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# The Hellenistic World

Using Coins as Sources

PETER THONEMANN



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## Preface

This book is an introduction to the coinages of the Hellenistic world, from the campaigns of Alexander the Great in the late fourth century BC to the Roman conquest of the eastern Mediterranean. Rich and fascinating as it is, this period poses particular challenges for historians. For much of the Hellenistic era, narrative sources are entirely lacking. The Hellenistic historian therefore has to master a wide range of different kinds of source material: inscriptions, papyri, archaeology, Alexandrian poetry, and of course coinage. The aim of this book is to show how coins can help us to understand the varied societies and cultures of the Greek-speaking world during the last three centuries BC.

The book is structured around four main themes, all of them concepts of central importance in recent work on the period. The first theme (covering Chapters 1 and 2) is *globalization*. The Macedonian conquest of the Near East created a new monetary ‘world-system’, stretching from northern Gaul to the central Asian steppe. The coinages of Alexander the Great and his early successors served as a kind of common language for monetary cultures throughout this ‘big’ Hellenistic world. Chapters 3 to 5 explore the second major theme of *identity*. Greek cities, regional leagues, and Hellenized peoples on the fringes of the Graeco-Macedonian world all used coinage as a means of representing their distinctive cultural and political identities. The third theme, discussed in Chapters 6 and 7, is *political economy*. The use of coined money underwent radical changes during the Hellenistic period, both at the macro-level of state and civic economies, and at the micro-level of coin use by individuals. The fourth and final theme is *ideology*. In Chapters 8 and 9, we shall look at the representation of power on Hellenistic coins, first by the rulers of the major Graeco-Macedonian kingdoms, and finally by the Romans who succeeded them across much of the Greek-speaking world during the second and first centuries BC. The book also has an unobtrusive forwards motion, travelling from the decades after Alexander’s death (Chapter 1) to the organization of Rome’s eastern provinces in the last decades of the Roman Republic (Chapter 9).

xxiv Preface

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Like all specialist disciplines, ‘numismatics’ (the study of coins, *nomismata* in Greek, *nummi* in Latin) has its own technical jargon: obverse and reverse, dies, weight-standards, denominations and so forth. The reader is urged to make use of the Appendices on pp. 193–200 (Glossary of numismatic terms; Denominational systems; The manufacture and material of ancient coinage). All ancient sites and mints mentioned in the text will be found on the maps on pp. xxvii–xxxi.

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## Abbreviations

Abbreviations of Greek and Latin authors and works follow *The Oxford Classical Dictionary, Third Edition Revised*, eds. S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth (Oxford, 2003). The following special abbreviations are also used:

BCD Akarnanien	Münzen und Medaillen GmbH, Auktion 23 (18. Oktober 2007), Sammlung BCD: Akarnanien und Aetolien.
BCD Peloponnesos	LHS Auction 96, 8–9 May 2006, Coins of Peloponnesos: the BCD Collection (A. S. Walker).
BCD Thessaly	Triton XV, 3 January, 2012, The BCD Collection of the Coinage of Thessaly.
CH	<i>Coin Hoards</i> . London, 1975–2002 (vols. I–IX); New York, 2010 (vol. X).
FGrHist	F. Jacoby, <i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> . Berlin and Leiden: 1923–.
I.Délos	<i>Inscriptions de Délos</i> .
I.Ilion	P. Frisch, <i>Die Inschriften von Ilion</i> . IGSK 3. Bonn, 1975.
IG	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i>
IGCH	M. Thompson, O. Mørkholm and C. M. Kraay, <i>An Inventory of Greek Coin Hoards</i> . New York, 1973.
NAC	<i>Numismatica Ars Classica</i>
OGIS	W. Dittenberger, <i>Orientalis Graecae Inscriptiones Selectae</i> (2 vols). Leipzig, 1903–5.
RPC I	A. Burnett, M. Amandry and P. P. Ripollès, <i>Roman Provincial Coinage Volume I: From the Death of Caesar to the Death of Vitellius (44 BC–AD 69)</i> . London and Paris, 1992.
RRC	M. H. Crawford, <i>Roman Republican Coinage</i> . Cambridge, 1974.
SEG	<i>Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum</i>
SNG	<i>Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum</i>