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Cult Image or Decor?
Options for the Interpretation of Deities on Provincial Coinage from Asia Minor in an Overview of Research History

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Abstract

The interpretation of figures of deities on the reverse of the coins of Asia Minor cities of the imperial period is usually done in several steps. The deity is generally quickly determined. It is difficult, however, to establish the superior intention behind the depiction. Does the figure refer to a real cult statue of the emitting city, is the image 'only' a reference to a local cult or was it chosen to symbolise, for instance, political connections of cities?

The essay brings together opinions from 140 years of international numismatic scholarship and thus offers an overview of the changing patterns of interpretation as well as their range in general. In the end, a more conscious approach to the figures of the gods on coins and a more reflective methodological approach are recommended.

Keywords: coins, cities, Asia Minor, imperial period, figures of gods, cults, interpretations, cult image, statue, temple.

For almost 100 years, and with growing intensity, the provincial coinages have been a topic of academic research, yielding a wide range of questions.[1] In the following, the focus shall be on one aspect which is seldomly consciously treated as a methodical problem but is often incorporated in numismatic works. The relevant publications are accordingly scattered.[2]

[1] Many thanks to first readers of the manuscript S. Kerschbaum and P. Matern (both Frankfurt am Main) for many valuable suggestions and C. Voelsch for the translation. Errors in the argument and inadequacies are obviously the author's fault.

[2] The actual beginning could be found in the 30s of the 20th century with the works of Bosch 1935 and Robert 1935. However, the beginnings were already in the 19th century, mainly characterised by the individual interest of F. Imhoof-Blumers (on this, s. Weiß 1992, 143 n. 1).

An anthropomorphic figure on the reverse of a coin, usually provided with attributes, which—for the ancient viewer and for us today—can be addressed unequivocally.[3] The for the most part easy identification leads to further definition attempts. The results often correspond to one of three explanatory approaches named in respective literature:

a) It is an iconographically largely exact representation of a cult statue placed within the city.

b) The representation on the coin does not show the iconography of an urban cult image but indicates a respective local cult for a deity. If the representation of the deity is pure fiction or displays e.g. the cult image of another location, is irrelevant.

c) The picture of the deity on the coin is not a reflex of urban cults. As an 'image filler', it is instead a suitable motif which nevertheless needs to be comprehended without having a substantial 'foundation.'
These possibilities can be accompanied by others:

d) The motif of a deity on city coinage is a code for something else than the deity, e.g. for political, economic or similarly abstract statements.

e) None of these 'all-or-nothing'-models[4] applies: coin images with representations of deities were *a priori* meant to be polyvalent and should instigate ideas in the viewer.

The starting point of these considerations is the coinage of the Roman colony Cremna in the Pisidian mountain region. At this site, there were not only issues of a large amount of bronze money from Hadrian to Aurelian, but on these coins, there were depictions of all in all 25 different deities, some of which only adorned the reverse of a single coin type. After the first issue in the colony under Hadrian, deities were first imprinted under Antoninus Pius, further editions followed under almost every emperor until the time of Aurelian.[5] In the case of many deity images, the legends with the name of the god are written in dative, which speaks for a dedication. Were these many cults really present in the city? Do the figures display the respective cult statues as citizens once saw them? Why were some of the deities presented on the reverses later changed for others?[6]

Which messages did the citizens want to convey with these images and who were they directed to? To themselves, as affirmation of their own identity or as 'advertising' for the people in neighbouring *poleis*? Can historic explanations for the selection of the deities be found in local history or was the iconographic program influenced by cross-city 'trends' which were dependent on the time? Which other 'filters' was the coin as a pictorial medium subjected to?

[3] The following only deals with the formal type of a calmly standing divine individual figure depicted without architectural framing or inside of a temple. Excluded are ensembles with several figures (which, due to the group composition, follow their own formal conventions), mythological or myth-historical scenes (on myths s. introductory Weiss, in: Nollé – Overbeck – Weiss 1997, 29 f.; Price in: Howgego – Heuchert – Burnett 2005, 115−124; among them also divine founders) and miniaturised cult statues in the outstretched hand of emperors/deities/personifications and encounters between emperor and deities (on this extensively Harl 1987, 38−70). I will further refrain from discussing Homonoia coins, which form a huge group of sources with their own regularities (Franke – Nollé 1997; Bennett 2014).

[4] Observation by Watson 2019, 130, that in scholarly debate, the models are contrasted with each other and that mediation positions are seldomly formulated.

[5] Tabular overview of the 3rd century AD in Johnston 2007, 182, tab. 50.

[6] Filges 2015, 81–84; on the votive character of the coins Nollé 1992, 83.

Every of the five categorisations had and has supporters. During the last 50 years, there were many fiery debates (initiated by the theses of Kraft[7] and Brandt[8] to problematise coin images as evidence of urban cults).[9]

Many authors have firm opinions, others judge seemingly arbitrarily. Often, individual coin types were described and interpreted consequently—without testing if the chosen methodical approach is equally successful in other cases. Do we need an enhanced criteria apparatus for the determination of the context in which the images emerged and in which they were supposed to have an effect? This sounds as if semiotic aspects would not play a role in numismatic research—this is decidedly wrong. However, the theory-oriented branch of especially Italian numismatics has never dealt with eastern imperial city coinage and never searched for a substantiation of images in a lifeworld context.[10]

This essay is not supposed to determine the overlap of coin images and epigraphic evidence and, in a positive case, allegedly verify the existence of a cult or, in a negative case, speculate on why the groups of evidence do not confirm each other. Due to the quantity of the material, such an endeavour would be impossible anyway.[11]

Deliberately without introducing an initial thesis, which would probably lead to an immediate reaction and alignment in a part of the readers, a neutral presentation—in no way exhaustive—of the respective publications on the topic in chronological order seems most sensible. Thus, we will approach the topic via individual cities (with Corinth, Athens, Thrace and the Levante deliberately exceeding the geographical region of Asia Minor), exhibition catalogues and synopses of different aspects of ancient coin iconography and cult image practice.[12] Publications on classical and Hellenistic Greek numismatics complement explanatory models which are interesting in the light of research history. The important statements of the contributions will be recited in the form of direct quotes. At the end of each section, there will be a respective summary and evaluation of the statements.

19th century

Early on, F. Imhoof-Blumer argued in support of deities on Hellenistic coinage from Akarnania that they "…in der Regel Schöpfungen der Stempelschneider, und nicht blosse

[7] Kraft 1972.

[8] Brandt 1988.

[9] On the phases of the discussion, see Watson 2019, 128−130.

[10] Important for this e.g. Caccamo Caltabiano 2007. To some extent, the terminology, as e.g. *denotativo e connotativo delle immagini* (Caccamo Caltabianco 2007, 46) were adopted by others, e.g. Elkins 2015 and Ritter 2017.

[11] The understandable expectations that both genres of sources would confirm each other, is again and again disappointed (demonstrated based on the example of Roman colonies in Asia Minor in Filges 2015, 316−325).

[12] Particularly in the German-speaking world, there were and are involvements with the topic; however, in the last decades, more and more contributions come from French and increasingly also from Turkish numismatic research. British works, often critical-methodological, increasingly focuses on architectural depictions—the insights gained by this also help to better understand deity images.

Copien plastischer Kunstwerke und Cultusbilder waren, ist eine bekannte Tatsache, die uns je länger je deutlicher zum Bewusstsein kömmt."[13]

In this early time, anthropomorphic coin images were mainly understood as random pictorial inventions.

In 1883, only five years later, the topic was taken up again by P. Gardner. In his history of the stylistic development of ancient statues, he adduces coin depictions as evidence for lost large-scale sculptures and thereby occasionally talks about the authenticity of the images. The representation of a statue of Artemis Pergaia "in a Doric temple excludes all doubt as to its being the real object of cultus in the city" or "these figures were copies more or less faithful of current representations."[14] For the later phases of ancient art, Gardner wants to attribute an accurate representation of the images to the coins: coin images of numerous other cities in Late Classical and Hellenistic times are addressed as cult images—without explanation.[15]

The only—and obviously sufficient—criterion for addressing a depiction as cult image is the representation of figures within temples. Gardner interprets the coin material very differently than Imhoof-Blumer, with whom he is closely acquainted. Provincial coinages are not yet a relevant field of research in this time.

1910–1920

In one of the early city corpora from 1910, H. von Fritze dealt with the coinages of Pergamon from imperial times. In this fundamental work, he systematically classifies the coin depictions into three groups: "konventionelle Darstellungen, welche sich über die ganze griechisch-römische Welt verbreitet finden, 2. solche mit lokaler Bedeutung und 3. Bilder, die bestimmte Ereignisse illustrieren sollen."[16] The abandonment of the representation of local topics in the 1st century AD was not to be interpreted in a way that e.g. the cult of the city god Asklepios, already evidenced on Hellenistic coinage, "eine Vernachlässigung erlitten hätte" in this time, but rather the coin representations showed "nur verhältnismäßig wenig Mannigkeit und eine gewisse Zurückhaltung in der Auswahl der Typen."[17] Since Trajan, Asklepios appeared in many different representations and it needed to be carefully pondered "welche dieser Stempel auf in Pergamon vorhandene Kunstwerke zurückgehen."[18] With certainty, the author wants to decide in favour of a cult statue only in the case of two deities shown inside temples; in the case of the other Asclepius types, he remains undetermined.[19] For him, a coin image with an Archaic Apollon is a strong enough argument to imply a cult of Apollon Smintheus in Pergamon, which cannot be

[13] Imhoof-Blumer 1878, 33.

[14] Gardner 1883, 78. Further below, the depiction of a statue inside a temple is seen as "rule, I think without exception": Gardner 1883, 177.

[15] Gardner 1883, 80 f. (Apollon in Sparta), 169 (Zeus in Halikarnassos), 178 (Apollon in Delphi), 205 (Athena in Ilion).

[16] Von Fritze 1910, 46.

[17] Von Fritze 1910, 47.

[18] Von Fritze 1910, 47.

[19] Von Fritze 1910, 47–52, 85 (one time a sitting image, the other time a standing one).

proven by other sources. The justification for this is the uniqueness of the iconography.[20] In contrast, a cult for Dionysos is epigraphically documented; the coin images display the god in different forms, so that von Fritze determines: "Man wird also hier einen je nach Vorlage oder Geschmack variierten Dionysostypus des konventionellen Schemas ohne örtliche Beziehung erblicken dürfen."[21] The temenos of Demeter is archaeologically verified beyond a doubt—however, the goddess is displayed on only one coin type and only together with Dionysos.[22]

For von Fritze, decisive criteria for the determination of cult statues on coins are the display of temples or unconventional iconography. In cases where deities were represented in several iconographies, he does not see a possibility to identify specific statues. The example of Pergamon shows that cults important for the city were not necessarily prominently depicted on the coinage.

1920–1930

In 1923, the important Asia Minor researcher J. Keil named five relevant groups of sources in his essay on the ancient cults in Lydia and commented on the coin representations and legends:

> So wenig bezweifelt werden kann, dass die Münzbilder eine ausserordentlich wichtige Quelle für die Kulte ihrer Städte sind, so schwierig, ja unmöglich ist es, im einzelnen Falle Sicherheit darüber zu gewinnen, ob dem Münzbilde einer Gottheit, namentlich wenn es vereinzelt oder selten vorkommt, tatsächlich auch kultische Verehrung dieser Gottheit entsprochen hat.[23]

Here, the basic informative content of depictions on coins is not denied, but a quantitative criterion is suggested, which is not elaborated further. Pronounced, it can be concluded: if a deity has been used as motif on only one civic issue, we cannot reliably presume a local cult.

1930–1940

The extensively planned work by C. Bosch on the coins of Asia Minor in imperial times was subsequently limited to only one volume and appeared in 1935. The purport of the author is that coins are especially suited to serve religio-historical analyses, as opposed to inscriptions, sculptures or literary texts.[24] A group of 71 deities is introduced for Bithynia on the basis of mostly numismatic evidence. Quite pragmatically, Bosch judges for example on the "hellenischen" god Apollon: "Wenn [dieser] … während der

[20] Von Fritze 1910, 59 f.
[21] Von Fritze 1910, 60 f.
[22] Von Fritze 1910, 63, 87.
[23] Keil 1923, 249 n. 1.
[24] Bosch 1935, 132 f.

ganzen Kaiserzeit immer wieder auf den Münzen [der bithynischen Städte] erscheint, so müssen wir daraus schließen, daß er auch verehrt worden ist."[25] In the 1st century AD, only individual deities were represented on the coins; however, in the 2nd century, people started "die allgemeine Frömmigkeit stärker zu betonen."[26] What follows is the observation which deities appeared on coins from Bithynia first and when exactly during the 2nd and 3rd century, which constitutes a precursor to Heuchert 2005. Bosch interprets the material directly: "Offenbar werden neue Statuen der Götter aufgestellt, denn es begegnen eine Reihe von ungewöhnlichen Bildern."[27] Using the example of Nikomedeia, he deduces clues to cults and cult statues from the coin images. Two of five types of a Demeter as main deity of the city could be tied to cult images. The criteria are depiction inside of a temple, representation with plinth or a ground line which can be interpreted as basis. For Bosch, the number of coin types or specimen is irrelevant, since one type of the goddess is only known from two coins. The depictions are classified to exact centuries within the Greek art history and sometimes ascriptions to masters are discussed.[28] However, Bosch is as consistent as recognising in the case of Ares-images on the basis of their "Mannigfaltigkeit, daß ein fester Typus überhaupt nicht vorhanden war, das Bild von Fall zu Fall nach irgendeiner Vorlage gewählt wurde. Es gab offenbar kein Kultbild des Gottes in Nikomedeia, sein Kult, der früher bestanden haben muß, war ausgestorben."[29]

For Bosch, iconographically consistent images on the reverses gave clues to cults; new images point to the erection of new statues. If there are numerous alternating types for the deities on the coins, there was no cult image, indeed, not even a cult. With a keen eye, the author recognises that only few deities are depicted at all times, most of them only in certain times. He does not, however, scrutinise the reason for this.

1940–1950

An important publication, although limited to statues of the Archaic and Classical period—but including coin images from imperial times—is the monography of L. Lacroix from 1949. Immediately at the beginning, he reveals his initial thesis: "Les habitant de la cité pourront du reste s'assurer eux-mêmes de la fidélité da la copie, puisque le graveur reproduit généralment un monument qui leur est familier."[30] Lacroix explains his criteria, which he adopts from Imhoof-Blumer—Gardner and refines. Among them are the display of statues within buildings or other localities, the presence of a basis, frequent

[25] Bosch 1935, 153.

[26] Bosch 1935, 170.

[27] Bosch 1935, 170 f.

[28] Bosch 1935, 245–251. The same argumentation in the case of Zeus depicted with a floor line (p. 263 f.) and in the case of Athena due to consistent motifs (p. 267).

[29] Bosch 1935, 264 f.

[30] Lacroix 1949, 5, 23. The fact that especially due to this familiarity it was possible to refrain from such an accuracy of the reproduction in order to identify the statue shows how much our argumentations are influenced by subjective presuppositions.

repetition of a singular representation type over the course of several periods of coinage and unique characteristics which pointed to the transfer of a three-dimensional object to a two-dimensional art form. Quite self-aware, he states the possible limits of knowledge.[31] The die cutting of imperial times appears in an unfavourable light: "A l'époque impériale, ceux-ci ne semblent pas avoir été toujours à la hauteur de leur tâche. On fera bien, par conséquent, de n'utiliser ces témoignages qu'avec ne certaine prudence."[32]

Lacroix took up the old arguments of framing temple and statue support as code for the display of a specific statue and enhanced them with further, preferably objective, criteria. Meritoriously as this may have been, only one point was scrutinised, namely if the coin image represents a prototype in the round. Reasons for the choice of motif or content-related more abstract messages of the coin types are not addressed.

1950–1960

In 1953, D. Magie attended to the cults of Egyptian deities which reached Asia Minor on the basis of standard representations on coin reverses. Even if he acknowledges some indicators for the display of cult images, he often sees methodical problems: "it may scarcely be assumed that there was a cult, either public or private, in every city whose issues show representations of the Egyptian deities" and

> In the smaller cities, particularly, where the coin-types of the third century show a large number of different deities, it is scarcely credible that there were established cults of all the gods and goddesses so depicted. It seems more probable that these types were merely ornamental, chosen arbitrarily from standard models by the city-authorities or the citizen responsible for the issue.[33]

As historian, Magie could have been one of the first to explicitly formulate that coin depictions of deities are not mandatorily related to the cults of the city on whose coinage they are displayed. Almost revolutionary, he goes as far as assigning the role of mere ornaments to the images.

1960–1970

A basic insight into the topic of city coinage from Asia Minor was presented by P. R. Franke in 1968. It deals with information to be gained from the coins. Despite the promising introductory phrase "Der Reichtum, die bunte Vielfalt der griechischen Mythen- und Sagenwelt wird noch übertroffen vom Reichtum der griechischen Götterwelt,"[34] the astoundingly short paragraph on deities on less than half a page is striking. The last sentence is relevant: "Viele Götterbilder gehen zweifellos auf einst berühmte Kunstwerke, d.h. im

[31] Lacroix 1949, 16–22, 24.
[32] Lacroix 1949, 28. Nevertheless, numerous coins from imperial times are presented in the plates.
[33] Magie 1953, 183.
[34] Franke 1968, 30.

Tempel oder Heiligtum aufgestellte Statuen zurück, ohne daß sich das aber in den meisten Fällen noch mit ausreichender Sicherheit nachweisen ließe."

Whereas the great informative content of the coins for the urban pantheon is emphasised, it becomes clear that there is no apparatus for the classification of the deities beyond general plausibility.

1970–1980

An example for the positivistic concept that coins and their motifs directly reflect cults of ancient cities is the lexicon entry on the lemma Parlais in a supplement of the Realencyclopädie from 1970. For this imperial colony, there are known inscriptions; the urban pantheon, however, is reconstructed by B. Levick solely on the basis of coin figures.[35]

The confidence in the possibility to reconstruct the ancient living environment from the ancient pictures stands for a research which hardly dealt with methodical reflections.

In 1972, E. Schönert-Geiß recognised a renewal of the available types on the coinage of Byzantion from imperial times as opposed to Hellenistic coin images.[36] One of the Poseidon coin types typical for the city is then emphasised as a new variant due to the integrated ship's prow. This would "als Symbol für Byzanz' Bedeutung als Hafenstadt zu gelten haben, … [die] jetzt wohl in erster Linie unter militärischem Aspekt gesehen werden muß, d.h. als Übergangsstelle für die Truppentransporte zwischen Europa und Asien."[37] In other words, there was no such cult statue with a ship's bow in Byzantion.

Other deities displayed on reverses during imperial times were—although this is also expressed only between the lines—deities which had an urban cult. Nevertheless, Schönert-Geiß says that they were no "typisch byzantischen, sondern gehören allgemein zum religiösen Leben der Griechenstädte in römischer Zeit."[38] It would be a different case with Artemis, for whom a festival with a torch race is recorded. The figure of Phosphoros running with a torch in each hand would go back to this cult.[39] Does this wording mean that the city cult image is supposed to have looked like that?

It is determined for the coins of Byzantion in imperial times that most deity images indicate cults. However, Schönert-Geiß refrains from a definite identification of such a cult image. In contrast to this is the fact that attributive addenda of deity images are understood as pragmatic clues—the ship's bow with Poseidon is interpreted as profane hint to the presence of the Roman fleet.

Therefore, during the 70s, another step was made in the interpretation of messages from deity images on coins. They are still references to cults but are now also read as code for historic situations.

The monography by K. Kraft on the mobile coin workshops in Asia Minor and their influence on numismatic repertoires was published in 1972, two years after his death,

[35] Levick 1970, 999–1001.
[36] Schönert-Geiß 1972, 33.
[37] Schönert-Geiß 1972, 33.
[38] Schönert-Geiß 1972, 35.
[39] Schönert-Geiß 1972, 35 f.

and sparked many discussions. Crucial points were the influence on the reverse designs by the types predefined by the workshops and the thesis deriving from it: that they were used "ohne daß in jedem Falle eine spezielle Beziehung der Darstellung auf die betreffende Stadt vorläge."[40] At the same time, the author goes so far as to claim that in dies with a deity inside a temple "nur jeweils die Gottheit ausgewechselt wurde, während die Form des Tempels bleib und nicht den lokalen Gegebenheiten angepasst wurde."[41]

A general 'outcry,' starting with L. Robert in 1975[42] and continued by German numismatists in the 90s, emphasised the autonomy of the cities concerning the selection of the motifs. In recent times, there were still instructive debates on the ideas of Kraft, which will be discussed below.[43]

In 1973, the archaeologist R. Fleischer collected pictures of Anatolian-Syrian hieratic cult statues and used them for reconstruction and art historic classification. In the case of the coins with representations of e.g. the Artemis of Ephesos, he notices that the coin images "trotz der Kleinheit der Wiedergabe und Weglassung von Details … eine wichtige Rolle zu[kommt] … [Denn] die plastischen Nachbildungen zeigen oft Einwirkung künstlerischer Freiheit, welcher bei den offiziellen, von Beamten kontrollierten Darstellungen der Münzen engere Grenzen gesetzt waren."[44] Convinced of Lacroix' observations, the author does not scrutinise the genre's evidential value.[45]

Here, we can determine a positivistic interaction with coin images which does not pose the question of genre-intrinsic conventions of representation but uses coin motifs as full-value pictorial evidence beside other sources.

In her publication of the coin types of Magnesia at the Maeander from 1975, S. Schultz refers back to the results of Kraft, which had at that point been published recently. Nevertheless, she takes the pictures seriously and discusses individual types in regard to their significance for local statues. The famous Artemis Leukophryene as xoanon is depicted very often, but Schultz can determine that: "bei den Münzdarstellungen handelt es sich natürlich nicht um gewissenhafte Kopien, was sich auch darin zeigt, daß das Tempelbild nur ein einziges Mal auf seinem Sockel wiedergegeben ist."[46] The indication of the cult which was so important to the city is completed by pictures of other representations of Artemis, among them a coin image in the shape of the Greek-Roman huntress.[47] The mother Leto is imprinted at different times; here, the author recognises a statuary model, albeit she does not want to locate it in Magnesia.[48] What is interesting is the explanation on the emergence of Hephaistos only in the 3rd century, which is interpreted as revival of the cult during this time. A first issue is here interpreted as historic. Nevertheless, the

[40] Kraft 1972, 94.

[41] Kraft 1972, 95. This astounding inconsistency, which minimises the rigour of Kraft's thesis, has up to now not been addressed in literature. Watson 2019, 129 cites this passage neutrally; however, he does not mention that already Kraft of course assumed city-identifying coin designs.

[42] Robert 1975, 188−192.

[43] Watson 2019.

[44] Fleischer 1973, xii. On the 'officially certified representations' also Fleischer 1973, 39, 401.

[45] Fleischer 1973, 402−406.

[46] Schultz 1975, 36.

[47] Schultz 1975, 37.

[48] Schultz 1975, 39.

pictures of the god of blacksmiths would possess 'keine ortsgebundene Aussagekraft' for the appearance of the postulated cult statue.[49]

Schultz emancipates herself from the theses of Kraft and does not identify any of the coin images as established motif of a workshop. At several places, she names the motivic diversity and, implicitly, also the related difficulty in order to refer pictures back to local works. However, she points—although not offensively—to the urban cults which are reflected in the depictions on the coins, albeit the images only seldomly represented cult statues.

1980–1990

The coins found in Sardis were presented by A. Johnston in 1981. The author discusses the evidence of the coin figures of Artemis, Kore and Zeus. The first is well-known from Hellenistic city coins but seems to have been replaced by an 'Asian' Kore in imperial times. What is interesting is the usage of the motif of Kore on Homonoia coinages of Ephesos as code for Sardis chronologically before the introduction of the picture in Sardis itself.[50] The coinage of the 3rd century AD show the goddess inside of varying temple fronts. Archaeologically, no such building is evidenced; it was probably only a shrine within the temple of Artemis.[51] Likewise, there is almost only numismatic evidence for the cult of Zeus Lydios, which varies strongly in its iconography.[52]

Coin images are considered as indicators for local cults. However, the difficulties to reconcile the divine representations with the other evidence are also stated.

In the 80s, C. C. Vermeule advocated an art-historically oriented handling of urban coin images whose pictorial sources are searched for in the complete ancient art, starting in the 5th century BC. In doing so, he leaves the small-scale urban levels of explanation. At the same time, he judges non-reflectively when a completely unspecific reverse image showing Zeus from Kasai/Kilikia from the 3rd century AD is addressed as visualisation of a "splendid Hellenistic cult-image."[53] The author takes the coin images so seriously that he recognises the Artemis on a multi-levelled basis inside of a temple building on a coin from Pionia/Troas as a Hellenistic alteration of a High Classical Greek statue of which "a copy in bronze or marble, must have been set up in the temple at Pionia."[54]

As sure as the author is that many deities on the coins are pure copies of coin types of neighbouring cities or even Roman imperial coinage,[55] he is nevertheless convinced that the deities displayed on the coins reflect local cult images in detail. Thus, he passes

[49] Schultz 1975, 40. However, in the case of other deities, the judgement is that they only became worthy of representation at specific times without any introductions of cults connected with it (p. 44).

[50] Johnston 1981, 8.

[51] Johnston 1981, 10.

[52] Johnston 1981, 10 f.

[53] Vermeule 1983, 5 f.

[54] Vermeule 1983, 13.

[55] Vermeule 1983, 25.

judgement on which is a copy after a well-known statue from another place and which is a contemporary replica.

The coinage of the Thracian city Maroneia was analysed in a monography by E. Schönert-Geiß in 1987. A characteristic emblem in the 2nd/1st century BC is the head of Dionysos on the obverses of tetradrachms, which is completed by a whole figure of the naked god with two spears on the reverses. The consistent design of Hellenistic times would speak for the representation of a cult image.[56] Under Hadrian, after 150 years, an identical full-figure representation of the god is re-established. This picture is complicated by individual presentations of the god on the late coinages under Trebonianus Gallus and Volusianus. Whereas the coin types with the obverse of the father show the known statue, contemporary coins of the son are furnished either with a Dionysos wearing chiton or naked but respectively (as already seen in a statue in the temple under Caracalla[57]) with a thyrsos.[58] Schönert-Geiß tries to justify the multifarious images of this one god with extraneous influence in writing that they "… auf eine ‚normale' Form der Dionysosdarstellung zurück[gehen], wie sie in der Münzprägung vieler thrakischer Städte in römischer Zeit zu finden ist. Mit der für Maroneia spezifischen Dionysos-Statue haben sie folglich nichts zu tun"[59] and "… der unter Caracalla abgebildete Dionysos-Tempel [stellt] offensichtlich nicht die dazugehörige Kultstätte dar ..., da sie eine Dionysos-Statue beherbergt, wie sie im griechisch-römischen Kultleben allgemein üblich war."[60]

These comprehensible statements point to several phenomena. For centuries, there was a consistent monetary representation of a statue, with high probability a cult statue. Nevertheless, this one form of representation was deviated from already in Hellenistic times, when the large-sized head is not consistent with the full figure of the god. Obviously, this did not pose a problem for the viewers of the coins. What was meant was always Dionysos of Maroneia. Under Caracalla and in the 3rd century AD, any of the supraregionally conventional standard images for the god is displayed on the coins (irritating for us, even inside a temple) albeit not the cult image with the two spears identifying the city.[61] This example shows that it was no contradiction for the ancient population of the city to depict the cult image 'in a wrong way'. In Maroneia, a well-known wine-growing region, the main god was always recognised. The coin images of Dionysos were meant for people who knew what they saw.

[56] Schönert-Geiß 1987, 64, 114 cat. no. 976 ff. What is interesting in the Late Hellenistic coin types is the noticeable difference between a long-haired head of Dionysos on the obverse and a short-haired statue of Dionysos on the reverse (as Schönert-Geiß 1987, 66, n. 4 mentions in an open and unbiased way; the fact is not pursued by her).

[57] Schönert-Geiß 1987, 87, nos. 1715–1716, tab. 92.

[58] Schönert-Geiß 1987, 87 f., nos. 1726–1727, 1735.

[59] Schönert-Geiß 1987, 88.

[60] Schönert-Geiß 1987, 114.

[61] An easily assigned explanation would be the erection of a second sacred building for Dionysos in the time of Caracalla, then with a 'standard statue' as second execution of the city's main deity. This picture would not have replaced the old Hellenistic one, since the god with the spears has been displayed on the reverses up until the end. However, up to now there are no other known remains than those of the Late Classical temple. In addition, the decreasing importance of the city after Hadrian does not speak for a new construction phase.

In his exhaustive work on the eastern city coinage of the Middle Imperial period from 1987, K. W. Harl also touches on the subject of "routine renditions of cult statues."[62] From Hadrianic times onwards, he observes the emergence of numerous new topics, and in the late 2nd and 3rd century AD "newcomers to Greco-Roman paganism" like Mithras or the Egyptian deities. These, in turn, were superseded by agonistic topics, often without deities, in the late 3rd century.[63] Following Kraft, Harl recognises the influence of workshops because "stock depictions" and "coins celebrating deities unknown to the civic pantheon" emerged;[64] as a rule, however, "coin depictions of divinities did . . . evoke at least respect, if not awe and worship . . . "[65] Even if Harl sometimes refers to the representation of cult images, more important to him is the active usage of deity images by urban elites who link their messages to it.[66]

Between the lines, we can read that iconographically exact equivalents of cult statues are indeed verifiable but that completely different agendas stood behind the images than the pure presentation of the urban pantheons. Harl deems superordinate messages of the decision makers for coins as the main statement of civic coinages, which were instrumentalised by the elites during imperial times. Here, we again find an explanatory model in which motifs are only vehicles for superordinate messages.

In 1988, Brandt published an essay on "Kulte in Aspendos," in which he referred to Kraft's verdict of the strong influence coin workshops had on the selection of the images and tried to verify it using different types of sources.[67] Right at the beginning, he reaches a statement, which is subsequently validated and found correct: " . . . damit entfällt zwangsläufig die Möglichkeit, die Ikonographie dieser Münzen hinsichtlich programmatischer Absichten, politischer Verbindungen oder gar ‚Münzligen' zu deuten. Insbesondere können die Münzbilder daher auch nicht als hinreichende Belege für lokale Kulte fungieren . . . "[68] Thus, the author excludes some of the deities displayed on coins as cult receivers.[69] Instead, he consults inscriptions without examining if they are institutionalised or private evidence. Based on the slightly earlier special researches on the reliability of architectural depictions on coins, Brandt reaches the verdict that "auch dem Ansinnen mit Skepsis begegnet werden [muss], von den aspendischen Münzen der Kaiserzeit auf die Existenz von Kultgebäuden und deren Aussehen zu schließen."[70]

Brandt presented an article which was almost revolutionary at his time. In it, he problematised postulates hardly scrutinised up to then. Based on some research approaches which were new at the time, he tests his explanatory model with a case study (whose

[62] Harl 1987, 13 and 15: "Reverse figures are executed in an attenuated and schematic fashion" on the execution styles.

[63] Harl 1987, 14.

[64] Harl 1987, 16 f. However, the standard iconographies were not impedimental for expressing urban religiosity and the orientation towards certain deities.

[65] Harl 1987, 36.

[66] Harl 1987, 76–82.

[67] According to Watson (2019, 129), Brandt did not know about the general critique of Robert (1975) on Kraft at the time of writing.

[68] Brandt 1988, 238.

[69] Brandt 1988, 241–246.

[70] Brandt 1988, 250.

source material was not put together properly[71]). This essay served the sharpening of numismatic ways of argumentation. It still helps to seriously scrutinise the potential of statements of different groups of sources in classical studies before the results are extracted almost 'automatedly'.

Thessaloniki was an important city already in Hellenistic times, which could further expand its importance during imperial times and late antiquity. Even if here, as in all ancient cities, numerous deities were worshipped and temples were erected, according to Touratsoglou (1988), the coinage shows a "Schlichtheit, die manchmal geradezu eintönig und manieriert wirkt."[72] Apart from a Nike with changing attributes who is ineligible as cult image,[73] Kabeiros is depicted as single figure, within a building and often also in the hands of other deities and is also epigraphically testified as patron deity of the city. Other deities are missing. A cult image is presumed, although the coins show differing versions of the young man with a hammer.[74]

In contrast to most other cities, Thessaloniki focalised on a specific god which fulfilled the function of a code for identifying the city on the coinage quite well due to his rareness. It seems to not have played a role on which side the attribute was carried. However, it becomes also clear that cities in no way wanted to depict all institutionally worshipped deities on the reverses in their entirety. Thessaloniki is a rare example which demonstrated the range of possibilities well.

1990–2000

In 1990, in a popular science article, J. Nollé outlined the long and diversified history of the Pamphylian city Side on the basis of its coin images. In a subchapter on 'the city of the gods,' he lists the many different representations of the most important goddess Athena.[75] Although half of all the coin types from imperial times display Athenas, there is no convincing evidence on the *one* cult image.[76] Her iconographic diversity is, however, astounding when compared to the second most important god of the city, Apollon Sidetes. He is always displayed in a consistent form—the figure in the temple corresponds to this iconography.[77] Accordingly, Nollé assumes "kleinere oder größere Heiligtümer in der Stadt" for deities displayed less frequently in Side—Artemis, Dionysos, Hephaistos, Herakles, Nemesis, Poseidon and Kybele.[78]

The couple of Athena and Apollon as main deities shows with its different 'consistency in form' how careful we should be with an evaluation. Again we can see that it was

[71] Nollé 1992.

[72] Touratsoglou 1988, 96.

[73] Touratsoglou 1988, 94.

[74] Touratsoglou 1988, 95.

[75] Nollé 1990, 252 f., nos. 28, 30–33.

[76] Nollé 1990, 253, nos. 26, 37. Perhaps apart from the image of Athena enthroned inside a temple, on which she is, however, combined with other attributes and seating furniture than the seating figure without temple.

[77] Nollé 1990, 253, nos. 34–36, 38. Remains of both temples from Middle Imperial times still exist—in contrast to many other cities—so that cult images can surely be postulated.

[78] Nollé 1990, 254.

only about displaying the cults present in the polis. The actual appearance of the cult images was not necessarily a goal of the representations.

At the beginning of the decade, the Aphrodisian coin types were presented by MacDonald. Since Late Augustan times, the famous Aphrodite of the city was shown in profile with her lower arms outstretched, but also frontally within a temple including standing or respectively sitting priestess and well. The number of columns changes, and in the 2nd century AD, small statues on pedestals are added in the cella. In the 3rd century AD, the cult image is displayed sometimes in right profile, sometimes in left profile and in some cases on a basis; thereby, the figure's extremities are always oriented consistently.[79]

In the case of the main cult image of the city, numerous details are depicted invariably (over the course of 250 years). This is one of the cases in which the mere quantity of information indicates that we are not dealing with a standard image. In turn, the numerous other city deities are devaluated when they are depicted on the coins significantly less often or not at all, although their cults are evidenced epigraphically.[80]

In 1992, J. Nollé submitted the coin material of the Pisidian city Etenna. In an excursion several pages long, he explicitly elaborates the topic of deity images on coins and their expressiveness in order to comment on the theses presented by Brandt in 1988 (see above). Nollé's introductory statement says that in most of the larger cities with good transport connections "nahezu alle wichtigen Gottheiten des griechisch-römischen Pantheons und der in dieses eingedrungenen orientalischen Religionen entweder in privatem oder öffentlichem Kult verehrt wurden"[81] and that "die Darstellungen auf den Münzen hingegen berücksichtigen nur die öffentlichen Kulte und ermöglichen uns eine Bestimmung des Stellenwertes der einzelnen Kulte im religiösen Gefüge einer städtischen Gemeinde."[82] Then he names deities which are recognisable due to their epiclesis (Brandt would certainly agree on this) and the deities which were used as substitutes for the polis on Homonoia coinages. Nollé then leads over to the "Emissionen mit Götterdarstellungen, oft in unregelmäßigen Abständen, manchmal sogar nur sporadisch geprägt" and "Nur zu bestimmten Zeiten und unter besonderen Umständen gewannen sie soviel an Bedeutung, daß ihrer in städtischen Prägungen gedacht wurde."[83] This is followed by hypothetical examples for occasions for coin types with e.g. Asklepios, Demeter or Zeus, who time and again might have become important for the cities. However, beyond the most important polis deities who were often presented individually due to their unique iconography,

> wurden . . . dieselben Statuentypen von den Städten der verschiedensten Regionen Kleinasiens zu ihrer Hommage für Zeus, Artemis, Aphrodite, Asklepios oder andere Gottheiten verwendet. Wenig spricht dafür, daß in den Heiligtümern aller dieser Städte dieselben Kultbilder der jeweiligen Gottheiten standen' and 'Hinter diesen Gemeinsamkeiten steht vielmehr eine bewußte Entscheidung der städtischen Prägeherren, die Reverenz für die im öffentlichen Kult verehrten Gottheiten mit weithin bekannten . . . und beliebten (also ‚modischen') Darstellungen zum Ausdruck zu bringen . . . , [wenn]

[79] MacDonald 1992, 27−29, 74 f., tab. 4−5.

[80] MacDonald 1992, 30.

[81] Nollé 1992, 79 with n. 148 introduces some non-numismatic examples according to which preferably all divine beings in the city were worshipped.

[82] Nollé 1992, 81.

[83] Nollé 1992, 82.

> es nicht so sehr darauf ankam, die Existenz ihres Kultes zu betonen, als vielmehr eine aktuelle Huldigung auf den städtischen Geldstücken zu vollziehen.'[84]

Nollé assumes "zeitbedingten und ideellen Präferenzen"[85] for deities on coin reverses.

This model claims that in every city in Asia Minor (if this can be transferred also to Greece, Thrace or the Levant remains undecided), beside the main deities, more or less all Greek (and other) gods were worshipped. Their pictorial reproduction on the coins would only match their actual appearance in the case of the distinctive cult statues. The majority of deities would correspond to conventional types—whereby the chosen types were changed due to the time of the coinage. For Nollé, it is a matter of an area of the official 'Huldigungen' with historic-contemporary occasions, which has not been clearly defined by him. At the end, this explanatory model leaves open if all displayed deities were actually rooted as a cult with priests or priestesses in the official pantheon or if the wishes to the gods were directed to them only at this moment.

In 1992, the publication of the first volume of Roman Provincial Coinage not only led to a simplified access to city coinages but also to valuable summarising statements from the team of authors, among others on reverse motifs: " . . . the types continue to refer to the principal cults of the relevant city, and it is only rarely that other types are used." Usually, the urban deities would be displayed; however, sometimes they were also adapted from other places—and again, "the representation of a deity may be directly derived from a statue." Secure examples for this are listed; they are surprisingly few.[86]

For the authors of the RPC I, it seems obvious that deity images were meant as indications to local cults, whereas cult statues were probably depicted much less frequently.

On the occasion of the first exhibition of coins from Asia Minor of imperial times, the author couple Nollé developed a catalogue which was decidedly addressed to a broad public in 1994. In it, they point to the many manifestations of one and the same deity on the coins of many poleis and within individual communities, which would have to be explained with different aspects and responsibilities. The deities would inform about the religious life and god cults.[87] It would be striking that for example in the case of the famous Aphrodite of Knidos and the Eros of Parion, that they were in no discernible way marked as cult images.[88] And the iconographically singular cult images in their temples in Asia Minor (e.g. Artemis Perge, Aphrodite Aspendos, Artemis Myra, Sandon Tarsos), which do not correspond to the Greek canon of representation, show no uniform design but again and again variations.[89]

On coins, cult images had a deviating iconography and were not expressly marked; they needed to be known in order to be recognised as such. An obligatory constancy of representation was not necessary for the 'functioning of the images' in ancient times.

In a short article from 1993, E. Schönert-Geiß pursues the question of deity images inside temples and their reproductions on the basis of the example of coinage from Augusta

[84] Nollé 1992, 84.
[85] Nollé 1992, 85.
[86] Burnett – Amandry – Ripollès 1992, 43.
[87] Nollé – Nollé 1994, 9.
[88] Nollé – Nollé 1994, 28, 30.
[89] Nollé – Nollé 1994, 61–73.

Traiana in Thrace. She arrives at clear results, whereby the consequence of the conclusions seems speculative. Remarkably often, the four different deities on the coin types are depicted in four different temple types. In her analysis, the author reaches the conclusion that "sich hinter diesen Münzbildern letztlich doch eine gewisse konkrete bauliche Realität verbirgt," only to subsequently demand rather boldly that there were temples for Apollon, Artemis, Asklepios and Hades in Augusta Traiana.[90] Since there are different statues of Apollon in different temple framings, she assumes that there were three temples for Apollon with three different cult statues for the 'main deity,' two for Artemis and for Asklepios and Hades respectively one.[91] No archaeological source verifies only one of them.

To claim an urban temple landscape with seven temples for four deities might correspond to the superficial image imparted by the coins, but it does not scrutinise genre-dependent conventions. The author herself admits that three temples for Apollon "für eine Stadt wie Augusta Traiana sehr viel [erscheinen mögen]," [92] but at the same time resorts to the strategy of self-representation of the polis Augusta Traiana, which designs a spectacular panopticon of a pious and rich polis on their coins.

In 1995, J. Nollé repeated unambiguously scantly his theses already phrased in his article on Etenna (1992) on the expressiveness of deity images on coin reverses in his article on Hephaistos and Athena as topics of coin types: "Alle städtischen Münzen mit Götterdarstellungen sind mit einem Kult in Verbindung zu bringen."[93] However, his argumentation gets difficult, since the author at the same time remarks that in many metalworking cities, there were definitely cults for Hephaistos despite the fact that his craft had a very low reputation in these cities. This would be why the images of Hephaistos, which were imprinted rather late, would not show cults but the increasing presence of Roman troops in Asia Minor, for whom weapons were produced in the poleis, and also the affinity to Rome.[94]

Contrary to the introductory thesis 'images of deities indicate respective cults', the reasoning differs in this case. It becomes historic and has hardly anything to do with the worship of the god (who was mainly favoured by the lower classes). Only as a result of war, the cult would have received an ennoblement in the people deciding on the coin images, who were now able to point to the city's accomplishments for Rome. The reverse images did not have anything to do with the documentation of urban institutionalised cults for Hephaistos anymore.

In 1995, the dissertation of B. Weisser deals with the coinage of Pergamon in imperial times. What is interesting is the outline of the research history on the Neocoria temple and the statue of the emperor. Their appearance changed from issue to issue and led to various speculations. Weisser recognises that "es . . . den Stempelschneidern nicht um eine naturalistische Wiedergabe des Tempels und der Statue [ging], sondern um die Darstellung des Themas."[95] The case is similar with the cult for Zeus Philios estab-

[90] Schönert-Geiß 1993, 222. Only the round temple connected with Artemis—which has been depicted on the coins of other Thracian cities accordingly—is dismissed as architectural fashion (p. 223).

[91] Schönert-Geiß 1993, 225.

[92] Schönert-Geiß 1993, 224.

[93] Nollé 1995, 66.

[94] Nollé 1995, 67−69, 74.

[95] Weisser 1995, 19.

lished under Trajan. On several coin types depicting a temple and a sitting cult statue, the attributes often vary. Contemporary coins with the detail of the head showed that it was used identically on coinages of other cities, specified by respectively different epithets. The coin iconography of a cult image important for the city was never meant to be a realistic representation; however, the Pergamenians would have recognised their god.[96] Surprising in contrast is the statement that a standing Zeus, who has no verified parallels on the coins of other *poleis* (and who has not been repeated in Pergamon either), is addressed as "Reflex auf eine in hadrianischer Zeit erfolgte Statuenweihung in Pergamon, zumal dieser Zeus ein repräsentatives statuarisches Schema zeigt."[97] All in all, Weisser determines a considerable overlap of deities presented on coins and those evidenced by other sources.[98]

Even deities depicted inside of temples were represented inconsistently, as long as their recognisability was ensured. The iconography itself was not essential; however, which topics, i.e. which deities were supposed to be recognised, was. Singular motifs are given higher chances of a representation 'similar to the statue' (as already von Fritze 1910, also on the example of Pergamon although on different deity images). In Pergamon, the cults which can be verified epigraphically and the figures on the coin reverses are for the most part congruent.

In 1996, an article by D. O. A. Klose was published which pursues the topic of urban identity at the transition to Hellenism until the Late Imperial period—years before the important symposium in Oxford in 2002—on the basis of the coining activity in Smyrna. At first, overall developments of city coinages in Asia Minor are described. They show that apart from local decision-making processes, which are presupposed, also extra-urban influences affected the choice of motifs. The number of coin types from Asia Minor would increase from the 1st to the 3rd century AD, and a constant increase of coin types could be verified. Finally, due to the enlargement of the coin diameter, more and more complex multi-figured images became possible.[99] Urban identity markers were inter-urban rank competitions, age and mythic early days, honorary titles, games and festivities, Neocoriae and other imperial privileges—among this list are no cults or statues.[100] The statement of "Typen meist von Kleinmünzen sowie Götter, die allgemein verbreitet sind und weder in besonderer Verbindung zur Stadt noch zum Kaiser stehen"[101] also shows Klose's approach not to expect a visualisation of urban cult images for the coins of Smyrna, although he repeatedly names specific manifestations of cults in Smyrna.[102] As for example in Aphrodisias, the coin images in Smyrna were supposed to indicate face value so

[96] Weisser 1995, 105−107.

[97] Weisser 1995, 107. In the case of a Hermes depiction only known from Pergamenian coins, Weisser 1995, 125 pleads for "eine lokale Kultfunktion" using the same argument.

[98] Weisser 1995, 128 f. On Pergamenian coins, the most important deities were also displayed together in "Göttergalerien" without verifiable cultic connections (p. 115).

[99] Klose 1996, 54. On the increasing amount of coinages in different regions of Asia Minor, p. 56.

[100] Klose 1996, 54.

[101] Klose 1996, 56. The "eigentlichen Stadtgötter" Nemes(e)is and Amazon belong to the foundation myth; their coin images vary strongly during the course of the centuries (p. 57).

[102] Klose 1996, 58.

that the "Aussage dieser Münzbilder kann also keine ganz spezielle, sondern muss eine allgemeinere sein."[103]

According to Klose, the monetary self-representation of the city Smyrna was not produced via specific deities (even if their cults are verified) but via different variants of the foundation tales, Homonoia coinages, Neocoria temples and Koinon games. No representation on the reverses instigates deliberations on possible cult images.

In 1996, von Mosch rates the coin images from Athens in imperial times with all in all 73 reverse types as arbitrary variations of motifs. Among them are also statues inside of temples and freely erected statues which, however, do not allow any reconstruction of the monuments.[104] He recognises—as others before him—a visualisation of topoi for praise of the city in the context of the Second Sophistic on the coin images.[105]

Vital for our question is von Mosch's determination that a recognisability of the topics was important, not a detailed representation.

In 1997, the presentations of the colloquium in Munich in 1994, initiated by Nollé, Overbeck and Weiß, were published. At that time, the essays formed the 'state of the art' of the topics coins— imperial times—Asia Minor. In his introductory chapter, Nollé picks up his former considerations from 1992 and extends them:

> Grundsätzlich sollte der Benutzer solcher Münzen sich klarmachen, daß es nicht um die Wiedergabe von Kultbildern oder Kunstwerken geht, sondern um eine Darstellung oder Evokation der Gottheit und manchmal auch um ihre Huldigung. Das hatte zur Folge, daß zum einen Gottheiten durch verschiedene statuarische Typen wiedergegeben werden konnten, daß es zum anderen nicht auf eine archäologisch präzise Wiedergabe eines Typus ankam . . . Überall im Römischen Reich wurde die Tendenz faßbar, Gottheiten in wenigen, an der klassischen Kunst orientierten Schemata darzustellen, die allgemein bekannt waren oder wurden. Eine ‚Koine' der Bildersprache wurde geschaffen. Die Ästhetik der uralten Kultbilder in den Tempeln stimmte nicht mit dem Zeitgeschmack überein; an ihrer Stelle repräsentierten gängige klassizistische Typen die städtischen Gottheiten . . . [106]

Many important things are disclosed here; however, there are no advices as to the method with which information can be gained from the coins and how.

Another article in the same volume shows the complexity of the topic in listing the numismatic evidence of Phrygian cults:

> Aber auch hier sind lokale Varianten [des Gottes Men] zu erkennen, wie etwa die Münzen von Siblia zeigen. Dort wird Men . . . stehend mit Zepter und Nikestatuette, den Fuß auf einem Maultierkopf [dargestellt]. Dieser letzte Typ, der wahrscheinlich von einem Kultbild aus Antiochia in Pisidien übernommen wurde . . . [107]

Are a cult and a respective cult statue to be expected with the adaption of the iconography of the Antiochian cult image as coin iconography in the polis Siblia? The many presuppositions and the argumentatively not secured interim stages of this thesis are symptomatic.

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[103] Klose 1996, 56.

[104] Von Mosch 1996, 160.

[105] Von Mosch 1996, 170.

[106] Nollé in: Nollé – Overbeck – Weiss 1997, 24 f.

[107] Leschhorn in: Nollé – Overbeck – Weiss 1997, 53.

In 1998/1999, M. Flashar published his studies on Klaros, which consisted of three essays. In the second part, he follows the work of Lacroix and points to criteria which were helpful in the identification of coin motifs as images of specific statues and applies them successfully to the triad of Klaros. Some of his restricting remarks are significant:

> Daraus ergibt sich die Konsequenz, daß mit einem Münzbild durchaus eine bestimmte Statue gemeint sein kann, obgleich diese aber nur sehr allgemein und unspezifisch wiedergegeben ist, und daß umgekehrt ein Stempelschneider/Münzmeister in einem anderen Fall nur einen spezifischen Symbolgehalt einer Statue, gar nicht sie selbst, in seinem „Bildprogramm" chiffrenhaft bezeichnen wollte, aber dennoch eine existente Skulptur überraschend getreu wiedergegeben hat.[108]

Methodically reflecting, although prosaic in the statement, the range of possibilities is not restricted, but many ways of usage and passing on of figure types and their messages are declared as norm.

In 1999, A. Burnett, in his essay on the topic 'architecture on coins', enriched the up to then quite positivistic research approaches[109] with critical methodologic observations. Did buildings have other representational conventions as statues? At first, very few speaks in favour of this. The author's first questions on the material "... how reliable the representations on coins can be taken to be" and "If representations on coins are not like photographs . . . , why not? What actually are the engravers trying to achieve?"[110] can by all means easily be transferred to other coin motifs. Right at the beginning, Burnett phrases the demotivating statement that for the die cutters, it was never about the depiction of a certain monument (be it a temple or a cult statue) but about the visualisation of the idea behind the design.[111] Urban cults were made public via the depiction of belonging sacral buildings, cult statues or other statues of the same deity, attributive animals or excerpts of processions.[112] According to Burnett, the codes were interchangeable.

On the subject of statues on coins, Burnett states that a basis indicated the wish to depict a specific statue which could then be displayed in a generally familiar iconography. For a majority of deities, the author sees "no reason for regarding them as intended to be depictions of actual structures rather than just creations from the die engraver's own visual repertoire"[113] and "that they are interpretations."[114]

The many important stimuli can be paraphrased in a few keynotes: the die cutters never wanted to depict temples or deities on coins as local buildings and statues actually looked. The reason for the representation of architecture is a certain point in time when something happened with the building which could be easily recognised on the coin types and put into historic context by contemporaries. Can this thesis be transferred to the representations of cult images?

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[108] Flashar 1998/1999, 227 f.
[109] Burnett 1999, 137 f.
[110] Burnett 1999, 138.
[111] Burnett 1999, 140, 151 f.
[112] Burnett 1999, 156.
[113] Burnett 1999, 139.
[114] Burnett 1999, 152.

2000–2010

T. Scheer (2000) chose an ancient historical text-oriented access to the topic of ancient cult image. She introduces ancient sources which talk about several cult images of the same deity within one city. Examples are: several temples for the same deity (with different epithets) and accordingly different statues within a city.[115] This also includes several statues within one temple, which all could be main cult images,[116] and several statues of the same deity distributed within larger temene, whereby their cultic hierarchy was unclear.[117]

Relevant for our question is the situation when deities do exist on city coinages in several iconographic types which basically differ from each other (not only through a mirrored position or attributes). Due to Scheer's suggestions, it would be possible that the figures correspond to the existing cult statues in the city.

N. Belayche addresses the cults of the Levantine region in 2001. In her chapter on coins, she writes that "information drawn from coins cannot be of an absolute veracity or our knowledge of religious facts. The numerous studies . . . have tended to overinterpret the information. They automatically lead to the existence of local cults as soon as a divinity or a temple appears on the coins."[118] This remarkably clear statement is defined more precisely in what follows. She emphasises that the cities within the area under investigation all used the same repertory of topics and motifs, thereby inspiring each other or even interchanging dies. Coin images and deities were used in politics: in Semitic-Jewish Sepphoris, the Rome-friendly attitude had been made public via a coin image of the Capitoline triad inside a three-aisled temple, although this temple never existed.[119]

On coins issued in regions where there was no 'standard religion,' unusual pictures can be contextually classified more easily. In the respective research papers, the coin image is rated as a "means of communication and . . . not an objective document."[120] This evaluation might be transferred to city coinages in regions where such a differentiated view is not possible.

K. Ehling dealt intensively with the coin types of the Mysian city Germe in his monography presented in 2001. Based on older studies (especially Schönert-Geiß 1993), it is beyond a doubt for him that statues on coins that are shown inside a temple are supposed to depict cult statues.[121] Thus, two different types of Apollon inside their temples are interpreted as two different cult images. The fact that one of them was repeated on many coin types,[122] the other one not once,[123] is transferred very directly to the urban everyday life—and explains that one of them "ein für die Stadt weniger bedeutsames Kultbild

[115] Scheer 2000, 130 f.

[116] Scheer 2000, 132–134.

[117] Scheer 2000, 134–136.

[118] Belayche 2001, 38. Repeated in other words, see p. 43.

[119] Belayche 2001, 39. Belayche 2001, 41 f. further examples for deity images which cannot correspond to the religiosity of the citizens in Semitic cities (Iupiter Heliopolites).

[120] Belayche 2001, 43 f.

[121] Ehling 2001, 71.

[122] Ehling 2001, 100, 112; 148, no. 207.

[123] Ehling 2001, 100; 150, no. 216.

gewesen, oder aber die Figur erst in späterer Zeit aufgestellt worden [sei]."[124] In contrast to cult images, the fact that architectural representations of coins offer "keine auch nur annähernd exakte Abbildung des gemeinten Gebäudes," is subsequently stated.[125] What is interesting is the discussion, only seldomly found in other works, if a chronologically earlier monetary proof of one city also means an earlier introduction of the cult if the same deity is imprinted only later in other poleis.[126]

For the author, a cult image was marked by adding a temple, and deities on coins indicate urban cults despite their often foreign iconographic origin.

Fourteen years after his first essay on the reverse images of city coins from Asia Minor and after the critical replies by Weiß[127] and Nollé,[128] H. Brandt again attends to a city in Asia Minor in 2002, this time Adada in Pisidia. In contrast to his earlier work, Brandt now chose Nollé's diction of the "von der Polis bevorzugt verehrten Götter."[129] In what follows, he processes all deities displayed on coins: for example, the Dioscuri were part of the foundation myth, Dionysos an indicator for local wine-growing, Asklepios and Hygieia stood for the health of the population. This time, the numismatic evidence is acknowledged as evidence for the urban roles of the deities. This is unfortunate, since the author, in his long footnote 124, cites considerations that far from all deities on coins had a real background.

It is not the same level if a deity image stands for an institutional cult or is supposed to indicate a supraregional 'time-related sentiment', an epidemic or an economic integration. Compared to the problem-oriented approach from 1988, the chapter on coins is a step backwards, since it refrains from a discussion on the potential of statements on coin images. The range of possible occasions for the choice of individual deities is so extensive that they can now be chosen arbitrarily. However, cult statues are not a topic.

In 2003, A. Lichtenberger compared coin representations of deities from the cities of the Syrian Decapolis with epigraphic and archaeological evidence in a comprehensive analysis. Without diving into individual results, some summarising findings shall be introduced. In the introduction, the expressiveness of coin images for the urban cults is limited programmatically; "Dennoch dürfen die Münzabbildungen nicht uneingeschränkt als Wiedergabe realer Architektur oder tatsächlicher Kulte genommen werden". especially "wenn auf konventionelle ikonographische Schemata zurückgegriffen wird."[130] Lichtenberger proposes that "eigentümliche Darstellungen auf tatsächliche Verhältnisse schließen lassen. Dies gilt sowohl für Götterdarstellungen und daraus abzuleitende Kultbelege wie auch für Architekturdarstellungen und den Rückschluß auf tatsächliche Architektur."[131]

[124] Ehling 2001, 72, 100 (here, he accuses the die cutter of an accident as third possibility).

[125] Ehling 2001, 100. Consequently, a depiction of an Asklepios without temple is not addressed as cult statue; for the many types of Dionysos and elsewhere known depictions of numerous deities, he refers to iconographic parallels of the complete ancient culture—if these cults are verified in Germe is not formulated (pp. 84–99, 113).

[126] Ehling 2001, 93 (using the example of Kybele).

[127] Weiß 1991.

[128] Nollé 1992.

[129] Brandt 2002, 406.

[130] Lichtenberger 2003, 2.

[131] Lichtenberger 2003, 2 f.

Indications for cults existed "erst in antoninischer Zeit."[132] The influences of different cultures are more frequent in this region than in the rest of the Mediterranean area. Nevertheless, the iconographic versions mostly corresponded to the *interpretatio Graeca* and to what was known from coinages in Asia Minor.[133] A secure identification of cult statues would never be possible.[134]

Lichtenberger sees the monetary evidence in this geographic area, which is influenced by many religions, as trustworthy clues to cults; certainty can hardly be obtained—sometimes deity images refer to other things than cult.

In his monography from 2004, Butcher reviewed the city coinage of the North Syrian poleis. Beyond the Syrian specifics, he expresses several generalisable observations on the topic of deity representations: the emergence of motifs meant to be cult images would be a phenomenon only of the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD. Therefore, such figures were subject to chronologically bound 'fashions.'[135] The city goddess in identical guise (based on the early Hellenistic Tyche of Antiochia) was used most often by the North Syrian cities,[136] which made the reverse images of those many cities interchangeable. In Samosata, no deities at all were displayed on the coins, only astrological symbols and the personification of community.[137]

The imagery of the North Syrian cities is marked by the missing iconographic unambiguity in the labelling of cult statues and the partial abandonment of the display of the deities important for the cities.

In her monography on the Roman colonies in Greece during imperial times, H. Papageorgiadou-Bani 2004 seldomly approaches the question as to which messages deities on the reverses were supposed to convey. Using the example of Corinth and Asklepios, she reaches a definite interpretation: the respectively earliest depiction of a deity indicates a historic situation like the revival of a cult or the restoration of a sanctuary.[138] The coin images from Patras "seem to copy statuary, and this is underlined by the habit that grew up, of representing the main subject as enclosed by a simple distyle temple."[139]

The fact that the framing by a temple is a secure evidence for a local cult has already been doubted heavily in earlier times.

Similarly stimulating as the colloquium in Munich in 1994 (published in 1997) was a symposium in Oxford in 2002 on the topic 'urban identity and coinage', whose contributions were published in 2005. In the first article, C. Howgego asks if urban elites had preferred deities prevalent empire-wide to the local indigenous deities on their coin images. The statement "in many cases there are genuine questions about whether the images represented continuity, revival, or invention"[140] forms one of the most important points in the discussion. On the basis of art-historical styles in which deity images could be depicted

[132] Lichtenberger 2003, 280, 328 f.

[133] Lichtenberger 2003, 323−327, 331, 344 f.

[134] Lichtenberger 2003, 335. The small amount of five probable cult statues within the large spectrum of coinages of 12 cities is distinctive.

[135] Butcher 2004, 224. The author excludes influences deriving from political events (p. 218).

[136] Butcher 2004, 228. 231 f.

[137] Butcher 2004, 231.

[138] Papageorgiadou-Bani 2004, 63.

[139] Papageorgiadou-Bani 2004, 67.

[140] Howgego in: Howgego – Heuchert – Burnett 2005, 3.

on coins, their associative messages are demonstrated, e.g. that archaistic figures would indicate great age and an otherness, no matter the urban reality. Temple buildings shown on reverses are seen as a possibility to express the urban identity common to all citizens—surprisingly, the same is not expressed for the statues inside of them.[141]

V. Heuchert's essay on coin iconography in the same volume is also of great importance. At the beginning, he expresses carefully: "The official nature of civic coinage and countless positive examples make it quite likely that the great majority of coin designers did indeed reflect local cults. However, it cannot be ruled out that the 'workshops' or regional denominational systems might have been responsible for some choices."[142] Regardless of that, he describes how the iconographic variety of the coin images increases from Iulian-Claudian times via the Flavian epoch and the 2nd century AD until the Severi and decreases again after that; this led to the introduction of new topics and also to a greater number of deity images on the coin types.[143] The connection with cults could not be verified; as a rule, the deity images represented standard iconographies which were used throughout the Mediterranean.

A third article in the collective volume recommendable for our research field is the one by K. Butcher. Although it focuses on Syrian coinage,[144] it contains many general observations based on the thesis that standard depictions of deities could have possessed identity-establishing statements which might not be conceivable for us today but was for contemporaries. Methodologically sensitive, he recognises subjective experiences as basis of the pictorial elements and messages from ancient times—which would be a difficult starting point for an objective analysis today. The more is known about the community in which the products originated, the more reliably they can be read.[145] He names one coinage as specific example which transforms a common sitting Zeus into a specific god by its legend. Iconographic schemes were interchangeable. The inscription was there to offer specific clues; as a rule, the people handling the coins knew who was meant anyway.

Pointedly expressed, the three named essays together lead to the view that coin images were not depictions of statues erected within the cities but would refer to something superordinated. Furthermore, the time dependence of the represented topics is a factor separate from the city, which gives occasion not to classify deities on coin reverses as an indicator for the establishment of cults 'close to the time of the coinage'. Specific iconographies not necessarily had a higher expressive value than standard images for the ancient users of the coins. In case it was important, an explanatory text was added to the pictures, thereby clearly identifying a standard representation.

In an article on Egyptian deities on the city coinage in northern Asia Minor from 2005, W. Leschhorn described the chronologically differing appearance of the three individual

[141] Howgego in: Howgego – Heuchert – Burnett 2005, 4 f. Cult images are discussed in the chapter on religion; temples, in contrast, in the chapter on monumentality. Is religion here seen as a category outside of codes for identity?

[142] Heuchert in: Howgego – Heuchert – Burnett 2005, 44.

[143] Heuchert in: Howgego – Heuchert – Burnett 2005, 49. As new topics are named: buildings (beginning with temples for the cult of the emperor in the early 1st century AD; agonistic motifs (especially prize crowns); mythological scenes with city founders.

[144] On the thematic difference of the Syrian coinage as opposed to the ones from Asia Minor s. Butcher in: Howgego – Heuchert – Burnett 2005, 147.

[145] Butcher in: Howgego – Heuchert – Burnett 2005, 146 f., 149 f., 153.

deities in the region. Leschhorn says that "nicht jede Stadt, auf deren Münzen eine ägyptische Gottheit dargestellt ist, auch ein Zentrum dieses Kultes gewesen sein [musste]."[146] He also indicates that the "Wahl dieses Rückseitenbildes in Kios . . . durch die gleichzeitige Verwendung der Harpokratesdarstellung auf Münzen von Nikaia und Tios bedingt gewesen sein [könnte], ohne dass damit eine gemeinsame Werkstätte oder ein gemeinsamer Stempelschneider vorausgesetzt werden sollte".[147] In doing so, he offers no uniform explanation for the reasons for the depictions but varies from case to case. The triad of Sarapis, Isis and Harpokrates could mean Antoninus Pius, Faustina minor and the young Marc Aurel,[148] or a series of Sarapis in Sinope could indicate a "größeres Sarapis-Fest."[149]

At the end, the questions (again) remain as to which of the many deities of urban pantheons received the honour to adorn a coin and what could have been the occasions for it, e.g. in the case of the Egyptian deities. Many different categories are suggested rather 'intuitively' in this essay.

Coin images are an important evidence for the cults of the four cities of the Carian Harpasos valley. They were put together by F. Delrieux in 2008. In Bargasa, excavations revealed remains of temples and statues which seem to match quite well an Asklepios inside a temple and a Zeus group depicted on coins.[150] Due to two coin types with an Athena of the Promachos type inside a temple, Delrieux supposes the former existence of such a sacral building for the city of Harpasa.[151] He describes the "mimetisme iconographique systématique" of the neighbouring Carian communities on the basis of the representations of an Artemis of the Ephesos type.[152] Do identical deity images also mean a common cult? In the neighbouring city Neapolis, Artemis and Apollon were depicted on coins as individual figures inside of temples in the 3rd century AD; for the author, this again is a reliable proof for a cult.[153] A coin image of the Dioscuri in Orthosia is rated as an indicator for a local cult, since here, a small altar was depicted.[154] Delrieux determines for the Carian cities an increase of deity images during the reign of Gordian III.[155]

In Caria, neighbouring cities seem to influence each other in the choices of motifs.[156] Does this provide information on common cults or only on commonly used coin images? Perhaps even both? In the four small cities in the Harpasos valley, the influence of supra-regional representation fashions clearly shows.

In 2008, the monography by J. Dalaison dealt with the coin types of Amaseia in the area of the Pontos. During the discussion on the deities presented on the reverses, she frequently mentions types which are supra-regionally prevalent and which were also known from other places–she does not, however, deduce a cult from these images.[157] The author

[146] Leschhorn 2005, 204 f.
[147] Leschhorn 2005, 212.
[148] Leschhorn 2005, 206.
[149] Leschhorn 2005, 209.
[150] Delrieux 2008, 202 f.
[151] Delrieux 2008, 205.
[152] Delrieux 2008, 205.
[153] Delrieux 2008, 206.
[154] Delrieux 2008, 210.
[155] Delrieux 2008, 206.
[156] Delrieux 2008, 210.
[157] Dalaison 2008, 191.

judges differently when dealing with depictions of temples: " . . . lorsque les coins de revers montrent les divinités placées sous des éléments architecturaux, nous pouvons supposer que celles-ci passédaient un lieu de culte à Amaseia."[158] There were three deities inside of temple-like buildings on the coins— Asklepios, Hades-Sarapis and the city goddess Tyche—for each of them, there was also epigraphic evidence. On the representation of Tyche, she remarks that "la présence da la base . . . renvoie sans doute à l'idée que le temple possède en son sein une statue de Tyche." As doubtlessly as figures on bases inside temple buildings are defined as cult statues, the author does not want to concede any evidential value to the coin images regarding their posture and design.[159]

This work also uprates the potential messages of sacral buildings in comparison to those of deity images, although the author knows the discussion on this topic. A comprised resume would be as follows: temples and statue bases on coins verify cult, a specific appearance of statues, however, cannot be deduced.

2010–2020

In 2010, M. E. H. Walbank deals with the same question as this essay using the example of coins from the Roman colony Corinth in imperial times. The problem is addressed already in the first few lines:

> . . . because the details on the coins often do not match the archaeological evidence. When the details of a monument or statue differ from one coin type to another, is it simply artistic license or do the changes have some deeper significance? Did the building or cult statue even exist at the time a particular coin image was minted? And, if so, how popular was the image?[160]

Using the example of the so-called temple for Gens Iulia, the author reveals—based on Burnett 1999—that the temple was not depicted on coins in order to show the building itself but to mark a specific point in time.[161] The comparison of a coin image of Tyche inside a temple with fragments of the actually excavated cult statue of Tyche did not show any conformity.[162] On the depictions of not identifiable temples, Walbank writes a sentence which can easily be transferred to many other pictures of objects: "These temples must have been so familiar to the Corinthians that they did not need identifying, but we can only make intelligent guesses."[163] After that, she turns to statues: "Is it a cult image, a well-known sculpture displayed in the city, or does the image represent something entirely different?"[164] Criteria which already Lacroix deemed relevant, like the depiction of statue bases and statue supports, Walbank regards as well-founded. At the same time, however, she recognises the many variants of Melicertes representations, among which there

[158] Dalaison 2008, 172.
[159] Dalaison 2008, 172.
[160] Walbank 2010, 151.
[161] Walbank 2010, 159.
[162] Walbank 2010, 171.
[163] Walbank 2010, 173.
[164] Walbank 2010, 182.

may be local cult images, as "creations from the die engraver's own visual repertoire."[165] The case is similar with Poseidon, who is important for Corinth: there were many different representations which reflected regionally common types.[166]

On the basis of the coins from Corinth, it is easy to understand how freely die engravers made changes; however, the viewers of the coins must have been completely aware that the pictures were supposed to mean the cult image—or, how Walbank puts it: "One gets the impression that the die cutters enjoyed playing with the image and introducing new elements."[167]

In a complete submission of the topography and ancient evidence of the Lydian city Hypaipa in 2013, S. Altınoluk emphasises the great meaning of the most important goddess Artemis Anaitis, whose pictures survived on coins and in relief. The hieratic figure was displayed alone, inside a temple and together with other deities or respectively the founder Torrhebus on coin reverses.[168] Zeus is presented in several iconographies; however, a local cult is doubted, as the origin of the worship lay in the mountains nearby.[169] The author wants to deduce a local cult from coins with different depictions of Asklepios. This is supported by an inscription with an indication of a priesthood.[170] Due to a literary mention and coin images, there is also supposed to have been a temple for Dionysos, although epigraphic and archaeological evidence is missing. On account of the chronologically consistent evidence, Altınoluk wants to put the introduction of the cult in the time of Nero.[171] On the basis of one single coin type with Hermes and a statuette, she claims a cult for him.[172] Referring to Nollé 2012, the author explains her premise that every coin image of a deity indicated an official urban cult. In contrast to other publications, this is a clear methodical positioning.[173]

When epigraphic evidence indicates a priesthood, coin images confirm the existence of such cults. An iconographic reliability of the coin figures was not necessary as information for the viewer. In a consequent explanatory model, every figure on the coins is considered an evidence of an institutionalised cult.

In his dissertation from 2013, A. Matthaei concerns himself with Hellenistic coin images from Asia Minor. Many remarks are important in a research historical-methodological way: in the reconstruction of cult images, the "unabdingbare Diskussion der methodischen Möglichkeiten" would be skipped regularly.[174] For the Hellenistic, iconographically easier coins, he emphasises the meaning of a pictorial motif which can be conceived quickly and can be assigned to specific cities;[175] slightly moderated, this statement can also be adopted for the cities in imperial times. With the example of Miletupolis, Matthaei calls attention to the fact that deity images could be iconographically varied also within a city and that

[165] Walbank 2010, 182.
[166] Walbank 2010, 184−186.
[167] Walbank 2010, 192 f.
[168] Altınoluk 2013, 37−41, 88, 90 f.
[169] Altınoluk 2013, 47 f. (has Nollé 2012, 127−195 esp. 168 cited here been misunderstood?).
[170] Altınoluk 2013, 48 f.
[171] Altınoluk 2013, 49 f., 88.
[172] Altınoluk 2013, 51.
[173] Altınoluk 2013, 87.
[174] Matthaei 2013, 14.
[175] Matthaei 2013, 101.

iconographies could be adopted from other cities—along the lines of: the more famous, the better.[176] This open interpretative approach is taken back when the author names criteria which are indicative of the cult image worshipped in a city: "wenn ganzfigurige Motive auf Münzen mit Statuenstützen dargestellt werden, die bei zweidimensionalen, bildlichen Wiedergaben nicht notwendig sind" and "Verweis darauf, dass es sich bei der abgebildeten Gottheit um das Bild einer in der Stadt verehrten Kultstatue handelt, sind Beischriften, mit denen der Kultname . . . genannt wird."[177]

Many of the results seem as if they could unhesitatingly be adopted for civic coinages in imperial times and their iconographic design.

In his dissertation from 2014, R. Bennett pursues the question of how much influence urban donators of coinages and coin workshops had on the iconography. He does so using the examples of Thyateira and Laodikeia. According to him, it was mainly the large nominal values with "elaborate iconography" which were preferred by "money sponsors."[178] In many coin images, the influence of individuals becomes evident;[179] this could go so far as to display a Demeter on an obverse of the Carian Trapezopolis—without any connection with a civic cult but as a public demonstration of a wheat donation by the financer of the coin.[180] "Individual eponyms may have chosen the types most pertinent to their interests from the established canon of civic iconograph . . . Only in cases when . . . the iconography is highly unusual are they noticeable."[181] Despite changing workshops, the most important topics remained identical for a long time—this would testify to the small influence the workshops had on the repertory of motifs, which, however, sometimes yielded new iconographic input (in the case of the supraregional 'topics in fashion').[182] He can observe repeatedly that some of the deities at hand, which do appear in several versions, cannot be connected with the cults in the city.[183]

What can be deduced from the many results of this study is that the basic canon of the respective urban topics could absolutely be influenced individually. The more impressive and extraordinary the picture was, the higher the possibility of it being a custom design. Not all deity images can be harmonised with the verified cults.

In 2014, T. Korkut shows a cautious and reflective dealing with the coins of the Lycian city Tlos. On the one hand, he reasons that "ausgehend von den Götterdarstellungen auf den Münzen von Tlos, von einer bestimmten Gottheit, deren Kult für Tlos spezifisch ist, nicht gesprochen werden kann. Denn die von diesen bekannten Götterbilder kommen auch auf den Münzen anderer Städte Lykiens vor . . . und [waren] in ganz Lykien weit verbreitet." And "andererseits gibt es auch schriftlich bezeugte Götterkulte, die auf den Münzen Lykiens kaum nachzuweisen sind."[184]

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[176] Matthaei 2013, 108, 110 f., 116, 129, 132.

[177] Matthaei 2013, 114 f.

[178] Bennett 2014, 47−51, 65, 68 (here, the example Magnesia).

[179] Bennett 2014, 73−83.

[180] Bennett 2014, 76, also the patterns of the city-identifying deities on Homonoia coinages could be deviated from if the sponsor liked.

[181] Bennett 2014, 83.

[182] Bennett 2014, 52−54, 63, 69. The succession of popular topics at specific times developed by others—mainly Heuchert 2005 (in: Howgego – Heuchert – Burnett 2005) can be confirmed by Bennett (pp. 51, 53, 85, 87).

[183] Bennett 2014, 49 (Hephaistos and Selene-Hekate in Thyateira).

[184] Korkut 2014, 31.

According to the author, coins were not used in the scope of urban hierarchic encounters in Lycia of the imperial period. The Lycian Alliance was still active in imperial times and standardised the monetary public image of the members.[185]

The coins of the Paphlagonian inland city Gangra-Germanicopolis were discussed by L. Bricault und F. Delrieux in 2014. They were issued only in the years from Septimius Severus to Caracalla; nevertheless, their reverses show a large number of deities.[186] Most striking are the many depictions of well-known ancient 'masterpieces' of the Late Classical and Early Hellenistic period, as for example the Crouching Venus, a leaning Herakles, a calmly standing Athena, several types of Sarapis, Asklepios, Artemis and Apollon; there are hardly any motifs used exclusively by Gangra-Germanicopolis.[187] The authors exclude the existence of such deity statues within the urban space, since it could be established frequently that the pictorial motifs also occur in neighbouring cities and even on Roman imperial coinage: " . . . intégrant certaines des divinités les plus populaires de l'Empire."[188]

The deity images on the Severan coinages are not connected with local cults. As a rule, the motifs were rather borrowed from other cities—exactly the epigraphically verified local cults of Magna Mater and Hera were not displayed on coins. In Gangra-Germanicopolis, coins take on the role of a connection with Rome and as a sign of an 'internationality'. These are superordinate levels of messages in which pictures are supposed to arouse associations instead of depicting realia or visualise specific city cults.

In his dissertation from 2015, N. Elkins discusses the depictions of architecture on Roman coins implementing new methodical ideas (on the basis of Burnett 1999). Some observations on the "wider ideological or visual program . . . on the coinage"[189] can be transferred to other ancient objects—as for example the representations of deities as potential displays of statues. Elkins works out that in imperial times, many cities copied temple representations from Roman imperial coins for their own coin types.[190] The author focuses on the determination of chronologic-regional-motivic distribution patterns and the role of the images as identity markers.[191] It can be transferred to other coin images that "These abbreviated architectural forms [column supported arches] appear to have been symbolic frameworks used to elevate the importance and divinity of the figures within them."[192]

Framing of figures as a strategy to charge meaning—tentatively applied to deities inside of temples or temple-like structures: the designers of the coins wanted to increase the appeal of the deity displayed. However, to deduce a secured spacial or content-related relationship between deity and city might perhaps be exaggerated.

In 2015, R. M. Motta introduced a paper on the coinage from Dora, located in the Levantine region which is known for its religious diversity and syncretism. During her analysis, which was shaped by many theoretical models, she worked out that the deities

[185] On this, s. also Weiß 1992, 144 with n. 4.

[186] Bricault – Delrieux 2014, 91 f.

[187] Bricault – Delrieux 2014, 102−109, 113 f., 119.

[188] Bricault – Delrieux 2014, 107. Inscriptions only mention deities who are not displayed on coins (pp. 129−141).

[189] Elkins 2015, 2.

[190] Elkins 2015, 162, 170.

[191] Elkins 2015, 146−157, 162−166.

[192] Elkins 2015, 169.

represented most frequently on the coins were Tyche and Zeus Doros, the gods most important for the city.[193] Three coin types of Tyche inside a temple from the reign of Caracalla "might provide an opportunity for a look at the physical setting of the cult, and therefore a chance to analyze the architecture of the city"–a surprisingly positivistic remark given the otherwise careful dealing with general statements.[194] Different Tyche statues in counterpose inside of differing architectures are presented on the coins; the author discusses if one of the depictions is supposed to represent the real temple, whereas the others were artistic freedom. She does not come to a conclusion.[195] However, she mentions the excavations of a temple and thereby connects the coin images with a real structure for the readers. The main goal of the coin design was not the visualisation of urban religiosity but the statement on a conscious Romanisation.[196]

As seen frequently before, depictions of architecture are ruled as being more relevant than those of deities. Buildings as coin motifs were a visual evidence for the multicultural city's orientation towards Rome.

In her article from 2016, V. Sauer offers a neutral handling of the evidence potential of the coin images from Pontic cities: "Meist sind die Gottheiten in persona dargestellt oder sie sind gleichsam aus der kultischen Sphäre genommen—sei es, daß ihr Kultbild oder Tempel abgebildet wird."[197] She then shares her observation on the imbalanced tradition: the main deities of the cities, which could be deduced from other sources, were not the ones most often displayed on coin reverses; some epigraphically mentioned deities could not be found in coinage. Based on French explanatory strategies, she compares real urban pantheons with a respective 'coin pantheon' which—read between the lines—offers its own truth.

Deities on coins are not to be understood as documentation but quasi independently, according to this thesis. Unfortunately, it is not problematised why this could be the case.

The rich coining of the *polis* Ephesos from imperial times was submitted by S. Karwiese in 2016. His comments on the reverse images with deities show well in how many directions interpretations of images can lead. Here are some examples: it is explicitly phrased that Artemis Ephesia, which was minted during the 2nd century BC and then continuously since 44 BC, was a cult image. The motif develops from a single statue via a statue inside a temple under Vespasian to finally being accompanied by a deer on each side in the time of Domitian.[198] It was recognisable that with important motifs, a reproduction of these motifs was sought, whereas the recognisability was never doubted. Since Domitian, there was also the display of a sitting Zeus who is addressed as Olympios in legends. Therefore, it is the cult image from Peloponnesian Olympia which here stood for a Zeus cult in Ephesian Olympieion. At later times, the image would have been

[193] Motta 2015, 55−62.

[194] Motta 2015, 62. The discussions on real representations or fantasy buildings with other messages the author does know and cite, however.

[195] Motta 2015, 63, fig. 40, 43, 46. The descriptions of the architecture (one time aedicula, the other time tetrastyle temple) cannot be comprehended.

[196] Motta 2015, 63.

[197] Sauer 2016, 198.

[198] Karwiese 2016, 12, 32, 56, 60, 63.

imprinted when there were special activities in the sanctuary.[199] According to Karwiese, the calmly standing Herakles does not belong to the Ephesian pantheon but was depicted due to several reasons: first under Antoninus Pius in order to refer to the athletic victory of an Ephesian; subsequently, it was often depicted when new rulers were displayed on the civic coins. The semi-god was an especially suitable type for this.[200] The case was slightly different with the figures of Hermes. They were imprinted every time people wanted to point out currently upcoming festivities.[201] Leto, in contrast, surely had a cult, since her figure was displayed more often, and on one special coin type, the birth of Artemis was depicted—an event which was later re-enacted during cult festivities.[202]

In this volume, coin images are interpreted in different ways or, respectively, the messages of the motifs are reconstructed with the help of different ways of argumentation. Sometimes, the coins with deity images are indicative of cults, sometimes they are an almost topical medium of information without cultic background. The presence of the main goddess illustrates her prominent position, irrespective of context or attributes.

In his essay from 2017, A. Lichtenberger deals with the question of "To what extent are these depictions [of buildings on coin reverses] accurate, or are they merely topical symbols of civic life?" He uses the example of coinages from the region of Palestine, following his monography from 2003. In the introduction, the publication of K. Kraft—45 years after its publication—is named as evidence for the state of research, according to which the "depiction of architecture has little connection to real architecture and coins cannot be used for reconstructing civic life at all."[203] Important is the reference to the mainly private nature of inscriptions, statuettes etc. in contrast to the coins as official urban testimonies—whereby "idealizations tell us a great deal about civic identities. This means that even an image that does not truly mirror reality nonetheless creates a certain reality with important information about civic identities."[204] In some cases, it can be verified that deity images on coins are depicted without any architectural framing, although temples for these deities could actually be excavated.[205] In his final review, the author reveals that the depiction of temple buildings on coins ensued only in times when their diameter allowed a detailed presentation. Only in extremely few cases, coin images could be identified with excavated sacred buildings.[206]

Lichtenberger frequently names the 'basic information' of the coin images as a category for information, whereby no iconographically faithful display of an actual situation was meant (although he frequently compares archaeological remains and 'coin temples' by means of number of pillars), but only the indication of the existence of cults and/or buildings. The case examples show that in the case of archaeologically evidenced

[199] Karwiese 2016, 66, 172.

[200] Karwiese 2016, 103, 129, 301.

[201] Karwiese 2016, 301.

[202] Karwiese 2016, 310.

[203] Lichtenberger 2017, 197.

[204] Lichtenberger 2017, 198.

[205] Lichtenberger 2017, 209, 211.

[206] Lichtenberger 2017, 215 f. The indication (p. 217), that differing representations of one and the same work were common also in other archaeological genres as manuscripts or statue copies disregards that these incorporate copies of far older originals but are not original evidence, as coin images are.

cults, the sacred buildings are often not depicted on the coins, but only the respective deity figures. Therefore, temple representations are not necessarily to be rated as clues for urban cults.

For the slightly deviant area of Roman imperial coins with depictions of architecture from the 1st century AD, S. Ritter suggests a methodically new evaluation in 2017. Some of his ideas shall be gathered here: "The iconograpic evidence leads to no other conclusion than that it was simply intended here to depict the idea of a temple . . . without expecting the viewer to identify a particular building."[207] Furthermore, the up to now usual differentiation of 'specific' and 'general' forms of representation (of buildings, but also transferred to statue types) is criticised in that this binary concept would enforce a decision which was originally not intended; nevertheless, this categorisation would be more sensible than the one in 'realistic' and 'unrealistic,' since it is not about the images themselves but about the models behind them.[208] A third conceptual pair is the one adopted from Elkins 2015 (but already introduced by Caccamo Caltabianco 2007) of 'denotative' and 'connotative' types, whereby the first would name those with a specific and easy-to-read message, whereas the latter aimed at superior ideals.[209] According to Ritter, "the objective of the representation is almost never simply to document its existence . . . [and] all coin images, even if they show a particular building in Rome, are 'connotative' by nature!"[210] The message of the text would dominate that of the images.[211]

In how far can these ideas be transferred to images of deities? If the allocation to modern categories can bring new insights into ancient groups of objects remains undecided. Presuppositions can produce only a certain kind of results. We should be open for any results in consulting the whole spectrum of messages within the urban context when the figure of a deity is displayed on a coin reverse. This seems to be the only way to do justice to the major part of the representations.

What is remarkable is the objectivity of some current essays which do not want to force the material into a desired direction. An example for this is the essay of I. Türkoğlu on the coins of Carian Keramos from 2019. Although the coinages of imperial times show, beside a nameable Zeus (sometimes inside a temple) also an archaistic head, the complete figure of a man with double axe and panther (also inside a temple),[212] the author consciously refrains from deducing statements on the urban pantheon from them due to the small concordance with epigraphically verified cults.[213]

Such a reserved evaluation of the divine coin images is rare. This renunciation speaks for the implicit thesis that representations of deities do not necessarily denote local cults.

In a recent publication from 2019, which picks up the discussion initiated by K. Kraft on the die workshops and their influence on coin iconography (and possibly ends it), G. Watson can determine with the help of extensive case studies, that the dies for the cities

[207] Ritter 2017, 104.

[208] Ritter 2017, 105, 133.

[209] Ritter 2017, 124, 135.

[210] Ritter 2017, 136.

[211] Ritter 2017, 127−132, 134.

[212] Türkoğlu 2019, 185−187.

[213] Türkoğlu 2019, 190. Besides the already mentioned deities, Athena, Dionysos, Nemesis and Artemis were depicted.

were specifically produced by respective workshops.[214] However, Watson also reaches the conclusion that some image details could go to the account of die cutters and were not to be explained with urban guidelines—he thereby relativises the postulation of the trustworthiness of coin depictions.[215] In his detailed observations, he can prove that the Apollon Sidetes shown on coins was not worshipped in Lyrbe, but that another Apollon cult existed there; the pictorial motif should be understood only as a clue.[216]

Having reached the end of our journey through the numismatic publications, a transfer of Watson's results to the initial question makes a generally valid explanatory model improbable. Figures should neither be deemed as unconditionally iconographically trustworthy nor be seen as indicator for specific cults without a reason.

Summary and evaluation of the research approaches

During the course of the decades, the discussions seem to have produced a tendency: images of deities on coins should not *per se* be seen as trustworthy pictorial evidence. Even in the case of the main deities verified by other sources, the *proestôtes theoí*,[217] too frequently there are several ways of representation in one and the same community. In the case of others, a seemingly individual and easily identifiable image is changed from coin type to coin type; they just add parts of clothing, attributes or companions. The conclusion can only be: **cult images** cannot be reconstructed in their iconographic details with the help of coins, since a completely trustworthy 'copy-like' representation cannot be expected. The phenomenon known from architectural displays of a 'clue' to an actually existing or planned or even only wished-for building with a respective fictive representation can therefore also be transferred to the statues shown inside of temples. What is important is the depiction of the 'topic'[218] or an 'idea,'[219] not an exact representation.[220]

Let us back up this consideration by discussing the arguments which have been made over the decades in order to verify 'real' cult images. Already in the 19th century, the representation of a deity inside of a building indicated to be a temple was named as a criterion.[221] Up until about 15 years ago, this reason could be read regularly, however, currently no more. More frequently, the safeguard is sought in unusual/unique forms of

[214] Watson 2019, 127 f., 136 f.

[215] Watson 2019, 137.

[216] Watson 2019, 134, 136. The image of Apollon Sidetes would be owed to the wished-for partnership with Side and was therefore no evidence of religion but of the city's politics.

[217] In Nollé 1992, 81 different ancient possibilities of address.

[218] Schönert-Geiß 1987, 88; Weisser 1995, 19; von Mosch 1996.

[219] Burnett 1999, 140, 151 f.

[220] Figures believed to be cult images in colonies in Asia Minor from numismatic research exemplarily analysed by the author: Filges 2015, 145 (Apollon in Alexandria), 147 (Apollo Clarius in Apamea and Cremna), 156 (Diana in Apamea), 157 f. (Artemis in Olbasa and Cremna), 168 f. (Hercules in Iconium and Olbasa), 174 f. (sitting Zeus in several colonies), 176 (Kybele in Cremna), 185 (Minerva in Ninica), 190 (Nemesis in several colonies), 192 (Neptun in Sinope and Apamea), 201 (Sarapis in Sinope), 204 (Sol in Cremna), 206 (Venus in Olbasa).

[221] Gardner 1883.

design. This was already mentioned in von Fritze 1910 and recently in the critical work of Bennett 2014. As a rule, however, what is already said above is true for unique iconography: in the case of several coinages with figures who supposedly refer to an identical statue, variations can be found from coin type to coin type if we take a closer look. A third argument for the representation of a cult statue is the image's frequency during long durations of time (introduced by von Keil 1923 as distinctive feature)–and again, the already mentioned critique is true. Finally, basis-like elevations and supports were named,[222] which coin figures do not need for statics. An argument against that is that figures in counterpose are allegedly used to suggest a high age of the statue. The apparent logic of the claim 'a coin figure does not need a support, therefore a support is not an indicator of a real statue made of ore or marble' is plausible at first but rather corresponds to our modern wish to understand ancient pictures. Let us record: cult images were not represented faithfully on coins; however, they could indeed have been indicated. A positive decision on the motif is very hard to verify.

With this, we leave the anyhow questionable level of hope for authentic copy-like representations and turn to deities as pictorial elements. In research approaches of classical studies, anthropomorphic figures whose specific iconographic characteristics enable a recognisability are interpreted as being consciously chosen pictorial codes. The question is: which message was supposed to be behind them? At this point, the approaches diverge. We have learned of examples where motifs were adopted from neighbouring cities, of the representation of supra-regionally known individual statues, above all of multiple forms of representations on the coin types of one city.[223] In addition, the use of unspecific 'standard-iconographies' which have been equally used in many regions of the Roman empire often left perplexity on the informational content of these images (first von Fritze 1910, then intensively during the 2000s).

Ever since the early 20th century, the majority argues that the representations were connected with the **institutionalised cults** of the issuing city and would reveal them. A male recognisable as Dionysos is code for an institutionalised cult of Dionysos, Nemesis for an urban Nemesis cult and an Eros for a cult of Eros. This is plausible in the case of the frequently and long-issued figures of urban main deities. However, if every single coinage with a unique god motif visualises a cult—such quantitative aspects are hardly ever problematised.

In the early 1990s, Nollé formulated the clear thesis that all deities displayed on the coin types were cultically worshipped in the issuing polis. Some of these cults were only 'activated' as coin motifs when situations occurred in which divine helpers were called upon. The term chosen for this is "Huldigung."[224] In case of a bad harvest, Demeter was depicted, in the case of epidemics Asklepios or Apollon; in wine-growing areas, Dionysos was preferred. In this, the possibilities to create occasions which could fit the deities retrospectively were arbitrary. But what about representations of 'situation-unbound' deities whose responsibilities could not be explained causally, as for example Hermes,

[222] Bosch 1935.

[223] Even if it is possible that a deity had several official temples and several statues within a city (Scheer 2000), this is, according to archaeological findings, far less frequent than the existing of different types of a deity on the coins of a city.

[224] Nollé 1992, 84; Nollé in: Nollé – Overbeck – Weiss 1997, 24.

Isis, Hades or Herakles? What were the situations in which special help was desired in the case of representations of an Athena or Artemis? In individual cases, there might be perfect explanations—but can they not be always found if we search long enough? Does this thesis work as a generalisable interpretative approach? Its appeal is made up of the fact that it can include any deity into the urban pantheons, whereas its problem is the conscious heuristic limitation on the sphere of cults—do we do justice to the ancient living environment of countless poleis in the Roman empire in this way?[225]

At this point, we shall return to the coins from Cremna, whose distinctive features caused this summary. The coins with numerous deities which are distributed throughout all coinage periods, their names written in dative, which legitimised the coins' function as urban and show institutionalised votive offerings seem to confirm Nollé's thesis. Nevertheless, coin images with deities could also have a substitutional role and have been effective as temporary 'votive'—without sanctuary and altar, without responsible priests. If there was a real historic occasion for the issue of the coins, if they were supposed to refer to the establishment of a small shrine or if the 'modern' oriental deities were supposed to be shown now in Cremna as well: the population of the city had decided on a diversified pictorial language, thereby at the same time symbolising the pious attitude towards as many deities as possible.

Besides that, there were and are many authors who reject a connection of coin figures with religion in singular cases. The reasons for this often sound similar. There were many seemingly arbitrary representations which were better known from other places and which did not have an overlap with the cult evidence of the issuing polis but frequently found connecting factors in magistrate careers, participation in delegations or priesthood. In these cases, the direct dependence on the city, its cults and the coin images is suspended.

Whereas Magie 1953 wanted to assume an only decorating role of the images on coin reverses via plausible considerations of statistic distributions, the deity motifs later gained a certain symbolic power which was supposed to transport **abstract information**. The motifs were supposed to transport historic,[226] individual-representing,[227] coin value-marking[228] or Rome-affiliated[229] statements. Thereby, the people choosing the coin images were awarded great creativity and intellectuality in the handling of images, which were taken from a supraregional motif pool and were used depending on the intended statement—if the message was understood was decided only retrospectively.

[225] Especially problematic in this approach is the time-bound usage of some deity types in form of real 'fashion deities' in specific decades, which is accepted by all parties (Harl 1987, 14; Nollé 1992, 85; Heuchert in: Howgego – Heuchert – Burnett 2005, 49; Delrieux 2008, 206). Factors independent of individual cities further show in the fact that in regular cities, deities were generally used as coin motifs much earlier than in neighbouring colonies (Filges 2015, 109, 331).

[226] Schönert-Geiß 1972; Burnett 1999; in parts also Karwiese 2016.

[227] Harl 1987; Howgego – Heuchert − Burnett 2005; Bennett 2014.

[228] MacDonald 1992; Klose 1996.

[229] Nollé 1995; Belayche 2001; Bricault – Delrieux 2014; Motta 2015.

The necessity of reflected and unbiased iconological interpretations

We got to know an astonishing diversity of strategies of the communities. Some *poleis* chose a pictorial language limited to extremely few motifs, others chose a great spectrum of motifs. Some preferred local cults as topics, others searched for references which lay beyond the city limits. As such, it is not surprising that the modern interpretations of the 'iconographic programmes' are equally widespread—it is hard to generalise antiquity.

In the face of this, I shall now introduce a respectively open explanatory model, in which I will not pre-formulate rigid interpretative patterns for divine figures on imperial coins but will consciously permit different interpretative approaches—sometimes even in combination.

One guideline, however, shall nevertheless be maintained: ancient pictorial language has consistently been regulated by content; it would be astounding to have discovered an experimental playground—which is why at least the 'decor thesis' of Magie 1953 seems to be improbable.

1) Official polis cults have been presented by figures on coin reverses most frequently. What was unclear is who was able to recognise them. A rule applies to this: the more frequent a deity was displayed, no matter in which form, the higher the possibility that it should point to institutionalised cults. Citizens knew about their urban sanctuaries and priesthoods anyway, no matter which iconography was chosen.
2) Statues famous throughout the Mediterranean could have been depicted for many reasons. In the case of the easily identifiable representational topics, not an iconographic but a cult-indicating intended message is well conceivable.

In the list at the beginning of the article, these would be the options a) and b).
In contrast, the following reasons for choice do not presuppose a steady permanent city cult.

3) Representations of 'rescuing' deities in anticipated dangerous situations.
4) With pictures of new deities, which were popular at certain times, so-called 'fashion topics', the city showed how 'modern' it was. At the same time, it secured their divine help.[230]
5) Beside all this, it could have been an urban strategy to visualise the pious attitude of the citizens by as many deities on reverses as possible, parallel to the miscellaneous possibilities of statements—regardless if respective cults existed in the city or not.
6) The deities of close neighbours depicted on coins could have indicated regional cult communities or friendly relationships; perhaps there was also economic interlacing behind it. 'Shared' deities on the reverses would have possessed an effect which would equal the one of the Homonoia coin types.
7) Deity images were political statements within generally accepted city-state hierarchies. The connection with Rome was especially important.

[230] Since deities have been depicted more often at specific times, and since some deities were only depicted at specific times, we cannot deduce cult introductions from the representations.

8) The motifs on the coin types from coin sponsors not necessarily had to conform to the urban pantheon or the superordinated intended message. Personal wishes of individual citizens were also possible, as long as the responsible councils agreed.

These options would belong to the groups d) and e) mentioned at the beginning.

Systematised differently, the proposals 1–5 would have a mainly religious connotation, the possibilities 6–7 a political-economic one and variant 8 would allow individuals to present 'their' images to a larger addressed audience for a short time beyond the norms.

After this attempt to classify the messages of city coinages from Asia Minor into categories (which demands to be modified and enhanced in the sense of scientific cognitive processes), it seems almost astounding that all these different statements were transported mainly via deities. What was the advantage of the representation of divine entities? What was it that displays of urban architectures, foundation myths, agones or other local events could, in contrast, not express?

An attempt of an answer could be: different to the mentioned visualisations of place-bound objects or situations, deities have been intelligible at once and 'universally', no matter in what city the viewers of the coins lived. An Athena was recognised by all people within the Mediterranean; a gateway construction, however, left behind questions; the figure of a youthful heros also needed to be explained by inscriptions.

Olympic and 'modern' deities were what connected everyone, no matter if in Greece, Syria or Asia Minor; they were what could be named by all. Even when the first rule surely was 'images for citizens', there might have been hope that foreigners could also decipher the motifs.

What does this 'open approach' at the end mean? It hardly helps to better classify a figure on a coin reserve into one of the traditional or new categories. Still, main deities and official cults have to be verified—under inclusion of all available non-numismatic sources—with the help of unique iconographies, their frequency within the whole monetary material of the issuing city in unavoidably subjective interpretative approaches.

However, the new approach warns of a restrictive determination of allegedly verified interpretative patterns in which figures exclusively point to cults or are even supposed to represent cult images. If there are arguments against such assumptions, it should be further questioned. If a determination is not possible due to insufficient evidence, it is recommended to formulate these insecurities.

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