

Greek Numismatic Art 400 B.C. — 300 A.D.

Some General Remarks

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INTRODUCTION

If, then, the result of thus grouping together from an historical standpoint specimens of the chief monetary issues of all parts of the ancient world would prove to be also a commentary on the history of the growth, development, and decline of Greek art, it will be none the less valuable for being a thoroughly independent commentary.

SO WROTE BARCLAY V. HEAD, as great an art historian as historian of numismatics, in the preface to the first edition of *Coins of the Ancients* in 1880. In his conclusions can be found the basis of studies in Greek numismatic art as a discipline in itself and as the groundwork for relating the aesthetics of numismatics to the development of Greek art in other media. The contents of Head's chronological grouping of Greek coins is often remembered only by the sets of British Museum electrotypes seen in museum and classroom corridors; this

grouping, however, remains in literary substance in the 1932 revision by Sir George Hill and E. S. G. Robinson, *A Guide to the Principal Coins of the Greeks*. This edition provides the forum for the remarks on Greek numismatic art made here, and the references are to the numbering of its plates. Portraiture is a special study, and as such is not emphasized here; reverses are stressed, as much from their total expression as from the deities or inscriptions advertised thereon. Much of this should suggest that the periods emphasized are not the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. but the age of the Greek internationalists, having its conventional beginning in Alexander III of Macedon and continuing (for these purposes) until Alexandria's Greek imperial mint was closed in the late third century A.D. For reasons of clarity and brevity we shall concentrate on the years 400-27 B.C.

PERIOD III (400-336 B.C.)

THE GREEK WORLD BEFORE ALEXANDER THE GREAT

Head's Period III (400-336 B.C.) is not a brilliant one for Greek numismatic art. In Greek painting and sculpture this was a period of great activity, but the generation of Cephisodotus and Timotheus marked a mediocre lull before the rise of Praxiteles, Scopas and Lysippus. The dekadrachms of Euainetos and his following were produced probably as late as the first reign of Dionysius II (367-357 B.C.) (pl. 26, fig. 31); like so many other coins of Period III, their design belongs to Attic art of the late fifth century. Just as the styles of Agoracritus and Kallimachus, Pheidias' pupils, were perpetuated in an unimaginative way in sculptures at Epidauros, so the cities of Magna Graecia and Greece proper were using die designs developed for them by artists of the post-Pheidian era. Large heads of gods, heroes and nymphs, sometimes perpetuating the techniques of three-quarters or full face, dominate the obverses; the reverses also continue designs symbolic of regions and their produce: animals, horsemen, seated divinities, objects, and the like. The semi-barbarous silver of Lycceius of Paeonia (359-340 B.C.) (pl. 21, fig. 9) with a spirited

reverse of Herakles and the lion, and the coin of Zakynthos with Herakles and the snakes (pl. 23, fig. 44) are exceptions that catch the eye in their efforts to break out of their *tondo* compositions. The giant bronzes of Olbia, on the other hand, (pl. 21, fig. 3) have the faults of the period and achieve only vulgarity.

In Asia, however, artistic imagination followed the gold of the Satraps. This, we remember, was the region where Mausolus and Artemisia summoned the great artists of the Greek world to commissions culminating in one of the Wonders of the ancient world. Another architectural marvel of the area, the Ephesian Artemisium (the other Wonder beginning the century of the Rhodian Colossus and the Alexandrian Pharos), was rising anew at the same time. At first glance one does not differentiate between the earlier coins of Asia and Africa and those of Head's Period III. The Darics and sigloi, to be sure, have somewhat larger flans; coins of Lesbos and Lampsacus present seemingly more modern designs; but the small, thick, irregular flans, the quadripartite incuses, remain a disturbingly anachronistic feature of the earlier coins. Among these earlier coins, however, we find arresting advances. Leaving aside the naturalistic portraits of elderly men on electrum of Cyzicus (pl. 18, fig. 8, 9), the infant Herakles and snake obverse of c. 394 to 389 B.C., common to Cyzicus, Ephesus, Samos and other cities (pls. 18, fig. 15; 19, fig. 34, 37), presents a less original but perhaps more dynamic version of the subject than that of Zakynthos discussed in the previous paragraph. The silver of Aphrodisias in Cilicia c. 379-374 B.C. (pl. 19, fig. 48) has long been admired for an obverse showing "the Athena Parthenos of Pheidias, her right hand supported by olive-tree, holding Nike, left hand resting on shield" and "important as an early reproduction of the Parthenos of Pheidias". It is likely the immediate prototype was a fourth century modification of the Pheidian image (like the Pitcairn Nike in Philadelphia or the head of Zeus in Boston) or perhaps a painting, but the die designer had caught the monumentality of the Athena in the freedom of a frontal pose allowing precise definition of important secondary details. Aphrodite, smelling a flower and

enthroned between two Eastern sphinxes, is no less successful a transcription of a cult image to the format of a coin.

The coins of Mazaëus (or Mazaïos) ruler of Cilicia (361-333 B.C.), struck at Tarsus (pl. 20, fig. 51), with seated Zeus, lion devouring bull, and a walled city below (Fig. 1.); the issue at Paphos in Cyprus which projects a plastic miniature of Agoracritus' Aphrodite-Nemesis at Rhamnus beyond the plane of field and flan (pl. 20, fig. 55); and the avowedly Graeco-Oriental octodrachms of Strato of Sidon (368 B.C.) with Artaxerxes II Mnemon in a ceremonial quadriga (pl. 20, fig. 57) all stand out from the surfeit of beauty in divine heads and city emblema found in surveying the general run of coins of 400-336 B.C. When we meet new rarities in the coins of Western Asia Minor, in one case we find this imagination combined with reuse of a traditional reverse, all presented in a vaguely barbarous manner. The small series of silver staters of Perikles (Päriklä), last dynast of Lycia (c. 365 B.C.), use the late fifth century technique of the three-quarters facing head to present a wild-eyed Herakles (?) wearing a wreath and his lion's skin. He overwhelms the obverse. The reverse, however, is a disappointment; the striding warrior is all too well known, most recently as Ajax the Less on the coins of Locri Opuntii (pl. 22, fig. 29) (Fig. 2).

PERIOD IV (336-280 B.C.)

ALEXANDER, HIS GENERALS, AND THE GREEK WEST

While Head's Period III might be considered an aesthetic non-historical division, unless we think of Greek history from the death of Socrates to the death of Philip II of Macedon as a distinct phase, Head's Period IV (336-280 B.C.) bears close relationship to the upheavals which changed the complexion of Greek civilization. These are the years from the accession of Alexander the Great through the lifetimes of the first generation of Diadochoi, many the companions of his original exploits. Appropriately, illustration of the coinage of Asia after the conquests begins with a double Daric of the traditional type of the kneeling archer-king and incuse reverse



FIGURE 1



FIGURE 2

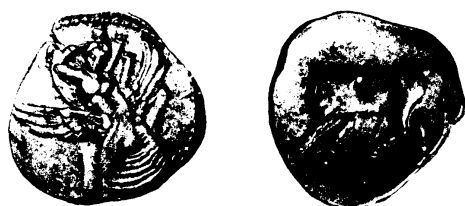


FIGURE 3



FIGURE 4



FIGURE 5



FIGURE 6

FIG. 1. Tarsus, Cilicia. Mazaios (361-333 B.C.). Silver Stater. (54.39)
 FIG. 2. Lycia, Antiphellos. Pärıklä (380-362 B.C.). Silver Stater. (58.12)
 FIG. 3. Crete, Gortyna. (c. 350 B.C.). Silver Stater. (57.729) FIG. 4. Syria,
 Seleucus I. (303-293 B.C.). Gold Distater, struck at Ecbatana. (56.100)
 FIG. 5. Syria, Seleucus I. (294-280 B.C.). Gold Stater, struck at Tarsus.
 (54.567) FIG. 6. Thrace and Asia Minor, Lysimachus. (c. 300 B.C.).
 Silver Tetradrachm. (58.317)



FIGURE 7



FIGURE 8

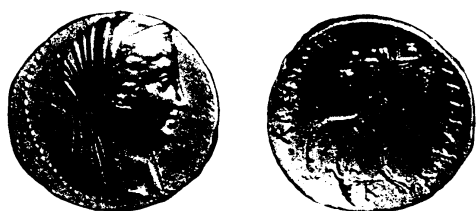


FIGURE 9



FIGURE 10



FIGURE 11

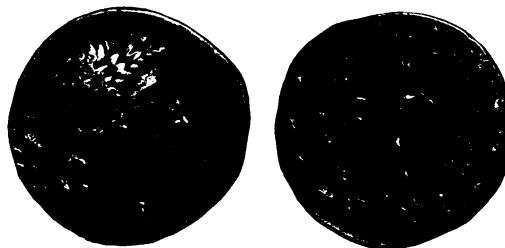


FIGURE 12

FIG. 7. Macedonia, Demetrius Poliorcetes (c. 290 B.C.). Gold Stater. (53.2550) FIG. 8. Egypt, Ptolemy I (struck for Alexander IV, c. 310 B.C.). Silver Tetradrachm. (58.331) FIG. 9. Egypt, Ptolemy II, with bust of Arsinoe II (c. 270 B.C.). Gold Octadrachm, struck at Kition. (53.117) FIG. 10. Egypt, Ptolemy XIII (55-51 B.C.). Silver Drachm. (53.456) FIG. 11. Macedonia, Antigonus Gonatas (277-239 B.C.). Silver Tetradrachm. (58.332) FIG. 12. Aeolis, Aigai. (c. 150 B.C.). Silver Tetradrachm. (57.719)



FIGURE 13



FIGURE 14



FIGURE 15

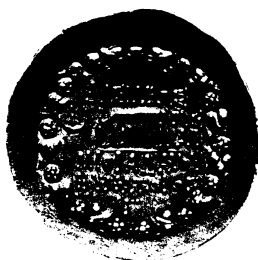


FIGURE 16



FIGURE 17



FIGURE 18



FIG. 13. Syria, Seleucus IV (187-175 B.C.). Silver Tetradrachm, struck at Sardis. (55.381) FIG. 14. Syria, Alexander II (128-123 B.C.). Silver Tetradrachm. (54.97) FIG. 15. Pontus, Mithradates VII (85-84 B.C.). Silver Tetradrachm. (54.37) FIG. 16. Bithynia, Nicomedes (149-120 B.C.), or later, to c. 82 B.C. Silver Tetradrachm. (54.671) FIG. 17. Ionia, Ephesus. (c. 225-133 B.C.). Silver Tetradrachm (Cistophorus). (54.1040) FIG. 18. Ephesus, Emperor Nero as Caesar (c. A.D. 51). Silver Cistophorus. (58.3)



FIGURE 19



FIGURE 20



FIGURE 21

FIG. 19. Pergamon, Emperor Caracalla (A.D. 211-217). Bronze Medallion. (58.13) FIG. 20. Perinthos and Ephesus, Emperor Gordianus III (A.D. 238-244). Bronze Medallion. (57.720) FIG. 21. Steelyard Weight. Bust of Artemis. Late Hellenistic, from Asia Minor. (58.16)

(pl. 27 fig. 1). This coin shows Alexander's continuation of an expression of Persian tradition in his new realms. The so-called Porus medallion or dekadrachm, struck at Babylon, is one of the curiosities of the age (pl. 27, fig. 4); the obverse projects us suddenly into the realm of Hellenistic humanism, presenting an early though distorted version of Alexander's encounter with Porus and his army of elephants in the Panjab. A painting by one of the court artists no doubt inspired the die designer. We are on firmer grounds in this suggestion when we study the equally monumental reverse. Alexander stands in military regalia, holding the thunderbolt of Zeus; Nike flies from the left to crown his plumed helmet. Pliny describes just such a painting or paintings by the foremost artist of the period, Apelles.¹ The exotic beasts of the Macedonian kingdoms are quick to appear on other coins of the early third century: Seleucus I shows both the elephant alone (pl. 27, fig. 8) and Athena in an elephant quadriga (pl. 27, fig. 10), and the Indian zebu or humped bull (pl. 27, fig. 13). Counting in the amusing contributions of Cretan numismatics in this period (Fig. 3), the zoological propensities of Greek coins are well exploited in Period IV.

The coins in Head's Period IV fall into two divisions: those coins with subjects related to Alexander the Great and his successors, and those coin types preserving the artistic autonomy traditional in the Greek series. These divisions, one would assume, cover Alexander's empire in Europe, Asia, and Africa on one hand, and those areas, particularly Italy and Sicily, he never succeeded in conquering. There are, however, exceptions. Cyzicus, Ephesus and Cnidus continue their own types for some time in this period. Crete behaves as if nothing had happened, continuing the types of Zeus, Europa, Poseidon and the bulls on her well designed, sometimes crudely struck large silver coins. Carthage, on the other hand, voluntarily adopts the Herakles-Alexander head to her obverses, no doubt for commercial gain (pl. 31, fig. 19). Alexander's series in gold, with head of Athena on the obverse and Nike standing on the reverse, is a coin type of the fourth

¹ See *Gnomon*, 25 (1953), 475.

century B.C., and as such it did not have the endurance of his issues in silver (pl. 29, fig. 4, 8.). It took the three-hundred year interval to the revived classicism of the late Roman Republic to reuse this standing Nike, on denarii of Mark Anthony and related coins.² In the early third century B.C. the design passed away with such curiosities as the rare distater or double Daric of Seleucus I, struck at Ecbatana c. 303-293 B.C. (Fig. 4), or the staters of the same king, struck c. 294-280 B.C. at Tarsus in Cilicia (Fig. 5).

Like sculpture and painting in the age of Alexander and the Successors, the design of tetradrachms and drachms, Herakles-Alexander obverse and enthroned eagle-bearing Zeus reverse, provided the new age with a vehicle for artistic expression. Alexander's die designers did not begin to exploit the possibilities of these new compositions (pl. 29, fig. 5-11). The empire of Alexander needed a coin type with an obverse bordering on portraiture and with a reverse honoring a major divinity, and including local mintmarks as well as the royal titles. Although Lysimachus (pl. 27, fig. 16) and Ptolemy I (pl. 28, fig. 20) could abandon the Alexander types in favor of their own inscriptions (Fig. 6), and in the second case portrait, they and their descendents (e.g. Demetrius Poliorcetes, pl. 29, fig. 10) (cf. Fig 7) found the basic arrangement of divine portrait on the obverse and major divinity on the reverse one suited to the needs of mass coinage over large areas. In addition, Ptolemy increased the concentration on the ruler's person by reducing the reverse design to the symbol of the divinity (Zeus' eagle) rather than the divinity himself (Fig. 8).

The general arrangement of obverse and reverse instituted by Alexander the Great continued to the end of the Hellenistic Kingdoms and passed over into the basic design of Roman imperial coinage. Alexander's artists employed a forceful treatment of obverse and reverse, but the idea found its most vigorous expression in the dramatic portraits and baroque reverses of Asian tetradrachms in Period V (280-190 B.C.), probably under the influence of Pergamene art. In

² E.g. Trau Sale, Hess (May 22, 1935), No. 52.

Egypt, save for the major gold and silver of the first three Ptolemies (Fig. 9), design gave way to production technique; coins appear to have been produced by forced casting rather than striking, and only some changes in portraiture relieve the monotony of eagle and inscription on the reverses (Fig. 10). In all, history no doubt gained in the portrait tetradrachms of the Hellenistic period, but Greek numismatic art can be easily said to have lost a measure of its attraction.

The coins of Period IV in the west, aside from the occasionally exciting horses' heads of Carthage (pl. 31, fig. 21), are disappointing. Neapolis, Tarentum, Metapontum, Thurium, Croton, and Syracuse, among others (pl. 31, fig. 1-16), produce watered-down versions of types with echoes back into the fifth century. The interaction of designs in east and west is seen by comparing contemporary reverses of Seleucus I (pl. 27, fig. 11) and Agathocles of Syracuse (pl. 31, fig. 14), showing Nike setting up a trophy. A large intaglio gem in the British Museum, in chalcedony and signed by the engraver Onatas, is a contemporary example of work which could have passed from one court to another and inspired both the coin types.³ The chariot groups on reverses of Syracuse (pl. 31, fig. 12, 16) follow the models of Kimon and Euainetos, but the treatment of what was an inspiring model is even duller than in the reverses of Period III. We encounter distorted horses, partially unquadrated gallops, and distracting emphasis of groundline and inscription beneath. If one were to pick the most successful of the coins of this period in Southern Italy, it might be the silver of Locri with head of Zeus on the obverse and Akragas' old motif of an eagle devouring a hare on the reverse (pl. 31, fig. 10). The design is simple, delicate, gem-like, and unencumbered by epigraphy. When we look at the coins of the west in the time of Alexander and the Successors, we may say that it is perhaps well political events demanded a new artistic idiom. We may turn back, then, to the Hellenistic east in the period of the consolidation of the kingdoms and the rise of Pergamum to see what manner of

³ A. Furtwängler, *Die antiken Gemmen*, Pl. XIII, 37; H. B. Walters, *British Museum Catalogue*, No. 601.

success the Diadochoi made of the combination of their portraits with a reverse proclaiming the individuality of the various kingdoms.

PERIOD V (280-190 B.C.)

THE HELLENISTIC BAROQUE AND ITS ROCOCO COUNTERPART

In turning to Plates 32-34 of *Principal Coins*, Head's Period V in Asia and Africa (280-190 B.C.), we see the successful infusion of baroque force into the wide range of portraits and of Hellenistic sculptural virtuosity into the reverses. The gods and goddesses on the reverses are more statuesque than ever, taking their models from the latest creations of the followers of the great fourth-century triad, Praxiteles, Skopas and Lysippus. While Mithradates of Pontus (c. 220-185 B.C.) (pl. 32, fig. 1) and the city of Miletus (pl. 32, fig. 5) continue the seated Zeus of Alexander's tetradrachms and drachms, a figure based on fourth-century versions of Pheidias' gold and ivory statue in the temple at Olympia, Prusias I of Bithynia (c. 238-183) uses the standing Zeus created earlier in the third century by the local master Doedalsas, famed for his crouching Aphrodite (pl. 32, fig. 2).⁴ Coins of Pergamum under Philetærus (284-263 B.C.) and Eumenes I (263-241 B.C.) show a seated Athena that must reflect the statue in her temple in that city (pl. 32, fig. 3, 4). Antiochus I and II also use new statues in their capital and in the shrine at nearby Daphne on their reverses: Apollo on the omphalos (pl. 32, fig. 6, 7), and a seated Herakles which echoes the colossus created by Lysippus for the city of Tarentum (pl. 32, fig. 8). Seleucus II (246-226 B.C.) uses a standing Apollo, holding an arrow and leaning languidly on a large tripod (pl. 32, fig. 10); the statue is just what one would expect from the workshops of the sons or followers of Praxiteles at the end of the fourth century B.C. All three coin types were copied by later Seleucids and by kings in Bactria and India.

When we turn to Bactria and its rich series of tetradrachms in the later third and second centuries B.C., we find

⁴L. Laurenzi, *Annuario*, 24-26 (1946-48), 167-179.

the same desire to match striking portraits with the latest sculptural creations of the early Hellenistic period. Herakles crowning himself on coins of Demetrius and his successors (pl. 33, fig. 17) has been identified as a statue by Praxiteles or his school; the original may have stood in Corinth and may have been familiar to Bactrian die designers through sculptors' models, such as the plaques found at Begram in Afghanistan.⁵ On coins of Antimachus (pl. 33, fig. 20), we encounter a Poseidon standing in hipshot, baroque pose and holding a large trident and a palm; we are on the firmest ground in connecting this reverse with contemporary statuary, for this is no other than the over lifesize marble Poseidon discovered in a sanctuary on the island of Melos and now in the Athens National Museum.⁶ The die designers of this series were capable of adaptations of striking originality; the Zeus, seen from the back, hurling a thunderbolt on coins of Diodotus and Agathocles is a good example (pl. 33, fig. 15, 18). The Bactrian designers somehow also organized the lettering on their reverses better than did the Seleucids or the Ptolemies; the titles enframe the figures and seem to suit their statuesque verticality. The Parthians observed this little detail and made much of it for the many years of their coinage, turning the lettering into a foursquare enframement for the reverse figures.

We have spoken of the high point reached by the Ptolemaic series during the earlier part of Period V and of its degeneration into dullness. The large gold, silver, and bronze coins are handsome examples of what can be done with portraiture on coins, and in a large gold piece of Ptolemy II (pl. 33, fig. 21) the importance of the portrait is recognized to the extent that the whole coin is given over to the likeness of the first two rulers and their consorts, mother and father on one side and son and daughter (husband and wife) on the other. Turning from Africa to Greece, amid continuations of traditional types among certain city-states, we find the baroque

⁵ *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 77 (1957), 283-299.

⁶ M. Bieber, *The Sculpture of the Hellenistic Age* (New York, 1955), 160f., Fig. 684.

tetradrachms lose in not reproducing the Pheidian statue more faithfully.⁹

In the west, Head's geographical arrangement within each period leads us first to the silver struck in Spain by the Barcids between the first and second Punic wars (pl. 37, fig. 1, 2). The large, bold heads of Herakles-Melqarth on the obverses are related, naturally, to the breadth of concept which one finds in contemporary Carthaginian dies (pl. 38, fig. 28-31). The reverses with their African elephants of various proportions are just as refreshing; no lettering distracts appreciation of the designs. For Herakles, one feels that the die designers used the impression of a deep, boldly cut intaglio gem; the club set on the right shoulder and consequently behind the profiled bust is just the technique used by a Hellenistic gem engraver to fill the concave background of his design. In between these coins struck in Spain and the Carthaginian issues at the end of the first Punic war, we have the Italian and Sicilian coinages, including those of the third-century kings of Syracuse (pls. 37, 38).

Italy and Sicily in the fifth century B.C. pioneered with new styles and new designs in their coinage. There is evidence in the third century B.C. that this initiative, in style at least, was not lost in numismatic art. We have spoken of the reflection of baroque styles in the dies of Asia, Africa and Greece in this century. These styles are related to that dynamic artistic synthesis which finds its greatest surviving expression in the statues, reliefs and paintings produced by artists from all over the Greek world in the service of the Attalids of Pergamum. When Pergamene art was thoroughly documented at the end of the last century, archaeologists, notably Wilhelm Klein, turned to the problem of a rococo reaction in Greek art, in the period c. 175-75 B.C.¹⁰ An attempt was made, rightly or wrongly, to explain Greek art in terms of progress in Western Europe from 1650 to 1800. The school of Pergamum was Bernini's baroque; the antique rococo was a reaction corresponding to French art under

⁹ J. Liegle, *Der Zeus des Phidias* (Berlin, 1952).

¹⁰ *Vom antiken Rokoko* (Vienna, 1921).

Louis XV; and the classicism of the first century B.C. was likened to the impact of Pompeii and Winckelmann on Italy, France and England. A steelyard weight from Asia Minor, recently acquired by the Boston Museum, illustrates the similarity of a work of c. 100 B.C. to products of the French eighteenth century (Fig. 21); the bust of Artemis is light and delicate, a counterpart to the likenesses of Louis XV's mistresses in hunting costume or to the small sculptures by Clodion, Falconet and Pigalle.

Aestheticians of the present generation have delighted in shooting holes in the thesis of parallel development for the arts of antiquity and the post-Renaissance, but there remains a core of undeniable evidence.¹¹ There was a rococo reaction to the Pergamene baroque, and traces of this reaction are evident in the numismatic art of Italy and Sicily in the third century B.C. This is nearly a century before we expect such things in any number in the major arts. The elements of new styles are latent in any earlier phase of a national art, and perhaps the designers among the Western Greeks became aware of new developments before other artists felt the urge to discover and exploit them.

Let us return to the coins themselves. A didrachm of Cales in Campania, colonized from Rome after 334 B.C., is typical of what we encounter as we move southwards to the toe of Italy and across to Sicily (pl. 37, fig. 4). The design is a traditional one in the region: head of Athena in a crested Corinthian helmet on the obverse, and Nike driving a biga on the reverse. But the style is very different from that described for Period V in Macedonia and central Greece. The lines are thin and fussy; Athena's hair ripples out in delicate, scroll-like curls; and the horses of the biga rear back in elongated proportions bordering on mannerism. Coins of Suessa (pl. 37, fig. 5), Nuceria Alfaterna (pl. 37, fig. 6), Tarentum (pl. 37, fig. 7, 8), Heraklea in Lucania (pl. 37, fig. 9), and Velia (pl. 37, fig. 10) present the same stylistic characteristics applied to their traditional types. Sometimes the choice of types is exactly what Klein found as typical of the Greek

¹¹ M. Bieber, *op. cit.*, 136ff.

rococo in monumental art; a small gold coin of Bruttii in the second half of the third century B.C. illustrates this (pl. 37, fig. 11). The head of Poseidon is as unkempt in a delicate way as any fountain figure from an eighteenth century French park; the little trident is almost lost behind the strands of his fillet. Amphitrite is seated on a hippocamp on the reverse, holding an Eros with a bow on her outstretched hand. Parallels abound for treatment in these terms of the essentially dignified fourth-century group of the marriage of Poseidon and Amphitrite, a work of the emotional master Skopas; the Nereid and Triton Group in the Vatican, or the Triton and Papposilenos in the Louvre are the sculptural counterparts of the coin of Bruttii.¹²

Two series of coins conclude our observations on the numismatic rococo in Southern Italy and Sicily in Period V (280-190 B.C.). Pyrrhus, king of Epirus (295-272 B.C.), spent the years 280 to 274 B.C. campaigning in Italy and Sicily, where his gold and silver coins were struck. All show characteristics of the rococo to a marked degree. The reverse type for his gold coinage consists of a Nike who trips along in rustling drapery, carrying a trophy on her left shoulder and a large oak-wreath in her extended right hand (pl. 37, fig. 15, 16). The curve of the wings and the smallness of the lettering contribute to the lightness and delicacy of the composition. The heads of Athena and Artemis on the obverse exhibit the same qualities, especially the former which is an even more delicate mirror reversal of the Athena on silver of Campanian Cales. Pyrrhus' silver contributes further rococo interpretations of old and new types. Persephone is combined with Athena Alkis (pl. 37, fig. 18). The oak-wreathed Dodonean Zeus and a cult image of Dione, seated in casual fashion on an ornamented throne, share the tetradrachm (pl. 37, fig. 17); the huge head of Zeus is a study in oak-leaves and curls multiplied in profusion, as if to prove that the scope of a coin flan did not limit the die cutters' capacities for detail. The didrachm is the masterpiece of the series (pl. 37, fig. 19). A young helmeted Achilles, in whose features one could read those of Pyrrhus (another voyager from Epirus), has as com-

¹² *Op. cit.*, Figs. 640f.

plementary reverse another Nereid and hippocamp motif, this time the topical scene of Achilles' mother Thetis carrying the shield forged by Hephaestus. Again minute handling of surface detail determines success of the designs in terms of the rococo style described previously.

The last coins of Syracuse before the capture of the city by the Romans under M. Marcellus in 212 B.C. are chiefly those of the long reign of Hiero II (275-216 B.C.). The large silver piece of 32 litrae combines the royal portrait with a reverse of Nike driving a quadriga (pl. 38, fig. 21), and the 16 litrae matches a reverse showing a more stately, pacing quadriga with a veiled head of Queen Philistis (pl. 38, fig. 22). The coins of the ill-fated King Hieronymous (216-215 B.C.) (pl. 38, fig. 23), and those of the republican government which followed his assassination (pl. 38, fig. 24, 25), complete the series with traditional types, the very last coin being an echo of the fifth-century dekadrachms of Kimon and Euainetos. Both the royal portraits and the variations of the quadriga reverse manifest characteristics of the rococo described in the previous paragraphs. Hiero's hair is treated in a profusion of crisp curls; the portrait of Philistis is executed in a flat style, combining low relief and incised lines for the veil; and the horses of the quadrigae dance where their fifth-century counterparts galloped majestically. The end of the coinage of Syracuse coincides generally with the extinction of the Western Greek series by the Romans, and when we return to Asia and Egypt to consider the coins of Head's Period VI (190-100 B.C.), it is with the knowledge that Roman conquest in this period was ever diminishing the geographic scope of Greek coinage in these areas and on the Greek mainland as well.

PERIOD VI (190-100 B.C.)

LATER HELLENISTIC CLASSICISM

In surveying the Western Greek coinages of Period V, we suggested that the important point about numismatic application of the rococo phase in Hellenistic art is the appearance of this style a century before it has been generally postulated in painting and monumental sculpture. The same may

be said of the style which dominates the Asian and Greek mainland coins of Period VI. This new style is anywhere from fifty to a hundred years in advance of its development in other media. As one might suspect from what was said previously, we encounter a strong revival of classicism, in terms of the Greek fifth and fourth century meaning of the word. A comparable return to the values of Greek, especially Athenian, art before the Pergamene and rococo phases occurred in painting and sculpture about 100 B.C., when Roman patrons were importing Greek works of art and Greek artists to inspire works suited to Roman taste. We have men such as the Athenian Apollonius the son of Nestor, the craftsmen of the so-called Neo-Attic school of decorative art, and the avowed eclectics such as Pasiteles and his followers. How, then, does this classicism manifest itself in the relatively constricted limits of a coin flan?

When one turns to Head's Plate 39, coins of the regions from Smyrna to Cyzicus and back to Cyme and Myrina, one is conscious of a change in the size, organization and handling of cutting from the flans and dies of Period V (Fig. 12). Heads of divinities are large and severe and exhibit tendencies to reflect fifth and early fourth century types; gods and goddesses on the reverses are more often the images of the high classical century rather than the up-to-date statues of the early Hellenistic period encountered in the comparable coins of Period V. The most striking novelty of these coins of Period VI is the marked increase in the size of flans and in the amount of area given over to empty surfaces (Fig. 13, 14). When we compare an Alexander-type tetradrachm struck at Smyrna after the defeat of Antiochus III in 189 B.C. with its fourth-century prototype, the classicism of Period VI explains itself most readily (pl. 39, fig. 1). The coin of Smyrna exhibits a characteristic representational technique of this new classicism in its reverse; the border of dots is omitted, and the design stands out in uncluttered contrast with the plain background, like the timelessness of the Parthenon frieze. When one sees obverse and reverse both without restraining borders, as on the Pontic tetradrachm of Pharnaces I (c. 189-169 B.C.) (pl. 39, fig. 2), this effect has been exploited to the fullest. The features

of Pharnaces, uncle to Mithradates the Great, are those of a non-Greek. The period abounds in rulers, Parthians and the like, in whom the blood of the Macedonian conquerors runs most thinly, if at all; late Hellenistic classicism seems to have no trouble in handling non-Greek portraits with Greek reverses. Only the artistic deterioration in the peripheral regions in Period VII (c. 100-1 B.C.) spoils the success of the final phases of a numismatic idiom first expressed in the universal coinages of Alexander the Great.

Aside from the coins of Perseus, last Greek king of Macedonia (179-168 B.C.), which present a remarkable portrait in classical terms (pl. 42, fig. 7), the coins of mainland Greece have little to command our artistic attention. What other large coins that survive (pls. 42, 43) are semi-barbaric curiosities, not polished examples of the die cutters' art; such is the case of the Dionysos and Herakles tetradrachms of Thasos, a series started after 146 B.C. when silver coinage ceases in Macedonia. These Thasian coins were much copied by the Balkan tribes at whose hands they deteriorate into lumps of metal (pl. 42, fig. 6). The ancient city of Cnossus on Crete produced two wild and wonderful tetradrachms in the second century B.C., classicistic versions of the tendency toward imaginative types which we have seen characterize the Cretan series throughout. The first (pl. 43, fig. 19) places a regal Minos, diademed and with the features of a Macedonian king, on the obverse and a complex, *square* labyrinth on the reverse; the second (pl. 43, fig. 20) combines a large, soft-faced head of Apollo or Ariadne with a *circular* labyrinth as reverse type. Other contemporary Cretan coins imitate Athenian new-style tetradrachms (pl. 43, fig. 21, 24); the first of these, struck at Cnossus, even squeezes the labyrinth in between the owl and the olive wreath on the reverse.

PERIOD VII (100-1 B.C.)

THE LAST HELLENISTIC KINGDOMS

The classicistic style of Period VI carries on into Period VII (100-1 B.C.) (pls. 44, 45, and 46) and so does the number of barbaric versions of older types, especially the coins of

Philip and Alexander. The proportionate increase in the Parthian series lends an exotic note, as the traditional Hellenistic tetradrachms disappear. The two monumental tetradrachms of the period, both coined in the first quarter of the first century B.C., are those of Mithradates the Great (120-63 B.C.) (pl. 44, fig. 2) (Fig. 15) and Nicomedes of Bithynia (92-74 B.C.) (pl. 44, fig. 3) (cf. Fig. 16). The portrait of the former has been commented upon frequently; the large features, the massive head with its wind-blown locks make it a worthy terminus to the series of Hellenistic royal portraits on coins. Nicomedes, too, is an arresting, if much more human, portrait. Certainly these coins are a thousandfold more exciting than the cistophori of Roman Asia (pl. 44, fig. 4), or their earlier counterparts (pl. 39, fig. 5) (Fig. 17). Of the cistophori of Mark Anthony and of Augustus (pl. 44, fig. 5-8), the coin of the latter with sphinx seated on the reverse (pl. 44, fig. 8) makes the transition from Greek to Greek imperial coinage with a measure of artistic success. The large head of Augustus is set in a circle of tiny dots, and on the reverse, the details of the sphinx and corresponding border are handled with a delicacy that becomes almost more mannered than classical.

THE GREEK IMPERIAL PERIOD (27 B.C.-A.D. 300)

SOME NEW APPROACHES TO NEGLECTED ASPECTS OF IMPORTANT MATERIAL

It remains for us to say something of the numismatic art of Head's Period VIII (pls. 47-50), the Greek imperial series from the middle of the reign of Augustus (27 B.C.-A.D. 14) to the closing of the tetradrachm workshops in Alexandria at the end of the third century A.D. Scholars have spoken widely in recent years of the neglect of the Greek imperial series. The coins are indeed in need of a comprehensive study, excluding perhaps those of Roman Egypt. One important use to which Greek imperial coins have been subjected bears directly on their artistic value and thus on one of the very reasons they existed. They have been exploited, Pausanias fashion, for

what they show of buildings, statues, paintings, and other works of art which survived from the great ages of Greek civilization into Roman times. The cities which were allowed to coin, usually in the lesser metals, under the Romans could only advertise their past glories or show well-known versions of the myths identified with their regions. As a result both in antiquity and in our times Greek imperial medallions and coins have demanded a curatorial more than an aesthetic approach.

But the success of this series in presenting aspects of the history of Greek art and religion suggests some approach to problems of representation. It is of this approach that we may speak in our remaining paragraph. One begins by discounting the obverses of these coins since generally they have been only the portrait and titles of the reigning emperor; the reverses are little more than translations of what we find in more competent form in the Roman imperial series. It is, unfortunately, natural to expect that the best die designers flocked to the mint of Rome and its subsidiaries, where pay was no doubt higher than in the provinces. An exception in this rule of quality can be made for the imperial cistophori, where one frequently finds masterpieces (Fig. 18). Of the reverses, it is particularly in the large, medallion coins that one finds the most artistry. These pieces belong almost exclusively to Roman Asia, and their great period corresponds to that of Roman imperial medallions—the years from Antoninus Pius (A.D. 138-161) through Alexander Severus (222-235). Pergamum and Ephesus produce fine examples (Figs. 19, 20). The ingenuity with which die designers fit a view of a temple complex and its cult statue or a Hellenistic painting of the triumph of Dionysos (pl. 48, fig. 21) within the limits of a small irregular flan often reaches a level of medallion art not found again until the Italian sixteenth century. Certain cycles, such as the Labors of Herakles, may be compared on the coins of a number of cities. But soon we begin to speculate about reflections of lost sculpture and painting, and the coins return to their position as documents of antiquarianism rather than art.

CONCLUSION

Looking back over Head's division of Greek coinage into eight periods, his arrangement seems a sound one in terms of numismatic art. Period VIII could be split in three parts: c. A.D. 1-117 (Augustus through Trajan); c. 118-235 (Antoninus Pius through Alexander Severus, the age of medallic productivity); and c. 235-300 (Maximinus through Diocletian and his colleagues). The new Period VIII is the age in which Greek imperial coinage struggled unsuccessfully to express itself in terms of Greek coin types under Roman organization and uniformity. Period IX is the age of archaeological and literary numismatics, discussed in the previous paragraph. Period X still contributed much, areas such as Palestine producing their most fruitful coinage, but in these years economic re-organization and barbarian pressures closed one mint after another in the Greek provinces. In the twenty-five years after Shapur's sack of Antioch (A.D. 260), new styles from the East begin to take over Roman imperial coinage, and it cannot be said to be unfortunate that Greek numismatics had to await the Byzantine Empire for a final great period of artistic expression.

NOTE

The literature on Greek numismatic art has been collected in the writer's *A Bibliography of Applied Numismatics in the Fields of Greek and Roman Archaeology and the Fine Arts* (London, 1956) Part I. Archaeology and Art History, A. Greek and Greek Imperial Subjects and Coin Types, B. Greek Statuary Reconstructed from Coins. Part II. Iconography, Studies in Portraiture and Individuality in Antiquity in which Numismatic Material and Particularly Illustrations Appear. A. Greek, Hellenistic, and General. Part III. Geography, Topography and Architecture.

The most important general works are: H. A. Cahn, "Analyse et interprétation du style," *Congrès International de Numismatique* Paris 6-11 July 1953, II Actes 1957, 37-42; P. Gardner, *The Types of Greek Coins. An Archaeological Essay* (Cambridge, 1883); G. F. Hill, *L'Art dans les monnaies grecques* (Paris-Brussels, 1927); L. Lacroix, *Les reproductions de statues sur les monnaies grecques* (Liege, 1949); J. Liegle, *Euainetos*, 101 Winckelmannspr. (Berlin, 1941); J. G. Milne, "The History of the Greek Medallion," *Studies to D. M. Robinson*, 2, pp. 224-232; K. Regling, *Die antike Münze als Kunstwerk* (Berlin,

1924); G. E. Rizzo, *Monete greche della Sicilia* (Rome, 1946); C. T. Seltman, *Masterpieces of Greek Coinage* (Oxford, 1949); C. H. V. Sutherland, *Art in Coinage. The Aesthetics of Money from Greece to the Present Day* (London, 1955); and, by the same author, "What is Meant by 'Style' in Coinage?," *A. N. S. Museum Notes*, 4 (1950), 1-12.

The best work on portraiture on coins is J. Babelon, *Le portrait dans l'antiquité d'après les monnaies*² (Paris, 1950); also F. W. Imhoof-Blumer, *Porträtköpfe auf antiken Münzen hellenischer und hellenisierter Völker* (Leipzig, 1885), and K. Lange, *Herrscherköpfe des Altertums in Münzbild ihrer Zeit* (Berlin-Zurich, 1938). For the problems of architecture on ancient coins, T. L. Donaldson, *Architectura Numismatica or Architectural Medals of Classical Antiquity* (London, 1859) is still the only general monograph; Mrs. Bluma Trell's *Architectura Numismatica — II: Temples in Asia Minor* (Ph.D. Diss. New York University, 1942) and *The Temple of Artemis at Ephesos*, *A.N.S. Num. Notes and Monographs* (New York, 1945), are pioneer studies in terms of twentieth century knowledge.

The coins illustrated here are all acquisitions of the Department of Classical Art, Boston Museum of Fine Arts, made since completion of the late Honorary Curator's catalogue of the Greek coins in the collection (A. B. Brett, *Catalogue of Greek Coins, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston* [Boston, 1955]). Figs. 1-7, 9, 10, 12-15, 17-20 were purchased from Theodora Wilbour Fund No. 1, in memory of Zoe Wilbour; 8, 11 were an Anonymous Gift in memory of Prof. D. M. Robinson; 16 was a gift of Mrs. Edward J. Holmes; and 21 was purchased from William E. Nickerson Fund No. 2.

Photographs are by Edward J. Moore, Museum Photographer; the coins and the steelyard bust of Artemis are shown as slightly less than actual size.