

W.M. STANCOMB, *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum*. Vol. IX. The William Stancomb Collection of Coins of the Black Sea Region, (The British Academy), Oxford 2000, pp.138, pls 53, ISBN 0-19-726213-9.

There are in Western Europe few significant collections of ancient coins from the Black Sea region. Fewer still have been published. The leader in what work has been done is the United Kingdom. In addition to a very important collection of the British Museum<sup>1</sup> published a few years ago, we have recently seen the long-awaited publication of *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum* covering the collection of William M. Stancomb. W.M. Stancomb began gathering coins from the Black Sea region in the early 1950's. His efforts produced a sizeable body of which the recent catalog included 1092 pieces. Developed by the collector himself, the publication was editorially prepared by the British Museum team. In addition to the catalog proper, it includes a map of the Black Sea basin with mints marked on it and extensive indices to help the reader look up information.

The catalog itself is divided into two parts, one each for autonomous and Roman coinage. This was not the most felicitous decision. On the one hand, it makes searching the catalog more difficult (the same mint features in two different places), while on the other the criteria used in making the distinction are less than clear. One example are the issues of Panticapaeum and Phanagoria, struck respectively under the names of Caesarea (nos. 614-615) and Agrippa (no. 631). They were included among autonomous issues, although the very renaming of both cities suggests at least strong Roman influence. Apart from this, the catalog was conscientiously edited, is clearly laid out and easy to use.

The conscientiousness also applies to the information content, with the result that errors and shortcomings are indeed very few. Most of those that did slip though are of secondary importance, such as e.g., nos. 413-414, where Heracles' head on the obverses faces right, not left as indicated in the catalog. A few questions, however, deserve a comment. And so, coin no. 350 counted among the first Olbian series struck ca. 400-350 BC in reality belongs in the so-called BSE issue dated at the first half of the 2nd century BC. This is indicated by its style, weight, and fabric. A striking

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<sup>1</sup> *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum* IX. The British Museum. Part I. The Black Sea, London 1993.

feature, the flan is thick and slightly tapered in cross-section in a manner unfamiliar for early Olbian issues. The dating of autonomous bronzes of Tyras (nos. 331-333) is far too broad: at 3rd-2nd centuries BC. None of those coins could have been struck not only before the end of the 3rd century but even before its middle<sup>2</sup>. Another comment is due to cast arrowheads. I can understand the criterion whereby arrowheads nos. 22-29 were attributed to Apollonia Pontica based on their discovery near that city. I can likewise understand that a similar argument was used for the same type of currency attributed to Istrus (nos. 128 -130). This applies particularly to arrowhead no. 128 which is of the type known also from other locations, just to mention the finds in the settlement on Berezan' island<sup>3</sup>. In the absence of definite knowledge on where such currency was produced, the pieces' place of origin may play a decisive role. All in all, those few shortcomings do not detract from the high quality of the work in question.

It is much to W.M. Stancomb's credit that for some mints and issues he included a catalog of additional bibliographic information which is a valuable help to the book's users. The photography is remarkably good, some of the pictures taken of plaster models, others of originals. The photographs afford close inspection of even poorly preserved pieces.

With its numerous quality features, the catalog makes an excellent tool for all those interested in coinage around the Black Sea. And as W.M. Stancomb's collection has grown significantly since the publication, one hopes to see a supplementary volume published before too long.

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Translated by Tadeusz Stanek

<sup>2</sup> Cf. e.g. A.N. ZOGRAF, *Monety Tiry*, Moskva 1957, pp. 24ff.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. e.g. V.V. RUBAN, V.N. URSALOV, „Iz istorii denezhnogo obrashcheniya v nizhnem Pobuzh'e dorimskogo vremeni”, in: *Numizmaticheskie issledovaniya po istorii yugo-vostochnoy Evropy*, Kishiniev 1990, pp. 30ff.