

# KOINON

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## Why a New Journal in Classical Numismatics?: The Rationale for *KOINON* and Some Introductory Comments

“But why is it prohibited?” asked the Savage. In the excitement of meeting a man who had read Shakespeare he had momentarily forgotten everything else.

The Controller shrugged his shoulders. “Because it’s old; that’s the chief reason. We haven’t any use for old things here.”

“Even when they’re beautiful?”

“Particularly when they’re beautiful. Beauty’s attractive, and we don’t want people to be attracted by old things. We want them to like the new ones.”

From Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*

I had the great benefit of reading some dystopian novels during my summer graduate work, specifically Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* and George Orwell’s *1984*. Initially, when I sat down to write this brief introduction and welcome message to *KOINON*, I laid out a grand philosophical justification for its existence based on the lessons from these two works. In the final analysis, it was just ok (it was actually a bit much, if I’m being honest). We all know that totalitarianism is a danger even now and that many attempts have been made throughout history at erasing the past, so there is really no need for me to go on and on about it. And, likewise, we all also know that rampant consumerism à la *Brave New World* will ultimately destroy us, so we need to take time and appreciate things instead of always moving on to the next thing, coins included. *KOINON* was, in my initial speculations, a noble attempt at keeping historic scholarship alive and well in the face of unprecedented social progress, all through the study of numismatics. Moreover, by participating in the journal, we would all make the world a better place. While there is not anything particularly wrong with that sort of justification, it ignores the real reason for *KOINON*, namely, the fact that I love studying and writing about ancient coins, and so do many of you. Ultimately, then, the real purpose of *KOINON* is to offer a venue for taking a closer look at the past, because so much knowledge about antiquity can be regained through the study of numismatics. This journal is here to help people do precisely that.

In terms of the content of this inaugural volume you will find a wide variety of material that should be of interest to just about everyone, and I hope that by reading these essays some of you will get new ideas about articles you might consider writing for the journal. We begin with my own essay. I was hesitant to start with my own work so as not to appear too egotistical, but I decided that I need to take the lead as the editor and put myself out there, flaws and all. That essay purports to shine a new light on a very old play using ancient coins to justify a new interpretation, and I hope readers find it enjoyable. Dr. Voukelatos’ essay appears next, and shows that provenance research can be thrilling and informative, and the characters that collect and study ancient coins are an integral part of numismatic research, often times as interesting as the coins themselves. The Greek section also greatly benefits from the inclusion of an interesting die study by Lloyd Taylor concerning the coinage of Philip III and the ritual reuse of dies in antiquity. It is an essay that reminds us not to assume the

ancients conceived of the world as we do, and were heavily influenced by the prevailing superstitious beliefs of the time period. Finally, we round out that section with a detailed analysis of a charming coin from Arados by Martin Rowe, whose passion for Phoenician coinage is sure to fill pages of *KOINON* for years to come.

The Roman section is just as interesting. It begins with a fascinating study by Luigi Pedroni concerning the Aegis of Minerva, written in Italian, and featuring some truly breathtaking coins. That essay is followed by a persuasive argument in favor of the legitimacy of a particular Republican denarius by Jordan Montgomery and Richard Schaefer—an important argument to say the least. Next we have Shawn Caza's detailed study of Nepotian's usurpation and the coinage of Magnentius, which validates a dating scheme originally put forth by Curtis Clay and gives the reader a more comprehensive understanding of that tumultuous time period. The Roman section ends with a newly discovered coin type of Constantine I—a truly rare occurrence these days—from the Roman mint of Arles.

I was pleasantly surprised to have three outstanding essays to include in the Oriental section. First is a detailed analysis from a long-time professional numismatist, Wilhelm Müseler, which offers a compelling new account of some enigmatic Persid coins. That essay is followed by N.J.C. Smith's explanation of some Kilwa coins, an essay which demonstrates the incredible depth of history surrounding what appear at first glance as some modest bronze coins nearly lost to time. Finally, we have Robert Langas' important overview of Parthian fractionals, a small area of numismatics that has gone almost completely ignored until now. The final section of essays concerns Medieval and Early Modern coinage, and here I am delighted to include Andrei Bontas' account of a *denaro tornese*, an area of numismatics I personally had no experience with, but an essay I nonetheless really enjoyed.

The final part of the journal is dedicated to new varieties of coinage. I was excited to have so many contributions and I am hopeful that this section will greatly expand in the future. As I see it, it is the perfect gateway into numismatic publishing. I say this because it requires a detailed study of all the literature that might list a coin variety as well as an analysis of where it would belong in the standard references, and this skill-set is essential to developing further, more comprehensive numismatic studies. If you know of an unpublished variety, no matter how small a variant, I encourage you to contribute in the future.

Before closing, there are many people to thank. I was very lucky when assembling the advisory board to have many notable figures in numismatics volunteer to help out. That says a lot, I think, about the type of people that really love ancient coins. They are some of the most generous people I have ever met, and I am greatly indebted to them for offering their expertise. I am also particularly grateful to Lloyd Taylor and Shawn Caza, who agreed to serve as Associate Editors when I realized I was in over my head. Moreover, when I originally embarked on this project, I'd planned to publish this journal independently, but I quickly realized I am not skilled enough to do so. I am therefore also very grateful to Archaeopress for offering to take the reins and provide me with much-needed assistance. More and more research in numismatics is appearing in their stock and the reader would be very wise to browse their offerings. They have become an indispensable source for quality material about antiquity and I am thrilled that *KOINON* can be a small part of that enterprise.

Finally, I'd like to close with an insight from a scholar I am happy to call my friend, David MacDonald. Sometimes we ask ourselves, when starting or finishing such a long, arduous process

like publishing a journal, what is the point of it all? This is the question I initially sat down to answer and, indeed, the same question I asked myself after finishing *IOTAMIKON*. It is also a question David reflected on when I congratulated him on his excellent new book on colonial French Illinois. His profound response was this: “It keeps me off the streets and for that the neighbors are grateful!” That is probably true, and not just for David, but for everyone. If we are not engaged in good and meaningful activities such as *KOINON*, we are bound to get ourselves in trouble, and that simple lesson is the same one at the heart of the dystopian novels I decided not to write about.

Vivat Achelous!

Nicholas J. Molinari, General Editor  
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