



Two Rare Coins from the Zecca Di Scio: Early Issues of the Maona Dei Giustiniani (XIVth C.)

Sakız Darphanesinden İki Nadir Sikke: Giustiniani
Maona'sının Erken Dönem Darpları (14. Yüzyıl)

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TWO RARE COINS FROM THE ZECCA DI SCIO: EARLY ISSUES OF THE MAONA DEI GIUSTINIANI (XIVTH C.)

ABSTRACT

This paper presents two rare coins from Chios island. Both are issues of the mint of Chios during the period of the Maona dei Giustiniani, the venture company which ruled the island from 1346 until 1566. This period is very well documented through the Genoese State archives and the fourteenth-century cartulary of the *Codex Berianus Chiensis* kept at the Library Civica Berio, in Genoa. The cartulary contains an agreement stipulated in 1347 between the Commune of Genoa and the Maona, which lays down the right of the Maona to strike coins in the mint (the *Zecca*) of the island. We know that Chios operated its own mint and struck gold, silver and copper coins since the early 1300s, under the Zaccaria overlords. The two coins discussed in this paper appear to be among the earliest issues of the Old Maona: the first is a silver harati (carat or keration) bearing the bust of the doge with the legend DVX IANVENSIVN; the second is a copper denier tournois bearing the castle of Tours with the legend CIVITAS SII. The reverse of both coins commemorates CUNRADVS REX. They are an important addition to the study of the late medieval coinage of Genoese Chios but also a valuable resource illuminating the Mediterranean economy during the first decades of the Maona's overlords-hip. The coins are part of an officially registered private collection.

Keywords: Chios, Genoa, Byzantium, Maona dei Giustiniani, Coins, Mint of Chios, Zecca.



SAKIZ DARPHANESİNDEN İKİ NADİR SİKKE: GIUSTINIANI MAONA'SININ ERKEN DÖNEM DARPLARI (14. YÜZYIL)

ÖZ

Bu makale, Sakız Adası'na ait iki nadir sikkeyi tanıtmaktadır. Her ikisi de 1346'dan 1566'ya kadar adayı yöneten ticari girişim şirketi Giustiniani Maona'sı döneminde Sakız Darphanesi'nde basılmıştır. Bu dönem, Ceneviz Devlet arşivleri ve Cenova'daki Biblioteca Civica Berio'da muhafaza edilen *Codex Berianus Chien-sis*'in 14. yüzyıla ait kartüleri aracılığıyla oldukça iyi belgelenmiştir. Söz konusu kartülde 1347 tarihli ve Ceneviz Komünü ile Maona arasında yapılmış bir anlaşma yer almakta olup, bu anlaşma Maona'nın adadaki darphanede (*Zecca*) sikke bastırma hakkını düzenlemektedir. Sakız'ın, Zaccaria hâkimiyeti altında 1300'lerin başlarından itibaren kendi darphanesini işletip altın, gümüş ve bakır sikkeler

bastığı bilinmektedir. Bu makalede incelenen iki sikke, Eski Maona'nın en erken bastırımları arasında görünmektedir: İlki, ön yüzünde dojun (Ceneviz doju) büstünü taşıyan ve DVX IANVENSIVN lejantını içeren gümüş bir haratı (karat ya da keration); ikincisi ise ön yüzünde Tours kalesini taşıyan ve CIVITAS SII lejantını barındıran bir bakır denier tournois'tir. Her iki sikkenin arka yüzü CUNRADVS REX anısını taşımaktadır. Bu sikkeler, Ceneviz Sakız'ının geç Orta Çağ sikke basımını çalışmalarına önemli bir katkı sağlamanın yanı sıra, Maona'nın hâkimiyetinin ilk yıllarında Akdeniz ekonomisini aydınlatan değerli bir kaynak niteliğindedir. Söz konusu sikkeler, resmi olarak kayıtlı özel bir koleksiyonun parçasıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sakız, Cenova, Bizans, Giustiniani Maona'sı, Sikkeler, Sakız Darphanesi, Zecca.



INTRODUCTION

In memory of my dear parents,
Nikolaos and Kalliope

The island of Chios holds a special place in the Aegean Sea. Its geographical position had always been considered favourable for trade since antiquity¹. In medieval times, its commercial, maritime and economic role emerged when the two maritime Republics of Venice and Genoa consolidated their Mediterranean supremacy. A series of factors, mainly its strategic location on the crossroads of the principal commercial axes towards Constantinople and the Black Sea, the western and eastern Mediterranean, coupled with its proximity to Asia Minor, established Chios as the most sought-after seafaring centre in the Levant.

The Genoese gained a foothold on the island with the treaty of Nymphaeum (1261) by power of which they were free to establish commercial stations in various places, including Chios, enjoying all kinds of commercial privileges and a customs-free commerce². The golden age for Chios began in the later part of the 13th century, when two Genoese businessmen, the brothers Manuele and Benedetto Zaccaria—one of the leading Genoese lineages—used the port of Chios as entrepôt and warehouse for the alum³; alum was a mineral extracted in the mines of Phocaea, at the north of Smyrna, the monopoly of which had been given by the Byzantine

¹ Herodotus, I, 165, mentions that the Phocaeans wanted to buy from the Chiots the islet Oinoussai, situated in the Strait of Chios, between the island and the Anatolian coast (modern Turkey). However, the Chiots refused to sell it, for they feared that they would be cut off from trade. Strabo, XIV, 663

² Balard 2017, 529-549. An image of the Treaty is reproduced in Koukouni 2021, fig. 6, by courtesy of the State Archives of Genoa.

³ Ducas, XXV, 160, 161; Koukouni 2021, 95.

emperor to Manuele Zaccaria. From the port of Chios, the product was shipped to western and northern European industries. Benedetto Zaccaria paid the emperor a certain sum of money to organize the island's defenses against the Turks and became its Lord in 1304, recognizing the imperial suzerainty⁴. Although the dynasty ruled only for twenty-five years, they propelled the local economy, reorganizing it and orienting it towards export trade. Under their lordship, Chios acquired its own mint, which, in contrast to the rest of the Latin-ruled Aegean islands, struck good quality gold and silver coins.

We possess very few sources from the Byzantine period to use as evidence for the trading activities and, by and large, the range and extent of production Chios would have had during the Byzantine period⁵. The mastic trade during the Byzantine period has barely left a trace in the historical record. There are sources which imply mastic export to Egypt since the 10th century and certainly in the mid-11th century, according to a document of Cairo Genizah. 12th-century testimonies for mastic are those of Benjamin of Tudela and of the Russian abbot Daniel, who visited the island on his way to the Holy Land⁶. During the rule of the Maona dei Giustiniani—the period that the present article focuses on—the economic affairs of the island regarding the precious resinous gum extracted by the evergreen species *pistachia lentiscus varia chia*, are well documented.

The principal document that we need to study to unfold the political and administrative history of the island of Chios during the course of two and a half centuries of Genoese overlordship is the *Codex Berianus Chiensis*, a 15th-century cartulary kept in the Library Civica Berio of Genoa, in Italy⁷. The concession of the Byzantine province of Chios to the Genoese—marking the second and longest Genoese period in the island's late- and post-medieval history—was the result of a naval expedition against the island in June 1346. The concession was made official three months later, on 12 September 1346, with a treaty that was stipulated between the surrendered Greek local governors and the Genoese shipowners of the victorious fleet⁸. In a rare chance of fortune, the treaty—among many other documentary sources—has come down to us incorporated in the *Codex Berianus Chiensis*.

⁴ Kantakouzenos, I, 370; Chalkokondyles 521, 17–21.

⁵ Lemerle 1979, 1981; Michael Psellos, 467.

⁶ Koukouni 2021, 89, no. 313, 314, 315.

⁷ Biblioteca Civica Berio, BERIMRCFArm15, available in digitized form: <https://bibliotecadigitale.regione.liguria.it>. Publication of the treaty's text in full in Argenti 1958, II.

⁸ For the historical events, see Koukouni 2021, with the relevant bibliography on the topic.

On 27 February 1347, five months after that major historical event⁹, the commander of the naval expedition, Simone Vignoso and his fellow shipowners signed an agreement with the Genoese Commune in Genoa¹⁰.

The headline of the convention reads:

CONVENTIO. PRIMA. INTER. MAHONENSES. MAHONE. VETERIS. CHIL. TEMPORE. DOMINI. SIMONIS. VIGNOSI. TVNC. ARMIRATI. GALEARVM. XX-VIII. ANNO. DOMINI. MCCCXXXVII. DIE. XXVII. FEBRVARII. MANU. PETRI. DE. REZA. NOTARII. ET. TVNC. COMUNIS. IANUE. CANCELARII. (Fig. 1).

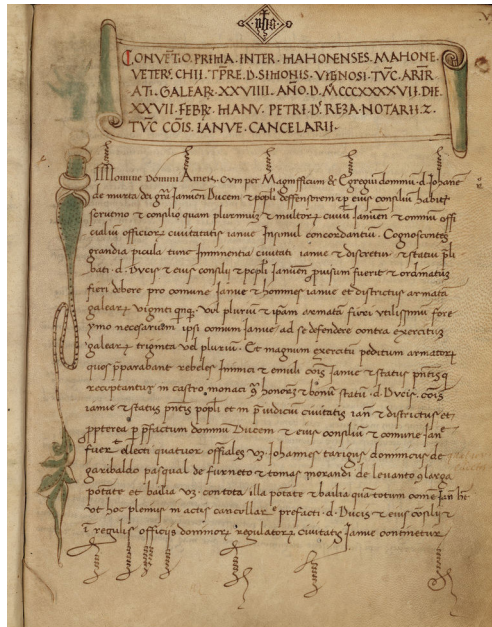


Fig. 1. Codex Berianus Chiensis, fol. VII *recto*. The convention between the Commune of Genoa and the fleet of the shipowners. © Biblioteca Civica Berio. <https://bibliotecadigitale.regione.liguria.it/>.

The convention would inaugurate Chios's new political, administrative and economic status for the following two centuries, namely the overlordship of the

⁹ Argenti *op.cit.*, II, 38 reads 26 February, whereas it is clearly written XXVII = 27. However, in the convention of 1373, fol. XXXVII writes that the notarius Petrus de Reza (the notary of 1347). "quondam Petri de Reza notarij MCCCXXXVII die XXVI februarij".

¹⁰ Argenti 1958, I, 107-108. <https://bibliotecadigitale.regione.liguria.it>.

Maona of Chios, “the first Company-State in history”¹¹. The Genoese Commune would hold the jurisdiction and sovereignty of the newly acquired island in the eastern extremity of the Aegean Sea, and would grant the Maona (the commercial company composed of the shipowners of the victorious naval expedition) all sort of rights in reference to the ownership and exploitation of the revenues of Chios as well as of the Old and New Phocaea, situated in the adjacent Anatolian coast. The island’s administration and justice would be exercised by a governor or *podestà*, on behalf of the Commune of Genoa. The most crucial clause however—which highlights the topic of this paper—was the right conferred to the Maona to strike silver coins in the name of the Commune. The weight standard of the coins would be at the discretion of the *podestà* of Chios, but the representations and the legends would have to be identical to those of Genoa: the obverse would bear the figure of the Doge with the legend DVX IANVENSIVM and the reverse the legend CONRADVS REX¹² (Fig. 2).

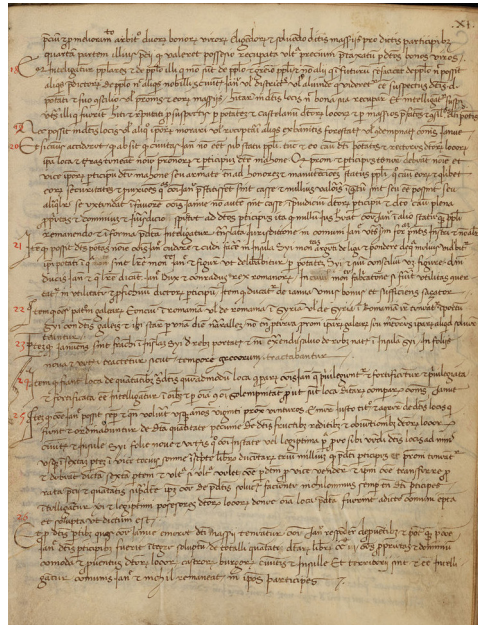


Fig. 2. Codex Berianus Chiensis, fol. XI recto. © Biblioteca Civica Berio, <https://bibliotecadigitale.regione.liguria.it/>.

¹¹ Term used after Mazarakis 1993, 320.

¹² Argenti 1958, II, 38ff and n. 1 on 38. *Codex Berianus Chiensis*, fol. Xlr.

“Item quod possit dictus potestas nomine comunis Janue cudere et cudi face-re in insula Syi monetam argenti de liga et pondere de qua melius videbitur ipsi potestati, in qua moneta sint littere monete Janue et figure ut deliberabitur per potestatem Syi et suum consilium, videlicet figure domini ducis Janue, et quae lit-tere dicant Janue dux et Conradus rex romanorum, in cuius monete fabricatione si fuerit utilitas conuertatur in utilitatem et profichuum dictorum participum. Item quod ducatur de Janua unus bonus et suficiens sazator”¹³.

As already mentioned, the mint of Chios had started operating earlier in that century, when the island was under the lordship of the Zaccaria dynasty, which held the lordship of Chios until 1329. But who had given the right to the Zaccaria to strike coins? The Republic of Genoa or the Byzantine emperor Andronikos II?¹⁴ Additionally, it is not known whether the mint worked during the brief Byzantine reoccupation of Chios (1329-1346), but it surely resumed its production from 1347 under the lordship of the Old and a little later of the New Maona. The mint carried on its operation for the next two centuries, until the fall of Chios to the Ottomans (1566)¹⁵.

The medieval coinage of the mint of Chios during the two Genoese dominions was first studied by Domenico Promis in 1865, in his fundamental work *La Zecca di Scio Durante il Dominio dei Genovesi*, Torino 1865. The catalogue was enriched a few years later with the publications of Gustave Schlumberger and Paul Lam-bros, based largely on their private collections¹⁶. The big boom in the numismatists' world came in the spring of 1887 with a significant discovery in the district of Siderounda, a small rural settlement in north-western Chios: a treasure containing nearly two hundred silver coins was unearthed by a villager, while he was plough-ing. The hoard of Siderounda was studied and classified by Francesco and Ercole Gnechi, and was published by them soon after, in 1888¹⁷. Its importance was par-amount for the study of the monetary history of the eastern Mediterranean and the late medieval Chios, in particular, because it added four new types—unknown until then—to the then known Genoese issues of the *zecca*, the mint of Chios.

In the past thirty years, new finds from rescue excavations have come to light, enriching our picture of the mint of Chios during the 250 years of its operation. The coinage and the monetary system of the island—especially of the Zaccaria pe-riod—have been the object of meticulous study, analysis, revisions and reconsider-ations by Andreas Mazarakis¹⁸.

¹³ Argenti 1958, I, 110; II, 50.

¹⁴ See Mazarakis 2006.

¹⁵ Koukouni 2018.

¹⁶ Schlumberger 1878; Lambros 1886.

¹⁷ The treasure was unearthed by chance by a peasant who ploughed his plot of land in the area of Sideroun-da, in an area with ruins of a rural mansion. Gnechi – Gnechi 1888.

¹⁸ Mazarakis 1992. Id. 1995. Id. 1997. Id. 1999. Id. 2003. Id. 2006.

Aspiring to add my own contribution to this field, below I present two new coins—a silver and a copper issue—which I discovered in a private, officially registered collection. Both specimens represent rare types of the early coin production of the Maona of Chios¹⁹.

The Coins

1. Silver Harati–Carat–Keration (formerly: quarter gigliato)²⁰ (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3. Silver harati.

AR

Obverse: Bust of Doge frontally depicted within pelleted circle, wearing a tall, conical hat with two long ribbons hanging from either side. Cross in the exergue, probably countermark of the *zecca* (the mint)²¹. Legend: •DVX•IAN VENSIVN.

Reverse: cross patent within pelleted circle. Legend: +CVNRADVS REX.

Diam: 16 mm.

Weight: 0.92 gr.

Date: 1348-1373.

Condition: moderately used (U2)²².

¹⁹ The study is ongoing, therefore I apologise, in advance, to the readers for omissions and errors encountered in this text.

²⁰ Promis 1865, 39, table, nos 7, 8, 9 particularly no. 7. The three silver specimens presented by Promis are of very good quality. Lambros 1886, 19-20, table 3, nos 29-30. Lunardi 1980, 174. Mazarakis 2003, 161.

²¹ Mazarakis 2003: three varieties of this coin type are known, with either a cross, or a disc or a rosette below the doge's bust.

²² https://www.muenzfunde.ch/downloads/bulletins/ifs_bulletin_1995_suppl%C3%A9ment.pdf.

The coins of this type were classified as quarter gigliati in the older bibliography of the 19th century²³. After Mazarakis' revision, the denomination is now established as *harati* (carats or keratia)²⁴. The *harati* bears the bust of the Doge and the legend DVX IANVENSIVM or IANVENSIVN and is very rare. Of all the known Maona issues that have come down to us, these are the earliest in date. They belong to the time of the admiral Simone Vignoso and the establishment of the Old Maona.

There are two other counterparts of this coin type in the collection of the Chios Division of Antiquities. They were discovered in the interior of the tower keep of Pityos, a settlement built at a strategic location in the hinterland in the northeast part of the island²⁵. The publication of the Pityos coin finds by the excavator—as stated by the author in the introduction—is a mere catalogue limiting itself to the presentation of the types “after Mazarakis 2003”. The catalogue adds nothing to the scholarly debate; its contribution is to increase the number of known issues of this rare type. It is worth mentioning that Mazarakis adds one more parallel to this *harati*-keration, which he found in a private collection²⁶.

Since the 19th century, all scholarly bibliographies have agreed to assign an early date to these issues. Lambros dates them from 1347, in the early period of the Old Maona; so does Lunardi²⁷, classifying them in the sub-period 1347–1373 and certainly before the 15th century²⁸. Mazarakis shares the same view, adding that the form of the script of certain letters is one of the criteria for the assignment of the early dating. More precisely, it's the letters V and A, which appear to have the same form as on the early *harati*-carat variety, showing the Doge in the upper half holding scepter and cross²⁹.

I will agree with the early date assigned to these issues for the simple reason that the testimony of the First Convention between Vignoso and the Commune bears witness to that: it mentions specifically that “sint littere monete Janue et figure”³⁰—the figures and the legends have to be identical to the coins of *Ianua*. The

²³ P. Lambros names this denomination quarter of gigliato, because its weight equals that of the 1/4 gigliato. Lambros 1886, 24, table 3, no. 30.

²⁴ Mazarakis 1997 and Mazarakis 2003 distinguishes the account currency from the actual currency, a fundamental division in order to study the chiot coinage.

²⁵ Valakou 2010, 111, fig. 4, inventory number N 1134.

²⁶ Mazarakis 2003, 161.

²⁷ Lambros 1886, 25; Lunardi 1980, 172; Mazarakis 2003.

²⁸ The dating between 1347 and 1373 is marked by two points of reference: in 1347 we have the first convention between the Commune of Genoa and the Old Maona (set up by the conquerors of Chios and Phocaea). In 1373, the third agreement between the Commune of Genoa and the reconstituted Maona (New Maona) confirms the grant of the possession and the dominion of Chios, as well as of the Old and New Phocaea “in Ipsos emptores et successores eorum” and that “sola jurisdictio et merum et mixtum imperium remaneat in Comuni Janue” that is, only the jurisdiction shall remain in the hands of the Commune of Genoa. Argenti 1958, II,110 *Codex Berianus Chiensis*, fols XXXIIverso-XXXVverso.

²⁹ Mazarakis 2003.

³⁰ See above.

time frame between 1347–1373 for the dating is meaningful: while in 1347 we have the first convention stipulating the right of the Genoese privateers, who set up the Old Maona, to strike coins, in 1373 on the 21st day of November another treaty was stipulated between the Commune of Genoa and the New Maona this time, reconfirming the right of the new association to strike coins in the *zecca* of Chios. Clause 28 lays down that³¹:

“Item quod moneta que cudetur et stampiatur in Insula Chij stampiatur et formetur cum litteris et figuris monete Janue vel cum figura Domini Ducis Janue cuius fabricationis monete et ceche ipsius utilitas et fructus sint et conuertantur in utilitatem et proficuum dictorum emptorum et successorum.” (Fig. 4).

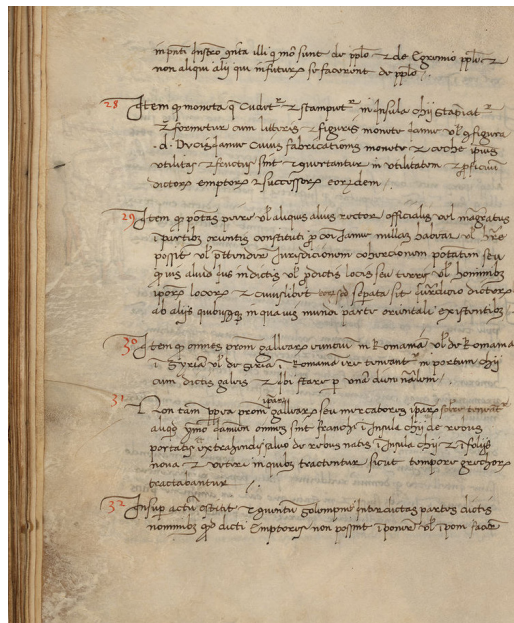


Fig. 4. Codex Berianus Chiensis, fol. XXXXII verso. © Biblioteca Civica Berio, <https://bibliotecadigitale.regione.liguria.it/>.

After 1373, new issues were struck bearing different figures and legends; the effigy of the Doge is replaced by the castle with three towers, which becomes the coat-of-arms of the Giustiniani as well as Maona's trademark³².

³¹ Codex Berianus Chiensis, fol. XXXXIIv. Argenti 1958, II, 117.

³² Koukouni 2018.

2. Denaro Tornese (denier tournois) (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5. Denaro tornese (denier tournois) Copper alloy.

AE

Obverse: **Castle of Tours**. Legend: **CIUITAS SII**³³ (a triangle and two pellets?)

Reverse: Cross patent within pelleted circle. Legend: **+CUNRADVS (T)·[REX]**

Diam.: 16 mm.

Weight: 0.69 gr.

Condition: used (U3)³⁴.

The denomination of this coin is denaro tornese (denier tournois). The iconography on the obverse shows the Castle of Tours³⁵. The legends, particularly the script of the name CHIOS, and the letter fonts create an enigma in the scholarly debate as per their chronological classification. It was already evident in the 19th-century bibliography that the type of these issues is extremely rare, so the different script of the fonts play some role in distinguishing broadly their chronological frame³⁶. Based on a specimen in a private collection and documentation from Genoese notarial deeds for the year 1394, Mazarakis classifies the issue in the period 1394–1428³⁷. However, the said specimen writes the island's name SIY (or

³³ Because of the wear, I am not very sure if the name of the island is written SYI, SIY or SII. From what I am able to see, I distinguish the script SII.

³⁴ https://www.muenzfunde.ch/downloads/bulletins/ifs_bulletin_1995_suppl%C3%A9ment.pdf.

³⁵ Promis 1865, 45.

³⁶ Schlumberger 1878, 418. Lambros *op.cit.*

³⁷ Mazarakis 2003, 175.

sometimes SYI) in the genitive case, whereas ours, with all probability, reads SII. The scholarly debate tends to counter the form SII–SYI–SIY older in date than the form ChII and CHII³⁸.

Our coin shows similarities in iconography with a late denaro tornese issue of Martino Zaccaria with the legend CIVITAS SYI, dated 1328–1329 and weighing 0.60 gr³⁹. Also, it looks similar to Promis nos 32–36⁴⁰; however, the script of CHIOS in Promis appears written with Ch–ChII (genitive); as mentioned above, the latter indication (Ch) is said to account for a later date. One wonders if this is a reliable indicator for the division between an earlier and a later date: if, for example, one reads the text of the treaty of 1346 as well as the convention of 1347, one will remark the alternate use of the forms Chii and Syi.⁴¹ Another difference is the letter form of the legends, which, perhaps, plays a role in assigning a time period. On our coin we see the letter T of the word CIVITAS, the two edges of which are immensely elongated from top-down; also, the name CUNRADUS is written with curved U whereas usually it is written with the angle-type V. Maybe it's the letter forms that we should draw our attention to get a more trustworthy indicator for the dating.

There are two newly discovered specimens of this denier tournois coinage that appear to be exactly parallel to our coin⁴². They come from rescue excavations in the city of Chios and the fort of Pityos, respectively. The first denier tournois, inventory no N 1426, was unearthed in the capital city. The obverse shows the Castle of Tours with the legend+CIVITAS-SII, exactly as read on our coin; the reverse shows a cross patent and the legend CVNRADUS R[EX]. The metal is copper alloy, weighing 0.5 gr and has been assigned a date between 1394–1428 after Mazarakis 2003.

The second denier tournois, inventory no N 1118, is also a copper alloy and was recovered during excavations in the interior of the tower keep of Pityos: it bears on the obverse the Castle of Tours and the legend +CIVI[TAS SI]Y. The reverse bears a cross patent, but the legend is illegible. According to P. Valakou, the script SIY assigns to this issue an earlier date (1348–1373) pertaining to the period immediately following the conquest of Chios by Simone Vignoso. I tend to believe that the form Syi, encountered in the treaty of the concession of Chios to the Genoese, in the *Codex Berianus Chiensis*, can be a supporting argument; but, as I mentioned above, in all these archival documents, the form Syi and Chii are interchangeable.

The confusion grows. Mazarakis admits that, at the moment, every possible theory is open for discussion because of the complete lack of other data.

³⁸ Mazarakis 1997, 814–817.

³⁹ Mazarakis 2006, 81; Also, Metcalf 1995, 291, although Metcalf merely repeats Mazarakis, adding nothing new.

⁴⁰ Promis 1865, Table III, nos 32–36.

⁴¹ Argenti 1958, 38 ff.

⁴² Valakou 2010, N 1426 recovered from Chios town, 115, no. 9, and N 1118 recovered from the tower keep at Pityos, no. 8, 115.

The two rare specimens of the early Genoese coinage, which I briefly presented here, enrich the numismatic data originating from one of the most strategic regions in the northeastern Aegean. There is a lot of work to be done as the archaeological and numismatic records bring to light new material. Because my study is ongoing, I thought better to limit myself in the presentation of the latest data expressing some initial questions⁴³. I will come back to the topic.

I express my thanks to the private collector who wishes to remain anonymous for making the collection available to me.

Conflict of Interest

The author has not conflict of interest to declare.

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⁴³ There is a still-pending application to the Division of Antiquities requesting the study of the material.