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## The “Marsyas of the Forum” image on Roman city coins of the Southern Levant

Ronit Palistrant Shaick

*Abstract:* This article assembles all ‘Marsyas of the Forum’ depictions appearing on city-coins from the Southern Levant (particularly in the region between Antioch and Alexandria) and examines the reasons for and the importance of their inclusion on the coins. Marsyas was meant to manifest the city’s status as a Roman *colonia*, its *Romanitas*, and, as I suggest, the wealth the city enjoyed under Roman rule. Of all the colonies in the region, eleven chose to portray Marsyas, with no necessary correlation between Marsyas and *ius Italicum*. It emerges that the image was immensely popular and diversely represented. Marsyas was shown in a clear civic context: either standing next to Tyche, or before the city’s symbols, or within a central structure of the city. These three types of Marsyas’s depictions were originated in the region, mainly in Tyre’s mint. They indicated the cities’ aspiration to publicize themselves as Roman colonies from the east maintaining their local identity. All Marsyas’s representations in the region are dated from the time of Septimius Severus onward, even those of colonies granted colonial status prior to the Severan period, including, as I suggest, the coins of Berytus (without the emperor head). The motif was prevalent mostly on coins of emperors who had deep familial bonds in this region.

*Keywords:* Marsyas of the Forum, City coins, Southern Levant, *Ius Italicum*, Roman colony, Septimius Severus, Elagabalus, Liber Pater, Provincial Coinage, Roman provinces, Tyche, Laodicea, Tyre, Sidon, Berytus, Heliopolis, Neapolis, Akko Ptolemais, Bostra, Damascus.

### Introduction

The “Marsyas of the Forum” image – inspired by a statue in the Forum Romanum – appears on coins of cities possessing colonial status from the Eastern provinces of the Roman Empire; the coins are dated from the time of Hadrian onward (Newby 2016: 70-79; Small 1982: 68-92). This article explores, for the first time, the depictions of Marsyas on coins of cities of the southern Levant, particularly ones located in the region between Alexandria and Antioch on the Orontes – the two most important centers of the area.<sup>1</sup> The study examines the reasons for depicting Marsyas on the coins and its significance. Furthermore, it explores Marsyas’s popularity in the region, his innovative and diverse representations, and the uniqueness of the coin-types incorporating him.

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<sup>1</sup> The article is based on part of my Ph.D. dissertation. I would like to take the opportunity to thank my supervisors Benjamin Isaac and Rivka Gersht for all their encouragement and support.

Two mythical traditions are associated with Marsyas. The Greek one tells about Marsyas the satyr, who was skinned alive for challenging Apollo in a musical contest; and the Etruscan-Roman tradition about his successful escape and arrival in Italy, where he taught the Italians the *disciplinam auguriorum* (Silius Italicus, *Pun.* 8. 502-4; Schertz 2005: 118-120; Wiseman 1988: 4-5; Small 1982: 77). A statue of Marsyas was placed in the Forum Romanum during the Roman Republic (possibly in the third century BCE). The statue is lost, and apart from some visual depictions and several mentions in literary sources, there is no information about its exact location and the reasoning behind its placement in the Forum.<sup>2</sup> The image of Marsyas of the Forum is familiar from silver Denarii, issued by Lucius Marcus Censorinus in 82 BCE (*RRC*: no. 363/1a-d; Pl. 1), and from the second century CE *Anaglypha Traiani* marble reliefs, where Marsyas is shown standing on a pedestal beside a fig tree in the Forum Romanum (Pl. 2).<sup>3</sup> These representations portray an old and naked satyr, carrying a heavy wineskin (*askos*) over his left shoulder.



**Pl. 1:** Rome, Silver Denarius, 82 BCE., issued by L. Marcus Censorinus; *Rev.* Marsyas walking left, right arm raised and holding wineskin over left shoulder; behind, a column bearing statue of Victory; legend: L·CENSOR VI; 4.23 g., 18 mm; *RRC*: no. 363/1a.  
<http://numismatics.org/crro/id/rrc-363.1a>

Small suggested that the raised right hand and the slight backward tilt of the head identify Marsyas as an Asia Minor augur, but the boots and the fillet on the head, are Italic (Small 1982: 85-6; Schertz 2005: 118). Over the years, the identity of Marsyas as augur had been forgotten, whereas the political significance – as a representation of freedom (*libertas*) – continued to be ascribed also to images of Marsyas displayed in *fora* of other cities than Rome, as an *indicium libertatis* (Servius, *ad Aen.* 3.20, 4.58). Furthermore, Servius mentions Marsyas as being under the protection of Liber Pater, the god of *libertas*, which represented liberty in cities; thus Marsyas – his attendant – represented liberty as well, who by his raised hand, according to Servius, calls to witness that nothing is lacking in a city (“*nihil urbi deesse*”).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> For the ancient literary sources, see Schertz 2005: 23-25, 175; Small 1982: 70-71, 80; Torelli 1982: 89-106.

<sup>3</sup> For the *Anaglypha Traiani* reliefs, see Small 1982: App. III, B 1, no. 1, p. 131, figs. 22-23; Torelli 1982: 89-118; Weis 1992: 375, no. 71.

<sup>4</sup> In North Africa, Imperial time's bases were discovered with inscriptions suggesting that statues of Marsyas were once placed above them (Small 1982: 138-142). A bronze statue of Marsyas is known from the Forum of Paestum, dating from the third to the first centuries BCE (Schertz 2005: 30ff.; Small 1982: 83-84; Weis 1992: 375, no. 72).



**Pl. 2:** The figure of Marsyas under the fig tree. Detail from one of the marble relief known as the *Anaglypha Traiani*, second century CE, discovered in the Forum Romanum, now in the Curia; Weis 1992: 375, no. 71.

The display of the statue at the center of political life in Rome (Horace, *Sat.* 1.6.119-121; Seneca, *Ben.* 6.32; Pliny *NH* 21.6), near the *rostra* and the tribunal of the *praetor peregrinus* (who settled legal cases among non-Romans/*peregrini*), enables its association with law and the administration of justice, especially regarding the inhabitants of the Roman colonies. This may be the reason why the figure was appropriated by them (Walbank 1989: 80-81; Habetzeder 2010: 174; Kondratieff 2010: 96-97, 99). In the second century CE, Charax of Pergamon (*Etymologicon magnum*, s.v. Κολώνεια) associated the image with Roman colonies; and indeed the first representations of “Marsyas of the Forum” appear under Hadrian on coins of *coloniae* Corinth and Cremna at the eastern provinces of the Roman empire (Walbank 1989: 79, 87; *RPC* III: nos. 190, 203, 2808).<sup>5</sup> However, the majority of the portrayals are dated to the Severan period onward, minted on coins of *coloniae* in Greece, Asia Minor, Thrace,

<sup>5</sup> See also later under Antoninus Pius and Commodus: *RPC* IV.1: no. 9608; IV.2: nos. 168-170.



Mesopotamia, and the southern Levant (Small 1982: table on 139; *RPC* VI: no. 3966, 3983, 4111; *RPC* VII.2: nos. 72539, 2892).<sup>6</sup>

The image of “Marsyas of the Forum” on the coins was first and foremost meant to proclaim the city’s prestigious status as a Roman *colonia*, which Aulus Gellius described as a miniature replica of Rome (*Noctes Atticae* 16.13.9; Klimowsky 1982-3: 97,100). By displaying Marsyas's image in their *fora*, the *coloniae* proclaimed their affinity to Rome and their *Romanitas* (Veyne 1961: 87). I would like to suggest, following Servius’ observation of Marsyas’s raised hand as a signifier of “*nihil urbi deesse*,” that Marsyas’s figure on the coins meant to indicate also the wealth and prosperity of the city. However, the question of whether the image intended to indicate the city’s *ius Italicum* – a privilege of a higher status granted to certain colonies, including tax exemption, is still a matter of debate. According to scholars, such as Paoli, Meshorer and others (Paoli 1938: 99-130; Habetzeder 2010: 175; *CHL*: 5, 50), the image does attest the status of *ius Italicum*; Klimowsky believed Marsyas represented other tax benefits (1982-3: 96, 100). However, other scholars, primarily Veyne (1961: 92-93) and later Millar (1990: 15) were opposed to this idea and denied any essential association between Marsyas’s image and the *ius Italicum*.<sup>7</sup> It is possible that in Hadrian’s time, the image was indeed meant to indicate tax exemption (Walbank 1989: 82-85), but this did not apply to the Severan period.

With the rise to power of Septimius Severus in 193, a new phase of colonial grants began in the region (Butcher 2003: 232). The title *colonia* was now part of the *indulgentia* repertoire, given to the cities by the emperor as a reward for their loyalty to him. This turned the title *colonia* into an honorary one, much like the title *metropolis*, with or without *ius Italicum*. This practice continued under Septimius Severus’s heirs, some of whom were born and raised in this region, like Elagabalus and Severus Alexander (Millar 1990: 31, 39-40; Butcher 2003: 232).<sup>8</sup>

To my mind, Marsyas’s popularity during the Severan period resulted from the importance assigned by Septimius Severus to Liber Pater, the patron god of Lepcis Magna, his hometown, who was accompanied by Marsyas.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, it is possible

<sup>6</sup> For discussion of the identity of the figure standing on a column before Tyche as Marsyas on coins of Gordian III from Mesopotamia see Butcher 2013: 28. For discussion of the coins from Asia Minor with Tyche and Marsyas, issued under Severus Alexander in Mallus (Cilicia) see Jellonek 2018: 35-39.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Kaizer, who opposes the assertion that the figure of Marsyas is an evidence of *ius Italicum* regarding Palmyra: Kaizer 2007:46, n.57.

<sup>8</sup> It should be considered that from the time of Caracalla, by his newly introduced law, *constitutio Antoniniana*, all free men that were residents of the empire became Roman citizens; this made the title *colonia* redundant in effect, unless accompanied by benefits or tax exemptions, about which we hardly know anything.

<sup>9</sup> Liber Pater (Bacchus), identified with the Phoenician/Punic god Shadrappa, was the patron god of Lepcis Magna - the hometown of Septimius Severus - along with the god Melqart Hercules (Rowan 2012: 33; Lichtenberger 2017: 116-117). After he defeated Niger, the gods Liber Pater and Hercules were shown on his coins, as those who were responsible for his victory, along with the inscription: DIS AVSPICIB(us) (Rowan 2012: 41; *RIC* IV Septimius Severus 25). Later, in 204, they appeared on coins from Rome with the inscription: DI PATRII, as the protecting gods of Rome and the entire empire (Rowan 2012: 75; *RIC* IV

that the “Marsyas of the Forum” image was chosen by the eastern provinces for his nature, since he was by his “dual” myth a sort of a connector between east and west (Walbank 1989: 87; Small 19982: 81-83). According to the myth, Marsyas’ skin (ἄσκόζ) was hanging in the Agora of Kelainai (Hdt. 7. 26.3). In Greek, ἄσκόζ also means a wineskin; hence allegorically, the hanging skin from the Agora could be interpreted as being carried – in the form of a wineskin – by Marsyas himself, on his back, from Asia Minor to the Forum Romanum. In this way also the symbolic association of the figure with marketplaces was transferred from east to west.

Marsyas was not the sole image chosen by the city mint in the province to emphasize its colonial status and its association with Rome. In the coinage repertoire, one can notice other coin-types, such as the symbolic ploughing of the colony’s *pomerium*, the *Vexilla* of the Roman legions, Dea Roma, and the *Lupa Romana* – which like Marsyas, is an image inspired by a well-known sculpture from Rome and appears on coins of four colonies in the Southern Levant region (as well as in Alexandria in Egypt).<sup>10</sup> Yet, compared to them, the “Marsyas of the Forum” image gained a more diversified iconography.

### **Marsyas on coinage of cities of the Southern Levant**

The image of “Marsyas of the Forum” appears on the coinage of eleven cities in the region. On all of them, the satyr is depicted in a similar manner: standing in profile, naked, stocky, and often lacking a tail; sometimes he looks bearded, but this detail is not always clear. Marsyas’s legs are slightly bent, his belly is well defined, and his back is somewhat bent. His bent right hand extends forward, the forearm raised, and the palm occasionally open. He holds in his left hand the spout of a heavy wineskin, which he carries over his shoulder, on his back. In some instances, Marsyas is wearing boots.

Despite the similarities in the appearance of Marsyas, there is great diversity in the scenes in which he is included. The satyr faces either left or right, but frequently he is seen facing right; often, he is depicted as a small figure, sometimes even miniature, while in others his figure extends over the entire coin. In some cases, he is depicted as a single figure on the coin, while in others, he is part of a large scene including additional figures and/or other symbols. Occasionally, he is seen within structures of various types, together with additional figures. The variations are many, and often within the same city several types of Marsyas’s depictions were displayed simultaneously. Overall, four different main types can be distinguished: (1) Marsyas standing alone, (2) Marsyas standing next to Tyche, (3) Marsyas within an architectural setting, (4) Marsyas facing a symbol.

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Septimius Severus 762). They appear in his arch in Lepcis, and he also founded games and built a large temple for them in Rome, as noted by Cassius Dio (77.16.3; Rowan 2012: 41-87).

<sup>10</sup> For the *Lupa Romana* image on the city-coins from the eastern provinces see, Rissanen 2014: 335-360; Palistrant – Shaick 2019: 82-106.

## The period of Septimius Severus and Caracalla

### Laodicea ad Mare and Tyre

The earliest depictions of Marsyas in the region that can be accurately dated appear in the cities Laodicea ad Mare and Tyre, on coinage of Septimius Severus. This is not surprising, for these cities were loyal to him during the war against Niger (194) and he wished to repay them. By dividing the province of Syria into two, Septimius Severus made Laodicea ad Mare the capital of the new province: *Coele Syria*. Antioch lost its preeminent position as punishment for supporting Niger. Septimius Severus granted Laodicea the rank of *metropolis* in 194 and of *colonia* with *ius Italicum* in 198, as clearly stated by Ulpian (*Dig.* 50.15.1.3). The city was known as: ‘Colonia Septimia Laodicea Severiana Metropolis’. Being a *colonia*, Laodicea hosted the “Sacred Capitoline” games. Under the Severans, as evinced from the coins of Macrinus and Elagabalus, Laodicea also gained the status of leader of the Syrian *koinon* – in which the imperial cult took place – instead of Antioch, which lost it for the aforementioned reason (Meyer 1987-88: 60-63, 69-70; Butcher 2003: 370-371; Butcher 2004: 234; Butcher 2012: 479). The coinage of Laodicea well reflects all these changes in its status, as well as the city’s affinity to Rome and emphasized the generosity bestowed upon the city by the Severans.<sup>11</sup>

Under the Severans, the image of Marsyas was meant to proclaim Laodicea ad Mare as a *colonia*. In Laodicea, Marsyas appears in two types: 1.) Marsyas standing alone (type 1), on coins of Septimius Severus, (Pl. 3; Meyer 1987-1988: nos. 70-73), in an unusual manner for this region, as a satyr with a tail, a detail that indicates an adaption of a type from Asia Minor, where this appearance of Marsyas was common.<sup>12</sup> On coins of Macrinus, (Pl. 4) his figure is accompanied by the legend: COL LAVDICIAE METR IIII PROV, proclaiming Laodicea’s status as the leader of the Syrian *koinon* (Butcher 2004: 234). The Type of Marsyas standing alone persisted in Laodicea on coins of Caracalla, Macrinus and Trebonianus Gallus.<sup>13</sup> 2.) Marsyas standing next to Tyche (type 2), on coins of Caracalla (this type will be discussed below).

Tyre, after being looted and burnt by Niger’s army, received a favour (*beneficium*) from Septimius Severus for its loyalty to him. He elevated the city to be the capital of the new Province: *Syria Phoenicia* and a *colonia* with *ius Italicum* known as ‘Septimia Tyrus Metropolis Colonia’ (being a *metropolis* since the time of Domitian). Moreover, Tyre was elected capital of the Phoenician *koinon* and host of the *Actia Eraclia* games (*BMC*: nos. 379, 414, 418). The city proclaimed all this on its coinage.<sup>14</sup> Ulpian, a native

<sup>11</sup> Coin-types as the *Lupa Romana*, and coins with Latin legends such: AETERNUM BENEFICIUM and ROMAE FEL: Meyer 1987-88: nos. 111-114, 125-128, 130-134, 138-141, 143-146.

<sup>12</sup> *RPC* III: no. 2808 - Hadrian, Cremna in Pisidia; *RPC* IV.2: no. 169 - Commodus, Alexandria in Troas.

<sup>13</sup> Lindgren and Kovacs 1985: nos. 2095, 2098, 2107; Butcher 2012: 480, fig. 25.10, 477, no. 25.30; *RPC* IX: no. 1855.

<sup>14</sup> The scene of the symbolic ploughing the colony’s *pomerium*, with the *vexillum* of the legion: LEG. III GAL in the background was shown on coins of Septimius Severus, Caracalla and onward, (*BMC*: 269, no.1; Hirt 2014: 195-6, fig. 7.1). The *vexilla* depictions depicted with the names of legions on city coins from the 3rd century CE, such as in Tyre,

of Tyre, highlights the distinguished fidelity of the city to Septimius Severus, by mentioning the fact that it was the “mother city” (*metropolis*) of Lepcis Magna, the birth town of the emperor (*Dig.* 50. 15. 1).<sup>15</sup> For Tyre, as for other cities, particularly Phoenician ones, the title *metropolis* “mother city” – indicating a hegemony over other cities – was of no less importance than the title *colonia*. For the Phoenicians, it embodied a wide range of colonial associations, which were meant to perpetuate the ancient, historical rivalry over territories and colony establishments overseas, in particular between the cities Tyre and Sidon (Quinn 2018: 143; Millar 1994: 288). The competition between the cities over honorary titles and prestige, which dates back to Hellenistic times, carried on into Roman times and is documented in various literary sources and additional records.<sup>16</sup>

In Tyre, the scenes in which Marsyas was included were designed not only to represent the city’s status as a Roman *colonia*, the capital of the Phoenician *koinon*, but also, as I suggest, to indicate the prosperity of the city, which was known for its great wealth (Strabo, 16. 2. 22; Pliny *NH* 5.17.14) and the good fortune bestowed upon it, particularly under the Severans.

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are claimed by some to be evidence of veteran settlement in the city (Hirt 2014: 196), while others claim that they are evidence of a temporary stationing of detachments of legions inside the cities (Isaac 1992: 139 and n. 191). Aelia Capitolina seems to have been one of the last “true” Roman colonies in the region with veteran settlement in the time of Hadrian. Regarding the legend TVRIORVM, that is seen on some Tyrian coins issued under Elagabalus, there is a dispute about its meaning as well; Hill, Hirt and, recently, also Quinn claim that for some reason, the colony title, as well as other titles were taken from Tyre for a limited time, when Sidon was granted the rank of *colonia*. The rank and titles of Tyre were then restored. All occurred in the reign of Elagabalus (*BMC*: cxxv-cxxvi; Hirt 2014: 196-197; Quinn 2018: 143-4). Millar, however, claims that, without further evidence, the legend TVRIORVM on the coins can not be seen as sufficient proof of such measures, and under Elagabalus, on coins of Laodicea a similar legend is also shown (Millar 1990: 35 and n. 126). Nevertheless, the image of Marsyas is not to be found on coins of Tyre together with the legend TVRIORVM. Some argue that it is a sign of Tyre’s loss of colonial status (Webster 2019: 292-3, 319), but I suggest that it was merely more suitable to display Marsyas together with the title of *colonia*.

<sup>15</sup> For inscriptions in Lepcis Magna and Tyre, perpetuating their historical bond and *Foedus* see Millar 1990: 35-6; Millar 1994: 292.

<sup>16</sup> Strabo, for instance, mentions the eternal and furious rivalry between Tyre and Sidon, and in particular over the title *metropolis* (Strabo 16.2.22); Tyre’s pursuing of the title *metropolis* in the time of Hadrian is well recorded (Suda, s.v. Παῦλος); on an inscription from Didyma, dating 100 CE, Tyre is represented with its full honorary titles, some of them are known since the Hellenistic period. Moreover, the rivalry between Tyre and Berytus was also known and documented in literary sources from the fifth century CE. For these, see Quinn 2018: 143; Hall 2004: 107-109; Millar 1994: 288-9; Hirt 2014: 198.

Both Laodicea and Tyre presented the image of Marsyas on their coinage immediately upon the city becoming a *colonia*, under Septimius Severus. Yet, while Laodicea maintained the common type of Marsyas appearing alone on the coin (type 1), Tyre integrated Marsyas on a new coin-type, which is an entirely original creation of the city mint, depicting Astarte/Tyche – the city’s good fortune – at its glory. This new type of Tyre, known from coins of Julia Domna, depicted Marsyas standing next to Tyche (type 2; Pl. 5a), who places her right hand upon a trophy and crowned by Nike standing on a column. To the left, between the trophy and Tyche, at the goddess’s feet, appears Marsyas as a small figure facing her. On the right-hand side, between Tyche and Nike’s column, at the same height as Marsyas, appears the murex shell – the symbol of Tyre mint. The type persisted until the closure of the mint (Caracalla – Gallienus; Pls. 5b-d; *BMC*: nos. 372-373, 388-392, 419, 423, 431, 474-475). The role of Marsyas in this scene is purely indicative, and he was integrated into a broad and glorious scene including Tyche and the symbols of Tyre – a visual statement of the city’s prestige.



**Pl. 3:** Laodicea ad Mare, Septimius Severus with Julia Domna, 193-211; *Rev.* Marsyas is standing to the left, right hand is extended forward, holding wineskin over left shoulder; around: SEPT LAVDIC COLON SEVER METROPOLI; Æ, 19.74 g., 33 mm; Meyer 1987-1988: 83, no. 71.



**Pl. 4:** Laodicea ad Mare, Macrinus, 217-218; *Rev.* Marsyas standing, facing left; around: COL LAVDICIAE METR IIII PROV; Æ, 13.55 g., 28 mm; Butcher 2012: 480, fig. 25.10; CNG 291, 21 Nov. 2012, Lot 249. <https://www.cngcoins.com/Coin.aspx?CoinID=221797>



**Pl. 5a:** Tyre, Julia Domna, 193-211; *Rev.* Tyche-Astarte standing frontally, holding scepter and placing right hand upon a trophy on left, crowned by Nike standing on a column on right; at feet to left, Marsyas facing right; at feet to right, murex shell; around: SEPTVRVSMETR COLONI; Æ, 6.59g., 27 mm; *BMC*: 269, no. 369, Pl. XXXII.7.



**Pl. 5b:** Tyre, Caracalla, 198-217; *Rev.* Tyche-Astarte standing frontally, holding scepter and placing right hand upon a trophy on left, crowned by Nike standing on a column on right; at feet to left, Marsyas standing right; at feet to right, murex shell; around: SEP TVRVS METRO COLONI; Æ, 23.57 g., 31 mm; *BMC*: 270, no. 372; *CNG* 82, Sep. 16, 2009, Lot 873.  
<https://www.cngcoins.com/Coin.aspx?CoinID=147329>



**Pl. 5c:** Tyre, Elagabalus, 218-222; *Rev.* Tyche-Astarte standing frontally, holding scepter and placing right hand upon a trophy on left, crowned by Nike standing on a column on right; at feet to left, Marsyas standing right; at feet to right, murex shell; around: SEPT IM T VRO COLO; Æ, 18.06 g., 30 mm; *BMC*: 273, no. 389, Pl. XXXII.1.  
<https://ikmk.smb.museum/object?lang=en&id=18242294&view=rs>



**Pl. 5d:** Tyre, Gallienus, 253-268; *Rev.* Tyche-Astarte standing frontally, holding scepter and placing right hand upon a trophy on left, crowned by Nike standing on a column on right; at feet to left, Marsyas standing right; at feet to right, murex shell; around: COL TVRO METRO; *Æ*, 11.54 g., 32 mm; *BMC*: 291, no. 474; *CNG* 302, May 08, 2013, Lot 282.  
<https://www.cngcoins.com/Coin.aspx?CoinID=233476>

This new iconography, in which Marsyas appears for the first time as part of selected images embodying civic identity and local pride, is essential for understanding the significance of the image to the cities in the region. The iconographic innovation of the Tyrian mint was subsequently adopted by other city-mints in the region and was further developed by the Tyrian mint itself. Thus, Laodicea, on Caracalla's coins, issued the second type of Marsyas, in which he is standing next to Tyche (type 2; Pl. 6). Unlike in Tyre, in Laodicea, Tyche is depicted sitting on a throne, and the figure of Marsyas is not miniature. He appears to be bearded and wearing boots, but lacking his tail. As in Tyre, he stands on the left side of the scene, but is not facing the goddess. In another variation of this type on Laodicea's coins under Elagabalus, Marsyas is represented facing the goddess (*BMC Syria*: 261, no. 104).



**Pl. 6:** Laodicea ad Mare, Caracalla, 198-217; *Rev.* Tyche seated on a throne to the left, holding rudder and cornucopia; on left, Marsyas standing, facing left; around: COLSE PAVRLAO MATR; *Æ*, 13.24 g. 27 mm; Meyer 1987-1988: Pl. 17, no. 137.

During Caracalla's reign, Antioch regained its title of *metropolis* and was awarded the status of *colonia* without tax exemption (*Dig.* 50.15.8.5). Possibly, the city was restored to its function as the Syrian *koinon* capital alongside Laodicea (Butcher 2012: 479; Meyer 1987-88: 70). Nevertheless, the colonial status of Antioch is known on the coins only from the time of Elagabalus and persisted until Valerian, using Greek legends only (Millar 1994: 258). Yet, the image of Marsyas is absent from the coins.

Ulpian, writing in the time of Caracalla, records a grant of colonial status with *ius Italicum* to the city Emesa by the emperor, because it was the hometown of Caracalla's

mother, Julia Domna (*Dig.* 50.15.1.4). Coins with Greek legends indicating the status of the city as a colony were minted in Emesa (Homs) under Caracalla, Macrinus, Elagabalus, and later in the time of Uranius Antoninus (253/4) (*BMC Syria*: nos. 9-10, 15, 21, 24). Marsyas does not appear on Emesa coins. This is a clear example of a city granted *ius Italicum* that its coins lack the image of Marsyas.

According to Ulpian, Sebaste (Samaria) was granted the rank of *colonia* by Septimius Severus as well, yet it is unknown what benefits came with it (*Dig.* 50. 15. 1.7; Millar 1990: 38; Isaac 1992: 360). The city, which ceased minting by Elagabalus's time, was known officially as Colonia Lucia Septimia Sebaste. The ploughing scene was shown on Caracalla's coins (Meshorer 1984: 45, no.118), nevertheless, the colony chose not to represent the image of Marsyas on its coins.

### The period of Elagabalus and Severus Alexander

#### Sidon, Tyre, Berytus and 'Akko-Ptolemais

During the period of Elagabalus, we witness a burst of creativity of the mints in the region, manifested by creating different variations on the type of Marsyas standing next to Tyche, as well as by producing additional new coin-types with Marsyas. Sidon, Tyre's great rival, was granted the desirable rank of *colonia*, by Elagabalus, as legends on the coins inscribed: Col(onia) Aur(elia) Pia Met(ropolis) Sid(on). The city was chosen to host the games in honor of Eshmun/Asklepios (*BMC*: cxv). The new rank was advertised by a series of new coin-types indicating Sidon's wealth and fortune under the Severans, all were minted under Elagabalus and Severus Alexander.<sup>17</sup>

Sidon included Marsyas in five different settings to celebrate its colonial status. Sidon used the type invented by Tyre (type 2), and similarly depicted Marsyas standing next to Tyche. He appears as a small figure to the left, at her feet (Pl. 7). The rivalry between Tyre and Sidon, documented in the literature, is well-evident in the variations given to the scene. Sidon created a new variation in which Marsyas is standing next to Tyche along with palm-trees, on coins of Julia Paula (Pl. 8). The palm tree is of vast and significant local Phoenician meaning,<sup>18</sup> being part of the Tyre coin-type repertoire since the Hellenistic period onward (*BMC*: nos. 246-247, 386). On Tyre's coins, the palm tree was integrated into the scene of Tyche crowning by Nike, *without* Marsyas, since the time of Diadumenian (*BMC*: no. 385) and under Elagabalus (*BMC*: nos. 385, 388),<sup>19</sup> yet

<sup>17</sup> Coin-types such as: ploughing the colony's *pomerium*, three *vexillia*, prize-table (alluding the games), and a *mudius* with the legend AETERNVM BENEFICIVM: *BMC*: nos. 301, 188-9, 266-273, 191, 274-8, 324. After Severus Alexander the mint ceased to operate.

<sup>18</sup> For the Phoenicians, the palm tree represented Phoenix (Φοῖνιξ), the founder of Phoenicia and the father of some colonial founders overseas, as well as the father of the Phoenician heroine Europa, according to various literary versions. The word phoenix, which gave the Phoenicians their name, means "the color purple" in Greek, but also "palm" (Date Palm) or more accurately - "date" (Phoenix dactylifera; Bonnet Tzavellas 1983: 121). For the associations between the palm tree and Phoenicia see Bonnet-Tzavellas 1983: 113-116; Quinn 2018: 137-9.

<sup>19</sup> Webster claims (Webster 2019: 292-3, 319) that on Tyrian coins depicting Tyche crowned by Nike, the palm tree *replaced* Marsyas in the time of Elagabalus only on coins with the legend TVRIORVM, and that this is evidence of the fact that in Elagabalus's time, for some



Sidon was first, under Elagabalus, to include both Marsyas and the palm tree into the Tyche coronation scene. Later, under Gordian III and onward, Tyre adopted this version from Sidon and presented a scene in which Marsyas is standing next to Tyche with the murex shell and the palm tree (Pl. 9).<sup>20</sup> This variation was issued in Tyre concurrently with the familiar type, without the palm tree (*BMC*: no. 423).



**Pl. 7:** Sidon, Elagabalus, 218-222; *Rev.* Tyche-Astarte standing frontally, holding cross-headed standard and an aplanon, crowned by Nike standing on a column on right; to lower left, Marsyas facing right; around: AVRPIASIDONCOLMETRO; *Æ*, 18.68 g., 30 mm; *BMC*: 184: no. 242, Pl. XXIV.3.



**Pl. 8:** Sidon, Julia Paula, 219-220; *Rev.* Tyche-Astarte standing frontally, holding cross-headed standard and an aplanon, crowned by Nike standing on a column on right; to lower left, Marsyas facing right; on either side of the goddess are palm trees; around: AVRPIASIDONCOLMETRO; *Æ*, 16.69 g., 30 mm; *BMC*: 192: no. 289, Pl. XXV.2.

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reason, Tyre's titles (*colonia* and *metropolis*) were revoked, and when restored, the image of Marsyas too returned to its coins. But this claim does not fit the numismatic findings. The scene of Tyche coronation with the palm tree was issued in Tyre even earlier, under Diadumenian, and on Elagabalus's coins, the scene of Tyche with the palm tree appears also together with the legend *Colonia* (*BMC*: no. 388).

<sup>20</sup> Marsyas next to Tyche with the Palm tree: Gordian III: *RPC* VII.2: nos. 6522, 27466; Philip I and Valerian I: *BMC* nos. 449-451, Pl. XXXIV.7.



**Pl. 9:** Tyre, Gordian III, 238-244; *Rev.* Tyche-Astarte standing frontally, placing right hand on trophy to left, and holding sceptre, crowned by Nike on column to right; at feet to left, Marsyas facing right; at feet to right, murex shell and palm-tree; around: COL TYR(O) MET(R); Æ, 18.63 g., 29 mm; *RPC* VII.2: no. 27466 (unassigned). <https://rpc.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/coin/340528>

In Sidon, under Elagabalus, another variation was created, in which Marsyas standing next to Tyche within her temple (Pl. 10; *BMC*: nos. 243, 290). The goddess stands under the central arch of a tetrastyle temple, crowned by Nike, whereas Marsyas is shown at her feet, on the left.



**Pl. 10:** Sidon, Julia Paula, 219-220; *Rev.* Tyche-Astarte standing frontally within a tetrastyle temple set on a podium, with central arch, pediment and acroteria along roofline, holding scepter and crowned by Nike set on column to right; on the left side, within a wing of the temple, Marsyas standing, facing right; around: COLAVR PIAMETRSID; Æ, 16.20 g., 34 mm; *BMC*: 192, no. 290, Pl. XXV.3.

In Tyre, a more lavish hexastyle temple with Tyche at the center crowned by Nike, set behind an altar with a murex shell and a palm tree on both its sides was represented on coins of Elagabalus as well (*BMC*; nos. 404-5). Marsyas however is *absent* from most of the specimens, although according to Hill a variation with Marsyas does exist (*BMC*: no. 393).<sup>21</sup> The scene of Tyche in her temple endures in Tyre until Gallienus, *with Marsyas* appearing only later, on some coins of Philip I and Trebonianus Gallus (Pls. 11a, 11b).<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Possibly, the figure had been present but was worn out. However, in most of the specimens it is the tip of Tyche's long scepter that is seen near her right leg.

<sup>22</sup> According to *RPC* VIII Marsyas is not included on coins of Philip I depicting Tyche in her temple, but as we can see, he does appear on some of the coins: *RPC* VIII: no. 6495 (unassigned).



**Pl. 11a:** Tyre, Philip I, 244-249; *Rev.* Tyche-Astarte standing frontally within a hexastyle temple set on a podium, with central arch, pediment and acroteria, placing right hand on trophy to left, and holding sceptre, crowned by Nike on column to right; at feet to left, a small figure of Marsyas facing right; before the temple, in exergue, a lighted altar between palm tree and murex shell; around: COLTYRO METRO; Æ, 15.64g., 30 mm; *RPC VIII*: no. 6495 (unassigned).  
<https://rpc.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/type/6495>



**Pl. 11b:** Tyre, Trebonianus Gallus, 251-253; *Rev.* Tyche-Astarte standing frontally within a hexastyle temple on a podium, with central arch and pediment, placing right hand on trophy to left, and holding sceptre, crowned by Nike on column to right; at feet to left, a small figure of Marsyas facing right; before temple, in exergue, a lighted altar between palm tree and murex shell; around: COL TYRO METRO; Æ, 19.41g., 30 mm; *RPC IX*: no. 2010.  
<https://rpc.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/coins/9/2010>

Tyre, over the years, elaborates the type of Marsyas standing next to Tyche by creating additional variations: 1.) Marsyas standing next to Tyche with the murex shell and a *modius* (Pl. 12; under Trebonianus Gallus),<sup>23</sup> 2.) Marsyas standing next to Tyche with the murex shell, palm tree, ambrosial rocks and Dea Roma (Pl. 13; under Trebonianus Gallus),<sup>24</sup> all alluding to the abundance, wealth and power of Tyre. 3.) Marsyas standing next to Tyche with four additional Tychai offering a sacrifice, under Philip I (Pl. 28; see further discussion below). Altogether, the type of Marsyas standing next to Tyche (type 2), appears on Tyre coins in six different variations, from the time of Septimius Severus up to the end of the city minting under Gallienus.

<sup>23</sup> The *modius* is identified by Hill (*BMC*: no. 436). In *RPC IX*: nos. 1998-9, 2028 it is identified as the ambrosial rock, which relating to the mythic foundation of Tyre.

<sup>24</sup> Dea Roma sitting on a shield holding a small figure of Nike. The object on the right, in exergue beneath, is identified as the ambrosial rock: *RPC IX*, nos. 2000, but I suggest regarding it as an altar.



**Pl. 12:** Tyre, Trebonianus Gallus, 251-253; *Rev.* Tyche-Astarte standing frontally, placing right hand on trophy to left, and holding sceptre in left hand, crowned by Nike standing on column to right; at feet to left, Marsyas facing right; on right a modius; in exergue a murex shell; around: COL TYRO METRO; Æ, 11.68 g., 27 mm; *RPC IX*: no. 1998.  
<https://rpc.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/coins/9/1998>



**Pl. 13:** Tyre, Trebonianus Gallus, 251-253; *Rev.* On the left, Tyche-Astarte standing frontally, placing right hand on trophy to left and holding a sceptre, crowned by Nike standing on column to right; at feet to left, a small Marsyas facing right; on the right, Dea Roma seated on a round shield, facing left, holding a small figure of Nike; in exergue beneath, a palm tree between murex shell and ambrosial rock(?); around: COL TYRO MET; Æ, 18.34 g., 31 mm; *RPC IX*, no. 2000.  
<https://rpc.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/coins/9/2000>

Again, under Elagabalus, a new additional type was created, portraying Marsyas within an architectural setting (type 3). The depictions appear concurrently on both Berytus' and Sidon's coins, and it is hard to know which city was the first to invent the concept.

Berytus was the first Roman colony to be founded in the region, under Augustus, yet only at a later date did the city choose to depict Marsyas on its coins. The city minted two different types of Marsyas: 1.) Marsyas standing alone (type 1), on coins the date of which is still a matter of debate (Pls. 34-35; see further discussion below). 2.) Marsyas within a monumental gate (*tetrapylon*), on coins of Elagabalus (type 3; Pl. 14; Sawaya 2009: nos. 1747-1782, 1810-1847). Marsyas is facing right, standing on a low pedestal under the central arch of a grand tetrastyle gateway. The place was identified as the entrance to the Roman Forum of Berytus (Sawaya 2009: 265; Hall 2004: 65).<sup>25</sup> An

<sup>25</sup> Another interpretation of the architectural setting in the scene views the arch high over the columns as the curved court of the Forum appearing behind the *tetrapylon*; inside of it stands the statue Marsyas (Butcher 2003: 232, fig. 87). The gate structure on the coin might

inscription from Berytus, dating to Vespasian (Millar 1990: 15; Hall 2004: 65), mentioning the erection of shops (*tabernae*), perhaps fronting the forum, and a statue of Liber Pater (of whom Marsyas is a companion); it implies that a statue of Marsyas may have stood in the Forum of Berytus, as appears on the coins. Placing Marsyas at the center of Berytus's commercial life accords with Servius's text, regarding Marsyas's standing in the forum with his hand raised.



**Pl. 14.** Berytus, Elagabalus, 218-222; *Rev.* Marsyas standing right on low base, within the gateway of the Forum, consisting of a central arch and two decorated distyle wings, with bases, an architraves and upper stories (?); above central arch, a figure on a lion to right; around: COL IVL AVG FEL BER A, 18.38 g., 29 mm; *BMC*: 82, no. 194; CNG 105, May 10, 2017, Lot 594. <https://www.cngcoins.com/Coin.aspx?CoinID=334291>

Sidon as well created a type of Marsyas within a grand gateway structure, on coins of Elagabalus and Julia Maesa (type 3; Rouvier 1902: 273, no. 1550, Pl. X.13; Trell 1970: 29-31, figs. 1-6, 8). Marsyas is represented standing within a gate, flanked by two Nikai — each standing on a column and holding a torch — between two lavishly decorated pillars of large size (Pl. 15). The upper part of the coin shows a sculpted group of Europe on the bull, as if standing inside a gable; in fact, it should be interpreted as if displayed in the inner court of a colonnaded enclosure, decorated with sculptures. The monumental structure should be identified either as the entrance gate to the *temenos* of the Astarte sanctuary (Price and Trell 1977: 156-7), or as the gate to the city Forum, due to Marsyas's presence in the scene (*BMC*: cxvi).

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be identified with the large gate structure in Beirut described by the traveler Nasir-I Khusraw in the eleventh century (*Book of Travels*, 15-16; Hall 2004: 66).



**Pl. 15:** Sidon, Elagabalus, 218-222; *Rev.* A small figure of Marsyas standing left between two Nikai standing on columns with torches in hand facing Marsyas, within the gateway of Sidon central sanctuary, consisting of two decorated large pillars; behind the gate (but seen as above it), is the court of the *temenos*, with a colonnade around(?), decorated with sculptures of figures and Europa on the bull in the center; around: COLAVR METRO SID; Æ, 17.14 g., 30 mm; Price and Trell 1977: color plate. on p. 13.

A different coin-type of Sidon, under Julia Maesa, shows Marsyas within a tetrastyle building (type 3; Pl. 16). He is standing alone, wearing boots, under a wide arch of the edifice, which consists of two additional narrow aisles, an architrave, and a pediment. The identity of the building is unclear; Rouvier identified it as a temple (1902: 279, no. 1589), yet I believe it is implausible for Marsyas to have been depicted standing alone in a temple, and it is more likely that this is the same grand gateway shown before (Pl. 15), but in a modest form. All of these depictions from Sidon and Berytus, although dissimilar in details, were created out of a desire to present Marsyas within an important civic center, which was recognizable by the people and well-renowned at the time. The interpretation I suggested of Marsyas as symbolizing the wealth of the city, certainly applies to these depictions of Berytus and Sidon.



**Pl. 16:** Sidon, Julia Maesa, 218-223; *Rev.* Marsyas standing, facing right, within the gateway of Sidon central sanctuary, consisting of a tetrastyle structure with an architrave, central arch and a pediment; around: COLAVR METRO SID; Æ, 9.92 g., 24 mm; Rouvier 1902: 279, no. 1589.  
[https://www.wildwinds.com/coins/ric/julia\\_maesa/sidon\\_Rouvier\\_1589.jpg](https://www.wildwinds.com/coins/ric/julia_maesa/sidon_Rouvier_1589.jpg)

Like the third type of Marsyas, also the fourth type was created during Elagabalus's reign. It depicts Marsyas facing a symbol (type 4). The type was first minted both in Tyre and in 'Akko-Ptolemais, concurrently. It is likely, considering the creativity of the mint of Tyre, that it was first invented in Tyre and then adopted by 'Akko. In Tyre, the type appears solely in the time of Elagabalus, with Marsyas raising his hand toward a majestic palm tree before him, (Pl.17; Lindgren and Kovacs 1985: no. 2384; Rouvier1904: no. 2371). In 'Akko, on coins of Elagabalus and onward, Marsyas raises his hand toward a large winged Caduceus before him, one of 'Akko's mint symbols (Pl. 18).



**Pl. 17.** Tyre, Elagabalus, 218-222; *Rev.* On left, Marsyas standing to the right, raising right hand toward a large palm tree set on the right; between them a murex shell and a star; around: SEP TYRO COLO; Æ, 10.72 g., 24 mm; Rouvier 1904: no. 2371.  
[https://www.wildwinds.com/coins/ric/elagabalus/tyre\\_Rouvier\\_2371.jpg](https://www.wildwinds.com/coins/ric/elagabalus/tyre_Rouvier_2371.jpg)



**Pl. 18.** 'Akko Ptolemais, Severus Alexander, 222-235; *Rev.* On left, Marsyas standing to the right, raising right hand toward a long, winged caduceus on the right; around: COLONIA PTOLEMAIS; Æ, 4.90 g., 20 mm; *CHL*: 15, no. 238.

'Akko-Ptolemais became a veteran colony during the last stage of Claudius's reign and was known as: *Colonia Claudi Caesaris Ptolemais*.<sup>26</sup> Ulpian noted about Ptolemais that the city: "nihil praeter nomen coloniae habet" (Ulpian, *Dig.* 50, 15, 1, 3).<sup>27</sup> This statement is disputed, and it might be inferred that although it had the rank of a *colonia*, the city did not enjoy any additional financial privileges or tax exemption, such as *ius Italicum* (Isaac 1998: 93, n.29; Isaac *forthcoming*).<sup>28</sup>

Though a *colonia* since Claudius, only from the Severan period, 'Akko saw fit to portray Marsyas on its coins. He was shown on 'Akko's coinage in three different types; sometimes, like on coins of Severus Alexander, two types appear simultaneously: 1.) Marsyas facing a Caduceus (type 4; Pl. 18; Elagabalus - Gallieus; *CHL*: nos. 269, 299; Kadman 1961: no. 163). 2.) Marsyas standing alone (type 1; Severus Alexander; *CHL*: no. 226). 3.) Marsyas standing next to Tyche, in two variations, which will be fully discussed below (type 2; Pls. 30-31; Philip I, Valerian and Gallienus).

Some scholars argue that the presence of Marsyas on 'Akko coins is an indication that the city was granted *ius Italicum* (*CHL*: 5), But the case of 'Akko proves just the

<sup>26</sup> The coin-types that were chosen to publish the colonial status of the city are: the symbolic ploughing of the colony's *pomerium* and four legionary standards with their numbers depicted in the background, with the legend: DIVOS CLAUD STA GER FEL and the abbreviated name of the colony minted under Nero (*CHL*: 10, nos. 131-134). A Latin inscription, indicating that the colony's territory was subdivided into *pagi* for the settlers, implies the organization of the Roman colony in the area (Isaac 1998: 93-94 and n.30).

<sup>27</sup> "The colony of Ptolemais, which is situated between Phoenicia and Palestine, has nothing but the name of a colony" (*Dig.* 50, 15, 1, 3 trans. by S. P. Scott).

<sup>28</sup> Levick suggested that by the time of Ulpian (period of Caracalla), Ptolemais had lost its rights (Levick in Millar 1990: 26), see also Applebaum 1989: 83-84.



opposite: although being a *colonia* since Claudius, without *ius Italicum* at least since the reign of Caracalla, the city displayed Marsyas on its coins in three different types. I suggest that it was done because of the popularity the Marsyas motif gained in the region during that period of time.

### Caesarea ad Libanum / Arca

In the time of Elagabalus, the small city in the Lebanon mountains Caesarea ad Libanum / Arca became a colony because it was the hometown of his aunt's husband and the place where later his aunt, Julia Mamaea, gave birth to their son, Severus Alexander, his heir (Millar 1990: 51). The evidence of becoming a *colonia* is known solely by the coins, which contain the legend: Col Cesaria Libani, or, alternatively, with a reference to the Itureans: Col Cesa Itur. The minting was ended in the time of Severus Alexander. Marsyas is present only on coins of Elagabalus, in two types: 1.) Marsyas standing alone (type 1; Pl. 19) bald, bearded, with a tail and boots, like in Laodicea, 2.) (if it is indeed Marsyas) appearing near the right edge of the coin, standing in front of a tetrastyle temple (not inside it, as usual, but outside the temple; type 2; Pl. 20). In the temple, Tyche is being crowned by a male figure whose identity is unclear; Hill suggested identifying him as Alexander the Great (*BMC*: 110, no. 8) but Webster surprisingly identifies him as the emperor himself (Webster 2019: 269).



**Pl. 19:** Caesarea ad Libanum/Arca, Elagabalus, 218-222; *Rev.* Marsyas standing, facing right; around: COL CESARIA LIB, AA Φ; *Æ*, 7.74 g., 24 mm; Rouvier 1901: 62, no. 736; J. Noory coll. [https://www.wildwinds.com/coins/ric/elagabalus/caesarea-ad-Libanum\\_Rouvier\\_736.jpg](https://www.wildwinds.com/coins/ric/elagabalus/caesarea-ad-Libanum_Rouvier_736.jpg)



**Pl. 20:** Caesarea ad Libanum/Arca, Elagabalus, 218-222; *Rev.* Tyche-Astarte standing frontally within a tetrastyle temple on a podium, with central arch and pediment, resting right hand on a long standard, placing left foot on a half-length figure of a river god; on right, a male figure (Alexander the Great (?)) standing left, is crowning Tyche; in exergue below, Marsyas (?) standing left; around: COL CES /AA(Φ); *Æ*, 6.94 g., 28 mm; *BMC*: 110, no. 8, Pl. XIII.9.



**Bostra**

In the time of Severus Alexander, the rank of *colonia* was granted to Bostra, which thus became Colonia Bostra.<sup>29</sup> The city was the capital of *Provincia Arabia* from the time of Trajan. It was the governor's seat and the legion *III Cyrenaica* was based there. The city hosted the *Actia Doursaria* games. In the time of Philip I, who was born not far from the city, Bostra was granted the title of *metropolis* as well. Under Severus Alexander, Bostra chose to celebrate the new status on its coinage through the coin-types of the symbolic ploughing of the colony's *pomerium* (*CHL*: 151, no. 42), as well as by the type of Marsyas standing alone, wearing boots (type 1; Pl. 21; *CHL*: 151, nos. 44, 48). At a later date, on coins of Herennius Etruscus and his son Hostilian (251), another type appears, depicting Marsyas standing next to Tyche, as a small figure at the goddess's feet (type 2; Pl. 22; *CHL*: no. 60; *RPC IX*: no. 2219).

Unlike Bostra, the city of Petra, which was granted the rank of *colonia* in the time of Elagabalus, and the title of *metropolis* earlier, under Trajan (*CHL*: 191-194), chose not to present Marsyas on its coins; The minting there ceased after Elagabalus.



**Pl. 21:** Bostra, Severus Alexander, 222-235; *Rev.* Marsyas standing to the right; around: COLONIA BOSTRA; *Æ*, 3.35 g., 20 mm; *CHL*: 151, no. 44; CNG 427, Aug. 22, 2018, Lot 388 <https://www.cngcoins.com/Coin.aspx?CoinID=366482>



**Pl. 22:** Bostra, Herennius Etruscus and Hostilian, 251; *Rev.* Tyche standing frontally, holding a sceptre surmounted by trophy and a cornucopia; on right, a small figure of Marsyas facing left; around: COL METROPOL BOSTRON; *Æ*, 5.96 g., 23 mm; *RPC IX*: no. 2219. <https://rpc.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/coins/9/2219>

**The period of Philip I, Decius and Trebonianus Gallus****Damascus**

In the period of Philip I, whose origins were in the Syrian Hawrān, several additional cities were granted the rank of *colonia*. The city Damascus, elevated to the rank of

<sup>29</sup> It was known also by its longer name, which preserved the former city name: Nea Traiana Alexandriana Colonia Bostra (Sartre 1985: 76; *CHL*: 151, no. 151).

*colonia*, being *metropolis* since Hadrian's times, was called on its coins: Colonia Damascus Metropolis. The city was the capital of the *hyparchia* Coele Syria, and hosted the *Olympia Sebasmia* games (Millar 1994: 316; Butcher 2003: 228-9). In order to publish its new status as a *colonia*, the city chose several coin-types besides Marsyas.<sup>30</sup> Marsyas's image was shown in two types (by four different variations), all of them from the time of Philip I: 1.) Marsyas facing a cypress tree, raising his hand towards it (type 4; Pl. 23; *RPC* VIII: no. 26615), much like the depictions in Tyre and 'Akko. 2.) Marsyas standing next to Tyche (type 2), as a small figure facing the goddess, who appears in three different scenes, a.) seated on a rock (Pl. 24a; *RPC* VIII: nos. 26801, 26824);<sup>31</sup> b.) as a draped, turreted bust (Pl. 24b; *RPC* VIII: no. 26825). c) Marsyas standing next to Tyche, including four other Tychai offering a sacrifice (Pl. 29; this variation will be discussed below).<sup>32</sup>



**Pl. 23:** Damascus, Philip II, 244-249; *Rev.* On left, Marsyas standing right, raising right hand toward a cypress tree on the right; in exergue, ram's head right; around: COL ΔΑΜΑΣCV METRO; Æ, 10.77 g., 26 mm; *RPC* VIII: no. 26615 (unassigned).  
<https://rpc.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/type/26615>

<sup>30</sup> These were coin-types like the symbolic ploughing of the *pomerium* (Lindgren and Kovacs 1985: 114, no. 2148), and the *Lupa Romana* with the *vexillum* of the sixth legion *Ferrata* (*BMC Syria*: no. 25). Burns suggests that it can be inferred from the coins, that in period of Philip I the status of Damascus as *colonia* was not only an honorary one, but a place where veterans of the sixth legion *Ferrata* were settled (Burns 2005: 85); but as in Tyre, here as well, others claim that it is not to be viewed as a settlement of veterans, but rather a temporary stay of the legion in the area (Isaac 1992: 139 and n. 191).

<sup>31</sup> The same scene of Tyche seated on a rock appears on coins of Philip I but without Marsyas: Rosenberger 1978: nos. 39, 46.

<sup>32</sup> Possibly Marsyas appears on an additional type, but the identification of the small figure, raising its hand, standing inside a tetrastyle building under an arch that represents the spot where the river springs, with the legend ΠΗΓΑΙ, is not certain. Price, Trell and Rosenberger (Price and Trell 1977: 210, fig. 433; Rosenberger 1978: no. 40) identify the figure as Marsyas, but Aliquot identifies it as an idol (Aliquot 2009: 329), and Butcher describes it as a female figure (Butcher 2012: 480). Her back is not bent, and she bears less resemblance to other depictions of Marsyas in Damascus. In *RPC* the figure is not identified as Marsyas: *RPC* VIII: no. 15976.



**Pl. 24a:** Damascus, Philip I, 244-249; *Rev.* On right, Tyche seated on a rock facing left, holding a cornucopia in her left hand and a fillet or a rudder (?) in her extending right hand; below, a half-length figure of the river-god Chrysooroas swimming to the right; on left, Marsyas standing facing right; above, a ram leaping left; around: (COL D) AMASCVM(ET)RO;  $\text{Æ}$ , 23.42 g., 29 mm; *RPC* VIII: no. 26801 (unassigned). <https://rpc.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/type/26801>



**Pl. 24b:** Damascus, Philip I, 244-249; *Rev.* On right, a draped, turreted bust of Tyche facing left, cornucopia over shoulder; before her, on left, a small figure of Marsyas standing to the right; around: COL ΔAMAS METRO;  $\text{Æ}$ , 10.59 g., 23 mm; *RPC* VIII: no. 26825 (unassigned). <https://rpc.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/type/26825>

Philip's hometown, Shahba (later renamed Philippopolis), is located only about 90 km from Damascus, in the Syrian Hawrān. Although granted the rank of *colonia* in his reign (Isaac 1992: 361-363; Millar 1990: 53-54), Shahba does not show Marsyas on its coins.<sup>33</sup>

### Neapolis (Nablus)

The city Neapolis (Nablus) was also granted colonial status in the time of Philip I. At the foot of Mt. Gerizim, Neapolis was founded by Vespasian, after the suppression of the Jewish revolt (70 CE). On coins, the city was named Colonia Iulia Neapolis or Sergia Neapolis, occasionally together with the legend: *Neocoron*, which declares that a temple in its area was hosting the imperial cult (Sandberg 2019: 141-142). The granting of the rank of *colonia* was advertised on various coin-types.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> The coin-type that was chosen to show its connection with Rome was the one of Dea Roma holding two small figures of Philip's parents: *CHL*: nos. 1, 3-4, 7-9; *RPC* VIII: no. 2286.

<sup>34</sup> Such as: the *pomerium*'s ploughing, the *Lupa Romana* motif in several variation, the Roman Eagle carries Mt. Gerizim (*CHL*: 57, nos. 132, 133, 137-139) and Dea Roma (Sandberg 2019: 146, Pl. 10: 22).

For the Marsyas motif, Neapolis chose two types, with different variations, all of them issued under Philip I. 1.) Marsyas is facing a symbol before him (type 4), which is also known from Tyre, 'Akko, and Damascus, in two variations: a.) raising his hand toward an eagle supporting Mt. Gerizim,<sup>35</sup> b.) raising his hand toward a figure of Nike carrying Mt. Gerizim, sometimes accompanied by a star (Pls. 25, 26; *CHL*: nos. 141, 143-144, 172, 183, 196, 197, 177). The eagle and Nike stand for the Roman empire and for the Roman army that was situated there (the legion *X Fretensis*);<sup>36</sup> Marsyas, with his raised hand towards Mt. Gerizim, on the other hand, stand for the civic aspect of the colony, signifying that the city will flourish and lack nothing under Roman rule. 2.) Marsyas standing next to Tyche (type 2), but in a very rare depiction, known only from two specimens (Pl. 27): Marsyas is standing between two Tychai holding bust, their foot on a couching lion (*RPC VIII*: nos. 2451, 2365). Sandberg identifies the goddesses as Kore-Persephone and Demeter (2019: 151, no. 26). This variation is very atypical for the region,<sup>37</sup> but its aim was, in a similar manner to the typical scenes (type 2), to present Marsyas together with the local goddess of the city, who was responsible for the city's fortune and wealth. The scene was meant to indicate the prosperity of Neapolis as a successful Roman *colonia* in the time of Philip I. Some scholars maintain that the city was granted *ius Italicum* because of Marsyas's presence on the coins (*CHL*: 50; Sandberg 2019: 147), but we have no records about whether or not Neapolis had such rights at that time, and the title was probably only an honorary one (Millar 1990: 39-40).



**Pl. 25:** Neapolis. Philip I, 244-249; *Rev.* On left, Marsyas standing to the right, raising right hand toward an eagle with spread wings standing on the right, supporting Mt. Gerizim; around: COL SERG NEAPOL; Æ, 13.33 g., 28 mm; *RPC VIII*: no. 2359 (unassigned).  
<https://rpc.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/type/2359>

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- <sup>35</sup> This scene is subject to many variations; the eagle's head turns either to the right or to the left; a star is occasionally added to the scene and Marsyas is shown in different dimensions. All of these imply the use of several different coin-types simultaneously.
- <sup>36</sup> Emblems of the legion *X Fretensis* appears on coins of Trebonianus Gallus: *CHL*: 62, no. 234. Harl suggested that it is evidence for the settlement of veterans from that legion in the city (Harl in: *CHL*: 50), but the matter is disputed (Isaac 1992: 431 and n. 38), and evidences of a widespread military presence in the area has existed since the first century CE (Isaac 1992: 430-431).
- <sup>37</sup> The scene of two Tychai facing each other is known in many variations on coins of Asia Minor from the time of Antoninus Pius onward, when they usually shake hands. Sometimes another goddess or the emperor himself appear between them, but a figure of Marsyas is absent (*RPC IV.1*: no. 5388; *IV.2*: no. 746, 854; *VI*: no. 5599).



**Pl. 26:** Neapolis, Philip I and Philip II, 244-249; *Rev.* On left, Marsyas standing to the right, raising right hand toward a figure of Nike carries Mt. Gerizim; around: NEAPOLI NEOCORO; Æ, 10.90 g., 26.6 mm; *RPC VIII*: no. 2194 (unassigned). <https://rpc.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/type/2194>



**Pl. 27.** Neapolis, Otacilia Severa, 244-249; *Rev.* Two Tychai standing, facing each other, holding bust and sceptre, foot on a couching lion, between them, Marsyas standing to the right; above them, Mt. Gerizim; around: COL SERG, NEAPOL; Æ, 17.53 g., 29 mm; *RPC VIII*: no. 2451 (unassigned). <https://rpc.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/type/2451>

#### **New variations of Marsyas standing next to Tyche: Tyre, Damascus and ‘Akko-Ptolemais**

As noted, under Philip I, a new variation of Marsyas standing next to Tyche (type 2) was introduced in the coinage of Tyre and Damascus, concurrently. The scene is split; in the upper register, the Tyche of the city is represented together with Marsyas and other symbols, whereas in the lower register are four additional Tychai offering a sacrifice to the Tyche above, around an altar. It is likely that the type was first minted by Tyre and then adopted by Damascus. On the coins of Tyre, alongside Marsyas at Tyche’s feet, symbols of Tyre are depicted, among them: the murex shell, the palm tree and the club of Heracles (Pl. 28; *RPC VIII*: nos. 27529, 6471, 70020, 72530). In Damascus Marsyas is depicted in front of Tyche, who is seated on a rock (Pl. 29; *RPC VIII*: nos. 72720, 26811, 26775, 26818). These coin-types visually and concisely embodied a political situation, in which Tyre and Damascus wished to proclaim their prestige, being not only Roman colonies, but also among the cities chosen to be leaders of the *koinon*, and, as such, taking part in the imperial cult ceremonies. The depictions indicated, furthermore, the prestigious hegemony of Tyre and Damascus over the region’s cities. Laodicea advertised this by a legend on its coins together with the figure of Marsyas in Septimius Severus’s time (Pl. 4).



**Pl. 28:** Tyre, Philip I, 244-249; *Rev.* On the upper register, Tyche-Astarte standing frontally, placing right hand on a palm tree, crowned by Nike on column on right; at feet to left, Marsyas standing to the right; on the left is a murax shell; on the right is the club of Heracle; on the lower register, four Tychai offering a sacrifice to the above Tyche, three extending their hands, one of them holding up a dish with offerings and the other one is sacrificing over a lighted altar in the middle; around: COLTYR METRO; *Æ*, 16.19 g., 31 mm; *RPC VIII*: no. 27529 (unassigned). <https://rpc.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/type/27529>



**Pl. 29.** Damascus, Otacilia Severa, 244-249; *Rev.* On the upper register, Tyche seated on a rock facing left, holding a fillet or a rudder (?) and a cornucopia, below her, a half-length figure of the river-god Chrysoroas; on left, Marsyas standing facing right; in exergue, ram leaping left; on the lower register, four Tychai offering a sacrifice to the above Tyche, three extending their hands, one of them holding up a dish with offerings and the other one is sacrificing over a lighted altar in the middle; around: COL ΔAMA (MET) RO; *Æ*, 16.42 g., 30 mm; *RPC VIII*: no. 26775 (unassigned). <https://rpc.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/type/26775>

This new composition of splitting the coin into two registers was adopted by 'Akko-Ptolemais, but with certain adjustments to a city which is not a *koinon* leader. On a unique coin-type, of which only one specimen is known, Marsyas is shown on the left side of the upper register of the coin, facing Tyche, who is crowned at the center, by a small Nike standing on top of a column. At the lower register, two male figures are standing on both sides of a burning altar, each holding a *patera* and additional object. The figure on the right holding a scepter is identified as Philip I (Pl. 30; *RPC VIII*, no. 58870). A similar scene of two male figures standing over an altar is depicted on coins of Neapolis, and are identified there as Philip I and Philip II, his son (*RPC VIII*, no. 2424). It is thus possible that also in Akko-Ptolemais the second figure is Philip II.



**Pl. 30:** ‘Akko Ptolemais, Philip II, 244-249; *Rev.* On the upper register, Tyche standing frontally, holding a cornucopia in left hand and a rudder in right hand, crowned by Nike standing on a column; on the left, a small figure of Marsyas facing right; on the lower register two male figures (possibly Philip I and Philip II) are standing on both sides of a burning altar, each holding a patera and additional object, on the right Philip I is holding a sceptre; around: COL PTOL; *Æ*, 15.99 g., 29 mm; *RPC VIII*: no. 58870 (unassigned). <https://rpc.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/type/58870>

The depiction of Marsyas as a small figure at Tyche’s feet, as on the upper register of the previous coin-type, also appeared independently on ‘Akko-Ptolemais coins issued under Philip I (type 2; Pl. 31; *CHL*: nos. 250-251; *RPC VIII*, nos. 6544, 26665, 66929). The depiction continued in the coinage of Valerian and Gallienus (*CHL*: no. 276; Kadman 1961: no. 262). Another type, represented concurrently, is that of Marsyas standing in front of a Caduceus (type 4; *RPC VIII*, no. 6468), first issued under Elagabalus (pl. 18). Altogether, in the coinage of ‘Akko at the time of Philip I, Marsyas was shown in three different variations.



**Pl. 31:** ‘Akko Ptolemais, Philip I, 244-249; *Rev.* Tyche standing frontally, holding a cornucopia in left hand and a rudder in right hand, crowned by Nike standing on a column; on the left, a small figure of Marsyas facing right; in exergue, a caduceus and thunderbolt; around: CO PTOL; *Æ*, 21.05 g., 30 mm; *RPC VIII*: no. 26665 (unassigned). <https://rpc.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/type/26665>

Tyre, as mentioned before, offered in the time of Trebonianus Gallus additional variations to the familiar scene of Marsyas standing next to Tyche crowned by Nike (type 2; *RPC IX*, no. 1999), which is known from the time of Septimius Severus onward (Pl. 5a-d). The scene was elaborated by adding to the scene the goddesses Dea Roma (Pl. 13), a *modius* or the ambrosial rocks (Pl. 12), four others Tychai in the lower register (*RPC IX*: nos. 1997, 2026), or by placing the scene within a temple (Pl. 11b). Altogether, in the coinage of Trebonianus Gallus in Tyre, Marsyas with Tyche were represented in five different variations.



### Caesarea Maritima

Eventually, Caesarea Maritima as well, in the time of Decius (249-251), decided to mint the motif of Marsyas standing next to Tyche.<sup>38</sup> He appears, on a rare coin-type of Herennia Etruscilla, as a small figure on the left, at Tyche's feet, who is holding a scepter and the emperor's bust, her leg on a prow, and at her feet on the right the harbor-god *Sebastos* (Pl.32). This coin-type was issued solely under Decius, although the city had been a *colonia* since Vespasian (70 CE). It was here that Vespasian was first proclaimed emperor, and therefore the city was called: *Colonia Prima Flavia Augusta Caesarea*. According to Ulpian, the city was not granted *ius Italicum* (*Dig.* 50. 15. 8. 7), but enjoyed some significant material advantages (Isaac 2011: 25).<sup>39</sup> The title *metropolis* was given to it by Septimius Severus (Isaac 2011: 25). Being the seat of the governor and the financial procurator, Caesarea had a distinct Roman character. Its coinage emphasizes the affinity to Rome through several coin-types.<sup>40</sup> The use of Marsyas' motif was very minimal and very late.



**Pl. 32:** Caesarea Maritima, Herennia Etruscilla, 249-251; *Rev.* Tyche standing to the left, holding the emperor's bust in her extending right hand and a scepter in her left hand, resting right foot on prow; at feet to right, a half-length figure of the harbour god *Sebastos* holding an anchor, swimming right; on left, a small figure of Marsyas facing to the right; around: COLPRFAVG; Æ, 20.37g., 29 mm; Meshorer 1984: 21, no. 30.

A fragmentary statue, discovered in Caesarea, in the eastern Circus, was identified by some scholars as “Marsyas of the Forum” (Weis 1992: 375, no. 72c; Klimowsky 1982: 92-3). The statue depicts a tailed figure of a satyr, naked and bearded, of which only the torso remained. The absence of the wineskin and the manner in which his arms were preserved, make it difficult to identify the figure as “Marsyas of the Forum”, and it is better to identify him as one of Dionysus's companions in a Dionysiac scene (Gersht 2018: 149, cat. No. 6, fig. 6).

### The “pseudo- autonomous” coins of Berytus and Heliopolis

Coins from the cities Berytus and Heliopolis displaying the type of Marsyas standing alone do not have a precise date, due to the absence of an emperor's head on its obverse

<sup>38</sup> The same depiction appears on the coins of Decius also *without* Marsyas: *RPC IX*: no. 2122.

<sup>39</sup> For more about the reasons for why Caesarea had not been granted *ius Italicum* see Isaac 1998: 96-97; Millar 1990: 26-27.

<sup>40</sup> Such as: the ploughing of the *pomerium* (Meshorer 1984: 20, no. 26), an eagle holding a wreath inscribed with the letters SPQR (*CHL*: nos. 36, 63, 84-96) and two eagles flanking a  *vexillum* inscribed L III GAL: *CHL*: nos. 145, 165-166).



("pseudo- autonomous"). The colony Berytus (Beirut), Colonia Iulia Augusta Felix Berytus, was founded by Augustus as the first in the region. It was settled by veterans from two Roman legions, the *legio V Macedonica* and *legio VIII Augusta Gallica*.<sup>41</sup> The city was probably granted *ius Italicum* by Augustus (*Dig.* 50.15.1.1). Berytus, known as the 'most Roman city,' *polis romaikotera*, of the Greek cities of the East, characterized by its Roman culture, Latin language and as a place to study Roman law (Millar 1994: 279-280; Hall 2004: 195).<sup>42</sup> During the war with Niger (194 CE), Berytus seems to have refrained from supporting Septimius Severus, and as a result was punished by him. He punished Berytus by expropriating territories in the Bekaa Valley including the city Baalbek/ Heliopolis, which had been part of its territory since the founding of the colony, and granted it colonial status separately. This new *colonia* was given a similar name to that of Berytus: Colonia Iulia Augusta Felix Heliopolis. Ulpian explicitly states that Heliopolis was rewarded for its support of Septimius Severus (*Dig.* 50.15.1.2; Herodianus 3.3.3; Sawaya 2009: 229-230). It furthermore had the honor of hosting the games, known from coins as: "*Certamina Sacra Capitolina Oecumenica Iselastica Heliopolitana*" (Butcher 2003: 229; Sawaya 2009: 101, no.636ff).<sup>43</sup>

Coins of both Berytus and Heliopolis display a similar type of Marsyas, although it is clear that the Heliopolis coins could not have been issued prior to Septimius Severus's period (Heliopolis: Pl. 33: Sawaya 2009: nos. 260-263, 94, 379-381; Berytus: Pls. 34, 35: Sawaya 2009: nos. 767--844, 900-1014; *RPC* III: nos. 3857-9, 3863). The resemblance between the two cities' coins is evident not only by the type of Marsyas standing alone (type 1), but also through the entire coin itself, with Marsyas appearing atypically on the *obverse*. On the reverse is the abbreviated name of each colony. In Heliopolis the legend COL HEL is inside a wreath, and in Berytus, the legend CB is inside a wreath or the legend BER above a prow. The coins of both cities share a resemblance in their small size as well (13 mm– Heliopolis; 12-16mm – Berytus). Yet the question still is – who was the first to mint this type?

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<sup>41</sup> The coin-types minted by Berytus to declare its colonial status are: the ploughing of the *pomerium* with the figure of Augustus as the founder, which are dated to the reign of Tiberius and onward (Sawaya 2009: nos. 337-357), and the *signa* of the Roman legions with Augustus' head in the obverse (Sawaya 2009: nos. 269-314). For discussion of the dating of coins with Augustus' head, see Sawaya 2009: 193-198.

<sup>42</sup> As noted by Gregory Thaumaturgus, who had been travelling in the mid third century CE to Berytus to attend the famous law school there (Gregory Thaumaturgus, *Panegyricus in Originem*, 5. 58-9 in: Hall 2004: 195).

<sup>43</sup> Its colonial status was proclaimed on the coins (Septimius Severus - Gallienus) by the ploughing of the *pomerium* coin-type (Sawaya 2009: 100, no. 606ff).



**Pl. 33:** Heliopolis, Uncertain date, probably Septimius Severus' time, 193-211; *Obv.* Marsyas standing to the right; around: CO[L] HEL; *Rev.* COL HEL in two lines, within wreath; Æ, 1.53 g., 13 mm; Sawaya 2009: no. 260; CNG 244, Nov. 10, 2010, Lot 354.  
<https://www.cngcoins.com/Coin.aspx?CoinID=174730>



**Pl. 34:** Berytus, Uncertain date, possibly Septimius Severus' time, 193-211; *Obv.* Marsyas standing to the left; *Rev.* BER on prow to right; Æ, 0.98 g., 12 mm; *RPC* III: no. 3858.  
<https://rpc.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/coins/3/3858>



**Pl. 35:** Berytus, Uncertain date, possibly Septimius Severus' time, 193-211; *Obv.* Marsyas standing to the right; *Rev.* C B within a wreath; Æ, 3.39 g., 16 mm; *RPC* III: no. 3857.  
<https://rpc.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/coins/3/3857>

For years it was accepted to date the Berytus coins to the time of the foundation of the colony, in 15 BCE, until the first half of the first century CE (*BMC*: lv; Rouvier 1900: nos. 478-481). Nowadays, scholars tend to date them to the beginning of the second century CE, since, it turns out, the formula C(OLONIA) B(ERVTVS) first appeared on the coins only from Trajan's period (*RPC I*: 648-649; Sawaya 2009: 215). However, the date given by the *RPC* to these coins is tentative (*RPC* III: no. 3857). Sawaya argues that, although some scholars date these coins to the time of Hadrian (Hunter in Sawaya 2009: 215, n. 137), they ought to be dated to Trajan, due to various numismatic and morphological considerations (Sawaya 2009: 215). If we accept a Trajanic date for the coins, it makes the issues of Marsyas in Berytus the earliest known to us from all the depictions of the motif in the eastern provinces of the Roman empire. They would precede the imagery of Marsyas on coins of Corinth and Cremna, dating to Hadrian, which are usually considered the earliest ones. The question as to why Marsyas emerged on coins during Trajan's time remains inadequately answered. I suggest that the coins of Berytus should be dated to the Severan period, much like the rest of the coins with Marsyas' image in the region, in response to Heliopolis becoming a colony in the time of Septimius Severus.

### Summary and conclusions

As we have seen, the image of ‘Marsyas of the Forum’ was immensely popular on Southern Levant city-coins, and although inspired by the statue standing in the Forum Romanum it enjoyed diverse and more elaborate representations. The cities of the eastern Roman provinces adopted the Roman image, which represented freedom (*libertas*), to manifest the *libertas* bestowed upon them by the Roman government. On the coins, Marsyas’s image was first and foremost meant to point to the cities’ status as *coloniae* through the benefaction/*beneficium* of the emperor. Being a “miniature of Rome,” these cities proclaimed, through the image, the prestige of their status, their affinity to Rome, and, as I further suggest by tracing the civic setting in which Marsyas was represented, the wealth and prosperity they gained under the auspice of Roman rule.

Of all the seventeen colonies in the region, eleven chose to depict Marsyas on their coins, and always on coins bearing the legend *colonia* in Latin script. The colonies Emesa, Antioch on the Orontes, Aelia Capitolina, Sebaste (Samaria), Philippopolis and Petra did not issue coins with the image of Marsyas. In Caesarea Maritima, the depiction of Marsyas appeared only late, under Decius. The question of whether Marsyas’s image indicates that the colony was granted *ius Italicum*, is disputed. The present study suggests that there is no necessary correlation between Marsyas and *ius Italicum*, and that the image aimed to signify the colony’s reputation and good fortune whether the city gained *ius Italicum* or not.

The first depictions of Marsyas on city-coins in the region date from the period of Septimius Severus (Laodicea ad Mare, Tyre and Heliopolis). Even cities granted colonial status prior to the Severan period, such as ‘Akko-Ptolemais, added Marsyas to their coinage repertory only in the Severan period. Cities which gained their colonial status from the Severan period on and chose to depict Marsyas, did so immediately upon receiving the rank. I suggest that the Berytus coins without the emperor head, but with Marsyas on the obverse, were minted right after Heliopolis became *colonia* under Septimius Severus; hence they should be dated to the Severan period, as opposed to the Trajanic date accepted today.

Of the four types of Marsyas on city-coins issued in the region, three show him in a clear civic context. Apart from one type (type 1), depicting Marsyas standing alone, all the other types and their variations were the product of city-mints in the region, mainly the innovative one of Tyre. Tyre issued seven variations with Marsyas (Septimius Severus – Gallianus). Under Elagabalus and Severus Alexander Sidon also showed creativity by issuing five different variations of Marsyas. The first and most popular type created and minted by Tyre under Septimius Severus, was Marsyas standing next to Tyche (type 2). The variations of this imagery, which mostly resulted from the long-standing rivalry between Sidon and Tyre and from Tyre’s aspiration to proclaim hegemony (as leader of the *koinon*), point to the local significance of the type. This type, was adapted with certain modifications by eight other cities (Laodicea ad Mare, Sidon, Caesarea ad Libanum, ‘Akko-Ptolemais, Bostra, Damascus, Neapolis, Caesarea Maritima) and became one of the most widespread and copied types in the region and beyond (e.g., Mesopotamia and Cilicia).

The second type created in the region (type 3), was introduced under Elagabalus by Berytus and Sidon. It shows Marsyas standing inside a monumental gate (*tetrapylon*) of

a large complex, which aimed to present Marsyas within a central city enclosure. The third type (type 4), which was introduced under Elagabalus by the mint of Tyre, presents the satyr raising his hand toward a palm tree, the symbol of the city. This formula was adapted by 'Akko-Ptolemais (Caduceus, Elagabalus), Damascus (Cypress tree, Philip I) and Neapolis (Mt. Gerizim over Nike or an eagle, Philip I). The popularity of Marsyas in the region, although resulting from rivalry over status and/or hegemony, may also be viewed as a form of *homonoia* among the rival cities, who shared an artistic repertory that was first introduced by one of the cities, mainly by Tyre.

Septimius Severus, Elagabalus, Severus Alexander, Philip I and Trebonianus Gallus, the emperors during whose reign Marsyas was the most prevalent motif, had — all but Trebonianus Gallus — deep familial bonds in this region. The prevalence of the motif corresponds with the historical events which saw a substantial increase in granting colonial status to cities in the region during the reigns of these emperors. It is possible, to my mind, to attribute the emerging popularity of Marsyas during the Severan era to Marsyas's connection to Liber Pater (Dionysos), the patron-god of Septimius Severus's hometown.

The popularity of the image in the cities of the eastern Roman provinces might be further related to the dual narratives incorporated into Marsyas myth, whose origins were in the east. He left as an eastern Greek and returned as a Roman. By his portrayal, with the wineskin (*askos*) on his back — relating him to Liber and being a reminiscence of his hanging skin (*askos*) in the Agora of Kelainai — Marsyas himself carried the association with marketplaces from east to west (Rome). Bearing on his back all the meanings attached to the image over the years, Marsyas embodied the colonies' aspiration to advertise themselves as Roman cities from the east of the empire, flourishing and prospering under the Roman rule, all the while maintaining their local pride and civic identity. With his hand raised, Marsyas declares the *beneficium* of the Roman reign towards the city, so that “nothing is lacking in a city” (“*nihil urbi deesse*”), as noted by Servius.

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