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A Galatian Tetradrachm of Seleucid Type

Richard P. Miller

Barbarous imitations of the tetradrachms of Antiochus III (born c. 242, ruled 223–187 B.C.) are known from several areas of Asia Minor¹. Antiochus was in the region from 216 to 213, fighting his sometime satrap Achaeus, who had usurped the royal authority while he was campaigning in Coele Syria and the marches of Egypt.

A few barbarous tetradrachms from Asia Minor, which may be termed «Galatian», seem to be based on the early Antioch series. Our coin's type closely resembles several other examples, as we shall see. It was obtained in commerce and its provenance is unknown.

The Galatians were originally Danubian Celts who had come south through Macedonia and Thrace in 280/279². Some stayed in mainland Greece, terrifying the coastal cities, while others crossed into Asia Minor in 278/277, part of them at the invitation of Nicomedes of Bithynia, whom they helped to suppress a pretender to his throne³. They then became the terror of western Asia Minor, too, as Galatians. Sometimes defeated by the Hellenistic kings and sometimes serving as mercenaries in their armies, the Galatians were finally driven into central Asia Minor by the Roman general Cn. Manlius Vulso, in 189⁴. Many of them settled within the ill-defined boundaries of Phrygia, keeping their tribal organizations intact. By the 1st century B.C. they were firm allies of Rome, fighting in her wars against Mithradates VI of Pontus⁵.



Fig. 1 New Galatian tetradrachm, SC Uncertain Mint 49. Coll. R. Miller

Obv: Diademed head of a young king to r., sideburn represented by a row of dots; two pellets below neck truncation; dotted border

Rev: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ on r., ANTIOXOY on l.; Apollo seated l. on omphalos, testing arrow and resting l. hand on grounded bow; in outer left, H

AR Tetradrachm, 16.91 g, 12.00. R. Miller collection, Detroit, Michigan, USA (Fig. 1)

The new coin shows very little wear. The portrait is of summary style but of good craftsmanship, and was probably created by a trained artisan familiar with Greek coin engraving. The flan is notably different from most other imitations of An-

1 SC vol. I, p. 381, Uncertain Mint 49; barbarous issues «from Asia Minor north of the Taurus», p. 384; Uncertain Mint 58, «probably in eastern Asia Minor», p. 385.

2 For a brief history of the Galatians' movements to 189, see Livy 38.16.

3 Livy 38.16.7–9.

4 Polybius frag. 21.42, supplemented by Livy, 38.38.

5 Appian 12.3.17.



Fig. 2
Tetradrachm of sideburned
Antiochus III, portrait type Ai.
Antioch mint. ANS

tiochos III's coinage. It has been laid flat on an anvil and hammered at a slight angle around much of the circumference. This would help spread the flan and perhaps create greater circularity. The flan was then placed, hammered side down, on the anvil die. The result of striking is a «bevelled» appearance round the obverse die impression, while the reverse is quite flat. The practice was known in Asia Minor beginning with coins of Antiochus Hierax, and was much used on Alexander tetradrachms of the coastal cities⁶. After the battle of Pydna (168), when the Romans put an end to the Macedonian kingdom and minting of these pseudo-Alexanders virtually ceased in Asia Minor, similar hammering was done on the successor, wreathed tetradrachms struck by some of the same cities.

But our coin was likely struck late in the 3rd century or early in the 2nd. Its portrait clearly derives from tetradrachms of Antiochus III of a type struck at the very outset of his reign, at Antioch (*Fig. 2*). It shows the king, aged 19 or 20, with a long sideburn, reminiscent of his older brother Seleucus III's coin portraits⁷. There cannot have been a great number struck, since all 33 examples known to G. Le Rider are from the same obverse die, which was also used to strike his first series of gold octodrachms in 223⁸. Still, some found their way into Asia Minor, where the Galatians would have seen them at this time, if not earlier; examples have been found in Phrygian hoards⁹.

Circulation of the sideburned Antiochus tetradrachms, the first of his reign, would have spread from the Antioch mint into Asia Minor, perhaps even before his campaigns there in 216–213 and almost certainly no later. Evidence for a *terminus ante quem* is found in the Peace of Apamea, concluded between Antiochus III and Rome in 188 following his defeat at Magnesia in 190. Under its terms, Antiochus gave up all claim to Asia Minor north of the Taurus¹⁰. It is most unlikely that a mint in the lost territory would have continued to strike Antiochus's coinage after the settlement, especially at the risk of offending the Romans.

The portrait on our coin, and pellets below the neck truncation, in addition to the hammered flan, are keys to its place of origin. SC 1003 (= WSM 1699, pl. 85, 2) bears a close resemblance, as do WSM 1700γ (pl. 85, 4) and WSM 1701β (pl. 85, 6). These three portraits are plainly from the same engraver's hand as our coin. WSM 1699 (overstruck on a royal tetradrachm, probably Seleucid) and 1701β show the hammering described above; 1700γ does not. WSM 1699 and 1701β each have a single pellet in the neck truncation. Our coin has two unrecorded marks: the two obverse pellets and the H reverse control mark. The WSM examples and our Galatian tetradrachm are all, clearly, from Uncertain Mint 49, which Houghton and Lorber have identified as probably being located in Phrygia, perhaps at Apamea¹¹.

Semi-barbarous coins such as the above, most likely struck within Galatian territory, and at any case on the periphery of the principal areas of Seleucid control, suggest that this mint did not have official status, at least when the issues of Series 3 were struck. However, the clear copying of an Antiochene coin of Seleucus III, and the use of Antiochene controls, provide evidence that an official mint produced Series 1, 223–222 B.C. It would have been under the control of the slain Seleucus III's court when it began striking coins of Antiochus III with the portrait dies at hand. But the dies of Series 3, as we have seen, are semi-barbarous in nature; it is hard to imagine a Seleucid mint official or military authority

6 Hierax: e.g. WSM 1584 (Alexandria Troas); Alexanders: e.g. Price, Alexander 1610 (Assos), 1639 (Cyne), 1659 (Myrina), 2420 (Chios), 2460 (Alabanda), etc.

7 This first portrait is classified as type Ai in SC, pp. 357–358.

8 G. Le Rider, *Antioche de Syrie sous les Séleucides* (Paris 1999), pp. 110–111. No fewer than 22 punch dies were used with this anvil die, A1. Die A2, represented by a single coin (35) shows a very slight sideburn.

9 Gordion Hoard V (IGCH 1405), Gordion Hoard I (IGCH 1406), Mektepin (IGCH 1410), Asia Minor, central (IGCH 1411).

10 Polybius 21.17.3.

11 *Supra*, n. 1.

allowing this to occur. Their control marks, too, tend to the chaotic, and are unlike regular Seleucid markings (*Fig. 3*)¹².

The supposition may be advanced, then, that as Seleucid authority was withdrawn from the region, perhaps to consolidate and focus the army further to the west in the fight against Achaeus, the issuance of coins by Mint 49 was turned over to the Galatians to administer. How long they did so remains a question, but the fairly close relationship between the three series, 1 to 3, suggests that the mint may have been discontinued quite early.

Thus we may hypothesize with some confidence as to where, by whom, and approximately when, these Galatian tetradrachms were struck. Perhaps we may also begin an inquiry as to *why* they were struck. Apparently, the coins were not issued in large numbers; in fact, unlike prolific imitations of Hellenistic coinage by the Danubian Celts, they are quite rare. This leads one to suppose that they had some significance for the Galatians in addition to monetary use, these few, isolated coins. The discovery of more examples could help us to determine what that significance may have been, as well as to refine their dating.

Photos: Oliver Hoover

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Fig. 3
SC 1003 = WSM 1699.
SC Uncertain Mint 49. ANS

¹² I am indebted to Catharine Lorber for this observation.