

## Comparisons of sizes and obverses for Ptolemaic bronze coins produced in 180-145 BC

There is a general pattern in Ptolemaic bronze coinage in that coins with Zeus-Ammon obverse are almost always the heavier/larger in a given series; Heracles coins and Alexandria coins are lighter/smaller in that order, Isis coins have various weights, and the more specialized coinage is generally the lightest/smallest (e.g., Helmeted head). This pattern is shown with the three series Sv1375-1379 (K marked coins), Sv1380-2 (with Cleopatra's name), and Sv1383-7 (Α marked coins). The result is that coins in each of these series may appear to have denominational markings by obverse types in the order Ammon, Isis, Herakles, and Alexandria (see 30, 27/28, 25, 22 mm) on the left side of the table shown below.

<b>Size and Obverse Comparisons of Bronze Coins produced 180-145 BC</b>					
Series: Sv1375-9, 1380-2, 1383-7			Series: Sv1423, Sv1424-A and -B, Sv1425-8		
Diameter, mm.	Svoronos Number	Obverse	Diameter, mm.	Svoronos Number	Obverse
			36/40mm	Sv1423	Ammon
30mm	Sv1375, Sv1380, Sv1383	Ammon	32mm	Sv1424-A	Ammon
27/28mm	Sv1384	Isis	29mm	Sv1424-B	Ammon
25mm	Sv1376, Sv1385	Herakles	23/25mm	Sv1425	Ammon
22mm	Sv1377	Ammon	19/22mm	Sv1426	Ammon
	Sv1381, Sv1386	Alexandria			
18mm	Sv1378	Zeus or Nilus	16/18mm	Sv1427	Ammon
17mm	Sv1382, Sv1387	Isis	15mm	Sv1428	Ammon
16mm	Sv1379	Helmeted Head			

However, a more general view, involving all of Sv1375-87 circulating together with Sv1424-8 (as in the table), shows that the various different obverse types of coins Sv1375-87 (as well as the Ammon obverse type on each of Sv1424-8) can be, and apparently were, ignored as denominational indicators in Ptolemaic times. Since it is generally accepted (see below) that coins Sv1375-87 circulated together with coins Sv1424-8, it is apparent (as explained below) that there was no systematic policy of denominational recognition by obverse types.

Based largely on the appearance of Cleopatra I's name on coins Sv1380-2, there is wide agreement that related coins in the series Sv1375-87 (left side in the table) were produced during 180 to c. 170 BC, i.e., in the reign of Cleopatra I and Ptolemy VI (Sv1375-82, 180-176 BC) and then by Ptolemy VI (Sv1383-87, 176-c.170 BC) shortly thereafter. The coins Sv1375-87 do

not give examples of denominational markings by obverses; they make up denominations according to weights/sizes (indicated in the table above by sizes) as: Sv1375 = Sv1380 = Sv1383 all 30mm; Sv1384 28mm; Sv1376 = Sv1385 both 25mm; Sv1377 = Sv1381 = Sv1386 all 22mm; Sv1378 18mm; Sv1382=Sv1387 both 17mm; and Sv1379 16mm.<sup>1</sup>

Coins Sv1423-8 (right side in the table) make up a set of seven denominations (including Sv1424-A and Sv1424-B) all with Ammon obverses and distinguished only by their weights/sizes (from c. 40g to c. 3g). According to Price (Necropolis hoard) the two-eagle coins (Sv1423-8), that predominated during the second century, began production before c. 170 BC. With contemporary or at least consecutive timing established for production of Sv1375-87 and Sv1423-8 there can be little or no doubt that coins Sv1375-87 (180-c.170 BC) would have been in circulation with coins Sv1423-8 (before c.170-145 BC).<sup>2</sup>

As shown in the table above, and contrary to the hypothesis of obverse denominational marking, five of the seven denominations (same weight/size) of Sv1375-87 and Sv1423-8 circulated together before and after 170 BC, each with two, or more, different obverse types. The smallest coins (15-18mm) would have been particularly confusing in the market place if five different small obverses had to be remembered in addition to the large size coins Ammon, Isis, Heracles, and Alexandria. In a bartering society, transactions could be much better settled without the need for complicated obverse identification.<sup>3</sup>

Even if, in our modern times, coins Sv1375-87 may be taken as being denominationally marked by Ammon, Isis, Heracles and Alexandria, in the second century, they would have been used with the familiar weight/ size recognition as was the whole series of Ammon coins Sv1424-8 during that time. The table above shows good evidence that there was no systematic policy of denominational recognition by obverse types from 180 BC to 145 BC. The denominations of these coins, like those of the previous century, were identified by weight/size.

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<sup>1</sup> All the diameters given in the table are from Svoronos' catalogue except those for Sv1424-A and Sv1424-B. Svoronos did not separate Sv1424-A and Sv1424-B; he gave Sv1424 as 29 to 32mm. Huston and Lorber recognized that Sv1424 was composed of two different denominations; Faucher and Lorber give Sv1424-A as 32mm and Sv1424-B as 29mm.

<sup>2</sup> The Corinth hoard contained examples of Sv1380, Sv1384 and Sv1424; Thompson, 'Corinth', p. 355. Other pertinent hoard data seems to be unavailable for lesser weight coins; heavier weight coins were essentially always preferred for hoarding.

<sup>3</sup> See 'The small coin problem' in Pincock, 'Denominational indicators', pp. 42-44.