

30 January 2007

Mr. Jay I. Kislak, Chairman  
Cultural Property Advisory Committee  
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs  
U.S. State Department

Reference: Cypriot request to renew their Cultural Property Agreement with the U.S.

To the Committee;

First of all, we wish to thank-you for your efforts and successes in this important aspect of our government's role in worldwide citizenship. We appreciate the time you spend on behalf of all U.S. citizens.

This letter addresses the recent inclusion of coins in the Cypriot request for renewal of the referenced Agreement. The existing Cypriot Agreement provides a very specific list of important archaeological items dating back many thousands of years. We sincerely hope that the original Cypriot request and U.S. cooperation has resulted in the preservation of Cypriot patrimony.

However, the recent inclusion of coins to the list gives cause for alarm. Coins are simply not the same as archaeological items such as statuary, mosaics or ceramic vessels, many of which are one-of-a-kind. Coins, even from the Classical, Hellenistic and Roman, etc. Periods, were issued in quantities ranging from many thousands to millions. It certainly is not appropriate that coins be given "significantly rare archaeological stature", to quote from the U.S. Senate Report 97-564. (This was the phrase the Senate Committee used to describe the intent of the Cultural Property Implementation Act.) In fact it appears that the Cypriot decision to suddenly propose the inclusion of coins in the terms of the Agreement came as a hasty afterthought that was not given careful consideration.

Coins and their study have been a source of immense enjoyment to numismatists around the world for at least the last 500 years. In fact many of these numismatists have become experts in their field of interest and are responsible for the scholarship that aids archaeologists and updates our concepts of history. Numismatists do not want to lose the opportunity to continue this work!

To our knowledge the existing Cultural Property Agreement with Cyprus has functioned well since its inception in July 2002. We see no advantage in including coins in the Agreement and many advantages in leaving the agreement as is. Briefly, these advantages can be summarized as follows:

- Coin collecting and the study of coins is an activity that brings together individuals from many countries in peaceful, scientific discourse and fosters an appreciation of diverse cultures.
- Numismatists tend to research, propose and document new theories regarding the timelines of history or ancient commercial arrangements between various nations. Truly, they have made significant contributions to our understanding of the ancient world.
- Numismatists tend to exhibit a reverence for ancient coins that leads to their expert conservation and preservation. Research articles in numismatic periodicals and publications ensure the spread of knowledge and maintain a vibrant interest in the avocation.

In summary we thank you for your role in this important contribution to worldwide

citizenship. We implore you to consider carefully the Cypriot request with respect to coins. And finally, we respectfully request that coins remain absent from the list of “significantly rare” antiquities.

Sincerely,

David S. Kellogg