«Attica in Syria»
Persian War Reenactments and Reassessments of the Greek-Asian Relationship:
a Literary Point of View

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ABSTRACT – In one of the fragments of encomiastic poetry which is most difficult to interpret, Suppl. Hell. 958 (P. Hamb. 312 inv. 381, 3rd cent. BCE), a king (most probably Ptolemy II) compares his two arch-enemies, the «Medes» and the Galatians, those already defeated and those about to receive due punishment for their impiety. Comparison with contemporary and late-antique Greek encomia from Egypt may suggest that here are at play two levels of assimilation with the 5th century Persians: on the one hand, every barbarian enemy of a Greek state can be seen as a reincarnation of the Persian spectre (even the Galatians are often assimilated to the invading army of Xerxes in Hellenistic art and literature); on the other hand, the Seleucids, having inherited the land once dominated by the Achaemenids, can be presented by their enemies as «the New Persians». That a Ptolemy could play the role of a defender of the cultural identity of his subjects (both Greeks and Egyptians) against the Persians, is no surprise. We have to assess, however, if the Seleucids really did care less about advertising their Greek/Macedonian cultural inheritance than the rival dynasties. A review of the surviving Greek literature from the Seleucid empire (generally overlooked by scholars, who are most interested in the marvels of Alexandrian poetry) can be useful to reply to this question.

KEYWORDS – Seleucid, Ptolemy, Hellenistic, Persian, Greek literature, court poetry, SH 958, Seleucidi, Tolemei, ellenistico, Persiani, letteratura greca, poesia di corte.

1 The paper has been presented at the international Conference «The Many Faces of a Hellenistic King», organized by Prof. Penelope Wilson and Dr. Heba Abd El Gawad at University of Durham, 11-12 November 2011; an earlier and shorter version has been presented in the cycle of lectures «La (ri)scoperta dell’Antico. Terzo incontro di studi in ricordo del Prof. Mario Zambarbieri», organized by the Liceo Ginnasio Statale Carducci, Milano, 22 January 2011, while its origin is in a series of presentations I did in 2009 and 2010 in preparation for the travels in Jordan and in Syria of the Scuola di Specializzazione in Archeologia of the Università Cattolica. I thank the organizers of the conferences and all the colleagues for useful comments and suggestions. Mine remains the responsibility for what is written.
Now as in antiquity, wars are fought on the battlefield as much as on the cultural ground. However, ancient court poetry, especially learned poetry as we find it in Alexandria, cannot be defined, literally, as «propaganda», as it could hardly «be propagated», circulate widely outside the circle of the alphabetized Greeks, that is ethnic Greek or Greek-speaking members of the court, members of the rival court, élites of the Greek and Hellenized poleis. While the audience for docta poesis was relatively restricted, Hellenistic kings had other means to spread their self-representation as rulers 2 on a wider scale: primarily iconographic tools, like works of art donated and exhibited in renown sanctuaries, symbolism on coinage, theatrical manifestation of power like solemn processions and festivals 3, but also specific literary genres, like epic/encomiastic poetry designed for panhellenic competitions and public performances outside the relatively circumscribed sphere of the court. However, even the most exclusive manifestations of court poetry could be useful to understand the way Hellenistic kings related with their inner circle of «Friends», their allies and their adversaries.

1. PTOLEMAIC COURT POETRY ON MEDES AND «PHILOPERSIAN» KINGS

I shall start from SH 958, one of the rarest – if not the only – example of Hellenistic elegy about a contemporary war, dating 3rd century BC. It could better be defined as fragment of an epic poem in elegiacs: the presence of a speech or a dialogue suggests that the composition was of a certain length, and the military subject recalls Hellenistic historical epic poems like those of Simonides of Magnesia and Musaeus of Ephesus 4.

2 On the diverse nature of Hellenistic monarchies, not fitting a unique model, see e.g. Mooren 1985, 208-209; Gruen 1996; Ma 2003.
3 E.g. the Great Procession described by Callixenos, or Antiochus IV’s festival at Daphne, on which see Chaniotis 1997; Rice 1983; Iossif 2011c. On the use of theatres for festivals as a stage for rulers, see Le Guen 2003, 353; Le Guen 2010, 505-511; Vial 2003.
4 For a thorough commentary and a critical edition of this problematic fragment see Barbantani 2001; Barbantani 2002-2003.
[. . . . . . . . . .] ῥὸν δ’ αὐτίκα ἄνεσχε λόγον·
[. . . . . . . . . .] ζ ϒβρισταί τε καὶ ἄφρονες, ἀλλὰ μ[. . . . . . . . . .]γ ταύτης μισθόν ἄτασσαλίης,
γνώσονται δὲ μαθόντες, ἐπεὶ καὶ ἄρει[ονας ἄλλους]
[. . . . . . . . . .] εὶς κρατήτην δουλοσύνην ἐθεμ[εν.]
[οὐδ’ ἔμποροις Μήδοισι βαθυκτεάνοις ὀμοίως]
[οἴδε βιώσασθαι θοῦρος ἄνήρ Γαλάτης.]
Οὐ γὰρ πο[ιρφυρέοισιν ἐν εἴμασιν οὐδὲ μύροισιν]
[. . . . . . . . . .] . μαλακόν χρῶτα λιπαινόμενος,
ἀλλὰ χαμευνάδιός τε καὶ αἰθριάα ἐν αυτόν.
[. . . . . . . . . .] in front of the gate and the walls […]
you completed these [gloomy] tidings:
«[…] unpleasant,] o king, from my mouth […] of my speech;
[…] the shoots of the sacred tree;
[…] what remains behind are ears of rough tribolos»
[…] bringing the message to the king.
[…] as soon as he had heard the entire tale,
[…] immediately raised a […] speech:
«Impious and stupid men, but [very soon]
[they will pay] the penalty for their impudence.
They will learn from experience, because [others, even more courageous],
[…] we reduced to harsh slavery.
The impetuous Galatian man does not certainly
[follow a way of life similar] to the rich Medes;
for he does not recline in purple garments nor does he […]
anointing his delicate skin with unguents,
but rests on the ground and lives in the open [all year round].»

This is a unique fragment, because it names in one breath two of the most iconic enemies for every Graeco-Macedonian ruler: Galatians and Medes. The piece is quite complex, due to several lacunae in some of the lines crucial for the interpretation of the scene. In my commentary on the fragment 5 I argued that the king speaking is a Ptolemy, comparing two of his most fearful enemies, the Galatians, ύβρισταί τε καὶ ἄφρονες 6, and the «Medes». The identity of the Galatians is quite clear, only the time of the action is debatable: they may be Ptolemy Philadelphus’ rebellious mercenaries of 275, or, if the action is to date some years later, a roaming band of Celts threatening Ptolemaic-controlled areas in Asia Minor, like those attacking Tlos and repelled by the general Neoptolemus 7. The identification of the «Medes», although apparently evident, it is not. The

7 On this episode see Barbantani 2007.
term «Medes» was commonly used by the Greeks in a derogatory way to identify the Achaemenids (so, not exactly «Medes», but Persians) who attacked Greece and were defeated in the 5th century BC, or, more closely to the date of our fragment, the Achaemenids defeated by Alexander, in the person of king Darius III. If so, the king speaking may be Ptolemy II, comparing the «Medes» already defeated by Alexander, the ktistes (hero-founder) of his capital Alexandria and the ultimate origin of the power of the Ptolemaic dynasty, and the about-to-be defeated mercenaries. This interpretation fits well with the integration for l. 11 proposed by most philologists: ἀρείονας ἄλλουs, identifying the «better» with the Medes; the king would state: «We (i.e. the Macedonians, or more specifically the Ptolemies) have already defeated others better (= better organized and powerful, although more effeminate) than the Galatians». However, there is the possibility that with «Medes» the king refers (overtly or allusively) to the heirs of the Achaemenids in the Asiatic territories of Alexander’s former empire, namely the Seleucids. Episodes of the wars for the possession of the so-called Coele-Syria were represented, by Ptolemaic «propaganda», at many levels and for different audiences, as a re-enactment of the Persian wars of the 5th century, in the same way in which Alexander’s enterprise was presented as a belated punishment for the «Medes». Seleucids are clearly superimposed to the Achaemenid invader Cambyses in documents primarily (but not exclusively) addressed to the Egyptian subjects, such as the Pithom stele (273 BC, 1st Syrian War), the Adulis decree (OGIS I 54, 18-22 and 199, 3rd Syrian War), where Ptolemy III states to have invaded the lands «beyond the Euphrates, Mesopotamia, Babylonia, Susiana, Persia, Media, until Bactria» in order to retrieve the sacred things stolen by the Persians from Egypt, and the Canopus decree (OGIS I 56, ...
10-11, 239/8 BC, 3rd Syrian War)\textsuperscript{13}, where the king is said, again, to have «brought back the statues stolen by the Persians from the temples». To those one could add a demotic ostrakon from Karnak (258/7 BC), whose text may derive from a Greek original: it describes Ptolemy II as «the king who was victorious over the philo-Persian king (= Antiochus I) when he went to the land of Syria» (ll. 2-4)\textsuperscript{14}. Ptolemy Philadelphus’ mighty military power is also celebrated in Egyptian documents like the text of the Sais Stele and an inscription accompanying a triad of statues (Ptolemy II, Arsinoe II and Amon), now in the Graeco-Roman Museum of Alexandria (l. 3: Ptolemy’s soldiers are «more numerous than the sand»; ll. 5-6: shield and sword are mentioned)\textsuperscript{15}. Not only the common Egyptian population, but also the Egyptian philoi of the king acting at court in various capacities (recent studies are confirming a relevant presence of Egyptian collaborators of the Ptolemies at a very early stage), may have appreciated the Macedonian rulers stepping into the shoes of the old pharaohs and presenting themselves as avengers of the Persians’ impiety.

In Egyptian style bas-reliefs the Syrian Wars are represented with the topic image of the king smiting the enemy with a spear: on the Memphis stele preserving the Raphia decree, sanctioned by a priestly synod on the occasion of Philopator’s victory over Antiochus III (217 BC), Ptolemy IV is depicted mounted on horseback, with the pharaonic double crown, in the act of transfixing with his spear an enemy (not appearing in the broken stone). In the Pithom stele II, replicating the same decree, the Ptolemy appears in Macedonian battledress, overcoming with a spear his adversary, Antiochus III\textsuperscript{16}. Chaniotis compared this scene with the painting of the Kinch tomb (Naousa, 3rd century BC) showing a Macedonian horseman in the act of charging with his spear a Persian infantry soldier\textsuperscript{17}, and with


\textsuperscript{14} See Bresciani 1978, 31-37, and Bresciani 1981; on the «philo-Persian king» see Funk 1997.

\textsuperscript{15} Sais Stele: see Thiers 1999; Collombert 2008. For the inscription on the triad (cat. nr. 11261) see Stanwick 2003, 44, 100, A10 and 159, fig. 9; Sauneron 1960, 87.


\textsuperscript{17} See Chaniotis 2005, 196, fig. 10.1; cf. Pollit 1986, 43-44; Smith 1991, fig. 204.2; Iossif 2012.
a Bithynian relief dated by the time of Prusias I’s campaigns against the Galatians (216 BC), representing a horseman hitting with two spears a Galatian, also mounted on horse 18.

Epigraphic documents, especially if bilingual, are so explicit because they are meant to be exposed in public, and to be read by as many subjects as possible. There may have been some influence of a Ptolemaic anti-Seleucid propaganda in prose works, now almost completely lost 19; hyperbolic statements like those of the Adulis and of the Canopus decrees are repeated by later sources like Polyainus VIII 50 (Ptolemy III arrives «as far as India») and Trogus/Justinus XXVII 1, 9 (the Euergetes conquered totum Seleuci regnum). Quite different is the tone of court poetry and its level of engagement in contemporary events. If in Egyptian documents a Seleucid can be unambiguously defined «phil-Persian king», the Seleucids, as enemies, are never named explicitly in the surviving Ptolemaic learned poetry. In Alexandrian poetry there are, undeniably, some allusions to Egypt’s challenging relationship with its eastern neighbors. In the eve of the 2nd Syrian War, Ptolemy II was presenting himself as the heir to the philhellenic and anti-Persian politics of Alexander, whose striking image as Πέρσαισι βαρύς («punisher of the Medes»), sporting the insignia of divine kingship (αιολομίτρας) is prominent in Theocritus Idyll XVII 19; in this poem, Alexander is presented side by side with Ptolemy I, one of his main collaborators and founder of the Ptolemaic dynasty, and with the civilian hero Heracles kentaurophonos (l. 20), progenitor of both Macedonians, Alexander and Ptolemy (l. 27). Moreover, in Idyll XVII 85-89, among Philadelphus’ eastern domains are listed Phoenicia, Syria (that is Coele-Syria) and Arabia, lands contended by the Seleucids, without a word spent on an ongoing conflict: in the fictional encomiastic reality these territories are indisputably belonging to Ptolemy II. The coast of Asia Minor, including Pamphylia, Cilicia, Lycia and Caria (ll. 88-89) 20 is also depicted as under tight control of the king of Egypt. In spite of these allusions to the ruler’s military power (both Ptolemy I and his son are por-

18 See Chaniotis 2005, 201, fig. 10.2.
19 On the philo-Ptolemaic sources showing Antiochus I as a bon vivant and a champion of tryphe see Mastrocinque 1987, 24-29. Philarchus criticizes Antiochus II and shows Seleucus II defeated and on the run (FGrHist 81 F 6 and F 30). Of course the accusation of excessive tryphe could rebound on the Ptolemies, e.g. in some passages of Philarchus (FGrHist 81 F 40; cf. Pédech 1989, 467-468) or of Ptolemy of Megalopolis (FGrHist II b 161 Text, 897-898). The anecdote on Stratonice’s baldness (Luc. Pro Im. 5-7), in contrast with the celebration of Berenice’s lock, could be a product of the Lagid propaganda at the time of the Laodicean War (246/5 BC); possibly on the same topic is the mysterious and ironic epigram praising the hair of an anassa, A.P. V 25 (= FGE 313-314, anon. II).
20 On this passage see Barbantani 2007, 68 with further bibliography.
trayed in their martial capacity, αἰχμηταί, ll. 55-56), Theocritus’ *Encomium of Ptolemy* is mostly engaged in internal politics, celebrating Philadelphus’ relationship with his family and his role of keeper of peace and bringer of wealth to his country. The same celebration of Alexander’s deeds we find in Theocritus was also publicized in an impressive pageant including a military parade, the Grand Procession described by Callixeinos, where images of Dionysus and Alexander appear, and the allegoric figure of Corinth (referring to the League set up by Philip II) is followed by the cities «which were governed by the Persians» (Ath. V 201d-e). Rightly it has been pointed out that

The presentation of Dionysos and Alexander as the conquerors of the East and as gods with a special relationship to the Ptolemies places the Ptolemies metaphorically in the position actually occupied by the Seleucids in the eastern stretches of Alexander’s empire. The Ptolemies [...] surely had no intention of usurping eastern Asia from Antiochus I, but their indirect claim to it here as part of the inheritance from Alexander can hardly be interpreted otherwise than in the context of the current struggles with Syria over Coele-Syria and, to a lesser extent, Caria. (Rice 1983, 191)

In comparison with the bombastic statements of the Ptolemaic epigraphic decrees, Callimachus is admirably synthetic, even though dutifully encomiastic, when in the *Lock of Berenice* (fr. 110 Pfeiffer / Catull. *Car.* 66) alludes to the blitz-krieg that led Ptolemy III into the very heart of the «Assyrian empire», the region of Babylonia, during the 3rd Syrian war: see Catull. *Carm.* 66, 12: *vastatos finis Assyrios; 36: captam Asiam Aegypti finibus addiderat*. In the poem there is also a clever interplay between the new conflict and the ancient Persian War, since at ll. 45-46 (καὶ διὰ μέσου / Μηδείων ὀλοαὶ νῆες ἔβησαν Ἄθω, cf. Catull. *Carm.* 66.45-46: *cum Medi peperere nouium mare, cumque iuuenta / per medium classi barbaran nauti Atbon*) is evoked Xerxes’ impiety, the cut of the Athos peninsula. However, like in Theocritus’ *Idyll* XVII, the focus of the poem is neither the war nor the king, but Berenice as a role-model of a faithful and loving wife. Interestingly enough, there is no political exploitation, in the surviving Alexandrian poetry of the 3rd century BC, which is often keen on celebrating Ptolemaic queens and the value of dynastic marriage as source

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21 For a recent re-interpretation of the *Idyll* XVII in a double Greek-pharaonic key, see Heerink 2010.
23 See Weber 1993, 313-314; Pfeiffer 2004, 18-19; Boiy 2004, 149-154. At the death of Antiochus II, his two sons Seleucus (by Antiochus and Laodice) and Antiochus (by Berenice) competed for the throne. Most probably Ptolemy never went further than Babylon and just received ambassadors from the farthest regions while staying there.
of legitimate heirs, of the fact that Seleucus I was one of the few among Alexander’s generals not to repudiate his «barbarian» wife, Apama, a Sogdian princess, and that their son Antiochus I was the first half-blood ruler in Asia, for a long time relegated to the Upper Satrapies 24; a claim that, coming from the Ptolemies, who (mainly through twin marriages) always remained «ethnically pure» Macedonian throughout three centuries, could have used at their advantage. Other references to Medes, Persians or Syrians in the extant work of Callimachus are quite puzzling, and not overtly politically charged 25. That the disparaging connotation of the «Assyrian river» 26, the Euphrates, as muddy waters in Call. Ap. 108 could be a political reference to the Seleucids 27 is extremely doubtful: the context of the Hymn finale refers to the choice of a poetic style, not to politics, and Callimachus was notoriously fond of a scholar hired by the Seleucids, like Aratus; in turn, later Greek poets working for Seleucid kings, like Euphorion, were inspired by Callimachus. Apparently, then, the world of Hellenistic learned poetry was not divided by court affiliation, and the feeling is that inside this quite restricted community of poetae docti osmosis and cultural exchange (even rivalry to get the best patron) was more common than political antagonism; it was more common, probably, scholarly bickering inside the same institution (Timon SH 786 docet). In Theocritus too, references to exotic places of the Seleucid East look like harmless commonplaces 28. Ptolemaic court poetry had other, more allusive ways to present their rulers as superiors to the Seleucids, without even mentioning the

25 The reference to Medes and Persians in Callimachus generally points to the old, barbarian Medes, like fr. Aitia I 15-18 Pfeiffer: Μασσαγέται καὶ μακρὸν οὔστεύον ἕναν Μῆδον / Μῆδαν· Ην ηδονίδες δ᾿ ήδε μελιχρότεραι. / ἔλετε Βασκανίης ὀλοὸν γένος· αὖθι δὲ τέχνη / κρίνετε, μὴ σχοίνῳ Περσίδι τὴν σοφίη. Other notable references are Call. fr. 505 Pfeiffer (ἡ μὲν ἀπ’ Ἀσσυρίων ἡμεδαπὴ στρατιή «and our army from the Assyrian»), with reference to Cappadocians who live on the Pontus Euxinus, according to the explanation of the Etymologicum Magnum (Pfeiffer relates the fragment to the army of the Amazons), and fr. 506 Pfeiffer (ἡμισυ Πέρσαι, ἥμισυ δ’ Ἀσσύριοι; cf. Schol. ad Aesch. Pers. 84: «the Persians were formerly called Assyrians»).  
26 On the interchangeable, and not uniform, definition of all things «Syrian» as «Assyrian» (and on the assimilation of Arameans as «Syrians») see Andrade 2013, 6.  
27 Sic Strootman 2009, 35-36. See also Brumbaugh forthcoming.  
28 In Theocrit. Id. II 161-162 the «Assyrian guest» who knows many pharmaka is just a cliché; in Id. X 26 a beautiful black-skinned woman is nicknamed «Syra»: Βομβύκα χρισσά, ἐγὼ δὲ μόνος μελίχλωρον; in Id. XV 114 Συρίω … μύρω is a precious Oriental perfume. In the ps.Theocritean Ep. 25 Gow = A.P. VII 534 (possibly by Alexander Aetolus, see Gow 1950, II, 548) the warning against untimely navigation (cf. Call. A.P. VII 272) is directed against a Greek merchant
competing dynasty. As convincingly suggested by Petrovic 29 with plenty of parallels, Ptolemies dared to rival the Seleucids on their own new cultural territory, re-interpreting in an epigrammatic low key (but not for that less effectively encomiastic), the traditional Achaemenid inscriptions representing riches and goods flowing to the Great King from the most exotic places: in Posidippus’ *Lithica*, Ptolemaic grasp over the farthest regions of Earth is represented by the stream of precious stones (some of which explicitly connected with Persia) to Alexandria. For Ptolemaic court poets therefore Alexandria becomes not only the new epicentre of the Hellenic cultural life in the Mediterranean, but also the treasury of the world’s most desired art trophies, which was once the Achaemenid court.

The fact that there is no further explicit reference to the Syrian wars or to Seleucid rulers in the surviving Ptolemaic court poetry could be bewildering for a modern historian. It may well be that chance has robbed us of the most blatant pieces of poetic anti-Seleucid productions. However, one of the tacit rules of political marketing (ancient or modern) is «never multiply the enemies without a good reason»: one arch-enemy is capturing the attention and the energy of the audience better than two, even if, in fact, the one chosen for the purpose does not constitute a real and present danger after all. The role of the arch-enemies which once belonged to the «Medes», for all the Hellenistic rulers, in different times and places (Ptolemies, Seleucids, Attalids, possibly some of the Antigonids 30), in Greek sources is invariably taken over by the new barbarians on the scene, the Galatians, at least in the 3rd and part of the 2nd century BC, before the rise of the Romans 31. The

sailing from Coele-Syria (ll. 3-4): δείλαιε Κλεόνικε, σὺ δ’ εἰς λιπαρὴν Θάσον ἐλθεῖν / ἠπείγευ Κοίλης ἔμπορος ἐκ Συρίης.

29 Petrovic 2014.

30 See Barbantani 2001, 181-223; on the debated identification by Barigazzi 1974 of SH 958 as a fragment of Aratus’ *Hymn to Pan*, dedicated to Antigonus Gonatas after the Lysimachia clash with the Galatians, see Barbantani 2001, 123-125. The victory over the Galatians at Delphi was carefully exploited in mainland Greece by the Aetolians, while the Attalids made any effort to advertise in Athens their success over the Celts, linking them iconographically to the Persian Wars (their donaria in Athens included a Persomachy and an Amazonomachy).

31 An exception to the exclusive equation «Galatians = ancient Medes» appears in the period when the Argead kings tried to conquer Greece: the insistence of the contemporary sources on the «barbaric threat» coming from Macedonia is due to the fact that many Greeks still considered Philip II a barbarian invader like Xerxes (cf. the comparison between Macedonians and Persians in the Chremonidean Decree, *Syll.* 434/5); in the epigram *FGE* CXLII, commissioned by Pyrrhus to celebrate the dedication of the shields taken from the soldiers of Antigonus Gonatas, the conquest of Asia is associated to the conquest of Greece (ll. 1-2: Αἶδε ποτ’ Ασσαία γαϊάν ἐπόρθησαν πολύρρωσον, / Αἴδε καὶ Ἑλλασὶ δοβλοσύναν ἐπορουν): the Antigonid king, once conqueror of Persia and Greece,
so called «Galatian wars» (that is, a galaxy of scattered guerrilla episodes and minor-scale clashes, with the possible exception of the «Battle of the elephants») were paradoxically felt by the Graeco-Macedonian people and presented by Greek literature as a re-enactment of the Persian wars, much more than the Syrian Wars, which constituted one of the longest series of continuous conflict ever (nine, spread over 150 years) 32. The Galatian victory of Ptolemy II is transfigured into an epic, cosmogonic fight in Call. Del. 165-188 33. It may be that advertising military success over an unambiguously non-Greek entity, the Galatians, was striking a deeper chord in Greek hearts. Later encomia in Greek by Dioscorus of Aphroditò and other Egyptian poets, but also some encomiastic epigrams dedicated to emperors like Julian, follows this trend, interpreting again the fight against local barbarians (like the Blemmyes) as a revival of the Persian Wars 34:

1. *GDRK* Π XXII 1 (Page 19502, nr. 135), 4th century AD: epic poem on the Diocletian and Galerius’ war against the Persians: fr. 1 *recto*, ll. 7-10: οὐ γὰρ ὃς στεινωπὸν ὑπὸ πτύχα Θερμοπυλῶν / Μήδος Ἀρης ἠχησεν ὑπὸ στρατηγίας Λακώνων, / τόσος ἐμοὶ βασιλεύσανταν ἄντιβολήσων, / ἀλλὰ πολὺ πλεῖον τε καὶ ἀσχαλόν ὑπʼ ομοκλῆς. «Not such as the Persian arms that rang beneath the Spartan host in the narrow cleft of Thermopylae, not such the numbers that advanced to meet my kings, but greater far, and stung by the battle cry» (transl. by D.L. Page); fr. 1 *verso*, ll. 15-21: the two emperors are compared to Zeus and Apollo defeaters of the Giants: οἷα δ’ ὁ μὲν Κρήτηθεν, ὁ δ’ ἐκαλίης ἀπὸ Δήλου / εἶσι, Ζεὺς ὑπὲρ Ὄθρυν, ὁ δ’ ἐς Πάγγαιον Ἀπόλλων, / τοῖν δὲ κορυσσομένοιν ὅμαδον Γιγάντων / τοῖος ἄναξ πρέσβιτος ήπειροκομένων Αὐσονίων / ἀντολίην ἀναπόβαλον ἀνθρώπων, / καὶ γὰρ ἐσάν μακάρεσσι θεοί / αἰθερίῳ Διὸς κάρτος, ὁ δ’ Ἀπόλλωνι κομήτῃ. «Even as one divinity goes from Crete, the other from seagirt Delos – Zeus over Othrys, Apollo to Pangaeus – and as they gird their armour on, the throne of Giants trembles: in such guise came our elder lord, beside the younger king, to the Orient with an army of Ausonians. Like to the blessed gods they were, one in strength a match for Zeus. above, the other for long-haired Apollo» (transl. by D.L. Page).

2. *GDRK* Π XXXV (Page 19502, nr. 140), ca. 500 AD: encomium or fragment from Pamprepius’ *Ἰσαυρικά*: *recto*, l. 14: αὐχένα γα[ῦ]ρον Ἀρης Ἀρηοῖν ἄρμαν [ιδ.]

is now hiring Galatians as mercenaries and let himself be defeated by the Epirote king, emulator of Alexander and alleged descendant of Achilles (cf. Leon. *A.P.* VI 130).

32 See Grainger 2010. The scholar highlights (415), as a consequence of the rivalry over Coele-Syria, the development of a continuous arms race between Ptolemies and Seleucids, with a resultant impact of the military conflict on every aspect of life (economic, political, administrative) of the two kingdoms.

33 See Barbantani 2001, 188-203; Barbantani 2011.

3. GDRK II S 10, p. 50 (Page 1950², 141) Encomium ducis Thebaidos, possibly coming from a campaign against the Blemmyes, or the Persians: l. 12: Πέρσαὶ ἀναπνεύσωσι Θεμιστοκλῆ φυγόντες. «The Persians may breathe again, for they have escaped their Themistocles» (transl. by D.L. Page). 

4. Epigrams: anon. A.P. 16, 62 and 63: Justinian Μηδοκτόνος (62, 1) / Μηδοφόνος (63, 4) [cf. Kaibel 30, 6: μηδοφόνον ... πατέρων; Paul. Sil. A.P. 16, 118, 1: Cynegeticus’ Μηδοφόνους ... χειράς; Teae. Schol. A.P. 16, 233, 7: Marathon ὁ μηδοφόνος; A.P. 14, 148, the emperor Julian, μαρνάμενος Περσῶν πόλιας καὶ τείχεα μακρὰ (l. 4), is compared to Zeus defeater of the Giants, Γηγενέων ... φῦλον (l. 1).

The absence of a prominent figure of a Seleucid king as a military «arch-enemy» in Ptolemaic learned poetry may be also due to the simple fact that a cultivated Greek or Greek-speaking audience, as the one composed by the king’s philoi and courtiers, could not be cheated into this belief, not even in the fictitious realm of court poetry, as the Seleucids were simply not «Medes enough» or «barbarian enough» to play the part of the Achae menids. Possibly in a different kind of poetic production, less concerned with allusive refinement and more overtly encomiastic, like epic poems or encomia (in hexameters or elegiacs, like our fragment SH 958) targeting a wider audience than the court, identification of the Seleucids with the Persians could be more explicit. Unfortunately parallels with Ptolemaic works of art in Greek style do not help, as there is some ambiguity in the figurative representations of the Ptolemaic king victorious over an enemy: in the many variants of the small bronze group representing Ptolemy as Hermes Enagonios in the act of wrestling an adversary to the ground, the opponent has been recognized by various scholars in turn as a «Seleucid» or a «Barbarian» (Galatian?), but his identity is not unquestionably identifiable. Large scale monuments celebrating Ptolemaic military victories
are missing, therefore it is useless to speculate on the hypothetical presence of the Seleucids in them 37.

2. **Kaleidoscopic identities and split personalities**

The question here is not to discuss the real ethnicity of the Seleucids, but rather the way they presented themselves to their subjects and to their Graeco-Macedonian rivals 38. In the last decades, collaboration between Classicists, Egyptologists, scholars of Ancient Mesopotamia has depicted a much more exciting and complex image of the Hellenistic kingdoms. The case of non-Greek royal *philoi* – both in Egypt 39 and in the Seleucid area – bearing Greek names and able to move at ease in both worlds, being perfectly bilingual 40 and – at a different level – bicultural (Berossus, Manetho) 41, is enlightening. We could also imply that to a certain extent subjects of the Ptolemies and of the Seleucids were also visually and imaginatively bi-functional, that is they could interpret, with various degrees of awareness, iconography originally belonging to different co-existing cultures: the reliefs on the Egyptian temples depicting Ptolemies destroying the enemies would not have left indifferent also the Greek or mixed-Greek

Ptolemy III as Heracles wrestling with Seleucus II, represented as a mythical king of Thrace (cf. Moreno 1994, 332-333).

37 On the existence of an hypothetical large-scale monument on the defeat of the Galatian mercenaries see discussion in Barbantani 2001, 199-200. Laubscher 1991 hypothesizes the existence in Alexandria of an equestrian monument of Ptolemy depicted as Alexander defeater of the Asians, while Moreno 1994, 322-323, believes that the statuette of Alexander/Ptolemy Philadelphus on horseback adorned with an elephant skin possibly refers to the Ethiopian campaigns of 280 BC.

38 On Greek identity in the East and in Egypt see Burstein 2005; Burstein 2008; Mairs 2008, 2011a, 2011b; Mairs forthcoming; Goudriaan 1988; Goudriaan 1992, 76-77 (ethnicity is a «way to organizing cultural differences»; «each generation must decide for itself whether or not to adopt the transmitted ethnic identity»); Østergård 1992. On ethnicity as a «process», «constructed (mainly cultural) identity», «definition/negotiation of (territorial, cultural, linguistic, biologic) boundaries» see Retsó 2006; Herring 2009; Jones 1997; Barth 1969, 84-85 («Ethnic groups are culturally ascribed identity groups, which are based on the expression of a real or assumed shared culture and common descent»).


40 See Mairs 2011a, 1: «Strict and consistent allocation of different languages to specific domains by a language community as a whole results in a situation of diglossia».

41 On Manetho see Moyer 2011, 84-140. On Berossus and his cultural environment see Haubold · Lanfranchi · Rollinger · Steele 2013; Haubold 2013, 142-177.
passer-by. Identity is fundamentally a choice between multiple cultural components of an individual or a society, much more than the mere product of genetic factors. Since the Eighties of the last century, many studies have shown how Ptolemaic kings managed the relationship with their multi-ethnic subjects and collaborators, and we know with a good degree of certainty how and when they were able to play the part of the pharaoh, when the part of protectors of the Greek identity, and when the wanted to enhance their Macedonian heritage. The latter position is exemplified by Posidippus’ epigrams, or by Call. Del. 167, where, according to Apollo’s prophecy, all the lands facing the sea, from the East to the West, «do not refuse to have a Macedonian king», Ptolemy II: the king is styled as a (almost) Greek sovereign, in order to present him properly as a savior of the Hellenes in l. 171. In Alexandrian poetry, «Greek» is generally used in a contrastive way to mark a relevant opposition to non-Greeks, and in his surviving works Callimachus uses the terms «Hellene» (fr. 379 Pfeiffer; Del. 172), and «barbarian», in the adjectival form barbarikός, only in the context of the Galatian invasion.

Only recently a similar effort has been done for the study of the ethno-political strategies of the Seleucid rulers, who had to deal with a more complex kingdom than the Ptolemies, a mosaic of different cultures, languages and ethne: most relevant for our purposes are the studies about the relationship of these Macedonian-Iranian rulers with the heart of their empire, the region of Babylonia, and to the very heart of Babylonian culture, the local templar clergy. In fact, for the Seleucids, Babylonian and Mesopotamian culture were more important, from the political point of view, than

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42 As rightly pointed out by Diana Delia in her response to Samuel 1993, 203: the Ptolemaic monuments at Karnak, Edfu, Kom Ombo, Philae, celebrate the king emulating pharaonic prototypes, but they were visible to Egyptians and Greeks alike. See also Assmann 2001, esp. 412 (XXX dynasty models for Ptolemaic Egyptian temples).

43 They remained culturally and ethnically Macedonian until the last ruler, Cleopatra VII Philopatris (she was the only Ptolemy to speak Egyptian, and maybe half Egyptian by birth): see Bingen 1999a, 1999b; Bearzot 1999. On the diversity of roles played by all Hellenistic kings with the Greek and the local communities, see Ma 2003.


45 See Hunter 1991, 85, 87, n. 19. Cf. SH 969, 7: φῦλα μὲν Ἑλλήνων (Barbantani 2001, 111-114). Documentary evidence gives us a more complex picture of ethnicity in Ptolemaic Egypt: although there were never massive ethnic-motivated clashes between Greek and Egyptians, at least in the first century and a half of the Macedonian rule, cases like that of the Memphite katochos Ptolemy, who dreams in Demotic but complains that local sellers harass him «because [he is] Greek» show how complex the situation may be in the everyday life. See Thompson 1992; Thompson 2001, 314, on the bilingualism of Apollonius son of Glaucias, brother of Ptolemy katochos in the Serapeum.
the Persian-Iranian elements, who survived mostly in religion and iconography: rather than of a «philo-Persian king» (as Antiochus I is defined in the Karnak ostrakon, see supra, p. 25), we should rather speak of a «philo-Babylonian» king. But how the Seleucid kings were perceived abroad by the Greek allies and enemies is not an easy question to reply to, due to the shipwreck of most of the 3rd and 2nd century works in verse and prose produced in this area of the world. Paradoxically it is easier now to understand how Greeks and Macedonians were perceived by local communities in Asia, thanks to the wider knowledge we have of non-Greek sources. We need to rely mostly on epigraphical and archaeological (mainly numismatic) sources, which show that the self-representation of the Seleucid rulers as Greek/Macedonians was still very strong in the 3rd century BC, as strong as the Ptolemaic one, even though not so successfully advertised through Greek poetry. Here I shall focus on the first two rulers, Seleucus I and Antiochus I, since they are contemporary with the events hinted in the verses of SH 958.

From Babylonian sources it is clear that Seleucus I, although supported and appreciated by the local clergy, who included him in templar chronicles as a true Babylonian king after his Assyrian and Achaemenids predecessors, was nonetheless acknowledged with his Macedonian identity: in a chronicle of 281 BC Seleucus is said to march with his army from Sardis.

46 See Mitchell 2007, 152-153; Kosmin 2013; Haubold 2013, 127-177. Some scholars, like Briant, challenged the idea that Persian culture survived through Hellenistic and Roman periods in Asia Minor, except in the royal dynasties of Eastern Anatolia; but Iranian names remain associated with the local cults in sanctuaries in Caria, Lydia, Pontus and Cappadocia, showing that Persians traditions and families remained active for a long time in that area, sometimes in an Hellenized form, like in Ephesus.

47 In Near Eastern sources (Babylonian, Assyrian, Hebrew, Persians), Greeks are always defined generically «Ionians» (Kuhrt 2002, 24 ff.; Briant 1994), like in Demotic documents «Greek » (Hellen) is «Wynn» = Ionian (Thompson 2001, 302). For the Persian use of «Yauna» as «Greek» see Del Monte 2001, 139-140 and Sancisi-Weerdenburg 2001. In the reliefs of the Persians royal tombs at Naqs-i Rustam and Persepolis, the representatives of various peoples part of the Persian empire are labeled: two are called Yauna and Yauna takabana (with petasos); the same outfit however is found on «Carians» and on a Lydian; on the Darius tomb relief, two groups of Yauna are differentiated, with and without petasos: in sum, there is little in the outfit and in the descriptions separating the diverse Hellenic and Hellenized peoples, which evidently formed in the eye of the Persians a culturally homogeneous group.

48 Hellenistic rulers define themselves simply as basileis for the Greek subjects, while for the indigenous subjects they adopt local titles (Walbank 1984, 65-67). The ethnic «Macedonian» is sometimes used in a contrastive way, e.g. for Ptolemy III in IG II 1, I 56 (Thermon), during a war against an Antigonid; for Antiochus III in Delos, while following in Greece the politic agenda of Philip V.
towards Maqqadunu, Macedonia, «his country» ⁴⁹. The ethnic of the king, apparently, was not considered so important, since also previous kings recognized in Babylonian temples but not of Babylonian origin claimed proudly their own ethnic identity ⁵⁰. It is worth recalling that Babylonian sources contemporary with Seleucus I and Antiochus I make a strong difference between the «Macedonicity» of the king who complied with the Babylonian rule of protecting the temples, and the origin of other, more dangerous, Greek-Macedonian troops, those of the invaders, disparagingly defined as Haneans, «barbarians from a faraway country» ⁵¹: evidently everybody needed to have their own «Galatians». The fact that Antiochus I was half-Iranian was certainly put in good use in his relationship with the local philoi and population, but we can be confident that this could hardly change his attitude towards the Greek subjects and Greek culture in general (nor the attitude of his Hellenic subjects towards him): he was willing to underline the paternal side of his lineage, the Macedonian side, in one of the most important Babylonian document of his time, where he and his family are shown performing the duties of the Achaemenid and previous Mesopotamian kings towards the local temples. Antiochus I presents himself as a protector of the temples of Borsippa and of the Babylonian Esagila, using traditional standard formulae, but he proudly states his Macedonian descent, deviating in this from the Babylonian use, where the ethnicity of the king is never stated (but echoing instead the Achaemenid royal inscriptions, see note 50). In the Borsippa cylinder he states in fact: «I am

⁴⁹ See Del Monte 1997, 199; Del Monte 2001, 145 ff., 199. The «Diadochoi Chronicle» presents Macedonia as the homeland of the legitimate king (Seleucus).

⁵⁰ Cf. Kuhrt 2002, 19: King Darius I (DNA 8-14) proclaims: «I am Darius, the great king, king of kings, king of all kind of people, king of this great earth far and wide, son of Hystaspes, an Achaemenid, a Persian, son of a Persian, an Aryan, having Aryan lineage» (transl. by A. Kuhrt).

⁵¹ The term «Hana», from its original meaning «a north-west region beyond the Cedar Mountain», indicates an undefined far-off land, the place from where threatening barbarian outsiders (nomadic hordes, sacrilegious pillagers) usually come; it is a disparaging title, like «Vandals» applied to people with destructive behavior, or «Huns» for «Germans » during World War I (see Joannès 1997, 150; Kuhrt 2002, 25): it is applied therefore only to troops which bring turmoil and chaos, notwithstanding their real ethnicity and provenance. Seleucus and his army are not categorized by Babylonians as «Hanaeans»: his troops in 282 are called «Ionians», and when he is treacherously killed in Thrace in 281 the place is called «the land of the Hanaeans». See Del Monte 2001, 140-147; Kuhrt 2002, 25-26; Landucci 2007. In the Chronicle of the Diodochoi (see Del Monte 1997, 183-189; Grayson 1975, 24-37) the army of Akkad, Babylonian, is guided by Seleucus (contra, see van der Spek 2003, 289-346: the leader would be Alexander), while his rival Antiochus Monophthalmos is the leader of the Haneans. Haneans are also the Greek rebels in Bactria in the astronomical diary of 323/2 BC (Del Monte 1997, 12).
Antiochus, great king, king powerful, king of the universe, king of Babylon, king of the land, the caretaker of the Esagila and of the Ezida, first son of Seleucus, I, Macedonian, king of Babylon» (transl. by Kurt - Sherwin-White 1991). The text also contains a prayer for military victory, and for the prosperity of the king and of his family. The joint forces of many historians specialized in different ethnicities of Asia have in recent years better defined the many faces of the Seleucid kings, especially of the founder of the dynasty and his son: Babylonian with the Babylonians, Bactrian/Iranian in the «Upper Satrapies», Achaemenid in Asia Minor (and whenever it was convenient to keep elements of the previous empire), Macedonian with the army and military colonists, Greek with the Greek poleis and continental Greeks. The impression is that the Seleucids were much more flexible than Ptolemies in their royal self-representation, as they had to cope with many different ethnic/cultural groups inside the boundary of their empire.

If it is true that the first Seleucids found convenient to maintain certain aspects of the Achaemenid rule for practical reasons, nonetheless they acted like all the others Hellenistic dynasts towards mainland Greeks. For example, so much effort was put in attracting the sympathies of Athens, still a symbol of Greek culture par excellence, in spite of the rise of Alexandria, that Seleucid kings started to play with the Athenians the part of the «anti-Persian kings» (the exact opposite of the Ptolemaic claim about them) when they spread the news – no matter how close to reality – to have brought back to Athens the «statues/books stolen by Xerxes» (Aul. Gell. VII 17; Paus. I 8, 5: restitution of the statues of Armmodius and Aristoteiton by an Antiochus, probably the first; Paus. I 16: Seleucus I gives back to Brauron the statue of Artemis; Polyb. XVI 1, 11, Strabo IX 1, 17, Liv. XLI 20, 8: Antiochus IV wanted to complete the Athenian temple of Zeus Olympius). Probably the blueprint for these moves is the restitution

52 On the Borsippa cylinder see Kuhrt - Sherwin-White 1991; Kuhrt 1996, 49 ff.; Del Monte 2001, 148-149; Kuhrt 2002; Virgilio 2003, 70-71; Strootman 2013; Haubold 2013, 128-178; Andrade 2013, 46-47. Briant 1994 suggests that this formulae rather follow the common use of Hellenic dedications in Greek sanctuaries, where the rulers style themselves as «king of the Macedonians» (see e.g. Antiochus III in a dedication in Delos; Paus. VI 3, 1, X 7, 8, on Ptolemaic dedications in Delphi and Olympia: «They called themselves «Macedonian», although they were kings of Egypt, because they liked to be called so»).

53 See Ma 2003.

54 See e.g. Engels forthcoming.

55 See the anecdotic link between Berossus and the Athenians in Plin. HN VII 123. Athens is also considered the primary inspiration for the Alexandrian library (Engberg-Pedersen 1993, 287-288).

56 Seleucus Nikator manifested an interest in the Athenian culture (see Habicht 1989; Primo 2009, 52-53); he allegedly established a group of Athenians coming from
by Seleucus I to the sanctuary of Didyma-Miletus of the statue of Apollo taken by Xerxes to Ecbatana (Paus. I 16, 3 and VIII 46) 57. Even if most of the episodes of restitutio are fictitious constructions by later historians, they are in tune with the Seleucid anxiety of competing (especially with the Attalids, who showed-off their Galatian triumphs in Athens with majestic monuments) for the role of «Defeater of the Barbarians» in front of mainland Greeks, in order to maintain them as deferential and useful allies. Under the reign of Antiochus III, Romans fitted well in this picture as new invaders, while in turn the Seleucids were described by Roman and Greek philo-Roman sources as degenerates, decadent Greeks influenced by Asiatic customs; but the subject is too complex to be developed here 58.

3. EARLY SELEUCID KINGS AS PATRONS OF GREEK CULTURE

The will of the Seleucids of underlining their «Greekness» in the Greek culturally dominated part of their empire is evident from many facts, like the wealthy donations to famous panhellenic sanctuaries, the foundation of new Greek poleis (mainly in Northern Syria, but also the royal capital Seleucia on the Tigris had its Greek community, and Greek architectural features like a theatre 59), the participation in the agonistic competitions in mainland Greece 60, and, most of all, monetary iconography. Recently Le

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57 According Bearzot 1984, 73, it was Seleucus I to give it back; see now Iossif 2011a.
58 On the accusation of «barbarization» of Greek customs in the Seleucid kingdom, and on the counter-offensive cultural politics of Antiochus IV, see, among the latest, Andrade 2013, 48-55. It is impossible to know if the negative equation Seleucids = anti-Greek Persians has been inspired to the Romans and their allies by previous Ptolemaic models of anti-Seleucid propaganda. Rhodian sources presented Antiochus III as the new Xerxes threatening the freedom of the Greeks, and the Roman could boast: in Antiocho vicimus Xerxen (Flor. I 24, 12); Ennius (369 Skutsch) compares the passage of the Dardanelles by Antiochus III to that of the Achaemenid king; at the Isthmian games of 196 BC the battle of Cynoscephalae was assimilated to the victories of the Persian Wars (Plut. Flam. 11); Alcaeus of Messene in A.P. XVI 5 opposes Xerxes to T.Q. Flamininus.
59 Van der Spek 2001: also according to cuneiform texts (temple diaries), the theatre is an important feature in Hellenistic Babylon. It was built for the Greek community, maybe even at the time of Alexander, and was used both for civic meetings or reading of royal letters, and, at least at Seleucia on the Tigris, for dramatic performances (see Le Guen 2003, and infra, pp. 38 and 68).
60 There is no literary or epigraphic source mentioning the participation of 3rd/2nd century Seleucid kings to such games, while Ptolemies competed in the periodos games.
Guen has underlined the role of Seleucid kings in sponsoring, directly or indirectly, theatrical representations. In the Hellenistic period, and later under the Roman empire, the theatre was not only the scene for tragedies and comedies, but it was also used for civic meetings, encounters with the king or the king’s officials, and recitals of encomiastic poetry; theatres were built with the financial help of local citizens but possibly also with that of kings and courtiers. Ptolemies protected the Technitai of Egypt and Cyprus, which took the name of «Technitai of Dionysus and of the Theoi Adelphoi» ⁶¹. The engagement of the rival dynasty in protecting professional poets was surely a motive strong enough not to be left behind ⁶²: also in the Seleucid kingdom the Associations of Dionysian Technitai, like the one in Teos, were actively subsidized by the rulers, especially Antiochus III ⁶³.

The Seleucids, at least since Antiochus I, chose Apollo as archegetes of their dynasty and father of Seleucus I, and exploited the image of this god as main symbol on coins (one of the most pervasive means of propaganda) for at least two good reasons, as shown by recent numismatic studies, mainly by Iossif ⁶⁴: he was «the most Greek» of all the Olympian gods and, at the same time, syncretically, the equivalent of the Iranian god with whom the ruler was identified, mainly through the symbol of the bow ⁶⁵. I would since the beginning, as we know from Posidippus’ Hippikê; however, Seleucid courtiers and princes (like Alexander Balas, son of Antiochus IV Epiphanes and competitor in the Panathenaia in 150 or 146) are listed as participants in Panhellenic agones: see Savalli Lestrade 2005, 31; van Bremen 2007, 362-363; Barbantani 2012, 52-54.

⁶¹ Le Guen 2003, 339-340: although no Hellenistic theatre has survived in the area of Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, the impression is that Seleucus and Antiochus I tried to develop the Hellenized urban life in those areas. The theatrical drama does not belong to Semitic cultures, while it is at the core of the Greek one also in the Hellenistic period (Le Guen 2010). Plut. De Alex. fort. II 9 identifies the theatre as the epicenter of the Hellenistic monarchies cultural life.

⁶² Le Guen 2003, 354: the Lagids sponsored the Technitai in Cyprus and Egypt; the Attalids those in Ceos.

⁶³ See Le Guen 2001, I, TE 42, ll. 16-17, 48-49.


⁶⁵ See Iossif - Lorber 2009, 29-32: the superimposition of the Seleucid kings to Apollo could pre-date the decision to make Apollo the archegetes of the dynasty (see the Aigai decree for Seleucus and Antiochus, in 281 BC). According to the legend preserved in Diod. XIX 92 and App. Syr. 56 and 63 the Apollinean oracle of Didyma foresaw an exceptional destiny to Seleucus when he was still an officer of Alexander; in turn Seleucus showed an extraordinary devotion to Apollo, even without stating a descent from this god (I.Did. 479 = OGIS 213; I.Did. 480, 424 = OGIS 214; cf. I.Erythrai 205, 74-75, in Engelmann - Merkelbach, 1972, nr. 205, ll. 74-76: archegetes), while the first explicit reference to Apollo as Seleucid ancestor is in Miletus/Didyma under Seleucus II (I.Did. 493 = OGIS 227); according to Iossif - Lorber 2009, 31, n. 62, the Decrees of Ilium OGIS 212, 13-14
like to enhance this view pointing out that the first Seleucids may have had a further reason to insist on Apollo, that is the antagonism with the Ptolemites in the Mediterranean and Syrian area. In Alexandrian court poetry, especially in Callimachus’ *Hymn to Delos* and in the fragmentary hymn of *P. Goodspeed* but cf. also Theoc. *Id.* XVII 64-69: Cos is for Ptolemy what Delos is for Apollo, Ptolemy II plays on earth the role of Apollo, who, as a defector of the Titans/Giants, was *par excellence* the bringer of the order over the chaos unleashed by chthonian enemies – in Egyptian terms, the keeper of *maat* against the assault of the unruly forces of the Barbarians. It would be no surprise then, if Euphorion, a learned poet sponsored by Antiochus III, can be suspected of having written also about Zeus’ (and Apollo’s?) fight against the Giants, possibly with encomiastic purposes (see *SSH* 454C; *P. Oxy.* LVI 3830 fr. 3, ii, ll. 9-10: «the story is in Euphorion»).

Even if they were not reading Alexandrian poetry, Seleucid rulers could not ignore that the Ptolemies, presenting themselves as new pharaohs, had made the god Apollo, that is Horus, for the Egyptians, «the prototype of pharaonic kingship» a competitive genealogy that promoted Seleucus I, the founder of the dynasty, as a direct scion of Apollo could beat even the fabulous imagery of Callimachus’ *Hymn to Delos*, where Apollo defines Ptolemy II θεὸς ἄλλος (l. 165) and foresees his collaboration with him in defeating the Celtic barbarians; Ptolemy I could, at the most, cling to the unofficial gossip that wanted him son of Philip II.

Both Seleucids and Ptolemies contended for the favor of the Apollinean temple of Didyma – apart from the epigraphic evidence, we have some examples of court poetry on this subject: for the Ptolemies, Callimachus’ *17 Iambus* (fr. 229 Pfeiffer), on Branchus, the ancestor of the priestly family of Didyma and beloved of Apollo; we may only guess that Apollonius *I. Il. 31* and *OGIS* 219, 26-27, which refer to Apollo as *archegetes* of the Seleucid *genos*, is more recent than suggested by Robert 1937, 172-184 (281/0 BC); Ma 1999, 254-259 dates them to the reign of Antiochus I. Certainly, Zeus also keeps a fundamental position as god *genethlios* of the Seleucids, and as a *genius loci* of the favorite city of Seleucus I, Seleucia in Pieria (Paus I 16, 1; App. *Syr.* 58; *OGIS* 245), while Apollo remained the local deity of Antiochia (in the Daphne sanctuary, developed by Seleucus I, cf. Strabo XVI 2, 6): see *Debord* 2003, 302-305; *Le Rider* 1999.

68 I am quoting *Stephens* 2003, 236 (see also *Stephens* 2003, 114, 209).
69 See Barbantani 2001, 196-199; Barbantani 2011.
70 Ptolemy I apparently did not construct any divine filiation for himself; he was divinized by his son Ptolemy II. On the paternity of Alexander (Ammon, Nectanebo, Philip II) and of Ptolemy I see *Assmann* 2001; Ogden 2013.
71 *Primo* 2009, 79-80: Demodamas of Halicarnassus, *philos* of Seleucus and Antiochus (Plin. *HN* VI 49; *FGrHist* 428 T 2), makes an offer to Apollo Didymaeus in...
Rhodius, in his *Ktiseis*, insisted on the same topic. Probably is not by chance that the first evidence of a joint cult of Seleucus *Zeus* Nicator and Antiochus *Apollo* Soter comes from a city of the Syrian Tetrapolis, very close to the Mediterranean Greeks, a city bearing the Macedonian toponym of Seleucia *in Pieria*: this is the town where Antiochus I buried his father and probably started his cult in the Nikatoreion (App. *Syr.* 63), and which therefore was later considered «the hearth of the dynasty» (ἀρχηγέτιν; ἕστίαν … τῆς αὐτῶν δυναστεία, Polyb. V 58, 1-5). There is no doubt, then, that Seleucid rulers too considered important to advertise and underline their Hellenic and divine origin as a means of legitimation in front of their Greek audience, both in their own kingdom and abroad. So, to reply to the question, how important was for the first Seleucid kings (the contemporary to our fragment *SH* 958) to advertise their Greek/Macedonian identity, we can say that it was as much important as for the Ptolemies, that is, vital; as vital as the need to represent themselves as the continuators of the local rulers. There is no contradiction in these sentences, if we abandon the thinking process based on binary opposition (foreign to some cultures, like the Egyptian one) and embrace some basic facts about the processes by which individuals manage their identity.

Incidentally, Apollo is also the god of poetry, and is often evoked in this capacity in Callimachus and in most of the Alexandrian poetry. It is significant that he is not prominent for this role in the Seleucid kingdom, as far as we know (as for Seleucid-sponsored poetry, there are just some Apollinean references in Euphorion, see note 124): the Apollo of the Seleucid coins is

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72 Miletus is one of the sets for the myth of Ocyrhoe in the *Ναυκράτεως Κτίσις* and could feature in the *Καύνου Κτίσις* as well; see Barbantani forthcoming, F 2-3, 5-6.

73 On *OGIS* 245 (= *IGLS* III 1184 = *SEG* 35, nr. 1521, Seleucia in Pieria) see Coşkun forthcoming; Debord 2003, 297-299: the inscription lists the priests of Seleucus *Zeus* Nicator (*military victor*) and of Antiochus *Apollo* Soter. Promoter of the cults seems to be Ptolemy son of Thraseas, *strategos* and *archiereus* of Coele-Syria and Phoenicia, who betrayed the Ptolemies for the Seleucids around 202 BC.

74 See Bousdroukis 2003.

75 See Sève-Martinez 2004: Seleucia in Pieria was taken by Lagids several times between 246 and 219, but was often visited by the king.


77 See *e.g.* the Apollonius son of Ptolemy a.k.a. Pashai son of Pam enches and his double funerary monument, in Greek and in hieroglyphs: Thompson 2001, 315-16; Barbantani 2014a, 305-306.
the toxotes, the perfect bowman, who, as demonstrated by recent studies, corresponds to the image of the warrior king in the Achaemenid tradition. This is a radical shift from the Macedonian and Greek symbol of the spear, that in Hellenistic poetry and iconography is intended as «the royal weapon» par excellence. The only known Apollo citharoedus in the Seleucid area is the statue work of Bryaxis, dedicated in Daphne, near Antiochia, by Seleucus I. The Paean Erythraeum in Seleucum I (140 Powell = I.Erythr. 205, ll. 74-76) may post-date this ruler, and the word παῖς is ambiguous.

Pray with hymns during the libations Seleucus, the servant/son of the dark-haired Apollo, whom the player of the golden lyre himself begot.

This is not, strictly speaking, an example of encomiastic court poetry, but rather one of the many lyric poems in honor of rulers (Lysander, Demetrius Poliorcetes, Antigonus Monophthalmos) commissioned by cities or private citizens for a public festive occasion. Note that here the image of Apollo as a lyre-player, unusual in Seleucid environment, is required by the lyric context.

4. A TALE OF TWO KINGDOMS, AND OF MANY LIBRARIES

Doubts about the strength of Seleucids’ devotion to their culture of origin were probably originated by the fact that there has never been an institution equivalent to the Alexandrian Library and Museum in the Seleucid world, and therefore the contribution of the kings to fostering Greek culture appears somehow irrelevant. The reply to the question «how will...
ing were the Seleucids to support Greek culture» mainly depends from the consideration of the different structure of the Seleucid empire in comparison with the Ptolemaic one. Although keen on playing the role of the Egyptian pharaohs for their native subjects, the first Ptolemies cleverly exploited Greek culture as a means (along with other ones, like the mirage of economic growth and promising careers, see Theoc. Id. XIV 58-68; Herodas I 26-34) to lure new Greek immigrants to Alexandria, to attract the allegiance of Greek poleis, Athens in primis, and to justify their legitimacy as heirs of Alexander: in Callimachus Victoria Sosibii, fr. 384, 23-24 Pfeiffer, Egypt is presented as «the land of Alexander» tout-court. Babylon, the last residence and first resting place of Alexander, was used as a first important capital by Seleucus I 82; but Alexandria, founded by the young conqueror himself, became, thanks to a clever move of Ptolemy I, also the site of his burial: preserving the mortal remains of the divinized hero ktistès, Alexandria could claim in the face of all the Greeks to be the only site where his legacy – in terms of legitimacy of power and ideals – was treasured 83. Alexandria ad Aegyptum, the only Greek polis in the new territory (with the exception of Ptolemais and Naucratis) was strategically transformed, with the creation of the Museum and of the Library, into the «New Athens», the new centre of culture at the heart of the Mediterranean pond: it quickly became a springboard of cultural, military and economic importance with no equals. Although the sources are contradictory and sometimes unreliable in details, there is no doubt that the Library was conceived and developed by the first two Ptolemies (contemporary to the first three Seleucids) as a monument to the Hellenic heritage, well preserved under their munificent wings: there could be a personal cultural interest in this enterprise, but it was also a clever political move. Although every sort of science and art was given free citizenship in the Museum, the genius loci remained Homer, the co-founder of Alexandria along with the notoriously philomerikos Macedonian king 84: Alexander had his Sema, the deceased and divinized Ptolemies their temple, but Homer soon received his own

82 On Hellenistic Babylon see Boiy 2004; Clancier 2007; on the special relationship of Seleucus with Babylon, where he was satrap in 320-315 BC, see Capdetrey 2007.
83 On the foundation of Alexandria see Barbantani 2014b and Barbantani forthcoming, F 1.
84 Plut. Vita Alex. XXVI 3-7: appearing in a dream, Homer (quoting Od. IV 354-355) showed Alexander where to found his city: Alexandria is a «product of Homer», as it is all Greek paideia. A.P. XVI 295, a list of places claiming to be Homer’s homeland, also included Egypt: see infra, n. 173. On the importance of the figure of Homer in Alexandria see Farnoux 2007 and Petrovic forthcoming. Alexander had a special predilection for Homer (see Strabo XIII 1, 27; Dio Chrys. IV 39; Plut. Alex. 8 and 26; he is the new Achilles: Arr. Anab. VII 14, 4); but also other Macedonian leaders presented themselves
sanctuary too, thanks to Ptolemy IV (the Homereion: Ael. V.H. 13, 22). Homer was the first author to be graced with a critical work by the philologists of the Library, and would remain at the core of Greek paideia until the end of Antiquity. Library and Museum were mainly and foremost centres of Greek culture, although some foreign works in translation could be hosted there (Manetho, the Septuaginta); in spite of all myths surrounding the Library of Alexandria, Bagnall 2002, 361, pointed out that even the fake letter of Aristeas implies that the inclusion of a work into this institution was commonly perceived, by non-Greek as well as by Greeks, as a universally recognized validation. Thanks to the stability of the Ptolemaic dynasty and to the existence of one and only capital, the program of development and protection of the Greek heritage by the Ptolemies, in terms of book collection, philological studies, not to speak about the effort to support new research in various scientific fields (medicine, astronomy, geography, zoology), looks quite systematic and well organized, at least for the 3rd century, and until the half of the 2nd century BC.

Opposite to the Ptolemies, the Seleucids never had the need nor the will to establish a single cultural center, or a «capital». Following in this, partly, the example of Achaemenids, they had an itinerant court, moving between a few important centers (Babylon, Seleucia on the Tigris, Sardis, the Tetrapolis), going after the monarch wherever political, diplomatic and military obligations would call him. The focus of modern scholars has shifted over the years from a Mediterranean-centered view of the Seleucid empire (the creation of the Tetrapolis, the Syrian Wars), to a Babylonian-centered one. Abandoning the old interpretative model «centre-periphery», we can safely say now that, like an ellipse, the Seleucid kingdom had two political/military foci, Northern Syria and Babylonia-Seleucis, not mutually exclusive but complementary. We must remember, however, that not always a cultural centre need to be also an important political centre, and vice-versa. This situation, therefore, does not excludes the presence of other important sites of Greek literary culture, with residential fond of Homer, as a mark of their philhellenism: see, e.g. Cassander (Ath. XIV 620b). On Macedonian philhellenism see Carney 2005.

See Erskine 1995; Maehler 2003. Even if, as suggested by Bagnall 2002, the number of volumes in the Library of Alexandria is exaggerated by the sources, this was considered the most complete Greek library in antiquity.

Tuplin 1998.

On Seleucid residences see Held 2002.

On the pluricentric empire, where every zone and city had a specific role, see Kuhrt 1996; Invernizzi 1993; Briant 1994; Boucharlat 1997; Sève-Martinez 2004.

See now for this concept Sève-Martinez 2003, 232-233.

As pointed out by Engberg-Pedersen 1993, 311.
scholars, partly depending from – or sponsored by – the king, even though we know that some of the intellectuals, acting occasionally as diplomats and courtiers, would follow the nomadic monarch in his activities throughout his empire. Recent studies, for example, have underlined the important role of doctors \(^{91}\), not only as scholars and scientists but also as friends and counselors of the king.

As we well know – and as the Ptolemaic poetae docti knew better – scholarly poetry, like historical and scientific writing, needs a well-endowed library in order to be created. We can think of individual libraries of smaller scale, moving along with their owners wherever the court was settled, but more realistically cultural institutions needed a solid architectonic structure (often monumental, like the Celsus library in Ephesus). Some of the scholars linked to the Seleucid court produced quite specialized work, e.g. in the field of lexicography: Euphorion compiled an Hippocratic lexicon (frr. 196-198 Lightfoot), possibly inspired by the doctor and philos of Antiochus III, Apollonaphes; the antiquarian and historian Hegesianax of Alexandria Troas, highly esteemed by Antiochus III \(^{92}\), wrote Περὶ τῆς Δημοκρίτου λέξεως and Περὶ ποιητικῶν λέξεων (Steph. Byz. s.v. Τρωιάς) \(^{93}\). Certainly, the occasional court poem or epigram may be composed *impromptu* or with the help of memory, but the long-lasting products of literary art, the ones the king would wish to flaunt as sponsor in front of the most sophisticated Greek audience in the poleis of his kingdom, in mainland Greece, and even before the scholars subsidized by rival dynasties, imply stability and wealth, the only conditions which can grant a systematic collection/production of books, and can sustain the expenses for its maintenance \(^{94}\).

Seleucus I may have known something firsthand about the building of the Alexandrian library (or at least its plans), as he was a guest of Ptolemy I for some time before accessing the throne. But both he and his co-regent and successor Antiochus I had many other problems to face before thinking to establish themselves a library of such size, and everything that goes with it. However, this was a world where competition among kingdoms

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\(^{91}\) See Savalli Lestrade 1998; Massar 2004; Primo 2009, 45-49, 52 (he believes that a school of medicine was developed and supported by the court); Istasse 2006, 66-67. Important was also the engagement of historians/diplomats, like Megasthenes, ambassador of Seleucus I, in building the new royal image of the Seleucid ruler, bridging the gap between Greek and Mesopotamian culture: see Haubold 2013, 131.

\(^{92}\) See Massar 2004, 200, on Ath. IV 155a-b.

\(^{93}\) FGrHist 45 T 1. See Primo 2009, 91-94.

\(^{94}\) According to Bagnall 2002, the Library of Alexandria was destroyed first and foremost by the lack of maintenance.
was hard at every level. Since the rival Ptolemies were boasting, with the Library and the Museum, to be the true keepers of the Greek heritage, followed in the 2nd century BC by the Attalids, eager to take over the part of the «New Athens» of Asia after the Ptolemaic decadence, a Greek library endowed and controlled by the king had to be created at a certain point also in the Seleucid kingdom. The first mention of a *demosia bibilotheke*, located at Antiochia, and supervised by the learned poet Euphorion of Chalcis, appointed by the Antiochus III the Great (223-187 BC), is in a very late source, *Suda*, *c. 3801* Adler. Information on the contents of the library is lacking: we know *e.g.* that it contained the letters of Epicurus. It is not surprising to find precisely in Antiochia the first library officially supported by the king: this was probably, from the political point of view, the most important city of the Tetrapolis, a system of four Greek cities founded by Seleucus I to guard the western front, against the Ptolemaic advances in Southern Syria, and against the Macedonian expansion from the north, and also not too far from mainland Greece: Antiochia was at the crossroads of all the Hellenic cultural, economic and military routes of the Mediterranean East. According to Johannes Malalas (197, 10 Thurn = *Chron.* 235, 18-236, 1; *FGrHist* 854), under Antiochus IX Philopator (114-95 BC) or Antiochus X Eusebius Philopator (95-92 BC) in Antiochia was built a monumental complex near the *agora*, including a library and a *Museion*, a temple of the Muses, probably on the Alexandrian blueprint; the project was financed, however, not by the ruler, but by the Antiochian citizen Maron, once he came back to his homeland after making a fortune in Athens. How these architectural spaces were put at the service of the scholarly community is hard to know; Libanius and other rhetors of Late Antiquity still used for their public lectures a covered room in the *bouleuterion*.

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95 See Engberg-Pedersen 1993, 299-300; Pfommer 2004 offers an interesting parallel between the complex of the royal palace in Pergamon and Alexandria: both of them included a library.

96 The Epicurean Philonides was living at the court of Antiochus Epiphanes: see Engberg-Pedersen 1993.

97 Strabo compares Antiochia on the Orontes, the metropolis or capital of the Seleucid kingdom, to Seleucia on the Tigris and to Alexandria, underlining its proximity to the Daphne sanctuary, sacred to Apollo (Strabo XVI 2, 5-6; Paus. VIII 33). On the foundation plans of Seleucus and on the divine prodigies which accompanied them as reported in contemporary and later sources, see Primo 2009, 240 ff., 253 ff., 262 ff., 274 ff.; Iossif 2012. On the importance of Antiochia as an art centre see Balty 2004.

5. Seleucid “Court Poetry” and Scholarship

It is hardly credible, however, that the Seleucids started to care about Greek libraries only with Antiochus III. When he summoned Euphorion, it was not the first time that a Seleucid king invited a learned poet from mainland Greece. Aratus, born in Soli, Cilicia, an area contended between Ptolemies and Seleucids, was first active at the Macedonian court of Pella, by Antigonus Gonatas (married to Phila, daughter of Seleucus I and Stratonice), who was gladly hosting Greek scholars, like the Stoic philosopher Perseus, the epic poet Antagoras of Rhodes and the poet-philologist Alexander Aetolus (later member of the Alexandrian Pleiade). Possibly between 274 and 272 Aratus moved at the service of Antiochus I (even though it is uncertain in which city he mainly resided) then went back to die in Macedonia. Aratus was greatly admired by the most important Alexandrian poet of the period, Callimachus, and possibly he is the same person named by Theocritus in *Idyll VII* considering his international fame, having him associated with his court was for Antiochus a smart move.

Certainly the topic of some of his poems, astronomy and medicine (e.g. *Ἰατρικαὶ δυνάμεις, Σύνθεσιν φαρμάκων, Θηριακῶν ἐπιτήδεια, Phaenomena*), was in tune with the interests of the Seleucid rulers, but there is no way to know if these works were composed under a specific cultural influence of the king (cf. *Suda*, s.v. Ἀρατος, α 3745: he wrote an epikedeion for the court doctor Cleombrotus, *SH* 104).

I suspect that Antiochus could provide him with a decent library, as Aratus, unlike some intellectuals drawn to the Seleucid court purely by the mirage of doreai and syntaxis, was not the type of scholar to be lured from a court to another only by money or prestige. Callimachus (*Ep. 27*

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99 Istasse 2006, 62, n. 46, follows B.A. Van Groningen in proposing as a founder of the Library Seleucus I or II.

100 For their wedding he wrote the *Hymn to Pan* (*SH* 115; *Suda*, s.v. Ἀρατος, α 3745); see *supra*, n. 29.

101 Vita Arati III 16 Martin: Δωσίθεος δὲ ὁ πολιτικὸς ἐν τῷ πρὸς Διόδωρον ἐλθεῖν φησιν αὐτὸν καὶ πρὸς Αντίοχον τὸν Σελεύκου καὶ διατρῖψαι παρ’ αὐτό τ’ χρόνον ἰκανόν.

102 See Lewis 1992, 97-98; Cameron 1995, 196-198, on this debated point and on the synchronism between Aratus and Theocritus.

103 Medical works: *SH* 92-98; astronomical works: *SH* 86-91. For a list of attributed works see also *Suda*, s.v. Ἀρατος, α 3745.

104 See Massar 2004; Primo 2009, 45-49.

105 See Savalli Lestrade 1998; Massar 2004, 191-195: syntaxis is a sort of periodical wages, possibly offered by the kings to scholars like Euphorion or the Peripatetic Lycus (Diog. La. V 67), in order to attract them to their court.
Pfeiffer) describes him almost as his alter-ego, inspired, like himself, by Hesiod; a champion of poros («toil»), a Hellenistic poetic code-word for «literary refinement», «painstaking artistic research», and of the equally essential Alexandrine quality of leptotes («subtlety»)

“Ἡσιόδου τόδ’ ἄεισμα καὶ ὁ τρόπος· οὐ τὸν ἀοιδὸν ἔχατον, ἀλλ’ ὅκνεο μή το μελιχρότατον τὸν ἐπέων ὁ Σολεύς ἀπεμάξατο. χαίρετε λεπταὶ ρήσιες, Αρήτου σύντονος ἀγρυπνιή.  

Interesting is the information that Aratus devoted himself, like the main scholars in the Alexandrian Library, to a διόρθωσις («correction», a philologically revised copy) of the Odyssey and possibly of the Iliad, which also implies the help of a library. However, there are no traces of Aratus’ scholarly interest for these poems in the Homeric scholia, and we have no evidence that could relate his philological works (or any of his works, actually) to his Seleucid period: the compressed information given in the Vita Arati I 8, 19-24 Martin is the only testimony of such a connection (καὶ τὴν Ὀδύσσειαν δὲ διώρθωσε, καὶ καλεῖ τις διόρθωσις οὕτως Ἀράτειος ὡς Αριστάρχειος καὶ Αριστοφάνειος. τινὲς δὲ αὐτὸν εἰς Συρίαν ἐληλυθέναι φασί καὶ γεγονέναι παρ’ Ἀντιόχω καὶ ἡξιώθαι ὑπ’αὐτοῦ ὅστε τὴν Ἰλιάδα διορθώσασθαι, διὰ τὸ ὑπὸ πολλῶν λελυμάνθαι), and remains isolated. On the contrary, an anecdote preserved by Diog. La. IX 113 (Timon of Philious suggested him to look for the «ancient copies» of the Homeric text and not for the «corrected copies») may suggest that Aratus started his Homeric work in Athens, where he was a pupil the Stoic philosophers Zeno and Perseus (before he too moved to Pella). In any case, there is no sure relationship of Aratus with Antiochia, a city which in later times was renowned


107 Aratus was admired for his subtlety as «king of astronomical poetry» by a Ptolemy, possibly Ptolemy III Euergetes, author of Πτερίνη: see SH 712, 4: ἦλθεν ὁ γε λεπτολόγος σκήπτρον Αρατος ἐξει. Leonidas of Tarentum A.P. IX 25 also praises Aratus as a «second Zeus» (ll. 5-6) for his λεπτότης (l. 1) and his poetic dedication (l. 5: καμώ).  

108 The last word is a medical technical term: see D’Alessio 2007, 240.  

109 See Suda, s.v. Ἀρατός, a 3745: Διόρθωσιν Ὀδυσσείας, and Vita Arati I 8, 19-24 Martin (quoted here above). Curiously, Suda praises his main work, the didactic poem Phainomena, for the ζῆλος Ὀμηρικός and not for the Hesiodic taste, as Callimachus did in his epigram 27 Pfeiffer does.

110 φασὶ δὲ καὶ Ἀρατον πυθέσθαι αὐτοῦ πῶς τὴν Ὀμήρου ποίησιν ἀσφαλῆ κτήσαιτο, τὸν δὲ εἰπεῖν, «εἰ τοῖς ἄργους ἀντιγράφοις ἐντυγχάναι καὶ μὴ τοῖς δεδιορθωμένοις. 

111 Vita Arati IV 20 Martin. Cameron 1995, 210, also suggests that Callimachus and Aratus met in Athens.
mainly for his rhetorical and philosophical schools rather than for philology and poetry; hyperbolic is the statement by Cicero, Arch. 4: *celebri quondam urbe et copiosa atque eruditissimis hominibus liberalissimisque studitis adfluenti.*

We do not possess any significant example or solid evidence for learned poetry in Greek composed for Seleucid kings, especially under Seleucus I and his son and successor Antiochus I. What is more striking however, is the lack of encomiastic poetry – or better, the lack of its traces – before Antiochus III. We may assume that there was none, and think that Seleucid royal ideology was better spread by prose works of historiographers, but the *argumentum ex silentio* is never a good one, and our case is no exception, especially because encomiastic poetry has always been a necessary ingredient to almost every known court in history. Light poetry as entertainment for banquets is attested: Mnesiptolemus of Cuma’s son, bearing the flattering dynastic name of Seleucus, wrote ἱλαρὰ ἄσματα, «festive songs» under Antiochus III or IV. But this is not what a king was mainly sponsoring poets for. That even a modest a poet born and raised in the Seleucid kingdom, and specialized in entertaining *impromptu* compositions, could

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112 Although some philosophers are known to have been *philoi* of the Seleucid kings and to be living at court, the philosophical schools flourishing in the kingdom were not attached to or protected by the ruler. On prominent doctors and scientists living at court see Engberg-Pedersen 1993; Istasse 2006, 65-67, 73. Antiochus II tried to lure at his court the peripatetic Lycon who was a guest of Eumenes I of Pergamon (Diog. La. V 67); the Epicurean Philonides was a courtier of Demetrius I, while the Epicurean Diogenes of Seleucia was hosted by Alexander Balas (Ath. V 47, 211a-d); the Stoic philosopher Aristocreon from Seleucia, nephew of Chrysippus of Soli, acted in Athens as a diplomat for Antiochus III. Among the philosophers originary of (or linked to) the Seleucid kingdom one can count also the Stoic Apollonophanes of Antiochia Mygdonia (Nisibis), contemporary of Antiochus III; Diogenes of Babylonia, from Seleucia in Mesopotamia (Strabo XVI 1, 16; Diog. La. VI 81), pupil of the Stoic Chrysippus; apparently the Athenian philosopher Archedemus founded a school in Babylon (Plut. Mor. 605b). The Epicurean Philonides of Laodicea became a courtier of Antiochus IV Epiphanes and Demetrius I Soter (P.Herc. 1044; Epicurean school at Antioch). Under the Roman Empire Apamea became the site of a Neopythagoric school (Numenius; Iamblicus of Chalcis). Mathematics was also flourishing, probably inspired by the old Babylonian tradition: one of the outstanding scholars in this field was the Neopythagorean Nicomacus of Gerasa (ca. 60-120 AD).

113 See Primo 2009, 67-68, 103-104; Istasse 2006, 66-67 ff. Under Seleucus I was active Daimachus of Platea (FGrHist 65; Strabo II 1, 9), while Demodamas of Miletus acted also as *strategos* for Seleucus I and Antiochus I (FGrHist 428; Plin. HN VI 49); Megasthenes (FGrHist 715) and Patrocles (FGrHist 712) served under Antiochus I (for the relationship of Greek historiographers with Berossus see Kosmin 2013); under Antiochus II Theos, the Cypriot Aristos (FGrHist 143); under Antiochus III, Mnesiptolemus of Cuma (FGrHist 164; Ath. XV 53, 697d; Primo 2009, 88-89; Austin 1999), Hegesianax of Alexandria Troas (FGrHist 45; Polyb. XVIII 47, L 3).

114 See Powell 1925, 176; Ath. XV 53, 697d.
also produce propagandistic epic poems on military deeds is proved by Archias of Antiochia, who, after moving to Rome, wrote a poem on Marius’ wars against Cymbrians, one on Lucullus’ war against Tigranes of Armenia (73-70), and one on Cicero’s consulate (Cic. ad Att. II 4, 1; 6, 1).

Victory in battle has always been one of the strongest marks of legitimation for every monarch, ancient and modern 115. We have seen above that even a king philomousos and not particularly martial like Ptolemy Philadelphus boasted, through the writing of his court poets, to be the conqueror of the world. It has been often underlined that, among the many attributes characterizing a Hellenistic king, Seleucids were mainly defined by the military power 116, forced, as they were, first to struggle with competing Successors, then, for almost two centuries, with the Ptolemies for the possession of Southern Syria, and at the same time with the Galatians, various usurpers, several minor dynasties fighting for the control of Asia Minor and the most Eastern territories, to say nothing about Parthians and the Romans. Since the Syrian Wars lasted for so long and were of central importance to both the kingdoms involved, and since the clashes with Galatians were exploited in encomiastic poetry by all the Greek parties engaged in them, it is highly improbable that Seleucid kings did not wish that some encomiastic poet could turn these exploits into heroic tales, advertising in verses their martial prowess: as for the literary genre, this praise could be sung in encomia, like those promised by Theoc. Id. XVI to Hiero and like the Id. XVII offered to Ptolemy II, in longer epic poems designed for court reading or festival performance 117, or simply in epigrams accompanying statues or to be read in books 118. A military victory which is not celebrated in epic verses (either in hexameters or in elegiacs), possibly with Homeric flavour 119, and not just with monuments in panhellenic sanctuaries, for

115 See e.g. the use of epithets like kallinikos, also for minor rulers: cf. the dedication of an altar to Hestia by Heliodotus for the safety of king Euthydemus and his son Demetrius, 2nd BC (Tagikistan), in Bernard et al. 2004, 333-356. For the theme of doriktetos chora see Virgilio 2003; Barbantani 2007, with relevant bibliography; Callataj - Lorber 2011; Muccioli 2013, 342-345.

116 For the comparison between the Achaemenid and the Seleucid king as a warrior see Sève-Martinez 2003, 236-238; Tuplin 2013.


118 E.g. Ant. Thess. A.P. XVI 75 is an encomium of the Thracian king Cotys (ἔργον ἄοιδοπόλων, l. 4).

119 On the Homeric style of SH 958 see Barbantani 2001, passim. «The vigor of Callimachus’ and Theocritus’ renunciation of heroic poetry may well derive from that part of their audience who would in fact relish hearing of the basileus and heroas (fr. I 3 and 5 Pfeiffer): namely, the royal patrons» (so Griffiths 1979, 6). This was so much true in the
Greek traditional culture is somehow incomplete, as it lacks the power to bridge time and acquire immortal glory: since Pindar, *Nem.* 5, 1-5, Greek poets proclaim that their compositions are not anchored to fixed – figurative and epigraphic – manifestations of praise, but can spread the glory of the *laudandus* all over the world, living in the memory of the audience for ever. The topos survived until Late Antiquity: a good Hellenistic example from the 3rd century BC is the encomiastic hero, which I have discussed in depth elsewhere, *SH* 969, 3-4: his δόξα («fame») should be remembered ἐν βύβλοις («in books»). Immortality is consigned to written words rather than to figurative art again in Agathias (5th AD) *A.P.* IV 5(3c), 9-10: ἡμιτίθετοι, ἄν μνήμη πινυτῶν ἐνι τεύχεσι βίβλων, / ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἐς κενεὰς εἰκόνας ἐνδιάει («Blessed are they whose memory resides in the scrolls of wise books, but not in empty images»). Although the current belief among scholars is that only under Antiochus III there has been a systematic reappraisal and celebration of his dynastic predecessors, I rest convinced that Seleucid court poetry must have flourished before. The main poet under Antiochus III was Euphorion: he celebrated Seleucus’ divine origin from Apollo in fr. 119 Lightfoot (= 174 Powell, from Tert. *De anima* 46, 6: *Seleuco regnum Asiae mater nondum eum enixa providit. Euphorion promulgavit*; cf. Iust. *Epit.* XV 4, 3-4; *App. Syr.* 284-285), and possibly also mentioned the defeat of the case of the Ptolemies, who practiced a cult of Homer (cultural, in the Library and in the Museion, and religious, since Ptolemy IV).  


122 Στῆλαι καὶ γραφίδες καὶ κύρβιες εὐφροσύνης μὲν (134) / ἀυτί τοῖς ταῦτα κτησαμένοις μεγάλης, (135) / ἄλλες δόσον ζώουσι τὰ γὰρ κένα κώδεα φωτόν / ψυχαῖς οἰχομένων οὐ μάλα συμφέρεται. / ἥ δὲ ἀρετή σοφίς τε καὶ κυρίας / καί θύη συνεργείται, / κάνθαδε μιμάζει μινὴν ἐφελκουμένη, / ὡς τοις οὕτως Πλάτων βρέθηται οὕτα ἢρμος (140) / χρώμαιν ἀν δῆλα, ἄλλα |
the Galatians under Antiochus I: he names a Galatian tribe in a fragment preserved in *Et. Magn.* 223, 12-16 (s.v. Γαιζήται: Οἱ Γαλάται· οἱ τὴν γῆν ζητοῦντες. Ἐκπεσόντες γὰρ τῆς ἑαυτῶν χώρας, πολλὴν γῆν περιῆλθον ζητοῦντες ὧν οἰκήσουσιν. Εὐφορίων ἤ Πολυχαρίης, ὁδεν καί, “Γαϊζήται περὶ δείεα χρυσοφορεύντες”); cf. *Et. gen.* AB s.v. Γαϊζήται; Steph. Byz. s.v. γάζα, but it is not clear if the verse was just a passing reference to the barbarians or it was part of a work entirely focused on the military actions of the Seleucids against them: nothing is known of the poem *Polychares*, from which the fragment is taken; surely Euphorion, with his cryptic and convoluted style, could not be the author of the elegy *SH* 958.

The fact that we do not have evidence for encomiastic poetry pre-Antiochus III may be simply due to chance, or to the poor quality of the poems (especially if conceived for festival recitations and not as small, learned pieces); ancient sources mainly focus on philosophers, pantomimes and doctors as preferred guests of the Seleucid kings instead of poets, but their court was not different from the ones of the Ptolemies, of the Attalids or of Argeads. In particular, I find unrealistic that the famous – if ineffective – “Elephant victory” of Antiochus I over the Galatians was not celebrated by contemporary court poets, especially if, as Coşkun 2012 recently pointed out, we must place the episode at a higher date (before the First Syrian War), rather than around 267 BC (Wörle): it could be almost contemporary with Callimachus’ *Hymn to Delos*, praising the ridiculous enterprise of Ptolemy II against the Galatians as a glorious deed he completed with the help of Apollo, the same god Antiochus I wanted to advertise as his main dynastic symbol. It would have been too good an occasion to be wasted for a Seleucid ruler, and comparison with Macedonian, Ptolemaic, Attalid and Greek (Aetolian) parallels shows that...

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2009, 98-99). Further encomiastic intentions can be detected in Euphorion’s works: the *Hippomedon maior* could be an encomium-hymn for the Ptolemaic governor of Thrace, as first thought by Wilamowitz, while the *Alexandros* could refer to a ruler of Euboea whose wife, Nicea, protected the poet (Magnelli 2002, 96).

125 ἐν Πολυχάρει corr. Meineke.

126 Fr. 42 Lightfoot. According to Cazzaniga 1972, 393-395, before moving to the Seleucid court Euphorion tried to obtain the protection of the Attalids celebrating the sanctuary of Gryneion (Barigazzi 1952, 167); this fragment on the Galatians then could be referring to the Attalids’ enterprises against the Celts.


128 For the *Hymn*, see supra, p. 39. Coşkun forthcoming believes that the «Soter» ideology was linked to the dynastic program which likened the couple Seleucus I - Antiochus I to Zeus - Apollo.

129 See Barbantani 2001, 214-223. Poetic compositions for the Attalids are ascribed to an Arrrian (*Suda*, a 3867 Adler; see Fowler 1991; Swain 1991) and to a Leschides (*Suda*, λ. 311 Adler; Fantuzzi in Ziegler 1988, lxxi); among the Pergamene historians, one can
everybody who defeated the Galatians in the 3rd-2nd century BC did not wait two generations to advertise this victory in poetry. The article in Suda which refers to Simonides of Magnesia (Suda, σ 443 Adler = FGrHist 163 T1), the epic singer of the said elephant victory, as a poet living under Antiochus III, is a problematic text, and it is not given for granted that the «Antiochus the Great» quoted by the Byzantine source is a correct chronological reference. Simonides may have lived under the same Antiochus he celebrated. What is sure is that SH 958 is not a poem composed for a Seleucid ruler, in spite of some suggestions in this sense: the disparaging presentation of the «Medes» would not have been welcome at the court of the Seleucids, since they inherited the Medes’ territory, but also some of their habits, like the use of many local administrators, as well as philoi of native origins; not to speak about the Asian maternal side of Antiochus I

mention, in the Hellenistic period, Neanthes, Philarchus and Semos (FGrHist 84, 81, 396); under the Roman rule, Telephus (FGrHist 505) and Charax (FGrHist 103). A candidate for the authorship of SH 958, according to Powell 1919, was Musaeus of Ephesus (Suda, μ 1296 Adler), court poet of Eumenes I and Attalus II (contra, Jacoby FGrHist 172 Komm. and Lloyd-Jones - Parson ad SH 561; see also Ziegler 1988, lxxiii-lxxiv; Cameron 1995, 269, 283).

Suda, σ 443 Adler = FGrHist 163 (Simonides of Magnesia) T1; SH 723. See Barbantani 2001, 65, 134, 154, 157, 183; Bar-Kochva 1973; Fantuzzi in Ziegler 1988, Ixxxiv; Cameron 1995, 284-285; Primo 2009, 87-88. Suda defines him ἐποποιός. The so called «battle of the elephants» is of uncertain date and effect; the fact that Lucian (Zeux. 8-11) describes it with novelistic touches suggests that he was probably using as a source a poetic text. According (among others) to Jacoby (FGrHist 163 Komm. 594) and Cameron 1995, 285, Simonides would have celebrated, under Antiochus III, the Galatian enterprises of his predecessor Antiochus I. However, the rhetoric rules of the encomium prescribes that, celebrating his patron, a poet could certainly mention and praise his predecessors, but not in way that could obfuscate the glory of the laudandum. Momigliano 1929 identified the basileus of SH 958 with Antiochus III, engaged in an expedition against the Galatians after subjugating the Medes (197 BC).

On the Babylonian and local philoi see Istasse 2006: among the Seleucid territorial governors (strategoi) there were at least seven non Greek (five Iranians); the diplomats were mostly Greeks, with the exception of the Syrian Zenodorus, sent to Athens by Antiochus VII. Most of the military commanders were Macedonians and Greeks, only four Iranians and two Syrians, and some of other ethnicities – e.g. Galatians like Lysimachus (Polyb. V 79, 11) and Briccon, from Apamea (Barbantani 2014a). Among the Seleucid philoi, non-Greeks are attested only from the 2nd BC onwards: notable are Hermias from Caria, probably a philos of Seleucus III and general of Antiochus III; Kendeabais (Pisidian or Lycian), philos and general for Antiochus VII in Palestine; Bithys, a Thraco-Macedonian chancellor and «relative» of Antiochus VII (see Istasse 2006, 75-78); the Syrian Kombabos philos of Seleucus I is a fictional character by Luc. De Dea Syria 17-27. An onomastic survey, however, offers more clues about the presence of Hellenized, Greek-Babylonian people near to the court: see Clancier 2007, 26-27; Del Monte 2001, 155-160; Boiy 2004, 288-289; Andrade 2013, 45-46. In Uruk, as in Babylon, there is evidence for a double onomastic in Greek and Babylonian, but it disappears in the 2nd century BC after
himself. It has been underlined that, exactly like the Ptolemies, Seleucids applied the definition of «barbarian» only to populations external to their kingdom, like Galatians and Thracians. It would be interesting to know how – if ever – the Ptolemies have been portrayed as enemies by Seleucid «propaganda», catered both for a Greek-speaking audience and for the native populations. By now, there is no derogative use of the term «Egyptian» in Seleucid sources in Greek language, but as we have seen, Babylonian sources under Seleucus I and Antiochus I did not hesitate to define any enemy, notwithstanding his ethnicity, a «Hanean», and the Ptolemaic Graeco-Egyptians were not an exception: the Babylonian Chronicle of Ptolemy III referring to the campaign of Ptolemy Euergetes into Mesopotamia during the 3rd Syrian War describes the enemies in traditional terms as godless Haneans, while, in turn and in the same period, Ptolemy III was presenting himself as a defender of the Egyptians and his beaten Seleucid adversaries as the heirs of the impious Persians who once invaded Egypt and stole sacred statues from there.

Not only overtly encomiastic poetry could also be of high political value to a Hellenistic cultivated monarch; we may presume the early existence, also in the Seleucid area, of poems of local historical interest. Alexandrian court poetry had a very strong etiological penchant, meaning that the Graeco-Macedonian élite rejoiced in retracing fictitious Hellenic origins for their habits and in recreating a Greek past even for the most distant parts of the area colonized by them; this kind of «intentional history», especially when applied to foundation tales, had a significant diplomatic importance in keeping or developing cultural, economic and military

the Parthian conquest; see e.g. Anu-Uballit = Nicarchus, whose Greek name was granted to him by Antiochus II (ca. 245 BC); from the same family is known a Anu-Uballit son of Anu-balassu-iqbi = Cephalon (202 BC): at least 14 persons of this family bear a Greek name (some a dynastic Seleucid name). For a similar phenomenon (bilingual philoi of mixed origin) in Ptolemaic Egypt see a summary with bibliography in Barbantani 2014a.

As for the Ptolemies, the only disparaging note on the Egyptian low-life is in Theoc. Id. XV 47-49, but it is put in the mouth of the not particularly cultivated Greek housewives of Alexandria, and is meant as a praise of the urban «law and order» granted by the king: a classist, more than a racist comment. Ptolemy I and II, who lived side by side with Manetho and other notables from highly respected priestly families, could hardly see their Egyptian courtiers as «petty thieves».

Possibly their relationship with the Galatians, both in Asia Minor and in Egypt, was discussed by Demetrius of Byzantium (FGrHist 162 T 1; Diog. La. V 83): see Primo 2009, 105.

See Haubold 2013, 134-135.

See Cameron 1995, 263, on the local encomiastic poets.
relationship with allied cities or states. If the strategy of «Hellenizing the past» of a non-Greek area through the use of myth is a very well established practice for the Ptolemies, thank to the abilities and the subtleties of poetae docti like Callimachus and Apollonius, there is no reason to believe that Seleucid did avoid competition in this field, especially since they were very active founders of new cities, often in remote regions, all in need of some Hellenic background, real or imagined: recent studies show that Macedonian toponyms where used in Greek foundations all over the Seleucid kingdom, with concentration in Northern Syria. There may be a clue that such poetry was produced in the Seleucid kingdom already in the 3rd century BC, in relation with a city of the Tetrapolis, Apamea. If Antiochia was the first centre with a library and a residential poet-scholar worthy to be mentioned, Apamea, created first and foremost as a strategic centre for the royal stables (war elephants and horses: Strabo XVI 2, 10), was also associated very early with Greek and Macedonian cultural traditions: first known as the village «Pharnake», then baptized «Pella» by the Macedonian colonists, who also changed the name of the local river Orontes into «Axius» (another allusion to homeland: it was the river of the Macedonian Pella), the city later bore the not-so-Hellenic name of Antiochus’ mother, the Bactrian Apama: it must be underlined that, in the

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137 See Mori 2008; Barbantani forthcoming, introduction. On intentional history, see Gehrke 1994; Gehrke 2001; Foxhall et al. 2010.

138 On the Seleucid foundations see Grainger 1990; Grainger 2010. A distinction was endorsed by the Seleucids, within the same city or areas, between Greek communities and other ethnicities; the effort to increase the number of resident Greeks is evident especially after 188 BC (Roman conquest of Anatolia): existing cities (especially in Phoenicia and Syria, but also Babylon, OGIS 253) were granted the status of poleis and these new «upgraded» poleis constructed fictitious ties of kinship with the Greek cities of the Aegean area: on these topics see Andrade 2013, 41-44; Burstein 2008, 75-76.

139 See many examples in Bousdroukis 2003; the most evident case is that of Pella-Apamea, but see also, in North Mesopotamia, «Mygdonia» (Plin. HN VI 41-42), named after a Macedonian district; also the region of «Pieria», where Seleucia is located, takes its name from a Macedonian region.

140 See Balty 2003b, 229. The coins of Apamea show a war elephant on the obverse, a horse and the anchor on the verso.

141 There is another Pella in Jordan, north of Amman. On the foundation of Apamea see Cohen 2006, 94-101; Balty 2003a. The first toponym for the site, Pharmake, is registered by Malalas VIII 198-203 (account of the foundation of Apamea). Strabo XVI 2, 4 recalls that the first Macedonian colony was called «Pella», in honor of Alexander and Philip; the denomination «Pella» is preserved in the tale of Oppian (see infra, p. 55). In the same region Antigonus Monophthalmos had founded, around 307 BC, Antigoneia, a military katoikia; Seleucus did not obliterate his rival’s city, but changed its Macedonian name into that of his Bactrian wife, Apama. In some sources the city is sometimes defined «Cherronesos» (Plut. Dem. L 914, LII 915; cf. Opp. Cyn. 100-155: «at the same time firm ground and an island»).
intention of the Seleucid king, this denomination was on the same level of importance as «Antiochia», «Laodicea» and «Seleucia», the other three cities of the Tetrapolis named from the Greek anthroponyms of Seleucus I and Seleucus' father and mother. The effort to grant the polis a strong Hellenic heritage must have been done quite early. Hollis and Bernard have convincingly suggested that the passage of the *Cynegetica* attributed to a 3rd century AD poet, Oppian 

142 Oppian declares Apamea his homeland in *Cyn.* II 156-158. He is the author of the *Cynegetica* in four books dedicated to emperor Caracalla (after 211 AD, see *Cyn.* I 10-15; he promises Caracalla other poems in *Cyn.* II 156 ff.), and must be distinguished from the homonym Oppian of Anazarbus (Cilicia), who lived under Marcus Aurelius and wrote a poem on fishing, *Halieutika* (datable after 198 AD). On the *Cynegetica* and their authorship see Mair 1928, xiii-xxiii; Bowie 1990, 80; Silva Sánchez 1994-1995 and Silva Sánchez 2002, 15-28; Primo 2009, 95 ff.

143 On the reprises by Oppian from Euphorion see Magnelli 2002, 113-114. On the passage here discussed see Hollis 1994, followed by Agosta 2009, 74-82; Bernard 1995; Whitby 2007, 132-133; Bartley 2003, 186-196, suspects on Oppian the influence of the episode of Heracles and Cacus in Virg. *Aen.* VIII 184-279, and of *Her.* VII 129, 4 (the flooding by the Thessalian river Peneus, released by Poseidon; in Diod. IV 18, 6 it is Heracles who opens the way for the river Peneus). If the myth of the Orontes has been treated in poetry first by Euphorion, he could have drawn from Macedonian sources, like Marsias of Pella (4th century BC) and Marsias of Philippi (3rd century BC), as suggested by Bernard 1995.

144 Euphorion himself was heavily indebted to Callimachus and Apollonius: see Magnelli 2002, 22-26.
καρτερὸν ἀθλεύοντ’ ἀγέμεν πάρος ἐξ Ἐρυθείης, ὁπότ’ ἐπ’ Ὑκελανῦ δηρίσατο Γηρυννῆι καὶ τάνην ἐν σκοπηθησιν· ἐπεὶ πόνον ἠλλον ἐμελλεν οὖχ Ἡρη τελέειν οὐδ’ Ἐφυσθῆς ἐνυπαῖς, Ἀρχίππο δ’ ἔταρφο, Πέλλης ἤγητορ δῆς. ὃ γὰρ τοι προπάρоθε παραί πόδας Ἐμβλωνοί πάν πεδίον πελάγεις· ἐπεὶ πολὺς αἴεν Ὁρόντης ἵπτ’ ἐπεγόμενος, χαροποῦ δ’ ἐπελήθητο πόντου, δαιόμενος Νόμης κυνώπιδος Ὑκελανῦς· ἀδηθον δὲ πάγοις, κάλυπτε δ’ ερίσσορον αἶαν οὔτ’ θέλον προλπεῖν δυσέρωτα πόδον Ἔρυθρούης. οὔριστ’ τ’ ἀμφιτέρῳθε περίδρομος ἐστεφανώτα τειναμένος ἐκάτερθθεν ἐπ’ ἄλλον κάρηνα· ἦ γάρ τοι προπάροιθε παραι πόδας Ἐμβλωνοῖο πᾶν πεδίον πελάγεις· ἐπεὶ πολὺς αἴεν Ὁρόντης ἵπτ’ ἐπεγόμενος, χαροποῦ δ’ ἐπελήθητο πόντου, δαιόμενος Νόμης κυνώπιδος Ὑκελανῦς· ἀδηθον δὲ πάγοις, κάλυπτε δ’ ερίσσορον αἶαν οὔτ’ θέλον προλπεῖν δυσέρωτα πόδον Ἔρυθρούης. οὔριστ’ τ’ ἀμφιτέρῳθε περίδρομος ἐστεφανώτα τειναμένος ἐκάτερθθεν ἐπ’ ἄλλον κάρηνα· ἦ γάρ τοι προπάροιθε παραι πόδας Ἐμβλωνοῖο πᾶν πεδίον πελάγεις· ἐπεὶ πολὺς αἴεν Ὁρόντης ἵπτ’ ἐπεγόμενος, χαροποῦ δ’ ἐπελήθητο πόντου, δαιόμενος Νόμης κυνώπιδος Ὑκελανῦς· ἀδηθον δὲ πάγοις, κάλυπτε δ’ ερίσσορον αἶαν οὔτ’ θέλον προλπεῖν δυσέρωτα πόδον Ἔρυθρούης. οὔριστ’ τ’ ἀμφιτέρῳθε περίδρομος ἐστεφανώτα τειναμένος ἐκάτερθθεν ἐπ’ ἄλλον κάρηνα· ἦ γάρ τοι προπάροιθε παραι πόδας Ἐμβλωνοῖο πᾶν πεδίον πελάγεις· ἐπεὶ πολὺς αἴεν Ὁρόντης ἵπτ’ ἐπεγόμενος, χαροποῦ δ’ ἐπελήθητο πόντου, δαιόμενος Νόμης κυνώπιδος Ὑκελανῦς· ἀδηθον δὲ πάγοις, κάλυπτε δ’ ερίσσορον αἶαν οὔτ’ θέλον προλπεῖν δυσέρωτα πόδον Ἔρυθρούης.
The Syrian Bulls, the breed of the Chersonese, pasture about high well-built Pella; tawny, strong, great-hearted, broad of brow, dwellers of the field, powerful, valiant of horn, wild of spirit, loud-bellowing, fierce, jealous, abundant of beard, yet they are not weighed down with fat and flesh of body, nor again are they lean and weak; so tempered are the gifts they have from heaven – at once swift to run and strong to fight. These are they which report said Heracles, the mighty son of Zeus, when fulfilling his labours, drove of old from Erytheia, what time he fought with Geryoneus beside the Ocean and slew him amid the crags; since he was doomed to fulfill yet another labour, not for Hera nor at the behest of Eurystheus, but for his comrade Archippus, lord of holy Pella. For aforetime all the plain by the foot of Emblonus was flooded; since evermore in great volume rushed Orontes in his eagerness, forgetting the sea and burning with desire of the dark-eyed nymph, the daughter of Ocean. He lingered amid the heights and he covered the fertile earth, unwilling to forgo his hopeless love of Meliboea. With mountains on either side was he encircled round, mountains that on either hand leaned their heads together. From the East came the lofty form of Diocleium, and from the West the left horn of Emblonus, and in the midst himself raging in the plains, ever waxing and drawing nigh the walls, flooding with his waters that mainland at once and island, mine own city. Therefore was the son of Zeus destined straightway with club and mighty hands to apportion their water unto each, and to give separate course from the plain for the waters of the fair-tressed lake and the fair-flowing river. And he wrought his mighty labour, when he cut the girdle of the encircling hills and undid their stony bonds, and sent the river belching to its mouth, surging incontinent and wildly murmuring, and guided it toward the shores. And loudly roared the deep sea, and the mighty body of the Syrian shore echoed to the din. Not with such violent flood descend those contrary-travelling rivers on either side the echoing sea: here Ister, cleaving the white barriers of the North through Scythia, roars loudly everywhere, trailing amid precipices and water-smitten heights; while on the other hand the sounding sea trembles at the holy stream of Egypt when from Libya it breaks about it. So the mighty river Orontes made a noise of dread bellowing about the shores; and mightily roared the headlands when they received within their bosom the swell of the new-come sea; and the black and fertile earth took heart again.

145 Oppian keeps the original name Orontes for the Aixius. On the coins minted by Antiochus IV there is still the «Aixius» denomination (also quoted by Sozomenus, 5th century AD). With reference to the events narrated at ll. 128-131, it must be also noted that the Macedonian Pella was situated by a lake, into which the Aixius flew through a canal.

146 The name Meliboea could be a variant for Periboea, a nymph beloved by the Aixius river in Hom. Il. XXI 141-143, and by the Orontes in Nonn. Dion. XVI 146-148 (Nonnus could also be inspired by Euphorion).
arisen from the waves, a new plain of Heracles. And to this day the fields
flourish everywhere with corn and everywhere the works of oxen are heavy
on the prosperous threshingfloors around the Memnonian shrine, where
the Assyrian dwellers mourn for Memnon, the glorious son of the Morning,
whom, when he came to help the sons of Priam, the doughty husband of
Deidameia swiftly slew. Howbeit the spacious glories of our fatherland we
shall sing in due order with sweet Pimplean song; now I turn back to sing of
glorious hunting.

At the time of the Cynegetica, Heracles was a model for Caracalla, Oppi-
an’s dedicatee. But the hero has always been part of the pedigree of
all the Hellenistic dynasties. Heracles was linked to the Attalids through
Telephus. As a bringer of civilization and ancestor of the Macedonian royal
house, Heracles, like Dionysus, was the ideal hero for a dynasty of city-
founders and explorers like the Seleucids: according to later sources,
possibly drawing from earlier Hellenistic material, Daphne, with its sacred
alsos of Apollo, honored by the Seleucid kings since the time of Seleucus I,
was founded by Heracles himself and was originally called «Heracleis».
Since Heracles was also very prominent in the dynastic pantheon of the
Ptolemies (in the Adulis decree, ll. 5-6, Ptolemy II lists among his ances-
tors Heracles and Dionysus; cf. Theoc. Id. XVII 26-27), one can safely
hypothesize that this hero was exploited by Seleucid royal propaganda with
every means. Even as late as in the 4th century AD, Libanius of Antioch
boasted in his panegyrical oration Antiochikos (XI 56 and 119) that among
the Greek colonists (Ionians, Argives, Cretans) who first inhabited Antio-
chia there were also the descendants of Heracles, the mythical Heraclidae
expelled by Eurystheus.

The character of Archippus, a dear friend of Heracles in the tale pre-
served by Oppian, may allude to a noble citizen of Apamea at the time of
Seleucus I, possibly holding a military title as a head of cavalry, hippocar
(Hollis), or to the founder of the first Macedonian colony in this area (Ber-

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147 As Euphorion probably composed verses for Antiocchus III, so Oppian dedicated
his poem to the emperor Caracalla. The theme of the «royal hunt», an aristocratic activity
also dear to the Achaemenids, was en vogue under Alexander and his successors, as well
as under the Roman emperors: see Seyer 2007; Seyer 2006; Whitby 2007, 132-135.
148 See Primo 2009, 57 ff.
149 See Primo 2009, 282. Heracles, however, is not very frequently present on Seleu-
cid coins: see Iossif 2011b.
150 Hazzard 2000, 70, underlines that Dionysus was exhibited for the first time
among the ancestors of Ptolemy II during the Procession of 262 BC.
151 On Heracles see also Theoc. Id. XXIV: Herakliskos; ps.Theoc. Id. XXV: Heracles
and the Nemean Lion. The hero also features in Callimachus’ Aitia (e.g. in the Victoria
Berenices) and in Apollonius’ Argonautica.
nard). The effort of granting Apamea such a strong Hellenic past may be motivated by the fact that this was one of the last cities before the frontier with the contended region of Coele-Syria (Strabo XVI 2, 19: Ptolemaic fortifications south of the Orontes), a strategic role that ceased once Antiochus III conquered the region in 200 BC (victory at Panion).

6. SYRIA, COELE-SYRIA, PHOENICIA: A NEW ATTICA, A NEW ALEXANDRIA

If there is nothing comparable to Alexandria in the Seleucid kingdom, there was, however, an Athens, and an Athens well linked to Heracles, like Apamea: Gadara, a city located in an ideal position from the strategic point of view, on the boundaries with the troublesome Coele-Syria, will be remembered as «the Attica of the Syrians» thanks to the multi-faceted poet Meleager (1st BC), who defined it so in one of his famous self-epitaphs (A.P. VII 417, 2: Ἀττὶς ἐν Ἀσσυρίοις ναιομένα Γαδάροις). This is a very apt denomination, as Gadara, one of the most profoundly Hellenized cities of this area, could boast for centuries to be one of the richest and productive poleis of the Seleucid kingdom (and then of the Roman empire), both in economic and cultural terms. The epigrammatist and philosopher Meleager, in many way a «servant of the Muses», was not the only one to express a laudatory judgment on the city as an ideal «common homeland» (like Athens) for cultivated men: the idea that the area near Gadara was the «new Attica» still persists in the 2nd-3rd century AD, as the city is still called πατρὶς δέ μου, / καὶ πᾶσι κοινὴ, Γάδαρα χρηστομοσία in a humble Roman funerary epigram for the local citizen Apion, found in the vil-

152 On Heracles represented on Gadarene coins see bibliography in Cohen 2006, 283, 285.
153 The city is located on a fertile ground, on a hill above the Yarmuk (Hieromax), at the confluence of various caravan routes. See Grainger 2010, 210, 260-261, 401; Cohen 2006, 282-286. First under Ptolemaic influence, Gadara was taken by Antiochus III during the 4th Syrian War, in 218 BC (Polyb. V 71; a Ptolemaic garrison was located at Philadelphia = Amman), then re-occupied by the same king during the 5th Syrian War, in 200 BC: Gadara was renamed Antiochia and later Seleucia.
154 On Attica as the quintessential heart of Greek culture see Ael. Aristid. Or. I 15-16.
155 «Homeland to me, and common homeland to all, Gadara illustrious for the Muses». The adjective is an hapax; the verb χρηστομοσεῖν is attested in Ath. XIV 33, 19 and Eust. Comm. ad II. III 906, 23 van der Valk.
156 Apion is only child of Quintus and Filous (= abbreviated form for Filousa) of Hippos, deceased at 22. See SGO IV 21/21/03 = Peek GVI 1070; Cumont 1913, 169-170, nr. 143. The editio princeps is given by Clermont-Ganneau 1897, with a transcription and a
lage of Saffouré, south-east of the lake of Tiberias: the city, once named Hippos (now Susieh), belonged, like Gadara, to the Roman Decapolis. The persistence of the reputation of the area as the new Attica under the Roman empire is further confirmed by the fact that the jurist Domitius Ulpianus from Tirus, a city not far from Gadara (and «nurse» of Meleager: A.P. VII 417, 1; 418, 2), was nicknamed «Syrrattikos» 157.

Meleager is probably one of the best examples of the subtle power of Greek culture to infiltrate and saturate local and ancient cultural traditions, blending with them but maintaining its distinctive features. Cynical philosopher 158 like his older fellow citizen Menippus (a «Phoenician» according to Diog. La. VI 99-101), prose writer, one of the most refined Greek epigrammatists and the first to anthologize earlier epigrams, Meleager proudly states in three self-epitaphs (A.P. VII 417, 418, 419) 159 to be a citizen of three poleis and also a citizen of the world, a cosmopolites (A.P. VII 417, 5-6: μίαν, ξένε, πατρίδα κόσμον / ναίομεν). Meleager is a sort of cultural bridge between two worlds, the Ptolemaic and the Seleucid kingdom, being at the same time a Syrian from Gadara, a Phoenician raised in Tirus 160, and a Greek educated in Cos, the very place where Ptolemy II

157 Ath. III 126f, IX 368c, III 126a, IV 174e. Ulpian lived under Septimius Severus.

158 Like Posidippus and other epigrammatists declaring a sympathy for some philosophical school, Meleager states in his epigrams to have been inspired by the Cynic Menippus of Gadara. Meleager is classified among the Cynics by Ath. IV 157 and Diog. La. VI 99, who attributes to him, in the Life of Menippus, the now lost spoudogeloia (tà δὲ βιβλία αὐτοῦ πολλοῦ καταγέλωτος γέμει καί τι ἴσον τοῖς Μελεάγρου τοῦ κατ’ αὐτὸν γενομένου). On Meleager’s biography and work see HE II 591-593.

159 See lately on Meleager’s self-epitaphs and cosmopolitanism Höschele 2013.

160 Phoenician cities once under Ptolemaic control, like Tirus, gained early the status of Greek poleis, while local communities under Seleucid rule rarely had it; among others, Gadara and Hippos are explicitly defined in Greek sources as «Greek cities» (Joseph. BJ II 97; AJ XVII 320), while other cities of the area are not; in a honorific inscription, Nysa-Scythopolis boasts to be one of the «Hellenic poleis of Coele Syria», possibly to differentiate itself from the Aramaic-speaking countryside: see Foerster - Tsafir 1986-1987, 53-58; Andrade 2013, 47-48. On the complex issues of identity and ethnicity in Hellenistic and Roman Middle East, at the time of Meleager and later, see Geiger 2002: Diog. La. VI 99 defines Menippus a Phoenician, and Philostratus calls the sophist Apsines from Gadara also a «Phoinix»; Meleager in A.P. VII 419, 7-8, distinguishes the Syrian from the Phoenician language, but there are many examples of confusion for the names of the inhabitants of the Palestinian region; Sartre 2007 discovered that some apparently
was born and followed the teaching of Philitas, and which was celebrated by Callimachus in the crucial passage of the *Hymn to Delos* where the king is praise as «another Apollo» defeating Galatians. The name of Meleager’s father, as well as his own name, are Greek, even though this is not enough to be certain of his Hellenic origin. As we have seen, cultural preferences are more important than genetic configuration or ethnic traditions when one has to define his/her own identity: in spite of his claim to be a polyglot and multi-ethnic citizen of the world, Meleager’s literary production is all and only in Greek, very concerned with the classical Greek tradition and with the way to innovate it: he revolutioned the genre epigram, developing it and preserving for the first time its best samples in an *Anthology*, and probably also the philosophical dialogue, which evolved into the Menippean satyre. In *A.P.* VII 419, 7-8 he salutes the passer-by in three languages (*salam, audonis, chaire*), but he is expecting that his Phoenician and Syrian audience could read his epigram in Greek in order to reply to his greetings. Gadara would produce another philosopher and master of the epigrammatic genre, Philodemus, who moved on to live with the new masters of the Mediterranean, the Romans, as later did another famous Gadarene, Theodorus, rhetor and teacher of Tiberius 161.

If in the 5th and 4th century BC Athens was believed to be the «school of Hellas» (Thuc. II 41) thanks to its capacity to unite different nations through culture 162, 1st century BC Gadara was the best evidence that this process was already well developed, and Meleager was right in claiming the Athenian inheritance for his hometown.

Homer, whom the Ptolemies consecrated as a co-founder and *genius loci* of Alexandria, shared with Meleager the cosmopolitanism, and became, by the Roman period, a strong identitarian symbol for many Greek communities of Asia, which granted him cultural citizenship 163. Some Homereia, temples of Homer endowed with a gymnasiyal area, were Greek and Latin sounding names in Syriac inscriptions disguise a Syrian origin. On Zeno-dotus’ epigram for Zeno, *A.P.* VII 117 = *HE* 1, which presents Phoenicia as the origin of Cadmus and Greek letters, with an expression comparable to Meleager *A.P.* VII 417, 4, see Höschele 2013, 21.

161 According to *Suda*, Θ 151, s.v. Θεόδωρος, Γαδαρεύς, he composed a *Περὶ Κοίλης Σωρίας*: see Primo 2009, 287; for his work see Granatelli 1991.

162 *Isocr.* Paneg. 50: τὸ τῶν Ἑλλήνων ὄνομα πεποίηκε μηκέτι τοῦ γένους ἀλλὰ τῆς διανοίας δοκεῖν εἶναι, καὶ μᾶλλον Ἑλληνισμος καλεῖσθαι τοὺς τῆς παιδείας τῆς ἡμετέρας ἢ τοὺς τῆς κοινῆς φύσεως μετέχοντας («she has brought it about that the name Hellenes suggests no longer a race but an intelligence, and that the title Hellenes is applied rather to those who share our culture than to those who share a common blood»; transl. by Norlin 1980).

163 Homer appears frequently on coins from Asiatic cities; see Strabo XIV 37; Esdaile 1912; Heyman 1982 (Smyrne).
present in Asia Minor since early Hellenistic times, and survived into the Roman era. The widespread presence of Homer – not only through books and recitals of the Homeristai but also in figurative arts, numismatic iconography, anthroponyms, local cults – even in the most remote areas of Asia Minor is another sign the capillary infiltration of Greek culture even without a centralized support from a stately/monarchic institution. Although, as we have seen above, there is no certain evidence of philological work on Homer in the Seleucid kingdom, as we have for the Ptolemaic one, Homer remained for the Greeks and the Hellenized people of Asia the pivotal author of their paideia, until very late into the Roman Empire.

Many Greek cities had contended for the honor to be Homer’s homeland: while the Alexandrian philologist Aristarchus, in his monograph περὶ πατρίδος (scil. Ὀμήρου), made him an Athenian, for Meleager, a citizen of the «Syrian Athens» Gadara, Homer was, like himself, a Syrian. It would be interesting to know the view of the cultivated 1st century AD doctor Hermogenes of Smyrne, who wrote, among other things, one book περὶ τῆς Ὀμηρείας φοιείας and one about the poet’s πατρίς (SGO I 05/01/26).

Not only the long-time Hellenized, Mediterranean Coele-Syria, but even the internal region of Babylonia, the core of the Seleucid kingdom, so rich in ancient local traditions, could be assimilated to old glorious Greece, against the claim of cultural excellence of the Alexandrian scholars: this claim is made, unsurprisingly, by a bunch of philosophers linked not with the Seleucid, but with the Attalid court. Crates and his pupil Zenodotus,  


165 See e.g. the hyperbolic epitaph of the teacher Magnus from Miletopolis in Mysia, ἔξοχα Ὀμηρείων ἀνάμειν τοῖς σελίδοις (l. 2; SGO II 08/05/08); a common praise for poets was to be «the New Homer», like Paeon of Syde, Pamphylia (Robert 1990), and Heraclitus from Rhodiapolis, Lycia (Robert 1990; Jones 1978 and Jones 2011, TAM II 910, 15-16; SEG 27, 1977, 937).

166 See e.g. the epigram from Pergamon SGO I 06/02/18, and A.P. IX 213, 672; XVI 102, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 320 (Skiadas 1965).

167 Αρίσταρχος δὲ καὶ Λιονύσιος ὁ Θρᾴκη Ἀθηναῖον (Vita Homeri in Allen 1912, 101, 244, 247.8; cf. schol. A ad II. XXIII 197).

168 In a prose philosophical work titled «Charites», quoted by Ath. IV 157 B: (Nicon speaks) ἢ καθάπερ ὁ πρόγονος ὑμῶν Μελέαγρος ὁ Γαδαρεὺς ἐν ταῖς Χάρισις ἐπηγραφομέναις ἔρη τὸν Ὀμηρον Σώρον ὡντα τὸ γένος κατὰ τὰ πάτρια ἱχθῶν ἀπεχομένους ποιῆσαι τοὺς Ἀχαιοὺς ἀγαλλείας πολλῆς ὀύσης κατὰ τὸν Ἑλλήσποντον («or it is like what your ancestor Meleager of Gadara, in the work entitles The Graces, said of Homer: being a Syrian by birth, he has represented the Achaeans as abstaining from fish according to the practice of his own country, although there is great abundance of them in the region of Hellespont?»; transl. by Gulik 1928).
both of Mallus, considered Homer a «Chaldean» (Babylonian) 169; on the same wavelength is the epigram by Herodicus of Babylon 170, the successor of Crates of Mallus (Ath. V 221f-222b; SH 494; FGE 62-64), directed against Aristarchus, who abandoned Alexandria in 145 BC under the pressure of Ptolemy VIII Physkon, and his school:

Φεύγετ’, Ἀριστάρχειοι, ἐπ’ εὐρέα νότα ταλάττης Ἑλλάδα, τῆς ξούθης δειλότεροι κεμάδος, γονιοβόμβικες, μονοσύλλαβοι, οίσι μέμηλε τό σφίν και σφώιν και τά μίν ἡδὲ τό νίν. Τοῦθ’ ὡμῖν εἰή δυσπέμφελον Ἡροδίκῳ δὲ Ἑλλάς οὐκ μίμοι καὶ θεόπαις Βαβυλῶν.

Fly, sons of Aristarchus, fly from Hellas over the broad back of the ocean, more craven than the lawny lechive antelope, buzzing in corners, mumbling monosyllables, whose sole business is the difference between «ye» and «your» and «it» and «hit»; may your journey be rough through these waters, but as for Herodicus, long live Hellas and Babylon, child of the gods. (Transl. by Gulick 1928)

It is remarkable that the Herodicus’ epigram strikingly presents the opposite view of the famous Hellenistic inscription from Rhodes IG XII 1, 145 (SEG XXXVI 175) 171, where the Greek Halicarnassus is proudly (and favorably) compared to ancient (ὦγυγίη) Babylonia: Assyria may have the tomb of the legendary queen Semiramis, but it cannot boast to have such glorious sons as Andron «blossom of the Muses», and the sweet (γλύκιον στόμα, ἤδιταί) Herodotus and Panyassis: apparently, the intellectual heritage of the Carian-Hellenic colony is meant to be superior to the venerable and exotic Syrian past:

ἀλλ’ Ἀνδρόνικος ὡπ’ ἔσχε Νίνου πόλις, οὐδὲ παρ’ Ἰνδοῖς ῥηξοφυὴς Μουσέων πτύρθος ἐνετρέφετο.

169 Schol. A ad II. XXIII 79b Erbse reports that Zenodotus of Mallus, disciple of Crates, considered Homer a Chaldean, in the context of a discussion on a Greek word, interpreted as having a Babylonian origin; his master Crates of Mallus was also interpreting an Homeric word, «belos», as coming from an Babylonian root: see Broggiato 2001, 180-182, F 21 (for Zenodotus F 20, 23, 67, 132); according to Pusch 1889, 150-151, «Chaldean» here most probably is not an ethnic definition but stands for «an astronomer». See also Et. Magn. CLVII 52 ff. s.v. Ασσυρία: Ἡ Βαβυλονία· τὸ μὲν πρῶτον ἐκαλεῖτο Εὐφράτης, ὑστέρον δὲ Ἀσσυρία· τὸ τελευταῖον δὲ, ἀπὸ Λούδορον του Σούσου, Ασσυρία, ὡς Ξανακράτης ἐν πρῶτον Χρονικόν. 170 On this passage see now Haubold 2013, 178-184.

171 The inscription, whose date is uncertain (possibly 2nd-1st BC), has been put in relation with the Salmakis elegy of Halicarnassus: see Peek 1978; Isager 1998, 16-18; Ebert 1986; Garulli 2012, 176-178.
Assyria (has) the stone-mound of Semiramis. But the city of Ninos did not bring forth an Andron, neither did such offspring of the Muses shoot from the ground among the Indians. Primeval Babylon did not nourish a mouth like that of Herodotos’ which is even sweeter, nor Panyassis with his sweet words, but the rugged earth of Halikarnassos did. Through their songs does she enjoy a renown among the cities of the Hellenes. (Transl. by S. Isager, in Isager 1998, 16)

The Pergamene approach to texts (Homer in primis) was radically different from the Alexandrian one; it would be too much to read in the epigram attributed to Herodicus anything other than a scholarly argument, one of the many we can catch some glimpse of in the Hellenistic poetry. Even if the competition between different schools of thought or approaches to the Hellenic tradition was not programmatically sponsored by the Seleucid or Attalid kings against their rivals, the Ptolemies, interesting nonetheless is the vindication of the «Hellenicity» of Babylon from Herodicus’ part. The natural consequence of making Babylon a New Hellas was to make Homer, the embodiment of Hellenic culture, a Babylonian.

Following the «well-known practice of fashioning Homer in one’s own image» (Kim 2010, 167) and his Attalid predecessors in mocking Alexandrian philologists, Lucian of Samosata (Samsat in Turkey, formerly Anti-ochia of Commagene; see Lucian Hist. conscr. 24), another cosmopolitan author, admirer of the Gadarene Menippus, and very keen on reworking in a novelized way episodes of the Seleucid history, went as far as to make Homer, under the original name of Tigranes, a native of Babylon (Lucian Ver. hist. II 20 ff.):

Οὔπω δὲ δύο ἢ τρεῖς διεληλύθεσαν, καὶ προσελθὼν ἐγὼ Ὁμήρῳ τῷ ποιητῇ, σχολῆς οὔσῃ ἀμφοῖν, τά τε ἄλλα ἐπυνθανόμην καὶ ὅθεν εἴη, λέγων τοῦτο μάλιστα παρ’ ἡμῖν εἰσέτι νῦν ζητεῖσθαι. ὁ δὲ οὐδ’ αὐτὸν ἀγνοεῖ ν ἔφασκεν ὡς οἱ μὲν Χῖον, οἱ δὲ Σμυρναῖον, πολλοὶ δὲ Κολοφώνιον αὐτὸν νομίζουσιν ·

172 See e.g. his version of the Battle of the Elephants in Zeux. 8-11 (supra, n. 130); in Imag. 5 and in De Dea Syria 17-18 (cf. Dio Cass. XXXI 116, XXXVII 6) he told the romantic tale of Antiochus and Stratonice.

Before many days had passed, I accosted the poet Homer, when we were both disengaged, and asked him, among other things, where he came from; it was still a burning question with us, I explained. He said he was aware that some brought him from Chios, others from Smyrna, and others again from Colophon; the fact was, he was a Babylonian, generally known not as Homer, but as Tigranes; but when later in life he was given as a homer or hostage to the Greeks, that name clung to him. Another of my questions was about the so-called spurious lines; had he written them, or not? He said they were all genuine; so I now knew what to think of the critics Zenodotus and Aristarchus, and all their lucubrations [...]. (Transl. by Fowler - Fowler 1905)

According to Hesych. B19 Latte, probably from Aristophanes’ play The Babylonians, «Babylonians’ means tout-court ‘the Barbarians’ in the Attic authors» (scil. of the 5th century BC). This was ages before Babylonia had become the most important region of the Seleucid empire, and before the Syrian territory around Gadara could be defined «the Attica of Syria». Meleager presents himself as a Syrian-Phoenician-Greek, Lucian as a Syrian: both of them, centuries apart, are choosing to use the Greek language, in the Attic form 174, and to embrace the traditional Hellenic literary culture, two of the most important marks of identity (cf. Her. VIII 144), blending them proudly with their Near Eastern origin. Lucian himself explains how he had to learn Greek as a foreign language, because he considered the Hellenic education and philosophy, in spite of one’s ethnicity, the real core of a man 175. In the Piscator 19, Lucian goes beyond Hellenism, stating that civilization is not linked to the Greek language, but to morals:

Παρρησιάδης: Σύρος, ὦ Φιλοσοφία, τῶν Ἐπευφρατιδίων. ἀλλὰ τί τοῦτο; καὶ γὰρ τοῦτων τινῶς οἶδα τῶν ἁπάντων ἁπλῶν οὐχ ἔπειτα τι πλὴν ἐμοῦ ἡμῶν ἐμοὶ ἂν ἔκτοιρος τὸ γένος: ὁ τρόπος δὲ καὶ ἡ παιδεία ἡ συνάξεως ἡ Συριακὰς ἡ Κυπρίους ἡ Βαβυλώνιους ἡ Σταγειρίταις. κατὰ τοῦτο πρὸς γε σὲ οὐδὲν ἄν ἔλαττον γένοιτο οὐδὲν εἰς τὴν φωνὴν βάρβαρος εἶπες εἰς τοῦτο γνώμης ἡ μόνη καὶ δικαία φαινομένα τοῦτο ὡς.  

I am a Syrian from the Euphrates, my lady [Philosophia]. But is the question relevant? (cf. Meleager, A.P. VII 417, 5: ἐν ἑαυτῷ τῷ Ἰούδα, τις τό θαῦμα.) Some of my

174 On the cultural ideology of Atticism in Asia, see Andrade 2013, esp. 247-253.
175 Luc. Somn. IX 11: a Greek education makes a man worthy of public office and precedence.
accusers I know to be as much barbarians by blood as myself; but character
and culture do not vary as a man comes from Soli or Cyprus, Babylon or
Stagira. However, even one who could not talk Greek would be none the
worse in your eyes, so long as his sentiments were right and just. (Transl. by
Fowler - Fowler 1905)  176

His situation was not very different from that of many subjects of the
Seleucid empire who wanted to be part of the new administrative, political
and military Graeco-Macedonian élite. Between the 3rd century BC and the
rise of Rome, in Egypt, Asia and elsewhere, «Greek» are those who share
Greek language (learned through the heritage of poetry and literature), not
anymore only those who share the Greek ethnicity. Wherever Homer and
the Greek literature is studied, no matter the difference of methodological
approach, this place (Babylon, Gadara, Samosata) «is forever Hellas».

7. AT THE BOUNDARIES OF THE HELLENIZATION

Gadara, which pre-existed the Macedonian invasion of Asia, and shifted for
at least a century and a half between Ptolemaic and Seleucid control, can be
the best example of how Hellenic culture flourished in the Seleucid king-
dom even when not directly sponsored by the court. On the other hand,
to remain in the same area, Greek culture in the Tetrapolis, especially in
Antiochia, was to a certain extent controlled by the king, who often resided
in this area, at least until it remained part of the Seleucid empire 177. The
ratio of founding (or re-founding) Greek colonies and poleis was dictated
to Seleucid kings by military and political reasons, not by cultural ones.
Most of the Seleucid colonies-turned-into-poleis, however, preserved a
core of Greek citizenship that carried on the Hellenic literary tradition for
many centuries. Although no impressive Greek library has been recorded
as an enterprise of Seleucid kings, the sheer number of intellectuals who
originated from their kingdom, or former kingdom, once it passed under
the Roman empire, is a symptom of the persistence and of the vivacity of

176 Cf. with the testimonies quoted by Burstein 2005, 241, e.g. Isocr. Paneg. 50
and Eratosthenes in Strabo I 4, 9, C 66-67: «Praise should not be given to those who
divide mankind into Greek and Barbarians, or to those who advised Alexander to treat
the Greeks as friends and barbarians as enemies; for the division should rather be made
according to good qualities and bad».

177 See Austin 1999: the fact that even in a period of deep crisis of the Seleucid
dynasty in the 2nd and 1st century BC outstanding personalities manifest themselves in
this area (Posidonius, Philodemus) shows that the culture of these cities was independent
from the court.
Hellenic culture in this region\textsuperscript{178}. Making Homer a Babylonian, or a Syrian, was just a way of reminding the audience that Greek \textit{paideia} had not one and only capital (Alexandria, Athens), but was everywhere Greek books and language may reach. And they could reach very far. If the heart of the Seleucid kingdom remained Babylon, other Greek centers bloomed in the far eastern regions of the Seleucid empire, from the royal capital Seleucia on the Tigris as far as the garrison town of Dura Europos (where in the 3\textsuperscript{rd} century BC philosophical works and iambic poems were read)\textsuperscript{179} or Ai Khanoum (where the Delphic maxims were exhibited in the heart of the city)\textsuperscript{180}: the deep-rooted Greek culture of these remote towns survived at least until the 1\textsuperscript{st} century AD, as proved by archaeological finds. The newly discovered acrostic poem by Sophytus (2\textsuperscript{nd} century BC), a merchant of Alexandria Arachosia (Bactriana)\textsuperscript{181}, can be compared with the ambitious acrostic poems by the Nubian official Paccius Maximus at Kalabsha (1\textsuperscript{st} AD), at the boundary of the ex-Ptolemaic empire\textsuperscript{182}: both are quite sophisticated and reveal the will of advertising proudly a Greek identity which has been conquered by eager learning and by the slow assimilation of the Greek poetic tradition.

In sum, the role of the Seleucid as active sponsors of Greek identity in the East is difficult to prove, but has to be implied by the nature of their kingdom: although it has been demonstrated that the Seleucids, more than the Ptolemies, used local people in the administration and in the army, the core of the State remained a relatively restricted Greek-speaking ruling class, active over a vast territory, from the coast of Ionia to the Indian boundaries. Greek language and literature were not imposed from above by a systematic «cultural policy»\textsuperscript{183}, but soaked into the land as a result of

\textsuperscript{178} For a list of Asiatic intellectuals see Pack 1993; Istasse 2006, 62-65. On the fluctuating category of «Greekness» in Syria, and on the meaning of Greek \textit{paideia} in that region, from the age of Antiochus IV to Late Antiquity, see Andrade 2013, esp. 247-260.

\textsuperscript{179} See Rapin 1992, esp. 115-123; Welles \textit{et al.} 1959; Welles 1959; Leriche 2003. The \textit{Europaioi} (descendants of the Macedonians) considered Seleucus I «Nicator» («military victor») the hero founder of the city of Dura Europos (whose centre possibly was established under Antiochus I) and dedicated him a priesthood, still present in 180 AD (\textit{P.Dura} 25; \textit{P.Dura} 23, ll. 16-20; see Debord 2003; Rostovtzeff 1939; Rigsby 1980).

\textsuperscript{180} At Ai Khanoum, in the shrine of the heroized city founder, a Clearchus, possibly the philosopher from Soli (see Merkelbach - Stauber 2005, 8-15, nr. 103), had the Delphic maxims inscribed. On the cultural identity of the Greeks in these peripheral locations, and on Hellenic identitarian elements (gymnasium, theatre, shrine of the \textit{ktistes}) see Burstein 2005, 232-234; Burstein 2008; Mairs 2008.


\textsuperscript{182} Mairs 2011b.

\textsuperscript{183} See Mairs 2012: «[…] claims that any political power pursued a deliberate policy of Hellenization toward its subjects must be approached with caution […]». Rather
military conquest, colonization, mixed marriages, business exchanges, and the ambition of the locals to share the «identity» of the ruling class. In cities where a Greek community was established, the culture of the gymnasium, which implies Greek education and the presence of small libraries, also appeared, along with a theatre; even if not all the οἱ ἀπὸ τοῦ γυμνασίου were ethnically Greek, they were certainly culturally Hellenes. It is true that, differently from Egypt, where the language of administration was Greek, in many regions of the Seleucid kingdom Aramaic was still widely used and in Babylonia the Akkadic language was artificially kept alive by the clergy; there are hints, however (like the «Graeco-Babylonian tablets»), that Greek was known and used also by local scholars and officials, and Greek culture in Babylon may have been more alive than what the scanty evidence suggests (the materials which supported Greek texts, like papyrus and parchment, are easily perishable in that climate). We are sure that in Babylon there was a rich library of literary and scientific texts in the dead or dying Akkadic/Babylonian language, but a Greek library (including possibly local scholarship in translation) is nowhere attested; the only effective effort to share Babylonian culture with Greeks was made by than focus on Hellenization as a process imposed from above by a political authority, it is almost always more useful to examine the specific aspects of Greek culture which a population adopted, the context in which they did so, and the motivations they may have exercised. The Hellenistic kingdoms, in particular, were places where an element of self-Hellenization could be advantageous.

185 On the Graeco-Babylonian tablets (1st BC - 1st AD) see Del Monte 2001, 165; Boiy 2004, 192-196; Black - Sherwin-White 1984. They could be the work of Greek apprentices in the Babylonian scribe workshop or an experiment to keep alive in a new form the dying Akkadic-Sumeric language. Clancier 2007, 24-25, underlines the multilingualism of the Babylonian notables.
186 See Boiy 2004, 140-141: OGIS 23 (dated 146 BC; the Parthians invaded the city in 141 BC) is the first indication of the existence of a Greek community in Babylon; it describes Antiochus as a savior of Asia and founder and benefactor of the city; but most probably the first Greek nucleus was established with the arrival of Seleucus in Babylon in the 4th century BC (Capdetrey 2007, 210: in 312 Seleucus is said to have liberated his φίλοι in Babylon, cf. Diod. XIX 91, 4). On the Greek presence in Babylon as shown by the onomastic in the cuneiform documents and in the architectural remains see Boiy 2004, 288-290; ephebia is attested by an inscription 2nd BC; the agora of Babylon is mentioned by Diod. XXIV-XXV 21; houses with peristyle have been found.
187 Clancier 2007, 48-54, highlights the prosperity of the Sumerian-Akkad culture in the Hellenistic period: the old tablets of the cuneiform libraries were copied and restored, and the scribal tradition was strong; the existence of big libraries with encyclopedic contents is proved in Mesopotamia since the 1st millennium. It is not possible to know if such libraries included also foreign texts; some cuneiform texts are copies of documents on parchment (Clancier 2005), however no document on this material survives.
Berossus

Berossus, unsurprisingly attached to Antiochus I, who was at the same time the most Hellenic and the most Babylonian/Iranian among the rulers of the dynasty.

To simplify, if the role of Alexandria was mainly to collect and preserve what was representative of Greek culture, and to keep it flourishing in the Mediterranean, the Seleucids inherited from Alexander the task of spreading the same Greek culture on a wider scale, carrying on what Plutarch describes as the effect of Alexander’s conquest, even in the respect of the local traditions. It is true, as Burstein (2005, 226-229) puts it, that «Colonial culture is a simplified and selective version of Greek culture», however, it provided a unifying layer for one of the widest empires known to history. In fact, the new koine did not only brought together all the Greeks, who already shared cults and literary tradition even when they spoke the most diverse dialects, but was something more ambitious: it united all the Greek-speaking people, that is also the hellenophone «Barbarians», in primis the native officials in Egypt and in the Seleucid kingdom. In this Seleucids were a step beyond the Achaemenids, who never created an empire with a common, shared culture. «[…] Greek and ‘barbarians’ reconstituted, reinvented, and restaged Hellenism in ways that produced new types of Greeks or conveyed Greekness through unassimilated, un-classical traditions» (Andrade 2013, 347).

To conclude: unless new papyrological evidence would shed more light on this fragment, I believe that in SH 958 the «Medes» are the Achaemenids defeated by Alexander and his generals. Ptolemies could present the Seleucid as the new Medes to the Egyptians, but Greek subjects could hardly find this superimposition fully believable. In spite of genetic ethnicity, the Seleucids never presented themselves to their Greek subjects, allies and rivals as less Greek/Macedonian than the Ptolemies; strikingly, the main adversary

188 See supra, n. 40.
189 Plut. De Alex. fort. I 5, 328c-329a: ἀλλ᾽ Ἀλεξάνδρου τὴν Ἀσίαν ἐξημεροῦντος Ὄμηρος ἦν ἀνάγνωσμα, Περσῶν καὶ Σουσιανῶν καὶ Γεδρωσίων παῖδες τὰς Εὐριπίδου καὶ Σοφοκλέους τραγῳδίας ἕδον («when Alexander civilized Asia, Homer was the reading and the children of the Persians, Susians, Gedrosians, sang the tragedies of Euripides and Sophocles»; transl. by Babbitt 1936).
190 The same claim was made by the Egyptians some centuries before, see some lines from the New Kingdom instruction to a scribe: «One teaches the Nubian to speak Egyptian, the Syrian and other strangers too» (quoted by Thompson 1992, 44-45, from Lichtheim 1976, 144).
191 Sancisi-Weerdenburg 2001, 335: «In contrast to the Romans, the Persians never fully developed an ideological system that might have created empire-wide internal coherence […]. Conquest was made by ethnic (or political) units: king engaged in battle against king, and the winner took it all». 
of Ptolemy II, who styled him as the «philo-Persian king», Antiochus I, appears at the same time as the most Hellenic (as defeater of the Galatians) and the most Babylonian (as half-Bactrian by birth and perfectly integrated into the Babylonian templar system) of the Seleucid rulers. His successful adoption of Apollo as archegetes of the Seleucid dynasty overstepped any Ptolemaic claim over this god. The combination of philhellenism and defeat of the Galatians, started by Antiochus I and imitated by the Attalids, was still a vivid memory when Antiochus I of Commagene had inscribed on his the temple of Nemrud Dag (1st BC) a threat against potential violators of the royal site, recalling the power of Delphi, ἔνθα παραναίος πέτρας ὁμογενεί φύσει Γαλατικάς τείσει[ε]ν δίκας 192. The role of Seleucid kings in Hellenizing the East was discreet and not systematic, yet their influence lasted at least four or five centuries, and produced some marvellous fruits, like the art of Gandhara. Today, only scanty remainders survive of that enterprise: curiously, a Macedonian symbol survives in what was the most remote region of their empire, the pakul, the typical Afghan and Pakistani hat, heir of the Macedonian kausia 193. The last poetic resurgence of the dream of Alexander in the 20th century AD comes not from the ex-Seleucid territories, but, again, from Alexandria, so once more the Ptolemies had the last word over their rivals as keepers of the Hellenic culture. The last of the great Alexandrian poetae docti, Konstantinos Kavafis, probably for the first time in history after the death of the Macedonian conqueror, names in one breath as «we», with a healthy pinch of irony and one of nostalgic pride, the Greeks of Egypt, Syria, Media, Persia and «all the rest»:

Στα 200 π.Χ. (1931)
[.........]
Κι απ’ την θαυμάσια πανελλήνιαν εκστρατεία,
την νικηφόρα, την περιλαμπηρή,
την περιλάλητη, την δοξαμένη
ως άλλη δεν δοξάσθηκε καμιά,
την απαράμιλλη: βγήκαμ’ εμείς-
ελληνικός καινούριος κόσμος, μέγας.

Εμείς· οι Αλεξανδρείς, οι Αντιοχείς,
οι Σελευκείς, κ’ οι πολυάριθμοι
επίλοιποι Ελλήνες Αιγύπτου και Συρίας,


193 Survived through the Bactrian kings, see Kingsley 1981; Kingsley 1984; Fredricksmeier 1986; Saatsoglou-Paliadeli 1993.
κ’ οἱ εν Μηδία, κ’ οἱ εν Περσίδι, κι όσοι άλλοι.
Με τες εκτεταμένες επικράτειες,
με την ποικίλη δράσι των στοχαστικών προσαρμογών.
Και την Κοινήν Ελληνική Λαλιά
ως μέσα στην Βακτριανή την πήγαμε, ως τους Ινδούς.

[........]

In 200 B.C. (1931)

[........]

And from this marvelous pan-Hellenic expedition,
triumphant, brilliant in every way,
celebrated on all sides, glorified
as no other has ever been glorified,
incomparable, we emerged:
the great new Hellenic world.

We the Alexandrians, the Antiochians,
the Seleukians, and the countless
other Greeks of Egypt and Syria,
and those in Media, and Persia, and all the rest:
with our far-flung supremacy,
our flexible policy of judicious integration,
and our Common Greek Language
which we carried as far as Bactria, as far as the Indians.  194

[........]

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