Seleucid Study Day I

Veranstalter: Centre for Hellenistic and Romano-Greek Culture and Society, University of Exeter; Waterloo Institute for Hellenistic Studies University of Waterloo
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The growing interest in the Hellenistic world in general and in the Seleucid Empire in particular was well reflected by this first Seleucid Study Day, which involved many fairly young scholars: four of eight presentations were by PhD students, another two by postdocs up to two years past their viva. How wide-spread Seleucid studies, formerly a specialist resort, have become, is best demonstrated by the geographical background of the eight contributors: they are based in Belgium, Canada, England, Germany, Italy, Scotland, Switzerland, and Wales. Originality of research, high quality of presentation, and most of all liveliness of the ensuing discussions may characterize the event that was co-hosted by the Centre for Hellenistic and Romano-Greek Culture and Society (Exeter, UK) and the Waterloo Institute for Hellenistic Studies (Waterloo, Ontario).

Some of the studies presented had been initiated on the predecessor of this meeting, the Seleucid Dissolution conference (Exeter 2008), the proceedings of which will be released from the press this October[1]. As major trends of the latest workshop emerged an interest in the family and genealogy of the Seleucids, especially the queens (d'Agostini, Widmer, McAuley, Ramsey), as well as a focus on the oriental areas of the empire (Plischke), or rather an attempt at considering the simultaneous developments in its eastern and western parts (Coşkun, Erickson, Engels), whereby the latter approach yielded a substantial re-appraisal of the rule of Antiochus I (ruled 294/281-261 BC). As most presentations are soon going to be published independently, no joint conference volume was intended.

MONICA D'AGOSTINI (PhD candidate, supervised by Franca Landucci (Milan) and Riccardo Vattuone (Bologna) started with a study of the early Seleucids' complex marriage policy that implicated oriental aristocrats with Persian roots. In particular, the relationship between the kingdoms of Pontus and Syria looked like an intricate web of ambiguous ties, both dynastic and political, and culminated in the wedding of Antiochus III with Laodice, the daughter of Mithridates II. Polybius (V 43.1-4) highlights the Mithridatids' nobility with reference to the Conspiracy of the Seven Persian Noblemen before the establishment of Darius I. While the Polybian version was followed by various more recent authors, Diodorus (XIX 40.2; XX 111.4) and Plutarch (Demetr. 4) link the Mithridatids with a dynasty of Mysian Cius who had played a major role already in the mid-4th century BC. A comparison of the different sources seems to suggest that the whole tradition of Mithridates I Ktistes and his ancestors was concocted by Hieronymus of Cardia. While the link with the Achaemenids implied prestige even beyond the days of Alexander the Great, the Mysian connection was designed to explain the Mithridatids' political bonds with the Seleucids and Antigonids.

MARIE WIDMER (PhD candidate Lausanne, supervised by Anne Bielman Sanchez) questioned the repudiation of Laodice III (V according to the Daniel Ogden, Polygamy, Prostitutes and Death, 1999), an hypothesis normally based on the queen's disappearance from the evidence after 193 BC and on Antiochus III's marriage with the young Chalcidian Euboea. But the underlying premise of a strictly monogamous kingship has been questioned on various grounds. Ogden (p. 137) defends the idea that the Seleucids were polygamous „in default of evidence to the contrary", thus preferring the hypothesis of Antiochus III's polygyny. A Babylonian ephemerides dated to 187 BC reports that Antiochus III offered a sacrifice to Bēl and Bēltija for his life, the life of his wife and his sons. On the same day, the treasures of sanctuaries in Babylon (including clothing of Nabucodonosor) were presented to the Seleucid king. G. Del Monte sees in these actions the assertion of Antiochus III's

[1] Kyle Erickson / Gillian Ramsey (eds.), Seleucid Dissolution. The Sinking of the Anchor, Philippika 50, Wiesbaden 2011.

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kingship in Babylonia and the insertion of the king's family (presented as himself, his spouse and his sons) into the neo-Babylonian imperial tradition. But who would be this woman presented with the agnatic descendants of the king? A comparison with the Greek epigraphic evidence seems to suggest that it was queen Laodice. This Accadian testimony allows us to reject the repudiation of Antiochus III's first wife.

ALEX MCAULEY (PhD candidate at McGill University, Montreal, supervised by Hans Beck) reconsidered Seleucid genealogy and descent in his MA thesis (Edinburgh, supervision by Andrew Erskine). The preliminary results have been presented on http://www.seleucid-genealogy.com. In his paper, he first outlined his methodology and approach to genealogy in the Seleucid context, and then explored some mechanisms by which we can use such revised identifications to formulate an interpretative framework for explaining why the *stemmata* emerged as they have. Advocating a minimalist approach, he rejects the tenuous cross-identifications and equations of individuals that were previously so commonplace in the field, instead preferring to embrace the evidence in all of its complexity and ambiguity. It has been argued that the Seleucids consistently presented – and conceived of – themselves as a simplified 'nuclear family' of King/Husband, Queen/Wife, and Heir/Son. This reigning triad forms the fundamental link in the Seleucid dynastic chain and is central to their royal ideology. The perpetuation and modification of this image can be seen throughout the dynasty's history. While this triangular model is of course not the sole key to understanding Seleucid *dynasteia*, it is one – highly visible – facet of a much more complex royal ideology at work.

Session II reported on a joint research agenda on Antiochus I whose basis of power and royal representation had been examined for Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, and Persia. It is hoped that the manuscript of a co-authored monograph be submitted to a peer-review process in the upcoming spring.

As a premise of his argument, ALTAY COŞKUN (Waterloo, ON) pointed out that the military and political importance of the so-called Elephant Victory inflicted on the Galatians had mostly been overrated. For the Galatians remained in a leading position in central and western Anatolia. However, the traditional view[2] holds that the victory entailed the establishment of several Soter cults for Antiochus in western Asia Minor as an expression of gratitude amongst the Greek cities. But not a single 'Soter' cult can be proven to have been founded between 275 and 261 BC. The connection of the Galatian defeat with the Soter ideology within the centrally orchestrated dynastic cult rather appears to postdate the death of Antiochus I. This notwithstanding, earlier Soter cults had existed for the living king. Most important in this regard is the recently discovered evidence from Aegae in Aeolis (Hasan Malay/Marijana Ricl, EA 42, 2009, pp. 39-59), which stresses the Soter ideology and the close affiliation of the dynasty to Apollo (281 BC). The latter is also expressed in I.Ilion 31-32 (281/275 BC). Antiochus' role as 'Soter' thus seems to stem from the dynastic program which likened the couple Seleucus/Antiochus to Zeus/Apollo. This view is supported by the dominant role of Apollo on Seleucid coinage since ca. 276 BC, and confirmed by the priests of „Seleucus Zeus Nicator and Antiochus Apollo Soter [...]" attested in Seleucia-in-Pieria (OGIS I 245 ll. 10-12, 34-36, 2nd century BC).

KYLE ERICKSON (Trinity Saint David, Lampeter) argued that one of the principle inspirations for the Seleucid adoption of Apollo as an ancestor was the strong relations with Babylon. This affiliation was established during Seleucus' first rule as governor and steadily strengthened by Antiochus I. Its clearest manifestation can be seen in the Borsippa cylinder. The adoption of Apollo not only exploited Greek iconography but also allowed Antiochus to justify his kingship in traditional Babylonian terms. Antiochus may have participated in the Akitu festival as his descendants would do, and his patronage of Berossus may have assisted him in his understanding of the significance of this traditional ritual. Although the Berossus text survives on-

[2] Christian Habicht, Gottmenschtum und griechische Städte, 2nd ed. München 1970. Michael Wörrle, 'Antiochos I., Achaios der Ältere und die Galater. Eine neue Inschrift in Denizli', in: Chiron 5 (1975), pp. 59-87.

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ly in fragments and differs from the known cuneiform texts, it contains a version of the Creation Epic (the Enuma Eliš) which was recited during the Akitu festival as well as at other times of the year. Assuming that Antiochus functioned as Berossus' patron, then at least the Creation Epic and a narrative of Babylonian history up until his father's reign were available to him and he was thus able to place himself within a Babylonian tradition of kingship. In addition to other regional resonances, the Apollo tradition was linked to Babylonian kingship rituals through the syncretism of Apollo and Nabû, thus establishing a dual Greek and Babylonian legitimacy for the king.

According to DAVID ENGELS (Université Libre de Brussels), Seleucid history is no longer reduced to a narration of a long decay, but rather testifies to the empire's surprising stability. Yet this amazing robustness was impossible without an efficient inner administration on the one hand, and at least a minimal acceptance of the new regime by its subjects on the other. To understand this acceptance, one inevitably has to consider that the Seleucid Empire corresponded geographically to the core territories of the Achaemenid Empire and that its major part was inhabited by various Iranian peoples who, just some years ago, had constituted the Persian Empire's „ethno-classe dominante", to cite P. Briant. One thus has to wonder how the early Seleucids managed to establish a political compromise valid throughout the next 150 years. Many aspects could only be touched upon briefly in this paper, such as Antiochus' activities as viceroy of the Upper Satrapies, the importance of Antiochus' Bactrian mother Apama, the Oriental aspects of two legends relating to Antiochus' wife Stratonice, the creation (or revival) of the post of governor of the Upper Satrapies, the Seleucid royal titles as enumerated in the Borsippa cylinder, and Antiochus' attitude towards the Zoroastrian religion. Most of the attention was dedicated to two coin series of the Frateraka, which have hitherto been understood as representations of independent and even anti-Seleucid rulers of Persia. Engels has clearly demonstrated the circularity of the underlying argument, and made a strong case for regarding the Frateraka as loyal dynasts within the Seleucid Empire. Persis remained an integral part of the empire well into the 2nd century BC.

GILLIAN RAMSEY (Leicester) opened the final session with a paper on Laodice II, notorious among the Seleucid queens as violent. By purchasing an estate in Hellespontine Phrygia from her ('ex'-?) husband Antiochus II in 254/3 BC, she gained control over a plot of territory that provided her with both wealth and significant political capital, as she had the right to attach the land to any polis of her choice. Laodice appears again as administrator of royal property in the cuneiform Lehmann text, dated to 236 BC. This records that Antiochus II had given his wife and sons a Babylonian property on the banks of the Euphrates, which they now gave to the citizens of Babylon, Borsippa and Kutha, along with tithes from its produce for the main temples of each city. After investigating the nature of this Babylonian land grant, Ramsey compared it with the 254/3 sale. Laodice appears using royal lands to forge relationships with cities and to further her own political aims. In the tradition of other Hellenic queens she aspired to a queenship that matched the kingship of her husband in terms of prestige, honours received and clout in the complex world of imperial and international politics. These two known examples of her engagement with local populations reveal that she actively sought to build a base of support for the Seleucid dynasty – including her husband and her sons. Discussion highlighted the significance of the comparable treatment of Laodice's dispositions, specifically that the promotion of both through *stelai* in prominent temples follows Babylonian practice and was possibly introduced to western Asia Minor by the Seleucids as an innovation for networking allied cities together.

Finally, SONJA PLISCHKE (Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel) briefly presented her PhD-project 'The Seleucids and Iran' (supervisors: Josef Wiesehöfer and Andreas Luther). Seleucus was forced to legitimize anew and rearrange his own rule over the eastern territories after the expulsion of Antigonus Monophthalmus. With their specific traditions, political aspirations and strategic significance, the Upper Satrapies

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played an important but unconventional role in the context of the legitimization and stabilization of Seleucid kingship. On the one hand, Persis with its monumental residences had for a long time constituted the centre of Achaemenid power. On the other, Bactria, Sogdia, and Margiana procreated substantial wealth, too. All of these regions were geographically and climatically very different from the Seleucids' Macedonian homeland or Asia Minor. Against this background, the Seleucid policy of constructing, legitimizing and securing kingship in the east is to be examined and compared to the better known models of the Iranian and Hellenistic monarchies. The questions at stake are if and to what extent the Seleucids followed Persian models as 'heirs' of the Achaemenids, or rather the example of Alexander III or other western monarchical patterns, such as those of the Ptolemies or Antigonids.

One of the immediate outcomes of the event was to agree on a second Seleucid Study Day, which is going to take place at Waterloo on 9 November 2011. While this, too, is designed to communicate and critically discuss original research on Seleucid History rather broadly, four papers have already been announced to focus on the times of Antiochus II and Seleucus II. The program is expected to be advertized in October.

Conference overview:

Session I: Queens, Princesses, and Dynastic Issues of the Seleucids
Chair: A. Coşkun

Monica d'Agostini: Seleucids and Mithridatids: the Origin of Their Dynastic Ties.

Marie Widmer: The Repudiation of Laodice III.

Alex McAuley: Towards a Seleucid Dynastic Model.

Session II: Construction of Seleucid Royalty: Studies in the Politics and Propaganda of Antiochus I
Chair: Stephen Mitchell

Altay Coşkun: The Soter Cults of Seleucus I and Antiochus I Preceding the So-Called Elephant Victory of ca. 275 BC.

Kyle Erickson: Babylonian Religion and Seleucid Propaganda.

David Engels: Antiochus I and the Early Seleucids' Iranian Heritage.

Session III: Further Seleucid Studies
Chair: Lynette Mitchell

Gillian Ramsey: Seleucid Dunasteia, Royal Land and Cities.

Sonja Plischke: The Seleucids and Iran.

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