

Seleukos I and the Origin of the Seleukid Dynastic Ideology¹

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This paper deals with the constituent components of the Seleukid ideology in the age of the founder of the dynasty, Seleukos I. It will reassess the role played by Alexander the Great as the point of reference for Seleukos, arguing for Seleukos' intention to anchor his legitimacy in decisions of Alexander. It will further provide evidence for introducing the idea of the special protection of Apollo enjoyed by the Seleukid dynasty from ca. 300 BCE. It will be shown that this concept did not stem from Seleukos personal piety but it was successfully promoted by the city of Miletus and its prominent citizen, Demodamas.

There are a number of generally recognizable features of the Seleukid imagery and ideology. Some are specifically Seleukid, such as the anchor and Apollo seated on the omphalos² on the coins of the Seleukid era. The others had more universal appeal in the early Hellenistic age, such as putting the king's name on coins in place of Alexander's,³ naming newly founded cities or renaming existing ones after members of the royal family, placing the images of elephants on coins⁴ or advertising victory in royal nicknames (Nikator, Kallinikos, Nikephoros)⁵ or in names of cities (Nikephorion, Nikopolis).⁶ Of course nickname Nikator was much more than an image-building trick, as the exceptional military prowess of Seleukos in re-building the empire of Alexander was a fact acknowledged by ancient authors.⁷

Some of these features proved extremely resistant to the passage of time. One is the Seleukid era, the first example of counting years from a fixed moment in the past, and

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² Apollo on omphalos, i.e. with its most recognizable Delphic attribute of universal appeal, on Seleukid coins from 281 until 172 BCE: Le Rider and de Callatay (2006), 46-47.

³ From 305/4 BCE: Waggoner (1969).

⁴ On the importance of elephant in Seleukid imagery and ideology see Kosmin (2014), 1-3. Seleukos I was mockingly addressed *ἐλεφαντάρχης* at a banquet of Demetrios Poliorketes (Plu. *Demetr.* 25.7; *Mor.* 823c; Phylarchus *FGrH* 81 F31, ap. Ath. VI 78).

⁵ For importance of victory in imagery of Hellenistic kings see e.g. Sherwin-White and Kuhrt (1993), 28, 40, 129.

⁶ On these names of cities in Mesopotamia and Syria, respectively, see Grainger (2014), 43, 122.

⁷ *App. Syr.* 278-282; *D.S.* XIX 92.5; *Arr. An.* VII 22.5; *Just.* XXXVIII 7.1. Sherwin-White and Kuhrt (1993), 7-14.

on some accounts the longest-used era in the world, reportedly survived in some part of Syria until the 1930s and in Yemen to this day.⁸ Others dissolved in the early- or mid-Hellenistic period. The influential book of Sherwin-White and Kuhrt credits Antiochos I with laying the foundations for the Seleukid image-making:

At his accession, Antiochus innovated and authorised, against all precedent, adoption of a dynastic era, so continuing the regnal era of Seleucus instead of beginning a new one of his own. Time became Seleucid, dynastic and continuous ... The second development in the second generation of the Seleucids was the invention of the dynastic tradition and mythology anchoring Antiochus' kingship in a continuum of legitimate monarchy. It was easy to build on Seleucus' own well-known and widely advertised personal devotion to Apollo and upon Apollo's reciprocal care for Seleucus, already implicit in the royal patronage of Didyma. It is, thus, early in Antiochus' reign that Seleucus' filiation from Apollo and Apollo's status as founder of the *genos* (family) of the Seleucids was propagated and publicly accepted (cf. *OGIS* 219, cf. 212). Seleucus is identified and sung of in a paean as son of Apollo (Asclepius: Powell (1925), 140).⁹

Not trying to deny the contribution of Antiochos I in the field of Seleukid dynastic ideology, this paper proposes to look at what his father Seleukos I wanted other people to think about his image and legitimation and what aspects of his rule continued in the reign of his son.

The first facet is his ties to Alexander the Great, the second is the birth of the Apollo-factor in the Seleukid ideology. I will not dwell here on the anchor: it is very well attested but less substantial than the other two. The importance of Apollo as the dynastic god of the Seleukids is well-known; the discussion in the scholarship concentrates on why Apollo rose to this position, with some attributing it to political expediency or propaganda, allegedly exercised by Seleukos I to win the hearts and minds of the Greeks in Ionia,¹⁰ and others pointing to the personal piety of Seleukos.¹¹ Seleukos' ties with Apollo are seemingly very well covered by ancient sources: by Diodorus, Pompeius Trogus (known through Justin's epitome), Appian, with two short remarks in Pausanias, and a much later passage in Libanios' oration in praise of Antioch. Diodorus, Pompeius Trogus and Appian, ultimately derived from a Hellenistic source (Hieronymos of Kardia?)¹², give this sequence of events: Laodike married Antiochos, the mortal father of Seleukos I; she conceived Seleukos with Apollo; the next morning she discovered in her bed an iron ring with an anchor engraved on it; the child (Seleukos) was born with an anchor-shaped birthmark on his thigh; at an unspecified date there was an unexplained outburst of fire on the hearth in Seleukos' (or his parents') home; in 334 Laodike handed over the iron ring to her son; Seleukos received a prophecy of kingship at Didyma; Alexander predicted a great future for Seleukos in a dream. The last two events happened between the beginning of Alexander's expedition to Asia and

⁸ Kosmin (2014), 101.

⁹ Sherwin-White and Kuhrt (1993), 27. Erickson (2011) maintains that Antiochos' preference for Apollo was based on the Eastern, especially Babylonian appeal of syncretic Apollo-Nabû.

¹⁰ E.g. Orth (1977), 18; Parke (1985), 47, 53; Grainger (1990), 103-104, 164-165.

¹¹ Sherwin-White and Kuhrt (1993), 27; also Burstein (1980), 76-77; Grainger (1990), 164; Capdetrey (2007), 169, n. 14; Grainger (2014), 60.

¹² Hadley (1969), criticised by Marasco (1982), 69-72.

Seleukos' expedition to Babylon in the Spring of 311.¹³ Seleukos honoured his two fathers by founding Antioch and consecrating the adjacent plain (Daphne) to Apollo. Libanios adds that the place to be consecrated to Apollo was revealed to the king by the god through the signs of his arrow and by that of a snake. Seleukos also received an oracle from Miletus (i.e. Didyma) concerning Daphne. From Pausanias we learn that at one point Seleukos returned the statue of Apollo to Didyma.¹⁴

Libanios' oration in praise of Antioch (the *Antiochikos*) is some 660 years later than the foundation of Daphne and Antioch on the Orontes. The story of the foundation of Antioch by Seleukos is aetiological in nature, rich in the miraculous and myth, and its purpose was to extol Antioch, to show its Greek and indeed pagan credentials (hence inevitable prominence of Apollo, the most Greek of Greek gods), and to put its foundation story in the context of the deeds of the unbroken line of great figures of Greek history: Alexander the Great, Seleukos and other Seleukid kings. All of these speak against treating it as a serious evidence of Seleukos' devotion to Apollo. The Seleukos story of the *Antiochikos*, like Appian's account of the origin of the Seleukid empire, proclaims the clear message of Seleukos as successor to Alexander.¹⁵ Next is the story of the divine conception of Seleukos and of the oracle he received. In Diodorus' account Seleukos did most to demolish the credibility of the story of the oracle given to him: Seleukos told it to his companions during the daring expedition from Egypt to Babylonia through Syria to strengthen their morale in the face of the army of Demetrios (later Poliorketes), defeated at Gaza but still stronger than Seleukos' force. The purely utilitarian rationale for disseminating the story makes a modern reader ask whether it was perhaps invented in 311 BCE by Seleukos or later by a Hellenistic author.¹⁶ The historicity of the story is further diminished because of the circumstances in which the oracle was allegedly issued to Seleukos. Appian says: στρατιώτη τοῦ βασιλέως ἔτι ὄντι καὶ ἐπὶ Πέρσας ἐπομένῳ, χρησμὸν ἐν Διδυμέῳ γενέσθαι, which has to refer to 334 BCE, the only moment when Seleukos could visit Didyma in Alexander's lifetime.¹⁷ At that time Didyma was still silent after the destruction inflicted on it by Xerxes in 479 BCE, to reopen in 331 BCE when the sacred spring sprang up to issue the oracle for Alexander the Great.¹⁸

Thus literary sources do not show any trace of Seleukos' particular devotion to Apollo prior to 301 BCE, which one might expect to have been manifest should the stories of Apollo's parentage have been a constituent part of his ideological portrait from 312 BCE onwards. Because of the significant number of attested coins, the shape of his coinage is important for understanding Seleukos' image-making, notwithstanding the

¹³ For the discussion of the date of Seleukos' expedition from Syria to Babylonia see Grainger (2014), 43.

¹⁴ Paus. I 16.3, VIII 46.3.

¹⁵ App. *Syr.* 281: ὡς ὀρίσθαι τῷδε μάλιστα μετὰ Ἀλέξανδρον τῆς Ἀσίας τὸ πλεόν; soon followed by the story of the alleged oracle of Didyma (283-284) and of Seleukos rescuing Alexander's diadem, symbolically putting it on his head (287-291), which was a sign (ἕτερον τῷ Σελεύκῳ σημεῖον περὶ τῆς ἀρχῆς) predicting Seleukos inheriting Alexander's kingdom. Francesio (2004), 42-52.

¹⁶ Grainger (1990), 3-4, 163-164.

¹⁷ App., *Syr.*, 283.

¹⁸ Callisth. *FGrH* 124 F14. Parke (1985), 62; Grainger (1990), 3-4; Nawotka (2010), 211-212.

still dominant position of Alexander's coins in circulation in the Seleukid empire.¹⁹ It is generally accepted that Seleukos, not unlike other kings, selected iconographic motifs of his coins carefully, among alia advertising the particular divine protection he enjoyed, or at least wanted other people think he did.²⁰ For the whole reign of Seleukos I Apollo is not among the deities most often represented in his numismatic imagery. Counting both the reverse and obverse images, on approximately 300 issues, Apollo, with 13 attested cases, is no match for Nike (40), Athena (61), Herakles (144) or Zeus (165).²¹ Apollo is absent from the numismatic iconography of Seleukid coins prior to 300 BCE, to appear soon after in the bronze coinage of Antioch on the Orontes.²² Quite obviously, Apollo was not a part of the image making of Seleukos in the first half of his career, until ca. 300 BCE. If coins are representative of the personal devotion of Seleukos, his god of choice was Zeus, as it was of Alexander, and in fact Seleukos' coinage for the most part continued that of Alexander.²³

The evidence drawn from coin images is congruous with an anecdotal tradition surviving in late authors: according to Libanios and Malalas, Seleukos' foundations in Syria were carried out under the auspices of Zeus, whose sacred bird disturbed sacrifices performed by Seleukos in Antigoneia, thus indicating the god's will to have a new city established.²⁴ If the tradition is genuine, these accounts suggest that as late as 300 BCE Seleukos was giving preference to Zeus in the important act of founding of Antioch. And bearing in mind the importance of what would soon become the principal Seleukid residence in the West and its dynastic name, this may be a testimony of Seleukos' perception of Zeus as the patron of his dynasty. Malalas most likely drew upon a second-century BCE author Pausanias of Damascus and since some details of the foundation story of Seleukeia seem to find reflection in archaeological material, he probably relates a genuine local tradition.²⁵

There is more indirect, often late, evidence of Seleukos' preference for Zeus as his patron god. One is a dedication from Lydia which reads: [Δ]ι Σελευκίῳ καὶ Νύμφαις/Καρποδοτείραις.²⁶ Then there a scene surviving in the temple of Gad in Dura-Europos, in which Seleukos Nikator crowns god Gad, whose iconography suggests assimilation with Zeus.²⁷ The relief scene is as late as 159 CE but if it follows a Hellenistic model, as was believed by Rostovtzeff, it may reflect ideology professed by the founder of Dura, Seleukos I.²⁸ Chronologically closest to the lifetime of Seleukos I is an inscription from Seleukeia Pieria of 193-175 BCE with a list of priests of (principal) gods of the city

¹⁹ On Alexander's coins as the dominating international currency well into the third c. BCE see Le Rider and Callataÿ (2006), 105-107. Seleukos' coins in image-making (or propaganda): Hadley (1974).

²⁰ Zahle (1990).

²¹ Apollo: Houghton, Lorber and Kritz (2002), nos 15-20, 112, 113, 148-150, 163, 257.

²² Houghton, Lorber and Kritz (2002), nos 15-17, 18-19.

²³ Hadley (1974); Goukowsky (1978), 125-128; Bearzot (1984), 65.

²⁴ Lib. 11.86-88; Malalas VIII 12. Downey (1961), 85; Musti (1966), 95.

²⁵ Chuvin (1988).

²⁶ TAM V.1 426 of 228/9 CE. Nock (1928); Bikerman (1938), 242-245; Tondriau (1948), 173-174.

²⁷ Rostovtzeff (1939), 283-284, Seleukos' name is inscribed in Palmyrene.

²⁸ Rostovtzeff (1939); Kosmin (2014), 216.

which reads: Σελεύκου Διὸς/ Νικάτορος καὶ Ἀντιόχου/ Ἀπολλῶνος Σωτήρο[ς]. Although this is a municipal cult, it surely reflects arrangements of the reign of Seleukos who wanted himself to be associated with Zeus and his son with Apollo.²⁹ None of these pieces of evidence is conclusive in its own rights but taken together they corroborate what we learn from Seleukos' coinage: that apart from perpetuating the tradition of Alexander's coinage, Seleukos may have considered Zeus, identified with eastern gods, a deity of universal appeal in his vast empire.³⁰ Apollo came to the fore only later in Seleukos' reign.

The case for Alexander is stronger and it goes beyond the prophetic dream of Seleukos in which Alexander predicts great future for him.³¹ Other Successors saw Alexander in their dreams too, so the dream of Seleukos belongs to the realm of literary *topoi* rather than to historical reality.³² At one point Seleukos was surely seen as the successor to Alexander, as attested by the story of the diadem of Alexander blown away from his head by wind and rescued, in the more common version, by a sailor,³³ in another version by Seleukos who put it on his head as a sign he would succeed Alexander.³⁴ Appian, who transmits this variant, pro-Seleukid, version of the story of the diadem of Alexander and with it, symbolically, legitimacy passing from Alexander to Seleukos, does not state his source. The question to be addressed here is whether any trace of the notion linking Seleukid legitimacy to Alexander can be found in the age of Seleukos I.

Of course there is nothing surprising in any of Alexander's companions who vied for power after his death stressing his ties to Alexander, the most charismatic figure and the most distinguished conqueror in Greek history. This has been perhaps best researched in the case of Ptolemy, the self-made half-brother of Alexander through an illegitimate but well-advertised union of his mother with Philip II.³⁵ The blood ties to Alexander were surely meant to underscore Ptolemy's legitimacy as king. To the best of my knowledge nothing of this kind is attested for Seleukos, the one Successor who inherited or conquered most of the Alexander's empire and who followed in Alexander's footsteps on more than one occasion.³⁶ There is a persistent tradition of Seleukos becoming king according to the last will of Alexander, and thus a legitimate monarch by

²⁹ *OGIS* 245=*IGLS* III 1184, A10-12. The date is after *IGLS*.

³⁰ Zahle (1990); Erickson (2011), 52.

³¹ D.S. XIX 90.4.

³² Bearzot (1984), 55.

³³ D.S. XVII 116.5-7; Arr. *An.* VII 22; App. *Syr.* 288-291.

³⁴ App. *Syr.* 291:

εἰσὶ δὲ οἱ τὰδε πάντα ὑπερελθόντες οὐ ναύτην ὅλως φασίν, ἀλλὰ Σέλευκον ἐπὶ τὸ διαδῆμα τοῦ βασιλέως ἐκκολυμβῆσαι καὶ περιθέσθαι Σέλευκον αὐτὸ τῆ κεφαλῆ, ἴνα ἄβροχον εἴη. καὶ τὰ σημεῖα ἐς τέλος ἀμφοῖν ἀπαντήσαι· Ἀλεξάνδρον τε γὰρ ἐν Βαβυλῶνι μεταστῆναι τοῦ βίου καὶ Σέλευκον τῆς Ἀλεξάνδρου γῆς, ὅτι πλείστης μάλιστα τόνδε τῶν Ἀλεξάνδρου διαδόχων, βασιλεῦσαι.

³⁵ Curt. IX 8.22; Paus. I 6.2 with Aelian alluding to it (Ael. fr. 285 = Suda, s.v. Λάγος) and some other sources writing about him as a scion of Herakles, as the Argead king were (Satyr. fr. 21; Theoc. 17.26; *OGIS* I 54, ll. 4-6). This was probably an invention of the age of the Successors: Errington (1976), 155-156; Heckel (2006), 235; Lianou (2010), 128-130.

³⁶ Goukowsky (1978), 125-131.

virtue of inheriting kingship from the defunct Argead dynasty. Among the earliest witnesses to this tradition is Berossos, as Tatian attests:

Βηρωσὸς ἀνὴρ Βαβυλωνίος, ἱερεὺς τοῦ παρ' αὐτοῖς Βήλου, κατ' Ἀλέξανδρον γεγονώς, Ἀντιόχοι τῷ μετ' αὐτὸν τρίτῳ τὴν Χαλδαίων ἱστορίαν ἐν τρισὶ βιβλίοις κατατάξας καὶ τὰ περὶ τῶν βασιλέων ἐκθέμενος, ἀφηγεῖται

Berosus, a Babylonian, a priest of their god Belus, born in the time of Alexander, composed for Antiochus, the third after him, the history of the Chaldeans in three books; and, narrating the acts of the kings, he mentions one of them³⁷

In this account, Antiochos I is the third king after Alexander, surely with his father Seleukos counted among the legitimate kings who preceded him. Since we do not have Berossos' text but only a testimony in Tatian, it is not possible to say with certainty whether it expresses the idea of the legitimate succession from Alexander to Seleukos or if Alexander is mentioned simply as the *terminus post quem*. There are a number of later pieces of evidence that the idea of the succession from Alexander to the Seleukid kings was present in literary sources from the Hellenistic age to late antiquity and later. It appears in Amminius Marcellinus: "Qui post multa gloriose et fortiter gesta, superato Nicatoro Seleuco, eiusdem Alexandri successore ..." (XXXIII 6.2). The idea of Alexander ordering on his deathbed the division of his empire, with Seleukos being one of the appointed successors, is known to us from I *Maccabees*³⁸. The notion of Alexander dividing his empire among his companions and the succession going to Seleukos resurfaces in Moses Khorenats'i, who consulted I *Maccabees*, among other sources:

After ruling over the whole world, Alexander of Macedon, the son of Philip and Olympias, who was twenty-fourth from Achilles and after bequeathing his empire to many with the stipulation that the empire of them all would be called that of the Macedonians, he himself died. After him Seleucus reigned in Babylon, having seized the states of all the others.³⁹

The idea of succession from Alexander to Seleukos is known also to numerous late-antique and early-medieval evidence, mostly from the East: *ELB*,⁴⁰ John Malalas,⁴¹ Georgios Monachos,⁴² *Maronite Chronicle* (after 664),⁴³ *Apocalypse of Ps.-Methodius*

³⁷ *BNJ* 680 T2, ap. Tatianus, *Oratio ad Graecos* 36; tr. B.P. Pratten.

³⁸ I *Macc.* 1.1-9, with Goldstein's restoration of the missing first part of 1.1: "[This is a history of events which began in the era of the Hellenistic dynasty. The dynasty had its origins] 1 in the time of Alexander son of Philip, the Macedonian".

³⁹ Moses Khorenats'i, *History of the Armenians*, Translation and Commentary on the Literary Sources by Robert W. Thomson, Cambridge Mass. and London 1978, II 1 (p. 129).

⁴⁰ *ELB* I 8.5-6, II 6.1.

⁴¹ Malalas VIII 3-10.

⁴² *Commentarium in Daniele* IV 3.8.

⁴³ Text: J.-B. CHABOT, *Chronica Minora*, II, Louvain (1955), 37: "Hi sunt qui regnaverunt post Alexandrum: in Macedonia regnavit Philippus qui et Arridaeus, frater ipsius Alexandri; et in Asia, Antigonus; et in Macedonia, Cassander; et in Syria, Seleucus". Date: Palmer, Hoyland and Brock (1993), 29.

(perhaps 685-692),⁴⁴ *Chronicon ad annum Domini 846 pertinens*,⁴⁵ *Chronicon ad annum Christi 1234 pertinens*.⁴⁶ This enumeration of mostly late sources is not meant to give the impression that a strong, source-based case can be built for the legitimate succession from Alexander to Seleukos but only to show that the notion of it was widespread.

The division of Alexander's empire allegedly came about by his decision recorded in his last will or Testament. The Testament of Alexander is spurious but it circulated widely in antiquity: among Alexander historians it is known to Diodorus, perhaps following Hieronymos of Kardias, rejected by Curtius Rufus,⁴⁷ and known to Flavius Josephus.⁴⁸ The earliest directly attested (small) fragment of it survives in a papyrus, now in Vienna, of the first c. BCE–first c. CE.⁴⁹ This papyrus scrap leads us to the original source of the Testament of Alexander: the *Alexander Romance*, whose section the Vienna papyrus repeats almost verbatim (III 33.11-12), and the *Liber de Morte Testamentoque Alexandri* attached to the *Metz Epitome*.⁵⁰ The testament of Alexander thus survived in two late texts (third–fourth c. AD), each independently of the other drawing on a political pamphlet of the beginning of the age of Successors.⁵¹

Broadly speaking, the Testament repeats the decisions of the council of Babylon, giving them, however, the ultimate sanction of Alexander's decision. Having in mind that the empire was his by virtue of conquest (*doriktetos chora*), his was also the right to dispose his property as saw fit. Hence, in an ideological sense, the decision as to the division of Alexander's empire represented by the Testament is meant to be permanent. A notable diversion from the actual state of affairs in Alexander's empire in 323 BCE is the position of Seleukos: he becomes satrap of Babylon in the Testament and not by the decision of the generals gathered in Triparadeisos.⁵² Having in mind that holding onto Babylonia was the cornerstone of Seleukos' policy from 320 BCE on, this ahistorical proviso in the Testament must reflect Seleukos' desire to show that his rule in Babylon was anchored in the ultimate authority of Alexander. This does not make the whole (spurious) Testament of Alexander a pro-Seleukid pamphlet, but shows that a pro-Seleukid strain was a component in this complex source.

The Testament of Alexander is the first step on the path to the legend of the Seleukid legitimacy anchored in legacy of Alexander. Here he becomes satrap of Babylonia by

⁴⁴ Ps.-Methodius 9.1, in Greek rendition: τελευτήσαντος τοιγαροῦν Ἀλεξάνδρου τοῦ <πρώτου> βασιλέως <Ἑλλήνων> ἐβασίλευσαν ἀντ' αὐτοῦ οἱ τέσσαρες παῖδες αὐτοῦ· οὐ γὰρ ἔγημε ποτέ (quoting after the edition of W.J. Aerts and G.A.A. Kortekaas, *Die Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius. Die ältesten griechischen und lateinischen Übersetzungen*, Leuven 1998). The date: Brock (1976), 34; Reinink (1992), 178, 186.

⁴⁵ Text: Chabot, *Chronica*, II, 130.

⁴⁶ J.-B. Chabot, *Anonymi auctoris Chronicon ad annum Christi 1234 pertinens*, I, Louvain (1937), 82.

⁴⁷ D.S. XX 81.3; Curt. X 10.5.

⁴⁸ J. *AJ* XI 346.

⁴⁹ Segre (1933).

⁵⁰ Ps.-Callisth. III 30-33; *ME* 115-122.

⁵¹ For a summary of the discussion on its date see Nawotka, "I *Maccabees* and the *Alexander Romance*" (forthcoming 2017). A milestone prosopographical study is Heckel (1988).

⁵² Heckel (1988), 60, n. 5.

Alexander's last will. In Berossos' account Antiochos son of Seleukos is the third in line after Alexander, which may indicate Seleukos' legitimate succession to Alexander, or at least it may mark Alexander as the point of reference in Seleukid history. The evidence, if indirect, of Berossos shows that the story of Seleukos appointed by Alexander satrap of Babylon and/or his successor was very much alive in pro-Seleukid historiography in the early Hellenistic period. Later, mostly eastern, sources seem to suggest that the idea of the Seleukid legitimacy anchored in the decision of Alexander was widespread through the Seleukid empire and obvious also to anti-Seleukid Jewish authors. The Alexander factor was, as it seems, the earliest discernible element of the Seleukid image-making. Gradually additional elements accrued: from the similar pattern of coinage to stories of Alexander's diadem or the prophetic dream of Seleukos.

A supporting evidence for the importance of the Alexander-factor in the politics and image-making of Seleukos I is supplied by the events of the very end of his life. Having defeated Lysimachos at Koroupedion, and having absorbed his kingdom, Seleukos came closest of all Successors to rebuilding the empire of Alexander, only to be assassinated by Ptolemy Keraunos just after crossing to Europe. Based on two contemporary or near contemporary accounts, one of Nymphis, known to us from Photius' summary of Memnon, and one a Babylonian Chronicle, Kosmin has convincingly proven that these two accounts are derived from an official pronouncement of Seleukos, who soon after Koroupedion declared his intention to take over Macedonia and thus to re-establish the empire of Alexander.⁵³ What is striking in Nymphis' account is Seleukos' motivation πόθον ἔχων τῆς πατρίδος, ἐξ ἧς σὺν Ἀλεξάνδρῳ ἐστρατεύετο ("having a longing for his homeland, out of which he had marched with Alexander"), reminding us of Alexander's famed *pothos*, which guided him in some of his adventures, including the expedition to Siwah. Even if we accept Kosmin's interpretation that Seleukos' homebound *pothos* is a reversal of Alexander's *pothos*, which lead him always across new boundaries, the template of Alexander is strikingly obvious in this last recorded pronouncement of Seleukos.

And now back to Apollo. There is no evidence of Seleukos' devotion to this god prior to 301 BCE, and then there is a flurry of evidence of his piety and patronage: Apollo's head on coins of Antioch on the Orontes,⁵⁴ the temple of Apollo built in Daphne upon an oracle from Didyma,⁵⁵ altars of Apollo of Didyma erected by a Seleukid general Demodamas to the north of the Jaxartes,⁵⁶ gifts to Apollo of Delos,⁵⁷ and of Didyma,⁵⁸ and the most spectacular of all, the foundation by the crown prince

⁵³ Memnon *BNJ* 434 F1 8.1; *BCHP* 9, rev. 1-4. Kosmin (2014), 80-85.

⁵⁴ Houghton, Lorber, Kritt (2002), nos 15-17, 18-19.

⁵⁵ Lib. *Or.* 11.99. Seibert (1974), 203-204; Parke (1985), 46.

⁵⁶ Plin., *Nat.*, VI 49. The same information appear, certainly after Pliny, in: Iulius Solinus, *Collect. Rerum memorabilium*, 49.5-6; also Martianus Capella, 692. For the discussion of the intended meaning of the altars as a means of delimiting Seleukid sovereignty in Central Asia but also as gesture paralleling Alexander's feat of reaching the altars of Dionysos and Herakles in the pursuit of the Scythians beyond the Jaxartes see Kosmin (2014), 61-67.

⁵⁷ *Schenkungen*, nos 155, 157-166: 11 acts of munificence of Seleukos I and queen Stratonike dated between 301 and 268 BCE.

⁵⁸ *CIG* 2852=*Didyma* 424=*RC* 5=*Schenkungen* 280 of 288/7 BCE: magnificent gifts of kings Seleukos I and Antiochos I.

Antiochos, in Miletus, of a *stadion*-long *stoa* built to provide income for construction works at Apollos's temple at Didyma.⁵⁹ The crowning glory was Apollo's pronouncement of Seleukos, who was soon to become enshrined in pro-Seleukid sources as the founder of the dynasty (ἀρχηγὸς τοῦ γένους),⁶⁰ as his son.⁶¹ No date can be assigned to the returning of the statue of Apollo known from Pausanias.

Three elements stick out: the sudden outburst of the Seleukid acts of devotion to Apollo after 301 BCE, the prominent position of Didyma and the role played by Demodamas. In the fourth c. BCE Didyma, which was a place of great prominence before 479 BCE and later in Hellenistic and Roman times down to the emperor Julian, paled in comparison to other oracles of Apollo, no doubt as a result of long silence. Hence its prominent position in Seleukos' dossier of piety is remarkable. This brings us to Demodamas, the best known Milesian of his age, author of books on Central Asia and India, a *philos* and general of Seleukos and Antiochos, a person in good relations with queen Apame, and certainly one of the most influential members of the inner circle of power in Seleukos' empire.⁶² It must have been his idea, and not that of Seleukos or Antiochos, to set up altars to Apollo of Didyma beyond the Jaxartes, as only a Milesian could have come up with it. Demodamas was then involved, as a formal or de facto proposer of the motion, in the adopting by the demos of Miletus of the two decrees honouring Antiochos and Apame for their good deeds to Miletus, including setting up the *stoa*, and he was one of three *epimelatai* elected to supervise erecting a statue of a (Seleukid?) royalty.⁶³ He was, therefore, quite obviously instrumental in negotiations with Seleukos, Apame and Antiochos in the issue of Antiochos' foundation. A reference to the negotiations appears in the Milesian inscription which mentions a diplomatic exchange between the city and Seleukos.⁶⁴ As with any negotiations, something had to be offered in return for a very substantial amount of money spent on the *stoa* and offerings. The most obvious thing a city, whether within the Seleukid area of political influence in the first two decades of the third c. BCE or not, could offer was the particular protection of its most celebrated deity, Apollo of Didyma.

⁵⁹ *OGIS* 213 = *Didyma* 479 = *Schenkungen* 281 [E 1] of 300/299 BCE, perhaps in the beginning of 299 BCE and *SEG* 4.442=*Didyma* 480=*Schenkungen* 281 [E 2] of 299/298, most likely at the end of 299 BCE. The *stoa* was completed very soon as the inscription on its architrave *Milet* 1.7.193a (with Hermann (1997), 13-14) testifies: [Ἀντίοχος βασιλέως Σελεύκου [ὁ πρεσβύτατος υἱὸς] / [Ἀπόλλωνι] τῶι ἐν [Διδύμοις]. It was inscribed before the promotion of Antiochos to kingship, i.e. before 294 or 292 BCE.

⁶⁰ IMT Skam/NebTaeler 187 of 279-274 BCE from Troas; but perhaps as early as 306-280 BCE (i.e. closer to 280 BCE), if the restoration of IMT Skam/NebTaeler 190, l. 14 is acceptable: τοῦ ἀρχηγοῦ τοῦ / [γένους αὐτοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος].

⁶¹ Powell (1925), 140 = *IErythrai* 205. The date is after Powell (1925) who remarks that these verses were inscribed in Seleukos' lifetime, but after Korupedion, when Erythai, along with all of Ionia, passed to him from Lysimachos.

⁶² Ath., XV 30; Hdn., *De prosodia catholica*, 3.1, p. 268; St.Byz., s.v. Ἰουλιανὸς; Iulius Solinus, *Collect. Rerum memorabilium*, 49.5-6. See: Carsana (1996), 63-64, 142; Savalli-Lestrade (1998), 4-5; K. Nawotka, "Demodamas of Miletus, Seleucus I and Apollo" (forthcoming) and Kosmin (2014), 61-67

⁶³ *Didyma* 424, 479, 481 (with Rehm's commentary and Günther (1971), 28).

⁶⁴ *Didyma* 480.

In all probability Apollo owes his prominence among deities whom Seleukos worshipped and whose temples he sponsored to Demodamas, who is recorded as having promoted the tutelary god of Miletus in order, inter alia, to secure a source of income for the construction works at Didyma. In antiquity this task was proverbially expensive and it was placed very high indeed on the list of priorities of Miletus.⁶⁵ Although we have no evidence of it, it would be no surprise to learn that it was Didyma who proclaimed Seleukos son of Apollo, as it proclaimed once Alexander son of Zeus.⁶⁶ Circumstantial evidence on the ties between Seleukos and Didyma is found in a later legend of Seleukos' sister Didymeia, whose name must have been devised in memory of these relations.⁶⁷ It seems that the cult of Apollo of Didyma continued in the Syrian Seleukis long after 281 BCE. Among municipal priests of Seleukeia Pieria in 193-175 BCE there are priests of Apollo of Daphne and of another Apollo (A-B 7-8).⁶⁸ The editors of *IGLS* are probably correct in associating the second Apollo with father of Seleukos, i.e. Apollo of Didyma.⁶⁹ Be that as it may, the concept of the divine sonship of Seleukos came into being almost certainly late in his life, not before his family's spectacular acts of munificence for Didyma.⁷⁰ Alongside the epigraphic attestations of the 280s-270s BCE, it surfaced in literary form in pro-Seleukid writing directly or indirectly consulted by Pompeius Trogus and Appian. For lack of hard evidence it is not possible to say whether the original source was the *Seleucus Romance*, postulated by Fraser,⁷¹ Timagenes or some unknown to us Seleukid court historiography, but there is little doubt as to its very existence.⁷²

A hypothetical sequence of events would be as follows. Soon after Ipsos when the Seleukid power was projected to Asia Minor, Demodamas advanced the concept of particular ties between Seleukos and Apollo of Didyma, probably acting in accordance with Antiochos and Apame. The Seleukids accepted the idea and in return founded the stoa in Miletus. In 300 BCE Apollo issued a propitious oracle concerning the founding of Antioch on the Orontes, and perhaps other cities in Syria, including above all Seleukeia. The head of Apollo was placed on early coinage of Antioch. Miletus honoured the Seleukids in a customary way with decrees and statues. Seleukos, Antiochos and Apame showered the temples of Apollo in Didyma and Delos with gifts. At some point before 280 BCE Seleukos was proclaimed son of Apollo (of Didyma). Legends of his particular ties with Apollo were born and circulated in pro-Seleukid literature.

⁶⁵ The new Didymaion, one of the largest and most expensive Greek temples, was never completed and with time became a paragon for an endeavour of superhuman size, listed among overambitious plans of Caligula (Suet. *Cal.* 21.1). For the greatness of the temple see: Str. XIV 1.5; Vit. VII 16-17; D.C. LIX 28.

⁶⁶ For the hypothesis of Apollo of Didyma proclaiming Seleukos his son: Bevan (1902), I, 121, n. 1; Stähelin (1923), 1232; Habicht 1970, 86. For Apollo of Didyma proclaiming Alexander son of Zeus: Callisth. *FGrH* 124 F14, ap. Str. XVII 1.43. Nawotka (2010a), 155-159.

⁶⁷ Malalas VIII 10.

⁶⁸ *OGIS* 245=*IGLS* III 1184, A-B 7-8.

⁶⁹ L. Jalabert and R. Mouterde, *IGLS* III, pp. 648-649 (lemma to no 1184).

⁷⁰ Habicht (1970), 82-83, 85-87.

⁷¹ Fraser (1996), 36-39.

⁷² Primo (2009), 29-35, 204-206, 247-249; Kosmin (2014), 94-100.

Thus this paper, in opposition to recently voiced opinions,⁷³ defends the paramount importance of Alexander as a template (victor, ruler of the great empire, Macedonian) and a point of reference for Seleukos from the beginning of the age of Successors to his death. This element of the Seleukid image-making, adopted by design and kept by Seleukos, not as an exclusive but still as a very important part of his royal ideology for all of his life, was not to last long, since Antiochos abandoned, out of necessity, his father's drive to conquer Macedonia and thus to recreate Alexander's empire. The second factor, the particular protection of Apollo for Seleukos, reciprocated by Seleukos' and his family's particular generosity towards Apollo's shrines, devised for Seleukos by his close advisor Demodamas of Miletus, and further developed by Antiochos I, was to stay with the Seleukids and with Miletus for another one and a half centuries.

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⁷³ Kosmin (2014), 102 (in the context of the Seleukid era):

In 320 Seleucus had received the satrapy of Babylonia as an administrative assignment from a superior, sovereign authority. His return eight years later marked a new start — his rule was the result of personal bravery, military victory, and indigenous acknowledgment. Thereby, his state lay outside the authorizing structures of Alexander's kingdom. The chronological principle of the Seleucid Era (1 SE) figured Alexander's campaign as the background but not the genesis of the Seleucid kingdom.

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