Early in the first century B.C., Antioch on the Orontes began to issue a bronze coinage in its own name, on which the city displays the title “metropolis.” How are we to interpret this title? Wide-spread and much-pursued later, it was unprecedented when it appeared on the first Antiochene bronzes in 92/1 B.C. If we can discern its circumstances and logic, we may fathom the genesis of a civic title that was to have a long and complicated life in the Greek East. The innovation, however interpreted, is an episode in the history of the Seleucids and their cities, to which Getzel Cohen contributed so much.

On two earlier occasions, the Seleucid crown had allowed Antioch, among other cities, a bronze coinage of its own; but those episodes were brief and the coins show no titles.1 The bronzes in question, by contrast, begin the almost unbroken history of the civic mint of Antioch, extending well into the third century A.D., with “metropolis” advertised as late as the time of Valerian.

The bronzes that begin in 92/1 are inscribed Ἀντιοχέων τῆς μητροπόλεως. Most issues are dated, with scattered years not represented: at first by the Seleucid era (years 221 to 243 are on record, ΑΚΣ to ΓΜΣ = 92/1–70/69), then by a Pompeian (years 3 to 19 extant, Γ to ΙΘ = 64/3–48/7).2 And sometime during this half century, an Italian resident in Antioch doing some business on Delos made a dedication there: Λεύκιος Γράνιος Ποπλίου Ῥωμαίου Ἀντιοχείας τῇ μητροπόλει κατὰ πρόσταγμα Ἀπόλλωνι.3 In 47, with the benefactions of Julius Caesar, the coins add to “metropolis” two further titles, “sacred and inviolable” and “autonomous.”4

It is a common dilemma that we learn of a civic title only from coins, so that our evidence for the two privileges – the title and the right to coin – is sometimes identical, as in the present case. Was Antioch “metropolis” before 92/1, and we

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2 The chronology of these coins was deciphered by H. Seyrig, *Antiquités syriennes* IV 72–82 (Syria 27 [1950] 5–15); cf. the list at K. Butcher, *Coinage in Roman Syria* (London 2004) 308–314.

3 J. Hatzfeld, BCH 36 (1912) 212–214, followed by IΔελος 2355, thought that this is a dedication “to Antioch,” probably made in Antioch but subsequently the stone was transported to Delos where the word Ἀπόλλωνι was then added. This strange idea is not needed: the first dative is a Latinism, Granius’ origo “from Antioch,” rendering a Roman’s ablative, as in the countless tribu or domo statements in inscriptions.

4 K. Rigsby, *Asylia* (Berkeley 1996) 496–499, where however I attached more weight to a garbled phrase of Malalas than to the absence of the added titles on coins before 47.
begin to hear of it only in that year because these coins begin then? or were the
title and the right to coin in fact acquired in the same year?

A weight, long known, is dated to the preceding year, Seleucid 220 = 93/2
B.C., and under king Antiochus X: ⁵

Side A: [Βασ]ι[λέ]ω[ς] Ἀντιόχου Εὐσεβοῦς Φιλοπάτορος
Side B: ἔτους ΚΣ ἀγορανομοῦντος Διονυσίου, μνᾶ

A twin has now been published, from two years earlier (Sel. 218 = 95/4):
Βασιλέως Σελεύκου Ἐπιφάνους Νικάτορος / ἔτους ἩΣ ἀγορανομοῦντος
Δημητρίου, μνᾶ. ⁶ The two weights are anomalous in mixing royal and civic
usages: as the editors of the new example observe, they name the king (and not
in a dating formula), but also an agoranomos, a civic magistrate. The two weights,
in not naming the city, can offer no evidence about civic titles. But the attribution
to Antioch is highly probable, ⁷ and the mixed authority that the weights express
supports this: in its civic institutions Antioch may well have suffered special
involvement with the crown, as did Pergamum and Alexandria. Thus, close
control of the city by the kings is implied as late as 93/2, and this suggests that the
coins of 92/1 represent something new beyond the right to coin.

Perhaps the title “metropolis” was not quite unprecedented. There had been
a small dialogue in the second century B.C., conducted in Phoenician. ⁸ In the
160’s coins of Tyre advertise “mother of the Sidonians” (i.e. Phoenicians), while
those of Sidon have “mother of Carthage, Hippo, Citium, and Tyre.” And Beirut
in the 120’s calls itself “mother of Caanan.” This was on bronze coins that cannot
have circulated far, in a language unread by Antiochenes. We should doubt that
they or the Seleucid rulers in the 90’s B.C. knew the Phoenician gesture and
decided to invent a Greek imitation, the unqualified “metropolis.”

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⁵ IGLSyrie III 1071d. The presentation there was obscured by several errors: “Antiochos IV
Philopator (roi en 95)” (in fact Antiochus X, so corrected on p. 685), “92/91” rather than 93/2,
and the omission of the word μνᾶ. Both the first editor E. Michon (MemSocAntiqFrance 51 [1890]
11–13) and Rostovtzeff (SEHHW 452) had written merely “92,” probably the source of the second
error in IGLSyrie. Correctly cited in P. Weiss and K. Ehling, “Marktgewichte im Namen seleukidi-

⁶ Weiss and Ehling (as in n. 5).

⁷ So attributed in IGLSyrie; recently Weiss and Ehling (as in n. 5); O. D. Hoover, “A Revised Chron-
ology for the Late Seleucids at Antioch,” Historia 56 (2007) 280–301, at 289; K. Ehling, Untersu-
chungen zur Geschichte der späten Seleukiden (Historia Einzelschr. 196 [2008]) 236.

⁸ E. Babelon, Rois de Syrie (Paris 1890) cix-cx, cxxii.

⁹ Strabo (16.2.22) knew that Sidon and Tyre disputed which was “metropolis of the Phoeni-
cians.” This dispute, of uncertain Hellenistic date, must have been about history rather than
about a granted title: neither city shows “metropolis” on a coin until each was so declared in
Imperial times.
These Phoenician gestures apart, the wider context for Antioch is that at the start of the first century B.C. only two titles were available to cities: “sacred and inviolable” (ἱερὰ καὶ ἄσυλος) and “autonomous” (αὐτόνομος). If Antioch had gained these titles, that would have put the city on a par with several of the other great cities of the contemporary Levant. This is not what happened in 92/1: Antioch obtained neither, nor the right to issue silver (as had e.g. Tyre in 126/5, Seleucia in 109/8). Later Antioch gained both titles in a stroke, a gift of Caesar in 47 B.C., and inaugurated a new dating-era. These new grants did not end the title “metropolis” but were added to it: Ἀντιοχέων τῆς μητροπόλεως καὶ ἱερᾶς καὶ ἀσύλου καὶ αὐτονόμου, often abbreviated, is seen sporadically on coins from the 48/7 B.C. into the third century A.D., also on a civic weight of year 7 = 42/1 B.C.10 Thus, “metropolis” was unique in 92/1, and ostentatiously not an attempt to match Antioch’s civic rivals and their existing titles.

What was the narrower context? For we can usefully look to Antioch’s immediate neighbors.11 Seleucia down river was declared sacred and inviolable around 140 B.C., autonomous in 108. But otherwise the cities of the Seleukis seem to have been closely watched on this score, lagging behind those of Phoenicia – with Antioch lagging more than the rest. The Phoenician list is instructive for its contrast: Tyre inviolable in 141/0, autonomous in 126/5; Ptolemais inviolable in 126/5, autonomous ca. 103; Sidon inviolable by 122/1; Beirut inviolable by 110; Tripolis inviolable ca. 110, autonomous ca. 103. In Syria, by contrast, Laodicea and Apamea show no titles before the end of the 80’s, when each was declared inviolable by Tigranes of Armenia after his conquest of the region. Little Larisa, the next city up river from Apamea, had up-staged both, declared inviolable in or before 86/5. But Antioch had to wait until Roman rule for these honors.

We can imagine the jealousy of the Antiochenes especially against Seleucia – the original Seleucid capital,12 through whose territory Antiochenes had to pass to reach the sea. A competition for royal favor is implied by coins of the two cities in the 140’s B.C.,13 at the end of which Seleucia was declared sacred and inviolable, and then autonomous in 109/8. For years thereafter the Antiochenes must have chafed under the superior honors of their envied neighbor. Inviolable, autonomous – these Antioch never became under Seleucid rule (or Armenian).

10 IGLSyrie 1071i: Ἀντιοχέων τῆς μητροπόλεως ἱερᾶς καὶ ἀσύλου καὶ αὐτονόμου / ἀγορανομοῦντος Ποπλίου καὶ Ἀντίοχου / ἕτους ἑβδόμου, δημοσία μνῆ.
11 For what follows see the entries in Asylia (as in n. 4).
13 Rigsby (as in n. 1) 242–248.
But in 92/1 the Antiochenes persuaded the ruler to grant their city a title that had no precedent.14 What message did “metropolis” send?

The historian’s hope has been to find concrete constitutional meaning in civic titles; in this case results have inevitably been vague, given the novelty of the title.15 But granted titles can play various roles, not all of them constitutional. When in the USA a city is declared by the National Civic League an “All American City,” that does not alter the city’s constitution or its relation to the federal government: the title indulges local patriotism. “Nebraska Admiral” is the highest honor that can be bestowed on an individual by the state of Nebraska, which has no navy. To understand “metropolis,” we can search more widely than in constitutional law.

The term “metropolis” was one way to say “royal capital” in the Hellenistic period. Thus, Strabo repeatedly links μητρόπολις and βασίλειον, the palace of the ruler: Cnossus, βασίλειον τοῦ Μίνω ... τὸ παλαίων σχῆμα τὸ τῆς μητροπόλεως (10.4.7); Meroe, τὸ βασίλειον καὶ μητρόπολις τῶν Αιθιότων (1.2.25); Babylon, τῆς τε Σεμιράμιδος ... μὲν ἡ Βαβυλῶν κτίσμα καὶ βασίλειον, τοῦ δὲ Νίνος ώς ἄν μητρόπολις τῆς Συρίας (2.1.31, cf. 16.1.5 τὸ βασίλειον, 16.1.16 μητρόπολις τῆς Ἀσσυρίας); Sinope under Mithridates Eupator, μητρόπολιν τε τῆς βασιλείας ὑπέλαβεν (12.3.11). So too when he came to speak of Antioch (16.2.5): μητρόπολις ἐστιν αὕτη τῆς Συρίας, καὶ τὸ βασίλειον ἐνταῦθα ἵδρυτο τοῖς ἄρχουσι τῆς χώρας.16

What happened at Antioch in 92/1? The royal coins of the period frequently lack dates, but the cities that minted them are often discernable. Of our literary sources, repeatedly confused or inexact, some say that Antiochus X died soon after a battle with the Parthians in 93/2; his death has commonly been assigned to 92. Houghton refined this: Antiochus captured Antioch in late summer or early autumn 93, but then was killed early in 92. Newell thought that the title

14 Ehling (as in n. 7) 244 n. 1078 wrote that Tyre had already been declared “metropolis” in 94/3; in fact 93/4 (Tyrian ΘΙΣ) with similar issues: J. Rouvier, JIAN 6 (1903) 323 no. 2221; Asylia (as in n. 4) 483.
16 For Xenophon’s ταῖς μητροπόλεως οἰκίαις ... ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς αὐτῶν ὁ ἐν τῷ μόσσυν τῷ ἑπὶ ἄκρου φυκοδομημένῳ (An. 5.4.25–26), Diodorus offers ἦν δὲ τὸ χωρίον τούτο μητρόπολις τῶν ἄλλων ἐρυμάτων, ἐν ὧ καὶ ὁ βασιλεὺς αὐτῶν κατέσκη (14.30.6). Cf. [Arist.] Oeconom. 2.13 on Myslas as the residence of Mausolus: μητρόπολις οὖσα ἡ πόλις αὐτοῦ.
Antioch the Metropolis was granted by Demetrius III. Houghton suggested that no king controlled Antioch in 92/1, and that this is the message of the new civic bronzes. Ehling has followed his chronology in its essentials but prefers Philip I at Antioch then. Hoover, by contrast, has adduced Antiochus X’s numerous coin issues at Antioch, contrasting with the few of his successor there Demetrius III, to urge that Antiochus X survived down to about 88, and perhaps was the grantor of the title.17

Whatever was the fate of Antiochus, his wife Cleopatra Selene supplanted or succeeded him for a time; for a few bronzes were issued in the name of her and their son Antiochus, who on these coins is called Φιλομήτωρ,18 with their paired images.19 Bellinger, quite tentatively, had assigned these to Antioch and 92/1; Houghton and Hoover have offered good reasons to doubt Antioch (Damascus?) and have urged a date well into the 80’s, and Hoover sees the son not as Antiochus XII (who died in 83/2) but XIII.20

The bronzes of Antioch the Metropolis replaced royal Seleucid bronze, which was never struck again in the city, even though Antioch thereafter remained under Seleucid rule and was regularly the seat of a royal mint issuing silver. The issuing of the civic bronzes seems then to represent not competition but cooperation between king and city, a feature of royal policy rather than some degree of liberation. I would conclude that there was a Seleucid ruler in Antioch in 92/1.

Whether the few bronzes of Cleopatra and her son represent Antiochus XII and come from Antioch in 92/1, or XIII and elsewhere years later, Cleopatra as regent for Antiochus XII had to be somewhere in 92/1, holding out, in the absence of her husband, against the rival claimants for the throne Demetrius III (based in Damascus) and Philip I (Tarsus or Beroea?). I propose that she held Antioch, and that the city’s novel title was by her grant. In a desperate hour, with her husband either engaged against the Parthians or dead, she did not declare Antioch “sacred and inviolable” or “autonomous” like other honored cities. The title metropolis instead asserted Antioch’s primacy over its civic rivals, and by implication Cleopatra’s over her and her son’s rivals for the Seleucid throne. Rather than merely equal in honor, Antioch was the true royal seat.

17 Newell (as in n. 15); Houghton (as in n. 15); Ehling (as in n. 7) 242–243; Hoover (as in n. 7).
18 Two undated weights, one found at Antioch, are under βασιλέως Ἀντιόχου Φιλομήτορος (IGLSyrie III 1071c, there attributed to Antiochus VIII; not yet adequately published).
The word “metropolis” also means the city of the mother – city of the mother goddess, or even the city of a particular mother: so Asclepius is to benefit his mother’s city Epidaurus (τὰν οὖν Ἐπίδαυρον ματρόπολιν). Possibly this sense lent the term a special attraction to Cleopatra, if she was indeed holding the capital Antioch for her son against her male rivals.

If this is right, such a regency of Cleopatra at Antioch will soon have been terminated in the course of 91, whether she was expelled by Demetrius III or was supplanted by the return from war of her husband Antiochus X. The title metropolis, however, persisted through subsequent rulers, as titles did. The successive kings who controlled Antioch will have had no interest in abolishing their city’s claim to primacy.

21 Isyllus, IG IV.1² 128.54, with Paus. 2.26.4 on Asclepius’ mother. Cf. Wilamowitz, Isyllos von Epidaurus (Berlin 1886) 17.