

## Alexander the Great – the Father of the First International Currency

Alexander the Great is of big importance to the history of coinage. After his ascension to the throne following the assassination of his father Philip II, Alexander adopted the Attic coinage standard. From then on, he thus had his silver coins struck after the tetradrachms from Athens, the at that time most successful international trading currency.

Wherever he went on his later campaigns, Alexander issued and circulated his own coins. They were of an until then unknown uniformity, despite some stylistic variations and although they were struck in hundreds of mints throughout Europe and Asia.

Alexander's silver coins always bore the head of Heracles on the obverse, the mythical ancestor of the Argead dynasty, as the royal house of Macedon called itself. The gold pieces showed the head of the goddess Athena on the obverse and Nike, the goddess of Victory, on the reverse.

## Kingdom of Macedon, Alexander III the Great (336-323 BC), Stater, 330-320 BC, Amphipolis



<b>Denomination:</b>	<b>Stater</b>
<b>Mint Authority:</b>	<b>King Alexander III of Macedon</b>
<b>Mint:</b>	<b>Amphipolis</b>
<b>Year of Issue:</b>	<b>-330</b>
<b>Weight (g):</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Diameter (mm):</b>	<b>19.0</b>
<b>Material:</b>	<b>Gold</b>
<b>Owner:</b>	<b>Sunflower Foundation</b>

This stater of Alexander the Great bears on the obverse the Greek goddess Athena and on the reverse Nike, the Greek personification of victory.

Alexander was only 20 years of age when he assumed power in Macedon. In the thirteen years of his rule, he invaded and conquered enormous territories and created an empire from Greece to India. Part of Alexander's realm was the Persian Empire, which had until then been the dominant power in the eastern world. Alexander founded a number of Greek settlements in Persia, from where Greek culture began to merge with Persian civilization. This is how the Hellenistic culture developed, a mixture of Greek-European and Persian-Oriental elements.

Alexander died at the age of 33 without having settled his succession. His empire almost instantly fell apart. The single parts were taken over by the Diadochi, Alexander's former generals. They soon established their own dynasties in their territories. Alexander's currency, however, was to last much longer than his short-lived empire.

## Kingdom of Macedon, Alexander III the Great (336-323 BC) in the Name of Philip II, Stater, c. 324 BC, Colophon



<b>Denomination:</b>	<b>Stater</b>
<b>Mint Authority:</b>	<b>King Alexander III of Macedon</b>
<b>Mint:</b>	<b>Colophon</b>
<b>Year of Issue:</b>	<b>-324</b>
<b>Weight (g):</b>	<b>8.6</b>
<b>Diameter (mm):</b>	<b>19.0</b>
<b>Material:</b>	<b>Gold</b>
<b>Owner:</b>	<b>Sunflower Foundation</b>

Through decades of warfare, King Philip II had turned Macedon into the leading power of the Greek world. In the summer of 336 BC he was assassinated, however, and succeeded by his son Alexander, who would later be known as "the Great." This coin was minted one year before Alexander's death. It bears a beautiful image of Apollo.

The coin of the Philip type was struck during the reign of Alexander. Philip had already issued them for diplomatic purposes and for the pay of his mercenaries. These mercenaries, among them many Celts from northern and central Europe, later brought the Philip's staters into circulation in their homelands. The coins became so popular that they were minted long after Philip's death – not only by his son Alexander and his successors, but also by diverse Celtic tribes.

## Alexander's Empire, Alexander III, the Great (336-323 BC), Tetradrachm, Memphis



<b>Denomination:</b>	<b>Tetradrachm</b>
<b>Mint Authority:</b>	<b>King Alexander III of Macedonia</b>
<b>Mint:</b>	<b>Memphis</b>
<b>Year of Issue:</b>	<b>-332</b>
<b>Weight (g):</b>	<b>17.09</b>
<b>Diameter (mm):</b>	<b>28.0</b>
<b>Material:</b>	<b>Silver</b>
<b>Owner:</b>	<b>Sunflower Foundation</b>

The obverse of this tetradrachm shows Heracles, whom Alexander regarded as progenitor of his family. The reverse depicted the father of the gods, Zeus, with an eagle, and the inscription "Alexandroy" (for Alexander's coin).

Alexander had such tetradrachms minted in huge numbers. Whenever he captured a new city, the silver reserves kept in the temples were turned into money – in this case it was the silver of the Egyptian city of Memphis: the rose besides Zeus is the mint mark for Memphis. Alexander's soldiers spread his coins all over the then-known world. The reputation and degree of popularity of Alexander's coins assured them wide acceptance as trade money. Soon cities, and later also Celtic tribes, started to issue money modeled after Alexander's tetradrachms. waren.

## Sicily, Siculo-Punians, Tetradrachm, c. 300 BC



<b>Denomination:</b>	<b>Tetradrachm</b>
<b>Mint Authority:</b>	<b>Siculo-Punians</b>
<b>Mint:</b>	<b>Undefined</b>
<b>Year of Issue:</b>	<b>-310</b>
<b>Weight (g):</b>	<b>17.09</b>
<b>Diameter (mm):</b>	<b>28.0</b>
<b>Material:</b>	<b>Silver</b>
<b>Owner:</b>	<b>Sunflower Foundation</b>

This tetradrachm is evidence of the complexity of the Mediterranean world around 300 BC: The obverse shows the traditional type of the tetradrachms of Alexander the Great and is thus Hellenistic. On this coin, however, the Greek hero Heracles represents the Punic god Melqart. The reverse, on the other hand, is influenced by Phoenician culture. The horse's head was the national emblem of Carthage, and the palm tree referred to the Phoenicians. For contemporaries, it was immediately clear that this was Siculo-Punic money, a coin minted in a Carthaginian mint in Sicily.

## Seleucid Empire, Seleucus I Nicator (312-281 BC) Tetradrachm, c. 311-305 BC, Babylon



<b>Denomination:</b>	<b>Tetradrachm</b>
<b>Mint Authority:</b>	<b>Satrap Seleucus I Nicator</b>
<b>Mint:</b>	<b>Babylon</b>
<b>Year of Issue:</b>	<b>-311</b>
<b>Weight (g):</b>	<b>17.13</b>
<b>Diameter (mm):</b>	<b>29.0</b>
<b>Material:</b>	<b>Silver</b>
<b>Owner:</b>	<b>Sunflower Foundation</b>

Like the other Satraps of Alexander's Empire, Seleucus I struck tetradrachms in the name of Alexander the Great. The obverse of the coin here bears the head of Heracles, the legendary first ancestor of the Macedonian dynasty. The reverse depicts Zeus on his throne with a scepter and an eagle.

## Carian Islands, Kos, Tetradrachm, 300-190 BC



<b>Denomination:</b>	<b>Tetradrachm</b>
<b>Mint Authority:</b>	<b>City of Kos</b>
<b>Mint:</b>	<b>Kos</b>
<b>Year of Issue:</b>	<b>-250</b>
<b>Weight (g):</b>	<b>14.94</b>
<b>Diameter (mm):</b>	<b>28.0</b>
<b>Material:</b>	<b>Silver</b>
<b>Owner:</b>	<b>Sunflower Foundation</b>

Cos, the third largest island off the southwestern coast of Asia Minor, was famous all through antiquity for its school of medicine founded by Hippocrates in the 5th century BC. In 333 BC, Alexander the Great conquered the island from Persian rule. After the death of the great commander ten years later, the island became the focus of discord again, this time between the Diadochi of Babylon and Alexandria.

Who ever struck coins on the island of Cos tried to legitimate his claim for power by minting in the succession of Alexander the Great. His coin obverse was left unchanged, the reverse types were adapted to the respective political circumstances. This tetradrachm was issued under the influence of Rhode, a significant naval power in the late 3rd century BC.

## Lower Danube Region, Tetradrachm (Imitation of the Coins of Philip III Arrhidaios), c. 3rd Century BC



<b>Denomination:</b>	<b>Tetradrachm</b>
<b>Mint Authority:</b>	<b>Undefined</b>
<b>Mint:</b>	<b>Undefined</b>
<b>Year of Issue:</b>	<b>-300</b>
<b>Weight (g):</b>	<b>16.55</b>
<b>Diameter (mm):</b>	<b>26.0</b>
<b>Material:</b>	<b>Silver</b>
<b>Owner:</b>	<b>Sunflower Foundation</b>

During the Celtic migrations, which started in the 5th century BC, Celtic tribes settled in the lower Danube region and in Asia Minor (present-day Turkey). The proximity to the Greek world influenced the Celts and caused the East Celts to adopt Greek coinage.

This coin is a East Celtic imitation. The original coin was a tetradrachm of Philip III Arrhidaios (323-317 BC), who was a half brother of Alexander the Great and king of Macedonia after the latter's death. The obverse shows the Greek hero Heracles and the reverse the Greek god Zeus on his throne.

## Celts, Thrace, Odessus, Tetradrachm (Imitation of the Coin of Alexander III), 125-70 BC



<b>Denomination:</b>	<b>Tetradrachm</b>
<b>Mint Authority:</b>	<b>City of Odessos</b>
<b>Mint:</b>	<b>Odessos (Varna)</b>
<b>Year of Issue:</b>	<b>-125</b>
<b>Weight (g):</b>	<b>16.27</b>
<b>Diameter (mm):</b>	<b>30.0</b>
<b>Material:</b>	<b>Silver</b>
<b>Owner:</b>	<b>Sunflower Foundation</b>

This tetradrachm from the Thracian town of Odessus (today's Varna) is an East Celtic imitation of a coin from Alexander the Great. The design of the original coin is far more naturalistic than the imitation, however. Here, the head of Heracles with the lion's scalp and the enthroned Zeus are schematic and stylized. This procedure, called "barbarism" in numismatics, is characteristic for mints outside the Graeco-Roman territories.