Seleucid Study Day II

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On the first Seleucid Study Day (Exeter, 15 August 2011)[1], the benefits of a collaborative approach that comprises Anatolian, Syrian, Mesopotamian, and Persian areas were exemplified by a joined project on Antiochus I (294/81-261 BC) (Altay Coşkun, David Engels, Kyle Erickson). It was further agreed that the rules of Antiochus II (267/61-246), his wives and offspring were in urgent need of revision, because latest research on dynastic marriages called for a more systematic enquiry into both, the effective roles and the often distorted representations of royal women (Monica d'Agostini, Alex McAuley, Gillian Ramsey, Marie Widmer). These strands were followed up on Seleucid Study Day II, which was hosted by the Waterloo Institute for Hellenistic Studies (WIHS) on 9. November 2011.

Section I was dedicated to Seleucus II Callinicus and Antiochus Hierax. According to common opinion, the Third Syrian War was rooted in the second marriage of Antiochus II. Immediately after his death (246), his second wife queen Berenice was killed, whereupon her brother Ptolemy III Euergetes invaded the Seleucid Empire (Justin 27.1f.). While a domestic rebellion called him back to Egypt in 245, his troops remained until Hierax supported his brother King Seleucus in 241 (Porphyry, FGrH 260 F 32.8). It is only thereafter that Justin (27.2.10f.) narrates the rebellion of Hierax, culminating in the defeat of Seleucus and the latter's evacuation of Asia Minor. Being the only coherent narrative, Justin's account is the basis for all modern reconstructions of the turbulent rule of Seleucus II, despite all its implausibility. Slander against Antiochus' first wife Laodice as reported by Polyaenus 8.50 is normally harmonized into the account by modern scholars, in a misled intention to honour every little bit of the surviving evidence. Instead of mending the bad with the worse, ALTAY COŞKUN (Waterloo ON) has tried to identify three different layers of Ptolemaic propaganda, construed a) as long as Berenice and her son were still pretended to be alive, b) when the invasion was explained as a revenge for Laodice's crimes, c) when the cooperation with Hierax and Laodice required the denigration of Seleucus as the 'villain'. Other distortions within the tradition were due to the moralizing and dramatizing nature of historiography. But the 'Epitomator' Justin was not only at the receiving end of this tradition. In fact, he permitted himself an astounding degree of freedom in reshaping the plot by dating the outbreak of the War of Brothers after the end of the Third Syrian War. More convincingly, Hierax' revolt precedes Ptolemy's invasion in Porphyry's account. As a result of these observations, Seleucid History will have to be rewritten for 246 to 241, if not for 253 to 228.

These conclusions encouraged KYLE ERICKSON (Lampeter) to reconsider a vexed question of Seleucid numismatics: who produced the coinage with the legend of Antiochus Soter?[2] These types have inspired a large scholarly corpus without any firm conclusions. Most recent attempts have favoured the authority of either Seleucus II or Berenice in 246. But the latter view implies that the largest issue of all Seleucid coins has to be fitted into only a couple of weeks in the summer of 246, if Berenice ever assumed minting authority at all; the former assumption, in turn, does not go along with the fact that Seleucus II abandoned the reverse type designed by Antiochus I and continued by Antiochus II: while these displayed Apollo seated on the omphalus on most of their coin reverses – as all of the Antiochus Soter coins do –, Seleucus, immediately after his succession, exchanged this depiction by an Apollo leaning towards a tripod.[3] Erickson would

[1] Tagungsbericht Seleucid Study Day I. 15.08.2011, Exeter, in: H-Soz-u-Kult, 27.10.2011, <http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/tagungsberichte/id=3866> (08.12.2011).

[2] For Antiochus-Soter, cf. <http://wildwinds.com/coins/greece/seleucia/antiochos_I/SC_641.jpg> (08.12.2011).

[3] For Seleucus II with a standing Apollo, cf. <http://cngcoins.com/Coin.aspx?CoinID=129615> (08.12.2011); for Hierax with a seated Apollo, cf.

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rather place the coinage under the auspices of Hierax and his mother, thus avoiding either problem. Furthermore, the ideological interpretations of the iconography can be explained by Hierax' cultivation of his ancestors' images, a practice not followed by his brother either. This still preliminary hypothesis forms the starting point of a larger study in the coin imagery of the early Seleucids.

Session II on inter-dynastic marriages in the Hellenistic kingdoms was opened with a research proposal by SHEILA AGER (Waterloo ON) on 'Ptolemaic Queens in the Seleucid House'. She started with the following quotation: „He shall give him the daughter of women to destroy the kingdom; but it shall not stand or be to his advantage" (Daniel 11.17). However, the quotation is not in fact about the later Ptolemaic princesses who ruled with Seleucid partners, but rather about the daughter of Antiochus III, the first Cleopatra in the Ptolemaic house. The Seleucid king allegedly married his daughter to Ptolemy V in an effort to overthrow Ptolemaic rule in Egypt. And yet Cleopatra cleaved more to her husband than to her father, and the descendants of the couple rather went on to impose their own dynastic chaos on the Seleucid realm. This 'chaos' was examined by Ager in the context of the role and status of the Ptolemaic princesses who married into the Seleucid house in the later 2nd century. The following questions were pursued (and will be pursued further): what impact did these women have on their marital house, and what loyalties, if any, did they feel towards it? What was the role played by Ptolemaic power and interference, as represented (at times) by these women, in the Seleucid Empire? Antiochus III at the beginning of the second century might have intended to impose his daughter on Ptolemy V with a view to establishing Seleucid overlordship in Egypt; but in the end it was Ptolemaic marital strategies that became a destabilizing factor in the long agony of Seleucid collapse.

ALEX McAULEY (Montreal) turned to case studies of Seleucid princesses that found their nuptial courts outside their home empire. There has been a scholarly presumption regarding Seleucid royal women in particular, and Hellenistic women in general, that upon marriage to an allied or neighbouring dynasty these princesses' ties with their natal houses were either weakened or completely severed. To demonstrate that this was not the case, McAuley discussed the illustrative examples of four Seleucid women who were betrothed to client dynasts: Apama of Cyrene, Stratonice of Cappadocia, Antiochis of Cappadocia, and Antiochis of Armenia. He examined the 'careers' of these women by focusing on their interaction with the court of their nuptial dynasties, demonstrating that their respective interventions were consistently in service of Seleucid interests. Once married, it was argued, such women acted as both symbols of and catalysts for the Hellenization of Seleucid client dynasties, and, despite being omitted from the primary course of succession, they nevertheless held a prominent place in Seleucid royal ideology. In addition, their place in the mechanism of imperial administration was considered, and a potential Archaic and Classical Greek precedent for such an ideology and practice was postulated.[4]

Session III focused on 'Marriage Policy at the Seleucid Court in the Mid-3rd Century'. GILLIAN RAMSEY (Leicester) returned to the abovementioned Queens Laodice II and Berenice Phernophoros. Her approach was less conflictual but rather one that sought to describe systematically the (potential) roles of the king's wives. Accepting the views of Daniel Odgen (1999) that polygamy was normal for the Seleucids as a Hellenistic dynasty[5], along with the consensus reached at the Seleucid Study Day I, her paper argued that it is better to view the two women as joint wives of Antiochus. The older idea that Laodice was divorced by Antiochus so that he could marry the lavishly dowered Ptolemaic princess Berenice was rejected, being based on assumptions about Seleucid marital life that no longer tally and, more importantly, ignore the geo-political importance of all types of royal women. She considered in some detail the follow-on effects of re-working the model

<http://wildwinds.com/coins/greece/seleucia/hierax/SC_876@6.jpg> (08.12.2011).

[4] These findings will soon be published in A. Erskine et al.: Hellenistic Court and Society.

[5] Daniel Ogden, Polygamy, prostitutes and death. The hellenistic dynasties, London 1999.

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for Seleucid marriage practices, with particular focus on the women's role at the complex royal court that comprised a variety of residences, most importantly for the present case Ephesus and Sardes in Asia Minor (Laodice) and Antioch in Syria (Berenice). Their coexistence was possible in this setting, until the problem of the succession became pressing. Ramsey also discussed the queens' personal agency as political foes, which gives us grounds for a more positive assessment of their contributions to royal affairs in the mid-3rd century. Seleucid queens, even these two in a polygamous setting, played a crucial role in establishing Seleucid diplomatic relationships with cities, connections which Laodice and Berenice then used to advantage (or disadvantage) during their conflict with each other. Also important were their relationships with individuals at the court or associated with cities and other polities, and the prelude to war saw the marshalling of supporters from these groups. Even in the midst of a hostile situation described in negative terms by the sources, we may identify patterns of queenship and Seleucid royal organisation which match those at other periods.

MONICA D'AGOSTINI (Bologna/Milan) spoke about the 'Creation of a Marriage Web' in the mid-3rd century: Laodice, the daughter of Antiochus II and Laodice I, married Mithridates II of Pontus; her sister Stratonice became the wife of Ariarathes III of Cappadocia. Based on an analysis of the fragmentary literary sources and the Greek and Babylonian inscriptions, it was pointed out that Laodice I hailed from a powerful family of western Asia Minor. They had begun to intermarry with the Seleucids and Attalids early in the 3rd century, and one of their prime concerns seems to have been to prevent Ptolemaic interference in that area. After the peace treaty with Ptolemy II and the ensuing marriage of Antiochus with Berenice (253/52), the Seleucid king intended to campaign in northern and western Asia Minor, which was then under threat by the Galatians and potentially also by Ptolemy. Antiochus sent his first wife Laodice to her home country, from where he himself would soon start his military operations. It is within this broader political context that the Seleucid web of *epigamiai* into the minor dynasties of Asia Minor has to be viewed: this went through Laodice's daughters, if not through Laodice herself, and thus strongly reminds one of the marriage strategy pursued by Laodice's father Achaeus. The adoption of this new policy in Asia Minor is coherent with the federal structure of the Seleucid Empire: unlike the Ptolemaic Kingdom, it allowed local dynasties to survive, involving them in a complex web of land grants, privileges, and – from then on – also inter-dynastic marriages. Rather than reflections of Seleucid weakness, this policy should be viewed as a strategy by which the Seleucids effectively counterbalanced centrifugal tendencies.

Given the far-reaching implications of these six presentations, it was felt that both research strands represented on Seleucid Study Day II deserve to be followed up collaboratively. History under Antiochus II and Seleucus II will be the focus of a panel at the upcoming Celtic Conference in Classics (Bordeaux, 5-8 September 2012). And the group has been invited to dedicate a workshop to dynastic marriages and representations of Seleucid royal women at McGill University (Montreal, 2013). According calls for papers will be sent out in due course.

Conference overview:

Session I: Seleucus II, Antiochus Hierax, & the War of Brothers
Chair: Hans Beck

Altay Coşkun (Waterloo ON): The Third Syrian War and the War of Brothers Revisited

Kyle Erickson (Lampeter): Different Apollos? The War of the Brothers in the Coinage of Seleucus II and Antiochus Hierax

Session II: Inter-Dynastic Marriages in the Hellenistic Kingdoms: Intentions and Effects
Chair: Altay Coşkun

Sheila Ager (Waterloo ON): Ptolemaic Queens in the Seleucid House

Alex McAuley (Montreal): Once a Seleucid, always a Seleucid: Seleucid Princesses and their Nuptial Courts

Session III: Marriage Policy at the Seleucid Court in the Mid-3rd Century
Chair: Sheila Ager

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Gillian Ramsey (Leicester): Laodice II vs Berenice Phernophoros: Queenship and Seleucid Polygamy

Monica d'Agostini (Bologna/Milan): The Creation of a Marriage Web

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