

Seleukid Perspectives – Band 1

Franz Steiner Verlag

Auszug aus:

Seleukid Ideology



Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart 2023

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CHAPTER 4

THE FIRST SELEUKID BENEFACTIONS IN MILETOS AND THE CREATION OF A DYNASTIC IDEOLOGY

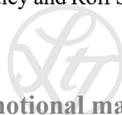
Altay Coşkun

Abstract: Apollo held a central position in the ideology of the Seleukids, as the legendary father of the dynasty's founder and as its main protector divinity. Traditionally, scholars have regarded the military leader and geographical author Demodamas of Miletos as the driving force behind this development at the early court of Seleukos. However, the present paper amplifies those recent voices that date the arrival of Demodamas at the Seleukid court to after 301 BCE and identify Antiochos I as the king who shifted the court's concentration on Zeus towards Apollo. A closer reading of the Milesian honorific decrees for Antiochos and his mother Apama (*I. Didyma* 479–480 from 300/299) allows for several nuances. With the support of his new ally and father-in-law Demetrios, Seleukos drew on Miletos to advertise the prosperity of his kingship, including the prospect of its continuation through his oldest son, born from a *basileus* and *basilissa*. As a result of this initiative, Demodamas gained access to the court and began fostering Antiochos' predilection for Apollo Soter. The investigation of Milesian-Seleukid relations also invites a reassessment of the history of Miletos and its political institutions (*boule, demos, epistatai, synhedrion*). The epigraphic evidence reveals a fully functioning democracy under Antigonid hegemony both before and after Ipsos, when diplomatic relations with the Seleukid court were first established. The honours for the royal family were thus not simply induced by some oligarchs, but had profound democratic legitimacy.

I. INTRODUCTION: THE SELEUKIDS, MILETOS, AND APOLLO

As an economic hub and as the host of the Didymeion, the most important Apollo sanctuary outside of the Greek motherland, Miletos played an important role in the rival claims for royal rule and dynastic legitimacy in and beyond Asia Minor since the campaigns of Alexander the Great. After his death, various Diadochs gained

* I would like to thank Deirdre Klokow, Ben Scolnic and Richard Wenghofer for helpful and encouraging feedback, and Alex McAuley and Rolf Strootman for sharing yet unpublished mss. with me.



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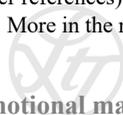
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control of the city, until Antigonos I Monophthalmos granted freedom and re-established democracy. In the subsequent course of the conflicts among the Successors, the city was once more ‘liberated’ by Demetrios I Poliorketes in 302. Its fate in the generation after the Battle of Ipsos (301) is controversial. Most probably, however, the Milesians stayed loyal to Demetrios I Poliorketes, who granted them a high level of independence. The city’s fate between the years 294 and 285 is less certain. By the latter year, Lysimachos established a firm rule, before Seleukos replaced him briefly through his victory at Korupedion (281), only to yield to Ptolemy II Philadelphos as the leading force in 280 or 279.¹

The recognition of Demetrios did not exclude friendly contacts with other Diadochs, as long as they themselves were on good terms with the son of Antigonos. Seleukos I Nikator reconciled with him soon after Ipsos and married his daughter in 300, which must have facilitated the inception of cordial relations with the Milesians.² The benefactions of Seleukos and his family stand out in our records for early-Hellenistic Miletos. The Seleukids paid keen attention to the most distinguished Apolline oracle and were happy to draw on Milesian support for the construction of their public image throughout the Graeco-Roman world.

The literary, epigraphic and numismatic evidence for close Seleukid-Milesian relations is rich and diverse, although its analysis is complicated in several regards. The present study does not aim at a comprehensive revision of all the sources, many of which have been the object of recent investigations, in particular by Kyle Erickson, Krzysztof Nawotka, and Daniel Ogden.³ My intention is rather to elucidate the context and procedure of the first interactions between the Seleukid court and the civic institutions of the Milesians, to shed light on the mechanisms of the ideological communication they entertained. For this purpose, we can leave aside the largely fictional literary tradition on the early oracles in favour of Seleukos, whether these were said to have been issued soon after Alexander’s Battle at the Granikos (334) or shortly before Seleukos’ campaign to reconquer Babylon (312/11). Most likely,

- 1 For a general description of Miletos and its cultic-political role in the Hellenistic world, though with partly differing reconstructions, see Günther 1971 and 2017; Müller 1976; Orth 1977, 23–32; de la Nuez Pérez 2008; Carlsson 2010, 244–253; also Grieb 2008, 202, 218, 242–256; Meijering 2014/15; Capdetrey 2022, 29–147 (though he surmises that Demetrios lost Miletos in 301 and only potentially regained control in 287/86). I argue in more detail as outlined above in Coşkun 2022d. Some of the main sources are referenced in ns. 22 and 33 below. On Alexander and Didyma, see n. 4 below.
- 2 The main source for Seleukos’ polygamous wedding is Plut. *Demetr.* 30–32. The view that Apama had to be divorced (Macurdy 1932, 78) is barely held anymore. Hämmerling 2019, 35f., 121–124 and Olbrycht 2021, 173 still follow John Malalas 8.10 (= ed. Niebuhr p. 198), who surmises Apama’s death. This is also unlikely: Ogden 1999, 119; cf. Reda 2014, 14; Harders 2016, 34f.; Ramsey 2016, 98; Widmer 2016, 20; Ager 2018, 58; Kunst 2021, 124–126 (although she maintains 298 as the year of Seleukos’ wedding with Stratonike); Romm 2022, 118f.; Coşkun 2022e (with further chronological arguments and epigraphic evidence). Undecided is Müller 2013, 208f. The date of the wedding is argued for in Coşkun 2022d.
- 3 Ogden 2017, 56–58, 64, 138–140, 271–280; also de la Nuez Pérez 2008, 334–337; Erickson 2011 and in this volume (with further references); Widmer 2016, 29f.; Meeus 2020, 297f. For a different view, see Nawotka 2019. More in the next note.



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they developed only after Seleukos, his wife, and his oldest son had become benefactors of the Milesians as documented in the inscriptions from Didyma.⁴ The promotion of Apollo as the main protector of the dynasty is even later, as revealed by the coin imagery introduced by Antiochos I Soter.⁵

I shall concentrate instead on the earliest inscriptions from Miletos that attest to benefactions of the Seleukid family and the honours awarded them in response. By following up on these documents, we can build a good case to show that diplomatic relations with the city and a systematic instrumentalization of its famous sanctuary began only after the Battle of Ipsos, as initiated and designed at the king's court in Syria. The choice of the Milesian sanctuary was not yet due to a strong preference for Apollo as the patron divinity of the dynasty, but driven by a desire to herald the legitimacy and stability of Seleukos' kingdom, with Antiochos, the son of Apama, as his designated successor. No pressure was needed for the Milesians to cooperate willingly: the only 'coercive' means at Seleukos' disposal were substantial financial gifts and the promise of a long-term pre-eminence of the Milesian sanctuary in an otherwise most volatile world.

II. HONORIFIC DECREES OF THE MILESIAINS FOR THEIR SELEUKID BENEFACTORS

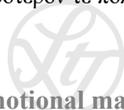
The euergetic engagement of Seleukos I and his family with Miletos is well-attested epigraphically. The decree for Antiochos, the 'oldest son' of Seleukos, is normally dated to 300/299⁶ and that for his mother Apama soon thereafter to 299/298, although I have recently tried to show that both were passed before spring 299.⁷ A

4 App. *Syr.* 56.283 (on 334, an apparent posthumous fiction) and Diod. 19.90 (on 313/12); cf. Lib. *Or.* 11.99. These traditions are closely connected with the establishment of the dynastic sanctuary of Apollo at Daphne, see Justin 15.4.7f. and Lib. *Or.* 11.94–100. The Seleukid tradition has also been influenced by the Didymaeon oracle for Alexander: Strabo 17.1.43 = Kallisthenes F 14a. See the references in the previous note. The allegation of John Malalas that Seleukos had a sister named Didymeia (herself the mother of Nikanor and Nikomedes) is a late and transparent development of the legend, also influenced by Seleukos' dynastic epithet Nikator; it deserves a firm rebuke, not hesitation as in Heckel 2006, 111 and Olbrycht 2021, 173. Nawotka 2019 argues for the creation of the myth around 300, see n. 45 below. On the epigraphic dossier and the continued relation between Miletos and the Seleukids, see n. 12 below.

5 On the roles of Seleukos and Antiochos, see n. 45 below.

6 *OGIS* 213 = *I.Didyma* 479 ed. Rehm (and Harder) = *Didyma* 7 ed. McCabe (for *PHI*) = PH246998 = Bringmann and Steuben 1995, 338–341, no. 281 [E1] = *IK Estremo Oriente* 393 = Kunst 2021, II 144f., no. 136; cf. Haussoullier 1902, 34–49; Nawotka 2019, 265 (transl.); Strootman 2021, 150f. On the date, see below, with ns. 8, 27, and 28.

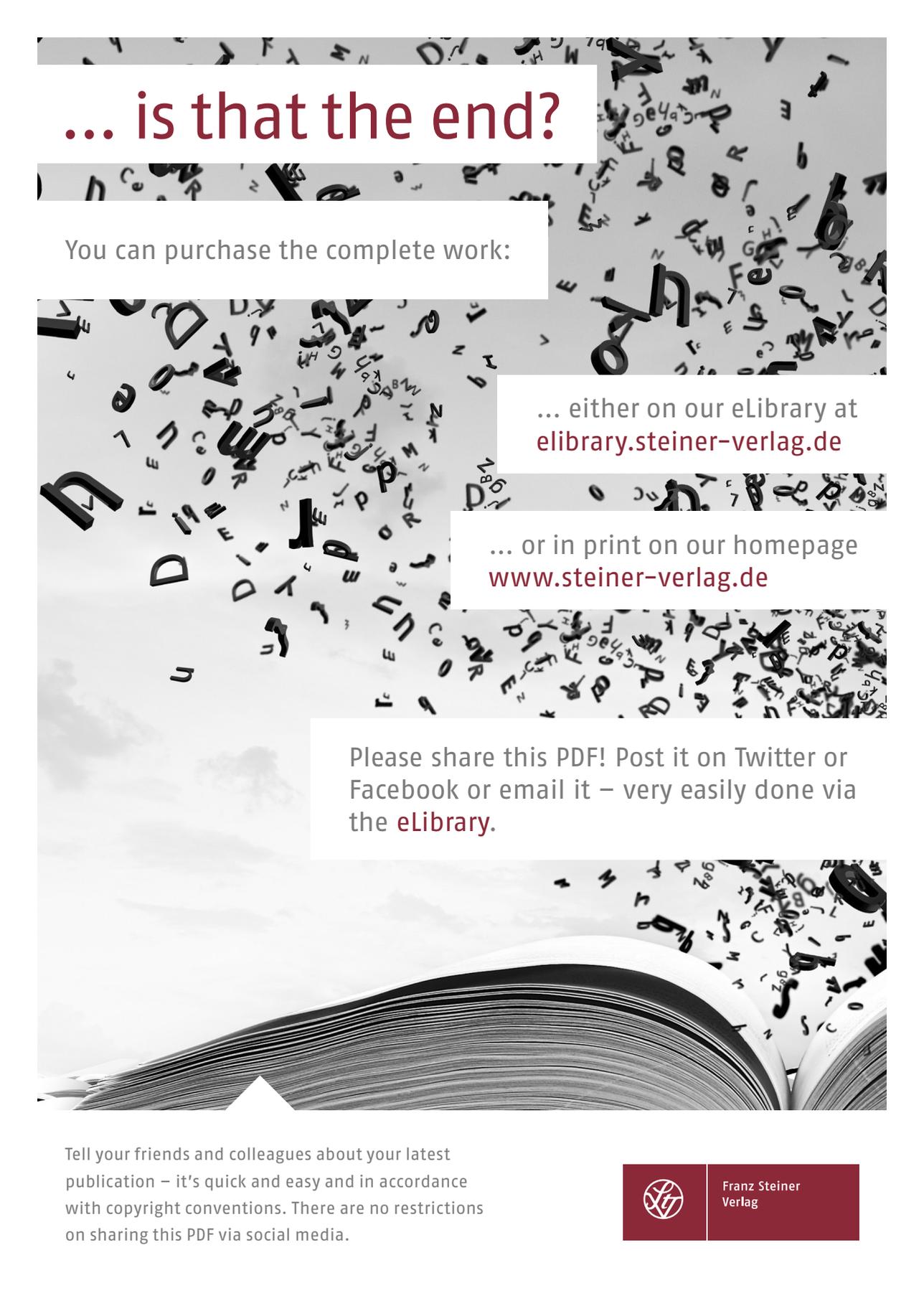
7 Decree: *I.Didyma* 480 ed. Rehm (and Harder) = *Didyma* 8 ed. McCabe (for *PHI*) = PH247146 = Bringmann and Steuben 1995, 341–343, no. 281 [E2] = Austin² 51 (transl.) = *IK Estremo Oriente* 394 = Widmer 2016, 21–23 = Engels 2017, 196f. = Kunst 2021, II 142f., no. 135; cf. Nawotka 2019, 265f. (transl.). The honours for Apama are explained in II. 4–14 as follows: ἐπειδὴ Ἀπά[μη ἢ βα]- | (5) σύλιστα πρότερόν τε πολλὴν εὐνοίαν καὶ προ[θυμίαν] | παρείχετο



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