

Coins in Rhodes

From the monetary reform of Anastasius I
until the Ottoman conquest
(498 - 1522)

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Prologue

This study, in its early version, was a PhD Thesis submitted to the University of Athens. It is dedicated to the memory of Elias Kollias, Ephor of Byzantine Antiquities in the Dodecanese from 1978 until 1998, because without him it would never have been undertaken. However, it was put together in the hope that it will also benefit the archaeologists engaged in the rescue, protection and study of the local heritage in challenging times; without their contribution, the available numismatic information on Rhodes would have been poor indeed. I thank them all for their help at every stage of my research, for the information on excavated sites and finds and for their daily encouragement. It would be impossible to cite everyone by name without forgetting some.

Heartfelt thanks are also due to a host of others who administratively supported my research or gave practical assistance at various stages. Friends working in other fields, conservators, draughtsmen, computer specialists, architects, civil engineers, surveyors and photographers were available when needed and helped reduce errors and omissions concerning sites, finds, publications and various records. The Numismatic Museum in Athens was decisive for my development as a student of numismatics in the last twenty years through the advice of its expert staff and access to its specialist library. Finally, an important preparation for the analysis of Hospitaller coins was provided through a bursary of the British School at Athens in 1995 under its then Director Martin Jessop Price, which gave me the opportunity to study the Rhodian coins kept at the Museum of the Order of Saint John, Clerkenwell.

The guidance of my PhD Committee of Professors Sophia Kalopissi-Verti, my supervisor at the University of Athens, outstanding numismatist Vasso Penna of the University of the Peloponnese and a veteran of the Numismatic Museum in Athens, and medievalist Florentia Evangelatou-Notara, has been decisive in the avoidance of several pitfalls. I am grateful to all those who enabled me to present the material from Rhodes and apologize, to them and to the reader, for the errors that I could not avoid.

Anna-Maria Kasdagli
Ephorate of Antiquities of the Dodecanese
2017

Introduction

Rhodes and archaeology

Antiquarian interest in Rhodes has deep roots. Already in the Middle Ages educated visitors tried to trace evidence of its celebrated ancient past. Later on, the geographical location of the island, and of the town and its harbours in particular, attracted the Western travellers who replaced the medieval pilgrims on the sea-routes between Europe and the Middle East.¹ Romanticism revived interest in the Crusaders and their castles, while the rise of the bourgeoisie and of colonial ambitions encouraged the collection of antiquities. For the diplomats, career soldiers, antiquaries and collectors of the 19th and early 20th centuries, Rhodes had everything: a strategic location, easy access, a mild climate and adequate harbours, many standing monuments of the past and its ancient renown, which promised exciting discoveries.

Visitors like the Belgian colonel Rottiers (1826), French politician and antiquary Eugène Flandin (c. 1844) and Prussian Albert Berg (1853) published descriptions of Rhodes illustrated with engravings of various monuments; the important, and also illustrated with a number of sketches by the author, personal diary of Swedish MD Johannes Hedenborg (1854),² who spent his retirement in Rhodes, lies still unpublished in the local archaeological library. Other writers, such as Ludwig Ross (1845, 1852), Victor Guérin (1856), Charles Thomas Newton (1865), Gustave Schlumberger (1878), Édouard-Henri Furse (1889), Édouard Biliotti and the abbé Cottret (1881), Guy Sommi-Picenardi (1901) and Louis Fradin de Belabre (1908), dealt more systematically with the history of Rhodes and its antiquities; most of them were also active in the hunt for collectible antiquities synonymous with early archaeology. The architecture of the Hospitaller town was thoroughly explored by Frenchman Albert Gabriel in a two-volume work entitled *La cité de Rhodes, Architecture Militaire and Architecture civile et religieuse* (1921/1923). The breadth and quantity of scholarly publications about medieval Rhodes up to the last quarter of the 20th century was summarized and integrated in the presentation of its cultural history by Elias Kollias in 1994.³

In the 19th century, the town of Rhodes consisted of the medieval walled settlement, exclusively inhabited by Turks and Jews, and of Christian parishes scattered outside the medieval fortifications, between stretches of gardens and farmsteads. Two of the ancient harbours were still in use, although shrunk in size due to sedimentation: the commercial harbour, the ancient 'great harbour', flanked by the medieval town wall to the west and south; and Mandraki, north of the medieval town, where the fortified Ottoman arsenal was located. Muslim cemeteries spread over the sloping outer banks of the medieval fortifications. Among the Christian parishes, locally known as *marassia*, Niochori, the northern one, had a church dedicated to the Latin rite in addition to its Orthodox one, as some of its inhabitants were Western technicians who worked at the arsenal or European diplomats and merchants. The other *marassia*, each with its own church, spread in an arc from the southwest of the medieval settlement to its southeast, near the coast, thus: St. John, Ayioi Anargyroi (SS Cosmas and Damian), St. Anastasia, Metropolis, St. George 'Ano', St Nicholas and St George 'Kato'.⁴ Further south was the Orthodox church and cemetery of St. Demetrius. In the last years of the 19th and the early 20th century a number of Greek schools were added to the other public buildings of the *marassia*.⁵

In the course of the 20th century, the material remains of the past were particularly affected by political developments. The decline of the Ottoman empire encouraged the colonial aspirations of Italy, which occupied Rhodes in 1912 by force of arms.⁶ Apart from the Danish mission at and around Lindos (1902-9/ 1913-14), systematic archaeological exploration in Rhodes began during the Italian occupation of the island (1912-1943).⁷ Until World War II, the Italians made use of archaeological discoveries in order to promote the role of Rome in the history of the island as an ideological tool of empire.⁸ The medieval Great Hospital of the Knights of St. John became the Archaeological Museum, soon filled with excavation finds and antiquities purchased from the local population. The

¹ Among them celebrated personalities such as Jean de Thévenot (1655), the count of Choiseul-Gouffier (1776), Claud-Etienne Savary (1779), Joseph von Hammer (1803), Chateaubriand (1806), the count of Marcellus (1820), Joseph-François Michaut and Jean-Joseph-François Poujoulat (1830-31), Joseph d'Estournel (1832), Lamartine (1835), William John Hamilton (1836) etc.

² Stefanidou 2001.

³ Kollias 1994: 174-180.

⁴ Gabriel 1921: 1-7; Papachristodoulou 1972: 401-402; Konstantinopoulos 1986: 238-242. For the parish churches see Dellas 2012.

⁵ Maria 2008.

⁶ Tsirpanlis 1998.

⁷ Morricone 1965: 743-744. Coulié and Filimonos 2014: 16-40. Most of the portable antiquities unearthed in 19th c. excavations were sent to Britain (the British Museum), Italy (Florence) and Denmark.

⁸ Tsirpanlis 1998: 79 ff.

FERT Archaeological Institute was set up and furnished with a specialist Library which would be a precious legacy for later archaeologists. The exploration of various sites was presented in the *Annuario della Regia Scuola Archeologica di Atene* and the periodicals *Clara Rhodos* and *Memorie*; an archaeological map of the island was published by Raffaele Umberto Unglieri in 1930.

Italian architects and archaeologists like Giuseppe Gerola, Pietro Lojacono, Amedeo Maiuri, Giulio Jacopi and Cesare Brandi contributed to large-scale excavations and restoration projects which still dominate the urban landscape and some sites in the countryside. The Ottoman cemeteries were cleared from the perimeter of the medieval fortifications, which was turned into public parks. Beyond the ring of parkland, the Italian rulers of Rhodes engaged in a broad building programme which houses most public services to this day, particularly in the harbour zone. Large public buildings, hotels, housing for the Italian military and administrators, markets and factories, and two new Latin churches were built, forming the principal nodes for the new urban grid of Rhodes, which also incorporated the *marassia* and older roadways (Figure 1).⁹ The urban projects in the new colonial capital, the effort to associate the island's past with Italy for political reasons and the enhancement of archaeological sites of natural beauty, required extensive excavations of which only a few were documented,¹⁰ according to the norms of the period.

In 1947, after World War II and the unification of the Dodecanese Islands with Greece, Greek archaeologists undertook the challenge of keeping up with the expansion of the town. Rhodes was being transformed into a major tourist attraction, bringing in much needed hard currency at a time when civil war was lingering on the mainland. The rapid rate of land development eventually led to rescue excavation by state employees in over 1,500 urban properties, in accordance with state law; thus a large part of the ancient city and its necropolis were gradually investigated. The street grid, with several public buildings, humble housing and mansions, its infrastructure, industrial installations such as casting pits and workshops, fortifications and the dwellings of the dead around them were brought to light.¹¹ The undoubted quality and dedication of the archaeologists who participated in this gigantic task, which is still in progress, has harvested an immense amount of material for the study of local history and society across several centuries.¹²

In the historic centre, continuously occupied since ancient times and today comprising the walled medieval settlement, rescue excavation was limited and, with a few exceptions, was carried out from the 1970s onwards. Within the fortifications of the protected medieval town,¹³ large-scale excavations have been carried out in some of the areas where the Allied air raids of World War II had destroyed the medieval buildings. Smaller-scale exploration has formed part of the restoration and consolidation process in a number of standing buildings as well as in the interior and grounds of medieval churches.¹⁴ From the late 1980s major restoration projects on the fortifications and urban historic buildings were jointly funded by the Greek state and the European Union. Modern restoration practices involve thorough study of surviving structures and their consolidation; this required the cutting of exploratory trenches using archaeological techniques in order to preserve the maximum amount of data. The information yielded by such soundings modified earlier assumptions relative to the development of the town,¹⁵ but the significant moveable finds brought to light have not yet been systematically examined.

The Roman period, which connects the Hellenistic with the Byzantine era, is problematical for the archaeology of the city of Rhodes. Selective examination of Roman monuments was undertaken in the Italian period and refined by later scholars; however, an integrated study of the Roman city during the Early Christian centuries has not been attempted; large-scale correlation of architectural remains with other kinds of evidence has yet to be pursued and the pace and spatial aspect of the decline of the ancient city have yet to be traced systematically.¹⁶ So far, at least

⁹ Livadiotti and Rocco 1996.

¹⁰ Published in various Italian periodicals but mainly in the local archaeological periodical *Clara Rhodos* (1928 ff.) See also Livadiotti and Rocco 1996.

¹¹ Kondis 1958: 146-158; Konstantinopoulos 1970; Dietz and Papachristodoulou 1988; *Ρόδος 2.400 Χρόνια* 1999; Philemonos-Tsopotou 2004; Giannikouri 2013; Patsiada 2013.

¹² The progress of archaeological investigation is to be found scattered in specialist publications and the *Chronika* section of the yearly *Archaiologikon Deltion*.

¹³ Since 1988 the medieval town is a UNESCO designated World Heritage Site. Manoussou-Della 2001: 76.

¹⁴ In some cases, archaeological excavation does not reach the lower strata when something important higher up has to be preserved, or when conditions become unsafe due to the proximity of standing masonry.

¹⁵ Manoussou-Della 2001: 64 ff.; *15 χρόνια έργων αποκατάστασης στη Μεσαιωνική Πόλη της Ρόδου*, Athens 2007; *Μεσαιωνική πόλη Ρόδου, Έργα Αποκατάστασης 2000-2008*.

¹⁶ An attempt to correlate moveable finds with structural remains across the city has recently been made by A. Katsioti (under publication, Archaeopress), in her examination of the sites where Late Roman lamps have been found; but this is only a start.

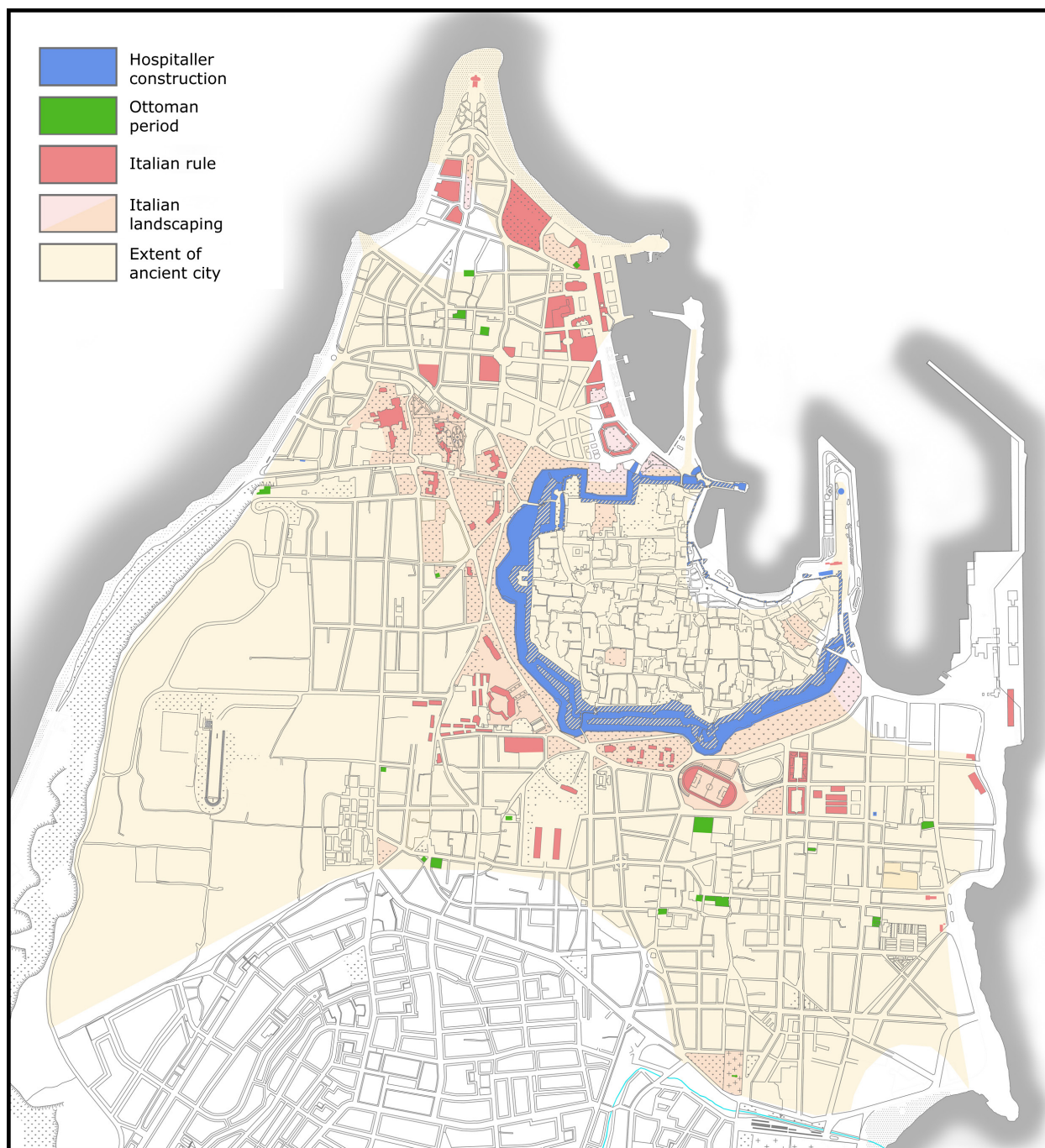


Figure 1: Italian urban remodelling in the town of Rhodes.

seven Early Christian basilicas have been located in the area covered by the ancient city;¹⁷ their later phases come within the date-range of the present study.

Rhodes had shrunk drastically by Early Byzantine times. In the 7th century, a small part of the ancient city located on rising ground overlooking the two principal harbours was fortified (Figure 2, B). In the Byzantine period, although Rhodes was for a time a provincial capital and then an important naval base, it was rarely mentioned in the written sources. The Byzantine town is hard to discern in most archaeological sites, because it is hidden below standing Hospitaller buildings or was destroyed by their foundations, which deliberately sought the stable substrate of ancient constructions. In troubled times like the 7th or the 13th century, the history of the place and its inhabitants

¹⁷ Manoussou-Della 2014. For the ancient substrate see n. 12 and Philemonos-Tsopotou 2004: 21-33.

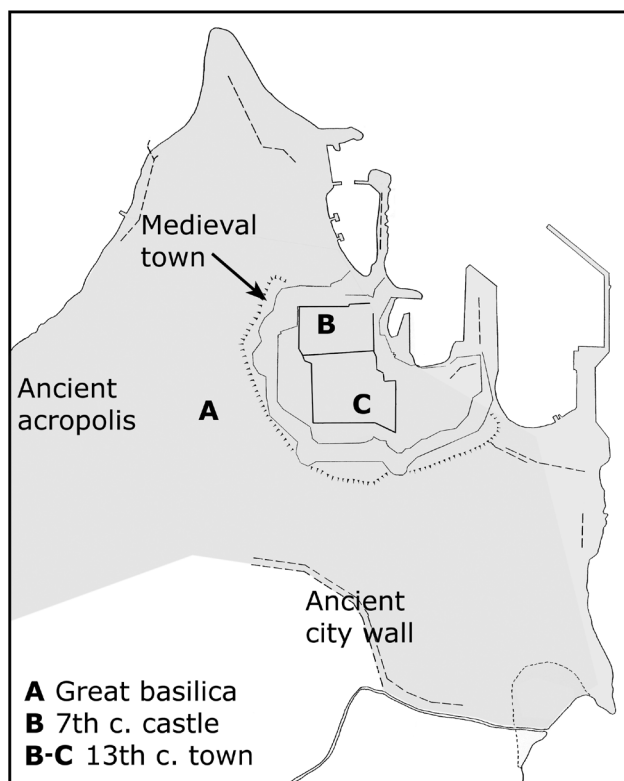


Figure 2: The urban nucleus from Hellenistic times to 1522.

is rather guessed that observed. From the 11th century, the walled settlement began to expand again (Figure 2, C), a process which continued in the Hospitaller period. Until the 14th century, historical sources provide limited and fragmentary information, mostly concerning events that affected the Byzantine state and more general political and military developments such as the Crusades.

In 1309, Rhodes was conquered by the Order of the Hospital, thus becoming the capital of a singular island state which survived until 1522. The stout Hospitaller defences with their broad and deep dry moat, preserved to this day, did not merely destroy the stratigraphy of the ground they stand on: the Knights, like their Byzantine predecessors, systematically quarried ancient structures in the vast expanse of ruins that spread outside the walls for building material to use in their own constructions, especially the fortifications. The massive disturbance caused by successive defensive structures, Byzantine and Hospitaller, which involved the recycling of older building material, the digging of great trenches and the massing of earthworks and sloping banks, is both a serious difficulty and an opportunity not sufficiently exploited: the fortifications cut through the ancient substrate but, at the same time, reveal various of its features in cross-section at a number of locations.

In the countryside of Rhodes, excavations have generally been limited to the sites of Early Christian basilicas, rescuing archaeological remains in developments involving construction within various villages or large seaside hotels; such sites seem to have emerged in Late Antiquity, particularly in agricultural areas. When the Byzantines lost control of the sea to the Arabs in the second half of the 7th century, these settlements disappeared. In addition, a number of deserted medieval villages in the interior have still to be explored. Even so, a number of archaeological sites have been investigated and new ones located; progress has also been recently made in the study of the pottery and other finds,¹⁸ providing valuable information about Rhodes which sometimes does not accord with mainstream political developments or seems independent of them. Thus a background has been prepared which may be immensely enriched by the specialized study of the masses of material collected from excavations, fieldwork and the chance finds brought in by private individuals or seized from illegal traffickers of antiquities.

Subject-matter and structure

The present study covers the Christian coins so far treated by conservators and recorded from the period beginning with the reform of emperor Anastasius I (AD 498) and ending with the Ottoman conquest of Rhodes (1522) which are kept in the collection of the Ephorate of Antiquities of the Dodecanese (Figure 3). They mostly derive from archaeological excavations or are chance finds casually picked up by people. Most of the excavation finds were unearthed in the 1970s, '80s and '90s. Thus, the chronological boundaries are the reform of the copper coinage generally recognized as the beginning of Byzantine numismatics, and the conquest which ended the use of Christian petty coins on the island.

The work has two objectives: first, to present the material as fully as possible, in order to make it accessible to other scholars and, secondly, to draw the maximum of information from the available coin sample¹⁹ for the political and social history of Rhodes during the ten centuries separating the Anastasian reform from the Conquest of 1522.

¹⁸ Cf. Triandafyllides 2015; Michaelidou 1994 and 2014; Katsioti 2016.

¹⁹ The term 'local coin sample' is used here to refer to the total of coins available to this study.

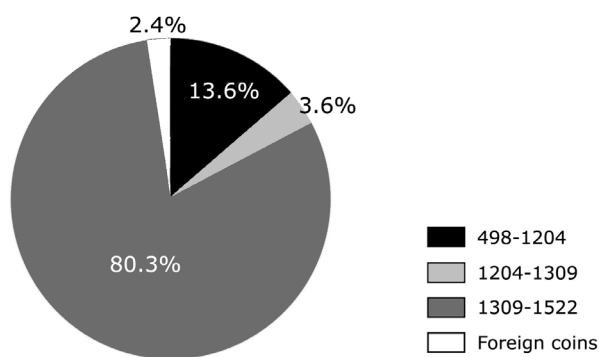


Figure 3: Chronological distribution of the coins covered by the study.

The coins presented and examined below are dealt with in two parts. The first part contains the material from Byzantine Rhodes (498-1309) and the second of the Hospitaller period (1309-1522). The Byzantine part is divided into two sections, reflecting the provenance of the coins. For several centuries the money available for daily transactions on Rhodes came from the imperial Byzantine mints. Of course, besides the scarcity of copper coins encountered in most of the Byzantine provinces between the 8th and 10th centuries,²⁰ local numismatic events emerged from time to time, when the need for coin apparently coincided with the temporary interruption in communications between Rhodes and the Byzantine capital. Thus the first section contains the following chapters:

- The 6th and 7th centuries
- The period from the late 7th century to 969
- The era of the anonymous *folles* (969 - 1092)
- The period from the monetary reform of Alexius I (1092) to 1204.

The second section, the 13th century, begins with the fall of Constantinople to the armies of the Fourth Crusade and ends with the conquest of Rhodes by the Knights Hospitaller in 1309. This is a transitional period, characterized by political instability and centrifugal tendencies. These characteristics resulted in the circulation of various imitations of imperial trachea and the operation of a local mint for copper. The petty coinage of the empire of Nicaea is rarely found in Rhodes, although Byzantine political and cultural influence remained dominant.

Each chapter contains, alongside the presentation of the relevant coins, a summary of available information on local history and the broader developments which might be expected to have influenced the island; special characteristics are noted, and a cautious attempt is made at interpreting the numismatic evidence.

The second part of the study deals with the Hospitaller period, from 1309 to 1522, when the medium for petty cash transactions was locally issued. Coin finds increase considerably; there are also increased numbers of foreign coins, probably indicative of the significance of overseas trade and the multiethnic character of the urban population and ruling class.

The approach to the Hospitaller period is different, due to the characteristics of the material which, although quantitatively dominant (Figure 3), derives from a much shorter period and includes important evidence from hoards. An introductory section on the coinage of the Latin East, the Order of the Hospital and a concise account of the production of its mint are followed by a description of the petty coinage, including an attempt to revise and refine coin types and their dating. Crucial for the understanding of coin production and typology is the examination of two large hoards with a *terminus a quem* most likely in the first quarter of the 15th century. The presentation of the period is concluded with the monetary reform of grand master Pierre d'Aubusson (c. 1490) and the numismatic evidence for the commercial ties of Rhodes with Western Europe and the Latin East.

The concluding chapter of the study attempts to summarize the changes in numismatic circulation on Rhodes from the 6th to the 16th century, with some more general comments on ongoing research, comparing the sample from Rhodes to other geographical locations in the eastern Mediterranean.

The history of the research

The focus of numismatic research in Greece is the Numismatic Museum at Athens. With its rich collection, important publications²¹ and specialist library, it has enabled interested scholars and archaeologists to specialize and contribute to numismatic research. The Friends of the Numismatic Museum Society have organized a number of specialist conferences, providing a much needed platform for discussion and a permanent record by the publication

²⁰ Metcalf 1979: 50; Hendy 1985: 640-645; Morrisson 2010: 106 ff. On Rhodes, it begins c. 670 and retreats in the 11th century.

²¹ Galani-Krikou et al. 2002; Kokkas and Nikolaou 2005.

of the proceedings.²² Knowledgeable coin collectors and professionals have made their own contribution to the numismatics of Byzantium and Latin Greece through the publications of the Greek Numismatic Society and its annual periodical, the bilingual *Nomismatika Chronika*, whose first issue appeared in 1972.

Coins, and particularly coins of low purchasing value, have for long been accepted as important evidence for the dating of archaeological contexts, and of household pottery in the period starting from the decline of Roman cities until the end of the Ottoman period. However, while other kinds of documentary evidence, like archival material, have been used extensively to trace the individual portrait of a region, numismatics in Greece have lagged behind in this respect. This is partly due to the necessarily brief presentation of archaeological discoveries in the most important and comprehensive periodical dedicated to archaeological exploration, the *Chronika* section of the *Archaologikon Deltion*, where the excavations of each year by every regional archaeological bureau (Ephorate) are presented in turn. The comparatively small number of coins found in a rescue excavation cannot be of much use for anything but dating. For the numismatic evidence to make sense in a broader context it is necessary for the sample to be sufficiently large to support argument, as in the large scale explorations conducted by the foreign Schools of Archaeology²³ or the various University departments engaged in research of this nature. Also, although the comparison between the numismatic profile²⁴ of different sites is a key part of the research, in extant publications the approach to the coinage is not consistent.

In Rhodes, the rich coin collection assembled before World War II by the Italian administration, part of which was on display in the Archaeological Museum, disappeared at the end of the war. An incomplete handwritten *Catalogo del Medagliere* is still preserved in the Library of the Ephorate of Antiquities of the Dodecanese where, after 824 ancient and Roman pieces, 25 Hospitaller coins are also listed.²⁵ However, some coins kept in storerooms, archives and desk drawers, escaped the fate of the bulk of this material; they include the silver *gigliato* of grand master Elion de Villeneuve (1319-46) found in a storeroom in an envelope with a pencilled note in Italian or the gold *solidus* of Byzantine emperor Basil I (867-86) found appended to a document dated 1917. It is quite possible that some of the coins now inventoried in the internal catalogue of the Ephorate without mention of provenance were also found in the Italian period. However, the fate of most of the Byzantine and Hospitaller coins undoubtedly brought to light in the Italian excavations remains a mystery. Thus, most of the coins of the archaeological collection of Rhodes examined here derive from the hundreds of excavations carried out by state archaeologists in the town after Rhodes became officially part of Greece in 1947,²⁶ from two large hoards discovered in obscure circumstances in the first half of the 20th century, from chance finds handed in by conscientious locals and from pieces seized from antiquities smugglers. It has to be said that the coin finds from an indeterminate number of excavated sites from the late 1990s to the present have yet to be treated and inventoried, but the currently available sample forms a solid basis for discussion.

The author's engagement with the coins of Rhodes began in 1988, as part of a wider drive to deal with the backlog of inadequately recorded finds in the storerooms of the Archaeological Service, under the direction of Elias Kollias, Director of the 4th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities which, from its headquarters of Rhodes, exercised a broad remit for the protection of Byzantine and later antiquities and heritage in the Dodecanese Prefecture.²⁷ As the inventory progressed, it became possible to compare the coin evidence with other sources for local history. Certain patterns began to emerge, as well as intriguing discrepancies with accepted interpretations and, with them, the desire to explore further and make sense of the accumulating data. From the year 2000 this led to the appearance of a number of papers by the author related to the coin evidence from Rhodes,²⁸ which coincided with contributions to the numismatic history of Rhodes by other scholars.²⁹ During the numismatists' Fourth Meeting, focusing on *Coins in Rhodes and Its Asia Minor Peraia*, (Cos, 30 May-2 June 2003), Panayota Psarri presented a communication on coin finds from the Rhodian countryside and Julian Baker one on coin circulation in the Dodecanese Islands between 1100 and 1400. Very important comparative material from Byzantine Cos was presented by Ersi Brouskari and Sophia

²² Periodical *Obolos*.

²³ Cf. Grierson 1965c and *idem* 1966.

²⁴ I.e. the unique features of the *corpus* of locally found coins regarding ratios between coins of different periods and denominations.

²⁵ Mostly gold and silver coins (14 *gigliati*, 6 *aspers*, 3 *sequins* and two *billon deniers*, inv. nos 825-849). No Byzantine coins are mentioned.

²⁶ See Appendices, List of Excavated Properties and Sites with Coin Finds dated 498-1522.

²⁷ Under the Italian occupation of Rhodes responsible for the local antiquities was the Istituto FERT, founded in 1927 and directed, in turn, by A. Maiuri, G. Jacopi, L. Laurenzi and L. Morricone; in 1947, the latter handed over the Istituto and its appurtenances to the first Greek Ephor of Antiquities in the Dodecanese, I. Kondis, when Italy formally ceded the Dodecanese to Greece. In 1978, the Archaeological Service in the Dodecanese split into the XXII Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities and the 4th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities; they were merged again in 2014.

²⁸ Kasdagli 1992: 53-60; *eadem* 1996: 319-334; *eadem* 2000: 267-274; *eadem* 2002; *eadem* 2006a: 253-264; *eadem* 2006b: 325-338; *eadem* 2006c: 31-70; *eadem* 2007: 422-432; *eadem* 2010: 159-174.

²⁹ See *Obolos* 8-9.

Didiomi (4th-12th c.) During the Fifth Meeting, on *Coins in the Aegean Islands* (Mytilene, 16-19 September 2006), Andreas Mazarakis presented the first part of his study on the coins of Hospitaller Rhodes (1310-1476), which was later expanded to include the entire Hospitaller period in a separate publication.³⁰

Increasing familiarity with the material and recent relevant publications raised questions that demanded a more methodical and comprehensive review of the coins of Rhodes. The need to include as many coins as possible in the study was time-consuming; but a generous study leave of three years by the Greek Ministry of Culture (2010-2012) permitted the updating and digitizing of the internal medieval coin catalogue of the Archaeological Ephorate of the Dodecanese, which reached a total of about ten thousand entries. An additional year's sabbatical (2015) enabled the author to put together this analysis, which includes a first attempt at setting the Byzantine and medieval coins from Rhodes in a broader context. As was expected, its contents substantially revise the views expressed by the author in earlier publications; and it is encouraging that often they seem to enhance and complement the interpretations recently proposed by other scholars studying different kinds of archaeological evidence like pottery, wall paintings and architectural remains.

Methodology

The usefulness of coins for dating purposes and, as a source of evidence, to the historian, has often been misunderstood.³¹ Their role in everyday exchanges between private individuals in modern times makes it easy to forget that, for a very long time, this function was of secondary importance for the rulers. In fact, coinage was always produced under the strict supervision of the issuing authority, in order to cover mostly administrative needs, in the broader sense: to support, in various ways, a bureaucratic system and the institutions that kept it going, to promote political and military control, regularize daily interaction between soldiers and the local population they had to deal with, and enable the distribution of alms. The importance of coinage as a tool of state authority is reflected in the sentences passed on those caught counterfeiting or otherwise interfering with the official coin supply.³²

Gold and silver pieces that escaped the recycling net of the state could have a much longer career than the copper due to their intrinsic value; while more careful striking and the symbolism of their representations encouraged their use as jewellery. Thus, the presence of individual gold or large silver coins in an archaeological context is often of limited significance for dating purposes. Moreover, the accidental loss of such pieces is relatively rare, as their value ensured care would be taken to keep them safe. Their presence in the form of hoards is much more significant, because the discovery of a hoard is usually associated with extraordinary circumstances which prevented its recovery by the original owners. For a single hoard this might be due to personal misadventure³³ but a series of hoards in a particular region is probably due to political instability and military action. In such circumstances, their dating is secure and their composition provides information for the impact of political developments to the wealthy and the administration, including mint production.³⁴

In contrast, the low value of a copper coin increases its chances of getting lost or mislaid, although hoards of copper coins also occur ('hoarding' is probably not always the proper term for them). However, the presence of petty coin hoards usually has a different explanation than that of gold or silver, as it reflects different mechanisms and situations such as inflation, natural disasters, recall of the coins for recycling or, simply, carelessness. Low value usually ensured circulation within the geographical and chronological boundaries of the issuing authority. Thus, in combination with the natural durability of their fabric, frequent chance losses make petty coins valuable for dating purposes in archaeological contexts in periods when other written evidence consists of the much rarer seals and other inscribed artefacts.

³⁰ Mazarakis 2010. His work is of limited relevance to the present study, because it has a theoretical approach focusing on metrology, moneys of account and the role of Hospitaller coins in the economy.

³¹ The modern analysis of coin finds follows the pioneering methodology of scholars such as Philip Grierson, John Kent and Michael Metcalf, all highly productive in the last quarter of the 20th century.

³² For example, it seems that in Byzantium technicians employed by the imperial mints and the moneychangers (*katallaktai* or *argyramoivoi*) who played a key role in the distribution of copper coins might, at times, be lured into 'corrective' action when demand substantially overshot the official supply of coin. Hahn and Metlich 2000: 6. Hendy 1985: 253, 324-328. In fully monetized periods some taxes were paid exclusively in coin of high value (*charagma*) and others in smaller denominations, while the change (*strophe*) was paid by the state in copper pieces. The *katallaktai* were the middlemen who supplied the public with the required denominations.

³³ Such as the gold hoard Rhodes/1998, which is probably evidence for the tragic conclusion of a trip in the high road leading from the 12th century town to the west coast of the island. Christodoulidis 1998; Papadopoulou 2010: 175-176.

³⁴ Metcalf 2009: 144: 'A single hoard will offer ambiguous evidence; when a chronological sequence of several hoards provides a consistent story, its evidence is highly reliable.'

Ease of identification generally makes copper coins handy for dating archaeological contexts. However, dating a context by a single coin find is often risky because, particularly in urban sites inhabited for a long time, the stratigraphy is seldom undisturbed. The disturbance need not be due to human action: creatures active underground, like earthworms or rats, and even the roots of long-disappeared trees, may help coins, especially the heavier ones, to travel downwards, creating confusion even in rural contexts. Moreover, clumsiness and mischance may befall at every step of the long journey of coin finds from the trowel to the desk of the coin specialist. Caution is therefore advisable if the dating evidence of a lone coin cannot be corroborated by some other means.

The larger the size of the coin sample in a particular site, the less significant occasional errors will be. This is important, because besides disturbed contexts and handling mistakes, the condition of the coins does not always permit precise identification. The sample supplied by a particular area may be studied independently from other finds, to answer questions about the relative monetization of the local society in particular periods, a factor often associated with the urbanization level of a site.³⁵ It may also pinpoint the centre of daily monetary exchanges in a wider area, the fluctuations of monetary circulation through time and the degree of control exercised by the central authority on the periphery of a state. In addition, it allows comparison of different sites, in order to explore issues of broader historical significance. The employment of various methodological tools such as losses per year,³⁶ the ratio between different denominations, the representation of different mints in the local sample, the wear pattern on the coins, the composition of the local 'numismatic profile'³⁷ and the comparison to other sites are useful in many ways: for example, the evaluation of coins of unknown provenance is much easier once the local numismatic profile is established, and even the derivation of coins seized from traffickers may be determined with relative accuracy.

* * *

The decision to explore the coin evidence from Rhodes across a span of ten centuries, in spite of the difficulties presented by the large number of coins and the varying degree of wear without recourse to particular excavation contexts, was taken with deliberation. The independent examination of a particular type of find is much simpler and, the larger the sample, the more likely it is that quantitative analysis will be reliable. A single coin is not much use, but the distribution on the map of all the coins of its type will produce information on the social and administrative situation; while comparisons between coin distributions at different periods will reveal much more and be very useful to scholars working with other sites or other kinds of archaeological evidence. Moreover, chance errors tend to disappear if a sample is large enough, while errors in methodology can be spotted, and compensated for, more easily. Naturally, it is necessary to take into account more general problems related to the circumstances of recovery and the condition of the coins.

The analysis of the material is based on two main premises supported by notable numismatists. The first is the significance of losses per year as an indicator of the circulation of copper and has been employed with particular success by David Metcalf and by others following in his footsteps.³⁸ Other scholars have occasionally expressed doubts,³⁹ or treated it with too much caution,⁴⁰ but with time its reliability has gained it acceptance. The second is the primary function of coin as a tool of government in reference to Byzantium clearly expressed by Wolfgang Hahn, who stressed that it was meant to facilitate the interaction of the state with the general population, regarding taxation and the supply of the armed forces⁴¹ and other representatives of the government.⁴² Thus, in the period under consideration, and particularly until 1204, the coin finds -or lack of them- should primarily be used as evidence of state policy and only secondarily as a marker for economic activity. Of course, the availability of coin facilitated exchanges between members of the public, particularly in urban settings, but this was not a primary concern for bureaucrats. This, to a lesser degree, is also true for Hospitaller Rhodes; what made the difference was the close proximity of rulers and ruled in the peculiarly cosmopolitan urban environment of the island capital. Moreover, the Hospital had strong motives to make life easier for pilgrims and other travellers and was therefore more responsive to the public need for petty cash ('black money'). Besides, the minting of fiduciary coin could be profitable for the public purse when social conditions created a need for frequent small-scale exchanges.

³⁵ Metcalf 2009: 145.

³⁶ Losses per year represent the quotient of the division of the number of coins of a particular ruler by the number of regnal years; it is used to keep track of fluctuations in coin circulation. Other time intervals may be used if more appropriate.

³⁷ The peculiarities of the local sample in comparison to other areas are represented by its 'numismatic profile', which is essentially the breakdown of its content into percentages across time.

³⁸ Metcalf 1979; *idem* 2009: 141-146.

³⁹ Mostly historians like Vryonis 1963: 291-300.

⁴⁰ Numismatists like Philip Grierson 1965c.

⁴¹ Hendy 1985: 416, 646; Grierson and Travaini 1998: 41; Morrisson 2002: 911 ff.; Curta 2011: 68-92.

⁴² Hahn and Metlich 2000: 7-8. This case has been taken much farther by social anthropologist David Graeber 2011.

The comparison with other parts of the Byzantine empire is helpful in weeding out general phenomena in order to look more closely into the peculiarities of the local numismatic profile.⁴³ Unfortunately, even the most useful publications of extensive excavations by the various Schools of Archaeology, Universities and other research agencies within and without Greece present difficulties. The oldest obviously suffer from dated identifications which have since been revised. However, these later, corrective contributions are scattered in a variety of publications and languages, which are not always easily accessible. Moreover, the presentation of a large number of coins is usually concise, preventing revision of the material according to recent scholarship without returning to the coins themselves. Finally, the plates of these publications are selective, showing legible specimens or some coins considered important by the author, but not the bulk of the material which might be more relevant to students of other regions. The condition of the coins, particularly the wear pattern, is seldom mentioned.

In this study an attempt has been made to present the material comprehensively and discuss its significance for each period in association with the historical background. More weight has been given to the examination of the coins, since the views of scholars on the broader subject and its background are likely to undergo further modifications. Many of the observations made here are not interpreted, or an interpretation is suggested with caution, in order to avoid forced arguments.

In the presentation of the material, site finds are often dealt separately from the rest of the coins within a group, whenever they are thought to present a more rounded view as, for example, in the ratio between various denominations for the period 498-668. When calculating losses per year, an effort is made to leave out hoarded coins, while the better preserved coins serve in more detailed analyses like the representation of the various mints under each emperor or more closely dated fluctuations in circulation. This ensures a fuller exploitation of the sample in order to reduce the possibility of statistical error.⁴⁴ The presentation is assisted by graphs and tables employing simple statistical approaches. For the comparisons of the Rhodian coins to those from other sites, where sample sizes vary widely, the numismatic profile (percentage of the total representing each period or emperor) for each site has been preferred, to facilitate the drawing of comparison graphs.

Integrating the evidence of the coins with the historical background faced two hurdles: the scarcity of information for Byzantine Rhodes itself in the written sources and the selective account of events by modern historians and, even more so, by the primary sources: events not directly relevant to the perceived flow of history tend to be omitted in authoritative works written with particular aims in mind although they may be able to throw some light on phenomena which have left traces in the local archaeological record. Unfortunately, the authority of major historical works in the portrayal of broader tendencies encourages the unwary to project interpretations based on wider trends, which may not be useful at the local level. For this reason, each chapter includes an extensive section attempting to trace the influence of events on the administrative setting Rhodes belonged to, in an effort to fill in some of the gaps in local history.

The attempt to link the numismatic evidence with political and military events is mostly based on recent secondary sources, because primary accounts often contain dating discrepancies the author lacked the expertise to deal with.⁴⁵ The choice of these works has been influenced by the fullness of their coverage of primary sources and relevant bibliography and their internal consistency as, for instance, in the case of the Arab invasion of Syria in the reign of Heraclius. A basic problem in the balancing of various sources of information is due to the difference of three or four months between the start of the Byzantine and Muslim calendar. The start of military campaigns is easier to date, because they generally began in the spring; and naval actions, particularly relevant to an island setting, even later. Their conclusion, which was often the result of *force majeure*, is harder to determine and frequently ended in tragedy due to bad weather. In any event, particularly for the second half of the 7th century, making a choice between alternative schedules is difficult, and some doubts must remain.

The material

The vast majority of the coins collected by the Ephorate of Antiquities in Rhodes are of low value. Most are chance losses or small parcels often found in disturbed layers. Gold and large silver coins are few indeed: 35 gold coins are

⁴³ The examination of coin circulation in other sites after the 12th century would have been desirable, but the variety of the coins in different locations and the fragmentation of political authority make the attempt not worth the effort, at least at present. For the problems of comparing coin samples of different regions see Guest 2012.

⁴⁴ Metcalf 1979: 11 ff.

⁴⁵ Cf. Conrad 1992: 317-401.

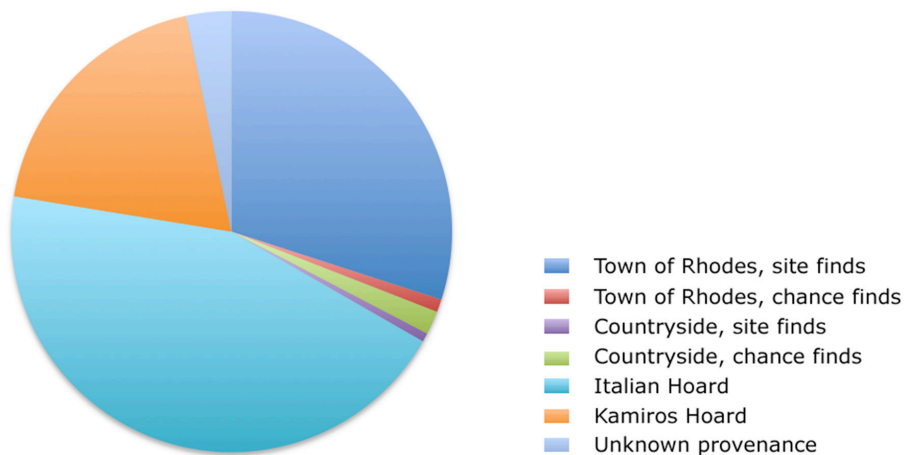


Figure 4: Provenance of the coins covered by the study.

included in the collection (of which two are debased *hyperpyra*), as well as 27 silver⁴⁶ and four of electrum. The rest of the site and chance finds are of copper or billon. It is also worth mentioning that 18 gold and two silver coins are of unknown provenance,⁴⁷ while eight of the gold pieces were presented by a native of the village of Salakos.⁴⁸ The remaining 17 gold, 13 silver and four electrum coins are single finds from excavations or chance finds of known provenance. As the gold and silver issues of the period under consideration are very poorly represented in the collection, they are mentioned without particular discussion because they are of no statistical significance and cannot be readily integrated into the main body of the material.⁴⁹ No attempt has been made to examine them in comparison to hoards and collections already published by other scholars and kept outside Rhodes, because the study of gold and silver requires a different approach and more finds.

The overwhelming majority of the inventoried Christian coins stored in the depots of the Archaeological Service or on display at the Palace of the Grand Master⁵⁰ were found on the island and were, when they were in circulation, the local medium of everyday monetary transactions. To date, the internal catalogue of the Ephorate of Antiquities contains about 10,200 pieces, which have been conserved by specialists and dated;⁵¹ but an uncertain number of still untreated coins remain in the Service depots, a state of affairs common to most of the Ephorates of Antiquities in Greece and, the author suspects, wherever large-scale rescue excavations are carried out around the world. Of the treated coins, some came from other islands of the Dodecanese or are issues dated after 1522 and therefore of no relevance here. The remaining 9,555 pieces belong to six categories:

1. Archaeological site finds (2,845 pieces) derived from 180 excavated property plots or monuments situated within the town of Rhodes, including small purses of coins found in disturbed layers.
2. Chance finds (89 pieces) of known provenance from the town of Rhodes.
3. Chance finds from the countryside, most handed in by private citizens or archaeological inspectors (164 pieces).
4. Finds from 14 excavated sites in the countryside (63 pieces).
5. Two large Hospitaller hoards found on Rhodes under circumstances not properly documented. The first consists of 4,247 pieces and is known as the 'large hoard of the conservation lab' or the 'Italian period hoard'. According to information by Elias Kollias, it was discovered in the first half of the 20th century in the environs of a medieval building thought to have been the Hospitaller mint which still stands to the east of the Grand Masters' Palace.⁵² The second hoard, comprising 1,834 pieces, was found in Kamiros on the west coast of the island, some 40 kilometres SW of the town.⁵³

⁴⁶ Of which 14 derive from three hoards: Town of Rhodes/1990 (Kasdagli 1992), Paradeissi/[Italian period] (Kasdagli 1996), Town of Rhodes /1994 (Kasdagli 2006b).

⁴⁷ At least one of them was found in the Italian period.

⁴⁸ I. Varellis. It is probable that they originally belonged to two different lots: the first perhaps included the three *solidi* of Justinian I and the second three *solidi* of Heraclius and two *tremisses* of Phocas.

⁴⁹ Metcalf 2009: 144-145.

⁵⁰ Exhibition *Rhodes from the 4th Century AD to Its Capture by the Ottoman Turks (1522)*, 2004: 44-47.

⁵¹ Some less precisely, due to poor state of preservation.

⁵² Kasdagli 2013.

⁵³ It was accompanied by a later note of the 1960s, which was a partial copy of a decayed original.

6. Coins of unknown provenance, including seizures of illegally trafficked antiquities; some of them may be either chance finds collected just after World War II or from excavations undertaken during the Italian occupation of Rhodes. Pieces handed in by people active in other Dodecanese islands were left out of this group; others which, according to information by Elias Kollias and retired archaeological inspectors,⁵⁴ were found by farmers in the countryside, have been included in the chance finds from the countryside (category 3 above). Thus, 313 pieces (13 seized coins, 151 handed in by private citizens and 149 without documentation) are left in this category. They were included in the study because very few of them are likely to have been found outside Rhodes: generally, coins from other islands have remained in the local museums (of Cos, Calymnos, Symi and Kastellorizo) where they have been inventoried, even though they may have received treatment in Rhodes. Besides, it is unlikely that from a total of 3,473 pieces (leaving aside the two large Hospitaller hoards) a small fraction of 9% would be of particular statistical significance.

Of course, it is worth comparing the sample derived from chance finds with the picture derived from excavation coins in order to exercise appropriate caution when drawing conclusions. Chance finds are generally larger and better preserved than excavated coins, because corroded or small pieces are not so easily spotted by accident. From 553 chance finds, 147 (26%) are medieval deniers and obols of the period 1309-1522, with an average weight of less than 0.7 grams. However, of those, 45 are kept in the sacristy of the parish church of the village of Archangelos and the possibility that they derive from one or two small hoards is likely. If the Archangelos group is left out, the percentage of this period drops to 20% of the chance finds. For reasons explained in detail below, to reduce as far as possible the imbalance in the comparison between chance and excavated finds, post-1204 coins should be excluded from the weight graph.⁵⁵ In this, chance finds are represented by the paler line while excavation coins by the darker one:

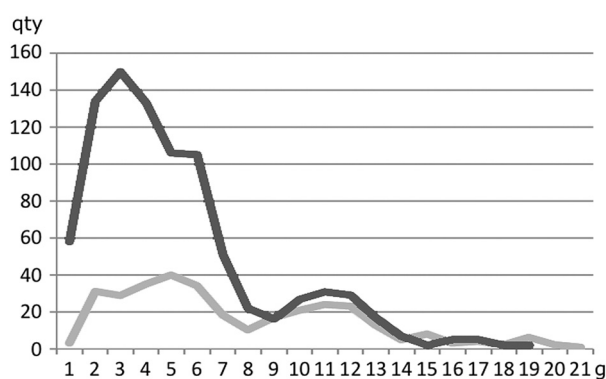


Figure 5: Comparison of site and chance finds by weight.

The calculation of losses per year is not without its problems: apart from the difficulty of dating with precision worn scyphate coins, and the fact that some of the coins of unknown provenance may be from old excavations, an indeterminate number of small purses deposited as grave offerings is concealed among the coins recovered from disturbed contexts in excavated churches of the medieval town (13th c. onwards); due to repeated use of the graves, these deposits have been mixed up.⁵⁶

The following table, showing concisely the percentages of coins of each period in a number of churches which have yielded over 50 coins, is instructive:

It is obvious that the proportion of chance finds relative to the total number of coins of a certain weight increases with weight. A second graph (Figure 6), with the percentages of increasing weight makes this clearer.

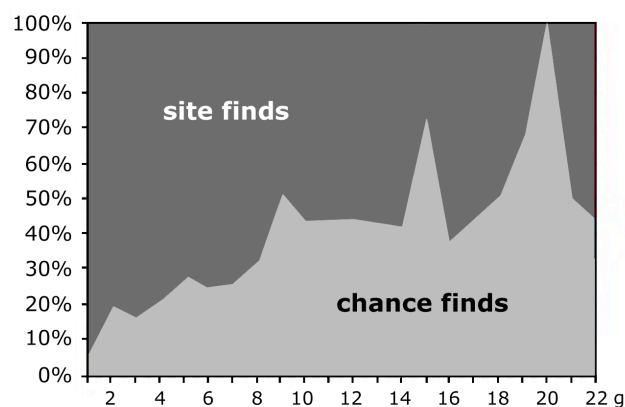


Figure 6: Comparison of the ratio of chance against site finds according to weight.

⁵⁴ Special thanks are due to Emeritus Ephor of Antiquities Dr. I. Papachristodoulou, retired archaeological inspector P. Misodoulakis and Mr. K. Pharmakides.

⁵⁵ It comprises coins whose weight ranges from less than one to 20 grams.

⁵⁶ The regularity of this phenomenon in Rhodes and the type of the coins preclude the possibility that the graves were a convenient hiding place for the savings of the living, a practice recorded elsewhere. Avramea 2001: 15. For funerary coin deposits outside Greece see Travaini 2004.

	SITE	498 - 1204	1204 - 1309	1309 - 1522	Uncertain	Coin total
1	St Michael's (Demirli) with Haliloglou - Konstantinidis plots	9,8%	12,2%	76,3%	1,6%	558
2	SS Constantine & Helena with Minatsis plot	20,5%	25,1%	50%	4,3%	342
3	Panaitiou St.	11%	4,2%	87,8%	-	310
4	Pekmetzis plot	75,4%	15,2%	8,8%	0,6%	171
5	St Artemius and Nikolis plot	15%	1,8%	83,2%	-	167
6	St Mary of the Castle	77,5%	4,2%	12,5%	5,8%	120
7	Asprakias, Maravelias and Hasapoglou plots	57,8%	14,7%	26,6%	0,9%	109
8	Hatziandreou plot (great basilica of Rhodes)	72%	1,2%	25,6%	1,2%	82
9	St Spyridon	12%	9,3%	78,7	-	75
10	St Mary of the Burgh	1,6%	-	98,4%	-	63
11	St Mark	7,1%	14,3%	78,6%	-	56

Figure 7: Percentages of excavated coins by period in key sites.

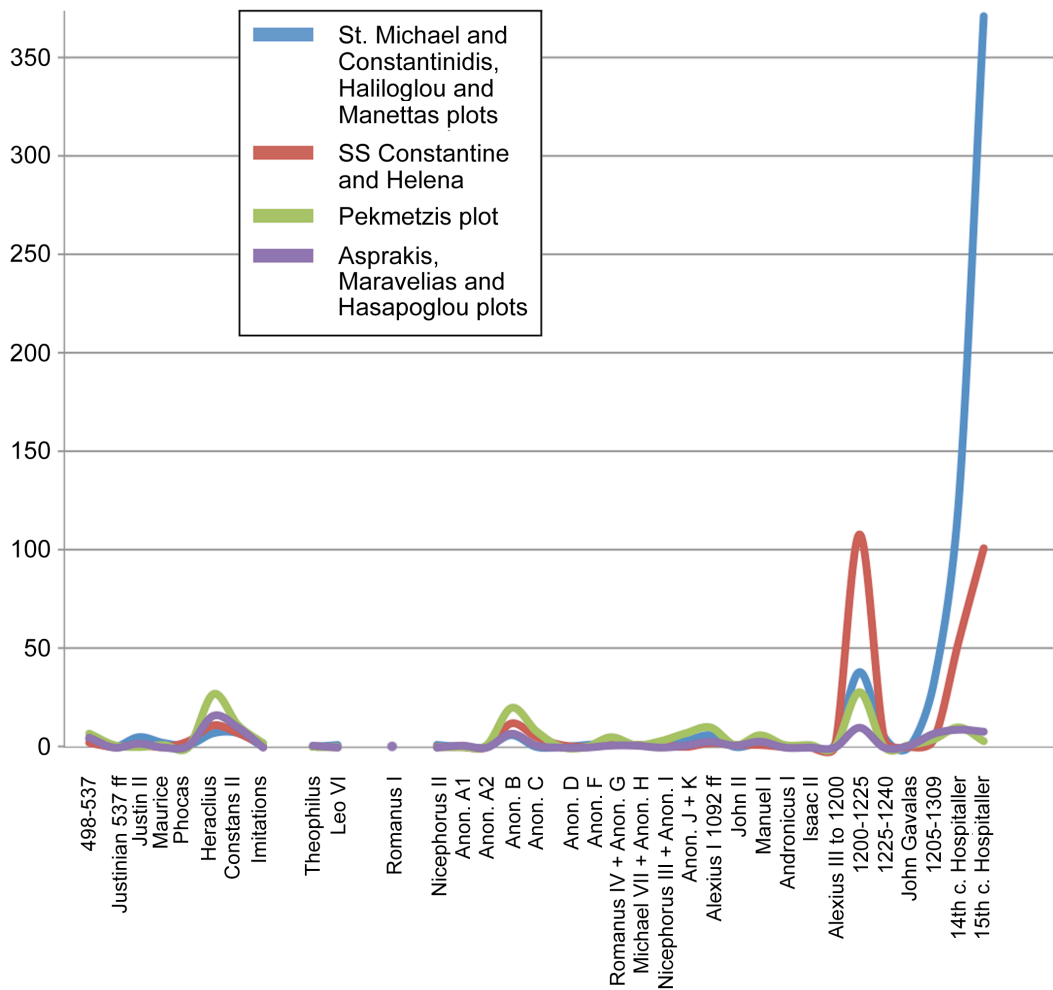


Figure 8: Comparison of coin finds from secular and religious sites.

In churches with burials dating from the 13th to the early 16th century, the percentage of coins from the period 1204-1522 always exceeds 75% of the total. St Michael's, built on top of an Early Christian basilica, was probably the Orthodox cathedral of the Hospitaller period and succeeded a smaller medieval church: this explains the elevated number of imperial Byzantine coins. The site of Panaitiou St., which includes the conventual church of the Order of St John, is an extreme case; although most of the graves in that church are without burial offerings, a single secular burial furnished with a variety of grave goods also contained about 190 small coins, representing 56.3% of the coin finds from the entire site. The Hatzandreou plot outside the medieval town, on the east slope of the ancient acropolis, contains the great Early Christian basilica of Rhodes; the Hospitaller coins found on the site probably mark the presence of crews quarrying building stone for the Hospitaller fortifications from its ruins. St Mary of the Castle is not a real exception either: only a small part of it has been excavated, and the focus of the dig was the holy water spring underneath the sacristy sealed off in Hospitaller times. However, in the Asprakis, Maravelias and Hasapoglou plots, adjacent to each other, there was no church and the site was excavated to a depth of five metres down to Hellenistic levels; and in the Pekmetzis plot, where burials are earlier, the percentage of post-1204 coins is low. Of course, many of these sites have not been archaeologically exhausted, but this does not undermine to a significant degree the exaggerated representation of the later period in the coin sample (Figure 8).

If the two large Hospitaller hoards, which together make up 64% of the material from Rhodes, and the chance finds are subtracted from the coin sample, the chronological distribution of the coins is modified, in comparison to Figure 3, as follows:

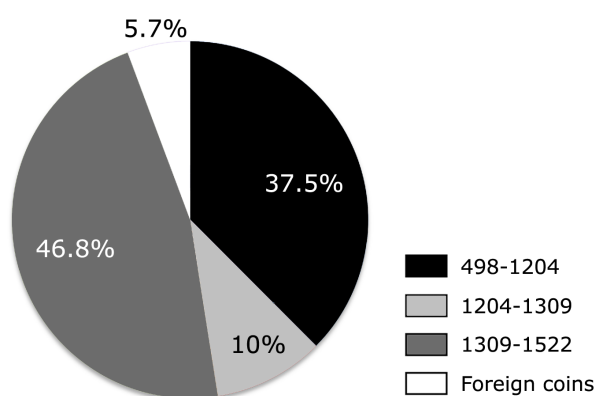


Figure 9: Chronological distribution of site finds.

Although uneven in length, the three periods reflect the history of Rhodes and each of them has its own special features. The majority of foreign coins belong to the period after 1204, and most of them date from the Hospitaller period. Of course, it is necessary to divide the presentation of the material in smaller instalments when particular characteristics dictate a modified approach. This has determined the structure of each chapter. Thus, the coins of the intervals 498-668, 969-1025 and 1092-1204 are analyzed emperor by emperor, while those of 668-969, 1025-1092 and 1204-1309 are examined alongside broader political, administrative and economic developments. The Hospitaller period is explored in greater depth because of the quantity and originality of the available material: the introductory section is followed by the presentation of the petty coinage of the 14th and 15th centuries, in much greater

detail than ever before through the exploitation of key evidence from hoards. The brief *excursus* into the foreign coin finds constitutes a glimpse into the overseas contacts of Rhodes. The concluding chapter, apart from a summary of the new information made available in this study and a note on the work still to be done, contains comparisons with other areas of the Byzantine empire with substantial coin finds, an exercise of wider interest because it is also useful as a control of various published interpretations of the numismatic evidence.

The Bibliography contains most of the reading which helped the arguments in the text to take shape, although some of it is not directly cited. The appendices include lists of the land plots which produced the Byzantine and Hospitaller finds and maps with their location on the ground (Maps I and II), as well as the coins from each plot. A few important assemblages of coins are also included, as well as maps with the spatial distribution of coins of different periods (Maps III-VIII)⁵⁷. The Catalogue contains almost all the recorded coins up to 1309, a representative selection of Hospitaller petty coin types and all the foreign coins. With some exceptions due to technical problems, all the coins in the Catalogue also figure in the Plates. Throughout the text and notes, bold figures refer to each coin's number in the Catalogue and Plates.

⁵⁷ Individual pie charts for each site which has yielded more than one coin help contrast the representation of different periods covered by each map; a tile shape indicates a hoard or singular context, the number within referring to the number of coins involved.