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BRUNO CALLEGHER

Coins and Economy in Magdala/Taricheae

Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, Jerusalem

VANDENHOECK & RUPRECHT GÖTTINGEN



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Bruno Callegher

Coins and Economy in Magdala/Taricheae

With a Foreword by Rosario Pierri OFM
and a Contribution by Arianna D'Ottone

In collaboration with the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum (SBF) of Jerusalem

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Foreword

The first stone has been laid. The Custody of the Holy Land has long awaited the publication of the results of the latest excavation campaigns in Magdala, if only for the considerable economic commitment undertaken over the years to finance them. The importance of the site for archaeologists engaged in research at or around the shores of Lake Tiberias is significant. The good news that we can finally draw from the data offered by the coins found in Magdala will certainly be welcomed by the academic community with great enthusiasm.

This volume by Prof. Bruno Callegher is the first in a series intended to make known the results of these excavations, and it augurs well, because the laborious publication of the volumes on the excavations of Magdala – more precisely of that area of the city, which is owned by the Custody of the Holy Land – has launched.

With painstaking detail, Prof. Callegher reconstructs the history of the excavations of the site and therefore it is preferable to leave this story and the history of Magdala/Taricheae to him. Following the careful study of the coins discovered, I limit myself to giving proper attention to the importance the city, with its vicissitudes, had between the 1st and 5th centuries within the commercial and political context of a specific geographical area. It turns out to be strategic for the exchanges between the Mediterranean and the lands beyond the lake. Furthermore, from the accurate reconstruction of Prof. Callegher, a fact of considerable importance is revealed, namely the correspondence between the scant sources on Magdala and the lively economic activity that guaranteed its discrete prosperity.

Tradition has it that this site corresponds to Mary of Magdala's city of origin. And even if the imagination has sometimes taken the upper hand in the sources that speak of it, those remains still interest us nonetheless because they are connected to this unique figure mentioned in the gospels, she who became part of the group of women who followed Jesus (Lk 8:2). This is the real reason that prompted the Custody of the Holy Land to persevere in the attempts to acquire that piece of land along the shores of Lake Tiberias. 1903 saw the first attempts but it was only in 1922 that the acquisition was finalized. Anyone who knows the history of the Custody even briefly, will also know that the Franciscan friars have always had at heart the protection of places linked to the Gospel accounts, following a centuries-old tradition that dates back to the first epoch of Christianity. Being in the vicinity of Capernaum that was preserved, Magdala too had to be preserved, and so it was.

In view of the mission entrusted to it by the Church, the Custody intended to re-evaluate the site with the aim above all, of offering pilgrims a place to visit; a place that recalls a woman whose life was transfigured by her encounter with Jesus of Nazareth and by his word.

From this point of view, archaeological investigations are certainly of great importance but they are not decisive. We have not gone in search of the home of the Magdalene, but we are also only interested in the fact that Jesus had passed through one of those streets – the layout of which has been brought to light – and that either there or elsewhere he met a woman named Mary who became his disciple, followed him to Jerusalem in the days of his Passion, and was commanded

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by the Risen One to go and announce to the disciples his return to the Father (Jn 20:17). Archeology directs its own course as it always has.

In 1935 Frs. Sylvester Saller and Bellarmino Bagatti visited the site for an initial reconnaissance conducted on behalf of the then Custos, Fr. Nazzareno Iacopozzi; but it was only in 1971 that the first excavation campaign was conducted by Frs. Virgilio Corbo and Stanislao Loffreda. The sole purpose of mentioning these beginnings is to remind that the later achievements were possible thanks to the pioneering work of scholars of that caliber.

The *Ancient Magdala Excavations Series* (*AMES*), which I have the honor of inaugurating with this foreword, will comprise of seven volumes. It is my personal hope that these can be published in due time.

The first volume is published by Brill | Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. In the name of the Custody and the SBF, I express my sincere thanks to all who have worked and collaborated in various capacities to bring this challenging project to completion.

Jerusalem, 12th January 2023
Rosario Pierri, Dean SBF

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Abbreviations

AASOR	The Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research
AIIN	Annali dell'Istituto Italiano di Numismatica
AJN	American Journal of Numismatics
AqN	Aquileia nostra. International Journal of Ancient Studies on Northern Adriatic Region
ATar	Antiquité Tardive
BAAL	Bulletin d'Archéologie et d'Architecture Libanaises
BAH	Bibliothèque Archéologique et Historique. Paris
BASOR	Bulletin of American School of Oriental Research
BMC. *Phoenicia*	Hill G. F., *A Catalogue of the Greek Coins in the British Museum. Catalogue of the Greek Coins of Phoenicia*, London 1910
BMC. *The Ptolemies. King of Egypt*	BMC. *A Catalogue of the Greek Coins in the British Museum. The Ptolemies*, Kings of Egypt, London 1883
BMGS	Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies
CH	*Coin Hoards*, London 1975–
CHL	Meshorer Y., Bijovsky G., Fischer-Bossert W., *Coins of the Holy Land. The Abraham and Marian Sofaer Collection and the American Numismatic Society and the Israel Museum*, I–II, New York 2013
DOC I	*Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbaton Oaks Collection and the Whittemore Collection, I, Anastasius to Maurice 491–602*, Washington 1966
DOC II.1	*Catalogue of the Byzantine coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection, Phocas to Theodosius III. 602–717, Part 1, Phocas and Heraclius (602–641)*, Washington 1968
Hadashot Arkheologiyot	Ḥadashot Arkheologiyot. Excavations and Surveys in Israel
IEJ	Israel Exploration Journal
IMJ	Israel Museum Journal
INJ	Israel Numismatic Journal
INR	Israel Numismatic Research
JAA	Journal of American Archaeology
JRA	Journal of Roman Archaeology
LA	Liber Annuus
LRBC	Carson R. A. G., Hill P. V., Kent J. P. C., *Late Roman Bronze Coinage*. I–II, London 1965
MEFREM	Mélanges de l'École française de Rome – Moyen Âge
MIB	Hahn W., *Moneta Imperii Byzantini*, I–III, Wien 1973–1981
MIBE	Hahn W., Metlich M., *Money of the Incipient Byzantine Empire*, Wien 2000
MIBEC	Hahn W., Metlich M., *Money of the Incipient Byzantine Empire Continued*, Wien 2009
NAC	Quaderni Ticinesi. Numismatica e Antichità Classiche
NC	The Numismatic Chronicle
PRQ	Palestine Exploration Quarterly
RB	Revue Biblique
RBN	Revue Belge de Numismatique
RIC	*Roma Imperial Coinage*, voll. 1–10, London 1923–1994 (and revised editions)
RIN	Rivista Italiana di Numismatica
RN	Revue Numismatique
RPC I	Burnett A., Amandry M., Pau Ripollès P., *Roman Imperial Coinage. I. From the death of Caesar to the death of Vitellius (44BC-AD69)*, London-Paris 1992
RPC II	Burnett A., Amandry M., Carradice I., *Roman Provincial Coinage*. II. *From Vespasian to Domitian (AD 69–96)*, London-Paris 1999
SC	*Seleucid Coins. A Comprehensive Catalogue*. Part 2.1. *Seleucus IV through Antiochus XIII*, Lancaster/London 2008

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SICA	Album S., Goodwin T., *Sylloge of Islamic Coins in the Ashmolean, 1, The Pre-Reform Coinage of the Early Islamic Period*, Oxford 2002
SNAT 1993	Ilisch L., *Sylloge Numorum Arabicorum Tübingen: Palästina IV a Bilād aš-Šām* I, Tübingen 1993
SNG. Danish. *Egypt. The Ptolemies*	SNG. *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum. The Royal Collection of Coins and Medals. Danish National Museum. Egypt: the Ptolemies*, Copenhagen 1977
SNG. Danish. *Syria. Seleucid Kings*	SNG. *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum. The Royal Collection of Coins and Medals. Danish National Museum. Syria: Seleucid Kings*, Copenhagen 1959
SNG. *Israel* I	SNG. *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum. Israel. The Arnold Spaer Collection of Seleucid Coins*, Jerusalem/London 1998
VAMZ	Vjesnik Arheološkog muzeja u Zagrebu – Journal of the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb
ZDPV	Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins
ZPE	Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik
Τοποι	Τοποι Orient-Occident

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Something more than a beginning

It was thanks to the study of the numismatic documentation of Capernaum, conducted prior to the start of the excavation campaigns of the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum (hereafter SBF)-Custody of the Holy Land, that similar research was extended to the monetary findings from the nearby site of Magdala.[1] Here, in fact, the archaeologists of the SBF[2] from the 1970s until 2013[3] carried out various excavation campaigns aimed at discovering the real extent of the archaeological remains, but also (and perhaps above all) the relationship between archaeological evidence and the written sources that had preserved records of Magdala/Migdal.[4] The task of studying this numismatic dossier was given to me by Giovanni Claudio Bottini, Dean of the SBF. At that time, the numismatic documentation only referred to the area investigated on the property of the Custody of the Holy Land. The first excavations, dated at least to 1970/71, took place in the stretch between a monastery of Byzantine layout, some Roman-era roadways, several buildings with different functions or chronology, and finally the lake port.

Later, from 1991–1992, over twenty years after those pioneering explorations, the Israel Antiquities Authority [hereafter IAA] initiated a number of archaeological excavations to the west and south of the area considered here. The aim was to verify the extent of a settlement relevant to the history of Palestine in the Hasmonean and Roman periods, widely mentioned by the historian Flavius Josephus. Additional investigations by the IAA followed in 2002. Shortly afterwards, an economic-religious development project called "Magdala Center" led to the discovery of a probable synagogue from the first century CE and one of the oldest a menorah image,[5] prompting – from 2005 – the exploration of the site that took on the dimension of a large-scale systematic urban excavation. The considerable historical-documentary significance of these discoveries caused the archaeological excavations to be extended as far as possible in order to define

1 Rahmani 1980 and subsequent clarification in Rahmani 1981 published a hoard from the Crusader period (Moneta regis), while in Wilson 1989a and Wilson 1989b both individual coin findings with a broad chronology and hoards from the Umayyad period collected in the area of the Greek Orthodox patriarchate in Jerusalem were made known. Callegher 1997, finally, edited a hoard of Byzantine gold coinage from the mid-seventh century. In general, on the numismatics of Capernaum: Tzaferis 1989; Arslan 1996a; Arslan 1996b; Arslan 1997; Arslan 2003a; Arslan 2003b; Arslan 2003c; Callegher 2007a; Callegher 2007b; Callegher 2010; Arslan 2011; Callegher 2016. A summary of all published numismatic data can be found in Mattila 2015, p. 223. Arslan 2021 recently examined some coins or roundels used as amulets.

2 This, the information provided in the foreword and the entire archaeological history of the site, will be accounted for below, especially in the notes and bibliography.

3 The first excavations were conducted by Virgilio Corbo; after about thirty years, they were resumed by Stanislao Loffreda & Michele Piccirillo, scientific heads of the Magdala Project [hereinafter MP] between 2008–2013 coordinated by the designer Stefano De Luca for whose popular reports cf. De Luca 2008; De Luca 2009; De Luca 2011; archaeological-scientific reports in Lena 2013.

4 Manns 1976a. Little added by De Luca, Leibner 2019. Essential for the contribution of economic analysis are Mattila 2013 and Mattila 2015, as they combine archaeological data and sources.

5 Preliminary reports on this part of the archaeological area in Abu-'Uqsa 2001; Abu-'Uqsa 2005; Avshalom-Gorni 2009a; Avshalom-Gorni 2009b; Avshalom-Gorni, Najar 2013.

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the extent of the settlement and its function in relation to other historical sites on the shore of Lake Kinneret, and most importantly to plan a unified recovery and increase its value. Other emergency excavations, undertaken between 2009 and 2013 in collaboration with the Universidad Anáhuac México Sur and the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México [hereinafter MAP], were motivated by the construction of tourist hotel facilities. All this took place around the area that had been acquired by the Custody of the Holy Land in 1935. As a result, the SBF was in tune with the renewed interest, not only archaeologically for the entire site of Magdala for which the urbanistic aspects and the material culture over the centuries of its frequentation remained to be defined, but also more generally its role in the framework of Hellenistic-Roman Galilee. Precisely these archaeological-historical aspects had already motivated the Corbo-Loffreda excavations in the 1970s and the recent Magdala Project [hereinafter MP].

The undoubtedly unique documentary potential of the archaeology of Magdala is confirmed by the interest shown by the numerous institutes and authorities involved. The singularity of the site is an essential motivation for any research not tainted by ideologies or uncritically constructed expectations sought to be later confirmed in the excavation. At the same time, the many stakeholders involved in each aspect of the study make it very difficult to proceed to a unitary analysis of any class of finds, in this case coins.[6] If, for the plots owned by the Custody of the Holy Land, Stanislao Loffreda's generous and profound archaeological expertise made it possible to unify the numismatic data from the 1970s excavations with those collected during the MP's long activity. The same was not possible with the same numismatic data from excavations in the surrounding areas and, generally, from the site included in the MAP. The limitation of having access only to the coins concerning a part of the site motivated the search for the sharing of numismatic data. A different approach would have prevented the reconstruction of an exhaustive monetary-economic context and reaching fully convincing conclusions regarding the frequentation of the site, the monetary stock in circulation at a certain period, and the contribution of mints from Galilee, Gaulanitis or the Decapolis. Such a collaboration was explored and attempted several times.[7] One example is the documentable fact that the unpublished catalogue created by the writer has been made available, including the photographic documentation, without any constraints to some colleagues at the IAA, while still a work in progress. That the data of this study have been made available to the archaeological community since their drafting and in the course of the work in progress is evident, *sine ullo dubio*, from the extensive and in many respects unsystematic use found in the essay by Stefano De Luca, "*La città ellenistico-romana di Magdala/Taricheae. Gli scavi del Magdala Project 2007–2009: relazione preliminare e prospettive di indagine," Liber Annuus* 59 (2009), pp. 343–562.[8] In it, once the rhetoric of the formal obligation of ritually mentioning the appointee of the numismatic study had been followed, the monetary data was extensively, too extensively, used as mere chronological indicator. Such schematism, moreover justified by the user with a reference to a so-called autonomous archaeological method[9] – *utinam!* it would have been profitable for everyone if its epistemological foundations or a non-self-referential bibliography of reference had been disclosed – denotes the absence of basic competence in dealing with money in archaeological contexts. In fact, there is no archaeologist in at least the past half century who had disregarded John Casey's standard book, *Coins and the Archaeologist*, Oxford 1974 (British Archaeological Reports) or Richard Reece's numerous articles, now collected in *Roman Coins and Archaeology. Collected papers*, Wetteren 2003 (Collection Moneta 32).[10] The preliminary report of 2009 will be disregarded in

6 Several times there have been attempts to initiate a joint publication of the coin findings of the entire site, as evidenced by various emails kept in my personal archives, in particular those of 1 August 2018, when following my visit to the excavation as an anonymous visitor, I received a polite invitation from Danny Sion to tackle this proposal together because, as he recalled: "*Some years ago you suggested that we work jointly on the coins of the site*". Various coordination difficulties on the side of the excavation supervisor of the Holy Land Custody property, Stefano De Luca, procrastinated the time and research making a 'realistic joint publication' impossible.

7 E-mails stored in my personal archive.

8 In the autumn of 2008, the writer sent De Luca the catalogue of coins, a "work in progress" in need of verification, feedback and corrections at a library better equipped for numismatics than what could be consulted at the SBF. At the same time, it was suggested that he "*make use of it as he saw fit*", relying on the policy of the scientific community.

9 This singular assertion can be supported, *inter alia*, by the testimony of two professional archaeologists, not amateurs, who participated in the excavation and were present at a singular syncretum, which took place in 2009 at the SBF, during which I tried to ask for an account of the use of unpublished data: Anna Lena and Carmelo Pappalardo.

10 On the interpretative methodology of coins found both as hoards and as single finds in archaeological contexts, see now Katsari 2011, in part pp. 9–33.

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this analysis because of the critical issues arising from establishing links between the dating of a coin (*terminus post quem*) and its stratigraphic contexts, the human presence on site and even with some ceramic classes. Reference to the report will be made only for elements of urban topography and sometimes for the history of archaeological excavations in Magdala.

After the MP's interruption in 2013, when the last brief numismatic survey took place, the dossier remained suspended pending the formation of an Archaeological Board of recognized value that aimed to ensure an editorial project of the entire excavation overseen by accredited specialists. As a matter of fact, this goal even today, in the spring of 2023, has remained on paper and nothing more has been heard of such a unified project.

In the meantime, numismatic finds from the nearby site of Khirbet Wadi Hamam by Gabriela Bijovsky[11] have been published, as well as the fundamental general synthesis by Danny Syon on Upper Galilee, with extensive discussion of the coinage circulating there and the monetary system in use in the region between Gamla and Tyre.[12] These contributions of undisputed standard, including analyses and syntheses on numismatic materials entirely similar to those from the Magdala Scavi Corbo-Loffreda and MP, prompted doubts and questions regarding the validity of an independent publication. The time-consuming work of classifying, compiling the catalogue, and studying such a large monetary dossier ran the risk of being repetitive, of confirming what was already known in the bibliography and demanding excessive time and energy.[13] Nevertheless, certainly well aware of all the limitations arising from a lack of a unified vision, it was decided to publish what had emerged in the archaeological section of the Custody of the Holy Land, comparing the data from the reports by fellow Israeli numismatists Gabriela Bijovsky and Danny Syon, whom I thank for making their data, some of which is still unpublished, available.

******

It is well known that coins, as archaeological finds, are potentially rich in information because they combine chronological, epigraphic, iconographic and most importantly economic data. If these sets of data are then placed in relation to each other and compared to analogous evidence from the same site and similar sites in the same area, it can be easily deduced how coins are to be placed among the most significant sources in the field of archaeology.[14] It seemed to us that this general premise was particularly relevant for the Magdala site [MP]. Moreover, the quantity of coins recovered, thanks to the combination of what was discovered in the course of various excavations, albeit directed by different archaeologists, was compelling. The potential for study, beyond the cataloguing data, would also have concerned economic aspects, in particular the function and use of the circulating stock, examined by periods or persistence of account and monetary systems, in this case quite reliable due to the extensive database available.

Acknowledgements

The long history of this work places Stanislao Loffreda at its beginning: I am grateful to him for his solicitation to study, after Capernaum, also the coins of Magdala, and for the trust he placed in me during our conversations in his archaeological laboratory at the SBF, which were always rich in information and open to scientific discussion. The entire SBF community welcomed me with warmth and cooperation during the study weeks that followed, although irregularly, between 2008 and 2015 as well as in this summer of 2022. Among them, I remember Michele Piccirillo (*sit ei terra levis*), Eugenio Alliata, Deans Giovanni Claudio Bottini, Massimo Pazzini, and Rosario Pierri. To these must be added those involved in the MP, in particular Stefano De Luca and Anna Lena to whom we owe the cleaning, the restoration of some of the coins and the references to the stratigraphic contexts, Ettore Soranzo and Angelo Tosi for the photographic campaign of the coins until 2009. Vanja Macovaz (Trieste) generously took on the propedeutic photographic optimisation to the tables, assembled by Drs. Ella Zulini, Costanza Vecchiet and Paola Maggi, collaborators at the DiSU of the University of Trieste-NummusLab. I also gratefully acknowledge my collaborators Drs. Andrea Gariboldi and Giulio Carraro who read the last version of this work before it went

11 Bijovsky 2018.

12 Syon 2015.

13 Danny Syon asked me to have the catalogue ready for publication at least by the end of 2018 and received it in the latter part of 2020 for use in his Final Report of the MAP numismatic dossier. On the other hand, he himself sent me his Report so that I could have the data from that area. I thank him.

14 Particularly significant are the considerations on the interpretation of the coin findings presented in Syon 2015, pp. 31–39 especially as they pertain to Galilee. In general, especially for the provinces of the Roman Empire see Katsari 2011, pp. 19–33.

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to press. My sincere thanks also go to the translators Hannah Wilson and Michol Stocco for their meticulous work, to Jürgen K. Zangenberg for careful editing and the team at Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht for the fruitful and effective collaboration.

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The greatest, and unpayable, debt, however, is to Rita and Dotty, who have always expressed nothing but approval for my long absences from home. They have always been with me, not only in memory, but at the heart of my thoughts.

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1. Introduction

The site of Magdala is suitable for various historical and cultural investigations: firstly with an excursus on the ancient and medieval sources that mention it[1] as the possible birthplace of Mary of Magdala,[2] a central figure in the evangelical narrative;[3] then for its etymological complexity in the various sources;[4] and even for the real coincidence between ancient Magdala and the present site.[5] From other perspectives, and of no less importance, is the examination of the Greek and Latin sources, especially Flavius Josephus[6] and the Rabbinic sources, the latter being indispensable not only for topographical data but above all because they recall the existence of a synagogue and a beth-midrash in Magdala itself between the second and third centuries.[7] However, for the purposes of our study, we chose to focus on the long and arduous archaeological rediscovery of this site, as a premise for contextualizing the study of the monetary finds.

The village known as al-Majdal (but also Mejdel) during the nineteenth century, i. e. in Ottoman times, was no more than a modest agglomeration of almost uninhabited hovels, leaning against some ancient ruins.

1 Manns 1976a remains indispensable, although rarely cited in bibliographies perhaps because it is written in French, a language certainly not marginal in antiquities studies; De Luca, Leibner 2019.

2 Schaberg 2004, especially chapter two: *Meditation at Migdal*; Taylor 2014.

3 In the excursus of historical sources in Zapata-Meza *et al.* 2018, p. 83, the reference to the Polish pope John Paul II is aimed at establishing a connection between this archaeological site and Mary Magdalene as "the apostle to the apostles". The procedure is not scientific but unmethodical because the head of the Christian Catholic religious confession has nothing to do with archaeological research and science when he speaks of religious topics.

4 It was decided to follow Manns 1976a. The Hebrew form is Migdal; the Aramaic form is known as Magdala Nunaya (Nunnaya or Nunayah meaning 'Tower of Fish') or Magdala Tza'baya (or Seb'iya) meaning 'Magdala of the dyers'). Thus, it is also mentioned in the Jerusalem (Ta'anit 4.8) and Babylonian Talmud (Pesahim 46b). In Greek and Latin sources, the city is also known as Magdala/Taricheae, i. e. 'Magdala of the fish salters', cf. also Bauckham 2018. Kokkinos 2012 insists on an alternative location.

5 Much has been debated about Magdala's exact location in relation to Tiberias. In this regard, the topographical conclusions shared almost unanimously in the most recent literature are accepted, to which De Luca 2009 and De Luca, Leibner 2019, pp. 407–411 add nothing new.

6 Flavius Josephus, *Jewish War, ad indicem.*

7 For the sake of correctness, not knowing Hebrew, I have referred to Manns 1976a where Tosefta Erubin 6/13, Talmud of Jerusalem (Erubin 5,22d), Talmud of Babylon (Erubin 61a) are cited, as well as passages in Bereshit Rabbah 79,6 the Pesiqta de Rab Cahana (Pisqa 10) but also Eicha Rabbati 3,8,3 and Ma'aser Scheni 5,2 are referred to for the synagogue, the beth-midrash and the scribe Nikai.

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Photo 1: El-Majdal in the late nineteenth century. From the Library of Congress at Washington DC (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magdala#/media/File:Magdala_um_1900.jpg)[8].

[8]This is how eighteenth-century travelers saw it. Indeed, Ulrich Jasper Seetzen (1767–1811)[9] in 1807 stayed, without further specification, in 'the little Mahommedan village of Majdil, situated on the bank of the lake',[10] but he does not describe any monumental or archaeological finds or artefacts there. Likewise, no signs of antiquity were identified by Edward Robinson (1794–1863)[11]during his exploratory trip in 1838[12]. Reports by other travelers, such as William Francis Lynch (1801–1865),[13] Solomon Caesar Malan (1812–1894),[14] Bayard Taylor (1825–1878)[15] and Isabel Arundell (1831–1896) wife of Richard Francis Burton (1821–1890)[16] agree that the village was of miserable stone houses, mostly in ruins. In 1910 it was seen unchanged, poor and almost depopulated, by the Russian Zionists who settled not far away and founded modern Migdal. The transformations following the fall of the Ottoman Empire did not change Majdal's economy or construction, but favored, particularly during the first phase of the British Mandate, a significant population increase.[17] About a century ago, at the beginning of the 1920s, one of the first guides to be widely circulated among Christian pilgrims described it as follows: *"4 km from Tiberias, at the roots of the*

8 Petersen 2001, p. 210.
9 Kark, Goren 2011.
10 Seetzen 1810, p. 20.
11 Soler 2014.
12 Robinson, Smith 1841, p. 278.
13 Lynch 1849, p. 164; cf. also https://archive.org/stream/narrativeunited03lyncgoog#page/n202/mode/1up.
14 Malan 2012.
15 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bayard_Taylor.
16 Arundell 1875; Zilli 2019.
17 Government of Palestine, Department of Statistics. Village Statistics, April, 1945. Quoted in Hadawi, 1970, p. 122, 172. http://www.palestineremembered.com/download/VillageStatistics/Table%20II/Tiberias/Page-122.jpg; http://www.palestineremembered.com/download/VillageStatistics/Table%20III/Tiberias/Page-172.jpg.

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Photo 2: Magdala before archaeological intervention by Virgilio Corbo (©SBF Photographic Archive. Virgilio Corbo, 17 February 1977).

mountain that forms the southern flank of the 'Uâdi el Hamâm, or valley of the Pigeons, one encounters a poor village called el Megidel. Near the hovels stands a small Muslim Ueli. The village bears traces of a wall and two towers, the northernmost of which was used by some dyers. El Megidel is, as we have already seen, ancient Magdala. A city of great importance was Magdala, according to the Talmud. It was divided into several quarters, among which are mentioned that of the Fish, or Migdal Numya, and that of the Dyers, or Migdal Ceboya"[18]. It was not much, but the pilgrim could see the Biblical narrative in real life and at the same time be aware of the etymological and functional complexity of the ancient site.

The aforementioned Guide also indicates an upswing in pilgrimage to the places of Christianity. So much so that new individuals had recently settled in Galilee, in particular the Franciscans, precisely to cope with and follow the influx of pilgrims. They had been dedicated for centuries to the custody of the places identifiable with those frequented by the Jew Yehoshua, the Jesus of the Gospels.[19] Between the end of the nineteenth century and 1912, they had purchased from German military engineer R[udolf?] Lendle, an archaeology enthusiast,[20] a plot of land facing the lake because there were ruins worthy of investigation which could perhaps provide some useful clues to locate another "holy" place, not far from Capernaum, in this case for Mary of Magdala.[21] It was this identical goal that motivated Bellarmino Bagatti (1905–1990)[22] and Sylvester Saller (1895–1976)[23] in 1935 to begin negotiations to extend the Franciscans' property. They met a certain Mutlaq, the head of the village with his entire family, according to Ottoman-Turkish tradition a Muhktar, who were then owners and residents of the adjoining land, but the attempts to purchase of the adjoining land was not successful.[24] The site and the Muhktar property itself

18 Meistermann 1925, p. 567.
19 Meir 1991.
20 Schaberg 2004, p. 50. I do not know any bio-bibliographical references about him and especially any accounts of his excavations. He might have been the German military engineer and cartographer Rudolf Lendl, who accompanied Alois Musil (1868–1944), an archaeologist who was particularly interested in the late antique and early Islamic archaeology of the Syrian-Palestinian region: cf. Vaselá 2012, p. 61–62, 85, 206.
21 Loffreda 1976b, p. 133.
22 Piccirillo 2001.
23 Saller 1957.
24 Bagatti 1971, p. 81.

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were then affected by the events following the founding of the state of Israel and the first Arab-Israeli war in 1948 to the extent that some hovels were destroyed and the property abandoned.[25]

The 1970s marked the definitive take-off of the area, especially thanks to the Custody of the Holy Land which acquired some of the land bordering that of the first purchase and had a small building constructed there, mainly for the surveillance and conservation of the site That the area was of considerable archaeological interest was known by those interested in the historical exegesis of the New Testament, and especially by the generation of archaeologists who received consensus and expectations from the new Israeli state.[26]

Thus from November 1971, and with substantial continuity in the following years until 1977, Virgilio Corbo (1918–1991)[27] and Stanislao Loffreda investigated a large part of the Franciscan property, often having to contend with inexhaustible springs and a vegetation of wild palm trees.[28] They brought to light a building that was then interpreted as a small synagogue, a water collector/cistern, mosaic fragments of buildings of various sizes and the section of a roadway. They hypothesized that ancient Magdala must have had an urban layout of considerable size, with living quarters and buildings of value, all elements consistent with a settlement with an extension and urban planning referable to a town rather than a *vicus*-village.



Photo 3a



Photo 3b

25 Bagatti 1971, p. 83; Morris 2004, p. 86: https://books.google.it/ books?id=uM_kFX6edX8C&pg=PA86&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false. This event is briefly discussed in Testaferri 2015, p. 407.

26 However, it seems singular that in the notes and bibliography of the https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Majdal,_Tiberias site, there is no explicit reference to the Franciscans' pioneering presence and publications in the archaeology of Magdala. Of course, as always, the motivation must be sought in the Italian language, which is also marginal in this case, but the drafters who did give evidence of knowledge of other chronicle details, rather make the impression of a deliberate removal.

27 Corbo 1974; Corbo 1976; Corbo 1978; Corbo 1989.

28 The unpublished excavation diaries are preserved in the SBF Archive: Vigilio Corbo, Diario di scavo. I. 1973–1974; Stanislao Loffreda. Excavation Diary. II. 1973–1977. I thank the director of the SBF Museum, Eugenio Alliata for this information. Bagatti 1971, pp. 68–71 and figs. 33–34.

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Photos 3a–c: : Magdala during archaeological excavations by Virgilio Corbo and Stanislao Loffreda (©SBF Photographic Archive. Stanislao Loffreda, 1978?)[29].

A decade later, between 1991 and 1992, the IAA planned archaeological excavations in two areas (area A, area B)[30] outside of Corbo and Loffreda's excavation areas with the aim of partly verifying the extent of the urban area of ancient Magdala and confirming the topographical hypotheses already advanced.[31] Other interventions date back to 2002, this time in the south of area B, to which two new plots named C and D were added, in which medieval and Ottoman archaeological artefacts were found, proving a long period of frequentation.[32] Shortly afterwards, however, major urban development projects (the first called Magdala Center, the second aimed at enhancing the coastline with tourist hotel buildings) were planned by various archaeological missions for at least a decade until 2013. This was done by Israeli archaeologists both independently and in collaboration with the Universidad Anáhuac México Sur and the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México [MAP]. Once again, those responsible were from the SBF's Department of Archaeology[33]. This is not the place for even a brief exposition of what was found, but as of 2010 it can be stated that archaeology in Magdala had radically altered what had been known about town planning until then, in particular the connection between the lake port, the road network, the settlements, and the public and private buildings.[34] Enormous and as yet unpublished is the amount of data: ceramics, transport containers, mosaics,[35] cores for pollen and palaeobotanical analyses,[36] everyday objects, the well-known 'minor objects' highly revealing regarding local taste and way of life. Since 2010, however, the locality recorded by Cassius and Cicero, Strabo and Pliny the Elder, Suetonius, Flavius Josephus, Rabbinic texts, the Synoptics and numerous late antique and medieval sources,[37] ceased to be known in a succinct manner, and the scientific community had enough elements such as to outdate all previous reconstructions. Not a village, but a typical settlement comparable with other towns on the banks of the Kinneret to be contextualized in Galilee, related to the settlements of Decapolis and the southern part of Phoenicia. Magdala emerged from historical marginality, from indeterminacy, to be confronted with the archaeology and historical investigations of numerous settlements in Galilee in order to define their constants and their diversity, not only locally, and illuminate their possible role in the economy of Galilee and the regions in various ways united by belonging to the sphere of the Kinneret.[38]

29 Corbo 1976, *passim*; Loffreda 1976a; Loffreda 1976b.

30 For the locations outside the area covered by the MP excavations and the previous excavations see the indications published in Zapata-Meza *et al.* 2018, p. 84, fig. 2.

31 Abu-'Uqsa 2001; Abu-'Uqsa 2005; Avshalom-Gorni 2009a; Avshalom-Gorni 2009b; Avshalom-Gorni, Najar 2013.

32 Testaferri 2015, p. 418.

33 Its creators were Giovanni Claudio Bottini, rector of the SBF, Stanislao Loffreda, *olim* in charge, together with Virgilio Corbo, of the 1971–1975 excavation campaigns, (+) Michele Piccirillo and the designer Stefano De Luca since 2009, *post mortem* of Piccirillo, coordinator of the MP on behalf of the SBF and the Custody of the Holy Land under whose responsibility the actual and scientific management of the site's archaeology remains to this very day.

34 The conclusions of De Luca 2009 apply.

35 De Luca, Lena 2014b.

36 Lena, Rossi, Palmieri, Marchesini 2017.

37 An exhaustive list of passages and quotations in Manns 1976a; for the Middle Ages useful De Luca, Leibner 2019.

38 Fiensy, Strange 2014; Fiensy, Strange 2015.

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Photo 4a



Photos 4a–b: Magdala after the MAP archaeological excavations (©Archivio fotografico SBF. Stefano De Luca 2012).

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2. Numismatics and archaeology in Magdala/Taricheae

Status quaestionis and methodological notes

As has often been the case with various localities in the Holy Land where some form of religious cult has stratified over time, it is difficult if not impossible to establish a certain point in time from which numismatic research can begin. Over the centuries, clandestine excavations, the recovery of building material, agricultural work and tampering of various degrees and nature took place in these settlements. During the first decades of the twentieth century, an increasingly rigorous application of systematic archaeological methods favored not only the protection of architectural and monumental elements, but also renewed the attention to so-called minor testimonies which also included coins. What happened in the area of Magdala over the course of many centuries is not dissimilar, and in the accounts of the pilgrims there is no mention of any archaeological excavations or coin findings, not even accidental. The earliest reports of excavated coins known to this writer, albeit in general terms, date back to the excavations of 1971–1973 because Corbo recalls that "*coins found in the same slime* [of a drainage channel] *are being studied*"[1], though many were thrown back into the lake by those same archaeologists because they were tiny, corroded and illegible.[2] It was not a great method, but that was sometimes the practice in those decades when two functions were essentially attributed to the coin: chronological and aesthetic. In reality, the information is not untrue, as a significant percentage of the numismatic specimens collected during the MP excavations conform to that narrative: many specimens are so corroded as to be unreadable, unless one wants to let the imagination run wild on the basis of the size of the coin and/or weight. As the MP archaeological excavations progressed, urbanistic interpretations of the area of the Custody of the Holy Land began to be proposed, particularly on the topography,[3] the port[4] and the mosaics.[5] No less relevant are the contributions on the remaining area of the site, excavated by the IAA in collaboration with the MAP,[6] the last of which proposes a thorough preliminary edition of the monetary finds from the 2010–2012 excavations.[7] De Luca's lengthy 2009 essay, however, as mentioned, abounded in monetary citations: the word 'coin' appears 47 times, 'coins' 27 times and 'coinage' 21 (a term used as a synonym for currency, thus without distinction between the instrument of production and the outcome of minting), the word 'nominals' is used twice, not counting citations of authorities and mints. In order for the reader to have immediate evidence of De Luca's method, I randomly quote a few passages which are all indistinctly connected by the same conviction: that the coin is merely a chronological indicator to be listed, in sequences of stratigraphic units (US), often confused with stratigraphic wall units (USM), alongside other finds. A first example:

1 Corbo 1975, p. 28.

2 Personal communication by Stanislao Loffreda. On the other side of the Mediterranean Sea, the same thing sometimes happened: in Aquileia, for example, in Brusin 1934, p. 146 we read that 1,000 small bronzes were recovered in the port area that were considered illegible and therefore, in fact, neglected and today are unrecoverable.

3 De Luca 2009.

4 De Luca, Lena 2014a.

5 De Luca, Lena 2014a; De Luca, Leibner 2019.

6 Zapata-Meza et al. 2018.

7 Syon 2018.

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"*Finds from the collapse disintegration layer include Late Roman ceramic fragments, with a predominance of the common tableware forms, the intact upper element of a rectangular millstone of the hopper and lever type (St 50) (Durante 2001, 78) found leaning against USM 29 near the corner of the room, and the following coins from: Alexander Iannæus (103–76 BC), Aretas IV issued in Petra (9 BC–AD 40), Trajan of the Roman mint (AD 98–117), Hadrianus of the Roman mint (AD 119–122), Trajan Decius-Volusianus of Caesarea Maritima (AD 249–253), provincial Roman mint (II–1/2 III cent. AD), provincial Roman mint with oval countermark with male head (possibly second cent. AD), provincial Roman mint with oval countermark (second–1/2 third cent. AD)*".[8]

Or another passage that confuses hoard with deposit, takes the information of those who had the coins under study as their own and above all does not know the function of the punches, here confused with countermarks:

"*Hidden under a stone of USM 8, at 5.50 m from the southern edge, a hoard containing 18 coins was discovered which, in ancient times, must have been accessible from the eastern compartment. At a later stage, three more coinage pieces from the same coin hoard were found in a spot not far away. The catalogue of 21 pieces includes very worn bronzes from prolonged use, originally struck by the nearby autonomous cities between the first and mid-third century AD, but which were put back into circulation after having been re-tariffed with a countermark that has yet to be studied: a fine example of a coinage from Tiberias under Claudius (AD 53), one from Tyre (55 BC–AD 87), seven of Elagabalus of which one with a figure of the emperor standing (AD 218–222), three from the mint of Nysa Scythopolis (AD 218–219; 220–221; 220–221), one from the mint of Antiochia at Hippos (AD 218–222) and another from the mint of Petra (AD 218–222), five Roman provincial issues from the second -mid third century AD, two Roman provincial issues from the mid-third century AD, one of which from a mint in the Decapolis. It is hoped that a detailed study of the punches will make it possible to trace the* ***emissary*** *authority*[9] [Bold by present author]".[10]

To conclude with a last quotation as proof of the repetitive progression between coin dating and archaeological context.

The regularity and accuracy in the construction of the road conduits are in contrast to the dozens of the canal in E5 and one wonders if the latter arrangement is not a late restoration. The coin catalogue seems to confirm this. In fact, it includes: a coinage of Herod Archelaus (4 BC–AD 6 and one of Elagabalus (AD 218–222) from the dismantling of the pavement near the canal; a Tyrian mint from AD 107–108 and a provincial Roman mint from the second–third century AD on the pavement and a coin of Claudius (AD50–51) found near the mouth between E5 and E20; then there is also another mint of Herod Archelaos (4 BC–AD 6, mint of Jerusalem), one of Trajan (AD 99–100 AD, mint of Tiberias) and a provincial Roman one from the second to the first half of the third century AD from a survey in the south-east corner".[11]

The coin, like many other archaeological finds, is very talkative, as we could say in somewhat fashionable terminology. In it, individual data specific to that coin, and serial data common to other similar specimens, can indeed be identified. Among the individual features specific only to that nominal are the weight, diameter, position in the archaeological stratigraphy, state of preservation, and wear indicative of its period of circulation and use. These characteristics identify a particular specimen and that specimen alone. Alone, however, they say little on a historical-economic level. Serial data, on the other hand, increase the documentary potential of coins. They are: the type of the obverse and reverse, which together with the epigraphy help us to establish the issuing authority, the mint and the chronology. The combination of this information makes the coin a document requiring a multidisciplinary study that includes numismatic data associated with archaeological finds, historical sources and above all the comparison on a distributional basis of similar coin findings in territories belonging to the same administrative entity or monetary area. Thinking in terms of an administrative entity in ancient times, one runs the risk of applying modern criteria of exercising political power over a region and even to make explicit the central authority of a state. The relations and dependencies between the center and the periphery of a town were not structured like in a modern state and did not have an economic status even comparable to that of contemporary states or economies as they have been structured over the last five to six centuries. Actually, many regions in antiquity enjoyed relative autonomy and often had contacts with a political and administrative center only in relation to tax collection, the obligation to support the logistics of legions on

8 De Luca 2009, pp. 363–364.

9 The polysemy of the word *emissario* (emissary) in the Italian language includes meanings such as: envoy (of a person) or river that flows into a lake, for example, but never has the meaning of "monetary authority".

10 De Luca 2009, p. 367.

11 De Luca 2009, p. 414.

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the move or encamped, and the maintenance of public buildings or road networks. Monetary finds can, therefore, contribute to our knowledge of ancient societies, especially through the reconstruction of the volume of coinage and its circulation away from or close to the place of actual coin production, but only if placed correctly in their general historical context.[12] However, the minted stock, which can also be described by observing the different monetary types and the choice of metals used for minting, is closely linked to its circulation: money was minted, hence money was provided if there was demand for it. Demand and supply were interdependent, and especially this relationship must be well placed in a historical epoch. With reference to the region in which Magdala was located, it is barely necessary to mention the radical difference between the epochs of the Seleucids, the Ptolemies, the Hasmoneans, the progressive Romanization up to full Roman imperial control, and finally the crisis of the Roman empire, the Byzantine and then Umayyad authorities.[13] Denominations changed; at times silver struck with large and small divisionals was favored, at other times bronze prevailed. The units of account and the physical pieces (coins) that represented them in whole or in part therefore varied.

The use of different metals poses a crucial question: whether ancient coinage always circulated with a value established by its weight and alloy, or whether it was accepted on a fiduciary basis, or better still was overvalued, because its face value was established by a civic or state authority *lato sensu* without any set standards being adhered to. This is a very complex issue because we possess few written sources, and scholarly hypotheses can only be reversed by large-scale quantitative studies. There is, however, substantial agreement that for gold and silver there was a close link between metal/weight and face value.[14] This is different for bronze. The coinage in base metal could also be exchanged with a partly fiduciary value, but not exclusively fiduciary, because in any case buying the metal, coining it and putting it into circulation required an expense so that a minting fee necessarily had to be applied especially because the quantity of bronze coins was often enormous. A productive organization with specialized artisans mastering various and not so common skills, with buildings, spaces and controls was therefore required.

Once in circulation, the coin passed from hand to hand, and on leaving its area – i. e. where pre-established values and exchange ratios were in force – it had to be confronted with a divisional responding to different values both in terms of weight and fineness, and therefore face value. This entailed either exchanges made by agents specialized in this activity or an acceptance on the money market with a different quotation, usually disadvantageous, but sometimes also advantageous especially for gold or silver coinage of excellent alloy that was collected where these metals were scarce and therefore in great demand.

In archaeological excavations, moreover, the presence of coins depends on at least three other factors: the methodology applied in the archaeological intervention (emergency excavation, systematic excavation, survey); the nature of the soils where a coin was lost; and the function, i. e. the type of frequentation of that site.[15] It is hardly worth mentioning that the recovery of numismatic documentation is strictly dependent on how one excavates because often, especially during earthworks or emergency excavations, it is the coins that suffer the most serious loss. In this case, however, during MP's campaigns, correct methodologies were followed in the excavation technique, but – as mentioned – stratigraphic units (US) were always confused with stratigraphic wall units (USM) when recording the finds, while the numbering does not always seem to be consistent or in continuity with that established in the Corbo-Loffreda intervention. Furthermore, although the excavation documentation is believed to exist, it has not been made accessible or available for inspection to the author of this publication. Thus, the entire interpretative framework and the very accuracy of the numismatic evidence suffers. As far as the stratigraphic conditions of the numismatic finds are concerned, considerable differences emerge from what has been published so far, both within the same excavation campaign and, above all, in the succession of excavations. One part of the site, in fact, was subject to heavy water infiltration, which lasted for centuries and due to the presence of limestone corroded especially the copper coins. In some sections of the site with a higher elevation, the state of preservation was better, a circumstance that also applies to the specimens that ended up in the water pipes/channels or stepped water cisterns. The extent

12 Crawford 1985; Von Reden 1995.

13 Syon 2015, pp. 31–39.

14 For methodological lucidity on this specific topic, even if focused on Constantinian and post-Constantinian times and even if written in Italian (which in the context of antiquities studies cannot be considered a marginal language at all!) cf. Carlà 2009.

15 Katsari 2011, pp. 19–34.

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to which the chemical composition of soils interferes with the survival of a copper alloy roundel subject to centuries of corrosion in comparison with medieval sites,[16] is not much studied for the earliest periods, particularly in archaeological sites in the Near East. It is generally believed, though erroneously, that the absence of moisture creates the conditions that prevent corrosive interactions between soil chemistry and what falls into it and is no longer recovered. If this observation is of any value in general, it must be kept in mind that there are areas in which water was not lacking at all, or which were even marshy in the past: and it is precisely in such areas that settlements, even of considerable size, developed over the centuries. In the case of Magdala, this *communis opinio* is disproved by the recovered data, because a particularly large number of Hasmonean *prutot* or similar coinage in terms of shape or production technique is so badly preserved as to render them *de facto* unclassifiable or, at most, only generically attributable to an era, but always with many doubts.[17] Moreover, when a coin was dropped accidentally or in the course of an exchange, its recovery depended not only on its value but also on the nature of the pavement of a house, a street or a square. Perhaps archaeologists should pay attention to these facts because, obviously, if coins fell on a mosaic surface, they were readily recovered, whereas if lost on a dirt floor or in the sand, searching for them and recovering them not only became challenging, but it could also happen that the search was abandoned, especially if the lost coin was of modest value.

Finally, the presence of coins depends on their use at a particular site.[18] There are many factors to consider on this subject. First of all, circulating money was influenced by the amount of money produced in a given period and the relationship between supply and demand for divisional or small coins triggered in that site for reasons that can often only be hypothesized. In fact, when we think about exchanges in the ancient world, we are very much conditioned by our language and our experience of using money for all the transactions of our daily lives. What do we really mean when we use the terms economy, currency, exchange, market, monetary transaction to refer to the ancient world? What is the relationship between the agrarian subsistence economy and that practiced in *latifundia*? The Romans, for instance, did not monopolize land ownership in the provinces and allowed the inhabitants of the provinces to continue to have free reign to extend their holdings and cultivate according to local traditions as well as in the choice of what to cultivate and even more so in the adoption of land management techniques: a dirigiste and centralized vision was lacking. Some Roman citizens became landowners in territories they had never visited in their lives, and this allowed the formation of intermediary classes that regulated profits by directing them to the owners. In the interdependence between town and countryside, what was the mutual conditioning? I believe that in this context, rather than real trade, one should reason on the satisfaction of the essential needs of those who practiced crafts and of those who worked the land as freeholders or in servile conditions. Trade, or rather, the allocation of artefacts and agrarian product not so much according to the law of supply and demand, but of the availability of a good at that time according to the climatic seasons and the specificities of a given region could take on an irregular, periodic character and in any case be dictated by the needs of a single community. Perhaps more structured were the economic aspects of taxation or the procurement of resources for the administrative bureaucracy and especially for army logistics. It is not intended here to return to themes that gave substance to the debate on ancient economy, choosing between economists who theorized about the market's ability to regulate itself through the competition of the actors involved, and primitivists.[19] Overcoming such oppositions, often strongly ideological, happened by taking into account 'economic' components that have only been studied in recent decades such as demography, the management of the *oikos*, the application of technological innovations, and the occurrence or non-occurrence of military events that brought about profound changes in agrarian methods of production, which can, however, be prudently defined as 'crises'. In this context, the most recent studies place the use of money in the ability of an environment and its resources to allow the social organization and life of a community.[20] Numerous and increasingly accurate publications of coin findings from small sites and larger settlements that can only with some caution be defined as 'towns', have made available quantitative data capable of supporting distributional analyses that can be defined as 'mone-

16 Blackburn 1989.

17 On the technique of production by means of die casting, cf. Ariel 2012.

18 Reece 2003, pp. 335–338.

19 Finley 1973; Polanyi 1944 (ed. 2000).

20 Extremely interesting is the analysis of the history of the debate, accompanied by acute interpretative observations, in Carlà, Marcone 2011.

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tary circulation'. Even if the chronological scansion, intensity and duration of the currency's presence on the market cannot be immediately associated with the quantity of specimens found, examined and published. However, such quantitative analyses should be extended to other classes of artefacts, especially those that can certainly be associated in various ways with agricultural or artisanal work or with the transfer of goods over short distances. In other words, progressive monetarization affected the territory of Galilee at least from the second century BCE, even outside the sites of greatest population concentration, as can be deduced from the large number of small coins recovered in archaeological excavations even in sites of modest size. However, one cannot define this presence per se as unitary, well-structured, continuous, and equal in all the sites in the same region. It depended on the position of a site in relation to neighboring territories, on its belonging to a well-defined monetary area and on the integration of that site into the economic system of reference, more or less open to the influences of other economic dynamics. It also depended on the greater or lesser quantity of currency struck by the mint of reference and on the reasons for the increase or decrease, which is often linked to the military or fiscal function of the currency produced. It should also not be forgotten that coinage considerations in an excavation cannot be based on the sample recovered because this can never be considered as an absolute quantitative value. In fact, the numismatic documentation of an excavation is only a part of what is potentially present because other specimens may have been found in the past and then dispersed, while others might still be waiting to be recovered in parts of the excavation not yet investigated. What can still be found is not what has been lost. Many coins lost in antiquity have disappeared through corrosion, through chemical processes of mineralization, because they returned to use in the centuries following their loss, or because they were recast as metal. These are all objective data that suggest caution in constructing interpretations on a statistical basis, caution that should also be extended to the choice of data for comparisons in contexts of the same monetary area. They are, moreover, all indicators to move from analytical data to the formulation of at least some hypotheses on the use of an instrument with a prevalent commercial function, and which must never disregard the three classic functions of the institution 'money', namely its functions as a measure of value (unit of account), as a store of value (hoarding), and as a means of settling debts and credits at all levels of exchange (monetary use/circulation).

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3. Magdala in the Galilee and the specific region of Lake Kinneret

For a long time, the locality of Magdala was thought of as the village of the evangelical Mary of Magdala, a mythological approach reinforced by the image that Galilee had been a separate rural region full of farming villages. In this regard, for an analysis of the cultural tradition concerning the 'concept' of Galilee over the centuries up to most recent times, a luminous article by Zangenberg is worthy of note. Breaking with commonplaces, he attempts to pose all questions concerning Galilee from the chronology of settlements, including the interpretation of archaeological finds, to the dynamic relations with neighboring territories, the presence of different cultural and religious elements, the influence of Tyre and the Hellenistic cities of the Decapolis to the settlements along Lake Kinneret, within the peculiar geographic framework of this territory: the largest freshwater reservoir is a hinge area with easy communications in all directions, towards the Mediterranean and inland between Syria and the Red Sea along the Jordan Valley.[1] In fact, the scholar notes that for too long the interpretative *topos* had crystallized in the belief that *"Galilee has been interpreted as an integral part of Western cultural memory, as 'the land where Jesus walked', 'the cradle of early Christianity' or 'the home of the rabbis'"*. Whether a remote 'oriental utopia' where sages instructed a meek and honest audience of uncorrupted people on moral values and simple living, or a distant 'region of authentic origins', Galilee has more often been conceptualized as a myth, an ideal or a symbol than as a reality 'on the ground' that must be interpreted like any other Mediterranean area. This approach is understandable as a result of popular interest and imagination, but problematic when it comes to developing historically valid concepts about Galilean history and culture.[2] In terms of interpreting the documentation of the material cultures attested there, especially the archaeological finds, a sort of dogma has imposed itself that there was an unambiguous and indisputable relationship between documents, ethnicity, and religious cultures: *"As a consequence of this approach, scholars focused on Galilean distinctiveness by emphasising its ethnic boundaries, and thus tended to separate it from its broader geographical and cultural matrix. As a result, a geographically and culturally self-referential concept of 'Galilee' emerged, which traced pre-rabbinic and rabbinic identity constructions and emphasised the differences between the 'inside' (such as the Jewish villages and towns of the heartland) and the 'outside' (such as the non-Jewish and Greek cities of the Decapolis and the Aramaic-speaking regions of Syria to the east or the Phoenician areas along the Mediterranean coast and to the north)"*.[3] Magdala, therefore, cannot be divorced from its regional context. For this reason, numismatic evidence is of great

1 Zangenberg 2019 with an exhaustive and up-to-date bibliography on the subject.

2 Zangenberg 2019, p. 268.

3 Zangenberg 2019, p. 269. Moreover, that the tendency to mythologize the site is still an attractive option can be deduced from the statements published by Mexican excavators who, influenced by the Legionaries of Christ association (*sufficit* a few online searches), convey any link between the site of Magdala and the mythological story of Mary believed to have originated here. But Magdala is Magdala with the depth of its entire history. The rest pertains to propaganda for more or less tourist purposes.

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value as it helps to establish the period when the site was first frequented, the interconnections with the cities on the coast, Tyre *in primis,* but also with the places of trade over the short distance, locally, along the shores of the lake, the true epicenter and in fact the fastest route of communication/transport. Numismatic evidence can also help clarify contacts over the long distance, with Judea and Samaria, but also with Phoenicia and Coele Syria, Hauran and the Jordan regions towards the Red Sea. Did this site, where recent archaeological excavations have contributed to a better understanding of its not insignificant size and the existence of a large lake port, a merchant area and buildings with a public function and at least one synagogue, only gained importance in the Hasmonean and later Roman period as recounted by Flavius Josephus[4], or was it precisely Magdala's strategic position on the lake and along the routes of travel in various directions that determined its vitality for several centuries?

Apart from modern definitions, the territory within which to locate Magdala and its monetary documentation was defined following the indications of Flavius Josephus, who distinguished between Upper Galilee (mountainous) and Lower Galilee (hilly and partly sloping towards the western shore of the lake), but ranging along the Bet She'an valley in the south, towards Gamla in the Gaulanitis and the northern part, that is the territory of the Jordan tributary of the lake.[5]

For the purpose of the research and to allow consistency of comparison,[6] relevant archaeological sites in the territory thus delimited are listed in the following tables.

	Location (cf. MAPS of sites 1,2)	**Source/Bibliography**
1	Akko Ptolemais	Syon 2016
2	Bet Yerah	Bijovsky 2017
3	Beit She'an (Nysa-Scythopolis)	Fitzgerald 1931; Sharabani 2004; Berman 2007; Berman 2015
4	Et-Tell (Bethsaida)	Meier 1995; Kindler 1999a; Ariel 2019
5	Berytos	Butcher 2003; Sawaya 2009; Sawaya 2011a; Sawaya 2016; Sawaya 2017.
6	Caesarea Maritima	Hamburger 1955; Belloni 1966; Hohlfelder 1994; Ariel 1986; De Rose Evans 2006.
7	Carmel Coast	Meshorer 2010
8	Galilee (general)	Syon 2015
9	Gamla	Syon 2014
10	Gerasa	Marot 1998; Lichtenberger, Raja 2020
11	Ginnosar	Gitler 1990
12	Gush-Halav	Bijovsky 1998
13	Hammat Gader	Barkay 1997

4 *Bellum Iudaicum* II 596–599, 634–635; III 462–465.

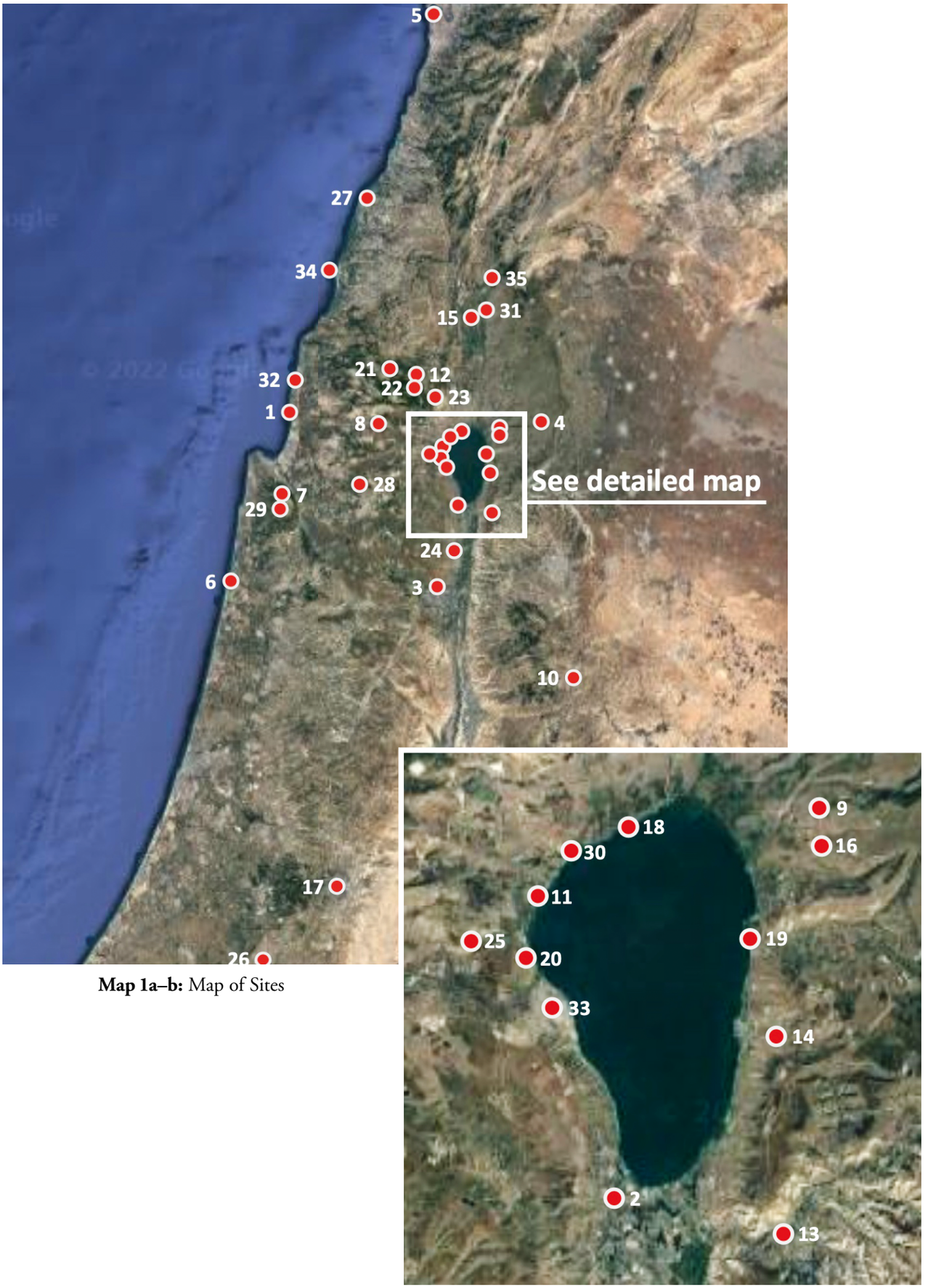
5 An effective delimitation, also on historical grounds, of this same territory can be found in Syon 2015, pp. 51–52.

6 For each site, the bibliography contains the coin report or some numismatic information (preliminary or final numismatic report). The numismatic documentation represents the selected background for comparison of the numismatic evidence from Magdala.

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	Location (cf. MAPS of sites 1,2)	**Source/Bibliography**
14	Hippos	Excavation Seasons from 2001 to 2013: *courtesy of IAA (Coin Cabinet) thanks to Donald Ariel*; Solarewicz 2015
15	Omrit	Syon 2011
16	Kanaf, Horvat	Ariel 1980
17	Jerusalem	Ariel 1982; Gitler 1996; Ariel 1990; Gitler 2003; Ariel 2013; Glücksmann, Kool 1995; Ariel, Berman 2020; Ariel 2020a; Ariel 2020b; Ariel 2020c
18	Capernaum	Spijkerman 1958–1958; Arslan 1996a; Arslan 1996b; Arslan 1997; Callegher 1997; Arslan 2003b; Arslan 2003c; Callegher 2007a; Callegher 2007b; Callegher 2010; Arslan 2011; Callegher 2016; Mattila 2011; Mattila 2015
19	Kursi	Sharabani 1983
20	Magdala	Meshorer 2010; Abu-'Uqsa 2001; Arslan 2003a; Garza, Díaz Barriga 2013; Syon 2018; Garza, Diaz Barriga 2019
21	Marus, Khirbet	Bijovsky, *Report of Coins from Excavations at the Ancient Synagogue of Kh. Marus* (personal communication)
22	Meiron	Meiron 1981; Meyer, Strange, Meyers 1981; Raynor, Meshorer 1988
23	Nabratein	Bijovsky 2009
24	Nevé-Ur (Beit She'an Valley)	Berman, Bijovsky 2002
25	Nitai, Mount	Farhi, Leibner 2011–2014; Farhi 2018
26	Palestine (general)	Gitler, Weisburd 2005
27	Sarepta	Abou Diwan 2016
28	Sepphoris	Bunnel 1937; Meyers, Netzer, Meyers 1986; Ariel, Bijovsky 2018
29	Sumaqa	Kindler 1999b
30	Tabgha	Loffreda 1970
31	Tel Anafa	Meshorer 1994
32	Tel Nahariya	Ariel 1993
33	Tiberias	Hamburger 1959; Hamburger 1983; Rahmani, Sharabani 1983; Amitai-Preiss 2000; Berman 2004; Bijovsky 2004a; Bijovsky 2018
34	Tyre	Sawaya 2011b; Sawaya 2012
35	Wadi Hamam	Bijovsky, Leibner 2013; Bjiovsky 2018

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Map 1a–b: Map of Sites

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Many other data are available in the numismatic bibliography of the area, but of all the publications Syon 2015 is a standard work that certainly constitutes an indispensable reference. We have chosen, as a comparison, to refer to the numismatic evidence of the following:

In our analysis, we have followed certain criteria: monetary relevance (quantitative and typological consistency, i. e. coins with a definite provenance from excavations, excluding those recovered by chance or from collections), legal relevance (i. e. relevance to the same monetary area), and finally administrative relevance, i. e. sites falling within regional units governed by the same authority, including the variation of the same authority over the centuries. However, if the choice of a coin pattern falls within the previous coordinates, comparisons with sites in a 'supra-regional' research perspective will not be disregarded.[7] The purpose hereby is to at least connect Magdala to the mints of production of the currency found there, to the current monetary system of account, and to follow broader patterns of monetary circulation so as to identify phases of lesser or greater influx and bring out their interdependencies.

In fact, alongside neighboring sites such as Wadi Hamam, Tabgha, Capernaum, et-Tell (Bethsaida?), Tiberias and Ginnosar, all of which can be directly linked to the same dynamics due to being sites on the lake and thus easily connected by navigation, we also selected sites particularly relevant for their territorial role as well as for the high consistency and reliability of their numismatic data, such as Gamla, Meiron, Beit She'an, Jerash, and sites of lesser extent but certainly indicative for establishing the actual presence and circulation of numismatic items comparable in whole or in part with those of Magdala: Gush Halav, Hammat Gader, Horvat Omrit, Horvat Kanaf, Khirbet Marus, Nabratein, Nevé-Ur, Mount Nitai and Tel-Anafa. These sites are able to illustrate the actual distribution of coinage both chronologically and quantitatively and thereby contribute to the definition of a distribution of issues on a scale beyond the case study under consideration, which only focuses on the Magdala finds.

Finally, the choice of some other sites of great historical-archaeological importance was guided by the fact that they were mints particularly active in the production of coinage, especially in copper, and sometimes played a hegemonic role in regulating the influx of coinage into the settlements of Galilee and neighboring regions. This is true of Tyre, Berytos, Caesarea Maritima, Gadara, Akko Ptolemais, Hippos, Jerusalem of course, Scythopolis, Sepphoris and close-by Tiberias.

A further element concerns the chronological periodization. Temporal extremes do not have absolute value in our case study because, as already pointed out, the date of mintage and the date of accidental loss rarely coincide.[8] As widely accepted by scholars, the chronological periodization is marked by the degrees of events that affected Galilee, Gaulanitis, and the Mediterranean coast, including Phoenicia. A chronological division is not always easy and, above all, cannot always be associated with numismatic data for the already mentioned reason of persistence in the use of the coins, and because wear and state of preservation often do not facilitate the identification of an excavated specimen. On the basis of the numismatic evidence analyzed and proposed in the catalogue and of what was possible to compare thanks to the shared numismatic data emerging from the MAP excavations at Magdala, it was decided to follow a shared periodization with the Wadi Hamam site as well. The overall data are illustrated in the following two graphs, the first (fig. 1) starting with the presence of Ptolemaic coins until the first phase of Romanization considered to have ended with Domitian; the second (fig. 2) extends from the end of the first century CE and to the subsequent coinage up to modern times, but the part of real interest can be limited to the fourth –fifth century coinage with an appendix to the Arab-Byzantine and Umayyad phases.

7 Stella 2019, p. 12.

8 On the duration in circulation of the coinage cf. Gorini 1992; Katsari 2011, chapter I which also applies to the Roman imperial provinces.

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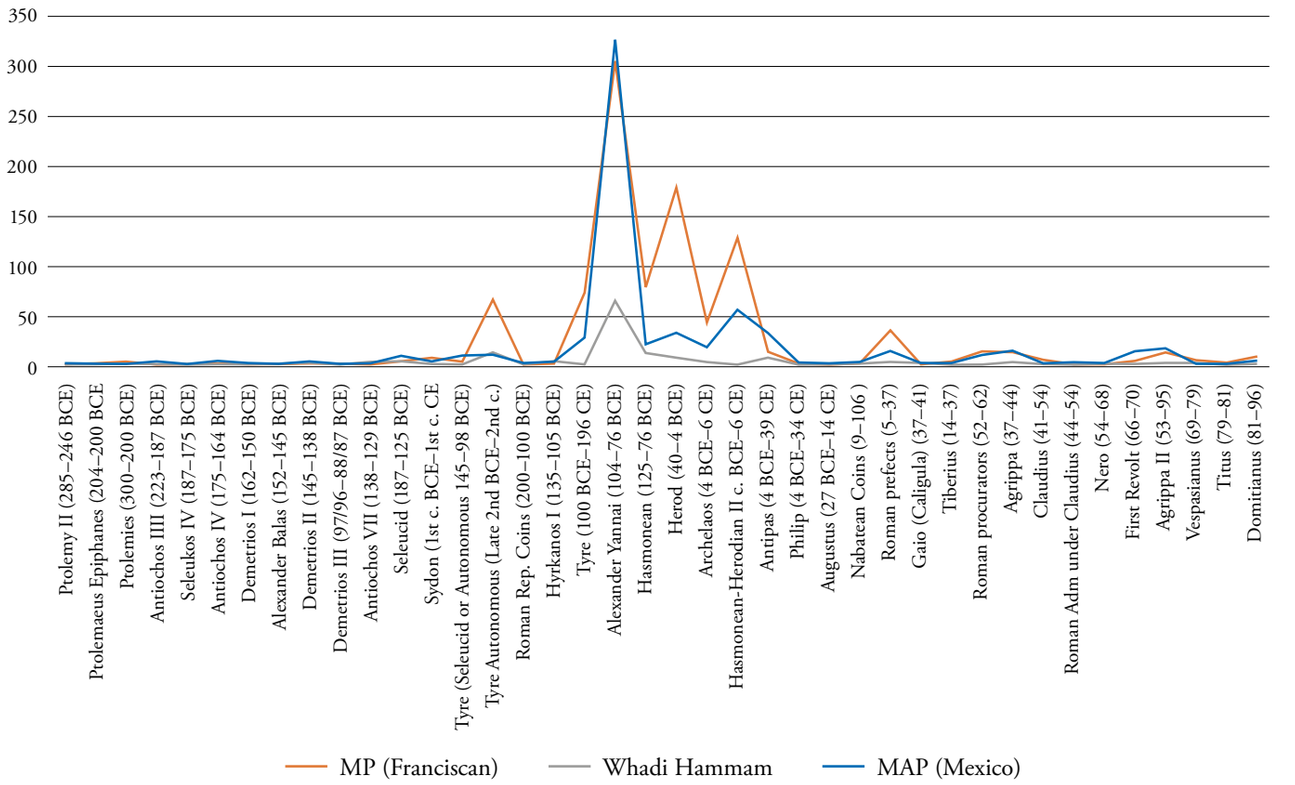


Fig. 1a: Comparison of coin quantities between Magdala (MAP), MP and Wadi Hamam from Ptolemaios II to Domitianus

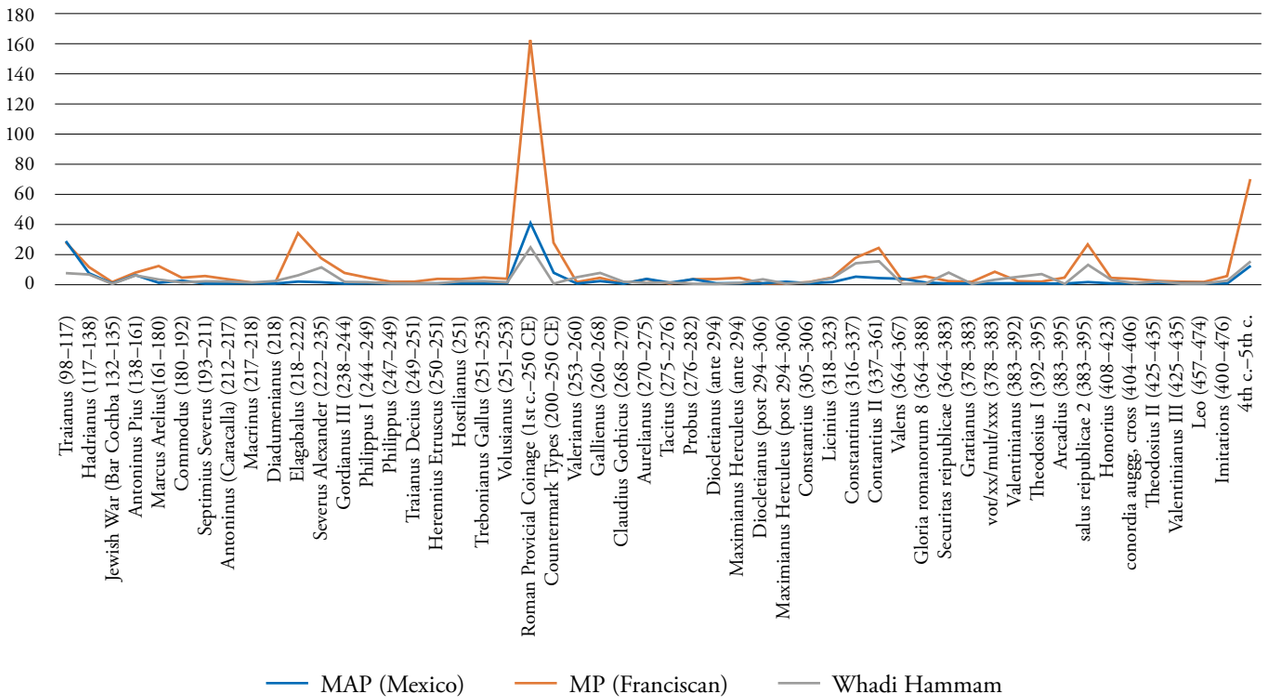


Fig. 1b: Comparison of coin quantities between Magdala (MAP), MP and Wadi Hamam from Traianus to fourth-fifth century

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4. Some aspects of monetary and numismatic periodization

4.1 Third century BCE: Ptolemaic period

From the third century BCE onwards, the compositional structure of the monetary circulation of Palestine (Galilee in particular) saw a clear prevalence of coins from Tyre (rarer are those minted at Akko Ptolemais and other mints) also because the administrative-legal control of the Phoenician city extended from the coastal settlements inland, encompassing them in its own monetary area based on the Attic foot tetradrachm (17.24 g, hence on a drachma cut on the foot of 4.31 g of silver), thus asserting the supremacy of its own coinage, with the occasional inclusion of issues from Sidon and Akko.[1]

4.2 Second century BCE: Seleucid period

The Seleucid conquest of the region, which took place at the expense of the Ptolemies at the beginning of the second century BCE, led to the replacement of Ptolemaic metrology (Attic foot) by that defined as Phoenician standard, i. e. on a *tetradrachm* of 14.3 g and a *drachma* of 3.55 g of silver. Beyond the hegemonic role of Tyre and not a secondary one of Akko, the most important fact is the initiation of a copious coinage in copper, which quickly became dominant over silver and its fractions, from Phoenicia to Palestine, including inland areas. The demand for numerals of small face value, obviously intended for minute exchange as opposed to silver tetradrachms, which performed the function of a store of value, was met by the official Seleucid mints. However, especially from the reign of Antiochus IV, other mints also began to mint coinage with distinct types, giving rise to the production of copper coins known as 'municipal issues' and 'autonomous coinage', series clearly identifiable by the adoption of their own iconographic types especially on the reverse.

4.3 Hasmonean period (125 BCE–63 BCE)

In the Syro-Palestinian region, the second century had seen the establishment of Seleucid hegemony with Antiochus IV (215–164 BCE), who, however, had no successors to his military-strategic height. In fact, after his death, dynastic succession conflicts began that led to the disintegration of his state-building aimed at restoring Seleucid authority not only in the regions of Syria and Palestine, but also in Egypt. The final figure in this process of disintegration was Demetrius II (160–125 BCE), assassinated in Tyre in 125 BCE, the date from which after which the autonomous coinage of the Phoenician city began with silver (*sheqels*) and copper issues. Alongside these, albeit in later years, but as evidence of the progressive quest for civic autonomy and economic vitality in various post-Seleucid territories, Akko-Ptolemais and Askalon would start minting coins.[2] As a consequence of that crisis and

1 Elayi, A. G. Elayi 1993; bibliographical-historical synthesis in Syon 2015, pp. 51–52.

2 An effective chronological and typological excursus of issues in CHL, pp. 237–240; Syon 2015, pp. 57–61.

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possible autonomy, Hasmonean coinage also began, which recent studies date to coincide with the events of 125 BCE and thus is parallel with the autonomous coinage of Tyre. After the first issues of Hyrcanus I, those of Alexander Jannaeus became dominant. His issues were copious, they spread so ubiquitously in the region that they also took on a function as identity markers, as well as an economic one, because their typology of the obverse and reverse broke with that of the Seleucid sovereigns: images, in fact, were replaced by specific, tangible objects (anchor), or natural elements (star) consistent with the rejection of images so characteristic of Hasmonean Jewish religious culture. Particular care has recently been given to the quantitative analysis of the various types of Jannaeus' coinage, in particular on the presence of the various types of his coinage in sites variously connected to the historical and military history of this central character among the Hasmoneans.[3] Assuming that excluding the type TJC L1-L6,[4] for all the others types minted in the name of Alexander Jannaeus, it is not possible to determine an absolute chronology. An attempt has been made to investigate whether the presence or absence of the various types, in particular TJC K (Type 4 in Shachar 2004) and TJC L7-L17 (Type 7 in Shachar 2004), could provide essential data for the study of Upper Galilean settlements. Given that TJC L7-L17 is by far the most widespread type in the Hasmonean territories, and in consistently surprising quantities, it does not seem entirely convincing that it was only copiously minted in the last three years of Alexander Jannaeus' reign, especially if one takes into account the previous thirty-four years of monetary projection. It might instead indicate that this type of coin was in fact minted even after the death of this Hasmonean ruler and that its presence or absence in archaeological contexts, compared to the presence/absence of Seleucid coinage, helps to establish whether a site/location was permanently inhabited or suffered discontinuity in habitation even in the phase preceding the arrival of the Romans under Pompey in 63 BCE.[5]

3 Shachar 2004, pp. 10–12.

4 Meshorer 2001.

5 On this interesting analysis of numismatic data see Shachar 2004; Ariel 2022.

4.4 Early Roman period (63 BCE–First Jewish Revolt 70 CE)

The years included in this phase are characterized by Pompey's military action, the end of the Hasmonean reign, the establishment of Herod's reign and the division of his dominion between his sons Archelaus, Philippus and Antipas. The latter was given Peraea and Galilee, i. e., the Transjordanian territory towards the Mediterranean coast, including Magdala. While the minting activity of the Jerusalem mint was central in the actual Hasmonean phase, Herod the Great opened also other minting workshops, all in the northern part of Palestine. In fact, Samaria joined Jerusalem in the start-up phase of Herodian coinage (particularly in year 3 = 40 BCE). Herod Archelaus minted in Jerusalem while Herod Antipas obtained his coinage in Tiberias between 4 BCE and 39 CE. Herod Philippus minted his series between 4 BC and 34 CE at Caesarea Philippi (Paneas), but in the name of the emperors Augustus and Tiberius, who in fact appeared on the obverse of those coins. From the same mint also came the bronze issues of Agrippa I and Agrippa II, the latter, however, was also actively minting at Sepphoris. Although with different production intensities, all rulers played a major role in the minting of copper coinage because enormous quantities of *prutot* and perhaps ½ *prutot* came out of their workshops.[6] In addition, the gradual assimilation of the Palestinian region into a Province within Roman imperial administration was accompanied by monetary coinage clearly identifiable as pertaining to the imperial procurators representing Augustus (Coponius and Ambibulus), Tiberius (Valerius Gratus, Pontius Pilatus), Claudius (Antonius Felix) and Nero (Festus). Their copper issues flanked the Hasmonean and Herodian ones in circulation, contributing to the immense stock availa-

6 The most up-to-date reference is CHL, esp. pp. 237–240 and the catalogue in this section. The existence, or rather a market price, of ½ *prutah* is not agreed upon. It is believed that the inhabitants were losing and no longer recovering *prutot* because they were worthless, especially if they were obtained with matrices and their weight dropped. Such a 'pessimistic' view on the value of bronze coinage in the ancient world goes hand in hand with the extension of maximum 'fiduciary' for coinage in base metal: the coins were worth very little and their value did not depend on the metal but on the issuing authority alone, which guaranteed their face value. They were, however, still metal, they had a value, they served to honor exchanges of goods with modest prices. And this was enough for *prutot* to first and foremost remain money in all its aspects, from minting to alloy and weight. If other denominations with equal face value but extremely different weights and alloys, however, could run on the market remains an open question.

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ble at least until the First Jewish War against Rome, fought between 66 and 70/3 CE. It should also be mentioned that, as far as silver was concerned, the practical use of the *sheqel* of Tyre continued, both as a coin of account and as a high-value denomination suitable for tax collections and for larger Temple payments. In reality, even though the Romanization of the area had begun, the Roman republican and then Augustan post-reform systems began to spread slowly in Palestine, at first flanking the long-established and widely used and influential Tyre unit of account and then supplanting it in? the Flavian era, especially with Domitian (81–96). In fact, as mentioned in the previous chronological partitions, in the regions of Syria and Palestine, from the third century BCE until the end of the second century CE, silver and copper coinage was made and circulated by different authorities and in different mints, so much so that it can be said that monetary bimetallism (silver/copper) was in force in these regions. The mint of Tyre, which was joined during the first century CE by that of Antioch, played a predominant role in producing both silver (tetradrachms, tridrachms, didrachms and drachmas)[7] and bronze coins, both – as will be seen in the catalogue commentary – widely disseminated and accepted in the territory of Judea, Samaria[8] and even more in Galilee.[9] As a consequence of Augustus' reform and the full legal-administrative incorporation of these territories into the empire, various mints in the region chose to adapt the types of their bronze coinage to those of Roman bronze, as in the well-known cases of the Jewish coins from Herod Philip (4 BCE–34 CE) to Agrippa II (55/56–94/95).[10] From contemporary sources, including the *euangelion* of Levi (Matthew), it can also be deduced that units of account (talents and mines) and Greek coins (*tetradrachmas*, *didrachmas* and *drachmas*) remained in use alongside Roman units of account and circulating money (*denarii*, *asses* and *quadrans*).[11] Rabbinic texts from the same period and referring to the Herodian period or immediately thereafter hand down references about the use of coins with a lower quotation than the Roman divisionals, therefore equivalences or exchanges could require complex calculations; at the same time Roman silver had such a high value (1 *denarius* = 6 silver *ma'ot;* 1 *ma'ah* = 1 *obolus*)[12] to play a liberating function only for transactions with high prices.[13] However, it is the numismatic-archaeological data from the Palestinian area that enrich the information on the role of the most valuable coinage minted in Rome. For silver, the data inferred from circulation, particularly from coin findings in archaeological contexts, would indicate an unchallenged dominance of the coins minted in the local mints of the area (*tetradrachmas*, *didrachmas*, *drachmas* and *shekels*) and a marginal function of the republican and imperial *denarius* at least until the late first century CE.[14] Indeed, during the first century, despite some misgivings raised in studies from the 1960s,[15] local silver coinage spread very gradually, perhaps because, apart from the complexity arising from the exchange between the actual coinage of the Augustan system and the Hasmonean-Herodian system, various mints in the region made up for the demand for high-value coins by minting *denarii* in the style of the Roman ones and sometimes even some gold coins, the latter probably in Alexandria.[16] Moreover, the spread of imperial money, especially of Neronian standard[17] particularly from the second half of the first century CE, is related not so much to long-distance trade as to the deployment of military contingents to suppress the first anti-Roman revolt (66–70/3). For the first century, in fact, generally the composition of the hoards confirm the modest presence of Republican and Imperial Roman *denarii*: some specimens were recovered

7 Butcher 2004, pp. 49–98: "Silver and Gold Coinage".
8 Cf. Bijovsky 2021.
9 RPC, I, pp. 581–590.
10 CHL, pp. 261–266; Barkay 2012, p. 26: *"Most instances of the Roman influence on Jewish coins belong to the first group [scil. the use of Roman motifs for political reasons, BCE], mainly because the Herodian dynasty were client kings of Rome, and thus wished to please the emperors and the Roman administration in the province".*
11 Sutherland 1967; Picozzi 1972; for a monographic study on the subject see Bijovsky 2004b, note n. 14.
12 Kindler 1967, in part. p. 181.
13 Howgego 1984–1985.
14 Levy 1995; Ariel, Fontanille 2012, pp. 34–36, in par. p. 34, Table 2.
15 Roth 1962 accepts the circulation of Roman *denarii* in Judea, but without citing examples. The absence of *denarii* of the Julio-Claudian dynasty in the repositories of the Eastern Mediterranean regions is instead affirmed in van Lassen 1971, pp. 240–241, where with some perplexity regarding the territorial spread the author writes: "*I have the following* denarii *obtained during 1939/40 in Palestine: M. Antonius (Leg. VI, very worn) from Gaza; Augustus (CL Caesares) from Jerusalem, Tiberius (Livia seated) and Vitellius* (libertas restituta) *both from Ohan in Jerusalem. The two latter may well not be of Palestinian provenance*".
16 Butcher 2004.
17 The republican *denarii* of Mark Antony's legions remained in use for a long time even in the first half of the first century almost certainly because their silver content conforms to the Neronian standard rather than the Augustan one. See Meshorer 1992; Bjovsky 2004b, p. 247.

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in the Khirbet Qumran hoards in 1955,[18] at Isfiya on Mount Carmel,[19] in the Hebron district,[20] again in Hebron "spring 1990" but without any precise indications,[21] in Beit Guvrin/Eleutheropolis,[22] in Wadi Murabba'at,[23] and in hoard C from Khirbet Badd 'Issa/Qiryat Sefer[24] and in an unpublished hoard, probably found in the Gaza Strip, which appeared on the Jerusalem antiques market in late summer 2019.[25]

As for the presence of Roman gold *aurei* in this same chronological period, on the basis of the data available today, it appears to be entirely episodic compared to the enormous stock of silver and gold circulating in Palestine.[26] Therefore, it can be deduced that precious metal coinage seems to have played little role compared to silver coinage during much of the first century, so much so that it is considered a negligible presence in the composition of the money in circulation and more generally of the monetary stock in use. This holds despite Vespasian's *aurei* were probably minted in Alexandria, Vespasian's and Titus' *aurei* in a 'southern mint',[27] and despite the discovery of western *aurei* of Tiberius respectively in a Nabataean tomb at Dhat-Râs[28] and in Jerusalem (mint of Lugdunum)[29], those of Nero, Vitellius and Vespasian (mint of Lugdunum) also in Jerusalem[30], as well as those of Vespasian in Khirbet Badd 'Issa-Qiryat Sefer[31]. A hoard found in the Upper Galilee has recently been proposed, but with *aurei* dated immediately after the events of 66–70, thus attributable to a phase of more decisive influence of the Augustan-Neronian system of account.[32]

4.5 Period of Romanization (ca. 70–ca. 294)

During this period, which lasted for over two centuries, the process of full Romanization necessarily involved the coinage as well. After the events of the first anti-Roman revolt, the Augustan/Neronian system of account with coins minted in Rome became established and spread. From an administrative point of view, the region of Galilee followed the events of the relationship between Rome and Agrippa II, including the territorial partition of Judea and Syria. It was partly involved in the revolt of Bar Kokhba (132–135) whose relevance in the monetary sphere, particularly in Galilee, is analyzed by Leibner and Bijovsky who surveyed and studied the structure of monetary circulation and hoarding, revealing cases of both silver coins, mainly minted in Antioch, and mixed silver-bronze hoards, the latter coins being minted in the area, especially Akko-Ptolemais and Tiberias.[33] The evidence that can be deduced from the study of coinage is that from the first half of the second century, imperial Roman coins and coins from local mints (provincial Roman coins or city coins) circulated together, sometimes also motivated by the settlement of Roman legions, as in the case of Legio VI Ferrata. It can also be stated that from the Antonine period onwards, but especially with Septimius Severus, the whole terri-

18 Six Roman republican *denarii* are in the hoard found in Locus 120 in Khirbet Qumran during the Roland De Vaux excavations in 1955: see the manuscripts by Henri Seyrig from 1955 and Augusto Spijkerman from 1960 (Archives École Archéologique et Biblique Française and Archives Studium Biblicum Franciscanum in Jerusalem: unpublished). The arguments of Lönnqvist 2007, pp. 3–5 about the presence in this same repository of imperial *denarii* with different chronology are not well founded. See in this regard Ariel, Fontanille 2012, p. 34, Table 2.

19 After the first reports of Kadman 1960a; Kadman 1960b; Kadman 1962 and especially of Kadman 1965, this hoard has been cited as evidence of Roman coinage in trade with the East by Raschke 1978, esp. p. 998, no. 1431, or in the discussion of the concrete reference of the term *denarius* in the Gospels for which cf. Hart 1984 [there the author also refers to a letter from A. Spijkerman to Y. Meshorer in which news is given of the discovery of Roman *denarii* from the Julio-Claudian(?) era in the Jericho area why in these brackets?]. The hoard of Isfiya has been treated in a much larger recent edition than previous reports in Meir 2008; Meir 2009; Meir 2010.

20 CH III, p. 38, no. 90; Butcher 2004, p. 273, n. 28.

21 Butcher 2004, p. 274, no. 33a.

22 Butcher 2004, p. 273, no. 30.

23 Milik, Seyrig 1958. The reliability of this relic, from the Jerusalem antiquities market, remains uncertain.

24 Bijovsky 2004b, p. 247.

25 I was able to examine for myself this find of 96 Roman Republican/Imperial *denarii* and 2 *antoniniani*. For the period under examination here, there was 1 Roman Republican coin of C PISO.L.F.FRVGI Naked horseman galloping right, holding whip-above I = RRC 408/1 (and following types) but in poor condition; 4 *denarii* of Antoninus Pius; 6 *denarii* of Marcus Aurelius; 1 *denarius* of Commodus, and 5 *denarii* of the Antonine period.

26 Bijovsky 2004b, p. 247: "*In general, gold Roman coins are most unusual finds, and only four such coins are recorded from controlled archaeological excavation*".

27 Butcher 2004, pp. 96–97.

28 Zayadine 1970, p. 127, fig. 10; Butcher 1996, in part. p. 103.

29 Ariel 1982, p. 314, no. 61. Zissu *et alii* 2009–2010.

30 Zissu *et alii* 2009–2010.

31 Bijovsky 2004b, p. 247.

32 Callegher 2015.

33 Bijovsky, Leibner 2013, p. 122, note 19–21, with references to the Tiberias 1952 hoards, a tomb in the 'Akko cemetery and Kibbutz Sha'ar ha'Amaqim.

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tory surrounding the Sea of Galilee, the Golan but also the confined regions of the Decapolis, Phoenicia and Syria experienced an extensive monetarization, supported by the opening or reopening of numerous mints, some continuously, others less intensively, but always in response to the increased demand for copper divisionals, proving the diffusion of the monetary instrument in the economy and in trade even of minor value. The continuity of the contribution of silver from Antioch, i. e. the tetradrachms, a reference denomination for larger values, which in fact was never supplanted by the imperial *denarius* and not even by the introduction of the *antoninianus* with Caracalla in c. 214/215, should also be mentioned. In fact, the local mints continued to strike coinage even during the great crisis of the third century, at least until the reign of Gallienus (260–268). Tyre and Akko-Ptolemais stand out among them all, as evidence of their substantially hegemonic role together with Tiberias. The reason for the success of the bronze coinage is to be found in the high quality of their alloy and in their weight trend, often close to that of the imperial *sestertius*, especially until the mid-third century, when, in the face of the devaluation of the *antoninianus*, which came to contain silver in the almost negligible percentage of between 5–3 %. The large coins of good copper were appreciated and revalued overtime, until they became the good currency of the system and were often hoarded, as shown by the data from the western part of the empire.[34] In the same period, the impact of the loss of value of silver coinage can be observed also in this region, as there are quite a number of mixed or even predominantly bronze hoards with coinage from various local mints. The phenomenon seems not to be confined to a specific episode in the Galilee area,[35] but protracted in time to intensify and stop around the time of the reign of Claudius II Gothicus (260–268) and thus shortly before Aurelian's monetary reform (274). Indeed, in addition to the cases reported in Syon's study on small change in Galilee,[36] the mixed hoard from Wadi Hamam-Unit A11 (last coins: *tetradrachms* of Claudius II Gothicus),[37] the two of Capernaum[38] and the one found there in US 8 should be added. However, it should not be forgotten that, perhaps at the same time as the loss of value of silver coinage and the revaluation of bronze coinage, in this very region, and almost certainly because of military presence, there was an extensive re-pricing of the bronze divisional through reworking of the mint and the application of different types of countermarks: with letters, images and often with small imperial portraits difficult to identify.

Aurelian's monetary reform imposed the closure of the mints of almost the entire empire, including those of Syria, Palestine and Arabia, with a notable change in the structure of the circulating currency. The presence of copper declined and that of the *antoninianus* imposed itself, albeit gradually, but devalued to such an extent that, just twenty years later, a new radical intervention occurred under Diocletianus in 294. The quantitative analysis of the presence of *antoniniani* minted between 274 and 294 will make it possible to clarify the impact of the reform on the structure of the stock in use and the consequent monetary conditions that led into the following period: the time of the formation of two monetary circuits, that of Constantinian gold, i. e. the *solidus* (ca. 310),[39] and that of the bronze coinage with increasingly vile alloy and decreasing weights, between the fourth and fifth centuries.

4.6 Between the fourth and fifth century: the decline of small coins

The long period from Diocletianus to the end of the 5fourth century will see a radical change in both the system of account and coinage. The cornerstone of the modalities of counting values and their representation in coinage will be the Constantinian *solidus*, effective as unit of account from 310. Its purity and weight stability made it a very successful currency throughout the empire. Its value was to be used to price the rare silver coins, mostly ceremonial or donative in nature, but also copper coins, exchanged according to ratios corresponding to many thousands of *denarii* of account, but also by weight at the rate of 1 *solidus* against 20 pounds of copper as the *Codex Theodosianus*

34 It is sufficient to check for this same chronological range in https://chre.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/; Walker 1978, *passim*. An account of this phenomenon, which led, for example, to the widespread distribution of bronze from Viminacium, a Balkan mint, even in the regions of *Noricum* and *Venetia et Histria*, can be found in Callegher 2018a.

35 For an updated analysis of even mixed hoarding (silver/bronze) "after 243–244 CE" in central Israel, cf Ariel, Sokolov 2018.

36 Syon 2015, p. 76.

37 Bijovsky 2018, p. 527–530.

38 Callegher 2007, pp. 71–74, known as the 'treasure of the millstone', pp. 139–141, Area A. L130.2 (with only one *tetradrachm* of Traianus Decius and all *antoniniani* up to Gallienus).

39 Confirmation of 310 as the date for the introduction of the Constantinian solid in Malingue 2018.

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reminds us.[40] The high purchasing power of the *solidus* and its fractions (quite rare in the east and more frequent in the west – see below) confined it to being used in transactions of considerable amounts, in taxation and in the records of debts and credits of the great economic actors of the period: the imperial bureaucracy, tax records or army payments. One of the consequences was also a progressive differentiation between east and west. In the west, silver continued to play a significant role, later confirmed by the coinage of the Ostrogoths. The process of regionalization saw the establishment of alloy coinage (at first *folles* and fractions, then from 348 AE2, AE3, AE4) minted in eastern mints with Constantinopolis preeminent, followed by Antioch and Alexandria. Generally speaking, although the volume of issues from the various mints was enormous, especially in the second half of the fourth century for the types *fel temp reparatio* (LRBC 2625 & 2295) and *spes reipublicae* (LRBC 2504), followed by the Valentinian-Theodosian AE3 *securitas reipublicae* (LRBC 527) and *gloria romanorum* 8 (LRBC 338), all of which are evidence of an extensive inflationary phenomenon. Their diffusion in the area surrounding Lake Tiberias appears rather diversified. At some sites, considerable quantities were found, obviously in proportion to the area investigated and the function of the site itself. We mention here, by way of indication, the conspicuous presence at Capernaum,[41] Omrit[42] and Khirbet Marus,[43] but also at Meiron,[44] Nabratein,[45] Sepphoris[46] and Hippos,[47] in addition to a few smaller sites such as Horvat Kanaf.[48] By contrast, at other sites, investigated *in extenso*, the presence of numerals undergoes a rapid decrease from second – third century until they become meagre or stop altogether, like in Gamla.[49] The phenomenon is part of the process of functional diversification of certain settlements in the Galilee and the Golan, with a consequent impact on the use of circulating currency, a phenomenon that has been investigated in still valid statistical terms by Gitler and Weisburd.[50] As for the fifth century, the coins minted and in circulation in the previous fourth century continued to be widely used, in particular the type *salus republicae* 2 (LRBC 1105) joined by the types *gloria romanorum* with two/three soldiers (LRBC 1876, 2214), with *vota* of the emperor Marcian with monogram and of Leo (LRBC 2260). Along with the official coins that flowed into this area mainly from eastern mints, very ancient issues from the Ptolemaic, Hasmonean, and provincial Roman periods also began to return into circulation from the mid-fifth century, just to mention the most frequent in the excavation documentation. Above all, numerous imitations of the most common types struck between the fourth and fifth centuries appeared. In them the legends were disjointed, the images sketchy and there were even inventions that were difficult to explain.[51] Beyond the iconographic data, however, their weight is of particular importance. It tends to be about ½ of that of similar official coins, as has been verified by testing the weight data of a conspicuous number of imitative types.[52] Assuming that until the mid-fifth century, AE4 substantially respected its weight ratio with the *scruple* (1.13 g)[53] effectively representing the physical mintage of the unit of account: that is the *nummus* of account really minted. It can be hypothesized, therefore, that its face value equaled its intrinsic value in copper metal. It follows that all these imitations were mostly or predominantly fiduciary in nature and course, or at least had a price that was overvalued compared to their face value. Similar observations regarding the weight deviation concern the imitations that can be dated to the second half of the fifth century, which are also widely found in the circulation of this region. These small copper coins all have an average weight significantly lower than the reference standard. In fact, for example, the weight of the imitation *vota* is around 0.49 g; that of the small *nummus* with the cross drops to an average weight of 0.38 g.

40 Hendy 1985, pp. 291, 470 for the weight ratio of the various copper/bronze denominations.
41 Callegher 2007a; Callegher 2007b; Callegher 2010.
42 Syon 2011, particularly the graph n. 1, p. 106.
43 Thanks to Gabriela Bijovsky: personal communication.
44 Meyer, Strange, Meyers 1981, Appendix C, *passim*; Raynor, Meshorer 1988, pp. 79–83.
45 Bijovsky 2009, pp. 388–389.
46 Bunnell 1937a, pp. 62–74; Ariel, Bijovsky 2018.
47 Segal, Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2000; Segal, Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2001; Segal, Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2002; Segal, Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz *et alii* 2004; Segal, Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz *et alii* 2006; Segal, Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz *et alii* 2008; Solarewicz 2015. General Conspectus of Coins Chronology and Mints Found at Hippos: thanks to Donald Ariel, personal communication.
48 Ariel 1980.
49 Syon 2014, p. 223.
50 Gitler, Weisburd 2005, in particular the map on p. 541 and the list of sites considered, many of which pertain to the region under analysis here. Not reliable Safrai 1998 as brilliantly pointed out in Bijovsky 2000–2002.
51 Arslan 2021.
52 Carlà 2007, pp. 184–186; Carlà 2009, pp. 437–440; Asolati 2012b, pp. 283–284, in particular for the identification on both documentary and numismatic grounds between AE4 and *nummus*. For archaeometric aspects see Asolati 2012a, pp. 187–227.
53 Arslan 2011; *contra* Asolati 2012b, p. 284.

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The data for the imitations of the Victory left from the period of Valentinian III are no different. In all these cases, therefore, these small coins would have been minted with a weight of at least half the acknowledged standard for the contemporary legal *nummus*. The proto-Vandal coins or the imitations of the same type Greek cross within wreath or double wreath, Greek cross and four dots, six or eight-pointed star, and type Victory left, also widely found in Palestine and Syria and almost always of Carthaginian or North African origin, would also fall within the scope of fiduciary. They are placed in the late fifth century, if not in some cases traced back to Thrasamund (496–523). However, although it seems immethodical to propose an average weight for the various proto-Vandal groupings here, it should be noted that for various types the weights are distributed with ranges between 0.21–0.45 g, 0.25–0.35 g or 0.26–0.39 g.[54] These are very low values, about half of the official *nummus*, which at that time tended to average close to, if not more than, ½ g because "*the imperial nummus* […] *had to conform to an official standard that* […] *guaranteed the monetary and account system*"[55]. The Carthaginian or North African issues, minted outside imperial control, would thus not only have seen their status as overvalued coins confirmed, but would even have been reinforced if one considers that their weight reference was not the official *nummus* but that of the Byzantine coins marked with account numbers of 40 (M), 20 (K), I (10) and E (5). In fact, the actual weight of this divisional was always lower than that which would have been obtained by adding a quantity of coins equal to the number of *nummi* indicated, even if they had had a standard weight of ca. 0.50 g. In practice, these imitations would have had their reference in an already overvalued coin as that of the first reform of Anastasius.[56] The spread of this minute divisional from Carthage along the routes of the central-eastern Mediterranean and the Syrian Palestinian regions is well known in its strictly numismatic aspects,[57] as well as for the commercial motivations reconstructed through the study of transport containers (amphorae),[58] of North African slip ware,[59] and for military reasons stemming from the strategic-military choices that involved the displacement and subsequent allocation of *numeri* and *limitanei* (Vandal *Iustiniani*) mainly in an anti-Persian function.[60] In the Syrian-Palestinian region, and also in the area under examination here, this type of numismatic documentation is very substantial, both among individual excavated finds and as a relevant component of another phenomenon typical of this area, that of the founding deposits of synagogues between the late fifth and early sixth centuries in which many thousands of these small coins are recovered.[61] It is clear from the above that all imitations at the time of their manufacture were overvalued coinage and therefore fiduciary in nature, probably in response to a demand for divisionals that the imperial mints were not taking on or were no longer able to satisfy. Despite the prohibitions (CTh. IX, 21. 10), their quantity, diversity, and diffusion attest that from the end of the fourth century and during a large part of the fifth century they were produced locally or came from other areas (Carthage or Italy). This was not by some imponderable chance, but for a necessity issues, so much so that they constituted an appreciable percentage of the stock available on the market, in this case from Galilee and Gaulanitis, without their circulation posing any particular problems of acceptance or valuation in relation to other coins.

4.7 Byzantine period (498–ca. 640)

In order to face the progressive debasement of copper coinage and its fall in weight, the reforming intervention of 498 provided for the creation of new coins quoted at de facto fiduciary values with the indica-

54 Callegher 2016.

55 Asolati 2012b, *loc. cit.*

56 Asolati 2012b, *loc. cit.*

57 For an overview of circulation and consequent issues: Morrisson 1999; Bijovsky 2000–2002; Morrisson 2003a; Asolati 2005; Asolati 2006; Prigent 2006; Asolati 2008; Morrisson 2008; Morrisson 2012; Asolati 2012a; Asolati 2012b. For the Israeli area, cf. Bijovsky 2012b, pp. 147–148.

58 Panella 1993; DeRose Evans 2006, p. 46.

59 Magness 1994, p. 134; for attestations in nearby Capernaum, see Loffreda 2008, *ad indicem*.

60 Ravegnani 2005, pp. 190–191 remember, *inter alia*, the appropriation of *numeri* at the end of the fifth century-early sixth century in the regions of Syria, Lebanese Phoenicia and Palestine; it also points to an *arithmos* of Theodosiacs in Nessana at least from 504. From 534 the appropriation of the well-known Vandal *Iustiniani,* remarks the extensive employment of Vandal soldiers in the eastern part of the empire. For monetary circulation related to the military element on the Persian-Byzantine border in the sixth century: Casey 1996. Of extraordinary relevance for the reconstruction of taxation amounts in towns and villages as well as payments of military elements in the period and territory considered here is the essay by Di Segni 2004.

61 In this regard, the data on the circulation of imitative coinage in Bijovsky 2012, pp. 102–170; Ahipaz 2013 are exhaustive. Most recently also Callegher 2019, now also see https://www.ancientsynagoguecoins.com.

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