The Morris Coin
A Masterpiece by Euaenetus

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"Somewhere in the misty field of the seas / where Ortigia lies by Thrinakia / Apheios's bubbling mouth intermingles / with Arethousa's streaming water-spring"

(Words spoken by the Delphic oracle to Archias of Corinth, before setting forth to found Syracuse. Pausanias, V.7.3)

One day, longer ago than I care to recall, when I was a graduate student assistant at Princeton University's excavations at Morgantina in central Sicily (Fig. 1), a rumor swept our site like fire across a parched hay field that something spectacular ("prodigiosa, stupenda") had just been found. The prodigy turned out to be a blackened coin of exceptional weight, thickness, and diameter. After cleaning it was identified as a silver decadrachm issued some time after 405 B.C. by Syracuse, the greatest of all of the Classical Greek cities in the west, and signed by Euaenetus. Euaenetus was arguably the most famous celator or die engraver ever to design a coin. This recollection is worth mentioning only to the extent that it bears witness to the excitement and wonderment that this masterpiece of the coin-engraver's craft always seems to stir in anyone lucky enough to see it or, better yet, to hold it in their hand, even when blackened and encrusted after nearly sixteen

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hundred years of lying in the wet Sicilian earth.

The University Museum is extremely lucky to possess a single specimen of the same superb coin (Figs. 2 and 3). It was presented to the Museum in 1916 by Mr. J. T. Morris (see box) as part of a larger group of gifts that included 115 coins and a number of other objects of considerable scholarly as well as aesthetic interest. The important features of the Morris coin are as follows.

Silver decadrachm (University Museum catalog no. 29-126-41) issued by Syracuse, southern Sicily, circa 396 and 380 B.C. Max. diam. 35 mm. Wt. 42.52 gm. Condition: some faint surface scratching on obverse; reverse slightly flaked and pitted. Edges of flan worn away in places.

Reverse (Fig. 2). Head of a young woman facing left, with upasent hair entwined with bracts (stem leaves) from water reeds, and wearing beaded necklace, triple pendulum earring. Around her face swim four dolphins. Inscribed over head: SYRA (K OSION, which means "of the Syracusee.") Under dolphin beneath neck incised EU/AN/E-(TOU, meaning "of Eunomus,") the artist's signature.

Obverse (Fig. 3). A quadriga (four-horse chariot), galloping left. Above the team a winged Nike (female personification of victory) flies to crown the auriga (charioteer), who holds a long goad in right hand and reins in left. In the exergue (space below base line) a step is depicted on or against which are placed a shield, a pair of gravettes to either side of a cuirass, and a created helmet.

Cl. Krony and Hirmer, Greek Coins 291, pl. 34-35, nos. 104-105.

Economic and Political Background to the Coin's Issue

Throughout the 5th century B.C., the standard currency used interchangeably between the various independent Sicilian Greek states was based on a silver weight unit called the Euboic-Attic drachma. With the noteworthy exception of an important commemorative ten drachma issue struck by Syracuse some time between 479 and 460 (its famous Demaretia), the largest circulating unit in use throughout most of the century was the tetradrachm or four drachme piece, a large silver coin with a roughly 25 millimeter diameter and a standardized weight of 17.2 grams (Fig. 4). After Syracuse had won its celebrated victory over a powerful expeditionary force from Athens in 413 B.C., many of its rival Greek neighboring states lost their independence either to Syracuse or to its arch-rival Carthage, which had been in possession of parts of the western corner of the island since as early as 700 B.C. The city-states whose independence had been destroyed in the Punic invasions of 410-09 B.C.; Acragas, Gela, and Camarina fell in 405-04. Syracuse meanwhile was busy absorbing Catane, Naxos, and Leonitini. When Syracuse's infamous tyrant Dionysios I (ca. 430-367 B.C.) first took his place on the political stage in 400, apart from Syracuse there was only one independent Greek city-state left, Messana, which itself was lost to Carthage in 396 B.C.

Using this historical information, Kraay has argued that by the century's end the tetradrachm ceased to function as the preferred unit of exchange between the independent Greek states (all of which were gone except for Syracuse), but instead continued to be circulated almost exclusively by the cities under Punic domination (Fig. 5).

Syracuse responded by diverting its coin production into high-value, prestige gold issues and silver decadrachms to pay for the mercenary troops hired to prosecute Dionysios's seemingly endless wars against Carthage. With Athenian silver presumably curtailed because of the recent hostilities, bullion must have been largely supplied from mines in Spain under Greek control and to a lesser degree from those on Sardinia and in Gaul and Britain, in exchange for Syracusan grain. Local exchange was conducted in small denomination silver issues and the recently introduced bronze coins.

John T. Morris

Mr. John T. Morris was a life member and sometime president of the Numismatic and Antiquarian Society of Philadelphia from 1901 until his death in 1916. He occupied from 1857 onwards the Chestnut Hill estate known as Compton that is today the site of the Morris Arboretum. Heir to a family business—the Morris Iron Works—Morris was an industrialist who served on the boards of several Philadelphia institutions, but not, so far as can be determined, the board of The University Museum. As a Museum member, he did, however, bequeath to this institution an outstanding collection of Sicilian and South Italian Greek coins, including the Eunomus decadrachm, as well as a group of Roman imperial coins. Although the latter formed the focus of his paper entitled "What My Coins Have Taught Me," published in the Proceedings of the Numismatic and Antiquarian Society of Philadelphia 28 (1910-12), approximately three-quarters of the Morris coin collection currently possessed by the Museum are Greek. The PNASP article does not mention the decadrachm, and while most of the Morris coins are known to have been purchased from various American dealers, no record survives in the Museum's archives for when or from specifically whom Morris made this major acquisition.

It is of further interest to note that Mr. Morris's devotion to horticulture led him to the idea of turning his estate into a public arboretum soon after its acquisition. His sister Lydia carried out this wish upon her death in 1902, when the Morris Arboretum was established as part of the University of Pennsylvania. The Arboretum therefore joins The University Museum in celebrating its own centenary this year, in commemoration of the foundation of Compton a hundred years ago.
The Minting of the Decadrachm

According to this reconstruction, Euaenetos created his decadrachms exclusively for Dionysios I during the first quarter of the 4th century. Prior to that, beginning perhaps around the time of the Athenian invasion, he was busy designing an extraordinary series of tetradrachm types for Syracuse, Carthage, and Antioch. After the Demarateia issue, the first decadrachms designed for Syracuse were created by Euaenetos’s close contemporary, the artist named Clion. Clion’s signature occurs on a small but magnificent series of decadrachms apparently inspired by Dionysios’s victory over the Carthaginians in 405. The Cimelion type may have been succeeded by Euaenetos’s design after the fall of Messana in 396.

The coin represents a highly unusual type, whose noble design, fine execution, great size, and relative scarcity insure its fame today.

Fewer than 300 examples of Euaenetos’s decadrachms were in existence when Albert Gallatin published the definitive catalogue on them in 1903. Even assuming that excavation and informal discovery have since then doubled that number (Dr. Cornelius Vermeule, curator of the Classical collection of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, tells me he doubts the total exceeds 350), the coin represents a highly unusual type, whose noble design, fine execution, great size, and relative scarcity insure its fame today—and less important to the archaeologist than the collector—its commercial value, of which is considerable. The question of how many of Euaenetos’s decadrachms were created for his native city by Syracuse during the opening years of the 4th century is quite another matter. Circulation estimates are largely worthless, but it has been determined through experiment that a modern facsimile of a hardened bronze die used to strike an ancient coin will withstand between 10,000 and 15,000 strikes before breaking down. Numismatists have identified 24 separate reverse dies used for Euaenetos’s decadrachms, which could indicate a minimum original circulation of something between 240,000 and 300,000 coins and hence a modern survival rate ranging between .09 percent and .25 percent. Engraver signatures never appear with any regularity on Greek coins at any period. Fewer than perhaps 45 complete or abbreviated names of coin engravers are preserved from all the coins minted throughout the entire Greek world, of which more than four-fifths are to be associated with 4th and 5th century South Italy and Sicily. The practice was more common in Sicily than Magna Greece, and here Syracuse heads the list with eight signatures. Of these 9, Euaenetos also designed types for Carthage and Camarina, while his coinage is thought to have been minted for Messana and perhaps Himera as well as Syracuse.

The assumption is frequently made that at least some of the electors who signed their names were Athenian artists, traveling about the western Mediterranean to practice their skills as itinerant silver-smiths and gem cutters, as well as coin die engravers. The fact that coin engravers were permitted to add their signatures is taken as proof of the unusually high social esteem in which they were held in the western Mediterranean cities. Selman in particular is anxious to push the theory of an Athenian derivation, but weakens his case by basing his argument on overly simplified stylistic considerations, coupled with the strong personal prejudice against the very idea that western Greek artists were able to create anything of lasting value on their own. Vermeule, on the other hand, has shown that the Sicilian coin designers were the supreme masters of their chosen medium, capable of producing reinterpretations of the artistic designs worked out by late 5th century Attic painters and sculptors that are of striking beauty and the highest originality. Silver vessels, molded vases, and jewelry provide the most obvious vehicles for the representation of such motifs from mainland Greece to the west.

Glossary

auriga — charioteer

celor — die engraver

citon — a tunic worn by men and women in ancient Greece
cuirass — armor for covering the breast and back

e姓名 = space on coin below base line

flan — the metal blank upon which a coin is struck

greaves — armor worn on the legs below the knee
quadriga — 4-horse chariot

not the rest of the Greek world—
one of the oddities of Syracusan coins being that relatively few ever circulated outside of Sicily. From the outset of the series, around ca. 510 B.C., the chariot group connotes ‘victory.’ Whether this was interpreted in a narrow ‘agonistic’ sense, meaning stemming from a win achieved in a race staged as part of religious games, or as a broader metaphor for success won on the battlefield remains moot. By as early as 500 B.C. the charioteer is shown crowning a flying winged Nike in order to make explicit the allusion to victory. Down until ca. 425 B.C. the team is always shown walking slowly (Fig. 4, second from right), in other words: chariot at rest following the actual race. After that the motif invariably depicts an agitated plunging gallop, which, when checked against stop-motion photos of actual horses galloping, turns out to reflect the oscillation of different gait collapsed into a single time-frame. Throughout the century the standard charioteer is a male, but on one occasion the driver is a Nike being crowned by a second Nike, which seems a strangely tangential conceit. On a later reverse (Fig. 6) the driver is the goddess Demeter, brandishing a blazing tree for her whip, not Persephone as is frequently but quite erroneously stated, since it is the mother-goddess who according to the Sicilian version of her myth wrenches a pine from the slopes of Mt. Aetna and lights it from the volcano’s fiery summit to serve as a torch while searching for her lost daughter. In the case of the Museum’s decadrachm, Euaenetos has chosen to use once again a male auriga, depicted here with exposed muscular arms, wind-whipped hair, and billowing chiton.

The hauntingly lovely young woman captured on the reverse of this coin is part of an evenly lengthy series of depictions of female subjects, spread over nearly three centuries of time. In speaking of the silver tetradrachm series preceding the decadrachms of the late 5th, early 4th century, Jenkins says, “We are hardly aware of outside influences, so inextricably seems the invention of the Syracusan artists with the infinite variety of heads each differing from the next in coiffure and individuality.” From the beginning it is hard to be sure who she is, which, it is fair to say, has not deterred a great many numismatic experts from simply labeling her Arethusa. Others, adopting a more stealthy attitude, call her either Arethusa-Persphone or Artemis-Arethusa, in a move to impose some kind of ambiguous religious duality to the core of her persons. Sometimes she is simply Persphone or Nike. Arethusa, which in Greek seems to mean ‘water-river,’ was a water-nymph personifying a spring, celebrated in both prose and verse, that was located by the western shore of Syracuse’s island of Ortygia, the original site of the Archaic town. The young woman, so her runs, was pursued from her home in the Peloponnese by the love-besotted river god Alpheus. To escape his unwelcome advances she dove beneath the waves and re-emerged in the freshwater spring on Ortygia. The close proximity of spring to sea is argued by some to be reflected by the four dolphins swimming round and through her hair, but the dolphins can also just as well symbolize...
The city's naval strength and maritime-based economy and therefore have nothing to do with Arethusa.

The fact of the matter is that convincing proof for the portrait's identity is extremely sparse throughout the whole development of Syracusan coinage. Arethusa's name is, however, inscribed on a single bronze-taking successf ul frontal portrait created by Cimon in ca. 410-400 B.C. for a tetradrachm, in which loose strands of the nymph's hair float off to the edges of the flan's circular border as if trapped in a watery marinescape filled with four leaping, twisting dolphins (Fig. 7). No other coin ever again labels an nymph by name, but whenever it reappears on other Syracusan issues, the treatment of hair floating loose in water must identify the subject as Arethusa.

A few additional coin types convey the identity of their subject by iconographic attribute: ears of wheat in the hair on a tetradrachm designed by Phrygillus around 412 B.C. (Fig. 8) should, pace Kraay, identify the woman as Demeter Persephone. Athena is easily picked out by her helmet on a tetradrachm designed by Eucleidas from roughly the same period. Artemis is identified by a small quiver over her right shoulder on a 100-letra bronze coin issued at the end of the 4th century. The hair tied into a tight topknot at the back of the crown (Fig. 9) as portrayed by an anonymous artist, 410-400 B.C., may, on analogy with certain extant free-standing statues, link the subject with Nike. Otherwise a near impenetrable veil of anonymity shrouds the series.

The Museum's coin may prove an exception. The one clue left us by Enaelus is the water reed bracelets entwined in the young woman's hair. Taking these with the sea imagery of the dolphins, Kraay calls her Arethusa. Both Heud and Jenkins prefer 'cori (i.e., wheat) leaves' to 'water reeds' and name the young woman Persephone on the strength of that goddess's well-attested association with the nutritive grains, as well as with Syracuse where she and her mother, Demeter, were honored with dual temples. Since it seems to be open season on naming Enaelus's subject, may I offer a new candidate, who I would like to suggest was named Cyane?

I too prefer water reeds to wheat leaves. Cyane was another water nymph, whose sacred spring, still heating as of 1962 a thick stand of Egyptian papyrus said to have been presented by Tolemeny Philadelphia, is located 6 kilometers west-south-west of the city of Syracuse (Fig. 10). Legend says that a mortal girl, Cyane (in Greek, 'Blue-Girl', also the name for cornflower), tried to prevent Plato from carrying off Persephone, but was changed into a spring and condemned to weep forever.

"We found Cyane out in the fields nearly dead. She wore a garland and a crown of blackened leaves. We asked about the child. She had

The Plague

"Now the plague attacked first the Libyans, and, as many of them perished, at first they buried the dead, but later, both because of the multitude of corpses and because those who tended the sick were seized by the plague, no one dared approach the suffering. When even nursing was thus omitted, there was no remedy for the disaster. For by reason of the stench of the unburied, and the naxmas from the marshes, the plague began with a catarrh; then came a swelling in the throat; gradually burning sensations emerged, pains in the sinews of the back, and a heavy feeling in the limbs; then dysentery supervened and putridation upon the whole surface of the body. In most cases this was the course of the disease; but some became mad and totally lost their memory." Diodorus Siculus, World History, Loeb trans. (14.70.6-14.71.3).

The Pennsylvania Academy Collection

It is an astonishing fact that when Albert Gallatin wrote his study of the Eclecticot decadrachms in 1830, 21 were owned by the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, a total exceeded only by the Berlin, Naples, and Syracuse museums. As a matter of fact the Academy possessed a truly incredible collection of 23 decadrachms, of which 2 were attributed to our artist's great rival, Cimon. According to the Academy's authorities, to whom I am much indebted for the following information, the bulk of the coins originally came from the Santa Maria di Lecce board in 1830. Sixteen were sold in 1839 by de Spinks and Son in London to an American collector for the truly bargain-basement price of 500 pounds. Soon after they passed for an undisclosed sum into the hands of Mr. and Mrs. George H. Earle, Jr., who in turn presented them to the Academy in 1899. There they remained until 1959 (not, however, without incident, as they were stolen only to be safely returned in 1999), when a decision was taken by the Academy's Board of Directors to offer them for sale. At that time all 23 left Philadelphia to enter the distinguished private collection of Arthur Stone Dewing, who, in due course bequeathed them to Harvard's Fogg Museum. Harvard's gain was Philadelphia's loss, but under the circumstances we may feel doubly grateful for the perspicacity and generosity of Mr. J.T. Morris.

The Victory Symbolized by the Museum's Coin

In 396, the year of Dionysios's raid, the Syracusans had experienced a bewildering series of checks and successes in their ongoing confrontation with the Carthaginian garrison that climaxed with Himilcon placing Syracuse under siege by land and sea. For his headquarters he arrogantly took up residence in theextramural Temple of Zeus,
about 2.5 kilometers away from the Cyane-Persophone sanctuary. Hamil-
con’s undoing came after he had unleashed his North African “Gnosis” to plunder the twin tem-

tles of Demeter and Persophone, since shortly after that his siege army was struck by a highly conta-
gious, lethal plague (smallpox, according to Hans Zimser; see box on “The Plague”). Dionysian, oppor-
tunistic as ever, then seized his chance to lead the aforementioned nocturnal raid against the Punic
camp which brought him past Cyane-
Persophone’s sanctuary. The raid
broke the siege and brought about
Hamilcon’s eventual disgrace and

Later tradition is explicit in attrib-
uting Syracuse’s salvation to the
Punic general’s desecration of Syra-
cuse’s temples: it is Demeter and
Persophone who send the plague
after Hamilcon has plundered their
sanctuaries. As we have seen, the
beginning of Euainetos’s decac-

drachma series may be dated to the

same year, 346 B.C. The ‘victory’
symbolized by its racing quadriga
must therefore be the city’s recent
deliverance. This event surely
provides a better explanation for the
design than Dionysos’s farcical
attempt six years later to monopolize
the games at Olympia, where his
victory was ridiculed and his prize
teams of horses ran into each other
on the track! The captured arms
in the exorcise reiterates the motif of
military victory, perhaps mainly
for the benefit of the mercenaries
whose services the new coin issues were
theoretically intended to secure. On
the reverse mysterious nymph
would once again inspire the Syra-
cusan people to recall their debt of
thanks to the timely intervention of
their ancestral gods. And finally, on
a deeper level, the unforgettable
image of Cyane-Persophone must
symbolize mankind’s ultimate tri-
mphant: in her role as the Bride of
Hades and Queen of the Under-
world, Persophone provided most
Greeks of this period with their
chief hope for a life after death,
surely a more profound message
and one more in sympathy with the
aspirations of this complex and

serves now as editor for its final publication
series, to which he has contributed the opening

expository volume.
His latest field research is being undertaken at
the Late Bronze Age

settlement at

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northwest Egypt.

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