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A TEOS/ABDERA OVERSTRIKE

David MacDonald

An overstrike (*fig. 1*) in a private American collection presents interesting chronological implications:



Overtyp: Teos

Denomination: Stater (didrachm) of Aeginetic standard (reduced from Abderite)

Weight: 11.76 (reduced from original weight of c. 14.90)

- Obv.:* Griffin r. on ground line, curled wings, both visible. Before: bunch of grapes and grape leaf. Grape leaf obscured by undertype, but grape bunch certain.
- Rev.:* Rough quartered square incuse.
- Reference:* J.M. Balcer, *The Early Silver Coinage of Teos*, SNR 47, 1968, p.27: Period I, Group VII, No. 15 and Plate XII, 15 same dies (A15/P27), reverse die apparently in a slightly earlier state (*fig. 2*).

Undertype: Abdera

Denomination: Tetradrachm of Abderite standard, c. 14.90, reduced for overstriking to Aegenitic standard by two overlapping cuts taken from the edge of the flan at 2:00 to 3:00 position and 3:00 to 6:00 position.

- Obv.:* Griffin l., both front paws raised, straight feathered wing. Below: ΗΓΗ. No field symbol evident.
- Rear of griffin, tail, hind legs, feet, bottom of body line, front paws, and tops of letters visible in field from 2:00 position to 7:00 position. Traces of griffin's head visible in field at 9:00. Considerable remains of wing visible from 11:00 to 1:00 (*fig. 3*).
- Rev.:* Quartered linear square.
- The underlying quartered linear square is generally visible in fields and on portions of the overtype incuse which are not fully struck.
- Reference:* J.M.F. May, *The Coinage of Abdera (540–345 B.C.)* (London 1966), p. 100: Period III, Group XXXVI, Nos. 72–73, and Plate V, 72–73 (A60–A61/P62–P63), two specimens recorded from different obverse dies, both different from the obverse die represented by this undertype; reverse not sufficiently well preserved for die comparison. The combination of raised forepaws, pointed wing (May A-type griffin), and quartered linear square put the undertype in May's Period III, and the remains of the magistrate's name are certainly Hege- (*fig. 4*).

An apparently early Teian coin is struck over a coin of Abdera of more developed and apparently later style, technique and date.¹ J.M. Balcer's 1968 study of the Teos coins is exemplary, but the chronological conclusions were necessarily based on subjective grounds, such as style and the accepted dating of parallel coinages, and on materials which have subsequently proved to be less certain than formerly recognized, such as the dating of the Athenian Coinage Decree. Moreover, in recent years several new hoards have appeared which require significant lowering of dates of many coin issues.

Balcer treated Period I, Groups V–XIII, to which the overtype belongs, as a single class and placed it in the period c. 510/505–495/490. The Asyut hoard contains five Teian staters (Balcer Period I, Group I, No. 7; Group III, No. 11; Group V, No. 13; uncertain similar to Group V, No. 13; fragment), none particularly fresh, for which the editors propose a date of c. 500–480.² The latest is Balcer Group V, No. 13. This overtype, Balcer Group VII No. 15, comes two dies later in Balcer's corpus and is of essentially identical style to the latest Asyut coin. It is doubtful that any chronological implications should be made of Balcer's arrangement of his Teos Groups V–XIII, which involve just eleven obverse and twenty-four reverse dies and which Balcer treats

¹ I thank J.M. Balcer for encouraging me to publish this overstrike. The overstriking with very similar types of a coin from a colony by the metropolis is explained by the different weight systems employed by the two cities.

² M. Price and N. Waggoner, *Archaic Greek Coinage: The Asyut Hoard* (London 1975), p. 87.

as a single class.³ It would be reasonable on the basis of the Asyut Hoard to assign a date of c. 480 to the overtype, but the evidence of the Lycian Dekadrachm Hoard and the undertype lowers this date an additional ten to fifteen years.

May, in his 1966 study of Abdera, dated Period III c. 492–473/470, the A-type griffin (pointed wing) coins c. 492–480 and the issue of the undertype, bearing the name of Hege-, midway in the sequence, c. 486.⁴ The Asyut Hoard contained fifteen Abdera pieces, one from late in Period I and fourteen of Period II.⁵ On the basis of the Asyut material, Price and Waggoner redate May Period I c. 530–500 and Period II, c. 500–480, thus equating it with Balcer Period I, Groups V–XIII. They place the beginning of May Period III after perhaps a slight break in minting c. 480. May assigns ten or twelve years to the Abdera Period III A-type griffins and places the Hege- coins halfway through that sequence, so the undertype might be redated on the evidence of the Asyut Hoard at c. 470. This date agrees poorly with the date of c. 480 suggested for the overtype above.

The Decadrachm Hoard, buried in Lycia c. 465/462, contains nineteen coins of Abdera.⁶ Five octadrachms and one tetradrachm belong to May Period II. Thirteen tetradrachms, from May Period III, are all later than any coins of Abdera in the Asyut Hoard. They are distributed as follows:

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| Scallop shell above griffin | A-type griffin | May — ⁷ | 4 specimens |
| Hege- | A-type griffin | May 72 | 3 specimens |
| Zen- | B-type griffin | Cf. May 81 ⁸ | 3 specimens |
| Tele- | C-type griffin | May 84 | 3 specimens |

³ Balcer, *Teos*, pp. 9, 20, 26–28. Note that the field sign of the overtype, Period I Group VII No. 15: grape cluster and leaf, is repeated on Period II, Group LIII, No. 102, dated by Balcer c. 470/465–449 B.C. but probably to be placed even later. The later coins are of a flatter, more spread fabric, bear an ethnic and dotted border on the obverse, a neat linear quartered square on the reverse, and a more developed style. The dispersed hoard which has produced most of the coins of Teos on the market in recent years contained examples of both somewhat worn specimens of Period I, Group VII, No. 15 and extremely fresh specimens of Period II, Group LIII, No. 102. All indications are that the two issues are separated by some significant time, as Balcer hypothesized.

⁴ May, *Abdera*, pp. 89–90.

⁵ Price and Waggoner, *Asyut*, pp. 36–38.

⁶ Preliminary publication: S. Fried, *The Decadrachm Hoard: An Introduction*, p. 3 and M. Jessop Price, *The Coinages of the Northern Aegean*, p. 45, in: I. Carradice (ed.), *Coinage and Administration in the Athenian and Persian Empires: The Ninth Oxford Symposium on Coinage and Monetary History*. BAR International Series 343 (Oxford 1987).

The sole coin of Teos associated with the Lycian Dekadrachm Hoard has been judged an intrusion. That stater is of a later type, Balcer, cf. 102–105, and is overstruck on a stater of Tanagra: S. Hurter, *Teos over Tanagra*, in: H. Nilsson (ed.) *Florilegium Numismaticum, Studia in honorem U. Westermark edita* (Stockholm 1992), pp. 171–173. Additionally, the British Museum and a private American collection contain staters of Teos overstruck on staters of Aegina.

⁷ The scallop shell appears as an additional sign on Abderan coins of this period bearing the names ANTI- (May 63–64), HPO- (May 67–68), and IKEΣ- (May 70), but it was unknown standing alone until the Lycian Dekadrachm Hoard.

⁸ May 81 is a drachm. The name on the small, ill-preserved specimens was read as «THN»- by May. The tetradrachms, unknown until the Lycian Dekadrachm Hoard, clearly show the name to be «ZHN»-.

The type bearing only a scallop shell probably predates those bearing the abbreviated magistrates' names. The types bearing the names of the three magistrates fall, according to May, in the first decade of May Period III. All Period III tetradrachms from the Lycian Dekadrachm Hoard are fresh and unworn and were probably minted shortly before the burial date of the hoard, c. 465/462. In short, the undertype probably dates to c. 470–465, and the Teian overtype must be redated later than previously thought, to the same period or a little later.

It has been generally assumed that the coinages of Teos and Abdera developed along parallel lines both stylistically and temporally. *This* overstrike demonstrates that stylistic development at Teos lagged significantly behind Abdera, at least during early May Period III which saw the introduction of the stylistically advanced pointed-wing A-type griffins at Abdera. Just as there was a disparity in stylistic development between Teos and Abdera, so also stylistic development at Teos may not have been consistent and linear.

Balcer Period I, Groups V–XIII seem to have been struck over a long period. Some specimens are early enough to have been included in the Asyut Hoard, c. 480–475, where they were dated by the editors c. 500–480. The specific variety of the overtype, Balcer Period I, Group VII, No. 15, must be no earlier than c. 470–465. The group appears to be small to cover such a long period, even considering possible unrecorded dies. Although the group is consistent in style and fabric, it may not be represent a closed chronologically and temporally discrete unit. Price and Waggoner's remarks about Cyrenaica seem also to apply to Teos:⁹

«The coinage of Cyrenaica emphasizes one again phenomena already demonstrated at Athens, Corinth, Rhodes and Cyprus; namely, that flat fabric at times preceded dumpy flans; that crude incuse punches and one-type coins could be contemporary with or later than issues with a developed reverse type; and therefore that primitive techniques alone do not necessarily determine the earliest strikings.»

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List of Illustrations:

- 1 Teos over Abdera overstrike. Private collection.
- 2 Overtime: Balcer, Teos, p. 27: Period I, Group VII, No. 15 and Plate XII, No. 15 same dies (A15/P27): Berlin, 12.00.
- 3 Teos over Abdera overstrike. Tracing of visible elements of undertype.
- 4 Undertype: May, Abdera, p. 100: Period III, Group XXXVI, No. 72 and Plate V, No. 72 (A60/P62): Lockett, 14.51.

⁹ Price and Waggoner, Asyut, p. 114.