

This paper seeks to account for discrepancies in the pattern of find-spots of different issues of Seleukid 'royal' bronze coinage. While it deals with a substantially different category of coinage, its conclusions reinforce the recent arguments of Kevin Butcher (*Small Change in Ancient Beirut*) against what he calls 'natural' circulation being the best explanation of the observable phenomena.

It is often maintained that bronze coins do not travel far. This may be a reasonable rule of thumb for 'municipal' issues (cf. O. Mørholm, *Early Hellenistic Coinage* 6 and the discussion in Butcher 37 ff.), but it is clearly not the case with Seleukid 'royal' bronze. Very large numbers of Seleukid bronze coins minted in Antioch were found in the excavations of Dura-Europos, and no less than 85% of the identifiable Seleukid bronze coins from Jebel Khalid, a fortified Hellenistic settlement on the upper Euphrates over 200 kms from Antioch, are from that mint, too (Total: c. 280 coins). Under the Seleukids, Antioch became an important, not to say dominant, mint. Its products, including bronze, clearly travel far. In what circumstances? 'Naturally' circulating in the 'normal' course of commerce and trade? If so, the pattern of coin finds is decidedly odd.

Some Seleucid bronze issues, found in considerable numbers at one site, are rare or absent from others. A Distribution Table listing the occurrence of various bronze issues at a number of excavation sites - taking the commonest issues found at Jebel Khalid as its starting point - reveals some striking disparities. [Sites compared are Jebel Khalid, Antioch itself, Dura-Europos, Tarsus, Tel Anafa, Beirut and Abou Danné. Bibliographical details available at the conference.]

What is the explanation for such remarkable divergences? While one might postulate that chance - the vagaries of excavation - would play a part, that is not likely to be significant with big sites like Antioch and Dura. What of the peculiarities of individual site histories? Certainly these, where known, must be taken into account. But they cannot adequately account for the evidence by themselves: a second Table illustrates the coincidence of peaks and falls, reign by reign, of Seleukid bronze coin finds from some of these sites, suggesting that the pattern of coin finds may be as much the result of Seleukid minting practice as due to the vagaries of a particular site's history.

If so, why should the content of the coinage at various sites not be similar? The explanation is to be sought in the purpose of minting. The pattern of circulation is not 'natural', the result of free market forces, but reflects the hand of the central government. Payment of troops and officials, which included the provision of bronze, together with the movement of troops, is the best explanation of why excavation finds today appear to reflect the despatch of batches of some issues to one site, and others to another. Jebel Khalid is a particularly clear example. It appears to have begun life as a kind of *katoikia*, or garrison city, but, while it may have later developed some features of a regular *polis*, to judge by the coin finds it was dependent on the centre to its very end.