Tokens, Value and Identity: Exploring Monetiform Objects in Antiquity and the Middle Ages

WORKSHOP AT THE BRITISH SCHOOL AT ROME (ROME – ITALY)

18-19 OCTOBER 2018

Tokens have actively shaped culture and civilisation throughout history, beginning with their contribution to the invention of writing and abstract number in the ancient Near East. Discussions at the *Tokens: Culture, Connections, Communities* conference (University of Warwick 2017) suggest that tokens might act as external memory devices, as proof of relationships and obligations, embody intimate sentiments, establish and maintain social hierarchies, and create feelings of 'inclusion' and 'seclusion' in different communities. Tokens also possess a complex relationship with money, enabling the distribution of goods, services and benefactions without the existence of coins or notes, at times functioning as a type of alternative currency. Unlike money, however, many tokens appear to have been intended as single-use items, to be used in a single context, or to represent a single good or service. These characteristics suggest that tokens operated in a more complex way than the traditional definition of these objects as "something that serves to indicate a fact, event, object, feeling, etc". The multiple uses of these objects continue to pose a challenge for research in this area.

Debate remains surrounding the roles and functions of tokens and the workshop will contribute to this dialogue through a series of detailed case studies from antiquity and the middle ages. In particular, the workshop focuses on two areas:

1. how tokens are related to **value** (emotional, economic, social, cultural, personal);
2. how tokens (their material, legends, iconography and use) express and contribute to the **identities** of their makers and users.

WORKSHOP PROGRAM

Thursday 18 October 2018 (DAY 1)

14:15-14:30   GENERAL INTRODUCTION

14:30-15:00   François de Callataÿ (École pratique des hautes études, Paris): *On the origin of ancient tokens studies: the count of Caylus in the mid eighteenth century*.

15:00-15:30   Sebastiano Tusa (Soprintendenza del Mare, Palermo) & Massimiliano Marazzi (Università Suor Orsola Benincasa, Napoli): *Tokens and counting devices in Bronze Age central Mediterranean*.

15:30-16:00   Denise Demetriou (University of California, San Diego): *Token diplomacy: authenticating embassies in the ancient Mediterranean*.

16:00-16:30   COFFEE BREAK

16:30-17:00   Antonino Crisà (University of Warwick, Coventry): *Deities, small communities and tokens in Hellenistic and Roman Sicily*.

17:00-17:30   Mairi Gkikaki (University of Warwick, Coventry): *Tokens and festivals in Athens from the late Classical age to the Herulian destruction*.

17:30-18:00   Maria Cristina Molinari (Musei Capitolini, Rome): *Two Imperial portraits. Pewter* tesserae *of Claudius/Messalina and Nero from the temple of Hercules in* Alba Fucens: *new considerations on the use of official Imperial tokens*.

18:00-19:00   **RECEPTION**

Friday 19 October 2018 (DAY 2)

09:00-09:30   Clare Rowan (University of Warwick, Coventry): *Everyday expressions of being Ostian: tokens and local identity in the port of Rome*.

09:30-10:00   Philip Kiernan (Kennsaw University, Georgia): *Imitations as tokens and imitation images*.

10:00-10:30   Peter Franz Mittag (Universität zu Köln): *Roman medallions*.

10:30-11:00   **COFFEE BREAK**

11:00-11:30   Rubina Raja (Aahrus University): *Tackling the Palmyrene banqueting* tesserae.

11:30-12:00   Denise Wilding (University of Warwick, Coventry): *Tokens in Roman Gaul: deposition on sanctuary sites and use in the religious sphere*.

12:00-12:30   Marie-Laure Le Brazidec (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris): *Proposal to identify a female deity on a series of lead tokens in Roman Gaul*.

12:30-13:00   Gunnar Dumke (Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg): *A 'hoard' of clay coins from* Seleucia *at the Tigris*.

13:00-14:00   **LUNCH**

14:00-14:30   Yoav Fahri (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Be'er Sheva): *An assemblage of unpublished Roman lead* tesserae *from* Caesarea Maritimae.

14:30-15:00   Bill Dalzell (Classical Numismatic Group, Lancaster, Pennsylvania): *Personal, public, and mercantile themes on unpublished lead tokens from a private collection*.

15:00-15:30   Cristian Mondello (University of Warwick, Coventry): *Re-reading the so-called 'Asina coins': tokens and religious identities in Late Antiquity*.

15:30-16:00   **COFFEE BREAK**

16:00-16:30   Arianna D'Ottone (Università di Roma La Sapienza): *On Islamic tokens and jetons*.

16:30-17:00   Andrea Saccocci (Università degli Studi di Udine): *The so called 'Lombard jettons', a Medieval multi-tasking card?*

17:00-17:30   **FINAL REMARKS**

ABSTRACTS

ANTONINO CRISÀ (University of Warwick, Coventry)

Deities, small communities and tokens in Hellenistic and Roman Sicily

As a Research Fellow within the *Token Communities in the Ancient Mediterranean* project at the University of Warwick, I am currently exploring the production, spread and use of tokens in Hellenistic and Roman Sicily. My research benefits from unpublished sets of finds, 're-discovered' in Sicilian major and provincial museums, especially in the provinces of Palermo and Messina. Artefacts have been found in past archaeological excavations and have never been studied before.

The scope of my paper – based on a selection of case studies – is to explain how token production was strongly connected to a well-founded religious and civic background in local Sicilian communities. First, I present some tokens from Marineo (Palermo), which show religious iconographies and might be linked to local festivals or events. Second, I assess a unique, new token from Tindari, which demonstrates how the cult of Dioskuroi was strongly widespread in that site. Lastly, such finds and 'visual' data shed new light on token production in Hellenistic and Roman Sicily and offer vital information on religion and tradition on a local scale.

FRANÇOIS DE CALLATAŸ (École pratique des hautes études, Paris)

On the origin of ancient tokens studies: the count of Caylus in the mid-eighteenth century

Taken by many as the father of modern archaeology – a pendant to Winckelmann as the father of art history – the count of Caylus (1692-1765) devoted a great part of his rich life to produce his 7-volumes *Recueil d'antiquités égyptiennes, étrusques, grecques, romaines* (1752-67). Mainly interested in ancient technology and function of modest archaeological artifacts, he left nearly entirely aside the study of coins (see F. de Callataÿ, 'Le comte de Caylus et l'étude des monnaies antiques', *Comptes rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, July-Oct. 2010: 1329-63), but focused as nobody before him on monetary objects which are not coins, i.e. tokens. The *Recueil d'antiquités* offered full plates of tokens for the first time. This paper aims to investigate Caylus' achievements in this respect.

BILL DALZELL (Classical Numismatic Group, Lancaster, Pennsylvania)

Personal, public and mercantile themes on unpublished lead tokens from a private collection

This paper will focus on unpublished pieces from four of the major token-producing areas of the Roman period: southern Spain, Rome, Ephesus and Egypt. In Spain, where several distinct groups of

lead coins or tokens were issued, a new specimen from the *Municipia Flavia* will be described. In Rome, a new food-related type and a possible contemporary counterfeit provide additional shades of meaning to the well-documented Roman series. The under studied Ephesian tokens will offer the most interesting and important pieces: unpublished mythological and agriculture types, as well as an exploration of the practice of mixed obverse and reverse dies. Lastly, a rediscovered Egyptian token will lend additional support for the interpretation of lead tokens from that region as currency.

All of the pieces under discussion are currently held in a private collection. Though shorn of their find-spot data, the types and legends displayed on the pieces can still present invaluable information to the understanding of their respective series. Additionally, the diverse geographic origins of each piece provide the opportunity to draw important comparisons between the tokens produced in various places and how they may have functioned.

DENISE DEMETRIOU (University of California, San Diego)

Token diplomacy: authenticating embassies in the ancient Mediterranean

This paper discusses tokens that were used to prove the authenticity of embassies in the ancient Mediterranean. The starting point is an inscription that details several honorific awards that Athens granted to a king of Sidon in the 350s BCE (*IG* II^2 141), as well as an attempt to establish permanent diplomatic relations between Athens and Sidon. This text is unique in that it provides the earliest record of the exchange of *symbola*, tokens of recognition. Although the word *symbola* usually indicates judicial agreements between states, I argue that in this instance the word refers to tokens used to guarantee the authenticity of embassies. Parallels from other contexts and places exist. For example, tokens with similar functions have been excavated from Athens. These were in the form of clay tablets that had painted inscriptions of the names of tribes and demes, the identifying criteria of an Athenian citizen, which were cut in half using a jigsaw design so that the names of the tribe and deme could only be read if the two halves were fitted together. Such an arrangement was necessary to authenticate the official capacity of the individuals who carried these tokens.

These kinds of tokens are most like the *tesserae hospitales*, objects that verified the relationship between partners or contracting parties. A different example from Carthage, an ivory depicting a boar, had an Etruscan inscription that read "I am Punic, of Carthaginian citizenship", no doubt belonging to a Carthaginian who traveled extensively in Etruria and used it as an identifying marker. I argue that in the Mediterranean world, where travel was commonplace and cross-cultural interactions frequent, objects such as the ones this paper brings together facilitated diplomatic or personal interactions. Tokens acted as passports of sorts to prove the identities of individuals, civic groups, or even embassies.

ARIANNA D'OTTONE (Università di Roma La Sapienza)

On Islamic tokens and jetons

The paper is intended to explore the meaning and the use of tokens in the Islamic society in Medieval and pre-Modern times.

In particular, the role of tokens in the religious and magic sphere will be examined and that of glass jetons used as currency tokens, as Paul Balog suggested, will be reviewed in the light of the most recent scientific literature and archaeological evidence.

GUNNAR DUMKE (Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg)

A 'hoard' of clay coins from Seleucia at the Tigris

During the American excavations at *Seleukia* at the Tigris several 'clay coins' have been found. These clay disks appear to have been cast from molds that had themselves been formed on actual Seleukid coins. The originals coins must have been Seleukid tetradrachms ranging in date from Seleukos I to Antiochos IV. Although 19 of these clay coins have been published with a short description of each item by MacDowall, they have not been worked on since then. A thorough search in the holdings of the Kelsey museum at Ann Arbor brought to light several examples that had not been published by MacDowall and revealed the existence of further examples at the ANS in New York. With a new corpus of 25 examples the first step was to try to identify the prototypes as precise as possible, since MacDowall's publication was written even before Newell published his seminal works on Seleukid coins. It turns out that most of the identifiable specimens are casts from Eastern workshops which produced imitative coinages.

So, my paper will analyze the archaeological context of these clay coins, compare them with the meagre parallel evidence from other parts of the Mediterranean and the Far East, and will finally try to find a proper solution to the question what the main function of these 'coins' was.

YOAV FAHRI (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Be'er Sheva)

An assemblage of unpublished Roman lead tesserae from Caesarea Maritimae

Hundreds of lead *tesserae* were picked up by many collectors in the sand dunes covering the ruins of *Caesarea Maritimae* in the 1960s and 1970s. The majority of these *tesserae* can be dated to the Roman period, while many others are from the Byzantine and crusader periods.

The aim of my paper is to present a hitherto unpublished collection of Roman *tesserae* from *Caesarea* which I was allowed to study. Most of these *tesserae* differ much in their dimensions and shape from other Roman period *tesserae*, as for example those published from sites in Europe as well as in Syria (*Palmyra*) and Egypt (*Alexandria*).

These *tesserae* from *Caesarea* seem very local in character and similar phenomenon is so far unknown from other cities in Roman Palestine. Thus, if deciphered correctly, these small objects can contribute much to our understanding of the civic life in the city under Roman rule.

MAIRI GKIKAKI (University of Warwick, Coventry)

Tokens and festivals in Athens from the late Classical age to the Herulian destruction

While it is obvious – especially through the analogy of their Roman counterparts – that tokens were issued in Athens on the occasion of festivals, actual evidence is lacking. Except for some sporadic references in studies published over the last decades, this aspect has never been properly addressed

before. This will be the occasion to address two major issues in the history of the Athenian tokens: the distinction between public and private tokens and their relation to the contemporary Athenian coinage. Methodologically, the paper heavily relies on the intersection between the imagery of tokens and coins starting from the Hellenistic Period and the abundant epigraphical record on civic, financial and religious matters of the ancient city.

The paper will sketch an evolution in practices, which were occasioned by the deteriorating financial conditions of the city, based on case studies from the Hellenistic and High Imperial Period. As festival finances came to rely more and more on the *liberalitas* of individuals in the last centuries BC and in the first centuries AD, tokens played powerful roles in celebrating civic pride and glorifying the city's unique past. Acting in the material sphere by minimising transaction costs on the one hand and by consolidating civic constitutions on the other hand, tokens empowered individuals and society and forged bonds until the Herulian destruction put an abrupt end to this practice.

PHILIP KIERNAN (Kennsaw University, Georgia)

Imitations as tokens and imitation images

Numismatists recognise several periods in Roman history when unofficial imitation coins were produced in large numbers and dominated local and sometimes even regional circulation. These imitations should be considered tokens in the sense that they functioned as an unofficial fiduciary currency and were (probably) made by non-government entities. The very existence of such token coinages is itself a sign of a highly monetised economy.

Official Roman coins are usually admired for the portraiture of their obverses, the use of legends that include official titles and slogans, and reverse imagery that can convey both simple and complicated propagandistic messages. Roman coins are often compared to state reliefs carved in stone that adorned so many Roman Imperial monuments. Imitation coins from all periods attempted to copy these aspects of the official Imperial coinage to varying degrees of success. At one end of the spectrum are superb copies that are difficult to detect, while at the other are degraded monstrosities, described in older numismatic literature as 'barbarous'. While it is easy to dismiss these cruder copies as the products of inexperienced die engravers, they also present two interesting venues of inquiry.

First, do these copies tell us something about how the Romans actually perceived and understood the imagery of official coins? Second, is it possible that the crudeness of these pieces was not so much the result of artistic ineptitude, but of an intentional choice to reject conventional standards? Rejecting the possibility that the barbarism is the result of an ethnic preference, I turn to numismatic parallels of imitation coinages in late eighteenth century Britain and early nineteenth century Canada for alternative explanations.

MARIE-LAURE LE BRAZIDEC (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris)

Proposal to identify a female deity on a series of lead tokens in Roman Gaul

Several years ago, I had the opportunity to study a series of lead tokens discovered in Roman Gaul, bearing depictions of deities and inscriptions. A set of this materials, gathering several copies bearing

the names of different peoples or secondary groups, shows the representation of a female divinity, for whom several identifications had been proposed, without being able to discover who she really was. This paper presents a new identification of this divinity, which could then play an important role in the religion of Roman Gaul during the second half of third century AD.

PETER FRANZ MITTAG (Universität zu Köln)

Roman medallions

Roman medallions are not tokens in a strict sense because they were products of the Imperial mints and they normally were not used instead of money. But as tokens, they look like coins without being coins. Especially the first medallions from the Julio-Claudian dynasty resemble coins, because they were produced with regular coin-dies and very heavy flans. From the Flavian dynasty onwards, special dies were cut and not only bronze medallions were produced but gold and silver medallions, too. During the second century these precious medallions were produced in small numbers but since the third century their numbers increased. These developments might reflect changes regarding the occasions for their distribution and the groups of recipients. Beyond dispute is the fact that the emperor himself was more or less directly responsible for the medallions' design.

The relatively small number of medallions produced and some very unusual depictions of second century medallions, which sometimes seem to reflect the emperor's private life, make it highly probable that these medallions were distributed to close friends and/or members of the administration. The precious gold and silver medallions of later times often were found (and copied) in the Barbaricum and might have served as awards for members of the military elite. New Year, jubilees and victories seem to have been occasions for their distribution. Many medallions found their way into private tombs, sometimes as pieces of the grave furniture, in Rome quite often pressed into the plastering of catacombs.

MARIA CRISTINA MOLINARI (Musei Capitolini, Rome)

Two Imperial portraits. Pewter tesserae *of Claudius / Messalina and Nero from the temple of Hercules in* Alba Fucens: *new considerations on the use of official Imperial tokens*

The scope of this paper is to present the recent discovery of two Imperial *tesserae* in a sacred well inside the sanctuary of Hercules at *Alba Fucens*, along with other finds dedicated therein and related to the military sphere. This discovery represents an extraordinary archaeological evidence revealing the function of *tesserae* with Imperial portraits, in connection with the presence of troops deployed by Emperor Claudius in the draining operations of the Fucino Lake.

CRISTIAN MONDELLO (University of Warwick, Coventry)

Re-reading the so-called 'Asina coins': tokens and religious identities in late antiquity

The study of late antique tokens with the image of a she-donkey suckling a foal, in one case with the alleged legend ASINA, is dependent at present on the research of A. Alföldi (*GNS* 2, 7-8, 1951) and his interpretation of these artifacts as tools of a covert 'pagan' propaganda against the Christian Empire. According to Alföldi, the legend D N IHV XPS DEI FI-LIVS (*Dominus Noster Jesus Christus Dei Filius*) on

some specimens would reveal the 'satirical' and anti-Christian features of these issues, in parallel with the charge of onolatry used by pagans to taunt the first Christians.

This paper will focus on a preliminary classification and a typological, morphological and iconographic analysis of the tokens with type/legend ASINA, with the goal to understand the historical and cultural meaning they had at a crucial moment in the relations between pagans and Christians in late antiquity.

RUBINA RAJA (Aahrus University)

Tackling the Palmyrene banqueting tesserae

The so-called Palmyrene *tesserae* constitute the largest *corpus* of objects giving us insight into certain aspects of Palmyrene religious life. Since the *tesserae* often carry images of Palmyrene priests (portraits), they have been subject of study within the framework of the 'Palmyra Portrait Project' based at Aarhus University, Denmark.

The *tesserae* were published in 1955 in a joint publication by Ingholt, Starcky and Seyrig, who were the first to try to tackle the *tesserae* as religious tokens. Since then several further *tesserae* have been found and published. However, the *tesserae* have never been systematically studied in order to understand the implications which they carry for understanding the structure of Palmyrene religious life. Neither have their rich iconographic language been studied in detail.

This paper will aim at giving a typological overview of these *tesserae*, which functioned as entrance tickets to religious banquets hosted by priests and groups of priests. The paper will tackle issues of iconography and stylistic development as well as the religious patterns, which these objects give insight into and will address this unique phenomenon and the meaning it carries for understanding the organization of Palmyrene religious life.

CLARE ROWAN (University of Warwick, Coventry)

Everyday expressions of being Ostian: tokens and local identity in the port of Rome

Excavations at the Roman port of Ostia have uncovered numerous lead tokens and token moulds that remain understudied. This paper focuses on this material as a source to better understand Ostian identity, forms of value, and the function of lead tokens in the Roman world.

A comparison of the lead tokens found in the city of Rome and those found in Ostia suggest that there were differences in the images used in the Imperial capital and its port. This highlights the extremely local nature of token use in the Roman world and offers the opportunity to explore what the imagery on tokens in Ostia might reveal about a specifically Ostian identity and visual language. Since the city did not strike provincial coinage, tokens might be used to gain insight into how the population of the settlement viewed themselves and their culture. For example, tokens carrying an image of the famous Ostian lighthouse are evidence of how the buildings of the city were adopted to express a local identity and sense of place in a similar manner to the use of civic buildings on provincial coinage.

Ostia also furnishes numerous find contexts for tokens and token moulds, frequently with stratigraphic data. The recurring finds of tokens in bath complexes throughout the city suggests that at least some tokens were used in this context, a hypothesis supported by evidence elsewhere in Italy. Tokens in this

particular context must have served to enable access to particular goods or services within a very confined economy, possessing value within a small local community. These tokens, as with others, appear to possess a 'singular' value, perhaps valid only in a single establishment.

ANDREA SACCOCCI (Università degli Studi di Udine)

The so called 'Lombard jettons', a Medieval multi-tasking card?

One of the most well-known series of Italian medieval tokens is formed by the so-called 'Lombard jetons', dated between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Since the middle nineteenth century, these artefacts have been recognised as bearing the monograms of the commercial Lombard (= Italian) companies and then interpreted as tokens, used by the merchants to make calculations on the abacus. After the publication of the Barnard's important work on medieval instruments of account in 1917, the discussion on the function of these pieces has subsided and all subsequent contributions – until recently – have accepted without further discussion the thesis of their essentially 'accounting' use, as pawns for abacus.

It seems very probable that this was one of their functions – maybe even one of the main functions – because entries like *jeton à compter* or *Rechenpfnnige* are attested since the late Middle age. Some of the main features of these objects seem in contrast of such exclusive role, as, for instance, their original name, *quarterolo* or *ferlino*, which means just '1 fourth'. This was a good name for a coin, not for a pawn which needed only to be counted as '1' (no matter if 1 pound, 1 shilling, 1 penny, 1 grain), or the extreme variability of their appearance, especially for the number of pellets or rosettes, which substitute the legend along the border. It is a very strange feature for objects which had only to be identical one each other to be recognised as belonging to a certain company.

Thus, some authors have recently suggested, due to this variability, that these tokens had a much wider role than being used for the abacus, especially as a token used in all the many occasions in which the commercial activity might ask for a recognition sign. This could occur in case of a *torsello* withdrawal from a warehouse to enter in a protected area, or in case of the substitution of money, when the use of coins could be inconvenient (or risky) for demonstrating the right to participate in a free distribution of food or other commodities.

This paper will discuss and examine archaeological data and a rare representation of a *taberna* by Gentile da Fabriano (1425), which seems to strongly confirm this last hypothesis.

SEBASTIANO TUSA (Soprintendenza del Mare, Palermo) & MASSIMILIANO MARAZZI (Università Suor Orsola Benincasa, Napoli)

Tokens and counting devices in bronze Age Central Mediterranean

Research conducted over the last twenty years in the Bronze Age island settlements of central Mediterranean has shown the existence of a series of 'object-based writing' devices, benefitting of particular tokens. Moreover, real 'numerical tablets' and graphic systems, mostly related to vase production, have been also documented.

The use of such 'pre/proto-writing' devices appears to be closely linked to a network of maritime connections, in which metallic raw materials and products of particular prestige circulated.

Finally, this paper aims not only to present such currently known 'object-based writing' systems for calculation and registration, but also to evaluate and contextualise them in transmarine links to which they appear to be part of.

DENISE WILDING (University of Warwick, Coventry)

Tokens in Roman Gaul: deposition on sanctuary sites and use in the religious sphere

The tokens of Roman Gaul are frequently found on sites with a religious association. These monetiform objects are usually lead, copper alloy or silver, and have been little-studied over the past century. Although scholarship has discussed tokens on a site by site basis, there is a lacuna in the discipline for consideration of these objects and their religious contexts collectively.

Therefore, this paper aims to provide an overview of the religious sites where these objects have been found, including the shrine sites of Liry and Digeon, as well as exploring the potential for votive deposition of tokens at Nimes. Furthermore, consideration will be given to the possibility that tokens bearing the name of towns or tribes might have had a religious function. The imagery and inscriptions on the tokens shall be examined in order to highlight the diversity between the tokens from different sites, as well as providing opportunity to consider any similarities. The archaeological contexts of tokens shall be considered on an intra-site basis, and wider distribution patterns explored where they are found across a greater area.

The paper will consequently argue that tokens from sanctuary sites in Gaul had a particular local character. This is due both to the imagery and inscriptions having specific relevance to each locality, as well as distribution patterns implying that their circulation and use was limited to each site and its hinterland. Their use shall then be considered in light of the implications for group identity, for example, how tokens were able to facilitate religious expression of the communities who used them.

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