

Timeline of Ancient Greek Coins and Events

Historical Events and Eras		Numismatic Events
Archaic Period (prior to 500 BC)		
2200 BC	Earliest palaces of the Minoan civilization on Crete	
1400 BC	Earliest Mycenaean palaces	
12 th C. BC	Trojan War, depicted in Homer's <i>Iliad</i>	
1200-900 BC	Destruction of Mycenaean civilization; the Dark Ages	
900-800 BC	Population and agriculture begin to revive; iron used for tools and weapons	
776 BC	First Olympic Games	
c. 750 BC	Greek city-states begin to form	
750-550 BC	Greek colonies form all around the Mediterranean: Western Turkey, North Africa, Italy and Sicily	Colonies become future sites of diverse coinages, each with its own "tipos" or design-type
Late 7 th C. BC (Perhaps 650-625)		First coins struck in electrum, probably in Lydia (west coast of Turkey), from Temple of Artemis at Ephesos: striations, lion's head, cocks
By Early 6 th C. BC		Diverse early electrum coinages established in Asia Minor, from Cyzicus (Sea of Marmara) in the north to Halicarnassus in the south
560-546 BC	Reign of King Croesus of Lydia ("rich as Croesus")	Croesus abandons electrum in favor of bimetallic coinage of gold and silver, with head of lion

575-550 BC		<p>confronting bull (siglos, double-siglos), with gold:silver ratio of 1:13 1/3.</p>  <p>First silver staters (“Turtles”) minted on island of Aegina, Europe’s first mint, replacing currency of obelos (iron spits) and drax (a handful of six obelos), from which the terms “obol” and “drachma” are derived.</p>  <p>Silver coinages appear at Athens (Gorgons, amphora, wheels, etc.; the “Wappenmünzen,” literally, “heraldic coins”), Corinth (Pegasus), and other island and mainland city-states</p> <p>At Athens, evolution towards double-sided coins</p>
546 BC	<p>Oracle of Delphi tells Croesus: “If you make war on the Persians, you will destroy a mighty empire.” Croesus attacks the Persians and his empire falls. Eastern coast of Mediterranean now controlled by Persians.</p>	<p>In Lydia, Persians continue minting coins with lion and bull for about 30 years after Croesus’ defeat</p> <p>Electrum continues in use in the north, at Mytilene, Phocaea, Lampsacus and Cysicus.</p> 
530 BC	<p>Pythagoras migrates from island of Samos to Southern Italy.</p>	<p>“Incuse” coinages appear in city-states of Magna Graecia: Sybaris, Metapontion, Kroton, Kaulonia, Poseidonia)</p>

521-485 BC	Reign of Persian King Darius I	 <p>Gold “Daric” with running archer first minted by 500 BC, replacing Croesus coinage with lion and bull, circulating only in Western Anatolia where coinage was well established among the Greeks and their neighbors</p>
Last quarter of 6 th C. BC	Rule of Solon, Peisistratos, or perhaps just after	 <p>Athens strikes its first “Owls.” Double-sided coin with god and contrasting reverse become the basis for Greek coins and European coin-making tradition. Coinages appear throughout the Greek world, including Sicily and Cyrene in Northern Africa. The largest (after Aegina, Athens and Corinth) include Thasos, Thebes, Macedonia</p>
510 BC 508-500 BC	Kroton destroys Sybaris Democracy is created in	   <p>Sybaris’ coinage ends</p>

Athens, under Cleisthenes		
Classical Period (C. 500 – 323 BC)		
490 BC	Vastly outnumbered, Athens defeats the Persians and Darius I at the Battle of Marathon	
483 BC	Athens discovers large silver deposits at the Laurion mine in Attica. Themistokles convinces Athenians to build navy instead of sharing profits of mines among the citizens.	Minting of Athens “Owls” increases with virtually inexhaustible supply of silver from Laurion mines
480 BC	Massive Persian invasion of Greece under Xerxes. Battle of Thermopylae (“300”) and Athens’ naval defeat of the Persians at Salamis	Addition of olive leaves to helmet of Athena and waning moon to the reverse, beside owl, of the Athenian tetradrachm
479 BC	Greek forces, under the Spartan Pausanias, defeat the Persians at Plataea, and the Greek fleet defeats the Persian navy at Mycale in Ionia.	Tyrant Anaxilas introduces coinage of mule-car and hare at Messana (Sicily)
477 BC	Athens takes leadership of Delian League, alliance of Greek city-states in Northern Greece, Aegean islands, and Anatolia against Persia; tributes from League members and spoils from Persian outposts enrich Athens. Meanwhile, Sparta leads independent city states of Peloponnese in Peloponnesian League	 <p>Classical realism replaces archaic art on coinages throughout Greek world</p> 
450s BC	Pericles supports aggressive policy against Sparta; hostilities between	

	Athens and Sparta	
458 BC	Aeschylus' tragic trilogy (<i>Agamemnon</i> , <i>Libation Bearers</i> , <i>Eumenides</i>) produced at Athens	
447-432 BC	Construction of Parthenon on the Acropolis of Athens	
		Coinage of Thurii begins
441 BC	Protagoras makes laws for new colony of Athenians and others at Thurii, near site of Sybaris in Southern Italy	
c. 441 BC	Sophocles' tragedy <i>Antigone</i> at Athens	
431 BC	Euripides' tragedy <i>Medea</i> at Athens; Peloponnesian war between Athens and Sparta begins	
c. 425 BC	Athens impose its coinage of Owls on other city-states via the Coinage Decree	Cessation of silver coinages at many Greek city-states under Athen's domination
415 BC	Athens' ill-fated expedition against Syracuse	
411 BC	Aristophanes anti-war comedy <i>The Lysistrata</i> produced at Athens	
410-400 BC	Carthaginian invasions of Sicily; Himera and Silenus destroyed in 409 BC, Akragas and Gela in 406-	

	405 BC	<p>Apex of numismatic art in Syracuse, with dies signed by Kimon and other artists; end of coinages in conquered city-states of Sicily</p> 
407 BC	Three cities of island of Rhodes form federal capital city of Rhodes	Prolific Rhodian coinage with sun-god Helios / Rose begins.
406 BC		Athens strikes emergency gold coinage from statues of Nike in the Parthenon in effort to build new fleet
404 BC	Athens surrenders to Spartan army under general Lysander	Revival of coining in many parts of the Aegean after fall of Athens and removal of its restrictive policies
399 BC	Trial and execution of Socrates at Athens	 
359-336 BC	Reign of Philip II of Macedon; defeats alliance of Greek city-states at Chaeronea in 338 BC; assassinated in 336 BC	Macedonian coins rival Athens for dominance in Greek world; gold “Philipi” staters on Attic weight system, silver stater on local Macedonian standard; Carthage begins to strike coins modeled on Macedonian coinage to pay mercenaries in Sicily

		 <p>Coinage begins in Carthage</p>  <p>Mazaios stater with Ba'altars on throne to become model for Alexander the Great's coinage</p>  <p>Olynthos coinage ends</p> <p>Alexander the Great introduces uniform coinage of silver tetradrachms and gold staters, both on Attic system, throughout his empire, converting mints in conquered territories and using gold and silver bouillon from captured Persian treasuries</p>  
361-334 BC	Persian Satrap Mazaios reign in Tarsos	
348 BC	Philip II captures and destroys Olynthos	
336-323 BC	Reign of Alexander III ("The Great"), son of Philip II	
Hellenistic Period (Death of Alexander III in 323 BC to Roman Conquest)		
323 BC	Alexander dies suddenly in	Diadochi continue Alexander's

318-315 BC	Babylon; his former empire divided among the “diadochi” (inheritors), but two decades of conflict (the “Wars of the Diadochi”) follow	coinage Ptolemy I mints tetradrachm with diademed head of Alexander wearing elephant’s headdress; apparently first example of human head on coin
305 BC	Seleucus gives part of Afghanistan to Indian king Chandragupta, gets war elephants in return	
301 BC	Battle of Ipsus; Antigonus defeated; Alexander’s former kingdom ends up divided among: Ptolemy I “Soter” (Savior; Egypt); Seleucus I “Nicator” (Victor; Syria and points East); Lysimachus (Thrace); Cassander (Macedonia); and a few minor kingdoms (Crete, Rhodes, Epirus in the Western Pelopponese).	Demetrius Poliorcetes, son of Antigonus, begins issuing his own tetradrachms with Nike on ship’s prow / Poseidon
300 BC		Ptolemy I issues a new tetradrachm with his own head / eagle on thunderbolt. Apparently first example of living ruler’s portrait on a coin; first in long series of Ptolemaic portrait coins
297 BC		Lysimachus introduces coinage with head of deified Alexander and ram’s horn / Athena with shield

295 BC	Seleucus I moves capital from Babylon to Seleucia (Syria)	 <p>Seleucus begins minting own coinage with Zeus / Quadriga of elephants</p>
281 BC	Battle at Corupedion in Lydia ends wars of the diadochi; descendents of Ptolemy, Seleucus and Antigonus chief claimants to power in Hellenistic Age	 <p>Antiochus I, son of Seleucus, strikes coin with his own portrait / Apollo seated on omphalos, first in long line of Seleucid portrait coins</p>
261-246 BC	Bactrian kingdom breaks away from Seleucid empire	
212 BC	Sicily falls to Rome	<p>Coinage of Syracuse ends</p> 
200-160 BC		<p>Apex of Bactrian portrait coins</p> 
196 BC	Roman conquerer Flaminius defeats Philip V at Kynoskephalai, proclaims freedom of Greeks at Corinth	<p>After brief issue of Macedonian coins under Roman rule, Roman coinage takes over</p>

<p>162 BC</p> <p>30 BC</p>	<p>Egypt is last Hellenistic kingdom to be absorbed by Rome</p>	 <p>Seleucid portrait coinage in Syria comes to end</p> <p>Roman coins replace Greek ones throughout the Mediterranean</p>
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