



# ANCIENT --- SELFIES

## Chapter 1 THE ANCIENTS

CLINTON  
RICHARDSON

*History Revealed Through Ancient Coins*

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HISTORY REVEALED THROUGH THE WORLD'S  
FIRST SOCIAL MEDIA: ANCIENT COINS



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## **Why Ancient Selfies?**

More than 2,500 years ago, rulers in Greece and Lydia created the first social media when they began stamping images on their newly invented coins. Distributed widely, these coins survive today with striking images that let us experience our past in an immediate way. *Ancient Selfies* uses these images to bring you closer to the leaders and artists who built empires, created great art, and invented both science and democracy.



### **What's in the book?**

*Ancient Selfies* will introduce you to the ancient Persians, Greeks, Phoenicians, Celts and Carthaginians. You will follow Alexander the Great on his campaigns and Rome as it grows into an empire. You will watch as ambitious men tear apart the Roman Republic. And you will witness, with the ancients, the formation of Rome, Greek rebellion against Rome, the genius of Homer and much more.



## What can you learn?

How did Cleopatra and Marc Antony appear to their contemporaries? How did the Greeks inspire revolt against the Romans with coins? Did an ancient coin embolden Caesar's assassins? These are just a few of the questions answered in *Ancient Selfies*. Check out the Contents and Introduction for more.

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Also from the author:

*Passports in his Underpants*

*Richardson's Growth Company Guide 5.0*

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*To the curious, who wonder how we became who we are.*

# Preface

THIS BOOK CELEBRATES a unique resource that few people know much about - ancient coins. Hand stamped from dies engraved by artisans more than 2,000 years ago, these ancient art miniatures opened up commerce by replacing barter and in so doing became, with their ability to deliver images, the world's first social media.

Ancient rulers quickly realized the power coins had to broadcast images that could shape impressions and deliver messages to their subjects and trading partners. With carefully selected images, they used their coins to convey messages of strength and power, to celebrate accomplishments and beliefs and, sometimes, to deceive. In so doing, they left a permanent record of images that let us see the ancient world as the ancients themselves saw it.

This book invites you to join the author on a personal journey to the distant past, one assisted by the hand stamped coins ancient rulers issued to support their economies and convey their messages. The images on these coins say something direct about our ancient ancestors, who they were, how they acted, and what they did to shape the world we live in. Like modern day selfies, they provide unique, first-person glimpses into the lives and times of the rulers who produced them.

You hold a piece of history when you examine an ancient coin. You hold an artifact from a world of city states, republics, empires, noble aspirations and conflict. It is a world

that included Alexander the Great, Aristotle, Hannibal, Homer, Spartacus, Julius Caesar, Cicero, Brutus, Marc Antony, Cleopatra and more. It is a world that refined art and literature and built the institutional foundations that support our 21<sup>st</sup> century way of living.

But it was also a world of physical hardship where even the wealthy lived without the modern conveniences we take for granted. There was no electricity or Internet. There were no combustion engines, fire arms, light bulbs, or telephones. Roads, when they existed, were aggregations of cut stones. Even necessities like soap had yet to be invented. Chocolate and coffee were hundreds of years in the future.

Come visit this fascinating and important world. Experience it in new and tangible way. Spend time with the coins our ancient forbearers left behind. Contemplate their world as they saw it. Hear their stories, celebrate their victories and learn about their values and gods. Experience it all through the telling images their leaders commissioned for their coins.



Raphael Imagines Aeneas (Rome's forefather) Escaping Troy  
Detail from the *Fire in the Borgo* fresco at the Vatican Museum



[ 1 ]

## The Ancients

WE WELCOME YOU with a puzzle.<sup>1</sup> Is this encrusted metal fish one of the oldest coins known to man? Or is it something else?

Authorities date this fish-shaped object to the Chinese Chou Dynasty from the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC. Metallic and small enough to fit easily in your hand, these tokens are found in large enough numbers to suggest that they may have served some purpose in commerce. Many of these pieces have been discovered in Chinese tombs, where they may have served as funerary objects.

But with no contemporary writings describing how this piece was used, archeologists can only speculate about whether or not this small metal fish from more than 2,500 years ago was one of the first coins used in commerce or something else. And, whether or not this abundant artifact is money, what can it tell us about the people who made it and their times?

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<sup>1</sup> China Chou Dynasty fish money produced from 770 to 476 BC. Their abundant numbers suggests they may have been used as an early form of money. Acquired from ECIN Associates, O'Fallon, Missouri in December 2007.

Welcome to the fascinating world of ancient history and ancient coins where records can be sketchy, nonexistent, or conflicting and where some of the best evidence about the people and their lives is found on the coins they used in trade. On the pages that follow are the images of ancient coins fashioned by the artists of their times to reflect the people, the events, and the gods of their worlds.

Artisans, who the Romans called *celators*, were commissioned by ancient rulers to engrave images into dies that were then used to hand stamp their coins. Despite the lack of modern equipment or mechanical stamping processes, the coins produced by these *celators* contain images that are often exquisitely detailed.

These metallic art miniatures circulated throughout ancient realms in everyday commerce and provide us with a unique opportunity to see and touch very real and tangible evidence of the ancients themselves and, in the process, to understand more about their times and how they saw themselves.

This first chapter contains some of the oldest coins issued by leaders of the ancient world. In it you will find coins from the mid-sixth to the mid-fourth century BC. They come from the Mediterranean cradle of Western civilization, the more “bar-baric” civilizations to the north, and the land of the Buddha far to the east. They include coins from the Lydians of Croesus, the Persians of Darius and Xerxes, the Phoenicians, the Greeks of democratic Athens, and the Macedonians of Philip II, father to Alexander the Great.

Around 550 BC, coins produced by the wealthy and powerful Lydian King Croesus emerged as a medium of international exchange to facilitate commerce and convey

messages to a large and widespread population. His coins portray a roaring lion confronting a bull, images undoubtedly chosen to communicate the king's power. They were remarkable for their consistent purity and weight.



Persian Empire

*Labberton's Historical Atlas (1884)*

The Persian ruler Cyrus the Great had no coinage of his own when he conquered Croesus and his Lydian armies. After his conquest, Cyrus adopted coins as a tool of commerce and method of communicating with his subjects. The coins he commissioned included profiles of the king himself. His successors Darius, Xerxes, and Codomannus (aka Darius III) continued making similar coins until Alexander the Great appeared in the fourth century BC and turned the Persian Empire into a new Greek Empire.

To the north of the Lydians, Persians and Greeks, in what is now Russia, the Ukraine and Central Asia, the Sarmatians were also issuing coins to support their commerce. Theirs include no engraved images but, instead, are shaped in the image of a dolphin. Considered "barbarian", a term meaning non-Greek to

the Greeks, these Sarmatians were described by the Greek historian Herodotus as being a blond, stout, and tanned people who had descended from the Scythians and Amazons.

To the east, the great religious leader Siddhartha Gautama Buddha was traveling and teaching in the Magadha region of India south of the Ganges River. He was a contemporary of both Croesus and the Sarmatians. And, although he did not issue coinage because his domain was spiritual and not political, we have here a coin of his realm, issued by Bimbasara, who ruled the region and became an important disciple of the Buddha.

The golden age of Greece occurred while the Persians ruled the East. The signature coin from the unofficial Greek capital of that era, Athens, portrays a helmeted portrait of the goddess Athena with a distinctive archaic eye on one side and the symbolic Athenian owl with an olive branch on the other.



*The Death of Socrates* by Jacques-Louis David (1787)

This coin circulated for more than 30 years while Athens was the leading cultural, intellectual, and commercial center of the

Western world. Dramatists Sophocles, Aeschylus, Euripides, and Aristophanes all walked the streets of Athens while this coin was in circulation. Philosophers Socrates and Plato, historians Herodotus and Thucydides, and physician Hippocrates all lived in or visited Athens during this period, likely using the coin to purchase goods.

Also here are coins from city-states in Thrace, Syracuse and Phoenicia that bear the images of contemporary gods, battlefield armor, and animals. Here too is the coin of Philip of Macedonia, the father of Alexander the Great, who consolidated power in Greece to such an extent that Alexander could strike out on his conquest of the East.

These ancient coins represent the first mass produced and widely distributed art. Their invention provided rulers with a powerful medium for commerce and political expression. Through these coins, rulers were able to portray themselves and their messages in the manner they chose to the broader population.

Contemporary portraits of the great ancient rulers first appear on coins during this period. As time passes, rulers get more and more sophisticated about the images they strike onto their coins, conveying overt and subtle messages to their people. As you flip through these pages, pause and consider how close these remarkable coin images bring you to the ancients, their ways and world.

#### **PARTIAL TIMELINE.**

753 BC Founding of Rome.

700 BC Sabines and Romans jointly rule Rome.

- 653 BC Rise of the Persians.
- 563 BC Siddhartha Gautama Buddha is born.
- 561 BC Croesus becomes king of the Lydians.
- 551 BC Confucius is born.
- 550 BC Cyrus the Great founds the Persian Empire.
- 547 BC Cyrus defeats Croesus.
- 539 BC Babylonians fall. Cyrus liberates the Jews.
- 512 BC Darius I expands Persian Empire.
- 509 BC Lucius Brutus defeats Tarquinius, Roman King.
- 508 BC Democracy in Athens begins.
- 490 BC Greeks defeat the Persians at Marathon.
- 480 BC Xerxes defeated at Salamis.
- 469 BC Socrates is born.
- 460 BC Greek city-states begin Peloponnesian war.
- 449 BC Athens golden age begins.
- 414 BC Athenians fail to take Syracuse.
- 404 BC Peloponnesian war ends.
- 338 BC Codomannus (Darius III) rules Persia.
- 336 BC Philip II prepares to invade Persia.

## COINS FEATURED IN THIS CHAPTER.

- Chou Dynasty Fish Money, 770 to 476 BC*
- Croesus, 561 to 515 BC
- Magadha Region of the Buddha, 550 to 470 BC
- The Milesians, 550 to 377 BC
- Cyrus & Darius, 505 to 480 BC
- Xerxes I, 485 to 420 BC
- Alexander I, 498 to 454 BC
- The Sarmatians, 6<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> century BC

Thracian Chersonese, 480 to 350 BC

Thrace, Mesembria, 450 to 350 BC

Athens Golden Age, 449 to 413 BC

Syracuse, circa 380 BC

Phoenicia, Arados, 380 to 352 BC

Artaxerxes & Darius, 375 to 340 BC

'Abd 'ashtart I, 372 to 361 BC

Panticapaeum, 4<sup>th</sup> century BC

Philip II, 359 to 336 BC

The Celts, 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC

The answer both oracles gave to the question were perfectly consistent with each other: they told Croesus that if he made war on the Persians, he would destroy a great empire.

*The Histories* by Herodotus  
Chapter 1, Book 53



## LYDIAN KING CROESUS

561 TO 515 BC

This is the coin that started it all. First issued more than 550 years before the birth of Christ by a Lydian king with global aspirations, it introduced coins to the conquering Persians and triggered the growth of a new international medium of exchange and communication. Greek city-states had issued coins before but none gained the international acceptance of this Lyd-ian coin.

This silver siglos with its distinctive image of a confronted lion and bull was issued by the great Lydian King Croesus who conquered much of Greece in the sixth century BC. The consistent quality of its silver and weight made it an ideal medium for international exchange. Its striking image proclaimed the ancient ruler's power and attested to the remarkable skill of the artisans who engraved and stamped the coins by hand.

We know about Croesus and his eventful life through accounts of his life in the Western world's first written history, *The Histories* of Herodotus. Composed more than a century later using stories remembered by local inhabitants, the Greek

historian from Halicarnassus paints a colorful picture of this ancient Lydian ruler whose wealth was so great that it gave rise to the phrase "rich as Croesus."

After subduing Greece, King Croesus consulted with two oracles and set his sights on expanding to the east. Encouraged by the words of the oracles, he attacked the new Persian King Cyrus in 547 BC expecting to destroy the Persian Empire only to lose his own.

Following the battle, the Persians forced Croesus to climb atop a funeral pyre to die. According to Herodotus, Croesus cried out from the flames in remorse, understanding for the first time the wisdom of the Athenian sage Solon who had belittled his wealth and power years before.

On hearing the cries of Croesus, Cyrus took pity and ordered the flames to be put out. But the fire had grown too intense and raged on. Croesus prayed to the gods and clouds appeared miraculously in the sky, sending down a torrential rainstorm that quickly quenched the blazing pyre.

Croesus survived and went on to become a trusted advisor to his new master Cyrus. His method of coinage was adopted by the Persians and spread throughout the ancient world.

*Coin details and provenance: Croesus, King of Lydia. 561 to 515 BC. Silver half-siglos. Minted in Lydia. Obverse: Confronted foreparts of roaring lion and bull. Reverse: Double incuse punch. 5.55 grams. References: SNG Copenhagen 456; SNG von Aulock 2875. Acquired from Tom Vossen Antiquities, Kerkrade, Netherlands in March of 2004.*



## MAGADHA REGION OF THE BUDDHA

550 TO 470 BC

Far to the east of Lydia at this same time, a great spiritual leader lived and spread his word in the Magadha region of India south of the Ganges River. This coin, with its symbolic images, circulated in this region while Siddhartha Gautama Buddha, the spiritual leader and founder of Buddhism, lived and taught in the area.

Believed to have lived from 563 to 483 BC while rulers Bimbisara and Ajatashatru ruled the Magadha region, the Buddha began his spiritual quest at the age of 29 when he left his palace to meet his subjects and came upon an old man, a diseased man, a decaying corpse, and an aesthetic. Siddhartha later abandoned his palace to become a monk and practice near total deprivation of worldly goods in search of enlightenment.

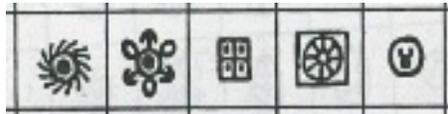
He eventually discovered what Buddhists refer to as the middle way and, at age 35, following 49 days of meditation, achieved enlightenment. It was from this point on that he became known as the Buddha, or “Awakened One.” For the remaining 45 years of his life, the Buddha traveled and taught in the Gangetic plain where this coin circulated.

Bimbisara, who ruled the region from 545 to 493 BC and first met the Buddha before his enlightenment, became an important disciple of the Buddha and attained the sotapanna status reserved to those who eradicate the first three fetters of the mind. Bimbisara was succeeded by his son and murderer Ajatashatru, who ruled the region until 461 BC.

The date when these coins started being issued is obscure. It is believed this coin type was first issued around 550 BC and that it was replaced by 470 BC with a smaller and thicker coin of the same weight. These dates coincide with the reigns of both Bimbisara and Ajatashatru.

*Coin details and provenance: Bimbisara and Ajatashatru. Circa 550 to 470 BC. Silver karshapana. Minted in the Magadha region. Obverse: Five various punch marks. Reverse: Bankers marks. 3.25 grams. 25 x 19 mm. References: Gupta and Hadraker I VI C 34 (#55). This type has an unpublished variety of the 6-arm symbol from the lifetime of the Buddha. First issue karshapanas are rare and hard to find. More precise attribution of these coins is impossible at this point. Acquired from Ancient Coins Canada, Ontario, Canada in March of 2007.*

#### Symbols on the Coin:





## THE MILESIANS

500 TO 377 BC

About the same time the Buddha was finding spiritual revelation in the Gangetic plains of India, a very different tradition was taking root among the Greeks. In Ionian Miletus on the western coast of Anatolia (present day Turkey), a group of thinkers began speculating about the causes of natural phenomena and the origins of the universe in a new way.

The Milesian philosopher Thales, from the era in which this coin was issued, is now widely regarded as the father of western philosophy. During his life, he counseled Croesus and helped the city of Miletus avoid entanglement in the Lydian conflict with the Persia. This resulted in a long period of independence for Miletus and much of Greece. Thales' most lasting contribution, however, was the way he thought and the school of thinkers he established in Miletus.

Among those who participated in his Milesian school were Anaximander and Pythagorus. Thales and his followers were the first to search for and define general principles that accounted for natural phenomena and the first to offer

hypotheses for why things occurred as they did. Members of his school focused on discovering the mechanisms that created the cosmos and explained natural phenomena instead looking to mythology or spirituality for explanations.

Anaximander, for example, speculated that the universe began as an undifferentiated concentration of material that began to spin and separate in a way that brought like materials together. The earth fell from this to the center, surrounded by water and then air. The fourth element, fire, formed the stars. Essential portions of this remarkable ancient theory are very similar to the big bang theory that modern scientists believe describes the creation of the universe.

The Melisians were the first to apply deductive reasoning to geometry. Thales theorem, that posits the necessary creation of a right angle from connecting three points on a circle, was discovered by the Melisians. They were among the first to inquire about the world in a scientific manner and created a tradition that has led to the modern scientific tradition.

The Melisian coin from 500 BC depicts the head of a roaring lion and an ornamental star. The star is a fitting symbol for the city that turned the study of the cosmos into scientific deliberation.

*Coin details and provenance: Miletus. Satraps of Caria, Iona. 500-377 BC. 1/12 obo. Obverse: Lion head facing left. Reverse: Ornamental Star. References: Sim-SNGCOP 953, Sim McClean pl 284/16, Iona. 1.25 gram. 10.25 mm. Acquired from Topcoins and Fine Art, Czech Republic, in April 2011.*



## CYRUS & DARIUS

505 TO 480 BC

The figure of the Persian king drawing his bow on the front of this coin identifies it as the first of the coins minted by the Persians after they defeated Croesus and went on to assemble the greatest empire of their time. Like the Lydian coin it succeeded, this silver siglos proclaims the power of its issuer with a bold image.

Both this coin and the Lydian coins that preceded it were produced by placing a metal flan beneath a hand engraved die and then striking the die with a hammer. The incuse punch on the reverse of the coin came from an elevation on the platform that held the metal flan during the minting process.

The Persians burst onto the world scene in the sixth century BC when Cyrus merged the Medes and Persians to create a single great Achaemenid dynasty. His decisive victory over Croesus in 547 BC expanded Persian territory and made the new empire the dominant force in the region.

The next great Persian king, Darius I, took the throne through murder and deception. As related in *The Histories* of Herodotus, Darius plotted the removal of the rightful heir Smerdis in 522 BC with six high ranking Persian conspirators. Together, they accused Smerdis of being an imposter, claiming that the real Smerdis had been murdered earlier by Cambyses, the successor to Cyrus. Cambyses conveniently died before Darius launched his deception and was unable to foil the plot.

Once enthroned, Darius organized and expanded the Persian Empire with great success. It would be nearly 30 years before he would meet with a major military defeat.

Attempting to expand westward after putting down a revolt of Greek city-states in Asia Minor, Darius invaded mainland Greece. He met with much success until his massive army met the Athenians at the Battle of Marathon in 490 BC just 25 miles from Athens. The Athenians won the battle and stopped the Persians' expansion into Greece, preserving Greek independence.

Darius died five years later and was succeeded by his son Xerxes.

*Coin details and provenance: Persia. Achaemenid Empire. Circa 505 to 480 BC. AR siglos. Obverse: Persian king or hero in kneeling/running stance right, drawing bow. Reverse: Incuse punch. 5.44 grams. 14 mm. References: Carradice Type II, 12-13. Carradice, NumChron 1998, 79-88 (same reverse punch). Toned VF. Scarce issue. Acquired from Barry P. Murphy Coins, Willow Street, Pennsylvania in January 2006.*



## XERXES I

485 TO 420 BC

The Persians minted coins like these for nearly 200 years, changing the design of the king's image on the front only a few times. The details of this coin, with its running king carrying a spear and bow, identify it as being minted from 485 to 420 BC. This puts the coin's issuance into the reigns of Xerxes I and his son Artaxerxes I.

Xerxes' reign began in 485 BC, the year Darius died and the great Greek historian Herodotus was born. Just two years later, in 483 BC, Xerxes began preparations for the great task left undone by his father – punishing the Athenians for supporting rebellion among Persia's Ionian possessions.

After securing an alliance with Carthage three years later, Xerxes launched his large fleet and army from Sardis. His forces advanced quickly into mainland Greece.

A Greek alliance led by Athens, Sparta and Corinth formed to confront the threat. The Athenian general Themistocles persuaded the Greeks to make their stand against the Persian

army at the narrow pass of Thermopylae. The Persian fleet was to be confronted at the straits of Artemisium.

Notwithstanding large losses to their fleet from a storm, the Persians easily dispatched the smaller Greek fleet. Their massive army, however, fought for seven days against just 7,000 Greeks at the narrow pass at Thermopylae before executing a successful rear guard action that ended the battle.

This left the route to Athens undefended and the conquest of the Greeks all but sealed. The Athenians, in their desperation, deserted to the nearby island of Salamis to watch their city burn and prepare to meet the Persians in a last-stand naval battle.

The battle that ensued matched just 371 Greek ships against 1207 Persian ships, including Persian ships under command of Artemisia, the female tyrant of Halicarnassus. Confident of his ultimate success, Xerxes sat ashore on a golden throne to watch his navy complete the Greeks' destruction.

Instead, the smaller but more agile Greek fleet outflanked and defeated the Persian navy in full view of a disappointed Xerxes. With the loss of much of his navy, Xerxes withdrew his forces to Asia. The unexpected Greek victory marked a turning point in the Persian wars and preserved the Greek homeland for the Greeks.

*Coin details and provenance: Achaemenid Kings of Persia. Xerxes I, King of Persia. 485 to 420 BC. Silver Siglos. Minted in Lydia, Asia Minor. Obverse: King in guise of a kneeling and running archer wearing a kidaris (gown) and a kandys (crown) with a bow in left hand, spear in right. Reverse: Oblong punch. 5.56 grams. 13 mm. References: Carradice Type IIIb. Choice VF. Acquired from Glenn W. Woods Numismatist, Dallas, Texas in December 2004.*



## ALEXANDER I

498 TO 454 BC

Alexander I, who claimed descent from the Argive Greeks and the hero Heracles, was the first Macedonian ruler to put his name on his coins. This example has images on both sides, with a cantering horse on one and the profile of a Greek battle helmet on the other.

The helmet depicted fits the description given by the poet Homer of the helmet worn by the great Trojan hero Hector in the *Iliad*. As the poet describes Hector's last meeting with his wife and infant son before leaving to defend Troy, Hector's child screamed out "terrified by the flashing bronze, the horsehair crest, and the great ridge of the helmet nodding, bristling terror - so it struck his eyes." Hector and his wife laughed and Hector lifted the helmet from his head and set it down, "fiery in the sunlight," to pick up and console his son.

Alexander would have known this passage from the *Iliad* and, like his Macedonian contemporaries, he would have aspired to the heroic values portrayed in the Greek classic. But Alexander did more than aspire to the Greek heroic ideal. He also supported

the Ionian Greeks during their revolts against Persia in the early fifth century BC, going so far as to murder envoys of the Persian Emperor Darius who were sent to his court.

When Xerxes invaded Greece in 480 BC, however, Alexander was forced to submit and represent Persian governor Mardonius during peace negotiations after the Battle of Salamis. While so constrained, however, he surreptitiously gave aid to Greek city-states who were battling the Persians, even warning them of the Persian governor's plans before the Battle of Plataea.

Alexander escaped his servitude when the Greeks prevailed at Plataea. As the Persians retreated, Alexander led troops to harass them, killing many at the estuary of the Strymon River in 479 BC.

After the Persians were expelled, Alexander reasserted Macedonian independence and modeled his court on the court of Athens. Poets Pindar and Bacchylides both dedicated poems to their patron Alexander.

Some Greek city-states considered Macedonia a non-Greek state. But a court of Olympic judges, the *Elean Hellanodikai*, confirmed Alexander's claim of descent from the Argive Greeks and included the Macedonians in the Olympic Games. Alexander's accomplishments set the stage for future expansion of Macedonian influence within and outside the Greek world.

*Coin details and provenance: Alexander I. 498 to 454 BC. Silver tetrobol (heavy). Obverse: Horse cantering right. Reverse: Crested Illyrian helmet right within single lined incuse square. 2.06 grams. 15 mm. Acquired from Hixenbavgh Ancient Art, New York, New York in August 2009.*



## THE SARMATIANS

6<sup>TH</sup> TO 5<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY BC

The Sarmatians' domain stretched from the Caspian Sea west to the Vistula River and covered parts of modern day Russia, Ukraine, the Baltic States, and Central Asia. A collection of independent tribes, they moved west from the Central Asian steppes into Europe between the sixth and fourth centuries BC. This dolphin shaped object was their coin.

Greek historian Herodotus described the Sarmatians as blond, stout and tanned and believed them to be descended from the Scythians and Amazons. This, he reported, accounted for their Iranian-type language and the unusual freedoms of their women, who participated in warfare.

As recorded by Herodotus, the Greeks defeated the Amazons at the Battle of Thermodon and sailed away with three ships of captured Amazon warriors. While at sea, the women overpowered and killed their Greek captors and then drifted at sea because they did not know how to navigate. They eventually landed in an area populated by Scythians and, after

skirmishing with them, reconciled with a group of young Sythian men.

Rather than assimilate with the Scythians, whose women did not hunt or make war, this new group of Amazon women and Scythian men traveled east and north for six days to a new territory where they settled and became known as the Sauromatae or Sarmatians. The Greeks and Romans widely accepted the analysis of Herodotus and his reports of an ancient Amazon nation ruled by female warriors.

That the Sarmatian women served as warriors is undisputed. Modern archaeological evidence shows why the Scythian and Sarmatian culture may have given rise to the stories about the Amazons. Graves of armed females have been found in Sarmatian territory. In ancient warrior graves excavated on the lower Don and Volga rivers, one in five is a female dressed for battle.

Comparisons of genetic evidence taken from the sites have found genetic links to the Kazaks, a Turkish-Mongol people from north central Asia. Some ancient historians portrayed them as a separate nomadic people who did little trading but glass beads at the excavated sites suggest they had meaningful ties to other cultures.

*Coin details and provenance: Olbia, Sarmatia. Circa 6<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. Bronze dolphin-shaped coin with raised spine. 23 mm long. As cast with dark green and brown patina. References: SNG BM Black Sea 362; SNG Stancombe 334. Acquired from Ancient Coins Canada, Ontario, Canada in January 2006.*



## THRACIAN CHERSONESE

480 TO 350 BC

The Chersonese peninsula, what is now the Gallipoli peninsula of Turkey, was part an ancient Thracian kingdom that encompassed much of modern-day Bulgaria, northern Greece and parts of Turkey, Serbia, and Macedonia. The Thracians settled 12 cities on the Chersonese peninsula during the seventh century BC.

This coin from a Greek settlement on the peninsula was issued in the fifth and fourth centuries BC. It portrays both a lion and a lizard. At the time it was issued, the peninsula was controlled by the Athenians who had established a number of colonies on the peninsula and enrolled them in the Delian League to resist Persian expansion into Greece. Sparta gained control between 431 BC and 404 BC but the peninsula reverted to the Athenians until it was ceded to the Macedonian Philip II in 338 BC.

The wealthy Miltiades the Elder, who opposed the Athenian tyrant Pisistratus, founded a major Athenian settlement on the

peninsula around 550 BC, 70 years before this coin was first issued. Eventually, he took control of the entire Chersonese and built defenses to protect the peninsula against invasion.

His step-nephew Miltialdes the Younger seized control of the peninsula in 516 BC and married the daughter of Thracian King Olorus. He later became a vassal of the Persian King Darius I but joined the Greek Ionian revolt against the Persians in 499 BC, establishing relations with Athens and taking the Islands of Lemnos and Imbros.

When the revolt failed, Miltiades escaped to Athens, where he was elected one of the ten Athenian's strategoi (generals) in 490 BC. In that role he served as a leader at the Battle of Marathon. According to Herodotus, he was responsible for devising the battle plan used by the Greeks to defeat the Persians in the battle.

Just one year after his great success, however, Miltialdes led an unsuccessful naval battle and suffered a leg wound. When he returned to Athens, his rivals charged him with treason. He died in prison, probably from gangrene.

*Coin details and provenance: Thracian Chersonese. 480 to 350 BC. AR Hemidrachm. Obverse: Forepart of lion right, head turned back. Reverse: Quadripartite incuse square, monogram, pellet and lizard in sunken quarters. 2.2 grams. 18.67 mm. References: SNGCop 830. Acquired from InclinatioRoma Ancient Coins, New York, New York in January 2007.*



## THRACE, MESEMBRIA

450 TO 350 BC

This coin comes from Mesembria, a city established at the end of the seventh century BC on the southeastern coast of Thrace, in what is now the Black Sea coast of Bulgaria. The coin bears the image of a crested Corinthian helmet and the initials META between four spokes of a wheel. This reverse image has been interpreted as a reference to solar worship with the radiate wheel representing the midday sun.

The Corinthian helmet, which originated in ancient Greece, was made of bronze and covered both the head and neck. It was the most popular and widely depicted helmet of antiquity and was worn by both Greek and Roman armies into the first century AD. The Greek hoplites and the later Roman legionnaires would wear the helmet tipped up for comfort between battles.

The Thracians who populated Mesembria were, by the time this coin was issued, the second most populous people in the world, at least according to Herodotus. They were an Indo-European people who were considered rural and barbaric by their more urban Greek neighbors. They were ruled for nearly

half a century by the Persians in the sixth and fifth centuries BC and later conquered by Philip II of Macedonia in the fourth century BC.

Mesembria flourished during the fifth and fourth centuries BC when this coin was issued but declined after Macedonian occupation. Herodotus referred to the Thracian city of Mesembria, where this coin was minted, as a Samothracian stronghold but otherwise there are few references to this ancient city.

The site of the city has been located and has supported an active archeological dig since excavations began in 1966. The site is administered by the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and is designated by the Ministry as Mesembria-Zone to reflect archeological finds that identify the city site as a colony of Samothrace.

The foundations for fortified walls with towers have been excavated. City streets and houses within the walls, two public buildings, a sanctuary of Demeter, and a temple to Apollo have also been uncovered.

*Coin details and provenance: Thrace, Mesembria. 450 to 350 BC. Obverse: Crested war helmet facing. Reverse: 'META' in 4 quarters of wheel. 1.14 grams. 11.72 mm. References: Seaby 1673. Nearly extremely fine. An old collection piece with deep toning. Acquired from Lodge Antiquities, Grantham, United Kingdom in August 2005*



## ATHENS' GOLDEN AGE

449 TO 413 BC

This is one of the most famous of ancient coins. It is one of the earliest fully sculpted, double-sided coins minted with a portrait on one side and an animal on the other. The portrait on the front is of the goddess Pallas Athena, protector of the city, wearing a helmet. A large-eyed Athenian owl, symbolizing wisdom, graces the reverse with an olive branch and a small crescent in the field.

The images on this coin reflect the foundational myth of the city. According to tradition, Athena claimed dominion over Athens by causing an olive tree to spring up next to a salt water well Poseidon had created by driving his trident into the soil. The Olympic deities were called together to determine Athena or Poseidon would have dominion over the area. They sided with Athena after hearing the testimony of Cecrops, first king of Athens, who had witnessed Athena's gift of the olive tree.

This coin was first issued in Athens after hostilities ended with Persia. It remained Athens' principle medium of exchange for 36 years. While this coin was being issued, the Athenians

put together the Delian League of Greek city-states to contend with the continuing threat from the Persians. Over this period, with the help of the league, many Greek city-states in Asia Minor and the Aegean Islands were freed of their Persian overlord.

This was the golden age of Greece, when Athens was the leading cultural, intellectual, and commercial center of the eastern world. It was a period during which the Parthenon was constructed and the best and brightest of the Greeks were attracted to the city, unleashing a unprecedented period of artistic and theatrical creativity.

Dramatists Sophocles, Aeschylus, Euripides, and Aristophanes all walked the streets of Athens while this coin was in circulation. Philosophers Socrates and Plato, physician Hippocrates, and historians Herodotus and Thucydides all lived in or visited Athens during this period. Sophocles' Oedipus the King saw its first performance in 430 BC, while the coin was in circulation.

Democracy also thrived at the time, with political heavyweight Pericles dominating politics for much of the period. The Peloponnesian War with Sparta began in 431 BC and continued until the end of the period. The Spartans and their allies eventually prevailed, ending Athens' golden age and its dominance throughout the Greek world.

*Coin details and provenance: Athens, Attica. 449 to 413 BC. Silver tetradrachm. Obverse: Helmeted head of Athena, with signature 'archaic eye' facing right. Reverse: Athenian owl with an olive branch and crescent, AOE legend to the right. Acquired from the Robert Johnson Coin Co., London, United Kingdom in 2000.*



## SYRACUSE

380 BC

Located on the eastern heel of Sicily, Syracuse was a Greek colony that witnessed the battle that effectively ended Athenian predominance in the Peloponnesian war. The failure of Athenian forces to take control of Syracuse in the year 414 BC and the losses that Athens sustained in the final battle for that control changed the balance of power in the Greek world.

This coin, minted years later in 380 BC, pays homage to the city's Corinthian heritage by portraying the Greek goddess Athena in a Corinthian helmet. The goddess wears her helmet tipped up in this portrait, as was the practice of the Greek hoplite who wore them in this fashion between battles. The reverse side of the coin features a sea star surrounded by two dolphins.

Originally founded by Greek Corinthians and allied with Corinth and Sparta during the Peloponnesian War, Syracuse found itself besieged in 414 BC by Athenian forces commanded by Nicias. The city was on the brink of surrender when eleven triremes manned by Corinthians and their allies under

command of the Corinthian general Gongylus slipped through the Athenian naval blockade. Spartan forces lead by Glyippus arrived shortly after by land.

Both the Athenian commander Nicias and his general Demosthenes, who lead the Athenian land force, were captured and executed. Most of the surviving Athenian soldiers were enslaved and made to work in the Sicilian quarries. Few escaped or survived.

The failed Athenian siege devastated the Athenian war effort. Thousands of soldiers and hundreds of ships were lost, a significant portion of Athens' military. Athens enemies elsewhere were emboldened and rebellions broke out throughout the Aegean. Athen's dominion over Greek affairs came to an end.

*Coin details and provenance: Sicily, Syracuse. Circa 380 BC. Æ drachma. Obverse: Head of Athena left, wearing Corinthian helmet decorated with an olive wreath. Reverse: Sea star between two dolphins. 33.03 grams. Green and brown patina. References: SNG ANS 454ff; Calciati II pg. 111, 62ff; SNG Copenhagen 720; SNG Morcom 697ff; Favorito 14; Laffaille 218; Virzi 1422ff. Acquired from Barry P. Murphy Coins, Willow Street, Pennsylvania in August 2003.*



## THE PHOENICIANS OF ARADOS

380 TO 352 BC

This coin was issued by the Phoenician population of Arados, a tiny island in the Mediterranean Sea about 30 miles north of Tripoli. It was first settled in the second millennium BC by the Phoenicians, who constructed an artificial harbor and turned the island into a trading city protected by their powerful navy. When this coin was issued in the fourth century BC, Arados was ruled by the Persians.

The coin bears the image of an unidentified male deity and the prow of a naval vessel. So powerful was the Phoenician navy in ancient times that its ships are mentioned on Egyptian monuments. Assyrian King Tiglath-pileser I reported sailing in Phoenician ships from Arados, then called Arvad or Arwad, around 1,000 BC.

The Phoenicians were inventors of the phonetic alphabet and descendants of the ancient Canaanites mentioned in the Book of Genesis. They formed a federation of city-states on the eastern Mediterranean coast in the 16<sup>th</sup> century BC and became a great merchant sea power.

Cambyses, the great Persian ruler, enlisted Phoenician ships in his conquest of Egypt in 525 BC. Phoenicians participated in the Greco-Persian wars, shuttling Persian troops to battles including those at Miletus (494 BC) and Salamis (480 BC). Xerxes' Persian forces crossed into Greece on a pontoon bridge constructed, in part, by Phoenicians.

In 350 BC, while this coin was in circulation, the Phoenician city-states rebelled against Persia only to be put down violently by King Artaxerxes III and his more than 300,000 Persian troops. The Phoenician city of Sidon was destroyed in the course of the rebellion and more than 40,000 Phoenicians are said to have perished.

Sixteen years later, when the 35,000 man Macedonian army crossed the Hellispont into Phoenicia under command of the 20-year-old Alexander of Macedonia, Arados' King Strabo submit-~~ted~~ted without a struggle and lent his Phoenician navy to Alexander for the Battle of Tyre.

*Coin details and provenance: Phoenicia, Arados. 380 to 352 BC. Silver stater. Obverse: Head of male deity, laureate, hair and whiskers dotted, pointed beard represented by lines, full eye, and border of dots. Reverse: Prow of galley above waves. 10.27 grams. 18.1 mm. References: BMC Phoenicia, page 10, 61. From Glenn W. Woods Numismatist, Dal-las, Texas in December 2004.*



## ARTAXERES & DARIUS

375 TO 340 BC

This coin was issued during the reign of Persian Emperor Artaxerxes III and circulated widely during the reign of his successor Darius III. The coin shows the Persian king in a running position with a dagger and a bow.

Artaxerxes was reportedly poisoned by his Visier, the wealthy and powerful eunuch Bagoas, in 338 BC. After dispatching Artaxerxes direct heirs, Bagoas recruited a distant cousin of Artaxerxes named Codomannus and installed him as the Persian Shah. He chose Codomannus believing he would be easy to control.

Codomannus took the name Darius III and immediately struck his own course over a large but unstable empire. When Bagoas tried to regain control by poisoning Darius, the king learned of the plot and forced Bagoas to drink the poison himself.

Before long, Darius had to deal with an even greater threat. In 333 BC, Alexander the Great and his Greek hoplites invaded Persia and defeated his army at the Battle of Granicus. A year

later, Darius led his armies in battle against Alexander at Issus but was again defeat after his chariot driver was killed and he was seen to be vulnerable after being knocked off of his feet.

Following the battle, Darius worked to rebuild his army but with little success. When Alexander and his troops later approached the Persian army near the city of Ecbatana in 330 BC, Darius withdrew to Bactria to begin a rear-guard action.

This emboldened the Persian satrap Bessus of Bactria who captured Darius while the Greeks pursued and had Darius bound in a wagon. When Alexander's forces unexpectedly approached the captive Darius, his captors panicked and wounded Darius with their spears. Darius was found dead or dying in the wagon.

When Alexander saw the corpse, he removed Darius' signet ring and ordered his body to be transported to Persepolis where Darius was accorded a magnificent funeral and buried in the Persian royal tombs. Five years later, Alexander married one of Darius' daughters in a mass marriage to help consolidate his power over his conquered empire.

Bessus, who declared himself King of Asia after capturing Darius, was tracked down and captured by Alexander's general Ptolemy. Alexander had him mutilated and killed.

*Coin details and provenance: Artaxeres and Darius III. Achaemenid Kings. Circa 375 to 340 BC. AR siglos. Obverse: Persian hero-king right, in running kneeling position holding dagger and bow. Reverse: Oblong incuse. 5.49 grams. 15 mm. References: Carradice, Taf. XV, 46. Acquired from Tom Vossen Antiquities, Kirkrade, Netherlands in October 2006.*



## ‘ABD’ ASHTART I

372 TO 361 BC

‘Abd’ ashtart was King of Sidon, the leading state in the fifth satrapy of the Persian Empire during the first half of the fourth century BC. The city, located on the southern Mediterranean coast of present day Lebanon, was renowned for the purple dyes and glass produced by its craftsmen.

Sidon was one of Phoenicia's oldest cities, having been inhabited since 4,000 BC and possibly earlier. Its history illustrates the expansion of the Phoenician trading empire.

Sidon colonized the city of Tyre in the second millenium BC which, in turn, colonized Carthage in the ninth century BC. According to the Roman Virgil, Tyre's Queen Dido fled her home city after her brother King Pygmalion murdered her husband.

‘Abd’ ashtart's coin, minted in Sidon between 371 and 361 BC, shows a galley rowing to the left with a Phoenician B above, an unmistakable reference to the seafaring prowess of the Phoenicians. On the back is a depiction of the king standing and confronting an upright lion. The images proclaim the power of the ruler and the scope of his influence.

At the time, the Phoenician's were considered loyal Persian subjects whose fleet ranked second only to that Xerxes himself. 'Abd' ashtart cultivated friendly relations with Athens and ruled over a court known for its luxury and appreciation for Hellenistic art and culture.

According to the writings of Menander of Ephesus as quoted by the first century historian Josephus, 'Abd' ashtart came to power at the age of 20 just seven years after the death of his grandfather Hiram I when his father Beleazarus died at the age of 43. He ruled for just nine years.

During his short reign, the Persians lost Cyprus and the city of Tyre to Evagoras, the King of Salamis, in what came to be known as the great revolt of the satraps. Through association with Evagoras' son Nicocles, 'Abd' ashtart became vulnerable to claims that he was conspiring with the disloyal satraps. Four sons of his nurse plotted his death and killed him.

*Coin details and provenance: Phoenicia Sidon. 'Abd' Ashtart I (also, Straton I or Bod 'ashtart). 372 to 361. AR 1/16 shekel. Obverse: Galley rowing left, Phoenician 'B' above, waves below. Reverse: King standing right, confronting lion, which he holds by its mane; small 'o/o' between. 0.78 gram. 10 mm. References: Betylon 32; BMC Phoenicia pg. 147, 34; SNG Copenhagen 197ff. Dark toning. Exceptional detail, strike and grade for type. Mild roughness, particularly on obverse. Acquired from Civitas Galleries Numismatics & Philately, Middleton, Wisconsin in April 2005.*



## PANTICAPAEUM

325 TO 310 BC

This coin is from the ancient city of Panticapaeum, an important port city on the Kerch Strait that separates the Black Sea from the Sea of Azov to the north. When this coin was issued in the fourth century BC, the city was governed by the Spartocids, a dynasty of the Thracian kings of the Bosphorus. At the time, Panticapaeum was facing growing commercial competition from Egypt for the grain it supplied to foreign markets. Conflict over territory with the Sarmatians also occupied the Thracians.

The coin issued by these Thracians bears no witness to these two growing pressures. Instead, it contains a distinctive image of the god Pan on the front and a griffin above a sturgeon on the back. Pan is the Greek god of mountain wilds, flocks and sheep, hunting and rustic music.

Pan was also known to inspire fear, or panic, in crowds. According to mythology, he claimed credit for the victory of the gods over the Olympians because of the disorder and panic he spread among the Olympians. Greeks also believed

he assisted the Athenians in their victory at Marathon by spreading panic among the Persians.

The griffin was a legendary king of the beasts that combined the forepart of an eagle with the body of a lion. To the ancients, the griffin was a symbol and guardian of the divine. The griffin protected against evil, witchcraft and slander.

By combining these two powerful images, the Thracians conveyed a message of strength and power to their citizens and trading partners. Notwithstanding the message, however, Thracian power and influence declined in Panticapaeum over the fourth and third centuries BC.

In 107 BC, Mithradates VI of Pontus dispatched a general to persuade King Paerisades V of Panticapaeum to cede his kingdom to Mithradates. While Mithradates' general was there, the Sythians revolted and killed King Paerisades. Escaping back to Pontus, Mithradates' general returned with a large fleet and ended the revolt, reducing Panticapaeum to a dependency.

Many years later, when his Greek resistance to Roman rule was coming to an end, Mithradates fled to the city to avoid capture by Magnus Pompey and the pursuing Romans. There he reportedly died from self-inflicted poison while his son Phraates laid siege to the city. Pharnaces sent his body to Pompey as proof of his death.

*Coin details and provenance: Thrace Panticapaeum. 325-310 BC. Æ21 bronze. Obverse: Head of Pan facing left, wreathed in ivy. Reverse: Forepart of Griffin facing left, sturgeon below, Π-A-N in field. 7.55 grams. 21.57 mm. Reference: SNG BM Black Sea 869-71. Acquired from Ancient Imports, Grand Marais, Minnesota in March 2011.*



## PHILIP OF MACEDONIA

359 TO 336 BC

The great ruler from northern Greece, Philip II, made Macedonia the predominate power in Greece through a series of military and diplomatic conquests. His success in growing Macedonia and subduing the other Greek city-states set the stage for the great Persian conquest of his son Alexander III.

On his coin, Philip chose the images of Apollo and a prancing horse ridden by a naked youth. Apollo was one of the great Olympian deities, son of Zeus and deity of the Delphic Oracle. Among the ancient Greeks, his name was associated with the verb for destruction, *apollymi*, and with medicine and dominion over colonists. The horse was associated with Philip's name and, in this image, reminds one of the legendary taming of the wild steed Bucephalus by Philip's son Alexander in his youth.

Before his reign, Philip was held hostage in Thebes for three years. When he was released to Macedonia, he used what he observed while a captive to assist his brother, King Perdiccas III, to reorganize and strengthen the Macedonian army.

In 359 BC, Philip became king of a declining Macedonia, most recently defeated by the neighboring Illyrians. Within a year he neutralized Athens with concessions and a treaty, retook territory from the Illyrians in a battle that saw the Illyrian soldiers flee in panic, and convinced the neighboring Thracian king to execute a pretender to the Macedonian throne.

During his lifetime, Philip extended Macedonian control east and west from the Black Sea to the Adriatic and as far north as the Danube. At Chaeronea in central Greece he defeated a Greek army that included Athenians, Thebans and Achaeans to impose his will south into the southern half of Peloponnesia.

Ruling Greece through the League of Corinth and with his borders safe, Philip used the League to appoint himself general of a Pan-Hellenic crusade against the Persian Empire in 336 BC. With his troops already encamped in Persian territory, however, Philip was assassinated while participating in the wedding procession for his daughter Cleopatra. After his death, Philip's son Alexander seized the throne and was elected to succeed his father as general of the Pan-Hellenic campaign.

*Coin details and provenance: Philip II of Macedonia. 359 to 336 BC. AE. Obverse: Head of Apollo facing right, hair bound with tainia. Re-verse: ΦΙΛΙΠΠΟΥ, naked youth on horse prancing, facing right. 7.08 grams. 17mm. References: Muller 129. Acquired from Herakles Numismatics, Charlotte, North Carolina in December 2004.*



## THE CELTS

2<sup>ND</sup> CENTURY BC

It is believed that some seven thousand years ago, a people who would eventually cover the European continent began travelling west from the Black Sea, driven by rising waters and global warming. By the fourth century BC, when Philip II ruled Macedonia and began expanding his influence throughout Greece and elsewhere, diverse tribes of these people, the Celts, occupied the territories north and west of Macedonia.

Trade and conflict between the Macedonians and the adjoining Celtic tribes was inevitable. This coin, and others like it, provide some of the best surviving evidence of this interaction and of the creativity of ancient Celtic artisans.

Obvious in its reference to the horse and rider motif of Philip's coin, this Celtic coin from the second century BC also displays the unique abstract artistic temperament common to Celtic coins. The front of this coin also mimics the Philip coin with an abstract profile of a man, though on this example the image is obscured by time and wear.

So too is much of our understanding of the early Celts, much of which must be extrapolated from archaeological finds and evidence of neighboring Greek and Roman societies who interacted with the Celts. One of the first recorded encounters with the Celts occurred around 400 BC, when a Celtic tribe displaced the Etruscans from the Po Valley in northern Italy and Rome sent three envoys to the Etruscans to evaluate the situation.

Later battles between the Celtic tribes of continental Europe and Julius Caesar would be recorded in notes Caesar published while on campaign. Celts in the British Isles would resist Roman invasion by Caesar and his successors, at one time even destroying the city of Londinium in an uprising. The Picts in Scotland would prove so resistant that Emperor Hadrian would order the construction of a wall across northern England to keep them at bay.

Many Celtic coins, like the one above, are masterful miniatures of surreal art. They depict an artistic temperament and perspective of a proud people who were quite different from their Greek and Roman neighbors to the south.

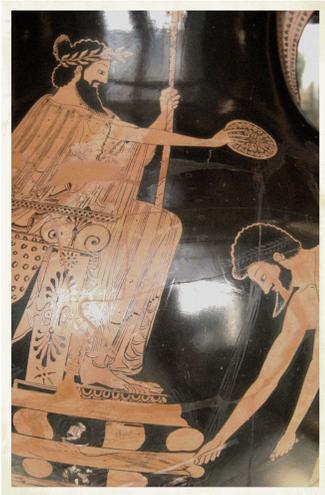
*Coin details and provenance: Celtic Tetradrachm Imitating Philip II of Macedonia. 2nd Century BC. Obverse: Celtic style bust of Philip facing right. Reverse: Celtic style horse and rider facing right. 7.3 grams. 24.71 mm. References: DLT 9618. Acquired from Ancient Imports, Grand Marias, Minnesota in May 2005.*



Read the introduction to *Ancient Selfies* [here](#):

# Introduction

THE REMARKABLE STORY OF CROESUS, wealthy and powerful king of the Lydians more than 500 years before Christ, comes to us from *The Histories* of Herodotus, written in the fifth century BC. Misunderstanding the oracle's words and wanting to expand his empire, Croesus launches an attack against the Persian ruler Cyrus the Great. He expects a great victory but, instead, loses his empire.



Captured, he is made Cyrus' prisoner and seated atop a funeral pyre that is set on fire. Reflecting on his life while the flames grow, Croesus repeats the name of the wise Solon three times and catches the attention of Cyrus. While responding to questions about his behavior, Croesus reveals his humanity in a way that moves Cyrus to instruct his servants to douse the fire. But it is too late. The fire rages out of control and Croesus faces imminent death.

Weeping, Croesus appeals to the god Apollo for help. Clouds quickly gather and release a torrent of rain that douses the fire and spares Croesus' life. Croesus lives on to serve Cyrus as his trusted counsel and becomes guardian to Cambyses, son and heir to Cyrus.

The fantastic details of this ancient story challenge the modern reader to believe in its veracity or the reality of the man. But Croesus was a very real and powerful man, one who left very tangible evidence of his tenure and influence on this planet. Like other ancient rulers who would follow, Croesus left his mark on the coins he issued to fuel the commerce of his realm.

In fact, while still in control of his vast empire, he issued one of the first coins to be recognized as a ready medium of exchange between cultures. Unmistakable in their design and consistent in their quality and weight, the silver coins of Croesus showed other rulers how to leave their words and images in permanent form as irrefutable evidence of their existence and influence.

The images of many great figures appear on the pages that follow, along with their very human stories. They are the images ancient rulers chose to circulate in the most wide spread media of the time - coins. That many of them are also strikingly precise and beautiful is a testament to the skills of the ancient celators who engraved the dies used to hand stamp these coins. The incredible art miniatures their work created provide us with unique glimpses into the lives and times of our ancient ancestors.

Included here are coins and stories from 550 BC to 4 BC, beginning with the Lydians of Croesus and their Persians conquerors. The Greeks held off the Persians and colonized the Mediterranean. The Romans fought and conquered until they turned the Mediterranean into a Roman sea. Both are represented in the coins presented here.

So too are the Phoenicians, Egyptians, Seleucids, Carthaginians, Parthians, and Thracians. All played important

roles in the ancient world, as did the Celts, Sarmatians, Numidians, Mamertini, and Mauretians. The coins they issued take us back in tangible ways and give us unique windows into their times.

The great Persian rulers Cyrus, Xerxes and Darius stamped their coins with heroic images of the Persian king in action, wearing a crown and bearing weapons. The Macedonian King Philip II and his son Alexander the Great both put their profiles on coins. Alexander added the lion headdress of the Greek hero Heracles to his profile and placed the greatest of the Greek gods, Zeus, on the back.



The Alexander Mosaic at the Naples Archaeological Museum

Alexander's general Ptolemy, who founded a dynasty that ruled Egypt for three centuries, issued coins with similar profiles. His most famous descendant Cleopatra VII influenced the direction of Western history by captivating, in turn, both Julius Caesar and Mark Antony while ruling the wealthiest empire on the planet. Her profile graces three different coins included in these pages from very different stages of her eventful life.

Also here is the ancient artisan's portrait of a Greek king in Afghanistan, at the far eastern edge of Alexander's conquest, who attained the highest stage of sanctification and died a Buddhist monk. Other coins portray the author of Greek epics, the founding of Rome, the first vote by ballot and the touching story of Odysseus' return to his beloved Penelope.

The lives and times of Spartacus, who lead an army of 120,000 slaves against Republican Rome, are captured on coins of the time - first on a coin from the native Thrace where Spartacus was born and taken captive and second on a Roman coin celebrating his eventual defeat at the hands of the Roman generals Crassus and Pompey. The unfortunate Senator Lentulus Clodianus, whose Roman legions were defeated by Spartacus, also appears here with a coin he issued.



Ancient Mosaic from the Roman Coliseum

The Parthian general Surenas, who defeated the Romans, put Crassus to death and sent his severed head to his king, Orodes, as a prize. Crassus left a coin from his term as Governor of Antioch, just before his death. Orodes and his son Phraates

both issued coins with imposing profiles that include a prominent forehead wart, something that distinguished Parthian royalty.

The great Celts of Europe later battled Julius Caesar and displayed a unique abstract style on their coins. The Celtic chieftain Vercingetorix brought together several tribes in southern France to give Julius Caesar his greatest challenge. He is here not on a Celtic coin but, instead, on a Roman coin with a haunting portrait commissioned while he sat imprisoned in a Roman jail. So too is a Celtic coin that mimics the coin of Philip II, the father of Alexander the Great, but with a stylized horse and rider that look more like the work of a modern artist than that of an ancient artisan.



*The Iliad* from a fifth century AD manuscript page

Intriguing coins and stories from the chaos that followed the assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 BC also fill these pages. Did

Brutus, an assassin of Julius Caesar, flaunt his act by minting a coin depicting daggers of the very sort used to put Caesar to death? Did the son of Caesar's adversary Lucius Ahenobarbus really become a pirate and later reconcile with Caesar's close friend Mark Antony?

Contemplate, on the pages that follow, the only attributed portrait of Marcus Brutus on a coin he issued to pay his armies as he fought Octavian and Marc Antony to succeed Caesar as Rome's ruler. And consider the coin of Decimus Brutus, the cousin to Brutus who convinced Caesar to ignore his foreboding and go to the Senate on the morning he was killed. See too how Marc Antony celebrated a short-lived truce with Octavian with a unique coin. It bears his profile on one side and the image of his wife Octavia, renowned beauty and sister to Octavian, on the other poised between two opposed snakes.

In today's entertainment-saturated world, it can often be hard to separate reality from fiction. What follows, however, is the real thing, hand engraved, hand stamped coins minted by real people that provide unique glimpses into the lives and times of our very real predecessors. No fictional characters or movie action figures here. Instead, contemporary images of Alexander the Great and the generals who helped him conquer much of the known world. Here too you will find the coin of Hannibal, the great Carthaginian general who crossed the Alps to attack and subdue Rome's best legions.

See history reflected in the dramatic images that have been preserved through time on the coins ancient rulers issued in their names. See the coin that Socrates and Plato used for their purchases. Reflect, with their contemporaries, on the impact of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* on the Greek and Roman world. And

see through their coins how Octavian, Agrippa, Marc Antony and Cleopatra aligned, maneuvered and fought to reestablish an empire out of the chaos that followed Caesar's assassination.

The actions of the leaders portrayed on these pages created the world we live in today. Their successes and failures touch every aspect of our lives. Reflect on their lives and stories while considering the incredible and telling images they left on their coins. Enjoy the opportunity this first and permanent social media gives us to see the ancients as they saw themselves.

And look for the future volumes of this *Ancient Selfies* adventure. Hand stamped coins continued to mark the accomplishments, beliefs and challenges of ancient rulers who changed our world after Octavian consolidated his hold on Rome and became known as Emperor Augustus. As the first social media, these coins continued to serve ancient rulers as a means for communicating with their subjects and others.

In our next book, Roman emperors will expand Roman predominance throughout the Mediterranean and beyond. Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, Trajan, Hadrian, Commodus and others will rule into the second century AD. Nero will persecute Christians and Vespasian will put down a Jewish revolt in Jerusalem. But Christianity will take hold and the Jews will survive.

A third century of instability will follow with emperors and challengers galore, including the first African emperor, the first woman to openly rule the Roman Empire and the only vestal virgin to serve as an empress. The empire will split and run through a succession of short term emperors until

Aurelian finally reunites Rome under one ruler. Diocletian will follow with a successful reign that is marred by Christian persecutions that give rise to legends like those of Saint George and the dragon.

And then Constantine will change everything by consolidating the empire and legitimizing Christianity after receiving a vision from the Christian god. His mother will find the Holy Grail and other Christian artifacts while the Church grows in influence. Emperor Justinian will follow later and codify Roman law while fighting a growing Persian threat and one brought on the backs of fleas, a plague that will change everything and open the empire to later assault from a new threat - the nation of Islam.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Clinton Richardson is a student of history, lawyer, business advisor and author of two critically acclaimed books for entrepreneurs – *The Venture Magazine Complete Guide to Venture Capital* and *Richardson's Growth Company Guide 5.0* (fifth edition) . This is his first history book. He is a graduate of Albion College and Duke University School of Law. Please take your children to a museum.

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Accuracy: This book uses the actual coins commissioned by ancient rulers to illustrate our history. Hand stamped and made from dies engraved by artisans, these miniature works of art provide a unique first-person window into our past. Interpretations of history and coins are subject to bias and error.

Other books by the author include:

Passports in his Underpants (Read Janus 2020)

Richardson's Growth Company Guide 5.0 (Read Janus 2014 – 5<sup>th</sup> edition) The Growth Company Guide (Pfeiffer & Co. 1993)

The Venture Magazine Compete Guide to Venture Capital (NAL 1987)

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