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THE USE OF COINAGE FOR LARGE PAYMENTS AT ROMAN SAGALASSOS (SW ANATOLIA). COMBINING EVIDENCE FROM HISTORICAL SOURCES, COIN FINDS AND REGIONAL HOARDS

Abstract: This paper wishes to analyse the use of high-value coinage for large payments at Sagalassos during the Roman imperial and late Roman period. To start, two case-studies on possible contexts in which large payments could have taken place, i.e. taxation and public expenses, will be presented for Roman Asia Minor and the region of Sagalassos in particular. Afterwards, the article will focus on the concrete evidence that exists for large transactions and/or the use of high-value coinage, from both historical sources, coin finds from the excavations, and regional hoard evidence. These different material categories will afterwards be combined to analyse the role coinage might have played when large sums had to be paid by the citizens, elite or civic government at Sagalassos.

Keywords: *Roman Asia Minor, Sagalassos, high-value coinage, taxation, public expenses.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The ancient city of Sagalassos was located in the inland region of Pisidia in southwest Anatolia, a mountainous area characterized by a vibrant network of smaller and larger cities during the Roman period. Occupation at the site of Sagalassos took place from the 5th century B.C. until the 13th century AD, after which community life came to an end. As such the site knew Achaemenid, Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine overlords, and witnessed its heydays during Roman Imperial times.¹

¹ For an overview of the history and archaeology of Sagalassos, see WAELKENS 2018.

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Evidence exists for the use of coinage as a means of payment for all these periods, although the level of monetization and the contexts in which the coins functioned could vary significantly. This paper wishes to address one particular question in this respect, being the possible use of high-value coinage of for large payments at Sagalassos and its region during the Roman imperial and late Roman period.

To start, two case-studies on possible contexts in which large payments could have taken place, i.e. taxation and public expenses will be discussed for Roman Asia Minor and the region of Sagalassos in particular. Afterwards, the article will focus on the concrete evidence that exists for large transactions and/or the use of high-value coinage, from both historical sources, coin finds from the excavations and regional hoard evidence collected from the CHRE database. These different material categories will afterwards be combined to analyse the role coinage played when large sums had to be paid by the citizens, elite or civic government at Sagalassos.

2. POSSIBLE CONTEXTS FOR LARGE PAYMENTS

When analysing the way in which large payments were fulfilled in Sagalassos and its region during the Roman imperial period, it is necessary to start with a sketch of possible contexts in which such transactions might have taken place. The following paragraphs will present a short discussion of two domains which (partly) included large payments, i.e. taxation and public expenses, with attention for the different parties that were involved in these contexts.

2.1. Taxation

A first category of payments possibly involving large sums of money, consists of taxes imposed on various levels. During the Roman imperial period, both imperial taxes, levied by the Roman state, and local civic taxes were required to be paid by the citizens across the empire. However, details about their extent and precise nature are relatively scarce for Asia Minor and very limited for the region

of Sagalassos. The following paragraphs will give a general overview of how the taxation system worked in Asia Minor, with special attention for eventual regional evidence. The primary focus will be on the question if taxes were levied in kind or in cash, which is a fundamental distinction when evaluating the possible role of coinage in this respect.

A first category of imperial taxes that were levied in Asia Minor, were the land taxes (*tributum soli* or *agri*). During the entire Roman imperial period, the local cities or communities were responsible for their collection. For the province of *Asia*, landowners had to pay a fixed sum based on the size of their property (*tributum soli*), instead of handing over a tenth of the crop yield as was previously the case.² These developments are described by Cassius Dio³ as follows:

“Thereupon, meeting with no further resistance, he proceeded to take possession of the rest of that region and to regulate its affairs, levying a money contribution, as I have said, but otherwise doing no one any harm and even conferring benefits on all, so far as was possible. In any case he did away with the tax-gatherers, who had been abusing the people most cruelly, and he converted the amount accruing from the taxes into a joint payment of tribute.”⁴

However, it is not clear if the taxes should be paid in money or in kind, or if a combination of the two systems existed. Although the above passage of Cassius Dio is traditionally interpreted as referring to a combined payment and the introduction of taxes paid in money, Duncan-Jones argues that Dio is referring to a one-time money contribution and not to a tax reform. Moreover, the author used a citation by the 2nd century AD land-surveyor Hyginus⁵ to state that payments in kind were the main form of land taxation:

² DE LIGT 2002, 55-66; DUNCAN-JONES 1990, 191; MAREK 2016, 257; SARTRE 1995, 201.

³ CASSIUS DIO, *Historia Romana*, XLII, 6.3.

⁴ Translation by E. CARY in LCL 66 (1916, 127).

⁵ THULIN 1913, 168.

“In quibusdam fructus partem praestant certam, alii quantas alii septimas, alii pecuniam, et hoc per soli aestimationem.”

“In some provinces, they pay part of the crop, some paying one fifth, others one seventh, while other pay in money, based on assessment of area.”⁶

The fact that the payments in kind are mentioned first, led the author to the conclusion that this kind of taxation will have been the most common one. However, an alternative version of the text uses the word *multi* instead of *alii*, which changes the translation of “other (provinces pay) money” to “now many (provinces pay) money”.⁷ If this reading was indeed the original version of Hyginus’ text, then it seems to indicate that at a certain moment in time taxes in cash widely replaced taxes in kind.⁸ In the epigraphical record, evidence for both systems of land taxes can be found. While an inscription from Phrygian Kibyra⁹ dating to the reign of Claudius mentions an adjustment in a tax paid in grain, a document from Nakrasa in Lydia¹⁰ dating to the late 1st century AD mentions a land tax of 12 *denarii* per *uncia* or unit of land that was paid by the landowners to the civic authorities.¹¹

Also a second category of imperial taxes, i.e. the poll tax (*tributum capitis*) for males over the age of fourteen and females over twelve, can be proven to be imposed in the *Provincia Asia*. Next to these direct taxes, other irregular taxes were e.g. levied on the manumission of slaves (*vicesima lertabis*) and on inheritances (*vicensima hereditatum*).¹² Another important

form of taxation consisted of the *portoria* or customs taxes, which were levied on goods crossing certain borders. Thanks to the considerable number of documents that came to light during the last decades, the customs system in Asia Minor is especially well-known. The first and most famous of these documents is the Customs Law of Asia or *Lex Portoria Asiae*, which was discovered in the Church of St. John in Ephesos in 1989.¹³ The inscription does in fact list clauses dating from the Republican period, with a first record dating to 72 BC, until the reign of Nero. The original laws were not erased, but were supplemented by later, sometimes contradictory rules. In AD 62, the list was summarized and published in a Greek translation in the capital of Ephesos. All items concern the laws for the dues on import and export into and out of the province of Asia, both by land and sea.¹⁴ Customs stations where taxes had to be paid were present both on the coast – of which the location of 29 of them can be reconstructed from the inscription – and inland along the eastern border of the province (Fig. 1). Strikingly, the Pamphylian cities of Perge, Magydos, Phaselis and Side are mentioned, and also Aspendos and Attaleia might have been originally part of the list. Given the fact that the region of Pamphylia was no longer part of the province of Asia since 102 BC, this list must according to Mitchell belong to the original period of the law’s drafting in the 120s BC.¹⁵

Regarding the toll stations on the internal boundary, evidence is provided by the epigraphical record. A text found in Pisidian Apollonia¹⁶, the first city in the province of Galatia on the main route, does for instance refer to an official stationed at the toll station of this city, which existence is moreover

⁶ DUNCAN-JONES 1990, 187.

⁷ THULIN 1913, 168.

⁸ HOPKINS 2002, 215-216. See also DE LIGT 2002, 55-66 & *id.* 2004, who strongly argues for tax payments in cash.

⁹ IGR IV, 914; DUNCAN-JONES 1990, 190.

¹⁰ DUNCAN-JONES 1990, 192.

¹¹ DE LIGT 2009, 83.

¹² DUNCAN-JONES 1990, 195; MAREK 2016, 388-389; MITCHELL 1993, 68. For a description of the different taxes levied by the Roman imperial authorities, see DREXHAGE 2007, 32-39 (specifically for the province

of Asia); DREXHAGE / KONEN / RUFFING 2002, 43-44; GÜNTHER 2016; NEESEN 1980, 25-84.

¹³ For the text, translation and commentary on the Customs Law of Asia in general, see COTTIER *et alii* 2008; ENGELMANN / KNIBBE 1989.

¹⁴ MAREK 2016, 389-390; MITCHELL 2008, 173; on custom duties during the Roman period, see also KRITZINGER / SCHLEICHER / STICKLER 2015.

¹⁵ MITCHELL 2008, 188-192.

¹⁶ PFLAUM 1975.

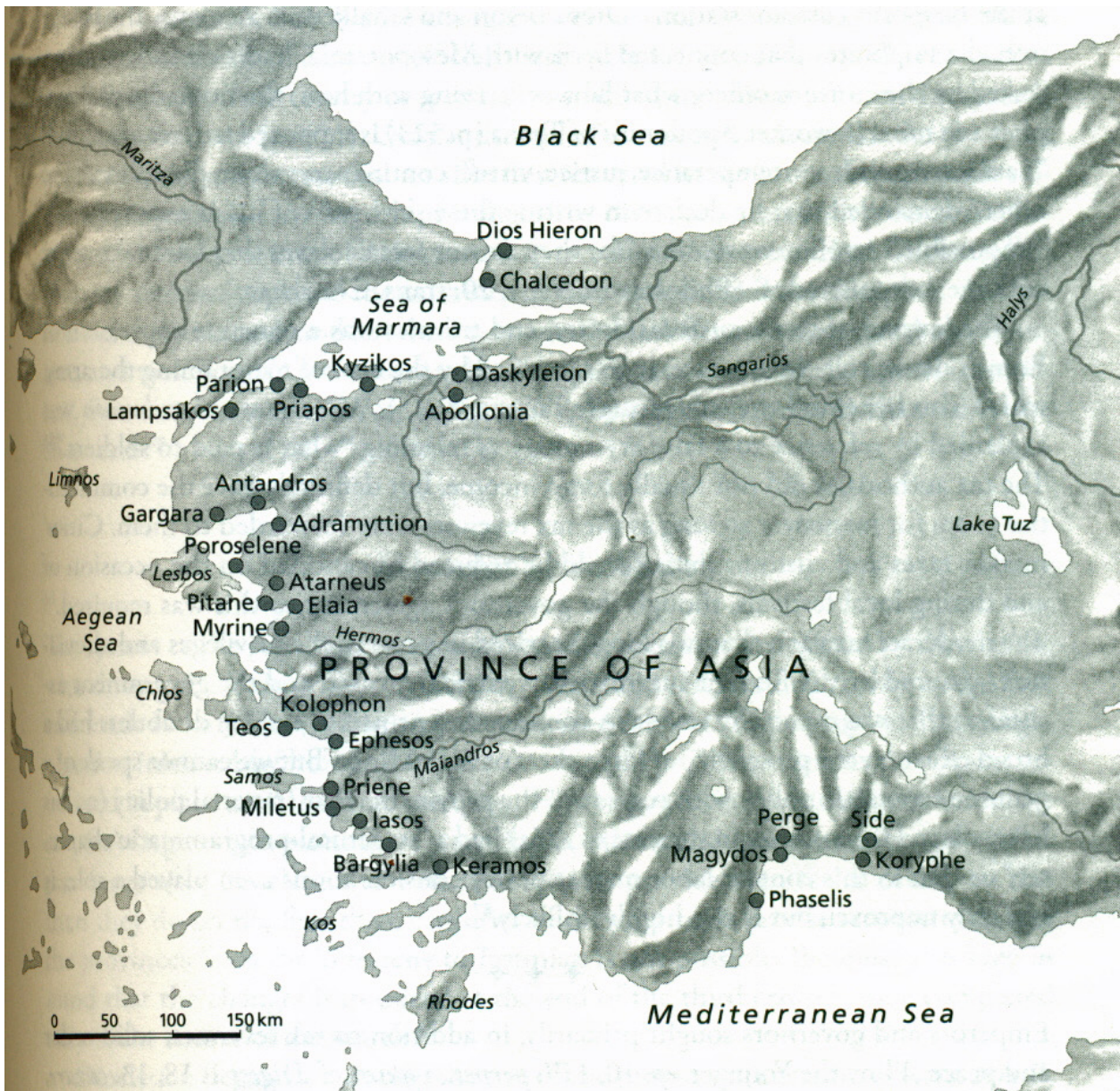


Fig. 1. Map showing the harbours listed in the customs law of Ephesos (Marek 2016: 391, map 22).

confirmed by a funerary inscription found at Laodikeia on the Lykos¹⁷, mentioning a slave official active at the same location. Also at the city of Amorion, which is located on the Asian side of the main route leading into Galatia, a gravestone¹⁸ honouring a slave official working in the customs' system was discovered.¹⁹ Regarding the precise functioning of taxation system, generally a customs duty of 2,5% of the value of the goods had to be paid when crossing the border. Some exceptions existed, such as the set sum of 5 *denarii* per capita

¹⁷ MAMA IV, 113.

¹⁸ HARRISON 1988, 180 f.

¹⁹ MITCHELL 2008, 177-178.

levied on the transport of young slaves. Moreover, a considerable amount of goods was exempt from customs duties, like goods transported for state officials and military men, goods for "private use" such as slaves and animals, bronze and silver coins, books and water. Moreover, the document mentions the penalties set on fraud and evasion, with undeclared or falsely declared commodities being confiscated by the customs officer. In contrast to the land taxes mentioned above, the *portoria* were the responsibility of Roman *publicani*, although local authorities were involved when the latter were not available. Each year on the second Ides of October,

these tax farmers had to hand over the collected money to the *Aerarium*.²⁰ In theory, the commodities a traveller brought with him had to be orally declared, the declaration had to be registered, and the corresponding tax had to be paid at the stations. However, as suggested by Corbier, this does not mean that every single duty was always met directly at the spot. Although this presumably will have been the normal procedure for ordinary travellers, important merchants and carriers could make agreements with the *publicani* to fulfil a group of tax they accumulated during a certain amount of time at different place or different date. That such systems existed, is for instance clear from a rescript send by Septimius Severus and Caracalla²¹, which refers to the granting of deferred payments by the *publicanus* as a common practice.²²

Another inscription dealing with the same subject and equally dating to the reign of Nero was found in 1999 in the Hadrianic *granarium* of the city of Andriake in Lycia. The law regulates customs matters of the Lycian League, again probably taking over an already existing system. In this particular case, Rome transmitted the responsibility over the customs taxes entirely to the League, demanding the annual lump sum of 100.000 *denarii* in return. In its turn, the *koinon* left the right to collect the *portoria* to its member cities, fixing a due annual payment per centre. On top of that, the League levied a double customs duty of 5 percent on unsold goods taken out of the country.²³

Regarding the 3rd century AD, it is often argued that imperial taxes in kind – especially in the form of grain requisitions – became increasingly important, due to the institution of the *annona*, i.e. the direct provisioning of the troops with grain and other supplies, on the one hand, and the debasement of the coinage on the other.²⁴ According to Mitchell however,

²⁰ MAREK 2016, 390; COTTIER *et alii* 2008, 1-13.

²¹ *Digest*, XXXIX, 4.16.12.

²² CORBIER 2008, 220-221.

²³ MAREK 2016, 390-391; TAKMER 2007.

²⁴ HOPKINS 1980, 123-124; HOWGEGO 1992, 23-24; JONES 1964, 411.

the situation in Asia Minor will not have been so different from the previous periods, since payments in kind by the local peasants to the tax-collecting authorities were traditionally common practice. What did change however, was the method of tax collection. The task of the civic magistrates in collection taxes in kind and money dues was gradually taken over by soldiers or other imperial officials spread across the Asian countryside. *Frumentarii* were responsible for the collection of taxes in kind in order to secure the supplies of grain for military units, while *stationarii* were located as some kind of police forces at stations along the main roads of the empire. However, these troops did not only collect the official taxes, but also burdened the local population with additional requirements of infrastructure, food, drinks and cattle. Complaints about abuses by these groups are well-attested in the epigraphical record. One inscription²⁵ from the colony of Aragua in the region of Phrygia, dating to the reign of Philips I and addressed to the emperor himself, does for instance testify about the troubles that were afflicted to the rural population by the present Roman soldiers.²⁶

Under the emperor Diocletian, the entire Roman tax system was reformed and unified, as such creating a model that remained in general in use until the 7th century AD. A general annual charge was introduced, which demanded from the empire's subject both fixed *indictiones* or levies in kind – which could be commuted into cash equivalents by the system of *adaeratio*²⁷ –, next to compulsory labour for state projects and money contributions. Every fifteen years, universal censuses were conducted which counted and registered individuals and their properties to calculate the poll and land tax. Based on these calculations, the due levies were established per city, province and diocese. The responsibility over the tax collection was transferred from the civic authorities to imperial officials, who were stationed in the capitals and

²⁵ OGIS II.519.

²⁶ MITCHELL 1993, 232-234.

²⁷ MITCHELL 1993, 233; VERBOVEN 2009, 14-15.

throughout the province and fell under the overall supervision of the praetorian prefects.²⁸ Next to these direct poll and land taxes, also other forms of taxation remained in use or were newly introduced during the late Roman and early Byzantine period. Customs duties on goods were still levied on borders, at harbours, or at cities. According to a law of Constantine, the collection of these customs taxes was in the hand of tax-farmers, allocated by auction to the highest bidder for terms of minimum three years.²⁹ Accessional, quinquennial and other festive donatives were levied on the curial class (*aurum coronarium*) and senatorial class (*aurum oblativum*) as theoretically voluntary offerings, which could reach to values of 1.000 or 2.000 *solidi* at certain cities according to Libanius.³⁰ Under Constantine, a new tax, called the *collatio lustralis* or *chrysargyron*, was levied on the group of *negatiatores*, i.e. anyone who made his living by buying and selling or by charging fees, including for instance urban craftsmen, rural merchants and moneylenders. Specific groups like doctors, teachers, landowners, peasants selling their own produce, and in time also rural craftsmen were exempted from the tax. The payment was assessed on the capital assets of the *negatiatores*, including both themselves and their families, tools, animals and slaves. Initially the burden could be paid in gold and silver, but was generally collected in gold only from the reign of Valentinian and Valens on.³¹

As is already clear from the overview above, levies and payments in kind were progressively commuted into gold from the late Roman period on, corresponding to the re-establishment of a solid gold currency. Although the switch seems to have been completed in the West by the second quarter of the 5th century AD, the commutation was slower and less consistent in the East. At first, it seems that land taxes were assessed in kind and later on commuted into gold based on an

²⁸ JONES 1964, 411-412, 449-458; MITCHELL 2007, 171.

²⁹ JONES 1964, 430.

³⁰ LIBANIUS, *ORATIONES*, XVIII, 193; HENDY 1985, 175-178; JONES 1964, 430.

³¹ HAARER 2006, 194-196; JONES 1964, 431-432.

average price calculated over five years.

Turning to the second category of taxes, i.e. the ones imposed by the civic authorities, Dio Chrysostom mentions in his *Orationes* direct levies on non-citizen groups or on depended villages and communities in the territories of Rhodes and Apameia Caeleana.³² The bulk of the civic taxes however again seem to have been of an indirect nature, such as dues and fees levied during markets or other economic activities. That such demands might indeed been common practice and possibly provided the city with a decent amount of resources, is for instance suggested by the several attestations of temporary suspensions of these fees in times of festivals.³³ An inscription from Lycian Oinoanda³⁴ recording the establishment of a festival by a local benefactor does for instance declare that all goods that were bought, sold, imported or exported during the duration of the festivities should be exempt from tax. Moreover, three so-called tariff inscriptions are known from Palmyra (AD 137)³⁵, Kaunos (1st century AD)³⁶ and Myra³⁷, listing all indirect taxes that were levied in the respective cities and the goods to which they related. The Palmyrene tax tariff is highly interesting in this respect, since it mentions the fixed sums that had to be paid per category of goods expressed in silver *denarii* for larger payments and in bronze Italian *asses* for smaller sums.³⁸ However, this does not necessarily mean that these currencies physically circulated in Syria: according to Butcher, it is possible that prices were expressed in the “official” imperial currency as a means of standardization, but that they were paid on the spot in local obols and tetradrachms.³⁹

³² RHODES: DIO CHRYSOSTOM, *ORATIONES*, XXXI, 101; APAMEA CELAENA: *IBID.*, XXXV, 14.

³³ For references, see DE LIGT 1993, 229-234; appendices I.C & II.C; WÖRRLE 1988, 210, fn. 158.

³⁴ SEG XXXVIII, 1462; WÖRRLE 1988, 4-17.

³⁵ IGR III, 1056.

³⁶ SEG XIV, 639.

³⁷ WÖRRLE 1975, 287.

³⁸ See SCHWARZ 2001, 375-376 for a list of the taxed goods and the sums that had to be paid.

³⁹ BUTCHER 2004, 192-195. See also VON REDEN

For the late Roman period, revenues from civic properties and taxes were confiscated by the imperial *res privata* during the reigns of Constantine and Constantius and, after a brief restoration under Julian, again during the reigns of Valentinian and Valens. The complaints responding to these measures led to a series of adjustments of the legislation, in order to enable the cities to maintain their public amenities. In AD 374, one third of both the rents of the former civic lands and of the civic tax revenue was refunded to the cities, but the management remained in the hands of the *sacrae largitiones* in case of the latter until AD 431.⁴⁰ Evidence for the existence of a system of combined levels of taxation comes from instance from Mylasa, where the income from customs duties were shared between the city and the imperial *sacra largitio* in AD 428.⁴¹

The above discussion shows that the questions on how the taxation system worked in the region of Sagalassos during the Roman imperial period, and especially on what the importance was of taxes levied in kind and in cash, cannot be easily and unambiguously answered due to fragmentary evidence and possible regional differences.⁴² However, some general thoughts can be added. First, the fact that the bulk of the taxes were charged on land and yields, does suggest that the main part of the revenues came from rural areas. Second, taxes paid for in kind or in money demanded a different form of organization and structures. If taxes are primarily levied in kind, this implies that their revenues should be redistributed within a relatively short time span to a large consuming mass. However, the demand for grain and other commodities was largely limited to the elite, the army and the urban dwellers, while the largest share of the population, i.e. the rural peasants, could provide the bulk of their food needs themselves. Moreover, taxes raised in cash are not only easier to collect and transport, but also mean a much larger degree of freedom

2010, 89.

⁴⁰ JACOBS 2013, 483-484; JONES 1964, 732-733.

⁴¹ LIEBESCHUETZ 1991, 172, fn. 14.

⁴² On this subject, see also DE LIGT 2009.

for the receiving parties, since they could use the resources to buy or pay for any possible needed goods or services at any place or moment in time.⁴³ On the other hand, if taxes are levied directly in cash from the population, this means that all levels of society had access to the monetary means of payment both in the cities and on the countryside, and that commercial structures were omnipresent or easily accessible where surplus could be sold and exchanged for money.

Regarding the possible constraints that both taxation in kind and in cash confronted, it is highly possible that both systems were combined: the local peasants might have paid their contributions in kind to their landlords or directly to the city, who at their turn converted it into cash through commercial transactions, and transferred their debts to the higher authority in coins or credit.⁴⁴ In such a scenario, the conversion of the surplus into money, which was easier to handle and could be used for a larger variety of purposes, took place at an intermediate level. An early imperial text⁴⁵ from an anonymous village in the province of Lycia, discussing the revenues from a grain tax, might indeed argue for such system. The document uses the term *seitike dekate* to denote the tax paid by the local peasants, which might be interpreted as a payment in kind. However, the community as a whole afterwards paid a sum of 550 *denarii* to the urban tax collector, which suggests that some mechanism existed to convert the taxes paid by the peasants in kind into money at the level of the village.⁴⁶ Who was particularly responsible for this conversion could vary from period to period and/or from region to region, according to the taxation system that was used. In this case however, the presence of sufficient storage space, access to commercial opportunities and the availability of monetary

⁴³ HOPKINS 2002, 229.

⁴⁴ DUNCAN-JONES 1990, 194; HOPKINS 2002, 209, 217.

⁴⁵ SEG XLVII, 1809.

⁴⁶ DE LIGT 2009, 84-85. However, de Ligt stresses that the interpretation of the term *seitike dekate* as referring to taxes paid in kind cannot be taken for granted.

forms of payment remains essential, although not for the lower levels of society.

Another option might have been that taxes were paid by the local inhabitants in small change, and were later on converted into high-value coins before being transmitted to the higher authority. The existing evidence does indeed suggest that the sums charged on the individual level were rather modest. A 1st century AD document from Nakrasa in Lydia⁴⁷ mentions a land tax of 12 *denarii* per land unit to be paid by the landowners to the civic authorities. Moreover, also indirect taxes like custom duties or civic market taxes probably required only small amounts of money. It was only during the next step or at a “higher level”, e.g. the transfer of payments from the entire village communities to the civic authorities or from the civic authorities to the ruling powers, that really large money transactions were at stake. Several of the above-mentioned examples can be cited in this respect, such as the inscription from Lycian Andriake⁴⁸ dating to the reign of Nero quoting the lump sum of 100.000 *denarii* that had to be paid by the Lycian League to Rome, or the passage by Libanius⁴⁹ mentioning donatives of 1.000 to 2.000 *solidi* paid by the curial and senatorial class to the late Roman authorities. In this scenario of a “stepped” taxation-system, it is necessary to stress that the largest share of the population only needed to small change or modest amounts of precious metal coins to pay their burden. The term of “large payments” consequently only applies for a limited part of the tax transactions, i.e. from the moment that the individual smaller sums were converted into large amounts of precious metal.

2.2. Public expenses

A second category were large money transactions might have played an important role, were public expenses. These included the financing of a whole range of public amenities, such as the construction, restoration and

maintenance of public structures, the provision of certain public services, or the organization of civic festivals and games. The costs could be carried by different parties like the cities themselves and the urban elite, whose share evolved through time. For the early and middle imperial period, Schwarz divided the civic expenses into the following categories: expenses for the management of the cities and the territory like the payment of civil servants, the financing of civic and imperial cults and festivals, expenses related to social welfare such as education and healthcare, expenses for diplomatic purposes, the sponsoring of the coin production and the financing of specific civic services such as the fire brigade and police forces.⁵⁰ Considering the fact that this period brought a boom in both monumental building and festivals to the cities of Asia Minor⁵¹, expenses in these fields will have been abundant.

During the early and middle Roman period, a system with both the cities and individual elite members participating in the financing of public amenities existed. The tradition of *leitourgiai* – i.e. public services that required the holder to make payments corresponding to its function – that already existed in the cities was continued.⁵² Moreover, fixed sums had to be paid upon entry for several offices as a sort of ‘inauguration fee’, an institution which is known as *summa honoraria*. They could include both direct payments to the city, but were often translated in the financing of monuments.⁵³ Moreover, it is clear that the phenomenon of euergetism or gift-giving by the elite, which was extensively studied for Roman Asia Minor by Zuiderhoek (2009), became increasingly popular during this period, especially in the 2nd century AD. The gifts granted to the community by the elite’s members could take various forms. Gifts relating to public building are most commonly attested, followed by distributions of oil,

⁴⁷ DUNCAN-JONES 1990, 192; DE LIGT 2009, 83.

⁴⁸ TAKMER 2007.

⁴⁹ LIBANIUS, *Orationes*, XVIII, 193.

⁵⁰ SCHWARZ 2001, 280-332.

⁵¹ See e.g. MITCHELL 1993; WAELEKENS 2002.

⁵² DMITRIEV 2005, 109-139; MAREK 2016, 431.

⁵³ DMITRIEV 2005, 152-157; DUNCAN-JONES 1990, 176-177.

money, grain and/or wine, and contributions to games and festivals.⁵⁴ In return, the elite received status and prestige, i.e. primarily in the form of honorific inscriptions, praising the benefactor's moral qualities and virtues.⁵⁵ According to Zuiderhoek, this proliferation of euergetism can be explained by the contemporary social and political developments, i.e. the growing discrepancies in wealth between elite and non-elite citizens and the concentration of political power in the hands of a small elite group. Public benefactions were a remedy to counter the threat posed by this context on the unifying ideal of the citizen community, which provided the basis for social and political stability in the cities of the Eastern empire.⁵⁶ On the one hand, it emphasized the continuing importance of the unifying civic ideal since most gifts reflected the essential characteristics of the Greco-Roman urban life, like buildings and public events associated with civic religion, cultural life and entertainment. On the other hand, the public munificence also clearly reflected and legitimized the increasingly hierarchical and oligarchic nature of the civic society.⁵⁷ In the case of public handouts for instance, privileged groups that occupied the higher echelons in the civic hierarchy generally received larger shares than ordinary citizens.⁵⁸ Moreover, the depiction of the benefactors in the inscriptions honouring their gifts as being morally superior, legitimized their position to rule the city.⁵⁹

However, Zuiderhoek also demonstrated that the traditional view⁶⁰ on euergetism as

⁵⁴ ZUIDERHOEK 2009, 71-112.

⁵⁵ ZUIDERHOEK 2009, 113-153.

⁵⁶ ZUIDERHOEK 2009, 53-70.

⁵⁷ ZUIDERHOEK 2009, 71-76.

⁵⁸ ZUIDERHOEK 2009, 95-104.

⁵⁹ ZUIDERHOEK 2009, 113-133.

⁶⁰ Traditionally, an economic explanation is preferred for the proliferation of euergetism during the early and high Roman empire. ZUIDERHOEK 2009, 23 summarized the traditional argument as follows: "*The imperial government, greedy for taxes, left the provincial cities few revenues of their own. Hence, provincial civic governments suffered an endemic shortage of cash and were by a large unable to finance the necessary urban infrastructure and public amenities for their communities.*

the dominant force of the urban economy during the early and middle imperial period cannot be maintained. Munificence only constituted maximum 5% of the aggregate annual elite income, and most gifts were once-only and of a limited size, i.e. of a sum lower than 1000 *denarii*. Regarding for instance the financing of buildings, most gifts consisted of donations of single architectural elements for embellishment or restoration. Only few elite families would have been able to finance large-scale munificence, like the construction of an entire building or the foundation and sponsoring of a recurrent festival.⁶¹ Given the fairly modest and irregular character of the elite's contributions and the fact that most of their gifts were of a representational nature and not contributing to the basic daily needs of the ordinary citizens, the role of the city governments in financing the public amenities will have been essential. In many cases, payments will have been shared between private benefactors on the one hand and the cities on the other.⁶² Regarding the civic governments, funds to pay for public amenities were obtained from a variety of resources, i.e. primarily indirect taxes (see above), but also rents from public lands, workshops and real estates, fees, fines and occasional *summa honoraria*.⁶³

Also during the late Roman – and early Byzantine – period, the level of public expenses will have remained considerable in the cities. Although the monumental centres were by now in many cases largely saturated – meaning that there was simply no place left for new large-

Members of the local elite stepped in, however, to pay for the required amenities out of their own pocket. Thus, elite public benefactions were crucial for the long-term economic survival of the cities of the Roman world." See e.g. MITCHELL 1993, 210 and SARTRE 1991, 133 for examples of this view.

⁶¹ ZUIDERHOEK 2009, 27-36.

⁶² For examples of collective financing of public works in the region of Pontus and Bithynia, see SALMERI 2005.

⁶³ DREXHAGE 2007, 97-100; Marek 2016, 434-436; ZUIDERHOEK 2005; *id.* 2009: 37-52. On the civic budget in Asia Minor during the Roman period, see SCHWARZ 2001. On the income of the cities, see SARTRE 1991, 134-135.

scale building projects – this period saw the emergence of some new types of structures, which gave the cities their typical late classical look. From the second half of the 4th century AD on, fortification walls surrounding the city centres were erected across the whole of Asia Minor, while heterogeneous colonnades were added to streets and squares from the late 4th and early 5th century on. Especially during the Early Byzantine period, the first monumental churches started to appear on dominant positions in the landscape, both as new buildings or through the conversion of both temples and secular buildings. Moreover, some new late antique and few early Byzantine decorative monuments were added to the urban landscape, although they were often smaller, simpler and more modest in decoration than during previous periods. Apart from these new constructions, considerable budgets were moreover needed for repairs, restorations and overall maintenance of the public space, like is for instance reflected in the many interventions in squares and street pavements.⁶⁴ Also another important pillar in public expenses, i.e. the organization of games and festivals, survived during the late antique and early Byzantine period. Athletics competitions or *agones* seem to have remained fairly popular during the first half of the 4th century AD, as is for instance shown by evidence from Ephesos and Aphrodisias, but their importance declined from the 2nd part of that century on.⁶⁵ On the other hand, new types of events started to appear across the East, with for instance circus races taking over the role of most popular games.⁶⁶ Moreover, the cities now also witnessed the emergence of new Christian festivals replacing the old pagan ones, which were organized in honour of martyrs and saints and included processions and communal meals. These celebrations now had important shrines and churches as their focus, and often attracted pilgrims from wider areas.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ JACOBS 2013, 644-652; ROUECHÉ 2000, 577-583.

⁶⁵ REMIJSEN 2015, 70-88; TALLOEN 2003, 178-180.

⁶⁶ REMIJSEN 2015, 169-170.

⁶⁷ TALLOEN 2003, 180-183.

Also during the late Roman and early Byzantine period, the financing of the public amenities remained largely in the hands of the civic authorities. The *Codex Justinianus* does for instance mention how cities spend money on a large variety of civic amenities, like the building and/or maintenance of aqueducts, baths, harbours, fortifications, towers, roads and bridges⁶⁸, and the purchase of corn⁶⁹. However, municipal resources seemed to have generally declined, for instance caused by the confiscation of civic property and civic taxes by the imperial authorities during several reigns (see above). That these confiscations made it extremely difficult for the cities to finance their traditional projects is for instance clear from the many complaints that were addressed to the emperor. Several attestations in the *Codex Theodosianus* attest to measures that are taken to improve this situation by apportioning a fixed part of the city's remaining revenues for the upkeep of public buildings and walls.⁷⁰ The widespread reuse of building elements from older structures allowed the civic authorities to save on their budget, and new sources of income were tapped, with for instance the sale or lease of (parts) of a portico or other public monuments to private citizens.⁷¹ A second party that was concerned with public expenses was the institute of the Church, whose funds increased considerably through endowments and were directed by the local bishop. The Church was not only responsible for the maintenance and construction of ecclesiastical and charity buildings or for the salaries of the clergy, but also played a role in various secular projects, e.g. the construction and maintenance of city fortifications.⁷²

On the other hand, the interference of the civic elite in the financing of public amenities gradually started to decline. From

⁶⁸ *Codex Justinianus*, I.4.26.

⁶⁹ *Codex Justinianus*, X.27.12.

⁷⁰ *Codex Theodosianus* 4.13.5 (358); 5.14.35; 15.1.18 (347). See also CHASTAGNOL 1986; JONES 1964, 732-733.

⁷¹ JACOBS 2013, 483-488; JONES 1964, 737; *id.* 1979: 251; LIEBESCHUETZ 2001, 172-175; MITCHELL 2007, 230; ZUIDERHOEK 2009, 154-159.

⁷² JACOBS 2013, 488-490.

the 220s onwards. Except for some scarce evidence of civic euergetism in large cities like Antioch⁷³, insecurities on the elite's income on the one hand and the fact that the higher echelons of the civic society now primarily focused on the imperial instead of the civic cause on the other⁷⁴, made that the members of the local elites no longer chose to spend their wealth on public facilities.⁷⁵ During the late Roman period, local councillors increasingly tried to escape their local duties, which eventually led to the disappearance of the class of civic *curiales*.⁷⁶ However, this does not mean that individual benefactions disappeared: rather than being targeted at the civic life and structures, they were now however focusing on Christian charity, benefiting both the institution of the Church as the large group of "the poor".⁷⁷

The above paragraphs presented two contexts which were (partly) characterized by large payments during the Roman imperial period, i.e. taxation and public expenses. However, large-scale money transactions were of course not restricted to these domains. Also rents of land and eventually other structures will have asked for considerable contributions of the tenant's part, and might just like the taxes have been paid in cash, kind, or a combination of both.⁷⁸ Moreover, the urban elite not only sponsored public amenities but also invested considerable amounts of their capital in private projects, as is for instance attested at Sagalassos by the large Urban Mansion dating to the late Roman and early Byzantine period.⁷⁹ As such, it is certain that large payments were frequently carried out by several parties in

⁷³ Libanius' *Orationes* mention how the leading *decuriones* of Antioch still financed large-scale and prestigious games in the later part of the 4th century AD (Libanius, *Orationes*, XI, 134-137).

⁷⁴ See MITCHELL 1999.

⁷⁵ JACOBS 2013, 668.

⁷⁶ On the decline of the curial order, see e.g. JACOBS 2013, 485-487; JONES 1964, 737-756; *id.* 1979, 251-252; MILLAR 1983.

⁷⁷ ZUIDERHOEK 2005, 156-157; BROWN 2002, 4-6.

⁷⁸ On the payment of rents, see e.g. HOWGEGO 1992, 25-26.

⁷⁹ see WAELEKENS / JACOBS 2014, 121-123.

Sagalassos and its region during the period under consideration. Now, it is time to turn to the direct evidence that points to these transactions and illuminates the possible role of high-value coinage in this respect.

3. EVIDENCE FROM SAGALASSOS AND ITS REGION

3.1. Historical evidence

Written sources are a first category that can provide information about the possible use of coinage for large payments at Roman Sagalassos and its region. Important epigraphic evidence from the city itself relates the field of expenses for public amenities. As discussed above, public investments will have been carried both by the civic authorities as by members of the local elite, be it directly linked to a public office or not. The phenomenon of civic euergetism, i.e. gift giving by members of the elite to the citizen community, proliferated during the early and middle imperial period, and is archaeologically reflected in the large number of honorary inscriptions that were put up for the benefactors in return. The investments of the elite could take various forms. First, some examples are known from Sagalassos of elite members financing the construction of public buildings. The most obvious example of this practice in the city is the construction of the Neon Library around AD 120-130, which was sponsored by Titus Flavius Severianus Neon and dedicated to his father Titus Flavius Dareius.⁸⁰ Also the organization of festivals and games was (partly) financed by members of the local elite, functioning as *agonothetes*. To quote just a couple of examples: Tiberius Claudius Piso, the founder of the Klareian games at Sagalassos and *agonothetes* for life, is said to have provided for the effigies and statues of the victors in the wrestling competition⁸¹, while the epitaph of a the imperial high priest Tertullus mentions how he organized gladiator games, animal hunts involving bears,

⁸⁰ DEVIJVER 1996, 109-113, 135-136; WAELEKENS 2002, 349; *id.* 2013.

⁸¹ DEVIJVER 1996, 133, nr. 3.; TALLOEN 2015, 299.

panthers and lions, and athletic competitions in the late 2nd and early 3rd century AD.⁸² More limited contributions consisted for instance of the erection of imperial statues. A statue of Vespasian was erected by Tiberius Claudius Piso and Tiberius Claudius Varus⁸³, while a certain Attalos, son of Neon and grandson of Antiochos, set up a statue for Hadrian on the Upper Agora⁸⁴. During the 3rd century AD, Aurelius Medianus Attalianus donated an effigy of Severus Alexander and Julia Mamaea to the city.⁸⁵ Another example of a more modest donation is the erection of an altar for the deity Angedeisis in the territory of Sagalassos during the 2nd century AD by the priestess Briseis, a member of the urban elite.⁸⁶ However, the elite was not the only sponsor of public structures and events: although less referred to in the epigraphical record, the city itself will have been largely responsible for the financing of the construction, organization and maintenance of civic amenities. Regarding public buildings, the Roman baths were dedicated by the city of Sagalassos to the emperors Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus in AD 165.⁸⁷ Statues were erected by the city or its institutions for e.g. the emperors Trajan⁸⁸, Marcus Aurelius Caesar⁸⁹, Commodus⁹⁰,

⁸² CIG 4377; TALLOEN 2015, 279, fn. 824.

⁸³ DEVIJVER 1996, 132; TALLOEN / WAELKENS 2004, 192.

⁸⁴ LANCKORONSKI 1892, 230, nr. 215 = IGR III, 347; TALLOEN 2015, 163; TALLOEN / WAELKENS 2004, 193.

⁸⁵ LANCKORONSKI 1892, 226, nr. 196; TALLOEN 2015, 277; TALLOEN / WAELKENS 2004, 195.

⁸⁶ TALLOEN 2015, 258, 278. The altar was recorded at the village of Bağsaray in the south part of the Sagalassian territory. See also BEAN 1954, 478-481; HORSLEY 2007, 9, nr. 2; ROBERT 1980, 238-239; VANHAVERBEKE / WAELKENS 2003, 255-257; WAELKENS *et alii* 1997, 61-64.

⁸⁷ TALLOEN 2015, 167; TALLOEN / WAELKENS 2004, 184-186.

⁸⁸ LANCKORONSKI 1892, 226, nr. 199 = IGR III, 346; TALLOEN 2015, 162, fn. 70; TALLOEN / WAELKENS 2004, 193.

⁸⁹ LANCKORONSKI 1892, 225, nr. 190 = IGR III, 349; TALLOEN 2015, 167; TALLOEN / WAELKENS 2004, 193-194.

⁹⁰ LANCKORONSKI 1892, 225, nr. 191 = IGR III, 350; TALLOEN 2015, 168; TALLOEN / WAELKENS 2004, 194.

Septimius Severus⁹¹, Caracalla⁹², Gallienus & Salonina⁹³ and Constantius II⁹⁴.

In a number of cases, the inscriptions honouring the contributions of elite members to public expenses mention the exact sums invested by the benefactors. The building inscription of the temple of Apollo Klarios⁹⁵, erected for the restoration and the dedication of the temple to both the deity and the divine emperors during the 2nd century AD, mentions that the priest Titus Flavius Collega invested the 10.000 *denarii* “of his priesthood”, i.e. his *summa honoraria*, for the rebuilding of the colonnades and the marble cladding, while the rest of the repairs were paid for by other members of his family.⁹⁶ The construction of the portico of the Macellum was financed by the *archiereus* Publius Aelius Akulas who sponsored 15.000 *denarii*, while the city financed the central tholos and the paving of the courtyard⁹⁷:

*“Publius Aelius Akulas, son of Antiochos, grandson of Neon, great-grandson of Rhodon and after-great grandson of Konon, has built for eternity, in honor of the victory of the emperor [Caesar Marcus Aurelius Commodus] Antoninus and dedicated to his sweetest and most glorious hometown, the first city of Pisidia, the friend and ally of the Romans, as high-priest of the imperial cult next to other generosities (which he had bestowed on it), the macellum for the sum of 15.000 denarii”*⁹⁸

⁹¹ LANCKORONSKI 1892, 224, nr. 198 = IGR III, 352; TALLOEN 2015, 171; TALLOEN / WAELKENS 2004, 194.

⁹² Two statues: LANCKORONSKI 1892, 224, nr. 203 = IGR III, 353; DEVIJVER / WAELKENS 1995, 115, nr. 1 = SEG XLIV, 1761; TALLOEN 2015, 172; TALLOEN / WAELKENS 2004, 195.

⁹³ LANCKORONSKI 1892, 226, nr. 198; TALLOEN 2015, 175; TALLOEN / WAELKENS 2004, 196.

⁹⁴ DEVIJVER / WAELKENS 1995, 119, nr. 8; TALLOEN / WAELKENS 2004, 196.

⁹⁵ LANCKORONSKI 1892, 226, nr. 200.

⁹⁶ TALLOEN 2015, 275-276; TALLOEN / WAELKENS 2004, 175-176.

⁹⁷ RICHARD 2014, 259, fn. 16; RICHARD / WAELKENS 2012, 88-89; TALLOEN 2015, 276; TALLOEN / WAELKENS 2004, 187.

⁹⁸ English translation based on RICHARD / WAELKENS

During the 3rd century AD, a certain Gbaimos, who acted both as priest of the cult of Apollo Klarios and as *agonothetes*, donated 30.500 *denarii* for the renovation of the *naos* of the Apollo Klarios temple and for the celebration of the Klareian and Vareian festivals.⁹⁹ On a more limited scale, an inscription from the territory of Sagalassos mentions how Gaius Attalos offered 100 *denarii* for the restoration of a temple.¹⁰⁰

Additional evidence from the broader region of Sagalassos sheds further light on other domains where high-value coinage might have played a significant role. An inscription from Pednelissos for instance mentions a religious offering of 215 (?) *denarii* left by Aurelius Thoantianus Moles to Zeus Sosonianos.¹⁰¹ Also money distributions are attested in the epigraphical record¹⁰²: at Pogla, a certain Hermes dispersed 1.500 *denarii* amongst councillors and assemblymen¹⁰³, while another citizen Publius Caelius Lucanus distributed money to the same groups in particular and all citizens in general¹⁰⁴. Moreover, the city of Termessos delivered valuable evidence for the payment of fines. More than 250 examples¹⁰⁵ are recorded of penalties that were imposed for the violation of graves. The sums ranged between 500 and 30.000 *denarii* – with sums of 1.000 to 2.500 *denarii* most commonly attested – and were payable to sacred treasuries, mainly of the chief deity Zeus Solymeus.¹⁰⁶

No later attestations directly referring to large payments exist for the late Roman or early Byzantine period. This can be linked to the decreasing role of the elite members in the financing of public amenities, and the absence of honorary inscriptions mentioning such benefactions.

2012, 89 (in French).

⁹⁹ LANCKORONKSI 1892, 227, nr. 201; TALLOEN 2015, 277.

¹⁰⁰ SEG II, 740; TALLOEN 2015, 287.

¹⁰¹ BEHRWALD 2003, 124, nr. 9; TALLOEN 2015, 289.

¹⁰² TALLOEN 2015, 312.

¹⁰³ BÉRARD 1892, 424, nr. 54

¹⁰⁴ BEAN 1960, 59, nr. 104.

¹⁰⁵ See TAM III, 1.

¹⁰⁶ TALLOEN 2015, 290-291.

3.2. The coin finds from Sagalassos

The above attestations for large money transactions from Sagalassos all mentioned sums in precious metal. Regardless the question if these payments were indeed paid for in actual coins, it is plausible to state that only precious metal coins, i.e. in gold or silver, will have been suited for large money transactions, leaving aside the base metal coinage. The following paragraphs will give an overview of the precious metal coins in silver and gold dating to the Roman imperial period that were found during the various excavation campaigns at Sagalassos between 1990 and 2016.¹⁰⁷ The billon *antoniniani*, which have a low silver percentage, are considered as small change and left out of the discussion.

The precious metal coins dating to the early and middle Roman imperial period encountered during the excavations at Sagalassos consisted of 9 silver *denarii*, dating between the reign of Trajan and Aurelian (table 1).

The oldest attested *denarius* (SA-93-NW-31)¹⁰⁸ dates to the reign of Trajan, and was found west of the Hellenistic Fountain House in a secondary context, i.e. in a fill connected to 2nd – 3rd century levelling of the slopes surrounding the structure.¹⁰⁹ A second *denarius* struck in the name of Hadrian (SA-92-DT-129)¹¹⁰ was found in a floor substratum context inside the Doric Temple, covering several large irregular slabs forming the fill of the temple podium.¹¹¹

Two *denarii* of Marcus Aurelius (SA-06-MAC-24-69 & 70) were found in a shop (Room 4) of the Macellum or food market as part of a concentration of artefacts with a large chronological span, which was abandoned after the dismantling of the original floor

¹⁰⁷ The coins found during the excavations at Sagalassos between 1990 and 2004 were identified and partly published by prof. em. Simone Scheers (see SCHEERS 1993a; 1993b; 1995; 1997; 2000; *in press*). From the campaign of 2005 on, the coins are identified by Fran Stroobants and Johan van Heesch.

¹⁰⁸ SCHEERS 1995, 309, nr. 27.

¹⁰⁹ SCHEERS 1995, 320; WAELEKENS *et alii* 1995, 49-50.

¹¹⁰ SCHEERS 1993b, 250, nr. 18.

¹¹¹ SCHEERS 1993b, 256; WAELEKENS 1993: 12.

level during the late Roman – early Byzantine period on top of the remaining floor slabs and the substrate underneath. The concentration consisted of a wide variety of well-preserved objects, including ceramics, worked bone artefacts, several metal objects like balance parts and a small cross, glass artefacts and faunal remains like large antlers, a tortoise and several sea-shells. Moreover, an ensemble of 17 coins was found, including the two silver *denarii*. The other coins were bronze pieces¹¹², including 1 civic coin from Perge struck during the reign of Trebonianus Gallus, 10 specimens dating to the late Roman period, 1 Byzantine *decanummium* of Justinian I and 3 unidentified coins.¹¹³

A third *denarius* struck in name of Marcus Aurelius (SA-14-PQ2-199-322; Fig. 2.1.) was found inside the so-called Association Building in the Eastern Suburbium, a large rectangular structure originating in the early imperial period that seems to have been used for communal activities.¹¹⁴ During the 2014 campaign, several concentrations consisting mainly of ceramic tableware, oil lamps, faunal remains and glass shards were excavated in room 1, room 2 and space 4. The fact that many of the vessels were still complete on the one hand and the homogeneity of the tableware on the other (Fig. 2.2.), lead to the hypothesis that these concentrations belong to one single banquet event, the remains of which were left and quickly buried on the spot. Nine coins dating between AD 117 and 270 originated from these concentrations, including the *denarius* struck in name of Marcus Aurelius and several civic bronze coins¹¹⁵ dating to the 1st part of the 3rd century AD.¹¹⁶ Their presence

¹¹² Civic coin from Perge: SA-06-MAC-24-58; late Roman coins: SA-06-MAC-24-50-51; 53; 56-57; 72; 75: 80-81; 134; Byzantine coin from Justinian I: SA-06-MAC-24-68; uncertain coins: SA-06-MAC-24-73; 83; 111.

¹¹³ Sagalassos Excavation Report 2006 – Macellum, by J. RICHARD *et alii*; WAELKENS *et alii* 2008, 439.

¹¹⁴ CLAEYS 2016, 194-201, 259-288.

¹¹⁵ SA-14-PQ2-55-225 & 226; SA-14-PQ2-89-189; SA-14-PQ2-181-262; SA-14-PQ2-183-314; SA-14-PQ2-197-325 & 327; SA-14-PQ2-197-325; SA-14-PQ2-199-302.

¹¹⁶ CLAEYS 2016, 270-279.

within this closed context implies that the coins were directly linked to this banquet event, probably representing the money the guests brought with them – and eventually lost – at such occasions.

A fourth *denarius* (SA-90-F-86)¹¹⁷ belonging to the reign of Marcus Aurelius, this time struck in the name of Commodus *Caesar*, was found as grave good within a family tomb at the burial compound located at Site F, which was used for funerary practices from the Hellenistic until the late Roman period.¹¹⁸ The tomb contained remains of at least 7 individuals, including two male adults, two female adults, one adult of which the sex could not be identified, and two children. Although the construction of the tomb can probably be dated to the 2nd century AD and the coin find provides a *terminus post quem* for one of the burials in AD 177, the other grave goods – consisting of a crossbow fibula, jewellery, glass *unguentaria*, beads and a bowl – are dating to the 4th century AD, which suggests that the compound was in use for several centuries.¹¹⁹

A second *denarius* (SA-16-PQ4-100-159) that entered the archaeological record as grave good was struck in the name of Caracalla. This coin was found in a vaulted tomb excavated at site PQ4, another burial compound within the Eastern Suburbium which was in use from around AD 100 until the 5th century AD.¹²⁰ Although the tomb was constructed during the 2nd century AD, the burial of the individual, being an adult male, can be dated to the 3rd century AD based on the numismatic evidence. The green colour of the substance that was located immediately underneath the jaw of the deceased, shows that the coin was originally placed in his mouth. Next to the *denarius*, an iron ring, iron pin and two glass

¹¹⁷ SCHEERS 1993a, 198, nr. 11.

¹¹⁸ CLAEYS 2016, 374-377; STROOBANTS / CLEYMANS / VAN DE VIJVER 2019.

¹¹⁹ CLAEYS 2016, 176-177, 242-244, 316; STROOBANTS / CLEYMANS / VAN DE VIJVER 2019; For the initial publication of the tomb, see WAELKENS / HARMANKAYA / VIAENE 1991, 206-208.

¹²⁰ CLAEYS 2016, 169-175, 251, 324-333; STROOBANTS / CLEYMANS / VAN DE VIJVER 2019.



Fig 2. Finds belonging to the “final banquet scene” encountered in the Association Building: *denarius* struck in name of Marcus Aurelius (figure 2.1.) and a sample of the ceramic finds found in the concentrations of the different rooms (figure 2.2.).

unguentaria were encountered as grave goods.¹²¹

Another *denarius* (SA-16-UAS-2-4) in the name of Caracalla was found at the south side of the Upper Agora, as part of the *illuvium* between and underneath the pavement slabs of the square. Other finds in this context consisted of ceramics, faunal remains and metal objects.¹²²

A final *denarius* (SA-03-LA2-51), struck during the reign of Aurelian in name of

¹²¹ Sagalassos Excavation Report 2016 – site PQ4, by S. CLEYMANS; STROOBANTS / CLEYMANS / VAN DE VIJVER 2019.

¹²² Sagalassos Excavation Report 2016 – Upper Agora, by B. BEAUJEAN & F. GYSENBERG.

Severina, was found in a destruction layer in the late Roman/early Byzantine complex in the northern part of the eastern portico along the Lower Agora, which was interpreted as a “*thermopolion*” or restaurant.¹²³ However, the fact that the *denarii* were by then extremely debased and contained only a tiny percentage of silver, makes it unlikely that this coin was functioning as a high-value piece.

In some cases, the context of a number of these silver *denarii* seem to allude to the high value with which these objects were

¹²³ Sagalassos Excavation Report 2003 – Lower Agora, by T. PUTZEYS *et alii*; WAELEKENS / TALLOEN 2005, 426.

Table 1. Overview of the precious metal coins found at Sagalassos dating to the Roman period.

Reign	In name of	denomination	Date	Ref.	Exc. number	Context
Trajan	Trajan	<i>Denarius</i>	AD 112-117	RIC 347	SA-93-NW-31	Fill to W of Hellenistic Fountain House
Hadrian	Hadrian	<i>Denarius</i>	AD 134-138	RIC 268	SA-92-DT-129	On top of fill of podium of Doric Temple
Marcus Aurelius	Marcus Aurelius	<i>Denarius</i>	AD 162-163	RIC 66	SA-06-MAC-24-69	Concentration of artefacts in shop of Macellum
	Marcus Aurelius	<i>Denarius</i>	AD 166-167	RIC 171	SA-06-MAC-24-70	Concentration of artefacts in shop of Macellum
	Marcus Aurelius	<i>Denarius</i>	AD 170-171	RIC 231	SA-14-PQ2-199-322	Dump of a communal meal in Association Building
Marcus Aurelius	Commodus <i>caes.</i>	<i>Denarius</i>	AD 177		SA-90-F-86	Grave good in Roman family tomb
Caracalla	Caracalla	<i>Denarius</i>	AD 201	RIC 54	SA-16-PQ4-100-159	Grave good in Roman individual tomb
	Caracalla	<i>Denarius</i>	AD 198	RIC 25	SA-16-UAS-2-44	<i>Illuvium</i> between and underneath pavement slabs of Upper Agora
Aurelian	Severina	<i>Denarius</i>	AD 274	RIC 6	SA-03-LA2-51	Destruction layer in “restaurant” in eastern portico of Lower Agora
Theodosius I	Theodosius I	<i>Tremissis</i>	AD 383-388	RIC 75b	SA-12-DA1-38-145	Erosion and collapse material in room LXXVI

endowed on the symbolic level. This is for instance clear for the use of two of these pieces as grave goods, of which certainly one was placed as a Charon’s obol in the deceased’s mouth.¹²⁴ However, it has to be added that also low-value bronze coins were part of the same or similar contexts. Although the archaeological information does not allow to affirm such function with certainty, the presence of the silver coin struck in name of Hadrian in a floor context on top of the podium of the Doric Temple, might be related to an offering activity. The other *denarii* were found in secondary contexts, i.e. as part of

¹²⁴ STROOBANTS / CLEYMANS / VAN DE VIJVER 2019.

filling or *illuvium* layers, and can no longer be linked to their initial deposition within the archaeological record.

Only one precious metal coin dating to the late Roman period was found during the excavations at Sagalassos (table 1), being a gold *tremissis* struck in name of Theodosius I dating to AD 383-388 (SA-12-DA1-38-145; (Fig. 3). The coin was excavated in the Urban Mansion, more precisely in a space (room LXXVI) bordering the western porticoes of the peristyle courtyard, and was part of a layer of erosion and collapse material from the spaces located higher on the slope.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Sagalassos Excavation Report 2012 – Urban Mansion, by I. UYTTERHOEVEN & R. VAN BEEUMEN.



Fig 3. *Tremissis* struck in name of Theodosius I, found at Sagalassos.

The above paragraphs showed that the concrete evidence for large payments at Sagalassos. First, the epigraphical and historical record gives information about considerable sums that were paid, i.e. in the context of the financing of public amenities, for the settling of fines, or for religious offerings or money distributions. Moreover, the sums that are recorded for the Roman period are expressed in terms of precious metal coins. Second, the excavations at Sagalassos yielded a number of precious metal coins dating to the Roman period, i.e. 9 silver and 1 gold specimens. At first sight, there is a clear discrepancy between these two categories of evidence. On the one hand, the epigraphical and historical attestations mention large sums of money, i.e. up to 30.500 *denarii* at Sagalassos during the Roman period, while on the other hand the presence of precious metal coins that could be used to fulfil these payments is very limited. Such scarcity of precious metal coins in archaeological excavations is a general phenomenon: At Perge for instance, the 1910 recorded coin finds included only 9 Roman *denarii* dating between the reign of Domitian and Severus Alexander and no Roman gold coins at all.¹²⁶

How can such discrepancy be

¹²⁶ The data for Perge are taken from EROL- ÖZDIZBAY 2005, KÖKER 2007, ŞEN 2004 & TEKIN 1987. The author would like to thank Prof. Tekin for gaining me access to these unpublished theses.

explained¹²⁷? First and foremost, the scarcity of precious metal coins is of course a result of the fact that they were much less likely to be lost and subsequently not searched for than low-value ones.¹²⁸ As Katsari vividly describes it: “People can afford to lose those of lower value, but will not rest, if they lose a silver or gold coin, until they recover it.”¹²⁹ As such, absence of evidence is no evidence of absence: the virtual lack of silver and gold coins in excavations is the result of the fact that these rarely entered the “deposition phase”, but this does not mean that these coins did not circulate or were not being used.

3.3. Regional hoard evidence

Luckily, there is another category of coin finds that does include high-value coins, being hoards. In general, hoards consist of a concentration of two or more coins that was deposited at once by its owner, and was as such withdrawn from the circulation pool. The term covers many loads, involving e.g. hidden savings, abandoned purses and offer depots. Saving hoards often consist of large value coins that were intentionally selected and hidden for purposes of safeguarding. Moreover, also offer depots often (partly)

¹²⁷ See also HOWGEGO 2014, 310-311.

¹²⁸ BUTCHER 2004, 150; CASEY 1986, 70-72; REECE 1993, 341.

¹²⁹ KATSARI 2011, 20.

consisted of precious metal coins.¹³⁰

No hoards of precious metal coins were found during the excavations at Sagalassos so far. Therefore, broader regional evidence should be used to gain some insight in which coins might have circulated and been used in the region of Sagalassos. However, the study of coin hoards presents some problems. First, the precise origin of the concentration is very often unknown or described only in very broad terms, such as “western Asia Minor” or “Turkey”. Most hoards are found “by accident”, i.e. outside permitted excavations, and are donated or sold to a museum, auction house or collector without any detail about the location, context or circumstances of the find. Second, hoards can be contaminated with extraneous pieces, can be only partly dug up or reported, or can be dispersed over multiple lots. Such confusion threatens the integrity of the hoard, and severely hinders their use for e.g. questions of chronology and circulation. Thirdly, our knowledge of hoards can by no means be seen as complete, especially given the fact that local museums keep considerable amounts of unpublished – and mostly not consultable – hoards in their reserves.

The evidence for precious metal hoards dating to the Roman imperial period is very scarce for the region of Sagalassos. One hoard was reported by Imhoof-Blumer as having been found near Antioch *pros* Pisidia, consisting of numerous Flavian *cistophoroi* and a couple of *denarii* of Nero, Otho and Vitellius.¹³¹ The excavations at Side yielded a hoard of 402 *denarii* and 3 *cistophoroi* from the mint of Asia, found in a ceramic ‘piggybank’ during the excavations of the late Antique Baths. While the *denarii* date from the reign of Cladius I until Caracalla, the *cistophoroi* were struck in name of Claudius, Domitian and Trajan.¹³² Regarding the late Roman and Byzantine period, a hoard of 49 gold coins of Zeno and Anastasius was found in Pamphylian Korakesion (present-day

¹³⁰ On the definition, classification and study of hoards in general, see e.g. KATSARI 2011, 10-19.

¹³¹ CHRE 12944; IMHOOF-BLUMER 1908, 112; METCALF 1980, 110; RPC II, 121.

¹³² CHRE 6276; see also TEK 2013, 129.

Alanya) and is now kept in the Archaeological Museum of Istanbul.¹³³

4. CONCLUSION: THE USE OF COINAGE FOR LARGE PAYMENTS AT ROMAN SAGALASSOS AND ITS REGION

From the reign of Augustus until the end of the 2nd century AD, occasions for large payments at Sagalassos are clearly present. The boom in monumental building and the organization of cults, games and festivals certainly asked for large-scale investments by both civic authorities and the urban elite, as is sporadically recorded in the epigraphical evidence. Moreover, also the fulfilment of taxes or the redeeming of rents and fines possibly asked for payments in cash at certain levels. All inscriptions listing donations by individual benefactors recorded in the city express the given sums in the official Roman silver coinage, i.e. *denarii*. However, the use of this term should be read as a general unit of account, and does not directly mean that they could only be paid for in this denomination. Apart from the Roman silver coinage, also imperial gold coins might have played their role, next to the several issues of provincial silver coinages that were intermittently struck for local circulation and use. In the following paragraphs, the possible circulation and use of these different categories at Sagalassos will be discussed.¹³⁴

Regarding the precious metal coinage of the high empire, their physical presence at Sagalassos is attested by 9 *denarii* struck between the reigns of Trajan and Aurelian. Moreover, the regional hoard evidence is limited to two hoards, i.e. one (presumably) from Antioch *pros* Pisidia consisting numerous *cistophoroi* and a couple of *denarii*, and one from Side including 402 *denarii* and 3 *cistophoroi*.

¹³³ CHRE 4647; CULERRIER 2006, 106; MORRISON / POPOVIC / IVANISEVIC 2006, 382, nr. 313.

¹³⁴ The discussion in this article is limited to the possible function of coins in large transactions. Of course, multiple other alternatives existed which function as money, consisting of credit and documentary transactions. For some highly recommended overview of this subject, see HARRIS 2006; *id.* 2008; VERBOVEN 2009.

No gold coins are attested in Sagalassos or its region for this period. Also for the remainder of Asia Minor, the hoard evidence for *aurei*¹³⁵ and *denarii*¹³⁶ is rather limited. However, their scarcity in the archaeological record does not necessarily mean that they only played a minor role. In a recent article, van Heesch¹³⁷ suggested that both *aurei* and *denarii* might have been used as the main currency for the pay of the army also in the eastern part of the empire. His arguments can be summarized as follows: First, local silver coinages were minted irregularly and often on a limited scale, hampering their use for army payments. Second, the fact that Pescennius Niger started to mint *aurei* and *denarii* in Antioch, Caesarea and Alexandria during his revolt to pay his troops, shows that the soldiers expected to be paid in these denominations. Third, Roman *aurei* and/or *denarii* were struck in the East under Marc Antony, Octavian, Vespasian, and in limited numbers during the reigns

¹³⁵ Mardin (East Turkey): 8 kg of gold bars, including 320 *aurei* from Nero to Marcus Aurelius or Commodus (CHRE 5435; REGLING 1931); Turkey I Hoard: 200+ *aurei* from Nero to Commodus (CHRE 5494; CH II, 236 & CH III, 156); Kuşakkaya Hoard (East Turkey): 1400 coins including 1 *denarius* of Galba and 44 *aurei* from Nero to Antoninus Pius (CHRE 5438; ERGEÇ 1996).

¹³⁶ Manyas Hoard (Bithynia): 208 *denarii* from Otho to Antoninus Pius and 2 drachms of Amisus, on a total of 2469 coins (CHRE 5474; ARSLAN 1996a); Sor Hoard (near Caesarea): some 2000 silver coins closing with Commodus, including 100+ *denarii*, two Lycian drachms and 1800+ silver coins from Caesarea (CHRE 8772; CH VII, 156; BLAND 1996, 65; METCALF 1996; WEISER 1984); Sulakyurt Hoard: 1 drachm and 428 *denarii* from Antoninus Pius to Maximinus Thrax (CHRE 3120; KIZILKAYA 1991a); Eastern Hoard: ca. 2800 Roman silver coins, made up almost completely of *denarii* from the Republican period until the 3rd century AD, next to some provincial issues and some *antoniniani* (CHRE 4843; BENDALL 1966); Yatağan Hoard (SW Turkey): 243 *denarii* from Antoninus Pius to Gordian III (CHRE 3517; KIZILKAYA 1991b); Haydere Hoard: Possibly a combination of two hoards, of which one consists mainly or exclusively of *denarii* with a closing date between AD 217 and 238 (CHRE 3711; BLAND / AYDEMIR 1991); Göktepe Hoard: 185 Roman coins, including 40 *denarii* and 85 *antoniniani* from Septimius Severus to Valerian I (CHRE 5297; HOLLARD / BINGOL 1994).

¹³⁷ VAN HEESCH 2014.

of Hadrian and Commodus, proving their significance and role on the spot. Moreover, coins were overstruck on *denarii* of Trajan during the Bar Kokbha war (AD 132-135), proving their availability in the East.¹³⁸ In such a scenario, the Roman imperial gold and silver coins might have been primarily introduced as army payment in the eastern provinces, after which they were included in the local coin circulation and took up various functions. Regarding the possible use of gold *aurei*, it should moreover be added that their high face value made them very well suited for the fulfilment of large payments, since large sums would require only a rather small amount of gold coins when compared to silver *denarii*.¹³⁹

On the other hand, provincial silver issues were struck locally at several places of the eastern empire during the early and middle imperial period. In the neighbouring province of Asia, the tradition of silver *cistophori* was continued from the reign of Augustus until the reign of Septimius Severus, although not continuously and often on a limited scale. However, also for this category of coins, the available archaeological evidence is scarce. Metcalf listed only three hoards¹⁴⁰ containing *cistophori* with a certain Turkish provenance, next to respectively 4 and 1 coins of this type found in the excavations of Sardis and Pergamon. This list included the already mentioned hoard from Antioch *pros* Pisidia, which was the only concentration of *cistophori* found outside the province of Asia – albeit still very close to the border. Moreover, all the mints that were used for the overstriking of the coinage during Hadrian's reign were located within the province's borders, with

¹³⁸ VAN HEESCH 2014, 149-151.

¹³⁹ HOPKINS 2002, 228; HOWGEGO 1992, 11-12. According to DUNCAN-JONES 1994, 111, gold coinage represented c. 70% of the total face value in circulation until the Severan period.

¹⁴⁰ Next to the hoard found in Antioch *pros* Pisidia (see above), there is the Istanbul Hoard consisting of 38 Antonian and 255 Augustan *cistophori* (CHRE 12941; OLCAIY 1970), and a hoard of Turkish provenance containing 47 Antonian and 99 Augustan *cistophori* (CHRE 8832; DE ROQUEFEUIL 1975).



Fig 4. *Cistophoros* struck during the reign of Trajan, showing the temple of Artemis *Pergaia* on its reverse, accompanied by the formula *DIANA PERG* (ANS 1944.100.44674 = RIC 720).

the exception of Nicomedia. In Metcalf's view, the above evidence supports the view that the local silver issues were only circulating freely and being used within *Provincia Asia* itself, and were of no importance in the other regions of Asia Minor. Their restricted circulation can be explained by the fact that they were overvalued in comparison to the imperial *denarius*, making them less easy acceptable.¹⁴¹ However, Woytek does not agree with the restricted circulation hypothesis, but points to the production of Bithynian *cistophoroi* during the reign of Hadrian on the same weight standard as their Asian counterparts to argue for the circulation and use of the local silver coins across the province's borders.¹⁴²

Within this framework, a special type of *cistophoroi* issued during the reigns of Nerva and Trajan deserves some extra attention when studying the region of Sagalassos. Under these two emperors, a number of series showed the image of the temple of Artemis *Pergaia* on its reverse, eventually accompanied by the formula *DIANA PERG* (Fig. 4).¹⁴³ The precise reason for this iconography is unclear.¹⁴⁴ Some authors proposed a historical

explanation, such as Pinder¹⁴⁵ who suggests that Artemis *Pergaia* took over the role of her famous Ephesian counterpart during this period, or Merlin¹⁴⁶ who links the presence of the temple on the coinage to the possible granting of the asylum right to the sanctuary under the emperor Nerva. According to Mattingly however, the series might rather have been a "special issue for Pamphylia", specifically produced for circulation and use in this region and provided with a locally adapted iconography.¹⁴⁷ Broughton took this interpretation one step further, and suggested that the coins were struck at the city of Side or Perge itself.¹⁴⁸ However, the production place of the Roman *cistophoroi* is a widely discussed problem, and should according to Woytek rather be placed in the city of Rome itself during the reigns of Trajan and Hadrian, based on stylistic and metallurgical arguments.¹⁴⁹

Leaving aside the question of the exact circulation span of the *cistophoroi*, the question remains if these might have been used for large payments on the civic level. According to van Heesch, their irregular

¹⁴¹ METCALF 1980, 110-112.

¹⁴² WOYTEK 2010, 95-96.

¹⁴³ Nerva: WOYTEK 2010, type 3a-b, 7, X1; RIC 116-117; Trajan: WOYTEK 2010, type 3, 7, X2; RIC 720.

¹⁴⁴ For a summary of the discussion, see WOYTEK

2010, 93.

¹⁴⁵ PINDER 1856, 620.

¹⁴⁶ MERLIN 1906, 101.

¹⁴⁷ BMC III, cvii.

¹⁴⁸ BROUGHTON 1938, 884.

¹⁴⁹ WOYTEK 2010, 96-98.

minting pattern suggests that they were struck in response to local *ad hoc* demand, and were used for local and regional commerce and to cover expenditure of local authorities.¹⁵⁰ Other authors – like Butcher¹⁵¹ and Harl¹⁵² – pointed to possible links between the output of local silver coins and the fulfilment of tax obligations. Their complete absence from the archaeological record in the region of Sagalassos makes it however impossible to estimate their role in the local economy. If they were indeed circulating and accepted for large payments, then there must have been fixed exchange rates to convert the sums expressed in *denarii* into the local silver specimens.

The situation might have changed somewhat during the 3rd century AD. Taxes can have been temporarily increasingly levied in kind, and the decline in monumental building activity might have significantly reduced the public expenses. This does not mean that occasions for large payments were completely lacking: renovation and maintenance works of course remained necessary, and the local elite now concentrated their investments on other domains, like for instance the organization of private *agones*. However, also the nature and availability of the monetary high-value resources witnessed important developments during this period. Regarding the gold coinage, Katsari pointed to the total absence of gold coin hoards in Syria and Asia Minor to suggest that the *aurei* disappeared from circulation in the Roman East. While the demand for precious metal on the one hand increased during the 3rd century AD due to the rise in military costs, gold coins were on the other hand regularly exported as means of tributary payments to the *barbaricum*. The resulting shortage of gold bullion and coins subsequently led to a rise of its commercial price. However, the face value of the gold coins probably remained the same in order to maintain the gold : silver exchange rate, which

¹⁵⁰ VAN HEESCH 2014, 152-153. On the motives behind the production of silver coins, see also RPC I, 9; RPC II, 12; RPC III, 805-807.

¹⁵¹ BUTCHER 2004: 257-258.

¹⁵² HARL 1997: 223.

caused a devaluation of the *aurei* in circulation in relation to the price of gold as a commodity. Moreover, the continuous debasement of the *denarii* and the determination of the Roman state to sustain the existing rates will have deteriorated this situation. The fact that gold as metal was more valuable than the minted coins, might have encouraged the local inhabitants to melt them down and use them as bullion.¹⁵³ In first instance, this gradual disappearance of gold coins was backed up by increasing numbers of overvalued silver coins in circulation. However, with the definitive breakthrough of the *antoniniani* during the reign of Gordian III and their extreme devaluation during the second half of the 3rd century AD, the silver coinage lost its function as high-value currency.¹⁵⁴ Within this context, Katsari argues for a partial demonetization of the economy during the middle of the 3rd century AD in the field of large transactions.¹⁵⁵

During the late Roman and early Byzantine period, taxes were again increasingly levied in coin instead of in kind due to the re-establishment of a solid gold currency. Next to these obligations, also the public domain in Sagalassos still asked for considerable investments. The period witnessed the construction of some monumental structures such as the new defensive wall and multiple churches.¹⁵⁶ Moreover, the construction of the large Urban Mansion is symptomatic for the elite's investments in their own comfort and luxury, and geophysical research showed that this was not the only large dwelling on the flank to the Theatre.¹⁵⁷

Again, the evidence for large monetary transactions is extremely scarce for Sagalassos and its region. Only 4 gold coins dating to this period were found during the excavations at Sagalassos, i.e. 1 late Roman and 2 early Byzantine ones, and the regional hoard evidence is limited to two early Byzantine

¹⁵³ KATSARI 2011: 85-95.

¹⁵⁴ KATSARI 2011: 134.

¹⁵⁵ KATSARI 2011: 134-136.

¹⁵⁶ TALLOEN / VERCAUTEREN 2011; WÄLKENS / JACOBS 2014.

¹⁵⁷ Personal communication J. POBLOME.

hoards from Pamphylia. For the whole region of Asia Minor, only one late Roman gold hoard is published, being the so-called Kapulukaya Hoard found *c.* 100km east of Ankara and consisting of 21 *solidi* of Valentinian I, Valens, Gratian and Valentinian II.¹⁵⁸

Although large-scale investments in the public and private domain probably decreased in the course of this period, the ongoing taxation in gold might still have necessitated the availability of high-value coins. Again however, the question remains if their use penetrated to all levels of society, since it is highly possible that taxes were paid in kind by the local population and only transferred into cash in a later stage. Moreover, evidence from the epigraphical record seems to reflect the increasing role of precious metal bullion as means of payment, possibly continuing a development that already started during the 3rd century AD (see above). Several funerary inscriptions, especially from Termessos, mention fines that had to be paid in case of tomb robbing to the family of the deceased, the city, or the imperial treasury. While the payable sums were defined in terms of money during the previous centuries, the 4th and 5th century AD inscriptions expressed the fines in general units of account like *litra*, *uncia* or talent, eventually combined with the type of metal.¹⁵⁹ This situation might point to a growing importance of uncoined metal, although it does not necessarily reflect a complete disappearance from circulation of the gold coinage as such.

Finally, the question remains which levels of society were actually involved in such large payments and the possible use of high-value coins. Regarding the public expenses, the costs and transactions were carried by specific groups, being the civic and religious authorities and the elite. Even if taxes and rents were levied in coin, this does not necessarily mean that every citizen had

¹⁵⁸ ARSLAN 1996b.

¹⁵⁹ KATSARI 2011, 135. For the city of Termessos, see e.g. SEG XLI, 1277 (amount in *unciae*) and CIG III, 4259 (amount in talent). For more references, see KATSARI 2011, 135, fn. 69.

precious metal coins at its disposal. Possibly, local peasants paid their land taxes in kind or payments were collected in small change, and were only in a later stage converted to the gold or silver coins demanded by the ruling authorities. As such, it is highly possible that the use of precious metal coinage was mainly limited to specific institutions and groups of citizens, and did only occasionally penetrate into the lower levels of society. On the other hand, if taxes, rents, and fines were paid for in coin by ordinary citizens, be it in precious metal or in base metal coins, this means that both civic dwellers and rural peasants had access to monetary means and commercial transactions.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ANS	American Numismatic Society
BMC	Catalogue of the Greek Coins in the British Museum
CIG	Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum
CH	Coin Hoards
CHRE	Coin Hoards of the Roman Empire
IGR	Inscriptiones Graecae ad res Romanas pertinentes
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
MAMA	Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua
OGIS	Orientalis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae
SEG	Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum
RIC	Roman Imperial Coinage
RPC	Roman Provincial Coinage