Law, money, and the transformation of Athens in the sixth century B.C.E.

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In this thesis I propose a new paradigm to explain the transformation of Athens during the sixth century B.C.E. I argue that economic change continually promoted sub-elite groups who became sufficiently strong to demand a share of legal and political rights. The pace of change increased during the century as trade, commerce, and silver mining monetised the economy and brought Athens into broader contact with the outside world. Politicians responded in accordance with circumstances and their own interests. Solon, Peisistratos and Kleisthenes were particularly important because their experiences abroad and personalities led them to try novel solutions. The end of the century saw the collective rise in prosperity of a large proportion of the population, notably farmers, manufacturers, traders and miners. Leaders among these people worked with officials who had been increasingly involved in administering Attica during the tyranny. They used their organisational skills and detailed local knowledge to design and implement the democratic changes under Kleisthenes.

Central to my theory is a re-evaluation of Solon and the ancient attribution to him of a comprehensive ‘code’ of laws. I demonstrate that laws were written in response to need over time, and only reinscribed on numbered axones at the end of the fifth century. I argue against the claim that weights were used as de facto coinage in Solonian legislation, and suggest a requantification of the system of weights and measures. In my view, coinage was introduced by Peisistratos with a suite of denominations for internal use in Attica. Exploitation and export of newly-accessed silver was the reason for the subsequent change of type to ‘owls’, not democracy. Silver mining also helped foster an embryonic market economy with significant social and economic consequences. These insights allow me to provide a new reading of key political events with a focus on identifying the groups and people involved.
DECLARATION

I certify that the work in this thesis entitled “Law, money, and the transformation of Athens in the sixth century B.C.E.” has not previously been submitted for a degree, nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree to any other university or institution other than Macquarie University.

I also certify that the thesis is an original piece of research and it has been written by me. Any help and assistance that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself have been appropriately acknowledged.

In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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My interest in this topic grew out of a masters seminar course on Greek epigraphy taught by Dr. David Phillips at Macquarie University, Sydney in the 1990s. David I am pleased to say, supervised my thesis at the time on the Athenian State calendar. Now with children grown up and time to again pursue my passion for Greek history, David has kindly supervised my Ph.D. Indeed, I have the honour of being his final candidate as he is now retiring, not I trust because he found this task too onerous. I am very grateful to him for his patient support, and ability to instantly recall the name, details and publication date of practically any relevant material. I also thank the Macquarie University Ancient History Department under the capable leadership of Professor Alanna Nobbs, my Associate Supervisor Dr. Ian Plant who read some of my early work, Dr. Stephen Llewelyn for the support he provided when I needed it as post-graduate coordinator, Dr. Ken Sheedy for offering me the Junior Fellowship at the Australian Centre for Ancient Numismatic Studies in 2008 and facilitating my studies in Athens, and Associate Professor Damian Gore (Macquarie University Faculty of Science) for mentoring me and collaborating in the analytical investigation of the chemical composition of ancient Greek silver coins.

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Matthiaou (Epigraphical Museum, Athens). Early on in my research I put a question to Professor Alan Sommerstein (University of Nottingham) about a possible fragment of Aiskhylos. His immediate and comprehensive reply to someone whom he had never met made a deep and positive impact on me. All these scholars caused me to rethink aspects of my arguments, but it goes without saying that I am fully responsible for the result, and they do not necessarily agree with or support my hypothesis.

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NOTES ON TRANSLITERATION AND DATES

Any work dealing extensively with Greek texts faces intractable problems of consistency in transliteration, especially when the material ranges from the Archaic to late Byzantine periods. I have chosen to adopt a policy which I trust is acceptable for a reader familiar with the types of source material used.

Greek words are usually transliterated throughout the text itself except where they appear in a quotation of a secondary work, or it is important to the argument to have the text, in which case it is also translated (by me if not otherwise indicated). In the case of most Greek words, I have transliterated as closely as possible, thus kurbis not kyrbis. Greek names and titles fall into two categories. The most familiar ones are given in their common form to avoid confusion, so Thucydides rather than Thoukudidēs, Galen rather than Galenos or Galenus, Acropolis not Akropolis, Archon not Arkhon. All others are accurately transliterated except that I have succumbed to using ‘y’ for upsilon rather than ‘u’ yielding Aiskhylos and Phrynikhos. However, for the sources used in the appendix in Part 6.3 (only), I have followed the format provided in the Oxford Classical Dictionary 3rd ed. 1996 xxix – liv to make it easier for those texts to be independently consulted and checked.

All dates are B.C.E. (Before the Common Era) unless otherwise stated.

ABBREVIATIONS

I have used standard abbreviations in classical citations as contained in the Oxford Classical Dictionary 3rd ed 1996 xxix – liv. The following abbreviations commonly appear in the text:

- APF Davies 1971
- F Fragment
- FGrH Jacoby 1923-58.

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1 I regret some slight inconsistencies in the articles published early in my candidature.


Martina Martina 1968 (in Part 6.3.3 only).

Rusch. Ruschenbusch 1966 (in Part 6.3.3 only).

SEG *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecae*.

Stroud Stroud 1979 (in Part 6.3.3 only).

West West 1998.