The Romans minted their coins mainly in Rome itself or in auxiliary mints, while keeping to a clear separation of powers between the Emperor and the senate. However, the expansion of the empire and especially the annexation of the East with its Hellenistic traditions, brought about a new fiscal policy, and the Romans now began to strike silver and probably also gold coins in central eastern mints. Most of the city coins minted in the eastern mints were issued between the late first century and middle third century CE. They were inscribed in Greek, rather than Latin inscriptions, since Greek was the language spoken by the people in the Roman East. The Romans embarked on a policy of granting minting rights to cities, some of which they had founded or re-founded. A number of these cities were even raised to the rank of a colony, a status which conferred important privileges on the local inhabitants, including Roman citizenship and exemption from the taxes paid by other people living in the provinces. One of the important rights granted liberally to a growing number of Roman provincial cities was the right to mint bronze coins, while silver were continued to be minted only in the few above mentioned important cities. Generally speaking, the circulation of the city coins did not extend beyond the limited geographical area of the city where they were minted and of its surroundings.¹

Together with this monetary development, the Romans came to realize that coins which are passed from hand to hand and from region to region are a highly efficient means of spreading information rapidly over extensive areas. In a world lacking mass means of communication this was an important advantage and the Romans, more than any other nation before them, knew how to exploit it. They began to use symbols, inscriptions and designs on the coins in order to publicize political ideas, social events and religious, military or economic messages. Thus within

a short period of time, in the first and second centuries CE, the coins became a most important source of information. The city-coins are an incomparable mine of information, providing material for reconstructing the history of the city which minted the coins, as well as affording insight into the character of the inhabitants, their religion, their local economy, political, and cultural expression.

One particular group of cities is known as the Decapolis, a league of Syrian-Hellenistic cities in Trans-Jordan and the northern Jordan Valley during the Roman and Byzantine periods. Most of the Decapolis cities date their eras from the time of Pompey’s conquest of the area in 63 CE, some believe that the Decapolis was founded by Pompey himself when he freed the cities which had been conquered earlier by King Alexander Jannaeus. Cities of the Decapolis were self-governing, and maintained the right to mint their own coins. The Decapolis was of special importance because they were located along the key trade routes between Syria and northern Arabia. Frequently, the city coins bear the portraits of the Emperors under whom they were issued. However, the coins are not dated by regnal years, but mainly according to eras of each individual city.2

The Numismatic finds, with the ritual characteristics of the curative sites, likewise shed light and uncover a veritable treasure about the spas. The ritual worship characteristics of the spas in the eastern Mediterranean basin are expressed in most interesting types of coins from Tiberias, Gadara, and Pella.3

8.1 TIBERIAS (HAMMEI-TIBERIAS)

On one of the most famous coins of Palestine and especially outstanding among the coins of Tiberias, Hygieia, daughter of Aesculapius,

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