

Economic Change and Monetary Transition from the Republic to the Empire: the Case of the Eastern Mediterranean

Georgia Galani

Summary

The presence of the Romans in the eastern Mediterranean and their involvement in the administrative affairs of the Greek cities had multiple effects on the cities' economy. One way to study ancient economy is through the production and the manifold uses of coinage. As official products of the cities, coins met various needs and were particularly suited to forming and propagating notions of identity on various levels. The technical characteristics of the coins, i.e. their metal alloy, weight and diameter, as well as their iconography, provide immediate information on the value of the money used and how this value was calculated; these features had an impact on how ordinary people perceived money and how they used it on a daily basis.

By the beginning of the 1st century BC, the Roman denarius had started circulating widely in the East and the movement and settlement of Roman officials, soldiers and Italian merchants (*negotiatores*) in the eastern territories altered the demographic composition of the Greek cities. As a result, the recipients and users of coins also changed and became significantly more varied.

This study investigates how civic coinage was adapted to this new social and monetary reality. The main purpose is to detect the possible changes that the bronze coinage of the Greek cities in the eastern Mediterranean underwent under the Roman influence in the transition from the late Republic to the early Empire (1st century BC). The focus will be on both the iconography and the denominational system of values, as well as whatever strongly connects with it, such as the minting authorities or those financing the coin issues of the cities, in the broader frame of the compatibility of the Roman and the Greek currencies.

Work progress

A basic axis of this study is the establishment of the Roman provinces in the East and the possible implications of this significant administrative change in the monetary affairs of the Greek cities. The civic bronze coinages of the eastern Mediterranean are therefore reviewed in the frame of this newly established Roman administration and the mixed populations cohabiting in the same cities. The examination is done on a civic, regional and then inter-regional level, testing any impacts on coin production and on the creation of any monetary zones. More specifically, the aim is to detect

continuities and changes in the value of the coins through their metrology and in their symbolic language through their iconography and legends, as well as the role of the Greek and the Roman authorities in the minting processes.

During these first years, most of the thesis work was focused on the gathering and registration of the numismatic material that would be used as primary evidence for the study. The coins have been registered in an Excel file under the entries of issuing authority, geographical region, obverse type, reverse type, diameter in millimetres, weight in grams and reference number from the publication used. From the aforementioned sample, the average range of diameters and weights of the different issues has been extracted for the metrological purposes of the study. This was done by recording the diameters and weights of a large number of individual coins from the same issue and then defining a close diameter and weight range by excluding the remarkably higher and lower ends of the spectrum.

Due to the fact that the nature of the material is quite varied, deriving from a very broad geographical area with many differences and local peculiarities, the structure of the thesis has constantly been changing in order to find the best way to present it and discuss it. This process affected also the way the research questions were being formulated and applied to the gathered sample, with important methodological implications on the material included and excluded from the study, both in chronological and geographical terms. The current structure, as formulated for the time being, is reflected in the preliminary table of contents attached here as a separate file.

Following an introductory chapter that gives the motivation and the research scope of the study, the monograph is divided into five main chapters. Chapter 1 gives the research background in the study of the Greek civic coinages in the eastern Mediterranean in the frame of the early Roman expansion. Chapter 2 presents the Roman and the Greek monetary systems as developed in the 1st century BC and comments on the incompatibilities in-between them. Chapter 3 is the largest chapter and consists of the presentation and discussion of the numismatic material used as primary evidence for this study, accompanied by a historical background for each region. It is divided into six sub-chapters each of them dealing with a Roman province in the chronological order of their official establishment: province of Macedonia, Asia, Crete-Cyrenaica, Pontus-Bithynia, Syria and Cilicia-Cyprus; those provinces are sub-divided into the regions incorporated into them. A seventh sub-chapter tackles with the client-kingdoms of Rome and some border-regions intermittently included into the Roman sphere of control at that period. Chapter 4 attempts to put the Roman bronze coins into the context of the coin circulation in the Greek cities in the East through the selection of some detailed published excavations as case-studies. Chapter 5 adopts an inter-regional comparative perspective of the civic bronze coinages of the provinces and it is followed by a concluding discussion where the summary of the main points and the results of the thesis are presented. The summary is then given in a Swedish translation, while the bibliographical list of all the works used and cited follows. In order to avoid extremely dense and tiring descriptions within the main text a catalogue listing the coin

issues discussed in Chapter 3 was deemed necessary and it will be attached in the end as an appendix, along with the plates of images of each coin issue.

So far, most of the material registration has been completed and some of the thesis chapters were written in draft form and they were presented on a term basis in the seminars of the Classical Archaeology and Ancient History section. More specifically, the Introduction chapter, Chapter 1 on the previous research and parts of Chapter 3 have been worked on. As regards to Chapter 3, a discussion has been attempted on the material of the province of Macedonia, with Macedonia proper and mainland Greece and the islands. The numismatic material for the rest of the provinces still needs to be processed in detail.

Currently, there is a plan to complete the sampling of the remaining material during this fall. Meanwhile, work is being done in filling up the catalogue in order to get a clearer whole picture of the material and start discussing it in the respective sub-chapters later on. Since, as already mentioned, a basic axis of this study is the establishment of the Roman provinces in the East, the numismatic material in the catalogue is being arranged and presented by province, following the structure of Chapter 3 in the main text. Although some comparative observations are, naturally, being made already during the sampling and arrangement of the material, the concrete discussion on similarities and differences among the bronze coin production of the various provinces will be the last step to take in the process.

In the upcoming seminar, the presentation will focus on the research questions and the structure of the thesis as developed so far, with the information included and excluded and the way this information is arranged. Furthermore, a part from Chapter 3, namely the numismatic material from Macedonia proper and southern Greece, will be shortly presented as an example of the processing of the material and of some preliminary results.