

An overstrike of Akragas on Corinth

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AN OVERSTRIKE OF AKRAGAS ON CORINTH

Ulla Westermark

A restruck, archaic didrachm of Akragas in Sicily was recently, very generously, presented to the Royal Coin Cabinet, Stockholm, by Münzen und Medaillen AG, Basel.

Obv. AK/PA, eagle standing r.

Rev. Crab, below CAΣ.

7.82 g. Inv. No 101 163. Fig. 1.

The coin belongs to the last group IV of the archaic didrachms of Akragas. This group comprises 12 obverse dies and 38 reverse dies. Most die-pairs are represented by a large number of specimens, in this case nineteen. The special interest of the present coin is that it is overstruck on a Corinthian stater of Ravel's group I¹. The traces of the underlying type are not very clear, but the «ring» behind the eagle can, I think, hardly be anything else than the *koppa* of the Corinthian coin. The body of the under-

¹ O. Ravel, Les «poulains» de Corinth, tome I (1936).



lying pegasus can be traced in the way the tail and legs of the eagle are curiously cut off, and there are faint traces of the pegasus' head above K in the legend (Cf. fig. 2). The reverse of the first Corinthian series has an incuse of swastika form, often very irregularly placed, and surrounded by a flat surface. The Akragantine crab within its round incuse has here obliterated the original square swastika incuse, leaving the flat surface to the left unchanged. The spread fabric of the coin is in fact that of the original Corinthian stater and differs from the normal, more thick and dumpy shape of Akragas group IV.

The influence of Corinth in the West during the late 6th and early 5th centuries B.C. is attested by overstrikes and by the use of the Corinthian standard but not by hoards, as no coins of Corinth occur in the hoards of that period². The re-use of Corinthian coins is better documented for Magna Graecia than for Sicily, where overstrikes on pegasi are very rare.³ Of the three early Sicilian mints, Akragas, Selinus and Gela, which issued didrachms on a standard equivalent of that of Corinth, a few overstrikes on Corinthian undertypes are known for Akragas and Selinus but none yet for Gela.

Two didrachms of Akragas belonging to the earlier groups I and II and struck over Corinthian staters of Ravel's group II with an Athena head reverse, were briefly mentioned by me in an earlier article⁴ and have recently been more fully treated by Garraffo⁵. Three more specimens in Garraffo's catalogue, no 2 (Akragas gr II) and 4a-b (Akragas gr IV) might all be restruck on Corinth, but the traces of the undertypes are, especially for 4a-b, very indistinct. The new piece is, however, with certainty restruck on Corinth I. The most common dates given to that series are c 570-515 B.C.⁶ Group IV of Akragas may be dated within the period c 483-472 B.C. It means that the original coin is considerably earlier than the overstrike. That there can be a considerable time-lag between the undertype and the re-striking is evident also from other examples. A good parallel in our case is an overstrike of Selinus, which has been known for

² G. K. Jenkins, A note on Corinthian coins in the West, *ANS Centennial Volume* (1958), 367-370.

³ The entire material is now easily available in the excellent newly published book by S. Garraffo, *Le riconiazioni in Magna Grecia e in Sicilia* (1984).

⁴ U. Westermark, *Overstrikes of Taras on didrachms of Acragas*, *Essays in Honor of Margaret Thompson* (1979), 292-93.

⁵ *Op.Cit.*, p. 133: 1 and 3, pp. 46, 138-39. Note for no. 1 the better identification of the Corinthian type (p. 46, also *Münzen und Medaillen AG Basel*, Sale 52, 1975, 61).

⁶ C. M. Kraay, *Archaic and Classical Greek Coins* (1976), 79-80; cf M. Price and N. Waggoner, *The «Asyut» hoard* (1975), 76-79.



a long time; a double-sided didrachm dating from the end of the period c 500–480 B.C. and thus roughly contemporary with our coin and, like it, restruck on an archaic stater of the first Corinthian series⁷. This evidence of how long old Corinthian coins could remain in use in the area is in concord with Kraay's contention that obsolete coins were normally used for overstriking⁸, though that was certainly not always the case and cannot be accepted as a general rule⁹. As to our coin also the low weight (7,82 g, standard weight 8,60 g) indicates that the original was both old and much worn from long circulation when being restruck.

Overstrikes of Akragas on foreign coins are, as mentioned, very rare. Its coins were more frequently re-used by Italian mints, especially by Metapontion and Kroton. Garraffo's catalogue comprises 35 overstrikes of Kroton from the incuse period, of which no less than 20 are on Akragas. The majority belongs to the dumpy incuse phase, dated by Kraay to c 480/75–440 B.C. and restruck on Akragas IV. I take the opportunity to illustrate here a new specimen (fig. 3)¹⁰. It is of the same category as Garraffo pl. XI: 2 ff., but seems worth illustrating as the undertype is unusually visible. An Akragantine didrachm of a similar die-pair is illustrated in fig. 4.

Illustrations

- 1 Stockholm, Royal Coin Cabinet
- 2 Stockholm, Royal Coin Cabinet; SNG Sweden I, 79
- 3 Bank Leu AG Zürich
- 4 Private Collection

⁷ W. Schwabacher, *Die Tetradrachmenprägung von Selinunt*, *Mitteilungen der Bayerischen Numismatischen Gesellschaft* 43 (1925), 29 note 4; Garraffo, p. 138: 1.

⁸ NC 1960, 77.

⁹ Cf. the overstrikes quoted above note 5: cf S.P. Noe, *The Coinage of Metapontum* 1–2, 3rd ed. 1984 with additions by A Johnston, 49.

¹⁰ Mrs. Silvia Hurter, Bank Leu AG, Zürich, has kindly sent me the photograph.