

Dear Mr. Kislak,

I am writing as a professional numismatist and author with a career spanning almost half a century. My numerous publications, some of which have remained in print for decades, cover all aspects of ancient Greek, Roman and Byzantine coinage and are used as a principle source of reference by students and collectors alike. In addition, I provide advice via my website to anyone with questions concerning ancient numismatics and operate a certification service for those who have doubts over the authenticity of their coins.

It is with grave concern that I have learned of the proposed extension of import restrictions on cultural property from Cyprus to include coins from the earliest times to those minted as recently as 250 years ago. This appears to be a fundamental policy change without precedent and is not only unjustifiable in the light of the evidence but could do serious harm to the scientific study and understanding of coinage development in the eastern Mediterranean region.

Coinage, in its earliest manifestations, was regarded as an international medium of exchange and the circulation of issues of individual cities and regions was by no means confined to those locations. Thus, the coins of a particular state could theoretically be found in hoards many hundreds of miles from their place of origin. This makes it virtually impossible for modern governments to claim property rights over a coin discovered in another country or continent far distant from its original place of manufacture. It has to be understood that vast numbers of these pieces traveled legitimately in ancient times rather than in recent years.

Furthermore, there is a fundamental difference between coins and other types of antiquities which requires them to be viewed in a totally different light. Coins are mass-produced objects manufactured for the purposes of commerce, whereas antiquities are generally unique and in many cases are to be regarded purely as *objets d'art*. To treat the two categories together is illogical and wrong when one considers that as many as 10,000 coins could be struck from a single pair of dies and a large proportion of these pieces would have been distributed in ancient commerce throughout various parts of the Greek world.

A further consideration is the study and classification of ancient coinage with a view to establishing a fuller understanding of the development of currency from its origins around 600 B.C. down to Greco-Roman times. Most of this research has been undertaken in Western Europe and in the United States and over the past century has added immeasurably to our knowledge of the world of Classical Antiquity. If ancient coins were to be claimed as cultural property by modern governments, whose states had no connection with this culture other than the fact that they occupy the same territory as the ancient civilizations, then the opportunities for research would inevitably be significantly reduced and our understanding of the past would suffer in consequence.

I would ask you to bear all these points in mind when arriving at your decision

and to give the matter the very serious consideration which it unquestionably deserves.

Yours truly,

David R. Sear

Porter Ranch, CA