



Summary :

The mint of Antioch was the second most important early Byzantine mint after the one at Constantinople. It was founded during the reign of Anastasios I (491-518) and remained active – with some short intervals – until the reign of Phokas (602-610). It minted exclusively bronze coins, which, however, were widely circulated, at least throughout the eastern provinces of the empire.

Date

Anastasios' reign (491-518) – Phokas' reign (602-610)

Geographical Location

Antioch

1. Introduction

The mint of [Antioch](#) was the second most important mint of the early Byzantine period after the [mint of Constantinople](#).¹ It was founded during the reign of [Anastasios I](#) (491-518) and remained active – with some short breaks – until the reign of [Phokas](#) (602-610). It is characterized by the exclusive production of bronze coins. Its coin products, however, were widely circulated, since we find them in [coin hoards](#) and as single findings in all the eastern provinces of the empire.

2. Production

The mint of Antioch issued the full series of the 6th-century bronze coinage denominations ([follis](#), [eikosanummia](#), [decanummia](#), [pentanummia](#), [nummus](#)), although not during the whole period of its mint activity. Its products are easily discerned thanks to the use of a [mint-mark](#):² at the beginning the ANTIX was used or a similar one (Antioch), while from 529 onwards abbreviations of the city's new name were used (Theoupolis).³

In general the coin production of the mint was very large and was aiming in covering the needs of North Syria, where the mint of Antioch shared a percentage of 29% in coin hoards⁴ and 46,9% in single findings,⁵ as well as of other regions of the empire: according to a recent study the rate of Antioch's monetary presence in hoards from the Balkans and Asia Minor of the period 491-713 amounts to 5,67% on average.⁶ The same study showed that, as it is expected, the mint's rate of production was never the same, but presented fluctuations caused by the organization of the production – it was for example larger during the beginnings of the five-year cycle (see below) –, as well as by the prevailing political situations. Thus, the changes in the Byzantine-Persian relations were reflected in the decrease of production during the period 532-534 after the conclusion of a peace treaty with Chosroe I, in its new increase during the period 532-534 as a consequence of the restarting of hostilities in 573, as well as in the maintenance of a relatively high degree of production the last two decades of the 6th century.⁷

3. Mint organization

As the rest of the imperial mints did, the mint of Antioch included [officina](#) (workshops). In theory their number did not surpass that of four officinae, although after 542 a fifth one was added.⁸ It seems that the third officina (Γ) was responsible for the largest part of the mint production, especially during the second half of the 6th century.⁹

As far as the organization of the production is concerned, this seems to be based on five-year cycles in general, known as [lustra](#), which determined the change of the [subsidiary marks](#). Although we can trace this system with certainty only from the reign of [Justinian](#) onwards, when the large bronze denominations started bearing the year of reign,¹⁰ it must have been already in use since the mint's foundation: the subsidiary marks of Anastasios' second issue did change only after the end of the lustrum in 522, in spite of emperor's



death and the change of the iconographic type in 518.¹¹

Finally, what is characteristic for this mint is the sense of saving with regard to the production and use of moulds. Not only older moulds were reused – with or without countermarking – but **obverse** moulds were created, which could be used for the issue of more than one denominations.¹²

4. Issues

4.1. Anastasios I (491-518)

The mint of Antioch was founded under Anastasios I, though not after the monetary reform of 498, but some time after 512 – probably in 516 – when follis' weight had already been increased.¹³ During this first phase the mint struck folles, eikosanummia, decanummia and pentanummia.¹⁴ With regard to imagery, it is worth mentioning the use of a combination of asterisk and crescent (sun and moon respectively) as subsidiary marks, which was continued during the following emperors and became in a way a characteristic element of the mint of Antioch ([fig. 1](#)),¹⁵ as well as the wide use of the diadem crowned with a cross on the emperor's portrait, which seems to have theological implications and to be connected with the role of the city of Antioch as a center of [Monophysitism](#).¹⁶

4.2. Justin I (518-527)

Under [Justin I](#) the same denominations were still issued, to which nummoi were added.¹⁷ Nevertheless, the big novelty of this period of reign concerns the pentanummia, on which the mint mark was replaced by the depiction of the Tyche of Antioch under a stylized temple with the personification of river Orontes on her feet ([fig. 2](#)). The prototype for this issue was the famous sculpture of [Eutychides of Sikyon](#) (3rd century B.C.), which had also been used previously on Roman coins.¹⁸

The short period of co-regency between Justin I and Justinian I (527) is represented in Antioch by four denominations (from follis to pentanummia), which were novel in relation to the rest of the mints, since they bear on the obverse the portraits of both the co-emperors ([fig. 3](#)).¹⁹

4.3. Justinian I (527-565)

Under Justinian I Antioch issued the full series of bronze denominations.²⁰ As has already been mentioned, the earthquake of 528 led to the change of the city's name and of the mint mark. At the same time, the depiction of Tyche on pentanummia was replaced – for reasons of piety – by the **value mark** E, of which the central arm took the form of a cross ([fig. 4](#)).²¹

The applying of the reform of the year 538/9 which led among other things to record on coins the years of reign,²² was delayed at Antioch for one year (539/540)²³ and was immediately interrupted because of the [Persian occupation](#) of the city on June 540 that caused a temporary close of the mint (540-542/3).²⁴ A second break, which was probably due to a plague epidemic, is attested by the numismatic material for the period 543-546/7.²⁵ After those breaks, the production continued under normal conditions, although towards the end of Justinian's reign the inscriptions were almost always wrong, a fact that gave reason for various interpretations without, however, any of them to appear satisfying.²⁶

4.4. Justin II (565-578) – Maurice (582-602)

Under Justin II, Tiberius II (578-582) and Maurice the mint of Antioch followed in broad outline the model of Constantinople, from which, however, it diverged as far as details on the iconography, the mint marks, the rendering of inscriptions and the style are concerned.²⁷



4.5. Phokas (602-610)

This emperor's issues were the last ones for the Byzantine mint of Antioch (fig. 5).²⁸ Most probably because of the Persian danger, the mint issued very large amounts of coins: its products are represented in coin hoards from the regions outside Syria in a rate of 15%, the largest since the starting of its mint activity.²⁹ctivity.

1. Grierson, Ph., *Byzantine Coins* (London 1982) p. 65; W. Hahn (with the collaboration of Metlich, M. A.), *Money of the Incipient Byzantine Empire (Anastasius I – Justinian I, 491-565)* (Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Numismatik und Geldgeschichte der Universität Wien 6, Wien 2000) (hereafter MIBE) p. 6.
2. In the case of those denominations that do not include mint marks because of their small size, the attribution is based on stylistic elements and the strong presence of certain types among the numismatic findings from excavations of that region. Grierson, *Byzantine Coins*, p. 66.
3. Antioch was renamed Theoupolis after the disastrous earthquake of the 29th of November 528 in hope of avoiding future quakes. Grierson, *Byzantine Coins*, p. 66; MIBE, p. 60. For the theological meaning of this name and its use on the coinage see Salamon, M., "Theology and Coinage: The Name of Theoupolis on the Coins of Antioch", in Hackens, T. – Moucharte, G. (ed.), *Actes du XIe Congrès international de Numismatique : organisé à l'occasion du 150e anniversaire de la Société royale de numismatique de Belgique (Bruxelles, 8-13 septembre 1991)* (Louvain-le-Neuve) III, pp. 15-20.
4. For the period from Anastasios I until Maurice (582-602) see Pottier, H., *Analyse d'un trésor de monnaies en bronze enfoui au VIe siècle en Syrie byzantine* (Bruxelles, 1983) pp. 38-41.
5. For the period from Anastasios I until Constat II (641-668) see Noeske, H. C., *Die Münzfunde der ägyptischen Pilgerzentrums Abu Mina und die Vergleichsfunde aus des Dioecesen Aegyptus und Oriens vom 4. - 8. Jh. n. Chr. Prolegomena zu einer Geschichte des spätrömischen Münzumschlufs in Ägypten und Syrien* (Berlin 2000) I, p. 290.
6. This average derives from the percentages mentioned in Morrisson, C. – Popović, V. – Ivanišević, V. *et collaborateurs, Les trésors monétaires byzantins des Balkans et d'Asie Mineure (491-713)* (Réalités byzantines 13, Paris, 2006) p. 58 (fig. 9).
7. Morrisson et al., *Les trésors monétaires*, p. 55.
8. MIBE, p. 6, 61. There are coins as well that bear mint marks bigger than this number (S, Z, H), though their interpretations remains problematic. Grierson, *Byzantine Coins*, p. 66.
9. Grierson, *Byzantine Coins*, p. 66.
10. On Justinian's folles, eikosanummia and decanummia issued after 528, the five-year-cycle organization is obvious in the periodic change of the abbreviation of the city's name (Theoupolis) used as its mint mark. MIBE, p. 61. Cf. Grierson, *Byzantine Coins*, p. 67, plate 2 and Hahn, W., *Zur Münzprägung des frühbyzantinischen Reiches. Anastasius I. bis Phocas und Heraclius-Revolve, 491-610* (Wien 2005) p. 66-70.
11. MIBE, p. 30.
12. MIBE, p. 36-37, 41, 62; Hahn, *Zur Münzprägung*, pp. 26, 40, 67, 70 where particular examples can be found.
13. MIBE, p. 30; Grierson, *Byzantine Coins*, pp. 65-66.
14. All the denominations bear the mint mark ANTX, except the pentanummia, which bear only two letters (AN) because of their small size. Hahn, *Zur Münzprägung*, p. 26.



15. Hahn, *Zur Münzprägung*, p. 26; Grierson, *Byzantine Coins*, p. 66. The combination of the asterisk with the crescent first appeared on folles of the Constantinopolitan mint and more precisely on those of the fifth officina (E), which was probably responsible for the organization and the supervision of the mint of Antioch during its first years of activity. *MIBE*, p. 30.
16. Hahn, *Zur Münzprägung*, pp. 11, 26.
17. *MIBE*, p. 37; Hahn, *Zur Münzprägung*, p. 41.
18. *MIBE*, p. 37 and note 175; Hahn, *Zur Münzprägung*, pp. 40-41; Grierson, *Byzantine Coins*, p. 66.
19. The bronze issues of the rest of the mints still bore the portrait of Justin I on the obverse, while Justinian was mentioned only in the accompanying inscription. *MIBE*, p.41; Hahn, *Zur Münzprägung*, pp. 44-45; Grierson, *Byzantine Coins*, p. 66.
20. Under his reign the mint of Antioch issued nummoi for the last time. *MIBE*, p.62; Hahn, *Zur Münzprägung*, p. 70.
21. *MIBE*, p. 60-61; Hahn, *Zur Münzprägung*, p. 66.
22. For this novelty brought by the reform of the year 538/9 see for example Grierson, *Byzantine Coins*, pp. 60-61.
23. It is interesting to mention that it was not until 547 when the mint of Antioch followed the decrease of weight initially imposed in 542, while it did not participate in the reform of the year 550. *MIBE*, pp. 17, 61.
24. *MIBE*, p. 61; Hahn, *Zur Münzprägung*, pp. 67-68; Grierson, *Byzantine Coins*, p. 66.
25. *MIBE*, p. 62; Hahn, *Zur Münzprägung*, p. 68.
26. Different opinions were expressed by G. Bates [Bates, G. E., "Five Byzantine Notes. 1. A supplement to 'The Antiochene Bronze of Justinian'; 2. A Maurice Pentanummium from Cyzicus; 3. The Antioch Mint under Heraclius; 4. The Third Officina at Seleucia; 5. An Addition to the 30 Nummi Coinage", *Museum Notes* 16 (1970) pp. 73-79], by Ph. Grierson (Grierson, *Byzantine Coins*, p. 67) and by W. Hahn (*MIBE*, p. 62; Hahn, *Zur Münzprägung*, p. 69).
27. Grierson, *Byzantine Coins*, pp. 67-68; Hahn, *Zur Münzprägung*, pp. 118-119 (Justin II), pp. 142-143 (Tiberius II), pp. 165-167 (Maurice).
28. On previous times some issues bearing the mint mark of Antioch had been attributed to this mint under the reign of Herakleios (610-641). Balty, J. C., « Un follis d'Antioche daté de 623/4 et les campagnes syriennes d'Héraclius », *Schweizer Münzblätter* 20 (1970), pp. 4-12 ; Bates, "Five Byzantine Notes", pp. 80-82 ; Pottier, H., « Deux folles d'Héraclius et Héraclius Constantin datés des années XII et XIV », *Bulletin du Cercle d'Études numismatiques* 14 (1977) pp. 51-59; Pottier, H., « L'atelier d'Antioche sous Héraclius », *Bulletin du Cercle d'Études numismatiques* 16 (1979) pp. 66-81; Hahn, W., "Minting activity in the diocese of Oriens under Heraclius", *Numismatic Circular* 85 (1977) pp. 307-308. Nevertheless, the modern scholarship does not recognize them as official Byzantine issues. Grierson, *Byzantine Coins*, pp. 85, 106; Hahn, *Zur Münzprägung*, p. 194. For Phokas' mint production at Antioch see Hahn, *Zur Münzprägung*, pp. 194-195.
29. Morrisson et al., *Les trésors monétaires*, pp. 57, 58 (fig. 9) and p. 62 (fig. 10e).

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	Noeske H.C. , <i>Die Münzfunde der ägyptischen Pilgerzentrums Abu Mina und die Vergleichsfunde aus des Dioecesen Aegyptus und Oriens vom 4. – 8. Jh. n. Chr. Prolegomena zu einer Geschichte des spätrömischen Münzumschlufs in Ägypten und Syrien, I-III</i> , Berlin 2000
	Pottier H. , "Deux folles d'Héraclius et Héraclius Constantin datés des années XII et XIV", <i>Bulletin du Cercle d'Études numismatiques</i> , 14, 1977, 51-59
	Salamon M. , "Theology and Coinage. The Name of Theoupolis on the Coins of Antioch", Hackens, T. – Moucharte, G. (ed.), <i>Actes du XIe Congrès international de Numismatique: organisé à l'occasion du 150e anniversaire de la Société royale de numismatique de Belgique (Bruxelles, 8-13 septembre 1991) (Louvain-le-Neuve) III</i> , Louvain-la-Neuve 1993, 15-20

Glossary :


	Decanummium , pl. -a
	Copper coin worth 10 nummi.
	Eikosanummium , pl. -a (20 nummi)
	Copper coin worth 20 nummi, also known as half follis.
	follis
	(pl. folles) A Latin word originally meaning a purse, but used in the Byzantine period for the largest denomination of copper coin, initially worth 40 nummi.
	lustrum , το
	Πενταετής κύκλος βάσει του οποίου οργανωνόταν η νομισματική παραγωγή κατά τα Πρωτοβυζαντινά χρόνια.
	mint-mark
	Letters or symbols placed on a coin to indicate where it was struck. In the Byzantine period they are usually a shortened version of the mint name.
	nummus



A Latin term meaning originally 'coin'. In the Early Byzantine period the term was normally applied to the smallest copper coin, 1/40th of the follis, which served as the base of the accounting system.

 [obverse](#)

The face of the coin which bears the more important device. Due to ambiguities that sometimes exist, many numismatists prefer to use the term for the side struck by the lower (anvil) die.

 [officina mark](#)

Letters or symbols placed on a coin to indicate the workshop (officina), where it was struck.

 [pentanummium, pl. -a](#)

Bronze or copper coin worth 5 nummi.

 [subsidiary mark](#)

Symbol (asterisk, stigma etc) placed on a coin and changed periodically. This mark is concerning the organization of production of mint.

 [Thesaurus \[1. treasure \(archit\), 2. hoard \(archaeol,numism.\)\]](#)

Space for storing, repository or treasure.

1. (archit.) Temple like structure of votive character. It was dedicated by different cities to famous sanctuaries (Delphoi, Olympia, Delos). It was used to store the cities' valuable offerings as well as the smaller offerings of their citizens.

2. (archaeolog, numism.) Collection of valuable objects or artifacts, coins and metal objects buried in the ground.

 [value mark](#)

Letters or symbols placed on a coin to indicate its value.

 [workshop \(officina\)](#)

Subdivision of a Roman or Byzantine mint.

Auxiliary Catalogues

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1 : Mint of Antioch. Follis of Anastasios I (491-518) with asterisk and crescent as subsidiary marks.

Hahn, W., Zur Münzprägung des frühbyzantinischen Reiches. Anastasius I. bis Phocas und Heraclius-Revolt, 491-610 (Wien 2005), p. 25, MIB 56

Fig. 2 : Mint of Antioch. Pentanummion of Justin I (518-527) depicting the Tyche of Antioch.

Hahn, W., Zur Münzprägung des frühbyzantinischen Reiches. Anastasius I. bis Phocas und Heraclius-Revolt, 491-610 (Wien 2005), p. 41, MIB 67.2 (2:1)

Fig. 3 : Mint of Antioch. Eikosanummion from the period of co-regency between Justin I and Justinian I (527).

Hahn, W., Zur Münzprägung des frühbyzantinischen Reiches. Anastasius I. bis Phocas und Heraclius-Revolt, 491-610 (Wien 2005), p. 45, MIB 11.

Fig. 4 : Mint of Antioch. Pentanummion of Justinian I (527-565) on which the central arm of the value mark E has taken the form of a cross.

Hahn, W., Zur Münzprägung des frühbyzantinischen Reiches. Anastasius I. bis Phocas und Heraclius-Revolt, 491-610 (Wien 2005), p. 67, MIB 142

Fig. 5 : Mint of Antioch. Follis of Phocas (602-610). On the obverse the emperor is portrayed with his wife Leontia.

Hahn, W., Zur Münzprägung des frühbyzantinischen Reiches. Anastasius I. bis Phocas und Heraclius-Revolt, 491-610 (Wien 2005),



p. 195, MIB 83a.