



A Database for the French Excavations Coins in Greece

Caroline Carrier

► To cite this version:

Caroline Carrier. A Database for the French Excavations Coins in Greece. Hackathon. Excavation coins Online, Thomas Faucher, Jun 2023, Athènes, Greece. <hal-04571780v2>

HAL Id: hal-04571780

<https://hal.science/hal-04571780v2>

Submitted on 19 Oct 2024

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.



Distributed under a Creative Commons CC BY-NC 4.0 - Attribution - Non-commercial use - International License

‘A Database for French Excavations Coins in Greece’

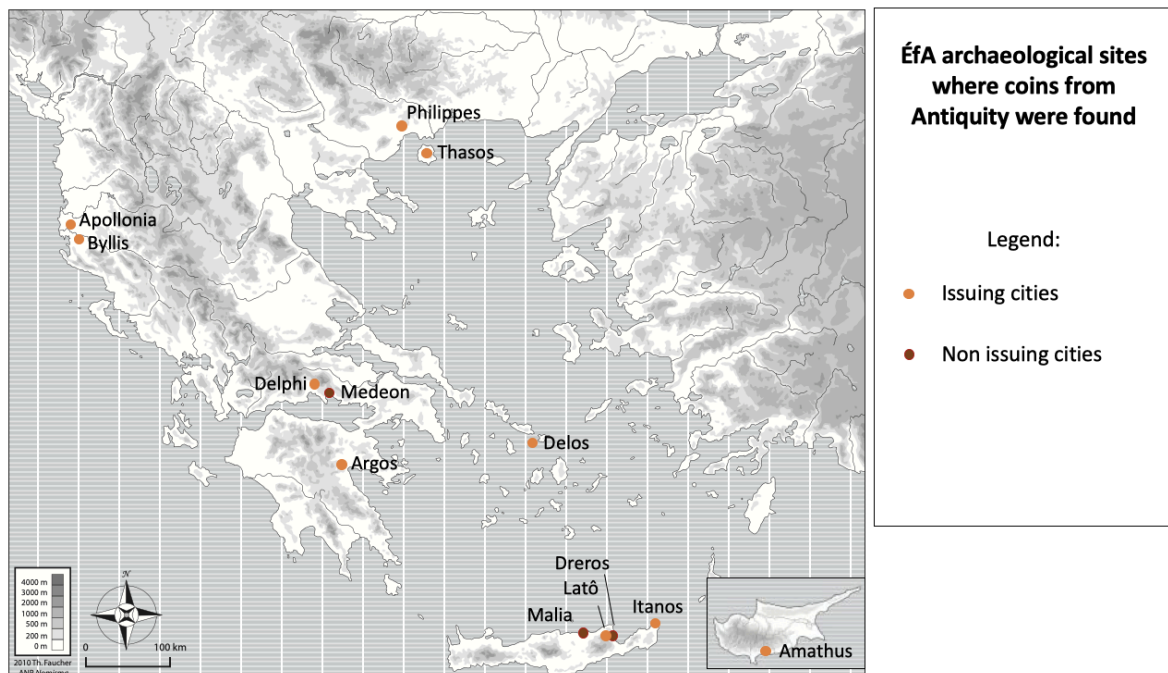
Caroline Carrier

Communication for “Hackathon. Excavation Coins Online”, at Athens, June 26th-28th 2023, organised by Th. Faucher (CEAlex)

I have been working on this Greek coins database as a research project and I will show:

1. what kind of data are available
2. the database that I designed and where I see difficulties
3. how to go further in preparing to link the coin database with other databases recording different artefacts found by the French School.

1. The French School at Athens has worked on or is still working on 17 excavation sites in Greece. Archaeologists found coins from Antiquity in at least 13 sites according to publications and discussions I had with archaeologists from the School: you can see them on the map in orange and red (Fig. 1). Amongst them, 10 (in orange) were cities issuing coins in Antiquity.



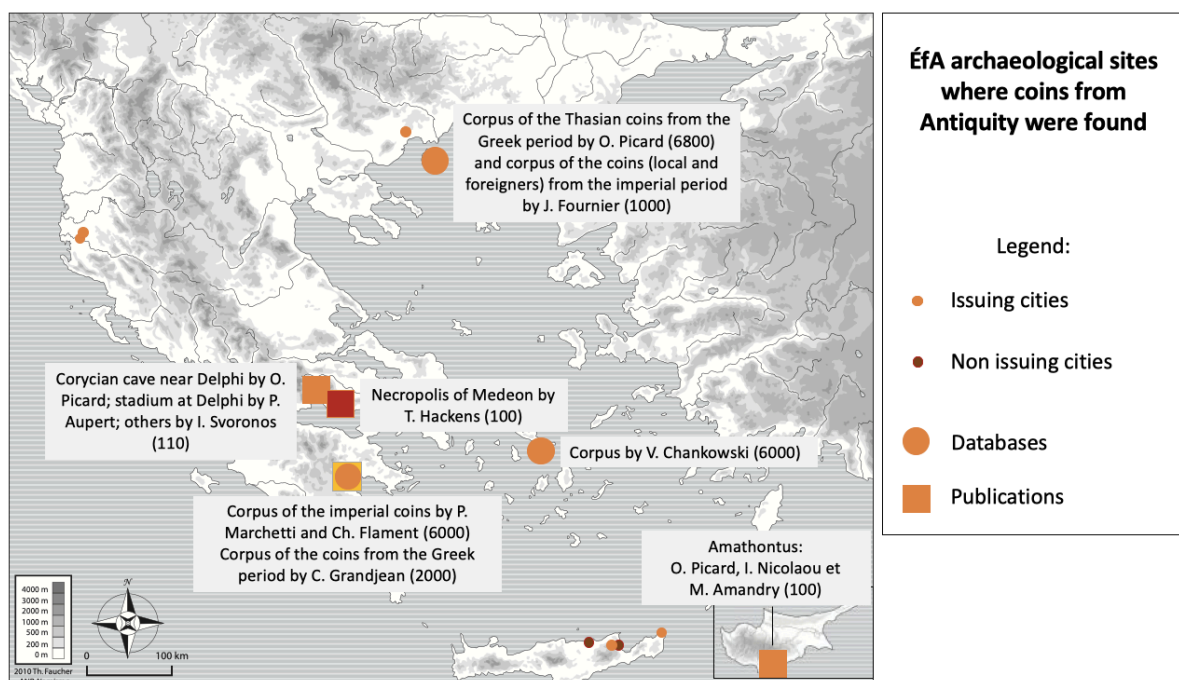
(Fig. 1)

Only a small part of the coins excavated on these sites are published but a lot are already recorded in databases (Fig. 2):

- In the North, at Thasos, Olivier Picard recorded around 6800 coins struck at Thasos in the Greek period; he has been working on these coins for decades and published many studies on the Thasian coinage, making it the most well-known of all the sites' coinages. Julien Fournier has also worked on Thasos, recording a 1000 coins from the Imperial Period found on the site; he is going to publish his catalogue and his study in the coming years.
- Then, Véronique Chankowski built a database for the 6000 coins found on Delos.

- And for Argos, Patrick Marchetti and Christophe Flament recorded 6000 coins from the Imperial period in a database. Their work including the catalogue has been published in 2012 in their book “Le monnayage argien d’époque romaine”; the coins from the Greek period are recorded and studied by Catherine Grandjean and some of them have been published.
- In addition, there are around 300 excavation coins published. They are the 100 coins found in the Corycian cave near Delphi published by Olivier Picard, some from Delphi published by Pierre Aupert and Ioannes Svoronos; the 100 coins from the necropolis of Medeon published by Tony Hackens and those from Amathus published by Michel Amandry, Olivier Picard and Ioannes Nicolaou.

=> So, in total around 20 000 coins can be recorded quickly in the same database. Most of them are already on Excel spreadsheets or Filemaker files. For the others, it’s possible to record them quickly because, according to my estimation, between 40 and 50 coins can be recorded in a day by one person.



(Fig. 2)

The **dissimilarity of these sites** is obvious and the study of their coins would be an opportunity to combine unknown data from various contexts:

- The Thasian coins for example derive from the long-term excavations of the ancient city of Thasos, which is the centre of a powerful island-based polis with, at times, strong economic ties to the mainland.
- Moreover, those from Delos and Delphi attest to the presence of coinage at two major Pan-Hellenic sanctuaries.
- There is also the case-study of the necropolis of Medeon and its specific social context.
- In addition, the dataset available from Argos, which is a major, old Greek polis, opens up possibilities of comparison through the Thasian material with monetary activity across the “Greek” and “Roman” periods of these cities.

- Therefore, the corpus of the French School provides a body of material that crosses periods, regions and site profiles, allowing the possibility to address many historical questions from multiple perspectives.

Most of the excavation coins are bronzes of course and their study in various contexts will bring a better understanding of **their uses** in Greece.

- For example, the corpus will allow a study of the regionality of exchange at a low level to understand how bronze coinage circulated at different times and in different places compared to the much better studied phenomenon of precious metal coinage. Therefore, because there are type corpora and die studies for Argos and Thasos, we can trace and quantify patterns of dispersion of coinage to compare circulation to production.
- At the scale of a city, studying where the different denominations or metals are used will reveal differing economic strategies in the different parts of the city.
- It will also be interesting to see what bronze coins from military, civic and religious contexts reveal about their functions at different levels of the economy and how the pattern of bronze deposition differs across different types of sites in different periods.

Therefore, a digital presentation of coin finds could be also an opportunity to associate the coins with other categories of finds to work on their dating and their time of circulation and also on the dating of some artefacts dated with coins a long time ago.

2. To have an efficient tool to answer these questions I designed a database. I used the data from the necropolis of Medeon to imagine:

- which fields would be relevant for these researches in Greek numismatics
- how it would be convenient to show them on a screen
- and how to query the database to easily find the data

I recorded the coins found in the Necropolis published in the book “Médéon de Phocide, rapport provisoire” by Claude Vatin published in 1969 in which the coin catalogue was written by Tony Hackens. I chose this site to gather data because there are 100 coins in the catalogue which is a representative sample and because the context is known for most of the coins.

First, I used an Excel spreadsheet to work because many institutions use it to upload data online. Then, it will be possible to transfer the data into a website using Heurist which is free or another software to have more functionalities if there is funding which is the main problem for all of us I guess.

What you see on the screen is an example of a coin page of the future website (Fig. 3). I gave a name and a title to each coin on the top (here it's MdF-EFA for Monnaie de fouilles de l'Ecole française d'Athènes, number 5) ; the database is organised in 5 sections, all visible on the screen:

Description		Contexte de découverte	
Type d'objet	Monnaie	Date de mise au jour	1963
Lieu et n° de conservation	Delphes, Musée archéologique, no. 29		
Droit	Tête d'Athéna à droite, coiffée d'un casque corinthien.		
Revers	BA et monogramme ANT (grec). Pan à gauche, érigeant un trophée à droite. Dans le champ, un monogramme.		
Masse (en g)	5,48		
Diam (en mm)			
Axe (en h)	5		
Matériau(x)	métal, argent		
Monnaie fourrée	oui ☐ non ☐		
Dénomination	Étalon		
Atelier	Amphipolis ou Pella		
Région	Macédoine		
Pays moderne	Grèce		
Autorité	Antigone II Gonatas (roi antigonide, 277/6-239 avant J.-C.)		
Datation	277-239 avant J.-C. (période hellénistique)		
Technique de fabrication	frappe		
Marque(s) de fabrication			
Modification(s) post-frappe			
État de conservation			
Analyse(s)			
		Liens vers les pages de contexte Site Médéon Zone Nécropole de Médéon Secteur Nécropole de Médéon, secteur I Fait Nécropole de Médéon, secteur I, tombe 60 US Nécropole de Médéon, secteur I, tombe 60A Précision	
		Détails de l'US Nature de l'US cultuelle, funéraire (contenu d'une tombe) Coordonnées de la monnaie X : Y : Z : Autres monnaies de l'US MdF-EfA_6 ; MdF-EfA_63 ; MdF-EfA_82 ; MdF-EfA_83 Détail si trésor MdF-EfA_6 ; MdF-EfA_63 ; MdF-EfA_82 ; Localisation de la monnaie dans la bouche du défunt Fonction de la monnaie rituelle : mobilier funéraire (obole à Charon) Datation et mobilier datant après 277 av. J.-C. : 2 monnaies, c. 277-239 av. J.-C. (MdF-EfA_5, MdF-EfA_6) ; 1 monnaie, c. 354-343 av. J.-C. (MdF-EfA_63) ; 2 monnaies, 355-248 av. J.-C. (MdF-EfA_82, MdF-EfA_82) ; 1 oenoché, c. 300-250 av. J.-C. ; 1 coupe basse, c. 300-250 av. J.-C. Hors contexte stratigraphique oui ☐ non ☐	
		Références bibliographiques et portails en ligne Publication(s) de la monnaie T. Hackens, "Les monnaies de la nécropole", in Cl. Vatin, Ph. Bruneau, Cl. Rolley et T. Hackens, <i>Médéon de Phocide V Tombes hellénistiques - Objets de métal - Monnaies</i> , Paris, 1976, p. 124, no. M5, pl. I. A. Meadows et U. Wartenburg, <i>Coin Hoards Volume IX, Greek Hoards</i> , Londres, 2002, no. 157. P. Tselekas, "Grave Hoards of Greek Coins from Greece", <i>The Numismatic Chronicle</i> 155 (1996), p. 249-259 (p. 256, no. 52). Publication(s) du type <i>Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum, Copenhagen, The Royal Collection of Coins and Medals, Danish National Museum, Copenhagen</i> , vol. 10, <i>Macedonia 3: Philip III-Philip VI. Macedonia under the Romans. Kings of Paeonia</i> , 1943, no. 1205-1209. Référence web du type	
		Remarque(s)	
Illustrations ↓			

(Fig. 3)

- There is first on the left side the description of the coin: here I copied the fields we use at the National Library (Paris) for the online catalogue of coins on the Gallica website. I just added the date of discovery and the museum reference. The blue circles are links to Nomisma.org for metals, places, and people. I will not comment on this part because I guess that we all use the same fields to describe coins. Just one, thing: I put checkboxes for some fields like for the plated coin section but with Heurist, it's not possible to have boxes to check. It is only possible to have a box with a word to choose like "yes" or "no". It's not a big change in the form but it's important to know the limits of the database softwares to work on the spreadsheet properly.
- On the right side, there are the bibliographical references and the web references for the coin and for the type to link the database to portals like PELLA, SCO, RPC. Here, the blue circles are permalinks to Worldcat and Zenon.
- There is also a field for remarks because we always have data we don't know what to do with.
- The pictures of the coin and pictures of the coins in context if there are any.

- And the data about the context which are the most important here:

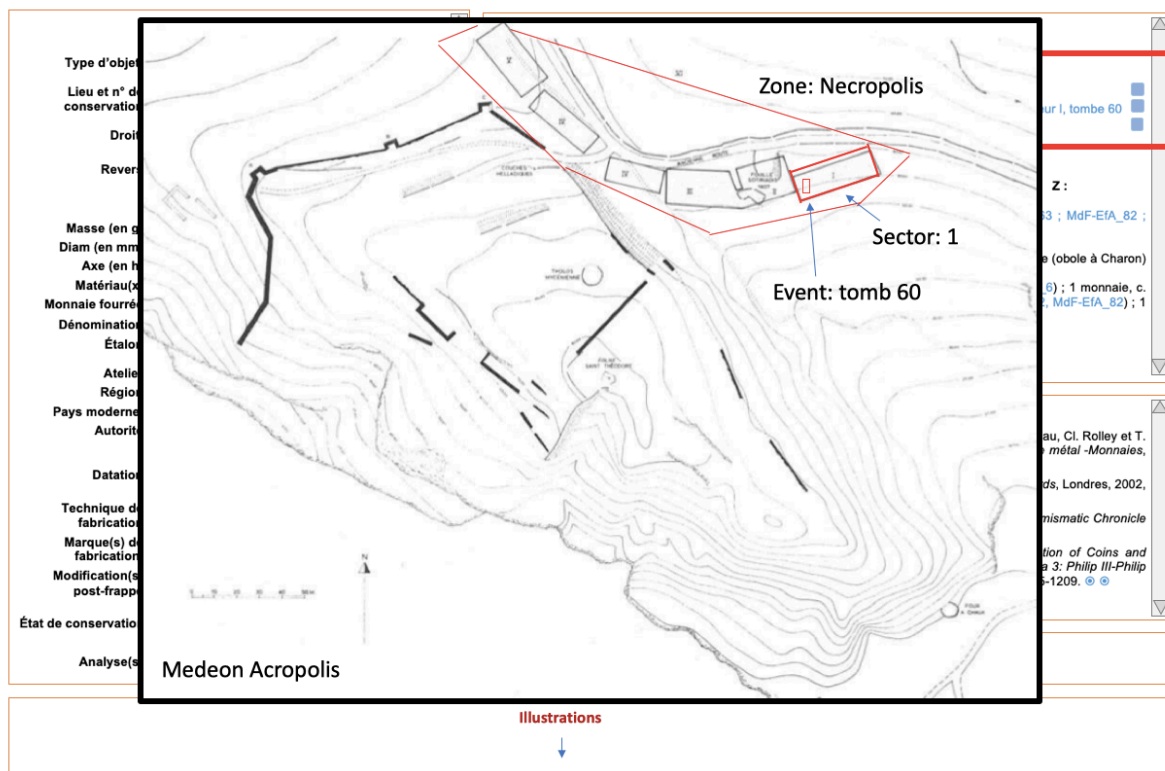
* The simplest section shows if the coin was found in a context or not. It will allow the user to select the coins with a known context in the database.

* In the 1st section, there are 6 levels: the archaeological site (Medeon); the zone (here it's the necropolis); the sector; the event (here it's the tomb number sixty) and the unit which is called tomb 60-A. And there is another box if more precision is needed. I let here the words we use in archaeology but it would be the same to have zone 1, zone 2, zone 3, etc; the main problem here is that there is no precise definition for these words in an ontology but I believe that we could create one in Nomisma with simple definitions: a site is divided in zones, each zone is divided in sectors, sectors are divided in events or units. It's simple and adaptable enough to record the coins found in different archaeological sites which are divided and recorded differently. For example, I tried recording coins from Thasos in this database and it works too. It's necessary to think carefully about the organisation of each site precisely before recording the data but it's possible to use these categories.

Nommer les différents niveaux de contexte		Exemples	
Possibilité 1	Possibilité 2	Médéon	Thasos
Site	Secteur 1	Médéon	Limenas (Thasos)
Zone	Secteur 2	Nécropole de Médéon	terrain Valma
Secteur	Secteur 3	Nécropole de Médéon, secteur 1	place des théores
Fait	Secteur 4	Nécropole de Médéon, secteur 1, tombe 60	
Unité strati.	Secteur 5	Nécropole de Médéon, secteur 1, tombe 60A	83.199
Précision			Carré de fouille ?

* The blue squares are buttons to open the GIS maps when they exist and to show where the coins were found. It would be possible to link the excavation coins to the maps according to 5 different levels. Technically, this would mean drawing polygons corresponding to each level on the maps and creating links associated with each (Fig. 4). It's a lot of work and we would need a precise definition of each area. This work can be done only with archaeologists working on the site. So, as a first step, creating links only for the sites and for the zones would be a good start in my opinion because for many coins, we will have only these data. The second step will be refining the sectors; for this step, case studies will be necessary to estimate the time. Another difficulty here is that I don't know if it's possible to create GIS buttons with Heurist or if it would be necessary to use a different software to create them.

If there is a link to the maps in the database, it would also be possible to access the coin databases from the GIS maps.



(Fig. 4)

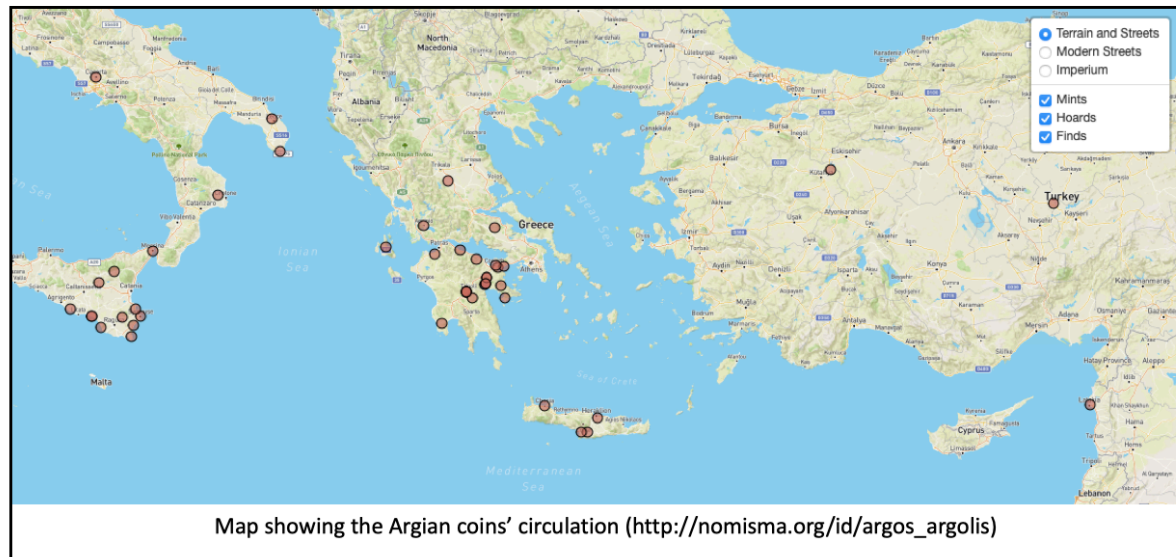
* About the details of the unit:

- there is its nature: here it's "ritual", more precisely funerary and I added that is the content of a tomb. This section should be a closed list with different choices to find the data easily.
- To the right, the precise coordinates
- Below, the list of the others coins found in the same unit: there are 4
- Another box shows the coins composing a hoard: here, 4 coins were found together including these 3 and the coin recorded on this page; I will add a field named "hoard" with a box filled in with the words "yes" or "no" to select the coins being part of hoards in the database
- Below, the precise place of the coin in the unit: in the mouth of the dead; here the text is free and I think it would be the good place to write when a coin was found in a pot or something else
- Then, the function of the coin: it's a funerary artefact, what is called a Charon obol; here it's another closed list to allow researches
- Below, you can see the dating of the unit with the list of the dated artefacts found in it.

=> A last remark on this section: you can see the names of coins in blue in 3 fields > they are links to access their pages easily. Technically, I don't know if it is possible to create a link to another page with Heurist and how it works. I just know that it's possible with other softwares.

Of course, most of the time, we don't have all these data about coins but I think that it's better to have many fields in order to record the coins properly. Even, if we have only the locations on a site, many different studies will be possible.

Finally, a general map with the location of the coins would be necessary on the main page of the web site with the query form to look for the coins from the same mint, or the same metal or value, or the same political authority (Fig. 5).



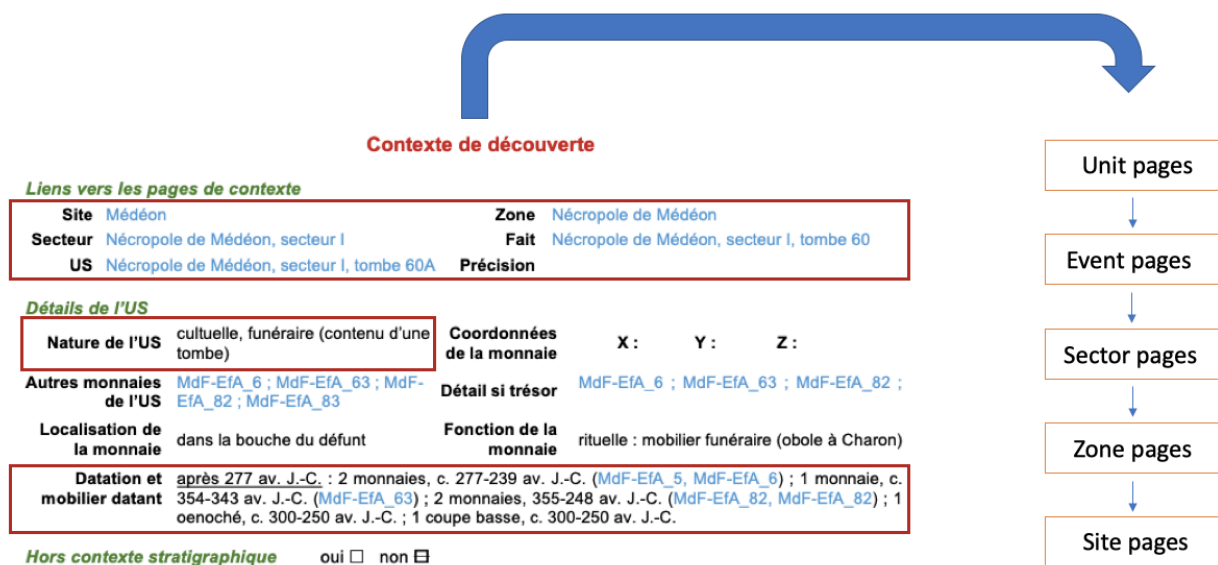
Main filters to query the database:

- **mint(s)** to view the circulation of the local coins and the foreign coins on a site in order to study the movement of peoples and troops
- **denomination(s)** and **series** to analyse their proportions in a specific place to have an idea about which coinages are accepted or not in the coin circulation
- **dates of the coins** and **their discovery contexts**

(Fig. 5)

3. To go further, I believe that the database should be an interconnected one composed by seven different kinds of pages:

- pages for the coins as I showed you
- pages for sites
- zones
- sectors
- events
- and units



(Fig. 6)

It is possible to ask to a database software to copy the contextual data into other forms (Fig. 6). For example, if I record a new unit on a coin page, the software can create automatically a page for it and fill in some fields like the nature, dating and contexts pages. If the page already exists, the software will update the data with the new ones. This would allow us to gather on a single page all the coins and other artefacts from a single zone or sector for example. This is the page for the unit 60-A (Fig. 7):

US_EfA_5 - Nécropole de Médéon, secteur I, tombe 60A ("60")

Informations générales Date de la fouille 1963 Nom du responsable Type de fouille rapide (fouilles de sauvetage) Type d'US positive Activité de l'US construction Interprétation de l'US vestige d'une inhumation Datation initiale (tpq) 277 Datation finale (taq) ? Relation(s) physique(s) avec les autres US au-dessous de Nécropole de Médéon, secteur I, tombe 60B ("60bis") Relation(s) chronologique(s) avec les autres US ultérieur à Nécropole de Médéon, secteur I, tombe 60B ("60bis") Altitudes	Contexte Site Médéon Zone Nécropole de Médéon Secteur Nécropole de Médéon, secteur I Fait Nécropole de Médéon, secteur I, tombe 60
Remarque(s)	Composantes Artefact(s) 4 monnaies de bronze (MdF-EfA_5 ; MdF-EfA_6 ; MdF-EfA_63 ; MdF-EfA_82) dans la bouche du mort ; 1 monnaie de bronze (MdF-EfA_83) sur l'épaule gauche ; une coupe (Vase-EfA_21) le long du bras droit ; 1 strigile (Ot-EfA_1) aux pieds ; 1 amphore (Vase-EfA_18) aux pieds ; 1 cruche à anse double (Vase-EfA_19) aux pieds ; 1 oenoché (Vase-EfA_20) Écofact(s) squelette humain (OsH_EfA_5) Bâti sarcophage en calcaire coquiller (bâti_tombe_EfA_4) Composantes géologiques Indice(s) de datation 2 monnaies, c. 277-239 av. J.-C. (MdF-EfA_5, MdF-EfA_6) ; 1 monnaie, c. 354-343 av. J.-C. (MdF-EfA_63) ; 2 monnaies, 355-248 av. J.-C. (MdF-EfA_82, MdF-EfA_82) ; 1 oenoché, c. 300-250 av. J.-C. (Vase-EfA_20) ; 1 coupe basse, c. 300-250 av. J.-C. (Vase-EfA_21) Références bibliographiques T. Hackens, "Les monnaies de la nécropole", in Cl. Vatin, Ph. Bruneau, Cl. Rolley et T. Hackens, Médéon de Phocée V Tombes hellénistiques - Objets de métal - Monnaies, Paris, 1976, p. 12-16, fig. 18-21. ©

(Fig. 7)

Finally, last year, when I recorded the coins from Medeon, I also recorded others artefacts and bones found on the same site along with the data about their contexts to understand the interpretation of the coins and their dating context. Those from the unit 60A are in blue on the screen (Fig. 8). I worked with a ceramologist, an archaeo-zoologist and an anthropologist on forms adapted to their disciplines for the description section of bones, figurines and pots. I can't show you them on the screen because these forms are only on an Excel file. If the coin database is created someday, it will be easy to keep the page setup of the coin pages and change only the description form to add others' discoveries. It would be very useful to combine the data and work easily with different specialists about the meanings of the contexts and the dating of the artefacts. In the past, units and artefacts like pots have been dated according to coins even though they can be used for centuries. The only way to correct these mistakes is to study the contexts in general.

US_EfA_5 - Nécropole de Médéon, secteur I, tombe 60A ("60")

Informations générales		Contexte	
Date de la fouille	1963	Site	Médéon
Nom du responsable		Secteur	Nécropole de Médéon, secteur I
Type de fouille	rapide (fouilles de sauvetage)	Zone	Nécropole de Médéon
Type d'US	positive	Fait	Nécropole de Médéon, secteur I, tombe 60
Activité de l'US	construction		
Interprétation de l'US	vestige d'une inhumation		
Datation initiale (tpq)	277		
Datation finale (taq)	?		
Relation(s) physique(s) avec les autres US	au-dessous de Nécropole de Médéon, secteur I, tombe 60B ("60bis")		
Relation(s) chronologique(s) avec les autres US	ultérieur à Nécropole de Médéon, secteur I, tombe 60B ("60bis")		
Altitudes			
Remarque(s)		Composantes Artefact(s) 4 monnaies de bronze (MdF-EfA_5 ; MdF-EfA_6 ; MdF-EfA_63 ; MdF-EfA_82) dans la bouche du mort ; 1 monnaie de bronze (MdF-EfA_83) sur l'épaule gauche ; une coupe (Vase-EfA_21) le long du bras droit ; 1 strigile (Ot-EfA_1) aux pieds ; 1 amphore (Vase-EfA_18) aux pieds ; 1 cruche à anse double (Vase-EfA_19) aux pieds ; 1 oenoché (Vase-EfA_20) Écofact(s) squelette humain (OsH-EfA_5) Bâti sarcophage en calcaire coquillier (bâti_tombe_EfA_4) Composantes géologiques Indice(s) de datation 2 monnaies, c. 277-239 av. J.-C. (MdF-EfA_5, MdF-EfA_6) ; 1 monnaie, c. 354-343 av. J.-C. (MdF-EfA_63) ; 2 monnaies, 355-248 av. J.-C. (MdF-EfA_82, MdF-EfA_82) ; 1 oenoché, c. 300-250 av. J.-C. (Vase-EfA_20) ; 1 coupe basse, c. 300-250 av. J.-C. (Vase-EfA_21)	
		Références bibliographiques T. Hackens, "Les monnaies de la nécropole", in Cl. Vatin, Ph. Bruneau, Cl. Rolley et T. Hackens, Médéon de Phocide V Tombes hellénistiques - Objets de métal - Monnaies, Paris, 1976, p. 12-16, fig. 18-21.	

(Fig. 8)

If this database project is realised, it will bring us a new type of data we lack in Greece for now. I hope it will be possible to work on it in the coming years...