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Tissaphernes at Dor?

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IN the mid-1960's, a coin found on the surface of the ancient city of Dor was brought to my attention. The ruins of the site of Dor lie on the coast west of Mount Carmel, some 21 km. south of Haifa.¹ The bronze coin, about the size of a drachm, weighed 4.00 gr. On the obverse was the head of a Persian satrap to r., wearing a satrapal headdress (*tiara*) and on the reverse appeared an owl, standing r., head facing, all within incuse square. Behind the owl were two letters: BA.

This article reviews the coins attributed to Tissaphernes and puts forward the view that his coins found at Dor were minted there. Our survey presents three groups of coins: (1) Group D comprises 11 identical coins, ten of which were found at Dor and one in Asia Minor. (2) Group V consists of ten different coins, all bearing a head attributed to Tissaphernes. (3) Group A comprises ten coins, each bearing the names of Tissaphernes and of the mint of Astyra.

A cast of coin D1 was made soon after it was discovered in the mid-1960's and its details were recorded. About two years later, in 1967, a similar coin (D2)² was published by H. von Aulock, who attributed it to Sigeium in Troas because of its acquisition in Bayramiç, near Sigeium, and its similarity to a coin of Sigeium which appeared next to it in the *Sylloge*.

Since 1967, nine similar coins have been discovered, five in the excavations at Dor (D3-7) and four from different surface finds in the area (D8-11). One of the coins from the excavations at Dor (D3) was published by Y. Meshorer in the excavation report.³ In his introduction, he notes that "Coin No. 10, published here for the first time,

¹ The ancient site was first excavated by the British School of Archaeology in 1923-24. The Israeli Department of Antiquities uncovered several sections of a Roman theatre and a Byzantine church between 1950 and 1952. Major excavations were resumed by Prof. E. Stern on behalf of the Institute of Archaeology of the Hebrew University and the Israel Exploration Society at the beginning of the 1980's. See E. Stern: *Dor — The Ruler of the Seas*, Jerusalem, 1994; *idem*: in *The New Encyclopaedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, 1, Jerusalem, 1993, pp. 357-368 and *idem*: *Qedem Reports 1, Excavations at Dor, Final Report, I A, Areas A and C: Introduction and Stratigraphy; Qedem Reports 2, I B, Areas A and C: The Finds*, Jerusalem, 1995.

² *SNG Deutschland, Sammlung H. von Aulock*, 16, Berlin, 1967, No. 7636.

³ Y. Meshorer: Coins from Areas A and C in *Qedem Reports 2* (above, n. 1), p. 466, No. 10.

may well be of the mint of Dor."⁴ Three coins (D5-D7) were found together during the excavation.

1. The coins of Dor – Group D. (Pl. 1:D4–11).

D1: found on the surface at Dor, 4.00 gr.

D2: acquired in Bayramiç, near Sigeium, von Aulock, 3.30 gr. (above, n. 2).

D3: excavated at Dor, coin No. 10, 2.44 gr. (above, n. 3).

D4: excavated at Dor, No. 57, Locus 6527, Area E, 2.98 gr.

D5: excavated at Dor; further information unavailable.

D6: excavated at Dor; further information unavailable.

D7: excavated at Dor; further information unavailable.

D8: collection P.7, 4.00 gr.

D9: collection Gil Chaya, Geneva, 3.67 gr.

D10: collection Gil Chaya, Geneva, 3.10 gr.

D11: collection Prof. Yigal Ronen, Beersheba, 3.37 gr., silver-plated.

All the coins are of similar appearance; the poor state of preservation of most of them, however, makes it impossible to determine whether they were all struck from the same pair of dies. With the discovery of D11, it became clear that all the coins had been silver-plated, i.e. the coins were plated drachms.

A tetradrachm (V1) in the British Museum, acquired between 1938 and 1948, has been attributed to Tissaphernes. His portrait was identified on the obverse and an owl and the letters ΒΑΣ on the reverse.⁵ This coin is the closest parallel to the 11 coins in Group D. A study of the portrait on the tetradrachm and on the 11 coins from Dor reveals a similarity in the facial features — the same sharp, pointed beard, the same hawkish nose. It can, therefore, be assumed that if the tetradrachm of the British Museum bears the portrait of Tissaphernes, so do the 11 coins of Group D. It is noteworthy that all the coins attributed to Tissaphernes bear the legend ΒΑΣ(ΙΑΕΩΣ) ('of the king') or abbreviations of it.

Tissaphernes was the Persian satrap of Sardis, all of Asia Minor and then Caria (413–395 B.C.) who, together with Pharnabazus, the satrap of Dascyleum, was one of the leading figures in Persia's struggle to retake from Athens the Ionian Greek cities of Asia Minor. Tissaphernes supported Sparta in the Peloponnesian War against Athens, but sought to play off the Spartans against the Athenians to the king of Persia's advantage. The history of that period is marked by almost constant warfare in Asia Minor and endless intrigues. Darius II decided to give Sparta his full support and his son Cyrus the Younger was made governor of Asia Minor in 407 B.C. After the death of Darius II in 404 B.C., his elder son Artaxerxes II became king. His brother Cyrus the Younger, who had replaced Tissaphernes as governor of Asia Minor, revolted. Tissaphernes supported Artaxerxes II and fought valiantly at the Battle of Cunaxa (on the Euphrates about 100 km. NW of Babylon) in 401 B.C., in which Cyrus the Younger

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 461.

⁵ E.S.G. Robinson: Greek Coins Acquired by the British Museum 1938–1948, *NC*, sixth series, 8 (1948), p. 48, Pl. V: 8.

was killed. In 400 B.C. Tissaphernes was reappointed governor of Asia Minor and attacked the Ionian cities that had been lost during Cyrus' revolt. This attack led to war with Sparta and Tissaphernes was defeated by Agesilaus II at Sardis in 395 B.C. He quickly fell out of favour and Parysatis, the queen mother, persuaded Artaxerxes II to have him executed.⁶

2. *Various coins attributed to Tissaphernes – Group V.*

Coins V1–10, attributed to Tissaphernes, which bear his head on the obverse, have neither a mint name nor a symbol and seem to be unique. V1–7 are of silver, V8–10 of bronze. Three different reverse types occur in this group: owl, lyre and Persian king in kneeling/running stance. The reverse of the coins is in incuse square, except for V2. The location of the mint or mints of this group is unknown.

Coin	Denomination	Weight	Reverse	Legend	Location	Published
V1	Tetradrachm	16.96 gr.	Owl	BAΣ	British Museum	Robinson, (above, n. 5). Pl. 1:V.1.
V2	Tetradrachm	15.31 gr.	Lyre	BAΣIA	British Museum	<i>Babelon, Traité II</i> , p.111, No. 62, Pl. 88/25
V3	Tetradrachm	14.90 gr.	Persian king in kneeling/running stance & galley.	BAΣIAEΩΣ	Berlin	<i>Ibid.</i> , p. 103, No. 51, Pl. 88/10
V4	Tetradrachm	16.88 gr.	Persian king in Kneeling/running stance.		Karlsruhe	F. Sternberg, Auction XXII, Zürich, 1989, lot 152
V5	Drachm	3.30 gr.	As V4.	BAΣI	British Museum	<i>Babelon, Traité II</i> , p. 103, No. 52, Pl. 88/11
V6	Drachm	3.52 gr.	As V4.	BAΣIAE	Karlsruhe	Leu, Auction 33, Zürich, 1983, lot 443
V7	Hemidrachm	1.85 gr.	As V4.	BA	Luynes	<i>Babelon, Traité II</i> , p. 103, No. 53, Pl. 88
V8	Hemidrachm	1.84 gr.	As V4.	BA	Haifa	Meshorer, Hecht Museum Collection, p. 38, No. 19.
V9	Hemidrachm	1.56 gr.	As V4.	BA(?)	Haifa	Meshorer, Hecht

⁶ For the history of that period and the career of Tissaphernes see A.T. Olmstead: *History of the Persian Empire*, Chicago, 1948, pp. 358–384.

				Museum Collection, p. 38, No. 18.
V10	Obol	0.88 gr.	As V4. BA	British Museum
				<i>Babelon, Traité II</i> , p. 103, No. 54, Pl. 88/13

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Babelon, Traité, II, Paris, 1909.

Y. Meshorer: *Ancient Means of Exchange, Weights and Coins, The Reuben and Edith Hecht Museum Collection*, Haifa, 1998 = Meshorer, Hecht Museum Collection.

3. Coins of Tissaphernes issued at Astyra – Group A.

Coins A1–10 are ten small bronze coins bearing the names of Tissaphernes and that of the mint of Astyra in Mysia. These coins were minted in Astyra⁷ during the last years of Tissaphernes' life, between 401 and 395 B.C., when his power was waning. In light of this, it is possible to attribute the Groups D and V of Tissaphernes, wearing a *tiara*, to the period between 413 and 401 B.C. The obverse of the Group A coins depicts the head of Tissaphernes without a *tiara* and the legend ΤΙΣΣΑ. Cahn observed that Tissaphernes appears here as an elderly man. He also notes that these are the earliest examples of coins bearing the name of the ruler depicted on the coin.⁸ The reverse features a frontal cult statue of Artemis, wearing a *polos*, with fillets hanging down from her outstretched arms. In field r. there is a club and the legend ΑΣΤΥΡΗ. All the coins have a diameter of 11–12 mm.

A1: 1.82 gr., private coll., Germany, H. Cahn, 1986. See footnote 7.

A2: 1.35 gr., private coll., Germany, H. Cahn, 1986. See footnote 7.

A3: 1.58 gr., private coll., Germany, H. Cahn, 1986. See footnote 7.

A4: 1.64 gr., private coll., Germany, H. Cahn, 1986. See footnote 7.

A5: 1.65 gr., Bankhaus H. Aufhäuser, Munich, Auction 4, 1987, lot 66.

A6: 1.23 gr., Bankhaus H. Aufhäuser, Munich, Auction 5, 1988, lot 76.

A7: 1.55 gr., Jacquier, Price list No. 8, Kehl, 1988, lot 85.

A8: 1.70 gr., Sternberg, Auction XXII, Zürich, 1989, lot 112.

A9: 1.65 gr., Baldwin's, The New York Sale, Auction IV, 2002, lot 175. Pl. 1.

A10: 1.51 gr., Fritz Rudolf Künker, Auction 12, March 2002, lot 319.

Despite the wars between Athens and the Persian empire, the prototype of all these coins is probably to be found in Athenian coinage, the international coinage of that

⁷ H. Cahn: Tissaphernes in Astyra, *Archaeologischer Anzeiger*, 1985, pp. 587–594; also, *idem*: Zwei griechische Miszellen, *Numismatics — Witness to History*, International Association of Professional Numismatists Publication 8, (1986), pp. 11–14.

⁸ *Ibid.* (1986), p. 12.

period. Herbert Cahn offers an explanation for the appearance of the portrait of Tissaphernes on the obverse and an owl on the reverse, i.e. on an obviously Athenian coin type.⁹ He explains that in the Persian Zoroastrian religion there was no cult based on the image of the gods. Herodotus, in *The Persian Wars*, I. 131, reported that "they have no images of the gods, no temples nor altars and consider the use of them a sign of folly. This comes, I think, from their not believing the gods to have the same nature with men, as the Greeks imagine." Accordingly, suggests Cahn, the satrap Tissaphernes found a way to offend the Athenians in a particularly sensitive area. A great opponent of Athens in Asia Minor, Tissaphernes had the brilliant idea of replacing the head of Athena on the obverse of the coins with the head of the representative of the Persian empire — himself. The image of a human head on a coin did not go against the Persian tradition of not portraying their gods in human form. At the same time, not only had the face of a mortal Persian replaced that of a Greek goddess, but the act emphasized the superiority that the Persians felt over the Greek concept of gods in human form.

The attribution of coins to a specific mint according to their provenance is not always reliable. However, there is a strong probability that such attributions are correct. The contents of hoards may indicate that they were minted in the area in which they were found (some or all of the coins), that they were brought from a distant place, or that they were minted somewhere else. Another category of coins is that of international currency, coins found in most parts of the ancient world, such as Athenian currency. Since this coinage was acceptable all over the ancient world, it was copied in many places. Regional currency, however, was in use in the area of the mint and in the areas adjoining it. Phoenician coins of Tyre and Sidon, for example, are found in large numbers in the area to the south of Phoenicia, as are the Phoenician coins in Samaria in the Samarian Hoard.¹⁰ Local currency are coins found almost exclusively in the area of the mint and only rarely in other places: Samarian coins of the fourth century B.C., for example, have not yet been found outside the area of Samaria. The coins of Group D, ten of which were found at Dor, belong to this fourth category, indicating that the plated drachms were not international tender, but for local use. In 1967, H. Von Aulock stated that the coin he published was minted in Sigeium because it was acquired there. The 10 coins found at Dor establish that the coin attributed to Sigeium was struck at Dor.

In recent years, some scholars have cast doubt on whether the portrait of Tissaphernes is represented on these coins.¹¹ In the Persian period, Dor was ruled by the Sidonians. Tissaphernes' links with Phoenicia are well known and probably extended

⁹ H. Cahn: "Dynast oder Satrap?", *Schweizer Münzblätter* 97 (1975), pp. 84–91.

¹⁰ Meshorer and Qedar: *The Coinage of Samaria in the Fourth Century BCE*, Jerusalem, 1991.

¹¹ Leo Mildenberg: On the So-called Satrapal Coinage, in O. Casabonne (ed.) *Mecanismes et innovations monetaire dans l'Anatolie achemenide. Numismatique et histoire. Actes de la Table Ronde Internationale d'Istanbul, 22–23 mai 1997*, *Varia Anatolia* 12, Paris, pp. 9–20.

to areas under Phoenician control, especially as regards the powerful Phoenician fleet. Historical sources relate that at one stage of the war, Tissaphernes was advised by Alcibiades not "to let himself be persuaded to bring up the Phoenician fleet which he was equipping..." and thus "ruined their (*the Peloponnesians'*) cause by pretending that the Phoenician fleet would arrive..." (Thucydides I. 8). In light of these close ties, it is very probable that coins minted in Dor would bear the portrait of the powerful Persian satrap, Tissaphernes. The precise circumstances and date, probably between 413 and 401 B.C., under which plated (!) drachms were issued at Dor with the portrait of Tissaphernes remain obscure.