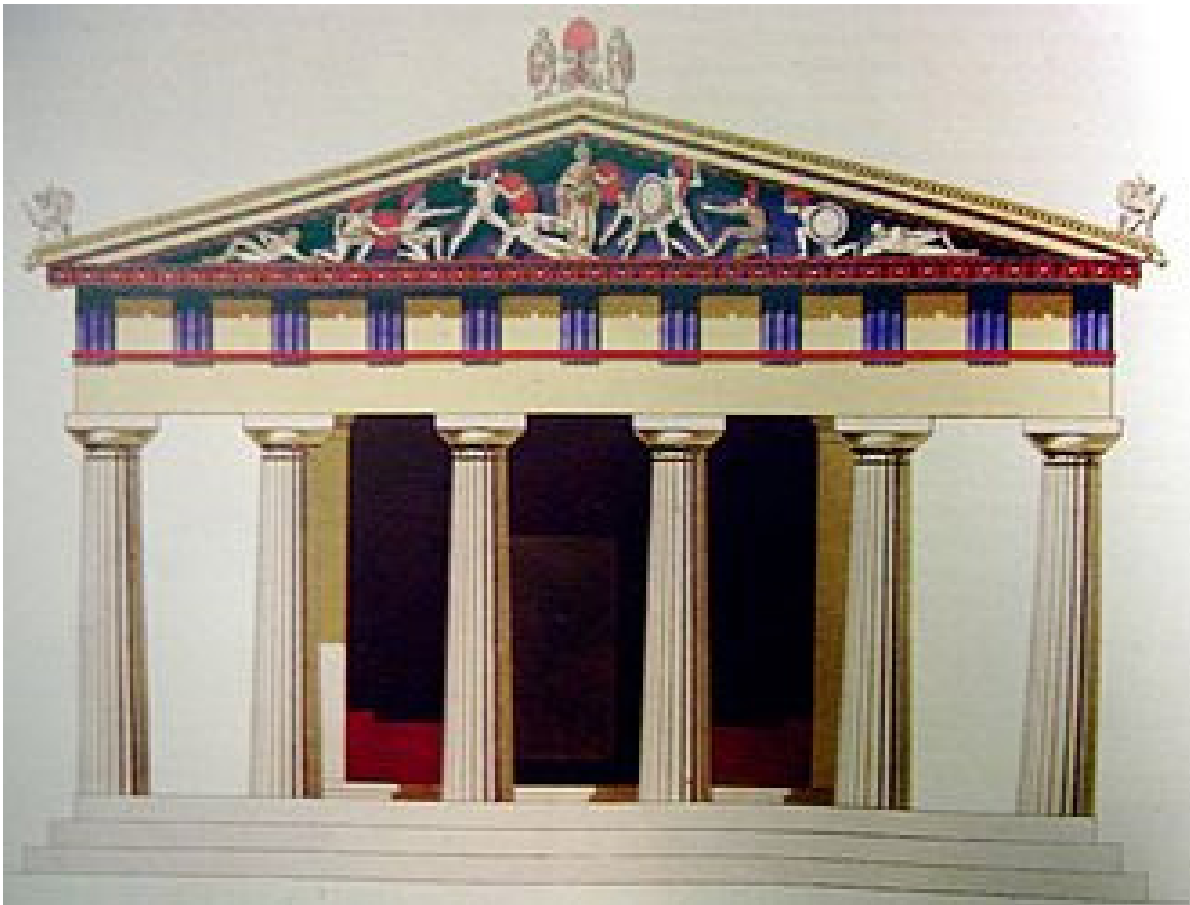


THE PLANCHET

EDMONTON NUMISMATIC SOCIETY

December 2014

Volume 61 Issue 4



New Face of Aigina Coinage Decreed

Page 18



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THE PLANCHET-

December 2014

Volume 61 Issue 4

Other Stuff

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The President**

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Society**

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26 **Coming Events**

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ON THE COVER:

Temple of Aphaia

<http://en.wikipedia.com>

Tortoise (photo by J. Sevcik)

Aigina Silver Stater (photo by W. Hansen)

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accept or refuse any material submitted for publication.*

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From Sea Turtle to Land Tortoise

"Cataclysmic changes on a
small Greek island prompt a
transformation of the traditional
obverse coin type" *Aigina Times Herald*

by Wayne Hansen



Message from the President

Marc Bink 2014



Another Fall Show has passed, and it was primarily through the efforts of the great volunteers who manned it that it was another spectacular show. All of the dealers in attendance reported that they had a great show even though attendance was slightly down from the spring. The weather was horrible which I'm sure contributed to the lower numbers, but those who came were treated to the widest variety of numismatica that Canada has to offer. To them it was well worth it to brave the snow and cold, the "good stuff" was all here.

I'd like to thank all of the volunteers; you guys are great, and it's always a pleasure to work with you. I'd like to think we have the best volunteers in the country, particularly when I get told that we get more volunteers for a show set up than some clubs get for a meeting. My sincere thanks to all of you!

With that show over, we settle in to another long winter. The ice and cold means that for most of us we'll be staying indoors. For some, it's a great time to do some work on the collection, whether that be cataloging, storing, or just updating it and filling holes. I know I'll be doing more research, - if I can get the time. Every now and again I get round to cleaning off my desk, and whenever I do I tend to find some forgotten gem that got buried somehow. If you have the same thing happen, bring it in, we'd like to see it.

This month marks the 95th Remembrance Day. In commemoration of the sacrifices that men and women have made over the centuries the RCM is offering a new circulating 2 dollar coin called "Wait for me, daddy". It features the famous image captured from a renowned photograph of a young boy reaching out to his father as he marches off to war. This poignant image was taken in New Westminster BC in 1940 as the Duke of Connaught's Own Rifles was preparing to ship out. It's a haunting reminder of the potential human cost of war, the fact that families get disrupted and lives overturned on the home front as well as those lost in combat. So take a minute to remember the sacrifices that were made by those men and women who went to war in the past and unfortunately have to continue to do so in this day and age.

One last thing; I also owe the readers of the Planchet an apology. This is the first time since we changed to this format almost 5 years ago that I have not submitted an article. I'm sure it won't be missed by most, but all the same, to those few that do read my columns I apologize; life just got in the way. I promise to get one in the next issue!

On behalf of the Executive of the ENS, I'd like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a safe and prosperous New Year.

Marc

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About Your Society

Minutes from ENS Monthly Meeting on November 12, 2014

Marc Bink, the ENS President, opened the meeting at 1925 hrs and welcomed everyone. He thanked all the volunteers for their dedication and hard work in once again, putting on a highly successful coin show. Twenty-two members participated in the set up on Friday night, and seventeen took part in the tear down at the end of the week-end.

In between that, there were several floor walkers in addition to volunteers manning the admission, silent auction and appraisal tables.

Some of the items brought in by the public to be appraised included bank notes of all denominations and a large collection of gold coins issued by the United States of America. These dated back to the 1880s & 1890s and were in VF – EF condition. There was even a pied-fort gold coin from France in this grouping which is something not seen very often in Edmonton.

Terence Cheesman thanked the members who created displays for the show.

Howard Gilbey said there were 142 lots in the silent auction of which 88 were sold, and these to 24 different bidders.

The total admission count for the show was 872. It's slightly lower than the last show and possible causes for this might be the weather or even the state of the bullion market. Our highest attendance ever was 1100 in March 2012 which happened to be at the height of the bullion market.

We have the same venue booked for the March 2015 coin show, but nothing has been arranged after that. The ENS Executive will soon start negotiating with the current hotel for future shows. They will look at other venues, if arrangements cannot be made.

Show & Tell

Several items were circulated for the Show & Tell portion of the meeting:

- 20 Monnaie de Paris tourist medals recently acquired by Mitch on places he and Terence recently visited in France. These are available in vending machines at most tourist attractions and cost 2 euros each. Terence then gave a brief talk on the November 1 – 2, 2014 Frankfurt Numismata coin show they attended in Germany.
- Alex spoke about how he is working on acquiring a coin from each of the different countries or territories that issued them. He has 235 now. For the show and tell, he passed around a 100 Dobras coin from S. Tomé & Príncipe and 2 coins from Mexico: an 8 reales piece from 1839 and a 100 pesos coin from 1977. These were the first and last large silver coins from the Mexican Republic.
- Other items presented were an Empire of Iran coin set from 1971 commemorating the 2500th anniversary of the monarchy. A tent city was set up on the ruins of Persepolis for this celebration by the Shah of Iran.
- A 1999 Romanian polymer banknote commemorating a solar eclipse,

Conclusion

Door prizes were drawn, the silent auction lots were sold and the meeting was adjourned at 2050 hrs.

Mitch Goudreau
ENS Secretary

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Coin Nerd in Europe

My Recent Trip to Paris and the South of France

By Terence Cheesman

For a couple of years, I had made an arrangement with another numismatic society member, Michel Goudreau, to tour France. Ever since the early 90's, I have wanted to do this, but other considerations always seemed to get in the way. So finally on October 22, we boarded an Icelandic Air flight that with one stop, got us to Frankfurt airport about 1.30 in the afternoon their time. The first thing we did was drive to Kehl am Rhein to visit a coin dealer who was holding on to a coin I had purchased in a recent auction. I found another coin that I had liked, and now, I had 2 coins in my pocket and was feeling really good. As we had a long flight, we did not proceed much further. After a fairly good sleep we proceeded down towards the south of France. Being pressed for time, we did not linger taking the local roads so instead, we took the freeways which unfortunately in France are toll roads. After spending four wonderful days in the south of France, where we looked at all the major Roman sites which were standing more or less intact, we headed to Paris.

Paris seems to have most of its coin shops located in a five block radius along the Rue Vivienne and the Rue Richelieu. There are at least ten along with another three or four that specialize in auctions exclusively. The coin district, if it can be called as such, seems to be centered around the old Bourse which was the stock exchange building in Paris. The shops could be broadly divided into two groups which I would call "civilized" and "uncivilized". In many of them especially those around CGB, you stand, as the vendor brings coins for you to look at. For me, this was rather uncomfortable. At the other shops which I would think as civilized, you can sit. Security at these places is rather intense, and in most places, you have to buzz the vendor and then negotiate a double secure door system just to get to the area which the public is allowed into. Thus because the bathroom is within the sancta sanctorum, there are no bathroom privileges for the public either.

The coins on display are most interesting as well. One does not see overwhelming numbers of modern coins on display. Mostly what



you see are ancient coins and French coins usually from the Bourbon dynasty. There are large numbers of medals on display as well, but most were very modern art medals. The one thing that is noticeable -NO SLABS. I do not think I saw a slabbed coin all the time I was in Paris. Yessssss, I found civilization at last. Paris seems to have been able to keep

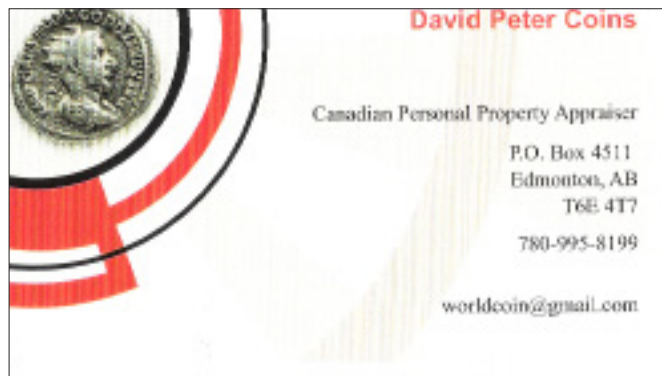


1890. The walls are lined with books, many very old, and coins can be seen lying about everywhere. I can almost feel the presence of some of the early numismatists in my field such as Weber, Mclean and Mattingly entering these shops and having a similar experience. I saw no Canadian coins, though Mitch did buy some jetons that had a Canadian connection. Prices on the coins, I thought, on average were a bit high. There was quite a range on quality as well. If one is contemplating a trip to Paris and collects something other than Canadian coins I would advise to bring some money, you will find things that you like.

its brick and mortar coin shops much better than cities like New York. The shops have an air of being there for a long time. One shop, Burgan advertises that it was founded in



Spending three days in Paris, doing, besides the coin shops the usual tourist things we headed to Frankfurt. On the way there we passed through the area fought over during World War One. We were very close to Verdun, where one of the most horrific battles was fought during that war but we did not stop. In the evening we made it to Frankfurt. We had slated two days to do the coin show and we needed the them. There



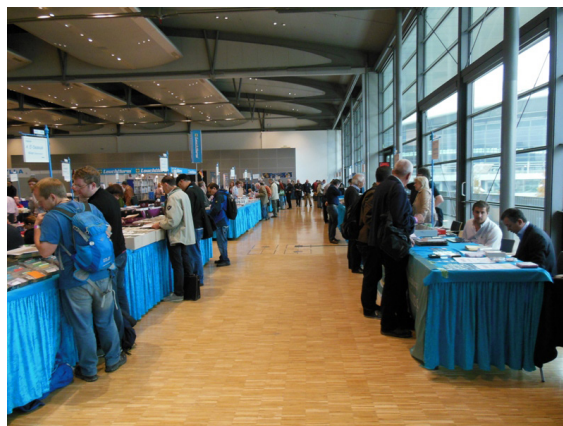


were a lot of coins. Yessss. Approximately 110 dealers were at the show. The one thing that I didn't see were large numbers of modern coins, though maybe two dealers were selling euro coins more or less exclusively. Another thing I did not see were the hated slabs, though somebody did slab a modern German one pfenning coin perhaps as a



joke. Unfortunately the dreaded grading services were there peddling their wares, but thankfully few were talking to them. So I spent both days wandering among large numbers of Greek and Roman coins, including gold aureii, thalers, and large numbers of really neat coins. It was close to being in heaven. I do not know if this was the best show I had ever attended but it is in contention. One thing I should mention is that I had made a point of wearing my Edmonton Numismatic Society black shirt. I got a number of favourable comments from both dealers and other visitors.

There were a number of features that were different from our shows. The first, and most glaring for me as an older guy was, no chairs. I am not certain why this is done. There seemed to be enough room, as the aisles seem to be as wide as the ones I have seen at our shows, but perhaps that chairs may restrict the numbers that can be at any table, though I found that the vendors tended to service one customer at a time. Another feature was that the coins were displayed,



not in cases, as we do, but in smaller trays with clear tops which are removed by using a small suction cup. I am not so certain if this arrangement is better than our own. As the coins would arrive in trays, they would be much easier and faster to put on display than ours which do take some time to put out, and the number of coins which can be put on display seems far larger than what I am used to here. But as regard to security, the system does have its flaws, as anyone with one of these suction cups can basically open

up a case. The security at this show seemed a little more organized than at our shows with guys in suits with communication gear, but this did not seem to have stopped some major thefts.

Perhaps the greatest difference from the good old days was that everyone used the Euro. This was true of the trip as well. So buying coins in Germany, or souvenirs and baguettes in France, I could use the common currency. For all its problems, it certainly made my life easier, and that is a good thing. Perhaps in passing with this trip, I managed to take a lot of things off my bucket list, and the shops in Paris and the show in Frankfurt is worth another visit. I really want to go back and continue with," Coin Nerd in Europe".



The next issue of the Planchet:

Please have your edited submissions to me by January 14, 2015 at ppurdie@telus.net

Paul Purdie

Position of Editor In Chief of the Planchet

A new person will be required to assume this role after the next edition. Due to other commitments I must give priority to, I am unable to continue in this role.

Job Description: produces the Planchet using Adobe CS6 software from submitted copy and advertising material.

For more information interested members can contact me: Paul Purdie (780) 435-6586 or ppurdie@telus.net.

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From Sea Turtle to Tortoise

A Coin Makeover in Ancient Aigina



By Wayne Hansen



As reported in the Aigina Times Herald on an auspicious day in 456 BC

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ΣΕΑ ΤΥΡΤΑΕ ΣΕΡΒΑΝΤ ΟΦ ΜΙΓΗΤΨ ΠΟΣΕΙΔΟΝ
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ΦΕΣΤΙΝΑΑΣ. ΑΛΗΘΟΥΓΗ ΠΡΙΕΣΤΣ ΔΟ ΩΣΗ
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Translation:

SEA TURTLES TO BE REMOVED FROM POLIS COINAGE

(AIGINA) News has come from High Priest Themistokles that the Ninth Conclave has banished sea turtles - servants of mighty Poseidon - from all further temple rituals and festivals. Although the priests do not wish to anger Lord Poseidon, they have removed sea turtles from the state veneration list after receiving strong protests from polis citizens.

For the past year, hordes of sea turtles have roamed the watery netherworld around our sacred island, suddenly attacking citizens on their fishing rafts. Many turtles were also seen along the rocky shore feasting on octopus creatures that we need for food. Polis magistrates had demanded action to remove turtle effigies from the temple precinct and to immediately replace the sea turtle image now used on polis coinage.

Magistrate Klion has proposed that the sea turtles on Aigina's silver staters be replaced with land tortoises - companions of goddess Aphrodite - since tortoises do not damage our grape and olive groves. The measure will be considered at the next Grand Council symposium, so that new coins can be struck before our athletes depart for Olympia.

How reporters might have covered events of the day. Intended solely to incite further interest in the topic, this fictional news item provides a somewhat plausible, but entirely imaginary, explanation for ancient Aigina's sudden coinage makeover. Read on to see what really happened.)

Ancient times can, of course, be portrayed as a sequence of unfortunate events punctuated by brief glimmers of resourcefulness and inspiration - just like recent history. The island of Aigina was one of many important Greek city-states whose candle glowed brightly in the early classical period, but then its downfall came quickly when regional military-economic alliances shifted. In a sense, Aigina partly brought misery upon itself. With all due deference to the fantasy 'Times Herald' report noted on the previous page, it was really inconsistent and hostile relations with neighboring states that caused Aigina to lose its independence, its wealth and its identity and ultimately caused it to modify its coinage. In this latter regard, Aigina responded to its suddenly changed circumstances by redesigning the obverse badge used on its famous, early classical silver staters - transforming the image from the familiar spread-eagled sea turtle, which symbolized Aigina's maritime prowess, to a very fine, but generally terrestrial, land tortoise. The new tortoise issues only lasted for a brief period until the calamitous purging of the entire island population. Greek coin collectors highly value both types, but it is hard to find good examples of either early sea turtles or any of the tortoise coins, since many were badly struck, or re-struck, and since the best ones were not produced in great quantities. Such misfortune and scarcity, taken together with the simple but captivating obverse designs, definitely increases the market desirability of these coins - one of the well-entrenched Collector Laws of the Universe.

Early Aigina History

Aigina was strategically sited and well known to the ancients in the eastern Mediterranean. It is noted as being '17 miles' from Athens and almost as close to Corinth (the island is readily seen when driving from Athens to Corinth, since it is just off the coast). Not only was it physically close to major mainland Greek powers, its maritime fleet and trading expertise linked it to import/export centers from Egypt to the Black Sea. With trade came wealth and the incentive and opportunity to produce coinage.

The first inhabitants may have come to Aigina from the Peloponnese as early as 3500-3000 BC (they were possibly colonists from Epidauros). The island had potential for fishing and limited agriculture in its rocky soil. Minoans had some interaction with Aigina, judging by artifacts found there, and there was likely also a Mycenaean presence dating to circa 1600 BC. Thessalians also settled in parts after 1400 BC, and then Dorians arrived from northern Greece and the Peloponnese around 950 BC.

Also around 900 BC, Aigina formed a religion-based, economic/political and possibly protectionist alliance of neighboring cities in the region (the Amphiktyonia of Kalaureia), including Athens, Nauplia, Epidauros, Minyeon Orchomenos and the island of Poros. By 650 BC, Aigina had used its strategic location to become a shipping and trading power. It had two main ports - one for commercial use and one for military use. After two or three centuries of strong growth, it had a population of approximately 40,000 citizens and many times that number of slaves - the slaves being necessary to empower the economy. Around 550-500 BC, it reached its peak of prosperity, owing to its significant maritime monopoly, leading to construction of the new Temple of Aphaia (see Figure 1) and the adoption of new coinage practices from the East to support trade and wealth storage. So far, so good.

The picture of prosperity began to change just as its fortunes peaked. Athens had earlier passed a law limiting Aiginetan commerce in Attika, highlighting an ongoing period of hostility between the two states. Then in 491 BC, Aigina prostrated itself before a threatening Persian

Empire after the Ionian Revolt of Greek cities in Asia Minor. Many other cities were forced to do the same, except for Athens and Sparta, creating another antagonism with Athens. However, by the time of the first Persian invasion of Greece in 490 BC, the Greek cities rallied as a group to defeat King Darios at Marathon, saving Athens, and then they rallied to defeat King Xerxes in the second invasion of Greece at Thermopylae and Salamis in 480 BC. Aigina contributed ships to the Greek effort at the Battle of Salamis. Though the Greeks were victorious against Persia, Aigina's extensive trading empire in Asia Minor, and elsewhere, was badly disrupted.

Only two decades later, in the first Peloponnesian War (starting 461 BC), Aigina fought with Sparta, Corinth and Thebes against Athens. Athens blockaded and defeated Aigina in 456, annihilating its fleet and destroying its city walls (tribute for the inhabitants was set at 30 talents). Aigina gained some autonomy in the 30 Years Peace starting in 445 BC, even joining the Delian League, but at the start of the second Peloponnesian War (between Athens and the Peloponnesian League, again led by Sparta, from 431-404 BC), Athens expelled the Aiginetan populace to mainland Peloponnese. Athens later massacred most of those exiles in 424 BC. With the defeat of Athens at the end of the second Peloponnesian War, Lyssandros of Sparta moved the remaining exiles back to Aigina while manning a base on the island to contain the Athenians. In fact, Athens and the

Peloponnese were generally destitute by the end of these several wars (not that this stopped further conflicts). The islanders struggled on through the 4th and 3rd centuries, but the Pergamene King Attalos I captured and destroyed Aigina in 210 BC. Pergamon subsequently bequeathed the island to the Romans in 133 BC.

Aigina's coinage program was of course severely affected by these conflicts and losses. Its massive production of silver staters in the early 5th century stopped altogether for several decades by the time the population was expelled in 431 BC. It may have stopped when Athens first pillaged and occupied the island in 456, but the assumption now is that production of land tortoise staters began at the beginning of the period of domination. Once the inhabitants were expelled in 431, there was no mint activity until the population was fully re-established on the island in the early 4th century, at which time tortoise production was resumed. The level of coin production in both of these tortoise issue periods was of course much diminished because of outside domination and economic decline.

Figure 1 includes an overview map showing the location of the island of Aigina, an outline map of the island plus photos of the important Temple of Aphaia both as ruins and in a reconstruction (the model is located in the Munich Glyptotek along with many surviving temple sculptures).

Figure 1 – Map Showing Island City-State of Aigina





Figure 1: Aigina is located in the Saronic Gulf, very close to both Athens and Corinth. Its main archeological feature is the Temple of Aphaia, built in Doric style circa 490 BC. The temple was a model for many other Greek temples in Greece, Asia Minor and south Italy, including the Parthenon in Athens. (Temple photos courtesy Wikimedia – ruins photo by Dennis Jarvis and Munich Glyptotek model photo by Mathias Kabel).

Aigina Silver Stater Production and Issue Periods

The actual start date for coin production in Aigina is uncertain, but it was likely soon after the development of a pure silver coinage by King Kroisos (Croesus) of Asia Minor in the mid-6th century BC, that is, around 550 BC. The technology would have spread quickly to Greek settlements in coastal Asia Minor, then across the Aegean via Aigina's extensive trading links with the Eastern Greeks. Aigina is thought to be the first place in Europe to mint coins, which of course were struck in silver (mainland Greece and its islands never really produced gold coins, and small Greek bronzes came much later). Aigina minted stater coins to its own Aiginetan standard of 12.3 grams, which was adopted by other centres primarily around the Peloponnese and the Greek Islands. The Aiginetan standard was one of the two main standards used for Greek coinage in the 6th and early 5th centuries (the other standard was the Attic standard of Athens), attesting to Aigina's influence and the usefulness of currency in general.

Aigina's coinage was an expression of its independence. It issued massive quantities of sea turtle staters at the peak of its commercial and maritime success in the early 5th century, both to facilitate trade and to store its wealth. Coin issues were dramatically cut only a few decades later, after its trading sphere was reduced by wars with Persia and Athens. The wars not only reduced its maritime capability, but they caused the loss of its markets in Greece and Asia Minor and allowed the complete displacement of its population by a foreign power. These hardships greatly affected Aigina's need for coinage and its ability to produce it.

Through the late 5th and the 4th century, Aigina's coin types were remarkably static, even while they constantly changed. The city's stater issues basically maintained a simple, bold, spread-eagled turtle-type image on the obverse and a square punch on the reverse. The initial turtle-type image it chose was a simply carved sea turtle. Just before 450 BC, when Aigina had lost much of its power to Athens, the series got more interesting when the sea turtle motif suddenly shifted to a tortoise. Around

the same time, the reverse design was made into a better-defined, formal skew pattern (the broad cross bands of a skew are somewhat askew of each other rather than being at right angles). The reverse switch to a skew seems to have occurred a bit in advance of the obverse switch to the land tortoise, judging by the presence of the new skew on late sea turtle issues. Nonetheless, this was a fairly dramatic change, related to the tumultuous political events of the day. The change in types likely reflects Aigina's sudden domination by Athens and the concurrent loss of its maritime power, although there could have been more conventional reasons as well (not including the aforementioned vendetta against sea turtles).

Colin Kraay, in a seminal work on early Greek coinages, described four periods of Aigina stater production based on obverse/reverse design progressions (Colin M Kraay, *"Archaic and Classical Greek Coins"*, Berkley, Univ of California Press, 1976. pp 42-44. – also reprinted by Sanford Durst in 1993 - an excellent reference). The characteristics for each of these four issue periods are summarized in the text below. Figure 2 includes photos of two sold-coin examples, from commerce, for each period (the coins illustrated are better quality examples which generally sold for \$3,000-\$10,000 US). Period I, 550-480 BC, includes an example of both the Union Jack and the windmill type of reverse. The windmill effect resulted when some of the deep, triangular prongs of the late Period I design broke off or were otherwise filled. Almost invariably, we see windmill staters that are very badly struck on globular flans, plus they are found in extremely worn condition. This implies that their production was hurried, that vast numbers of coins were minted and that the coins circulated for many decades. From the examples that follow the first period, we can note that the formalized, broad skew pattern appears in Period II, 480-456 BC, and that the land tortoise obverse appears in Period III, 456-431 BC, with the same skew. An actual Aigina civic legend – 'AIG' or 'AIGIN' – is first observed on the obverse and/or reverse of some of the staters when the mint was revived in Period IV, half a century after Period III ended. Some degree of design variation can be expected within each category.

It is interesting to consider that the weight of these staters remained consistent at 12.0-12.5 grams through all four periods, stretching over 200 years, and that the quality of the silver was high. At times, the silver metal may have come from the Laurion mines controlled by Athens, but it may also have come from Siphnos or Thrace, or from other, more distant ports where Aigina traded (taking goods there in exchange for raw silver).

Athens began using slaves to work the rich silver veins, 60 km SE of the city, around 485 BC, creating enough wealth to build a powerful navy of 200 triremes and also to construct many of its great civic monuments. The mines in Laurion were largely exhausted by the end of the same century.

Period I

Date: 550-480 BC
 Obv: Sea turtle with plain collar, single row of dots on shell & profile head
 Rev: Various Union Jack or windmill incuse punches

Period II

Date: 480-456 BC
 Obv: Sea turtle with curving collar, T pattern dots on shell & profile head
 Rev: Formal skew pattern incuse with broad bands

Period III

Date: 456-431 BC
 Obv: Land tortoise with segmented shell & profile or normal head
 Rev: Formal skew pattern incuse with broad bands

Period IV

Date: 370-330 BC
 Obv: Land tortoise with segmented shell & normal head
 Rev: Squared pattern incuse with narrow lines & sporadic civic legend



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Figure 2 – Examples of Aigina Silver Staters by Period



Period I (550-480 BC)

Period II (480-456 BC)



Period III (456-431 BC)

Period IV (370-330 BC)

Figure 2: Examples of Aigina staters sold in the past few years as categorized by Kraay. Note the Union Jack and windmill reverses in Period I, the advent of the broad skew reverse in Period II and the advent of the land tortoise obverse in Period III. The skew reverse became more perpendicular, with narrow bands and generally less dramatic when the mint was revived in Period IV. Partial Aigina civic legends were added on some of the Period IV dies. The coins shown above were sold in CNG and Nomos auctions for between \$3,000 and \$10,000 US (photos courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group). All were noted as 12.0-12.5 grams.

Figure 3 – Loggerhead Sea Turtle



Figure 3: The loggerhead sea turtle was undoubtedly the model for Aigina's obverse coin image. It was, and still is, widely distributed in a wide band around the world's warm oceans and in the Mediterranean Sea - even now nesting on the shores of the Greek Islands. As a seafaring people, the ancient Aiginetans would have observed and may possibly have eaten such turtles in their everyday lives. The loggerhead is large and powerful, so it would have been an obvious symbol for that island-based, water-borne city-state.

Figure 4 – Mediterranean Tortoise



Figure 4: Several tortoise species are grouped into the Mediterranean tortoise category. They are widely distributed in the dry climate of Europe and the Middle East. The hard shell of the tortoise, depicted on Aigina's later coinages, may have symbolized the state's need for resistance and protection during troubled times. It may also have conveyed a sense of endurance to its citizens (photo by J Sevcik).

Collection Examples

Figure 5 contains photos of three Aigina staters from two collections, representing three of the minting Periods cited by Kraay. The first example is from pre-skew Period I, courtesy of T Cheesman, while the other two skew reverse examples, from Periods II and III, are from my collection. Comments are provided for each coin. All are

reasonably attractive and in good condition. The Period I coin (Figure 5a) is rare in such a high grade, while the Period III coin (Figure 5c) is scarce. All are generally obtainable for collection purposes, since they can usually be found in lower grades, meaning that most have more circulation wear and an odd strike.

Figure 5 – Collection of Staters



5a. Aigina Silver Stater– Period I - Sea Turtle/Single Row of Dots/Early Union Jack.

Issued 550-530 BC (11.86g, 21.2x18.8mm). Mint: Aigina. Aiginetan weight standard. Obv: Sea turtle, head profile, with collar and single row of dots down back. Rev: Rough Union Jack incuse punch. (Collection of T Cheesman and photo by the author; purchased from NFA, 1998).

Figure 5a: This is a wonderful, very early Aigina stater, minted near the start of the city's coin production. Though not totally sharp, it is well centered with good metal, showing a complete set of dots on the sea turtle shell and a nice, early, Union Jack punch (there is some die-breaking in the punch). Punches soon after this contained more-defined, triangular compartments, which at times became filled when portions of the die broke off, producing a variable windmill pattern. This stater is an exceptional collection piece, and it is a rare survivor.



5b. Aigina Silver Stater – Period II - Sea Turtle/T Shaped Dots/Skew.

Issued 487-457 BC (12.38g, 21.5x19.7mm, 7h). Mint: Aigina. Aiginetan weight standard. Obv: Sea turtle, head profile, with collar and T shaped row of dots down back. Rev: Large incuse square with wide-band skew pattern. (Collection of the author and photo by the author; purchased from Aegean Numismatics, Dec 2005).

Figure 5b: This stater is not the highest grade, and the obverse is a bit off center, but it was minted in an important transition period between the sea turtle issues and the tortoises. The obverse shows a late version of the sea turtle image with extra decoration on the shell (two additional dots at the front edge forming a 'T' plus a curving collar). The reverse shows a full, early version of the skew punch, carved with very wide bands. These bands grew progressively narrower through Period III and became merely lines in Period IV. It is also nice to see the wonderfully articulated, high relief, profile turtle head on this coin, more elaborate than in the Period I tradition.

All is not rosy though - the coin does have problems, including some overall wear plus surface metal erosion and the beginning of a die break on the left side of the obverse. However, I'm finding that the coin is very useful to me whenever I'm put on the spot - forced to describe the subtle changes in obverse/reverse transitional styles of Aegean coinages. This usually happens when I'm in some non-descript bar, in a forgotten town, late at night, surrounded by nervous doubters and miscreants. It's always best to have a real coin handy to get you out of those kind of situations. Other than that, it does get some attention in displays and articles.



5c. Aigina Silver Stater – Period III - Land Tortoise/Skew.

Issued 456/45-431 BC (12.26g, 21.3x19.4mm, 6h). Mint: Aigina. Aiginetan weight standard. Obv: Land tortoise with decorated carapace, head in profile. Rev: Large incuse square with wide-band skew pattern. (Collection of the author, and photo by the author; purchased from Classical Numismatic Group, April 2001).

Figure 5c: This coin is as interesting as the Period I coin above. The type isn't as rare as the earlier coin, but the detailed obverse die is quite rare – I have only seen one or two other coins with the same die. This die is remarkable for its side profile head, which is extremely unusual in the tortoise series. Most tortoise dies opt for a top view of a chunky head, so I suspect, together with the wide skew bands, that this is an early version of the tortoise issue. The head on this one is also remarkably clear, and the scutes (segments) of the carapace are nicely preserved. Moreover, both obverse and reverse are well centered which is a real key for finding a high grade Aigina coin – you desperately want to see the head and all of the feet on the flan. The legs and feet of this coin contain a fair amount of detail as well. There is the countermark at the peak of the tortoise shell that detracts somewhat from its general appearance, but such marks are not uncommon on these coins, and often there is little negative impact on sale value. The additional flan cracks around the edge are also very typical for the issue – they are the result of the force of the strikes needed to obtain the high obverse relief. All in all, this is a keeper.

Is the Skew Punch Epigraphic?

I have wondered for several years, since I bought my tortoise stater, whether the Period II and Period III reverse skew pattern was more than it seemed. No one else has apparently wondered the same thing, for I have not seen any other comment in this regard, but there is lots of room in Greek coinages for research and interpretation.

In short, I wondered if the skew could be an

epigram for the full or, more likely, the partial name of AIGINA (ΑΙΓΙΝΑ in Greek). The case is certainly not air tight, and I can think of some arguments against, but the notion is worth mentioning. Of course the skew could be a random pattern or a copy of another city's design (I have seen tiny obols attributed to the settlement of Orchomenos, in nearby Boeotia, and to Lokris Opuntii, that have a similar skew pattern from around the same time or earlier, though the siting and/or dating of these coins could be wrong). The skew design



could also simply be a primal interpretation of a human figure.

The epigram suggestion assumes that AIGINA (spelled that way by the ancients, but often spelled 'AEGINA' now) used the skew design first, since that city issued it in a major coinage. The suggestion further assumes that there was some impetus to attach a civic name to the staters in mid 500 BC, since other

important city-states in the vicinity, such as Athens and Thebes, used city legends on their main coinages. Athens used 'A-Θ-E' (A-TH-E) on its reverses from the 5th to the 2nd centuries, while Thebes placed a Theta/Cross symbol, and later 'Θ-E' (TH-E), on its reverses from the early to late 5th century (a multitude of magistrate or civic names were used instead in the 4th century). Perhaps in the beginning, Aigina did not have to be as obvious in this regard, because the turtle obverse image was so entrenched and recognizable. They wanted a simple, but bold, reverse legend design that would reinforce the strong obverse iconography and set their legend style apart from other cities. Another possibility is that the celators were just being inventive or mischievous in creating a disguised civic legend, thinking it added a level of sophistication. In any event, after the 5th century broad skew period ended, Aigina decided to attach a normal civic legend to its late, Period IV staters - sometimes it was a partial name and a dolphin within the reverse punch (usually 'A-I-Γ' as in Figure 2 above/Figure 6 below), while at other times, the letters started on the obverse and finished on the reverse (such as 'A-IG' on the obverse and 'N-I' on the reverse). Figure 6 shows examples of contemporary, 5th century normal-legend coins for Athens and Thebes, as well as one of the late, Period IV, coins from Aigina that used the similar conventional civic letters.

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Figure 6 – Nearby Civic Coins with Legends in the 5th Century



Athens Tetradrachm (465-460 BC)



Thebes Stater (480-460 BC)



Thebes Stater (425-400 BC)



Aigina Stater (380-360 BC)



Figure 6: These examples show various civic legends from central Greece – Athens and Thebes in the 5th century BC and the clear Aigina legend from a late stater of the early 4th century. The earlier Thebes legend is a circle and cross within a triangular, segmented, square incuse, representing Theta, or 'T', the first letter of its name. This coin was issued just before the Aigina skew reverse coins appeared, so that the notion of triangular compartments and broad divisions was known. The later legend coins of Thebes and Aigina obviously follow the lead of the clearly lettered Athens tetradrachm of 460 BC. (Photos courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group, Stacks and Heritage Auctions).

The hidden legend proposal for the Aigina broad-skew coins is straightforward. The reverse design of Periods II and III coins, from the mid 5th century, could contain the embedded letters 'A-I-G' as the city's identifier within the bands of the reverse skew punch. The city's full name, A-I-G-I-N-A, could be located if part of the 'N' is placed on the skew border and dividing bands are used more than once, but this is not necessary given that abbreviated legends

were the norm for other cities in the region. The very broad bands of the unusual skew design seem to support the function of the bands as conjoined letters. The letters are sequential and can be viewed in sequence as the coin is rotated one side per letter. Because the letters are hidden but conjoined, they essentially form a monogram, which is usually created for ornamentation. In this case, the monogram is not as much beautiful as functional, befitting an ancient context.

According to Kellsraft, an ideal monogram is all about unity and balance. The letters should be readable in the correct order for the monogram to be considered perfect. Legibility requirements depend on the purpose - public uses usually need easier decipherability.

Figures 7 and 8 describe the suggested rationale for deciphering 'A-I-G' within the typical skew reverse - one set of images shows the coin in position with the letters rotating, while the second set shows the coin rotated one quadrant at a time so that the letters can be seen in their proper orientation. The 'A' letter requires interpretation because of the nature of the simplified monogram (it is formed but incomplete without a visible crossbar). That may have been part of the puzzle as envisaged by the designers, a form of artistic license, which makes the concept more interesting. The full resolution of letter 'A' is left to the imagination of the viewer. Modern logo inventors take the same liberties with letter structure to create a pleasing, simplified result. Another possibility is that the missing bar in the 'A' of the Aigina skew could be a reference to the openness of the early 'A' (Alpha A) design in places like nearby Athens, where the 'A' often looked more like a 'D' (Delta Δ), as seen in Figure 9. In that case, the designers may have felt that a middle bar wasn't necessary, since the

punch border below the open 'A' acted as a bar approximating the open 'D' shape of the Athens 'A'. Whatever the rationale, the object of the design was to keep the skew outline as simple and balanced as possible. In Figures 7 and 8, I have added a small crossbar to the 'A' to enhance the effect for the purists.

In support of the simplicity and elegance of the proposed skew punch epigram, I should note that the three city letters use all bands of the skew pattern and none overlap. Moreover, the sequence could be started in the next triangular compartment over and the same pattern is repeated with the same one rotation per letter.

The suggestion of an epigraphic reverse might be less probable than I imagine. In any event, it is an interesting concept that may, or may not, be corroborated by further investigation of letter manipulation within known Greek civic monograms. It is certain, however, that the Aeginetans later abandoned the broad skew in favor of a narrow banded skew with actual civic letters placed in the compartments. The bands on my early tortoise coin (Figure 5c) were already narrower than the sea turtle issues, and by the 4th century they became mere lines, requiring actual civic letters to be added (see example in Figure 6). I think the broad bands served a definite purpose.

Figure 7 – Possible Epigraphy of Skew Punch – Coin Stationary



Figure 7: This sequence shows the stationary coin reverse with letter options for 'AIG' outlined in order. The 'A' is interpreted and simplified, as noted in the text. All lines of the skew are used only once and the same pattern is repeated if the legend is started in the next triangular compartment over.

Figure 8 – Possible Epigraphy of Skew Punch – Coin Rotated



Figure 8: This sequence shows the coin reverse rotated one quadrant at a time, so the letters 'AII' are viewed in their proper orientation. Again, the 'A' is interpreted, as noted in the text.

Figure 9 – Letter Variation in Early Athens Tetradrachms



Figure 9: These Athens tetradrachms were issued in the early to mid 5th century BC, just before the skew reverse appeared in Aigina. The letter 'A' (alpha - 'A' was often cut to be close to a 'D' shape (delta - Δ) at Athens. (Photos courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group).

In Closing...

Although the Aigina staters are not necessarily pretty, in a full-throttle, sensual way, they are definitely among the earliest of western Greek coinages, and they offer a simple, honest presentation of an attractive city-state badge. The combination of attractive, high relief iconography, historical importance and tragic, ancient conflict has made the whole series of turtle-tortoise coins popular among the broad range of Greek coin collectors. Of course, the popularity of the type is also helped by the modern day veneration of sea turtles as mascots of the world's oceans. Sea turtles perform not only as graceful icons of ocean life, but they also act as symbols of threatened freedom. The ancient Aiginetans may have chosen the turtle as their symbol for the exactly the same reasons.

A I Γ I N A

Notes and Denials:

1. To the best of the author's knowledge, there was no newspaper called the 'Aigina Times Herald' in ancient Aigina, in 456 BC.

2. No turtles were intentionally harmed in the production of this article.

Quote:

Every sea-captain who sailed to the West Indies was expected to bring home a turtle on the return voyage for a feast to his expectant friends. Alice Morse Earle






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No new members this month

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Coming Events

January 14, 2015 - ENS January Meeting - Royal Alberta Museum, 7:15 pm start.

February 11, 2015 - ENS Annual General Meeting - Election of Officers Royal Alberta Museum, 7:15 pm start.

March 7 & 8, 2015 - *Edmonton's Spring Coin Show and Sale, Edmonton Hotel & Conference Centre, 4520 - 76 Ave, Edmonton, Alberta, T6B 0A5, dealers wishing to attend call 780-270-6312.*

March 11, 2015 - ENS March Meeting - Royal Alberta Museum, 7:15 pm start.

April 8, 2015 - ENS April Meeting - Royal Alberta Museum, 7:15 pm start.

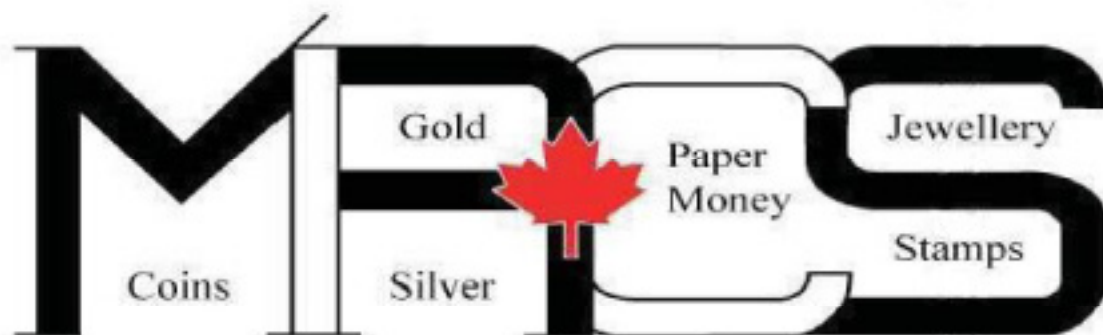
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