

Three Hoards of Byzantine Bronze Coins

ALFRED R. BELLINGER

Yale University

IN 1926 A MONEY-CHANGER IN THE PIRAEUS had a lot of 11 scyphate bronze coins whose condition and hard green patina showed that they all belonged together. Since no others like them turned up in the vicinity they may be presumed to have constituted a small hoard. Where they had come from the dealer neither knew nor cared, so that we can hardly use them as proof of the circulation of these types in Greece. They do, however, call attention to a difference between Athens and Corinth which is interesting. The coins are as follows:

MANUEL I 1143–1180

1–2 Christ bearded seated on throne without back. Weakly struck and obscure.

Rev. No inscription visible. On l. Manuel holding in r. short labarum, in l. globus cruciger. On r. Virgin crowning him.

Imperial Byzantine Coins in the British Museum
(cited as *BMC*) 575f. Type 11, 40–51. Pl. LXX, 4

ISAAC II 1185–1195

3 The Virgin seated. Almost obliterated.

Rev. To r. ΔΕC/Π/T/HC. Double struck: a second inscription. Isaac standing holding in r. cross, in l. anexikakia.¹ Pl. 8, fig. 1

BMC 592f. Type 4, 19–31. Pl. XXII, 5, 6

ALEXIOUS III 1195–1203

4–5 +KERO HΘEI Bust of Christ beardless. To l. and r.
IC XC

Rev. To r. TΩ. On l. Alexius holding in r. labarum. On r. St. Constantine holding in l. labarum. They hold globus cr. between them. Pl. 8, fig. 2,3.

BMC 603f. Type 4, 20–36. Pl. LXXIII, 8–12

The two legible letters of the reverse inscription suggest that these pieces belong to *BMC* variety 2 which has the name Comnenus.

THEODORE I LASCARIS 1204–1222

6–11 $\overline{M-P}$ to l. $\overline{\Theta V}$ to r. The Virgin enthroned holding the infant Christ.

Rev. ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟC to l. ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟC to r. Theodore and St. Theodore standing facing. The emperor holds labarum in r., the Saint holds spear in l. They hold patriarchal cross between them. Pl. 8, fig. 4, 5

Coins of the Vandals, Ostrogoths and Lombards in the British Museum, 207–209, 4–11, Pl. XXVIII, 6–XXIX, 2.

All of these types are well known and their association is one of many instances of the continuity of coinage after the taking of Constantinople in 1204 which is somewhat obscured by our habit of treating the Empire of Nicaea as if it were a

¹This object, generally called “mappa,” “volumen,” or “sword in sheath” in the catalogues, is a little sack of silk filled with dust from the tombs to symbolize mortality, which is one of the ceremonial objects pertaining to the emperor. Constantine Porphyrogenetus, *Livres des Cérémonies*, ed. Vogt, Vol. 1 (text) Book I, Chap. 1, p. 20, line 11; (commentary) 71f.

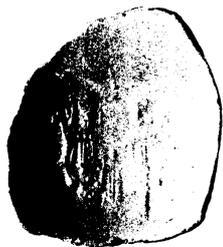
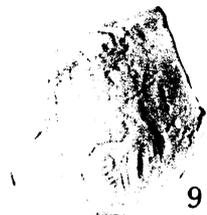
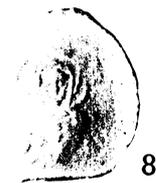
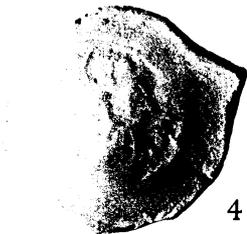
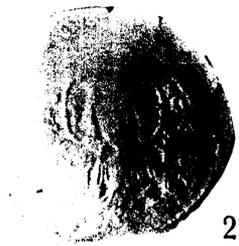
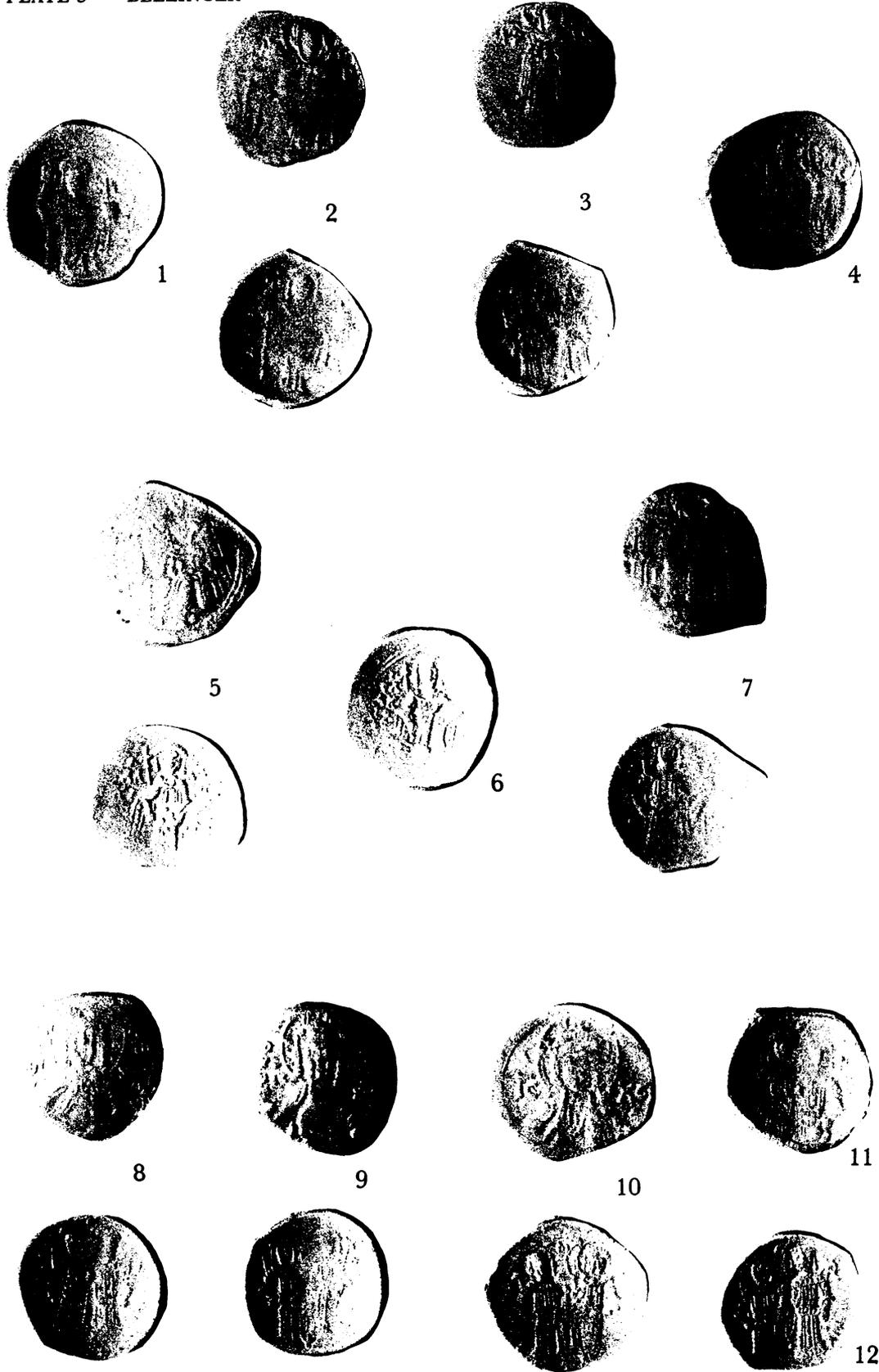


PLATE 9 BELLINGER



ISTANBUL HOARD

thing apart. In Asia the coins of Theodore circulated with those of his predecessors and it need occasion no surprise to find them in the same little hoard.

What does provoke thought is to see how much better this hoard acquired at the Piraeus agrees with the evidence from Corinth than it does with that from Athens. Of this type of Manuel there are 6 specimens published from the excavations at Corinth² but none from those at Athens.³ This may not seem a difference worth noting, but it is only a detail of a striking picture if viewed as a whole. From Corinth there are 1509 coins of Manuel (all bronze) of which 299 are scyphate. Athens, on the other hand, has the staggering total of 3775 coins of Manuel (all bronze except one) of which only 16 are scyphate! These are certainly figures too large to be ignored. Six types are represented:

- 1 Christ seated/Manuel crowned by the Virgin. *BMC* Type 11
- 2 Similar/Manuel with cross and globus. *BMC* Type 12
- 3 Virgin seated/ Manuel with labarum and anexikakia. *BMC* Type 13, p. 577, 58
- 4 Similar/ Manuel with labarum and globus. *BMC* Type 13, p. 577, 56f.
- 5 Christ seated/ Manuel with anexikakia and globus. Sabatier II, 209, 14
- 6 Bust of Christ/ Similar. Sabatier II, 210, 18

The distribution between them is very uneven:

	CORINTH	ATHENS
1	6	
2	6	
3	184	
4	15	
(3 or 4)	43	14
5	30	1
6		1

² Katherine M. Edwards, *Corinth Vol. VI The Coins* (Cambridge, 1933).

³ Margaret Thompson, *The Athenian Agora Vol. II The Coins* (Princeton, 1954).

Figures such as these invite investigation of the other emperors included in this hoard to see whether the difference between the two cities is maintained. Here, in brief, is the record of the scyphate bronze.

ANDRONICUS

None from either excavation.

ISAAC II

Four types:

- 1 Virgin seated/ Isaac and St. Michael. Sabatier II, 223, 3
- 2 Similar/ Isaac and St. George. *BMC* Type 3
- 3 Similar/ Isaac with cross and anexikakia. *BMC* Type 4
- 4 Christ seated/ Similar. *BMC* Type 5

Distribution:

	CORINTH	ATHENS
1		1
2		3
3	1	4
4		1

ALEXIUS III

Three types:

- 1 Bust of Christ/ Alexius and St. Constantine. *BMC* Type 4
- 2 Christ seated/ Similar. *Corinth* 147, 157
- 3 Virgin seated/ Alexius enthroned. *Corinth* 147, 158

Distribution:

	CORINTH	ATHENS
1	19	3
2	4	
3	4	

THEODORE I

One type. Distribution:

	CORINTH	ATHENS
	9	1

Though not so remarkable as the figures for Manuel, these later comparisons do emphasize the fact that 12th and 13th century bronze coins occur with varying frequencies in different localities.⁴ This, in turn, suggests that different bronze types may have been struck in different places in spite of the common assumption to the contrary.⁵ Considering the enormous number of coins issued, that assumption hardly seems reasonable, but there will need to be a great deal of material assembled before we are in a position to amend it. As a beginning of the gathering of such material, I offer evidence from two more hoards of the same period.

In 1933 a hoard of several hundred scyphate bronzes turned up in Athens. Unfortunately it was dispersed without accurate record of its whole contents so that I can only present specimens known to have belonged to it without any attempt at completeness.

MANUEL I 1143–1180

1–3 Christ bearded seated

Rev. Manuel with short labarum and globus cr. being crowned by the Virgin.⁶ Pl. 8, fig. 6
BMC 575f. Type 11

4–6 The Virgin seated

Rev. Manuel with long labarum and anexikakia
BMC 576f. Type 13

7–17 Similar types

Pl. 8, figs. 7,8

The remarkable thing about these pieces is that they are very small, as may be seen on the plate.

⁴I deal here only with the scyphate types, but the same is true of the flat bronzes.

⁵*BMC* p. xcix "From the sole reign of Constantine VIII (A.D. 1025) onwards, all coins seem to have emanated from the capital."

⁶I will make no attempt to record the inscriptions of this hoard except where they are critical. As usual on such coins they are always incomplete and generally illegible.

ISAAC II 1185–1195

18 The Virgin seated on throne with back

Rev. Isaac with cross and anexikakia Pl. 8, fig. 9
BMC 592f. Type 4

ALEXIUS III 1195–1203

19 Bust of youthful Christ. K]ERO to l., HΘ[ΕΙ to r.

Rev. Alexius with short labarum and St. Constantine, nimbate, with short labarum holding globus cr. between them. To r. KTUM ? Pl.8, fig.10
BMC 603f. Type 4, Variety 2

The incomplete and garbled inscription seems to be part of the name Comnenus.

20, 21 Similar without inscription

Rev. Similar. No visible inscription. Pl. 8, figs. 11, 12
 These are of rough and peculiar style.

THEODORE I OF NICAEA 1204–1222

22–24 The Virgin seated on throne without back.

Rev. Theodore with short labarum and St. Theodore with spear holding patriarchal cross between them. Pl. 8, fig. 13
BMC Vandals etc., 207–209, 4–11

This body of material, incomplete though it is, shows the need for caution in reaching conclusions. On the basis of comparison with the excavations, the Piræus Hoard looked as though it were not typical of Athens, but the second hoard confirms it as thoroughly as one could ask. It was much larger and Manuel was represented by Type 13 in considerable quantity which the Piræus Hoard did not include, but otherwise the issues which we have are identical. Moreover, the fabric is similar in the two collections. The flans are rough and irregular and sometimes cracked by the process of striking. The legends are seldom visible, and the whole level of workmanship is uniformly low. The identity of fabric between the

issues of Theodore and his predecessors is food for thought. By hypothesis his mint should be Nicæa alone. Is it possible that he actually controlled other mints as well?

The most interesting feature of the large Athens Hoard is the number of little pieces of Manuel, Type 13, Pl. 8, figs. 7, 8. A similar piece is published by Hugh Goodacre, *A Handbook of the Coinage of the Byzantine Empire*, p. 279, as a "half nomisma." It is true that not only the flan but the die as well is very much smaller than normal, the latter being 13–16 mm. instead of 20 mm. and over. The difference is so noticeable that they may have been intended as fractions though, in our state of entire ignorance as to the value of these coins, we can hardly do more than admit the possibility. Such little bronzes would be generally overlooked by collectors and it is not surprising that Goodacre's specimen seems to have been the first one described, but there is reason to think that search might reveal more than would be suspected. At any rate I acquired two in Athens in 1926 which therefore had no connection with this hoard. We have first-hand evidence that they do occur in Athens; whether they come from other parts of the empire remains to be seen.

Very different in appearance from the foregoing are the contents of a hoard of uncertain size parts of which were in the hands of dealers in Istanbul in 1933. The specimens known to me are probably only a part, but are likely to be fairly representative. They are as follows:

MANUEL...I 1143–1180

1–3 No inscription. Christ bearded seated on throne without back. To l. and r. $\overline{\text{IC}}$ $\overline{\text{XC}}$.

Rev. To l.]HΛ, above, $\overline{\text{M-P}}$, to r. $\overline{\text{ΘV}}$ and ΔΕCΠ[
On l. Manuel, holding in r. short labarum, in l. globus cr. On r. Virgin crowning him.

BMC 575, Type 11, 40–46

4–8 No inscription. The Virgin seated on throne without back. To l. and r. $\overline{\text{M-P}}$ $\overline{\text{ΘV}}$

Rev. MAN 8 HΛ to l., ΔΕCΠOTHC to r. Manuel hold-

ing in r. long labarum, in l. globus cr. Pl. 9, figs. 1,2
BMC 576f. Type 13, 56f.

ANDRONICUS I 1183–1185

9–13 The Virgin standing. To l. and r. $\overline{M-P}$ $\overline{\Theta V}$

Rev. ANΔPONIKOC to l., ΔΕCΠIOTHC to r. On l. Andronicus holding in r. short labarum, in l. globus cr. On r. Christ crowning him. Pl. 9, figs. 3,4
BMC 584f., Type 3

ISAAC II 1185–1195

14–17 The Virgin seated on throne with back. To l. and r. $\overline{M-P}$ $\overline{\Theta V}$

Rev. ICAAKIIOC to l., ΔΕCΠIOTHC to r. in columns varying divisions. Isaac holding in r. cross, in l. anexikakia. Pl. 9, figs. 5–7
BMC 592f., Type 4, 19–29

ALEXIUS III 1195–1203

18–21 KERO to l. HΘEI to r. Bust of youthful Christ. To l. and r. \overline{IC} \overline{XC}

Rev. AΛΕΞIΩ (1 specimen) to l., TΩ[or ΩK[to r. On l. Alexius holding in r. short labarum, on r. St. Constantine, nimbate, holding in l. short labarum; they hold globus cr. between them. Pl. 9, figs. 8,9,11
BMC 602f., Type 4

It is impossible to tell whether the traces of letters on the right of the reverse are part of “Constantine” (Variety 1) or of “Comnenus” (Variety 2).

22–23 No inscription. Similar type.

Rev. AΛΕΞIIOC (1 specimen). Similar type. Pl. 9, figs. 10,12

The most evident novelty here is the neatness of the flans. Even when they are of irregular shape (e.g. Pl. 9, fig. 7) the rims are smooth and there are no cracks from striking. They were evidently manufactured with greater skill and care; some

of them at least were silvered. Comparison of the plates will show a difference that is more striking still with the coins themselves in hand. It is hard to believe that they are products of the same mint.

Theodore is not included in the hoard from Istanbul; otherwise the period covered is the same. But there are differences. Whereas the specimens of Manuel, Type 13 in the Athens Hoard, both large and small, show the emperor holding the *anexikakia* (like *BMC* 577, 58 except that the reverse inscription is there in columns instead of around the coin), those in the Istanbul Hoard all hold the *globus cr.* (like *BMC* 577, 56f.). Moreover, Andronicus is well represented, who was not found in the hoards from Greece nor in the Corinth and Agora excavations (though his bronze of flat fabric occurs in both places).

It would be rash to base any conclusions on evidence so slight, but I believe enough has been produced to encourage the hope that further investigation may lead to a sorting out of this material, hitherto uncritically combined.