ABSTRACT

BRADY, JORDAN HARLAN. City of Thunder: Numismatics, Space, and Civic Identity in Seleucia-Pieria. (Under the direction of Dr. Tate Paulette).

This thesis uses numismatic evidence to study the construction of civic identity in Seleucia-Pieria, an important but understudied city within the Seleucid empire (305–64 BCE). A port city founded around 300 BCE by the first Seleucid king, Seleucus I Nicator, Seleucia-Pieria maintained a strong link with Seleucid dynastic ideology throughout its history. Careful consideration of silver and bronze coinage minted in the city, however, demonstrates the gradual emergence of a distinctive civic identity, constructed in conversation with but not solely determined by royal authority and ideology. This thesis considers the evolving balance struck between royal and civic prerogatives through consideration of numismatic space, that is, a space produced by means of the minting and circulation of coins. More specifically, it argues that coinage helped to produce three types of imagined space – royal, civic, and cosmological – that each played an important role in the city. Particular attention is given to the process by which Seleucia-Pieria came to be imagined as not just a civic space, but a sacred place defined above all by devotion to and pride in its civic religion. This religious identity, focused especially on the god Zeus and associated imagery, was ultimately grounded in Seleucid dynastic ideology but achieved a sort of independence from it. Even after the fall of the dynasty, Seleucia-Pieria appears to have retained its identity as a sacred place with a close connection to Zeus. A comparison with two other important Seleucid cities, Apamea-on-the-Axios and Laodicea-ad-Mare, shows that each made of use of numismatic space to foreground its own distinctive vision of civic identity and to define its own place within the Seleucid world.

City of Thunder: Numismatics, Space, and Civic Identity in Seleucia-Pieria

by
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INTRODUCTION

The urbanization program undertaken by Seleucus I Nicator (r. 305-281 BCE) and his successors was one of the most impressive feats of state-building in antiquity. Seleucus, a Macedonian general-turned-king, had survived the Wars of the Successors following the death of Alexander the Great and had managed to create one of the largest empires in the ancient world. The Seleucid Empire covered a vast area of land stretching from European Thrace to the borders of India, and within this territory were dozens of colonies, most founded by Seleucus himself. Many of these colonies eventually grew into large *poleis.*[1] In Roman times, the legacy of the Seleucid Empire was most clearly visible in cities like Antioch-on-the-Orontes and Seleucia-on-the-Tigris. Some Seleucid cities even survive to this day under similar names.

Many cities during the Hellenistic period lacked the political autonomy enjoyed by *poleis* in the Classical period. However, Hellenistic-era cities were generally much larger than their Classical predecessors and often had deep connections with the ruling dynasties. Rather than developing organically over time, Hellenistic cities were often founded from scratch by kings intent on solidifying their control over specific areas and legitimizing their rule. The Seleucid city which has received the most scholarly attention is Antioch-on-the-Orontes.[2] One reason for the persistent interest in Antioch is its continuing significance during Roman times. Other Seleucid cities have not received adequate attention. My thesis considers one of these understudied cities, Seleucia-Pieria, a seaside colony in northern Syria founded by Seleucus in 300 BCE.[3]

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[1] Ancient Greek term for an autonomous or semi-autonomous city-state.

[2] Glanville Downey, *A History of Antioch in Syria: From Seleucus to the Arab Conquest* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1961). Kristina M. Neumann, *Antioch in Syria: A History from Coins (300 BCE-450 CE)* (Cambridge, United Kingdom Cambridge University Press, 2021).

[3] The city is sometimes referred to as Seleucia-in-Pieria or simply Seleucia Pieria. The English spelling varies.

Literary evidence from Seleucid cities is scarce. Epigraphic evidence is, therefore, crucially important but is more abundant in certain regions, such as Asia Minor, than in others. One way to better study a city like Seleucia-Pieria is through the examination of numismatic evidence. Coins were able to carry with them significant meaning. The designs on coinage were deliberately created to convey a variety of expressions. With the circular piece of metal, a political message usually traveled as well. A royal coin showing the face of a powerful monarch and a civic coin showing a local athlete carry two different messages and embody different sentiments. One projects royal power while the other projects civic pride. Coins are also unique in how they travel; they are created in order to be exchanged and thus are intended to be spread far and wide.

This thesis uses numismatic evidence to explore the evolving relationship between the Seleucid dynasty and the inhabitants of the city of Seleucia-Pieria. The civic agency and identity of this populace are given special attention. It deals with coins made from two materials – silver and bronze – and minted under either royal, civic, or quasi-municipal authority. Before further discussion of these types of coins, it is necessary to clarify the notion of authority and its impact on the numismatic record. According to Andrew Meadows, numismatic authority refers to "the formal guarantor of the value of a coin."

> For civic coinages, the authority is generally presumed to be the government of the city itself. Within kingdoms and empires, the authority may be the supreme ruler (e.g., king or emperor), or an appointee (e.g., satrap or provincial governor)."[4]

During the Seleucid period, silver coinage usually carried the name of the king (e.g., "of King Seleucus"), while bronze coinage often bore the name of the city's inhabitants (e.g., "of the Seleucians"). Both silver coinage with overtly local iconography and bronze coinage bearing the

[4] Andrew Meadows. "Appendix: Glossary of numismatic terms." *The Hellenistic World: Using Coins as Sources*, by Peter Thonemann (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 193.

king's name are often called quasi-municipal,[5] and more often than not quasi-municipal series are bronze.[6] Coins minted under quasi-municipal authority imply some sort of collaboration between a king and a civic government.

Civic agency is often most visible in bronze coinage. Civic officials minted bronze coinage for everyday transactions.[7] Since these coins were created with little or no influence from the king, civic coinage usually included iconographic imagery relating to a city's local culture. Due to its heavy weight and low value, bronze coins did not travel as far as silver or gold.[8] Therefore, locally relevant bronze coinage would have regularly circulated in the marketplaces and low towns of cities. Silver coinage traveled much further due to its greater value and lighter weight. It is impossible to know precisely who authorized the minting of royal coins and their exact connection to the king. However, for a king's name and profile to be on a coin, we can assume at the very least that the official in charge believed the king would approve of the design. It is even possible that the king himself ordered certain designs to be produced. Silver royal coinage often would have been used by soldiers and well-off citizenry and was useful for making large payments.[9]

The primary function of coins was first and foremost to serve as a medium of economic exchange. However, they also propagated images far and wide. I suggest that ancient rulers would have recognized this and took advantage of the opportunity to spread certain iconography that would benefit them. In a world where many people could not read and did not travel, coins

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[5] Bronze coinage minted under the authority of a king but with royal iconography is sometimes called royal bronze.
[6] Paul J. Kosmin, *The Land of the Elephant Kings* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2014), 238.
[7] Peter Thonemann, *The Hellenistic World: Using Coins as Sources.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 128.
[8] Ibid, 134-138. Panagiotis P, Iossif & Catharine C. Lorber, "Monetary Policies, Coins Production, and Currency Supply in the Seleucid and Ptolemaic Empires" in *Comparing the Ptolemaic and Seleucid Empires: Integration, Communication and Resistance*, edited by Christelle Fischer-Bovet and Sitta von Reden (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 192.
[9] Thonemann, *The Hellenistic World*, 128.

allowed the likeness of a king to be in the hands of anyone wishing to spend or receive money in a certain kingdom. Likewise, civic governments often took the opportunity to mint their own coinage with locally relevant iconography.

In this thesis I rely on *MANTIS: A Numismatic Technologies Integration Service*, an affiliate of the American Numismatic Society. This database allows one to filter searches to find coins minted in a certain location, with specific imagery, and by specific kings. In my study of coins minted at Seleucia-Pieria, I pay special attention to not only the dies (the designs engraved on the obverse and reverse) but also mint-marks[10] and other less-recognizable details when necessary. Because they are often preserved unaltered (as opposed to fragmented literary and papyrological sources), coins can be extremely useful for historians. However, one must be careful not to overanalyze coins. They can only tell part of a story, and an analysis of their contents should not be overstretched. Moreover, while the opening and closing of mints are crucial historical details, there are extended periods without evidence for numismatic production. The lack of evidence should not be seen as evidence itself.

Recently scholars have engaged with numismatic evidence to study the Hellenistic period. Peter Thonemann's 2015 work *The Hellenistic World: Using Coins as Sources* is a useful and modern introduction to Hellenistic numismatics. Seleucid coinage has also received attention in recent monographs, such as Kristina M. Neumann's 2021 monograph, *Antioch in Syria: A History from Coins (300 BCE-450 BCE).* She focuses on royal/imperial power and civic agency in coinage. Since Seleucia-Pieria was Antioch's port city, this book is especially relevant but remains focused on Antioch. In *The Early Seleukids, their Gods and their Coins* (2018), Kyle Erickson has written about how Seleucid kingship affected numismatic imagery throughout the empire. *Seleucid Coins: A Comprehensive Catalogue* (2002, 2008) by Arthur Houghton,

[10] Mint-marks are engraved marks which indicate the producing mint.

Catharine Lorber, and Oliver Hoover is a two volume and four-part catalog. This is an authoritative work on Seleucid numismatics. Daniel Odgen's *The Legend of Seleucus: Kingship, Narrative, and Mythmaking in the Ancient World* (2017) also uses numismatic evidence occasionally. This is an important work which explores the origins of many civic and dynastic myths from the Seleucid Empire.

While numismatic evidence is emphasized in this project, I also employ a spatial theoretical framework in my study of Seleucid cities. In the second chapter, I suggest new ways to think about the connection between coinage and urban space. Space is the subject matter for one of the field's key monographs. Paul J. Kosmin's *The Land of the Elephant Kings: Space, Territory, and Ideology in the Seleucid Empire* (2014) analyzes how Seleucid kings created Seleucid space in the geopolitical sense. This monograph includes a section dedicated to the colonization efforts of the Seleucids and how these colonies achieved greater power as the empire declined. I build on this work but also on more theoretically inclined works on space and place, such as Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* and Tim Cresswell's *Place: An Introduction*.

This thesis aims to approach an understudied city in a novel way while using a prevalent source material, coins, which allows us to gain new perspectives on urban space. The numismatic-spatial approach employed here can be utilized when studying the civic identity of other ancient cities, specifically cities under the control of an imperial or royal government. This research aids in the exploration of how civic communities in the Seleucid Empire communicated and reinforced their local culture. Ultimately, my goal is to provide a better understanding of the intersections between numismatic iconography, civic agency, and identity inside the Seleucid

Empire. Furthermore, I focus on the ways in which civic communities utilized iconography as a means of political action and self-expression.

This thesis is made up of three chapters. The first chapter begins with a general overview of Seleucia-Pieria, paying particular attention to its foundation and its status as a capital city. While considering civic religion in the city, I suggest that Seleucia-Pieria's cults and foundation stories were deeply connected to Seleucid dynastic ideology. I argue that the civic body referenced this connection to the dynasty with the use of specific iconography and imagery on coinage. I draw on numismatic evidence to give a complete civic history from the founding of the city in 300 BCE to its independence in 109 BCE. As the empire weakened, Seleucia-Pieria's civic government increasingly appropriated dynastic iconographic imagery, which was also linked to the city's history, as a means of civic expression. Finally, I argue that the Seleucid kings were aware of the city's ideological significance and sometimes considered the *polis* when making crucial political decisions.

In the second chapter, I look deeper into the perspective and worldview of the Seleucians by employing a spatial analysis. I introduce the concept of "numismatic space" and suggest that circulating coins can produce different kinds of imagined spaces. I explore three of these spaces: cosmological, royal, and civic. I argue that dynasties and cities alike were able to produce imagined spaces by minting and circulating coinage. I am interested in how the inhabitants of Seleucia-Pieria reconciled their cultural connection to the ruling dynasty and suggest that the civic body reappropriated dynastic symbols and turned them into civic symbols. Imagery that eventually became heavily associated with Seleucia-Pieria's civic culture ultimately stemmed from Seleucid dynastic propaganda. Moreover, the civic space that the Seleucians fostered emphasized their city as a sacred space, defined by their local religious traditions.

My third chapter compares Seleucia-Pieria with two neighboring cities: Apamea-by-the-Axios and Laodicea-ad-Mare. I aim to find out what is unique to Seleucia-Pieria and what my spatial-numismatic approach would uncover about Apamea and Laodicea. I provide similar but shorter analyses of these two cities using the numismatic record. I compare the consistency of iconography used in these cities. Seleucia-Pieria's preferred thunderbolt symbol was more common in the city's coinage than any local Apamean or Laodicean symbol in the coinage of these cities, but the two neighboring cities did emphasize certain aspects of their civic identities in the minting of coins. Laodicean coinage presented the city as a maritime space, while Apamean coinage reflected the city's role as the Seleucid military headquarters. In developing this comparative analysis, I consider the different processes by which Seleucia-Pieria and Laodicea may have produced maritime spaces. Both port cities decided to mint coins with considerable thematic differences. I also consider the possibility that the dynastic elephant symbol so common on Apamean coinage was co-opted by the civic community in a similar way to the thunderbolt at Seleucia-Pieria. The study of these numismatic symbols gives us greater insight into the lived experiences of these cities' inhabitants.

CHAPTER 1: CIVIC RELIGION AND THE NUMISMATIC RECORD

Introduction

The 2nd century BCE Hellenistic historian Polybius described Seleucia-Pieria as the "hearth" of the Seleucid Empire.[11] In antiquity, the strategic, ideological, and religious importance of this Mediterranean city was well known. The northern Syrian *polis*[12] was founded by the Macedonian king Seleucus I Nicator around 300 BCE and was home to his posthumous ruler cult. Seleucia-Pieria was likely planned to become the Seleucid royal center,[13] but it was not able to keep up with the growth of other Seleucid cities like Antioch and Seleucia-on-the-Tigris. In 246 BCE, the Ptolemaic army of Ptolemy III Euergetes captured the city. It remained in Ptolemaic hands until Antiochus the Great recaptured the city in 219 BCE during the 4th Syrian War. The city stayed under Seleucid control until it was granted independence by Antiochus VIII Grypus in 109 BCE,[14] by which time the empire had all but completely disintegrated.

This chapter's argument is that the civic religion of Seleucia-Pieria was inherently tied to Seleucid dynastic ideology and that this connection was a key part of Seleucian[15] civic identity. Seleucid kings were aware of this city's ideological significance dating back to the time of Seleucus and assigned special significance to the *polis.* With the geopolitical climate of the Hellenistic period in mind, I focus on the persistence of local religious culture shown in numismatic evidence. The numismatic record demonstrates that a Zeus/thunderbolt iconographic pairing was prevalent on many Seleucian coins for centuries. Furthermore, this chapter traces the

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[11] Polybius, *The Histories,* 5.58.
[12] Term for an ancient Greek city.
[13] Daniel Ogden, *The Legend of Seleucus: Kingship, Narrative, and Mythmaking in the Ancient World,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017): 165-7.
[14] *OGIS* 257.
[15] Seleucian refers to the city of Seleucia, while Seleucid refers to the dynasty and empire.

relationship between civic identity and dynastic ideology. The shifting balance between civic and royal power was often reflected in the numismatic record.

Ancient literary accounts and inscriptions describe the city's civic religion, which I define as the distinct religious beliefs and practices, including foundation stories and cult worship, pertaining to a particular city. Confining my scope between 300 BCE and 109 BCE allows us to look at the *polis* under a stable, or at least somewhat stable, Seleucid Empire. This also allows for a detailed analysis of the period during which the city fell under Ptolemaic control for over two decades. Much of the numismatic iconography is reminiscent of distinct Seleucian[16] religious traditions, and the coinage minted under civic authority suggests the city's self-expression. We can see the civic body designing coinage in a way that communicates their local identity and culture. Moreover, coins minted with the involvement of a king or a pretender[17] might show the manipulation of civic religion for some wider political goal or ideological agenda.

This chapter is divided into two main sections. In the first section, I provide an overview of Seleucia-Pieria and what the ancient sources tell us about the city and its inhabitants. I also look at the dynastic cult and the city's propagandist foundation stories, which feature Seleucus and Zeus. I argue that the city's identity was closely connected to the presence of Zeus and his thunderbolt. In the second main section of this chapter, I trace the city's history through the numismatic record, paying particular attention to civic identity and the shifting balance between the civic and royal governments. The earliest civic coins exhibited the common Zeus/thunderbolt imagery. Only 35 years after the first coins were minted, the Seleucian mint closed. This took place as the Seleucid kings were beginning to favor association with Apollo rather than Zeus.

[16] Seleucian refers to the city of Seleucia, while Seleucid refers to the dynasty and empire.
[17] An illegitimate king on the throne.

The mint became active again under Antiochus IV, a king closely connected to Zeus. Following Antiochus IV's reign, we can see the growing autonomy of the city reflected in numismatic production. In the end, the shifting balance between royal and civic power concluded with Seleucia-Pieria becoming a fully autonomous city.

Seleucia-Pieria

In 301 BCE, Seleucus led a grand coalition consisting of various other Diadochi[18] to victory against Antigonus Monophthalmos at the Battle of Ipsus in Anatolia.[19] The territories of Antigonus' kingdom were then divided up among the triumphant kings, further increasing the size of Seleucus's already massive Asian empire. Northern Syria was among Seleucus's new possessions. The king saw potential in this relatively under-urbanized region.[20] A massive colonization project was soon underway, and northern Syria became known as *Seleucis.* Four grand *poleis* collectively known as the Tetrapolis were constructed here in 300 BCE. The Tetrapolis consisted of Antioch-on-the-Orontes, Laodicea-by-the-Sea, Apamea-on-the-Axios, and Seleucia-Pieria. Out of these four "sister cities"[21] Seleucia-Pieria was the first to be established.[22]

Seleucia-Pieria was not, however, the first city to be eponymously founded by Seleucus.[23] That honor goes to Seleucia-on-the-Tigris. Appian records Seleucia-on-the-Tigris' own foundation legend which includes Seleucus's conversation with the Babylonian Magi.[24] Rolf Strootman has recently argued that while no 'Seleucid capital' existed, these two cities

[18] Greek term for the successors of Alexander the Great.
[19] Plutarch, *Life of Demetrius*, 30.
[20] Paul J. Kosmin, *The Land of the Elephant Kings,* 186.
[21] Strabo, *Geographica,* 16.4.
[22] John Malalas, *Chronographia,* 8.12.
[23] John D. Grainger, *The Rise of the Seleukid Empire: 323-223 BC* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Military, 2014), 36.
[24] Appian, *The Syrian Wars*, 58.

named Seleucia can be understood as 'royal cities' or 'seats of sovereignty.'[25] This was in stark contrast to Ptolemaic Egypt, in which the monarchy favored Alexandria as a sole center of power in lieu of traveling sporadically from city to city like the Seleucids did. It was not until the reign of Antiochus IV that Antioch began to serve as the clear capital of the Seleucid Empire.[26] Seleucia-Pieria sits on the coast of the eastern Mediterranean, between Mount Pieria to the north and Mount Kasios to the south. It is likely that a settlement had already existed at this site before the construction of the city. Both Strabo and Diodorus of Sicily mention a small trading-town being situated in the same location as the later city.[27] As with many other Seleucid colonies, the site was not heavily urbanized until the Hellenistic age.

Diodorus tells us that Seleucia-Pieria's earliest colonists were transferred from nearby Antigonea, Antigonus's destroyed capital, following its demise.[28] It is likely that the native Syrian inhabitants of the vicinity were moved into the *polis* as well. It is difficult to ascertain the ethnic makeup of ancient cities, especially ones that were not metropolises. As a major port city in the region, Seleucia-Pieria was probably ethnically diverse. In 219 BCE Polybius recorded that the population of free citizens numbered 6,000.[29] This estimate is far too low for a city of its size and might refer to the number of adult male citizens. The Tetrapolitan cities all had an interior area of between 220 and 300 acres, with Seleucia-Pieria being the largest.[30] It has been

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[25] Rolf Strootman, "Imperial *metropoleis* and Foundation Myths: Ptolemaic and Seleucid Capitals Compared: 2B Seleucid Royal Cities" in *Comparing the Ptolemaic and Seleucid Empires: Integration, Communication, and Resistance,* ed. Christelle Fischer-Bovet and Sitta von Reden (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 36.
[26] Ibid, 43-46.
[27] Ogden, *The Legend of Seleucus,* 101n7.
[28] Diodorus of Sicily, *The Library,* 20.47.
[29] Polybius, *Histories,* 5.61.
[30] John D. Grainger, *Seleukos Nikator: Constructing a Hellenistic Kingdom,* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 127.

suggested that the actual population was somewhere around 30,000.[31] Epigraphic evidence shows that local magistrates and priests had Greek names. While these individuals might have been native Syrians with Greek names, it is more likely that Hellenic colonists were the ones who held civic positions of power since the ruling dynasty was Hellenic. Seleucia-Pieria, like its southern neighbor Laodicea-ad-Mare, possessed a deep-water harbor, previously unseen in northern Syria.[32] While Antioch became the most prominent city in the Seleucid realm, Seleucia-Pieria served as a highly trafficked port for those traveling to and from the inland metropolis. Most famously, Paul of Tarsus began his first overseas journey in Seleucia-Pieria sailing to Cyprus.[33] We know Seleucia-Pieria functioned at least as an *ad hoc* naval base. After being damaged in a storm the fleet of Antiochus III anchored in the Seleucian harbor to repair their galleys.[34]

The few epigraphic sources that remain allow us to piece together some details about the civic government. An inscription dating to 186 BCE confirms that the inhabitants were governed by an *epistates* (local governor) along with other magistrates at the local level.[35] Cohen has also found that there is evidence for a *boule* (civic council involved with daily affairs) and *demes* (civic subdivisions).[36] The surviving literary sources describing the city are scarce. However, Polybius does gives us some information regarding the city's outline:

> A tract of broken ground reaches from the city down to the sea, and otherwise it is almost entirely surrounded by crags and precipitous cliffs. At the bottom of this tract of land is some level ground, where the commercial and residential areas are; the whole of this lower town has been exceptionally well fortified. The upper city is just as well protected

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[31] Polybius, *The Histories*, trans. Robin Waterfield, Introduction and Notes by Brian McGing. (Oxford: Oxford University Press),468n335.
[32] Kosmin, *The Land of the Elephant Kings*, 189.
[33] Acts, 13.4.
[34] Appian, *The Syrian Wars*, 4.
[35] *RC* 45; *IGLS* III.2.1183
[36] Getzel M. Cohen, *The Hellenistic Settlements in Syria, the Red Sea Basin, and North Africa,* (Berkeley; Los Angeles: London: University of California Press, 2006), 127.

> by costly walls and had been enhanced by the temples and other magnificent buildings that have been constructed there.[37]

Polybius clearly describes the physical divide between the lower residential and commercial areas, and the politico-religious center in the upper city. Polybius also claims that Antiochus stationed garrisons both at the port and at the acropolis. We can imagine sailors, soldiers, traders, and others in the portside agora gazing up at the upper city and its many buildings. Among these "temples and other magnificent buildings" was no doubt the Nicatoreum, a temple precinct built to house the ashes of Seleucus.

Dynastic Cult and Sacred Thunder

The story of the Nicatoreum begins with the assassination of Seleucus as recorded in 2nd century CE historian Appian's *Syrian History*:

> Philetaerus, ruler of Pergamum, paid Ceraunus [Seleucus's murderer] a great deal of money for the body of Seleucus, which he had cremated and sent the ashes to Antiochus, Seleucus's son. Antiochus buried them at Seleucia on the sea [Seleucia-Pieria] and built a temple for Seleucus with a sacred precinct around it. The precinct is called Nicatoreum.[38]

The burial of Seleucus's ashes and the creation of the Nicatoreum (named after the king's epithet "Nicator" meaning victor) contributed greatly to the ideological significance of the city. Whether this was one of Seleucus's last wishes or the doing of Antiochus I Soter is unclear. Given the founder king's favoritism towards the city, the former seems more likely. Even though Seleucia-Pieria did not grow to the size of Antioch and Alexandria, its ideological relevance had been cemented.

We are fortunate to have both archaeological and epigraphic evidence that can supplement Appian's short but significant passage. The existence of the Nicatoreum itself suggests that the posthumous worship and veneration of Seleucid kings began with the founder-

[37] Polybius, *The Histories,* 5.59.
[38] Appian, *The Syrian Wars,* 63.

king's death. Elsewhere, cults to Seleucus are known to have existed.[39] During the lifetime of Seleucus, for example, Ilium honored the king with a civic cult.[40] Therefore, a founder-cult for Seleucus in a city that bore his name comes as no surprise. In the late 1930s, a team of archaeologists excavated the site thought to be the Nicatoreum and confirmed that it sat by the Coryphaeus Mountain to be seen by all in the city.[41] The team also discovered a small bronze statuette of the Egyptian goddess Isis around the temple grounds. Isis was a popular deity throughout the Mediterranean but especially in port cities, hinting at Seleucia-Pieria's potential religious diversity.

An inscription from the reign of Seleucus IV (187-175 BCE) shows that the cult of Seleucus was still active even a hundred years later. It lists the various priests of "Seleucus Zeus Nicator", "Antiochus Apollo Soter," "Antiochus Theos", and the remaining kings down to Seleucus IV.[42] Even Seleucus II Callinicus and Seleucus III Soter, who ruled when the city was under Ptolemaic control, are present in the list. After Antiochus I we see no blending between king and Olympian god in the inscription; there is only the king's personal name and epithet recorded. The civic cult established for Seleucus I, therefore, lasted long beyond his time and became a dynastic cult. It is not surprising that Seleucus and Zeus were assimilated while Antiochus I chose to be associated with Apollo. Seleucus was associated more heavily with Zeus than any other Olympian. The shift towards Apollo was in full swing following Seleucus's death and had long-lasting effects; the god became a common feature of royal iconography on coinage.

In addition to Seleucus Zeus Nicator, priests were mentioned for Zeus Olympius, Zeus Kasios, and Zeus Coryphaeus, confirming the city's dedication to the sky god. The inscription

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[39] Nicholas L. Wright, "Seleukos, Zeus and the Dynastic Cult at Seleukeia in Pieria", in *The Seleukid Empire 281-222 BC: War Within the Family,* ed. Kyle Erickson (Swansea: The Classical Press of Wales, 2018), 85.
[40] *OGIS* 212.
[41] Wright, "Seleukos, Zeus and the Dynastic Cult at Seleukeia in Pieria," 89.
[42] *OGIS* 245.

also mentions the names of so-called "thunder-bearers," perhaps mimicking Zeus's heavenly entourage. Ivan Ladynin has recently argued that given the similarities in foundation stories of Seleucia-Pieria and Alexandria, the cult of Seleucus might have been modeled after the cult for Alexander already prevalent in the Ptolemaic kingdom.[43] In both cases, the bodies were preserved in a temple in a seaside city bearing the name of the deceased. Stories about the burials also resemble one another. Ladynin's convincing argument supports the view that Seleucia-Pieria was something of an Alexandrian equivalent for the Seleucid dynasty; both cities possessed the cult site and name of the dynasty's founder.

In his brief discussion of Seleucia-Pieria, Appian also gives some important details on the city's foundation and contemporary religious practices. He records:

> When Seleucus was founding the two Seleuceas, they say an omen of thunder guided him in the case of Seleucia by the sea [Seleucia-Pieria]. For this reason, he established thunder as a god for the inhabitants, and to this day they worship thunder and sing hymns to it. [44]

Here, thunder takes an active role in founding the *polis.* Daniel Ogden assumes that this worship of thunder refers to the cult of Zeus Keraunios "of the Thunderbolt."[45] Singing hymns to Zeus was certainly not unusual in the Hellenic world. However, we must not rule out that this could be the worship of the natural phenomenon itself without personification. Regardless of whether it represented Zeus or thunder itself, the thunderbolt cult was born. Ogden argues that thunder-worship likely existed among the pre-Seleucid inhabitants of the city's site. But he concludes that thunder iconography was common and widespread during the reigns of Alexander and Seleucus

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[43] Ivan Ladynin, "The Burial of Seleucus I Nicator in Appian (Syr. 63): A Replica of the Ptolemaic Eponymous Cult?" in *New Perspectives in Seleucid History, Archaeology, Numismatics: Studies in Honor of Getzel M. Cohen,* ed. Roland Oetijen, and Frank Ryan (Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 2019), 55.
[44] Appian, *The Syrian Wars,* 58.
[45] Ogden, *The Legend of Seleucus,* 107-8.

and therefore comes from Hellenic religion, at least partially.[46] The foundation stories of Seleucia-Pieria probably reflected a blending of indigenous and Hellenic beliefs over time. The civic cults that developed in Seleucia-Pieria were most likely the result of the syncretic combination of pre-existing traditions and Seleucid tales linking Seleucus to Zeus.

The 6th century Byzantine chronicler John Malalas recorded the foundation stories of each city in the Tetrapolis. Malalas' fantastical writings must not be over-analyzed but cannot be ignored. Malalas claims that he relied on the obscure Pausanias of Antioch for the writing of this passage.[47] It reads:

> On the 23rd of Xanthikos he went to Mount Kasios to sacrifice to Zeus Kasios. After completing the sacrifice and cutting up the meat, he asked in prayer where he should build a city. Suddenly an eagle seized some of the sacrifice and carried it off to the old city. Seleukos and the augurs with him followed close behind and found the meat thrown down by the sea, below the old city at the trading-station known as Pieria. After marking out the walls he immediately laid its foundations, calling the city Seleukeia after himself. To give thanks he went up to Iopolis, where three days later he celebrated a festival in honor of Zeus Keraunios, in the temple built by Perseus, the son of Picus and Danae, which is on Mount Silpios.[48]

The accounts for the three other cities include similar sacrificial themes but with differing details.

In his account of the origins of Seleucia-Pieria, two themes stand out: the involvement of Zeus in the founding of the city and the reference to the thunderbolt in the mention of Zeus Keraunios ("of the Thunderbolt). A prayer to Zeus Kasios, followed by an omen from Zeus's primary animal, suggest a deep connection between the city and god. An eagle acting as an omen is not a new phenomenon either. Alexander the Great is said to have had a similar experience with an eagle when mulling over tactical strategies during his campaigns.[49] Seleucus's avian

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[46] Ibid, 273-274.
[47] Ibid, 105.
[48] John Malalas, *Chronographia,* 8. 12.
[49] Arrian, *Anabasis,* 1.18.6.

encounter demonstrates Zeus's approval and the king's divine favor. The appearance of Zeus Keraunios ties this tale back to Appian's thunder omen story. Malalas's reference to Zeus "of the Thunderbolt" and Appian's foundation story both link the city's foundation to thunder. This detail reflects a crucial part of the civic identity of the *polis.* Appian and Malalas recorded these stories centuries after the city's historic foundation. Exactly when these stories first developed is unknown, but it is more probable that they come from the Seleucid period than from the Roman period. Stories like these created a unique sense of religious identity for new Hellenistic cities. Most Seleucid cities were colonies created by Seleucus and his successors and therefore could not show off a deep legacy. However, Seleucia-Pieria could certainly boast a deep connection with Zeus: both surviving foundation stories featured Zeus, various iterations of Zeus were worshiped, and as we will see, he featured heavily in Seleucian coinage.

The religious and ideological significance of Seleucia-Pieria is not only touched on in mythological legends. Sometime between 147/6 and 139/8 BCE, the *polis* of Seleucia-Pieria was declared "sacred and inviolable."[50] Kent Rigsby has argued that this was either the first or second city outside of the Aegean to achieve such honors. These honors theoretically protected the city's temples from plunder and defilement. Despite the evidence of Isis worship and a sanctuary to the Dioscuri,[51] Zeus remained the city's central deity. The thunder god was also important in Argead (i.e., the ruling dynasty of Macedonia to which Alexander belonged) Macedonian religious tradition. That later ancient authors wrote of Zeus helping in the foundation of his city is testament to Seleucus's effective propaganda. Seleucus's entombment in the Nicatoreum and the subsequent dynastic cult solidified the city as an ideological center of the Seleucid world.

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[50] Kent J. Rigsby, *Asylia: Territorial Inviolability in the Hellenistic World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 485-488.
[51] Polybius, *Histories,* 5.60.

Coins of Seleucus: The Early Years

It took many years for the Diadochi to begin minting their own faces on coins, rather than the face of a deity or Alexander.[52] Most coins minted in the decades during and after Alexander's conquests featured a youthful Heracles on the obverse and a seated Zeus on the reverse, sometimes with an eagle.[53] This type of coin was so common that it has been dubbed an "Alexander" by numismatists. The Diadochi emulated these "Alexander" types when first minting their own coinage. Eventually, Seleucus started to personalize his coins; pan-imperial imagery, like the anchor, also slowly began to emerge. Over time, Seleucus's profile became more common on coins. It comes as no surprise that Seleucus aimed to associate himself closely with Zeus.[54] Zeus was the chief god in the Greek pantheon and was dominant in traditional Macedonian religion. As the god of justice, Hellenistic kings were often drawn to him since they were seen as the top judicial authority. We have also already seen how Seleucian foundation stories affirm Seleucus's close association with the god. That is not to say that Seleucus dismissed other deities, but Zeus clearly reigned supreme in his mind. Out of the 656 coins minted under the authority of Seleucus in the American Numismatic Society's *MANTIS* database, 440 feature some depiction of Zeus.

The cities of the Tetrapolis were some of the earliest to begin minting Seleucid coins. Each of the four cities did their part in minting coins for Seleucus. Seleucia-Pieria specialized in royally authorized silver tetradrachms and drachms, as well as civically authorized bronze coins.[55] The Seleucian mint commonly embraced the imagery of Zeus. Figure 1 shows an

[52] Thonemann, *The Hellenistic World,* 18.
[53] Ibid, 3.
[54] Kyle Erickson, *The Early Seleukids, their Gods and their Coins* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 28.
[55] Neumann, *Antioch in Syria*, 50.

example of an “Alexander style” coin from Seleucia-Pieria minted under the authority of Seleucus.

Figure 1. Royal coin of Seleucus, c. 300 BCE. ANS 1948.19.2319 American Numismatic Society, accessed September 19, 2023, http://numismatics.org/collection/1948.19.2319.

This coin dates to around 300-298 BCE, making it one of the earliest coins minted in the city. On the obverse, we see a beardless Heracles sporting the coat of a lion. The reverse shows a seated Zeus, carrying Nike. The text, which reads “of King Seleucus,” confirms that this is not a coin left over from Alexander’s own conquests. This short legend shows that Seleucus (or a royal delegate) would have been the formal guarantor of this die series.[56] The appearance of Nike, rather than the eagle usually held by Zeus, is the only slightly unusual attribute. This is not surprising considering the king’s epithet Nicator.[57] But other Seleucian coins do show Zeus holding the familiar eagle. Across the empire Seleucus experimented with other symbols and deities on silver coinage, but these “Alexanders” with Seleucus’s name would be the norm for the early coinage in Seleucia-Pieria.

At first sight, the silver coinage from this era seems to reflect Seleucus’s lack of influence at the Seleucian mint because of how typical it appears compared to other contemporary coinage. But it is also possible that he intended it to be this way. The successor kings trod carefully when depicting themselves on coinage and it was crucial to slowly introduce

[56] Ibid, 193.

[57] “Nicator” references Nike, the goddess of victory.

royal authority. Moreover, northern Syria was a region in which Seleucus was closely involved. The stereotypical "Alexanders" from Seleucia-Pieria should not be used as evidence to suggest Seleucus's disinterest towards the mints of the Tetrapolis. These dies were struck deliberately; either Seleucus or an administrator close to him believed it a good idea to mint these coins featuring Zeus in the northern Syrian *poleis,* one of which was Seleucia-Pieria. Seleucus ensured that his image would be presented in connection with Zeus.[58] After all, Zeus was said to have played a role in the founding of each Tetrapolitan city.[59] This first series of "Alexanders" was minted after Seleucus's great victory over Antigonus, and it would have likely first been used by the fresh colonists and veterans just settling the new *polis*. Besides the mint's monogram, there is not much here yet that shows the local distinctness to come. Zeus's profile and his thunderbolt, which would each become trademark signs of Seleucian coinage, are absent here. Seleucia-Pieria's mint would move away from this typical Hellenistic design, but Zeus and his attributes would remain.

First Examples of Civic Iconography

As the colonists became citizens, a localized cultural identity started to form in Seleucia-Pieria. The first Seleucid coins depicting Heracles and Zeus minted in the city might have looked somewhat generic for the Hellenistic period. However, coinage from the city soon started to appear much more distinct. Figure 2 shows a bronze coin from 290-285 BCE. In *MANTIS*, all Seleucian coins minted under civic authority follow this same basic obverse-reverse pattern. It has even been suggested that some of these civic models were minted as early as 300 BCE.[60]

[58] Erickson, *The Early Seleukids, their gods and their coins,* 36-39.
[59] Ogden, *The Legend of Seleucus,* 100-107.
[60] Oliver Hoover, Handbook of Syrian Coins: Royal and Civic Issues, Fourth to First Centuries, (London: Classical Numismatic Group, 2009), 294-295.

Bronze coins like these were minted for low-level exchange and used in urban settings by regular citizens.[61]

Figure 2. Civic coin of Seleucia-Pieria, c. 285 BCE. ANS 1962.57.151. American Numismatic Society, accessed September 19, 2023, http://numismatics.org/collection/1962.57.151

Zeus replaces the typical beardless Heracles on the obverse. On the reverse there is a winged thunderbolt, echoing Appian's story about the thunder omen. The legend reads "of the Seleucians," almost certainly proving that someone from the civic body is responsible for this series of coins. Coins like this are the earliest examples of local religious culture being depicted on coins from Seleucia-Pieria and by non-royal citizens.[62] Such local autonomy at such an early stage in a city's existence is exceptional. The silver "Alexanders" resembled normal Hellenistic models, but here Zeus and his thunderbolt are being used to reflect the city's distinctive identity. Morkholm has suggested that Seleucus encouraged the minting of civic coinage so that Seleucia-Pieria could achieve the status of a true *polis.*[63] The right to mint was an indicator of a city's relative autonomy. As previously argued, the Tetrapolis was a strategically important area that the founder-king did not completely leave to its own devices. But that fact should not minimize the agency of the civic body. The legend itself confirms the city's role in the process. If the king

[61] Thonemann, *The Hellenistic World,* 128. More information on this in chapter 2.
[62] Kyle Erickson, *Early Seleukids, their Gods, and their Coins,* 34-35.
[63] Otto Morkholm, *Early Hellenistic Coinage from the Accession of Alexander to the Peace of Apamaea (336-188 BC*) (Cambridge University Press, 1991), 75.

did want to elevate Seleucia-Piera to true polis status (i.e., granting the city considerable autonomy and self-governance short of complete independence), then it certainly would have been the Seleucians who decided on which iconography to use. Civic expression can surely be seen in this first bronze series.

Nearly identical civic coins were also produced in Antioch (their legend reads "of the Antiochians"),[64] whose foundation myths also reference Zeus. While Seleucia-Pieria retained this specific Zeus-centered iconography on bronze coinage for centuries, Antioch experimented more widely. Already during the reign of Seleucus, several different designs (i.e., different obverse/reverse pairings) were being used for quasi-municipal coins in Antioch, and this diversity continued long into the future.[65] In Seleucia-Pieria, on the other hand, the thunderbolt on the reverse was the norm and would even outlast the Seleucid Empire itself. In the Roman imperial period, for example, the thunderbolt remained a favorite numismatic symbol of the city. It is also interesting to note that the winged thunderbolt recalls the shape of the pan-imperial anchor symbol, though the wings become less prominent on civic coins over time. Could there have been an effort, early on, to promote a sort of syncretism between locally meaningful iconography and royal iconography on civic bronze coinage? Such an interpretation would again put Seleucus as an active participant in this process.

After Seleucus's death in 281 BCE, his son Antiochus I Soter ruled until 261 BCE. Despite epigraphic evidence from Ilium that might reference some unrest in Syria, the succession was relatively smooth.[66] Construction on the Nicatoreum must have begun as soon as Antiochus received the ashes of his father from Philetaerus.[67] There are only a few examples of coins

[64] Neumann, *Antioch in Syria,* 55.
[65] Ibid, 57.
[66] *OGIS* 219.
[67] Appian, *The Syrian Wars*, 63.

minted in Seleucia-Pieria during the reign of Antiochus I. Figure 3 shows a coin with, again, Zeus on the obverse and the thunderbolt on the reverse. It reads "of King Antiochus" but is made of bronze rather than silver, making it a quasi-municipal coin. The iconography is nearly identical to that used on the bronze civic coins minted in the time of Seleucus. However, in this case the thunderbolt looks closer to those used for later coins from Seleucia-Pieria and less like the imperial anchor. If Antiochus were somehow involved in approving the dies for these coins, then he would be permitting clear civic expression. If he was not, then the civic actor who added Antiochus's name believed that there would be no negative repercussions to doing so. This coin might be an example of collaboration between the king (or a royal delegate) and the city as well.

Figure 3. Quasi-municipal coin of Antiochus I Soter, c. 275 BCE. ANS 1944.100.74975, American Numismatic Society, accessed September 19, 2023, http://numismatics.org/collection/1944.100.74975

As Thonemann has convincingly argued, civic coins were in a state of decline during the early 3rd century BCE due to the large number of silver coins already in circulation after Alexander's conquests.[68] Sometime early in the reign of Antiochus I, possibly around 275 BCE, the mint in Seleucia-Pieria ceased to produce coins.[69] There were presumably already enough coins in circulation. This also coincided with the growth of Antioch. Antiochian coins had spread

[68] Thonemann, *The Hellenistic World,* 46.
[69] Arthur Houghton, "A Tetradrachm of Seleucia-Pieria at the Getty Museum: An Archaizing Zeus and the Accession of Alexander Balas in Northern Syria," *The J. Paul Getty Museum Journal* Vol. 10 (1982): 157n.

far and wide, with the result that many were found in Seleucia-Pieria during the excavation of remains dating to the reign of Antiochus I or later.[70] Seleucia-Pieria retained its ideological and naval significance, but eventually it became better known as merely Antioch's port city. The reign of Antiochus also saw a movement away from Zeus and towards Apollo as the patron deity of the dynasty.[71] Seleucus's successors ensured that Apollo was the most prominent deity on coinage, even above Zeus. Kyle Erickson has theorized that this shift was initiated by Antiochus I Soter to legitimize his own rule and to associate Apollo with native non-Greek deities.[72] Especially in the east, Apollo could be assimilated with indigenous gods because of their shared attributes and roles and therefore could resonate with more subjects. Out of the 206 coins minted under Antiochus II Theos's authority in *MANTIS,* only 14 feature Zeus. It is possible that a city so closely connected with Zeus lost some influence due to this dynastic turn towards Apollo.

The dynastic shift from Zeus and towards Apollo took place after Seleucia-Pieria had already minted coins with Zeus-centric symbols. During the period between 300 BCE and c. 275 BCE, we can see civic religious identity develop in the numismatic record. The first silver coins were royally minted and featured typical, yet relevant, depictions of Zeus. From the beginning, Seleucus either promoted this connection to Zeus or at least allowed the city to emphasize its connection to the deity. Around the same time or a little afterwards, Zeus moved from the reverse of the coins to the obverse, and the thunderbolt appeared on the reverse in bronze coinage for decades. The centrality of the thunderbolt attests to the claims of Appian and Malalas that there was believed to be connection between Seleucia-Pieria and Zeus's thunderbolt. However, it is impossible to know whether this early numismatic imagery predated the

[70] Neumann, *Antioch in Syria,* 81-88.
[71] Kyle Erickson, *The Early Seleukids, their Gods, and their Coins,* 63.
[72] Kyle Erickson, "Apollo-Nabu: The Babylonian Policy of Antiochus I Soter," *Journal of American Oriental Society,* (2011), 52.

foundation stories. These bronze coins minted under civic and quasi-municipal authority demonstrate the populace's active self-expression, despite the possible influence of Seleucus. We can see the parts of this newly developed religious culture in the coinage from Antiochus I's reign as well. This Zeus-centric religious culture was presented as soon as the city's inhabitants were capable of numismatic self-expression. The closing of the mint shut the door on the numismatic record of Seleucia-Pieria, but it would about a century later.

Ptolemaic Occupation

The Seleucid and Ptolemaic empires battled for six "Syrian Wars" over control of the strategically important Levant. During the 3rd Syrian War in 246 BCE, the armies of Ptolemy III Euergetes swept through the Seleucid realm. A Red Sea Ptolemaic inscription reads that "he [Ptolemy III] crossed the river Euphrates and having subdued Mesopotamia, Babylonia, Susiana, Persis, Media and all the remaining territory as far as Bactria."[73] This is an extreme exaggeration; however, the war was a massive victory for Ptolemy III. The king did manage to march as far as Babylon.[74] During his conquests he took control of Seleucia-Pieria and installed a garrison in the city. Polybius writes that the Egyptian garrison caused shame for the Seleucid kings.[75] This would be a thorn in the monarchy's side for over two decades. Seleucid military movements could be easily defended against with the Ptolemies controlling territory in the heart of Syria. The evidence from Ptolemaic-controlled Seleucia-Pieria is few and far between.

The Ptolemaic and Seleucid empires had followed two completely distinct policies regarding the circulation of coinage within their realms. The Seleucids preferred an open-

[73] *OGIS* 54.
[74] Gunther Holbl, *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire,* trans. Tina Saavedra (London and New York: Routledge, 2001) 48-51.
[75] Polybius, *The Histories,* 5. 58.

circulation system.[76] Coins minted abroad could freely flow into Seleucid territory and would be used alongside royal and civic Seleucid coinage. Conversely, the Ptolemies enforced a closed system. This meant that only state-minted coins could be used inside the empire.[77] Seleucia-Pieria thus entered this closed-circulation system after its fall, and its mint probably began minting Ptolemaic coins. Coinage from this era is very rare, but the evidence that remains is telling. Figure 4 demonstrates a bronze coin possibly from the city during the time of occupation. The text and iconography reveal it to have been minted under royal authority.

Figure 4. Ptolemaic coin of Berenice II, c. 246-222 BCE. ANS 1944.100.77203, American Numismatic Society, accessed September 19, 2023, http://numismatics.org/collection/1944.100.77203

On the obverse, Queen Berenice II is depicted. Royal women were common on Ptolemaic coins[78] but rarer on Seleucid coins. On the reverse, we see an eagle typical in Ptolemaic iconography. The obverse reads “Queen Berenice," and the reverse reads “of King Ptolemy.” There is not even the smallest hint of local culture being depicted in this iconography. Another bronze coin is shown in figure 5. The obverse again shows Queen Berenice II with a cornucopia on the reverse, again a typical Ptolemaic feature. The text is the same as before. Again, no sign of distinct Seleucian iconography can be found.

[76] Thonemann, *The Hellenistic World,* 115.
[77] Ibid, 119.
[78] Ibid, 150-151.

Figure 5. Ptolemaic coin of Berenice II, c. 246-222 BCE. ANS 1953.171.1710, American Numismatic Society, accessed September 19, 2023, http://numismatics.org/collection/1953.171.1710

There is more here than just Ptolemaic authorities minting coins bearing their own iconography. During his reign, Ptolemy III Euergetes (246-221 BCE) actively promoted the cult worship of his wife Berenice II.[79] Berenice was known for her identification with the Egyptian goddess Isis. It would be too speculative, though, to assert that the Ptolemaic authorities were trying to promote their cult worship to undermine the existing cult to Seleucus Zeus Nicator. Though the previously mentioned statuette of Isis found in the Nicatoreum could possibly date to this period, Wright rightly mentions that the cult of Isis had spread far and wide in the ancient world.[80] Worship of Isis was not exclusively associated with the Ptolemaic regime.

The Ptolemies seem to have had no great interest in the civic religious traditions of Seleucia-Pieria. The Ptolemaic rulers may have been aware of Seleucia-Pieria's ideological significance but cared primarily about the strategic importance of the site. The fact that we do not see any civic religious iconography in the coinage is not surprising since the Ptolemaic closed-currency system only allowed Ptolemaic coins to circulate. Berenice's relation to Isis might connect to the statuette of Isis in the temple, but it is completely plausible that there would be no relation. There is no need to explicitly connect Ptolemaic rule to this statuette. Later coins

[79] Gunther Holbl, *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire,* 105.
[80] Wright, "Seleukos, Zeus and Dynastic Cult at Seleukeia in Pieria," 92.

will show that Seleucian civic religion did persist through this period, but in the Ptolemaic coins, there is only period-typical Ptolemaic iconography with an emphasis on Berenice-Isis.

Reconquest and Antiochus IV Epiphanes

In 219 BCE, the greatest of the Seleucid kings planned his attack on Seleucia-Pieria. Antiochus the Great would begin the 4th Syrian war by invading the Ptolemaic territory that had been lost in the previous war. Polybius describes how Antiochus was convinced by a Seleucian advisor in his court to begin the war with an attack on Seleucia-Pieria.[81] The assault was successful, and the *polis* once again was controlled by a Seleucid king. When Antiochus the Great entered the city the population of free citizens numbered some 6000.[82] This likely refers to the number of free males in the city. Although the 4th Syrian War ended in defeat for the Seleucids, the recapture of Seleucia-Pieria was a notable gain. Despite his initial defeat, Antiochus the Great's subsequent conquests helped the empire look much like it had during Seleucus's reign.[83] His armies conquered far and wide, eventually retaking parts of Syria, Asia Minor, and Central Asia. However, his war with Rome towards the end of his reign was disastrous and resulted in large-scale territorial loss for the Seleucids. When Antiochus died in 187 BCE, a few years after signing a devastating peace treaty with Rome, his son Seleucus IV assumed the throne. We can presume from epigraphic evidence mentioned earlier that the dynastic ruler cults like the one to "Seleucus Zeus Nicator" were active during his reign. However, the mint at Seleucia-Pieria did not return to producing coins until the reign of the next

[81] Polybius, *The Histories*, 5.58.
[82] Ibid, 5.61.
[83] Amelie Kuhrt and Susan Sherwin-White, *From Samarkhand to Sardis: A new approach to the Seleucid empire*, (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 188-216.

king, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who ruled from 175 to 164 BCE.[84] These coins are rare but historically revealing.

Ancient literary sources often depict Antiochus IV Epiphanes, or "God Manifest," as a crazed proto-Nero. His bold epithet alone suggests that he thought highly of himself. Despite this negative reputation, he proved himself to be an efficient king, successfully invading Egypt until the Romans pressured him back into Seleucid territory.[85] He decided to partially break the traditional dynastic link to Apollo and began to associate himself more closely with Zeus, as Seleucus originally had done, especially in the western part of the empire.[86] His coinage often shows Zeus imagery, and Antiochus himself often sports a radiate crown that emphasizes his divine-like presence. During his reign, the Seleucian mint finally reopened. The fact that a silver tetradrachm that might have been minted in Seleucia-Pieria features Apollo, however, confirms that Antiochus IV did not completely abandon the god.[87] Antiochus is seen on the front, and Apollo is sitting on the omphalos (the navel of the universe) on the reverse. Civic agency is hardly visible in this silver series which may or may not have been Seleucian.

Towards the end of his reign nineteen cities in the Levant minted quasi-municipal bronze coins. Marion Meyer has argued that the king himself initiated this phenomenon and that these cities were free to design their coinage as they liked.[88] The *MANTIS* database includes few coins minted in Seleucia-Pieria during these years, but their iconography is telling. Figure 6 is a bronze

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[84] Houghton, "A Tetradrachm of Seleucia Pieria at the Getty Museum," 157n18.
[85] Kosmin, *The Land of the Elephant Kings*, 129-31.
[86] Erickson, *The Early Seleukids, their Gods and their Coins*, 160, 173-4.
[87] Arthur Houghton, Catharine Lorber, and Oliver Hoover, *Seleucid Coins Catalogue: A Comprehensive Catalogue (Part 2: Seleucus IV through Antiochus XIII, Volume 1)* (New York: Classical Numismatic Group and American Numismatic Society, 2008), 72-73.
[88] Marion Meyer, "King Antiochus IV and the Cities in the Levant" in *New Perspectives in Seleucid History, Archaeology, Numismatics: Studies in Honor of Getzel M. Cohen*, ed. Roland Oetijen, and Frank Ryan (Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 2019), 536-7.

coin from 168-164 BCE. The image of the king wearing a radiate crown on the obverse, an indication of his god-like nature, is typical of Antiochus IV's coins.

Figure 6. Quasi-municipal coin of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, c. 168-164 BCE. ANS 1944.100.74977, American Numismatic Society, accessed September 19, 2023, http://numismatics.org/collection/1944.100.74977

More important is the reverse. The winged thunderbolt appears once again. The last numismatic depiction of a thunderbolt from the city came from civic coins in the 270s BCE. The legend reads "of the Seleucians in Pieria." The text combined with the profile of Antiochus confirms this as a coin minted under quasi-municipal authority.[89] After a century without an operating mint, the Seleucians continued to reference their civic cult when given the opportunity to strike new coins.

Seleucia-Pieria was likely of special importance to Antiochus IV because of the city's history as a dynastic center. More specifically, the city's link to Zeus was meaningful for a king who aimed at greater association with the god. Figure 7 shows a similar coin with the same text but from a different series. The obverse and reverse show the same iconography as the previous example.

[89] Neumann, *Antioch in Syria,* 66.

Figure 7. Quasi-municipal coin of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, c. 168-164 BCE. ANS 1944.100.74978, American Numismatic Society, accessed September 19, 2023, http://numismatics.org/collection/1944.100.74978

The thunderbolt was not the only local sign struck on coinage. The *polis* also minted coins with Zeus on the reverse. Zeus sits where Apollo usually would be in Seleucid coinage. For example, figure 8 is reminiscent of earlier "Alexanders" minted under Seleucus. The reverse text remains "of the Seleucians in Pieria."

Figure 8. Quasi-municipal coin of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, c. 168-164 BCE. ANS 1944.100.77042. American Numismatic Society, accessed September 19, 2023, http://numismatics.org/collection/1944.100.77042

Meyer states that the standard model for these quasi-municipal coins included Zeus standing on the reverse with a crown in hand and that Seleucia-Pieria initially minted this model.[90] However,

[90] Meyer, "Antiochus IV and the Cities of the Levant.," 528.

figure 8 differs because Zeus is seated. Both reverse designs find precedent in earlier coins minted in Seleucia-Pieria. Because neither is the default model that Antiochus IV first pushed, we can assume that Seleucian civic agency is on display. Coins from the other cities that issued quasi-municipal coins also illustrated their autonomy in creating designs. The initiative of the citizens is evident in these two reverse models (the thunderbolt and seated Zeus). The thunderbolt was by now a sure sign of Seleucian civic identity.

Antiochus IV Epiphanes' program to have nineteen cities in the Levant mint quasi-municipal coins was designed to improve royal-urban relations in Coele-Syria.[91] That the Seleucian mint did not operate under Antiochus III and Seleucus IV but reopened under a king favored by Zeus should not be ignored. Antiochus IV surely knew of this city's various cults of Zeus and of Seleucus Zeus Nicator at the Nicatoreum. The only Seleucid king to be aligned so closely with Zeus prior had been Seleucus himself. I suggest that further promoting the king's connection to Zeus played a role in the reopening of the mint. The silver coin with Apollo must date to earlier in his reign when he still sought to promote dynastic continuity. Having the inhabitants of the empire's "hearth" mint the quasi-municipal series cannot have hurt the king's standing. Therefore, the civic cult was something of an agent in the move towards Zeus. This would not be the last time that a king recognized and utilized Seleucia-Pieria's civic religion.

The Pretender

Like all late Hellenistic kingdoms, the shadow of Rome loomed large over the weakening Seleucid state. By the mid-second century BCE, the Seleucids were more of a regional power than a superpower. Their territory diminished, and civil war ensued for decades. It was not uncommon for pretenders and usurpers to make attempts at the throne. One of these pretenders

[91] Ibid, 529. Coele-Syria, meaning hollow Syria, is southern Syria. During most of the Hellenistic period, the Ptolemies controlled Coele-Syria.

was Alexander I Balas, who claimed to be the son of Antiochus IV and was supported by the Ptolemies.[92] Alexander I Balas was not a member of the Seleucid family, but sometime around 150 BCE, he positioned himself in Seleucia-Pieria as king. This was an important locality to win over for Alexander. But the pretender would need to tread lightly in the birthplace of the Seleucid ruler cult. Several silver *stephanephoroi*, or 'wreath-bearers'[93] coins from the city bear Alexander's name.[94] In Figure 9, one can see how these coins mirror the first civic coins (figures 2 and 3).

Figure 9. Quasi-municipal coin of Alexander I Balas, c. 150-145 BCE. ANS 1944.100.74983, American Numismatic Society, accessed September 19, 2023, http://numismatics.org/collection/1944.100.74983

Though rendered in silver, the Zeus profile and thunderbolt are strongly reminiscent of the coins minted under the authority of the Seleucians in the 290s and 280s BCE. The legend, however, reads "of King Alexander." This mixture of the king's name with clear local iconography again reflects typical coinage of quasi-municipal authority. To Alexander, the birthplace of Seleucid kingship ideology seemed like a good place to mint these large silver coins. Houghton writes that Seleucia-Pieria might have been "key to his claim to Syria Seleucis

[92] Neumann, *Antioch in Syria*, 64.
[93] Ibid, 57.
[94] Houghton, "A Tetradrachm of Seleucia Pieria at the Getty Museum," 153.

as a whole." [95] On both sides of the coins, representations of civic religion are present. On Antiochus IV's coins, only the reverse had included local symbols. Alexander's precarious situation as pretender to the throne is reflected here. Rather than portraying his face on the obverse, Alexander settled for a legend of his name only, at least for this series. I would argue that this is an attempt to curry favor with a city of ideological and strategic importance. How else he interacted with the people of Seleucia-Pieria might never be known, but we do know that he played a role in minting coins that bore symbols associated with their civic religion.

Under Alexander I Balas, several series of bronze quasi-municipal coins were also minted. One series with Alexander I on the obverse and Zeus Nicephorus on the reverse includes the legend "of the Seleucians in Pieria." Furthermore, a design with Zeus on the obverse and Athena on the reverse reads "of Alexander I Balas." Interestingly, the silver series most closely echoes past bronze designs with the Zeus/thunderbolt pairing. It has been speculated that Alexander I Balas promoted an empire-wide cult due to the appearance of thunderbolt iconography in his coinage from several mints around the empire.[96] We should not minimize the local importance of the wreath-bearer series because of Alexander I's potential thunderbolt cult. Whether this thunderbolt cult was real is not relevant here. Because the Zeus/thunderbolt combination resembled Seleucian coins before and after this series, we can assume that these coins are in reference to local culture, and not just royal ideology being pushed by Alexander I. It is even possible that the king minted these silver coins hoping that they might serve two goals: to promote his hypothetical imperial thunderbolt cult and to collaborate with Seleucia-Pieria to advertise dynastic continuity with the past.

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[95] Ibid, 158.
[96] Houghton, Lorber, and Hoover, *Seleucid Coins Catalogue: A Comprehensive Catalogue (Part 2, Volume 1)*, 212-213.

Despite Alexander I Balas's attempts to win the loyalty of the city, by this time in Seleucid history cities had achieved far greater autonomy than ever before.[97] Numismatic production often reflected this growing autonomy. During the 5-year reign of Alexander Balas the disillusioned civic bodies of Seleucia-Pieria and Antioch jointly minted bronze civic coins without royal portraits (figure 10).[98] The political destinies of these two cities were often intertwined because of their proximity. These coins bore the legend "of the brother peoples," or *Adelphoi Demoi* in Greek.[99] These "peoples" were the populations of the two cities. The unity and solidarity shown between these two cities is surprising. For two cities in the Seleucid Empire to independently act in this way was rare. 1st century BCE geographer Strabo wrote that the cities of the Tetrapolis "were called siblings of one another because of their concord."[100] I am suggesting that this minting was a rejection of the false king's authority and a projection of the power of these two *poleis.*

Figure 10. Bronze coin with legend reading "of the brother peoples," c. 150-145 BCE. ANS 1961.154.309, American Numismatic Society, accessed September 19, 2023, http://numismatics.org/collection/1961.154.309

[97] Kosmin, *The Land of the Elephant Kings,* 248.
[98] Neumann, *Antioch in Syria*, 65.
[99] Ibid, 65.
[100] Strabo, *Geographica,* 16.2.4.

Note the familiar Zeus-Thunderbolt combination on the "brother peoples" civic coins minted in Seleucia-Pieria. Without any connection to a king, the sacred thunderbolt is still shown. Other combinations were minted, but this one appears to have been the most prominent. A tripod, a seated Zeus, and a standing goddess also make appearances on the reverses. Besides Zeus, Tyche and twin heads representing the *demoi* can be found on the obverse. The coins produced in Antioch during this short-lived alliance employ iconography more geared towards their own city's identity.[101] In light of such displays of independence, one can see why Alexander would be so anxious to win over Seleucia-Pieria. Further complicating the situation, Ptolemy IV, in a volte-face move, captured Seleucia-Pieria around 146 BCE from Alexander Balas.[102] This was to be a temporary occupation and relevant only in that it continued the disruption in and around the city. Before long, Alexander and Ptolemy IV would both be dead, and the hereditarily legitimate Demetrius II would begin his own troublesome reign.

I argue that the joint minting of civic coins by Seleucia-Pieria and Antioch indicates frustration over the incessant civil wars and a series of incompetent kings. This joint assertion of civic identity suggests a concerted effort to assert greater civic sovereignty. Indeed, the *Adelphoi demoi* series might attest to ephemeral but genuine civic autonomy in an otherwise king-centric empire. The next series minted in Seleucia-Pieria were during the reign of Antiochus VII Sidetes (r. 138-129 BCE). Along with a silver tetradrachm featuring the king's profile and Athena Nicephorus, Antiochus VII also minted quasi-municipal coins.[103] One series is known to exist and is believed to have been produced around 138 BCE. The design includes the king's image on the obverse and an enthroned Zeus Nicephorus on the reverse. The legend reads "of the

[101] Neumann, *Antioch in Syria*, 65.
[102] I Maccabees, 11.8.
[103] Houghton, Lorber, and Hoover, *Seleucid Coins Catalogue: A Comprehensive Catalogue (Part 2, Volume 1)*, 370-371.

Seleucians in Pieria sacred and inviolable."[104] As previously mentioned, Seleucia-Pieria was one of the earliest cities outside the Aegean to achieve this status. While the thunderbolt is absent, the presence of Zeus is still consistent with the earlier numismatic evidence.

Freedom

The Seleucid Empire continued to decline as civil wars raged and new kings assumed the throne every few years. By 129 BCE, all that remained was Syria.[105] Despite the civil wars, some of these short-lived monarchs continued to mint at Seleucia-Pieria. Demetrius II Nicator minted silver and bronze coins with the pan-imperial anchor symbol. That these were of royal authority is no surprise. He also minted a hemidrachm[106] with himself on the obverse and the thunderbolt on the reverse.[107] The legend reads "of King Demetrius God Victor." Civic agency is difficult to see in Demetrius II's coins, but what we can see is another king putting a local symbol on royal coinage. Again, this should be taken as an attempt to associate with the dynastic past that was embodied in the Seleucian thunderbolt cult. The Seleucian mint was active during Demetrius II's reign, but the empire continued to crumble. At the same time as Demetrius II, another king named Alexander II Zabinas (r. 128-122) minted royal bronze with the Zeus/thunderbolt pairing in Seleucia-Pieria.[108] Royal authority is confirmed by the legend reading "of King Alexander." These two rival claimants battled for the throne and for the loyalty of the Syrian cities. While Alexander II was victorious, his success did not last as he was killed in 122 BCE.[109] About a decade later, amid yet another civil war Seleucia-Pieria would become a sovereign *polis.*[110]

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[104] Ibid, 370.
[105] Kosmin, *The Land of the Elephant Kings,* 22-23.
[106] A silver coin worth half a drachm.
[107] Houghton, Lorber, and Hoover, *Seleucid Coins Catalogue: A Comprehensive Catalogue (Part 2, Volume 1),* 421.
[108] Ibid, 457.
[109] Kosmin, *The Land of the Elephant Kings,* 23.
[110] Ibid, 111.

Under Antiochus VIII Grypus (r. 125-96 BCE), there was at least a little stability in Syria until civil war resurged. Antiochus would end up being assassinated in 96 BCE, only a few decades before the final conquest of Seleucid territory by the Romans. Relatively early in his reign, Antiochus VIII minted bronze coins at Seleucia-Pieria that bore his name on the reverse (figure 11). Though shifted from a horizontal to vertical orientation, the local thunderbolt remains. I would argue that, during his tumultuous reign, the use of such a potent local symbol was an attempt to win the loyalty of one of the last cities remaining in the empire.

Figure 11. Bronze coin of Antiochus VIII Grypus, c. 119-113 BCE. ANS 1944.100.77960, American Numismatic Society, accessed September 19. 2023, http://numismatics.org/collection/1944.100.77960

Antiochus VIII Grypus was desperate enough to go to further extremes. Epigraphic evidence shows that Antiochus VIII granted the city its independence in 109 BCE. The inscription reads: "And now being anxious to deem them worthy of the first and greatest benefaction, we have decided that for all time they shall be free."[111] The quasi-municipal coins minted by Antiochus VIII, bearing a mix of local and royal iconography, were not enough to appease the citizens. I argue that numismatic collaboration between king and city could not secure the city's loyalty. Grainger explains that the decree by Antiochus VIII was intended to

[111] *OGIS* 257.

prevent a rival claimant from conquering the city.[112] Analyzing the actual autonomy exercised by the city after this decree is beyond the scope of this paper, but one should probably remain skeptical. Regardless of the limits of their freedom, however, the inhabitants of Seleucia-Pieria achieved a greater status of independence. The city would not be taking orders from Seleucid kings any longer, at least in theory. Antiochus VIII's son Demetrius III (r. 97/6-88/7) later minted royal bronze coins, one series featuring the thunderbolt, in Seleucia-Pieria. It is believed that the Seleucians allowed Demetrius III to do this as there is no evidence for a violent takeover.[113] It would seem that Antiochus VIII's grant benefitted his successor.

With the empire crumbling, one city winning its freedom might not have changed the political situation in any significant way. However, it is possible that the inhabitants of the *polis* were proud of their new status. From the founding of the city to its emancipation, the coins minted in Seleucia-Pieria exhibited a certain local flavor. The city's story culminated with Antiochus VIII's grant. During the turbulent age of Roman conquest, Seleucia-Pieria would then shed its place as "hearth" of the Seleucid Empire and become just another Mediterranean city.

Conclusion

The ideological and religious characteristics of Seleucia-Pieria are crucial to understanding Seleucid ideology. The writings of Appian and Malalas along with inscriptions provide precious details about civic religion, but the numismatic evidence provides the clearest view into the religious identity of the city. As soon as Seleucus's first royal coins appeared, bronze coins began to convey civic religion and culture. As the dynasty turned towards Apollo and neighboring Antioch grew, Seleucia-Pieria's mint was shut down. Even when it was reopened under Ptolemaic occupation there was no sign of civic religion in the coinage until after

[112] John D. Grainger, *The Fall of the Seleukid Empire 187-75 BCE*, (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Military, 2015) 148-9.
[113] Houghton, Lorber, and *Hoover, Seleucid Coins Catalogue: A Comprehensive Catalogue (Part 2, Volume 1)*, 588-589.

the city had been reconquered by Antiochus the Great. Then, kings began acknowledging and utilizing the civic religion more and more as the empire weakened: Antiochus IV Epiphanes in a move to connect himself to Zeus; Alexander I Balas in an attempt at gaining legitimacy; Antiochus VIII in a strategic move to oust a rival.

The local culture of the city persisted during this era of monumental change and political instability. Even after decades of Ptolemaic rule, the inhabitants did not lose their desire for numismatic self-expression. In the evolving coinage from Seleucia-Pieria, we are not just seeing a *polis* express itself but also evidence of an evolving relationship between city and king. The different mixtures of iconography employed on quasi-municipal coins specifically show the kings manipulating civic religion and at the very least, collaborating with the city in permitting local iconography to be portrayed next to their likenesses. These were not brief amicable interactions but carefully calculated and strategic maneuvers that were bound up with the empire-wide agendas of individual monarchs. The next chapter will look specifically at how the Seleucians themselves used civic coinage to define their city's locality within the context of the wider empire.

CHAPTER II: NUMISMATIC SPACE IN SELEUCIA-PIERIA

Introduction

When Seleucus (r. 305-281) died in Thrace at the age of seventy-seven, his ashes were transported back to northern Syria. King Antiochus I Soter, son of Seleucus, ensured that the founder-king was laid to rest in the aforementioned mausoleum called the Nicatoreum in Seleucia-Pieria. Being just one of the dozens of cities founded by Seleucus, Seleucia-Pieria's royal and ideological significance had been cemented with this burial. Events such as the burial of Seleucus are well-known to Hellenistic historians. Less understood and more difficult to study is what transpired inside the city walls. While the events that tie Seleucia-Pieria to Seleucid high politics are important, the agency of the city's inhabitants must also be studied. Metropolises like Alexandria, Antioch, and Pergamum have received scholarly attention, and there exists plenty of diverse evidence from these locales. However, for a smaller city like Seleucia-Pieria, the primary source material cannot compare. As discussed earlier, there are few literary sources and inscriptions that can inform us about the city. It becomes a challenge to think of Seleucia-Pieria in the same way as its Ptolemaic counterpart Alexandria. For example, the Alexandrian court poet Theocritus authored fictional stories of everyday men and women navigating the streets of Alexandria, giving the modern reader a peek into quotidian life. Nothing comparable is available from Seleucia-Pieria.

As we have seen, however, material objects can assist in this research. Small objects like coins or weights carried with them profound meaning. The act of striking a coin itself was a meaningful political act. Coins could also contribute to the production of both royal and civic space. They are not unique in this regard. Urban space was a complex, multilayered, multi-dimensional amalgam of discourses, representations, practices, and manipulations of the material world. Massive buildings, foundation myths, street systems – all contributed to the production of

urban space. Coins, however, are special in how they travel; they are designed for exchange and are thus intended to spread far and wide. With these small, circular pieces of metal, a political message usually traveled as well. The images and symbols deployed on coinage were deliberately created to disseminate messages through movement.

Essential to my theoretical approach is the work of Henri Lefebvre in his monograph *The Production of Space.* I suggest that circulating coins are prime examples of Lefebvre's concept of "representations of space."[114] On the one hand, coins were a portable form of material culture. They were designed to move through space and to circulate. On the other hand, they bore visual representations, images that helped order and define particular kinds of imagined spaces. They were antiquity's most effective propaganda tool, disseminating political messages and ideas far and wide, but they were also markers of identity and belonging. The result of this circulated material is what I call "numismatic space." Numismatic space refers to the space produced by the minting and circulation of coinage.

This chapter focuses on the intersection between numismatic space and three types of imagined spaces: cosmological, royal, and civic. In Seleucia-Pieria, these imagined spaces were produced and maintained, in part, by the minting and circulation of existing and new coin series. The mythological and religious understanding of the events concerning the foundation of a city produces cosmological space. Several documented mythological origin stories assisted in the production of cosmological space in Seleucia-Pieria. Royal space, designed to bolster the legitimacy of dynastic rule, was constructed by kings and their court. Seleucid royal space was created partly by silver coinage with royal iconography, some of which was minted in Seleucia. Finally, civic space refers to an imagined space that reinforced a cultural identity centered around the *polis.* As we will see, bronze coins were instrumental in the production of Seleucian

[114] This term is defined in the section "Silver Seleucids: Royal Space."

civic space. This chapter will begin with a consideration of the production of cosmological and royal space in Seleucia-Pieria, before delving more deeply into production of civic space and, more specifically, a distinctive kind of civic place. Place, as opposed to space, is a space that has been invested with distinctive meaning: in this case, a city whose inhabitants viewed it especially as a scared place. I am interested in how the minting and circulation of coins might have contributed to the place-making process.[115]

This chapter explores what material objects do and gives insight into the lived experiences of urban residents in the Hellenistic period. More specifically, it demonstrates the different ways in which numismatic evidence can illuminate the specificities of civic identity and agency. I again chiefly focus on the period from 300 BCE to 109 BCE, the era during which Seleucia-Pieria was under direct Seleucid control. I demonstrate how the inhabitants used bronze coinage to express their local religious beliefs as a sign of their distinctive civic identity. Seleucia's numismatic record demonstrates that cultural markers, such as images of Zeus and thunderbolts, that stemmed ultimately from Seleucid dynastic ideology found new meaning inside the city walls. Seleucia-Pieria was an important city, tightly bound to the dynasty that ruled it, but coinage offered the inhabitants a means of co-opting certain dynastic symbols and using them to build a communal identity and a civic space that, in the end, outlived the Seleucid dynasty. Finally, a brief look at the Roman period demonstrates that certain aspects of civic culture persisted through centuries of drastic political change and turmoil. Some literary passages and particular coins that have been studied in the prior chapter will be presented again. This repetition is necessary for the clarity of the argument.

[115] I rely on Tim Cresswell's work when discussing the differences between space and place.

Ab Urbe Condita[116]: Cosmological Space

In considering the cosmological space that took shape within the city of Seleucia-Pieria, I have chosen to focus, not on notions of universal cosmology (e.g., Hesiodic narratives regarding primordial beings such as Gaia or Uranus), but on the city's own cosmology: how the inhabitants of Seleucia-Pieria understood their city's foundation. In other words, I want to ask: how did the Seleucians understand their place in the world as inhabitants of this specific city rather than as humans in the wider universe? In this case, the production of cosmological space is more easily seen in literary sources than in material remains such as coinage. Interestingly, though, the cosmological space that finds voice in the literary record also intersected with the royal and civic spaces produced in part through numismatic circulation. On the one hand, the cosmological space of the city was not inherently political, but it did draw on religious-political tropes that could translate into political capital for ruling dynasties. Therefore, one can see evidence for a blending together of cosmological and royal space. On the other hand, because the cosmological space produced in Seleucia-Pieria was concerned especially with the origins of the city itself, this cosmological space was intertwined with an emerging civic space. That is, the citizens' understanding of their city as a distinctive kind of place – and their understanding of their own place in that city – was built, at least in part, on legends about the deeper history of the city.

The early Hellenistic period is characterized by intense colonization programs undertaken by the successors of Alexander the Great. This was in imitation of Alexander's earlier city-building success. Among the successors, Seleucus was unrivaled in this endeavor. In his empire stretching from Thrace to the borders of India, Seleucia-Pieria was only one of perhaps thirty-four cities founded by this king alone.[117] These new colonies would be populated with Greek

[116] Latin title of Livy's history of Rome, meaning "from the founding of the city."
[117] Paul J. Kosmin, *The Land of the Elephant Kings*, 184.

immigrants and people from the native populations, and eventually each city began to develop new local cultures, based in part around civic origin stories. Before Alexander's conquests, established Hellenic and non-Hellenic cities alike boasted about their long histories, as evidenced by a wide variety of foundation stories and legends. The new colonies that filled up the Seleucid Empire lacked this deeper history, but the inhabitants developed origin stories that emphasized connections with the mythical past. As Tanja S. Scheer explains, during the Hellenistic period, the Greco-Macedonians longed to make the newly conquered foreign lands more familiar with the help of myth. She writes, "The cultivation of a mythical past was valuable for the Hellenistic present; even in the most far-flung foreign land traces of old familiar patterns could be discovered."[118] She also argues that the naming of unfamiliar lands using Greek names was a common method of subjugation. A quick look at the Tetrapolis supports her argument. The four cities were given new Seleucid dynastic names. However, the geographic location attached to the names (e.g., Seleucia-*in-Pieria,* Antioch-*on-the-Orontes*) often recalls a place in Greece. Mount Pieria, north of Seleucia, for example, was named after a Macedonian region near Mount Olympus.[119] The city's full name reflects its Macedonian heritage while also bolstering the monarch's role as founder.

To the first colonists it was evident that the Tetrapolitan cities had no real history. Place names recalling Greece did little to change that fact. To supplement the lack of history, legends and myths were needed to further create a sense of civic identity. Over the centuries, the inhabitants of Seleucia-Pieria developed a distinctive historical consciousness regarding their city's ancient history. Our two surviving literary sources on the city's foundation are not ideal.

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[118] Tanja S. Scheer. "The Past in a Hellenistic Present: Myth and Local Tradition" in *A Companion to the Hellenistic World.* Ed. Andrew Erskine (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 219.
[119] Apostolos Bousdroukis, "The Tetrapolis and Other City Foundations." In *A Companion to the Hellenistic and Roman Near East.* Ed. Ted Kaizer (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 2021), 197.

They were recorded centuries after the founding of the city, but it may be significant that these particular stories had managed to stand the test of time. I suggest that these stories had also been meaningful for the citizens living during Seleucid rule. Below, I will attempt to confirm this argument using numismatic evidence.

Our first source is Appian of Alexandria (c. 95-165), a Romanized Greek historian from the second century CE. In his *Syrian Wars* (a history of the war between Antiochus the Great and Rome) he briefly tells the story of the Seleucid Empire. Legends concerning Seleucus feature heavily. Among the several divinely inspired episodes recorded, Appian mentions the founding of Seleucia-Pieria. He writes:

> When Seleucus was founding the two Seleuceas, they say an omen of thunder guided him in the case of Seleucia by the sea [Seleucia-Pieria]. For this reason, he established thunder as a god for the inhabitants, and to this day they worship thunder and sing hymns to it. [120]

This short but important excerpt tells us much about the cosmological understanding of the city. The details are crucial; thunder (a sign of Zeus) takes an active role in founding the *polis.* Seleucus was able to establish the colony with the help of thunder, which may represent Zeus Keraunios ('of the Thunderbolt').[121] The cult of Zeus Keraunios was only one of many for Zeus in the city.

John Malalas (c. 490-575) provides the other account. Malalas was from Antioch but worked in Constantinople during Justinian's reign. In his *Chronographia,* Malalas attempts the modest task of writing a history from the beginning of time to his own day. More than eight hundred years separate Malalas's work from the founding of Seleucia-Pieria. However, due to his Antiochian origins it is worth exploring, as he is likely to have insight on local traditions of

[120] Appian, *The Syrian Wars,* 58.
[121] Daniel Ogden, *The Legend of Seleucus,* 107-8.

northern Syria. Malalas recounts the stories of all four Tetrapolitan cities, and the accounts are broadly similar with differing details. For the first to be founded, Seleucia-Pieria, he writes:

> On the 23rd of Xanthikos he [Seleucus] went to Mount Kasios to sacrifice to Zeus Kasios. After completing the sacrifice and cutting up the meat, he asked in prayer where he should build a city. Suddenly an eagle seized some of the sacrifice and carried it off to the old city. Seleukos and the augurs with him followed close behind and found the meat thrown down by the sea, below the old city at the trading-station known as Pieria. After marking out the walls he immediately laid its foundations, calling the city Seleukeia after himself. To give thanks he went up to Iopolis, where three days later he celebrated a festival in honor of Zeus Keraunios, in the temple built by Perseus, the son of Picus and Danae, which is on Mount Silpios.[122]

Clearly, Malalas has confused the chronology by assuming that the name Pieria predated the Seleucid colony. Despite the lack of thunder, Zeus Kasios and Zeus Keraunios both make an appearance. In Appian, I suggest that the thunder is an agent of Zeus, but here it is the eagle. While these tropes and characters might reflect genuine Seleucian beliefs, we know for certain that Zeus was commonly worshiped in the city. The previously mentioned inscription dating from the reign of Seleucus IV (r. 187-75), for example, records priests of the cults of Zeus.[123] The foundation stories reflected active religious worship: stories of Zeus were common as was his cult worship. Crucial to my argument and significant to the ancient inhabitants is that the Seleucian origin story somehow involved Zeus. In antiquity Seleucus's role in these founding events developed into a literary tradition that Paul J. Kosmin has dubbed the "Seleucus Romance," brilliantly studied in Daniel Ogden's *The Legend of Seleucus.* The "Seleucus Romance" is similar to the "Alexander Romance" in that it is a collection of fictional legends about the king's life. As a result, Seleucus nearly became as glorified and mythologized as Alexander the Great. Seleucian origin stories were developed within this tradition; Seleucus's famous connection to Zeus when founding cities was beneficial to dynastic legitimacy.

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[122] John Malalas, *Chronographia,* 8.12.
[123] *OGIS* 245.

The city's name and the acts of Zeus and Seleucus both contributed to the popular imagination regarding the city's cosmological origins. The Greco-Macedonian settlers searched for landmarks that looked familiar (e.g., Mt. Pieria) and wanted a history that could give them a typical civic origin story. Seleucus was something of a cult hero, and in the accounts of Appian and Malalas, Zeus notably comes to his aid. The king and his patron deity were paramount to the city's developing cultural identity. That the Seleucians believed the aforementioned stories is proved in their cult practices, the literary sources, and as we will see, their coins. In their collective memory, Zeus was at the forefront of their civic history. The cosmological space of the *polis* was grounded in these foundation stories.

Silver Seleucids: Royal Space

The previous section explored how the cosmological space of Seleucia-Pieria was grounded in the Seleucians's understanding of their city's past. This section will look at the overtly political spatial dimension that I call royal space. This refers to the space that is constructed to advance the idea that a territory is under the control of the monarch and their dynasty. A strongly produced royal space would strengthen the legitimacy and authority of the king. Seleucid royal space has been studied before,[124] but the focus has been on institutions and the imperial borderlands. To my knowledge, royal space has not been studied in a city as small as Seleucia-Pieria. An understudied *modus operandi* that helped the kings maintain this spatial control was the proliferation of silver coins. Silver coinage disseminated imagery and iconography further than the ancient kings even knew. The concept of numismatic space as royal space can be applied to anywhere Seleucid royal coins traveled inside, and to a certain extent outside, the empire. This, of course, includes Seleucia-Pieria, which occasionally minted royal silver coinage.

[124] Kosmin, *The Land of the Elephant Kings,* 2014.

As mentioned earlier, the name Seleucia, i.e., a dynastic name, is a clear sign of royal space. Kosmin has written that "the bestowal of a city name was the most formal and direct method for coding the colonial act, a baptism of place, prescribing conformity upon land, settlers and administration."[125] The choice of the eponymous "Seleucia" rather than another family name is significant because it references the king's own name, but Seleucia-Pieria was fascinating in many ways beyond this. Seleucus's burial by his son in the Nicatorium was another constant reminder to the citizens that they lived in royal space.[126] The Nicatoreum served as an aide-memoire towering over the city on the nearby hills. It might have been built there specifically so that it would be visible from the lower city.[127] Commoners, garrisoned soldiers, wealthy elites, and foreign emissaries would have been constantly reminded of the founder king's great legacy. There was even a civic cult for "Seleucus Zeus Nicator," actively reminding the citizens of him.[128] In sum, signs of Seleucid power are evident in the buildings and the religious practices of the city. It is even present in the spoken language of colonists throughout the empire when speaking the name of this *polis*. In addition to all this, royal space was constructed by mobile pieces of metal acting as much more than just a means of exchange.

Key to my argument concerning numismatic space are the writings of Henri Lefebvre. In *The Production of Space,* Lefebvre theorized a "conceptual triad" which includes spatial practice, representations of space, and representational spaces.[129] I argue that coins in use fall under the category of representations of space. For Lefebvre representations of space "are tied to the relations of production and to the 'order' which those relations impose, and hence to the

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[125] Ibid, 208-209.
[126] Appian, *The Syrian Wars,* 11.63.
[127] Nicholas L. Wright, "Seleukos, Zeus and the Dynastic Cult at Seleukeia in Pieria," 89.
[128] *OGIS* 245.
[129] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. (Oxford, UK: Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell Publishing, 1991), 33.

knowledge, to signs, to codes, and to 'frontal' relations."[130] Coins are agents in the epistemological ordering of royal space. They serve to normalize and legitimize the realm of the king. Civic and quasi-municipal coins produce similar numismatic spaces but with different results. As representations of space, royal and civic coins helped to conceptualize and imagine royal and civic space, respectively.

Silver coinage played a key role in the production of royal space at Seleucia-Pieria, even if these coins were only minted sporadically during the history of the city. While we know that silvers from neighboring cities like Antioch entered the city,[131] I only analyze those silvers minted in Seleucia itself. The act of minting coupled with the use and subsequent wide-ranging circulation of the coins spread deliberate political messages throughout the Mediterranean world. This circulation is an example of numismatic space creating royal space.

The spatial process, however, begins with the mining of the metals. In the ancient world, the mines were mostly worked by the enslaved. Such a task was relegated to those lowest in the social hierarchy: unskilled laborers.[132] True for most of history, mining was extremely dangerous work. For Seleucid Syria, silver was acquired through trade from near and far. Silver from the mines of Laurion in Attica was used to create coins in Syria.[133] Silver was also mined in Anatolia, an area which was usually in Seleucid control or in their sphere of influence.[134] When the Seleucids lost Anatolia, they relied more on overseas trade for bullion. Gaining the material that ended up producing royal space was an inter-regional process. Bullion from around the empire came to the mints in cities to be turned into coins which in turn spread back out into the

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[130] Ibid, 38-39.
[131] Neumann, *Antioch in Syria*, 69-93.
[132] M.I. Finley, *The Ancient Economy; Updated with a new foreword by Ian Morris*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1999), 72-73.
[133] Michail Yu Treister, *The Role of Metals in Ancient Greek History* (Leiden; New York; Cologne: Brill, 1996), 288.
[134] Ibid, 290.

realm and beyond. The production of royal space could take place on a multi-regional, imperial scale.

The Seleucids used an open currency system in their empire, meaning that any currency based on the internationally favored Attic weight scale was accepted. This Attic scale was the most popular in the Greek-speaking world and therefore was useful, for example, when paying mercenaries from abroad.[135] Seleucid coinage in Seleucia-Pieria was not exclusively exchanged inside Seleucia-Pieria. Indeed, Seleucid coins traveled for and were used beyond the limits of the imperial realm. In the case of Seleucid Asia Minor, hoard finds suggest that Seleucid royal coins were only a fraction of the Attic-weight coinage in circulation.[136] Even outside the empire's borders, therefore, a king's image or a royal symbol projected Seleucid power. The image of a Seleucid king on an acceptable coin legitimized the king's authority in minting. The open currency system employed by the Seleucids contrasts with the closed currency system of the Ptolemies, in which only state-minted coinage on a particular scale could be exchanged.[137]

In both systems, however, merchants and soldiers (often paid in silver) would have played a crucial role in the production of royal space. The movement of peoples, whether on campaign or in search of financial opportunities, would have resulted in the movement of coinage. In the case of Seleucia-Pieria, the production of royal space would have been amplified because of two of the city's features: its active port and its garrisons. A Mediterranean port city was anything but an isolated place and was easier to visit than insular cities deep in western Asia. Soldiers and wealthy citizens probably often used the higher denomination royal coins in the upper city of Seleucia-Pieria near the "temples and other magnificent buildings" since economic

[135] Thonemann, *The Hellenistic World,* 115.
[136] Ibid, 117.
[137] Ibid, 121.

transactions commonly took place around ancient temples.[138] Soldiers who were paid with silver would also have taken their money on campaign, bringing with them the implied legitimacy of Seleucid kingship. Retired soldiers, having been paid with Seleucid coinage, also settled after decades of warfare in cities like Seleucia. Whoever was using these coins, and in whatever capacity, they were actively producing an imagined royal space where Seleucid kings were legitimate and omnipotent. This particular space was a reality for those in Seleucia-Pieria, as well as inhabitants of other cities around the empire.

The first silvers minted in Seleucia-Pieria were of a type that was common across the Mediterranean during the early Hellenistic period. As we have seen, these designs are called "Alexanders,"[139] with Heracles on the obverse and a seated Zeus on the reverse. Figure 12 shows Zeus holding winged Nike with the legend reading "of King Seleucus." The king's spectacular victories led to comparisons with Alexander (who sought a special connection to Heracles). Seleucus's coins demonstrated that Zeus and the goddess of victory had aided him.

Figure 12. Royal coin of Seleucus, c. 300 BCE. ANS 1948.19.2319, American Numismatic Society, accessed September 23, 2023, http://numismatics.org/collection/1948.19.2319

Later royal coinage began to show more personalized and specific signs of Seleucid dynastic power. The mid-second century King Demetrius II Nicator chose to decorate his series'

[138] Polybius, *Histories,* 5.59.
[139] Thonemann, *The Hellenistic World,* 13. "Alexanders" resembled the silver coins minted by Alexander the Great.

reverse with the famous Seleucid anchor. I argue that the anchor was a purely dynastic symbol with little maritime association.

Figure 13. Royal coin of Demetrius II Nicator, c. 145-143 BCE. ANS BC 2000.14.2, American Numismatic Society, accessed September 23, 2023, http://numismatics.org/collection/2000.14.2

Etiological stories often explain the anchor and at the same time contribute to dynastic mythmaking legitimizing Seleucid power. It was said that Seleucus was born with a birthmark on his thigh resembling an anchor.[140] Kosmin writes that Seleucus's identity became attached to this anchor symbol. Indeed, Seleucid kings spread images of the anchor throughout the empire (not just port cities) on coins as a reminder of dynastic power.[141] Therefore, the presence of this symbol serves in the production of royal space and not maritime space, which will be introduced in the following chapter. Other dynastic symbols commonly found on silver include Apollo (the dynasty's patron deity) and the elephant. While no elephant imagery is known from Seleucia-Pieria, Apollo, the typical patron deity of the Seleucids, sometimes appears despite the city's firm commitment to Zeus.[142]

[140] Ogden, *The Legend of Seleucus,* 44-50.
[141] Kosmin, *The Land of the Elephant Kings,* 97-99, 238.
[142] Arthur Houghton, Catharine Lorber, and Oliver Hoover *Seleucid Coins Catalogue: A Comprehensive Catalogue (Part 2: Seleucus IV through Antiochus XIII, Volume 2)* (Lancaster; New York: Classical Numismatic Group and American Numismatic Society, 2008), 361-362.

Figure 14. Quasi-municipal coin of Alexander I Balas, c. 150-145 BCE, ANS 1944.100.74983, American Numismatic Society, accessed September 23, 2023, http://numismatics.org/collection/1944.100.74983

Figure 14 shows a unique sort of coin dating from 150-145 BCE during the time of the pretender Alexander Balas. As we have seen, Balas minted multiple high denomination wreathed silvers in Seleucia-Pieria.[143] The presence of the king's name and the use of silver are fundamental signs of royal coinage. Nonetheless, the pairing of Zeus with the thunderbolt is an attribute of Seleucian civic bronze coinage (see Figure 15). Quasi-municipal coins like this one, whether silver or bronze, cannot be linked exclusively with the production of either royal or civic space. They define a unique sort of numismatic space that straddles the boundary between royal space and civic place. It is royal in the sense that the king's name was there for all literate people to read and civic in the sense that locally meaningful images were employed. The local images, however, would almost certainly have lost significance when the coins traveled beyond the civic hinterland. The silver material makes silver quasi-municipal coins more producers of royal space than civic place. It is a reminder of the king's power over the civic government; the king is allowing this collaboration, not the other way around. As merchants, soldiers, and citizens exchanged silver coins of different designs, royal space was actively being produced.

[143] Arthur Houghton, "A Tetradrachm of Seleucia-Pieria at the Getty Museum: An Archaizing Zeus and the Accession of Alexander Balas in Northern Syria," 155.

City of Thunder: Civic Place

I have argued that cosmological and royal space coexisted in Seleucia-Pieria and that both were bound up with the minting and circulation of royally minted silver coins. This section describes how the civic bronze coins used in the *polis* not only produced a third kind of space, civic space, but also how they helped transform Seleucia-Pieria into a distinctive kind of civic place, a place prideful of religious traditions that ultimately originated from dynastic propaganda. The inhabitants of the city actively fostered the production of civic place by minting and exchanging local coins as well as excluding foreign money.

Tim Cresswell's book *Place: An Introduction* explores the distinction between place and space in some depth. In general, place is less abstract and more meaningful than space.[144] In this case, it is a dimension more meaningful for the Seleucians. Cresswell writes that "Place is how we make the world meaningful and the way we experience the world. Place, at a basic level, is space invested in meaning in the context of power."[145] I examine civic *place* in lieu of civic *space* since this chapter is specifically focused on the perspective and worldview of the Seleucians. I argue that the production of civic place in Seleucia-Pieria was accomplished, at least in part, through the use of local, civic coinage bearing imagery whose meanings would be immediately apparent to those with the necessary cultural literacy. Civic place was created by the local circulation of locally meaningful money. This process started before the bullion was formed into a coin at the mint. Without enslaved laborers and seafaring merchants, the compositions of bronze would never have made it to the city. The tin necessary for the bronze alloy originated as far away as Spain and Britain and came to Syria by trade.[146] The copper, on

[144] Tim Cresswell, *Place: An Introduction* (West Sussex, UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 19.
[145] Ibid, 19.
[146] Treister, *The Role of Metals in Ancient Greek History*, 355-356.

the other hand, was available much closer in Asia Minor and Cyprus.[147] However, the imprinting of meaning did not occur until the material made its way to the city's mint. Civic officials deliberately employed symbols that were meaningful to local people and were specifically tied to civic identity when minting bronze coinage. I argue that Seleucians, especially the commoners using civic coins, saw, knew, and understood the messages being conveyed on their money and that these messages were fundamentally about civic identity. Like royal coins, civic coins were, in Lefebvre's terms, representations of space, but in this case, they helped produce a distinctive civic identity rooted in a particular place with its own history and traditions.

Quotidian patterns of life (outside of the domestic sphere) were experienced with money in hand. Local goods were bought with local coins. According to Polybius, Seleucia-Pieria had a lower town, where the commercial and residential areas were, and an upper town (or acropolis), walled off with huge temples and structures inside.[148] Besides around the temples, I argue that civic coins would have been used mostly in the lower town. Troops were garrisoned by the port and the acropolis, but in between these places were the living quarters of the year-round citizens.[149] Bronze coins were of a lower denomination than their silver counterparts. In general, it is common for civic coins to contain a marker of local culture (e.g., the dolphin on Laodicean bronzes). Once minted and in circulation, where were civic bronzes exchanged, and in what capacity? Most civic types would have been used in daily, low-level transactions.[150] These were the coins of the agora and the money used when buying cheap food like bread and goods necessary to sustain urban life. Near the port they would have been used when the merchants sold their inexpensive goods. Given its status as a *polis* we know that Seleucia had a prominent

[147] Ibid, 290.
[148] Polybius, *The Histories*, 5.59.
[149] Polybius writes that in 219 BCE there were 6,000 free citizens. The total population of the inhabitants is unknown.
[150] Thonemann, *The Hellenistic World*, 128.

Greco-Macedonian population, but there also would have been native Syrians and possibly a substantial Jewish population, as in Antioch and Alexandria. I suggest that civic coins would have helped unify this ethnically diverse community by emphasizing a shared civic identity.

It is well known that bronze coinage in the Hellenistic period did not travel far from its mint.[151] The Seleucid Empire was no different.[152] Bronze coins would not have been worth taking on long journeys due to their weight and low value. Anyone wishing to take their life savings far away would have exchanged their bronze for silver or gold. Therefore, hoards discovered far from *poleis* usually include silver and gold coins more than bronze.[153] However, it was still possible for bronze to travel, especially in the mint city's geographical region. Numismatists have theorized that Seleucia-Pieria might have tried excluding foreign bronze coins from adjacent cities from entering the *polis*.[154] Total exclusion was nearly impossible since Antioch was only miles away and Laodicea-ad-Mare and Apamea-on-the-Axios were also close by. While studying an assemblage of coins thought to have been assembled by an individual in Seleucian territory, Catharine Lorber and Arthur Houghton have written:

> The presence of numerous royal bronzes[155] of Seleucus I from other mints suggests a provisional hypothesis: that the Seleucian civic authorities initially allowed "outside" bronze coinage to enter their market, but then recognized the benefits of monopoly and limited the circulation of non-Seleucian bronze coins in order to protect their local mintage.[156]

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[151] Ibid, 135.
[152] Iossif and Lorber, "Monetary Policies, Coin Production, and Currency Supply in the Seleucid and Ptolemaic Empires," 192.
[153] Thonemann, *The Hellenistic World,* 134.
[154] Catharine Lorber and Arthur Houghton. "An Early Seleucid Bronze Hoard," *The Israel Numismatic Journal,* vol. 17 (2010): 17.
[155] I.e., Quasi-municipal bronzes.
[156] Ibid, 17.

Lorber and Houghton remark that this hypothesis of civic exclusion had already been put forward regarding the late Hellenistic and early Roman periods.[157] They go on to theorize that Seleucus I probably allowed the Seleucian civic authorities to do this. The power to exclude foreign bronzes did not inherently belong to cities.[158] These hypotheses suggest that cities were territorial about which civic coins were circulated and actively tried to define their own civic place. Even in a limited sense, the neighboring cities would have become "others." Civic officials, and likely the people of the city more broadly, wanted their own bronzes to be used. Here we can see numismatic space in action. Even if one were to argue against this convincing suggestion, one cannot ignore the fact that coins minted in a city were circulated inside the town walls and rarely traveled significant distances beyond the hinterland. In the open-currency system of the Seleucid Empire, it was probably impossible to completely restrict the movement of coins. Yet the presence of foreign coins in Seleucian territory does not prevent the production of a unique civic place.

In the numismatic record, Seleucian identity was typified by local religion. Their coinage invoked a city proud of its religious institutions and its cosmological history. Zeus dominated the city's religious culture. Epigraphic evidence confirms the presence of various priesthoods with an emphasis on several similar cults of Zeus. Zeus Olympius, Zeus Coryphaeus, Zeus Kasios, and Seleucus Zeus Nicator were all worshiped. There is even evidence of priests acting as "thunder-bearers."[159] The Seleucians were also recognized by outsiders as inhabiting an especially sacred city. Sometime between 147/6 and 139/8 BCE, the *polis* was accepted as "sacred and inviolable," meaning that the city was (in theory) protected against temple raids by

[157] Ibid, 16.
[158] Ibid, 17.
[159] OGIS 245.

foreign and domestic armies.[160] Seleucia might have been the first city outside of the Aegean to achieve these honors. Towering over the city was also the Nicatoreum which served as a center of the dynastic cult. Seleucus notably stressed his close relationship to the thunder god.[161] The numismatic record reinforces the evidence for a Zeus-centric civic religion in Seleucia-Pieria, and the civic place that was constructed to emphasize the sacred character of the city.

Figure 15 shows one of the first bronze series minted. Zeus appears on the obverse, and the winged thunderbolt covers the reverse along with a text reading "of the Seleucians." This would be the model for bronze coinage in Seleucia moving forward.

Figure 15. Civic coin of Seleucia-Pieria, c. 285 BCE. ANS 1962.57.151, American Numismatic Society, accessed September 23, 2023, http://numismatics.org/collection/1962.57.151

Series based on this model were minted throughout the reign of Seleucus and early into the reign of Antiochus I Soter before the mint closed circa 275 BCE.[162] The Ptolemies controlled the city from 246 up until Antiochus the Great's reconquest in 219.[163] Sixty years later the same basic model was still being employed but with a twist. In figure 16, Zeus was replaced with an image of the Seleucid king, with a text that reads "of the Seleucians in Pieria.". The rays around king

[160] Kent J. Rigsby, *Asylia: Territorial Inviolability in the Hellenistic World,* 485-488.
[161]Nicholas L. Wright, "Seleukos, Zeus and the Dynastic Cult at Seleukeia in Pieria," 83-84.
[162] Arthur Houghton and Catharine Lorber, *Seleucid Coins Catalogue: A Comprehensive Catalogue (Part 1: Seleucus I through Antiochus III, Volume 2)* (New York: Classical Numismatic Group and American Numismatic Society, 2002), 168. On the closing of the mint: Houghton, "A Tetradrachm of Seleucia Pieria at the Getty Museum,"157 n18.
[163] Polybius, *Histories,* 58-61.

Antiochus IV Epiphanes's head show off his divine-like nature, and the reverse keeps the thunderbolt symbol.

Figure 16. Quasi-municipal coin of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, c. 168-164 BCE. ANS 1944.100.74978, American Numismatic Society, accessed September 23, 2023, http://numismatics.org/collection/1944.100.74978

Again, quasi-municipal coins like this – bearing an image of the king on one side and a civic symbol on the other – appear to have granted legitimacy and value to both king and city and would, therefore, have contributed to the production of both royal space and civic place. I would argue, however, that this coin does more to legitimize and affirm civic place than it does to assist in the production of royal space. For the king to share a bronze coin with a local marker suggests his respect for the city's ideological and strategic significance. The goal of Antiochus IV's Levantine quasi-municipal series was to allow civic government a greater voice in their numismatic production.

Figure 17 shows a coin from an extremely rare and telling series. As we have seen, Between 149 and 146 BCE, during the reign of the pretender Alexander Balas, Seleucia-Pieria and Antioch jointly minted several series of bronze coins with the legend reading "of the brother peoples."[164]

[164] Neumann, *Antioch in Syria*, 65.

Figure 17. Bronze coin with legend reading “of the brother peoples,” c. 150-145 BCE. ANS 1961.154.309, American Numismatic Society, accessed September 23, 2023, http://numismatics.org/collection/1961.154.309

It is believed that the two cities formed a brief political league to express dissatisfaction with the usurping king. Therefore, these coins are evidence of civic expression in defiance of the monarchy. The communities actively sought to further solidify their own sense of place vis-à-vis the monarchy and the realm as a whole. In this case of coinage minted without royal support and in defiance of royal power, many (although not all) of the “of the brother peoples” coins include Zeus on the obverse and a simple thunderbolt on the reverse. The coin shown in Figure 17 is strongly reminiscent of the example shown in Figure 15, dating to more than a century prior. My argument, however, is that the “brother peoples” series demonstrate that the Seleucians had taken a step towards creating their own civic place, independent of royal power, by appropriating symbols that had once carried strong dynastic overtones. The significance of these coins cannot be overstated.

When given a voice, the Seleucian civic authorities preferred to express themselves in coinage using the single thunderbolt. Other symbols and images were used but not to the same extent. The thunderbolt was not only a sign of Zeus but moreover harkens back to the city’s foundation stories: for example, Appian’s story about the thunder portent guiding Seleucus to the city-to-be comes to mind and his reference to the Seleucians singing to thunder even in Roman

times. Seleucian civic identity was rooted not just in active religious cults but also in etiological cosmologies. Here civic place as numismatic space unites with cosmological space. Whether the coins were minted with the support of the king or as a statement against the king, the thunder imagery remains. The numismatic record, therefore, also demonstrates the city as a sacred place. The civic coins produced a unique and exclusive sense of civic place in Seleucia-Pieria, while also reinforcing foundational stories about the origins of the city. The thunderbolt symbol was directly rooted in stories that promoted dynastic legitimacy. What Appian and John Malalas both recorded was essentially dynastic mythology. However, over time the thunderbolt became more a symbol of Seleucia-Pieria than of the Seleucid Empire.

Conclusion

In 109 BCE, the Seleucians were granted complete independence by a weak king desperate to secure the loyalties of Syrian cities.[165] With complete independence the sense of civic place would have been amplified. But, by the middle of the first century BCE, the remnants of the Seleucid Empire had been conquered by Rome, and Syria became a Roman province. Roman emperors replaced Seleucid kings. The local culture of Seleucia-Pieria, however, did not perish along with the Seleucid Empire. Civic place outlived Seleucid royal space. Even as new Roman coins and monuments overshadowed the legacy of Seleucid royal space, Seleucian civic culture persisted. Figure 18 shows an Augustan-era silver coin sporting the head of Augustus on one side and the familiar Seleucian thunderbolt on the other, this time sitting on a throne. Furthermore, Appian's first century-CE account of Seleucians singing hymns to thunder and Malalas's sixth century-CE foundation stories confirm that Seleucia-Pieria continued to be recognized as a distinctive civic place long after the disappearance of Seleucid royal power.

[165] OGIS 257.

Figure 18. Silver tetradrachm of Augustus, Seleucia Pieria, c. 44 BCE - AD 14. ANS 1944.100.66588, American Numismatic Society, accessed September 23, 2023, http://numismatics.org/collection/1944.100.66588

Among the spatial dimensions explored here, royal space was the most fragile. Although royal coins could travel great distances, even projecting images of Seleucid power far beyond the empire's borders, the open-currency system allowed foreign coins to do the same. The empire's monetary policy was not exclusive, in contrast to Seleucia-Pieria's attempt to restrict the inflow of bronze coinage from other cities. The new Roman invaders quickly shrouded the old Seleucid legacy in Syria and produced their own Roman imperial space, in part through the manipulation of numismatic space.

Seleucia-Pieria's cosmological stories and local culture outlasted the dynasty that founded the city. Interestingly, these long-lived civic myths (Appian's omen of thunder) and local cults (Seleucus Zeus Nicator) originated as a direct outgrowth of Seleucid dynastic ideology. But these stories and beliefs found new meaning within the city walls. The civic coinage, which on the surface might appear to have simply reinforced royal propaganda, did more to solidify the city's culture than to legitimize the dynasty's authority in the long term. The Seleucian community chose to express itself by emphasizing local civic religion. All three of the spatial dimensions discussed help to demonstrate the Seleucian worldview. During the Hellenistic period and beyond these inhabitants used coins, not to create a maritime city looking

seaward or a royal city forever loyal to a specific dynasty, but to produce their own place in the world: Seleucia-Pieria.

CHAPTER III: COMPARISONS WITH APAMEA-ON-THE-AXIOS AND LAODICEA-AD-MARE

Introduction

The previous two chapters focused specifically on Seleucia-Pieria and the lived experiences of its inhabitants. Predominantly using numismatic evidence, I looked at the city's ideological place in the empire and the way that coinage and mythological discourse created types of space in the city resulting in a layered sense of identity for the Seleucians. I have argued, for example, that Seleucia-Pieria occupied a unique position within dynastic ideology and that the coins minted in the city helped produce a distinctive kind of royal space. At the same time, however, I have argued that coinage also offered the inhabitants a channel of autonomous civic self-expression even in the empire's heart. For my final chapter, I use the same numismatic-spatial approach to study two other cities in the Seleucid world: Apamea-on-the-Axios and Laodicea-ad-Mare. The goal of this chapter is to compare these cities with Seleucia-Pieria and, in the process, uncover both what is unique to Seleucia-Pieria and what might be characteristic of Seleucid cities in general.

Before analyzing the numismatic evidence, I provide a brief history for each of the cities. Then I look specifically at the cities' numismatic iconography and compare each case with Seleucia's fairly consistent thunderbolt iconography. In this chapter as in the prior two, I am only focusing on these cities during their time under Seleucid rule (c. 300-64 BC). Like Seleucia-Pieria, Apamea and Laodicea are also Tetrapolitan cities and are relatively understudied in comparison with Antioch. The two cities have a similar history to Seleucia but ended up playing different roles for the Seleucid state. Apamea became the center of Seleucid military power, and Laodicea played an important trading and naval role. The similarities between the histories of the

three cities are clear enough. I argue, however, that differences within the numismatic record indicate a different relationship between civic identity and royal power in each city.

Apamea-on-the-Axios[166]

The following quote from the 2nd century historian Arrian underscores Seleucus's ability to successfully establish new cities and incorporate pre-existing ones into his nascent empire:

> That Seleukos was the greatest of the kings who succeeded Alexander, and that he possessed, in the highest degree, a kingly spirit and ruled a domain second in extent only to Alexander's, does not seem to me to admit of doubt.[167]

Apamea-on-the-Axios was one of these new colonies that Seleucus founded a few years after taking the title of king. Established shortly after Seleucia in 300 BCE, Apamea was one of the two inland colonies constituting the Tetrapolis (the other being Antioch).[168] According to Appian, Seleucus founded three Apameas in sum, all named for his Bactrian wife Apama.[169] Interestingly, Seleucus did not divorce his Asian wife as the other Macedonian generals had following Alexander's death. Presumably the others had married involuntarily at the Susa Weddings. It appears that all the Tetrapolitan cities were consciously named to familiarize the inhabitants with the name of Seleucus and his family. Apama likely died around the time of the city's foundation, because by the 290s Seleucus had wedded Demetrius Poliorcetes's daughter Stratonice.[170] Given the Seleucid tendency towards monogamy, we can assume that Apama had passed away by this time, but Seleucus then chose to honor her memory by lending her name to three cities.

Apamea-on-the-Axios sat in a valley close to the Orontes River, about 20 miles southeast of Seleucia. Like Seleucia, the site had already been occupied before the official foundation.

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[166] There are multiple names for this city, but I will mostly refer to it simply as Apamea.
[167] Arrian, *Anabasis*, 7.22.5.
[168] Strabo, *Geographica*, 16.2.4.
[169] Appian, *Syrian Wars*, 57.
[170] Plutarch, *Life of Demetrius*, 32.

Originally, there had been a Persian settlement there called Pharnake.[171] Alexander's invasion brought Macedonian settlers to the site, who called their new home Pella, after the Macedonian capital.[172] Following the Seleucid victory at the Battle of Ipsus, Pella was transformed into the Tetrapolitan Apamea.[173] John Malalas recorded this foundation in a typically fantastical but brief account featuring a sacrifice to Zeus and the god's familiar eagle, like in the Seleucian story.[174] Apameans during the Seleucid era also believed that in mythic times Heracles had helped with the canalization of the Orontes, according to the second century writer Oppian.[175] Kosmin argues that this foundation story dates back to the Hellenistic period, proving that Malalas's story was not the only story in circulation.

Throughout antiquity, Apamea remained an important city, especially for the Seleucids. The *polis* was most famous for being the Seleucid base of military operations, notably the home of the royal elephant and horse farm.[176] By the first century BCE, the city could boast a well-fortified acropolis.[177] A permanent garrison was likely stationed in this citadel. It is no coincidence that the Seleucid military headquarters faced Ptolemaic Palestine; Apamea was the southernmost of the Tetrapolitan cities. The Seleucid kings needed to be able to assemble their army quickly in the event of war with their enemies to the south.

Antiochus the Great made a habit of mustering his army in Apamea during the Fourth Syrian War.[178] Furthermore, the Roman-Seleucid War was ended by the Peace of Apamea in 188 BCE. The Romans chose this site to conduct a devastating treaty with the Seleucids to inflict

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[171] Cohen, *The Hellenistic Settlements*, 94.
[172] Strabo, *Geographica*, 16.2.10
[173] Cohen, *The Hellenistic Settlements*, 95.
[174] John Malalas, *Chronographia*, 8.203.
[175] Kosmin, *The Land of the Elephant Kings*, 232.
[176] Strabo, *Geographica*, 16.2.10
[177] Ibid, 16.2.10.
[178] Polybius, *Histories*, 5.45, 5.50, 5.59.

maximum injury. So proud were the Apameans of their famed war elephants that they ignored Roman demands that the Seleucids surrender such animals and never use them again.[179] Polybius records that in 162 BCE, a Roman delegation discovered the remaining elephants and subsequently hamstrung them.[180] It is unclear whether ignoring the Roman treaty was a royal decision or one of the civic government. Diodotus Tryphon, the power behind the throne of the boy king Antiochus VI Dionysus (r. 163-161), may have been behind the decision to flout Roman demands. It is equally possible that it was an Apamean decision. The waning power of the Seleucids seems to have impacted Apamea's prosperity little. It grew to an exceptionally large size, perhaps numbering 400,000 inhabitants in the early 1st century CE.[181] During the Roman general Pompey's eastern conquests, Seleucid rule in the *polis* ended in 64 BCE.

In sum, Apamea served as the military and political center of the empire, while Seleucia-Pieria remained the ideological center. In the 3rd and 2nd centuries BCE the Seleucid Empire fought six wars against its southern neighbors, and Apamea played a critical role in each conflict. Because of its location and its production of war elephants, Apamea served as a crucial center for the Seleucid state. The significance of Apamea as the empire's military headquarters cannot be overstated.

The Numismatic Story in Apamea

Paul J. Kosmin has written "to think Seleucid is to see elephants."[182] While Kosmin implies that the Seleucid state, huge and powerful yet fragile, metaphorically resembles war elephants, he also makes a point to emphasize that the elephants acted as an imperial emblem. Much like how the royal anchor represented Seleucus and his successors, elephants were

[179] For the treaty: Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita*, 38.38
[180] Polybius, *Histories*, 31.2.11.
[181] Cohen, *The Hellenistic Settlements*, 96.
[182] Kosmin, *The Land of the Elephant Kings*, 3.

commonly used as symbols throughout the empire to promote the empire's military prowess. Seleucus famously received 500 war elephants from the Mauryan king Chandragupta following the former's failed invasion of India.[183] The gift was part of an agreement in which Seleucus would relinquish to Chandragupta several provinces that had earlier been conquered by Alexander.[184] War elephants were then bred and played key roles in several of Seleucus's victories.[185] The rival Ptolemies even sent expeditions in search of such animals lest they be disadvantaged on the battlefield.[186] As Apamea proudly housed the elephant farm, the elephant imagery employed by the Seleucid dynasty was also sometimes associated more specifically with the city of Apamea. Elephant and military iconography are not uncommon in Apamean coinage. Did the Apameans cling to a particular dynastic symbol, in a similar fashion to the Seleucian appropriation of the thunderbolt, in an attempt to produce their own distinct civic space?

Apamea minted the least amount of coinage compared to its three Tetrapolitan neighbors. The only surviving coinage minted during the reign of Seleucus was bronze, a series that features an elephant on the obverse and a horse's head on the reverse. Below the horse's head one can see the Seleucid anchor lying horizontally. While equine iconography is common on Seleucid coins, I suggest that ancient people saw elephants as a more distinct symbol of both the dynasty and the city than horses.

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[183] Strabo, *Geographica*, 16.2.10.
[184] Grainger, *The Rise of the Seleukid Empire: 323-223 BCE,* 65-67.
[185] Bezalel Bar-Kochva, *The Seleucid Army: Organization and Tactics in the Great Campaigns.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976) 75-79.
[186] Diodorus of Sicily, *The Library,* 36.3-5.

Figure 19. Bronze coin of Seleucus I Nicator, Apamea in Syria, c. 300-281 BCE. ANS 1944.100.76976, American Numismatic Society, accessed September 28, 2023, http://numismatics.org/collection/1944.100.76976

The legend reads "of King Seleucus." Unlike Seleucia, it appears that Apamea had not received special royal dispensation that allowed for the inclusion of the city's name on locally minted coins. However, the low denomination of the bronze coinage does suggest that civic agency may be reflected here, even if in a more limited way compared to the Seleucian bronzes of this era, since civic governments were likely more involved in the production of bronze coinage. It is possible that the early citizens of Apamea advocated for elephant and equine iconography. But we should not dismiss the fact that Seleucus may have had a clear hand in this series. Following the Battle of Ipsus, Seleucus became famous for the use of war elephants. Demetrius Poliorcetes even mockingly referred to Seleucus as a "master of elephants."[187] While Demetrius's comment was referencing Seleucus's defeat in India (which resulted in his gaining of the elephants), advertising these devastating animals would have been in the best interest of the king.

As in Seleucia, the Apamean mint ceased to produce coinage for the majority of the 3rd century. However, Houghton and Lorber have convincingly argued in *Seleucid Coins* that a disputed series of silver coins was minted in Apamea at the end of the 3rd century. This series of coins minted by Antiochus the Great depicts a single war elephant on the reverse. It was once

[187] Plutarch, *Life of Demetrius*, 25.

thought that these coins were tied to Ecbatana and Nisibis, but, considering the king's hair and possible age, it is now believed that they were minted in order to pay Seleucid soldiers before the king's invasion of Armenia.[188] There is no doubt that many troops were mustered at Apamea. Antiochus the Great would have been a young man on the eve of his eastern conquests, and this depiction supports that fact.

Figure 20. Silver coin of Antiochus III the Great, Apamea in Syria, c. 213-211 BCE. ANS 1944.100.73688, American Numismatic Society, accessed September 28, 2023, http://numismatics.org/collection/1944.100.73688

Houghton and Lorber date the series to somewhere between 213 and 211 BCE. The suggested historical context makes sense, as does the argument that these would have been minted as an advance for the soldiers preparing for an arduous eastern campaign. The text reads "of King Antiochus," like the Apamean bronzes minted earlier under Seleucus. There is no obvious sign that the citizens of Apamea had much influence on the iconography of Antiochus the Great's coinage. Antiochus the Great would have been proud of his possession of capable war elephants. At the end of his eastern campaigns, he even bullied an Indian warlord into handing over to him

[188] Arthur Houghton and Catharine Lorber, *Seleucid Coins Catalogue: A Comprehensive Catalogue (Part 1: Seleucus I through Antiochus III, Volume 1)* (New York: Classical Numismatic Group and American Numismatic Society, 2002), 404-405. Antiochus III (the Great) famously campaigned successfully to re-establish control over the Upper Satrapies from 212-205.

150 elephants.[189] War elephants were rare in the Hellenistic period, and the Seleucid kings appear to have been eager to advertise their ownership of such beasts.

The numismatic record is silent again until Antiochus IV's program to mint quasi-municipal coins in nearly twenty cities of the empire in the 160s BCE. [190] We have seen how Antiochus IV's quasi-municipal bronzes in Seleucia-Pieria featured the local thunderbolt on the reverse. In a similar vein, the coins minted in Apamea during the same reign may have been the first instance in which Apameans had a real voice regarding numismatic iconography. Rather than something more distinct like military imagery or a reference to Heracles's canalization feat, the two series minted show simply Zeus Nicephorus on the reverse and Antiochus IV on the obverse.

Figure 21. Bronze coin of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, Apamea in Syria, c. 168-164 BCE. ANS1944.100.77043, American Numismatic Society, accessed September 28, 2023, http://numismatics.org/collection/1944.100.77043

In one series Zeus is standing, in the other he is enthroned.[191] Civic involvement is confirmed by the text "of the Apameans near the Axios." Zeus, accompanied by Nike (hence the epithet Nicephorus), was not a rare design for a reverse, but this imagery seems to lack any specific connection to Apamean civic identity. Malalas's story about an eagle (Zeus) helping Seleucus

[189] John Grainger, *The Seleukid Empire of Antiochus III 223-187 BC*, (Barnsley: Pen and Swords, 2015), 73–74.
[190] Meyer, "King Antiochus IV and the Cities in Levant," 528.
[191] Houghton, Lorber, and Hoover, *Seleucid Coins Catalogue: A Comprehensive Catalogue (Part 2, Volume 1)*, 74-75.

demarcate the city's walls comes to mind. But overall, this design is generic in nature and does not reflect any distinct aspect of the city's identity.

Alexander I Balas (r. 150-145 BCE), the pretender who minted the *stephanephoroi* ('wreath-bearers') in Seleucia-Pieria, also minted a few series in Apamea. If we can conclude that Antiochus IV's quasi-municipal coins showed little of Apamean civic identity, then Alexander I's quasi-municipals show quite the opposite.

Figure 22. Bronze coin of Alexander I Balas, Apamea in Syria, c. 150- 149 BCE. ANS 1944.100.77044, American Numismatic Society, accessed September 28, 2023, accessed September 28, 2023, http://numismatics.org/collection/1944.100.77044

The bronze coin above (figure 22) shows Alexander I's profile on the obverse and Zeus on the reverse holding a helmet in one hand and a spear in the other. Near the warlike Zeus, "of the Apameans" is engraved. Another bronze coin inscribed by the Apameans shows Zeus with the same items but also standing on a pile of weapons.[192] Royal bronze coinage was also minted during Alexander I's short reign, for example, in figure 23, with the reverse reading "of King Alexander," the pretender is shown on the obverse with a Heraclean lion-skin headdress. Apollo stands on the reverse with a bow in his hand.

[192] Houghton, Lorber, Hoover, *Seleucid Coins Catalogue: A Comprehensive Catalogue (Part 2, Volume 1)*, 229.

Figure 23. Bronze coin of Alexander I Balas, Apamea in Syria, c. 150-149 BCE. ANS 1944.100.76490, American Numismatic Society, accessed September 23, 2023, http://numismatics.org/collection/1944.100.76490

While Apollo's bow is not an uncommon motif on coinage, the martial reference must be put in context. All of the bronze coins minted under Alexander I reflect Apamea's military role in the empire. Military imagery was serving as a symbol of Apamea's distinct identity.

Under the child-king Antiochus VI Dionysus (r. 144-142 BCE), Apamea minted three known series of coins. As we have seen, the *de facto* ruler at this time was a man named Diodotus Tryphon, who led a revolt against Demetrius II, the king following Alexander I Balas's death.[193] Demetrius II's attempts to disband the Seleucid army resulted in his temporary removal from the throne. Antiochus IV and Tryphon capitalized on his unpopularity among the soldiers and established Apamea as an important center for their rule. The silver and bronze coinage minted in Apamea during these few years shows imagery associated with royal authority, confirmed by the presence of the young king's name on the coins. Antiochus IV's Apamean coins are diverse, without any iconography or imagery that indicates a reference to a distinct civic identity. Silver tetradrachms, for example, show Antiochus VI Dionysus as a mature king

[193] 1 *Macc.* 11.39.

with a radiant crown, along with the Dioscuri[194] on horseback on the reverse side.[195] Never before had Dioscuri been depicted on silver coins, but Tryphon appears to have been particularly fond of them.[196] More typical Seleucid silver drachms featuring the young king show Apollo on the omphalos (a stone representing the navel of the universe) on the reverse.[197] One silver hemidrachm[198] (figure 24) minted under Alexander VI Dionysus's authority even features a rare panther:

Figure 24. Silver Coin of Antiochus VI Dionysus, Apamea in Syria, c. 144-143 BCE. ANS 1944.100.76562, American Numismatic Society, accessed September 28, 2023, http://numismatics.org/collection/1944.100.76562

Royal bronze was almost certainly minted by Antiochus VI in Apamea. Unsurprisingly, given the king's epithet, the god Dionysus appears on the reverse side of one of these series, holding a cantharus, a two-handed drinking cup.[199] On others, (figure 25) the cantharus stands alone.

[194] The Dioscuri were twin gods often associated with horses.
[195] Houghton, Lorber, and Hoover. *Coins Catalogue: A Comprehensive Catalogue (Part 2, Volume 1)*, 325-327.
[196] Ibid, 317.
[197] Ibid, 327.
[198] A coin worth half of a drachma.
[199] Ibid, 328.

Figure 25. Bronze coin of Antiochus VI Dionysus, Apamea in Syria, c. 144- 143 BCE. ANS 1992.54.1826, American Numismatic Society, accessed September 28, 2023, http://numismatics.org/collection/1992.54.1826

The active mint, (nominally) under Antiochus VI Dionysus, failed to produce coinage with any overt sign of the military imagery favored as a means of civic expression and identity in Apamea. The Dioscuri are minted with spears pointed ahead, and the panther with his paw raised, but the military imagery is not as explicit as before.

The Seleucid Empire crumbled rapidly in the latter half of the second century BCE and the first half of the first. The last king to mint at Apamea was Alexander II Zabinas (r. 128-122), a man promoted by the Ptolemies deliberately to sow discord in Syria.[200] Alexander II established himself firmly, though briefly, in northern Syria. Elephant imagery reappears during his reign. Below (figure 26) is a rare series of Apamean bronze coins with an elephant head on the obverse and an eagle on the reverse along with the king's name.

[200] Justin, *Epitome of the Philippic Histories,* 39.1.4-5.

Figure 26. Bronze coin of Alexander II Zabinas, Apamea in Syria, c. 128-122 BCE. ANS 1944.100.76783, American Numismatic Society, accessed September 28, 2023, http://numismatics.org/collection/1944.100.76783

Another more common bronze series minted by Alexander II depicts Dionysus and Tyche.[201] Only about a decade before the Seleucid dynasty's twilight did the inhabitants of Apamea mint coinage in their own name again. In 77/6 BCE, the city, like many others in the 1st century, was declared "sacred and inviolable."[202] In the 70s and 60s BCE, two series of bronze coinage include the statement "of the Apameans, holy and inviolable," with an elephant decorating the reverse and Zeus's head on the obverse.[203] The elephant symbol decorated the first and last series of coins minted under Seleucid rule. The city was taken by Pompey in 64 BCE. Though the numismatic story after the demise of the Seleucid dynasty falls outside the scope of this chapter, it is worth noting that Apamea minted a bronze series with Zeus on the obverse and a war elephant on the reverse in the 50s BCE.[204] Detached from the Seleucid dynasty, Apameans still chose the elephant as their civic symbol.

Apamea and Military Space

Seleucia-Pieria and Apamea followed similar trajectories: both cities were founded during the most active period of Seleucid urbanization, each was named after a member of the Seleucid ruling family, and both had specific functions for the dynasty. While Seleucia served as the ideological center of the empire, Apamea acted as the center of military affairs. The numismatic record, however, presents two different stories concerning civic agency and expression. Seleucian coinage reflects a citizenry that was aware of its status and generally was committed to a particular symbol and god. Zeus's thunderbolt is shown on silver and bronze

[201] Houghton, Lorber, and Hoover. Seleucid *Coins Catalogue: A Comprehensive Catalogue (Part 2, Volume 1),*458-460.
[202] Hoover, *Handbook of Syrian Coins,* 303.
[203] Ibid, 304.
[204] Ibid, 304.

Seleucian coins minted during the reigns of Seleucus, Antiochus I, Antiochus IV, Alexander I Balas, Demetrius II, Alexander II, and Antiochus VIII.[205] Furthermore, Antiochus VII's royal bronze coinage depicted Zeus.[206] While Apamean coinage regularly features military iconography, including the elephant, the city lacked an equivalent to Seleucia's thunderbolt. Based on numismatic evidence, Apamea did not commit to one specific iconographic symbol to last the centuries. Elephants are only featured on three bronze series from the time of Seleucus to the 70s BCE. Though featured in the earliest known post-Seleucid series, elephant imagery is not common in post-conquest Apamean coinage.[207] Overall, more diverse imagery was used on Apamean coinage to express the city's military importance and function within the empire.

In the previous chapter discussed how Seleucia used bronze coinage to help create a distinct civic space. I am not suggesting that Apamea and its inhabitants lacked a distinct civic space. However, they may have produced that civic space in different ways. A close look at the coins minted in Seleucid Apamea does not suggest that the citizens imagined *one* specific civic symbol to be their own. Certainly, the elephant is a civic symbol, but it does not appear nearly as consistently as the Seleucian thunderbolt. Military imagery and iconography on coinage might have circulated and resulted in an imagined military space. Apamean silver and bronze coinage alike contained warlike imagery, and the attempts to keep their prized elephants secret from Rome following the treaty proves the Apameans pride in their city's military capabilities. However, bronze minted under Antiochus IV Epiphanes and some under Antiochus VI Dionysus lacked any reference to the Seleucid army.

Despite my argument that the Apamean elephant was not as potent a symbol for the civic community as the Seleucian thunderbolt, these two common motifs are similar. Both have roots

[205] Houghton, Lorber, and Hoover, *Seleucid Coins: A Comprehensive Catalogue: (Part 2, Volume 2),* 361.
[206] Houghton, Lorber, and Hoover, *Seleucid Coins: A Comprehensive Catalogue: (Part 2, Volume 1),* 370.
[207] Hoover, *Handbook of Syrian Coins,* 304-306.

in the Seleucid dynasty, specifically the life of the founder king,[208] and they each came to represent (in varying degrees) particular cities independently of the dynasty. Elephant iconography was deployed empire-wide, decorating coinage from Sardis to Ai Khanoum.[209] However, this royal symbol still became something of a staple of numismatic iconography for Apamea throughout the centuries. In both cases, we see a motif created to project the power of the monarchy transformed into a symbol representing a specific city and its inhabitants. Again, however, nowhere do we see the Apameans using this originally royal symbol independently of royal authority, like the Seleucians did during the alliance with Antioch, until the series from the 50s BCE, after the Seleucid collapse. The Seleucians might have simply had more opportunities for clear civic expression.

Apamea and Seleucia both played critical roles in Seleucid history. Each played a specific role in the empire, with Seleucia being the ideological center and Apamea the military center. This functionally differentiated urban landscape was designed by Seleucus and his successors. The Seleucids did not merely conquer former Achaemenid lands; they created their own landscape full of new, purpose-built cities. On the ground level in these cities, dynastic images circulated on royal coins used by the respective populations. Apamean civic coinage borrowed some of these same symbols, favoring specific forms of military imagery. This contrasts with the near-exclusive nature of Seleucian bronze coinage which almost always sported a thunderbolt and/or its wielder, Zeus. Apamean civic space – specifically in the form of numismatic space – was not as well defined or well-ordered as Seleucian civic space.

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[208] Ogden, *The Legend of Seleucus,* 107-109. Kosmin, *The Land of the Elephant Kings,* 1-4.
[209] Houghton and Lorber, *Seleucid Coins Catalogue: A Comprehensive Catalogue (Part 1, Volume 1)*, 103-107, 371-376.

Laodicea-ad-Mare

Named after Seleucus's mother,[210] Laodicea-ad-Mare ("by the sea") was the second port city of the Tetrapolis, founded in 300 BCE. The site of ancient Laodicea still bears the name Latakiya.[211] It is likely that the city was preceded by pre-Hellenistic settlements in the same location, most notably a Phoenician colony.[212] John Malalas's foundation narrative for Laodicea tells of an eagle stealing Seleucus's sacrifice to Zeus. In pursuit of the eagle Seleucus encounters a wild boar which he slays. With the blood of the vanquished boar, Seleucus marks out the future city's walls.[213] Located approximately twenty miles south of Seleucia, the city was to perform similar functions for Seleucus: serving to promote dynastic legitimacy and acting as a strategic trading and naval center. However, as we will see later in this chapter, Laodicea did not hold the same ideological significance as Seleucia.

The *polis* was known for its deep artificial harbor and its production of quality wine, most of which went to supplying Alexandria.[214] It was, however, not only a trading center; Antiochus III launched a campaign with his army from the port at Laodicea.[215] During the Ptolemaic occupation of Seleucia (246-219 BCE), Laodicea was the main naval base for the Seleucids. We know that during the reign of Alexander II Zanibas in 128 BCE there was an unsuccessful rebellion by the king's officers in the city.[216] Laodicea was eventually declared "holy and inviolate" sometime before 81/80 BCE,[217] when Tigranes of Armenia granted the city its

[210] Strabo, *Geographica*, 16.2.4.
[211] Cohen, *The Hellenistic Settlements*, 113.
[212] Ibid, 111.
[213] John Malalas, *Chronographia*, 8.203.
[214] Strabo, *Geographica*, 16.2.9.
[215] Polybius, *Histories*, 5.45.
[216] Cohen, *The Hellenistic Settlements*, 112.
[217] Rigsby, *Asylia: Territorial Inviolability in the Hellenistic World*, 502.

independence. The city enjoyed this status until the Roman conquest.[218] In this study, I am chiefly concerned with Seleucid Laodicea, not with independent Laodicea or its subsequent position within the Roman empire. The city was roughly the size of Apamea (covering an area of 250 hectares) but probably had a smaller population.[219] Laodicean coinage displayed a large amount of marine and maritime iconography. This sort of imagery is largely absent in Seleucia. I argue that the differences in coinage produced two distinct civic spaces in these two cities that were otherwise remarkably similar. After an analysis of the numismatic record, I argue that a distinctive kind of maritime space might have been created in each city, but in separate ways.

The Numismatic Story in Laodicea

Laodicean coinage was solely silver until the mid-second century BCE. Therefore, the production of civic space with civic bronze coinage was impossible up to this point. Nonetheless, civic culture can still be discerned in the silver coinage. As in Seleucia, silver "Alexander" types were minted under the authority of Seleucus. Both the tetradrachm and drachm examples contain the image of a dolphin as a mint-mark, distinguishing the producing mint (figure 27).[220]

Figure 27. Silver coin of Seleucus I Nicator, Laodicea-ad-Mare, c. 300-280 BCE. ANS 1976.107.3, American Numismatic Society, accessed September 28, 2023, http://numismatics.org/collection/1976.107.3

[218] Cohen, *The Hellenistic Settlements*, 112.
[219] Ibid, 113.
[220] Houghton and Lorber, *Seleucid Coins Catalogue: A Comprehensive Catalogue (Part 1, Volume 1)*, 25-26.

Heracles wears his lion headdress on the obverse. While Zeus holds an eagle (rather than Nike) in the Laodicean coins, the dolphin is the more significant difference between these coins and their Seleucian equivalents. Dolphins were signs of Aphrodite and by association often connected to commercial productivity. During the reign of Antiochus I Soter little changed at the Laodicean mint. Again, silver tetradrachms and drachms were minted under the name of Seleucus.[221] They are nearly identical to earlier series; even the dolphin mint-mark remains in figure 28.

Figure 28. Silver coin of Antiochus I Soter, Laodicea-ad-Mare, c. 280-261 BCE. ANS 1960.176.46, American Numismatic Society, accessed September 28, 2023, http://numismatics.org/collection/1960.176.46

The dolphin mint-mark lasted into the reign of Antiochus II Theos, under whom more silver tetradrachms were minted. Again, Heracles decorated the obverse, and Zeus with his eagle featured on the reverse. The first major change in the design of Laodicean silver coinage came during the reign of Antiochus III. Antiochus III likely minted silver tetradrachms in Laodicea. These coins feature the king's profile on the obverse and a seated Apollo on the reverse. Dolphins, along with an image of a ship's prow, often appear as control-marks[222] on these

[221] Ibid, 133-134.

[222] Control-marks are similar to mint-marks as they give information about who oversaw the minting of a series.

series.[223] The first bronze coinage from Laodicea comes from the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. For the first time, clear Laodicean civic expression can be seen in the numismatic record. In figure 29, Antiochus IV is featured on the obverse and the reverse reads "of the Laodiceans by the sea."[224]

Figure 29. Bronze coin of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, Laodicea-ad-Mare, c. 168-164 BCE. ANS 1944.100.77070, American Numismatic Society, accessed September 28, 2023, http://numismatics.org/collection/1944.100.77070

Also on the reverse, Poseidon stands where Zeus would typically stand in Seleucid coinage. His characteristic trident differentiates the sea god from his brother. In some designs Poseidon also holds a wreath, but here he holds a dolphin, echoing the mint-mark which had been used for centuries.

Another bronze series from Antiochus IV's time with the same legend, reading "of the Laodiceans by the sea," displays a lone dolphin on the reverse (figure 30).

[223] Ibid, 406-408.

[224] Houghton, Lorber, and Hoover, *Seleucid Coins: A Comprehensive Catalogue: (Part 2, Volume 1)*, 75-76.

Figure 30. Bronze coin of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, Laodicea-ad-Mare, c. 168-164 BCE. ANS 1944.100.77072, American Numismatic Society, accessed September 28, 2023, http://numismatics.org/collection/1944.100.77072

These bronze types emphasize symbols which had only been hinted at in previous silver series. As soon as Laodiceans were able to mint their own coinage in bronze, despite Antiochus IV's presence on the coins, images of Poseidon and dolphins were used as their local signifiers. It appears that whoever oversaw these design decisions wanted to include these dolphins as a way of portraying Laodicea as a trading hub, via their association with Aphrodite. But this coinage not only depicted Laodicea as just a commercial center but also as a city with distinct maritime attributes, emphasizing a closeness to Poseidon and Aphrodite. This Laodicean coinage does not seem to show the city as a place of unique ideological or military significance for the dynasty.

Similar bronze coinage appeared during the tumultuous reign of Alexander I Balas (r. 150-145 BCE). These bronze series were nearly identical to those minted during Antiochus IV's reign. Alexander's profile was displayed opposite an enthroned Poseidon in one series and opposite a sole dolphin in another.[225] These series also included the legend "of the Laodiceans by the sea." The last coinage minted at Laodicea during the Seleucid era was probably a royal bronze series minted by Demetrius II during his first reign (r. 145-138 BCE).[226] While not

[225] Houghton, Lorber, and Hoover, *Seleucid Coins: A Comprehensive Catalogue: Part 2, Volume 1)*, 230-231.
[226] Ibid, 290.

definitively Laodicean, this series shows the king's profile on the obverse and his name on the reverse, surrounding a standing Poseidon holding his trademark trident. The numismatic record only picks up again after Laodicean independence in 81/80 BCE. Interestingly, independent Laodicea minted silver and bronze coinage that included little maritime iconography, favoring instead deities like Tyche, Artemis, and Nike.[227]

The Laodicean mint was not as active nor as consistent as the Seleucian or Apamean mint. Starting off with the silver series only, it is difficult but possible to see signs of local identity, such as the dolphin mint-marks. Only when bronze coinage began to be minted, specifically during the reigns of Antiochus IV and Alexander I Balas can we see clear civic expressions. Poseidon and/or a dolphin became the centerpiece of Laodicean bronze coinage. But as quickly as these local images appeared, within decades they were gone. The gap between the royal bronze coins of Demetrius II and the autonomous Laodicean coins is a frustrating one. Here we might expect to see greater civic expression as the empire began to quickly disintegrate. However, the little numismatic evidence we have does show us that maritime iconography was common. In silver and bronze coinage, dolphins were used as a civic symbol. It is interesting that Laodicean iconography was centered around oceanic imagery while Seleucia's was not. I argue that the coins in these port two cities worked to produce distinct numismatic spaces: for Seleucia, it was a sacred and dynastically relevant one, and for Laodicea, it was a maritime space.

Seleucia, Laodicea, and Maritime Space

Here, I want to look more closely at how coins, or other objects, served as representations of a distinct maritime space. Maritime space here refers to a produced space in which distinct maritime power and culture is reflected, as well as civic identity associated with proximity to the ocean (e.g., seen in iconography and imagery that features marine and naval themes or trade). In

[227] Hoover, *Handbook of Syrian Coins,* 298-302.

The Social Construction of the Ocean, Philip E. Steinberg asserts, "In the Mediterranean, ocean-space was constructed as a non-possessable arena wherein competitive states, acting as resource stewards, asserted linked objectives of naval and commercial strength."[228] While a city, much less a powerful kingdom, could not claim possession over the sea, sea-power (as well as commercial strength) could still be projected. Sea-power also certainly became associated with some cities' cultural identity. In the Hellenistic era, the Ptolemaic and Antigonid kingdoms boasted far greater navies than the more land-based Seleucid military. But this political situation did not translate to a lack of maritime iconography in the material evidence of the Seleucid Empire.

Two surviving weights, used for weighing goods in the agora, are believed to have been made in Seleucia-Pieria. In figure 31, the typical Seleucid anchor is front and center.

Figure 31. Lead weight with anchor and dolphins, Seleucia-Pieria, c. 151-150 BCE. Permission granted by the Getty.

We have already established earlier that the anchor should be viewed as more of a dynastic symbol than a symbol of maritime prowess. The three dolphins stand out, however. The dolphins here must be understood as a symbol of Aphrodite, goddess of sailors. The marine imagery is clear enough.

[228] Philip E. Steinberg, *The Social Production of the Ocean* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 66-67.

Figure 32. Bronze weight with ship's prow, Seleucia-Pieria, first half of 2nd century BCE. Permission granted by the Getty.

Figure 32 contains even more explicit maritime imagery: a ship's prow. The basic function of these weights was to facilitate commerce. But they also reflect a maritime atmosphere in the port city. The evidence here confirms that maritime imagery was not foreign to the marketplaces of Seleucia-Pieria. There is an element of maritime space here and a connection to the wider maritime culture.

However, the coinage minted in Seleucia-Pieria, whether silver or bronze, did nothing to contribute to the production of maritime space. Conversely, Laodicea-ad-Mare for centuries minted silver (royal) and bronze (quasi–municipal) coinage decorated with dolphins. The dolphin distinguished Laodicean silver coins, which were otherwise typical "Alexander" style tetradrachms. Local symbols were not only relevant in a commercial context; they were symbols of identity. According to *Seleucid Coins*, seven Laodicean series of bronze coins can be dated to the mid-second century BCE.[229] All seven series include either a dolphin or Poseidon – clear markers of the sea – as the main design on the reverse. In sum, both royal and quasi-municipal

[229] Houghton, Lorber, and Houghton, *Seleucid Coins Catalogue: A Comprehensive Catalogue (Part 2, Volume 2)*, 362-363.

Laodicean coinage shared the same oceanic characteristics. For Seleucia-Pieria, there is no appearance of dolphins or Poseidon on any coin minted in the city.[230]

Based on numismatic evidence, Laodicea-ad-Mare placed a greater emphasis on the maritime nature of their *polis* than Seleucia-Pieria. These were two fundamentally similar settlements: they were both port cities founded by the same king at the same time. Why the contrast in the symbolic realm? A likely possibility is the fact that Laodicea represented the primary Seleucid naval base during the 27 years when the Ptolemies controlled Seleucia (246-219).[231] During that chaotic period Laodicea was crucially important for Seleucid kings. Although maritime space certainly existed in Seleucia, it was produced in separate ways, like with the visuals on the weights. The names of the two cities might have also affected this difference. Laodicea was "by the sea," while Seleucia sat by a mountain reminiscent of the foothills of Olympus. I suggest that the inhabitants of Seleucia-Pieria saw themselves less as living in a maritime city and more as living in a city defined by its local (and dynastically relevant) religion. Seleucians saw Seleucia as a sacred space and emphasized locally meaningful religious imagery rooted in Seleucid dynastic ideology.

Conclusion

The numismatic record from Laodicea-ad-Mare and Apamea-by-the-Axios reveals that local symbols were used on both silver and bronze coinage as a means of civic representation. While the Seleucian thunderbolt was a more consistent civic emblem, Laodicean and Apamean coinage presented these cities as spaces tied to distinct identities: Laodicea as a maritime space and Apamea as a military one. That Seleucian civic expression is more visible in the numismatic record does not prove that their civic identity was somehow stronger than that of their neighbors.

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[230] Ibid, 361-362.

[231] Bousdroukis, "The Tetrapolis and Other City Foundations," 200.

Their outlet for expressing this identity on coinage, however, was certainly greater. These three Tetrapolitan cities might have understood their places in the empire as fulfilling certain roles. Seleucia would be the religious and ideological center of the dynasty, Apamea the military center, and Laodicea the commercial center connecting the empire to the rest of the Mediterranean. As each of these cities became overshadowed in size and significance by Antioch, it is possible that these imperial functions molded into distinct civic identities over time. Apamea held Seleucus's elephant farm, and centuries after the founder king's death elephants still decorated Apamean coinage. A similar phenomenon could be said to exist in Laodicea: at one point only a mint-mark for royal coinage, the Laodicean dolphin became a principal symbol of a proud maritime city.

CONCLUSION

My thesis has used numismatic evidence to study three cities in the Seleucid Empire: Seleucia-Pieria, Apamea-on-the-Axios, and Laodicea-ad-Mare. I have focused in particular on Seleucia-Pieria, an understudied city ideologically linked to the Seleucid dynasty. Because coins are mobile pieces of material culture, they are a distinct type of historical evidence. I argue that the minting and circulation of coins produces "numismatic space" which can then exist as a variety of imagined spaces inside a city. I have looked at three coexisting imagined spaces: cosmological, royal, and civic space. The imagery and iconography chosen by civic governments (which emerged from a connection with both cosmological and royal space) can tell us about how civic bodies wanted to express their identity. As the Seleucid Empire rose and fell, Seleucia-Pieria used numismatic production to reinforce its civic identity, detach itself from the ruling dynasty, and ultimately push for its own independence.

Before diving into the numismatic record, I briefly analyzed Seleucia-Pieria's place in the Seleucid Empire. As home of the dynastic cult and the Nicatoreum, the city was something of a counterpart to the Ptolemaic Alexandria in Egypt during the early years of the empire. The various cults and surviving foundational stories of this city all have deep associations with dynastic ideology and propaganda. Focusing on the numismatic evidence from 300 BCE to 109 BCE, I examined the civic body's commitment to a Zeus/thunderbolt iconographic pairing, found on quasi-municipal and civic coinage. Keeping political events in mind, I argued that later Seleucid kings remembered Seleucia-Pieria's legacy as a "hearth" of the empire and attempted to control or appease the city to help strengthen their own position. As the empire weakened, the civic body even used originally dynastic iconography to express their dissatisfaction with the monarchy.

In the second chapter I focused on how mobile pieces of material culture acted as "representations of space" in order to create various imagined spaces. This research illuminates the perspective and worldview of the Seleucians. The minting and circulation of coinage played a significant role in the production of various imagined spaces in the city. I looked at how stories contributed to the production of cosmological space and how coinage played a key part in the production of royal space and civic space. I showed that a place-making process took place inside the city walls as the Seleucians attempted to exclude foreign civic coins and repeatedly disseminated consistent imagery on their own. This imagery may have been derived from dynastic imagery, but it became civic imagery over time. From what we can see in the numismatic record, Seleucian civic identity was characterized by a connection to the local religion, emphasizing the city as a sacred space.

The third and final chapter offered a briefer look at two neighboring cities: Apamea-on-the-Axios and Laodicea-ad-Mare. These two cities experienced similar historical trajectories to Seleucia-Pieria. However, the coinage minted in each city presents a different story than that of Seleucia-Pieria. Laodicean coinage presented the city as a maritime space, while Apamean coinage reflected the city's role as the Seleucid military headquarters. As with Seleucia-Pieria's use of the thunderbolt symbol, which was rooted in dynastic mythology, I explored how Apamea might have co-opted the elephant symbol in a similar, yet less consistent, way.

The concept of numismatic space can be applicable to any coin-producing city in the ancient world. This approach is especially illuminating for cities within large empires, in which the inhabitants possessed a layered identity, maintaining their status both as citizens of a city and of a larger political entity. Numismatic evidence is commonly used for researching the Hellenistic world, and it can be used to strengthen our understanding of urban spaces and civic

identity. This research relates to research exploring how other material artifacts produced meaningful spaces for ancient peoples. Seleucia-Pieria, Apamea-on-the-Axios, and Laodicea-ad-Mare have different stories and are all relevant to the study of the Seleucid Empire. This thesis has attempted to study the lived experiences of the people inhabiting these newly founded cities by scrutinizing the numismatic record they left behind. The original immigrant and indigenous populations settled these cities and experienced a new geopolitical reality in the aftermath of Alexander the Great's conquests. How these civic bodies responded to the turmoil characteristic of the Hellenistic period can be effectively explored with a detailed study of the coinage they produced.

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RC C.B. Welles, *Royal Correspondence in the Hellenistic Period* (New Haven, 1934)

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