

NOTAE NUMISMATICAE

ZAPISKI NUMIZMATYCZNE



Tom XIX

MUZEUM NARODOWE W KRAKOWIE
SEKCJA NUMIZMATYCZNA
KOMISJI ARCHEOLOGICZNEJ PAN
ODDZIAŁ W KRAKOWIE

Kraków 2024

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Lech Kokociński. Photo by Piotr Idem
Lech Kokociński. Fot. Piotr Idem

Szanowni Państwo,

oddajemy w Państwa ręce tom XIX *Notae Numismaticae – Zapisków Numizmatycznych*. Zgodnie z przyjętymi przez nas zasadami wszystkie teksty publikujemy w językach kongresowych, z angielskimi i polskimi abstraktami. Zawartość obecnego tomu oraz tomy archiwalne są zamieszczone w formie plików PDF na stronie internetowej Muzeum Narodowego w Krakowie (<https://mnk.pl/notae-numismaticae-zapiski-numizmatyczne-1>). Na stronie dostępne są ponadto wszelkie informacje ogólne o czasopiśmie oraz instrukcje dla autorów i recenzentów.

Bieżący Tom naszego czasopisma chcielibyśmy zadedykować Panu Mecenasowi Lechowi Kokocińskiemu, obchodzącemu w 2024 roku swoje 80-te urodziny. Lech Kokociński (ur. 1944), prawnik, sędzia i wieloletni pracownik Ministerstwa Kultury i Sztuki, z numizmatyką związany jest w zasadzie od zawsze. Przede wszystkim należy do grona najwybitniejszych kolekcjonerów numizmatów drugiej połowy XX i pierwszych dziesięcioleci XXI wieku. Jego zainteresowania kolekcjonerskie nie ograniczały się przy tym do wąskiego zakresu, lecz obejmowały szerokie spektrum obiektów: od monet antycznych poczynawszy, poprzez pieniądź papierowy, medale, aż po fałszerstwa monet i banknotów. Ważną część jego zbiorów stanowią starodruki i rękopisy numizmatyczne oraz inne obiekty o charakterze bibliofilskim, szczególnie *Lwowiana*. Mecenas Kokociński przez całe życie aktywnie włączał się w animowanie ruchu numizmatycznego. Od 1962 roku był członkiem Polskiego Towarzystwa Archeologicznego, od 1984 roku przewodniczył Sekcji Numizmatycznej Polskiego Towarzystwa Archeologicznego i Numizmatycznego, a w 1987 roku został Prezesem tej organizacji. W 1991 roku należał do założycieli Polskiego Towarzystwa Numizmatycznego i był jego pierwszym Prezesem, a następnie Prezesem Honorowym. Bliskie związki mecenasa Kokocińskiego z Gabinetem Numizmatycznym Muzeum Narodowego w Krakowie sięgają XX wieku. Jest członkiem Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Muzeum im. Emeryka Hutten-Czapskiego (od 1996 r.), a w latach 2011–2015 pełnił funkcję członka Rady Muzeum Narodowego w Krakowie. Wszedł też w skład Komitetu Honorowego projektu *Europejskie Centrum Numizmatyki Polskiej*, w ramach realizacji którego udało się otworzyć Muzeum im. Emeryka Hutten-Czapskiego w obecnym kształcie. Przede wszystkim jednak jest jednym z najważniejszych i najbardziej hojnych darczyńców na rzecz Muzeum. Wzbogacił zbiory Gabinetu Numizmatycznego o niemal 11 000 obiektów, w tym monety antyczne, bezprecedensową kolekcję pieniądza fałszywego, pieniądź papierowy i medale. Dodatkowo ofiarował do biblioteki Muzeum ponad 1000 pozycji różnych publikacji, starodruków i znakomite archiwalia związane z życiem i działalnością wybitnych numizmatyków czy towarzystw numizmatycznych, jak np. Związku Numizmatyków Lwowskich czy Towarzystwa Numizmatycznego w Krakowie. Z okazji Jubileuszu życzymy Lechowi Kokocińskiemu, naszemu Drogiemu Przyjacielowi, co najmniej 100 lat!

Redakcja

Dear Readers,

We are delighted to present you with volume 19 of *Notae Numismaticae – Zapiski Numizmatyczne*. As is our policy, we publish all texts in the congress languages, with English and Polish abstracts. The contents of current volume and archive numbers are available as PDF files on the website of the National Museum in Krakow (<https://mnk.pl/notae-numismaticae-zapiski-numizmatyczne-1>). The website also provides all general information about the journal, along with guidelines for authors and reviewers.

We would like to dedicate the current volume of our journal to Mr Lech Kokociński, who celebrated his 80th birthday in 2024. Lech Kokociński (born in 1944), lawyer, judge and long-time employee of the Ministry of Culture and Art, has been involved in numismatics for practically all his life. Above all, he is one of the most outstanding numismatic collectors of the second half of the 20th century and the first decades of the 21st century. His collecting interests were not limited to a narrow range, but covered a wide spectrum of objects, starting with the ancient coins, through paper money and medals, to counterfeits of coins and banknotes. An important part of his collection consists of antique prints and numismatic manuscripts as well as other bibliophile objects, especially *Lvoviana*. Throughout his life, Kokociński has actively participated in promoting the numismatic movement. He was a member of the Polish Archaeological Society from 1962, chaired the Numismatic Section of the Polish Archaeological and Numismatic Society from 1984 and became its president in 1987. In 1991, he was one of the founders and first president of the Polish Numismatic Society, later becoming Honorary President. The close relationship between Mr Kokociński and the Numismatic Department of the National Museum in Krakow dates back to the 20th century. He is a member of the Emeryk Hutten-Czapski Museum Friends Society (since 1996), and in the years between 2011–2015 he was a member of the Council of the National Museum in Krakow. He also became a member of the Honorary *European Center of Polish Numismatics* project, which led to the opening of the Emeryk Hutten-Czapski Museum its present form. Above all, however, he is one of the most important and generous donors to the Museum. He enriched the collection of the Numismatic Cabinet with almost 11,000 objects, including ancient coins, an unprecedented collection of counterfeit money, paper money and medals. In addition, he donated more than 1,000 items to the museum library, including various publications, antique books, and valuable archive material related to the life and work of prominent numismatists or numismatic societies, such as the Union of Lviv Numismatists and the Numismatic Society in Krakow. On the occasion of this milestone birthday, we wish Lech Kokociński, our dear friend, at least 100 years!

The Editors

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Pouches of *Minimi* from Byzantine Egypt. How Should We Deal with Them?¹

ABSTRACT: The archaeological works of the Polish mission studying the pilgrimage site of Marea/Philoxenite (Egypt) from Late Antiquity have yielded over 9,000 coins thus far. Within the numismatic material, dated mostly to the 5th–8th century, several group finds regarded as the remains of pouches of small change have been distinguished. The wide-spread phenomenon of the usage of coins in Late Antiquity within sealed bags of petty change is known from various sources but its archaeological remains are largely understudied. Pouches of *minimi* discovered in Marea/Philoxenite and the published group find from sanctuary of St. Menas in Abu Mina are considered in the article as examples of well documented material from similar sites which illustrate the popularity of using pouches in Byzantine Egypt. Various methodological problems of studying small coinage from Late Antiquity are well attested when considering pouches of *minimi*. In consequence, comparative studies of coins from Marea/Philoxenite and Abu Mina demonstrate broader monetary circulation patterns of Late Antique economy in Egypt.

KEY WORDS: Egypt, Late Antiquity, Abu Mina, Marea/Philoxenite, *minimi*

ABSTRAKT: *Sakiewki minimi z Egiptu bizantyńskiego. Jak sobie z nimi radzić?*

W ramach prac wykopaliskowych polskiej misji archeologicznej w późnoantycznym ośrodku pielgrzymkowym w Marei/Filoksenicie (Egipt) odkrytych zostało ponad 9 000 monet. Wśród materiału numizmatycznego datowanego w znacznej mierze na V–VIII w. wyróżnić można szereg przykładów znalezisk gromadnych

¹ This paper is an outcome of the research project “Coin circulation in the Byzantine and Umayyad Marea/North Hawwariya: studies in the monetary economy of Mareotis region in the hinterland of Alexandria”, funded by the National Science Centre, Poland, UMO-2020/39/B/HS3/03102.

rozumianych jako pozostałości sakiewek drobnego pieniądza obiegowego. Szeroko rozpowszechniony zwyczaj obiegu pieniądza w późnym antyku w ramach sakiewek składających się z drobnych monet udokumentowany jest w szeregu różnego rodzaju źródeł. Mimo to, archeologiczne pozostałości sakiewek nie doczekały się dotąd należytego opracowania. W artykule sakiewki *minimi*, odkryte w Marei/Filoksenite oraz opublikowane znalezisko gromadne z Abu Mina, rozumiane są jako materiał z dobrze rozpoznanych stanowisk archeologicznych, ilustrujący fenomen użytkowania sakiewek w codziennych transakcjach w bizantyńskim Egipcie. W ramach badań sakiewek *minimi* rozważony został szereg problemów metodologicznych przy analizie drobnego pieniądza brązowego. W rezultacie, studium porównawcze materiału z Marei/Filoksenite i Abu Mina wskazuje na szersze trendy w ekonomii Egiptu u schyłku starożytności.

SŁOWAKLUCZOWE: Egipt, późny antyk, Abu Mina, Marea/Filoksenite, *minimi*

INTRODUCTION

One of the most common finds on archaeological sites in Egypt dated to the Byzantine period are coins, mainly small bronze change accidentally lost during daily routines. Bronze change from the second half of the 5th century² or even after the Arab conquest in 642 mostly constitute so-called *minimi* with a diameter of 12 mm or less and a weight of 1 g or less. Overlooked for nearly 200 years of numismatic research in Egypt, this smallest of monetary units should ultimately be understood as one of the main means of monetary exchange in the Late Roman and Byzantine period. With the focus on small coins, the main peculiarity of the monetary system is the popularity of the usage of so-called pouches of bronze change.

The widespread phenomenon of coins circulating in sealed pouches is evident from different types of sources. Both legal and literary texts mention so-called *folles* as a name for sealed bags of coins from 4th century onwards.³ Additionally, iconographic sources show this kind of monetary circulation.⁴ In archaeological contexts dated to the 5th–7th century, groups of coins found together are commonly corroded together into lumps. Those remains of pouches of coins often consist of hundreds of small module *minimi* and blank flans. The scarcity of publications treating those remains as a valuable source of information about coin circulation patterns in Byzantine Egypt leads to the misunderstanding of the general character of small change in Late Antiquity. Those pouches seem to give a glimpse into which coins were in circulation simultaneously during the time of the deposition. Having established the importance of studies on pouches of *minimi*, it is necessary to look

² All the dates in the article refer to the Common Era unless stated otherwise.

³ For the terminology of *folles* according to historical and literary accounts: HENDY 1985: 338–344.

⁴ Examples of mosaics from Late Antiquity showing sealed bags of coins as a means of transaction: BESCHAOUCH 1966: 137; HENDY 1985: 340.

from methodological point of view how to analyze, process and interpret those group finds. Two vibrant pilgrimage centers of Late Antiquity in the Nile Delta, namely Abu Mina and Marea/Philoxenite, seem to be examples of well documented archaeological sites with thousands of coins dated to the 5th–8th century. The pouch of coins published by H.Ch. Noeske from Abu Mina⁵ as well as pouches discovered during Polish excavations in Marea/Philoxenite⁶ are considered here as examples of archaeologically documented remains of coin group finds. Numerous methodological and conservation problems that appear during the analysis of those pouches can be treated as examples of the agenda that we should bear in mind while giving more attention to the distribution of small change in Egypt in Late Antiquity.

COINS FROM MAREA/PHILOXENITE – A UNIQUE POSSIBILITY TO UNDERSTAND MONETARY CIRCULATION IN EGYPT IN LATE ANTIQUITY

Research in Marea/Philoxenite has been conducted by the University of Warsaw in cooperation with the Archaeological Museum in Krakow since the year 2000.⁷ The results of the Polish excavations have revealed a large city with a layout reminiscent of urban settlements popular during the Justinian period.⁸ The oldest building in Marea/Philoxenite, namely the main church, is dated to the last quarter of the 5th century and which was rebuilt into a monumental basilica in the 6th century.⁹ Situated on the shore of Lake Mareotis (ca. 40 km west of Alexandria) the city served as a rest stop in the 6th century for pilgrims on their way to Abu Mina (Map 1). The close connections between Marea/Philoxenite and Abu Mina are evident on many levels. Literary sources mention the importance of Philoxenite for pilgrims traveling to Abu Mina in Late Antiquity¹⁰ and we can clearly see analogies in the archaeological material from both sites.¹¹ Abu Mina also seems to be the main reference site for the numismatic material.¹² Excavations so far have revealed among other buildings: two bath complexes, several churches, latrines, and a number of other infrastructure necessary for the accommodation of pilgrims. The city functioned after the Arab conquest and through the 7th century, being abandoned for unclear reasons in the 8th century.¹³

⁵ NOESKE 1998.

⁶ Unpublished material.

⁷ Directors of excavations: Hanna Szymańska (2000–2010), Krzysztof Babraj (2011–2019), Tomasz Derda (2019–now).

⁸ GWIAZDA and DERDA 2021.

⁹ BABRAJ, DRZYMUCHOWSKA and TARARA 2020.

¹⁰ WIPSYCKA 2012.

¹¹ ZAJĄC 2014.

¹² JAWORSKI 2023: 39.

¹³ BABRAJ and SZYMAŃSKA 2013; GWIAZDA 2023.

Excavations by the Polish mission from seasons 2000 to 2024 yielded over 9,000 coin finds. Such a large number makes coins one of the commonest finds in Marea/Philoxenite, yet until recently overlooked and understudied. All coins beside one silver dirham¹⁴ are of copper-based alloys.¹⁵ We can distinguish two categories of coin finds from Marea/Philoxenite: loose finds and group finds (identified as remains of pouches of small change or deposits). An ongoing intensive study of all coin finds from Marea/Philoxenite has been conducted since 2020 by a group of numismatists and a conservator (P. Jaworski, S. Jellonek, M. Mozyrski, W. Weker and B. Zając) under the supervision of Piotr Jaworski from the University of Warsaw. The numismatic project aims to clean, document, identify and publish one of the largest known groups of coins recovered during archaeological excavations from Byzantine Egypt. All coin finds are being recorded in a database as well as being documented photographically. Until now, only a few articles have been published about coins from Marea/Philoxenite, mostly devoted to Byzantine and Umayyad material.¹⁶ Recently, P. Jaworski has published preliminary observations on coins from Marea/Philoxenite with the focus on Late Roman/Byzantine *minimi* and blank flans.¹⁷ Coin finds are also mentioned in the archaeological reports of works in Marea/Philoxenite where they are treated from the archaeological perspective.¹⁸ The above-mentioned state of publications of numismatic material indicates the need to focus closer attention on the circulation of small coinage and the problems related to its interpretation.

All coin finds from Marea/Philoxenite can be assigned to one of the eight groups distinguished by P. Jaworski:¹⁹

1. Ptolemaic and Early Roman coins (before the 4th century): <0.5%
2. Late Roman coins (4th–first half of 5th century): 1%
3. *Minimi* (ca. second half of the 5th–6th century), with a high percentage of cast imitations: 50%
4. Copper blank flans: 21%
5. Lead blank flans: <1%
6. Byzantine coins (Anastasius I – Constans II): 19%
7. Arab-Byzantine coins (second half of the 7th century): <0.5%
8. Umayyad epigraphic coins (7th–8th century): 8%

¹⁴ MALARCZYK 2008: 153; ZAJĄC 2024: 5.

¹⁵ JAWORSKI 2023: 38.

¹⁶ JELLONEK 2024; LICHOCKA 2008; EADEM 2020; MALARCZYK 2008; NOESKE 2000b 2: 219–220; ZAJĄC 2024.

¹⁷ JAWORSKI 2023.

¹⁸ GWIAZDA and PAWLIKOWSKA-GWIAZDA 2019; GWIAZDA 2023; Archaeological reports of works conducted in Marea/Philoxenite.

¹⁹ JAWORSKI 2023: 38.

Percentages given above refer to 7,919 specimens recorded in the database thus far and do not take into account coins as yet unidentified. Certain numbers may vary slightly in the final publication of the material.²⁰ The general classification of coins gives us rough information about its chronological distribution and indicates certain trends (Chart 1). The most prominent category are *minimi* coins and its cast imitations, composing almost 50% of all finds. Those small module coins, while constituting the largest group of coin finds, are often only catalogued in many Late Antiquity sites as “illegible”. The problem of describing 4th–6th century coins as “illegible” has been taken into consideration by scholars regarding coinage in Syro-Palestine,²¹ Asia Minor²² as well as other regions.²³ By assigning coins which are even completely undecipherably to one of the eight groups distinguished in Marea/Philoxenite, the picture of monetary circulation becomes much clearer. This general overview of the chronological distribution opens a path to the new considerations about each category with the focus on coins traditionally treated as “illegible”.

Being neglected by many researchers, one can find only a few publications devoted in detail to *minimi* in Egypt as well as the problem of cast imitations. Very important works are those of H.Ch. Noeske,²⁴ whose observations are made based on material from Abu Mina. B. Lichocka published studies on casting coins in Byzantine Egypt, taking into account coins from Kom el-Dikka and the forms used to cast coins from various museums.²⁵ The usage of cast imitation coins from Byzantine period in Egypt have been also addressed from the perspective of analyzed clay molds containing images of *dodekanummia*.²⁶ Of great interest are the works on coins from the Italian excavations in Kom al-Ahmer,²⁷ treated as a comparison for finds from Nile Delta. P. Jaworski in his article points to several problems and questions that remain open when it comes to the interpretation of *minimi* and thanks to which the material from Marea/Philoxenite can be reconsidered.²⁸ The problem of misunderstanding the distribution of small coinage in Egypt results from scarce publications as well as complex conservation problems and an abundance of material. The key to the new observations on petty change in Egypt in Late Antiquity seems to be intensive studies and publications of the numismatic material found during excavations with well documented stratigraphy.

²⁰ JAWORSKI et AL. (in preparation).

²¹ BIJOVSKY 2012: 153.

²² BURRELL 2008: 168.

²³ For Italy: WILLIAMS 2005; EADEM 2008; ASOLATI 2005.

²⁴ NOESKE 1991; IDEM 1998; IDEM 2000a; IDEM 2000b; IDEM 2001.

²⁵ LICHOCKA 1990; EADEM 1996; EADEM 2005.

²⁶ CHAMEROY 2020.

²⁷ ASOLATI, KENAWI and MARCHIORI 2018; ASOLATI, CRISAFULLI and MONDIN 2019.

²⁸ JAWORSKI 2023: 39.

GROUP FINDS FROM MAREA/PHILOXENITE

Apart from loose finds, numismatic material from Marea/Philoxenite consists of several examples of group finds regarded as remains of “pouches” of small change.²⁹ Several similar finds from outside of Egypt have been published, confirming the wide scope of this phenomenon.³⁰ They consist of several dozens to several hundreds of small coins once sealed in a bag. The place of finding for such pouches, if known, suggests the accidental loss of petty cash. In most cases they are found in canals or near the walls of houses (an example of a pouch discovered near House H1 in Marea/Philoxenite – Fig. 1). From the methodological point of view, we have to bear in mind the difficulties of identifying groupings of coins as the remains of pouches. Not all coins found near each other in one room indicate that they were once lost as a “purse”. Various reasons, including inadequate documentation during excavations, may result in the false interpretation of some coins as group finds.

Most of the remains of pouches are found as coins stuck together into corroded lumps. They can thus be interpreted as purses even if coins cannot be identified (Fig. 2). In some cases it is even impossible to separate coins from each other, as evident from the remains of pouches found in Marea/Philoxenite (Fig. 3). Such corrosion, even if it creates conservation problems, can be one of the indicators of the original deposition as a pouch. Another indicator of the original usage of a group of coins as part of a purse are imprints of fabric visible in the corroded mass.³¹ Those traces of textiles have been studied meticulously in the case of finds from Berytus.³² One can find textile pseudomorphs on a few coins from Marea/Philoxenite.³³ In the case of group finds with evident contexts as remains of pouches, it seems necessary to not only study their contents in detail but also to conduct comparative research regarding similar material from other sites in Egypt. Such studies can show us if certain trends within the composition of a group find can be treated as a part of a wider circulation pattern or if it is a local anomaly.

A feature that makes the study of pouches of *minimi* extremely difficult is the very high percentage of unidentifiable coins even for standards of badly corroded coins from the Mareotis region.³⁴ In his study of a “purse” from Abu Mina, H.Ch. Noeske describes 1,041 coins (nearly 84% of the find) as illegible. The problem of the high degree of illegibility of small bronze coins from Late Antiquity

²⁹ *Ibidem*: 41.

³⁰ Some examples of published remains of pouches of small coinage from Asia Minor and Syro-Palestine: BURRELL 2007; EADEM 2008; BUTCHER 2003; EVANS 2018.

³¹ JAWORSKI 2023: 41.

³² BUTCHER 2003: 291.

³³ JAWORSKI 2023: 41.

³⁴ *Ibidem*: 41.

has been also noted for other regions, in particular the Iberian Peninsula and Italy. Even if challenging to conduct, a comprehensive study of coins from pouches reveals a picture of coins used in daily transactions in a more or less defined moment of time. In the time of deposition, the coins that make up the contents of the purses were simultaneously in circulation and can give a very sharp insight into “shelf-life” of coins produced in the 4th–5th century (Figs. 4–5). As evident from pouches known from Marea/Philoxenite, it is common that small cast coins from the 5th or even 4th century occur in the same group finds as coins dated to the 7th century. Connecting it with the presence of Umayyad coins in the same contexts, P. Jaworski puts forward a hypothesis of usage of such purses even in Arab times.³⁵ Similar conclusions are evident from the material from Abu Mina.³⁶ The continuation of the usage of Byzantine coins far beyond the Arab conquest has been also noticed within coin finds from the Iberian Peninsula. In particular, this phenomenon is well documented in the case of treasure from Cordoba, containing four bronze coins from Late Antiquity that were still in circulation simultaneously with coins dated to the last quarter of the 9th century.³⁷ When interpreting coins from pouches, one has to remember the original function of those bags of coins. Since they were used as a means of everyday transactions, it is doubtful that they were meticulously checked by officials every time.³⁸ This phenomenon is evident from the numismatic material as almost all remains of pouches consist of unofficial cast imitations and blank flans (Figs. 11–13). Used as “emergency coins”, those blank flans circulated as a normal means of transaction which were visually indistinguishable from badly-produced and worn *minimi*. It is also important to notice the appearance of lead alloy blank flans (Fig. 13) in group finds – an evident attempt to make a purse heavier. The usage of lead blank flans in Late Antiquity in paramonetary applications is a widely recognized phenomenon for other regions, especially Italy.³⁹ Pouches of *minimi* from Marea/Philoxenite also show many features of monetary circulation evident for the whole numismatic material such as presence of Vandalic (Figs. 6–8), Ostrogothic (Fig. 10) and pseudo-Axumite coins (Fig. 9).

³⁵ *Ibidem*: 41.

³⁶ H.Ch. Noeske, personal communication.

³⁷ NAVASCUÉS 1958; MARTÍN ESCUDERO 2013.

³⁸ BIJOVSKY 2012: 56.

³⁹ ASOLATI 2005; ASOLATI and STELLA 2018; WILLIAMS 2005; EADEM 2008.

The existence of *minimi* from Western powers as part of small change in Egypt and eastern parts of Mediterranean is also supported by the occurrence of Visigothic coinage in several finds,⁴⁰ a phenomenon yet unrecognized for the material from Marea/Philoxenite. While understanding this as a pan-Mediterranean trend,⁴¹ comparing the vision of monetary exchange from different areas is crucial to understanding the patterns within the Late Antiquity economy. The importance of sharing and comparing finds from different sites is highlighted even more sharply by the analyses of coins from Iberian Peninsula showing similar trends as coins from Egypt.⁴² These characteristics of the monetary economy once more indicate the importance of comparative studies and show the problems until recently overlooked for the coinage in Byzantine Egypt.

ABU MINA – AN OVERVIEW OF THE NUMISMATIC MATERIAL

Being one of the most active centers in the Mareotis region, Abu Mina served as a pilgrimage site of supra-regional importance. Its location century 20 km south of Lake Mareotis and 40 km west of Alexandria made it necessary for an existence of pilgrimage stop in between of Alexandria and Abu Mina (Map 1). The reliance of Marea/Philoxenite on the flow of pilgrims to the sanctuary of St. Menas was a factor that shaped the history of this site. According to historical accounts, Abu Mina began functioning as a religious center from the beginning of 5th century. Its complicated path of development is connected with the fierce religious conflict between adherents of the Arians and the Chalcedonians. The pilgrimage site functioned up until the Arab conquest and was even an active urban center afterwards. The archaeological remains of the sanctuary were discovered at the beginning of the 20th century by C.M. Kaufmann. Excavation works by C.M. Kaufmann lasted from 1905 till 1907 with the focus on works around main church, unfortunately not documenting them in detail.⁴³ With only sporadic excavation works in between,⁴⁴ systematic research in Abu Mina started from 1961. Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Abteilung Kairo (DAI) conducted its works under the supervision of P. Grossmann in Abu Mina until the beginning of the 21st century. Grossmann's over 40 years of research at the site have revealed monumental remains not only of religious importance but also several buildings connected with accommodating thousands of pilgrims. The center point for any pilgrimage to Abu Mina was visiting

⁴⁰ ADELSON and KUSTAS 1964; FARHI and PLIEGO 2023.

⁴¹ Works highlighting the pan-Mediterranean character of monetary economy in Late Antiquity include: MOORHEAD 2013; PLIEGO 2020; EADEM 2023.

⁴² PLIEGO 2023.

⁴³ KOŚCIUK 2009: 23.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*: 23.

the cenotaph of St. Menas, a martyr that is said to have died during the persecutions of the 4th century. Around his grave the Martyr's Church was built and which was later incorporated into the large Basilica from the Justinian period – the biggest church known from Byzantine Egypt. The abundance of similarities between buildings in Abu Mina and Marea/Philoxenite clearly forces us to analyze the archeological material from Marea/Philoxenite in strict correspondence with the excavations in Abu Mina.

Coins from Abu Mina were described by H.Ch. Noeske in a number of articles concluding in a monumental monography published in the year 2000.⁴⁵ The published material consists of 13,808 coins from various sources (Chart 2). With the exception of a gold hoard found in 1906,⁴⁶ most of the finds are of copper-based alloy. The majority (63%) of all known material are coins that were part of a hoard found in the Martyr's Church in an alabaster crater.⁴⁷ Other finds from DAI's excavations make up around 30% of the material.⁴⁸ The rest of the coins come from the exploration works done by C.M. Kaufmann, in some cases possibly to identify only from the archival photographs.⁴⁹

H.Ch. Noeske in his *Die Münzfunde des ägyptischen Pilgerzentrums Abu Mina und die Vergleichsfunde aus den Diocesen Ägyptus und Oriens vom 4.–8. Jh. n. Chr.* tries to consolidate the results of numismatic research at Abu Mina with a compilation of known coin material from other sites in Egypt and Syro-Palestine dating to the same period. The attention of H.Ch. Noeske is focused on the attempt to date the hoard of 8,600 coins from the Martyr's Church discovered in 1983. This treasure consists mainly of coins attributed to the 4th–5th century (over half of the find) and *minimi* (over 25% of the find) produced from the mid-5th century.⁵⁰ The initial interpretation of other finds from Egypt allowed H.Ch. Noeske to date the moment of the formation of the hoard as the second half of the 5th and the beginning of the 6th century.⁵¹ The importance of this hoard is invaluable to the research on coin finds from other sites in Egypt, in particular from Marea/Philoxenite. With a defined date of deposition, this hoard can be to some extent be compared to the other group finds. As a part of the comparative studies, Noeske

⁴⁵ Publication of coins from Abu Mina: NOESKE 1981; IDEM 1991; IDEM 1996; IDEM 1998; IDEM 2000a; IDEM 2000b; IDEM 2004.

⁴⁶ NOESKE 2000b 2: 15–16.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem* 2: 16–57.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem* 2: 57–171; NOESKE 1998.

⁴⁹ NOESKE 2000b 2: 171–210.

⁵⁰ The numbers given above are a result of comparing coins from the hoard to the groups distinguished for the material from Marea/Philoxenite. Exact numbers can vary as figures are based solely on the information given by H.Ch. Noeske in the catalogue.

⁵¹ NOESKE 2000 1: 125 and personal communication.

also mentions loose finds of coins from the excavations of C.M. Kaufmann and DAI excavations from 1963, 1965–1969, 1975–1983. Among these coins, H.Ch. Noeske does not describe any remains of pouches or other group finds.⁵²

THE NUMBER “9490 AK” POUCH OF *MINIMI* FROM ABU MINA AND ITS IMPORTANCE FOR NUMISMATIC RESEARCH

The apparent absence of the remains of pouches in Noeske’s analysis of loose finds from Abu Mina has to be redefined thanks to the article from 1998.⁵³ In his publication aimed at explaining the phenomenon of the occurrence of pseudo-Axumite coins in finds from Byzantine Egypt, Noeske includes a catalogue of the remains of a “purse” discovered during excavations in 1994.⁵⁴ This group find is referred to under the field number “9490 Ak”. The find of approximately 1,500 coins discovered under the floor of the house was with certainty originally wrapped in some kind of fabric.⁵⁵ A thorough analysis of the pouch allowed H.Ch. Noeske to distinguish 1,242 coins and 352 fragments. Of those, 140 coins were identified and with certainty assigned to a particular issue and emperor. Another 51 coins Noeske was able to assign to a certain type and roughly date. 132 coins are described as dated to the second half of the 4th–5th century. The rest of the specimens (919 coins) are not identified. 28 coins are illustrated with the photographs. Assigning coins published by Noeske to the eight groups distinguished for the material from Marea/Philoxenite can give us interesting information on its typological and chronological distribution (Chart 3).⁵⁶

The oldest coins in the “purse” are small AE4 bronzes minted at the time of the Constantine Dynasty (330/361). Those coins, even if evidently continuing its “shelf life” far into 6th–7th century are classified as Late Roman issues. Late Roman coins in general make up around 24% of all finds. A significant part of the legible coins from group find “9490 Ak” can be assigned to the *minimi* category (74%). The youngest coins in the typological composition are 1-*nummi* pieces of Anastasius minted after his monetary reform. One has to remember that most probably many of the coins described as “halbcentionalis” without any more

⁵² In the catalogue Noeske gives correlation between coins in the catalogue and the field numbers but is not able to draw any specific conclusions (NOESKE 2000b: 158–171). H.Ch. Noeske does not exclude the possibility of the appearance of remains of pouches in the finds from DAI’s excavations described in the catalogue but it cannot be determined (personal communication).

⁵³ NOESKE 1998.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*: 251–254.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*: 251.

⁵⁶ Correspondence between coins from pouch “9490 Ak” and groups distinguished for material from Marea/Philoxenite is based only on the information given in the catalogue. The catalogue does not mention diameter or weight of any coin. It does not include photographs of most of the find.

information would fit into the category of *minimi*. It is also probable that copper blank flans (noted within the pouches from Marea/Philoxenite) that are not described by Noeske possibly appear in the unidentified coins. An important feature is also the appearance of a lead blank flan, confirming the phenomenon visible in the material from Marea/Philoxenite. Seven specimens described as imitations of the pseudo-Aksumite coins found in the purse are one of the characteristic features of monetary circulation in Byzantine Egypt.⁵⁷ Noeske connects this phenomenon with the Blemmi invasions of the 4th century, when a significant number of Aksumite coins arrived in Egypt. The occurrence of cast imitations of original Aksumite coins is interpreted by the similarity of these coins in terms of dimensions to other Late Roman coins in circulation in the 5th–7th century. Casting molds containing impressions of Aksumite coins are also attested.⁵⁸ G. Bijovsky also draws similar conclusions regarding the occurrence of pseudo-Aksumite coins in Palestine, linking their occurrence with Palestine's contacts with Egypt.⁵⁹ It is one of the examples of an influx of coins from outside Egypt into its monetary circulation pattern. Material from Marea/Philoxenite shows that, beside pseudo-Aksumite imitations, coins of Vandalic and Ostrogothic origin as an integral part of small change, also attested within group finds. The appearance of Visigothic coinage within finds from Egypt cannot be excluded, as has been shown for the material from Syro-Palestine,⁶⁰ but is not yet unrecognized. Those results once more support the hypothesis of a diverse monetary system open to the influx of coins from outside of Egypt. Out of all 1,242 coins described in the catalogue, almost 84% (1,035 specimens) are described as cast imitations, indicating a wide-spread phenomenon of using mostly unofficial coins within pouches.

ABU MINA AND MAREA/PHILOXENITE – THE NEED FOR COMPARATIVE STUDIES OF NUMISMATIC MATERIAL FROM BYZANTINE EGYPT

Coins from Abu Mina serve an important function for the analysis of the material from Marea/Philoxenite. Being closely connected historically, material from Abu Mina is also the largest group of coin finds from Byzantine Egypt that is known in the literature. Remembering differences within chronological scope, the number of similarities of finds from both sites is striking. The need for comparative studies of the whole material from sanctuary of St. Menas is visible even more sharply

⁵⁷ NOESKE 1998: 260–261.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*: 259.

⁵⁹ BIJOVSKY 2012: 6.

⁶⁰ FARHI and PLIEGO 2023; ADELSON and KUSTAS 1964.

from the perspective of the analysis of similar group finds such as remains of pouches. The publication of the material from Abu Mina shows that coins from Marea/Philoxenite cannot be examined individually and have to be compared to the other finds showing similar trends. The approach to the analysis of the material from Marea/Philoxenite (i.e. working in a larger team of specialists, assigning each coin to one of the eight categories) is an answer to some of the problems that we face when analyzing badly-preserved material and can be extended to finds from other sites to some degree.

The “9490 Ak” group find is an important contribution to the research on monetary circulation patterns for various reasons. Namely, it is not only a publication of a large group of coins from Byzantine Egypt within a known context but it can also be a source for comparative studies of similar finds. Trends within typological and chronological distribution of coins that are part of a pouch are as well indicators of a broader economic phenomena in Late Antiquity. Re-examining similar coin finds from both sites from different perspectives can only deepen our understanding of the economy in Late Antiquity. Pouches of *minimi*, when analyzed from numismatic point of view, can answer many questions noticed from papyrological, historical and economic perspectives.

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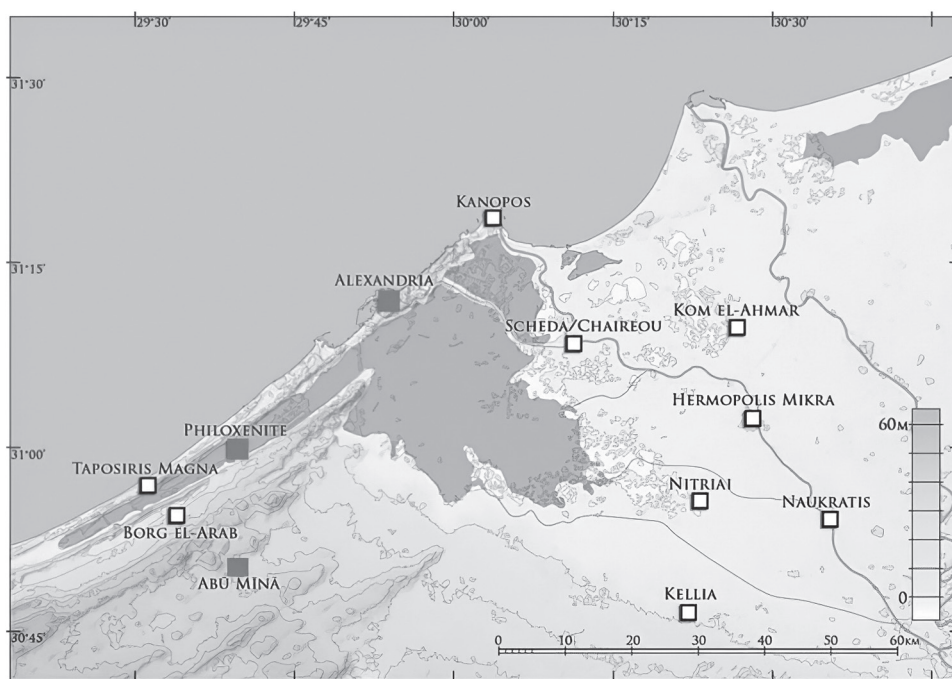
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MAP 1	Alexandria and its hinterlands in Late Antiquity Courtesy of the University of Warsaw, Marea Archaeological Project (prepared by J. Kaniszewski)
PLATE 1	Chart 1. Typological distribution of coins from Marea/Philoxenite for 7,919 specimens (prepared by M. Mozyrski) Fig. 1. Remains of a pouch found near the wall of House H1 in Marea/Philoxenite Courtesy of the University of Warsaw, Marea Archaeological Project (photo by M. Gwiazda, A. Pawlikowska-Gwiazda)
PLATE 2	Fig. 2. A group of coins that were a part of a pouch found in Marea/Philoxenite (photo by P. Jaworski) Fig. 3. An example of not separated coins from a pouch found in the Basilica in Marea/ Philoxenite; scale 2:1 (photo by M. Mozyrski)
PLATE 3	Figs. 4–13. Examples of coins found in Marea/Philoxenite that 5 th –7 th century pouches consisted of; scale 2:1 Fig. 4. AE3 bronze (Cat. 2; Late Roman coin); Issuer: Constantius II (?); Type: SALVS REIPVBLICAE; d.: 20 mm; wt.: 2.22 g (photo by M. Mozyrski) Fig. 5. AE4 bronze (Cat. 3; <i>minimi</i>); Issuer: Zeno; Type: Monogram; d.: 8 mm; wt.: 0.76 g (photo by M. Mozyrski) Fig. 6. <i>Nummus</i> (Cat. 3; <i>minimi</i>); Protovandalic coinage; Type: eight-pointed star (455–484); d.: 9 mm; wt.: 0.73 g (photo by M. Mozyrski) Fig. 7. <i>Minimus</i> (Cat. 3; <i>minimi</i>); Vandalic autonomous coinage (484–533); Type: N/III; d.: 10 mm; wt.: 1.30 g (photo by M. Mozyrski) Fig. 8. <i>Nummus</i> (Cat. 3; <i>minimi</i>); Issuer: Justinian I; Minted in Carthage (552–565); Type: Alpha with three stars/dots; d.: 8 mm; wt.: 0.76 g (photo by M. Mozyrski) Fig. 9. Cast imitation of pseudo-axumite <i>minimus</i> (Cat. 3; <i>minimi</i>); Pseudo-Axumite imitation; Type: rev.: cross in circle; d.: 11 mm; wt.: 0.4 g (photo by M. Mozyrski) Fig. 10. <i>Minimus</i> (Cat. 3; <i>minimi</i>); Issuer: Athalaric (Ostrogothic Kingdom); Type: monogram; d.: 10 mm; wt.: 0.89 g (photo by M. Mozyrski) Fig. 11. Cast copper blank flan (Cat. 4; blank flans AE); d.: 10 mm; wt.: 0.25 g (photo by M. Mozyrski) Fig. 12. Cast copper blank flan (Cat. 4; blank flans AE); d.: 6 mm; wt.: 0.15 g (photo by P. Jaworski) Fig. 13. Cast lead blank flan (Cat. 5; blank flans PB); d.: 10 mm; wt.: 0.32 g (photo by M. Mozyrski)
PLATE 4	Chart 2. Distribution of coins from Abu Mina for 13,808 specimens (prepared by M. Mozyrski) Chart 3. Typological distribution of identified coins from pouch “9490 Ak” for 324 specimens (prepared by M. Mozyrski)



Map. 1. Alexandria and its hinterlands in Late Antiquity; Courtesy of the University of Warsaw, Marea Archaeological Project (prepared by J. Kaniszewski)

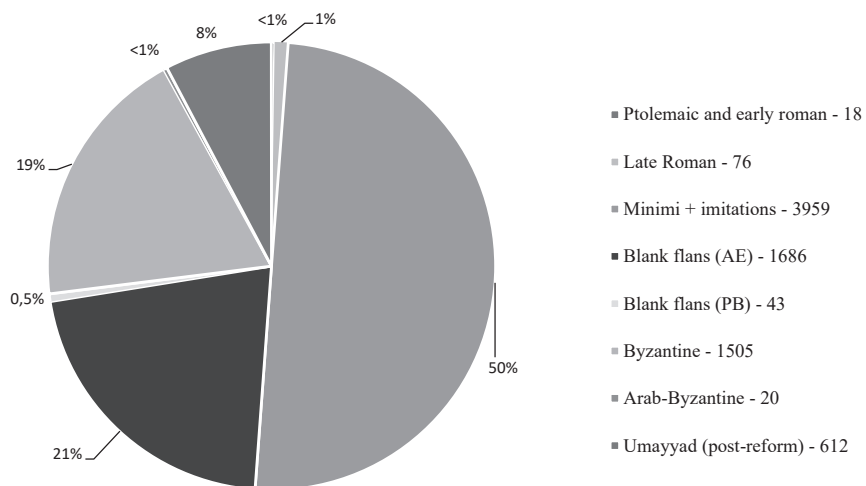


Chart 1. Typological distribution of coins from Marea/Philoxenite for 7,919 specimens (prepared by M. Mozyrski)



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

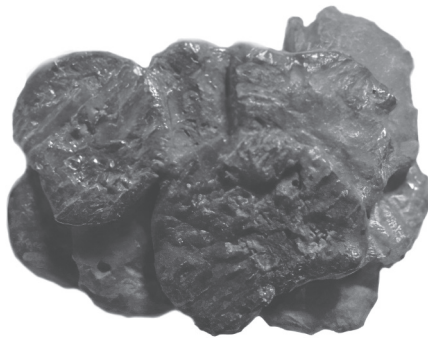


Fig. 3



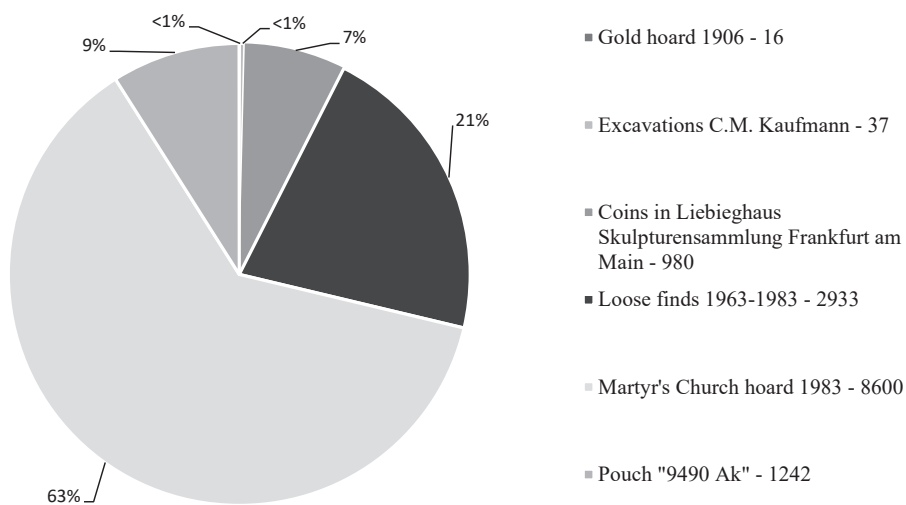


Chart 2. Distribution of coins from Abu Mina for 13,808 specimens (prepared by M. Mozyrski)

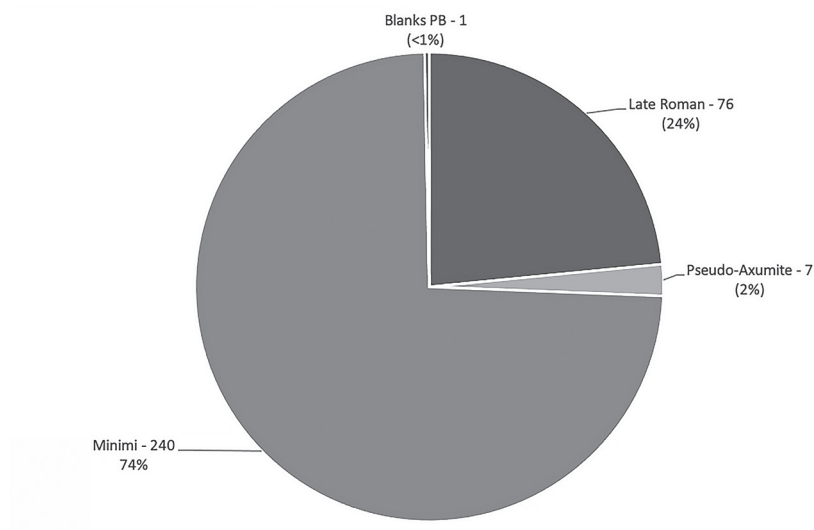


Chart 3. Typological distribution of identified coins from pouch "9490 Ak" for 324 specimens (prepared by M. Mozyrski)