

Late Byzantine Coins 1204 - 1453 in the Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford

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before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Late Byzantine Coins 1204 - 1453 in the Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Lianta, Late Byzantine Coins 1204-1453 By VanthCrudely designed, often badly struck in debased alloys, and usually poorly preserved, the late Byzantine coinage is a difficult series to love. Until very recently, the aspiring collector has also been hampered by a dearth of accessible reference books. This lack was partly remedied by the publication in 1999 of Philip Grierson's magisterial fifth and final volume of the Dumbarton Oaks catalog, illustrating nearly 1800 coins. In the same year, the eminent Byzantine scholar and collector Simon Bendall donated a substantial study collection of late Byzantine Coins to Oxford University's historic Ashmolean Museum. This collection has now been meticulously documented by Eleni Lianta in Late Byzantine Coins 1204-1453, published by Spink. Dr. Lianta holds a degree in Byzantine numismatics from Oxford, and this work is based on her dissertation. At the time of publication, she was working as a numismatist in the archaeology department of the Thessaloniki Metro Project. The book includes 1128 coins, most previously unpublished and most in "fine" condition, meaning they are identifiable. For the period 1204-1261, 84% of the coins are billon (copper alloy with a small amount of silver), 7.6% are copper, 5.5% are electrum and almost 3% are gold. For the period 1261-1453, 43% are copper, 37% are silver, 17% are gold and only 3.4% are of billon. The denominational structure of the coinage was complex, with at least four distinct phases: Latin Conquest (1204-1261), Early Palaeologan (1261-1304), Middle

Palaeologan (the "silver basilikon period," 1304-1370s), and Late Palaeologan (the silver stavraton period, 1370's-1453). The very last issue of Byzantine coins, presumably struck during the final siege of Constantinople to pay mercenaries, is represented by a rare silver stavraton (23mm, 6.58 g), unknown until a single hoard was identified by Bendall in 1991. For every coin listed in the catalog, there is a diameter, weight and die axis, obverse and reverse types are briefly described and any readable inscription transcribed. The provenance of every coin is detailed, and there is a fascinating listing of hoards, and of previous owners, donor and dealers. The bibliography is scholarly and comprehensive, but there is no index. Every coin is illustrated with halftone photographs in actual size. Unfortunately, many of the illustrations are basically just gray blurs, even under magnification. This says more about the poor state of the material than the quality of the photography or reproduction. There are extensive tables of "sigla," the cryptic monograms, symbols and markings so common in this series. An annoyance for the casual user is the absence of any running section headings at the top of each page. This makes it difficult to locate the exact section for a particular ruler or period without leafing forward and back through the pages. *Late Byzantine Coins 1204-1453* will be a valuable companion to the *Dumbarton Oaks* catalog for specialist collectors, dealers and serious numismatic libraries.

This brand new book, written by an expert in the field, will provide an indispensable point of reference for students, curators, dealers and collectors as well as a ready source of information for archaeologists, historians and others with a more general interest in Late Byzantine numismatics. The collection of Late Byzantine coins in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, comprises one of the most important and representative collections of coinage from the period between the sack of Constantinople by the Fourth Crusade in 1204, the Byzantine recovery of the city in 1261, and the final capture of Constantinople by the Ottoman Turks in 1453. This collection is here presented for the first time in a modern catalogue which will enable the user to identify, classify and understand Late Byzantine coins, in accordance with our present state of knowledge.