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COINS OF ARETAS IV, KING OF NABATAEANS (9 BC–AD 40)

The history of the Nabataean tribes, despite the significant role they played in the history of the ancient Near East in the Greco-Roman period, is relatively little known. This results primarily from the lack of any more extensive source information. The situation is slightly better with archaeological finds, which are scattered around the entire Mediterranean basin. Unfortunately, the majority of these come from the 1st century AD, when the Nabataean state, with its capital in Petra, reached its high water mark. Despite these limitations, we know from the accounts of Strabo, Diodorus Siculus, and Flavius Josephus that at some time near the beginning of the Hellenistic period the Nabataeans began to consolidate under the name "*Nabat*"¹, eventually forming a united state. Al-

¹ Strabo, *Geographia* 16.4.2.

though initially they maintained a nomadic life style,² by the 1st century BC they were involved in trade and banking, which brought them the greatest prominence. The fall of the Nabataean kingdom occurred in AD 106, when it was incorporated directly into the Roman Empire, creating the new province of Arabia.³

The problems posed by the coins of the Nabataean kings issued have proven to be more difficult than the history. There are few works devoted to this subject matter, and the earliest of these, written in the 19th century, are full of mistakes and fantastic interpretations.⁴ Nevertheless, each successive article contributed to progress in research. It was only in 1904 that R. Dussaud⁵ published an extremely important work, which until 1975 remained the best and most complete study of the subject. Its main contribution was to establish the chronology of the Nabataean kings, after comparative tests based on the written sources, the coinage, and the archaeological sources. It is surprising that from 1922, when G. F. Hill published yet another edition of his *Catalogue of the British Museum*,⁶ until 1975, no basic works on Nabataean coins were published. The difficult task of formulating a comprehensive overview of the coinage of the Na-

² Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica* XIX.94.1–95.2.

³ Cassius Dio, *Historia Romana*, LXVIII.14.5. For more details on the history of the Nabataeans, see N. Glueck, *Deities and Dolphins* (New York 1965); P. C. Hammond, *The Nabataeans: Their History, Culture, and Archaeology* (Lund 1973).

⁴ F. Lenormant, *Description des médailles et antiquités composant le cabinet de M. le baron Behr* (Paris 1857), p. 147, plate II, no. 11; Duc de Luynes, „*Monnaies des Nabatéens*”, *Revue Numismatique* III (1858), pp. 292–316, 362–385, Pls. XIV, XV, XVI; V. Langlois, *Numismatique des Arabes avant l'Islamisme*, Chap. I, „*Royaume de Nabatène*” (Paris 1895), pp. 5–38, Pls I and II; M. de Vogüe, „*Monnaies des rois de Nabatène*”, *Revue Numismatique* XIII (1868), pp. 153–168, Pl. V; F. de Saulcy, „*La numismatique des rois nabathéens de Pétra*”, *Annuaire de numismatique* IV (1873), 1–35, Pls. I and II. Until 1904 several more short articles were published, which did not, however, contribute anything new. Cf. for example F. de Saulcy, „*Note sur deux monnaies inédites de Palmyre et de la dynastie des rois nabathéens*”, *Annuaire de numismatique* (1877), 462–464; *idem*, „*Note sur deux monnaies inédites*”, *Mélanges de numismatique* II (1882), 193–197; A. Sorlin-Dorigny, „*Monnaies nabatéennes inédites*”, *Mélanges de numismatique* V (1887), 369–371; E. Babelon, *Revue Numismatique* V (1887), 371–377; *idem*, „*Monnaies nabatéennes inédites*”, *Mélanges de numismatique* (1900), 75–81.

⁵ R. Dussaud, „*Numismatique des rois de Nabatène*”, *Journal Asiatique* III (1904), pp. 189–238, pl. I–IV; *idem*, „*Monnaies Nabatéennes*”, *Revue Numismatique* IX (1905), 170–176.

⁶ G. F. Hill, *British Museum Catalogue of Greek Coins: Arabia, Mesopotamia and Persia* (London 1922), pp. xi–xxii, 1–13, Plates I, II. In 1912, a short article describing several Nabataean coins was published by A. Decloedt, „*Monnaies inédites ou peu communes du Médaillier*”, *Revue Numismatique* XVI (1912), 463–466.

bataean kings was only undertaken by Ya'akov Meshorer, who based his study primarily on his own investigations.⁷ After him there has been only one small work on Nabataean numismatics and chronology published by A. Negev.⁸ Of necessity, then, the present article will be based primarily on the work of Meshorer, though the present author does not share all Meshorer's views.⁹

In Nabataean numismatics, the most important position is surely occupied by the coins of Aretas IV (9 BC–AD 40). During his reign the Nabataean kingdom reached the apogee of its cultural, social, and political development. The number of coins struck is a highly characteristic feature. Eight out of ten extant Nabataean coins were struck under Aretas IV.¹⁰ No less important is the fact that, due to his widespread economic contacts, his coins and inscriptions have been found in various parts of the ancient world.¹¹

The source accounts regarding Aretas IV are relatively numerous. His accession to the throne was preceded by a struggle with Syllaeus, the influential minister of Obodas III (30–9 BC). This extremely powerful individual was able to obtain the favour of the emperor Augustus, who

⁷ Y. Meshorer, *Nabataean Coins* (Jerusalem 1975). It should be recalled that two articles were published earlier regarding the new monetary finds: E. S. G. Robinson, "Coins from Petra", etc., *Numismatic Chronicle* XVI (1936), 288–291, Pl. XVII; J. T. Milik and H. Seyrig, "Tresor monétaires de Murabba'at", *Revue Numismatique* I (1958), 11–22, Pls. I–III.

⁸ A. Negev, "Numismatics and Nabataea Chronology", *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 114 (1982), 119–128. Recently were published articles by A. Kushnir-Stein and H. Gitrlir, *Numismatic Evidence from Tel Beer-Sheva and the Beginning of Nabatean Coinage*, *Israel Numismatic Journal* 12 (1992–93), pp. 13–20; J. M. C. Bowsher, *Early Nabatean Coinage*, *ARAM* (Society for Syro-Mesopotamian Studies), 2 (1990), pp. 221–228; K. Schmitt-Korte, *Nabataean Coinage – Part II. New Coin Types and Variants*, *Numismatic Chronicle*, 150, 1990, pp. 105–133; K. Schmitt-Korte, M. Price, *Nabatean Coinage – Part III. The Nabatean Monetary System*, *Numismatic Chronicle*, 154 (1994), pp. 67–131.

⁹ I would like to take this opportunity to express my deep gratitude to Dr. Marek Wilczyński of the Institute of History at the Pedagogical University in Cracow for his help in the work on the present article.

¹⁰ Y. Meshorer, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

¹¹ Nabataean coins of Aretas IV were found during excavations at Curium on Cyprus (see D. H. Cox, "Coins from the Excavations at Curium, 1932–1953", *Numismatic Notes and Monographs* 145 [1959], p. 26, no. 202), at Dura-Europos (see A. R. Bellinger, *The Excavations at Dura-Europos. Final Report VI: The Coins* (New Haven 1949), p. 10, no. 166, 167), and in Susa and Iran (see Ghirshman and Saïles, *Memoires de la mission archéologique en Iran*, XXXVIII, Mission de Susiane (Paris 1965), p. 202, no. 499).

did not accept Aretas as King of Nabataea. It was only the intervention of Herod the Great, who was in fact an enemy of the Nabataean rulers, that led to the fall of Syllaeus, enabling Aretas to officially take the throne.¹²

The coins struck during the reign of Aretas IV can be divided into four chronological groups:

- I. silver coins from the 1st to the 6th years of his reign (9-4 BC);
- II. bronze coins from the 4th to the 6th years of his reign (6-4 BC);
- III. bronze and silver coins from the 10th to the 24th years of his reign (AD 1-15);
- IV. silver and bronze coins from the 27th to the 48th years of his reign (AD 18-39).

It should be noted from the outset that the long reign of Aretas IV, and the consequent long period of minting, had a significant impact on his coinage. The issue process was not uniform, but required several radical changes caused by economic or "banking" necessities, which cannot be known in greater detail.

GROUP I

Silver coins from the 1st to 6th years of the reign of Aretas IV

This group is comprised of the earliest coins struck under Aretas, all made of silver. The coins of the first year are divided into two sub-groups, one struck at the beginning of the year, and the other near the end.

The specimens belonging to the first sub-group have preserved certain characteristic features of the coins of Obodas III.¹³ The most important of these is the representation of the head of the Queen, whose name is not mentioned on Obodas III's coins. The head of the King is in a diadem, and the date is given as שנת חדרה (first year), while the actual portrait of Aretas is almost a caricature. One may venture the supposition that this results from the mediocre talents of the artist who made the dies. The same can in fact be said of other elements on the coins of this group. Among these is the extraordinary half-shekel. In Nabataean

¹² Flavius Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* XVI, IX, 271-299; XVI, X, 335-355.

¹³ Y. Meshorer, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-36.

mintage the striking of coins in this denomination was halted after the seventh year of the reign of Obodas III (24 BC). Since to date this is the only known example of a Nabataean half-shekel struck after this date, Meshorer has advanced the hypothesis that its issue shortly after Aretas IV's accession to the throne was caused by some sort of political or prestige considerations.¹⁴

He also refers to the discovery of a small silver coin, upon which he bases the conclusion that in the first year of Aretas IV's reign a special series of commemorative coins was struck, in three different denominations: half-shekel, denarius, and half-denarius.¹⁵

The coins struck towards the end of Aretas's first year were now done by a more talented artist, and are remarkable for their beauty. Only one head is placed on each side (which remained the case until AD 19), and moreover, for the first time in the history of Nabataean mintage, the Queen's name is mentioned on the coins. The date is given on the coins in numerals, 1 שנת (Year 1), and not in words. The written-out date appears for the last time on silver coins from the second year of the reign, שנת תרתי. On the specimens of this group, the King's head is in a laurel wreath, whereas after the fourth year the head of Aretas IV in diadem disappears completely. The issue of the coins from the second sub-group was continued in the second, third, fourth, and sixth years of the reign.¹⁶

A. Heads of Group I

1. Head of Aretas IV. This appears in two forms: (a) In the earlier, "archaic" form a diadem is placed on the head, the hair falls down straight onto the neck and covers the ears; a robe is wrapped around the shoulders. (b) In the later, "new" form, the diadem has been replaced with a laurel wreath, and the hair is longer and wavy. The head is presented alone, without shoulders and robe. On the front of the laurel wreath there is a decoration in the shape of the letter V. In all likelihood this is merely the stamp of the Nabataean mint.

¹⁴ Ibidem, pp. 28, 42.

¹⁵ Ibidem, p. 43.

¹⁶ Ibidem, p. 43.

2. Head of Huldu. The first wife of Aretas IV (to AD 16) is the first Nabataean Queen whose name is mentioned on coins, as well as on inscriptions. She is always presented in a veil covering her hair and neck and hanging down onto the robe that covers her shoulders. On her head she also has a laurel wreath.¹⁷ On the coins of the first sub-group the veil is presented in a very severe and schematized manner with vertical lines, giving the impression of incompleteness. On the specimens from the second sub-group it has been sketched very delicately, with well emphasized folds. On some coins the Queen is also wearing jewelry: a beaded necklace and earrings, which are spiral or pendulum-shaped.¹⁸

B. Inscriptions

On the obverse of Group I coins there are the following inscriptions:

– חרתת מלך גבטו שגת חדה (Aretas, King of the Nabataeans. First Year)

– חרתת מלך גבטו רח סעמה (Aretas, King of the Nabataeans, who loves his people) (inscription begins at the top on the left side)

– גבטו רח סעמה חרתת מלך (Aretas, King of the Nabataeans, who loves his people) (inscription begins at the bottom on the right side)

As can be seen, the date שגת חדה (Year 1) appears on the obverse of the coins of the first sub-group immediately after the King's name and title. There are no inscriptions on the reverses of these coins, nor do they have the title רחם עמה, which appears only on the specimens of the second sub-group.

It is difficult to answer the question why the title [...] appears only on the coins from the end of the first year of Aretas's rule. Perhaps at the beginning of the year he did not yet hold the title, though it cannot be precluded that it was omitted on the earlier coins for reasons of space.¹⁹

¹⁷ Most likely the Queen also has a V-shaped decoration on the front of her laurel wreath, though the small dimensions make it impossible to make a full identification.

¹⁸ Meshorer, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 44. It should be recalled that these types of title or cognomen were assumed by many rulers in antiquity, especially in the Hellenistic period, e.g. Antiochus Epiphanes, Ptolemy Philadelphus, or Ptolemy Euergetes. Their purpose is typically explained as underlining some sort of personal characteristics of the ruler, e.g. love for his father or brother.

The inscriptions on the reverses of the coins in Group I are as follows:

– חרתת מלכ[א מלך] נבטו שנת חדה (Huldu, Queen of the Nabataeans. First Year)

– חלדו מלכת נבטו שנת חדה (Huldu, Queen of the Nabataeans. Year 1)

– חלדו מלכת נבטו שנת תרתין (Huldu, Queen of the Nabataeans. Second Year)

– 2 [חלדו מלכת נבטו] שנת 2 (Huldu, Queen of the Nabataeans. Year 2)

– 3 חלדו מלכת נבטו שנת 3 (Huldu, Queen of the Nabataeans. Year 3)

– 4 [חלדו מלכת] נבטו שנת 4 (Huldu, Queen of the Nabataeans. Year 4)

– 6 [חלדו מלכת נבטו] שנת 6 (Huldu, Queen of the Nabataeans. Year 6)

The reader may recall that from the third year of Aretas IV's reign on, all dates on silver coins are given exclusive in numeral form.

On the reverse of one of the coins (now found in the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum in Jerusalem) which presumably belongs to this group (undated), there is a peculiar inscription with an error: ...חלדו מלך נבס.

C. The letter ן and the sign O.

The letter ן and the sign O continued to be placed on Aretas's coins. Meshorer explains the latter as the sign of the mint in Reqem, i.e. Petra.²⁰ The table below depicts the configuration in which these two elements occur in the coins of Group I. We shall return to the letter ן.

GROUP II

Bronze coins from the 4th–6th years of Aretas's reign

No coins were struck for two or three years after the sixth year of Aretas's reign, which was caused by the fact that a large number of coins were struck in previous years. In fact, in the fourth, fifth, and sixth years a significant number of bronze coins were issued, which in their form and characteristic features are a continuation of the late bronze coins of

²⁰ Y. Meshorer, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

Table A.²¹ Chronology of the letter Π and the sign O on the coins of Group I, silver coins of the 1st-6th years of the reign of Aretas IV.

Number of the coin in Meshorer's catalog	Year	Obverse of the coin		Reverse of the coin	
		left side	right side	left side	right side
46	1	—	—	—	O
47	1	—	—	—	—
47 A	1	—	—	—	—
48	1	—	—	—	—
49	1	—	O	—	O
49A	1	—	O	—	—
50	2	—	—	—	—
51	2	?	?	—	O(?)
52	3	?	?	—	O
53	4	—	—	—	—
Sup 6	5	?	O	—	?
65	6	?	?	—	O

Explanation of symbols:

— no sign or letter

? difficult to determine whether or not the sign and/or letter is present, due to the poor state of conservation.

Obodas III. They were probably issued in the fourth year of Aretas's reign. These coins are distinguished by the "Oriental" head with diadem on the hair, which falls more or less straight down. In the coins of this first group the Nabataean King is presented in "archaic" style for the last time.

Towards the end of the fourth year there appears the "new" head with laurel wreath, which from that moment to the end of Nabataean coinage is the only type that appears. On this basis we may state with complete confidence that every coin on which the King's head is depicted in Archaic style (even if the inscription is illegible) was struck no later than in the fourth year of the reign of Aretas IV (6 BC).²² The date is given on the "new" coins in numerals: 4 שגת (Year 4), 5 שגת (Year 5), 6 שגת (Year 6).

²¹ The table comes from Y. Meshorer, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

²² Y. Meshorer, p. 45.

The coins of the fourth year, and especially the sixth, are rare, whereas in the fifth year a large number of coins were struck in several types and variants. The predominant type shows on the reverse the figure of a standing woman, turned to the left, with hand raised. This figure had already appeared on the coins of Obodas III, and most likely represented the Queen.²³ If this surmise is correct, then the woman on the coins in question is Huldu, the first wife of Aretas IV. Another type of coin struck in the fifth year of his reign shows the figure of a seated woman in a crown, turned to the right. This type, very rare, was published in 1887 by Babelon,²⁴ who stated that the woman is very similar to Astarte on the city coinage of Byblos. Meshorer's research, however, indicated that this is Tyche, or the Queen in the form of the goddess. Hill was also of similar opinion.²⁵

A. The meaning of the inscription פצאל [אל] on the coins of Aretas IV

Several Nabataean inscriptions mention the members of Aretas IV's family, primarily his children. One of these coins, found in Petra²⁶ and dated "Year 29 of Aretas" (AD 20), mentions the following persons:

... על חיי חרתת מלך נבטו רחם עמ[ה ושקילת]
 [א]חתה מלכת נבטו ומלכו ועבדת ורבאל ופצאל
 ושעודת וחגרו בודי וחרתת בר חג[רו]
 /... [ברברה]

(... in the lifetime of Aretas, King of the Nabataeans, who loves [his] people, [and Shuqailat]/ his sister, Queen of the Nabataeans, and Malichos and Obodas and Rabbal and Phasaël and Se'udat and Hagru his children, and Aretas son of Hag[ru, his grandson].../)

Another inscription, found in Avdat,²⁷ mentions בני חרתת עבדת ופצאל ושעודת (Obodas and Phasaël and Se'udat, sons of Aretas).

²³ Ibidem, p. 34. The standing woman had already appeared on the coins of Aretas III, but in his case this is either Tyche or Nike of Damascus, copied from the city coinage issued by the earlier rulers of Damascus (ruled for a certain time by the Nabataeans as well), without any specifically Nabataean meaning.

²⁴ E. Babelon, *op. cit.*, p. 376, Pl. X.

²⁵ G. F. Hill, *op. cit.*, p. xviii.

²⁶ *Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum* (hereafter CIS) II.354.

²⁷ A. Negev, "Nabataean Inscriptions from 'Avodat (Oboda)", *Israel Exploration Journal* 11 (1961), pp. 127-128.

Meshorer states that the letters פל are an abbreviation of פצאל, Phasael, adducing as evidence the fact that this name appears on the coins of Aretas IV, the only Nabataean King so far known to us who had a son named Phasael. He presumes that the first of the inscriptions cited above names Aretas's children in chronological order, a conclusion which is partially supported by the second inscription. After Queen Shuqailat, Malichos is mentioned, probably Aretas's firstborn son, which seems to be confirmed by the fact that he assumed the throne after his father's death. It may be supposed, then, that Phasael was the fourth son of Aretas, and the placement of his name on a coin from the 5th year of his father's reign results, in Meshorer's opinion, from the fact that he was born in that very year (5 BC).²⁸ This is the only year when bronze coins with Phasael's name were issued, as a result of which we may conjecture that the occasion for their striking was the birth of the royal son.

We should properly ask, however, why the birthdays of Aretas's remaining sons were not commemorated in this same way. Of course it can always be assumed that the three oldest sons were born before their father ascended to the throne, while the children younger than Phasael were born in years in which Aretas issued no coins. It does not seem possible to resolve this problem at the present state of research.

There is, however, a fact which to a certain extent confirms Meshorer's thesis: on the coins bearing the letters פל there is also a palm branch, which apart from this type is unknown in Nabataean coinage (with one exception). On the coins of this group, the palm branch appears exclusively with the letters פל, never without them.²⁹ Other than this we know of only one other type of Nabataean coin on which the palm branch symbol can be seen. This is a coin struck in the time of Shuqailat, Aretas's second wife, whose issue – in Meshorer's opinion – is associated with the event of Shuqailat's marriage to Aretas and her coronation (ca. AD 18).³⁰

The palm branch of course symbolizes joy and victory, and plays a particular role in Jewish coinage and cult.³¹ It is curious that on one of

²⁸ Y. Meshorer, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 48.

³⁰ Y. Meshorer informs us several sentences later that just after his study was written he saw in A. Frankel's collection in Tel Aviv a coin with the inscription פצאל in its entirety.

³¹ E. W. Klimowsky, "Symbols on Ancient Jewish Coins", in *The Dating and Meaning of Ancient Jewish Coins and Symbols* (Jerusalem 1958), p. 88–89.

the coins of the Roman Republic, a denarius of P. Plautius Hypsaeus, there appears the image of a palm branch with ribbon (58 BC). On the obverse a figure is presented with a palm branch belted by a ribbon. This figure is probably the Nabataean king Aretas III (87–62 BC), as indicated by the inscription. This coin was struck to honor M. Aemilius Scaurus, who fought with Aretas III and contributed to a significant degree to the extension of Roman authority to the East.³² We may suppose, then, that the palm branch with ribbon is also an express symbol of homage.³³ This does not mean, of course, that the symbol of the palm branch must have immediately had bad associations for the Nabataeans. It seems to us, however, that Meshorer's interpretation does not resolve the problem definitively.

The cornucopia, on the other hand, typically accompanied Tyche or Fortuna in the Mediterranean basin, sometimes also Demeter.³⁴ Some scholars see in him a symbol of the good fortune which the divine King brings to the people.³⁵ This may explain why the accession of Shuqailat to the throne is commemorated using this symbol.

B. Small bronze coins

Small bronze coins were struck for the first time in 9 BC, in the period of the brief reign of Syllaeus. The dominant image on the specimens struck under Aretas IV is his head on the obverse and two crossed cornucopiae on the reverse. In addition, the signs and letters appear on these coins in an unspecified order and in many different combinations. Their issue probably began no earlier than in the 4th year of Aretas's reign, when the first bronze coins were struck, and no later than in AD 18, when Shuqailat became the new Queen, and the coins began to display a different character. Only three specimens of this group bear the date 4, i.e. 6 BC. The characteristic feature of these coins, distinguished by the large number of types, is the lack of the letter ϖ or any

³² A. Sydenham, *The Coinage of the Roman Republic* (London 1952), no. 913.

³³ S. Skowronek, *Moneta w kulturze starożytnego judaizmu. Spór o mennictwo Heroda Wielkiego*. (Cracow 1994), pp. 75–76.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 83.

³⁵ E. R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period* (New York 1953–1968), vol. I, pp. 106–114.

reference whatsoever to Shuqailat. On this basis we can state with a high degree of probability that they were all struck before her marriage with Aretas. Since they are undated, however, we are unable to specify the date when their issue was commenced or halted. Nevertheless, the large quantity of these coins suggests that they were struck over a long period. The letter Π appears on these coins many times; there is even one specimen on which it occurs as many as four times. At least one of these may refer to Queen Huldu.³⁶ Moreover, the letter Π may appear on the coins of this group in homage to Aretas, as the letter generally occurs after the sign O on the issues of the Nabataean kings. After Huldu's death, this letter disappeared almost entirely, appearing only on individual types, most likely in reference to Aretas.

GROUP III

Bronze and silver coins from the 10th to the 24th years of Aretas's reign

A. Coins of the 10th and 11th years

After a three-year interval, Aretas IV issued the most interesting coins in the history of Nabataean coinage. They also have important implications for ancient numismatics as a whole. Their impact on the solution of several problems regarding Jewish coins is also not without meaning. These issues are distinguished by the fact that the denominations are placed on the coins. They are described as follows:

1. Obverse: Head of Aretas IV (to the right), surrounded by an inscription: $\text{נבטו רחם עמה מעה כסף}$ (Aretas, King of the Nabataeans, who loves his people. Silver *ma'ah*).

Reverse: Bust of Huldu (to the right), surrounded by an inscription: $\text{חלדו מלכת נבטו שנת עשר}$ (Huldu, Queen of the Nabataeans. Tenth year [= AD 1]) 9.35 gr, 24 mm

A similar coin was struck in Year 11.

³⁶ In several cases, the left vertical leg of the letter Π is somewhat longer and more slanted to the left than might be expected. In effect, the letter when thus shaped could be read almost as a monogram of the name of Queen Huldu, as though the letters ח and Π had been joined into one. It should be noted, however, that this is only a supposition.

2. Obverse: Head of Aretas IV (to the right), surrounded by an inscription:

חרתת מלך נבטו רחם עמה (Aretas, King of the Nabataeans, who loves his people).

Reverse: standing eagle (to the left), surrounded by the inscription 10 כסף שנה (semi-silver. Year 10) 5.10 gr, 19 mm

A similar coin was struck in Year 11.

3. Obverse: Head of Aretas IV (to the right)

Reverse: wreath; inside, the inscription רבע (quarter) 2.30 grams, 14 mm

On another specimen of this group there is the inscription רבוע.³⁷

With the exception of the coins of the First Jewish War, the placing of the denomination on the coin, as occurs in the bronze issues by Aretas here under discussion, has no precedence in ancient numismatics. No such practice was in fact necessary. The procedure adopted by Aretas IV was most likely caused by some sort of exceptional circumstances.

Between the years 4 BC (the sixth year of Aretas's reign) and AD 4 (the thirteenth year) there was a complete cessation of the issue of silver coins. Only in the 16th year was their actual issue resumed, and then only partially. The only exceptions are two single types, the first from the thirteenth year of the reign, and the second from the fourteenth, struck in very limited quantities. It is difficult to determine what the reason for this may have been; there may have been both political and economic factors at play. Meshorer presumes that it was caused by the insufficient supply of silver.³⁸ Perhaps in the 7th, 8th, and 9th years of the reign of Aretas the lack of this raw material was not yet felt too strongly, for the reason that silver coins from earlier years were still in circulation. By the 10th year the supply was obviously depleted, which began to be felt in a painful way. Since Aretas IV did not have a sufficient quantity of silver ore to issue new coins, he decided on the extraordinary step of striking bronze substitutes for silver coins. If he had intended to strike normal bronze coins, he would not then

³⁷ Though this type shows neither the date nor the name of the King, it surely belongs to this group, since one specimen has an identical countermark to those found on other coins of this group; see Y. Meshorer, *op. cit.*, pp. 49, 50.

³⁸ Y. Meshorer, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

have had to specify them as **מעה כסף** (silver *ma'ah*) or **חצי כסף** (semi-silver).³⁹

B. The term **מעה** (*Ma'ah*)

This term is unknown to us from Nabataean inscriptions, but it occurs in Mishnaic sources, where it sometimes means a monetary unit with a value of 1/24 denarius. More often it denotes money and coins in general, without reference to the denomination.⁴⁰

The term *ma'ah* was intended to emphasize the kind of coin for which it was a substitute, stating, as it were, "silver [coin]" or "semi-silver [coin]." Since these coins were substitutes, the type of denomination **מעה כסף** bears the same representations as the earlier silver coins of Aretas, while the type of denomination **חצי כסף** shows the image of an eagle, similar to the small silver coins (half of the ordinary denomination) that were struck in 9 BC. It can safely be assumed that the similarity is not accidental; the minting authorities were presumably at pains to indicate the bond between the bronze substitutes and the original silver coins. The substitute coin of the "quarter" denomination were given the new, previously unknown image of the "wreath."⁴¹ The only analogous example known to us of striking coins of a similar character took place in the fourth year of the First Jewish War (AD 69/70). The painful lack of silver, partially caused by the huge issues of shekels in the third year, and partly by the lack of silver from besieged Jerusalem, compelled the authorities to issue bronze semi-shekels and quarter-shekels, which, in Meshorer's opinion, served as substitutes for silver coins.⁴² Not all scholars, however, agree that the bronze coins of the first appearance should be given the name

³⁹ The denominations are also shown on archaic Tyrian coins, on which, however, the inscriptions are not entirely clear; see G. F. Hill, *British Museum Catalogue of Greek Coins: Phoenicia* (London 1910), p. 227, no. 1.

⁴⁰ See Ketubot XIII.2.5.7; Nedarim XI.8; Nazir IV.6.

⁴¹ A full description of the coins is contained in a catalogue drawn up by Meshorer and included in his work, pp. 84–112.

⁴² Y. Meshorer, *Jewish Coins of the Second Temple Period* (Tel Aviv 1967), no. 161, 162. See also L. Kadman, "The Coins of the Jewish-Roman War", in *The Dating and Meaning of Ancient Jewish Coins and Symbols* (Jerusalem 1958), pp. 33–35.

“shekel.”⁴³ It is interesting that Meshorer explains the omission of the word “shekel” on these coins in terms of religious considerations.⁴⁴

C. Bronze substitutes and the Nabataean market

Among all the Nabataean coins only the bronze substitutes bear countermarks, indicating difficulties in introducing them into circulation. Meshorer hypothesizes that at the moment these coins appeared on the market, Nabataean merchants began to hoard silver coins, since they had no confidence in substitutes of less than full value, even though they were guaranteed by the authorities.⁴⁵ It is a normal phenomenon, after all, that a worse coinage pushes better coinage out of the market. Thus in a short time the few silver coins still in circulation disappear from the market entirely.

It is difficult to determine whether the purchasing power of the bronze substitutes was the same as that of the silver coins. One may suppose with a high degree of likelihood that devaluation took place in the Kingdom of Nabataea, though its extent is hard to estimate. The substitute coins were certainly in circulation until the 15th year of Aretas's reign, since in his 16th year (AD 7), after a long interruption, a large series of silver coins was issued. Meshorer presumes that this led to their being once again hoarded by the general population, which compelled Aretas to halt the issue and restore the bronze substitute coins.⁴⁶ This is indicated by the countermarks struck towards the end of the 16th year or during the 17th year of the reign of Aretas (AD 7–8/9), intended to validate the coins as legal tender.

⁴³ S. Skowronek, „Szele z pierwszego powstania w Judei”, in *Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego CCCXXX: Prace Archeologiczne 16, Studia z Archeologii Śródziemnomorskiej* 2 (1974), p. 48.

⁴⁴ Y. Meshorer, “Alternations of the ‘Sequel Standards during the Jewish War and the Bar-Kohba War’” in *Proceedings of the Fifth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem 1969), pp. 81–86 (Hebrew); English Abstract, pp. 231–232. It is worthwhile adding that until the moment of the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, the only types of coin accepted there were the Tyrian silver shekel and semi-shekel, in view on their high standard; cf. S. Skowronek, „Moneta w kulturze”, *op. cit.*, p. 41; B. D. Ayre, *Jerusalem und Tyros. Ein Beitrag zu palästinensischen Münz und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* (Tübingen 1969); A. Kindler, “The Mint of Tyre: The Major Source of Silver Coins in Ancient Palestine”, *Eretz Israel* 8 (1968), pp. 318–324.

⁴⁵ Y. Meshorer, “Nabataean Coins”, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*.

D. Coins of the 24th year

In the 24th year of the reign of Aretas IV, an extraordinary series of bronze coins was struck, which were exact copies of silver coins, in terms of both inscriptions and diameters. A coin of this type was published for the first time by Hill,⁴⁷ who, however, regarded it as a counterfeit of a silver coin.⁴⁸ Since he was unable to read the inscription, he ascribed it to Queen Shuqailat, though it is not without significance that he did not know the chronology of Aretas's two wives, and that the latest coin known to him to bear the name of Huldu was dated to 16 שנת (16th year).

Meshorer examined two other coins of this type, besides the one published by Hill, of which the best preserved is in Cambridge.⁴⁹ The date "24" and the name "Huldu" can be read on it without difficulty. Interestingly enough, when the coin from the British Museum was cleaned, it turned out that the same dies had been used to strike it as the Cambridge specimen.

We do not know what happened with these coins after they were introduced on the Nabataean market, since the issue was of limited scope, both in time and quantity. Nevertheless, their significance would be hard to overestimate, for the reason that these are the latest coins on which the name of Huldu is mentioned. The letter ן appears two times on these coins, once on the obverse and once on the reverse, in the form of a monogram, probably of the names of Aretas and Huldu. It should be noticed that this was the last time this letter appeared on a Nabataean coin more than once.

E. Coin from the city of Hagra (Ha-Heger)

This is an uncommonly rare type of coin,⁵⁰ interesting due to the fact that it is the only instance in Nabataean numismatics where the name of a city appears on a coin. The description is as follows:

Obverse: Head of Aretas IV (to the right), with long, wavy hair falling on the neck; in the field on the right side, ן

⁴⁷ G. F. Hill, *BMC Arabia, Mesopotamia and Persia*, *op. cit.*, p. 7, no. 12, Plate 1, 20.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, footnote to coin no. 12.

⁴⁹ In the collections of the Fitzwilliam Museum.

⁵⁰ To date only one specimen has been found.

Reverse: Unidentified object similar to a bell with fringe, which looks like five fringes falling down and ending in droplets; on the top of the object there is a sort of flower or handle; below, the inscription **הגרא** (Hagra).

Hagra⁵¹ (Ha-Heger in Hebrew sources) was an important city on the caravan trail between Nabataea and southern Arabia. Many of the artifacts and inscriptions found there indicated that the origins of its development and importance came with the reign of Aretas IV. It is not impossible that the city was founded then. If this is in fact the case, then, in Meshorer's opinion, the coin was struck to commemorate the occasion of the city's founding. There would be many analogies to this in the ancient world, especially in Jewish coinage and in the Roman provincial cities in the East.⁵² It is not easy, on the other hand, to resolve the matter of that mysterious object on the coin, though Meshorer suggests that it may be connected with the city itself or some cult practiced there.⁵³

The fact that the coin was struck under Aretas IV is also confirmed by the letter **ה** appearing next to the head. It seems likely, also, that it was issued in the first period of his reign, i.e. no later than AD 18, when the head of Aretas is presented without mustache.

F. Minor bronze coins

The average weight of these coins is slightly greater than 1 g., though many specimens weigh slightly less. The majority of these have been preserved in very poor condition, and so their elements are very difficult to read. Certain difficulties are also caused by the significant number of variants. Moreover, most of these coins are struck asymmetrically, so that only in a few cases can all the details be distinguished. Thus the description of this group is based on reconstruction, which consists in matching complementary elements from various specimens. It should be stated explicitly, however, that the comparison of coins not struck from the same dies is risky, and does not always give the correct results.⁵⁴

⁵¹ P. C. Hammond, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

⁵² Y. Meshorer, "Jewish Coins", *op. cit.*, pp. 73–75, 85–87.

⁵³ Y. Meshorer, "Nabataean Coins", *op. cit.*, p. 54.

⁵⁴ It is curious that among these coins only two have been found struck from identical matrices.

We can divide these minor coins into two groups, the first from the time of Huldu, and the second from the time of Shuqailat. This distinction is based on the letters, **𐤇** for Huldu and **𐤅** for Shuqailat. Meshorer dates the first of these to AD 2 – 6, with an image of an eagle on the reverse, while on the coins of the second group the head of Queen Shuqailat can be seen.⁵⁵

GROUP IV

Silver and bronze coins from the 27th to the 48th years of the reign of Aretas IV

The first coins struck by Aretas to carry the name of Shuqailat are specimens from the 27th year of his reign (AD 18).

We do not know the exact date of the death of Huldu; it may have occurred in the 24th year of Aretas's reign, when the last coin with her name appeared, or a year or two later. Nor do we know when Shuqailat became Aretas's wife and Queen, even though the numismatic evidence would point to the 27th year. An earlier date cannot be precluded, however, though for the moment we have no coins or inscriptions from the 25th year (AD 16) or the 26th year (AD 17) of Aretas's reign.⁵⁶ The problem is rendered serious by the fact that the majority of the coins of Aretas IV (in quantitative terms) were struck in the days of Shuqailat, while the bronze coins are undated.

A. Silver coins of Aretas and Shuqailat

The silver coins of Aretas and Shuqailat can be divided into two typological groups, which likewise constitute differing typological units.

GROUP 1

This group includes the earliest silver coins of Aretas and his second wife. They were struck in **27 שנת** and **28 שנת** (Year 27 and 28; AD 18

⁵⁵ Y. Meshorer, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

⁵⁶ The earliest inscription mentioning the name of Shuqailat comes from the 29th year of the reign of Aretas (AD 20); see *CIS II*, 354.

and 19), and are similar in appearance to the earlier silver coins of Huldu. The description is as follows:

Obverse: Bust of Aretas IV with a laurel wreath (to the right), with wavy hair falling down on the neck; surrounded by the inscription חרתת מלך נבטו רחם עמה (Aretas, King of the Nabataeans, who loves his people)

Reverse: Bust of Shuqailat with laurel wreath (to the right), draped, with veil falling on the neck; sign O in the field; surrounded by the inscription שקילת מלכת נבטו שנת (Shuqailat, Queen of the Nabataeans. Year 27/Year 28)

With the exception of the name of the Queen and the smaller diameter of the coin, these are in essence a continuation of the coins of Aretas and Huldu. These two issues are connected by a group of bronze coins from the 24th year of Aretas (AD 15), which are similar to the silver specimens. They also have an impact on the chronological determinations. Thus with high probability we may assume the general rule that all the silver coins bearing the name of Shuqailat and having only one portrait on each side (the head of the King and the head of the Queen) are no later than AD 19, and no earlier than AD 18.⁵⁷ The coins struck beginning in AD 20 belong to Group 2. This general rule is rendered all the more important by the fact that a considerable portion of the silver coins of Aretas are preserved in poor condition, or have the inscriptions and dates on monetary rounds that are smaller than the diameter of the matrices.

GROUP 2

The coins of this group are described as follows:

Obverse: Bust of Aretas IV with laurel wreath (to the right), wavy hair falling on the neck; surrounded by the inscription מלך נבטו רחם עמה חרתת (Aretas, King of the Nabataeans, who loves his people)

Reverse: Combined busts of Aretas and Shuqailat (in the foreground is Aretas without robe; in the background, Shuqailat with robe); surrounded by the inscription שקילת מלכת נבטו שנת (Shuqailat, Queen of the Nabataeans. Year 29 [until the 48th year there are 13 different dates in this place]).

⁵⁷ Y. Meshorer, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

In contrast to Group I, the coins belonging to this group present on the reverse the combined busts of the royal couple. This custom appeared for the first time on the coins of Obodas III, but later it was suspended, until AD 19. From AD 20 until the end of Nabataean mintage it became common practice. The silver coins of this group were struck through most of this period, with the exception of the 42nd, 43rd, and 45th years of Aretas's reign, from which we have no specimens. The possibility cannot be ruled out, however, that coins from these years will be found. Moreover, there were interruptions in issues in AD 28 – 30, since no coins have been discovered from the 37th, 38th, or 39th years of the reign of Aretas. In Meshorer's opinion, the interruption must have been intentional, since it occurred in successive years.⁵⁸ It is difficult, however, to find the reason for this phenomenon. It should be remembered, also, that we also have no inscriptions from these years.⁵⁹

B. Silver content

In the case of silver coins, the silver content is an essential issue, since it determines their value. The silver coins from the earlier years of Aretas (first to sixth years) still have a significant silver content, averaging above 70%. In this respect they are a continuation of the later coins of Obodas III, which exhibit a similar standard.

The transition group of coins from the 16th year of Aretas's reign have a silver content averaging ca. 50%.

The later, third group of silver coins, dated from the 27th year of the reign, exhibit a significant fall in the silver content, which varies in the range from 35% to 40%, and in particular cases is even lower. Some undated coins even show a silver content lower than 20%. The silver

⁵⁸ Y. Meshorer, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

⁵⁹ Y. Meshorer cites the analogy to a pause in the issue of Roman coins by the procurators of Judea. Valerius Gratus halted the striking of coins in AD 24, and their issue was not resumed until Pontius Pilate did so in AD 29. See G. F. Hill, *Catalogue of the Greek Coins in the British Museum: Palestine* (London 1914), pp. 254–257, nos. 31–53; A. Kindler, "More Dates on the Coins of the Procurators", *Israel Exploration Journal* 6 (1956), pp. 54–57. It should be noted that in AD 32 Pontius Pilate was also forced to suspend the issue of coins, due to the reactivation of the imperial mint in Antioch. Cf. E. Bammel, "Syrian Coinage and Pilate", *Journal of Jewish Studies* 2 (1950), pp. 108–110.

coins can be used to exemplify the successive phases of devaluation in the reign of Aretas IV.⁶⁰

Numerous silver Nabataean coins dated from AD 20 onwards were found in a hoard from Murabba'at. On this basis Meshorer presumes that the Nabataean coins struck before that date were made of high-grade silver, as a result of which they disappeared from circulation, and perhaps were even melted down. Given the presence on the market of coins with a lesser standard, their continued use would not serve any particular purpose.⁶¹

C. Bronze coins of Aretas and Shuqailat

The richest group in the Nabataean monetary system consists of the bronze coins of Aretas and Shuqailat. Since these are not dated, other evidence is used to establish their chronology, primarily stylistic criteria, which of course cannot produce a precise dating system.

As of today, we may state that the earliest date on which bronze coins appear with the name of Shuqailat is AD 18. From that moment until AD 40 they were struck in large quantities.

There exists an interesting group of coins that represent an innovation in Nabataean numismatics. In Meshorer's opinion they were struck immediately after Shuqailat's coronation. They may be described as follows:

Obverse: Aretas IV in laurel wreath, standing straight like a soldier, looking to the left, holding a spear in his right hand and supporting himself with the left hand on a sword in a sheath fastened to his belt; his hair is falling on his neck; in the field on the left there is a palm branch; on the right, a monogram

Reverse: Shuqailat standing (to the left), in veil and long garment, with right hand raised and outstretched, holding a palm branch; in the field on the left side, a wreath; on the right, in three lines, the inscription שִׁקְיִלָּת (Shuqa / ila / t)

This is the first time the entire figure of the Nabataean king is shown, dressed in a military uniform consisting of plate and mail armor. The

⁶⁰ Y. Meshorer, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, p. 57.

inscription Π (after the monogram is deciphered) designating the name of Aretas indicates who the figure is on the obverse. Attention should be drawn to the palm branch, which has appeared here for the second and last time in Nabataean coinage (the first time on the coins of Phasael). Meshorer suggests that the palm branch on this coin is associated with the marriage of Aretas and Shuqailat and her coronation.⁶²

These coins are small, relatively thick, and carefully crafted. Queen Shuqailat is presented on the reverse exactly the same as Huldu on the bronze coins from 6 – 4 BC, with this difference, that this time the name of Aretas's second wife is mentioned. The features distinguishing these coins are – according to Meshorer – characteristic for the limited period AD 18 – 20, and thus the beginnings of the reign of Shuqailat.⁶³ Their face value comes to half that of the largest bronze coins struck in the years AD 18–39.

D. "Whole" bronze coins

Among the bronze coins of Aretas and Shuqailat are three denominations specified as "whole," "half," and "quarter." The "whole" coins are described as follows:

Obverse: Combined busts of Aretas IV and Shuqailat (to the right), the King in laurel wreath, wearing a mustache, with hair falling on his neck; in the field on the right, ש ; on the left, Π ; sometimes over the head there is the inscription שלם (= whole), in its entirety or as a monogram.

Reverse: Two crossed cornucopias; between them, above and below, in three lines, the inscription חרתת/שק/לת (Aretas / Shuqai / lat).

This type can be divided into two chronological groups.

1) In the early group, the coins are generally more beautiful and struck on larger coin rounds. Above the heads of the royal couple there is a legible inscription, שלם (= whole). This group is probably the archetype of all the other similar coins, struck, it would appear, around AD 18–25.

2) The coins of this group differ from the first in that they have no inscriptions over the heads of the royal couple, and are made more de-

⁶² *Ibidem*, p. 58.

⁶³ *Ibidem*, p. 58.

licately; though they have a smaller diameter, they weigh the same. It may be assumed that this is a continuation of the coins of an earlier group, where the inscription שלם no longer had any particular significance, since the relation of these coins to others found on the Nabataean market were well known.⁶⁴ They were probably issued from AD 25–40.

E. Letters

On the coins in question, the letters ח ו appear regularly and always in this same order. Since the busts of Aretas and Shuqailat, like the letters, are on the same side of the coin (obverse), with the King always on the left next to the letter ח and the Queen invariably on the right, next to the letter ו, it would appear that these letters designate the names of the royal couple.⁶⁵

F. Denominations of the small bronze coins

Coins of average dimension

The issue of coins with half the face value of the “whole” specimens, which bear the portrait of Shuqailat, was also continued in the later years of her reign. These are a continuation of the coins with the same face value struck in the days of Huldu, where the head of Aretas appear on the obverse, while the reverse presents crossed cornucopiae (with various letters and signs).

In essence only two changes were made on the coins of this type. The letter ח designating Huldu has been replaced by the letter ו, designating Shuqailat.⁶⁶ In addition, a pomegranate has replaced the earlier caduceus between the two crossed cornucopiae. Until quite recently it was supposed that, in addition to Nabataean coinage, the only example where the pomegranate appears between two crossed cornucopiae is in Hasmonean coinage. A scrupulous analysis of the symbols on Hasmone-

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 58.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 59.

⁶⁶ There exists a single coin, however, where the letter ו is missing, and only the letter ח designates Aretas.

an coins has indicated, however, that most likely this is a poppy seed head, and not a pomegranate.⁶⁷

Minor coins

The coins whose face value is a quarter of the "whole" bronze coins were only published in 1936.⁶⁸ They have been preserved in very poor condition, and accordingly not much attention has been paid to them to date.

They were issued for the first time in the days of Huldu, though of course in the reign of Shuqailat the letter ח has been changed to the letter ש. All the specimens bearing the first of these have the image of an eagle on the reverse, while the coins with the second letter have the Queen's head on the reverse. It seems likely that the change of images was intended to differentiate the two types. It should be acknowledged, however, that at the present moment we cannot make a precise distinction between the minor coins of Huldu and Shuqailat. Nor do we know in what period of the latter's reign these coins were struck.⁶⁹

G. Inscriptions

The inscriptions חלדו מלכת נבטו (Huldu, Queen of the Nabataeans) and שקילת מלכת נבטו (Shuqailat, Queen of the Nabataeans) on the coins of Aretas IV have two common features. First of all, their names appear without any additional titles. Secondly, one is struck by the absence of the word אחת (sister),⁷⁰ which occurs beside the names of both Queens in non-numismatic inscriptions. The earliest use of this word appears in an inscription found in Puteoli in Italy,⁷¹ dated to AD 2.⁷²

line 3: [על חיי חרתת מלך נבטו ודי] in the days of Aretas, King of the Na[bataeans, and]

⁶⁷ Y. Meshorer, *Ancient Jewish Coinage*, vol. II (Dix Hills 1982), p. 21; S. Skowronek, *Moneta w kulturze*, *op. cit.*, pp. 72–73.

⁶⁸ E. S. G. Robinson, *op. cit.*, nos. 4 and 5.

⁶⁹ Y. Meshorer, *Nabataean Coins*, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

⁷⁰ It should be recalled that on the coins of Malichos II his wife Shuqailat is called אחתה (his sister). See Y. Meshorer, *op. cit.*, pp. 64–65.

⁷¹ CIS II, 158.

⁷² It should be noted that this date is not absolutely precise.

line 4: [ח]לדו אחתה מלכת נבטו ודי בניה בבירח אב שנת
[Hul]du his sister, Queen of the Nabataeans, and their children, in the
month of Av in the year 11...

The corresponding information relating to Shuqailat is contained in
an inscription dated to AD 20, found near Petra.⁷³ Note that the name
Shuqailat is not preserved, and results from a reconstruction, which is
regarded, however, as beyond dispute:

line 2: על חיי חרתת מלך נבטו רח סעמחושקילת]
in the days of Aretas, King of the Nabateans, who loves [his] people,
[and Shuqailat]

line 3:
[א]חתה מלכת נבטו ומלכו ועבדת ורכאל
ופצאל ושעודת וחגרו בנודי וחרתת בר
הג[רו ברברה]

his sister, Queen of the Nabataeans, and Malichos and Obodas and
Rabbel and Phasaël and Se'udat and Hagru his children, and Aretas
son of Hag[ru]

line 4: [בירח... שנ]ת 3 III III III לחרתת מלך נבטו רח ם מה
[in the month... of the year] 29 of the reign of Aretas, King of the Naba-
taeans, who loves his people.

What does the word **אחת** (sister) mean? According to the interpreta-
tion offered by some scholars, it actually refers to Aretas's sister. Thus
Aretas first married his eldest sister, Huldu, and after her death the se-
cond sister, Shuqailat. Meshorer, however, questions this view, based on
two Nabataean inscriptions.

The first of these, found in Miletus,⁷⁴ states that Syllaeus was **מלכא**
אח, which means literally the "brother of the King", i.e. King Obodas III.
No historical sources have transmitted the information that Syllaeus was
actually the brother of Obodas III. Moreover, this inscription mentions
the father of Syllaeus, Teimu, while the father of Obodas III was Mali-
chos I.

On this basis, Meshorer suggests that the word "sister" denotes a title
(rank) in the hierarchy of the royal court. According to this understand-

⁷³ CIS II, 354.

⁷⁴ Clermont-Ganneau, *Recueil d'archeologie orientale* VII (1906), pp. 310–312, 328; VIII (1924), Pl. VI.

ding, Syllaeus, bearing the title "Brother of the King", occupied a high position at the court. According to this view, Huldu and Shulqailat also obtained the title "Sister of the King" to mark their position. Meshorer refers in this context to the second inscription,⁷⁵ mentioning Unaishu, the brother of Shuqailat, Queen of the Nabataeans, stating that he also obtained a high-ranking position at the royal court.

The question arises, however, as to why the wives of Aretas IV, being Queens, the most important persons in the state after the King, should be given a title designating their position in the court hierarchy. Such a custom is attested among persons not belonging to the royal family, particularly in the Hellenistic era, but in reference to members of the royal family it is odd, to say the least. At this point the problem appears to be insoluble.

Translated by BRUCE MAC QUEEN

JERZY CIECIELĄG

Monety króla nabatejskiego Aretasa IV (9 przed Chr.–40 po Chr.)

Monety Aretasa IV stanowią najbogatszy i najbardziej różnorodny zbiór w mennictwie nabatejskim. Dzielią się one na dwie wyraźne grupy chronologiczne, związane z dwoma żonami Aretasa, Huldu i Shuqailat, choć pod względem typologicznym nie ma między nimi poważniejszych różnic.

Szczególną grupę tworzą brązowe substytuty srebrnych monet, które – zdaniem autora – nie mają odpowiednika w starożytnej numizmatyce, mimo iż niektórzy uczeni dopatrują się analogii w emisjach z czwartego roku pierwszej wojny żydowskiej. Trzeba jednak przyznać, że wielu problemów dotyczących nabatejskich monet Aretasa IV nie można rozstrzygnąć na obecnym etapie badań.

⁷⁵ CIS II, 351.