



Bulgarian Numismatic Journal Supplementary Series

COIN FINDS FROM BLAUNDOS, LYDIA

ÖMER TATAR

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.18078499



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>.

<https://bulgnj.com>

ISSN: 2815-4827

ISBN: 978-619-92562-8-2

Coin Finds from Blaundos, Lydia

Ömer TATAR

Akdeniz University, Department of History, Antalya /
TURKEY
omertatar@akdeniz.edu.tr
ORCID: 0000-0002-5644-2188

Abstract: Blaundos is a Lydian city which is located approximately 2 km northeast of Sülümenli village, 30 km south of Uşak. It was founded on the top and slopes of a peninsula surrounded by a deep canyon on three sides. It was colonised by Macedonians in the early Hellenistic period, probably by those in the Seleucid army, which dominated this region for about 100 years between c. 281 and 188 BC. After the peace of Apameia in 188 BC, Blaundos became a dependent of the Pergamene Kingdom, and in 133, BC Roman hegemony in western Asia Minor also included Blaundos. While the city was in a prosperous condition in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD, it fell into decay during the Byzantine era, and the church records indicate that the population decreased gradually from the 9th to the 12th centuries.

As the first ever archaeological excavation in the settlement, a six-week study was carried out by the Uşak Museum in 1995, and, after that, A. Filges carried out surveys in Blaundos in 1999, 2000, and 2002 as part of his PhD. A new period of excavations began in 2018 under the supervision of Prof. Birol Can from Usak University.

As of 2022, the number of coins found in Blaundos is 235. Twenty-four are from the Hellenistic period, and the number of Roman provincial issues is 20, while there are 16 Roman Imperial coins. One hundred and ten coins are from the Late Roman period. The number of coins from the Byzantine period is just five, and lastly, there are two Islamic coins found. Fifty-eight coins, on the other hand, could not be identified due to their poor condition. This paper aims to share the preliminary analysis of the coin finds, which will be published in a more comprehensive study soon.

Keywords: Lydia, Blaundos, Coin Finds.



Introduction

The ancient city of Blaundos, a Lydian city very close to the Phrygian border, is located approximately 2 km northeast of the village of Sülümenli and 30 km south of the Uşak city centre, which is located in the interior part of the Aegean region (**Fig. 1**). Blaundos was founded on the top and slopes of a peninsula surrounded by a deep canyon on three sides.¹ This location of the city allowed it to have a natural defence system. It is clear, based on the spread area and territorial borders of the settlement, that its strategic position, livelihoods, and cultural/social character were the elements that made Blaundos a significant settlement. The canyon has been inhabited continuously from the Bronze Age to the Byzantine period (Can 2017, 74; 2023b, 393). The city itself, on the other hand, was colonised during the Hellenistic period. On this note, it is necessary to briefly mention the history of the settlement. After the death of Alexander the Great, Phrygia

¹ For more detailed information regarding the location and topography of the settlement, see Filges 2006b, 2–7; Can 2017, 73–74; 2023b, 393.

was given to Antigonos Monophthalmos. With the death of Antigonos in the Battle of Ipsos in 301 BC, most of Anatolia came under the rule of Lysimachos, the governor and king of Thrace, and remained so until the Battle of Koroupedion in 281 BC.²

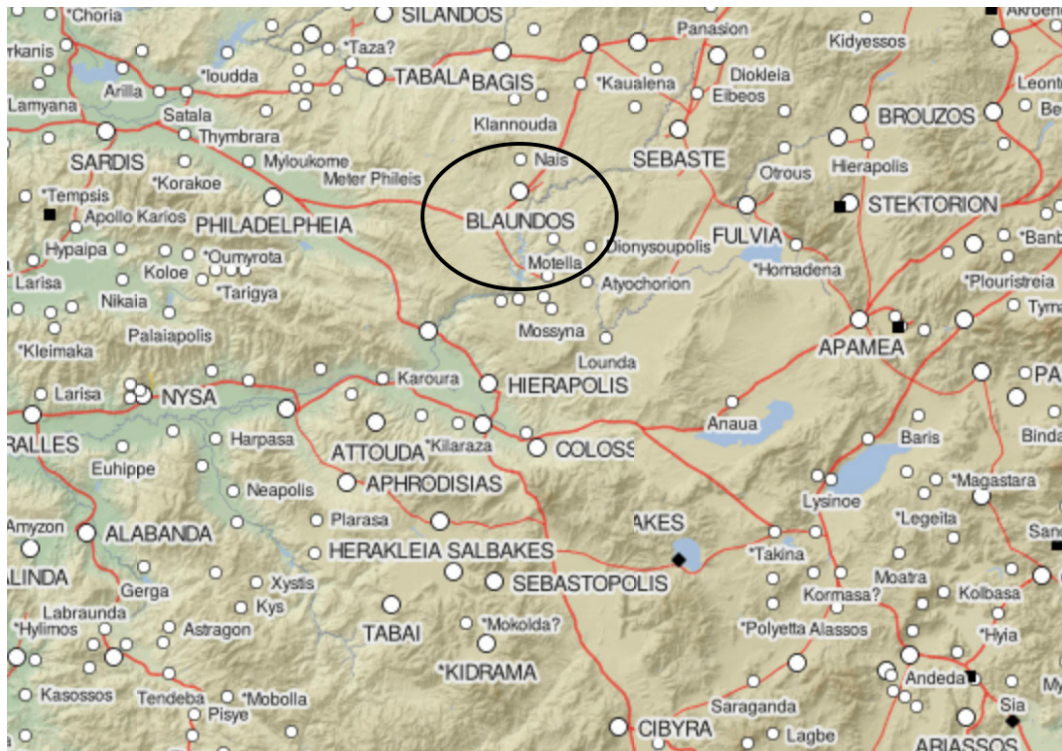


Fig. 1. Location of Blaundos.

Based on an inscription found near Blaundos, which reads 'Macedonian Blaundos' (Hamilton 1842, 124ff),³ it comes to mind that Blaundos was colonised in the last quarter of the 4th century BC or the first quarter of the 3rd century BC by Macedonians. The more prominent view is that it was founded as a colony city by the Macedonians who were in the Seleucid army during the period of the Syria-centred Seleucid Kingdom, which dominated this region for about 100 years from the Battle of Koroupedion in 281 BC to the Treaty of Apameia in 188 BC. Based on current research, it is plausible to suggest that Blaundos was colonised and redesigned by the Seleucids as a military base.⁴ Regarding the 2nd century BC, Blaundos was included in the Pergamon Kingdom following the Treaty of Apameia in 188 BC, and when the western part of Asia Minor came under Roman domination in 133 BC, Roman rule also began there.⁵ The city must have lived its heyday in the 1st century AD. It is known that architectural investments were made in the city from the middle of the 1st century AD to the middle of the 4th century AD (Can 2023b, 394–397). During the Byzantine era, buildings of relative low quality were built, and it is understood from the church records that the population of the city decreased gradually from the 9th to the 12th centuries (Can 2023b, 394; 400).

² For this period and related events, see Hammond 1992, 250ff; Bosworth 2005, 215ff.

³ Also see Can 2023b, 398.

⁴ For opinions and suggestions about the Hellenistic period colonisation of the settlement, see Cohen 1995, 290; Filges 2006c, 20–21; Can 2017, 76; Mitchell 2018, 23–28; Mazzini 2020, 136–137; González 2021, 115. Prof. B. Can, head of the excavation, prepares a comprehensive study regarding the colonisation of Blaundos.

⁵ For the influence and impact of the Pergamene and early Roman rule on the city, see Kileci-Can 2020, 302ff.

Archaeological research in the city

In 1995, a six-week study was carried out by the Uşak Museum – the first excavation in Blaundos. During this study, the structure in the centre of the city, which was later identified as the Temple of Ceres, was excavated.⁶ Before the more recent excavations in Blaundos, it was the team headed by A. Filges that carried out the most important work in the city. Surveys were carried out in 1999, 2000, and 2002 as part of Filges' doctoral study. As a result of these studies, very important data regarding the history of the city, as well as detailed plans of the buildings, inscriptions, sculptures, ceramics, and coins, were compiled. This important research was published in 2006, and it is still the main academic source on Blaundos.⁷ After a decade, under the presidency of the Uşak Museum and under the scientific consultancy of B. Can from Uşak University, landscaping studies, plant cleaning, and georadar measurements were carried out in the city, and a new period of excavations began in 2018 under the supervision of Prof. Birol Can from Uşak University.⁸ Five excavation seasons have passed since 2018, and very significant progress was made. The first period of studies has focused on the main street and the structures around it (Can et al. 2020).

Coin finds (2018–2022)

First of all, this paper just presents a preliminary analysis of the coins. Along with a general overview, some significant conclusions and highlights are shared here. As I joined the team in 2022, I have not yet made a detailed analysis of the previous findings. A comprehensive publication of the coins found in Blaundos is planned to be published soon.

As of 2022, there are 235 coin finds from Blaundos. The first season of the excavations yielded 59 coins in total, the second season yielded 31 coins, the third 34 coins, the fourth 46 coins, and the last season, 2022, 65 coins (**Fig. 2**). Among them, only three coins are silver, four are antoninianus, and the rest are bronze issues. Two of the silvers are from the Ottoman period (15th and 16th centuries) and the other is an illegible Greek coin.

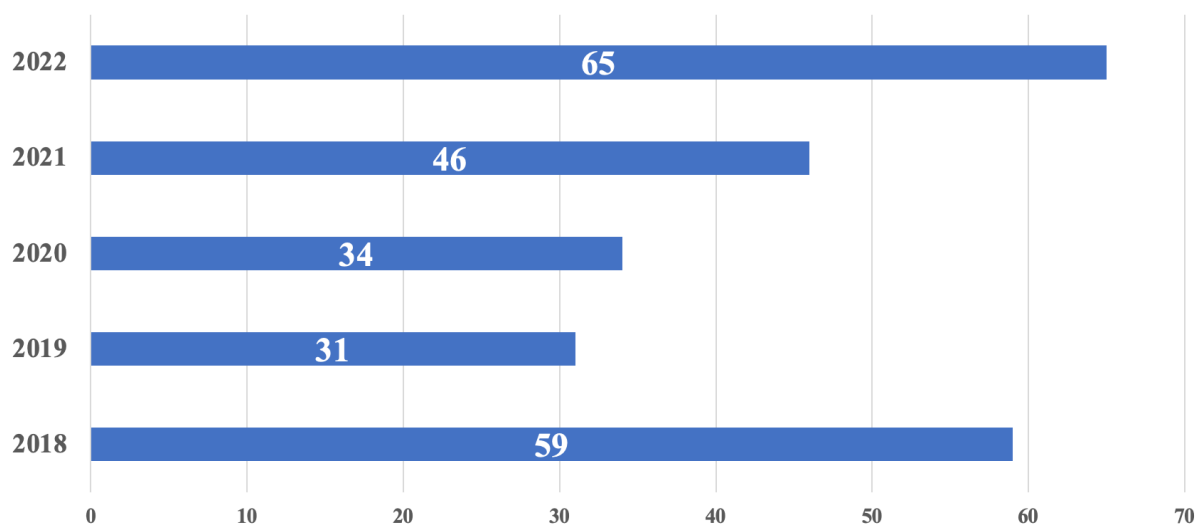


Fig. 2. Number of coins found in Blaundos so far.

⁶ For the results of the excavations carried out by Uşak Museum, see Akbıyıkolu 1997.

⁷ For these studies administered by A. Filges and their results, see Filges 2006a.

⁸ For a preliminary analysis, see Can 2017. For the results of the studies, see Can 2023a; 2023b, 397–401. As of 2024 a new team has been appointed to the excavation.

For the first two seasons (2018 and 2019), most of the coins were from the main street and the surrounding areas, as the excavation focused on these locales. Out of the 90 coins from these seasons, 56 (c. 62%) were found on the main street and its immediate surroundings. From 2021, the excavations in the Temple of Ceres have begun and yielded many coin finds. The total number of coins found there is 65. What is interesting on first glance is that the finds from this temple are from the Hellenistic to the Late Roman periods.⁹ A monographic study regarding the structure, which would include numismatic finds as well as other archaeological material, is necessary to understand it better.

When it comes to the earliest and latest coin finds from the settlement, the earliest find is a Macedonian royal issue (Fig. 3). It is a specimen of the shield/helmet series from the late 4th century. As it is corroded, it is not possible to determine its emission but in the light of its iconography (with the head of Gorgoneion on the obverse side), we can say that it is from c. 323–315 BC.



Fig. 3. Macedonian royal bronze issue, Photo: excavation archives.

However, this is the proposed date for its minting, and the period of use must have been longer. It is a significant find for presenting evidence for the earlier days of the settlement. Unfortunately, this coin is a surface find. If we can find more of these bronzes from specific trenches, it will surely become possible to elaborate more precisely on the Macedonian presence in the city. As of 2022, the latest coin find is an Ottoman silver coin from the late 16th century (Fig. 4). It belongs to the reign of Mehmed III, struck in Hijri 1003 (AD 1594–1595).¹⁰ This is the only 16th-century find so far. As the settlement was abandoned as early as the 13th century, it is possible to consider it as a lost/dropped coin.



Fig. 4. Ottoman silver coin from the 16th century, Photo: excavation archives.

When we take a look at the general periodical distribution, there are 24 coins from the Hellenistic period. There are 20 Roman provincial issues and 16 Roman Imperial coins. There are 110 coins from the Late Roman period, thus constituting the densest group of finds. In accordance with the historical pattern of the settlement, there are only five coins from the Byzantine period and, lastly, there are two Islamic coins found. Fifty-eight coins, on the other hand, could not be identified due to their poor condition (Fig. 5).

⁹ It is suggested that the existing temple was built in the 1st century AD during the reign of Claudius. However, the structure must have been used with a similar function before the Roman era. Not only Hellenistic period coins but also ceramics from the 2nd century BC have been found there. For more detailed information about this structure, see Roos, Filges 2006. Also see Akbıyıköğlu 1997, 30–31.

¹⁰ I would like to thank B. Teoman for her identification of the coin.

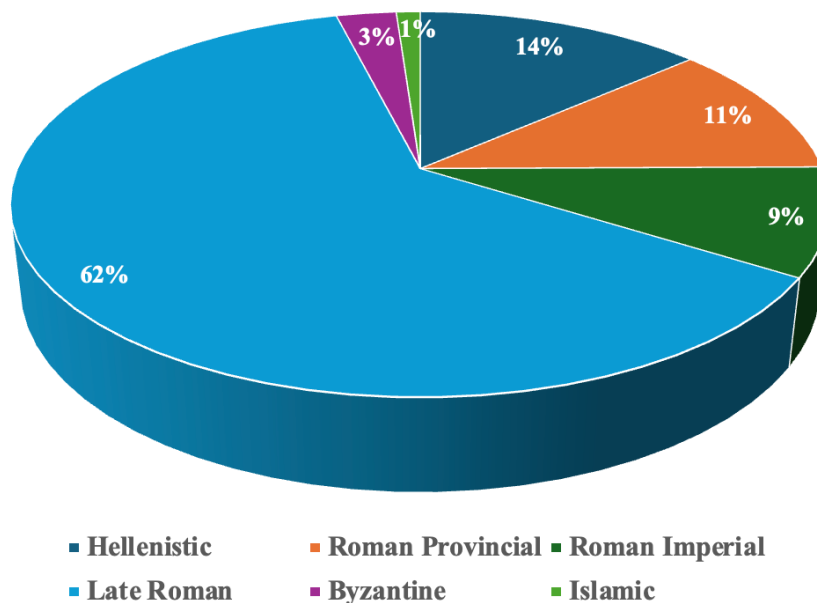


Fig. 5. Periodical distribution of coin finds.

Coins from the Hellenistic period are additionally significant, as dating the earlier phase of the settlement is problematic regarding its colonisation and the following situation of the city. Although the number of coins is not sufficient at this stage to make a comprehensive analysis of the era, what is available is important for a preliminary idea. For now, among 24 coins, there are six coins of Blaundos, three coins of Sardis (2nd–1st centuries BC), one coin of Laodikeia (2nd century BC), and, as mentioned above, one Macedonian royal issue (c. 323–315 BC). On the other hand, unfortunately, the rest of the coins are mostly illegible. Among the illegible specimens, there is one interesting coin which is broken, and the other half is missing. Its more legible obverse side and the metrology brings to mind the possibility of it being a Ptolemaic royal bronze from the 3rd century BC (**Fig. 6**). If this hypothetical interpretation is later supported by further Ptolemaic finds, the Hellenistic period of the settlement would of course take another turn.

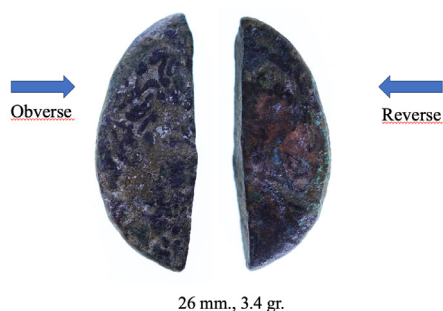


Fig. 6. Unidentified bronze (Ptolemaic?), Photo: excavation archives.

Civic coin finds, on the other hand, despite being quantitatively insufficient for now, clearly show Blaundos' interaction with the nearby cities (**Fig. 7**). The route following the only convenient road from the north as far as Sardis and through the Hermos Valley is visible even in light of this minor group of finds. As the material accumulates, Blaundos' relations with the region during the Hellenistic period will surely be clearer and more apparent with regard to the pattern of the coin circulation. On the other hand, among the six specimens of Blaundos' own issues, there is not yet any unrecorded or unpublished coin. This is an important point because Birch (1844, 11) and Imhoof-Blumer (1883, 385, n. 6) catalogued two rare bronze specimens, but these coins have not

been published or recorded in the auctions since then.¹¹

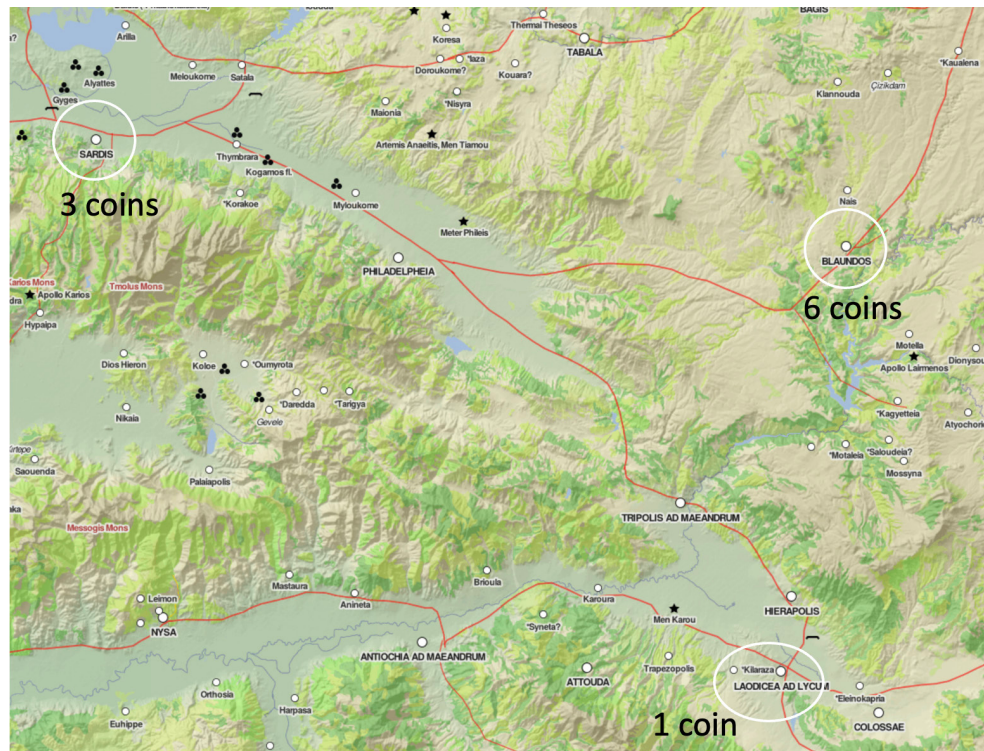


Fig. 7. Hellenistic period civic coins found in Blaundos shown on the map.

As stated above, there are 20 Roman provincial coins found in Blaundos. The issues are of Blaundos (five coins), Silandos (two coins), Tripolis (two coins), Sala (one coin) in Lydia, Traianopolis (1 coin) in Phrygia, and Antiocheia ad Maeandrum (one coin) in Caria (**Fig. 8**). Finally, there is a single specimen from the Syrian province. Seven coins are unidentified issues.



Fig. 8. Roman provincial coins found in Blaundos shown on the map.

¹¹ As catalogued by Birch: bearded male head r./ MΛAYNΔEQN, Fortuna holding cornucopia and rudder; Imhoof-Blumer: wreathed head of Asclepius r./ MΛAYNΔEQN, Coiled serpent.

Issues of Blaundos are from the reigns of Nero (as Caesar), Septimius Severus, and Trebonianus Gallus (RPC I, n. 3060; RPC IX, n. 748; GRPC, n. 119). Another two coins are pseudo-autonomous issues, and their minting period is not well attested (RPC IV.2, n. 1196; RPC IX, n. 752A). Coins of Silandos, on the other hand, are in the name of the emperor Marcus Aurelius, dated to AD 163–165, as they carry the name of magistrate Attalianos (RPC IV.2, n. 1500). One of them is a previously unpublished medallion, and it is the most striking find so far from Blaundos (**Fig. 9**). It is a medallion of Faustina the younger struck by Silandos found within a wall of a Byzantine-period structure on the main street. The fact that it was found in a Byzantine-period workshop also makes it difficult to establish its original context. Considering the fact that medallions were presented to members of local elites, perhaps it was given to such a person living in Blaundos. This movement of the medallion is most likely explained as the result of some relationship between two nearby cities.¹²



Fig. 9. Medallion in the name of Faustina II, Photo: excavation archives.

Coins of Tripolis and Sala are, on the other hand, pseudo-autonomous issues.¹³ A bronze of Traianopolis, the only Phrygian issue found in Blaundos, is also a pseudo-autonomous coin and is from the period of the Antonine Dynasty (RPC IV/2, n. 3352). Finally, a coin of the Carian city Antiokeia ad Maeandrum is attributed to the reign of Tiberius (RPC I, n. 2835), making this specimen the earliest provincial coin found in Blaundos. Apart from these coins from Asia Minor, there is one bronze from the Syrian province, and it is the one and only issue from such a distant territory. This partially illegible coin is probably from the reign of Augustus (cf. RPC I, n. 4102–4107).

These issues, just like the Hellenistic period civic coins, are significant for understanding the coin circulation in the city and more generally in the region. For now, the circulation is limited to Lydia as well as Phrygia and northern Caria, which are neighbouring regions. As a *de facto* rule, bronze coins remain in and around where they were struck, so the circulation pattern is not surprising.

Among the 16 Roman imperial coins found in Blaundos, it has been possible to determine the issuing authority of five of them. These coins are from four different emperors: Tiberius (as Caesar; 1 coin), Gallienus (2 coins), and Claudius II (1 coin).¹⁴ One partially illegible issue is probably from the reign of Florianus. All these specimens were struck in Rome. On the other hand, almost all of the other imperial issues are heavily corroded, and their issuing authority as well as minting place could not be determined. As Roman Provincial coins were the main currency until the middle of the 3rd century, imperial issues are few in number.

Late Roman imperial bronzes are the concrete traces from the late 3rd and 4th century history of Blaundos. Following the cessation of provincial issues, the currency of the empire became more uniform, and imperial mints began to strike coins. Coins from this period are the highest in number, and there are 110 coins as of 2022. As a result of the preliminary study of these coins, it has been possible to determine the issuing authority of only a small portion of the total, as most of the coins are heavily corroded. Identified coins are from the reigns of Maximianus (four coins), Diocletianus (one coin), Constantinus I (six coins), Crispus (one coin), Licinius II (three coins),

¹² See Tatar 2023 for a detailed analysis and discussion of the medallion.

¹³ Tripolis: RPC IV.2, n. 9972; Cfr. RPC IV.2, n. 1648; RPC VI, n. 5570; Sala: RPC III, n. 2438.

¹⁴ Tiberius: RIC I, n. 471; Gallienus: RIC V, n. 178 or 179; RIC V, n. 283.

Constantinus II (three coins), Constantius II (three coins), Valens (one coin), Gratianus (one coin), Arcadius (four coins), Honorius (one coin), Theodosius II (two coins), Eudoxia (two coins), and Zenonis (one coin). On the other hand, some partially legible coins could be at least attributed to a certain time period, if not to a certain reign. Among them, there are 15 coins from the period of the Constantinian Dynasty, two coins from the Valentinian Dynasty, and six coins from Theodosian Dynasty. Finally, 54 coins are illegible. When we examine the mints of coins which ended up in Blaundos, among legible issues there are coins from Kyzikos (12 coins), Constantinopolis (four coins), Thessalonika (four coins), Nikomedia (three coins), Herakleia (two coins), Antiocheia (two coins), Siscia (one coin), and Trier (one coin). Finally, there is one issue either struck in Kyzikos or Alexandria.

Finally, there are five Byzantine coins and two Ottoman coins. Among the five Byzantine issues, three are from the early Byzantine period, i.e., the late 6th century AD. While two coins are from the reign of Justin II, one is in the name of Maurice Tiberius. The other legible issue is from the 11th century, and it is an issue of Nicephorus III. Lastly, there is a surfrapped bronze coin. It is seen that on an issue of Emperor Phokas, a coin in the name of Heraclius was struck. Coins from the reign of Justin II are Constantinople issues, while the coin in the name of M. Tiberius was struck in Thessalonika. As previously attested, the Byzantine era of the settlement is not represented densely by the coin finds, and there is a huge gap between the 6th century and later periods. Two Ottoman coins, on the other hand, are the latest numismatic evidence found in Blaundos. One of them is from the 15th century, while the other is from the late 16th century. This silver specimen is in the name of Murat III and was struck in Constantinople.

Conclusion

Each excavation season in Blaundos has yielded a considerable number of coins. As is the case with most of the ancient settlements in Asia Minor, coins from the Late Roman era are the highest in number. A medallion of Faustina II has been the most significant numismatic find of five excavation seasons in Blaundos. On the other hand, Macedonian royal bronzes might turn out to be the first numismatic evidence for the Macedonian colonisation of the settlement. As it is a surface find and the only specimen so far, further finds are necessary to make a more decisive comment regarding the subject. Regarding the theory of Seleucid period colonisation of Blaundos, there is no numismatic data to support this opinion yet. Potential finds of Macedonian and Seleucid coins are key in understanding the Hellenistic period colonisation of the city. Such numismatic finds will also let us know what kind of colonisation took place in the settlement – whether it was a military colonisation as commonly suggested or whether this was in the form of establishing an active military garrison or settling retired mercenaries in the city. Another issue is the civic coins of Blaundos. The city struck its own coinage in the late Hellenistic period; however, a certain chronology could not be established yet. For now, it seems plausible that Blaundos began to strike its own coins from the middle of the 2nd century BC.¹⁵ In the light of a comprehensive study including numismatic finds and other archaeological materials, a more precise dating of these coins will be possible.

Bibliography

- Akbiyikoğlu, K., 1997. 1995 Yılı Blaundos (Sülümenli) Kazısı. VII. Müze Kurtarma Kazıları Semineri, 29–48.
- Birch, S., 1844. Observations on Some Unedited Coins, Principally of Asia Minor. *The Numismatic Chronicle and Journal of the Numismatic Society* 7, 5–18.
- Bosworth, A. B., 2005. *Büyük İskender'in Yaşamı ve Fetihleri: Fetih ve İmparatorluk*, Translated by Çalışkan, H., Ankara.

¹⁵ For the analysis, discussion and detailed information about the Hellenistic period civic coins of Blaundos, see. Tatar 2024.

- Can, B., 2017. Blaundos Antik Kenti, in: Czichon, R. et al. (eds.), *Yüzey Araştırmaları ve Kazılar Işığında Uşak. Uşak Müzesi Müdürlüğü, Lidya Bölgesi Arkeolojisi Uygulama ve Araştırma Merkezi*, İstanbul, 73–82.
- Can, B., 2023a. Blaundos Antik Kenti 2019–2021 Çalışmaları (İkinci, Üçüncü ve Dördüncü Sezonu). 42. Kazı Sonuçları Toplantısı, 453–469.
- Can, B., 2023b. Blaundos Antik Kenti ve Kazıları, in: Sarısamam, S., Ceylan S. (eds.), *Kurtuluşun 100. Yılında Uşak. Palet Yayınları*, Konya, 393–403.
- Can, B., Söyler, Ş., Keklik Dünder, G., 2020. Blaundos Antik Kenti 2018 Yılı (İlk Sezon) Çalışmaları. 41. Kazı Sonuçları Toplantısı, 393–409.
- Cohen, G. M., 1995. *The Hellenistic Settlements*. Berkeley.
- Filges, A. (ed.), 2006a. Blaundos; Berichte zur Erforschung einer Kleinstadt im lydisch-phrygischen Grenzgebiet. Tübingen.
- Filges, A., 2006b. Einleitung. in: Filges, A. (ed.), Blaundos; Berichte zur Erforschung einer Kleinstadt im lydisch-phrygischen Grenzgebiet. E. Wasmuth, Tübingen, 1–13.
- Filges, A., 2006c. Von Mlaundos zu Blaundos. Literarische Quellen und Überlegungen zur Frühen Geschichte bis zur Integration in das Pergamenische Reich, in: Filges, A. (ed.), Blaundos; Berichte zur Erforschung einer Kleinstadt im lydisch-phrygischen Grenzgebiet, E. Wasmuth, Tübingen, 17–21.
- González, C. M., 2021. *The Macedonian Army as a Vehicle for Change? Military Presence in Western Asia Minor During the Early Hellenistic Period: Topography, Agency and Identity*. University College, (Unpublished Phd.). London.
- GRPC = Kurt, D., 2020. *Greek and Roman Provincial Coins: Lydia, Vol. I–IV*. İstanbul.
- Hamilton, W. J., 1842. *Researches in Asia Minor, Pontus and Armenia, with Some Account of Their Antiquities and Geology*, I.II. London.
- Hammond, N. G. L., 1992. *The Macedonian State: Origins, Institutions, and History*. Oxford.
- Imhoof-Blumer, F., 1883. *Monnaies Grecques*, Amsterdam.
- Kileci, Ş., Can, B., 2020. A New Honorific Inscription from Blaundos: Tiberius Claudius Lucius, the Priest of Dionysos Kathegemon. *Adalya* 23, 297–309.
- Mazzini, L., 2020. Triggered Identity: The Use of Macedonian Ethnic by Blaundos in Confrontation with the Roman Empire, in: Irvin, A. W. (ed.), *In Community and Identity at the Edges of the Classical World*. John Wiley & Sons Inc., New York, 131–188.
- Mitchell, S., 2018. Dispelling Seleukid Phantoms: Macedonians in Western Asia Minor from Alexander to the Attalids, in: Kyle, E. (ed.), *In The Seleukid Empire, 281–222 BC: War Within the Family*. The Classical Press of Wales, Swansea, 11–35.
- RPC = Roman Provincial Coinage online. <http://rpc.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/>
- Roos, D., Filges, A., 2006. Das Ceres-Heiligtum im Stadtzentrum, in: Filges, A. (ed.), Blaundos; Berichte zur Erforschung einer Kleinstadt im lydisch-phrygischen Grenzgebiet. E. Wasmuth, Tübingen, 140–188.
- Tatar, Ö., 2023. A Unique Silandos Medallion of Faustina II from Blaundos in Lydia. *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 36, 186–195.
- Tatar, Ö., 2024. Blaundos'un Hellenistik Dönem Sikke Darbı. *Anadolu* 50, 193–223. 10.36891/anatolia.1426143