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## THREE BONE ARTEFACTS FROM ROOM R.23 OF THE EAST PORTICO AT THE AGORA IN NEA PAPHOS, CYPRUS

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**ABSTRACT:** In 2011-2019, during the research of the Jagiellonian University's expedition at the Agora of Nea Paphos (Cyprus), more than 50 artefacts made of bone and related materials were discovered. This article presents an analysis of three objects unearthed in room R.23, located in the central part of the East Portico. This small assemblage, dated to the Late Hellenistic period, consists of a protective amulet depicting a mano fica and a phallus, a perforated knucklebone and a ring. Although the interpretation of this find – which also partially considers the coins found in the same context – remains uncertain, the possibility that these artefacts constituted a set of personal items should not be overlooked.

**KEYWORDS:** amulet, bone artefacts, Cyprus, Late Hellenistic period, Nea Paphos

### 1. Introduction

The archaeological research has been conducted since 2011 as part of the interdisciplinary project Paphos Agora Project (PAP) and covered the area of the

ancient Agora in Nea Paphos, the capital of Hellenistic and Roman Cyprus.<sup>1</sup> The most significant architectural structure examined by the Jagiellonian University's expedition is the East Portico, a monumental public building located on the eastern boundary of the Agora. According to PAP's findings, it was built at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC during the reconstruction of this part of the city after the administrative centre was moved from Salamis to Nea Paphos. The East Portico was later rebuilt several times due to frequent earthquakes (Papuci-Władyka and Miszk 2020, 506, 526). It was finally destroyed around 126 or 142 AD (Papuci-Władyka and Miszk 2020, 508; Łajtar 2021).

Excavations at the Paphian Agora have brought to light a large number of interesting small finds from different phases of its existence. These include, among others, a magical amulet (Śliwa 2013), a steelyard with an acorn-shaped counterweight (Papuci-Władyka and Wacławik 2016), a set of surgical instruments from the so-called "Surgeon's Office" (Wacławik 2019), a lead weight with an inscription mentioning the name of *agoranamos* Seleukos (Twardecki 2020; Łajtar 2021) and numerous coins (Bodzek 2020; 2022). Moreover, more than 50 artefacts made of bone and related materials have been unearthed at the site, mainly in the remains of the East Portico. These are structural and decorative elements of furniture, everyday objects and production waste (Milczuk 2024). This article discusses three previously unpublished bone artefacts from room R.23 (Trench II).

## 2. Bone artefacts from R.23

In 2018, the excavations were focused on several rooms located in the central part of the East Portico (Trench II). One of these was a small rectangular space (measuring approximately 3.20 x 0.80 m), referred to in PAP documentation as room R.23, situated near the eastern entrance to the Agora. To the south, it is directly adjacent to rooms R.10, R.11 and R.12, and to the north to room R.22, where the remains of a canal, probably part of the workshop infrastructure of yet undetermined function, were discovered (Miszk 2020, 98-99).

Pottery collected from the layers (contexts K.1784, K.1786 and K.1791) exposed within room R.23 indicates that it went out of use in the Late Hellenistic

<sup>1</sup> More information about the discoveries and the progress of each excavation season is available on the official website of the Paphos Agora Project: <https://paphos-agora.archeo.uj.edu.pl/> (accessed: 13/01/2025).

period, at the end of the first phase of the East Portico. Unfortunately, the other categories of artefacts – with the exception of coins (see below) – and the stratigraphy of this structure have not yet been analysed in detail. For this reason, neither the function of this room nor the relationship between the movable material can be defined.

The lowest layer of the backfill (context K.1791, depth approximately 6 m) contained Hellenistic tableware pottery and five coins (see Appendix), based on which it can be more precisely dated from the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC to about the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC.<sup>2</sup> Apart from fragments of glass, shells and animal bones, including one piece with traces of processing (PAP18/II/1791/B), an unspecified metal object (PAP18/II/1791/M1) and three bone artefacts – objects of daily use – were also uncovered there:

### 1. Amulet (Pl. 1: 1)

**Inv. no.:** PAP18/II/1791/V1

**Z no.:**<sup>3</sup> Z3104

**Description:** Made of bone. Completely preserved. Surface damaged, with partially preserved traces of polishing. The upper part of the amulet is made carefully and with attention to detail, depicting a hand clenched in the *mano fica* gesture (the thumb is placed between the index and middle fingers). Below the hand, at wrist level, there is a bracelet in the form of three hoops. An irregular hole has been drilled through the central part of the object. At the bottom of the amulet, there are two engraved lines running diagonally around its surface, representing a schematic depiction of a phallus. Cream colour.

**Dimensions:** L: 62.5mm; W: 11.5mm; WT: 6.2g

### 2. Perforated knucklebone (Pl. 1: 2)

**Inv. no.:** PAP18/II/1791/B

**Z no.:** -

<sup>2</sup> At this point I would like to thank Dr. M. Kajzer for the information about the tableware pottery from room R.23 and its chronology.

<sup>3</sup> The Z No. (in Polish: Z = zabytek) is an individual number assigned to each small find discovered on the Agora in Nea Paphos. Other abbreviations used in this article: D – diameter, ID – inner diameter, L – length, OD – outer diameter, W – width, WT – weight.

**Description:** Perforated goat knucklebone. Poorly preserved. The outer layer of bone is damaged. No traces of polishing. A round hole (D: 2 mm) has been drilled through the plantar-dorsal sides. Beige colour.

**Dimensions:** L: 22.4mm; W: 14.1mm; WT: 1g

### 3. Ring (Pl. 1: 3)

**Inv. no.:** PAP18/II/1791/V2

**Z no.:** Z3116

**Description:** Made of bone. Poorly preserved. Broken into three pieces. Surface rough, damaged. No traces of polishing. Cream colour.

**Dimensions:** OD: 23.1mm; ID: 14.5mm; WT: 1g

It is worth noting that almost all the small finds from context K.1791, excluding a perforated knucklebone (PAP18/II/1791/B), the original location of which is unknown, and one coin (PAP18/II/1791/C3), were scattered over a relatively small area in the central and western parts of room R.23 (see Pl. 2: 1-2). The amulet (PAP18/II/1791/V1) was revealed right next to the northern wall, roughly in the middle of its length. At a distance of approximately 30 cm to the southwest of the amulet, at the same depth (approximately 6.02 m), a Rhodian coin (PAP18/II/1791/C1) was found. It is possible, therefore, that these two objects are related in some way. A larger concentration of finds, recorded in the western part of the room at a depth of 5.89 to 5.79 m, consisted of a ring (PAP18/II/1791/V2) and three Ptolemaic coins (PAP18/II/1791/C2, PAP18/II/1791/C4, PAP18/II/1791 C5). The distribution of these four objects suggests that they may have constituted a small deposit (cf. Appendix), but their association with the other two coins and the amulet is uncertain, although it seems likely that all the mentioned artefacts were deposited in room R.23 at the same time.

## 3. Analysis of bone artefacts

### 3.1. Amulet

#### 3.1.1. Meaning

In antiquity, it was believed that amulets imitating various parts of the human body had extraordinary apotropaic powers and could effectively protect against the 'Evil Eye', i.e. the envious or hostile gaze that could cause misfortune, illness

or even death (MacGregor 1985, 105-107; Dasen 2015, 181; Faraone 2018, 68). It appears that charms featuring hands making various gestures, derived from Near Eastern traditions,<sup>4</sup> had special symbolic significance (Elworthy 1958, 233-234; Elliott 2016, 180-181). During the Hellenistic and Roman periods, depictions of the hand clenched in a *mano fica* gesture – i.e. with the thumb inserted between the index and middle fingers – became popular. This gesture was used as a symbolic representation of the vulva or of sexual intercourse (Johns 1982, 72-73; Elliott 2016, 181-182; Hoss 2020, 135-136). The *mano fica* had ambiguous meanings, as it could be perceived as a gentle symbol of fertility and luck, but also as a vulgar and obscene gesture, expressing a hostile attitude towards the enemy, identified with the 'Evil Eye' (Elworthy 1958, 255-257; Johns 1982, 73-74; Faraone 2018, 72).

Small finds depicting the *mano fica* are much less frequently observed in north-eastern Europe than in the Eastern Mediterranean (see Hoss 2020, 138), where this symbol is known not only from amulets, but also from women's accessories, such as pins (Larson 2018, 111). During the Roman period, the *mano fica* was often combined with another powerful apotropaic symbol, the phallus (Whitmore 2017, 48-50; Faraone 2018, 75-77; Parker 2020, 92). The phallus, associated with male power and fertility, commonly appears in the iconography alongside representations of male fertility deities, for example Priapus (Elliott 2016, 192-193; Whitmore 2018, 17; Parker 2020, 95-96). Like the *mano fica*, it also had negative connotations, as it could be linked to aggression and sexual violence (Dasen 2015, 186-187).

Phallic images were quite prevalent in public spaces and can still be seen today on the walls of ancient residential and commercial buildings, city walls, mosaics and everyday objects such as oil lamps. It was thought that these depictions would defend the property and its owner from thieves, enemies or disaster (Johns 1982, 64-66; Elliott 2016, 192; Faraone 2018, 76-78). Phallus-shaped pendants, on the other hand, are common finds in north-eastern Roman provinces, where they primarily occur in the burials of children. Furthermore, the strong connection of these amulets with the Roman military camps has been noted. In this context, they are often found in horse burials, and their placement suggests that they may have been attached to the horse's harness to protect not only the

<sup>4</sup> Egyptian amulets in the shapes of human body parts were discussed by W. Petrie (1914). Among the examples representing the human hand, he lists variants in the form of an open hand (Type 11), a clenched fist (Type 12) and a fist clenched in a *mano fica* gesture (Type 13).

precious animal, but also the soldier (Whitmore 2017, 50-54; 2018, 20-25; Hoss 2020, 139-140).

Wearing eye-catching, atypical, vulgar or directly referring to the sexual sphere amulets in a visible place, usually around the neck, was justified. Their intention was to cause embarrassment, confusion or a smile, thereby dispelling the hostile gaze or reducing its negative effects (Dasen 2015, 181; Whitmore 2017, 47-48; Hoss 2020, 136-137; Gerçek 2022, 64). The presence of two protective symbols in one object, as in the case of *mano fica* and phallic amulets, enhanced its power (Johns 1982, 74; Parker 2020, 101).

### 3.1.2. Analogies and chronology

The current state of research makes it impossible to determine where and when the first amulets incorporating *mano fica* and phallus symbols appeared, but there are many indications that they have a Near Eastern origin. It seems that the earliest known example of this type of amulet, probably dating to around the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC, comes from a Phoenician *tophet*, the remains of which were found within the later Roman necropolis in Tyre, situated in the southern part of present-day Lebanon. However, the chronology and original context of the artefact are uncertain, as the site was destroyed by looters in the 1980s. It was probably contained in an urn with human ashes (Seeden 1991, 76, Fig. 48).

Parallels to the Paphian find (PAP18/II/1791/V1) from the Hellenistic and Roman periods are not numerous in the Eastern Mediterranean. It should be noted that only amulets made of bone are known from this region, although this may be due to the limited state of research. Five well-preserved amulets were recovered during French excavations on Delos in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Two of these, dating to around the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, were found in the Temple of Hera, while the others, dating from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 1<sup>st</sup> centuries BC, were related to public buildings (Déonna 1938, 359-360). The closest analogy to the Nea Paphos amulet was discovered near the remains of the Delian theatre (Déonna 1938, 359, No B 5418, Pl. CI: 890). The similarity between the two objects is interesting, considering the close trade relations between Cyprus and the Aegean Islands in antiquity, the presence in room R.23 of pottery imported from Rhodes<sup>5</sup> and a Rhodian coin (PAP18/II/1791/C1) (see Appendix).

<sup>5</sup> This information was provided by Dr M. Kajzer.

Next, two analogies, identified as amulets depicting a clenched fist, were found at Tel Anafa,<sup>6</sup> a settlement from the Hellenistic and Roman periods lying in north-eastern Israel, and – like the artefact from the East Portico – are dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC (Larson 2018, 111-112, Pl. 5: BD 81-82). It was reported that they were discovered, together with glass and carnelian beads and pendants, in the industrial/service part of the site (Larson 2018, 85). The last two artefacts, which constitute the analogies to the Paphian amulet, were unearthed in two different locations in the area of Patara, one of the most important cities of ancient Lycia. The first of these, along with other pendants, was found inside a tomb, while the second comes from a structure identified as the *Prytanеion*. Both are dated to around the early 1<sup>st</sup> century AD (Gerçek 2022, 65-66, Figs. 1-2). It is important to note that the finds from the above-mentioned sites differ significantly from the amulet discovered in Nea Paphos, both in terms of workmanship and specific details, such as the number of hoops or bracelets below the hand. This may suggest that they did not come from the same workshop, nor were they made by the same itinerant craftsman.

Many more *mano fica* and phallus amulets have been documented at Roman sites in north-western Europe, mainly in the British Isles and the Rhine basin (Crummy 1983, 139; MacGregor 1985, 107; Hoss 2020, Fig. 5.9). In this region, they are present in contexts dating from the 1<sup>st</sup> to about the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD and, as with amulets depicting only the phallus (see above), they are mostly known from military camps and the necropolises associated with them (Crummy 1983, 139; Parker 2015, 139; Cool 2016, 34; Hoss 2020, 139; Parker 2020, 100). Apart from amulets made of bone or antler, examples made of copper alloys are quite common (MacGregor 1985, 107). Sometimes they are accompanied by additional protective symbols such as a scallop shell. This element appears, for instance, on amulets discovered in an infant burial in Catterick, UK (Parker 2015, 136, Fig.1).

<sup>6</sup> K. Larson (2018, 111) classified these amulets as a Type 12 by F. Petrie (1914). However, based on the available pictures, they seem to depict a *mano fica* gesture (Type 13) rather than a simple clenched hand. Furthermore, none of the amulets catalogued by Petrie have engraved lines in the lower part of the object, whereas these are clearly visible in amulets from Tel Anafa. For this reason, in my opinion, the finds discovered in Tel Anafa should be recognised as examples of the *mano fica* and phallus amulets.

### 3.2. Perforated knucklebone

Protective properties were also attributed to certain parts of animal skeletons. Among these, the knucklebones – often used for ritual purposes – held a special place (Choyke 2010, 202). They may have been used in games, in cleromancy or during various religious ceremonies. They have been found in burials and in sacred places, where they were offered as votive gifts (cf. Gilmour 1997; Perry-Gal *et al.* 2022, 66-67). The symbolic importance of these bones was emphasised by the fact that their imitations were created from valuable materials such as ivory, metals and precious stones (Dandoy 2006, 133; Choyke 2010, 204).

It is quite likely that some modified knucklebones, mostly drilled through the plantar-dorsal sides – such as the one (PAP18/II/1791/B) from room R.23 in the East Portico – and their imitations could have been used as amulets or talismans, probably because of their ritual and symbolic significance (Gilmour 1997, 172; Choyke 2010, 203-204). It seems that they were attributed both healing and protective properties (Faraone 2018, 67). The perforated astragali could be worn as separate pendants or be part of larger composite necklaces. Such evidence, although scarce, is known from several sites located in the Mediterranean. For instance, a few knucklebones discovered in Gordion had metal rings placed inside the perforations, which, according to J. Dandoy (2006, 133-134), may indicate that they were strung on a chain. Stronger evidence of the protective use of astragali comes from Pompeii, where the remains of a woman holding a jewellery box were uncovered in one of the houses destroyed during the eruption of Vesuvius. Inside the box were several small amulets (*crepundia*), including a perforated astragalus and a hand in the *mano fica* gesture (Faraone 2018, 59-60, Fig. 2.4). Another similar discovery dating to the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC was made in Thasos. The funeral pyre of a young woman unearthed here contained funerary gifts, one of which was a valuable amulet necklace with several animal-shaped pendants and an amber astragalus (Sgourou and Agelarakis 2001, 343-346, Fig. 31). It cannot, therefore, be excluded that the discussed artefact from the East Portico<sup>7</sup> – a single perforated knucklebone found in the public building (cf. Gilmour 1997, 172) – could have been used as a protective pendant. The presence of an amulet nearby may support this interpretation.

<sup>7</sup> This is not the only modified astragalus found at the Agora in Nea Paphos (cf. Croft 2020, 458; Milczuk 2024, 75-76). Among the other astragali from the site, noteworthy is the gazelle bone from Well S.173, which, according to P. Croft (2020, 458), is the first bone of this species discovered in Cyprus.

### 3.3. Ring

The last bone artefact recovered from context K.1791 is a simple undecorated ring (PAP18/II/1791/V2), found in the western part of the room along with three Ptolemaic coins (PAP18/II/1791/C2, PAP18/II/1791/C4, PAP18/II/1791/C5) (see Appendix; see Pl. 2: 1-2). This type of ring is widespread at Hellenistic and Roman sites in the Mediterranean and beyond but has attracted little scholarly attention. Depending on the diameter and the context of discovery, similar artefacts can be interpreted as hair or hand adornments, pendants, parts of composite jewellery, elements of clothing or even components of furniture (see, e.g. Sackett 1992, 383; Ayalon 2005, 65; Rodziewicz 2007, 34). Unfortunately, it is difficult to interpret the ring from the East Portico, as it is badly damaged and has no distinctive features to draw more accurate conclusions. Its connection with the other finds from context K.1791 is also not entirely obvious. It seems most likely that the ring was either part of a pouch in which the aforementioned coins were kept or a fastener or pendant used to attach the pouch to a belt. However, the presence of a perforated knucklebone and an amulet in close proximity might also suggest that it could have been used as a personal adornment.

## 4. Conclusions

The above-described three bone artefacts from the East Portico of the Agora in Nea Paphos constitute a rather intriguing, though difficult to interpret, assemblage. The most significant of these objects, found in the lowest layer of the backfill in room R.23, is a well-preserved protective amulet depicting a *mano fica* and a phallus. To the best of the author's knowledge, no other amulet of this type has so far been discovered in Cyprus, and only a few comparable finds have been documented at other sites in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Unfortunately, the relationship between the Paphian amulet and the other artefacts from context K.1791 remains unclear. However, its potential association with a Rhodian coin and possibly with a perforated knucklebone – which could also have been used as a pendant – should be considered. Even less certain is the connection between the amulet and a small deposit – perhaps the remains of a pouch – discovered in the western part of the room. At the current stage of research, there is not enough evidence to conclude that all these items were used at the same time. On the one hand, these may represent entirely

unrelated artefacts that were discarded in room R.23 as refuse after it was no longer in use. On the other hand, a closer association between the bone finds from context K.1791 – potentially a set of personal items belonging to one individual – cannot be completely ruled out, especially in light of the nature of other deposits of bone artefacts identified at the Agora in Nea Paphos (cf. Milczuk 2024, 42-44). It is difficult to determine under what circumstances the artefacts were deposited in room R.23, but the pottery and coins (cf. Appendix) indicate that this took place in the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC. Nevertheless, an accurate interpretation of this assemblage requires a thorough and detailed analysis of the entire backfill of the room.

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## Appendix

*Jarosław Bodzek*

### COINS FROM CONTEXT 1791 IN THE ANCIENT AGORA OF NEA PAPHOS IN CYPRUS<sup>8</sup>

Among the numerous finds of Hellenistic coins made in the Agora of Nea Paphos by a team of archaeologists from the Institute of Archaeology of the Jagiellonian University led by Professor E. Papuci-Władyka, there is a small group of five coins discovered in Context 1791.

These are:

#### **Karia, Rhodes, c. 188-84 BC, chalkous, AE**

Obv: Radiate head of Nymph Rhodos, wearing a pearl necklace r.

Rev: Rose, branch with buds on sides, to the l. P; to the r. O; shallow incuse square.

1/ 1.33g; 13.2mm; xii

Inv. No PAP/FR 21/2018 (field inv. no PAP/18/II/1791/C1)

State of preservation II+/State of wear II

Cf. SNG Keckman I 702-724; SNG Cop 860-863

Pl. 3: 1.

#### **Cyprus, Paphos, c. 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, AE**

Obv: Laureate head of Zeus r.

Rev: Zeus standing frontal, head l., holding cornears and staff; star overhead.

2/ 3.48g; 17.1mm; xii

Inv. No PAP/FR 23/2018 (field inv. no. PAP18/II/1791/C3)

State of preservation III/State of wear III

CPE II/3 B823

Pl. 3: 2.

<sup>8</sup> The author would like to thank Prof. Ewdoksia Papuci-Władyka for permission to publish the material, Dr Łukasz Miszk for valuable comments on room R.23 and the context of 1791, and Dr Barbara Zająć for discussing the issues addressed in this text. Finally, I would like to thank Ms. Aleksandra Milczuk for inviting me to collaborate and Dr Wojciech Ostrowski for creating the orthophotomosaic of room R.23.

**Cleopatra VII (58-30 BC), Cyprus, Paphos, AE**

Obv: Head of Zeus Ammon r.

Rev: Two eagles standing l. on a thunderbolt; to r. Isis Headdress; ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ  
ΠΤΟΛΕΜΜΑΙΟΥ

3/

7.96g; 25.8mm; xii

Inv. No PAP/FR 22/2018 (field inv. No. PAP18/II/1791/C2)

Rev: [ΠΤΟΛΕΜΑΙΟΥ ΒΑ]ΣΙΛΕΩΣ[Σ]

State of preservation III/State of wear II

Svoronos 1843; CPE II/3 B830

Pl. 3: 3.

4/

5.39g; 23.9mm; xii

Inv. No PAP/FR 24/2018 (field inv. no. PAP18/II/1791/C4)

Rev: [ΠΤ]ΟΛΕΜΑΙ[ΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ]

State of preservation III/State of wear II

Svoronos 1843; CPE II/3 B830

Pl. 3:4.

5/

4.66g; 24.7mm; xii

Inv. No PAP/FR 25/2018 (field inv. no. PAP18/II/1791/C5)

Rev: [ΠΤΟΛΕΜΑΙΟΥ] ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ

State of preservation III/State of wear II

Svoronos 1843; CPE II/3 B830

Pl. 3:5.

The earliest coin discovered in Context 1791 is a small Rhodian plinthisphoric bronze (PAP/FR 21/2018). Coins of this type were produced between c. 188 BC and the 80s of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC (Jenkins 1989, 105; Ashton 2001, 2009, 41; Ashton and Meadows 2008, 117-121; HNO no. 903). The coin is not badly worn, indicating it had not been in circulation for very long. Another Hellenistic Rhodian coin was found during the Polish excavations in the Agora in 2024 in Trench I (PAP/FR 50/2024). However, in this case, the coin belongs to a different issue struck in the 80s of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC during the war with Mithridates VI Eupator (Ashton 2001).<sup>9</sup> Taking a slightly broader perspective, other coins from the region of southwestern Asia Minor (Karia – Lycia), also

<sup>9</sup> The publication of this object is in preparation.

found in the Eastern Porticus (Trench II) but in different contexts, can be mentioned. These include a small bronze Koan coin dated to 170-40 BC and a small AE of the Lycian League minted in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC (cf. Bodzek 2022, 8-9, Fig. 7). It is worth noting that, no Hellenistic Rhodian coins have been found at the House of Dionysus, the Odeon, the so-called “Asklepieion”, or the so-called “Gymnasion”, they were not recorded among the published finds from Polish research on the Maloutena residential site. However, they have been registered, for example, at Kurion (Cox 1959, 21, no. 158). The discovery of the Rhodian coins dated to the Hellenistic period in the Agora is very interesting because of the examples of Rhodian ceramic imports (e.g. amphorae) recorded in this area (cf. Dobosz 2013). They testify to the trade contacts between Rhodes and Ptolemaic Cyprus.

The second of the coins (PAP/FR 23/2018) discovered in Context 1791 belongs to an intriguing, anepigraphic issue featuring the image of the laureate head of Zeus on the obverse and a standing figure of Zeus, with a star above his head, holding ears of corn and leaning on a scepter on the reverse (hereafter referred to as the “Zeus/Zeus” type). Coins of this issue are often found in Paphos and other Cypriot sites. In Paphos, as many as 41 coins of this type have been found in the House of Dionysus (Nicolaou 1990, 58-62, nos. 469-509), two during archaeological research in the Odeon (Nicolaou 1990, 182, nos. 10-11), at least six during Polish research at the Maloutena site (Lichocka 1985, 184, nos. 1-6; 1998, 122), and at least 37 specimens in the Agora (Bodzek 2020, 382-383; 2022, 6-7). Apart from Paphos, coins of this type have been found in Kourion, Salamis and Idalion (Cox 1959, 16, no. 128; Nicolaou 1990, 116). There is no consensus on the dating and attribution of these coins (cf. Bodzek 2022, 7). Helly dated them to the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries BC (Helly 1970, 208-209, no. 16). Cox, on the other hand, proposed dating the production of these coins to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC (Cox 1959, 16, 107). Finally, Lichocka and Nicolaou date them to the reign of Cleopatra VII and associate them with the mint in Paphos (Lichocka 1985; 1998, 122-123; Nicolaou 1990, 115-116). Lorber recognised that coins of this type were minted during the short period of Roman rule in the 50s of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC (CPE II/3, 96, B823). Such a dating is indicated primarily by the significant lack of the legend ΠΤΟΛΕΜΑΙΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ. On the other hand, as Lorber points out, two varieties can be distinguished among coins of this type based on their fabric and style. It is also puzzling whether such an abundant issue could have been minted within a few years of Roman rule (CPE II/3, 96). Most researchers attribute the minting of these coins to the Paphos

mint, with only Helly linking them to the mint in Salamis (Helly 1970, 208-209). The degree of wear of the coin found in Context 1791 is average, and its current appearance may be partly due to the conditions in which it was found. It seems that it remained in circulation for some time, but not an overly long period.

Three subsequent coins (PAP/FR 22/2018; PAP/FR 24/2018; PAP/FR 25/2018) represent the issue with a Zeus Ammon head on the obverse and two eagles on a lightning bolt and an Isis crown on the reverse (Svoronos 1904-1908, no.1843; Poole 1883, 121, nos. 1-3; SNG Cop. 864; CPE II/3 B830). Isis crown coins are known in two variants, with a monogram (Svoronos 1904-1908, 1842; CPE II/3 B829) or without (Svoronos 1904-1908, 1843; CPE II/3 B830). It seems that all the coins in the described deposit belong to the series without a monogram. The attribution of these coins is not entirely certain, but they have traditionally been associated – and still are – with the latest phase of Ptolemaic coinage in Cyprus. Poole attributed them to the joint reign of Ptolemy XV and Arsinoe IV (Poole 1883, 121). Svoronos, Cox and Nicolaou, on the other hand, dated them to the reign of Cleopatra VII (Svoronos 1904-1908, 472-474; Nicolaou 1990, 114-115). Lorber (CPE II/3, 102) also supported dating the coins to the time of Cleopatra VII. This attribution has also been adopted in the present work. Coins of this type were probably minted in Paphos and are recorded relatively frequently during research at Cypriot sites. From Paphos itself, five specimens without a monogram and one with a monogram are known from Polish research in the Agora in 2011-2015 (Bodzek 2020, 382). Further finds of this type of coin were recorded in subsequent years. They were also discovered in large numbers in the House of Dionysus (Nicolaou 1990, 54-57, no. 425-461), the House of Orpheus (Michaelidou-Nicolaou 1993, 13-14, no. 35-47), and the Villa of Theseus (Lichocka 1998, 122). Finds of these coins were also recorded in Kourion (Cox 1959, 16, no. 122-123).

The three coins from Context 1791 are the latest specimens in this layer. Although both the types and the legends are partially illegible in the case of the items, this is not necessarily due to their wear and tear but rather partly to the manner in which they were minted. This suggests that they ended up in the ground relatively soon after being struck. From a numismatic perspective, this means that Context 1791 can be dated to around the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC. The dating of the remaining coins is less significant here. The “Zeus/Zeus” type is most likely also dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC. The dating of the Rhodian coin (PAP/FR 21/2018) is more problematic. Coins of this type are widely dated from the 80s of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC to the 80s of the 1<sup>st</sup> cen-

tury BC. This dating refers to the production time of silver plintophoric coins minted in Rhodes (Jenkins 1989; Ashton 2009). Unfortunately, unlike the latter, the sequence of the series of bronze coins is not fixed. It is, therefore, difficult to say with certainty whether the specimen from Context 1791 was minted in the 2<sup>nd</sup> or early 1<sup>st</sup> century BC. One clue may be the degree of wear and tear on the coin. It is relatively unworn, which seems to indicate that it did not remain in circulation for long. However, whether it can be attributed to the series of plinthophoric bronzes minted in the early 1<sup>st</sup> century BC can only be determined by a future, comprehensive analysis of the material from Context 1791.

An important question is whether the coins discovered in Context 1791 should be treated as stray finds or as a collective find/hoard. Unfortunately, the context, which is a kind of backfill of room R.23, has not yet been fully analysed in terms of material and stratigraphic analysis. Nevertheless, the stratigraphy and planigraphy of the monetary finds allow for certain conclusions to be drawn (Pl. 2: 1-2). The maximum distance between the furthest coins does not exceed approximately 150 cm in the described case. On the one hand, this concerns the PAP/FR 23/2018 coin, the “Zeus/Zeus” type bronze found in the eastern part of the room, and on the other hand, the PAP/FR 22/2018 coin, a specimen of the type dating back to the time of Cleopatra, discovered to the west of the previous one, at a distance of approximately 40 cm from the western wall of room R.23. Between them, at a distance of approximately 80 cm, the Rhodian coin was found (PAP/FR 21/2018). At the same time, the maximum difference in depth at which the coins were found was approximately 25 cm. In view of the aforementioned lack of stratigraphic and material analysis, it is difficult to indicate a connection between coin PAP/FR 23/2018 and the others. The same applies to the Rhodian coin (PAP/FR 21/2018). The situation is slightly different with the remaining coins, i.e. PAP/FR 22/2018, PAP/FR 24/2018 and PAP/FR 25/2018. They form a cluster in which the central position is occupied by the PAP/FR 25/2018 coin, and the others are approximately 20 cm (PAP/FR 22/2018) and approximately 25 cm (PAP/FR 24/2018) away from it. The maximum difference in depth between them is approximately 15 cm. As mentioned, they all belong to one type, dated to the reign of Cleopatra VII, and are characterised by a similar degree of wear and tear. Based on the above observations, it can be assumed that the three coins described constitute a small hoard (perhaps the contents of a purse?). A bone ring (PAP18/II/1791/V2) described in a text by A. Milczuk belongs to the same cluster and was discovered a few centimetres away from coin PAP/FR 22/2018, and not much further from coin

PAP/FR 22/2018. There is also only a difference of a few centimetres in the depth at which the two coins and the ring were discovered. So perhaps this bone object was part of the aforementioned hoard/purse? It is much more difficult to identify any possible connections between the aforementioned cluster of coins from Cleopatra's time and the other coins from Context 1791. The only clue, although very poorly substantiated at this stage of the research, is a possible connection between the Rhodian coin (PAP/FR 21/2018) and the bone amulet (PAP18/II/1791/V1). Both objects were found about 30 cm apart and at practically the same depth. If such a connection did indeed exist, and taking into account the analogy of the previously described cluster of Cleopatra VII coins and the bone ring, which is also an unproven connection, it would constitute an analogy and perhaps the basis for considering whether all of the aforementioned objects constitute a single set (hoard/purse). However, the answer to this question will only be possible after a comprehensive study of the material from room R.23.

## Abbreviations

**CPE II** – Lorber 2025

**HNO** – Historia Numorum Online <http://hno.huma-num.fr> (accessed 28.01.2025)

**SNG Cop.** – Kromann and Mørkholm 1977

**SNG Keckman** – Westermark and Ashton 1994

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**PLATE 1**



1



2



3

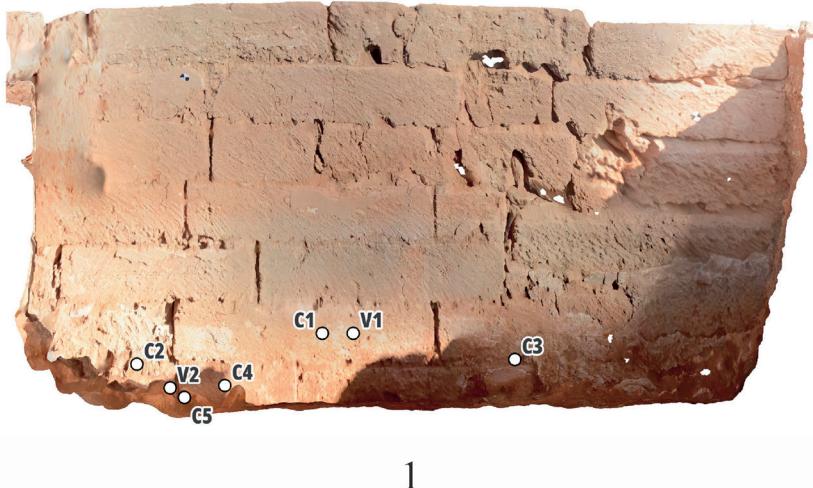
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**Pl. 1: 1** – Photo of the amulet from room R.23 (Photo by M. Iwan)

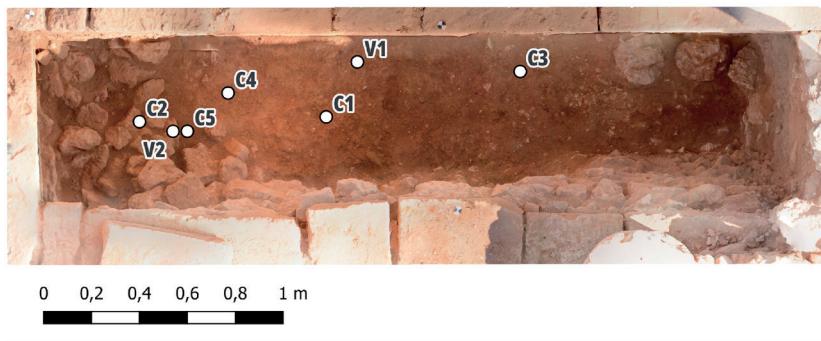
**Pl. 1: 2** – Photo of the perforated knucklebone from room R.23 (Photo by M. Iwan)

**Pl. 1: 3** – Photo of the ring from room R.23 (Photo by M. Iwan)

## PLATE 2



1



2

**Pl. 2: 1** – Orthophotomap of room R.23 with marked locations (depth) of bone artefacts (V1 - amulet, V2 - ring) and coins (C1 - PAP18/II/1791/C1, C2 - PAP18/II/1791/C2, C3 - PAP18/II/1791/C3, C4 - PAP18/II/1791/C4, C5 - PAP18/II/1791/C5) (by W. Ostrowski)

**Pl. 2: 2** – Orthophotomap of room R.23 with marked locations of bone artefacts (V1 - amulet, V2 - ring) and coins (C1 - PAP18/II/1791/C1, C2 - PAP18/II/1791/C2, C3 - PAP18/II/1791/C3, C4 - PAP18/II/1791/C4, C5 - PAP18/II/1791/C5) (by W. Ostrowski)

**PLATE 3**



**Pl. 3: 1** – Karia, Rhodes, c. 188-84 BC, chalkous, AE (Photo by Wojciech Ostrowski).

**Pl. 3: 2** – Cyprus, Paphos, c. 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, AE - “Zeus/Zeus” type (Photo by Wojciech Ostrowski).

**Pl. 3: 3** – Cleopatra VII (58-30 BC), Cyprus, Paphos, AE (Photo by Wojciech Ostrowski).

**Pl. 3: 4** – Cleopatra VII (58-30 BC), Cyprus, Paphos, AE (Photo by Wojciech Ostrowski).

**Pl. 3: 5** – Cleopatra VII (58-30 BC), Cyprus, Paphos, AE (Photo by Wojciech Ostrowski).