

## THE PROVINCIAL IMPERIAL CULT IN THE LEVANT (SYRIA, PHOENICE, COMMAGENE, JUDEA, DECAPOLIS, ARABIA)

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### Abstract

The provincial imperial cult represents one of the most relevant expressions of multiform relationship between provincial communities and Roman authorities especially in the East. During the Roman Principate in Syria, we can enumerate seven administrative districts (eparchies) which occur in connection with this political and religious phenomenon. The complicated question of how the province-wide worship of the Imperial family was organised in Roman Levant must be analysed in different terms. Important aspects are the Roman territorial framework of administration, the creation of autonomous city-leagues (*koiná*) and their cultic functions, the rules of membership within these federal organizations and their self-representation in coinages and inscriptions. On the level of political and financial management, we are dealing with federal officials and the festivities organized by them. Our paper aims to give a detailed overview of the Syrian imperial cult related not only to one specific site, but in the context of a large and culturally complex area.

**Keywords:** imperial cult, Syria, Phoenice, *koinon*, eparchy, metropolis, Phoenicarch, Syriarch, Antioch, Tyre.

### Introduction

In most of the Eastern provinces, the imperial cult existed on at least two levels, the civic and the provincial. Certain titles of high officials of the imperial cult and city titles, such as *metropolis* or νεοκόρος, “temple-warden” (the respective city housed a temple of the provincial imperial cult), point to city hierarchies and underline the distinction between the two cultic levels. Some of these titles, such as “priest of the four eparchies” /

“Gymnasiarch of the four eparchies” or “*metropolis* of the four provinces” were characteristic only of the provincial imperial cult in the province of Syria created by Pompey the Great and of regions that once had belonged to this province.<sup>1</sup> Like in other Eastern provinces, the provincial imperial cult in Syria was institutionalised on the basis of city leagues, κοινά, represented by assemblies. Interestingly, in Syria the events held by these assemblies for the worship of the emperor, such as “common (provincial/federal) games” (κοινὸς ἀγών) or the mutual offering up of sacrifices, comprised more than just the *koinon* of a single eparchy/*provincia*; league centres such as Antioch, Tyre or Laodicea hosted the delegates of all Syrian eparchies/*provinciae*, in terms of administrative districts (sub-provinces) within the sphere of a governor’s authority, that is, his ‘gubernatorial’ *provincia* (on this see chap. 2); here, we have to deal with the ambiguity of the expression *provincia/ἐπαρχία* with respect to the Eastern provinces. Previous research has traditionally assumed that these eparchies in Syria represented regions or “sub-districts of the Syrian provincial cult,” distinguished from one another on a purely ethnographic level, that were completely detached from Roman administration in both their organisation and their territorial extent. However, contrary to the prevailing view, the comparatively few attestations of the provincial imperial cult in Syria show that its structure fitted quite well into the Roman administrative framework.

## 1. “Common Games” and Priests of the Provincial Imperial Cult in Syria and Phoenice

The earliest attestation of a province-wide imperial cult in the gubernatorial province of Syria is found in an honorary inscription from Apamea on the Orontes (today’s Qal’at al-Mudik) for the local benefactor L. Iulius Agrippa dating from Trajan’s reign. Agrippa’s great-grandfather Dexandros, a former tetrarch in North Syria, was “the first priest of the eparchy.” He was immortalised on bronze tablets in the Capitol “by the deified Augustus for his friendship and loyalty to the Roman people as a friend and ally” (Il. 29–34: [μάλιστα δ]ἔ Δέξανδρος ὁ πρῶτος τῆς ἐπαρ/[χείας/ιε]ρασάμενος πρόπαππος αὐτοῦ ὑπὸ // [θεοῦ Αὐ]γούστου διὰ τὴν πρὸς / τὸν Ῥωμαίων | [δῆμιον] φιλίαν καὶ πίστιν ἐπικρίματι / [φίλο]ς καὶ σύμμαχος / ἀνεγράφη χαλ/[καῖς δ]έλτοις ἐν τῷ Καπετωλίῳ).<sup>2</sup> Based upon the statement that Dexandros was the first to hold the office of priest in the province (ὁ πρῶτος τῆς ἐπαρχείας ἱερασάμενος), a provincial imperial cult must already have formed in the gubernatorial province of Syria under the first princeps. This also implies the existence of a province-wide league of cities, κοινὸν Συρίας. The same can be observed for the provinces in Asia Minor founded during the time of the Republic and the early principate, Asia, Galatia and Pontus-Bithynia.<sup>3</sup> However, the honorary inscription from Apamea provides no clues that help to identify the official seat of the priest of the provincial imperial cult; for example, there is nothing to suggest that the official seat of Dexandros and

<sup>1</sup> For a summary of the province’s history and structure, incl. the most recent lit., cf. Raggi 2015, 221–227.

<sup>2</sup> Rey-Coquais 1973, 41–46, no. 2 = *AE* 1976.678 = *SEG* 52.1553; on the date of the inscription, cf. esp. J. and L. Robert, *REG* 89, 1976, 563–565, no. 718.

<sup>3</sup> Vitale 2012, 61–64 (Asia), 117–129 (Galatia); Marek 2003, 63–65 (Pontus-Bithynia).

his unknown successors was certainly the provincial capital and metropolis Antiochia, as claimed by A. Gebhardt.<sup>4</sup> Apamea, the findspot of the inscription, is also a possibility. Dexandros's priestly office expressly included an "eparchy," that is, a *provincia*. By contrast, it is unclear whether the priests of the imperial cult in the service of the "Goddess Rome and the deified Augustus Caesar" (ιερεὺς Θεᾶς Ῥώμης καὶ θεοῦ Σεβαστοῦ Καίσαρος)<sup>5</sup> referred to on a dedicatory inscription of 69 C.E. from Abila (today's Brahl-iyā, Suq Wadi Barada) and on an undated inscription from Sidon should be seen as provincial or only as civic priests.<sup>6</sup>

An inscription from Magnesia on the Maeander in honour of the pankratiast Demokrates provides further evidence from the early phase of the Syrian *koionon*. It includes the earliest mention to date of a κοινὸς Συρίας, "joint agon of Syria," in which the athlete won three competitions.<sup>7</sup> The mention of the triple victory in the κοινὸς Καππαδοκίας and the double victory in the κοινὸς Λυκίας suggests an approximate date for the inscription between 25/26 C.E. and the reign of Claudius.<sup>8</sup> However, the date of the honorary inscription does not preclude that the provincial games in the province of Syria may already have been held under Augustus, possibly at the same time that the first priest of the provincial imperial cult, Dexandros, took up his office. Under Domitian, the same provincial games appear in greater detail as κοινὸς Συρίας Κιλικίας Φοινείκης ἐν Ἀντιοχείᾳ in an honorary inscription from today's Naples for the athlete Artemidioros.<sup>9</sup>

A dedicatory inscription made by Diogenes in Gerasa (today's Jerash) constitutes an accurately dated evidence for a priest of the provincial imperial cult. This inscription explicitly refers to Antioch on the Orontes as the seat of the priesthood. The dedication was made in the local year 182. Based on the local Pompeian enumeration of years (from 64/3 B.C.E.), this corresponds to 119/120 C.E.<sup>10</sup> It is unclear when exactly prior to 119/120 C.E. Diogenes carried out his office as priest of the four unnamed eparchies of the Syrian metropolis of Antioch (*Il.* 3–5: Διογένης Ἐμμεγάνου ἱερασάμενος τῶν τεσσάρων ἐπαρχειῶν ἐν Ἀντιοχείᾳ τῇ μητροπόλει); given the lack of independent

<sup>4</sup> Gebhardt 2002, 305: „Amtsitz des Dexandros sowie seiner unbekanntenen Nachfolger (...) sicherlich die Provinzhauptstadt und Metropolis Antiochia.”

<sup>5</sup> Gatier – Yon 2009, 146–148, no. 36; Rey-Coquais 1978, 47–48.

<sup>6</sup> This is why these priests are not mentioned in connection with the imperial cult, for example by Sartre 2004, 167–169; however, they are referred to in Rey-Coquais 1978, 47–48; Gebhardt 2002, 305 incl. n. 2.

<sup>7</sup> *I.Magnesia*, 119–120, no. 149 = *IAG* 162–164, no. 62.

<sup>8</sup> This dating is already proposed by *IAG* 163–164; followed by Deininger 1965, 87 n. 5; Sartre 2004, 170 n. 17; the provinces of Cappadocia and Lycia were founded in 17 C.E. and 43/44 C.E., respectively. Based on a penteteric cycle, Demokrates's victory in the κοινὸς Καππαδοκίας could have taken place in 17, 21 and 25 C.E. at the earliest. Furthermore, if the "wrestling match of Lycia" refers to an agon in the province of Lycia and not to games held by the still autonomous Lycian League, the inscription could be even later, from the time of Claudius's reign. By contrast, Rey-Coquais 1978, 48 n. 45 and Gebhardt 2002, 306 n. 1 date the inscription to the Augustan period, based upon the paleographic evaluation of the *editio princeps* by *I.Magnesia*, 119–120, no. 149.

<sup>9</sup> *IAG* 183–186, no. 67, *Il.* 15–16.

<sup>10</sup> *SEG* 7.847 = Jones 1928, 157, no. 16 = *I.Gerasa*, 399–400, no. 53: ἀγαθὴ τύχη. ἔτους βπρ'. ὑ[πὲρ] / τῆς τῶν Σεβαστῶν σωτηρίας / Διογένης Ἐμμεγάνου ἱερασάμενος / τῶν τεσσάρων ἐπαρχειῶν ἐν Ἀντιοχείᾳ / τῇ μητροπόλει ἄγαλμα Δικαιοσύνης / ὑπὲρ Εὐμένους τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆ πατρίδι / ἀνέθηκεν, ὃ ἐπηγγείλατο ὑπὲρ τοῦ / Εὐμένους ἀγορανομοῦντος; on this, cf. in detail Sartre 2004, 167–186.

evidence, we can only surmise that it was roughly during the reign of Trajan.<sup>11</sup> One difficulty, when interpreting Diogenes's inscription, is that his home city of Gerasa was already separated from the province of Syria and added to the province of Arabia in 106 C.E. If we assume that Diogenes only officiated as a priest in Antioch after this date, then either Gerasa, which belonged to Arabia, must have continued to take part in Syria's provincial imperial cult, or the new province of Arabia would have to form one of the "four eparchies" mentioned within an imperial cult that spanned the provinces. Besides Arabia and Syria, this "supra-provincial" commonality would have had to include the neighbouring gubernatorial provinces of Judea and Cilicia:<sup>12</sup> however, this composition of participants in Syria's provincial imperial cult would be unique, as M. Sartre has already highlighted.<sup>13</sup> In such a case, Commagene and Phoenice would have to be excluded, even though they are attested as sub-provinces of Syria on inscriptions detailing the careers of governors at least during Trajan's reign.<sup>14</sup>

However, there is also another, simpler possible explanation. Diogenes could also have carried out his office as priest of the provincial imperial cult based upon his additional citizenship of a polis that still belonged to the gubernatorial province of Syria even after 106 C.E.<sup>15</sup> The phenomenon that members of wealthy families who were citizens of several poleis also took on liturgies (benefits or services for the people) in other poleis, often in other provinces, is attested at least in Asia Minor.<sup>16</sup> Probably citizenship of poleis in different provinces was the reason that Serenus from Gaza and Aurelius Maro from Gerasa held the office of the *Phoenicarches* in the 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> century C.E. respectively,<sup>17</sup> although their home cities belonged neither initially to the Syrian sub-province Phoenice nor to the later gubernatorial province Syria-Phoenice that was newly formed around 194 C.E. In order to hold the Phoenicarchy, both notables must have held additional citizenship of a Phoenician polis.<sup>18</sup> The Syrian assembly thus was not a supra-provincial organisation; rather, the catchment area for functionaries of the

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Stein 1990, 271.

<sup>12</sup> Sartre 2004, 168, is doubtful: "Faut-il donc penser que quatre provinces voisines célébraient ensemble à Antioche un culte non plus provincial mais 'supra-provincial'?"

<sup>13</sup> Sartre 2004, 168: "Un tel regroupement de provinces, dans ce contexte, serait sans exemple."

<sup>14</sup> *AE* 1929.98: C. Antius A. Iulius Quadratus (102/104 C.E.) and *AE* 1934.177: C. Iulius Quadratus Bassus (115/117 C.E.); furthermore, according to the Artemidoros inscription Phoenice already took part in the common provincial games of Syria during the late Flavian period.

<sup>15</sup> Also Stein 1990, 270–271 incl. example.

<sup>16</sup> For example A(ulus) Caecilius Proclus officiated both as *Pontarches*, the leader or president of the *koinon* in the sub-province of Pontus, and as *Lesbarches*, 'leader/president' of the *koinon* in the sub-province of Lesbos; on this, see Marek 1993, 163–164 Cat. Amastr. 19; Labarre 1996, 302, no. 46 (French transl.); Vitale 2012, 89–91 (German transl.); similarly, in the double province Pontus-Bithynia the presidencies of the provincial assemblies of Bithynia and Pontus (Bithyniarchy and Pontarchy) were often held by one and the same person; on this, cf. in detail Marek 1993, 77. According to an inscription from Balboura, the Lyciarch M. Aurelius Thoantianus was a citizen of this polis and of the Pamphylian Attaleia and "scion of a family of Lyciarchs and Pamphyliarchs" (*SEG* 38.1450, ll. 9–13), as his predecessors held the polis citizenships both in Lycia and in Pamphylia.

<sup>17</sup> Serenus: *OGIS* 596; Aurelius Maro: *IGR* 3.1375.

<sup>18</sup> The honorary decree for Serenus's son, Ptolemaios, also mentions the citizenship of several cities: like his father, Ptolemaios was "(citizen) of Gaza and citizen of other poleis" (*OGIS* 596, ll. 13: Πτολεμαῖον Σερήνου φοινικάρχου υἱὸν Γαζαίων καὶ ἄλλων πόλεων πολίτην).

*koinon* of Syria could be supra-provincial.<sup>19</sup> Given this background, M. Sartre’s theory that the poleis of Gaza and Gerasa continued to participate in celebrations of the imperial cult in the province of Syria, even though they belonged to different provinces, does not seem to be the only possible explanation.<sup>20</sup>

An honorary inscription from Tyre recently published by J.-P. Rey-Coquais and dated to the local year 169 (= 43/44 C.E.) suggests that the “eparchies” in the Diogenes inscription refer primarily to the administrative units within the gubernatorial province of Syria. Just like the inscription from Gerasa, it mentions four unnamed eparchies as the area administered by a Gymnasiarch named Diodoros:<sup>21</sup>

Διόδωρος υἱοῦ Ἰδοῦ | γυμνασιαρχήσας τῶν Δ ἐπαρχιῶν | τὸ ΘΞΡ ἔτος

“Diodoros, son of Idas, was Gymnasiarch of the four eparchies, year 169” (transl. M. V.).



**Fig. 1.** Picture: Jean-Baptiste Yon, Mission archéologique de Tyr

<sup>19</sup> On this, cf. Vitale 2012, 277–278; 2013, 46–48; 2014a, 172–174.

<sup>20</sup> Sartre 2004, 169–171; 177.

<sup>21</sup> *I.Tyr* II, 53–54, no. 54 incl. figg. 54a–d; Vitale 2014a, 172–174 incl. fig. 1; also cf. Rey-Coquais 1981, 30; Sartre 2004, 173–174.

Unlike the Diogenes inscription, no mention is made of a metropolis as the Gymnasiarch's official seat. Accordingly, Diodoros's seat was probably the place the inscription was displayed, the Gymnasion in Tyre. Like Antioch, the Phoenician polis served as the metropolis of an administrative area covering several eparchies. However, the clarifying clause τῶν Δ ἐπαρχιῶν ([Gymnasiarch] of the four eparchies) in the Tyrian inscription has proved to be an addition made by another stonecutter. It is not possible to determine when this addition was made. M. Sartre reaches the logical conclusion "que Tyr abrite des concours communs aux quatre éparchies, mais que ce n'était pas encore le cas sous Claude."<sup>22</sup> Under the Emperor Claudius, the gubernatorial province of Syria contained only three eparchies, namely *Syria – Phoenice – Cilicia*, as Caligula had already returned *Comma-gene* to his childhood friend Antiochos IV. as a kingdom in 38 C.E. and *Judea* was not involved in organising the provincial imperial cult (see chap. 2 below). However, during the first century C.E., Cappadocia may at least temporarily have formed one of the "four eparchies" of Syria in question. Cappadocia was formed from the kingdom of the same name in 17 C.E. Even though the scant sources on Cappadocia's administrative status until Vespasian's reign do not permit any conclusive statements,<sup>23</sup> it nevertheless seems plausible, following W. Eck and M. A. Speidel,<sup>24</sup> that Cappadocia, like Commagene and Judea, was under the control of an equestrian *praefectus* who served under the supervision of the Syrian governor. Accordingly, the Diodoros inscription from Tyre could date from the time between Claudius and Vespasian and Diodoros's "four eparchies" could have included *Syria – Phoenice – Cilicia – Cappadocia*.<sup>25</sup> The outstanding position of Gymnasiarchs in Tyre during the early principate can be seen clearly in an exceptional new civic coin type issued ἐπὶ Διοφάντου / γυμνασιάρχου / ελτ'.<sup>26</sup>

## 2. 'Eparchy'/provincia: sub-districts of the imperial cult or sub-provinces of the governor's provincia?

What are "eparchies" to be understood as within the context of the provincial imperial cult? Are they individual "districts du culte impérial ('éparchie)'"<sup>27</sup> or "sub-districts of the

<sup>22</sup> Sartre 2004, 178.

<sup>23</sup> Cass. Dio 57. 17, 7; Tac. *Ann.* 12, 49; Suet. *Vesp.* 8, 4: *Cappadociae propter adsidios barbarorum incursus legiones addidit, consularemque rectorem imposuit pro eq. R.*; *AE* 1914.128 (Antioch near Pisidia); cf. *AE* 1966. 472 (Side); on the Syrian governors' supervisory position, cf. esp. Tac. *Ann.* 12, 49; on this in detail, cf. Vitale 2012, 240–245; 291–298.

<sup>24</sup> Eck 2007, 193–195; Speidel 2008, 58–62; arguing against Gwatkin 1930, 17–18; 30–32; Pflaum 1960, 65–66, no. 25; Thomasson 1984, 263, no. 2; Rémy 1986, 32; Levick 1999, 164; Cassia 2004, 48–49; Eich 2005, 150 incl. nn. 7 and 11. We can reject the view that Cappadocia was an independent area of jurisdiction under equestrian praesidial procurators, as the equestrian praesidial imperial procurators, who 'governed' their own *provincia* to all effects, are attested for the first time under Emperor Claudius (Levick 1990, 48–50; Eck 1995, 327–340; Eich 2005, 150–154; Vitale 2015, 33–34).

<sup>25</sup> For a detailed argument, cf. Vitale 2013, 48.

<sup>26</sup> On this, see Vitale 2014a, 177–179 incl. fig. 2 = *SEG* 57. 2050.

<sup>27</sup> Sartre 2004, 169.

Syrian provincial cult,”<sup>28</sup> as M. Sartre and K. Butcher put it? This is contradicted by the titles used by the civic colony Laodicea on its coinage from the first half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century C.E. (see chap. 11 below). In connection with the provincial imperial cult, Laodicea styles itself *Colonia Laodicea Metropolis IIII provinciarum* (“the colony Laodicea, metropolis of the four provinces”). Here, the Latin word *provincia* refers not only to a district of the cult, but is a term used in Roman administration.

This general confusion is caused by the fact that both the areas of responsibility of the highest officials of the provincial imperial cult and the areas administered by the governors of Syria or other provinces of Asia Minor appear as structured in “eparchies” on inscriptions. The possibility suggested by K. Butcher and other scholars that the “eparchies” on priestly and Gymnasiarch inscriptions represent districts created specially for the imperial cult does not tally with the fact that the number of “priestly” eparchies always corresponded to the number of sub-provinces. Based on this, it is inconceivable that descriptions of gubernatorial careers describe only the territorial structure of the provincial imperial cult in cultic districts or *koina*, especially as a governor’s jurisdiction could be described using only the name of a single one of these eparchies. For example, according to the detailed descriptions of the careers of C. Antius A. Iulius Quadratus (102–104 C.E.)<sup>29</sup> and C. Iulius Quadratus Bassus (115–117 C.E.),<sup>30</sup> the whole territory administered by the Syrian governors was divided into the three eparchies “Syria, Phoenice, Commagene” (πρεσβευτῆς καὶ ἀντιστράτηγος ἐπαρχείας Συρίας Φοινείκης Κομμαγενῆς). At the same time, the same area of competence could also appear only as the “eparchy of Syria” (πρεσβευτῆς καὶ ἀντιστράτηγος ἐπαρχείας Συρίας).<sup>31</sup> As in the case of the gubernatorial provinces of Asia Minor, which were made up of several eparchies (e.g. Cappadocia, Galatia, the ‘double/multiple provinces’ Pontus et Bithynia or the so-called *treis eparchiai* Cilicia – Isauria – Lycaonia),<sup>32</sup> the whole province of Syria was designated in two ways in inscriptions: as an enumeration of all of the eparchies it contained on the one hand, and only by the name of the earliest annexation, which then stood for all the other eparchies *pars pro toto*, on the other hand.<sup>33</sup> Later territorial gains were also given a name of their own as administrative sub-districts or eparchies at the time of their incorporation into the existing *provincia*.

Nothing suggests that this territorial and administrative division of a *provincia* only took place after or, as a result of, the organisation of a provincial imperial cult. When Cassius Dio writes that Pompey the Great united both (Coele) Syria and Phoenice and organised them as a single area of jurisdiction,<sup>34</sup> he is not referring to the division into individual districts of the provincial imperial cult set up under Augustus, but is rather mentioning the oldest administrative units of the *provincia* Syria. In fact, the same *Syria et Phoenice*

<sup>28</sup> Butcher 2003, 370: “The Syrian provincial cult was divided into smaller regional entities or sub-districts called—somewhat confusingly—provinces or eparchies;” for a similar view, cf. Meyer 1987/1988, 69 and Stein 1990, 269–270.

<sup>29</sup> *I.Ephesos* III, 614; VII.2, 3033–3034; *I.Didyma* 151.

<sup>30</sup> *IvP* VIII.3, 21; cf. the Latin version *AE* 1934.177 (Heliopolis): [prov(inciae)] / Syriae P[hoenices Commagenae]; cf. Rémy 1989, 203–204, no. 163.

<sup>31</sup> For example, *ILS* 8819.

<sup>32</sup> On this, see in detail Vitale 2012, 13–27.

<sup>33</sup> On this, see Vitale 2013, 35–41.

<sup>34</sup> Cass. Dio 37, 6–7a.

were given to the Augustan governor P. Sulpicius Quirinius (6–8/9 C.E.) honoured in the so-called *Titulus Tiburtinus*<sup>35</sup> along with *Asia*, referred to explicitly as a *provincia* in the previous line, as his total area of jurisdiction. However, this did not mean “the two eparchies of Syria and Phoenice” in the sense of priestly areas of responsibility. Rather, the corresponding numbers of “priestly” and “gubernatorial” eparchies confirm the opposite, namely that provincial *koina* were based upon existing Roman territorial administrative structures. Against this background, the “four eparchies” in the priestly titles of Diogenes and Diodoros can only be referred to as “éparchies du culte impérial”<sup>36</sup> or “provinces” of the imperial cult<sup>37</sup> with strong reservations. Here, we are dealing first and foremost with eparchies in the sense of Roman sub-provinces and only secondly with the corresponding provincial *koina* that occurred as an organisation led by common priests of the imperial cult and Gymnasiarchs.<sup>38</sup>

Compared to the priestly titles of Diogenes and Diodoros, only the inscription of Dexandros of Apamea is somewhat jarring, describing his priestly area of competence as an “eparchy” in the singular (ὁ πρῶτος τῆς ἐπαρχείας ἱερασύμενος). The formulation refers to the situation under Augustus, but is found in an inscription of 116/117 C.E. and thus diverges markedly from the phrasing used to describe the priesthood of Diogenes, who was responsible for “four eparchies” according to an inscription from Trajan’s reign. Was Dexandros only responsible for a specific eparchy, or do we—as in the case of the gubernatorial titles—need to consider the alternative meaning of the term “eparchy”/“*provincia*,” according to which the entire province of Syria, perhaps even a conglomerate of several eparchies, would have formed Dexandros’s eparchy? Accordingly, J.-P. Rey-Coquais interprets all three offices of Diogenes, Diodoros and Dexandros as having the same function, understanding Dexandros’s ἐπαρχεία in the sense of ‘entire gubernatorial province.’<sup>39</sup> By contrast, M. Sartre objects that at a time the gubernatorial province of Syria was divided into four eparchies, the great-grandson of Dexandros would not have failed to present his ancestor’s large area of responsibility in detail as the priesthood over “four eparchies.”<sup>40</sup> Dexandros’s area of responsibility must thus have been restricted to the eparchy of Syria in the sense of a “sub-province.” However, this argument is purely speculative, for neither do we know the precise date during Augustus’s reign that Dexandros took up his office, nor do we know with any certainty whether the gubernatorial province of Syria was divided into as many eparchies in the time immediately after 27 B.C.E. as it was under Trajan. Far from it: even after the incorporation of the eparchy of Judea in 6 C.E., there were at most three eparchies relevant to the provincial imperial cult (Syria – Phoenice – Cilicia) during Augustus’s time, as Judea or at least the majority of its provincial officials

<sup>35</sup> *CIL* XIV 3613 = *ILS* 918; rest. Alföldy 2005, 216–226: [P(ublius) Sulpicius P(ubli) f(ilius) Quirinius co(n) s(ul)] / [---] / [---] / [---] / [legatus pr(o) pr(aetore)] divi Augusti Syriam et Phoenicen optinens] / [bellum gessit cum gente Homonadensium] / [quae interfecerat Amyntam] / [r]egem qua redacta in pot[estatem Imperatoris Caesaris] / Augusti populique Romani senatu[s dis immortalibus] / supplicationes binas ob res prosp[ere ab eo gestas et] / ipsi ornamenta triumph[alia decrevit] / proconsul Asiam provinciam opti[nuit] legatus pro praetore] / divi Augusti iterum Syriam et Pho[enicen] optinuit.

<sup>36</sup> Sartre 2004, 179.

<sup>37</sup> Butcher 2003, 114.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. the critical discussion of the Latin term *provincia* in Bertrand 1989, 191–215.

<sup>39</sup> Rey-Coquais 1973, 51–52: “Le premier grand-prêtre du culte impérial dans la province romaine de Syrie.”

<sup>40</sup> Sartre 2004, 182.



were exempt from performing the province-wide imperial cult at least until the time before the Bar Kokhba revolt.<sup>41</sup> Thus the assumption that Dexandros, unlike Diogenes and Diodoros, was only in charge of the sub-province Syria requires clearer proof. For the time being, preference must thus be given to J.-P. Rey-Coquais's interpretation, according to which the "eparchy" of Dexandros, the Augustan priest of the imperial cult, was equivalent to the entire *provincia* of Syria.

### 3. *Syriarches* and *Phoenicarches*: presidencies over provincial assemblies and *sacerdotia* (*provinciae*)

There is no lack of epigraphic evidence for provincial games and priests of the provincial imperial cult during the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries. By contrast, there are only literary sources for *Syriarches*.<sup>42</sup> These chief priestly officials, analogously to the similar office titles in Asia Minor (e.g. *Asiarches*, *Bithyniarches*, *Paphlagoniarches*), were the presidents of the provincial assembly. However, the earliest evidence for a president of the Syrian assembly is only found during Commodus's reign. According to a brief note by the Antiochian annalist Johannes Malalas (6<sup>th</sup> century C.E.), under Commodus both the first *Alytarches* and the first *Syriarches*, Artabanios (ὀνομάσθη Συριάρχης πρῶτος),<sup>43</sup> were appointed in Antioch when the polis was permitted to host Olympic games once more. M. Sartre considers this late dating of the first Syriarch as compared to the attestations of his counterparts in Asia Minor to be improbable. Perhaps this was a misunderstanding on Malalas's part.<sup>44</sup> In M. Sartre's opinion, the *Syriarches* was only responsible for part of the entire gubernatorial province, namely the sub-province Syria.

However, the question of the territory covered by the office of the *Syriarches*, which was obviously connected to the games, cannot be answered for the time being. As Antioch, the official seat of the Syriarch, already served as the official seat of the priests of the imperial cult of the four eparchies during Trajan's time, the office of the *Syriarches* could have included several eparchies or the entire *provincia* Syria—and not only the sub-province of Syria. The terminology is ambiguous, as the name "Syria" in *Syri-arches* could refer both to the name of the entire gubernatorial province or merely to that of an administrative district. This is associated with another further problem: the areas of which Dexandros, Diogenes or Diodoros were in charge are not listed in the form of toponyms, but only by the administrative term *ἐπαρχεία*, both in its singular (Dexandros) and its plural form (Diogenes, Diodoros). Two questions thus arise:

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Haensch 1997, 237 n. 38; Pucci 1998, 473–474; on the implementation of the imperial cult in local cults both under Herod and under direct Roman rule, cf. Eck 2006, 15–19; 80–82 and Burnett 2007, 194–196.

<sup>42</sup> These are all passages of text from late antiquity; cf. Schenk von Stauffenberg 1931, 424–427.

<sup>43</sup> Ioh. Mal. 285, 17–19: Καὶ εὐθέως τότε ὀνομάσθη Συριάρχης πρῶτος Ἀρταβάνιος πολιτευόμενος, προβληθεὶς ἀπὸ τῶν κτητόρων καὶ τοῦ δήμου παντός; on this, cf. in detail Schenk von Stauffenberg 1931, 412–443; Sartre 2004, 168–169.

<sup>44</sup> Sartre 2001, 478 n. 54; 2004, 168–169: "trompé par le fait que les concours olympiques, peut-être associés au culte impérial, ont été restaurés au temps du même Commode;" by contrast, Schenk von Stauffenberg 1931, 427; 432 understands the appointment of the Syriarch to be a new creation of "Priestertum" under Commodus.

- 1) In the context of the provincial imperial cult and its priests, when is “eparchy” to be understood as the entire gubernatorial province and when as a sub-province?
- 2) To which extent is the office of the *Syri-arches* connected with these priestly offices?

A closer understanding of the *Syriarchy* beyond the administration of the Olympic games can only be gained indirectly from a comment made by the Severan jurist Modestinus in the *Digestes*, which contains an official definition of the “leading presidents (-*arches*):”<sup>45</sup> (*Dig.* 27. 1, 6, 14, *Mod.* 2 *excus.*): “Ἐθνους ἱερ<ω>σύνη, οἷον Ἀσιαρχία, Βιθυνιαρχία, Καππαδοκαρχία, παρέχει ἀλειτουρησίαν ἀπὸ ἐπιτροπῶν, τοῦτ' ἔστιν ἕως ἀν' ἀρχῆ (“The priesthood of an *ethnos* such as the Asiarchy, the Bithyniarchy or the Cappadocarchy relieves the holder of taking on guardianships during his term of office” (transl. M. V.). These official functions, which are explicitly leading ones (ἀρχή), are based upon the names of regions. The jurist describes them using the ambiguous term ἔθνος as ἔθνους ἱερωσύνη, literally as “priestly office of an *ethnos*” or an “Ethnarchy.” While the term *ethnos* originally refers to a “community of descent” or “people” / “ethnic group,” it is used differently in this context, namely in the sense of eparchy or *provincia*. For example, in their paraphrasing of the Modestinus passage, 9<sup>th</sup>-century Byzantine legal scholars render *Asiarchai* in a manner that diverges markedly from the 3<sup>rd</sup>-century original text as τῶν ἔθνῶν ἱερεῖς, not literally as “priests of the *ethne*,” but instead as “priests of the eparchies” (ἱερεῖς τῶν ἐπαρχιῶν).<sup>46</sup> In fact, the epigraphical evidence of the title ἀρχιερεὺς (τοῦ κοινοῦ) τῆς ἐπαρχείας in Thrace provides an exemplary touchstone for our administrative interpretation of the term ἔθνος.<sup>47</sup> In sources dating from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century C.E. in particular, ἔθνος was used synonymously to “eparchy” in an administrative-geographical sense to refer to the city league corresponding to the respective eparchy.<sup>48</sup>

However, despite the attested existence of ἐπαρχείας ἱερωσύνη / ἀρχιερωσύνη during the Principate, S. Friesen rejects the equation of ἔθνος and ἐπαρχεία in the Modestinus commentary and translates the text passage in question (ἔθνους ἱερωσύνη) as “priesthood of an ethnic group,” completely divorced from administrative regional divisions.<sup>49</sup> In contrast to S. Friesen, for example, J. Deininger takes the term ἔθνος to carry the same

<sup>45</sup> Similarly, Sartre 2004, 168 sees an analogy to the “ethnarchs” of Asia Minor; cf. Sartre 1995, 190–192.

<sup>46</sup> *Basilic.* 38. 1, 6: Καὶ μόνοι οἱ ἐν Ῥώμῃ νόμους ἐξηγούμενοι ἄφεςιν ἔχουσιν, καὶ οἱ ἐν ἀγῶσι στεφανούμενοι, καὶ οἱ ἱερεῖς τῶν ἐπαρχιῶν, τοῦτέστιν Ἀσιάρχαι καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ, ἕως οὗ τὴν τιμὴν πράττουσιν; cf. the comments by Campanile 2004, 78–79 and Vitale 2012, 33–34.

<sup>47</sup> *IGBulg* 5.5592, ll. 3–4; cf. *SEG* 55.1377; 1380; on this, cf. Vitale 2014b, 18.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Freyburger-Galland 1997, 34–35. This administrative meaning of the term *ethnos* in association with provincial priesthoods is all the more plausible as according to inscriptions at least the “ethnarchs” of Asia Minor held the presidency of the provincial assemblies. For example, according to an honorary inscription of the first century C.E. from the *polis* of Lycia, Tlos, the person honoured, “led the assemblies (*synagogai*) of the *koinon* three times as Lyciarch of the *ethnos*” (*TAM* II 583, ll. 7–9): Λυκιαρχήσαντα τοῦ ἔθνους / τὰς τρεῖς συναγωγὰς τοῦ κοινοῦ καθαρῶς καὶ ἐνδόξως; cf. Behrwald 2000, 205 and Jameson 1980, 842–843. The synonymous usage of ἔθνος and κοινόν is particularly evident in the sources of the Lycian city league. During the imperial period, the league presented itself mainly as ἔθνος (on this, cf. Behrwald 2000, 170–173; in general, cf. Mason 1974, 40–41). For example, when it says that Sextus Marcius Priscus reigned over the *ethnos* of the Lycians (i.e. the gubernatorial province of Lycia, which at that time had not yet been amalgamated with Pamphylia) for a period of eight years (between 64/65 and 70/71 C.E.), then the meaning of *ethnos* must be limited to Roman territorial administration, especially the term ἐπαρχεία (Eck 2007, 197–198).

<sup>49</sup> Friesen 1993, 93–97.

meaning as κοινόν with a slight nuance, and translates ἔθνοὺς ἱερωσύνη as “Provinzial-priestertum” (priesthood of a province).<sup>50</sup> Accordingly, D. Campanile and J. Rumscheid speak of “Provinc-archy.”<sup>51</sup> Other scholars prefer the reading “Koinarchy”<sup>52</sup> or the term “Eparchy-archy,”<sup>53</sup> which we will adopt here. Even though the term ἔθνος is missing thus far from the epigraphic and numismatic sources on Syria, Modestinus’s definition offers us further pointers for the two questions formulated above in regard to the issue of how the *Syriarchia* is to be classified:

- 1) In analogy to the “ethnarchies” of Asia Minor, the *Syriarchia* was a ἱερωσύνη, a priesthood. The same goes for the office of the *Phoenicarches*, which is attested in inscriptions and will be discussed further below (chap. 5). This is confirmed by an edict of Constantine of 336 C.E., which explicitly refers to the *Phoenicarcheis* and *Syriarcheis* as *sacerdotes*.<sup>54</sup> Besides these presidents of the provincial assemblies, thus far—e.g. in contrast to Asia (ἀρχιερεὺς τῆς Ἀσίας) and Lycia (Λυκίων ἀρχιερεὺς)—no mention of any proper “arch-priests of Syria” (ἀρχιερεὺς τῆς Συρίας) or “arch-priests of Phoenice” (ἀρχιερεὺς τῆς Φοινίκης) has been discovered. This is the result either of the comparatively sparse sources or simply of the regional *epigraphic habit*: in the Syrian eparchies, the function of provincial priesthood was not formulated explicitly,<sup>55</sup> because, presumably, it was contained within the Syriarchy or Phoenicarchy.<sup>56</sup>
- 2) The Syriarch’s area of responsibility is expressed through “Syria,” the first element of the title; analogously to most of the “ethnarchs” attested epigraphically in Asia Minor (cf. *Armeniarques*, *Paphlagoniarques*, *Lykiarques*), this probably does not refer to the entire gubernatorial province of Syria, but only to a certain administrative sub-unit, namely the actual eparchy of Syria. Similarly, M. Sartre observes “que ce magistrat de très haut rang dirige l’assemblée provinciale

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Deininger 1965, 139.

<sup>51</sup> Campanile 1993, 345; Rumscheid 2000, 38–39.

<sup>52</sup> Lorient 2006, 535.

<sup>53</sup> See on this most recently Vitale 2014b, 17–19.

<sup>54</sup> *Cod. Iust.* 5. 27, 1 pr: *Senatores seu perfectissimos, vel quos in civitatibus duumviralitas vel sacerdotii, id est phoenicarchiae vel syriarchiae, ornamenta condecorant*; similarly *Basic.* 38. 1. 6, 9 in the Greek version; on this, cf. Schenk von Stauffenberg 1931, 425; Sartre 2004, 171.

<sup>55</sup> In the sub-province Bithynia, despite the comparatively satisfactory source situation there is no literal attestation of “arch-priests of Bithynia” (ἀρχιερεῖς τῆς Βεϊθυνίας), but rather *tout court* “arch-priests” (ἀρχιερεῖς); on this, cf. Vitale 2012, 191–196.

<sup>56</sup> According to many scholars, titles such as “arch-priest of Asia” or “arch-priest of Lycia” do not refer to a separate office, but rather express merely the cultic aspect of the Asiarchy or Lyciarchy. Based on the edict of Constantine, the office of the president of the provincial assembly and that of the provincial priest also seem to have been identical in Syria (this is also the view of Deininger 1965, 88 incl. lit. in n. 1), but this was not noted in inscriptions. The fact that the few Syrian priests of the provincial imperial cult known to date refer to their official function as a priesthood (ἱερεὺς) rather than an arch-priesthood (ἀρχιερεὺς), in contrast to most of their counterparts in Asia Minor, also suggests that there was a different *epigraphic habit* in Syria. On the identity of *Asiarches* and “*Archierus* of Asia,” cf. the state of research in Engelmann 2000, 173–175; Friesen 1999, 275–290 argues against the identity theory, albeit only based upon the statistical results of an epigraphic database; on the identity of the offices of the Lyciarchs and the *Archieris* of Lycia, cf. Zimmermann 2007, 111–120 with a compilation of earlier discussion contributions Zimmermann 2007, 112–116; for a seminal account, now cf. Reitzenstein 2011, part. 11–13; 51–57.

(*koinon*) d'une province ou d'une subdivision de province dans le cas des provinces multicéphales."<sup>57</sup> Because *Syria*, too, was a multi-part gubernatorial province, we might deduce that each of its administrative districts was presided over by such an official. However, compelling evidence for this interpretation of the *Syriarchia* is lacking, for to date there is no absolutely conclusive epigraphic or numismatic proof either for a *Syriarches* or a *Phoinikarches* during the period before the large province of Syria was divided into a gubernatorial province Syria Coele and another gubernatorial province Syria Phoenice under Septimius Severus. However, Malalas's literary testimony (see above, *Ioh. Mal.* 285, 17–19) supports M. Sartre's assumptions at least in regard to its chronological information, in that the office of the Syriarch already existed under Commodus. At that time, *Phoenice* and *Syria* had not yet been divided into independent gubernatorial provinces. Accordingly, neither the Syriarch nor the Phoenicarch nor any other eparchy-arch can have been responsible for the province of Syria as a whole; thus the area of the *Syriarches* did not correspond to that of the ἱερεῖς τῶν τεσσάρων ἐπαρχειῶν, "priests of the four eparchies." For this reason, the toponym *Syria* in his title cannot have referred to the entire gubernatorial province. In contrast to the priests and Gymnasiarchs of the provincial imperial cult, the Syriarchy involved only one of the three or four eparchies, namely the actual eparchy of *Syria*. Unlike the provincial assemblies in Asia Minor, in the gubernatorial province of Syria thus had its own two-level hierarchy of the highest offices of the provincial imperial cult, in which the eparchy-archs were responsible for the sub-province indicated by their name, while priests of the imperial cult such as Diogenes were expressly responsible for all of the eparchies partaking in the provincial imperial cult in the gubernatorial province of Syria.<sup>58</sup>

#### 4. Antioch on the Orontes: first official seat of the province-wide imperial cult

Bronze coinages in the name of the "metropolis" of Antioch are first attested in 64/63 B.C.E. following the organisation of the province Syria under Pompey the Great (ANTIOXEΩΝ ΤΗΣ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΕΩΣ).<sup>59</sup> The last "metropolis" coinage before the 2<sup>nd</sup> century C.E. is attested in 38/39 C.E.<sup>60</sup> No abbreviations or images in Antioch's city coinage suggest that it presided over all Syrian sub-provinces as a metropolis. Rather, the polis refers to itself summarily as a "metropolis" without referring explicitly to any areas of responsibility,<sup>61</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Sartre 2004, 168.

<sup>58</sup> For a similar view, cf. Sartre 2004, 171: "rôle régional, non pas seulement municipal;" also cf. Sartre 2001, 478–479.

<sup>59</sup> Dated in the third year of the Pompeian era (67/66 B.C.E.); on this, cf. Seyrig 1950, 5–15 incl. table on p. 13.

<sup>60</sup> *RPC* 1, nos. 4167–4168.

<sup>61</sup> Such as *BMC Galatia-Syria*, 160–165, nos. 68, 100–107, 109–110, 112–114; for the reign of Trajan, cf. Waagé 1952, 40–41, nos. 422, 424, 429; cf. Gebhardt 2002, 119 in regard to the coins issued for the visit of Hadrian (128/129).

much like Tyre at the same time (see chap. 5 below). Despite the scant sources, during the first two centuries of Roman provincial rule Antioch seems to have been both the only metropolis in the eparchy of Syria and at least the preferred league centre and the place where the common provincial games, κοινὸς [ἀγών], of all Syrian eparchies were held.<sup>62</sup> This is suggested by the following sources in particular:

- 1) In the agonistic inscription for the athlete Artemidoros dating from the Flavian period, Antioch is referred to as the host city of the joint provincial games in association with the κοινὸς Συρίας Κιλικίας Φοινείκης ἐν Ἀντιοχείᾳ.<sup>63</sup>
- 2) The older games-related honorary inscription from Magnesia on the Maeander for the pankratiast Demokrates from the mid-1<sup>st</sup> century C.E. also mentions the κοινὸς Συρίας γ'.<sup>64</sup> The city coinage from the time of Trajan, also in connection with the common provincial games, carries the legend κοινὸν Συρίας, "common games of Syria."<sup>65</sup> Both inscriptions probably refer to the same federal/provincial games. However, unlike the Artemidoros inscription, these sources do not refer explicitly to several sub-provinces, but only to Syria. While the question of whether Syria here includes all other sub-provinces *pars pro toto* is certainly worth considering (especially in the case of the coinage), there is no conclusive answer. The fact that the honorary inscription for Artemidoros also provides more detail on all his other victories, unlike the inscription for Demokrates, speaks in favour of this theory.<sup>66</sup>
- 3) Antioch appears as "metropolis of the four eparchies" on the inscription of Gerasa dating from the later part of Trajan's reign (*SEG* 7, 847).
- 4) According to a passage in the *Vita Hadriani*, Hadrian "was filled with such hatred towards the Antiochians that he wanted to divide Syria and Phoenice so that Antioch could no longer call itself a metropolis of many cities."<sup>67</sup> This textual passage of the *Vita Hadriani* is disputed in the literature. It is interpreted either as a retrojection of the condition of the Severan period (when the new provinces of Syria Phoenice and Syria Coele were set up following the division of the large province Syria, and Laodicea was chosen as the new metropolis instead of Antioch, see chap. 11 below) or as an ambiguous account of the conditions under Hadrian.<sup>68</sup> However, regardless of which of these interpretations is correct, this

<sup>62</sup> Thus Meyer 1987/1988, 69–70; Gebhardt 2002, 306–307.

<sup>63</sup> *IAG* 183–186, no. 67, ll. 15–16.

<sup>64</sup> *IAG* 162–164, no. 62; on the dating, see chap. 1.

<sup>65</sup> E.g. Waagé 1952, 39, nos. 400–401.

<sup>66</sup> For example, the common games of (the province) Asia do not appear simply as κοινὸς Ἀσίας, but include the respective host city (cf. ll. 7 (ἐν Ζυμόρνῃ); 11 (ἐν Περγάμῳ); 12 (ἐν Ἐφέσῳ)). Accordingly, κοινὸς Συρίας could simply be an older, abbreviated version of the detailed phrase κοινὸς Συρίας Κιλικίας Φοινείκης ἐν Ἀντιοχείᾳ.

<sup>67</sup> *HA Hadr.* 14, 1: *Antiochenses inter haec ita odio habuit, ut Syriam a Phoenice separare voluerit, ne tot civitatum metropolis Antiochia diceretur*; cf. the commentary in Fündling 2006, 666–669.

<sup>68</sup> Bowersock 1985, 87; Sartre 2004, 177–178 interprets this episode as "ce pourrait être le reflet d'un autre partage effectué entre Antioche et Tyr: celui du privilège d'abriter les célébrations communes aux quatre éparchies" (followed by Hirt 2009, 81; Gebhardt 2002, 308 already argues in this direction); according to Haensch 1997, 252–254 any attempt "den historischen Kern der Nachricht der *Historia Augusta* zu ermitteln" is hopeless.

mention of *Syria* and *Phoenice* in in the *Vita Hadriani* attests Antioch's function as a metropolis, a function spanning the sub-provinces.<sup>69</sup>

- 5) According to the abovementioned observation by Malalas, the (chronologically) first *Syriarches* was appointed and held office in Antioch.

## 5. The *koinon* of Phoenice

The coinage of Tyre provides the earliest explicit proof of a *koinon* of the eparchy Phoenice. The ancient Phoenician port city was officially declared a metropolis under Domitian at the latest.<sup>70</sup> Semi-autonomous city coinage with the obverse legend ΤΥΡΟΥ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΕΩΣ ([coinage] of the metropolis Tyre) and the depiction of a laurel-crowned bust of Heracles Melqart, the city deity of Tyre, on the reverse bear the legend ΚΟΙΝΟΥ ΦΟΙΝΙΚΗΣ—ΑΚΤ (or ΑΚΤΙ) as the circumscription of an eight-columned temple front. Given the lack of any elements that allow for precise dating, the coinage is generally dated to the period between 101 and 200 C.E.<sup>71</sup>



**Fig. 2.** Tyre; 2<sup>nd</sup> century C.E.: *Obv.* ΤΥΡΟΥ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΕΩΣ; *Rev.* ΚΟΙΝΟΥ ΦΟΙΝΙΚΗΣ—ΑΚΤ(I) (TYP in Phoenician); image: *RPC Online temp.* – No. 5662; AE 26 mm; 11,43 g.<sup>72</sup>

On all known specimens, the coin legend ΚΟΙΝΟΥ ΦΟΙΝΙΚΗΣ does not appear in the more common nominative form, for example as ΚΟΙΝΟΝ ΦΟΙΝΙΚΗΣ, as D. C. Baramki erroneously states,<sup>73</sup> but without exception in the rare genitive form. The sequence

<sup>69</sup> Cf. the detailed discussion of this passage in Vitale 2013, 151–157; similarly Fündling 2006, 668–669.

<sup>70</sup> On the *koinon* of Phoenice in general, cf. Deiningner 1965, 88; Ziegler 1985, 71 n. 31; Meyer 1987/1988, 69–70; Millar 1990, 31–32; 34–37; Gebhardt 2002, 307–308; Burrell 2004, 252.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Gebhardt 2002, 308.

<sup>72</sup> Reference: *BMC Phoenicia*, 268, nos. 361–366, Imhoof-Blumer 1890, 767, no. 795; Rouvier 1900, no. 2246.

<sup>73</sup> Baramki 1974, 248, no. 201; adopted by Leschhorn – Franke 2002, 172.

of letters in exergue, AKT or AKTI, are abbreviations of *Aktia*, the games held in honour of Octavian's victory at Actium in 31 B.C.E.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, coinages under Caracalla and Gallienus bear the Latin inscription ACTIA (H)ERACLIA,<sup>75</sup> and under Volusian (251–253 C.E.) display the Greek equivalent AKT(IA) HPA(ΚΛΕΙΑ) or AKT(IA) KOM(MOΔΕΙΑ).<sup>76</sup> The *Herakleia* in Tyre were ancient games held in honour of the city's god Heracles Melqart, which were obviously changed into provincial games during Caracalla's reign at the very latest. Because of the genitive form ΚΟΙΝΟΥ ΦΟΙΝΙΚΗΣ, the coin circumscription with the depiction of an eight-pillared temple front can be read in three possible ways: "(games) *Aktia* of the *koinon* of Phoenice;" "common (imperial cult) of Phoenice"<sup>77</sup> or "(coinage) of the *koinon* of Phoenice, (games) *Aktia*."<sup>78</sup> After Tyre's elevation to a Roman *colonia* (198 C.E.), coinages of the same type in the name of the Phoenician *koinon* also bear a Latin equivalent under Macrinus and Diadumenianus (217/218 C.E.). The coin reverse shows a temple with several columns with the inscription COENV PHOENICES:<sup>79</sup> the exact Latin transcription of the Greek legend ΚΟΙΝΟΥ ΦΟΙΝΙΚΗΣ.<sup>80</sup> Because of the Heracles Melqart coinages in the name of the Phoenician *koinon*, the thesis has been put forward that Tyre only put on its own provincial games as a metropolis after Syria's division into the two gubernatorial provinces of Syria Coele and Syria Phoenice under Septimius Severus in 194/195 C.E., when Phoenice gained the administrative status of an independent gubernatorial province. However, this conclusion cannot be upheld without precise dates for the coinages in question and without further independent evidence.<sup>81</sup>

## Phoenicarches

To date, the presidents of the assembly of *Phoenice* have appeared on two honorary inscriptions under the title Φοινικάρχης, conforming to Modestinus's definition of the highest federal offices in Asia Minor as ἔθνους ἱερωσύνη. An honorary inscription from Eleusis was erected at an unknown date for a certain Ptolemaios, son of the *Phoinikarches*

<sup>74</sup> For example Ziegler 1985, 71 n. 31; Meyer 1987/1988, 60 incl. n. 6; Gebhardt 2002, 308; Leschhorn – Franke 2002, 172 n. 1. By contrast, Rouvier 1900, no. 2246 and Baramki 1974, 248, nos. 201–202 interpret AKT as the local year 321, neglecting to take count of the key variant AKTI, however.

<sup>75</sup> *BMC Phoenicia*, 271, no. 379; 295, nos. 493, 498.

<sup>76</sup> *BMC Phoenicia*, 444; Rouvier 1900, no. 2488.

<sup>77</sup> Thus Leschhorn – Franke 2002, 172 analogously to the legend ΚΟΙΝΟΥ ΑΣΙΑΣ.

<sup>78</sup> Analogously to the legend ΚΟΙΝΟΥ ΑΣΙΑΣ (*RPC* 1, 489, no. 2994) from the Augustan period, written within a wreath; on the interpretation of the coin legend, cf. Levy 1994, 81–82, who states that it is "generally believed to denote the minting authority, the Koinon of Asia;" also n. 13: "The Inscription ΚΟΙΝΟΥ ΑΣΙΑΣ on the issue discussed here is sometimes seen, alternatively, as a reference to the provincial games held at Smyrna (they were called the Koinon, or Koina of Asia): (...). But, if so, use of the genitive ΚΟΙΝΟΥ seems odd."

<sup>79</sup> Rouvier 1900, nos. 2335–2336 (Macrinus); Rouvier 1900, no. 2343 (Diadumenianus).

<sup>80</sup> As already observed by Deininger 1965, 88.

<sup>81</sup> Depending on the date given to the inscription of the Gymnasiarch Diodoros from Tyre (see chap. 1 above), Tyre could already have presided over four eparchies before the division of the provinces, like Antioch and (during the Severan period) Laodicea before it; a similar view is taken by Sartre 2004, 178–179.

Serenus.<sup>82</sup> According to M. Sartre, the simple name form of the honoured individual and his father suggest that they were not Roman citizens, and that thus the inscription can at best be dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century C.E., with the 1<sup>st</sup> century C.E. being more likely.<sup>83</sup> A further honorary inscription from Gerasa mentions the Phoenicarch M. Aurelius Maro. C. B. Welles is of the opinion that Aurelius Maro must have held this office during the first half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century C.E. due to the form of his name.<sup>84</sup> However, the name form does not preclude an earlier date, for example around the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century C.E.,<sup>85</sup> as the cognomen “Maro” was widespread in the Syrian region.<sup>86</sup>

Based upon the scant numismatic and epigraphic sources for the period from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century C.E., the poleis of the eparchy *Phoenice* and of the later gubernatorial province *Syria Phoenice* had their own provincial assembly. The assembly must have convened in Tyre, its main seat, until into the 3<sup>rd</sup> century C.E. During the reign of Emperor Elagabalus (218–222 C.E.) at the latest, however, Sidon and Tripolis became league centres rivalling Tyre, presenting the title of metropolis and a neocorate temple of the imperial cult on their coinages.<sup>87</sup> Meanwhile, Tyre no longer proclaimed any metropolis title, presumably as the Emperor had taken away the title and given it to Sidon instead.

## 6. Tyre, “metropolis of Phoenice and both of the cities in Coele Syria and of the other poleis”

On coin legends from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century C.E., both Sidon and Tyre claim in Phoenician to be the “mother city” of the other polis.<sup>88</sup> Similarly, the Augustan geographer Strabo mentions the centuries-long rivalry between the Phoenician trade cities Sidon and Tyre over which was to be recognised exclusively as the metropolis of the Phoenicians. Strabo lists the poleis’ size, level of fame and age as criteria for their claim to metropolitan status.<sup>89</sup> He

<sup>82</sup> *OGIS* 596.

<sup>83</sup> Sartre 2004, 169.

<sup>84</sup> *IGR* 3.1375 = *I.Gerasa*, no. 188, ll. 1–13: Μάρκον Αὐρήλιον / [Μ]άρωνα Ἀμόντου Δημ[η]/[τ]ρίου πρ[ῶ]τον τῆς πόλ[εως] (...) καὶ Φοινε[ι]/[κ]αρχήσαντα καὶ πάσα[ς].

<sup>85</sup> Also Sartre 2004, 169 n. 13.

<sup>86</sup> Christol 1976, 175–176; a marble column from Caesarea for example honours an Αὐ[ρ](ήλιον) Μ[α]ρωνα ἐπίτρο(σπον) / τ[ο]ῦ σεβ(αστοῦ) διέποντα / τὰ [μέ]ρη τῆς ἡγεμον(ίας) (Christol 1976, 170–176 = *SEG* 26.1674 = *AE* 1978.824; on the office-holder, cf. Eck 1978, 78; Thomasson 1984, 326, no. 42 under *incerti*). As the financial procurator of the province *Syria-Palaestina*, Aurelius Maro took on the gubernatorial office of *agens vice praesidis*. As only one emperor is mentioned in the title, his office is presumed to date to the reign of Gordian III (238–244 C.E.) or between 260–282 C.E.

<sup>87</sup> Burrell 2004, 252.

<sup>88</sup> E.g. *BMC Phoenicia*, cvii; cf. *BMC Phoenicia*, 155, nos. 87–91 the coin inscriptions from Sidon.

<sup>89</sup> Strabo 16. 2, 22: μετὰ δὲ Σιδῶνα μεγίστη τῶν Φοινίκων καὶ ἀρχαιότατη πόλις Τύρος ἐστίν, ἐνάμιλλος αὐτῇ κατὰ τε μέγεθος καὶ κατὰ τὴν ἐπιφάνειαν καὶ τὴν ἀρχαιότητα ἐκ πολλῶν μύθων παραδεδομένην. οἱ μὲν οὖν ποιηταὶ τὴν Σιδῶνα τεθρυλήκασιν μᾶλλον (Ὁμηρος δὲ οὐδὲ μέμνηται τῆς Τύρου), αἱ δ’ εἰς τὴν Λιβύην καὶ τὴν Ἰβηρίαν ἀποικίαι μέχρι καὶ ἔξω σπηλιῶν τὴν Τύρον πλέον ἐξυμνοῦσιν. ἀμφοτέραι δ’ οὖν ἔνδοξοι καὶ λαμπραὶ καὶ πάλαι καὶ νῦν: ὁποτέραν δ’ ἂν τις εἴποι μητρόπολιν Φοινίκων ἕρις ἐν ἀμφοτέραις ἐστίν; cf. Puech 2004, 368–369 with a French translation in n. 63.



grants the Tyrians a slight advantage over Sidon in that they founded colonies not only in the continents of Africa and Europe, but even beyond the Pillars of Hercules. Nevertheless, passages in Homer lead Strabo to refer to Sidon alone as a metropolis.<sup>90</sup> Apart from Homer's vote, the competition between Sidon and Tyre over the status of metropolis was obviously still undecided during Strabo's time. Until the early Principate, the coinage of the two poleis—which is almost continuously attested since the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E.—does not contain the title of metropolis. Otherwise, Strabo would hardly have hesitated to mention an 'official' Roman preference for one of the two rivals.

Tyre's metropolis title appears for the first time on coinage from 84/85 C.E. under Domitian, only a few decades after Strabo's text.<sup>91</sup> The fact that Tyre suddenly appears as a metropolis cannot be explained by Sidon being raised to a metropolis at the same time, for Sidon only received this honour under Elagabalus. Rather, it means that Domitian first permitted the Tyrians to hold the official title of metropolis.<sup>92</sup> In the simple variant ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΕΩΣ, without the area of responsibility usually given in the genitive case (e.g. "metropolis of Phoenice"), the Tyrians used their metropolitan title on coins until the reign of Emperor Gallienus. By contrast, Tyre's metropolis title in combination with the detailed enumeration of several areas of responsibility is first attested in an inscription in the temple of Apollo in Didyma honouring C. Antius A. Iulius Quadratus, who was governor of Syria between 102 and 104 C.E. Tyre, the dedicant, presents itself as follows in lines 9–11: ἡ βουλή καὶ ὁ δῆμος Τυρίων τῆς / ἱερᾶς καὶ ἀσύλου καὶ αὐτονόμου μητροπόλεως Φοινείκης καὶ τῶν κατὰ / Κοίλην Συρίαν καὶ ἄλλων πόλεων καὶ ναυαρχίδος.<sup>93</sup>

However, contrary to the claims of G. W. Bowersock, we cannot deduce from the sources that Tyre carried the simple title variant "metropolis" in a purely honorary sense as "mother-city," or even misused it or used it in an ambiguous manner during the period before Trajan.<sup>94</sup> For coinages of 112/113 C.E., dated to the same time as the Didyma inscription, give the same privileges in a selective and synthetic form: "(Coinage)" of the holy metropolis" (ΙΕΡΑΣ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΕΩΣ).<sup>95</sup> Apparently the respective medium determined the selection of the existing city privileges.

<sup>90</sup> Strabo 1. 2, 33: εἰ δὲ Φοίνικας εἰπὼν ὀνομάζει καὶ Σιδωνίους τὴν μητρόπολιν αὐτῶν σχήματι συνήθει χρεῖται; contra Puech 2004, 368 n. 63 it is not "Strabon, qui n' hésitait pas à déclarer Sidon métropole de Phénicie," but Homer who completely ignores Tyre (cf. above Strabo 16. 2, 22).

<sup>91</sup> *RPC* 2, 294–295, no. 2063 (ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΕΩΣ); no. 2073 (ΙΕΡΑΣ – ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟ – ΛΕΩΣ); by contrast, Puech 2004, 376 erroneously dates the first attestations of the metropolis title 93/4 C.E. Coinage of the same type dated to the local year 203 (= 77/78 C.E.) still carries the legend ΙΕΡΑ ΑΣΥ commonly used since the 2<sup>nd</sup> century C.E.; *RPC* 2, 294, nos. 2067–2073 from the period between 74/75 and 84/85 C.E.; cf. during the same period the abbreviated legend ΙΕΡ – ΑΣ (*RPC* 2, 295, nos. 2077–2088).

<sup>92</sup> For example Haensch 1997, 253; Puech 2004, 376.

<sup>93</sup> *AE* 1929.98 = *I. Didyma* 151: Γάιον Ἀντίον Ἰούλιον Αὔλου <υ>ἰὸν (...) πρεσβευτήν καὶ ἀντιστράτηγον / Αὐτοκράτορος Νέρουα Τραιανοῦ Καίσαρος Σεβαστοῦ Γερμανικοῦ ἐπαρ/χείας Συρίας Φοινείκης Κομμαγηνῆς vac. ἡ βουλή καὶ ὁ δῆμος Τυρίων τῆς / ἱερᾶς καὶ ἀσύλου καὶ αὐτονόμου μητροπόλεως Φοινείκης καὶ τῶν κατὰ / Κοίλην Συρίαν καὶ ἄλλων πόλεων καὶ ναυαρχίδος (...).

<sup>94</sup> Contra Bowersock 1985, 81: "The possible confusion of μητρόπολις in the sense of 'mother-city' with the formal title conferred by the Romans would have been a strong inducement for a place like Tyre to make use of the word."

<sup>95</sup> *BMC Phoenicia*, 262–264, nos. 313–330 between 93/94 and 195/196 C.E.



**Fig. 3.** Tyre; Trajan (112/113 C.E.); Rev. ΗΑΣ [year 238] / ΙΕΡΑΣ / ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΙ / ΑΕΩΣ; Triton V Sale, 15 January 2002, no. 564;<sup>96</sup> AE 20 mm; 6,92 g.

A slightly later source dates from between 134 and 138 C.E. The Tyrian cohort prefect M. Iulius Pisonianus had an honorary inscription carved in Eumeneia in Phrygia,<sup>97</sup> which presents his native polis as *metropolis Phoenices et Coeles Syriae*, a much shorter title than commonly used during Trajan's reign.<sup>98</sup> Besides the titles *hieros*, *asylos* and *autonomos*, "(metropolis of) the other poleis" is also missing. However, it seems unlikely that Tyre had been forced to give up this area of responsibility in the meantime. Rather, from the dedicator's point of view, this addition was not necessarily worth mentioning.<sup>99</sup> The Tyrians cannot have lost the title "(metropolis of) the other poleis," as it reappears once more in 174 C.E. in an inscription from the Italic port Puteoli (today's Pozzuoli). According to this inscription, Tyre was "sacred, *asylos* and autonomous Metropolis of Phoenice and of other Poleis, and *nauarchis* ('mistress of ships')"<sup>100</sup> While on the one hand this is the earliest epigraphic source of the title *ναυαρχίς*, on the other hand the title "(metropolis) of the poleis in Coele Syria" is missing. This title does not appear later, either. On an inscription upon the base of a statue for Geta in the Roman *colonia* and Phoenician colony foundation Leptis Magna, the title of the dedicator Tyre, omitting further titles, now reads *Septimia Tyros colonia metropolis Phoenices*

<sup>96</sup> *BMC Phoenicia*, 262, no. 315.

<sup>97</sup> On the dating, cf. Haensch 1997, 253 n. 129; Puech 2004, 377 n. 103.

<sup>98</sup> AE 1927.95: [I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)] / [pro salute Imp(eratoris) Caes(aris)] / [divi Traiani Parth(ici) fil(ii)] / divi Nervae [n]epoti[s] / Traiani Hadriani Aug(usti) / domuique(!) ei{!}us / senatui(!) populiq(ue) R(omani) / et coh(ortibus) Cl(audiae) Sygambrium / veteranae equitatae / M(arcus) Iulius M(arci) f(ilius) Fabia / Pisonianus qui et Dion / praef(ectus) fabrum et praef(ectus) / coh(ortis) s(upra) s(criptae) domo Tyro / metropolis Phoenices / et Coeles Syriae qui a / Moesia inf(erioris) Montan(ensi) / praesidio numerum / in Asia perduxit / v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito).

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Puech 2004, 370.

<sup>100</sup> IG XIV 830 = OGIS 595; cf. SEG 49.1366; ll. 1–3: ἐπιστολή γραφεῖσα τῇ πόλει / Τυρίων, τῆς ἱερᾶς καὶ ἀσύλου καὶ αὐτονόμου μητροπόλεως Φοινείκης καὶ ἄλλων πόλεων καὶ ναυαρχίδος; on this, cf. Sosin 1999, 275–284; Gebhardt 2002, 192–193; Vitale 2013, 67–68.

*et aliarum civitatum* (“Septimia Tyros, colony, Metropolis of Phoenice and of other cities”).<sup>101</sup>

During the same time period, two statue dedications in Tyre were made explicitly for “Tyre the (metropolis) and the/our own metropolis” (Τύρον καὶ ἑαυτῆς μητρόπολιν). *Leptis Magna*<sup>102</sup> and another unknown polis are the dedicants (l. 1–5: ----ΕΩΝ τῆς / [ιε]ρᾶς καὶ ἀσύ/λου καὶ αὐτο/νόμου / καὶ ναυαρχίδος).<sup>103</sup> The word καὶ in the phrase Τύρον καὶ ἑαυτῆς μητρόπολιν apparently coordinates two different aspects of the city’s function as a metropolis. On the one hand, Tyre is referred to generally as ἡ μητρόπολις, while on the other hand it is spoken of as “the/our own metropolis” (ἑαυτὴ μητρόπολις) from the point of view of *Leptis Magna*. Tyre’s title “(metropolis) of other poleis” (*metropolis aliarum civitatum*) explains this formulation,<sup>104</sup> as it includes all historical and supposed foundations by Phoenicians from Tyre,<sup>105</sup> such as *Leptis Magna*, for example. In an undated statue dedication from the same site, an unknown polis honours Τύρον τὴν μητρόπολιν (Tyre, the metropolis).<sup>106</sup> In contrast to the statue dedications from Tyre’s daughter colony *Leptis Magna*, this simple phrase without the coordinating καὶ expresses not the special relationship between daughter- and mother-city, but Tyre’s official function as a metropolis within the eparchy *Phoenice* or the later gubernatorial province *Syria Phoenice*.<sup>107</sup> Tyre’s metropolitan title, contrary to the one-sided interpretation as “mother-city of a colony,”<sup>108</sup> was thus based upon a double meaning that was both official and administrative as well as unofficial and historical-colonial:<sup>109</sup> on the one hand, Tyre was the centre of the province-wide imperial cult in *Phoenice*, and on the other hand was the “mother-city” of colonies.

It is striking that the title “(metropolis) of the poleis in Coele Syria” is missing in Tyrian sources from the late 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries C.E. A large part of the specialist research explains this with the fact that the title was transferred to Damascus after Hadrian;<sup>110</sup> Damascus is first attested as a metropolis under Antoninus Pius, but its metropolis title does not refer to any area of responsibility (see chap. 7 below). It is also problematic that—unlike *Phoenice*, for example—none of the sources state that Coele Syria formed a *provincia*/

<sup>101</sup> Reynolds – Ward-Perkins 1952, no. 437 = *AE* 1954.201j = *AE* 1998.1425 (*Leptis Magna*). The imperial epithet *Septimia* is a new feature of the Tyrian title, associated with the colony status Tyre received as a reward for its loyalty to Septimius Severus in the civil war against Pescennius Niger.

<sup>102</sup> *I. Tyr* II, 50, no. 49 = *AE* 1987.959: [---]Λ[---] / κολωνία Οὐλπία Τρα[ιανῆ] Αὐ[γοῦστα] Πιστῆ Λέπκ[ις] Με[γ]γάλη, Τύρον τὴν κα[ὶ] ἑαυτῆς / μητρόπολιν (...); cf. *I. Tyr* II, 50, no. 48 = *AE* 1987.958 = *AE* 1998.1425 = *AE* 2006.1581 (Tyre): Col(onia) Ulpia / Traiana Aug(usta) / Fidelis Lepcis Magna Tyron et / suam metropolin.

<sup>103</sup> *I. Tyr* II, 51–52, no. 51 suspects the dedicant is the port city of Kition on the southern Cyprus coast.

<sup>104</sup> As also claimed by Hirt 2009, 79.

<sup>105</sup> Puech 2004, 377.

<sup>106</sup> *I. Tyr* II, 50–51, no. 50. The combination of titles in the inscription, “holy (polis) of asylum and autonomy” (ll. 1–3: [---] ἱερᾶς καὶ / [ἀσύ]λου καὶ / [αὐ]τονόμου), was held by many of the region’s cities; in *Phoenice* and *Judea* alone, *Ptolemais*, *Dora*, *Tripolis* and *Sepphoris-Diokaisareia* and in *Decapolis* *Abila*, *Kapitolias*, *Gadara* and *Gerasa* are possibilities; cf. Rigsby 1996, 488539; on the combination of titles, cf. Gebhardt 2002, 266.

<sup>107</sup> J.-P. Rey-Coquais (*I. Tyr* II, 182) makes a distinction between “métropole de la province” and “métropole de colonies”.

<sup>108</sup> Bowersock 1985, 81; also arguing against Bowersock, Sartre 2004, 176–178; Puech 2004, 376. In *Asia Minor*, this play with the ambiguity of the term “metropolis” is evident in the 2<sup>nd</sup>- and 3<sup>rd</sup>-century coinage of the Pontic polis *Herakleia*; for a extensive discussion, cf. Robert 1937, 245–248; Heller 2006, 291 n. 23.

<sup>109</sup> Puech 2004, 376: “métropole au sens historique du terme, c’est à dire fondatrice de colonies”.

<sup>110</sup> Sartre 2004, 175–177; cautiously adopted by Puech 2004, 378 incl. n. 104.

ἐπαρχεία with a corresponding *koinon*.<sup>111</sup> Accordingly, the theory that Tyre was a “doublement métropole,” so to speak, of a “district du culte impérial” made up mainly of Phoenice and Coele Syria<sup>112</sup> is not confirmed by sources to date.<sup>113</sup> Without clear evidence, no administrative significance can be attached to the mention of Coele Syria in Tyre’s metropolis title.<sup>114</sup> Rather, in the sources from the time after Hadrian, Coele Syria seems to be referred to in the more general phrase “(metropolis) of other poleis.”

## 7. Damascus: metropolis in the inland of Syria

The issue of a *koinon* of Coele Syria during the imperial period is closely linked with the question of Damascus’s area of responsibility in its function as a metropolis. Damascus was one of the most important poleis in the *Decapolitana regio*.<sup>115</sup> Under Domitian at the latest, this area in southeastern Syria, which is referred to as Decapolis by ancient historians and geographers and was densely populated by Greek poleis, developed into a sub-province ruled by a *praefectus*, as attested by a fragmentary career inscription from Chersonnesos in Thrace (*SEG* 31, 675, Fr. B).<sup>116</sup> However, here we face the difficulty that no known example of Damascus’s metropolis title includes an area of responsibility in the form of a toponym.<sup>117</sup> To date, the earliest evidence of Damascus’s metropolis title

<sup>111</sup> On this, cf. the exhaustive discussion in Vitale 2013, 69–73.

<sup>112</sup> According to Sartre 2004, 178, poleis of other gubernatorial provinces, such as Gaza, are supposed to have belonged to this “district.”

<sup>113</sup> Even if the cities of Phoenice had been included among the member poleis of a larger “district du culte impérial”, the correct form of Tyre’s title would have had to have been μητροπόλις τῶν κατὰ Φοινείκην καὶ κατὰ Κοίλην Συρίαν καὶ ἄλλων πόλεων. However, in all variants of the title, Phoenice as an area of responsibility is clearly distinguished from the others and is not left out in any of the known inscriptions.

<sup>114</sup> E.g. Jones 1928, 157, no. 16; Jones 1971, 512 and Rey-Coquais 1978, 53; Rey-Coquais 1981, 29 (followed in principle by Puech 2004, 384) count Coele Syria as one of the four unnamed eparchies of the provincial priest Diogenes from Gerasa (*SEG* 7.847, ll. 3–4), although Coele Syria does not appear among the sub-provinces of the governor Antius A. Iulius Quadratus during the same time (*AE* 1929.98: Συρίας Φοινείκης Κομμαγηνῆς); a similar stance is already taken by Bickerman 1947, 267 n. 2, who follows E. Kornemann in interpreting these eparchies as “quatre dioceses de la province”, that is, as judicial districts; Kornemann 1903, 724–725; in reference to Asia Minor also cf. Mitchell 1999, 28–29; Meyer-Zwiffelhofer 2002, 224 n. 3; for a counterargument, cf. Vitale 2012, 54–60. However, the equation of “four eparchies” with judicial districts must be rejected, as thus far there is no evidence of any fixed divisions of the Syrian province into judicial districts (Haensch 1997, 254).

<sup>115</sup> Pliny, *HN* 5.74: *Iungitur et latere Syriae Decapolitana regio, a numero oppidorum, in quo non omnes eadem observant, primum tamen Damascus.*

<sup>116</sup> Ed. pr. Hauvette-Besnault 1880, 507–509 = *IGR* 1.824 = *I.Sestos* 96–97, no. 53 = *SEG* 31.675: Fr. B ... ]Α, ἐπάρχῳ [εἰλ]ης β’ Παννονίων, [ῆ]ρη]/[σα]μένῳ Δεκαπόλεως τῆς ἐν Συρίᾳ, τετει[μη]/μένῳ δόροις στρατιωτικοῖς πᾶσιν ἐν τε τῷ / [Δ]ακικῷ πολέμῳ [καὶ ἐν τῷ Γερμανικῷ πολέμῳ]; cf. Isaac 1981, 67–74; Eck 2006, 37 incl. n. 73; Vitale 2013, 33–34; also Bowersock 1983, 91 incl. n. 5; Sartre 1991, 317; Lichtenberger 2003, 11.

<sup>117</sup> According to Sartre 2004, 182 the lack of geographical names in Damascus’s metropolis title suggests that it was a mere “décoration supplémentaire.” This is contradicted by the reverse of the coinages from Damascus (COL DAMA METRO) from the time of Philippus Arabs that depict eparchy personifications making sacrifices, which suggests that Damascus took part in provincial games jointly with Laodicea and Tyre (see chap. 11 below).

(ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΩΣ ΔΑΜΑΚΗΝΩΝ) is provided by undated coinages from the reign of Antoninus Pius in the name of the ΘΕΟC ΑΔΡΙΑΝΟC, the deified Hadrian.<sup>118</sup> We cannot deduce from this that Damascus was first elevated to a metropolis by Hadrian.<sup>119</sup> The gap in the coinage between the reigns of Nero<sup>120</sup> and Antoninus Pius, a gap of nearly a century, means we must be wary of coming to any premature conclusions concerning the date of the city's elevation to a metropolis. The epigraphic tradition is of no help.

There is continuous evidence of the metropolis title of Damascus until the reign of Valerian (253–260 C.E.).<sup>121</sup> However, none of the sources provide any direct information on which cities or which area Damascus was responsible for as a metropolis. Despite this, A.H.M. Jones links Damascus's metropolis title with the membership “of/in Coele Syria” (abbreviated on coins as ΚΟΙΛΑ CYP instead of Κοίλης Συρίας or, in inscriptions, the longer variant κατὰ Κοίλην Συρίαν πόλις), which appears from the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century onwards on the coinages of several cities of the Decapolis (Abila, Dion, Gadara, Pella, Philadelpheia, Skythpolis).<sup>122</sup> He deduces Damascus's function as a metropolis in “the religious union of Coele Syria” from this.<sup>123</sup> However, unlike the six poleis of the supposed *koinon* of Coele Syria, Damascus makes no claim that it belongs to or is responsible for Coele Syria. Furthermore, to date it is only Tyre that is explicitly attested as the metropolis of Coele Syria (as well as the metropolis of Phoenice) in two inscriptions from the time of Trajan and Hadrian (see chap. 6 above).

How can the existing source material be reconciled with the assumption that Damascus held the function of metropolis of the poleis of Coele Syria?<sup>124</sup> J.-P. Rey-Coquais already notes in connection with the honorary inscription of Antius A. Iulius Quadratus (πρεσβευτῆς καὶ ἀντιστράτηγος ἐπαρχείας Συρίας Φοινείκης Κομμαγηνῆς) that Coele Syria “n'y est pas mentionnée et dont l'absence étonne.” However, the scholar does not follow this surprising fact through and sticks to his theory of a “circonscription provinciale” named Coele Syria.<sup>125</sup> This “circonscription provinciale” is supposed to have included poleis of neighbouring provinces in the form of a “*koinon* du culte impérial” or “*éparchie* du culte impérial” (M. Sartre) within the context of a “réorganisation du culte impérial” prior to 119/120, that is, at the latest at the time that Diogenes of Gerasa, priest of the four eparchies in the

<sup>118</sup> *BMC Galatia-Syria*, 283, no. 8; cf. *RPC Online temp.* – no. 8598, where ΘΕΟC is clearly legible.

<sup>119</sup> Arguing against Gebhardt 2002, 252–253 (“unter Hadrian erstmals”); Sartre 2004, 178 incl. n. 46; Puech 2004, 360 (“c'est sous Hadrien qu'il le titre apparaît sur les monnaies de Damas”); cf. tentatively Meyer 1987/1988, 70 n. 59.

<sup>120</sup> Cf. *RPC* 1, 665, nos. 4803–4806 dating from 65/66 C.E. with the mere legend ΔΑΜΑΚΗΝΩΝ.

<sup>121</sup> *BMC Galatia-Syria*, 288, no. 33.

<sup>122</sup> See the numismatic evidence for each individual polis in Spijkerman 1978; the inscriptions from Philadelpheia Gatier 1986, 47–49, nos. 23–24; cf. the extensive discussion in Vitale 2013, 158–167.

<sup>123</sup> Jones 1928, 157, no. 16; followed by Rey-Coquais 1981, 27–31; Meyer 1987/1988, 69–70; Sartre 2004, 174; Puech 2004, 384; sceptically, by contrast, Gebhardt 2002, 308–309.

<sup>124</sup> Because of the discrepancy between the mention of Coele Syria in Tyrian titles and its absence from the gubernatorial eparchies, MacAdam 1986, 76 attempts to relativise the contradiction, claiming that Coele Syria “appears to have been revived, not as a ‘league’ or as an administrative district, but as the *koinon* of an imperial cult under Hadrian. From the evidence of coins and inscriptions of the second century, this *koinon* resurrected for itself the appellation *Koile Syria*”. However, it is unclear what H.I. MacAdam understands by “league” on the one hand and *koinon* on the other, as both can refer to a city league.

<sup>125</sup> Rey-Coquais 1981, 29.

metropolis Antioch, took up his office.<sup>126</sup> These reconstructions are contradictory in that the Roman administrative units and the *koina* of the same name terminologically refer to the same thing as “éparchies/districts/circonscriptions,” but do not have the same territories. Older research already cast doubts on the assumption of a city league in Coele Syria based upon the imperial cult. In line with E. Bickermann’s theory of the poleis’ “historique et archéologique”<sup>127</sup> construction of KOIA CYP, this administrative and cultic understanding of “Coele Syria” is often countered with the opposite interpretation of the territorial name as referring to a purely geographical and historical entity.<sup>128</sup>

The assumption of a Roman administrative unit Coele Syria contradicts the reconstructions of Roman provincial organisation created to date, especially as there are no parallels for administrative areas below the gubernatorial level intersected by several governors’ provinces. An eparchy of this kind would be quite unique in administrative terms, as several governors would have held responsibility for it concurrently.<sup>129</sup> Furthermore, all attempts at explanation fail to take account of the fact that the only sub-province in the region of Coele Syria attested thus far, which Damascus also belonged to, was Decapolis, known from an inscription from the late Flavian period (*SEG* 31.675, Fr. B). Decapolis’s existence as a *praefectus*’s administrative unit is only attested for a period of time between the reigns of Domitian and the governorship of Antius Iulius A. Quadratus (102/104 C.E.). Interestingly, however, Decapolis appears again during the late Hadrian period in an inscription from Palmyra detailing the origins of a citizen of Abila. In contrast to the coins of his region’s poleis, Agathangelos refers to himself not as a citizen of Abila “of/in Coele Syria,” but according to the “vocabulaire de la géographie administrative”<sup>130</sup> as “Agathangelos, citizen of Abila of the Decapolis.”<sup>131</sup> Similarly, according to an undated grave inscription Diodoros, son of Heliodoros, came “from Gadara, (polis) of the Syrian Decapolis” (*SEG* 30.1801: Διοδώρου / Ηλιοδώρου / ἀπὸ Συριακῆς / Δεκαπόλεως // Γαδάρων / ταφεών).<sup>132</sup> Against this background, Damascus’s metropolitan title could most likely refer to Decapolis.

## 8. The eparchy of Commagene and its *koinon* (*quattuor civitates*)

The incorporation of the Hellenistic kingdom of Commagene into the province of Syria took place in two phases over the course of the 1<sup>st</sup> century C.E. Emperor Tiberius

<sup>126</sup> Rey-Coquais 1978, 53–54 n. 125; also Sartre 2004, 179.

<sup>127</sup> Bikerman 1947, 266: “Mais au II<sup>e</sup> s. les cités helléniques ou hellénisées de l’Orient, devenues riches sous la protection des aigles romaines, prennent goût à la titulature historique et archéologique;” Stein 1990, 260–286.

<sup>128</sup> Gatier 1986, 47–48; Millar 1993, 423: “This very vague geographical term had indeed no very precise application (...);” Graf 1997, 33–34; followed by Gebhardt 2002, 309; Barkay 2003, 155; Lichtenberger 2003, 17: “Zu Ptolemaios’ Zeit existierte weder eine administrative Einheit Koile Syrien noch eine Dekapolis.”

<sup>129</sup> Cf. Vitale 2013, 150–170 for a summary of the entire debate in the scholarship.

<sup>130</sup> Gatier 1990, 205.

<sup>131</sup> Waddington 1968, 609, no. 2631: Ἀγαθάνγγελος Ἀβιληνὸς τῆς Δεκαπόλεως.

<sup>132</sup> On the designation of origin τῆς Δεκαπόλεως, cf. Gatier 1990, 204–205: “la terminologie rappelle l’appartenance d’Abila et de Gadara à un ensemble géographique et administratif nommé Décapole qui dépendait de la province de Syrie;” followed by Vitale 2013, 138–145.

started the first phase of annexation in 17/18 C.E., which lasted until 38/39, when Caligula reassigned the former kingdom as well as other territories in Rough Cilicia and Lycaonia to his childhood friend Antiochos IV, who was next in line in the Commagene dynasty. The second and now definitive phase of annexation was ordered in 72/73 by Emperor Vespasian.<sup>133</sup> Like Judea decades earlier,<sup>134</sup> Commagene was placed (at least temporarily) under an equestrian *praefectus Commagenes* under the supervision of the Syrian governor.<sup>135</sup> Also under Trajan, Commagene appears as one of several eparchies in the abovementioned honorary inscriptions of the Syrian governors C. Antius A. Iulius Quadratus (102–104 C.E.) and C. Iulius Quadratus Bassus (115–117 C.E.), who governed the provincial complex “Syria, Phoenice, Commagene” as *legati Augusti pro praetore*.

Apart from a few exceptions, scholars have scarcely investigated the question of an own *koinon*, a provincial assembly, of Commagene. Usually it is only Commagene’s participation in the imperial cult for the comprehensive central provincial assembly of Syria that is of interest.<sup>136</sup> However, what does the title ΦΛΑ(ΟΥΙΩΝ) CAMO(CATEΩΝ) ΜΗΤΡΟ(ΠΟΛΕΩΣ) ΚΟΜ(ΜΑΓΗΝΗΚ) (Flavia Samosata, metropolis of Commagene),<sup>137</sup> which is found on the coinage of Samosata (today’s Samsat) from the reign of Hadrian at the earliest until the reign of Philippus II (247–249 C.E.), designate if not a position of pre-eminence granted to the polis by the assembly of delegates from the member poleis of the Commagenian provincial commonality (*koinoboulion*)?<sup>138</sup> Pliny the Elder (Plin. *Nat.* 5, 85) already refers to Samosata as *Commagenes caput*, although it is unclear whether he means the former royal seat or is already speaking of the metropolis of the new eparchy.<sup>139</sup>

<sup>133</sup> Suet. *Vesp.* 8, 4: *Achaiam, Lyciam, Rhodum, Byzantium, Samum, libertate adempta, item Thraciam Ciliciam et Commagenen dicionis regiae usque ad id tempus in provinciarum formam redegit*; cf. Achaia, Lycia, Rhodos, Byzantion, Samos in Ios. *Ant. Iud.* 18, 2, 5; Tac. *Ann.* 2, 42.

<sup>134</sup> Eck 2006, 23–24; also cf. Millar 1993, 43–49, 61–69, 76–77; Sartre 2001, 536–554; Vitale 2013, 32–33.

<sup>135</sup> Ramsay 1924, 201–201, no. 24 = AE 1926.82: -] / [praefec]T(o) alae Ant`i/[anae, pr]aef(ecto) veteran/[orum leg(ionis)] XII, praefec(o) / [C]ommagen(es) T(i) / C`aesaris Aug(usti), / [col(onia)] Caes(aria); cf. Speidel 2005, 98, who—despite W. M. Ramsay reading a T at the end of l. 4 (“the last letter is certainly T not I”)—restores ll. 4–5 as “[C]ommagene`s, / [praef(ecto) Ti.] C`aesaris Aug(usti)”; by contrast, cf. Keppie 2000, 244 rest. ll. 45: “...COMMAGEN TI / CAESARIS AVG;” Demougin 1981, 105–106, no. 65 = AE 1982.885 rest. ll. 4–5: “[C]ommageni[s] / praefecto Ti(berii) C`aesaris Aug(usti);” Christol – Drew-Bear 2002, 286–288 = AE 2002.1453 rest. ll. 3–5: praefec(o) / [pro leg(ato) C]ommagene`[s, / praef(ecto) Ti(berii)] / Caesaris Aug(usti); also cf. the detailed commentary and comparison with other *praefecti* in Demougin 1981.

<sup>136</sup> E.g. Meyer 1987/1988, 69–70; Gebhardt 2002, 150–151; 308; Puech 2004, 384 and Sartre 2004, 172, 178; by contrast, Deininger 1965, 87–88 and Millar 1993, 453–454 do not mention Commagene even in connection with the Syrian *koinon*.

<sup>137</sup> On Samosata’s coinage, cf. Butcher 2004, 467–476, for the history of the polis see Winter 2008, 41–42.

<sup>138</sup> E.g. the city’s title “first (polis) of the eparchy” in the province Pontus-Bithynia was first granted “by decree of the assembly of the *koinon*” (πρῶτος ἐπαρχείας δόγματι κοινοβουλίου); *I.Pr(o)usias*, no. 47; cf. Bowersock 1985, 78–79; Sartre 1991, 307; Heller 2006, 307; Vitale 2012, 186–191.

<sup>139</sup> By contrast, cf. Strabo, who usually refers to poleis with royal seats and the main cities of Roman provinces as metropoleis, only calls Samosata a “fortified polis” (ἐρμυνη πόλις) in connection with the royal palace (βασιλείον) (Strabo 16.2.3; cf. Strabo 14.2.29).



**Fig. 4.** Samosata; Hadrian; picture: Helios Numismatik, Auction 5, 25. 06. 2010, No. 1104. AE 17 mm.<sup>140</sup>

Here, the place name Commagene appears in Samosata's prominently wreathed title as the metropolis's area of responsibility: "metropolis of Commagene." Based on this coin legend, A. H. M. Jones already speculates that the elevation of Samosata to the rank of metropolis meant the creation of a *koinon* of Commagene.<sup>141</sup> D. H. French concurs with this view, stating that "the evidence for a Commagenian *koinon* seems to rest solely on the use of the title *Metropolis Commageneae*, first found on coins of Samosata under Hadrianus."<sup>142</sup> Besides the coinage, the epigraphic evidence also seems to suggest this. In four inscriptions, erected between 198 and 200 C.E. at the latest, honouring members of the Severan imperial house for co-financing the repairs made to a bridge over the Chabinas there is strikingly no mention of individual poleis or the polis institutions usually involved in making decrees (such as *demos* or *boule*) as the honouring entities; instead, *quattuor civitates Comma(genes)* ("the four cities of Commagene") are the dedicants.<sup>143</sup> The *quattuor civitates Commagenes* are not mentioned individually as subscribers, but are referred to collectively as the joint dedicant.<sup>144</sup> Provincial assemblies as dedicants of honorary monuments or commissioners of coinages

<sup>140</sup> Reference: *BMC Galatia-Syria*, 118, no. 20.

<sup>141</sup> Jones 1928, 157; cf. Jones 1971, 572; followed by Rey-Coquais 1978, 53 with n. 119; French 1991, 15.

<sup>142</sup> French 1991, 15.

<sup>143</sup> Three of originally the four columns placed next to the approaches to the bridge bear the following inscriptions: (*CIL* III 6712 = III 13610 = III 14165, 17a): [Imp(eratorem)] / Caes(arem) L(ucium) Septimium / [Se]ve(rum) Pium] Pertinacem / Arab(icum) Adiab(enicum) Par(thic(um) princip(em) fe/licissimum pon/tif(icem) max(imum) trib(unicia) po/test(ate) XII imp(eratorem) VIII / co(n)s(ulem) II proco(n)s(ulem) / quattuor / civitates Com[m]ag(enes) principem / munificentissimum; (*CIL* III 6713): Imp(eratorem) Caes(arem) M(arcum) / Aurel(ium) Anto(ninu[m]) Aug(ustum) / Aug(usti) n(ostr) fil(ium) / proco(n)s(ulem) / imp(eratorem) III / quattuor / civitates / Commag(enes) / [---]; (*CIL* III 6714 = III 14165, 17b): Iul(iam) Domnam / Aug(ustam) matre(m) / Ka[st]rorum / quat(tuor) civitat(es) / Commag(enes).; on the bridge across the Chabinas, cf. Wagner 1988, 48–55; the bridge construction is probably already Flavian; on this, cf. Millar 1993, 82–83; Gebhardt 2002, 46; Sartre 2001, 487. Schmitz – Şahin – Wagner 1988, 95 and Winter 2008, 39 interpret the dedicants' abbreviation differently: *Comma(generatorum)*.

<sup>144</sup> Similarly Speidel 2012, 23–25.



are known in several provinces of Asia Minor, such as the Galatian *koinon*,<sup>145</sup> or, even appearing jointly on the same document, “the cities in Pamphylia,” the “*koinon* of Lycians” and the “*koinon* of the Hellenes in Asia.”<sup>146</sup> The confusion surrounding the four Commagenian honorary inscriptions is caused only by the dedicants referring to themselves as the “four cities of Commagene” instead of using the as yet unattested phrasing “*koinon* of Commagene.” These “four cities of Commagene” probably only represent a title variant of the name of the respective *koinon*,<sup>147</sup> as is the case with the formulations “*koinon* of the poleis in Pontus” (κοινὸν τῶν ἐν Πόντῳ πόλεων) or “the cities in Pamphylia” (αἱ ἐν Παμφυλίᾳ πόλεις).<sup>148</sup> Given the sparse documentary evidence, it is hardly surprising that literal attestations of a “*koinon* of Commagene” and a president of the *koinon*, a “*Kommagenarches*” or an “*Archiereus* of Commagene” (i. e. an arch-priest of the imperial cult of the eparchy of Commagene) are still lacking.<sup>149</sup> Commagene, which was already definitively annexed in 72 C.E., is expressly designated a *provincia* for the first time only in the career inscriptions of the Syrian governor Antius Iulius Quadratus under Trajan. Similarly to the recent first attestation of a *Paphlagoniarches*,<sup>150</sup> on a new inscription from Taşköprü, we can expect to discover clarifying epigraphic finds in the case of Commagene also.

The question of which other three poleis besides the metropolis Samosata made up the four-membered *koinon* can only be answered in part. Based on the numismatic evidence, Germanicia Caesarea (today’s Maraş) is certainly a possibility.<sup>151</sup> As in the case of Samosata, its civic titles include the eparchy name “Commagene:” the coin legend reads KAICAPE(ΩΝ) ΓΕΡΜΑΝΙΚΕ(ΩΝ) ΚΟΜ(ΜΑΓΗΝΗC)—A ([Coinage] of Caesarea Germanicia in Commagene).<sup>152</sup> However, besides the coinages of Samosata and Germanicia, the statement of membership “in/of Commagene” is not known for any other polis issuing coins in the region.<sup>153</sup>

<sup>145</sup> *MAMA* VI 255 (Acmonia, Phrygia); Bosch 1967, 53, no. 56 (Ankyra); *OGIS* 534 (Ephesus).

<sup>146</sup> Cf. e.g. *TAM* II, 495, ll. 13–17: τετεμη/[μ]έρον και ὑπὸ [Λυ]κ[ίων τ]οῦ κοινοῦ ταῖς πρώταις / [καί] δευτέραις και τρίταις τεμαῖς και ὑπὸ τοῦ κο[ι]ν[ο]ῦ τῶν ἐπὶ τῆς Ἀσίας Ἑλλήνων και ὑπὸ τῶν ἐ[ν] / Παμφυλίᾳ πόλεων.

<sup>147</sup> According to Speidel 2012, 25, the poleis of Commagene already formed a *koinon* in the 1<sup>st</sup> century C.E. Cf. as an analogy the *civitates Siciliae* in an honorary inscription for the governor C. Plautius Rufus from the Augustan era (*ILS* 926 = *CIL* IX 5834); Manganaro 1988, 15; Wilson 1990, 34–35 incl. n. 21 and 383 and n. 96.

<sup>148</sup> On the *koina* of Pontus (Pontus-Bithynia) and Pamphylia. cf. in detail Vitale 2012, 196–203, 272–277. The *koina* of Lycia and Asia can also refer to themselves as “the cities in Lycia/Asia” (καὶ τῶν ἐν Λυκίᾳ καὶ τῶν ἐν Ἀσίᾳ [πόλεις]), particularly as subscribers of honorary inscriptions; cf. *IGR* 3.778, ll. 4–5.

<sup>149</sup> Arguing against Sartre 2004, 172.

<sup>150</sup> I was able to view the photographs by kind permission of C. Marek (Zurich) and U. Kunnert (Zurich).

<sup>151</sup> Arguing against Millar 1993, 453–454.

<sup>152</sup> *BMC* Galatia-Syria, 115, no. 1; MacDonald 1905, 126, no. 1; *RPC* Online temp. – no. 5746. The image framed by the legend—a female personification enthroned upon a rock wearing a mural crown and a swimming river god at her feet—is also common on the coinage of Samosata. Whether this is a personification of the respective polis or of the eparchy of Commagene cannot be determined without the independent evidence of a similar type of coin bearing a clarifying toponym.

<sup>153</sup> On the other member poleis, which were probably Doliche (today’s Dülük) and Perreh (today’s Pirun), cf. in detail French 1991, 11, 16; Vitale 2013, 80–91; these two *poleis* were already suggested by Mommsen 1884, 20–22 and Jones 1971, 263–265; also cf. Winter 2008, 39.

## 9. Provincial *koina* in Syria Palaestina and Arabia?

After its first establishment by Pompey the Great, the Syrian governors' area of jurisdiction was altered several times up until the 3<sup>rd</sup> century C.E. Judea was separated from Syria in 70 C.E. as an independent *provincia* and placed under *legati pro praetore*; in 135 C.E. its name was changed to Syria Palaestina.<sup>154</sup> Arabia had been established as an independent province by Trajan in 105/106 C.E.<sup>155</sup> As part of this process, the new provincial territories were enlarged by several cities that formerly belonged to Syria, such as Gadara, Gerasa or Philadelpheia.<sup>156</sup> According to M. Sartre, to date there is no firm evidence that the two gubernatorial provinces Arabia and Judea / Syria Palaestina had their own provincial assembly. This—thus M. Sartre—lends strength to the thesis that at least one of the four eparchies of Diogenes of Gerasa, “priest of the four eparchies,” was specially created under the name of Coele Syria at the beginning of Hadrian's reign to continue to offer the poleis of Arabia and Judea / Syria Palaestina, which were now without an assembly, suitable conditions for participating in the provincial imperial cult.<sup>157</sup> However, there is insufficient support for this contingent construct in the sources: nothing definitively precludes the existence of two provincial *koina* for Arabia and Syria Palaestina. Far from it: while there is no conclusive evidence that either Arabia or Judea / Syria Palaestina had their own provincial *koina* after their establishment, their coinages in particular strongly suggest that provincial commonalities existed in both provinces.

### Syria Palaestina

Since Philippus Arabs, Neapolis (today's Nablus) was the only polis of the province to claim the title of *neokoros*,<sup>158</sup> which, given the parallels across the Empire in the use of this title, suggests that a provincial imperial cult was carried out in the region.<sup>159</sup> During the same time period—probably in competition with Neapolis—Caesarea Maritima outdid its rival's title by proclaiming the title of “metropolis of Syria Palaestina” (C[olonia] I[= prima] F[ida] AV[gusta] F[elix] C[oncordia] CAE[sarea] METROP[olis]—S[yriae] PAL[aestinae]) on bronze coins from the time of Severus Alexander (222–235 C.E.) until Volusian.<sup>160</sup> The main seat of the *koinon* of Syria Palaestina was thus probably Caesarea Maritima. This interpretation of Caesarea Maritima's titles is based on the key fact that

<sup>154</sup> In detail Eck 1999, part. 88–89; Wesch-Klein 2008, 298.

<sup>155</sup> Lewis 1978, 100–114; Meimaris 1992, 146–161; Wesch-Klein 2008, 294–295.

<sup>156</sup> How the *poleis* that originally belonged to Syria were distributed across the new gubernatorial provinces Judea / Syria Palaestina and Arabia cannot be ascertained and is disputed in the literature; cf. e.g. Bietenhard 1977, 244–245; Bowersock 1983, 90–95; Gebhardt 2002, 87–93; part. 88 n. 4; Sartre 2004, 179; Vitale 2013, 113–121.

<sup>157</sup> Sartre 2004, 179, 183.

<sup>158</sup> Burrell 2004, 260–265.

<sup>159</sup> Cf. similarly Haensch 1997, 237 note 38; cf. on the title *neokoros* most recently Stevenson 2001, 86–96; Burrell 2004, 349–356.

<sup>160</sup> Cf. Kadman 1957, 114–142, nos. 87–230; with the partial designation SPAL for Syriae Palaestinae cf. BMC Palestine, 40–41, nos. 208, 215, 222.

the phrase “of Syria Palaestina” is only used on coins in association with the metropolis title awarded by Severus Alexander. It does not appear, however, on older source material as a purely geographical or administrative term of membership. In the same way that Samosata, metropolis of the provincial assembly (*quattuor civitates Commagene*) of the eparchy Commagene, expresses this primacy in the form “metropolis of Commagene,” Caesarea Maritima also records a territorial area of responsibility, i.e. the province of Syria Palaestina, in its title of *metropolis*. On an architrave block from the late imperial period, possibly a component of a triumphal arch from Caesarea Maritima, the words appear in the vocative case: [αὔξοις μ]ητρόπολι (Glory to you, metropolis!).<sup>161</sup> The self-praise recorded in several inscriptions from Perge, the metropolis of the eparchy Pamphylia, from the reign of Emperor Tacitus (275/6 C.E.) start in a similar fashion with the acclamation “Long live, Perge!” (αὔξε Πέργη).<sup>162</sup> According to this inscription, the important Pamphylian port city was already given the privilege of *neokoros* status under Vespasian. Alongside its rivals Side and Aspendos, Perge was the preferential seat of Pamphylia’s provincial assembly.<sup>163</sup>

As a metropolis, Caesarea Maritima also appears to have presided over a provincial assembly which included at least three member poleis. As already noted by K. Butcher,<sup>164</sup> the territorial and institutional framework for the performance of the provincial imperial cult by the poleis of Syria Palaestina also emerges from the coinages of Neapolis and Samaria-Sebaste, which are paid little attention in the scholarship. Just like Caesarea Maritima, they used the provincial name Syria Palaestina in its genitive form as the area to which they politically belonged: from the time of Antoninus Pius to Severus Alexander, Neapolis calls itself “Flavia Neapolis of Syria Palaestina” (ΦΛ ΝΕΑΠΟΛΕΩΣ ΣΥΡΙΑΣ ΠΑΛΑΙΣΤΙΝΗΣ),<sup>165</sup> while from the time of Commodus to Caracalla Sebaste presents itself using an abbreviated form of the province’s name as “Sebasteans of Syria (Palaestina)” (ΣΕΒΑΣΤΕΩΝ ΣΥΡΙΑΣ).<sup>166</sup>

Accordingly, even though there is no explicit evidence to date of a provincial *koinon* of Syria Palaestina, the privileges (the titles of *neokoros* and *metropolis*) and coin legends of Caesarea Maritima, Neapolis and Samaria-Sebaste imply the existence of a provincial commonality—albeit a strikingly late one. Given this evidence, there is little to support the hypothesis that the provincial cities—most of which were Hellenic—were unable to set up an assembly of their own because of the special status granted to the population of the province, the majority of whom were Jewish, and instead had to join the assembly of a neighbouring province, possibly the supposed *koinon* of the inland Coele Syria, as M. SARTRE suggests for Gaza, for example.<sup>167</sup> By contrast, recent research on the particular

<sup>161</sup> *I. Caesarea Maritima* 86, no. 61; also on an architrave block, cf. *I. Caesarea Maritima* 84–85, no. 60: [---τι]/ν μητρόπολιν ἔκτισ[εν---]; also 45–47, nos. 10–11.

<sup>162</sup> Ed. pr. Kaygusuz 1984, 1–4, Plate 1; *I. Perge* II, 52–58, no. 331; Roueché 1989, 206–228; Burrell 2004, 175–176.

<sup>163</sup> Vitale 2012, 277–282.

<sup>164</sup> Butcher 2003, 371.

<sup>165</sup> *BMC Palestine*, 47–63, nos. 20–115.

<sup>166</sup> *BMC Palestine*, 79, nos. 7, 9–11.

<sup>167</sup> Arguing against Sartre 2004, 169–170, Serenus from Gaza (see chap. 5 above) was not a *phoinikarches* because Gaza (Syria Palaestina) took part in the assembly of the neighbouring province Syria Phoenice, but because Serenus held multiple citizenships (ἄλλων πόλεων πολίτης).

practices of imperial worship in the province of Judea / Syria Palaestina reveals that the imperial cult was carried out constantly, predominantly on a local level, both under the Herodians and under direct Roman government.<sup>168</sup> The Jewish population seems to have been ‘exempted’ from the usual practice of the imperial cult throughout the Empire, at least in factual terms.<sup>169</sup> But this does not mean that, at the latest after the suppression of the Bar Kokhba revolt, when the Jewish population had been visibly decimated and the name of its people eradicated from the province’s name (*Iudaea* vs. *Syria Palaestina*), the predominantly pagan Greek poleis of the newly named province Syria Palaestina could not have formed a provincial assembly, like the cities of other provinces.



**Fig. 5.** Neapolis; Faustina II. (147–161 AD); picture: *RPC Online* temp. no. 3792; AE 28 mm; 14,38 g.<sup>170</sup>

## Arabia

By comparison, sources for Arabia are more sparse. The metropolitan title of Petra (Ἀδριανὴ Πέτρα μητρόπολις), attested since 114 C.E., might suggest a provincial assembly of the province Arabia.<sup>171</sup> Since Philippus Arabs (244–249 C.E.), the *colonia* Bostra also claimed the status of a metropolis (COL METROPOLIS BOSTRA), competing with Petra.<sup>172</sup> These metropolis titles, like that of Damascus, are recorded without mention of any appertaining areas of responsibility. If we assume that the title of metropolis is very frequently connected with a provincial assembly, then Petra was probably—at least in theory—responsible for the provincial *koinon* of Arabia, which has not been explicitly attested to date, from the foundation of the province onwards.<sup>173</sup>

In light of the sources available so far for the gubernatorial provinces of Arabia and of Syria Palaestina, claims that “aucune indication de l’existence d’un tel culte provincial”

<sup>168</sup> Cf. e.g. Rabello 1980; 1988; Gaudemet 1988; Stemberger 1990; Pucci 1998; Bernett 2007.

<sup>169</sup> On this, cf. Pucci 1998, 471–481; part. 473–474 with earlier literature.

<sup>170</sup> *BMC Palestine*, 53, no. 57.

<sup>171</sup> Sartre 1993, 67–68, no. 37; on this, cf. Sartre 2004, 183–184; Spijkerman 1978, 220–241.

<sup>172</sup> Spijkerman 1978, 82, nos. 56–60.

<sup>173</sup> A similar conclusion is already drawn by Gebhardt 2002, 309.

can be found seem unjustified, especially for Syria Palaestina. Nor does it support the assumption that only the creation of a *koinon* of Coele Syria made it possible for the “anciennes cités grecques de la région,” that is, mainly the poleis of the former Decapolis, “d’échapper, à la tutelle de ces nouvelles venues (ou promues) qu’étaient Césarée et, plus encore, Bostra ou Pétra.”<sup>174</sup>

## 10. Priests and Metropoleis “of the four eparchies”: Analogies from Asia Minor (Pergamon, Anazarbus, Tarsus, Caesarea in Cappadocia)

Comparable numerical descriptions of areas of responsibility within the context of the provincial imperial cult, such as those found in the inscriptions for Diogenes and Diodoros, who present themselves as “priests/gymnasiarch of the four eparchies,” or Laodicea’s title of metropolis (see below), can be found in several provinces of Asia Minor.<sup>175</sup> Tangible analogies become evident particularly in comparison with civic titles from the provinces of Asia Minor bordering Syria. According to the coinages and inscriptions of Anazarbus and Tarsus during the late 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> century C.E., these metropoleis of the gubernatorial province Cilicia presided over several eparchies in connection with the provincial imperial cult.<sup>176</sup> For example, under Severus Alexander their coin legends are as follows: ἡ πρώτη καὶ μεγίστη καὶ καλλίστη μητρόπολις τῶν γ’ ἐπαρχειῶν Κιλικίας Ἰσαυρίας Λυκαονίας προκαθεζομένη καὶ β’ νεκόρος (first and greatest and most beautiful metropolis set above the three eparchies of Cilicia, Isauria and Lycaonia, twice *neokoros*).<sup>177</sup> On coins, this situation is often abbreviated as AMK ΓΒ.<sup>178</sup> Accordingly, the provincial imperial cult in Cilicia was carried out by the three eparchies constituting the gubernatorial province, namely Cilicia, Isauria and Lycaonia in one of the respective presiding metropoleis Anazarbus or Tarsus. In line with this complex provincial assembly structure, the gubernatorial province Cilicia presents itself in detail in inscriptions of Roman governors as a conglomerate of the eparchies Cilicia – Isauria – Lycaonia.<sup>179</sup> These eparchies are even personified as female figures and labelled with their names on a coinage from the time of Septimius Severus, accompanying the coin legend ΑΔΠΙ CEYHPIANHΝ

<sup>174</sup> Sartre 2004, 180.

<sup>175</sup> In his commentary on the Diodoros inscription, J.-P. Rey-Coquais (*I. Tyr* II, 54) points out that the function of a Gymnasiarch is attested within the context of the provincial imperial cult in inscriptions from Pergamon, one of the metropoleis of the province Asia, in association with the “common/provincial games of Asia.” However, none of the inscriptions from Pergamon explicitly states that the Gymnasiarch was in charge of several poleis of the province Asia. There is a different explanation for these “multiple” Gymnasiarchies in Pergamon; on this, cf. Vitale 2014a, 172–176.

<sup>176</sup> Mionnet 1808, 634–636, no. 478; Ziegler 1985, Plate 9, 84; 84a (obverse); on dating, cf. Ziegler 1985, 73–74.

<sup>177</sup> E.g. *IGR* 3.879–880; 882; Dagron – Feissel 1987, 30.

<sup>178</sup> On deciphering the abbreviation, cf. the authoritative account by Weiss 1979, 545–552.

<sup>179</sup> Two governors are attested as ἡγεμόν Κιλικίας Ἰσαυρίας Λυκαονίας beziehungsweise ἀντιστράτηγος ἐπαρχειῶν Κιλικίας Ἰσαυρίας Λυκαονίας: A. Claudius Charax from 144/5–146/7 C.E. (*SEG* 18.557 [Pergamon]; Rémy 1989, 345–346, no. 305 incl. lit.) and his successor C. Etrilius Regillus Laberius Priscus was between 147/8148/9 C.E. (*IGR* 3.290 [Isaura]; Rémy 1989, 346, no. 306 incl. lit.).

TAPCON ΜΗΤΡΟ ΤΩΝ Γ ΕΠΑΡΧΙΩΝ (Hadriane Severiane Tarsus Metropolis, president of the three eparchies).<sup>180</sup>

A correlation between the “three eparchies” of Eastern Asia Minor and the “four eparchies” of Syria, at least in terms of phrasing, can be assumed based upon their proximity and Cilicia’s many years as part of the gubernatorial province of Syria.<sup>181</sup> The identical letter order AMK ΓΒ as an abbreviation of civic honorary titles is also found upon the reverse of coins from the former royal seat of Cappadocia on the Argaios, Caesarea Mazaca, the “metropolis of the Cappadocians” (ἡ μητρόπολις τῶν Καππαδόκων),<sup>182</sup> minted under Severus Alexander: AMK Γ ΠΟΝ Κ ΑΡ ΜΗΤΡΟΠ ΚΑΙΣΑΡΙΑ ΔΙΣ ΝΕ.<sup>183</sup> The Γ in the coin legend can be read analogously to the coin legends of Anazarbus and Tarsus as a symbol for the number “3,” not as an abbreviation of “Galatia” (Γ[αλατίας]), as stated by previous scholars.<sup>184</sup>

## 11. Laodicea, “metropolis of the four provinces”

In Syria, like in the neighbouring provinces Cilicia and Cappadocia, the areas of responsibility of provincial metropoleis and of high officials of the provincial imperial cult were described as covering a certain number of eparchies. The reason for this was their original joint provincial commonality. This commonality was characterised by the fact that the administrative districts of the respective gubernatorial province not only formed their own *koina*, but also came together to jointly organise provincial games and assemblies. This can be seen clearly in the coin legends of the Syrian metropolis Laodicea (today’s Latakia), minted at the same time as those of Anazarbus, Caesarea and Tarsus.

Laodicea had the privilege of being “metropolis of the four provinces,” as shown by city coinage from Caracalla to Elagabalus. The full title reads *colonia Laodicea metropolis IIII provinciarum* (The colony Laodicea, metropolis of the four provinces), and appears abbreviated as METR(O) IIII—METR IIII PROV—METROPOL IIII PR on coins.<sup>185</sup> These privileges were granted to the Laodiceans for their loyalty to Septimius Severus in the war against Pescennius Niger.<sup>186</sup> In return, however, Antioch,

<sup>180</sup> SNG von Aulock, no. 6001 = SNG Levant, no. 1023; on this, cf. Nollé – Zellner 1995, 43 incl. fig. 2; also cf. Vitale 2012, 307–313 and Vitale 2013, 94–96 incl. fig. 10.

<sup>181</sup> Thus also Meyer 1987/1988, 71; Ziegler 1999, 141–142. In the 1<sup>st</sup> century C.E., both Cappadocia and Cilicia were temporarily annexed to Syria as sub-provinces. Thus it seems no coincidence that during the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> century, Anazarbus, Tarsus and Caesarea claimed metropolis titles formulated in a manner similar to the priestly and Gymnasiarch titles familiar from the province of Syria.

<sup>182</sup> Strabo 14. 2, 29.

<sup>183</sup> Imhoof-Blumer 1898, 20–21, no. 68; incl. further references Burrell 2004, 249, no. 7.

<sup>184</sup> Vitale 2012, 256–259; 2013, 95–96 reads “first (A) and greatest (M) and most beautiful (K) metropolis of the three (Γ) eparchies of Pontus Mediterranean (ΠΟΝ), Cappadocia (Κ), Armenia Minor (ΑΡ), twice *neokoros*,” arguing against the restitutions by D. Berges, J. Nollé (*I. Tyana* II), 516 n. 98 and Teja 1980, 1100.

<sup>185</sup> Cf. Meyer 1987/1988, 89–90, nos. 115, 116, 119, 122, 129; Lindgren – Kovacs 1985, 111, no. 2098; see the full discussion by Vitale 2013, 105–110 and, more recently Vitale 2014a, 172–174.

<sup>186</sup> According to a thrice-dated lead weight, Laodicea was only given the status of a metropolis in 194 C.E. by Septimius Severus. Besides the local Caesarean era (from 48/47 B.C.E.), the year in which Laodicea was made a metropolis also appears as a starting point for the counting of years: “in the thirteenth year of the

which had allied itself with Pescennius Niger, was punished with the removal of all of its privileges and its polis status for some years (until 197/198 or 201/202 C.E. at the latest), making it a *κώμη* of Laodicea and forcing it to pay taxes to the new metropolis.<sup>187</sup> Taking Antioch's place, Laodicea not only rose to become the new "rightful metropolis" of the eparchy Syria (δικαίον μητροπόλεως)<sup>188</sup> and centre of the provincial imperial of the κοινὸν Συρίας,<sup>189</sup> but was given the responsibility over four eparchies in the context of the provincial imperial cult, like Tyre and Antioch before it.<sup>190</sup> The title and bundle of privileges *Colonia Laodicea Metropolis IIII provinciarum* was an honour granted by the Emperor and thus displays a predominantly Roman concept of civic privileges. This is all the more relevant in Laodicea's case as these "*provinciae*" were formulated in Latin, in association with the metropolis title of a Roman colony *iuris Italici*. In the sense of administrative units, the "four *provinciae*" in Laodicea's 3<sup>rd</sup>-century metropolis title thus corresponded to the "four eparchies" of the priests and Gymnasiarchs of the provincial imperial cult of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries C.E.<sup>191</sup> The question remains of which kind of Roman administrative units exactly are to be understood by the term "*provinciae*" in this context: are they entire gubernatorial provinces or sub-provinces?

The *IIII provinciae* cannot refer to the four neighbouring gubernatorial provinces Syria Coele, Syria Phoenice, Syria Palaestina and Arabia in their entirety. If we assume a factual correspondence between the eparchies or *provinciae* of Diogenes, who held his office in the metropolis of Antioch under Trajan, and the four *provinciae* around the metropolis of Laodicea a century later, we must take into account that at least two of the four gubernatorial provinces did not exist in this administrative form during Diogenes' time. Up until 194 C.E., Syria Coele and Syria Phoenice—under the eparchy names Syria, Phoenice, Commagene and possibly Decapolis (see above, *SEG* 31.675, Fr. B)—formed a single gubernatorial province. The *provinciae* in question on Laodicea's coins must thus be preferentially sought among these sub-provinces. This reconstruction is suggested by contemporaneous coinages from Laodicea that carry the Latin legend COL LAOD METROPOL ΔΕ and depict a personification of Laodicea wearing a mural crown.<sup>192</sup> The decisive factor is that this figure is flanked by four further female personifications, two on each side, all also wearing mural crowns. Two of them are handing Laodicea, who is standing in the middle, a laurel wreath.

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metropolis status, which (corresponds) to the year 253" (γί' τῆς μητροπολιτείας, τ[οῦ] καὶ γνσϵ); Seyrig 1963, 30–31; on the Caesarean era in Laodicea, cf. Seyrig 1950, 26–31.

<sup>187</sup> Herodian 3. 3, 3–5; 3. 6, 9; on this, cf. Ziegler 1978, 494–496.

<sup>188</sup> According to Ioh. Mal. 293, 4–294, 2; of course, Malalas's claim that Laodicea only held these privileges during the reign of Septimius Severus is not correct; on this, cf. Haensch 1997, 251 n. 114.

<sup>189</sup> A Laodicean coin specimen recorded by Mionnet 1914, 71, 467 incl. Plate suppl. 24, 467, now lost, of Iulia Domna with a reverse image of an eight-columned temple front and the legend KOINON CYPIAC shows that the provincial assembly meetings and provincial games of the eparchy Syria were held in Laodicea; cf. Meyer 1987/1988, 60 n. 8.

<sup>190</sup> On this, cf. Meyer 1987/1988, 58–60; Haensch 1997, 251–254; Sartre 2001, 614–617.

<sup>191</sup> Based on this, the approach of Meyer 1987/1988, 69 is not convincing in methodological terms, interpreting the four *provinciae* only as "eine bestimmte Region, eine Landschaft mit ethnischer und historischer Tradition."

<sup>192</sup> *BMC Galatia-Syria*, 262, no. 110; Baramki 1974, 258, no. 266; Lindgren – Kovacs 1985, 111, no. 2104.



**Fig. 6.** Laodicea; Philipus Arabs (244–249 C.E.); *Rev.* COL LAOD METROPOLEOS—DE; picture: Gorny & Mosch Giessener Münzhandlung, Auction 204, 5 March 2012, no. 1874; AE 9,77 g.

The four figures can be interpreted analogously to the metropolis titles from Anazarbus and Tarsus (see above AMK ΓΒ) as “bildliche Umsetzung des Sachverhaltes ‘Metropolis IIII Provinciarum,’”<sup>193</sup> as depictions of the four eparchies or *provinciae* taking part in the provincial games. This parallel seems even more relevant because of the similar visual programme, also presenting a crowning scene: three female personifications, labelled with the respective eparchy names Cilicia (ΚΙΛΙΚΙΑ), Isauria (ΙΣΑΥΡΙΑ) and Lykaonia (ΛΥΚΑΟΝΙΑ) crown the personification of Tarsus, who is sitting enthroned in their midst, with laurels. All personifications are wearing mural crowns. By contrast, D. C. Baramki and H. C. Lindgren identify the four personifications on the Laodicean coins as “four figures of cities.”<sup>194</sup> Their main argument in support of this claim is that mural crowns characterise only personifications of cities.<sup>195</sup> However, this argument is not convincing, for mural crowns are also worn by the eparchy personifications on the coinages of Anazarbus and Tarsus.

The same scene, four female figures standing around the personification of the respective metropolis, is also shown on coins from Damascus and Tyre dating from the same period. Both poleis depict the scene of sacrifice and crowning with laurels in exactly the same way.<sup>196</sup> Even after 194 C.E., the two places where the coins were minted, Tyre and Damascus, were still part of the same gubernatorial province, Syria Phoenice, in administrative terms. Accordingly, they cannot have represented the *koina* of two different governor’s provinces as metropoleis. It is relevant here that all three metropoleis, Laodicea, Tyre and Damascus, depict not only a personification of their own city but also four further personifications. Furthermore, the coin legends all follow the same standardised

<sup>193</sup> Meyer 1987/1988, 69.

<sup>194</sup> Baramki 1974, 258, no. 266; Lindgren – Kovacs 1985, 127, no. 2388 using the example of the coinage of Damascus.

<sup>195</sup> Cf. Messerschmidt 2003, 83–90; esp. 87: “die Mauerkrone als Symbol einer städtebeschildernden Gottheit;” Meyer 2006, 15–27 (research history), 111.

<sup>196</sup> Damascus: Lindgren – Kovacs 1985, 127, no. 2388; Tyre: Rouvier 1900, no. 2440; *BMC Phoenicia*, 282, no. 433.



formula (COL DAMA METRO, COL TVRO METRO, COL LAOD METROPOL): status as a colony, city ethnic and metropolitan status are enumerated in the same order. At least according to the *III* *provinciae* coinages, Laodicea seems to have been the only metropolis privileged by holding provincial games that included all eparchies/*provinciae*. However, since the discovery of the Diodoros inscription from Tyre with the later notation of a Gymnasiarchy “of the four eparchies,” the actual scope of the metropoleis Damascus, Tyre and Laodicea’s responsibility cannot be determined by the coin legends alone.<sup>197</sup> Rather, according to the coin images, all metropoleis in question probably organised the provincial games in turn.

Which four *provinciae* or *koina* were involved in these assemblies during the 3<sup>rd</sup> century C.E.? Based on the fact that the number of *provinciae* is four both in the Diogenes inscription from the Trajanic era and in the Laodicean coinages from Caracalla to Elagabalus, it seems obvious to assume more or less the same territories. Apart from a few redistributions of territory between Syria Phoenice and Arabia,<sup>198</sup> which play no role in our present issue, the areas of the individual sub-provinces of the original province Syria remained the same even after Syria’s dissolution, they were just grouped in different administrative units:<sup>199</sup> the northern Syria Coele was now made up of the eparchies Syria (Seleucis and Pieria) and Commagene, while Syria Phoenice, its southern neighbour, comprised the eparchy Phoenice and a further inland eparchy around Damascus whose name is not yet known and which probably included the remainder poleis of the eparchy of Decapolis attested during the late Flavian era.<sup>200</sup>

However, the coinages of the metropoleis Damascus, Tyre and Laodicea only allow us to identify three of the *III* *provinciae*, as there are no sources attesting a further metropolis standing for the fourth *provincia*. It is striking that no comparable coin reverse images with sacrificing and wreath-offering eparchy personifications are known from Samosata, the meropolis of the eparchy Commagene (see chap. 8 above) for the 3<sup>rd</sup> century C.E. This silence of the Commagene iconographic programmes is not surprising, given the comparatively monotonous Samosatian coinages. It can be attributed either to a coincidental gap in the tradition or to the fact that while Commagene took part as a member of the four *provinciae*, Samosata—unlike Damascus, Tyre and Laodicea—did not serve as a place of assembly for all the *provinciae*.<sup>201</sup> No matter which of these explanations

<sup>197</sup> Arguing against Meyer 1987/1988, 72.

<sup>198</sup> E.g. Sartre 2001, 614–617.

<sup>199</sup> By contrast, Meyer 1987/1988, 71–72 (cf. 69) states that the metropoleis in question must be “die vier alten Eparchien” of the Hadrianic era, that is, “Syrien (Antiocheia), Phönizien (Tyros), Kommagene (Samosata) und Koile-Syrien (Damaskos),” even though no eparchy named Coele Syria has been identified in any of the sources to date. However, this reconstruction contradicts the changes within Syria’s administrative geography. To prove that the *III* *provinciae* in Laodicea’s metropolis title correspond with the four eparchies of Diogenes, we do not necessarily need to assume that the administrative areas formed under Trajan and Hadrian in association with the provincial imperial cult survived the restructuring of the provinces under Septimius Severus without any changes.

<sup>200</sup> On Decapolis as a geographical name on the one hand and a sub-province on the other, cf. in detail Vitale 2013, 111–149; e.g. the Abila of Lysanias, northwest of Damascus, and the village community of Aere in the south-southwest were originally Decapoltan places that lay within the jurisdiction of the governor of Syria Phoenice according to road construction inscriptions from the Severan period (*AE* 1930.141; *CIL* III 202).

<sup>201</sup> Meyer 1987/1988, 72 n. 72.

will be confirmed by future finds, it is certain that *Commagene*, which possessed a city league made up of four poleis by the time of Septimius Severus at the latest, formed one of the *III* *provinciae* during the 3<sup>rd</sup> century C.E. Otherwise the only other possibilities for the fourth member province would be the gubernatorial provinces Syria Palaestina or Arabia, which based on the evidence presented above possessed provincial commonalities of their own, however.

## Closing remarks

In administrative terms, since Pompey the Great the entire Levant region formed first a single and later three gubernatorial provinces. However, in contrast to this description of Syria according to gubernatorial areas of administration, we can count seven territorial sub-divisions, so-called eparchies which frequently occur in connection with the provincial imperial cult.<sup>202</sup> Were these sub-divisions “districts du culte impérial” created *ad hoc* specially for organising the province-wide imperial cult, or were they originally administrative units, on the basis of which the provincial assemblies were subsequently formed and structured? These eparchies are attested in different contexts and sources. Besides appearing in connection with high officials of the Roman provincial administration and recordings of provincials’ native provinces, eparchies are also found in the civic titles of particularly privileged poleis (e.g. Tyre “metropolis of Phoenice;” Flavia Samosata “metropolis of Commagene;” “Caesarea [Maritima] metropolis of Syria Palaestina”), in association with the provincial imperial cult as the areas of responsibility of priests, Gymnasiarchs or presidents of local city leagues (such as *Syriarches*, *Phoenicarches*), or linked to common provincial games. It is characteristic of most attestations of the provincial imperial cult in Syria that its structure always included several eparchies, and some of them were only temporarily part of the *provincia Syria* (Cilicia and Cappadocia): For example, an agonistic inscription from the Flavian period attests provincial games of “Syria, Cilicia, Phoenice in Antioch,” an inscription from the early reign of Hadrian tells us that the priest Diogenes “presided over the four eparchies in the metropolis Antioch” and even in the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century C.E., Laodicea, claimed the title of “metropolis of the four *provinciae*.” A comparison with imperial constitutions shows that priestly/’metropolitan’ and administrative eparchies or *provinciae* always refer to the same territories.<sup>203</sup> Beyond the obvious correspondences of administrative and cultic geography in connection with the provincial imperial cult in the Levant, there is no easy answer to the question of whether, in the region of Coele Syria, Decapolis with its many cities formed a provincial *koinon* around the metropolis Damascus, or whether the cities in the new 2<sup>nd</sup>-century provinces, Arabia and Syria Palaestina (formerly Judea), were organised in provincial commonalities of their own.

<sup>202</sup> Syria, Phoenice, Cilicia, Judea, Commagene, Cappadocia, Decapolis.

<sup>203</sup> By contrast, A. H. M. Jones’s claim, adopted by the majority of scholars, cannot be supported “It does not seem likely that *ἐπαρχεία* means strictly *provincia*; it must rather mean a region possessing its own *koinon*” (Jones 1928, 157).

In contrast to Western Asia Minor, the documentary evidence of the provincial imperial cult in Syria is relatively scarce and subject to strong regional and chronological fluctuations: on the one hand, like in Asia Minor, presidents of the provincial assembly are attested as *Syriarches* and *Phoenicarches* but, on the other hand, we still lack evidence for a *Commagenarches* or *Palaestinarches* and perhaps an *Arabarches*. Moreover, there are no explicit attestations of provincial arch-priests, such as ‘*Archiereus* of Syria/Phoenice,’ as title variants of *Syriarches* and *Phoenicarches*. Nevertheless, our documentary evidence suggests that the formal *mise en place* of the provincial imperial cult in the Levant was aligned with the provincial system, both in terms of its territorial organisation and the designation of its leading representatives.

## ABBREVIATIONS

- BMC Galatia–Syria* – W. Wroth, *British Museum Catalogue of Greek Coins: Galatia, Cappadocia, and Syria*, London 1898.
- BMC Palestine* – G. F. Hill, *British Museum Catalogue of Greek Coins: Palestine (Galilee, Samaria, and Judaea)*, London 1914.
- BMC Phoenicia* – G. F. Hill, *British Museum Catalogue of Greek Coins: Phoenicia*, London 1910.
- LAG* – L. Moretti, *Iscrizioni agonistiche greche*, Roma 1953.
- I. Caesarea Maritima* – C. M. Lehmann, K. G. Holum, *The Greek and Latin Inscriptions of Caesarea Maritima*, Boston 2000.
- I. Didyma* – A. Rehm, *Didyma II: Die Inschriften*, Berlin 1958.
- I. Ephesos* – *Die Inschriften von Ephesos*, Bonn 1979–1984.
- IGBulg* – G. Mihailov, *Inscriptiones Graecae in Bulgaria repertae*, 6 vols., Sofia 1957–1997.
- I. Gerasa* – C. B. Welles, The inscriptions, in: C. H. Kraeling, *Gerasa, City of Decapolis*, New Haven 1938: 355–494.
- I. Magnesia* – O. Kern, *Die Inschriften von Magnesia am Maeander*, Berlin 1900.
- I. Perge II* – S. Şahin, *Die Inschriften von Perge*, vol. II, Bonn 2004.
- I. Sestos* – J. Krauss, *Die Inschriften von Sestos und des thrakischen Chersones*, Bonn 1980.
- I. Tyana II* – D. Berges, J. Nollé, *Tyana. Archäologisch-historische Untersuchungen zum südwestlichen Kappadokien*, 2 vols., Bonn 2000.
- I. Tyr* – J.-P. Rey-Coquais, *Inscriptions grecques et latines de Tyr*, Beyrouth 2006.
- IvP III* – C. Habicht, *Die Inschriften von Pergamon*, vol. III: *Die Inschriften des Asklepieions*, Berlin 1969.
- RPC* – A. Burnett *et al.*, *Roman Provincial Coinage*, London–Paris 1992–.
- SNG* – *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum*.
- MAMA* – *Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiquae*, Manchester–London 1928–.
- TAM* – *Tituli Asiae Minoris*, Wien 1901–.

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