

The Athenian Empire

Coinage played a central role in the history of the Athenian naval empire of the fifth century BC. It made possible the rise of the empire itself, which was financed through tribute in coinage collected annually from the empire's approximately 200 cities. The empire's downfall was brought about by the wealth in Persian coinage that financed its enemies. This book surveys and illustrates with nearly 200 examples the extraordinary variety of silver and gold coinages that were employed in the history of the period, minted by cities within the empire and by those cities and rulers that came into contact with it. It also examines how coins supplement the literary sources and even attest to developments in the monetary history of the period that would otherwise be unknown. This is an accessible introduction both to the history of the Athenian empire and to the use of coins as evidence.

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The Athenian Empire

Using Coins as Sources

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Table

3.1 Conspectus of allied coinage

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Preface

Coinage and the Athenian empire were inextricably linked. It is by no means an exaggeration to say that silver coinage made possible the rise of Athenian sea power and hence the empire itself, constituting rule over more than 200 cities. Since study of the many coinages that lend detail to the history of the empire has been largely limited to specialists in Greek numismatics, our purpose in this book is to make this evidence, much of it involving very recent analyses and discoveries, accessible to students, non-specialists, and scholars of Greek history.

The evidence of coinage is presented in two stages. After an introductory chapter, Chapters 2 and 3 survey the coinages of Athens and of the allied city-states of its empire and discuss how these coinages broadly interacted. Chapters 4–7 are devoted to coinages that add factual detail to the record of particular events, most of them episodes leading up to and during the Peloponnesian War, which ultimately brought the Athenian empire to an end. As Thucydides, the great historian of the war, emphasized, in the final analysis it was a war of competing monetary resources. Coinages of precious metal were at its core.

We have many to thank. Much of this ground was covered some twenty years ago in Thomas Figueira's meticulously researched *The Power of Money: Coinage and Politics in the Athenian Empire*, a work with many observations that largely dovetail with our own. Since its publication in 1998, however, the field has been greatly enriched by new discoveries, particularly with respect to the inscribed fragments and dating of the Athenian Coinage, Weights and Measures Decree, and by the rapidly expanding body of reexamined coinages themselves. Here we owe a profound debt of thanks to Carmen Arnold-Biucchi, Gil Davis, Aneurin Ellis-Evans, Christos Gazolis, Jonathan Kagan, Ute Wartenberg, Kagan, Andrew Meadows, Selene Psoma, and Kenneth Sheedy for sharing or discussing with us their recent work in published or draft form. Among the many other colleagues who have responded to our inquiries, we thank Peter Thonemann, Alan Walker, and, especially, for unpublished data on coins in the Elmalı hoard in Turkey, Koray Konuk. We are grateful also to the anonymous readers of the Cambridge University Press for their careful reading and recommendations, and to Marcus Chin for compiling the index.

For assistance in obtaining photographs, we warmly thank Peter van Alfen and his colleagues at the American Numismatic Society, Christopher Howgego and Volker Heuchert (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford), Dimitra Tsangari (Alpha Bank, Athens), Bernhard Weisser (Münzkabinett, Berlin), Kay Ehling (Münzsammlung, Munich), Augustinus Zeman (Schottenstift, Vienna), Wolfgang Fischer-Bossert (Vienna), Oğuz Tekin (Antalya), and the auction houses of Lanz Numismatik (Munich), Classical Numismatic Group (Lancaster), Gorny and Mosch (Munich), and Numismatica Ars Classica (London-Zurich).

In keeping with the other titles in this series, the book has been written primarily for university-level students, including those who have no prior knowledge of the Greek language. Appendices explaining coin weights and special terms that are commonly used in the description and study of coins are included. And to assist in locating the dozens upon dozens of place names that inevitably crop up in any political and monetary history of the fifth-century BC Greek world, all places mentioned in the book will be found on the maps in the preliminary pages and Chapters 2 and 6.

Because the size of a silver or gold coin is indicative of its relative monetary value, all coins are illustrated at actual size, even in the case of small coins with inscriptions that are difficult to read. For most of these we have added an enlarged photograph of the inscribed face. Breaks in coin legends are indicated with dashes. Translations of ancient texts, if not attributed, are our own. As for transliterations, we tend to stay close to the Greek but not consistently in the case of proper names that are familiar.

Chronological Table

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 480–479 Persian invasion of Greece and Greek victories in the battles of Salamis, Plataia, and Mykale

The Pentecontaetia

- 478 Formation of Athenian alliance (Delian League) against Persia
 476 Kimon conquers Eion at the mouth of the Strymon river in Thrace. It becomes an Athenian colony and *emporion*
 c. 470 Failed revolt of Naxos
 c. 469 Delian League defeat of the Persian navy at the Eurymedon River
 mid-460s Failed revolt of Thasos
 mid-460s–c. 453 Alexander I of Macedon gains control of western Thrace and its mines
 457 Subjugation of Aegina
 454 Transfer of League treasury from Delos to Athens
 447 Failed revolt of Euboean cities
 446 Athens and Sparta sign a Thirty Years Peace
 441–440 Failed revolt of Samos
 Athenian foundation of Amphipolis in Thrace
 435–433 War between Corinth and Corcyra; defensive alliance between Corcyra and Athens; battle of Sybota in which Athens and Corinth come into conflict
 432 King Perdikkas of Macedon supports revolts of Olynthos, Poteidaia, and other Chalkidian allies
 Athens begins siege of Poteidaia

The Peloponnesian War

431–421 **The Archidamian War**

- 431 Sparta declares war and invades Attica
 428 Failed revolt of Mytilene
 424–422 Spartan general Brasidas invades the Chalkidike, winning over
 Akanthos, Amphipolis, and other cities
 422 The battle for Amphipolis: Spartan victory; Brasidas and Kleon
 are killed
 421 **Peace of Nikias:** treaty and alliance concluded between Athens
 and Sparta for fifty years
 416 Conquest of Melos
 415–413 Athenian Expedition to Sicily
 413 Spartan fort at Dekeleia in Attica; naval war resumes in the
 eastern Aegean
 413–404 **The Ionian (or Dekeleian) War**
 413 Persian satraps begin negotiations with Sparta
 412 Revolt of Chios, the first of multiple Ionian defections to the
 Spartans. Athens makes Samos its naval base in the eastern
 Aegean
 407, 405 Lysander assumes control of the Spartan fleet and receives
 funding from Cyrus, son of Darius II
 405 Destruction of the Athenian fleet at Aigospotamoi
 404 Siege and surrender of Athens to Sparta

Abbreviations

Abbreviations of Greek and Latin authors and works follow *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*.

The following special abbreviations are also used:

AIO	<i>Attic Inscriptions Online</i>
ANS	The American Numismatic Society, New York
BMC	<i>British Museum Catalogue of Greek Coins</i>
CH	<i>Coin Hoards</i> . London, 1975–2002 (vols. I–IX); New York, 2010 (vol. X)
IG	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i>
IGCH	M. Thompson, O. Mørkholm, and C. M. Kraay, <i>An Inventory of Greek Coin Hoards</i> . Oxford and New York, 1973
O&R	R. Osborne and P. J. Rhodes, <i>Greek Historical Inscriptions 478–404 BC</i> . Oxford, 2017
R&O	P. J. Rhodes and R. Osborne, <i>Greek Historical Inscriptions 404–323 BC</i> . Oxford, 2003
SNG	<i>Sylloge Numorum Graecorum</i>
TN	J. R. Melville Jones, <i>Testimonia Numaria, Greek and Latin Texts Concerning Ancient Greek Coinage</i> , vols. 1 (<i>Texts</i>) and 2 (<i>Addenda and Commentary</i>). London, 1993, 2007

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P.2 The Middle and Eastern Mediterranean