

STEVEN BATTELLE

# *Certificate of Authenticity*

This coin has been personally inspected and determined to be an authentic ancient coin .  
If deemed a forgery by the ACCS, IGC, NGC, or PCGS, it may be  
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Athens Attica, 425-375 BC, AR Drachm

B076597/U02418 5.3 Gm 16 mm

Obv: Helmeted head of Athena right; Arabian 'N' (value mark) on cheek Rev; Owl standing right, head facing; olive sprig. Munro-Hay 1.1a1; BMC Arabia pg. 45, 1 var.; SNG ANS 1456 var.

The coinage of Athens enjoyed a widespread distribution due to a huge production, based on the exploitation of the silver mines of Laurion (Attica), and due to the emergence of this city state as an important regional power. The distinctive 'owl' coinage of Athens (introduced c.530-510 BC) established a long-lived iconographic tradition, which was maintained almost invariably on several series for more than two centuries. With the help of her powerful navy, and through the taxation of her allies, Athens accomplished to gain pre-eminence in Hellas and achieved a celebrated prosperity. The Athenian tetradrachms were well-accepted all over the Mediterranean world, while several imitations modeled on them were issued within the Persian state. The Peloponnesian War (431-404 BC) exhausted the silver resources of Athens and eventually destroyed irreparably the Athenian supremacy. With the mines at Laurion lost and their treasury depleted by the ruinous cost of the Peloponnesian war with Sparta, the Athenians resorted to an emergency issue of plated silver tetradrachms. These were officially withdrawn from circulation after the government was reestablished in 403/2. Testcuts were probably inflicted on most, if not all, Athenian tetradrachms in circulation at this point, to differentiate the silver tetradrachms from silver-plated "emergency" pieces that were to be withdrawn from circulation. During the 4th-3rd century BC, the well-known Athenian types were maintained and only stylistic changes can be observed in the rendering of the designs. This tetradrachm bears the helmeted head of Athena on one side and two symbols of the goddess, an owl and an olive-branch, on the other. In Greek mythology, Athena, the goddess of wisdom and just warfare, rivaled Zeus himself in power and wisdom. It was Athena who gave the people of Attica the olive-tree. The snake and the owl were reckoned to be symbols of her wisdom. The great Greek poet Homer describes Athena as being "owl-eyed". It has been suggested that the eye's of the owl were associated with a very ancient symbol for heaven in the form of a double circle (perhaps from the constellation Gemini that served as a guide to travelers by night). The Athenians were one of the first to commemorate a military victory on their coins. Following victory over the Persians at Marathon in 490 BC, the Athenians modified their tetradrachm to include a crescent moon between the owl and olive branches. The moon reminded Athenians that Darius, king of Persia, withdrew his forces under a waning moon.

