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The coins represented in Rigas *Charta* as a major thematic cartographic element.

Keywords: Rigas Velesinlis; Rigas *Charta*; Greek Enlightenment;
Eighteenth century cartography; coinage.

Summary

The late eighteenth century twelve-sheet map, known as “Rigas *Charta*”, designed and produced by Rigas Velesinlis, a reference personality of the Greek Enlightenment, apart of its general cartographic value, its symbolisms and its placement in the historical context of the preliminaries, it is further characterized by an impressive representation of a huge number of coins placed all over the map surface. These coins with origin in the ancient and medieval periods are fundamental as a major “thematic” cartographic content of this map, the importance of which is discussed in this paper.

Introduction

Rigas Velesinlis is a major personality of the preparative period of the Struggle for Greek Independence and a top representative of the Greek Enlightenment in the late 18th century. His ideas intellectual involvement and political activism¹ played an important and reference role among the Greeks in early 19th century, influencing also the neighbouring people in the Balkans under Ottoman rule. Among his rich scholar production, i.e. his writings and translations of literature and science books into Greek, his cartographic production, even limited in number of maps, is of particular importance. Especially his masterpiece, *Charta*, a twelve-sheet map covering in total four square metres surface (2X2 metres in the directions of longitude and latitude), printed in Vienna in 1796² and 1797, representing almost the whole of Southeast Europe³, is considered a monument of modern Greek national cultural heritage⁴.

Rigas, even though he was one of the best educated representatives of Greek Enlightenment was not a professional cartographer⁵, historian or archaeologist. Taking into account that his political plans and activism were carefully designed, organised and implemented, it is obvious that *Charta*, with its thematic multiplicity, was a substantive part of his revolutionary work⁶.

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¹ He was deeply influenced by the ideological principles of the French Revolution.

² The first sheet (No.1), depicting Constantinople and its surroundings, was published and circulated a year before the publication of the rest eleven map-sheets.

³ A surface extended, in latitude, from the territories along the Danube in the north to Crete in the south and in longitude from the west lands of Asia Minor to the Dalmatian coasts and the Ionia Sea.

⁴ See the relevant bibliography about Rigas and *Charta* in Livieratos E., 2008. On the Cartography of Rigas Charta, *e-Perimtron*, Vol. 3, No. 3, 120-145.

⁵ The sources on his early life confirm his strong inclination in Geography.

⁶ Rigas had a good awareness of the French Enlightenment and he had understood that it would be more effective to implant the idea of living, acting and thinking in a context that only a free and fair modern state could provide to his citizens, by forcing his readers making the comparison with the actual situation of living under the ottoman rule (*L'*



Figure 1. An illustrative example of the thematic multitude of Rigas works (original and translations): historic images, texts (theatrical plays, manuals on natural sciences, novels, political manifest, military handbook), songs and *Charta*.

écolier écoute en classe le verbiage de son maître [...] les pédagogues étalent en grand appareil les instructions qu'ils donnent a leurs disciples & qu'elles sont des mots, encore des mots & toujours des mots (J. J. Rousseau, *Émile*) or *Teachers give too many emphases talking without ending to their students [...] words, words, always words*. *Physikēs Apanthisma*, preface), <http://195.134.75.14/Hellinominon/0709241349300000/main.htm>. He succeeded on that, using a variety of different ways: the books (before the final revolutionary manifestos, he translated from the French novels, military and scientific handbooks, poetry etc. His book *Skholeion tōn melikatōn erastōn* (erotic romantic tales), based on novels by Rétif de la Bretonne, was the first novel of its kind translated in the modern Greek language. See also, *O Stratēgos Kevenkxylar ē Stratiōtikon* (military manual), *Physikēs Apanthisma* (physics anthology), *Ēthikous Tripous* (3 theatrical plays), *Neos Anakharsēs*, (translation of *Voyage du jeune Anacharsis en Grèce*, by J. Barthélemy), while he had ready the translation of *Esprit de Loi* by Montesquieu), the songs (*Thourios* –still widely known in Greece– and *Ymnos Patriōtikos*), the image (Portrait of Alexander the Great <http://www.karaberopoulos.gr/karaberopoulos/apanta/9.asp>) and the maps (Map of Vlachia and Map of Moldavia, Vienna 1797, <http://www.karaberopoulos.gr/karaberopoulos/apanta/8.asp>) which combine the communicative advantages: the information, the immediate perception and easy memorization. Furthermore, Rigas probably conceived his cartographic work and its thematic content as a way of easy transmission of his revolutionary ideas, elevating thus the map to a unique, self-existent medium with great communicative power, with such a variety and quantity of information, equivalent to thousands of written pages. Ironically, his cartographic work attracted the interest of the Austrian police (the Austrian police was familiar with the use of maps and its communicative power, thanks to the great progress of military mapping during the 18th century in Austria. See. Livieratos E., 2008, *ibid*): when Rigas was arrested and during his interrogation, the Austrian officers considered *Charta* as the main proof of his guilt for revolutionary actions. This fact classifies *Charta* as the first map that was officially characterized as “a revolutionary document”, as stated in the records of Austrian police (Livieratos E. 1998b, “*Mia khartografikē anagnōsē tēs Khartas tou Rēga*”, in: *200 Khronia tēs Khartas tou Rēga 1797-1997*, Symposium Proceedings, Kozani 18 October 1997, Thessaloniki: Hellenic Cartographic Society – Paratērētēs).

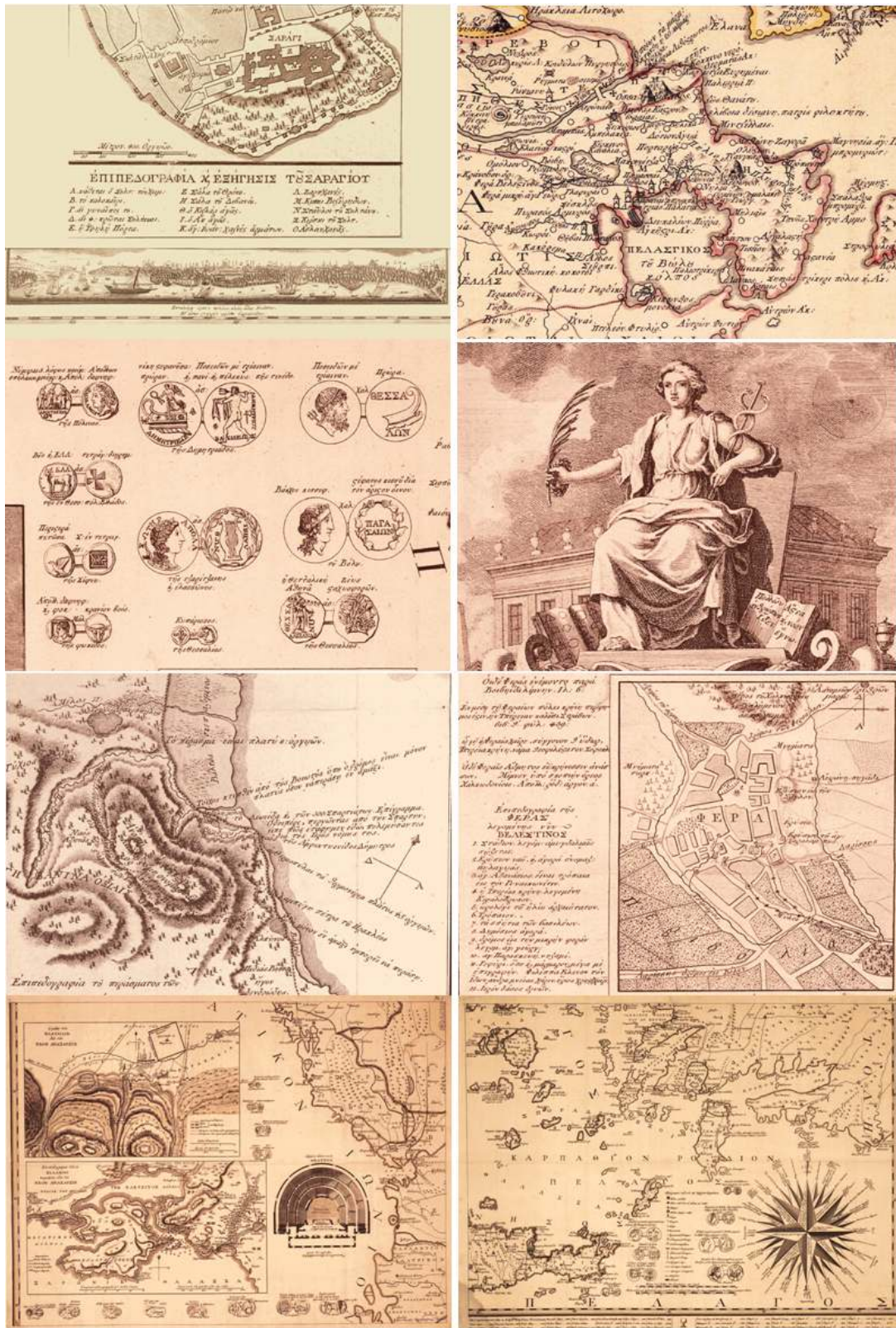


Figure 2. Details from Rigas' Charta.

The ancient coins in Rigas' *Charta*

Rigas' idea to use a map as a “visual medium” for transmitting historical and archaeological impression and knowledge finds a most original application in the depiction of 162 ancient and medieval coins placed in several areas of *Charta*, in such an extension and detail, that we can consider this map also as a *numismatic thematic map*. The mass of coins represented on the map is impressive. All 162 coins, in both their sides, are referred to the classic, roman and medieval period. Most of them are identified from the historical numismatic research^{7, 8}. Their placement is illustrated in Figure 3.

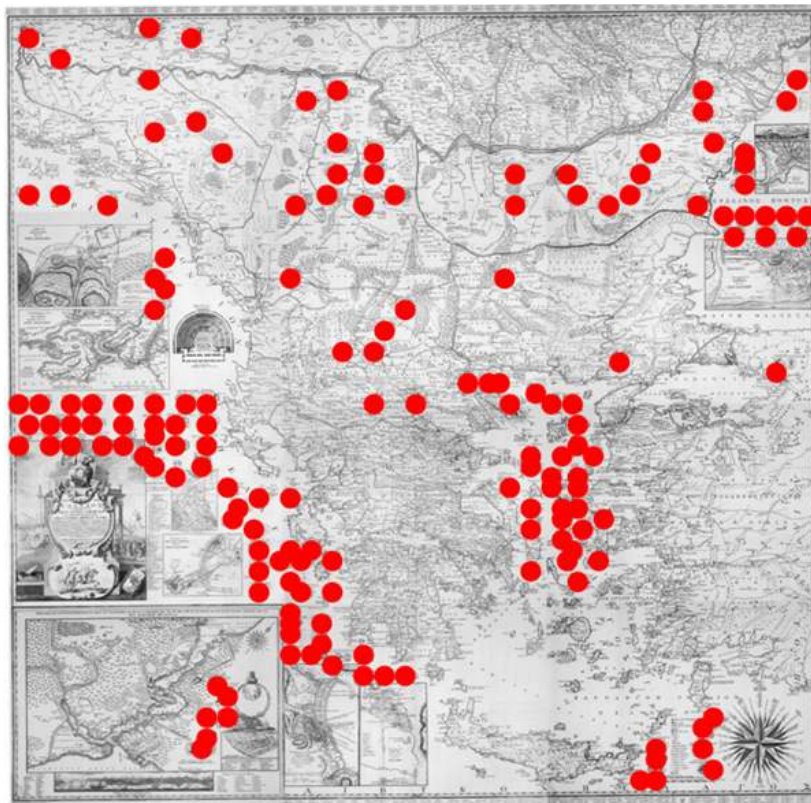


Figure 3. The 162 ancient and medieval coins as placed in Rigas' *Charta*.

⁷ Laios G., 1960, “Oi khartes tou Rēga. Erevna epi tōn neōn pēgōn”, in *Deltion Istorikēs kai Ethnologikēs Etaireias Ellados*, v. 14., pp. 231-312. Penna V. 1998a. Ta nomismata tis Khartas tou Riga. in: *200 Khronia tēs Khartas tou Rēga 1797-1997*, Seminar Proceedings, Kozani 18 October 1997, Thessaloniki: Paraterētēs (in Greek) and Penna V. 1998b Ta nomismata tis Khartas tou Riga. in: *Ē Kharta tou Rēga Veletinlē*, Athens: Epistēmonikē Etaireia Meletēs Ferōn-Veletinou-Rēga: The most complete and detailed presentation of the coins.

⁸ Pazarli M. 2001, “Enas ‘agnōstos’ khartēs apo tēn syllogē tēs Ethnikēs Khartothēkēs, pēgē empneusēs gia tē Kharta tou Rēga”, http://cartography.web.auth.gr/Maplibrary/New/Har_Paz.pdf: a detailed analysis of Harenberg's map content, comparing to the *Charta*, where we presented the similarities and the differences of Harenberg's coins with Rigas' coins, according to V. Penna. The most interesting result was that we recognized one of the so-called “imaginary” coins of *Charta*, this from Delfoi, to be depicted in Harenberg's map, 50 years earlier. See also: E. Livieratos (2002), *Ē apotyposi tou Choiseul-Gouffier*, in: *Orous Athō Perimtron*, Θεσσαλονίκη: Ethiko Kentro Khartōn kai Khartografikēs Klēronomias: the comparison between the coins of *Charta* and those from Choiseul –Gouffier's map.

The use of coins in Charta's context

In *Charta's* cartouche Rigas explained the inclusion of coins as “to give a faint idea of Archaeology”, that is of a science “à la mode” to the philhellenic and Greek Diaspora’s literary European circles⁹ at the end of 18th century. Rigas was undoubtedly interested to rise the interest of these circles for his political plans as well as their moral and financial support, while, at the same time, he was equally addressing his project to the illiterate people¹⁰, the future free citizens of an independent state: the affluent coins may represent in this case the recall of the “fame of the glorious ancestors” and promise a “desirable perspective of material resurrection”¹¹.



Figure 4. Left: *Charta's* emblematic cartouche (map-sheet No. 4). Right: Cartouche detail.

It was also known at that time, that since the ancient years only sovereign states or cities were entitled to issue their own coins: thus, the connection to the actual situation was inevitable, since all territories represented on *Charta* and their wealthiness were at present constrained under the Ottoman rule¹². In *Charta's* sheet No 1, the plan of Constantinople, the capital city of Ottoman Empire and obviously the future capital of the new state, Rigas places three coins from ancient Byzantium (B.C., 2 copper and 1 silver) and three from medieval Constantinople (1 silver, 2 golden) followed by a golden bull of the last Byzantine emperor, with Rigas' notice “golden -and we became slaves” (Figure 5), indicating thus the tradition of continuing wealthiness in different historical periods, interrupted by the Ottoman conquest. Even seen from the decorative and the cartographic visualization point of view, the depiction of coins was a unique choice for Rigas to fill “empty spaces” of his map, especially in sea. Drawn in relevant size

⁹ The Royal Numismatic Society of London was founded a few decades later, in 1836 and immediately begun publishing the journal that became the *Numismatic Chronicle*. From its website: *In retrospect it is clear both that there was a need and a desire for such a body and also that the general circumstances were propitious for such a venture. The later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries brought great changes in the economic and social fabric of this country. The increased wealth generated by the Industrial Revolution and a greater spread of education created a class equipped with the means, the leisure, and the knowledge to indulge in intellectual and cultural pursuits.*

<http://www.numismatics.org.uk/history/>

¹⁰ As it were the almost total majority of the Greek people living in the territories of the today Greece.

¹¹ The poor farmers in the Balkan Peninsula were familiar with ancient coins as frequent findings during their common rural works in the fields.

¹² Toliás G. 2007, “*Ē Kharta tou Rēga sto perivallon tou ellēnikou Diaphōtismou*”, presented in *Ē Kharta tou Rēga ston Psēfiako kosmo*, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki / Tellogleion Arts Foundation, 11 November 2007.

and in simplified linear sketch the coin depiction was ready for easy engraving, retaining at the same time their symbolic character: by the addition of an accompanying short explanatory note, sometimes in the common Greek language of Rigas times, otherwise in archaistic language, each coin was associated to a “story”, a “myth” or some historical event. Besides, and this is a typical issue of Rigas’ conception to use the multiple communicative power of map (combining the image and the synoptic information), all of the coins are related to some *toponym* (geographic place) depicted in *Charta*. In this way, Rigas is offering the possibility to the user to locate the place of his interest or descent, with an additional clue for its freedom and prosperity to come.



Figure 5. Coins of ancient Byzantium and Constantinople in sheet No. 1.

The coins: quantity, descent and spatial distribution on map.

Rigas’ methodology for the choice and collection of 162 coins’ images was subject of several studies and interpretations¹³. Rigas states in *Charta*’s cartouche that he had visited on purpose the Imperial Museum of Austria, but it seems more probable that he copied the coins from works by E. Froelich, J. Pellerin, J.J Gessner and J. Eckel¹⁴. Still, there is a number of coins in *Charta* not identified (Delfoi, Megara, Nafpaktos), derived probably from unknown sources or Rigas’ own sketches. For most of them, Rigas notes the modern toponym of the site (city) of origin, with its ancient and medieval or current name, the material (copper, silver, gold) and some times some comments about the representation (Figure 6). In some cases, he combines the sides of two different coins of the same city and different era^{15, 16}.

¹³ See footnotes 7, 8. See also Mihailidou L. 2003, “The Coins of Rigas Charta: An interpretation”, in: *Rigas Feraios’ Charta (1997-2007)*, Symposium Proceedings, Nicosia 27 October 2007, Nicosia: Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation (in print).

¹⁴ Laios, *ibid*, p. 29, Penna, *ibid*, p. 94.

¹⁵ Penna, *ibid*, p. 95.

¹⁶ Mihailidou, *ibid*.



Figure 6. Coins in Rigas' *Charta*.

There are coins placed in all the twelve *Charta*'s sheets, ranging from a minimum of 6 coins per sheet to a maximum of 28 coins per sheet. Their distribution in *Charta*'s map sheets does not always follow the geographical place of their origin, not even a greater relevant area (Figure 7). Only in a few cases the coins are placed near to their place of origin, in a way the user can make a direct spatial correspondence^{17,18}.

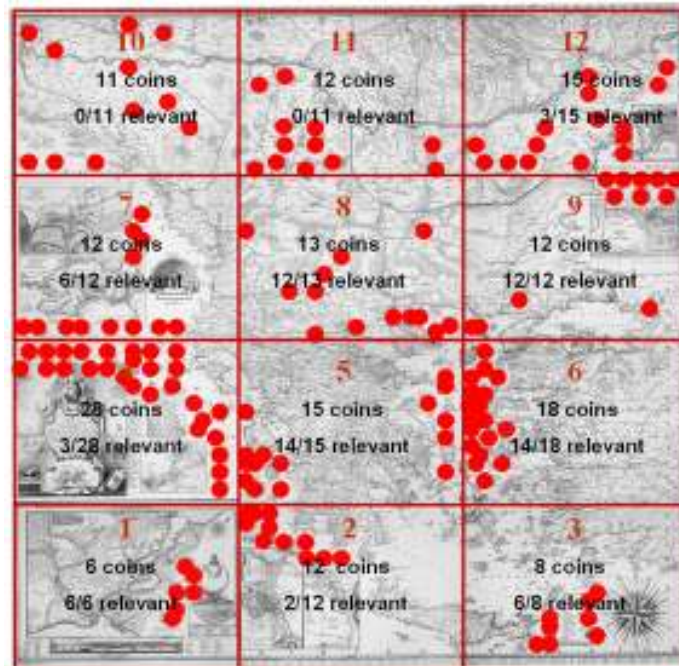


Figure 7. Spatial distribution of coins (in red) in the twelve map-sheets and their spatial relevance with the place of origin.

¹⁷ Livieratos E. 1998b, “Mia khartografikē...”, *ibid*.

¹⁸ Ch. Reihard in his review in *Allgemeine Geographische Ephemeriden XXV* (1808) indicates that the coins' spatial distribution makes hard for the user to understand the Greek antiquity, in other words does not allow to have “a faint idea of Archaeology”. See Laios, *ibid*, p. 84.

There is not always a geographic relevance between the coins and the area depicted on the same map-sheet. If we try to relate each coin with the exact geographic place of origin, a different picture is obtained concerning the geographic reference of coins in each map-sheet (Figure 8, Right).

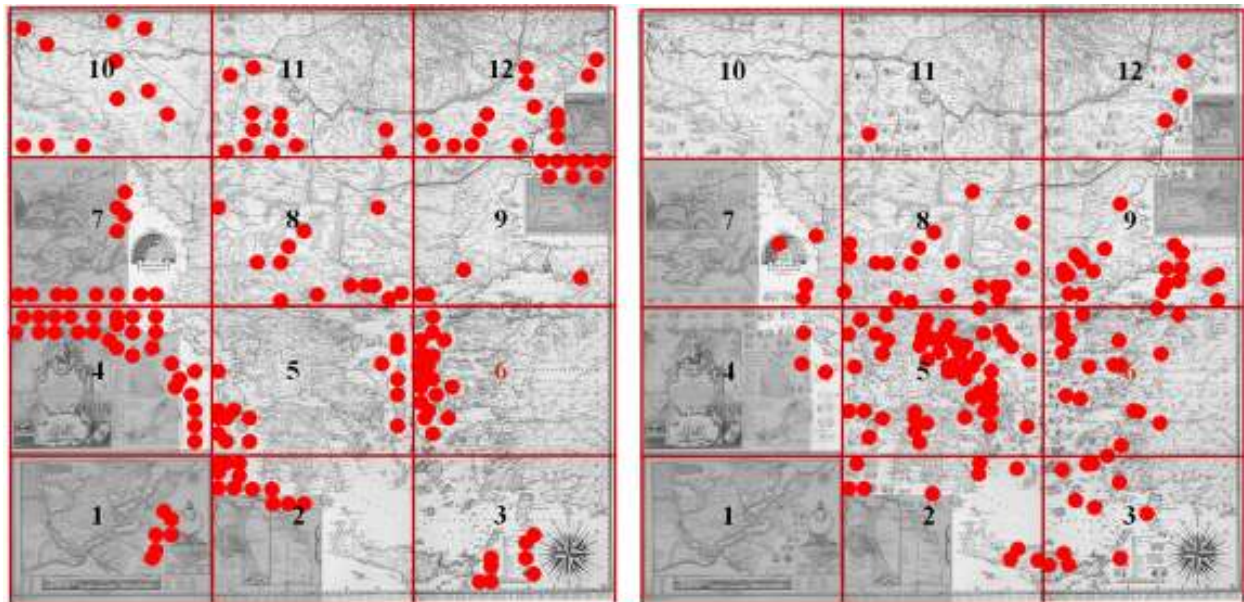


Figure 8. Left: The original place of coins in *Charta*. Right: The re-distribution of the places of coins according to their geographic reference.

The resulting image of this elaboration is radically different: the majority of coins are moving in the region of Thessaly, in the central sheets of the map (i.e. No. 5 and 8), while some of the sheets remain empty of coins. Rigas, a native of Thessaly, was probably more interested or more familiar with the coins and the depictions, myths and toponyms descending from his motherland, or maybe he did not find coins referenced to all the areas of the map. In any case, it seems that, the precision in geographical reference of the depicted coins was not a main issue for Rigas. The important thing was the coins to be there, in order to attract the map reader's interest and concern.

Comparison with other related maps

At the end of 18th century only a few number of other maps depicting coins is known^{19, 20}. Here are mentioned, e.g., Weigel's map, depicting the ancient reigns south of the Danube, Cristophorus Harenberg's map of ancient Greece and Choiseul-Gouffier's map of the canal of Athos peninsula (Figure 9). In any case, it seems that there is not any other known example in the cartography of this time, where the presence of coins is so huge and dominant, with so many meanings as it happens with *Charta*.

¹⁹ Although the research has proposed numerous maps as Rigas' sources for *Charta* (by Delisle, Weigel, Senex, Blair), there is no coins depicted in none of them (L. Mihailidou, *ibid*).

²⁰ Also maps by Ortelius and Homann Haeres (See Mihailidou, *ibid*).

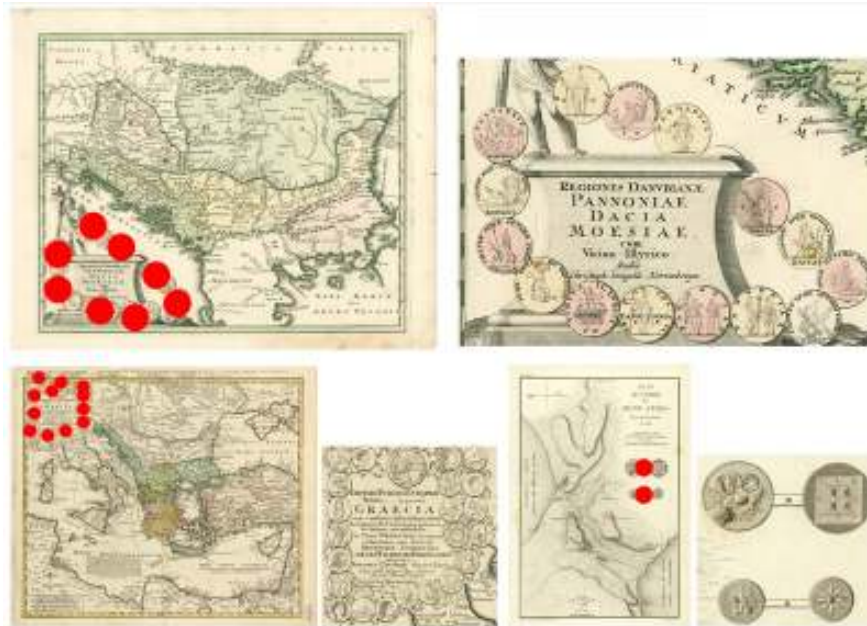


Figure 9. Up: Ch. Weigel, *Regiones Danubianae, Pannoniae, Dacia, Moesia, cum Vicino Illyrico*, Nürberg 1720-24, Private collection (8 coins) Down left: I. Ch. Harenberg, *Imperii Turcici Europaei terra, in primis Graecia, cum confiniis, ad intelligentes Scriptores N.T. ceterosque graecos et latinos accomodata...*, 1741, Private Collection (12 coins) Down right: Choiseul-Gouffier, *Plan de l'isthme de Mont Athos*, 1791, Mount Athos Maplibrary (2 coins).

The differences between the three maps mentioned above and Rigas' *Charta* are obvious, not only in the number of coins depicted, but also in their correlation with the content of the map. The coins are related to the historical content of the map (ancient coins in the map of ancient Greece, coins of the Mt Athos peninsula in the Choiseul-Gouffier's map and coins of the ancient Panonia, Dacia, Moesia in Weigel's map). Furthermore, the coins have strictly decorative role and they are spatially restricted in the cartouche, not in the entire space of the map, in contrast to *Charta* where they are placed all over the map (regardless their relevance to their place of reference), servicing not as a decoration but as carriers of multiple meaning and messages.

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