



Roman Taxation and Monetary Production: The Case of the *Provincia Asia* up to 48 BC

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ABSTRACT

Was Roman taxation the main cause of the financial crisis of Asian cities in the course of the first century BC? Was there a correlation between taxation and monetary production? This essay aims to offer, through an analysis of the production and circulation patterns of late and later Republican *cistophori* – the reduced standard tetradrachm issued in the *Provincia Asia* between 128 and 48 BC – a new perspective on the impact of Roman domination and of the *societates publicanorum* on this province, defined by Cicero as one of the richest in the Roman Empire.

ESSAY

“The companies which had contracted with the censors for Asia complained that in the heat of the competition they had taken the contract at an excessive price; they demanded that the contract should be annulled. I led in their support, or rather, I was second, for it was Crassus who induced them to venture on this demand. The case is scandalous, the demand a disgraceful one, and a confession of rash speculation.”¹

¹ Cicero, *Letter to Atticus*, 1.17 (<http://thelatinlibrary.com/cicero/att1.shtml#17>): “Asiam qui de censoribus conduxerunt, questi sunt in senatu se cupiditate prolapsos nimium magno conduxisse, ut induceretur locatio, postulaverunt. Ego princeps in adiutoribus atque adeo secundus; nam, ut illi auderent hos postulare, Crassus eos impulit. Invidiosa res, turpis postulatio et confessio temeritatis.” Translation in Evelyn S. Shuckburgh, *The Letters of Cicero* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1899), vol 1: 48.



In this letter to Atticus, Cicero recalls the attempt to rescind a tax-farming contract in Asia on the part of the *societas publicanorum* that had bid for it in 61 BC. The *publicani* alleged that they had bid at an excessive price in the heat of the competition (*cupiditate prolapsos*) and they requested a one-third reduction of their dues to the Roman *aerarium*.² The Senate, after initial hesitation and with the significant exception of Cato, agreed to the requests of the *societas*.³ If we are to believe Cicero's silence about it, the lengthy decisional process concerning the request – which lasted at least from December 61 to May 60 BC – happened without strenuous opposition from the *societates publicanorum* competing for the same tax-farming contract. Perhaps there was no other *societas* interested in the bid after 61, but, if there were other companies in the field – the more likely possibility – then it must have appeared that, even after the reduction of a third, the contract was not as profitable as previously evaluated.⁴

The decrease in profitability for the tax-farming contracts of the *Provincia Asia* seems confirmed in another letter to Atticus, probably dated around 50 BC. Cicero here states that the *publicani* had not been able to extract any revenues from the Asian and Cilician cities for five years because of their excessive civic debt.⁵ The literary evidence confirms the financial crisis of Asian cities in these same years.⁶

² Cic., *Att.*, 1.17; 1.18. <http://thelatinlibrary.com/cicero/att1.shtml#18>

³ Cic., *Att.*, 2.1.8. <http://thelatinlibrary.com/cicero/att2.shtml#1>

⁴ J. P. V. D. Balsdon, "Roman History, 65-50 B.C.: Five Problems," *Journal of Roman Studies* 52 (1962): 134–41, at 135–37.

⁵ Cic., *Att.*, 6.2.4-5 (<http://thelatinlibrary.com/cicero/att6.shtml#2>): "Mira erant in civitatibus ipsorum furta Graecorum quae magistratus sui fecerant. Quaesivi ipse de iis qui annis decem proximis magistratum gesserant. Aperte fatebantur. Itaque sine ulla ignomina suis umeris pecunias populis rettulerunt. Populi autem nullo gemitu publicanis quibus hoc ipso lustro nihil solverant etiam superioris lustris <reliqua> reddiderunt. itaque publicanis in oculis sumus." Eric O. Winstedt, trans., *Cicero: Letters to Atticus* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1912), vol 1: 447: "Secondly, the states (of the Greeks) had suffered from surprising corruption in their own countrymen, that is to say, their magistrates. I questioned the men who had held the office of magistrate during the last ten years. They concealed nothing. So, without exposure they took on their own backs the repayment of the money: and the communities which had paid the tax-farmers nothing for the present five years have now without any complaint paid up arrears for the last five years too. So I am the apple of their eye to the tax-farmers."

⁶ On the financial distress of Asian cities after the Peace of Dardanus (85 BC) see Appian, *The Mithridatic War*, 9.63 (Horace White, trans., *Appian: "Roman History,"* Loeb Classical Library 4 [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1912]: 269, 271) On the despair of the Ephesians at Mark Antony's extraordinary requests (41 BC): Appian, *The Civil Wars*, 5.1 (https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Appian/Civil_Wars/5*.html)

But, can monetary production offer further evidence for this financial crisis?⁷ As I will show in the following pages, in the years between the end of Aristonicus's war and the early 40s BC, Asia had issued an unprecedented amount of *cistophori*, a reduced standard tetradrachm.⁸ Where did this coinage go? It seems that at least part of it must have been used to pay the province's dues to Rome. Monetary production confirms the literary evidence on the subject and allows a quantification of the financial ruin caused by wars and by Rome's extraordinary requests in the course of the first century BC.⁹

The study of cistophoric production and circulation up to 48 BC is crucial for answering this question since Roman currencies were not produced or circulated in Asia before this time.¹⁰ The province of Asia was *de facto* a closed currency system.¹¹ 48 BC is also the year of the Caesarean reform of the Asian tax-farming system that cut the *societates publicanorum* out from the exaction of the *decuma*, while maintaining their involvement in other taxes.¹² There

⁷ François de Callataÿ, "Crises monétaires et crises du monnayage dans le monde gréco-romain. Une vue perspective," *Topoi* 21 (2017): 173–92.

⁸ On early *cistophori* (160s–128 BC): Fred S. Kleiner and Sydney Noe, *The Early Cistophoric Coinage* (New York: American Numismatic Society, 1977); Late *cistophori* (128–60s BC): Fred S. Kleiner, "The Dated Cistophori of Ephesus," *American Numismatic Society Museum Notes* 18 (1972): 17–32 (Ephesus); Fred S. Kleiner, "Hoard Evidence and the Late Cistophori of Pergamum," *American Numismatic Society Museum Notes* 23 (1978): 77–106 (Pergamum); Fred S. Kleiner, "The Late Cistophori of Apameia," in *Essays in Honor of Margaret Thompson*, ed. Otto Mørkholm and Nancy Waggoner (Wetteren: Cultura Press, 1979), 119–30 (Apamea); William Metcalf, "The Late Cistophori of Nysa," in *FIDES: Contributions to Numismatics in Honor of Richard B. Witschonke*, ed. Peter G. Van Alfen, Gilles Bransbourg and Michel Amandry (New York: American Numismatic Society, 2015), 311–20 (Nysa); Lucia F. Carbone, *The Hidden Power: Late Cistophoric Production and the Organization of the Provincia Asia (128–89 B.C.)* (New York: American Numismatic Society, 2020) (overview of late cistophoric production); Later Republican *cistophori* (58–48 BC): William E. Metcalf, *Later Republican Cistophori* (New York: American Numismatic Society, 2017).

⁹ Carbone, *The Hidden Power*, 227–43.

¹⁰ Lucia F. Carbone, "The Introduction of Roman Coinages in Asia (133 BC –1st century AD)," in *Graecia Capta?*, ed. Richard H. J. Ashton and Nathan Badoud (Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2021).

¹¹ The monetary system of the *Provincia Asia* is only *de facto* closed, as silver autonomous coinages were still produced at least until Nero. However, the very scant quantity of these issues and their hyperlocal circulation makes for a matter-of-fact closed currency system. On the decrease of silver autonomous coinages see Lucia F. Carbone, "Money and Power: The Disappearance of Autonomous Silver Issues in the Roman Province of Asia," *Revista Numismática, OMNI* 8 (2014): 10–34.

¹² On the reform of 48 BC see Plutarch, *Life of Caesar*, 48.1 (Bernadotte Perrin, trans., *Plutarch: "Lives" Volume 7*, Loeb Classical Library 99 [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1919], 555); Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 42.6.3 (https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Cassius_Dio/42*.html). On the role of the *publicani* in Asian tax-farming after 48 BC see Onno Van Nijf, "The Social World of Tax-Farmers and their Personnel," in *The Customs Law of Asia*, ed. Michel Cottier and Mireille Corbier (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 279–311.

seems to be at least a contemporaneity – if not a causation – between the creation of a *de facto* currency system in the province of Asia and the farming of the *decuma* at the hands of the *societates publicanorum*.

This essay will demonstrate firstly the relationship (or lack thereof) between Roman taxation and monetary production in the province of Asia up to 48 BC and secondly the role of the *societates publicanorum* in the establishment of the peculiarities of the Asian monetary system during that same period. Through my analysis of the numismatic data, I will offer a new perspective on the impact of Roman domination on this province, defined by Cicero as the province which fueled the financial market in Rome itself.¹³

The Presence of *publicani* in Asia

While the presence of *publicani* in Asia before the 120s BC is still an object of discussion, it is certain that the *lex Sempronia de provincia Asia* or *de vectigalibus Asiae*, regarding the exploitation of the province through the *publicani*, represented a milestone in the tax-farming operations of the province.¹⁴ As made clear by Cicero, the *lex Sempronia* established several

¹³ Cic., *Pro Leg. Man.*, 19 (<http://thelatinlibrary.com/cicero/imp.shtml#19>): “mihi credite, id quod ipsi videtis: haec fides atque haec ratio pecuniarum, quae Romae, quae in foro versatur, implicata est cum illis pecuniis Asiaticis et cohaeret.” Humphrey Grose Hodge, *The Speeches: Pro lege Manilia, Pro Caecina, Pro Cluentio, Pro Rabirio perduellionis*, Loeb Classical Library 198 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927), 31: “Believe me when I tell you – what you see for yourselves – that this system of credit and finance which operates at Rome, in the Forum, is bound up in, and depends on capital invested in Asia.

¹⁴ The law is generally attributed to C. Gracchus: App., *The Civil Wars* 1.22 (https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Appian/Civil_Wars/1*.html); Ernst Badian, *Roman Imperialism in the Late Republic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968), 48-49; Adrian N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Foreign Policy in the East* (London: Duckworth, 1984), 18-31; Robert M. Kallet-Marx, *Hegemony to Empire: The Development of the Roman Imperium in the East from 148 to 62 B.C.* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 120-21 and 138; Giovanna D. Merola, *Autonomia Locale—Governo Imperiale* (Bari: Edipuglia, 2001), 34-40; Michel Cottier and Mireille Corbier, eds., *The Customs Law of Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 8; Philip Kay, *Rome's Economic Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 59-83. The argument in favor of an organized presence of *publicani* in the province before the *lex Sempronia* relies mainly on the dating of the *SC de agro Pergameno*, found in several copies in the assize district centers of the province, on which see Frank F. Abbott and Allan C. Johnson, *Municipal Administration in the Roman Empire* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1968), 12 = *IGRP* IV, 262 (copy at Adramyteum); Alfredo Passerini, “Le iscrizioni dell’Agorà di Smirne concernenti la lite tra i publicani e i Pergameni,” *Athenaeum* 15 (1937): 252-83; Giovanna Di Stefano, “Una nuova edizione del Senatus Consultum de agro Pergameno,” *RAL* 9, no. 9 (1998): 707-48 (copy at Smyrna); Robert K. Sherk, *Roman Documents from the Greek East. Senatus Consulta and Epistulae to the Age*

noteworthy changes in taxation procedure relative to those used in other provinces.¹⁵ Like in Sicily, the tithe (*decuma*), a direct tax in land, in Asia was levied as a percentage of produce, not as a fixed sum as in Spain or Africa, and, again like in Sicily, this tax was contracted out to tax-farmers.¹⁶ However, unlike in Sicily, this was done on a provincial scale.¹⁷ In the newly

of Augustus (RDGE) (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 12; Gianfranco Tibiletti, "Rome and the Ager Pergamenus: The Acta of 129 BC," *Journal of Roman Studies* 47 (1957): 136–38; Robert K. Sherck, "The Text of the Senatus Consultum de Agro Pergameno," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 7 (1966): 361–69; Francesco De Martino, "Il Senatus Consultum de agro Pergameno," *La Parola del Passato* 210 (1983): 161–90; Georg Petzl, "Reste eines ephesischen Exemplars des Senatusconsultum de Agro Pergameno," *Epigraphica Anatolica* 6 (1985): 70–71 (copy at Ephesus). The inscription, which concerns itself with limiting the power of *publicani* in the *chora* of Pergamum, had been dated originally to 129 BC, but has now been persuasively redated to 101 rather than 129, on which see Merola, *Autonomia Locale—Governio Imperiale*, 27–34; David Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), 1055–56, no. 25; De Martino, "Il Senatus Consultum de agro Pergameno"; Erich Gruen, *The Hellenistic World and the Coming of Rome* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 606–07; Sherwin-White, *Roman Foreign Policy in the East*, 96, no. 9; Ernst Badian, "Two Notes on *Senatus Consulta* regarding Pergamum," *Liverpool Classical Monthly* 11 (1986): 14–16, at 15–16; Petzl, "Reste eines ephesischen Exemplars des Senatusconsultum de Agro Pergameno," 58–60. For a summary of the argument see Kay, *Rome's Economic Revolution*, 66–69. The late dating of the *SC de agro Pergameno*, now widely accepted, undermines the thesis of an organized presence of *publicani* in Asia before the *lex Sempronia*.

¹⁵ Cicero, *In Verrem*, 2.3.12–13 (<http://thelatinlibrary.com/cicero/verres.2.3.shtml>); Merola, *Autonomia Locale—Governio Imperiale*, 39–40; Kay, *Rome's Economic Revolution*, 70–83; and, most recently, Kyle McLeister, "Publicani in the Principate" (PhD dissertation, McMaster University, 2016), 75–82 (with bibliography).

¹⁶ On *Decuma* in Sicily (in juxtaposition to Asia) see Claude Nicolet, "Dîmes de Sicile, d'Asie et d'ailleurs," in *Le Ravitaillement en blé de Rome et des centres urbains des débuts de la République jusqu'au Haut-Empire. Actes du colloque international de Naples, 14–16 février 1991* (Naples: Centre Jean Bérard, 1994), 215–29, at 215–21 (with bibliography); Merola, *Autonomia Locale—Governio Imperiale*, 102–07 (with bibliography). On taxation in Spain see Livy, *History of Rome*, 43.2.1, 2 [17 BC] (Alfred Cary Schlesinger, trans., *Livy: "History of Rome," Volume 13*, Loeb Classical Library 396 [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951], 7); John J. Van Nostrand, "Roman Spain," in *An Economic Survey of Ancient Rome*, ed. Tenney Frank (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1938), vol. 3: 119–224, at 146; Claude Nicolet "Frumentum Mancipale: en Sicile et ailleurs," in *Nourrir la Plèbe. Actes du Colloque en hommage à Denis van Berchem (Genève, 1989)*, ed. Adalberto Giovannini (Basel/Kassel: Reinhardt, 1991), 119–41, at 136–37. On taxation in Sardinia: *alterae decumae* are attested in 191, 190, 189 and 171 BC (Livy, *Hist. Rom.*, 36.2.13; 37.2.12; & 42.31.8 [Evan T. Sage, trans., *Livy: "History of Rome," Volume 10*, Loeb Classical Library 301 [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935], 159, 295, & Evan T. Sage and Alfred Cary Schlesinger, trans., *Livy: "History of Rome," Volume 12*, Loeb Classical Library 332 [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1938], 383]). On taxation in Africa see Richard M. Haywood, "Roman Africa," in *An Economic Survey of Ancient Rome*, ed. Tenney Frank (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1938), vol. 3: 3–119, at 17–21; Plut., *Caes.*, 55 (Perrin, trans., *Plutarch: "Lives,"* 571). For the discussion on the nature of the taxation in Africa see Geoffrey Rickman, *The Corn Supply of Ancient Rome* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 231–35.

¹⁷ T. R. S. Broughton, *The Magistrates of the Roman Republic* (New York: American Philological Association, 1951–1952), 511–12; Angela Donati, "I Romani nell'Egeo: i documenti dell'età repubblicana," *Epigraphica* 27 (1965): 3–59; William T. Arnold, *The Roman System of Provincial Administration* (Rome, 1968), 87–95; Christiane Delplace, "Publicains, trafiquants et financiers dans les provinces d'Asie Mineure sous la République," *Ktema* 2 (1977): 233–52; Edouard Will, *Histoire politique du monde hellénistique (323–30 av. J.-C.)* (Nancy: Université de Nancy, 1982), 462–63; Kallet-Marx, *Hegemony to Empire*, 95–125, 138–48; Guy Labarre, *Les cités de Lesbos aux époques hellénistique et impériale* (Lyon: Diffuson De Boccard, 1996), 107; Merola, *Autonomia Locale—Governio Imperiale*, 13–14, 34–40; Jean-Louis Ferrary, "La Création de la province d'Asie et la présence italienne en Asie Mineure," in *Les Italiens dans le monde grec—IIe siècle av. J.-C.—Ier siècle ap. J.-C. Circulation, activités, intégration*, ed. Christel Müller and Claire Hasenohr (Paris: École Française d'Athènes, 2002), 133–46, at 143; Henri-Louis Fernoux, *Notables et élites des cités de Bithynie aux époques hellénistique et romaine (IIe siècle av. J.-C. – IIIe siècle ap. J.-C.)* (Lyon: Maison de l'Orient et de la Méditerranée, 2004), 116; Élodie Bauzon, "L'enregistrement des Italiens et des Romains de passage ou résidents dans les cités grecques (IIe-Ier siècles av.

reorganized province of Asia, contracts were farmed for the taxes of the entire province at once.¹⁸ Also unlike Sicily, these taxes were, from the outset, farmed out to Roman tax-farming companies, rather than local contractors, as had been the case for the Sicilian tithes.¹⁹ This represented an enormous gain for the Roman tax-farming companies, as they were now granted the right to bid on the contract to collect taxes for the entirety of one of the richest provinces in the Empire.²⁰

In contrast to other relatively minor taxes, such as the *portorium*, for which farming relied on a widespread system of customs stations (τελώνια) operated by associates of the *societas publicanorum* of lesser *status*, the exaction of the *decuma* required a more centralized organization since it implied the assessment of the production of the province as a whole, probably through *pactiones* with each city.²¹ Moreover, the Asian tithe was supposedly paid in money to Rome, not in kind, as in the case of Sicily.²² Scholars disagree on the agency responsible for the conversion of the produce into cash, but there is a *consensus* on the fact that

J.- C.),” in *Gens de passage en Méditerranée de l'Antiquité à l'époque moderne. Procédures de contrôle et d'identification*, ed. Claude Moatti and Wolfgang Kaiser (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2007), 183–202; Toni Naco del Hoyo, Borja Antela-Bernárdez, Isaías Arrayás-Morales and Salvador Busquets-Artigas, “The Impact of Roman Intervention in Greece and Asia Minor upon Civilians (88–63 BC),” in *Transforming Historical Landscapes in the Ancient Empires*, ed. Borja Antela-Bernárdez and Toni Naco del Hoyo (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2009), 33–51, at 38–40.

¹⁸ Ernst Badian, *Publicans and Sinners: Private Enterprise in the Service of the Roman Republic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), 63; A. M. H. Jones, *The Roman Economy: Studies in Ancient Economic and Administrative History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974) 163. Kay, *Rome's Economic Revolution*, 73–76.

¹⁹ Andrew W. Lintott, *Imperium Romanum: Politics and Administration* (London: Routledge, 1993), 75; Howard H. Scullard, *From the Gracchi to Nero: A History of Rome from 133 BC to AD 68* (London: Methuen, 1970), 35. For the advantages for Sicily from the farming out of the *decuma* to local contractors see Mario Genovese, “Condizioni delle civitates della Sicilia ed assetti amministrativo-contributivi delle altre province nella prospettiva ciceroniana delle Verrine,” *Iura* 44 (1993): 171–243; Francesco Cristiano, “Civitates di Sicilia. Il comportamento di Roma,” *Instoria* 42 (2008): 1–8.

²⁰ Badian, *Publicans and Sinners*, 63; Geneviève Dufour, *Les Societates Publicanorum de la République Romaine: Ancêtres des sociétés par actions?* (Montreal: Éditions Thémis, 2012), 95.

²¹ On capillary presence of τελώνια see Van Nijf, “The Social World of Tax-Farmers and their Personnel.” On the organization of the *decuma* in Asia see Merola, *Autonomia Locale—Governo Imperiale*, 77–80 (with bibliography), and, most recently, Cottier and Corbier, eds., *The Customs Law of Asia*, 127–33 (commentary to *Lex Portorii Asiae*, ll., 72–74, dated to 75 BC). For the functioning of the *pactiones* between publicani and municipal institutions in Asia see Merola, *Autonomia Locale—Governo Imperiale*, 101–13 (with bibliography).

²² Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor*, 164–66; Raffaella Pierobon-Benoit, “L’ Asia Minore e l’approvvigionamento in grano di Roma,” in *Le Ravitaillement en blé de Rome et des centres urbains des débuts de la République jusqu’au Haut-Empire. Actes du colloque international de Naples, 14–16 février 1991* (Naples: Centre Jean Bérard, 1994), 305–21.

the *decuma* was ultimately paid to Rome in cash.²³ The payment of Asian revenues to Rome in cash is confirmed by the fact that the *Provincia Asia* was not considered among Rome's corn suppliers.²⁴ However, literary sources noted exceptional circumstances in which the Asian province was required to provide corn to Rome during the Late Republic.²⁵ For example, Cicero remarks that in 44 BC, right after the assassination of Julius Caesar, Brutus was sent to Asia *ad frumentum emendum*, although this occurrence was noted precisely because it was exceptional.²⁶ Was the *decuma* thus paid to Rome in the only silver coinage widely available in the province, i.e. the *cistophorus*?

The Role of the *cistophorus*

As mentioned, *cistophori* were overwhelmingly the silver currency that circulated throughout the *Provincia Asia*, given the almost complete absence of Roman or foreign currencies from the Asian circulation pool until 48 BC, and the fact that almost all the cistophoric hoards retrieved in the province until then are unmixed.²⁷ Another factor playing into the function of the *cistophorus* as the sole silver coinage of the Asian province was the hyperlocal circulation and very scant production of silver autonomous issues.²⁸ Moreover, the Carian region, where

²³ Nicolet, "Dîmes de Sicile, d'Asie et d'ailleurs," 221–22; Pierobon-Benoit, "L' Asia Minore e l'approvvigionamento in grano di Roma"; Merola, *Autonomia Locale—Governo Imperiale*, 105; Mireille Corbier, "The *Lex Portorii Asiae* and Financial Administration," in *The Customs Law of Asia*, ed. Michel Cottier and Mireille Corbier (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 202–35.

²⁴ Pierobon-Benoit, "L' Asia Minore e l'approvvigionamento in grano di Roma."

²⁵ Ibid., 306–07.

²⁶ Cic., *Att.*, 15.9.1 (<http://thelatinlibrary.com/cicero/att15.shtml#9>): "vesperi a Balbo redditae mihi litterae fore Nonis senatum, ut Brutus in Asia, Cassius in Sicilia frumentum emendum et ad urbem mittendum curarent." Eric O. Winstedt, *Cicero: Letters to Atticus* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1918), vol. 3: 319: "On the evening of the 2nd I received a letter from Balbus telling me there would be a meeting of the Senate on the 5th to send Brutus to Asia, and Cassius in Sicily, to buy corn and send it to Rome."

²⁷ Lucia F. Carbone, "The Gradual Introduction of Roman Currency: Epigraphic Attestations of *Denarii* in the Provincia Asia (2nd century BCE–1st century CE)," in *Proceedings of the XV International Numismatic Congress (Taormina 2015)*, ed. Maria Caccamo Caltabiano (Messina: Arbor Sapientiae Editore, 2017), 841–45, and Carbone, "The Introduction of Roman Coinages in Asia (133 BC –1st century AD)." On unmixed cistophoric hoards before the Mithridatic Wars see Carbone, *The Hidden Power*, 34–35, and for mixed cistophoric hoards in the course of the Mithridatic Wars, Carbone, *The Hidden Power*, 229–32.

²⁸ Carbone, "Money and Power."

the majority of silver autonomous issues was concentrated, was not annexed to the province until the end of the First Mithridatic War, thus further enhancing the importance of the *cistophorus* as the only coinage produced and circulating in significant quantities in the province.²⁹

At the same time, the difference in starting dates for the cistophoric issues in each city, along with the presence of the same names on cistophoric, silver autonomous and bronze issues, shows that cistophoric production was – at least to a certain point – controlled by the municipal administration of each city.³⁰ This coincidence in names also suggests that cistophoric issues were closely related to the financial needs of each city. Of course, the financial needs of each city could be connected to events on the provincial level (i.e. the Mithridatic Wars), but they could also be explained by specific circumstances on the municipal level (i.e. the punishment bestowed upon the city of Tralles after the First Mithridatic War) or the specific civic attitudes towards certain events (i.e. the decrease in the cistophoric production of Pergamum during Aristonicus's rebellion [130s BC]).³¹

²⁹ Carbone, *The Hidden Power*, 20–23.

³⁰ Apamea (around 90 BC): Late cistophori and bronze coinage: ΔΙΟΝΥΣΙΟΥ / ΚΗΦΙΣ (cistophorus: Kleiner, “The Late Cistophori of Apameia,” group VI. Bronze: R. H. J. Ashton, “The Late Hellenistic Brass and Bronze Coinage of Phrygian Apameia – A Sketch,” in *Kelainai-Apameia Kibotos*, ed. Lâtife Summerer, et al., vol. 2. (Bordeaux: Ausonius éditions, 2016), Appendix I, Type 2. ΚΩΚΟΥ (cistophorus: Kleiner, “The Late Cistophori of Apameia,” Group IX. Bronze: Ashton, “A Sketch,” Appendix I, Type 1). ΜΑΝΤΙΘΕΟΣ ΔΙΟΔΑΤ (cistophorus: Kleiner, “The Late Cistophori of Apameia,” group XIX. Bronze: Ashton, “A Sketch,” Appendix I Types 2–3). ΜΗΤΡΟ ΚΕΛΑΙ (cistophorus: Kleiner, “The Late Cistophori of Apameia,” Group IV; Ashton, “A Sketch,” Appendix I, Type 3. ΦΑΙΝΙΠΠΙΟΥ (cistophorus: Kleiner, “The Late Cistophori of Apameia,” Group XIII. Bronze: Ashton, “A Sketch,” Appendix I, Type). ΦΑΙΝΙΠΠΙΟΥ ΔΡΑΚΟΝΤΟΣ, die-linked to ΚΩΚΟΥ). For the complete chronology of late cistophoric issues and contemporary bronze issues see Ashton, “A Sketch,” Appendix II. Later Republican cistophori and bronze coinage: ΑΤΤΑΛΟΥ ΒΙΑΝΟΠΟΣ (cistophorus: Gerd R. Stumpf, *Numismatische Studien zur Chronologie der Roemischen Statthalter in Kleinasien* [Saarsbruecken, 1991], no. 21; Pinder 174; Metcalf, *Later Republican Cistophori*, 42, Laodicea II. Bronze: Ashton, “A Sketch,” Appendix I, Type 1 ΑΤΤΑΛΟΥ ΒΙΑΝΟΠΟΣ). The name ΚΩΚΟΥ (Ashton, “A Sketch,” Appendix I, Type 1) is also present on later Republican cistophori (Stumpf, *Numismatische Studien*, no. 81; Metcalf, *Later Republican Cistophori*, 44, Laodicea VIII). Adramyteum: Carbone, *The Hidden Power*, p. 180, no. 11.

³¹ On the punishment of Tralles after the First Mithridatic War see Carbone, *The Hidden Power*, 204-05 (with bibliography). On the decrease in Pergamene cistophoric production during Aristonicus's rebellion see Carbone, *The Hidden Power*, 11–15.

The “provincial” *cistophorus*, i.e. the standard-reduced tetradrachm issued in the Asian province after 133 BC, thus maintained the same double nature as the Attalid one, in that it had a civic appearance but a provincial circulation.³² Moreover, as mentioned, at least until 48 BC the *Provincia Asia* was *de facto* a closed currency system.³³ The Roman provincial administration had a clear interest in maintaining a cistophoric supply adequate for the needs of the province, i.e. the enrollment of armies and – at least partly – the payment of taxes.³⁴

The increase in production of the cistophoric mints of Pergamum, Ephesus and Tralles in connection with the arrival of the *legati* in Ephesus in 91 BC suggests that at least part of the armies assembled for reinstating Ariobarzanes and Tigranes to their thrones must have been paid in *cistophori*.³⁵ The cistophoric issue of 85 BC in the name of C. Flavius Fimbria, L. Valerius Flaccus’s insubordinate lieutenant, strongly supports this interpretation, as well.³⁶

On the other hand, the relationship between taxation and cistophoric production is suggested by the increase in production related to the extraordinary taxation that Sulla imposed upon the

³² On the Attalid *cistophorus* see Peter Thonemann, “The Attalid State, 188–133 BC,” in *Attalid Asia Minor: Money, International Relations and the State*, ed. Peter Thonemann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1–49.

³³ On the Attalid closed currency system and its limits see Andrew Meadows, “The Closed Currency System of the Attalid Kingdom,” in *Attalid Asia Minor: Money, International Relations and the State*, ed. Peter Thonemann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 148–206. On the closed currency system in provincia Asia before 48 BC see Carbone, “The Introduction of Roman Coinages in Asia (133 BC–1st century AD).”

³⁴ On armies see Carbone, *The Hidden Power*, 11–14, 56–58, 89, Fig. 2.10 (Pergamum), 124, Fig. 3.13 (Ephesus) and 165, Fig. 4.11 (Tralles). On taxes see Carbone, *The Hidden Power*, 225–26 (Tralles), 233–43.

³⁵ On the arrival of *legati* in Ephesus: Justin, *Ep. Hist. Phil.*, 38.3.4 (<http://thelatinlibrary.com/justin/38.html>): “in quod tum missi M’. Aquilius et Mallius Malthinus legati”; App., *Mithr.*, 12.2.11 (White, trans., App., *Roman History*, 253, 255). For a detailed discussion of this dating see François de Callataÿ, *L’Histoire des Guerres Mithridatiques vue par les Monnaies* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Département d’Archéologie et d’Histoire de l’Art, 1997), 277; T. Corey Brennan, “Sulla’s Career in the Nineties: Some Reconsiderations,” *Chiron* 22 (1992): 103–58, at 153; Kallet-Marx, *Hegemony to Empire*, 250–60 (with further bibliography); Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor*, 199–210. On the increase in cistophoric production in correspondence with the beginning of the Mithridatic Wars see Carbone, *The Hidden Power*, 56–58; 89, Fig. 2.10 (Pergamum); 124, Fig. 3.13 (Ephesus), and 165, Fig. 4.11 (Tralles); 197–201.

³⁶ Richard B. Witschonke and Michel Amandry, “Another Fimbria Cistophorus,” *American Journal of Numismatics* 16–17 (2004/2005): 87–92.

cities that sided with Mithridates after 85 BC.³⁷ In order to evaluate the impact of taxation and military campaigns on the monetary production of the Asian province, the following section will be devoted to an estimate of the cistophoric production of the province.

Cistophoric Production (128–48 BC)

In the first part of the next section, I will attempt a quantification of the cistophoric production of the *Provincia Asia* for the years 128–58 BC, based 1) on the die study of the 2002 hoard, a cistophoric hoard originally composed of 1,370 coins and now dispersed on the market,³⁸ and 2) on the combination of data derived from a die study of the late cistophori of Tralles that I pursued elsewhere³⁹ and the study of the composition of fourteen cistophoric hoards dated 90/89–58 BC.⁴⁰ In the second part of the section, I will compare this data to the cistophoric production under the Attalids and the later Republican ones issued between 58 and 48 BC.⁴¹

For what concerns the years 128–89 BC, the sheer number of specimens included in the 2002 hoard permits an at least indicative quantitative overview of the cistophoric production in the *Provincia Asia*. In the years between the end of the Revolt of Aristonicus (128 BC) and 91/90 BC, the cities of Pergamum, Ephesus, and Tralles produced coinage using 317 observed

³⁷ On Tralles see Carbone, *The Hidden Power*, 225–26, Fig. 11.11; on Ephesus see Callataÿ, *L'Histoire des Guerres Mithridatiques vue par les Monnaies* a, 171–79.

³⁸ The *terminus post quem* for the hoard is provided by the latest Ephesian cistophoric issue, dated to 90/89 BC and represented by 62 specimens (Kleiner, “The Dated Cistophori of Ephesus,” no. 29). For an overview of the hoard see Carbone, *The Hidden Power*, 37–49.

³⁹ For a die study of Tralles’s late *cistophori* see Carbone, *The Hidden Power*, 129–46.

⁴⁰ The hoards taken into consideration are: 2002 hoard (burial date 90/89 BC, Carbone, *The Hidden Power*, 37–49), IGCH 1461 (burial date 88 BC), IGCH 1462 (burial date 85–80 BC), CH X, 341 (burial date 89–88 BC), IGCH 1383 = CH II, 113 (c. 80 BC), IGCH 1358 = CH V, 52 (burial date c. 75 BC), CH IX, 558 (c. 75 BC), IGCH 1415 (70–60 BC), IGCH 1359 (c. 70–65 BC), CH VIII, 521 (c. 75–50 BC), CH IX, 560 (c. 70 BC), Alime Çankaya and Hüseyin Köker, “A Cistophoric Hoard from Dumancik,” *Adalya* 14 (2011): 63–70 (c. 67 BC), CH VIII, 526 (c. 65 BC), CH VIII, 447 = 525 = 526? (c. 58–57 BC). On the continuity in composition see Carbone, *The Hidden Power*, 229–32, esp. Figs. 12.3–12.4.

⁴¹ On cistophoric production under the Attalids see Kleiner and Noe, *The Early Cistophoric Coinage*, and for the later Republican cistophori, Metcalf, *Later Republican Cistophori*.

tetradrachm obverse dies. In the single year 90/89 BC, these same three mints issued coinage using 35 observed tetradrachm obverse dies, as shown in Table 1.

Years	n	d	Singletons	Dest	Coverage	s	High estimate	Low estimate
128–90 BC	1,035	317	96	455.22	0.90	26.54	482.53	429.45
90–89 BC	189	35	11	43	0.94	4.22	47.43	38.98

Table 1. Cistophoric production in tetradrachm obverse dies in the Provincia Asia (Esty, “How to Estimate the Original Number of Dies and the Coverage of a Sample.”)

Without discounting the high standard deviation for the data concerning the years 128-90 BC, Esty’s formula permits us to estimate a coverage of c. 90% and to estimate the total cistophoric production in the province for those years at 455.22 tetradrachm obverse dies (i.e., 1,820.88 drachm-equivalent obverse dies). This translates to an average of 47.91 drachm-equivalent obverse dies per year, a slightly larger amount than that estimated by Andrew Meadows for the years of the Revolt of Aristonicus.⁴² The data for 90/89 BC seems even more reliable. According to Esty’s formula, Pergamum, Ephesus and Tralles issued a total of 43 tetradrachm obverse dies (i.e., 172 drachm obverse dies). This shows a sudden increase in the cistophoric production of the province that can only be explained as related to the military operations of the Mithridatic Wars.

	Callataŷ, “The Coinages of the Attalids and their Neighbours.”	2002 hoard
167–123	51.9	–
128–90		47.91
90–89	50.8	172
Average 128-89	50.8	51.09

Table 2. Cistophoric production in drachm-equivalent obverse dies per year (Esty, “How to Estimate the Original Number of Dies and the Coverage of a Sample.”)

⁴² Meadows, “The Closed Currency System of the Attalid Kingdom,” Table 5.8b calculates that the cistophoric production of the four major mints in the province (Pergamum, Ephesus, Tralles, Apamea) for the years 133-129 BC was 38.75 drachm-equivalent obverse dies per year.

Table 2 compares François de Callataÿ's estimates with the data provided by the 2002 hoard.⁴³ Callataÿ's estimates only make a distinction between early and late *cistophori*, while the die study of the 2002 hoard allows for a more precise distribution of the issues in time. While slightly lower, Callataÿ's estimates are very close to those provided by the die study of the hoard.

For the years between 90/89 BC and 58 BC, it is necessary to highlight here that 1) the data I am relying on does not derive from a single cistophoric hoard, but rather from fourteen of them, all dated between 90/89 BC and 58 BC, which shows a substantial continuity in their composition, and 2) the data deriving from the combination of hoard composition and the die study of Tralles is confirmed by the die study of the late cistophori of Apamea pursued by myself and Gregory Callaghan.⁴⁴ I will therefore present an estimate of the late cistophoric production of the *Provincia Asia*, as derived from the combination of these two groups of data.

Mint (ca. 105 – ca. 58 BC)	Number of specimens in hoards	Percentage of specimens per mint in hoards (%)
Pergamum (105 – ca. 58 BC)	1,283	48.5
Ephesus (105 – 67 BC)	590	22.3
Tralles (105 – ca. 60 BC)	381	14.4
Apamea (ca. 90 – ca. 60 BC)	162	6.1
Laodicea (ca. 90 – ca. 60 BC)	192	7.3
Nysa (85 – 62 BC)	22	0.8
Sardis	13	0.5
Smyrna	3	0.1
Adramyteum	1	0.04
Total	2,647	100

Table 3. Quantitative overview of late cistophoric specimens included in hoards (105-58 BC)

⁴³ François de Callataÿ, "The Coinages of the Attalids and their Neighbours: A Quantified Overview," in *Attalid Asia Minor: Money, International Relations and the State*, ed. Peter Thonemann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 205–66, at table 6.12.

⁴⁴ Lucia F. Carbone and Gregory Callaghan, "Cistophoric Mysteries Solved: The Contribution of the R. B. Witschonke Collection," in *Coinage in the Roman Province before Roman Provincial Coinage*, ed. Lucia F. Carbone, Oliver D. Hoover and Liv M. Yarrow, forthcoming.

The late cistophoric production of the mint of Tralles in the same years encompassed by this hoard survey consists of 111 tetradrachm obverse dies.⁴⁵ Since the proportions between cistophoric mints in hoards are substantially stable in the years 105–58 BC, the proportions between specimens included in these hoards will be used as a proxy for the proportions between the cistophoric production of the mints that produced these specimens.

Given this premise, since Tralles's production represented 14.4% of the entire production, it is therefore possible to estimate the total production of the province. The data here is confirmed by a die study of the late cistophori of Laodicea which I have pursued with Gregory Callaghan.⁴⁶ We calculate a production of 58 tetradrachm obverse dies according to Esty's formula, while the estimate deriving from hoard data suggests 56.27 tetradrachm obverse dies, a figure only slightly lower, and well within the high-low estimate range.

Mint (105–ca. 58 BC)	Percentage of specimens per mint in hoards (out of a total of 2,647 specimens)	Total tetradrachm die estimate (Esty Confidence Interval 95% based on Tralles)
Pergamum	48.5%	
Ephesus	22.3%	171.89 [187.24–159.87]
Tralles	14.4%	111 [120.91–103.24]
Apamea	6.1%	47.02 [51.17–43.73]
Laodicea	7.3%	56.27 [61.29–52.33]
Nysa	0.8%	6.16 (64.74)
Sardis	0.5%	3.85
Smyrna	0.1%	2.31 (<7)
Adramyteum	0.04%	0.31 (<12)
Total	100.	770.83 [839.65–716.94]

Table 4. Late cistophoric production in the Provincia Asia

⁴⁵ The calculations are all based on Warren Esty, "How to Estimate the Original Number of Dies and the Coverage of a Sample," *Numismatic Chronicle* 166 (2006): 359–64. The data for Tralles is n (specimens) = 446, d (observed dies) = 91, singletons: 16.

⁴⁶ Carbone and Callaghan, "Cistophoric Mysteries Solved."

A caveat is necessary for the mints underrepresented in hoards, i.e., Nysa, Smyrna and Adramyteum (and possibly Sardis). The scarcity of specimens from these mints in hoards would at first sight imply a very low production, but the die studies of these mints – though highly incomplete – seem to suggest otherwise. However, the confirmation derived from the independent study of Laodicea shows that the crossing of data deriving from hoard and die studies has a fair level of accuracy with respect to the major mints, but does severely underrepresent smaller mints. For this reason, the data presented in Table 4 for Nysa, Smyrna, and Adramyteum has been integrated with that deriving from the incomplete die studies of these mints.⁴⁷

In spite of all these caveats, the late cistophoric production of *Provincia Asia* may be estimated at between 839.65 and 716.94 tetradrachm obverse dies, which would suggest a likely figure of 770.83 tetradrachm obverse dies, i.e., 16.4 tetradrachm obverse dies per year for the period 105–58 BC, which is equivalent to 65.60 drachm-equivalent dies per year.

	Callataÿ, “The Coinages of the Attalids and their Neighbours”	2002 hoard die study	Hoard and Tralles’s die study combined
167–123 BC	51.9		–
128 – 90 BC	50.8	51.09	65.60 (105-58 BC)
90 – 89 BC			
89 – 58 BC		–	

Table 5. Cistophoric Production in drachm-equivalent obverse dies per year (Esty, “How to Estimate the Original Number of Dies and the Coverage of a Sample.”)

The amount of 65.60 yearly drachm-equivalent obverse dies for the years 105–58 BC is considerably higher than the 50.8 yearly drachm-equivalent obverse dies proposed by Callataÿ, but the years included in the study are different, since my estimate derives from the combination

⁴⁷ On Nysa see Metcalf, “The Late Cistophori of Nysa”; Carbone, *The Hidden Power*, 183–85. On Smyrna see Carbone, *The Hidden Power*, 187–90, esp. p. 189, no.9. Adramyteum: Carbone, *The Hidden Power*, 177–82

of hoard and die studies only starts in 105 BC.⁴⁸ The figure suggested in Table 5 for the years 105-58 BC derives from the combination of die studies of the Trallian and Laodicean cistophoric mints with hoard evidence, and incorporates the relatively low production of the years 105-90 BC as well as the surge in production in the first year of the First Mithridatic War.

This high number could be explained not only by the increased production of the already functioning cistophoric mints of Pergamum, Ephesus and Tralles, Smyrna and Adramyteum, but also by the resumption of cistophoric production in Apamea and Laodicea and the commencement of cistophoric production in Nysa.⁴⁹ This production surge in the post-Dardanus years could certainly be explained by Sulla's request for 20,000 talents of silver from the rebellious cities of Asia, as further suggested by the presence of the Sullan Era on cistophori of Tralles.⁵⁰

At the same time, it is apparent that cistophoric production, though enhanced and higher than previously thought, could not compensate for the lack of a substantial production of autonomous silver coinage. The overall silver production of the *Provincia Asia* can be estimated to equal 59% of the production under the Attalids. In comparison with the amount of silver coinage issued up to 89 BC, the burial date of the 2002 hoard, the production of coinage increased by more than 14%, as it then represented only 45% of the amount produced under the Attalids.⁵¹ Financial exactions due to wars and taxes led to the great increase of cistophoric production. On the other hand, autonomous silver coinage continued to decline in terms of

⁴⁸ Callataÿ, "The Coinages of the Attalids and their Neighbours," table 6.12.

⁴⁹ Carbone, *The Hidden Power*, 164–69 (Laodicea), 170–74 (Apamea) and 185–88 (Nysa).

⁵⁰ Carbone, *The Hidden Power*, 206, 222–23 and 226. On the Sullan Era on Tralles's cistophori see Kurt Regling, "Ein Kistophorenschatz aus der Provinz Brussa," *Frankfurter Münzzeitung* n.F. 3 (1932): 506–10; Wolfgang Leschhorn, *Antike Aren: Zeitrechnung, Politik und Geschichte im Schwarzmeerraum und in Kleinasien nördlich des Tauros* (Historia - Einzelschriften) (Berlin: Franz Steiner, 1993), 208–21.

⁵¹ Carbone, *The Hidden Power*, 184–85.

quantitative production, despite the addition of the Carian mints, still actively minting this kind of coinage. While only partial, the data here presented for silver autonomous issues is indicative of the clear decrease in the proportional representation of these issues.⁵²

	Cistophori	Autonomous silver issues	Total
167–123 BC	51.9	88.8 ⁵³	141.9
128–89 BC (2002 hoard)	51.09	13.05 ⁵⁴	64.14
105–58 BC	65.60	18.54 ⁵⁵	84.14

Table 6. Asian production of silver coinage in drachm-equivalent obverse dies per year (167–58 BC)

Additionally, Roman armies present in the province between 133 and 50 BC had at least part of their expenses paid in *cistophori*, as suggested by the aforementioned increase in the cistophoric output of the province corresponding to the Revolt of Aristonicus and the beginning of the Mithridatic Wars, and by the cistophoric issues of Fimbria in 85 BC.⁵⁶ The reduced silver output of the province therefore had to suffice to cover at least part of the expenses incurred by armies stationed in the province and for at least part of the tributes imposed by Rome.

⁵² For the decrease in the number of mints issuing silver autonomous issues under the Romans see Carbone, “Money and Power.”

⁵³ For estimates of cistophoric production see Callataÿ, “The Coinages of the Attalids and their Neighbours,” table 6.12, and on silver autonomous coinage: Ibid., tables 6.9 (post-Apameian Alexanders: 21.4 obverse dies) and 6.10 (wreathed coinages: 67.4 obverse dies).

⁵⁴ Unless otherwise indicated, all data is from Aneurin Ellis-Evans, “The Koinon of Athena Ilias and its Coinage,” *American Journal of Numismatics* 28 (2016): 105–58, at 144, table 5. All numbers express drachm-equivalent obverse dies per year. Ilium (1.08); Alexandria Troas (0.76: Callataÿ, *L’Histoire des Guerres Mithridatiques vue par les Monnaies*, 151–55); Tenedus (2.8); Abydus (4.64); Smyrna (2.7: written communication by Philip Kinns); Chios (0.35: Lagos 1999). Carbone, *The Hidden Power*, 201, Tables 10.3–10.4.

⁵⁵ This data is derived from the integration of the data presented supra, 201, Tables 10.3–10.4 with those related to the production of Rhodes and of the Carian cities of Aphrodisias and Stratonicea. Rhodes: 144.2 drachm obverse dies (c. 75–20 BC, Callataÿ, “The Coinages of the Attalids and their Neighbours,” table 6.11); Aphrodisias: 30.9 drachm obverse dies (first century BC), François de Callataÿ, *Recueil quantitatif des émissions monétaires hellénistiques* (Wetteren: Editions Numismatique romaine, 1997), 221; Stratonicea: 57 drachm-equivalent obverse dies (Andrew Meadows, “Stratonikeia in Caria: The Hellenistic City and its Coinage,” *The Numismatic Chronicle* 162 (2002): 79–134, Group 3, dated to the 80s BC).

⁵⁶ Carbone, *The Hidden Power*, 11–14, 56–58, 89, Fig. 2.10 (Pergamum), 124, Fig. 3.13 (Ephesus) and 165, Fig. 4.11 (Tralles). On Fimbria’s issues see Witschonke and Amandry, “Another Fimbria Cistophorus,” and, most recently, François de Callataÿ, “Monnaies, guerres et mercenaires en Grèce ancienne: un bilan actualize,” in *Guerre, économie et fiscalité*, ed. Jean Baechler and Georges-Henri Soutou (Paris: Hermann, 2016), 41–54, and Callataÿ, “Crises monétaires et crises du monnayage dans le monde gréco-romain. Une vue perspective.”

Without discounting the still ongoing academic debate regarding the possibility of quantifying ancient monetary production, the following table represents an attempt to quantify the cistophoric production of Asia.⁵⁷

Cistophoric Production	Total Output (tetradrachm obverse dies) ⁵⁸	Total Output (drachm-equivalent obverses)	Annual output (drachm-equivalent obverses)	Total Cistophoric Tetradrachms (with a die output average of 20,000 coins)	Total Silver Tons ⁵⁹	Silver Tons per year	Total Silver Talents ⁶⁰	Silver Talents per year
Early cistophori (c.175–133 BC) ⁶¹	558	2,232	53.1	11,160,000	139.27	3.31	5,580	132.85
Late cistophori (105–58 BC)	770.83 ⁶²	3,083.32	65.60	15,416,600	192.4	4.09	7,708.3	164
Later Republican cistophori (58–48 BC) ⁶³	118	472	47.2	2,360,000	28.792	2.87	1,180	11.8

Table 7. Comparison between Attalid, late and later Republican cistophoric production

According to the data presented in Table 7, the yearly late cistophoric production of the *Provincia Asia* for the years 105–58 BC was higher than the one estimated by Callataÿ for the Athenian New Style drachms (c. 3.4 tons of silver) and the Seleucid kings (c. 2.1 tons of silver).⁶⁴

⁵⁷ For the most recent overview of the debate on the matter see François de Callataÿ, “Quantifying Monetary Production in Greco-Roman Times: A General Frame,” in *Quantifying Monetary Supplies in Greco-Roman Times*, ed. François de Callataÿ (Bari: Edipuglia, 2011), 7–31, and Theodore V. Buttrey, “Quantification of Ancient Coin Production: the Third Element,” in *Quantifying Monetary Supplies in Greco-Roman Times*, ed. François de Callataÿ (Bari: Edipuglia, 2011): 105–12.

⁵⁸ Estimates according to Esty, “How to Estimate the Original Number of Dies and the Coverage of a Sample.”

⁵⁹ With an average weight of 12.48 per cistophoric tetradrachm (derived from the 1,376 specimens of the 2002 hoard). For the later Republican cistophori, the average weight in Metcalf, *Later Republican Cistophori*, 69 is 12.20.

⁶⁰ 1 Talent = 6,000 denarii and 1 cistophorus = 3 denarii. Festus, s. u. “Talentorum”: *Atticum* (scil. *talentum*) *est sex milium denarium; Rhodium et cistophorum quattuor milium et quingentorum denarium*.

⁶¹ Callataÿ, “The Coinages of the Attalids and their Neighbours,” tab. 6. 13.

⁶² See *supra*, Table 4.

⁶³ Metcalf, *Later Republican Cistophori*.

⁶⁴ Callataÿ, “Quantifying Monetary Production in Greco-Roman Times,” 21 Table 4.

In the years between the end of the second century BC and the early 50s BC, Asia thus issued an unprecedented amount of *cistophori*. This exceptional production was linked not only to the expenses connected to the Mithridatic Wars, but also to the extraordinary taxation imposed by Sulla. As shown by the comparison to the early and later Republican *cistophori*, this production was absolutely unprecedented.

It is also striking that, while during the period of the Attalid dynasty cistophoric production was integrated in relevant measure by silver autonomous coinages, this does not seem to have been the case for the decade 58-48 BC, when later Republican *cistophori* were issued.⁶⁵ Cistophoric production after 60 BC (and most certainly earlier) decreased to one-seventh of what it was in the earlier decades, with no further compensation offered by Roman currency, which was still not produced or circulating in significant amount in the province at that time. In addition, at least two cistophoric mints, Ephesus and Nysa, had ceased issuing coinage after 67 BC, with Tralles stopping not so long afterwards.⁶⁶ An explanation for this sudden decrease could of course be that the end of the Mithridatic Wars had brought to an end the immediate necessity for new coinage.⁶⁷ (As already noted, wars and heightened taxation were the main factors that caused cistophoric production to spike in earlier years.) However, it is tempting to see in the sudden decrease of cistophoric production in the very late 60s BC a sign of the financial crisis of the Asian cities noted by literary sources.⁶⁸ Bankruptcy was very likely the reason for the

⁶⁵ For the decrease in the production of silver autonomous coinage see Carbone, "Money and Power."

⁶⁶ Carbone, *The Hidden Power*, 222–24.

⁶⁷ On the correlation between minting coinage and military expenditure see Christopher Howgego, "Why did Ancient States strike Coins," *Numismatic Chronicle* 150 (1990): 1–25, at 8–9; Callataÿ, "Monnaies, guerres et mercenaires en Grèce ancienne: un bilan actualize." On the correlation between coinage and taxation see Sven Günther, "Taxation in the Greco-Roman World; The Roman Principate," in *Oxford Handbooks Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) (with bibliography).

⁶⁸ See note 6 above.

end of cistophoric production in Ephesus after 67 BC.⁶⁹ The same seems to have been true for another important cistophoric mint, Tralles.⁷⁰

The Impact of Roman Taxation

Was Roman taxation a relevant factor leading to the financial crisis of Asian cities in the course of the first century BC and to the related decrease in monetary production? In times of peace, Rome extracted from Asia the *decuma*, plus other indirect taxes (*vectigalia*), like *scriptura* and *portorium*.⁷¹ The tax extraction amounted then to a flat ten percent of the revenues of the province, plus other taxes. François Kirbihler evaluates the annual tribute exacted by Rome from Asia to have been between 2,400 and 3,000 talents of silver before the Caesarian reform of 48/47 BC, suggesting that the annual net worth of the province's production amounted to between 24,000 and 30,000 talents.⁷² If Rome's tributary demands were to be met with payments in cash, the Asian province would have been in need of a steady supply of currency. However, the figures proposed in Table 7 show that late cistophoric production could not even cover ordinary taxation.

⁶⁹ Dirk Backendorf, "Die Reichsprägung," *Archäologie in Deutschland* (1999): 24–29.

⁷⁰ Carbone, *The Hidden Power*, 204–05.

⁷¹ For a summary with bibliography of taxes exacted from Asia see David B. Hollander, *Money in the Late Roman Republic* (Boston and Leiden: Brill, 2008), 91. On *Decuma*: App., *The Civil Wars*, 5.1.4 (https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Appian/Civil_Wars/5*.html); Cicero, *Pro Leg. Man.* 15 (<http://thelatinlibrary.com/cicero/imp.shtml#15>). On *Scriptura*: Cic., *Pro Leg. Man.* 15. *Vectigal*: Cic., *In Verrem*, 2.1.89, 3.27 (<http://thelatinlibrary.com/cicero/ver.shtml>); Cicero, *Ad Quintum Fratrem* 1.1.26 (<http://thelatinlibrary.com/cicero/fratrem1.shtml>); *Pro Leg. Man.* 15. *Portorium*: Cic., *Att.*, 2.16 (<http://thelatinlibrary.com/cicero/att2.shtml#16>); *Pro Leg. Man.* 15. For the relationship between *portorium* and financial administration in the *Provincia Asia* see Corbier, "The *Lex Portorii Asiae* and Financial Administration," 217–23. For a general definition of *vectigalia*, most recently Günther, "Taxation in the Greco-Roman World; The Roman Principate."

⁷² François Kirbihler, "Brutus et Cassius et les impositions, spoliations et confiscations en Asie mineure durant les guerres civiles (44-42 a.C.)," in *Spolier et confisquer dans les mondes grec et romain*, ed. Marie-Claire Ferriès and Fabrice Delrieux (Chambéry Cedex: Université de Savoie, 2013), 345–67, at 354–59. For a quite recent discussion of the taxation system in the Republican *Provincia Asia* see McLeister, "Publicani in the Principate," 75–82 (with bibliography). Merola, *Autonomia Locale—Governo Imperiale*, 49–86.

Makis Aperghis, in his studies on the Seleucid economy, calculated that in times of peace in the Seleucid Empire new coinage represented only a replacement, equivalent to 1–2% of circulating coinage.⁷³ While this theory has been criticized, it offers us the highest possible estimate for the amount of coinage circulating in Asia.⁷⁴ According to Aperghis's theory, the average of 65.60 drachm-equivalent obverse dies per year calculated for the years 105–58 BC would represent only a minimal fraction of the amount of coinage circulating in the province, which then amounted to 16,400–8,200 silver talents of coinage circulating in the *Provincia Asia*. I also do not factor in autonomous silver production, as this had a very limited circulation and discontinuous production. As a caveat, these figures are probably too high to be realistic, but they show that ordinary taxation could not have been entirely paid with coinage.

Claude Nicolet argues that *publicani* collected the *decuma* in kind, then paid the amount due to Rome in money.⁷⁵ Building upon her analysis of the *Monumentum Ephesenum*, Mireille Corbier agrees with him, while discussing the ways and times in which the *publicani* were to pay their obligations to Rome.⁷⁶ The *decuma* was thus exacted in kind, as made evident by Cicero. In the second book of his orations against Verres, he alleges that Verres exacted money instead of corn and goods from the cities of the province when he was *proquaestor* in Asia, implying that tributes were usually exacted in kind.⁷⁷ Another confirmation of the exaction of

⁷³ Gerassimos George ("Makis") Aperghis, "A Model for the Seleucid Economy," in *Hellenistic Economies*, ed. Zofia H. Archibald and John Davies (London: Routledge, 2001): 96–102, at 92–95; Gerassimos George ("Makis") Aperghis, *The Seleucid Royal Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 228–46.

⁷⁴ Alain Bresson, "Coinage and Money in the Hellenistic Age," in *Making, Moving and Managing: the New World of Ancient Economies, 323–31 BC*, ed. Zofia H. Archibald, John K. Davies and Vincent Gabrielsen (Oxford: Oxbow, 2005), 44–72, at 56–59.

⁷⁵ Nicolet, "Dîmes de Sicile, d'Asie et d'ailleurs," 221–22. *Contra* Rickman, *The Corn Supply of Ancient Rome*, 42–45.

⁷⁶ Corbier, "The *Lex Portorii Asiae* and Financial Administration," 216–23.

⁷⁷ Cicero, *In Verrem*, 2.1.95 (<http://thelatinlibrary.com/cicero/verres.2.1.shtml>): "Pro quaestore vero quo modo iste commune Milyadum vexarit, quo modo Lyciam, Pamphyliam, Pisidiam Phrygiamque totam frumento imperando, aestimando, hac sua, quam tum primum excogitavit, Siciliensi aestimatione adflixerit, non est necesse demonstrare verbis: hoc scitote, cum iste civitatibus frumentum, coria, cilicia, saccos imperaret, neque ea sumeret proque iis rebus pecuniam exigeret [...]" (L. H. G. Greenwood, trans., *Cicero, "Verrine Orationes," Volume 1*, Loeb Classical Library 221 [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1928], 223, 225) "How, as acting quaestor, he harried the Milyad community, and the injuries he inflicted throughout Lycia and Pamphylia, Pisidia and Phrygia,

the *decuma* in kind derives from Antony's speech in Ephesus in 41 BC.⁷⁸ There it is clearly stated that the *decuma* represented not a fixed amount decided ahead of time, but a "part of the yearly harvest," which varied according to the yearly yields. The *societas publicanorum* in charge of the collection of the Asian revenues would have thus been the one in charge of the *permutationes*, the transfers of funds from Asia to Rome.⁷⁹ Since the *permutationes* usually did not seem to entail actual transfer of coinage, there is no reason to put in correlation the exaction of the *decuma* with actual production of local coinage.

Entirely different is the scenario proposed by Raffaella Pierobon-Benoit and Giovanna D. Merola.⁸⁰ According to their hypothesis, through *pactiones* Asian cities were the ones responsible for the commercialization of the corn from the *decuma*, which was then collected by *publicani* in cash. However, since *cistophori* were the only silver coinage widely available in the province until 48 BC, in this scenario the cities should have had in hand an amount of *cistophori* adequate to pay the tributes to the *publicani* in cash. This was clearly not the case, as the estimate of the cistophoric production in the province shows in Table 7. This entails that – at least up to 48 BC – the *publicani* were the agents responsible for the conversion of Asian crops in money for Rome.

by demanding corn and making them pay money instead, on his own Sicilian system which he first invented during this period – this I need not expound in detail. But you should note this result of his practice of demanding corn, hides, Cilician rugs and sacks from the various cities, refusing to accept them, and exacting their money value instead [...]."

⁷⁸ App., *The Civil Wars*, 5.1.4 (https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Appian/Civil_Wars/5*.html): "But when they became necessary we did not impose them upon you according to a fixed valuation so that we could collect an absolutely certain sum, but we required you to contribute a portion of your yearly harvest in order that we might share with you the vicissitudes of the seasons." For a discussion on the percentage of payments in kind over the total amount of tributes see discussion in Hollander, *Money in the Late Roman Republic*, 91–97.

⁷⁹ Nicolet, "Dimes de Sicile, d'Asie et d'ailleurs," 221–22; Corbier, "The *Lex Portorii Asiae* and Financial Administration," 216–23.

⁸⁰ Pierobon-Benoit, "L'Asia Minore e l'approvvigionamento in grano di Roma"; Merola, *Autonomia Locale—Governo Imperiale*, 105.

The *cistophori* produced in the province were thus not used to pay ordinary taxes to Rome, at least not in significant amount, since the *publicani* were the intermediaries between the exaction in kind of the *decuma* and the ultimate payment in cash to Rome. Moreover, it was exactly the financial intermediation operated by *publicani* that made it possible for the *Provincia Asia* to be a *de facto* closed currency system. It is no coincidence that the removal of the *societates publicanorum* from the farming of the *decuma*, the most relevant of the *vectigalia* farmed from Asia, corresponds chronologically with the introduction of Roman currencies in the province.⁸¹ After 48 BC, once the cities became directly responsible for the payment in cash of the *decuma*, *cistophori* had to be integrated with Roman currency. This means that – at least up to 48 BC – there seems to be a direct correlation between *decuma* and monetary production.

The Financial Impact of the *imperatores*

After Dardanus, Sulla extracted five years of taxes in arrears, plus the war indemnities, for a total of 20,000 talents from a region already devastated by the First Mithridatic War.⁸² Plutarch suggests that Lucullus, Sulla's lieutenant, was directly entrusted with the collection of the extraordinary tributes and fines imposed on Asia after the Peace of Dardanus of 85 BC.⁸³ This certainly had to do not only with the unusual nature (and amount) of the fines imposed but with extraordinary circumstances. The reason for the remarkable absence of the *publicani* from this

⁸¹ On the removal of *publicani* from the farming of *decuma* in 48 BC at Caesar's hands see App., *The Civil Wars*, 5.1.4 (https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Appian/Civil_Wars/5*.html): "When the publicans, who made these collections by the authority of the Senate, wronged you by demanding more than was due, Gaius Cæsar remitted to you one-third of what you had paid to them and put an end to their outrages; for he even turned over to you the collection of the taxes from the cultivators of the soil." On the introduction of Roman currencies into the province see Carbone, "The Gradual Introduction of Roman Currency," and Carbone, "The Introduction of Roman Coinages in Asia (133 BC – 1st century AD)."

⁸² Plutarch, *Life of Lucullus*, 41 (Bernadotte Perrin, trans., *Plutarch: "Lives" Volume 2*, Loeb Classical Library 47 [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1914], 601–05); Plutarch, *Life of Sulla*, 25.4–5 (Bernadotte Perrin, trans., *Plutarch: "Lives" Volume 4*, Loeb Classical Library 80 [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916], 407); Callataÿ, *L'Histoire des Guerres Mithridatiques vue par les Monnaies*, 325–30.

⁸³ Plut., *Lucull.*, 4.1 (Perrin, trans., *Plutarch: "Lives" Volume 2*, 483): "ἐπεὶ δὲ συνθηκῶν γενομένων Μιθριδάτης μὲν ἀπέπλευσεν εἰς τὸν Εὐξείνῳ πόντον, Σύλλας δὲ τὴν Ἀσίαν δισμυρίοις τάλαντοις ἐξημίωσε, προσταχθέν αὐτῷ τὰ τε χρήματα ταῦτα πρᾶξαι καὶ νόμισμα κόψαι, [...]" "After peace had been made, Mithridates sailed away into the Euxine, but Sulla laid a contribution of twenty thousand talents upon Asia. Lucullus was commissioned to collect this money and re-coin it [...]."

process finds a plausible explanation with their lack of human resources after the losses suffered after the outbreak of the Mithridatic War.⁸⁴ One thinks in particular of the Asian Vespers in which some 80,000 Romans are said to have been killed.⁸⁵ The presence of *publicani* would have made the exactions readily available for the *aerarium*, as established for each province by the already mentioned *censoriae locationes*.⁸⁶ The losses suffered by the *societates publicanorum* in Asia enabled Sulla, through his lieutenant Lucullus, to have direct access to the wealth gathered from Asia, with a limited opportunity for the *aerarium* to take advantage of it.

The same Plutarchean passage suggests that Lucullus was actually ordered to strike coins (νόμισμα κόψαι) in Asia. Since *cistophori* were the silver currency overwhelmingly produced and circulating in the province up to the 40s BC, it can be inferred that the coinage struck by Lucullus was indeed *cistophori*.⁸⁷ Their production shows a clear increase in the years between the end of the First Mithridatic War and the end of Lucullus's *praetura* in 81-80 BC.⁸⁸ Such an increase was probably caused by the necessity of paying the extraordinary tribute, and there seems to be a correlation between the return of Lucullus to Italy in 80 BC and the decrease in

⁸⁴ P. A. Brunt, "Sulla and the Asian Publicans," *Latomus* (1956): 17–25. Federico Santangelo, *Sulla, the Elites and the Empire: A Study of Roman Policies in Italy and the Greek East*, Impact of Empire (Boston and Leiden: Brill, 2007), vol. 8: 113–15.

⁸⁵ Valerius Maximus, *Factorum et Dictorum Memorabilium Libri Novem*, 9.2.3 (<http://thelatinlibrary.com/valmax9.html#2.init>.) and Memnon, *History of Heraclea*, 22.9 (80,000) (<http://www.attalus.org/translate/memnon2.html>); Plut., *Sulla*, 24.4 (150,000) (Perrin, trans., *Plutarch: "Lives" Volume 4*, 405).

⁸⁶ Cic., *In Verr.*, 3.6.12 (<http://thelatinlibrary.com/cicero/ver.shtml>). For an in depth-discussion of the difference in the *censoria locatio* between different provinces, see James K. Tan, *Power and Public Finance at Rome, 264-49 BCE* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 40–68. On the quinquennial length of the *censoria locatio* see Cicero, *Ad Atticum*, 6.2.5 (communities paying or not paying taxes for blocks of five years); Cottier and Corbier, eds., *The Customs Law of Asia*, 4–5 (taxation in the Province of Asia revolving around *lustra*, blocks of five years); and, most recently, Tan, *Power and Public Finance at Rome*, 42, no.3.

⁸⁷ Carbone, *The Hidden Power*, 33-34, 197 (with bibliography), 222–26.

⁸⁸ On Ephesus see Callataÿ, *L'Histoire des Guerres Mithridatiques vue par les Monnaies*, 177–78 (with a double cornucopia as a control mark). According to p. 178 graph 1 the cistophoric production in Ephesus increased from 6 observed tetradrachm obverse dies in 84/83 BC to 13 in 82/81 BC with a sudden decrease to 4 in 81/80 BC. *Contra* Philip Kinns, "Asia Minor," in *The Coinage of the Roman World in the Late Republic. Proceedings of a Colloquium held at the British Museum in September 1985*, British Archaeological Reports 326, ed. Andrew M. Burnett and Michael H. Crawford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 105–19, at 110–12 (who doubted the real possibility of identifying the currency struck under Lucullus).

the production of coinage in Asia. The presence of a Sullan Era on Tralles's *cistophori* and the spike in their production in the years right after the Peace of Dardanus provides a further hint in the direction of a correlation between coinage and Sulla's demands.⁸⁹

Magistrate	Coins	Dies	Of which Singletons	Die estimate (Esty, "How to Estimate the Original Number of Dies and the Coverage of a Sample.")	Coverage (%)
ΠΤΟΛ (85/84 BC)	21	6	0	6	100
ΠΤΟΛ Β (84/83 BC)	25	8	0	8	100
ΠΤΟΛ Γ (83/82 BC)	19	6	1	7.38	94
ΠΤΟΛ Δ (82/81 BC)	25	7	0	7	100
ΠΤΟΛ Ε 81/80 BC)	9	4	0	4	100
ΠΤΟΛ ς (80/79 BC)	6	3	1	4.8	83
ΠΤΟΛ Ζ (79/78 BC)	2	2	2	-	-
ΠΤΟΛ Η (78/77 BC)	4	2	0	2	100

Table 8. *Cistophoric Production in Tralles (85 – 77 BC)*

Table 8 shows an estimate of the cistophoric production in Tralles for the years marked by the already mentioned Sullan Era.⁹⁰ Combining this data with the mint proportions provided by Table 3, it is possible to evaluate the cistophoric production of the whole *Provincia Asia* in the post-Dardanus years.

Year	Esty Estimate of obverse dies	Total in denarii (@ 20,000 cistophoric tetradrachm coins per die worth 60,000 denarii) and in silver talents
85/84 BC	42.85	2,571,300 = 428.55
84/83 BC	57.14	3,428,400 = 571.4
83/82 BC	52.71	3,162,600 = 527.1
82/81 BC	50	3,000,000 = 500
Total	202.7	12,162,300 = 2,027.05

Table 9. *Cistophoric production in Asia during the Sullan years (85–81 BC)*

⁸⁹ Lucia F. Carbone and Liv M. Yarrow, "The Aftermath of the First Mithridatic War and Sulla's dictatorship – Some Preliminary Historical Analyses using the 'Roman Republic Die Project'," *Revue Belge de Numismatique et de sigillographie* 166 (2020): 285–333, esp. at 324–26 Tables 17–19.

⁹⁰ On the Sullan Era on Tralles's *cistophori* see Regling, "Ein Kistophorenschatz aus der Provinz Brussa"; Leschhorn, *Antike Aren*, 208–21.

Table 9 shows that *cistophori* were issued in the enormous amount of 202.7 tetradrachm obverse dies between 85 and 81 BC. This amount roughly corresponds to 12,162,300 *denarii*, a figure very close to the lower end of the production estimate for the Sullan issues *RRC* 359/2 and 367/1, 3 and 5 (13.3 – 21.3 million *denarii*), potentially used to finance at least part of his reconquest of Italy from the Marian forces, which culminated in the battle of Porta Collina in 82 BC.⁹¹ As made clear by a letter from Cicero to Atticus in 59 BC, *cistophori* were also certainly part of the booty brought back to Rome by Pompey for his triumph of 61 BC.⁹² There is no reason to doubt that Sulla did the same.

Moreover, I have already argued that *cistophori* were used to pay at least part of the expenses of the armies stationed in Asia.⁹³ In 89 BC the Romans raised troops from Bithynia, Cappadocia, Paphlagonia and Galatia to support their own army in Asia under the command of Lucius Cassius.⁹⁴ According to Appian, each of the four Roman-led armies contained 40,000 men, for a total of 160,000 men. According to the estimations of Michael Crawford, each man was paid

⁹¹ For the quantitative estimate of these Sullan issues see Carbone with Yarrow, “The Aftermath of the First Mithridatic War and Sulla’s dictatorship,” 310–26.

⁹² Cic., *Att.*, 2.6.2 (<http://thelatinlibrary.com/cicero/att2.shtml#6>): “sed ut ad rem, scripsi ad quaestores urbanos de Quinti fratris negotio. vide quid narrent, ecquae spes sit denari an cistophoro Pompeiano iaceamus.” Eric O. Winstedt, *Cicero: Letters to Atticus* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1912), vol 1: 127: “But to return to business, I have written to the city quaestors about my brother Quintus’s affairs. See what they have to say, and whether there is any hope of our getting current coin (payment in *denarii*), or whether we must put up with Pompey’s *cistophorus*.” On the date of Pompey’s triumph see Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 8.26.98; 33.15.1; 37.13 (<http://thelatinlibrary.com/pliny1.html>). Livy, *Periochae*, 103 (<http://thelatinlibrary.com/livy/liv.per103.shtml>); Val. Max., *Nine Books*, 8.15.8 (<http://thelatinlibrary.com/valmax8.html>).

⁹³ Carbone, *The Hidden Power*, 3, 190, 199, 230, 236; Callataÿ, *L’Histoire des Guerres Mithridatiques vue par les Monnaies*, 281–82, 397–98; Callataÿ, “Monnaies, guerres et mercenaires en Grèce ancienne: un bilan actualize.”

⁹⁴ App. *Mithr.* 3.17 (White, trans., App., *Roman History*, 177): “ὥς δὲ αὐτοῖς ὁ τε ἴδιος στρατός, ὅσον εἶχε Λεῦκιος Κάσσιος ὁ τῆς Ἀσίας ἡγούμενος, ἔτοιμος ἦν ἤδη, καὶ τὰ συμμαχικὰ πάντα συνεληλύθει, διελόμενοι τὸ πλῆθος ἐστρατοπέδευον, Κάσσιος μὲν ἐν μέσῳ Βιθυνίας τε καὶ Γαλατίας, Μάνιος δὲ ἢ διαβατὸν ἦν ἐς Βιθυνίαν τῷ Μιθριδάτῃ, Ὀππίος δὲ ἕτερος στρατηγὸς ἐπὶ τῶν ὁρῶν τῶν Καππαδοκίας, ἱππέας ἔχων ἕκαστος αὐτῶν καὶ πεζοὺς ἀμφὶ τοὺς τετρακισμυρίους.” “When their own army under the command of Lucius Cassius, the governor of Asia, was ready, and all the allied forces had assembled, they divided their whole force and established their camps, Cassius midway between Bithynia and Galatia, Manius where Mithridates would have to cross into Bithynia and Galatia, and Oppius, another general, in the mountains of Cappadocia; each of them had four thousand cavalry and about forty thousand infantry.”

700 *denarii* per year, with no distinction between legionaries and mercenaries.⁹⁵ The army expenditure for 90/89 BC would therefore have been 112,000,000 *denarii*, i.e. 37,333,333 cistophoric tetradrachms. This would amount to 18,666 talents, very close to the amount of extraordinary taxation exacted by Lucullus after 85 BC, which corresponded to five years of taxes in arrears plus war indemnities.

The incredibly high number of *cistophori* minted in the year 90/89 BC (i.e., 172 drachm-equivalent obverse dies) – more than twice the average of the province's production for the years 105-58 BC – would have sufficed to pay only 3,685 soldiers, not even one-fortieth of the full army assembled by the Romans. Even more significantly, it is known that after the Peace of Dardanus Sulla imposed upon the cities of Asia a payment of 16 drachms per soldier for 15 days, amounting to a total of 1,000 silver talents according to De Callataÿ's calculations.⁹⁶ The heightened production of the post-Dardanus years would have sufficed to pay for Sulla's soldiers, but at enormous costs for the financial well-being of the Asian cities.

Though issued in impressive quantities, coined silver in Asia corresponded to 2,027.05 talents, only one-tenth of the 20,000 talents extracted by Lucullus on behalf of Sulla. The lavish description of Sulla's triumph in 81 BC offered by Plutarch suggests that the *dictator* had access to enormous resources.⁹⁷ The *comparandum* of Pompey's triumph twenty years later, where 20,000 talents of coined silver and bullion were displayed, offers a probable equivalent for Sulla's triumph.⁹⁸ The description of Pompey's triumph shows that the 20,000 talents were not

⁹⁵ Michael H. Crawford, *Roman Republican Coinage* (= *RRC*) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 496-97. On the equal pay between legionaries and mercenaries see Callataÿ, *L'Histoire des Guerres Mithridatiques vue par les Monnaies*, 405-06.

⁹⁶ Plut., *Sulla*, 25.5 (Perrin, trans., *Plutarch: "Lives" Volume 4*, 407); Callataÿ, *L'Histoire des Guerres Mithridatiques vue par les Monnaies*, 328, no. 27.

⁹⁷ Plut., *Sulla*, 34.1 (Perrin, trans., *Plutarch: "Lives" Volume 4*, 433).

⁹⁸ Plut., *Pomp.*, 45.3 (Plutarch, *Life of Pompey*, Bernadotte Perrin, trans., *Plutarch: "Lives" Volume 5*, Loeb Classical Library 87 [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1917], 231).

only exacted in coins (certainly including *cistophori*), but also in bullion, in the shape of vessels made out of precious metals.⁹⁹ The same should be hypothesized for Sulla's exactions and this is what Plutarch is referring to in the passage above with the use of the generic term χρήματα (wealth).¹⁰⁰ In the immediate aftermath of Dardanus, the massive amount of bullion extracted from Asia by Lucullus on Sulla's behalf was likely used to mint RRC 359/2 (and possibly RRC 367/1,3 and 5), which financed Sulla's reconquest of Italy. In Crawford's words, these issues "were made with metal from the Greek world, presumably in large measure melted down booty." Furthermore, the importance of bullion as a means of tribute payment in Asia is made evident by the despair of the Ephesians in 41 BC. Plutarch reports that they were forced to pay the extraordinary tributes demanded by Brutus and Cassius "in plate and ornaments."¹⁰¹

The tributes imposed by Sulla, and Pompey after him, thus represented a major factor leading to the measures enacted in 63 BC by the then-governor of Asia, Valerius Flaccus, who forbade the export of bullion from the province.¹⁰² The overbid of the Asian *publicani* in 61 BC and the lack of opposition to the remittance of one-third of what was owed to the *aerarium* from other tax-farming societies fit in the same picture.¹⁰³ The extraordinary extractions demanded by

⁹⁹ Idem.

¹⁰⁰ The same combination of coins and bullion should be hypothesized for the payment of ordinary Asian tributes: Carbone, *The Hidden Power*, 232–35 (with bibliography).

¹⁰¹ App., *The Civil Wars*, 5.1.6 (https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Appian/Civil_Wars/5*.html): "The Greeks, while he was still speaking, threw themselves upon the ground, declaring that they had been subjected to force and violence by Brutus and Cassius, and that they were deserving of pity, not of punishment; that they would willingly give not only their money, but, in default of money, their plate and their ornaments, and who had coined these things into money in their presence." For a comprehensive discussion of Brutus's and Cassius's treatment of the *Provincia Asia* see Kirbihler, "Brutus et Cassius et les impositions, spoliations et confiscations en Asie mineure durant les guerres civiles (44-42 a.C.)."

¹⁰² Cic., *Flacc.*, 67–69 (<http://thelatinlibrary.com/cicero/flacco.shtml#67>). Financial crisis in Asia in the 60s BC, among others: Léopold Migeotte, *L'emprunt public dans les cités grecques: recueil des documents et analyse critique* (Québec: Les éd. Du Sphinx, 1984), 339–41; Koenraad Verboven, "La sententia Servilii et l'endettement des cités libres (60 av. J.-C.)," *Euphrosyne* 21 (1993): 285–300, esp. at 289–90; Koenraad Verboven, "*Caritas Nummorum*. Deflation in the Late Roman Republic?," *Münstersche Beiträge zur antiken Handelsgeschichte* 16 (1997): 40–78, esp. at 55–56, 61–64. Most recently, for an overview of the connection between the financial crisis and monetary crises: Callataÿ, "Crises monétaires et crises du monnayage dans le monde gréco-romain. Une vue perspective."

¹⁰³ On the overbidding of Asian *publicani*: Cic., *Ad Atticum* 1.17 (<http://thelatinlibrary.com/cicero/att1.shtml#17>): "Asiam qui de censoribus conduxerunt, questi sunt in senatu se cupiditate prolapsos nimium magno conduxisse,

these Roman *imperatores* deprived the province of almost the totality of its annual revenues which, as already stated, must have amounted to between 24,000 and 30,000 talents.¹⁰⁴ The cities were thus unable to pay their dues to the *societates*, so the profits deriving from farming their revenues were considerably hampered. As noted, cistophoric production ceased in several cities in the same years or right before, and this was possibly because of financial distress.

Conclusions

The *cistophori* produced in the province were thus not used to pay ordinary taxes to Rome, at least not in any significant amount, since the *publicani* were the intermediaries between the exaction in kind of the *decuma* and the ultimate payment in cash to Rome. Moreover, it was exactly the financial intermediation operated by *publicani* that made it possible for the *Provincia Asia* to be a *de facto* closed currency system. It is no coincidence that the removal of the *societates publicanorum* from the farming of the *decuma*, the most relevant of the taxes farmed from Asia, corresponds chronologically with the introduction of Roman currencies in the province.¹⁰⁵ After 48 BC, once the cities became directly responsible for the payment in cash of the *decuma*, *cistophori* had to be integrated with Roman currency. This means that – at least up to 48 BC – there seems to be no direct correlation between the *decuma* and monetary production.

ut induceretur locatio, postulaverunt. Ego princeps in adiutoribus atque adeo secundus; nam, ut illi auderent hos postulare, Crassus eos impulit. Invidiosa res, turpis postulatio et confessio temeritatis.” Shuckburgh, *The Letters of Cicero*, 48: “The companies which had contracted with the censors for Asia complained that in the heat of the competition they had taken the contract at an excessive price; they demanded that the contract should be annulled. I led in their support, or rather, I was second, for it was Crassus who induced them to venture on this demand. The case is scandalous, the demand a disgraceful one, and a confession of rash speculation.” See also Badian, *Publicans and Sinners*, 100; McLeister, “Publicani in the Principate,” 78–81 (with bibliography).

¹⁰⁴ Kirbihler, “Brutus et Cassius et les impositions, spoliations et confiscations en Asie mineure durant les guerres civiles (44–42 a.C.),” 354–59. For a quite recent discussion of the taxation system in the Republican *Provincia Asia* see McLeister, “Publicani in the Principate,” 75–82 (with bibliography). Merola, *Autonomia Locale—Governo Imperiale*, 49–86.

¹⁰⁵ See note 81 above.

Cistophoric coinage was therefore mostly used only in the economic transactions that took place *within* the province, as could be expected of a reduced standard currency. However, these payments could include the extremely costly upkeep of Roman armies, as was certainly the case during the Mithridatic Wars. Only in exceptional cases were *cistophori* used to make international payments.¹⁰⁶ When outside of the Asian province, they were mostly lumped together with other forms of bullion to be displayed during triumphal parades, such as the ones of Sulla and Pompey, respectively, in 81 and 61 BC.

Completely different appears to be the situation for the extraordinary taxation imposed by the Roman *imperatores*. As mentioned, after Dardanus, Sulla extracted five years of taxes in arrears, plus the war indemnities, for a total of 20,000 talents from a region already devastated by the First Mithridatic War.¹⁰⁷ The same did Pompey and the *imperatores* after him. The extraordinary extractions imposed on the *Provincia Asia* in the course of the Mithridatic Wars were – unsurprisingly – the main cause for its financial ruin, as they deprived the province of almost the entirety of its revenues.

Given these premises, monetary production or – better – the absence thereof for the very late 60s BC represents a good proxy for the financial ruin of Asian cities. As the Ephesians made clear in their plea of 41 BC to Antony, Brutus and Cassius's request, the last of a long series of extortions, they had been by then deprived any sort of valuables.¹⁰⁸ In sum, taxes and *publicani* were not the cause for the financial ruin of Asian cities in the first century BC, war and *imperatores* were.

¹⁰⁶ Cic., *Att.*, 2.6.2; 2.6.4; 11.1.2. <http://thelatinlibrary.com/cicero/att2.shtml> & <http://thelatinlibrary.com/cicero/att11.shtml#1>.

¹⁰⁷ Plutarch, *Life of Lucullus* 41 (Perrin, trans., *Plutarch: "Lives,"* 601-05) & *Sulla*, 25.4-5 (Perrin, trans., *Plutarch: "Lives" Volume 4*, 405-07); Callataÿ, *L'Histoire des Guerres Mithridatiques vue par les Monnaies*, 325–30.

¹⁰⁸ See note 101 above.

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