

THE SOLIDI OF FOUNDATION DEPOSIT FROM THE EXCAVATION AT KÜÇÜKÇEKMECE LAKE BASIN

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During the 2013 excavation season at Küçükçekmece Lake Basin (İstanbul), seven Byzantine solidi were found in Trench II/27G,¹ at a depth of 3.84 m and within grid plan D. This area is situated on the west side of the lake, north of the Firuzköy Peninsula.² Although it may be called a small hoard, most probably they were placed in the walls or under the foundation walls as “good luck money” to wish good fortune for the building³ (a kind of “foundation deposit”, which was an old and widespread tradition in the Antiquity and Middle Ages). The coins are now kept in the İstanbul Archaeological Museums. Five solidi belong to the reign of Focas (602–610) and two belong to the reign of Heraclius (610–641), all were minted in Constantinople and there is no die-link between them. The average masses of the solidi of Focas and Heraclius are 4.38 g and 4.45 g respectively. The diameters of all coins are nearly same, i.e. 21 mm. While die positions of Focas’s solidi are 6 or 7 o’clock, the Heraclius’s solidi are in the 6 o’clock position. For the burial date it can be suggested that the solidi were placed in the walls probably sometime towards 620, as the last coin dates to 613–c.616. Thus, the building (basilica?), which rises above these foundations, can also be dated to the same period.

FOCAS (602–610)

Constantinople

Solidus

603–607

Obv.: ONFOCAS PERPAVC Bust facing, bearded, wearing cuirass, paludamentum, and crown without pendilia and cross on circlet; holding globus cruciger in right hand.

Rev.: VICTORI AAVCC + officina letter. Angel standing facing, holding in right hand long staff with surmounted by cross+rho at the top and globus cruciger in left hand. In ex., CONOB

1. A/ 4.33 g, 21 mm, dp. 7. Off., Γ. Inv. no. KCG13.ENV.04.⁴

2. A/ 4.38 g, 21 mm, dp. 7. Off., I. Inv. no. KCG13.ENV.07.⁵

607–610

Obv.: dNFOCAS PERPAVC Bust facing, bearded, wearing cuirass, paludamentum, and crown without pendilia and cross on circlet; holding globus cruciger in right hand.

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² The ancient name of the site is uncertain. It might be in the territorium of Byzantium before Constantine the Great and most probably it was a district/quarter of Rhegion. On the north of the lake there was also a settlement called Melentiana/Melantias, which could be a settlement of Late Antiquity. We learn from Ammianus Marcellinus (*Rerum Gestarum*, XXXI.11) that there was an imperial villa at the time of Emperor Valens. Thus, one may suggest that the site, where the solidi of the seventh century were found, was linked to Reginon before Constantine the Great and to Melantias in the Late Roman and Early Byzantine periods. It is hard to say that there was another separate settlement besides Reginon and Melantias at the site in question during the Late Antiquity or before. For Melantias see also Konrad Miller, *Itineraria Romana. Römische Reisewege an der Hand der Tabula Peutingeriana*, Stuttgart, 1916, col. 540.

³ A similar example was at Aenus where ten Byzantine coins of gold dated to 11th/12th centuries were found in a small terracotta cup placed intentionally in the foundation wall of a Byzantine basilica during the construction as a good luck money: Afif Erzen and İsmail Kaygusuz, “Thrakia Enez (Antik Ainos) Kazılarda Bulunan Bizans Altın Sikkeleri”, *Belleten*, 152, 1988, pp. 429–435. For the other hoards found in Thrace, see also Cécile Morrisson, Vladislav Popović and Vujadin Ivanišević, *Les trésors monétaires byzantins des Balkans et d'Asie Mineure (491–713)*, Réalités byzantines 13, Paris, 2006, p. 117 ff.

⁴ Philip Grierson, *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whitemore Collection, vol. II, part 1: Phocas to Theodosius III, 602–717*, Washington, 1968, p. 154, Class III, 5c; Wolfgang Hahn, *Moneta Imperii Byzantini II: Von Justinus II bis Phocas (565–610)*, Wien, 1975, p. 29, no. 7.

⁵ Grierson, *Catalogue*, p. 154, Class III, 5J; Hahn, *Moneta II*, p. 29, no. 7.

Rev.: VICTORIA AVSЧ + officina letter. Angel standing facing, holding in right hand long staff with surmounted by cross+rho at the top and globus cruciger in left hand. In ex., CONOB

3. A/ 4.36 g, 21 mm, dp. 6. Off., E. Inv. no. KCG13.ENV.03.⁶

4. A/ 4.39 g, 21 mm, dp. 6. Off., E. Inv. no. KCG13.ENV.05.⁷

5. A/ 4.46 g, 21 mm, dp. 7. Off., I. Inv. no. KCG13.ENV.01.⁸ Obv. legend begins with dNN.

HERACLIUS (610–641)

Constantinople

Solidus
610–613

Obv.: dNhERACL ΙΨPPAC Bust facing, with short beard, wearing cuirass, paludamentum, and crown with pendilia and cross rising from central

circlet behind which is a plume. In right hand, cross.

Rev.: VICTORIA AVSЧ + officina letter. Cross potent on base and two steps. Beneath, CONOB.

6. A/ 4.46 g, 20 mm, dp. 6. Off., I. Inv. no. KCG13.ENV.02.⁹

613–c.616

Obv.: JJNNhERACLIΨSETERA[CONSTP-PAVC] To left, bust of Heraclius facing, with short beard, wearing chlamys and flat crown with cross. To right, similar but much smaller bust of Heraclius Constantine, beardless. Above, cross.

Rev.: VICTORIA AVSЧ + officina letter. Cross potent on base and three steps. Beneath, CONOB.

7. A/ 4.44 g, 21 mm, dp. 6. Off., E. Inv. no. KCG13.ENV.06.¹⁰ Note: On the rev., to right field, there is an obscure relief which may be a dot or I but not certain.

⁶ Grierson, *Catalogue*, p. 156, Class IV, 10e; Hahn, *Moneta II*, p. 29, no. 9.

⁷ Grierson, *Catalogue*, p. 157, Class IV, 10j; Hahn, *Moneta II*, p. 29, no. 9.

⁸ Grierson, *Catalogue*, p. 157, Class IV, 10j.6; Hahn, *Moneta II*, p. 29, no. 11.

⁹ Grierson, *Catalogue*, p. 245, Class I, 2b; Wolfgang Hahn, *Moneta Imperii Byzantini III: Von Heraclius bis Leo III./Alleinregierung (610–720)*, Wien, 1981, p. 1, no. 3.

¹⁰ Grierson, *Catalogue*, p. 248, Class II, 8e; Hahn, *Moneta III*, p. 1, no. 8.



Find place of the coins.

