TWO INSCRIBED LEAD WEIGHTS OF AGrippA II

The two weights discussed below are kept in a private collection in Antwerp. One of these weights was published in 1986/7, the second is unpublished. The unpublished item is almost square with bevelled edges, so that it looks trapezoid in cross-section. There are traces of a broken loop at the top side. The larger panel measures 5 x 4.5 cm; the smaller panel measures 4.3 x 3.8 cm. The weight is 0.7 cm thick and weighs 136.6 gm (Plate VII).

The smaller panel has a five lines inscription, surrounded by a double square frame. The space within the two frames is filled with a row of thick dots on all four sides. The larger panel has a six lines inscription, also surrounded by a double frame, but here the space between the frames is filled with closely placed diagonal lines; this decoration is clearly visible only at the lower left corner, being worn or partly off flan elsewhere. The bevelled edges are also decorated with vertical lines, placed more sparsely.

The inscriptions read:

A. Smaller panel
LKB  "Ετους κβ'
BACIAEWC βασιλέως
AFRIPIPPA 'Αγριππα
KYPISOY κυρίου
[...ΩΟΝ [γ]δον
"Year 22 of our lord, king Agrippa. An eighth."

B. Larger panel
[...Π[...NO [Α]γ(ο)ρ[π]νο-
M[....]N [μ]ο(ντο)ν
P[....] 'P[....]
POYΦΟ[...]KAI 'Ρώφο[...]καλ
IOYAI[...]Y[...]'Ι(ουλ[...]ν[...]
BO[...]OY βο[...]ου
"When R[...] Rufus and Iulius [...]bo[...]os were agoranomoi."

After the ro at the beginning of line 3 on the larger panel there is a line resembling a lunar sigma. This surviving part must thus belong either to an epsilon or an omicron. The year 22 of Agrippa II equals 70/71 according to the era of 49 AD, or 81/2 according to the era of 60. As their names testify, both agoranomoi were Roman citizens, but while the agoranomos named Julius would have probably been a scion of a local family which had received Roman citizenship about a century earlier, the first one may have been of Roman descent. The man had a Roman cognomen and his nomen gentile did not refer to that of a Roman emperor; therefore, he would not necessarily have been of local origin. If Rufus was indeed of Roman descent, he, or an earlier member of his family, could have been a soldier who had settled in Palestine after completing his military service.

1 I am grateful to Joseph Chaim Kaufman for his permission to examine and publish weights from his collection.
2 S. Qedar, Two lead weights of Herod Antipas and Agrippa II and the early history of Tiberias, Israel Numismatic Journal 9, 1986/7, pp. 30–33, pl. 5.
3 All the photographs are by Pavel Shrago, Tel-Aviv University.
The indication of the item’s weight as ‘an eighth’ implies that the basic weight unit related to was equivalent to c. 1100 gm; thus, it must refer to a double mina of 500–600 gm, or a ‘heavy’ mina of 1100–1200 gm. The existing evidence shows that as far as Syria and Palestine are concerned, both standards were in common use not only during the Late Hellenistic period, but also well into Roman times.6

This new weight has many similarities with the published weight of Agrippa II.7 The published weight is also square with bevelled edges, so that it looks trapezoid in cross-section. At the top of the weight there are also traces of a broken loop. Its smaller panel has a six lines inscription, surrounded by a double frame; the space within the frames is filled with small circles. The larger panel has a six lines inscription and seems to have been surrounded by a double frame with closely spaced diagonal lines, as on the first weight. However, this frame is visible only at the top side of the panel, with the reminder being off flan. The bevelled edges are decorated by more sparsely placed vertical lines, also in a manner similar to the first weight. The published weight measures 4.2 x 4.2 cm (larger panel) and 3.7 x 3.7 cm (smaller panel). It is 0.6 cm thick and weighs 86.4 gm (Plate VIII)

The editio princeps gives the following reading of the two inscriptions:

A. LMG | BACIA | EWC ME | ΓΑΛΟΥ Α | ΓΡΙΠΠΑ Κ | ΥΡΙΟΥ
B. ΑΓΟΡΑΝΟ | MOYNTWN | IAECAIOY M | ΑΘΙΟΥ ΚΑΙ Α | NIMOC MON | IMOY

A. “Year 43 of the great king Agrippa, our lord.”
B. “Iaesaias son of Mathomoi and Animos son of Monimos being agoranomoi.”

The first publisher suggested that the date ‘year 43’ should be counted by a city era of Tiberias (19/20 AD) and assigned the weight to 61/2 AD. However, it was later realized that a weight bearing Agrippa’s name should in fact have been dated by the king’s regnal years; the year 97/8 (according to the era of 55 AD), has thus been proposed instead of 61/2.8

A re-examination of the weight shows that two corrections must be made to the original reading of the two inscriptions. The most important correction concerns the date. In fact, it was already clear from the published photograph that the area of the first digit is partly damaged and that the reading of this digit as μι (40) is not certain. Indeed, only the left part of the letter can be discerned on the weight itself. This surviving part consists of two lines: a vertical line near the sign L and a diagonal line which starts at its lower end and goes up to the right. Many letters in the inscription of this side have small bulging serifs at their ends, and the vertical line near the letter L also has such serifs at both ends. There are no lines joining the upper serif of this vertical line; at the same time, a diagonal line joining the lower serif is clearly visible (see the enlarged photograph of the area, Plate VIII). The preserved part of the first digit could thus only belong to a καππα, i.e. number 20, which means that the correct date of the weight is ‘year 23’. This equals 71/2 according to the era of 49 or 82/3 according to the era of 60. The weight is thus of no relevance for the question of the possible date of Agrippa II’s death.9 The correction in the inscription of the other side involves the name of the first agoranomos. The name has been read by the editio princeps as IAECAIOY, but since the fourth letter looks more like an ωιμικων, while the preceding one could be either epsilon or sigma, the correct reading seems to be IACOAIYO.

---

9 The latest coin of Agrippa shows that he must have been still alive in 88/9 AD: Kushnir-Stein (note 4), p.131, note 32.
Thus we have here two weights which were manufactured in two consecutive years and most certainly in the same place. The common origin may be inferred from numerous similarities: the trapezoid form, the same kind of decoration and the same distribution of the inscriptions on the larger and smaller panels: the date with the name of Agrippa II on the latter, and the names of the two *agoranomoi* on the former. Since the weight dated 'year 23' is said to have been found in Migdal, which is near Tiberias, both our items were most probably manufactured in this city.

Tel-Aviv University

Alla Kushnir-Stein
First weight: inscription of Agrippa, agoranomoi and side view
Two inscribed lead weights of Agrippa II; A. Kushnir-Stein, pp. 295–297
Second weight: inscription of Agrippa, side view, agoranomoi and enlarged photograph of the area of the date
Two inscribed lead weights of Agrippa II; A. Kushnir-Stein, pp. 295–297