

PART II

THE QUESTION OF PROVENANCE AND CONTROLS

EXCEPT for the Carthage and Antioch stamps, and some of the stamps from the fourth and fifth centuries (nos. 81, 83), none gives direct indication of where it was applied or by whom. The date of the stamps is usually evident, particularly in the Imperial series, but the problem of their origin is also important for the study of artistic development in silver of this period. Since the great majority of stamps belong to the Imperial series, and since almost all the objects lending themselves to stylistic analysis have stamps of this kind, the following discussion will concentrate upon Imperial stamps. Earlier stamps and those of the Irregular group will be considered mainly in relation to the Imperial stamps. While there is no absolute proof that Imperial stamps were applied in Constantinople and only in Constantinople, both internal and external evidence favor this assumption.

A. CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM THE STAMPS

The earliest stamps on gold and silver bullion and the square stamps on bowls of the fourth and fifth centuries already point to a kind of official control in matters dealing with precious metals. In the case of bullion stamps, there are generally indications of where they were applied and these indications point to widely separated centers in Europe and the Mediterranean. Only one of the bowls (no. 83), however, has a stamp so marked, and in this case the place indicated is Constantinople. Two other stamps on these early bowls, nos. 81 and 82, have partially legible Greek inscriptions, pointing to an Eastern Mediterranean origin. No. 83 is dated in the fifth century and proves that the practice of stamping silver existed in Constantinople at that time. Moreover, the seated Tyche in the same stamp, undoubtedly Constantinople herself, is comparable to contemporary coin types, giving an imperial or at least an official character to the stamp. This was the forerunner of the later Imperial series with the emperor's bust or monogram, and the fact that it can so readily be assigned to the capital lends support to the argument that follows.

The presence of five Imperial stamps on an object indicates that they were applied by an especially designated group of officials, of whom there were five at one time; and, further, that these officials represented imperial authority in the capital itself, rather than elsewhere. In the first place, the persons whose names or titles are inscribed on the stamps must have held positions of some authority in the imperial service since their names were associated with the emperor's portrait and monogram. Indeed, the titles *λαμπρότατος* and

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σεβαστός, occurring several times in the stamps among the Christian names, represented officials of a certain dignity. Such a group of officials certainly existed in the highly centralized administrative organization of the capital, whereas it is more difficult to imagine equally imposing bodies of dignitaries functioning in provincial centers. Thus, if we assume that the stamps were normally applied under the direct supervision of these functionaries, the stamping most likely took place in Constantinople. The possibility that the stamps, though designating officials in Constantinople, were used on their behalf also in smaller localities will be considered below.

While there are, moreover, many sets of five stamps which theoretically could belong to different centers and different groups of officials, the fact that frequently one or more of the stamps on one vessel are repeated on another indicates that the groups did not operate in different places. In the Chart below, under A, the seventy-eight objects with Imperial stamps are listed by number so as to group together those with at least one identical stamp, and, instead of eighty-one separate sets of stamps (nos. 17, 54, and 55 each having two sets), about thirty-four groups are thereby established.⁷⁷ This number is further reduced if the thirty-four groups are related to each other by bringing together also all the secondary monograms common to them (Chart, B); thus related, the groups number only seventeen. Finally, if repeated inscribed names are taken into consideration as well (Chart, C), the separate groups are reduced to seven. If all these names were ordinary, like Ἀνδρέας (nos. 12-14), this last arrangement would prove very little, but the repetition of a name like

CHART

A. Objects Grouped According to Repeated Stamps

I 2 3 4 5 6 7 8-9 10 11 12-13 14 15 16-17 20-22
18 19 23 24 25 26 27-29 30-31 32-34 35-36 37-47 48-49
50-57 58-67 68-69 70 71 72-73 74 75-78

B. Objects Grouped According to Repeated Stamps and Secondary Monograms

I 2-3 4 5 6 7-13 14 15-29 30-31 32-36 37-57 58-67
68-69 70-71 72-73 74 75-78

C. Objects Grouped According to Repeated Stamps, Secondary Monograms, and Inscribed Names

I 2-4,6 5 7-14 15-29 30-31 32-78

⁷⁷ The following numbers are approximate because only too often stamps are lost or illegible. Some relationships may be considered tenuous, as, for instance, the repetition of an inscribed name that is very common. 54A and B are grouped together because they occur on the same object and for this reason were probably stamped in the same locality.

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Σχολαστικίς (see *supra*, p. 18) does suggest persons in the same locality. This last method of grouping is particularly remarkable in that the different groups do not overlap in time but follow one another chronologically. These factors indicate that the stamps represent one group of officials in one place, rather than different groups in different places.

That there were not more than five men applying stamps contemporaneously is also implied by the nature of the stamps. The stamps are of only five different shapes, and on the great majority of objects each stamp contains a different individual name. Each one thus belongs to a different official. Where a name appears twice on the same object, it is a common name, such as Ἰωάννης (no. 16), and does not necessarily indicate that the same person applied more than one shape, although this may have happened. On the other hand, there could not have been more than five officials because this would mean that more than one person used the same shape of stamp. In that event, when two stamps of the same shape are found on the same vessel, the inscribed names might be expected to differ, but this is rarely the case. From the reign of Justinian, two stamps of the same shape on a vessel are generally identical and clearly belonged to the same official. Exceptions to this rule either belong to the period of preliminary organization under Anastasius I (when the question of five officials does not arise, since he used only four stamps and, apparently, a different system) or result from special circumstances.^{77a}

Although the relationships between stamps on different objects point to a single group of five officials, and their imperial association and exalted rank relate this group to the capital, it might yet be argued that the stamps were made and applied in other centers also, as were coin dies. This is improbable, however, because the character of the Imperial stamp, with its changing individual name, implies that it was a guarantee by the person whose name was inscribed therein and that that person, therefore, applied his own stamp. If it had been used by some over-all authority in several centers, the individual names would no more have been required than they were on coins. Moreover, no mint-mark comparable to those on coins is found in the Imperial stamps⁷⁸ and this suggests that their especial character was enough to indicate where they were applied and by whom. What is more, the turnover in personnel was evidently frequent, for the names change constantly and the persons concerned cannot have been in office for more than two years at a time, more likely one.⁷⁹ Consequently, if the stamps had been applied in provincial centers as well as in Constantinople, these centers would have found it very difficult to stay up to date. Such a system would hardly have been practicable.

A kind of negative support for the above arguments is found in the Irregular group of stamps. It has been noted that several different kinds of stamps existed concurrently with the Imperial series, one set of which can be assigned to Carthage, another to Antioch. In the sixth and seventh centuries Carthage

^{77a} Nos. 54, 78.

⁷⁸ With the possible exception of three stamps; *supra*, p. 15. See also *infra*, p. 32.

⁷⁹ See note 87.

was one of the few imperial mints to issue silver,⁸⁰ and if the Imperial stamping system extended to centers outside the capital, it should have included Carthage. As the Carthaginian stamps are very different from Imperial stamps, however, it is clear that this city was not included in the system, and the same logic is applicable where other irregular stamps are concerned. There is yet a third group of objects, silver without stamps, which should be taken into consideration also in a negative sense. Since this study is concerned with stamps it does not deal with the large number of objects having no stamps, each of which poses a problem of origin. Such objects were found with stamped objects, in the area encompassing the Mediterranean, Europe, and Russia, and frequently in the same hoards. A detailed account of these treasures and their places of discovery lies outside the bounds of this text. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that many unstamped silver objects have been found in the famous treasures of Syria and many more in Europe, especially in Italy and Southern France. Equally, objects of Sassanian origin and others of obviously local workmanship have been found along with stamped silver in hoards from the South of Russia. The large number of unstamped objects from those areas where stamped silver has been found makes it the more unlikely that the use of stamps was very widespread. It indicates, rather, that the stamps distinguish a small group of objects of a particular kind and most probably from a particular place. All of these observations point to the conclusion that the use of Imperial stamps was confined to Constantinople.

B. EXTERNAL EVIDENCE

Contemporary references to the stamps on silver, together with what is known of the economic history and administrative organization of the Empire in the sixth and seventh centuries, support the conclusions drawn from the stamps and throw further light not only on their provenance, but also on their purpose and their history. Smirnov was the first to draw attention to a reference to five stamps on silver of the seventh century from Constantinople, and to point out that these stamps indicated the superior quality of the metal.⁸¹ He referred to a legend in the life of John the Almoner, Patriarch of Alexandria in the early seventh century (d. A.D. 616). Several versions of this story exist; in the later versions, a boat returns to Constantinople from England with its cargo of tin miraculously changed to "silver of the best quality with five stamps."⁸² In an earlier version, written by actual contem-

⁸⁰ Wroth, I, pp. xvi, lxxv-lxxvi, ci; Grierson, *Num. Chron.* X, p. 61. A vivid description of the wealth at Carthage under the Vandals of the sixth century is given by Procopius, *BV*, IV:iii:25ff.; IV:iv:3f.; IV:vi:6-9. Little is known about mines in Carthage in the Byzantine era; presumably much of the silver was imported as in Roman times. See A. Héron de Villefosse and H. Thédenat, "Les trésors de vaisselle d'argent trouvés en Gaule," *Gazette archéologique*, IX (1884), p. 234; Walters, p. x; M. Rostovtzeff, *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*, II (Oxford, 1957), pp. 690, 691, notes 101, 102; for Vandalic treasures, see also Jacques Heurgon, *Le trésor de Ténès* (Paris, 1958), p. 15, note 1.

⁸¹ Smirnov, p. 507.

⁸² Fr. Combefis, *Historia haeresis monothelitarum* (Paris, 1648), col. 641 A.

poraries of John the Almoner, the story takes place in Alexandria and there is no mention of five stamps.⁸³ The transference of the location from Alexandria to Constantinople evidently came about later, and it may be significant that the descriptive phrase concerning the five stamps is present only in the versions written after this transfer.

A second reference to five-stamped silver as a proof of quality comes from the life of Theodore of Sykeon, a text written in the time of Heraclius.⁸⁴ According to this story, St. Theodore sent his archdeacon to Constantinople to buy a chalice-and-paten (the word is in the singular, as it is in Greek today, to signify both vessels: *δισκοποτήριον*). This the archdeacon did, and he brought it back to the monastery. Before Communion the next day, he carried it into the vestry to show it to the Saint. When St. Theodore objected that the piece was defective, the archdeacon assured him that it was of very good quality and bore the five-sealed proof (*πεντασφράγιστον αὐτῶν δοκιμήν*). The Saint agreed that it was indeed beautifully worked and that the worth of the silver was evident from the stamps on it (*ἐκ τῶν ἐπικειμένων σφραγίδων ἢ τοῦ ἀργύρου δοκιμή*), yet he insisted that it was defiled. Then the archdeacon chanted an invocation and the Saint prayed and filled the chalice, after which it turned black. Only when it was put away did it turn silver again. Thereupon it was returned to Constantinople, where it was discovered to have been used for profane purposes.⁸⁵ This story admirably illustrates the purpose of the stamps and relates them without question to Constantinople.

While pointing to Constantinople as their place of origin, the stamps also give an indication of the type of organization that applied them. The identity of all the officials connected with the stamping of silver has not been discovered, but something of their function is indicated by the stamps, and when this is related to what is known about the Empire's financial administration in the sixth and seventh centuries a certain correlation is revealed.

The stamps of the Imperial series suggest that at least six persons were involved, the five whose individual names and titles occur in the five stamps and a sixth to whom belonged the secondary monogram. The first of the five stamping officials, he who placed his name in the round stamp, presumably was responsible to the emperor whose portrait he used. Similarly, in the square and hexagon the names were linked to the emperor's monogram; but the individual whose name occurs in the long stamp with the secondary monogram and emperor's portrait must have been responsible to the owner of the secondary monogram as well as to the emperor. This suggests that he was less important

⁸³ H. Delehay, "Une vie inédite de Saint Jean l'Aumonier," *Analecta Bollandiana*, XLV (1927), p. 32.

⁸⁴ Theophilus Ioannou, *Mnemeia Agiologika* (Venice, 1884), p. 399, para. 42; E. Dawes and N. H. Baynes, *Three Byzantine Saints* (Oxford, 1948), p. 117f. I owe these references to Prof. E. Kitzinger.

⁸⁵ Two other sources concerned with silver are relevant in this context, though the five stamps are not mentioned. Theophanes relates that in the early ninth century, when Nicephorus carried off the treasure of the Khan of Bulgaria, he had his stamps put upon it, "thereby making it his own property" (Theoph., p. 490, 23-25). This happened considerably later than the period under discussion, but it is revealing that there was such a thing as an Imperial stamp placed on treasure. Theophylactus Simocatta, in the late sixth century, tells a story which resembles that of St. Theodore (I:xi [Bonn ed., 1834, pp. 53-57]. Dr. C. Mango brought this reference to my attention).

than the other officials. The official using the cross stamp did not have the privilege of the emperor's monogram or portrait, but was responsible mainly to the owner of the secondary monogram.⁸⁶ It has been noted that the secondary monogram changes more frequently than does that of the emperor, but not as frequently as do the inscribed names. The person to whom it belonged was evidently in office for a longer period of time than the individual signatories.⁸⁷ He did not stamp the silver himself, but had two of the five stamping officials (those using the long and cross stamps) under his authority. He must have been a person of high position. Among the principal administrative officials in the government, the one concerned most directly with the silver trade was the *comes sacrarum largitionum*. As administrator of the Imperial Largesses, the central treasury of the Empire, this dignitary was in charge of state factories, trade, and mines. He did not, as a rule, remain in office for any length of time; but there were exceptions, the most notorious being Peter Barsymes, who, by favor of Theodora, was *comes sacrarum largitionum* twice in the reign of Justinian, both times for several years.⁸⁸ Table V gives a list of the known names of *comites sacrarum largitionum* in the sixth and seventh centuries with the date of their office and the texts that refer to them.⁸⁹ The list is by no means complete, for there are large gaps throughout the entire

⁸⁶ This hierarchy conforms to the rules of the hereditary *corporata* described on p. 43 and in note 94.

⁸⁷ In the fifth century, the period of office decreed for the assistant masters of the Sacred Largesses, the Privy Purse, and the Sacred Imperial Bureaus was one year: *Cod. Theod.*, VI:xxx:21. See also p. 37.

⁸⁸ The dates are not certain: see Table V. The Edict of 559 (*Ed. Just.*, XI) calls him *comes sacrarum largitionum* twice, but Procopius speaks of his promotion direct from *officialis* to Prefect. If this is correct, the Petrus of 542 (*Ed. Just.*, VII:vi) must be a different man and Barsymes' second tenure fall in the early 550's. On the other hand, Grierson would place Barsymes' first period of office in the year 539.

⁸⁹ This list of *comites* was compiled largely by Dr. John Kent. It represents the latest study in the subject and is the most thorough. There remain, however, many uncertainties as to the identity of some of the officers and particularly as to their dates. For the dates of Peter Barsymes, see note 88. Stein (*BE*, p. 434, note 1) mentions "Elie, patrice et comte des largesses sacrées en été 528" giving the date according to Malalas (XVIII, p. 441, 8-12); but Theophanes (p. 186, 8-13), who refers to the same event as Malalas, gives the year A.M. 6025 (A.D. 532/3). In Table V, Dr. Kent has favored the earlier date. Evagrius implies that Magnus was *curator* of one of the imperial *domus* (see Excursus p. 37), while Corippus says that he was *comes sacrarum largitionum*. Anastasius was killed by Phocas before the latter's own fall, i.e. in 610, although Theophanes gives the year 6101 (A.D. 608/9); the names of his associates in conspiracy, however, show him to be identical with the Athanasius mentioned in the *Chronicon Paschale*, A.D. 605. Finally, three more names are known of men who assumed the title of *comes sacrarum largitionum* in the sixth century: Ephremius (524/5), Constantinus (528/33), and Cratinus (533). Kent believes, however, that these men bore the title only in an *honorary* capacity (p. 37). Prof. George Ostrogorsky kindly discussed some of these problems with me and made most helpful suggestions; but it was not possible to pursue this topic further in the present context. For earlier investigations of the office of the *comes sacrarum largitionum*, see F. Grossi-Gondi, in *Dizionario epigrafico di antichità romane* (ed. Ettore de Ruggiero, 1900), II, 1, pp. 487-493; O. Seeck, "Comites," in Pauly-Wissowa, *Real-Encyclopädie*, IV (Stuttgart, 1901), cols. 671-675. See also Daremberg and Saglio, *Dictionnaire des antiquités grecques et romaines*, II (1908), pp. 876-877; Bury, pp. 80-90 and *passim*; *idem*, *History*, I, p. 51; A. E. R. Boak and J. E. Dunlap, *Two Studies in Later Roman and Byzantine Administration* (New York, 1924), pp. 21, 179, 224; F. Dölger, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der byzantinischen Finanzverwaltung, besonders des 10. und 11. Jahrhunderts...* (*Byzantinisches Archiv*, 9) (Munich, 1927), pp. 16, 27, note 4; *idem*, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des oströmischen Reiches*, I, *Regesten von 565-1025* (Berlin, 1924), p. 6 (A.D. 575-6); R. Guiland, "Le consulat dans l'Empire byzantin," *Byzantion*, XXIV (1954), p. 552; E. Hanton, "Lexique explicatif du Recueil des inscriptions grecques chrétiennes d'Asie Mineure. Titres byzantins," *Byzantion*, IV (1927-28), pp. 53-136, esp. p. 97; G. Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State* (New Brunswick, N. J., 1957), p. 89; L. Bréhier, *Les institutions de l'Empire byzantin* (Paris, 1949), pp. 95, 106; Stein, *BE*, pp. 213-214.

* H. Seyrig, in G.
Tchalenko, *villages
antiques*, III, pp. 40f.
"Magnus the Syrian"

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period. Similarly, Table III shows the secondary monograms and there are omissions in this list also, since not all the stamps have been preserved. Some of the names are common ones. Nevertheless, there is enough correlation between the two lists to lend strong support to the suggestion that the secondary monogram belongs to the *comes sacrarum largitionum* in office at the time the object was stamped. John the Paphlagonian was *comes sacrarum largitionum* in 498. It was he who was largely responsible for the reforms in the domain of finance under Anastasius and probably for instigating the stamp system as well.^{89a} Among only five sets of stamps from the time of Anastasius, the monogram ΙΩΑΝΝΟΒ occurs twice. Peter Barsymes has already been mentioned; he was Justinian's favorite from 540 to about 559 and when he was not Count of the Sacred Largesses he held the even more powerful office of Praetorian Prefect. He was responsible for the reorganization of the "imperial monopolies," especially in the silk trade, and by means of "shameless traffic in the magistracies and...scandalous speculation in corn" he filled Justinian's treasuries.⁹⁰ It is easy to believe that it was this same Peter who was responsible for the monogram on seven of the fourteen sets of stamps belonging to Justinian. The name ΙΟΥΑΝΙΑΝΟΒ occurs in the monograms, and also in the list of *comites* under Justinian. One Theodorus Petri evidently held this influential post in the reign of Justin II, and the monogram Theodorus occurs in seven of the eight sets of stamps from the same reign.⁹¹ Finally, Athanasius was a *comes sacrarum largitionum* and was killed by Phocas in 605; his monogram occurs in the stamps of Phocas. No names of *comites sacrarum largitionum* during the reign of Heraclius are known. From the reign of Anastasius through the reign of Phocas, only eleven names have been found in texts and there are fifteen different secondary monograms for the corresponding period. Out of these, five correspond in sequence and in time. Considering the number lost on either side, this is a substantial proportion. The closeness of the relationship gains added support if the list of monograms is compared to similar lists of the names of two other prominent officials, the Praetorian Prefects,⁹² or the Masters of Offices.⁹³ It is apparent that no relationship exists between these two lists

^{89a} See *infra*, p. 32 and note 101.

⁹⁰ C. Diehl, in *The Cambridge Medieval History*, II (Cambridge, 1913), p. 42; for monopolies, see note 94.

⁹¹ See nos. 20-26. Although the combination of letters in the monogram could equally well spell the name ΔΩΡΟΘΕΟΒ, it should probably read ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΒ, for the letter Θ in the center, rather than one of the letters on the arms of the cross, is likely to be the initial letter of the name (compare the secondary monogram of no. 58 and the monogram of Theodora on the capitals of St. Sophia, *supra*, p. 16). In the monograms on nos. 20-26, the position of the P in the name is not always clear, for it becomes confused with the O of the 8. In the long stamp of no. 25, a P shows clearly below the V; so presumably the O may be derived from the shape of the central Θ. This difficulty was resolved in a more satisfactory way for the monogram in the long and cross stamps of nos. 58-67. *

⁹² A list of Praetorian Prefects is to be found in Stein, *BE*, Excursus A, pp. 781-786, and W. Ensslin, "Praefectus Praetorio," in Pauly-Wissowa, *Realencyclopädie*, XXII² (Stuttgart, 1954), cols. 2495-2501.

⁹³ Boak and Dunlap, *Two Studies in Later Roman and Byzantine Administration*, pp. 150-151. Complete lists of other major dignitaries of this period, the Counts of the Privy Purse, the Quaestors, or the City Prefects are not available. It does not seem likely, however, that a comparison between the list of monograms and the names of these officials would prove rewarding. For a study of the office of the Privy Purse and a few names from this period, see F. Grossi-Gondi, in *Dizionario epigrafico di antichità romane* (ed. de Ruggiero), II, 1, p. 497; Seeck, "Comes rerum privatarum," in Pauly-Wissowa,

* A similar transference in the position of the Θ occurs in the secondary monograms of nos. 33 and 78a.

and the list of monograms, except in one or two instances where the Count of the Sacred Largesses also assumed another office. So it is that the last factor in dating the stamps is the identification of the owner of the secondary monogram. When he cannot be identified, the stamps may tentatively be dated according to their relationship to the general sequence of stamps that are dated. The *Stuma paten* (no. 27), for example, may be placed in 577–578 because its stamps belong to the reign of Justin II (565–578) and succeed stamps assigned to the period of office of Theodorus Petri (577). The significance of the secondary monogram is described in the Catalogue wherever pertinent. The reader is reminded, however, that the list of *comites sacrarum largitionum* is short and that some of the dates are uncertain. The attributions of the monograms and the dates assigned to silver objects on these grounds alone cannot be considered final.

The likelihood of a connection between the stamps and the office of the *largitiones* is enhanced by a more detailed study of the office. An Excursus, contributed by Dr. John Kent, provides a history of the office and a description of its functions and organization. Dr. Kent throws valuable light on the relationship between the stamps and the *largitiones*.⁹⁴ The title *comes sacrarum*

Real-Encyclopädie, IV (Stuttgart, 1900), cols. 664–670; Stein, *Studien*, pp. 176–186; *idem*, *BE*, pp. 423–425, 433; L. Bréhier, *Les institutions de l'Empire byzantin* (Paris, 1949), pp. 96, 256. The office ran parallel with the office of *comes sacrarum largitionum* and died with it toward the end of the sixth century or the early seventh (Bréhier, *op. cit.*, p. 106 f.; Bury, p. 19 f.; Stein, *loc. cit.*; Boak and Dunlap, *op. cit.*, p. 224). The Quaestors did not have much to do with the management of traffic in precious metals, and the few names that come readily to hand bear no relation to the list of monograms: Bréhier, *op. cit.*, pp. 95, 107; Stein, *Studien*, p. 186; *idem*, *BE*, pp. 246, 406, 433; Boak and Dunlap, *op. cit.*, p. 179. The City Prefect was the dignitary most closely concerned with the guilds in the city, and, in the ninth century, was most immediately responsible for the guild of silversmiths: see *Le Livre du Préfet*, chap. ii (ed. Jules Nicole [Geneva, 1893], pp. 22–24); Bréhier, *op. cit.*, pp. 186–192, esp. p. 189. The names of City Prefects in the sixth century, however, do not correspond to the list of monograms: *Nov. Just.*, XXII, p. 186; XLIII, p. 269, LXIII, p. 334; LXIV, p. 336; LXXIX, p. 390; LXXXII, p. 402; CXXV, p. 630; CXXXIV, p. 676; CXL, p. 701; *Proc.*, *Anec.*, ix: 37; Stein, *Studien*, p. 186.

⁹⁴ Further research in this direction should prove highly rewarding. Dr. Kent's description of the organization of the department, for example, reveals a group of workmen bound to the state by hereditary ties. This factor would explain the recurrence of names in the stamps over long periods (p. 17) and the migration of the same name through different shapes of stamps. The fact that there are titles of rank among these names supports Dr. Kent's account of the privileges accorded to the *barbaricarii*, the workers in precious metals (p. 44), and probably also to the *argentarii comitatenses*, the holders of the parallel office, under whose authority Dr. Kent suggests the silver was stamped (*ibid.*). Dr. Kent mentions also the "twin factories at Antioch and Constantinople... directly administered by a section of the palatine *scrinium ab argento*" (*ibid.*). We already have official stamps from Antioch with a distinctive character, and it seems evident that Imperial stamps represent the office in the capital. Further, the office of the *sacrae largitiones* was responsible for the organization of the textile mills, including the garment, linen, and canvas mills, the purple dye works, and especially the so-called "monopoly" of silk; and on silk, at least in a later period, stamps were used to facilitate imperial control (*Le Livre du Préfet*, viii:9; p. 37 f.). Thus the stamps on silver afford a precedent for this practice in another branch of the *largitiones*. This "monopoly" of silk, moreover, seems to be another innovation by Peter Barsymes who was, as we have seen, responsible for innovations in silver stamps. According to Procopius, Peter Barsymes "... set up a great number of what are called 'monopolies' and sold the welfare of his subjects to those who wanted to operate these abominations, and thus, on the one hand, he carried off a price for the transaction, and, on the other hand, to those who had contracted with him he gave the privilege of managing their business as they wished... But when these sovereigns had brought most of the merchandise under the control of the monopolies, as they are called, and every single day were strangling those who wished to buy anything, and only the shops where clothing is sold were left untouched by them, they devised this scheme for that business also..." (*Proc.*, *Anec.*, xx: 5; xxv: 13). For these monopolies, see *Cod. Just.*, XI: viii, ix; cf. Kent's Excursus, p. 42 f. and R. S. Lopez, "Silk Industry in the Byzantine Empire," *Speculum*, XX (1945), pp. 1–42.

largitionum was given up sometime during the reign of Heraclius, and the duties of the office were transferred to, or divided among, persons with other titles.⁹⁵ Imperial stamps in the reign of Heraclius continue to show a secondary monogram, but who assumed this part of the office of the Sacred Largesses has not been determined. Toward the end of the Imperial series the stamps show irregularities for which the reorganization of financial controls may have been responsible. The disintegration of the office of the *comes sacrarum largitionum* may also have caused the abandonment of this type of Imperial stamp, and during the subsequent reorganization of the department of finance new stamps, e.g. those of nos. 99–102, may have been substituted.⁹⁶

The *comes sacrarum largitionum* controlled not only stamps but coins also. It is not surprising, therefore, that certain relationships existed between the use of silver in trade and its use in the imperial mints. Indeed, the stamps have frequently been compared to coins which also have the emperor's effigy and which were certainly regulated by a strongly centralized administrative organization. The term ἀργυροπράτης could refer either to the money changer or to the silversmith.⁹⁷ A comparison between the use of silver in imperial mints and its use in trade points to a connection between the controls of the metal instituted for both purposes. Silver was not plentiful in the Empire and the output of silver coins was consequently small relative to that of gold or bronze. Its use was actually restricted to the mints of Constantinople, Carthage, Rome, and Ravenna.⁹⁸ It is, therefore, particularly in these areas where silver for making coins came under imperial supervision that similar supervision might be expected to have extended to other uses of the metal. That Constantinople was a major center for silver trade is well known, and Justinian lavished the precious material in wonderful abundance on the decoration of St. Sophia.⁹⁹ Constantinople, therefore, would have been a logical area for silver controls. The wealth of silver in Carthage has already been mentioned, and the stamps on the Turin plate are evidence of some kind of official control; but since they differ from those of the Imperial series, the control evidently took a different form. On the other hand, no silver coins from other major centers, such as Antioch, Alexandria, or Salonika, have been found.¹⁰⁰ Correspondingly,

⁹⁵ Excursus, p. 37f.

⁹⁶ See *supra*, p. 21f.

⁹⁷ The archdeacon of Sykeon (p. 27) carried out his transactions in Constantinople with the ἀργυροπράτης. This person, in turn, referred the problem of the chalice to the ἀρχιεπίσκοπος and the ἀργυροκόπος. The ἀρχιεπίσκοπος was concerned with the legal side of the dispute, for he was the official scribe and keeper of official documents (*Ed. Just.*, IX:ii:1). Ἀργυροπράτης and ἀργυροκόπος are equivalent to the Latin terms *nummularius* and *argentarius* and both could mean the banker or tester of coins or the silversmith; see, under the relevant words, H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford, 1925) and C. B. Hase, W. and L. Dindorf, *Thesaurus Graecae Linguae* (I, pt. 2 [Paris, 1831–1856]); J. G. Platon, *Les banquiers dans la législation de Justinien* (Paris, 1912), p. 4.

⁹⁸ Wroth, I, p. lxxvi. The large output of silver coins from Constantinople did not start until the seventh century (see *infra*, p. 32f.).

⁹⁹ As described by Paul the Silentiary: Lethaby and Swainson, *passim*. The wealth of silver in Constantinople is described by H. Graeven, "Ein Reliquien-Kästchen aus Pirano," *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses*, XX (Vienna, 1899), pp. 6, 7.

¹⁰⁰ All silver in Egypt had to be imported: A. C. Johnson and L. C. West, *Byzantine Egypt: Economic Studies* (Princeton, 1949), p. 117.

only two stamped silver objects have been traced to Antioch and none to the other major centers.

Moreover, as we have seen, the first organized system of stamps was instituted by Anastasius, and it can hardly be coincidence that this Emperor was also responsible for the most far-reaching monetary reforms since Constantine the Great.¹⁰¹ Among these reforms, which placed the treasury on its feet, was the institution on coins of the mark of value in Greek letters. The use of Greek lettering on the coins recalls the change from Latin to Greek inscriptions on the silver stamps of Anastasius; but if there is a connection between stamps and coins, it is all the more noteworthy that the stamps do not show the device of the mint. As was suggested above, the mint mark was not required on the stamps of Anastasius because they came from only one locality, Constantinople. The monetary reforms of Anastasius were elaborated by Justinian who established a system that endured, virtually unchanged, well into the seventh century,¹⁰² and it was this same Emperor who established the five-stamp control on silver which lasted until the reign of Constans II.

Finally, an event occurred in the reign of Heraclius pertinent to the history of silver stamps. When Heraclius was embroiled in the Persian Wars, he drained the treasury and by A.D. 621 was in considerable financial distress. The personality of this Emperor was strong enough to inspire in Constantinople, at this critical moment, an action by the church and the populace that can be considered psychologically extraordinary; it is told in several sources¹⁰³ that for this emergency he called in all the treasure from all the churches in the capital. The sum collected must have been immense, for the wealth of the churches at this time was famed and their treasure allowed Heraclius to conduct a successful war that lasted for seven years. Apparently the Emperor had already tried to collect treasure in Egypt when the Persians attacked Alexandria in 615, but on this occasion had not been successful.¹⁰⁴ It was in 615, however—this same year of financial difficulty—that a new silver coin, the *hexagram*, weighing over six scripula, was first issued in Constantinople.¹⁰⁵ The *hexagram* continued to be coined throughout the reign of Heraclius and during the three following reigns. The fact that it first appeared in a year when the Emperor was in great financial need, and that it continued to be minted in

¹⁰¹ Sabatier, I, pp. 25f., 151; R. P. Blake, "The Monetary Reform of Anastasius I and Its Economic Implications," reprinted from *Studies in the History of Culture*, February 1942 (American Council of Learned Societies Devoted to Humanistic Studies. Conference of the Secretaries of Constituent Societies), pp. 84-97; Stein, *BE*, pp. 192-198; Ph. Grierson, "The Currency Reform of Anastasius," *Atti dello VIII Congresso internazionale di studi bizantini, Palermo, 1951*, pt. 1 (*Studi bizantini e neoellenici*, VII [1953]), p. 374f.

¹⁰² Wroth, I, pp. xiii, xv. Major financial reforms occurring in the seventh century brought with them changes in the monetary system, for which see *infra* and Wroth, I, p. xxviii. For Justinian's financial policy and reforms, see Bury, *History*, II, pp. 348-359; Stein, *BE*, pp. 422-427.

¹⁰³ Nicephorus, *Opuscula historica* (ed. de Boor, Leipzig, 1880), p. 15; Georgius Monachus, *Chronicon*, IV:ccxxvii:10 (*PG*, CX [1863], col. 829). A. Pernice, *L'Imperatore Eraclio* (Florence, 1905), p. 102, cites other textual sources. It is true that Nicephorus, *op. cit.*, p. 15, says that Heraclius took away the treasure and, p. 22, that he returned it. This can hardly be a literal statement; as Pernice observes, Nicephorus probably meant that it was not taken without assurance of later payment with interest.

¹⁰⁴ Pernice, *op. cit.*, p. 77f.

¹⁰⁵ Wroth, I, p. lxxvi.

THE QUESTION OF PROVENANCE AND CONTROLS

considerable quantity when he was successful in procuring silver treasure in Constantinople, may have been one reason for the disappearance of stamped silver vessels. The silver coin was required, in addition to gold, to pay the troops, and it was found to be so valuable in this respect that there must have been a corresponding drop in the use of silver for manufacturing purposes and trade. Certainly, for a brief period following the collection of the treasure in 621 and until the immediate danger was over, all procurable silver would have been used for coinage rather than for silver vessels. Objects from the period after 629 indicate that silver manufacture was not abruptly stopped, but while the stamping system lingered on, it is evident that under Constans II, at least, the controls were more loosely applied.¹⁰⁶ Moreover, the treasures of the church would eventually have had to be replenished; so the demand for silver in the capital must have been greater than ever before. External trade would have correspondingly lessened. Most of the stamped objects were found outside Constantinople¹⁰⁷ and must, therefore, have been exports; thus it is not so surprising that none have survived from the second half of the seventh century. Finally, as more silver was used for coins and less for vessels, the elaborate stamping system fell into disuse.

The question of trade raises the problem of the migration of silver objects and it is revealing, indeed, to consider the area over which silver with stamps has been found. This is indicated in the Distribution Map. Each known place of discovery is marked, but without any indication of the number of objects found, for this would be misleading in the instances of the chance preservation of large hoards like the Cyprus finds. It has been pointed out¹⁰⁸ that silver with stamps has been found in the area of trade routes radiating from Constantinople. Comparatively few stamped objects come from the Western Mediterranean, a fact unfavorable to the assumption of a Western origin for the stamps, while the large number of objects found in Russia, along the river routes from the Black Sea, points to the markets of Constantinople as a most logical source.

The great distance travelled by silver objects in trade is also illustrated by the Map. Frequently valuable objects were broken up and used for currency en route, but if they survived the journey they might then have been decorated or redecorated by local craftsmen. The changes made in the decoration of the rim of the plate of Paternus (no. 2) may be an example of this. We noted above (p. 2f.) that the stamps were applied to an object before it was decorated, but after the silver was cut out and partially fashioned. This means that even within Constantinople there may well have been a division of labor; the men who shaped the vessels might not necessarily have been the same as those who finished them. Sometimes the vessel might not have been decorated until several years after it was stamped: a plate from the Lesbos treasure, no. 32, with a crude niello cross on the obverse, is identical in size and in every detail

¹⁰⁶ See *supra*, pp. 8, 12.

¹⁰⁷ See *infra*.

¹⁰⁸ Matsulevich, *Byz. Ant.*, p. 61; Kitzinger, "The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial. V: The Silver," *Antiquity*, XIV (1940), p. 50.

of decoration with another plate from the same treasure, no. 40. Yet no. 32 has stamps from the reign of Phocas and no. 40 from the reign of Heraclius. As the other six objects from this treasure (nos. 41, 42, 43, 48, 49, 50) also belong to the reign of Heraclius, it seems probable that the first plate was decorated at the same time as the others, though it had been stamped some years before. Further, in a case where an object has two sets of stamps, as has no. 54, some time may have elapsed between their application. Since the inscription in the square stamp has changed, there was time enough for a change of at least one of the officials concerned; and, since the decoration was completed after the second set of stamps, the first set, at any rate, does not afford an accurate clue to the date of the vessel. At times an old vessel may have been returned to the central offices, perhaps in payment of debt, or simply to be redecorated.^{108a} Before it was resold, or renovated, a second set of stamps may well have been applied. Whatever the reason for the existence of dual sets, it is evident from these examples that there was an organization of artisans engaged in the production of objects which were roughly shaped and stamped, but which may or may not ultimately have been decorated in the same workshop. Indeed, a comparable workshop had existed at an earlier period for the garland sarcophagi that were shipped in a semidecorated condition, to be finished locally before being sold to the ultimate owners.¹⁰⁹ The same could have held true for the silver objects which admittedly travel more easily than sarcophagi. In any case, we must reckon with a "production line" involving several distinct phases: the crude metal was received and refined by members of the *largitiones*, its use in coin or vessels being determined in this office. The vessels were then cut into preliminary shapes, but before they could leave the imperial offices Imperial stamps of guarantee were applied. Presumably a vessel might then be sold unfinished, as it was, or worked in the official atelier and sold as a finished object. As happened in other departments belonging to the *largitiones* (p. 43), the factories were no doubt permitted to trade on their own account so long as they met the requirements of the state. In this event, the stamps would also have signified imperial permission to trade. Finally, a silver object might be returned to the imperial offices, probably in payment of debt or tribute, and then be tested and stamped again, as witness the objects with two sets of stamps.

In summary, a study of Imperial Byzantine stamps leads to the conclusion that they were applied by a single group of officials in Constantinople, and that they were not used in other centers of the Empire. Stamps used in centers outside the capital were sometimes similar to, but clearly did not belong to,

^{108a} In the reign of Justin II, Corippus relates that during the celebration of Consular games the Emperor distributed old silver plates engraved with new inscriptions and reliefs, and that each plate was filled with gold (Corippus, IV, 103 ff., 142 ff.). Cf. also the inscription on the plate of Paternus (no. 2) referring to a "renovation." I am most grateful to Mr. Thomas Cole who discussed with me some of the ambiguities of the passage in Corippus and who also helped in the transcription of some of the inscriptions in the Catalogue.

¹⁰⁹ J. B. Ward Perkins, "Roman Garland Sarcophagi from the Quarries of Proconnesus (Marmara)," *The Smithsonian Report for 1957* (Washington, 1958), pp. 455-467; *idem*, "Four Roman Garland Sarcophagi in America," *Archaeology*, XI, 2 (1958), pp. 98-104.

the Imperial series. Contemporary texts and examination of the financial administration of the Empire in the sixth and seventh centuries support the conclusion drawn from the stamps. Byzantine silver objects with Imperial stamps of the sixth and seventh centuries are thus documented as coming from Constantinople. In any study based on these conclusions, however, two reservations should be borne in mind: first, though the objects were stamped in Constantinople, they were not necessarily decorated there. Some Byzantine silver objects with Imperial stamps show a provincial crudity of style, and many authorities believe, on convincing grounds, that the stamped objects found among the silver treasures of Syria belong to Syrian workshops and exhibit distinctive Syrian styles. Indeed, a silversmith in the provinces could order the finest silver from the capital, roughly cut into the desired shape and guaranteed in quality by the stamps on the reverse, and then decorate it to the satisfaction of his clients at home. Second, although the stamps provide a *terminus post quem* for the date of an object, in at least one example the object was not decorated until several years after it had been stamped.

EXCURSUS: The *Comes Sacrarum Largitionum*¹

by

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The great financial department of the *sacrae largitiones* was not the work of any one imperial reformer, but an institution that can be traced back at least to the second century—to the development in Rome of the *summae rationes*. The function of the latter was the unification of the many procuratorial accounts, and in spite of periodic efforts, for example under Septimius Severus, to maintain the distinction between public monies and imperial domains, the tendency throughout the third century was for all finances other than those of the Praetorian Prefects to be dealt with by the one central office. It is to this omnicompetence of the *summae rationes* and its head, the *rationalis*, that the *sacrae largitiones* was to owe the miscellaneous character of its duties and sources of revenue.

Not until the fourth century was far advanced were the public and domain accounts once more separated. The reversion to this policy can be detected, however, by the time of Diocletian, under whom we see that the *summae rationes* has developed a twofold staff—the *res privata* and the *summae rationes* (or *res summa*) par excellence, each administered by a *magister* responsible to the *rationalis*. In the late third and early fourth centuries we find the same

¹ This excursus is based on J. P. C. Kent, *The Office of Comes Sacrarum Largitionum* (1951), a dissertation presented to the University of London for the degree of Ph.D.

duality between *rationalis* and *magister* at diocesan levels, both ultimately responsible to the same official at the capital.²

Though for minor officials the title of *magister* survived at least until the reign of Justinian, its use in the central offices cannot be shown to have outlasted that of Constantine I. The replacement of the formulae *summae rationes* and *rationalis* by *largitiones* (not at first *sacrae*) and *comes* took place by 342. Development was not quite in step in the Eastern and Western parts of the Empire, but there is no evidence which enables us to attribute the step to Constantine himself rather than to his sons. It marks a stage in the militarization of the formerly servile *officia*, and their transformation from the sedentary staffs hitherto encountered to the mobile palatine *officia* of the late fourth century. This change does not seem at first to have affected the actual status of the officers at their head. Certainly in the East the earliest *comites largitionum* remained *perfectissimi*, of the same grade as *rationales summarum rationum* had been since the early third century.³

The Western policy attested under Constans of creating a cognate *comes rei privatae* was not followed by Constantius II. Though his *rationalis rei privatae* was integrated into the *comitatus*, his inferior status was maintained by his exclusion from the *consistorium*, and not until almost the end of Julian's reign did the emperor revive the *comitiva rei privatae* for his friend Elpidius. Both offices were by now senatorial, and underwent the usual hierarchic rise; to *spectabilis* in 372, and to *illustris* in about 396. They were not, however, strictly co-ordinate officials. Their origins in the unified *summae rationes* resulted in the *largitiones* retaining control of state land other than that directly administered, and it was not until the fifth century that revenue from this source was transferred to the *res privata* in the west, and a true dichotomy of function established between the two departments.⁴

By the advent of the sixth century the *sacrae largitiones* was declining in importance. In the West its *comitiva* was combined with a *primiceriatus*, probably that of the *sacrum cubiculum*, and Cassiodorus bids the holder console himself with the double office 'etsi quid tibi de antiquo privilegio usus abstulit'. In the East too the decline was substantial. The tendency of much revenue to become customary in amount will have reduced income, and the abolition in 498 of the *collatio lustralis*, probably a whole third of the *largitiones'* budget, must have struck a heavy blow at its importance. This was the more severe because the revenue from imperial estates, which Anastasius diverted in re-

² For *magistri*, see Dessau, No. 1347; *Cod. Just.*, III:xxii:5, A.D. 294; Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum*, vii (*PL*, VII [1844], col. 205); *CIL*, III, 18, 12043; *Cod. Theod.*, X:i:4, A.D. 320; Athanasius, *Apology to Constans*, X (ed. Szymusiak, Paris, 1958, p. 99); B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt *The Amherst Papyri*, pt. II (London, 1901), no. 138; *Aegyptische Urkunden aus den Koeniglichen Museen zu Berlin, Griechische Urkunden*, III (Berlin, 1903), no. 927 = L. Mitteis and U. Wilcken, *Grundzüge und Chrestomathie der Papyruskunde*, I, pt. 2, *Chrestomathie* (Leipzig-Berlin, 1912), no. 178.

³ The earliest *comites largitionum* are the eastern officials Nemesianus *v. p.* (*Cod. Theod.*, XI:vii:5, A.D. 345) and Domitianus *ex comite largitionum* in 354 (*Amm. Marc.*, XIV:vii:9). Constans' finance system was styled *largitiones* by 349 (*Cod. Theod.*, IX:xvii:2; IX:xxi:6).

⁴ Early western *comites rei privatae* include Eusebius (*Cod. Theod.*, X:x:6, A.D. 342; *Amm. Marc.*, XV:v:4, 13), Eustathius (*Cod. Theod.*, X:x:7, A.D. 345), Orio (*Cod. Theod.*, X:x:8, A.D. 346; X:xiv:2, A.D. 348). For the comitatensian *rationalis* see *Amm. Marc.*, XV:iii:4, 5; XXII:iv:9.

compense to the public account, passed through a new officer, the *comes sacri patrimonii*. *Patrimonium* and *largitiones* in consequence remained closely linked, and by the second half of the sixth century the former seems to have dissolved into several *domus* under *curatores*. A further weakening of the position of the *comes sacrarum largitionum* was the creation, early in the sixth century, of a special βασιλέως ταμίης for dealing with out-payments of money from the treasury. By the early seventh century this officer emerges as the *sacellarius*, and with his subsequent history we are not concerned.⁵

Tenure of high office in the late Roman Empire was generally of very short duration. For the period between about 350 and 430, for which we have the fullest information, surviving names show an average tenure of less than three years, and a complete list would probably reduce it to below two years. There are several cases of specially competent or privileged persons holding office for three years and more, thus emphasising the brevity of the normal period of tenure.

Peculiar to the sixth century, in the light of our present knowledge, was the creation of honorary *comites sacrarum largitionum*. The earliest is Ephremius, *comes orientis* in 524-5, but two more, Constantinus and Cratinus, *magister libellorum* (528-33) and *antecessor urbis* (533) respectively, are known from Justinian's Code, and such officers must be carefully distinguished from effective holders of the rank. Under Justin II there is some evidence that Magnus doubled the office of *comes sacrarum largitionum* with that of *curator* of an imperial *domus*. We cannot say whether this was by now normal. One of the supporters of Maurice killed in 602 was Constantinus, ex-Praetorian Prefect and 'Logothete and Curator of the Estate of Hormisdas' (an imperial *domus*), and while such an expression does not exclude the possibility of his being a *comes* of the same type, there can be no certainty.⁶

In the end the disappearance of the *sacrae largitiones* was due to its absorption by the vast finance system of the Praetorian Prefecture. Even in its heyday the budget of the *largitiones* was probably not more than a third of that of the Prefecture, and in its decline its functions must have seemed increasingly trivial and vestigial. Meanwhile the inflated finance bureaux of the Prefect of Oriens were themselves undergoing modification. Shortly after 540 we meet for the first time a division of his *scrinia* into three groups; the ἰδική and γενική τραπεζαί and τὸ στρατιωτικόν. The specifically military function of the latter is clear, and is reflected in the specific exclusion of debts to its account from the periodic remissions of tax arrears. The distinction in the sixth century between the other two is obscure, one of the few references being

⁵ Cassiodorus, VI: vii. For the *collatio*, see *infra*, note 8. *Comes sacri patrimonii*: *Cod. Just.*, I: xxxiv; Lydus, *De magistratibus* (Bonn ed., 1837), II: 27 (eastern); Cassiodorus, IX: xiii; *Nov. Just.*, LXXV = CIV, A.D. 537; *Regesta pontificum romanorum*, I (ed. Jaffé-Wattenbach, Leipzig, 1885), nos. 961, 971, 997, 1013 (western). The *patrimonium* remained as a separate account long after the disappearance of its *comes*.

⁶ Ephremius: V. Chapot, "Antiquités de la Syrie du Nord," *BCH*, XXVI (1902), p. 166; Stein, *BE*, p. 241, note 1. Constantinus and Cratinus: *Cod. Just.*, I: xvii: 2 = *Const. Tanta* (*Corpus Iuris Civilis*, I, *Justiniani Digesta* [ed. Mommsen and Krueger, Berlin, 1928, p. 17]); *Const. Summa* (*Cod. Just.*, p. 2). Constantinus: *CP*, *sub anno* 602.

the (mistaken) statement of Evagrius that the *collatio lustralis* of old was paid to the account τῶν καλουμένων εἰδικῶν σκρινίων. Presumably they dealt with the cash land-tax that Evagrius thought replaced it. A *comes largitionum* is last attested under Phocas: the Logothete of the γενικόν is not explicitly named until Justinian II. Yet, under the Byzantine system the γενικόν dealt with mines and trade taxes, and clearly absorbed most of the functions of the *largitiones*. The earliest attested independent logothete of high rank is 'the most glorious patrician Theodosius' in 626. Seals record γενικοὶ κομμερκιάριοι from the latter part of the reign of Heraclius, and the evidence seems sufficient to infer that by the middle of his reign that emperor had broken down the inflated Prefecture into its component *logothesia*, and divided among them the remaining functions of the degenerate *largitiones*.⁷

The *comes sacrarum largitionum* had no financial policy of his own: the order to pay taxes to his treasury was contained in the Praetorian Prefects' indiction. Even his powers of gathering his own income were severely restricted. His main interest lies, consequently, less in the taxes which accrued to his treasury and the disbursements which fell on it, than in the supervisory duties which he exercised over various groups of state factories, trade and mines. The direct taxes, as we shall see, came to the *largitiones* in order to finance specific expenditure. The indirect taxes and administrative duties testify to the department's origin in the numerous procuratorial accounts of the early empire, and are part of its very nature. It was surely a symptom of decline when the *siliquaticum*, the revived sales-tax of the fifth century, was allocated to the Prefects' *arca* and not to the Count's *thesaurus*.

From the time of Constantine I until its abolition in 498 the biggest single source of revenue to the *largitiones* was the *collatio lustralis* (χρυσάργυρον πραγματευτικόν). As its name shows, it was collected in cash and had originally a five-yearly incidence. There is no evidence that it was particularly heavy, but its origin in the hated urban *capitatio* led to workmen liable to it being assessed in terms of some arbitrary monetary value. Consequently, solvent or not, they were still called on to pay, and our sources are full of the hardships this provoked. The tragedy which Timotheus of Gaza is said to have written on the theme of this tax savours perhaps of melodrama, but it certainly inspired what must be one of the last recorded endowments of a citizen to his town. No doubt things were better after 410, when Theodosius II authorised its payment 'sub parva et minima contributione'—the monthly instalment plan we find used by a trade guild in Egypt some twenty years later. Along with the other direct taxes, the collection of the *collatio* was originally the responsibility of the *curia* of each city, but by the end of the fourth century this had been transferred to *mancipes* derived from the body of *negotiatores* itself. There is little doubt that this quinquennial tax was designed to meet the burden of the quinquennial donative which late Roman emperors were expected to pay their armies, and it is indeed

⁷ For the *logothesia* see G. Millet, "L'origine du logothète général, chef de l'administration financière à Byzance," *Mélanges d'histoire du moyen âge offerts à M. Ferdinand Lot* (Paris, 1925), p. 563 ff.

likely that the *largitiones* derived its name from the technical use of the word in late Latin to mean 'military donative'.⁸

The supervisory duties of the *comes* over the government textile factories (*gynaecea*) with the consequent function of providing military uniforms is the natural origin of the land-tax *militaris vestis*. At least down to 374 actual garments in the stipulated numbers and of the required quality had to be found for the treasury, but the 'adaeration' of this tax, which the collectors must have practised with individuals and even communities from the first, was complete by the end of the fourth century when the troops received a cash allowance in lieu of uniform. With all the supervision in the world, 'uniforms' produced by taxation must have been a heterogeneous lot, and there is more than a hint that they tended to lie unused in treasury warehouses.⁹

Other land taxes of the *largitiones* were miscellaneous in character. Most important were the *titulus auri comparaticii* and the mysterious *bina et terna*. The former seems to have been a simple land-tax for the purpose of financing the purchase of gold, an important feature of late Roman finance. The origins of the latter are obscure. In East and West alike, however, certain minor land-taxes, of which this is an example, were paid to the *largitiones* in the fifth and sixth centuries. With them can be classed the *gleba senatoria* and the other supertaxes paid by the estates of senators and other members of the hierarchy. It is doubtful whether the revenue they yielded was very substantial. The senatorial burdens at least were abolished by Marcian on his accession, and his finances were on a notably sound footing.¹⁰

A more characteristic source of revenue was constituted by the so-called 'voluntary' payments. These were twofold: the *oblatio senatoria* of the Roman Senate, made on a grand scale at the quinquennial celebrations and more modestly with the renewed *vota* of each New Year. The corresponding curial burden was the *aurum coronarium*, whereby the government was 'given' gold crowns, images of Victory, and the like, on all occasions of public rejoicing, such as imperial accessions and anniversaries, military successes, remissions of tax arrears, et cetera. But in spite of efforts to ensure that it fell directly on landed proprietors, the city councils financed the burden with a super-tax (*στεφανικόν*) on the community at large, and since the fiction of its voluntary character remained, it had to be excluded from the indiction and could not be effectively controlled. By the sixth century it appears that, like many other

⁸ The main texts on the *collatio* are: Zosimus, *Historia* (Bonn ed., 1837), II:xxxviii:3; Evagrius, III:xxxix; Zonaras, *Epitome Historiarum* (Bonn ed., 1897), XIV:iii:11; Libanius, *Orationes* (Teubner ed., III, 1906), XLVI (*contra Florentium*):xxii; *Cod. Theod.*, XIII:i, *passim*; *Novellae Theodosii II*, XVIII (*Nov. Theod.*, p. 44); *Cod. Theod.*, VII:xx:3, A.D. 326; Vitelli, Norsa, etc., *Papiri greci e latini*, VIII (Florence, 1927), no. 884; St. Basil, *Epistolae*, LXXXVIII (*PG*, XXXII [1886], col. 470); Cassiodorus, II:xxvi, xxx; Mal., p. 398; Chronicle of Edessa (ed. Ludwig Hallier, in O. Gebhardt and A. Harnack, *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur*, IX [Leipzig, 1893]), LXXIV (cf. Stein, *BE*, p. 204, note 1).

⁹ For *militaris vestis*, see especially *Cod. Theod.*, VII:vi, *passim*; *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, Severus Alexander (Loeb ed., II, 1924), XL:3.

¹⁰ *Aurum comparaticium*: *Cod. Theod.*, VII:vi:3 = *Cod. Just.*, XII:xxxix:2, A.D. 377. *Bina et terna*: Cassiodorus, III:viii; VII:xx-xxiii; cf. *Novellae Maioriani*, VII:16, A.D. 458 (*Nov. Theod.*, p. 171). *Gleba*: O. Seock, "Collatio glebalis," in Pauly-Wissowa, *Real-Encyclopädie*, IV (Stuttgart, 1901), cols. 365-367.

dues, it had become a customary payment, perhaps made annually, and in this form it continued into Byzantine times.¹¹

The revenue from emphyteutic and patrimonial land, originally classed as 'commoda largitionum', passed to the *res privata* as early as 379, but the control of civic *vectigalia* continued to provide both an income and an administrative problem. An early solution of the problem of municipal expenses provided that the *largitiones* should refund one third of the civic revenue for this purpose, and this regulation, revived by the time of Justinian, was supplemented by the periodic allocation of specific *vectigalia* for specific civic purposes.¹²

The *largitiones* also enjoyed several miscellaneous sources of revenue, such as the *aurum tironicum* paid by landowners in lieu of the provision of recruits. Cash fines were paid to the *largitiones* until well into the fifth century, whereas confiscated land and goods entered the *res privata*. We do not know the date of the reform, evident from the practice of the Justinian Code and Novels, which gave fines also to the latter, though there is a slight indication that Justinian himself may have been responsible.¹³

Although policy fluctuated, two major phases can be detected in the methods employed to collect *largitionales tituli*. Under the first system which operated down to the comprehensive reforms of Valentinian I and Valens in 364-5, officers styled *largitionales civitatis* were responsible for the collection of taxes from the treasury of each city (initial exaction was of course in civic hands) and their transport to the *comitatus*. The exaction of arrears was the task of the provincial *rationalis* and his *officium*. Bulky goods of no great urgency, such as textiles, travelled by ship or requisitioned vehicle, but fragile materials, particularly those destined for imperial use, were authorised to use the *cursus publicus*. Under no circumstances might the transport of bullion be delayed. There was of course much abuse to be put down: joy-riding on the *cursus publicus*, pilfering of coin en route to the treasury.¹⁴

Valentinian I and his successors aimed to prevent the central treasuries becoming powers in the provinces, and to this end withdrew all part in the exaction of taxes and arrears from *palatini*, vesting it all in the *officia* of provincial governors, particularly those of the diocesan vicars. The big increase in financial

¹¹ *Oblatio*: Symmachus (ed. O Seeck, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctores Antiquissimi*, VI, 1), *Epistulae*, II:lvii; *Relationes*, xiii, xxx; *Cod. Theod.*, VI:ii, *passim*. *Aurum coronarium*: *Cod. Theod.*, XII:xiii, *passim*; Themistius, *Orationes* (ed. Dindorf, 1832), III:40c; *Amm. Marc.*, XXVIII:vi:7.

¹² *Res privata*: *Cod. Theod.*, V:xv, *passim*; *Novellae Marciani*, III, A.D. 451 (*Nov. Theod.*, p. 188). *Vectigalia*: *Amm. Marc.*, XXV:iv:15; C. G. Bruns, *Fontes juris romani antiqui* (7th ed., Tübingen, 1909), no. 97; *Cod. Theod.*, XV:i:18, A.D. 374; IV:xiii:7, A.D. 374; V:xiv:35, A.D. 395; *Novellae Valentiniani III*, XIII, A.D. 445 (*Nov. Theod.*, p. 95); *CIL*, nos. 7151, 7152; *Cod. Just.*, IV:lxii:13, A.D. 431.

¹³ *Aurum tironicum*: *Cod. Theod.*, VII:xiii:2, A.D. 370, and 13, A.D. 397; *Amm. Marc.*, XXXI:iv:6; Socrates, *Historia ecclesiastica*, IV:xxxiv (ed. R. Hussey, Oxford, 1853, II, p. 562); Sozomen, *Historia ecclesiastica*, VI:xxxvii (ed. J. Bidez and G. C. Hansen, Berlin, 1960, p. 297); Synesius, *Epistolae*, LXXIX (PG, LXVI, 1864, col. 1445); Anonymus, *De rebus bellicis*, V (ed. E. A. Thompson, Oxford, 1952, p. 96). Fines: *Cod. Theod.*, IX:xvii:2, A.D. 349; XI:xxx:25, A.D. 355 = *Cod. Just.*, VII:lxii:21; *Novellae Theodosii II*, XXV, A.D. 444 (*Nov. Theod.*, p. 65), etc.

¹⁴ *Largitionales*: *Cod. Theod.*, VI:xxxv:3, A.D. 352. For this and the following paragraph, see also J. P. C. Kent, "Gold Coinage in the Later Roman Empire," *Essays in Roman Coinage Presented to Harold Mattingly* (Oxford, 1956), p. 190ff.

duties involved changes in the structure of provincial *officia*, which acquired two accounting branches, dealing respectively with the affairs of the Prefects' *arca* and those of the *largitiones*. Speedy and effective action was ensured by the dispatch of two *palatini* into each province in each indiction, with the task of demanding delivery of taxation material by the governors to the diocesan *thesauri*, and preparing provisional and final statements of payments and arrears. Collection of the latter remained for long the responsibility of a new officer, the *comes titulorum* (*largitionum*, *thesaurorum*, etc.), appointed on a diocesan basis in the East, and with rather wider circumscriptions in the West. He still worked through the medium of the provincial *officia*, and this practice continued into the sixth century, after the *comites* had disappeared and been replaced by palatine *scriniarii*. Towards the end of the fourth century the *largitiones* was rendered independent of the *cursus publicus* and the need to requisition, by the provision of a transport corps (*bastaga*). The problem of pilfering was dealt with by the extension to taxes of a system applied to the rents of the *res privata* since the time of Constantine I. Provincial governors were, after 365, forbidden to accept coin without melting it down and subjecting it to tests for weight and purity. Any deficiency was required to be made up by a charge called *obryza*. Thus tested for weight and fineness at every stage, bullion finally arrived at the *comitatus* in refined bar form, and from 368 the new standard of imperial fineness was expressed on the gold and silver coinage by the symbols OB (*ryzum*) and P(u)S(*ulatum*) respectively.

Of the indirect taxes of the early empire, only *portoria* survived the financial upheavals of the third century to remain an important source of revenue to the *largitiones*. Trade with tribes or nations beyond the Roman frontier had always been severely restricted, with the three objects of maintaining security from spying and surprise attack, the prevention of the passage of strategic materials (gold, iron, etc.) to potential enemies, and the facilitation of the collection of customs. All frontiers were therefore furnished with a few organised and closely controlled points of intercourse with those beyond, all passage or commerce elsewhere being illegal. From the fifth century such centres were policed by soldiers under the supervision of *curiosi* selected from the *agentes in rebus* of the *magister officiorum*, but by a characteristic anomaly were responsible not to him but to the *comes sacrarum largitionum*.¹⁵

Once diverted through an authorised commercial centre, customs were collected by curials with the time-honoured title of *conductores*. The form of the triennial auction of contracts lasted into the sixth century, and with the government annexation of civic *vectigalia* had to be done port by port and tax by tax. In fact, the government recognised the state of affairs which had

¹⁵ Foreign trade at restricted points: Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, LXXII:xi:3; xv (Loeb ed., 1929, IX, pp. 12 ff., 34); Dessau, no. 775; Themistius, *Orationes* (ed. Dindorf, 1832), X:135C (Danube); Petrus Diaconus, *Liber de locis sanctis* (*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, XXXIX, p. 116: "India," i. e. India, South Arabia, and Ethiopia); Petrus Patricius, frag. 14, in *FHG*, p. 189; *Cod. Just.*, IV:lxiii:4, A.D. 408-9; Menander Protector, *Historia*, frag. 11, in *FHG*, p. 212 (Persia). *Curiosi*: *Cod. Theod.*, XI:vii:17, A.D. 408; VI:xxix:10, A.D. 412; Ioannes Chrysostomus, *Epistolae ad Innocentium*, I (*PG*, LII [1862], col. 532).

effectively prevailed since the second century, that the duty of *conductor* was now no more than a liturgy, and furnished the incumbent with some temporary immunities from civic duties, and an *officium* at first from the imperial *familia*, but later militarized, and even sometimes containing actual soldiers. In the East, the high rate of 12½% resulted in the term *octavarii* being applied to the farmers, and this obtained at least until about 600. When times were good, there is no doubt that the farmer was able to profit substantially from his undertaking. Though the idea of directly collecting *vectigalia* by imperial officials is first mentioned as one of the lunacies of Caligula, there is no evidence for its application before Justinian. Procopius records the establishment of salaried officials at Hieron and Abydos, paying their takings into the treasury, as one of his many evil deeds. There is no sign of a farming system after the sixth century, and it is probable that Heraclius swept away its last traces when he established his γενικοί κομμερκίφριοι along with his new finance organisation.¹⁶

State-owned mines and quarries belonged to the *res privata*, but the *metallicus canon* paid by their hereditary workmen was owed to the *largitiones*. Supervision was in the hands of curial procurators, a not unprofitable job if our sources are to be credited. Several mines were used as penal settlements. Even privately owned *metallica loca* came under strict state control. They were not entered in, nor transferable to, the ordinary taxation registers, and had obligations to the *largitiones* only. Inhabitants of such land were hereditarily bound to work the deposits, and owners liable to ensure fulfilment of fiscal dues. Quarries paid 10% of their products to the state; the government had a right of pre-emption of gold, and very likely of other metals also. Itinerant gold prospectors constituted a difficulty which the government met by demanding the purchase of a licence, and the sale to its officials of all produce. In Illyricum, where mining was an important source of revenue, a special *comes metallorum* was appointed, and as the κόμης τῆς λα[το]μίας he survived into the Byzantine period.¹⁷

The notorious monopolies that are said to have enriched the *largitiones* under Justinian have no place before his reign. Such monopolies as existed were for the most part fortuitous, and, with the exception of salt, were suppressed by Leo I in 473. Complementary legislation ten years later under Zeno aimed at

¹⁶ *Conductores*: *Cod. Just.*, V:xli:1, A.D. 213; X:lvii:1, A.D. 287-293; *Cod. Theod.*, XII:i:97, A.D. 383; XI:xxviii:3, A.D. 401. *Octavarii*: H. Grégoire, *Recueil des inscriptions grecques chrétiennes d'Asie Mineure*, I (Paris, 1922), no. 10; *Cod. Theod.*, IV:xiii:6, A.D. 368 = *Cod. Just.*, IV:lxii:7; *Cod. Theod.*, IV:xiii:8, A.D. 381 = *Cod. Just.*, IV:lxii:8; *Cod. Just.*, IV:xlii:2, A.D. 459-465; Sophronius Monachus, *Narratio miraculorum SS. Cyri et Ioannis* (PG, LXXXVII, 3 [1865], col. 3424). Caligula: Suetonius, *De vita caesarum, Caligula* (Loeb ed., I, 1935), XL. Justinian: Proc., *Anec.*, xxv:1 ff.; H. Grégoire, *op. cit.*, no. 4. *Commerciarii*: G. Millet, "Sur les sceaux des commerçants byzantins," *Mélanges offerts à M. Gustave Schlumberger*, I (Paris, 1924), p. 303 ff.

¹⁷ Mining regulations: *Cod. Theod.*, X:xix, *passim*; I:xxxii:5, A.D. 386 = *Cod. Just.*, XI:vii:4; *Notitia Dignitatum* (ed. O. Seeck, Berlin, 1876), *Or.*, XIII:11; Firmicus Maternus, *Mathesis* (Teubner ed., 1897), III:xii:10. *Dammatio ad metalla*: E. G. Hardy, *Pliny's Correspondence with Trajan* (London, 1889), p. 127. Quarries: *Cod. Theod.*, X:xix:8, A.D. 376; X:x, A.D. 382 = *Cod. Just.*, XI:vii:3. Gold prospecting: *Cod. Theod.*, X:xix:3, A.D. 365 = *Cod. Just.*, XI:vii:1; *Cod. Theod.*, X:xix:12, A.D. 392 = *Cod. Just.*, XI:vii:5; Amm. Marc., XXXI:vi:6.

breaking up trading rings and restrictive practices, and though the Ostrogothic kingdom issued licences to engage in specific trades under the name of *monopolium*, there is no trace of such a system in the East. Justinian maintained the anti-monopolistic legislation of his predecessors and, apart from the imperial purple dye being made available to the public, there is little to suggest that the so-called monopolies of Procopius were anything more than the mere cornering of various commodities by wealthy men with the bought connivance of a corrupt government, or that they extended beyond Constantinople. The strict control of the trading *corpora* seems only to be in its infancy under Justinian.¹⁸

One of the special duties of the *largitiones* was the supervision of a large group of factories and workmen. These seem to have originated partly in bodies of imperial slaves and freedmen, partly in free workers, all or part of whose services had been requisitioned by the government. The establishments falling within this category were the mints (*monetae*), textile and garment mills (*gynaecae*), linen and canvas mills (*linyfia*) and purple dye works (*bafia*). They must not be considered solely as government factories, because so long as they fulfilled state requirements there was no doubt of their right to work on their own account—their workers were subject to *collatio lustralis*—nor of that of their head to negotiate private contracts. There were of course certain restrictions. Just as the arms factories might produce for the general public knives but not swords, so the textile workers might not supply cloth of the imperial purple shade, or garments resembling those worn by the emperor.

The workmen of these establishments were constituted into hereditary *corpora*, bound *nexu sanguinis* to the *largitiones*. They could abandon their calling only with the approbation of the emperor himself, and then only by the sacrifice of family and property. Subject to the S. C. Claudianum, women who married them descended to their degraded status, while their own womenfolk could not marry outside the *corpus*. For a long while they were forbidden to acquire dignities, and though in practice skilled workers came to have a more enhanced position, assignment to the mints and textile factories was used in the fourth century as a humiliating punishment, where convicts might work in chains.

Provision of raw materials for government work at these factories was a tax which fell on specific bodies and localities. The *corporati* of Carthage, for example, jointly maintained the supply for the city's *gynaecium*. Ensuring the production and delivery of the government quota was the responsibility of the *procurator*. These managers of state factories, like other minor posts under the *largitiones*, were appointed subject to certain strict rules. Adequate sureties had first to be found, and on leaving office they were required to deposit all official papers and accounts at the appropriate provincial *thesaurus*, and present a copy to their successors. Failure to observe these regulations meant loss of dignity—such *procuratores* held rank as *perfectissimi*—and liability to torture

¹⁸ Monopoly legislation: *Cod. Just.*, IV:lix, *passim*. *Monopolium*: Cassiodorus, II:iv, xxvi, xxx. Justinian's monopolies: *Proc.*, *Anec.*, xx:5, xxv:13, xxvi:19.

until the accounts were balanced. Conviction for overt fraud meant prohibition against seeking any further office on pain of death, but the financial risks of such posts led to their occasional appearance in the lists of those whose treasury debts were from time to time remitted. There is no doubt that the output, as well as the accounts of the factories, was deposited in the provincial *thesauri*.¹⁹

One group of specially skilled workmen was exempted from the humiliating status of the others, the *barbaricarii*. These were workers in the precious metals, men skilled in their use as ornaments, and able to manufacture the highly ornate ceremonial armour worn by the emperor, and the great gold brooches that constituted one of the insignia of high ranking officers. In the West, these workmen were grouped in factories, differing from the others only in their relatively exalted status. From the time of Valens in the East, however, though remaining in their twin factories at Antioch and Constantinople, they were directly administered by a section of the palatine *scrinium ab argento*, and were not classed with the other state employees.²⁰

The Eastern *largitiones*, among its large staff of clerks dealing with questions of taxation and administration, included two departments with technical branches, dealing respectively with gold and silver. The first was the *scrinium aureae massae*, the recipient of the tested gold bars in which alone the government would accept cash taxes after 365. Apart from a small clerical staff, the department mainly consisted of two technical branches; *aurifices solidorum*, and *sculptores et ceteri aurifices*. The concentration of gold coinage at the *comitatus* in and after 368 to the exclusion of the provincial *monetae publicae* is a phenomenon explicable by the structure of this *scrinium*, and its continuance is demonstrated by the occurrence of the relevant laws in the Justinian Code and the presence of officials styled *pal(atinus) s(a)c(rarum) l(artitionum) et monitarius auri* in sixth-century Ravenna. The *ceteri aurifices* must be considered as *barbaricarii* working in gold as opposed to silver, and this dichotomy even within the one *officium* is interesting evidence of the minuteness governing all aspects of late Roman organisation. The second was the *scrinium ab argento* (if we accept, what seems beyond doubt, that its composition in the published versions of the Justinian Code has become transposed with that of the *scrinium a pecuniis*). Here again we find two divisions: *argentarii comitatenses*, and *barbaricarii*. The latter we have already considered. The former I believe to have included those responsible for the coinage of comitatensian silver, a negligible function by the time of Justinian, and in all probability the officials responsible for the stamping of silver with marks indicating its sterling character.²¹

The release of such officially stamped silver to the public we now see to be an innovation of the reign of Anastasius. If, as we can hardly doubt, the *largitiones* charged a fee for hall-marking silver brought to its smiths, or for issuing already

¹⁹ State factories and personnel: *Cod. Theod.*, X:xx, *passim*.

²⁰ *Barbaricarii*: Donatus, *Interpretationes vergilianae*, Aeneid, XI:777 (Teubner ed., II, 1906, p. 529); *Cod. Theod.*, XIII:iv:2, A.D. 337; X:xxii:I, A.D. 374; *Cod. Just.*, XII:xxiii:7, A.D. 384.

²¹ For the *officium*, see *Cod. Just.*, XII:xxiii:7, A.D. 384; *Notitia Dignitatum* (ed. O. Seeck, Berlin, 1876), *Occ.*, XI:88; *Or.*, XIII:22.

authenticated silver from the treasury, the repute of such silver and the *bona fides* of the marks must have been ample compensation. It has been shown that of the five different shapes of stamp used in the later years of Anastasius, four normally are marked with the Emperor's portrait or monogram, presumably in order to give that guarantee of sacred authenticity carried by the coinage, and to discourage imitation. In these stamps, as well as in the normal set of five stamps instituted by Justinian, occur also the individual names and monograms of officials; among them, in all probability, were the stamps of the *comes sacrarum largitionum* himself, the *primicerius* of his *officium*, and the *primicerius* of the *scrinium ab argento*. Together the five stamps served to authenticate the quality of the silver, and perhaps also to signify that the appropriate dues had been paid. Imperial stamps show that this system was maintained at least down to c. 650. It would seem that the end of the stamp system and the dissolution of the *largitiones* were connected. Yet the demand for authenticated silver plate must have survived the loss of the eastern provinces and the resumption of a substantial silver coinage; the interaction of the demand for plate and the circulation of a copious silver currency is something which remains to be evaluated. It may well be that for a while the skilled metal workers who remained to the empire were able to satisfy the reduced demand by melting down the new coins.