

The struggle for the seleucid succession, 94-92 BC : a new tetradrachm of Antiochus XI and Philip I of Antioch

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THE STRUGGLE FOR THE SELEUCID SUCCESSION, 94-92 BC

A New Tetradrachm of Antiochus XI and Philip I of Antioch

Plate 12

In 1987, this author catalogued the coins of the late Seleucid brother rulers, Antiochus XI Epiphanes and Philip I Philadelphus.¹ Six of the seven known examples were attributed to a north Syrian mint, perhaps Beroea (modern-day Aleppo); the seventh was given to a mint in Cilicia, possibly Tarsus. All were believed to have been struck in 93 BC, the same year that Antiochus and Philip occupied the Seleucid capital, Antioch.

The separate mint attributions were made on the basis of style, fabric, and controls, which differentiated the six «Beroean» tetradrachms from the last, perhaps Tarsian, issue. Style, fabric, and monograms, also differentiated both groups of tetradrachms from coins struck contemporaneously at Antioch, which in the author's view (as well as that of E.T. Newell), could not have been their issuing mint.² Although there was no evident reason why the Antioch mint should not have produced coinage for the two rulers, none was known at the time.

A New Tetradrachm

A new tetradrachm shows that Antioch did, in fact, issue coinage for Antiochus and Philip:³

- Obv.: Diademed, jugate heads of Antiochus and Philip, r.; fillet border.
Rev.: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ANTIOXOY (on r.), ΚΑΙ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΦΙΛΙΠΠΟΥ (on l.).
Zeus Nikephoros seated l. on throne; in outer l. field, unclear controls: A or ⚡ (or ⚡) above (⚡?); beneath throne, ⚡ (? - inscribed as Φ); laurel wreath border.
16.04 Triton II, 1 Dec. 1998, 484; Freeman and Sear FPL 5 (Spring 1998), 83. *Pl. 12, 1.*

Abbreviations are:

- Bellinger A.R. Bellinger, *The End of the Seleucids*, Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences 38, 1948.
SMA E.T. Newell, *The Seleucid Mint of Antioch*, AJN 57, 1917-18.

¹ A. Houghton, *The Double Portrait Coins of Antiochus XI and Philip I*, SNR 66, 1987, pp. 79-85, hereafter 'Coins of Antiochus XI and Philip I'. The author deeply appreciates the kindness of Robert Freeman and David Sear who helped ensure the proper recording and provided clear photographs of the new tetradrachm.

² *Ibid*, p. 80, citing E.T. Newell, SMA, p. 117.

³ The coin first appeared in early 1997 and has been shown publicly on a number of occasions.

Similarities between the new tetradrachm and contemporary coins of Antioch include style and controls. On the obverse, Antiochus is shown in the foreground – consistent with his position as the older of the two brothers – as a youthful figure with a long sideburn and short hair, curled at the crown, below the diadem and at the neck; Philip is clean-shaven. The robust style of the engraving is very close to that of tetradrachms struck by Antiochus as sole king (*Pl. 12, 4*), and, to a degree, coins issued at Antioch by Antiochus X Eusebes during his last months at the city (*Pl. 12, 5*). The reverse of the new Antioch coin shows the same seated Zeus Nikephoros as appears on other tetradrachms of the two kings. The controls, while not fully clear, are close to and may be the same as several of those that appear on issues of Antiochus XI and the earliest tetradrachms of Philip produced at the Seleucid capital.⁴

Pl. 12, 1-3 illustrate the new tetradrachm from Antioch, an issue of Beroea (?) and a tetradrachm from a third, probably Cilician mint, for purposes of comparison.

The Syrian Succession of the Early First Century BC

The joint reign tetradrachms of Antiochus XI and Philip are to be seen against the background of the political disruption that enveloped Syria at the beginning of the First Century BC, and in particular the wars waged over the Seleucid succession between the sons of Antiochus VIII Grypus and Antiochus XI Cyzicenus, half-brothers who had fought each other across Syria, Cilicia, Coele-Syria and Phoenicia from 114 BC to 97 BC, when Grypus was killed.⁵ In 95, after several year's preparation, Grypus' eldest son, Seleucus VI Nikator, managed to take Antioch from Cyzicenus, who died soon afterwards. The following year, 94, Antiochus X Eusebes, captured Antioch and laid claim to the Seleucid throne. Seleucus VI fled to Mopsus, where he was killed in a popular uprising.⁶

In late 94, there were three claimants to one or another part of the Seleucid kingdom. Eusebes held Antioch. Demetrius III, Grypus' fourth son, ruled in Damascus, where he had been installed in 97/6 by Ptolemy Lathyrus of Cyprus as an ally against Cyzicenus. And now, with the death of Seleucus VI, his younger brothers

⁴ Antiochus XI: SMA 433; Philip: SMA 436, with to l., N above A, and Δ beneath the throne, but without the tertiary control that appears on later issues.

⁵ This article draws heavily on but revises the chronology given by Bellinger in the light of new research on the coins of Antioch. Some modifications have also been made to the dates provided in 'Coins of Antiochus XI and Philip I'. A recent discussion of the chronologies and historical context of the reigns of Grypus and Cyzicenus is to be found in A. Houghton, *The Reigns of Antiochus VIII and Antiochus IX at Antioch and Tarsus*, SNR 72, 1993, pp. 87-111.

⁶ Bellinger, p. 94, attempts to reconcile the conflicting accounts of Seleucus' death. Coins of Seleucus that may have been struck at Mopsus in the last months of his life include Glasgow, Hunter 10 and 11, both of which show late, bearded portraits of the king. The reverse tripod of Hunter 10 appears also on issues of Mopsus of Antiochus IV and the city's early autonomous coinage.

Antiochus XI and Philip came forward to contest the throne at Antioch. They established their headquarters in northern Syria at Beroea, sacked Mopsus in revenge for Seleucus' killing then, in early 93 BC, attacked Antioch and managed to evict Eusebes from the city, where they then ruled jointly. In time – perhaps no more than some weeks – Philip seems to have ceded authority to his older brother, who now reigned alone at the Seleucid capital.

Antiochus XI's reign at Antioch was short-lived. As the histories record and the coins show, Eusebes returned to seize the city – judging from the number of recovered tetradrachm dies, in the late summer or early fall of 93.⁷ Antiochus XI was killed after the fight, reportedly while trying to cross the Orontes River. Eusebes appears to have held Antioch into 92 BC (*PL. 12, 5*). Early that year, he led an army against the Parthians, who had continued to make inroads on Seleucid territory in the east and posed a long-term threat to Syria itself. He was killed in battle.

It is not at all clear what the political situation in Syria was in the aftermath of Eusebes' death. Two kings remained: Demetrius, at Damascus, which continued to issue dated coins in his name; and his brother, Philip, who appears to have retained a position in northern Syria, at Beroea, and in Cilicia.⁸ There may also have been a third royal claimant: Eusebes' wife, Cleopatra Selene, acting in the name of her and Eusebes' son, the future Antiochus XIII. Both of Cleopatra and her son appear on a unique small bronze coin, identified by Bellinger in 1951 (*PL. 12, 8*).⁹ But Bellinger's assignment of the coin to Antioch is unlikely, and the date he proposes (92 BC) not certain (an alternative is 84/3 BC when, following Philip's death, Cleopatra also seems to have sought to claim the Seleucid succession).¹⁰

Who, then, reigned at Antioch? There is some evidence that the city may not have been subject to the rule of any king, at least in the early aftermath of Eusebes' death. Toward the end of 92 or early 91 B.C., the Seleucid capital began to issue two denominations of bronzes. The larger (c. 20 mm diameter) bears the head of Zeus on the obverse and, on the reverse, a seated Zeus Nikephoros (*PL. 12, 9*), the smaller (c. 16 mm) a Zeus head and a tripod (*PL. 12, 10*). Both bear the legend, **ANTIOXEΩN TΗΣ ΜΕΤΡΟΠΟΛΕΩΣ**. Known examples of the Zeus/Zeus Nikephoros type are dated from S.E. 221 (October 92 – September 91 BC) to S.E. 240 (73/2 BC), a period that includes the reigns of Demetrius, Philip, Antiochus XII (at Damascus only), and the Armenian ruler, Tigranes II.¹¹

⁷ Newell, SMA, presumes a single reign for Antiochus X at Antioch, but Eusebes' coins can be divided into two series, which almost certainly were the products of his two reigns at the Seleucid capital.

⁸ A tetradrachm of Philip as sole ruler links closely with the single known double portrait coin of the third, Cilician mint (perhaps Tarsus) mentioned in this article, and must have been struck soon after his and Antiochus' joint rule had ended (the coin, cited by Bellinger, p. 93, is Naville 10, 1526). A number of other mints in the Syrian north also began to issue tetradrachms for Philip. They are not dated, but some may have been issuing coinage for Philip in this early period.

⁹ A.R. Bellinger, ANSMN 5, pp. 53-55, pl. XII, 4

¹⁰ Bellinger, pp. 79-80, interpreting Appian, Syr. 48.

¹¹ SMA, pp. 117-118. The same types were used on Antiochene bronzes dated to the Pompeian Era: Bellinger, ANSMN 5, pp. 56-7, following Seyrig, Syria 27, 1950, pp. 5-15.

The appearance of these civic bronzes appears to signify a new era in the city's history, when instead of issuing royal silver – coinage in the name of a reigning monarch – Antioch produced municipal issues in the name of the city's citizens only. Bellinger saw this as implying a weakening of royal control. It also suggests the possibility of no control, at least no definitive royal control at Antioch itself. Philip and Demetrius, brothers and allies in the war against Eusebes, would have badly needed to find a way to co-exist as successors to the Seleucid throne, without either ceding his claim, or risk another civil war. Antioch may have been declared subject to neither and left, effectively, as an autonomous entity in charge of its own affairs. This construction of events is speculative but plausible, given the sudden appearance and studied neutral content of its civic coinage.

How long matters may have remained in this state cannot be known. The political situation was inherently unstable and in time Demetrius and Philip (*Pl. 12, 7*) fell out with each other. In 88 BC, Demetrius marched against Philip at Beroea.¹² He was defeated, disastrously, and was sent in captivity to Parthia. Philip seized Antioch and reigned there until 84/3, when he was killed by his younger brother, Antiochus XII, who had assumed royal authority at Damascus on Demetrius' death.¹³

It is certain, still, that Demetrius ruled at Antioch at some point between 88 and 84: two series of coins mark his passage at the Seleucid capital. One shows a youthful, unbearded portrait of the king, the traditional Zeus Nikephoros reverse, and bears the epithet Philometor and left field controls ω above Π, above A (*PL. 12, 6*).¹⁴ The other bears the epithet Philopator, shows the ruler either beardless or with a short beard, and carries the controls N above A.¹⁵ The N/A controls link closely with the first Antiochene tetradrachms of Philip of c. 84 BC with the same marks, and were likely issued immediately beforehand, perhaps as Demetrius was preparing to attack Philip at Beroea.¹⁶ The Philometor issues with the youthful portrait would have been struck some months – even years – earlier, exactly when is not clear.

The existence of two such different groups of coins suggests several possibilities. One is that after Demetrius' occupation of the Seleucid capital and until his defeat and death in 84 BC, coin production of the Antioch mint was discontinuous. Another is that, as he sought to establish his own, sole rule in Syria, Demetrius occupied Antioch more than once, issuing coinage on two separate occasions. It is unfortunate that there is not enough evidence to favor one possibility over the other.

¹² Bellinger, p. 76.

¹³ Demetrius' last recorded issues of Damascus were struck in S.E. 225 (88/7 BC); Antiochus' first begin in S.E. 226. The succession must have been almost immediate.

¹⁴ SMA 434.

¹⁵ SMA 435.

¹⁶ SMA 436.

Zusammenfassung

In 94/93 v. Chr. kämpften nicht weniger als fünf Prätendenten um den seleukidischen Thron, alles Söhne der verfeindeten Halbbrüder Antiochos VIII. Grypos und Antiochos IX. Kyzikenos. Nach dem Tod des Seleukos VI., des ältesten Sohne von Antiochos VIII., regierten zwei jüngere Brüder des Verstorbenen, Antiochos XI. und Philipp, für kurze Zeit gemeinsam. Das neue Tetradrachmon zeigt, dass auch die Hauptstadt Antiochia, die in Jahr 94 von Antiochos X., einem Sohn des Antiochos IX., erobert worden war, wieder in die Hände der Grypos-Nachkommen kam. Wie kurz die gemeinsame Regierung der beiden Brüder in 93 v. Chr. war, sieht man daraus, wie selten die Tetradrachmen der Beiden sind; wir kennen insgesamt weniger als 10 Tetradrachmen aus drei verschiedenen Münzstädten. Antiochia wurde 93 von Antiochos X. zurückerobert.

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Key to Plate 12

- 1 Antiochus XI and Philip I. Tetradrachm, Antioch
- 2 Antiochus XI and Philip I. Tetradrachm, Beroea (?)
- 3 Antiochus XI and Philip I. Tetradrachm, uncertain Cilician (?) mint
- 4 Antiochus XI. Tetradrachm, Antioch. CSE 387
- 5 Antiochus X. Tetradrachm, Antioch. CSE 381
- 6 Demetrius III. Tetradrachm, Antioch. CSE 390
- 7 Philip I. Tetradrachm, Antioch. CSE 394
- 8 Cleopatra Selene and Antiochus XIII. Bronze (photo from ANSMN 5, Pl. 12, 4)
- 9 Antioch. Bronze (photo from BMC Galatia, etc. Pl. 19, 2)
- 10 Antioch. Bronze (photo from BMC Galatia, etc. Pl. 19, 2)



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2



3



4



5



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