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THE EXCAVATION AT TEGEA: THE NUMISMATIC MATERIAL

The coin material from Tegea was studied on-site during the field season of 1994. Pre-monetary layers had been reached during the 1993 season, and more coins were not expected during the work in the following seasons.

At first 38 coins and coin-like objects had been identified and labelled by the excavation team. During preliminary studies of this material, 24 of these were ruled out as possible coins. We were left with the limited number of 15 clearly identifiable numismatic objects. Due to the high standard of excavation methods in general and the extensive use of sifting, one might have expected the number of coins to be higher.

The coins cover a long time span, from the 4th century B.C. until the end of the 17th century A.D., *i.e.* approximately 2100 years. Virtually every century from the 4th century B.C. to the 3rd century A.D. is represented. The absence of Late Roman and Early Byzantine coinages is striking, but the identification and estimated chronology of several bronze coins is insecure due to heavy corrosion and the badly preserved state of the coins.

List of coins, with commentaries¹

Co 1 Attica, Athens. Obol, ca. 430–415 B.C. *Pl. 1*
Obv. Head of Athena in Attic helmet facing r.
Rev. Owl; olive-branch; **ΑΘ|Ε**
 AR 9 0.70 g.
 Inv. no. 3829 (Tex no. 365). Location, F. no.: C9-C10/09-3 (layer with marble chips, Late Classical/mixed).
 Kroll and Walker 1993, 19 no. 13.a–q, pl. 2.

This Athenian obol is apparently the oldest securely dated coin among the excavated coin finds. The obols, as the other coin series of Athens, are difficult to date with a high degree of accuracy, and the dating of these issues has been controversial. The chronology of the Classical issues has been partly revised after the publication of the excavated coins from the Athenian Agora.² The removal of the Athenian League treasury from Delos to Athens in 454 B.C. gave rise to a huge output from the Athenian mint, and the so-called ‘standardized’ type developed as a result

of the industrial mass-production of coins. The obol found in Tegea belongs to this very active period of minting, probably late in the period that ended about 415–413 due to loss of income from the allies and from the silver mines of Laurion. Thus, the most probable date of this obol is between 430 and 415 B.C. Small change of this kind appears in stray finds all across Attica and the Peloponnese.

It is worth mentioning that coins of a similar type, with Athena in an Attic helmet and an owl on the reverse, were issued by the mint of Tegea itself in the period about 370–350.³ These silver issues did not, however, weigh less than about 2.50 g (hemidrachms), as compared to the much lighter Athenian coins of 0.70 g. Smaller silver issues were minted at Tegea in the previous period, *i.e.* obols with weights around 0.90 g. These issues are easily distinguished from the Athenian owl-type by their motifs. It is difficult to estimate the time of circulation of the small silver fraction from Athens. A significant degree of wear is apparent, but whether this was caused by intensive and/or long use (the context is about a century later than the coin itself), or by wear and tear from being buried in the earth, is almost impossible to determine – especially if water had been running through the layers where the coin was found.

Co 2 Greek bronze coin, ca. 4th–2nd century B.C. (?) *Pl. 1*
 The shape of the flan, small diameter and thickness are the only indications supporting the dating of the coin.
Obv. Helmeted head facing r.
Rev. Obliterated pattern.
 Æ - 1.00 g, 9.5–10 mm.
 Inv. no. 3623 (Tex no. 152). Location, F. no.: C7/44-1 (destruction of the temple, Late Antique).

Co 3 Greek bronze coin, ca. 3rd–1st century B.C. (?) *Pl. 1*
 Irregular flan; damaged with heavy corrosion.
Obv. Traces of pattern; border of dots (?)
Rev. Border of dots (?)
 Æ - 7.5–9 mm.
 Inv. no. 3589. Location, F. no.: C6/08-1 (Early Medieval alluvial layer).

Co 4 Greek bronze coin, ca. 4th–2nd century B.C. (?) *Pl. 1*
 Regularly shaped flan; flan is relatively thick (2 mm).
Obv. Border of dots (?)

¹ Die positions are given clockwise.

² Kroll and Walker 1993.

³ Walker 2006, 353 nos 1724.1–4.

Rev. Traces of obliterated pattern.

Æ - 7 mm.

Inv. no. 3590. Location, F. no.: C6/06-2 (Early Medieval alluvial layer).

Co 5 Bronze coin from Mantinea, Arcadia; ca. 330–300 B.C. *Pl. 1*

Obv. Helmeted head of Athena facing r.

Rev. Trident.

Æ - 1.30 g, 12 mm.

Inv. no. 3731 (Tex no. 265). Location: C9-C10/07 (Roman?). Walker 2006, 353 nos 1485.1–4; *SNG Copenhagen*, 253.

The combined motifs of a helmeted Athena on the obverse and a trident on the reverse point towards a series of bronze coins issued by Mantinea late in the 4th century B.C. A trident occurs also on the bronzes of Troizen in the 4th and 3rd centuries B.C.⁴ and on the very rare bronze series from 4th-century Helike,⁵ but none of these have matching obverses. The circulation of coins from Mantinea in the vicinity of Tegea is furthermore attested by a hoard from the “Tegea environs” recorded in 1875.⁶

Co 6 Greek bronze coin (?), ca. 4th century B.C. (?) *Pl. 1*

Obv. Helmeted head facing r.

Rev. Traces of inscription and (floral?) pattern. Reverse has concave shape.

Æ - 1.70 g, 13 mm.

Inv. no. 3793 (Tex no. 328). Location, F. no.: C7/69-2 (the Byzantine pit).

The obverse of this severely damaged coin probably depicts Athena with an Attic helmet. The most obvious place to search for parallels is, thus, Tegea itself. The Tegeans issued bronze coins with a similar obverse motif in two periods: first in the 360s with an owl as the reverse motif, and then, about three decades later, another issue with a standing rooster on the reverse.⁷ Neither motif can match the (almost obliterated) traces of the pattern on the reverse of this particular coin. Other local, *i.e.* Peloponnesian, parallels were minted by Aegira in the 360s–350s (forepart of a goat on the reverse), include 4th-century issues from Heraia (**H** on the reverse), and late 4th-century issues from Mantinea (with standing Poseidon on the reverse). None of these reverse motifs bears any resemblance to the bronze coin found at Tegea. The transition, late in the 4th or early in the 3rd century B.C., towards showing Athena with a Corinthian instead of an Attic helmet on the Peloponnesian coinage in general, makes it reasonable to suggest a date in the 4th century for this coin. This suggestion, although far from verified, is supported by the size and shape of the flan.

Co 7 Greek bronze coin (?), ca. 1st century B.C. – 1st century A.D. (?) *Pl. 1*

Obv. Head facing r. (?); traces of border of dots or inscription with small lettering.

⁴ *SNG Copenhagen*, 159.

⁵ Walker 2006, no. 497.

⁶ *IGCH* 29.

⁷ Walker 2006, nos 1728 and 1734.

Rev. Damaged by corrosion.

Æ - 1.00 g, 12–13 mm.

Inv. no. 3868 (Tex no. 404). Location, F. no.: C5-C6/75a-3 (perhaps Classical).

Co 8 Roman provincial bronze coin, Commodus or Lucius Verus (?) *Pl. 1*

Time of Antoninus Pius to Septimius Severus (A.D. 138–192).

Obv. Laureate head of emperor facing r.

Rev. Altar or tripod (?)

Æ 1 5.30 g, 20–21 mm.

Inv. no. 3722 (Tex no. 255). Location: E7/07 (medieval).

Co 9 Aurelian, A.D. 270–275. Antoninian. A.D. 274/5. Mediolanum (?) *Pl. 1*

Obv. Radiate bust of emperor facing r.; **IMP C A[VRELIANV] S AV[G]**; border of dots.

Rev. Sol walking l.; l. arm raised; holding globe in r. hand; at feet, two captives seated with arms tied behind their backs; **ORIENS AVG**; in exergue. **P C**; border of dots.

Billon 12 3.40 g, 20–23 mm.

Inv. no. 3610 (Tex no. 139). Location: D10 (modern fill). *RIC* 150.

The coin comes from the fourth *officina* (cf. the letters **P C** on the reverse). The city of Mediolanum received a fourth *officina* late in Aurelian’s reign, and thus the coin can be safely dated to the year 274/5 A.D., *i.e.* it belongs to Period 3 of Aurelian’s coins. The absence of comparative material from this period makes it difficult to establish a probable time of circulation for this coin, but it remains the most accurately dated coin from Tegea. For this reason it is a pity that it was not found in a good context.

Co 10 Unidentified bronze coin; Late Antique or Byzantine (?) *Pl. 1*

Thin flan, apparently containing a high percentage of brass. Low relief. Traces of inscription, irregular letter-forms with long, thin lines and dots in the line crossings.

Obv. Damaged by corrosion.

Rev. Damaged by corrosion.

Æ - 1.10 g, 12–13 mm.

Inv. no. 3664 (Tex no. 193). Location, F. no.: C7/50-1 (destruction of the temple, Late Antique).

Co 11 Abbasid, Western province (Crete or Krim?). Harun al-Rashid, ca. 850 A.D. *Fig. 1; Pl. 1*

Uncertain type, but cf. M.B. Mitchiner, *The world of Islam*, London 1977, 115 no. 533.

Perforated so that the *kalima* is in a regular, upright position when used as a pendant.

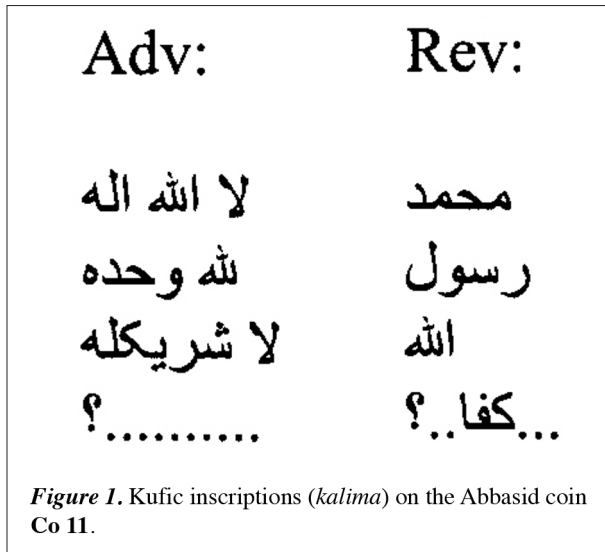
Obv. *Kalima* in Cufic script (“There is no God but Allah, who has no Associate”); double border of dots.

Rev. *Kalima* in Cufic script (“Mohammed is the prophet of Allah”); name of ruler; double border of dots.

AE 12 [1.70], 20–22 mm.

Inv. no. 3729 (Tex no. 263). Location: E7/08 (modern village).

The coin is perforated so that the *kalima* is read in a regular, upright position. This indicates that the secondary



treatment was done well before the coin arrived in Tegea and thus that it did not have a monetary function locally. The deliberate position of the perforation indicates that the coin was used as an amulet, a piece of jewellery, or had a similar, decorative purpose. One can speculate that the coin was brought to Tegea by Byzantine traders or other travellers after returning from journeys to Crete.⁸ The Greeks regained control over Crete from 960, and it is a likely possibility that an Abbasid provincial coin could be used as an amulet at that time.

Co 12 Byzantine. Anonymous bronze *folles*. Unknown mint; 11th century A.D. (before 1092). *Pl. 1*

The porous and shiny surface might indicate that the bronze-alloy contains a high percentage of zinc and lead.

Obv. Bust of Christ *en face* with nimbus; r. hand raised in benediction.

Rev. Latin cross with globule and two pellets at each extremity; in the centre, **X**; in lower field, on either side, floral ornament; in upper field, on either side, crescent; border of dots.

Æ 12 4.80 g, 25–26 mm.

Inv. no. 3723 (Tex no. 256). Location: E7/01 (modern village).

J.D. Bateson and I.G. Campbell, *Byzantine and Early Medieval Western European coins in the Hunter Coin Cabinet*, University of Glasgow, London 1998, 106 no. 30.

Although a period of almost a century was dominated by anonymous *folles* (*i.e.* only carrying religious motifs and legends), these coins have received little attention from scholars. Margaret Thompson's publication of the coins from the Athenian Agora⁹ still remains the most frequently used typology. The anonymous *folles* found in Tegea is classified according to her Class I, which is usually attributed to the period of Nicephorus III (1078–81 A.D.). Thompson's chronology and typology is the basis for the catalogue reference given above, although a reference to her publication is not included there. The

question of where these anonymous coins were minted remains unsolved. It has been suggested that they were produced in several small, provincial mints in Greece and Asia Minor,¹⁰ but at present the place of production of the coin found at Tegea remains obscure.

Co 13 Byzantine coin. John II (1118–43 A.D.). *Nomisma*, Constantinople, period III (1125–40 A.D.). *Pl. 1*

Obv. Bearded emperor standing in full figure *en face*; he is crowned by the Virgin standing r. also in full figure *en face*; above, **MP**; in r. field, **ΘV**. The emperor is wearing a crown, jewelled robe and mantle; holding in r. hand, labarum and in l. hand, mappa. The Virgin is wearing nimbus, veil, tunic and mantle; r. hand is raised in benediction. Double border of dots. On l., **ΙW E ΠOΤ**; on r., **WΠPΦV** (IW ΔEΠOTEC TW ΠOΡΦYPOΓEHTWC).

Rev. Bearded Christ enthroned *en face*; in l. hand, the book of Gospels; r. hand outstretched in benediction; he is wearing tunic, mantle and nimbus. Above l., **IC**; on r., **XC**. Double border of dots.

AV 6 4.10 g, 26–29 mm.

Inv. no. 3627 (Tex no. 252). Location: E7/01 (modern village).

BMC, Imperial Byzantine Coins, John II, 29.

Co 14 Republic of Venice, Dalmatia and Albania. *Zara gazetta*, 1691. *Pl. 1*

Obv. Winged half-figure (the lion of St. Marcus) *en face* with halo surrounded by flames; **SANCT MARCV[S]**; in exergue, ***II***.

Rev. **[EN] DALM[A] E[T] ALB[A]**; border of dots or ring.

Æ 12 4.00 g, 25.5–26.5 mm.

Inv. no. 3581 (Tex no. 109). Location: E6/02 (modern village).

Corpus Nummorum Italicorum. Primo tentativo di un catalogo generale delle monete medievali e moderne, coniate in Italia o da italiani in altri paesi, Vol. VI: *Veneto, Dalmatia – Albania*, Milan 1922, 623 no. 43, pl. 34.7.

The *gazetta* from the Republic of Venice is the latest coin among the finds from Tegea. Issued in 1691 it attests to activity at the site in the years around 1700. This precise coin type was once the price of one issue of a local Italian periodical. It has later become the French and Italian name of periodicals and newspapers in general.

Co 15 Coin-like flan/tessera. Possibly of Classical or Hellenistic origin. *Pl. 1*

The **A**-mark has been incised, not struck into the flan.

Obv. Mark, **A**.

Rev. Damaged by corrosion.

Æ - 2.00 g, 21–21.5 mm.

Inv. no. 3601 (Tex no. 130). Location: E6/12 (Late Classical/mixed, and later).

The flan differs from ordinary cast coin flans by being hammered out and cut into shape. Furthermore, the **A**-mark was not impressed by a cut die (as with ordinary coins), but by incision. Whether or not the incision was made originally or was added at a later stage is impossible to

⁸ For these possibilities, see section **xx** (Drocourt), 415–7.

⁹ M. Thompson, *The Athenian Agora II, Coins from the Roman to the Venetian period*, Princeton 1954.

¹⁰ So D.M. Metcalf, "Interpretation of the "Rex Regnantium" folles of class "A", c. 970–1030," *NC* 10, 1970, 199–252.

decide with certainty. Single letters frequently occur on several coin issues from the Peloponnese, e.g. Argos (**A**), Megalopolis (**A**), Heraia (**H**), Mantinea (**M**) and Tegea (**T**). Also worth noting is a unique hemiobol from Olympia¹¹ and a series of unidentified bronze coins, some of which are supposedly from a Peloponnesian hoard of the 2nd century B.C.¹² Furthermore, a single **A**-mark is commonly found on theatre tickets in Athens, and on Byzantine coins of the 7th and 8th centuries A.D. Considering the fabric of the flan and the incised **A**, it is tempting to consider the “coin” as an ancient forgery or, more likely, a jetton, tessera and/or ticket for some kind of public use (e.g. for the theatre). The possibility of a modern origin cannot be ruled out completely, although the context is a good one.

Coins from Tegea

The coins from Tegea are mostly stray coins that probably became interred during ordinary use as means of payment.¹³ There are some exceptions: the Abbasid coin from Crete **Co 11** had probably been used as an amulet (or as jewellery) for a significant period of time before it found its way into the earth; possibly it was brought to Tegea from Crete after the Greeks had regained control of the island in 960. The Byzantine gold coin of John II **Co 13** and the anonymous Byzantine *folles* **Co 12** might be connected with the medieval cemetery, although there are uncertainties concerning their location and contexts.¹⁴ The unidentified bronze coins are probably local currency (i.e. from Peloponnesian mints and/or Achaean/Arcadian League issues), indicated by the general pattern of circulation, use and function of these bronzes.

The nature of the material, first and foremost the small number of coins but also the division of types, state of preservation and lack of context, obviously limits their significance as source material. Studies of circulation patterns, coin importation, chronology and the volume of local coin types, macro-economy and socio-political issues are ruled out. The documented coin finds from the Peloponnese are generally scarce, which makes comparisons difficult. There are today relatively few publications of coin material from archaeological excavations in the Peloponnese; the American excavations of Corinth, Nemea and Halieis and the Canadian excavation of Stymphalos are valuable exceptions,¹⁵ and publications of the French excavation of

Argos and a number of Greek projects are in preparation.¹⁶ A recently published catalogue on the typology, and to a lesser degree the chronology, of the Peloponnesian coinages in general makes the attribution of local types easier and gives us a general outline of the locally produced coinage of Tegea.¹⁷

Coins have previously been found in and around Tegea, and one would expect occasional surface finds of single coins to be the most common find category (although not generally available for scholarly studies). A few coins were found in the sanctuary by the French excavations early in the 20th century.¹⁸ Most important, however, is the large hoard of more than 1000 bronze coins discovered in 1861.¹⁹ The find spot near the village of Hagios Sostis is quite distant from the excavation site in the sanctuary of Athena Alea, and there is no direct connection between this large hoard and the archaeological objects published here.

Tegean coins found outside the vicinity of the city are few and thus deserve mention, although they are hardly significant for this study. A hoard of 172 silver coins was discovered on Zakynthos in 1904; among these coins, buried before ca. 225 B.C., was one Tegean trihemiobol.²⁰ 204 silver coins came to light near Stratos in Acarnania in 1974; the majority of these coins were Corinthian, Elian, Phocian and Sicyonian issues, but a single Tegean hemidrachm was also part of the hoard that was buried about 330 B.C.²¹ Another large hoard was discovered in 1983 near Itea; more than 1500 silver coins were buried during the years 290–270 B.C., and among them were at least two Tegean hemidrachms, possibly more. The composite nature of the hoard is apparent, and cities like Lamia, Pharsalos, Pherae, Opuntian Lokris, Phokis and Boeotia are abundantly represented. The following hoards recorded in *IGCH* also contained Tegean stray coins: Peloponnese, burial dated ca. 350 B.C., one stater (*IGCH* 60); Corinth, burial dated ca. 338 B.C., one bronze coin (*IGCH* 64); Moulki (Sicyon), burial dated ca. 350–325 B.C., four triobols (*IGCH* 67); Peloponnese, burial dated ca. 350–325 B.C., one triobol (*IGCH* 69); Megara, burial dated 295 B.C., one drachm (*IGCH* 137); Thessaly, burial dated ca. 280 B.C., one hemidrachm (*IGCH* 146); Messenia (?), burial dated to the 2nd century B.C., one bronze coin (*IGCH* 301). Two Tegean coins were listed among the coins deposited in the sanctuary at Isthmia in *IGCH* 11, but both have later been correctly attributed to Boeotia.²²

¹¹ Walker 2006, 166 no. 630.

¹² See Walker 2006, 272–3 (lot 1121), with additional references.

¹³ But see section **xx** (Drocourt), 417–8 for evidence for the use of old coins for deposition in Byzantine graves.

¹⁴ For the stratigraphical contexts, see section **iii** (Luce), 37–9 and 41.

¹⁵ See K.M. Edwards, *Corinth VI, The coins*, Cambridge Mass. 1933; R.C. Knapp and J.D. Mac Isaac, *Excavations at Nemea III, The coins*, Berkeley 2005; M.H. McAllister, M.H. Jameson, J.A. Dengate and F.A. Cooper (eds), *The excavations at ancient Halieis I*, Bloomington 2005. On Stymphalos: Walker 2006, 400–1, and the excavation's home page (www.cnrs.ubc.ca/index.php?id=3526).

¹⁶ Walker 2006, Introduction.

¹⁷ Walker 2006; 406 on Tegea.

¹⁸ Dugas, *Sanctuaire*, 133–5, fig. 69: 10 Greek coins, mostly from Tegea and elsewhere in Arcadia.

¹⁹ *IGCH* 265; H. Nicolet-Pierre and M. Oikonomidis, “Le Trésor de Tégée,” *IGCH* 265. Contribution à l'étude du monnayage de bronze Péloponnésien,” *ArchEph* 134, 1995, 77–84; Ziesmann 2005, 197.

²⁰ *CH* VIII.318; *IGCH* 245; H. Nicolet-Pierre and M. Oikonomidis, “La circulation monétaire dans le Péloponnèse et le trésor de Zakynthos (Zante) de 1904 (*IGCH* 245),” *Quaderni ticinesi di numismatica e antichità classiche* 20, 1991, 161–91; Ziesmann 2005, 196.

²¹ *CH* VII.45 and IV.31.

²² H. Nicolet-Pierre, “Monnaies de bronze dans le Péloponnèse: quelques

The best survey of the chronology of Tegean coinage, and by far the most complete survey of types, is at present Walker's publication from 2006.²³ Only additional finds in context can provide sufficient sources for further elaboration on the minting activity at Tegea and the circulation pattern in the area. We must hope that future

activity at the site will prove fruitful for this. For now, the value of the coins from this excavation is limited to the dating of archaeological layers and to attesting to the continuity of human activity at the site.

remarques sur le monnayage de bronze d'Élis et de Tégee," *RN* 153, 1998, 41–4.

²³ Based on the older standard references, with the addition of C. Boehringer, "Zu Chronologie und Interpretation der Münzprägung der Achaïschen Liga nach 146 v. Chr.," *Topoi* 7.1, 1997, 103–8; J.H. Kroll, "Traditionalism vs. romanization in bronze coinages of Greece, 42–21 B.C.," *ibid.* 123–36; J.A.W. Warren, "After the Boehringer revolution, the 'New Landscape' in the coinage of the Peloponnese," *ibid.* 109–14, and *id.* "More on the 'New Landscape' in the Late Hellenistic coinage of the Peloponnese," in M. Amandry and S. Hurter (eds), *Travaux de numismatique grecque offerts à Georges Le Rider*. London 1999, 375–93.

Literature:

CH = *Coin Hoards* I–VIII, London 1975–94.

Kroll and Walker 1993 = J.H. Kroll and A. Walker, *The Athenian Agora* XXVI, *The Greek coins*, Princeton 1993.

Walker 2006 = A. Walker, *Coins of Peloponnesos. The BCD Collection. LHS Auction 96*, LHS Numismatics, Zürich 2006.

Ziesmann 2005 = S. Ziesmann, *Autonomie und Münzprägung in Griechenland und Kleinasien in der Zeit Philipps II und Alexanders des Grossen* (Bochumer Altertumswissenschaftliches Colloquium Bd. 67), Trier 2005.

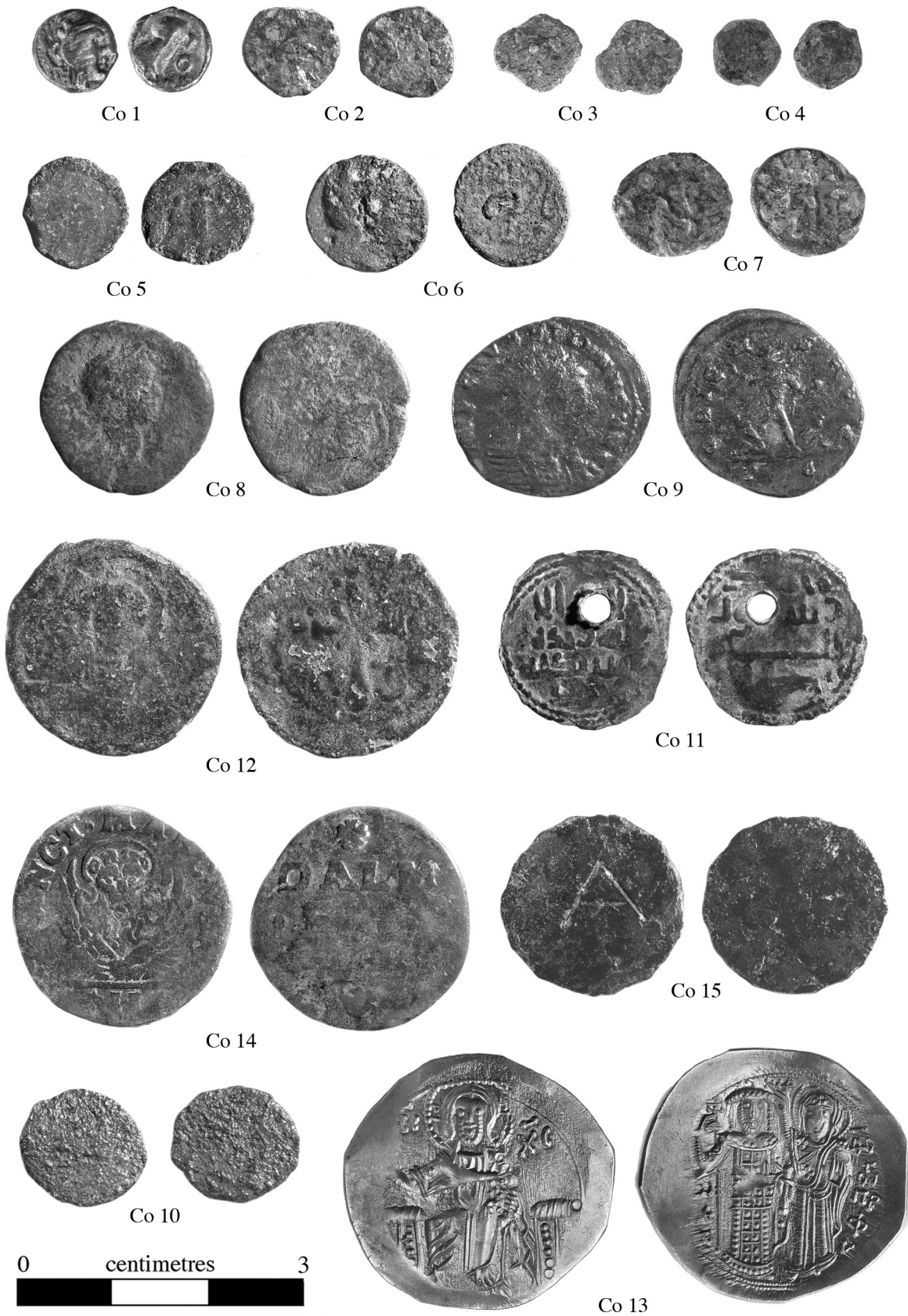


Plate 1. Coins from the excavation.

