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► To cite this version:

Michaël Girardin. *Compte rendu de Anne LYKKE, Reign and Religion in Palestine. The Use of Sacred Iconography in Jewish Coinage*, Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, 2015. *Review of Biblical Literature*, 2019. hal-03831675

HAL Id: hal-03831675

<https://hal.science/hal-03831675>

Submitted on 4 Nov 2022

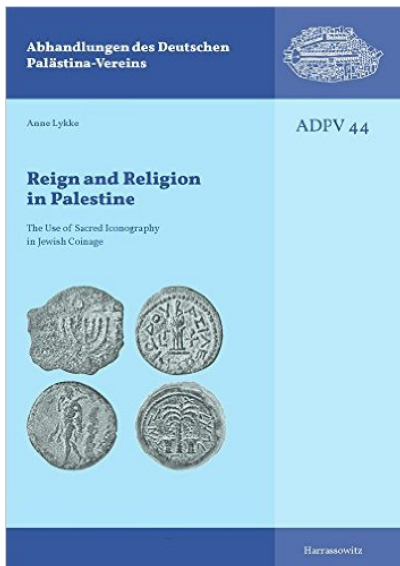
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RBL 06/2019



Anne Lykke

Reign and Religion in Palestine: The Use of Sacred Iconography in Jewish Coinage

Abhandlungen des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins 44

Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2015. Pp. xii + 278.
Hardcover. €68.00. ISBN 9783447104432.

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Only a few books are available about coinage in Ancient Judaism, so the enterprise of Anne Lykke is highly commendable. This book was originally Lykke's PhD dissertation, defended at the University of Vienna in 2012. However, many important works have appeared in subsequent years but are not taken into account here. Since a great number of works, both classical and recent, are not referenced, it is probably not an exaggeration to say that the book was, in some regards, obsolete the day it was published. Lykke argues that her aim was not to offer a full discussion of the Jewish coin material, but the book can be classified as a brief summary (182 pages of text) of the coins produced in Judea between the Persian kings and the Bar Kokhba War. The legends, the metrology, and numerous other considerations derived from the stated purpose occupy many pages in each chapter.

The aim is to examine the "sacred iconography" in Jewish coinage, a difficult matter to define, as Lykke acknowledges in her introduction. Her decision not to presuppose that the imitation of a pagan motif was always an adoption of its meaning is interesting. It may be that some motifs, sacred outside of Judea, do not carry a religious meaning at all on Jewish coins. Built on these premises, the thesis is that the political role of the sacred iconography was not continued during the period, that the motifs were taken from the Greco-Roman world before some elements were considered "sacred" and used as such for political reasons.

After a preface, an introduction, and preliminary considerations, seven chapters are given in chronological order. The first chapter, "Coinage in the Province of Judah" (8–30), despite its title, is not devoted to the Achaemenid period only but to the Ptolemaic one as well. The work does not engage adequately with recent developments, and Lykke spends too much time with outdated viewpoints. The recent works of Lipschits at Ramat Raḥel could have been used in particular, in order to discuss the minting authority and the role of the temple in the governing of the province, since it could be that Jerusalem played only a minor role in the administration of Yehud in Persian times. Finally, a great part of this chapter is devoted to explaining the purpose of the first Jewish coinage, which was issued, according to Lykke, in order to pay the temple tax. It is noticeable that a recent consensus has formed around the idea that the so-called temple-tax was in fact invented by the Hasmoneans. If so, then a large part of what this chapter sets out to demonstrate cannot be accepted.

The title of the second chapter, "Jewish Coinage under Hasmonaean Rule (162–37BCE)" (31–52), is not adequate either, since the chapter does not discuss the coinage of only Hasmonaean rulers but that of Seleucid kings as well. While Lykke spends four pages explaining the causes of the uprising, she does not take into account the inscription of Maresha, which since 2007 has contributed to a profound reappraisal. One can also regret the absence of the works of Magen and Dušek at Mount Gerizim, which throw a totally different light on the Seleucid politics in the region. Lykke argues that a Seleucid mint was established in Jerusalem, in line with Ptolemaic policy and the financial role of the temple. The *ḥever yehudim* mentioned on some Hasmonaean coins is understood as a forerunner of the Sanhedrin, but the possibility that this represents the Jewish community as a whole is not mentioned. However, her view of the anchor as a royal motif, adopted as a sign of stability in keeping with Seleucid use, seems better than the usual interpretation of maritime prosperity or an unknown maritime event. In this chapter she argues that no sacred iconography can be recognized on Hasmonaean coins before the menorah that appears on the coins of Mattathias Antigonus.

Lykke's view of Herodian domination (53–80) is also dated, since findings from the Masada excavations have shown that Herod did not lack religious consideration. Five pages are devoted to the imperial cult, following the arguments of Bennett but without any apparent link with coinage. However, Lykke interestingly thinks that no sacred iconography is traceable on Herodian coinage, since the king only searched to be seen as such by copying Seleucid iconography. Lykke demonstrates that the eagle that appears on some Herodian coins had no relation with the golden eagle installed on the temple and could be, in fact, an imitation of Tyrian iconography.

The examination of the coins of the Herodian tetrarchs in chapter 4 (81–98) and kings in chapter 5 (99–120) follows the same arguments. It would have been interesting if Lykke had reflected on the absence of the ruler's portrait, since this absence is paradoxically one of the most noticeable signs of a Jewish conception of sacred iconography.

Without paying attention to the concessions to Jewish sensitivity during the Roman procurator era (yet some coins are depicted in the catalogue), Lykke devotes the sixth chapter, "The Coins of the Bellum Judaicum (66–70CE)" (120–45), to the Jewish War. However, the principal reference cannot be the 1984 book by Mildenberg, which is actually about the Bar Kokhba war. Many recent works could have been taken into account that explain the insurrection not as a reaction to Roman "aggressions and threats" but as a much more complex phenomenon. In numismatic matters, Lykke accepts the recent proposal of Ariel that the bronzes of the fourth year were minted by Simon bar Giora. She again understands the minting as a supply for the payment of the temple tax. On the same page she writes that "the payment of the tributes and taxes to the temple had for centuries been made with the Tyrian silver shekels" and that these staters "had been minted since Tyre was established as an autonomous city in 126/5 CE." It is evident that, before their minting, these coins could not be used for the temple of Jerusalem, and it is possible that thinking of the stater as "the only proper coin" for the offerings is later than the destruction of the temple and thus only a myth. If so, the minting of the shekel of Israel must have had other motives than to replace foreign coinage for the temple.

The seventh chapter, "The Bar Kokhba War" (146–67), does not benefit from recent works in the field: it is no longer possible to write about "the Romans' deliberate oppressive politics toward the Jews" nor that "Hadrian's politics was tailored to suppress the Jewish people." The works of Mor devoted to the small extension of the war are quoted, but not when Lykke explains the great extension of the war, adopting the conclusions of Eck (147–49). It is simply wrong that the documents found in the Judean Desert support "the impression of an effective Jewish ... dissident state, without internal political tensions"; on the contrary, they show the divisions as well as the lack of zeal among the administrators of Bar Kokhba. It is interesting to see the palm as borrowed from the Roman representation of Judea rather than an allusion to Sukkoth, but in this case why then see the palm as representing Sukkoth on the coins of the first war? The identification of the crown as a *corona civica* is surprising, because the laurel crown on the coins of some procurators is probably more frequent in the province, but the idea is not uninteresting. The rosette beneath the temple probably did not have "no specific meaning," and it may be that the name Eleazar did not designate the "religious leader" but was rather a reference to priesthood generally, represented by the son of Aaron (according to Hendin).

Finally, the eighth chapter, “Political Instrumentalisation of Sacred Iconography in Jewish Coinage” (168–82), serves as a conclusion, summarizing the main arguments. It is followed by a table of the coin types (183–94), a bibliography (199–222), indices (223–27), and a catalogue (229–78). One could regret the choice to depict coins at the scale 1:1 or 2:1 and the absence of any stater of Tyre (only bronze and half-shekel are present).

One may say in conclusion that this book is useful, that it does contain a few innovative analyses, but that it frequently uses outdated references. Finally, the presence of too many misprints is regrettable.