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Title	Deciphering the dodecanummia of Heraclius and Constans
Authors	Woods, David
Publication date	2018
Original Citation	Woods, D. (2018) 'Deciphering the dodecanummia of Heraclius and Constans', Israel Numismatic Research, 13, pp. 195-207.
Type of publication	Article (peer-reviewed)
Link to publisher's version	http://www.ins.org.il/50/
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Download date	2026-10-10 17:22:57
Item downloaded from	https://hdl.handle.net/10468/9586

UCC
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Israel Numismatic Research

13 | 2018

Published by
The Israel Numismatic Society

Israel Numismatic Research
Published by the Israel Numismatic Society

Editorial Board: Donald T. Ariel (editor), David Wasserstein,
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Text editor: Miriam Feinberg Vamosh
Plate Layout: Yaniv Schauer

Typesetting: Michal Semo-Kovetz and Yael Bieber,
Tel Aviv University Graphic Design Studio

Printed at Elinir, Tel Aviv

ISSN 1565-8449

Correspondence, manuscripts for publication and books for review should be addressed to: Israel Numismatic Research, c/o Haim Gitler, The Israel Museum, P.O. Box 71117, Jerusalem 9171002 ISRAEL, or to dtariel@ins.org.il
Website: www.ins.org.il

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Israel Numismatic Research

Published by the Israel Numismatic Society

Volume 13 *2018*

Contents

3 Eric A. Carlen and Catherine C. Lorber: Silver Coinage from the Co-regency of Ptolemy VI and VIII

35 Julien Olivier: Coinage as a Tool of Ptolemy VI Philometor's Policies: Ptolemaic Coins in Coele Syria and Phoenicia in the Middle of the Second Century BCE

55 Mikhail G. Abramzon: Numismatic Evidence for Ancient Seafaring between the Levant, Western and Southern Asia Minor and the Northern Black Sea

73 Boris Bessarabov and Yoav Farhi: Countermarked Coins of Demetrias (by the Sea) and their Suggested Relation to Mark Antony

85 Samuele Rocca: The Source of Herod's Eagle on the Façade of the Temple: Eastern-Hellenistic or Roman?

101 Carlos Zorea: Judean Coins Unearthed in Spain: First Century BCE to First Century CE

121 Achim Lichtenberger: The First Jewish Revolt as Reflected on the City Coins of the Southern Levant

139 Rachel Bar-Nathan and Gabriela Bijovsky: The Emperor Plowing: Cause or Effect? A Hadrianic Coin from Excavations at Shu'afat and the Foundation of Aelia Capitolina

151 Donald T. Ariel and Helena Sokolov: The Kafr Bara Hoard

195 David Woods: Deciphering the Dodecanummia of Heraclius and Constans II

209 Robert Kool, Haim Gitler and Izhak Hershko: Unmasking a Forged Lead Seal of Baldwin I, King of Jerusalem

221 Abbreviations

ABBREVIATIONS

AJC Y. Meshorer. *Ancient Jewish Coinage*. Dix Hills, NY 1982
AJN *American Journal of Numismatics*
BMC e.g., *BMC Arab*.: G.F. Hill. *Catalogue of the Greek Coins of Arabia, Mesopotamia, and Persia*. London 1922
BMCO e.g., *BMCO* 1: S. Lane-Poole. *The Coins of the Eastern Khaleefehs in the British Museum. Catalogue of the Oriental Coins in the British Museum* 1. London 1875
CH *Coin Hoards*
CHL Y. Meshorer, G. Bijovsky and W. Fischer-Bossert. *Coins of the Holy Land: The Abraham and Marian Sofaer Collection at the American Numismatic Society and the Israel Museum*. Ed. by D. Hendin and A. Meadows. New York 2013
CIL Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum
CNP e.g., L. Kadman. *The Coins of Akko Ptolemais* (Corpus Nummorum Palaestinensium IV). Jerusalem 1961
CRE e.g., H. Mattingly. *The Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum I. Augustus to Vitellius*. London 1923
DOC e.g., P. Grierson. *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection* 3. *Leo III to Nicephorus III 717–1081*. Washington, D.C. 1973
EH I T. Faucher, A. Meadows and C. Lorber eds. *Egyptian Hoards* I: *The Ptolemies*. Cairo 2017.
IEJ *Israel Exploration Journal*
IG *Inscriptiones Graecae*
IGCH M. Thompson, O. Mørkholm and C.M. Kraay. *An Inventory of Greek Coin Hoards*. New York 1973
INJ *Israel Numismatic Journal*
INR *Israel Numismatic Research*
LA *Studium Biblicum Franciscanum Liber Annuus*
LRBC e.g., P.V. Hill and J.P.C. Kent. Part 1: The Bronze Coinage of the House of Constantine, A.D. 324–46. In *Late Roman Bronze Coinage (A.D. 324–498)*. London 1965. Pp. 4–40
MIB e.g., W. Hahn. *Von Anastasius I. bis Justinianus I (491–565)*. Moneta Imperii Byzantini 1. *Österreichische* Akademie der Wissenschaften Philosophisch-Historische Klasse Denkschriften 109. Veröffentlichungen der Numismatischen Kommission 1. Vienna 1973
MIBE W. Hahn. *Money of the Incipient Byzantine Empire (Anastasius I–Justinian I, 491–565)* (Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Numismatik und Geldgeschichte der Universität Wien 6). Vienna 2000
MIBEC W. Hahn and M. Metlich. *Money of the Incipient Byzantine Empire Continued (Justin II—Revolt of the Heraclii, 565–610)*. (Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Numismatik und Geldgeschichte der Universität Wien 13). Vienna 2009
MN American Numismatic Society Museum Notes
NC Numismatic Chronicle
NCirc. Numismatic Circular
NNM *Numismatic Notes and Monographs*
RIC e.g., C.H.V. Sutherland. *The Roman Imperial Coinage* I. *From 31 BC to AD 69*. London 1984
RN Revue Numismatique
RPC e.g., A. Burnett, M. Amandry and I. Carradice. *From Vespasian to Domitian (AD 69–96). Roman Provincial Coinage* 2. London 1999
RRC M.H. Crawford. *Roman Republican Coinage*. Cambridge 1974
SC e.g., A. Houghton and C. Lorber. *Seleucid Coins. A Comprehensive Catalogue. Part I. Seleucus I through Antiochus III*. New York, Lancaster, Penn.-London 2002
SICA e.g., S. Album and T. Goodwin. *Sylloge of Islamic Coins in the Ashmolean* 1*: The Pre-Reform Coinage of the Early Islamic Period*. Oxford 2002
SNAT e.g., L. Ilisch. *Sylloge Numorum Arabicorum Tübingen–Palästina IVa Bilād aš-Šām* I. Tübingen 1993
SNG *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum* (with suffix as necessary, e.g. *SNG Cop.*)
SNR *Schweizerische Numismatische Rundschau*
TINC *Transactions of the International Numismatic Congress*
TJC Y. Meshorer. *A Treasury of Jewish Coins from the Persian Period to Bar Kochba*. Jerusalem-Nyack 2001
ZfN *Zeitschrift für Numismatik*

Deciphering the *Dodecanummia* of Heraclius and Constans II

David Woods
University College Cork
d.woods@ucc.ie

Abstract
This article offers new explanations of the letters appearing in association with a cross between the numerals I and B on the reverses of the *dodecanummia* struck at Alexandria in Egypt under Heraclius and Constans II. It is argued that these all abbreviate Greek terms used in connection with the worship of Christ or veneration of his cross.

Fig. 1. *Dodecanummium* of Justin II (5.17 g, 16 mm; *MIBEC*:104, No. 67; CNG E-Auction 340, December 3, 2014, Lot 430).[1]

The mint at Alexandria in Egypt was reopened toward the end of the reign of Justin I (518–527 CE) and continued in production until the Byzantines finally evacuated Egypt in late 642 under Constans II (641–668 CE). It struck a number of different denominations over time, but the main denomination, which it continued to produce throughout most of this period, and was in fact unique to it, was the *dodecanummium* or 12-*nummi* piece.[2] The basic appearance of this denomination remained the same throughout the whole of this period. The obverse depicted the standard bust of the reigning emperor, while the reverse depicted the large Greek numerals I and B (IB=12) separated by a small cross of some type, with the mintmark in the exergue. The type of cross between the numerals could vary between and during reigns. A simple cross alone was used under Justin I (*MIBE*:105, No. 68),

1 CNG images are courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. (Figs. 1–5); Fig. 4a is courtesy of Roma Numismatics Ltd.; Fig. 4b is courtesy of the American Numismatic Society; Fig. 6a is courtesy of Steve Mansfield; Fig. 6b is courtesy of Sincona AG; and Fig. 7 is courtesy of Morton & Eden, London.

2 The fact that the *dodecanummium* was struck in Egypt alone did not preclude its circulation elsewhere. Bijovsky (2012:388–392) records the discovery of 31 *dodecanummia* of Heraclius in Israel.

Justinian I (*MIBE*:152, No. 165), and Justin II (*MIBEC*:104, Nos. 67, X8; Fig. 1), but this became a cross-on-steps under Tiberius II (*MIBEC*:126, Nos. VV62, 62b, X1, X2). Under Maurice, one type depicted a staurogram-on-steps between the numerals (*MIBEC*:163, No. VV106), another type depicted a cross-on-globe instead (*MIBEC*:163, No. 107c), but most issues favored the simple cross once more (*MIBEC*:163, Nos. V106, 106a–b, 107a–b). No coins seem to have been struck at Alexandria under Phocas (602–610 CE), but production resumed again under Heraclius (610–641 CE) sometime after his eldest son Heraclius Constantine was elevated as Augustus in 613.[3]

Fig. 2a. *Dodecanummium* of Heraclius (4.68 g, 18 mm; *MIB* 3:112, No. 200; CNG E-Auction 379, July 27, 2016, Lot 401); b. *dodecanummium* of Heraclius (5.69 g, 17 mm; *MIB* 3:113, No. 201; CNG E-Auction 233, May 26, 2010, Lot 551): c. *decanummium* of Heraclius, Carthage (3.84 g, 15 mm; *MIB* 3:117, No. 237a; CNG Auction 88, September 14, 2011, Lot 1639).

During the period from the first renewed striking of *dodecanummia* until the Persian invasion of Egypt in 618, it was the cross-on-steps that was depicted between the numerals I and B (*MIB* 3:112, Nos. 199, 200a–b; Fig. 2a), with one exception depicting a small plain cross above a letter N between the numerals instead (*MIB* 3:113, No. 201; Fig. 2b).[4] It seems to be generally agreed now that this letter abbreviates either the Latin term *nummus* or its Greek translation νουμμίον (Phillips 1962:236; *MIB* 3:113). The main evidence adduced in support of this interpretation is the parallel offered by the use of the letters N-M on the copper coinage of Carthage, including, most recently, on the *decanummium* or 10-*nummi* piece of Heraclius himself (*MIB* 3:117, Nos. 237a–c, 238; Fig. 2c).

Nevertheless, there are three arguments against this interpretation. First, the use of the single letter N does not actually represent the same practice as the use of the combination N-M. If the official or engraver responsible for the use of the letter N had really been influenced by the practice at Carthage, one might have expected him to replicate both letters, not just the N. Second, there is no evidence to suggest

3 In the absence of official coinage under Phocas, the supply of *dodecanummia* was probably maintained by one or more of the several series of imitations of sixth-century types that have been discovered. See Goodwin 2015a:27–29.

4 The order of *MIB* 200 and *MIB* 201 is not agreed. Metlich and Schindel (2004:12) argued that, since the *MIB* 200 often depicts a larger bust of Heraclius Constantine than does *MIB* 201, it should be dated later.

any other Carthaginian influence upon the design of any of the three denominations being struck at Alexandria at this approximate time, the 12-*nummi* piece, the 6-*nummi* piece (*MIB* 3:112, No. 210), or the 3-*nummi* piece (*MIB* 3:112, No. 213). Finally, it would seem more methodologically convincing if one could apply the same or similar explanation used in the case of the N to the other letters — Δ, A and M — used in the same position on subsequent issues of *dodecanummia* under Heraclius. In the case of these other letters, however, very different explanations have been offered, or none at all, as will be seen next.

Fig. 3. *Dodecanummium* from Persian-occupied Egypt (?) (12.19 g, 22 mm; *MIB* 3:113–114, No. 202a; CNG Auction 97, September 17, 2014, Lot 768).

While doubt has sometimes been expressed as to whether the mint at Alexandria continued striking *dodecanummia* during the period *c*. 618–628 when Egypt was occupied by the Persians, it is generally agreed now that an unusual type with obverse depicting a large beardless frontal bust between a star and a crescent and reverse depicting a tall thin cross-on-globe between the numerals I and B (*MIB* 3:113–114, Nos. 202a–b; Fig. 3) should be attributed to this period (Phillips 1962:231; Morrisson 1970:294; Metlich and Schindel 2004:12; Foss 2008:93).[5] This type can be subdivided into two varieties, one small and light, the other large and heavy, otherwise distinguishable only by the absence or presence of a crescent beneath the cross on top of the crown worn by the bust on the obverse. If this type was struck during the Persian occupation of Egypt, then the bust is probably identifiable as that of the Persian King Chosroes II, despite efforts to suggest otherwise (Phillips 1962:231). However, the most important point here is that no letter or other symbol was ever associated with the cross-on-globe between the numerals on the reverse.

5 Domaszewicz and Bates (2002:102) suggested that they might be better attributed to the reign of Anastasius (491–518) instead, but the stratigraphic evidence from Abu Mina excludes this.

Fig. 4a. *Dodecanummium* of Heraclius (9.66 g, 20 mm, *MIB* 3:114, No. 205; Roma Numismatics, E-Sale 13, November 29, 2014, Lot 573); b. *dodecanummium* of Heraclius (20 mm, *MIB* 3:115, No. 208). ANS 1984.100.89; c. *dodecanummium* of Heraclius (7.82 g, 20 mm, *MIB* 3:115, No. 209; CNG E-Auction 251, March 9, 2011, Lot 372); d. *dodecanummium* of Constans II (7.84 g, 20 mm, *MIB* 3:141, No. 188; CNG E-Auction 288, October 10, 2012, Lot 573); e. *dodecanummium* of Constans II (7.00 g, 21 mm, *MIB* 3:141, No. 189; CNG E-Auction 304, June 12, 2013, Lot 424).

When the striking of *dodecanummia* resumed under Byzantine control once more, their reverse types displayed far more variety and innovation in the next decade than they had for the previous century. Fortunately, even though the various coins bear no dates, they can be dated fairly closely on the basis of their obverse types. The earliest variety (*MIB* 3:114, No. 203), struck in 629, depicted a cross-on-globe above what has been variously described either as a "pyramid" (*DOC* 2/1:338) or "triangle" (Domaszewicz and Bates 2002:92) between the numerals I and B on the reverse. The next variety (*MIB* 3:114, No. 205; Fig. 4a), struck about 629–631, depicted a cross standing directly upon the apex of what has been variously described as a "triangle" (*DOC* 2/1:338), "linear triangle" (Phillips 1962:236), or "open triangle" (Domaszewicz and Bates 2002:92). The reverse type, depicting a cross standing upon the apex of a "triangle", continued to be used after the accession of Heraclonas as Caesar in 632 (*MIB* 3:115, No. 206), but this was soon replaced by types depicting the cross standing above a letter M instead. One type (*MIB* 3:115, No. 208) depicted a cross rising from the apex of a letter A set above the letter M (Fig. 4b). Another (*MIB* 3:115, No. 209) depicted a cross above the letter M, although this type actually contains three different subtypes (Phillips

1962:240–241). One depicts a cross above the letter M, another depicts a cross above a horizontal line above a letter M, and a third depicts a cross above a letter M which has an extra horizontal bar across its top (Fig. 4c). This reverse type, with the same three subtypes, continued into the reign of Constans II, when it was paired with an obverse depicting a single frontal bust (*MIB* 3:141, No. 188; Fig. 4d).

Finally, the last two varieties of *dodecanummia* struck at Alexandria both depicted a single standing emperor on the obverse, but one paired it with a reverse depicting a cross-on-globe between the numerals I and B (*MIB* 3:141, No. 189; Fig. 4e), while the other paired it with a reverse depicting a cross on a plain base between the numerals instead (*MIB* 3:141, No. 190).

Attempts to explain the "triangle" of *MIB* 203 and 205 under Heraclius have favored its interpretation as some form of support for the cross rising from it. So Wroth (1908:226) concluded that it was probably "the basis or steps of the cross misunderstood", Morrisson (1970:295) identified it as "une base triangulaire", and Hahn (*MIB* 3:114) interpreted it as a schematic representation of either Mount Calvary, the site of the crucifixion of Christ, or the Trinity. Phillips (1962:236) simply admitted that "its significance remains obscure".

As for the significance of the letter M on *MIB* 208 and 209 of Heraclius and *MIB* 188 of Constans II, although Wroth (1908:226) assumed that it represented another misunderstanding of the base or steps of the cross, most modern commentators have accepted it as a mark of value. Phillips (1962:236) favored the idea that it indicated "that the coins had a parity of value with the imperial folles"; Grierson (*DOC* 2/1:340) opined similarly that "the M was possibly intended to indicate that the Egyptian *dodecanummium* was now of the same value … as the *follis* elsewhere"; Morrisson (1970:296) agreed that "le M indique l'équivalence de cette pièce avec le follis frappe dans le reste de l'empire"; Domaszewicz and Bates (2002:93) concurred that "this was presumably intended to show that the 12 *nummia* of Egypt had the same value as the *folles* rated at 40 *nummia* elsewhere", and Foss (2008:97) followed them in this. However, Hahn (*MIB* 3:115) firmly rejected this idea on the basis that the *dodecanummia* were actually heavier than the *folles* of the years 631–648. Instead, he proposed that the letters A and M had some form of religious or theological significance. He tentatively suggested that the A may abbreviate the Greek adjective ἅγιος ("holy") and the M the Greek adjective μόνος ("alone") and that they had some relevance to contemporaneous theological debates. However, he did not pursue this interpretation in any detail because he did not want to engage in any further speculation, as he put it.

It is my argument that Hahn's basic approach was correct, that the various marks associated with the cross on the reverse of the *dodecanummia* under Heraclius and Constans II were religious in significance, but that he failed to apply this interpretative approach in a sufficiently consistent and rigorous manner. His approach was inconsistent in two ways. First, he failed to recognize that the marks were all letters, that is, that the alleged "solid triangle" of *MIB* 203 and "linear triangle" of

MIB 205–206 under Heraclius were both actually a Greek letter *delta*. The cross rises from the apex of the letter Δ in the case of *MIB* 205–206 in the same way that it does from the apex of the letter A in the case of *MIB* 208. The difference between what should really be called a solid *delta* in the case of *MIB* 203 and a linear *delta* in the case of *MIB* 205–206 is simply due to the fact that the former was squashed into a smaller space than the latter due its separate depiction not merely from a cross but from a cross-on-globe above it. Consequently, the crude standard of engraving transformed what was supposed to be a *delta* into a solid triangle. The failure of most commentators to even consider the possibility that these apparent triangles represent the letter *delta* is puzzling. Phillips (1962:236) does admit this possibility when he briefly claims that "it may be doubted whether this should be understood as the letter delta", but does not explain further. Foss (2008:96) also allows that the object below the cross-on-globe on *MIB* 203 may be a "pyramid or letter delta", but does not explore the implications of the latter identification. The second inconsistency in Hahn's approach lies in his treatment of the letter N of *MIB* 201 as somehow different from the similarly placed letters on the later *dodecanummia* so that he does not consider the possibility of a religious interpretation in its case also.

So what do the various marks mean? One may start with the earliest mark, the letter N of *MIB* 201. Two factors suggest that one treat this as the Greek letter *nu* abbreviating a Greek term rather than a Latin letter abbreviating a Latin term. First, the use of the letter *delta* on *MIB* 203 and 205 suggests that all similarly placed letters should be treated as Greek also. Second, there is the general context, the fact that these coins were struck within the Greek-speaking part of the Byzantine Empire.

Next, the fact that this letter is used in close association with a cross suggests that it abbreviates some term associated with the cross, and the more common the association the better. It ought to be clear, therefore, that it almost certainly abbreviates some form of the verb νικάω ("I conquer"). The close association between this verb and the cross dates back to the description by bishop Eusebius of Caesarea (*VC* 1.28) of the vision experienced by Constantine I sometime before the battle of Milvian Bridge in 312 when he allegedly saw a cross in the sky accompanied by the legend τούτῳ νίκα ("By this conquer"). More significantly here, a temporary mint operating at Jerusalem in 614 struck folles (*MIB* 3:110, No. X28) depicting the legend XCNIKA abbreviating Χριστός νικᾷ ("Christ conquers") in the exergue where the mintmark would normally have appeared (Mansfield 2010). Furthermore, the obverse of the *folle*s struck at Constantinople and Carthage under Constans II during the period 641–657 depicted the emperor standing with a long cross in his right hand surrounded by the legend ЄN TȣTO NIKA ("By this conquer").[6] In this

6 *MIB* 3:135–138, Nos. 162–165, 167–168, 170–173 (Constantinople); *MIB* 3:142–143, Nos. 191, 195 (Carthage).

context, it seems that the officials at the mint in Alexandria resorted to the same ploy as those in charge of the temporary mint at Jerusalem in 614, both seeking to remind people of the power of the cross of Christ in the face of imminent Persian attack, the message being that the Byzantine forces would triumph because of their faith in the power of the cross, although this reassurance proved equally worthless in both cases.

Fig. 5. *Follis* of Justinian II, Carthage (6.08 g, 21 mm; *MIB* 3:172, No. 55; CNG, Triton XII, January 6, 2009, Lot 822).

In chronological sequence, one turns next to the varieties depicting a letter *delta* in association with a cross. The fact that two different forms of cross are associated in slightly different ways with two slightly different forms of the letter *delta* in the case of *MIB* 203 and *MIB* 205–206 should not distract from the sameness of the message in each case: the cross rising directly from the apex of the linear *delta* is merely a more elegant and developed form of the cross-on-globe depicted above a solid *delta*.

But what does this mean? One should compare the cross rising from the apex of the linear *delta* to a mark consisting of a letter *theta* above a linear *delta* depicted at the top of the reverse of a *follis* struck at Carthage during the first reign of Justinian II (685–695 CE; *MIB* 3:172, No. 55; Fig. 5). This combination of *theta* and *delta* is best explained as an abbreviation of the phrase θεοῦ δοῦλος ("servant of God"). Since Justinian describes himself as the *servus Christi* ("servant of Christ") on the reverse of the new type of solidus with the bust of Christ which he introduced probably on Easter of 690 (*MIB* 3:165–166, Nos. 8a–b), it is clear that the mark on the *follis* from Carthage parallels the same and was intended in reference to the emperor also. This inference is reinforced by the fact that it appears at the same position on the reverse of the *follis* where the imperial monogram had traditionally been accustomed to appear. The similarity in appearance and function between the cross rising from the *delta* in Alexandria under Heraclius and the *theta* above a *delta* in Carthage under Justinian suggests that the *delta* probably abbreviates the same term in each case, δοῦλος ("servant"). In effect, the cross upon the *delta* declares Heraclius to be the servant of the cross or crucified Christ.

While this mark was a new way of describing the emperor as a servant of the cross or Christ, it would not have been particularly startling to see him declared as such. First, every Christian was supposed to be a servant of Christ. This idea had a long tradition beginning in the writings of St. Paul who, for example, declared himself

to be δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ ("a servant of Christ Jesus") in the opening line of his letter to the Romans (Rom. 1:1). Secondly, and probably more importantly here, Heraclius had a particularly strong association with the cross because he recovered the remains of the True Cross from the Persians, who had seized it following the fall of Jerusalem in 614, and initially returned it to Jerusalem in the spring of 629 before then taking it to Constantinople and returning it to Jerusalem once more in the spring of 630 (Zuckerman 2013). Such is the coincidence in dates between the recovery of the True Cross from the Persians and the first depiction of a cross rising from a *delta* on the *dodecanummia* that it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that this description of Heraclius as a servant of the cross alludes specifically to his recovery of this cross from the Persians in the spring of 629.

a b

Fig. 6a. Half *follis* of Justin II, Thessalonica (4.56 g, 20 mm; *MIBEC*:105, No. 70b). See Mansfield 2016, no. 8.31; b. *solidus* of Tiberius III, Rome (4.17 g, 14 mm; *MIB* 3:188, No. 60b; Sincona, Auction 37, May 16, 2017, Lot 291).

The proper interpretation of the various types depicting a cross above a letter M is more difficult to discern than in the case of the types just discussed. It seems probable that the simple cross above the letter M, with or without the extra bar between the two, is merely a simpler form of what was intended by the cross rising from the apex of a letter A all above the letter M. Hahn's suggestion that the M abbreviates the Greek adjective μόνος seems unlikely because that would then raise the question as to what sense Christ, represented by the cross, was "alone", the question that lay at the heart of the various very bitter Christological debates at this period. All Christians would doubtless have agreed that he was μονογενής ("single-born"), but any suggestion that he was μονοφυής ("of one nature") or μονοθέλητος ("of one will") would have proven much more controversial.[7] On the one hand, neither Heraclius nor any of his senior officials — least of all Bishop Cyrus of Alexandria who governed Egypt for much of the period 630–642 — would have tolerated any coins believed to indicate support for monophysitism. On the other hand, most of the ordinary population would probably have been reluctant to accept any coins believed to indicate support for monothelitism. One could start speculating next as to whether the M abbreviates the name of the Virgin Mary or

7 For an authoritative account of the development of the Christological debates of the seventh century, see now Booth 2014.

even of St. Mark the Evangelist who gave his name to the cathedral in Alexandria that also contained his remains.

It is important to note that a cross above a letter Μ had been depicted on the reverse of the half *folles* struck at Thessalonica under Justin II during the period 569–575 (*MIBEC*:105, No. 70b; Fig. 6a). Furthermore, under Tiberius III (698–705 CE), the mint at Rome would use Μ as an issue mark in the field next to the main cross on the reverses of some *solidi* (*MIB* 3:188, Nos. 59–61; Fig. 6b) and *tremisses* (*MIB* 3:188, Nos. 63–64).[8] Since the letter Μ occurs in association with a cross in all these examples, whether at Alexandria, Thessalonica, or Rome, it seems reasonable to conclude that the same explanation probably applies in all cases, and that this probably involves the cross in some way. However, the fact that the Μ was used at Thessalonica as early as the reign of Justin II excludes any association with monothelitism, while the fact that it was used at Rome as late as the reign of Tiberius III excludes any association with monophysitism.

The evidence from Rome is particularly important because it fatally undermines any attempt to interpret the Μ in the present case as the numeral 40 indicating some form of revaluation of the *dodecanummia* against the copper coinage of other regions. The uses of the Μ at both Thessalonica and Rome also argue against any special association between it and Alexandria, such as in commemoration of St. Mark. More importantly, the pattern demonstrated by the appearance of the other religious marks used at Thessalonica under Justin II also argues against interpreting the Μ in reference to the Virgin Mary, even though this is how Hahn interprets it in this case (*MIBEC*:30). The key point is that the only mark that does definitely refer to the Virgin Mary — the letters ΘΚϹ in abbreviation of θεοτόκος ("Mother of God"; *MIBEC*:106, No. 70c) — occurs alone without any associated cross, while all the abbreviations in clear reference to Christ — Ϲ in abbreviation of σωτήρ ("savior"; *MIBEC*:106, No. 70d), ΘϹ in abbreviation of θεός ("God"; *MIB* 106, No. 70e), and ΦϹ in abbreviation of φῶς ("light"; *MIBEC*:106, No. 70f) — occur with a cross above them. This suggests that if the Μ really did occur in reference to the Virgin Mary, it would probably have occurred alone also.

So what does the letter Μ mean? Such is its association with the cross that it ought to abbreviate some term in reference to Christ or to his crucifixion in particular. Here one notes the frequent use of the term μυστήριον ("mystery") by St. Paul and the early church fathers, whether to describe Christ himself or key moments of his life from his incarnation as God made man to his death and resurrection (Lampe 1961:891–893; Danker 2000:661–662). The idea of the cross

8 Hahn (*MIB* 3:188) wondered briefly whether this abbreviates *moneta* ("money") before dismissing this possibility. As he rightly concluded, the Μ by itself probably has nothing to do with the combination Ѕ Μ on the reverses of the contemporary *solidi* from Sardinia (*MIB* 3:186, Nos. 9–11, 17), a combination which he takes to mean *Sardiniensis Moneta* ("Sardinian money").

as a mystery was widespread throughout the Late Antique world. For example, one of the most famous Christian hymns in honor of the cross, the *Vexilla Regis*, composed by Bishop Venantius Fortunatus in 569 in commemoration of the arrival of a relic of the True Cross at Poitiers as a gift from Emperor Justin II and his wife Sophia, declared in its second line: *Fulget crucis mysterium* ("the mystery of the cross shines forth") (Roberts 2017:80–81). Furthermore, in Christian terms, it is hard to reference the death of Christ on the cross without also referencing his resurrection, so that the presence of the letter Α at the foot of a cross would almost inevitably have suggested the term ἀνάστασις ("resurrection"). It is my argument, therefore, that the cross rising from the letter Α all above the letter Μ symbolizes what, to give a second example, John Chrysostom (*In Matthaeum* 54.5) refers to as τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ σταυροῦ καὶ τῆς ἀναστάσεως ("the mystery of the cross and resurrection"). Consequently, the cross alone above the letter Μ abbreviates this slightly, explicitly referencing only the mystery of the cross, but including within this an implicit reference to the resurrection also. As for the variant of this type that depicts a horizontal bar across the top of the letter Μ, if this was not simply the result of the careless copying of what was supposed to be a step beneath the cross, then it may have been intended to turn the original letter Μ into a monogram consisting of both Μ and Π in abbreviation of the phrase τὸ μυστήριον τῆς πίστεως ("mystery of faith"), as used in the New Testament (1 Timothy 3:9), in reference to the death and resurrection of Christ once more.

Fig. 7. Arab-Byzantine Coin, Egypt (7.92 g, 16 mm; *MIB* 3:142, Heraclius X48; Morton & Eden, Auction 68, June 2014, Lot 670).

A final point is necessary. The realization that the reverses of the last issues of *dodecanummia* under Heraclius and Constans II were also used to convey religious messages concerning the power of the cross needs to be borne in mind as one examines the various types of coins that continued to be produced in Egypt after the Arab conquest. For the most part, these coins are clearly identifiable as *dodecanummia* since their reverses copy the traditional style of reverse depicting two large Greek numerals Ι and Β (ΙΒ=12) separated by a cross or the letter Μ.[9] However, one exceptional type, exceptional also in that it was cast rather than struck, depicts a long cross between the letters Α (*alpha*) and Ω (*omega*) (*MIB* 3:142, Heraclius X48; Fig. 7). This type has attracted particular attention because

9 For the most recent classification and discussion, see Goodwin 2015b.

the legend ΠΑΝ occurs in the exergue where the mintmark ΑΛЄƵ ought traditionally to have appeared. Various explanations of this legend have been offered, but none seems to have won general approval. One suggestion was that it might abbreviate the name of Panopolis in Upper Egypt (Kubitschek 1897:192–196; Metlich and Schindel 2004:12). Another is that it "may, perhaps, be a degraded form of ΑΛЄƵ" (Wroth 1908:228). A third is that it might represent a corruption of the mintmark ROM copied from a coin struck in Rome (Domaszewicz and Bates 2002:103). Finally, it has also been suggested that it abbreviates the legend Πολίς Αντινοέων ("The City of the Antinoites"), that is, the name of Antinoöpolis in Upper Egypt (Castrizio 2010:12).

All of these suggestions assume that this legend must abbreviate the name of a place and serve as a mintmark in the traditional late Roman or Byzantine manner. However, this was not necessarily true. The legend in the exergue did not always serve as a mintmark even during late Roman or Byzantine rule. For example, and as already noted, a type of *follis* struck at Jerusalem in 614 bore the legend XCNIKA in the exergue where the mintmark would normally have appeared. More importantly, a type of *dodecanummium* struck after the Arab conquest depicted the legend ABAZ in the exergue and this has been plausibly interpreted as an abbreviated Greek transliteration of the name of Abd al-ʿAziz, Umayyad governor of Egypt during the period 685–705 CE (Metlich and Schindel 2004:14). It is my suggestion, therefore, that the legend under discussion abbreviates the title παντοκράτωρ ("Almighty") as often used by Christians in reference to God, including Christ (Lampe 1961:1005; Danker 2000:755). The proof of this lies in the depiction of an *alpha* and *omega* on the reverse where these had never appeared on any Egyptian coins previously, whether these were *dodecanummia* or any other denomination.[10] In conjunction with the legend ΠΑΝ these would inevitably have recalled a famous line in the book of Revelation to the mind of any Christian viewer (Rev. 1:8):

> Ἐγώ εἰμι τὸ Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ Ὦ, λέγει Κύριος ὁ Θεός, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, ὁ Παντοκράτωρ.

10 Curiously, the letters *alpha* and *omega* were rarely depicted in association with the ubiquitous cross of Byzantine coinage. Most recently, a half *siliqua* of Maurice from Carthage had depicted an *alpha* and *omega* on either side of a cross-on-steps (*MIBEC*:144, Nos. 61, N61), a third *siliqua* of Phocas from Carthage depicted an *alpha* and *omega* on either side of a staurogram (*MIBEC*:187, No. 56), and a *tremissis* of Heraclius from Spain depicted an *alpha* and *omega* on either side of a cross-on-steps (*MIB* 3:93, No. 96). Still, one should not assume, as did Domaszewicz and Bates 2002:103, that the authorities responsible for the production of this coin needed a Western numismatic model for what was a common combination of elements in the arts more generally.

> "I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, He who is, was, and is to come, the Almighty".

In other words, this type seems to represent the culmination of the process of Christianization of the reverse of the *dodecanummium* where the message previously confined to the issue mark between the numerals I and B has now expanded to fill the whole of the reverse to the exclusion of what would once have been considered absolutely essential, the denomination mark and the mintmark.

In conclusion, the various marks on the reverses of the *dodecanummia* struck at Alexandria under Heraclius and Constans II all serve to convey some religious message involving the cross of Christ, whether to trumpet the power of the cross, the religious devotion of the emperor as a servant of the cross, or simply to proclaim the death and resurrection of Christ as one of the mysteries of the Christian faith. The main difference between these marks and those on the reverses of the half *folles* struck at Thessalonica under Justin II as already described is that these only ever consist of one letter and so are much harder to decipher.

However, one should not imagine that the use of these marks represents an isolated outbreak of a more explicit religious fervor or inventiveness on the part of mint officials at Alexandria under Heraclius. On the contrary, there was a growing tendency across the empire to celebrate some aspect of the cross serving as the main device on the reverse of gold and silver coins by means of issue marks abbreviating a term describing this aspect, whether a Greek K (abbreviating κυριακός or κυρίου ["the Lord's"]), a Θ (abbreviating θεῖος ["divine"] or θεοῦ ["of God"]), or, as most recently demonstrated, a Latin P (abbreviating *pacifer* ["peace-making"]) celebrating the new peace wrought between man and God as a result of the crucifixion of Christ (Woods 2017). The desire to transform less prominent crosses on copper coinage into issue marks by using single-letter abbreviations in association with them also represents a part of this larger phenomenon.

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