

THE THERA/1910 HOARD:
A CONTRIBUTION
TO THE
HISTORY OF
MESA GONIA, SANTORINI

Vasiliki Penna
The Thera/1910 hoard: a contribution to the history of Mesa Gonia, Santorini
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AS A PREFACE

THE ANNUAL publication *Memoranda Numismatica Atheniensia* (MNA) is a token contribution, but also a tangible endeavour, to make known to a wider audience the research fields of the discipline of Numismatics. Through discussion and analysis of a specific numismatic issue, the reader is introduced to fascinating deliberations and bold ascertainties and approaches. With springboard the study of the historical development of a past coinage, the reader becomes familiar with the political ambitions of the issuing authority, its economic prospects, its monetary needs. Through these interdependent factors, the reader is inducted into the religious, political and cultural symbolisms of the coin iconography prevailing each time and, by connotation, comes to comprehend mentalities, to detect and to recognize obscure facets of history. The coin is transformed from a medium of transaction to a means of transmitting manifold information. Coins function as eye-witnesses of the past and, as the French numismatist Ernest Babelon has remarked, participate in the understanding of history. Coins are History.

The MNA series is included in the publishing activity of the Benaki Museum, in tandem with the Welfare Foundation for Social and Cultural Affairs (Κ.Ι.Κ.Π.Ε.), the Numismatic Collection of which is on long-term loan to the said Museum (<http://www.kikpe.gr/en/collections>). The KIKPE Numismatic Collection has been presented to the public in Greece and abroad, through exhibitions organized under the auspices of the Benaki Museum (<http://www.kikpe.gr/cultural-affairs/exhibitions>), while the greater part of the ancient Greek coins have been published in the *SNG* international series as the *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum, Greece 7: The KIKPE Collection of Bronze Coins, Volume I*, Athens: Academy of Athens, 2012.

† Vasiliki Penna

EDITORIAL NOTE

VASILIKI PENNA was born in 1951. She served in the Archaeological Service of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture (1974–1998); in 1991 she received her DPhil from the University of Oxford. In 2003 she started teaching in the University of the Peloponnese (Department of History, Archaeology and Cultural Heritage Management); she became full Professor in 2017. She was an eminent scholar, specializing mainly in numismatics, sigillography and the economic history of Byzantium, but among else interested also in the economic and numismatic history of ancient Greece, as well as in the history of money through the ages.

Vasso Penna passed away on May 17th, 2018. This third issue of the series *Memoranda Numismatica Atheniensi* is dedicated to her memory. It contains a paper of hers, which had been presented during an one-day colloquium titled “The Byzantine Church of Pannagia Episkopi, Thera” and held at the Belloneio Cultural Center, Santorini, on August 9th, 2008. The said essay had remained unpublished so far. With this posthumous publication, a coin hoard which had been found back in 1910 is rendered to research and, based on its analysis, specific questions that arise are discussed. At the same time, through the study of this numismatic ensemble, a contribution is made to the microhistory of Thera during the transition from the Middle Byzantine period to the period of Latin rule.

Y. S.

THE THERA/1910 HOARD: A CONTRIBUTION TO THE HISTORY OF MESA GONIA, SANTORINI

ON 20 JUNE 1910 the German archaeologist Friedrich Hiller von Gaertringen (FIG. 1), excavator of Ancient Thera¹, donated to the Numismatic Museum at Athens a highly important numismatic find, discovered by a farmer in the village of Mesa Gonia², in the wider area of Episkopi. Hiller von Gaertringen's experience and insightfulness, but mainly his view that a place's history should be studied over time, led him to purchase the find and then to donate it to the Greek State. A laudable and moving gesture that bespeaks a virtuous and cultured scholar (FIGS 2-3).

The said coin hoard not only enriches the still patchy historical testimony we have with respect to Byzantine Thera but also, as we shall see in due course, constitutes a critical document for extracting conclusions relating the area of Mesa Gonia (FIG. 4) in the early thirteenth century.

The hoard comprises 450 coins, billon *aspra trachea* (*stamena*)³, spanning a period of some forty years, from 1167 to 1208⁴. Specifically, the quantitative distribution by emperors or issuing authorities of the coins in it presents the following picture: seven (7) coins of emperor Manuel I Komnenos (1143–1180) (FIG. 5)⁵, sixty-five (65) coins of emperor Isaac II Angelos (1185–1195) (FIG. 6)⁶, one hundred and one (101) of Alexios III Angelos (1195–1204) (FIG. 7)⁷ and twenty-six (26) of the emperor of Nicaea Theodore I Laskaris (1208–1221) (FIG. 8)⁸. It includes also one hundred and sixty (160) of the so-called 'faith-

1 F. Hiller von Gaertringen's five-volume work is to this day an invaluable source of knowledge about Thera in historical times; see Hiller von Gaertringen 1898–1903.

2 ΣΒΘ, no. 107. The coin hoard is since kept in the Numismatic Museum, Athens.

3 For the names *aspron trachy nomisma* (ἄσπρον τραχὺ νόμισμα) and *stamenon* (στάμενον) see indicatively DOC 4.1, 44.

4 The precise dating of the various coin issues of the twelfth and the early thirteenth century, whether of a specific emperor or of the various issuing authorities that were active after 1204, is not possible. Consequently, the dates of issue proposed by different researchers, although based on combinatory criteria – numismatic, historical and in part iconographical – present divergences, sometimes quite significant. The study here follows, in general outline, the chronological scheme of coins given in the publication of the Dumbarton Oaks Numismatic Collection (DOC 4). Personal differentiations from this scheme are noted in the further examination of the hoard.

5 See Table 1.

6 See Table 2.

7 See Table 3.

8 See Table 4.



[FIG. 14]
Billon *aspron trachy*, Latin Imitative,
'Thessalonike', Type A, large module
(after Hendy 1969, Pl. 28.2)



[FIG. 15]
Billon *aspron trachy*, Latin Imitative,
'Thessalonike', Type B, large module
(after Hendy 1969, Pl. 28.5)

Ο «ΘΗΣΑΥΡΟΣ» ΘΗΡΑ/1910: ΣΥΜΒΟΛΗ ΣΤΗΝ ΙΣΤΟΡΙΑ ΤΗΣ ΜΕΣΑ ΓΩΝΙΑΣ ΣΑΝΤΟΡΙΝΗΣ

ΜΕ ΑΥΤΗΝ ΤΗ ΜΕΤΑΘΑΝΑΤΙΑ δημοσίευση της Βάσως Πέννα αποδίδεται στην έρευνα ένας νομισματικός «θησαυρός» που είχε ανακαλυφθεί το 1910 και σχολιάζονται επιμέρους ζητήματα που αναφύονται από την ανάλυσή του. Ταυτόχρονα, μέσω της μελέτης του συγκεκριμένου νομισματικού συνόλου κατατίθεται μια συμβολή για τη μικροϊστορία της Μέσα Γωνιάς και της Θήρας κατά τη μετάβαση από τους μέσους βυζαντινούς χρόνους στους χρόνους της Λατινικής κυριαρχίας.

Το εξεταζόμενο «εύρημα» το είχε εντοπίσει ένας αγρότης στο χωριό Μέσα Γωνιά, στην ευρύτερη περιοχή της Επισκοπής: δωρήθηκε από τον Γερμανό αρχαιολόγο και ανασκαφέα της αρχαίας Θήρας Friedrich Hiller von Gaertringen στο Νομισματικό Μουσείο Αθηνών (επί θητείας Ιωάννη Σβορώνου). Ο «θησαυρός» αποτελείται από 450 χαλκάργυρα *άσπρα τραχέα*, που έχουν εκδοθεί κατά τη διάρκεια μιας τεσσαρακονταετίας περίπου, από το 1167 έως το 1208: 7 νομίσματα του Μανουήλ Α΄ Κομνηνού (1143–1180), 65 νομίσματα του Ισαακίου Β΄ Αγγέλου (1185–1195), 101 του Αλεξίου Γ΄ Αγγέλου (1195–1204), 26 του Θεοδώρου Α΄ Λασκάρως (1208–1221), αυτοκράτορα της Νικαίας, 160 από τις λεγόμενες «πιστές απομιμήσεις», 84 Λατινικές απομιμήσεις μεγάλου μεγέθους και 7 Λατινικές απομιμήσεις μικρού μεγέθους.

Εκτεταμένος σχολιασμός γίνεται ως προς το ζήτημα των λεγόμενων «πιστών απομιμήσεων», κοπών που παλαιότερα είχαν θεωρηθεί απομιμήσεις εκδοθείσες σε εδάφη που είχαν περιέλθει στον έλεγχο των Βουλγάρων (*Bulgarian Imitative trachea*, κατά την άποψη του Άγγλου νομισματολόγου Michael Hendy). Η βουλγαρική προέλευση των συγκεκριμένων νομισματικών εκδόσεων στη συνέχεια αμφισβητήθηκε από άλλους μελετητές (Ι. Τουράτσογλου, D. M. Metcalf, Μ. Οικονομίδου). Η δημοσίευση νομισματικών «θησαυρών» από διάφορα σημεία του ελλαδικού, αιγαιακού και μικρασιατικού χώρου κατέστησε σαφές ότι δεν είναι δυνατόν οι απομιμήσεις αυτές να κυκλοφόρησαν σε περιοχές όπου η παρουσία τους δεν μπορεί να εξηγηθεί γεωγραφικά και ιστορικά, υπό το πρίσμα της υποτιθέμενης σύνδεσης με το Β΄ Βουλγαρικό Βασίλειο. Παράλληλα με την επανεξέταση του ρόλου των κοπών αυτών ξανατίθεται επί τάπητος το θέμα της χρονολόγησής τους: εικάζεται ότι η εμφάνισή τους μπορεί να έγινε μετά από το 1160 περίπου, ενώ η κυκλοφορία τους φαίνεται πιθανό να συνεχίστηκε και ύστερα από το 1204.

Ακολούθως η συζήτηση περιστρέφεται γύρω από τις Λατινικές απομιμήσεις, δηλ. τις εκδόσεις των Λατίνων μετά από την άλωση της Κωνσταντινουπόλεως το 1204. Πρόκειται για εν γένει κακότε-