ON FINDS OF HELLENISTIC COINS IN TURKMENISTAN

NATALIYA M. SMIRNOVA

The study of sites in Turkmenistan, which has been going on since the end of the 19th century, has facilitated the registration of numismatic finds. Thanks to the excavations undertaken by the South Turkmenistan Multidisciplinary Archaeological Expedition (YUTAKE) since the late 1940s at the sites of Old and New Nisa and since the late 1950s at the city-sites of Erk-Kala and Giaour-Kala at Ancient Merv, scholars now have at their disposal an extensive range of numismatic material.

The total number of registered finds of Greek coins is still quite small, particularly if we compare them with the large series of bronze coins of the Parthians, Sasanians and Islamic dynasties, which were issued in this region and were in regular circulation there. Bearing in mind the limited degree to which the archaeological sites of the Hellenistic period in Turkmenistan have been studied to date, it is worth pointing out that the statistics regarding numismatic finds at the site of Giaour-Kala reveal marked similarities with those made in the course of many years' investigation of the city-sites of Ai-Khanoum in northern Afghanistan and Takhti-Sangin in southern Tajikistan. It has been suggested


From 1892 there has been a collection of ancient and oriental coins in the Hermitage which previously belonged to General A.V. Komarov, the former governor of the Trans-Caspian region. See: S.D. Loginov, A.B. Nikitin, “Monezy—pamyatniki istorii i kul’tury Turkmenistana,” in: Pamyatniki Turkmenistana 41 (1986) 8.

2 At present they include 30 Greek coins and 12 coins that are imitations of Antiochus I drachms. In addition to these some chance finds from Merv have also been recorded and studied, thanks to the joint efforts of those in charge of the numismatic collection and collectors. In this article 57 coins are listed.


that the Greek coins found in Turkmenistan were not merely in circulation there, but may possibly also have been minted there.6

For information concerning Greek coins found in Central Asia we are deeply indebted to M.E. Masson, who from the 1930s onwards regularly published information that he obtained from markets, collectors, and later from archaeological excavations.7 Coins found at Nisa are mentioned in many publications,8 as well as chance finds.9 I am particularly grateful to Dr. S. Loginov, keeper of the YUTAKE numismatic collection and collector G. Volchev who made available the material published in this article. Information on finds of ancient coins in Central Asia is also referred to.10

Most of the documented finds of recent years have been made in the Merv region, where both archaeological investigations and survey work have been going on.11

---


8 M.E. Masson, “Novye arheologicheskie dannye po istorii rabovladen’cheskogo obschestva na territorii Yuzhnogo Turkmenistana,” VDI 1 (1953) 150-152; Drevneishie Gosudarstva... 241-244; Loginov, Nikitin, “Money—pamyatniki istorii...” 8-11.

