

ALBERTO D'ANDREA – DOMENICO LUCIANO MORETTI – ANDREA TORNO GINNASI, *Byzantine Coinage of the Comnenian Dynasty*. [Roseto degli Abruzzi]: Edizioni D'Andrea s.n.c., 2025. 262 pp. and a brochure (4 pp.). – ISBN 979-12-82072-01-4

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The coinage of the Komnenian dynasty that ruled in Byzantium between 1081 and 1185, along with that of its successors, the Angeloi (1185–1204), had been misunderstood by numismatists for decades. Its mysteries were solved by MICHAEL HENDY in his 1969 ground-breaking book, whose content was partly completed and updated by the same author in the fourth volume of the *Dumbarton Oaks catalogues* published in 1999.¹ Since then, the general outline of coin production under the Komnenoi and the Angeloi remains unaltered. At the same time, a great number of publications that came to light between 1969 and 1999 but also later have refined our knowledge on different aspects of the numismatic activity of the period 1081–1204. This fact demonstrates the potential for improvements in our understanding of this coinage and the continuous interest in it by numismatists and collectors alike.

The book by ALBERTO D'ANDREA, DOMENICO LUCIANO MORETTI and ANDREA TORNO GINNASI is the latest addition to this long list of publications, while forming part of a series by the Edizioni D'Andrea with annual publications devoted to Byzantine coinage.² Despite its title, which mentions only the Komnenian dynasty, the book's chronological limits are

1. MICHAEL F. HENDY, *Coinage and Money in the Byzantine Empire, 1081–1261* (*Dumbarton Oaks Studies* 12). Washington DC 1969; IDEM, *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection*, vol. 4. Washington DC 1999 (henceforth DOC 4).

2. ALBERTO D'ANDREA – CESARE CONSTANTINI – MARCO RANALLI, *Byzantine Coinage in Italy, Volume I*. Acquaviva Picena (AP) 2015; ALBERTO D'ANDREA – ANDREA TORNO GINNASI, *Byzantine Coinage in Italy, Volume II*. Acquaviva Picena (AP) 2016; ALBERTO D'ANDREA – CESARE CONSTANTINI – ANDREA TORNO GINNASI, *Byzantine Coinage in Italy, Volume III*. Acquaviva Picena (AP) 2017; ALBERTO D'ANDREA – ANDREA TORNO GINNASI, *Byzantine Coinage in Africa and Spain*. Acquaviva Picena (AP) 2018; ALBERTO D'ANDREA – DOMENICO LUCIANO MORETTI – ANDREA TORNO GINNASI, *Byzantine Coinage in the East, Volume I*. Acquaviva Picena (AP) 2019; ALBERTO D'ANDREA – ALAIN GENNARI – ANDREA

larger and encompass the whole period from the ascension to the throne of Alexios I Komnenos (1081–1118) to the fall of Constantinople to the Crusaders in 1204.

The book is divided into chapters, each of them focusing on an emperor of the period, regardless whether he issued his own coinage or not. Thus, the reader will find small chapters devoted to Alexios II Komnenos (1180–1183) (pp. 170–173), Alexios V Mourtzouflos (1204) (pp. 221–222) and Constantine Lascaris (1204) (pp. 223–224), to whom no numismatic issues have been ascribed to date. Along with the numismatic production of the emperors of Constantinople, are also presented the coinages of two usurpers, Isaac Komnenos of Cyprus (1185–1191) (pp. 225–238) and Theodore Mankaphas (1188–1189; 1204–1206) respectively (pp. 239–245). Each chapter is composed of three parts: a short introduction to the reign; a presentation of the relevant coinage by mint; and a catalogue of the reign's coinage with detailed descriptions and illustrations. An Italian translation of parts one and two follows. Chapters dealing with emperors, usurpers and their coin production, are preceded by a long chapter (pp. 7–43) devoted to the anonymous *folles* (970–1092), a copper coinage that bears religious iconography and inscriptions without any reference to the ruler that issued it. Some chapters have been written by one of the authors, other are the product of collaborative work (pp. 5–6). The whole is lavishly illustrated with high quality images of the discussed coin issues, which, as can be deduced from the list of illustrations (pp. 251–262), originate almost entirely from auctions. The book is completed by the bibliography – where, however, the page numbers for articles and book chapters are not given – and a four-pages brochure with indicative market values for the discussed coin types. The latter inclusion reveals that the book is primarily intended for collectors.

In both structure and content, the book by D'ANDREA et al. follows closely DOC 4, from which particularly extensive excerpts are cited verbatim in the

TORNO GINNASI, *Byzantine Coinage in the East*, Volume II. Acquaviva Picena (AP) 2020; ALBERTO D'ANDREA – ALAIN GENNARI – ANDREA TORNO GINNASI, *Byzantine Coinage in the East*, Volume III. Acquaviva Picena (AP) 2021; ALBERTO D'ANDREA – ALAIN GENNARI – STEVE MANSFIELD – ANDREA TORNO GINNASI, *Byzantine Coinage of Constantinople*, Volume I. Bari 2022; ALBERTO D'ANDREA – DOMENICO LUCIANO MORETTI – ANDREA TORNO GINNASI, *Byzantine Coinage of Constantinople*, Volume II. Bari 2023; ALBERTO D'ANDREA – ALAIN GENNARI – DOMENICO LUCIANO MORETTI – ANDREA TORNO GINNASI, *Byzantine Coinage of Constantinople*, Volume III. Bari 2024.

footnotes. The classifications and attributions to emperors, usurpers and mints of DOC 4 are fully endorsed by the authors. At the same time, an effort is made to update DOC 4 with new types or varieties that came to light in recent decades (see for example, pp. 15, 46, 226 and n. 7). These are almost entirely made on the basis of the catalogue by VALENTIN MARCHEV and ROBERT WACHTER.³

Only two choices of the authors diverge from the model set by DOC 4. The first one is their decision to begin the book with a chapter devoted to the anonymous *folles*, which started being minted more than a century before the rise of the Komnenoi to power. Although it is not stated anywhere, one could suppose that this choice was dictated by the fact that the last two classes of anonymous *folles*, Classes J (1081–1087) and K (1081–1092), were issued by Alexios I Komnenos before the implementation of his numismatic reform in 1092, a reform that changed radically the Byzantine monetary system and set the standard for the centuries to come. In any case, since the chapter on Alexios I deals also with the rest of his pre-reform denominations, the long discussion of the anonymous *folles* seems an awkward and rather unnecessary addition.

The second one is the omission of any discussion regarding the *folles* of Trebizond, which were minted in the capital of Pontos in the last quarter of the eleventh and the beginning of the twelfth century. Although this coinage has been recognized as semi-autonomous, it falls within the chronological limits of the book and should have formed part of it.⁴ Nowhere is the rationale behind the choice to omit the discussion of the Trapezuntine *folles* explained.

Another choice of the authors, which, in this reviewer's view, represents the book's main shortcoming, is the omission of direct references to the large bibliography on the coinage of the Komnenoi and Angeloi. Instead, references are made almost exclusively to more general publications – namely DOC 4 and MARCHEV – WACHTER 2011. If this publication is indeed intended as an updated handbook for the collector, the addition of the relevant bibliography would have provided him/her with all the necessary tools to consolidate and expand his/her knowledge on the coinage of the period.

3. VALENTIN MARCHEV – ROBERT WACHTER, *Catalogue of the Late Byzantine Coins, 1081–1453. Volume I, 1081–1261. Byzantine Imperial Coinage from Alexius I to Alexius IV, Isaac of Cyprus, Bulgarian and Latin Imitative Coinage, Despotate of Thessalonica, Despotate of Epirus*. Veliko Tarnovo 2011 (henceforth MARCHEV – WACHTER 2011).

4. For this reason, the coinage of Trebizond is included in DOC 4, pp. 427–434.

In any case, an introductory note on the scopes and methodology of the book would have helped the reader to better understand the choices made by the authors.

A final note should be made regarding the terminology and the translation of inscriptions. In general, the authors characterize the different denominations according to DOC 4 and thus no significant problems are observed in terms of terminology. It should be noted however that the debased *tetarteron* of the pre-reform period is not a *histamenon tetarteron* (pp. 82, 85), but a *tetarteron nomisma*. Moreover, the term *scyphate* used by the authors for denominations of concave shape has long been recognized as referring to coins of the eleventh century and should not be used in order to describe twelfth-century concave coins, a use based on a false etymology from the Greek *skyphos*.⁵

More problematic are the translations – and in some cases the transcriptions – of several coin inscriptions, since these are not offered in DOC 4. A few examples:

p. 84, nos 14–15: ΚΕ ΡΘ ΑΛΕΞΙΩ (Mother of God Alexius) *recte* Lord help Alexios

p. 85, no. 18: ΙΜΗΔΟΙΓΛΟ ΑΛΕΞΙΩ ΔΕCΠ (Christ help Alexius Despot) *recte* Saint Demetrios (retrograde inscription) Alexios despot

+ ΧΕ ΡΟΗΘΕΙ ΑΛΕΞΙΩ ΔΕCΠΟΤΗ ΤΩ ΚΟΜΝΗΝΩ (Mother of God help Alexius despot from Komnenos) *recte* Christ help Alexios Komnenos despot

p. 123, no. 67: ΚΕ ΡΟΗΘΕΙ (Mother of God) *recte* Lord help

p. 235, no. 151: ΚΕ ΒΟΗΘΗ (Lord Protector) *recte* Lord help

Cruciform monogram ΙCΑΚΑΠΤ (Isaac) *recte* ἸCΑΑΚΔCΠΤ Isaac despot

In sum, ALBERTO D'ANDREA, DOMENICO LUCIANO MORETTI and ANDREA TORNÒ GINNASI have produced an updated handbook of the coinage of the Komnenoi and the Angeloi covering the period between 1081 and 1204, useful mainly to collectors and numismatic amateurs who will find an outline of the numismatic production of the period illustrated with high resolution photographs of actual coins.

Keywords

Byzantine numismatics

5. PHILIP GRIERSON, *Nummi scyphati*: The Story of a Misunderstanding. Numismatic Chronicle 11 (1971) pp. 253–260.