

**A GROUP OF COPPER TRACHY OF ALEKSİOS III
ANGELOS (1195-1203) FROM KUVA-Yİ MİLLİYE MUSEUM/
BALIKESİR”THE REPRESENTATION OF SAINT
KONSTANTINOS ON BYZANTINE COIN ICONOGRAPHY
IN THE BEGINNING OF THE 13TH CENTURY”**

Aleksios III Angelos issued copper coins that Saint Konstantinos and Aleksios III Angelos were represented together on the reverse side of them. Saint Konstantinos was firstly introduced to Byzantine coin iconography by Aleksios III Angelos. Why did Aleksios III Angelos choose the figure of Saint Konstantinos in his issues? Did Saint Konstantinos have a special importance for this emperor or was this the only preference of the era? Did Aleksios III Angelos choose the representation of Saint Konstantinos randomly or did the emperor want to give a message to the citizens of Byzantine Empire who were troubled about the decreasing political and economic situation? Was Saint Konstantinos seen as a supporter or saviour of the empire in this era which had a great chaos in political, economical and cultural areas? Throne fights caused confusions and Latins also were about to capture the empire. The public lost their trust to the palace and emperor. Aleksios III Angelos needed to show his citizens the spiritual and heavenly support and renovate the trust of Byzantine people with the help of Saint Konstantinos who was the founder and protector of the empire.

The representations of saints on coins developed simultaneously with the political conditions of the Byzantine Empire. What kind of political and economic conditions caused these changes on coin iconography? Did political needs affect Byzantine coin iconography directly or political conditions and the imperial coin iconography interconnected during the empire? All of these questions were exactly hidden in the coin iconography. Economic and political conditions cooperated with the coin iconography of the empire. The depictions on coins supported the imperial propaganda which focused the emperor, his family and the imperial court. The depictions on Byzantine coins selected meticulously according to its era. When the emperor wanted to show his power, he dressed in military costume such as paludamentum, cuirass and helmet and he held sword or shield. Furthermore, the emperor wanted to prove his divinely support and then he depicted with holy figures such as Christ, Virgin Mary, Saints and

holy creatures such as seraphim and cherubim. In both conditions, whether the support of heavenly court or his military achievements, the coin iconography of the empire shows that the imperial court takes its power from divine authority¹.

Before introducing copper coins of Aleksios III Angelos from Kuva-yi Milliye Museum, we have to learn the progress of the representation of Saints on Byzantine coin iconography. Comnenian Dynasty opened a new era in which the military aristocracy appeared as the center of the power of the Byzantine Empire at the beginning of the eleventh and twelfth centuries². The new military aristocracy settled in Constantinople and these members of the aristocratic families gained power over the empire. Before the sovereignty of the Comnenian Dynasty not even one military- saint depiction was seen on Byzantine coin iconography. Portraits of the great early Christian martyrs became popular in the Comnenian period in the beginning of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. When the Comneni took possession of the throne, they typified the new imperial virtues. The Comnenian emperors also indicated their military interests on their coins. The Comneni preferred to use the depictions of the great military saints. Emperor Aleksios I Komnenos firstly introduced St. Demetrios to Byzantine coin iconography. Emperor Ioannes II Komnenos used the representation of St. Georgios on his issues and emperor Manuel I Komnenos introduced the depiction of St. Theodoros on his coins³. Later on, the reign of the empire passed to Angelos family in 1185. Isaakios II Angelos was on throne in 1185 and he firstly used the representation of Archangel Mikhael on his issues. The use of the depiction of Archangel Mikhael on his coins correlated with his family name⁴.

15 copper coins from Kuva-yi Milliye Museum are dated to the reign of Aleksios III Angelos (1185-2003)⁵. All of them have a representation of Saint

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¹ The most important detail is that the numismatic studies also have to research the historical background of the era.

² A. P. Kazhdan-A.W. Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*, California, 1985, 69-73.; G. Ostrogorsky, *Bizans Devleti Tarihi*, Ankara 1995, 325-386.

³ Aleksios I Komnenos was the first emperor who had a depiction of the warrior Saint Demetrios on his issues. This pre-reform coin, histamenon nomisma, issued in Thessaloniki showing Saint Demetrios standing and presenting a long patriarchal cross on steps to Aleksios I Komnenos.

⁴ We have lots of samples from Anatolian museums and excavations in Turkey. During the excavation of Anaia/Kadıkalesi in 2005, one electrum aspron trachy of Ioannes II Komnenos was found and it has a representation of Saint Georgios on its reverse. The coin section of Manisa Museum also has samples of electrum aspron trachaea which are belonged to Manuel I Komnenos. These coins have a representation of the warrior Saint Theodoros on its reverses (C. Ünal, *Kalanlar*, 12. ve 13. Yüzyıllarda Türkiye’de Bizans/Remnants, 12th and 13th Centuries Byzantine Objects in Turkey, İstanbul 2007, 66.; C. Ünal, *I. Uluslararası Sevgi Gönül Bizans Araştırmaları-Bildiriler*, First International Byzantine Studies Symposium-Proceedings, İstanbul 2010, 223-231.; C. Ünal, *Manisa Müzesi Bizans Sikkeleri*, Manisa 2012, 221-224).

⁵ The museum is located in the north-western part of Turkey, in city of Balıkesir. Kuva-yi Milliye Museum opened in 1996 and it has approximately 2.500 coins from different ages and cultures.

Konstantinos on their reverse side. We don't know where they exactly come from. They were delivered to the museum by the military police. They came through illegal trafficking of historical works. Now, 15 copper coins are dated to the reign of Aleksios III Angelos. Four variations are determined; 3 coins belong to Variation A(ii), 9 coins belong to Variation B(b), 1 coin belongs to Variation C(b) and 2 coins belonged to Variation D(a). All of them are classified according to figures costume types and attributes. The main classification depends on the emperor's loros and what type of globus cruciger Aleksios III Angelos and Saint Konstantinos hold in between⁶.

Saint Konstantinos and Aleksios III Angelos were represented together on the reverse side of the copper coins. Saint Konstantinos was firstly introduced to Byzantine coin iconography by Aleksios III Angelos and why did he choose the figure of Saint Konstantinos in his issues? The empire was in trouble, the struggles continued for gaining the power and throne. This political chaos was the major problem of the empire. Aleksios III Angelos took the throne from his brother in an illegal way. The ex-emperor, his brother Isaakios was blinded by him. Although the citizens of the empire didn't show a reaction of his tyranny, he actually knew that his behaviour would never be approved. He always was anxious and he was never at ease. When Aleksios III Angelos was on throne, his blinded brother/ex-emperor Isaakios II Angelos was in jail and the son of him wanted to take back the throne and become the emperor. Aleksios III Angelos was very anxious both for being faced with the revolt of the public and to be punished like his brother⁷. He was on throne but he was in pressure of his conscience. Aleksios III Angelos wanted to be loved and accepted a legal emperor by public so he responded to every demand. He also used spiritual affects to be tolerated. He issued electrum and copper coins which had a depiction of Saint Konstantinos. Most probably, the emperor wanted to give a message to the citizens of the empire. Throne fights caused confusions: Latins were about to capture the empire and the citizens of the Byzantine Empire lost their trust to the court. Aleksios III Angelos needed to show his citizens the spiritual and heavenly support and renovate the trust of his people with the help of Saint Konstantinos who was the builder and the protector of the empire. Saint Konstantinos might have been seen as a supporter and saviour of the empire in this era. Furthermore, we know that coins of the empire also served as an imperial propaganda tool

⁶ Look for classification; J. Sabatier, *Description générale des monnaies byzantines*, Austria, 1955, 227-230.; R. Ratto, *Monnaies Byzantines*, Amsterdam, 1959, 115.; W. Wroth, *Catalogue of the Imperial Byzantine Coins in the British Museum*, 2 Vols., Chicago, 1966, 602, Plate LXXIII, 7.; H. Goodacre, *A Handbook of the Coinage of the Byzantine Empire*, London, 1971, 290-293.; P. D. Whitting, *Byzantine Coins*, New York, 1973, 206, fig. 350.; G. E. Bates, *A Byzantine Coin Collection*, Boston 1981, 150.; P. Grierson, *Byzantine Coins*, California, 1982, p. 376, Plate 68, 1136.; Sotheby's, *The William Herbert Hunt Collection Highly Important Byzantine Coins*, December 5-6, New York, 1990, 934-937.; Sotheby's, *An Important Private Collection of Byzantine Coins*, Auction Catalogue Monday Nov. 2, New York, 1998, 589.; J. D. Bateson-I. G. Campbell, *Byzantine and Early Medieval Western European Coins in the Hunter Coin Cabinet*, London 1998, p. 124, Plate 20.; D. R. Sear, *Byzantine Coins and Their Values, second edition revised and enlarged*, London, 2006, 406-407, fig. 2012.

⁷ G. Akropolites, *Vekayinâme*, İstanbul 2008, 18-20.

with their depictions for a long centuries. Most probably, being one of the most venerated saints in Byzantine empire, the depiction of Saint Konstantinos also served to unite the empire during its struggle against political gridlock⁸.

In conclusion, Constantine the Great was a great commander and emperor who declared Christianity as a Roman legal religion and created Konstantinopolis as a capital of the empire. This brilliant emperor who was born in Nis became one of the most venerated Saint in Byzantine Empire after his death. The veneration of Saint Konstantinos in Anatolia also continued for centuries during the Medieval period. Byzantine coin iconography displays the importance of Saint Konstantinos as a saviour and protector of the empire in Medieval Period.

TRACHAE FROM KUVA-YI MİLLİYE MUSEUM

Class A(ii)(1197-1203)

Konstantinopolis

Obverse: The nimbate bust of Emmanuel Christ, beardless, wearing tunic and kolobion, holds scroll in left hand. Pellets in each limb of nimbus cross.

KCRO HΘEI / IC XC

Reverse: Emperor on left and Saint Konstantinos on right, full length figures, with nimbus and they are holding globus cruciger in between. Both of them wear stemma, divetesion, collar piece and jewelled loros and hold labarum-scepter and on emperor' loros waist;



Ref.: DOC 1999, 407, 409-410, Plate XXIII, 3b.1, 3c.49.

1. Æ, 27 mm, Invention No 43.

[K]CRO [HΘEI] / IC [XC]

2. Æ, 29 mm, Invention No 50.

[K]CRO HΘ[EI] / IC XC

3. Æ, 26 mm, Invention No 51.

[+K]CRO HΘEI / IC XC

Trachy


Class B(b) (1195-1203)

⁸ The depiction of Saint Konstantinos on coin iconography continued in later centuries; Ioannes III Doukas-Vatatzes who was the emperor of Nicaea, Mikhael Komnenos-Doukas who was the ruler of Arta, Manuel Komnenos-Doukas who was the emperor of Thessaloniki and the emperor Ioannes V Palaiologos used the representation of Saint Konstantinos on their coins. Moreover, Manuel II Palaiologos and Ioannes VIII Palaiologos also used the depiction of Saint Konstantinos and Helena on their coins. The representation of Saint Konstantinos with his mother Saint Helena also protected and continued its popularity on the coins of the Latin Empire. Copper coins of Latin emperors had figures of Saint Konstantinos on the right and Helena on the left.

⁹ M. F. Hendy, Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection, Aleksius I to Michael VIII 1081-1261, Vol. Four, Part 1-2, Washington D.C., 1999.

Konstantinopolis

Obverse: The nimbate bust of Emmanuel Christ, beardless, wearing tunic and kolobion, holds scroll in left hand. Pellets in each limb of nimbus cross.
KERO HΘЄ / IC XC

Reverse: Emperor on left and Saint Konstantinos on right, full length figures, with nimbus and they are holding globus cruciger in between. Both of them wear stemma, divetesion, collar piece and jewelled loros and hold labarum-scepter and on emperor's loros waist; .

Ref.:DOC 1999, 412, Plate XXIII, 3d.1.

4. Æ,27 mm, Invention No 36.

KERO [HΘЄI] / [IC] XC

5. Æ,28 mm, Invention No 37.

KERO [HΘЄI] / [I]C XC

6. Æ,26 mm, Invention No 38.

[KERO HΘЄI] / [IC] XC

7. Æ,26 mm, Invention No 39.

[K]ЄR[O] HΘЄI/ IC XC

8. Æ,25 mm, Invention No 40.

KЄ[RO] [HΘЄ]I/ IC [XC]

9. Æ,25 mm, Invention No 41.

KERO [HΘ]ЄI/ IC XC

10. Æ,27 mm, Invention No 42.

[KERO HΘЄI] / [IC] XC

11. Æ,26 mm, Invention No 53.

[KERO] HΘ [ЄI] / IC XC

12. Æ,26 mm, Invention No 55.

[KERO HΘЄI] / [IC] XC

Trachy

Class C(b) (1195-1203)

Konstantinopolis

Obverse: The nimbate bust of Emmanuel Christ, beardless, wearing tunic and kolobion, holds scroll in left hand. Pellets in each limb of nimbus cross.
KERO HΘЄ / IC XC

Reverse: Emperor on left and Saint Konstantinos on right, full length figures, with nimbus and they are holding globus cruciger in between. Both of them wear stemma, divetesion, three jewels on collar piece and jewelled loros and hold labarum-scepter, on emperor's loros waist;

Ref.:DOC 1999, 413, Plate XXIV, 3g.1.



13. Æ,28 mm, Invention No 44.

KER[O] HΘЄI / [I]C X[C]


Trachy

Class D(a) (1195-1203)

Konstantinopolis

Obverse: The nimbate bust of Emmanuel Christ, beardless, wearing tunic and kolobion, holds scroll in left hand. Pellets in each limb of nimbus cross.

ΚΕΡΟ ΗΘЄ / IC ΧС

Reverse: Emperor on left and Saint Konstantinos on right, full length figures, with nimbus and they are holding globus cruciger in between. Both of them wear stemma, divetesion, collar piece and jewelled loros and hold labarum-scepter, on emperor's loros waist; .

Ref.:DOC 1999, 413, Plate XXIV, 3h.3.

14. Æ, 28 mm, Invention No 52.

[ΚΕΡΟ] ΗΘ [ЄI] / [IC] ΧС

15. Æ, 28 mm, Invention No 54.

[ΚΕΡΟ ΗΘЄI] / [IC] ΧС

Церен Унал

ГРУПА БАКАРНИХ ТРАХЕЈА АЛЕКСИОСА III АНГЕЛОСА (1195-1203) ИЗ МУЗЕЈА КУВА ЈИ МИЛИ/ БАЛИКЕСИР „ЛИК СВЕТОГ КОНСТАНТИНА НА ИКОНОГРАФИЈИ ВИЗАНТИЈСКОГ НОВЦА СА ПОЧЕТКА XIII ВЕКА“

Алексије III Комнин издао је бакарне новчиће за време своје владавине. Свети Константин и Алексије III Комнен заједно су представљени на полеђини ових бакарних трахеја. Алексије III Комнин је први увео Светог Константина у иконографију византијског новца. Зашто је Алексије III Комнин Алексије III Комнин изабрао лик Светог Константина за издање свог новца? Да ли је Свети Константин имао посебан значај за овог цара или је то био једини избор тога доба? Да ли је Алексије III Комнин случајно изабрао лик Светог Константина или је цар можда желео да пошаље поруку житељима византијског царства које је мучила све лошија политичка и економска ситуација? Да ли се на Светог Константина гледало као на помагача или спасиоца царства тога доба које је имало доста потешкоћа у областима политике, економије и културе? Борбе око престола довеле су до конфузије, Латини су се спремали да заузму царство, а грађани византијског царства су изгубили поверење у палату. Алексију III Комнену било је потребно да покаже својим грађанима духовну и небеску подршку и обнови поверење народа Византије уз помоћ Светог Константина који је био оснивач и заштитник Царства.

