

## THE ATHENIAN WAPPENMÜNZEN

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**Abstract.** This paper argues that the *Wappenmünzen* didrachms commenced *circa* 530 BC, in or shortly after the final years of Peisistratos' rule. Tetradrachm production commenced *circa* 513 in what proved to be the last years of Hippias' tyranny. Early Owls followed its overthrow, commencing *circa* 510, and the 'wreathed' Owls followed the defeat of the Persians in 479. The dates of the transition in coinage types have implications for arguments about the symbolism of early Athenian democracy.

The downdating of the Attic *Wappenmünzen* to a period after the Cleisthenic reorganisation of the Athenian state (508/7 BC) which was advocated by Michael Vickers is problematic,<sup>2</sup> not simply for the questions it raises about the earliest Owls.<sup>3</sup> It will be argued that there remain several objections to the displacement of the basic chronological division propounded by W. P. Wallace<sup>4</sup> in which the *Wappenmünzen* belong to the Peisistratid tyranny and the Owls to the period following its overthrow. Vickers' case that coinage began in Asia Minor in the mid- to late sixth century casts further doubt on the proposition that there was an Attic coinage in the Solonian era. He argued that Herodotus' references to gold dedicated by Croesus to Greek sanctuaries are indicative of bullion rather than coin.<sup>5</sup> Herodotus' statement that coinage began in Lydia (1.94.1) consequently suggests an earliest possible date for Greek coinage also of the mid- to late sixth century. Consistent with this, Kroll and Waggoner have shown that the Solonian economy used uncoined silver as a means of exchange, and that this was in accord

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<sup>3</sup> M. Vickers, 'Early Greek Coinage: A Reassessment', *NC* 145 (1985) 1-44. M. C. Root, 'Evidence from Persepolis for the Dating of Persian and Greek Archaic Coinage', *NC* 148 (1988) 9f. has demonstrated that an Athenian Owl tetradrachm was in circulation in Persia in 499. Root [above, this note] 12 concluded: 'The Owl cannot have been an invention of post-480 as Vickers has postulated'.

<sup>4</sup> W. P. Wallace, 'The Early Coinages of Attica and Euboea', *NC* 7 (1962) 23-42.

<sup>5</sup> Vickers [3] 10; for the seminal rejection of a Solonian coinage, see C. M. Kraay, 'The Archaic Owls of Athens: Classification and Chronology', *NC* 16 (1956) 43-68.

with the literary sources:<sup>6</sup> the principal source which attributes coinage to Solon (Aristotle *Ath. Pol.* 10) appears to have confused uncoined silver weight with coin weight.<sup>7</sup> Yet the question of approximately when Attic coinage commenced remains in dispute.

Kroll and Waggoner wrote in respect of the Early Owls that 'Art historical associations converge with the independent implications of the [coin] hoards to establish their date in the last quarter of the sixth century. From here the absolute chronology of the *Wappenmünzen* . . . is obtained by working backwards'.<sup>8</sup> Vickers was right to raise the problem of art chronology as evidence for coinage dating. He observed that the dating of pottery was skewed by the erroneous dating of a piece of red-figure pottery by the enthusiastic nineteenth-century excavator Ludwig Ross, 'based on the implicit idea that signs of burning necessarily require the presence of a Persian', and that Ross' flawed pottery datings then became the basis for the comparative dating of other material.<sup>9</sup> In consequence, when the pottery datings are challenged, coinage dates necessarily fall under suspicion. A re-examination of pottery dates together with reinterpretation of literary and archaeological material led Vickers to argue for a further radical downdating of Greek coinage.

Vickers argued that there was one series of ten basic *Wappenmünzen* designs supplanted by the Gorgoneion issues, and that the former might imply the existence of a tribal coinage. He suggested that there had been a *Wappenmünzen* motif for each of Cleisthenes' ten new tribes, and that their replacement by Gorgoneions would have had 'a special significance for Athenians'.<sup>10</sup> Yet although the Gorgoneions came at the end of the *Wappenmünzen* issues,<sup>11</sup> and although the Gorgoneion motif was later used in Athens on juror's allotment plates (*pinakia*),<sup>12</sup> it was also a longstanding mythological symbol—in Kroll's phrase, the 'pre-

<sup>6</sup> J. H. Kroll and N. M. Waggoner, 'Dating the Earliest Coins of Athens, Corinth and Aegina', *AJA* 88 (1984) 332 with reference to 'Androtion', F. Jacoby (ed.), *Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* (Berlin/Leiden 1923-) 324 F 34 (from Plut. *Sol.* 15.2-4; discussed by Jacoby in his commentary on 'Philochorus', *FGrH* 328 F 200), [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 8.3 and Lysias 10.18.

<sup>7</sup> P. J. Rhodes, *A Commentary on the Aristotelian Athenaion Politeia* (Oxford 1981) 168 noted that 'coins were named after the weights of silver which they represented', and that Solon could have been assumed by the author to have altered coinage along with weights. Kroll and Waggoner [6] 333 concurred.

<sup>8</sup> Kroll and Waggoner [6] 330.

<sup>9</sup> Vickers [3] 23.

<sup>10</sup> Vickers [3] 31 and n. 248.

<sup>11</sup> C. M. Kraay, *Archaic and Classical Greek Coins* (London 1976) 58.

<sup>12</sup> J. H. Kroll, *Athenian Bronze Allotment Plates* (Cambridge, Mass. 1970) 54f; Vickers [3] 31 claimed this as evidence of 'a seal denoting Athenian citizenship'.

eminent apotropaic device throughout the Greek world<sup>13</sup>—and does not necessitate a post-Cleisthenic date for these coins.

More crucially, Vickers' suggestion that the *Wappenmünzen* might reflect tribal devices rests on his classification of the coinage into ten 'basic' types 'superseded' by Gorgoneions. This division unduly presses (or compresses) the evidence: there are no less than fifteen different didrachm types, representing fifteen separate coinage issues. These consist of fourteen 'private' emblems, including the 'lion's head' Gorgoneion, and one 'public' Gorgoneion unmarked by any distinguishing device.<sup>14</sup> (Kroll and Waggoner argued that it is likely that the changing devices relate to changing annual magistracies and represent annual moneymers' signatures.<sup>15</sup>)

To arrive at ten 'basic' types, Vickers has refused to distinguish between wheel types—given by Hopper<sup>16</sup> as readily distinguishable—and between a clear difference in horse forepart representations,<sup>17</sup> and he has separated the Gorgoneion coins from the other didrachm issues. This last separation seems unwarranted by any evidence other than the observation that they occur at the end of the *Wappenmünzen* issues and so the basis of separation is purely hypothetical. Even if it could be accepted, there would still be thirteen distinct motifs, and the theory of a Cleisthenic tribal coinage must be discarded. Vickers must also explain why a silver obol bearing the legend ΗΙΙΙ should no longer be associated with Hippias: he suggested that as it bears an ear of wheat emblem it might be a coin of the Cleisthenic Hippothontis tribe which incorporated the town of Eleusis,<sup>18</sup> but this simply parallels his own argument that the *Wappenmünzen* are a tribal coinage.

Against Vickers, the evidence rather suggests that the *Wappenmünzen* were predominantly the coinage of Hippias. There are fifteen surviving *Wappenmünzen* didrachm issues and two issues of tetradrachms; the last, and the final two didrachm issues, are the Gorgoneion coins. Moreover, there is literary testimony that Hippias issued coins: [Aristotle] states that Hippias—at some unspecified point—rendered existing coinage invalid, yet subsequently 'issued the same coinage' (*Oeconomica* 1347a 8-11). Price and Waggoner suggested that Aristotle

<sup>13</sup> E.g., Homer *Iliad* 2.448, etc.; Hesiod *Theogony* 929s; *Shield of Heracles* 443; for the quotation, see Kroll [12] 53 n. 9.

<sup>14</sup> Kroll and Waggoner [6] 328; cf. J. H. Kroll, 'From *Wappenmünzen* to Gorgoneia to Owls', *ANSMN* 26 (1981) 23.

<sup>15</sup> Kroll and Waggoner [6] 331; cf. Kroll [14] 7, 20f.

<sup>16</sup> R. J. Hopper, 'Observations on the *Wappenmünzen*', in C. M. Kraay and G. K. Jenkins (edd.), *Essays in Greek Coinage presented to Stanley Robinson* (Oxford 1968) 38. The distinctions are between strutted, unstrutted and crossbar wheels.

<sup>17</sup> The distinctions are given by Kraay [11] 57.

<sup>18</sup> Vickers [3] 31.

could be read to indicate that Hippias withdrew didrachms and issued tetradrachms,<sup>19</sup> but Aristotle's statement does not indicate that there was any increase in monetary value. Consequently, another solution may be proposed. The introduction of Gorgoneions at the end of the *Wappenmünzen* series would be compatible with a reading of Aristotle that Hippias, in issuing a coin of new 'character' (*Oec.* 1347 a 10), began the Gorgoneion series. Furthermore, it does not need to be postulated that the Gorgoneion didrachms were separate from the other *Wappenmünzen*, nor that the value of the coin was changed. There is no reason to assume that the action of reissuing coinage which Aristotle attributed to Hippias cannot refer to Hippias' own earlier coinage. It would also be consistent with the suggestion of Kroll that the Gorgoneion tetradrachm issues constituted 'the first public or national coin type of Athens',<sup>20</sup> and would date that event near what proved to be the end of the tyranny. Hopper saw that any attempt to distribute the coin types over a series of years must overcome the difficulty of the widely differing numbers of surviving dies.<sup>21</sup> To this one can only reiterate his observation there that chance has played a great part in the survival rate, and suggest also that fluctuations in the supply of silver may well have occurred.

Those pre-Gorgoneion *Wappenmünzen* which have been analysed incorporate non-Laureion silver,<sup>22</sup> plausibly from the Strymon region which came under Persian control from *circa* 512.<sup>23</sup> But the Gorgoneion issues have a similar metal content to that of the earliest Owls,<sup>24</sup> consistent with the view advanced here that they are coins of Hippias' final years. Further, the metal composition—whatever its source—suggests a transitional phase, with indications of the increasing use of Laureion silver,<sup>25</sup> but where Kroll there supposed that by the time of the Gorgoneions 'production had become substantial enough to end Athens' dependence on foreign supplies', the hypothesis that the marked change in

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<sup>19</sup> M. J. Price and N. M. Waggoner, *Archaic Greek Coinage: The Asyut Hoard* (London 1975) 65.

<sup>20</sup> Kroll [14] 11, 23.

<sup>21</sup> Hopper [16] 39.

<sup>22</sup> C. M. Kraay, *The Composition of Greek Silver Coins* (Oxford 1962) 33.

<sup>23</sup> Kroll [14] 14 and n. 45; for Persian control of Strymon *circa* 512 and the consequent loss of an external silver source, see E. J. P. Raven, 'Problems of the Earliest Owls of Athens', in C. M. Kraay and G. K. Jenkins (edd.), *Essays in Greek Coinage presented to Stanley Robinson* (Oxford 1968) 57.

<sup>24</sup> Kroll [14] 14.

<sup>25</sup> Kroll [14] 14f.: '... of the 16 analyzed wappenmünzen with wheel obverses, about half have a silver composition similar to the gorgoneion and owl silver while the remaining half contain impurities of a much higher magnitude. This at least suggests that exploratory workings in the upper veins at Laurion had been initiated and were becoming progressively more productive as the wappenmünzen coinage developed'.

composition resulted from the loss of an external silver source shortly before the Gorgoneion issues<sup>26</sup> is equally attractive. Against Vickers' view that all Athenian coinage postdates the tyranny, why are indications of non-Laureion silver significant in the early *Wappenmünzen* issues if they are thought to be post-Cleisthenic?

On the other hand the commencement of the *Wappenmünzen* ought not to be moved back much before the inheritance of the tyranny by Hippias. Kroll argued that 'at least some of the four devices that appear on fractional pieces' attributed to the *Wappenmünzen* should be added to the fourteen 'private' issues to create an absolute minimum period of 18 years for *Wappenmünzen* issues, and that thirty years as a 'realistic maximum' should be preferred.<sup>27</sup> If, as argued above, the *Wappenmünzen* cease by 510, the earliest they should commence is *circa* 540 following Peisistratos' consolidation of control in Athens; but if they constitute an annual coinage, they should commence late in Peisistratos' rule, shortly before Hippias inherited the position of tyrant, *circa* 530.<sup>28</sup> The facts that the Gorgoneion tetradrachms appear to have been directly followed by the production of Group H Owls<sup>29</sup> and that the commencement of tetradrachms as such occurs at the end of the *Wappenmünzen* series, coupled with indications of the increasing use of Attic silver in coinage composition, suggests a consistent demand for coinage. This makes it less likely that the *Wappenmünzen* should be seen as irregular issues over a much greater than annual time-span. While certainty is unlikely, it would be logical to see the *Wappenmünzen* as at least predominantly the coinage of Hippias.

Vickers attempted to downdate the whole series of Attic coinage by dating the commencement of Early Owls after the Persian Wars. He cited several sources which support the view that the wealth of Athens increased dramatically after 479 against a prevalent opinion that Athens was wealthier before rather than after that time and that Athens' capacity to issue large volumes of coins soon after the Persian Wars was impaired.<sup>30</sup> However, the argument is not sufficiently cogent to overturn the view of Price and Waggoner<sup>31</sup> which put the 'wreathed' Owls after 479 and assigned the Early Owls to the intervening period after Hippias and before 480.

Underpinning Vickers' theory, which sought to place the commencement of the 'wreathed' Owls under the Ephialtic/Periclean *demokratia* (and by implication

<sup>26</sup> Wallace [4] 25f.

<sup>27</sup> Wallace [4] 23.

<sup>28</sup> Kroll [14] 23 saw a span of *circa* 20 years as plausible for the *Wappenmünzen* overall.

<sup>29</sup> Kroll [14] 24.

<sup>30</sup> Vickers [3] 24f., citing Plut. *Them.* 2.3; *Ar. Knights* 814; *Ath.* xii. 553e; [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 24.1; Aelius Aristides 1.143f.

<sup>31</sup> Price and Waggoner [19] 68.

to see in them a recognition of internal political change), is a 'class conflict' view of the causes behind the overthrow of the Areopagus by Ephialtes and Pericles in 462: 'The years between 479 and 462/1 were a time of unparalleled prosperity at Athens, though since wealth was too unevenly distributed within the community, a revolution took place'.<sup>32</sup> This view is problematic when applied to the Athenians at this time. According to Plutarch (*Per.* 11.2f), the rift between the many and the few took place after the actions of Ephialtes and not before. It follows that there was no open rift between nobility and demos before 462, and there was no wealth-based revolution. Further, Pericles did not make a redistribution of wealth after coming to prominence despite his provision of entertainments and military employment and his later building program. Plutarch states that the common labourers were to receive nothing under Pericles for laziness and idleness, and also records that he followed the earlier practices noted above of ridding Athens of its population surplus through colonization (*Per.* 11.5, 12.5). Wherever the sources talk about the overthrow of the Areopagus they are concerned with political control within Attica (cf. [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 25.1-26.1, 27.1; Plut. *Per.* 10.8, *Cim.* 15.2f.). Wealth is not a factor in any source, and the class conflict approach is wholly inadequate as an explanation of the events of 462.

Vickers attempted to show that the construction of the north wall of the Acropolis should be dated after 462 in order to challenge the view that the Early Owls found in its fill belong to the period before 480 and were buried soon after that time.<sup>33</sup> But to seek to date the north wall and its hoard to the period after 462 simply because 'we only hear of Cimonian building activity on the south side of the Acropolis'<sup>34</sup> is an argument from silence. The south wall, built from spoils won by Cimon's victory over the Persians at Eurymedon, probably in 469,<sup>35</sup> may plausibly be assigned to a date soon after that time (Plut. *Cim.* 13.6f.); but if a north wall was needed, it would be logical to accord it precedence over the shady walks and tree-planting which Cimon is also said to have financed at some point before his ostracism in 461 (*Cim.* 13.7f.). Given that the north wall was well built,<sup>36</sup> the wall and its fill (and coin hoard) may date anywhere between 479 and the later 460s. There is no necessity to place the building of the north wall after

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<sup>32</sup> Vickers [3] 32; cf. 29.

<sup>33</sup> Vickers [3] 22.

<sup>34</sup> Vickers [3] 26.

<sup>35</sup> R. J. Hopper, *The Acropolis* (London 1974) 82.

<sup>36</sup> Vickers [3] 25.

that of the Cimonian south wall;<sup>37</sup> it seems both feasible and likely that the north wall preceded it.<sup>38</sup>

Vickers additionally suggested that the *korai* statues found in the Acropolis fill may have postdated the Persian wars and, on stylistic grounds, so may the Early Owls found above them:<sup>39</sup> the *korai* employed as a characteristic feature an ‘archaic smile’, as did the Early Owls.<sup>40</sup> He cited Lucian’s mention of a sculpture by Calamis (active *circa* 480–450<sup>41</sup>) with a smile ‘grave and faint’ (*Essays in Portraiture* 6) as evidence for the paralleling of this feature in *korai* and Early Owls, arguing that it indicated a common period of production. But neither *korai* nor Owls should be downdated on the basis of a line of Lucian: in the first place, in that dialogue the character Lycinus composes a sculpture in speech, comprised of what he considered the best details of the various great sculptors’ works of the past. The *Sosandra* was a sculpture by Calamis on the Acropolis, and from it Lycinus chose the smile and the costume. However, no work by Calamis has survived, and so no comparison can be made between that reference in Lucian’s dialogue and extant *korai* and Owls. In the second place, while that passage gives us a smile ‘grave and faint’, it does not specify a smile archaic. The attempt to match *korai* and Early Owl features with Lucian’s text is consequently rather weak. Neither should Owls and *korai* be necessarily downdated in tandem: that

<sup>37</sup> Hopper [35] 81 held that the north wall was rebuilt ‘either immediately or some time after’ the Persian departure.

<sup>38</sup> A long-running dispute persists over the presence or absence of two coins untouched by fire, one a ‘wreathed’ Owl, in the otherwise fire-damaged Acropolis hoard as found in the North Wall fill. C. G. Starr, *Athenian Coinage 480–449 B.C.* (Oxford 1970) 4 argued cogently that the ‘wreathed’ Owl was ‘found elsewhere on the Acropolis and was erroneously added to the hoard in the Museum’, and that in any event it belonged to Group V and so to the late 450s, ‘far too late’ for inclusion in the Acropolis wall fill. Yet in 1981 Kraay, in a letter cited by Vickers [3] 29 n. 229, wrote that ‘If the context of the coin is really Periclean, then there is no need to exclude from it the one . . . wreathed coin as being intrusive’. That is, he was prepared to accept that the coin belonged to the hoard provided that the hoard as a whole was late. But given the strong possibility that, as Starr contended, the ‘wreathed’ Owl was not present in the hoard as found, one must abandon any link between it and the Acropolis hoard in the consideration of burial dates. Much of the discussion has concerned the burnt nature of the Acropolis coins; Starr [above, this note] 4 claimed that signs of damage ‘were surely due to the Persian firing of the Acropolis’. But there is no need to assume that the coins must have suffered fire in Athens: still valuable as silver, they may have been retrieved from a camp or elsewhere. There is no way of knowing, and the question of burning cannot help with dating the hoard.

<sup>39</sup> Vickers [3] 29.

<sup>40</sup> An Early Owl in C. Seltman, *Greek Coins*<sup>2</sup> (London 1955) pl. 4 no. 2 shows clearly the style of upturned lips to which Vickers paralleled the ‘archaic smile’ of early *korai*.

<sup>41</sup> G. M. A. Richter and A. J. S. Spawforth, ‘Calamis’, in S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth (edd.), *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*<sup>3</sup> (Oxford 1996) 273.

there will be some explanation for the shared stylized smile is likely, but it provides no grounds for sequencing the representations in sculpture and coinage. On all points there is no compelling reason to accept the view that the Acropolis Owls postdate 480.

Conversely, one cannot refuse to date the *korai* to the Persian war period simply because they fail to show signs of having been burnt; they could have been buried due to damage other than burning. It must be concluded that the case for downdating the Early Owls on stylistic grounds, essentially to make room for a Cleisthenic *Wappenmünzen*, is unsound, and one may reasonably hold that they are in all probability the coinage of Attica which followed the expulsion of Hippias. By way of a summary, I posit the following chronology: production of the *Wappenmünzen* didrachms commenced *circa* 530 in or shortly after the final years of Peisistratos' rule. Tetradrachm production commenced *circa* 513 in what proved to be the last years of Hippias' tyranny. Early Owls followed its overthrow, commencing *circa* 510, and the 'wreathed' Owls followed the defeat of the Persians in 479. The *Wappenmünzen* may be dated to the late sixth century in accordance with the available evidence without imposing a radical, and I believe questionable, downdating on other antiquities of Greece.