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## Introduction

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### What Was the Athenian *Arche*?

*When there were huge surpluses of public funds generated by the mines at Laureion and the Athenians were planning to divide it among themselves at the rate of ten drachmas a man, Themistocles had persuaded them to drop this idea of sharing the money out and to use it instead to build two hundred ships for the war, by which he meant the war against Aegina – a war which, at the time in question, proved to be the salvation of Greece, because it forced the Athenians to turn to the sea. In fact, the ships were not deployed in the war for which they had been built, but they were available at Greece’s hour of need. So Athens had already built these ships, and they felt obliged to undertake a further programme of shipbuilding as well. After due consideration, prompted by the oracle, they decided to go along with the god’s advice and commit all their personnel to meeting the Persian invasion of Greece at sea, with the assistance of any other Greeks who were prepared to join them. (Herodotos 7.144, trans. Waterfield, adapted)*

This passage neatly captures the fundamental link between the abundant wealth in silver that the Athenians had recently recovered from their earth and their rise as a power. That power was explicitly naval, which meant that, unlike land-based powers like Sparta’s, it depended on a huge outlay of money for the building and upkeep of ships and pay for the rowers. The combination of money and ships enabled Athens’ fleet to be the backbone of the successful resistance to the Persians at sea, most significantly in the battle of Salamis, off the coast of Attica, in 480. This turn of events sets the stage for the history of our subject, which begins immediately after the stunning victories of the Greeks in that year and the next.

The Greeks who defeated the Persian invasion had formed an alliance under Spartan leadership (at that time the preeminent power in the Greek world) conventionally called the Hellenic League. Upon the defeat of the Persians, the alliance remained intact with the objectives of removing them

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from pockets of territory still under their control and of carrying on a war of liberation of cities of coastal Asia Minor and neighboring islands that the Persians still claimed as their own. But everything soon changed. Owing largely to the outrageous behavior of the Spartan commander, Pausanias, the Athenians successfully contested Sparta's leadership and refashioned the alliance into what modern historians call the Delian League. This was because the meetings of the member states and the League treasury were initially headquartered on the centrally located island of Delos, sacred to Apollo.

The Delian League came into being with Athens as its leader of an alliance, which Thucydides terms a *hegemonia*, that did not impose legal or political authority on its member states. But quickly, as he explains (1.96–99), that alliance transformed into an asymmetrical relationship. In his lexicon of power, the Athenians shed their role as leaders of an alliance of Greeks bound to them in traditional ways in favor of rule *arche* over those Greeks who became subject to them. The translation *arche* as “empire” is not inapposite as long as we recognize that it cannot easily be compared with empires with institutional structures such as formally annexed territories. Athens' “rule” was more informal: while they mapped out tributary districts after some time – initially, Hellespontine, Islands, Thraceward, Ionian, Karian – these were not administrative units such as one finds in the satrapies of the Persian empire, or provinces in the Roman empire, with governors and local apparatuses to facilitate the extraction of resources. Informal, however, does not mean soft power: the heavy-handed encroachment on local autonomy in the cities was seen and felt in many ways, including Athenian officials in residence, the presence of a garrison, and, above all, the obligation to pay tribute.

Herodotos attests to the symbiosis of money and shipbuilding, essential to mobilizing a navy to campaign on an annual basis. Military alliances in the Greek world were no innovation in 478. But those were primarily land-based, involving a hegemon's ability to marshal its allies when necessary, and the allies' recognition that a call-up meant assembling with one's own armor and provisions (and for cavalry, one's own horse). And military alliances were activated in response to a specific, usually temporary, threat. What was unusual – indeed unprecedented – was that the Athenians envisioned a navy that would campaign summer after summer. Because of the expense necessitated by navies, involving outlays for shipbuilding, maintenance, and pay for rowers and other personnel, all of which depended for effectiveness and efficiency on a central coffer, the Delian League required a reliable source of revenue, namely, *phoros*, payable to

the Athenians, who provided the financial officers known as the “Treasurers of the Greeks” (*Hellenotamiai*). They were responsible for collecting, administering, and disbursing the tribute.

Initially the term *phoros* was probably innocuous, meaning, literally, a “bringing in,” but it became a word with unequivocally negative associations, signifying the subject status of those paying it. “Tribute” is a meaningful translation: the institution of *phoros* evoked Persian practice, in which subjects were obliged to offer annual tribute to the Great King, symbolizing their abject position vis-à-vis the imperial center. Symbolism aside, centralizing sizable monetary resources under Athens’ control led to a profoundly unequal power relationship, as well over two hundred city-states, formerly autonomous and free from outside interference, came under Athens’ control. No longer was Athens leading free Greek states; rather, Athens was ruling an empire, of which the primary objective was to drain the resources from these cities in order to fund its campaigns.

The necessity of money for a naval empire can hardly be overstressed. Never before in the Greek world had money been the essential factor in the development of polis or supra-polis power. Beginning at the inauguration of Athens’ naval *arche* in 478 BC, outlays of centralized, cash expenditures became the norm, demanded not only of the hegemon but also of the Greek cities that signed up, with the exception of several powerful cities and islands (notably Thasos, Naxos, Lesbos, Chios, and Samos) that provided ships and personnel instead of money. Monetary revenue, however, came not just from tribute, whose *raison d’être* was the funding of the League navy, but also from control of commercial hubs – *emporía* – and custom stations at the Hellespont and the Bosphoros, from which Athens derived income from taxes (when this practice was instituted is not known). In addition, revenue from mining and rents from sacred land belonging to Athena (and possibly a portion paid by cleruchs, Athenian settlers on prime lots of land in subjects’ territory) was a key source of Athens’ overseas wealth.

While Athens could choose to refer to its relationship with its subjects as an “alliance” (*symmachia*), an explicit example of which are the references to the “allies” and “alliances” in the treaty drawn up between the Athenians and Spartans at the time of the Peace of Nikias (Thuc. 5.18), the unequal relationship becomes transparent. This relationship is manifest from documents not only in which the Athenians made punitive demands on individual cities, or in other cases granted special privileges, but also in decrees that addressed cities throughout the empire as a whole. Accordingly, as in Thucydides (e.g., 2.41.3, 3.10.3–4), we find that in many contexts it is

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more meaningful to refer to the tributary members of the *arche* as the Athenians' "subjects."

### Sources

The introduction leads us to the sources for the Athenian empire: How do we know what we know, and how certain is it? Epigraphic and numismatic evidence are especially significant.

### Inscriptions

Inscribed stone documents concerned with the *arche* are precious evidence, revealing much about the empire, its finances, and the relationship between Athens and its subject allies otherwise unknown through literary evidence. Their study is hampered by their frequently fragmentary state of preservation – many of which had been broken up and reused as building material; many missing parts mean that a good number cannot be securely dated.

But we do know that in the year, 454/3, by which point the treasury of the empire had been transferred to Athens from Delos, the Athenians began annually to inscribe on marble the portions or quotas of the allies' tribute that were set apart for Athena and placed in her treasury as dedications. These were the "first fruits" (*aparchai*) of the tribute, and represented one-sixtieth of each city's full payment.

The most conspicuous – indeed ostentatious – of these accounts are the records of the first fifteen years recorded on a gigantic slab (about 1 m wide and some 3.5 m tall) known as the *Lapis Primus*, the "first stele," set up on the Athenian Acropolis. The scale of the monument and its contents endowed it with a potent visual message about who rules the member states and those states' obligations; no one ascending the Acropolis could fail to be impressed by this account of subjects' dedications, extracted from the year's tribute. Critical to this projection of Athens' might were the gods. They constituted an inextricable part of the fabric and proper functioning of every polis, and, equally, were central to the existence and well-being of the *arche*: the tribute quotas inform us that Athens' Athena had now become the patron deity of the *arche*. From the subjects' perspective, these monetary contributions made in the context of a religious observance were a mark of their submitting not just to Athenians, but to their gods.

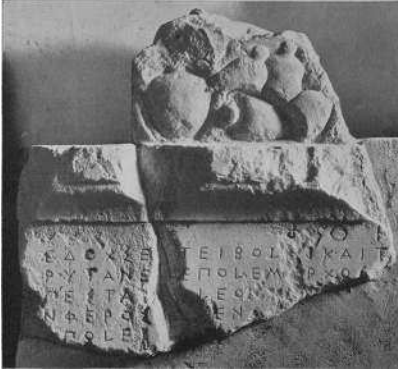


**Figure 1.1** Fragments of a marble stele inscribed with the tribute quota list from the left side of the Lapis Primus for the year 440/39 BC (IG I<sup>3</sup> 272). The districts (Hellespont, Thraceward) are listed in large letters with the cities and portions of their tribute (in numbers of drachmas) dedicated to Athena (*aparchai*) following in smaller letters.

As pieced together, the hundreds of fragments constituting the record of cities' dedications provide a wealth of documentary evidence for the organization and financing of the *arche* annually. Each year's entries gives the name and amount paid by each city to the goddess Athena (Fig. 1.1). From these "first fruits" we know that the sums were assessed in talents (6,000 drachmas = 1 talent) of Athenian silver coinage or in fractions of talents: halves, thirds, etc. (see the Table 3.1 on pp. 68–9). By the 450s, most of these assessed sums were probably being paid in Athenian tetradrachms, but we know that not all of them were because a summary at the end of the first year's total informs that part of the grand total included payments in electrum stater coins of Kyzikos (Fig. 3.1), and there are indications in other lists of similar payments in electrum coinages (Figueira 1998, 275–9).

Besides the Athenian tribute quota lists, a remarkable number of other documents pertaining to Athenian financial matters have been preserved in copies that the city had inscribed on stone for public consultation. One

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**Figure 1.2** Fragment of the marble stele inscribed with the Decree of Kleonymos (O&R 152, *AIO*, probably 426/5 BC). Shown in sculptured relief are containers of tribute money brought to Athens in tied bags and bronze vessels (*hydriai*).

such inscription, dealing with tribute (Fig. 1.2), was crowned by a sculpted relief depicting bags of tribute and the bronze jars which may have carried the money for display at the opening of the spring festival of Dionysos (the Great Dionysia), when the annual tribute was brought to Athens (Lawton 1995, 81; Raubitschek 1941). Although nearly all of these inscriptions survive in fragments, they augment immensely the financial information that Thucydides, Xenophon, and other ancient writers include in their accounts of fifth-century Athens. These literary texts and the surviving inscriptions have traditionally been the two primary sources of evidence for the study of the Athenian *arche*. The coins minted by Athens, its allies, and its opponents, however, make up a third category of contemporaneous evidence. Although on the face of it this numismatic evidence may not seem nearly as informative as Athenian inscriptions, unlike the inscriptions that were produced at the center of the *arche*, the coins were minted and circulated by the separate city-states all around the Aegean and, in addition to their visual and artifactual immediacy, allow a contemporary, broader, and more inclusive awareness of the empire as a whole, while literary evidence, principally, but not only Thucydides, is written with inevitable hindsight.

### Coin Hoards and Dies

Before turning to the coinages of the Athenian *arche*, we need to consider two vital kinds of numismatic evidence: hoards and the number of obverse dies employed in the minting of a coinage.

Ancient Greek coins in modern collections exist by the thousands. Although many of these are coins that had been lost in antiquity by accident

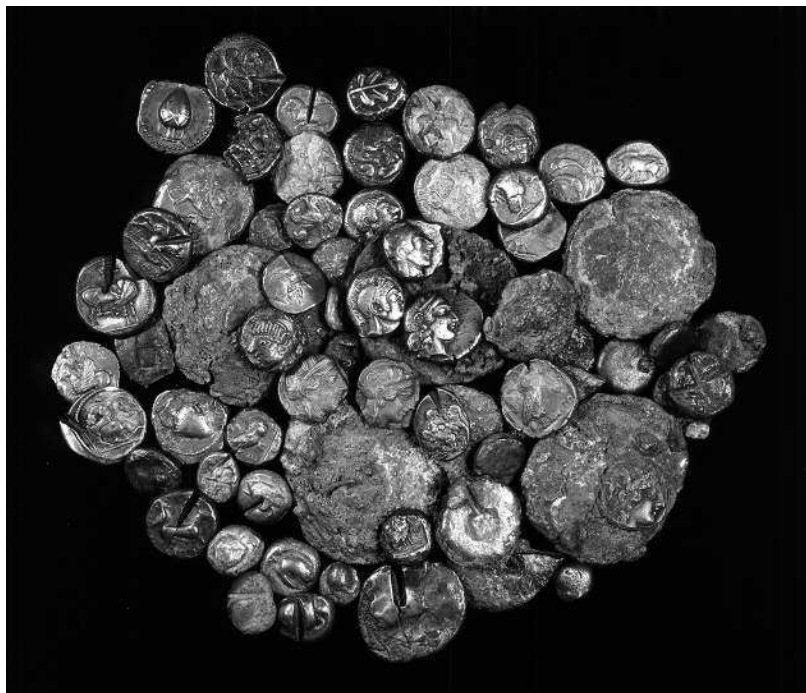
and have turned up in archaeological excavations or were just picked up from the ground or located with the aid of metal detectors, the overwhelming majority of ancient coins in modern collections comes from hoards, namely, pots or bags full of coins that had been intentionally buried in the ground for safekeeping but because of some unanticipated personal or communal misfortune were not retrieved. Most have been discovered by chance outside of controlled archaeological excavations and were broken up and sold, piece by piece, to supply the insatiable international demand for fine coins by collectors. Nevertheless, many hoards have been saved, or have had their contents recorded for study before being dispersed, and so provide concrete documentation for determining the circulation and chronology of the coins involved.

Of the approximately thirty-six hoards that have been recovered from within the territory of the Athenian *arche* (Appendix B), roughly half consisted exclusively of coins minted by the city in or near where the hoard was found. No surprise: cities minted first and foremost for local use. Predictably as well, most mixed hoards (nos. 27–36) tend to consist of coins from the same geographical region, and these, more often than not (Meadows 2011a, 275–7), are hoards of small fractional denominations of a half-drachma (c. 2 g) and less, including tiny divisions of an obol (0.2–0.3 g) that could be accommodated in several different weight systems and were not always easy to distinguish from one another. It is the exceptional hoards, however, that are most informative, like the three hoards of Athenian coins recovered on the island of Euboea (Appendix B, nos. 6–8) that imply that by the second half of the fifth century Athenian coins had replaced locally minted coins at the city of Eretria and probably at the other cities on the island of Euboea as well. Hoards nos. 18 and 19, from Bisanthe and Kios on the Propontis (now known as the Sea of Marmara), indicate that these two cities, which had not yet begun to mint coinages of their own, evidently made up for that lack by employing coinages from other Propontine cities, namely, Parion and Kyzikos.

A find from the Nile delta of Egypt (Fig. 1.3) presents an entirely different kind of hoard, and one that illustrates as well the propensity of economies that produced no coinage of their own to make use of imported coinage. It contained a great mixture of silver coins from all over the Aegean Greek world together with pieces of unminted silver, including several large round ingots of up to 6 cm in diameter. The ingots, and the fact that quite a few of the coins had been test-cut with a chisel to ensure that they were not just silver-plated, reveal that this was not a conventional hoard of circulating coins but a collected mass of miscellaneous silver that

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**Figure 1.3** Coin hoard recovered in 1901 at Zagazig in the Egyptian Nile Delta (Appendix B, no. 46). Eighteen round, unminted silver ingots and pieces of ingots together with eighty-four coins from two Thracian tribes and twenty-three Greek cities. All of the coins were minted before c. 480 BC, except for eighteen Athenian tetradrachms of several styles that date from the 470s into the fourth century BC. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Münzkabinett.

could be transacted only by weighing on a balance. Such bullion hoards are typical of silver hoards buried in Egypt and elsewhere in the Near East in the late sixth and early fifth centuries. The present one differs in one important respect. All of the silver was brought together early in the fifth century except for eighteen Athenian tetradrachms of various later styles and dates that were added a few at a time over the rest of the century, except for one that was added still later in the fourth century. As other Egyptian hoards show, this means that while the strong market demand for Greek silver in Egypt indiscriminately accepted imported silver in any form down to the 470s, thereafter the increasing availability of Athenian owl tetradrachms transformed this inflow into a nearly exclusive preference for Athenian coins, ultimately making them a *de facto* coinage of Egypt.



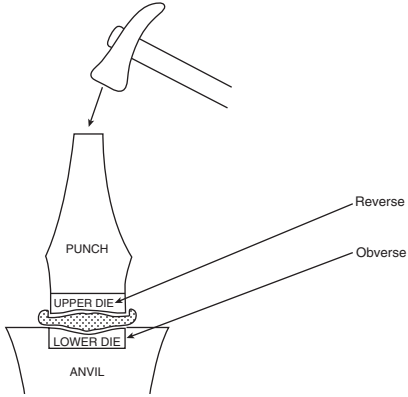
The significance of hoards extends also to the absolute dating of Greek coinages. Inasmuch as nearly all Greek civic coins were designed and minted without any inscribed indication of date, in assigning dates to coinages, scholars have had to rely on educated guesswork from whatever stylistic or other criteria might be relevant, including probable historical contexts, and, in the case of coins recovered in controlled excavations, from their archaeological contexts. Besides being a source of most new coins, hoards provide chronological evidence of a uniquely comparative kind since in any assemblage of mixed coinages, the most credibly dated later specimens serve as chronological pegs for adjusting the chronology of the less well dated coins buried with them.

The spectacular hoard of more than 1,900 Greek silver coins found by villagers in 1984 in the town of Emali in the Lycian uplands of southwestern Turkey (Map 2.2) illustrates how a newly discovered hoard can correct previously accepted chronologies (Appendix B, no. 41; Fried 1987; Kagan 1987). Now largely housed in the archaeological museum in the Turkish city of Antalya, the hoard was originally referred to as the “Decadrachm Hoard” because of the most stunning coins in it: thirteen large Athenian decadrachms, like the one illustrated in Fig. 2.5. Altogether, the hoard contained coins from twenty-two cities of Aegean Greece and seven Thracian tribes together with nearly a thousand coins of local Lycian rulers in the general region where it was found.

A number of the latest reliably dated coins in the hoard, like those of Athens in Fig. 2.4 and others from Samos, indicate a burial date of around 460 BC or slightly before. Accordingly, to take just two instances, the latest specimens of two major civic coinages of Northern Greece that are well represented in the hoard, the coinages of Akanthos and Abdera, are shown to belong to the 460s (and not the 480s or 470s, as these coins had been dated previously), a chronological shift of ten to twenty years that significantly lowers the dating of the cities’ subsequent coinages in the second half of the fifth century as well (cf. Figs. 3.9b and 3.15a). Likewise, the coins of the Thracian tribe of the Bisalti (Fig. 4.5), which do not appear in hoards earlier than the Emali hoard, must date not, as formerly believed, to the decades before 480 BC when Thrace was under Persian rule, but rather began in the 470s, after the Persians had departed. In other cases, the hoard has served to reinforce the correctness of existing chronologies.

Historical information of another kind from the Emali find concerns the volume of silver coinage that was being produced in two major mining regions during the 70s and 60s of the fifth century. One of these was the

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**Figure 1.4** The striking of ancient coins. Engraved dies for the striking of coins were normally made of hardened bronze. This diagram shows why the minting of a coinage tended to employ more reverse (or punch) dies than obverse (or anvil) dies. Because the punch dies received the full force of the striking hammer, they were liable to break or develop cracks sooner than the obverse dies that were somewhat cushioned from the blow of the hammer by the silver or gold blank on top and were also supported by the mass of the anvil into which they were inserted.

Thracian region of Bisaltia on the western bank of the Strymon River where the aforementioned tribal coins were produced. These large, showy coins (Fig. 4.5), weighing about 29 g each, were relatively rare until their numbers were suddenly boosted by the sixty-eight specimens in the Emali hoard. These, moreover, had been stamped out from some twenty-six obverse and forty-five reverse dies. As shown in Fig. 1.4, the stamping of ancient coins was done manually, and since the coin designs were engraved in sunken relief into the faces of the hard metal dies also by hand, no two obverse or reverse dies are exactly alike. Since it is estimated that one obverse coin die could have served to strike on average up to about 20,000 silver coins (de Callatay 2011), the original number of coins represented by these twenty-six dies would have come to over half a million – if all of the dies were used until they broke or wore out. Dies for such exceptionally big coins probably did not have such a lengthy working life expectancy. Yet when one makes allowance for additional obverse dies that were not represented in the Emali sample but can be roughly estimated through formulas of statistical probability, the estimated volume of the Bisaltian coinage remains huge. For a coinage of such large pieces that was minted within a space of only about ten to fifteen years, even the most conservative projection reveals how extraordinary the deposit or deposits of silver under the control of this single Thracian tribe must have been. (Indeed, the scale of the Bisalti coinage was greater than the Emali sample allows, as the Carchemish hoard of 1996 (Appendix B, no. 44), adds additional obverse dies from a continuation of the coinage after c. 460).

That coinage, however, was not nearly as prolific as the coinage being minted by the city of Athens from silver extracted from its mines in southeast Attica. Although the phases of this coinage from the end of the