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The Seleucid Mint of Simyra

Arnold Spaer

In 1971, in his note «Seleucus III at Simyra»¹, H. Seyrig published two tetradrachms with a royal Seleucid portrait, both bearing the legend ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΣΕΛΕΥΚΟΥ, with ΣΙ in the inner left field and, in the exergue, the Phoenician numerals year 35, presumably of the era of Aradus (= 225/224 B.C.). They were republished by Seyrig in 1973, in his «Trésors du Levant anciens et nouveaux»². A third specimen, formerly Houghton, is now in the author's collection (*Fig. 1*)³.

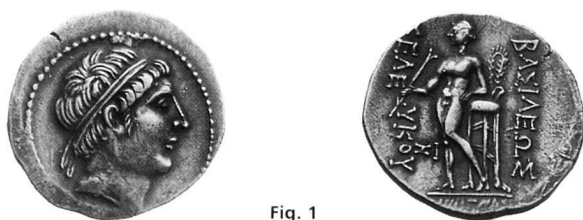


Fig. 1

The coin raises several questions. The date (226/5–224/3) is the second year of the reign of Seleucus III, but the portrait is clearly that of Seleucus II and so is the reverse type, the standing Apollo leaning on a tripod; Seleucus III used the usual Seleucid reverse type of Apollo seated left on an omphalos.

Simyra is one of the lesser Seleucid mints and was apparently situated in the Aradian Paralia. Its coins as published in BMC Phoenicia do not include tetradrachms, but only bronzes, one of which is dated year 35⁴. However, Simyra did issue tetradrachms of Alexander type, identified by the initials ΣΙ and a palm tree. The only specimen known, apparently bearing the Aradian date year 30 (230/229 B.C.), was found at Gordion (*Fig. 2*)⁵. The Aradian year 35 which occurs on the tetradrachm of Seleucid type, *Fig. 1*, is also found on issues of Alexander type at Aradus, Gabala, Carne and Marathus⁶. Price associated those with Seleucus III's preparations for a campaign in Asia Minor while, more recently, Houghton and Lorber considered them «a forced contribution to a Seleucid military enterprise»⁷.

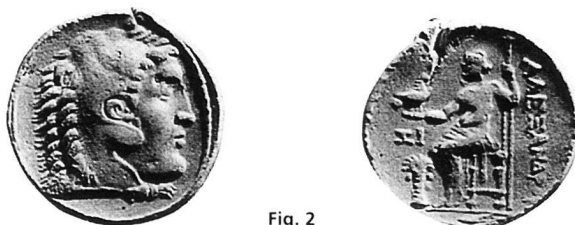


Fig. 2

1 Monnaies hellénistiques 18. RN 1971, p. 7–11.

2 Vol. II (Paris 1973), p. 17, hoard 24, 101–102.

3 CSE 687, now SNG Spaer 529.

4 BMC Phoenicia p. xiv–xv.

5 D.H. Cox, «Hoard V», ANSMN 12, 1966, p. 37, 24; Price 3527.

6 Price 3380, 3431–3433 and 3453.

7 SC p. 335–337, 927–930.

A step toward solving the riddle is supplied by a so-far unknown tetradrachm of Simyra which was recently obtained by the author.



Fig. 3

Obv: Diademed head of Seleucus II to right

Rev: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ / ΣΕΛΕΥΚΟΥ Apollo standing to left, leaning against tripod;
in inner left field, ΣΙ

16.40 g, 12.00 (*Fig. 3*)

The obverse is of the same die as that illustrated in *Fig. 1* and of the two specimens published by Seyrig; the reverse is very similar, but is, however, undated. The fact that the obverse of the new coin does not yet show the die-break above the king's head, visible on the dated pieces, proves that it was struck a year, or a few years at best, before them. This would have been at the very end of Seleucus II's reign, and would explain the choice of the reverse type. Seyrig, when first publishing the dated tetradrachms, had suggested that the issue had been prepared to finance a planned attempt by Seleucus II to reconquer part of Phoenicia that had been lost to the Ptolemies. Since this campaign did not take place, the existing dies were simply modified by the addition of a date, for use by Seleucus III, rather than going to the trouble of producing new dies with the appropriate reverse type.

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