

Gold octadrachm of Ptolemy II



Egypt, Ptolemaic Dynasty, 285-246 BC

One of the finest gold issues of the Ptolemaic Dynasty, the successors to Alexander the Great as rulers of Egypt

Touch the **animation button** on the left for a translation of the coin legends.

The Ptolemaic kings of Egypt inherited vast wealth along with the kingdom of Egypt from Alexander the Great, who had conquered the country in 332 BC. Thanks to supplies of gold from Nubia within the kingdom itself, the Ptolemies were able to issue coinage in gold far more frequently than contemporary kings.

This issue was produced by the second Ptolemaic ruler, Ptolemy II Philadelphus (284-246 BC). He was given the epithet Philadelphus, which means 'sister (or brother)-loving' in Greek, due to his marriage, in Egyptian style, to his sister Arsinoe II.

The portraits on the obverse (front) of this coin are of Ptolemy I Soter (305-282 BC) and his queen Berenice I, the legend above them reads 'Theoi' ('gods'), indicating that Ptolemy II had deified his parents. The portraits on the reverse are of Ptolemy II Philadelphus and his queen and sister, Arsinoe II, with the inscription 'Philadelphoi' ('brother- and sister-loving').

The whole design of this coin, through both its portraits and legends serves to reinforce the impression of dynastic harmony within the royal family of Egypt.

R.R.R. Smith, *Hellenistic royal portraits* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1988)

O. Mørkholm, *Early Hellenistic coinage* (Cambridge University Press, 1991)

Source URL: http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/cm/g/gold_octadrachm_of_ptolemy.aspx
Saylor URL: <http://www.saylor.org/courses/arth201/>

I.A. Carradice and M.J. Price, *Coinage in the Greek world* (London, Seaby, 1988)

Source URL: http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/cm/g/gold_octadrachm_of_ptolemy.aspx
Saylor URL: <http://www.saylor.org/courses/arth201/>