship and the Rift with Caesar 54–50", in idem, *Pompey the Great* (Kent: Croom Helm, 1978), 150–72.

11 As Kraft points out ("Taten des Pompeius", 19), A. Plautius was a close member of Pompey's party and, as tribune, agitated for Pompey in 56 BCE (Dio 39.16.2). It was with Pompey's support that A. Plautius was elected to aedile in 55 BCE, at which time he minted the denarius in question.

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