

## City of Thunder: Numismatics and Civic Space in Seleucia-Peria

In 300 BCE, Seleucus I Nicator founded the port city of Seleucia-Peria in northern Syria. This *polis* was an ideological and religious center of the Seleucid Empire. It was also home to a Seleucid royal cult and a temple containing Seleucus' remains. The ethnically diverse inhabitants of Seleucia-Peria were said to have worshipped thunder and inscriptions confirm the presence of many cults of Zeus. Numismatic evidence augments the limited literary and epigraphic sources pertaining to the city and provides a unique bottom-up perspective.

Civic identity and agency are often most visible in bronze coinage since it was typically minted by civic officials with little or no influence from the king. Due to its heavy weight and low denomination, bronze coinage did not travel as far as silver or gold and was used in quotidian transactions. Seleucian civic coinage mostly includes locally relevant religious iconography pertaining to Zeus and/or thunder. The result of this circulated material was the creation of an imagined space in the *polis*. In this essay, I employ a spatial theoretical approach in exploring how coins produced meaning for the inhabitants of Seleucia-Peria. My research focus primarily stretches from the city's foundation to their grant of independence by one of the last Seleucid kings (300 BCE to 109 BCE). I demonstrate the impact of coins in the context of the various spatial dimensions overlapping in the city and compare Seleucia-Peria with other cities. Seleucid space has been studied with a more geopolitical focus (Kosmin, 2014). Moreover, Seleucid coinage has also received attention in recent monographs (Nuemann, 2021; Erickson, 2018). However, Seleucia-Peria remains relatively understudied. The goal of this essay is to add to the scholarly discourse surrounding space, civic identity and religion, and numismatics in the Hellenistic world.

## Bibliography

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