

PREFACE

Greek coins can exert a powerful attraction on those who are fascinated by the *Realien* of ancient Greece. Perhaps because ancient historians can learn so much from other physical remnants of classical antiquity, especially inscriptions, we are eager to use coins extensively, too, as clues in our reconstructions of Greek history. Ancient Greek coinage, however, is a notoriously treacherous source of historical evidence. With the subject of sovereignty and coinage, particular difficulties arise because the coins usually lack overt indications of chronology and because the topic of the so-called right of coinage, so often mentioned by modern scholars, is very nearly invisible in the ancient literary and documentary sources. Keeping the limitations imposed by the nature of the evidence in mind, I have tried in this work to use coins as guides to a clearer understanding of one aspect of ancient Greek history. My curiosity was originally provoked by the reliance of scholars on a historical model which explains the minting of classical Greek and Macedonian coinages as primarily motivated by a desire on the part of the state to produce symbols of its political sovereignty. For many reasons, this model is unsatisfactory. A historical model seems preferable which posits practical economic concerns as the principal consideration in the minting of coinage in this period. Classical coins should not be understood as the functional equivalents of modern national flags in the symbolic assertion of an abstract notion of political sovereignty.

Practical necessities have limited me to the use of published numismatic material, and even there significant limitations must be acknowledged. Even though this preface is being written in 1984, the most recent issue of the invaluable publication *Coin Hoards* which I have been able to use belongs to 1981. The statistics on hoards used here are therefore inevitably out of date. Fortunately, the validity of the argument does not depend on

hard numbers. Since, however, legitimate doubts can arise about the ways in which and the extent to which the evidence of coin hoards should be used in historical arguments, I have tried to make my assumptions plain where hoards are concerned.

Since so many different types of coins are discussed in the course of this study, considerations of expense ruled out any attempt at comprehensive illustration. Photographs of most of the types mentioned are available, however, in the plates of the standard reference works, such as Colin Kraay's *Archaic and Classical Greek Coins* (Berkeley, 1976). I am grateful to the Dewing Greek Numismatic Foundation for permission to publish photographs of examples of a few of the types of coins which are especially important to my argument. All the coins illustrated belong to the Foundation and are on loan to the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

Many people have helped me in many ways in the writing of this book. Even a detailed recitation of their various kindnesses would fail to do more than to hint at how much I owe them. Under the circumstances, I hope that the listing of their names, poor recompense though it is, will show them that I am conscious of my debt. In the case of this book, it is particularly important to stress the formulaic *caveat* that those who have helped me should not be thought responsible for anything here which is wrong or seems wrongheaded. In addition, the expression of my thanks to those who gave me their opinions should not be taken to imply that I have persuaded them to accept the historical model presented in this book.

For reading parts or all of the text in various stages of reworking (some very early on), I am indebted to Ernst Badian, S. C. Bakhuizen, Thomas N. Bisson, G. W. Bowersock, T. V. Buttrey, W. Robert Connor, Giles Constable, Nancy J. Moore, R. M. Errington, Adalberto Giovannini, Philip Grierson, Christian Habicht, N.G.L. Hammond, Albert Henrichs, R. Ross Holloway, John H. Kroll, Carey McWilliams, William E. Metcalf, M. Jessop Price, P. J. Rhodes, Klaus Rosen, Alan M. Stahl, Joseph R. Strayer, Ronald S. Stroud, Margaret Thompson, and Nancy M. Waggoner. Their comments and advice contributed to a final

version of the book that is much changed from what they originally saw and is, thanks to their help, greatly improved.

Others have helped in other ways. I received bibliographic help with the history of the Hapsburgs from Steven Ozment. Scott Bradner, Gregory Crane, Lorna Holmes, Kenneth Morrell, and Jeffrey Wills helped with word processing and computer use. Michael Padgett energetically aided the verification of references. Margaret D'Ambrosio, of the Library of the American Numismatic Society, helped with bibliographic problems. Joanna Hitchcock, of the Princeton University Press, provided exemplary guidance throughout the process of publication. Her secretary, Carol MacKinnon, deserves special thanks, as does Barbara Stump for copy editing. The services of Gary Bisbee, of Chiron, Inc., made possible computer typesetting. Pamela Marshall provided timely and meticulous assistance with proofreading. Janet Dockendorff facilitated the photographing of the coins for the plates.

The support of my family was constant throughout the long process of finishing this project. The help of my wife Ivy was truly essential at all stages.

It is inevitable that a scholar's professional indebtedness will remain forever unpaid. I am happy to be able to acknowledge just how deep in debt I find myself.

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