

Syloge Nummorum Graecorum Deutschland : Staatliche Münzsammlung München [Roland Baldus]

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Roland Baldus (Hrsg.)

Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum Deutschland. Staatliche Münzsammlung München

28. Heft. Syrien: Nicht-Königliche Prägungen, Nr. 1-1066
München, Hirmer Verlag, 2001.

A rarity among SNG volumes, this: a catalogue of coins of Syria. Asia Minor is increasingly well-served by the SNG series, but regions further east and south have received less attention. All the more reason to welcome the present volume. The scholar responsible, Hans Roland Baldus, is a well-known expert on these coins who has been able to bring many years of experience to bear on the material. The result is a well-ordered and carefully structured catalogue without the frequent misattributions which often dog lists of Syrian issues.

Particularly sensible is the arrangement which places the majority of Roman imperial tetradrachms at the beginning rather than under individual cities, thus circumventing unresolved debates about the place of minting for various issues (e.g. the 'Zeus' tetradrachms of Caligula and Claudius, nos. 7-10, which may belong to Cilicia or Syria; or the Trajanic issues assigned to Antioch or Tyre, nos. 37-47). The reader is thus spared the task of hunting in two or more places to find the coins (although tetradrachms with ethnics have been placed elsewhere, e.g. nos. 704, 717-718). The list of silver issues includes some great rarities, such as the Caligula 'Zeus' tetradrachm (no. 7); two tetradrachms of Claudius and Nero (nos. 11-12); and the coin of Caracalla with the seated Zeus reverse, attributable to Cyrrhus (no. 61).

After the tetradrachms come the SC bronzes, normally assigned to Antioch (nos. 108-351). Included among these are a group of coins with the letters *delta-epsilon* rather than SC in a wreath as the reverse type (nos. 319-327) which, as Baldus notes, have been assigned to Laodicea as well as Antioch. The portraits on the SC bronzes are not always easily identifiable, but the author's familiarity with these issues means that he is able to assign coins to emperors, or confirm earlier identifications, even where the obverse legends are illegible, and to distinguish those bronzes probably struck at Rome (nos. 155-157, 164, 167, 174) from those probably produced at Antioch. The SC coins of Otho include several forgeries, tooled from coins of other emperors (nos. 152-3), all of which are duly noted by Baldus. No. 152, as he states, is a coin of Domitian. This fact presumably has some bearing on the *terminus post quem* for its unique countermark, GIC 580. Another coin, no. 148, is undoubtedly Otho but looks as if it has been tooled, which may explain its rather strange style.

The SC bronzes are followed by coins of the koinon of Syria (nos. 352-357), and the rest of the catalogue concerns the civic coinages of Syria, listed in BMC order, with one notable exception: 'Leucas on the Chrysorhoas' is correctly reconciled with Balanea on the coast and not an imaginary city somewhere on the Barada river west of Damascus, as in BMC. Most of the coins are of the Ro-

man period, and it is perhaps regrettable that geographical terms like 'Cyrrestice' and the misleading 'Seleucis and Pieria' have been retained and cities assigned to them, although their use here could be justified because they are familiar to numismatists. However, it would be a good idea if numismatists abandoned them, because they give the impression of a geographical structure which in reality never existed.

The evidence for any entity called Cyrrestice extending beyond the *polis* of Cyrrhus to include the cities of Beroea and Hierapolis during the Roman period is speculative at best; 'Seleucis' was used by the Seleucids, and may have survived as a popular name in Roman times, but was not an administrative entity; 'Pieria' seems to be nothing more than a term for the mountain range behind the port of Seleucia. 'Coele Syria' is highly slippery: it seems to have been used by the Seleucids to describe southern Syria and may have survived in the Roman period as a term for an eparchy of the imperial cult probably based at Damascus (which included many cities of the 'Decapolis'), but from the time of Septimius Severus northern Syria (excluding Damascus and the south) became the province of 'Syria Coele'. 'Decapolis' may have been a word employed to describe an enclave of city states which in the late first century BC were surrounded by the Herodian, Ituraean and Nabataean realms, but it seems fairly certain that it was never an official entity or league of cities. By the second century the identifiable cities of the 'Decapolis' were divided among the provinces of Syria, Arabia and Syria Palaestina. 'Trachonitis' was a popular term used in the Roman period to describe the modern Leja, a rough lava flow south of Damascus, but, with the exception of Philippopolis, which lay on its easternmost edge, no cities are known there in the period when cities were issuing coins (large parts of it may have been an imperial estate). Consequently Gaba (no. 147) should be located in Syria Palaestina, not in Trachonitis (see SNG ANS 904 for the same type), and Caesarea Panias is also wrongly assigned to this region. Baldus notes the relocation of Gaba, so it is all the more curious to see the traditional arrangement retained in this case. Over the period covered by this volume, the names for regions changed and provincial boundaries altered, making it hard to construct any rigid geographical terminology; but there is nothing to be gained by persisting in employing terms that we know to be misleading or wrong.

The civic coins include some very rare types, such as the issue of Philip I at Samosata with a seated city goddess, Pegasus and a river god (no. 400); the issue of Antioch under Claudius naming the Syrian governor Cassius (no. 719); and the coin of Claudius from Laodicea (no. 883). The letters E-E on an issue of Elagabalus of Emisa (no. 822) are interesting; this type commonly bears a single letter E, and one wonders whether this new inscription (if it is not simply an error) bears any relation to the letters *delta* or *delta-epsilon* found on coins of Antioch and Laodicea. *Delta-epsilon* has plausibly been interpreted as an abbreviation for 'of the four eparchies' of the provincial imperial cult in Syria.¹ The Emisa coins of Elagabalus accord the city the title of metropolis, a status not recorded on earlier or later issues, and one often connected with cities that were

meeting-places for celebrations of the provincial imperial cult. Was Emisa briefly the chief city of a fifth eparchy under Elagabalus? We know that in later times the city was a rival of the metropolis of Damascus, which is a likely candidate for the chief city of the eparchy of Coele Syria. As so often, the terse nature of these coin inscriptions leaves too much to the imagination and too little to build on.

Baldus is aware of the phenomenon of die-sharing between Antioch and other cities between the reigns of Elagabalus and Trebonianus Gallus, but does not always mention which coins belong to the die-sharing groups. It is highly likely that those sharing dies were struck at Antioch, regardless of the city in which they were issued. He does not separate third-century coins of Samosata struck locally from those probably produced at Antioch (nos. 392-6 of Elagabalus are local; nos. 397-9 are Antioch; nos. 400-403, 405-6, 408 and 411 of Philip I and II are local; nos. 404, 407, 409-410 are Antioch). Some links are noted, but not all (e.g. nos. 782 (Trebonianus Gallus, Antioch) and 952 (Laodicea) are from the same obverse die). Surprisingly, early types for Philip I at Antioch (nos. 761-763) are listed after later ones (750-760). But the author has done a good job in distinguishing portraits of Philip I from those of his son (especially difficult with worn or corroded specimens).

This reviewer has recently completed a catalogue of coins of northern Syria without the benefit of seeing the entire Munich collection. It is therefore worth listing 'new' material here:

- No. 373 (Samosata, Hadrian). The type is known with various dates, but this is the first specimen I have noted with the date year 59 (although the picture is insufficiently clear to confirm this reading of the date).

- No. 386 (Samosata, Lucius Verus). The coin is almost illegible. The reverse type (caduceus) is certainly known for Samosata (see, for example, no. 379), but the type is not otherwise known for Aurelius or Verus. The tentative attribution is possible, but a clearer specimen is necessary to confirm an attribution to Samosata.

- No. 390 (Samosata, Caracalla). The obverse bust type seems to be unique, although the coin is probably of Elagabalus rather than Caracalla (as is no. 391).

- No. 420 (Samosata, Philip I). The obverse bust variant seems to be otherwise unrecorded.

- No. 617 (Antioch, autonomous Zeus/Zeus seated type). I have no record of a caduceus symbol on the reverse for Caesarean year 25, but the date is unclear from the illustration. The symbol is common on coins of year 21.

¹ E. MEYER, Die Bronzeprägung von Laodikeia in Syrien 194/217, JNG 37/38, 1987/8 (1991), pp. 56-92.

- No. 619 (Antioch, as previous). I have no record of a cornucopiae symbol on the reverse for Caesarean year 15, but again the date is unclear. The symbol is certainly known for years 11, 13, and 16.

The following comments and minor corrections should be noted:

- Nos. 308, 314-318 (Antioch, Elagabalus). These coins should probably be assigned to Caracalla.

- No. 367 (Germanicia, Commodus). The obverse legend is illegible and it might also be Aurelius or Verus.

- No. 380 (Samosata, Antoninus Pius). The coin could well be of Aurelius or Verus rather than Antoninus Pius.

- No. 385 (Samosata, Aurelius Caesar). This is a coin of Flaviopolis in Cilicia (SNG Levante 1539).

- No. 392 (Samosata, Elagabalus). As Baldus notes, the attribution of this coin with its Latin legends is dubious. It is not a coin of Samosata.

- No. 516 (Chalcis ad Belum, Aurelius). This is a coin of Chalcis in Euboea.²

- No. 1003 (Chalcis sub Libano). This is also a coin of Chalcis in Euboea, as confirmed by find spots.³

These minor points do not detract from the value of this SNG volume. One can only hope that other major collections will make an effort to publish their Syrian coins, and to the same high standard.

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² O. PICARD, *Chalcis et la Confédération Eubéenne* (Paris 1979), p. 130, no. 100, 'semis'.

³ *ibid.*, no. 97, 'semis'.