

Foreword

Research in the source disciplines of ancient history at the Austrian Academy of Sciences in Vienna goes back a long way: as early as 1890, the study of Greek inscriptions from Asia Minor was taken up by the – then Imperial Academy’s – “Commission für archäologische Erforschung Kleinasiens”, the well-known research unit since then generally referred to as “Kleinasiatische Kommission”. Eighty years later, in 1970, Austria’s proud tradition of academic numismatic research, dating back to the 18th century, was finally acknowledged by the foundation of the “Numismatische Kommission”, and in 1974, the “Kommission für Antike Rechtsgeschichte” was set up: its main areas of competence were the study of ancient Greek law (often on the basis of epigraphic documents), Byzantine law and ancient oriental laws, as well as juristic papyrology.

As of the beginning of the year 2013, the study of epigraphy, numismatics, papyrology and the history of ancient law was concentrated in the newly created division “Documenta Antiqua” of the Institute for the Study of Ancient Culture of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, in the course of major structural and administrative changes to the Academy overall. The division’s founding head was Michael Alram, who was succeeded in this capacity by the undersigned in June 2013. The creation of “Documenta Antiqua” was accompanied by a strong commitment to promoting research in the above-mentioned disciplines by the Austrian Academy: the in-depth study of documentary sources of the ancient world will be continued in a new environment encouraging interdisciplinary approaches. Ancient economic history is an obvious area of cooperation between our disciplines and archaeology; hence, it was decided to dedicate the inaugural conference of the new division, held in Vienna from 28 to 31 October 2014, to the study of “Infrastructure and Distribution in Ancient Economies”. In this conference with the subtitle “The Flow of Money, Goods and Services”, researchers of the division “Documenta Antiqua” as well as international guest speakers discussed the topic across different cultures, focusing not only on Greek and Roman, but also on ancient oriental economies: the study of the ancient Orient has always been one of the special fields of research at the Austrian Academy and will continue to be of particular importance in the future.

The present volume contains the papers given at the Vienna symposium, with the exception of two.* It is readily apparent that this book is, of course, not a new handbook on ancient infrastructure as a whole – not all the facets of so vast a topic could receive equal attention in the conference. The focus of the present volume is on cross-cultural and polydisciplinary aspects of the subject instead, with a special emphasis on the integration of numismatic scholarship into research on ancient economic infrastructure: from the editor’s point of view, this is one of the innovative features of the present volume. Needless to say, research on several of the key questions of the topic is in a state of flux at the moment. This is, of course, reflected in the book, and no attempt has been made to harmonise divergent positions on disputed problems in different articles.

It is my pleasure to thank all of my colleagues for their contributions to the conference and the stimulating discussions; the somewhat lengthy process of the preparation of the manuscript and the production of the volume has made it impossible for the authors to systematically take into account literature published after 2015/2016. Special thanks to Roger Bagnall (New York), who not only generously accepted to give the inaugural lecture, but also chaired the conference’s concluding discussion, which he opened with lucid remarks that influenced my introductory essay to this volume. I am obliged to the city of Vienna (Magistratsabteilung 7 – Kultur-, Wissenschafts-

* Kaja Harter-Uibopuu, “Decrees and treaties – the legal framework for the successful flow of goods and money”; Michael Alram, “Money and coinage in the Achaemenid Empire: production and distribution”.

und Forschungsförderung) and especially to the Austrian Academy of Sciences for kindly sponsoring the event; the Austrian Academy also generously contributed towards the production costs of the present volume. For help with the editorial work I am grateful to Theresia Pantzer and to Katharina Preindl, who has also compiled the indices. Finally, I would like to thank the Austrian Academy of Sciences Press for their excellent cooperation in turning the manuscript of these proceedings into a book.

Vienna, December 2018

Bernhard Woytek