



The Coinage of Agathokles of Syracuse: Sicilian and Hellenistic Influences

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[PLATE 00]

Abstract. Agathokles of Syracuse stands at the intersection of Sicilian tyranny and Hellenistic monarchy. The only contemporary evidence for how he related to these two styles of rule is his coinage. Where many scholars have seen this coinage as evidence for a transition from one style of rule to the other, I argue that it demonstrates his continuous engagement with and adaptation of Macedonian styles of representation from the very beginning of his rule, but also the enduring significance of the local Sicilian context to Agathokles' decision-making and self-representation.

AGATHOKLES of Syracuse (r. 317-289) is a key figure for understanding the development of ideas of rulership at the beginning of the Hellenistic period.¹ Although not a successor to Alexander, he was in close contact with several of the Diadochoi and apparently recognised by them as a peer. In a telling passage, Diodoros states that when the Diadochoi took up royal titles, during the year of the kings (305/304 BC), Agathokles:

... νομίζων μήτε δυνάμεσι μήτε χώρα μήτε τοῖς πραχθεῖσι λείπεσθαι τούτων ἑαυτὸν ἀνηγόρευσε βασιλέα. καὶ διάδημα μὲν οὐκ ἔκρινεν ἔχειν· ἐφόρει γὰρ αἰεὶ στέφανον, ὃν κατὰ τὴν ἐπίθεσιν τῆς τυραννίδος ἕκ τινος ἱερωσύνης περικείμενος οὐκ ἀπέθετο περὶ τῆς δυναστείας ἀγωνιζόμενος.

... thought that he did not lag behind them in power, territory, or deeds, and declared himself king. Yet he decided not to have a diadem, because he always wore a *stephanos*, which he had when he seized the tyranny on account of a priesthood and did not remove while he was contending for power.²

This passage demonstrates that Agathokles, receptive to the developing features of Hellenistic kingship, was nevertheless attached to his own, highly effective local tradition of autocracy. How did these two styles of rulership interact, and did the *stephanos* always take precedence over the diadem? Scholarly opinion has changed over time. Freeman and Finley, inspired by parallels drawn between Agathokles and Dionysios I by ancient sources,³ downplayed the significance of Agathokles' assumption of the kingship and placed him firmly in the context of Sicilian tyranny, as its culmination or its last gasp.⁴ By contrast, Berve and Consolo Langher presented

¹ Key works on Agathokles: Tillyard (1908); Berve (1953); Meister (1984); Consolo Langher (2000).

² D.S. 20.54.1, cf. 19.9.7. For the date, see Gruen (1985), pp. 253-72.

³ e.g. Polyb. 15.35; D.S. 20.63.3, 20.78; Polyae. 5.3.2.

⁴ Freeman (1891-1894), pp. 4.371-2, with A.J. Evans' supplement pp. 487-91; Finley (1979), p. 106.

Agathokles as breaking with classical tyranny in favour of a new, Hellenistic style of rule. They have been widely followed.⁵ In 2006, Lewis synthesised these two views, arguing that Agathokles ought to be seen as following both traditions at once, embracing aspects of Hellenistic rule, but unable to ‘step outside’ the Syracusan *polis*.⁶

The iconography of Agathokles’ coins is key evidence for any of these perspectives since it is the only contemporary evidence for the self-representation of the government headed by Agathokles. It has been well-studied by proponents of the first two views, but there is no interpretation of it in the context of Lewis’ synthesis. This paper aims to rectify that.

Summary of Agathokles’ Coinage

Agathokles’ coinage is large, consisting of a range of series in gold, electrum, silver and bronze. Scholarship on it is characterised by isolated studies of individual metals and denominations. The only overall studies are Barclay Head’s 1874 article which is fundamental, but predates all hoard and excavation data, and Buda’s 1969/70 article which did not use them.⁷ Instead, most research has focussed on individual issues. The coinage is usually divided into three periods, based on the legends on the precious metal coinage. This division is useful for thinking about the beginning of issues, but probably should not be employed rigidly.

The first period began at some point after Agathokles came to power in 317 BC. It comprises gold drachms depicting Apollo on the obverse and a racing biga with a *triskeles* in the field on the reverse, loosely imitating Philip II’s gold staters;⁸ silver tetradrachms depicting Arethousa on the obverse and a racing quadriga with a *triskeles* overhead on the reverse, closely imitating earlier Syracusan issues;⁹ and silver *pegasoi* with a *triskeles* on the reverse.¹⁰ A rare silver coin with Apollo on the obverse and a *triskeles* on the reverse seems to be a drachm and has the same obverse as the gold drachms.¹¹ A gold diobol depicting Kore/bull and a very rare gold obol showing a bull forepart/grain ear, which probably accompanies it, have been assigned here as well.¹² All of these coins bear the legend ΣΥΡΑΚΟΣΙΩΝ.¹³

⁵ Berve (1953), pp. 67-77; Berve (1967), pp. 1.441-57; Consolo Langher (2000) especially pp. 263-82. Followed by Lehmler (2005) especially pp. 65-8; Zambon (2006), pp. 77-94; Lanteri (2011); Santagati (2011), pp. 54-5.

⁶ Lewis (2006), pp. 45-59

⁷ Head (1874); Buda (1969-70)

⁸ e.g. *SNG ANS* 776-781.

⁹ e.g. *SNG ANS* 632-643.

¹⁰ e.g. *SNG ANS* 554-560.

¹¹ e.g. *BMC* 353. There is a matching bronze denomination: e.g. *SNG ANS* 546-549.

¹² e.g. *BMC* 336-341 and *SNG ANS* 1393. The Kore/Bull gold coins occur in only two hoards, both of Agathoklean date: Akrai 1995 = Manenti (2013) and *CH* 7.59. The latter is decisive; it otherwise consists solely of Agathoklean gold/electrum and Carthaginian series IV electrum (late 310s BC: Jenkins & Lewis (1963)).

¹³ Jenkins (1968), pp. 151ff. divided this first period into two, one containing the gold imitation *philippeioi* and *pegasoi* and beginning in 317, followed by another containing the tetradrachms and running until 306/5 BC. This system is followed by *SNG ANS*. Jenkins’ justification was ‘there are

The second period began some time after Agathokles' invasion of Africa in 310 BC and marked the first appearance of Agathokles' name, in the adjectival form ΑΓΑΘΟΚΛΕΙΟΣ.¹⁴ It consists of rare gold staters and a new set of tetradrachms with types Kore/Nike.¹⁵ The stater bears a head wearing an elephant scalp on the obverse and a winged Athena Nike on the reverse. The reverse legend of these initially read ΑΓΑΘΟΚΛΕΟΣ, but the die was later recut to ΑΓΑΘΟΚΛΕΙΟΣ. The tetradrachms belong to two distinct series, the 'fine' and the 'barbaric', originally distinguished by style, but subsequently upheld by two independent die studies. They probably derive from two separate mints.¹⁶ Both depict a long-haired Kore on the obverse, usually identified by an inscription, and Nike erecting a trophy on the reverse, with a *triskeles* in the field. On the majority of the emissions, the obverse and reverse legends read ΚΟΡΑΣ/ΑΓΑΘΟΚΛΕΙΟΣ, but the earliest and latest issues of the 'fine' series bear the legends ΚΟΡΑΣ/ΑΓΑΘΟΚΛΕΟΣ and ΣΥΡΑΚΟΣΙΩΝ/ΑΓΑΘΟΚΛΕΙΟΣ instead.¹⁷ There is no clear reason why the beginning of this second series should indicate the end of the gold or the *pegasoi* of the first period; these may have continued to be minted alongside the coins of the second period. Similarly, there is no particular reason why the beginning of the third period should mark the end of the second.

Some of the coins of the third period are characterised by the legend ΑΓΑΘΟΚΛΕΟΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΟΣ, so they must date after Agathokles took that title around 304 BC. These include a gold octobol with Athena on the obverse and a winged thunderbolt on the reverse.¹⁸ These have a complicated pattern of die links indicating concentrated minting over a short period of time, perhaps with the 150 or 300 silver talants of gold which Agathokles received from the Carthaginians in the peace treaty of 306/05.¹⁹ A gold triobol with the same design presumably belongs to the same period, but has the inscription ΣΥΡΑΚΟΣΙΩΝ.²⁰ There is a gold tetrobol, with the same design as the Apollo/biga drachmas of the first series, which shares all of its control marks with the octobols and hence belongs to this third period.²¹ This suggests the continued presence of those drachms in circulation (as hoard evidence confirms) and perhaps

some connections between [the gold coins] and the *pegasi*, but none with the tetradrachms'. However, there is no supporting hoard evidence, since there are no hoards containing both *pegasoi* and imitation *philippeioi*. The large-scale redistribution of wealth (largely seized from his exiled or executed opponents) carried out by Agathokles at the beginning of his reign in 317 (D.S. 19.9.5) and the war with the exiles and Greek centres which followed seem to justify the minting of tetradrachms at the start of his reign.

¹⁴ *IGCH* 2151 is the key evidence for the date. It was deposited before this second series began. It contains 444 Corinthian Ravel V *pegasoi*, including only one example from the A-Y series, the last to be issued before the Ptolemaic conquest of Corinth in 308 BC. Uncertainties arise: series A-Y began a few years before 308 BC, but it is not clear how many (Brice (2011), pp. 67-72); how long it took *pegasoi* minted in Corinth to reach Sicily is not clear; and, of course, it is not clear how long after the deposition of *IGCH* 2151 that the Kore/Nike tetradrachms began to be issued.

¹⁵ e.g. *Basel und Sammlung Ludwig* 511; *SNG ANS* 664-681.

¹⁶ Ierardi (1995-96), p. 15; Armagrande (2000a), pp. 213, 216, 218-19.

¹⁷ Ierardi (1995-96) and Armagrande (2000) disagree on the order in which these legends were minted. See below, n. 119.

¹⁸ e.g. *SNG ANS* 702-705.

¹⁹ D.S. 20.79.5; Bérend (1998). Ierardi (1995-96) argues that this gold became Agathokles' electrum issues. The electrum's declining gold content and *CH* 7.59 (discussed below) speak against this.

²⁰ e.g. *SNG Manchester* 519.

²¹ e.g. *SNG ANS* 706; Bérend (1998).

indicates that they did not cease to be issued with the start of the second period.²² Several bronze denominations share the winged thunderbolt reverse, some of which have Athena on the obverse and some Artemis.²³ Reduced-weight *pegasoi* belong in this period, since the head of Athena on their obverse is identical to that on the octobols; hoard evidence confirms this association. These *pegasoi* appear to have continued after Agathokles' death, with the *triskeles* replaced by a thunderbolt.²⁴

The electrum issues consist of four denominations: usually given as 10, 25, 50 and 100 litrae.²⁵ The smallest denomination has a head of Kore, similar to that appearing on the bronze Kore/bull coins assigned to the first period (discussed below); the rest have a long-haired Apollo on the obverse. The reverses are, respectively, a cuttlefish, a lyre, a tripod and the head of Artemis. The last is very similar to the depiction of Artemis on the bronze winged thunderbolt coins. The different metal contents of the coins confirm what the stylistic similarities suggest: that they were not all issued at the same time. Jenkins identified four distinct groups with different levels of gold content. The three smallest denominations have high gold content and belong to group A, with the 50 litrae continuing for an extended period, over the course of which their gold content dropped repeatedly (groups B, C and D). The 100 litrae coins also belong to group D. The key evidence for dating them is *CH* 7.59, the largest gold hoard from the time of Agathokles. Though not recorded in perfect detail, its general contents are clear. There were over thirty examples of the 50 litrae and 25 litrae coins, and three examples of the 100 litrae coins. It can therefore safely be concluded that it was deposited after group D had begun. The hoard also contained over sixty gold coins of Agathokles, but none of these are the gold Athena/thunderbolt octobols, which strongly implies that the electrum coins came to an end before the end of the war with Carthage. Several hundred Carthaginian coins in this hoard are unfortunately not recorded in any detail at all, but appear to be mostly from Jenkins/Lewis' fourth period, probably minted in the late 310s, reinforcing the idea that the hoard was deposited during the war.²⁶ Presumably, the declining gold content of the electrum reflects Syracuse's dire economic situation during the war.²⁷

The bronze has been considered in detail by Gàbrici, Holloway, and Buttrey et al.'s publication of the Morgantina excavations.²⁸ Bronze coins with winged thunderbolts uncontroversially belong to Agathokles' third period, corresponding to the gold octobols and triobols. Some of these bear the legend ΣΥΡΑΚΟΣΙΩΝ; most of them bear ΑΓΑΘΟΚΛΕΟΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΟΣ.²⁹ Other bronze series are more problematic. The first has a short-haired Kore on the obverse and a bull on the reverse; the legend ΣΥΡΑΚΟΣΙΩΝ usually appears on the obverse, sometimes on the reverse. These should be associated with the gold Kore/bull coins, but as mentioned above, the exact date of these is not absolutely clear. There are two denominations. The larger one weighs around 10-11g with two dolphins on the reverse, one above and one

²² *IGCH* 2186a.

²³ e.g. *SNG ANS* 708-731, 749-752.

²⁴ e.g. *SNG ANS* 682-686, *IGCH* 2186b; Cantilena (1989).

²⁵ e.g. *SNG ANS* 620; 617-619; 621-631; *SNG Cop.* 701.

²⁶ Jenkins (1977), pp. 24-5.

²⁷ Jenkins (1968).

²⁸ Buttrey et al. (1989), Gàbrici (1927), pp. 78-81; Holloway (1979), pp. 7-95.

²⁹ For examples, see n. 23.

below the bull.³⁰ The smaller denomination weighs around 3-4g, often with a symbol (single dolphin, trident, axe with ΣΩ, club, caduceus) and/or a monogram.³¹ Some of these, with the legend IE in the reverse exergue, belong to Hieron II.³² This exception opens the possibility that some of the other variants may also be non-Agathoklean. Another series has a long-haired Apollo on the obverse and a pegasos on the reverse, with ΣΥΡΑΚΟΣΙΩΝ on the obverse or reverse.³³ These weigh around 4.3-5.8g. The long-haired Apollo on the obverse is shared with the larger three denominations of the electrum. In some cases, the left wing of the Pegasos can be seen.³⁴ This detail is not seen on Syracusan silver *pegasoi* until the reduced-weight *pegasoi* of the third period (perhaps postdating Agathokles), suggesting that these bronzes are also late.³⁵ A rare series of bronzes with Apollo/tripod in two denominations (*c.*3g and *c.*1g), with ΣΥΡΑΚΟΣΙΩΝ on obverse or reverse, share the obverse of this series and the reverse of the 50 litra electrum.³⁶ In hoards these Apollo bronzes are sometimes associated with the Kore/bull coins and sometimes with the bronze coins with winged thunderbolts.³⁷ Both the stylistic connections and hoard evidence seem to indicate that these Apollo bronzes belong after the Kore/bull coins, roughly contemporary with the second period of the precious metal coinage. Three other denominations seem to belong together. Two depict Athena on the obverse and a horseman on the reverse, one weighing around 7.5-9.5g and the other around 3-4g. The third depicts Athena and Pegasos, and weighs 9-10g;³⁸ Athena's helmet design is identical to that on Agathokles' other coins,³⁹ and Pegasos' left wing is again visible. All bear ΣΥΡΑΚΟΣΙΩΝ on the obverse. They appear in one Agathoklean hoard and two hoards primarily composed of material from the reign of Hiketas, suggesting a date at the very end of Agathokles' reign.⁴⁰

Circulation Background

The way Agathokles' coins circulated and the other coins which circulated alongside them provide the context in which Agathokles' coins may have been designed and seen. As we shall see, much of Agathokles' coinage imitates other types; circulation patterns may indicate whether such imitations were intended to ensure that the new coinage was accepted as currency or had other motivations.

³⁰ e.g. *SNG ANS* 5.3.561-571.

³¹ e.g. *BMC Sicily* 365, 371-374, *SNG ANS* 5.3.603-616, 5.3.1195, Gábrici (1927), #224.

³² For a long time this was uncertain: Gábrici (1927), pp. 91 and 175; Holloway (1979), p. 90-1, Buttrey et al. (1989), p. 144. However, examples from the Gela excavations (Griffo, Orlandini & Adamesteanu (1955), p. 207), which Holloway and Buttrey et al. cite as dating before 282 BC, were found with several coins which are certainly Hieronian. The Monte Iato excavations now support a Hieronian date for the IE coins: Frey-Kupper (2013), p. 1.156.

³³ e.g. *SNG ANS* 644-660.

³⁴ e.g. *SNG ANS* 650.

³⁵ e.g. *SNG Cop.* 81, 111.

³⁶ e.g. *SNG ANS* 661-3.

³⁷ *IGCH* 2155; *CH* 9.656; *IGCH* 2190; *IGCH* 2197.

³⁸ e.g. *SNG ANS* 697-701, *SNG Cop.* 774-775.

³⁹ Cantilena (1989), p. 10 n.12; Head (1874), p. 50.

⁴⁰ Akrai 1995 = Manenti (2013); *IGCH* 2197; *IGCH* 2200.

Hoard evidence makes the wider patterns of circulation of precious metal coinage in eastern Sicily in Agathokles' time clear. The great majority of the precious metal consisted of *pegasoi* from Corinth and north-western Greece – hoards often contain several hundred of them.⁴¹ These ceased to be minted after the Ptolemaic conquest of Corinth in 308 BC, but continued to circulate in Sicily for some time.⁴² Second place in hoards after the *pegasoi*, is usually split between the precious metals of Agathokles and those of Carthage and the Siculo-Punic mints. Most hoards also feature a small number of coins from other sources, most commonly gold *Philippeioi* and silver tetradrachms of Alexander and his successors.⁴³ Athenian coins and old tetradrachms and decadrachms from Syracuse under Dionysios are also found intermittently, sometimes in large quantities.⁴⁴ The coins of other Sicilian centres, such as Kamarina, Rhegion, Messene, and Selinous occur intermittently, but never in large quantities.⁴⁵

What bronze was circulating in eastern Sicily is harder to judge. The Timoleontic coins with Zeus Eleutherios on the obverse and a horse or thunderbolt on the reverse were the most recent major Syracusan issue before Agathokles. Dionysios' bronze drachm, depicting Athena with dolphins and starfish, probably continued to circulate. His bronze litrae with hippocamps certainly circulated throughout Agathokles' reign, since they are found in Hieronian contexts at Morgantina.⁴⁶ Morgantina also suggests that bronze from other east Sicilian settlements, like Kamarina and Tauromenion, was in circulation, as well as Carthaginian bronzes.⁴⁷ The data from Monte Iato and western Sicily gathered by Frey-Kupper reflects a different circulation system in which Punic coins predominated and east Sicilian coins were in the minority (apparently the inverse of bronze circulation in eastern Sicily), but the non-Punic component there is similar to that suggested by Morgantina: dominated by Syracuse, but also containing coins of several other local mints.⁴⁸ At both sites, bronze from outside Sicily is rare.⁴⁹

Agathokles' own coins had several different circulation patterns, as indicated by both hoard and stray find data. His gold issues of all periods appear only in south-eastern Sicily, within a region roughly coterminous with the hinterland of Syracuse itself.⁵⁰ His silver *pegasoi* are found over a larger area, including Gela and Enna – one was even found in a tomb in Taras.⁵¹ This roughly matches the distribution pattern of non-Syracusan *pegasoi* which concentrate in the eastern portion of Sicily

⁴¹ e.g. *IGCH* 2147, 2151, 2170, 2180, 2182, 2188, *CH* 6.21.

⁴² See n. 14.

⁴³ e.g. *IGCH* 2151, 2183, 2204, *CH* 6.21. Williams & Burnett (1998), pp. 380-3.

⁴⁴ e.g. *IGCH* 2184 / *CH* 9.633, *CH* 5.28, 6.21, 7.58.

⁴⁵ e.g. *IGCH* 2183, 2185b, 2238.

⁴⁶ Buttrey et al. (1989) ch. 4 no. 54.

⁴⁷ Buttrey et al. (1989) ch. 4 nos 52-53.

⁴⁸ Frey-Kupper (2013), pp. 13-15.

⁴⁹ Exceptions tend to match sources of extra-Sicilian silver: Buttrey et al. (1989) ch. 2, nos 43-49 (Rhegion); 5 (Terina); 458-461, 479-480 (Philip II, Alexander, Philip III); 463 (Leukas), 466 (fourth century Athens), 467-472 (Corinth), 478 (fourth century Lampsakos).

⁵⁰ *IGCH* 2176 (Ragusa), 2177 (Gela), 2185a (Camarina), 2186 (Pachino), 2204 (Serra Orlando); *CH* 7.59 (Camarina); Manenti (2013) (Akrai) & Buttrey et al. (1989) ch. 2 #327 (Morgantina).

⁵¹ *IGCH* 2179 (Syracuse), 2180 (Megara Hyblaea), 2183 (Capo Soprano), 2185a (Camarina), 2186b (Pachino) *CH* 9.670 (Enna), Manenti (2013) (Akrai); Travaglini (1982), pp. 73ff. (Taras).

and the shores of the Ionian Gulf. Agathokles' reduced-weight *pegasoi* seem to be tightly restricted to the same area as the gold, but there are only a few hoards.⁵² His tetradrachms concentrate in the southeast of the island, but a few are also found in western Sicily and the territory of the Bruttii in the Calabrian interior.⁵³ Agathokles' electrum is quite different, being equally split between Sicily and Calabria.⁵⁴ The distribution of the bronze coinage is different again. It is mostly attested by stray finds, which tend to indicate losses in everyday use, rather than hoarding. The picture of where the bronze travelled in normal commerce is thus better than that for the precious metals, but with the exception of a few well-published sites, most notably Morgantina and Monte Iato, it tends to be much more difficult to say when deposition actually occurred. All of Agathokles' bronze is found throughout both halves of Sicily, Magna Graecia and Campania. The bronzes of his last period, bearing his name and the royal title, are also found in quantity along the east coast of the Adriatic and in Veneto; others appear in the Adriatic much more occasionally. This pattern is similar to that of the bronze coins of Dionysios I and Hieron II, but distinct from that of Timoleon.⁵⁵ These various circulation patterns should be approached with caution, as new discoveries may modify the picture (evidence from North Africa is particularly limited), but the fact that different issues circulated differently may result from them being used to pay different groups of people. Thus, the gold and silver *pegasoi* may have paid primarily to people who remained in Sicily. The tetradrachms and especially the electrum also reached southern Italy. The bronze was used by people in all these locations; its wider range perhaps results from commerce, perhaps also from mercenaries returning with it to their homes in Campania and Cisalpine Gaul.

First Series

Pegasoi

Some of Agathokles' coins simply continue business as usual and their iconography is shaped by economic concerns, i.e. the desire for them be accepted in the same way as an existing denomination (with the result that they would have the same circulation pattern as those imitated). The prime example is Agathokles' *pegasoi* (**Pl. 00, 1**), which essentially continued the design of the Syracusan staters issued since the time of Timoleon (**Pl. 00, 2**); the latter themselves imitated the design of the Corinthian *pegasoi* which were the main silver currency of eastern Sicily. Agathokles only tinkered with these, switching obverse and reverse, decorating Athena's helmet

⁵² *IGCH* 2181 (Palazzolo Acreide), 2185b (Camarina), 2186b (Pachino), Manenti 2013 (Akrai).

⁵³ Arethousa/Quadriga: *IGCH* 2150 (Canicattini), 2151 (Pachino), 2154 (Cefalu), 2178 (Selinunte), 2179 (Syracuse), 2180 (Megara Hyblaea), 2181 (Palazzolo Acreide), 2182 (Cammarata), 2185b (Camarina), *CH* 4.3 (Sila, Calabria), 5.28a (Gela?), 9.633 (Mineo = *IGCH* 2184), Frey-Kupper 2013 no. 577 (Monte Iato), Boehringer (2008) (Gela). Kore/Nike: *IGCH* 2154 (Cefalu), 2179 (Syracuse), 2180 (Megara Hyblaea), 2182 (Cammarata), 2183 (Capo Soprano), 2185b (Camarina), 2186a (Pachino), *CH* 5.28a (Gela?), 8.274 (Kroton), Manenti (2013) (Akrai), Boehringer (2008) (Gela). Unspecified: *CH* 5.28 (Gela environs), 6.21 ('Southeast Sicily'), 7.58 (Camarina), 8.222 (Morgantina); 10.404 (Palermo = *CH* 4.18), 10.405 ('South Sicily' = *CH* 4.18).

⁵⁴ Sicily: *IGCH* 2158 ('Sicily'), 2176 (Ragusa), 2185 (Camarina), 2197 (Gela), *CH* 7.59 (Camarina). Calabria: *IGCH* 1944 (Reggio), 1945 (Pazzano), 1946 (Cariati), 1968 (Scandale), *CH* 8.97 (Croton).

⁵⁵ Gorini (1993); Gorini (2002).

with a griffin in conformity with her appearance on Macedonian coinage, and adding a *triskeles* (on which more shortly).⁵⁶ Thus, Agathokles did put his own stamp on the *pegasoi*, which is significant given that they bore a widely trusted design. This indicates a desire to proclaim his existence and authority despite the economic force favouring iconographic conservatism. But the wider circulation of the *pegasoi* suggests there was no specifically Agathoklean message in the iconography as a whole. The dominant concern of the design was ensuring that they inspired the same confidence in the marketplace as the Corinthian staters. Evidence of this is the fact that this iconography was subsequently used for the reduced-weight staters; it was an iconography that Agathokles expected to be trusted even when the coin was overvalued.

Bulls

The bull which appears on Agathoklean gold and bronze coins may be another example of the continuation of a traditional type that enjoyed widespread currency. On Agathokles' coins there is a female head on the obverse and a bull on the reverse (**Pl. 00, 3**). The bull may be in the process of charging, or collapsing after a sacrifice.⁵⁷ Agathokles' bulls have regularly been interpreted as referring to the Syracusan spring of Kyane, where Herakles had instituted a sacrifice of bulls by immersion.⁵⁸ This interpretation is based on the set of bronze bulls that feature a club and the inscription IE (short for *ἱερά* on this reading), some with the head of Herakles on the obverse.⁵⁹ But, as stated above, these coins belong to Hieron II.⁶⁰ The bull was ubiquitous in Greek art and thought and common on coinage.⁶¹ It could be associated with almost any god. If a specific identification was desired, the depiction had to make that clear with other features, like the club on the IE coins. Of the bulls which actually belong to Agathokles, some feature axes, caducei and tridents, flowers, corn ears, thunderbolts, grape bunches, and other generic subsidiary symbols. The majority, including all of the larger denomination, feature dolphins. This variety suggests that a specific deity was not intended.

The bull was a traditional metaphor of value, which made it a reasonable choice of motif to reinforce the currency of a token bronze coinage generally.⁶² The circulation context reinforced this. Bulls had been common on coins of South Italy and Sicily from the fifth century; very close parallels to the bull on Agathokles' coins occur at Thourioi and Poseidonia in Italy, and a large number of mints in Sicily, especially in the interior and the southeast.⁶³ The latter are especially significant, since the inland

⁵⁶ Caccamo Caltabiano (2010), p. 280.

⁵⁷ The latter seems less likely: depictions of the actual moment of sacrifice are very rare in Greek art and those that do exist almost always feature the sacrificer holding a knife or axe. The examples given by van Straten (1995), pp. 108-109, 186-92, come almost exclusively from Hellenistic and Imperial Kyzikos and Byzantion (the closest parallels to the coins are *I.Kyzikos* no. 7, fig. 8, and no. 16, fig. 18).

⁵⁸ *D.S.* 5.4.2; Holloway (1979), p. 91; Rutter (1997), p. 173.

⁵⁹ e.g. Buttrey et al. (1989) ch. 2 #331.

⁶⁰ See n. 32.

⁶¹ McNerney (2010).

⁶² e.g. Hom. *Il.* 23.703-5; McNerney (2010), pp. 227-33.

⁶³ Poseidonia: *SNG Cop.* 1311-1322; Thourioi: *SNG Oxford* 279-304, *SNG Cop.* 1405-1503; Abakainon: *SNG ANS* 1295; Adranon: *SNG Cop.* 12; Alountion: *SNG ANS* 1192; Campanians: *SNG*

centres of south-eastern Sicily formed Agathokles' central base during his rise to power. Agathokles' bull coins adopted a motif already current on bronze coins in this area, enabling him (and the soldiers in his pay) to pay those centres in a type they were familiar with.⁶⁴ Thus, like the *pegasoi*, the iconography of this type may have been motivated more by economic factors than any desire to send a message about Agathokles or his regime.

Arethousa & Quadriga

Agathokles' first set of tetradrachms (**Pl. 00, 4**) also continued a pre-existing type, with the head of Arethousa on the obverse and a racing quadriga on the reverse, which had begun at Syracuse under the *Geomoroi* and reached its peak with the signed tetradrachms and decadrachms of Dionysios I. Versions of the design were repeatedly adopted by other Sicilian cities in the late fifth century, and continued to be minted by Siculo-Punic cities subsequently.⁶⁵ Agathokles' tetradrachms owe their specific design to the obverse of decadrachms of Euainetos (**Pl. 00, 5**) and the reverse of decadrachms of Kimon (**Pl. 00, 6**); the combination was already made on Syracusan tetradrachms in the first half of the fourth century (Tudeer no. 106), which are probably the direct model for Agathokles' own coins.⁶⁶ The only significant change Agathokles made to these was the replacement of the Nike on the reverse with the *triskeles*. Thus, on the one hand, the case is analogous to the minting of the *pegasoi*. Because it was a trusted type, it was a reasonable choice for Agathokles' tetradrachms on economic grounds. The original coins were still circulating in Agathokles' time, as were the similar tetradrachms of the Siculo-Punic mints of *Σύσ* and *Ῥῆ Μλqrt*. However, if the sole motivation was the production of coins which were widely accepted, Agathokles could have minted all his silver as *pegasoi*, which are far more common than old quadriga coins in contemporary hoards. This suggests that economic factors are not sufficient to explain the revival of tetradrachms of any type. Further, given the decision to mint tetradrachms, the Arethousa/Quadriga type was an obvious choice in order to ensure the coins' currency, but not the only reasonable choice: Agathokles could have imitated the Athenian owls, which also circulated in Sicily in large numbers, or the Alexander tetradrachms which both circulated in Sicily and were probably familiar to many of his prospective mercenaries.⁶⁷

Instead, he chose to return to this typically Syracusan type. The appearance of shiny new examples of a Syracusan coinage whose circulating examples were now rather worn, may have served to proclaim the restoration of Syracuse to past prominence as a result of Agathokles' leadership.⁶⁸ The specific iconography of the tetradrachms

ANS 1234; Gela: *SNG Cop.* 282-285, *SNG ANS* 105-122; Kamarina: *SNG ANS* 1312; Katana: *SNG ANS* 1270; Kephaloïdion: *SNG ANS* 1331; Tauromenion: *SNG ANS* 1109-1111.

⁶⁴ Sicilian bronze issued in large part to enable troops to pay locals in central Sicily: Puglisi (2010), p. 189.

⁶⁵ Fischer-Bossert (1998).

⁶⁶ Fischer-Bossert (1998), pp. 31-2. The same combination is also found on tetradrachms from Morgantina and the Siculo-Punic mints and Fischer-Bossert suggests, reasonably, that Tudeer no. 106 is the common ancestor.

⁶⁷ See nn. 43 and 44 above.

⁶⁸ Ierardi (1995-96), p. 3, sees them as a reference to Dionysios and to the Deinomenids. I suspect that contemporaries may have been more aware of the circulating coins as 'old' rather than 'of Dionysios/Gelon'.

may still have resonated. Arethousa remained a central symbol of Syracusan local and Panhellenic identity in the Hellenistic Age.⁶⁹ The quadriga victory was the foremost symbol of aristocracy, especially in Sicily, which justified the pre-eminence of an autocrat or elite group within the community by the prosperity and fame which they would bring through their excellence.⁷⁰ These two themes of Syracusan identity and aristocratic excellence demonstrated through competition on the Panhellenic stage had been important parts of the self-representation of Dionysios and the Deinomenids. To the extent that the iconography was actively noticed, it thus associated Agathokles with traditional Syracusan types of leadership.⁷¹ Two signs that this may have been intended are the appearance of the *triskeles* on the reverse (discussed below) and the use of a similar image on Agathokles' first gold coinage.

Apollo & Biga

Agathokles' gold Apollo/biga coins (**Pl. 00, 7**) imitate Philip II's gold *Philippeioi* (**Pl. 00, 8**). Lehmler argues that this type, like the *pegasoi*, was simply one that had currency and that Macedonian imagery became important to Agathokles only later in his reign.⁷² This may well have been a factor in its selection, but it was not the only or most prominent gold type which was current in eastern Sicily: Agathokles could have imitated Alexander's Athena/Nike coins, the gold *pegasoi* issued by Timoleon, or the various Carthaginian designs.⁷³ No other gold-issuing state in the West imitated the *Philippeioi*.⁷⁴ Nor could they be mistaken for *Philippeioi* by users, since they are half the weight. Their adoption by Agathokles had a political dimension. The reported original meaning of the *Philippeioi*, the commemoration of Philip's chariot victory at Olympia,⁷⁵ obviously had little relevance to Sicily, but the more general message of aristocratic excellence matched Agathokles' contemporary tetradrachms. Moreover, just as the tetradrachms suggested earlier autocrats, like the Deinomenids, so the gold staters, as imitations of the *Philippeioi*, referred to Philip, who had recently raised Macedon from obscurity to the most important power in the world. As Philip had done for Macedon, so Agathokles would do for Syracuse. Thus, Agathokles' earliest coinage employed both traditional Sicilian imagery and novel imagery from overseas to communicate the same message of revival and personal excellence to the populace. Far from picking up Macedonian motifs only at a late stage in his career, they were part of his iconographic armoury from the beginning, capable of being combined with motifs from other sources as part of a coherent whole.

Triskeles

Almost all the precious metal coins in Agathokles' first series bear the symbol which we call a *triskeles* or *triskelion*, three legs emerging from a single point (**Pl. 00, 1, 4, 7, 11**). Its single earlier appearance on Syracusan coinage appears to be purely

⁶⁹ Boehringer (1929), pp. 96-102; Pind. *N.1.1*; Timaios *FGrH* 566 F 41a-c; Strabo 6.2.4.

⁷⁰ Thuc.6.16.2; Mitchell (2013), pp. 57-80; Antonaccio (2013), pp. 198-200; Morgan (2015), pp. 69-80.

⁷¹ Head (1874), p. 8; Lanteri (2011), p. 252; Santagati (2011), p. 54-5. Pind. *O.1*; P. 1-3; Paus.6.12.1.

⁷² Lehmler (2005), pp. 65-6.

⁷³ *Alexandreioi*: *SNG Lockett* 995-6; Carthaginian: Jenkins & Lewis (1963) group IV.

⁷⁴ A series of Neapolitan triobols include the *triskeles*, showing that they imitate Agathokles' coins, not the *philippeioi*: Giesecke (1928), p. 98; Burnett (1977), p. 120.

⁷⁵ Plut. *Alex.4.9*.

metrological, indicating that a coin was worth three onkia.⁷⁶ Elsewhere it appears on a few east Aegean coinages (most notably as a symbol at Aspendos), deriving from a common main type on Lycian dynastic coinage, with three hooks extending from a central ring, which Wilson considers a solar symbol.⁷⁷ It appears as a symbol on a number of early third century Italian coinages.⁷⁸ On Athenian pottery it is a common shield device down to the middle of the fifth century.⁷⁹ On Syracusan coins, it became Agathokles' 'personal badge,' like Seleukos I's anchor and Lysimachos' lion.⁸⁰ This personal association is clear from its sudden appearance on his first issues and its complete disappearance after his death. Its ubiquity on Agathokles' first coin series in particular strengthens the idea that he wanted viewers to associate the new coins with himself.

In addition to its function as an identifying symbol of Agathokles himself, many scholars argue that the *triskeles* also proclaimed Agathokles' ambition to rule all Sicily and hence hostility to the Carthaginians.⁸¹ Obviously, Sicily is triangular, and an alternative name for the island, Τρινακρία, shows that the Greeks were conscious of this from the fifth century or earlier,⁸² but this would be the earliest use of the *triskeles* symbol to refer to Sicily; all explicit evidence of the *triskeles* as a symbol of Sicily is Roman or later.⁸³

Second Series

Male Head with Elephant Scalp & Athena Nike

The most striking of Agathokles' coins is the rare gold stater (**Pl. 00, 9**) which is a very close imitation of Ptolemy I's second set of tetradrachms (**Pl. 00, 10**). It depicts a male head wearing an elephant scalp on the obverse and a winged Athena/Nike, with a small owl, on the reverse. Since Ptolemy's coins are quite rare in Sicily and the imitation is in a different metal from the original, the act of imitation probably had ideological significance. As scholars have long pointed out, it shows Agathokles' efforts to present himself on a par with the Diadochoi and to emphasise his close links with Ptolemy in particular.⁸⁴ Scholars have perceived a complicated set of

⁷⁶ *SNG ANS* 544. It coexists with a coin bearing a swastika (*SNG ANS* 542-543), which is identified as a four-*onkia* coin: Holloway (1969-70), pp. 134-5.

⁷⁷ Wilson (2000), p. 50.

⁷⁸ Seltman (1911), Consolo-Langher (1995), pp. 102-05, and Caccamo Caltabiano (2000) all argue that the appearance of the *triskeles* on Italian coins reflects Agathoklean control of various mints; Burnett (1977), pp. 119-21 argues against this. Most examples of the *triskeles* in Italy seem to date after the beginning of Agathokles' rule and the Neapolitan triobol mentioned in n. 74 above is undoubtedly derived from Agathokles' coinage. Such borrowings, however, need not indicate that Agathokles had political control over the mints.

⁷⁹ e.g. Beazley nos 8007, 10723, 42143, 302083. Variants occur: nos 11932, 301887, 302028 with one leg; 5170 with four legs; 202186 with two legs and two wings; shield *parasema* from Olympia with three wings instead of legs: Koenigs-Philipp (1980).

⁸⁰ Wilson (2000), p. 40; Caccamo Caltabiano (2010), p. 279.

⁸¹ Buda (1969-70), p. 198; Borba Florenzano (2005), p. 27; Lehmler (2005), p. 63; Lanteri (2011), p. 251.

⁸² Thuc. 6.2.2; Timaios *FGrH* 566 F 164; D.S. 5.2.1; Strabo 6.2.1; the name rationalises Θρινακρία in *Od.* 11.107-135, 19.275.

⁸³ Wilson (2000), pp. 41-6.

⁸⁴ Evans (1894), pp. 240-2; Consolo Langher (2000), p. 190; Dahmen (2007), pp. 42, 49, 116-17; Caccamo Caltabiano (2010), p. 279; Lanteri (2011), pp. 256-7.

messages in Ptolemy's tetradrachms. The obverse replaced a portrayal of Herakles or Alexander-in-the-guise-of-Herakles with a clear portrayal of a divine Alexander, as shown by the horns of Ammon and the *aigis*. The elephant scalp recalled Alexander's victories in India and claim to world empire, but may also have had specific resonances for Ptolemy, who had participated in the Indian campaign and had subsequently retained Egypt by defeating Perdikkas' elephants at the Battle of the Fort of Camels. Lorber proposes that the design had specific connotations for native Egyptian viewers as well.⁸⁵ Thus, the tetradrachms emphasised connections between Ptolemy and Alexander. These specific messages do not fit Agathokles, who had no connection with Alexander or India and who never fought an elephant in battle.⁸⁶ The omission of the horn of Ammon from Agathokles' coin suggests lack of interest in these connotations.⁸⁷

The fact that elephants were found in Africa was already common knowledge in Agathokles' time and this may have implications for his use of the motif.⁸⁸ In the Roman period, the figure of a woman wearing an elephant scalp represents the personification of Africa (as well as Alexandria and Egypt). This representation of Africa seems to have been popularised by the Numidian kings in the first century BC.⁸⁹ It is possible that the figure on Agathokles' stater represents a very early example of this motif. Personification of Africa/Libya before Agathokles is probably attested by a statue at Delphi of Battos in a chariot with Cyrene and Libya, mentioned by Pausanias.⁹⁰ However, depictions of Libya found at Cyrene take a very different form: a Berber woman with ringlets and a heavy cloak.⁹¹ Thus, if Agathokles' stater depicts a personification of Africa it did so in an innovative way, prompted by the Ptolemaic coinage that it imitates, in which case the context of the borrowing is important for interpreting it. It suggests that the elephant scalp should not be seen as indicating a personification of Africa, but mastery over it, just as Ptolemy's coinage depicts Alexander as conqueror of India and Alexander's coinage shows Herakles as conqueror of the Nemean Lion. Whether Agathokles' coin should be seen as depicting Agathokles himself or a divinity as conqueror of Africa (success in Africa was attributed to both Kore and Athena), rather than a representation of Alexander as conqueror of India, seems ultimately unprovable. But on any of these interpretations, the coinage implies that Agathokles' African Expedition is a feat equivalent to Alexander's invasion of India, an implication of which we find hints in the literary sources.⁹²

⁸⁵ D.S. 18.34; Mørholm, *EHC*, p. 63; Price, *Alexander*, pp. 33-4; Lorber (2012).

⁸⁶ Carthaginians did not begin to use elephants in battle until the third century BC: Hoyos (2010), pp. 162-3.

⁸⁷ Ierardi (1995-96), p. 18; Troncoso (2013), p. 259

⁸⁸ Hdt. 4.191.

⁸⁹ Leglay (1966), p. 1239; *LIMC* I, s.v. Africa, Aigyptos, Alexandria.

⁹⁰ Paus. 10.15.6.

⁹¹ Robinson (1927), pp. ccxlviii-ccl; Catani (1986).

⁹² Plaut. *Mostell.* 775; D.S. 17.23. Note the representation of Eumachos' expedition into the Carthaginian hinterland as a journey to the kind of exotic place that exists at the edge of the world (D.S. 20.57-58), and the use of elephants by geographers as a proof that Africa and India were connected (Aristot. *De Caelo* 298a).

Ptolemy's reverse depiction of Athena, with distinctively archaic swallowtail drapery, appears to be drawn from Athenian prize amphorae and depictions of Athena as a subsidiary symbol on Alexander's coins. Havelock suggests that the former may reflect a message of victory, spear-won land, and Ptolemy's claim to be defender of the Greeks, while Brett connects the latter to Macedonian identity, as Athena Alkidemos, patron goddess of Pella.⁹³ These specific messages (if they are there) would have been irrelevant to Agathokles, but the generic message of victory fitted and the wings on his version of Athena enhance this aspect. For Agathokles, Athena may also have had a specific relevance, referring to the morale-boosting auspicious appearance of owls before his first battle in Africa.⁹⁴

Although this coin is regularly cited as evidence for Agathokles' transformation into a Hellenistic dynast, it also emphasises that the history of the Diadochoi did not exactly fit Agathokles and had to be rejigged and generalised for his use.

Kore & Nike

Agathokles' second set of tetradrachms depict a long-haired Kore on the obverse and Nike nailing up a trophy on the reverse (**Pl. 00, 11**). The reverse's message of victory is clear.⁹⁵ The motif was almost new to coinage, appearing earlier on a rare issue of mid-fourth century Lampsakene staters (some of which occur in a hoard from Sicily) and on a near-contemporary emission of Seleukos.⁹⁶ However, it was a common motif in Greek art generally, appearing on fifth century Athenian pottery,⁹⁷ on the balustrade of the Temple of Athena Nike on the Acropolis,⁹⁸ and on a number of seals.⁹⁹ Rather than identifying any one of these as the model, it is probably best to see them as evidence of a widespread motif which Agathokles drew upon and unobtrusively associated with himself by the addition of the legend and *triskeles*.

The female obverse is also very explicit. An important aspect of female heads on earlier Sicilian coinage was their polysemy; in different cases and to different audiences they could signify Artemis, local springs like Arethousa and Kyane, Persephone, Demeter, possibly even Tanit.¹⁰⁰ Agathokles' tetradrachm allows no ambiguity: the new head's design borrows from the contemporary depiction of Demeter on Metapontine coinage,¹⁰¹ and is clearly marked out as different from the usual female heads on earlier Sicilian issues. From the second sub-issue onwards, it is even labelled ΚΟΡΑΣ, so that there can be no doubt. Possibly, this commemorates the burning of the ships on Agathokles' arrival in Africa, and the special relationship

⁹³ Brett (1950), pp. 5, 9-61; Havelock (1980); Lehmler (2005), p. 71.

⁹⁴ D.S. 20.11.3; Head (1874), p. 47; Hadley (1964), p. 147. Scepticism: Lehmler (2005), p. 71.

⁹⁵ Armagrande (2000a), p. 211; Lehmler (2005), pp. 77-80; Lanteri (2011), p. 257. Scholars have sometimes linked the image with specific battles in Africa, which seems unnecessary.

⁹⁶ Lampsakos: Jenkins (1972), pp. 127 and 288, *IGCH* 2124; Seleukos: *SC* 1 173-5.

⁹⁷ e.g. Beazley nos 230977, 230978.

⁹⁸ Kekulé (1869), pl. 3 H.

⁹⁹ Onatas gem: *BM* 1865.0712.86 = Furtwängler (1900) XIII.37; Parmenon ring: *BM* 1885.0417.1 = Furtwängler (1900) IX.44; intaglio rings: North Carolina Museum of Art 2008.7, and Ashmolean Museum AN1918.62.

¹⁰⁰ Zisa (1993), pp. 85-7; Armagrande (2000b), p. 123.

¹⁰¹ e.g. *SNG ANS* 5.3503; *SNG Cop.* 1223.

with Kore that Agathokles thereby proclaimed.¹⁰² Kore was the deity most closely associated with rulership in Sicily.¹⁰³ Arethousa, who was mainly a Syracusan symbol, although capable of a pan-Sicilian interpretation if the viewer was willing to reinterpret her as their local spring, was replaced by a much more explicitly pan-Sicilian motif.¹⁰⁴ Meanwhile the Nike on the reverse would speak clearly to anyone Agathokles paid, regardless of where they were from. Thus, Agathokles' second set of tetradrachms definitely represent a widening of his focus beyond Syracuse, but the local Sicilian context remained crucial.

Electrum issues

The electrum issues mostly feature Apollo on the obverse and symbols associated with him on the reverse: lyre, tripod, Artemis.¹⁰⁵ Apollo and Artemis hardly require an explanation on a Syracusan coinage: Apollo was venerated at a temple in the heart of the city, Artemis also enjoyed cult in Syracuse and was particularly associated with Ortygia.¹⁰⁶ But the circulation pattern of the electrum coins may indicate a second reason for the iconographic choice; a desire to make them more acceptable to payees in Bruttium and Magna Graecia, where the long-haired Apollo had already been used on coins by Rhegion for some time and became popular at several other mints around this time.¹⁰⁷

Third Series

Winged Thunderbolt

The most prominent image on Agathokles' later coinage is the winged thunderbolt, which appears on his gold octobols (**Pl. 00, 12**) and triobols with Athena on the obverse, and on several denominations of bronze with Artemis on the obverse of the larger denominations and Athena on the smaller ones. In the form with Athena, the coin. The gold octobols and triobols are direct imitations of Alexander's 1/8th stater.¹⁰⁸ No examples of that 1/8 stater have been found in Sicily, nor was it common among Alexander's coinage generally. For Alexander the design seems only to have had the generic meanings associated with Athena and the weapon of Zeus.¹⁰⁹ In Agathokles' context, however, a number of resonances might have made it an attractive appropriation. Firstly it recalled the vertical thunderbolt of Zeus Eleutherios on the coins of Timoleon (**Pl. 00, 13**), whose cult commemorated the toppling of the tyrant Thrasyloulos in 465.¹¹⁰ The connection is made clear from a small bronze issue, which may belong to Agathokles or to the period immediately after his death, which

¹⁰² D.S. 20.7; Just. 22.6.

¹⁰³ Hdt. 7.153; Pind. *N.* 1.13-15, *P.* 12.2; D.S. 11.26.7; Cic. *Vér.* 2.4; Plut. *Tim.* 8; White (1964), pp. 261-79.

¹⁰⁴ Borba Florenzano (1993), pp. 73-6; Armagrande (2000a), p. 211; Lanteri (2011), p. 257-62.

¹⁰⁵ The 10 litra with female head and cuttlefish, continues a standard type for small denomination coins: cf. *SNG ANS* 277, 293-4, 376-392.

¹⁰⁶ *IAGP* s.v. Syracuse, p. 229; Lanteri (2011), p. 251; *Hom. Hymn Apollo* 14-16; Pind. *P.* 2.10-11.

¹⁰⁷ Rutter & Burnett (2001), p. 951 (Taras, c.310s BC), 2177 (Kroton, before and after the 280 BC weight reduction), 2426 (Medma, fourth century), 2501-2504 (Rhegion, c.356-351).

¹⁰⁸ Price, *Alexander*, 166.

¹⁰⁹ Price, *Alexander*, p. 106; Lehmler (2005), p. 81.

¹¹⁰ Lehmler (2005), p. 81; Caccamo Caltabiano (2010), p. 280; D.S. 11.72.2. e.g. *SNG ANS* 5.3.470-471.

uses the legend ΔΙΟΣ ΕΛΕΥΘΕΡΙΟΥ with the exact winged thunderbolt design of Agathokles' coins.¹¹¹ Given Zeus Eleutherios' close association with the deposition of despots, he may seem an unlikely reference for Agathokles, but Agathokles seems to have presented himself as freeing Syracuse from the oligarchy of the Six Hundred,¹¹² and Zeus Eleutherios had other connotations, beyond freedom from autocrats. Eleutherios and his thunderbolt had also been prominent on the coinage of the inland centres such as Aitna and Agrigium which had been in alliance in the period after Timoleon. The inland centres had also been important for Agathokles' original rise to power.¹¹³ Additionally, Eleutherios was associated with victory over barbarians,¹¹⁴ including, through Timoleon, the Carthaginians. The winged thunderbolt type was also familiar to the Greek West from the coins of Alexander the Molossian (Pl. 00, 14).¹¹⁵ Here too the motif was associated with victory over barbarians (even if unfulfilled). All of this is significant given that these coins were issued when Agathokles had concluded hostilities with the Carthaginians and was engaged in conflict with the Bruttii, ostensibly on behalf of the local Greeks.¹¹⁶

Legends

The progression of the legends on Agathokles' coins, from ΣΥΡΑΚΟΣΙΩΝ to ΑΓΑΘΟΚΛΕΙΟΣ to ΒΑΣΙΛΕΟΣ ΑΓΑΘΟΚΛΕΟΣ has been the backbone of the chronology of Agathokles' coinage since the seminal article by Barclay Head in 1874.¹¹⁷ From early on, the same progression has also been considered highly relevant for understanding how Agathokles' rule changed over time. For scholars like E.A. Freeman it represented Agathokles' gradual progress from constitutional ruler to absolute autocrat; the more recent view which sees Agathokles developing from Sicilian tyrant to Hellenistic king retains the metaphor of gradual but complete transformation.¹¹⁸ In fact the evidence of the legends is not as clear as has been supposed.

The Kore/Nike tetradrachms were once supposed to demonstrate the sequence, since a small number of them, assumed to be the earliest, have the legends ΣΥΡΑΚΟΣΙΩΝ/ΑΓΑΘΟΚΛΕΙΟΣ and a similarly small number have ΚΟΡΑΣ/ΑΓΑΘΟΚΛΕΟΣ (assumed to be the latest). These presumptions were swept away by Michael Ierardi's die study of the tetradrachms, which showed that ΑΓΑΘΟΚΛΕΟΣ actually preceded ΑΓΑΘΟΚΛΕΙΟΣ on the silver tetradrachms. He further noted two examples of the gold stater, *Basel und Sammlung Ludwig* 511 and Leu 42, 12 May 1987, 133, which showed that the die had been modified to change the reverse

¹¹¹ *SNG Cop.* 783-4.

¹¹² D.S. 19.5.5 & 19.9.

¹¹³ Rutter (1997), p. 168. Cf. Kore/bull above.

¹¹⁴ Strabo 9.2.31.

¹¹⁵ e.g. *SNG ANS* 1.976-977; ANS 1944.100.18805.

¹¹⁶ Just. 23.3-4.

¹¹⁷ Head (1874), pp. 41-52; Buda (1969-70).

¹¹⁸ e.g. Head (1874); Buda (1969-70), pp. 204-5; Consolo Langher (2000), pp. 159-68; Lehmler (2005), p. 62; Zambon (2006), pp. 80-2; Caccamo Caltabiano (2010), p. 279. Dissenting voices: Ierardi (1995-96); Boehringer (2008).



legend from ΑΓΑΘΟΚΛΕΟΣ to ΑΓΑΘΟΚΛΕΙΟΣ, demonstrating the same direction of change.¹¹⁹

Additionally, Agathokles appears to have minted coins in the name of the Syracusans and in his own name simultaneously. For instance, the gold octobol and triobol with Athena/winged thunderbolt, with the legends ΑΓΑΘΟΚΛΕΟΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΟΣ and ΣΥΡΑΚΟΣΙΩΝ are probably two denominations of the same series.¹²⁰ The bronze issues with the winged thunderbolt also make use of both legends, apparently simultaneously.¹²¹ If none of the other bronze issues with ΣΥΡΑΚΟΣΙΩΝ belong to the period after 304 BC, then there would be remarkably few bronze issues in a period which made up more than half of Agathokles' reign. As stated above, stylistic and hoard arguments suggest that two other bronze issues with ΣΥΡΑΚΟΣΙΩΝ, Apollo/Pegasos and Athena/Horseman, belong to the period after Agathokles had begun to put his own name on his gold and silver.

Furthermore, the whole idea of the despot's progress is predicated on the assumption that the legends have a straightforward relationship with sovereignty. Thanks to Thomas Martin we are well aware that that assumption has its roots in medieval Europe and is not necessarily applicable to the ancient world.¹²² The legends of the coins of the Diadochoi, especially Ptolemy, do show a gradual transition towards assertion of themselves as independent rulers,¹²³ but this is a false parallel. While Philip III and Alexander IV were alive, it was important for the Diadochoi to associate themselves with their kings as closely as possible. Otherwise their rivals could present them as rebels, as Perdikkas did when he campaigned against Ptolemy in 321/20.¹²⁴ Self-representation as agents of the kings also allowed the Diadochoi to command obedience from their subordinates. The clearest example of this is Eumenes, who was able to use his subordination to the kings, backed up by letters, to bring the eastern satraps, officers, and troops under his control.¹²⁵ For the Diadochoi to proclaim that they acted on their own authority would thus be to threaten one of the foundations of their own power. Until Alexander's heirs were dead, they had to balance this factor against the value of presenting themselves as independent dynasts. Agathokles did not have to strike this balance, since he ruled

¹¹⁹ Terardi (1995-96), pp. 15-20. Armagrande (2000), pp. 214-17, 219-220, puts the coinage in the opposite order, on the presumption that the legends should progress from ΣΥΡΑΚΟΣΙΩΝ through ΑΓΑΘΟΚΛΕΙΟΣ to ΑΓΑΘΟΚΛΕΟΣ. She also misinterprets the direction of change on the gold staters. The direction of change is clear from the way that the I is squashed between the E and the O and from the fact that removal of the I from an original die would have required levelling a large part of the surrounding field and recutting at least the surrounding letters, of which there is no sign (Pl. 00, 9). Another indication that the Kore/Nike tetradrachms with ΑΓΑΘΟΚΛΕΟΣ came first is the fact that they are the only Kore/Nike tetradrachms to bear the **A** monogram, which appears on all examples of the preceding Arethousa/quadrige tetradrachms.

¹²⁰ On the octobols, see Berénd (1998) with die study; the triobols: *SNG Manchester* 519.

¹²¹ See n. 29.

¹²² Martin (1985); foreshadowed by Mørkholm, *EHC*, p. 84; Boehringer (2009), p. 64.

¹²³ As outlined, e.g. by Zervos (1967), pp. 9-10; Mørkholm, *EHC*, p. 64.

¹²⁴ D.S. 18.29.1.

¹²⁵ D.S. 18.58, 19.12.

in his own right from the start on the basis of his personal ability, not as agent of the Argead monarchs.

In fact, Agathokles placed his name on his own coinage long before the Diadochoi, who did not do so until the 290s¹²⁶. His use of his own name on his coinage cannot therefore be an imitation of them; the only major named coinage circulating when Agathokles began to issue coinage in his own name were those of the Argeads. It expressed his responsibility for the money's acquisition and distribution. In particular, it reminded the soldiers both that they were in his personal debt for their pay and that they could expect further pay from him.¹²⁷ These messages indicate Agathokles' controlling role and thus have some overlap with, but are less exclusive than messages about sovereignty. The fact that Agathokles' name mostly appears on the coins of largest denomination is especially relevant for an explanation of the legend in terms of the relationship between Agathokles and his troops. In his early reign, Agathokles used the *triskeles* to advertise his role and perhaps the shift in the legend reflects the increasing employment of troops who had served in Macedonian armies and were used to Alexander coinage. The absence of Agathokles' name from other denominations, such as the reduced-weight *pegasoi* and many of the bronze denominations, may indicate that they were not directed at his troops to the same extent.

Conclusion

Lehlmer regards Agathokles' coinage as reflecting 'den Übergang von einer lokalen Tyrannis in ein hellenistisches Königtum.'¹²⁸ There is truth in his, but the extent of the transformation should not be overstated. Agathokles' coinage borrowed motifs from Macedon from the beginning of his reign and continued to include traditional Syracusan motifs until his death. When he borrowed the iconography of the Diadochoi, the Sicilian context often gave the iconography new resonances. Further, many of Agathokles' iconographic decisions can be explained by the evidence which the coins' circulation patterns provide for the different purposes of different denominations. This adaptation of the coins' designs to their financial roles demonstrates how important it was for Agathokles to take into account his own circumstances when making choices both in monetary matters and in other areas as well. Since the Hellenistic elements in Agathokles' coinage, like the use of his name as a legend and the imitation of types of Alexander and the Diadochoi, predominate on types that appear to be intended for paying soldiers, it seems likely that they were designed with those soldiers in mind. If so, the prominence of these elements in Agathokles' coinage may not be representative of the degree to which he sought to imitate the Diadochoi in aspects of his kingship beyond the army camp. On the contrary, the fact that even the most Hellenistic elements of Agathokles' numismatic

¹²⁶ Thonemann (2015), pp. 19-22, with further references. I thank Peter Thonemann for drawing this point to my attention.

¹²⁷ Trundle (2004), pp. 42-4, on the importance of personal relationships for mercenaries.

¹²⁸ Lehmler (2005), p. 61.

iconography also reveal attention to his Syracusan, Sicilian and Italian audiences demonstrates the continuing importance of these contexts to his rule.

Key to Plate 00

- 1: ANS 1944.100.56943; 8.52g; 2h; 20mm
- 2: ANS 1957.172.1891; 8.67g; 2h; 20mm
- 3: ANS 1941.131.935; 11.01g; 12h; 20mm
- 4: ANS 1955.54.419; 16.97g; 9h; 26mm
- 5: ANS 1997.9.77; 43.35g; 8h; 34mm
- 6: ANS 1997.9.66; 43.26g; 9h; 35mm
- 7: ANS 1944.100.56939; 4.28g; 9h; 15mm
- 8: ANS 1944.100.12063; 8.57g; 10h; 18mm
- 9: ANS 1997.9.63; 8.54g; 6h; 19mm
- 10: ANS 1944.100.75470; 17.03g; 11h; 26mm
- 11: ANS 1944.100.57006; 16.91g; 7h; 26mm
- 12: ANS 1954.255.8; 5.7g; 3h; 16mm
- 13: ANS 1997.9.89; 14.4g; 6h; 25mm
- 14: ANS 1944.100.18805; 10.82g; 9h; 24mm

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