

From Strabonian Regions to διοικήσεις: a Study of the Administrative Development of the  
*Provincia Asia* as Seen through Civic Coinage (133 BC – 96AD)

εἰς δὲ τὴν σύγχυσιν ταύτην οὐ μικρὰ συλλαμβάνει τὸ  
τοὺς Ῥωμαίους μὴ κατὰ φύλα διελεῖν αὐτούς, ἀλλὰ  
ἕτερον τρόπον διατάξαι τὰς διοικήσεις, ἐν αἷς τὰς ἀγο-  
ραίους ποιοῦνται καὶ τὰς δικαιοδοσίας.

*To this confusion no little has been contributed by the fact that  
the Romans did not divide them [the inhabitants of Asia] according to tribes, but in another way  
they organized their administrative districts, within which  
they hold their popular assemblies and their courts.*

(Strabo 13.4.12)

Strabo highlights the σύγχυσις, the ‘confusion’ created by the Roman introduction of the διοικήσεις, the administrative districts in *Provincia Asia*. In Strabo’s time, however, the ἔθνη, tribes, were not merely a descriptive geographical element, but also played an administrative role in the Roman province. When did this ‘confusion’ of the coexistence of ἔθνη and διοικήσεις begin? And when did the διοικήσεις become the determinative element in the administrative and economic life of the Asian province?

This paper aims to explore this situation and show that the διοικήσεις, though probably introduced by the Romans simultaneously with the institution of the province, did not acquire a preponderant administrative and territorial relevance until the period between the end of the Mithridatic Wars and the beginning of the Civil Wars.

We will prove this through an analysis of changes in the production and circulation patterns of the coinage issued by Asian cities between 133 BC, the date of Attalus' testament bequeathing his kingdom to the Romans, and the end of the Flavian Age, which sees the end of the issue of autonomous silver and the gradual standardization of bronze coinage.

I have constructed a unique database of civic coinage issued by Asian cities comprising 11,898 coins. In this paper, I will present the results of careful analysis of this database, showing that the circulation and production of currency in the Roman province of Asia followed the boundaries of the ἔθνη-based regions, the 'Strabonian' regions, until the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC and only then significantly changed, between the end of Mithridatic Wars and the beginning of the Civil Wars. After this time, coin production and circulation began to follow the διοικήσεις boundaries as well. The growing territorial and administrative importance of the διοικήσεις and their coexistence with the ἔθνη-based regions are precisely the elements creating the σύγχυσις, the 'confusion' to which Strabo alludes.

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