



Kent J. Rigsby

## Antioch the Metropolis

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.<sup>1</sup> 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).<sup>2</sup> And sometime during this half century, an Italian resident in Antioch but doing some business on Delos made a dedication there: Λεύκιος Γράνιος Ποπλίου Ῥωμαῖος Ἀντιοχεῖα τῇ μητροπόλει κατὰ πρόσταγμα Ἀπόλλωνι.<sup>3</sup> In 47, with the benefactions of Julius Caesar, the coins add to “metropolis” two further titles, “sacred and inviolable” and “autonomous.”<sup>4</sup>

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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1 Under Antiochus IV in the early 160's and Alexander Balas in the early 140's: O. Mørkholm, *Antiochus IV of Syria* (Copenhagen 1966) 124–130; K. Rigsby, *TAPA* 110 (1980) 242–248.

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 *I.Délos* 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, *Asyria* (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:<sup>5</sup>

Side A: [Βασ]ι[λέ]ω[ς] Ἀντιόχου Εὐσεβοῦς Φιλοπάτορος

Side B: ἔτους ΚΣ ἀγορανομοῦντος Διονυσ[ί]ου, μνᾶ

A twin has now been published, from two years earlier (Sel. 218 = 95/4): Βασιλέως Σελεύκου Ἐπιφάνους Νικάτορος / ἔτους ΗΙΣ ἀγορανομοῦντος Δημητρίου, μνᾶ.<sup>6</sup> 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,<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup> 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.”<sup>9</sup> 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.”

<sup>5</sup> *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 seleukidischer Könige,” *Chiron* 36 (2006) 369–378, at 370.

<sup>6</sup> Weiss and Ehling (as in n. 5).

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

<sup>8</sup> E. Babelon, *Rois de Syrie* (Paris 1890) cix–cx, cxxii.

<sup>9</sup> Strabo (16.2.22) knew that Sidon and Tyre disputed which was “metropolis of the Phoenicians.” 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” (ιερά 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, Seleuceia 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 ἱεράς καὶ ἀσύλου καὶ αὐτόνομου, 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.<sup>10</sup> 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.<sup>11</sup> Seleuceia 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 Seleuceia – the original Seleucid capital,<sup>12</sup> 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.,<sup>13</sup> at the end of which Seleuceia 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 μητ[ροπό]λεως ἱεράς καὶ ἀσύλου καὶ αὐτονόμου / ἀγορανομούντων Ποπλίου καὶ Ἀντιόχου / ἔτους ἑβδόμου, δημοσία μνᾶ.

**11** For what follows see the entries in *Asyilia* (as in n. 4).

**12** As is probable: see G. Cohen, *The Hellenistic Settlements in Syria, the Red Sea Basin, and North Africa* (Berkeley 2006) 129–130.

**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.<sup>14</sup> 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.<sup>15</sup> 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 βασιλείον, the palace of the ruler: Cnossus, βασιλείον τοῦ Μίνω ... τὸ παλαιὸν σχῆμα τὸ τῆς μητροπόλεως (10.4.7); Meroe, τὸ βασιλείον καὶ μητρόπολις τῶν Αἰθίοπων (1.2.25); Babylon, τῆς τε Σεμψράμιδος ... μὲν ἢ Βαβυλῶν κτίσμα καὶ βασιλείον, τοῦ δὲ Νίνος ὡς ἂν μητρόπολις τῆς Συρίας (2.1.31, cf. 16.1.5 τὸ βασιλείον, 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 ἐστὶν αὕτη τῆς Συρίας, καὶ τὸ βασιλείον ἐνταῦθα ἴδρυτο τοῖς ἄρχουσι τῆς χώρας.<sup>16</sup>

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; *Asyilia* (as in n. 4) 483.

**15** E. T. Newell, “The Seleucid Mint at Antioch,” *AJN* 51 (1917) 1–151, at 117–118 (“a certain amount of autonomy”); A. R. Bellinger, “The End of the Seleucids,” *Conn. Acad. of Arts & Sciences* 38 (1949) 76 (“a sure sign that royal control was weakening”); G. Downey, *A History of Antioch* (Princeton 1961) 134 (“lessening of royal authority ... a measure of autonomy”). More cautious: A. Houghton, “The Struggle for the Seleucid Succession 94–92 BC,” *SNR* 77 (1998) 65–71, at 68 (“a new era in the city’s history”); Hoover (as in n. 7) 290 (“a change in the status quo with respect to the city’s relationship to the Seleucid king”).

**16** For Xenophon’s ταῖς μητροπόλεως οἰκίας... ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς αὐτῶν ὁ ἐν τῷ μόσσυσι τῷ ἐπ’ ἄκρου ὠκοδομημένῳ (*An.* 5.4.25–26), Diodorus offers ἦν δὲ τὸ χωρίον τοῦτο μητρόπολις τῶν ἄλλων ἐρμμάτων, ἐν ᾧ καὶ ὁ βασιλεὺς αὐτῶν κατῴκει (14.30.6). Cf. [Arist.] *Oeconom.* 2.13 on Mylasa as the residence of Mausolus: μητρόπολις οὗσα ἢ πόλις αὐτοῦ.

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.<sup>17</sup>

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,<sup>18</sup> with their paired images.<sup>19</sup> 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.<sup>20</sup>

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.

<sup>17</sup> Newell (as in n. 15); Houghton (as in n. 15); Ehling (as in n. 7) 242–243; Hoover (as in n. 7).

<sup>18</sup> Two undated weights, one found at Antioch, are under βασιλέως Ἀντιόχου Φιλομήτορος (*IGLSyrie* III 1071c, there attributed to Antiochus VIII; not yet adequately published).

<sup>19</sup> A. Houghton, C. Lorber, and O. Hoover, *Seleucid Coins* II.1 (New York 2008) 613–616.

<sup>20</sup> A. R. Bellinger, "Notes on Some Coins from Antioch," *ANSMN* 5 (1952) 53–55; Houghton (as in n. 13) 67; O. Hoover, "Dethroning Seleucus VII Philometor," *ZPE* 151 (2005) 95–99.

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 σὰν Ἐπίδουρον ματρόπολιν).<sup>21</sup> 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 Antioch 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.

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<sup>21</sup> Isyllus, *IG* IV.1<sup>2</sup> 128.54, with Paus. 2.26.4 on Asclepius’ mother. Cf. Wilamowitz, *Isyllos von Epidauros* (Berlin 1886) 17.