

INTRODUCTION: LOCALISM AND COINAGE

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SCOPE AND AIMS OF VLAC II

As this volume results out of the international conference “VLAC II. Tracing the local(s). The local world of Mediterranean landscapes in Greek and Roman coinage” held in Frankfurt in 2019 it has a broad scope. Chronologically the volume spans the whole period of coin minting from the archaic period to late antiquity. Geographically it touches mainly the Eastern part of the Mediterranean from Asia Minor to Macedonia, Sicily and Italy. With this broad focus the volume aims to discuss the following questions:

How were local identities constructed on coins, more precisely, which images and languages appear on coins and how were they combined to express locality? As coins were minted by different minting authorities, we further aim to observe the influence of these agents on the construction and alteration of local identities. The minting authorities produced these coins with a focus on different recipients. We will focus not only on the addressees, but also on the question if these coin images were part of an elite discourse only or part of the local identity of a greater group, such as the citizens or a tribe. The minting authorities were not the only ones who influenced the design of coin images with their personal preferences, but there are other cultural and political influences that mattered for the construction of a local identity. Especially on a regional level we will ask if a pool of images existed that was used by all mints in a specific region such as for example a province or a greater cultural frame like Asia Minor or the Greek East. The expression of locality on coins is suspected to have limits: Were there factors like economic reasons that could overrule the expression of locality? A local identity was not an eternal or never-changing concept. Can we observe that different aspects of the same identity were stressed, added or forgotten?

Coins were, as Fergus Millar has already stressed, “the most deliberate of all symbols of public identity”.¹ What, then, can we learn about the minting communities especially regarding their ideas of cultural self-identities? This question becomes especially interesting in greater frames, such as on a regional or superregional level, for example by comparing eastern and western minting practices in the Roman Empire. By taking a look at such different communities we can also ask, what their coins can tell us about their feelings of belonging and distinction to different kind of networks and socio-political groups.

Before giving some thoughts on the above-mentioned questions, it seems important to make a short definition of the key words used in this volume, namely “identity” and “localism”.

1 Millar 1993, 230; Howgego 2005, 1.

BETWEEN LOCALISM, GLOCALISM AND LOCAL IDENTITY: A DEFINITION

Identities – concept, definition and limitations

Probably no other term had a greater influence on ancient studies than the concept and semantic innovation of “identity”. Since its introduction in the 1990es the term underwent not only an inflationary use, but also a “colloquial vagueness” that led to criticism and a call for a more deliberate and defined handling.² One reason for the success of the concept lies in the flexibility of its applicability (where, of course, lies in the same extent the danger): identity can be connected with other theoretical approaches like the idea of a “collective”,³ “cultural” or a “local” identity and can be used as a very arbitrary category of analysis which carries the danger of homogenisation of heterogeneous entities or the exclusion of others.⁴

On a basic level, human individuals strive for a positive self-image, which can be confirmed and reassured in a group. Individuals therefore tend to choose groups who share a same-ness regarding values, norms and characteristics in distinction to the outside, for example to other groups. This means that identity is not only process-related, but always in need of differentiation together with at least a basic understanding of the other.⁵ Like this identity is created by the process of identification either intrinsic within a group or via definition from the outside. Through identity-formation individuals can position themselves within society, or within certain groups. This is probably the reason why modern research not only kept hold of the term “identity”, but also focussed much more on the process of negotiating and constructing identities or the offering of possibilities of identification.⁶

Localism, glocalism and local identities

Nearly the same fate as “identity” has suffered the concept of “localism”. While all notions and expressions of localism especially in Greek cities are still a famous research area,⁷ localism also earned criticism and lost importance in comparison to other approaches such as globalisation and glocalism.⁸ Both concepts do not deny the existence of localism, but focus on the different networks – for example colonial, cultural or political networks – that transform *poleis* to microregional but interconnected units. Under this lens, localism becomes the response to a global and linked world.⁹

This approach defines the formation of a local identity as a passive reaction¹⁰ and does, as other scholars have already criticised, not give enough credit to the fragmentation of the ancient world, as can be observed for example in Classical Greece.¹¹ For the aims of our volume it is important to stress that a local identity is much more than a reaction, but an active decision and fundamental prerequisite for a functioning political unit such as a *polis*, because it is a basic need for the forming of a group. The process of designing a local identity never stopped, as it could change and be re-altered under different political circumstances. Moreover, a local identity itself was formed by manifold external, regional and

² Klinger *et al.* 2016, 357-359. Hofmann 2022, 24-25 with a short history of the different uses and concepts of “identity”. For criticism, see Brubaker-Cooper 2000; for the relevance of “identity” for sociological and historical studies, see Reckwitz 2001.

³ Klinger *et al.* 2016, 358-359 warn of the transformation of single entities into collective identities via combining seemingly homogenous material remains into a shared cultural framework as it is often the case in ancient studies.

⁴ Hofmann 2022, 23. This problem arises especially in archaeological sciences, where material remains can be grouped according to possible similarities. Like this, collective or local identities were assumed that might not have existed in this form.

⁵ Byron 1998.

⁶ Hofmann 2022, 28 with a special focus on coins.

⁷ See *e.g.* Beck 2020 with a focus on the Greek city state.

⁸ For the rise of globalisation in connection with the spatial turn and post-colonial studies, see Müller 2016, 3. For the term “glocalization” see Vlassopoulos 2013.

⁹ “The idea of the local is, after all, obviously created by supralocal perspectives”, Whitmarsh 2010, 2. Important works on network analysis in the ancient world are for example Malkin 2011; Horden & Purcell 2000.

¹⁰ Cf. Appadurai 1996 and 2002 who labels globalisation as “localizing process”, which means that the local communities contribute to the development of networks and the process of globalisation and were not passive recipients of these changes.

¹¹ Beck 2020, 208-209.

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even global influences or reacted to external pressure, which caused a re-assurance of this identity.¹² Therefore, it comes as no surprise that a local profile consisted of different aspects. These aspects might not have even been unique to one group such as language, cults and myths – which is exactly how a shared regional or even international identity was formed. It was the combination of these aspects and the shared consensus and performance that made groups different and therefore local.

But what does it mean to be “local”?¹³ Scholarship tends to define “local” in contrast to Greek or Roman culture, which not only harbours the risk of a post-colonial focus, but equalises locality with autochthony or ideas of indigenous communities.¹⁴ Next to this ethnic concept, localism can also be understood in terms of geography: a local community, for example a Greek *polis*, can be defined according to its territorial boundaries and its built environment.¹⁵ These boundaries were often subject to political decisions and could be changed by these agents, for example the definition of provincial borders under the Romans which were not congruent with *e.g.*, cultural borders. Within these boundaries a group of individuals then shared not only space, but often other customs and social practices, for example dialects, governments, epigraphic or funerary practices, pottery or coinage – this gives the local identities a cultural as well as a social dimension. The agents responsible for the creation of local identity dependent on a multitude of influences can be divided into three groups. One group is the civic political elites, the wealthy citizens of the Greek poleis and of the Republican period, who held magistracies and priesthoods and made the most important public decisions. A second group includes the tribal elites, and a third group comprises powerful individuals like kings and emperors. It is to be expected that each of these groups had very different influences on local coinage and the expression of local identities (for more details see below p. 9-11).

LOCALISM AND COINAGE

An overview over existing research

While the discussion about local identities is ubiquitous in modern research, its conceptualisation is, especially in numismatics, still a rare phenomenon. The following publications were selected according to their special contribution in discussing the methodological framework of local identity on coins.

The volume “Coinage and Identity in the Roman Provinces” edited by Christopher Howgego, Volker Heuchert and Andrew Burnett in 2005 is still one of the most important and comprehensive works regarding Roman influence on local (and especially civic) coinages in Imperial times with a broad focus including the Western Roman Empire.

While most researchers focus on the Roman world, the potential of archaic and classical coins as expression of collective and local identities was the subject of Joseph Skinner’s influential article 2010.¹⁶ He asks if coins – independent from chronological issues – can be understood as marker of any identity at all as it is difficult to gain information about the agents – coin producers and users – and their agendas; a problem that is especially valid for early coinages such as electrum coins.

The classicist Johannes Nollé continued the tradition of Louis Robert to examine the so-called *patria* traditions in Asia Minor, the local mythologies and myth histories of the cities as they were communicated on the local coinages.¹⁷ Especially the significance of tradition as a fundamental part of imperial local identities in the cities of the Greek East

12 This corresponds to the definition of “glocal” according to K. Vlassopoulos, as “the variety of ways in which local communities adopt and adapt the global *koiné*”, Vlassopoulos 2013, 21. See also Beck 2020, 257-258, “entanglement of local and global processes”. One of the most famous contributions for the reaction of the Greeks to Roman expansion is Woolf 1994. See also Whitmarsh 2010; Ager & Faber 2013 for Alexander the Great as unifier of the Greek world.

13 Goldhill 2010 analyses the use of the Greek equivalent in the literary sources; see also Beck 2020, 1-42.

14 Whitmarsh 2010, 3 with references to older scholarship.

15 Müller 2016. Beck 2020, 4 calls it the “identity of place”.

16 Skinner 2010.

17 Nollé 2017 gives a good overview over his research and the many publications on different aspects of the *patria* traditions.

was a topic discussed in the volume “Traditions through Empires. Cities of Asia Minor and their coin images” published in 2020.¹⁸

While studies of specific regions and cities were deliberately left out of this overview, one exception needs to be made. In 2022 the long-standing experts for Thrace, Ulrike Peter and Vladimir F. Stolba published a new volume of the local identities of the Thracians from the archaic to the imperial period. Two papers within this volume discuss the importance of a specific numismatic approach regarding questions of local identities on a broader scope.¹⁹

The question how a local identity was constructed on coins, under which influences it changed and who was responsible for its creation was not yet studied extensively, which is where this anthology wants to start to fill this gap. It has a deliberate broad geographic and chronological focus in order to gain an impression of local identities across the ancient world.

Coins and local/regional identities

Agents and local identities

Coins were used by different authorities to express and communicate their self-representation or political messages. In this section the above-mentioned three different groups of minting authorities will be discussed in more detail: the ruling elites of the cities, the tribal elites and powerful individuals such as kings and emperors.

The most important minting authorities throughout ancient history were of course the cities – through the decisions of their local city councils and magistrates the images of the coins were a deliberate choice and often included references to the collective civic identities. It needs to be stressed at this point that coins represent the expression of the political ruling elites who were engaged in local councils and ministries. They offered means of identification, such as through coinage, buildings and festivals, and they often held religious offices such as priesthoods.²⁰ The ruling elites who could be Romans, Greek and indigenous people alike can primarily be grasped through the coin legend without naming the specific function or office. In modern research they are grouped together as magistrates. Rarely their exact function can be deduced by comparison with epigraphic material. The elites of the Roman Republic additionally minted their images and also pointed to their success and that of their ancestors. Therefore, the coins do not represent the community as a whole, although the civic coinages mainly served to address these communities.²¹ Sometimes cities were allied in different kind of leagues, mostly out of political or economic reasons. In these contexts new coin images had to be developed to express this corporate identity, a process that was probably again moderated by the ruling elites of the respective cities.

The second group were the tribal elites who functioned very similar to the ruling elites of the cities. They chose the coin images that represented their respective tribes and minted them in the cities they controlled. One prevalent theme on the coins was everyday scenes. Cities could also be used as mints by another heterogeneous group of minting authorities, namely local rulers such as dynasts of the 5th and 4th c. BC or the Persian satraps. While local dynasts exclusively minted coins in their own name in a *polis* that circulated among the civic coinages, the minting policy of satraps could be more complex as they ruled over one or more provinces, which could also change over time. It is worth asking if and how these different coinages and authorities interacted on an iconographic level and how they influenced each other in the search for expressing and differentiating local or dynastic identities.

The third group consists of kings and emperors. From Hellenism onwards, kings were no longer only rulers of a city or a greater region, but, following the example of Alexander the Great, they extended their power across geographical and cultural borders. With their foundations, encouragement of certain cults, financial support, but also with the royal coinage put into circulation, they were able to influence the self-image of the local citizens.

¹⁸ Kerschbaum & Vidin 2021.

¹⁹ Peter & Stolba 2022; Hofmann 2022.

²⁰ For the so-called “Tempelprägungen”, the deity of the temple was considered the minting authority. These coins were minted from the financial resources of the sanctuary, the temple treasury of the god and can be identified by the fact that the name of the god is written in the genitive, see Nollé 2014, 289–290.

²¹ Like these coins are part of an “accepted political discourse” in the respective cities, see Williamson 2005, 20.

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A special case is the Roman emperor. On first glance the emperor cannot possess a local identity as his function was much more the expression of a unified Roman empire. Nevertheless, they founded provinces and drew new political boundaries across the landscapes; the competitions of the *poleis* to achieve the emperor's attention and support also led to a change in communicating the local identity to the outside world. Furthermore, as will be shown, the emperors used their coinage to address their soldiers with local images that matched their respective regional backgrounds.

All these heterogenous groups have one aspect in common: they were the most important agents who influenced the coin images and therefore the active formation of local identities. Even when it is not their direct and personal influence that was visualised on the coins, they could strategically manipulate already existing local identities. A good example is the Roman emperor Galba: he addressed his Spanish soldiers by minting coins with a personification of Hispania (see contribution MacDougall in this volume), the Severan emperors created an image of North-African descent that was not in all part true.²² This example makes clear that local/regional identities always had a political dimension and could be used or altered for the advantage of different, mostly translocal agents who were able to move between these local worlds and formed these according to their wishes. One thing needs to be noted: all coin images were also the result of external influences – local civic identities developed in an entangled environment in distinction from or in response to other minting authorities; the resulting coin image therefore might have been an amalgamation of different influencers.

Image and text as tools for expressing a local profile

The previous section has shown that different authorities exploited coins for their own agendas. The following part will ask how locality in its multifaceted aspects was depicted on coins by the means of text and image by giving an overview over the most important topics on local coinages. These sections will form the basis for the following analysis of the specific representation of locality on coins.

Cult

One of the most important points of reference for the ancients were their cults and gods and therefore one of the strongest glues for local identities. It comes as no surprise then that gods and their attributes were one of the oldest and most often used coin images. The depiction of a god could fulfil different functions: Firstly, these images stood often in connection with the main cults or mythological foundations.²³ At this point it needs to be distinguished between the depiction of indigenous and Greek gods. It was already mentioned above that coins represent mostly a Greek and Roman view; we can observe probably indigenous cult images for example in the case of *baityloi* or unusual depictions of gods and goddesses as for example the famous Artemis of Ephesus or Apollo Lykeius in Tarsus.²⁴ But mostly the so-called indigenous deities are the results of syncretism, which comes from the interaction of local religious identity with the outside world, the Greek or Roman people. This interaction also could lead to a complete integration of Greek or Roman deities.

Next to a pure local depiction, the coin images could also refer to regional or “pan-Greek” gods, for example to Zeus Labraundus as important god for the whole of Caria or to the Delphic Apollo as one of the most important gods in the Greek world. With these references local communities displayed a connection to regional or “pan-Greek” mythologies and like that to a shared culture.

With the appearance of the Romans, Roman gods were, of course, also integrated into local coinages. One of the most famous examples is the goddess Roma who appeared on local coinages outside Rome as early as the 2nd c. BC. In her contribution Robyn Le Blanc discusses the image of the Marsyas-forum type, a typical Roman image that was introduced into the coinage of Roman colonies in Imperial times. The coins seldom show Marsyas alone, but mostly in interaction with local gods, demonstrating the “localisation” of an originally foreign image.

²² Whitmarsh 2010, 11-12.

²³ Filges forthcoming.

²⁴ *SNG von Aulock*, n° 2349 depicting the *baitylos* of the autochthonous god Basileus Kaunios (5th/4th c. BC); *RPC* III, n° 2081 showing the Artemis of Ephesus with her characteristic high headdress and fillets (minted for Sabina); *RPC* VI, n° 7071 (temporary) minted under Elagabalus showing Apollo holding two wolves. A quite fascinating case study in this regard might be found in imperial Egypt where a strong local religious tradition met with Roman culture, see e.g. Howgego 2005, 3.

As these gods represented the majority of a community, signs and symbols of other religions did seldom appear on coins until Constantine the Great. A remarkable exception might have been the Judean coinages as they were for example minted in the Jewish wars 66-70 AD or during the Bar Kochba revolt in the 130ies AD.²⁵

All these case studies show clearly that especially the depiction of gods and cults were at the core of many local identities. The overwhelming majority of these images can be observed on civic coinages thus representing *polis* religion in general. Much more important are the ways in which these images were constructed and what they can tell us about the forming, negotiation and representation of heterogenous local identities.

Ethnicity/Autochthony

Coins can provide insights into the self-assignment of different ethnic and autochthonous population groups through text and, more rarely, images. In the areas where the Greeks and Romans settled, other people already lived. They can be identified as ethnic groups if they ascribed themselves a collective identity beyond the family and also had this attributed to them from the outside.²⁶ The criteria can be common traditions, language, religion, values, special common social structures, common real or fictitious origin and history.²⁷ These criteria are the basis of the “us/others” dichotomy that serves to differentiate from other groups.²⁸ With the arrival of the Greeks or Romans, these groups did not disappear, they shared the living space and in the course of time, the culture. These ethnic groups can be described as autochthonous or indigenous, which means that they are archaeologically or textually the first ethnic group to have settled the landscape.²⁹ The claim of being the first to settle is the essential criterion for distinguishing local from indigenous. Even if language alone is not a sufficient criterion to speak of a distinct ethnic group, the legend on the coins is the most important indication of the minting activity of autochthonous groups. The script of those languages is mostly different from the Greek or Latin letters. In Asia Minor, autochthonous groups such as the Carians or Lycians already minted coins with their autochthonous language from their earliest coinage, around the 6th c. BC. It was not until Hellenism that these scripts disappeared. On the other hand, Iberian and Celtiberian script for example can be found on coins from the Iberian Peninsula until the late Hellenistic or late Republic period. Names of persons, especially magistrate or ruler names and names of the cities, as well as in rare cases names of gods, also provide insight into the autochthonous world of the minting city. These names can occur in Latin and Greek or in the autochthonous language. There are also bilingual coins addressing multiple groups simultaneously like coins from Abydos carrying a Latin legend on the obverse and Greek script on the reverse under Severus Alexander. Iconographically, deities were most often the expression of autochthonous identity, whereby they are usually already the result of syncretism, such as the case of Zeus Ammon on the coins of Cyrenaica. There are also images that do not originate from the world of the autochthonous group but can become autochthonous when the community claims them as their own. An example is the double axe of Zeus Labraundos. The *labrys* is an attribute known from the Near East before the Carians used it for their pan-Carian deity.

²⁵ See Hendin 2022 and Goodman 2005. It needs to be stressed that the Jewish coins did not have any local references but served as identification tool of a new politic and religious group.

²⁶ Sommer 2003, 208.

²⁷ Hall 2002, 8-9; Derks & Roymans 2009, 1-9.

²⁸ Barth 1998, 11-16; Sommer 2003, 211; Kemmers & Myrberg 2011, 98.

²⁹ https://www.iz3w.org/zeitschrift/ausgaben/303_indigenitaet/dos (15.02.2023) p. 2. The concept of autochthony was not alien to the Greeks; especially the Athenians prided themselves as being “born from the Athenian soil”, see Petit 1995.

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History-Myth history

The preoccupation with the own history, especially with the foundation of a city was a phenomenon already present in Archaic times, but gained importance only in the imperial period.³⁰ Especially the Greek cities in the eastern Roman Empire used their coins to a great amount for the depiction of a real or imagined history. The (myth)-histories had a double function: they explained the own long history and legitimised the communities as the legal and earliest settlers of their land. The boundaries between fiction and factual history become blurred in the process. Nevertheless, the self-invented past was understood as an experienced past by the Greeks, which had a major input into the collective and local identity.

The cities had a rich pool of mythologies at their disposal. They not only exploited these myths by deliberately combining them, but most of them claimed more than one founder or foundation myth. These myths served not only as reference to a mythological and complex past, they were an expression of different local groups: Alexandria Troas had to take into account its Hellenistic past, its refoundation as a Roman colony and its ancient cult of Apollo Smintheus served as connection to the Trojan cycle.³¹

One point has to be stressed: the mythologies might have been local, but at the same time they connected the *poleis* to a shared Greek – and not autochthonous – history. It comes as no surprise then that the main topics – founders and foundation myths – mostly referred to Greek gods and Greek heroes.³² Only seldom do we find non-Greek heroes like for example Sandan of Tarsus.³³

Even more rare are images of “real” founders: the most important historical founder was of course Alexander the Great, but Nicomedia, for example, also depicted King Nicomedes I. in the act of founding the city.³⁴

Only a minor theme were references to famous local citizens: Most prominent was probably Homer who was claimed by no less than eight cities. Included were also poets like Sappho and Anacreon, physicians such as Hippokrates or mathematicians and philosophers like Hipparchus, Pythagoras and Heracleitus.³⁵ A special case are, of course, the Roman elites of the Republic period. They exploited the coins for their own by propagating their families and their own past. Like this they defracted the local identity of Rome into the individual self-representation of the ruling families.

Whilst the occupation with the past was a phenomenon that existed predominantly in the cities of the Greek East, mythological founders stood also for the ethnic identity of tribes and had often a physical connection to the land. The river-god Borysthenes, for examples, was not only honoured by the Greek city of Olbia, but was also revered by the Scythians as their mythological founder.³⁶

The natural environment and the economy

Among the most ancient coin images are depictions of plants, animals and other natural features like rivers, mountains or springs. While plants and animals can mostly be interpreted mythologically or as *pars pro toto* of a god/goddess they could also additionally refer either to natural surroundings or economic products. It needs to be stressed that the nature as shown on coins was often domesticated and therefore integrated into the civic sphere.

An often-cited example in this case is the *selinon* leaf on early coins of Selinus on Sicily – *selinon* was wild celery that grew near the city with a very distinctive smell. The city took its name either from that plant or from the homonymous river.³⁷ While Selinus referred to its surrounding nature, the cities of 6th c. BC Cyrenaica chose an opposing strategy.

³⁰ Leschhorn 1993 is mostly focussed on real pre-Hellenistic founders in the context of the Greek colonisation but takes also in account the mythological ones.

³¹ Price 2005, 120.

³² Howgego 2005, 6-7.

³³ Tekin 2021.

³⁴ *RPC* VI, n° 3462 (temporary) for Nicomedes.

³⁵ Heuchert 2005, 52.

³⁶ Vidin 2022.

³⁷ *SNG ANS*, n° 684.

They depicted the famous *silphium* plant out of economic reasons, as it was not only sold, but also used as medicine and food. Nevertheless, the plant also had a mythological component.³⁸

Next to plants, animals were among the most ancient coin images. Similar to plants the early coin images probably had a double function: they referred to the nature, but could also represent local economies: the tunny fish on ancient coins of Cyzicus, for example, served as a reminder of the fish's annual migration along the city's coast; on the other hand tunnies were hunted and sold on the local markets.³⁹

Local identity could not only be created by the depiction of products but, on a much broader level, by references to natural features such as rivers and mountains. The representation of rivers was a wide-spread phenomenon that occurred basically during the entire time of coin production. This comes as no surprise as rivers functioned as frontiers, water supplies and important landscape markers that bound especially cities to a physical place.⁴⁰ Mountains are in contrast a rare (and mostly imperial) coin image and came predominantly in connection with a cult, for example Mount Argaeus in Cappadocia or Mount Gerizim in Judaea.⁴¹

Cities, regions and provinces could also be depicted as personifications. While the representation of Tyche, mostly with a mural crown, is the usual appearance of the city on civic coinages already before the Romans⁴², the personification of regions and provinces is a decidedly Roman and especially an imperial phenomenon.⁴³ The depiction of *e.g.* Hispania or Gallia follows not only a Roman visual codex, but represents a Roman view on the world, more precisely the conquered territory.⁴⁴ Pictorial references to regions in civic coinages are in contrast very rare and might therefore be interpreted as reaction to Roman image traditions. A good example for this is a coin from Laodicea minted under Caracalla (211/212 AD), where the city goddess sits between the personifications of Caria and Phrygia.⁴⁵ If we find references to regions, it is mostly in form of inscriptions (see section above "Ethnicity/Autochthony").

Build Environment

Especially civic coinages can also refer to build environment. The coins primarily show public buildings that can be interpreted as urban landmarks. They are not so much from the administrative but mainly from a public or cultic context. One of the oldest images is the representation of city walls, as they can be seen for example on silver coins from Sidon (5th c. BC) or Tarsus (4th c. BC).⁴⁶ City walls continued to be depicted on Roman provincial coinages especially in times of crisis such as the raids of different tribes in the 3rd c. AD. Next to city walls, the harbour of the Sicilian city of Zancle is among the oldest architectural images (6th c. BC), but it needs to be noted that the sickle-shaped structure on the coins does also refer to the natural form of the harbour.⁴⁷ Other early coin images show purely mythological architecture such as the labyrinth of Cnossus.⁴⁸ All in all, as these few examples have already made clear, built structures are a rare phenomenon in pre-imperial coinage. It is only under the emperors that civic coinages, perhaps as a response to Roman practice, depicted public monuments, buildings, and even aerial views of the city as a whole.⁴⁹ Out of the

38 *BMC Cyrenaica*, n° 12.

39 *SNG France*, n° 230.

40 Howgego 2005, 12.

41 *SNG von Aulock*, n° 6482 (Caracalla as Caesar); *SNG ANS*, n° 1024-5 (Philipp II). Exceptions of the connection between mountains and cult are, for example, a depiction of the personification of the Coressus mountains (*RPC III*, n° 2049 corr.), the mountain-god Haemus (*RPC VI*, n° 1291 temporary) or the mountain-god Tmolus (*RPC IV.2*, n° 1576).

42 These Tychai could also hold local references to their respective cities, for example, temples or civic badges like the name-giving pomegranate of Side, see *e.g.* *SNG France*, n° 626 (Stater, 5th c. BC).

43 Personifications of regions were rarely also minted in late Republican times, see Houghtalin 1993, 82-83 with the suggestion that Pompey the Great copied the image from Numidian coins of King Iarbas.

44 Howgego 2005, 10-12.

45 *SNG von Aulock*, n° 3856. Whether the coin is connected to a newly defined border between Phrygia and Caria must remain unclear, see Howgego 2005, 11 and Burrell 2004, 124.

46 *SNG Copenhagen*, n° 191; *SNG Paris*, n° 365.

47 *SNG ANS*, n° 296.

48 Berthold 2011, 70-72 and 83. The motif exists on other cities too, such as in Terina or in different Thessalian cities, therefore, it is not yet clear if the wells and water-sprouts are part of a real water building or serve as symbolical marker for *e.g.* natural sources.

49 Howego 2005 4-5.

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great and innumerable variety of architectural types, which is impossible to discuss in detail here, the predomination of temples is obvious at first glance.⁵⁰ The depiction of public buildings on civic coinages can clearly be understood as expression of local identities. While this does apply to civic coinages the interpretation has to be adjusted when talking about the Roman Imperial coinages: the depicted monuments are of course a reference to the city of Rome, but much more tied to imperial propaganda than to a collective identity of the Roman citizens. All these monuments are strongly connected to the above-mentioned identity of place, which means that they express a locality bound to a place such as a city and its hinterland.

Representations of an every-day life

While the topics mentioned above were the most important thematic complexes, coins could refer in many other ways to the local realities of their recipients that are not discussed specifically in our volume, but will be presented here in short selection.

The use of local eras is a thorny topic as especially in Hellenistic times the use of local eras and regnal years was a practice founded on Seleucid and Ptolemaic bureaucratic practices and therefore something implemented from above.⁵¹ Cities used these dating methods in Imperial times still and, as Christopher Howgego already suggested, stood probably often enough in connection with the Roman authorities.⁵² Nevertheless, the use of these eras could still be seen, in some cases, as a deliberate expression of belonging and as such of a local identity, as the cities chose for themselves that starting point and with this the point of reference in their specific and local history.

Other examples are a Roman phenomenon and mostly located in Asia Minor, which is why they will be discussed only briefly. Political buildings were, as discussed above, never minted, but were present on coins as personifications such as *boule*, *demos* and *gerousia*.⁵³ Much more importance gained the depiction of games and festivals. They were a part of the greater phenomenon of civic rivalries that are well known in modern research and will not be discussed further. These agonistic and musical games could often only be celebrated with allowance of the emperor and were therefore a great prestige to gain. It comes as no surprise then that these games and festivals resulted in a great abundance of different coin types that were invented to publicly celebrate these events.⁵⁴

COINS AND LOCAL/REGIONAL IDENTITIES

Coins are a unique and complex historical and archaeological source as they are part of the ancient material culture as well as an object carrying image and text as cultural marker of the societies that minted them. Through their designs coins can provide a sense of belonging and can therefore be interpreted as one of the most important tools for the visualisation of local/regional identities.⁵⁵ As local identities are actively constructed and altered over time, coin designs change too, which makes clear that coins were an important part and marker of these changes.⁵⁶

50 Howgego 2005, 4. Religious structures on Greek coinages are in our opinion a very rare type. The pyramidal monument of Sandan in Tarsus, minted under the Seleucids, might be one of the most famous examples in this regard, see Tekin 2021. There is still an ongoing discussion about the “reality” of the depicted monuments: Elkins 2015, 1-13 gives a good overview over modern research discussion. While the depiction of monuments in the Greek East does not always correspond to reality, Roman coins are on the contrary usually linked to an event or an act.

51 Leschhorn 1993, 8-21.

52 Howgego 2005, 9.

53 Martin 2013.

54 Klose 2005.

55 Kemmers & Myrberg 2011, 96-99.

56 Kemmers & Myrberg 2011, 97. Papadopoulos 2002, 24 studied early Greek silver coinages in Southern Italy and calls them “active agents in shaping identities and communities”.

Features qualifying coins as carrier of local identity

Coins are means of payment with a very small size, so that they can be carried along. The material (electron, copper, silver, gold), the production technique, and the surface dimension are (almost) always constant. These technical specifications also determine the possibilities of depicting an image in terms of image perspectives, axes, depth, and the arrangement of the complex image elements.

Not only, but especially due to the very small space, the content of the coin images is seldom limited to the statement of the depicted object(s). The picture is mostly symbolic since it stands in its statement for a complex meaning content. Thus, the depicted images in their individual signs are each like a code with additional semantics, standing for a more complex context.⁵⁷ Coins therefore are a multifaceted communication medium.⁵⁸ The content and message of this medium depended on the decision of the minting authorities. Even if we mostly cannot reconstruct what the viewers interpreted into these coin images, it was in the interest of the minting authorities that the messages were understandable. They chose images and themes with which the inhabitants or subjects were familiar, which could serve as a kind of symbol of the community. Their full meaning was primary clear to this community. To understand the message, the viewer's level of information was crucial and is also decisive in modern times for scientific analyses. This argumentation becomes even more clear when discussing the intentional ambiguity of some coin images. While the whole range of interpretation might have only been clear to the minting authority, different groups could have various ways of interpreting the coin image, depending on their cultural background.⁵⁹

The knowledge of the meaning decreases with the increasing distance to the minting place. Neighbouring *poleis* and inhabitants of the same landscape and region could thus understand the message of the coin images better through their shared cultural and geographical world than the inhabitants of other and more distant landscapes.

Even when coins represent the communities who minted them, were self-referential and carriers of local identity, they are not tied to a specific place. This already lies in the nature of the coin as a mobile means of payment, which was used not only to make payments within the community, but also to make payments to the outside, *e.g.* for trade, depending on its denomination. As soon as these coins leave the inner circle, the aspect of demarcation to the outside – the we-others dichotomy – appears.

Construction of local images on coins

While the images used for the coins were already discussed, one question remains: how did an image become local? The creation of these images consists of various steps. At first, the minting of each coin series was the result of an active and conscious decision on the monetary and design aspects. Thus, for each series, the composition of the image and text was decided anew and actively, even if it means continuing to mint the existing composition. The authorities in charge had various ways to localise their coins, which will be discussed in the following sections.

Most coin images are usually generic, such as images of flora and fauna or of gods, who do not show specific characteristics. Even images that explicitly represent a geographic personification or deification such as the city tyche or the river god have a general iconography limited to their function. Different methods were used to localise these images. One possibility was the use of adding badges or monograms like the Rhodian rose on Hellenistic royal coinages. Second, the use of script served to localise an image such as naming the otherwise generic picture of a nymph. Inscriptions therefore fulfilled an important and often even crucial function as localising tool. As a third option especially gods could become local by holding or wearing special attributes that were not within their usual representation. Like this, a generic image of Zeus could become the local Carian god Labrandus by carrying a double axe.

In contrast, there existed already local images such as *xoana*, *baityloi*, the *silphium* or special attributes of gods known only from one place. While these images were rare, they are nevertheless important, as they demonstrate the different micro-identities of a local group, such as the different peoples living in one city. This integration manifests itself in the

⁵⁷ Schierl 2001, 217.

⁵⁸ This theory was discussed in detail by Hekster 2003 and Noreña 2011, but with an exclusive focus on Roman coinage. A theoretical approach to Greek coinage is still missing.

⁵⁹ Rowan 2016. These images also had the advantage to suffice heterogenous population groups.

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fact that the autochthonous language was combined with Greek or Roman images, autochthonous names of persons or gods appear in Greek or Roman language, or through syncretism of the gods, which also led to an iconographic combination of both worlds.

Deciding against a local identity on coins

Up until this point coins were treated not only as the most important media for local identity, but also as an encompassing source. This section aims to show the limits of coins as a tool for expressing locality. First, economic reasons could overrule the choice of a local image. A well-known example are the Siculo-Punic coins on Classical Sicily that show a wild mix of Punic and Greek images and militaristic Punic inscriptions, such as “master of the camps”. These coins were used as payments for Greek soldiers in the wars between the Carthaginians and the Greeks in Classical times and were therefore no fitting means to express the local identity of the mint masters, the Carthaginians. A second example that will be discussed further in this book (see contribution Vogt) is the Oscan city of Capua. During the Punic Wars the city founded a league together with other South Italian cities. The new league had to decide upon a design for their coins that were issued together. The cities did not choose a unique or local imagery, but used well-known coin designs from the city of Rome. The reason for this decision was the need to pay soldiers who were more accustomed to the already dominating Roman coins.

There are other reasons when coins could not be used as a source for a local identity: when unstable political circumstances prevented the formation of a stable political and thus also local identity. A good example for this are the Greek cities on Archaic and Classical Sicily. Due to the changing control of different tyrants who constantly moved and removed parts of the respective citizens, the cities never developed a stable coin imaginary. The tyrants changed these images according to their wishes and, in some cases, even changed not only the socio-political structures, but even the names of the cities. The coins as a political medium could therefore not convey the message of a stable local identity, which might have been present in other sources.⁶⁰

A last example that was not part of the conference and will therefore not be discussed in detail, are the missing references to local identities in the Western Roman Empire. While Greek colonies in Southern Italy, Spain or Gaul produced their own civic coinages with many references to their local identities, these coins ceased at least under Tiberius, Caligula or Claudius. Andrew Burnett explains the end of the civic coinages plausibly as a cultural phenomenon: the communities in the west wanted to use Roman coinage instead of their own, a practice he explained as “a very different idea of self-identity.”⁶¹ Beyond the cities we do have additionally the various Celtic coinages, but if they could be understood as expression of a tribal identity or as a cultural expression in distinction to Rome will not be elaborated further.⁶²

CONCLUSION AND FURTHER NEED FOR RESEARCH

By analysing the coin images and inscriptions that were constructed and used by many different communities, we aim to offer an overview over the different expressions of local identities. One stable local identity never existed. To give an inside how these identities were constructed on coins and how they were modified and changed under different regional, political, economic and socio-cultural influences and circumstances, is the over-all aim of this volume.

As we have seen these coin images were the result of deliberate construction, mostly set in motion by the ruling elites. To be “local”, the language was as important as the image: while Greek and Latin might have been the dominant languages, we still find the mother tongues of other minting authorities, such as the Oscans, the Carians or the Carthaginians. The

60 Fischer-Bossert 2018; Wahl 2021.

61 Burnett 2005, 176-177. Of course, as Burnett himself makes clear, this might have been a too strong polarisation, as the use of coins and coin images was a regional phenomenon that differed also in the heterogeneous east. Nevertheless, there is a clear border in the use of local coinages between east and west.

62 Haeussler 2013, 75-144 discusses the Celtic identities in the Roman Republic.

“local” character of an image was much more complex: it could be local by means of using autochthonous elements, direct references to the identity of a place or the specific history and culture of the respective communities. Locality could also be reached by the unique combination of generic images such as Tychai or river-gods with local elements – mostly the inscription was then the most important factor.

Out of a bigger scope, a local identity could only exist in differentiation to another. Coins can fulfil both functions: they are exclusive, as there existed coin images that were only used by a single minting authority and could only fully be understood by a really small group. As coin images could have more than one level of meaning, its specific local content could get lost to people who were not part of the local community. As a small and light object, coins could travel far, disconnected from their local frames. Nevertheless, these images could basically be understood by others who might have used the same image, but with another (local) content. Moreover, coin images can become part of a shared regional identity: some images were only used in specific parts of the Greek or Roman world, such as the above-mentioned Tychai.

These regional differences existed even out of a macro-perspective: the communities of the Western Roman Empire stopped using their local coinages during the early Imperial period. The observation of cultural differences in the use of coins and the expression of local identities through other media is an area that still requires further research. Another open field is the question of the proportion of local images. The coin programs of the different minting authorities had other topics to cover: references to the ruling class such as the kings and emperors or pan-Greek/pan-Roman images as expression of a shared identity, such as Roma or the Delphic Apollo. The question of the percentage of purely local images can give us a more precise picture of the relevance of coinage as medium of local communities. And, as last aspect, coin were an official medium used by the political authorities. Therefore, they communicated the public identity of a group. It might be worth asking, what differences might have existed between this public identity and a private one as we can find it for example in ritual or funeral practices.

SUMMARY OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS

Hülya Vidin considers the coin image of the young god with ram's horns, Apollo Carneius from Cyrene. Since several suggestions for naming this deity have been made by researchers, she finally identifies him and then asks about his role for the local identity. With her analyses, she shows that the deity, once a seer, brought from the Doric homeland to the *apoikia*, now, was primarily worshipped as a fertility deity and due to the fact that the oracle/seer competence was performed by Zeus Ammon. The coinage also shows that a new political value was added to him.

Johannes Heinisch focuses on the hostility between the Sicilian cities Segesta and Selinunt in the Classical period. Elymian Segesta overtook, as he proposes, a coin motif from Selinunt after an important victory and re-designed it in its local fashion. The two cities therefore offer an interesting case study how one city absorbs part of the local identity of a civic rival.

Annalisa Polosa takes a look at the numismatic developments in Cilicia from the classical to the Hellenistic period. She discusses the shaping and changing local identities of the Cilician cities in response to external influences such as the Hellenistic kings. Moreover, she asks if a regional Cilician identity existed and what other factors influenced the coin images of the cities.

Pero Ardanliev considers the coinage of the ancient city of Lychnidus located at Lake Ohrid in modern Northern Macedonia. The city minted its own coinage in Hellenistic times with its *ethnicon* in Greek, a Macedonian shield on the obverse and a *prora* on the reverse. But the city was also home to the tribe of the Dassaretians who used Lychnidos as their mint. Their coins demonstrate how the Dassaretians designed their public identity in response to Lychnidos and the Greek world by the means of text and image.

Simone Vogt analyses the coin production of the so-called Capuan League that was formed by Capua and other south-Italian cities against the growing Roman influence during the Punic Wars. These coins, as she demonstrates clearly, followed Roman weight standards and mostly Roman images – the Oscan language is the only non-Roman element. The

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Capuan League serves therefore as a case study how political and economic factors had overrun the formation of a (new) distinct local identity.

Ellen MacDougall provides deep insights into the political use of local images by Roman emperors. In the civic wars of the 1st c. AD personifications of peoples and places such as Africa or Hispania were designed and used in the Imperial coinage to an unusual high degree. MacDougall shows that the emperors minted these personifications to communicate with the soldiers in the respective areas who were the main support for aspirants like Galba in Spain or L. Clodius Macer in Africa.

Frank Daubner discusses the coin production of the Greek city Amphipolis with a special focus on the image of Europa that was minted in early Imperial times. Additionally he analyses the different elements of Amphipolis' local identity, for example references to the Thracian environment in form of the river-god Strymon or the goddess Artemis Tauropolos. Like this, he gives a deep insight into the construction of the local identity of a Greek city located sometimes at the borders of the Greek/Roman world.

Saskia Kerschbaum examines the civic rivalry of the Bithynian cities of Nicaea and Nicomedia in Roman Imperial times. Both cities fought for prestige and titles, but Nicaea lost in the long run under Antoninus Pius and Septimius Severus. Politically only on second place, Nicaea focussed on its long history and its noble founders Hercules and Dionysus and celebrated this *eugeneia* on its coins. This contribution shows therefore how the Nicaeans constructed their local civic identity in order to differentiate themselves from the rival city and to whom these specifically local coin images were addressed.

Robyn le Blanc analyses the coin image of the so-called "Forum Marsyas type" and its spread in the Eastern Mediterranean in Imperial times. She shows that coins with Marsyas were minted especially in the Roman colonies, for example in Tyre, Mallos, Bostra and Neapolis. While the image of Marsyas was clearly modelled after a statue on the forum in Rome, Marsyas was often combined with local images. Like this the god served as link between different civic groups in the Roman colonies and became a symbol of a new shared cultural and local identity.

Andrea Gorys and Bernhard Weisser offer a detailed and fascinating overview over the local coinages of the city of Adramyttion in Asia Minor from the beginning until the end of the mint. The authors ask how the local profile of Adramyttion was constructed considering different political, geographical and cultural influences. While some features remained stable over a long period of time, others were only temporarily shown on the coins.

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