

The Lechaena Hoard, 1979 (*CH* 8.417 and 8.358?), dep. second century BC

Introduction

A large and diverse hoard of bronze coins was reportedly found at Lechaena, near Patras in the Peloponnese, and came to the market in multiple lots from 1979 onwards.¹ Dated to the second century BC,² the hoard was likely composed of at least 550 bronze coins, produced by cities based not only in the Peloponnese, but also in other regions of the Mediterranean, as well as by various leagues, and the Antigonid, Seleucid and Ptolemaic kingdoms.³

It has been suggested that the arrival of Rome and the interruption of mining made the acquisition of silver in the second-century Greek mainland more difficult;⁴ this disruption, it seems, led to the increased use of bronze coinage to fulfil military expenditure, including the payment of mercenaries.⁵ The Lechaena hoard can likely be fitted in this context, as the second-century Peloponnese played host, after all, to continuous geopolitical turmoil.⁶ Even in comparison to other large hoards containing bronze coinage from the later Hellenistic period, however, the Lechaena hoard is strikingly large and diverse in its contents.⁷ Indeed, for J. Warren, the deposit was nothing short of “extraordinary”.⁸ The hoard demonstrates that diverse

¹ Work on this note took place as part of the CHANGE project with funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No. 865680). I owe thanks to Andrew Meadows, Marcus Chin, Peter van Alfen and Sophia Kremydi, who kindly corresponded with me regarding the hoard.

² J. Warren suggested a date in the second quarter of the century on the basis of some fresh coins of the Athamanes: see Warren 2007, p. 147 n. 254 with Franke 1961, pp. 24-5.

³ Given the broad range of mints represented, the hoard has unsurprisingly been cited by scholars in varied studies on particular coinages: see for example Kinns 1986, p. 260; Houghton *et al* 2002, p. 127; Tsankarē 2007, p. 234; Warren 2007, p. 147.

⁴ Livy 45.29.1 describes the closure of the gold and silver mines; see Kremydi, 2018 p. 382.

⁵ Warren 2007, p. 164; Psoma 2009, p. 24 (with n. 131 for the Lechaena hoard).

⁶ See Kralli 2017 for a useful narrative overview.

⁷ Compare, for instance, the 1996 Polygyros Hoard from the Chalkidike (*CH* 10.122 = *CH* 10.123), dated by Kremydi 2019, pp. 356-8 to the first century BC, which contained 1373 bronze coins, but mostly from Macedonia and the North Aegean, or the 1988 Ascalon Hoard (*CH* 9.548), dated c. 100 BC, which contained 46 bronze coins from a range of cities in Asia Minor and the Levant, as well as the Seleucid and Ptolemaic kingdoms.

⁸ Warren 2007, p.147.

bronze coinages, far from only having value within limited local contexts,⁹ could circulate together, and far from their places of production.

Despite its multivalent significance, a full listing of the hoard has not been published. The entry provided in *Coin Hoards* for the larger lot recorded in 1979 (8.417) refers to the royal coinages but otherwise does not detail civic mints, numbers or types; the entry for lots 2 and 3 (8.358) does list mints and numbers, but provides no further information. However, more comprehensive records of all the possible lots are contained in the *Coin Hoards* archive, held at the American Numismatic Society. Although some doubt must remain about the association of the lots and the overall identification of the hoard given its dispersal in trade, it should be noted that the archival records identify a characteristic “green adhesion” on the surface of all the coins listed, indicating a common find context. I hope that the publication of a fuller – albeit still incomplete – listing, based on these records, will be of some value, given the unusual profile of the hoard.

Catalogue

Lot 1 (CH 8.417)

Achaean League

Zeus/ cornucopia	1
Aegina	3
Aegium	3
Aetolia	16
Alea	2
Apollonia	1
Arcadian League	1
Argos	3
Argos Amphiloichicum	1
Athamanes, Epirus	
Head and neck of bull	7
Standing figure	22

⁹ For this assumption, see for example Shipley 2018, p. 232.

Athens	4
Boeotia	3
Carthage	3
Carystus	1
Chalcis	3
Chios	4
Clazomenae	2
Cleitor	1
Corcyra	1
Corinth	
Athena/ Zeus	3
Apollo/ Zeus	3
Pegasus/ ?	53
Athena/ Pegasus	4
Cos	1
Delos	2
Eleusis	3
Elis	101
Zeus/ wreath?	1
Zeus/ thunderbolt	21
Early Zeus/ eagle	7
Late Zeus/ eagle	12
Ephesus	7
Epirus	2
Euboean League	1
Hephaestia	1
Heraclea Trachinia	1
Heraea	4
Laconia	1
Larissa	2
Lebedus	1
Leucas	1
Locris	1
Lysimachia	1

Magnesia on the Maeander	1	
Mantineia	3	
Megara	2	
Miletus	1	
Myrina	1	
Paros	1	
Pellene	4	
Phalanna	1	
Phlius	5	
Rhithymna	2	
Rhodes	1	
Roman Republic	1	
Selge	1	
Sicyon	27	
Taras	1	
Tegea	1	
Troezen	1	
Unknown mint	56	
Macedonia	Many	
Seleucid kingdom	Many	
Including Antiochus/ elephant		
Ptolemaic kingdom	Many	
Including Isis head		
Zeus/ Hera	3	
Zeus/ thunderbolt	2	
Lots 2 and 3 (<i>CH</i> 8.358)		
Athamanes, Epirus		
Veiled head/ Athena standing		8
Aetolian League		
Athena head in crested Corinthian helmet/		
Herakles standing facing		1
Boeotia		

Athena head in crested Corinthian helmet/ trophy facing	1
Carthage (or Sicily)	
Tanit head crowned with corn/ horse, head reverted	1
Corinth	5
Elis	
Apollo/ thundering Zeus in range of sizes	43
Elis?	
Zeus head/ eagle with wings open, fighting snake, Σ in coil of snake	1
Miletus	
See Kinns 1986, p. 260	1
Phocaea	
Male head in flat cap/ griffin forepart seated (c.f. <i>SNG</i> Copenhagen Ionia 1039-43)	1
Sicyon	
Dove/ Σ	2
Unknown	
Apollo head/ figure walking	1
Uncertain type/ wreath	1
Antigonos Gonatas	
Athena head in Corinthian helmet/ Pan erecting trophy	1
Philip V (Macedonia)	
Zeus head/ Athena Alkis	2
Zeus head/ prow	1
Macedonia ?	
Zeus head/ eagle	2
Ptolemaic kingdom	
Head, ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΠΤΟΛΕΜΑΙΟΥ	7

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