

# The countermark KOB on coins of Caesarea Maritima

Autor(en): **Kanitz, L.E.**

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Heft 87 (SM 22, 1972) publizierte Bibliographie zur Schweizer Numismatik 1946 bis 1971.

Ebenso bedeutend ist die organisatorische Leistung von Maître Martin. Die 26 Jahre, während deren er seit 1949 die Schweizerische Numismatische Gesellschaft als Präsident leitete, war für diese eine Zeit des Wachstums und der Blüte. Dabei verstand er es, in einer unverwechselbar persönlichen Art weniger zu dominieren als vielmehr zu animieren und mit einer fast charismatischen Gabe der Numismatik zahlreiche neue Freunde zu gewinnen. Seine Fähigkeit, wissenschaftliche Arbeit zu organisieren und ihr auf diese Weise Impulse zu geben, wurde auch von andern Organisationen in vermehrtem Maße in Anspruch genommen. Zu erwähnen wäre etwa die Internationale Kommission für Numismatik, deren Kasse er jahrelang führte. Für die Bibliothèque historique vaudoise zeichnet er als Initiant und Herausgeber und hat damit der waadtländischen Geschichtsforschung eine Publikationsreihe geschenkt, die innert 35 Jahren bereits auf über 50 Bände angewachsen ist. Dieses reiche und fruchtbare Wirken fand immer wieder berechnete Anerkennung, und so hat ihm denn auch 1973 die Universität Lausanne die Würde eines Docteur ès lettres honoris causa verliehen.

Wenn Colin Martin nun das Präsidium unserer Gesellschaft niedergelegt hat, so bei weitem nicht, um das an sich wohlverdiente «otium cum dignitate» zu genießen. Vor einem Jahr nämlich übernahm er die Leitung der Schweizerischen Geisteswissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft, wo ihm neue und wichtige Aufgaben harren. Unsere herzlichsten Glückwünsche zum siebzigsten Geburtstag, die wir Maître Colin Martin am 11. März darbringen, verbinden wir mit der Hoffnung, daß die Numismatik noch lange in den Genuß seiner tätigen Initiative komme. Als bescheidener Dank sei ihm dieses Heft gewidmet.

*Hans-Ulrich Geiger*

Präsident der Schweizerischen Numismatischen Gesellschaft

## THE COUNTERMARK KOB ON COINS OF CAESAREA MARITIMA

L. El. Kanitz

To the memory of Leo Kadman

Some coins of Nero<sup>1</sup> bear the countermark KOB, first published by Leo Kadman in «The Coins of Caesarea Maritima»<sup>2</sup>. The meaning of this countermark is so far without explanation<sup>3</sup>. This negative status was still some time ago confirmed to the present writer in a personal communication by the late Father Aug. Spijkerman OFM, the eminent expert of Roman provincial coins in the Middle East and Curator

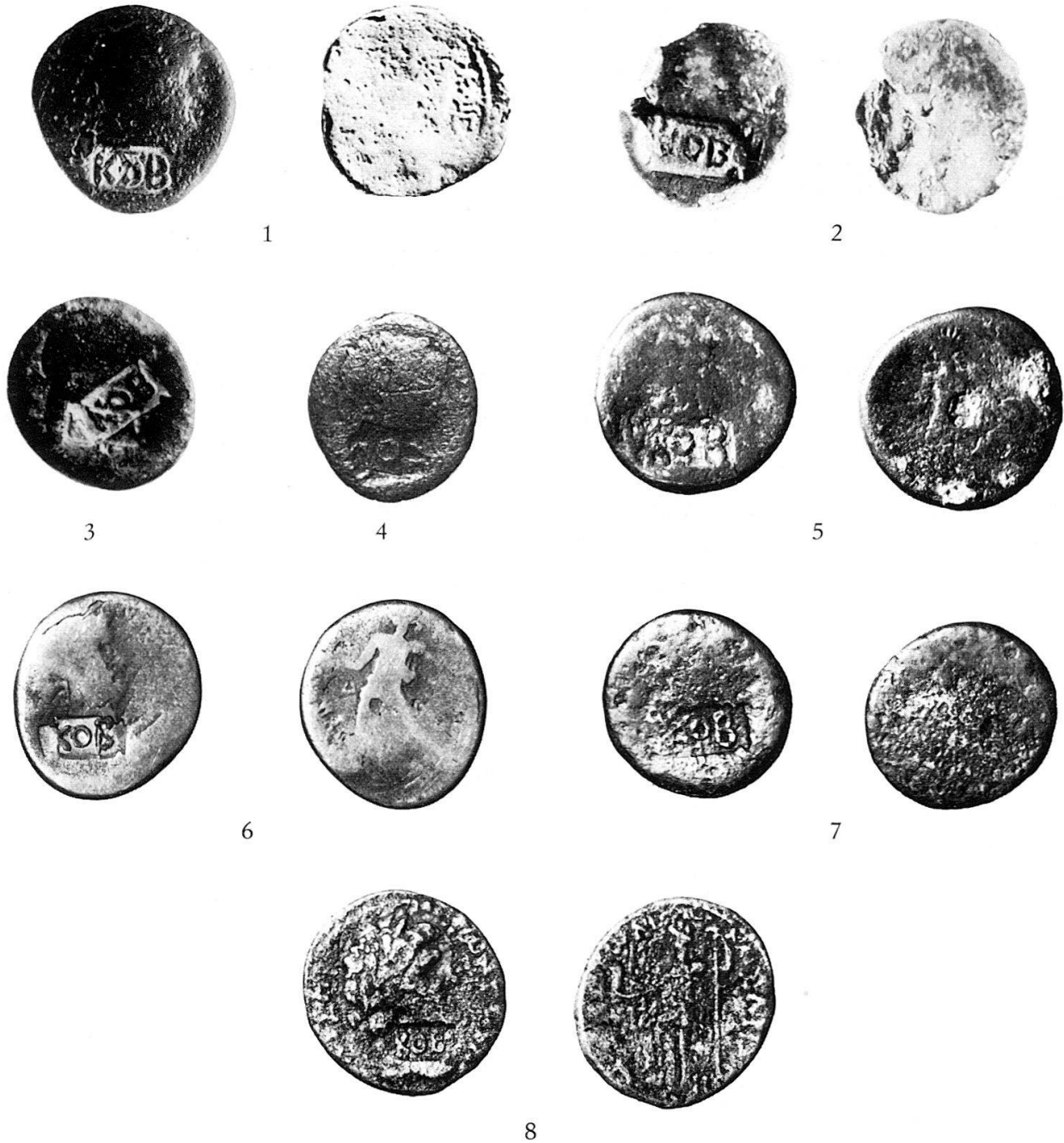
I am grateful to Dr. Colin M. Kraay, Oxford, whose work on countermarks inspired me, for his encouraging comments. My thanks are due to the above mentioned museums and their directors, Father M. Piccirillo, Jerusalem, and Mr. A. Kindler, Tel-Aviv, and to the private collectors for their support and permission to publish their coins.

<sup>1</sup> G. F. Hill, BMC Palestine/Caesarea. Nos. 20–29.

<sup>2</sup> Corpus Nummorum Palaestinensium, Publications of the Israel Numismatic Society, Vol. II, Jerusalem (1957) p. 100 no. 12 and p. 189 no. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 82.

of the Museum of the Franciscan Biblical School (Flagellation) Jerusalem, where three specimens of the above mentioned countermarked coins are kept (Pl. nos. 1–3). An other specimen is in the Kadman Numismatic Museum, Tel-Aviv (Pl. no. 4), one in the collection of Mr. L. Better, Haifa (Pl. no. 5), an other is with Mr. M. Rosenberger, Jerusalem (Pl. no. 6) and two further specimens are in the writer's possession (Pl. nos. 7 and 8).



One of the latter (Pl. no. 7) has been found at Givat Ram, today's hill location of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, when the trenches were dug during the siege of Jerusalem in 1947/48. The second one (no. 8) has been found, years later, in the dunes of Caesarea. The flan of the first is badly worn on both sides and apparently disfigured by previous countermarking; on the obverse to the left, above the clear oblong countermark KOB, an X, on the reverse, in a round incuse, a small boar are still visible, both symbols of the Legio X Fretensis.

The second coin, from the sands of Caesarea, is in such a condition that on the obverse the bust of Nero, laureate, is distinct as well as a part of the legend, viz.: ΝΕΡΩΝ Σ(ΕΒΑΣΤΟΣ Κ)ΑΙΣΑΡ; on the reverse Tyche is standing to left, holding a bust in the right and a sceptre in the left hand, her right foot rests on a prow, in the field beneath the outstretched right arm appears the date (L)ΙΔ; the legend reads: ΚΑΙΣΑΡΙΑ (Η ΠΙΡΟΣ ΣΕΒΑΣ)ΤΩ ΛΙΜ(ΕΝΙ) <sup>4</sup>. – On the obverse, over the neck of Nero's bust, appears, neatly and clearly, the oblong countermark KOB.

Colin M. Kraay, in «The Behaviour of Early Imperial Countermarks» <sup>5</sup>, emphasizes that his endeavour at that time was not to discover the purpose of countermarks but to define the behaviour of some of them, after examining the evidence given, for instance, by the relation of the countermark to the coin, by chronological and geographical distribution or by epigraphical facts <sup>6</sup>. Under the impression of these views, the present writer tried to look for the explanation of the KOB countermark in a new light.

The known countermarks on Caesarea coins of Nero, all dated ΙΙΔ, i.e. in the 14th year of the emperor's reign, = 67/68 A.D., are the following:

1. LXF or XF, sometimes together with a boar, a galley, a dolphin or a bust – related to Legio Decima Fretensis
2. KAI or KA, sometimes with a bust – related to ΚΑΙΣΑΡΙΑ
3. AV.C – related to AUGUSTA CAESAREA, from the time when Caesarea became a Roman colony, and
4. KOB – until now unexplained.

Most of these countermarked coins of Nero were found on the site of Caesarea, but one was excavated at «Sheikh-Bader» in Jerusalem <sup>7</sup>. Sheikh-Bader was once the name of a northwestern district of Jerusalem between the highway coming up from the plain and the Givat Ram hill mentioned above; thus the coin came from the same region as one of the author's specimens.

As to the letters KOB, obviously the first and the second letter, viz. K and O are almost equal in size – the O being the smaller one. The third letter B, however, is larger in size, and creates the effect to stand separately.

Since the later time of Augustus (6 C.E.) the Roman procurators, installed in Judaea, issued successively copper coins – the Prutot; the last ones under Procurator Antonius Felix (52–60) appear with Nero's name and with the date ΛϷ, i.e. the year 58 <sup>8</sup>. These Prutot of the Procurators have been, at that time, the smallest coins in Palestine.

Nero's coins of Caesarea, on which the countermark KOB occurs, bear, as mentioned above, the date ΙΙΔ, the year 67/68, the last of his reign and of his life; as there is a considerable number of these Neronian coins with Tyche on the reverse preserved till today, it would appear that great quantities of this coin must have been issued in the year 66/67 already <sup>9</sup>. When prior to the Civil Wars and still in Nero's lifetime the revolt broke out in the provinces and when even the imperial bodyguard, the Praetorians, deserted the emperor at Rome <sup>10</sup> – who finally was

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. Corpus no. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Essays in Roman Coinage, presented to Harold Mattingly, Oxford (1956).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. pp. 114/115 and 134.

<sup>7</sup> Leo Kadman, op. cit. supra 2 p. 81.

<sup>8</sup> Ya'akov Meshorer, Jewish Coins of the Second Temple Period, Tel-Aviv 1967, Corpus no. 234.

<sup>9</sup> L. Kadman, op. cit. supra 2 p. 81.

<sup>10</sup> Suetonius, XII Caesares, Nero 40 ff.

declared a public enemy by the Senate <sup>11</sup> – coins bearing Nero's name and portrait were apparently locally countermarked, to different purposes and intents, as shown above. As a significant fact, the countermarks are struck mainly on the obverse of the coins and placed in such a way as to deface, deliberately, the bust of Nero <sup>12</sup>.

It can be assumed that after ten years the last Prutot of the Procurators were not circulating anymore in sufficient quantity, apart from the fact that this coin, too, bore Nero's name; on the other hand, the requirement of small change was, without doubt, prevalent in the daily life of the country.

Now, two Prutot of the Procurators were equal to one Roman Quadrans. This proportion appears repeatedly in contemporary Scriptures <sup>13</sup>, where one Pruta is denoted as  $\frac{1}{8}$  of the Roman As (the latter being equal to four Quadrantes). The Gospel <sup>14</sup> also confirms, viz.: Λεπτά δύο ὁ ἔστιν Κοδράντης.

The Greek Kodrantes stands for the Latin Quadrans <sup>15</sup>.

«Lepta» denotes the smallest coins (mite) and this smallest denomination at that time was the Pruta. B. Kanael <sup>16</sup> states: «We are justified to consider the Lepta as the current coins of the Procurators.» Rev. J. Hastings <sup>17</sup> declares: «The coins (Lepta) mentioned in these three passages (of the Gospel) can only be the Pruta . . . It is expressly declared (reference to Scriptures) to have been tariffed as  $\frac{1}{8}$ th of the Roman As, in other words the  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the Roman Quadrans.»

The KoB countermarked Caesarea coins of Nero thus designate the current value of 2 Quadrantes (= 4 Prutot):

Ko stands for Κοδράντης

B stands for δύο; B as the second letter of the Greek alphabet has the numeral value «2» <sup>18</sup>.

A coin's weight was a significant and important factor: The average weight of the Nero coin in question is 11.7 g <sup>19</sup>; the average weight of Antonius Felix' Prutot is 2.9 g <sup>20</sup>.

Kodrantes (Quadrans) one . . . . . = 2 Prutot

Kodrantes two (thus the B in the countermark) = 4 Prutot,

4 times 2.9 g = 11.6 g, which tallies with the average weight of Nero's Caesarea coin. Thus the weight, too, confirms the indication of the countermark KoB, i.e. 2 Kodrantes, equal to 4 Prutot.

On the other hand, the weight of Nero's Roman copper Quadrans is about 3 g <sup>21</sup>, 2 Quadrantes of 6 g are about the half of the 11.7 g for Nero's Caesarea coin. Hence it appears that the countermark KoB clearly denotes – according to the Roman standard – a downgrading of the pieces, nearly all of which are very worn, as will be noticed from the plates and from the detailed list. To prolong the life of worn coins <sup>22</sup> was one of the main purposes of countermarking and there are instances of a countermark DVP = dupondius on worn sestertii and AS on worn dupondii, indi-

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. Nero 49.

<sup>12</sup> L. Kadman, op. cit. supra 2 p. 81.

<sup>13</sup> Kiddushim I, 1; Ediyot IV, 7.

<sup>14</sup> Ev. Marci XII, 42 and others.

<sup>15</sup> Liddell-Scott, Greek-English Lexicon, Oxford 1961.

<sup>16</sup> JNG 1967 – Literaturüberblicke der griechischen Numismatik, Altjüdische Münzen, p. 181 (translated).

<sup>17</sup> A Dictionary of the Bible, Edinburgh 1950, Vol. III p. 428.

<sup>18</sup> Liddell-Scott, op. cit. supra 15.

<sup>19</sup> L. Kadman, op. cit. supra 2, Corpus nos. 3, 4, 6, 8, 12.

<sup>20</sup> Y. Meshorer, op. cit. supra 8 p. 174.

<sup>21</sup> BMC RE I p. lvi.

<sup>22</sup> Colin M. Kraay, op. cit. supra 5 p. 113.

cating a downgrading: those worn pieces were only admitted at half their original value <sup>23</sup>.

Obviously, the KoB-marking was a relief action and a temporary measure, using up the still available, even worn Neronian coins, since soon afterwards, in the second year of the Jewish war against Rome, new Prutot were issued, this time by the Jewish Government <sup>24</sup> and with Hebrew legends <sup>25</sup>.

*List of available details according to the plate*

- 1 Obv. Head of Nero, laur. KoB  
Rev. Contours of Tyche: upper part and l. hand holding sceptre, IIA KAIC...  
Flagellation Museum, Jerusalem.
- 2 Obv. NEP...C...A KoB  
Rev. Contours of left part of Tyche holding sceptre, badly worn and partly broken.  
Flagellation Museum, Jerusalem.
- 3 Obv. Head of Nero, laur. NEPω...CAP. KoB upwards covering eye and nose of emperor,  
struck over an oblong countermark (horizontal, illegible).  
Rev. Obliterated except for a round countermark with a head (?).  
Flagellation Museum, Jerusalem.
- 4 Obv. Head of Nero, laur. KoB  
Rev. Obliterated, except for a round, unidentified countermark.  
Kadman Numism. Museum, Tel Aviv.
- 5 Obv. Contours of Nero's head, laur. NE...KoB.  
Rev. Tyche with turreted crown holding bust in r. hand, beneath (L) IIA - AIC...  
L. Better, Haifa.
- 6 Obv. Head of Nero, laur. KoB.  
Rev. Tyche holding bust in r. hand, beneath (LI) Δ - EBA...  
M. Rosenberger, Jerusalem.
- 7 Obv. Contours of Nero's head, laur. KoB.  
Rev. Tyche's turreted crown.  
L. Kanitz, Haifa.
- 8 Obv. Head of Nero, laur. KoB.  
Rev. See above p. 3.  
L. Kanitz, Haifa.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. p. 130.

<sup>24</sup> L. Kadman, *The Coins of the Jewish War of 66-73 C.E., Corpus Numm. Palaestinensium*, Publications of the Israel Numismatic Society., Vol. III, Jerusalem (1960) p. 97.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. *Corpus nos.* 11-19.

UNE EMISSION MECONNUE DE FOLLES  
DE LA PREMIERE TETRARCHIE A L'ATELIER DE TREVES

Pierre Bastien

Le premier lot du trésor de Fresnoy-lès-Roye II nous avait révélé deux *folles* de l'atelier de Trèves à la marque  $\frac{\text{ATR}}{\text{ATR}}$ <sup>1</sup>. On ne signalait jusqu'alors qu'une émis-

<sup>1</sup> P. Bastien, *Une émission inédite de folles de Trèves sous la 1<sup>e</sup> Tétrarchie*, BSFN, 1970, pp. 510-512, P. Bastien et F. Vasselle, *Les trésors monétaires de Fresnoy-lès-Roye (Somme)*, Mém. Soc. Ant. Picardie, 23, 1971, p. 162, Fresnoy-lès-Roye II, pl. I, 48-49.