PART 1

GOLD AND SILVER
Exchange is a common feature of human societies. In some societies, exchange transforms from direct to indirect, requiring the use of money. Money is the means of unlimited exchange based on the calculation and recognition of value without direct correlation of need. In the archaic period, in the Greek world and some non-Greek states in Asia Minor, a specific type of money spread, coinage. The distinguishing feature of coinage as against other types of money was its exclusive issue by the state.¹ The degree of monetization found in the Greek world has been debated by scholars, but for the purposes of this work the pervasiveness of monetization is immaterial, since the investigation focuses on the role of the state.² However, it must be stated that it is assumed throughout that there existed at least a minimal degree of monetization in the archaic period and a basic degree in the classical.

Coinage in the Greek world was a state issue and as such the procurement of precious metals for it was a state concern, either by their own means for the few states that controlled relevant resources, or from external sources.³ The following chapters explore the role of the state in the trade of precious metals, gold and silver, especially in relation to precious metal coinage.

Silver was the coinage metal par excellence in the Greek world, particularly after the middle of the sixth century. Gold, on the other hand, was particularly important in the archaic period as the main constituent metal of electrum and continued to be used in some parts of the Greek

² The most important work on the issue is Kraay (1964), especially pages 84–88, where is it argued that the low level of fractions minted by Greek poleis shows a very low level of monetization. However, recent research has shown that the level of fractions was considerably higher than those Kraay knew from the archaic period onwards, showing that the level of monetization was higher throughout the archaic and classical periods: Kim (2002).
³ There are a few disputed cases from the time of early coinage, e.g. The Phanes coin, which has been thought to be that of a private individual, possibly a merchant. However, it is equally possible that one of the poleis followed the Lydian system of inscribing the name of the minting official: Kraay (1976: 24–25).