

VIII. Pheidon's Aeginetan Coinage

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The question of who first introduced coins into Greece* has been much discussed, and the leading candidate has always been Pheidon of Argos.¹ This is not remarkable, for not only is there a strong and explicit tradition which attributes the innovation to Pheidon² but a remarkable corroboration of the story seemed to have been provided by the discovery of a bundle of iron spits at the Argive Heraeum, precisely where the tradition said that Pheidon had dedicated such an offering on the occasion of his issue of silver coinage.³ Such a happy accident would seem to have clinched the argument, but in fact the attribution of the Aeginetan coinage has since then come under sharp attack.

In 1950 W. L. Brown, influenced by Robinson's lower dates for the coins found at the Ephesian Artemisium,⁴ challenged the Pheidonian tradition on archaeological as well as historical grounds.⁵ His main arguments may be summarized as follows:

1. One tradition states that Pheidon was the first man to strike coins and that he did so on Aegina. Since the evidence indicates that coinage was invented in Asia Minor, the tradition is false in this particular and is weakened in general.
2. An examination of the Aeginetan coins shows that they were first struck between 640 and 590 B.C., probably late in that period.
3. It is possible that Pheidon was alive at that time, but it is

* This paper was prepared with the assistance of a grant from the American Numismatic Society to which the writer is much indebted.

¹ Cf. P. Gardner, *A History of Ancient Coinage* (Oxford 1918) 113; B. V. Head, *Historia numorum* (Oxford 1911) 394-95.

² Ephorus (Jacoby, *FGrH* 70, F 115, 176); Orion, *Etymologicum*, s.v. ὀβολός; *Etymologicum magnum*, s.v. Εὐβοϊκὸν νόμισμα; *Das Marmor Parium*, ed. Jacoby (Berlin 1904); Pollux, *Onomasticon* 9.83.

³ C. Waldstein and others, *The Argive Heraeum* (Boston 1902) 1.62 and Fig. 31.

⁴ E. S. G. Robinson, "The Coins from the Ephesian Artemision Reconsidered," *JHS* 71 (1951) 156-67.

⁵ W. L. Brown, "Pheidon's Alleged Aeginetan Coinage," *Numismatic Chronicle* 10, 6th Ser., (1950) 177-204.

difficult to believe that he controlled Aegina in the second half of the seventh century.

4. There is no reason to believe that the spits dedicated at the Argive Heraeum had anything to do with the striking of coins.

5. The tradition comes from only one source, Ephorus, although it carries some later additions. Ephorus is not to be trusted, for his account is merely an attempt to flatter the Macedonian monarchs who claimed descent from the kings of Argos.

For a decade Brown's challenge has gone virtually unanswered, perhaps because of its persuasiveness, perhaps because the question is basically a historical one, and historians pay insufficient attention to numismatic journals. Brown's arguments seem to me wholly unconvincing; and although no new evidence has come to light in the interim, a re-examination of the evidence for and against Pheidon's authorship of Greek coinage seems justified by the interest and importance of the subject.

The tradition of Pheidon's introduction of coins into Greece is reasonably clear, although the different sources tell stories which differ in detail. Ephorus tells us simply that ἐν Αἰγίνῃ ἄργυρον πρῶτον κοπήναι . . . ὑπὸ Φεῖδωνος (Jacoby, *FGrH* 70, F 176), and in another passage that καὶ μέτρα ἐξεῦρε τὰ φειδῶνια καλούμενα καὶ σταθμοὺς καὶ νόμισμα κεχαραγμένον τό τε ἄλλο καὶ τὸ ἀργυροῦν (Jacoby, *FGrH* 70, F 115). Pollux (9.83), in a long list of claimants for the honor of striking the first coins, lists Pheidon among others. The tradition in its most complete form is reported by Orion in his *Etymologicum* (s.v. ὀβολός):

πρῶτος δὲ πάντων Φεῖδων Ἀργεῖος νόμισμα ἔκοψεν ἐν Αἰγίνῃ, καὶ διδοὺς τὸ νόμισμα καὶ ἀναλαβὼν τοὺς ὀβελίσκους ἀνέθηκε τῇ ἐν Ἀργεὶ Ἡρᾷ. ἐπειδὴ δὲ τότε οἱ ὀβελίσκοι τὴν χεῖρα ἐπλήρουν, τουτέστι τὴν δράκα, ἡμεῖς καίπερ μὴ πληροῦντες τὴν δράκα τοῖς ἐξ ὀβολοῖς, δραχμὴν αὐτὴν λέγομεν παρὰ τὸ δράξασθαι. ὅθεν ἔτι καὶ νῦν ὀβολοστάτην καλοῦμεν τὸν τοκιστὴν, ἐπειδὴ σταθμοῖς τοὺς ὀβελίσκους παρεδίδουν οἱ ἀρχαῖοι. οὕτως Ἡρακλείδης ὁ Ποντικός.⁶

A problem immediately arises over the first clause, which Brown interprets as consisting of two separate statements; Pheidon was the first of all men to strike coins, and he did so on Aegina. As the evidence seems to indicate that coinage was invented in Western Asia Minor, probably by the Lydians, the attribution to

⁶ The attribution of the passage is especially to be noted.

Pheidon of the invention of coinage is false, and the entire passage containing that attribution is rendered suspect. Brown's interpretation of the text is certainly possible, but it is by no means the only one. It has been suggested, with the statement of Ephorus in mind, that it is the invention of *silver* coinage which is being claimed for Pheidon, but Brown is right in rejecting this as taking too much liberty with the text.⁷ The statement of Orion-Heraclides agrees with the express statement of Ephorus (F 176), and both are of greater significance than is at first apparent. What they are really saying is that Pheidon struck the first coins in European Greece, for the coins of Aegina seem to have been widely recognized as the earliest in circulation among the Greeks in Europe.⁸

This, then, is what Orion-Heraclides and Ephorus tell us: that Pheidon was the first to mint silver coins at Aegina and therefore the originator of coinage in European Greece. That is a claim that is both worthy and capable of defense. The attempt to burden it with an additional claim to the invention of all coinage is not justified. It is also worth pointing out that even the acceptance of Brown's version need not invalidate the evidence of the passage as a whole. It must be remembered that all the ancient claims to the invention of coinage were based not on numismatic evidence but on tradition and that the traditions in the several parts of the Greek world differed from one another. Xenophanes and Herodotus, who attributed the invention of coinage to the Lydians, were both natives of Asia Minor who lived in close proximity to the land of the Lydians. They would naturally have access to the Lydian tradition and would have some experience with the Lydian coins which were probably in circulation locally. For them the Lydian coins were the earliest. The story recorded by Ephorus and Heraclides, though the authors themselves were natives of Asia Minor, may well derive from a purely European tradition which was ignorant of the coins of Lydia, or at any rate believed the coins of Aegina to be earlier. That is to say that the tradition which credited Pheidon with the invention of coinage may have been true so far as its authors knew; and though it be false in fact, this should not count against the general reliability of Ephorus and Heraclides.

⁷ Brown (above, note 5) 180.

⁸ P. N. Ure, *The Origin of Tyranny* (Cambridge 1922) 156, note 1.

Next we must consider the matter of chronology. Here there are two questions to be answered: what was the date of the invention of coinage, and what were Pheidon's dates? To the first question the most recent and widely accepted answer has been supplied by E. S. G. Robinson.⁹ His eminence as a numismatist of the first rank entitles his opinion to the greatest respect, yet it is worth while to examine the arguments he proposes. The first coins known were found at the Ephesian Artemisium in what was surely a foundation deposit,¹⁰ which Jacobsthal believes to have been sealed ± 600 B.C.¹¹ Robinson points out that in this deposit there are, in addition to the early coins, a number of typeless pieces and concludes that

there is no reason to suppose that the finds from the Artemisium do not represent a fair sample of the currency actually in circulation at the time they were laid down; and the high proportion of those pieces (otherwise extremely rare) which represent the stages immediately preceding true coinage compels the conclusion that we are very near in time to its invention. As one passes from the mere dump through the punched dump, the punched and striated dump, the punched and striated dump with a type cut into it, to the normal coin, and all lying in nearly contemporary deposits, little if at all affected in appearance or weight by wear, one has the feeling of assisting at the very birth of coinage. If the deposits may be dated round about 600 B.C., then this great event can hardly have taken place much more than a generation earlier.¹²

This reconstruction rests on two assumptions: that the deposit was closed about 600 and that only about a generation is necessary to account for the development from the mere dump to true coins. Each of these assumptions is open to question. It must be remembered that the date 600 B.C. is qualified by the notation \pm and with good reason, for the criteria for dating the deposits are strictly those of stylistic comparison. Jacobsthal finds that almost all the coins found in the Basis Treasure

⁹ Robinson (above note 4); see also "The Date of the Earliest Coins," *Numismatic Chronicle* 16, 6th Ser., (1956) 1-8.

¹⁰ C. Seltman, *Greek Coins*² (London 1955) 13-19 and 42, denies that it was a foundation deposit, but his arguments are not persuasive. He is convincingly refuted by Robinson, "The Date of the Earliest Coins" (above, note 9).

¹¹ P. Jacobsthal, "The Date of the Ephesian Foundation Deposit," *JHS* 71 (1951) 85 ff.

¹² "The Coins from the Ephesian Artemision Reconsidered" (above, note 4) 163.

are of the seventh century B.C., that a very few are slightly later, while one piece only is possibly of the eighth. Among pieces to which a still closer date can be assigned are those with the "cup spiral" ornament (later seventh century); the scarabs (660-625 or later): a gold fibula with lions' heads belonging to a stylistic group of the end of the seventh century; and electrum figurines of women whose chitons already show rudimentary folds, therefore ca. 600 or a few years later. This is the latest date, and the deposit was therefore closed round about 600.¹³

In this kind of dating dogmatism is not warranted, and a good deal of elasticity must be given to the boundaries represented by \pm . An error of as much as twenty-five years in stylistic dating at this period would be neither shocking nor unprecedented, and to treat a date so established as a firm terminus is unjustified.

Now what of Robinson's estimate of a generation for the development of true coins? One looks in vain in either of his discussions for some substantiation for his estimate. In his best effort at a justification he says, "How long an interval should we allow? The Herodotean unit of a generation, bringing us to a date in the middle of the third quarter of the seventh century, still seems to me reasonable enough in view of the speed with which the invention was taken up."¹⁴ Surely this is mere conjecture. Why thirty-five years? Why not fifty, or sixty-five? The paucity of these early coins and pre-coins and the likelihood that the demand for them was small in the beginning would seem to indicate that mintings would be few and the opportunity for development restricted. Surely in the early stages of coinage it would be better to allow more rather than less time for stylistic change. While any estimate must remain a mere guess, thirty-five years seems a very short time. If the assumption be made that the Basis deposit was closed not precisely in 600 but even about 610 and the development period was not thirty-five but fifty or sixty years, then the invention of coinage would be dated ca. 670-660. Such a guess is certainly no less likely than the one made by Robinson. Neither is sufficiently well founded to affirm or deny the Pheidonian claim.

There remains the question of Pheidon's position in Greek chronology. He has been placed anywhere from the tenth

¹³ Summarized by Robinson, "The Date of the Earliest Coins" (above, note 9) 2.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 4.

century to the end of the seventh, and the possibility of fixing his dates with certainty seems remote. One view is that Pheidon belongs in the eighth century, even before the foundation of Syracuse. This date and all others before the seventh century must be rejected on two counts. The first objection is that the very concept of a tyrant is out of place before the seventh century; indeed the word *tyrannos* first appears in the time of Archilochus (ca. 650 B.C.).¹⁵ The second concerns the implications of Ephorus' statement that Pheidon took away the hegemony of the Peloponnese from Sparta (Strabo 8.358). Sparta's hegemony began after her victory in the first Messenian War, which is to be dated ca. 725–705.¹⁶ Pheidon's domination of the Peloponnese is one of the few aspects of his career which is not challenged and is prerequisite for the acceptance of his imposition of a system of weights and measures there. As the latter is likewise not questioned, Pheidon's rule before the seventh century is impossible.

An attempt has likewise been made to push Pheidon's reign up into the second half of the seventh century.¹⁷ Those who subscribe to this late date argue as follows: (1) Aristotle speaks of Pheidon as being immediately before Cypselus (*Pol.* 1310b.25), and they date the tyrant of Corinth *post* 625. (2) The second Messenian War (ca. 625–600 B.C.)¹⁸ could not have taken place until after Pheidon's death, for Strabo mentions as allies of the Messenians the Pisatans, led by King Pantaleon, the Arcadians under Aristocrates and the Argives, but with no leader designated (8.362). This suggests that Pheidon was no longer alive and places his reign between the two Messenian Wars.¹⁹ Moreover, as Lenschau points out, "würde der 2. Krieg wohl einen andern Verlauf gehabt haben, wenn Sparta noch den mächtigen Herrscher von Argos im Rücken hätte."²⁰ (3) If the report of Nicolaus of Damascus is correct, Pheidon died at Corinth when he came to the aid of a party friendly to him during the course of a revolution.

¹⁵ T. Lenschau, *RE* 19 (1937) 1942, s.v. "Pheidon."

¹⁶ H. T. Wade-Gery, "The Growth of the Dorian States," *CAH* 3. 537–38.

¹⁷ Lenschau, *op. cit.* (above, note 15) 1939–45.

¹⁸ Wade-Gery (above, note 16) 557, note 2.

¹⁹ Lenschau, *op. cit.* (above, note 15) 1942.

²⁰ Lenschau, *op. cit.* (above, note 15) 1942–43, however, dates the second Messenian War "ans Ende des Jahrhunderts" and dates Pheidon ca. 650–613. This dating is not acceptable for it does not take note of the significance of the events of 669–668.

This is to be identified with the Cypselid revolt against the Bacchiads in ca. 620.²¹

These arguments carry enough weight to suggest strongly the presence of Pheidon in the second half of the century, but there is good evidence that he ruled in the first half as well. The best case for this point of view is made by Wade-Gery, who argues that Argos under Pheidon gained control of the Peloponnese by defeating the Spartans at Hysiae in 669 B.C. and that Pheidon seized control of the Olympic games in the following year.²² The argument is not without flaws for Pheidon is not mentioned in connection with the battle of Hysiae, and the date for his Olympiad is arrived at only by emending the text of Pausanias.²³ It is, nevertheless, persuasive in its logic and in its reasonable reconstruction of otherwise meaningless events and is here accepted as correct.

We are thus faced with the problem of reconciling a Pheidon who died in ca. 625 with one who ruled at least as early as 669. One way to manage this is to posit several Pheidons, at least one each in the eighth, seventh and sixth centuries, some in Argos, one in Cleonae and one in Corinth.²⁴ While these may all have existed, they do not solve the chronological difficulties presented by the Pheidon of Argos who conquered the Peloponnese, seized control of the Olympic games and gave their weights and measures to the Peloponnesians, a figure presented without any question as one man by our best and earliest source (Hdt. 6.167).

Fortunately, a plausible reconciliation is possible by other means. It is necessary only to infer what an examination of all

²¹ This is the date ably defended by E. Will, *Korinthiaka* (Paris, 1955) 363-440, whose arguments I accept. The same position was earlier set forth by V. Costanzi, "Argolica," *Rev. fil.* 7, N.S., (1929) 221.

²² *CAH* 3.761. Wade-Gery argues further that Pheidon's victory at Hysiae led to the introduction of the Gymnopaediae at Sparta: vid. "A Note on the Origin of the Gymnopaediai of the Spartans," *CQ* 43 (1949) 79 ff. Both hypotheses are accepted by A. Andrewes "The Corinthian Actaeon and Pheidon of Argos," *CQ* 43 (1949) 70 ff.

²³ 6.22.2. The change makes Pheidon preside over the twenty-eighth Olympiad instead of the eighth. The arguments for this emendation are fully discussed by Will (above, note 21) 348-49.

²⁴ The unemended Pausanias passage provides an eighth century Argive Pheidon. Most scholars accept an Argive Pheidon somewhere in the seventh century. A close adherence to Herodotus' account of the wooing of Agariste (6.127) would lead to a sixth century Pheidon of Argos. Malcolm McGregor, "Cleisthenes of Sicyon and the Panhellenic Festivals," *TAPA* 72 (1941) 268-87, suggests a Pheidon of Cleonae, and Aristotle (*Pol.* 1265b) names a Pheidon of Corinth.

the evidence so strongly implies: that Pheidon ruled in the second and third quarters of the seventh century, ca. 675–625 B.C. If it be objected that a fifty years' reign is unusual, it is surely not impossible. Louis XIV ruled France for sixty-eight years in name and fifty-four in fact. Victoria ruled Great Britain for more than sixty-three years. A closer analogy is provided by the reign of Archidamus II of Sparta, who ruled for fifty-two years. If these dates for Pheidon are accepted, then the chronological argument against his introduction of coinage is invalidated; for whether Robinson's date or the earlier one be accepted, Pheidon would have been in power at the time when the first Greek coins were issued.²⁵

Brown raises yet another chronological objection: "One may say that, speaking roughly, the later his date the less important we can believe him to have been. At the end of the seventh century it is hard to believe that he could have controlled Aegina."²⁶ The meaning of the first statement is not clear, but it probably is based on the idea that in the latter part of the century the power of the Argive tyrant would have been diminished by struggles with the Cypselid and Orthagorid tyrants and by involvement in the Messenian revolt. Now the dates of the ascent to power of the Cypselids and Orthagorids and the rebellion of the Messenians are not firmly fixed, yet persuasive arguments have been put forth to show that Cypselus came to power in Corinth about 620²⁷ and the tyranny at Sicyon is to be dated after 615²⁸ and that the second Messenian War took place after 625.²⁹ Thus the argument in favor of a reign for Pheidon in the second and third quarters of the century is not nullified by Brown's objection. It may, in fact, be strengthened by the consideration that all these events took place shortly after Pheidon's death, at a time when the temporary weakness of Argos made such actions possible.

The second part of Brown's objection is supported by a reference

²⁵ If it be objected that some time must be allowed for the invention to spread across the Aegean, only a short interval should be imagined. In the seventh century liaison between mainland Greece and Asia Minor was good, and so simple and useful a device as coinage must have spread almost immediately.

²⁶ Brown (above, note 5) 190.

²⁷ See note 21.

²⁸ Costanzi (above, note 21) 221–22; Mary White, "The Dates of the Orthagorids," *Phoenix* 12 (1958) 2–14.

²⁹ Costanzi (above, note 21) 222; Wade-Gery (above, note 16) 557, note 2.

to the works of Dunbabin and Ure³⁰; let us concentrate on the fuller version of Ure. Here we have arrived at a vital point in the discussion, for if it can be shown that Pheidon controlled Aegina in the first half of the century and had no connection with it in the second, the statement that Pheidon issued the first Greek coins there will come into conflict at least with Robinson's proposed date for the origin of coinage. In fact this cannot be shown. Ure's account is based on a passage in the fifth book of Herodotus which describes a war between Athens and Aegina (82-89). Herodotus says that at the beginning of the affair Aegina obeyed the Epidaurians, that after a successful revolt they became involved in a quarrel with the Athenians. The Aeginetans, now threatened by Athens, appealed to Argos and the Argives came to their aid. Argos and Aegina were victorious, and after the war was over they made a number of decisions in common.

From this account Ure infers that Pheidon conquered Aegina and further concludes that the conquest occurred in the first half of the seventh century. Both conclusions present difficulties. Nowhere does Herodotus mention the name of Pheidon in connection with the war between Athens and Aegina. What is more, he does not say that Aegina was subject to Argos but to Epidaurus. It is no more likely that Argos was master of Aegina than that the two states were allies, connected on terms of equality. There is, in fact, reason to believe that there existed between these cities an old alliance which was repeatedly called upon.³¹ If such an alliance existed, Pheidon could well have struck coins at Aegina without ever having conquered the island at all. It is well to remember that we have no text which states that Pheidon conquered Aegina. The reasons for believing that he did are contained in the statements of Ephorus and Heraclides that he struck coins there and in the tradition that he reconquered the domain of his ancestor Temenus (Strabo 8.358) which included Aegina (Paus.2.29.5).

For the incident mentioned above Herodotus gives no date. This has led to all kinds of conjecture and great differences of opinion.³² Ure's dating is equally conjectural and is based on a

³⁰ Ure (above, note 8) 164 ff.; T. J. Dunbabin, *Ἐχθρὴ Παλαυή*, *BSA* 37(1936-37) 83-91.

³¹ Will (above, note 21) 352, note 2.

³² R. W. Macan, ed. *Herodotus IV-VI* (London 1895) 2.106.

series of guesses, assertions and what he deems to be historical probabilities and unlikelihoods.³³ The fact is that it cannot be shown with certainty that Pheidon ever ruled Aegina, but if he did he might as well have done so in the third as in the second quarter of the seventh century.

The next point to be considered is the dedication of the iron spits at the Argive Heraeum. These spits were identified by Svoronos³⁴ with the *obeliskoi* dedicated by Pheidon and are archaeologically dated in the seventh century.³⁵ Brown challenges this interpretation in two ways. He suggests that the spits, if offered by Pheidon, may simply have been a dedication to the goddess, quite common at the time and having no connection with coinage. This, of course, may be true, but the tradition suggests there was more to it. The second argument, however, attacks the tradition itself as improbable if not impossible. Let us examine Brown's own words as an example of the kind of argument on which his thesis is based:

Another difficulty in the way of the story in the *Etymologicum* is centered on the phrase διδοῦς τὸ νόμισμα καὶ ἀναλαμβάνει τοὺς ὀβελίσκους (handing out the currency and taking in the spits), implying that Pheidon put his coins into circulation by issuing them in exchange for the old spits. This smacks a little of modern methods and is hard to imagine at the very inception of coinage itself in mainland Greece. Can we believe that anyone, however powerful a tyrant, could have "called in" the spits, or had enough wealth to mint enough silver coins beforehand for issue in exchange for the spits called in or to stand the loss of dedicating those spits when he called them in? Not perhaps impossible, but in the highest degree improbable, especially when the dual function of the spits is remembered. The manner in which coins came into circulation at the start is not easily imagined, but the transition from one medium of exchange already established by long usage to another, new and perhaps a little suspect at first, must have been gradual, the two being current for a period side by side. Certainly anachronistic and incorrect is the talk of "demonetization" of the spits which one meets constantly in modern writings on the subject, even the best. This is not required even by the account of the *Etymologicum*.³⁶

³³ *Loc. cit.* (above, note 8) 166–76.

³⁴ *Journ. int. d'arch. num.* 9 (1906) 192 ff.

³⁵ Ure (above, note 8) 163.

³⁶ Brown (above, note 5) 193–94.

Brown, in short, believes that, even if Pheidon did dedicate the spits, such a dedication should be dissociated from the introduction of silver coinage into Greece.

It is highly unlikely that we shall ever know with certainty how coins first came into circulation in Greece, but I think it is possible at least to make a plausible guess. To begin with it is well to keep in mind Sutherland's reminder that, from the first, coins were issued by a central government and served a national interest.³⁷ This implies that however gradually they may have come into common use, there was one moment in time at which they came into use and before which they did not exist as currency. It is not difficult to picture how that moment may have been reached. It would certainly not be necessary or practical to call in all the iron spits in circulation and replace them with silver coins, and surely Pheidon did no such thing. It would be sufficient to announce that thenceforth he would accept payments due him as head of state in silver coins only and to make that possible he would exchange his newly minted "turtles" for the iron spits at a specified rate. No doubt the ratio was set to insure a profit for the Argive tyrant and this, in fact, may have been the chief reason for Pheidon's interest in coinage. We know that he was often engaged in warfare, and he may have hit upon this device as a means of offsetting the cost of his campaigns. In any case, such a method of introducing coins into circulation requires no anachronistic demonetization but would imply a gradual replacement of iron by silver coins. The dedication itself would have the dual purpose of making known officially and solemnly the new policy and of setting up in a sacred and public place the standard ratio between the new silver coins and a drachma of iron spits. The passage in the *Etymologicum* supports this reconstruction without difficulty.

As for the idea that Pheidon could or would dedicate to the goddess all the spits he took in, it may freely be granted that it is absurd. In fact, the text requires no such interpretation. It says merely that Pheidon took in the spits and dedicated (them). There is an absence of precision in the wording and a consequent ambiguity in meaning. Does it mean some of the spits or all the spits? Of the two possibilities one is plainly so absurd that I

³⁷ C. H. V. Sutherland, "Corn and Coin: A Note on Greek Commercial Monopolies," *AJP* 66 (1945) 132.

believe the author never thought of it and was not troubled by any ambiguity. Clearly Pheidon dedicated not all the spits but merely a token.

Brown assumes that the story of the spits is a late invention and not the result of research based on good evidence or tradition, "unless," he says, "... we assume that the dedication bore an inscription actually giving the interpretation preserved in the *Etymologicum*. This is improbable enough."³⁸ It would be instructive to know how Brown weighs the probability of there having been such an inscription at the Heraeum but, alas, his technique is not revealed. The truth is that there is nothing at all improbable about such an assumption, because the inscription need not have been very long to convey the necessary information.³⁹

At last we come to Brown's direct attack upon the tradition and his ingenious *tour de force* in suggesting how it might have been formed. His reconstruction of the process may be summarized

³⁸ Brown (above, note 5) 204, note 69.

³⁹ Some support for this assumption may be offered by an inscription found at the sanctuary of Hera at Perachora; see H. Payne and others, *Perachora* (Oxford 1940) 1.257, Plates 36 and 132.iii. It is slightly mutilated but is restored by Wade-Gery to read *Δραχμα εγο ηερα λευ* [ολενε κειμαι εν αυ]λαι. He believes that the dedication was a bundle of iron spits like that found at Argos and dates the inscription ca. 650–640. More recently Milne has offered a different suggestion. He restores the inscription to read *Δραχμα εγο ηερα λευ* [ολενε δεξο μ'εν αυ]λαι ("The Perachora Drachma Inscription," *CR* 58 [1944] 18). He believes, as does Wade-Gery, that the inscription is related to the introduction of Pheidon's coins but proposes a different object of dedication. As he sees it, the dedication of spits at the Argive Heraeum fixed the official Argive ratio between the silver pieces struck at Aegina and the iron spits in use at Argos. He does not, however, consider it likely that Pheidon could impose this ratio on the Corinthians who nevertheless began to use the Aeginetan coins. It would then be convenient for them to adopt the same ratio and to make an official announcement of it to the public. Thus, for Milne, the dedication at Perachora was not a bundle of iron spits but rather a new Aeginetan silver drachma. We know that the inscription later disappeared, for the stone on which it is engraved was re-used and the inscription obscured. Milne explains this by the introduction of Corinthian coinage which was struck on the Euboic, not the Aeginetan, standard and thus rendered the first definition of the drachma obsolete. Brown of course regards this inscription as earlier than the first coins, and he therefore makes no attempt to discuss the plausible suggestions of Milne. Chronology aside, however, Milne's case deserves attention. In any case the Perachora inscription may have reference to a monetary dedication perhaps having something to do with coinage. Another instance of this kind of dedication has been discussed by A. Raubitschek, "Another Drachma Dedication," *Yale Classical Studies* 11 (1950) 295–96. The possibility, therefore, that the tradition of Pheidon's dedication of the spits at the Argive Heraeum, with its explanatory detail, may derive from a contemporary inscription deserves further consideration.

as follows: "The story first occurs, so far as we know, in Ephorus' *Histories* and the probability is that it was invented by Ephorus himself."⁴⁰ It is known that he was interested in inventions and inventors and liked to attribute inventions to individuals who could be dated historically rather than to gods or whole nations. He freely attributed the invention of the potter's wheel and the double anchor to Anacharsis, an impossible attribution, and "if Ephorus could thus shamelessly invent combinations of inventions with famous names in some cases he could do it in others, and Pheidon's inventions are probably such."⁴¹ There was, in addition, another motive for falsification. In the fourth century it was characteristic of the circle of Isocrates, of which Ephorus was a member, to flatter and attempt to raise the prestige of the house of Macedon. The kings of Macedon claimed descent from the Heraclid Temenus, no doubt out of a desire to prove their celestial descent and more important their ancient Greek lineage. Pheidon, as a Temenid king of Argos and the most famous of the line, was a natural subject for glorification to cast reflected greatness on the kings of Macedon. The story then grew as follows, according to Brown:

Ephorus in the fourth century found (a) Herodotus' statement that Pheidon gave their measures to the Peloponnese: (b) the Aeginetan coin standard used throughout the Peloponnese, the Aeginetan coinage as the currency of the Peloponnese, and perhaps an Aeginetan claim to have invented coinage.

To this he brought a great desire to give all important inventions an inventor with a date. Taking Herodotus' clue he attributed all kinds of measuring units to Pheidon, a well-known name which had just become a subject of great interest as a pretended member of the Macedonian royal line. So he wrote the story that Pheidon of Argos invented coinage and first minted in Aegina.

Another researcher, perhaps as early as the fourth century, knew this story and also the then familiar information that, before coins, spits were widely used as currency: with these things in mind he saw and explained a dedication of spits at Argos, perhaps actually bearing the name of the tyrant. The story in the *Etymologicum* was then complete, but for the adding of the etymological note about spits which was a commonplace.⁴²

⁴⁰ Brown (above, note 5) 194.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* 195.

⁴² *Ibid.* 196-97.

Implicit in this reconstruction and necessary to the entire thesis is the assumption that the tradition derives mainly from one source, Ephorus, who concocted the whole business. It is important, therefore, to keep in mind that the notice in Orion's *Etymologicum* under discussion concludes with the words οὕτως Ἡρακλείδης ὁ Ποντικός. Brown says, "It is often assumed that he [Orion] drew his whole entry under the word ὀβολός from Heraclides, but this is not necessary and Jacoby may be right in denying it."⁴³ He then assumes that only the last part, dealing with etymology, comes from Heraclides and proceeds to hunt the source of the rest of the passage; it is not surprising that he finds it in Ephorus. If the passage in Orion and the two from Ephorus are compared, however, there appears little reason to think that one derives from another. The only statement they have in common is that Pheidon struck coins on Aegina. Each on the other hand contains information omitted by the others. Ephorus tells us that Pheidon's coins were of silver and also of some other metal, a fact that Orion would be unlikely to omit were he copying Ephorus. In addition Ephorus mentions Pheidon's institution of weights and measures, which is likewise not mentioned in the *Etymologicum*. Orion tells the story of the spits and adds the etymological note, statements that prove at any rate that he used some source other than Ephorus.

It is quite true that the inference that Heraclides was responsible for the entire passage is not a necessary interpretation, but it is surely the most obvious one. With all deference to Jacoby's unmatched knowledge of the Greek historians, the ability to determine just what part of the paragraph did not derive from Heraclides can come only from an occult communication with Clio.⁴⁴ Intuition aside, there is no reason to doubt the attribution of the entire passage, which is after all a short one, to the only authority cited. Once this is recognized, Brown's reconstruction disintegrates. If there are two fourth-century historians who agree on the important particulars of the Pheidon story, then Ephorus could not have made up the story of Pheidon's Aeginetan mint from whole cloth. It cannot be denied that the propaganda

⁴³ *Ibid.* 178.

⁴⁴ Jacoby, *Das Marmor Parium* (Berlin 1904) 93, says only, "den ganzen artikel Orions unter die fragmente des Pontikers Herakleides zu stellen, wie Voss p. 51 es thut, halte ich nicht für richtig."

motive may have been present among the fourth century historians who wished to flatter the kings of Macedon, but surely the complicated mythopoeic process described by Brown can be improved by an application of Ockham's razor.

Here is my reconstruction:

1. The coins of Aegina were known to be the first to circulate in Greece, and tradition attributed them to Pheidon of Argos.
2. The measures of the Peloponnese were invented by Pheidon and bore his name.
3. A dedication of spits at the Argive Heraeum was attributed to Pheidon and may even have borne an inscription explaining the circumstances of their donation.
4. Pheidon was known to have been an active and successful military figure who had lifted the hegemony of the Peloponnese from Sparta.

One other point is worthy of mention in support of the Pheidonian claim. It concerns the Pheidonian measures mentioned by Herodotus (6.127). It is necessary of course to point out that measures are not coins. It is worth considering, however, that a ruler with the power and imagination to establish a new and uniform systems of weights and measures in the Peloponnese is a very likely candidate for the honor of striking its first coins.

Brown concludes his article by saying:

The burden of proof must lie with those who maintain Pheidon's coinage in Aegina, and no evidence has yet been adduced which genuinely strengthens the suspect literary tradition on the subject. The matter is one in which we have to weigh probabilities: the positive archaeological evidence is not perhaps, decisive, but it all seems to weigh sufficiently to tip the scales of probability in the absence of heavy counter evidence.⁴⁵

This conclusion is unjustified in every particular. The tradition is a persuasive one which comes from more than one source and has not been shaken in any serious way. The archaeological evidence, far from damaging the literary account, is not of a decisive nature but tends rather to support it. The two pieces of archaeological evidence discussed by Brown are the foundation deposit of the Ephesian Artemisium and the spit dedication at the

⁴⁵ Brown (above, note 5) 198.

Argive Heraeum.⁴⁶ The first provides a date which suits the claim of Pheidon admirably and the second offers striking confirmation of the tradition.

Admittedly there is little that we may regard as certain in our knowledge of the Greek world in the seventh century B.C. Admitted too is the fact that there are unresolved problems in connection with Pheidon's coining activities, most notably why did he choose to strike his coins at Aegina?⁴⁷ In spite of this, the story hangs together with reasonable coherence, and attacks upon it on chronological and archaeological grounds have failed to discredit it. Instead we are left with an account of Pheidon's career which explains most of the evidence⁴⁸ and makes good historical sense. It suggests that Pheidon defeated the Spartans at Hysiae in 669, not many years after coming to power in Argos, and that in the following year he seized control of the Olympic games, which symbolized the new Argive supremacy. Having mastered the Peloponnese, he imposed upon it a uniform system of weights and measures and, it is here argued, introduced silver coinage. His death in support of his Bacchiad supporters in Corinth enabled the Cypselids to achieve power there. The consequent diminution of Argive power enabled the Orthagorids to achieve the independence of Sicyon and the Spartans to crush the Messenian revolt and regain their Peloponnesian leadership.

The case for Pheidon is not finally proved, but it is supported by a credible and plausible tradition. The burden of proof must properly be shouldered by those who would attack it.

⁴⁶ Brown's analysis of the Aeginetan coin series is interesting but essentially beside the point for it sheds no light on the date of its beginning. Ross Holloway of Princeton University is currently engaged in a study of the Aeginetan coins based on a very broad sampling of those coins. He informs me that they do not provide conclusive evidence as to the date of the earliest coins of Aegina which must remain an archaeological and historical problem.

⁴⁷ One suggestion (made by Holloway) is that Aegina was a busy and easily accessible emporium and would have provided a good place for the trans-shipment of silver bullion, goods and coins.

⁴⁸ The only evidence left unexplained is the presence of "Leocedes, son of Pheidon of Argos" among the suitors of Agariste in ca. 575 B.C. as reported by Herodotus (6.127). It is always painful and difficult to reject a statement of Herodotus, but in this case it must be done. The chief problem aside from the obvious chronological one is that we find the son of the Argive tyrant wooing the daughter of Cleisthenes of Sicyon, the great hater of Argos and Argives. No plausible explanation for this phenomenon has yet been suggested, and it seems best to reject it. It is, of course, merely one part of a fairly long catalog and, as Professor Wade-Gery has reminded me, all catalogs in ancient literature are more concerned with filling a quota of impressive names than with historical accuracy.