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Common dwelling place of all the gods: commagene in its local, regional and global Hellenistic context

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Citation

Blömer, M., Riedel, S., Versluys, M. J., & Winter, E. (2021). *Common dwelling place of all the gods: commagene in its local, regional and global Hellenistic context*. (M. Blömer, S. Riedel, M. J. Versluys, & E. Winter, Eds.). Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag. doi:10.25162/9783515129268

Version: Publisher's Version

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Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3257083>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Common Dwelling Place of all the Gods

Commagene in its Local, Regional
and Global Hellenistic Context

Edited by Michael Blömer, Stefan Riedel,
Miguel John Versluys and Engelbert Winter

ORIENS ET OCCIDENS

Studien zu antiken Kulturkontakten und ihrem Nachleben | 34

Franz Steiner Verlag





Oriens et Occidens

Studien zu antiken Kulturkontakten und ihrem Nachleben

Herausgegeben von

JOSEF WIESEHÖFER

in Zusammenarbeit mit

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und ROBERT ROLLINGER

Band 34

Common Dwelling Place of all the Gods
*Commagene in its Local, Regional and Global
Hellenistic Context*

Edited by
Michael Blömer, Stefan Riedel, Miguel John Versluys
and Engelbert Winter

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Funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation)
under Germany's Excellence Strategy – EXC 2060 “Religion and Politics.
Dynamics of Tradition and Innovation” – 390726036 as well as the Netherlands Organisation
for Scientific Research (NWO) under VICI project 277-61-001

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Umschlagabbildung:

Nemrud Dağ, view of the statues on the east terrace taken during the campaign of 1953
(Photo: Friedrich Karl Dörner, © Forschungsstelle Asia Minor, Dörner archive)

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek:

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen
Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über
<<http://dnb.d-nb.de>> abrufbar.

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Layout und Herstellung durch den Verlag

Druck: Memminger MedienCentrum, Memmingen

Gedruckt auf säurefreiem, alterungsbeständigem Papier.

Printed in Germany.

ISBN 978-3-515-12925-1 (Print)

ISBN 978-3-515-12926-8 (E-Book)

<https://doi.org/10.25162/9783515129268>

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Foreword & Acknowledgements

In the winter of 2018, from 29 November to 1 December, the *Forschungsstelle Asia Minor* and the cluster of excellence entitled “Religion and Politics”, both at Münster University, hosted the international conference *Beyond East & West. Hellenistic Commagene in its local and global Eurasian context*. The meeting brought together, for the very first time, almost all important specialists that currently work on the archaeology and history of Commagene in Hellenistic and Roman times.

The fact that these people travelled from all over the world to Münster was also a fitting tribute to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the *Forschungsstelle Asia Minor*. This institute was founded by Friedrich Karl Dörner, the doyen of Commagene research, in 1968. Dörner conducted fieldwork in Commagene from the 1930s onwards and was director of the excavations at the royal residence of Arsameia on the Nymphaios. He established the *Forschungsstelle* as a homestead for further research in and about the area. In subsequent decades, the institute inspired new generations of scholars to examine the epigraphy, history, and archaeology of Commagene across the widest spectra. Its most recent project is the large-scale excavation of the ancient city of Doliche and the sanctuary of Jupiter Dolichenus.

The conference grew out of the recent cooperation between the *Forschungsstelle Asia Minor* and a VICI project based at Leiden University entitled *Innovating objects. The impact of global connections and the formation of the Roman Empire (ca. 200–30 BC)*. From its initiation in 2016, this collaboration has focused on unlocking the important legacy data of the rescue excavations that took place in Samosata, the capital of ancient Commagene, between 1978 and 1989. The conference and this resulting book are among the many results of this Leiden-Münster axis that has developed so fruitfully during the last decade.

Our initiative was received with great enthusiasm by the invited speakers and characterised by the lively discussions that were incited by their lectures. We hope that this volume, through its many debates (sometimes even between individual contributions), has retained at least some of the intellectual energy of the Münster meeting.

Our aim was to provide a state-of-the-art overview of the history and archaeology of Hellenistic Commagene itself, while simultaneously exploring its wider Eurasian context structurally and in depth. Taken together, the 21 papers we present in this volume are an ambitious response to that challenge. We hope that the overview of the history

and archaeology of the area combined with its contextualisation on local, regional, and global scales, which this book offers, will make Hellenistic Commagene into a much-used and lively debated subject for general discussions on the history and archaeology of the Hellenistic world, at last.

The conference and the publication of this volume were made possible by the (financial) support of The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO), the cluster of excellence “Religion and Politics”, Münster University, and the *Historisch-Archäologischer Freundeskreises Münster e. V.* We are most grateful to all of them, as well as to Josef Wiesehöfer and the other editors of *Oriens et Occidens* for welcoming this volume into their distinguished series, and to Steiner Verlag for their important help with the swift publication.

Münster & Leiden, February 2021

Michael Blömer, Stefan Riedel, Miguel John Versluys & Engelbert Winter.

Beyond East & West

Hellenistic Commagene between Particularism and Universalism

MIGUEL JOHN VERSLUYS & STEFAN RIEDEL

Introduction

The history and archaeology of Hellenistic Commagene is a rich field of study, all in its own right, not in the least because of the remarkable monuments and inscriptions of king Antiochos I (who ruled between ca. 70 and 36 BCE) that could be said to have dominated the Commagenian landscape and its scholarly study until the present day. Over the last decades, important work has been published that is now slowly replacing, so it seems, the earlier *communis opinio* on Commagene as formulated in the foundational work by scholars like Friedrich Karl Dörner, Theresa Goell, Wolfram Hoepfner and Jörg Wagner.¹ We identify two different developments, in that respect. On the one hand important new work has been done on Commagene proper, providing novel interpretations of the epigraphical and historical record² or the archaeological data and individual sites.³ On the other hand, scholars have tried to better understand ancient Commagene not by zooming in on the region or the Orontid dynasty, but rather by zooming out to the wider Mediterranean and Near Eastern context of their reign and its cultural products.⁴

- 1 Hoepfner 1983; Dörner 1987; Wagner 1987; Sanders 1996. For a brief overview of the *Kommagene Forschung* see Versluys 2017, 41–45 and, for specifically the ‘hybrid’ Antiochan style, Versluys 2017, 191–199.
- 2 For instance: Facella 2006; Crowther – Facella 2014; Jacobs 2017; to only give a single, representative example for each author.
- 3 Representative examples include: Blömer 2012; Brijder 2014; Winter 2017.
- 4 Representative examples include: Kropp 2013; Versluys 2017; Riedel 2018.

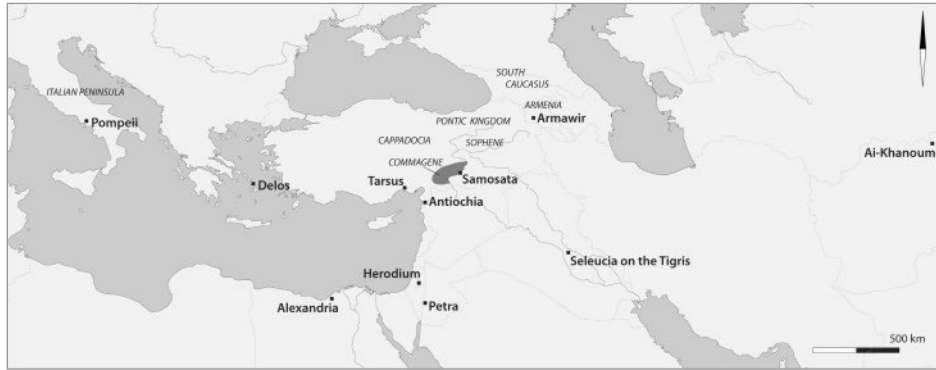


Fig. 1 Map of Eurasia indicating locations dealt with in this volume and their geographical references to Commagene, © J. Porck, Faculty of Archaeology, Leiden University

From all this work, a very different picture now seems to emerge. A picture in which Hellenistic Commagene is no longer understood as the peripheral and out-of-the-ordinary, but as an important node in a large Hellenistic network, a “Common Dwelling Place” in all respects.⁵ Given its strategic position in that network, at the interface of the Mediterranean (or western Afro-Eurasia) and the Near East (or central Afro-Eurasia), Commagene might perhaps even have been exemplary of socio-cultural developments in a Hellenistic *oikumene* that stretched from the Atlantic to the Oxus. Building on this exciting development, and including almost all of its key discussants, the present volume aims to provide a critical evaluation of all these new data and ideas on the basis of a state-of-the-art overview for the history and archaeology of Hellenistic Commagene. As such, the first objective of this book is to take stock of the new, dynamic and more international phase of the *Kommagene-Forschung* and thus add to its fruitful continuation. Our second aim is to explore the wider Eurasian context of Hellenistic Commagene structurally and more in depth, on both a regional and a global scale.⁶ What did the Eurasian network that Hellenistic Commagene was part of look like? How did it function? And what was the relation between Commagene and other nodes in the network?

The focus of this book is the history and archaeology of Commagene in, roughly, the final two centuries BCE. The term we use to indicate that time frame, ‘Hellenistic’,

⁵ For the *Sonderstellung* of Commagene as perceived by previous research, see Versluys 2017, 1–37.

⁶ The wider context discussed by Kropp 2013 is mostly regional while the foci of his analysis are dynastic images and monuments alone. Versluys 2017 could be said to cast the net wider but limits its ‘global perspective’ largely to the wider Mediterranean. It is therefore certainly true that that book detaches Hellenistic Commagene too much from its Iranian or Central Asian context; as is already explicitly acknowledged in the volume itself (Versluys 2017, 24 n. 61). Strootman – Versluys 2017 was a first attempt to redress that imbalance; this book is the second.

is therefore meant to include the growing Roman influence in the region. Commagene and its dynasty seem to have greatly profited from the *Neuordnung des Orients* by Pompey that resulted from the congress at Amisos in 65/64 BCE. At that occasion, the important Euphrates crossing at Seleukeia on the Euphrates (Zeugma) was granted to Antiochos I. As a result, Commagene further established itself as one of the richest kingdoms of the Hellenistic East and an important strategic player between the volatile Roman and Parthian Empires. It seems that after Actium, when Seleukeia/Z Zeugma had been added to the province of *Syria*, things became rather different in terms of political influence, possibilities for dynastic self-presentation and economic dynamics. Although members of the Orontid dynasty managed to remain highly connected to the main centres of power, like Rome, we see little repercussions of their role as cosmopolitan brokers in Commagene itself. In that respect, it is telling that the last dynastic monument of the dynasty, the tomb of Philopappos (C. Iulius Antiochos Epiphanes), is located in Athens. After the final annexation of the kingdom in 72/73 CE, Commagene changed into a frontier province, with a Roman legion stationed at Samosata. Although the history of Commagene and the area around Seleukeia/Z Zeugma in the first two centuries CE is, of course, strongly related to developments in the region in the first two centuries BCE, it seems clear that the Augustan period is a crucial transition in many respects. This book mainly deals with the period before the Augustan transition and uses the qualification ‘Hellenistic’ to indicate that focus.

Hellenistic Commagene between Particularism and Universalism

Central to *all* interpretations of the history and archaeology of Hellenistic Commagene, probably, explicitly or implicitly, are questions of cultural dynamics. This is due to the fact that ‘inbetweenness’ seems to be the defining characteristic of what still is our main source material: the Antiochan project. At Nemrud Dağ, for instance, there are clear references to both the Mediterranean and its history (in the form of Hellenism) as well as to Central Asia and its history (in the form of Persianism).⁷ Additionally, Antiochos I also qualifies himself as *philorhomaïos*, next to the better known *philhellene*, which was already in use for a century at his time.⁸ Irrespective of their interpretations, scholars have struggled with accounting for this ‘multiculturality’ from the very beginning. This is the conclusion the first, modern explorers of Nemrud Dağ, Carl Humann and Otto Puchstein, draw after an extensive presentation of the finds in their publication from the end of the 19th century:

7 For Persianism see Strootman – Versluys 2017.

8 See Facella 2005.

“Allerdings können die Skulpturen des Antiochos keinen Anspruch darauf erheben, in einer Darstellung des Entwicklungsganges der allgemein-griechischen Kunst berücksichtigt zu werden: dort haben sie weder durch ihre Wirkung auf die Folgezeit noch um ihrer eigenen künstlerischen Bedeutung willen einen Platz verdient [...]. Ihren Wert haben diese Skulpturen daher nur für die Lokalgeschichte: sie müssen als Leistungen hellenisierter Barbaren geschätzt und als solche um so mehr beachtet werden [...]”⁹

Significant is the word *Lokalgeschichte* (local history) and the tension between local and global that becomes clear from this conclusion: while the cultural products of Antiochos I ultimately are considered to be distinctly local it is acknowledged that they certainly depend on the much wider world of Greek art at the same time. One feels exactly the same tension between local and global, between particularism and universalism, in the book by Andreas Kropp from the beginning of the 21st century, dealing with images and monuments of Near Eastern dynasts between 100 BCE and 100 CE.¹⁰ As one of the first to do so, his monograph studies Commagene and the Orontid dynasty in the regional context of other major players in the Near East in the period, like the Hasmoneans, the Nabateans, the Itureans and the Herodian dynasty. Kropp convincingly shows that many structural parallels between all these dynasties exist in terms of making deliberate choices from a large Hellenistic repertoire (or koine) that also includes Roman and Persian references. The analysis, therefore, clearly moves beyond *Lokalgeschichte*. Still, his general characterisation of Hellenistic Commagene concludes:

“But the visual language of Antiochos I is too idiosyncratic and far removed from regional trends and traditions to allow for generalizations about what the statues of other dynasts might have looked like”¹¹

9 Humann – Puchstein 1890, 345.

10 Kropp 2013.

11 Kropp 2013, 87.



Fig. 2 Map of Commagene and its geographical position within the extended region 'between' Asia Minor, Syria, Armenia and Persia,
© J. Porck, Faculty of Archaeology, Leiden University

A summarizing overview of the *Forschungsgeschichte* shows that indeed all scholars working on Hellenistic Commagene struggle with accounting for its 'inbetweenness', which they most often do in terms of ethnic or cultural character and identity. Generally, it can be concluded that there are two different ways of explaining Commagene's 'multiculturalism'.¹² There is a strong tendency, first, to link Hellenistic Commagene to a specific culture, understood as a distinct, exclusive and demarcated entity called, for example, Greek, Hellenistic, or Parthian. Commagene should primarily belong to one of these 'containers', although, due to its 'multiculturalism', never in the pure form in which these cultures are imagined to exist. Secondly, it is often argued that geographical context is determining for those cultures and from that perspective Hellenistic Commagene would literally illustrate the blending of what is called East and West. Both strands of interpretation put distinct ethnic, geographical or cultural 'containers' at the core of their explanatory model. Could this be the reason that they continue to wrestle with integrating the local and the global in their interpretation? It is on purpose, therefore, that we have placed this methodological and theoretical problem at the very heart of this volume, and the conference on which it was based.

12 Versluys 2017, 185–201. It is interesting to note that research from the 1950s and 60s seems to have had less difficulties with evaluating Commagene's 'inbetweenness' on its own terms than later scholarship (Michael Blömer, personal comment).

Within and Between – The Structure of the Book

Are there other models that perhaps do allow for an integration of the particular and the universal for Hellenistic Eurasia? How to account for the ‘inbetweenness’ of Hellenistic Commagene in a way that does justice to the local, the regional and what we could call the global? How to overcome ‘container-thinking’ in our study of the Hellenistic *oikumene* of which Commagene was part? These are, from a methodological and theoretical perspective, the overarching research questions for the present volume as a whole. We have designed and structured its content accordingly.

The first part of the book, therefore, is devoted to four theoretically orientated discussions that deal with questions of cultural complexity, ‘inbetweenness’ and ‘multiculturalism’ in Hellenistic Eurasia in relation to what happens in Commagene. We hope that, taken together, these papers help establishing a proper methodological framework for Commagene Studies. They do so in addition to Kropp’s *Images and monuments* and Versluys’ *Visual style and constructing identity* that focussed on the regional and Mediterranean-wide context, respectively¹³, by critically discussing and developing those initial ideas. It is on purpose, therefore, that the papers in Part I are mainly engaged with the Iranian and Central Asian context, as an important addition to those earlier attempts.¹⁴

The second part of the book (called *Within*) focusses on the history and archaeology of Hellenistic Commagene proper. Invited experts deal with their specific expertise; from coins and architecture to ethnicity, religion and dynastic iconography; and from the phenomenology of landscape to new work on Samosata, the capital of Commagene, and its legacy data. Taken together, these essays not only present a state-of-the-art overview for the history and archaeology of Hellenistic Commagene, but also try to move beyond what remains one of our main methodological problems in terms of data: the over-representation of (the remains of) the Antiochan project.¹⁵

The third part of the book (called *Between*) tries to place Hellenistic Commagene in its regional and global Eurasian context. Looking east, south and west, we have identified eight Hellenistic contexts that serve to illuminate what happens in Commagene in terms of analogical reasoning, from Armenia to Nabataea and from the Italic peninsula to Seleucia on the Tigris.

The overarching conclusion by an invited expert, but a scholar from outside the field of Commagene Studies proper, critically evaluates how successful the volume re-

13 Kropp 2013; Versluys 2017.

14 See n. 6 above.

15 For this problem and its discontents see Blömer 2012; Versluys 2017, 108–184, in particular 137–141, 172–184.

ally is in positioning Hellenistic Commagene between particularism and universalism and, importantly, what remains to be done, also in that respect.

Before we will outline the content of the book more in depth and in terms of the discussion above, we will first briefly elaborate on our key terminology: the pairing of particularism and universalism or, in other words, the interplay between the local (*Within*) and the global (*Between*).

Beyond East & West – Thinking with Globalization

Globalization is a debate on how to understand and study complex connectivity.¹⁶ It is not about homogenisation, as is often still thought, but about the interaction between the local and the global. What we call ‘global’ is as much constituted by the particular as it is by the universal as when the global is brought to the local level, the local becomes global simultaneously. Globalization, therefore, is inherently *glocalization* and therefore always and automatically about the interplay between the universal and the particular.¹⁷ Thinking with globalization implies that understanding the (socio-cultural) character and identity of a person, artefact, region, dynasty, style or even empire is *not* about choosing for the one cultural container versus the other; *not* about trying to measure the degree to which people, objects or socio-cultural phenomena would belong to a specific culture. Instead, research questions focus on the impact of connectivity and, hence, not on traditions but on the *invention* of traditions; not on communities but on *imagined* communities; et cetera. Thinking in terms of intense connectivity and hence a continuous interplay between the local and the global for our study of the Hellenistic world directs us to the importance of its social *imaginaries*.¹⁸ One of the effects of this continuous interplay was the ‘disembedding’ of all kinds of (socio-cultural and religious) elements, which moved between a concrete, tangible, and local context and a more abstract or global level. Things that we call Greek or Persian or Roman (et cetera) in the final two centuries BCE travelled widely, thereby often changing in meaning. By being used in different contexts, they often lost their geographical and cultural specificity and developed into ‘cultural scenarios.’¹⁹ They were, in other words, ‘unmarked’ from their origin (or *universalised*) and subsequently appropriated and made to work in different contexts for different purposes (or *particularised*). In characterising these

16 See Pitts – Versluys 2015b and Hodos et al. 2017, 1–65 for definitions, debates and bibliography.

17 See Riedel 2018 for glocalisation and also globalization. The latter term combines the notions of growing and globalization and is meant to investigate the force of globally spreading phenomena from their perspective.

18 See already Stavrianopolou 2013 for how such a shift in perspective effectively rewrites the history of the Hellenistic world.

19 Versluys 2017, 241–248 with examples and previous literature.

elements for our period, therefore, we should in fact always put geographical, ethnic or cultural denotations between inverted comma's and talk about 'Greek' or 'Persian' or 'Roman' (et cetera) elements – and then explain what we mean by those terms.

As such, the concept of globalization is now widely used amongst scholars of Antiquity.²⁰ It is the central point of departure, for instance, of Angelos Chaniotis' recent history of what he calls the Greek world, from Alexander to Hadrian (336 BCE – AD 138), a book tellingly entitled *Die Öffnung der Welt. Eine Globalgeschichte des Hellenismus* in its German translation.²¹ For many it works well as hermeneutic strategy as it effectively takes us away from imagining the ancient world as consisting of distinct cultural containers (Commageneans, Greeks, Romans, Persians etc.) with their various interactions. Globalization rather invites us to take intense connectivity and inherent multiculturalism as point of departure for our analyses. Our interpretations thus shift from *inter*-cultural connectivity, with related acculturation-questions of who influences whom and to what extent, towards *intra*-cultural connectivity, which sees all these cultural containers as relative and fluid, while simultaneously and fundamentally being part of a single, global Afro-Eurasian container.²² Intra-cultural connectivity still asks (fundamental) questions of connectedness, but it focusses on the functioning of the network; on understanding the frequency, strength, content and directionality of the ties that hold the Hellenistic world together; and on investigating local, particular appropriations from a global, universal repertoire. It therefore goes beyond the zero-sum game that acculturation thinking implies and is much better suited to understand questions of identity and 'inbetweenness'.²³ This is how thinking with globalization, we argue, can help us to move beyond East and West in the study of Hellenistic Commagene and integrate local, regional and global, Eurasian-wide scales of analysis.²⁴

Within and Between – An Overview of the Content of the Book

As indicated above, the book purposefully starts with a set of contributions dealing with basic problems of conceptualizing 'inbetweenness' and 'multiculturalism'. This is done through four detailed and theoretically rich case studies that not only deal with

20 Jennings 2011; Pitts – Versluys 2015a; Hodos et. al. 2017; Riedel 2018.

21 Chaniotis 2018, 6: "Because of the interconnection of vast areas in Europe, Asia and North Africa, the Hellenistic world and the Roman Empire have justly been considered as early examples of Globalisation"; unfortunately, without any reference to the theoretical debate on the issue.

22 For intra-cultural connectivity see Versluys 2017 and now Pitts 2019.

23 For a discussion of Hellenistic and Roman Syria and the Near East as part of the global world of ancient Afro-Eurasia in general and from this perspective, see Versluys forthcoming.

24 For important philosophical reflections on the interplay between the local and the global, the particular and the universal, as an anthropological fact that has, throughout history, resulted in both the greatest catastrophes and innovations of mankind, see Safranski 2003.

Hellenistic Commagene from this perspective but simultaneously integrate discussions on comparable developments in other, in particular Near Eastern and Central Asian 'global localities'.

In her self-reflective contribution '*Ai Khanoum God with Feet of Marble*' – *Reading Ai Khanoum through Commagene*, Rachel Mairs shows that the categorization of evidence that does not fit specific, basically disciplinary norms is not only a problem of Commagenian scholarship, but also characterizes the study of Ai Khanoum in Bactria. She furthermore demonstrates that (French) scholarship on Commagene, especially Nemrud Dağ, had a direct influence on the conceptualisation of the 'inbetweenness' of Ai Khanoum. Mairs' experiment in 'quote-switching', whereby she applies comments originally made concerning Commagene to the situation in Ai Khanoum, neatly shows that the questions and issues addressed in this volume – although being centred on Hellenistic Commagene – are most relevant for the scholarship of other 'inbetween' localities exposing 'multiculturalism', as well. Stefan R. Hauser in his paper '*Hellenized Iranians?*' – *Antiochos I and the Power of Image* takes up these ideas while focussing on Commagene and especially the Antiochan programme proper. His contribution deliberately considers Commagenian imagery in the context of the visual (material) culture of the Arsacid Empire, thus adding the so far often lacking contemporary, eastern background to the study of Hellenistic Commagene. Hauser argues that the Antiochan project, specifically the tomb-sanctuary on Nemrud Dağ, shares various aspects with the arts employed by the elites of the Arsacid Empire, which is also characterized by a conscious eclecticism. By suggesting that the appropriation of 'Persanite' regalia and eastern concepts by Antiochos I could relate to the Arsacids more directly, he adds another important perspective to our understanding of Hellenistic Commagene and the 'bricolage' by Antiochos I, who, Hauser argues, addressed different audiences including other Hellenistic kings, regional dynasts as well as the Romans in an attempt to demonstrate his social standing, power and ambitions within a wider Eurasian Hellenistic koine. The eastern, 'Iranian' components of Commagene's dynastic-religious traditions are furthermore considered in-depth by Matthew P. Canepa, from again a different perspective, in *Commagene Before and Beyond Antiochos I – Dynastic Identity, Topographies of Power and Persian Spectacular Religion*. His analyses highlight the historical role of the Armenian and especially Sophenian rulers of Commagene, before the independence of the kingdom, which are likewise appropriating Achaemenid traditions in various ways. In doing so, Canepa importantly adds a globalised eastern as well as a regional perspective to the debate, arguing for an interlocking of both. We see an expression of this, he argues, in the 'Persian' elements in Hellenistic Commagene in particular, which would be mediated, in his view, through the former Orontids of Sophene evoking an Achaemenid legacy. In this way, the "newly ancient kingdom" of Commagene capitalized on the prestigious Achaemenid legacy, but through regional developments; just as they did with Greco-Macedonian traditions. Both were meant, Canepa argues, to address specific elites – in the time of Antiochos I mainly the Ar-

sacids and the Romans – in an attempt at integrating Hellenistic Commagene in global networks both East and West. The fact that it is indeed difficult to reconstruct and understand the integration of a specific locality into different (regional and global) networks simultaneously – not only for Commagene – is shown by *Helen Fragaki* in her essay entitled *Reversing Points of Reference – Commagene and the Anfushy Necropolis from Alexandria in Modern Scholarship*. Her historiographic discussion focusses on what surely was, in terms of scale and impact, one of the most important nodes of Hellenistic Eurasia: Alexandria. Discussing the *Forschungsgeschichte* of the Anfushy Necropolis from this cosmopolis, she unveils a fairly similar dichotomy in scholarship as has been observed for Commagene. Whereas in the discussion of Commagenian monuments the ‘containers’ of ‘Greek’ and ‘Persian’ are often opposed, for Alexandria these are matched by ‘Greco-Macedonian’ and ‘Egyptian’ influences and concepts to set (and distort) the interpretative frame. For Anfushy, the use and especially the combination of these culturally charged labels led to negative (and misleading) judgments of the tombs as they did not fit one of these two main, classical canons – a situation well comparable to the (negative) evaluation of the Commagenian monuments. By considering the use of such labels, Fragaki reveals their inadequacy for the study not only of Anfushy but of many, if not all, other places of the cosmopolitan Hellenistic world. Instead of using these traditional, ‘classical’ labels as points of reference, she argues for a shift towards putting the new global centres – like Alexandria, Pergamon, Antioch but also Commagene – central in their own right.

Taken together, the essays making up Part I of the volume clearly show how much can be gained from an exploration of Hellenistic Commagene (and its study) within a global, Eurasian perspective; for Commagene Studies itself but certainly also for Hellenistic archaeology and history in general. Developments in Hellenistic Commagene are no isolated phenomena but rather integral, perhaps even exemplary parts of wider Eurasian phenomena.



Fig. 3 Map of Commagene, © J. Porck, Faculty of Archaeology, Leiden University

After having discussed conceptual and theoretical frameworks for Hellenistic Commagene as part of larger, Eurasian developments, the second part of this volume is devoted to the history and archaeology of Commagene proper. The seven contributions of Part II present a state-of-the-art overview that can serve as basis for further studies of the region. Taken as a whole, the essays making up Part II contribute to all of the ongoing debates in the history and archaeology of Hellenistic Commagene; it is on purpose, therefore, that differences of opinion between authors have been maintained or even made explicitly clear.

Already the first contribution of Part II addresses significant questions concerning the history of the Commagenian kingdom in combination with the presentation of new data. Dealing with *Sovereignty and Autonomy in the Hellenistic Coins of Commagene*, Margherita Facella provides a much needed review and discussion of the numismatic evidence, adding new, hitherto unknown specimen to the corpus of Commagenian coins. The number of known coin-types and even coins from Commagene is comparatively low, which suggests a rather poor monetisation of the kingdom. Coins and coin types are only increasing under the kingdom's last ruler Antiochos IV around the middle of the first century CE; which is telling in several respects. In this regard, especially the

complete absence of silver coin-production from Commagene itself, be it royal or civic issues, indicates the large degree of integration of the kingdom in the wider Hellenistic economic system, which is supported by Facella's observations on Seleucid and Cappadocian silver coins that were found in the region. Additionally, she shows that the Commagenian capital of Samosata was most probably granted the right to issue civic coins by Antiochos I as reward for withstanding the siege by Marc Antony. This interpretation is based on new coin-types and Facella interprets this policy as indicative of a strong bond between the ruler and his capital rather than civic autonomy. In the next contribution *Werner Oenbrink* re-evaluates *The Late-Hellenistic Architecture of Commagene* by re-assessing the known pieces and adding new finds from religious, dynastic and urban contexts. His essay, partly summarizing his important work on the subject from the last decade, as it was published in German²⁵, shows that on the one hand Commagenian architecture basically follows the canon of Hellenistic Asia Minor, but deviates from it in certain details on the other, allowing us to speak of a distinct Commagenian architecture rooted in 'Greek', i.e. Hellenistic Asia Minor, traditions. However, some Commagenian architectural forms appropriate different styles, which makes it difficult to date them precisely. Oenbrink suggests that the monumentalization of the kingdom might already have started in the early 1st c. BCE, prior to the rule of Antiochos I. This hypothesis remains to be proven, but its importance lies in the fact that, amongst other things, it has the potential to move our evidence beyond the Antiochan programme. Such a laudable attempt is also visible in the article of *Lennart Kruijer* and *Stefan Riedel* entitled *Transforming Objectscapes in Samosata – The Impact of the Palatial Complex*, providing an analysis of the palatial complex at Samosata which was excavated before the flooding of the site in 1989 due to the building of the Atatürk reservoir. By combining the (known but never extensively published) finds with a re-consideration of the excavation's legacy data and new methodological approaches, they are able to document a substantial change in the material culture of Commagene in the 1st c. BCE. This excitation of Commagene's 'objectscape' was characterised by the increased appropriation of styles and iconographies from a global Hellenistic repertoire. This is revealed by the genealogies of specific motifs used within the palatial complex and elsewhere in Commagene, which had already acquired different 'global' properties before they were appropriated by the Commagenian kings. Interestingly the article by Canepa (as discussed above) makes a similar argument concerning universalisation and subsequent particularisation for the domain of religion. In terms of chronology, also Kruijer and Riedel prudently suggest a beginning of this development already before the reign of Antiochos I, in the early 1st c. BCE. Be that as it may, that the overall monumentalization and especially the ambitious religious programme for the kingdom are for the most part to be connected with Antiochos I is underlined in *Bruno Jacobs'* contribution entitled

25 Oenbrink 2017; Oenbrink 2019.

The Syncretistic Episode in Late-Hellenistic Commagene – The Greek-Persian Religious Concept of Antiochos I and the Ethnicity of the Local Population. He takes the ‘syncretism’ in the Antiochan programme and the contested issue of its different target-groups as his starting point. These have often primarily been identified with the rulers and elites of other kingdoms and empires, beyond Commagene, which were thought to be either rooted in ‘western’ or ‘eastern’ traditions. To this discussion Jacobs usefully adds the Commagenian population, which he argues to have been capable of understanding the visual language and religious practices. This leads Jacobs, contrary to a recent trend in Commagene Studies, to plead for a rootedness of the Antiochan project in the local population for which ‘Greek’ as well as ‘Iranian’ elements could be detected. The ‘Iranian’ component of religious practices in Hellenistic Commagene is further illuminated by *Ab de Jong* in his essay entitled *Dynastic Zoroastrianism in Commagene – The Religion of King Antiochos*. Based on the archaeological and especially epigraphical evidence from Commagene, he argues that the religious programme launched by Antiochos I lacks specific characteristics of Hellenistic ruler cult, whereas it shows significant similarities with Zoroastrian religion. Defining four partly overlapping styles of Zoroastrianism – familial, dynastic, imperial and priestly Zoroastrianism – de Jong interprets the religious role of Antiochos I, his dynastic programme and priests in the light of this religion, provokingly shifting the focus towards a fierce integration of Near Eastern/Iranian perspectives on the developments within the Commagenian kingdom. In turn, *Rolf Strootman* explores the (indeed understudied) connection of Antiochos I to the Seleucid dynasty looking at *Orontid Kingship in its Hellenistic Context – The Seleucid Connections of Antiochos I of Commagene*. He contextualizes Hellenistic Commagene by looking at the developments in other post-Seleucid kingdoms, showing that Antiochos I, his imagery and rhetoric can well be understood as reaction to the collapse of the Seleucid Empire and the struggles to fill in the power vacuum in its aftermath. Therefore, not all allegedly ‘eastern’ elements appropriated by Antiochos – like the title ‘Great King’ – need to be understood as references to the Achaemenids, Strootman argues, but rather more immediate to the Seleucids. In this way, Hellenistic Commagene would be directly and actively involved in the late-Hellenistic power struggles that characterised large parts of Eurasia; an important background for a proper understanding of the Antiochan programme. In the final contribution to Part II named *Times, Echoes and Experience – Perceiving the Landscape in Commagene*, *Anna Collar* innovatively considers the perception of the Commagenian landscape by its inhabitants. She argues for a specific role of the mountains in shaping something like a Commagenian identity. As such, this identity would be rooted in the history and collective memory of both the elites and the ordinary people; something which could be capitalized upon e.g. by their Hellenistic kings. In this regard, the mountaintop tomb-sanctuary of Antiochos I as well as other *hierothesia* (and *temene*) take advantage of this landscape perception. It might therefore be regarded as (local) catalyst of the Antiochan programme itself while in turn contributing to the shaping of a nascent Commagenian identity.

We feel that the update and re-evaluation of the history and archaeology of Hellenistic Commagene as presented in Part II underline the importance of contextualising the kingdom within the wider Eurasian Hellenistic world, as it shows in various ways how Commagenian developments relate to much wider – regional and global – phenomena and especially how its elites participated in this koine.

It is to this wider Eurasian Hellenistic world that Part III turns. Eight case studies dealing with ‘global localities’ east, south and west of Commagene were selected to gain a better understanding of how the Hellenistic world functioned as global system. Together and on that basis, these case studies work towards determining the place and function of Commagene within that Eurasian network, on a local, regional and global scale.

Looking east, *Giusto Traina* opens these comparative studies by discussing the immediate neighbour and dynastic relative of Commagene: *Armenia and the ‘Orontid Connection’ – Some Remarks on Strabo, Geography 11,14,15*. His contribution is concerned with the particular problem of Orontid kingship which is of utmost importance for the legitimization of the Commagenian kings, since they claim descent from the Armenian rulers. Traina argues that this ‘Orontid connection’ was well suitable to embed the Commagenian kings in regional traditions and not only served to establish a link between Antiochos I and the Achaemenids; thus adding a firm regional component to Commagenian kingship and its display. Moving further east, *Lara Fabian* in her paper *Beyond and Yet In-between – The Caucasus and the Hellenistic Oikumene* presents us with the South Caucasus Kura polities; a historical case which is comparable to Hellenistic Commagene in several respects. Both emerge around the same period and the socio-cultural phenomena observed have unsettled scholars trying to make sense of these areas ‘inbetween’ in similar ways. Both have been (and often still are) described as being on the margins and therefore largely incomparable to contemporary developments in the main centres. However, Fabian convincingly demonstrates – as this volume hopes to show for Commagene – that also the ‘marginalized’ region of the South Caucasus needs to be studied within the context of a wider Eurasian Hellenistic koine – from which likewise several appropriations can be detected – in order to overcome the inadequate view of incommensurability. Moreover, her theoretical explorations of the concept of ‘inbetweenness’ significantly add to the debate central to Part I. The interplay of local and global, which is at the core of many phenomena observable in almost any ‘locality’ of the Hellenistic period, is directly addressed by *Vito Messina’s* contribution *Beyond Greece and Babylonia – Global and Local at Seleucia on the Tigris*. His revealing study of the material culture of Seleucia on the Tigris, a central hub in Hellenistic Babylonia, shows several phenomena that are closely comparable to what happens in Hellenistic Commagene. Messina also makes clear how thinking in terms of, in his case, ‘Greek’ and ‘Babylonian’ traditions has distorted a proper understanding

of what goes on. He convincingly identifies Seleucia as being exposed to globalization and at the same time fostering it by appropriating from, transforming and (re-)emitting to the repertoire provided by the Hellenistic koine – be it the ‘Hellenistic mainstream’ or more local and regional Babylonian traditions.

In *Looking south*, similar observations regarding the appropriation from a universal Hellenistic koine, and hence the integration of the particular and the universal, are made by *Orit Peleg-Barkat*. Focussing on *Herodian Art and Architecture as Reflections of King Herod's Many Faces*, she presents a case study of someone who was seemingly a truly global player and in many aspects directly comparable to Antiochos I. Being ‘caught up’ between global trends and local traditions, the architecture of Herod unveils his ‘code-switching’, which can be regarded as both a necessity and an opportunity offered by particularizing from the universal repertoire(s) at his disposal. Peleg-Barkat shows that the utilization of different artistic and architectural styles appropriated by Herod shared a major characteristic with the Antiochan programme: to communicate the ruler’s claims and position to a varied audience, from the local population to the peers of other late-Hellenistic dynasts to the rising power that is Rome. The apparent issue of local traditions (and identities?) within ever-changing supra-regional, i. e. global trends and developments is also seized upon by *Stephan G. Schmid*, dealing with the Nabatean kingdom in his essay entitled *Was There a Nabatean Identity – And If Yes, How Many?*. He addresses the core question of how material culture helps to understand the self-definition of local groups in demarcation from others – a major aspect concerning (local) responses to globalization. Focussing on the distinctive sculpture and especially pottery within the Nabatean kingdom Schmid identifies the painted fine ware as specific marker for identity-building processes. In this regard, the material culture bears witness to the importance of feasting which was common throughout the entire kingdom, across social strata and probably connected to specific rites fostering what might be called a Nabatean identity-system. These multi-layered processes of identity-building are well comparable to developments observed in Commagene, especially on Nemrud Dağ, and elsewhere in the Hellenistic world, and are inevitably interwoven with the demands of integrating particularisation and universalisation to face a globalizing environment.

Looking west, *Christoph Michels* compellingly contextualizes the Commagenian kingdom within other smaller dynastic kingdoms in Asia Minor by looking at ‘Achaemenid’ and ‘Hellenistic’ Strands of Representation in the Minor Kingdoms of Asia Minor. The focus of his study is the appropriation of ‘Greek’ and ‘Achaemenid/Persian’ traditions, which he traces not only in Commagene but also in Pontos, Cappadocia, Bithynia and Armenia. Michels detects not only similarities, but also differences in the embedding of Hellenistic kingship, illuminating that each ruler – although appropriating from a very similar global Hellenistic repertoire – chose the styles, measures and ideas ac-

ording to his very specific needs and desires. He also argues that these developments did not necessarily originate in the Hellenistic period, since such ‘glocalization’ can already be observed in the identity-building of the late-Achaemenid satraps of Asia Minor. The last two contributions of Part III importantly consider phenomena that are not exclusively royal and take the contexts of Greece and the Italian peninsula as their starting point for putting Hellenistic Commagene in perspective. In her contribution *Delos Beyond East and West – Cultural Choices in Domestic Architecture*, Monika Trümper addresses the important question of choices of cultural styles and strategies for the Delians. Discussing the problems to identify these strategies, she shows how certain agents appropriated styles that were associated with different cultural backgrounds. In her analysis, she skilfully detects varying degrees of rootedness in local traditions on the one hand and globalizing tendencies on the other. Taken together, the choices result in ‘glocal’ Delian solutions and particularities. The analysis thus contributes to the understanding of how ‘ordinary’ (but still well-connected) people made both use and sense of their rapidly changing environment in the Hellenistic period according to their possibilities and desires, just as e.g. the rulers and elites further east, like in Commagene. Finally, Annette Haug explores *Decoscapes in Hellenistic Italy – Figurative Polychrome Mosaics between Local and Global* and thus the phenomenon of the spread of styles and iconography through the Hellenistic network by investigating Hellenistic Italy. Focussing on figurative polychrome mosaics depicting fish or marine worlds, she explores the local implementations of widespread Hellenistic forms and iconographies. These are tied to specific contexts as defined by the agents’ spatial and social connectedness. Haug shows that the use of the mosaics discussed reflects an active participation in Hellenistic cultural practices in Italy and – in terms of fish mosaics – as far east as Commagene, thus intensifying the Hellenistic network as part of which Commagene needs to be understood.

The comparative exercise undertaken in this final part of the book contributes significantly, we think, to a better contextualisation of what happens in Hellenistic Commagene. Together with the contributions in Part I and II, it shows that Commagene was a well-connected node within a global Hellenistic world from which it took and to which it added.

Outlook

On the basis of the overview presented in this book, let us conclude by suggesting some prospects for Commagene Studies in the future. The rich tableau of papers here assembled not only presents the status quo of research on Commagene, but also constitutes a first coherent attempt to put the kingdom and its monuments in a local, regional and global perspective simultaneously. One of the main conclusions must be that our knowledge about Hellenistic Commagene still is relatively limited

and that much work remains to be done.²⁶ The large number of royal inscriptions and the wealth of information they provide, as well as the suggestive power of the material culture commissioned by Antiochos I conceal the actual scarcity of information on Hellenistic Commagene at hand. Many contributions illustrate how the available sources in fact leave us in the dark about crucial matters, such as the early stages of Commagenian history; its material culture beyond the Antiochan project; the lived reality of its religion; the ethnic and cultural affiliations and social stratification of the people living in Commagene; as well as the impact of changing economic and political networks. A key problem here is the (perhaps surprising) lack of unbiased evidence from archaeological surveys and excavations. It is important to realise that the era of intensive fieldwork in Commagene came to an end already in the late 1960s. In the 1980s, the salvage operations at Samosata offered a unique opportunity to explore the royal capital, but the scope of this work was constrained by limited time and resources. Various attempts to resume research at Nemrud Dağ remained largely unfinished.²⁷ In the meantime, important new monuments and sites have been identified and studied in many parts of Commagene, but these were mostly chance finds and never resulted in comprehensive follow-up research projects.²⁸

As a result, all interpretations of Hellenistic Commagene ultimately have to refer back to a dataset assembled and published in the early phases of Commagene Studies. Moreover, despite the increase in scholarly attention for Commagene over the last decades, no settlement in the region has been properly excavated or investigated. The Münster excavations at Arsameia on the Nymphaios mainly targeted the *hierothesion*. The question whether the royal monuments were at the heart of a city, as Antiochos claims in his inscriptions, must remain unsettled – but no traces of a Hellenistic city have been found. No research has been conducted at Arsameia on the Euphrates, at all. At Perrhe, a large urban site at the heart of Commagene, the Adıyaman Museum had started piecemeal investigations in the 2000s, but the layout and character of the settlement in the Hellenistic (and Roman) period remain obscure.²⁹ Minor places like Ancoz, Selik, Palaş, Kilafık Höyük, Sofraz, Boybeypınarı, and the only recently identified site near Güzelçay, have yielded evidence for the existence of sanctuaries for (again) the ruler cult of Antiochos, but virtually nothing is known about the archaeological contexts; in some cases, not even the exact location of the findspots can be

26 See n. 15 above.

27 See Brijder 2014 for the international Nemrud Dağ Project from the beginning of the 21st century as well as Şahin Güçhan 2011 for the subsequent Turkish Nemrut Conservation and Development Program.

28 For some of the most important new discoveries in Commagene since the 1970s, see Wagner – Petzl 1976 (Sofraz stele); Şahin 1991 (Damlıca sanctuary); Crowther – Facella 2003 (Zeugma stele); Wagner – Petzl 2003 (Ancoz fragments); Crowther – Facella 2014 (Güzelçay sanctuary).

29 Eraslan – Winter 2008 provide an overview of the site; see also Eraslan 2016.

retraced.³⁰ Major exceptions are Zeugma and Doliche, where ongoing large-scale excavations projects yield important new information about urban life and material culture of North Syria in Antiquity.³¹ Both cities were under the sway of king Antiochos I, but they were located outside of Commagene proper and the extent to which the picture that emerges from these excavations can be transferred to the Commagenian heartland remains unclear – and needs to be tested.

To conclude, for these reasons there is an urgent need to initiate a new phase of modern archaeological research, in which the new questions, methods, and approaches that were recently developed in Commagene Studies (and beyond) constitute the main point of departure. This should certainly include intensive surveys and targeted excavations at the sites that are already known. Moreover, large parts of Commagene have never been surveyed at all (or only very provisionally) and need to be investigated in order to compile the first reliable archaeological map. This is, in fact, a most urgent *desideratum* since the fast development even of remote mountain regions is about to obliterate all kinds of archaeological remains. A second promising avenue of new research is the reassessment of the extant evidence (legacy data) in combination with archival studies. First attempts in this direction, like the work by Lennart Kruijer and Stefan Riedel on the data from the Samosata rescue excavations or the reassessment of the archaeological and architectural evidence from various *hierothesia* by Werner Oenbrink (for both *vide infra*) have already yielded promising results. The archives of institutions and scholars that were active in Commagene, like the Dörner Archive at the *Forschungsstelle Asia Minor* in Münster, contain a substantial amount of rich materials that should be used to calibrate and refine our knowledge. In sum, there is great potential for the future of Commagene Studies, as this book hopes to illustrate in a variety of ways.³²

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30 Not a single of the *temene* for the cult of Antiochos I has been ascertained archaeologically. For the stelae from Ancoz, Selik, Palaş, Kilafık Höyük, Sofraz, and Boybeyınarı, there are no unambiguous records about the exact findspots.

31 For Zeugma, see Görkay 2012. The most recent overview of the Doliche excavation project is Blömer et al. 2019.

32 It was an excellent idea of Michael Blömer to add this brief outlook, that has been written by all four editors of the book, to the article.

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Part I:
Theoretical and Conceptual Introductions

‘Ai Khanoum God with Feet of Marble’ *Reading Ai Khanoum through Commagene*

RACHEL MAIRS

Stone Foot Variations

It became apparent at the *Beyond East and West* conference in Münster that specialists in the material culture of distant regions of the Hellenistic world have been engaged in a process of circular reasoning. To explain how this came to be so, it may be useful to examine our scholarly biographies. I began my own academic life working on Hellenistic Egypt. When I first began to conduct research on Hellenistic Bactria, and within that more specifically on the city of Ai Khanoum, it was natural for me to look to other regions of the Hellenistic world for comparanda, to help me understand complex cultural and ethnic interactions in a region whose material culture was less well preserved, and where there was very little epigraphic, documentary or historical evidence. I recall my PhD supervisor at Cambridge, Dorothy Thompson, telling me about her visit to Nemrud Dağ, and recommending that I look at the publications of sculpture and inscriptions from the site, as a route into thinking about how religious syncretism worked in practice. This was long before the recent flurry of publication on Hellenistic Commagene and Nemrud Dağ, so I was reliant on the work of Theresa Goell, in particular the publication of her excavations by Donald Sanders.¹ I found Nemrud Dağ was indeed a productive route into thinking about how cultures and ideas interact on an intimate, practical level, in a man of mixed descent’s construction of his own public identity. The way I came to conceive of Ai Khanoum was heavily influenced by what, from the then-available publications, I understood about Nemrud Dağ.

Others have been engaged in similar processes. Not necessarily with the same sites – Nemrud Dağ and Ai Khanoum – and in the same direction – from West to East – but seeking parallels, historical or structural, between contexts of complex cultural inter-

1 Sanders 1996.

action in different parts of the Hellenistic world.² In addition to Commagene, my interpretations of Bactria have been influenced – even determined – by my experience in working on multilingualism in Hellenistic Egypt. While I would maintain that the comparative study of different regions of the Hellenistic world is immensely productive, there are some interpretative issues which we must take on board. If my reading of Ai Khanoum derives in part from others' readings of Nemrud Dağ, then it matters where the publications I read on Nemrud Dağ in turn took their inspiration from. If someone then takes my work on Ai Khanoum and uses it in their interpretations of Nemrud Dağ, they should be aware of the Commagenian source of some of my ideas about Ai Khanoum. At the Münster conference, it was amusing to find that many of us were turning to each other's material for interpretation of our own. There is a danger in assuming that scholars working on other regions have everything figured out. I would like to state for the record that I do not.

What would it be like to come to this material fresh? In a lecture at the University of Melbourne in April 2019, I undertook an experiment.³ I showed the audience the following image, with no information on archaeological context, and asked for their reactions.

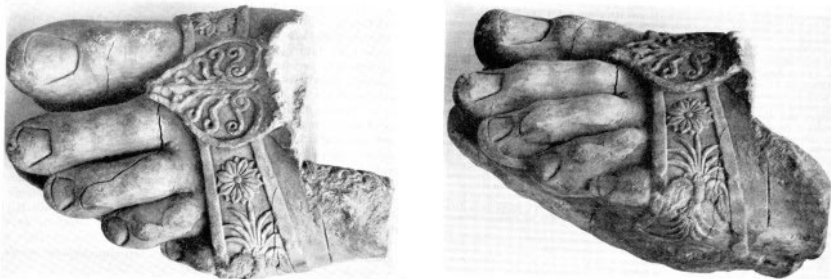


Fig. 1 Foot of the Cult Statue from the Temple à Niches Indentées at Ai Khanoum, from Bernard 1969, fig. 15–16

I initially told them nothing about how this piece had been interpreted in the past. Colleagues, who approached the exercise in the ludic spirit in which I instigated it, gave me some excellent food for thought. Could we assume the gender of the statue, for example? What was the design on the sandal strap? Someone, not entirely unseriously, suggested an octopus. In itself, they found little to support the interpretations which this piece has borne in the context of the main temple of Ai Khanoum.

- 2 See, for example, Clarysse – Thompson 2007 and van der Spek 2009, who directly address the problem of how valid Ptolemaic Egypt is as a model for Hellenistic Bactria.
- 3 I would like to thank Melbourne colleagues for their hospitality, and for being such good sports.

For scholars of Hellenistic Central Asia, in contrast, it is impossible to come to this stone fragment fresh, with no preconceptions. It was discovered in 1968, during the fourth season of excavations at Ai Khanoum, in the *cella* of the main temple of the city, the *temple à niches indentées/temple à redans*. For the excavators, the discovery of this temple brought some major interpretative problems. Until this point, the focus in media coverage and scholarly publication of Ai Khanoum had been on the 'Greek' character of many architectural elements. From the public's point of view, these were dramatic and out of place in Afghanistan. From a scholarly perspective, they were long-awaited confirmation of the 'missing link' between the Graeco-Roman world and the art of Gandhāra, which Alfred Foucher famously, and from bitter personal experience, considered a 'mirage'.⁴ The temple yielded "des riches renseignements," but many of these were unexpected, "du triple point de vue de son architecture, de la statuaire et des objets qu'il abritait".⁵ The excavators were confronted, far more directly than hitherto, with the question of how Ai Khanoum, its material culture and religious practices, fit into a wider world. The architectural format of the temple, and comparisons which were drawn with Dura Europos and with Mesopotamia, have been extensively discussed⁶, but less attention has been given to the foot fragment of the temple's main cult statue.

Paul Bernard's reading of the foot follows on directly from his discussion of the 'Mesopotamian' style of the temple plan, and is a stark contrast: "La statue de culte qui se dressait sur la banquette de fond de la *cella* figurait en effet un dieu d'aspect grec. Grecque cette statue l'était aussi par sa technique et par son style".⁷ He draws parallels with examples of acrolithic statues from the Mediterranean world. In Bernard's 1969 analysis, quality of production, and fidelity to Greek styles, means that the sculptor must himself have been Greek: "Le superbe modèle que nous offre le fragment de pied nous enseigne aussi que le sculpteur travaillait bien à la grecque, et je dirais même, devant la perfection du travail, qu'il ne pouvait être que grec".⁸ (This conflation of style of workmanship and ethnic identity is not something that many would now agree with.) Bernard then offers an interpretation of the statue fragment which has passed into much subsequent literature as read: the design on the sandal is a winged thunderbolt, implying a Zeus, and the dimensions of the temple make a seated statue more likely than a standing one.⁹ Bernard muses ("je songerais volontiers") – not states – that the statue may be an enthroned Zeus of the kind depicted on Graeco-Bactrian

4 Foucher – Bazin-Foucher 1942/1947, 73–75.

5 Bernard 1969, 327.

6 For a comparative architectural perspective on the temple, see Downey 1988, 63–75.

7 Bernard 1969, 338.

8 Bernard 1969, 340.

9 Bernard 1969, 340–341.

and Indo-Greek coins, holding a sceptre in one hand and an eagle or small Nike in the other.

Ai Khanoum god with feet of marble

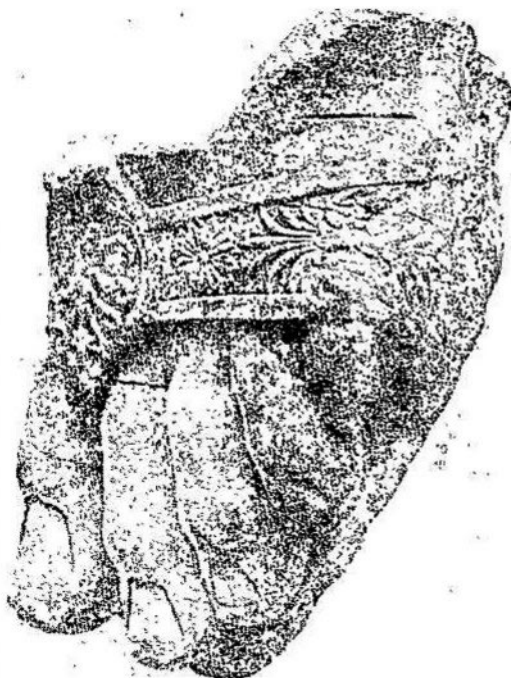
By DARSIE GILLIE

This massive foot of fine Greek workmanship is almost all that remains of the deity nearly three times life size which once presided over the temple at Ai Khanoum, on the frontier between Afghanistan and the Soviet Union.

This temple surprisingly constructed after the oriental fashion, and only the sculpture was Greek, although the surrounding houses on the market place appear to have been of Greek design. The temple, the only one of its kind to be discovered so far east, poses interesting historical problems. The divinity itself, which may well have been an oriental one, was probably given the features of Zeus, since the fragment of the magnificent sandal he wore was ornamented with a winged thunderbolt.

These finds were the most important announced to the Académie des Inscriptions by M Paul Bernard, director of the French Archaeological Delegation in Afghanistan, in a communication giving the results of the fourth and fifth years of excavations on the site of Ai Khanoum, all that is left of the great Hellenistic city of Central Asia. The Greeks held this for two hundred years as an outpost against all comers, above all the Parthians and the Indians, until they collapsed in the first century AD.

The figure of the deity must have been at least 15ft high and,



like most Hellenistic statues of the kind was composed of some less costly material with only the extremities in marble. The torso was probably of clay, on a wooden structure.

The discoveries also include a remarkable statuette in limestone, its height as preserved 35cm, representing an athletic young man in the nude. The style is strongly reminiscent of Lysippos, with its small head on a long muscular neck, and M. Bernard dates it as third century BC.

There are three other finds: the remains of a bed, with

carved ivory legs of evident Greek workmanship, a magnificent scaraboid in white chalcedony, the size of a pigeon's egg, engraved with a dog standing with tensed muscles; and some small fragments of a canvas picture, on which friezes of animals are identifiable.

The excavations at Ai Khanoum were first begun when the King of Afghanistan espied on his Soviet frontier a column which he recognised as Greek, and pointed it out to M. Schlumberger, then head of the French Archaeological Delegation in 1964.

Fig. 2 Ai Khanoum God with Feet of Marble, article in the *Guardian* in 1969

As we shall see, Bernard's views evolved, but this initial publication was very influential. It was even reported, with a reproduction of the foot, in the *Guardian* newspaper in 1969.¹⁰ In this popular report, Bernard's careful suggestions are turned into fact:

¹⁰ See also Mairs 2014, 20–21.

"This massive foot of fine Greek workmanship is almost all that remains of the deity nearly three times life size which once presided over the temple at Ai Khanoum, on the frontier between Afghanistan and the Soviet Union.

This temple surprisingly was constructed after the oriental fashion, and only the sculpture was Greek. [...] The divinity itself, which may have been an oriental one, was probably given the features of Zeus, since the fragment of this magnificent sandal he wore was ornamented with a winged thunderbolt."¹¹

The foot from the temple has played an important role in wider discussions about culture and identity at Ai Khanoum. In a broad sense, such discussions are about resolving apparent contradictions: what do complex intersections and juxtapositions of artistic styles say about the identities – cultural, ethnic, social, religious – of the people who created such juxtapositions? More recent interpretations of the city, and in particular of the *temple à niches indentées*, tend to focus less on such apparent 'contradictions' and more on how the city functioned as a whole: the emphasis is on flexibility and polyvalence rather than contradiction.¹² Early attempts to resolve these apparent contradictions looked for other examples of the coming together of disparate styles and religious practices. Nemrud Dağ has long been brought into such discussions.

By 1970, as the diverse range of cult practices performed within the temple and its sanctuary became more evident, Bernard's views had evolved in the direction of seeing the statue as representing an assimilated or syncretised deity:

"la représentation de foudres ailés sur la sandale du pied colossal de la statue de culte nous avait l'an dernier suggéré l'idée que la divinité adorée dans le temple pouvait être un Zeus. À l'appui de cette hypothèse nous invoquons le témoignage des monnaies gréco-bactriennes où ce dieu occupe une place prééminente. La présence d'une statue de style grec dans une architecture non grecque nous paraissait enfin pouvoir s'expliquer par l'assimilation du dieu grec à une divinité orientale. Ces suggestions retent, au terme de cette nouvelle campagne, conjecturales."¹³

As always, his conclusions remained cautiously argued, and subject to revision. In 1974, he introduced the Zeus-Oromasdes of Nemrud Dağ as model for a possible solution: a syncretised Zeus-Ahura Mazda in the temple of Ai Khanoum:

"Faute de la moindre inscription, faute de la moindre figurine votive, nous en sommes toujours réduits aux conjectures sur l'identité de la divinité à qui appartenait ce sanctuaire. Les foudres ailés qui décoraient les sandales de la statue de culte suggèrent un Zeus, mais l'architecture purement orientale du temple ne serait pas explicable s'il était été destiné à

11 Gillie July 30, 1969.

12 See e. g. Martinez-Sève 2010a; Martinez-Sève 2010b; Mairs 2013; Mairs 2014; Martinez-Sève 2014.

13 Bernard 1970, 327.

un dieu purement grec. Pour réconcilier ces deux données, on est amené à supposer une divinité gréco-orientale, un Zeus qui serait en même temps son équivalent iranien, Ahura Mazda. Un tel syncrétisme sous la forme d'un Zeus-Oromasdes existe dans le panthéon gréco-oriental des rois de Commagène et le rapprochement, malgré son éloignement géographique et chronologique, donne quelque force à cette hypothèse.¹⁴

Since this time, Nemrud Dağ has frequently appeared in the literature on Ai Khanoum, and more specifically on the stone foot from the temple. Frantz Grenet, for example, makes reference to “la religion syncrétique de la Commagène” in his own arguments for a Zeus-Mithra in the Ai Khanoum temple.¹⁵ A Nemrud Dağ-inspired Zeus-Ahura Mazda or Zeus-Mithra is accepted without much further comment in many treatments of the material.¹⁶ More recently, Laurianne Martinez-Sève and I have both argued for the god of the temple having a fluid or polyvalent identity, influenced by these earlier interpretations which were in turn inspired by Nemrud Dağ.¹⁷

It matters greatly, then, that views about Commagene have changed over the past few decades. I have taken the foot of the statue from Ai Khanoum as a specific example, but Commagene is also a frequent point of reference or comparison for others who work on Central Asia. There are much wider implications to changing views about Commagene. When I was first asked to participate in the Commagene conference by Miguel John Versluys, he said that “ideally we would like you to address specifically how the processes of bricolage and glocalisation we see in Commagene compare to Bactria – and what implications this has for our views on material and ideological exchange in Hellenistic Eurasia.”¹⁸ I realised that I had in fact been thinking about this my entire career. Hellenistic Commagene – and more specifically, Nemrud Dağ – has always been central to how I conceive of Hellenistic Central Asia. The idea that others might take my Commagene-inspired ramblings on Bactria and apply them back to Commagene itself was deeply worrying.

What I would like therefore to offer in the remainder of this chapter is not a comparative study of Commagene and Bactria, but an experiment in what happens if we directly impose gleanings from one case study area to another. I offer two ‘Stone Foot Variations’¹⁹: short analyses of the fragment from the Ai Khanoum temple, according to different scholarly paradigms. I shall refer to these as:

- Commagene I. Based on Goell – Dörner 1956 and Goell 1957. This interpretation focusses on the rehabilitation of the monuments at Nemrud Dağ from their repu-

14 Bernard 1974, 298.

15 Grenet 1991, 148.

16 E. g. Rapin 1992, 120.

17 Martinez-Sève 2010b, 13; Martinez-Sève 2014, 274; Mairs 2014, 87.

18 Email 5 July 2017.

19 Inspired, naturally, by John Ma’s *Black Hunter Variations* (Ma 1994), although I shall be keeping to English.

- tation as “the ugly caprice of a bombastic monarch.”²⁰ It introduces terms such as ‘syncretism’, ‘hybrid’, ‘fusion’ and ‘hub’ (considerably earlier than many may be aware such terms were used of Hellenistic material culture). It positions Commagene ‘between East and West’ and examines the coming together of three styles or identities: Greek, Iranian and local. Greek architectural terminology is used. There is an emphasis on the landscape of Commagene, and routes of procession.
- Commagene II. Based on Versluys 2017, and to a lesser extent on Brijder 2014. This also aims to rehabilitate Commagene, as a “marginal cultural backwater.”²¹ It situates Nemrud Dağ more firmly in its regional and chronological context, including examining the Hellenistic stage upon which Antiochos makes his statements about kingship and identity. It makes a distinction between personal identity and artistic style. Commagene’s connectivity is emphasised, and it is placed in a ‘global’ framework.

This is also an experiment in scholarly bricolage, since I have pieced together a collage of direct quotations from the works cited above, and others, to compose ‘new’ texts about the Ai Khanoum fragment. In this, I have been in part inspired by Robin Coste Lewis’ *Voyage of the Sable Venus*: a poem constructed entirely from titles and exhibition descriptions of depictions of black women in Western art.²² Direct quotations are in italics, and words which I have added – paraphrasing earlier publications, or inserting details specific to Bactria and Ai Khanoum – are in regular type.

Commagene I: A Cultural Link Between East and West

Bactria was a small but strategic region in the third century BC. According to the Greek geographer Strabo, it was a land rich in natural resources. He says that the Greeks of Bactria who rebelled against the Seleucid Empire grew powerful “because of the excellence of the land” (11.11.1). Quintus Curtius Rufus said of Bactria that “multiplex et varia natura est” (7.4.26–31). Although its borders shifted with political events, and are not known for any specific time, we may state in general that it was bounded on the north by Sogdiana, on the east by the Pamir mountains and on the west by Margiana and Areia. On the south it was bounded by the Paropamisadae mountains, the modern Hindu Kush, and to the south of these the province of Arachosia. Bactria was the hub of many roads from the West to India and China. Any power intent on gaining a foothold in the East had to possess of control this small kingdom. Lying across the land routes between East and West, Bactria had been deeply influenced by the ebb and flow of foreign cultures. Its rulers felt spir-

20 Goell 1957, 9.

21 Versluys 2017, 13.

22 Lewis 2015.

itual and ancestral ties with both worlds. The gods on the coins of Graeco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek kings, and worshipped in their temples, *are neither Graeco-Roman, Persian not local, but hybrids of all three.*

The site of Ai Khanoum – *one of the most impressive and least known of the ancient world* – occupies a geographically strategic location, at the junction of two major rivers, ideally situated to command a large agricultural plain and the resources of its mountainous hinterland, most notably lapis lazuli. The high acropolis affords a view over routes of approach. From the outmoded *nineteenth-century* perspective which privileges ‘pure’ *Classical Greek style*, its architecture may appear *too Oriental – barbaric and imperfect* – but this is to *overlook its significance as a cultural link between the cultures of East and West.*

The main temple of Ai Khanoum *was a focal point for pilgrims from all directions*, as can be seen from its position on a major *dromos*, which continued outside the city, north of the walls, to a second large temple. The *temenos* is characterised by *the tight interrelationship of its separate elements – architecture, sculpture, and inscriptions – which constitute a key to the religion of the inhabitants of the city, and which reflect their syncretistic cultural proclivities.* It is geographically situated to present an almost perfect example of the fusion of Iranian, Hellenic and Central Asian traditions in architectural and sculptural styles. It bears significant witness to the development of religious syncretism in the period just preceding our era.

The fragments of the acrolithic cult statue suggest *Greek drapery*, and the *thunderbolt motif* on the sandal indicates a Zeus. The *hybrid* nature of wider religious practice within the *temenos*, however, suggests *the worship of a syncretised Graeco-Persian god*, a Zeus-Oromasdes like that of the hierothesion of Antiochos I at Nemrud Dağ in *Kommagene*. According to *the Persian custom*, we might conjecture that a fire altar was also located within the sanctuary. *The deeper significance of this monument is that it reflects not only the influences of the Graeco-Roman and Eastern worlds, but also that they represent Central Asian tradition shaped by Greco-Roman, Mesopotamian and Persian influences. Thus remnants of the local culture survived at least until the time of the Eukratids.*

Commagene II: Alexandria, Rome, Antioch – Ai Khanoum

Bactria has long been regarded as a *marginal cultural backwater*, and seldom receives more than a passing mention in books on the Hellenistic world. It is frequently treated as *an exception, as something out of the ordinary and non-representative.* As such, the site of Ai Khanoum and related Bactrian monuments have been detached from their regional and chronological contexts. Bactria was, in fact, a *fully fledged part of the developments that took place in the Hellenistic world during the formative period of the third century BC.* Hellenistic Bactria played its own part in the highly interactive network of city-states, kingdoms, and empires covering large parts of the Mediterranean, Near East and Egypt. This

study, therefore, takes an approach that explicitly focuses on the wider context, and seeks to understand what happened in Bactria by drawing parallels throughout western and central Eurasia.

The Hellenistic world was highly interconnected. Idiosyncratic elements of Ai Khanoum's material culture, such as the juxtaposition of apparently jarring artistic styles, can only be properly understood as part of an overarching, 'global' framework. Hellenistic (material) culture was one large repertoire of optional styles and iconographies: a Hellenistic koine. One was able to choose (and combine) different elements from the repertoire and flexibly use them in different contexts on different occasions. As such, certain traditions developed: certain styles and iconographies became associated with certain functions of contexts and the meanings they expressed. There is no straightforward correlation between artistic style and cultural or ethnic identity. The 'Mesopotamian' style of the main temple at Ai Khanoum, for example, is connected more to religious function than to any Mesopotamian cultural identity and the position of a statue of apparently 'Greek' artistic style within it presents no insurmountable cultural contradiction.

The Octopus Goddess of Ai Khanoum

The passages above are a product of selective quotation, and in their recombination are not necessarily representative of the views of the authors whom I, respectfully, plagiarise. The technique of bricolage may not make for elegant prose, but I hope my points have come across. Looking at Ai Khanoum through the lens of Nemrud Dağ, at two different moments in its scholarly history, produces different emphases. Our Commagene I-Ai Khanoum is a strategic, well-connected region mentioned in the Greek and Roman historians. Its style and culture are a tripartite hybrid of Greek, (Achaemenid) Persian and local Central Asian. It is unfair to view it from a purely Classical angle and dismiss it as 'Oriental' and 'barbaric'. The temple is located within a network of pilgrimage routes and its place in the (urban) landscape is highly significant. The material culture of the site is hybrid, and its gods syncretic. Greek artistic and architectural terminology is used with abandon. Viewed within this framework, we can see the statue fragment as a syncretised god – our old friend, Zeus-Oromasdes – housed within a temple sanctuary and city whose image and identity is a fusion, produced by mysterious, unexamined social processes.

Commagene II-Ai Khanoum is slightly different. It too has been stereotyped as marginal and exotic, and must be rehabilitated as part of the Hellenistic world. Its apparently clashing artistic styles are rather elements of a single Hellenistic koine, a shared cultural repertoire, in which the Greek is not necessarily dominant. In this light, the statue fragment is not something that should be considered in isolation: it is an el-

ement in a common repertoire of styles and practices, deliberately and strategically employed.²³

Readers may or may not be surprised at the extent to which I was able to compose perfectly plausible (fake) interpretations of Ai Khanoum using direct quotations from works on Nemrud Dağ. The rhetorical and conceptual similarities between authentic discussions of the two sites and the artificial hybrids above are the product of a number of factors. First, direct scholarly influence. Writings on Ai Khanoum in the 1960s and 1970s were directly influenced by writings on Nemrud Dağ in the 1950s. Writings on both sites in the mid-2010s have been in dialogue with one another, and with these earlier works. Second, a common intellectual formation and scholarly milieu. Scholars of both Nemrud Dağ and Ai Khanoum have tended to come to these sites from previous work on the Graeco-Roman world, and more specifically the Graeco-Roman Middle East (Theresa Goell worked at Jerash; Paul Bernard had been a member of the French schools at Athens and Beirut; the previous specialisms of more recent scholars of the two sites include Egypt and Susa). We therefore find a tendency to look for commonalities, and to turn to a stylistic language familiar from other regions. Third, actual structural compatibility. I have left this factor to last because I remain agnostic about the validity of direct comparison between the cultural factors at play in Commagene and those in Bactria. Certainly, the political force of the deliberate visual syncretism at Nemrud Dağ is, so far as we can tell, lacking at Ai Khanoum. At Nemrud Dağ there is a publicly asserted ideology of hybridity (or whatever term we choose to employ); at Ai Khanoum there is not.²⁴ Nemrud Dağ provides good material to think with for scholars of Ai Khanoum, but not, I would argue, to reason with. At both sites, actors are deploying selective elements of a common Hellenistic cultural koine, but to very different intent and effect.

Does this mean that we can dismiss the Zeus-Oromasdes of the temple at Ai Khanoum? Without the influence of Commagene, would we instead be free to interpret the stone foot fragment as the remains of an octopus goddess? That would be to take this short excursion into the ridiculous a little too far. The scholarly reconstruction of this fragment into a whole with a specific name and identity – a Zeus-Oromasdes – has certainly been determined by Nemrud Dağ. But while the identity of the god in Bernard's original proposition came in part from Commagene, its form – a seated Zeus – came from Graeco-Bactrian coinage and from the constraints of the temple building itself. Bernard's suggestion remains what it has always been: a plausible reconstruction, but not a certainty. Examination of this one artefact and its interpretative history has shown, I hope, just how strong an influence Nemrud Dağ has always had on the scholarship on Ai Khanoum, and why we should employ comparanda flexibly and self-critically.

23 This is not dissimilar to what I have proposed in Mairs 2014: a 'Hellenistic Bactrian koine'.

24 Argued at Mairs 2014, 185–187.

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‘Hellenized Iranians?’ *Antiochos I and the Power of Image*

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When the *Forschungsstelle Asia Minor* was inaugurated at the University of Münster in 1968, its director Friedrich Karl Dörner (1911–1992) had already been working in Commagene for 30 years.¹ It is worth stressing that finding support for such an institution was an amazing achievement, since Dörner’s interest in Eastern Anatolia was decidedly outside the mainstream topics of the fields of Classical Archaeology and Ancient History, which tended to rather simply dismiss outlying cultures and their material culture at this time.² The history of research on Nemrud Dağ and its place in intercultural perspectives was repeatedly tainted by negative judgements and still calls for studies in between established academic disciplines. The difficulties to describe and categorize Nemrud Dağ already started with Carl Sester’s discovery of Antiochos’ I *hierothesion* in 1880.³ His wrong attribution of the sculpture as Assyrian, although most probably positively connotated, is telling.⁴ Osman Hamdy Bey in turn, despite his detection of “a certain sentiment of art” was irritated by the rough stone and the dimensions of the

- 1 Dörner visited Commagene the first time in 1937 together with Rudolf Naumann supported by the Reisestipendium of the German Archaeological Institute. After World War II he returned to Turkey in 1948 and started to work in Commagene in 1951, cf. Dörner 1966, 29–31. On the history of the *Forschungsstelle* cf. Winter 2015.
- 2 On Hellenocentrism and resulting Orientalism and exclusion of research topics in 19th and 20th c. ‘Altertumswissenschaften’ cf. Hauser 2001a and Hauser 2001b/2009.
- 3 At this point Asia Minor had been barely explored at all, the notable exceptions being Texier who travelled intensely between 1833 and 1837 (Texier 1839–42) and Hamilton 1842. After a break in connection with the Crimean War and its aftermath explorative travels and first attempts to excavations resumed coeval with and slightly after the discovery of Nemrud Dağ in 1880, cf. Alaura 2006, 16–32. On the history of archaeology in Anatolia, cf. Matthews 2011; on research in the ancient Near East in relation to politics in the later 19th/early 20th c., Hauser 2014b.
- 4 In retrospect the idea appears nearly as wishful thinking, as the rediscovery of Assyrian palaces in the 1840s and the sensational exhibition of their reliefs and cuneiform texts in London, Paris and elsewhere, prompted a certain Assyromania. On the rediscovery of the Assyrians cf. Larsen 1996, on their reception Bohrer 2003.

statues and ascribed them to an “*époque de decadence*”:⁵ Neither one of them could easily consider them Greek or Hellenistic. But even the Pergamum altar, nowadays one of the most famous ensembles of ancient art, which was just being excavated by Carl Humann at that time, received very ambivalent reactions in the late 19th century. Its sculptures were considered of minor, i. e., non-classical quality and were not easily accepted as valuable examples of Greek art. It turned out that a difficult and lengthy debate about the value, the essence and the fuzzy limits of Greek art was needed before it was acquired by Prussia and, much later, assigned a prominent place in the Berlin Museum.⁶

This should apply even more to the statuary program of Nemrud Dağ, which even Otto Puchstein and Carl Humann – who provided the first detailed description, including excellent plans of the site as well as outstanding drawings and even plaster casts of sculptures that are now only badly preserved – considered of high value in the local context of Hellenized barbarians, but beyond the limits of Greek art.⁷ As Miguel John Versluys aptly summarized: they “characterized the Antiochan style as (1) a local phenomenon, that was (2) made by non-Greek artisans, that is (3) artistically uninteresting and had (4) something to do with a combination of Greek and Persian, even if ‘empty and meaningless’”⁸ No wonder summaries of Greek (and Roman) art would refrain from embracing this ‘megalomaniac’ work. Antiochos I’s visual statement of power only finds consideration in rather recent studies of Hellenistic sculpture, but with obvious reluctance. Brunilde Ridgeway concluded that “the unusual layout and the unique character of the sculptures at Nemrud Dagh may seem of little use for the study of Hellenistic sculpture, except to demonstrate the far-reaching diffusion of Greek iconographic and stylistic details intentionally adopted by a monarch who at the same time emphasized his descent from a Persian royal line.”⁹ And for R. R. R. Smith, the sculptural program of Antiochos I is intentionally blemished by this “hereditary local ruler of Kommagene”, “a Hellenised Iranian, with some Seleucid blood in his veins”:¹⁰ According to him, the *dexiosis* relief from Arsameia demonstrates that “the sculptors were clearly capable of carving naked male figures in good koine or naturalistic style, as seen elsewhere in the kingdom; but here, in accordance with the king’s stylistic instructions, they make a vigorous effort to introduce ‘un-Greek’ com-

5 Hamdy – Effendi 1883, 17–18.

6 On the history and political background of German excavations in Western Turkey and the changes in the self-assessment of classical scholarship prompted by the new approach, cf. Marchand 1996, 92–115. 190–199.

7 Humann – Puchstein 1890, 345. For the history of research in Kommagene and especially at Nemrud Dağ cf. the detailed review by Brijder 2014, 176–431.

8 Versluys 2017, 193.

9 Ridgeway 2002, 38. Ridgeway refers to a “fusion of imagery”, in which the “use of Oriental attire, esp. the tall Persian tiaras, convey a predominantly foreign impression”, while the poses, “the occasional presence of sparse folds” and the parted lips “in keeping with late Hellenistic trends” demonstrate the Greek influence; Ridgeway 2002, 37.

10 Smith 1991, 226–227.

ponents, by artificially barbarizing the anatomical scheme. There could be no genuine Achaemenid element in such figures, because nudity and naked images had always been anathema to Iranians.”¹¹ As a result “the synthetic style of the sculptures has a certain hollowness that well expresses Antiochos’ dynastic vision. The monuments of Kommagene were probably the atypical products of a troubled time and a troubled mind.”¹² While largely ostracized from discussions of Greek sculpture and given a poor image, Nemrud Dağ did make its entry into a different world: the Parthian-Persian or Iranian world, as westernmost exponent of the ‘Hellenized Iranian East’.

This paper, in its first part, reviews the various arguments for the resilient powerful image of Antiochos I’s Persian/Iranian connections and his visual program and discusses them in respect to the recently changing image of ‘Arsacid art’, by debating concepts of cultural exchange and bricolage.¹³ The second part addresses the question of systems of ideas in which Antiochos I’ program was situated and how the images created at and by Nemrud Dağ embody and engage with power, social standing and Roman imperialism.¹⁴

Nemrud Dağ as Example of Iranian Religion and Persian/Parthian Art

The idea of Nemrud Dağ’s relation to Iranian religion and Persian/Parthian art is generally based on three interwoven arguments: a) the Iranian deities featured and venerated in Antiochos’ I *hierothesia* and *temene* (‘religion’), b) the supposedly non-Greek, presumably Iranian style of the sculptures (‘art’), and c) the Persian(ite) dress of sculptures and cult personal (‘realia’) lending support to the assumption of some kind of Persian cult. All three are presented against the background of the Persian-Achaemenid ancestors mentioned by Antiochos I.

a) Religious Connections¹⁵

Just when Theresa Goell finished her cleaning of the eastern and western terraces,¹⁶ Hans Henning von der Osten surmised in his *Die Welt der Perser*: “The Iranian cultural influence was very strong in this Roman-Parthian frontier area [...] The most

11 Smith 1991, 228. On other examples of Orientalist judgements cf. Root 1991; Hauser 2001a.

12 Smith 1991, 228.

13 In this case the entire spectrum of meanings for resilience, from indestructible to elastic, is included.

14 This paper is often forced to reiterate arguments provided in much more detail in the most excellent study of M. J. Versluys 2017 in order to add remarks or argue for different opinions.

15 This topic is discussed in more detail and depth by de Jong in this volume.

16 Cf. Sanders 1996, 35–47; Brijder 2014, 312–381.

outstanding monument in this area is the tomb of King Antiochos [...] Aside from a number of large scale sculptures he had images of his ancestors, who were mainly of Iranian descent, made in relief. Greek was only the appearance [outer garb], i. e. the make-up and design, but the content is purely Iranian.¹⁷ It is not expressly stated why the content appeared Iranian to him, but since he continues with a discussion of Mithras, his interpretation seems to rely on Antiochos I's relation to this deity.¹⁸ In stressing the Iranianess of Antiochos I through his *dexiosis* with Mithras, von der Osten followed Franz Cumont's idea, who only six years after Nemrud Dağ's discovery argued for Commagene as link between the ancient Iranian god and Mithras' later prominence in the Roman Empire.¹⁹ A special relationship between Mithras and Antiochos I was repeatedly purported for the simple reasons that both are dressed the same way in the *dexiosis* reliefs at Nemrud Dağ, although they differ in their headdress; Antiochos I is seen wearing the Armenian five-pointed tiara, while Apollo-Mithras-Helios-Hermes wears the typical upright cap ('tiara?') used in Roman representations of 'Parthians'. (Sun) rays emanate from behind his head high-lighting his Helios-persona. The image of a genuinely Iranian religious setting was taken up by various scholars.²⁰ During

17 von der Osten 1956, 113: "der iranische Kultureinfluß war in diesem römisch-parthischen Grenzgebiet äußerst stark [...] Das weitaus großartigste Monument aus diesem Gebiet ist das Grabmal des Königs Antiochos I. [...] Außer einer Reihe von Großskulpturen hat er dort auf Relieftafeln seine Ahnen abbilden lassen, die vorwiegend iranischen Ursprungs waren. Griechisch ist nur das äußere Gewand, das heißt die handwerkliche Ausführung und Gestaltung, der Inhalt aber ist rein iranisch." It is funny to observe that for von der Osten the rather fragile argument for Iranian descent on Antiochos I father's side took precedence over the clear sequence of his mother's Greek ancestors. His position can be supported by Str. 11,14,16: "The sacred rites of the Persians are held in honor by both Medes and Armenians."

18 von der Osten 1956, 113: "Auf der einen Relieftafel erscheint Antiochos I., wie er Mithra-Helios zur Bestätigung des Lehnsverhältnisses die Hand reicht." I refrain from a discussion of the idea of feudal relations. Whether there is more than an assumed connection of the Iranian god and Zoroastrianism with the Roman Mithras cult is an open question. While the 'Persian clothing' of the deity in Roman contexts clearly insinuates an Iranian background, there is no indication that the idea behind the god and its cult show any continuity. The debate cannot be taken up in detail here. Severe criticism of Cumont started among specialists in the 1960s, cf. Beck 2002, although some defend a connection between Commagene and the Roman cult of Mithras. According to Beck 1998 Antiochos I played a major role in the transformation of Mithras worship by his equation of Mithras with Helios, and paved the way for the later transfer of Mithraism to Rome in connection with the deposition of Commagene's last king Antiochos IV and his relocation to Rome in 72 CE. Cumont 1896/1898.

19 Cf. Duchesne-Guillemin 1984, 17: "Die Wichtigkeit Mithras ist in Kommagene offenbar. Erstens ist er der einzige Gott, dem ein spezieller Priester gewidmet ist; zweitens nennt der König sich selbst gerecht (δικαιος, ein beliebtes Epitheton Mithras); drittens trägt der König Mithras Gewand und Halsband; viertens will Antiochos die Nemrud-Dagh-Anlage als ein zweites Delphi verstanden wissen. Darüber hinaus geschah vermutlich, wie wir sahen, die Nemrud-Dagh-Stiftung unter astrologischem Einfluß, und bekanntlich spielte die Astrologie in den römischen Mithrasmysterien eine große Rolle." None of these arguments appears fully convincing in my view. On the other hand, Duchesne-Guillemin 1984, 13, acknowledges that the deities appear "zuerst als griechische oder makedonische Götter mit einem dünnen iranischen Firnis".

her excavations at Nemrud Dağ, Goell felt forced to identify a highly suspicious fire-altar.²¹ And also Dörner was enthralled by the idea of Iranian connections. Otherwise it would be difficult to understand his interpretation of the 158 m long tunnel at Arsameia, which ended in a kind of chamber, as being connected to some Mithras cult in which the king should have appeared from the depths as ‘Epiphanes’ and ‘reborn of Mithra.’²² It is interesting to note the preparedness of many scholars to look for Iranian traits to the demise of the Greek component, although the latter was obviously at least as important. Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin and Bruno Jacobs tried to demonstrate on various occasions that the religious program originally concentrated on Greek deities and that the ‘Iranian’ component was added only during the ‘syncretistic’ reconfiguration.²³ But regardless of chronology, the important point is that Antiochos I clearly felt the need to make sure that everybody, not only those with a more western ‘Hellenistic’ background, but also people in the East, understood that his divine support was supreme. Therefore, he created deities of high complexity as indicated by their combinatory names. However, the fact that all images of these deities were accompanied by inscriptions detailing their names should be interpreted as evidence that these explanations were considered necessary, because otherwise neither the population nor visitors from outside might have (fully) understood their significance.²⁴

But because the interesting aspect of the syncretistic deities is their comprehensibility within various communicative or religious traditions²⁵, the isolation of and emphasis on Mithras in earlier research appears misguided. Concentrating on Mithras not only dismisses the divine aspects of Apollo, Helios and Hermes, it also leaves aside the other ‘syncretistic’ deities represented in *dexiosis* reliefs and as monumental statues,

- 21 Brijder 2014, 348–354. Goell’s perspective is summarized by Jacobs 1996, 348: “Bei der religionshistorischen Einordnung betonte Goell stärker die iranischen Traditionen. Allerdings werden Begriffe wie ‘Feuerkult’ und ‘Feuertempel’ (z. B. S. 144 f.) schlagwortartig und völlig unreflektiert gehandhabt; wenn Mithraskult und Feuerverehrung miteinander in Verbindung gebracht werden (S. 146), wenn das Barsambündel als Symbol des Heiligen Feuers apostrophiert wird, das während ‘Persian-Mithraic religious sacrifices’ gebraucht wurde (S. 101), wird deutlich, daß das Verständnis der orientalischen Komponente eher unscharf blieb.”
- 22 Dörner 1966, 75 (and several other times since 1960, e. g. Dörner 1991, 351): “Hier in der Tiefe der Erde entsühnte der König – so scheint es – sich und sein Volk als ein ‘Epiphanes’, wie der Beinamen des Königs von Kommagene lautet, das heißt als eine sichtbare Erscheinung göttlichen Wirkens, als ein Wiedergeborener des Gottes Mithras.” The idea was originally prompted by the failure to reach any water source as expected. Doubtful about this pre-Mithraeum already Duchesne-Guillemin 1984, 18.
- 23 Duchesne-Guillemin 1984, 17; Jacobs 2012b, 103, but cf. Versluys 2017, 178–182, questioning the chronological evidence.
- 24 For a related idea cf. Kropp 2013, 315, who remarked that “to the native Aramaic-speaking population [...] one set of gods was as alien [...] as the other”. But cf. the contribution of Jacobs in this volume correctly cautioning against Kropp’s direct correlation of language and ethnicity which is the basis for his suggestion.
- 25 This does not necessarily imply that these specific syncretisms were easily comprehended by contemporaries and accepted outside their Commagenian context.

especially Oromazdes-Zeus, whose place in the middle of the line-up of statues on the Nemrud Dağ terraces was certainly not accidental.²⁶

b) 'Parthian Art'

For other scholars, the images themselves and art historical arguments took precedence over religious aspects in the connection between Antiochos I's sculptural program and Iranian or Persian heritage. Von der Osten's estimate of a mixture of cultures was entirely shared by Roman Ghirshman in his monumental handbook *Iran. Parther und Sasaniden*, but the direction of the arguments differed.²⁷ Aside from the Zoroastrian pantheon, he stressed the Iranian attire of the former kings, their tiara, and the *barsom* of the gods, as well as the "taste for the colossal, which follows a tradition that had been created in the past and was resumed by Achaemenid artists". He concluded: "But they also prove the infiltration of new currents, the influence of the Parthian world, which extended fast in these frontier zones of the empire."²⁸ Still, Ghirshman refrained from calling the sculpture from Nemrud Dağ 'Parthian art'.

The question of 'Parthian art' was originally posed by Gerhard Rodenwaldt, who, following Riegl's idea of 'Kunstwollen', argued in the 1920s that Roman art was more than just (poor) copies of the Greek ideal. In 1931 he wrote: "The problem of Parthian art or rather the Art of the Parthian Empire is one of the most acute, but also one of the most difficult in archaeology. What do we understand as Parthian culture? Did it exist at all? Rostovtzeff answered this question already by calling the culture of Palmyra nearly completely Parthian. From him, as the foremost expert on these frontier areas, we could expect [can hope for] the decisive advancement of this problem."²⁹ Being nudged that vigorously, Rostovtzeff complied. In his seminal study *Dura and*

26 His central position in turn led some scholars to claim that the whole *hierotheseion* was strongly influenced by Zoroastrianism, e.g. Sommer 2005, 60. Facella 2006, 291–293, convincingly argues that there was nothing Zoroastrian (or Persian) to the cult than the added names. Neither in Nemrud Dağ nor in any other place in Commagene exists any evidence for Magoi or sacred fires. On Zoroastrianism in the Arsacid period cf. de Jong 2015 and in this volume.

27 Ghirshman's book was published in several languages in 1962. My translations from the German version sometimes differ slightly from those provided by Versluys 2017, who translated from the Italian version, both in turn mirror the different translations from the original French into Italian and German.

28 Ghirshman 1962, 67–68.

29 Rodenwaldt 1931, 291: "Das Problem der parthischen Kunst oder richtiger der Kunst des Partherreiches ist eins der akutesten, aber auch schwierigsten der Archäologie. Was verstehen wir unter parthischer Kultur? Hat es überhaupt eine solche gegeben? Rostovtzeff hat die Frage schon beantwortet, indem er die Kultur Palmyras als fast vollständig parthisch bezeichnet. Von ihm als dem besten Kenner dieser Grenzgebiete dürfen wir die entscheidende Förderung dieses Problems erhoffen, [dessen Lösung für die Geschichte der spätantiken Kunst von größter Wichtigkeit wäre]." On the problem of 'Parthian art' see Hauser 2014a; Jacobs 2014, 77–82; Dirven 2016.

the Problem of Parthian Art (1935), he defined ‘Parthian art’ as an art characterized by a strict frontal representation and by an inherent spirituality expressed in “the large piercing eyes, full of religious fervor and enthusiasm”.³⁰ Rostovtzeff argued that this art was furthermore characterized by linearity and increasingly schematic rendering of figural contours and drapery – in contrast to the more natural Greek rendering of bodies – and ethnographic realism/verism with love for detail in dress or weaponry.³¹ The result seemed “no longer almost Greek, with a slight Achaemenid touch”, but “much more Iranized, much more Parthian.”³²

For Rostovtzeff this was not “merely a barbarized and degenerate version of the Graeco-Mesopotamian art of the Hellenistic period”³³, but the essence of a particular material culture, ‘Parthian art’ in its own right, which he saw as an expression of neo-Iranian identity. “The discussion of the material culture thus served to support his description of Arsacid policy. The political and the material had become intermingled.”³⁴

Rostovtzeff tried to identify traces of this neo-Iranian art on three levels, first at the (still) unknown Arsacid imperial court³⁵, second in regional developments in Fars and Babylonia, where he assumed the tendency of Graeco-Babylonian style to develop to “linear, stiff, and spiritual” ‘Parthian’ style³⁶, and third in Iranian artistic traditions outside the empire in Central Asia, Armenia and neighbouring regions. His main example became Nemrud Dağ. “As much Iranized as the Sarmatian kingdoms [...] was a large part of Asia Minor, especially the eastern section of it. We know very little of the development of art in Pontus and Cappadocia [...] More is known about Kommagene. The splendid mountain sanctuary of Nimrud Dagh with its fascinating sculptures has been studied many times by various scholars. There is no difference of opinion on the Iranian character of these sculptures, evident not only in the dress, arms, religion but

30 Rostovtzeff 1935, 232. This result had already been suggested by Rodenwaldt 1931, 292–293.

31 Rostovtzeff 1935, 299.

32 Rostovtzeff 1935, 232. As augmented elsewhere, Rostovtzeff’s discussion of ‘Parthian art’ had two independent aims, his need to interpret the unusual visual culture encountered in his excavations at Dura Europos and his interest in the ‘Parthian Empire’ and its character not the least reflected in its material remains, which he considered “an independent source of historical information, no less valuable and important, sometimes more important than written sources”, Rostovtzeff 1922, p. VIII. His discussion of ‘Parthian art’ therefore is not only a debate about certain art styles, but about the character of the ‘Parthian Empire’ and its history in general, cf. Hauser 2014a, 128–129.

33 Rostovtzeff 1935, 160.

34 Hauser 2014a, 129.

35 In this context he referred to the temple sculptures from Hatra following Walter Andrae’s erroneous assumption that the temples were the palace of the kings of Hatra.

36 Rostovtzeff 1935, 182. 186. On the other hand, he describes the art of Babylonia in Parthian times as “hybrid art” with “main currents” from “Greek, Babylonian, and Iranian art”, Rostovtzeff 1935, 189–190.

also in the style.”³⁷ Representing the state of the research, this image of Iranianess will have greatly influenced Goell and Dörner when they started to work in Commagene.

Rostovtzeff’s opinion was not entirely shared by Daniel Schlumberger in his 1960 article *Descendants non-méditerranéens de l’art grec*, in which he described the art of Commagene. He regarded the statues of deities at Nemrud Dağ as excellent examples of block-formed statues as part of a Near Eastern tradition going back to Gudea.³⁸ He saw the *dexioseis* (which he interpreted as investitures) and the lion horoscope as something new. Still, for Schlumberger the reliefs at Nemrud Dağ were not really ‘Parthian’, as they were not frontal depictions, but three-quarter profiles of the body and full profiles of the faces. Schlumberger felt that they were about to turn from the three-quarter profile to frontality (“une tendance marquée à se tourner vers le spectateur”). Therefore, he explained, one could call this Parthian, but maybe better Graeco-Iranian, a forerunner of Parthian art proper.³⁹

Interestingly, Schlumberger, who had been working in/near Palmyra for years and was excavating in Surkh Kotal at that time, considered the invention of strict frontal representation to be a Syro-Mesopotamian and not an Iranian development. Therefore, it was Ghirshman, whose field experience and interest was from and in Iran, who against Schlumberger identified frontality again as a native Iranian tradition.⁴⁰ For him, this fit well into his general image of Arsacid period art: “Whatever Iranian art accepts from the new stimulations [by Hellenism, SRH], they are not profound, but remain façade. And even where form and material seemingly adapt, the Iranian spirit remains unswayable.”⁴¹ Amalgamating the opinions of Rostovtzeff and Schlumberger concerning Nemrud Dağ, Ghirshman acknowledged: “the law of frontality, one of the most striking peculiarities of Parthian art, has not asserted itself so far.”⁴² Therefore, uphold-

37 Rostovtzeff 1935, 192–193, where he compares the style to Greco-Persian gems and “still more striking” to the “almost contemporary sculptures of Palmyra”.

38 Other scholars favoured an Anatolian tradition: “fundamentally the monument was rooted in Anatolian-Hittite tradition”, Goell 1952, 141. In this she followed Rostovtzeff, who also thought that ultimately the concept of frontality derived from Syro-Hittite art in Northern Mesopotamia (thus not far from Commagene), somehow ‘invaded’ (on undisclosed ways) Central Asian nomadic art, from where it was accepted by the “nomadic Parthians”. Although these became Hellenized for a while, the “principles of their ancestral art”, among which was the “principle of frontality”, were revived along with their “national consciousness” and became the rule in religious and “ancestral secular compositions”, Rostovtzeff 1935, 240–241.

39 He concluded: “L’art parthe est un art post-grec, une version transformée, adaptée par les nouveaux maîtres de l’Orient à leur propre usage, de cet art ‘moderne’ du temps qu’est l’art grec”, Schlumberger 1960, 291–292.

40 Ghirshman 1962, 7.

41 Ghirshman 1962, 337: “Das, was die iranische Kunst anscheinend von den neuen Anregungen [des Hellenismus, SRH.] übernimmt, geht nicht in die Tiefe, sondern bleibt Fassade. Und wenn auch Form und Materie sich anzupassen scheinen, so bleibt der iranische Geist doch unbeeinflussbar.”

42 Ghirshman 1962, 68.

ing the image of the Iranian character, he concluded: “the flat relief is still under the spell of Achaemenid tradition” and “preserves Achaemenid motifs”.⁴³

But after this clear Iranization of Antiochos I’s visual program, the approach to ‘Eastern’ art that had marked the period changed. Starting with Malcolm Colledge’s *Art of the Parthians* (1977), summaries of ‘Parthian art’ increasingly became compilations of ‘art within the Arsacid Empire’ with fewer ethnical overtones and thus they increasingly excluded Nemrud Dağ. Although the important role of frontal representation as stylistic trade mark of genuine ‘Parthian art’ remained consensual⁴⁴, the art of the empire in general now increasingly appeared as “characterized by eclecticism, a willingness to borrow style and motifs from Greek and earlier Near Eastern cultures and to recombine them to create new forms”.⁴⁵ This results in “the overlapping of different cultural planes, which is perhaps the most truly characteristic feature of art in the Parthian empire”.⁴⁶

An excellent example of what this means is the first Arsacid capital in Nisa, where a marvellously eclectic collection of artefacts was found, in particular in the so-called ‘Square Building’, a monumental, representative former banqueting space, which had been turned into a storehouse for disused precious objects.⁴⁷ At Nisa, we see marble statues of Aphrodite (possibly identified with Anahita), Artemis and Dionysos in purely Hellenistic style, which are in contrast to likewise ‘Hellenic’ life-sized clay-heads of which comparisons can be found in Central Asia.⁴⁸ But Greek and Central Asian elements are also found side by side in gilded silver or bronze figurines including Athena, Eros, gryphons and eagles.⁴⁹ Finally, a splendid collection of approximately 50 ivory rhyta came to light, part of which displaying Greek mythological scenes and deities on the stem. Antonio Invernizzi suggests that: “The principals of these common features are the cultural component of Greek origin and the specifically Arsacid Iranian element”⁵⁰, while I would stress that their execution and the recurring presence of typically eastern subjects demonstrate the perfect blend of local and western traditions.⁵¹

43 Ghirshman 1962, 66–67.

44 E. g. Keall 1989, 51–52; Mathiesen 1992, 13–14; correctly criticised by Dirven 2016, 75, cf. on the debate Hauser 2014a, 129–131.

45 Downey 1986, 580. Colledge 1977, 144: there is “no common language of art” in the Parthian Empire. For Colledge, in a way returning to Rostovtzeff’s argument of politics and art, this coincided with a “lack of [central] control” that “reflects on social and political as much as on art history”.

46 Invernizzi 2011, 192.

47 Invernizzi 2010. On the rhyta cf. Masson – Pugachenkova 1982; Pappalardo 2010; on metal objects: Invernizzi 1999; on sculptures: Invernizzi 2009.

48 Invernizzi 2009.

49 Invernizzi 1999.

50 Invernizzi 2011, 191. Dirven 2016, 70 n. 10 pointedly remarks: “one cannot help wondering what the study of Parthian art would have looked like had Nisa been found ten years earlier”.

51 Masson and Pugachenkova 1982; Pappalardo 2010.

Still, in discussion of material culture from the Arsacid period, the image of a strong Hellenistic influence is most often considered chronologically relevant. The more than 30 statues that have been found at Susa may serve as an example. They vary from possibly even imported marble statues of Greek deities, to locally produced items according to western norms, e.g. the city Tyche, to less naturalistic, frontal representations of men in long tunic, mantle, trousers and shoes, which display every aspect of 'Parthian art' as defined by Rostovtzeff. According to Pierre Amiet, the differences represent three periods, which he interpreted as a phase of direct Seleucid control, a period of strongly Hellenized art under early Arsacid rule, and a decline of Greek influence after the mid-1st century CE.⁵² Nevertheless, stratified terracotta figurines from Seleucia on the Tigris show no such abatement, but the continuous development of new types in seemingly 'Graeco-Hellenistic' as well as mixed styles.⁵³ For a long time, the continuation and development of 'Greek-looking' terracotta figurines was simply not conceded to 'the Parthians', but the evidence abounds of the way different styles were actively employed and transformed. A case in point are the alabaster statuettes that were found in Seleucia in the later Arsacid period levels I and II. While Hans E. Mathiesen sees an "astonishing [...] pure Greek style"⁵⁴, the statuettes are quite obviously a local innovation based on inherited accumulated visual codes without any direct counterpart in the West.⁵⁵ And we should not be surprised if some 'Greek-looking' Hellenistic figurines were invented in Seleucia on the Tigris, one of the most important Hellenistic centres of its time, as those styles had been common in that area for centuries already and did not need any further stimulus from outside to thrive.

In addition, we should be aware that dwindling (direct) Greek influence is not necessarily the same as loss of quality. Instead, it represents a different set of values and/or contexts of use. This is nicely illustrated by life-sized statues of rulers and nobility of the 2nd and 3rd century CE excavated in shrines at Hatra, which appear rigid but demonstrate certain virtuosity in their finely embroidered tunics, trousers and shoes.⁵⁶ As already observed by Rostovtzeff and Schlumberger, the same steadfast quality and frontality are even found in scenes of communicative acts between persons, which do not look at each other but gaze at the beholder. This rendition in later Arsacid times produces immediacy, a direct contact between the person depicted and the observer and was obviously considered more important than a naturalistic rendering. The less Hellenized way of representation is, nevertheless, neither ethnically 'Parthian', nor official 'Arsacid art', but just the most commonly used form of visual communication.

52 Amiet 2001. Cf. on the idea of separate traditions Ghirshman 1962, 337, as in note 41.

53 Van Ingen 1939; Menegazzi 2014.

54 Mathiesen 1992, 17.

55 Cf. Hauser 2012, 1019; Fowkes-Childs – Seymour 2019, 233–237.

56 Safar – Mustafa 1974; Dirven 2008.

The statues of Hatrean nobility show us how much the way and style of images depended on contexts of use. While they had been considered prime examples of Parthian art for their frontality and linearity, it is now obvious that they were employed in temples where they lent a specific presence and permanence to those represented in sculpture. They force the viewer, human or divine, to engage and interact with the image.⁵⁷ But at the same time we find marble sculpture modelled on Greek classical ideals in other, functionally different contexts at Hatra, and large paintings of animal hunts, which prefigure Sasanian art, covering walls of contemporary private buildings.⁵⁸

Based on this, we conclude that a deliberate choice of art styles was possible in the Arsacid empire according to their use, at least in larger city centres. And even where individual pieces might be described in fixed stylistic or even ethnic terms, the overall result is usually as time-space specific as it is eclectic. Instead of one type of ‘Parthian art’ or a single style, there was a choice between a multitude of possibilities to acquire rather idiomatic pieces or to have them blended into something new. This applies to conscious eclecticism in assemblages as much as to individual pieces demonstrating the same trend of bricolage as we encounter at Nemrud Dağ.

c) Persianite Realia

With the redefinition of ‘Parthian art’ as ‘art in the Arsacid Empire’, Commagene was eliminated from this specific discourse. Mathiesen even stated: “Even though the art of Commagene is at times included in the treatment of Parthian art, this disposition is difficult to accept, for the Commagenian works of art do not, from neither a historical nor art-historical point of view, belong with the Parthian works.”⁵⁹ One might well argue against Mathiesen that, although we don’t know any genealogical assemblages from the Arsacid Empire (which might well be a result of our very fragmentary knowledge), the individual ancestor stelae fit perfectly fine into the general context of Adiabenean rock reliefs of local rulers.⁶⁰

Likewise, Ghirshman’s idea that Nemrud Dağ’s ‘Iranian character’ is anchored in a rather Achaemenid Persian style, was rejected by Smith, who advanced the idea that “there is no trace of Achaemenid style or iconography” at Nemrud Dağ – and “the sculptures are a quite conscious and artificial concoction of Greek and Oriental. It is a

57 Dirven 2008; Hauser 2014a.

58 Safar – Mustafa 1974; Venco 1996, 156 fig. 5.

59 Mathiesen 1992, 85.

60 Cf. the stelae in Assur (Andrae – Lenzen 1933, 105–107; Hauser 2011, 142–143), and the rock reliefs in Batas Herir (Boehmer – von Gall 1973; Grabowski 2011), Rabana/Merguli (Khounani – Mohammadifar 2018) and Amadiya (Miglus et al. 2018).

hybrid art designed to express particular hybrid dynastic ideas”.⁶¹ On the other hand, Ghirshman was supported by Antiochos I’s own statements that he had the images made “according to the ancient logos of the Persians and Hellenes” and that the priests of the *hierotheresia* were to wear “suitable clothing of Persian character” (N 71). Visually this is represented by the dress of the ancestors on the father’s side, the costumes and headdresses of gods and Antiochos I himself, as well as the *barsom*.⁶² Accordingly, Smith concluded that (even) “the colossal seated statues [...] represent Antiochos himself and the four syncretic gods of his pantheon, and wear Oriental costumes and headgear, no doubt intended to be Achaemenid”.⁶³ Goell had already discussed that this was not genuinely appropriate Achaemenid attire, arguing that “the ‘Persian’ costumes of Antiochos, his deities and ancestors do not come directly from the draped costumes in the Persepolis reliefs. They were the result of the type developing as part of a long evolution and representing a local contemporary style worn by the Parthians. Another type with long cloak and trousers that are narrow at the ankles is of Median origin. The original can be seen worn by Medes in the Persepolis reliefs and on silver statuettes of the Achaemenid period. In other words, the Nemrud Dağ figures are wearing local, contemporary costumes.”⁶⁴

The appropriate question, therefore, is what Antiochos I refers to when he calls clothing or customs ‘Persian’ in his inscriptions. While modern research simply assumed that this referred to the Achaemenids, this seems far from certain. In a detailed study, Bruno Jacobs clearly demonstrated that ‘Persian’ could well have meant ‘Parthian’⁶⁵, in the same way as how Roman authors refer to either Parthians or Persians without differentiating. Therefore, the explicit Persianizing of Antiochos I might in fact be aimed at the Arsacids.⁶⁶

This is particularly interesting in connection with the observation that, in the process of eclectic appropriation at Nemrud Dağ, Greek elements seem far more present than ‘Persianite’.⁶⁷ The combination of various forms has been discussed in great

61 Smith 1988, 227–228, who sees a rather hollow, synthetic version of Oriental dynastic art. The term hybridity allows us to intellectually distance ourselves from descriptions and assignations which appear too simplistic or outright ethnocentric (and thus politically incorrect) without defining what we really mean, cf. the excellent discussion by Versluys 2017, 244–245.

62 Duchesme-Guillemin 1984; Jacobs 2017.

63 Smith 1991, 227.

64 Goell 1952, 143.

65 Jacobs 2017, 244.

66 Strootman – Versluys 2017, 18, for a very valuable definition of and discrimination between Persianization, “a (specific) form of acculturation” and Persianism (a construction of cultural memory in later circumstances).

67 Hoepfner 2012, 129: es handelt sich “um einen hellenistischen Akkulturationsprozess [...], bei dem orientalische Elemente auf äußerliche Zeichen wie Kleidung und Federkrone reduziert sind”. Kropp 2013, 314: “The Persian elements are both late and sporadic, being mainly limited to royal garb and added names to the deities depicted.” I disagree with the idea that the Achaemenids were crucial for Arsacid royal ideology as expressed by Versluys 2017, 215, 230, although they might have

detail by Jacobs and Versluys, who specifically stressed the combination of different elements as a kind of bricolage, i. e. the notion of “how various influences and traditions are used to create a new whole.”⁶⁸ Versluys convincingly argues that the styles were not related to any specific ethnic group, but – as argued above for the examples from the Arsacid Empire – the result of an active, conscious choice. As such – to quote Versluys: “The Antiochan style [...] is best described as a juxtaposition and blending of discrete elements suggestive of different cultural traditions within a single, new style as the result of conscious appropriation.”⁶⁹ The ancestor reliefs invited or even forced earlier research to interpret the sculptures as “plastic counterpart of the genealogy of the Commagenian house”.⁷⁰ But this image needs correction, since “the visual strategy of Antiochos I was [...] not about being Greek or Persian, but about doing Greek and Persian.”⁷¹

Versluys concludes that the deployment of Greek elements can be understood as an active choice to associate with civilization and modernity.⁷² Nevertheless, this by no means implies that references to contemporary Arsacid culture should be regarded as less positive – or they would not be there. The representation of contemporary ‘Persian’ dress, specific crowns, and in particular the peculiar dagger simply accord to a different reference system of dignity.⁷³ As much as the Greek elements accord to a certain language to create the image of a Hellenistic ruler, the ‘Persianite’ references relate him to modern eastern kingship.

Power, Social Standing and Roman Imperialism

The question remains why Antiochos I should make this choice for his image, especially if it seems doubtful that there was any genetically or culturally exclusive Greek or Persian population in the area? To approach this question, we have to discuss Antiochos I’s self-aggrandizing visual and cultic program in the context of power, social standing and Roman imperialism. His program consisted of: a) the foundation of (or at least the renovation of) three *hierothesia* and the establishment of numerous *temene*,

accepted suggestions of connections as occasionally helpful, cf. Shayegan 2011. Cf. also de Jong 2017, 37–38. The ancestor gallery at Nemrud Dağ is interesting in that it attempts to connect the Arsacids with the Achaimenids via Antiochos’ family.

68 Versluys 2017, 197–198.

69 Versluys 2017, 246.

70 Mathiesen 1992, 85.

71 Versluys 2017, 219.

72 Versluys 2017, 212.

73 This dagger belongs to the type of ‘four looped dagger’, which in the Arsacid period obviously became an accepted insignia of high standing from Central Asia to Nemrud Dağ as its westernmost occurrence. For comparisons for the dagger in Central Asia, Winkelmann 2013, 243–245.

together with the foundation of regular festivals, b) his personal ascendancy towards divinity, and c) the creation of a unique visualization of his royalty, which found its acme in his *hierotheresion* on Nemrud Dağ.

The entire program was obviously developed after Antiochos I was awarded the kingdom of Commagene by Pompey in 64 BC.⁷⁴ It has been repeatedly mentioned that Antiochos I needed the one thing that, as is widely assumed, every ruler needs: acceptance or legitimacy.⁷⁵ Usually, you would see three different courses that might lead to acceptance: 1) Divine selection; 2) Genealogy, i. e. successful ancestors; and 3) as Gehrke stressed, following Max Weber: charisma provided by success, in the Hellenistic period preferably through war.⁷⁶ The problem for Antiochos I was that none of the three factors could be claimed without reservation and hesitation. Although he asserted that he was succeeding to his ancestral kingdom he was selected by Pompey and his Roman arms; his immediate ancestors had been dependent on the Armenian kings and the Seleucids⁷⁷; and if there was anything he needed to avoid, it would have

74 Appian reports that Pompey after his defeat of Mithridates of Pontos, added Sophene and Gordiène to the realm of Ariobarzanes of Cappadocia, passed the Taurus mountains and made war against Antiochos I, until they entered into friendly relations (App. Mith. 16,105–106). The state of war must not necessarily have involved any actual armed confrontation, since the relative strength was too obvious. Before leaving the region Pompey granted Antiochos I Seleucia (Zeugma) and those parts of Mesopotamia that he had conquered (App. Mith. 17, 114; Str. 16,2,3) which did not prevent him from listing him among the vanquished kings in his triumph at Rome in 62 BCE (App., Mith. 17,117). According to Plut. Pompeius 45,4, Antiochos I gave hostages.

75 I would like to thank Ab de Jong for a thought provoking debate about the usefulness of this category which indeed, as he pointed out, is often overstated and might in cases be “not only anachronistic, but intellectually mechanical, culturally homogenizing, theoretically naïve, empirically false, and tediously predictable” as Sheldon Pollock (*The Language of the Gods in the World of Men. Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Pre-modern India* [Berkeley 2006] 18; quoted after de Jong 2017, 42) summarized. In spite of this certainly often appropriate critique, I will use this category here as I assume a strong need on the side of Antiochos I to define his new kingdom and to gain acceptance and justification for his rule, i. e. legitimacy.

76 Gehrke 2013, 76.

77 Versluys 2017, 172–178, not the least building on the critical evaluation of evidence for pre-Antiochos activities in both Arsameias by Hoepfner 2012, 129, questions the validity of historicity of Antiochos’ I dynasty as augmented by Antiochos I. As much as I agree with Hoepfner and Versluys about this ‘invention of dynastic tradition’, I would argue that it does not really matter whether we believe that the kingdom existed before – based on the coins of his father and grandfather (Bedoukian 1983; Facella 2006, 209–224) – or not. Antiochos I owed both, the kingdom’s existence and its geographical extent, to the decisions of Pompey during the conference of Amisos. Assigning Antiochos I “obscure origins” (Versluys 2017, 231) is probably too harsh. The only question is why Pompey thought it prudent not to incorporate Commagene into the Roman realm. Aside from avoiding a direct, possibly confrontational frontier, he evaded additional problems with the senate at home for overstepping his imperium. At this moment (and in retrospect) the installation of a friendly king without too great ambitions, who while controlling the important crossings of the Euphrates at Zeugma and Samosata, was easily controlled himself, appeared (and appears) the much better choice.

been a war that he could only lose. Still, the foundation of a new kingdom required him to play the game: and he played it in a big way.

a) The Installation of Cult Places

Obviously Antiochos I decided that if he received a new kingdom from the Romans, he was going to use it well. The various cult places throughout the country – as has been remarked very often – described the kingdom, they defined the space. Versluys appropriately suggests that “by using these spatial practices Antiochos I changed the map of Commagene into an Antiochan space.”⁷⁸ But in deploying these cult centres, Antiochos I not only appropriated the landscape, he also created (the new) Commagene, a political entity that had just been extended in the South by Zeugma and its surroundings and allotted the control of two of the most important crossings of the Euphrates between Rome, Armenia and the Arsacid Empire.⁷⁹

The new creation of the realm is also the reason why the goddess Commagene features so prominently in his program. No other Hellenistic ruler used the image or personification of his country this meaningfully. The Seleucids claimed to descend from Apollo, who was likewise the patron-deity in Elymais, while the Ptolemies claimed to descend from Dionysos, and the Attalids from Herakles, who also became the patron deity in Mesene. But nowhere do we see as much importance assigned to the country itself as in Commagene. But there is an additional aspect: all the energy spent on building a Commagenian identity through cult is defensive in how it carves out a territory from the previous Armenian realm and from those areas that were factually under the sway of Rome. Accordingly, Antiochos I – contrary to more potent Hellenistic kings – lacked any interest in expanding his realm and simply accepted the limits of his (tax-rich) kingdom. This was a wise decision, as he would have stood no chance against the Armenians and even less against Rome. As Ulrich Gotter pointedly remarked, the rulers of the region “had learned how little it took to be disposed of [...], who held power – even on the Euphrates – could no longer remain secret. I consider it extremely plausible to see the occasion for the energetic construction of the ruler cult at Commagene in this structural delegitimation of regional kingdoms.”⁸⁰ So Antiochos called himself ‘Philorhomaioi’ for good reasons and just guarded the Euphrates, while at the same time he transmitted a certain image through an unusual display of power in the scale and visibility of his buildings, and in particular his *hierothesion* at Nemrud Dağ.

78 Versluys 2017, 113.

79 This responsibility also involved enormous tax revenues, cf. Jacobs 2012b, 107.

80 Gotter 2013, 222.

b) Ascendency towards Divinity

Styling oneself a divine ruler is not exceptional in the Hellenistic world. We can refer to the Ptolemies as example.⁸¹ And while the majority of ruler cults were established by the respective subjects, there were still cults elsewhere that the rulers had established for themselves.⁸² But although “Hellenistic dynastic monuments, and in particular colossi, were designed to display power as something tangible”⁸³ the dimension and conceptual consistency of Antiochos I’s plans were outstanding. By assigning cult places throughout his territory and prescribing the participation in cultic festivities, he actively attempted to inscribe and display the new political and social realities in the physical world.⁸⁴ The various cult centres thereby addressed Antiochos I’s subjects directly, as they were supposed to attend at least two festivities a year, a duty they were compensated for by free meals, again intended to strengthen communal ideas.⁸⁵ The *hierothesion* at Nemrud Dağ will also have affected the local population, since a sizeable number of them will have helped to build this enormous monument, and it must already have been visible throughout the kingdom during the building process. A monument to refer to and a wonder to behold! The power of Antiochos I’s images thus served to establish an image of power.

c) Nemrud Dağ and its Multiple Messages

Although Antiochos I dramatically changed the entire landscape of his kingdom, the representational efforts reached their acme and unprecedented levels in the complex

81 Jacobs 2012a, 79: The gods provide “was ihre göttliche Huld gewährend kann: die Herrschaft selbst, aber auch deren Gelingen durch Prosperität und Sicherheit.” Contrary to earlier interpretations which saw these reliefs as attempts to place Antiochos on par with the gods, his *dexiosis* inscription from Zeugma states that the representation shows him “receiving the benevolent right hands of the gods”, which they extended “to my assistance in my struggles”, cf. Crowther – Facella 2003, 47–53. Therefore, despite his calling himself *theos* and his mixing with the gods at Nemrud Dağ in form of a *synthronos*, Antiochos I did not place himself on the same level. Cf. Shayegan 2017, 427 n. 135.

82 Gotter 2013, 219.

83 Versluys 2017, 122 with additional literature.

84 Bourdieu 2013, 199.

85 It is often assumed that the population was supposed to participate in 24 events per year, e.g. Wagner 2012b, 44; Jacobs 2012b, 105; Rose 2013, 226 (Kropp 2013, 309, erroneously even speaks about 26 occasions!), since the ‘great cult inscription’ (N) details that Antiochos I a) “consecrated” his birthday (the 16th of Audnaios) and the day of his accession to the throne (the 10th of Loos) as annual festival, and b) ordered the observation of both events on every 10th and 16th each month. But at least the cult inscription at Nemrud Dağ clearly discriminates between the annual festivals to which the population is expected and the monthly ones which shall be observed by the priests, but not necessarily involve anyone else (N 80–104). The same holds true for the inscription from Sofraz Köy (SO 12–19, cf. Petzl 2012, 68–69). Only in Arsameia we see monthly public festivities for the birthdays of Antiochos and his father.

hierothesion at Nemrud Dağ. But while modern scholars tried to identify every single detail and its possible reference to hidden meanings, it is more pertinent to ask which references were distinguishable for various more or less learned audiences. Who would have been able to read the images and identify a certain crown or a stylistic trait as what it was meant to refer to? Or to pose the question slightly differently and more directly: How much could Antiochos I (trust to) capitalize on specific references? What audience was addressed in this complex ‘Selbstdarstellung’?

Surprisingly, much of the literature considered the whole scenery in terms of internal politics, as though Antiochos I had really been an independent autonomous ruler.⁸⁶ More recently, Kropp and Versluys successfully argued that the main target audience would have been peers from the neighbouring kingdoms. As Kropp described, Antiochos I in his “self-projection as sovereign ruler, exceeding his Hellenistic predecessors by benefitting from his double Greco-Persian heritage” was the only one of the Hellenistic kings who used images of himself in a leading role to create a new religious fabric of his kingdom.⁸⁷ Here we have a king, supported by Rome, who built a unique tomb for himself, a case of impressive self-aggrandizement that pushed him far up above his peers in the royal competition for social capital. This was something to talk about, not only among kings. Although we will never be able to prove the actual visits that Antiochos I expected (N 148–151) and encouraged (SO 24–33), we may well imagine that some dignitaries indeed came to see the site.⁸⁸

On the other hand, we should not underestimate Antiochos I intention to impress the Romans. In contrast to Kropp and to Versluys⁸⁹, who only admits that the “preprovincial status granted some freedom in building identity in cultural terms”⁹⁰, I would stress that it was Rome’s presence and growing might that set the stage for Antiochos I’s program. His entire reign relied on Rome and Pompey’s decision to prefer indirect rule over the more cost-intensive direct rule. While conscious of every move of their client-king, the Romans will have been aware of the building process and the far-reaching claims of social capital that the images provided. And Antiochos I certainly addressed the Romans as audience. Neither the emblematic colossal statues of deities, which still impress every visitor today and thus come to the fore, nor the *dexiosis* reliefs, which serve to demonstrate divine assistance and approval in an almost Assyrian way, are of

86 E. g. Brijder 2014, 20.

87 Kropp 2013, 357. Cf. Versluys 2017, 159: “Antiochos I was part of – and added to – a Hellenistic symbolism that was meant to appeal to the subjects in his kingdom and to audiences in the *oikumene* at large”.

88 Cf. the old-Babylonian palace at Mari, which was so famous that the king of Ugarit wanted to visit, cf. e. g. Margueron 1995, 885.

89 Kropp 2013, 359: “Rome played no role in Kommagenian ideology”; Versluys 2017, 166: “had something to do with Roman power, but rather more indirectly”.

90 Versluys 2017, 167.

special importance in this context.⁹¹ While the claim of nearness to or even descent from the divine itself had already been established in the Hellenistic kingdoms, it was still a difficult argument in Rome. More importantly, the genealogical reliefs, “the fortunate roots of my ancestry” (N 30–32) as Antiochos I calls them, appear in the Roman context, not only forming an unusually long line, but also displaying both lines. Antiochos I uses this paternal genealogy to provide a historical derivation of Commagene, with Armenia as Achaemenid province and Commagene as stemming from Armenia. This might have impressed the subjects and to some extent also Antiochos’ peers, in as much as they were probably only too aware of his clever inventions.⁹² But this display of ancestors in order to establish one’s social capital was only too familiar [sic] to Romans.⁹³ The display of ancestor images was deeply ingrained in Roman society, where it played a particularly vital role in late-Republican competition among senatorial peers, i. e. just at the time when Antiochos I had his family gallery made. Therefore, Antiochos I and his designers certainly also had a Roman audience in mind. But “the heroic crowd of ancestors” (N 47–48), including the elusive previous kings of Commagene, will not have impressed the Romans as much as it might have impressed other Hellenistic rulers. While they might have admired the long pedigree, there was probably little to gain from displaying a relationship to the Seleucids, whom Pompey had just disposed of. In addition, the reference to the Armenian kings might have failed to receive the planned echo with Roman visitors, since they had just been defeated and reduced. Nevertheless, the long line of ancestors was intended to grant status and social capital, especially as these lines led to Alexander and Dareios I.⁹⁴

91 Cf. the crowning ritual of the king in which Ashur places him on the throne, while Anu crowns him, Nergal provides him with his weapons and Ninurta, with whom the king is often compared, with his radiant brilliance of awe, *melammu*, cf. Maul 1999, 207–208. For the visual representation of the kings as super-human beings cf. Winter 2008, 85–86.

92 Metzler 2012, 110, interprets them as dynastic cult and considers the “Institutionalisierung des Ahnenkultes” as prime evidence for the eastern connection (and orientation?) of Commagene. It is important to note that the gallery of forefathers, despite possible offerings in front of them, was not intended for cultic veneration of ancestors themselves, who only served a supporting role for the cult of Antiochos I among the gods. Furthermore, as discussed by various scholars (esp. Hintzen-Bohlen 1990; cf. Versluys 2017, 130–135) the constant reference to ancestors as dynastic legitimation was no less present in Hellenistic contexts than in Assyria. The most pertinent example is Mithridates VI of Pontos who in 89 BCE according to Justin (Just. Epit. 38,7,1) stated that – exactly like Antiochos I – his genealogical tree would go back to Dareios and even Kyros on his father’s side and to Seleukos Nikator and Alexander in his mother’s line, for a discussion cf. Shayegan 2016.

93 The importance of capitalization on success and grandeur of dynastic *exempla* becomes obvious a few years later in the images of the Julian family (*gens*) which Augustus displayed in a parallel row to the *summi viri* of Roman history within his newly built temple of Mars Ultor, cf. e. g. Zanker 1987, 213–215. Although this example is later than the ancestor reliefs of Antiochos I, the idea behind was probably already as evident to Roman senators as to regional peers.

94 It did not really help with Cicero though, who poked fun of Antiochos I while still in Rome (Letter to Quintus dated 13 February 54 BCE) and considered him not entirely trustworthy while in

It is therefore apt to consider that the most valuable family member, at this point, was probably Antiochos I's daughter Laodike, who had been successfully married off to the King of Kings Osroes in Ktesiphon, who was certainly not a lightweight in the political arena and who provided a connection that might at times prove favourable, a situation which secured her a spot at Nemrud Dağ in a place where a living person should not belong.⁹⁵ As long as she lived, her inclusion can be seen as a statement vis-à-vis the Romans (and Armenians) that Antiochos I might receive protection from a third party.⁹⁶ At the same time, the ancestor gallery sent the clear message to the Arsacids that Laodike was worth being married to.⁹⁷ In this context, finally also the syncretistic and as such all-encompassing deities would find some additional justification as a gesture towards the Arsacids, a reference that might have even been prompted by this marriage itself. The insignia of the crown and the ‘Vierlappendolch’ of Antiochos I and the royal costumes worn by himself and his ancestors are explicit expressions of a shared value system.

Specific messages were also sent to the Armenian king. The inclusion of Armenians in his line of ancestors, and his adoption of an Armenian crown, while calling himself “Great King”, at the same time appears to have been an attempt to claim a rank equal to Tigranes II. There is only one difference; Tigranes II had been the most powerful monarch in the area and was reduced to *amicitia* with the Romans by Pompey, while Antiochos I had been made into a winner through the wars with Rome. Accordingly, he remained a loyal follower and supporter of Pompey, even sending him troops to fight at Pharsalos.⁹⁸

Therefore, it is a pity that Pompey the Great himself never managed to visit Commagene again, as he, himself a master of the political use of architecture and of nuances of visual communication⁹⁹, might have enjoyed this gigantic project of self-aggran-

Cilicia (letter to the magistrates and senate 18 September 51 BCE) although Antiochos I had sent envoys to inform and warn him about Arsacid troops crossing the Euphrates, cf. Facella 2006, 236–243, who also concludes that Antiochos I truly behaved like a *philorhomaiois*.

95 On her identification cf. Jacobs 2000, 305, followed e. g. by Facella 2006, 272–275 and Brijder 2014, 342–343.

96 The importance of this connection is likewise made obvious in the *dexiosis* between Mithradates II and his already deceased sister and the accompanying inscription Kb from Karakuş, cf. Wagner 2012b, 53–54; Brijder 2014, 60–62.

97 Messerschmidt 2012, 87, correctly points out that two previous marriages are central to the ancestor gallery: a) the marriage of Aroandas with the daughter of the Artaxerxes II, Rhodogune, which connected the Orontids with the Achaemenids, and b) the marriage between Antiochos I's parents, Mithradates and Laodike, daughter of the Seleucid Antiochos VIII Grypos.

98 Caes. B Civ. 3,4,5.

99 At exactly the same time as Antiochos I developed his program for Commagene, Pompey built a huge building complex of approximately 320 × 160 m on the Campus Martius just outside the city boundaries of Rome to memorialize his (undoubted unique military and his political) achievements and to gain further following and support in Rome. The complex consisted of the first stone theater of Rome, which was erected against the express will of the senate, and an attached temple

dizement meant to define the newly created kingdom. The artful juxtaposition and blending of discrete elements in the bricolage of legitimacy, thus providing an image of power, might have been to his taste, as he could have read the power of images as evidence for his own successful politics.

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for Venus Victrix. Adjoining was a huge quadriporticus surrounding a garden with an exquisite collection of Greek art. At the rear end a curia (the *curia Pompeii*) was created, in which the senate could meet outside the *pomerium*, but in the presence of a huge statue of Pompey in 'heroic nudity' holding a globe. The complex in its combination of representative architecture, cultic, governmental and public cultural spaces transformed the (sub-)urban space as much as it put pressure on the senate in general and in particular to senatorial competitors vying for influence. Outperforming earlier senatorial public buildings it set a new standard for self-aggrandizement and became a reference for later Imperial Fora. On the complex cf. Sauron 1987, Schröter 2008, esp. Madeleine 2014, and Klinkott 2019. For the interpretation of portraits of Pompey cf. Giuliani 1986, 25–100; Junker 2007.

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Commagene Before and Beyond Antiochos I

Dynastic Identity, Topographies of Power and Persian Spectacular Religion

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Introduction

The Hellenistic kingdom of Commagene exerted an outsized influence on the volatile world of post-Seleucid Western Asia given its small size and relatively recent independence. It was an important player within the complex military and diplomatic crises that unfolded between the Romans and Parthians. Through astute and at times double-dealing diplomacy, strategic marriage alliances, and, eventually, close cooperation with the Romans, the kingdom survived all other post-Seleucid kingdoms in Anatolia and the Caucasus, not to mention most other Hellenistic kingdoms across the Mediterranean, Western and South Asia more broadly. This achievement is even more remarkable given the fact that Commagene itself, that is, the fertile land between the Euphrates River and the Taurus mountains, did not enjoy a long continuous history as an independent state or even a semi-autonomous province before the province fragmented from the Seleucid Empire around 163/162 BCE. Indeed, the last time that Commagene ruled itself before it broke from the Seleucid Empire was as a neo-Hittite principality in the 8th c. BCE as attested in Luwian epigraphic documents.¹

Commagene experienced the height of its geopolitical influence under Antiochos I Theos (ca. 69 – ca. 36 BCE) who portrayed himself as the heritor of an ancient, continuous and transregional – even imperial – legacy of royal power anchored on his descent through the Orontid and Seleucid dynasties to Dareios I, Seleukos Nikator and Alexander the Great. Antiochos I introduced and monumentalized ‘newly ancient’ Iranian cultic traditions across his kingdom and used them as the centrepiece of his campaign of strategically crafting and foregrounding a royal identity that could com-

1 Discussed in Versluys 2017, 138–139.

pete and outflank any other regional rivals.² After the dissolution of Tigranes II's Armenian empire (ca. 69/68 BCE), to which Commagene was briefly tributary, Antiochos I monumentalized his cultural and religious reformation of his kingdom. In a relatively short time he seeded the kingdom with numerous small sanctuaries ensuring that cult centres were accessible to all his subjects and, suggested by archaeological and in some cases just epigraphic evidence, created huge open-air funerary cult complexes at the tombs of his father and, possibly, his grandfather. The most magnificent of all was his own mountaintop tomb and cult site at Nemrud Dağ, whose colossal cult statues, inscriptions, and stelae of his paternal and maternal ancestors rendered his dynastic and imperial claims powerfully vivid in visual, architectural, discursive and ritual terms.³

Many previous appraisals of Commagene's religious and royal traditions have portrayed them as eccentric to any larger transregional development in the Hellenistic world or ancient Near East, thus either the aberrant fantasies of a monomaniacal tyrant, or even an idiosyncratic survival of a hyperlocal Hittite tradition.⁴ It has been a commonplace in scholarship to state that Commagene developed at the cusp of multiple cultural and political spheres.⁵ Indeed, this cultural diversity was strategically shaped and displayed as a key element of its Hellenistic rulers' foreign policy. As all ancient societies beyond the size of a village, Hellenistic Commagene was culturally complex. Albeit awkward, 'culturally complex' is a term I prefer to others, like syncretic or hybrid, which assume an original, fictional state of cultural purity.⁶ These problems of continuity, cultural depth and complexity dovetail with historiographical problems. Past scholarship has often described the Hellenistic kingdom as "marginal to the Hellenistic world" or more charitably simply "between east and west".⁷ Moreover it has sought the origins of Antiochos I's cult as mapping onto and growing directly from a mixed population, the residue of Achaemenid or Seleucid colonization, or conversely the result of a passive bricolage of deracinated images and ideas drifting along 'the Silk Roads'. While not accepted as truly western, Commagene has also not been fully claimed as 'eastern', that is, as an integral part of the Iranian world, especially by those who seek a monolithic unchanging Zoroastrianism traceable from the Bronze Age to the present day.⁸

Luckily scholarship has recently undergone a salutary reorientation in the last few years, which has recontextualized Antiochos I's reforms within a wider late-Hellenistic phenomenon wherein rulers caught between Rome and Parthia sought to bolster

2 For a relatively comprehensive survey of the archaeological and epigraphic evidence and overview of a variety of problems in the study of the site and Commagene, see Brijder 2014.

3 For an entry into the cult and its archaeology, see Brijder 2014 and Versluys 2017.

4 The historiography is surveyed in Versluys 2017, 293–299.

5 For a survey of exploration and study of region see Brijder 2014, 176–310 and Versluys 2017.

6 See the comments of Dietler 2009 and Canepa 2010.

7 The treatment of Commagene in Classical Studies scholarship is discussed in Versluys 2017, 13.

8 E. g. Boyce – Grenet 1991, 338.

their legitimacy and lineage through similar programs of monumental building and religious renovation or reinvention. These included the Hasmonaeen and Herodian sovereigns of Judea, the rulers of Emesa, the Ituraeans and Nabataeans.⁹ The goal for all of these newly formed kingdoms was to appropriate ancient traditions and manufacture a venerable past on which to build the royal identities of their new kingdoms. While this has been identified as a phenomenon of the post-Hellenistic East, viewed from a broader perspective, as observed by M. J. Versluys it is not dissimilar to Octavian's own eclectic and experimental legitimizing program, which celebrated and monumentalized his lineage and 'renewed' the ancient religious traditions of his realm in order place his nascent dynasty at the centre of all political and religious traditions.¹⁰ Indeed, it is only because of Octavian's and Rome's eventual dominance over the Greek world that his experimentations seem natural and inevitable.

While Commagene is now starting to find a place within the Hellenistic Mediterranean, it is only beginning to be fully and meaningfully integrated into the history of the Iranian world. Building on recent work, this chapter thus offers an inquiry into the origins of Commagene's Persian royal legacy and Iranian religious traditions under Antiochos I, and the cultural and geopolitical contexts that informed their development.¹¹ Its primary goal is to provide historical nuance for the 'Persian traditions' that scholarship has frequently treated as a complete invention or the outgrowth of a monolithic and essentialized Zoroastrianism. It considers the extent to which these traditions grew from an Iranian constituency in place within Commagene since the Achaemenid period or, more likely, arose from a more restricted courtly or dynastic milieu. In so doing, it analyses the dynastic legacy of the Orontids of Sophene and Armenia and the techniques by which they crafted their royal identity and the nature of their impact on Commagene. In particular, it seeks to strike a balance between the epigraphic and archaeological evidence offered by the Antiochos I's monuments, which offer the most abundant evidence, and what we can descry about the region's and the dynasty's earlier traditions from the archaeological record and fragmentary textual sources. This chapter and the larger body of work on which it builds, by necessity, challenges the assumption that there is a unified and naturally replicating tradition of Persian kingship, manifesting itself in palatial, sacred architecture, ruler representation, or gardens.¹² Ancient and modern identities alike have strung together data-points to provide a linear developmental history from any of these precursors; however, none of them were continuous, determinative nor essential of Commagene's later Hellenistic

9 Kropp 2013; Versluys 2017, 232–241.

10 Discussed within context in Versluys 2017, 219–248.

11 This chapter introduces ideas that expand on the evidence and arguments laid forth in Canepa 2018, 5–7. 95–121). In addition, the papers in Strootman – Versluys 2017 have offered new points of view on the nature of Persian identity in the post-Achaemenid world from different approaches.

12 Argued in depth in Canepa 2018.

history. Instead they resulted from active efforts and choices of those in power to shape and control their identity. This is especially stark when it comes to Commagene's rather scant Achaemenid heritage. These traditions all, some to a greater, others to a lesser extent, were raw conceptual, ritual or topographical material, out of which the later Hellenistic kings wrought their identity, especially at points of crisis and opportunity. Royal identity in the wider Iranian world that extended beyond Persia itself was just as much practiced and constructed in relation to the natural and built environment as expressed in discursive terms.

Understanding Persian Culture and Identity in Commagene

Within Commagene, Antiochos I's monuments overshadow all other sources: Antiochos I's reign has provided scholarship with by far the greatest amount of indigenous, primary-source epigraphic and archaeological evidence for the reconstruction of the Commagene's post-Achaemenid history. His inscriptions present the greatest volume of indigenous textual sources, the cult regulations contained within provide our only emic description of Commagenian religion, and, spurious or not, the lineage reconstructed from his stelae offers the most detailed, indigenous and continuous account of Orontid dynastic history we possess extending from the Achaemenid Empire through the 1st c. CE and the region's early stages of incorporation into the Roman Empire. Given the paucity of what exists for the period before Antiochos I, methodologically this requires comparing and putting into dialog his magnificent monuments and extensive inscriptions with a fragmentary archaeological and textual record and poorly preserved bronze coinage.

Antiochos I created a cohesive image of his dynasty through his epigraphic and artistic output. He did so not just as a vanity project, but as a foundation for his claims to Commagene and, indeed, any region previously held by other branches of the Orontids that he could get his hands on. Viewed from the standpoint offered by Antiochos I, Commagene was an ancient and deeply rooted political entity with a long-established cultural and political identity, whose religious traditions he himself laboured tirelessly to reinvigorate in the form practiced by his ancestors. While the land of Commagene was important to him, his kingship did not derive nor was it dependent on it. According to Antiochos I, the origins of the dynasty and the ultimate source of its legitimacy lie with the Achaemenid dynasty and the Persian Empire, which was augmented and strengthened through intermarriage with the Seleucids. In effect, his emphasis on dynastic tradition was compensate for the relative youth and small size of the kingdom itself.

In his monumental inscriptions the king proclaimed that he returned his land to the ancient religious traditions of his Persian ancestors, which he restored and renewed. Given that we have little archaeological evidence of previous monumental cult sites

and his new cult centres were quickly abandoned after his reign, we must question whether these particular traditions were as deeply rooted and supported by Commagene's populace as he proclaims in his inscriptions. As we will see, this is not to say that evidence is completely lacking for a certain depth of Commagene's Persian traditions, but rather that their development was not as linear and monolithic as he implies, nor without major points of inflection caused by internal and external forces. Antiochos built on centuries of effort on the part of his dynastic forebears to create an identity that would be geopolitically useful within the fluid political situation after the fall of the Achaemenid Empire and those efforts changed Orontid dynastic culture and their lands considerably.

Commagene shared many characteristics with other kingdoms that flourished in Anatolia, Northern Mesopotamia and the Caucasus after the fall of the Persian Empire that were similarly ruled by post-satrapal Persian dynasties.¹³ With the rise of the Parthian, Pontic and Armenian empires, new currents of post-Achaemenid, Iranian kingship gained prominence, challenging and eventually blending with those of the Seleucid Empire. For the last century before the common era, within Anatolia and the Caucasus, these post-satrapal, 'neo-Persian' traditions became the gold standard of legitimacy until ultimately overshadowed by those of Rome. The Orontids cultivated royal and religious traditions that tied them to an Armenian-Cappadocian-Pontic politico-cultural continuum and foregrounded their eminent Persian and Macedonian dynastic roots. The manner in which Antiochos I conceived of and performed his identity was by no means unique other than the fact that he left the largest and best-preserved monuments. Moreover, these monuments, like Antiochos I's royal image, deliberately incorporated the traditions of his neighbours to appropriate and outflank them. We see this in everything from his use of the tumulus for his funerary monument to his adoption of the *kitaris*, the royal headgear signifying supreme royal power in the region. It should be emphasized that among all of these dynasties, this Perso-Macedonian identity was a carefully constructed elite idiom cultivated and showcased by kings and aristocrats speaking to each other more than their own populations.¹⁴ In fact, while we do not have detailed information, what we do have indicates that non-elite culture in Commagene was very different from that of the ruling dynasty. The unchanging antiquity of the kingdom's Perso-Macedonian identity was a trap that Antiochos laid for us and one that scholarship often willingly walks into.

13 Canepa 2017; Canepa 2018, 5–7. 95–121.

14 Strootman 2017; Canepa 2017; Lerouge-Cohen 2017; Canepa 2018.

Ruptures, Reinventions and Continuities in the History of Commagene

Commagene existed as an autonomous political entity only twice in the first millennium BCE with no direct political links connecting the two and with only very tenuous evidence of demographic and cultural continuities. Its name is detectable in the name of the late-Hittite principality of Kummuh, whose territory was by and large continuous with the core of the Hellenistic kingdom.¹⁵ Following the incorporation of the region into the Assyrian Empire in 850 BCE, the king of Kummuh ruled as a vassal of the Assyrian king. This arrangement lasted until 708 BCE when Sargon II conquered Kummuh outright, removed the king, and turned it into an Assyrian province.¹⁶ The land of Commagene did not exist as an semi-autonomous or independent state again until the region broke away from the Seleucid Empire around 163/162 BCE to form an independent kingdom. During the intervening five and a half centuries, the region was ruled by more important adjacent regions, such as Cappadocia, Syria or Sophene, and passed among multiple empires and their successor states.

While the toponym was extremely ancient, all streams of evidence point to profound changes in the region's demography, its people's language and culture, as well as the political, cultural and religious traditions of its elites. Following a revolt, the Assyrian Empire deported the majority of Kummuh's inhabitants, exchanging its population with one drawn from Mesopotamia. While this population exchange certainly was not accomplished *in toto* it seems to have been substantial enough to break any linguistic, cultural or local political continuities in the region.¹⁷ The Assyrian deportations appear to have greatly changed the region's demography and possibly catalysed changes in the spoken vernacular wiping away all evidence of subsequent use of Anatolian languages, like Hittite or Luwian, beyond toponyms. Either through transfer or assimilation, by the Hellenistic period the majority of Commagene's population appears to have spoken Syrian Aramaic and Roman commentators understand the land to be culturally and geographically part of 'Syria' not just because of its administrative incorporation.¹⁸ As we will explore in greater detail below, several sites, such as Samosata, have yielded evidence of a long history of intermittent settlement. Although many were reoccupied, our present evidence suggests that no major palatial or cult site in Commagene was continuously inhabited or in use from the Achaemenid through the Hellenistic period, the sites that were important for the Hellenistic kingdom did not seem to play a major role in the Achaemenid period. While the Assyrian period changed the demography and possibly precipitated shifts in the vernacular of the region's population, the coming

15 Kummuh was possibly in the orbit of Carchemish. Messerschmidt 2012, 26; Brijder 2014, 52–53. On the geography of the region in the Roman period, see Str. 2,12,2. 2,14,1–2. 12,1,2. Cf. Marciak 2012.

16 Brijder 2014, 52.

17 Hawkins 1975; Summer 1991; Facella 2006 73–78.

18 E. g. Plin. HN 5,66; Str. 11,12,3. 16,1,22; Lucian. Syr. D. 1; Versluys 2017, 38–41.

of the Achaemenids and Seleucids made the most profound impact on the culture and identity of Commagene's elite, their royal and aristocratic culture, and, ultimately, the identity of the independent kingdom.

The history of Commagene under both the Achaemenid and Seleucid empires is very murky, and we lack clear evidence of many pivotal historical moments, not to mention fine-grained archaeological evidence of the official presence of either empire. After the Assyrian period, the region does not appear in a literary source until Cicero's brief mentions in his letters followed by Antiochos I's epigraphic testaments and later Roman sources. Our only continuous source of evidence, both positive and negative, is archaeological. After trading hands between Egypt and the Neo-Babylonian Empire, the region fell to the Persian Empire with Kyros the Great's conquests.¹⁹ Unlike Melitene to the north, Commagene does not appear in any Persian epigraphic or archival source and unless one appears it remains unclear which Achaemenid satrapy or subsatrapy controlled it.²⁰ Because Commagene's Hellenistic rulers traced their ancestry to the Orontids some interpreters, especially those that wish to emphasize the region's late-antique and early-medieval affiliation with Armenia and extend it further back in time, have speculated that Commagene might have formed an administrative unit within the Achaemenid satrapy of Armina. This is perhaps conceivable though no evidence of any kind can confirm this and it is also possible that the region formed part of a different, more proximate administrative unit, most likely Tauric Cappadocia.²¹ This is certainly not to deny Commagene's close relationship with the lands ruled by Armenian kings after the Hellenistic period but rather to clarify the origins and nature of the relationship. It is unclear when exactly Commagene became the possession of an Orontid-ruled satrapy or kingdom, but the weight of the evidence suggests that this most likely occurred only well after Alexander in the early-3rd c. BCE. As had occurred elsewhere in Anatolia and the Caucasus former satrapies were seized by new dynasties and old frontiers dissolved as post-satrapal dynasties opportunistically claimed and lost new kingdoms and dynastic spheres of influence ebbed and flowed.²²

The Persian Empire left a very light infrastructural footprint on Commagene and founded no major settlements that show direct evidence of a close connection with the imperial centre. An important Persian-period aristocratic residence was constructed at Tille Höyük, a site with previous Assyrian occupation. While overshadowing the Assyrian remains, the architecture of the complex does not bear the marks of imperially sponsored architecture as have been documented at numerous other sites elsewhere in the empire that implant ground plans and architectural forms that are

19 Neo-Babylonian and Egyptian periods surveyed in Brijder 2014, 52.

20 Jacobs 1994, 140–145, 183–186; Khorikyan 2017; Marciak 2017, 115.

21 E. g. Str. 12,1,4.

22 Marciak 2012, 16; Canepa 2018, 95–98.

nearly indistinguishable from those produced in the imperial centre.²³ In contrast to Tille Höyük, the patrons of the important satrapal centres at Karaçamirli and Dahan-e Gholayman in the Caucasus and Eastern Iran implanted architectural forms from the imperial centre. They have yielded ground plans and masonry work that exactly and faithfully replicate imperial models and likely were created by builders and workshops trained in the styles and methods of Persepolis, Susa and Ecbatana. Tille Höyük also differs from sites like Daskyleion, whose variations of Ionian prestige architecture demonstrates another mode of intensive imperial interaction by creatively adapted transregional elite architectural traditions in the service of the empire, deploying them side by side with Achaemenid horticultural and open-air cultic emplacements.²⁴ It is possible that Tille Höyük was the residence of a 'sub-satrapal' local grandee who paid fealty to a distant Achaemenid authority simply based on its relative importance and the fact that the region lay inside the empire. From this point of view the complex's small columned hall, column bases, niches and (possibly) merlons, which were fashioned using local vernacular construction methods mimicking Achaemenid imperial productions, could signify an effort on the part of the estate's owners to affiliate themselves with the empire, but such speculation is as far as the current state of the evidence will allow.²⁵ While it was certainly possible that Iranians lived in the region under the Achaemenids, we have no clear evidence of them even commensurate to the scanty epigraphic evidence from related regions like Cappadocia or Pontos, and for this reason we must temper expectations voiced in earlier scholarship that a sizeable Iranian community existed in Commagene.²⁶ While new discoveries might change the picture, altogether our present state of evidence suggests that Commagene itself did not host a major Achaemenid satrapal centre with a large accompanying Iranian-speaking settler community even if local strongmen might have affiliated themselves with the empire.

Although one of its layers was erroneously identified as Persian in initial reports, the site of ancient Kumuḥ, later re-founded as Samosata by the Orontids of Sophene, did not host a major settlement in the Achaemenid period and certainly did not serve as a Persian satrapal centre.²⁷ The site now lies under the waters of the reservoir of the Atatürk Dam, but before the site was engulfed, Nimet Özgüç conducted several seasons of salvage excavations.²⁸ Since it controlled an important crossing on the Euphrates, Samosata displays a long occupation history consisting of numerous levels that stretch back to the Bronze Age. Tellingly, however, there appears to be a gap between the Assyrian and early-Hellenistic/Orontid levels with no significant Achae-

23 Blaylock 2009, 157. 171–212; Canepa 2018, 25–28.

24 Dusinberre 2013, 57.

25 Blaylock 2009, 192–197. 201–203; Gopnik 2010; Khatchadourian 2016, 140–150.

26 E. g. Boyce – Grenet 1991, 309. On the onomastic evidence see Mitchell 2005; Mitchell 2007.

27 Facella 2010, 393–408.

28 Özgüç 1986; Özgüç 1987; Özgüç 1996. On the work in Samosata cf. also the contribution by Kruijjer and Riedel in this volume.

menid monumental remains at the site of the Hellenistic palace.²⁹ The sanctuary at Dülük Baba Tepesi was in use through the Achaemenid period. It is important to note, however, that Dülük Baba Tepesi did not yield a ‘Persian temple’ *per se* but rather was a regional sanctuary in use through the Persian period, an important distinction, similar to Kınık Höyük in Cappadocia.³⁰ It is conceivable that Persians may have visited it, however, we have no evidence at this point that its cult was adapted to distinctively Iranian religious or ritual sensibilities. To judge by the fact that Zeugma too lay originally beyond the frontiers of Hellenistic Commagene until it was given to Antiochos I by Pompey it is probable that the sanctuary of Zeus Dolichenos also became a part of the kingdom c. 65/64 BCE as well.

By 300 BCE, Commagene was a small holding of the vast Seleucid Empire, which eventually left an equally important cultural and dynastic legacy, though much like the Achaemenids, a similarly meagre infrastructural, material cultural and urbanistic imprint within the Commagenian heartland. This is especially noteworthy because the Seleucids, unlike the Achaemenids, were ambitious and prolific city founders. Seleukos I Nicator founded what later became the two most important urban settlements of Antiochos I’s kingdom: the cities Seleucia on the Euphrates and Apameia controlling the Euphrates river crossing, known collectively as Zeugma. Although Zeugma’s proximity to the frontier of Commagene no doubt facilitated a certain amount of cultural interchange, it only became a possession of the kingdom of Commagene in the 1st c. BCE through the intervention of Pompey the Great.³¹ Commagene itself never experienced the intensive urbanization that was the hallmark of strategically and symbolically important regions of the Seleucid Empire and Zeugma was only later retrofitted with Antiochos I’s cults once he gained control over it.³² Without a large-scale gridded city, like Dura Europus or Ai Khanum, or even a major fortress foundation, like Jebel Khalid, the heart of Commagene was eccentric to the system of Seleucid cities and fortresses that bound together the empire. Instead of major cities or large towns, surveys of the region indicate that a dense network of small rural villages flourished in the Hellenistic period, which was a time of prosperity for Commagene, with many continuing into the Roman period.³³ Under the early Seleucid Empire, the region appears to have been largely left to its local strongmen with its populations in villages much as it did under the Achaemenids, though with a growing number of small settlements supported by a broader increase in prosperity seen here and elsewhere regionally in the Hellenistic period.

- 29 Although initially identifying the layer with the orthostated walls, altar and courtyard as Achaemenid, the excavator revised their initial assumption and assigned it to the Hellenistic period. Özgüç 1996, 213; Özgüç 2009, 41–46; Canepa 2018, 102–103. On the significance of this, see below.
- 30 The so-called ‘bull capital’ described in an early excavation report at Dülük Baba Tepesi was actually a Hittite relief. Blömer 2015; Canepa 2018, 393 n. 107.
- 31 Plin. HN 5,86; cf. Cohen 1996, 190–196
- 32 Canepa 2018, 42–67.
- 33 The evidence summarized in Versluys 2017, 137–141.

To summarize, while we can only speak in general terms, the archaeological evidence in no way supports the large-scale colonization of Commagene in the Achaemenid period with large influxes of Persian settlers. This is also the case for Commagene under the Seleucids, although Seleucid cities and fortresses were founded in adjacent regions, most notably the cities of Zeugma as well as further south in Cilicia and Syria. Given the importance and longevity of Persian traditions among the royal dynasty it is possible that an influx of Iranian settlers to Sophene or other regions contributed to the core of the region's aristocracy in the later period. However, we do not have the wealth and richness of epigraphic documentation attesting to such a population onomastically as we do in Pontos and it is equally possible that such an Iranian aristocracy either did not exist originally or was constituted deliberately and artificially by the later Orontid kings. This provides important nuances on how we interpret the late prominence of Persian royal and religious traditions under the Orontids, suggesting that they largely emanated from the court rather than grew organically from a dominant 'indigenous' Iranian population within Commagene.

Creating a Newly Ancient Kingdom – Orontid Dynastic Lineage and Topography of Power

The period between the mid-3rd c. and the mid-1st c. BCE was the true crucible of Commagene's emic Persian identity. The source of this new identity was the Orontid dynasty. The rulers of the independent kingdom of Commagene traced their ancestry to the Persian Orontid dynasty who ruled as satraps over Achaemenid Armenia. The Orontids consolidated an autonomous kingdom in the Armenian highlands after Alexander's destruction of the Achaemenid Empire and a branch of the Orontid family later governed Sophene. While the historicity of a direct lineal relationship is by no means clear, the Orontids of Commagene claimed the dynastic heritage of the main Orontid line of Sophene and Greater Armenia, and through it, that of the Achaemenid dynasty. Scholarship is not entirely in agreement over the identity or even number of kings attested in the numismatic evidence or mentioned in the fragmentary classical literary sources for this period.³⁴ For this reason the archaeological evidence is of especial importance as an anchor for the meagre literary and numismatic sources and to fill out and check the epigraphic evidence.

While the Peace of Apameia (188 BCE) allowed Sophene to maintain its independence, its terms also allowed the Seleucids to reassert control over Commagene. The first time that Commagene constituted a significant and self-standing administrative unit since the late-8th c. BCE seems to have been in the early-2nd c. BCE under this

34 Facella 2006; Marciak 2012; Marciak 2017, 113–128.

second Seleucid reincorporation, a bureaucratic investment that likely contributed to the province's successful rebellion not long thereafter. The treaty explicitly defined the Taurus Mountains as the northern and westernmost limits of Antiochos III's sphere of influence, suggesting that even as Sophene became independent, the price they paid for it was Commagene, which the Seleucids retook.³⁵ This reincorporation into the empire, however, was short-lived. Commagene became an independent kingdom in its own right around 163/162 BCE when its Seleucid governor (*epistatēs*) detached the region from the Seleucid Empire and expanded its borders, capitalizing on Rome's destabilizing influence and instability in both Sophene and the Seleucid Empire following the deaths of Zariadres of Sophene and Antiochos IV Epiphanes. Given that Ptolemaios appears in our sources initially as a Seleucid governor (*epistatēs*), it is likely that at this point Commagene was finally constituted as a separate Seleucid administrative unit at least in name. Our only literary source on the event, Diodorus Siculus, gives the impression that Ptolemaios achieved his position as *epistatēs* under the Seleucids and perhaps held the province as governor as Zariadres and Artaxias operated as independent dynasts.³⁶ Now ruling autonomously, Ptolemaios quickly joined in the general rapacity of this unsettled period. He invaded Cappadocia taking Melitene until driven back over the Taurus range by Ariarathes IV. The Seleucids' efforts to peel it off from Sophene and provide it with the administrative infrastructure for it to operate independently not only created the conditions that enabled Commagene to later detach itself from the Seleucid Empire, but the administrative structures necessary for it to function as an independent kingdom. Thus, while the Orontid family and aristocracy may have cultivated a long collective memory of Persian satrapal court, administrative and religious culture, these traditions did not operate continuously in Commagene itself as the basis for local governance.

It is unknown whether Ptolemaios was a member of some provincial cadet branch of the Orontids of Sophene, had married into the family, or simply fabricated the dynastic claim after he had detached the province from Sophene, though all are conceivable scenarios. Our main source of evidence of Orontid dynastic history comes from Antiochos I of Commagene's ancestor stelae at Nemrud Dağ supplemented by coins and scattered literary sources. The twelfth ancestor stele from Nemrud Dağ, which would have contained Ptolemaios' predecessor, is missing from the line of Antiochos I's paternal ancestors. In fact, the only possible attestations of Ptolemaios in the epigraphic evidence from Commagene, that is, the inscription from Gerger and the thirteenth ancestor stele from Nemrud Dağ, are also highly damaged.³⁷

The next generation quickly set out consolidating dynastic claims and making strategic marriage alliances. Ptolemaios' successors, Samos II (ca. 130 BCE) and Mithra-

35 Pol. 21,32–43; App. Syr. 38–39; Liv. 38,38.

36 Diod. Sic. 31,19a. Facella 2006, 206–207.

37 Facella 2006, 201.

dates I Kallinikos (100–70 BCE) carry Iranian names, suggesting either a deliberate reassertion or outright fabrication of an Orontid and Persian identity. Mithradates I married Laodike VII Thea the daughter of the Seleucid king, Antiochos VIII Grypos, which allowed the dynasty to claim Seleucid descent, while Antiochos I's marriage to Isias Philostorgos, daughter of the Cappadocian king Ariobarzanes I, allowed him to lay claim to Cappadocian's royal heritage as well. As the Armenian Empire expanded across Syria, Tigranes II absorbed the fledgling kingdom into his empire (ca. mid-80s–69 BCE), temporarily stalling the dynasty's ambitions. After emerging from Tigranes II's Armenian Empire and intermarrying with the Parthians the kingdom became more and more closely aligned with Rome.

Orontid Conceptual and Spatial Strategies of Legitimation

It was the Orontids of Sophene rather than the Achaemenids or Orontids of Greater Armenia who were responsible for establishing Commagene's urbanistic and ideational topography of power, at least that is the impression that Antiochos I. From the perspective offered by Antiochos I, Samos I's foundation of Samosata and Arsames' fortified settlements of Arsameia on the Nymphaios and Arsameia on the Euphrates remained the most important of the independent kingdom of Commagene's royal residences. The Orontids of Sophene foregrounded onomastic architectural traditions intended to communicate a Persian heritage. The personal names and toponyms of the royal foundations of the Orontids of Sophene accentuated their Persian dynastic claims and Iranian cultural roots. They bore names such as Xerxes and Arsames (Old Persian *Ršāma*, "he who has the strength of heroes"), which was a common name within the Achaemenid family and among the Persian elite. Samos possibly derived from the Avestan *Sāma*, father of the Avestan hero *Kərəsāspa*, which would attest to some tradition of Iranian religious or epic lore within the family (cf. *Yāšt* 13.136).³⁸ Moreover, naming cities as the "joy of" or "happiness of" the founder was a characteristically Orontid-Artaxiad practice evoking Achaemenid royal discourse and occurs as a pattern in several foundations, such as Samosata and Arsamosata (Mid. Persian **Sāmašād*, Old Persian **Sāmašiyāti-*; Mid. Persian **Aršāmšād*, Old Persian **Ršāmašiyāti-*).³⁹

While their settlements' toponyms broadcast a Persian cultural and dynastic affiliation, the Orontids did not reuse sites tied to Achaemenid (or Seleucid) rule as their main residences, if any such sites ever existed in Commagene in the first place. As emphasized above, no large-scale, official Persian satrapal residence has been discovered in Commagene as one would expect if the area constituted a subsatrapy. The Orontid

38 Justi 1895, 280–281.

39 Canepa 2018, 109.

kings of Sophene founded several new fortified settlements in Commagene but kept their royal tombs at *Arkathikert (Arm. Angl, mod. Eğił) in Sophene.⁴⁰ This city was understood to be Sophene's primary royal residence and seat of power. Moreover, its legacy survived into the late-antique and early-medieval Armenian historical tradition well after the Orontid dynasty was forgotten and the dynasty of the occupants of the tombs enfolded into the Aršakuni (Arsacid) dynasty in Armenian historical consciousness.

None of the Orontids' major settlements in Sophene or Commagene seem to have functioned continuously as major urban or religious centres from the Achaemenid through the early-Hellenistic period, at least as far as the present state of the archaeological evidence can show. Certainly, sites continued to host some sort of human presence, but their prominence, function and scale were not continuous. In this the Orontids of Sophene followed a remarkably similar strategy for siting their new settlements as their dynastic forebears in Greater Armenia suggesting a certain dynastic tradition.⁴¹ After the fall of the Achaemenids the Orontids of Highland Armenia built at strategically important sites featuring venerable ruins or places of natural beauty to create a new independent royal identity. They deliberately excluded ruins that had been associated with Persian satrapal rule, choosing to build at sites that had been unoccupied since the Urartian period such as Erebuni, Altuntepe, and Oshakan to foreground their new status as kings, not governors beholden to a distant overlord. Moreover, these new royal residences often featured Urartian and even Bronze Age ruins whose extreme antiquity allowed the Orontids to shape their perceived origin into whatever they wanted and use them figuratively and sometimes literally as a foundation on which to build a new royal identity.⁴² The abraded Assyrian relief at *Arkathikert (Eğił) seems to have served a similar purpose for Orontids of Sophene's new foundation, providing a generalized sense of antiquity and authority but one whose exact origins were conveniently malleable.

Similarly, instead of establishing a major royal residence at a site like Tille Höyük, which, at least at this point, seems to preserve the closest thing we have to a high-status residence from the Persian period, the Orontids of Sophene founded or, better, re-founded new residence cities on sites that had a long history of activity but which had not been prominent in the Persian or Seleucid empires. Chief among these within Commagene was Samosata, which illustrates their ambitious approach establishing their new royal authority well. Samosata was founded sometime in the mid-3rd c. BCE on the site of Neo-Hittite Kummuh. While not definitive, the archaeological, epigraph-

40 Newly discovered coins belonging to an "ΑΡΚΑΘΙΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ" suggest the reconstruction above. The city appears with various names in our literary sources: Arg(i)athicerta, Artesikerata, Karkathikerta etc. Str. 11,14,2; Plin. HN 6,10,26; Ptol. Geog. 5,13,22; cf. Marciak 2017, 75–76. 78–79. On the royal tombs and later significance, see Buzandaran 4,24 (trans. Garsoïan 1989, 157); cf. Canepa 2018, 112. 227–229.

41 Canepa 2018, 98–104.

42 Khatchadourian 2007.

ic and literary evidence all point to a re-foundation by Samos (I) of Sophene, whom Antiochos of Commagene names as the grandfather of Arsames in a fragmentary inscription.⁴³ While the site revealed no Achaemenid occupation, the excavators documented a palace built in the early-Hellenistic period, which used an archaic limestone orthostat treatment of the walls and a torus bases to evoke Achaemenid architecture.⁴⁴ The excavators cleared a courtyard, two adjoining rooms, and an entranceway on the northeast wall, which was fronted by two simple torus column bases set on plinths. The doorway reused a block from late-Hittite walls that retained traces of relief carving from its original context. An altar was discovered in the next season, which also made use of spoliated Hittite blocks, and a paved path connected the altar with the structure containing the orthostats. Samosata evinces an analogous pattern of development compared to Arsamosata in Sophene. Founded in the mid- to late-3rd c. BCE by Arsames, son of Samos I, it too had a similar gap between the Urartian and Hellenistic occupations.⁴⁵ Still more, its use of 'sub-Achaemenid' Persian architectural forms is conceptually continuous with Orontid structures in Greater Armenia, as is its location at a site of ancient significance without satrapal connotations.

Like the other early-Orontid royal residences, Antiochos 'retrofitted' Samosata and its hinterland with sanctuaries for his new cult while updating it with palaces built with cutting-edge prestige architecture.⁴⁶ The Orontid kings of Commagene built a palace at Samosta in the 1st c. BCE, which was decorated with rich mosaics and frescos.⁴⁷ Similar to the late-Hellenistic architecture at Arsameia on the Nymphaios the palace of the Orontids of Commagene imposed a rather abrupt shift in architectural style emblematic of the later dynasty's close entanglement with the contemporary Greco-Roman world.⁴⁸

According to the inscriptions of Antiochos I of Commagene, Arsames founded fortified settlements at Arsameia on the Euphrates (present-day Gerger) and Arsameia on the Nymphaios (Eski Kahta), a building campaign that took place during Arsames' rebellion from Seleukos II.⁴⁹ The most significant remains from these sites date to the 1st c. BCE when they became important fortresses and ritual centres for the 1st-c. Orontid sovereigns of the independent kingdom of Commagene. Although occupied in the Middle Bronze Age, Arsameia on the Nymphaios did not host an im-

43 OGIS 394. Memnon FGtH 434 F 14.1. Cohen 2006, 187–189; Schottky 2006b; cf. Facella 2006, 172–173. On the archaeological remains attributed to this period in Samosata cf. also the contribution by Kruijer and Riedel in this volume.

44 Mellink 1984, 449; Özgüç 1996, 214; Özgüç 2009, 46–48. plans 13–14. pls. 119–120. 258–260b.

45 Ögün 1971; Ögün 1972; Tirats'yan 2003, 131.

46 Brijders 2014, 132–145.

47 Özgüç 2009, 41–46. pls. 101–116; Zoroğlu 2012.

48 Canepa 2018, 109–110. On the palatial complex, its material culture and relations to the wider Greco-Roman world cf. the contribution of Kruijer and Riedel in this volume.

49 Facella 2006, 174–175.

portant settlement in the Achaemenid period. Possibly paralleling the early-Orontid palace at Samosata, a simple Achaemenid-style torus base might have belonged to an Orontid structure; if further early-Hellenistic remains are found it would suggest that Arsames made similar use of 'Persianizing' architectural forms in establishing his new royal identity.⁵⁰ It should be noted however, that the Seleucids themselves used this combination of Persian and Greek architectural forms as a hallmark of their official architecture, a feature with which their Arsacid competitors also experimented. From this perspective these ideas can be understood as engaging and competing with a larger transregional architectural idiom of power for those dynasties (Seleucids, Arsacids and Orontids included) who aspired to control all Iranian royal legacies.⁵¹

Arsameia on the Euphrates has not received as much attention as Arsameia on the Nymphaios and was only cursorily surveyed by the early-20th c. expeditions.⁵² Nevertheless, this settlement fits the pattern of Arsames' other foundations: it is a virtually impregnable fortress set atop of a flat-topped rocky outcrop. We know from an inscription at the site that it hosted the tomb and, eventually, a sanctuary of Antiochos I's grandfather, Samos II, and a sanctuary of a goddess called Argandene.⁵³ A small number of niches carved into the cliff face below the rock relief might have functioned as ossuaries and hint at royal or elite inhabitants who adhered to Iranian mortuary structures.⁵⁴ In order to make this dynastic connection tangible, Antiochos of Commagene carved a colossal rock relief of his grandfather and a cult inscription mentioning the tombs and cults of Antiochos I's male line within the sanctuary of Argandene.⁵⁵ This goddess has no Iranian roots and it is possible that, like Tarhun/Tork' she was ancient Anatolian deity whose cult continued unabated through the Hellenistic period. In this case, this might imply the presence of Hittite remains which would have provided a sense of diffuse antiquity for the new fortress. Until the construction of Mithradates I's and Antiochos I's tombs Arsameia on the Euphrates could have served in the place of *Arkathikert as the necropolis of the Orontids of Commagene and, to judge by Antiochos's epigraphic, rupestrian and cultic attentions, it served as an important point of connection to the royal legacy of both the early Orontids of Commagene but those of Sophene as well. As it is unexcavated, we do not know much about the early-Orontid constructions at the site, though its scale, the archaic ossuary niches, the cult of Argandene, and the monumental rock relief that Antiochos I later carved into its cliffs indicate that it remained a significant settlement through several generations.⁵⁶

50 Oenbrink 2017, 108–123; Hoepfner 1983, 6–7; Hoepfner 2000, 58; Dörner – Goell 1963, 175–184.

51 E. g. Canepa 2018, 74. 171–175. 310–316.

52 Dörner – Naumann 1939, 86–91; Waldmann 1973, 123–141; Sanders 1996, 175–377; Brijders 2014, 222–228.

53 Antiochos I, G 50.

54 For the archaeological history of such features see, Huff 2004.

55 Canepa 2018, 111.

56 Brijders 2014, 222–228.

The Orontids of Commagene thus held a significant proportion of the settlements that the Orontids of Sophene had built centuries before and substantially rebuilt and renewed them. Commagene's main settlements, including Samosata, Arsameia on the Nymphaios and Arsameia on the Euphrates, were all re-founded by the Orontids of Sophene suggesting, while it was not integral to the Achaemenid or Seleucid empires, it was to the Orontids of Sophene. Mithradates I and most notably Antiochos I, embellished these foundations to serve as important points of pride and evidence of dynastic continuity. In fact, the only major Orontid royal residences, albeit important ones, that the later independent kingdom of Commagene did not encompass were the royal city of Arsamosata and the royal necropolis at *Arkathikert (Eğil). It is important to emphasize that any continuities between the two branches of the dynasty were the result of deliberate efforts to create a sense of dynastic and political permanence to smooth over major discontinuities. By grafting his new cult onto these ancient sites, Antiochos I manufactured tangible and clear evidence for the antiquity of the cult as well as dynastic connections with the Orontids of Sophene.

Antiochos I's Cult in Dynastic, Regional and Deep Historical Context

As the centrepiece of his efforts to foreground his dynastic roots, Antiochos I instituted a dynastic cult centred on a newly codified pantheon of Perso-Macedonian tutelary deities, which were worshipped at specially designed sanctuaries constructed across his kingdom. Much of past scholarship has either attempted to fit Antiochos I's reforms into the mainstream of Zoroastrian practice, check them against them, or has simply dismissed his religious reforms as a complete invention.⁵⁷ These approaches fail to grasp the true historical dynamics behind their development, the nature of Iranian religious practice in the region and the peculiar transregional dynamics that motivated Antiochos I to showcase such a dynastic religion. What I want to emphasize here is that Antiochos I's cult did not grow from a widely practiced Zoroastrianism preserved intact by an Iranian population, but neither was it a complete invention. While the Iranian cultural elements showcased in Commagene are not normative Zoroastrian practices when compared to 'orthodox' Zoroastrianism, that is only because such an orthodoxy did not exist in the 2nd and 1st c. BCE. With these criteria, the religious practices of the Achaemenids would not qualify as sufficiently orthodox.⁵⁸ Such a Zoroastrianism, which eschewed the worship of statues and focused entirely on the ever-burning fire guarded within a temple and celebrated Ahura Mazdā as the chief deity of their pantheon, was the religion as it was defined in late antiquity under the Sasanian dynasty

57 Waldmann 1973; Boyce 1991; Waldmann 1991; Waldmann 1994.

58 See the studies of Garrison 2017, Canepa 2018, 149–169, and Cantera 2019 for a new approach to Achaemenid religion.

by its own priestly elite. Even then it existed alongside a wide variety of cultic practices, doctrines, and variant pantheons, both within and outside of the empire.

Among these variants, was the tradition of Zoroastrianism that was practiced in Armenia and Anatolia before the coming of the Sasanians, which Antiochos I's cult maps onto quite closely, at least in terms of its basic outlines. Antiochos I's *hierothesia* engaged contemporary ruler cults, regionally and across the Iranian world, but the basic constituents and the cultic architecture map most closely onto the practices of Orontid, Artaxiad and Arsacid Armenia. The open-air sanctuaries of Orontid, Artaxiad and Arsacid kings included statues of the gods (portrayed in some instances with Greek iconography), the king, and his ancestors.⁵⁹ Only in the 3rd c. CE, under Sasanian influence and with introduction of fire temple architecture, do temples appear. In fact, the majority of archaeological evidence cited for fire temples in Armenia were discovered in pre-existing structures, either palaces or Christian churches, which were converted to serve Zoroastrian cults during Sasanian occupations. Ruled continuously by Iranian dynasties, the pantheon and practices of Armenian religion represents the most stable regional tradition of post-Achaemenid Iranian religion, albeit one that was later brought into harmony with later Parthian trends, such as the inclusion of a fire altar. Like Commagene, the post-Achaemenid religious landscape of Armenia incorporated gods, sites and traditions that retained ancient Urartian, Hittite, or Mesopotamian origins or influences, as well as newer Iranian and Greco-Macedonian associations.⁶⁰ For his part, Antiochos I may have selectively reinvigorated certain monumental traditions from the region's ancient Hittite past as raw material to lend a patina of antiquity to his newly ancient cult architecture and reliefs, though direct and unbroken continuities with Hittite traditions should not be overstated in his cult reforms.⁶¹ While the origins of some of the cults can be traced to early-Iron Age Urartian Caucasus or Hittite Anatolia, Armenia's chief gods were heavily influenced by Iranian religions, as were many aspects of Armenian cult. Linguistic evidence suggests this Iranization did not solidify until the Middle Iranian period as the Orontid and especially Artaxiad dynasties built new ideologies of kingship and national identities drawing from contemporary power sources.⁶²

Although he presented it as continuous with and a direct window onto the traditions of his Achaemenid 'ancestors' Antiochos I's new cult betrays a strong 'Middle Iranian' imprint even despite efforts to use local and regional forms as raw material. The

59 Canepa 2015; Canepa 2018, 202–203, 248.

60 Petrosyan – Tirats'yan 2011.

61 Argandene could have genuine Anatolian origins. Sanders 1996, 151; Messerschmidt 2008; Messerschmidt 2012; Brijder 2014, 53–55.

62 The earliest sanctuaries, such as the one at Armavir, bear a resemblance to the Persian and Elamite open-air 'Grove Sanctuaries', where the leaves of sacred plane trees whispered as oracles Movses Khorenats'i 1.20; Russell 1988, 1–17; Tirats'yan 2003, 129–130; Petrosyan 2007, 177; Henkelman 2008, 441–443.

pantheon shows a post-Achaemenid and ‘western’ character, with the Iranian names of the gods corresponding most closely to those of the Armenian pantheon. The pantheon consisted of Zeus-Oromasdes, Apollo-Mithras-Helios-Hermes, Artaganes-Herakles-Ares, and the Tyche of Commagene. The main gods of the Armenian pantheon consisted of Aramazd-Zeus, Mihr-Hephaestus, Tir-Apollo and Vahagn-Herakles.⁶³ The Achaemenid royal inscriptions never mention a god corresponding to Avestan *Vərəθraϥna*, but the god was very prominent in Arsacid and Armenian religion and the cult of Vahagn at Ashtishat was particularly important for the Arsacid kings of Armenia. Given the make-up of the new pantheon and parallels between Commagene’s cult rituals and those of Orontid-Artaxiad Armenia, it is probable that Antiochos I drew on some lingering familial memories. But it is equally likely that he brought them into alignment with contemporary religious practices within Anatolia and the Caucasus and, possibly, the Parthian Empire.

We have very little direct primary source evidence on the nature of the religion practiced by members of the Orontid dynasty in Sophene or Commagene before the Antiochos I other than the altar in the courtyard excavated at Samosata and perhaps the deities or divine symbols on the reverses of the Orontids’ crude bronze coinage, all of which feature Greek iconography. As far as we know, the Orontids, both of Commagene and Sophene, did not build temples in the Greek style. While not much evidence exists for the early-Hellenistic period, its open-air sanctuaries, either altars within precincts, on mountaintops or altars in courtyards cohere with our evidence of Persian practices in Pārsa and the provinces, such as Pasargadae and Dahan-e Gholayman.⁶⁴ In the coinage of Sophene, Herakles appears as do winged thunderbolts and eagles, which may visually reference *Vərəθraϥna* or Ahura Mazda, in an *interpretatio iranica*, as well as winged victories, which also regularly appear in the Arsacid numismatic and ruspertian repertoire as a cross-culturally intelligible symbol.⁶⁵ While small, the prominence of Herakles and Zeus is reflected in the post-reform pantheon. The symbols of Zeus as well as the eagles and lions find parallels in the iconography of the cult emplacements and the independent kingdom’s coinage. Interestingly, Apollo appears to be largely absent in both the coinage of the Orontids of Sophene and Commagene. Although evidence is sparse, Commagene’s first three kings may have conformed their religious traditions to those of the Seleucids to broadcast an affiliation with this newly acquired

63 Our primary evidence of the Armenian pantheon come from Movses Khorenats’i, 2.8, 2.12, 2.14, 2.40 and 2.49. Agat’angelos 10.777–791. On the Armenian pantheon see Petrosyan 2007. The parallels with the Orontid and Artaxiad cult were emphasized by Sarkissian 1968. On Aštišat: Garsoïan 1989, 449.

64 Discussed in detail in Canepa 2018, 149–169.

65 As is the case for many of the post-Achaemenid kingdoms of Anatolia and the Caucasus, consensus is lacking in the identification of many of the coins and number of kings. Bedoukian 1985; Nercessian 1995; Rudy Dillen, *Coins of Commagene*, in: Brijder 2014, 533–562.

dynastic lineage.⁶⁶ Some have speculated that an early cult inscription from Sofraz Köy might provide us with a glimpse of a pre-Antiochan-reform dynastic pantheon, which centred on Apollo Epêkoos and Artemis Diktyinna.⁶⁷ This is by no means conclusive, since Antiochos appears to have also called on Apollo in an unmixed state to protect travellers along the ‘sacred way’ to his funerary sanctuary, and may simply indicate that Apollo continued to be worshipped in an unmixed state in parallel.⁶⁸ Moreover, while rayed nimbuses were present outside of Commagene, the shape of Apollo’s rayed nimbus on the relief on the Sofraz Köy stele is quite distinctive enough to have served as a graphically powerful and identifiable iconographical marker. With its triangular solar rays superimposed on a disk nimbus, it visually indexes the sculptural portrayal of Apollo in his unmixed state on the stele to the iconography of Apollo-Mithras-Helios in his mixed state as portrayed prominently throughout the kingdom.

After Antiochos I’s reign the *hierothesia* fell out of use and sanctuaries built in the region may have returned to this pre-reform cult, venerating Apollo and Artemis in an unmixed state.⁶⁹ This could be interpreted as the mark of a populace exhausted by the previous king’s experiments; but with the Parthians no longer an ally, it is just as likely that it could reflect a deliberate effort on the part of the next generation to strategically realign their traditions with those more readily interpretable by Rome. Given that Apollo and Artemis are not prominent in the independent kingdom’s (albeit meagre) bronze coinage, it seems that any such policy of alignment with Seleucid religion was not all-encompassing if it existed at all.

Facing the rise and then fall of the Mithradatid and Artaxiad empires along with Roman and Arsacid encroachment, Antiochos I understood it to be a political necessity to make the Persian traditions of his kingdom monumentally visible and interpretable as such outside his frontiers. Instead of an outright invention, our evidence suggests that we are dealing with a strategy of aggrandizing and monumentalizing pre-existing dynastic religious traditions, which were present, but had not received such prominence in permanent media in the earlier religious art and architecture of Commagene. While the pantheon and divine iconographies might seem strange to an ancient or modern viewer familiar only with Greek visual culture, they are actually quite outward looking and make great effort to ensure that no matter is legible to outside Greco-Roman or Iranian observers. In other words, while scholarship has concentrated on the strangeness of the mixed iconographies, that very cultural complexity made them uniquely geopolitically effective as an idiom that could claim control over an ancient esoteric religious tradition while simultaneously making that tradition legible and understand-

66 Small bronze coins issued by Samos II portray a radiate figure, which has been identified tentatively as Helios. Bergmann 1998, 55 pl. 8,4.

67 Crowther – Facella 2003; Brijder 2014, 143–144.

68 Npo 6–7. This important point is made by Versluys 2017, 178–181.

69 Brijder 2014, 421–423.

able to outsiders. The inscriptions are in Greek thus making them literally legible to the educated viewer, and the king's epithets of 'Friend of the Greeks' and 'Friend of the Romans' potentially frame the Greco-Roman viewer's experience of this pantheon as one that actively reaches out to make them visually legible, despite their exotic appearance. The iconographies of the gods are deliberately and carefully designed to be iconographically 'bilingual', either appearing in Persian and Greek forms separately like Apollo and Herakles, or with subtle symbolic or ornamental hints framing the primary 'Persian' iconography. Such ornamental interpretative frames include oak leaves or laurel while the thunderbolt and club define the regal figures dressed in Persian robes as visually interpretable as Zeus and Herakles. While Apollo-Mithras-Helios or Artagnes-Herakles-Ares might also appear in their Greek iconographic guises, Zeus-Oromasdes is always portrayed in what Antiochos I terms 'Persian robes', as are all gods in the cult statues at his primary sanctuary at Nemrud Dağ. The only deity that was not overtly linked with a Persian deity was the Tyche of Commagene, who appears with the standard iconography of a Hellenistic Tyche. It should be noted, however, that the iconography of Tyche was thoroughly incorporated into Arsacid (and Kushan) visual culture as an iconographic vehicle of Royal Fortune and various other goddesses.⁷⁰ One might interpret Antiochos I's program as code switching visually between Greco-Roman and Persian idioms while at others offering a simultaneous cross-cultural translation and commentary. There were three potential audiences, some of which are explicitly called out in the inscriptions, the Greeks and Romans, and others that are geopolitically implicit, namely the king's other neo-Persian competitors in Anatolia and the Caucasus and the Arsacids.

Paralleling the aggrandizement of his perfect Achaemenid and Seleucid ancestry, which competed with those of the Mithradatids and Ariarathids, his monuments and cult unify, regularize and, most importantly claim and subsume the political discourse and religious traditions of Cappadocia, Pontos and Greater Armenia.⁷¹ Antiochos I's new artistic and religious program played a central role in dynastically outflanking the other Perso-Macedonian families of Anatolia and Armenia and foregrounding his legitimacy to other regional powers and the Romans and Parthians. In addition to the Armenian nature of the cult, burial tumuli have a long history in Anatolia, yet the tumuli of the Cappadocian kings, whose kingdom he claimed and whose royal legacies Antiochos attempted to subsume, were the most proximate influences.⁷² Simultaneously importing the Cappadocian funerary tradition, Antiochos looked to contemporary Parthian and, especially, Armenian traditions to design his pantheon and reinvigorate his ancestral religion and provide himself a fitting royal burial.

70 Sinisi 2008.

71 Cf. Just. Epit. 38,7,1; Diod. Sic. 31,19,1–6; Antiochos I, N 2,24–34. On these kingdoms cf. the contribution by Michels in this volume.

72 Canepa 2018, 221–227.

Persian Royal Spectacular Sacrifice as a Parallel Iranian Religious Tradition

In the final portion of this paper I would like to pursue this question of origins more closely and consider the relationship of Antiochos I's cult to a longer tradition of the Persian royal religious practice of what I will term 'Persian and neo-Persian spectacular sacrifice.' Antiochos I's cult was a royal religion of spectacle rather than popular devotion. The cult had deep importance for the royal family, but in the form in which it took under Antiochos I it was experienced largely through passive participation of the majority of Commagene's population rather than as personal elective religion of choice, as is the priestly tradition of Zoroastrianism. Such traditions and popular devotion clearly existed in Greater Armenia, but without a large Iranian (or Iranized) population, in Commagene during the age of Antiochos I and possibly even under his Orontid ancestors, these Persian traditions appear to have persisted as a courtly tradition. In this respect, it follows in a long and ancient tradition of 'Persian religion' stretching back to the Achaemenids, a tradition that we should treat as enduring in parallel to the complicated priestly ceremonies executed by specialized practitioners, or the small-scale, daily personal rituals of everyday Zoroastrians.

Within the Persian context, the two most important 'spectacular sacrifices', that made the greatest impact on contemporary and post-Achaemenid audiences were the *bašur* sacrifices at the Achaemenid tombs for the souls of the deceased kings, and the *šip*. While there could be Elamite and, in the case of Commagene, Anatolian residue and influence, the *bašur* sacrifices and their post-Achaemenid reinventions participated in and rendered royally monumental an Iranian ancient cult of the *frauuashis*, the souls of the great Iranian heroes as attested in the Avesta and identified in later Zoroastrianism as the souls of the faithful, living, dead or yet to be born.⁷³ I have treated the relationship between the Achaemenid and Orontid traditions within the context of the wider development of post-Achaemenid Iranian kingship elsewhere.⁷⁴ Here I want to tie them into these larger traditions of royal religion, which grow from Iranian religious traditions, but were the province of kings not commoners, most notably the traditions of grand open-air sacrifices. The Persepolis archives indicate that the Achaemenids' most important, prestigious, not to mention lavish, religious rituals were large-scale royal sacrifices conducted in the open-air followed by massive feasts. Foremost of these was the sacrifice known in Elamite as the *šip*.⁷⁵ Given their nature,

73 Canepa 2018, 208–209.

74 Canepa 2018, 188–204. 220–230. 239–248.

75 The published Persepolis archival tablets record several locations that accommodated *šip* feasts: Tikranuš, Appištapdan (twice), Batrakataš/Pasargadae (three times), Išgi, and Pumu (Henkelman 2011, 109). The nature and frequency of the *šip* sacrifice is dealt with in detail in Henkelman 2008 and discussed within the wider context of Persian religion and architecture in Canepa 2018, 149–169.

the Persepolis Fortification Tablets do not mention detailed descriptions of the ritual protocol of these sacrifices. They do, however, offer detailed accounts of the commodities needed to perform them and mention that they were consumed by the large crowd in attendance. Internal evidence in the Persepolis archives, related archaeological sites, and classical sources that reflect these institutions flesh out these crucial yet terse indigenous records and all place them in open-air settings. This combined evidentiary stream indicates that the *šip* was an elaborate open-air sacrificial feast. It could be celebrated at royal residence or paradise or on the march during campaign. In the many archival records extant that record provisions for the *šip*, temples (Elamite *ziyan*) do not play a role. The Persian king or his delegate celebrated it for a large assembly of people arranged in concentric rings with the most important individuals at the centre with altars standing at the centre of the assembled crowd. Depending on the community for whom the sacrifice was staged and who was staging it, be it the community of workers, court functionaries and nobles in attendance at a specific royal residence, the Persian army on campaign, or assembled representatives, it had the power to portray the empire in microcosm and communicate a perfect alignment of royal and divine power and abundance. Ahura Mazdā was not the only god to receive such an elaborate sacrifice in the archival sources. Like the *lan* the Persians performed the *šip* for a variety of gods other than Ahura Mazda, who is named individually much less often than Elamite gods. However, in the royal inscriptions, when a king specifies the type of sacrifice he performed for Ahura Mazdā, in the Elamite version he invariably refers to it as a *šip*.

Our literary sources preserve the memory of a long line of post-Achaemenid performances of massive sacrifices with a remarkably similar protocol. This is not the first time that many of these literary attestations of Hellenistic sacrifices have been compared to the Achaemenid rituals; however, here I would like to more fully interrogate it as a cohesive tradition in its own right rather than multiple, disparate and disconnected echoes. Moreover, in order to understand these, I argue that we should approach the problem not just from the perspective of origins, but also from a broader, contemporary transregional debate. In almost all cases, despite the historical and cultural distance, the sources allude to or even directly state that the protocol was distinctively Persian and in some instances performed according to a distinctively royal and ancestral protocol.⁷⁶ The first of these includes a massive feast celebrated by Peucestas at Persepolis, which previous scholarship has often drawn parallels to the *šip*.⁷⁷ About a half a century later we hear that the Seleucid king Antiochos I let out to enemy forces that he was planning this sort of enormous ‘Persian festival’ as a diversionary tactic.

76 Xen. Cyr 8,3,33–34; App. Mith. 12,66; Diod. Sic. 19,22,2–3; Str. 15,3,7.

77 Arr. Anab. 6,29,4.

“Antiochus, wishing to take Damascus, which Dion, a general of Ptolemy [II], defended, ordered his army and the entire region to celebrate a **Persian festival**, commanding all the hyparchs to gather abundant provisions in preparation. Insofar as Antiochus was celebrating together with everyone else, Dion, having heard news of the luxury of the festival, let down his guard.”⁷⁸

The text's emphasis that this was a 'Persian' religious rite and mention that the king was a celebrant are especially noteworthy. Both under the Achaemenids and in the Hellenistic period, the rite was not tethered to a specific site, temple, or even deity. It could be performed for any numbers of divine entities, from Ahura Mazdā, to Elamite gods as witnessed in the PFA, to Alexander and Philip under Peucestas, to even theoretically (should one be so perverse) the *daivas*, but as I have stressed elsewhere, the rite itself was what was the most important: the ability to stage it, either with oneself as the celebrant or a delegate doing the honours, marked one as supremely powerful and a contender for the Persian royal tradition, and this was its ultimate significance.⁷⁹ Of course, it was likely that there were viewers who were oblivious to the ritual's claims and connotations unless explicitly told, but our post-Achaemenid material does indeed make a point of mediating its ultimate origins. In the post-Achaemenid world the fact that this 'Persian festival' was now performed by Macedonians, or Irano-Macedonians in the case of the Seleucids, was highly polemical inasmuch as it demonstrated that royal power had been taken from the Achaemenids and now resided elsewhere, either with the Macedonian command under Peucestas or, with the Seleucids, who at this point was Western Asia's new hegemon and dominant Iranian (though not necessarily Persian) royal dynasty.

The rite was not static, and it took on a more topographically rooted character among the *regna minora* of Anatolia connected with specific sites. The basic constituents of a massive royally sponsored open-air sacrifice 'according to Persian custom', with burnt offerings on altars, and a feast connected these performances with those in the Persian heartland and were combined with other Persian or neo-Persian traditions. Of more proximate significance to Antiochos of Commagene and the political discourse of post-Achaemenid, post-Seleucid Anatolia is the sacrifice celebrated by Mithradates VI of Pontus to Zeus Stratios, another deity who combines Greek and Iranian linguistic and cultic attributes. During this geopolitical moment, the deities as well as the royal sponsors were proudly Perso-Macedonian. This particular performance took place after Mithradates VI repelled Lucius Licinius Murena and has been placed at either Sinope or Mt. Yassıçal near Amasya. This particular performance was a massive spectacle whose lavish scale was to reach allies and enemies alike, though

78 Polyaeus, *Strat.* 4,3,24.

79 Canepa 2018, 184–185.

it is likely that there were multiple sites where such sacrifices took place on a more routine, less lavish basis before as they did even after the Roman conquest of Pontos. Our evidence for the structure of the cult of Zeus Stratios during the Roman period, with its multiple cult installations and especially its periodic assemblies of the community, offers broad parallels with the Antiochos I's multiple *temene*, focus on feasting and prescriptions calling for his subjects to assemble at different points of the year to celebrate the cult.⁸⁰ The summit of Mount Yassiçal is to this day still covered with large deposits of ash, charred bones intermixed with Hellenistic and Roman pottery shards along with the remains of Roman cult installations.⁸¹ While it was likely performed on this scale only on special occasions, the description, which quite possibly drew from official propagandistic dispatches from Mithradates VI given its incredible specificity, parallels several features of the performances at Antiochos I's *hierothesia*:

“[Mithradates VI] offered an ancestral sacrifice to Zeus Stratios on a high peak, having erected a summit made of wood on top higher than the other. First the kings themselves carry wood to it, arranging another shorter [sacrificial altar] in a circle around it, then they arrange on the upper one milk, honey, wine, oil and all kinds of incense; and having laid out bread and meat on the [altar] on the ground level as a meal for those present, just like the kind of sacrifices of the Persian kings at Pasargadae, they ignite the wood. Due to its great size the blaze it is visible to sailors one thousand stadia away. They say that it is not possible to approach for many days, the air being so blazing hot. [Mithradates VI] led the sacrifice according to ancestral *nomos*.”⁸²

Though previous scholarship was sceptical of any genuine connection with Persian religion as practiced in the Persian homeland and Pasargadae, the archival sources have confirmed that this reflects Achaemenid religion in the form of the *šip* and that it was indeed performed at Pasargadae.⁸³ Earlier scholarship's scepticism of legitimate correspondence with Persian religion centred on the fact that the rituals described in Appian, namely, offering honey and oil to the fire, does not conform to orthodox Zoroastrian strictures.⁸⁴ Of course, not much of Achaemenid religion as evinced in the PFA's texts and seals corresponds to the performance of the *yasna* in contemporary (and as far as we can judge) late-antique to early-modern Zoroastrianism, the point of comparison for most estimations of 'orthodoxy'. It is also worth noting that this grand royal sacrifice does not bear much resemblance to the popular Iranian religiosity that persisted in Pontos at sites like Zela, with its processions of statues, fire cults and

80 Canepa 2018, 197–199.

81 Observed during my own visits to the site in 2014.

82 App. Mith. 9,66,83.

83 See above.

84 Boyce – Grenet 1991, 294; de Jong 1997, 140–142.

small shrines.⁸⁵ If we can judge from its frequency in the Achaemenid period, this major sacrifice to Zeus Stratios would take place only on special occasions, certainly not daily or weekly.⁸⁶ Moreover, although we are viewing it through a Roman filter, Appian's emphatic statement that Mithradates VI sacrificed, "according to ancestral *nomos*", offers compelling parallels with Antiochos I's equally emphatic emphasis that he was sacrificing to his family's ancient ancestral *nomos*. Thus in both Mithradatid kingdom under Mithradates VI and Orontid Commagene under Antiochos I these cults took place on a high peak, its central focus was a communal feast, the sacrifice included a burnt offering of incense and fragrant herbs, and most importantly, it was performed according to a *nomos* that was (emically) understood to derive from a royal dynastic custom traceable to Achaemenid royal practice and transmitted through the dynastic customs, thus originating not from the region, but the king's familial traditions.

Antiochos I's emphasis on his intertwined Persian and Alexandrine-Seleucid roots as the cornerstone of his legitimizing program engaged and eventually subsumed what appears to be a contemporary discourse of royal legitimacy among the Mithradatids, Ariarathids and (possibly) the Orontids of Sophene. The cult *nomos* of both the Mithradates VI and Antiochos I had the same purpose: providing tangible and experiential proof of this heritage. This was reinforced in numerous other ways. Even as he portrayed himself visually on his coinage as a 'new Alexander' and owned the very chlamys of Alexander, Mithradates VI owned the 'couch of Dareios' and incarnated himself as a 'new Cyrus' through the performance of the type of sacrifices that had been performed at his royal residence, Pasargadae.⁸⁷ While not owning these relics, Antiochos I's Persian royal costume in real life and in sculpture, as well as his requirement that his priesthood wear Persian robes (at least insofar as the form he understood them to take), conjured an equally vivid experience of the veracity of his claims to the ancient viewer. Although reinvented and dramatically changed through an integration of Hellenistic cult and artistic elements, the traditions of Persian open-air sacrifice and sanctuaries had deep Persian roots and contemporary Hellenistic currency.

Conclusion: East or West? Memory or Innovation?

Scholarship has often described Commagene as lying between 'east' and 'west', however, as this paper has emphasized, 'east' and 'west', 'Greek' and 'Persian' were not stable or monolithic cultural or political siloes. Similar to those of the Ariarathids of Cappadocia and Mithradatids of Pontos, the Orontids' conjoined Perso-Macedonian lineages and traditions reflected the aspirations of ambitious sovereigns just as much as region-

85 Canepa 2018, 194–195.

86 Henkelman 2011, 107–108.

87 App. Mith. 116–117.

al histories. The later Orontids were certainly conscious of occupying an important, though precarious, place between the Greco-Roman and Iranian worlds culturally and politically, yet an opposition between these cultural and political spheres came into high relief only with Rome's destruction of the Pontic and Armenian empires and the encroachment of Parthia. The Orontids, more often than not, succeeded in deftly navigating and resolving these seemingly impossible diplomatic and military situations to their favour. The artistic, cultic, and diplomatic initiatives that Antiochos I in particular spearheaded responded to the opportunities and anxieties of this volatile period.

Despite the Arsacids' and Kushans' eventual pre-eminence over the wider Iranian world in post-Seleucid Western and South Asia, kingdoms ruled by Persian dynasties in Anatolia, the Caucasus, and Northern Iran presented rival claims to the Persian and Macedonian royal legacies. While the former emerged from the East, the later development originated in the West, among the newly royal post-satrapal families of Anatolia and the Caucasus. In both cases, the traditions of the Seleucids and Hellenistic kingship acted as one of the cultural commonalities that both new traditions of post-Achaemenid Iranian kingship shared. The Arsacids eventually began experimenting with the royal identities derived from the Eastern Iranian traditions as later preserved in the Avesta. This tradition may be faintly detected in the Orontid onomasticon, but among the kings of the West, Persian identity was one of their most important and valued sources of symbolic capital. It allowed them to treat and intermarry with the Arsacids and, despite enmities, provided them a platform from which they could treat with the Romans.

As much as these dynasties might have claimed, embellished, or reinvented grand Persian royal traditions, they relied on regional sites of memory and ritual traditions from the pre-Persian past to anchor their new visions. The independence and idiosyncrasy of these local memories of Persian kingship is paralleled in other aspects of their reigns, such as ruler representation. Moreover, as we have just explored, the post-satrapal dynasts often reoriented memorial significances of Hittite, Urartian or Assyrian ruins or architectural features toward their neo-Persian royal legacy, recruiting their regionally perceived primordial heft to augment what their great-great-grandfathers' more modest satrapal estates lacked. What is noteworthy is that these rival visions were predicated primarily on regional and familial memories of Persian identity and practices not on those of the Eastern Iranian royal and religious traditions and, with constant interchange with the Greek and later Greco-Roman world, they experienced significant cross-pollination with the Greek historiographical tradition. This western post-Achaemenid 'Persianism' was only one royal discourse among many, and for a time it presented an important rival vision of a new Iranian kingship.

Commagene presents an excellent test case for the study of the strategic formation and deliberate change of politico-cultural identities and symbolics of power in post-Achaemenid Western Asia, as well as moments of agonistic exchange among empires. As this brief historical survey has shown for both the Achaemenid or Greco-

Macedonian cultural elements, when approaching Commagene we must not fall into the trap of imputing all evidence of cultural identity or affiliation to map onto the ethnic make-up of the population over which the kings ruled, be they deeply rooted or newly transferred. Unlike Hasmonean or Herodian experiments, we must not assume that the majority or even the elites of the population shared the gods or cultural traditions of the royal family until they were compelled or invited to do so, much less that the king's subjects were the ultimate target of his program.

Antiochos I's incredible campaign of rooting, emphasizing and monumentalizing the Orontid royal legacy within Commagene was without a doubt a campaign intended to establish, augment and keep legitimacy, though not with his own populace. It was intended to amplify and make legible for an external audience those Orontid traditions that had the greatest cachet regionally and establish the dynast as an ancient and legitimate force to the Roman and, especially, the Arsacids. With reference to the spread of Sanskrit in South and Southeast Asia, Sheldon Pollock pointed out the need to establish legitimacy (which he defines and treats in a Weberian sense) in the eyes of their populace on the part of those in power provides a relatively weak interpretive paradigm for understanding the motivations and significance of moments of cultural change in premodernity.⁸⁸ In a nutshell, according to Pollock, there is no need for those in power to explain their actions and those who are dominated need not be fooled into accepting what they have no choice but to accept anyway. This indeed applies to Commagene. However, the problem we are confronted with in this chapter is substantially different and it behoves us to untether our understanding from Weber. While it ended in tragedy for his daughter due to the Arsacids' subsequent inter-dynastic civil war, Antiochos I's marriage of Laodike to Orodes II was proof of the power of his program. He had successfully constructed his dynasty as a repository of the Iranian world's most ancient royal dynastic traditions despite the small size of his kingdom and precarious position.

In his extensive inscriptions, Antiochos I never speaks of the religious traditions he promotes as important because they are the autochthonous customs of Commagene and its population. What made them significant is the fact that they combine the two global royal and aristocratic traditions of his day, those of the Hellenes and the Persians, not coincidentally his dynastic 'roots'. Moreover, he repeatedly states that he was the author of the cult and sanctuaries. They are "the primitive rule and common custom", not just of Commagene but rather "of all mankind" augmented by additional honours that he himself devised "in his own just consideration".⁸⁹ Similarly, he "announced, in the piety of my thought, that the kingdom subject to my throne should be the common dwelling place of all the gods [...]", these gods are represented in the form "as the ancient lore of Persians and Greeks- the fortunate roots of my ancestry-

88 I thank Ab de Jong for introducing this to our discussion in the course of the conference: Pollock 2006, 614–625.

89 N 1,3 (trans. F. K. Dörner in Sanders 1996, 206–217).

had handed them down [to us]”⁹⁰ They are “the ancestral gods” of Persia and Macedonia and now, because of the Orontids, “the native hearth of Commagene”⁹¹ While neither came close to achieving this goal, the pantheon shared the catholic and imperial pretensions of Antiochos I’s ambitions to unite the Greek and Persian worlds. They are the ancestral customs of the Orontid family as mediated by the king first and foremost. The people are compelled to assemble, take part and follow the rules, but it did not really matter what they thought about the proceedings as long as they showed up and behaved. Rather, the populace is “divided up for the purpose of these assemblies, festival gatherings, and sacrifices, and directed [...] to repair by villages and cities to the nearest sanctuaries [...]”, effectively trotted out as extras to complete the *mise-en-scène* prepared for the experience of the cult’s main audience, the dynast himself and external viewers from Rome, Parthia and the elites of Cappadocia, Armenia and Pontos.⁹² Against the assumption that Greek art, religion and culture were the only global idioms in the late-Hellenistic period, Antiochos I’s actions interpreted in the proper context show that these burgeoning traditions of Iranian kingship composed an equally powerful royal and aristocratic common culture with an ever growing global reach.

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Reversing Points of Reference

Commagene and the Anfushy Necropolis from Alexandria in Modern Scholarship

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Introduction

Despite the historical and cultural differences between Hellenistic Commagene and the Lagid kingdom, as well as the dissimilarities in the available archaeological and written sources, the issues encountered in modern scholarship dealing with these two regions are comparable. Similar to how the Antiochan monuments are usually interpreted as a combination of Greek and Persian/Iranian elements, Ptolemaic creations are mainly analysed in terms of Greco-Macedonian and Egyptian influences. Due to their so-called intermediate geographical position 'between East and West', both areas are regarded as in-between civilizations, merging elements from two different traditions. This orientation of scholarly literature is perfectly illustrated in the studies of the Anfushy necropolis, which is unfailingly seen as a typical example of such a presumed hybridization. Its architectural and painted decoration is supposed to mingle features that evoke either Greece or Egypt, and therefore act as emblems of these two areas, while reflecting the ethnic composition of the local population. As in the case of the prevailing evaluations of Commagenian Hellenistic material culture¹, the aesthetic result has sometimes been described as awkward, or has even been disregarded as a peripheral idiosyncrasy. In both cases, such negative assessments are often based on the alleged degree of Hellenization, which has been evaluated as disappointingly low, and therefore as an alarming sign of growing Oriental influence.²

1 See Versluys 2017, 191–199.

2 Regarding Commagene, see Hamdy Bey – Efendi 1883, 17–18. 25–26. 28; Humann – Puchstein 1890, 215. 222. 232. 249. 253. 258–259. 294–295. 345–348; Young 1963, 203. 207. 212; Robertson 1975, 565; Dörrie 1978, 245; Smith 1988, 23. 103–104. 121. 123. 131; Robertson 1993, 69–70; Boardman 1994, 80. 82. For Anfushy, see especially Adriani 1952, 122–123. 126–127; Bernand 1998, 226–230.

Comparisons between scholarly approaches to these sites and further historiographical investigation of the close resemblances between interpretative frames and evaluative criteria definitely reveal some of the guiding principles of modern archaeological thought. Moreover, the Alexandrian example provides an opportunity to reconsider the methodological questions raised by this literature³, in the light of Ptolemaic material and written evidence, which is more informative for some purposes than the sources related to the Commagenian social and political environment. It may therefore be worthwhile to unravel how scholars have assessed Alexandria as a Greek-Egyptian composite in order to better understand how and why they addressed Commagene in the way they did, as a Greek-Persian/Iranian conglomerate – and this points towards fruitful directions for further research. From this perspective, after a short description of the Anfushy tombs and an overview of their dating, this paper will detect and discuss similarities of viewpoints and thought patterns from research about these monu-

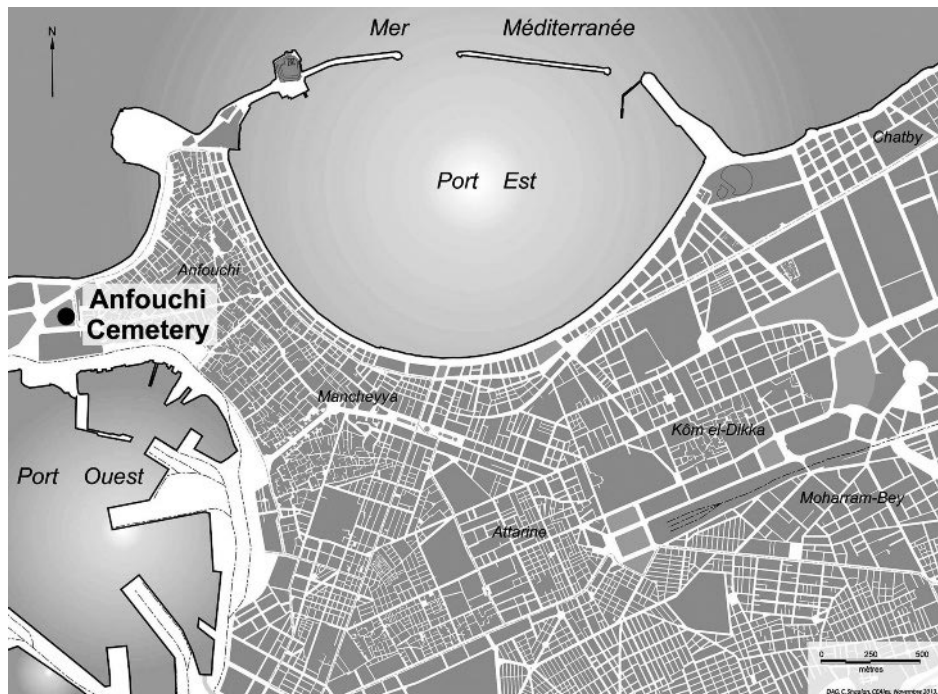


Fig. 1 Localisation of the site of Anfushy in the modern city of Alexandria, CAD Cécile Shaalan, © CEAlex archives

- 3 Botti 1902, 12. 17–19. 32; Pagenstecher 1919, 120. 126. 179–183. 185; Breccia 1921, 68–69; Noshy 1937, 26–28; Adriani 1952, 55–128; Adriani 1966, 191–197; Venit 2002, 68. 73–91; Venit 2004, 124–127; Venit 2009, 55–60; Guimier-Sorbets 2010; Guimier-Sorbets 2012, 171–172. 174. 178–181; Gorzelany 2019, 24. 88–90. 106. 110. 174–175. 178. 194. 198.

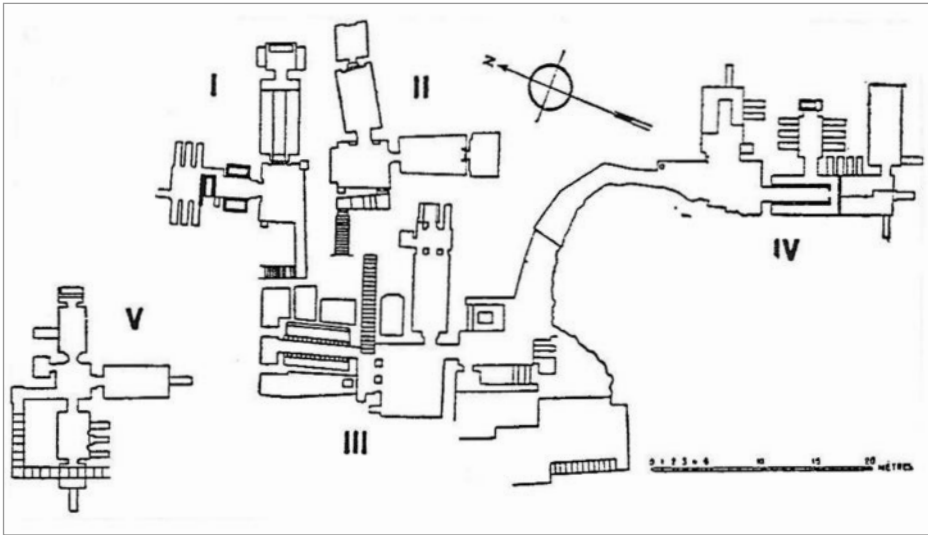


Fig. 2 General plan of the Anfushy necropolis, following Adriani 1952, 55 fig. 28

ments and those of Commagene. Subsequently, the issues brought up by such schemes of analysis in the Alexandrian context will be explored, and this criticism will serve as a suggested new basis for a re-examination of Commagenian visual art.

Anfushy Necropolis – The Site and its Chronology

The Anfushy necropolis is located in the North-West of Alexandria, on the modern Ras-el-Tin peninsula, which corresponds both to the ancient Pharos Island and the Heptastadium, the bridge connecting it to the coast (fig. 1). The site is situated on the north-eastern peak of this peninsula and covers a surface area of around 60m², which includes six monumental *hypogea* in various states of preservation (fig. 2). Two of these are relatively well-preserved (*hypogea* 1 and 2), one remains in good condition but is inundated and inaccessible (*hypogea* 5), while two others are damaged (*hypogea* 3 and 4), although their layout is still visible and some of their architectural and decorative elements are intact. The sixth tomb (*hypogea* 6) was already hardly visible by the middle of the 20th century.⁴ The site, which was discovered by accident in 1901 when shacks were being cleared and demolition work was being carried out for the reconstruction of the shoreline and the dock of the eastern harbour⁵, was first explored

4 Adriani 1952, 55. 97; Venit 2002, 73–74. 86.

5 Lacroix – Daressy 1922, 11; Tkaczow 1993, 51; Venit 2002, 68–69; Helmbold-Doyé 2009 1, 49.

by Botti in the early 20th century. Further excavations were conducted by Breccia and completed by Adriani, who published the first extensive study of the tombs in 1952.⁶



Fig. 3 *Hypogeum 2*, entrance of the funerary chamber 2, following Adriani 1952, 70 fig. 40

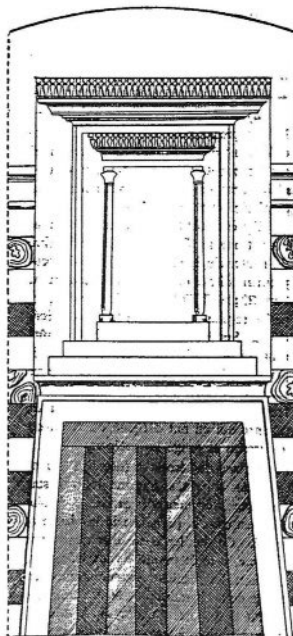


Fig. 4 *Hypogeum 2*, back wall of the funerary chamber 2, following Adriani 1952, 72 fig. 42

6 Botti 1902; Breccia 1921, 55–69; Adriani 1952, 55–128.

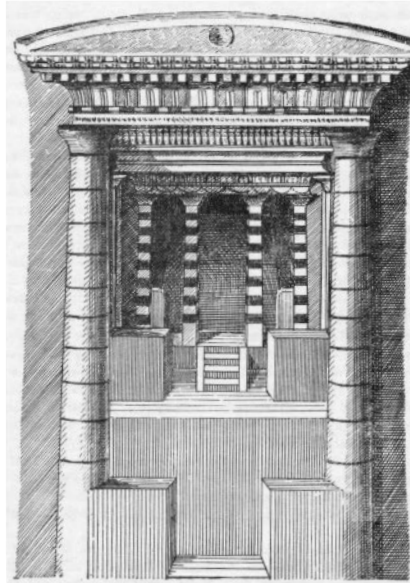


Fig. 5 *Hypogeum 5*, loculus frame in chamber 4, following Adriani 1952, 92 fig. 54

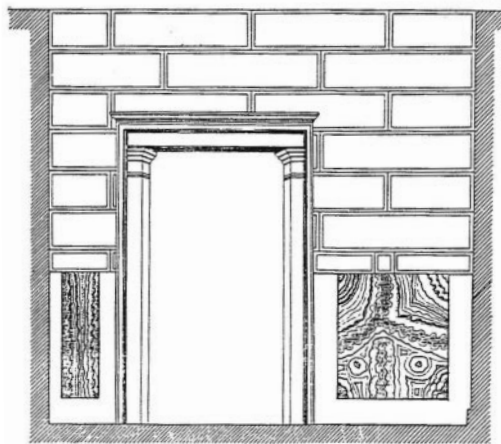


Fig. 6 *Hypogeum 2*, doorway leading from the court to one of the galleries, following Adriani 1952, 66 fig. 36

Despite some differences, all *hypogea* have an approximately identical design, with an L-shaped roofed staircase leading down to a wholly or partially open-air square court. This central space gives access to two or three surrounding underground galleries, each of which with a rectangular elongated vestibule arranged with benches, at the back of which a smaller funerary chamber is aligned on the same axis (fig. 2). *Loculi* for burials

and niches for offerings are cut into the walls of the rooms and water cisterns and wells are dug in the floor of the court. The best-preserved tombs, partly hewn from the rock and partly built, display a rich architectural decoration, which is still visible in *hypogea* 1, 2 and 5, featuring both Doric style mouldings and doorways, and *aediculas* or *loculi* frames mainly inspired by the Pharaonic tradition (fig. 3–6). Wall-paintings are either carried out in the structural style, with regular rows of trompe-l’oeil ashlar blocks imitating isodome masonry, or feature a checkerboard pattern, probably imitating a faïence cladding, with inserted squares bearing Egyptian crowns, alternating with bands of fake alabaster. In both systems, the lower part contains counterfeit marble or alabaster orthostats (fig. 7). *Hypogeum* 1 retains only the first decorative design. They both occur in different rooms in *hypogeum* 2, and they are superimposed in one of the vestibules, while in *hypogeum* 5 they decorate different walls of the same anterooms. In a room and a *loculus* of the latter tomb, various kinds of trees and bushes are sketchily painted on the walls, in one case standing between pilasters drawn in perspective (fig. 8). Other motives used in this monument seem to evoke carpets (fig. 9). In the stair-

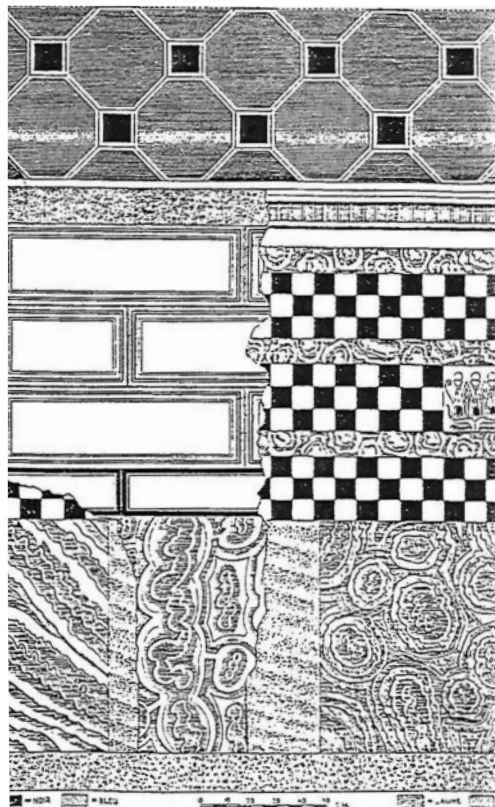


Fig. 7 *Hypogeum* 2, wall paintings in vestibule 2, following Adriani 1952, 69 fig. 39

case of *hypogeum 2*, three panels with figurative scenes in Egyptian style decorate the walls, but only one of them is still in good condition (fig. 10), while the second one is very poorly preserved and the third one is barely discernible. On the undecorated walls of one of the anterooms, numerous graffiti include both writing and sketches. The low-vaulted ceilings of the Anfushy tombs are covered by multicolour geometric shapes, including imbricated lozenges, squares alternating between octagons (fig. 7) or framing floral motives, such as stylized rosettes. In the main burial chamber of *hypogeum 2*, a particularly elaborate illusionistic example feigns a coffering, incorporating separate scenes probably inspired by Greek mythology, seen in the background through a grid (fig. 11).⁷

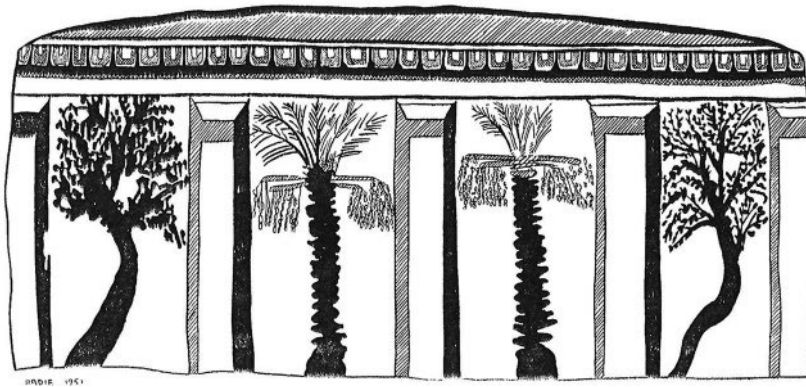


Fig. 8 *Hypogeum 5*, wall paintings in chamber 2, following Adriani 1952, pl. XLVIII fig. 1

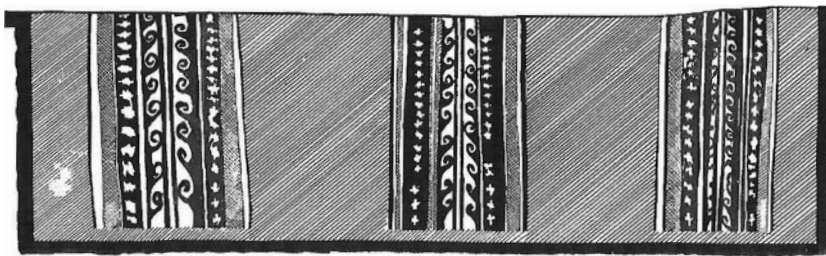


Fig. 9 *Hypogeum 5*, painting on a bench in chamber 2, following Adriani 1952, pl. XLVIII fig. 2

7 For a detailed description of the *hypogea*, see Adriani 1952, 55–97; Adriani 1966, 191–197; Venit 2002, 73–90; Helmbold-Doyé 2009 2, 5–56.



Fig. 10 *Hypogeum 2*, painted panel in the staircase, Judith S. McKenzie et al., *Manar al-Athar* Photo-Archive, Oxford 2013–, available at <http://www.manar-al-athar.ox.ac.uk>

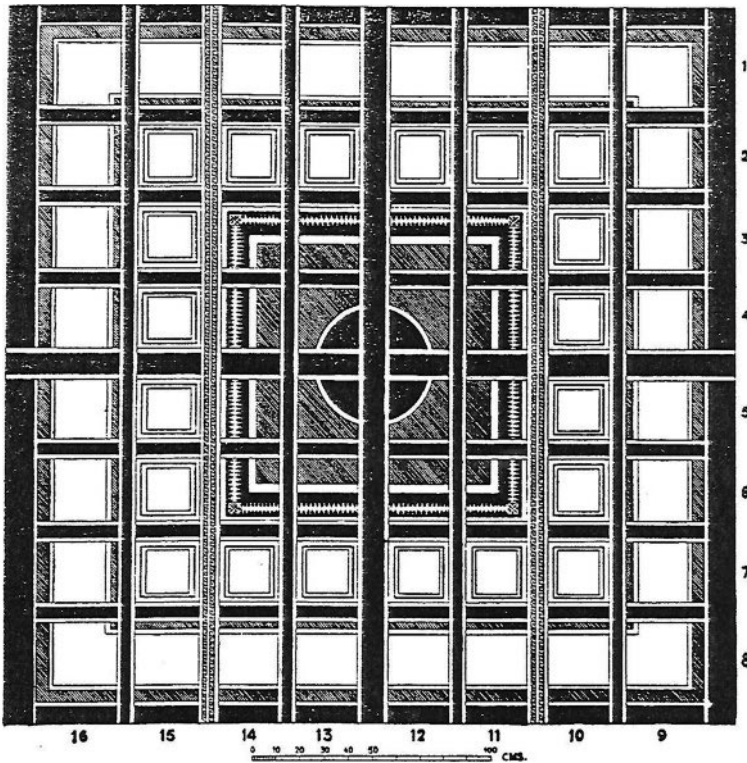


Fig. 11 *Hypogeum 2*, painted ceiling of the funerary chamber 2, following Adriani 1952, 73 fig. 43

The early commentators on *hypogeum 2* established a chronology in the 3rd c. BCE, which relied mainly upon the *dipinti* and an inscription traced on an amphora found in the tomb, as well as on iconographical particularities and stylistic comparisons with monuments from Ptolemaic Egypt and other parts of the Hellenistic world.⁸ Consequently, Breccia dated *hypogeum 5* to the first half of the 2nd c. BCE based on what he perceived as its more pronounced Egyptian character.⁹ Noshy accepted the suggested dating for the first phases of *hypogeum 2*, but he argued that all Egyptian and Egyptianizing elements, for which he found the earliest parallels in the Roman period, were added during a reconstruction that could not have taken place before the 2nd c. CE.¹⁰ Adriani was the first to take the typology of the findings into account, especially the ceramics, lamps and terra cotta figurines, and to confront these results with observations about the morphological and decorative features of the constructions themselves, which he compared to other Alexandrian tombs. On this ground, he reviewed the previous arguments and came to the conclusion that the Anfushy necropolis had been built during the 2nd–1st c. BCE and had remained in function until a later period.¹¹ Subsequent scholarship has generally supported this proposal, in spite of the fact that there are certain disagreements about how the exact stages of development were dated.¹²

Commagene and Anfushy – Conformity to Culture-styles and Marginality in In-between Areas

Modern approaches to the Anfushy *hypogea* and the Commagenian monuments are comparable in many respects. Antiochos I's visual language has often been said to integrate what is usually termed as Greek and Persian, or Iranian, elements. This attempt has been connected to the area's historical and geographical position between the Ori-

- 8 Botti 1902, 14. 17–18. 21–22. 25–29. 30. 33. 36; Schiff 1905, 20. 23–25. 42–67; Pagenstecher 1919, 117–118. 120–126. 178–185.
- 9 Breccia 1921, 68–69.
- 10 Noshy 1937, 26–28. This author denies the existence of an initial stage prior to the structural style decoration, but accepts Pagenstecher's two later phases, though excluding all the Egyptian features.
- 11 Adriani 1952, 123–125; Adriani 1966, 192. 194–195. 197. *Hypogea 1* to 3 would date back to the middle or second half of the 2nd c. BCE and *hypogeum 5* to the 1st c. BCE. See also Breccia 1921, 60. 65. 69.
- 12 See, for instance, Fraser 1972 1, 34; Fraser 1972 2, 43 n. 95; Fedak 1990, 132–133; McKenzie 1990, 67–68; Pensabene 1993, 59. 62. 89. 103. 107. 133. 135. 142. 526; Empereur 1998, 17; Pfrommer 1999, 123–124; Venit 2002, 77; Venit 2004, 124; Bonacasa 2005, 50; Venit 2009, 56–58; Fedak 2006, 92; Guimier-Sorbets 2010, 169; Guimier-Sorbets 2012, 171; Gorzelany 2019, 88. 100 n. 49. However, Barbet 1985, 21 retains the earlier dating. A contrary point of view is expressed by J. Helmbold-Doyé in her recent PhD, in which she connects the architectural and painted decoration of the necropolis to the evolution of Roman painting and the Augustan 'egyptomania', suggesting late parallels which would indicate a date between the first half of the 1st c. BCE to the 1st c. CE (Helmbold-Doyé 2009 1, 97–99, 102–104).

ent and the West and to the official discourse of the dynast, according to whom his double ancestry could be traced back to the Seleucids and Alexander the Great, on the one hand, and to the Persian King of Kings, Darius, on the other. The outcome of this process of fusion, which is thought to express such ideological visions as well as Commagene's intermediary state and role as mediator between the Hellenistic and Iranian-Parthian worlds, has been defined as a hybrid or synthetic style, a testimony to the blending of Greek and Persian cultural aspects. The site of Nemrud Dağ has been regarded as a typical example of this dual imagery, suggesting the area's in-betweenness, not only because of its morphological features, but also because of the syncretized denominations of the deities worshipped in its context.¹³

In a similar way, the Anfushy necropolis has almost exclusively been analysed in terms of its so-called Greek and Egyptian components. Although earlier literature suggests an underlying stylistic distinction between elements inspired by the Pharaonic tradition and 'Pompeian' influences¹⁴, soon afterwards this opposition acquired ethnic connotations as these designations were replaced by the labels 'Greek', 'Hellenic' or 'Macedonian' and 'Egyptian', which henceforth became recurrent:

*"Anfushy may have been, therefore, in origin a Macedonian tomb, Greek in architecture and decoration, which was requisitioned in the Roman period by a second proprietor who gave it an Egyptian touch."*¹⁵

The morphological and iconographical characteristics of the tombs would therefore mirror Alexandria's cultural particularities as a city in limbo between Egypt and Greece, in the formulation of Marjorie Venit:

*"From the second century onward, Egyptian-inspired forms both architectural and figurative vie with Hellenic ones in Alexandrian tombs and create an architectural and decorative program that, by merging signs and symbols of the two cultures, is unique to Alexandria. This phenomenon is given clearest voice in the tombs of the Pharos Island."*¹⁶

For this reason, these monuments have been interpreted as the most striking illustration of Greco-Egyptian eclecticism¹⁷ in the Alexandrian funerary architecture of the

13 Humann – Puchstein 1890, 349–353; Krüger 1937, 9. 17. 23–39; Dörner – Goell 1963, 302; Young 1963, 220–222; Pollitt 1986, 274–275; Smith 1988, 23. 25–26. 103–104. 121. 131; Wagner 1988, 9. 118. 138. 141. 178–181; Robertson 1993, 69–70; Smith 1996, 227–228; Jacobs 2002, 33–42; Dunand 2006, 138; Schwertheim 2011, 77. 79–81; Kropp 2013, 5. 180–188. 314–315. 357. 360–361. For a summary of these approaches, see Sanders 1996, 30–31; Versluys 2017, 11–13. 16. 19. 109. 127. 142. 155. 157–158. 172. 185. 200–201.

14 Pagenstecher 1919, 120. 126. 179–183. 185.

15 Noshy 1937, 28.

16 Venit 2002, 68.

17 The decoration is characterized as eclectic by Adriani 1952, 117. 122–123. 126–127, Bernand 1998, 230, Bonacasa 2005, 50, Guimier-Sorbets 2010, 174 and Gorzelany 2019, 88 n. 11.

Ptolemaic period. Their decoration, which is thought to incorporate elements from both traditions in a cultural mixture, is usually defined by the coexistence of two distinct styles, schemes, modes or systems, indicating an ultimate fusion of the two cultures, regardless of the question whether or not this process is deemed intentional.¹⁸ According to their subject and stylistic features, architectural elements, mouldings, figurative representations, and ornamental patterns or details are hence usually divided into two categories and attributed designations, such as “Greek zone style” or “Egyptian palace style” (fig. 7)¹⁹, while some of them are labelled “Greco-Egyptian”²⁰, “Egypto-Greek”²¹ or “Egyptianizing”²² (fig. 3–5).

Negative value judgements of such blends occur, either explicitly or implicitly, in modern interpretations of both the Anfushy necropolis and the Commagenian material finds. Antiochos’ images have often been evaluated as artistically uninteresting, rather hollow²³, frivolous, awkward and ill-proportioned, or even grotesque.²⁴ They have often been labelled as Greco-Oriental, a designation that has mostly been used in a derogatory sense, implying an unsuccessful combination, an artificial concoction, or an unsophisticated fusion resulting in stylistic failure.²⁵ The Nemrud Dağ monument, in particular, has been characterized as ugly, bombastic, rough and rude.²⁶ Its colossi, described as empty and meaningless²⁷ or scornfully compared to figures fabricated from snow²⁸, have been regarded as the products of a decadent and troubled time²⁹ and the

18 The term ‘hybrid’ referring to the Anfushy tombs can be found in Botti 1902, 32. Although Schiff does not use this word, he sees a mixture (“*Vermischung*”) of Greek and Egyptian motives in *hypogäum* 2 (Schiff 1905, 18). Breccia 1921, 68–69 comments on *hypogäum* 5 in a similar way (“*un mélange assez compliqué*”). More recent scholars describe with the same expression the whole necropolis: Pensabene 1993, 135 (“*un misto di elementi greci ed egizi*”); McKenzie 2007, 71 (“*a mixture of Egyptian and classical decoration*”); Guimier-Sorbets 2012, 171 (“*le mélange d’éléments grecs et égyptiens*”); Gorzelany 2019, 178 (“*the Greek and Egyptian styles had become merged*”). See also Lembke 2018, 182 (“*a progressive process of amalgamation*”).

19 Venit 2002, 76. 80. 82–83. 86. 88–89; Venit 2004, 124–127; Venit 2009, 56. 58. See also von Hesberg 1978, 142 (“*So folgt [...] einer griechischen Quaderwand I. Stiles eine ägyptische Kacheldekoration*”); Guimier-Sorbets 2010, 160. 162; Guimier-Sorbets 2012, 178. 180 (“*style structural grec*”).

20 Adriani 1966, 191. 193; Pensabene 1993, 89. 127. 133. 498. 526; Bonacasa 2005, 43. 50; Gorzelany 2019, 89 n. 11.

21 Adriani 1952, 70.

22 Schiff 1905, 23; Adriani 1952, 58. 60. 91. 104. 116. 119–121. 123; Adriani 1966, 191–193. 196; Fraser 1972, 2, 43 n. 95; Fedak 1990, 132; Pensabene 1993, 85. 103. 133; Bernand 1998, 226; Venit 2002, 75–76. 83. 85–86. 88–89; Venit 2004, 124. 126; Bonacasa 2005, 43. 47–48. 50; Fedak 2006, 92; Venit 2009, 56–58; Guimier-Sorbets 2012, 174. 178–179. 181; Gorzelany 2019, 90 n. 11. 107.

23 Smith 1988, 104.

24 Dörrie 1978, 245.

25 Smith 1988, 103–104. 121; Smith 1996, 228. See also Pollitt 1986, 275.

26 Humann – Puchstein 1890, 215. 253. Cf. Sanders 1996, p. xxiii. 28. 30 for a brief review of these characterisations.

27 Smith 1996, 228.

28 Hamdy Bey – Efendi 1883, 17–18.

29 Smith 1996, 228.

reliefs have been qualified as startlingly incompetent.³⁰ The main criticism underlying such invalidating assessments³¹ is the lack of consistency with a specific culture-style, ‘Persian’ or ‘Greek’³², perceived as a passive and absolute category or a coherent phenomenon related to a distinct population. Indeed, evaluations by early scholars rely upon the statement that Antiochan sculptures have not earned a place in the development of Greek art and cannot claim to be considered within this framework.³³ More recent literature reiterates such views and suggests that these creations are not genuine, regretting their Greek disguise reduced to a travesty of Classical statuary³⁴ or dismissing them as the last fling of Hellenism.³⁵ This neither purely Oriental nor authentically Classical style³⁶ has been thought to be uncharacteristic, reflecting the deficient skill of the stonemasons³⁷, if not their barbaric sense of design. The Nemrud Dağ *hierotheseion* has therefore been attributed to indigenous artisans of low artistic status, who had acquired knowledge abroad³⁸ and were unfamiliar with – and probably unsympathetic to – the Classical treatment of sculpture;³⁹ or, on the contrary, to faint-hearted attempts of Greek sculptors deliberately barbarizing or Orientalizing the style and anatomy.⁴⁰

Although pejorative characterizations are less frequent and virulent in the case of Anfushy, they derive from the same idea of faithfulness to fixed styles and artistic traditions. Thus, the painted panels inspired by Pharaonic iconography have been accused of having neither the beauty of works created by the great Greek masters, nor the authenticity of Egyptian art.⁴¹ Even more stringent criticism was levelled at the tombs when they were compared to other, more strongly Hellenized Alexandrian funerary monuments, which led to conclusions of disappointment that almost nothing was left of the beauty and the purity of Greek architectural forms on the Island of Pharos, that nothing reminded of the size, clarity, finish, richness, and variety of other ‘purely

30 Robertson 1975, 565.

31 Kropp 2013, 361 summarizes and criticizes these negative assessments. Although he thinks that the final products were artificial, he qualifies them as eclectic (see also Kropp 2013, 23. 382) in the positive sense of the term, an adjective which is also used by Sanders 1996, 135. 143–144.

32 As T. Goell pointed out, cf. Sanders 1996, p. xxiii. 27–28. 30–31. For the notion of culture-style, see Assmann 1986.

33 Humann – Puchstein 1890, 222. 258–259. 294–295. 345–348.

34 Boardman 1994, 80. 82.

35 Pollitt 1986, 275.

36 Young 1963, 203. 207. 212.

37 Hamdy Bey – Efendi 1883, 25–26. Hoepfner 1983, 66–67; Hoepfner 2000, 67 disputes this viewpoint.

38 Humann – Puchstein 1890, 345. 347–348.

39 Boardman 1994, 80. 82.

40 Smith 1988, 104; Smith 1996, 228. For a critical overview of all these derogatory judgements, see Versluys 2017, 19–20. 26. 155. 185–193. 197. 199–201.

41 Botti 1902, 12 (“*M. Poilay bey ne trouvait pas dans ce tableau la beauté de l’œuvre des grands maîtres grecs;*”). See also *infra*, n. 52.

Greek' expressions.⁴² Given the poverty of their uneven layout, their irregular design and masonry⁴³, their misunderstood 'bastardized' Doric elements⁴⁴ and roughly re-adapted Hellenistic motifs⁴⁵, the mediocre execution and modest quality of their decoration⁴⁶, the Anfushy *hypogea* allegedly display an eclecticism that demonstrates an extreme decadence of taste.⁴⁷ According to this view, the tombs testify to the weakness of Hellenism, fighting against traditional Egyptian art and bending under its weight.⁴⁸ Although more recent scholarly assessments are not overtly negative, their somewhat condescending undertones suggest that this opinion has not completely changed. Comparisons to other Alexandrian necropolises still conclude that the Pharos examples are less important⁴⁹, elaborate and innovative, less stately, neat and well-aligned. Landscape details (fig. 8) are qualified as ingenuous and trompe-l'oeil vistas as more simplistic and less sophisticated than their counterparts from mainland Greece and the Italic peninsula.⁵⁰ As in Commagene, such approaches retain Classical canons as the main aesthetic criteria, overtly or implicitly seeking for traces of these aesthetics in an alien and rather unfavourable environment. Again, the distortion of these norms is imputed to local craftsmen of lesser technical dexterity, appropriating a vocabulary that they have not become familiar with.⁵¹ Accordingly, the Pharaonic style panels (fig. 10) have been interpreted as the work of artists who were not native, despite their

- 42 Adriani 1952, 102 ("il n'y a rien, qui puisse rappeler la belle architecture [...] d'autres hypogées alexandrines"). 126 ("Il n'y a plus rien à Pharos qui nous rappelle l'ampleur, la clarté, la variété des plans de la nécropole de Moustafa Pacha; presque plus rien de la pureté des formes architecturales grecques"). Bernard 1998, 230 ("Les constructions, comme les décorations, n'ont ni le fini, ni la richesse, ni la variété des tombeaux de la nécropole de Mustapha Pacha, par exemple, qui se rattache aux expressions purement grecques des nécropoles orientales").
- 43 Adriani 1952, 103, 106 ("cette maçonnerie est bien loin de présenter la belle régularité de coupe et de mise en oeuvre qu'on a eu l'occasion de constater plusieurs fois dans d'autres constructions hellénistiques de la ville"); see also Schiff 1905, 21–22. For the irregularity of the layout, see *infra*, n. 92, as well as Schiff 1905, 18, 23; Adriani 1966, 191–192, 194, 197; Bernard 1998, 227.
- 44 Adriani 1952, 127. See *infra*, n. 45, 51, 92.
- 45 Adriani 1952, 105 ("nous avons vu très grossièrement interprété et adapté le motif hellénistique d'un quart de colonne engagé des deux côtés d'un pilastre"). 106 ("une sorte de kyma dorique peint, assez grossièrement interprété").
- 46 Adriani 1952, 64 ("la peinture, d'un style bien médiocre"). 126 ("la technique du travail [...] est, en général, nettement inférieure à Pharos."); Adriani 1966, 196 ("tutta la decorazione [...] è di qualità molto modesta.", "L'esecuzione è qui più che altrove inabile"); Bernard 1998, 227 ("Le style de la peinture est médiocre"). 229 ("le reste de la décoration peinte n'est pas d'un travail aussi achevé").
- 47 Adriani 1952, 123 ("Il y a, même, des formes qui dénoncent une période de décadence extrême du goût"). 127 ("éclectisme décadent").
- 48 Adriani 1952, 126–127 (see *infra*, n. 92).
- 49 Fraser 1972 1, 33–34.
- 50 Venit 2002, 68, 76, 87. Bernard 1998, 228 describes the representation of trees as "assez naïve".
- 51 Adriani 1952, 126–127 ("les formes incomprises et abâtardies des kymatia de type grec dénoncent plutôt la main d'artisans égyptiens."); Adriani 1966, 196 ("... reso con minore imperizia di quello architettonico").

lower level, and that ignored, either deliberately or not, the conventional rigidity of the Egyptian hieratic school of painting.⁵²

Such alarming conclusions about the fate of 'pure' Hellenism, primarily conceived as the diffusion of the Classical tradition, seem to be both justified and attenuated, in this kind of analysis, by the assumption that zones like the Pharos island or Commagene are out of the ordinary and remote, non-representative, and unimportant. Nemrud Dağ has often been neglected as a marginal political and cultural backwater⁵³, situated – geographically, historically and stylistically – on the edge both of the Hellenistic and the Parthian world. Commagene has been singled out as an oddity⁵⁴ and an exception⁵⁵, where Antiochos I developed an idiosyncratic style⁵⁶, unique or atypical for the period⁵⁷ and far removed from regional trends and traditions.⁵⁸ Antiochan creations have therefore been characterized as strange⁵⁹ and peculiar⁶⁰, a bizarre⁶¹ provincial phenomenon⁶² of limited local interest.⁶³ Accordingly, the Pharos tombs have been regarded as an episode or a parenthesis in the architectural history of Alexandria, a curious phenomenon spatially confined to this district and related to its Egyptian character, which was the result of the existence of a Pharaonic settlement that preceded the foundation of the city.⁶⁴ Inhabited by sailors, seafarers, fishermen, and merchants of old Egyptian origin who would have mingled, during the Ptolemaic period, with Greek families and people of all races, the island was allegedly never a stronghold of Hellenism.⁶⁵ Hence, on the basis of this marginality, some scholars have finally reversed the pessimistic idea of a declining Hellenization and highlighted its impact even in such isolated, faraway places. According to Humann and Puchstein,

52 Botti 1902, 12 (*"l'artiste, quoique d'ordre inférieur, n'était pas un indigène [...] il était grec, grec et, à dessein ou non, il ignorait quelque peu la rigidité conventionnelle des tableaux empruntés à l'école égyptienne hiératique"*).

53 Smith 1988, 23. 103.

54 Robertson 1993, 69–70.

55 Humann – Puchstein 1890, 232.

56 Boardman 1994, 80. Kropp 2013, 363 also uses this characterization although his evaluation of the Commagenian visual culture is not pejorative.

57 Smith 1996, 228.

58 Kropp 2013, 87.

59 Humann – Puchstein 1890, 349.

60 Smith 1988, 23. 121. 131. See also Kropp 2013, 186. 362. 382, who does not use this adjective in a negative sense.

61 Hamdy Bey – Efendi 1883, 28. Cf. Sanders 1996, 28. 135.

62 Pollitt 1986, 274; Boardman 1994, 80. Hoepfner 1983, 1 criticizes this characterization.

63 For a general survey of these views, see Versluys 2017, 11. 13. 20–21. 155. 191–193. 197. 200.

64 About this settlement, and the Egyptian character of the area, see Botti 1902, 10; Breccia 1921, 55; Calderini 1935, 161; Kees 1938, 1858; Fraser 1972 1, 6. 17; el-Abbadi 2004, 266; Ashton 2004, 17. 32–33; Scheidel 2004, 22. Cf. Adriani 1966, 58–59. 234. Venit 2002, 90–91; Venit 2004, 124 denies the existence of a native community in this district.

65 Adriani 1952, 127–128 (*"l'île n'a jamais dû représenter un rempart de l'hellénisme en Égypte."*). See also Bonacasa 2005, 50.

Antiochan sculptures should be highly regarded as achievements of Hellenized barbarians.⁶⁶ In the same vein, Adriani concludes his thorough study of the Pharos necropolis by remarking that these monuments may not seem like evidence to us of an imminent and definite defeat of Hellenism under the pressure of renascent forms of Egyptian art, but rather attest the force of the penetration of Hellenism into an old Egyptian environment, which must have been obstinately conservative, like all rather poor and uncultivated environments.⁶⁷

Certainly, negative assessments of the antiquities of Pharos and Commagene are far from exclusive and they are counterbalanced by critical approaches and comments. A number of studies emphasizes the great cultural, political, and historical interest of the Antiochan monuments⁶⁸, their important contribution to our knowledge of a poorly explored area and age⁶⁹, as well as the fascinating insight they give into a royal cult in operation.⁷⁰ Some scholars reject pejorative characterizations of the style, arguing that it has been misunderstood and misinterpreted.⁷¹ They applaud its originality, grandeur⁷² and strong connection with the natural environment⁷³, regarding it as the main example of Greco-Iranian art⁷⁴, as a new creation rather than a hybrid⁷⁵, or as a deliberately classicizing choice rather than a mere reflection of geo-political circumstances.⁷⁶ Similarly, the rich variety of motives in the Anfushy *hypogeum* 5 and their juxtaposition or mixture has been qualified as very interesting.⁷⁷ The paintings have been described as remarkable for the singularity of their decorative system and schemes, and the naturalistic element has been thought to be vividly expressed.⁷⁸ The lively sense of observation of nature and the tasteful choice of polychromy have also been put forward, and the originality of the necropolis as a whole has been admitted.⁷⁹ In more recent literature about the site, Alexandrian bilingualism is regarded as a source of conceptual and visual richness. The decoration of the *hypogea* is praised as more forceful and easily grasped than in other tombs of the city, the cheerful color-

66 Humann – Puchstein 1890, 345; cf. Versluys 2017, 192.

67 Adriani 1952, 128 (“*Ils pourront nous paraître non pas comme le témoignage d’une défaite, plus ou moins proche et définitive, de l’hellénisme, sous la poussée de formes renaissantes de l’art égyptien, mais plutôt comme le témoignage de la force de pénétration de l’hellénisme dans un vieux milieu égyptien qui devait être, comme tous les milieux plutôt pauvres et incultes, opiniâtement conservateur.*”).

68 Schlumberger 1970, 46; Hoepfner 1983, 1; Sanders 1996, p. xxiii. xxx; Hoepfner 2000, 73.

69 Goell 1957, 9; Allgöwer 1993, 258.

70 Smith 1988, 23. 103.

71 Sanders 1996, p. xxiii. xxxi.

72 Schlumberger 1970, 175–178. 211; Sanders 1996, 143–144.

73 Hoepfner 1983, 66–67; Hoepfner 2000, 65.

74 Schlumberger 1970, 49–51. 66. 141. 175–180. 182. 196. 210–211.

75 Sanders 1996, 143–144; Dunand 2006, 139.

76 Hoepfner 1983, 69–70. 73. For a review of these approaches, see Versluys 2017, 21. 194–198.

77 Breccia 1921, 69. See also Bernand 1998, 227.

78 Adriani 1966, 195. 196. See also Venit 2002, 85. 87.

79 Bernand 1998, 228–229.

tion of the walls is said to produce a sense of exuberance and gaiety.⁸⁰ The exemplary architectural regularity of the constructions is thought to match a most refined relief and painted ornamentation.⁸¹

Moreover, disputing the derogatory use of the term ‘Greco-Oriental’ in connection with the Commagenian material culture, some specialists have revealed the role of other traditions, such as the local Anatolian, Hittite, and Syro-Hittite, or Parthian art.⁸² As for the Anfushy *hypogea*, some scholars have endeavoured to abandon binary interpretations of the decoration by associating some of the ceiling paintings with Persian influences. The particularly complex pattern in funerary chamber 2 of *hypogeuum* 2 (fig. 11), which has recently been labelled as “Greek”⁸³, has for this reason been compared to the tent of Ptolemy Philadelphus, as described by Callixenus⁸⁴, or to other similar constructions, probably inspired by Achaemenid apadanas. Thus, the illusionistic superimposed plan has been convincingly interpreted as a view of an awning through beams, as many details, such as the circle in the middle, the decorative bands, the wave and tower motive, and the coffer design, perfectly correspond to the elements mentioned in this text.⁸⁵ As in the study of Commagene, such attempts open up the scope of research and suggest a new range of connections and interpretations.

Cultural Containers and Ethnic Markers in Modern Dual Approaches

Despite some innovative views that deviate from the established line of reasoning, binary approaches to material culture have remained predominant until recently, both in the field of Commagenian studies and in the literature concerning the Anfushy tombs. The Antiochan monuments are usually analysed in relation to the area’s role as a bridge country, located between East and the West⁸⁶, and the dual Greek and Persian/Iranian execution of the king’s project, expressing his particular hybrid dynastic idea.⁸⁷ Conformity to the Classical or Oriental norms is therefore thought to determine the

80 Venit 2002, 76. 92; Venit 2009, 55.

81 Bonacasa 2005, 43.

82 Goell 1957, 7; Sanders 1996, 36. 38. 133–151; Metzler 2000, 51–55; cf. Sanders 1996, p. xxxiii. xxx–xxxii; Versluys 2017, 194–197.

83 Venit 2002, 82; Venit 2004, 126; Guimier-Sorbets 2010, 161; Guimier-Sorbets 2012, 179. See also Adriani 1952, 120 who qualifies the style as Greek.

84 Quoted by Athen. 5.196a–197c.

85 Nowicka 1984, 258; Tomlinson 1984. For the Achaemenid connections of this tent and of the Ptolemaic *basileia* in general, see Fragaki 2015, 297–300; Riedel 2019, 290–292.

86 Dörner – Goell 1963, 302; Wagner 1988, 9; Schwertheim 2011, 77. 80.

87 Humann – Puchstein 1890, 349–353; Pollitt 1986, 274–275; Smith 1988, 103–104. 121. 131; Allgöwer 1993, 258. 261–268, 274. 282–284; Smith 1996, 227–228; Jacobs 2002, 33–42; Dunand 2006, 137–138; Kropp 2013, 186–187. 314–315. 361. For a reconsideration of these views, see Versluys 2017, 11–13. 20. 29. 109. 127. 142. 155. 172. 192–193. 200–201.

degree of Hellenization or Orientalism. Concerning Anfushy, the established Greco-Egyptian duality involves the application of similar principles of evaluation. Especially in recent scholarship, the use of expressions such as “*dual style [...] juxtaposing Hellenic with Egyptian elements*”, “*bicultural decorative scheme*”, “*bilingual style*”, “*bi-traditional approach to decoration*”, “*bilingual message*”, “*double style of decoration*”, “*a nascent bilingualism*”⁸⁸ clearly show how these tombs have been perceived. Hence, discussions revolve around the grade of Egyptianization or Hellenization and how this rate varies, depending on the different monuments and construction phases. In earlier literature, these traditions were regarded as opposing and as representing two conflicting cultures, or two rival influences.⁸⁹ The gradual extension of the Pharaonic repertoire is said to provide evidence of a more pronounced Egyptianization, contaminating the purity of the First Style⁹⁰ and provoking the regression of Classicism⁹¹ or Hellenism.⁹² The survival of motives inspired from Classical prototypes are thus interpreted as a sign of resistance against this threat of extinction.⁹³ Although this confrontation appears less conspicuous and antagonistic in the more recent studies, it is still subjacent in assertions such as the following:

*“In their fusion of the two cultural strains, the tombs reflect much more strongly the Hellenic tradition, than they do the tradition of Egypt.”*⁹⁴

*“The tombs of Pharos Island wrap the flesh and bones of a Greek cultural tradition in a partially Egyptian skin. Architecturally, of course, the tombs remain Greek [...] Only the subsequent decoration superimposed on this architectural and formal skeleton references Egypt. Subsequently the Anfushy tombs are in the Greek Alexandrian tradition [...] maintaining their cultural integrity as Greek.”*⁹⁵

88 Venit 2002, 76. 85–86; Venit 2009, 55. 58.

89 Bernand 1998, 229–230 (“ils nous montrent les influences rivales d’un hellénisme affaibli et des formes traditionnelles de l’art égyptien”).

90 According to Breccia 1921, 68–69 the higher degree of egyptianisation in *hypogeum* 5 indicates that it is later than *hypogeum* 3: “... dans l’Hypogée III on n’observe aucune trace d’égyptianisation [...] L’Hypogée III présente le “premier style” dans sa pureté, l’Hypogée V par contre, révèle [...] une égyptianisation évidente.” See also Fraser 1972 1, 34.

91 Pagenstecher 1919, 120 (“Die dritte Beisetzung ägyptisierte die Wandbehandlung”). 185.

92 Adriani 1952, 122–123. 126 (“à Pharos nous avons le témoignage d’un hellénisme affaibli, luttant avec les formes de l’art traditionnel égyptien.”). 127 (“les hypogées de Pharos seraient la preuve qu’après le troisième siècle, l’art grec à Alexandrie fléchit et s’abatardit sous le poids de la tradition de l’art égyptien”, “Si on devait donner une interprétation générale à la pauvreté de leurs plans bancroches, à certaines formes abâtardies de leurs décors, on serait vraiment tenté de dire que dès le II^e siècle av. J. Chr. il n’était plus question de pur hellénisme en Égypte.”).

93 Pagenstecher 1919, 182: “[...] die ältesten Decken [...] in unmittelbarem Anschluss an klassische Vorbilder, nicht an ägyptische, entstehen. Später fällt die Bemalung weg [...] oder endlich sie bildet die Fugung des Gewölbes nach, und dieses bedeutet ein Zurückgreifen auf den offenbar nie erloschenen ersten Stil”.

94 Venit 2002, 91.

95 Venit 2002, 127.

“Anfushy tombs retain their Graeco-Roman underpinning well into the first century CE [...] Yet, despite the Hellenic skeleton [...], Egyptian decorative elements are also included [...]”⁹⁶

From a similar viewpoint, the Alexandrian funerary monuments, especially those of the Pharos Island, are most recently believed to be of “Greek style, with added Egyptian elements”.⁹⁷ “The growing presence of Egyptianizing decoration” in these constructions would be attested in the burial chambers of Anfushy, where “particular stages of the process are evident”.⁹⁸ However, “raised on plans that drew on Greek and Egyptian architectural designs”, the tombs of the Lagid capital “were kept in an overall Greek-Macedonian style.”⁹⁹

A search for the continuity of the Greek heritage on foreign ground is explicit in scholarly literature, where Alexandrian monuments are seen as a testimony of the transposition of Hellenism and of its strength of assertion in the old land of the Pharaohs.¹⁰⁰ Thus, the Ptolemaic artistic production has been perceived as a chapter of Classical art, albeit a difficult one, as it requires the reconstitution of the vicissitudes of this art while it was transplanted in Egypt.¹⁰¹ Such views are also latent in comments that reserve the term Hellenistic for decorative systems that are thought to derive from the Greek tradition, as opposed to indigenous elements:

“In the [...] Necropolis of Anfushy at Alexandria we can see Hellenistic forms and details used both independently and side by side with Egyptian ones.”¹⁰²

This interpretative scheme indirectly determines archaeological research. Both in the case of Commagene and the Anfushy necropolis, it has led to the assumption of an initially purely Greek phase. Based on the early dating of the relief from Sofraz Köy, depicting a *dexiosis* scene that has been thought to represent the first stage of the local ruler cult, an original ‘Greek-Hellenistic’ phase has been reconstructed for the entire Antiochan program, which would hence become syncretic only after 64 BCE with

96 Venit 2009, 55–56.

97 Gorzelany 2019, 110.

98 Gorzelany 2019, 175.

99 Gorzelany 2019, 194.

100 Adriani 1952, 126 (“à Moustafa Pacha l'hellénisme nous a laissé un témoignage des plus importants de sa transposition et de sa force d'affirmation dans la vieille terre des Pharaons”).

101 Adriani 1952, 127 (“L'histoire de l'hellénisme en Egypte est, sans doute, la partie de beaucoup la plus difficile à étudier de ce chapitre de l'art classique, lui-même si difficile et si obscur, qu'est l'histoire de l'art hellénistique [...] la reconstitution des vicissitudes de l'art classique en Égypte”). See also, more recently, Bonacasa 2005, 43 (“vasto fenomeno del trapianto dell'arte greca in un paese come l'Egitto”).

102 Fyfe 1936, 12. See also Barbet 1985, 21 (“un schéma grec avec appareil isodome”, “Le premier état à appareil isodome est strictement hellénistique, tandis que le deuxième état reprend des traditions indigènes”).

the building of the Nemrud Dağ statues.¹⁰³ Following an identical line of reasoning, early scholarship about Anfushy extrapolated the phasing of *hypogeum* 2 from the superposition of an Egyptianizing decorative scheme of wall-paintings on the original structural style frescoes in the main vestibule (fig. 7), and hypothesized that the entire monument had evolved in a similar way. Influenced by the suggested chronology of the necropolis in the 3rd c. BCE, this hypothesis relied upon the conviction that the funerary chamber had included a subsequently destroyed Macedonian *kline*, like those encountered in other Alexandrian tombs of this period. Such interpretations also assumed an incompatibility between ‘Egyptian’ and ‘Pompeian’, ‘Greek’ or ‘Macedonian’ iconography.¹⁰⁴ For that reason, it has been remarked that the images of Egyptian deities must have contrasted strangely, at that time, with the Greek mythology of the coffering.¹⁰⁵ An Egyptianizing entrance would have weakened a possible restitution of a ‘Pompeian’ ceiling.¹⁰⁶

However, the later discovery of *hypogeum* 5 unquestionably proved that both repertoires could not only coexist during the same construction phase, but may also have merged within the same room. Moreover, in his extensive study of the Pharos funerary complexes published in 1952, Adriani discarded the hypothesis of an original exclusively ‘Greek’ state on the ground of specific archaeological observations in the field. He convincingly argued that many of the Egyptianizing elements, especially those of the controversial main funerary chamber of *hypogeum* 2 (fig. 3–4), go back to the time when the tombs were originally constructed.¹⁰⁷ Yet, despite this demonstration, his conclusions have not been taken into account. In all subsequent presentations or re-examinations of the site, the previously established stages of development are reaffirmed¹⁰⁸:

*“This tomb was initially decorated with Greek style decoration [...] It was later redecorated with Egyptian features”*¹⁰⁹

The most recent relevant study extends this phasing to the entire necropolis, even including *hypogeum* 5:

103 Wagner – Petzl 1976; Smith 1988, 104; Wagner 1988, 180–181; Allgöwer 1993, 259–261. 282–283; Jacobs 1998; Jacobs 2002, 33–34; Jacobs – Rollinger 2005; Kropp 2013, 357–358. 363–364; cf. Crowther – Facella 2003; Mittag 2004; Versluys 2017, 178–180.

104 Pagenstecher 1919, 117–118. 120–124. 126. 178–185; Breccia 1921, 68–69; Noshy 1937, 26–28.

105 Pagenstecher 1919, 183 (“[...] den Bildern ägyptischen Gottheiten [...] die einstmals seltsam mit der griechischen Mythologie der Kassettenbilder kontrastiert haben müssen”. Cf. Guimier-Sorbets 2010, 161; Guimier-Sorbets 2012, 179 (“Le décor du plafond est grec [...] les premiers spécialistes [...] se sont étonnés de son association avec le décor mural, de style égyptien.”).

106 Pagenstecher 1919, 182 (“Der ägyptisierende Grabeingang kann in diesem Falle unseren Glauben an die pompejanische Decke nicht bekräftigen”).

107 Breccia 1921, 62–64. 68–69; Adriani 1952, 88. 91. 93–94. 98–99. 105 n. 2. 108. 119–120. 122–123; Adriani 1966, 192–193.

108 Barbet 1985, 21; Venit 2002, 76–77. 79–83. 91–92; Venit 2004, 124–126; Venit 2009, 56–58.

109 McKenzie 2007, 71.

“The decoration of vestibule 1 and burial chamber 2 of Hypogeum II in Anfushy is later with regard to the architectural style. Isodomic bondwork decoration present in most of the chambers of Hypogeum I in the 1st century BC was plastered over and decorated anew with a pattern of alternating bands of a black-and-white checker pattern and alabaster [...] Similarly in [...] the later complex V.”¹¹⁰

This assumption has led to the conclusion that a combination of so-called Greek and Egyptian elements was not sought after, although it would have been easy to achieve.¹¹¹ When such a merging is admitted, it is regarded, like in Commagene, as an ulterior evolution of this primarily pure state *“introducing Egyptian decorative motifs only as late as the end of the 3rd century BC”*.¹¹² Features drawn from the Pharaonic tradition are hence interpreted as *“a testament to the vigorous penetration of Egyptian motives and beliefs into a once Hellenic milieu”*¹¹³:

*“Thus, Anfushy II, originally conceived as a purely Greek tomb, becomes bilingual in the first century BCE [...]”*¹¹⁴

*“The Pharos Island tombs at Anfushy and Ras el Tin are of Greek Alexandrian form, and excluding the rare Egyptianizing elements of their later phases, of Greek Alexandrian content.”*¹¹⁵

Although Adriani’s later chronology has generally been accepted, recent papers related to hypogeum 2 reformulate the postulate of a Macedonian *kline*, which allegedly characterized the first Greek phase and would have been removed during a second stage, when a new owner redecorated the monument in an Egyptian style. Discrepancies of conception and composition, iconography, painting technique and rendering, as well as religious content between the so-called Greek and Egyptian motives are again put forward in support of the claim that they were initially distinct.¹¹⁶ As in the case of Commagene, the fusion of traditions, hybridity, and multiculturalism are only admitted as late-Hellenistic and secondary phenomena.¹¹⁷

110 Gorzelany 2019, 106. n 68 (see also Gorzelany 2019, 174. 178).

111 von Hesberg 1978, 142 (*“So folgt in einem Grab der Nekropole von Anfuschy auf die Angabe einer griechischen Quaderwand I. Stiles eine ägyptische Kacheldekoration, eine Kombination wird selbst in diesem Medium nicht angestrebt, obwohl es dort leicht möglich wäre”*).

112 Gorzelany 2019, 198.

113 Venit 2002, 88; Venit 2009, 59.

114 Venit 2009, 58.

115 Venit 2002, 91.

116 Guimier-Sorbets 2010, 155–168. 174; Guimier-Sorbets 2012, 172. 174. 178–181.

117 Guimier-Sorbets 2010, 155 (*“Dans toutes les études consacrées à Alexandrie, ces tombes d’Anfouchy [...] sont caractérisées par leur décor mêlant des éléments grecs et égyptiens. Nous allons montrer qu’il faut revenir sur cette assertion pour la tombe 2”*). 165; Guimier-Sorbets 2012, 181 (*“les éléments de ‘mixité culturelle’ qui caractérisent la nécropole d’Anfouchy sont avérés pour le second état de la tombe 2, mais ils étaient absents de son premier état, de type uniquement grec.”*).

Furthermore, scholarly discussions on Commagenian material culture and the Pharos Island funerary monuments share a common approach to specific styles, implicitly or explicitly equated with specific cultures, which are therefore regarded as emblematic of Greece, Persia or Egypt. In relation to the Anfushy tombs, this perception of architectural and decorative elements as cultural containers can be inferred when motives like the faïence cladding or, more directly, the figures of Egyptian gods are interpreted as an expression of Egyptian thought.¹¹⁸ This connection is even more obvious in comments such as: “both paintings act as signs for the religion of Egypt”¹¹⁹; “The doorway [...] is clearly intended to denote Egypt”¹²⁰; “the faïence tiles must stand [...] as a referent for Egypt [...] The vault of the tomb, in contrast, alludes to Greece”¹²¹; “on the one hand Egypt, on the other Greece”.¹²² Ceilings are said to conjure up Egypt, to add to the Egyptian references of a room or, on the contrary, to maintain firm Hellenic associations. Morphological and ornamental features are clearly designated as markers of a cultural heritage¹²³:

“The burial room beyond the anteroom in Anfushy tomb II shows an even greater embrace of the two major cultures of Alexandria [...]”¹²⁴

In recent studies of hypogeum 2, its decoration is analysed in terms of two strictly distinct cultural systems, conceived as parallel, impermeable, and rather discordant, as each is defined by its own particular beliefs, funerary practices, and decorative modes.¹²⁵ Their coexistence therefore appears to be surprising and puzzling, if not problematic. According to this view, the Greek iconography of the ceiling, which includes Maenads, cannot have been executed as part of the same religious system as the *naïskos* and the Egyptian crowns of the walls.¹²⁶

In this framework, a direct link has often been presumed between such culture-styles or images and ethnic identities, leading to a rather static equation between these two concepts. Hence, the monumental art of Commagene has been more or less explicitly interpreted as an expression of the Greco-Oriental ascendance of its rulers, likewise expressed through the names of the deities as well as the mingling of Eastern

118 Pagenstecher 1919, 183 (“Unmittelbarer als in der Verkleidung mit Fayencen spricht sich der ägyptische Gedanke in den Bildern ägyptischer Gottheiten aus”).

119 Venit 2002, 79.

120 Venit 2009, 56.

121 Venit 2004, 126; Venit 2009, 56–57.

122 Venit 2009, 58.

123 Venit 2002, 86; Venit 2004, 124. 126–127; Venit 2009, 56–57.

124 Venit 2009, 57.

125 Guimier-Sorbets 2010, 165–166.

126 Guimier-Sorbets 2010, 162; Guimier-Sorbets 2012, 180 (“l’iconographie grecque du plafond [ménades] [...] ne peut être réalisée dans le même système religieux que le naïskos et les couronnes égyptiennes des murs.”).

and Western people in society.¹²⁷ By mixing Persian and Greek elements, it has been claimed that Antiochos I aimed to accommodate the cultural identity of the two most important groups of inhabitants in the kingdom, the well-established Iranian elite and the descendants of the Macedonian conquerors.¹²⁸ Such analyses, which are based on the premise that the Commagenian population was made up of these two categories, hence suggest a straightforward relationship between the dynastic representation of the king and what is regarded as the ethnicity of his subjects in this specific social context. From this perspective, the material culture of Antiochan Commagene is perceived as an ethnic index of its inhabitants or of its royalty and as the outcome of the evolutionary process of interactions and exchanges between groups with different backgrounds.¹²⁹

Pursuing the same line of reasoning, modern scholarship on the Anfushy necropolis focuses on issues of cultural interplay and ethnic identity.¹³⁰ The tombs stand as evidence for “*understanding the problem of mutability of culture and ethnicity in ancient Alexandria*.”¹³¹ Certainly, it is admitted that elements of material culture are difficult to use for assigning ethnic value to a particular group, as it may adopt features of another group without changing its own identity. It is also conceded that ethnicity is mutable, as it is socially constructed, and that the way it manifests itself varies, depending on the historical and social context, especially when it is transported to different environments.¹³² Moreover, it is clearly stated that Alexandrian society “*characteristically had no divisions formed on ethnic grounds*.”¹³³ However, the morphological and ornamental characteristics of the hypogea are constantly associated with specific communities and their interrelations, sometimes in a particularly straightforward way:

“[...] the Egyptian treatment of the ceiling [...] counterbalances the seeming ethnic inequality of the walls.”¹³⁴

Decorative details are for this reason regarded as ethnic markers and indicators of cultural interactions:

“*In multiethnic Alexandria, tombs such as those on the Pharos Island stand as a tangible paradigm demonstrating the dynamic relationship between two of the legally distinct ethnic groups of the ancient city [...]*”¹³⁵

127 Allgöwer 1993, 258. 267–268. 282–284.

128 Jacobs 2002, 35; Jacobs 2003, 120–121.

129 Versluys 2017, 27–31. 109. 141. 146. 155–159. 172. 200–201.

130 Guimier-Sorbets, 2010, 153 (“*Depuis leur découverte, plusieurs chercheurs se sont interrogés sur les raisons de ce caractère multiculturel et sur l’origine ethnique de leurs commanditaires.*”).

131 Venit 2002, 74.

132 Venit 2002, 91; Venit 2004, 124–125.

133 Gorzelany 2019, 24.

134 Venit 2009, 58.

135 Venit 2002, 91; Venit 2004, 125.

More exclusively, Alexandrian funerary monuments have been most recently attributed to “*successive generations of Macedonians who did not nurture relations with their homeland*”.¹³⁶

According to these ideas, stylistic characteristics would correlate with the ethnic identity of the owners, who were regarded alternately, depending on the interpretation of the decoration and its evolution, as Greeks, at least during the earlier stage of the complex¹³⁷, as more or less Egyptianized Greeks and more or less Hellenized Egyptians¹³⁸, as mixed¹³⁹, or as native Egyptians:

*“the tombs have unmistakable Egyptianizing traits in their structural and decorative features (which, admittedly, may be due to a considerable extent to the fact that they were burials of native Egyptians and not of Greeks [...])”*¹⁴⁰

Or, on the opposite:

*“[...] traditional Egyptian motives reappear in strength in the Anfushi and other areas of Alexandria [...] This phenomenon has usually been interpreted as [...] indicating growing importance of Egyptian ethnic elements in Alexandrian population. I think that such an interpretation merely underestimates the degree of ‘egyptianization’ of local Greeks”*¹⁴¹

Successive culture-styles are subsequently used as a proof that a tomb has changed hands:

*“This tomb received, therefore, two decorations: the first was Greek in the First Style, and the second Egyptian, each of which apparently corresponds to a different ownership.”*¹⁴²

*“[...] the second appropriation, and consequently the Egyptian decoration [...]. The second owner, [...] spared no effort to Egyptianize his tomb [...].”*¹⁴³

Accordingly, when a second Egyptianizing phase is recognized, it is either attributed to a new native Egyptian – or Egyptianized – acquirer¹⁴⁴, or believed to demonstrate the subsequent appropriation of Egyptian cultural features by the initial owners:

136 Gorzelany 2019, 194.

137 Guimier-Sorbets 2010, 170 (“*Le premier propriétaire de la tombe 2 d’Anfouchi était certainement d’origine et de culture grecques.*”). See also Arafa 1995, 120.

138 Adriani 1952, 126 (“*elles ont dû servir pour des grecs plus au moins égyptianisés et pour des égyptiens plus au moins hellénisés.*”).

139 Fraser 1972 1, 34.

140 Fraser 1972 2, 43 n. 95. See also Botti 1902, 17; McKenzie 1990, 67.

141 Daszewski 1994, 58. Cf. Empereur 1998, 17 (“*... des scènes égyptiennes qui montrent l’acculturation des Grecs d’Alexandrie à la religion des Égyptiens.*”).

142 Noshy 1937, 26.

143 Noshy 1937, 28.

144 Venit 2002, 91–92; Venit 2004, 124; Guimier-Sorbets 2010, 170–174.

*“Undoubtedly the occupants and patrons of the tombs thought themselves ethnically Greek whatever their biological lineage, although their cultural style had mutated far from that found on the Greek mainland.”*¹⁴⁵

Although there are differences in their assessment of the extent of presumed interethnic exchanges, both hypotheses establish a narrow connection between ethnicity and style, which are considered, as in Commagene, as interdependent. However, recent literature does include disapproval of these views. Talking about ‘ethnicity’ in such a late period of the architectural development and of the funerary ritual in Alexandria has been regarded as hazardous. This objection also cautions against inaccurate and unilateral choices that invert the natural terms of the relationship between Greeks and Egyptians, or, even worse, that limit the local contributions to a superfetation of extended and constant Greekness, as if the Egyptian element, even when it was Hellenized, almost represented a faint-hearted and superficial oddity.¹⁴⁶ Moreover, when pointing out the intrinsic methodological issues of some recent interpretations, it has been remarked that the delicate balance between analytical research and critical re-elaboration of the data is irremediably disturbed when monuments are charged with significance that they cannot have contained.¹⁴⁷ It has also been more directly objected that *“tombs cannot simply be seen as a direct reflection of social reality”*¹⁴⁸, *“style or iconography are not related to the ethnic identity of the commissioners.”*¹⁴⁹

Re-considering Modern Interpretative Schemes Applied to the Anfushy Tombs

Similar criticism needs to be addressed regarding the binary character of modern approaches, as they raise a number of methodological questions concerning not only these particular sites and monuments, but also in terms of the general perception of art and society in the Commagenian and Alexandrian contexts, respectively. Such analyses tend to divide the morphological and decorative features in two strictly defined categories, schematizing and sometimes even distorting their origins, while neglecting

145 Venit 2004, 127.

146 Bonacasa 2005, 46–47 (*“invertendo i termini naturali del rapporto tra Greci ed Egiziani, o, peggio, limitando gli apporti locali come superfetazioni di una grecità estesa e consistente, quasi che l’elemento egiziano quand’anche grecizzato abbia rappresentato una curiosità velleitaria e di facciata”*). 51–52.

147 Bonacasa 2005, 52 (*“I monumenti [...] mai vanno caricati di significati che non possono avere. Quando ciò accade, il delicato equilibrio tra ricerca analytica e rielaborazione critica dei dati e irremediabilmente disturbato”*).

148 Versluys 2004, 569. About such attempts to establish connections between material culture and society in the field of archaeology, see Dietler – Herbich 1998.

149 Lembke 2018, 181.

or excluding influences from regions other than Greece and Egypt or Persia. In the case of Anfushy, for instance, the structural style is not specifically Greek, but rather belongs to the Hellenistic koine, as it corresponds to the Oriental version of what scholars call the Pompeian First Style. Similar examples can be found not only in the Greek mainland, but also in other parts of the Eastern Mediterranean.¹⁵⁰ Apart from the aforementioned, probably Persian-inspired ceiling patterns (fig. 11), other elements, such as the carpet motives that are encountered in tombs of Southern Russia (fig. 9)¹⁵¹ also point to a third direction, beyond the Greco-Egyptian dichotomy. The trees and bushes in hypogeum 5 (fig. 8) have their closest parallels in ceramics of Elephantine workshops and seem to suggest Nubian connections.¹⁵² Moreover, the quest for traces of the Classical tradition has led to the assumption of a chronological gap between a first, exclusively Greek phase and a later Egyptian one, which is not supported by the archaeological evidence. As in the literature on the Commagenian material, this bipartite division of architectural and ornamental characteristics has subsequently been an impediment to the appreciation and interpretation of the decoration as a whole. Relief or painted details, motives and patterns have only been considered separately as isolated components, rather than as parts of a coherent iconographic program and a new integral entity.

A further issue resulting from these scholarly approaches is the association of the Anfushy necropolis' decoration with two strictly distinct groups, which are supposed to make up the Alexandrian population: the Greeks and the Egyptians. In the relevant literature, these categories are taken for granted and they are not explicitly delineated, yet each seems to be indirectly defined by the cultural tradition to which it is thought to correspond. However, unlike Commagene, from where data on its society is lacking¹⁵³, the written sources concerning Ptolemaic Egypt make it possible to detect a different use of the terms Greek and Egyptian and they reveal a far more complex situation than the simple dichotomy implied by modern scholarship. Since the 3rd c. BCE, the designation Hellen seems to acquire an institutional value and progressively loses its 'ethnic' meaning, but rather begins to refer to a privileged fiscal category.¹⁵⁴ Although many individuals eligible for this status could come from the old Greek world, other origins were also possible: Thracians, Carians, and Gauls counted as Hellenes, as well as Jews, but also some Syrians, Mysians, Libyans, Arabs, and the so-called Persians, who in fact

150 See, for instance, Tybout 1989, 159. 167 for very similar alabaster imitations in the palace of Herod in Massada and in the Kerameikos Pompeion in Athens.

151 Adriani 1952, 111; Tomlinson 1984, 261.

152 Rodziewicz – Rawska-Rodziewicz 2005, 49–50. 53. 66–70. 74. 77. fig. 8.1. 18.4. 21.9–10.

153 Dunand 2006, 139; Versluys 2017, 140–142. 155.

154 Méléze-Modrzejewski 1983, 265–268; Clarysse 1994; Thompson 2001, 306–307. 310–312; Clarysse – Thompson 2006, 57–59. 65–66. 71–72. 78. 93. 125. 127. 138–148. 154–165. 199–200 n. 410. 203. 238. 319. 321–322. 345; Veisse 2007, 279–288. 290–291; Veisse 2012, 57. 59; Huß 2013, 365–366; Coussement 2016, 105. 147–149. 154. 158. 211. See also Selden 1998, 298–300.

did not always have Persian origins. Therefore, the term Hellen was not necessarily connected with Greek ancestry or ascendance, but rather included a large part of the immigrants, as opposed to the native population.¹⁵⁵ It seems to correspond to the word *Wynn* or *Wynn ms n Kmy* of the demotic texts, which distinguishes all 'Ionian' foreigners from the African neighbours.¹⁵⁶ However, descendants of the indigenous Egyptian population could also be granted the status of Hellen, especially when they held a position in the Ptolemaic administration.¹⁵⁷

As for the Lagid capital, Polybius' account of the city's population, which goes back to the period when the Anfushy tombs were constructed, describes the Alexandrians as mongrels. Since in this passage the term 'Hellen' bears its initial conventional meaning, rather than its later Ptolemaic connotation, it is important to note that it does not apply directly to these people, but instead refers to their ancestry and culture merely as a distant memory and a survival of practices.¹⁵⁸ Although in this text the word Egyptian probably implies someone of local descent, in other contexts the same word may designate all inhabitants of Egypt, regardless of their origins, or those of the *chora*, including immigrants, apparently in contrast to the capital's residents, but it can also have the opposite meaning and signify the Alexandrians themselves. The use of this label is particularly problematic in sources related to the so-called Egyptian revolts, as it appears to qualify the rebels even when they were not necessarily natives, while it also often refers to their victims.¹⁵⁹

In the ancient sources, therefore, Hellenes and Egyptians appear as rather fluctuant and ill-defined communities in terms of the geographical origins and the cultural backgrounds of the people that were designated by these labels. The members of both groups are diverse and cannot be considered as representative of two specific

- 155 Bickermann 1927, 220–222. 225. 230; Méléze-Modrzejewski 1983, 250–251. 253. 265–268; Goudriaan 1988, 3–4. 20–21. 96. 102–103; Thompson 2001, 302. 306–307. 310–312. (who thinks, however, that the label Hellen may refer to the geographical origin in some contexts); Clarysse – Thompson 2006, 125. 139. 142. 145. 158. 321–322. 345; Veisse 2007, 279–288. 290–291; Veisse 2012, 57. 59–60. 65; Huß 2013, 364–367; Coussement 2016, 147–149. 154. 158. 211.
- 156 Méléze-Modrzejewski 1983, 253. 262. 266; Goudriaan 1988, 16. 58–63. 92. 117; Clarysse 1994, 74–75; La'da 1994, 183–186. 188–189; Thompson 2001, 302; Clarysse – Thompson 2006, 146. 162 n. 200. 164–165 with n. 216–217; Veisse 2007, 280–281. 290; Veisse 2012, 59; Huß 2013, 364–365; Coussement 2016, 156 n. 83.
- 157 Méléze-Modrzejewski 1983, 255; Lewis 1986, 28–30. 106. 129. 139–146. 153–154; Clarysse 1994, 75–76; Thompson 2001, 310. 315; Clarysse – Thompson 2006, 57. 144. 146–147. 154–155. 171. 238. 342. 344; Veisse 2007, 288–290; Veisse 2012, 60; Huß 2013, 366. 368; Coussement 2016, 1. 3. 28–29. 75. 100. 148–149. 207.
- 158 Strab. 17,1,12; Schubart 1913, 124 n. 1; Braunert 1964, 77; Fraser 1972 1, 61. 73. 75–78. 81. 85; Barns 1977, 27–28; Goudriaan 1988, 118; Burkhalter – Martin 2000, 258; Mittag 2003, 162; Scheidel 2004, 26; Laudenbach 2015, 24.
- 159 Préaux 1936, 522. 525. 528–530. 535. 538. 540–541. 545–546. 551–552; Fraser 1972 1, 60. 75. 81–82; Goudriaan 1988, 1. 109–114. 116. 118. 121–125; Selden 1998, 300; Goudriaan 2000, 39–40. 44. 56–58; Veisse 2004, 101–102. 110–111. 113–114. 120–126. 135–137. 151. 246–248; Veisse 2007, 280. 285 n. 39; Huß 2013, 364. 367–368.

and clearly delineated artistic traditions. Modern scholarly analyses that give an ethnic meaning to these terms and apply them to two uniform and strictly distinct categories are not supported by the textual evidence. Hence, such classifications of Alexandria's inhabitants can be misleading, as they tend to simplify and schematize a much more intricate social reality. In the study of material culture, systematic association of morphological or decorative features with segments of the population that do not really exist as such, according to the written sources of this period, inevitably affects the interpretation of monuments such as the Anfushy necropolis.¹⁶⁰

In a more general way, binary approaches to Alexandrian art give the impression that the city was mainly a Greco-Egyptian creation and that it was still perceived as such until the end of the Ptolemaic period. However, literary and archaeological sources provide a completely different and more complex image that might cast doubt on similar assertions regarding the character of Hellenistic Commagene. According to this evidence, Alexandria does not appear to have been conceived as a Greek colony on Egyptian soil, but rather as part of an overall plan – which the Ptolemies attributed to Alexander – to establish numerous new foundations bearing his name. The Lagid capital was a particularly important point in this network, as it was the first link of this chain of cities connecting the Mediterranean to the Far East or, in more recent terms, the Western world system to the Indian one. The common name of these Alexandrias did not only glorify their founder, but also proclaimed the beginning of a new era inaugurated by him and suggested that they corresponded to a new model. Accounts by ancient authors often include standard expressions that predict the prosperity and glory of these settlements that, in this way, announced the beginning of a future world and were bound to become its landmarks. Later on, during the Hellenistic period, the tendency to rename old Greek cities, such as Ptolemais, Berenike or Arsinoe, reveals a similar policy of breaking with the past and creating new references. Such changes do not only exalt the queens after whom they were named, but they also show that the old designations that were familiar to the inner Greek world were henceforth considered obsolete, while the new names were intended for a much larger and diverse public, suggesting that these cities had been thoroughly adapted to the Ptolemaic prototypes.¹⁶¹

Out of all the cities founded by Alexander, Alexandria in Egypt was to outlive all the other Alexandrias and become the pivot of the new empire. According to Plutarch, the conqueror's seers, expressing what is probably another stereotype reproduced in various versions, told him that the city would be “*a nurse to men from all regions*”, thereby

160 For recent criticism of such approaches to Ptolemaic art, see Landvatter 2018, 199–202.

161 Briant 1982, 231; Fraser 1996, esp. 40–41. 43–44. 46. 59. 71–72. 115. 128. 151. 164–168. 173–181. 186. 189. 200; Beaujard 2012, 300–303. 354–363. 367. 384. 392–393. 412 n. 1598. 523; Briant 2013, 72–73. 76–77. 83. 102.

suggesting that immigration from everywhere was particularly encouraged.¹⁶² Hence, Alexandria, was not meant to be a mere Greco-Egyptian hybrid¹⁶³, but was rather intended as a multicultural nodal point inhabited by a mixed population. In contrast with the Classical period, when the main urban centres may have been culturally more uniform than the periphery, the situation was subsequently reversed, as the leading role was taken over by such large cosmopolitan metropolises, while remote areas remained attached to older, less diverse traditions. In this context, Alexandria was neither a hybrid nor a conglomerate, but a separate entity that cannot be described in terms of previous and no longer applicable categories, such as ‘Greek’ or ‘Egyptian’, as it became itself a new reference.

The material culture of the Hellenistic world, therefore, needs to be analysed and assessed on the basis of these new geo-political and cultural circumstances. As in the case of Commagene and the Anfushy necropolis, modern scholarship often relies upon criteria that are not inherent to this historical reality, but rather continue to be borrowed from the Classical period and henceforth appear outdated or anachronistic. This tendency is also reflected in the structure of books or manuals dealing with arts and artefacts, as they often take as starting point the old Greek peninsula, rather than the new multicultural centres of the Hellenistic era, such as Alexandria, Pergamon, Antiochia or Ai Khanoum. Misguided by the availability of archaeological data, such underlying principles organize knowledge on a wrong premise and may lead to misunderstandings, distorting the image and evolution of material culture, as well as the general perception of the past. Of course, notions as ‘Greek’, ‘Persian’ or ‘Egyptian’ are inevitably invoked when the origins of Hellenistic artistic creations are explored. Nevertheless, objects, styles, and currents of this period also need to be described and commented upon as such, in terms that are appropriate to their own environment. Even though places like Athens, Macedonia or Thebes may once have been important, the new, tumultuous melting pots born out of Alexander’s conquests cannot be measured based on these old values, but need to be approached in quite the opposite way. The question is not how Greek, Egyptian, or Persian areas like Commagene, Seleucid Syria or Ptolemaic Egypt were, but rather how Commagenian, Antiochian, Alexandrian or Pergamene Greece, Egypt or Persia had become.¹⁶⁴ Re-examination of regions that have usually been regarded as hybrid or in-between, while they were focal in their

162 Plut. Alexander 26,6; Curt. 4,8,5; Briant 1982, 231; Fraser 1996, 186; Selden 1998, 290–300. 406. See also Ps.-Kallisthenes 1,32; Val. Max. 1,4,7.

163 For the notion of hybridity in general, see Ette – Wirth 2014; in the ancient world, Antonaccio 2003; van Dommelen 2010; Papalexandrou 2010.

164 Studies about Alexandrianism are definitely orientated towards this direction (for instance, the volume *Alexandria and Alexandrianism* [Malibu 1996]), although they concentrate on specific influences exerted by the Lagid capital in different artistic fields, rather than including this endeavour into an overall inversion of values in the vision of the Hellenistic world.

contemporary context instead, therefore has to be continued by reversing these points of reference.

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Part II (Within):
Archaeology and History of Hellenistic Commagene –
The Local Context

Sovereignty and Autonomy in the Hellenistic Coins of Commagene*

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If the standard picture of the Hellenistic king, as conveyed by the classical tradition, is characterised by a huge accumulation and display of wealth¹, then the kings of Commagene certainly provide no exception to this paradigm. The well-known monument of Antiochos I on Nemrud Dağ is an exceptional example of royal wealth and the desire of exhibiting it: the large number of statues (18 colossal limestone statues, ca. 90 sandstone relief-stelae, 14 animal sandstone statues and ca. 50 reliefless stelae)² is the most tangible sign of the king's profusion, but not the only one. In the same monument, various texts (*nomoi*) prescribe lavish festivals, which were to be celebrated in all sanctuaries of the kingdom twice a year and to involve the entire population. The last king of the Commagenian dynasty, Antiochos IV, was described by Tacitus as *vetustis opibus ingens et servientium regum ditissimus*³, a description which is confirmed by Josephus and by Cassius Dio⁴. Commagene was certainly a wealthy kingdom, but the process of monetisation of the country and the role played by coined money in the economic life is still unclear.⁵ The present study intends to collect and analyse the patchy data at our disposal for reconstructing the monetary circulation before Commagene was annexed for the first time to the Roman Empire (17 CE). In particular, I will focus on the question of the beginning of civic issues and of their relation with the

* I am very grateful to Aneurin Ellis-Evans, Achim Lichtenberger and Andrew Meadows for providing bibliographical suggestions and invaluable comments. François de Callatay has given me access to his database of overstrikes in the Greek world (*GOD*) and I would like to thank him for his generosity. My gratitude extends also to dott. Paolo Busoni (Sistema Bibliotecario di Ateneo-Università di Pisa) for his help in obtaining access to numismatic databases. Obviously, all conclusions in this article are the sole responsibility of the author.

1 See de Callatay 2012.

2 Cf. Brijder 2014, 121.

3 Tac. Hist. 2.81.

4 See respectively Jos. BI 5,11,3; Cass. Dio 49,20,5.

5 On the resources of Commagene see Facella 2005a.

royal coinage within the wider debate on sovereignty and coinage. From this brief examination it should be apparent how much the case of Commagene can benefit from the advance of historical and numismatic research on this subject and how much, in return, it can profitably contribute to the debate.

The Kingdom of Commagene and Numismatic Research

Commagene, a small territory located at the eastern bend of the Euphrates between Taurus and Amanus, was under the control of the Seleucid Empire at latest by the reign of Antiochos III.⁶ Its history as an independent kingdom began when Ptolemaios, a Seleucid officer, revolted against the kings of Syria, an episode recorded by Diodorus and usually dated to 163/162 BCE.⁷ Survival for the dynasts of Commagene over the following centuries was far from easy: first the expansion of Tigranes the Great, then Roman intrusion and Parthian pressure combined to put these kings fully through the wringer. By means of a shrewd policy and with the help of their resources, the kings of Commagene overcame the turnover of Roman generals and leaders in the Near East. More than anyone else, Antiochos I managed to save his throne and – as he tells us in the long inscription carved on the divine thrones of Nemrud Dağ – escaped “great perils”.⁸ Antiochos established friendly relations with Lucullus and Pompey, obtained the pardon of Caesar and withstood the siege of Samosata, placed by Ventidius and Antony on the plea that the king had helped Parthian refugees, but according to Dio “because of the vast wealth which he possessed”.⁹

Despite that dynastic struggles were not lacking, the kings of Commagene enjoyed autonomy until the death of Antiochos III in 17 CE. For reasons not entirely clear, the kingdom was then integrated into the Roman Empire for 20 years.¹⁰ In 38 CE Caligula returned the throne to the legitimate heir, Antiochos IV, and restored to him the revenues which Rome had collected over the previous 19 years (a hundred million sesterces, according to Suetonius)¹¹. Despite twists and turns (a deposition after a few years and a reinstatement on the throne with Claudius), Antiochos not only kept his territory but saw it enlarged with the addition of Cilicia Tracheia. He enjoyed the highest

6 Cf. a fragment of Memnon (FGrHist 434, F1,18,5), where Antiochos III is called “king of Syria, Commagene and Judaea”.

7 Diod. 31,19a Walton (= 34 Goukowsky; 32 Gandini). On the chronology of this fragment see Gandini 2016, 175.

8 OGIS 383, ll,20–21: δι’ ἃ καὶ κινδύνους μεγάλους παραδόξως διέφυγον [κτλ].

9 Cass. Dio 49,20,3–5. For sources and discussion see Facella, 2006, 225–248.

10 On the two stages of integration of Commagene into the Roman Empire see Speidel 2005.

11 Suet. Calig. 16,3.

prosperity and faithfully supported his Roman allies, until the old pretext of conspiring with the Parthians was used to oust the monarchy.¹²

The coins of Antiochos IV and his family were present in many private and state collections and the issuers were easy to identify thanks to the literary sources, which are more abundant during the last stage of the monarchy, because of its relationship with the Roman power.¹³ It is from these coins that modern research on Hellenistic and Roman Commagene began.¹⁴ Already as early as 1689, cardinal Enrico Noris dedicated a chapter of his *Annus et epochae Syromacedonum in vetustis nummis expositae* to the history and chronology of Commagene. Commagenian royal issues appeared in some of the most important numismatic *corpora* of the 18th century, for example that of Nicola Francesco Haym, *Del Tesoro Britannico* (London 1719), which included the notes of Giovanni Masson on the Commagenian kings or the *Doctrina numorum veterum* of Joseph Eckhel (1792–1798). With the publication of large state collections at the end of the 19th century (for example, the collection of the *Bibliothèque Nationale*, the Waddington collection, the British Museum collection), more issues of Hellenistic Commagene became known.¹⁵ A large contribution to our knowledge of Commagenian royal coins has also come from the publication of private collections (for example, the Bedoukian collection, the Lindgren collection, the catalogue and collection of Armenian coins by Y. Nercessian, and most recently the catalogue by Franz Kovacs).¹⁶ Over the last fifty years the number of Commagenian coins known to us has grown exponentially, thanks, above all, to the *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum* project. There is, however, no comprehensive analysis of the royal coinage of Commagene, which faces questions of coin production and circulation; even the latest publications offer only what is essentially a catalogue with a few historical notes.¹⁷ The best critical overviews

12 For full discussion see Facella 2005b, 98–102. More critical on Commagenian loyalty is Hartmann 2015, 314–325.

13 The first works on Commagenian dynasty described and analysed mainly the coins of the last king of Commagene, Antiochos IV, and of his wife and sons. But discussions and proposals for the attribution of coins to other members of the Commagenian dynasty were not lacking: see the XXVI volume of the *Mémoires de Littérature, tirés de registres de l'Académie royale des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* which documents the controversy between the abbey Augustin Belley and Charles Gros de Boze on a coin of the king Samos, as well as another article of the abbey on a bronze of Antiochos I from the collection of Joseph Pellerin.

14 The extent to which the study of ancient history is deeply rooted in antiquarian and in the factual approach to the past does not need to be stressed. But for reconstructing the history of dynasties rarely mentioned in Greek and Roman sources, like that of Commagene, coinage is an even more essential tool.

15 See respectively Babelon 1890, 217–223; Babelon 1898, nos. 7240–7256; BMC Galatia, 104–112, 116–117.

16 See respectively Bedoukian 1983, 71–88; Bedoukian 1985; Lindgren – Kovacs 1985, no. 1880 and ss.; Nercessian 1995, nos. 1, 4, 187 and ss.; Kovacs 2016, nos. 218–294.

17 On the most recent publications see below.

are the sections of the *Roman Provincial Coinage* dedicated to this kingdom and the chapter on Commagene in *Coinage in Roman Syria* by Kevin Butcher.¹⁸

From these studies and other works (which for reasons of brevity are not mentioned here) a few data, relevant for the following discussion, emerge. Firstly, the coinage of Commagene in the royal period consisted only of bronze coins; no silver coinage was issued under the name of a Commagenian king, as far as we know. The currency system was based on local weight standards (*chalkoi*) and up to four denominations have been distinguished.¹⁹ Moreover, most cities of Commagene began to issue coins only in the imperial period and sometimes only for a short period.²⁰ The only mint which issued civic coins in the Hellenistic-early Roman period was Samosata, which produced issues often labelled as ‘pseudo-autonomous’.²¹ The scarce activity of mints before the imperial period is an important factor, which leads us to the question of the production and circulation of royal coinage in Commagene.

On the Production and Circulation of Coins

It seems appropriate to begin with a note of caution: a die-study for the royal coinage of Commagene is lacking and figures for specimens need revision.²² New types and new varieties of royal coins are appearing at a remarkable pace from private collections. Rudy Dillen has recently published a brief catalogue of coins of Commagene, which includes a graphic of specimens and types struck in the monarchic period (fig. 1).²³ The list is updated to 2012 and is based on three private and ten public coin cabinets. The rise in the production of coins under Antiochos IV is, however, apparent.²⁴ The incorporation into the Roman Empire in 17 CE constitutes a watershed in the monetisation

18 See respectively RPC 1, 571–575 (and also 560–564 on the coins minted by the Cilician cities controlled by Antiochos IV of Commagene); Butcher 2004, 454–459.

19 Cf. Kovacs 2016, 41–42 who includes in his catalogue an 8 chalkous tentatively attributed to Mithradates II (no. 230) and an AE chalkous, the only so far known coin of Philopappus (no. 287).

20 Germanicia, Doliche and Antiochia on the Euphrates exclusively in the Antonine period: see Butcher 2004, 460–480.

21 On this definition see the classical articles of Macdonald 1904 and Johnston 1985.

22 The catalogue dedicated to the Commagenian royal issues in RPC 1 and RPC Suppl. 1 does not include many items preserved in public collections (which are now available in the SNG volumes). Comprehensibly, the authors of RPC 1 have restricted their list to the certain attributions, but the conclusion that after Antiochos I there was no royal coinage until the accession of Antiochos IV is debatable (see already the attributions by Alram 1986, 83–84 nos. 247–249, to Mithradates II and Mithradates III of Commagene). For the sake of clarity, the city given to Antiochos I of Commagene by Pompey is Seleucia on the Euphrates/Zeugma and not Samosata (as written in RPC 1, p. 572).

23 Dillen 2014 (see 536 for the graphic).

24 In Facella 2005a, 235–238, I had already highlighted this trend and commented on it, so I will be brief in what follows.

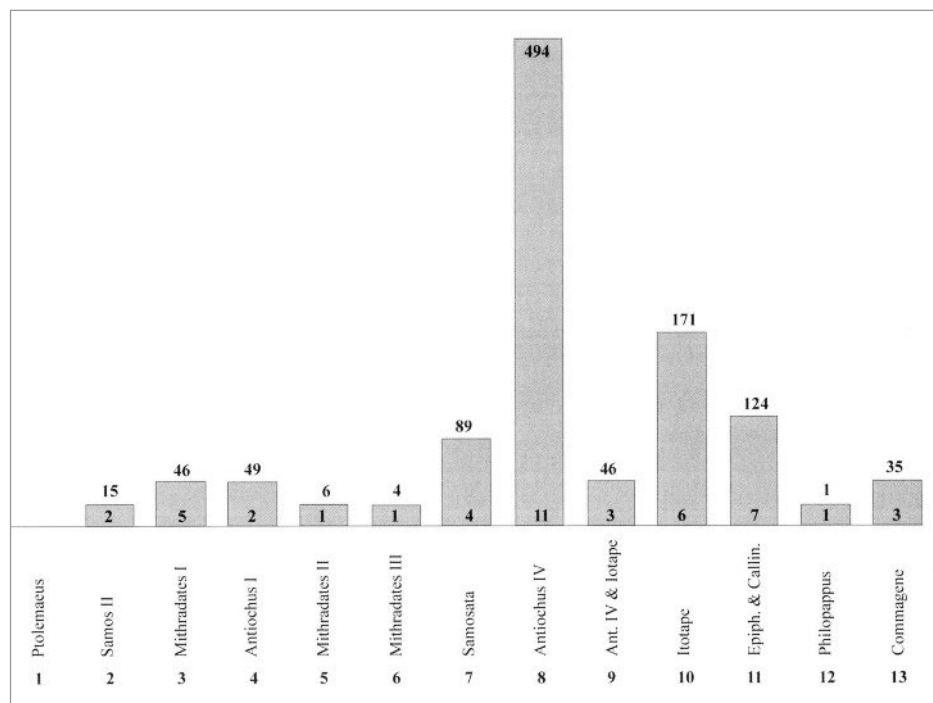


Fig. 1 Coin production of the Commagenian kings and relatives (including civic and state production); from Dillen 2014, 536

of the Commagenian economy. During the period of Roman control, the fiscal needs gave a fuller role to the coinage in the region, as the passage of Suetonius on the one hundred million sesterces from the taxes implies.²⁵ When Antiochos IV recovered his kingdom and started to control Western Cilicia, he had to confront 20 years of change in Commagene and the coin practice of the Greek cities of Cilicia. Hence, with this king followed a substantial increase in the production of coins, along with a more functional currency system.

The question of the output of coins is more complicated when we look at the period before the Roman intervention. The small figures involved speak for a limited and irregular production of royal coins before the reign of Antiochos IV. Certainly, we can assume that the economy of the country mainly relied on barter trade and that the degree of monetisation was very low. Yet, to establish just how marginal coinage was within the Commagenian economy, we should consider information on coin circulation.

25 Suet. Calig. 16,3.

Table (Commagene: site finds only)

Site	Hellenistic coins	Commagenian coins	Bibliographic ref.
Nemrud Dağ	–	–	Sanders 1996, 472–474
Direk Kale	–	–	
Arsameia (Eski Kâhta)	5: Eski Kale 1 (Ariobarzanes I) Stadtgebiet 4 (1 Prusa II; 1 Lycia; 2 Commagenian)	2 (1 Antiochos IV; 1 Iotape)	Berghaus 1963, 283–285; cf. Butcher 2004, 152
Perrhe	2 (Commagenian)	1 (Antiochos I) 1 (Antiochos IV's reign)	Facella 2008, 208
Tille	9 (1 Alexander the Great; 2 Seleucid; 6 Commagenian)	6 (Antiochos IV's reign)	Lightfoot 1996, 140–141; Butcher 2004, 155
Samosata	2 (1 Commagenian; 1 Seleucid)	1 (Mithradates Kallinikos)	Özgüç 2009, 43 (already in Taşyürek 1975, 42 II; Zoroğlu 2000)
Doliche (ancient city-ongoing excavations)	1 (Alexander the Great)	–	Facella unpublished preliminary reports
Dülük Baba Tepesi (sanctuary)	34 (29 Seleucid, 4 civic from Antioch; 1 illegible)	–	Facella unpublished preliminary reports
Zeugma	15 (Seleucid); 3 civic (1 from Kyzikos + 2 from Antioch) 11 (1 Alexander the Great; 4 Seleucid + 1 in a hoard; 2 Hell.-Rom.Pr.; 3 civic from Antioch (Augustus))	–	Frascone 2013, 250–251 Butcher 2013, C1–C7. C109–111
TOT	82	11	

Fig. 2 Table of the Hellenistic and Commagenian site finds; © M. Facella

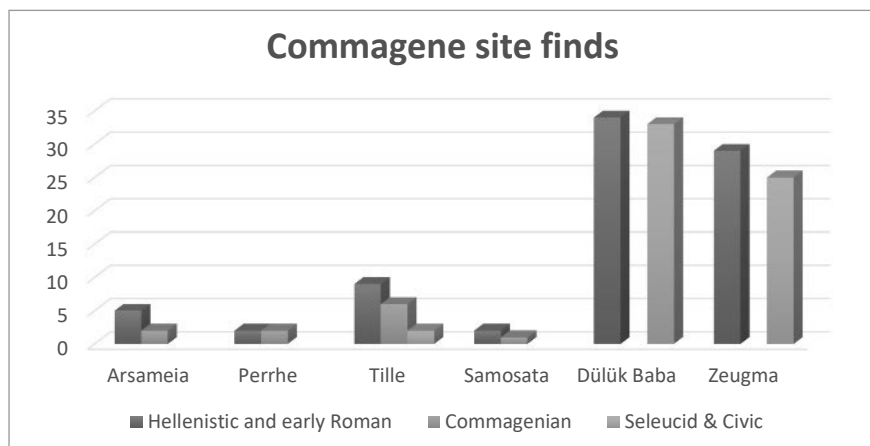


Fig 3 Proportions of the Hellenistic and Commagenian site finds; © M. Facella

No specific study on Commagenian royal issues lists coin finds from excavations in the region.²⁶ This absence is due to the extreme rarity of numismatic finds from Hellenistic Commagene. The table and the diagram presented here (figs. 2–3) summarize the numismatic finds from excavated sites in Commagene.²⁷ The paucity of Commagenian coins found during excavations or investigations in the region is apparent and, as expected, the majority of coins belong to the period of reign of Antiochos IV. The very low figures of Hellenistic coins recovered makes drawing any conclusions hazardous. Yet, while waiting for further material to come forth, we can try to raise questions and advance possible suggestions for a better understanding of the coin circulation in the kingdom. If we focus on the last two sites, Dülük Baba Tepesi and Zeugma, we can see that a certain number of Seleucid coins have been recovered, but no Commagenian coins. Again, considering the small numbers involved, the absence could be entirely chance. However, if there is a direct correlation between coins deposited and coins in use (which is, though, not always straightforward), one would expect Commagenian coins to be represented here. Zeugma became part of the Commagenian kingdom around 64 BCE²⁸, but it was

26 I could not find any exemplar from excavations in the catalogue of coins by Taşyürek 1975 (based on Aytuğ Taşyürek's unpublished dissertation at Istanbul University). Butcher 2004, 152–155 lists coin finds from Arsameia on the Nymphaios and Tille. The origin of one coin of Antiochos IV of Commagene in Antakya Museum (on which Butcher 2004, 291. 458 no. 10) is unknown.

27 The table does not include finds of Commagenian royal issues from hoards which, however, are highly limited: the only certain example is from the Nisibis hoard (IGCH 1788 on which Seyrig 1955) which contained one bronze of Mithradates Callinicus.

28 App. Mith. 114 and Str. 16,2,3, on which see the discussion in Kennedy 1998, 140–141 and Facella 2006, 231–234. For epigraphic evidence on the inclusion of Zeugma in the kingdom see Wagner 1976, 117–123; Crowther – Facella 2003; Crowther 2013; Ergeç – Yon 2012, 155–156 no. 3.

detached from it no more than 80 years later.²⁹ Doliche and its sanctuary of Dülük Baba Tepesi probably had a similar destiny: the city was included in Antiochos I's reign, as it appears from epigraphic evidence, but it returned to the Roman Empire on an unknown date (the terminus *ante quem* is the reign of Nero, when a small altar from Dülük Baba Tepesi attests a dating formula according to the regnal years of the emperor).³⁰ Now, the short time of incorporation of these cities into the kingdom of Commagene is hardly a justification for the lack of Commagenian coins from excavations. If, with the passage to the Roman province, the Commagenian bronze ceased to be a legal tender, one would expect a discard of small coins at a large scale, hence more finds.

No evidence points to an economic stagnation of this southern area in the 1st c. BCE; on the contrary, a passage of Caesar implies that the control of Zeugma by Antiochos was rewarding.³¹ How should we view, then, the coin circulation in this part of the country in the second half of the 1st c. BCE? Neither Doliche nor Zeugma produced their own issues until the imperial period, so in the Commagenian phase they must have drawn their coin supply from elsewhere. Kevin Butcher, who has analysed the coin finds from PHI excavations at Zeugma and the coinage of this city in general, concludes that “the intermittent nature of Zeugma’s own coin issues makes it highly likely that coins of other cities were in use in the first and second centuries”.³² This is a convincing explanation for the period during which the city was already part of the provincial system. For the earlier period, the question has not yet been raised. The 1st c. BCE is represented in Zeugma only by a handful of civic issues and in Doliche by four issues from Antioch, dating back to the second half of the 1st c. BCE, a figure which reflects the increasing importance of civic coinage to the Near Eastern money supply. We do not know how transactions worked in these two cities after their absorption into the Commagenian kingdom, but we should consider that certainly Zeugma, and probably Doliche, were integrated into the political and economic system of Seleucid Syria for a longer time. In Syria coinage had an important economic role: the nearby Antioch was from the 2nd c. BCE onwards “la capitale monétaire du royaume”.³³ Moreover, Zeugma was a main crossing point of the Euphrates³⁴, especially for connecting north-south avenues on opposite sides of the river.³⁵ In the Roman time the city was

29 According to Wagner 1976, 64 Zeugma was removed from the kingdom of Commagene in 31 BCE, while Butcher 2009 argues for 17 CE.

30 See Wagner 1982, in particular no. 4 (fr. of a *nomos* of Antiochos I of Commagene from Dülük Baba Tepesi) and no. 5 (altar from Dülük Baba Tepesi).

31 Caes. B Civ. 3,4.

32 Butcher 2013, 18.

33 So Picard 2002, 184.

34 On Zeugma as an important crossing in the Hellenistic and Roman period see, above all, Comfort et al. 2000 and Comfort – Ergeç 2001, to which I refer for previous bibliography.

35 So Aylward 2013, 24–25, who lays stress on the absence of evidence at Zeugma for long distance trade with the East.

a main point for the collection of tolls (*portoria*)³⁶ and held a strategic position in the regional trade network; for the Hellenistic period, unfortunately, we do not have much information (Apamea, on the opposite bank, looks like the more developed residential centre).³⁷ However, people around Zeugma must have profited from the movements of men and goods; even if one assumes that most of the payments and exchanges were made in kind, others probably demanded coins.

Considering all of this, a possible explanation for the lack of Commagenian coins at Zeugma and in the area of Doliche is that the absorption in the kingdom did not imply any monetary disruption. There is no hint that Antiochos tried to enforce his currency on the newly acquired territory; the impression is rather that he allowed the coins of the preceding monetary system (royal Seleucid and civic issues) to remain in use. Such a solution should not surprise us: a change in the political situation is not always followed by a change in the monetary system and, even within the same kingdom, we can find different monetary policies.³⁸

The idea that the Commagenian king did not enforce a uniform monetary circulation across his full territory is supported by a few observations, which speak in favour of a certain flexibility of the local monetary system. The first remark concerns the absence of a production of Commagenian silver issues. None of the Commagenian kings or cities produced their own silver coins. Surely bronze coinage could easily cover the daily necessities of the local community, especially in an economy where coined money, as we stated, had a relatively minor role. Recent studies have also emphasised the possibility that large payments could have also been made in bronze.³⁹ Yet, we cannot be sure that 'international' exchanges, bigger transactions and accumulation of wealth renounced to the more convenient silver. A different scenario is possible: foreign silver currencies, which included royal Seleucid and civic issues, might have circulated in the kingdom, compensating the lack of Commagenian silver issues. Helpful comparisons for an 'open' circulation can be found in another Near Eastern kingdom, that of Herod the Great (king of Judaea, 37–4 BCE). Here we find a predominance of Tyrian silver (sheqels), beside pre-imperial Roman denarii and earlier silver coins from the Seleucid

36 Cf. Philostr. VA 1,20, on which Millar 1993, 111.

37 See Abadie-Reynal 2003; Abadie-Reynal – Gaborit 2003 and the overview by Aylward 2013, 13. 21–23.

38 The case of the conquest of Coele Syria by Antiochos III is peculiar but instructive. Here the light silver standard and the types of the Ptolemies were maintained (the Ptolemaic bronzes were probably recalled, but in any case bronze coins in the name of Antiochos supplemented the high value currency): see Le Rider 1995, 402–403; Houghton – Lorber 2000–2002.

39 See for example the conclusions of Duyrat 2014, 374 for Syria in 2nd and 1st c. BCE and Duyrat 2016, 460–469.

period.⁴⁰ Donald Ariel and Jean-Philippe Fontanille strongly argued against the possibility that Herod ever struck his own gold and silver coins.⁴¹

We cannot exclude the possibility that silver coins were actually minted in Commagene. A study by Oliver Hoover argues that some imitations of silver drachms of Demetrius I of Syria were struck in Commagene for the local economy.⁴² The first issuer of these drachms would have been the founder of the reign, the above mentioned Ptolemaios, who needed silver coins to pay his mercenaries and to secure his throne. Then, these silver imitations would have continued to be issued up to the reign of Antiochos I. The hypothesis that the ‘barbarous’ drachms of Demetrius I were made for the Commagenian people is attractive, even if some points (for example the choice of the legend ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ with ΝΙΚΑΤΟΡΟΣ) still remain obscure. For us it is relevant that many specimens seem to derive from hoard material and from “areas corresponding to ancient Cappadocia and Commagene”⁴³, reinforcing the impression of a mixed pool of circulating coinage.

Commagenian site finds cannot shed light, at the current time, on the question of silver supply in the kingdom: as it is well known, precious metal currencies are very rarely to be found in archaeological excavations. Yet, a preliminary analysis of a local collection from Kâhta (near modern Adiyaman), where I could examine a few Seleucid silver drachms and a couple of Cappadocian tetradrachms allegedly found in the surrounding area, seems to support the idea that there was an ‘open’ attitude to some foreign silver issues.⁴⁴ Furthermore, we should consider the evidence of substantial silver hoards from nearby Doliche, in particular the ‘Demetrius I’ hoard (ca. 151/150 BCE) and the Gaziantep hoard 1994 (August–October 143 BCE), which show that in the mid-2nd c. BCE silver coinage was available in this area.⁴⁵

Finally, the presence of civic bronze issues from Antioch in Commagene is another element which speaks for an ‘open’ currency system. Kevin Butcher has drawn attention to some specimens of Samosata overstruck on Antiochene bronze of the 40s BCE

40 See Ariel – Fontanille 2012, 30–36, 158; for a bibliographic survey and a very useful overview on Herod’s coins see Hendin 2013, 271–275.

41 Ariel – Fontanille 2012, 36–42. Cf. also Jacobson 2014, who argues for a linkage of Judaeian bronze currency to the Tyrian sheqels.

42 Hoover 1998.

43 Hoover 1998, 72

44 These issues belong to state registered private collection of Neşet Akel (Kâhta), to whom I am very grateful for the possibility of examining it between 2010 and 2012. My gratitude goes also to Michael Blömer and Charles Crowther for their technical support.

45 As Aneurin Ellis-Evans kindly pointed out to me (*per epistulam*). On composition and dating of the ‘Demetrius I’ hoard (IGCH 1542 = Coin Hoards IX 528 = Coin Hoards X 301) see Lorber 2010, 153–172 and Duyrat 2016, 144 no. 242; on the Gaziantep hoard 1994 (Coin Hoards IX 527 = Coin Hoards X 308) see Meadows – Houghton 2010 (to which I refer for previous bibliography); in the latter publication a group of ten Seleucid tetradrachms from the region of Gaziantep (Meadows – Houghton 2010, 220 Addenda) is also listed. On the growth in the production of Seleucid silver in the 2nd c. BCE see now Duyrat 2016, 379–388.



Fig. 4.1 civic issue from Samosata, overstruck (courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group, LLC); from <https://www.cngcoins.com> (CNG, Electronic Auction 411, 13 December 2017, lot 203), size: x 1.5



Fig. 4.2 civic issue from Samosata, overstruck (courtesy of Leu Numismatik, AG); from <https://leunumismatik.com> (Leu Auction 4, 25 May 2019, lot 357), size: x 1.5

(figs. 4.1–4.2), so that he has no doubt on circulation of issues from Antioch in inland Northern Syria.⁴⁶ A few Antiochene bronzes, dating between the 1st c. BCE and the beginning of the 1st c. CE, have been recovered at Dülük Baba Tepesi and Zeugma, as we have seen. However, for the aim of the present paper it is essential to determine when, precisely, these overstruck by Samosata were issued, whether in the monarchic period or later, in the provincial phase.

The First Civic Issues of Samosata and the Question of Autonomy

“A civic coinage might seem more appropriate when Commagene was not a kingdom, e. g. during the interregnum between Antiochos III and IV, under Tiberius”, remarks Butcher.⁴⁷ Previous works, in fact, assigned these undated coins to the period in which

⁴⁶ Butcher 2004, 192.

⁴⁷ Butcher 2004, 468.



Fig. 4.3 pre-imperial civic issue from Antioch, 45/44 b. C. (courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group, LLC); from <https://www.cngcoins.com> (CNG, Electronic Auction 246, 15 December 2010, lot 243), size: x 1.5

the monarchy was ‘suspended’ or even later⁴⁸. On the contrary, Butcher believes that none of these issues was struck as late as the 1st c. CE. This conclusion derives from an important observation: the undertype is the large module of the head of Zeus/sitting Zeus of Antioch dated 48/47–41 BCE (fig. 4.3). Later, with the Parthian invasion of Syria in 41/40 BCE, Antiochene coins decreased in size and weight.⁴⁹ At present, we have no coins of Samosata overstruck on the later issues of Antioch, which restricts the chronology of the overstrikes.⁵⁰ Because of these chronological *termini*, the authors of *RPC 1* interpret the overstrikes of Samosata as an emergency coinage and suggest as a possible occasion for the minting the siege of Samosata by Antony in 38 BCE.⁵¹ Butcher is not entirely convinced by this reconstruction, considering it quite unlikely that such a varied coinage (four groups and three denominations) would be issued during a siege. The conclusion of Butcher is, therefore, that the civic coins of Samosata were struck in the 1st c. BCE, over a longer period of time, with only a portion of them being more or less contemporary to the Antiochene undertypes of the 40s BCE.⁵²

48 Babelon 1890, p. ccxv followed by Wroth in *BMC Galatia*, I: “The earliest coins bearing the name of Samosata may be assigned as M. Babelon has suggested, to the period intervening between the reigns of Antiochos I and Antiochos IV. The possibility of their belonging to the reign of Antiochos IV is, perhaps, not quite to be excluded”. For Head 1911, 776 the coins belonged to the monarchic period. Baldus 1987, 145–146 notes only that the type head of Zeus/lion is modelled on the coins of Antiochos I.

49 For the reduced *aes* of this type see Butcher 2004, 26–28. 317–320. McAlee 2007, 64. 76 n. 39, has identified two specimens of the reduced module dated to Year 9 of the Caesarean Era (= 41/40 BCE) and has therefore suggested that the weight and size reduction of these coins had already occurred earlier than in 39/38 BCE, as supposed by the authors of *RPC 1*, 619. If the identification is correct, we cannot attribute the reduction of the module to Antony and to his recovery of Syria.

50 One specimen of Butcher’s group 3 (Butcher 2004, 468) is overstruck on an Antiochene issue which Butcher dates back to the Seleucid period or to the Roman occupation before 48 BCE.

51 *RPC 1*, 572.

52 Butcher 2004, 28. 468.

In addition to what has already been observed by Butcher, stress should be laid on the fact that the overstrikes seem to concern only the civic issues: none of the (known) coins of Antiochos, the besieged king, has revealed traces of an undertype. Moreover, the period in which Samosata resorted to overstriking fits the picture of François de Callataÿ, according to which the recycling and mass overstriking of bronzes becomes a phenomenon typical of Asia Minor and the Levant in the 1st c. BCE, in contrast with the rest of the Greek world.⁵³

On the chronology of these coins, I will come back to shortly. For the time being, it is opportune to pay attention to two outcomes of the present analysis: firstly, Antiochene coins were available in the kingdom of Commagene for overstriking (the vicinity between Samosata and Antioch and the site finds of Dülük Baba and Zeugma reinforce the idea that the overstrikes reveal a pattern of circulation rather than foreign import); secondly, at a certain point during the kingdom Samosata started to produce civic issues, sometimes called ‘pseudo-autonomous’.

The latter conclusion triggers a series of questions related to the very complex issue of sovereignty and the right to issue coins. Why did Samosata begin to mint coins? What are the implications of the existence of civic coins in a period when the country was ruled by kings? Does the issuing of coins indicate that a city is free or autonomous? Until thirty years ago, the general assumption was that there were no civic issues under a monarchy. The so-called *lex Seyrig* (or *lex seyrigiana*), which presumes a link between coinage and political autonomy (in other words, no state issued coin in its own name if it was ruled by another) has been challenged by Thomas Martin.⁵⁴ An intense debate has followed, in which even the use of the term ‘sovereignty’ with reference to the ancient Greek world has been criticised.⁵⁵ In a relevant contribution, Andrew Meadows has explored the subject focussing on the Hellenistic world, showing how the significance of coinage underwent an evolution.⁵⁶ His analysis of the motivation for issuing coinage can be fruitful for a better understanding of the circumstances behind the production of the early civic issues by Samosata. Not only political, but also economic reasons could underlie the production of civic coins. Meadows demonstrates how in several cases the emergence of civic issues was a response to the disappearance (or shortfall) of royal coinages. Now, such a condition might have occurred immediately after the attack on Samosata. Plutarch and Cassius Dio relate an economic agreement between Antiochos and Antony to stop the siege: according to Plutarch, Antiochos

53 De Callataÿ 2018, 42–46. I owe this observation to Aneurin Ellis-Evans, who made me aware of this work of de Callataÿ.

54 Martin 1985, in particular 263.

55 See the sharable criticism by Howgego 1995, 39–44 and also the observations by Meadows 2001, 54; Oliver 2001, 38–39; de Callataÿ 2005, 135–136. On the inapplicability of the term ‘sovereignty’ to the ancient Greek world see Davies 1994.

56 Meadows 2001.

paid 300 talents⁵⁷, while according to Dio the king did not pay in the end.⁵⁸ But, despite the philo-augustean version of Dio wishing to deny Antony any success, there must have been an agreement, if the siege came to an end and Antiochos retained his throne. And this agreement surely involved money. We cannot reconstruct in detail how the king fulfilled his payment obligations and the extent to which his finances were impacted by the war. A temporary shortage of royal coinage might have induced the capital of the kingdom to issue its own coins. Antiochene coins circulating in the kingdom (particularly in the South) were recalled and overstruck with new types.



Fig. 4.4 bronze of Antiochus I of Commagene (courtesy of Leu Numismatik, AG); from <https://leunumismatik.com> (Leu Web Auction 5, 25 September 2018, lot 395), size: x 1.5



Fig. 4.5 bronze of Antiochus I of Commagene (courtesy of Numismatik Naumann, Auction 42, 3 April 2016, lot 322), size: x 1.5

57 Plut. Antonius 34,2–4: Οὐεντίδιος δὲ Πάρθους μὲν προσωτέρω διώκειν ἀπέγνων, φθόνον Ἀντωνίου δείσας, τοὺς δὲ ἀφροστῶτας ἐπιὼν καταστρέφετο καὶ τὸν Κομμαγηγνὸν Ἀντίοχον ἐν πόλει Σαμοσάτοις ἐπολιόρκει [...]. 4. τῆς δὲ πολιορκίας μῆκος λαμβανούσης καὶ τῶν ἔνδον, ὡς ἀπέγνωσαν τὰς διαλύσεις, πρὸς ἀλήκην τραπομένων, πράττων οὐδέν, ἐν αἰσχύνη δὲ καὶ μεταγνώσει γενόμενος, ἀγαπητῶς ἐπὶ τριακοσίοις σπένδεται τάλαντοις πρὸς τὸν Ἀντίοχον.

58 Cass. Dio 49.20.5; 22.1–2: ταῦτα μὲν χρόνῳ ὕστερον ἐγένετο, τότε δὲ ὁ Ἀντώνιος προσέβαλε μὲν τῷ Ἀντίῳ, καὶ κατακλείσας αὐτὸν ἐς Σαμόσατα ἐπολιόρκει [...]. 2. ἀμέλει αὐτὸς μὲν οὔτε ὀμήρους, πλὴν δύο καὶ τούτων οὐκ ἐπιφανῶν, οὔτε τὰ χρήματα ἃ ἤτησεν ἔλαβε, τῷ δ' Ἀντίῳ θάνατον Ἀλεξάνδρου τινὸς αὐτομολήσαντος παρ' αὐτοῦ πρότερον πρὸς τοὺς Ῥωμαίους ἐχαρίσατο.



Fig. 4.6 bronze of Antoninus Pius from Samosata (courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group, LLC); from <https://www.cngcoins.com> (CNG Electronic Auction 434, 12 december 2018, lot 235), size: x 1.5

Political and economic reasons are not mutually exclusive in the production of civic issues.⁵⁹ It is tempting to infer a political significance in the issuing of coins by the *polis* of Samosata and connect it with a new status for the city. Samosata is called *hiera*, *asylus* and *autonomos* on coins of Antoninus Pius (fig. 4.6)⁶⁰, but not before: on coins from the reign of Hadrian only the title *metropolis* appears and for the first time.⁶¹ Because of this absence, Alla Stein suggested that the title was acquired by Samosata in the Roman period, while Butcher is more inclined to trace the title back to the royal period. The circumstances following the siege of Samosata, in my opinion, offer a suitable set for the concession of these titles: the city had supported Antiochos and resisted against a long attack (as Plutarch clearly states)⁶², so it would be comprehensible that the king rewarded the capital with a special status. The good relationship between Antiochos and the city can be detected in the types chosen for the civic coins (figs. 4.1 and 4.2). The reverse with a Tyche is a very common type for Northern Syria, as well as for other Near Eastern areas, and “the clearest expression of civic identity”.⁶³ The obverses associated with it represent a lion or an eagle. The lion on the coins of Samosata has been for a long time connected with the lion figuring on Antiochos’ coins (fig. 4.4) and monuments⁶⁴ and the so-called ‘lion horoscope’ of Nemrud Dağ induce us to think that the lion was almost a personal badge for Antiochos.⁶⁵ The eagle occurs also in later coins of Samosata, perching on the branch of the Tyche, so that the idea of a possible reference to a foundation myth has been advanced.⁶⁶ It should also be considered that on other bronzes of Samosata the eagle is associated with the reverse type of a sitting

59 So Graham Oliver has reminded us (see Oliver 2001, 39).

60 See Stein 1990, 231–232 (*non vidi*) and Butcher 2004, 222.

61 See Butcher 2004, 471 nos. 16–18.

62 See above note 57.

63 Butcher 2004, 231.

64 See for example Wroth in BMC Galatia, I.

65 So lastly Dahmen 2010, 106 (with previous bibliography).

66 Cf. Butcher 2004, 231.

Zeus, a blatant imitation of the Antiochene type of the 1st c. BCE.⁶⁷ However, the eagle appears frequently on coins of the kings of Sophene and Commagene and even on coins of Antiochos: in 1983 Paul Bedoukian published a new smaller denomination of Antiochos' bronzes with an eagle on the reverse (fig. 4.5).⁶⁸ As a symbol and protector of royalty, eagles and lions flank Antiochos and the gods on the Nemrud thrones.



Fig. 5.1 octochalkous of Antiochus I of Commagene and Samosata (courtesy of Leu Numismatik, AG); from <https://leunumismatik.com> (Leu Auction 1, 25 October 2017, lot 98), size: x 1.5



Fig. 5.2 octochalkous of Antiochus I and Mithradates II of Commagene (courtesy of Leu Numismatik, AG); from <https://leunumismatik.com> (Leu Web Auction 3, 25 February 2018, lot 406), size: x 1.5

One may object that there was no deliberate intention by the city to refer to the king in its issues and, as in the case of the Antiochene prototype, the coins of Antiochos were simply a source of inspiration. Yet, the link between Antiochos and the capital of his kingdom is explicit on an exceptional coin (fig. 5.1) which appeared in the auc-

67 See for example BMC Galatia, 117 no. 16; Butcher 2004, 469 no. 6; Kovacs 2016, 48 no. 289.
68 Bedoukian 1983, 88 no. 26; RPC 1, no. 3847.

tion market in 2017 and which is unpublished and unparalleled as far as I am aware.⁶⁹ The obverse of this bronze (8 chalkoi; 27 mm; 17,36 g; 1 h) shows a bull butting left, surrounded by the legend ΒΑΣ ΜΕΓ ΑΝ; the reverse represents the Tyche of Samosata holding a palm branch, a river deity (Euphrates) swimming at her feet, and the legend ΣΑΜΟΣΑΤ[.]. In the catalogue of the auction the last letter is read as *omega* and the legend restored as ΣΑΜΟΣΑΤΩ [ΠΙΟΛΕΩΣ]; my impression from the photograph is that the last letter is an *epsilon* and the legend should be restored as ΣΑΜΟΣΑΤΕ[Ω]Ν. The Βασιλεὺς Μέγας mentioned on the obverse can be identified with Antiochos I, thanks to another coin of the same denomination (8 chalkoi), where the image of a bull also appears (fig. 5.2). The latter shows on the obverse the portrait of Antiochos I, wearing the distinctive Armenian tiara (distinctive because it was worn only by Antiochos among the Commagenian dynasts), surrounded by the legend ΒΑ ΜΕΓ ΑΝΤΙΟΧΟΥ⁷⁰; on the reverse figures a bull (or zebu) butting right⁷¹, encircled by an uncertain legend which contains the letters ΒΑ ΜΕΓ ΜΙΘΡΑΔ[...].⁷² Already Theodor Reinach identified the king mentioned on the reverse with Mithradates II and assigned the coin to a period of coregency between Antiochos I and his son.⁷³ The issue can therefore be confidently placed to the final years of Antiochos I's reign and before the sole rule of Mithradates (for which the *terminus ante quem* is 31 BCE).⁷⁴ The new octochalkous with the bull and the Tyche of Samosata uses a similar design (with the bull, though, butting to the left), but does not mention Mithradates as a king; for this reason, it should be placed before the coregency type, but chronologically not too

69 Leu Numismatik Auction 1, 25 October 2017, lot 98.

70 Staab 2011, 65 casts doubts on this reading, but see now a new item from the auction market [fig. 5.2] where the beginning of the obverse legend is clearer (Leu Web Auction 3, 25 February 2018, lot 406).

71 It is sometimes described as a zebu, because of the hump or dewlap visible in some specimens.

72 On this coin see Taşyürek 1975, 42; Alram 1986, 84 no. 247 and lately Staab 2011, 64–66 (to which I refer for the various suggested readings and restorations of the reverse legend). Cf. also Kovacs 2016, 41 no. 229. The type is not listed in RPC 1 or Butcher 2004.

73 Reinach 1890, 376 n. 2. Babelon 1898, 447 no. 7243 (Pl. XXI,3) attributed this issue to a period of coregency between Mithradates II and the phantasmal Antiochos II. Staab 2011, 64–66 is not convinced that the represented king is Antiochos I and that the coin is an evidence of coregency with Mithradates II. His objections can be summarised as follows: the mentioned Mithradates is called Μέγας, while Staab expects only one king with this title; the co-regent is not portrayed and a wild animal instead appears in connection with his name; a legend is present on both sides of the coin, rather than on only one, as is usual in late-Hellenistic coins of the 1st c. BCE. I do not see any difficulty in both kings carrying the epithet Μέγας, as it is now clear: there is no evidence to assume that Mithradates became Βασιλεὺς Μέγας only when his father died and not before (for example when he assumed the diadem, on which see Jacobs 2009; on the importance of the assumption of the diadem for Antiochos I see also Facella 2014). Wild animals often appear in royal coinage of Commagene, sometimes as a royal badge (see above). As far as we know (see Wagner 1983, 202–206), Antiochos I was the only dynast in Commagene to wear the Armenian tiara, so the Βασιλεὺς Μέγας Αντιόχος on the obverse is most likely Antiochos I (rather than another king of this name for whom we have no representation) and the king Mithradates his son.

74 On Mithradates II see Facella 2006, 299–312 (with sources and previous bibliography).

far away. The combination of an obverse with a royal name and a reverse with the city name is intriguing. The question that inevitably follows is which authority promoted the issue, whether it was the king, who wanted to celebrate the capital of the kingdom, maybe because of its support and resistance during the siege, or the city, which needed coined money to face (new?) expenses and at the same time wanted to manifest the approval by the king?

The comparison which first comes to mind is with the so-called ‘quasi-municipal’ issues, struck by 19 cities of Syria under Antiochos IV: these coins depict the royal portrait on the obverse and employ the city’s ethnic on the reverse.⁷⁵ Otto Mørkholm believed that the royal organization was behind the issue of these series, which all began to be struck in the same year (169/168 BCE).⁷⁶ More recently, Oliver Hoover has highlighted the local input in the choice of the design and has argued that comparable series from Apamea, issued under Alexander I Balas, were probably due to the initiative of the city authorities.⁷⁷ The local and civic character of the ‘quasi-municipal’ coins has been questioned by Panagiotis Iossif, who explains this coinage as an obligation imposed by the king onto these cities to share his financial burdens, hence overturning the usual interpretation of these coins as a sign of regained civic autonomy.⁷⁸ For Catharine Lorber the reverse types and inscriptions of these bronzes provide strong evidence that “the cities themselves designed these coin issues and valued the opportunity for civic self-promotion, even if the political and fiscal realities behind the quasi-municipal coinage remain obscure and debatable.”⁷⁹

The political and fiscal dynamics between the king and the cities in Commagene are even more unknown. For our bronze, I see no decisive clue to the issuing authority: on the one hand, the presence of the king’s name could be a hint that the king

75 SC II, 45–46 and nos. 1379–1380 (Antioch on the Sarus), 1385–1388 (Seleucia on the Pyramus), 1389–1390 (Aegae), 1391 (Hierapolis on the Pyramus), 1392–1393 (Alexandria by Issus), 1416–1418 (Antioch on the Orontes), 1425–1426 (Seleucia in Pieria), 1427–1428 (Apamea on the Axios), 1429–1431 (Laodicea by the Sea); 1432–1433 (Hierapolis-Bambyce), 1441 (Tripolis), 1443–1447 (Byblus), 1448–1452 (Laodicea in Phoenicia), 1453–1460 (Sidon), 1463–1471 (Tyre), 1480 (Ake Ptolemais), 1494–1496 (Ascalon), 1499–1501 (Antioch on the Callirhoe-Edessa), 1502–1504 (Antioch in Mygdonia-Nisibis). On these bronzes see the studies mentioned below. Meadows 2001, 61 aptly speaks of an “incongruous mixture of royal portrait and civic design”. I am grateful to Achim Lichtemberger for providing a draft of his paper (“Viele Mütter. Zu den quasi-municipalen seleukidischen Lokalbronzen im hellenistischen Phönikien”) with further bibliography and discussion on these coins and in particular on those with a bilingual (Greek and Phoenician) legend.

76 Mørkholm 1965.

77 Hoover 2001, in particular 22–28.

78 Iossif 2014, 67–68, and 79 for the quotation (“If, as I will argue elsewhere, this coinage was not a ‘privilege’ accorded to the nineteen cities by Antiochus IV, but an ‘obligation’ imposed by the king to these cities in order to share the financial burden in the aftermath of the Sixth Syrian War, then the message and meaning of these types and inscriptions as markers of ‘civic’ and ‘local’ identity should be reconsidered”).

79 Lorber 2015, 69.

was the promoting force behind the issue; on the other hand, the specific reference to the city's ethnic counterbalances this, especially when we consider that later coins of Antiochos IV of Commagene and his wife bear the more general ethnic KOMMATH-NQN. Whatever the case, the new type with bull and city-goddess perfectly fits our reconstruction, where the siege of Samosata is a *caesura* marking the emergence of the city as issuing authority.

Some conclusions

We are still very far from understanding coin circulation in the kingdom of Commagene. Certainly, the number of coin finds available is very low, although it could be indicative of some patterns. The lack of Commagenian coins in the area of Zeugma and Doliche, rather than being the product of casualty might instead point to the low impact that royal and civic Commagenian issues had on the economy of this area. When Zeugma and Doliche were added to the kingdom of Commagene, Seleucid North-Syria had reached a high level of monetisation, so a good number of Seleucid and civic bronze coins must have been in use. Before Antiochos IV of Commagene, there is no trace of a royal intervention which aimed at a uniform monetary circulation in the kingdom: we can imagine that Commagene experimented for a certain period a heterogeneous circulation of coins as, for example, happened some years later to the kingdom of Judaea under Herod the Great, where other currencies circulated beside those of his own.⁸⁰ When Pompey assigned Zeugma to Antiochos, the volume of Commagenian coins produced was probably low and could not displace the bronze coins already circulating in the southern area. How the emergence of the civic authority affected the southern areas of the kingdom is difficult to judge, also because this territory did not remain for long as part of the kingdom. Thanks to new analysis and new coin types we can suggest a placement for the beginning of civic issues from Samosata to the aftermath of the siege of the city. The coexistence of royal and civic issues during the monarchic period involves the question of coinage as expression of sovereignty and autonomy. There was no political change behind the issue of civic coins, no accomplishment of a political freedom or clash with the royal power, rather the opposite. Samosata had offered support to the king and, probably in reward, had been granted the right to issue coins by Antiochos I. Economic reasons, above all the necessity of making payments, stimulated the production of greater currency and Samosata

80 Cf. Ariel – Fontanille 2012, 157 who conclude that “the coins minted by Herod were only one (small?) component of the currency of his entire domain, except in greater Judea, where they predominated”. Obviously, in comparison to the kings of Commagene, Herod had a much larger territory to control and his output of bronze coins was much more substantial.

spotted in this the opportunity to express civic pride: in a political scenario which was rapidly changing, it was time for the city to assert its individuality.

Abbreviations

IGCH = Inventory of Greek Coin Hoards online, <<http://coinhoards.org/>> (01/09/2019)
 SC = A. Houghton – C. Lorber – O. Hoover, Seleucid Coins. A Comprehensive Catalogue. Part II. Seleucus IV through Antiochus XIII (New York 2008)

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The Late-Hellenistic Architecture of Commagene

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Introduction

Within scholarship on Hellenistic architectural sculpture of Asia Minor regional particularities are generally construed as evidence for the existence of different artistic landscapes (“Kunstlandschaften”).¹ Apart from the superior influence of specific decorative systems and ornament systems these regions exhibit differences in reception and transmission in individual workshops and workshop-groups which manifest themselves in different chronological and spatial distribution phenomena. The regional peculiarities in the innovation and preservation of forms mostly concern the typological and formal-iconographical characteristics of the architectural elements, less the choice of individual ornaments or their combination to broad ornamental complexes.² The architectural elements and ornament-fragments of late-Hellenistic Commagene likewise – apart from showing a reception of basic contemporary canonical patterns – also exhibit regional particularities and a certain degree of autonomy in its regional formal canon.

When viewed as a whole, the spectrum of finds of preserved architectural elements points to the existence of elaborate stone architecture with a rich repertoire of forms in late-Hellenistic Commagene. Our knowledge of their appearance has thus far mostly been shaped by the finds from the sanctuaries for the Commagenian ruler-cult, particularly the *hierothesia* in Arsameia on the Nymphaios/Eski Kale and Kâhta/Güzelçay Köyü.³ However, finds from urban contexts – for example individual architectural elements from the partially excavated representative architecture of the Commagenian capital and regal residence Samosata/Samsat Höyük or stray finds from the settlement

- 1 This is e. g. evident in the architectural forms found in Pergamon and its sphere of influence on the one hand and in Caria and Ionia on the other hand. A certain independence from the latter can, in turn, be observed in Lycia and the islands of Samos and Rhodes. On this cf. in general Rumscheid 1994, 346 f.
- 2 On this cf. e. g. the analysis on the Spanish provinces by Lehmann 2014, 139–153.
- 3 On the architecture of the sanctuaries for the Commagenian ruler-cult cf. Hoepfner 1983; Brijder 2014; Oenbrink 2014, 217–287; Oenbrink 2017, cf. also Oenbrink 2019, 302–304.

hill of the city of Doliche/Keber Tepe – as well as from sacral contexts, particularly the rich material from the sanctuary of Iuppiter Dolichenus on Dülük Baba Tepesi, are sufficient to enable a more comprehensive study of late-Hellenistic architectural sculpture in Commagene.⁴

The architectural sculpture of Commagene shows a certain autonomy in its regional formal canon. The question of its dating leads to a more general study of the architectural development of Commagene in late-Hellenistic times. Most scholars have thus far argued for a uniform kingdom-wide initiation of the Commagenian ruler-cult and the construction and elaboration of its sanctuaries under Antiochos I Theos (69 – ca. 36 BCE) and have tacitly assumed this to have been accompanied by processes of urbanization.⁵ Only rarely has an early monumentalization of Commagene already under his father Mithradates I Kallinikos (ca. 100–69 BCE) been considered.⁶ Despite the thus far relatively sparse material basis for the study of late-Hellenistic Commagenian architectural sculpture, the few available architectural elements and ornamental fragments provide evidence for a stylistic and architectural reappraisal. The latter, however, also highlights the problems and limits of a more precise chronological differentiation.

Because of its representative find-spectrum and its canonized basic forms, the diverse capital-sculpture offers a particular potential for attempting to undertake a reappraisal. With their partly diverging spatial and chronological spectrum of uses of the different architectural orders, the Hellenistic capitals essentially represent the basic repertoire of forms of the respective Hellenistic capital-production of Asia Minor. They exhibit, however, to varying degrees, distinctive variations in the overall structure as well as regional particularities in individual motives. General traits and particularities of the late-Hellenistic architecture of Commagene can – despite the fragmentary nature of the evidence – for example be gleaned from architectural elements relating to the Hellenistic elaboration phase of the sanctuary of Iuppiter Dolichenus on Dülük Baba Tepesi. There, particularly the forms of the Doric and Corinthian orders taken from the architecture of Asia Minor shape the sacral architecture of the temenos.

4 On Samosata/Samsat Höyük cf. for example Özgüç 1996; Özgüç 2009; Zoroğlu 2012. – On Doliche/Keber Tepe and Dülük Baba Tepesi Oenbrink 2008, 107–124; Oenbrink 2019. – In general on the late-Hellenistic and Imperial architecture of Commagene cf. also Hoepfner 1966, 157–177; Hoepfner 1975, 43–50; Hoepfner 1983; Pohl 2002, 37. 79–80. 201–202; Rous – Aylward 2013, 124–148.

5 Cf. e. g. Jacobs 2003, 117–123; Wagner 2012, 43–59 esp. 50–53.

6 Against a construction phase under Mithradates I Kallinikos in Arsameia on the Nymphaios: Hoepfner 2012, 117. 129; cf. also Kropp 2013, 309. 357. – In contrast, Waldmann 1991, 79–127 esp. 80; Ridgway 2002, 60 n. 20; Brijder 2014, 292 assume a first construction phase under Mithradates I Kallinikos, cf. also Weisskopf 1992, 54–57 esp. 55 s. v. Commagene. – For a summary on the chronology of the *hierothesion* in Arsameia on the Nymphaios cf. now Oenbrink 2017, 119–123. – On the monumental elaboration of the Commagenian residence of Samosata supposedly under Mithradates I cf. Zoroğlu 2012, 144. Cf. the contribution by Kruijer – Riedel in this volume.

The Doric Order in Commagene

Especially the Doric column capitals with their meticulous execution appear to assume a prominent place within the Commagenian capital sculpture. The group of Commagenian capitals of the Doric order is represented by the prominent, irregularly spaced column monuments around the grave tumuli of Sesönk/Dikili Taş and Karakuş, which at least in the latter case can be securely dated to the first half or third quarter of the 1st c. BCE.⁷ Their unfluted column shafts – consisting of individual drums of varying heights of mostly flat proportions and swelling forms – rest on a high square plinth. The capitals follow a clearly structured composition consisting of a low part of the upper column, a towering echinus with a curved profile, either directly transitioning into the shaft or separated from it by a narrow band, and a thick abacus. Because

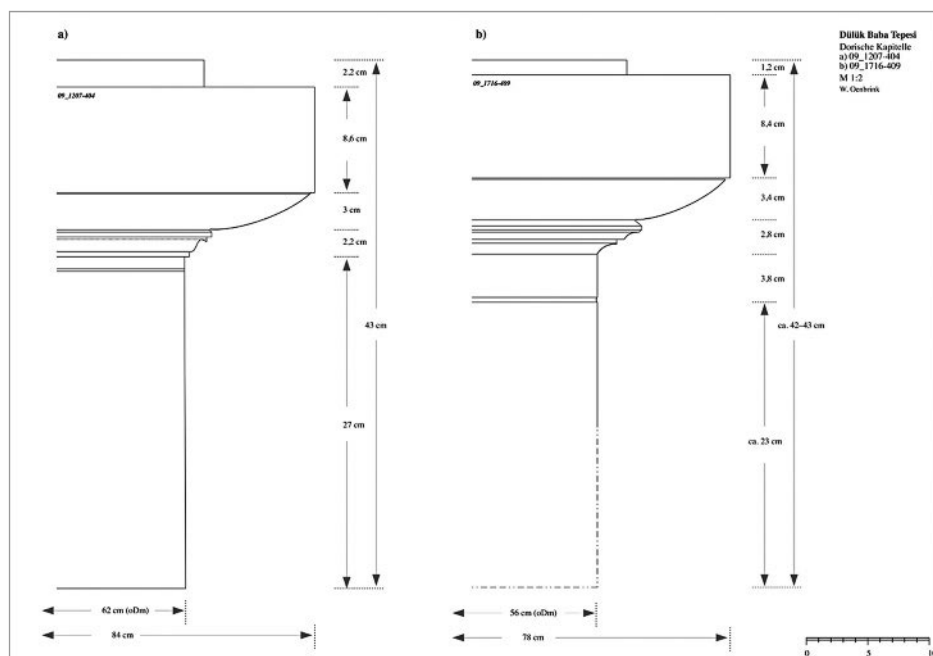


Fig. 1 Dülük Baba Tepesi, Doric capitals (profile design I and II), copyright W. Oenbrink

7 On Sesönk/Dikili Taş cf. Humann – Puchstein 1890, 213–217 figs. 34–37. pl. 16,2; Blömer 2008, 103–110. pl. 23; Beyazlar – Blömer 2008, 287–293 esp. 290–292; Brijder 2014, 199–206 figs. 114–122; Oenbrink 2017, 13–15 fig. 4. Colour pl. 8,3 4. – On Karakuş, a *hierothesion* erected by Mithradates II (38–20 BCE) for his mother Isias, his sisters Laodike and Antiochis as well as her daughter Aka, cf. Humann – Puchstein 1890, 217–232 figs. 38–43. pls. 15,2. 16–17; Blömer 2008, 103–110; Beyazlar – Blömer 2008, 287–293 esp. 290–292; Wagner 2012, 43–59 esp. 53–54. figs. 28. 37. 40–41; Brijder 2014, 206–217 figs. 123–132; Versluys 2017, 79–81 figs. 2.24. 2.35; Oenbrink 2017, 11–13 fig. 3. Colour pls. 6. 7,1–3. 8,1,2.

of their simple, coarse execution and their proportions, they – like the unfluted columns – convey a rather rustic, antiquated impression. The coarse workmanship on the different architectural elements, of which the column drums as well as the capitals exhibit a low drafted margin on the bottom edge, is conspicuous.

In contrast, the column capitals from Dülük Baba Tepesi exhibit a much more elaborate and carefully executed decoration.⁸ In their basic structure, the architectural elements largely follow the classical composition of Doric capitals, in their late-Hellenistic configuration, however, they display a rather local form (fig. 1). Despite showing a generally analogous composition, similar format and equally skilful execution, the capital fragments in a light, fine-grained limestone exhibit distinct differences in the details of their formal design which allow the differentiation of two profile types on the basis of diverging profiling of the anulus zone (profile-types I and II). The delicate profile composition with an extremely flat and strongly protruding echinus and a profiled anulus-zone formed by a cymatium framed either by plates and moulding or by plates and fillets, remains isolated within the late-Hellenistic capital production of Commagene and Asia Minor.

In general, these capitals follow the tradition of Hellenistic capitals of the 2nd c. BCE. A similar, delicate anulus-zone is found in the Doric capitals of the Graeco-Bactrian representative architecture in Ai Khānum which have convincingly been dated to the 2nd c. BCE.⁹ In contrast, the flat, strongly protruding echinus of the Commagenian capitals finds its closest parallels in capitals of central Italic buildings of late-Republican date. Examples of this configuration are the column capitals of the temple of Cori (80 BCE)¹⁰ and particularly the half-column capitals of the Tabularium in Rome (78 BCE)¹¹ which exhibit a largely analogous structure consisting of a flat, strongly protruding echinus and a cavetto-profiled anulus-zone.¹² It appears, as if we have to presume the existence of a regional workshop which was active in Commagene and in which different artistic traditions from the 2nd c. to the second quarter of the 1st c. BCE converged and were adapted locally. A dating of the Doric capitals from Dülük Baba Tepesi to as early as the early-1st c. BCE is therefore worthy of consideration. A later date in the mid-1st c. BCE in the context of extensive building activity in the eastern part of the sanctuary can, however, in light of their detailed profiling, not be excluded.¹³

A similar phenomenon can be observed in the Doric capitals of Arsameia on the Nymphaios. The capital fragments discovered there can be separated into two column orders by their diverging measurements and proportions and, more importantly, by

8 In general on the Doric architectural elements from Dülük Baba Tepesi cf. now the summaries in Oenbrink 2017, 152–165; Oenbrink 2019, 155–182.

9 Liger – Lecuyot 1987, 16–19. pls. 13a. 18b–e.

10 Delbrück 1907 2, 23–26; Vasdaris 1987, 285–286 no. 14.

11 Delbrück 1907 1, 36 fig. 35. pl. IX; Vasdaris 1987, 370 no. 149.

12 On the Doric order in central Italy cf. von Hesberg 1981, 189–197; Maschek 2012.

13 On this cf. Oenbrink 2017, 154; Oenbrink 2019, 157–158.



Fig. 2 Arsameia on the Nymphaios, Doric capital (order I), copyright Forschungsstelle Asia Minor, WWU Münster

their diverse profile design.¹⁴ The capital fragments of order I with their steeply rising trapezoid echinus profile, their anulus-zone consisting of a sequence of three ornamental profile mouldings and their hypotrachelium with incised fluting follow the traditional forms of capitals from Asia Minor (fig. 2). A precise dating of the capitals of order I is, however, difficult because their specific characteristics are at first glance typical for the Hellenistic period as a whole. Thus, the stepped regular sequence of three anuli with angular spaces are common from the 3rd c. BCE to the Imperial period. In contrast, the fragmented capital from Arsameia on the Nymphaios with its anuli of varying sizes which are arranged in a curved contour shows a form which is thus far without parallel in the Hellenistic capital sculpture of Asia Minor and is difficult to date. The lack of space between the anuli is typical for the 2nd c. BCE. Moreover, the combination of the Doric capital form with incised fluting whose upper end is not linear as they are on Doric columns, but semi-circular as they are on Ionic and Corinthian columns. The Commagenian capital, thus, shows the phenomenon of an influence of Ionic forms which is found particularly in the architecture of the early and mid-2nd c. BCE.¹⁵ The in comparison to early-Hellenistic capitals steeper echinus contour of the fragments in Arsameia on the Nymphaios is found mostly on examples of the later

14 Dörner 1969–1970, 260–262 fig. 3, pl. 50,1; Hoepfner 1983, 17–20 figs. 8–10; Oenbrink 2014, 271–287 esp. 277–278. pls. 34,2. 36,1; Oenbrink 2017, 29–32 nos. A3–A10. pls. 6. 7.

15 Delphi: Rumscheid 1994 2, no. 367.2. pl. 194,4. – Knidos: Rumscheid 1994 2, no. 91.1. – Pergamon: Rumscheid 1994 2, no. 217.2. pl. 128,2–3. – Samos: Rumscheid 1994 2, no. 335.28.

2nd c. BCE.¹⁶ Thus, also in light of the distinctive anulus-profile and the changes in the overall proportions, a relatively wide dating-range from the 2nd to the early-1st c. BCE can be assumed.



Fig. 3 Kâhta/Güzelçay Köyü, Fragment of a Doric column capital (profile design A₁), copyright Forschungsstelle Asia Minor, WWU Münster

An entirely different, simple basic shape is exhibited by the capitals of order II from Arsameia on the Nymphaios which find their closest formal and motivic parallels in the fragments from the newly discovered *hierothesion* in Kâhta/Güzelçay Köyü which show an analogously simple composition (fig. 3).¹⁷ On the capitals of this order a steep echinus is no longer separated from the relatively high transition to an unfluted column shaft by the canonical three (or four) ornamental rings (anuli), but by means of a single angularly protruding moulding whose upper and lower edge are bevelled. With their slightly curved echinus-form the Doric capitals from both sites adhere to a late-Classical / early-Hellenistic form while apparently following a different tradition in their anulus-design. Thus, in late-Hellenistic times a tendency towards a reduction of the anuli from three to two or one and ultimately even towards their complete omission can be observed.¹⁸ Moreover, their conspicuous rendering as angular protruding profile mouldings seems to point to a late-Hellenistic date, a period of experimentation with traditional architectural forms. As early as the 2nd c. BCE influence of the Ionic order can be detected with the insertion of an Ionic cymatium underneath the anuli in Doric capital profiles¹⁹, the angular profile mouldings of the Commagenian capitals,

16 Cf. e.g. Kalydon: Dyggve et al. 1934, pl. IV,A.

17 Kâhta/Güzelçay Köyü: Oenbrink 2014, 271–287 esp. 272–276 nos. 1–7. pls. 31–33. 34,1. 35a; Oenbrink 2017, 125–130 nos. K₁–K₇. pls. 43,1–5. 44, 1–4.

18 One anulus-ring: Vasdaris 1987, 99–100 ch. III 2a figs. 97–112; Fraisse – Llinas 1995, 19–21. fig. 339,27. – No anulus-ring: Fraisse – Llinas 1995, figs. 339,24–25.

19 Sioumpara 2011, 146–153 figs. 89–93. pls. 42–44. – In general on the influence of Ionic tendencies into the Doric order: Lauter 1986, 258–270.

however, will have rather developed from the anuli-rings themselves. The absence of additional anuli, furthermore, seems to point to a later dating to the timespan from the 1st half to the middle of the 1st c. BCE. Thus far this distinctive form of Doric capitals remains a regional variation in Commagene and is confined to the architecture of the *hierotherisia*. The Commagenian capitals of the Doric order therefore seem to exhibit gradual differences in their formal adaptation of forms of their prototypes in Asia Minor. In their respective find spots they apparently stem from a common architectural context and should probably be attributed to a peristyle courtyard or larger stoai which were obviously part of the basic architectural configuration of the sanctuaries of the Commagenian ruler cult.²⁰

The Corinthian Order in Commagene



Fig. 4 Arsameia on the Nymphaios, Fragment of a Corinthian column (order I), copyright Forschungsstelle Asia Minor, WWU Münster

20 On their integration into the architectural configuration cf. Oenbrink 2014, 271–287 esp. 280–283; Oenbrink 2017, 109–117. 140–141. 153–155; Oenbrink 2019, 302–304.

A different adaptation and execution of the design of the individual architectural elements of the Hellenistic capital sculpture is also evident in the form and syntax of the Corinthian capital. Thus, individual workshops obviously follow a universal repertoire of forms while others more strongly integrate different regional or local variations into the formal composition. Delicately executed capital fragments of a first Corinthian order from Arsameia on the Nymphaios (order I), which are difficult to place chronologically both because of their poor state of preservation and because of a lack of securely dated parallels, in principle adhere to the formal traditions of Corinthian capitals from Asia Minor (fig. 4).²¹ The largest fragment preserves parts of the lower kalathos with remains of the acanthus leaf-folia and of a caulis-stem. The wreath leaves of the lower folium consist of several leaflets with four to five pointed, grooved lobes arranged around a round midvein. Between these round-oval droplet-like eyelets are placed which are largely surrounded by the two flanking lobes. The acanthus-leaves of the only rudimentarily preserved bract folium are not touching at the tips, revealing the lower part of the caulis-stem with relatively shallow parallel flutes. The composition of the upper part of the column-like caulis-stem consists of a slim moulding and a smooth roundel onto which a calyx with steeply rising acanthus-leaves is placed.

Even though the preserved individual forms of Corinthian order I do enable a chronological placement, the thus far proposed datings – which have solely been based on the fragmented capitals from Arsameia on the Nymphaios – are contradictory. A hypothetical attribution to a merely conjectured architectural order of a grave monument of Mithradates I Kallinikos which was originally reconstructed on the eastern plateau in Arsameia on the Nymphaios led to an early dating already to the late first quarter of the 1st c. BCE.²² Subsequently, the peculiar rendering of the leaves of the ‘segmented’ acanthus has been adduced for a production of the capital fragments in a timeframe between the second quarter of the 1st c. BCE to early Augustan times which goes along with an attribution to the programme of architectural elaboration under Antiochos I in the mid-1st c. BCE.²³ The formal characteristics of the capital fragments are, however, in fact in line with an earlier dating as a comparison to the re-used capitals of the Augustan column monument of Sextus Appuleius in Klaros underlines.²⁴ The spolia-capital is difficult to date, but it will have been made in the late-2nd to early-1st c. BCE in light of its general composition, its proportions with a remarkably low abacus and its unusual

21 Hoepfner 1983, 38–42. 51. 73 fig. 29. pl. 15A–B; Hoepfner 2012, 126 fig. 107; Oenbrink 2017, 50–55 nos. A52–A63. pl. 18, 1–4.

22 Hoepfner 1983, 51. 73.

23 Hoepfner 2012, 126. 129. – Cf. the critical assessment by Brijder 2012, 292: “In sum, Wolfram Hoepfner’s dating of the different architecture fragments and building reconstructions in the hierotheion of Arsameia appears to be most inconsistent”.

24 Hoepfner 1983, 73.

leaf-structure and the rendering of its eyelets.²⁵ Apart from their general structural composition, the Commagenian capitals also in the characteristic traits of the rendering of the acanthus-leaves follow the general development in the Corinthian capital production in Asia Minor where the earliest examples of capitals with droplet-like eyelets occur in the mid-2nd c. BCE at the latest.²⁶ The dissolution of the regularly contoured acanthus-leaves with a closed outline into individual leaflets, which thereby acquire an irregular contour, can be observed from this period onwards at the latest. Moreover, the number of lobes on the individual leaflets increases to four or five lobes, a formal change which can be traced throughout the Hellenistic period and which becomes the most common way of the rendering of the leaves particularly in the late-Classical period. Characteristics of Hellenistic architectural sculpture are, furthermore, the simple form of the roundel of the caulis-knot as well as the parallel fluting of the caulis-stems which from the mid-2nd c. BCE onwards is increasingly replaced by spiralling caulis-flutes.²⁷ Thus, the parallel fluting of the capital fragments from Arsameia on the Nymphaios (order I) in principal rather points to a dating to the late-2nd or early-1st c. BCE.



Fig. 5 Kâhta, private collection N. Akel, fragment of a Corinthian pilaster capital, copyright Forschungsstelle Asia Minor, Münster

- 25 On the column monument of Sextus Appuleius in Claros cf.: Tuchelt 1979, 168. pl. 8,1–2; Rumscheid 1994 1, 19–20. 32. 93. 152; Rumscheid 1994 2, 26 no. 84. pl. 56,5; Étienne – Varéne 2004, 120–121. 224 fig. 73. 264 fig. 145.
- 26 Magnesia on the Maeander (scroll frieze): Rumscheid 1994 1, 265; Rumscheid 1994 2, pl. 84,3–6. – Theos (acroterium): Uz 1990, 52–53 fig. 8; Rumscheid 1994 1, 265; Rumscheid 1994 2, 86 no. 354.7 fig. 186, 1.2.
- 27 On the caulis-rendering in Hellenistic architectural sculpture cf. Rumscheid 1994 1, 274.

The closest parallel to the rendering of the leaves and the formal characteristics of the caulis and calyx of the capitals from Arsameia on the Nymphaios is a fragmented pilaster capital, of almost equal size, in a private collection in Kâhta which is said to stem from Samsat Höyük/Samosata (fig. 5).²⁸ On the basis of this fragment, the composition of the highly fragmented capital of order I in Arsameia on the Nymphaios can be reconstructed. Two symmetrically composed three-lobed, flat-stalked acanthus leaves flatly placed on the capital-Kalathos form the wreath-leaf folium. The second folium is composed of bracts which protrude over the wreath leaves only with their upper lobes and the overhanging tips of the leaves. Over these in turn, tower two column-like fluted caules with corresponding torus-shaped caulis-knots on each of which a regularly structured calyx consisting of inner and outer bracts of almost equal size. A rod-like, likewise parallel-fluted stem rendered as a downscaled caulis-stem with an acanthus calyx initiates the transition to the non-extant abacus-volute-zone. In the areas of the intricate overlap of the wreath leaves and bracts a particularity of late-Hellenistic capitals becomes apparent: the lower part of the bract overlapped by the first folium is only rudimentarily executed. Even though precisely dated parallels are lacking, a dating of the capitals from Arsameia on the Nymphaios and Kâhta to the early-1st c. BCE can be proposed on the basis of the synoptic compilation of the individual formal traits.²⁹

In contrast to this canonical form of Corinthian capitals in Commagene, other column and pilaster-capitals from the *hierothesion* in Arsameia on the Nymphaios and the residential city of Samosata belong to an order (order II) (figs. 6–7) which differs significantly from order I in its composition and the rendering of its leaves.³⁰ This order is characterized by a compact overall composition and an individual formal language of its foliage decoration. The lower kalathos in its usual arrangement of the two acanthus-leaf-wreaths and the large bracts supporting the volutes follow the canonical form. Unconventional, however, is the highly compact form of the two folia with bracts barely protruding over the wreath leaves and the short caulis-stems and caulis-knots

28 The pilaster capital-fragment could be documented in 2010 (Kâhta, Lokanta Müze [Neşet Akel] Inv.-No. 2003/3: KA2010_001-404): Oenbrink 2017, 52. pl. 19.1. – A small fragment featuring a caulis-knot and a partially preserved calyx attests the existence of another capital of this order (Kâhta, Lokanta Müze [Neşet Akeil] Inv.-No. 2003/13: KA2010_001-400): unpublished.

29 Lauter 1986, 761. F. Rumscheid also seems to favour a dating to the first quarter of the 1st c. BCE. While mentioning a general dating to the reign of Antiochos I (ca. 69–31 BCE) in the text volume (Rumscheid 1994 1, 266), he inclines to a dating “schon um 80 v. Chr. (?)” in his catalogue (Rumscheid 1994 2, 7 no. 18.10).

30 Arsameia on the Nymphaios, cf. Hoepfner 1983, 25–31 figs. 15–17. pl. 14A–C. E–F; Hoepfner 2012, 123 figs. 104. 105; most recently cf. Oenbrink 2017, 57–68 nos. A74–A91. pls. 19,5,6. 20. 21. 25. 26. – Individual specimens of the fragments from Samosata kept at the museum in Adıyaman have been published repeatedly (cf. Özgüç 2009, 43–44. pls. 111–112 figs. 244–245; Zoroğlu 2012, 144 fig. 122; Bingöl 2013, 79 figs. 124–125; Oenbrink 2017, 60–61. pl. 23), further fragments of this order are stored in the depot of the museum (I thank L. Kruijjer and S. Riedel from the VICI-project *Innovating objects. The impact of global connections and the formation of the Roman Empire [ca. 200–30 BC]* for making me aware of this).



Fig. 6 Arsameia on the Nymphaios, fragment of a Corinthian column capital (order II),
copyright Forschungsstelle Asia Minor, WWU Münster



Fig. 7 Samosata/Samsat Höyük, fragment of a Corinthian pilaster capital (order II),
Oenbrink 2017, pl. 23,2

terminating at the height of the overhanging tips of the bracts. Especially characteristic for this group of capitals is the rendering of the tripartite acanthus leaf. The extremely ample form of the acanthus leaves which are structurally largely dominated by the heart-shaped eyelets and their rounded stems constitutes a modification of the canonical folia by local workshops. A departure from the norm can be detected in the upper part of the kalathos in particular where different distinct individual motifs of the capital composition – such as the duplication of the caulis-motif, the divergent placement of the fleuron-stem on the pilaster capital from Samosata as well as the form of the over-sized corner volutes, the rudimentary inner helices as well as the high abacus with high-set fleuron of the fragments from Arsameia on the Nymphaios – can convincingly be identified as local manifestations of the capital production of Asia Minor and North Syria. In contrast to the column capitals from Arsameia on the Nymphaios (fig. 6), the leaf supporting the fleuron-stem on the pilaster capital from Samosata (fig. 7), which is usually positioned above the central leaf of the inner bract-folium, is placed in an axisymmetric relationship to the outer wreath-leaf folium. This formal syntax, which differs significantly from the canonical form, can hardly be explained as a result of the capital's smaller dimensions, but must instead be viewed as another regional manifestation or artistic landscape particularity.³¹

The dating of the strongly locally influenced capitals of order II can be narrowed down quite well on the basis of the individual motifs. The duplication of the caulis-motif is apparently a short-lived occurrence in the Corinthian capital sculpture. A broad chronological framework for the occurrence of Corinthian capitals with duplicated caulis-stems seems to be provided by late-Republican Corinthian capitals from the sacral architecture in the city of Rome and funerary architecture from Campania which were strongly influenced by the architectural traditions of the Hellenistic East.³² Distinctly separated double-caules are preserved already in the capital fragments of the circular temple B in Largo Argentina in Rome dating back to the early-1st c. BCE. The capitals of a grave monument of the mid-1st c. BCE in Pompeii show a more subtly executed version of this motivic particularity.³³ Such a dating would also fit with the small prongs which characterise the eyelet-form. These go back to a late-Classical decoration which is found as an ornament in capital sculpture throughout the Hellenistic period.³⁴ In Asia Minor Corinthian capitals whose acanthus leaves exhibit pronged eyelets are

31 Oenbrink 2017, 61.

32 Eastern influence on the Corinthian capitals of the circular temple B of Largo Argentina in Rome has been postulated by e. g. Heilmeyer 1970, 36. 53; Rumscheid 1994 2, 56; Albers 2013, 60.

33 Circular temple B, Largo Argentina, Rome: Heilmeyer 1970, 36. 53. 78. pls. 3,1. 60,1 (Sullan, 1st half 1st c. BCE); Rumscheid 1994 2, 56 no. 374.2. pl. 199,2 (after 101 BCE); Albers 2013, 58–60. – Pompeii: Heinrich 2002, 23–26. 63 no. K1a–b.

34 Olba/Diocaesarea: Rumscheid 1994 1, 86–91 esp. 87; Rumscheid 1994 2, 51–52 no. 185.3. pl. 111, 6.

attested till the late-Hellenistic/early Imperial architecture of the mid-1st c. BCE.³⁵ The compact, compressed form of the acanthus-*folia* with short *caulis*-stems are also found in the capital sculpture of the late-1st and early-2nd half of the 1st c. BCE³⁶, a dating that is also supported by the style of the acanthus leaves.

The fragments of Corinthian order II doubtlessly confirm building activity in various centres of the kingdom where the same stone mason workshops were most probably active. At the same time, they support the assumption of a direct, intentional spread of the architectural forms of the capital impacting the local as well as regional capital production. Moreover, they point to a contemporary monumental elaboration of Samosata as the capital of Commagene as well as the *hierothesion* of Arsameia on the Nymphaios already in the 1st half to the middle of the 1st c. BCE. However, their stylistic and motivic rendering do not allow us to decide if the elaboration occurred already during the late reign of Mithradates I Kallinikos or only under his son Antiochos I Theos.

The Ionic Order in Commagene

The coexistence of canonical capital forms adhering to the general evolution of Hellenistic architecture and forms exhibiting a strong regional or local character can apparently also be identified in the Ionic capitals of the late-Hellenistic architectural decoration of Commagene. These are preserved in a regular capital form as well as in a crowning part of an element that also includes the upper end of an unfluted column shaft, the latter of which is sometimes wrongly viewed as a regional particularity of Commagene and Northern Syria.³⁷ The earliest products of Ionic capital sculpture in Commagene date to the late-Hellenistic period. Two small fragments of a pulvinus from Arsameia on the Nymphaios which preserve parts of the outer pulvinus attest a small Ionic order at this site.³⁸ The pulvinus is strongly tapering towards the balteus and is adorned with a simple calyx consisting of densely placed lance-leaves extending

- 35 Sagalassos: Rumscheid 1994 1, 151–152. 292–294; Rumscheid 1994 2, 79 no. 328.2. pl. 173.3. – Stratonikeia: Rumscheid 1994 1, 88. 151–152; Rumscheid 1994 2, 85 no. 349.1. pl. 183.5; Mert 1999, 328 no. STF.3. pl. 187b. – In Augustan times: Antiocheia ad Pisidiam: Rumscheid 1994 1, 150–160; Rumscheid 1994 2, 4–5 no. 13.2. pl. 5,8; in general: Hänlein-Schäfer 1985, 191–196. pls. 46–50a. – Ephesus: Alzinger 1974, 87–88 no. Cvcu fig. 117; Rumscheid 1994 1, 151–153; Rumscheid 1994 2, 20 no. 55.1. pl. 45.3–4.
- 36 Cf. e.g. the half-column capitals of the ‘Temple of Dionysus’ in Side: Piesker 2015, 151–183 esp. 172–173 figs. 12a–b.
- 37 Krencker – Zschietzschmann 1937–1938 1, figs. 114. 331. 334. Krencker – Zschietzschmann 1937–1938 2, pls. 4. 37. 97.
- 38 Hoepfner 1983, 27. 31. pl. 14D; Rumscheid 1994 2, 7 no. 18.7; Oenbrink 2017, 80–82 no. A137. A138. pl. 27.1–4.

to the edges of the volutes.³⁹ To these, until now isolated, fragments of late-Hellenistic Ionic capitals, fragmented capitals from Doliche/Keber Tepe can now be added which are evidence of a late-Hellenistic Ionic order.



Fig. 8 Doliche/Keber Tepe, fragment of an Ionic column, copyright Forschungsstelle Asia Minor, WWU Münster



Fig. 9 Doliche/Dülük, fragmented Ionic column capital, copyright Forschungsstelle Asia Minor, WWU Münster

39 The long, smooth leaves which have a pronounced midvein, a pointed shape and are not deeply carved are referred to as lance-leaves here (Hoepfner 1983, 27) because their elongated schematic-abstract rendering of the leaves preclude a more precise botanical identification; on this cf. Alzinger 1974, 74–78; Rumscheid 1994 1, 268. – In literature other terms such as pointed-, reed-, as well as lotus- and palmette leaves are also used (Börker 1965, 7–8; cf. also Bingöl 1980, 82–96).

A newly discovered, rather unimposing pulvinus from Keber Tepe can be combined with a fragmented capital in the modern village of Dülük on the basis of its material, format, and decoration (figs. 8–9).⁴⁰ The find circumstances for the capital are unknown, but a provenance from the urban area of ancient Doliche is likely because of the proximity of Keber Tepe, the settlement hill. Both fragmented architectural elements exhibit corresponding basic forms and individual motifs and a matching format and must therefore have formed part of the same architectural order.⁴¹ In general, they follow the canonical forms of the Ionic capital production in Asia Minor in their structural composition, their decorative forms and their syntax. The capital includes the upper part of a fluted column shaft and, despite the largely destroyed flat abacus and canalis, preserves the composition and decoration of a volute capital. The battered bolster-shaped echinus adorned with a horizontal pentapartite cymatium with pointed oval eggs in duplicated, tight shells and freestanding, lancet-shaped interspersed leaves over which the remains of a four-lobed angle palmette springing up from volute are placed. The palmette consists of three long and flat lobes, the lower two of which are placed on the adjacent egg and its bracteal leaf, the upper lobe even extending over the interspersed leaf onto the next egg. The sparse remains of the undecorated canalis and the coil of the volute were originally framed by narrow ridges. The transition to the column shaft is marked by a delicate astragal consisting of the lengthwise oval pearls and pairs of discoid whorls which are closely aligned with shell-tips and the interspersed leaves that correspond with the whorl pairs. The likewise heavily damaged pulvini whose volutes and face are largely lost, preserve larger parts of the bolster-decoration thereby supplementing the sparse remains of the new find (fig. 8). The bolster is constricted by a wide balteus whose edges show two closely spaced, mirror-reversed cords on both sides which flank a wide guilloche (?). Reed-like leaves executed in a shallow relief and horizontally arranged to the ridges of the volutes are placed on both sides of the balteus.

In the rendering of their front the fragmented capitals from Doliche (figs. 8–9) can be attributed to a capital type characterised by a horizontal, pentapartite cymatium with a decorated abacus, framed volute and the incorporation of the upper part of the column shaft which is already repeatedly attested in the architecture of Asia Minor in the late-3rd and 2nd c. BCE and which was particularly popular in the Augustan period.⁴² The rendering of the bolster surface in the fragments from both Arsameia on the

40 The new find was discovered during the excavations on Keber Tepe in 2017 (Fd.-No. K17_413–400: Oenbrink 2019, 178–179. pl. 75,3). – On the capital in the garden of the Mukhtar of Dülük (Fd.-No. Ko7_001–416) cf. Schütte-Maischatz – Winter 2004, 4. pl. 1,2; Oenbrink 2019, 178–179. pl. 75, 4–5.

41 The capital in the garden of the Mukhtar of Dülük (Fd.-No. Ko7_001–416) could thus far not be subjected to a more detailed metrological analysis so that currently only some individual measurements are available, which, however, already enable an attribution to the same architectural order.

42 Bingöl 1980, 26–34 esp. 29–31.

Nymphaios and Doliche can be traced back to the 3rd c. BCE.⁴³ As an exclusive main motif reed-leaves arranged in this way can already be found on capitals of the late-3rd and especially 2nd c. BCE from Asia Minor.⁴⁴ This form can also be found on bolsters of Ionic capitals from the 1st c. BCE, although in those cases the leaves already exhibit an upward bulge and fillet-like edge⁴⁵, a form that can especially be identified in capitals from the Imperial period. In contrast, the fragments from Arsameia on the Nymphaios and Doliche (figs. 8–9) still follow the traditional leaf-shape of Hellenistic capitals of the 3rd and 2nd c. BCE with their flat reed leaves with grooved midveins and their concave rendering of the leaves which only rarely occurs on capitals of the late-Hellenistic / early Augustan periods.⁴⁶ The absence of interspersed leaves on the fragments from Arsameia on the Nymphaios indicates an early date, whereas their presence on the fragments from Doliche (fig. 8–9), where they are placed in the spaces between the leaves and only become visible where the main leaves are curving away from each other, points to a dating already to the 1st c. BCE. A dating which is also suggested by the more pronounced constriction of the lance-leaves towards the balteus. Despite their poor state of preservation, a dating of the capital fragments from Arsameia on the Nymphaios to the 1st quarter or 1st half of the 1st c. BCE and of the fragmented capitals from Doliche to the mid-1st c. to the 2nd half of the 1st c. BCE can be proposed.



Fig. 10 Samosata/Samsat Höyük, fragmented Ionic column capital, Özgüç 2009, pl. 113 fig. 247

- 43 Probably an invention by the architect Hermogenes: Rumscheid 1994 1, 304–306. – contra: Bingöl 1980, 118–120.
 44 Priene: Bingöl 1980, 85. 228 no. 270 pl. 4,26. – Magnesia on the Maeander: Bingöl 1980, 85. 210–211 nos. 189. 194. pl. 6–7. 26.
 45 Ephesus: Bingöl 1980, 85. 191–192 nos. 125. 127–128. pl. 10. 25.
 46 Calyx capital, Miletus: Rumscheid 1994 1, 349–350; Rumscheid 1994 2, 45–46 no. 154.7. pl. 101,5.

Other Ionic capitals from Commagene should be considered to be slightly later than the fragmented capitals from Arsameia on the Nymphaios and roughly contemporary with the architectural elements from Doliche (fig. 8–9) in light of the rendering of their pulvinus and their decoration. An Ionic column capital from the palatial complex in Samosata (fig. 10) shows a protruding echinus with egg-and-dart without intermediate leaves⁴⁷ The pulvini exhibit a dynamic surface and are constricted by a moulding-framed balteus and symmetrically placed, horizontal acanthus-leaves as well as palm-leaves with midveins. The capital from Samosata is largely formally consistent with the normal Ionic capital in its basic structure and its individual motifs but exhibits distinctive variations in its composition and decorative system. Thus, the fine-lobed angle palmettes do not originate in the upper angle to the volute coil, but instead grow upwards. Moreover, an unusual ornament is inserted below the egg-and-dart and above the astragal whose triangular leaves protrude into the open spaces of the egg-and-dart. This – thus far unique – form and the execution of a capital inscribed into the outer contours of the block-shape in such a way as to resemble chip-carving can probably be explained as the result of a production in a local stone mason workshop. The overall form and the individual decorative elements point to a dating still in the late first half of the 1st c. BCE.⁴⁸

Regional and Local Particularities in the late-Hellenistic Architectural Sculpture of Commagene

This limited synopsis already offers a small glimpse into a complex development of the architecture in Hellenistic Commagene. In contrast to Western Asia Minor and the rest of Anatolia where Greek forms had predominated since the Archaic period, the situation in Commagene was evidently different. As a result of its geographical position, Commagene marked the transition to the Syro-Palestinian Levant and to Mesopotamia and was consequently more strongly influenced by ‘oriental’ traditions. In spite of the limited material basis, it is possible to demonstrate the adaptation of originally foreign forms. The thus far prevailing assumption in scholarship of Greek-Anatolian or Alexandrian-Ptolemaic influence⁴⁹ imported with foreign craftsmen can be convincingly contrasted with the notion of local indigenous stone mason workshops

47 On the finds of Ionic column capitals from the palace of Samosata cf. Fd.-No. AD2010_001–429, Inv.-No. 4007/St.87–290: Özgüç 2009, 44. pl. 113 figs. 247a-b; Bingöl 2013, 80 fig. 125; Oenbrink 2017, 120; Oenbrink 2019, 179–180. pl. 75,1–2. – Fd.-No. AD2011_001–452, Inv.-No. 3337/St. 46–148: Özgüç 2009, 44. pl. 112 fig. 246; Bingöl 2013, 79 fig. 126.

48 Oenbrink 2019, 180.

49 Dörner 1969–1970, 263; Hoepfner 1975, 43–50 esp. 44. 49; Hoepfner 1983, 71–74; Hoepfner 2012, 119–126.

in the different regions and settlement areas in Commagene already in the late-Hellenistic period.⁵⁰

While late-Hellenistic stone masons in the city of Doliche as well as in the nearby sanctuary of Iuppiter Dolichenus on Dülük Baba Tepesi for the most part strictly followed a canonical capital design in syntax, iconography and style, they progressively developed their own form spectrum by consciously modifying canonical decorative motifs. This still manifests itself in the formal characteristics of early Imperial column and pilaster capitals which were part of a monumental Corinthian order on Dülük Baba Tepesi and a figural capital of a medium-sized order from Doliche in Beylerbeyi which preserve an unusual structural composition which deviates from the overall design and canonical form repertoire of the Corinthian capital, an uncanonical rendering of the volute-abacus-zone as well as an individual, highly dynamic execution of the unusually large inner bracts.⁵¹

In addition to the locally active stone masons, the close structural and formalistic similarities between the architectural elements from the *hierotheresia* and the residence in Samosata also enable us to presume the existence of workshops that were active in entire regions or even the entire kingdom and that were involved in comprehensive, almost simultaneous building programmes at various important sites in Commagene. A central role should probably be attributed for the royal residence in Samosata where a uniform building and monumental elaboration programme seems to have been developed which not only encompassed the erection of reliefs and inscription stelae in the sanctuaries of the Commagenian ruler cult, but also specified the architectural orders and decorative schemes used at those sites and in the representative architecture of the residence and palace buildings.⁵²

With regards to the initially outlined problem, the small number of examined architectural elements clearly demonstrate that a critical discussion of the prevailing assumption in scholarship of a uniform programme of monumental elaboration during the reign of Antiochos I Theos is warranted. The stylistic and iconographical configuration of individual capitals and fragments – of Doric order I and Corinthian order I in Arsameia on the Nymphaios and in Samosata – indeed permits a dating already to the early 1st c. BCE and could therefore potentially serve as evidence for a building phase under Mithradates I Kallinikos.⁵³ In contrast, the Doric capitals of order II as well as

50 On the question of local stone mason workshops cf. Oenbrink 2008, 117; Oenbrink 2017, 167–173; Oenbrink 2019, 323–327. – In general on the question of workshops cf. the critical discussion in Plattner 2014, 53–68.

51 On the capitals from Dülük Baba Tepesi cf. Oenbrink 2008, 117–121 fig. 4. pls. 20,3–4. 21,1–3; Oenbrink 2019, 199–207 no. K79. K81. pl. 81,1–9. – On the capital in Beylerbeyi cf. Wagner 1982, 142; Oenbrink 2008, 119–120. pl. 21,4; Ergec – Wagner 2012, 153; Oenbrink 2019, 202. pl. 82,3–4.

52 On this in general cf. Oenbrink 2017, 167–173; Oenbrink 2019, 323–327.

53 The different configurations of the Doric capitals in Arsameia on the Nymphaios (order I and II) led F. K. Dörner and W. Hoepfer to assume two separate building phases, attributing the capitals

the Corinthian capitals of order II in Arsameia on the Nymphaios, Kâhta/Güzelçay Köyü and Samosata were probably made in the late first half/middle of the 1st c. BCE and can consequently convincingly be attributed to the architectural monumentalization under Antiochos I Theos, also evidenced by epigraphical sources. The decorative forms, however, do not allow a definite decision on the question if the building activity occurred in the later reign of Mithradates I Kallinikos or under his son Antiochos I. Theos. With our current state of knowledge both datings remain possible.⁵⁴

In the late-Hellenistic period, architectural forms of the Doric and Corinthian orders borrowed from the formal repertoire of Asia Minor were equally dominant in the architecture of Commagene. At the same time, connections to the architecture of the Hellenistic cities of Northern Syria and Northern Mesopotamia as well as to the geographically more remote representative architecture of Graeco-Bactria can be identified⁵⁵. In the late-Hellenistic – early Imperial architecture, the forms of the Tuscan capitals betray an increased influence of Italic architectural forms transmitted to Commagene via the Greek-Anatolian architecture⁵⁶. Apart from a general adherence to the canonical forms of these architectural orders and forms, distinctive individual particularities of the Commagenian architectural sculpture become apparent. Indigenous traditions are apparently more pronounced here, although a selective blending of different Greek-western and Near Eastern architectural traditions with local concepts can clearly be observed.

of order I to an older western stoa presumably built by Mithradates I Kallinikos, while the capitals of order II were assumed to belong to the eastern stoa which was added in the course of the later elaboration by Antiochos I Theos (Dörner 1969–1970, 257. 262–263 [W. Hoepfner]. – Hoepfner 1983, 24 vaguely states: “Die unterschiedlichen Kapitellreihen machen jedenfalls zwei Bauphasen durchaus wahrscheinlich”). He abandons this reasonable chronological argument, however, with his most recent assumption of a uniform late-Hellenistic elaboration during the reign of Antiochos I.

54 Therefore, the importance of a future extension of our material basis and especially the addition of stratified architectural elements and decoration – which can for example be expected from the material studies conducted within the framework of the VICI-project *Innovating objects. The impact of global connections and the formation of the Roman Empire [ca. 200–30 BC]* on Samosata or the on-going excavations in Doliche/Keber Tepe – can hardly be overstated as it will allow us to verify or falsify the above outlined assumptions.

55 Oenbrink 2017, 173–178.

56 On the Early-Imperial capitals of the Tuscan order in Commagene cf. Oenbrink 2019, 166–176. – For a general treatment of Tuscan capitals and *kyma recta*-capitals in Hellenistic Asia Minor cf. Rumscheid 1994 1, 304; Laufer 2017, 131–185.

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Transforming Objectscapes in Samosata

The Impact of the Palatial Complex

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This contribution considers the palatial complex of the Commagenian kings at their capital Samosata. The main aims are to highlight the potential of the preserved material and to suggest alternative methodological approaches to the data in order to better understand the developments and (self-)positioning of the Commagenian kingdom within the wider Hellenistic world. As a basis for contextualizing the palatial complex we will first reconsider the issue of the Antiochan programme and possible earlier developments in Hellenistic Commagene and relate this debate to the material evidence including the situation at Samosata. We argue that a severe shift within the material repertoire is well observable but cannot indisputably be connected to Antiochos I alone. To better understand the make-up and development of the Commagenian material culture we therefore propose the methodological approach of objectscales. In the second part of this contribution, this approach will be applied to several elements of the palatial complex in order to emphasize the active participation of the Commagenian kingdom in global networks. It will become clear that, for the palatial context, a simple reduction of material culture to either a 'Greek' or a 'Persian' cultural affiliation does not do right to the complex global genealogies of many of the objects discussed. Rather, in some cases, it can be argued that such object genealogies in fact played an active role in the transformation of styles of elite consumption in Commagene in the early 1st c. BCE.

Introduction: Hellenistic Commagene – Of Watersheds, Globalization and Objectscales

Debates about the position of the kingdom of Commagene within the wider Hellenistic world are mainly centred around its most famous ruler, Antiochos I. This is especially due to the available literary and archaeological evidence attesting the king a leading role in many respects. Consequently, the *opinio communis* in Commagenian

scholarship is that Antiochos I initiated a systematic and highly ambitious ruler-cult centred upon his person which declined after his death. The most fully developed and telling monument in this regard is his tomb-sanctuary (*hierothesion*) on Nemrud Dağ but also most remains from the other *hierothesia* and other cult-places (*temene*) are related to Antiochos' building activities. And although evidence pre-dating the Antiochan programme is often discussed and even a later phase of the dynastic cult is preserved in the tumulus at Karakuş, the monumentality of his building programme and the related fame of his name ensure Antiochos I the perception of being a true watershed in Commagenian history. This perspective is strengthened by the political development since the defeat of the Armenian king Tigranes II (the Great) by Pompey in 66/65 BCE enabled Antiochos to partly fill in the occurring power vacuum making Commagene a notable regional kingdom until its position was again challenged after the battle of Actium in 31 BCE, five years after his death.¹

The perception of Antiochos I as the most ambitious and important ruler of the Commagenian kingdom encouraged the focus on his monuments and activities in scholarship. In this, especially the alleged syncretism of his religious programme bearing influences from Greek and Persian traditions plays a crucial role which becomes most evident when considering the role which has long been ascribed to the material culture of the Antiochan programme, and, by extent, its cultural affiliations: either such traditional approaches have followed an 'Eastern model' that frames the material culture of Commagene as a degeneration of the Greek ideal², or a 'Western model' that interprets Commagene as the last outpost of Greek culture towards the East.³ Although the misleading cultural dichotomy of East and West has rightly been challenged from within by various Commagene-scholars⁴, the image of a peripheral, out-of-the-ordinary and insignificant region still prevails in the broader research of antiquity.⁵ However, from shifting the view towards a more global perspective and trying to integrate Commagene into contemporary developments in the Mediterranean and Eurasia a different picture seems to emerge⁶ to which the observable changes in the material repertoire of Samosata considerably contribute.

- 1 For the history of Commagene with strong focus on the Hellenistic and Roman periods see especially the seminal work of Facella 2006. The Commagenian support of Marc Antony led to the loss of the important city of Zeugma and probably further territory in the western part of the kingdom which was accompanied by a reduction of power to an in fact semi-independent Roman ally – a status that the kingdom obviously also held under Augustus (cf. Facella 2006, 299–300; Wagner 2012, 38).
- 2 Cf. Waldmann 1991, 33–38; Fowler 2005, 127–128.
- 3 Cf. Dörner 1981, 8; Metzler 2012, 109.
- 4 Cf. Jacobs 2012; Canepa 2015, 81–84; Versluys 2017a, 108–254; Riedel 2018.
- 5 E. g. Pollitt 1986, 275; Stewart 2014, 267. Cf. also the evaluation of the scholarly perception of Commagene in Versluys 2017a, 13. 20–21.
- 6 Cf. Kropp 2013; Canepa 2015; Michels 2017; Versluys 2017a; Canepa 2018; Riedel 2018.

In this contribution, we analyse changes observed in Samosata in terms of ‘transforming objectscales’, a methodology developed by Miguel John Versluys.⁷ An objectscale is defined as the total repertoire of objects present at a certain locality during a specific period, for instance in Samosata during the early 1st c. BCE. An important first step in investigating an objectscale is to establish change in comparison to a preceding objectscale: which objects were added to the repertoire and which became obsolete?

Analysing objectscales, however, goes beyond merely documenting these repertoires. Rather, objectscales are used to investigate the socio-cultural impact of these changes, focusing on the question what objects *do* instead of what they *represent*.⁸ One way to investigate such impact is by analysing the global genealogies of objects that newly enter an objectscale: where and when do we see these objects as well? And what roles did they play in previous contexts? The diachronic development of objects can help us understand the potential impact they had in their new objectscale.⁹

This objectscale methodology already has proven to be fruitful as a middle-range theory to investigate the impact of changing repertoires in localities.¹⁰ Importantly, it increases the comparability of localities on a regional and global scale, something which is highly desirable for the inter-connected world of mid- to late-Hellenistic Afro-Eurasia.

We will analyse two subsequent objectscales of Samosata in relation to each other. First, we will consider the material culture of the pre-palatial, mid-Hellenistic objectscale (ca. 3rd c. – late 2nd c. BCE) of Samosata and Commagene at large. The second part deals with the palatial, late-Hellenistic objectscale (late 2nd c. BCE – early 1st c. CE) of Samosata and investigates the potential impact of transforming objectscales by exploring some of its object genealogies in more detail.

The Kingdom of Commagene prior to Antiochos I – Reconsidering the Evidence

From a historical perspective, the main political lines of the development of the Commagenian kingdom are basically known. After the defection of the region from the flagging Seleucid Empire in 163 BCE the former governor Ptolemy proclaimed himself king and thus founded the kingdom of Commagene. He is succeeded by Samos II (ca. 130–100 BCE) and Mithradates I (ca. 100–69 BCE) before Antiochos I ascends the

7 Versluys 2017b, 196–199. A key-publication is Pitts – Versluys 2021.

8 Versluys 2017b.

9 This methodology draws on a by now longstanding body of scholarly work on object biographies and itineraries, emphasizing the individual histories of cultural elements. Cf. van Oyen – Pitts 2017, 14–17 who argue for the analysis of such object trajectories as a way to overcome what they call the “representational model of material culture”.

10 E. g. Pitts 2018.



Fig. 1 Obverse of a bronze coin depicting Mithradates I with the conical, pointed tiara – not to scale (original dm. 18 mm), courtesy of the Münzkabinett Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 182.48758 (Photograph: Reinhard Saczewski)

throne in 69 BCE.¹¹ As outlined above, the political development presents Antiochos I as a watershed of Commagenian history since before the defeat of Tigranes II of Armenia by the Romans under Pompey the Commagenian rulers seem to have taken on a subordinate role to their Armenian neighbour with whom they shared the descent from the Orontids¹² in order to consolidate their regional power. This can be deduced from the depictions of Samos II and Mithradates I (fig. 1) preserved in their coinage. Both wear a conical, pointed tiara which most likely indicates a subordinate status to the Armenians since it is used to depict rulers of satrapal status in the ancestral gallery of Antiochos I on Nemrud Dağ¹³ and furthermore finds a strong parallel in the coinage of the neighbouring kingdom of Sophene at an even earlier time.¹⁴ The use of this specific headdress attests to the first Commagenian kings' firm awareness of the regional balance of power to which they adapted. This balance of power severely altered shortly after Antiochos I's accession to the throne when the Romans and their rivalry with the Armenians and later the Parthians set the political tone in the region which in turn also functioned as catalyst for the Antiochan programme.¹⁵

- 11 The history of the Commagenian kingdom is to be found in Facella 2006, esp. 199–358. Tellingly, only about a sixth of the study deals with the Commagenian kings prior to Antiochos I (Facella 2006, 199–224), saying much about the available sources. A more summarizing account highlighting the main lines of development and touching upon the most important historical sources is presented by Wagner 2012 revealing a similar treatment of the first 100 years of Commagenian history, presented in about a fifth of his contribution (Wagner 2012, 33–35).
- 12 Cf. Jacobs 2002, 77 and the contribution by Matthew Canepa in this volume.
- 13 For the use of the conical, pointed tiara in Commagenian iconography see Riedel 2018, 118–120.
- 14 A pointed tiara obviously differing from the Armenian one is to be found on coins of the Sophenean rulers Arsames I (Bedoukian 1983, 82 no. 2), Abdissares and Xerxes (Alram 1986, 66) who all date to the 3rd c. BCE (cf. Bedoukian 1983, 82. 84–85 and the criticism in Alram 1986, 66).
- 15 Cf. Riedel 2018, 127.

However, apart from the royal portraiture current knowledge about the material culture of the Commagenian kingdom prior to Antiochos I which could nuance this view is remarkably scarce. In order to contextualize and highlight the importance of the material from Samosata, it is therefore necessary to briefly discuss the Hellenistic, pre-Antiochan material repertoires available and re-evaluate the debate centred around the Antiochan programme.

The crucial point of this debate is the question whether the ambitious programme – and connected to this its monumental anchoring in the Commagenian material culture – was originally launched by Antiochos I or draws on developments starting at least under his father Mithradates I. The latter opinion was strongly advocated by Helmut Waldmann who attributed the initial dynastic religious programme to Antiochos I's father. Waldmann primarily argued from the extensive inscriptions and the iconography of some *dexiosis*-stelae.¹⁶ However, in their preserved entity these all date to the time of Antiochos I. His attempt has therefore rightly been rejected by emphasizing that these can only be connected with certainty to Antiochos I.¹⁷ Since most material remains from this period in Commagene are directly related to the *hierothesia*, they are mainly equally ascribed to Antiochos I culminating in the view “that the Commagenean archaeological record presents an extremely one-sided picture: it is largely Antiochan. All monumental contexts date to the reign of Antiochos”¹⁸. But it must be acknowledged that the reasons for such statements rest on a slightly unbalanced basis. Just as the opinion which favours Mithradates I as initiator of the religious re-modelling of the kingdom has correctly been accused for taking the information in the Antiochan inscriptions as historical fact¹⁹, the latter perspective primarily focusses on the monumental architectural remains which admittedly date to Antiochos I's reign devoting the information given in the inscriptions to the service of Antiochos I's ambitious goals. In this vein, Antiochos' hints at earlier building activities carried out by his predecessors are interpreted as an ‘invention of tradition’ to support the ruler's claim to be of extraordinary descent.²⁰

16 Waldmann 1973; Waldmann 1991.

17 Regarding the inscriptions, the authorship of Antiochos I is undoubted since it is stated therein. For the *dexiosis*-stelae the one from Sofraz Köy, which was found 1974 (cf. Wagner – Petzl 1976, 204–205) after Waldmann's first treatise of the subject, proves that all depictions of the king on these stelae show Antiochos I since the ruler is depicted wearing the Armenian tiara for which the inscription on the Sofraz Köy-stele emphasises that it was Antiochos I who first adopted it (Wagner – Petzl 1976, 206–207). However, although Waldmann later accepts this suggestion, he insists on the identification of two ruler-depictions on stelae at Arsameia on the Nymphaios (*Aq* and *As*) with Mithradates I since their headdress is no longer discernible and directly relates them to a pre-Antiochan phase at the site (Waldmann 1991, 59).

18 Versluys 2017, 104.

19 Cf. Versluys 2017, 176.

20 Cf. Versluys 2017, 172–178.

Key-evidence in both argumentations is the *hierothesion* at Arsameia on the Nymphaios. In the great cult inscription found at the place, Antiochos I mentions the foundation and fortification of both plateaus in Arsameia by Arsames, the Armenian satrap in the 3rd c. BCE and paternal ancestor of the Commagenian dynasty, and also the preparation of the place to hold his burial by Mithradates I, which he claims to have renewed and embellished.²¹ Such embellishment of previously occupied places is not surprising given the kingdom's and region's history and is also indicated elsewhere in Commagene²² but until now only little archaeological material can be attributed to Hellenistic, pre-Antiochan times. In Arsameia, pottery finds in lower strata attest that the spot of the later *hierothesion* was obviously reoccupied in the 3rd c. BCE²³ fitting to the overall picture painted in Antiochos I's inscription and at least partly vindicating its value as historical source. But apart from the few pottery finds, which comprise bowls, cups and cooking pots²⁴, nothing has been observed that contributes to the understanding of the appearance and function of the place prior to the erection of the sanctuary's architecture. Only one torus-base found in a lower stratum next to the staircase is tentatively attributed to the early-Hellenistic phase²⁵ which allows no reconstruction whatsoever. This evidence leaves us with a severe gap in the archaeological record from the early-Hellenistic period in the 3rd c. BCE until the *hierothesion's* main phase which the excavators attribute to the mid-1st c. BCE, i. e. the reign of Antiochos I.²⁶ This would mean that the building activities by Mithradates I which are mentioned in the inscription are indeed invented by Antiochos I and their existence the wishful

21 Cf. Dörner – Goell 1963, 40–42 l. 13–58.

22 Older building activities can be assumed in Arsameia on the Euphrates, where the *hierothesion* of Antiochos I's grandfather Samos was located. It was integrated into the existing sanctuary of the goddess Argandene (cf. Dörner – Naumann 1939, 23; Waldmann 1973, 12; Schwertheim 1991, 29; Oenbrink 2017, 8). The integration of the dynastic cult into pre-existing sanctuaries might also have been the case in the sanctuary of Jupiter Dolichenus (indicated by the find of a stele-fragment for the Antiochan ruler-cult: Wagner 1982, 136. 161–162; Wagner 1983, 191; Schwertheim 1991, 35–36; Waldmann 1991, 67; Winter 2011, 6; Blömer 2012, 78; Oenbrink 2017, 151) and a sanctuary dedicated to Apollo and Artemis (mentioned in the stele found at Sofraz Köy, although the pre-existence of this sanctuary is not certain: cf. Wagner – Petzl 1976, 215; Schwertheim 1991, 35). Matthew Canepa interprets Arsameia on the Euphrates and also Samosata as (re-)foundations on spots with late-Hittite traditions through the Orontids of Sophene in the 3rd c. BCE which were embellished by the kings of Commagene, most notably Antiochos I (cf. Canepa in this volume; Canepa 2018, 109–112. 242–244).

23 Dörner – Goell 1963, 234–237; Dörner et al. 1965, 199–200; Hoepfner 1983, 6–7. The reoccupation can be assumed by the observed stratigraphy on top of the plateau (Dörner et al. 1965, 199–200 with fig. 4) as well as next to the *hierothesion's* staircase according to which the layer containing the early-Hellenistic pottery directly follows the stratum dating to the Middle Bronze Age (Hoepfner 1983, 6). However, it must be noted that a granite torus belonging to a base with separate plinth has been discovered which Oenbrink 2017, 36–37 dates to the Achaemenid period.

24 Dörner – Goell 1963, 236–237 do not list cooking pots which were obviously only found in the trench close to the staircase (Hoepfner 1983, 92).

25 Hoepfner 1983, 6–7; Oenbrink 2017, 37–38.

26 Dörner et al. 1965, 218–221; Hoepfner 1983, 51–52.; Hoepfner 2012, 129.

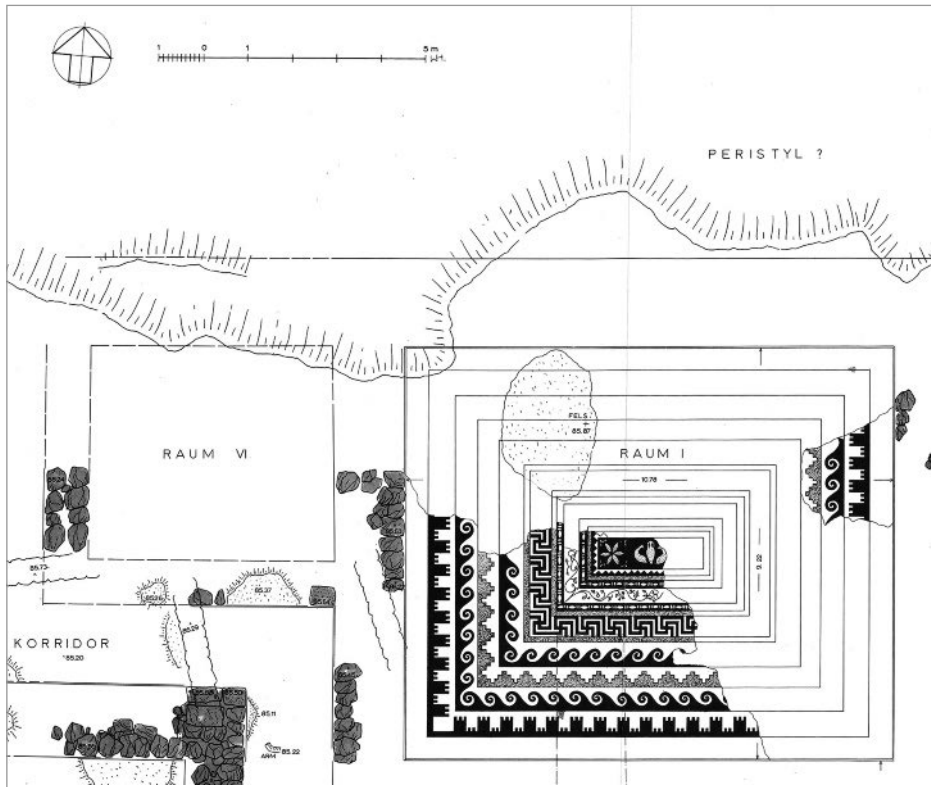


Fig. 2 Reconstructed drawing of the mosaic from room 1 in Arsameia on the Nymphaios, detail from Hoepfner 1983, plan 1, courtesy of the Forschungsstelle Asia Minor, WWU Münster

thinking of modern scholars.²⁷ However, albeit Antiochos I undoubtedly enlarged and monumentalized the cult installations at Arsameia on the Nymphaios, this rather radical interpretation of its material remains largely neglects the few indications for earlier activities at the site and ignores one of the major issues about Commagenian material culture, i. e. the absolute chronology of the (local) pottery.

Reconsidering the material evidence, already the mosaics (fig. 2), which are mainly dated to the end of the 2nd or beginning of the 1st c. BCE²⁸, indicate a pre-Antiochan building-phase of the sanctuary. In order to conciliate this with the identification of Antiochos I as sole builder of the structures, Wolfram Hoepfner explains the mosaics

27 Hoepfner in a later article mentions that the excavators – including himself – were intrigued by finding the mentioned earlier phase but in the end failed to do so (Hoepfner 2012, 129). Cf. Ver-sluis 2017, 176–177.

28 Dörner – Goell 1963, 196 (I. Lavin); Balty 1981, 355–357; Salzmann 1982, 68. 120 nos. 146–149; Balty 1995, 161; Oenbrink 2017, 120. Cf. also Haug in this volume.

as well as the wall-paintings as classicistic recourses to Pergamian art of the mid-2nd c. BCE in Commagene around the mid-1st c. BCE.²⁹ This hypothesis seems to be supported by pottery found “in the trench beneath mosaic I” of which the youngest pieces are dated to the mid-1st c. BCE.³⁰ But it must be remarked that Hoepfner’s picture is much less clear than he presents it. Against his claims that all pottery, “including those from the deepest layers, [belongs] to single period around the mid-1st c. BCE”³¹, already the quoted publication of the excavations advises caution since it also mentions pottery from the layers he refers to, dating to 2nd – and even late-2nd – c. BCE.³² Furthermore, the first excavators of Arsameia, Friedrich Karl Dörner and Theresa Goell, mention that most of the pottery they observed belongs to the so-called Hellenistic-Pergamian ware whose use in Commagene they roughly date from the late-2nd c. BCE to the 1st c. CE.³³ According to their evaluation, all pottery that can be dated to the 2nd c. BCE is imported although for most of the finds they cannot give a place or region of origin.³⁴ Generally, this is not a sole problem at Arsameia on the Nymphaios but can also be observed in other places of Commagene where especially the pottery from around the 3rd to the early 1st c. BCE is very difficult to date more precisely.³⁵ This problem seems to be due to the lacking imports which could provide a more detailed chronology since, contrary to the assumption of Dörner and Goell, most of the pottery of this periods seems to be regionally or locally produced.³⁶ In consequence, the pottery found at Arsameia does not allow for an exclusive dating of the structures to the mid-1st c. BCE and

29 Hoepfner 1983, 73.

30 Hoepfner 1983, 93 (“FO: Im Schnitt unter Mosaik I”). The pottery in question was obviously found in the southern part of the room where the mosaic was preserved best (cf. Hoepfner 1983, 12).

31 Hoepfner 2012, 129: “[Die] Keramik, darunter solche aus den tiefsten Schichten, [zeigt,] dass es nur eine einzige Periode aus der Mitte des 1. Jhs. v. Chr. gibt”.

32 Hoepfner 1983, 92–95.

33 Cf. Dörner – Goell 1963, 234–241.

34 Dörner – Goell 1963, 234, albeit this seems to be a very narrow understanding of ‘import’ since Samosata is assumed to be one of the production centres (cf. Dörner – Goell 1963, 234 note 2). However, two stamped handles of Rhodian amphorae have been discovered which date to the 2nd half of the 2nd c. BCE and the late 2nd / early 1st c. BCE, respectively (Dörner – Goell 1963, 244–245). This further strengthens the hypothesis of a pre-Antiochan phase at Arsameia in which obviously connections to the Eastern Mediterranean have been well-established.

35 Dörner – Goell 1963, 234 mention that the Hellenistic pottery from Arsameia on the Nymphaios generally features the characteristics of those from the Eastern Mediterranean in the 3rd and 2nd c. BCE (matt slip from red and brown to black and grey, soft and chalky fabric). At Tille Höyük it is stated for the Hellenistic period that the wares showing red or black slip are very important chronological markers but not touched upon in more detail, yet. It can be assumed that these are at least partly locally produced wares as reference is drawn to e.g. the pottery found at Samosata (cf. French 1984, 247) and some wares are referred to as “Tille material” (Blaylock et al. 1990, 117) but especially the red-slipped and burnished pottery also occurs in Antioch on the Orontes (cf. French et al. 1982, 173; Blaylock et al. 1990, 117). Glazed or rather slipped pottery is also identified as the most important marker of the early-Hellenistic period at Samosata (Özgülç 2009, 47).

36 This is actually already assumed by Dörner and Goell who think of Samosata as one of the main production centres of the time and region (cf. Dörner – Goell 1963, 234 note 2).

therefore for an indisputable allocation of the *hierotheriesion* to Antiochos I. Alternatively, it is well possible that at least some of the pieces date to the time of Mithradates I. Together with the mosaics, whose very close similarity to comparable objects dating to the late-2nd / early 1st c. BCE sustainably doubts the recourse on Pergamenian art as postulated by Hoepfner, this suggestion indicates settlement and building activities at Arsameia on the Nymphaios in the time of Mithradates I as the Antiochan inscription informs us. The mosaics might actually be the best preserved remains of the Mithradatic buildings which Antiochos chose to include in his extensive re-building of the site. Such a phase is further attested by Werner Oenbrink's thorough reassessment of the architectural fragments of which some were executed in the late 2nd and especially early 1st c. BCE.³⁷ Also new archaeological and epigraphic evidence from a sanctuary dedicated to the Commagenian ruler-cult at the west bank of the river Güzelçay close to where it once met the Euphrates³⁸, about 20 km northeast of Samosata, supports the idea of Mithradatic precursors³⁹ and it even implies that the Antiochan programme at least in terms of the underlying religious ideas might at least partly have rested on prepared foundations.⁴⁰ These observations are, of course, not meant to diminish the building activities and the related dynastic programme carried out by Antiochos I, of which most of the architectural remains, the inscriptions and imagery bear eloquent witness. It should rather caution against too radical interpretations of the material culture on the basis of the Antiochan programme alone and highlight the opportunity of new approaches to the data which are less prejudiced.

In this context, the data provided by the salvage excavations carried out in Samosata, the ancient capital of the Commagenian kingdom, which were conducted by Turkish archaeologists from Ankara University under the guidance of Nimet Özgüç from 1978 to 1989 prior to the completion of the Atatürk dam⁴¹ is of utmost importance to better understand the development of the kingdom of Commagene.

37 Oenbrink 2017, esp. 120–121. Cf. also the contribution by Oenbrink in this volume.

38 The site is located in an area which became affected by the construction of the Atatürk dam. Nowadays it is located on an outcrop which at high water-level forms a small island within the reservoir (cf. Crowther – Facella 2014, 255; Oenbrink 2017, 124).

39 This is indicated by the inscriptions which at least partly seem to pre-date Antiochos I. The inscriptions are currently prepared for publication by Charles Crowther and Margherita Facella. The preserved architectural elements strongly resemble those at Arsameia on the Nymphaios (Oenbrink 2017, 124–141; Oenbrink in this volume) indicating that Antiochos I also embellished the sanctuary at the Güzelçay.

40 The inscription pre-dating Antiochos I could belong to an ancestral gallery comparable to those known from the Antiochan programme as Charles Crowther indicated in his presentation of the find.

41 Beside reports on the progressive works (Izmirligil 1982 [on the Roman aqueduct supplying Samosata with water]; Özgüç 1985; Özgüç 1986), the main results touching upon all periods from the Neolithic to mediaeval times are published in Özgüç 2009.

The Pre-palatial Situation at Samosata



Fig. 3 Aerial view of Samosata exposing the course of the city walls and the prominent höyük, © L. Kruijer

Before its flooding, Samosata was located on the west bank of the Euphrates surrounded by the river's alluvial plain over which the 50 m high höyük towered (fig. 3). At least in Roman times the city was enclosed by an approximately 5 km long city wall which was partly carried out in *opus reticulatum*.⁴² The salvage excavations concentrated on the höyük which revealed to be a settlement mound consisting of thirty layers dating from Chalcolithic to Selçuk times.⁴³ However, the picture that emerged from the observations made elsewhere in Commagene, especially in Arsameia on the Nymphaios, is confirmed by the publications on the situation in Samosata. Before the erection of the royal palatial complex in the beginning of the 1st c. BCE⁴⁴ the mentioned remains

42 The city wall is either dated to the Roman period (Tirpan 1989, 522–523; Zoroğlu 2012, 137) or said to have been erected in the Late-Hellenistic period in the times of the Commagenian kingdom (Wagner 2003/2004, 135–136; Hoepfner 2012, 117).

43 The 30 layers are consecutively presented by Özgüç 2009. It must be noted that most scholars follow Zoroğlu 2012, 137 who mentions only 15 layers (cf. Wagner 2003/2004, 135; Brijder 2014, 424) without giving further explanations for this numbering.

44 On this structure and its dating see below.

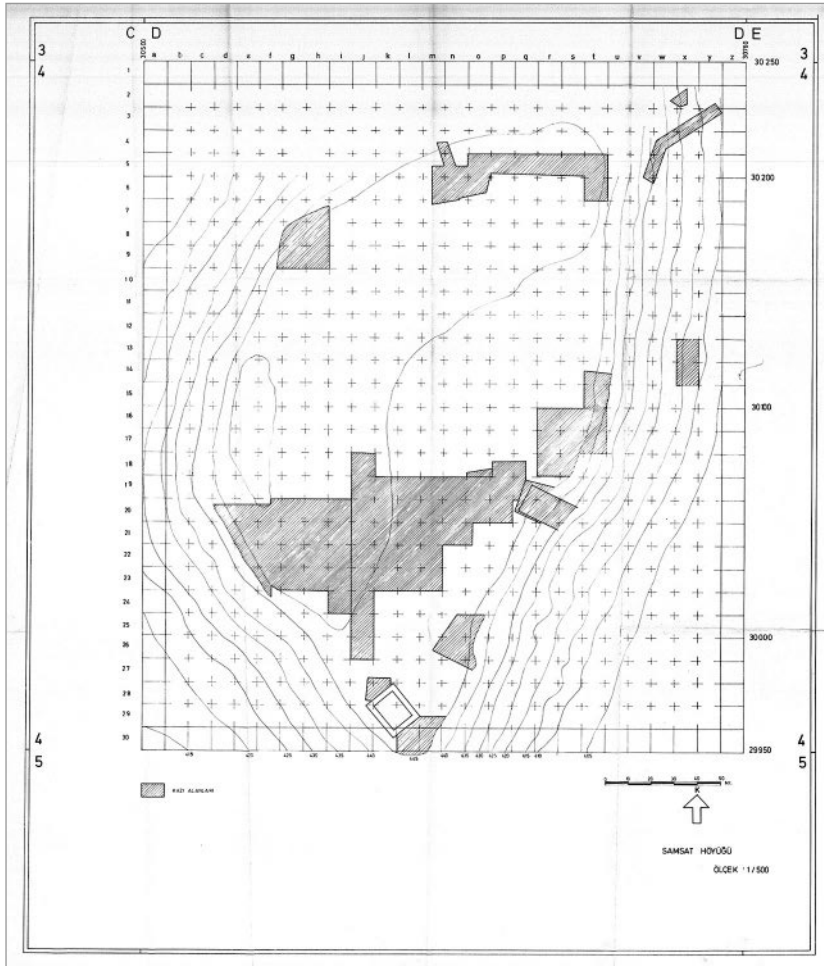


Fig. 4 Excavation grid of the höyük, 'Özgüç Archive', courtesy of the Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi, Ankara Üniversitesi

are addressed as early-Hellenistic dating to the 3rd c. BCE or even earlier.⁴⁵ But again, early-Hellenistic material is scarce. Although a similar composition of pottery, which mainly seems to have been locally produced, has been observed in several trenches and layers dating to the pre-palatial period of Samosata⁴⁶, only three spots on top of the

45 Özgüç 1996; Özgüç 2009, 46–48; Canepa 2018, 109–110. However, Mellink 1984, 448 assumes that the structure with the torus-bases (on this see below) date to the late Persian, i. e. Achaemenid, period. This dating seems to have been equated with the reign of Samos I by the excavators (cf. Özgüç 1996, 213, 216).

46 Özgüç 1996, 216.

höyük provide us with little further evidence about its material culture in this period up to the erection of the palatial complex.⁴⁷ These are sectors u/9–10 in the Northeast of the höyük, sector k/16 just below the later palatial complex and sectors d–g/15–17 in the Southwest (fig. 4). Remains of built structures were observed in the last two spots, albeit the published reports and subsequent discussions are only concerned with the remains in the Southwest which consist of a courtyard and two partially preserved rooms as part of a larger structure (fig. 5).⁴⁸ The excavated remains have initially been interpreted as a large building with an adjoining altar erected by Samos I in the first half of the 3rd c. BCE.⁴⁹ The excavated parts of the building – a courtyard and two partly preserved adjoining rooms – and the so-called altar are constructed in the same manner consisting of “neatly finished limestone orthostats”⁵⁰ and reused limestone blocks which partly bore late-Hittite hieroglyphic signs.⁵¹ The most distinct architectural features of the building are two torus-bases set on plinths in front of the northeast wall. These have either been attributed to the Achaemenid period⁵² or to the reign of the Orontids of Sophene.⁵³ Although the latter hypothesis seems to be more sound⁵⁴, it is not backed up by other material since especially the pottery, mainly related to the so-called altar, confronts us with one of the main problems concerning this period’s chronology of the site: it is mainly made of yellowish buff clay, bears different types of

47 In the following it will be referred to the grid-squares from the excavators’ system to indicate single locations (cf. Özgüç 2009, 131 plan 3; here fig. 4). This grid-system consists of grid-squares measuring 10 by 10 meters. The numbering is compiled by a north-south axis with numbers 1 to 30 counting up southwards; and a west-east axis with letters (a-z). Within this grid-system, Özgüç designated the 6th archaeological layer to the early-Hellenistic period, the 5th archaeological layer to the Commagenian or Late-Hellenistic period (Özgüç 2009, 38–48) and the 4th archaeological layer to the Roman period (Özgüç 2009, 31–36). However, in some grid-squares Özgüç clearly deviated from this system; in squares u/9–10 for example, the Hellenistic finds are part of layers 7 and 6 (this is to be seen in the excavation’s documentation stored at Ankara University). It must be emphasized that the layers distinguished by Özgüç are very general, as they combine layers across a 10 × 10 m grid-square, making it unavoidable that a lot of fine-grained stratigraphic differentiation was lost. We must conclude that we are dealing with very general periodic differentiation rather than genuine stratigraphic units.

48 Özgüç 1996; Özgüç 2009, 46–47; Canepa 2018, 109–110; cf. also the contribution by Canepa in this volume.

49 Özgüç 1996, 216.

50 Özgüç 1996, 213.

51 Özgüç 1996, 213–215; Özgüç 2009, 46.

52 Mellink 1984, 448; Messerschmidt 2014, 330.

53 Özgüç 1996, 216; Canepa 2018, 109–110 and Canepa in this volume.

54 Canepa convincingly argues that the Orontids of Sophene used an architectural language based on Achaemenid traditions to communicate their Persian roots and legacy (cf. Canepa 2018, 109–112 and Canepa in this volume). The dating of another torus-base found at Arsameia on the Nymphaios to the 1st half of the 3rd c. BCE (Oenbrink 2017, 37–38. Against this dating and suggesting a production in Achaemenid times Messerschmidt 2014, 330 n. 37) also points to this direction. But it must be noted that the torus-bases from Samosata and Arsameia on the Nymphaios significantly differ in the height of the torus and its proportion to the plinth making it difficult to directly relate them chronologically.

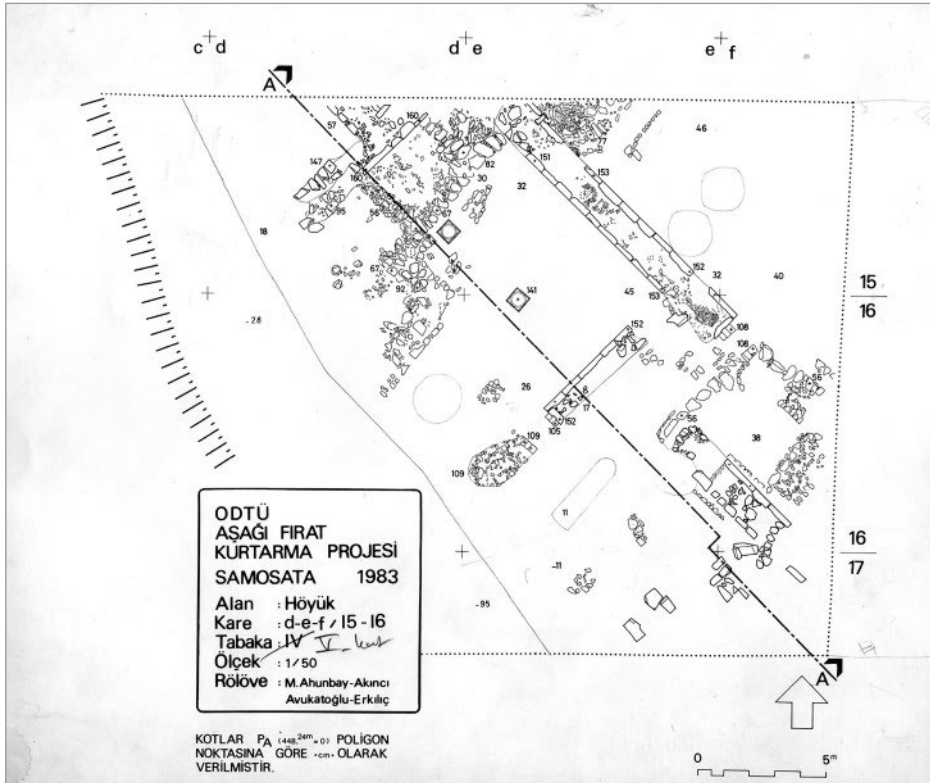


Fig. 5 Plan of the excavated structure in sectors d–g/15–17, ‘Özgüç Archive’, courtesy of the Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi, Ankara Üniversitesi

decoration in red paint and seems to be locally produced.⁵⁵ The missing of associated non-local finds as chronological markers and the appearance of the same kind of pottery in earlier layers⁵⁶ further blurs the picture. With certainty it can only be said that the material dates to the pre-palatial period and the pottery seems to indicate a stronger closeness to more regional traditions. The same holds true for the scarce architectural evidence whose most distinct marker – the torus-base – seems to cling to regional developments from Achaemenid models mediated through the Orontids of Sophene.⁵⁷

55 Cf. Özgüç 1996, 215–216; Özgüç 2009, 47. Similar pottery has also been observed in Tille Höyük where it was found in the Hellenistic layer not indicating whether the excavators suppose it to be early- or late-Hellenistic (cf. French et al. 1982, 173). Buff fabrics also make up a good amount of the Iron Age pottery from Tille Höyük which likewise is presumed to have been locally produced (Blaylock 2016, 5).

56 This can best be observed in the unpublished material from the excavation stored in the depot of the Museum Adıyaman.

57 Cf. Canepa 2018, 110.

However, little evidence from sector u/9–10 in the north-eastern part of the höyük also attests supra-regional connections to the West. But these only become apparent in very few sherds of Attic black-glazed pottery which can be dated to the transition from the 4th to the 3rd c. BCE⁵⁸ and apart from this, it is very difficult to draw further conclusions from the evidence since sector u/9–10 is located at the höyük's slope exposing the often attested mixture of eroded material and no built structures dating to the period in question. Nevertheless, the pottery indicates some sort of material link to the Mediterranean in the early-Hellenistic period which in comparably small quantities is also attested in other sites of Commagene like Tille Höyük and Arsameia on the Nymphaios.⁵⁹ At Arsameia the material attests an increase in pottery pertaining to Eastern Mediterranean Hellenistic pottery such as the so-called Pergamenian ware from the end of the 2nd c. BCE onwards.⁶⁰ These wares might well be locally produced⁶¹ but based on their design and fabric which adheres to Mediterranean traditions strong connections must have existed between Commagene and the West throughout the Hellenistic period as it is further indicated by the discovery of two fragments of stamped handles from Rhodian amphorae dating to the 2nd half of the 2nd c. BCE up to the early 1st c. BCE.⁶² Thus, the pottery indicates that a severe change in the make-up of the Commagenian material culture took place from the late 2nd and early 1st c. BCE onwards. This

58 The best chronological marker are two fragments probably of the same bowl or plate with an interior design of stamped palmettes within rouletting which are stored in the depot of the Museum Adıyaman (without inventory number). Close parallels have been found e.g. on the Athenian agora and date to the last quarter of the 4th and beginning 3rd c. BCE (cf. Rotroff 1997, 309–310 nos. 635–653, 330–331 nos. 874, 877).

59 For Tille Höyük French et al. 1982, 173 mention very few black glazed sherds from the early-Hellenistic period including one piece probably of Athenian West Slope. French 1984, 247 only states the finding of black-glazed pottery. However, French 1985, 213 refers to many such sherds found at the site but as he does not drop any hint about their place of origin, they seem to be locally or regionally produced. This is further strengthened by Blaylock et al. 1990, 117 who link the pottery found at Tille Höyük to the findings at Antioch on the Orontes adding (local) wares “from the Tille material”. Cf. also Blaylock 2016, 66 who – regarding the pottery – mentions an only gradually turn towards the West from the later 4th c. BCE. However, this turn might also have started earlier since few black-gloss sherds are assumed to have been imported from the West or at least to imitate western models and date to the late 5th c. BCE (Blaylock 2019, 63) – but their number (Blaylock 2016, 201–203 lists only 26 pieces for the whole Iron Age period with a “late emphasis” [Blaylock 2016, 62]) is not considerable. At Arsameia on the Nymphaios Dörner – Goell 1963, 236 nos. 1–2 list just two and Hoepfner 1983, 6, 92 no. 6 one black-glazed sherd but the few other mentioned pieces from the 3rd and 2nd c. BCE according to the excavators share the main characteristics with pottery manufactured throughout the Eastern Mediterranean in this period (Dörner – Goell 1963, 234–237 nos. 3–8).

60 Cf. Dörner – Goell 1963, 235–241 nos. 9–32.

61 This is already assumed by Dörner – Goell 1963, 234 with note 2. Zoroğlu 1986, 95 also suggests a vivid production centre of Eastern Sigillata at Samosata in the early 1st c. BCE which one would be inclined to see as having emerged from severe local experience in the production of Mediterranean wares.

62 Dörner – Goell 1963, 244–245.

can be seen in the increasing use of sigillata wares which is witnessed by the findings in Arsameia on the Nymphaios, in Samosata and seemingly also at Tille Höyük⁶³. As these finds in Arsameia are immediately related to the embellishment of the *hierotherasion*⁶⁴, they respectively are to the erection of the palatial complex at Samosata.

The material from the time immediately preceding the erection of the palatial complex can be seen in the evidence from sector k/16. This is the only excavated spot which contained the remains of walls belonging to a structure that was probably destroyed in order to build the palatial complex.⁶⁵ Although visible in the plans of the palatial complex, this small structure later covered by the courtyard's large mosaic remains unmentioned throughout the publications. It is the remains of slightly curving stairs

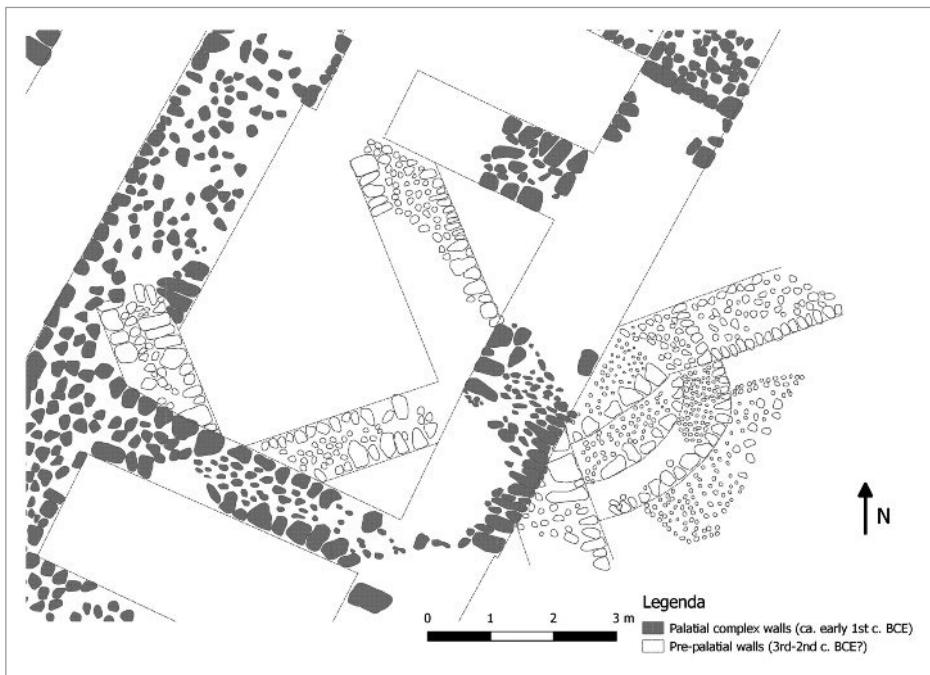


Fig. 6 Plan of the structures in sector k/16 beneath the palatial complex, © L. Kruijer

63 Although the final publication of the Hellenistic period at Tille Höyük is still eagerly awaited, the preliminary reports at least mention “many pieces of fine, red pottery, especially of the mould made relief ware common in the late Hellenistic period” (French 1982, 417) indicating a very similar situation, whereas the composition of the evidence seems to be rather complicated in the Hellenistic period (cf. French 1984, 247; Blaylock et al. 1990, 117) like in other places of Commagene.

64 Cf. Hoepfner 1983, 51.

65 The spot of the early-Hellenistic building in sectors D–G 15–17 was not immediately affected by the palatial complex to its east and it cannot be stated with certainty that it was in use up to the erection of the latter.

made of several small stones and adjoining walls with a different alignment than the later palatial complex (fig. 6). From this scanty remains, naturally no far-reaching conclusions can be drawn, albeit the masonry – as far as it can be gleaned from the plans which are the only record at our disposal – obviously differs from the one of the early-Hellenistic building in sectors d–g/15–17 in not (re-)using larger slabs. This might indicate a later date of construction at some point between the early-Hellenistic building and the palatial complex. Nevertheless, the few pottery finds related to this structure are comparable to the ones observed further west in sectors d–g/15–17 in terms of being locally produced vessels of similar clay-composition – although not as neatly decorated. Reasoning from this observation it seems that the pottery did not change remarkably from the late Iron Age / early-Hellenistic period to the late 2nd / early 1st c. BCE mainly pertaining to local and regional developments and traditions. In Samosata, this sustainably changed with the erection of the palatial complex but comparable developments can be observed throughout the region altering Commagene's objectscaapes from around the transition from the 2nd to the 1st c. BCE towards a more globalized repertoire.⁶⁶

The Palatial Complex as a 'Globalising Shift' in the Objectscape of Samosata

In layer 5 of grid-squares i–m/14–20, Nimet Özgüç's team unearthed the remains of an impressive structure with a SW-NE orientation, measuring ca. 1700 m², and covering a large part of the southern half of the höyük (fig. 7).⁶⁷ It is very likely that this monumental and lavishly decorated building served as the palatial complex of the late-Hellenistic Commagenian dynasty.⁶⁸ In the remainder of this article, we will argue that

66 The mentioned cult-place at the Güzelçay and the re-consideration of the mosaics and some architectural elements from Arsameia on the Nymphaios indicate that this development might have started already before Antiochos I launched his ambitious and monumental programme.

67 For the initial excavations reports, see Özgüç 1985, 221–227; Özgüç 1986, 297–304. The first results were published in Zoroğlu 2000, later re-published almost without revisions in Zoroğlu 2012. A brief discussion of the wall painting and mosaics was published in Bingöl 1997, 111–118. Özgüç 2009, 38–48 provides the first more in-depth archaeological discussion of the structure. Bingöl 2013 is an important publication that attempts to analyse the structure in context of the wider Mediterranean, with a strong focus on the mosaics and wall painting.

68 As already suggested by Özgüç 1985, 221–227; Sinclair 1990, 146–147; Facella 2006, 220; Kopsacheili 2011, 26; Zoroğlu 2012, 145; Bingöl 2013; Kropp 2013, 107; Brijder 2014, 424–428. Recently, Versluys 2017, 84–85 however called for prudence: “there is as yet no decisive evidence to prove that this large, richly decorated mansion, reminiscent of complexes like the Casa del Fauno in Pompeii or the Palazzo delle Colonne in Ptolemais, really was ‘the palatial complex of Mithridates’ (or Antiochos I himself)”. In a footnote, Versluys furthermore remarks: “these authors [Özgüç, Zoroğlu, Kropp, Brijder] do not question the interpretation of the remains as a royal palatial complex” (Versluys 2017, 85 n. 88). It is indeed important to critically question the structure's attribution

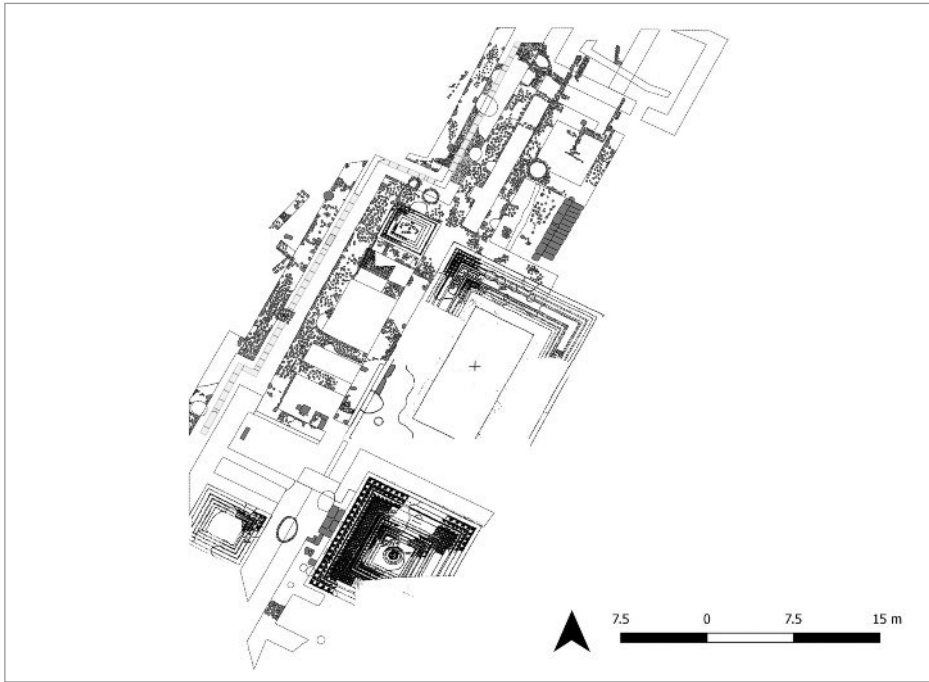


Fig. 7 Plan of the palatial complex, © L. Kruijer, based on Özgüç 2009, plan 12

the objectscape of this late-Hellenistic palatial complex entails a distinct shift towards a more *global* objectscape, something which seems to run parallel to developments discussed above for Arsameia on the Nymphaios. However, as the structure under discussion has received limited scholarly attention since its discovery in the 1980s, it is imperative to first shortly present its architectural layout and discuss its dating.⁶⁹

to (specific) Commagenian kings, and, more in general, to acknowledge its strong parallels also with non-royal contexts throughout Eurasia. We argue that a plethora of iconographic and stylistic parallels to the decoration of the *hierothesion* of Arsameia on the Nymphaios (neglected by Versluys but discussed here) nevertheless suggest a link to the Commagenian dynasty. A direct link to the Commagenian dynasty is provided by the inscription on the limestone statue of a Hellenistic king found in room V of the palatial structure, saying “Antiocho[s]” right underneath the statue’s left eye (cf. Riedel 2018). Str. 16,2,3 furthermore refers to Samosata as the location of ‘the seat of the kings’ of Commagene (*tò basileion*): “ἔχει δ’ ἐρυμνήν πόλιν Σαμόσατα ἐν ἡ τὸ βασιλεῖον ὑπῆρχε, νῦν δ’ ἐπαρχία γέγονε”. Like many other Hellenistic palaces (e. g. Masada, Herodium, Pella, Vergina, Pergamon, cf. Hoepfner – Brands 1996; Riedel 2020, 131–140), the structure in Samosata is located on top of the capital’s höyük covering large parts of it. Its large size (at least 1700 m²) and lavish decoration implies a considerable investment, fitting to a royal commissioner.

69 Due to limited space, we can only give a very concise presentation of the legacy data here. A complete presentation of the data is the focus of a PhD-dissertation by Lennart Kruijer (expected late 2021). The legacy data comprises the finds, nowadays kept in the Museum Adiyaman and the excavation’s documentation (hereafter referred to as the ‘Özgüç Archive’) kept at Ankara University.

After this, we will shortly dwell on the problematic interpretative treatment the palatial structure has fallen subject to in previous scholarship, specifically focusing on the tendency to reduce its separate elements to cultural labels such as ‘Greek’ and ‘Persian’ (so-called cultural reductions). The last section presents the individual global genealogies of a handful of objects from the palatial complex, which provide the basis for an alternative understanding of the rapid cultural transformations occurring in Samosata and Commagene during the late-Hellenistic period.

a) Description

The excavated area of the palatial complex was remarkably well preserved, with multiple floor mosaics throughout the structure and irregular stone walls that, in some places, were preserved up to two metres in height, many of them containing colourful painted wall decoration. The northern, eastern and southern limits of the structure were not excavated due to the super-imposition of later Roman, Byzantine and Islamic structures. For this reason, it is generally assumed that the structure was much larger than its excavated parts, perhaps even more than double its known size.⁷⁰ No external entrances to the building were found, nor convincing evidence for a second storey.⁷¹

The overall lay-out of the structure is characterized by narrow corridors and small rooms, most of them not exceeding 30 m².⁷² We can roughly divide the palatial lay-out

We are delighted to express our gratitude for making the material available to us to Mehmet Alkan (Museum Adiyaman), Aliye Öztan and Tayfun Yıldırım (both Ankara University).

- 70 Reconstructions in Bingöl 2013 (91 fig.140) and others are based on the assumption that the structure would originally have had a more or less symmetrical layout, similar to palatial complexes in Pella, Masada and Petra. The occurrence of an *in situ* mosaic floor and wall decoration in grid-square s/11 suggests that the palatial complex (perhaps even consisting of different buildings) covered a much larger area of the höyük than the excavated section (Özgüç 1986, 222; Özgüç 2009, 41). Kropp 2013, 107–108 estimates that the original structure covered about 4000 m², more than double the size of the excavated area. Kopsacheili 2013, 228 mentions an estimated size of 3400 m².
- 71 Kropp 2013, 107 suggests that the building contained two storeys while Kopsacheili 2013, 231 is more cautious and states that the existence of an upper storey cannot be confirmed. Zoroğlu 2000, 81, Bingöl 1997, 111 and Özgüç 2009, 41–42 all suggest that rooms II and IV would have been likely locations for staircases. The excavation’s documentation does not offer archaeological evidence to support this claim. The size of the mentioned rooms is small but this could in fact point to their use as corridors.
- 72 The room numbers used in this article propose a new room numbering system and thus do not follow those of Özgüç 2009, Bingöl 2013 or Zoroğlu 2012, as these do not correlate with each other either and are not always used in a consequent manner, something which creates confusion also with later publications who worked with both publications (cf. Kropp 2013, Kopsacheili 2013). The numbering starts with a string of rooms running west of the central corridor (I–IX, from north to south); it continues in the north, with two rooms north of the corridor (X–XI from west to east); and ends with another string of rooms that runs east of the central corridor (XII–XV, from north to south).

in three different areas: a western area⁷³, a northern area⁷⁴, and a southern area.⁷⁵ These three areas are located around a large space, 'room' XIV (20 × 14 m), which is usually interpreted as an open court containing a tessellated mosaic in concentric border style.⁷⁶ The three areas are solely connected by a central narrow corridor (ca. 1,50 m wide) that runs in a SW-NE orientation through the entire length of the excavated area. Along the outer north-western edge of the structure runs another, wider corridor (2,00–2,30 m wide) that is not connected to the inner lay-out of the structure and through which runs a water channel or drainage (ca. 0,50 m wide), a space potentially used as a service area.⁷⁷

A contested issue is the plan of the western area, where rooms I–V have exactly the same width (4,50 m) and together form a lay-out that appears symmetrical. This feature has led several scholars to believe that this area indeed functioned as a separate wing with inter-connected rooms. However, a lack of consensus concerning the locations of entrances makes this reconstruction problematic.⁷⁸ Based on the published

- 73 The western area consists of a row of rooms running parallel to the central corridor. From northeast to southwest: room I (3,50 × 4,50 m), *i. a.* containing a fish mosaic (see the contribution by Haug in this volume); room II (2,00 × 4,50 m), with a pebble mosaic in checkerboard design; room III (6,80 × 4,50 m); room IV (1,90 × 4,50 m); room V (3,60 × 4,50 m), the latter contains a statue base consisting of several limestone blocks (Zoroğlu 2012, 140) as well as an altar-like structure connected to a small basin for blood sacrifice (mentioned by Özgüç 1985, 225 and Zoroğlu 2012, 140). For a recent discussion of this context and two limestone portraits, see Riedel 2018.
- 74 The northern area consists of rooms X–XIII: room X (width 5,20 m, length unknown) and room XI (4,20 m, length unknown) are located north of the main corridor. South of the central corridor room XII (4,70 × 4,30 m) and room XIII (3,90 × 6,40 m) are located.
- 75 The southern area consists of rooms VI–IX (running parallel and west from the central corridor) and XV (east of the corridor): room VI (6,00 × 3,50 m) contains an elongated stone (ca. 1,10 × 0,35 m) placed centrally in front of the back wall and described as an 'altar' by the excavators ('Özgüç Archive', sketch from 28-05-1984, no pictures available. See also Özgüç 2009, 139 plan 12, j/17); room VII (ca. 1,50 × 6,00 m, probably a corridor); room VIII (6,00 × 5,50 m) with a mosaic in concentric border style; room IX has a width of 6,00 m but was only partially excavated; room XV (11,20 × 11,10 m), containing a concentric border mosaic with a figurative depiction of a mask in its roundel (see section f in the last paragraph of this article).
- 76 Kropp 2013, 108. A roofed construction cannot be precluded entirely even though the large size of the room makes it unlikely. The lack of a peristyle in combination with the presence of a tessellated mosaic is an uncommon feature for open courts. A possible parallel for a roofed construction might be found in room II of the palatial structure in Arsameia on the Nymphaios, where a central pilaster carried a roof (cf. Dörner – Goell 1963; Hoepfner 1983).
- 77 In several reconstructions, this double wall is expected to run along the entire extent of the palatial complex (cf. Kopsacheili 2013, 229). In the North, a pavement decorated with a plain white pebble mosaic is preserved on either side of the channel.
- 78 Özgüç's original field drawings remain inconclusive about the entrances from the central space XIV to the rooms in the west, although the dashed lines and indicated stones seem to preclude doorways from room XIV to rooms I, II, III, IV and V. Zoroğlu 2000 presents a new interpretation, in which room II offers the only entrance to the five-room wing, a conclusion followed by Kopsacheili 2013. Alternatively, Bingöl 2013 suggests that only room III grants access to the five-room wing, something both presented in Bingöl's map as well as his 3D-reconstruction. A separate wing as suggested by these authors would for instance resemble Heermann's 'Flügel dreiraumgruppe' in

data this issue is not easily solvable and also the newly emerged legacy data unfortunately do not really allow us to make more informed suggestions.⁷⁹ Interpretations concerning the internal functional differentiation of especially this part of the palatial complex should therefore be treated critically.⁸⁰ This in fact is true also for more general interpretations concerning the accessibility and function of spaces in the palatial complex; the incomplete architectural lay-out should make us cautious in this regard.⁸¹

b) Chronology

Özgüç assigned the palatial structure to her 'stratigraphic layer 5', which she dated to the late-Hellenistic period. The palatial complex itself was dated specifically to the reign of king Mithradates I Kallinikos (100–69 BCE), something which is mostly followed by other scholars.⁸² This dating was based on a coin depicting Mithradates (found on the mosaic floor in the southern part of 'room' XIV) as well as the style of the acanthus leaves in a fragment of a Corinthian capital and the style of palatial complex's tessellated mosaics.⁸³ Özgüç furthermore suggested that the palatial complex passed into possession of king Antiochos I, who expanded it and commissioned its decoration.⁸⁴

It remains mere speculation whether the palatial complex was indeed originally commissioned by king Mithradates I Kallinikos and the archaeological evidence for a

the palatial complex of Vergina (Heermann 1980) or Wulf-Rheidt's 'Dreiraumgruppen' in palatial complexes IV and V of Pergamon (Wulf-Rheidt 1999, 174–186).

79 It is clear that the NE-SW running wall, dividing the string of rooms from room XIV was very poorly preserved; it is mostly completely gone and where it was observed it was very shallow, making it possible that we merely see the remainders of a foundation. Yet it is likely that rooms I and V are indeed closed off; here the wall tracts are well visible.

80 Kropp suggested that the strip of rooms functioned as a private wing (Kropp 2013, 108). The small size of the rooms and its secluded but lavishly decorated character would perhaps support this suggestion, but since we do not even know whether this area indeed functioned as a 'wing' we remain reluctant to accept this interpretation. Kopsacheili 2013, 230 suggests that rooms I–V were used for bathing practices, comparing the structure's general lay-out to a suite of rooms with a bath function in the palatial complex of Ai Khanoum ('section g', rooms 63, 69–70 and 72–73). She argues that the maritime theme of the fish-mosaic in room I would furthermore support this interpretation. In this case, too, our assessment of the evidence does not allow for such interpretations, especially since bathing installations are completely lacking and maritime iconography in mosaics is not at all restricted to bathing contexts (cf. Haug in this volume).

81 Kopsacheili for instance suggests that 'room' XIV was not a 'movement space' but instead a 'gathering space' and that it would therefore have functioned as the main reception hall of the palatial complex (Kopsacheili, 2013, 229–230). The degree of accessibility is hard to corroborate because we lack the entire eastern area of the palatial complex, making the relative isolation of 'room' XIV an unsolvable issue.

82 Cf. Özgüç 1985, 225; Zoroğlu 2000, 83.

83 Özgüç 1985, 225; Zoroğlu 2012, 144; Bingöl 2013, 111–112. See section a in the last paragraph of this article.

84 Özgüç 2009; Kopsacheili 2013, 232.

distinct second, Antiochan phase of expansion and/or decoration is non-existent and should be discarded.⁸⁵ As stated before, we cannot draw many conclusions from the very broad periodic layering presented by Özgüç and a closer look at the respective ceramic assemblages does not help us to infer a more fine-grained chronology either, specifically because of their very mixed character.⁸⁶ As already mentioned in the first section of this article, the strong stylistic parallels between the palatial structure of Samosata and the ‘mosaic rooms’ of Arsameia on the Nymphaios suggest a similar date for both structures in the late 2nd – early 1st c. BCE.⁸⁷ The high amount of Eastern Sigillata A on top of the palatial complex’s floor (layer 4) suggests that the abandonment and/or destruction of the structure must be dated to the late-Hellenistic to early-Roman period as well. Some of its finds, specifically the limestone head of Antiochos I and the limestone head of a bearded male deity (perhaps Zeus), seem to date to the late 1st c. BCE – early 1st c. CE and could suggest that the palatial complex was at least in use until this period.⁸⁸ The palatial complex must have been abandoned and destroyed at the time of the construction of the structure in *opus reticulatum* that cuts through and superimposes the northern sector of the palatial complex (rooms X and XI).⁸⁹ Contrary to what is generally assumed, we doubt that this structure was only constructed in or after 72 CE, when Commagene was finally annexed by the Roman Empire.⁹⁰ Alternatively, it might be cautiously considered that the use of this wall fac-

85 Zoroğlu 2012 suggested that the palatial complex consisted of two phases, one in the northern part, a peristyle-house commissioned by Mithradates I Kallinkos, while the rest of the palatial complex and its complete refurbishment would have been commissioned by Antiochos I. See Zoroğlu 2012, 144. Followed by Kropp 2013, 109 and Kopsacheili 2011, 26. Zoroğlu argued from his observation that the northern area would have been located on a lower altitude than the southern part, which does not appear from the maps (room XV in the south is located on relative height -10,63 m, room I on -10,38 m and the northern corridor on -9.81 m. which in fact suggests that the northern part of the palatial complex had a somewhat higher altitude than the southern part) and, moreover, in itself does not necessarily suggest an older date.

86 In very broad terms, it can be stated that layer 5 is characterized by the presence of Eastern Sigillata A (ESA), which, in North-Syrian contexts, is generally dated to the late-Hellenistic and early-Roman periods. In Jebel Khalid, ESA is dated post-150 BCE (see Jackson 2009, 250). For the ESA of Samosata, see Zoroğlu 1986.

87 See above. As already suggested (albeit with different conclusions concerning the dating of both structures) by Hoepfner 2012, 117; Brijder 2014, 427–428.

88 For the sculpture, see Özgüç 2009, 41–46 and earlier mentions in Özgüç 1985, 224–226 and Özgüç 1986, 301–302. Due to stylistic details and socio-historical reasoning, the head should rather be dated to the reign of Antiochos III (12 BCE – 17 CE) and most likely represents a posthumous portrait of Antiochos I (cf. Riedel 2018). *Contra* Fleischer 2008, who identifies the head as contemporary portrait of Antiochos III.

89 Excavation report from 1985 from the ‘Özgüç Archive’: “A room with a wall in *opus reticulatum* was built on top of the room to the left of the corridor”.

90 E. g. Özgüç 2009; Zoroğlu 2012. Facella 2005, 239 claims that these walls are the quintessential example of the activity of the Roman legions from 72 CE onwards, showcasing an investment by the empire in this area and indicative of the Romans’ “contribution to building techniques” and, more in general, representative of the “material transformations of the region” and “lasting impact

ing technique – rarely attested outside the Italian peninsula – belongs to the reign of Antiochos IV (38–72 CE).⁹¹ If this is right, the superimposition of the structure in *opus reticulatum* would suggest that by roughly the mid-1st c. CE at the latest, the palatial complex would have fallen out of use.⁹²

Cultural Reductionism

In the introduction we already mentioned the dichotomous interpretative framework that has largely determined Commagenian scholarship, in which material culture is reduced to either its supposedly ‘Greek’ or its ‘Eastern’ cultural affiliations.⁹³ In scholarly discussions of the palatial complex of Samosata, we indeed witness a reoccurrence of that same interpretative model, in which a distinction is made between the palatial complex’s ‘Eastern’ architectural layout on the one hand and its ‘Greek’ decoration on the other.⁹⁴ In some cases this *assumed* dichotomous character of the palatial complex is furthermore interpreted as an intentional ‘hybrid’ that participated in the ancestral claims of Antiochos I, signalling both his Macedonian and his Persian lineage.⁹⁵ Maria Kopsacheili, for instance, states: “Greek-style decoration coexists with Achaemenid elements of narrow corridors and groups of consecutive rooms. The fact that the rulers of Kommagene preferred to follow this pattern is possibly explained by the effort of

of direct Roman control and the effect of the military presence”. Brijder 2014, 428 already doubted whether the palatial complex was indeed in use up until 72 CE. Versluys 2017, 53 wrongly attributes the *opus reticulatum* walls to the palatial structure itself. Sinclair 1990, 146 suggests that the palatial complex was abandoned immediately after the reign of Antiochos I but offers no arguments. Hoepfner 2012, 117 also suggests that the walls belonged to the reign of Antiochos I.

91 *Opus reticulatum* is mostly found on the Italian peninsula (and specifically in Latium and Campania), where it is dated to the early 1st c. BCE until the Augustan period (27 BCE–14 CE). Its presence outside Italy is rare. Cf. Kropp 2013, 147 n.274 and Oenbrink 2009, 196–197. Note that a mid or even later 1st c. CE dating is well possible if we for instance take into account the tomb of Gaius Iulios Samsigeramos in Emesa which dates to 78/79 CE (Oenbrink 2009; Kropp 2010). No structures in *opus reticulatum* are, however, known that are connected to the Roman legions, and the strong Roman links to Antiochos IV make him a much more likely candidate for the commissioning of the wall facing.

92 This might furthermore be corroborated by the fact that Str. 16,2,3 refers to Samosata as the location of “the seat of the kings” in the past tense (“ἔχει δ’ ἐρυμνὴν πόλιν Σαμόσατα ἐν ἣ τὸ βασιλεῖον ὑπῆρχε, νῦν δ’ ἐπαρχία γέγονε”). Strabo (63 BCE–23 CE) probably wrote during the Roman ‘interregnum’ of 17–38 CE, and the year of his death would thus offer a *terminus ante quem* for the abandonment of the palatial complex. Moreover, the presence of several wall sections that seem to be later additions, most notably a wall that cuts off the central court XIV from the northern area, seems to support that the structure was in use for some time after its initial construction. A more detailed assessment of these later modifications and restorations will be presented and discussed in the forthcoming dissertation by L. Kruijer.

93 Cf. ns. 2–6.

94 Kopsacheili 2013, 24; Kropp 2013, 109. 262; Oenbrink 2017, 173–178.

95 Westgate 2002, 242; Kopsacheili 2013, 26.

Antiochus I to claim origin from Seleucus I and the daughter of Artaxerxes II, leading further back to Alexander and Darius I.”⁹⁶ Others have understood this ‘Oriental-core/Greek-façade’-model as an example of ‘*limited* or *partial* Hellenisation’, a thin, superficial veneer of ‘Greek culture’ that did not really affect a local, eastern core below it.⁹⁷

In Near Eastern scholarship, the ‘Oriental-core/Greek-façade’-model is in fact a recurring interpretative framework used to explain the objectscales of a wide variety of Near-Eastern contexts.⁹⁸ In this interpretative model, the *Kulturkreise* ‘Greek’ and ‘Eastern’ are considered stable categories that remained intact despite intensified connectivity throughout Eurasia.⁹⁹ New approaches however suggest that this dichotomous model is in fact not tenable.¹⁰⁰ The mere fact that already from the 4th c. BCE onward we observe objectscales with seemingly ‘Greek’ and ‘oriental’ elements suggests that maintaining this cultural dichotomy for an early 1st c. BCE context like Samosata is risky. A wide variety of objects, structures or localities could serve as examples to elucidate this point. In the early 4th c. BCE, for example, seemingly Persian elements are combined with seemingly Greek elements in the Nereid Monument and the Payava Tomb at Xanthos.¹⁰¹ In the 3rd c. BCE, we may observe how supposedly Persian metal ware forms developed into luxury table ware that was used in banquet practices in the eastern Delta of Ptolemaic Egypt.¹⁰² In the 2nd c. BCE, the palace of Ai Khanoum was adorned with decorative features some of which are traditionally labelled ‘Greek’, while others are labelled ‘Achaemenid’.¹⁰³

The implications of this long-term travelling and mixing of objects, object classes, styles, concepts and materials for our understanding of them in new contexts are often not considered in depth. It seems for instance likely that the genealogies of many objects became so widespread that their (presumed) initial cultural affiliation could become withdrawn; their repeated re-appropriations caused such objects to lose a direct connection with, for instance, Greece or Persia. The long-term circulation of objects implies that such objects-in-motion could become *de-territorialized*, turning into a form of global culture with its own dynamic.¹⁰⁴ From such a perspective, understand-

96 Kopsacheili 2013, 26.

97 Oenbrink 2017, 177: “Aufgrund ihrer topographischen Lage leitet die Kommagene eher zum syrisch-palästinischen und mesopotamischen Raum über und ist dementsprechend stärker ‘orientalistisch’ geprägt.”

98 Such ‘partial Hellenisation’ would for instance already have been at play in Seleucid and Parthian sites such as Babylon, Nisa/Mithradatkert, Takht-i-Sangin, Seleukia on the Tigris, Dura Europos and Nippur. Cf. Rostovtzeff 1941, 1053.

99 Oenbrink 2017, 178 for instance speaks of “Einflüsse aus beiden Kulturkreise”.

100 For the deconstruction of this model for Commagene, see Versluys 2017 and Riedel 2018.

101 Coupel – Demargne 1969.

102 Agut-Labordère 2017, 147–149. For the Ptolemaic palace in Alexandria integrating different repertoires and culturally charged concepts cf. also Riedel 2019; Riedel 2020.

103 Hoo 2018.

104 Cf. Tomlinson 1999, 2; Jennings 2011, 2–3.

ing the diachronic and spatial development of individual objects – their global genealogies – becomes the essential starting point for any assessment of transformations in early 1st c. BCE Samosata. Such genealogies first of all illustrate the introduction of global culture as a shift in the objectscape exemplified by the palatial structure but furthermore also help to explore the complex character of this shift, emphasizing the potential impact of such objects rather than their cultural affiliation.¹⁰⁵

The Global Genealogies of Some Objects of the Palatial Objectscape

In the last section of this article, we will investigate the global genealogies of several objects that are newly introduced to the objectscape of Samosata during the palatial phase (early 1st c. BCE). Along with other objects, these examples make up the watershed that we have argued for in the first part of this article. In the analysis of these object genealogies, we are particularly interested in the geographic networks they developed through time and the ways in which these objects became integrated in other localities during earlier phases of their genealogy. By comparing this with the situation in Samosata, we move towards understanding the impact of transforming objectscales in Samosata during the early 1st c. BCE. In the first case study, we will present a detailed analysis that hopefully illustrates the merits of this object-oriented approach. Due to limited space, the succeeding case studies are more impressionistic in nature and will be developed more in-depth elsewhere.¹⁰⁶

a) Mosaics in Concentric Border Style with the Crenellation Motif

Tessellated mosaics in the so-called concentric border style were unearthed in rooms I, VIII, XIV and XV of the palatial complex (fig. 8). The concentric composition consists of a series of borders with geometric motifs that frame a central panel. It is a widespread design that is found in almost all mosaics of the Hellenistic period throughout the Mediterranean and beyond, with examples found in Greece, the Aegean Islands, Asia Minor, the Levant, Judea, Egypt, North Africa, Spain, Sicily and the Italian penin-

105 Here we follow for instance the important work of Michael Dietler, who states: “intercultural adoption of objects or practices is not a phenomenon that takes place at the level of cultures or abstract structures. It is an active process of creative appropriation, manipulation and transformation [...] more than simply reproducing static systems of cultural categories, consumption constructs culture in a more dynamic sense [...] we must seek to understand [...] the role of material objects in this process. This means that we must first understand how and why some practices and goods were absorbed into the everyday lives of people [...] and how those objects or practices triggered processes of cultural entanglement and transformation” (Dietler 2005, 63–65).

106 This will be one of the foci of the PhD-dissertation by Lennart Kruijer (expected late 2021).



Fig. 8 Mosaic in concentric border style, Salman 2007, fig. 160

sula.¹⁰⁷ The basic types of concentric designs known from other contexts – i. e. square, rectangular, with a rectangular emblem or a roundel in the centre – all feature in Samosata.¹⁰⁸ The specific selection of geometric motifs in the palatial complex – wave crest, meander, stepped pyramid, saw-tooth – also draws from a widespread repertoire of stock motifs.¹⁰⁹ In comparison to, for instance, the mosaics of Delos, Pergamon and Tel Dor, the selection of three-dimensional motifs is limited in Samosata.¹¹⁰ The amount of concentric borders in the designs of the mosaics in Samosata is, however, exceptional (in rooms VIII and XV the mosaics contain more than ten decorative borders) and exceeds all other known examples. Only in the ‘mosaic rooms’ of the *hierothesion* of Arsameia on the Nymphaios we find a similarly elaborate design, also using primarily ‘flat’ geometric motifs.¹¹¹ The use of a concentric border mosaic in a courtyard without a peristyle (in ‘room’ XIV of the palatial complex) is furthermore not attested outside of Samosata.¹¹²

107 For a discussion of the origins of the concentric design, see Westgate 1997/1998.

108 Mosaics in rooms I and XIV are rectangular while those of rooms VIII and XV are square, and the latter contains a roundel in its centre, similar for instance to the peristyle mosaic in the House of the Dolphins in Delos (Bruneau 1972, 235–239 no. 210. figs. 168–175. pls. B,1–2).

109 Dunbabin 1999, 32.

110 The only exceptions are the illusionistic cubes in room XV and the meander in perspective in room I. All other geometric motifs are ‘flat’. Compare to Delos (Bruneau 1972), Pergamon (Kawerau – Wiegand 1930, 63–65. pls. XVI–XIX) and Tel Dor (Stewart – Martin 2003, 121–145).

111 Dörner – Goell 1963, 191–196 (I. Lavin). Note that the *emblema* of room I in Samosata, containing two dolphin-like sea creatures symmetrically placed on either side of a Rhodian amphora, also recurs almost identically in the mosaic of room I at Arsameia on the Nymphaios.

112 As already observed by Kopsacheili 2013, 229. Courts without a peristyle are known from the palatial complex on the acropolis of Dura Europos (Leriche 1997, 199) as well as from ‘space 3’ in the palatial complex of Ai Khanoum (Bernard 1973, 17–83) but these do not contain mosaic floors.

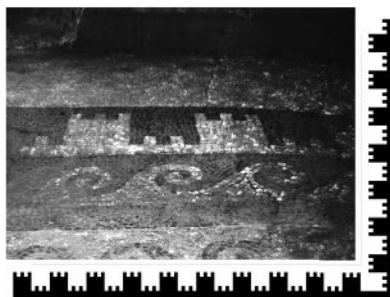


Fig. 9 The crenellation motif from room XV in the palatial complex (centre; courtesy of the Forschungsstelle Asia Minor, WWU Münster) and a reconstruction (bottom and right; © L. Kruijer & J. F. Porck)

One of the decorative motifs of the mosaic is the so-called crenellation motif, consisting of ‘turrets’ with three merlons on top and two crenels in between, executed in dark grey and white tesserae in an interlocking scheme (fig. 9).¹¹³ This motif should not be considered a stock motif as it has a very specific global genealogy. It can be traced from the 3rd c. BCE onwards, where it first only appears in the outer border of painted concentric designs of textile imitations on tomb ceilings.¹¹⁴ From the mid-2nd c. BCE onwards, the crenellation motif is solely found in floor mosaics; 61 examples have so far been documented, the Commagenian examples being the easternmost specimen.¹¹⁵ The 2nd c. BCE and early 1st c. BCE examples, preceding or contemporary to those in Samosata, appear in Italy, Alexandria, Pergamon and the Peloponnese.¹¹⁶ This wide

113 The crenellation motif is used in the mosaics of rooms VIII, XV and in grid-square s/11 of the palatial complex. In all cases, these crenellated borders only appear in the outer band of its concentric decorative design. The size of the individual ‘turrets’ is ca. 20 × 28 cm, while the width of the complete frieze is 36 cm. For a concise summary of this case study in relation to the idea of objectscares, see Pitts – Versluys 2021, 9–13.

114 Vasjurin’s Hill in the Taman peninsula, South Russia, cf. Rostovtzeff 2003/2004, 62. pl. 15; in Tarquinia, tomb 5512, cf. Steingraber 2006, 250; a tomb in Lefkadia, cf. Brecolouki 2006, 230. In the 2nd c. BCE, on Delos, the motif can be found on the ceiling of the *Maison des Sceaux*, cf. Alabé 2002. An exception to these ceiling-crenellations is a 3rd c. BCE painted sarcophagus, probably from the Fayum, see Edgar 1905, 10. pl. 5 (CG no. 33123). Another exception is a crenellation border on a gilded glass cup from a tumulus in Mozdok in the southern Caucasus, cf. Adriani 1967.

115 Zschätzsch 2009, 339–360.

116 The 2nd c. BCE and early 1st c. BCE examples, preceding or contemporary to those in Samosata, are the so-called Sophilos mosaic from Thmuis (Tell Timai, Egypt), cf. Brown 1957, 67–68 cat. no. 48. pl. 38; the so-called Hephaestion mosaic in Pergamon’s ‘palatial complex V’ (Turkey), cf. Kawerau – Wiegand 1930, 63–65. pls. 16–19.; the cella of the Temple of Despoina at Lykosoura (Peloponnese), cf. Salzmann 1982, 65–66. 123 no. 162. pl. 80; the Asklepieion of Pheneos (Peloponnese), cf. Daux 1961, 682–683 fig. 1; the peristyle of the ‘House of the Dolphins’ (Delos), cf. Bruneau 1972, 51. 235–239 no. 210. figs. 168–175. pls. B,1–2; the baths of Cortona at Piazza Tommasi (Italy), cf. Mancini 2005, 353–356, cat. no. VIII 49.; and the caldarium of the baths in Musarna (Italy), cf. Broise – Jolivet 2004, 52–55 fig. 71. 120. pl. 3.

geographical distribution, both in painted and mosaic form, suggests that the crenellation motif was a global phenomenon from its early beginnings onward.

Within Commagene and the wider region of Greater Syria, eastern Asia Minor and the Levant, however, it was an entirely novel element when it appeared in Samosata during the early 1st c. BCE. Therefore, the motif arguably played an active role in the overall consumer revolution that we witness in elite contexts in Commagene during the 1st c. BCE. Its capacity to transform styles of consumption in a palatial context and thereby exercise a direct impact on social practice can be investigated by considering the relational properties this motif had acquired through its genealogy.

First of all, the motif and its global genealogy allowed for a visual coherence between the dynastic contexts of Arsameia on the Nymphaios and Samosata; it acquired its strength through repetition. This strategy of visual canonisation would be further developed by king Antiochos I in the mid-1st c. BCE, using similarly recurring elements (e. g. *dexiosis*-stelae, colossal statues, the Nomos inscription etc.) throughout his kingdom. On another scale, the global Hellenistic network of the motif meant that its consumption in Samosata implied a joining of that network. The motif seems to be specifically reserved for highly prestigious contexts and bound to a specific set of decorative norms and concepts, for instance appearing exclusively in tessellated mosaics, solely on the outer border of a concentric scheme, executed in dark grey and white tesserae only, and only in a flat rendition. These norms and concepts are respected in Samosata, which suggests that the motif's global genealogy played a decisive role on this local scale. As such, the crenellation motif in Samosata actively positioned the palace within the rare category of prestigious and impressive contexts from the wider Hellenistic world.

The complete absence of the crenellation motif on a wide regional scale around Commagene allowed it to be exclusive and novel in Samosata. Sites like Jebel Khalid and Dura Europos are comparable to Samosata in several ways (for instance the presence of Masonry Style wall-painting and gilded architectural decoration, see below), but these well excavated sites do not show any evidence for mosaic floors and/or the crenellation motif.¹¹⁷ The impact of the crenellation motif thus was developed through its global genealogy; it was globally developed, regionally exceptional and locally repeatable.

b) A Gilded Corinthian Pilaster Capital Fragment

Let us now briefly consider a limestone fragment of a small Corinthian pilaster capital with acanthus leaves and a row of bead-and-reel below it (fig. 10).¹¹⁸ On the acanthus leaves, several traces of gilded paint could be detected by the excavators. Based on the

117 Nielsen 1999, 115–117, no. 16.; Clarke et al. 2002.

118 Zoroğlu 2012, 144–145. See also Oenbrink 2017, pl. 23,1. The piece was not (anymore) available for closer inspection in the Museum of Adıyaman at the moment of our research in its depot.



Fig. 10 A gilded Corinthian pilaster capital fragment, Adıyaman Museum, photo from the ‘Özgüç Archive’, courtesy of the Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi, Ankara Üniversitesi

excavation’s documentation, we can infer that it was found in the south-western corner of room XV, either on the floor or in the fill above the floor.¹¹⁹ If it was indeed originally present in room XV, it would probably have adorned a small (half-)column or a small (half-)pilaster.¹²⁰ The style of this fragment is rather anomalous compared to the other Corinthian capitals in Commagene, with a more rounded acanthus, less pointed leaf-fingers and round and less tear-shaped eyelets. Oenbrink categorized the fragment under the second Commagenian Corinthian order pertaining to interior decoration.¹²¹

In Commagene, this is the only example of a gilded architectural decorative fragment, but the phenomenon too had acquired a global genealogy by the moment it appeared in Samosata. From the 4th c. BCE, we can trace gilded architectural features in tombs of Macedonia and western Asia Minor, and later in a wide variety of contexts in Judea, Petra, Jebel Khalid and, during the late 1st c. BCE, also on the Italian peninsula.¹²² This global genealogy shows that gilding of architectural decoration was already a

119 The object description-form has written as context “j/19 (saray)” and, added in pencil, “kabul salonu”, which leaves only the far SW corner of room XV as the possible find location.

120 No indications of (half-)columns or (half-)pilasters are known for room XV, however, so its original context remains unclear. Another possibility is that the piece belongs to the decoration of a second storey.

121 Oenbrink 2017, 57–68

122 In some 4th c. BCE Macedonian tombs, gilded marble and gilded plasterwork have been attested, cf. Kakoulli 2009, 60. A 4th c. BCE tomb in Mylasa (South-western Turkey) allegedly contains gilded surfaces as well, cf. Kidd 2015, n. 17. In the so-called late Hellenistic Stuccoed Building of Tel Anafa (Upper Galilee, ca. 125–90 BCE) many examples of gilded egg-and-dart mouldings, dentils, Corinthian column shafts and Corinthian capitals were found, cf. Kidd 2015, 83–84. In the 1st c. BCE Great Temple Complex of Petra, gilded plaster was found (cf. Kropp 2014, 161) and in the debris of exedra 7 of the ‘Nabatean Mansion’ or villa at Az-Zantur IV a huge number of gilded and

widespread tradition throughout Eurasia by the 1st c. BCE when it was adopted in the palatial complex of Samosata. Unlike the genealogy of the crenellation motif, however, it can be understood as an element with a regional signature, fitting to a shared visual repertoire of Near Eastern Hellenistic kings.

c) Masonry Style Wall Painting and Stucco

Throughout the excavated area of the palatial complex, walls were decorated with so-called Masonry Style wall painting, imitating the masonry and decorative elements of stone walls (fig. 11).¹²³ The decorative schemata show a colourful design that has a tripartite structure, consisting of a socle with isodomes, a central band with alternating wide and narrow orthostats and an upper band, containing a layer of isodomes, a

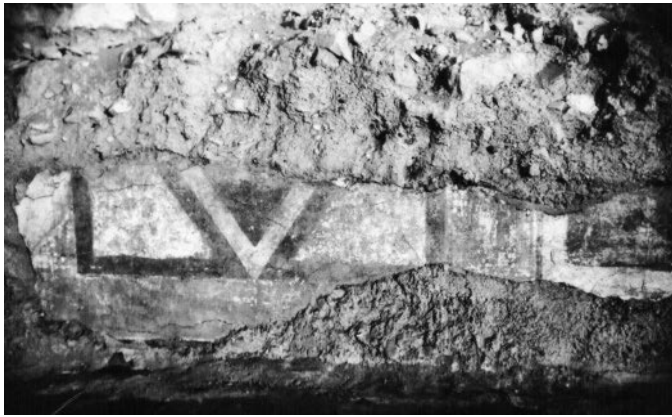


Fig. 11 Masonry style wall painting and stucco with the diamond lozenge motif, photo from the 'Özgüç Archive', courtesy of the Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi, Ankara Üniversitesi

painted stucco fragments occurred, cf. Kolb – Keller 2001, 319. In the Governor's Palatial Complex of Jebel Khalid, a white plaster fragment with embedded gold leaf was excavated in room 21 as well as a small separate piece of gold leaf, cf. Clarke 2002, 42–43. The earliest attestation of gilded architecture on the Italian peninsula is the Augustan temple of Apollo on the Palatine (dedicated in 28 BCE), which post-dates the palatial complex of Samosata, cf. Zink – Piening 2009. Literary sources provide additional evidence for the use of gilded architectural decoration. Kallixeinos of Rhodes, handed down through Athenaeus' *Deipnosophistae* (Athen. 5,204d–206c), mentions that the main saloon of the Thalamegos of Ptolemy IV (late 3rd c. BCE) was adorned with Corinthian capitals that were covered with ivory and gold (Athen. 5,203d). According to Josephus, there was a golden, perhaps gilded, grape-and-vine decoration on the frieze of the Jewish temple in Jerusalem (ca. 20 BCE) (Jos. Ant. Iud. 15,394–396.) And in a demotic letter on an *ostrakon* from Ptolemaic Egypt, the main subject is the gilding of a monumental doorway of a local temple in Nebkhounis (Documents Démotiques de Strasbourg III, 6 (Inv. D. 156). See Colin 2016, 41–74).

123 Well preserved remains were found *in situ* in rooms I, II, III, VI, VIII, XIV, XV, XVIII (east of XIII), and XIX (the anteroom of XV). Most of these were published already in Bingöl 2013 and large

frieze, or panels with stone imitations.¹²⁴ Some of the orthostats are decorated with diamond-shaped lozenges in alternating colours and in room III there are several depictions of pomegranates placed within these orthostats.¹²⁵ Room VIII contains a rosette frieze in red, blue yellow and white, bordered with an egg-and-dart border.¹²⁶ Another frieze contains light yellow acanthus leaves on a light blue background framed again by egg-and-dart.¹²⁷ A last frieze contains green grape vines on a dark grey background, with light yellow grapes indicated surrounding the grape leaves.¹²⁸ The occurrence of several fragments of stamped stucco with egg-and-dart motifs suggests that the walls were not only painted but also covered with relief stucco decoration, perhaps in the higher regions of the decorative schemata. This fits to the decorative repertoire of the mosaic rooms in Arsameia on the Nymphaios, where a fragment of stucco wall decoration in Masonry Style was unearthed as well.¹²⁹

The Masonry Style is often linked to the so-called First Pompeian Style, but the exact relation between these styles is still a matter of debate.¹³⁰ In the late 4th c. BCE, the earliest examples of the Masonry Style appear almost simultaneously in the houses of Olynthos in Greece, the Hieron of Samothrace in the Aegean, and in tombs of Macedonia.¹³¹ In these first instances, we already encounter stone imitations in very structured decorative schemata, often with hints towards illusionism by means of the suggestion of shadows and three-dimensionality. From the 3rd c. BCE onwards, the Masonry Style becomes even more widespread, now appearing in Alexandria, South Russia (Kerch), Asia Minor, the Greek mainland and the islands (specifically Delos), North Africa, and the Levant. Important late 2nd and 1st c. BCE comparanda are found in several house contexts in Delos, the palatial complexes of Herod in Judea (most notably the north-

amounts of fragments without clear context were found in the Adiyaman Museum's depot, many of which are likely to belong to the palatial complex based on their general similitude to the *in situ* wall paintings.

124 The preserved fragments in Samosata are rendered in colours ranging from white to yellow, red-brown, orange-red, red, light blue, purple, rose, green and black.

125 Bingöl 2013, 34 figs. 34–35.

126 Bingöl 2013, 55–56 figs. 79–80.

127 Bingöl 2013, 52–53 figs. 72–74.

128 Bingöl 2013, 47–48 figs. 63–64.

129 Hoepfner 1983, pl. 17D.

130 Fragaki 2003, 257–258 explains this development very well in her assessment of the origins of the First Pompeian Style, stating: “On a distingué dans la peinture et l’architecture de cette période, aussi bien en Orient qu’en Italie, des tendances communes qui se retrouvent plus tard sur les murs pompéiens. Au seins de cette koiné hellénistique, on a repéré différents systèmes décoratifs à zones qui évoquent, malgré leurs particularités et leurs divergences, le Premier Style pompéien. En ce sens, ce style aurait des précurseurs et des variantes aussi bien en Afrique du Nord, en Syrie, en Asia Mineure, en Grèce, en Macédoine, en Thrace et en Russie du Sud qu’en Italie.” *Contra* Laidlaw 1993, 227–233, who holds that the Masonry Style was inherently different from the First Pompeian Style.

131 Olynthos: Robinson – Graham 1938, 297–299. Hieron of Samothrace (ca. 325 BCE): Lehmann 1964, 267–286. Macedonia: cf. Tomb of Lefkadia (Brecoulaki 2006).

ern palatial complex of Masada and the third palatial complex of Jericho), the 'Painted House' of Beidha, the late-Hellenistic Building of Tel Anafa, the 'Petit Serail' in Beirut, and the 'House of the Painted Frieze' in the insula of Jebel Khalid, the latter containing, *inter alia*, egg-and-dart borders, a garland pattern band, and figurative depictions of winged cupids driving goat chariots.¹³² These comparanda underline how, similarly to the gilded architecture of the previous section, the genealogy of the Masonry Style wall painting by the 1st c. BCE had also developed a very regional character, occurring in sites relatively close to Samosata. Even though it is very well possible that the Masonry Style was originally developed in Greece, Macedonia or the Aegean, its successive global genealogy suggests that a one-to-one relation with a concept of Greece is far from self-evident. The many Near Eastern elite contexts containing Masonry Style are likely to have added new relational properties to this wall painting style, progressively watering down a relation to Greece by the time it appeared in Samosata.

d) The Diamond Lozenge Motif

Also specific decorative elements of the Masonry Style seem to have developed along a global genealogy by the time they appeared in Samosata. A good example is the diamond lozenge motif, which is ubiquitous throughout the palatial complex, specifically in rooms IV and VI (fig. 11). These lozenges are executed with thin banded borders in different colours that provide the decoration with a slight suggestion of three-dimensionality in a composition that is otherwise mostly flat.

Early applications of the diamond lozenge shape are found in the brick decoration of the Apadana from the palatial complex of Dareios I in Susa.¹³³ In the 2nd c. BCE the motif appears in Alexandria, most notably as plastered vault decoration of tombs.¹³⁴ Here, the diamond lozenges also have complex borders, which suggests that they were imitating three-dimensional ceiling coffers. From the mid-2nd c. BCE, the motif becomes much more widespread and starts occurring also on painted and stucco wall decoration, for instance in the so-called Hellenistic Naos in Jerash, the 'Late Hellenistic Stucco Building' of Tel Anafa and a Nabatean temple at Wadi Ramm.¹³⁵ The application of the motif in Samosata generally fits to the examples mentioned above, although

132 Anfushy: Adriani 1952. Delos: Bezerra de Meneses 1970. Palatial complexes of Herod: Rozenberg 2014. The 'Painted House of Beidha': Bikai et al. 2008, 465–507; Twaissi et al. 2010, 31–42. The 'Petit Serail' in Beirut: Aubert – Eristov 1998, pl. 39. Area 19 in the 'House of the Painted Frieze' in Jebel Khalid: Jackson 2009, 231–253.

133 Perrot 2013. It is in fact likely that, in Classical Greece, the motif was initially associated with the Achaemenids, as the motif occurs in representations of Persians on red-figured ceramics, for instance adorning the leggings of Persians and Amazons, cf. Morgan 2016, 120–122.

134 Adriani 1940, 55–97.

135 Jerash: Seigne 2002; Tel Anafa: Kidd 2015, 85–89; Wadi Ramm: Kirkbride 1960, 78.

the execution in Commagene is relatively flat and modest, lacking any egg-and-dart borders or moulded plaster reliefs and containing only limited suggestions of three-dimensionality. The closest parallel derives from the wall decoration of the Herodian palatial complexes (2nd half 1st c. BCE), specifically in Masada and Jericho, but it is likely that these date later than the paintings in Samosata.¹³⁶

The above illustrates how the genealogy of the diamond lozenge motif was highly global by the moment it appeared in Samosata but, again, had also acquired a distinctly regional dimension. Through its genealogy, the diamond lozenge positioned the palace in a category of prestigious contexts of the wider Hellenistic world, many of which were associated with Near Eastern dynasts of the 2nd and 1st c. BCE.

e) Doorframes with a Decoration of Bound, Trefoil Garlands of Olive or Laurel Leaves

Four fragments of decorated limestone doorframes (*'Türleibungen'*) containing the vegetal motif of bound trefoil garlands of olive (or laurel) leaves were found during excavations on the höyük in Samosata (fig. 12).¹³⁷ Although we lack any good contextual information for these four fragments, it is very likely that they belong to the architectural decoration of the palatial complex.¹³⁸ Stylistically, the fragments are almost identi-

136 Porat – Ilani 1998. Another later use of the motif in the wider region is seen in the tomb of Gaios Iulios Samsigeramos (1st c. CE) in Emesa, where an *opus reticulatum* wall facing is rendered in a diamond lozenge motif executed with black basalt and white limestone tesserae, cf. Oenbrink 2009; Kropp 2010.

137 We assigned new ID numbers to these pieces since they did not receive official inventory numbers by the museum. Fragment ID613 (l. 27,2 cm; w.20,9 cm; h. 20,9 cm) is the right upper corner fragment of a doorframe. The fragment is flat on the top and left side, broken on the other sides. The fragment, decorated on two sides, contains a continuous frieze with bound, trefoil garlands with olive/laurels pointing towards the right. The leaves are relatively short and overlapping. Above the frieze, a band of bead and reel decoration is executed, and on the large *simā* above it, an acanthus on the corner and deep perforated holes (ca. 3–4 cm) at the far left side. Fragment ID614 (l. 21,7 cm; w. 17,5 cm; h. 21,3 cm) clearly belongs to the same doorframe as ID613. Fragment ID614 has a flat top and a broken back side and bottom. This fragment contains a decoration of a lotus flower and a helix with outward turned volutes. Like ID613, it contains a profiled rim with a bead and reel motif and a frieze with bound, trefoil garlands with olive/laurels, with similarly overlapping shorter leaves, also pointing towards the right. Fragment ID517 (w. 13,6 cm; l. 17,1 cm; h. 7,2 cm) only contains a fragment of a frieze with a trefoil garland with olive/laurels, with equally overlapping but more elongated and articulated leaves compared to ID613 and ID614. The orientation of the leaves remains unclear. Fragment ID588 (w. 12,6 cm; l. 10,4 cm; h. 7,4 cm) looks almost completely similar to ID517 and it seems likely that these fragments belong to the same doorframe. The difference in the execution of the leaves suggests that ID517 and ID588 do not belong to fragments ID613 and ID614 and thus should belong to a different doorframe.

138 ID613 and ID614 were found in the 'stone pile' of the Adıyaman Museum's depot with fragments belonging to the Özgüç excavations. These did not contain any evidence for their original context. ID517 and ID588 were both found in a box called "1985 saray mimari parça". Fragment ID588 fur-



Fig. 12 Doorframes with a decoration of bound, trefoil garlands of olive or laurel leaves, Adiyaman Museum, photo L. Kruijer

cal to specimen from Arsameia on the *Nymphaios* and the recently emerged fragments from Güzelçay, both published by Werner Oenbrink.¹³⁹

Before appearing in Samosata, trefoil garlands of olive or laurel leaves are attested on a variety of materials and media but never on doorframes.¹⁴⁰ During this stage of the global genealogy of the motif, however, it still appears without buds and fruits and it is not yet bound together. The first bound trefoil motif occurs on a disk fibula, from a late 3rd c. BCE grave in Kerch (Crimea).¹⁴¹ From the late 3rd c. BCE onwards, the bound version of the motif starts appearing in great quantity, often in relation to Seleucid

thermore contained a reference to grid-squares j/15, k/15, j/16, k/16, layer 3, and thus was located exactly in the area of the palatial complex, albeit in a later filling. A good potential location could be the very wide entrance to room XV, which in fact shows the imprints of a larger doorframe in the relief of the stones framing the door.

139 For Güzelçay, see: Oenbrink 2017, 138, pl. 48,1. For Arsameia on the *Nymphaios*, see: Oenbrink 2017, 99 no. A195. pl. 29,2.

140 The earliest examples occur on red-figured ceramics from ca. 400 BCE where it appears in a non-bound version, cf. Pfrommer 1993, n. 367. In the 3rd c. BCE, the same motif appears throughout the Mediterranean, on a Ptolemaic gilded glass cup (Brussels, Musées Royaux E8034. Adriani 1967, 122. pl. 7A.), a faience skyphos (Alexandria, Graeco-Roman Museum JE 10479. Breccia 1912, 80–81 no. 233. pls. 45. 65.) and a bronze *cista* from Palestrina (Italy) (cf. Copenhagen, National Museum 778. See the 1968 Museum catalogue, page 93). Pfrommer 1993, 37–39 deals extensively with the development of the motif on a variety of materials in his study of the Parthian silverware treasures and this paragraph strongly draws on his findings. Pfrommer proposed a different chronology of the motif's biography than Callaghan 1980, 33–47.

141 Reinach 1892, 64. pl. 19,3.

dynastic visual culture, most notably on coins.¹⁴² In this period, the motif also appears on architectural ornaments of Seleucid monuments, e. g. on a red-clay *simā* from Seleucia on the Tigris (3rd c. BCE.)¹⁴³, grave reliefs from Tyre¹⁴⁴ and stelae from Sidon.¹⁴⁵ In 2nd c. BCE Pergamon, the motif likely had acquired the potential to signal the Seleucids.¹⁴⁶ Interestingly, the motif was subsequently adopted on a coin of Eumenes II (ca. 170 BCE), however in its unbound, earlier version.¹⁴⁷ The bound, trefoil garlands later appear on the Parthian silverware treasures I and II, on bowls and rhytons from the early 2nd to the 1st c. BCE.¹⁴⁸ After Seleucid power declined in the region, the motif continued to be used on architectural decoration, for instance on a frieze of the Khazne Firaun in Petra (last quarter 1st c. BCE).¹⁴⁹

Pfrommer underlines that “(t)he bound trefoil motif was only introduced to Greece and the western part of Asia Minor in the second century B. C.”¹⁵⁰ and instead grants an important role to Seleucid workshops in terms of the motif’s development.¹⁵¹ This means that, by the time the motif appears on the doorframes in Samosata, it was already part of a network that was global but also regional, with many applications of the motif found in Greater Syria, none of them, however, in combination with a doorframe; the latter seems to be an innovation in Samosata. The only other example of the motif on a doorframe was found on a block reused in a wall foundation in the sanctuary of Bel in Palmyra (late 1st c. BCE or early 1st c. CE), dating after the doorframe fragments from Samosata.¹⁵²

f) The Mask Mosaic in the Roundel of Room XV

The so-called ‘mask mosaic’ consists of two fitting pieces, which were found *in situ* in the central medallion *emblemata* of the mosaic covering the entire floor of room XV

142 Pfrommer 1993, n. 382 for instance mentions Houghton 1983, 27 no. 404. pl. 22.

143 Hopkins 1972, 132–133 figs. 44–46.

144 Seyrig 1940, 120–122.

145 Callaghan 1980, 45 fig. 2,3.

146 The motif appears on a shield ornament depicted on a weapon frieze of the Athena precinct in Pergamon, (2nd c. BCE.), which represented weapons captured by the Attalids, possibly after the battle of Magnesia against the Seleucids in 190 BCE. See Pfrommer 1993, 38.

147 Callaghan 1980, 43 fig. 1,8.

148 Pfrommer 1993, treasure I: nos. 1, 2, 17, 74; treasure II: nos. 69, 70, stag rhyton 74.

149 Schmidt-Colinet 1980, 217 fig. 32. For the dating, see Kropp 2013, 199–205.

150 Pfrommer 1993, 38.

151 Pfrommer 1993, 38: “we can tentatively attribute the development of the bound trefoil garland to Seleucid workshops in the second half of the third century B. C.”

152 Seyrig 1940, 285–289, multiple fragments: fig. 5. pl. 29,2. 30 (left). For the dating see Seyrig 1940, 279–282. See also Gawlikowski 2015. Note that Pfrommer 1993 also refers to the adyton-fronton of the temple of Bacchus in Baalbek, which, however, is a 2nd c. CE structure and thus beyond our chronological scope.



Fig. 13 The mask mosaic in the roundel of room XV, Adıyaman Museum, photo from the 'Özgüç Archive', courtesy of the Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi, Ankara Üniversitesi

(fig. 13).¹⁵³ The mosaic is executed in *opus tessellatum* with red, grey, green, orange, and white-yellow tesserae of 4–8 mm².¹⁵⁴ It depicts the face of an older man from a frontal perspective set against a monochrome dark grey background. The visible facial characteristics can be described as grotesque, with a reddish, rounded bald head, a widely opened mouth as well as widely opened eyes, heavily curved eyebrows, a stubby nose and a thin unkempt beard. On his head, the old man wears an ivy-wreath, containing little yellow grapes. It is likely that the figure should be interpreted as depiction of a comedy mask of an older man with a satyr-like appearance.¹⁵⁵

Such iconography is not uncommon in mosaics and other media throughout the Mediterranean.¹⁵⁶ From the 2nd c. BCE onwards, mosaic *emblemata* containing depictions of old male comedy masks occur in a Hellenistic domestic context in Rhodes¹⁵⁷, the 1st c. BCE/CE *domus* no. 1 in Ampurias (Spain),¹⁵⁸ and in an undefined context in Centocelle (Rome).¹⁵⁹ Mosaic borders with a garland-and-mask decoration also often

153 ID700-st.18–1000a–b: l. 0.613 m; h. 0.045 m; w. 0.32 m. The entire fragment seems to have been broken in two only after excavation and glued together again during modern restoration (probably executed during the time of excavation in 1984) and is therefore discussed as one fragment. It has extensive damage on top and bottom and is broken on all sides. The stone and ceramic tesserae (h. 0,007 m) are set into rather fine mortar (h. 0,038 m). It is unclear whether the entire height of the mortar bed was excavated. There is no use of glass or lead strips.

154 The size of the tesserae is smaller in the face (3–5 mm²) than in the dark grey background (5–8 mm²) and is particularly small in the nose of the depicted figure.

155 Most scholars, however, have interpreted it as a depiction of a comedy mask, particularly the so-called ‘pornoboskos’, known as a New Comedy character described in the 2nd c. CE *Onomasticon* (4,143–54) by Julius Pollux, cf. Bingöl 1997, 107; Bingöl 2013, 76–77; Westgate 2002, 242; Kopsacheili 2011, 24–25; Guimier-Sorbets 2012, 445; Kropp 2013, 109; Moormann 2014, 611. The *Onomasticon* by Julius Pollux provides a list and short descriptions of 44 different theatre masks, among which the ‘pornoboskos’, used for the New Comedy role of the old male pimp. Pollux describes the pornoboskos as follows: “generally like the Lycomedian, but has a slight smile on his lips and connected brows; he has receding hair and is bald”. In general, for the *Onomasticon*, see Bearzot et al. 2007. The late date and problematic background of this *Onomasticon* however make it an unreliable source for a more specific identification. Comedy mask depictions generally only show a head, they have widely opened eyes and mouths (mostly without teeth) and their overall facial characteristics are schematic, inanimate and grotesque, features to which the mosaic in room XV indeed more or less adheres, cf. Sagiv-Hayik 2011. For the mosaic of room XV, it is impossible to say whether the face lacks a neck, as this part is not preserved. The grotesque features and opened mouth without teeth should however suffice as arguments in favour of a mask interpretation. Note that we do not interpret the mask specifically as a satyr (or *papposilenos*) mask (*contra* Özguc 2009, 42; Zoroğlu 2012, 143; Kopsacheili 2013, 230–231); comedy masks of old men often get satyr-like characteristics and it seems impossible to wish for a clear distinction between the two. The satyr-like appearance lead Kopsacheili and Guimier-Sorbets to suggest that the mosaic should have a relation to the Dionysiac cult, see Kopsacheili 2013, 232–233; Guimier-Sorbets 2012, 445. Although it is possible that such associations existed, there is no actual evidence to support a cultic interpretation of room XV.

156 Webster et al. 1995.

157 Webster et al. 1995, 187 no. 3DM4b.

158 Webster et al. 1995, 372–373 no. 4XM1a.

159 Webster et al. 1995, 372–373 no. 4XM1b.

contain older satyr-like male masks.¹⁶⁰ It is striking that both types occur almost solely on the Italian peninsula and Delos; like the genealogy of the crenellation motif, the genealogy of mosaics with old male comedy masks is not attested anywhere in the wider region around Commagene. The impact of the mask mosaic thus in part must be understood in light of the regional rareness within its global genealogy. In other words: we suggest that the mask mosaic travelled with a global network of relational properties that it had acquired through its genealogy. These relational properties allowed for new styles of elite consumption on a local and regional scale.

Conclusion

The discussion of six object genealogies explored in the last section has elucidated the wide networks that these objects were already part of *before* appearing in Samosata. This perspective first of all has important implications for our assessment of the transformations witnessed in the late-Hellenistic objectscape of Samosata. Compared to the evidence of the pre-palatial period, we can conclude that these genealogies mark a true watershed in the objectscales of Samosata: we have presented the evidence for a radical globalising shift that occurred in the early 1st c. BCE. Unlike the discussed selection of material related to the palatial complex, the earlier objectscales of Samosata and Commagene expose a distinctly local and regional character. Even elements which might have gained a rather global genealogy, like the torus-bases, seem to have been appropriated due to the (micro-)regional significance they acquired through the use in Orontid (Sophtenian) royal architecture. An even stronger rootedness in local and regional traditions can be inferred from the pottery which shares characteristics in terms of fabric and style with locally produced wares observed elsewhere in Commagene. Only very few pieces found at Samosata indicate supra-regional connections prior to the massive shift marked by the erection of the palatial complex. This observation is paralleled in Arsameia on the Nymphaios where the re-modelling of the *hierothesion* results in a similar shift in the locality's objectscape which seems to have taken place in the early 1st c. BCE. These parallel transformations suggest a consumer revolution within an elite context in Commagene around this period.

160 Cf. the late 2nd – early 1st c. BCE room g of ‘The House of the Masks’ on Delos (cf. Webster et al. 1995, 188 no. 3DM5), the ‘Insula of the Jewels’ on Delos (cf. Webster et al. 1995, 189 no. 3DM6), an undefined context on the Via Ardeatina (Rome) (cf. Webster et al. 1995, 242 no. 3RM1), House VIII, ii,34 in Pompeii (cf. Webster et al. 1995, 235 no. 3NM2b), and the triclinium of the ‘House of the Faun’. (cf. Webster et al. 1995, 234 no. 3NM2a). Later, 1st c. BCE comparanda are found in a house context on the Piazza della Vittoria in Palermo (cf. Webster et al. 1995, 323 no. 4SM1) and the Villa of T. Siminius Stephanus at Torre Annunziata (cf. Webster et al. 1995, 300 no. 4NM2).

The object genealogies presented in this article have severe implications for our understanding of the character and impact of the changes observed for the early 1st c. BCE as each of them describes the development of networks that are inherently *beyond East and West*. Especially those genealogies that had acquired a global and regional dimension, occurring in contexts throughout Asia Minor, Southern Russia, the Levant and Egypt, defied such a binary cultural taxonomy by the time of their appearance in Samosata. For none of the discussed objects, there is evidence that supports a clear-cut connection to ‘Greekness’; not as a territorial label, nor as an ethnical label, and also not as a cultural concept or a distinct social category. Rather, the global genealogies of these objects first of all meant the introduction of global networks in a locality that had been local and perhaps regional beforehand.

Not all these elements brought in the same type of global networks, however. Although all objects discussed here had acquired a global dimension, we seem to be able to make a clear distinction between global objects *with* a (macro-)regional dimension (occurring in Asia Minor and the wider Levant) and those *without*. Whereas most objects discussed above belong to the former category, the crenellation motif and comedy mask mosaic seem to belong to the latter; their appearance in Samosata is rare or even absent on a (macro- or micro-)regional level. Whereas the former category would have connected the Commagenian dynasty to a wider regional network of elite culture, the latter category allowed them to develop a distinct local signature within this regional elite network. Objects from both categories (i. e. the concentric border decoration with crenellation motif, the masonry style wall painting, the diamond-shaped lozenges and the doorframes with trefoil garland) were selected repeatedly in multiple Commagenian dynastic contexts (e. g. Samosata, Arsameia on the Nymphaios and Güzelçay), suggesting that these objects were actively participating in dynastic attempts at visual canonization. This strategy has already been observed for mid-1st c. BCE / Antiochan Commagene by Versluys but we argue that it is very likely that this transformation of styles of elite consumption in fact predates the reign of Antiochos I, who in a way seems to have capitalized on this phenomenon when developing the visual characteristics of his ruler cult.¹⁶¹

The global genealogies of the objects discussed above show that Samosata’s objectscape in the early 1st c. BCE was suddenly characterized by ‘cohesive cultural packages’ – recurring sets of global objects – that together made Samosata’s objectscape look ‘similarly different’ to many other contemporary Eurasian contexts, with different combinations of similar objects glocalised in sites throughout Eurasia.¹⁶² This curious combination of homogenization and heterogeneity on a supra-regional level provides the real context within which we should understand the palatial complex of Samosata,

161 Cf. Versluys 2017.

162 For cohesive cultural packages and glocalization, see Witcher 2014, 645.

a context that is worlds apart from the East-West dichotomy traditionally employed. Although the evidence for other social strata in Commagene is basically absent, it is clear that the highly intensified royal participation in supra-regional elite culture – increasing the behavioural compatibility of this higher social stratum with their global peers – must also have triggered a ‘globalizing momentum’ for Commagene as a whole.¹⁶³ This momentum should be understood as both the consequence and the subsequent active trigger of increased connectivity in Eurasia from the late 2nd / early 1st c. BCE onwards. It underlines that Commagene became an integral player in the wider Hellenistic koine, and therefore should not be understood as merely a marginal backwater.¹⁶⁴

By taking transforming objectscales and their global object genealogies as the starting point of our analysis, it is possible to overcome the ‘black hole’ of *Kommageneforschung*: its hyper-focus on Antiochos I and his ruler cult. These *moyenne durée* transformations of Commagene in some way decentre and contextualize the reign of the protagonist of Commagenian scholarship, showing that his seemingly incredible archaeological legacy can in fact be understood within larger-scale developments in late-Hellenistic Eurasia.

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163 For elites triggering ‘globalizing momentum’ see Sommer 2014, 188.

164 For a thorough discussion and deconstruction of the supposed ‘marginality’ of Commagene in Mediterranean and Near Eastern scholarship, see Versluys 2017.

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The Syncretistic Episode in Late-Hellenistic Commagene* *The Greek-Persian Religious Concept of Antiochos I and the Ethnicity of the Local Population*

BRUNO JACOBS

The End of the Episode

The so-called Laodike inscription on the capital of a column at the Karakuş tumulus (Kb) reads¹:

“The Great King Mithradates, son of the Great King Antiochos and Queen Isias, consecrated the monument in eternal memory of Queen Laodike, sister of the King and wife of the King of Kings Orodes, and in his own honour.”

These lines are obviously related to the relief on the capital (fig. 1). It shows Mithradates II in handshake with the deceased. Laodike is depicted in chiton and cloak, Mithradates II in long shirt gathered between the legs, with trousers, long cloak and Armenian tiara².

While Laodike could hardly have found her last resting place on the spot, since she probably died in Parthia, three other female relatives of the king were buried here³, as can be seen from the so-called Isias inscription (Ka), another text found at Karakuş: Isias, the mother of Mithradates II and wife of Antiochos I, Mithradates' sister Antiochis, and his daughter Aka.⁴

* The author is much indebted to Michael Blömer and Stephan G. Schmid for valuable hints and discussions, and he is very grateful to Wouter F.M. Henkelman for his assistance with the English version of this article.

1 For the first time the wording of the inscription was presented by Wagner 1983, 208–212.

2 Wagner 1983, 210 pl. 52,3; Riedel 2018, 121–122; cf. Brijder 2014, fig. 126a–b.

3 Wagner 1983, 212.

4 Waldmann 1991, 200–201.



Fig. 1 Karakuş: Relief showing Mithradates II in handshake with his deceased sister Laodike, photo and © B. Jacobs

For his wife Isias and probably for one of his daughters, be it Laodike or Antiochis, Antiochos I had – probably not long before his death – two stelae erected at the end of the row of his maternal ancestors on Nemrud Dağ.⁵

This connection brings the sites of Nemrud Dağ and Karakuş chronologically closer. The creation of the latter may have been started jointly by Antiochos I and Mithradates II during their synarchy, but was completed only under the sole government of Mithradates II, since the inscriptions Ka and Kb both name him alone as consecrator.⁶

In both aforementioned inscriptions Mithradates II calls himself βασιλεὺς μέγας – “Great King” – and thus follows in his father’s footsteps; similarly he adopts his father’s Armenian Tiara as insignia of power.⁷

5 The identification of Isias, the wife of Antiochos I, mentioned in the Isias inscription with Isias Philostorgos seems almost certain (Jacobs 2000, 301–306). With regard to the person depicted on the last ancestor stela, the assumption that a daughter of the king was represented here could be made plausible (Jacobs 2000, 304–306), but it can hardly be decided whether Laodike (Jacobs 2000, 305–306) or Antiochis (Facella 2006, 272–275) was depicted here.

6 Cf. Jacobs 2000, 303–304.

7 Wagner 1983, 210. Humann – Puchstein 1890, 222; Sullivan 1977, 775–776, and Jacobs 2009, 55 assumed that Mithradates was depicted with the conical tiara, the headdress also worn by the predecessors of Antiochos I.

Apart from these two connecting factors, however, there is essentially no continuity between father and son. The motif of the *dexiosis*, in which, during the last decades, Antiochos I was shown dozens of times in a handshake with the Greco-Persian *theokrasiai* Zeus-Oromasdes, Apollon-Mithras-Helios-Hermes, Herakles-Artagnes-Ares, and with another female deity⁸, now returns to being an evocation of the farewell to a deceased, as it had been known from grave reliefs of the classical period.⁹ The quartet of three male gods and one female deity, which had dominated the inscriptions and monuments of Antiochos I since 62 BCE, is no longer mentioned; the then omnipresent combination of Greek and ‘Persian’ elements has disappeared. The riding costume in which Mithradates is dressed on the relief at Karakuş does not invalidate this statement. Although it is sometimes called *Persian* in written sources¹⁰, the costume has always been worn by the Commagenian rulers and therefore cannot be interpreted as a component of the Greco-Persian mixed concept designed by Antiochos I.

From the fact that the sanctuary on Nemrud Dağ, a project initiated by Antiochos only in the later years of his rule, remained unfinished¹¹, it follows that Mithradates II after his father’s death quickly abandoned the programme. The explanation for this is simple: Antiochos I was, on the one hand, the son of Mithradates I, who referred *via* his ancestors to the Armenian satrap Orontes and *via* him, a son-in-law of Artaxerxes II, to the Persian Achaemenid house; on the other hand, his mother Laodike had been a daughter of the Seleucid ruler Antiochos VIII Grypos. These lines of descent from Persians and Hellenes, ἐμοῦ γένους εὐτυχιστάτη ρίζα (“the most fortunate roots of my ancestry”), as Antiochos says, just came together in his person, but not in a comparably descriptive and convincing way in that of his son – a good reason for Mithradates II to cease the programme.

An idea of the pantheon, to which Mithradates II paid homage from then on, can be gleaned from the rock inscription of Ariaramnes, located on the right bank of the Euphrates at Damlica.¹² According to the reading of the damaged text by Sencer Şahin, Ariaramnes, son of Pallaios, possibly an architect of Mithradates II, had unfinished statues finished and erected in a sanctuary. Also, he had himself installed a statue of Zeus Soter and possibly another one of a second deity, which Şahin supposed to have been Apollon Epekoos.¹³

The naming of Zeus with the epithet Soter, but without an Iranian name counterpart, indicates that the venerated gods were now reduced to their Greek component again, and the renunciation of the reference to a Greco-Persian descent and to all ‘Per-

8 For the interpretation of the handshake motif on reliefs of Antiochos I see Jacobs – Rollinger 2005, 150–151.

9 Cremer 1995.

10 Jacobs 2017, 245–247.

11 Şahin 1991b; Jacobs 1991.

12 Şahin 1991a, 101–105.

13 Şahin 1991a, 105; Versluys 2017, 98.

sian' details, as practiced on Karakuş, brings Mithradates II close to the *beginnings* of his father's reign. By abdicating the handshake with the gods and the demonstration of his own divinity, he even fell short of the pretensions his predecessor enunciated in his early years of reign, as illustrated by the stele from Sofraz Köy (fig. 2)¹⁴ and by another one from Seleukeia on the Euphrates/Zeugma¹⁵, whose older inscription on the back of the stele (BEe) also dates from this early period.¹⁶ The inscription was later etched and replaced by a new one (BEc), which already presupposes Antiochos' turn to a Greco-Persian pantheon.¹⁷



Fig. 2 Gaziantep, Arch. Mus.: Stele of Antiochos I from Sofraz Köy, from Wagner 2000, 16 fig. 21

The Dating of the Sofraz Köy Stele

Meaning and dating of the stele from Sofraz Köy have been discussed in detail by Jörg Wagner. He argues that this stele does not only belong to the early years of Antiochos, but also marks the beginning of representative large-scale sculpture in Hellenistic

14 Wagner – Petzl 1976.

15 Crowther – Facella 2003.

16 Crowther – Facella 2003, 45–53.

17 Crowther – Facella 2003, 57–61.

Commagene. Previously, reliefs had repeatedly been dated to the time of Antiochos' predecessor Mithradates I. In view of the fact that Antiochos I notes in the introductory text of the stele that he was "the first who adopted the *kitaris*" (πρῶτος ἀναλαβὼν τὴν κίταριν), these earlier approaches can be rejected, for all stelae, which show a ruler wearing the Armenian tiara, cannot have come into being before Antiochos' accession to power. In the end, there were no monuments left that could, with sufficient reason, be dated earlier than 70/69 BCE, the time when Antiochos should have ascended the Commagenian throne.¹⁸ Now the year 62 BCE, more precisely July 7, 62 BCE, means a *terminus ante quem* for the origin of the stele from Sofraz Köy. That date marks a celestial event, observed and meaningfully interpreted by Antiochos' astrologers: the planets Jupiter, Mercury and Mars simultaneously stood in the constellation Leo, whose main star is Regulus, the king's star; the moon was also involved.¹⁹ The event is illustrated by the so-called Lion Horoscope (fig. 3). It depicts the impressive figure of a lion, whose character as a constellation is illustrated by 19 eight-pointed stars. The moon is introduced into the picture as a crescent hanging in front of the lion's chest like a piece of jewellery. Above the back of the lion, in the form of sixteen-pointed stars,



Fig. 3 Berlin, Staatliche Museen: The so-called Lion-Horoscope from the western terrace of the sanctuary on Nemrud Dağ, plaster cast, photo and © H. R. Goette

¹⁸ Wagner 1983, 202–203.

¹⁹ Neugebauer – van Hoesen 1959, 14–16; cf. Heilen 2005 on the difficulties of fixing the date of the celestial event, if there is no time frame determined by other sources. This is, however, as the present author is convinced, meanwhile given and the time frame limited to the early years of the reign of Antiochos (Jacobs 2015, 235 n. 5).



Fig. 4 Nemrud Dağ, western terrace: Symbols of planets on the so-called Lion-Horoscope, photo and © B. Jacobs (photo-inv. 88-09-19)

the three planets are indicated (fig. 4), equated with Zeus, Apollo and Heracles (see below), those gods who, together with a female partner, dominated the imagery of the sanctuaries erected after this date.

The date of the adoption of the *kitaris*, as a matter of course, means a *terminus post quem* for the origin of the stele from Sofraz Köy. Wagner has identified two possible dates within the period between 70 and 62 BCE for the adoption of this headgear: In the primary publication of the stele in 1976 he favoured 66/65 BCE, the year of the capitulation of Tigranes the Great to Pompeius²⁰, in a later article 69/68 BCE, the year of Tigranes' withdrawal from the areas west of the Euphrates and his defeat by Lucullus.²¹ Wagner connects the acceptance of the attribute μέγας – “Great” –, which Antiochos does not yet use on the stele from Sofraz Köy, with the territorial gains the Commagenian king was awarded with at the congress of Amisos in the winter of 65/64 BCE. At that time Commagene was enlarged by territories in the south of the ancestral dominion including Seleukeia on the Euphrates.²² The stele from Sofraz Köy would thus have originated between 69 and 65/64 BCE.

The initiative to use large-scale pictorial art as a means of representation often, however, tells a success story associated with territorial gains. The beginnings of Achae-

20 Wagner – Petzl 1976, 206–207.

21 Wagner 1983, 200–203.

22 For circumstances and duration of the affiliation of Seleukeia on the Euphrates/Zeugma to the kingdom of Commagene see Wagner 1976, 56–64; cf. Wagner 1983, 203–204; French 1991. For the temporal relationship of the denominations *Seleukeia on the Euphrates* and *Zeugma* see Wagner 1976, 65–70.

menid and Sasanid court art provide examples of this, as do the reigns of those Assyrian rulers under whom pictorial reports of deeds were created on orthostat reliefs, murals or bronze bands used to decorate city and temple gates. From this point of view a dating of the stele from Sofraz Köy between 64 and 62 BCE would even be preferable.²³ The previously mentioned stele from Seleukeia on the Euphrates/Zeugma, whose original text on the back corresponds to that of the stele from Sofraz Köy, can only have originated in this period.

The Genesis of the *theokrasiai*

Compared with the stele from Sofraz Köy and the inscription BEE texts from the time after 62 BCE show, as is well known, the following essential changes:

1. The circle of deities distinguished by nomination evolves. On the Sofraz Köy stele these are Apollon Epekoos and Artemis Diktyinna, later they are Zeus-Oromasdes, Apollon-Mithras-Helios-Hermes and Herakles-Artagnes-Ares with Hera Teleia or the goddess of the home country Commagene as the single female deity.
2. The male deities no longer bear purely Greek names, but *theokrasiai* are formed by adding an Iranian name to each of the Greek names or name combinations.

The canonization of the pantheon and the introduction of Greco-Iranian *theokrasiai* did not necessarily take place at the same time. On the other hand, the preserved monuments do not give any hint that the two steps were actually chronologically separated.

The privilege of being mentioned by name in inscriptions since 62 BCE was given to gods who could be associated with the planets involved in the celestial event mentioned previously: Jupiter, Mercury and Mars. On the lion horoscope the celestial bodies are called by epithets, which, scientifically speaking, point to their colour effect:²⁴ from left to right these are The Fiery (Πυρόεις), The Glistening (Στίλβων) and The Shining (Φαέθων).²⁵ On the one hand, the constellation was probably perceived as so important because the celestial bodies passing Regulus were that numerous; more than half of the planets known at that time were involved. On the other hand, the constellation offered possibilities of association with extraordinarily prominent representatives of the celestial sphere: Antiochos and his astrologers chose the connection of Phaëthon with Zeus (Φαέθων Διός), of Stilbon with Apollo (Στίλβων Απόλλωνος) and of Pyroeis with Heracles (Πυρόεις Ἡρακλέ[ους]) (fig. 4).

23 The assumption of the title μέγας would then not be linked to the territorial expansion.

24 Boll 1916, 19–26; Cumont 1935, 12; Hübner 2000, 1073 with fig. 6.

25 A very good reproduction is depicted in Wagner 2000, 20 fig. 26.

Of these, only the first equating, Phaëton = Zeus, was common.²⁶ For the other cases alternative equatings were known and apparently more popular. Thus, Plutarchus gives the identifications Phaëthon = Zeus, Stilbon = Hermes and Pyroëis = Ares and traces them back to Plato.²⁷ Particularly the equating of Stilbon with Hermes was more common than that with Apollo and can be found, for example, in Eratosthenes and Cicero.²⁸ The Antiochian identification is occasionally cited as an alternative.²⁹ For Pyroëis, the name Ares was the more common one, found again in Cicero.³⁰ Pliny and others, however, mention Heracles as an alternative association³¹ and some trace this back to the Chaldeans and attribute the association with Ares to the Greeks.³²

The more common equatings, Hermes with Stilbon and Ares with Pyroëis, were appropriated by Antiochos I in the relevant inscriptions for his *theokrasiai*, so that the names of the gods became composite. A passage in Ps.-Aristotle's *de mundo* sounds like a summary of the identification possibilities considered by Antiochos: "The position nearest to this sphere is occupied by the so-called circle of the 'Shining star', which also bears the name of Zeus; then follows the circle of the 'Fiery star', called by the names both of Heracles and of Ares; next comes the 'Glistening star', which some call sacred to Hermes, others sacred to Apollo."³³

Up to this point only the naming of Helios in the *theokrasia* Apollon-Mithras-Helios-Hermes remains unexplained, but the solar aspects of Apollon which are mentioned for example by Plutarch³⁴ should be responsible for this.

- 26 Of the numerous references only Cic. Nat. D. 2,20,52; Apul. de mundo 2; Iohannes Lydus, de mensibus 2,10, should be mentioned. Occasionally Phaënon, actually Saturn, and Phaëthon were confused, for example in Eratosth. Catasterismi 43; Hyg. Astr. 2,42 (Robert 1878, 194–195) and in Sch. Germ., BP. 102,10. On the problem of denomination see generally Merkelbach 1984, 55 n. 13.
- 27 Plut. Mor. 889b (= *De Placitis Philosophorum* 2,15,4): Πλάτων μετὰ τὴν τῶν ἀπλανῶν θέσιν πρῶτον φαίνοντα λεγόμενον τὸν τοῦ Κρόνου, δεύτερον Φαέθοντα τὸν τοῦ Διός, τρίτον Πυρόεντα τὸν τοῦ Ἄρεος, τέταρτον Ἐωσφόρον τὸν τῆς Ἀφροδίτης, πέμπτον Στίλβοντα τὸν τοῦ Ἑρμοῦ, ἕκτον Ἥλιον, ἕβδομον Σελήνην. Cf. Pl. epin. 986a–987d.
- 28 Eratosth. Catasterismi 43; Cic. Nat. D. 2,20,53; Hyg. Astr. 2,42 (Robert 1878, 196–197); Iohannes Lydus, de mensibus 2,9; Sch. Germ., BP. 103,8.
- 29 Apul. de mundo 2.
- 30 Cic. Nat. D. 2,20,53; Plut. Mor. 1029B (= *Compendium libri de animae procreatione* in Timaeo 32 B); Plut. frg. 157, 5 (= *Περὶ τῶν ἐν Πλαταίαις δαιδάλων*): ... ὁ δὲ πυροειδῆς Ἄρης ἐπωνόμασται; cf. Iohannes Lydus, de mensibus 2,8.
- 31 Eratosth. Catasterismi 43; Plin. HN 2,34: *Tertium Martis, quod quidam Herculis vocant* [...]; Hyg. Astr. 2,42 (Robert 1878, 194–195); Apul. de mundo 2; Sch. Germ., BP. 102,10.
- 32 Macrob. Sat. 3,12,6: *Chaldaei quoque stellam Herculis vocant, quam reliqui omnes Martis appellant*; Sch. Apoll. Rhod. 3,1377.
- 33 Ps.-Aristot. Mund. 392a: ... ἐφεξῆς δὲ ὁ τοῦ Φαέθοντος καὶ Διὸς λεγόμενος, εἰθ' ὁ Πυροίης, Ἡρακλέους τε καὶ Ἄρεος προσαγορευόμενος, ἐξῆς δὲ Στίλβων, ὃν ἱερὸν Ἑρμοῦ καλοῦσιν ἔνιοι, τινὲς δὲ Ἀπόλλωνος [...].
- 34 Plut. mor. frg. 157, 5 (= *Περὶ τῶν ἐν Πλαταίαις δαιδάλων*): [...] ὁ μὲν ἥλιος Ἀπόλλων κέκληται [...].

For the equating with the moon one fell back on Hera, although some other identifications would have been possible.³⁵ The choice for Hera may have been informed mainly by the fact that at the latest with the integration of that female figure into the community of privileged gods and into the row of colossal statues at Arsameia on the Nymphaios mythological associations came to mind. The appearance of the spouse of Zeus doubtlessly served to recall the kinship among the immortals, a role that must later have been taken over by the personification of Commagene.³⁶

The fact that the supplementation of the names of the male gods by one Iranian name element each occurred in the course of this new concept is not strictly provable, but likely. For the choice of the Iranian names Antiochos and his advisors could draw on discourse knowledge accessible at their time. Still the 3rd c. CE author Diogenes Laertius claims that already Eudoxos (of Knidos, 4th c. BCE), Theopompos (of Chios, 4th c. BCE) and Hermippos (of Smyrna, 3rd c. BCE) equated Zeus with Oromasdes.³⁷ Strabo, an approximate contemporary of Antiochos, announces in a well-known passage that the Persians worshipped the sun and called it Mithras.³⁸ Both, Oromasdes and Mithras, are also documented in primary sources of Achaemenid times.³⁹ To Heracles all this does not apply. But the equating of a certain, mostly unnamed god with Heracles was popular in the Arsacid Empire, as is attested by numerous illustrations.⁴⁰ In the Greek-Parthian bilingue on the thighs of the Heracles from Mesene, a well-known

35 Roscher, *MLII*,₂ (1894–1897) 3182–3189 s. v. Mondgöttin; on Hera as moon goddess see Roscher, *ML I*,₂ (1886–1890) 2087–2098 s. v. Hera. Harry Falk has recently proposed August 6, 62 BCE as the date represented by the Lion relief (Falk 2015, 276–279). But as he is inclined to identify the crescent on the breast of the Lion as representing the planet Venus, albeit its divine counterpart Aphrodite is not mentioned in any inscription, the proposal seems hardly convincing.

36 Cf. on this Jacobs 1998, 44–45.

37 Diog. Laert. 1,8: [...]· καὶ δύο κατ' αὐτοὺς εἶναι ἀρχάς, ἀγαθὸν δαίμονα καὶ κακὸν δαίμονα· καὶ τῷ μὲν ὄνομα εἶναι Ζεὺς καὶ Ἰστρομάσδης, τῷ δὲ Ἄρης καὶ Ἀρειμάνιος. φησὶ δὲ τοῦτο καὶ Ἑρμίππος ἐν τῷ πρώτῳ περὶ Μάγων καὶ Εὐδοξοῦ ἐν τῇ Περιόδῳ καὶ Θεόπομπος ἐν τῇ σγδῷ τῶν Φιλιππικῶν· – “[...]· and further that they believe in two principles, the good spirit and the evil spirit, the one called Zeus or Oromasdes, the other Hades or Arimanius. This is confirmed by Hermippus in his first book about the Magi, Eudoxus in his Voyage round the World, and Theopompus in the eighth book of his Philippica” (transl. R. D. Hicks). Also Plutarch mentions this god (Plut. Alexander 30; Plut. Mor. 1026B = *Compendium libri de animae procreatione* in Timaeo 27): [...] Ζωροάστρης δὲ θεὸν καὶ δαίμονα, τὸν μὲν Ἰστρομάσδην καλῶν τὸν δ' Ἀρειμάνιον.

38 Str. 15,3,13.

39 Auramazdā- [Oromasdes] is omnipresent in Achaemenid royal inscriptions; Mit/tra- [Mithras] is mentioned only in some later ones: A²Ha, A²Hb(?), A²Sa § 2, A²Sd § 2, A²Pa § 4.

40 See, e. g., rock relief at Tang-e Butān: Vanden Berghe – Schippmann 1985, 46–53 fig. 4. pls. 11–15; Mathiesen 1992, 125–130 figs. 7–11; rock relief at Tang-e Sarvāk: Vanden Berghe – Schippmann 1985, 62–64 fig. 7. pl. 23; Mathiesen 1992, fig. 15; von Gall 2000, 320–322 fig. 1; statue and relief from Masjid-e Solaiman: Ghirshman 1976, pl. LXX & 23–24; LXXXVI 1 & 25; relief from Assur: Mathiesen 1992, 193–194 no. 165 fig. 46; reliefs from Dura-Europos: Mathiesen 1992, 195 nos. 168–169 figs. 48–49.

bronze statuette from Seleukeia on the Tigris, the Greek version calls the depicted deity Heracles, the Parthian Vərəθragna (*wrtrgn*).⁴¹

Greco-Persian Gods and Ethnicity in Late-Hellenistic Commagene

The recipe of the programmes for the furnishing of sanctuaries commissioned by Antiochos I since 62 BCE shows a versatile integration into the Hellenistic world and an eclectic access to very different elements, which seemed suitable to him as devices for self-presentation and for the representative design of his sanctuaries. One of these elements was the Armenian tiara, the *kitaris*, which he adopted after the defeat of Tigranes the Great. In the inscription from Sofraz Köy, the claim that he was the first to accept this headgear is in a certain way presented as one among the royal titles: ὁ κτίστης καὶ εὐεργέτης καὶ πρῶτος ἀναλαβὼν τὴν κίταριν [...]. The acceptance of this headgear was certainly associated with the claim to henceforth represent the central power in the middle Euphrates region.⁴² With the decision to take the heavenly constellation from July 7, 62 BCE as a cause to privilege Zeus as well as Apollon and Herakles and to address them by name in his inscriptions and visualise them as statues and on reliefs, Antiochos created a particularly illustrious college for himself. Zeus, after all, was the highest of the gods and the two others were progenitors of important Hellenistic royal houses, for instance of the Seleucids and Attalids. The information used for the design of the Iranian element within the syncretistic programme was based on knowledge that is also reflected in the work of contemporary authors like Strabo and is still found in younger authors such as Curtius Rufus or Diogenes Laertius. The ‘globalization’ that is revealed here demonstrably includes direct contacts with the Parthian Empire and its ruling dynasty. In the depiction of the paternal ancestors, especially in those of the Achaemenid rulers, various elements can be identified that are far closer to contemporary Parthian fashion than to that of Achaemenid times.⁴³

Finally, the question may be posed what the intentions of the programme were. Recurring in various ways to Greek traditions and to traditions called Persian it was, in the past, often understood as a means of the Commagenian ruler to make himself understandable to the powerful neighbours in the West and East, the Roman and the Parthian Empires.⁴⁴ This interpretation took the imagery as a defensive strategy. At the same time, it revealed a somewhat orientalist view, since it was easily assumed that the Arsacids could be addressed by references to the chronologically distant Achae-

41 Invernizzi 1985, 423–425, no. 231. ills. on p. 340–341. 424; Thommen 2010, 461–462; Weber 2010, 569–571.

42 Wagner – Petzl 1976, 207; Wagner 1983, 200–201.

43 Jacobs 2017, 237–247.

44 Cf. Jacobs 2003, 118–119.

menids. Since both great powers – in the long run particularly Rome – actually posed a threat to the sovereignty of Commagene, the idea of a defensive strategy that was to prevent a faction within the country from calling on one of its powerful neighbours to help it achieve its own goals and thus offer a pretext for military interference was actually obvious. The present author connected the dividing line between possible factions with population groups that saw themselves in Greek or Iranian tradition.⁴⁵ He assumed that the affinity of parts of the population to one or the other group had its roots on the one hand in an immigration of Greeks and Macedonians in the aftermath of Alexander's conquest and of events thereafter, and on the other hand in that of Iranians during the Achaemenid period. This assumption may seem obvious⁴⁶, but is difficult to prove.

Be that as it may, the proposal cannot be invalidated by pointing out that the language spoken in the region was Aramaic – an assumption that, in itself, is not undisputed – and that the population therefore was Semitic.⁴⁷ In this sense Andreas Kropp argued that Antiochos had ignored the religious traditions of his kingdom and that the Greek and Persian gods were equally alien to the native population.⁴⁸ This statement inadmissibly postulates a direct correlation between language and ethnicity. Beyond this it not only contradicts the present author's assumption that there were antagonisms between groups of different ethnic origin, but also denies the existence of such groups.

The argumentation of Miguel John Versluys essentially postulates that 'Greek' and 'Persian' were not ethnic but exclusively social definitions. As an example for this view he adduces the rulers of Egypt, who were to play a role as new pharaohs and another one as Hellenistic kings. It was not by chance that the first role fell to them during the enthronement ritual in the old capital Memphis, the latter in the new foundation Alexandria.⁴⁹ So their respective identities were certainly socially defined, but nevertheless not independent from the historically conditioned ethnic realities as a whole⁵⁰. Versluys refers in this context to the rich name material, which shows that individuals could bear both a Greek and an Egyptian name and could assume one or another

45 Such a self-positioning of the inhabitants of Commagene had not necessarily to be equated with corresponding ethnic affiliation; see also the explanations of van der Spek 2009, 102–105 on "multiple ethnic identities".

46 Cf. the corresponding considerations of Joannès and Clarke and Jackson on Hellenistic Mesopotamia and Syria (Joannès 2014, 111–112; Clarke – Jackson 2014, 98).

47 Kropp 2013, 23 with n. 116. 358 with n. 94. According to Millar 1993, 452–456 there is, however, no proof that the indigenous population spoke Aramaic.

48 Kropp 2013, 314–315.

49 Versluys 2017, 142–143.

50 Cf. Landvatter 2018 who understands the burial practice of cremation in the cemetery of Shatby in Alexandria, as opposed to inhumation, as a rejection of Egyptian practice. Regarding the identity of those who chose this form of burial the aim was, as Landvatter explains, a demonstration of being an 'immigrant' rather than decidedly 'Macedonian' or 'Greek'.

identity depending on the situation, for which the author adopts the linguistic term code-switching.⁵¹

The limits of the viability of such a comparison become apparent when one looks at the situation in Babylonia, where also Greeks and an old-established population lived together. Here, too, name material is available, albeit to a lesser extent.

Gagik Sarkisian argued for Southern Mesopotamian Uruk that the Greeks, most of whom were domiciled there by Seleukos I Nikator, formed their own colony and became involved in the business life of the city only from the third quarter of the 3rd c. BCE, because only from this time onwards did their names appear in the cuneiform documents. From this time onwards there are occasional mixed marriages, some Babylonian inhabitants of Uruk adopted a second, Greek name and sometimes give Greek names to their children.⁵² In the time of Antiochos IV there was a further influx of Greeks.⁵³

Susan Sherwin-White and Tom Boiy have both dealt with the Akkadian-Greek and Greek-Akkadian double names. The first scholar confirms that the bearers of double names usually came from Babylonian families.⁵⁴ Boiy lists 17 Akkadian-Greek personal names; they mostly originate from the first half of the 2nd c. BCE and concentrate strongly on Uruk.⁵⁵ Boiy explains this with the fact that here – in contrast to Babylon, for example – most of the documents that came to us originate from family archives.⁵⁶

The assumption of a Greek name may have been an expression of a certain Hellenization.⁵⁷ Despite this, the site of Uruk has not yielded archaeological traces of cultural Hellenization.

The presence of Greeks in Babylonia was widespread.⁵⁸ Thus, under Seleukos III (225–223 BCE) they are attested at Larsa and a clay-tablet, which Bernard Haussoullier showed to have originated from the German excavations in Babylon, lists a number of *epheboi* and *neoi* who won victories in sporting competitions, all of whom bear Greek names.⁵⁹

In the material from Babylon there are, at best, two Akkadian-Greek double names: Marduk-eriba = Heliodoros and Aristreas = Ardi-Belit.⁶⁰ Like the persons with double

51 Versluys 2017, 147.

52 Sarkisian 1974; Boiy 2005, 57.

53 Sarkisian 1974.

54 Sherwin-White 1983, esp. 211.

55 Boiy 2005, 49–50. 54.

56 Boiy 2005, 56; cf. Sherwin-White 1983, 216. In the case of Uruk, the holders of double names are members of the Aḫūtu family (Boiy 2005, 57).

57 Sherwin-White 1983, 212. 218; Boiy 2005, 290.

58 McEwan 1982, 66, no. 26; Sherwin-White 1983, 217.

59 Haussoullier 1909, 352.

60 Boiy 2004, 290; cf. Sherwin-White 1983. The latter notes that the provenance of a clay vessel lid with the Greek inscription ΑΡΙΣΤΕΑΣ ΩΙ ΑΛΛΟ ΟΝΟΜΑ ΑΡΔΙΒΗΛΙΤΕΙΟΣ in the Yale Babylonian Collection (MLC 2632) is uncertain.

names from Uruk, they may have had a double identity, and they may have acted on one occasion under the Babylonian, on another under the Greek name. A Greek name could, Sherwin-White supposes, help to achieve or to defend a political position.⁶¹

In Babylon the Hellenization, suggested by the choice of names, manifests itself also in the archaeological record: a theatre and a palaestra are known, and two private houses with peristyles came to light in the district of Merkes. Diodorus also mentions an agora.⁶² Several other finds of Greek character have come to light.⁶³

These observations about the different places cast an iridescent light on the relationships between the natives and the immigrated Greeks. Robartus van der Spek has dealt with this topic in several articles.⁶⁴ As others did in relation to Uruk, van der Spek believes that under Antiochos IV a (renewed) influx of Greeks could be observed in Babylon.⁶⁵ The Greek community appears in the sources as *puliṭe* or *puliṭāni* and had its centre in the theatre, called *bīt tamarti*, “house of observation”, a calque translation of the Greek *theatron*. It was subject to the *pāhāt Bābili*, which may have corresponded to an *epistates*, while the group of long-established Babylonians had its center in the *bīt milki*, the “house of deliberation”, and followed a *šatammu*, the administrative head (of the temple), and the *kiništu*, the council (of the temple).⁶⁶ On a clay tablet in the British Museum, the so-called *Greek Community Chronicle*, Greeks in Babylon occur as those “who anoint with oil just like the *pol[itai]* who are in Seleukeia, the royal city, on the Tigris and the King’s Canal.” The Greeks were thus perceived as those who practiced sport in the *palaestra* and oiled themselves for it.⁶⁷ The result is a picture of urban communities that are politically and socially clearly separated from each other. The same *Chronicle* also makes it clear that the coexistence of the various groups, even if marriages were possible, did not take place without conflict, but rather led to confrontations and even violence.⁶⁸

In the examples quoted it appears that the coexistence of Greeks and natives in the various places looked quite different. Is there comparable information about the conditions in late-Hellenistic Commagene? Here the case of Seleukeia on the Euphrates/ Zeugma may be relevant. Seleukeia was a foundation of Seleukos I Nikator and seems incipiently only to have ensured control over the Euphrates crossing, which was se-

61 Sherwin-White 1983, 218; cf. Boiy 2005, 58.

62 Diod. Sic. 34/35,21.

63 Boiy 2004, 290–291; 2005, 58. On the difficulty to establish cultural and ethnic identities from material remains alone see Clarke – Jackson 2014.

64 van der Spek 2001; van der Spek 2006; van der Spek 2009.

65 Cf. Boiy 2004, 207–209, who connects this settling with Antiochos III.

66 van der Spek 2009, 108–109.

67 London, Brit. Mus. BM 33870: van der Spek 2004; van der Spek 2009, 108. On palaestrae as “being quintessentially Greek” see Clarke – Jackson 2014, 103–104.

68 See also on this the *Greek Community Chronicle* which mentions an armed conflict: van der Spek 2004; Finkel et. al. forthcoming, 314, l.7.

cured here by a fortification.⁶⁹ In contrast, a numerically significant Greek population was found in Apameia on the left bank of the river, which also owed its origin to Seleukos I.⁷⁰ According to Catherine Abadie-Reynal the city developed typical early-Hellenistic characteristics, especially by its layout according to the Hippodamian system.⁷¹

The oldest evidence of occupation at Seleukeia dates back to the end of the 3rd c. BCE. The second half of the 2nd and the first half of the 1st c. BCE saw a dynamic development and a considerable expansion of the settlement area. This has been attributed to an influx of immigrants, most likely caused by refugees from Apameia who gave way to Parthian threats. A layer of destruction testifies to violent clashes over Apameia.⁷² The organization of urban space in Seleukeia, however, did not develop in a similarly organized way as in Apameia, but more freely. It has in the past been tried to locate a theatre, *agorai*, a *bouleuterion*, a *gymnasion* and a *stadion* as evidence of a cultural Hellenization, but, as William Aylward states, “none of these has been proven by excavation”.⁷³ After all, as he admits in the same context, there is an epigraphic hint to a *bouleuterion*, since an inscription refers to a *boule of the people*. In connection with some of the seating steps excavated in 2004, he speaks cautiously of a theatre-like building, which, however, cannot be proven to have been “an arena of spectacle”. Moreover, this building certainly cannot be dated to the epoch relevant in our context, but probably to only around 100 CE.⁷⁴

Despite all this the question arises whether, if the above favoured dating of the stele from Sofraz Köy – and of that from Seleukeia on the Euphrates/Zeugma with the essentially same text – after the congress of Amisos is correct, the assumption of the title *philhellen* (φιλέλλην) could be connected with the gain of Seleukeia on the Euphrates/Zeugma.

Philhellen has been widely discussed as an element of the titles of the Arsacids. One view is that the title is owed to a political attention of Mithradates I (171–139/38 BCE) and his successors to the strong Greek population element within their empire.⁷⁵ This notion goes against the opinion that, given the assumption of numerous institutions and practices from the Seleucids – titles and insignia of rule, institutions in administration and army as well as the coinage –, the assumption of the title *philhellen* also was a concession to the Greek cultural dominance.⁷⁶ Antonio Invernizzi has put forward

69 Abadie-Reynal 2015, 825.

70 Plin. HN 5,33; cf. App. Syr. 11,9.

71 Abadie-Reynal – Gaborit 2003, 150–153.

72 Abadie-Reynal 2015, 825–826; cf. Abadie-Reynal – Gaborit 2003, 156.

73 The existence of a theatre on the northern slope of Belkis Tepe has been supposed by Algaze et al. 1994, 34, and Kennedy – Kennedy 1998, 53 fig. 3,2; excavation by Abadie-Reynal – Güllüce 2005, 357–364; Önal 2012, 198 speaks decidedly of a theatre; doubts were articulated by Aylward 2013, 15.

74 Abadie-Reynal – Güllüce 2005, 363–364.

75 Wolski 1983; Wolski 1989, 442; Dąbrowa 1998.

76 Wiesehöfer 2000; Wiesehöfer 2014.

a compromise in saying that Mithradates' self-designation as *philhellen* "masks his request or pretension of the support and imperial recognition by the flourishing Greek communities of Asia, in whose hands especially was the culture of the time, in particular the culture based on images."⁷⁷

As for Antiochos, the task of integrating a new territory, and in particular a city strongly marked by a Greek-Macedonian population, into his empire might have suggested the adoption of the title *philhellen*. For this measure a parallel can be named: It seems that the Nabataean ruler Aretas III accepted the same title on the occasion of his acquisition of Damascus in 84 BCE or a little later⁷⁸, as coins of the city with the inscription βασιλέως Ἀρέτου φιλέλληνας suggest.⁷⁹

An ethnically Greek part of the population as a potential addressee of the decorative programmes of Antiochos can therefore hardly be denied. According to the statement of Invernizzi quoted above, one may wonder to what extent the acquisition of Seleukeia on the Euphrates facilitated the realisation of the pictorial agenda Antiochos had in mind.

It is more difficult to answer the question of whether the Persian elements in those decorative programmes for their part resonated with a population element that saw itself in Iranian tradition. Matthew Canepa's remarks seek a different explanation for their existence. He argues that the Greek element, i. e. language and visual forms as well as "the half-remembered traditions of the Persian Empire [...]" played an "important role as a common field in which to conceptualize royal power and contest legitimacy."⁸⁰ In this context the Persian traditions served to articulate "rival claims of power, legitimacy and independence" towards the Seleucids and later the Romans.⁸¹ The question is, however, whether the recourse to the Persians of Achaemenid times, which is not quite self-evident in view of the temporal distance, is sufficiently motivated by the genealogy of the ruler alone, especially since Mithradatids, Ariarathids and Artaxiads proceeded similarly.

The names of the dynasties and of numerous of their representatives refer to this ancestry. Unfortunately, Iranian name material from other social strata of late-Hellenistic Commagene is sparse. This is regrettable, even though one must always bear in mind that it is not permissible to infer from the occurrence of an Iranian name the ethnicity of its bearer. This is – despite the fact that not every member of a Commagenian military unit was recruited in Commagene – shown by the example of a horseman belonging to the cohort *II Flavia Commagenor(um)* named Zaccas[?], son of Pallaeus, stationed in Dacia in 123 CE. Zaccas[?] had six children with his wife Iulia Florentina,

77 Invernizzi 2011, 135.

78 Hackl et al. 2003, 38–39; Keller 2003, 142–144.

79 Meshorer 1975, 86 nos. 5–6. pl. 1.

80 Canepa 2017, 202–204.

81 Canepa 2017, 202.

three sons named Sabinus, Zabaeus and Achilles and three daughters named Arsama, Abisalma and Sabina.⁸² So two of the children had a Latin, one a Greek, two a Semitic and one an Iranian name. It is not to be underestimated as an indication of the importance of Iranian tradition when, still in the 2nd c. CE, parents gave one of their children the Iranian name Arsama.⁸³ Here Mitridates,⁸⁴ the name of a soldier of the cohort *I Commagenorum*, likewise attested by an inscription, has to be lined up. Also another Mithridates is to be mentioned, named in an inscription on a funerary altar, possibly from Sofraz, dated to around the middle of the 1st c. CE. Finally returning to late-Hellenistic Commagene, reference should be made to the aforementioned architect Ariaramnes,⁸⁵ the son of a certain Pallaïos.

It can hardly be denied that Persian rule under the Achaemenids had an influence on the population structure in the subjugated provinces.⁸⁶ Christoph Michels defined the “immigration of ‘Iranians’” as one of three aspects of Achaemenid rule; the two others are “the impact on the religious landscape” and “structural changes concerning the administration.”⁸⁷ While the grandchildren of the immigrants of Greco-Macedonian origin, as the examples of Babylonia and the case of Seleukeia on the Euphrates show, were often still recognizable as a group, little can be said about the descendants of the once immigrated ‘Iranians’ in this respect and this is all the more so as the use of Iranian names in a completely altered historical landscape steadily declined.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, the occurrence of Iranian names, still ascertainable in the 1st c. BCE and later, is in some way their legacy. Examples from the late-Hellenistic period can also be cited for the impact on the religious landscape, for instance a bilingual Aramaic-Greek rock inscription at Faraşa in Cappadocia. According to it, a certain Sagarïos, son of Maiphernes and strategos of Ariaramneia, performed magical rites for the god Mithras.⁸⁹ For Cappadocia Strabo reports that there were many sanctuaries consecrated to Persian gods.⁹⁰ The Persian gods, whom Antiochos called to his pantheon, may therefore well have

82 Pferdehirt 2004, no. 22: *ex equite Zaccæ Pallaei f(ilio) Syro et Iuliae Bithi fil(iae) F<l>orentinae ux-or(i) eius Bess(ae) et Arsamae f(iliae) eius et Abisalmae f(iliae) eius et Sabino f(ilio) eius et Zabaeo f(ilio) eius et Achilleo f(ilio) eius et Sabinae fil(iae) eius*. Yon 2018, 175.

83 Cf. the corresponding male name in Old Persian: Tavernier 2007, 1.2.3.: Aršāma- – “having a hero’s strength”.

84 AE 1938, 6; Yon 2018, 175. Regarding the name see, Tavernier 2007, 4.2.1109.: *Miṭradāta- – “given by Mithra”.

85 Tavernier 2007, 1.2.6.: Aryāramna- – “who creates peace for the Arians”.

86 Speidel 2005, 90; on Iranian presence in Asia Minor in the Achaemenid period Jacobs 2015, 101–102.

87 Michels 2017, 41.

88 See the change of character of the names that were given to the members of a family traceable over seven generations: Schmitz et al. 1988, 86–89. 91–95.

89 Vermaseren 1956, 19; Donner – Röllig 1966–69, no. 265; Michels 2017, 45: Σαγάριος Μα[φά]ρνου στρατηγ[ός] Αριαραμνεΐ(ας) ἐμάγευσε Μίθρηι // *sgr br mhyprn rb hy[l]’ mgyš [lm]trh*.

90 Str. 15,3,15: Ἐν δὲ τῇ Καππαδοκίᾳ – πολλὰ γὰρ ἐκεῖ τὸ τῶν Μάγων φῦλον (οἱ καὶ Πύρραιθοι καλοῦνται), πολλὰ δὲ καὶ τῶν Περσικῶν θεῶν ἱερά – [...].

been familiar to parts of the population. That with the integration of Iranian elements into the naming of the gods worshipped by Antiochos followers of those 'Persian' cults were, i. a., addressed and in a certain way privileged, may have been favoured by the genealogy of the ruler.

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Dynastic Zoroastrianism in Commagene

*The Religion of King Antiochos**

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The material and epigraphic legacy of king Antiochos I of Commagene is to a large extent religious in nature¹, but in spite of considerable intellectual efforts no satisfactory interpretation of ‘the religion of king Antiochos’ has ever been produced.² Attempts to reduce the complexity of the evidence to conventional labels such as ‘Hellenistic religion’ or ‘Zoroastrianism’ have failed, but the failures in these two cases – the main ones to have been suggested³ – are distinct in nature. In the former case, that of ‘Hellenistic religion’, the problem seems to be one of a lack of specificity. Although there may be good grounds to trace certain *longue durée* developments in the general religious culture of the ancient world in the Hellenistic period, that world itself is far too large and far too diverse to allow for a meaningful reconstruction of ‘religion’ in the period that would help us understand the evidence from Commagene better.⁴

- * Indispensable help with the writing of this article was received from my friends Miguel John Versluys, Antonio Panaino, and Lucinda Dirven. None of them should be blamed for any mistakes.
- 1 Although this claim in itself seems absolutely justified, and although popular accounts of the finds at Commagene make frequent appeals to it with titles like *Der Thron der Götter auf dem Nemrud Dağ* (Dörner 1987), existing scholarly literature has been extremely reluctant to delve into the religious aspects of the evidence. This reluctance is clearly in need of closer inspection and will be taken up below.
 - 2 The only attempts known to the present writer are Waldmann 1973 and Waldmann 1991, as well as Boyce – Grenet 1991, 309–352. Waldmann 1973 was based on a chronology of the inscriptions (divided over the reign of distinct kings) that has since been shown to be mistaken; Waldmann 1991 is based on interpretations of (evidence for) Zoroastrianism that are unacceptable. Boyce – Grenet 1991 is by far the best study of the religion of Commagene and has been unduly neglected in recent scholarship. Its main drawback, however, is that it rests on assumptions about the nature of Zoroastrianism that are anachronistic, and that it uses ‘ethnic’ arguments (i. e., interference from ‘local’ or ‘Greek’ religious traditions) in order to maintain those assumptions.
 - 3 I include ‘syncretism’ in the category of ‘Hellenistic religions’ as explanation. The most detailed (and much criticized) ‘Hellenistic’ interpretation of the inscription is probably that of Dörrie 1964, which focuses heavily on philosophical connections.
 - 4 This may be the reason why Dörrie 1964 ultimately sought the key to understanding the main cult inscription of Commagene in Hellenistic *philosophy*, and more particularly (and implausibly) in

The problem with the Zoroastrian interpretation is its exact opposite: that label has suffered in academic writing from being over-specific. Because of the nature of the evidence for the history of Zoroastrianism – a religion that did not write down either its religious or its literary texts⁵ and that mainly survived in a material form that did not require, and therefore did not leave, traceable evidence – scholars have tended to reconstruct the religion on the basis of two distinct clusters of textual evidence: an early liturgical corpus in Avestan and a late collection of priestly writings in Middle Persian.⁶ Because these two bodies of evidence are often in consonance with each other, scholars have postulated a comparatively stable ('conservative') tradition. It is this reconstructed tradition that has most often been used as the chief instrument of interpretation of all evidence that somehow, intuitively, strikes individual scholars as possibly 'Iranian' or 'Zoroastrian', including the evidence from Commagene. Since specialists in this field tend to be philologists, there is a clear 'textualist' bias even in the interpretation of material culture, including iconography.⁷

While this approach to the history of Zoroastrianism has unquestionably been productive in its potential to elucidate a large variety of Zoroastrian ideas, narratives and practices (most powerfully the extensive repertoire of purity rules), it comes at a significant cost. Two things are relevant for the present discussion: the first is that this approach makes it very difficult to trace and understand historical and regional variety and development. Although the two clusters of evidence are separated by almost two millennia and come from the opposite ends of the Iranian world (Central Asia and Southwestern Iran, respectively), the fact that in core assumptions and prescriptions

Euhemerism. It certainly is the reason why almost all discussions of the evidence restrict their interests to ruler cult. For the implausibility of this, see below.

- 5 In spite of appearances, this distinction is not anachronistic: in the Iranian world, the transmission of religious traditions and the transmission of literary works (of entertainment, panegyric, narrative, and instruction) were in the hands (or, more precisely, in the minds) of two distinct classes of specialists: priests and *gosans* respectively. The two lines of tradition intersect in what can be called the 'Communal Narrative' (De Jong forthcoming a), but in those cases where we have (later, written) evidence for meaningful stories in both priestly and epic traditions, a different emphasis can often be observed. This is the case, for example, with the story of Arjasp and Zarer, known from the Middle Persian text *Ayādgār ī Zarērān* and from Ferdowsi's *Shāhnāmeḥ*. Interestingly, the prescriptions king Antiochos gives for the organization of his (memorial) cult show that he invested equally in priests and *mousikoi*.
- 6 The early corpus are the texts known as the Avesta, in their own specific language; these texts are impossible to date, but it is generally believed that they span a period from the late-2nd to the mid-1st millennium BCE, and that they mainly came into being in Eastern Iran/Central Asia. Both chronologically and geographically, they are thus very far removed from Commagene in the 1st c. BCE. The late corpus are the Zoroastrian books in Middle Persian (Pahlavi), which cannot be dated satisfactorily either, but in their current form cannot be earlier than the 8th–10th c. CE; although they include small compositions that may have a more eastern Iranian background, the vast majority very clearly comes from South-Western Iran (i. e., Pars). These texts are thus equally far removed from Commagene in the time of Antiochos I.
- 7 This was rightly stressed in Shenkar 2014, 6–9.

they were (or were believed to be) fully consonant very strongly supported, as we have seen, the construction of a conservative tradition. It has since been pointed out, however, that this interpretation of the evidence is at best partially correct. The two source clusters are by no means independent of each other, but the Middle Persian sources largely have their roots in a 'scripturalist' movement that was made possible by the writing down of the Avestan texts in the late-Sasanian period. This scripturalist movement is, furthermore, decidedly a priestly tradition.⁸

This is where the second problem comes in. The writing of pre-Islamic Iranian history has always been dominated by the history of four empires – the Achaemenid, Seleucid, Parthian, and Sasanian Empires⁹ – but neither the Avestan nor the Middle Persian texts derive from an imperial context. In the case of the Avestan texts, this is clearly because no concept of kingship existed. In the case of the Middle Persian texts, this is because the bulk of these texts date to the early-Islamic period. The ideal of a Zoroastrian monarchy is still reflected in Middle Persian literature, but for the authors of these texts it very clearly was a reality of the past. Since these texts do not record antiquarian realities, but largely reflect either on the current situation or on what were supposed to be timeless realities, they provide us with no information about the practice of religion in an imperial setting. And in those places where they do reflect on religion and the Iranian monarchy, their representations are wholly informed by the late-Sasanian context – and therefore not immediately helpful for an understanding of royal practice in different settings.

It is clear that we are in need of a different approach. Fortunately, recent finds and recent discussions have contributed to a better understanding of regional and historical varieties of Zoroastrianism.¹⁰ In many of these, the discussion still comes in the shape of registering divergence from a postulated normative system, but the insight that this system itself is an historical development is slowly gaining ground. This has important consequences. On the one hand, Zoroastrianism as we thought we knew it is transformed into a much more diverse and much more complex world. On the other hand, the variety of distinct religions that scholars have continued to invent in order to make sense of the evidence can be greatly whittled down.

8 De Jong 2009.

9 Since most Iranians tacitly assume that there is substantive meaning to the distinction between 'Iranian' and 'foreign'/'non-Iranian' (which is one of the foundations of their academic field), the Seleucids (and in many cases, the Parthians as well) have often simply been written out of the history of ancient Iran, by reducing them to 'intruders' and essentially by denying them the type of legitimacy (through conquest) that is extended to the 'Iranian' dynasties. There are many obvious (and fatal) problems with this, some of which will be discussed later in this article.

10 Recent finds especially include the excavations of a palace in Akchakhan-Kala (ancient Choras-mia; see Minardi – Khozhaniyazov 2011) with its spectacular Zoroastrian iconography (Betts et al. 2015; Shenkar 2019). For regional (and historical) variation, see for example, De Jong 2008; Crone 2012; Shenkar 2017.

All of this has important implications for the subject of the present chapter, for it means that we should reassess which evidence is actually relevant for a better understanding of the religion of king Antiochos. An argument will be presented here that this relevant evidence – while inevitably sparse – is available for two distinct elements that should frame future discussions. The first of these concerns local Greek-speaking Zoroastrians in Anatolia and their literature. The second concerns dynastic religion in an Iranian setting and its relations with different styles of Zoroastrianism. This certainly does not exhaust the dossier of comparative evidence that needs to be assembled, but it exhausts those dossiers that are within the competence of the writer, and that are felt to have been absent from the discussion so far. Before we reach these two subjects (and their interrelations), however, some more general remarks still need to be made about the ways in which the comparative evidence from assumed parallels has been, and continues to be, handled in the specific case of Commagene.

Domestication Strategies

Antiochos' *hierothesion* on the Nemrud Dağ is an arresting place to visit even today. The size of the monumental sculptures, and of the site itself, is impressive and its inclusion in the landscape is awe-inspiring. In spite of the fact that sometimes large numbers of visitors will be present, to modern travellers the site feels remote and different. It is clear that it has induced the same feelings in those scholars who have attempted to make sense of it (regardless of whether they have, or have not, visited the place). On the one hand, there is the excitement of a wealth of material and epigraphic evidence dotting and in fact constructing a meaningful landscape. On the other hand, very little of the evidence makes immediate sense. There is an illusory element to the totality of the evidence: it *looks* as if it should be familiar – the inscriptions and a sizeable part of the material evidence are 'Greek' – but upon closer inspection much of the familiarity dissipates. Many scholars have therefore tended to highlight what struck them as 'strange' in the evidence, and more often than not interpreted this strangeness as a sign of degeneration.¹¹ The fact that it looked Greek but was not Greek enough was then easily rationalized by appealing to the geographical and ethnic marginality of Commagene, or to the idiosyncrasy of its king Antiochos.

11 For such interpretations of the artistic production, see the important remarks of Versluys 2017, 2–21, with the references given there. The language and style of the inscriptions were subject to the same type of reasoning; see Versluys 2017 198–200. For a more recent, and more descriptive, interpretation of the style and rhetoric of the inscriptions, see Papanikolaou 2012; and see Kim 2017, for a very clear exposition of interpretations of 'Atticism' and 'Asianism' (note, however, that his sympathies for the latter style more or less end with our king Antiochos, who is still described as using a 'bombastic' (and unique) repertoire).

Even in this early stage, it is remarkable to see that the obvious presence in the materials of Iranian elements never led to an active involvement of, or invitation to, Iranists to give their opinion on how they would make sense of the evidence. Some of them did, of course, but much of their work was barely received by the small number of specialists working on the archaeology and epigraphy of Commagene.¹² This led to the rise of two distinct strategies of interpretation, a Hellenistic one and an Iranian one, that are rarely brought into conversation with each other. Both of them essentially subordinate the evidence to larger reconstructions of royal display and ideology in the two respective contexts. Rhetorically, both argue that there is nothing special or unique about Commagene¹³, and both make use of notions of legitimation in order to demonstrate the ‘normalness’ of the royal cult. We shall need to review both trajectories of interpretation here.

The oldest one, without a doubt, is the interpretation of the evidence in terms of a “Hellenistic ruler cult”.¹⁴ This interpretation, which was immediately suggested in the first reports of Humann and Puchstein¹⁵, has maintained itself as the most often suggested background to the totality of the evidence. It has survived dramatic shifts in the understanding of Hellenistic ruler cult itself¹⁶, and has had to face principled opposition from a number of leading scholars, who simply dismissed this as a viable interpretation, on a variety of grounds. These grounds themselves reflect those same shifts in understanding the phenomenon. Some scholars felt, for example, that the distinction between the king and his ancestors (as ‘heroes’) on the one hand and the gods on the other hand, or the related distinction between royal *τύραι* and divine *θεοῖα*, precluded any interpretation in terms of a Hellenistic ruler cult.¹⁷ Others felt uneasy about the

12 See, for example, Duchesne-Guillemin 1984; Boyce – Grenet 1991; Panaino 2007. An important exception to this academic separation can be found in the long academic discussion on ‘Parthian art’ initiated by M. Rostovtzeff (see for this debate especially Dirven 2016 and the contribution by Hauser in this volume). Within this discussion, material culture from Commagene was often included, but only to support or illustrate pre-given interpretations.

13 This is an exaggeration that is easily counterbalanced by frank statements that certain aspects of the evidence are in fact wholly specific (e. g., Versluys 2017, 21).

14 This concept traditionally came with the assumption of a heavy impact of the Near East on the development of Greek politics and religion. In that sense, the evidence of Commagene very powerfully propped up already existing notions. Although the notion that the Hellenistic ruler cult arose under the influence of the Near East has been abandoned by many specialists, it seems to be very tenacious in the minds of more general ancient historians, together with the almost inevitable interpretation of this development as a sign of degeneration. A good example is Green 1990, 396–408.

15 Humann – Puchstein 1890, 211–406. This first description, written by Otto Puchstein, remains a masterpiece, both stylistically and in terms of content. It is more nuanced in its appraisal of the evidence than most, partly because he had the advantage of being the first to report on the evidence.

16 My thinking on this subject has been greatly helped (and influenced) by Versnel 2011, 439–492, which includes a convenient sketch of major developments on pp. 456–460.

17 Thus, magisterially, Nilsson 1974, 170–171 (“Diese Anschauungen schließen den geläufigen Herrscherkult aus”).

absence of the living family members of the king: the queen, the crown-prince and other children, who most often are not mentioned at all (unless they predeceased the king, see below).¹⁸ All had to struggle, moreover, with the fact that hardly anything of conventional core elements of Hellenistic ruler cult was actually in evidence in the materials from Commagene.

This begins with explicit evidence for a *cult* of the living king¹⁹, which is vanishingly rare in Commagene, certainly when compared with the evidence for rituals in memory of deceased members of the family.²⁰ There are, of course, sacrifices on the birthday of the king, and the day of his accession to the throne, but the living king is explicitly mentioned as recipient of these sacrifices only once, in a very particular context: the great cult inscription on what he was laying out as his tomb on the Nemrud Dağ. The assumption that it seems to have been only the deceased king (who would have joined the company of the gods according to the inscription), who would share in the sacrifices is supported by an eye-catching difference in the versions of the cult inscription on the Nemrud Dağ on the one hand, and that of Arsameia on the Nymphaios on the other. In Arsameia, the place where his father was buried, the “splendid sacrifices” must be performed “for the worthy honour of the gods” (εἰς τιμὴν δαιμόνων ἀξίαν; A 123), whereas for his own tomb these sacrifices were destined “in honour of the gods and in my honour” (εἰς τιμὰς θεῶν τε καὶ ἡμετέρας; N 144–145).²¹ We shall review more evidence below that strongly supports recognizing that there is a real pattern that it is only the deceased members of the family who would be recipients of the cult.

To this pattern, which it would be adventurous to disregard, there is one important exception. This is the stele with *temenos* text from Sofraz Köy (SO), which has been much discussed.²² The main reason for the debates over this stele is the fact that it departs from the rest of the epigraphic corpus in major ways. Famously, it establishes a cult to two named gods that do not reoccur in the rest of the corpus: Apollo Epēkoos and Artemis Diktyнна, both of whom are considered to be ‘genuinely Greek’. The text of the stele has therefore been relegated to an ‘early’ stage of the cultic development of king Antiochos, before the ‘syncretistic’ stage.²³ But this is not the only element in

18 Hoepfner 1983, 60.

19 For the centrality of precisely this aspect of ruler cult in the Hellenistic world, see Chaniotis 2003; Caneva 2012.

20 This was highlighted already by Musti 1982.

21 I have mainly used Waldmann 1973 and Crowther – Facella 2003 to find my way in the epigraphy of Commagene. A full re-edition (with commentary) of all inscriptions is urgently needed, and has been promised by Charles Crowther and Margherita Facella.

22 Crowther – Facella 2003, 71–74 (with references); Boyce – Grenet 1991, 318–321.

23 I find myself incompetent to judge the plausibility of this interpretation, but there are other elements in the inscription that strongly support it, chiefly the fact that in the royal titulature the king does not refer to himself as a ‘great king’, but merely as king. See for this in general Facella 2006, 280–282, and for the importance of the title ‘great king’, the contribution by Strootman, this volume.

which the inscription stands out. There are two more aspects of direct relevance to the present discussion that should be highlighted. The first is that this is the only inscription that makes use of the conventional language of euergetism (for which, see below). The king refers to himself (SO 4–5) both as εὐεργέτης, ‘benefactor’, and as κτίστης, ‘founder’, two very regular epithets for the Hellenistic ruler cult, and for honorific inscriptions in general, that are entirely absent from the rest of the corpus. The second crucial departure is the explicit invitation (SO 24–28) to “kings or dynasts or generals or ethnarchs” to visit the sanctuary and to “make burnt offerings of incense and libations on the altars established in this sanctuary, *and likewise to the image of me that has been established together with the images of the gods*”.²⁴ To anyone familiar with Hellenistic ruler cult there is nothing surprising in all of this, but it is important to highlight that these characteristic elements from that repertoire *only* occur on the Sofraz Köy stele, and are remarkably absent from the rest of the corpus (see below).

The nature of the sacrifices themselves is, to say the least, unclear.²⁵ They are chiefly mentioned in generic ways, as part of traditional custom, and as part of the communal festivities, to which officials and the wider population are invited, and during which they are fed. These festivals, which are explicitly identified by the king as ‘new’, are to be celebrated not only on the birthday and accession day of the living king, but also on those same days after his death (as they were in Arsameia on the Nymphaios on the birthday of the king’s father as well as that of the king himself). The food and wine provided for these festive meals is described as lavish, but at no point is a connection made between the sacrifices and the festive meals – in fact, the two are generally kept distinct (as θυσίαι and σὺνοδοί).²⁶ In addition, there were sacrifices without festive meals, to be celebrated by the priests only. Sacrifices in general were never substantial enough to feed large groups of people, even where this is suggested as a literary topos.²⁷ Archaeological evidence for the sacrificial cult at the various sites has been very sparse²⁸ and

24 Text and translation in Crowther – Facella 2003, 72.

25 Brijder’s representation of the sacrifices (Brijder 2014, 165–167, largely based on Van Straten 1995), can only be qualified as a work of fantasy; it is nowhere connected to the archaeological reality of the sites.

26 The word σύνδοξ does not refer to the meal itself, but to the gathering of the people attending. See Papanikolaou 2012, 139 n. 12.

27 See especially Naiden 2012, for very important observations on Greek sacrifice in general, calculations, and a confrontation with literary representations. This may help to explain one of the enduring mysteries of the archaeology of Antiochos’ cult: the fact that not a single site has yielded evidence for these sacrifices in the form of deposits of animal bones, or layers of ash. This absence (which stands in marked contrast to the abundance of similar evidence in local cult sites, see Blömer 2012, 119–121) has occasionally been invoked to support the notion that the *temene* and *hierothesia* of Antiochos’ cult were unfinished and never used. Against these assumptions, see Brijder 2014, 114–117; Versluys 2017, 68.

28 It is not just the absence of animal bones, as was highlighted in the previous footnote, but also that of ceramics relevant to the sacrifices and the banquets. See already Dalglish 2017, 137.

controversial, and it seems worth noting that an altar *for the king*, which is a regular feature in ruler cults in other parts of the Hellenistic world, has not been attested.

Similarly lacking from the dossier is the language of euergetism, which has been much foregrounded in recent work on the Hellenistic ruler cult.²⁹ Much of that work focuses on the ruler cult as a mutual undertaking between the ruler and other political or social institutions of his realm, something else that is not at all in view in the entire corpus from Commagene (with the exception of the Sofraz Köy stele). The only voice we get to hear is that of the king, extending an invitation to his people to the festivities mentioned above. Although the king speaks, occasionally, of some of his deeds (and those of this father), at no point does his discourse even begin to resemble the conventional qualities of benefactors in the vast corpus of Hellenistic inscriptions. Although he refers obliquely to some of his political and military successes, he does so only in the context of demonstrating piety. Where he mentions somewhat more extensively his building activities (one of the core manifestations of munificence), these are only relevant to the palace, the cult, and the memory of his father and of himself. The dominant theme of the inscriptions, as becomes clear from the remarkable exordium in the longest texts, is piety (εὐσέβεια), which is closely coupled to holiness (ὁσιότης). The latter term is very rare in comparable inscriptions.³⁰ The former is very commonly encountered, but never in the way it is used in this corpus.³¹

This is immediately clear from the fact that the *only* parallel that has been adduced for it takes us to the easternmost limits of the Greek-speaking world: the Greek version of the inscriptions of the Maurya king Aśoka.³² This is not a very good parallel. There seems to be general agreement that εὐσέβεια in the inscriptions of Aśoka does not owe much to its usage in Greek inscriptions, but needs to be seen as an attempt to render the key term *dhamma* into Greek in a meaningful way. In the Greek-Aramaic bilingual from Old Kandahar, where in Greek we have εὐσέβεια the Aramaic uses the word *qšyt'*, 'truth'. The point of Aśoka's Greek and Aramaic inscriptions in these passages is to demonstrate that the king has *done* something: his *dhamma* is a programme of action. The point of Antiochos' emotional exaltation of piety as the driving force of his being and source of his success, "the sweetest enjoyment" of his life, is not to announce that

29 Caneva 2016, 11, for example, presents what he calls "euergetic discourse" as "the current paradigm".

30 The most famous case probably is the honorary decree from Colophon for the chresmologos Menophilos published by Robert – Robert 1962, where we find both εὐσέβεια and ὁσιότης in the same line (both, incidentally, restored but with great certainty), but with distinct meanings: the former refers to his piety towards the gods, the latter to his piety ("bonne et juste attitude") towards fellow humans. In a decree from Delphi in honour of Attalos II of Pergamon, the king is praised for having a disposition that is both εὐσεβής and ὁσιος. See Bringmann – von Steuben 1995, 154–158 (no. 94). The most extensive study of the word ὁσιος, but restricted to the 5th c. BCE is Peels 2016.

31 See Argyriou-Casmeridis 2019 for conventional Hellenistic usage.

32 Thus, among many others, Dörrie 1964, 52. 177; Boyce – Grenet 1991, 344; Crowther – Facella 2003, 49. For the inscriptions, see Falk 2006, 241–245; Lerner 2013.

he has done something, but to share with the hearers/readers of the texts what the foundation of his (and their) happiness has been. The religious candour with which the king declares this importance of religion in his personal life is without parallel in Greek epigraphy. It is not surprising, therefore, that it has tended to be mistrusted, or disbelieved (or even ridiculed).

This is partly due to the way in which specialists in Greek epigraphy do their work: in many cases, they attempt to understand inscriptions on the basis of parallels with others. Where no literal or well-established parallels exist, a remedy is sought in what one could call approximate similarity. In general, much of this is inevitable, but it is here that things can go wrong very quickly. A good example of this would be the rare word *σύνθρονος*, which occurs once in the great cult inscription on Nemrud Dağ (N 60), where the king describes the sculptural programme of his tomb and announces that he represented himself 'sharing the throne' with the gods. The word *σύνθρονος* is rather rare in classical and Hellenistic Greek and becomes much more common after the beginning of the common era, especially in Christian literature.³³ There are, however, at least two very good roughly contemporary parallels for the usage in Commagene³⁴, one literary and one epigraphic, both of which refer to the process of adding a statue of a *living* person to a collection of statues of gods. The first, best-known, parallel comes from the famous scene leading towards the death of Philip II of Macedon, as recounted by Diodorus Siculus.³⁵ The setting is that of a wedding, between Philip's daughter Cleopatra and Alexander, the king of Epirus. The king organizes contests, plays and lavish banquets to impress his Greek guests. After the wedding, in the procession leading to the theatre, Philip ensured that statues of the twelve Olympian gods occupied an important place, and to those he added a thirteenth, of himself, thus claiming a place for himself "enthroned among" the Twelve. The best inscriptional parallel comes from the complex and much-discussed dossier on the Pergamene benefactor Diodoros Paspáros.³⁶ Among his many deeds of munificence, we are told in one of the inscriptions honouring him (IGR IV,293), was his role as gymnasiarch for one of the

33 Although the term is not used there, a key passage is Rev 3,21, "He who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne". A good introduction to Christian (and Jewish) usage is Scott 1997. The lengthy survey of relevant features in literature, art, and liturgy in Kantorowicz 1963 makes it very regrettable that his death prevented this great scholar from finishing his study 'Synthronos'; see, however, Kantorowicz 1953 for some clues. Early Christians were especially fond, of course, of using the concept of 'throne-sharing' to explore the depths of trinitarian and triadological theology.

34 There is a third one that helps very much to rein in possible flights of religious fancy: in the poem that proudly announces the completion of his *Garland*, Meleager of Gadara makes a punctuation mark speak and declare to "sit enthroned" (*σύνθρονος*) "at the finish line of his great learning": Anth. Pal. 12,257; see van Sickle 1981, 66; Gutzwiller 2014 (translation taken from p. 86).

35 Diod. Sic. 16,92,5.

36 See, comprehensively, Chankowski 1998. The dating of Paspáros has long been controversial, but it is now generally accepted that he was a real contemporary of Antiochos I.

city's gymnasium, which he virtually rebuilt and saved from dilapidation. For this he was to be honoured in various ways, but especially by the consecration of a marble statue representing the benefactor, which would make him "σύνθρονος with the gods of the palaestra (i. e., Hermes and Heracles)".³⁷

Both for reasons of its semantic transparency and because of these parallels, one would think that the interpretation of the occurrence of the term in the great cult inscription would not cause too many problems. But many specialists read into it something that cannot be supported either by the text itself, or indeed by these parallels. This would be the proposal that σύνθρονος is a synonym of the much better attested term σύνναος³⁸, which would immediately lead towards general patterns of Hellenistic ruler cult.³⁹ This interpretation was strongly suggested by A. D. Nock in an authoritative article⁴⁰, and it is no doubt due to the enormous intellectual impact of Nock that it has seemed so natural to many that it hardly required any argumentation. But the inscription itself shows that the king had something else in mind. Once again, it is the sharp contrast between the great cult inscription on Nemrud Dağ and the inscriptions from other sites (in this case, especially Zeugma and Samosata) that provides enough evidence of this. For the former is the *only* text that actually mentions heavenly thrones and explains that the king's soul⁴¹ will rise up to the thrones of Zeus-Oromasdes after death. It is the end-result of this belief that is represented on the mountain. The parallel passages in the great inscriptions from Zeugma and Samosata⁴² have a very similar reference to the sculpture programme, where the king indicates that he has represented himself "receiving the benevolent right hands of the gods".⁴³ Georg Petzl used these references to explain the very common representation of the *dexiosis* between king and god in a novel way. Building on his original insight, Bruno Jacobs and Robert Rollinger

37 See the appendix to Chankowski 1998, 198–199 on this specific part of the inscription. Of further interest to the evidence from Commagene is the insistence in IGR IV,293, ll. 35–41 that another (honorific) statue of his should be produced 'out of the same stone' as the architectural ensemble in which it would fit.

38 Thus, e. g., Pleket 1968, 445. This was, incidentally, already the interpretation of Otto Puchstein; see Humann – Puchstein 1890, 338 ("σύνθρονον wie sonst σύνναον").

39 The word σύνναος, 'sharing a temple', refers precisely to the practice of rulers (and their spouses) inscribing themselves in the temple-cult of another deity: Chaniotis 2003, 439. Buraselis 2012 has collected the evidence for the parallel organization (and naming) of suitable festivals. It is to be noted that this type of (named) festival is not attested in Commagene at all.

40 Nock 1930.

41 The deceased king's soul itself is qualified as θεοφιλής, 'beloved by (the) God(s)', which again is unknown from Greek epigraphy of the period. It is used every now and then, much later, in the context of the cult of the Roman emperor and it is, of course, very common in Christian epigraphy. In literary sources, the word occurs sporadically, but not (it seems) in reference to post-mortem qualities of the soul.

42 For once, the great cult inscription from Arsameia on the Nymphaios is rather non-explicit on the subject of the meaning of the representations.

43 BEc 20–21; Sx 25–26.

have fleshed this out. They argue that the scene is neither a welcome nor a farewell, nor a sign of apotheosis (interpretations that had earlier been suggested), but a representation of divine succour.⁴⁴ The sculptural programme on the mountain represents a new step in the king's relations with the gods – but this clearly is a step that would only be taken after his death. In this case, therefore, we meet a situation where the inscriptions in terms of language have convincing parallels in both Greek literary and epigraphic texts, but in meaning depart very strongly from both.

The priests, the *hierodules* and the musicians appointed for the cult, again, are in no way comparable to what is normal in contemporary examples of Hellenistic ruler cult. These are all lifelong, full-time, exclusive and hereditary vocations. Neither the priests nor the musicians are expected, or allowed, to do anything other than their tasks for the royal cult.⁴⁵ These are not eponymous priesthoods handed out to confidantes of the king, but these are hereditary functions that cannot be combined with other vocations in life – a most unusual feature in Greek priesthoods.⁴⁶ The same is true for the masses of sacred slaves and musicians, although the former category is well attested (especially, it must be stressed, in literary texts) all over Anatolia⁴⁷, and the latter category is well attested generally, but not in this specific cultic context.⁴⁸

There thus are numerous points in which the inscriptions of king Antiochos strongly resist being interpreted in terms of what we think we know about Hellenistic ruler cult. We have focused mainly on institutional or organizational aspects: the worship of the living king – the nature of the sacrifices – the absence of euergetism – the priesthood and other functionaries. Underpinning this were vital ideological differences: the focus on piety (and on filial piety), the belief that a pious life will ensure an afterlife in the company of the gods (and a throne in heaven).⁴⁹ These were supported by vital

44 Petzl 2003; Jacobs – Rollinger 2005.

45 There are obvious practical issues to be sorted out here: can we really imagine that the priests and the musicians would live in/near the sanctuary throughout the year, snowed in as it is in winter? At the very least, no traces of domestic dwellings capable of housing them have been found on the site. Right now, we are merely interested in what the inscriptions tell us about the way religious life is set up.

46 Hereditary priesthoods are not entirely unknown, however. Important cases are discussed by Lupu 2009, 44–46. In almost all cases he mentions, the hereditary priesthoods (which came with considerable privileges) were bestowed upon the family who founded the sanctuary, or who promised to rebuild it. One of the inscriptions he discusses, LSAM 13, from Pergamon (before 133 BCE), offers very interesting parallels to the evidence from Commagene.

47 See, for example, Welwei 1979, Lozano 1999, Budin 2009; it cannot, however, be coincidental that Dignas 2002, 193–194 refers precisely to the inscriptions from Commagene to discuss these functionaries (followed by the tricky claim that it would have been identical in similar contexts).

48 The regular Greek context, of course, is that of musical (theatrical, literary, etc.) competitions, of which – again – there is no trace at all in Commagene. On these competitions, see the superb article by Rotstein 2012.

49 This may also be the strongest counterargument to the often heard claim that the lion horoscope would somehow signify a *katasterismos* of the king.

terminological and discursive novelties, which we have by no means exhausted (but many of which have been pointed out by others).⁵⁰ We shall see that many of these are most easily understood in a Zoroastrian context.

It has always been clear, of course, that the evidence from Commagene – both the archaeological evidence and the inscriptions – resists being subsumed in general patterns of Hellenistic ruler cult. If we skip those scholars who seem to have blinded themselves to this fact, or who have resorted to the assumption of madness (megalomania), we are left with serious attempts to join up the evidence, such as it is, with parallels from all over the Hellenistic East. To do this, the most important recent study, by Miguel John Versluys, resorted to a fragmentary approach: while acknowledging that something exactly similar cannot be found anywhere in the ancient world, Versluys focused on a number of characteristic elements that could be joined up with relevant parallels. These were 1) a hilltop sanctuary; 2) a temple tomb in the form of a *tumulus*; 3) colossal statues; 4) a canonical text; 5) *dexiosis* reliefs and other sculptural decorations; and 6) ancestor galleries.⁵¹ When it comes to the criteria for relevance, Versluys shows himself chronologically and geographically *very* generous, in adducing parallels that go back more than a millennium (the Bronze Age Aegean, pre-Achaemenid Phrygia) and move West (the Aegean, even Rome) and South (Egypt) considerably. But with the exception of Dareios I's relief in Behistun, Iranian parallels are never included.⁵² This enables him to treat the claims to 'Persian' traditions in the inscriptions themselves, and in the material culture, as 'invented traditions' that would form part of a culture of bricolage that, in turn, would be characteristic of the late-Hellenistic age in general, and of late-Hellenistic kingship in particular. The result is an unusual combination of the willingness to question the veracity of everything (or to declare everything, including all of Antiochos' predecessors, historically questionable) with a robust annexation of all the evidence into the concept of Hellenistic kingship.

There are elements in the evidence, however, that resist this argumentation, and there are further elements that make the argument that all we know pertains to Antiochos, and to Antiochos alone, implausible. These will be highlighted when we discuss Zoroastrianism in Anatolia and dynastic Zoroastrianism. First, we need to review the other 'normalizing' case that has been made for the king(s) of Commagene: that of (Middle) Iranian kingship.

That there were remarkable parallels between dynastic shrines in the Iranian world broadly defined and the architectural, artistic, and epigraphic programme of Antiochos I in Commagene was first underlined by Helmut Waldmann, but since his catalogue of comparanda came in the midst of a chaotic and idiosyncratic reinterpretation

50 Especially Boyce – Grenet 1991.

51 Versluys 2017, 111–135.

52 In all fairness, this changes considerably when he moves to the (much more important) discussion of the possible *meaning* of the evidence, for example with a long discussion of the Parthian Empire.

of the evidence, this particular observation was generally disregarded together with the rest of Waldmann's work.⁵³ The real watershed came, it seems, with the discovery and publication of the Rabatak inscription, which documented the construction of a dynastic shrine, containing statues of a series of relevant gods as well as the king himself and selected ancestors, by the Kushan king Kanishka the Great, in the first year of his reign, with additional provisions (in terms of money and servants) made over the first six years of his reign (that is, most likely, from 127 to 133 CE).⁵⁴

The Rabatak inscription, a stone slab of approximately one meter by sixty centimeters, was found near the village of Rabatak in the Baghlan province of Afghanistan, together with a few fragments of sculpture (featuring especially lions, "of Indian style").⁵⁵ Although these were accidental finds from a site that has not been excavated, they are believed to come from a site that would have been similar to the much better-known site of Surkh Kotal (in the same province), which was excavated by the French archaeological mission in Afghanistan in the 1950s and 1960s.⁵⁶ There, too, Bactrian inscriptions were found, which identified the structure as a temple (Bactrian βαρολαγγο), just as the Rabatak inscription does.⁵⁷ The main inscription itself is not, however, about the construction or the function of the temple, but about its repair (or rather, the reconstruction of a well) in a slightly later stage of the development of the temple. The most striking find from Surkh Kotal apart from the inscriptions was (part of) a life-size statue of king Kanishka. By combining the known architecture and decoration from Surkh Kotal with the information from the Rabatak inscription, scholars deduced that both temples would have been dynastic shrines in which dynastic gods would be worshipped together with the king and (deceased) members of his family, all of whom (gods and mortals) would have been represented by statues.⁵⁸ With the existence of two similar centres that were somehow connected to the Kushans (i. e., the complex at Khalchayan that may have belonged to the Yuezhi, and the Kushan dynastic shrine in Mat, near Mathura, in India), a pattern was duly established and this pattern turned out to be common to many other parts of the Iranian world. It is the particular merit of Matthew Canepa to have brought together the relevant materials

53 Waldmann 1991, 149–157 (see Jacobs 1992); Waldmann continued his reinterpretations of the evidence in a series of articles and lectures that were, eventually, collected in Waldmann 1996 (nos. IX, XIV, and XV). Rather than engaging with his critics, he chose in those articles to follow his own intuitions, which eventually led him to reconstructions both of Zoroastrianism and of Vedic religion, and their application to the evidence from Commagene, that lack all empirical or historical support.

54 Sims-Williams – Cribb 1995/1996; Sims-Williams 2004.

55 For these fragments, see Sims-Williams – Cribb 1995/1996, 75.

56 Schlumberger et al. 1983.

57 For the main inscription, see Gershevitch 1979.

58 This is mentioned explicitly in the Rabatak inscription, but is not certain for Surkh Kotal, where only the statue of Kanishka himself was found.

in a large number of important publications.⁵⁹ In those, he used evidence from (from West to East) Pontus, Commagene, Armenia, Elymais, Persia proper (the Frataraka), Parthia, and the Kushans.⁶⁰ He proposed to recognize that those elements that had earlier been foregrounded in an attempt to ‘domesticate’ Commagene as part of the ‘Western’ Hellenistic world are equally found in these Middle Iranian sites, but in this case *not* in a fragmented way (where each site would yield a parallel for one particular feature), but most often as a unified whole.⁶¹ In fact, he concludes that the religious structures of Antiochos I of Commagene “make perfect sense within the context of the Iranian dynastic sanctuaries, which, of course, had nothing to do with ‘orthodox’ Zoroastrianism (itself a late antique Sasanian invention).”⁶²

Through the addition of this final point, Canepa argued himself into a very difficult corner. For his disavowal of Zoroastrianism left him with a much reduced playing field for the interpretation of the evidence.⁶³ In order to expand that playing field somewhat, he decided to reintroduce much of the Zoroastrian evidence under a different name: Iranian (a concept, and possibly a reality, that does not correspond to anything actually attested in ancient sources).⁶⁴ Strikingly, he attributed the genesis of what he came to term ‘Middle Iranian’ kingship not to anything specifically Iranian (by whatever definition), but to the Seleucids.

In ascribing to the Seleucids and to their tradition of ‘charismatic Macedonian kingship’⁶⁵ the essential impetus for the formation of Iranian dynastic rituals, including the evidence from Commagene, Canepa joined a growing chorus of recent voices in Seleucid studies that aims to reconsider the historical and cultural relations between the Seleucids and Iran.⁶⁶ Formerly the Seleucids were seen, and treated, as no more than

59 Canepa 2010; 2015a; 2015b; and especially the grand summation in Canepa 2018; see also the contribution by Canepa in this volume.

60 It is surprising that the abundant evidence from Hatra is absent from this discussion. See Dirven 2008 for an overview of the combination of monumentality, human and divine statues, epigraphy, and elite display, all in an ‘Iranian’ context.

61 These would be monumentality, sanctuaries that combined statues of (living and dead) rulers with those of deities, inscriptions, extra-urban location, preferably on elevated places (where available), and possible linkages with a funerary cult.

62 Canepa 2015b, 81–82.

63 It is also simply not true that ‘orthodox’ Zoroastrianism would be a Sasanian invention. It is clear that his addition of the adjective ‘orthodox’ matters here (as a way of distancing himself from the interpretations of Mary Boyce), but with or without it, two things must be clear here. First of all, there is no clear evidence for Sasanian orthodoxy either. But in structural terms, the Achaemenids successfully reformulated and reorganized Zoroastrianism into an empire-wide system of beliefs and practices, and so did the Sasanians. Although their activities in this field are not explicitly recorded (there is very little ‘internal’ evidence for the Achaemenid Empire after Xerxes), they are traceable in virtually all post-Achaemenid manifestations of Zoroastrianism (see below, for Anatolia).

64 See De Jong 2017.

65 For which, see O’Neil 2000; Greenwalt 2019.

66 See, among many others, Capdetrey 2007; Plischke 2014; Strootman 2014; Engels 2017.

an interlude in the history of ancient Iran, and the fact that they were Macedonian conquerors, and therefore ‘foreigners’, was of great help to those scholars who wanted to marginalize their role in Iranian history (even though no one could reasonably point at any evidence that the concept of the ‘foreigner’ corresponded to something meaningful in ancient Iran). Further support came from the exceptional dossier of the hatred of the Seleucids among the Judaeans, which led to the assumption that this Jewish resistance would have been symptomatic for a more general pattern of ‘Near Eastern resistance’ to the Seleucids (and their Hellenism).⁶⁷ This led to the enduring notion that the Near East and the Hellenistic world were two distinct ideational realms shackled together exclusively through conflict and mutual resentment. Obviously, that appreciation of the evidence could not last, and from the late 1980s onwards, scholars began to demolish it successfully.⁶⁸

Doing so was comparatively easy in the case of Syria, Mesopotamia, and Asia Minor, but ran into considerable difficulties in the twin cases of Judaism and Iran. This was not a simple matter of scholarly traditions unable to deal with changing perspectives (although this undoubtedly played a role), but there was something in these specific cases that created obstacles to a reconsideration of the evidence. In both cases, it was precisely kingship and royal custom that was the issue. In the Judaeian case, what was at stake was (first) an internal and (then) an external conflict over the rights and duties of the king with respect to the temple in Jerusalem. Here, the king became actively involved, as he did in Babylonia, but it was an unexpected ‘nativist’ response that created considerable difficulty. In the Iranian case, the opposite scenario seems to have been active: here, the Seleucids refused to follow Iranian royal custom.⁶⁹ Although scholars have been very generous to the Seleucids in speculating that the many signs of active Seleucid involvement in, and reshaping of, Babylonian royal support of religion would be mirrored in a similar investment in Iranian custom⁷⁰, there is absolutely no evidence to support this generosity, and quite a bit that suggests the opposite is more likely to be correct.⁷¹ This is not to deny that the Seleucids were invested in maintaining and protecting their Iranian possessions, or that they employed symbolic practices for this as much as military and economic ones, but these symbolic practices specifically did not align well with local expectations or understandings.

This makes the case for the Seleucid ‘invention’ of Iranian dynastic traditions fragile as a whole, but it especially creates difficulties for understanding what the innovation (if such it was) of dynastic cult centres that would form the core of Middle Iranian

67 Much of these ideas came together in Eddy 1961, which is notably weak in its coverage of ancient Iran.

68 Sherwin-White – Kuhrt 1993 was a defining work for this new trend.

69 I follow here the remarkable works of Kosmin 2014 (on space) and Kosmin 2018 (on time).

70 Wiesehöfer 1994, 57–62.

71 See especially Tuplin 2008.

kingship meant to those involved. It is in this quest for meaning that both those who support an interpretation of the evidence from Commagene as simply a manifestation of Hellenistic ruler cult and those who align it with Iranian royal display seem to be of one opinion. In both cases, the meaning of the religion of Antiochos is reduced to a search for (personal, or dynastic) legitimacy. Everything the king (said he) did is habitually interpreted in terms of legitimation theory. This interpretation effectively reduces meaning to power, and can thus never be of much help to understand the *specific* nature of any given royal practice. The point seems to be, however, that this *specific* nature is deemed uninteresting the moment the reduction to power has taken place.

The problems inherent in the hegemonic rise of the quest for legitimacy/legitimation as an interpretation of political, cultural and religious behaviour in pre-modern societies have been pointed out by many with great cogency, but to surprisingly little effect. Where such a situation obtains (i. e., when scholars stubbornly hold on to a perspective to which serious and compelling objections have been raised), it is most often a sign that something vital in our modern societies is at stake. Nowhere is this more evident than in legitimation theory and its use of Max Weber. Weber's ideal types of legitimate authority (which were explicitly never intended to be used as labels that would actually explain behaviour) are indissolubly linked to the patterns of social, political, and existential disintegration of Wilhelmine Germany that framed a major part of his life.⁷² They are among his more important contributions to a theory of modernity, which has raised the question of their applicability to pre-modern realities. What is not in doubt, obviously, is the current belief in a crisis of legitimacy of our own political orders, and the attendant belief in political strategies of maintaining or establishing legitimacy. The question is whether these anxieties and strategies are of any use in understanding symbolic behaviour in very different contexts.

These problems have been highlighted with examples from two very different corners of the ancient world: the early Roman Empire and pre-modern India.⁷³ In both cases, as well as in more theoretical literature, the argument was made that for legitimation theory to work, a perceived crisis in legitimacy is necessary. There is no evidence for this crisis (or its presumed remedies) at all, and on a theoretical level the very possibility of conceptualizing a crisis in legitimacy has been seriously questioned.⁷⁴ Thus, the critique of the centrality of legitimation as an interpretation of pre-modern political behaviour is not only that it is starkly functionalist and anachronistic (presentist, ethnocentric, flattening, and predictable), but that it in effect conjures up or fabricates out of thin air the very evidence necessary to give it even the minimum level

72 Wolin 1981.

73 Lendon 2006 (early Roman Empire); Pollock 2006 (India).

74 "Weber seems to be looking at the past from a location of modern disenchantment and extending back into time the separation of structures and beliefs characteristic of modernity". (Pollock 2006, 518).

of support. Its plausibility resides, in other words, in the assumption itself, not in the evidence that is actually there.⁷⁵

All of this applies, in the present writer's understanding, very much to the evidence from Commagene.⁷⁶ In fact, none of the three ideal types of Weberian legitimacy (traditional, legal, charismatic) really helps us understand what is going on in Commagene. The former two are explicitly contradicted by the many pronouncements and the clarity in the material evidence that something radically new is coming into being here.⁷⁷ It is the third type, charismatic rule, that most often underlies the appeal to Weber's theory of legitimate rule. It is generally accepted that charisma is an *ascribed* quality that exists, by definition, only in a social relation between the central figure and his following. One of the key indicators for the presence of a charismatic ruler is the type of behaviour of his following that Weber called *Wirtschaftsfremdheit*: the neglect of any concern of economic gain or propriety.⁷⁸ While there is the factual evidence of this type of behaviour on the part of the king himself, it is wholly unclear whether he had a significant following. All evidence, in fact, suggests otherwise. It is time to return to that evidence once again.

The Religion of King Antiochos

The only person who certainly displayed an enormous *Wirtschaftsfremdheit* was king Antiochos himself, who invested incalculable amounts from his own wealth and that of his realm, and incalculable hours of hard labour by his people, for two self-declared reasons: piety and filial piety. He wanted to honour the gods, whose grace he had experienced, and he wanted to honour the memory of his father, both for its own sake and in the hope that his children would follow this example after his death. Honouring the gods, honouring the memory of his father, creating the possibility to receive the same honours after his own death, meant a number of things: rituals, performances, and festivals with lavish meals. Two groups were specifically invited for these: the gods

75 "That decision is not one of reason, it is one of faith". (Lendon 2006, 62).

76 There are, however, serious counterpoints to this position. See, for example, Gellner 2009; Sommer 2011.

77 Miguel John Versluys pointed out to me that the fact that the great cult inscription refers to itself as "the law" may actually be meaningful in this context. He may be right, but Weber's point in the context of 'legal' grounds for legitimacy had much to do with predictability, which does not seem to work in this specific context. See also Lendon 2006, 55, for an important brief discussion of the question whether in the early Roman Empire the power of the emperor in fact depended on the law, or whether the power of the law depended on the emperor (clearly the option he prefers).

78 In itself, this is obviously one of those aspects that make Weber's insights as a whole difficult to apply to pre-capitalist societies, see Pollock 2006, 519–520. Weber's *Wirtschaftsfremdheit* is sometimes reversed and attributed to the charismatic ruler himself (Hatscher 2000, 212–213). Against this as evidence for charismatic authority see especially Flaig 2004, 528–530.

and the deified ancestors (including the king himself after death) on the one hand, and the general population of the kingdom (as well as foreigners) on the other. Mediating between these were priests, dressed in Persian attire, and musicians and performers, all of them in hereditary full-time consecration to this specific cult.

A number of times, the king tells us that all of this, including the writing of the great cult inscription (part of which was simply called “the law”), was not his initiative, but came to him from the gods. Over the course of the large cult inscription on the Nemrud Dağ and the other sites, he stresses this several times. It is his piety that has protected him and made him successful, cult sites are constructed on divine command (A 10), the gods have inspired the text of the law, and even though it would seem to be the voice of the king, it is in reality the ‘mind of the gods’ (N 122; A 93) that has inspired these words (and these rules). In the inscription on the Nemrud Dağ, the king expresses his belief that after death, the soul will leave the body and, when beloved by (the) god(s), will rise up to the heavenly thrones of Zeus-Oromasdes and there join the company of the righteous ancestors and the gods (N 40–44).

In the inscription from Arsameia-on-the-Nymphaios (and its very poorly preserved double from Arsameia-on-the-Euphrates), this astonishing representation of a religious perception of reality that is quite alien to conventional Greek (or local) religiosity is given much greater depth. Although most scholars believe that all large cult inscriptions that include the text of the ‘law’ are roughly contemporary and need to be studied as an ensemble, we have already seen that there are frequently meaningful differences between the inscriptions. In this particular case, the concrete background of the long pious peroration is not easy to establish. Partly, we are confronted with a series of threats and injunctions that are also known from a separate inscription on the Nemrud Dağ (Np), again with interesting differences.⁷⁹ These are very reminiscent of the so-called sacred laws from various Greek and Anatolian sanctuaries, and from curse inscriptions protecting graves, in that their chief purpose seems to be to regulate entry to the sanctuaries (only to those who come with the right intentions, and made pious by works of justice) and to admonish those who come to steal or destroy that the place is overseen by divine watchers and that the gods are ready and quick to punish

79 Np has the unique threat with the “Galatian punishment” that will befall desecrators, a reference to those Galatians, led by Brennos, who attempted to pillage the sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi in 279 BCE, but were routed. This decisive moment in Greek history was widely known and represented all over the Hellenistic world, both in inscriptions (Champion 1995), and in art, with very notable examples in Pergamon (Papini 2016). The defeat of the Galatians was accompanied by thunderstorms and other natural calamities and was widely believed to have been accomplished by the god Apollo himself. The connection is made explicit in Np in multiple references, to “images of the Delphian power” that the visitor needs to behold, and to a comparison of the mountainous setting of the shrine in Delphi and the *hierothesion* itself. Some scholars have interpreted this to suggest that with this simile, Antiochos intended to establish his *hierothesion* as a ‘second Delphi’ (Waldmann 1973, 79), or even as a ‘Near Eastern Delphi’ (Andrade 2013, 83). Against this, see the judicious remarks of Petzl 1976, 372.

evildoers.⁸⁰ There are prominent differences to the genre as well, which are not easily explained.

These differences seem to be connected to a particular interpretation of the interconnections between moral rectitude and ritual purity, and between mental states and acts. Two scenarios are sketched: the first one concerns a person who accidentally ends up in the sanctuary and then realizes that he has entered a sacred space. He is admonished to remove himself from that place, to seek refuge in a non-ritual/public (βέβηλος) place and compensate for the impurity he inadvertently contracted by experiencing the appropriate emotion of being in awe of the gods (Np 17–24; A 198–205). His purity, however, is not one that is conditioned by the ordinary Greek (or, for that matter, Zoroastrian) concerns for ritual purity⁸¹, but it is a purity produced by ‘works of justice’.⁸² The inscription suggests, therefore, that although everyone (literally) is invited to come to the sanctuary, there is a precondition for actually entering this space, and it is one of coming prepared through having performed good deeds.

Likewise, those who come to the sanctuary in order to do harm, can produce harm (and, thus, expect divine retribution) not only through actual acts of violence (theft, destruction), but also through mental acts of hatred, jealousy and refusing the king the benefits of being remembered properly. Together with the promise of divine punishment, this is where the inscription on the Nemrud Dağ comes to an end.⁸³

The inscriptions in the Arsameias continue, however, in an even higher register of religiosity. The evildoer’s wicked heart, the very source of his unjust life, will be pierced by the unfailing arrows of Apollo and Heracles; this will cause him to feel pain in the deepest recesses of his villainous personality. Punishment will come from Hera’s wrath in revenge of his unholiness; and his family will be obliterated by the lightning of Zeus-Oromasdes, lest it continue to pollute God’s earth with its wicked progeny.

By contrast, those who are holy, pure and unsullied by deeds of injustice and who desire to perform holy deeds, will reap lavish rewards: they will confidently face the

80 See Parker 1983, 176–190, and Lupu 2009, for the sacred laws, and Strubbe 1991 for the grave inscriptions and important general observations.

81 See, however, discussions of ‘ritual’ versus ‘mental’ interpretations of pollution in Chaniotis 1997 and Petrovic – Petrovic 2016 for ancient Greece, and De Jong 1999 for Zoroastrianism.

82 The inscriptions speak of a person who is ἀναγνος δικαίων ἔργων. The meaning of this is not immediately obvious, but generally the word ἀγνός takes a genitive to indicate “pure from” (something I learnt from Romney 2019, 31 n. 20). The expression may mean, therefore, that the person should ‘not be free from works of justice’. This makes Dörrie’s insistence that these ‘works of justice’ are restricted to the royal cult (Dörrie 1964, 101. 122–123) and have no moral (or generalizable) import impossible to maintain.

83 Once again, there is a striking difference between the Sofraz Köy inscription and the *hierothesion* inscriptions. While the Sofraz Köy text is concerned about insulting the holiness of the place (and of the remembrance of the king; SO 24–end), it does not have the same moral/mental focus that the *hierothesion* inscriptions have. A sign of the difference may be the use of the (rare) words μ(ε)ισάγαθος and μ(ε)ισόχρηστος, both meaning ‘hating what is good’, in the *hierothesion* inscriptions (as well as μ(ε)ισάδικος, ‘hating what is unjust’ in the inscriptions from the two Arsameias).

gods, eye to eye, and will travel along the paths of the blessed in the confidence of attaining a good life (after death). They will see the house of Zeus in heaven and be seen and heard while praising the gods. And when, in their lifetime, they behold and praise the deeds of the kings, the gods and the deceased heroes will become fellow soldiers with them in the battle for good deeds.

These passages are difficult to understand from the perspective of Greek conventions and have generally been recognized as evidence for Zoroastrian thought. In some well-known cases, this is impossible to deny: both the expression of a “good life” and the notion that the gods join mortals in the battle for good deeds can hardly be explained otherwise.⁸⁴ The former has plausibly been interpreted as the Greek adaptation of one of the standard Avestan (and Iranian) expressions for ‘heaven’, the “best existence”.⁸⁵ With regard to the latter there is a rare consensus that this is as alien to Greek religiosity as it is common to Zoroastrianism. But when it comes to the specific combination of ideas about (ritual) purity and morality, the evidence is difficult to harmonize *both* with Greek and with Iranian common notions. The vast majority of purity regulations in both religious systems have little to do with moral concerns: a polluted deeply devout person is still polluted and a pure sinner may be evil and in need of correction, but would still be ritually clean. To this general pattern there is the well-known exception in the Greek case of the murderer, who is polluting because of his crime; and in both systems ideas that seek to negotiate connections between undesirable patterns of behaviour and ideas about pollution are occasionally found. Still, the notion that the offspring of a desecrator, because they share his “evil blood” (κακοῦ αἵματος, A 234), will sully God’s earth, or that one needs to purify oneself through works of righteousness is not easily found in the very physical world of Greek and Iranian ideas of purity and (contagious) pollution.

The only plausible background to this conundrum seems to be the nature of the texts themselves. Both generally and, in some often-discussed passages, the inscriptions show an extremely complex interplay between temporal referentiality⁸⁶ and timelessness. Although the inscriptions are astonishingly vague about actual events and developments in the king’s lifetime⁸⁷, when it comes to their actual subject – the estab-

84 Boyce – Grenet 1991, 334–337.

85 Boyce – Grenet 1991, 335, building on Duchesne-Guillemin 1978, 190–191, who makes wholly justified objections to the interpretation of Dörrie 1964, 121–123. Struggling with the very type of public declaration the king makes, Dörrie saw no other option but to reduce everything to the royal cult itself, or to a promise of delights in the life before death. Even in his own demonstration, this leads him to multiple impasses from which he attempted to extricate himself by his implausible appeal to Euhemerism.

86 With this I mean a reference to actual developments in actual time.

87 It is profoundly alienating to see Antiochos’ inscriptions listed alongside the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* as examples of *Tatenberichte* of Hellenistic (etc.) rulers in Chaniotis 1988, 11–12 with n. 18. Although Versluys 2017, 125–127 has judiciously compared the two texts as examples of very long monumental inscriptions, in terms of content they are profoundly dissimilar, especially with re-

lishment of new religiously defined ways of tying together the royal family (in its many generations), the land of Commagene, and its inhabitants – much stress is placed on the fact that much of this was new. At the same time, the innovation the king accomplished joined together inherited tradition (of the royal family itself, and of the people in general), going back many generations, and a timeless future. The establishments – the sites, the priesthoods, the musicians and servants, which are either newly repaired or altogether new – and their funds are meant to endure forever, just as the king's body will rest and his soul will enjoy the delights of the hereafter forever. The king thus acts as a pivot in historical time, and the fact that this role may be connected to an actual (but never named) event in the king's lifetime has always been strongly suggested by the presence of the famed lion horoscope near his tomb. For this horoscope is believed by all to represent a date of significance for his kingship (or his kingdom, or his life).⁸⁸

The interpretation of the lion horoscope is subject to much controversy. Multiple possible dates have been suggested, none of which is obviously tied to any known development in Antiochos' own life or that of his kingdom. There is no shortage of potential references, but most of these pertain to the political history of Commagene: the extinction of the Seleucid Empire, the defeat of Tigranes the Great of Armenia, the expansion and preservation of the territory of Commagene itself. Other scholars believe that the date of the lion horoscope should reference something of significance in the king's life itself, such as his coronation⁸⁹, or his divinization (in terms of apotheosis or, more particularly, *katasterismos*).⁹⁰ Finally, some scholars have suggested that the hierarchy between the lion horoscope and the life of the king(dom) should be reversed: that the horoscope marks a celestial event observed by astronomers that impacted the king in such a way that he produced a wholly novel religious expression.⁹¹ Obviously, underlying these very different attempts at interpretation we find very different general interpretations of the whole religious programme: those who believe that the religion of king Antiochos was a not very remarkable branch of the larger phenomenon of Hellenistic ruler cult, and who interpret the larger phenomenon generally in political-social terms, are more at ease to attribute everything found in the kingdom to the realm of (inter)national politics. Those who focus on the king are most likely to support the programme in terms of a quest of legitimacy. Although some of these

gard to the frequent references the emperor makes to consular periods, actual negotiations, and actual sums of money expended, none of which have a counterpart in the texts from Commagene.

88 We do not know, however, *which* date. Specialists in astrology have come up with several rivalling computations, but the majority have settled for the year 62 BCE. I have been very impressed (and convinced) by the long discussion in Bechtold 2011, 100–115. Cf. also the contribution by Jacobs in this volume.

89 Facella 2014.

90 It would seem that such claims are impossible to maintain after the critical evaluation of Bechtold 2011.

91 This seems to be the position of Boyce – Grenet 1991.

suggestions have a certain degree of plausibility (the accession of Antiochos *did* coincide with very complex political and military events in his region), none of them even remotely help to explain the (much more prominent) ‘timeless’ moralizing parts of Antiochos’ inscriptions. The third type of interpretation, that focuses on developments in the king’s personal life that led him to change his life and establish new ways to perform religion in his kingdom, may have the advantage of allowing greater possibilities to understand the pious inflection of his inscriptions, but it is by definition incapable of direct evidence and seems to rely on an interpretation of the practice of astrology that is not known from the ancient world.⁹² The exact interpretation of the *meaning* of the lion horoscope is therefore likely to remain unknowable. But its *function* is at least somewhat clear: it supports the notion that the king, without inhibiting traditional custom in any way, strongly experienced that the gods ordered him to do something new for his kingdom: to reshape it into a lasting abode of the gods and of his own blessed ancestors, whose ranks he would join in due time. This is, of course, literally what he tells us.

This situation of the king heeding the command of the gods, both for himself and for his realm, may help understand the immediacy, the eternity and the moralizing of the king in his great cult inscriptions. The negotiation of a past consisting of inheritance/tradition, a present that actually references the king’s deeds, and the promise of eternal rewards for the pious has often reminded scholars of a trend in Zoroastrianism that has come to be known as Zurvanism, which supposedly focused a lot on time and timelessness.⁹³ In fact, expressions referencing time in the inscriptions have often been seen as ‘translations’ of the name and epithet of the god Zurvan (‘Time’).⁹⁴ In more recent scholarship, the reality of Zurvanism has been doubted very strongly and the most recent book-length treatment on the subject has included a negative interpretation of the case made for a specific presence of Zurvanism in the inscriptions from Commagene.⁹⁵ It is important to stress, however, that the assumption of Zurvanism is by no means necessary for an interpretation of these aspects of the inscriptions on a model of Zoroastrian ideas about time and history. The story of Zarathustra as the pivot of human history, who makes known to humankind the will of the gods and who promises humans an eternal life of bliss if they listen, as well as the attendant story of Vishtaspa, who put the power of his realm in the service of that same message, are foundational elements of Zoroastrianism and work according to the same logic as the

92 See Heilen 2005 for the lion horoscope, and especially Heilen 2015 for what can and what cannot be attributed to ancient astronomy/astrology.

93 The classical ‘strong’ statement of Zurvanism, building on much earlier work is Zaehner 1955. The scholarly construction of Zurvanism was very effectively dismantled by Shaked 1992. The most comprehensive discussion is Rezanian 2010.

94 Most influentially: Junker 1923.

95 Rezanian 2010, 152–155. This, however, is not a very satisfactory treatment of the matter in relying almost exclusively on Dörrie.

moralizing time references in the inscriptions. The king nowhere refers to this narrative, of course – not a single Zoroastrian king in history has ever done so. But the time references in the inscriptions are fully consonant with general, and quite well attested, notions of time and history in the Zoroastrian world.⁹⁶ It is to that world that, finally, we need to turn now.

Lessons Unlearned and Paths Not Taken

So far, the argument has largely been negative. A careful reading of the inscriptions with the same willingness to question received wisdom that characterizes Miguel John Versluys' reappraisal of the material culture, shows that there is hardly any evidence to support the common interpretation of the religion of king Antiochos on the model of Hellenistic ruler cult. Not only is there no cult of the living king, virtually all core elements of Hellenistic ruler cult are actually absent: euergetism and acclamation, the proper socio-political contractual relationship between king and subjects, eponymous priesthoods. In that respect, the fact that there is but a single attestation of the class of royal *philoï* from this supposedly Seleucid-inspired kingdom may well turn out to be meaningful.⁹⁷ Much of this is, of course, present in the Sofraz Köy inscription, and if one follows the consensus about this inscription that it is an early text (compared to the rest of the epigraphic corpus), we face the interesting development that while Antiochos' reign started out, indeed, in a more or less conventional late-Hellenistic style of kingship, it suddenly began to depart from that model in very significant ways. This was highlighted already by Peter Mittag, who sought to explain this change in what he termed "self-stylization"⁹⁸ on the basis of *Realpolitik*: the extinction of the Seleucid house, and the rise of the Parthians. Essentially, he claims that the increasing focus on piety in the inscriptions is an indication of failure. In an almost futile attempt to preserve the *status quo* of his realm between the two opposing superpowers, Rome and Parthia, the king saw no other option than to withdraw from the realm of politics and place his hope entirely on the gods.⁹⁹

This is clearly not at all plausible, for a number of distinct reasons. The first is, quite simply, that it did not happen (in the sense that there is no evidence of such a withdrawal from the stage of international politics). Moreover, this interpretation unneces-

96 See, for example, De Jong 2005. Very little of these Zoroastrian ideas are incorporated in Kosmin 2018, which weakens the case he has made for the Seleucid generation of new concepts of time considerably (see Dawdy 2020 for similar reservations to an otherwise exemplary work).

97 For the royal *philoï* and their absence from Commagene (with only one suspected case reported), see Savalli-Lestrade 1998 (with the one case from Commagene on p. 201).

98 German *Selbststilisierung*; although Mittag does not really explain it (and does not seem to use it in the ordinary Foucauldian way), the concept itself strikes me as irredeemably anachronistic.

99 Mittag 2004.

sarily and anachronistically creates a contrast between political and religious motivations. Mittag's argument rests on a hypothesized consonance between the religiosity of the king and its reception by his subjects. For this, he relies heavily on an early article by Anneliese Mannzmann¹⁰⁰, which gave a sketch of king Antiochos as essentially a failure on the battlefield, who attempted to compensate for his incompetence by inventing himself as a god.¹⁰¹ Here, too, it is not just the case that the king did not actually do that¹⁰², but the expected response by his subjects is a mere fantasy – and the whole sketch (and with it, Mittag's adoption of it) comes down to “Weberian” legitimation theory once again. And so we have come full circle. Perhaps we should go in search of new possibilities.

Greek-speaking Zoroastrianism

Some ten years ago, the Turkish ancient historian and numismatist Sencan Altınoluk made a significant discovery. While she was gathering information for her important book on the city of Hypaipa in Lydia¹⁰³, she also prepared the catalogue of the coin collection of the regional archaeological museum of Ödemiş¹⁰⁴, where most of the finds from the site of Hypaipa are kept. The collection included a previously unknown and extremely important Roman bronze coin from Hypaipa, from the 2nd c. CE. The obverse is unremarkable, in showing a bust of the goddess Artemis facing right, with a quiver on her shoulder, but the reverse is truly sensational. It shows, without a doubt, a Zoroastrian priest. The priest wears *kandys* and *tiara* and holds a bundle of *baresman*-rods over a fire, which is represented as a pyramidal mountain of ash. The coin legend simply reads ΥΠΑΙΠΗΝΩΝ, ‘of the inhabitants of Hypaipa’.

Since the city of Hypaipa in Roman times was the subject of her research, Altınoluk was well aware of the famous passage in Pausanias (5,27,6–7) about a shrine in that city maintained by those Lydians who call themselves ‘Persians’. Pausanias’ description surprisingly comes in the fifth book of his *Guide to Greece*, which treats of the many sights of the region of Elis on the Peloponnese, which included the ancient site of Olympia. It is in Olympia that Pausanias describes a small, artistically inferior, bronze sculpture of a horse that has strange magical properties. In spite of its diminutive and

100 Mannzmann 1976.

101 Mannzmann is among those who believe the lion horoscope is evidence for Antiochos’ *katasterismos*. Against this, see above nn. 88, 90.

102 The only possible argument in favour of a self-divinization of the king would be the fact that one of his epithets is θεός. But like δίκαιος, that was an epithet used by Parthian kings, who do not seem to have divinized themselves in a straightforward way (likewise, kings calling themselves Φιλοπάτωρ, also frequently used by the Parthian kings, do not necessarily truly love their fathers).

103 Altınoluk 2013.

104 Tekin – Altınoluk 2012.

inferior qualities, it drives the stallions of the place mad with lust and they habitually break loose and mount the statue, not only in the breeding season but throughout the year. Following this, he adds ‘another miracle’ he knows of personally (it is widely assumed that Pausanias was, in fact, from Lydia). This is the text that interests us: those Lydians who are called ‘Persians’¹⁰⁵ have sanctuaries in the cities of Hierocaesarea and in Hypaipa.

“In each sanctuary is a chamber, and in the chamber are ashes upon an altar. But the colour of these ashes is not the usual colour of ashes. Entering the chamber, a magician¹⁰⁶ piles dry wood upon the altar; he first places a tiara upon his head and then sings to some god or other an invocation in a foreign tongue unintelligible to Greeks, reciting the invocation from a book. So it is without fire that the wood must catch, and bright flames dart from it.”¹⁰⁷

Altinoluk followed, it seems, the nineteenth-century emendation that made Pausanias’ text a reference to the most famous aspect of the two cities he mentions: their possession of a temple of the Persian goddess Anaitis.¹⁰⁸ While this is perhaps likely, it is important to stress that no such claim is evident from the text of Pausanias itself – which merely mentions a nameless shrine kept by a community of Lydians who call themselves ‘Persians’. Most details of Pausanias’ little miracle story are immediately recognizable from standard versions of Zoroastrianism: the fact that the sacred fire is kept in a separate room of a larger temple complex, the fact that it is tended by a magus,

105 There is an acknowledged problem in the text here. The text reads ἔστι γὰρ Λυδοῖς ἐπικλησὶν Περσικοῖς ἱερά ἐν τε Ἱεροκαιοσαρείᾳ καλουμένη πόλει καὶ ἐν Ὑπαίπῳ. This has been taken to mean “There are sanctuaries belonging to those Lydians who are nicknamed ‘Persians’ in the city called Hierokaisareia and in Hypaipa”. I take this to mean that there are Lydians who refer to themselves as ‘Persians’ (which I believe, in this time, to have a religious meaning; see De Jong 2017). In the 19th century, the philologist Karl Buresch proposed an emendation to the text that would transform its meaning: following those manuscripts that read Περσικῆς instead of Περσικοῖς, he assumed that a word meaning ‘goddess’ or the name Artemis had accidentally been omitted from the manuscript and that Pausanias’ reference was not to a shrine in Hypaipa maintained by a particular group, but that it was to a shrine to the Persian goddess, whose importance in Hypaipa is clear from many pieces of information. See Buresch 1898, 66 (Karl Buresch (1862–1896) died young, and this work was published posthumously). The problem with the standard reading, which I prefer, is the use of the adjective Περσικός instead of the ethnonym Πέρσης.

106 Since I use the translation of W. H. S. Jones, and since the whole passage builds on the story of the magical horse, I have retained this translation of the Greek ἀνήρ μάγος. All agree, however, that this reference is to be taken literally, as a reference to a *magos*, i. e., a Zoroastrian priest. The expression ἀνήρ μάγος itself is interesting; it strikingly resembles Middle Persian *mog-mard* (which led to the confusing practice of using the ordinary word *mard*, ‘man’, to indicate a priest). There are at least two further usages in Greek, however: Hdt. 1,132 mentions the mandatory presence of a μάγος ἀνήρ during the sacrifice among the Persians, and in Pl. Ax. 371a, Socrates relates that Gobryas, an ἀνήρ μάγος, told him about the judgement of the soul after death (in terms that are strongly reminiscent of Zoroastrian ideas, but include several strong departures from standard Zoroastrianism; see Graf 2014).

107 Jones 1926, *ad locum*.

108 See also Altinoluk 2014.

that that magus covers his head when entering the fire chamber, that he tends the fire and that he recites a long invocation in a mysterious language. There is one element only that is very surprising: that the priest would recite this invocation from a book. In better known versions of Zoroastrianism, liturgical texts were transmitted orally, and were not to be written down. But apart from that, Pausanias' testimony has often been seen as evidence for the surprising longevity of Zoroastrianism in Anatolia.

This interpretation has not gone uncontested. Several scholars have suggested alternative interpretations of the evidence in terms of folkloric remains, pervasive Hellenization, or simply the meagre volume of the totality of the evidence.¹⁰⁹ The coin from Hypaipa is unlikely to settle this debate, but it offers very strong support for the assumption of continuity. This would be a continuity maintained within a small group over a very long period of time.¹¹⁰

The last recorded presence of Zoroastrians in a position of power in Lydia was at the battle of the Granicus in 334 BCE, when Kleitos the Black prevented the last satrap of Lydia, Spithridates, from killing Alexander by cutting off Spithridates' arm that threatened to bring a hammer down upon the Macedonian's body.¹¹¹ Almost five centuries separate the downfall of Achaemenid Lydia from the production of this Hypaipan coin. During these five centuries, there was never a notable influx of Persians in the area. Lydia was never made part of the Parthian Empire, as there is no evidence that the Parthians had any interest in conquering territory beyond the Euphrates.¹¹² Territorial expansion beyond that highly significant border was never a feature of Parthian politics, one of many signs that the Parthian Empire was structurally and ideologically very distinct from the two more expansive Persian empires, that of the Achaemenids and of the Sasanians. So in the case of this coin, the Parthians cannot help us.

This means that the only plausible explanation of the coin remains the assumption of a long period of religious distinctiveness maintained by a group of Zoroastrians long resident in Lydia, who had adopted Greek as their language but remained distinct from their surroundings by their religion. This is the main reason to believe that the self-designator 'Persians', which Pausanias tells us this community applied to itself, should not be taken as an ethnic, but as a religious term – if, that is, that distinction is a valid one for ancient Iranian identities.

The evidence from Hypaipa is not unique. In fact, evidence for post-Achaemenid Zoroastrianism is fairly common in many parts of Anatolia.¹¹³ It is also very heteroge-

109 E. g., Briant 1985; Brosius 1998; Herrmann 2002; Versluys 2017, 140 with n. 146.

110 Those who have argued for such continuity include Debord 1982; Boyce – Grenet 1991; Boyce 1991; Mitchell 2007; De Jong 2017; Canepa 2018, 95–121.

111 Plut. Alexander 16.

112 The only exception to this rule was the city of Dura-Europos, which they held for almost three centuries.

113 The standard reference is Boyce – Grenet 1991. Many materials have come to light since that publication and a new study is desperately needed.

neous. It consists of archaeology, literary references, iconography, Greek and Aramaic epigraphy, and numismatic evidence. This heterogeneity is part of the reason why we do not have a full discussion of the evidence. In many cases, the evidence still needs to be collected.¹¹⁴ More often, however, there is a need to rethink interpretations that have been suggested earlier, or that seem to be fashionable presently. Earlier scholarship, for example, was firmly rooted in modernist assumptions about Hellenization in terms of cultural flattening; current scholarship seems to have a deep investment in (the equally modern concept of) indigeneity. The Persians of Anatolia somehow resist both intellectual investments¹¹⁵, and may therefore have been seen as a less rewarding area of study. Indeed, they may have been one of many ‘small religious groups’ in the Hellenistic world and the Roman Empire.¹¹⁶ But if so, they were a ‘small religious group’ with a difference: like the Jews, they made an investment in maintaining their specificity. Like the Jews, this investment tended to yield less than perfect returns, if one would expect clear-cut evidence of ‘orthodoxy’ or ‘fidelity’. But like the Jews, the abundant evidence for processes of cultural and religious participation in general society, expressed in Greek and frequently taking on locally meaningful forms, is consistently fronted by equally abundant evidence for persistence of religious practice, and beliefs.

The evidence is particularly strong and long-lasting for Cappadocia, Pontus, and the various Armenian kingdoms (including Commagene). Cappadocia in particular has yielded virtually the only recorded evidence we have of Avestan (the liturgical language of Zoroastrianism), both in Greek and in Aramaic. To begin with, there is evidence for the preservation, down to early Christian times, of the Zoroastrian calendar for civic purposes.¹¹⁷ That calendar itself contains evident traces of Avestan.¹¹⁸

114 This is especially true of coins. See, however, Dalaison et al. 2009, for Zela; Amandry – Rémy 1999, for Comana Pontica, and Altınoluk 2013 for Hypaipa. Another particularly difficult subject is the cult of the Anatolian moon-god Men, who in many ways moves within and beyond the orbit of Zoroastrianism in Anatolia. See Mitchell 2007; Parker 2017, 114; Labarre 2010.

115 It is bewildering to see the various satrapal dynasties of Anatolia reinvented as ‘indigenous’ in Michels 2009. It is not just that they clearly were not ‘indigenous’ (unless this is simply taken to mean ‘non-Greek’), they explicitly shunned such a claim; see Panitschek 1989. This is equally true of the kings of Commagene. There is thus no need to assume that king and subjects inhabited the same religious or ethnic identities any more than they did the same social or political ones. See Graeber – Sahlins 2017 for the ubiquity of the ‘stranger-king’. This point will be taken up in the final part of this article.

116 Gordon 2017.

117 This is genuinely rare. In most cases, Zoroastrian kingdoms only used the calendar, which was established to harmonize observance rather than to measure time, when communicating with fellow Zoroastrians, switching to Seleucid usage when interacting with non-Zoroastrian subjects. For the Cappadocian calendar see Panaino 2011 (with references).

118 The clearest evidence comes from the month name ΔΑΘΟΥΣΑ, from the genitive form *daθušō* of Avestan *daθuuah-*, ‘creator’; cf. the identical Parthian month-name *dtš*. The correspondence between these two month names is decisive evidence for the fact that the Zoroastrian calendar was introduced by the Achaemenids, and the use of Avestan in it is decisive evidence for the fact that it was intended, explicitly, as a *Zoroastrian* calendar.

Other traces of Avestan have been preserved in the unique epithets applied to the goddess Anaitis (βαρζοχαρά) and Zeus (Φαρνυαζ)¹¹⁹, as well as in the divine name of the “Mazda-worshipping religion” (notably, as consort of the god Bel) in the inscriptions from Arebsun.¹²⁰ Similar traces of Avestan are known from other parts of Anatolia, but mainly from the Achaemenid period¹²¹ – the evidence from Cappadocia is unique in allowing us to trace its persistence over a long period of time. And indeed, what is clearly recognizable as Zoroastrianism keeps reappearing in the record for Cappadocia. Strabo records their sanctuaries, sacrifice, and festivals as well as images and temple states¹²²; Basil of Caesarea complains about their unwillingness to yield to hegemonic Roman or Christian culture¹²³; the priest Kerdir notes with satisfaction that he found them all over Anatolia and ‘brought them back’ to orthodoxy¹²⁴; and in the 5th c. CE, they once again become pawns in diplomatic negotiations between the East Roman Empire and the Sasanians (with the Persian Christians as counterbalance).¹²⁵

Alongside this fairly substantial dossier, and alongside the slightly different evidence from Pontus¹²⁶ and from other parts of Anatolia, there is, of course, the very rich evidence from Armenia.¹²⁷ This evidence is largely literary, and because the whole notion of written literature only came to the Armenians when they adopted Christianity, it is largely Christian. It is not self-evident, therefore, that the evidence from Armenia would help us understand the facts from Commagene, especially since the inclusion of the Armenian kingdoms into the direct constellation of the Parthian Empire, with the rise of the Arsacid kings of Armenia, led to a revival and transformation of Armenian Zoroastrianism. Armenia was very clearly ‘Parthianized’, and since much of the evidence comes in a late transmission, it is by no means easy to extract from it reliable evidence for Achaemenid and Orontid Armenia.

Sometimes, there are small linguistic traces that can help us. This is especially the case when divine names are mentioned in two distinct forms. This happens to be the case, famously, with Spenta Armaiti, the goddess of the earth. She is known from Armenian texts under a presumably Old Persian form of her name, Sandaramet¹²⁸, in the

119 For references, see Debord 2005; and see the remarks of Elizabeth Tucker in Parker 2017, 102 with n. 107.

120 These inscriptions are notoriously difficult to read, understand, and date, but the reference to *DYNMZYDYSNŠ*, which concerns us here, is certain. See Lemaire 2003.

121 The most famous example, no doubt, would be the Aramaic version of the Xanthos trilingual; see, for references, Parker 2017, 42.

122 Str. 15,3,13–15; De Jong 1997, 121–156.

123 Basil. Epistle 258; De Jong 1997, 408–409.

124 Boyce – Grenet 1991, 254–255.

125 Priscus, fr. 41 Blockley (Blockley 1983, 344–347); see Trombley 1994, 120–126, for an important overview.

126 For Pontus, see Michels 2009; Fleischer 2017; Canepa 2018, 104–107.

127 Russell 1987a.

128 In the Cappadocian calendar, her month is known as ΣΟΝΔΑΡΑ.

meaning “(the depths of the) earth”, and under a presumably Parthian form of her name, Spandaramet, both in reference to the goddess herself, and the earth that she protects, and (surprisingly) in reference to the god Dionysos.¹²⁹

Following these, and a host of similar, traces, it has been possible to come closer to a more general appraisal of the history of Zoroastrianism in the various Anatolian kingdoms that ultimately (claim to) go back to satrapal families, including that of Commagene. The Armenian evidence is very useful in one other respect. This is that in its late-Christian form, it offers abundant evidence for a cluster of narrative and religious traditions that seem to have crystallized all over the Iranian world only with the Parthians. The Armenians combined this, it is true, with a very firm narrative tradition about themselves, showing them in interaction with the legendary kings and heroes of the ancient Iranians. But participating in this ‘Communal Narrative’ eclipsed, all over the Iranian world, the memory of the Achaemenids.¹³⁰ This did not happen in those parts of Anatolia that the Parthians did not conquer. On the contrary, the satrapal kingdoms (and, it is to be inferred, the Zoroastrian communities in other parts of Anatolia) constantly and consciously *affirmed* the importance of the Achaemenids, because their history explained the very existence of these kingdoms and these communities. There are traces of this narrative importance of the Achaemenids in a variety of places: the popularity of Achaemenid-period names (or the inability to coin new meaningful names in any other language than Greek)¹³¹; legends about royal or satrapal founders of temples and rites¹³²; and, of course, the genealogical discourses of the royal families of Pontus, Cappadocia, and Commagene.¹³³

There does not seem to be any evidence of the preservation of Iranian languages (other than Avestan, which in itself is highly significant, but was never a spoken language). These were Greek-speaking communities, whose real lives included preserved traditions maintained by their priests and at home, as well as participation in locally meaningful religious lives. There is nothing surprising in any of this. Parallels for most of these elements abound, in the well-explored case of Jewish history, in the experience of the Parsis, the Zoroastrians of India, and in the reality of Zoroastrian lives both in Armenia and in Central Asia.

Uniquely, however, the Greek-speaking Zoroastrians of Anatolia also offer a tiny glimpse in literary traditions that are barely known from other parts of the Zoroastrian world. At least one piece of literature that must have belonged to them is refracted in parts of Greek and Latin literature, sadly fragmentary, but highly significant. This is the

129 See for this Russell 1987a, 426–436; Russell 1987b.

130 Much of this will be set out in De Jong forthcoming a.

131 Schmitt 2007; Mitchell 2007.

132 Cyrus, famously, for the temple of the Persian goddess in Hierocaesarea; see Boyce – Grenet 1991, 202–203.

133 Panitschek 1989.

collection of predictions of the fall of the Roman Empire known as the *Oracles of Hystaspes*.¹³⁴ What we know from this text comes largely from Lactantius, and has been the subject of long and sometimes bitter debate.¹³⁵ The difficulty of distinguishing where quotations from the Oracles end and where Lactantius takes over is an acknowledged problem. But even in its most reduced form, the references are still impressive. They show, as clearly as is known from Jewish Sibylline literature, a local community united by (narrative and) religion responding in a negative way to Rome, attributing information about its impending fall to a visionary encounter with the ancient king Hystaspes and his (famous) *vaticinans puer*. A notable part of the Oracles is a description of how Jupiter/Jesus will requite the suffering of the pious by destroying their enemies, which has obvious parallels in the cult inscriptions of king Antiochos.¹³⁶

Although much of the work still needs to be done, even a superficial reanalysis of evidence that has long been known shows a constellation of characteristics that harmonizes very well with the evidence from Commagene. This strongly suggests that, in the evidence from Commagene, we face *real* religious continuities rather than a *bricolage* of disparate elements, partly invented, in the interest of self-aggrandizement. Within such an interpretation, the royal cult of Commagene would not constitute an example of 'Persianism'. It is an example of a local, dynastic style of Zoroastrianism.¹³⁷ That this is so is very strongly suggested by the presence, for example, of the *barsom* in the sculptural programme in the kingdom.¹³⁸ It is strongly suggested by the ancestor gallery and its selection of Iranian representatives in the male line (which, in the Iranian world, is the main factor in any genealogical claim).¹³⁹ These are two eye-catching elements in the totality of the evidence that would be very unlikely candidates for free invention. But the strongest evidence for real continuity undoubtedly comes from the

134 I have condemned the long extracts from the "hymns of the Magi" in Dio Chrysostomos' *Borysthenitica* (Oration 36) as fantasy (following Beck 1991, 539–548). See De Jong 2003. Although I still see the cogency of the argument made there, it might be worth reconsidering this text as part of the literature of the Greek Zoroastrians of Anatolia.

135 Windisch 1929; Bidez – Cumont 1938, 2. 359–376; Flusser 1982; Boyce – Grenet 1991, 376–381.

136 Lactant. Div. Inst. 7,18,2; cf. inscription A 232–237.

137 Miguel John Versluys has kindly pointed out that these two should not be seen as existing in mutual opposition to each other. He may be correct that both here and in De Jong 2017, I may have read his proposal to recognize a mechanism of 'Persianism' too much *in malam partem*, but both there and here I would maintain that it must be possible to make a distinction between different strategies of representation and identification, perhaps with an eye to intended audience, or to the range of available options.

138 I find this an important example, because the *barsom* (the bundle of twigs or rods held during Zoroastrian rituals) is a hugely important signifier within a Zoroastrian context, but not an intuitively understandable ritual (or iconographic) element for non-Zoroastrians.

139 We will never know whether this selection of ancestors is in any way reliable. To me, that is not a relevant question, but the general reliability is much helped by the inclusion of surprising numbers of marginal (or unknown) ancestors. Genealogy matters in the ancient world – real or confabulated. So the ensemble of the male line of ancestry is an interesting fact in itself, as is the ensemble of the 'female'/Seleucid/Macedonian line, ably discussed by Strootman, this volume.

divine name Artagnes, which surprisingly has never received any convincing linguistic interpretation.

This silence is not due to the fact that the ‘identity’ of the god in question is unknown. It has been clear right from the start that the divine name Ἀρτάγνης is to be seen as a local rendering of the name of the god Verethraghna. Not only is there enough correspondence to recognize the name as such, but the pairing of Artagnes with Heracles and Ares into the composite deity Artagnes-Heracles-Ares, fits this interpretation very well. With Heracles, Verethraghna shares a martial character, as well as the important function of protecting dwellings and protecting travelers; with Ares he shares his main function as a war god. Even though the creation of the composite deity may have been motivated through planetary or astral logic, there is a very good theological correspondence, too.

Verethraghna’s name has been recorded in a large number of different forms, over many Iranian languages and in Greek transcription.¹⁴⁰ None of them, however, strongly resembles Artagnes. In all other attested forms, the initial /v/ of the name has left some trace (in some cases it is preserved, in others it has developed into a plosive /b/, in some cases it has coloured the initial vowel).¹⁴¹ The Old Persian form of the name of Verethraghna has not been attested. But on the example of the double names for Spenta Armaiti in Armenian, one could venture a guess that Artagnes should go back to an unattested (and unpredictable) Old Persian form of his name, plausibly via Cappadocia (where, for example, the month name Fravartinam has been recorded as Arartana). Unless new evidence comes to light, this will necessarily remain very speculative, but what is absolutely clear is that this particular name cannot have been an invention of the time of Antiochos (for this, it is too close to the various attested forms of Verethraghna’s name), but must represent the name of a prominent god in the king’s immediate surroundings.

The Dynastic Style of Zoroastrianism

As was highlighted in the beginning of this article, a variety of factors have long prevented the evidence from Commagene from being interpreted at least partly as an instantiation of Zoroastrianism. Some of these are located in the dominance of classical archaeologists and specialists in Greek epigraphy and material culture in this (admit-

140 These would include Parthian Warhraghn (*wrtrgn*), Middle Persian Warhran/Wahram/Bahram, Sogdian Washaghñ (*wšghñ*), Bactrian Orlagn (OPAAΓNO), and Armenian Vahagn. In Greek transcription, we have, for example, Ὀρθονοφατης; see Livshits 2010, 163.

141 The only possible exception would be Khwarezmian, where the name of the twentieth day of the month, according to the Istanbul manuscript of al-Biruni’s *Chronology*, was Arthaghn (ῥθγñ; Livshits 1968, 445).

tedly very small) field. Others are more squarely to be attributed to certain shortcomings in the study of Zoroastrianism itself. We have dealt with the fact that Zoroastrianism, like any other religion, actually manifested itself in various ways in distinct places and periods of its wide spread and its long history. A serious reconsideration of all the evidence for Zoroastrianism in Anatolia and Armenia, including the evidence from Commagene, will go a long way in understanding this particular manifestation of Zoroastrianism.

Alongside geographical and historical variation, however, there obviously also was social variation. This, too, is generally assumed, but very difficult to prove, for the same reason that the other types of variation are difficult to demonstrate: the sources we have do not help us much. When it comes to social variation, this is due to the fact that all Zoroastrian sources, without exception, are priestly sources. Some of the difficulties that scholars have faced when trying to connect the evidence from Zoroastrian religious literature to either archaeological finds or to inscriptions find their easiest explanation in a process of mistaking idealized normative versions of Zoroastrianism for descriptions of reality. In the texts, for example, priests very clearly occupy the highest position in any imaginable social hierarchy. In real life, they did not. In the texts, priests attempt to dictate all aspects of social, political, and military decision-making. In real life, they could not. This should not be seen as an attempt to deny priests a prominent place in Iranian societies. They had an important place, as masters of ritual and keepers of tradition. But they were far more service-oriented than can be seen in Zoroastrian texts.

It is useful, therefore, to think of Zoroastrianism in antiquity as a religion that came in four different styles, which I would term familial, dynastic, imperial, and priestly.¹⁴² These styles obviously partly overlap: the core of Zoroastrianism is a domestic set of practices, which I call familial religion. Since a dynasty is, among many other things, also a family, there is some overlap between familial Zoroastrianism and dynastic Zoroastrianism. Since a dynasty needs to protect the majesty of its realm, there is possible overlap between dynastic Zoroastrianism and imperial Zoroastrianism. But overlap between familial religion and imperial religion is not necessarily there (see fig. 1). The core of this representation goes back to one of the many fundamental, but strangely overlooked insights of Mary Boyce, who insisted quite clearly on the fact that what I call familial Zoroastrianism – the practice of the religion in daily life in the context of family traditions and observance – is the core of Zoroastrianism throughout its history.¹⁴³ This is more than simply stating the obvious. Since Zoroastrianism is a non-congregational religion, the ‘community’ actually resides in the family, not simply as the

142 I first began thinking in these terms when preparing De Jong forthcoming b, which still thinks of three styles (familial-dynastic-imperial).

143 Although she never made it the subject of a separate publication, this assumption is pervasive in most of her writings; see especially Boyce 1975 for its particular relevance for what follows.

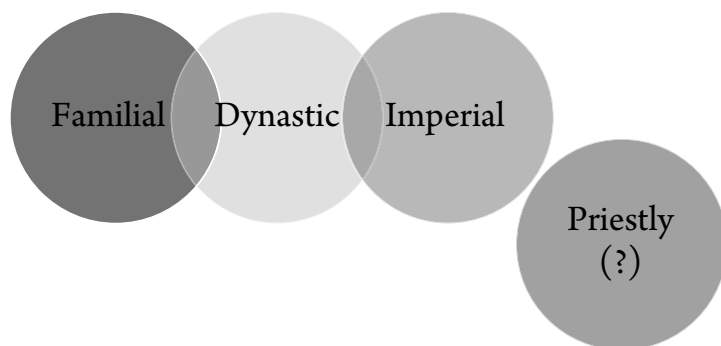


Fig. 1

most meaningful, but as the *only* religious institution. Most other aspects of Zoroastrianism are, in fact, dispensable (and historically/geographically unstable). Boyce explained many of the more eye-catching aspects of Zoroastrianism, such as the cult of fire, on the basis of this family cult, where the hearth-fire of the family would establish the family in a religious way. Since priests would reside among the families they served, it was the domestic fire of priests that would create the ritual fires necessary for community rituals. By following this logic, it can easily be shown that royal fires were (in religious terms) a further elaboration of the householder fire that would grow cold when the father of the family would die, upon which the next leader of the family would light a new fire – as did the king.

Dynastic Zoroastrianism thus is essentially familial Zoroastrianism on a grander scale. It is this phenomenon, it seems, that explains many of the materials brought together by Matthew Canepa, and while it is entirely possible that structural elements of the rituals of Middle Iranian kingship would go back to Seleucid precedents, dynastic Zoroastrianism would enable us to understand what these rituals and provisions actually meant to those involved. As we have seen king Antiochos is quite explicit about these worlds of meaning, and it is in these explicit evocations of his ideas about piety and its rewards, that his most impressive inscriptions culminate.

Imperial Zoroastrianism is a slightly different phenomenon. This would be the dynastic use of Zoroastrianism as an instrument of imperial rule. This is very well attested for the Achaemenids, whose ideology of kingship came in the language of a very close connection between Ahura Mazda and the king. It is equally well attested for the Sasanians, whose ideology of kingship mainly expresses their claim to have acted as restorers of a religiously defined monarchy. But imperial religion is not known from the Parthian Empire in any meaningful way, other than in its dynastic form.¹⁴⁴ In consolidating and anchoring their rule, the Arsacids relied on the familial and dynastic styles

144 See, for all of this, De Jong 2015.

of Zoroastrianism alone. The evidence from Commagene in this respect is ambiguous: the communal celebration of significant events in the king's life can clearly be seen as an example of dynastic religion, and this is obviously the case with the very heavy impact of funerary traditions in the inscriptions and the archaeology. But the warm celebration of the king's realm, the land of Commagene, and its recreation into the abode of the gods suggests something more in the nature of imperial religion.

It is important to realize that it is only the fourth style of religion, priestly Zoroastrianism, that is actually defined and maintained by Zoroastrian priests. Priests are necessary for the three other styles of Zoroastrianism as well, as experts in ritual and loyal servants of families, but they do not define these styles of Zoroastrianism. This is precisely how priests appear in the inscriptions from Commagene: as endowed employees of the king, there to perform required services. They may have assisted him, it is widely assumed, in the religious programme underlying his inscriptions, but from the polished Greek itself and the impact in the inscriptions of Greek rhetorical and philosophical elements, it is clear that Zoroastrian priests at least were not the only ones active in thinking through this programme.

Conclusion

The present article needs to be seen as a programme for possible future directions of research rather than a report on exhaustive research that has already been done. It is therefore deliberately provocative. It is inevitable that most interpretations of the evidence from Commagene, and of the religion of king Antiochos, will evince assumptions about the Hellenistic Near East, and about religion in antiquity, that bear the strong imprint of disciplinary and regional training and specialization. Hellenistic ruler cult, Greek philosophy, connectivity, Iranian royal ideology, Zoroastrianism, local religiosity have all been foregrounded as essential to interpreting the evidence, and the way these proposals are divided over the various specialists is not at all random. I have tried to show why some of these interpretations strike me as implausible, and have attempted my own reconstruction. That reconstruction relies fairly heavily on the willingness to take the king seriously. If we do so, we should follow the core lines of what he actually tells us: that it is piety that motivates him, that he desires to transform his realm into an abode of the gods, that he has personally experienced divine guidance in setting up a fitting cult for his family, and preparing one for himself, and in inviting his subjects to celebrate with him, in the hope not only of feeding them lavishly and quenching their thirst, but in the hope also of enabling them to practice piety in their own lives.

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Orontid Kingship in its Hellenistic Context

The Seleucid Connections of Antiochos I of Commagene

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For a local ruler, Antiochos I of Commagene made remarkably grand political statements. He adopted the imperial title of Great King, claimed to be a descendant of Alexander the Great and a successor to both the Seleucid and the Achaemenid empires, arranged a marriage alliance with the powerful Arsakid house, and probably expected to become deified and included among the gods after death.

The dynastic representation created by Antiochos continues to puzzle historians and archaeologist. Its meaning usually is considered either in the light of either the Achaemenid past that Antiochos so emphatically refers to, or from the perspective of Roman history. In the first case, Antiochos is seen as an 'eastern' monarch and his royal and religious imagery is accordingly decoded as ancient Persian traditions in Greek disguise.¹ In the second case, Antiochos is primarily seen as a client king whose main political aim was to position his small kingdom in a world dominated by Rome. In both cases, Antiochos' Commagene is believed to be marginal to the Hellenistic world and Hellenistic history.²

But for an alleged client king, Antiochos referred remarkably little to Rome in his self-presentation.³ Moreover, in the mid-1st c. BCE, Roman dominance in the Near East was not a foregone conclusion: when Antiochos succeeded to the throne of Comma-

- 1 See the important remarks of Canepa 2007, emphasizing how Antiochos' 'religious policy' is often anachronistically interpreted from either the Achaemenid past or the Sasanian-era Avesta, rather than in its contemporaneous late-Hellenistic/middle-Iranian context; on the conflation of Hellenistic-period West-Iranian religion and late antique 'Zoroastrianism', see also Jacobs 1992. Canepa's understanding of Antiochos' monarchy as 'Middle Iranian', offers an alternative to the usual antiquarian reading as pre-Hellenistic Persian or Late Antique Zoroastrian (see Canepa 2017).
- 2 The alleged marginality of Commagene under Antiochos vis-à-vis the Hellenistic world is discussed by Versluys 2017, 13.
- 3 From a Roman point of view, Antiochos of course was a subordinate ally, who in 59 BCE had received the *toga praetexta* in recognition of this status (Cic. Ad Q. Fr. 2,102); see Facella 2005a on Cicero's rather skeptical view of Antiochos' loyalty to Rome. The lack of reference to Rome is discussed by Versluys 2017, 166–167.

gene in 70/69 BCE, the greatest power in the Near East was the Armenian Empire of Tigranes the Great; after Tigranes' fall in that same year, the Parthian Empire of the Arsakid dynasty successfully challenged Roman supremacy in the region until the Roman-Parthian peace of 20 BCE (and indeed Antiochos sometimes can be seen to gravitate towards the Arsakids rather than Rome). The reign of Antiochos (ca. 70/69 – ca. 36 BCE) coincided with several military clashes between Romans and Parthians in which the latter were generally victorious, even though they did not succeed in permanently occupying the Levant or ousting the Romans from it. Roman influence on Commagenian architecture and material culture, if any, postdates the reign of Antiochos I. His Persianism meanwhile was a constructed identity with contemporaneous aims and not a case of real 'continuity'.⁴ The historical roots of the Commagenian dynasty – whether Persian, Armenian, Macedonian or a mixture of all that – have little relevance for understanding Antiochos' dynastic policy, which can best be understood in the context of its own time rather than from the Persian 'traditions' that Antiochos presents to us but are not attested in Commagene before his reign.⁵ Conspicuously absent from current interpretations above all is the historically closer political entity that Antiochos himself refers to most of all in his self-presentation: the Seleucid Empire.

This contribution aims to understand Antiochos' kingship in its late-Hellenistic/middle-Iranian context – I see no fundamental contrast between the two, the Seleucid Empire was far more Iranian than was assumed in the past.⁶ In one of the first volumes of the *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, G. Widengren defiantly called Antiochos I "a Seleucid ruler".⁷ This paper will further explore that unorthodox suggestion. It will be argued that the alleged idiosyncratic imagery and rhetoric found on Nemrud Dağ and elsewhere in Commagene are part of a wider movement among local rulers in reaction to Seleucid collapse.

In what follows, we will look at three aspects of Orontid monarchical representation that link the Orontids to the Seleucids: the ancestor galleries in the *hierotherision* on Nemrud Dağ; the use of Seleucid dynastic names and epithets; and the adoption of the title 'Great King' by Antiochos I. I will end my discussion by placing Antiochos' self-presentation within a wider context of post-Seleucid monarchs competing for the Seleucid heritage.

4 On the concept of Persianism, see Strootman – Versluys 2017.

5 See also the contribution by Canepa in this volume.

6 On the Iranian aspects of Seleucid kingship, see Strootman 2011b; Canepa 2018, 170–187. 307–315. For the middle-Iranian aspects of the Nomos Inscription, consult Panaino 2007.

7 Widengren 1986, 135.

The Ancestor Galleries on Nemrud Dağ



Fig. 1 Nomos Inscription on the west terrace of Nemrud Dağ, photo and © R. Strootman

In the Nomos Inscription on Nemrud Dağ (fig. 1), Antiochos famously glorifies his “fortunate roots” of Achaemenid and Seleucid ancestry:

“After taking over my paternal dominion (*archē*) [...] I proclaimed that the kingdom (*basileia*) subject to my throne should be the common dwelling place of all the gods; and I decorated it with representations of their forms by all the kinds of art that the ancient traditions (*logos*) of Persians and Greeks – the fortunate roots of my ancestry – had handed down [to me], and honored them with sacrifices and festivals in accordance with the original law (*nomos*) and common practice (*ethos*) of all mankind.”⁸

8 RIG 735 = OGIS 383, ll. 24–34 (cited from Strootman 2016, 212–213). Two slightly differing versions of the inscription were set up on the east and west terraces (Dörrie 1964, 29–34). The *editio princeps* was prepared by Puchstein in 1883 and published with a German translation in Humann – Puchstein 1890, 262–278; a German translation is also provided by Waldmann 1973, 63–69. The standard edition is now the transcription made by Dörner in 1991, published with an English translation in Sanders 1996, 207–213 (= Dörner 1996); Dörner’s translation is reprinted with permission in Versluys 2017, 255–260.

Further on, the inscription associates “the divine representations of the manifest deities consecrated on the holy hill” with “the heroic company of my forebears, whom you behold before you” (lines 45–53). The gods and ancestors of the text thus refer directly to the colossal statues of gods and the ancestor galleries, which can be found on both the east and west terraces of the *hierothesion*. The deified Antiochos Theos himself, who is represented among the statues of the gods, is the link between the two.



Fig. 2 Bases of the Seleucid ancestor gallery on the west terrace of Nemrud Dağ, photo and © R. Strootman

The dual rows of stelae on both the east and west terrace (fig. 2) represent Antiochos’ *progonoi* in respectively the male and female line⁹: the first traces his ancestry through Commagenian kings and Armenian satraps to the Achaemenid dynasty (EN I, 1–15; WS I, 1–15); the second consists of Seleucid monarchs (ES I, 1–17; WW I, 1–17), originating with Seleukos Nikator and “the Great King Alexander, son of King Philippos”.¹⁰ The matrilineal ancestor gallery comprises several royal women. A series of three stelae

9 In what follows, I use the following abbreviations: E = East, W = West, N = North, where the first letter indicates the terrace, and the second the side of the terrace where the row of stelae is situated (for this system of notation, see Jacobs 2000).

10 WW I, stele 1. On the ancestor galleries, see Dörner 1967; Dörner 1975; Dörner 1996; Young 1996, 254–350; Jacobs 2000; Jacobs 2002; Messerschmidt 2012; Facella 2006, 270–275; Strootman 2016.

behind the longer galleries flanking both terraces may have been dedicated to children of Antiochos (ES II 1–3/ON II 1–3).¹¹

The male, Achaemenid line today is often seen as more significant; notably Antiochos' adoption of the title Great King is conventionally (but mistakenly, as will be argued below) understood as a specifically Achaemenid inheritance. However, the Macedonian dynasties of the Hellenistic world were based on dual descent; they accepted the transmission of inheritance through both the male and female line.¹² Royal women therefore played a key role in the transmission of the dynastic heritage, of which royalty (*basileia*) was the principal element. Being himself part of this tradition, Antiochos seems to have adhered to the Hellenistic custom of heritage transmission.¹³ The Achaemenid and Seleucid lines are therefore presented as equal; they mirror each other and are not hierarchized in any visible way.

The identification of the 15 *progonoï* of the Achaemenid line poses no problems, though this line of ancestry likely is largely fictitious. The gallery spans a period of about four centuries. Beginning with Darius I, there are five Achaemenid kings, three satraps plus four kings of Armenia, and three rulers of Commagene: Ptolemaios, Samos, and finally Mithradates I, Antiochos' father.¹⁴ As regards the historicity of Antiochos' Achaemenid ancestry: a marital bond between the Orontid rulers of Armenia and the Achaemenid dynasty has indeed been attested, and is referred to on Nemrud Dağ by the mentioning of Rhodogune, daughter of Artaxerxes II, on stele 6, which is dedicated to the first of the Armenian satraps, Aroandas/Orontes I (Artaxerxes II precedes him on stele 5): "Aroandas son of Artasuras, who married Queen Rhodogune, daughter of Artaxerxes".¹⁵ A weak link, however, appears in the form of the first Commagenian ruler, Ptolemaios, who is supposed to be the connection between on the one hand the rulers of Commagene and on the other hand the Orontid kings of Armenia. The Armenian Orontids controlled Commagene as part of their holdings until it became a separate administrative unit or kingdom within the Seleucid Empire, perhaps in the reign of Antiochos III the Great.¹⁶ Next to nothing, however, is known about this Ptolemaios, who ruled as an independent Seleucid client from ca. 163 or 150 BCE.¹⁷ While the link between the Achaemenids and the Orontids of Armenia is

11 Jacobs 2000, 298–299. Antiochos honors his *progonoï* also in the cultic inscription of Arsameia on the Nymphaios, in which he boasts to have set up altars for them, along with cult statues of the gods (A 60–65). Here however only Antiochos' paternal ancestors are mentioned. Whatever the reason for this, I do not think that it can be taken as evidence that the female line was of less importance (*pace* Jacobs 2002, 83). Hoepfner 1983, 24 suggested that at Arsameia, too, an ancestor gallery was set up; cf. Versluys 2017, 135 n. 123.

12 Carney 1994; Mirón Pérez 2000; Strootman 2010 and 2014, 101–107.

13 Strootman 2016.

14 Dörner 1996, 361–77; cf. Messerschmidt 2012, 89–93; Jacobs 2002, 77–82.

15 Young 1996, 294–295.

16 Facella 2006, 190–200.

17 See below, ns. 36–37.

indicated by the mentioning of Rhodogune, a connection between Ptolemaios and the Armenian Orontids is conspicuously absent, though a marital link is not in itself impossible.¹⁸

Identifying the individuals in the Seleucid ancestor gallery offers more challenges due to the state of preservation of the stelae and their accompanying inscriptions; but it is also more straightforward as it presents a single dynasty only, rather than merging three families, as the patrilineal gallery does. The matrilineal galleries on both terraces consist of seventeen stelae, four of them dedicated to royal women. The male rulers are represented in military dress that may be more authentic than the Persianistic attire of the Achaemenid kings.¹⁹ The list below follows the original, still cautious reconstruction of Dörner (square brackets indicate names that have been entirely lost on both terraces).²⁰

1. Alexander the Great
2. Seleukos I Nikator
3. Antiochos I Soter
4. Antiochos II Theos
5. [Seleukos II Kallinikos]
6. [Seleukos III Soter]
7. [Antiochos III Megas]
8. [Seleukos IV Philopator]
9. [Antiochos IV Epiphanes]
10. Demetrios I Soter
11. Demetrios II Nikator
12. [Antiochos VII Euergetes ('Sidetes')]
13. Antiochos VIII Epiphanes ('Grypos')
14. [female ancestor]
15. [female ancestor]
16. Isias Philostorgos
17. [female ancestor]

Dörner tentatively includes Antiochos IV Epiphanes, even though he is not really the ancestor of the kings succeeding him.²¹ He may have been added to present Seleucid history as harmonious instead of plagued by dynastic strife between the descendants of this Antiochos and those of his older brother, Seleukos IV.²² Most of all, as a suc-

18 Sullivan 1977, 747.

19 For the surviving evidence, see Sanders 1996 2, 240 figs. 468–470. 254 fig. 511. 256 fig. 515. For the historicity of the attire given to the Achaemenid kings, see Jacobs 2002, 80–81 with n. 13.

20 Dörner 1967; cf. Dörner 1975; Dörner 1996, 371–377. See also Messerschmidt 2012, 93–96, discussing alternative reconstructions.

21 Dörner 1967, 208–209.

22 Cf. Wright 2010, 260.

cessful general and reformer, Antiochos IV was a ruler with much prestige. Alexander likewise was not really an ancestor. His inclusion may reflect a genuine belief of the 1st c. BCE that he was the father of Seleukos I's wife, Apama.²³ But the inclusion of Alexander and Antiochos IV could also indicate that not all the stelae are meant to represent direct ancestors but could include illustrious predecessors.²⁴

Remains of images in relief suggest that the last four stelae (14–17) were dedicated to female ancestors²⁵, but the only name that has been preserved is “Queen Isias Philostorgos” (ΒΑΣΙΛΙΣΣΑΝ ΙΣΙΑΔΑ [ΦΙΛΟΣΤΟ]ΡΤΟΝ) on stele 16 of the west terrace²⁶, along with three Greek letters PAN from stele 14.²⁷ Remains of an altar in front of Isias' stele indicates that she had predeceased Antiochos. Dörner suggested that she was the mother of Mithradates I Kallinikos and Antiochos' paternal grandmother²⁸, but later thought that she could also have been the wife of Antiochos I.²⁹ A newly discovered inscription of Mithradates II from Karakuş shows that Antiochos was indeed married to an Isias and the latter suggestion therefore seems most likely.³⁰

The most plausible reconstruction of the female ancestors, I think, is that of Jacobs, which is based on the probability that Isias Philostorgos must be the same as Isias, the wife of Antiochos I.³¹ The first female ancestor (stele 14) then would be Kleopatra Tryphaina, the Ptolemaic wife of the Seleucid king Antiochos VIII 'Grypos'. Grypos is epigraphically attested as being represented on stele 13, so that we would have Antiochos' grandparents standing next to each other on stelae 13 and 14.³² This interpretation matches the preserved letters PAN, which could be complemented as [ΚΛΕΟΠΑΤ] PAN.³³ The next female ancestor (stele 15) can be no other than Antiochos' mother, Laodike Thea Philadelphos, the Seleucid wife of Mithradates I Kallinikos. Stele 16 as we have seen was dedicated to Antiochos' own queen, Isias Philostorgos. Only the

23 Young 1996, 325; cf. Strootman 2012, 222 n. 22.

24 It is interesting to compare Antiochos' ancestor galleries with the 28 remarkable bronze statues of 'ancestors' before the tomb of the Habsburg emperor Maximilian I (r. 1493–1519) in the Hofkirche in Innsbruck, built in 1553 by his grandson, Ferdinand I. Apart from several genuine ancestors, the Habsburg ancestor gallery includes the mythical king Arthur; Theodoric, king of the Ostrogoths; and the Frankish king Clovis. The Hofkirche originally housed also a number of busts of Roman emperors, whose successors the Habsburgs claimed to be. On the Cenotaph of Maximilian I, see Bader-Wiesauer et al. 2004.

25 Dörner 1996; Jacobs 2000. Fischer 1972 and Young 1996 suggested that there were five female ancestors, but this is improbable (see Jacobs 2009, 300 for the arguments).

26 WW I, 16.

27 WW I, 14, preserved on a drawing in Humann – Puchstein 1890, 313.

28 Dörner 1967; accepted by Waldmann 1973, 56.

29 Dörner 1975.

30 Wagner 1983, 209.

31 Jacobs 2000, 303–306; endorsed with some reservations by Facella 2006, 272–275.

32 Jacobs 2000, 305.

33 Dörner 1996, 373, who, however, believed her to be Kleopatra Thea, the mother of Antiochos VIII 'Grypos'; against this identification, Jacobs 2000, 302.

identity of the last royal woman on stele 17 poses a problem; she likely was a daughter of Isias and Antiochos who had predeceased her father (her stele, like all stelae of the two main galleries, had an altar in front of it); the most plausible candidate is Laodike, who married the Parthian king Orodes II and was assassinated, probably in 38 BCE.³⁴ The line of royal women would thus be:

14. [Kleopatra Tryphaina, wife of Grypos]
15. [Laodike, daughter of Grypos]
16. Isias Philostorgos (wife of Antiochos I)
17. [Laodike, daughter of Isias and Antiochos]

Commagene and the Seleucids before Antiochos I

Commagene became part of the Seleucid Empire with Antiochos III's reorganization of Armenia³⁵, but had been a Seleucid satellite before that.³⁶ Ptolemaios, the *epistatēs* (a rather unusual term for a governor) of Commagene, according to Diodoros "asserted his independence".³⁷ The establishment of Commagenian autonomy is traditionally dated to 163/2 BCE, but a later date (150 BCE) has also been proposed³⁸, and is perhaps more plausible: until that time, Ptolemaios' coinage – imitation drachms based on issues from the imperial mint at Antioch – expressed allegiance to the Seleucid suzerain Demetrios I Soter.³⁹ To be sure, the lack of contemporaneous numismatic evidence that Ptolemaios assumed the title of king suggests that Commagene remained a Seleucid dependency for the entirety of Ptolemaios' reign (until ca. 130 BCE); the single reference to him as *basileus* on an inscription of Antiochos I from Gerger probably is an invention.⁴⁰ Ptolemaios' successor, Samos (whose reigning years are extremely difficult to reconstruct), struck regal coins in his own name, some showing the ruler wearing a 'pointed tiara', others modeled after contemporaneous Seleucid examples. Seleucid emblems of power such as Helios and the double cornucopia remained important devices on Orontid coins until the end of the kingdom.⁴¹

Samos' successor, Mithradates I (ca. 100–70/69 BCE), renewed relations with the Seleucids when he married Laodike, the daughter of Antiochos VIII Epiphanes

34 Cass. Dio 49,23,3–4; cf. Wagner 1983, 212.

35 Facella 2006, 184–199.

36 Sullivan 1977, 742–734.

37 Diod. Sic. 31 fr. 19a; on this elusive figure see Sullivan 1977, 742–748; Facella 2006, 199–205.

38 Jakobsson 2013.

39 Jakobsson 2013, 3; for the conventional dating, see Facella 2006, 199–205.

40 Versluys 2017, 174; I would not go as far as to presume that Ptolemaios himself was invented. For the inscription (Waldmann 1973, no. 141 no. Gf = IGLSyr 46), see Sullivan 1977, 747–748; Facella 2006, 201.

41 Sullivan 1977, 749.

Kallinikos (121–98/7 BCE), who is also known as ‘Grypos’.⁴² With this marriage, Mithradates likely received the title of *basileus* from his father-in-law.⁴³ It was an unequal marriage, not a sign of equality.⁴⁴ Seleucid kings mostly arranged for their daughters (and sometimes sisters) hypogamous marriages, where a woman is married to a man of lower status, thus affirming the superiority of the imperial house over the vassal dynasty.⁴⁵ From at least the reign of Antiochos III the Great (223/2–187 BCE), it had become standard practice to grant royal status to vassal rulers who had become independent, and often the arrangement was sealed with a dynastic marriage.⁴⁶ The Seleucids were thus able to bring local dynasts into their extended family, and thereby exchanged in the periphery of the empire failing attempts at direct rule for rule by proxy.⁴⁷ By this arrangement, Seleucid royal women had key diplomatic roles as representatives and intermediaries.⁴⁸ As local dynasties also married among each other, an intricate web of interdynastic relations developed that would survive the Seleucids for more than a century.⁴⁹ Though the Seleucid dynasty at the time of Antiochos VIII’s reign had lost most of its core territories to the Parthians, and was violently torn apart by inter-dynastic conflicts, Antiochos VIII’s status was still that of a ‘Great King’ placed above other kings, as attested *i. a.* by his introduction of the so-called Zeus Ouranios coinage with its astounding universalistic imperial imagery.⁵⁰

Direct Commagenian links with the Seleucids ended in 86 BCE when Commagene became a vassal principality of Tigranes the Great.⁵¹ When Tigranes was defeated by the armies of the Roman warlord Lucullus in 69 BCE and forced to give up his con-

42 On the reign of Mithradates I, see Facella 2006, 209–224.

43 Hellenistic kings usually married their (principal) queens in the context of their accession to the throne, the wedding ceremony being an extended part of the inauguration celebrations; see Strootman 2021.

44 Seibert 1967, 70.

45 See Strootman 2021. Eumenes II of Pergamon once rejected a marriage with a daughter of Antiochos III because this would give her father too much authority over his kingdom (Pol. 21,20; App. Syr. 5; cf. Ager 2017, 176).

46 Strootman 2011b; cf. Engels 2014; Wenghofer – Houle 2016.

47 Strootman 2010; Engels 2011.

48 McAuley 2017.

49 This web of relations has been charted for the post-Seleucid period by Sullivan 1990, and more recently has been studied in its Seleucid context by D’Agostini 2013 and McAuley 2018b.

50 Houghton et al. 2008, no. 2281a. The reverses of these coins show a standing (naked or draped) Zeus with inscription ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΝΤΙΟΧΟΥ ΕΠΙΦΑΝΟΥΣ (“[coin] of King Antiochos the Manifest [God]”); he has a long royal scepter in his left hand while his right hand is stretched out in a gesture of omnipotence, holding an image of the Sun; an image of the Moon is placed above his head (on the gesture, see L’Orange 1953, 139–170; on Hellenistic universalism in general, Strootman 2014b). The Zeus Ouranios coinage was struck between 122/1 and 113 BCE, a relatively peaceful phase in Antiochos VIII’s long reign; cf. Ehling 2008, 215–216.

51 In contrast to what is often written, Tigranes never ruled the Seleucid Empire. The Seleucid Empire was not a territorial state but a dynastic entity and Tigranes did not belong to that dynasty; he was king of Armenia and created an empire of his own. On the nature of the Seleucid Empire as a dynastic network polity, see Strootman 2011a.

quests, there no longer was an imperial overlord to preside over Commagene. Lucullus was recalled in 67 BCE. The Roman Republic did not yet have an emperor to bind together the various local kings of the Hellenistic Near East. This was the situation that Antiochos I found himself in when he came to the throne in the year 70/69 BCE.

The Use of Seleucid Names and Epithets

On Nemrud Dağ, Antiochos I presented his maternal line of ancestry as equal to the paternal line of kings that he claimed descent from. The presence of the matriline is a more striking choice than the obvious presence of the patriline. Ancestor galleries are not uncommon in Hellenistic ruler representation – they have been attested for e. g. Mausollos, Philip II, Antigonos II, Attalos I, and Ptolemy IV – but these normally focused on the patriline, even as female family members were regularly included.⁵²

The relative emphasis on Seleucid descent finds a parallel in the Orontid use of dynastic names. It is impossible to know whether Antiochos I was named so at birth by his father or took that name himself upon his accession, as Hellenistic kings often did. It was at any rate a reference to the Seleucids for the name referred to his maternal grandfather, Antiochos VIII ‘Grypos’, and this singular break with the Hellenistic dynastic custom of naming the first son/heir after his *paternal* grandfather must have been intentional and meaningful. ‘Antiochos’ was the most used name for Seleucid kings. It had been the name of fifteen reigning kings, around half of the total number of male rulers (the other half using Seleukos, Demetrios, Alexander, and Philip). In Commagene, ‘Antiochos’ systematically recurs as a throne name after Antiochos I’s reign. The last king of the dynasty ruled as Antiochos (IV) Epiphanes (38–72 CE), and the same name and epithet was used by his son and co-ruler (though he was named only “Epiphanes” on his coins). The son commanded a contingent of Commagenian troops during Titus’ siege of Jerusalem in 70 CE, where he emphasized his Seleucid identity by surrounding himself with a bodyguard of “Macedonians”.⁵³ The funerary monument for the king-without-a-kingdom, consul Antiochos Epiphanes Philopappos on the Hill of the Muses in Athens, still celebrated the Seleucid ancestry of the deceased. Philopappos was a grandson of the last Commagenian king, Antiochos IV

52 For an overview and discussion, see Versluys 2017, 130–132; also see Hintzen-Bohlen 1990; Højte 2002; Kosmetatou 2002. Earlier and later ancestor galleries consisted of statues or busts, never a ‘wall’ of stelae as was erected on Nemrud Dağ. Other views of the galleries’ origins include Jacobs 2002, who argues that Antiochos’ ancestor cult combines older Greek and Persian elements; Facella 2006, 276–278, and Facella 2015, 174–176, who sees an Armenian background; and Messerschmidt 2011, arguing for lingering Hittite traditions in Commagene, and making the important observation that Hittite monuments were still visible in the landscape.

53 Jos. BI 7,11,3 (460); a second son of Epiphanes was named Kallinikos (see below).

Epiphanes. He died in 116 CE, some 45 years after the disappearance of the Commagenian kingdom, but nonetheless bore the title of *basileus*.⁵⁴

The names of alleged Achaemenid ancestors are conspicuously absent in the royal house even in the reign of Antiochos himself, who most of all was responsible for the construction of this ancestry: Antiochos for some years ruled together with his heir, Mithradates (II), who therefore must have had that throne name already during his father's lifetime and with his father's consent.⁵⁵ He was named after his paternal grandfather but where the grandfather derived that name from is uncertain. There are two options. First, the name 'Mithradates' was a dynastic name recurring in the Pontic kingdom since the reign of its first king, Mithradates "the Founder", in the early 3rd c. BCE. Second, the name 'Mithradates' (middle-Iranian 'Mihrdād') was introduced in the Arsakid dynasty by the first Parthian 'Great King', Mithradates I (ca. 171–138 or 165/4–132 BCE), and was also used by the powerful Parthian 'King of Kings', Mithradates II (ca. 123/2–88/7 BCE). There is slight evidence tipping the balance in favor of Pontos: a coin of Samos shows on the reverse a queen called Pythodoris, a name appearing a century later as a Pontic queen.⁵⁶ If a marital connection with the Mithradatids of Pontos indeed existed, Pythodoris may have been a daughter of Mithradates V Euergetes of Pontos (150–120 BCE). Be that as it may, it must not be forgotten that due to intermarriage with the Mithradatic house of Pontos, 'Mithradates' had become a Seleucid dynastic name, too (though not of reigning kings). Most famously, Antiochos IV Epiphanes (the 2nd c. BCE Seleucid emperor, not the 1st c. CE Commagenian king) was named Mithradates before he became king.⁵⁷ In addition, the reference to the Indo-Iranian deity Mithra in the theophoric name 'Mithradates' may be associated with the Commagenian Orontids' public adoption of an Iranian dynastic identity.⁵⁸ Iranian identity in Antiquity was not a matter of language but of shared religious ideas and practices (in the Hellenistic period, Aramaic and Greek were also languages used by Iranians)⁵⁹, and the emphasis on religion in Antiochos' self-presentation is consistent with this definition.

Antiochos I gave Seleucid names to his daughters as well. The names of two of them, Laodike and Antiochis, have been recorded on inscriptions set up at Karakuş by their brother, Mithradates II.⁶⁰ Laodike, probably the oldest of the two, was married to the

54 On Philopappos, see Facella 2006, 354–358; on the monument and its ancestor statues of Seleukos I Nikator and Antiochos IV Epiphanes of Commagene, see Kleiner 1983; for analysis, see Jacobs 2015; Wu 2016.

55 The joint rule is attested on coinage; see Wagner 1983, 206–207.

56 ΒΑΣΙΛΙΣΣΗΣ ΠΥΘΟΔΑΔΡΙΑΔΟΣ; see Sullivan 1977, 752 with the references in n. 78; for the possible link with Pontos, also Facella 2006, 208.

57 Coşkun 2016.

58 Versluys 2017, 165.

59 de Jong 2017; also see de Jong's contribution to this volume.

60 Wagner 1983, 196. 209; on naming practices for Seleucid queens, consult McAuley 2018b.

Arsakid ‘King of Kings’, Orodes II. Again, it is striking that these royal women were not named after their Orontid ancestors.⁶¹ Laodike was named after her grandmother, the Seleucid princess who had married Mithradates I Kallinikos. It is interesting to note that by the reign of Antiochos II, the name Laodike had also become current among the Commagenian court elite, as is clear from the inscription on a funerary altar from Sofraz Köy which lists three generations of Laodikēs in a single family.⁶²

It is likely that Mithradates adopted his father-in-law’s best known cult title, ‘Kallinikos’, upon this occasion to stress his affiliation with the imperial family; the title also appears among the epithets of two successors of Antiochos VIII, Mithradates’ ‘brothers-in-law’ Demetrios III and Antiochos XII.⁶³ Towards the end of the Commagenian kingdom, the second son of the last Commagenian king, Antiochos IV Epiphanes, according to Josephus was named Kallinikos – a name or epithet that likely still referred to his ancestors Mithradates I Kallinikos and Antiochos VIII Kallinikos.⁶⁴

Finally, Antiochos I underlined his link with the Seleucid house by giving his mother, Laodike, the title of ‘Goddess’ (Thea), but did not call his father ‘God’. The epithet had previously been used by four Seleucid monarchs, including Laodike’s very powerful grandmother, Kleopatra I Thea. Antiochos also adopted the title himself, emphasizing his bond with his mother and her Seleucid ancestors.⁶⁵ In Antiochos’ dedicatory inscriptions, Laodike received in addition the title of Philadelphos to stress that she was the sister of no less than five Seleucid monarchs: Seleukos VI, Antiochos XI, Philippos I, Demetrios III, and Antiochos XII.⁶⁶ The accentuation of these dynastic links, I argue, did not merely aim at increasing Antiochos’ prestige, but was meant to claim inheritance. This aspect will be further discussed in the next and final section of this paper.

61 It was only from the reign of Mithradates III (ca. 20–12 BCE) that the ‘indigenous’ dynastic name Iotape was used in Commagene, accentuating links to the local royal houses of Atropatene, Emesa, and Judea (Sullivan 1978, 302; on the evolution of ‘Iotape’ as a dynastic name in Commagene, see still Macurdy 1936).

62 SEG 38, No. 1544.

63 Sullivan 1990, 60–61; on ‘Kallinikos’ as a royal epithet, see Muccioli 2013, 342–345. Dörrie 1964, 15 suggested that the epithet referred to a military victory of Mithradates against Antiochos VIII, and that the marriage was meant to seal the peace between the two kings; this has been shown by Seibert 1967, 70 n. 87 to be mere speculation. Kallinikos (“Gloriously Victorious”) is originally an epithet of Herakles, who in the Seleucid Empire was equated with Bahrām (MP Wāhrām or Warāhrān; Avestan Vərəθraγna), the victorious Iranian warrior god (Gnoli – Jamzadeh 1988; cf. Canepa 2018, 185); in the Nomos Inscription of Nemrud Dağ, Vərəθraγna appears as “Artagnes-Herakles-Ares” (l. 57).

64 Jos. BI 7,11,3 (460).

65 On the meaning of the epithet, see Hazzard 1995; cf. Muccioli 2013, 281–309.

66 An additional reason why Laodike was given such a pivotal place in the self-presentation of her son, perhaps was the fact that her mother, Kleopatra Tryphaina, was the daughter of the Ptolemaic royal couple Kleopatra III and Ptolemy VII Physkon. Antiochos could thus boast to be the descendent of both Seleukos I Nikator and Ptolemy I Soter, respectively the founders of the Seleucid and Ptolemaic dynasties. But the latter connection apparently was not stressed by Antiochos.

Antiochos I and the Title of Great King

Antiochos I's emphasis on his Seleucid ancestry implies that an important key to understanding the dynastic image he created is precisely that Seleucid connection. In this last section we will therefore turn to the broader Seleucid context – or rather, the political landscape of the *post*-Seleucid Near East.

The imperial pretensions of the Seleucids had already been successfully challenged in the 140s BCE by the Arsakid king, Mithradates I, who had conquered Iran and Babylonia; several Seleucid kings attempted to regain the lost provinces. They all failed. Seleucid power irrevocably collapsed when from 83 BCE Tigranes of Armenia conquered the last remaining holdings of the dynasty in Syria, Phoenicia and Cilicia.⁶⁷ The Commagenian kingdom had become a vassal of Tigranes already in 86 BCE. Tigranes' empire fell when the Romans defeated him in 69 BCE, the same year in which Antiochos I of Commagene came to the throne (70/69 BCE).

The power vacuum left behind by the Seleucids in the Near East, I argue, is the primary context in which Antiochos operated as a politician and as a producer of dynastic/religious identity and cultural memory. In the first half of the last century BCE, the outcome of Roman imperialist endeavors in the Near East was still uncertain, and many at that time must have seen the Parthian Arsakids as the strongest power in the region. Uncertainty caused an outburst of claims to imperial hegemony by a variety of competing monarchs.

Following in the footsteps of the Achaemenids, Alexander and the Seleucids had claimed imperial hegemony, using similar universalistic rhetoric as had been common in the Near East for many centuries. Their principal royal title, *basileus*, initially sufficed to express these imperial claims (in the pre-Hellenistic period, *basileus* had been the preferred term by which Greek writers referred to the Achaemenid emperor and by extension to the Persian Empire). But when the number of client *basileis* under their aegis increased, some Seleucid rulers in addition adopted the title 'Great King' (*basileus megas*) to express the idea of a hierarchy of kings.⁶⁸ The Arsakid empire-builder Mithradates I had appropriated that title after the conquest of Seleucid Iran. Mithradates II, who further extended the Arsakid Empire, in addition adopted the newly (re) invented title 'King of Kings' (*basileus basileōs*). Also Tigranes of Armenia, an enemy of the Arsakids, used both titles to express his overlordship over other kings and to generate confidence among local elites. Mithradates I and II, as well as Tigranes, had been able to claim imperial status by right of victory. It is important to note, however, that several other claimants to that status were able to do so on the basis of their descent from the Seleucid house *in the matriline*.

67 Ehling 2006, 250–253.

68 Strootman 2014b; Strootman 2019b.

Among those claiming the Seleucid heritage we find Mithradates VI Eupator of Pontos (r. ca. 120–63 BCE), a grandson of Antiochos IV Epiphanes. Like Antiochos of Commagene, Mithradates of Pontos claimed descent from Seleukos and Alexander, as well as from the Achaemenids.⁶⁹ Another well-known instance is Kleopatra VII Philopator (51–30 BCE). Cassius Dio reports that during the inauguration festival known as the ‘Donations of Alexandria’ (34 BCE), Kleopatra claimed all the lands that once belonged to her ancestors “from the Hellespont to India”; she adopted the imperial title ‘Queen of Kings’ while her minor son, Ptolemy XV (‘Caesarion’), became her co-ruler and was given the title ‘King of Kings.’⁷⁰ In the region west of the river Euphrates, which was largely under her and Antony’s hegemony, these titles were meant to give coherence to the system of client states that the Seleucids had left behind there; east of the Euphrates, where the empire was still imaginary, they were meant to generate the support of cities and local elites for Antony’s intended campaign of (re)conquest and ‘liberation’ from the Parthians. Plutarch’s slightly confused version of these events hints at a pairing of Macedonian and Persian imperial traditions not unlike what we see on Nemrud Dağ, when he writes that Antony made one of his sons with Kleopatra, Alexander, viceroy of Armenia, Media and Parthia (*i. e.* the Upper Satrapies) “as soon as he would have conquered it”; to his other son, Ptolemy, he gave Phoenicia, Syria and Cilicia. During the festivities in 34 BCE, “he presented Alexander, dressed in a Median garb with a tiara and a kitaris, and Ptolemy in krepides, chlamys, and a kausia encircled with a diadem; for the latter was the attire of the kings who had come after Alexander and the former that of the kings of Media and Armenia.”⁷¹

As we have already seen, Antiochos of Commagene called himself ‘Great King’. His dedicatory inscriptions use the title in a stock phrase that is repeated all over Commagene as an opening formula: βασιλεὺς Μέγας Ἀντίοχος Θεὸς Δίκαιος Ἐπιφανῆς Φιλορώμαιοις καὶ Φιλέλλην ὁ ἐκ Βασιλέως Μιθραδάτου Καλλινίκου καὶ Βασιλίσσης Λαοδίκης Θεᾶς Φιλαδέλφου [...]: “The Great King Antiochos, God, the Just, the

69 Just. Epit. 38,7,1; on the ancestral claims of Mithradates the Great, see Lerouge-Cohen 2017; cf. Versluys 2017, 217–218.

70 Cass. Dio 49,40,2–41,3. Kleopatra descended from Seleukos I through a maternal female ancestor, Kleopatra I, daughter of Antiochos III the Great. On the meaning of the ‘Donations of Alexandria’, see Strootman 2010; on the actual, and quite substantial, reach of Kleopatra’s authority in the Eastern Mediterranean, see Schrapel 1996.

71 Plut. Antonius 54,3–6. Note that just as in Commagene under Antiochos I, lack of knowledge of ancient ‘Median’ (*sc.* Persian) royal style was countered by the use of contemporaneous Armenian style; see Versluys 2017, 218–219. Note, too, that the name Alexander was used in the Ptolemaic dynasty since the 2nd c. BCE and suggests that Alexander the Great was believed to be at the beginning of the Ptolemaic line of kings and queens, too. In 35 CE, the Parthian emperor, Artabanus, demanded tribute from the Roman emperor, Tiberius, and “added menacing boasts about the old frontiers of the Persian and Macedonian empires, promising to seize all the lands that Cyrus and Alexander had once ruled” (Tac. Ann. 6,31,1); on this passage, see Fowler 2005, pointing out that the dual reference to the Macedonian and Achaemenid empires was a Hellenistic rather than an Iranian imperial tradition.

[God] Manifest, Philorhomaïos and Philhellēn, son of King Mithradates Kallinikos and Queen Laodike, the Goddess, Lover of her Brother[s].⁷² Antiochos transmitted the title to his heir, Mithradates II. An inscription discovered by Dörner in 1938 on a pillar in Karakuş but first transcribed by Wagner in 1975, opens with the formula, “The Great King Mithradates, son of the Great King Antiochos [I] and Queen Isias.”⁷³

There are two additional expressions of imperial power accompanying the title of ‘Great King’ on Nemrud Dağ and elsewhere in Commagene. The first is the use of the word *archē*. Though *archē* can be translated as “leadership”, “rule”, or “dominion”, it is the Greek standard term for what we would now call “empire”, and in ancient Greek is often used interchangeably with the less common term *hegemonia*. The word is used several times in the Nomos Inscription, and occurs e. g. as πατρώϊαν [ἀ]ρχήν (“ancestral empire”) in line 24.

The second instance of imperial rhetoric is the reference to “all the gods” in the text of the Nomos Inscription: “And whoever [...] takes over this dominion (*archē*) as king or dynast, may he [...] enjoy the favor of the deified ancestors (*daimones*) and all the gods.”⁷⁴ This is reminiscent of earlier Hellenistic universalistic imagery, for instance at the procession staged by Antiochos IV during the festival at Daphne in ca. 166 BCE, when images “of all the gods (*theoi*) and all the *daimones*” were brought to Daphne to participate in the celebrations:

“It is impossible to give an account of all the statues; for images of every god or divinity mentioned or believed in by human beings, as well as of all the heroes, were carried along. Some were gilded, others dressed in robes that had gold threads running through them; and the stories that went with all of them lay next to them in expensive editions that followed the traditional accounts. Images of Night and Day, Earth and Sky, and Dawn and Noon followed them.”⁷⁵

72 IGLSyr nos. 1. 3. 5. 8. 14–18. 22. 26–28. 31–35. 46–47. 52.

73 Wagner 1983, 209. Βασιλεύς Μέγας Μιθραδάτης ὁ ἐκ Βασιλέως | Μεγάλου Ἀντιόχου καὶ Βασιλίσσης Ἰσιάδος. The inscription dedicates a statue of “Queen Laodike, the sister of the king and the wife of the King of Kings Orodes” (Βασιλίσσης Λαοδίκης βασιλέ[ως ἀ]δελφῆς καὶ βασιλέως βασιλέων Ἰσρώδ[ου γυν]αϊκός); the mentioning of an Arsakid King of Kings next to the Orontid Great King complicates matters: was there a hierarchy of imperial titles, or had the two titles equivalent meanings as they also had in the Achaemenid Empire? On the evolution of ‘King of Kings’ as an Arsakid title in the Hellenistic period, see Wiesehöfer 1996; Shayegan 2011; Engels 2014.

74 RIG 735, ll. 228–234; transl. Dörner. [...] Ὅστις τε ἂν βασιλεὺς ἢ | δυνάστης ἐν μακρῶι χρόνῳ ταύτην | ἀρχὴν παραλάβῃ, νόμον τοῦτον | καὶ τιμὰς ἡμετέρας δια- | φυλάσσων καὶ παρὰ τῆς ἐμῆς | εὐχῆς ἴλεως δαίμονας καὶ θεοὺς | πάντας ἐχέτω. [...]. On the pantheistic rhetoric of Antiochos I as a typical Hellenistic phenomenon, see Hoepfner 2012, 130–132.

75 Ath. 5,195a–b ap. Pol. 30.25.12–19, transl. S. D. Olson (Loeb; 2nd edn, 2007): τὸ δὲ τῶν ἀγαλμάτων πλῆθος οὐ δυνατόν ἐξηγήσασθαι· πάντων γὰρ τῶν παρ’ ἀνθρώποις λεγομένων ἢ νομιζομένων θεῶν ἢ δαιμόνων, προσέτι δὲ ἡρώων εἰδῶλα διήγετο, τὰ μὲν κεχρυσωμένα, τὰ δ’ ἠμφιεσμένα στολαῖς διαχρύσοις. καὶ πᾶσι τούτοις οἱ προσήκοντες μῦθοι κατὰ τὰς παραδεδομένας ἱστορίας ἐν διασκευαῖς | πολυτελεῖσι παρέκειντο. εἴπετο δ’ αὐτοῖς καὶ Νυκτὸς εἰδῶλον καὶ Ἡμέρας, Γῆς τε καὶ Οὐρανοῦ, καὶ Ἡοῦς καὶ Μεσημβρίας.

The similarity is striking. At least the emphasis on the entire pantheon being present I think is significant (at the Daphne Festival, this probably followed from the festival's character as a New Year celebration).⁷⁶ Panthea were a somewhat common phenomenon in the Hellenistic world; they have been archaeologically attested *i. a.* in the town Kamiros on Rhodes, and textually for Ilion, Erythrai, Antioch-on-the-Meander, and Alexandria.⁷⁷

Conclusion – A Hellenistic King in a Post-Seleucid Political Landscape

The aspect of Antiochos I's dynastic identity that to my mind is most of all in need of explanation, is his use of the imperial title 'Great King'. The title seems too pretentious for Antiochos' small kingdom and his relative subordinate position *vis-à-vis* the Romans and the Arsakids. In his discussion of the Sofraz Köy stele, Wagner suggested that Antiochos adopted the title with the extension of his kingdom by Pompey in 65 BCE; but that still does no right to the imperial pretensions associated with that title.⁷⁸ As I have argued elsewhere⁷⁹, Antiochos could legitimately claim that title because of the "fortunate roots" of his Macedonian and Persian ancestry. But what did he hope to achieve by adopting it? There can be no doubt that the significance of the (Greek) title *basileus megas* must be explained from its late-Hellenistic, post-Seleucid context – and not from the three centuries old context of the largely forgotten Achaemenid Empire, as is so often thought. As Versluys has shown in his 2017 monograph on cultural production in late-Hellenistic Commagene, the dynastic iconography surrounding Antiochos I's claims to Persian ancestry is predominantly a Persianistic 'invention' of tradition, that despite its relative uniqueness is far less idiosyncratic than commonly assumed if seen in the light of cultural developments elsewhere in the late-Hellenistic Near East.⁸⁰ This contribution aimed at adding late-Hellenistic *political* developments to a better understanding of "wacky Antiochus and his giant garden gnomes" (as one Classical art historian during a discussion once phrased it).⁸¹

76 Strootman 2019a, 192–195.

77 Hoepfner 2012, 131, summarizing Jacobi 1930.

78 Wagner 1983; see now Jacobs in this volume, redating the Sofraz Köy stele to 64–62 BCE, disconnecting the adoption of the 'Great King' title from the expansion of Commagenian territory (I am grateful to Stefan Riedel for these references). On the Hellenistic title 'Great King' and its possible meanings, see Strootman 2019b.

79 Strootman 2016.

80 See also Kropp 2013, who shows how the various local dynasties of the late-Hellenistic Near East, in dialogue with each other, selectively appropriated aspects of Seleucid and Ptolemaic kingship in combination with presumed local traditions.

81 See Versluys 2017, 20 with ns. 47–50, for a selection of other derogative judgments by modern scholars, as well as the more nuanced views of Goell and Hoepfner. A well-known conspiracy theory on the Internet claims that the statue of Antiochos on Nemrud Dağ is in fact a portrait of

So what did Antiochos want? The sources say next to nothing about his political aims, let alone about their development in the course of Antiochos' long reign. We know that he alternately supported Parthia and Rome, and had to beware of the military strength of both. But the age in which he lived was also politically an age of uncertain outcomes: everything was possible. In Hellenistic history, political fortunes and 'interstate' power balances could shift dramatically by a single military victory or an unexpected royal death, and it would not have been the first time that a local ruler had been able to transform his kingdom into a powerful empire. Only one generation earlier, Mithradates of Pontos and Tigranes of Armenia had done precisely that, exploiting the power vacuum caused by Seleucid collapse and the political turmoil resulting from Roman and Parthian raids in Anatolia and the Near East. Mithradates had made good use of his alleged dual Macedonian and Persian descent: his actual Seleucid ancestry (including an assumed descent from Alexander) and his claimed Achaemenid ancestry. But whereas the coin production of Mithradates was enormous, coins of Antiochos of Commagene are rare⁸², and this does not suggest a lot of military activity. Yet, although Antiochos as far as we know never very actively showed the ambition of becoming a great conqueror, his political rhetoric was imperial. There is also the possibility that Antiochos at some point during his reign played out his Seleucid and Achaemenid heritage in accordance with Roman political aims, trying to win over local rulers and elites – precisely as Kleopatra, in cooperation with Caesar and later Antony, would capitalize upon her ancestral prestige to create imperial cohesion in the Near East.⁸³ Roman hegemony in the Near East was based on the continued existence of the system of vassal kingdoms set up by the Seleucids and Ptolemies. The need to control this fragmented and very monarchical political landscape explains why Roman leaders from Pompey to Nero adopted the ideology and trappings of Hellenistic kingship, and tried to cooperate with the friendly descendants of these imperial dynasties. Commagene was very strategically located, with easy access to the Syrian and Cilician plains, the Anatolian highlands, and to Mesopotamia.

Be that as it may, I hope to have shown that we need to understand Antiochos' dynastic policies in the context of Seleucid collapse. To make that point, I have moved Rome more to the background than historical narratives usually do. I did so to accentuate ongoing Seleucid prestige in the region and Antiochos' relatively large degree of autonomy, and also to highlight the substantial political role that the Parthians played in the Near East in the first century BCE.⁸⁴ But Rome of course was there – and not

Elvis Presley (search for "Antiochus Commagene Elvis Presley" *vel sim.*); if this is true, and if Elvis is indeed alive and living in Las Vegas, 'The Giant Garden Gnomes' would be a good name for his band.

82 See the contribution by Facella, this volume; cf. Facella 2005b; Gariboldi 2007. For the coinage of Commagene, consult Bedoukian 1995.

83 Strootman 2010.

84 On the connections between Antiochos I and the Arsakid Empire, see now Shayegan 2016.

only in the background, as a Roman *provincia* had been established in Syria already in 64/63 BCE. In 31 BCE, Antiochos' successor, Mithradates II, joined Kleopatra and Antony at Actium, but afterwards was still confirmed as king by the victorious Octavian.⁸⁵ Only from that date on there would be increasingly *direct* Roman intervention in Commagene, and it seems that this loss of independence resulted in a drastic reduction of the royal cult established by Antiochos I.⁸⁶ The Roman emperor now actively decided who would rule in Commagene. Such a strong Roman presence however was not yet in place during Antiochos I's reign.

The title of 'Great King' returned under Antiochos IV, who also adopted the grandiose epithet Epiphanes. But perhaps by that time the meaning of 'Great King' had devaluated and now merely expressed that this later king ruled Commagene plus some other lands.

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85 Plut. *Antonius* 61.

86 Speidel 2009, 566–567 with n. 22; cf. Bowersock 1965, 46–51.

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Time, Echoes and Experience

*Perceiving the Landscape in Commagene**

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Introduction

Commagene is mountainous, riverine, heavy with snow in winter and thick with dust in summer. Even sequestered in the modern cities, the landscape crowds in and cannot be ignored. The landscape, and how the landscape was perceived, is an essential part of the discussion of Commagene itself. In this chapter, I frame a discussion of the landscape and its perception around twin poles: the impact of the landscape on the formation of Hellenistic culture, and how the people who lived in Commagene may have perceived the Hellenistic monuments built by their kings. Accessing past perception is extremely difficult (impossible?) and this has led to the approach taken here, where I set out three interconnected ways of attempting to access how ancient inhabitants may have perceived the landscape of Commagene. First, the forms of the 'natural' landscape, and how the physical facts of mountains, sky and rivers may have influenced how the people who lived there felt about themselves and perceived themselves as a group (or not). Second, cognitive aspects of landscape, that is, the myths and the stories that were told in and of the landscape, and how they may have shaped the landscape and its understanding. And third, social forms of landscape perception, through the ways that the landscape was physically changed – both by the elite, and also by the forgotten masses – through participation in extraordinary events such as religious rituals or large scale building projects.

Each of these elements is worked through in three different ways in this chapter. Starting by questioning the 'betweenness' with which Commagene is often described, the first approach to thinking about landscape perception asks how time depth contributes to how people perceive themselves, here thinking about how inhabitants prior

* I should like to thank the organisers of the conference for their excellent hospitality and wonderful programme, my fellow participants for such stimulating discussion, and the reviewers of this chapter for their thoughtful and helpful comments.

to the Hellenistic period used and marked the natural landscape, transforming it into mental and social space. Second, to examine ways the Hellenistic occupants responded to these earlier narratives, myths, deities and monuments, and built a sense of their own mental and social place in the landscape, I suggest the metaphorical notion of 'echoes', as a way to draw out aspects of landscape perception that may be witnessed in parallels between the built monuments of the Commagenian kings, those of rulers before them, and the natural landscape. And finally, to attempt to address issues of experiencing the landscape, I conclude by thinking about the physical presence and visibility of the Commagenian monuments and how they influenced social behaviours, that is, how both the royal family and ordinary people would have participated in or interacted with them, and how these monuments contributed to building a mental map of the world that contributed to the construction of a Commagenian self-narrative.

Time Depth

The landscape of Commagene is marked by the colossal watercourse of the Euphrates at the eastern border of the rocky, difficult mountain terrain of the north, and the gentler hills to the south of the region. Although Commagene possesses diverse landscapes within its tentatively reconstructed borders¹, there are clear differences from the surrounding plains to the east of the Euphrates, or to the west of the Taurus range (see fig. 2 in the volume's introduction). The physical facts of mountains, sky, rivers and forests may well have contributed to the self-perception of the inhabitants, but to try to avoid environmental determinism, here I will think about how the people who lived here in the Iron Age and Hellenistic period used and marked this diverse and dramatic natural landscape, and how awareness of time depth contributes to how the people of Hellenistic Commagene perceived themselves as belonging to this place.

The story begins with the earliest records of the area. Taking a long view over 3000 years, the area later known as 'Commagene' seems to have indeed been a land sandwiched 'between' the Hittites in Anatolia and the Assyrians in Mesopotamia, but the people would not necessarily have described themselves as living 'between'. The area is perhaps to be identified in the middle Bronze Age Hittite records from Hattuša

1 The outlines of Commagene are not precise. For example, Seleukeia/Zeugma, the twin cities on the Euphrates that sit at the southern/eastern edge of Commagene, changed hands a number of times: given to Antiochos I by Pompey in 65/64 BCE, it was reallocated to the province of Syria a few years later by Octavian, as punishment for Commagene siding with Antony at Actium (see Versluys 2018, 49). There is argument too about Doliche's inclusion within the boundary of Commagene: Millar 1993 suggests that it too was allocated to Roman Syria by Octavian, Blömer – Winter 2011 suggest that it was part of Commagene for only 37 years; whereas Brijder 2014, 218, following Wagner 1975 suggests that Doliche was one of the four cities of Commagene mentioned in the inscription on the Chabinas Bridge in the period of Septimius Severus.

as a semi-independent region belonging to a city called Kummaha;² more firmly, the city-state of Kummuh that is identified with the later Hellenistic capital of Commagene, Samosata³, is known from the annals of the Middle Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser I (c. 1114–1076 BCE). Located between the kingdoms of Malatya to the north and Karkamiš to the south⁴, Kummuh was situated on the banks of the Euphrates, and is now submerged by the floodwaters created by the Atatürk Dam. The enormous tell of the city occupied a strategic ford on the great river, offering one of the more accessible places through which trade and communications could pass from Mesopotamia into the Anatolian plateau.⁵ Kummuh seems to have grown wealthy on its position, and Kummuhian merchants are known to have sold skins and linen in Harran, for example.⁶ In the later Iron Age, c. 900–700 BCE, Kummuh became a truly independent kingdom, a part of the collection of small Neo-Hittite states that carved out their places along the old borders between the Hittite and Assyrian Empires. The Hittite heritage of (some of) the people is clearly witnessed in the names of the rulers, which drew on the names of the Hittite kings at Hattuša – Šuppiluliuma, Hattušili.⁷ Kummuh was, however, allied with Assyria during most of this period, as witnessed in references to the tribute paid by Kummuh to Assyria under Aššurnasirpal II (866 BCE)⁸, or in objects such as the Pazarçık Stele, which records the boundary between Kummuh as Assyrian client kingdom and its neighbour Gurgum (Kahramanmaraş) in 805 BCE.⁹ Following a brief, and given the quantity of tribute he demanded, perhaps forced, alliance with Sarduri II of Urartu in the mid-700s, Kummuh was welcomed back into the Assyrian fold, before Sargon II finally extended Assyrian occupation into the surrounding regions of Melid (Malatya) and Gurgum, and conquered Kummuh for good in 708 BCE, after the king, Muwatalli, changed allegiance and sided with Urartu. Sargon's annals

2 It is not certain that this Kummaha is the same as the later city and kingdom of Kummuh – Garstang and Gurney have identified Kummaha as Kemakh, further to the north near Erzincan: Garstang – Gurney 1959, 35, but see Röllig 1997, 286, where he instead argues for Kummaha being located further south of Karkamiš at Tell Ahmar. However, Röllig also mentions that in the region of Kummaha are “forests and the landscape seems to be mountainous” (Röllig 1997, 286). This does not tally well with the topography of Tell Ahmar.

3 See also the contribution by Kruijjer and Riedel in this volume.

4 Bryce 2012, 110.

5 There were other fording points, notably further south at Birecik near Zeugma and north near Malatya.

6 The continued prosperity of the city is indicated too by the tribute demanded by the Urartian king Sarduri II when he attacked the kingdom in the 740s BCE: 40 minas of gold, 800 minas of silver, 3000 garments, 2000 copper shields, and 1535 copper bowls. Other texts record also numerous animals, beautifully dyed woollen and linen cloth and clothing, elephant hides and tusks, and precious woods. Blaylock 2009, 30.

7 Bryce 2012, 110.

8 Blaylock 2009, 30.

9 Bryce 2012, 113.

switch to referring to Muwatalli as an ‘evil Hittite’¹⁰, which although it rather smacks of the deployment of ethnicity to suit the political present, also demonstrates something important about the long-standing self-perception among the rulers (and people?) of Kummuh as Hittite successors: we may be able to infer from this that Assyrian control was rather limited to urban centres.

Kummuh’s relationship with Assyria had always been troublesome. The records reveal that Kummuh rebelled against the Great King Tiglath-Pileser I in the 11th c. BCE, and the city was captured. It seems, however, that the Assyrians never commanded the river crossing points, and the Euphrates was seen as a major obstacle by Tiglath-Pileser I.¹¹ Not for the last time, some urban inhabitants of Kummuh were deported to Mesopotamia, with Mesopotamians brought in to run the city.¹² However, what is particularly interesting here is a small detail: that those who survived the Assyrian attack and were not captured, “took their gods and fled to the mountains”.¹³ Presumably, this means that groups of refugees from the city gathered the statues of their deities and made their escape, up into the wild Taurus mountains that tower over 2,200 m high in the distance on the Euphrates’ western bank. The necessity of taking the gods with them demonstrates the importance of the bond between place and divinity, and the deliberate severance of this link that statue-stealing in the ancient Near East enacted, an act of war that was understood as “actualising the rupture between the god and his native land”.¹⁴

It is not known which gods were taken up into the mountains, but it is possible to hazard some reasonable guesses: likely are the imperial Hittite deities that continued to be venerated into the Iron Age, such as Tarhunzas the storm god, but perhaps more local gods were taken too, for example, city gods of Kummuh itself. Worship of the storm god was certainly established by c. 900 BCE (as shown by the ADIYAMAN 2 stele), but this presumably reflects a monumentalisation of worship that existed prior to this; similarly, his worship also seems to have been present at the sanctuary at Dülük Baba Tepesi on the outskirts of Gaziantep by the 9th c. BCE¹⁵, although it is unknown if this area was politically part of Kummuh at this stage. Although the evidence dates from after the period in question, perhaps it is also relevant to consider other important cults of the area, in particular Kubaba: with the advent of Karkamiš as the main regional political player in the Neo-Hittite period, her goddess, Kubaba, became widely worshipped, with dedicatory stelae found near Karkamiš at Körtün, Tell Ahmar, and Aleppo.¹⁶ In addition, her worship was known later in the Iron Age

10 Blaylock 2009, 30.

11 Llop-Raduà 2012, 214, 216.

12 See Hawkins 1975; Summers 1991, 1–6; Facella 2006, 73–78; Versluys 2018, 46.

13 Beaulieu 1993, 242.

14 Beaulieu 1993, 242, referring to Meissner 1925, 126–128.

15 Messerschmidt 2017, 37.

16 Hawkins 1981, 149. KÖRKÜN; TELL AHMARI, II; ALEPPO 2.

at temples within the territory of Kummuh, at Ancoz and Boybeypinarı (see fig 1): although these shrines may represent politico-religious dedications that show allegiance to Karkamiš, Kubaba's worship was regionally important from the early second millennium onwards.¹⁷ At Boybeypinarı, the pair of stelae were given by the wife of Šuppiliumas between 805–773 BCE, and record the setting up of a throne on a podium to the goddess, with an offering table. The shrine at Ancoz to Kubaba and the Hittite deity of hunting, Runda-Runtiyas, was apparently similar.¹⁸

These may be some of the deities that the people took with them to escape the onslaught of the Assyrians at the time of Tiglath-Pileser I. But where did they go, to where were the gods taken? Which mountains provided sanctuary for the people and their deities? The forbidding outcrop at Gerger might be one suggestion, where the great Hellenistic period inscription suggests that a sacred precinct for a goddess known only as Argandene – perhaps a local deity similar to Kubaba – existed here in the Iron Age, perhaps a shrine was set up here in this first period of refuge?¹⁹ Or it might be that Direk Kale, another mountaintop sanctuary complex with remains from the Roman period, has much older origins. There are doubtless other unknown mountain shrines yet to be discovered, but without further investigation these suggestions are purely speculative. What this textual detail implies, however, is that the mountains were perceived by the people of Kummuh as beyond Assyria's reach: that these were protective and sheltering places which offered sanctuary for the gods and outcast people who needed them, forbidding the Assyrians' advance with their rocky arms. And perhaps this observation of the mountains as sanctuary (in both its meanings) begins to shed some light on how the natural landscape of Commagene influenced the self-conception of the people and the deities there: using the mountains as refuge enables them to be perceived as welcoming or even hospitable landscapes; and taking the gods up to the mountains also starts to sanctify those mountain places. Although this process was no doubt already underway, in addition, a group self-conception of the inhabitants of Kummuh as 'mountain people' may have begun to emerge in the early Iron Age in response to the aggressions of the Assyrians.

Alongside mountains, rivers and water were a major source of spiritual energy across the Hittite world: in particular, limestone sinkholes were perceived as places of entry into the underworld in Hittite Anatolia, referred to in Hittite texts as KAŠKAL. KUR: "divine roads of the earth".²⁰ Assyria's kings understood (or borrowed from the Hittites?²¹) the importance of such naturally spiritual places such as rivers or springs,

17 Hutter 2003.

18 Hawkins 1981, 149. BOYBEYPINARI IV B1–C1; ANCOZ, 1.

19 Blömer – Winter 2011, 70.

20 Sørensen – Lumsden 2016; Harmanşah et al. 2017.

21 Osborne 2017, 98, on the Assyrian monuments at the source of the Tigris: "by situating the monument near a subterranean water course, the Assyrians were playing on the Hittite practice of placing monuments at watery locations with chthonic associations. The Source of the Tigris

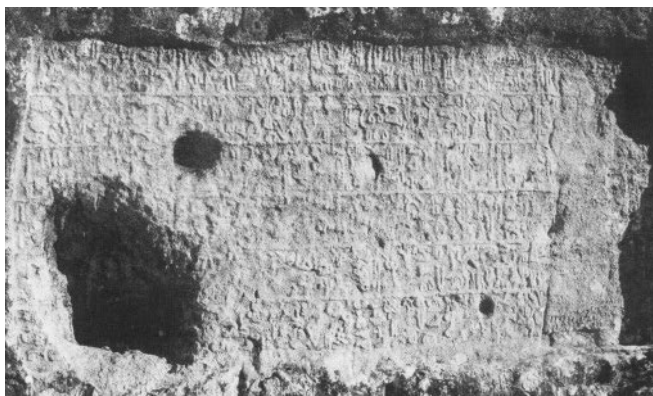


Fig. 1 Relief at Malpınar. Photo by J. D. Hawkins.

and similarly, marked them with rock reliefs that commemorated and proclaimed their idealised kingship and which “claimed places as previously untouched [...] rock reliefs and stone monuments attempt to capture the temporal power and longevity of geological time, associating themselves with ‘nature’s processes’ rather than cultural phenomena”.²² At least some of this perception and belief must have passed into later periods, as certainly rivers, springs and river gorges were spiritually and politically important in Neo-Hittite Kummuh. The relief of a local king, Atayazas, at Malpınar (fig. 1), was carved on an escarpment by a spring leading to the Göksu, and is now submerged in the floodwaters of the Euphrates. He describes himself as a “river lord” under the rule of Hattušili of Kummuh (770–750 BCE).²³ An earlier Iron Age (10th c. BCE) relief carved into the rocks above the river Karasu in the south of the region shows a god with spear and bow standing on the back of a stag (fig. 2), probably the god of the hunt, Runda-Runtiyas, or perhaps the more local deity Karhuhas, known also from Karkamiš.²⁴ Hellenkemper and Wagner suggest that this place, located on an outcrop

monuments thus represents the Assyrian adoption and manipulation of local landscape practices to communicate their own rhetoric of kingship”.

22 Harmanşah 2013, 94.

23 One way to see meaning in this relief is to view it in the light of Costly Signalling Theory (CST), where it may represent a demonstration of political instability, that is, rival rulers may have benefited from knowing about each other’s resources (the cost of investing in rock reliefs proving these resources), which may mean that Hittite monuments were constructed “as a medium through which rivals negotiated ongoing territorial disputes [...] the very existence of a large number of monuments with diverse authors indicates an unsettled political situation in which communications of strength via monument building was required” (Osborne 2017, 93). However, this was not the sole purpose or meaning, however, and a divine interaction or purpose – especially for a monument located in an inaccessible or striking setting – may have been just as if not more important, discussed further by Osborne 2017.

24 Hawkins 1981, 147; Blömer – Winter 2011.



Fig. 2 Relief at Karasu. Photo from Hellenkemper and Wagner.

overlooking the Karasu near to where it inflows into the Euphrates, was a water shrine: there are over thirty rock cut hollows and cup marks, as well as a 12 m long rock cut trench and remains of a square building in the vicinity.²⁵ The hollows resemble receptacles for libation or offerings, of the kind detailed in a Hittite ritual text aimed at entreating a spring god to return, KUB 15 34 iii,²⁶ in which a table is set up at the point where the water disgorges from a spring. In this ritual, seven holes are made and filled with beer, wine, sweet wine, honey, fine oil, fat, and sweet milk. The text also mentions the return of “vigorous cedar-gods”, an element which shall be explored later in this paper.²⁷ Because of the position of the Karasu relief at an area considered as the intersection between the states of Kummuh and Karkamiš, it may be that the relief, shrine, and the associated Iron Age buildings represent a deliberate act of both spiritual and political boundary marking by the independent state of Kummuh.²⁸

Echoes

Having established a sense of the earlier history, use and marking of the landscape, I would now like to think about how the presence of Iron Age cultural and religious el-

25 Hellenkemper – Wagner 1977, 173. A settlement is also proposed nearby, but further work is needed to confirm this.

26 The tablet refers to the city of Taurisa. Its location is unknown, with suggestions that it is near to the Zuliya river (modern Çekerek, near to Tokat). See Taracha 2010; Galmarini 2015, 53.

27 Bier 1976, 125.

28 Setting up monumental reliefs in frontier zones is suggested to have been a common practice of both Kummuh and Commagene, see French 1991, 17–19. The Hittites and the Assyrians are also known to have engaged in political and spiritual boundary construction and negotiation through the carving of reliefs. See in particular recently, Harmanşah 2013; Sørensen – Lumsden 2016.

ements in the landscape contributed to building cognitive aspects of later inhabitants' understandings of Commagene; that is, the memories, meanings, myths and narratives that were told and how they contributed to shaping the landscape and its perception. Rock reliefs and monuments are always reused and reinterpreted through time, relationally engaged in forging new meanings for new people:²⁹ here, I am interested to think about how both the indigenous population and new occupants of the Hellenistic period responded to these earlier stories, monuments, places, and practices, and how they used them to build a sense of their own place in the landscape.

To try to open up this deeply inaccessible aspect of landscape reception and perception, the obvious place to start is by looking for narratives in Commagene and how they relate to the landscapes. However, there is an extraordinary lacuna in written sources between the Late Neo-Hittite period and the late-Hellenistic period – a gap of some 600 years³⁰ – presumably driven in part by incorporation into other administrative provinces under the Assyrians, Neo-Babylonians and Persians. This lack of written evidence may in part reflect the multiple displacements of people, occupation by alien garrisons, and rule by non-locals; but although writing may have been lost, stories themselves cannot have been completely forgotten.³¹ Myths and narratives about places will have existed and despite displacement and occupations, some must have continued to be told and remembered. In order to find them, it is necessary to think creatively about what kinds of stories and memories might have carried on being told by people in and about the landscape in the years from independent Kummuh through Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian and Macedonian Greek occupations. Certain places in the landscape might have had longer term memory and narrative associated with them: battlefields, because they are temporary places of extreme physical and psychological energy, places associated with extreme suffering and loss, which loom large in human memory whether battles are won or lost; and sanctuaries, because of their supra-temporal links to the supernatural.

Battlefields play an important part as landscape loci of memory and identity, because they are the location of the battle event itself.³² During recent centenary commemorations, WWI battlefields were used by political leaders as places to consider the European project and to mark pan-European healing; and the WWI battlefield at Gallipoli has emerged over the last decades as a place for Australians to acknowledge

29 See Osborne 2017.

30 Blömer – Winter 2011, 22.

31 For example, the myths associated with the cult of the storm god at Mount Kasios on the Mediterranean coast continued to be told and retold into the later Iron Age, despite the destruction of Ugarit and the collapse of the Hittite cities that had been the main Bronze Age powers in the area. The myths of the storm god and the mountain itself seem to have been told to visiting Euboeans at the foot of Mount Kasios, who took the story with them to other locations in the Mediterranean. See Lane-Fox 2009.

32 Carman – Carman 2009, 292.

and connect with their national past and feel a powerful, emotional sense of national identity.³³ Ancient battlegrounds too have been used to foster modern national identities, for example, the battle of Marathon between Athens and Persia in 490 BCE was a metaphor for contemporary battles against the Turks in the 1960s, but in antiquity too, it was also “anchored in Athenian ritualised memory”.³⁴ Is it possible to imagine that this kind of landscape memory connected with warfare was also present in Commagenean self-conceptualisation? For example, the battle against the Urartian alliance, of which Kummuh was (unwillingly?) part, was won by the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser III in 743 BCE.³⁵ This battle might have loomed large in both the defeated Kummuhian and the victorious Assyrian self-narratives, given that the Assyrian annals describe “the gorges and the precipices of the mountains filled with their bodies”, the capture of nearly 80,000 people, and the river Sinzi (Göksu) “died red like wool”.³⁶ Tiglath-Pileser must be permitted his exaggeration and Sarduri some dignity in defeat, but it is reasonable to imagine some fairly bloody battles in the uplands of Kummuh.³⁷ Even with changing elite commanders, the location³⁸ of a transformative victory/defeat such as this will surely have been remembered for some time by those who were involved or who lost loved ones, perhaps through ritualised actions at the site of the battle, or, perhaps more likely given Assyria’s reassertion of dominance, through oral traditions.

Narratives associated with special places or sanctuaries that demonstrate continuity of practice might offer other opportunities for discovering landscape perceptions. Although on the edges of Commagene proper, a good example is the sanctuary of the storm god at Dülük Baba Tepesi. Careful excavation of the sanctuary at Dülük Baba Tepesi by the team from the Universität Münster have revealed that the first monumental mud brick temple was already constructed by the 9th c. BCE, and that, despite the advent of Assyrian, Babylonian and Achaemenid control of the region, the temple remained in use and ritual practices involving large scale animal sacrifice and burning events at the site continued unchanged.³⁹ This continuity of practice seems to support the regional observation that mountains and mountain sanctuaries in particular continued to be widely revered as places where the storm god dwelled, through the collapse of ruling structures and into the domination of new powers. Although no myths

33 Midford forthcoming.

34 Derks – Roymans 2009, 97.

35 Astour 1979.

36 Astour 1979, 7–8, referring to the Annals and the Nimrud Tablet; Blaylock 2009, 29.

37 Archers will have been especially important in difficult terrain like this: some 40 years later, following the victory of Sargon over Kummuh and the formal annexation of the kingdom by Assyria, 20,000 archers from Kummuh were deployed on the frontier with Urartu (Blaylock 2009, 30). Given this, the worship of the archer god Runtiyas may have had important resonances at this time, and places of his worship particular significance.

38 Astour 1979 identifies the battlefield as near the Kummuhian town of Halpi on the lake at Golbaşı, with ongoing skirmishes into the uplands as Sarduri retreated.

39 Messerschmidt 2017.

or stories about the god of this particular place survive, the storm god was a hugely powerful figure in Commagene and the wider region,⁴⁰ and the litany of texts from elsewhere from the Bronze Age through to the Iron Age and period of Greek contact (from Ugarit, Hattuša, and recalled in Hesiod's *Theogony*⁴¹) suggest that there was likely a rich repertoire of myth-narratives about the storm god and the other deities that continued to be told and transmitted orally.



Fig. 3 Shrine to Zeus Soter at Damlica. Photo by M. Blömer.

In the Hittite religious imagination, however, the mountains themselves were also gods in their own right: for the Hittites the landscape was possessed of spiritual qualities, perhaps bordering on animism. Water sources and water courses were seen as naturally numinous, and the earlier monuments at river places in Kummuh that have been explored above may have continued to be visited, used, and venerated in later times. In addition, however, the Hellenistic period also sees renewed spiritual and financial investment in sanctuaries which were constructed close to the water, for example, that dedicated to Zeus Soter at Damlica, in the steep cliffs above the Euphrates downriver from ancient Samosata (fig. 3). The inscription at this strange, boxy and inaccessible cliff-face shrine names the deity only in Greek, but it has been argued that the *interpretatio Graeca* “Zeus the Saviour” likely conceals an indigenous Commagenian deity, probably related to the river itself.⁴² Was this a shrine built by new, Greek-speaking occupants to honour an ancient indigenous deity, or one built by the native population, honouring their traditional god with an abstracted name in a new language? Or does it perhaps represent something between these two extremes, a sanctuary for an ancient native god, financed by Greek-speaking native elites?

40 See for example, Bunnens 2006.

41 See discussion in Lane-Fox 2009.

42 Blömer – Winter 2011, 145.

It is extremely difficult to argue for what or any level of interaction the people of the Hellenistic period had with earlier monuments if there are no material traces of these interactions. However, there may be some clues that can be gleaned from association, or from echoing. As Canepa has argued, there was a conscious re-occupation of late Hittite sites by the Sopherian kings in Commagene, which were then in turn prime reference points for the later Hellenistic kings, especially Antiochos I.⁴³ In the same way as the ruined settlement mounds, the images of earlier Iron Age deities and kings were present in the living landscape, such as in the rock reliefs carved at Malpınar, the Karasu, and elsewhere, highlighting the ‘special’ quality of those places. The figures of the god or king were also transformed into the permanent stone through the medium of these reliefs in these places of natural spiritual numen. Whether the people who lived here after Kummuh was annexed by the Assyrians, under Babylonian and Persian overlords, possessed any real knowledge of who these figures were is impossible to know. But these figures carved into the stone are clearly echoed in the way the kings of Hellenistic Commagene chose to represent themselves: as relief figures carved onto stelae and erected in special places, which can be interpreted in some way as a testimony to the continued observation of and connection to the earlier monuments of kings and divinities, and the perception of these perhaps as a ‘Commagenian’ way of doing things. Echoes of these Iron Age reliefs, and also of the Commagenian royal dexiosis-reliefs are seen again, in monuments such as the rock relief at Haydaran/Taşgedik (fig. 4), north of Adıyaman, the figures in which have been interpreted as members of the Commagenian aristocracy.⁴⁴ Carving figures of important people – whether these

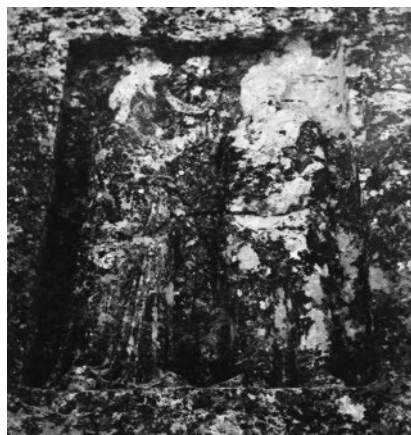


Fig. 4 Relief from Haydaran. Photo by F. K. Dörner.

43 Canepa 2018. Cf. also the contribution by Canepa in this volume.

44 Blömer 2011; Blömer – Winter 2011, 140; Brijder 2014, 213–214.

are local elites, kings, or deities – into rocky outcrops brings their presence directly into the place, marking it as meaningful, visited, remembered.

The concept of ‘haunting’ may be useful here, in the sense that Carl Knappett uses it: he suggests that in the act of careless forgetting (of an object’s function, of a place’s meaning) that object or place falls out of the understood world. “Objects in the world of ideas are sucked back into the phenomenal, in the process losing their transparency”⁴⁵, that is, their meaning becomes lost, and through that process of acquiring meaninglessness, they become somehow threatening. Places that once had meaning too may be subject to this process of careless forgetting or abandonment: ruins or forgotten places are potential sites of haunting. Leaving a community open to places of haunting might be dangerous: as Knappett suggests, “a lack of biographical care – a lack of inter-generational remembering of ancestral spirits – might very conceivably threaten individual and collective identity.”⁴⁶ In contrast, careful forgetting or continuing memory work counters or negates the possibility of haunting. Perhaps later occupants in Commagene did interact with the earlier rock reliefs in order to continue to appease these dangerous, poorly understood spirits, and this concept may also suggest a way of interpreting what the Commagenian kings had in mind in their echoing of the rock reliefs of earlier rulers and gods.

In addition to ‘continuity’ of practices such as the carving of figures into flat rock surfaces, there are also examples not of continuity *per se* (although there may have been), but of the deliberate use of important Iron Age places in the Hellenistic period. The early-8th c. BCE shrine at Ancoz dedicated by the king Šuppiliuma and his son Hattušili to Kubaba, Runtiyas and other deities was used also in the Hellenistic period, shown by the fragments of inscriptions and architecture, and it may have been continually venerated in between. In particular, it seems to have been a locally sacred place where the ruler cult of Antiochos I was superimposed.⁴⁷ Similarly, the throne and shrine to Kubaba at Boybeypinarı discussed earlier was arranged in a way that the worshipper had to walk around the monument. However, the preservation of these inscriptions is in part due to their reuse as part of a “Classical period wall”⁴⁸, or at least, a wall with some late classical architrave incorporated.⁴⁹ What was this building? Were these earlier monuments recognised for their spiritual quality or importance, and reused carefully as a way to incorporate or mitigate these earlier spiritual energies, or as unintelligible blocks useful only as foundation building materials? Without these details it is difficult to discuss continuity of use or memory work in this place. However, a third example is found at Gerger, the Commagenian city of Arsameia on the Euphra-

45 Knappett 2011, 189.

46 Knappett 2011, 208.

47 Blömer – Winter 2011, 118–121.

48 Hawkins 2000, 330–340.

49 von der Osten 1933, 140.

tes. This fortress in the northern part of Commagene is physically difficult to access, situated on top of a vertical-sided bluff in the cliffs above the Euphrates. The castle remains there today are Byzantine, but it was also an Iron Age sanctuary, and with the advent of the Commagenian royal family, an important location of ancestor worship. Inscriptions and reliefs reveal that it was a *hierothesion* for the founding father of the royal family, Samos II: the monumental relief looking out from the north-western corner of the promontory is assumed to depict him and the inscription informs the reader that he was buried here.⁵⁰ As with Ancoz, Gerger seems to demonstrate the reuse of an earlier sacred place as a location for the veneration of the Commagenian kings. Andrade has described the imposition of the Antiochan ruler cult in Commagene as a process of “erasure of local traditions”, one which did “epistemological violence” upon the Syro-Hittite continuities.⁵¹ This may possibly be the case, but it is important to be aware of the negative spin to which Antiochos is often victim: perhaps the imposition of the Commagenian ruler cult in this place could instead be seen as the regeneration and recasting of ancient religious loci in contemporary terms. By drawing diverse local places into a wider regional framework of sanctuaries with the Commagenian king at their core, Antiochos elevates localised or regional Commagenian deities and sanctuaries to universally accessible heights, bringing together these local identities and places of worship into something new, that starts to resemble a specifically ‘Commagenian’ way of doing things, a nascent Commagenian identity.⁵²

The Antiochan royal burial monuments form the last body of monuments through which I will explore the concept of echoes, and in particular, that these monuments form a series of specific landscape metaphors, whereby they also act to reflect or echo elements in the natural landscape. Doing so allows the possibility to draw out aspects of landscape perception that may be witnessed in parallels between monuments and landscapes, and to simultaneously highlight elements that may be missing from the modern landscapes that are observed today. Most obviously, the burial tumuli (seemingly borrowed from neighbouring Cappadocia⁵³) themselves directly echo the shapes of the mountains, especially in the northern area of Commagene, where the conical, pointed summits of Ulu Baba and a number of other mountains, clearly visible across the Euphrates from Arsameia on the Euphrates (fig. 5), were perhaps the direct inspiration for Antiochos I’s tumulus on Nemrud Dağ.

More abstractly and rather controversially, perhaps it is also possible to see echoes between the columns erected at these monuments and great trees? The Assyri-

50 Blömer – Winter 2011, 70.

51 Andrade 2013, 81.

52 See also the ideas expressed in Canepa (2018, chapter nine) which discuss the creation by Antiochos of a ‘newly ancient’ royal lineage and identity, which linked himself into a Graeco-Iranian and Armenian spiritual and ritual heritage and which allowed him to “navigate between Rome and Parthia” Canepa 2018, 203. Cf. also the contribution by Canepa in this volume.

53 Canepa 2018, 221–227. 241.



Fig. 5 Ulu Baba from Arsameia on the Euphrates. Photo by the author.

an annals reveal that alongside silver, gold, cattle and sheep, Kummuh gave cedar to the Assyrian rulers, an indication that the area was rich in cedar forests in antiquity.⁵⁴ Josephus mentions woodland in Commagene,⁵⁵ and during the Roman period festivals at Hierapolis, not far away, Lucian of Samosata tells the reader that tall trees were brought into the sacred precinct, decorated with gold and silver objects, and then set on fire.⁵⁶ The quantities of ash discovered at the sanctuary at Dülük Baba Tepesi indicate massive burning events which could perhaps be interpreted in a similar vein, and which as we have seen, apparently continued relatively unchanged from the Iron Age through to the Roman period.⁵⁷ Where did Kummuh get its cedar for the Assyrians; from where did the tall trees come to Hierapolis, or perhaps, even, to the fire festivals at the sanctuary of the storm god at Doliche?⁵⁸ Just as pollen analysis has revealed that the now largely bare mountains of Rough Cilicia were once covered with cedar trees praised in antiquity for their quality,⁵⁹ it is reasonable to surmise that the high northern mountains of Commagene must also have had extensive forests of cedar and other impressive trees which only grow above certain altitudes (although cedar can occur as low as 500 m, its more usual range is between 1,300–3,000 m).⁶⁰ The presence of such

54 In the 18th year of Aššurnasipal II (866 BCE), the king received tribute from Qatazilu of Kummuh of “beams of cedar, silver and gold”. Blaylock 2009, 27.

55 Jos. Ant. Iud. 14,441.

56 Lucian. Syr. D. 49.

57 Collar 2013, 85.

58 The ash from Dülük Baba Tepesi contains huge quantities of animal bones, see Pöllath – Peters 2011. As far as I am aware, the ash has not been analysed for floral remains, which would indicate whether wood formed part of the conflagration, but we must assume that there was some fuel used in these huge burning events.

59 Akkemik et al. 2012, 395; Karlioğlu et al. 2015.

60 Conifer Specialist Group (1998). ‘*Cedrus libani*’. IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Version 2006. International Union for Conservation of Nature. <<https://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2013-1.RLTS.T42305A2970821.en>> (accessed 8. April 2020).

trees would dramatically change the perception of the landscape, especially cedar forests.⁶¹ For the Hittites, cedar trees were understood as gods (the vigorous cedar-gods of KUB 15 34 iii, above), and in Mesopotamian literature cedars were particularly associated with royalty and the divine, and used as key components of temple structures for that reason (or acquired their symbolism through their usage in such contexts).⁶² A newly discovered Babylonian cuneiform tablet (Tablet V of the SB Epic of Gilgamesh) adds to the description of the cedar forest to which Gilgamesh and Enkidu travel. Although the mythological cedar forest of the story is probably located in the Amanus mountains near Antioch, the description outlines a multi-sensory forest experience that is described as the “dwelling of gods, throne-dais of goddesses”.⁶³ The forest is represented in rich, evocative terms, inviting the reader to marvel at the height of the cedars, at their sweet shade and dripping resin, the thorny undergrowth and thick canopy and the symphony of birdsong, crickets and monkeys.⁶⁴ The divine qualities of the forest and the trees are evident here.

If it is possible to see how the tumuli echo the mountains – and with Nemrud Dağ, this echo is very clear – perhaps the columns at the burial mounds of Karakuş and Sesönk too can be perceived as a distant echo of long-gone trees: both features of the landscape which possessed inherent ancient divinity. There are divergences in this interpretation – for example, there are no columns at Nemrud Dağ and the columns have an additional function of supporting reliefs, or images of animals, at Karakuş and Sesönk. Nemrud, is of course above the tree-line, so we do not need to see ‘trees’ here, and the animal images at the Antiochan monument at Karakuş relate to astrological symbols important to the royal dynasty,⁶⁵ so these could be seen as stars held up by divine trees. Even if this playful suggestion is too far-fetched for some, do these divergences necessarily mean that the mental connection between tree and column was absent? If we can mentally step back into a Commagene that is also rich with huge ancient woodlands, then perhaps it is easier to make the connection: and the monuments of the Commagenian royal family can be seen as the creation, in earth and stone, of permanent ‘trees’ and man-made ‘mountains’. They were ideological monuments that brought Commagene into a web of Antiochan propaganda, aiming to institute new forms of social structure⁶⁶ to be sure, but they are also testimony to the self-perception of the Commagenian royal family as permanent fixtures in this landscape, and their

61 The perception and representation of the Assyrians of the landscapes of North Syria as forested are explored by Karmel Thomason 2001 and Winter 2009.

62 Hurowitz 1992.

63 George 2003:602–603, see also Ryan 2017, 75.

64 Al-Rawi – George 2014.

65 It has been recently argued that the tumulus and monuments at Sesönk are not part of the Antiochan royal tombs (Blömer 2008); the bull, lion and eagle seen at Karakuş form part of the complex astrological symbolism of Antiochos (these symbols discussed most recently by Crijns 2014).

66 Versluys 2017, 168–172.



Fig. 6 Karakuş and Nemrud Dağ. Photo by the author.

places of death are marked by the epic construction of new divine mountains and forests. Their bodies nourish the soil, and these places repeat and echo the landscape that surrounds them (fig. 6). Through the way these monuments changed and highlighted the landscape, the Commagenian royal family became as integral to Commagene as the mountains and the trees. And in becoming the landscape, they also in some way mark their apotheosis – subtler, perhaps, than shaking the hand of Herakles – but in terms of the perception of the landscape as divine, just as important, in their message of royal assumption to the ranks of the mountain gods of the distant past.

Experiencing the Landscape

Finally, I turn briefly to social forms of landscape perception, through the ways that the landscape was changed and manipulated, both more obviously by the elites through the construction of monuments, but also by the forgotten masses, through participation in both extraordinary (or more ordinary, if we are to believe Antiochos!⁶⁷) events such as religious rituals as directed by Antiochos himself or, perhaps more pertinently, as labourers in large scale building projects. Although there is little proof that the in-

67 Antiochos seems to have ordered monthly festival celebrations of his person, his birthday, his assumption of the diadem and so on, to be celebrated in a specially constructed *temenos*. See discussion in Brijders 2014, chapter I.10.

habitants followed Antiochos' instructions, there are examples of more ordinary people dedicating to Kubaba at Karkamiš which are useful to note.⁶⁸

How then, did the people perceive the extraordinary royal monuments that were constructed in the late-Hellenistic period? Antiochos I, and perhaps some members of the royal family more broadly, may have perceived their monuments through a lens similar to that described above, that is, that the additions of their burial tumuli and sanctuaries to the landscape concretised their kingship, symbolising their power in the morphing of the landscape into one that was in some way, all a memorial to their dynasty, all a testimony to their status as divine.⁶⁹ By contrast, how would ordinary people have interacted with or seen these monuments? Without knowledge of what or even if rituals were actually conducted at Nemrud or any of the other monuments, it is difficult to think through the phenomenological elements that ordinary people may have experienced in connection to the monuments. However, the construction of Nemrud Dağ clearly required the participation of many thousands of labourers. Were these people free, serfs, or enslaved? Was work on the great tumulus of Antiochos a duty, a chore, an honour, or a ritual act of participation in the creation of the divine? Thousands of men (women and children too?) must have had direct experience of its building, of endless donkey loads of rocks and stones being carted up the mountain, of the searing cold, the fierce winds, and the precipitous edges. Even if they could not understand the Greek of the intimidating inscriptions he had written⁷⁰, they must have looked up at the tumulus at Nemrud with a sense of pride, testimony not just to their king's 'megalomania' and phenomenal vision of his place in the world above and below, but also of their own blood, sweat and tears.

The visibility of the monument at Nemrud is extraordinary, meaning that people across the whole of Commagene would have had visual access to it.⁷¹ Even as far south as the ancient sanctuary of the storm god at Dülük Baba Tepesi, on a clear day, the peak rises through the haze, which is c. 150 km distant (fig. 7). The imposition of such a strong visual landmark raises issues about how people experienced this monument within the landscape and how they felt about it, about their royal family, about Commagene, about themselves. The visibility of the tumulus at Nemrud across Commagene imposes a centre, a focus for the identity of the people who lived there: this, and

68 Hawkins 1981, 149.

69 Though perhaps the Greek inscription at the sanctuary at Damlica should be mentioned here: it reveals that the sanctuary was constructed under Mithradates II, son of Antiochos I, but in naming Antiochos, only includes his epithets Epiphanes Philoromaïos. The absence of Theos and Dikaios has been taken to mean that Antiochos was no longer seen as deified (Blömer – Winter 2011, 154).

70 Versluys 2017, 33; 124–127.

71 Versluys has recently discussed the visibility of the Antiochan monumental programme across the landscape more generally, suggesting that the presence of these monuments and the specific material culture in these places would have served to remind an ordinary person of the other sites of ruler cult, and to ensure that "Antiochan kingship was strongly felt" see Versluys 2017, 136.



Fig. 7 Nemrud Dağ seen from Dülük Baba Tepesi. Photo by the author.

the other burial monuments, helped to construct a ‘Commagenian’ self-narrative that was not easily dispelled.

Because when the Romans came, they found a people who cohered to their landscape. The letter of Mara bar Sarapion records the people of Samosata, refugees once again, leaving the landscapes of their ancestors, their families, and their gods: “We are now far removed from our home, and we cannot return again to our city, or behold our people, or offer to our gods the greeting of praise”.⁷² And of those who were left behind, some were conscripted into the Roman army. The local storm god, Latinised now as the Jupiter of Doliche, Jupiter Dolichenus, that was initially taken by these cohorts of men across the Roman world to Dacia was known in his earliest configurations there as ‘god of Commagene’.⁷³ Nemrud Dağ, and Jupiter Dolichenus’ worship on mountaintops, seem to imply that where mountains and sky meet, the place where the lightning breaks, was particularly important to the people of Commagene, that the mountains themselves were at the heart of the experience of being Commagenian.

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72 Trans. Plummer Pratten 1885, 104–114. See also recently Ramelli 2004 and Merz – Tieleman 2012.

73 Collar 2012.

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Part III (Between):
Comparative Studies on Hellenistic Commagene –
The Regional and Global Context

Looking East

Armenia and the ‘Orontid Connection’

Some Remarks on Strabo, *Geography* 11,14,15

GIUSTO TRAINA

The rulers of Hellenistic Armenia and Sophene are of utmost importance for the study of Hellenistic Commagene and Commagenian kingship. This is due to the immediate geographical proximity of the kingdoms as well as to the shared genealogic roots in the dynasty of the Orontids.¹ Armenia and Sophene thus make up an important part of the regional background against which the Commagenian developments must be considered. In terms of dynastic ideology, the Orontids are often presented as the genealogic link of the Commagenian kings to the Achaemenids; an interpretation that is based on the ancestral gallery of Antiochos I on Nemrud Dağ.² Some scholars consider this to be an invented tradition alone, as part of a strategy of legitimation of Antiochos I. Such a view, however, ignores the importance and possibilities the ‘Orontid connection’ possessed to legitimize Commagenian kingship on the regional level (and beyond). This debate is inevitably linked to the specific question of the royal status of the Armenian Orontids, which will be at the core of the following considerations.

The only piece of evidence for the founding of the independent kingdom of Greater Armenia is a passage of Strabo’s *Geography* (from Polybios?):

Ὁ μὲν δὴ παλαιὸς λόγος οὗτος, ὁ δὲ τούτου νεώτερος καὶ κατὰ Πέρσας εἰς τὸ ἐφεξῆς μέχρι εἰς ἡμᾶς ὡς ἐν κεφαλαίῳ πρέποι ἂν μέχρι τοσούτου λεχθεῖς, ὅτι κατείχον τὴν Ἀρμενίαν Πέρσαι καὶ Μακεδόνες, μετὰ ταῦτα οἱ τὴν Συρίαν ἔχοντες καὶ τὴν Μηδίαν (τελευταῖος δ’ ὑπήρξεν Ὀρόντης ἀπόγονος Ὑδάρνου τῶν ἐπτὰ Περσῶν ἐνός). εἶθ’ ὑπὸ τῶν Ἀντιόχου τοῦ μεγάλου στρατηγῶν τοῦ πρὸς Ῥωμαίους πολέμησαντος διηρέθη δίχα, Ἀρταξίου τε καὶ Ζαριάδριος, καὶ ἦρχον οὗτοι τοῦ βασιλέως ἐπιτρέψαντος. ἡττηθέντος δ’ ἐκείνου προσθήμενοι Ῥωμαῖοι καθ’ αὐτοὺς ἐτάττοντο βασιλεῖς προσαγορευθέντες. (Str. 11,14,15).

- 1 On these dynastic connections and their impact on the Commagenian kingdom see the contribution by Canepa in this volume.
- 2 Cf. the contribution by Strootman in this volume.

Accordingly, Armenia was previously ruled by the Persians, the Macedonians, and the Seleucids. Then it was split into two independent kingdoms³: Greater Armenia (Arm. *Mec Hayk'*) and Sophene (*Cop'k'*).⁴The kings of the new states were Artaxias (*Artašēs*) and Zariadris (*Zareh*), former στρατηγοί of Antiochos III⁵: of course, in this case, στρατηγός means 'governor' more than 'commander, general'.⁶

The independence of Armenia and Sophene was the result of the treaty of Apameia in 188 BCE. But what about Orontes, the last of the 'subordinate governors' who ruled Armenia and Sophene under the Seleucids? Strabo implies that the Orontids did not have royal status. Yet, as we will see, this contradicts the evidence from the inscriptions of Commagene and the Armenian tradition.

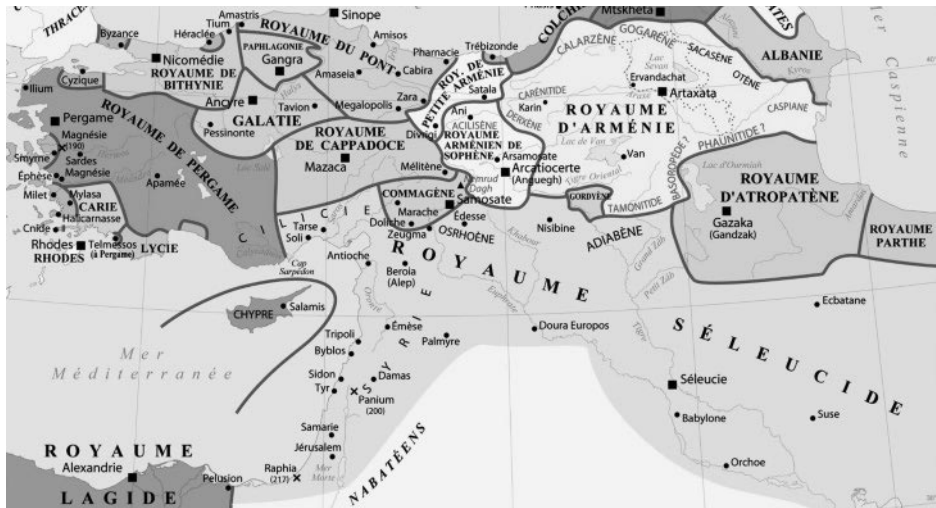


Fig. 1 Armenia after the treaty of Apameia in 188 BCE, from Mutafian – Van Lauwe 2001

Before considering the 'Orontid connection' to ancient Armenia, we need to review the evidence of Str. 11,14,15. All modern translators of Strabo interpreted this passage according to the traditional reconstruction of the events. Yet they – i.e., we – overlooked a textual problem: the syntactic non-sequitur in the expression τελευταῖος ὑπῆρξεν Ὀρόντης. Radt was aware of it. Still, he claimed to solve the problem by giving the verb ὑπάρχω the sense of 'to be a ὑπαρχός' (a lieutenant or a subordinate ruler),

3 Patterson 2001.

4 Toumanoff 1963; Garsoïan 1997; Traina 1999/2000; Traina 2017a; Traina 2017 b; Traina 2018a. Strabo somehow applies to Armenia the well-known model of the succession of the world-ruling empires: Muccioli 2018, 116–118.

5 See also Str. 11,14,5; Grainger 1997, 83. 122.

6 Unfortunately, all modern translators – alas, me too – opt for 'general': Jones 1928, 337; Lasserre 1975, 130; Traina, in Nicolai – Traina 2000, 191; Radt 2004, 397; Roller 2014, 511.

instead of its most common meaning 'to be',⁷ and eventually translated τελευταῖος ὑπῆρξεν Ὀρόντης "der letzte Statthalter war Orontes".

Radt's solution is less than satisfactory. No occurrence of ὑπάρχω in Strabo's *Geography* may be translated 'to be a ὑπαρχος'.⁸ To explain the inner contradiction in the text, we may not exclude a later gloss, as I suggested in a previous recent contribution.⁹ It is worth noting the unusual expression οἱ τὴν Συρίαν ἔχοντες καὶ τὴν Μηδίαν. This is an interesting definition of the Seleucid Empire around the 3rd c. BCE: a twofold space that included 'Syria' (as Roman historiographers called the Seleucid Empire) and 'Media', that is Iran, namely the Upper Satrapies.

At any rate, this passage of Strabo clearly shows the contradictions of his sources. He was aware of the intermediary status of the Orontids, who *de facto* ruled Armenia, but did not retain royal status. If Radt's translation of τελευταῖος ὑπῆρξεν Ὀρόντης is right, we may argue that Strabo considers Orontes a sort of sub-ruler: in modern historical jargon, a 'dynast'. In short, the Orontids ruled Armenia as 'semi-independent dynasts'.¹⁰ The text of the treaty signed in 179 BCE by several kings and princes of Asia minor mentions two Armenian rulers: Mithradates, a descendant of Zariadris, and Artaxias. Neither is called a king: the former was "satrap of Armenia", the latter "ruler (ἄρχων) of the most of Armenia".¹¹ So, just a few years after the granting of the royal title, they had been downgraded. Possibly, the Seleucids refused to recognize their legitimacy, one of the side effects of the treaty of Apameia; in short, the independent kingdom of Artaxēs was a creation of Roman diplomacy, but its status was not universally accepted. On the other hand, we know from Polybios that the rulers of Sophene in the 3rd c. BCE retained royal status.¹²

The earliest mention of an Orontid ruler/satrap of Armenia dates from ca. 370 BCE: in the *Anabasis*, Xenophon recalls his march in 401/400 BCE through "Armenia, the large and prosperous province of which Orontas was ruler".¹³ With some imagination, the late Janos Harmatta proposed to identify Orontes in the figure depicted on the silver *rhyton* found in 1968 at the foothill of the citadel of Erebuni (fig. 2).¹⁴ Indeed, Strabo highlights the nobility of the Orontids: the last dynast was Ὀρόντης ἀπόγονος Ὑδάρονου

7 As in Cass. Dio 36,36,3. 71,34,3.

8 The only passage of the *Geography* where ὑπαρχος means 'subordinate governor' is 11,12,8, concerning Strabo's uncle Moaphernes, who Mithridates Eupator appointed governor and administrator of Media Atropatene.

9 Traina 2017a, 380.

10 Kuhrt – Sherwin-White 1993, 192; Kosmin 2014, 156. Capdetrey 2007, ch. 7, rightly makes the difference between "espace contrôlé" and "territoire administré".

11 Pol. 25,11–12.

12 Pol. 8,25 (Exc. Peir. P. 26).

13 Xen. An. 3,5,17; see Xen An. 4,3,4.

14 Harmatta 1979, 308–309; Facella 2006, 131–135. Treister 2015, 63–64, is more cautious. On the context of this find, discovered in an archaeological context outside the fortress of Erebuni, see Dan 2015, 16.



Fig. 2 Erevan, Erebuni Museum, Silver *rhyton* dating from the Achaemenid period, ©Roberto Dan

τῶν ἐπὶ Περσῶν ἐνός “the descendant of Hydarnes”. Rüdiger Schmitt correctly defines their status under the Achaemenids and the Seleucids: Hydarnes “seems to have been rewarded by the Great King as quasi-hereditary satrap of Armenia, since his descendants apparently held this office until Hellenistic times, up to the Orontes, etc.”¹⁵

The first Orontid also appears in both versions of stele 6 from the western and the eastern terraces of Antiochos’ *hierothesion* at Nemrud Dağ (fig. 3).¹⁶ In the list of the king’s ancestors, Orontes can be identified with Ἀροάνδης, the son of the ‘king’s eye’ Artasyras. Aroandes/Orontes had a key role within Antiochos’ genealogy, as he provided the Commagenian dynasty with an Achaemenid ancestor. It is hard to say whether this genealogic connection was correct, or rather it was a sort of ‘invention of tradition’. In any case, Antiochos’ ancestors were the dynasts of Armenia and Sophene.¹⁷ Is this genealogy reliable, or was it manipulated by the king? Rolf Strootman argues that “Antiochos Epiphanes, himself the son of a Seleukid princess, likely wanted to use his inherited charisma to unite all Armenian lands, and in the process may have been one of several rulers who sought to create a new ‘world empire’ on the foundations of the former Seleucid state”.¹⁸ *Se non è vero, è ben trovato*.

15 Schmitt 2004. Lerouge 2013, 113 claims that the Orontids too, as well as other hellenized kings, “affirment certes leurs racines perses, mais ils le font par le truchement de la culture grecque”.

16 OGIS 391/392; IGLS 17 and 3; Facella 2009, 95–97 (see SEG 60, 1640).

17 An useful synthesis in Strootman 2016, 219–220, although his definition of ‘Armenia’, including both Greater Armenia and Sophene, is a bit questionable. As a matter of fact, we are informed of the genesis of the kingdoms of Armenia and Sophene, but there are still many blanks: for example, the rise of Lesser Armenia. See also Marciak 2017, 114–118.

18 Strootman 2016, 308.



Fig. 3 Inscription on the back of stele 6 (depicting Aroandas [Orontes] on its front) from Nemrud Dağ, from Sanders 1996 2, 215 fig. 407

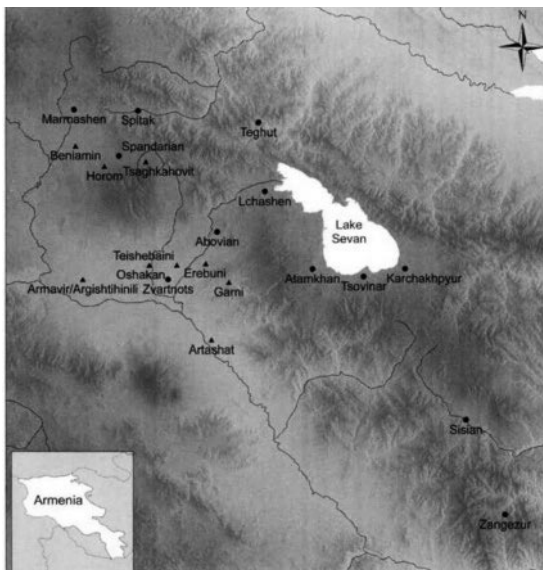


Fig. 4 Distribution map of stelae of Artashes I, from Khatchadourian 2007

However, both the dynasties of Commagene and Greater Armenia claimed an Orontid heritage. This is shown by the Aramaic inscriptions engraved in the boundary stelae of Artashes, found in several sites in the Republic of Armenia, where the use of Aramaic language may be considered, as Lori Khatchadourian argues, “an overt alignment with



Fig. 5 Erevan, History Museum. Stele of Artasēs I, from <http://campusnumeriquearmenien.org>

the Achaemenid past”¹⁹ or, more simply, a rupture with the Seleucid power (figs. 4 and 5). In most inscriptions the king presents himself as the son of Zareh.²⁰ Still, all the same claims lineage to Orontes, maybe to strengthen his legitimation by a royal pedigree dating back to the Achaemenids.

Another piece of evidence for the royal status of the Orontids is one of the Greek inscriptions found in Armawir, a collection of texts of some importance for the citadel.²¹ On the only surviving rock (the other was partly destroyed in WW2), a short inscription bears the greeting formula βασιλεύς Ἀρμαδοείρων / Μίθρας Ὀρόντη / βασιλεῖ χαίρειν “Mithras, king of Armawir, greets king Orontes”.²²

¹⁹ Khatchadourian 2007, 52.

²⁰ Marciak 2017, 117–118 only cites two stelae.

²¹ This is a sort of equivalent of the epigraphic series engraved on the walls of sanctuaries or public buildings in Anatolia. For a state of the art, see Traina 2018a.

²² In l.1, all the editors reported ὁ βασιλεύς, but of course this is wrong: the correct formula starts with βασιλεύς: the alleged *ho mikron* is just a dent in the rock. Moreover, in l.3 there is no need to read <Εὐ>ρόντη or <Εβ>ρόντη), as suggested by the former editors (and still followed by Marciak 2017, 119): the inscription has the classical form Ὀρόντης.



Fig. 6 Ancient citadel near the village of Nor Armavir.
Detail of the rock with Greek inscriptions, ©Giusto Traina

Usually, the epigraphical dossier of Armavir is dated from the end of the 3rd c. to the mid-2nd c. BCE; the Orontes greeted by Mithras in the top inscription is commonly identified with the last Orontid. Still, nothing says that all texts date from the same period. Although we ignore the content of Mithras' letter, the inscription highlights the relationship between a local ruler and a satrap/governor, both calling each other 'king'. In fact, we do not necessarily need to identify this Orontes with the last Orontid: he could be any Orontid. Possibly, the prominent position of the inscription in the rock hints at the most important document kept in the local archive.²³ Therefore, we could infer that Mithras' letter was sent to the founder of the Orontid dynasty. But let's not overdo it with the *ben trovato*.

A section of Movsēs Xorenac'i's *History of Armenia* transmits another account of the passage from the Orontids to the Artaxiads. As this is a very long text, I made a reader's digest:

"Once upon there lived a king who ruled the Eastern Armenian highlands: his name was Eruand. He was the son of 'a certain woman of the Arsacid family, fat of body, horribly ugly, and libidinous', who begot him and his brother Eruaz. Eruand was the overseer of

23 Traina 2018a.

king Sanatruk, who had been converted to Christianity by the apostle Thaddaeus. When Sanatruk died, Eruand became king of Armenia in the eighth year of the last Dareh (Darius). Suspecting of Sanatruk's sons, he slaughtered all of them but Artasēs, then a child. His wet nurse brought Artasēs to Persarmenia and also informed his foster-father Smbat, who lived in Western Armenia, in the province of Sper (present-day İspir), the homeland of the Bagratid family.

Smbat took the child with him and wandered for a long time in the highlands, helped by the local shepherds and herdsmen, until he managed to join Dareh. Eruand vainly tried to convince the Persian king to surrender him Artasēs; he eventually went after Smbat's supporters, who were looking after his daughters in Bayberd (Bayburt), not far from Sper. A tributary king of Rome, Eruand ingratiated himself with Vespasian and Titus by granting them Mesopotamia. He transferred his court from the site of Armawir to a new place, located at the junction of the rivers Arak's and Axurean, that he named Eruandašat. He also built a smaller city, called Bagaran 'the place of the Altars', where he transferred the idols from Armawir, appointing great priest his brother Eruaz. He also built and embellished another town called Eruandakert.

While young Artasēs was growing up, his foster-father Smbat fought valiantly against the enemies of the Persians. The king of kings agreed to bestow him a gift, and Smbat obtained Darius' help to put Artasēs on the Armenian throne. With the young Artasēs, Smbat marched with an army against the province of Utik', but Eruand fled to Eruandašat to gather the troops. The Armenian princes in Utik', who Eruand had left behind, were scared by the force led by Smbat and Artasēs; moreover, they realized that the Romans were not supporting Eruand, and they finally abandoned him, despite his generous, yet less than disinterested gifts.

Smbat and Artasēs marched through central Armenia until Eruand's camp. Artasēs convinced the noble Argam, a descendant of the Mede Aždahak (Astyages), to desert Eruand. Attacked by the valiant Armenian knights, the Iberians of king P'arsman fled away. Eruand's army was slaughtered. A squad of 'brave men' from the mountains of the Taurus attacked Artasēs, but Gisak, the son of his wet nurse, fought them and eventually died to save Artasēs' life. Subsequently, Artasēs arrived at Eruand's capital, where Smbat was waiting for him. After the first attack, the garrison of the fortress surrendered. A soldier struck Eruand with his saber, and he died after a reign of twenty years.

As Eruand had some Arsacid blood, Artasēs ordered to bury him in an honorable way, with funerary columns. Smbat entered the city and 'finding the crown of King Sanatruk, he placed it on Artasēs' head and made him king over all of Armenia in the twenty-ninth year of Dareh, king of Persia.' Then Smbat went after Eruand's brother, Eruaz, killed him and settled his slaves in a town behind mount Masis (present-day Ararat). He named the place with the same name Bagaran, then went to Persia bearing to Darius, by order of Artasēs, the treasures of the first Bagaran. But when Smbat was away, the Roman army arrived at

the Armenian border, imposing the payment of taxes. Then, Artašēs had to pay a double tribute”²⁴

Xorenac'i claims that this epic history “is accurately told by Ołimp (Olympios), priest of (H)ani, composer of temple histories, as are also many other deeds that we have to relate and to which the books of the Persians and the epic songs of the Armenians bear witness”²⁵. Xorenac'i also mentions a Greek source of the 3rd c. CE, Iulius Africanus, which seems to give the framework for a large part of his second book.²⁶

In fact, as usual, Xorenac'i combines local oral traditions with Greek and Roman sources; the result is a chronological hodgepodge, spanning at least four centuries. He dates the accessions of Eruand and Artašēs to the Armenian throne, respectively, in the eighth and the twenty-ninth year of the reign of Dareios III: but the last Achaemenid king did not rule more than six years.²⁷ This does not match the timeline at all, as Xorenac'i dates the war between Eruand and Artašēs to the second half of the 1st c. CE, as he mentions Vespasian, Titus, and P'arsman (*Pharasmanes*) king of Iberia.²⁸ Moreover, Xorenac'i links the whole story to the Arsacid dynasty: Artašēs gave Eruand respect to his Arsacid blood. In fact, Xorenac'i's chronological system presents two different Parthian (that is, Arsacid) kings named Artašēs: the first defeated the Lydian Croesus, the second Eruand. A similar confusion may be found in the *Primary History*, where Eruand is embedded in the genealogy of the Armenian Arsacids, and Artašēs is considered his brother.

Such documentary chaos justifies the harsh criticisms shared by several Armenian scholars, especially in the West. The late Robert Thomson, one of the most authoritative specialists and the author of a translation of Xorenac'i's *History*, said:

“It is at once the most significant historical work in Classical Armenian literature and the most controversial [...] since there were no sources written in the Armenian language until the invention of the script circa A. D. 400, Moses has preserved much that was handed down by word of mouth; and indeed he quotes verbatim several short extracts from oral tales current in his own day. But Moses also claims to be writing an authoritative history in which much has been based on archival sources written in other languages that give information about Armenia. It was when this claim was to put to modern scholarly scrutiny

24 This account is an abridgement of Movsēs Xorenac'i 2,37–48.

25 Movsēs Xorenac'i 2, 48.

26 See Topchyan 2006; Gazzano 2016; Mari 2016.

27 Under Darius III, a dignitary called Orontes was one of the commanders of the Armenian contingent at the battle of Gaugamela in 331 BCE (Arr. Anab. 3,8): he was very likely a descendant of Orontes I. Maybe Xorenac'i is confused with another Dareh, a Parthian Arsacid king who reigned thirty years according to the so-called *Primary History*, a chronicle transmitted in the manuscript tradition of the seventh century historian Sebēos (see Traina 2018b).

28 Xorenac'i supports his chronology with the fact that Sanatruk, the ruler of Armenia before Eruand, was a Christian convert: see van Esbroeck 1988.

that some doubts began to emerge concerning the reliability – or even the existence – of some of these early written sources. And when known sources used by Moses were identified, the ways in which he used them for his own purposes led to suspicions concerning his untrustworthiness”²⁹

So much for Xorenac‘i? The story of Eruand and Artašēs is indeed one of the most desperate cases in the *History of Armenia*: although Xorenac‘i gives compelling evidence for the memory of pre-Christian Armenia in late Antiquity, he is quite useless for any historical reconstruction. On the other hand, he provides evidence of a violent dynastic shift, that supports Str. 11,14,15. Despite Artašēs’ claim of Orontid legitimacy, as he shows in his boundary stelae, the Armenian epic traditions preferred to highlight a dynastic break from the Orontids to the Arsacids. In his simplified abridgment of the earliest history of Greater Armenia, Strabo shared this version, but with a significant difference: he did not attribute to the Orontids a royal title. Yet, as we have seen, the situation was more complicated, as shows the title of βασιλεύς in the inscription of Ar-mawir. However, the sentence *τελευταῖος δ’ ὑπῆρξεν Ὀρόντης ἀπόγονος Ὑδάρνου τῶν ἑπτὰ Περσῶν ἐνός* seems awkward and does not explain the relations between the last Orontes and Artaxias and Zariadris (and, of course, we cannot exclude a gloss). Future studies on ancient Commagene should not overlook the importance of Orontid kingship in the Armenian tradition, keeping in mind the connected historical and philological problems.

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29 Thomson 1994, 84.

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Beyond and Yet In-between *The Caucasus and the Hellenistic Oikoumene*

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Hellenistic Commagene and the Kura Polities

Commagene lay at the southwestern edge of a vast mountainous space that we might understand as the Taurus-Zagros-Caucasus highland belt, stretching from the Southeastern Taurus Mountains of Eastern Anatolia into Iran, and north from the Zagros to the Greater Caucasus. In the northeastern section of this belt, the South Caucasus Kura polities of Caucasian Albania (Gr. Ἀλβανία) and K'art'li (Caucasian Iberia [Gr. Ἰβηρία; Geo. ქართველი]) grew at roughly the same time as Commagene.¹ Albania was to the east, in the Kura lowlands and Caucasus piedmont near the Caspian, and K'art'li to the west, near the confluence of the Kura and Aragvi Rivers.² Although the concept of the Kura region as a unit is uncommon in modern scholarship,³ ancient authors

- 1 The ancient endonym of Albania is unknown, although a discourse stretching back to antiquity has sought (spurious) etymological connections to Mount Alban in Italy, e.g., Justin. 42,3,4. The relationship of the Greek *Ibēria* to the endonym *K'art'li* is likewise uncertain. For more, Rapp 2014, 2–3.
- 2 Albania falls largely in modern Azerbaijan, but also north along the Caspian coast. K'art'li was centred in what is today Eastern Georgia. The historical geography of each has been the subject of long and acrimonious debates with political roots and consequences, particularly the southern borders of Albania, e.g., Bais 2005; Gadzhiev 2015; Svazian 2015.
- 3 There are several causes of the division of studies: 1) the regional understanding of K'art'li as the ancestor state of modern Georgia, and Albania as that of Azerbaijan, thus bounding the study of the ancient polities within each national research tradition; 2) a credulous reading of Strabo Book 11 on the differences between the Iberians and Albanians, predisposing scholars to conceptualize the two polities as fundamentally different; 3) the lack of an extant manuscript tradition for Albania, resulting in a poorer understanding of the pre-Christian and later periods; and 4) the smaller scale of archaeology on pre-Christian Albanian sites than on K'art'velian ones.

treated K'art'li and Albania as a pair, separate from Armenia to their south, Kolchis to their west, and the 'nomadic' world to the north.⁴

The territories of Commagene and the Kura were at one point part of Achaemenid space. Subsequently, the polities that grew in both areas were among the post-Achaemenid kingdoms stretching from Anatolia and the Black Sea coast, across the Lesser Caucasus and into Northern Mesopotamia (i. e. Pontos, Bythinia, Armenia, Sophene, and Gordyene). Commagene, Albania, and K'art'li came to interact extensively with the regional highland power of Armenia, and eventually and to differing degrees with the expanding Roman and Arsakid empires. In seeking to situate late-Hellenistic Commagene within both its Hellenistic and Eurasian contexts, the Kura polities seem, therefore, like a natural point of comparison. And yet, Commagene and the Kura region are rarely interpreted as part of a single historical, geographic, or conceptual world. Instead, the Kura polities stand as an "absent presence", dragged onto the stage of ancient history only insofar as they explain the strategic goals of the empires on their borders, chiefly the Romans.⁶ In contrast to Commagene – whose curiosity has brought it a certain amount of attention even if only for its exoticness –⁷ K'art'li and Albania seem to be too 'other' to be considered much at all. This chapter considers the history of the Kura region's absence, and sets out to demonstrate the value of considering the space in relation to a larger Hellenistic *oikoumene*: an exercise with benefits for understanding of the South Caucasus, as well as of Commagene and the Hellenistic world at large.

Edges and their Incommensurabilities

The South Caucasus in antiquity was polycentric, characterized by the intersection of non-uniform environmental, political, and cultural spheres.⁸ Perhaps as a result, it has picked up the moniker "crossroads of nations."⁹ Even more frequently, it is described in vocabulary that evokes peripherality or liminality, e. g., the Caucasus as the "edge of empires."¹⁰ Although not mutually exclusive, there is something incongruous about a space being described at once as a periphery and also a crossroads, as the first implies

4 E. g. Plut. Pompeius 34,1: μέγιστα δὲ αὐτῶν ἔστιν ἔθνη Ἀλβανοὶ καὶ Ἰβηρες; the paring of the two in RG 31: ... *et ultra reges, Albanorumque rex et Hiberorum*. See also the arrangement of Strabo's description of the Caucasus in Book 11.

5 On the idea of the South Caucasus in this sense, Grant – Yalcin-Heckmann 2007, 2.

6 E. g., in Bosworth 1976; Dąbrowa 1980; Chaumont 1984; Isaac 1990, 42–50; Whittaker 2004, 309.

7 Versluys 2017, 13, 20–21.

8 Steppe, temperate lowland, and highland ecosystems; Iranian (Arsakid) and Mediterranean (Roman) political spaces; monetized and non-monetized economic spheres, etc.

9 Swietochowski 1999.

10 Ristvet et al. 2012; Rayfield 2013; Vasil'eva et al. 2013.

a sense of a prohibitive edge, and the second of connective potential.¹¹ But it is in fact a common pairing for a number of spaces that could be called ‘beyond, yet in-between.’¹²

The concepts of *peripheries* and *crossroads* are, of course, perspectival. The Romans, conceiving of the Albanians and K‘art‘velians on a political level as ‘other’ than their northern (nomadic) neighbours, rendered the Kura as the periphery of the rutable part of the world.¹³ Whether this divide between ‘us’ and ‘them’ was relevant to the Albanians or K‘art‘velians themselves is less clear, and indeed those same Greek and Latin sources also suggests that both the Albanians and K‘art‘velians were, in fact, closely connected to their nomadic neighbours through bonds of kinship above all else.¹⁴

But the frequency and consistency of the vocabulary of ‘peripheries’ and ‘crossroads’ in descriptions of the Caucasus should not be dismissed, for it hints at a central interpretive challenge: The space’s internal diversity and attempts to render sense about it has both generated and reified a sense of *incommensurability*. To be (or seem) ‘incommensurate’ is not precisely the same as to be ‘different’, but is instead to lack a basis of comparison with respect to a quality normally subject to comparison. Incommensurate structures, objects, or ideas cannot be measured by a single standard.¹⁵ Despite its appearance in postcolonial theory and invocations among anthropologists, explicit discussions of the consequences of incommensurability have been rare among archaeologists and ancient historians.¹⁶ Their focus has instead been on processes of convergence or becoming, as with the ‘-ization’ debates, from the well-trodden ground of Romanization to more recent scholarship on globalized antiquities.¹⁷

In the Kura polities, where a number of different types of edges collide both historically and historiographically, and where the processes of ‘-ization’ were at best uneven, incommensurability, however, plays an outsized role. In what follows, I trace the generation and persistence of this incommensurability along three axes: (1) One rooted in the physical world, namely the highland landscape of the Caucasus, as well as the interpretation of this topography; (2) one created by the course of imperial expansion and its uneven reach; (3) and finally, one resulting from a contemporary geopolitical edges, which has siloed the study of the Kura polities with respect to ancient studies.

A critique of incommensurability as a framework is that, by focusing on epistemological miscommunication, it reifies alterity and leads to a state of relativistic aporia

11 But, on this overlap, Simmel 1957 (repr. of his article published in 1909).

12 For example, descriptions of Afghanistan.

13 Str. 6,4,2.

14 Str. 11,4,3. 11,4,5. See also descriptions of the steppe groups or peoples descended from them who were said to dwell in Eastern Caucasia: Plin. HN. 6,38–39; Str. 11,5,8. 11,8,4. 11,14,4; Arr. Anab. 3,8,4; Ptol. 5,12. See also Gregoratti 2013.

15 On incommensurability in the philosophy of science, see Carrier 2001.

16 Bhabha 1989. In anthropological theory, Povinelli 2001; Handler 2009. On incommensurateness and indeterminacy in related disciplines, see, e. g., Chang 1997; Perloff 1999.

17 E. g., Hingley 2005; Versluys 2014; Pitts 2015; Hodos 2016; Van Oyen – Pitts 2017; Ghisleni 2018.

wherein no comparison is possible.¹⁸ And yet, the failure to take seriously the *consequences* of incommensurability on our understandings of antiquity has led us to the same place, with the Kura region and many other ‘beyond, in-between’ parts of the ancient world, like Commagene, excluded from comparison. This exploration of the sources and results of incommensurability, then, neither suggests that the spaces were, in fact, incommensurate in the distant past, nor that they need to stay that way in the scholarly future. Instead, it is offered as a cautionary tale about how overlapping, agglutinative ‘alterities’ layer atop one another at the margins of our disciplinary and historical subjects and how they distort our vision of antiquity.

Highland Contexts

More than any other factor, it is the topography of the Greater Caucasus range, running east-west along the isthmus between the Black and Caspian Seas, that has created the perception that the Kura region sat along an enduring periphery.

Spatial Borders

In ancient thought, mountains in general – and the Caucasus and Taurus ranges specifically – delimited the world both physically and ideologically.¹⁹ The earliest extant references to the Caucasus preserved in Greek texts offer little beyond descriptions of impossibly large mountains, taller and more rugged than any others on earth.²⁰ By the time of Strabo, when several centuries of contact with the Greek, Macedonian, and Hellenistic worlds allowed for greater geographic accuracy about the Caucasus,²¹ the Greater Caucasus range was cast as “a wall across the isthmus, separating the two seas.”²² This idea of the Caucasus as a border or frontier did not lose its salience in the subsequent millennia.²³ Indeed, even the traditional name for the South Caucasus in English, Transcaucasia, reflects a much more modern imperial perspective that constituted the Greater Caucasus in this way. Although the prefix ‘trans-’ sounds perhaps as a riff on the connective potential of the isthmus, it is in fact a translation of the Rus-

18 Brown 1983.

19 Meißner 1996; Evans 1999.

20 E. g., Hdt. 1,203; Aristot. Mete. 350a26–36.

21 Strabo’s sources of the roots of Hellenistic geographic knowledge about the Caucasus have been long-discussed, see e. g., Boltunova 1947; Traina 2018.

22 Str. 11,2,15.

23 Thus, in Islamic geography, Zadeh 2017, 76. Also from Islamic thought, see perceptions of the overwhelming linguistic diversity of the Caucasus, whereby the Caucasus was dubbed “a mountain of languages” (*ğabal al-alsun*), Catford 1977.

sian term, *Zakavkaz'e* (Закавказье), meaning “the land on the other side of the Caucasus range” (i. e., looking southward from Russia), to be contrasted with *Predkavkaz'e* (Предкавказье), or *Ciscaucasia*, located on Russia’s own side.

Rather than envisioning the Caucasus as an integrated ecosystem tied together by a network of small and large passes, where communities positioned themselves along strategic highland-lowland ecotones, the prevailing approach to topography has emphasized the region’s (internal) division and (external) disconnection. The shape of modern discourse about the Dariali and Derbent passes, the two doorways piercing the wall of the mountains, exemplifies the risks of this type of thinking. Located in the Central and Eastern Caucasus respectively, the two passes provide the most accessible routes through the Greater Caucasus, which are especially useful for moving large groups and are therefore of special interest to state-level actors trying to control the territory. The passes have, unsurprisingly, long been the subject of both foreign and local authors. In the Greco-Latin tradition, the subject of their correct localization and identification prompted considerable debate.²⁴ Building on this textual tradition, contemporary ancient historians have sought to understand Roman attempts to control these exact routes, either directly or mediated through the *K'art'velians* and *Albanians*.²⁵

The near-exclusive focus on the Dariali and Derbent passes gives the impression that all trans-Caucasus movement passed through them. In fact, we have much reason to suspect a wider number of routes through the mountains, even if many were only available seasonally or to specific types of agents (i. e. seasonally transhumant communities; or individuals travelling by foot with good knowledge of the landscape).²⁶ Descriptions of trans-Caucasus movement in the medieval Georgian compilation *K'art'lis c'xovreba* are more in line with this model. There are, on the one hand, repeated direct and indirect references to the strategic importance of controlling movement in a general sense.²⁷ But on the other, later components of the *K'art'lis c'xovreba* depict complicated on-the-ground realities. For example, a 12th century account of Davit' the Builder's military activity notes that the king captured the fortress not only of the Dariali pass, but also “those of all the passes of Ossetia and of the Caucasus mountain.”²⁸ Control, then, was not about securing a route, but rather about dominating the entire network.

24 See Pliny's unsuccessfully attempts to straighten out the confusion about the *claustra caspia*, Plin. HN 6,40; but also other uses of the term that conflict with his solution: Suet. Nero 19; Tac. Ann. 6,33,3; Jos. Ant. Iud. 18,97. See also Bais 2001, 81 n.326.

25 E. g., discussions in Manandian 1948; Bosworth 1977; Syme 1981; Gadzhiev 2007; Gagoshidze 2008.

26 A point made by Braund 1994, 44.

27 For reference to the strategic position of the city of *Mc'xet'a* with respect to control of the North: Qauxč'išvili 1955, 64, ll. 1–3, trans. Thomson 1996, 75. For mentions of either the Dariali or Derbent passes: Qauxč'išvili 1955, 11, line 21; 12, 4; 13, 9 = Thomson 1996, 14, 16; Qauxč'išvili 1955, 149, l. 14 = Thomson 1996, 166.

28 ... და ყოველთა კართა ოვსეთისათა და კავკასიისა ... Qauxč'išvili 1955, 336, line 19 = Thomson 1996, 328.

Furthermore, there is the question of the fortification of these passes, which has been assumed by many studying the Roman period.²⁹ In fact, although the Sasanian Empire clearly invested heavily in the fortification of the passes themselves, there is currently no evidence of similar instillations from earlier periods.³⁰ Although it is impossible to preclude the presence of a more ephemeral system of movement-control, the textual and material evidence from the pre-Christian period suggest close ties between communities on opposite sides of the watershed range.³¹ Control of these passes from a local perspective was not just about keeping others *out*, but also about enabling one's own movement *through*.

Cultural Backwaters

There is equally a long history of constituting the highland belt itself as a cultural dividing line. For the Hellenistic geographer Eratosthenes,³² and in ancient geographical thought more generally, the Taurus Mountains split the North from the South. Strabo clarifies that the people dwelling in this area can be classified into at least three groups:³³ those dwelling in the North from the Eurasian steppe southward on both sides of the Greater Caucasus (e.g., Sarmatians, Scythians, Albanians, K'art'velians, etc.); those living in the mountainous highlands (e.g., Armenians, Medes, Parthians, Kilicians, etc.); and those inhabiting the stretches south of the mountains (e.g., Indians, Mesopotamians, and also Commagenians).

The perception of the northern alterity of the Kura region was strengthened by descriptions of wild and uncivilized highlanders dwelling on the fringes of the kingdoms, beginning as a trope already in the classical literature.³⁴ The sense of northern-ness

29 E.g., the fortification of access to the passes discussed by Bosworth 1977, 226.

30 It is possible that earlier fortifications simply have not been preserved or have not been found. But, on recent archaeological work demonstrating extensive Sasanian and later levels, and vanishingly thin earlier levels, see Gadjiev 2008; Sauer et al. 2015; Lawrence – Wilkinson 2017. Two inscriptions, one for K'art'li and one from Albania, have often been cited in conjunction with these passes, but the case for the connection is weak in both cases, Smyshliaev 2018.

31 The archaeological investigations of North-South Caucasus connections are underdeveloped. Sagona et al. 2017 present some material from K'art'li; for the Eastern Caucasus, Gadzhiev 1997. The echoes in the historical tradition are many, e.g., the story of Artašēs and Satenik, which tells of the marriage of the first Artašēs, the first of the Artašēsid kings of Armenia, to a princess from the North Caucasian Alans, Satenik (Movsēs Xorenac'i 2.50). In Georgian historiography, the wife of the first king of the P'arnavaziani line, P'arnavaz, was a woman from the North Caucasus. When their son was threatened by other aristocrats upon assuming the throne, he went to his mother's homeland (Duržuket'i) to gather strength against the revolt.

32 Str. 2,1,1.

33 Str. 2,5,31. Strabo's Taurus is a composite range stretching from central Anatolia to India and subsuming a number of other mountain ranges under its name.

34 Braund 1986.

and highland barbarism made it easy for foreign sources to elide the entire region with the cast of mythological characters localized there, like Prometheus, Jason, and the Amazons.

By Late Antiquity, particularly through the vector of Syriac literature, the Greater Caucasus came to be known as the site of Alexander the Great's Northern Gate, and home to the biblical monsters Gog and Magog, the enemies of civilization.³⁵ As incursions from northern Alans and Khazars threatened the Sasanian state,³⁶ the Kura lands became evermore synonymous with a fundamental boundary, separating the world of civilization from that of marauders.³⁷ Indeed, the idea of a 'northern-ness' encompassing both Armenia and the Kura polities spread from Greek geography into Armenian and Georgian texts, including both the *Primary History of Armenia* in Movsēs Xorenac'i's *History of Armenia* and the Georgian historiographical work *Life of the Kings* from the *K'art'lis c'xovreba*, both of which framed local antiquity as having emerged from a wild North, different in fundamental ways from neighbours to the South.³⁸

In this diachronic and cross-cultural sense, then, discussions of topography and impressions of its social consequences have been operationalized to render the Kura region as something quite apart from more normative ancient centres of classical, Near Eastern, Christian, Islamic, and even Russian thought. Both foreign and local sources have engaged in this process, but with a single result: time and time again, the Kura territories have been placed either on the knife's edge of civilization, or in fact beyond its reach.

Divergent Local Histories

The sense of incommensurability that stems from physical geography and its imagination is exacerbated by the fact that the highland belt was rarely held unambiguously by a single power, either local or foreign. As imperial expansions in the Late Iron Age spread direct and indirect rule variably, local elites were able to triangulate between multiple local, regional, and pan-regional powers, creating on-the-ground realities that are difficult to untangle and fit into models of elite identity construction and state development. In a mutually reinforcing challenge, scholarship on the various empires falls into a range of contemporary fields (i. e. specialists in the Mediterranean on the Hellenistic empires vs. Iranists on the Arsakid). Differences in their underlying presumptions and evidentiary predilections add another source of disjuncture.

35 Rapp 2014, 133–140.

36 On the Khazars, Shingiray 2011; On the Alans, Abramova 1978; Alemany 2000.

37 On their perception in Georgian and Armenian literature, Shapira 2007.

38 Rapp 2014, 132.

Achaemenid Imperial Subtexts

In contrast to the Armenian highlands and territories of Northwest Iran, where Early Iron Age Urartian and Median historical contexts are better understood, relatively little is known about the Kura region in a political sense before the 5th c. BCE.³⁹ It was then that the Kura region came to be united with the politico-imperial system as the rest of the Taurus-Zagros-Caucasus under the Achaemenid Empire. Although the nature of Achaemenid control in the Kura region is murky,⁴⁰ it seems likely that the territories were included into the satrapal system under the umbrella of Jacobs' Great Satrapy of Māda/Media, perhaps entirely within the sub-satrapal unit of Arminiya, or perhaps divided between Arminiya and Media.⁴¹

Whatever the details of the historical geography, archaeological work conducted over the last half century has made the scale of Achaemenid investment along the Kura River valley clear. Several monumental building/palace complexes have been uncovered near the Kura and its tributaries, marking the northern extent of such architecture. The most dramatic of these sites, Qaracəmirlı in the Kura lowlands of Azerbaijan,⁴² is constructed using an Achaemenid vocabulary of monumental space, and specifically quotes of the concept of a Persian "paradise-palace."⁴³ It, along with two less-fully excavated examples,⁴⁴ represents an entirely new way of structuring and monumentalizing space in the Kura region.⁴⁵ Its function was most likely as a local administrative centre,

39 Along the Black Sea coast, a longer history of interaction brought Kolchis into the Black Sea orbit by the 6th or early 5th c. BCE. For the Kura region, there is little more to go on than scattered evidence suggesting the presence of North Caucasian 'Scythian' and 'Kimmerian' groups, see Mehner 2008 for a survey of the evidence. See also Vinogradov 1964; Khalilov 1971; Esaian – Pogrebova 1985.

40 There are, for example, debates about how much of modern Georgia was incorporated into the Achaemenid Empire, see Lordkipanidze 2000 for a minimalist view. See Rapp 2014, 23–27 for an overview of debates and their stakes. Another point of contention is the status of Colchis, on which Jacobs 2000.

41 The hierarchical system of overarching Great Satrapies containing other nested levels of satrapies was elaborated by Jacobs (1994), as attempt to reconcile the different descriptions of Achaemenid imperial space offered by Greek and Persian sources. For possibilities concerning the place of Armenia within this model, see Khatchadourian 2016, 217 n. 6, with some reservations about Jacobs' reconstruction of *Arminiya*. See also Rapp 2014, 26 on the idea that Achaemenid *Arminiya* was a synecdoche for all of Achaemenid-controlled Caucasia.

42 Babaev et al. 2007; Knauss et al. 2007; Knauss et al. 2013.

43 Canepa 2018, 350.

44 Two other sites with buildings of similar plan, but lacking evidence for the extensive landscaped spaces, are the nearby Gumbati (Furtwängler et al. 1997; Knauss 2000), and Sarıtəpə (Narimanov 1960; Narimanov 2001).

45 This, unlike Achaemenid-period sites further to the south, like Erebuni and Altıntepe, which were often built on the sites of pre-Achaemenid monumental architecture, and indebted stylistically to earlier local traditions, on which Khatchadourian 2016, 141–145.

although who was utilizing the space and for what purposes remains open to debate.⁴⁶ Beyond the ‘palaces’, there are also some examples of religious (?) architecture that perhaps dates to the Achaemenid period, like the large tower at Samadlo which finds parallels in towers from Pasargadae and Naqš-e Rostam.⁴⁷ These sites attest to the material presence of an Achaemenid substrate reaching nearly to the Greater Caucasus. Although the presence of the Achaemenid Empire is more difficult to see beyond the realm of elite culture, the buildings are the material indications of Achaemenid institutional structures that would echo through the Kura region in subsequent centuries.

Toward Hellenistic Independences

The fundamental shift toward divided versions of Hellenistic rule in the Kura region began with the dissolution of the Achaemenid Empire that fractured the high-level (if thin) political unity of the Taurus-Zagros-Caucasus highland belt into myriad shifting regional and pan-regional political entities. By the late Hellenistic period, K’art’li and Albania emerged from this chaos as independent kingdoms, connected to Commagene through the node of Armenia.⁴⁸ But, as the following discussion of the development K’art’li and Albania demonstrates, there was not a single shared path forward along the banks of the Kura.

Unlike the southern reaches of the highland belt, where the participation of local elites in the Hellenistic political *oikumene* is abundantly clear, the situation in the North is more uncertain. Despite an Alexander Romance tradition that invented a series of Caucasus stops along Alexander the Great’s campaign,⁴⁹ the Kura polities lay beyond the reach of Alexander’s sphere of activity, as well as beyond most of the jockeying among the Seleucid successors.⁵⁰ Although this did not prevent interaction with the Hellenistic world on a socio-cultural level, it did ensure that very little testimony about either K’art’li or Albania from this period was recorded in the classical corpus.⁵¹ Thus, in the case of Albania, only two explicit references discuss the polity in conjunction with

46 See interpretations of it and the similar structures in e.g., Tiratsian 1964, 74; Babaev 1990, 40; Khatchadourian 2016, 146–150.

47 Gagoshidze 1979, 51–53; also Kipiani 2004; Knauss 2006, 87–89.

48 Our evidence for K’art’li and Albania is scant in the early Hellenistic period, although histories written in the national traditions of Georgian and Azerbaijani history have tended to emphasize their emergence earlier period, e.g., on Albania, Babaev 1976 (although contrast with Trever 1959, 144–150).

49 Meißner 2000, 180; Rapp 2014, 136–140, see also in the Persian literary tradition, Casari 2012.

50 For which, see e.g. the contribution by Strootman in this volume.

51 The question of the ‘Hellenization’ of the South Caucasus was a *topos* in mid-century Soviet scholarship, which approached the idea with scepticism, Khatchadourian 2008, 271.

events occurring prior to the 1st c. BCE.⁵² The Greco-Latin texts speak in a similarly indistinct whisper about Hellenistic K'art'li.⁵³ An increase in foreign interest about the Kura region would not come for another century, when the machinations of Lucullus, Mithridates, and Pompey finally brought Roman attention to the area. Evidence that can be brought to bear on the Hellenistic development of the Kura polities, although often indirect, includes accounts of the early history of K'art'li preserved in the later Georgian manuscript tradition; K'art'velian architecture from elite contexts as well as a smaller body of material from Albanian sites; and traces of economic activity in both regions.

The manuscript tradition suggests that, as elsewhere in the post-Achaemenid world, recollections (and reinventions) of the highland's Iranian past offered the later Kura local dynasts both a foundation for their kingship and fertile site for experimentation in royal legitimization.⁵⁴ In nearby Armenia, as also in Commagene, some of the clearest evidence for Hellenistic-period re-animations of Achaemenid history are epigraphic.⁵⁵ In the Kura region, where the epigraphic habit was more attenuated, inscriptions are unfortunately both scarcer and later in date.⁵⁶

However, Georgian transmitted texts recall the importance of Achaemenid models for the later local dynasts of K'art'li.⁵⁷ For example, the *Life of the Kings*, a pre-Bagratid (c. 800 CE) component of the *K'art'lis c'xovreba*, says straightforwardly that the

- 52 (1) a reference in Arrian's 2nd c. CE *Anabasis*, where we read that the Albanians participated in the battle of Gaugamela as part of the force of Atropates (Arr. Anab. 3,8,4. 3,11,4); (2) a brief mention in Pliny of an anonymous Albanian king who gifted a dog to Alexander the Great (Plin. HN 8,149).
- 53 See the discussion of Hellenistic K'art'li in Meißner 2000, which reveals the impressionistic sense of Hellenistic. This situation can be contrasted with that in Armenia, where the rise of the Artaxēsid (Artaxiad) dynasty in the wake of the conquests of Antiochos III inaugurated a phase of increased greater participation in cross-border politics and a commensurate increase in Greco-Latin accounts.
- 54 E. g., among the Mithradatids of Pontic Cappadocia (Pol. 5,43,2); the Ariarathids of Cappadocia (Diod. Sic. 31,19,1–2); and the Orontids of Armenia (Str. 11,14,15). On this phenomenon more broadly, see contributions in Strootman – Versluys 2017.
- 55 I. e., the stelae of Artaxēs I, Khatchadourian 2007, 48–55. On Iranian echoes in the highlands, see Canepa 2018, 188–204.
- 56 For inscriptions from Georgia in general, Qauxč'išvili 1999–2000, as well as discussions of key inscriptions by Braund 2002; Braund 2003. No comprehensive catalogue exists for Azerbaijan, but only two large lapidary inscriptions are documented, neither of which is Hellenistic in date: an inscription of the Legion XII Fulminata, which is better understood as a graffito of sorts, found at the petrograph site of Qobustan, ca. 45 km south of Baku (Dzhafarzade 1948; Braund 2003; Smyshliaev 2018); and a Greek-language funerary inscription from the site of Böyük Dəhnə in the Nuxa district, held in the Georgian National Museum (Trever 1959, 340–341).
- 57 Although these sources contain anachronisms and inventions reflecting the perspectives and goals of their composers and exacerbated by their complicated recension histories, they preserve valuable information on the pre-Christian period, see Rapp 2003; Rapp 2014. There is no extant manuscript tradition of this nature from Albania. The most complete source is Movsēs Dasxuranc'i's 10th century Armenian *History of Caucasian Albania*, which is however very brief about pre-Christian periods, see Rapp 2020; Dowsett 1961.

first king of K'art'li, P'arnavaz, structured his rule by "imitating the kingdom of the Persians."⁵⁸ Although this tells us more about pre-Bagratid imagination than about post-Achaemenid realities, it nevertheless demonstrates that, for later K'art'velians, the idea of local administration as explicitly "Persian" (სპარსი), i. e. Achaemenid, was logical. The potential accuracy of these memories is supported by the fact that a number of structural characteristics of early K'art'velian administration and elite social structure from the *Life of the Kings* are Iranian in character, although these could have been retrojections based on later practices.⁵⁹

Material evidence of local Hellenistic-period interaction with the Iranian world, however, can be found in a number of religious structures from K'art'li – the so-called 'fire temples'.⁶⁰ If it is true that these structures are connected with Zoroastrian practice, then the aristocratic culture of the P'arnavaziani dynasty was interacting with Iranian religious vocabularies by the 2nd–1st c. BCE. Thus, although Iranian traits in K'art'li are often attributed to later influences from the Arsakid and Sasanian Empires, this suggests that they may well represent the long legacy of the Achaemenid period,⁶¹ layered underneath re-importations of Persian practice from later periods.⁶²

Finally, although architecture from the 1st c. CE and later falls outside the purview of this exploration, the early 'fire temples' like that at the sanctuary site of Dedop'lis Mindori foreshadow a coming elite K'art'velian architectural boom which incorporated architectural vocabularies drawn from beyond the Iranian world.⁶³ In particular, Armazi, the capital city, and its citadel Armazis-c'ixe (Armaztsikhe) took form,⁶⁴ growing over the next centuries and adopting architectural idioms that seem to derive from the Roman East, in particular a range of bath complexes and a fresco-decorated hall.⁶⁵

58 ... მიმსგავსებულად სამეფოს სპარსთას, Qauxč'ishvili 1955, 25, l. 4, trans., Thomson 1996, 35. See discussion of this passage in Rapp 2014, 211.

59 Rapp 2014, 209–213.

60 The 'fire temples' are four-columned structures known from a variety of post-Achaemenid contexts, see Plontke-Lüning 2009, although their interpretation remains unclear and deserves additional work. In the K'art'velian context, the largest and best published of these is from Dedop'lis Mindori, on which Gagoshidze 1992; Gagoshidze 2001; Furtwängler et al. 2008. On the phenomenon in K'art'li more broadly, K'imšiašvili – Narimanišvili 1995.

61 Rapp 2014, 212 n. 132.

62 On the presence of multiple Zoroastrianisms across the highland belt, de Jong 2012, 142. 150–151; de Jong 2015, 126.

63 See also its associated (aristocratic?) residence at Dedop'lis Gora, Furtwängler et al. 2008.

64 Mod. Baginet'i, near Mc'xet'a, Ἀρμόζικῆ (Strab. 11,3,5); Ἀρμάκτικα (Ptol. 5,10,2); Hermastus (Plin. HN 6,11,29). See Tsetskhladze 2008 for an overview and bibliography of work at the site. The earliest remains on the acropolis are generally said to come from the columned hall, which are not earlier than 1st c. BCE. On debates about its dating (which has been said to be as early as the 4th c. BCE), Gagoshidze 2008, 39.

65 Beyond this site, the later bath complex at Žalisi (Dzalisi) deserves mention, on which Boxoč'aže 1981; Odišeli 1995.

Thus, concerning the P'arnavaziani and their capital city, we can paint a general picture for the Hellenistic period, with increasing clarity in the 1st c. CE and later. If we turn to the East and Albania, though, even very basic questions of political history in the Hellenistic (and indeed also Roman) period are unresolved. The Greek and Latin sources provide us with the names of only two earlier kings and one prince, all dated to the 1st c. BCE.⁶⁶ The most detailed and oft-cited source about Caucasian Albania is Book 11 of Strabo's *Geōgraphika*, which presents a moralizing vision of the Albanians.⁶⁷ In it, the Albanians were recently united under a single king, emerging from 26 earlier linguo-ethnic groups.⁶⁸ Cyclopean in their simplicity, they were the quintessential quasi-agriculturalists who were lucky to live in a tremendously fertile land.⁶⁹

And yet, the situation in Albania by the late Hellenistic period was more interesting than Strabo would lead us to believe,⁷⁰ although since there has been far less excavation than in Georgia, the evidence is more fragmentary. At the site of the likely ancient capital of Albania, Qəbələ (Gabala),⁷¹ however, work has uncovered a striking set of monumental structures. They come from part of the site known as Çaqqallı, located on a low river terrace along the left bank of the Qaraçay approximately 2 km to the southeast of the main areas of ancient and medieval Qəbələ.⁷² Unlike Hellenistic and Roman-period architecture from K'art'li, the massive oblong oval-shaped (assembly?) buildings found at Çaqqallı are without clear parallels either in the Iranian sphere or elsewhere. The largest of these is ca. 74 m. by 23 m., sports a row of columns lengthwise, and two entrances on each long side.⁷³ They, along with another rectilinear structure in their vicinity, have been interpreted as public buildings, based on their massive scale and the find of a cache of bullae in the lower layers of the nearby structure.⁷⁴

The monumental architecture in K'art'li and Albania represents two divergent ways of constructing state power physically. We find, in K'art'li, a pattern of recombining architectural elements and forms that are familiar for neighbouring regions. In Albania, in contrast, despite the presence of construction elements that are similar to those in

66 Kings Oroises, ruling in 66/65 BCE (Cass. Dio 36,54) and Zober, ruling in 36 BCE (Cass. Dio 49,24,1); and brother of Oroises, Cosis (Plut. Pompeius. 35,2). The Georgian sources provide little additional detail, Rapp 2020.

67 Traina 2015.

68 Str. 11,4,2.

69 Str. 11,4,3.

70 Aliev 1975 for an impassioned critique of Strabo.

71 Cabalaka (Plin. HN 6,11) or Καβάλα (Ptol. 5,11).

72 Qala and Səlbir, located on a high plateau.

73 So far, five have been discovered. The shape is generally that of a hippodrome, although there is no typological connection. The dating is unclear. See the recent survey of work, Eminli 2020, and also Babayev 2001; Babaev 1990, 63–66. 73–86. Note that some of the oval buildings are constructed atop earlier wine storage facilities and the largest is constructed atop a kiln.

74 Khalilov – Babaev 1974, 100; Babayev – Əhmədov 1981, 9 fig. 20.

K'art'li (e. g. column bases and roof tiles of familiar types),⁷⁵ the end product is unique. Rather than crediting these differences to a lesser level of technical know-how or integration on the part of the Albanians, we ought to consider them as the product of different priorities and choices. We might well consider these choices as examples of “innovative eclecticism”, as discussed by Versluys in conjunction with Commagene.⁷⁶ As in the Commagenian case, the intentional reconfiguration of elements from a wider Hellenistic repertoire on the part of local power-brokers resulted in material realities that were in each case unique. It is possible that the desire to *be different* may, in fact, have been a feature that unified polities across the highland belt.

This pattern of dissimilarity between the two Hellenistic Kura polities extends also into the realm of coinage. This is perhaps surprising, because ‘money’ is the tool par excellence for the commensuration of value.⁷⁷ But here, we find that coinage developed along incommensurate conceptual lines in the two polities. In contrast to architectural evidence, there is more Hellenistic numismatic material from Albania than from the heartland of K'art'li.⁷⁸ Beyond imported coinage, largely Seleucid tetradrachms from Syrian mints and eventually Arsakid drachms,⁷⁹ several large hoards found in Albania contain a high percentage of locally minted drachms.⁸⁰ The drachms, of which over 570 examples are known, are concentrated in the piedmont of the Eastern Caucasus, although single examples are known from Artašat in the south and southern Dagestan in the north.⁸¹ These drachms are fairly unimpressive in appearance, highly stylized imitations of the coinage of Alexander III.⁸² The majority were minted to a fairly standard weight of ca. 4,3/4,4 g,⁸³ and they comprise around half of all the coinage known from the area, found in hoards, single finds in burials, and also as stray finds encountered during excavation.⁸⁴

75 Babaev 1990, 86.

76 Versluys 2017, 135–137.

77 Espeland – Stevens 1998.

78 Cf. Strab. 11,4,4 on the lack of coin use among the Albanians. By Sherozia's count (Sherozia 2008, 242–246), there are ca. 270 imported coins that predate Augustus known from K'art'li (including issues of Phraates IV as well as a small number of Kolkhian coins). Most of these come from burials. Contrast that with the ca. 570 imported coins from the Eastern Caucasus, predominantly from territories associated with Albania (Fabian 2018, Appendix B), found more often in large hoards than in the case of the K'art'li coins.

79 As well as tetradrachms from the Black Sea world and as far away as Bactria; and later Armenian tetradrachms and some Republican denarii.

80 Pakhomov 1962; Dadasheva 1980. There are also several tetradrachms.

81 The largest concentrations are 436 from the Qəbələ hoard (IGCH 1737); 72 from the Xınıslı hoard (IGCH 1745); and 36 from a burial at Nüydi excavated in 1972 (Osmanov 2006, 31). On the examples found outside of the piedmont, Gadzhiev 1997, 58; Mousheghian et al. 2000, 18.

82 The precise prototype is unclear.

83 The 4,3/4,4 g. weight is especially clear in the samples from IGCH 1737.

84 The finds are not well recorded, but see the report of discovery during the course of excavation of the (public?) building at Qəbələ, Khalilov – Babaev 1974, 108.

The details of this low-denomination locally minted coinage contrasts sharply with a (roughly?) contemporaneous Georgian minting tradition that may be connected with K'art'li or perhaps further to the west. This minting practice produced gold coinage called 'staters' in the literature, known from around 120 examples in total.⁸⁵ Although the minting authority of the coinage is unclear, roughly half of the examples that come from known locations are from K'art'li, with the rest found in Western Georgia. The coins are grouped into two sub-types, one of which has a likely prototype dating to the early 2nd c BCE from Western Georgia.⁸⁶ Unlike the Albanian drachms, these 'Georgian' pieces are more varied both in their appearance and their weights, which range from 0,55 g. to over 7,9 g. Many exhibit signs of secondary use in the form of drilled holes or attached loops. Furthermore, they come from a narrower range of archaeological contexts than the drachms, predominantly graves, where they are found with coins from the 1st and 2nd c. CE.⁸⁷

Some of the differences between the imitation staters found in K'art'li and the imitation drachms from Albania can be explained by the different lives of gold and silver coinage. The long preservation of the staters, their (re)use as items of personal adornment (?), and their absence from 'economic' hoards⁸⁸, but inclusion in burials as prestige goods are all logical in this context. The extremely inconsistent weights of the staters, furthermore, could result from, for example, a longer period of minting, leading to a gradual decrease in weight over time.

Nevertheless, the entirely dissimilar nature of these two coinages – the only examples of local minting from the late Hellenistic Kura – is nevertheless intriguing. The idea of coinage came into both of the Kura polities through the vector of the Hellenistic world in the literal (material) sense that the prototypes of these coins were Hellenistic. But the minting authorities who created these coinages and residents who used them developed very different roles for locally minted coins. Although the coins themselves might have been commensurable (that is, presumably you could have reached an equivalence between the two), the *idea of coinage* that sits behind their creation and use was not. It is, furthermore, the 'beyond, yet in-between' character of the Kura region that enabled different ideas of something as basic as coinage to take hold. Since

85 The coin type has been extensively studied, see particularly Kapanadze 1953; Dundua 1987, 55–100. See also the recent discussion and catalogue of several dozen specimens in foreign museums, Frolova 2009.

86 The more frequent 'Alexander' and the rarer 'Lysimachus' types. There have been extensive debates about their chronology starting with Zograf 1936. The likely prototype for the 'Lysimachus' type is the Aka stater, an example of the Black Sea *Lysimachi* minted between the 190's and 170's in the name of ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΚΟΥ, who is generally connected to Western Georgia. On Aka and his coinage, Kapanadze 1948. See also Fabian 2019.

87 E. g., Kropotkin 1961, 1013.

88 In the Kura region, where burial hoards are extremely common, this term is used to denote hoards not found in such contexts.

the region had access to the Hellenistic ideas of money, but was never fully incorporated into a Hellenistic monetary economy, local authorities and residents had a freer hand in developing their own use practices, even for something as generic as coins.

Ancient History and Modern Geopolitics

The final, and much more direct, source of the Kura region's historical incommensurability is the most obvious in a historiographic sense: the sinuous southern border of the former Soviet Union that cut across the highlands. This is, in part, a practical problem. Until recently, the shared scholarly language for researchers working on the Kura polities was Russian and the majority of research on these polities has been published in either Russian, Azerbaijani, or Georgian.⁸⁹ None of these languages are common among scholars working within the Western European research communities that have generated most of the discussion of places like Commagene, or indeed the Hellenistic world more generally.⁹⁰ As a result, information about the Kura polities has filtered into Western European-language scholarship in limited ways.⁹¹

The past scholarship on the Kura region, however, differs in more than just its language. Its conceptual and theoretical underpinnings developed first in the context of Russian Orientalist perceptions of the Caucasus,⁹² and then later within Soviet-Marxist social and economic models.⁹³ From the middle of the 20th century, archaeological and historical work on the South Caucasus centralized the idea of autochthony and searched for ethnogenesis. These approaches often blurred the borders between ancient and modern communities in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. Although this was the product of a specific set of nationalist pressures with resultant difficulties,⁹⁴ it

89 Post-Achaemenid, pre-Christian K'art'li has been the subject of more foreign language scholarship by both local and international scholars, e. g., on material culture, Lordkipanidze 1991; Braund 1994; Licheli 2001; Apakidze et al. 2004; Tsetskhladze 2008. Albania in the same period remains the subject of extremely little scholarship in non-local languages, but Hoyland 2020; Babayev 2001; Bais 2001; Patterson 2002; Traina 2015.

90 To the linguistic challenges one must also add issues of access to literature on both sides of the border.

91 And the details are also prone to error, see, e. g., the location of the Qobustan inscription, which has often been misidentified in Anglophone scholarship, with Bosworth claiming that "the Soviet first publication carefully concealed the exact location of Bejuk Dag" (Bosworth 1976, 75), although the first publication by Dzhabarova 1948 identifies clearly the (correct) location.

92 An important figure for the archaeology of the Caucasus who emerged out of late imperial Oriental Studies and rose to a place of extreme prominence in the Soviet period was N. Ia. Marr, about whom, Platonova 1998; McReynolds 2016.

93 E. g., the five-stage model of social development and discourses about ancient slavery. Krikkh 2013 provides the most complete discussion of ancient history in Soviet historiography. On archaeology, Klejn 2012.

94 Lindsay – Smith 2006; Khatchadourian 2008.

also enabled a focus on the ‘local’ rather different from non-Soviet studies of the same period.

For almost a century, archaeologists studying the Kura region chose where to excavate based on the questions that were important to them. They categorized their data and developed typologies following their understandings of civilizational development. They scaffolded their raw data with a historical narrative within the frame of their historical imagination. Working with this material demands awareness of the history of its generation, as there is no simple way strip away all of the layers of interpretation that cling to it. It offers, in return, a valuable counterpoint to the vision of antiquity of the Western European and Anglo-American traditions, built in the course of a different arc of colonialism, orientalism, and scientific progress.

The ‘Caucasian Knot’

The phrase the ‘Caucasian knot’ (кавказский узел) has been commonplace in Russian discourse about the political challenges of the Caucasus ever since Russia’s early, and at first unsuccessful, attempts to conquer the territory. In the Russian context, it describes “a tightly wound problem, hard to understand, harder to undo, and very man-made.”⁹⁵ The ancient Kura polities present a similarly tangled narrative, made even more difficult by their unfamiliarity for most researchers of either Mediterranean or Iranian antiquity.

However, the compounding marginality of the Kura region is not exceptional. Its shape, surely, is rooted in a specific constellation of factors. But the core elements of the story are shared by other places that have been defined as the edges of various ancient worlds, namely a profound alterity rooted in geographic determinism, local polyvalence that confounds imported interpretive models, and later (or contemporary) historiographical imbrication.⁹⁶ The shadow of incommensurability that hangs over such spaces raises a more general challenge for the scholarly project of ancient history and archaeology. The consequences of being, or being defined as, an ‘edge’ are significant. They continue to creep, often unnoticed, into foundational assumptions of our disciplines, even in the age of globalization and complex connectivity.

95 Grant 2016, 19.

96 E. g., Lecocq 2015; Chin 2017.

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Beyond Greece and Babylonia

Global and Local at Seleucia on the Tigris

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In this contribution different types of documents and classes of materials from Seleucia on the Tigris are presented and discussed with the purpose of identifying global and local trends in both their production and meaning. Subsequently, this paper explores how these trends coexisted, interacted and affected the city and its society. In many instances, materials that are deemed as 'local' at Seleucia have been considered part of a globalizing process; however, this paper addresses this issue by proposing that fully developed global systems, like those that came into being in the Hellenistic world, were in fact fostered by globalizing processes that had already been underway.

The aim of this essay is to show that global and local trends at Seleucia appear to go beyond their characterization as ensembles of exclusively Greek and Babylonian origin. As in Hellenistic Commagene, we seem to be dealing here with 'cultural scenarios' that acquired very different meanings over time. In particular, the use of Greek elements, which I will define as 'Hellenistic mainstream', in Seleucia on the Tigris, appears to be potentially comparable to what was happening in Commagene at the Euphrates simultaneously.

The Hellenistic World as a Global Network

Throughout different periods of human history, the culminating propensity to large-scale connectivity led to the creation of globalizing societies; that is to say, societies with different backgrounds, traditions, and even languages, participating in supra-regional networks and experimenting, among other interrelations and to various degrees, with cultural interplay.

In archaeology, this interplay can be traced, albeit usually not completely understood, by the examination of things (arranged in classes of materials) and framed in what the literature defines as a global perspective or Globalization theory.

This theoretical body, especially developed by notions derived from world systems theory during the past few decades, has brought complex phenomena as cultural interplay into sharper focus.¹ As such, it has highlighted the effects of increased connectivity to explain appropriation and interaction processes, although not always with a general consensus on the use of the concept of globalization itself.² Network dynamics has also been applied in this context and has provided new viewpoints on the integration of complexities.

Studies on globalizing networks and connectivity in Antiquity are generally conducted on the basis of objects or commodities as well as on the basis of the know-how that these embody and their movements.³ These studies often point to the fact that things were not merely carriers of meaning but indeed denoted – and still continue to denote – the people that envisioned, made, and used them. In a perspective that examines connectivity and cultural interplay as expressed in materiality, things are not only markers of social complexities, but indeed agents in social dynamics and, for this reason, among others, they can be considered as subjects of appropriation.

As far as can be deduced on the basis of known documents, there was no network as extended, complex and, therefore, as global as the network that came into being and functioned from the time onwards of what we call the Hellenistic world. Everything seemed to become part of one whole⁴, in this world, where concepts and ideas reverberated through time and space because of the movement of things (and of everything that these things entailed).

Cities like Seleucia on the Tigris became key nodes in this global network, points at which social, economic, political and cultural edges intersected. These were places that, in terms of their dimension, gravitational attraction, and cosmopolitan attitude suit the concept of metropolis closely, even when considered in its more contemporaneous meaning.

This contribution presents different types of documents and classes of materials from Seleucia on the Tigris, in order to detect global and local trends and examine how these trends seem to have evolved and have been adopted, and investigate what their overall effects on the city and its society may have been. Through this, it also addresses

1 See, among the most recent publications, Appadurai 2001; Hopkins 2002; LaBianca – Scham 2006; Jennings 2011 and the previous bibliography cited there. See in particular for the Hellenistic and Roman worlds Erskine – Llewellyn-Jones 2011; Pitts – Versluys 2015.

2 Criticism has been raised regarding the comparison implicitly established between the term ‘globalization’ as it is perceived in contemporaneity and its use for describing realities of the past (that is to say processes underway for centuries, if not millennia) that we do not understand completely: examples for such criticism are the emphasis given to the fragility of some approaches to globalization and the Roman Empire, or the fact that on the literal grounds the latter cannot be defined as ‘global’ according to some scholars (Naerebout 2006/2007; Greene 2008).

3 See for all Appadurai 1986; Hales – Hodos 2010; Versluys 2014.

4 Pol. 1,3.

the problem concerning our perception of what is global and what is local. It appears, namely, that things that can be deemed as 'local' at Seleucia – that is to say, Babylonian in their appearance – in fact seem to be the result of globalizing process that was already underway at least since the formation of the Achaemenid Empire, if not earlier.

As such, the case of Seleucia and its wider region, Babylonia, might offer a useful comparative study to better understand and contextualise what happened in Commagene during the same period. Although these were two very different regions, Babylonia and Commagene were part of the same network and they both added to and took from what we call the Hellenistic repertoire in terms of dynastic display, religion, and material culture.

Centrality of Seleucia in the Hellenistic Network

Seleucia on the Tigris was founded by Seleukos I, most likely in the final decade of the 4th c. BCE, at the centre of a system of land and water routes that developed over centuries and fostered connectedness between the Mediterranean, the Persian Gulf and the Iranian plateau.⁵ Among other characteristics, this position was crucial for the city's pre-eminent status, as has been stressed in the literature, because it would have enabled links between the centre and periphery of the Seleucid domain.⁶ Evidence from excavated archaeological materials, however, shows that the city's propensity for connectivity far exceeded this domain. The same propensity likewise characterized other major nodes of the Hellenistic network, namely, cities that shared unequalled centrality with Seleucia in terms of their size, position and status, for example Alexandria, Antioch and, later, Rome. In terms of scale, so it seems, what happened in Seleucia was quite different from what happened in Commagene.

The city's position is only one indicator of its centrality, however. It is also revealed by its political importance, social complexity and ideological meaning, which are not commonly present simultaneously. Another indicator is the city's enormous size, which far exceeds 600 hectares of almost entirely built spaces (an extension that is rarely detected elsewhere in Antiquity). Seleucia, as the official residence of the Seleucid co-regent and capital of the Upper Satrapies of the Seleucid Empire, played a pivotal political role also beyond the region in which it was located.

Seleucia was governed by institutions of Greek origin, like the *boule*. This council played a pivotal role in the history of the city until the second half of the 2nd c. CE, as

5 This is the point where the Nahar Malkha, the royal canal known in Babylonian records, joined the river Tigris to the Euphrates. The region is known in Arabic as 'Al-Mada'in' (the cities), and after the foundation of Seleucia it became one of the larger urban contexts in antiquity: from that time onwards, it was probably the main access to the Silk Roads.

6 Invernizzi 1993a.

has often been emphasised.⁷ However, the new foundation was also labelled according to a rather local ideological point of view: in cuneiform sources, Seleucia is indeed designated as ‘*āl-sharrūti*’, the city of kingship⁸, and it is openly assimilated to Babylon even by Greek authors.⁹ The fact that this Akkadian designation, conferring royal dignity, conforms with traditional local practices¹⁰ has led scholars to interpret the behaviour of Seleukos I, in founding his own capital, as that of a Babylonian king, and not merely as a successor of Alexander.¹¹

Indeed, the link between Seleucia and Babylon – as well as Babylonia – appears to have been very close since the onset. This link, induced as an intentional strategy, stimulated, and was stimulated by, the influence of the local background¹² to such an extent that it is hard to consider Seleukos I’s foundation exclusively as a Greek city. This can also be suggested on the basis of the city’s characteristics, like its urban layout and monumental setting, and of some passages in Greek sources.

The city’s layout is characterised by a regular grid of the so-called Hippodamian type (fig. 1),¹³ often understood as an expression of the Greekness of the city; however, the plan also reveals intentional reference to the Babylonian milieu in its building projects and monumental setting.¹⁴ Greek sources seem to show that a conceptual link between Babylon and Seleucia was established by Seleukos I himself, who transferred the *basileion* from the former to the latter, as if Seleucia was perceived as a new Babylon.¹⁵ Hence, it appears that the concepts of ‘Greece’ and ‘Babylonia’, which are often still understood as cultural or ethnic containers, were embodied in the city since it was conceived by its founder and planners. Moreover, in the end, because of this, Seleucia was envisioned as a cosmopolis encompassing these two elements and many more.

When we talk of the centrality of such a city in the network, we therefore refer to the fact that it was distinguished from the great majority of other inhabited centres by a series of characteristics that, simultaneously, occurred just in a few other major urban contexts (or network key-nodes). The network was supposedly counterbalanced by the existence of these centralities, even if it probably lacked constant stability. Centralities expressed their pre-eminence in each of their regional contexts, as they were involved, competitively or not, in supra-regional dynamics.¹⁶

7 See for all Invernizzi 1994, 9–14.

8 Smith 1924, 155 (e.g. BM 92688).

9 Plin. HN 6,122; Str. 16,744.

10 Sherwin-White 1983, 270. But for other records on the city foundation see also Hadley 1978.

11 Invernizzi, 1993a, 235.

12 Invernizzi 1994, 5–7.

13 Gullini 1967.

14 Messina 2011.

15 In particular, Str. 16,738. On this aspect, see also Sherwin-White 1983.

16 Think for instance to the interdependence of powers, demand and markets’ development that was central to some scholars’ vision of Hellenistic economy (see Archibald 2001, 379–386 and Manning 2005, 171–181, who discuss and elaborate concepts already outlined by Rostovtzeff 1936).

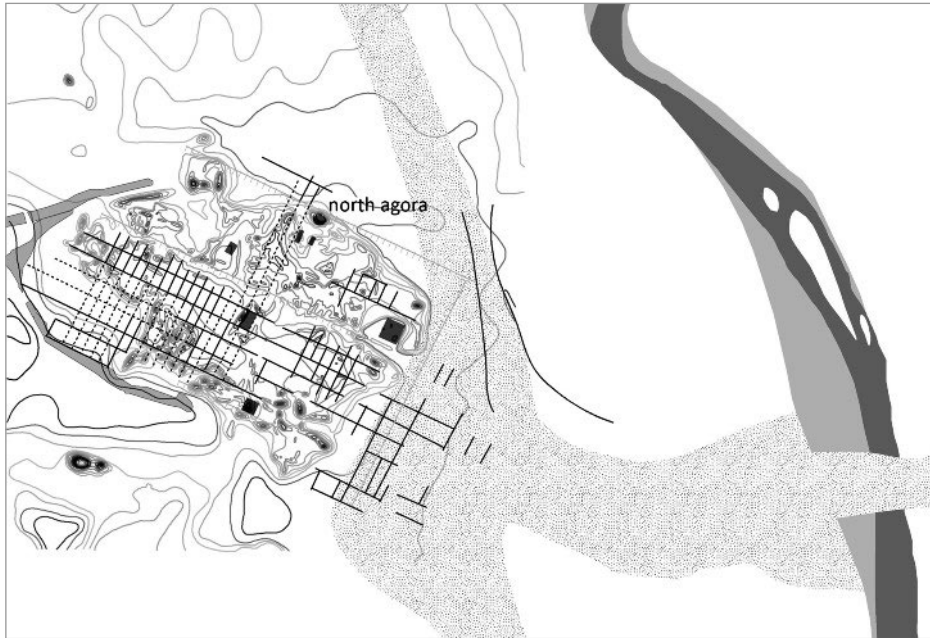


Fig. 1 Seleucia on the Tigris. Restored city plan, © E. Foietta and V. Messina (on the basis of the topography conducted by the Italian team and satellite imagery)

Quality and Quantity of the Documents from Seleucia

The ruins of Seleucia are still clearly visible on the west bank of the Tigris, about 30 km south of present-day Baghdad (fig. 2). The impressive remains of the city, which has not been covered by modern settlements, were noticed by travellers since the 16th century at least¹⁷, but were investigated systematically only in more recent times, following a ground survey in the region led by the *Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft* (DOG).¹⁸

Excavations were conducted at the site by two expeditions: the American joint expedition of the University of Michigan and the Museums of Toledo and Cleveland, which worked continuously from 1927 to 1936¹⁹, and the Italian expedition of the *Cen-*

17 Many accounts are known that describe the area and ruins, among which the one made by Claudius James Rich, the first British Resident in Baghdad, who visited Seleucia and Ctesiphon in 1810.

18 Maps were produced by Walter Bachmann and later published by Meyer 1929, fig. 2 and Reuther 1930, fig. 1.

19 Waterman 1931; Waterman 1933; Hopkins 1972.

tro *Ricerche Archeologiche e Scavi di Torino per il Medio Oriente e l'Asia* (CRAST), which worked from 1963 to 1976 and resumed field activity from 1985 to 1989.²⁰

Both expeditions recovered materials of various types in large quantities and revealed different buildings. Public buildings, like the theatre, the stoa, and the city archive were unearthed in the so-called north agora by the Italian team; a dwelling block (so-called block G6) was completely excavated by the American team; workshops were identified by both teams, in addition to the remains of what can be recognised as a *bouleuterion* and of a small Mesopotamian temple.²¹

Architectural remains span from the Seleucid to the Parthian periods and the materials found in various contexts provide information about city life, society and artistic production. Copious amounts of pottery, small objects and terracotta figurines were found in the dwelling block and other domestic contexts, but also in tombs (as funerary objects) or in workshops, as was particularly the case with terracotta figurines.



Fig. 2 Area of Al-Mada'in. Ruins of Seleucia on the Tigris. Corona scene 1104–2138-F30/31 (August 16, 1968). Detail, © Corona Atlas

20 Preliminary reports on the Italian excavations at Seleucia on the Tigris were published from 1966 to 1990 in the Journal *Mesopotamia*. Final reports on some operations were published by Messina 2006 and Messina 2010.

21 For the theatre and Mesopotamian temple see Messina 2010, 55–160; for the stoa Valtz 1986; Valtz 1988; Valtz 1990; for the city archive Messina 2006, 27–70; for the 'block G6' Hopkins 1972, 28–118; for a workshop in the north agora Menegazzi 2009, for the *bouleuterion* Hopkins 1972, 26–27 (there wrongly identified as a theatre).

Coins have been found throughout the site, albeit in smaller quantities and not always in clear contexts. Additionally, thousands of clay sealings (the remnants of perished sealed documents) were discovered in public and private archival contexts.

These classes of materials, together with architecture, architectural decoration and other types of findings that occur less frequently, reveal different backgrounds and trends, which not only coexisted but rather converged and interacted. This coexistence has been investigated from a 'continuity and change' perspective and considerable advances have been made in understanding mutual contributions and influences against different backgrounds. However, it is also possible to identify such dynamic processes when framed within a specific context, instead of considering the interaction between global and local trends on a larger scale only. Our understanding of these dynamics seems to have great potential, given the comparability of global trends in different cultural contexts or regions, as similar dynamics would have been concerned, in general terms, with different realities within the same Hellenistic network.²²

In any case, the quality of information embodied in the different classes of materials from Seleucia is characterised by a high degree of complexity, because the features, occurrences and contexts of the findings allow for the observation of dynamic processes taking place across its society, in spite of the fact that major artworks are almost entirely lacking.²³

Global and Local at Seleucia

When investigating the Hellenistic global network by means of examining things, it is important to start with the observation that things from different and distant places look somehow Greek to us, as this has affected assessments of the degree of system connectivity in most recent literature.²⁴ In general, this is not seen as the result of acculturation processes but instead as the adoption (whether conscious or not) of concepts that had often little to do with Greece or Greek culture directly. Rather, these testify to the use of a form of expression (especially in visual arts) that was derived from what

22 Dynamics related to the adoption of global trends and their interaction with different 'localities' are examined by Messina – Versluys forthcoming, with particular regard to the objectscales of Seleucia on the Tigris and Susa.

23 The only known major sculpture from Seleucia is a famous bronze statue of Herakles derived from a Lysippean prototype, accidentally found at the site, whose origin is still debated (see for all Invernizzi 1989; Canepa 2015b, 86–87). It is interesting to note that, in terms of the archaeological record, the situation in Seleucia is thus almost opposite to that in Commagene, where monumental art is well documented.

24 For networks of different types (economic, social, artistic) in the Hellenistic world, see Archibald 2011; Oliver 2011; Larson 2013.

we recognize as the Greek artistic tradition, but that in fact evolved because of external inputs, as well.

This form, Greek in its appearance but already the result of previous elaboration, is seen as global because it is attested in different and distant regions across the world that did not maintain direct relations with Greek culture: from the Mediterranean to the Indian Subcontinent and from the steppe of Central Asia to Africa. The diffusion of this form, to which the venture of Alexander greatly contributed but did not constitute the first input, has been initially understood as the spread of Greek customs beyond the Mediterranean and thus as a form of acculturation.²⁵ However, it has since been reconsidered as an outcome of active processes of appropriation and interactions embedded in local contexts that were fostered by the propensity of the network for connectedness.

From a global perspective, the overall Greek appearance of things can be used to investigate complex connectivity. However, this appearance can be misleading or meaningless when it is not contextualised: it could lead to generalizations or incorrect inferences, not to mention the risk of the tendency to see something as more global when it appears more Greek (as this is clearly not the case). The question is complicated further by the fact that what we currently perceive as Greek was probably not at all perceived as such in Antiquity. Therefore, to simplify, what we deem here as global shows features that appear mainly Greek (while being aware that they could not have been Greek, or at least not exclusively Greek). Secondly, what we deem here as local shows features that, at Seleucia, appear mainly Babylonian (we will examine below whether they were, and whether they were so exclusively).

At Seleucia, global and local dynamics, such as can be traced in the city's materiality, affected society at all levels as the result of appropriation, coexistence, combination and interaction processes. In some cases, it is evident that these processes – especially combination and interaction – were fostered by the input of apparatuses, while in other cases they appear induced by more spontaneous phenomena. This can be inferred from the characteristics of certain classes of materials and their supposed contexts of use and diffusion.

Products of the visual arts, in particular, reveal in what way and by what means trends that we see as global spread in the city, and how they coexisted and interacted with local productions. The most diffused classes of figurative materials found at Seleucia, namely, clay sealings and terracotta figurines, reveal that subjects that had originated from what can be defined as a Greek visual lexicon could be reproduced by media of various types and sizes. Moreover, they demonstrate that small media repli-

25 See for all Schlumberger 1970, who defined for the first time 'oriental Hellenism' as an original form that did give origin to Parthian and Greco-Buddhist arts.

cating major works were widely circulated and that certain iconographies lasted for long periods.

Global concepts influenced subjects that appeared to have originated from a much more local lexicon, thereby showing how a variety of solutions were found in order to satisfy the demands of different groups. The choice of themes, which in some cases can be peculiar,²⁶ appears to have been the result of commissions by people from different communities, backgrounds and from across all social groups. This is arguably revealed through the analysis of some classes of materials, of which this paper provides an overview, in particular seals and terracotta figurines. The variety of productions, and subsequently of commissions, is testified by the plethora of subjects displayed (observed in both seals and terracotta figurines), the way in which different visual lexica are used to create interaction (observed in particular in seals), the wide range of quality standards, sometimes with a high occurrence of certain types that most likely were mass-produced (observed in both seals and terracotta figurines, but particularly in the latter).

The city's population was mixed, with inhabitants of various origins, and as a result its productions appear to be the result of choices that cannot be ascribed to merely one component. In centres like Seleucia, appropriation is something that concerned all communities that lived there, while induced combinations and interactions seem to be detectable only in certain contexts.

The Seleucid apparatus appears to have been an agent of global and local interaction, as we are led to assume by two main indicators, namely, media displaying royal iconography and monumental architecture.

Our knowledge of Seleucid royal iconography is largely based on portraiture from coin dies and seals. Royal portraiture shows standardised types on coins²⁷, which display the beardless diademed head of the king in right profile almost exclusively (fig. 3), thus conforming to the global trend of Hellenistic coinage. Portraiture on seals (that is, seal impressions) reveals a much freer variety, onto which the divine likeness of the king or other attributes – unattested on coins – occur more frequently (fig. 4). This might be explained by the fact that coins and seals could have circulated in different circles. However, a more interesting angle from our perspective is the fact that global and local concepts seem to have been deliberately combined to interact in the construction of some royal images. An example of this is a portrait of Seleukos I that shows the king's diademed head (conforming to global trends) combined with the (locally used) divine attribute of horns.²⁸

26 See for instance Messina – Pappalardo 2019, 91–94.

27 For coins found at the site see Le Rider 1998, for issues attributed to the mint of Seleucia see for all Houghton – Lorber 2002, *passim*.

28 In Mesopotamia horns are the distinctive attribute of gods or supernatural beings, as is well known.



Fig. 3 Mint of Nisibis. Obverse of a silver tetradrachm showing a portrait of Antiochus III (Messina (ed.) 2007, no. 13), © Trustees of the British Museum London



Fig. 4 Seleucia on the Tigris. City archive. Seal impression showing a portrait of Antiochus III as Dionysus. Baghdad, Iraq Museum, © Archive of the CRAST

Seleukos I's horned head occurs on coins and official seals in the context of a posthumous celebrative programme developed by his son Antiochos I.²⁹ On seals, however, horned portraits of Seleukos I are also represented in full figurative form, following the canon of a Lysippean prototype created for a heroic – but hornless – statue of Alexander. This has led to the proposition that such full-figure portraits were replicas of one or more statues of Seleukos that had likely been erected in Seleucia or other important cities.³⁰ As such, they are pieces of information on how global and local trends converged and interacted in the celebrative sculptural programme of the Seleucid dynasty; a programme that aimed to present the city founder as a superhuman being by the use of a local divine attribute, but also by the appropriation of a concept that had already been developed in the Achaemenid milieu: namely, the concept of the royal hero.³¹ This appears to have led to the invention of a tradition that justified the superhuman and heroic celebration of Seleukos for redefining dynastic identity: this tradition was based on the figure of the hero defeating wild animals or monsters – which symbolized chaos in Babylonia and Iran – and this figure survived in later sources.³²

29 Messina 2004.

30 Messina 2011, fig. 7; Messina 2017, 24–25. It is there stressed that on media of small or miniature size major artworks now lost could have been replicated.

31 Cool Root 1979, 300–308.

32 For instance, a passage in App. Syr. 57 refers to Seleukos I's horned statues directly and justifies the presence of horns because Seleukos is said to have held alone, with nothing but his hands, a wild bull. This topos must have become quite famous in antiquity: for about a century later it appears again in a passage of the so-called Romance of Alexander attributed to the Pseudo-Callisthenes (Life of Alexander the Macedonian 2,28), and returns also in Lib. Or. 11,92. We are dealing with etiology, for these records postdate by centuries the – invented – facts they are describing; however,

The convergence of global and local elements can also be found at Seleucia in monumental architecture. Excavations in the north agora revealed the presence of buildings according to reproduced models that have been attested almost everywhere in the Hellenistic world (and thus also globally), like the stoa and theatre. But the excavations also revealed the presence of local types (fig. 5). The theatre was constructed in the same complex that also incorporated a small Mesopotamian temple³³, the stoa was built in order to limit the east side of the agora and face the city archive, which is a building with a modular layout based on the precincts of Babylonian sanctuaries.³⁴

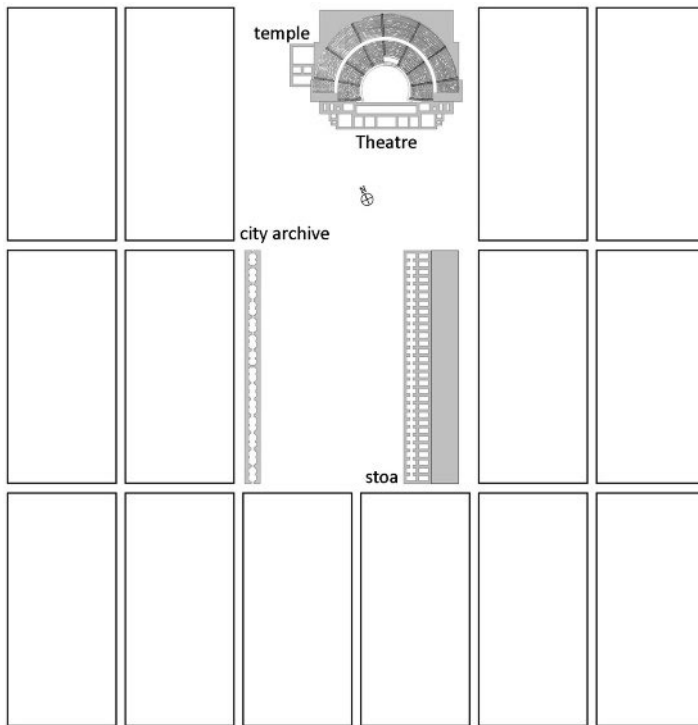


Fig. 5 Seleucia on the Tigris. Restored plan of the north agora, © V. Messina

they inform us that a tradition regarding Seleukos' horned statues did exist and survived long after the Seleucid era. The visual manipulation of global and local elements is thus very interesting in these statues: in Greek eyes, Seleukos wears a kind of bull's *exuvia* (horns) after having defeated a bull as Herakles wears the lion's skin after having strangled the Nemean lion; in local (Babylonian and Iranian) eyes, horns qualify Seleukos as a supernatural being directly, having been for millennia the distinctive attribute of gods of different rank or superhuman beings. Furthermore, the figure of the hero defeating animals or monsters by his hands is attested in Babylonian and Iranian glyptic of all times copiously.

33 Messina 2010, 55–160.

34 Messina 2006, 27–70.

All these buildings were made according to the local mud brick technique, using both Greek and Babylonian measurements.³⁵

The coexistence of these buildings in the north agora, the most important public space of the city, must be the consequence of a deliberate choice made by the city planners, namely, a choice for global and local convergence. The foundation of Seleucia can be seen as an ideological action by Seleukos I. The city's monumentalization is probably to a large extent the consequence of a royal dynastic project conceived and carried out – again (!) – by Antiochos I³⁶, which was also continued by his successors³⁷: Antiochos chose Seleucia as his residence during the co-regency (and probably as one of the symbols of Seleucid kingship) and he inspired the city designation as royal abode.

It would therefore not be misleading to regard Seleukos and Antiochos as the main instigators of this convergence.

The trends that can be identified by what we know of royal iconography and the remains of the city's monumental architecture allow for the reconstruction of a set of symbols (derived from the intentional combination and convergence of global and local inputs) that were purposely used to convey messages (and thus for propaganda). In the capital of the Upper Satrapies, Greece and Babylonia were combined for the purpose of the Seleucid dynastic display. It appears that this set of symbols indeed became a convention and that the Seleucids created basic and enduring strategies of royalty which lasted throughout the subsequent periods. According to some scholars, this was possible thanks to the selective integration of a variety of (global and local) traditions to forge artistic, architectural and even religious lexica.³⁸

If it may seem hazardous to regard these sets of symbols as evidence of the construction of a multiple identity³⁹, it seems at least probable that they could have been part of a strategy aiming to accommodate the multifarious identities of the city and, in so doing, gaining the consensus of these identities. Whether or not this accommodation

35 The standard measure of bricks used in the theatre followed the Greek *pentadoron*, that of bricks used in the stoa rather fits the Babylonian cubit (*ammatu*), that of bricks used in other buildings, like the city archive, followed the Attic-Ionic foot.

36 Messina 2011, 164–165.

37 For instance, the city archive was surely in use during the reign of Antiochos III (Messina 2006, 66–69).

38 Canepa 2015a.

39 In this context, the concept of multiple identity would imply that individuals could have engaged in practices (encouraged by apparatuses) that did lead them to navigate from one identity to another, or in processes of inclusion of groups considered alien from one's own group; it would also imply our awareness of social phenomena, like people's propensity to choose a variety of socially constructed but deeply embodied identities in a variety of circumstances and contexts that, on the contrary, we are not able to reconstruct. On constructing identities in the Hellenistic world (and a critique of the equation of style in material culture with ethnic or cultural identity) see Versluys 2017.

can indeed be recognised in the data from Seleucia and other Hellenistic centres is beyond our scope.

Was the city's society receptive to these sets of combined global and local symbols (whether or not one considers them as the direct emanation of an apparatus)?

Can the convergence traced in architectural and sculptural programmes also be detected in the production of other things?

These issues may be addressed by looking at three main classes of materials that allow the identification of societal tendencies effectively; namely, the behaviour of some groups within the city and their propensity for making choices concerned with the use of certain visual lexica.

The first class to be examined is that of clay sealings. These are uneven lumps of clay that were applied to the strings that tightened folded documents (parchments and, in very small number, papyri). Stamps or seals were impressed on their surface in order to avoid access to the documents that had tightened in this manner. Thousands of sealings were found at Seleucia: a few hundred in two small private archives unearthed by the American team, and more than 25,000 in the city archive discovered by the Italian team. These bear on their surface more than 30,000 impressions.⁴⁰

The majority of impressions on sealings belong to stamps of a Seleucid salt-tax department⁴¹; very few are related to official seals. Others were left by figurative seals that show a plethora of different subjects (derived from Greek, Babylonian and Iranian visual lexica).

More than 4,000 seals have been identified that supposedly were used by contracting parties, private individuals or professional witnesses. The users of these seals are therefore representative only of a part of the city's society: notables, officers or specialised circles (such as salt traders and witnesses). Figurative seals provide insight into the choices of restricted groups, and allow us to assess global and local dynamics within the city's elite, or at least a part of it.

On the seals used by these groups, subjects derived from the Greek visual lexicon are widely attested: Greek gods, heroes or mythological scenes seem to testify to the full adoption of global themes by officers and traders. Types that appear rather local seem instead to reveal the preferences of other professionals: monsters, priests and worshippers frequently occurred on seals used by witnesses.⁴² Among local types we

40 Bollati et al. 2004.

41 These bear Greek inscriptions that inform us on the payment of, or exemption from, a tax on the salt trade, and express the year of taxation following the Seleucid era. Almost all dated sealings (ca. 97%) fall in the period from Antiochos III's to Demetrios II's reigns, with a concentration in the reigns of Antiochos III (222–187 BCE) and Seleukos IV (187–175 BCE).

42 This can be inferred on the basis of the occurrence of the same motives on seals impressed on the clay tablets found in other centres of Babylonia and South Mesopotamia, like Uruk: on the Seleucid cuneiform tablets from the city sanctuaries, seal impressions are labelled and it is thus possible to recognise the categories of seals' users.

find also subjects derived from the Iranian visual lexicon, like winged griffins and hunting scenes (fig. 6).⁴³



Fig. 6 Seleucia on the Tigris. City archive. Seal impression showing a hunt in Greco-Persian style. Baghdad, Iraq Museum, © Archive of the CRAST

The appropriation and combination of global and local motives is attested in different ways: global subjects executed in local style (like many figures of Eros or Apollo, for instance) are quite diffused. Local types executed in global style (like the replica of a statue representing the *mušhuššu* of Marduk) are very rare, but extremely interesting. Especially figures that combine global and local elements appear to demonstrate the development of very complex concepts, which also embodied religious ‘syncretism’. Such is the case with seals that reproduced Greco-Babylonian gods, like Athena-Nanaia and Apollo-Nabu, in which divine attributes of Greek and Babylonian origins converged (such as the helmet of Athena and the crescent of Nanaia, or the headdress of Apollo and the stylus of Nabu).⁴⁴ There is no other evidence for postulating the existence of cults devoted to these (or other) ‘syncretistic’ gods, despite the evidence of these adaptations.⁴⁵ However, the process that led to the creation of these images implies a thorough religious elaboration based on the convergence – and

43 Hunts are very similar to those diffused in the so-called Greco-Persian glyptic, a definition that did rise a ferocious debate among scholars with regard to the ethnicity that seems implied in it (see for all Gates 2002).

44 Bollati et al. 2004 2, Na 2, Nb 1.

45 Adaptation is the process by which Greek gods were identified with gods of Mesopotamian or Iranian origin (thus adapting a non-local iconography to a local deity). This is demonstrated by two epigraphs, in Greek and Parthian, written on the legs of the bronze statue of Herakles already mentioned above, cf. n. 23. The epigraphs are two versions of the same text: in the Greek version the figure is labelled as Herakles, in the Parthian version as Verethragna.

intentional manipulation (?) – of global and local beliefs. That said, it is hazardous to consider this elaboration as a phenomenon that largely affected the city's society, especially if one considers the very low occurrence of known samples in comparison to other (global or local) subjects.

The combination of global and local elements in sculptural and architectural programmes appears to be the consequence of a choice deliberately made by the Seleucid apparatus in order to convey messages in a frame of propagandistic legitimization, similar to what appears to have happened in other regions of the Hellenistic world, like Commagene.⁴⁶ But it is more difficult to ascertain whether or not this combination was characterised by a similar intentionality on figurative seals. A positive answer could imply the successful ideological indoctrination of plutocracies and elites by the Seleucid apparatus; a negative answer would instead suggest that the convergence of global and local trends was a more spontaneous phenomenon, maybe unconsciously fostered by the need or propensity for complex forms to accommodate and negotiate. Whether spontaneous or not, these processes appear related to a minority of the city's society.

Spontaneous but less complex phenomena of appropriation, coexistence and convergence of global and local trends also appear to have originated from a larger part of the city's society. As such, they are recognisable in the production of two other classes of materials, which will be briefly discussed here: pottery and terracotta figurines.

Pottery and terracotta figurines are usually seen as things through which societies or social identities can be accessed to a larger degree than through other classes of material, because of their wide diffusion. As far as one can see, based on published examples⁴⁷, the ceramic fabric of Seleucia seems to be characterised by types that show either an appropriation or an original interpretation of shapes derived from a Mediterranean repertoire, like fishplates, *lagynoi*, amphorae and one-handled jars (fig. 7), as well as other sources of inspiration, especially including a locally rooted tradition reflected in bowls, miniature vessels and lamps. This led to the creation of an extremely varied production⁴⁸, but it is interesting to see that types belonging to different repertoires were almost only made following local techniques, based on the production of common and glazed ware (black painted ware is almost absent and usually seen as import). In pottery production, appropriation and adaptation are frequent, whereas combination is difficult to recognise. This points to the fact that the choice of vessels and other types of containers seems to have been made by the population for reasons related to taste rather than their need or propensity for negotiation.

46 Cf. Versluys 2017; Riedel 2018.

47 The pottery from Seleucia is far from being exhaustively published. A selection of the pottery found during the American excavation is published by Debevoise 1934, the pottery found during the Italian excavation is published very partially and only preliminarily by Valtz 1983; Valtz 1991; Valtz 1993. A final reassessment of the matter is more than desired by scholars.

48 The same variety characterised the pottery production of many sites, from the Persian Gulf to the Iranian plateau, from the 2nd c. BCE to the 3rd c. CE.



Fig. 7 Seleucia on the Tigris. North agora (area of the stoa). Glazed fishplate and one-handed jar. Baghdad, Iraq Museum, © Archive of the CRAST

However, it must be also said that combination is much easier to recognise in the process of the production of figurative objects than of pottery. If we turn to terracotta figurines, the adoption of global trends appears, to a certain extent, to be followed by their combination with local productions. It has often been put forward that the mass production of pottery and terracotta figurines, fostered by the fact that they were cheap and easy-to-make, could reach a wider audience than other forms could, and that, especially at sites like Seleucia, the plethora of different types attested by the production of terracottas indicate the acceptance of complex interplay by a multifarious society.⁴⁹ This interplay is primarily based on the supposed mutual acceptability of the many cultural features that these objects could be made to bear by those who made and used them.

The impact of global trends in the city's production of terracotta figurines is attested by the increase of the repertoire compared to the subjects represented in pre-Hellenistic Babylonia: Greek gods, women in Greek dress, grotesque figures and theatre masks (fig. 8), which are well-attested in the Mediterranean, were introduced as new types and became very popular.⁵⁰ As was the case with seals, major prototypes like the

49 On terracotta figurines from Babylonia, South Mesopotamia and Susiana, see, in chronological order, Van Ingen 1939; Ziegler 1962; Invernizzi 1968/1969; Karvonen Kannas 1995; Martinez-Sève 2002; Klengel-Brandt – Cholidis 2006; Menegazzi 2014 and, with a special focus on terracottas as indicators of societal tendencies vs. ethnicity, Langin-Hooper 2014.

50 According to recent studies (Menegazzi 2014, 24–25; Menegazzi 2019, 395–396), which move forward previous observations (Invernizzi 1993b), these types reveal close similarities with the production of the East Mediterranean and, particularly, Asia Minor.

‘Weary Herakles’, ‘Herakles Epitrapezios’ or ‘Crouching Aphrodite’ were replicated by figurines of different sizes and of varying quality.⁵¹ Moreover, technological aspects of this production refer to global tendencies if we look at the predominant use of double moulds instead of the more traditional single moulding and hand modelling.⁵² Subjects that pre-existed the introduction of these global novelties continued to be produced, especially nude standing women, sometimes supporting their breasts (a Babylonian traditional image) and riders (which had been diffused in Achaemenid Iran before their introduction also in Babylonia). These subjects, which can be defined as traditional – and therefore local – were renewed by their combination with global tendencies: for instance, nude standing women wear Mediterranean headdress or accessories (like the stephane) and reveal a new sensibility for the anatomy of the human body, being double moulded (fig. 9).⁵³ Combination is likewise revealed by figurines of women wearing the global chiton and the local crescent-shaped pendant that probably refers to the circle of acolytes of the goddess Nanaia.



Fig. 8 Seleucia on the Tigris. North agora (area of the city archive). Terracotta mask of Silenus. Baghdad, Iraq Museum, from Menegazzi 2014, 17.G90

51 Menegazzi 2014, SelT1G81. SelT1S16. SelT1W4. SelT1P2.

52 Almost 90 % of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figures are made in double moulds at Seleucia, whereas, interestingly, this proportion appears quite reversed in sites like Babylon, Uruk and Nippur, where local techniques seem to have been more tenacious (Menegazzi 2014, 8).

53 According to some scholars, the fact that these traditional types were produced in double moulds does not only imply knowledge of a newly introduced technique, but also the invention of modelled backsides (anatomically rendered) instead of flat-backed figurines (Langin-Hooper 2014, 459–460). This process appears far more complex than the simple adoption of a new technique, for it originated in the elaboration of new forms and this is particularly interesting when considering

The corpus of terracotta figurines from Seleucia includes a variety of types. These were probably created to suit specific needs and their variety seems to point to the existence of social negotiation processes or forms aiming to accommodate and/or redefine identity norms. According to recent studies, the types reproduced by figurines can be seen, at least in part, as miniature versions of the society; in this representation of the society, several identities may be recognised: riders, women in elaborated dress of Greek inspiration, men reclining on klinai, etcetera. This variety of miniature types seems to reflect, especially in regions like Babylonia where some types were mass-produced, a complex social environment, and figurines contributed to the understanding of how things operated within social life.⁵⁴ It is in this context that global and local trends were combined (after appropriation) and mediated for making objects that could be accessible to members of different groups or communities. Like other materials, these objects thus functioned as agents, and not only as reflections, of social tendencies.

As evident from the classes of material we considered here (and in particular from figurative objects), what appears as local in Seleucia is not exclusively Babylonian, for it already embodied inputs from previous, different backgrounds, too, in particular from the Iranian milieu.

Subsequent to this observation, models, concepts and ideas that we perceive as local in a given historical period or cultural context may be regarded as global – or globalizing – in others. What emerges as the Babylonian milieu's contribution to the creation of artistic and architectural lexica at Seleucia, and what appears to us as local in the context of Hellenistic Babylonia, was to some extent already global, or better said, already part of a globalizing phenomenon, namely, as the result of a process that had been underway since the formation of the Achaemenid Empire at least, if not earlier.

The artistic and architectural language created by the Achaemenid apparatus brought together influences from Egypt, Iran, Mesopotamia and even the Mediterranean, thus originating a milieu that included different backgrounds (and which was, for this reason, globalizing). This appears to be the case even though the predominant influence of Assyrian and Babylonian traditions clearly emerges in the visual codes that were used; for instance, in the rock carving at Bisutun or sculpted jambs and slabs at Pasargadae and Persepolis, and also in the palace architecture at Susa and monuments recently found in Fars.⁵⁵

that traditional single moulded nude standing women did continue to be produced, even if they are less frequent. In this regard, it is also interesting to note that more than 90 % of the terracotta figurines from Seleucia were found in layers dated to the Parthian period, i. e. from the 1st c. BCE to the 2nd c. CE (Menegazzi 2014, 29–30).

54 See for instance Langin-Hooper 2015.

55 In the plain of Marvdasht, not far from the place where Persepolis was erected, a joint Iranian-Italian expedition discovered in recent years even a replica of the Ishtar Gate (Askari Chaverdi et al. 2017).

The mutual influence that affected these backgrounds has generally been explained as the appropriation of foreign models, especially through the transfer of iconographies and styles from one milieu to another, with interferences that have often been deemed the result of ephemeral phenomena, like the so-called ‘perseries’ in Greece, or the sporadic occurrence of Greek sculptures at Persepolis. These were re-defined, in a broader perspective, in terms of reciprocated cultural receptivity, pointing to the conscious use and combination of well-known – and shared (?) – lexica.⁵⁶

This experimental combination of traditions – but not yet a complete interaction (?) – which is often defined as eclecticism, in turn affected, to a certain extent, the artistic production of the ‘localities’ that contributed to its evolution. The productions of Babylonia in the Achaemenid and post-Achaemenid periods likewise result from this return, and therefore from a globalizing process.



Fig. 9 Seleucia on the Tigris. North agora (area of a workshop). Double mould terracotta figurine of a nude standing woman wearing a stephane. Baghdad, Iraq Museum, from Menegazzi 2014, 2.S103

56 See in particular Miller 1997. For an overview on connectivity and objects’ agency in the Near East preceding the Achaemenid Empire, see Feldman 2006.

This is the reason why we see the figures of the royal hero, the rider and the Persian hunting scene, among others, already embodied in the local visual lexicon of Babylonia and reflected in the production of Seleucia.

Hellenism as a Mainstream

What we deem as global in a given period or cultural context is therefore the mainstream of that period or cultural context; a mainstream that can become convention (when a set of symbols is purposely used to convey messages) and embody asymmetrical trends that evolve from various backgrounds during different temporalities and, incidentally or deliberately, interact after coexisting.

The mainstream that arose in the Hellenistic world was global to a degree that had never before occurred, not only because of its unprecedented and unparalleled area of diffusion and rapidly increasing connectivity, but also because of the plethora of different cultural traditions – let us also say localities – that, in various ways and only initially in a local habitus, interacted and cooperated with its diffusion by means of the appropriation, creative elaboration and re-transmission of models, concepts and ideas in an increasingly growing loop.

We perceive these phenomena through the documents we examine, but we are not able to explain them completely. The reason is clear: mainstreams can be understood only if their historical, cultural, social and economic contexts are clearly known; that is, if it is possible to determine how and why they originated, how long they lasted, how and why they evolved or were contracted, and how and why they were replaced or became incorporated by other mainstreams. When contingencies are known only to a limited extent – and this is unfortunately almost always the case – we can explain what is, what was and what had previously been (and eventually again became) global, or a mainstream, only to a limited extent.

The Hellenising visual language of Seleucid Asia,⁵⁷ which arrived primarily via centres of production like Seleucia, incorporated – and was indeed also fostered by – the experience already gained in Achaemenid Asia, and took its place as a mainstream (and thus as a globalizing phenomenon, which was more global than any before had been). This visual language was in turn replaced by – or evolved into – new tendencies. East of the Euphrates, the new mainstream became what we call Parthian Art, a form of expression that gave voice to a renewed propensity for codified visuality (marked by frontality).⁵⁸ West of the Euphrates, the new mainstream became what we call, and

57 This language was part of the more complex phenomenon that Daniel Schlumberger (Schlumberger 1970, 5) defined as the expression of the heirs of Greek art in non-Mediterranean Asia.

58 Schlumberger 1970, 67–73. 187–209.

what is often debated as, Greco-Roman Art.⁵⁹ Both were still part, together with other forms of expression, of the global network that came into being across what we call the Hellenistic world. The processes we see in Commagene are, in all aspects, part of this same development.

Beyond Greece and Babylonia

Based on this overview, which is far from exhaustive, it can be supposed that, while in Seleucia appropriation of global ideas and coexistence with local elements were phenomena widely attested across the city's society, interactions due to global and local convergences or combinations were instead the result of deliberate choices or forms of accommodation and negotiation – in other words, of deliberate or more spontaneous forms of agency – that can be recognised only in certain circles, groups or communities. The fact that these forms of agency can be recognised only in relation to particular circles does not imply a priori that they held no a relation with a larger part of the society. However, there must have been reasons why, then, they did not emerge in the materiality; but we are not always able to discern these.

Be that as it may, it appears that in Seleucia complex dynamic processes, traceable in materiality, indeed developed beyond a rigid scheme based on the concepts of Greece and Babylonia, for two reasons. Firstly, because what we deem as global is not only Greek, and what we see as local is not only Babylonian. And secondly, because the multifaceted experience of appropriation and interaction between global and local trends was re-transmitted as part of the above-mentioned loop and in this way returned to the mainstream.

What were the reasons for the success of this mainstream? There appear to be many answers to this question, grounded in different contexts, when we refer to the multiple realities that joined and fostered the mainstream over time. However, if we examine visual lexica, in particular, one answer may be acceptable concerning the network in its entirety.

The visual form transmitted by the Hellenistic mainstream, Greek in its appearance but already the result of elaboration, had a ground-breaking narrative potential. This was expressed not only in the way human bodies were anatomically rendered (thanks to virtuosity reaching its apogee), but also, and more importantly, in the pioneering idea of rendering spatial relations as perceptible, which had never been done before, namely, through the way in which figures moved and acted in space, in order to evoke the third dimension as an experience for the observer rather than as simply a necessary measure. This is not the place for assessing the impact that this idea would have had on

59 Versluys 2014.

the visual (and still two-dimensional) codes that ruled the artistic production of many parts of the network before the introduction of this new form, but if we look at the Near East, at least, we can assume that this impact must have been indeed substantial.

As far as Babylonia is concerned, answers for the mainstream's success can be found in the presence of globalizing phenomena that had already been underway and ingenerated a kind of catalytic process. What is local is the result, to a certain extent, of a phenomenon that already was global and that subsequently became incorporated into a phenomenon that was even more global and that would thus foster it. The mainstream in Babylonia was successful because it was fostered by a pre-existing albeit less powerful stream. This catalytic process became possible in cities like Seleucia, which appear to have been especially envisioned to gain centrality in the network and entail global and local concepts in their urban projects. Simply put, these cities seem to have been made for the mainstream. In other Babylonian centres, like Babylon, Nippur and Uruk, the situation seems to have been different: in these cities the convergence, combination and interaction attested in Seleucia appears much less evident, and the compresence of diverse trends instead appears unbalanced in favour of local elements.

In Babylonia and many other regions of the former Achaemenid Empire, the Hellenistic mainstream gave voice to multifarious identities and answered a specific need. This necessity existed long before the debut of the new forms of expression in Asia, namely, as the need faced by the Persian kings when they established their sovereignty over people of different cultures, religions and languages and became programmatic of their artistic production and propaganda: the need for universality. This amounts to the capacity of a form of expression – in particular a visual language – to be understood by spectators of different backgrounds, in order for its message to be received by all, or at least by the largest possible audience. This originated in what many scholars call 'eclecticism' in Achaemenid Art, but must have been perceived as connatural to the global language that was spread, on such a substantial scale, by the Hellenistic mainstream. This language appears to have answered the need for universality as never before.

What is more universal than a flexible, adaptable, combinable form of expression? What is more resilient than a form that allows the convergence of local and global? What is more effective than such a mainstream in entangling identities that transcend the divide between cultural groups, as the outcome of a complex and multicultural society?

This form of expression entered milieus, left them, and returned to them, re-transmitting in its own loop. As such it reverberated over time and space and created entanglements that we can only understand up to a limited extent, despite the complex information embodied in materiality. But in the end, it told and still tells us a story of identities through connectivity.

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Looking South

Herodian Art and Architecture as Reflections of King Herod's Many Faces

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Abstract

This paper discusses the implications of recent archaeological findings in Judaea, mainly from the site of Herodium, for our perception of Herod's architecture and the multiple identities and influences it reflects. As a client king of the early Empire, whose construction projects are well-known from both the historical record and the archaeological finds, King Herod serves as a perfect case study for understanding the ways in which local monarchs and client kings in the late Republic and early Empire utilized art and architecture to simultaneously display their image to a varied audience, including the various groups that comprised their subjects, their peers, as well as their Roman patrons. The first part of this paper briefly explores different opinions concerning the nature of Herod's art and architecture and their varied sources of inspiration. The second part focuses on the site of Herodium, situated 12 km south of Jerusalem, where excavations led by the Hebrew University have brought remarkable findings to light over the last decades that put a new perspective on our perceptions of Herod's building program and motivation.

Introduction

Amongst the client kings of the early Roman Empire, Herod, King of Judaea (37–4 BCE), is unmistakably the best known to scholarship, thanks to the detailed historical testimony of Flavius Josephus' and the rich and well-preserved archaeological remains of his immense building program. These remains belong to a large array of sites and

1 Jos. BI 1; Jos. Ant. Iud. 14–17. On the complex image of Herod that emerges from Josephus' text see for example: Landau 2006; Kasher – Witztum 2007; Schwartz 2013; Vermes 2014. The term 'client-king' is used here for reasons of convenience. For discussion on the client kingdoms of the

structures that were built by Herod within his kingdom, as well as beyond its boundaries, including entire cities, palace complexes, fortifications and fortresses, temples and *temene*, theatres and hippodromes, bathhouses, mausolea, harbours, paved streets, and more.² Several of these buildings, such as the Roman-style bathhouses he incorporated in his palaces, or the buildings for mass entertainment he erected throughout his kingdom, constitute the first appearance of such structures in Judaea.³ In many cases, the exterior and interior decoration of Herod's building projects, as well as some of the construction techniques and materials used, also demonstrates how the architects and artisans who worked for the king adapted new artistic and architectonic forms and styles that had never been practiced in the region before.⁴ Although many of these innovations rely on Roman antecedents, others draw their inspiration from various Hellenistic centres, such as Alexandria, Antioch, and the cities of Asia Minor.⁵

These foreign traits exhibited in Herod's art and architecture were used as arguments in a long-lasting debate among scholars concerning the dominance of Hellenistic and Roman influences on Herod's rule, in an attempt to decipher the riddle of this enigmatic historic figure. While some scholars see Herod as a Roman client and attribute his buildings to an imitation of Roman models⁶, others understand him as one of the last in the line of Hellenistic kings, a founder of cities and master builder of royal palaces.⁷ However, when taking a closer look at the archaeological remains, the picture that emerges is one of a complex and nuanced combination of traits and fashions.

A discussion on the complex nature of Herod's art and architecture appears already in the fifth volume of the final report of the excavations at Masada, published in 1995 by Gideon Foerster. The volume contains a detailed study of the architectural layouts

late Republic and early Empire see: Braund 1984; Sullivan 1990; Paltiel 1991; Jacobson 2001; Roller 2003; Crighton 2009; Kaizer – Facella 2010; Kropp 2013.

2 For a thorough survey and discussion of Herod's construction projects see Netzer 2006. For an updated survey of Herod's palaces see Netzer 2018. For further discussions on Herod's building program and the ideology it reflects, see Roller 1998; Lichtenberger 1999; Japp 2000; Richardson – Fisher 2018.

3 On Herod's bathhouses, see Netzer 1999. For a summarizing updated discussion on Herod's entertainment buildings, see Weiss 2014, 11–55.

4 E. g., the use of pedestals, plinths for column bases, 'normal' Corinthian capitals, acanthus scroll friezes, modillion cornices, 'coffer-style' stucco decoration etc., see Rozenberg 2006; Japp 2007; Peleg and Rozenberg 2008; Peleg-Barkat 2014.

5 Clearly, by the time of Herod Roman visual culture was considerably influenced by Hellenistic art, as can be seen for example in some of the temples built in Italy during the late Republic (e. g. the Round Temple in the Forum Boarium, Rome; Stamper 2005, 68–74), the First Pompeian style that originates in the Hellenistic Masonry Style (Bruno 1969: 305–317), etc. Still, Roman mosaics and wall decorations in this period develop independent traits and in the days of Augustus a clear Roman architectural style evolves (Zanker 1990, 79–100). Therefore, despite common characteristics, it is yet possible to distinguish between Roman and Hellenistic styles in art and architecture and the distinctive impact each had on Herodian art and architecture.

6 E. g., Gleason 1996; Geiger 1997; Roller 1998; Lee 2003; Tsafirir 2003; Pažout 2015.

7 E. g., Turnheim 1998; Günther 2007; Lichtenberger 2009; Larson 2011; Gruen 2016: 383–395.

of Herod's buildings at the site, the stone and stucco architectural elements, along with wall paintings and mosaic floors. In this volume, Foerster demonstrates, for example, the complex nature of the architectural decoration of Masada, which is carved in a clear local style but within the Hellenistic tradition, and yet still reflects the considerable influence of contemporary Roman architecture.⁸ According to Foerster, the co-existence of the two traditions – the eastern/Hellenistic and western/Roman one – is not surprising, since it was in Herod's days that Roman art and architecture were first introduced into Judaea, and not enough time had passed to allow for a real synthesis of the two traditions.⁹

Nevertheless, this simultaneity of multiple styles is far from unique to Herod's realm. Throughout the Mediterranean, from late Republican and Augustan Rome in the West to Commagene in the East and Alexandria in the south, we encounter buildings with architectural layouts and decorations that were defined by various scholars as cases of hybrid styles or eclecticism¹⁰ and recently and more precisely by Miguel John Versluys as bricolage. In his recent book on Commagene, in which its most famous site – Nemrud Dağ – presents one of the clearest cases of coexistence of several traditions in local art and architecture, Versluys describes the Antiochan style of Commagene as “a juxtaposition and blending of discrete elements suggestive of different cultural traditions within a single, new style as the result of a conscious appropriation.”¹¹ This definition suits the Herodian style of architecture very well, too. Herod's building program, like that of Antiochus I, mostly draws from an existing repertoire of elements and its uniqueness lies in the specific choices of elements and the original way in which these elements are combined and recomposed (see below).

It should be remembered, however, that more than two trends or fashions played a significant role in the design of Herod's architecture and art, and that some of the elements that comprise Herod's building program go beyond Hellenistic and Roman models. Hasmonaean antecedents, local and eastern traditions, as well as Herod's own personal taste and preferences, clearly had a substantial impact on his construction

8 See: Foerster 1995; Foerster 1996. Thus, for example, the Corinthian capitals from Masada find their closest parallels in Italy, while the blocked-out friezes are characteristic of the Hellenistic architecture of the Aegean. Other features of the architectural decoration in Masada find their closest parallels in Nabataean sites. This complex picture of coexistence of several cultural traditions corresponds well with Foerster's study on the wall paintings and mosaic floors found at the site; Both multi-color Hellenistic style mosaic floors and monochrome over-all design Roman floors appear at Masada. The wall decorations adorning its buildings mainly conform to the second Pompeian Style, but with many cases of incorporation of orthostat panels painted with imitation of alabaster, that are typical of Alexandrian wall decorations. See also Rozenberg 2008, 283–424.

9 Foerster 1993, 61. Nielsen 1994, 181–208 also acknowledges a combination of Hellenistic and Roman influences on the architectural design of Herod's palaces. Nevertheless, she maintains that Roman influence becomes more dominant with time.

10 E. g., Colledge 1987, 14; Freyberger 1998; Kopsacheili 2011.

11 Versluys 2017, 206.

projects. The buildings Herod erected serve as a reflection of the many faces of the King himself – a Jewish king of Idumean (on his father side) and Nabatean (on his mother side) descent, ruling under the patronage of Rome over a heterogeneous population that included both Jews and non-Jews, in a region that had been dominated by great Hellenistic monarchs up until then. This paper seeks to demonstrate the multi-faceted character of Herod's art and architecture, based on the site he erected and named after himself – Herodium.



Fig. 1 An aerial photograph of the site of Herodium, showing the Mountain Palace-Fortress, the structures on the NE slope, as well as Lower Herodium (© The Herodium Expedition in Memory of Ehud Netzer, The Institute of Archaeology, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem; Photo: Tatspit)

In recent years, ongoing archaeological excavations at Herodium (fig. 1), led by the Hebrew University, exposed a mausoleum that was identified by the excavators as the king's final resting place¹², as well as a small theatre with a beautifully decorated royal box, including pictures with vistas and human figures, unprecedented in Herod's other construction projects.¹³ These two finds, along with other new discoveries at Herodi-

¹² Netzer et al. 2010; Porat et al. 2015a.

¹³ Rozenberg 2014; Rozenberg 2017.

um,¹⁴ have led to a drastic change in our understanding of the site, in particular, and Herod's architecture in general. The many changes to the plan of the complex¹⁵ clearly reflect Herod's own personal choice and attest to his state of mind during the latest years of his reign, which are so vividly described in dark colours by Josephus.

The Many Faces of King Herod

Several archaeologists and historians, including Duane Roller, Yoram Tsafrir, Lee I. Levine and Kathrin Gleason¹⁶, emphasize the architectural features in Herod's buildings that show a clear Roman influence and discuss how Herod's visits to Rome in 40 and 18 BCE and the buildings that he had seen there affected his constructions in Judaea. In their view, the Roman influence on Herod's building program went beyond what would suffice to satisfy his Roman patrons. Namely, Herod used his construction projects to manifest his close connection with Augustus and Rome, not just in direct ways, such as the establishment of temples to the emperor-cult in Samaria\Sebaste¹⁷, Caesarea Maritima¹⁸, and Paneion¹⁹, or the naming of cities, buildings or parts of buildings after the emperor or other members of the Imperial family²⁰, but also in several indirect ways, by introducing specifically Roman types of buildings and Roman forms of decoration into his kingdom. For example, in many of his buildings, construction techniques that are explicitly Roman are utilized, the most prominent example being the use of *opus reticulatum* in Jericho, Jerusalem, and Paneion.²¹ Use of genuine Roman materials is also well-attested, such as *pozzolana* for hydraulic concrete used in the construction of the harbour of Caesarea Maritima²², or the cinnabar – apparently

14 In particular, the finding of a winery inside the mountain palace-fortress and a 16 m-high-corridor leading into that palace that was eventually filled and sealed and not put into use (see below).

15 Porat et al. 2016.

16 Levine 1980, 54; Roller 1998, 90–117; Tsafrir 2003, 93–104. Gleason 1996, for example focuses on the close link between Herod's palace in Caesarea Maritima and the buildings for mass entertainment at the site. She suggests that the complex erected in the campus Martius by Pompey that included his famous theater, as well as his own residence had inspired Herod, as well as the linkage between Augustus' house on the palatine and the Circus Maximus at its foot.

17 Jos. BI 1,403; Jos. Ant. Iud. 15,296–298; Reisner et al. 1924, 46–50. 170–180; Crowfoot et al. 1942, 123–135; Netzer 2006, 85–89.

18 Jos. BI 1,414; Jos. Ant. Iud. 15,339; Kahn 1996; Netzer 2006, 103–106; Holum 2015.

19 Jos. BI 1,404–406; Jos. Ant. Iud. 15,363–364. There are three different identifications for the location of this temple, see Netzer 2006, 218–222; Overman – Schowalter 2011; Berlin 2015.

20 E. g., the Antonia citadel named after Marc Antony, Caesarea (and its harbor Sebastos) and Sebaste named after Augustus, Livias after Livia, Agrippias after Marcus Agrippa, a lighthouse at the Caesarea's harbor was named after Drusus, and so forth (Lichtenberger 2009, 45–47).

21 Netzer 2006, 314–315. There is also a small patch of an *opus reticulatum* wall that is preserved in Caesarea Maritima's promontory palace, but probably post-Herodian in date (Lichtenberger 2009, 50 n. 38)

22 Hohfelder et al. 2007; Votruba 2007.

originating from the Imperial mercury mines in Spain – that was used as red pigment for the wall decorations of his third palace in Jericho.²³ Herod introduced new forms of buildings into Judaea that had no antecedents in this region, such as Roman theatres²⁴ and Roman bathhouses.²⁵ He also made extensive use of domes and vaults in his constructions, in a scale unprecedented in Judaea. The king introduced new forms of decoration into local architecture, which are explicitly Roman, such as *opus sectile* floors²⁶, Pompeian style wall decoration²⁷, modillion cornices²⁸, and stucco ceilings in the ‘coffer style’²⁹, providing some of the first examples of such Roman traits in the East.

Scholars’ opinions differ with regard to Herod’s motivation for relying so heavily on Roman forms of art and architecture. While some scholars maintain that it was just another way for Herod to manifest his political submission to Rome, Lee I. Levine argues for the king’s sincere appreciation of the Roman culture and an acknowledgment of its superiority.³⁰ Erich S. Gruen emphasizes the impact that these structures had on the local population of his kingdom as the major motivation for Herod’s vast building activity. The gleaming new cities, temples, and structures carrying the names of Roman leaders advertised Herod’s links to the Emperor in the West to his subjects.³¹ A fourth possibility is that Herod was competing against his peers – contemporary client kings and major Greek cities – who also went out of their way to honour Augustus by establishing festivals and monuments in his name. Probably, each of these four motivations played a role in Herod’s big scheme when devising his building projects.

However, not all scholars see Rome and Roman architecture as the dominant factor behind Herod’s building program. Scholars, such as Yehudit Turnheim, Achim Lichtenberger, and Kathryn Larson³² trace Hellenistic prototypes and antecedents for Herod’s buildings and decorations in Alexandria, Antioch and elsewhere in the Hellenistic realm. Lichtenberger suggests that when Herod chose to use explicitly Roman

23 Rozenberg 2008, 263–267.

24 Netzer 2006, 277–281; Weiss 2014, 11–55.

25 Netzer 1999; 2006, 255–258.

26 Snyder – Avraham 2013.

27 Rozenberg 2013.

28 E. g., Peleg-Barkat – Chachy 2015, 326–330. This type of cornice does not appear in Judaea prior to Herod’s reign, but becomes very common and popular immediately after it was introduced into Judaea in Herod’s construction projects.

29 Peleg – Rozenberg 2008, 497–514.

30 Levine 1987, 4.

31 Gruen 2016, 387.

32 Turnheim 1998; Lichtenberger 2009. See also criticism on Roller’s emphasis on Roman models for Herod’s building projects in Burrell – Netzer 1999. Larson 2011 replies to Gleason 1996 and shows that the linkage between the king’s palace complex and structures for mass entertainment and sports, such as theaters and hippodromes, had already existed in Hellenistic cities, such as Alexandria, Antioch and Vergina. Therefore, these Hellenistic cities could have more easily served as a source of inspiration for a similar relation that Herod’s architects devised in Caesarea Maritima, as is reflected in the city plan.

materials, building methods, and forms of art and architecture, it was not due to their Roman character, but because of their high quality, expense, and because they were trendy. His ability to acquire such luxuries is interpreted by him, therefore, as an expression of his Hellenistic-style royalty. Or in the words of Lichtenberger: “[...]Romanization in Herod’s kingdom was not a goal of Herodian policy, but the result of Herod’s claim to be a Hellenistic king.”³³

But, as Miguel John Versluys has rightly put it in his book on Commagene, with regard to another client king under Augustus, Juba II, presenting oneself as a Hellenistic king, while at the same time displaying great loyalty to Augustus and Rome, was not perceived as an inconsistency at the time.³⁴ Namely, Herod could present himself simultaneously as both an independent Hellenistic king, although he was not, and as a Roman client king, which he clearly was, and in this respect, he was not different from any other client king of the early Empire.³⁵

Nevertheless, Herod’s art and architecture are more complex and contain much more than a combination of Roman and Hellenistic models and forms (that sometimes appear juxtaposed and sometimes intermingled).³⁶ At least four more aspects of Herod’s character and identity have substantially influenced the choices he made while devising his building program. Without getting into the question of how Herod perceived his own Jewishness³⁷, Herod was surely a king who ruled over a kingdom with a prominent Jewish population. Jewish norms and traditions have influenced many aspects of his constructions, such as his enormous investment in the rebuilding of the Temple and the enlargement of the Temple Mount compound³⁸, his avoidance of building pagan temples within the boundaries of his kingdom, other than the temples to the ruler-cult of Augustus, as well as his general avoidance of figural depictions

33 Lichtenberger 2009, 43.

34 Versluys 2017, 155.

35 A similar approach exists in Adam Kolman Marshak’s well-written book *The Many Faces of Herod the Great* (Marshak 2015), which discusses Herod as being simultaneously a client king under Marc Antony and Augustus and a Hellenistic king (as well as a successor to the Hasmonaeans and king of the Jews).

36 An example for this can be seen in the mosaic floors that decorated Herod’s palaces; the palaces were decorated by both Hellenistic style mosaics with a central colourful decorative motif surrounded by various borders, and monochrome mosaics with an overall pattern according to the prevailing Italian fashion. Then again, some mosaics show a unique combination of the Hellenistic *emblema*-type design with a monochrome Roman style repetitive pattern in the *emblema* (central panel; Rozenberg 2013, 204–209).

37 See, for example, Kokkinos 1998, 86–139 and Fuks 2002, who portray Herod as a pragmatic Hellenized king, who was ready to break the Jewish law to achieve his goals, versus Regev 2010, who claims that despite being an enthusiast agent of the Greco-Roman culture, Herod maintained his native Jewish identity.

38 Jos. BI 1,401; Jos. Ant. Iud. 15,380; Netzer 2006, 137–178.

in the decoration of his palaces, in accordance with the second commandment.³⁹ The transformation of the *frigidaria* pools in the Roman-type bathhouses that he incorporated in his palaces into ritual baths is particularly telling and presents another example of the creative combinations in Herodian architecture.⁴⁰

Nevertheless, it was already the Hasmonean kings, Herod's predecessors, who integrated Greek bath complexes into their palaces, as can be seen in their winter palaces in Jericho. They also preceded him, in that they had already incorporated ritual baths, alongside the Greek-style bathing facilities, into the private wings of their palaces.⁴¹ Herod was following the Hasmonean kings' example in many other ways, as well. He continued to use the winter palaces in Jericho, as well as the desert fortress palaces along the eastern border of his kingdom, adding to them and elaborating them.⁴² In a similar fashion to his Hasmonaean predecessors, he enthusiastically incorporated swimming pools and gardens in all of his palaces and constructed elaborate aqueducts to bring fresh water to fill up the pools, and to water the gardens at these sites.⁴³ Therefore, despite rivalry and enmity between Herod and the Hasmonaean kings, Herod was clearly influenced by the Hasmonaean model of royalty and made an effort to present himself as a legitimate successor of the Hasmonaean kings, at least in his early career.⁴⁴

Herod perhaps suppressed his Idumaeian descent, as we learn from Josephus, who cites Nicolaus of Damascus, Herod's court historian, claiming that Herod's father comes from a respectable family of Jews that returned to Judaea from the Babylonian exile.⁴⁵ However, his Idumaeian descent may have also played an important role, as Yitzhak Magen and Achim Lichtenberger have suggested.⁴⁶ They have claimed that Herod's Idumaeian background led him to construct the two ritual complexes, comparable to the Jerusalem Temple Mount, one on top of the cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron and the other at Mamre, both at the heart of the former Idumaeian territory, and perhaps meant for an Idumaeian audience. It has also been suggested that the site of Drousiyas, mentioned by the second century CE geographer Ptolemy and identified with Horvat Midras/Khirbet Durusiya in the Judaeian Foothills, also in the former territory of Idumaea, was re-established by Herod and named after Augustus' adopted

39 On the Jewish avoidance from depicting human figures in the Second Temple Period, from the days of the Hasmonaean kings onward, see Levine 2005; Tsafirir 2015.

40 Reich 2013, 248–249.

41 Netzer 2001, 35–43, 157–162, 170–171; Bar-Nathan – Peleg-Barkat 2019.

42 Netzer 2006, 202–217.

43 On the use of swimming pools by the Hasmonaean kings and Herod see Netzer 1985; on the Hasmonaean and Herodian gardens in Jericho, see Gleason – Bar-Nathan 2013.

44 On the relationship of Herod and the Hasmonaean kings, see for example Marshak 2014, 110–136, who also refers to the reliance of Herod in some of his coin on Hasmonaean precedents.

45 Jos. Ant. Iud. 14,8–9.

46 Lichtenberger 2007; Magen 2008.

son, Nero Claudius Drusus⁴⁷, since his family came from the rural area of Idumaea and perhaps from this site itself.⁴⁸

Lastly, but perhaps most importantly, it was the late Ehud Netzer, the most prominent scholar of Herodian architecture, who stressed the important part that Herod's own personality and interest in architecture played in shaping the king's construction program.⁴⁹ He claimed that, although Herod's architectural designs are based on Hasmonean and Hellenistic tradition and present a strong Roman influence, they are in their essence original creations that stemmed from his comprehensive sense of design and planning combined with his practical and economic approach. Herod's marks are seen, according to Netzer, in the choice of dramatic locations for his palaces, the combination of several functions in one site or building, and the shaping of the landscape by using artificial mounds and massive rock cuts. These unique characteristics, shared by many of Herod's construction projects, attest in Netzer's view to the fact that Herod actively partook in the planning and designing of his architectural endeavours.

This intricate web of considerations, motivations, and sources of inspiration turns Herodian art and architecture into what they are: a complex bricolage, which is very difficult to define. One remarkable example of this amalgam of sources of influence is the plan of Herod's complex for mass entertainment, excavated by Netzer in Jericho, which combines a theatre with a gymnasium and an enormous peristyle *palaestra*, which was meant for horse races or perhaps served as a large garden.⁵⁰ No wonder that Josephus is not sure how to call this complex and gives it different definitions – a hippodrome⁵¹ and an amphitheatre.⁵² The fact that building types and forms of decoration were not yet standardized gave the architects and artists that worked under Herod a greater variety to choose from and the freedom to make new and original combinations.

Herodium

Herodium is especially important for the discussion of Herodian art and architecture in the context of Commagene and the late-Hellenistic world because of several reasons. Firstly, it held special significance in the eyes of Herod. This was the place where his mother's carriage turned over when they were fleeing the Parthians and their Has-

47 Lichtenberger 2009, 47; Zissu et al. 2016, 15–16.

48 Shatzman 2013. Unfortunately, excavations at the site by the author of this article haven't shown so far remains that could be related to the generation of Herod's parents or grandparents.

49 Netzer 1981; Netzer 2006, 295–300. Lee I. Levine objects to Netzer's view and claims there is no historical record to support the assumption that Herod took an active part in the design of his building projects, which are all local versions of Hellenistic and Roman buildings (Levine 1980, 54).

50 Netzer – Laurys-Chachy 2004, 195–225; Netzer 2006, 72–80.

51 Jos. Ant. Iud. 17,174–178.

52 Jos. BI 1,654. 666; Jos. Ant. Iud. 17,161. 194.

monaean allies on the route from Jerusalem to Nabataea in 40 BCE and where Herod almost committed suicide.⁵³ Later he established a fortified palace at the site and named it after himself.⁵⁴ This palace also constituted an administrative centre and a district capital, as well as the king's burial place.⁵⁵ Secondly, since Herod turned the fortified palace into a conical shaped tumulus toward the end of his life, the site presents the closest parallel to the tumuli of Commagene in Herodian architecture.

In recent years, ongoing archaeological excavations at Herodium (fig. 2) led by Netzer and, after his tragic and premature death caused by a fall at the site, by Roi Porat (together with Yakov Kalman and Rachel Chachy), exposed a mausoleum, identified by the excavators as the king's final resting place.⁵⁶ Also exposed was a small theatre with a beautifully decorated royal box, including pictures of vistas and human figures, unprecedented in Herod's other construction projects, that generally conform to the Jewish norm of abstention from depicting human figures.⁵⁷ Following these discoveries, the expedition continued exploring the upper part of the slope and the double circuit wall that surrounds the Mountain Palace Fortress. It exposed a royal winery and a 16m high ashlar-built corridor, meant to allow entrance into the fortified palace through the artificial fills that created the tumulus-shape of the hill, but it was never put into use.⁵⁸

Herod's Final Resting Place at Herodium

Maybe more than any other type of structure, the funerary monuments of ancient rulers reflect how they wanted to be remembered by posterity, and the example of the burial tumulus of Antiochus I of Commagene at Nemrud Dağ as a site, which simultaneously served as his burial place and a central religious centre, is especially telling. No wonder, therefore, that Ehud Netzer was very keen on finding the burial place of king Herod that, according to Josephus, was to be sought at Herodium.⁵⁹ In 2007, Netzer exposed the remains of a mausoleum on the north-eastern slope of Herodium. This mausoleum is one of the most impressive funerary monuments ever to be built in Judea. Despite scepticism concerning its identification as the final resting place of the king raised by Joseph Patrich, Benjamin Arubas and others⁶⁰, the Hebrew Univer-

53 Jos. BI 1,265.

54 Jos. BI 1,419–421; Jos. Ant. Iud. 15,322–325.

55 Netzer 1981; Netzer 2006, 179–201; Porat et al. 2015a.

56 Netzer et al. 2010; Porat et al. 2015a.

57 Netzer et al. 2010; Netzer 2013; Rozenberg 2014; Rozenberg 2017.

58 Porat et al. 2016.

59 Jos. BI 1,670–673; Jos. Ant. Iud. 17,196–199.

60 Jacobson 2007; Patrich –Arubas 2015. Joseph Patrich and Benjamin Arubas's main arguments against the identification of the mausoleum with Herod's burial place are: 1. Its moderate dimen-

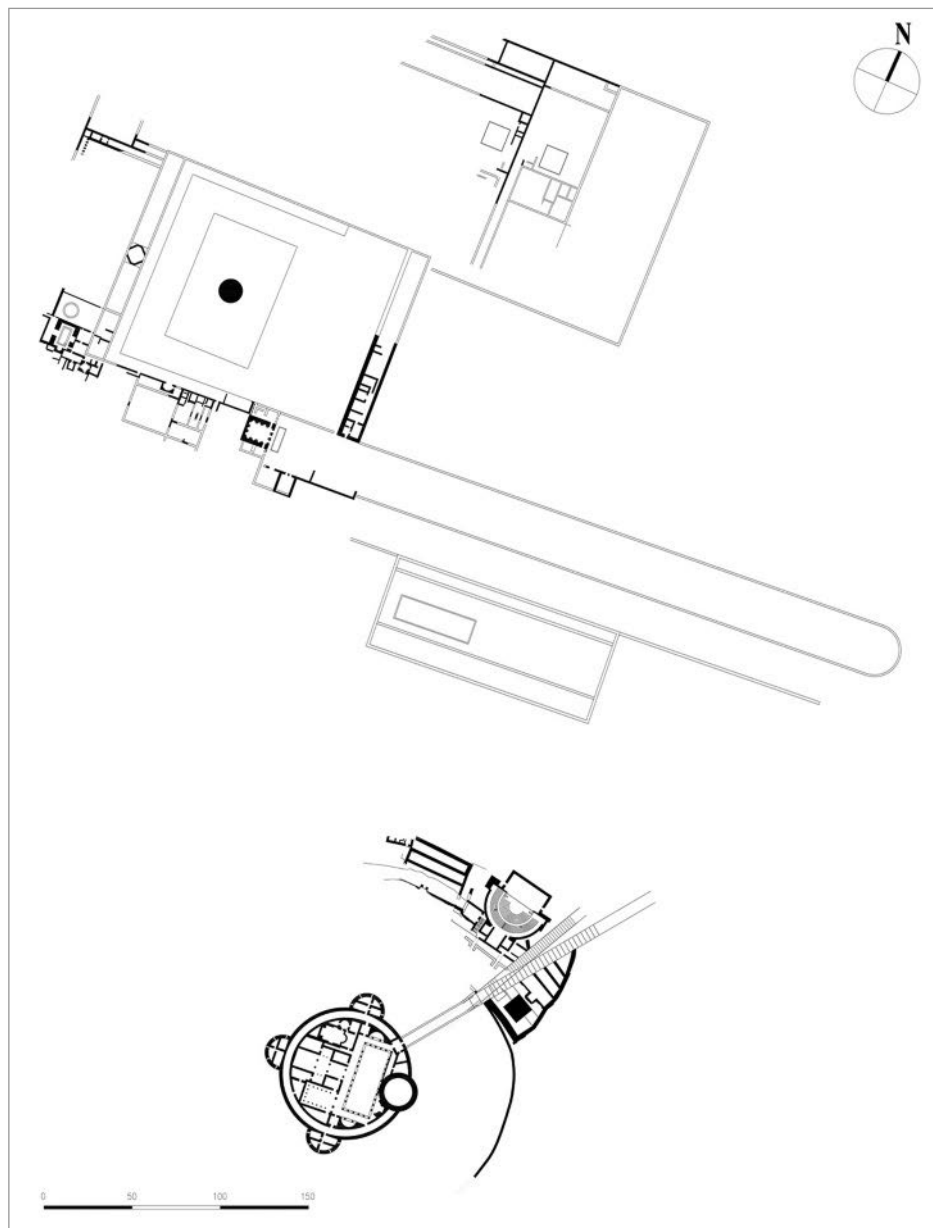


Fig. 2 General plan of the Herodian Structures at Herodium (© The Herodium Expedition in Memory of Ehud Netzer, The Institute of Archaeology, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem; Drawing: M. Edelcopp)

sity expedition is of the opinion that its size and decoration befit a tomb for a king.⁶¹ Enough has survived to allow a reconstruction of a three-storey monument that attained a height of almost 25 m. The reconstruction proposal, a result of a meticulous study by Rachel Chachy (fig. 3), the architect of the expedition, presents a three-storeyed structure with a concave conical roof.⁶² On top of the partially preserved *in situ* podium that contained the bottom room, a square structure was built, decorated with Doric pilasters bearing a Doric frieze, and containing another room. A tholos encircled by 18 Ionic monolithic columns was built above this and was covered by a conical roof surrounded by six urns, with a supplementary urn on top of a Corinthian capital that crowned the entire structure.⁶³

The tomb at Herodium belongs to a rather large group of freestanding burial structures and commemorative monuments comprising an aedicule on top of a podium, dating back to the Hellenistic and Roman periods.⁶⁴ These tombs consist of a high podium supporting at least one storey. The upper storey can be either in the shape of a *naiskos*, a prostyle niche, or a round pavilion, namely a tholos, as is the case at Herodium. Tombs of this type seem to have made their appearance in Judea during the Hasmonean period. The tomb of the royal priestly family, erected by Simon the Maccabee (143–134 BCE) at Modi'in, has not survived, but according to its description in the book of Maccabees

sion; 2. The absence of an appropriate gateway to the burial ground, and an adequate assembly space around the tomb; 3. The stairway leading up to the palace-fortress on the hilltop leaves the mausoleum 'in its shade', being also overlaid on top of the single irrigation pool that served the small garden that had surrounded the tomb; 4. The absence of any correspondence between the axis of symmetry of the mausoleum, and that of Greater Herodium, indicating that these two were entirely different building projects. Although some of these arguments are appealing, others are based on subjective modern expectations of Herod concerning his burial place and do not take into consideration that the mausoleum was only one component of the memorial devised by Herod (see below).

61 Another argument in favour of the identification of the mausoleum as Herod's final resting place is the fact that it was intentionally destroyed towards the end of the First Revolt (around 69 CE), at the time when Simon bar Giora's rebel faction was active in the area, replacing the former faction of Idumaeans rebels, who overrun the hill-top palace-fortress beforehand. The excavators conclude that the Idumaeans apparently did not want to harm the mausoleum of Herod who was also of Idumaean decent (Porat et al. 2015b).

62 Chachy 2015.

63 Peleg-Barkat – Chachy 2015.

64 Tombs with an aedicule of sorts on top of a podium include the most famous funerary monuments dating from the Hellenistic period up to the third century CE, and are found in France, Germany, Switzerland, Sicily, Greece, Croatia, Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Algiers, and Tunisia. They are especially common in Italian cities such as Pompeii, Sarsina and Aquileia, during late Republic and early Imperial times. Thus, for example, of the c. 100 tombs known today at Pompeii, about 25 are of this type, all dated from the 60s of the first century BCE to the first decades of the Principate (Nagel 2007, 23–26). The antecedents for this type of tomb should be sought in the *heroa* of the fourth and third centuries BCE in Asia Minor, that exhibit a combination of strong influences from Persian Lycia and Greek architectural forms, a compromise between a tower and a *naiskos*. One of the earliest examples of this type is the so-called 'Nereid Monument' built for Erbinna, ruler of Lycian Xanthos, in c. 390–380 BCE (Coupel – Demargne 1969; Fedak 1990, 66–68).

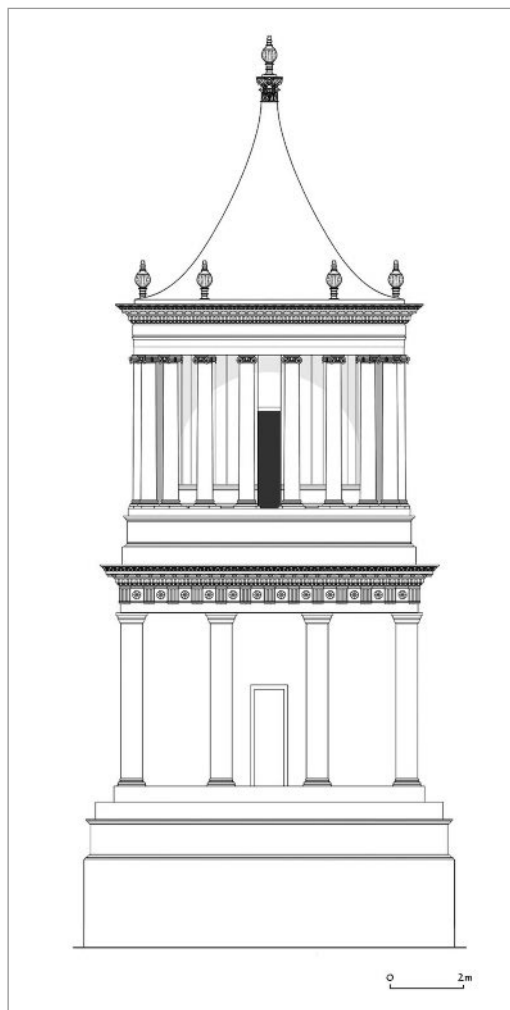


Fig. 3 Reconstructed elevation of the mausoleum at Herodium (© The Herodium Expedition in Memory of Ehud Netzer, The Institute of Archaeology, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem; Drawing: R. Chachy)

and Josephus, it was high enough to be seen from afar (namely, it was probably built on top of a podium) and was decorated with large columns and trophies.⁶⁵ In contrast to funerary monuments of the *naiskos* or prostyle niche type, those with a tholos on top

⁶⁵ 1 Macc 13,27–30; Jos. Ant. Iud. 13,211–212. For discussions on the royal Hasmonean tomb at Modi'in, see Kon 1971, 53; Fedak 1990, 148; Fine 2002.

of a podium were rare in the Hellenistic period (one example dated to the early third century BCE is documented in Marsala in Sicily).⁶⁶ This type of monument became very popular in the late Republican and Augustan periods, and examples are abundant mainly in Italy and Gaul.⁶⁷ We find similar monuments in Asia Minor, for example at Pergamon and near Ephesus, but only in the second century CE. As we know of no antecedent in Judaea or in the other eastern provinces, it seems rather clear that the inspiration for the construction of this mausoleum came from Rome. Nevertheless, several Hellenistic traits are discernible, such as the use of Ionic, rather than Corinthian, columns for the tholos' *peripteros* and the choice of a two-fascia architrave.⁶⁸

When King Herod or his architects chose this type of funerary monument for the mausoleum – be it Herod's own mausoleum or one meant for his family members – they were probably interested in an up-to-date monument that would be both elegant and remarkable. In this case, as in many others, Herod expressed his innovativeness and introduced a type of funerary monument into Judaea that was in widespread use in Italy, but was unknown in Judaea until then. The architects of the mausoleum chose not to imitate, but to adapt the Roman prototype to the local taste. Thus, for example, the style of carving and the details of the decoration reveal local workmanship and local taste, manifested in the choice of modillion cornices on both stories, as well as in the carving style of the rosettes and acanthus leaves of the crowning Corinthian capital. It seems that the Hasmonaean heritage was also taken into consideration. Besides the famous family tomb in Modi'in, mentioned above, Josephus mentions funerary monuments erected by the Hasmonaean kings in their desert fortress palaces, especially at Alexandrion.⁶⁹ Therefore, the monument presents a synthesis of Roman, Hellenistic, and local traditions and fashions.

66 Di Stefano 1974, 162–171.

67 E. g., a funerary *tholos* at Sestino (in Tuscany) dated to the third quarter of the first century BCE (Verzar 1974, fig. I,1–3. II,4–6), a late Republic funerary monument on the Via Appia in Rome (von Sydow 1977, 241–321), a tomb with a frieze of arms near ancient Pula (Croatia), a funerary monument at Aquileia, the monument of the Julii at St. Remy (ancient Glanum), all dated to the reign of Augustus, as well as similarly dated tombs from Porta Marina at Ostia and Pompeii (Gros 2001, figs. 474. 478–480. 487–488).

68 Peleg-Barkat – Chachy 2015.

69 So far unidentified: Jos. Ant. Iud. 16,394.

The Theatre and Its Royal Box

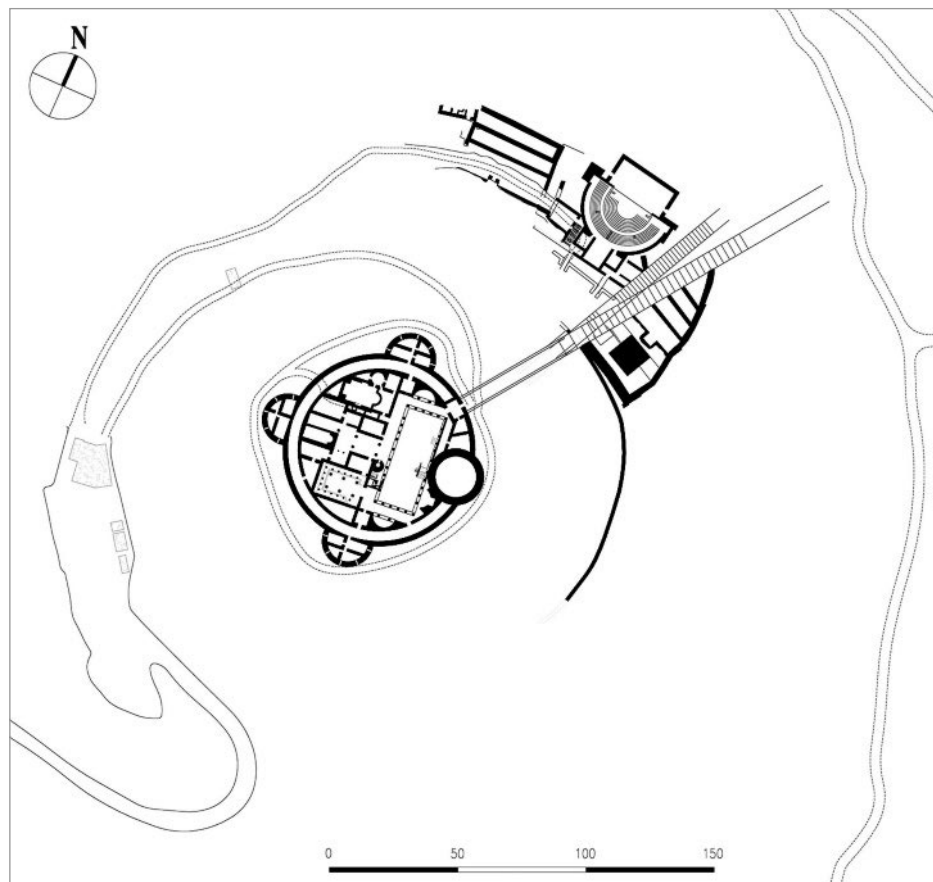


Fig. 4 Plan showing the Mountain Palace-Fortress and the structures on the NE slop
 (© The Herodium Expedition in Memory of Ehud Netzer, The Institute of Archaeology,
 The Hebrew University of Jerusalem; Drawing: M. Edelcopp)

In 2008, the Herodium expedition discovered a small theatre with an elaborately decorated reception area above the *summa cavea* on the slopes of the Mountain-Palace Fortress (fig. 4).⁷⁰ As opposed to the nearby mausoleum, the theatre and its reception area were covered in debris when Herod, in the latter part of his life, decided to cover the

⁷⁰ The reception area includes a 7 by 8 m wide decorated hall at the back of the *summa cavea*, overlooking the stage area of the theatre and flanked by two smaller rooms. See Netzer et al. 2010, 84–108; Netzer et al. 2013, 126–161.



Fig. 5 The Royal Box on top of the theatre of Herodium, general view
(© The Herodium Expedition in Memory of Ehud Netzer, The Institute of Archaeology,
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem; Photo: T. Rogovski)

entire hill with a massive fill, constructing the artificial conical mount.⁷¹ The still standing main room of the reception area was lavishly decorated with subtly executed stuccowork, brightly coloured walls and framed pictures on the upper part of the wall, between decorated Corinthian pilasters (fig. 5). The pictures, not yet attested in Herod's kingdom, contained Nilotic landscapes with vegetation, architecture, ships bearing armed men, animals such as goats, dogs, crocodiles, bulls and even a faun (fig. 6).⁷² The discovery of these framed pictures or *pinakes*,⁷³ as they are usually called, opened up a new chapter in the research of Herodian art, its connections with the surrounding world, and our understanding of the development of art in the region at large. Different scholars related the framed pictures to sacro-idyllic⁷⁴, historiographic⁷⁵ and mytho-

71 Upon the construction of this fill, the reception area of the theatre was partly demolished. The walls that would protrude the new artificial slope were torn down and were left collapsed. In the excavations over 50,000 scattered fragments of wall decoration were found from these walls. The wall decorations of the reception area are currently being studied by Naama Sharabi of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, as part of her PhD dissertation.

72 For discussion on these paintings and photographs, see Rozenberg 2013, 174–189.

73 The *pinakes* are painted boards that were given as votives to temples or hung in mortuary contexts. In Roman paintings they sometimes appear illusionistically painted as either hung in the wall or stand upon supports. They appear for example in the Villa Imperiale at Pompeii (Posautz 1997, 67–68; Pappalardo 2008, 122–131).

74 Rozenberg 2013; Rozenberg 2014.

75 Specifically, identifying the maritime battle scene discovered in pieces inside the room with the Battle of Actium. See Kahanov et al. 2015; Rozenbeg 2017.

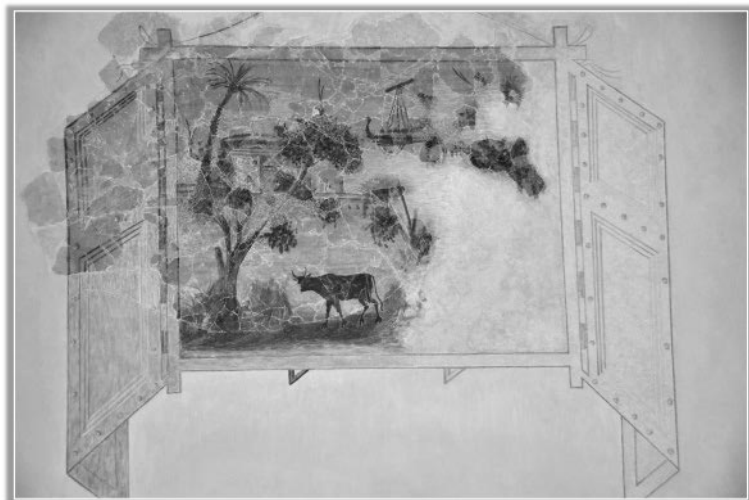


Fig. 6 'Hanging picture' with a sacred landscape restored from fallen fragments, Herodium, Royal Room, 20–15 BCE, plaster, pigments, H. 78 cm, W. 89.5 cm, D. 1.5 cm
(© The Israel Museum, Jerusalem; Photo: M. Suchowolski)

logical scenes.⁷⁶ Silvia Rozenberg cautiously proposed that the reception area at the theatre was decorated as part of the preparations made before Marcus Agrippa's visit in 15 BCE and that the motifs used allude to Herod's affiliation with Augustus and Agrippa by depicting battleships (fig. 7) and Nilotic motifs, which were meant to commemorate their victory over Marcus Antonius and Cleopatra in the battle of Actium in 31 BCE.⁷⁷ Based on technical and stylistic comparisons of the paintings and stuccowork, Rozenberg has even suggested that the paintings were realized by traveling artists from Alexandria, experienced in figurative art and unemployed after Cleopatra's fall.⁷⁸ If Rozenberg's claim is true, this is a radical example of the extent to which the king was willing to go in order to show his loyalty to and admiration for his Roman patrons.

76 Asher Ovadiah (2013) suggested that the banquet scene that appears on another large fragment found in the debris should be interpreted as depicting the drinking contest between Dionysus and Herakles. In another article, he contends together with Yehudit Turnheim, that the pastoral scene in one of the paintings on one of the walls of the still standing reception room is an image of Elysium and should be interpreted in light of the nearby Mausoleum (Ovadiah –Turnheim 2013).

77 Rozenberg 2014, 374–375; Kahanov et al. 2015, 269. It should be mentioned that originally the walls of the royal box were started to be decorated with painted orthostats of the second Pompeian style using the fresco technique. At some point the decision was made to change the decorative plan of the room and the new scheme was conducted in the *secco* technique and seems to have been executed rather quickly.

78 Kahanov et al. 2015, 269; Rozenberg 2017, 229–236.



Fig. 7 Large wall painting fragment depicting part of a nautical scene featuring battleships, still attached to an ashlar, Herodium, Royal Room, 20–15 BCE, plaster, pigments, H. 41.8 cm, W. 51 cm, D. of ashlar, 38 cm, D. of painting 0.2 cm (© The Israel Museum, Jerusalem; Photo: M. Suchowolski)

He was willing to break from his normal adherence to the prevalent abstention from human depictions to please his prominent guest, Marcus Agrippa.

The architectural layout of the theatre with its reception area also raises questions about sources of inspiration and cultural influence. Similar royal boxes in theatres are not very common and most of the examples come from Italian villas.⁷⁹ One parallel is especially interesting, though its date is uncertain. It comes from Publius Vedius Pollio's villa in Pausylipon, near Naples.⁸⁰ Pollio apparently had some connections with Herod, as attested by the two private shipments of his imported wine from Chios that were found in Herod's palaces at Herodium, Masada, Caesarea, and Samaria.⁸¹ It may

79 For discussion and comparanda, see Bar-Nathan – Gärtner 2015, 48–53; Ehud Netzer has proposed to reconstruct a similar room above the *summa cavea* for the hippodrome at Jericho (Netzer – Lauryes Chachy 2004, fig. 260).

80 Günther 1913, 41–47. The box at the top of the odeum at the villa share the same dimensions (7 × 8 m) with the Royal box at Herodium (Sear 2006, 130). It should be mentioned, though, that the villa, together with the rest of Pollio's assets, was bequeathed to Augustus and became Imperial property. According to Sear, the various construction techniques that are discernable in the walls of the theatre (*opus cementicum*; *opus reticulatum*, *opus latericium*) reflect several phases of construction and renovations. He contends that the box at the top of the odeum was added only during Hadrian's reign.

81 Bar-Nathan 2006; Finkielsztejn 2006. The two large shipments of Pollio's wine to Herod allude to a previous acquaintance between Herod and Pollio, that perhaps took place on the island of Rhodes in 30 BCE, after the battle of Actium (Bar-Nathan – Gärtner 2015, 45–47).



Fig. 8 The *dolia* in situ embedded into the floor of the ground floor of the northern wing of the peripheral corridor of the Mountain Palace-Fortress
(©The Herodium Expedition in Memory of Ehud Netzer, The Institute of Archaeology, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem; Photo: R. Porat)

be suggested that this is the same Pollio that Josephus mentions as the host of Herod's sons while in Rome.⁸² His acquaintance with Pollio, was perhaps one of the triggers that encouraged Herod to become a wine manufacturer himself, as is evidenced by the most recent and surprising discovery inside the double circuit wall of the Mountain Palace-Fortress of Herodium. West of the entrance room to the upper palace, a royal winery was found, including a few dozen enormous imported *dolia* embedded in the floor (fig. 8), which were meant for the storage and probably fermentation of locally manufactured wine.⁸³ These recent findings suggest that Herod's reference group, or at least one of his reference groups, did not merely consist of the other client kings or contemporary Hellenistic kings that are normally taken into consideration, when thinking about the model for Herod's actions and rule, but also the *summi viri* in Augustus court, like Publius Vedius Pollio.

82 Jos. Ant. Iud. 15,342–343. Most scholars identify the Pollio mentioned by Josephus as Gaius Asinius Pollio, a Roman Politician, who was consul in 40 BCE and was present at the ceremony, in which Herod was declared King of Judaea by Marc Antony, Octavian and the Roman Senate during that year (Schwartz 1990; Feldman 1996). However, others (Syme 1961, 30; Braund 1983; Finkielsztein 2006; Bar-Nathan – Gärtner 2015) carefully suggest that he could be identified just as well with Publius Vedius Pollio.

83 Porat et al. 2018. Each of the *dolia* could have contained c. 400 litres of wine. Their sides are very thick and they seem to have been imported, although this is yet to be determined by petrographic and chemical analysis.

The Last Years of Herod the Great – Frequent Changes of Mind

I would like to conclude this article by referring to one more important result of the recent excavations at Herodium, that perhaps reflects Herod's own personal choice more than anything else and attests to his state of mind during the latter years of his reign, which are so vividly described in dark colours by Josephus.⁸⁴

While considering the motivation behind Herod's construction projects, Netzer claimed that Herod's buildings were established out of a practical approach for a defined purpose and objected to the idea that they manifest the king's caprices and his urge to build, as suggested by other scholars.⁸⁵ Nevertheless, the results of the ongoing excavations at Herodium show that, when it concerned his final resting place, Herod was inclined to radical changes of mind. He built and then decided to discontinue the use of several elements of his palace, even when already much energy and funding had been invested in their construction. Some were not put into use, at all.

Netzer has suggested that the mausoleum was not Herod's first choice for his final resting place; a tomb estate was first created at Lower Herodium, including a processional course and a monumental building at the western end of the latter, serving as a *triclinium*, perhaps with water installations, and a ritual bath. A large group of ashlar with drafted margins and elements of a large Doric frieze, which were found in secondary use in nearby Byzantine structures, were ascribed by Netzer to the façade of this earlier tomb, the construction of which may not yet have been started.⁸⁶ The wreath that adorns one of the metopes supports Netzer's proposal, as several tombs in the necropolis of Jerusalem, and in Western Samaria, are similarly decorated. The motif that interrupts the normal sequence of rosettes or discs is, in all cases, a wreath or two wreaths flanking grape-clusters.⁸⁷

More dramatic changes of mind were evidenced during the exposure of the theatre, mentioned above, alongside storerooms and what seems to be a living quarter with bathing facilities near the mausoleum, to its west, which were put out of use and covered for the creation of the artificial mount.⁸⁸ Despite its beauty and the funding that was invested in its construction and decoration, the theatre was also eventually covered during the final stage of construction, when a decision was made to turn the entire hill into a cone-shaped mountain.

In Herod's days, two straight and wide staircases were built on the slope in two different stages (see fig. 4). The earlier one coexisted with the theatre and the other struc-

84 Jos. BI 1,552–673; Jos. Ant. Iud. 17; Netzer 2006, 14–16.

85 Netzer 1981; Netzer 2006, 306.

86 Netzer 2006, 198; Netzer et al. 2010, 107.

87 For the metope decorated with a wreath, see Peleg-Barkat 2007, fig. 231. These two motifs – the wreath and the grape-cluster – evidently gained funerary significance in early Roman Judaea. For further discussion, see Peleg-Barkat 2012, 414–416; Peleg-Barkat 2016, 36–37.

88 Netzer et al. 2010, 93–102; Netzer et al. 2013, 149–157.

tures on the slope, while the later staircase was constructed on top of the earlier one, in a slightly different orientation, at the same time of the construction of the artificial cone-shaped mountain, apparently during the king's final years. Up until recently, it was unclear where this later staircase was leading to. It was thought that the later staircase was meant to lead into an impressive corridor with a series of arches, spanning three levels in width, buttressing the corridor's thick sidewalls that supported the massive fills of the artificial mount behind them, which was also exposed by the Herodium expedition.⁸⁹ Surprisingly, the excavations that took place inside the corridor, between 2014 and 2015, have shown that this corridor had barely been used, as it had been filled soon after, or even before, its completion, and the staircase eventually continued on top of it, at a higher level.⁹⁰

The excavations of the arched corridor (fig. 9) started with stabilization and conservation works on the two sidewalls of the corridor, which were preserved to a maximum height of about 16 m, thanks to fills that covered them both on the inside and outside. Five sets of arches were built along the corridor, each with two or three arches

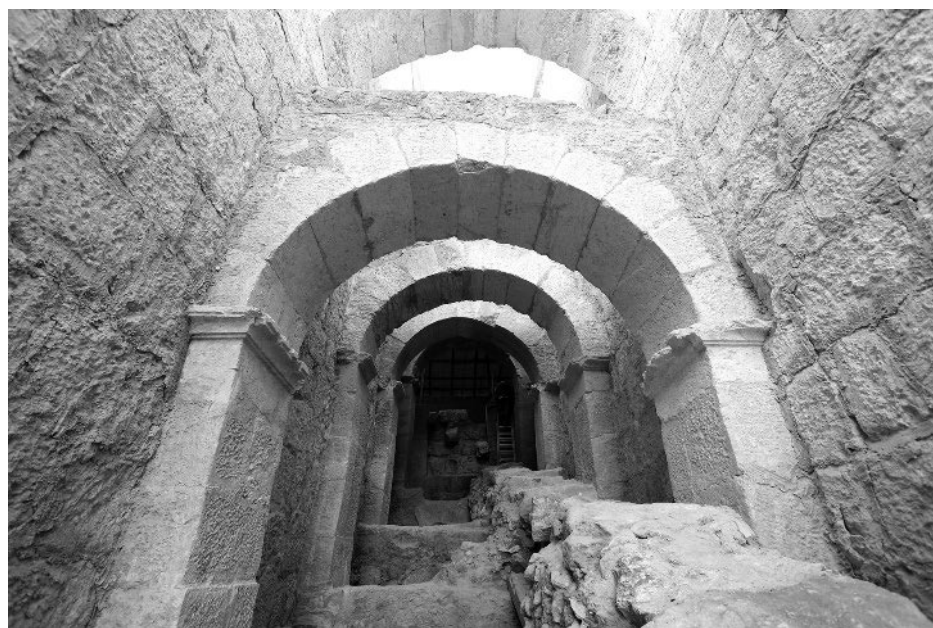


Fig. 9 The upper two series of arches of the arched corridor. On the left the drainage channel is discernible and at the back the sealing of the entrance into the entrance room of the Mountain Palace-Fortress (© The Herodium Expedition in Memory of Ehud Netzer, The Institute of Archaeology, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem; Photo: S. Tiram)

89 Netzer et al. 2010, 102–106. fig. 26; Netzer et al. 2013, 158–160.

90 Porat et al. 2016.

built, each one above the other, and two wide arches at both ends of the corridor.⁹¹ The upper level of the corridor contained a thick and massive layer of fieldstones of various sizes with no pottery sherds, and its composition is very similar to that of the fills that were laid outside the corridor, creating the artificial cone-shaped mountain. It became immediately clear that this is an intentional fill meant to block the corridor. Below the fills that blocked the corridor, a drainage channel was exposed that started off below the threshold of the southern opening of the entrance room, crossed below the room's floor, along the length of the corridor, and eventually turning westward at its northern end, apparently to fill in one of the cisterns on the mountain's slope. Clearly, this drainage channel was built when a decision was made to put the corridor out of use, and it was meant to drain the courtyard of the Mountain Palace-Fortress once the corridor was filled and sealed. Once the drainage channel was built and the corridor was filled, it was sealed at both ends.⁹²

North of the arched corridor, two massive retaining walls were found, abutting its northern wall. The two walls, together with the compact fill between them, functioned as the foundation for the continuation of the later staircase, mentioned above. The top of this foundation reached the arched corridor at a much higher level than that of its original passageway, making it clear that the later staircase was not meant to give access into the corridor, as had been anticipated, but instead it climbed on top of the corridor, after it was filled and sealed.⁹³

According to the results of the excavations, when Herod decided to turn the upper part of the slope of the Herodium hill into an artificial tumulus, the arched corridor was built, intended to allow the continuation of the palace's full functioning by giving access to the palace through the fills of the artificial mountain. In the next stage, the overall plan of turning the entire mountain into a burial memorial was set into motion. The arched corridor was sealed and blocked and the later staircase continued on top

91 The arches were designed to buttress the corridor walls against the pressure caused by the fills of the artificial mountain from outside. Their elevation was adjusted to the desired slope of the ramp inside the corridor and to the desired slope of the cone-shaped mountain on top of the walls. The middle level of the arched corridor maintained a continuous sloped line and served as the passageway level, while the lower set of arches supported a constructive fill, upon which the foundation of the passageway's floor was laid, and was founded on the bedrock. The passageway had stairs along its course, however these stairs were later removed and none was found *in situ* (Porat et al. 2016, 147–152).

92 At the northern end of the corridor a sloped terrace wall was built supporting the fills inside the corridor. The excavation showed that the northern entrance, the arch above it and northern end of the corridor walls were damaged and partly collapsed before the terrace wall sealed the entrance. Both the wide arch and the northern wall of the corridor into which the arch was incorporated were leaning sharply toward the north, as a consequence probably of a local failure in the construction of the wall (Porat et al. 2016, 152–156).

93 Porat et al. 2016, 157–158.

of it. Eventually the fills were laid on both sides of the corridor and along the entire perimeter of the hill to turn it into a tumulus or memorial mound.⁹⁴

Putting the corridor out of use seems to have been part of a new plan for the site that Herod and his architects devised at some point when the corridor's construction was almost complete. The consequences of the decision to cover the corridor were crucial; the palace was turned into a memorial that could only be reached by a ceremonial staircase at a level much higher than the original entranceway. It seems that this was the same moment when Herod decided to cover the theatre and the other structures that had been built along the slope. The only monument left standing and projecting on the slope was the mausoleum, apparently his own burial place. A royal funerary monument was thus created, comprised of an Italian style mausoleum with a tumulus most reminiscent of the Commagene tumuli (fig. 10). This presents one of the most striking examples of Herodian bricolage.

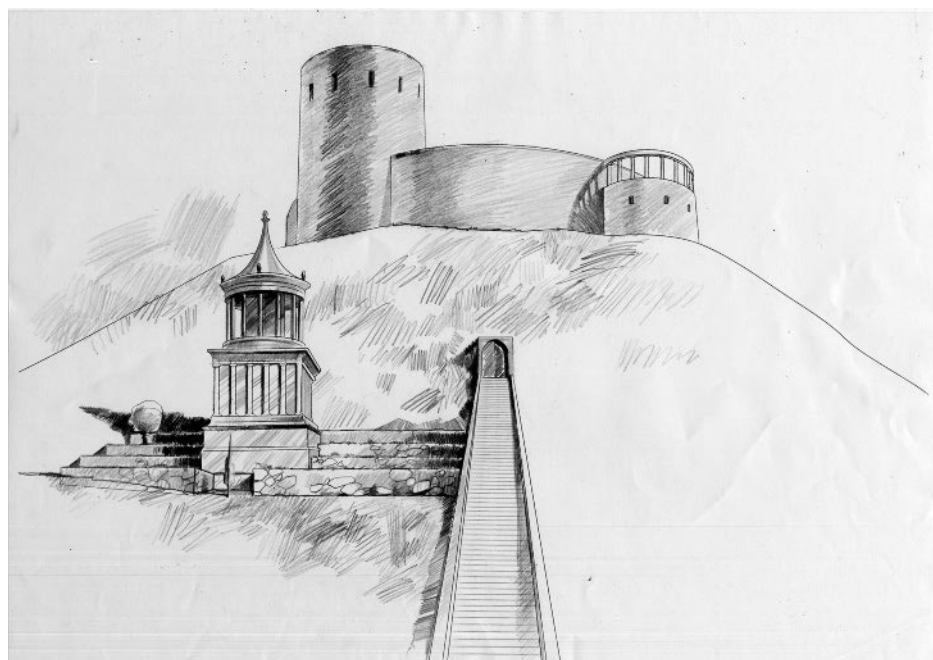


Fig. 10 A reconstruction of the final stage of constructions at Herodium, after the theatre and adjacent structures were covered by fill that created the artificial cone shape of the hill (© The Herodium Expedition in Memory of Ehud Netzer, The Institute of Archaeology, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem; Drawing: H. Cohen)

94 Porat et al. 2016, 144–145.

This sequence that shows how Herod and his architects changed their minds corresponds with his frequent changes of mind as depicted by Josephus in relation to his will. Josephus mentions seven different wills made by Herod, and he details at least four of them. In each of these wills, a different combination of sons gains Herod's inheritance.⁹⁵ Clearly, his approaching death was occupying Herod's thoughts and, unlike his usual self, he seemed to be contemplating this until he finally made up his mind concerning his burial place and his inheritance.

Luckily for us – archaeologists and art historians studying Herodian art and architecture – Herodian archaeology constantly continues to provide us with surprising, overwhelming, new findings that allow us to continue and study Herodian architecture and to see the king in a new light every time. The site of Herodium, specifically, reflects the complex picture of the reign and visual culture of this famous king more than any other site. Herodium is also the Herodian site that most resembles Nemrud Dağ in Commagene. The resemblance of the two sites is manifested not only in their tumulus shape and monumental appearance, but also in several other respects. While Herodium was the final resting place of King Herod, Nemrud Dağ was the resting place of Antiochos I. However, both kings wanted their eternal home to become a memorial for their own great achievements. Antiochos made Nemrud Dağ into a cult centre to celebrate his greatness. While this option was unavailable to Herod, he established his tomb estate in one of his greatest palaces, the palace that bore his name, and that served as a district capital and an administrative centre. Namely, it was a place that saw much traffic and many visitors. The bricolage created by these kings, therefore, pertains not only to the combination of various styles and forms in their art and architecture, but also to the unique combination of functions that they created when building their monumental funerary monuments.

95 The first will, apparently, named Alexander as sole heir to the crown (Jos. BI 1,454–458). The second will named Antipater as heir (Jos. BI 1,151; Jos. Ant. Iud. 16,86). The third will nominates Antipater as king and Alexander and Aristobulus as “subordinate kings” (Jos. BI 1,457; Jos. Ant. Iud. 16,132–135). In the fourth will Antipater is again declared as the sole heir of Herod, but Herod Philip I is named Antipater's successor (Jos. BI 1,573; Jos. Ant. Iud. 17,53). In the fifth will Herod Philip I appears no more (Jos. BI 1,599–600; Jos. Ant. Iud. 17,78). The sixth will, dated after Antipater's execution, nominates Herod Antipas as sole heir (Jos. BI 1,646; Jos. Ant. Iud. 17,146–147), while the final seventh will names Archelaus King and his brothers Antipas and Herod Philip II as tetrarchs (Jos. BI 1,664; Jos. Ant. Iud. 17,188–190). For further discussion see Hoehner 1972, 268–276; Richardson – Fisher 2018, 361–372.

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Was There a Nabataean Identity – And If Yes, How Many?

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In memoriam Jean-Marie Dentzer (1935–2020)

Introduction

Based on a very successful German bestseller from 2007¹, the seemingly strange title of this contribution accurately describes the various difficulties one has to face when dealing with the question of Nabataean identity. The subject is not new, and the issue of Nabataean *identity*, sometimes – consciously or unconsciously – merged with the question about Nabataean *ethnicity*, has already filled numerous pages.² Robert Wenning recently put forward a concise overview of some of the points dealt with here.³ He also offers some very interesting suggestions on how to continue research related to these questions, when stating that “[i]nstead of a definition of the ethnicity of the Nabataeans, it seems preferable to focus on *identity systems* (italics by the present author) of the Nabataeans. Speaking about the Nabataeans gives the illusion of a homogeneity

1 Precht 2007, going back on his turn on a quote from the movie *RobbyKallePaul* (1989) by Swiss director and actor Dani Levy.

Zbigniew T. Fiema, Laïla Nehmé, François Villeneuve, Will M. Kennedy, Piotr Bienkowski, Robert Wenning, Yvonne Gerber and Achim Lichtenberger provided important support for the completion of this contribution; they might not necessarily agree with all the elements of it, however. Will M. Kennedy further accepted the demanding task of editing the English text.

2 I do not intend to give a full bibliography here, but one has at least to mention several contributions by Michael Macdonald and Ernst Axel Knauf, who, in the 1980s and 1990s, fiercely discussed these subjects; see for instance Knauf 1986; Knauf 1989; Macdonald 1991; Macdonald 1993 and others more. For a more recent attempt see f. ex. Retsö 2003, 364–391 and *passim*. However, this contribution has to be considered with caution on more than one account, to say the least (cf. Bowersock 2004). Generally on questions about ethnicity in Antiquity see McInerney 2014; Cimadomo 2019, 9–15; see also his detailed summary about the Nabataeans Cimadomo 60–87.

3 Wenning 2017.

which does not exist”⁴ This not only offers a way out of the problematic use of the term ethnicity in general, it equally suggests that there might be *more than one* possible identity system used by the Nabataeans. To a certain extent, this also applies to the description of “groups”, as given in a recent contribution on similar questions related to early Iron Age Israel and Philistia: “It is accepted today that groups define themselves in relation to, and in contrast with, other groups. The ethnic boundaries of a group are not defined by the sum of cultural traits but by the idiosyncratic use of specific material and behavioral symbols as compared with other groups. As a consequence, emphasis shifted from the shared elements or characteristics of a group to the features that distinguish it from others. It is the **contact** (emphasis in the original text) between groups that is seen as essential for the formation of the self-identity of a group, which is thus clearly manifested in its material culture. Ethnic identity can be identified in certain artifacts that came to carry a symbolic meaning, or by identifying ‘ethnically specific behavior’, or more accurately, the material correlates of such behavior”⁵ While deducing *ethnicity* from *group identity* should be considered critically, this definition could nevertheless be used as a working tool.

Wenning’s proposal to expect several possible identity systems is helpful, as written documents clearly state that there were indeed several ‘groups’ that considered themselves as ‘Nabataean.’⁶ One of the debated questions is, how can these ‘groups’ be further defined and how did they relate to each other as well to their apparently superordinate designation as Nabataean?

What becomes further clear from the previous attempts in dealing with questions about Nabataean identity is the impression that we should approach the subject in a broad, holistic manner taking all elements of Nabataean cultural expressions into account: from writing to pottery production, from jewellery to monumental architecture and so forth. As this would extend the scope of this contribution, we shall therefore focus on only a few aspects, being fully aware that this will inevitably lead to some shortcomings. One aim is to deal with the specific importance of Petra for shaping some aspects of a cultural and social (Nabataean) identity. We will then deal with specific elements of material culture, particularly stone sculpture and pottery, in order to evaluate whether these offer clues to a Nabataean identity-building process. For such purposes, the traditional (chrono-)typological analysis of material culture is less fruitful than a spatio-temporal approach, which has been recognized by several authors in

4 Wenning 2017, 109.

5 Faust 2012, 123 with abundant references. Avraham Faust has more or less used the exact wording in several contributions from approximately 2000 onwards.

6 Macdonald 1991, 107; Macdonald 1993, 358; Wenning 2017, 115, all dealing with inscriptions mentioning people who belong to a specific tribe, the *’l rwh*, but simultaneously referring to themselves as Nabataeans. On the clearly existing Nabataean differentiation between family and tribe cf. Nehmé – Macdonald 2015; on the structure of Nabataean family and kinship relations see Qudrah – Abdelaziz 2008.

recent years as well.⁷ Exploring these questions is highly relevant to better understand the situation in Hellenistic-Roman Commagene, both from a methodological perspective and as an important contemporary parallel. Scholars have struggled to make sense of Nabataean identity in similar ways as they have debated relations between identity and material culture for Hellenistic-Roman Commagene⁸. Moreover, the Nabataeans and their kings were probably faced with comparable constraints and possibilities of identity formation as Antiochos I and his people. This contribution is meant to offer some conclusions on the Nabataean case in the hope that these can serve, by contrast or comparison, to illuminate the multiple identities of Hellenistic-Roman Commagene and its material culture.

Nabataean Sculpture

Before arguing whether and to what extent sculpture can contribute to our understanding of Nabataean identities, we must first define what Nabataean sculpture is. Does this entail only sculpture that was set up by Nabataeans, independent of find context? Or does it include all sculpture found within the Nabataean kingdom? It is clear that the paucity of information on the archaeological context of the various sculptural finds often does not allow for such distinctions. It therefore seems appropriate not to spend too much energy with considerations about the ‘Nabataeness’ of sculpture, not the least because this easily can lead to circular arguments. Unless clearly stated that it was set up by non-Nabataeans, everything found within the accepted extension of the Nabataean kingdom can be considered. The same goes for sculpture found outside the Nabataean kingdom, but was clearly set up by Nabataeans. One important distinction is a chronological one: Elements predating the Roman conquest of Nabataea should be looked at differently than elements postdating the annexation⁹, and this observation is valuable for all fields of material culture. However, in sculpture and other material categories, it is not always possible to clearly distinguish between pre- and post-annexation phases, as many finds are dated ‘around 100 CE’ etc.

Hence, potential ‘Nabataean’ sculpture is far from homogeneous. Apart from some regional particularities – the typical basalt sculptures of the Hauranitic area for example –, previous studies identified two main currents within Nabataean sculpture: A stronger Semitic one with no or only limited figural elements (fig. 1 bottom) and a stronger Mediterranean one, using figural elements similar to Greek and Roman sculpture (fig. 1 top; fig. 2). A main concern of previous research was dealing with the chro-

7 Cf. for instance Tholbecq 2017, 42–44 and *passim*.

8 See the contribution by Versluys and Riedel in this volume as well as the contributions to part I of this book more in general.

9 As correctly pointed out by Wenning 2017, 122.

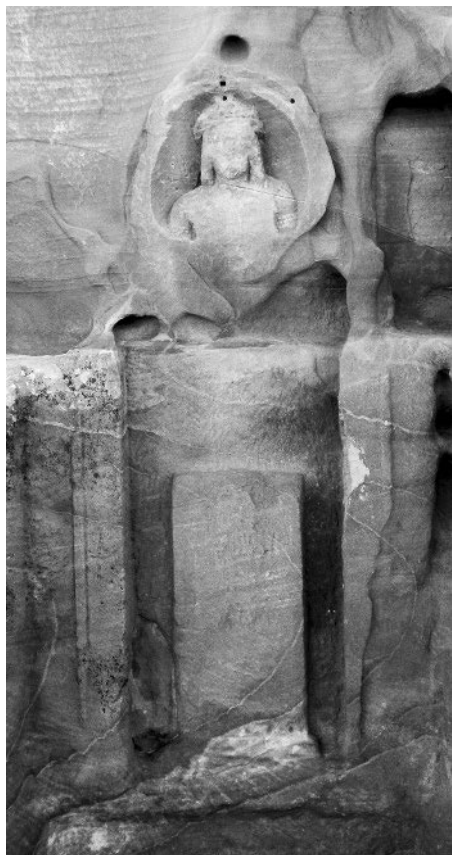


Fig. 1



Fig. 2

nology of both currents, sometimes suggesting that there might be a chronological difference between them.¹⁰

For our purpose, we shall concentrate on the spatial distribution of Nabataean sculpture. Already a very cursory look on findspots indicates that Petra and its immediate surroundings, such as Gaia (modern Wadi Mousa), Beidha and Sabra, has an unrivalled dominant position.¹¹ This is generally true and becomes even more evident when focussing on the figural representations of the Mediterranean type (fig. 1 top; fig. 2). When comparing the rock-carved tomb façades of Petra with the ones of Hegra, it is obvious that there is a huge difference in this respect. The tombs of Hegra feature almost exclusively rather stereotype eagles as acroters on doorways or in doorway

10 Wenning 1987, 294–295 and Wenning 2019 allow an interesting comparison regarding the progress over 30 years of research, also in terms of evolving approaches and research questions.

11 For a recent overview see Wenning 2019.

pediments, in rare cases lions and sphinxes, faces of Humbaba or Medusa in the doorway pediment.¹² The façades in Petra have a much wider repertoire, including busts, life-size and sometimes over-life-size anthropomorphic representations. Not only is the overall repertoire of figural representations wider, the general distribution of this repertoire over a rather large number of façades is far more extensive.¹³ These differences have been observed and discussed previously.¹⁴ Isabelle Sachet concludes that the people commanding, building and using rock-cut tombs in Petra and Hegra may not have been the same, suggesting even specific tribes as potential occupants of Hegra.¹⁵ Whatever the case, such differences in tomb decoration that possibly relate to different population groups, seem to indicate different identities as well. However, the observed differences cannot have been absolute as, at least in terms of architectural design, all elements from Hegra can be found in Petra as well. Nevertheless, specific ‘Mediterranean’ elements that are present at Petra are, for the most part, absent in Hegra.

These points are even more obvious when we consider Nabataean sculptural decoration beyond the tomb façades. Specifically, from Petra’s so-called city-centre, an important number of carved figural decoration is known, representing busts of gods, winged Nikai, weapons and more. They all clearly follow a rather direct Mediterranean, that is Greco-Roman, tradition.¹⁶ Without going into details, various findspots, sizes, technical and chronological observations indicate that these decorative elements must come from various buildings. Their strong concentration in the city-centre could indicate an exclusively public use. However, at least in some cases these elements found their way into a more private sphere as well. This is indicated by fragments of *tondi* with busts of gods, obviously adorning the main entrance of a rich Nabataean mansion on the hill of az-Zantur in Petra.¹⁷ Sculptural elements were therefore appar-

12 Jaussen – Savignac 1909, 307–441; Jaussen – Savignac 1914, Atlas pl. 36–55; McKenzie 1990, pl. 1–19; McKenzie et al. 1998; see now the seminal presentation by Nehmé 2015; especially for the figural elements cf. the contribution by J. Dentzer-Feydy, in: Nehmé 2015 1, 363–391.

13 Even if one takes into account that singular monuments with a high amount of figural decorations (e.g. the Khazne) are responsible for an important part of the statistics.

14 See e.g. Sachet 2012.

15 Sachet 2012, 250–251; on the other hand, only very few epigraphic elements clearly point to specific origins for people having built and/or being buried in rock-cut tombs in Hegra: Nehmé 2015 1, 122–123. In any case, these tombs do not show a particular architecture that would indicate anything related to their identity. The models of Sachet (a population remarkably different from that of Petra, based on tomb façades) and of Durand (2017, 96–98; cf. *infra* n. 62, important parts of population transferred from Petra, based on feasting architecture and pottery, but equally mentioning tomb-façades) are contradictory.

16 Among many other contributions, see McKenzie 1990, 41. 134–135; Schmid 2009a; Schmid 2012; Wenning 2019, all with further bibliography. Robert Wenning is preparing a complete presentation of the sculptures from Petra.

17 Kolb – Keller 2001, 314–315; only one bust is illustrated, but fragments of at least four different ones were found as indicated in the text. Unfortunately, these very important finds still remain largely unpublished.

ently used in the public as well as in the private sphere. Although difficult to prove, it is an attractive hypothesis that some of these elements may even represent portraits of members of the Nabataean royal family. Of particular interest is the ‘Dionysian hall’, a spectacular luxurious building at Beidha, in the northern outskirts of Petra.¹⁸ The specific function of the building as well as its status – public or private – is not exactly known. A certain connection with the official representation of Nabataean royal power can be deduced by the existence of elephant-headed capitals, very similar to the ones from the so-called Great Temple in the city-centre of Petra.¹⁹ The main rooms of the building were decorated with Corinthian type capitals and one series of them shows small human heads in the place of the central flower.²⁰ In some cases, these heads present strong ‘individual’ characteristics, allowing to hypothetically propose an identification as portraits of the royal family.²¹ Interestingly, as for the busts of deities in *tondi* as well, such capitals seem not to be restricted to (semi-)official buildings, but found their way into the private sphere as well.²² Pushing the interpretation of such sculpted elements even further, one could suggest similar aspects of royal portraiture for a series of limestone busts found during the excavation of the so-called Great Temple and in its immediate environs.²³ As far as the upper part of the sculptures is preserved, all of them show rectangular ‘openings’ at the place of the face (fig. 3). While this is acknowledged in the various publications related to these busts, this is rarely discussed or explained, other than being an opening for adding the face in another material. Adding separately worked pieces to ancient sculpture was indeed a common feature²⁴, and – as far as particularly marble insets of heads and faces are concerned – Ptolemaic Egypt had a leading position in that regard.²⁵ As the stone masons of Petra added separately worked elements to the rock-cut tomb façades²⁶, they certainly would have been able to apply

18 Bikai et al. 2008.

19 Bikai et al. 2008, 468. 475–476. 491. 495. 498 no. 11. We follow the interpretation of the ‘Great Temple’ as a royal reception or banqueting hall, as has been proposed by various authors, including the present one: Schmid 2013, 260–264.

20 Bikai et al. 2008, 477–486 and *passim*.

21 Schmid 2017, 282.

22 Comparanda listed by Bikai et al. 2008, 478–479; a fragment of a similar capital was found within the remains of the Nabataean mansion at az-Zantur: Kolb et al. 1999, 265 fig. 6. A very similar floral Corinthian capital with wine leaves and grapes is reported from az-Zantur as well: Kolb et al. 1999, 265 fig. 5.

23 Basile 2017; cf. Basile 2002a.

24 See for instance Despinois 2004; Schäfer 2016.

25 See lately Ghisellini 2003/2004. In Ptolemaic Egypt, this technique was also widely used with other materials: Ghisellini 2018.

26 Rababeh 2005, 81–82; Bessac 2007, 110–112. 156 no. 559 (wrongly labelled “temenos”) fig. 124. 156 no. 572 fig. 177. 158 no. 640 fig. 132; several more examples in McKenzie 1990. From Hegra only a few insets are reported (besides the numerous inscriptions): J.-C. Bessac, in: Nehmé 2015 1, 172 fig. 3.18; J. Dentzer-Feydy, in: Nehmé 2015 1, 260 with n. 190 (stone inset). 337 with n. 778 (wooden inset); Nehmé 2015 2, 117 (IGN 65).

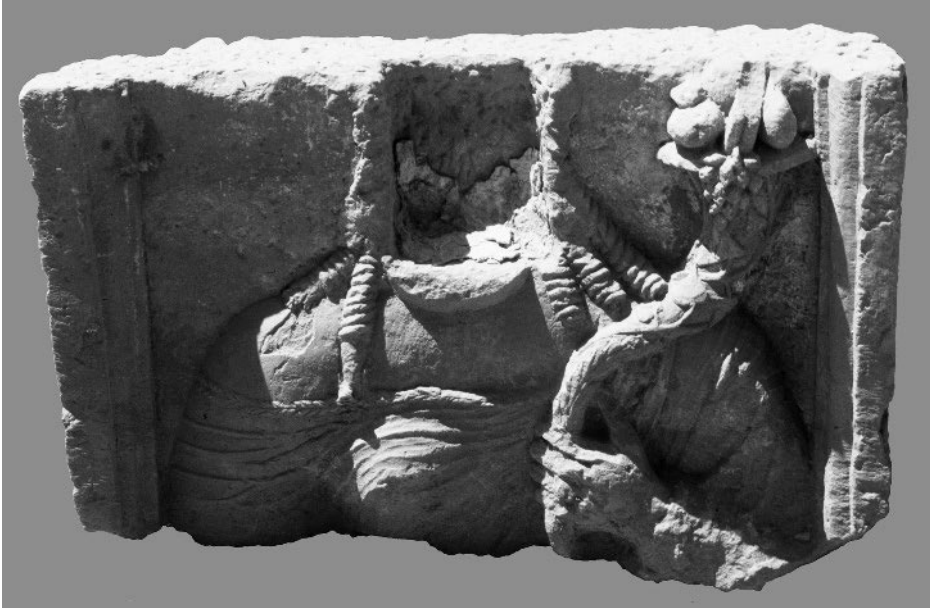


Fig. 3

the same technique on sculpted busts. Nevertheless, a few open questions remain. If the openings were intended to receive separately worked faces from the beginning, one would expect their surfaces to be more carefully adapted to the shape of a human face. Instead, all examples from Petra show a very unsophisticated and roughly cut opening, in several instances destroying parts of or even the entire headdress of the figure.²⁷ In addition, one has to ask for the sense of introducing a separately worked face into a limestone bust, knowing that in Nabataean Petra such carvings were usually covered with a thin layer of stucco and eventually painted. In my opinion, these observations could indicate that the openings were created at a later moment and that the busts were initially worked in one piece – including their faces. This would lead to the question why the faces were later replaced. If one follows the excavator's suggestion that the 'Great Temple' indeed served as a temple or a kind of ritual theatre and, therefore, these busts represent 'simple' deities, why were their faces replaced in a later phase? The only moment when the entire structure obviously underwent a substantial reworking is the early-2nd c. CE and everything points to the Roman annexation as being, in one way or another, responsible for the restructuring of the building, including

27 When intentionally planning to add a face of another piece from the beginning, the stonemason would have tried to carve the contour of the head and the hair entirely from sandstone, in order to add only the 'fleshy' part of the face separately. Alternatively, he would have added the entire head, including the hair, in one or more separate pieces.

the installation of a *theatron*-like construction in its main part.²⁸ As has been pointed out at various occasions and by several scholars, such a dramatic intervention into a former cult building would be unparalleled and requires explanation.²⁹ It has therefore been suggested that the building was initially not a religious structure, but one serving the self-representation of the Nabataean kings.³⁰ If so, the reason why the new Roman administration altered the function of the building is much better understood. However, there is still little to no need for altering the faces of deities, unless (in addition to their usual iconography) they showed other elements more directly linked to the initial function of the complex. As a working hypothesis, one could therefore propose that the busts initially represented the portraits of Nabataean kings and queens.³¹ In fact, most iconographic elements preserved on the busts from the 'Great Temple' can be found on coin portraits of Nabataean kings and queens as well³²; the representation of the royal family, particularly of the king and the queen, with divine elements must, therefore, have been rather common.

Independent of what and who these faces once represented, the busts belong to a growing number of similar figural representations from the Petra area.³³ Only very few similar elements were found outside the greater Petra area, from which their initial context is unknown.³⁴ There are virtually no comparable finds reported from Hegra, although this is the only place where we have convincing parallels for some of the tomb

28 Joukowsky 1998, 209–224 (E. L. Schluntz); Joukowsky 2007: 223–229.

29 See e. g. Kropp 2013, 156–164, esp. 160 with further references; Fiema et al. 2015, 380.

30 Kropp 2009 and Kropp 2013, 156–164 suggest the structure to be part of the *basileia*, the palatial quarter of the Nabataean kings; Schmid 2013, 261–264 suggests more specifically of a huge reception and/or banqueting hall of the Nabataean kings. Similar proposals have been submitted immediately after the first publications by the excavators, which are all referred to in the above quoted contributions.

31 As briefly suggested in my review of Kropp 2013 (JRA 31, 2018, 808). It is regrettable that the presentation of many objects from the 'Great Temple' does not follow scientific standards in terms of photographic representations (several views) or scale. The dimensions of the openings for the heads of the busts and complementary views (photographs or drawings) of a fragmented life-size male head of excellent technical and stylistic quality are missing (Joukowsky 2017, 388 no. 8 fig. 21.9). The quality seems too different from the busts in order to propose the head could fit into one of them. On the other hand, this would definitely be the kind of high quality sculpture used for representations of members of the royal family. Similarly well-worked heads were occasionally found in other contexts, for example reused within the Petra church: Roche 2001, 352–353 no. 12 (sandstone). Other examples must have been of similar quality, although their present state of conservation obstructs a correct appreciation. This is the case with a sandstone head of a bearded male from the 'Great Temple': Joukowsky 2017, 388 no. 7 fig. 21.8 (comparisons with sculpture of the Antonine period [Joukowsky 2017, 388] have to be discarded, the head clearly belongs to the Nabataean period).

32 Kropp 2013, 60–72; on Nabataean coinage see now Barkay 2019.

33 During recent research of the North Eastern Petra Project (NEPP) and of the International Umm al-Biyarah Project (IUBP), two additional relief blocks with busts of deities were found. They are still unpublished; on the two projects see Schmid et al. 2015; Schmid et al. 2012.

34 Wenning 2016.

façades from Petra, including figural decoration (cf. *supra*). The only other parallels with similar sculptural decoration in substantial quantity would be the sanctuaries of Khirbet et-Tannur and Khirbet edh-Dharih, but the late Judith McKenzie and others convincingly argued for a chronology post 106 CE for the main building phases, including the sculptural decoration.³⁵ Therefore, while these monuments may offer further insights into the first steps of the Roman administration in organizing their new province³⁶, they probably tell us less about Nabataean identities.³⁷ The situation in the Hauran is different. Historical sources as well as Nabataean inscriptions indicate the presence of groups considering themselves as Nabataeans, or as belonging to a superstructure called Nabataeans. The sources also attest to the fact that the region belonged to the Nabataean kingdom during some parts of the 1st c. BCE and CE.³⁸ This region shows a rather rich assemblage of sculpture, chronologically belonging to the pre-provincial period.³⁹ However, there are clear stylistic differences with the sculpture from the Petra region and authors like Robert Wenning insist that it should be referred to as ‘Hauranite sculpture’ in order to underline its strong regional particularities rather than Nabataean, which would evoke a wrong cultural homogeneity as pointed out above.⁴⁰ What eventually can be observed, is a certain cultural (and epigraphic) difference between the (political) Herodian North and the (political) Nabataean South of the Hauran.⁴¹ Despite some iconographic similarities⁴², the strong difference in terms of sculpted decoration between the (Nabataean) Hauran and (Nabataean) southern Jordan on the one hand, and the (Nabataean) Hejaz on the other hand indicates that the concept of multiple identities seems to be a promising one.

35 McKenzie et al. 2013; cf. Tholbecq 2017, 46–47. 51–53; for the composition and chronology of the Kh. Edh-Dharih sculptures and the sanctuary in general see for instance Villeneuve – al-Muheisen 2000.

36 Tholbecq 2017.

37 Unless one accepts a highly interesting proposal by the excavator, cf. *infra* n. 108.

38 In general, see Wenning 1987, 40–51; Wenning 2007, 36–38. For the Nabataean inscriptions see more recently Nehmé 2010; for general considerations as well as Nabataean and Greek inscriptions see Hackl et al. 2003, 165–166. 181–200; the volatile political (ancient) history of the region has been studied by Engels 2007 and for a more archaeological aspect concerning the temple of Baalshamin at Si cf. Tholbecq 2007. Interestingly, John F. Healey in a recent contribution identified three geographically distinct areas when considering linguistic aspects of Nabataean Aramaic: the Hawran, Petra and its hinterland, and Hegra, with the Sinai as a possible fourth area (Healey 2020, 205–209).

39 For an overview, see Weber 2010 and for an exemplary detailed study of specific contexts Weber 2009.

40 Wenning 2001a, 312; cf. *supra* n. 3. 4; this denomination seems useful even in the case of possible portraits of Nabataean rulers in basalt stone, tentatively identified by Weber 2009, 83–88.

41 Kropp 2010; partially identical with Kropp 2013, 43–47. The sanctuary at Si has to be considered separately; cf. *supra* n. 38.

42 The Hauranitic sculpture shows a similar prevalence of eagles and lions as the tomb façades from Hegra: Meynensen 2010.

However, we have to be careful in the case of Petra. In addition to its own cultural identity, as the capital of the Nabataean kingdom it may have displayed a cultural language understandable and intelligible by the many international visitors attested by ancient sources.⁴³ Some of the sculpted decoration mentioned above could be understood as a kind of Nabataean ‘state art’.⁴⁴ However, as there are comparable decorative elements from private and funerary contexts as well, they probably also contributed in shaping the identities of other ‘groups’ living in the Petra area. Again, Petra and its surroundings cannot be considered homogenous in terms of sculpted decoration. We equally find the aniconic, stronger Semitic representations of deities literally in the same contexts with the anthropomorphic ones, as the finds from the so-called Great Temple⁴⁵ and other contexts illustrate (cf. fig. 1).⁴⁶ As Nabataean coins with figural (anthropomorphic) elements were clearly used by the royal family and the tomb façades with figural representations were definitely no modest forms of funeral representation, one could conclude that these are elements of a specific elite, hence defining an economic or social identity rather than a specific Nabataean one. Therefore, we should try to compare our preliminary results with other categories of material culture.

Nabataean Pottery

One category of material culture that hardly anyone would suspect of being an elite feature is pottery. Even the often described eggshell-thin fine ware of Nabataean pottery, painted or not, cannot be considered an elite feature, since we know from Strabo that the real elite of Nabataea used to drink from golden cups.⁴⁷ On the other hand, Nabataean fine ware is found in all contexts of ancient life: cultic, funeral, residential, public, private etc.⁴⁸ and therefore offers a good base for our purpose.

For this contribution, we shall focus particularly on painted fine ware pottery as it is rather distinctive and easily recognisable, and because its most common forms, open bowls without standing devices, most likely served a specific purpose, namely drinking, most probably wine drinking.⁴⁹ The question is, what we can learn from Na-

43 Str. 16,4,21; cf. Hackl et al. 2003, 604–606; for similar concerns about the kingdom of Commagene as well as other ‘client kingdoms’ cf. e. g. Versluys 2017, 149–150 with n. 182. 162.

44 For a more detailed presentation, see Schmid 2012.

45 Basile 2002b, 257; Joukoswky 2017, 383–387.

46 For a short overview see Wenning 2001b.

47 Str. 16,4,26; cf. Hackl et al. 2003, 615–617; see also *infra* on Nabataean royal banquets.

48 For Nabataean fine ware pottery see Schmid 2000.

49 Not only the historical sources, but also botanical remains from archaeological contexts (Jacquat – Martinoli 1999) and wine presses from the wider Petra area (Salameen 2005; Bellwald 2020) clearly confirm that the Nabataeans were drinking wine. For the use of Nabataean fine ware cf. Schmid 2000, 153–156.

bataean pottery in terms of identity-building. While the archaeological mantra ‘pots don’t equal people’ is generally accepted, one should nevertheless clearly define what ‘people’ means. The shortcomings of identifying ethnic elements by a common use of specific pottery types are obvious. However, we are not looking for Nabataean *ethnicity*, but for possible Nabataean *identities* and pottery seems to be a tool as valuable as anything else.⁵⁰

As with sculpture and other expressions of material culture, we shall have a look at the spatio-temporal distribution of Nabataean painted pottery. Findspots of Nabataean painted pottery clearly located outside the boundaries of the kingdom can be used in order to reconstruct trade networks within which the Nabataeans were active.⁵¹ More interesting for our purpose is the distribution within the likely borders of the Nabataean kingdom. The Petra area can be considered an important production centre of that characteristic pottery, possibly the only one.⁵² In any case, Nabataean painted pottery found at Bosra and surrounding areas has been recognised as being produced in Petra.⁵³ The same is true for Hegra and surrounding sites.⁵⁴ Unless petrographic or other scientific studies prove otherwise, all Nabataean painted pottery from Hegra (and the Hejaz in general) was most likely imported from Petra.⁵⁵ After the summary and explicit statements about the so-called potter’s workshop from Oboda by Yuval

50 The drastic refusal of pottery as marker for any kind of social group (not just ethnic), as expressed by Knapp 2013, 267 (for prehistoric Cyprus) seems too extreme, although one can easily agree with his observation that pottery should not be used to establish an ethnic identity. For Euboean pottery in the Western Mediterranean, Delamard 2014 is less extreme and hence more purposeful. An interesting analysis of decorated Edomite pottery that touches some of the issues we deal with here, is proposed by Thareani 2010.

51 Schmid 2000, 127–131; Schmid 2004; Schmid 2007.

52 ‘Amr – Momani 1999 with older bibliography; ‘Amr 2004; cf. Goren – Fabian 2008 for a structure from Oboda, formerly believed to be a potter’s kiln.

53 Dentzer 1985; Dentzer 1986, 85; another important result from the different archaeological projects in the southern part of the Hauran is a considerable increase of sites and quantities per site with Nabataean pottery. Hence, the northern limit of Nabataean pottery as suggested by Glueck cannot be maintained anymore (*contra* Patrich 1990, 125); cf. Renel 2010, 524–526.

54 Durand – Gerber 2014, 159.

55 This is also true for the ‘2 red lines’ bowls from Hegra, for which Durand – Gerber 2014, 159–161 and again Durand 2017, 91–92 suggest a local production, arguing that these bowls would be absent from the Petra repertoire. However, they do occur in Petra, though not in enormous quantities: Schmid 2000, fig. 76; cf. also the similar forms/decoration systems Schmid 2000, fig. 189; most surprisingly, one of the authors published such pottery from Petra as well: Tholbecq – Durand 2013, 213 fig. 9; further parallels are reported from the ‘Dionysian hall’ at Beidha: Bikai et al. 2008, 492, fig. 26a. c, as well as one sherd from Khirbet et-Tannur: Schmid et al. 2013, 236–237 fig. 18.2, 5 and similar examples from Oboda: Negev 1986, 57–58 nos. 408. 411–414. It is true that these bowls are difficult to categorise, but unless scientific analyses do indicate anything else, it seems appropriate to suppose that they were produced in Petra. If indeed it shall turn out that Hegra produced its own painted drinking bowls, we would witness an interesting case of regional identity; cf. *infra* n. 78. 81.

Goren and Peter Fabian, there can be no doubt anymore that the same is true for Oboda⁵⁶ (and by extrapolation for all Nabataean painted pottery from the Negev).

Everything indicates that Nabataean painted pottery was produced exclusively in the Petra area and brought from there to almost every place within the Nabataean kingdom⁵⁷, while other categories of common but also plain fine ware pottery were produced locally and regionally in all parts of the kingdom.⁵⁸ As we are considering open forms, their apparent attractiveness was certainly not due to their content. Economic explanations for their distribution pattern can therefore be ruled out. The most obvious explanation would link the importance of these painted bowls to their function, the drinking of wine. Clearly, the built and rock-cut architecture of the Nabataeans as well as historical sources strongly emphasize banqueting as an important activity within the Nabataean kingdom.⁵⁹ Since the simple consumption of wine does not require specific vessels, the fact that it was apparently important to drink from specific painted bowls indicates that the crucial element was the *act* related to a specific form of banqueting. We can therefore conclude that drinking wine from specific bowls (and probably also in a specific surrounding, according to specific 'rites' etc.) was part of identity-building processes within the Nabataean kingdom. Very similar conclusions were reached by Laila Nehmé, Laurent Tholbecq and Caroline Durand, as well as by the present author, all pointing out strong 'group'-identities within the Nabataean society, regardless whether these represent families, clans, tribes, funerary or cultic associations or fraternities.⁶⁰ Interestingly, as far as there are archaeological contexts related to these banqueting installations, they all provided the same painted drinking bowls.

Drink to Be Nabataean?⁶¹

Although we did not examine in detail all elements of material culture, there are strong indications that the only category that possibly could fulfil all the requirements for

56 Goren – Fabian 2008, 342–343 and *passim*; Gunneweg et al. 1988 for the detailed study.

57 See the detailed listings in Wenning 1987, still not replaced but in need of an update. Already Wenning 1994, 33–34 suggested – correctly, as I think – the central function of Petra for the distribution of Nabataean painted pottery, although he reaches other conclusions for its use than the present paper.

58 Cf. *infra* n. 100 for the regional production of common wares.

59 For a recent overview see Charloux et al. 2016; Durand 2017, both with further references; cf. *infra* n. 60.

60 Schmid 2009b; Nehmé 2013; Schmid 2013; Tholbecq – Durand 2013; Durand 2017. Will Kennedy recently expanded these reflections to the hinterland of Petra: Kennedy 2019, *passim* esp. 132–134; Kennedy 2020.

61 This was the title of a presentation by the present author at the XIIth Conference on the History and Archaeology of Jordan held in Berlin in May 2013. Due to lack of time, it was not ready for publication in the acts (SHAJ 12, Amman 2016).

covering the entire Nabataean kingdom, bridging functional and socio-economic limits (to a certain extent), would be the painted drinking bowls. Centrally produced in the Petra area, these bowls were used all over the kingdom, possibly fostering a kind of identity by common feasting.⁶² This concept of identity-building through feasting is not new or restricted to the Nabataean realm. Michael Dietler has elaborated a detailed differentiation within feasting and banqueting activities for Iron Age Europe⁶³ and his concept can easily be applied to the Nabataeans.⁶⁴ Similar elements of commensal activities used for shaping identity and creating social cohesion through feasting were detected by Avraham Faust for Philistia as well.⁶⁵ As far as funerary banquets are concerned, Dagmar Kühn showed parallels between Nabataean elements and textual evidence from the Old Testament.⁶⁶ This kind of *marzeah-koiné* is by no means restricted to funerary banquets or to the Near East, but extends well into the Mediterranean where, for example, it was used for identity-shaping within Greek upper-classes.⁶⁷ If we keep in mind the theoretical approach stating that social groups also define themselves by their difference from other ‘groups’⁶⁸, the Nabataean drinking bowls may offer another element confirming our hypothesis: From the 1960s onwards painted bowls appeared in excavations in Jerusalem and at other Herodian sites, showing similar decorative elements as the Nabataean painted bowls, but clearly being from other workshops.⁶⁹ Referred to as “Pseudo-Nabataean Ware”, “Jerusalem” or “Jerusalemite bowls” respectively, this characteristic pottery seems to occur mainly at Herodian sites and covers the second half of Herod’s reign as well as the period of his successors. Scientific analyses showed that all of these bowls were produced centrally in Jerusalem.⁷⁰ Although the ‘Jerusalemite bowls’ are much less quantified and were in use for a far shorter period of time than the Nabataean painted bowls, the phenomenology is comparable. In both cases, a centrally produced type of drinking bowl is distributed over key sites of the kingdom. The vessels are similar but distinct enough not to be confused. Interestingly, in Oboda and in Masada Nabataean painted bowls are found

62 Recently developed in generally similar terms by Durand 2017; however, a *caveat* should be expressed concerning her interpretation that important movements of people from Petra to Hegra should be responsible for the presence of Nabataean painted pottery at Hegra (Durand 2017, 96–98). Not because it seems unlikely (on the contrary), but because it requires discussion and argumentation against the mantra ‘pots don’t equal people’ as briefly discussed *supra* n. 50.

63 For example in Dietler 2006 (with further bibliography).

64 As was done in the presentation mentioned in n. 60 and is partially developed by Durand 2017.

65 Faust 2015.

66 Kühn 2005; see also Healey 2001, 165–175; Sachet 2010.

67 Kistler 1998, 127–141 and *passim*; for a wider context cf. Nijboer 2013.

68 Cf. *supra* n. 5.

69 For an overview, see Magness 1994, 43; Schmid 2000, 115–116; Hershkovitz 2003; Hershkovitz 2009, 275–277.

70 Perlman et al. 1986.

in the same general contexts as ‘Jerusalemite bowls.’⁷¹ Therefore, there was no practical obstacle for using Nabataean painted pottery at Herodian sites, but obviously a deliberate choice not to do so, most probably in order to signal the respective belonging to different identity-systems.

Dietler’s reflexions on commensal policy were successfully adapted to the Achaemenid Empire by Erich Kistler and Friedrich Weigel.⁷² Kistler demonstrated that the empire-wide use of typical drinking cups made of precious metals and their clay surrogates does not necessarily indicate phenomena of acculturation and of an imperial cultural policy, but rather a kind of sub-institutional system of commensal policy by the king and, through the typical *imitatio regis*, by local rulers, satraps etc. The banquets at the royal court (as well as the courts of the regional and local rulers) were not only a perfect tool of fostering a group-identity, they also offered the continuous occasion to define and, if necessary, modify the position of each participant in their social network(s).⁷³ The commensal practices of the Achaemenid kings, including the practice of exchanging precious gifts (*keimelia*), seem particularly prolific for identity-building in multi-ethnic societies.⁷⁴ Unfortunately, the ancient sources dealing with the Nabataean royal banquet are not as explicit and do not allow a detailed comparison with the banquets at the Achaemenid court. However, Strabo’s description of the Nabataean “king holding many drinking bouts in a huge hall, but no one drinks more than eleven cupfuls, each time using a different golden cup” (Str. 16,4,26), as well as the passage immediately before, stating that the Nabataeans regularly held banquets with thirteen participants and two female singers, clearly indicates the importance of the banquet for the functioning of Nabataean society.⁷⁵ Considering ancient texts, inscriptions and graffiti, the manifold banqueting structures and the painted bowls, everything points to banqueting, and more specifically wine-drinking, as the key element for identity-building within the Nabataean kingdom⁷⁶, that was probably – though on a smaller scale – a multi-ethnic or multi-tribal construct as was the Achaemenid Empire. Hence, we probably can ascribe to the Nabataean court a real commensal policy as defined by Dietler and Kistler.⁷⁷

71 See the references above n. 68; cf. also Schmid 2000, 100–101; Magness 2009, 77 and *passim* for the Nabataean pottery from Masada.

72 Kistler 2010; Weigel 2012; see also Miller 2011 for a regional study.

73 Kistler 2010; the system is comparable with Norbert Elias’ observations regarding the court of the ‘roi soleil’ in Versailles (Elias 1969; while recent research has expressed some criticism about Elias’ approach and results, the specific functioning of interdependent social-relations at the court still holds true: Duindam 1995).

74 Kistler 2010, 419.

75 For further considerations about the Nabataean royal banquet, see Schmid 2013, 257–264.

76 Cf. *supra* n. 59. 60.

77 Dietler 2006; Kistler 2010; further studies could probably distinguish similar elements as for the three diagnostic types of feasting.

The Geography of Identities

What becomes clear from our short and selective overview so far, is the presence of several identity-systems: tomb façades show specific elements that are found only in Petra, while others are observed in Hegra as well. Sculptural decoration not related to tomb façades following a strong Mediterranean stylistic tradition seems to be very characteristic for Petra and its immediate surroundings. While the Southern Hauran shows its own regionally homogeneous sculptural decoration, other regions apparently offer nothing comparable. Painted pottery and, therefore, specific manners of wine drinking seem to be present all over the Nabataean kingdom.

However, within the Nabataean kingdom, we can also observe regional differences of painted drinking bowls. In addition to the eventual local manufacture of such bowls in Hegra (which still requires confirmation)⁷⁸, we need to add the temporal aspect in order to look at the painted pottery in the *longue durée*. There might be earlier pottery produced at Petra, but the first painted bowls come from contexts dating to the late-2nd or early-1st c. BCE, running until c. 50 BCE.⁷⁹ This early painted pottery is found in substantial quantities in the Petra area and is also reported from the Negev.⁸⁰ Hegra too seems to provide – although scanty – evidence from these earlier phases⁸¹, as does Tayma.⁸² The area of Dumat al-Jandal (al-Jawf) in Saudi Arabia, located at what must have been the north-eastern outpost of Nabataean territory, also revealed some painted pottery from a rather early phase, though not predating the mid-1st c. CE⁸³. It would be interesting to establish the northern extension of the early Nabataean painted pot-

78 *supra* n. 55.

79 Schmid 2000, 37–38 for the painting of phase 1. For earlier pottery (and structures) from Petra see Graf 2013, 38–46; Renel – Mouton 2013.

80 The site of Oboda has several early Nabataean painted bowls: Negev 1986, 57–58 nos. 409–411, maybe 408. 412–414 too; cf. Schmid 2000, 93–96. One of the most characteristic shapes of these early drinking bowls shows a foot (Negev 1986, 57–58 nos. 409–410), contrary to the later examples; it would be interesting to see whether this means a change in drinking habits; cf. for the time being some remarks in Schmid 2000, 154–155 with n. 959.

81 C. Durand – Y. Gerber, in: Nehmé et al. 2010, 271 fig. 64 definitely belongs to the pre-ca. 50 BCE phase of Petraean production; other elements, as pointed out above in n. 54 are difficult to place between the first and the second half of the 1st c. BCE and could, according to the specialists, even be produced locally (which, however, requires more evidence).

82 Lora 2017, 33–34 fig. 14 top left. However, in statistical terms (50 Nabataean sherds – probably all periods together – recognized out of 15000 recorded), the Nabataean presence (or identity?) cannot have been too strong (Lora 2017, 35).

83 A painted rim sherd most likely from phase 2a (c. 50–25 BCE) is reported from al-Tuwayr: Parr et al. 1978, 44. pl. 33, 40. There is some plain ware (Parr et al. 1978, nos. 39, 42) that is likely to confirm this chronology; cf. Schmid 2000, 127 (maybe dating too early) and now Charlot 2020. R. Wenning assumed an “early” integration of Jawf to the Nabataean kingdom (Wenning 1987, 115 no. 10 [c. 60 BCE]), while recent contributions prefer to date it towards the end of the 1st c. BCE: Charlot et al. 2016, 29; Durand 2017, 91. The general importance for Dumat for Arabian trade networks is stressed, among others, by Wenning 2013, 8–10.

tery. So far, the hilltop palace of Machaerus yielded some fragments⁸⁴, as well as Diban (Dhiban).⁸⁵ The other peripheral sites of the Nabataean kingdom only show painted pottery in later phases, mostly from the late-1st c. BCE and the early-1st c. CE onwards. A detailed up to date analysis of the distribution of Nabataean (painted) pottery within

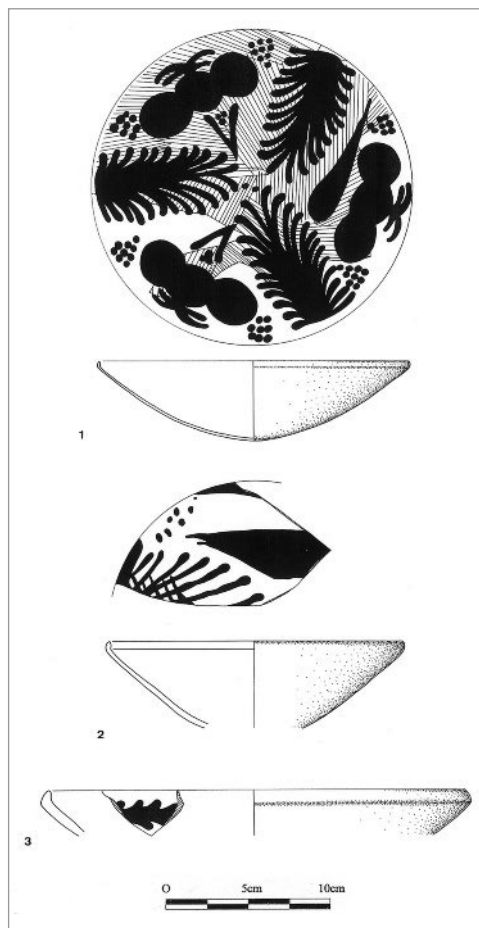


Fig. 4

84 Humbert 2019, 276–277. pl. 26. The evidence published by Humbert 2019 would suggest that there is Nabataean painted pottery from the period before c. 50 BCE, as well as continuous examples for the phases covering the period c. 20 to c. 100 CE, a picture confirmed by the Nabataean plain pottery (Humbert 2019 278–283. pls. 27–28). In other words, the reign of Herod the Great would be absent in terms of Nabataean pottery. However, one should not draw too many conclusions from that publication (cf. the review by M. Sartre: <<https://journals.openedition.org/syria/8846>> [03.06.2020]).

85 Schmid 2000, 104–105.

the Nabataean kingdom still is a desideratum⁸⁶ and it would provide many interesting insights, as can only be briefly outlined here.

Nabataean painted pottery shows a continuous evolution from c. 100 BCE to c. 100 CE. The main shapes gradually evolve from one phase to the next, as does the painted decoration, usually introducing new elements approximately every 25 years. This evolution comes to an end about 100 CE⁸⁷, when the bowls of what was called phase 3b (c. 70 – c. 100 CE), usually painted with stylised palmettes and pomegranates, rhomboid to trapezoid motifs, underlined or interconnected with hatchings of the same dark brown to nearly black colour (fig. 4 top), are replaced by the next generation of painted bowls. Basically, these show the same shapes (although often a little thicker) and painting, but in a much clumsier form and without the hatchings (fig. 4 centre). Clearly, this is a step backwards in terms of quality. The shapes are less fine, the firing is less careful and less time was invested into the painting. There is no innovation anymore. However, this is by no means the end of ‘Nabataean’ pottery production. The same general type of bowl, but even thicker and with a yet more neglected painting (but still with clearly recognisable palmettes etc.) was found in the late-Roman houses of az-Zantur, dating to the 4th and early-5th c. CE (fig. 4 bottom)⁸⁸ and the potter’s kilns of Zurrabah (Wadi Mousa) produced bowls in this tradition apparently up to the mid-6th c. CE.⁸⁹ In other words, nearly half a millennium (!) after the end of the Nabataean kingdom, people living in the Petra area still produced drinking bowls in the very same tradition than the ones that were apparently used earlier for identity-building from Bosra to Hegra and from the Sinai to Dumat al-Jandal. Only very few sites outside the Petra area seem to yield clearly post-106 CE painted bowls (fig. 5)⁹⁰, including Oboda⁹¹, Mampsis⁹², Aila (Aqaba)⁹³,

86 The respective paragraphs in Schmid 2000 were not aiming at presenting the full evidence, since the aim of that study was only to manage the large quantities of Nabataean fine ware pottery from az-Zantur in Petra and to establish a chrono-typology with some outlooks.

87 Schmid 2000, 28–29. 38–39. 141–146; according to the stratigraphic and contextual evidence then available, the change from phase 3b to 3c occurs around 100 CE. A more precise dating was not possible and I have not seen better evidence since. What is clear, however, is that a series of destruction layers at different sites of the Nabataean kingdom, show a common mix of pottery belonging to phase 3b and pottery belonging to phase 3c. One is of course tempted to relate these contexts with the Roman annexation of the Nabataean kingdom in 106 CE; cf. Schmid 1997.

88 Fellmann Brogli 1996, 240. 269 nos. 844–849.

89 ‘Amr 1991, 315–319 fig. 6; ‘Amr 2004.

90 Bosra might belong to such sites as well. Renel 2010, 524 mentions painted pottery of phase 3c (which would fit), but dates it to “essentiellement dans une période correspondant au I^{er} siècle de notre ère” which is too early for 3c. In any case, given the importance of Bosra during the reign of Rabbel II and during the early provincial period, one would not be surprised to find pottery from Petra in the 2nd c. CE.

91 Negev 1986, 47–48. 60 nos. 427–428; Erickson-Gini 2007, 92.

92 Negev – Sivan 1977, 116–117. 119. 126–129 (S 336. S 487).

93 Dolinka 2003, 136 fig. 35–36.

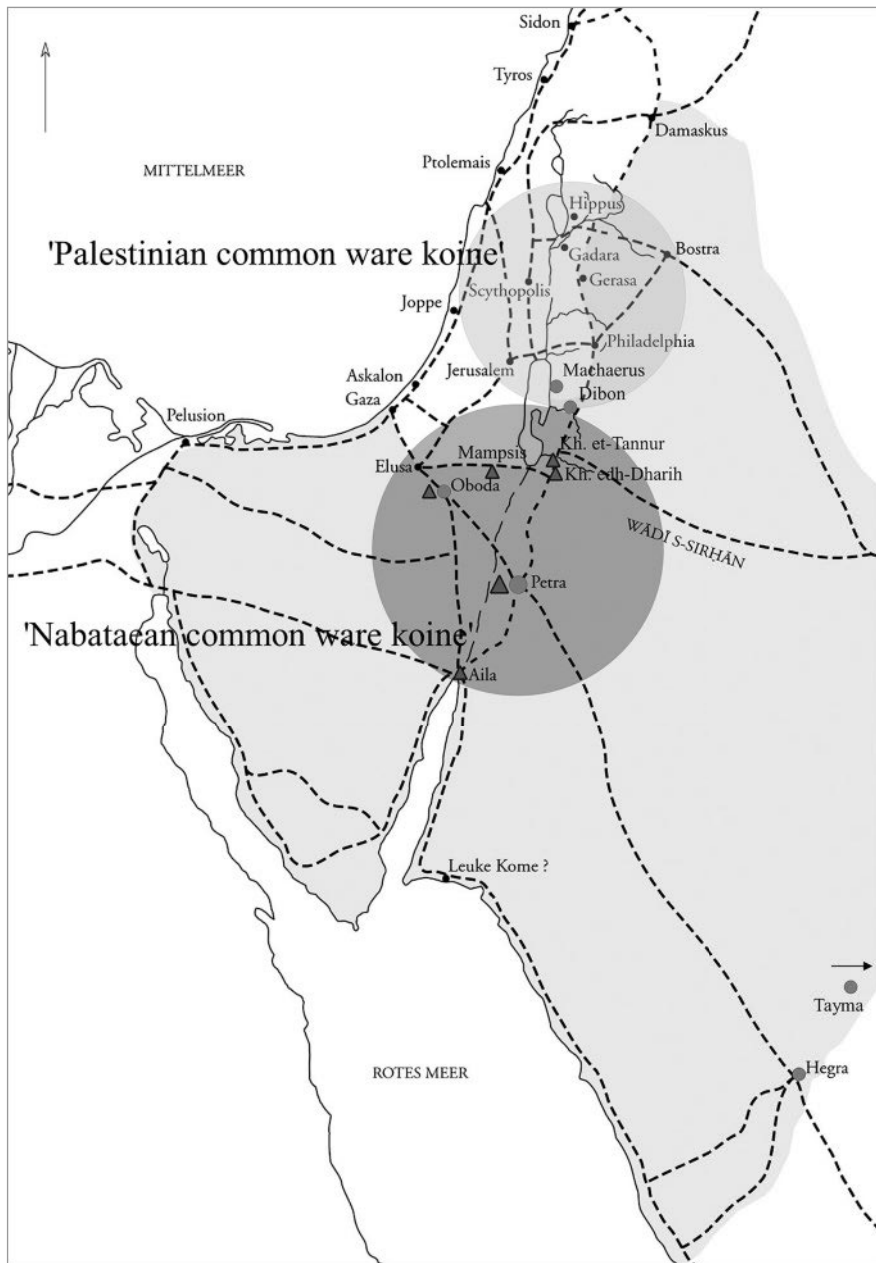


Fig. 5

Khirbet edh-Dharikh and Khirbet et-Tannur.⁹⁴ While the pottery from Oboda, Mampsis and Aila probably has to be dated to the (advanced) 2nd c. CE, some examples from Khirbet edh-Dharikh are even later, dating to the second half of the 3rd c. CE.⁹⁵

In short, while Nabataean painted bowls were found all over the Nabataean kingdom up to c. 100 CE, from then onwards we observe a dramatically shrinking distribution pattern, until, from the 3rd or 4th c. CE onwards, only the immediate surrounding of Petra continues to use derivatives of this pottery. This is, of course, a very seductive pattern to conclude that the typical Nabataean painted pottery always was related to the people from Petra. We must remember that several members of the wealthy family of Theodoros, who was the owner and one of the protagonists of the Petra papyri dated to the 5th and 6th c. CE⁹⁶, bear names such as Obodianos (three different persons) and Dusarios (one person). A kind of Nabataean substratum therefore clearly continued to exist in the cultural identity of these people. As in the time of the Nabataean kingdom, however, the same papyri attest to different identity-systems in the 6th c. CE as well, at least when looking at the personal names (Nabataean, Greek, Roman, Arabic).⁹⁷ Furthermore, similar or identical names are also known from other places, although at the end there seems to be a long lasting Nabataean connection.⁹⁸ In any case, the combination of the pottery tradition with the onomastics clearly indicates that some of the former *Nabataean* aspects of identity are closely related to the *Petra* area.

We could therefore consider referring to the characteristic painted pottery as ‘Petraean’ rather than ‘Nabataean’ as long as we refer to its origin that always seems to have been Petra. However, how shall we call it in terms of identity during, for example, the 1st c. CE when it is found all over the Nabataean kingdom? What does this mean for the

94 The region of Madaba provided some samples as well, which seem to be rather early within the 2nd c. CE and, therefore, less relevant for our purpose: Daviau et al. 2000, 277–278 fig. 15,2; Daviau et al. 2012, 291–292 fig. 45 (the two fragments in the second row belong to phase 3c, the others to 3b; that would be a typical early-2nd c. CE combination; cf. above n. 87). In order to be valuable for our purpose, the painted pottery has to come from clearly post-106 CE contexts.

95 Durand 2017, 94 fig. 10 gives the date as “IIIe-IVe s. apr. J.-C.” (caption to fig. 10), while in the text offers a dating “entre la fin du II^e et le III^e s. apr. J.-C.”. François Villeneuve confirmed (personal communication) that painted pottery in the Nabataean tradition is definitely found in contexts from the second half of the 3rd c. CE., but no longer in contexts related to the 363 CE earthquake.

96 Koenen 2003, 204 fig. 2 (family tree) and *passim*; cf. Fiema et al. 2015, 392–393, coming to very similar conclusions as the ones reached in this paper: “The papyri also reflect the ethnic and linguistic spectrum of the population of Petra in the sixth century, as well as the survival of Nabataean customs and traditions in the city some 400 years after it was annexed to the Roman empire”.

97 Koenen 2003, 216–223. Another aspect of multiple identities in Petra during this period is indicated by the parallel existence of Christian and pagan elements during the 4th and 5th c. CE: Fiema et al. 2015, 389.

98 An Obodianos is mentioned on a mosaic inscription from a church in Beth Guvrin, NE of Lachish and dating to c. 500 CE: Ameling et al. 2018, 896–898 no. 3469; Leatherbury 2020. Another Obodianos is a member of a well-known family at Antiochia in Syria in the 4th c. CE; interestingly, the family comes from Elusa in the Negev, hence from former Nabataean territory: Cabouret 2006, 344–345 and *passim*.

structure and concept of the Nabataean kingdom? One of the disputed issues in the above-mentioned discussion about the structure of the Nabataean kingdom between Michael Macdonald and Ernst Axel Knauf was whether the Nabataeans were one of several tribes within the Nabataean kingdom that dominated the others at least during the existence of the said kingdom. Even with the evidence briefly described here, a definitive answer is not possible. We simply do not know anything about the (ethnic) self-definition of the people who, for example, produced the painted pottery and the ones who used it. However, we can suggest that, in terms of (painted) pottery, the region of Petra had a dominant role within the Nabataean realm and that during the floruit of the kingdom, the pottery from Petra was used all over Nabataean territories in order to create and define (not necessarily ethnic) identity during feasts that apparently were very common and widespread.

Another element we can put forward, at least at the present state of knowledge, is the fact that the (painted) pottery from Petra was used by different social groups from the Petra area. Thus, it must have functioned as a kind of common identifier for these groups. Obviously, in all the excavated domestic, funerary and religious (i. e. family/tribal sanctuaries) contexts from the Petra area, the same pottery was used for feasting.⁹⁹

Yvonne Gerber was able to define regional areas of what she calls “common ware *koinai*”¹⁰⁰, valuable *grosso modo* for the 1st to 4th c. CE. There is a northern, the “Palestinian common ware *koiné*” and a southern one, the “Nabataean common ware *koiné*” (fig. 5). Interestingly, the “Nabataean common ware *koiné*” rather exactly corresponds to the distribution of painted pottery bowls of the 2nd/3rd c. CE¹⁰¹, i. e. after the Roman annexation of the Nabataean kingdom and, with minor variations, also to the distribution pattern of the earliest painted pottery. As pointed out elsewhere¹⁰², there are strong indications to suppose that with the annexation in 106 CE the functioning of the social units gathering for collective feasting collapsed, at least in the Petra area.¹⁰³

99 For these contexts see some references *supra* n. 60. Despite its very homogeneous general appearance, there is an immense variation in the painting of Nabataean drinking bowls even from one specific phase. It may thus be possible that specific social groups did use specifically painted pottery, but we are far from being able to state anything conclusive on this issue.

100 Gerber 2014, esp. 196–200. Based on the geographic homogeneity of specific pottery, one should be careful however, to conclude a “cultural ethnicity” as Gerber calls it. The term ‘cultural identity’ seems more appropriate.

101 If the presence of even later painted pottery in the Nabataean tradition from Jerash can be confirmed (‘Amr 2004, 240 [personal communication by A.-M. Rasson-Seigne]), we would need to review some of the geographic arguments. It would be important to have a clearer picture not only about the distribution but also about the quantities.

102 Schmid 2013, 58–61.

103 Or at least a remarkable shift from the huge main banqueting halls to secondary (smaller, less luxurious) installations took place, as shown in detail by Dehner 2013. Perry 2017, 106 reaches similar conclusions concerning funerary rituals.

It has been suggested that the Romans actively or passively suppressed these gatherings because they (correctly) identified them as the core of Nabataean identity-building.¹⁰⁴ Irrespective of the reason behind the cessation of organised group banqueting, there was obviously no need any more to export painted drinking bowls beyond the core of the Petraean social group(s) that were the nucleus of these activities and the production of the corresponding pottery.

When considering these aspects on a more regional scale, there are some additional interesting elements. Keeping in mind that in this contribution we are dealing with evidence that does not necessarily pre-date c. 100 BCE (beginning of painted pottery clearly attributable to a Petra-based production), the Negev clearly seems to belong to the Petraean zone, showing painted bowls from the beginning of their production into the post 106 CE 2nd c. On the other hand, Hegra has revealed only scanty evidence for the earliest painted bowls and apparently close to nothing from the early-2nd c. CE.¹⁰⁵ It therefore seems that Hegra was not as strongly related to the Petraean zone as were the settlements in the Negev.¹⁰⁶ Since we are lacking roughly 150 to 200 years in terms of painted ceramic evidence from the first mention of the Nabataeans, it might be too hastily to push these results much further, but when re-considering the origin (and the identity) of the Nabataeans, we should bear this in mind.¹⁰⁷ On the other hand, the

104 Schmid 2013, 58–61; Fiema et al. 2015, 381–382. These observations about a rather harsh intervention by the new administration into such aspects of social life seem confirmed by a generally oppressive behaviour by Rome towards Nabataea/Petra, resulting – among other things – in the almost complete vanishing of the Nabataean script from official documents: Fiema et al. 2015, 375–376. Together with the oppressive behaviour against former Nabataean elements, one observes, on the other hand, substantial efforts to transfer Petra into a ‘Roman’ city, including important building activities (Fiema et al. 2015, 379–381).

105 Durand – Gerber 2014, 159.

106 The fact that the latest inscription carved on a tomb façade at Hegra dates to 75 CE (Nehmé 2015, 139–141) has led to some speculation that the area around Hegra could have been (temporarily?) fallen out of Nabataean hands; however, this hypothesis is now largely rejected: Wenning 1993, 84. On the other hand, some indications suggest that in Hegra a king Malichos (III) persisted a few months after the Roman annexation of the Nabataean kingdom: Nehmé 2009, 40–42; Fiema et al. 2015, 376. The elements presented in this contribution would indicate that there is no major change in Hegra’s relationship with Petra before the early-2nd c. CE (absence of pottery from the 2nd c. CE, but presence of pottery belonging to the late-1st c. CE), hence the hypothesis of a secession during Rabbel II’s reign seems unlikely, while nothing specific can be stated as for the existence of Malichos III.

107 The distribution of the earliest identifiable Nabataean painted pottery, the distribution of the early post-annexation Nabataean painted pottery as well as Gerber’s “Nabataean common ware *koine*” all include what would correspond to the nucleus of Edom. Is this just a coincidence? Of course we have to be very cautious about the issue, but as Robert Wenning has put it, “One way or another there is a continuity” (Wenning 2007, 27); cf. also Bienkowski 2013, 32 and *passim* as well as Graf 2013, who is more audacious. It shall not be suggested here that the evidence of the painted Nabataean pottery can solve the issue, but it at least indicates that the core of the people initially sharing this specific pottery lived in that area. Important differences exist, however, inasmuch as Edomite decorated pottery shows several local productions and no centralised one, supporting the idea of smaller (sub-)identity-systems; cf. *infra* n. 121.

sites of Khirbet edh-Dharîh and Khirbet et-Tannur apparently continued to display a strong Petraean identity (in terms of pottery) well into the 3rd c. CE and they seem to constitute a remarkable exception outside Petra. If we add to this the exceptional standing of the very same sites in terms of ‘post-Nabataean’ sculpture, a highly interesting hypothesis presented some years ago by François Villeneuve comes to mind: He suggested that some members of the former Nabataean elite from Petra, possibly members of the royal family, took a kind of exile at Khirbet edh-Dharîh.¹⁰⁸ Although we cannot add conclusive elements, but in spite of the Nabataean/Petraean banqueting tradition that was continued at Dharîh until the 3rd c. CE, the outstanding position of the sites in the Wadi Laabân in terms of identity becomes obvious.

Conclusions

As was clear from the beginning, there is no easy answer to the question whether there was a Nabataean identity. In his critical discussion of Knauf’s idea of a Nabataean Bedouin state, Macdonald presented good arguments against the idea of a separate Nabataean tribe within the Nabataean kingdom, assuming that with the sedentarisation of the former nomadic Nabataeans “the concept of *Nbtw* would have changed from one of tribal identity, to being a subject of the Nabataean king, and, after the annexation, to having one’s origin in a particular geographical and cultural area”.¹⁰⁹ The problem we face when looking at the material culture is that there is no pattern that would fit to this definition. It is of course possible that Macdonald’s definition is correct on an administrative or legal level and we do not have to expect that the entire population belonged to a specific socio-political entity sharing a common material culture. Not everybody who eats cheese fondue is necessarily of Swiss nationality, and not all Swiss people eat fondue.¹¹⁰

108 Villeneuve – al-Muheisen 2003, 100.

109 Macdonald 1991, 116.

110 The fondue-metaphor actually bears some analogies with the aim of this contribution, as serious research in the subject indicates (e. g. Gyr 2014): Apart from the fact that Switzerland is a country with multiple (linguistic and other) identities, the origins of fondue are far from clear. Its definition as a national (Swiss) element is a quite recent construct and there are many regional variants. Most importantly, due to the ritualised consumption from a common central pot, it offers a strong element for identity-building. As Nabataean painted pottery, fondue is occasionally exported far beyond the limits of Switzerland, even to Jordan. It is therefore not impossible that when future archaeologists excavate the by then ruined remains of Nazzal’s camp in Petra, they will be able to reconstruct a typical Swiss cheese fondue feast that took place there on a cold February night in the last decade of the 20th c. CE as well as on a hot 1 August (Swiss National Day) in the early 21st c. CE. If they are lucky, they will be able to reconstruct that the participants came from Jordan, Poland, the USA, Germany and Switzerland. However, I doubt that they will be able to imagine to what extent it helped to shape a group-identity, indeed ...

Even if we did not look into all aspects of material culture, it also became clear that Robert Wenning's concept of several identity-systems within the Nabataean kingdom is a very promising one.¹¹¹ These systems were not uniform and homogeneous, neither in terms of geography, chronology and social components. The best evidence seems to come from a specific social behaviour: feasting in groups. The distribution pattern of rock-cut and built banqueting installations covers – at least – the core as well as the eastern periphery of the Nabataean kingdom.¹¹² The characteristic painted pottery that was used at such banquets covers the entire extent of the Nabataean kingdom. From Strabo we learn that 'the Nabataeans', specifically their king, frequently organised and participated in such feasts.¹¹³ A social hierarchy within Nabataean banqueting seems indicated by the use of golden vessels at the royal court¹¹⁴, while the common banqueter had to drink from painted bowls. However, as the entire Nabataean banquet, these bowls were so distinctive that other groups aimed at imitating them, as in the case of the 'Jerusalemite bowls'. Clearly, the Nabataean feast was not an ordinary drinking party, but well organised according to specific rites and rules, what is indicated by a few epigraphic mentions of *rb mrzh'*, head of the symposion (*symposiarchos* in Greek).¹¹⁵ From other places where more specific information is available, it becomes clear that the *symposiarchos* is an important function, pointing to members of the respective societies that usually held also other important offices.¹¹⁶

The discussed evidenced strongly focussed on Petra and its surroundings. This does not mean that, for example, pottery was not produced elsewhere, but it would not have served the purpose of Nabataean identity-building (given its restricted distribution and use). It could, however, be used for shaping parallel- or sub-identities on a regional

111 *supra* n. 3. 4.

112 See the map in Charloux et al. 2016, 26 fig. 9 that probably could be expanded. In any case, looking at the numbers of the structures, the area of Petra takes the same prominent function as it does in terms of the production of painted pottery, indicating that Nabataean feasting traditions originated from there.

113 The archaeological record indicates that the description by Strabo (or his sources) is hardly exaggerated, at least for Petra. Nabataean houses clearly feature one or several lavishly decorated dining rooms (Kolb 2007; Kolb 2012); freely built and open-air public sanctuaries, tribal, clan or family sanctuaries as well as funerary complexes usually feature several banqueting installations (evidence in the contributions *supra* n. 59. 60). Assuming that the average inhabitant of Nabataean Petra regularly attended cultic services in official temples, participated at commemorative or other gatherings of his family, clan and tribe, honoured his ancestors in the respective funerary complexes, was invited to banquets in private houses belonging to his social network and in turn had to invite people to banquets in his house, this must have been a quite full feasting – and therefore *social* – calendar.

114 Apart from the general plausibility of golden drinking vessels in socially elevated circles, there is almost no archaeological evidence. Pfrommer 1987, 48 n. 282. 228 cat. KaB A 139 refers to a fragmented bronze bowl in the Petra Museum which he dates, on typological criteria, to the 5th c. BCE.

115 Healey 2001, 167–169; Salameen – Falahat 2012, 43–49.

116 For a well-studied case from Palmyra see Schmidt-Colinet 2011. In general, see Stadter 2014, 108–116 with further references.

or local level. Several elements that possibly define social groups (which do not have to be necessarily the same) are specific to Petra and its region: sculpture in ‘Mediterranean’ style, tomb façades with ‘Mediterranean’ elements, the production (not the use) of painted pottery and probably others more. If we want to continue to refer to the painted pottery as ‘Nabataean’ and to suggest that its use at banquets and feasts of social groups throughout the Nabataean realm is something typically Nabataean, then we will have to accept that something very close to a Nabataean identity is strongly related to Petra.¹¹⁷

A more detailed though still very preliminary analysis of the spatio-temporal distribution of Nabataean (or Petraean?) painted pottery indicates that its core distribution should be expected in a range of about 100 kilometres around Petra, including Aila, Oboda, Mampsis, Khirbet edh-Dharīh and Khirbet edh-Tannur (fig. 5). These are the places outside Petra where the earliest variants of this pottery were found (Aila, Oboda, Mampsis¹¹⁸) and where it continued to be used after the annexation of the Nabataean kingdom by Rome in 106 CE (all of them). This area corresponds rather well to the “Nabataean common ware *koine*” defined by Yvonne Gerber. Whether this is the core of what should become known as the Nabataean kingdom¹¹⁹ with Petra as a centre, and whether this area was at the origin of something that modern research would tentatively call a Nabataean identity, requires further investigation.¹²⁰ The same holds true for the approximate accordance of the central part of this area with the Edomite cultural sphere. In any case, we should be careful not to underestimate the complexity of ancient societies, even when external sources, Greek and Roman ones in the case of the Nabataeans, suggest simple explanations. As there were local and regional ‘sub-identities’ in the area during the Iron Age¹²¹, the same might be true for the Naba-

117 A predominant role of Petra for the creation of the Nabataean kingdom has been postulated, among others, by Wenning 2007, 27–30.

118 Machaerus and Dhiban (*supra* n. 84, 85) as well, which are located about 135 kilometres north of Petra as the crow flies.

119 See also Wenning 2007, 36–37: “Probably the Nabataeans did not expand north of Wadi el-Hesa or of Wadi el-Mojib before the Hasmoneans started to occupy territories in Coele Syria east of the Jordan during the late second/early first century B. C.” It is interesting to note that Wenning considers the same northern limits as the initial nucleus of the Nabataean kingdom.

120 As indicated several times in this contribution, a holistic approach to the material culture is required. While the past decades have more or less successfully posited the pillars for a typo-chronological classification and understanding of Nabataean culture, the time is now ripe for a more differentiated and analytical approach to the available material, as proposed by Tholbecq and others (*supra* n. 7).

121 As mentioned above (n. 107), Edomite decorated pottery was produced at several places, indicating a stronger tribal structure including manifold interactions between groups, as pointed out e. g. by Bienkowski – Steen 2001; Bienkowski 2002, 349–351; Whiting 2007, 121–132; see also Tebes 2011; Tebes 2014, heavily relying on the world-systems theory. When comparing with the pattern of Nabataean painted pottery, this would definitely indicate a stronger central (stately) organisation for the latter.

taean period. At least for Petra, the often-cited studies dealing with the manifestations of social groups in the epigraphic and archaeological record were able to show a rich variety.¹²² Furthermore, in several contributions some years ago, Jean-Marie Dentzer pointed out that the Nabataeans cannot be considered an isolated phenomenon, but must be understood as part of a multitude of tribes that did not behave statically but very dynamically, even when they sedentarised.¹²³ Both the tribe- and clan-based social structure as well as the dynamic behaviour continued even within a specific political entity like the Nabataean kingdom. This is well demonstrated for the religious sphere.¹²⁴ Religious processions and pilgrimages brought people from other places to settlements and sanctuaries where one of the important activities was, of course, feasting. Nabataean commensal policies therefore not only worked in one direction (from the centre to the periphery), but in many directions – not only geographically, but also socially. As the commensal practices *per definitionem* allowed a tremendous flexibility for constructing identities and shaping social differentiation within groups, it offered all the tools a complex society needed for structuring itself.¹²⁵

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122 *supra* n. 60.

123 Dentzer 1999, 233–239 and *passim* as well as other contributions by the same author.

124 Dentzer 2010 (for the dynamic aspects); Wenning 2011 (for the tribal structure of religiosity).

125 It is very likely that Antiochos I of Commagene put similar emphasis on commensal practices, as may be indicated by the detailed description of the various festivals he organised in honour of the gods and himself: Versluys 2017, 103. 256–259.

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Looking West

‘Achaemenid’ and ‘Hellenistic’ Strands of Representation in the Minor Kingdoms of Asia Minor*

CHRISTOPH MICHELS

‘East’ and ‘West’ in an Interconnected World

It is a long-established tradition to regard Hellenistic Commagene as essentially situated between and influenced by two worlds and cultural spheres: the West, i. e. the Hellenistic world and Rome, on the one hand, and the Orient or the East, i. e. Persia respectively the contemporaneous kingdoms of Parthia (and Armenia), on the other hand.¹ This focus comes as no surprise, since these two strands feature prominently in the monuments of Antiochos I of Commagene, and the “ancient manners of Persians and Greeks” are explicitly identified as the “most fortunate roots” of his ancestry in the famous Nomos inscription from Nemrud Dağ.² Antiochos’ much-debated project of religious syncretism and the anchoring of his monarchy in the Macedonian and Achaemenid tradition have therefore been central to studies on Hellenistic Commagene, in general and especially to studies on his monuments.³ Closely connected to this is the relationship between the Eastern and Western influences on the inhabitants of Commagene, on the one hand, and on its monarchs, on the other hand.⁴ These questions, of course, do not only concern Commagene, but on a more general level the “Brückenland Anatolien” as a whole.⁵ Until recently, it was widely accepted that these

* I thank the editors for the possibility to contribute to this volume and Stefan Riedel for valuable comments on the manuscript.

1 On this cf. e. g. the chapter of Facella 2006, 299–358: “i successori di Antioco fra Rom e l’Oriente” or Jacobs 2012, 108: “im Schnittpunkt der Interessen einer östlichen und einer westlichen Großmacht, Parthiens und Roms”. Against this model Versluys 2017; Riedel 2018, 87–89.

2 OGIS 383 (= Burstein 1991, no. 48), ll. 29–31; Facella 2006, 291–294.

3 The aims of Antiochos I are of course heavily debated, cf. only recently Facella 2006, 294–297; Jacobs 2012, 108, and Versluys 2017, esp. 108–184.

4 Cf. the contribution by Jacobs in this volume.

5 Cf. e. g. Blum et al. 2002. For Schwertheim 2005, 77 Commagene is characteristic for Asia Minor’s role as “Vermittlerin zwischen Orient und Okzident”. Critical now Versluys 2017, esp. 249–254.

two cultural influences were opposing, if not even mutually exclusive forces. To illustrate this view, I quote one excerpt from the conclusion of a short comparative study by Stephen Mitchell on the Attalids of Pergamon and the Mithradatids of Pontos:

“In Classical antiquity Asia Minor was ruled from Persia between the sixth and fourth centuries B. C., and by Rome from the second century B. C. until late antiquity. The history of the Attalids and the Mithradatids during the hellenistic age, when the region was not dominated by external rulers, illustrates the same tensions from a different perspective. The choice between East and West still had to be made. The Attalids identified themselves with Hellenic European civilisation, based on co-operative rule with Greek city states such as Athens. The Mithradatids turned to Persia and developed a form of oriental monarchy derived from the Achaemenid tradition, and their partners were not Greek cities but eastern temple-states.”⁶

Going ‘beyond’ this largely constructed dichotomy has shown to be a very fruitful approach over the past years. Many studies on the major dynasties (especially concerning the Seleucids and Parthia) as well as on several small Hellenistic realms (Commagene being only one of them) have emphasized that ‘East’ and ‘West’ were in fact neither opposing nor mutually exclusive forces.⁷ Rather than interpreting the spread of ‘Greek’ culture in the Hellenistic period as the result of a guided civilising process, recent studies have instead asked for the motives of non-Greeks to adopt and adapt certain aspects of Greek (respectively Hellenistic) culture dominating the main states of the Eastern Mediterranean; likewise, it has been pointed out that Greek culture changed along the way.⁸ The reception and the instrumentalization of the cultural memory of Persian and Achaemenid culture and ideology (recently termed ‘Persianism’) have also been

6 Mitchell 2005, 529–530.

7 On the Seleucids see, among many other recent publications, Sherwin-White – Kuhrt 1993; Mehl 1999; Plischke 2014, esp. 327–328; Strootman 2017. On the Parthians, cf. Wiesehöfer 2000, 720: “Ein kulturelles und kulturpolitisches Entweder-Oder war ihnen, wie allen Herrschern der hellenistischen Welt des Ostens, fremd.” Fowler 2005, 129 advocates to see the Parthians neither exclusively as eastern (Achaemenid) nor as western (Greek) but to apply a “more nuanced view”; cf. also Shayegan 2016; Shayegan 2017; Olbrycht 2019. Concerning Pontos, see McGing 2014, 21; Gatzke 2019, 64.

8 Versluys 2017, 210: “it was not a matter of a superior culture bringing civilisation to a barbarian periphery”. One central aspect for the success of Greek culture (perhaps best illustrated by the spread of Greek language) certainly was, however, that it was the culture favoured by the Greco-Macedonian masters of this world. Power relations and usefulness considerations certainly play an important role in culture contact, cf. Ulf 2009; Ulf 2014. It was the Greco-Macedonian imprint of the Hellenistic world which meant that to participate in the dominant discourse required the acquisition of Greek education; cf. Bringmann 2004, 326–327. It is certainly important to be aware that there existed no pure forms of culture (cf. Versluys 2017, 207). On ‘Greekness’ in the Hellenistic period cf. Stavrianopoulou 2013; Freitag – Michels 2014. Although I agree with Versluys 2017, 212 that Hellenism meant for the indigenous kings to associate with “civilisation and modernity” (cf. Michels 2009, 288, 321), this was apparently not an all-encompassing drive as is shown by the rock-cut tombs of the Pontic kings; cf. Fleischer 2017.

contextualized in the contemporary Hellenistic world and critiqued concerning their 'authenticity' and informative value in respect to their cultural background.⁹

In this complex, 'globalized' world, it is certainly problematic to identify clear-cut, 'pure' cultural strands.¹⁰ There has, however, recently been a tendency to dissolve this dichotomy completely in a type of Hellenism influenced by various sources, and this, in my mind, has sometimes been taken too far.¹¹ An example is the recently published paper by Charlotte Lerouge-Cohen on the self-representation of the Mithradatids. While discussing 'Persianism' in the Pontic kingdom in the form of reference to the 'Seven Persians' – an aspect to which I will return below – she arrives at the following conclusion:

“The claim to Persian or Achaemenid roots was not targeted to an Iranian audience: it was a deliberate way to gain prestige and legitimacy, which could be combined with Macedonian claims, in a world that was not 'Greek' or 'Iranian', but simply 'Hellenistic'.”¹²

To label the multiform Hellenistic world of states as “simply Hellenistic” is also an oversimplification, of course. It is too sweeping an assertion with regard to its many cultures, and despite several characteristic similarities of the Hellenistic monarchies, the label 'Hellenistic' also only partially accounts for the specific royal images of the different Macedonian dynasties, let alone those of the diverse small kingdoms – among them Commagene.¹³

- 9 Strootman – Versluys 2017 on the concept of 'Persianism' (“ideas and associations revolving around Persia and appropriated in specific contexts for specific (socio-cultural or socio-political) reasons”; cf. Versluys 2017, 215). Strootman 2017, n. 90 defines cultural memory as “a partially constructed, top-downwardly imposed view of the past to serve the political aims of the present”. But that hardly does justice to the concept, as it rather means a long-term collective memory that is institutionalized and possesses specialized carriers of memory (in opposition to the fluid short-term communicative memory). Political aims are not necessarily attached to it; cf. Assmann 2008.
- 10 Versluys 2017, 20; Strootman – Versluys 2017; Gatzke 2019, 74: “cosmopolitan world that rejected the Greek-Persian binary”. The latter is rather problematic as it implies a conscious choice.
- 11 D'Agostini 2016 for example stresses the “multicultural ties of the Mithradatids”. Gatzke 2019, 74, regarding the representation of the greatest king of Pontos, Mithradates VI Eupator Dionysos, sums up: “Influenced by the culture of the Hellenistic period in general, and the Seleucid kingdom in particular, which had adopted many elements of Persian culture into their Greco-Macedonian worldview, Mithradates took off the blinders and revealed Hellenistic royal culture for what it was – hybrid of imperial Persian, Hellenic, and local traditions.” On the terms Hellenism and Hellenization cf. Michels 2009, 19–29; Strootman 2017, 177 n. 1.
- 12 Lerouge-Cohen 2017, 233.
- 13 For an overview of recent research on Hellenistic kingship see Wiemer 2017; see already Gruen 1996: “No single model accounts for Hellenistic kingship”.

Looking at Commagene from the North-West

When an autonomous kingdom of Commagene came into being in the middle of the 2nd century BCE¹⁴, it bordered to several other minor kingdoms in the North-West, which had come into being in the course of the 3rd c. BCE, its immediate neighbour being (Greater) Cappadocia, followed by the adjoining Cappadocia Pontica (Pontos)¹⁵, Bithynia, and Pergamon.¹⁶ As mentioned above, among these kingdoms of Central, Northern and Western Asia Minor, the Attalids have traditionally been grouped (despite their obscure beginnings) as part of the Macedonian dynasties, while the Ariarathids of Cappadocia, the Mithradatids of ‘Pontos’, and the kings of Bithynia are counted as indigenous (respectively ‘semi-barbarian’) dynasties – ruled by Thracian (Bithynia) and Iranian (Cappadocia and Pontos) kings.¹⁷ Furthermore, Bithynia and Pontos differed from inner-Anatolian Cappadocia by their proximity to the Black Sea coast (where Greek colonies had already existed for centuries), which meant indirect connection to the Mediterranean.¹⁸

It is indeed of little help to presuppose monolithic cultural blocks as framework when studying the multi-faceted image of these non-Greek kings – being influenced by local as well as ‘global’ traditions.¹⁹ A view on Commagene from ‘the West’ or ‘the East’ therefore bears methodological problems.²⁰ A comparison with potential parallels to other emerging minor kingdoms in Anatolia may offer a substantial contribution to compensate the extreme scarcity of sources for early Commagene.²¹ Concerning Commagene’s capital, Samosata, for example, it seems plausible that the Armenian ruler Samos I documented his claim to rule over this area by the re-foundation of

14 Sullivan 1978, 743–748; but cf. Jakobsson 2013.

15 The name Pontos as designation is late, cf. McGing 2014, 21–22.

16 On the geographic extension of Commagene see Facella 2006, 51–71.

17 There is no commonly accepted name for the Bithynian dynasty. Scholten 2007 calls them “Boteirids” which seems arbitrary since a predecessor of the name-giving Boteiras with the name Doidalsis is mentioned by Memnon BNJ 434 12,3. Wiemer 2017, 308 n. 7 surprisingly calls them “Prusaden” (probably after Prusias I). Historically correct would be Zipoitids after Zipoitēs (I). Gabelko 2017 rightly stresses the peculiarities of these kingdoms.

18 A good example for this connectivity is that the Bithynian king Ziaelas was asked by Cos to grant *asylia* to its sanctuary of Asclepius while also receiving security for their traders in the region; cf. TAM IV,1 1 (= RC 25; Burstein 1991, no. 26; HGIÜ III 409; Austin 2006, no. 66.).

19 McGing 2014; Riedel 2018, 86–92.

20 Cf. e. g. Metzler 2012, 115: “durch den Osten geprägt”. On details of the alleged Achaemenid iconography see, however, Jacobs 2017.

21 Versluys 2017 stresses the lack of sources on the first rulers of Commagene. Although he is certainly right that this must be a warning against too extensive historical reconstructions, a lack of sources is not a specific feature of Commagene, but also of Pontos and especially of Cappadocia; cf. McGing 2014, 22. Therefore, one should not take it as indication that the later sources for the first kings are fabrications.

the city.²² There are numerous examples of this behaviour as typical for Hellenistic kings, and similar behaviour was also observed in Iranian kingdoms, e. g. early Cappadocia (Ariaramneia, Ariarathea), Pontos (e. g. Pharnakeia, but apparently not the first kings), Parthia (Arsakia), and Armenia (Tigranes II founded several settlements called Tigrankert/Tigranocerta).²³ Likewise, the risky incursion of the first independent Commagenian ruler Ptolemaios into Melitene might best be understood as an attempt to gain military prestige, as the victorious king is a central theme of Hellenistic monarchy also adopted by the non-Greek kings.²⁴ However, in order to retrace the specific ideological foundations of monarchical rule in the different 'minor' monarchies of Asia Minor, it seems equally important to point not only to similarities as part of the Hellenistic world but also to profound differences between these Hellenistic kingdoms of Asia Minor.²⁵

A view from North-West on Commagene, so to speak, is all the more necessary, because the representation of the Orontids has sometimes been regarded as illustrative and characteristic for the way these minor monarchies of Hellenistic Asia Minor instrumentalized the Achaemenid and Hellenistic strands of representation. This view results from a deficit: no archaeological or epigraphical monuments comparable to those of Commagene (with exception to coinage) have survived from these monarchies that would allow comparable insights into the royal self-representation (if not self-perception) that occurred in their own realms.²⁶ In the following, I would like to outline the possibilities of this comparative approach with reflections on some examples from both ideological strands without any claim to completeness. The cultural

22 Winter 2008, 41. But cf. Sullivan 1978, 751–752 who prefers a (re)foundation of Samosata by Samos II. Cf. also the contribution by Canepa in this volume.

23 On Hellenistic city foundations as phenomenon cf. Cohen 1995, 15–74. Arsakia: Plischke 2014, 240; Ariarathea: Michels 2009, 311–313; Tigrankert: Canepa 2017, 221; Cohen 2013, 50–51. Cf., however, Versluys 2017, 172–173.

24 Diod. Sic. 31,19a; Facella 2006, 199–205. On the ideal of the victorious king (H.-J. Gehrke) see Wiemer 2017. It is important to recognize that military themes were also not alien to Achaemenid royal ideology, cf. Brosius 2005; but see Tuplin 2014, 264: "The conquest imperative may have been stronger in Hellenistic kings than in at least the Achaemenids who *immediately* preceded them."

25 Cf. Versluys 2017, 250: "Of course, those options were determined by his geographical and chronological context to a certain degree – and certainly by his position in society. A Hellenistic king ruling a small kingdom in North Africa, for instance, would have had different cultural scenarios at his disposal; but only partly so." My aim in this paper is to show that we do not have to go to North Africa to illustrate the differences between the non-Greek kingdoms but can show them already in Asia Minor.

26 Cf. e. g. Schwertheim 2005, 77–81. Instead, we are often dependent on literary sources alone. On the famous speech of Mithradates VI Eupator Dionysos (Iust. 38,4–7) in which he claims dual descent, now see Ballesteros Pastor 2013a, 272–285. One should not deduce from the lack of surviving material that there originally were no monuments like those of Commagene in Pontos and Cappadocia as Gatzke 2019, 65 seems to think.

development of these regions lies beyond the scope of this paper and can only be touched upon.²⁷

The limits of generalization concerning the usage of the Achaemenid and Macedonian heritage by Hellenistic monarchies of Asia Minor can already be quite clearly illustrated by means of a view on the representation of the Bithynian kings in this respect. Regarding typical royal euergetism in the Greek world, Hellenistic Bithynia certainly is 'remarkably similar' to Commagene, Pontos, and Cappadocia (and to a certain degree also to Pergamon).²⁸ This is, however, not at all the case with the construction of links to the Persians/Achaemenids and the Macedonians. Although Bithynian royal coins were at times and to a different degree influenced by the Seleucids (and Antigonids?)²⁹, there are no sources that present these kings as descendants of Alexander or one of the Macedonian dynasties. On the contrary, it seems that Bithynia's first Hellenistic monarch, Zipoites, used a decisive victory over Lysimachos to proclaim himself king.³⁰ It is even clearer that these Thracian monarchs did not claim any connection to the Achaemenids, although they had once been a (comparably autonomous) part of the Persian Empire.³¹

It is also worth pointing out the nuances in areas where the kingdoms of Asia Minor look very similar, at a first glance.

The Title *philhellen* and the Hellenistic Example

Fraser has pointed out that the Orontids were active as benefactors of Greek cities, like the other Hellenistic kings (although on a smaller scale),³² and he evaluated their activities on this field as part of the "strivings of these kings for hellenic culture, for the hellenic imprint bestowed by the patronage of Greek cities".³³ While it is problematic to draw a direct line between international euergetism and an internal policy of Hellenization, the Orontids certainly styled themselves as philhellenes.³⁴

27 Cf. recently McGing 2014; Ballesteros Pastor 2006 (Pontos); Fernoux 2004; Corsten 2007; Michels 2013a (Bithynia); Michels 2013b; Michels 2017; Panichi 2018 (Cappadocia).

28 Versluys 2017, 165. On the euergetism of the Bithynian kings see Hannestad 1996; Michels 2009, 54–87.

29 Cf. Schönert-Geiss 1978; Michels 2009, 153–182, 247–250.

30 Memnon (BNJ 434) 12,4–5. On Zipoites see Habicht 1972, Kobes 1996, 83–84; Scholten 2007; Michels 2009, 12–13, 65, 264–266, 284–285.

31 On pre- and early-Hellenistic Bithynia, see Hannestad 1996, 69–70; Briant 2002, 699; Scholten 2007; Michels 2009; Michels 2013. On the Thracian imprint of Bithynia and its kings, see only Corsten 2007.

32 Fraser 1978, 359–371.

33 Fraser 1978, 374.

34 Facella 2005, 87–94: "philhellenic dynasty".

But what does that mean? Like the great Macedonian dynasties (and among the smaller ones especially Pergamon), the kings of the minor monarchies of Asia Minor were active in a field that can be described with the modern term 'philhellenism'.³⁵ Philhellenism possessed both a political and a cultural dimension.³⁶ Royal benefactions – euergetism and sometimes military support – to Greek cities and sanctuaries were an important aspect that touched both dimensions. They served both as a diplomatic tool and as a source of royal prestige.³⁷ In a broader sense, it was an ideal for every Hellenistic king to be regarded as a common benefactor (κοινὸς εὐεργέτης) of the Greeks.³⁸ Their 'cultural competence' was also demonstrated by the fact that the courts of the non-Greek kings were increasingly influenced by Greek 'art and culture'.³⁹ However, not all aspects of the indigenous kings' integration into the Hellenistic world should be seen as expressions of their philhellenism or as instruments of staging this image. Dynastic marriages to Macedonian dynasties, for example, were rather a way to forge alliances and to find recognition of royal status.⁴⁰ Another question is whether the presence of Macedonian royal women at the court of non-Greek monarchies could entail a certain amount of 'Hellenization'.⁴¹ Furthermore, it is well attested that there was a close connection between the concepts of *paideia* and *philhellen*.⁴² The ideal king was not only supposed to be a superior statesman and warrior but also an educated man and a patron of the arts.⁴³ On the one hand, the minor dynasties emulated the major dynasties in this field in an effort to show themselves as their peers, and on the other hand, they were pulled into the 'self-perpetuating spiral' of euergetical exchange by poleis asking for benefactions.⁴⁴ In this, the Commagenian kings resemble their western neighbours. While "styling yourself as philhellen" – that is: to act as a philhel-

35 Cf. only Kobes 1996; Gruen 2000; Bringmann 2000; de Callatay 2003; Fernoux 2004; Panichi 2005; Michels 2009; Michels 2010a.

36 Ferrary 2014, 497–526.

37 Bringmann 2000; Kropp 2013, 253–254. Generally, Ballesteros Pastor 2006, 383–384; Michels 2009; Michels 2010a; Michels 2010b.

38 Cf. Antiochos III in I.Teos 30 (= Burstein 1991, no. 33), ll. 6–8. A particularly prominent example is the Attalid Eumenes II in OGIS 763 (= Welles RC 52; Austin 2006), no. 239, l. 6–13; cf. Syll.³ 630 (= Austin 2006, no. 237), ll. 1–10. On the development of the term 'common benefactor' cf. Erskine 1994. The same notion can be found in a letter by Ziaelas of Bithynia; TAM IV,1 1 (= RC 25; Burstein 1991, no. 26; HGIÜ III 409; Austin 2006, no. 66.), ll. 11–17; cf. Hannestad 1996; Michels 2009, 56–65.

39 Versluys 2017, 211. Cf. Michels 2009, 29–31; Gabelko 2017; Michels 2020.

40 McGing 2014, 30.

41 Olshausen 1974, 158. The reverse case, a certain amount of 'Asianisation' of Pergamon by the introduction of Zeus Sabazios from Cappadocia by queen Stratonike, daughter of Ariarathes IV, is documented by IvP 1,248 (= OGIS 331 = RC 67), ll. 45–61.

42 Ferrary 2014, 505–511.

43 Gruen 2000; Alonso Troncoso 2005. For the education of the Pontic princes see Ballesteros Pastor 2005; for Cappadocia see Panichi 2005; cf. Michels 2009; Michels 2020.

44 For the mechanisms of this reciprocal exchange see Bringmann 2000; Ma 2002, esp. 185; cf. on the first Pontic 'philhellene' Pharnaces I also Michels 2010b.

lene – “served to claim membership of the (wider) Hellenistic world and the circle of Hellenistic kings”,⁴⁵ to assume the title φιλέλλην, however, as Antiochos I of Commagene did, was something quite different.⁴⁶

The term, rarely used in ancient literature,⁴⁷ expressed a willingness to promote Greeks or to open up to Greek culture.⁴⁸ Although it could also be used for Greeks who acted selflessly for the benefit of all Hellenes, the term was applied much more often to non-Greeks.⁴⁹ It is first used by Herodotus to describe the policies of the Egyptian pharaoh Amasis.⁵⁰ On a cultural level, even an entire people could be characterized as *philhellen*.⁵¹ Since the term was thus mainly applied to outsiders, it had an ambivalent quality. According to the literary tradition, Alexander I of Macedon was the first monarch to officially carry the title φιλέλλην, but it seems that the epithet was not contemporary, as it was not used by any source from the 5th c. BCE.⁵² The title is not attested as a self-description of any monarch in the Classical period and was not held by any member of the great Hellenistic dynasties.⁵³ For our purposes, it is essential to point out that the kings of Bithynia, the Mithradatids, and the Ariarathids also never assumed this title.⁵⁴ Although one can only speculate why this was the case, it is plausible that these non-Greek kings did not assume it because they felt (or wanted to create the impression) that they belonged to the Greco-Macedonian world.⁵⁵

Basically, it were “rois barbares”, as Ferrary put it, who took the title from the middle of the 2nd c. BCE onwards.⁵⁶ For the kings of Commagene, the Parthian kings probably were the example. They were the first to assume *philhellen* as official (and also first)

45 Versluys 2017, 230.

46 See, however, Versluys 2017, 166.

47 Ferrary 2014, 498 n. 9 with a survey of usage in ancient literature and Parsons 1996.

48 Errington 1999, 150. In light of the cultural dimension of the term (in contrast to philoromaïos), it is problematic to classify the title *philhellen* as purely political, as de Callatay – Lorber 2011, 454 do.

49 Parsons 1996, 111.

50 Hdt. 2,178,1.

51 Parsons 1996, 110: “In outline, the word is applied (1) to non-Greeks either (a) by Greeks, as an interested compliment, or (b) by the non-Greeks themselves, as a gesture; (2) much more rarely, by Greeks to Greeks.”

52 Muccioli 2013, 28–29; Ferrary 2014, 499, n. 11; Müller 2016, 129 with n. 196.

53 Fowler 2005, 152 assumes that the large dynasties “avoided” to take this epithet. Perhaps they did not even think about using it as it would have been absurd for them as they naturally saw themselves as part of the Greek oikumene.

54 Muccioli 2013, 259. This also applies to a ruler like Ariarathes V whom we might – in modern terminology – term a philhellene; cf. Panichi 2005 with Michels 2009, 41–42, 133–139.

55 Ferrary 2014, 497: “La même observation vaut pour les Antigonides, les Lagides, les Attalides, et même pour des dynasties comme celles de Cappadoce, de Bithynie et du Pont, plus profondément hellénisées ou du moins en rapports plus étroits avec les cités du monde égéen que les Arsacides ou les Artaxiades.”

56 Ferrary 2014, 499–501.

epithet.⁵⁷ Mithradates I took the title in reaction to the capture of Seleucia on the Tigris in 141 BCE and minted tetradrachms with the legend ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ ΦΙΛΕΛΛΕΝΟΣ.⁵⁸ Fowler interpreted this innovation as an “opening gambit for friendly dialogue with the Greek communities”.⁵⁹ Among the following kings (up to Vologais V), it became a frequently used component of their title.⁶⁰ Recent research has pointed out that Parthian philhellenism towards their Greek subjects was not unconditional but rather part of their ‘Realpolitik’.⁶¹ While in principle the same applies to the Greco-Macedonian rulers, it is important to stress this point with regard to the Parthians because Greek titles and court system apparently did not change the “territorial and ethnic foundations of kingship”.⁶² Although it signified the appreciation of everything Greek, there certainly was no cultural subordination implied by it.⁶³

Thus, by describing himself as *philhellen*, Antiochos basically signalled – despite the use of Greek and the genealogical constructions – that he was not a Greco-Macedonian king, as Peter F. Mittag has rightly stressed.⁶⁴ This aspect of the multi-layered picture of his representation⁶⁵ is particularly significant because it suggests gradual differences between the royal image in Commagene, Pontos and Cappadocia. Looking to the East, however, we see kings of Armenia also assuming the title *philhellen*.⁶⁶ This is insofar possibly relevant for Commagene as the Armenian kings were an important reference point for the kings of Commagene – initially as their suzerains from whom they claimed descent. This changed after Tigranes the Great had been subjugated by Pompey. Antiochos now apparently tried to fill the power vacuum left by the Armenian king and propagated his enhanced status, for example, by the adoption of the Armenian tiara. As the attribution of the relevant coins from Nisibis with the title *philhellen* to Tigranes the Great is, however, far from sure it remains unclear if Antiochos

57 Jacobs 2017, 247 stresses the influence of Parthian self-presentation on Commagene and points to the close connections between the two dynasties – manifested e.g. in the marriage of Laodike, daughter of Antiochos I, with Orodes II; cf. Sullivan 1978, 756. 766; Wagner 1983, 209–212 (Karakuş [Kb]); Facella 2006, 237–238.

58 Fowler 2005, 152.

59 Fowler 2005, 152. Canepa 2017, 211 sees them rather as a political challenge to the Seleucids.

60 de Callataj – Lorber 2011, 425. 451. 455; Muccioli 2013, 287.

61 Wiesehöfer 1996b, 62 emphasizes that Parthian philhellenism was “strongly determined by questions of loyalty and disloyalty”; cf. Ferrary 2014, 499–500 n. 12.

62 Wiesehöfer 1996b, 60.

63 Muccioli 2013, 257–258.

64 Mittag 2004, 12: “Auch das Epitheton Philhellen (SO 3) ist ein deutlicher Beleg dafür, daß sich Antiochos I. nicht im üblichen Rahmen griechisch-hellenistischer Herrscher bewegte.” It is therefore problematic when Petzl 2012 writes regarding Antiochos’ title *philhellen*: “Sein Philhellenentum erklärt sich schon dadurch, dass er seine familiäre Abkunft auf Perser und Griechen zurückführte.” This is rather a contradiction.

65 Mittag 2004, 12: “mehrschichtiges Bild”.

66 Ferrary 2014, 500. On the numbering of the Armenian kings see Bendschus 2018, 14 n. 20.

also imitated Tigranes by assuming this epithet.⁶⁷ At any rate, these members of the “wider Western Iranian world”⁶⁸ apparently saw themselves quite differently with respect to the Greek oikumene. Concerning the cultural imprint of Anatolia in Achaemenid (and Hellenistic) times, much must remain unclear due to a lack of sources⁶⁹, but it seems probable that traditions played an important role here. However, that does not mean that Pontos and Cappadocia were already largely Hellenized at the time of the rise of the post-satrapal dynasts, as has been frequently presupposed, also in recent studies.⁷⁰ That we hear next to nothing about culture conflicts in Hellenistic Pontos or Cappadocia is no argument for a homogenous Hellenistic culture among the populace.⁷¹ The impact of Achaemenid rule on these landscapes and the consequences of Iranian colonization have been controversially discussed, and it is certainly necessary to differentiate.⁷² While Pontos had a very heterogenous population in the Hellenistic period⁷³, especially Greater Cappadocia underwent a profound Iranization during the time of Achaemenid occupation.⁷⁴

The Iranian Kingdoms and the Achaemenid Tradition

This cultural imprint is of course equally, if not more important for the evaluation of the other strand, that is, the reception of Persian/Achaemenid ideology, and it is

- 67 The close connections of Commagene to Armenia are stressed by Sullivan 1973, 33. On Antiochos and Rome see only Sullivan 1978, 764–766; cf. Sullivan 1973, 20–24; Wagner 1983, 201; Riedel 2018, 119–120 on the assumption of the Armenian tiara. On the attribution of the coins from Nisibis which differ from the other coins of Tigranes (II) cf. Sullivan 1977, 25–27; Foss 1986, 48–50. A later unique drachm of Tigranes II/III (20–8 BCE) also lists the epithet *philhellen*, cf. Foss 1986, 49.
- 68 Canepa 2017, 301.
- 69 Cf. McGing 2014, 24; Messerschmidt 2014, 324.
- 70 As e.g. Gatzke 2019, 63 seems to think: “the family’s Iranian heritage did little to gain the early Pontic kings power in a region where Hellenism reigned supreme”.
- 71 Lerouge-Cohen 2017, 226. That we hear nothing of conflicts does not surprise, however. The inner workings of these kingdoms were of no interest to the Greek authors and such troubles would not have been documented in ‘official’ inscriptions. Lerouge-Cohen 2017, 226 stresses that the Pontic kings “seem to have met no opposition to their Hellenizing policies from these families”. It is central to point out in this context that there were no royal Hellenizing policies in these kingdoms if one understands these as the intentional support and the spread of Greek culture among the originally non-Greek population. Argued in detail in Michels 2009; cf. Michels 2010a.
- 72 On the different positions, cf. Briant 2009; Jacobs 2014; Klingenberg 2014; Briant 2015; Michels 2017 with literature.
- 73 McGing 2014 differentiates between Greek, Anatolian and Persian Pontos. Again, it is important not to reduce the problem to a question of either Persian or Greek/Hellenistic; cf. McGing 2014, 22: “there is a danger of replacing one solitary identity with another”.
- 74 Mitchell 2007; Michels 2017. Andreas Klingenberg kindly informs me (written communication) that in his soon to be published Habilitationsschrift on the presence of Iranians in Hellenistic and Roman Asia Minor he argues that there is considerable continuity – of course in some areas more and in others (drastically) less, but significantly so in Cappadocia and Pontos.

likewise possible to differentiate between the dynasties, in this case. Without going into too much detail, as 'Persianism' as a royal culture has been the topic of several recent studies⁷⁵, I would like to point out certain nuances that appear to be significant and connected to the relevance of claims to Achaemenid ancestry and territory of the post-satrapal dynasts in Pontos and Cappadocia.

While the kings of Pontos, Cappadocia, Commagene and Armenia all used elements of the Achaemenid royal legacy, there are apparent differences between them. These are especially visible on coins.⁷⁶ Whereas the coin portraits of the kings of Cappadocia, Armenia, and Commagene show them wearing different forms (at different times) of the *kyrbasia* and the *tiara orthé*, none of the Pontic kings, not even Mithradates VI, to whom often the clearest references to Achaemenid kingship are ascribed, wears a 'Persian' headdress on coins. The different *tiara*-types are not 'authentic' representations of the Achaemenid headdress, but their message clearly places these Hellenistic kings in the same tradition as the kings of Persia.⁷⁷ The adoption of the Armenian *tiara* by Antiochos I of Commagene (and by Artavasdes II of Atropatene) illustrates that this iconography also has to be seen against the background of contemporary power struggles between the different Iranian dynasties – in this time of course heavily influenced by Roman presence.⁷⁸ The Cappadocian coins are insofar especially illustrative of the change of coin design during the entry into the Hellenistic world, as the first coins carry an Aramaic legend that soon changes to Greek, and at the same time the iconography becomes more 'Hellenistic' by the introduction of the diademed portrait of the king on the *avers* and Athena Nikephoros on the *reverse*.⁷⁹ The first Parthian coins seem comparable in terms of this basic constellation of Hellenistic and decidedly non-Greek elements.⁸⁰ In their effort to document their sovereign status, the Parthians borrowed elements of Hellenistic or – more specifically – Seleucid royal ideology.⁸¹ However, they also emphasized their cultural distinction.⁸² The first known Pontic royal coins are copies of the gold *stater*s of Alexander.⁸³ When individualized Pontic kings appear from Mithradates III onwards, the kings' diademed portraits look decid-

75 Cf. on this e. g. Eckhardt 2015; Canepa 2017, 203: "royal culture".

76 See now Bendschus 2017 (Pontos, Cappadocia and Commagene); on the coins of Pontos and Cappadocia, cf. also Michels 2009, 183–246. On the coins of Commagene see the contribution by Facella in this volume.

77 On the different types see von Gall 1990; on the iconography cf. also Jacobs 2017.

78 Sullivan 1973, esp. 32–33.

79 On the coins of the early Ariarathids see Alram 1986; Michels 2009, 220–224; Bendschus 2017, 41–44; cf. Panichi 2018, 7–14.

80 Dąbrowa 2014, 304.

81 On the aspect of sovereignty cf. Keller 2010, 614–615. The Greco-Hellenistic example is stressed by Plischke 2014, 240–242.

82 Dąbrowa 2014, 311; Canepa 2017, 210–214.

83 de Callatay 2009; Michels 2009, 183–185; Bendschus 2017, 93–95.

edly non-Greek, but there is nothing specifically Iranian about them, either.⁸⁴ While the high quality of the tetradrachms issued by Mithradates III, Pharnaces I, Mithradates IV and V is remarkable, François de Callatay has stressed that the kings prior to Mithradates VI never struck vast amounts of coins and has pointed out the low monetization of Pontos in the Hellenistic period in comparison to Bithynia, which should warn against concluding from the Hellenistic royal coin iconography the presence of Greek culture.⁸⁵ From the time of Ariarathes IV onwards, the Ariarathids appear in the guise of Hellenistic kings with diadem and stylistically similar to the Seleucids.⁸⁶ A decidedly Persian ruler iconography remained an option, however. On some coins, Ariarathes VI is again shown with a tiara of a type that is a development of the tiara of the Great Kings.⁸⁷ This was most likely not arbitrary but a reaction to a specific historical situation that necessitated this political message, which was possibly aimed at other Iranian dynasts rather than at the own population.⁸⁸ In Pontos, Mithradates VI – like his forebears, but modified and intensified in a time of imperial expansion – famously combined both strands in his fight against Rome.⁸⁹ Whether Mithradates thereby introduced a “new model of kingship”, as has recently been put forward, seems doubtful to me.⁹⁰ Concerning the representation of Antiochos I, Peter F. Mittag has argued for a “gradual shift in emphasis as a reaction to the changes in the political situation of Commagene between Rome on the one hand and Parthia on the other”.⁹¹

Target audience and authenticity of the claims are central criteria for the final point I would like to make. On the stelae of the gallery of ancestors and in the Nomos inscription at Nemrud Dağ, Antiochos I famously traced his royal descent on his father’s side back to Dareios I via the Orontids and the Persian Great Kings, and on his mother’s side to Alexander via the Seleucids. This is often contextualized with similar claims from the rulers of Pontos (especially from Mithradates VI), Cappadocia, Atropatene, and Armenia.⁹² I focus on the claims of the Ariarathids and Mithradatids as their (ad-

84 This has been much debated; cf. Michels 2009, 190–193.

85 de Callatay 2009, de Callatay 2011. D’Agostini 2016, 95–96 now wants to interpret the first Pontic coins as dowry for Laodike, daughter of Mithradates II, who married the Seleucid Antiochos III.

86 Michels 2009, 231–233.

87 Arslan 2003; on the form von Gall 1990, 322; cf. Facella 1999, 154.

88 Michels 229–233; Canepa 2017, 216.

89 This should, however, not be seen as decidedly new, as Gatzke 2019, 62 does: “Eupator saw particular promise in adopting Persian styles of administration and ideology that had been dismissed as politically poisonous in the post-Alexander world of Hellenism.” On the shift in emphasis see Ballesteros Pastor 1996, 430–436; McGing 2014; Ballesteros Pastor 2015; cf. also Shayegan 2016, 9 on the change from Dareios to Kyros.

90 Gatzke 2019, 73. Gatzke 2019, 61: “Through the Persianizing of the Pontic royal house, Mithradates’ reign thus marked a significant shift in the conception and execution of kingship in the late Hellenistic period, a new approach.”

91 Mittag 2004, 1.

92 Cf. e. g. Facella 2009, 383–384; Strootman – Versluys 2017, 17, and the contribution of Strootman in this volume.

mittedly questionable) authenticity and, more importantly, their motivation for and aims of these references have been questioned in recent research, on the basis of the Hellenistic context that I mentioned in the beginning of this paper.⁹³

The claims of these dynasties have traditionally been interpreted as directed either at the own, non-Greek populace and aristocracy (especially in Cappadocia) or, as Panitschek has convincingly argued, as an element of competition towards the other Iranian dynasties (or possibly towards both).⁹⁴ Against this, Lerouge-Cohen and Gatzke now not only suppose Greek sources as basis for the knowledge of the story of the six Persians who helped Dareios I against the usurper, but also a Greek audience for these claims.⁹⁵ This causes several problems. It is of course true that the different traditions were "reassembled, retooled or reinvented" in the post-Achaemenid dynasties.⁹⁶ But there are certainly indications – against the claims of Lerouge-Cohen – that the theme of the Seven Persians, famously mentioned in the Behistun inscription, and descent from them were already significant in the Persian Empire.⁹⁷ The sources for the knowledge about the Achaemenids in the Hellenistic period are not documented. It is possible that oral traditions played an important role.⁹⁸

Additionally, there are indications that the Parthians made (sporadic) use of them.⁹⁹ However, the important difference between them and the Anatolian kings is the fact that for the latter much of the evidence indicates a more or less direct continuity from the satrapal families to the post-satrapal dynasties and the royal houses. Although again many details remain unclear, it now seems probable that both the Ariarathids¹⁰⁰

93 Lerouge-Cohen 2013; Lerouge-Cohen 2017; Gatzke 2019.

94 Panitschek 1987–1988.

95 Lerouge-Cohen 2017, 227: "The Mithridatids (like the Ariarathids) had probably learnt the story of the Seven from Greek sources; their connections to these glorious characters put them in a favorable light in the Hellenistic world – but not in an allegedly 'Persian' or 'Iranian' context." Gatzke 2019, 62: "For the Anatolian kingdoms such as Pontus, as well as Commagene and Cappadocia, who also claimed ties to the Achaemenids, everything they knew about their supposed Achaemenid ancestors had been filtered through a Greek interpretation and modified to fit a Greek perspective of the Persian past."

96 Canepa 2017, 222.

97 DB § 68. Klinkott 2005, 49–53; Shayegan 2017; cf. however Lerouge-Cohen 2017, 224: "nothing indicates that it became customary in the Achaemenid world to distinguish dignitaries by recalling their descent from one of the seven conspirators."

98 Canepa 2017, 203; Shayegan 2016; Shayegan 2017; cf. Lerouge-Cohen 2013, 113.

99 Lerouge-Cohen 2017, 226 stresses that "there is no indication that the Seven were even remembered in the Iranian world: the Arsakids never referred to them, and neither did the Sasanids that succeeded them". Earlier Lerouge-Cohen postulated also for the Parthians Greek origins of the tradition; Lerouge 2007, 189–192, esp. 191: "a été produit au sein de l'Empire parthe pour un public grec, soit par des Gréco-Parthes, soit par des Parthes connaissant bien la culture grecque". Lerouge-Cohen 2013, 113 n. 35: "semble avoir été élaboré dans un milieu grec". But see Wiesehöfer 1996a, 133; Shayegan 2016; Shayegan 2017; Olbrycht 2019. This does not stand in opposite to the warnings of Fowler 2005 not to exaggerate the importance of the Achaemenid image.

100 The continuity is especially obvious in the case of the Ariarathids whose dynasty founder survived the Alexander campaign (if only for a short time). The genealogy given by Diod. Sic. 31,19 certainly

and the Mithradatids descended from Iranian nobility, and in the case of the Mithradatids, Bosworth and Wheatley have convincingly argued that – although the Pontic claims were exaggerated – the dynasty was indeed an offshoot of the Achaemenid royal family.¹⁰¹ This is important. If the minor kingdoms of Anatolia have been called newcomers, with relation to the Macedonian dynasties, then this term applies even more to Commagene. By the time it became independent, in the middle of the 2nd century BCE, Cappadocia and Pontos had already existed for over 100 years. The doubts about a possible Achaemenid origin of the kings of Commagene should therefore not be transferred to the other two kingdoms.¹⁰²

Although we first hear of the Pontic claims of their descent from one of the Seven Persians, and having been granted rule over their territories by Dareios in the time of Mithradates II (circa 255–220 BCE), this does not at all mean that this claim was only fabricated during this time and is as such ‘late’.¹⁰³ Polybios reports this claim in the context of the marriage of Mithradates’ daughter Laodike to the Seleucid Antiochos III. Lerouge-Cohen puts forward that if “it was prestigious for a Seleukid to marry a descendant of one of the Seven, we can deduce that the references to these historical figures were not confined to an Iranian audience.”¹⁰⁴ However, this cannot necessarily be deduced from this, because it would imply that only Greeks were important for the legitimization of the Seleucids. On the contrary, Sherwin-White and Kuhrt theorized that the Seleucids wanted to evoke a continuation of the Achaemenid tradition by marrying into the Pontic royal house.¹⁰⁵ For the marriage, several factors certainly come into play. However, when we consider Greeks as the main audience of these claims, I think it is fundamentally problematic, in any case, to assume that the Achaemenid kings were suitable as identification figures in the Greek world.¹⁰⁶ The fact that

is a construct (Panitschek 1987–1988), but that does not fundamentally contradict continuity; cf. Michels 2009, 17; Panichi 2018, 4–8.

101 Bosworth – Wheatley 1998; accepted e. g. by Ballesteros Pastor 2013b; McGing 2014, 29; Michels 2017. Lerouge-Cohen has repeatedly (Lerouge 2007, 207; Lerouge-Cohen 2013, 109, n. 11; Lerouge-Cohen 2017, 228 n. 26) disagreed with this reconstruction without presenting any arguments to the contrary.

102 On the early history of the Orontids see Facella 2006, 95–198.

103 As D’Agostini 2016, 93 suspects; cf. Lerouge-Cohen 2017, 227: “This late use and recreation of the Iranian past seem to present a clear example of Persianism”. Pol. 5,43,1–2. Andreas Klingenberg points out to me that while the truth of the claims cannot be proven, there is much to be said in favour of a usage of the claim during the time of the establishment of the founder of the dynasty Mithradates I in Pontos, himself probably belonging to the house of the satraps of Hellenistic Phrygia. The story (App. Mith. 9 [28]) of his flight and eventual victory certainly has an Achaemenid ring to it as he is supported by six knights; cf. Panitschek 1987–1988, 86.

104 Lerouge-Cohen 2017, 226.

105 Sherwin-White – Kuhrt 1993, 38.

106 Lerouge-Cohen 2017, 233: “The Kings selected Persian events and individuals (the Seven, Cyrus and Darius) that were well-known across the Greek world and enjoyed a very good reputation.” Gatzke 2019, 62: “These genealogical claims created continuity between Mithridates and the

Kyros was later perceived as a righteous ruler and, for example, that Alexander is called *Philokyros* by Strabo, do not stand in opposition to this.¹⁰⁷ A Hellenistic audience is especially unlikely in the case of the kings of Armenia, which had no significant 'Greek' population element.¹⁰⁸ Lastly, a major argument against the Greek/Hellenistic world as main target of this representation, to me, seems to be the fact that there is no indication that any themes from these (constructed?) genealogies were used in honorific inscriptions in Greek cities and sanctuaries, where they could have been presented to a wide audience.

Conclusion

As the last example illustrates, it is problematic to focus on only one aspect amid the whole range of interconnected motifs that the non-Greco-Macedonian rulers of Hellenistic Anatolia used to style themselves as kings both in their own realms and before an international audience of cities, leagues and other monarchs. The royal ideologies of these monarchies resulted from a mixture of Hellenistic and Iranian traditions and this should not surprise us, as the identities of their 'ancestors', the late-Achaemenid satraps can already be described as 'glocal' – comprising both imperial Achaemenid and local/regional (Karian, Lycian, and so forth) themes.¹⁰⁹ Despite the global interconnectedness of the Hellenistic world, however, it is worthwhile to point out the significant differences between the diverse dynasties of Hellenistic Asia Minor in detail, as I hope to have shown. Acknowledging these differences helps us to reconstruct both the specific profile of the individual monarchy and the multifaceted nature of Hellenistic kingship.

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Achaemenid forebears, and tied him to a royal past that had come to be revered, if not also critiqued, in the Greek world.”

107 Str. 11,11,4.

108 Str. 11,14,15 (531C). I thank Andreas Klingenberg for pointing that out to me.

109 Strootman 2017, 198; cf. on the term also Riedel 2018, 90–91.

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Delos Beyond East and West*

Cultural Choices in Domestic Architecture

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In 167/166 BCE, the Romans conquered the independent polis of Delos, evicted presumably all Delians, gave control of the island to Athens and declared it a free port. The port was centrally located in the Aegean and flourished until 88 or 69 BCE when Delos was sacked by the troops of the Pontian king Mithridates and by pirates of Mithridates' ally, Athenodoros, respectively. However, the increasing importance of rival harbours in the Western Mediterranean is usually identified as the major cause of the island's successive abandonment in the course of the 1st c BCE. Delos is well known today because the *École française d'Athènes* has excavated in Delos since 1872, exposing about a quarter of the ancient city.

The rich epigraphic evidence of Delos shows that the free port was frequented and inhabited by a heterogeneous cosmopolitan population. The names of numerous individuals and different groups appear in the dedications of buildings and, above all, statues, in subscription lists of sanctuaries, lists of epebes, and funerary inscriptions.

For example, a round marble base, found reused in a secondary context, documents the following dedication:

Κ- - - - -ς Ἀλαιέα, ἐπιμελητὴν
Δήλου γενόμενον, Ἀθηναίων καὶ Ῥωμαίων
καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ξένων οἱ κατοικοῦντες καὶ
παρεπιδημοῦντες ἐν Δήλῳ, ἀρετῆς
ἐνεκεν καὶ δικαιοσύνης καὶ τῆς πρὸς τοὺς
θεοὺς εὐσεβείας ἀνέθηκαν
Ἀπόλλωνι.

* I would like to thank Stefan Riedel and Miguel John Versluys for inviting me to participate in the conference and its publication. Buildings in Delos are referred to with English names and with their number in the *Guide de Délos* (GD), Bruneau – Ducat 2005. The inscriptions are referred to according to their numbering in the *Inscriptions de Délos* (ID).

(Statue of) K[... son of ...] from the deme Halai, who has been epimelete in Delos, dedicated by those of the Athenians and Romans and other foreigners who (permanently) live or temporarily stay in Delos, for his merits, righteousness, and piety towards the gods to Apollo.¹

The inscription emphasizes the ethnic provenance of the donors (Athenians, Romans, other foreigners), the length of stay in Delos (permanent or temporary), and the political status of the honoured person (epimelete). Other dedications further specify the provenance (e.g. from specific cities such as Ascalon, Berytos, Ephesos, Naples) and clearly indicate the social status (slave, *libertus*, freeborn), religious affiliations (those who venerate specific gods like Poseidon of Berytos, Isis or Sarapis), and professions (merchants, ship-owners, bankers etc.) of individuals and groups.² Diversity, and particularly provenance, mattered and was clearly advertised in the cosmopolitan trade port. Because of its central location and mixed population the Delian free port has traditionally been described as a gateway for negotiating and distributing not only merchandise, but also ideas, knowledge, cultural practices and styles.

The key question is how the impact of this specific historical setting on the island's rich archaeological evidence can be assessed, particularly in the late-Hellenistic period, which was strongly characterized by connectivity and the prevalence of a Hellenistic koine. Scholars have studied this key question for a long time, for Delos and many other chronological and geographical settings far beyond Delos. They commonly attempted:

- to identify specific ethnic or cultural styles in the archaeological evidence;
- to determine the semantic value and cultural concepts of different cultural styles;
- to reconstruct the strategies behind the choice of specific cultural styles, by adopting an agency perspective;
- to assess the consequences and outcome of cultural heterogeneity: simply a vast repertoire of options, innovative eclectic and hybrid features, or even a new cosmopolitan style.³

The key question has been studied with different theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches, recently for example with the concept of glocalization.⁴ While

1 ID 1650; translation cf. Müller 2017, 111. The epimelete has been identified with Karaichos, who was epimelete in 123/122 BCE, or Kallistratos, epimelete in 101/100 BCE.

2 The diversity of the inhabitants of the free port has been frequently discussed; only few titles can be cited here: Baslez 1977; Baslez 1982; Baslez 2002; Hasenohr 2007a; Hasenohr 2007b; Baslez 2013; Baslez 2014; Hasenohr 2017; Ernst 2018. See esp. Müller 2017, 96–108.

3 For an excellent analytical summary of research on this topic, Versluys 2017, 20–37. The term 'style' is used differently in Anglophone scholarship than in German. The broader Anglophone connotation is meant here, used for example in Smith 1998; Versluys 2017, 27–29; Riedel 2018.

4 For example, van Alten 2017; Riedel 2018.

the different approaches provide different perspectives and distinctly nuanced insights, they all emphasize the importance of agency – of both humans and objects.

The free port Delos offers optimal conditions to study the interaction and intermingling of different actors and agencies. While the key question mentioned above has been studied by many scholars, a comprehensive study of this phenomenon is missing. The vast amount of textual and archaeological evidence usually required restrictions, most often a focus on specific groups (e. g. Italians/Romans, Phoenicians) or monuments (e. g. Egyptian sanctuaries and figurines; ‘Agora of the Italians’).⁵ This is certainly not the place to fill the important gap in research. Instead, the aim of this paper is to critically discuss the state of research for one specific category: houses (and households).

Houses are selected here for three reasons:

- First, 90–100 houses were excavated and studied in Delos, providing an ideal basis for comprehensive qualitative and quantitative analyses. While precise dating is difficult for almost all of these houses, their construction and use are usually dated to the period of 167/166 to 88 or 69 BCE.⁶
- Second, private houses are usually identified as buildings that were primarily shaped by individual preferences, traditions and practices. It is commonly assumed that houses reflect, in design and decoration, key features of the inhabitants, such as social, ethnic and cultural identity (or identities), which can therefore be derived from the archaeological evidence.
- Third, the question of cultural influences and choices has been studied for Delian domestic architecture, but there is no agreement on methodological approaches and interpretation in scholarship.⁷ The debate exemplarily reveals problems, caveats and potential of studying cultural styles and choices in late-Hellenistic Delos.

The following discussion can certainly not provide the clear-cut answers that nobody else has given before. Instead, it attempts to show how the study of Delian houses can contribute to current discourses of cultural interactions and choices in the globalized late-Hellenistic world. In the following, methodological problems will be discussed, followed by three case studies and a concluding evaluation.

5 Baslez 1977; Baslez 1982; Siard 2001; Baslez 2002; Hasenohr 2007a; Hasenohr 2007b; Baslez 2013; Baslez 2014; Hasenohr 2017; Trümper 2006; Trümper 2008; Trümper 2011; Barrett 2011; Ernst 2018. Exceptions are works such as Bruneau 1970, and Baslez 1982, which was, however, never published.

6 Trümper 1998, 120–125.

7 Space does not allow to cite and discuss all publications in due detail. Important discussion of this topic are provided in Bruneau 1968; Bruneau 1972, 115–117; Kreeb 1988; Rauh 1993; Trümper 1998; Trümper 2005; Tang 2005; Barrett 2011; Trümper 2011; Zarmakoupi 2015; Ernst 2018; Wurmser 2018.

Methodological Problems

When asking for agencies, choices of cultural styles and strategies that may have shaped Delian houses, three methodological problems arise.

First, **knowledge of the houses** and their household inventories differs significantly, depending upon the post-depositional processes, from abandonment to modern excavation and publication. This affects particularly a comparative assessment of movable furniture and finds.⁸

Second, the **agents** must be identified if not by name, then at least by some other characteristic feature, such as provenance, gender or social, political, and economic status.⁹ While provenance often prevails in the discussion of cultural styles, the other characteristics certainly mattered too, and were instrumental in providing knowledge of and accessibility to different styles. In the free port with its highly fluctuant population, however, houses must have changed owners and inhabitants frequently. This is already insinuated in the inscriptions, which differentiate between permanent and transient population.¹⁰ (Parts of) houses may have been rented for shorter or longer periods to people who would have had little say, if any at all, in the design and decoration of these houses.¹¹ The potential change of owners and inhabitants, frequency notwithstanding, significantly impedes any assessment of agency. From a methodological point of view, the history of houses must be taken into account and it must be clearly differentiated between fixed decoration (e. g. wall decoration, pavements, architectural elements) and movable objects (e. g. sculptures, furniture).¹²

Third, **cultural styles** must be clearly identified and somehow labelled, for reasons of communication and for assessing possible semantic values and deliberate choices. While several cultural markers have been identified in Delian houses, most of them remain debated and ambiguous. Since no comprehensive discussion of these markers has been published so far, the most important are briefly listed here, focusing largely on fixed elements. It would exceed the scope of this paper to include **all** movable finds and furniture.¹³

1. Fixed architectural features: Certain architectural features have been compared with those of houses in the Vesuvian cities: carefully designed axes from the en-

8 For discussion see Trümper 2005; cf. also the catalogues in Kreeb 1988, Barrett 2011.

9 See e. g. Smith 1998, Versluys 2017, Riedel 2018 whose studies focus on known individuals, commonly rulers or members of the elite.

10 See ID 1650 above; Müller 2017, 99–101 and Ernst 2018, 109–113 for the important question whether this differentiation had also legal implications, namely whether foreigners had the right of *enktesis* and could, as permanent residents, own houses.

11 Trümper 1998, 90–106.

12 See Trümper 2005, esp. 394–394.

13 For the state of publication of these finds, Trümper 2005; Ernst 2018, 76–82; for furniture, Andrianou 2009.

trance door to the main room; porticoes combining low walls and columns or pillars; porticoes in front of house facades. The broad main reception room would have been adopted from oriental houses and palaces.¹⁴ None of these cultural attributions is convincing, however. The broad room (*oecus maior*) with rearward or lateral annexe rooms has many parallels in Greek domestic architecture. Since it is so common particularly in smaller Delian houses and is indeed the standard element of the most popular house type in Delos, Greek models are much more likely than some fancy distant oriental palaces.¹⁵ Axial designs and colonnades with parapet walls were also common in Greek-Hellenistic architecture, and it is far from certain that these were introduced in the houses of Pompeii earlier than in the Delian examples. Clearly distinct Italian-Roman architectural features such as *atria* with *cubicula*, *alae* and *tablina* have not been securely identified in Delos.¹⁶

2. Fixed decoration: A wall-decoration system that was found in the 'House of the Sword' has been identified as an early version of Second Style and linked with specific Italian-Campanian influence and patrons. While this decoration was certainly innovative within the Delian repertoire, its western provenance has been convincingly challenged.¹⁷ Since the wall decoration has never been comprehensively published in a volume of the *Exploration archéologique de Délos* series, it is difficult to fully evaluate the repertoire of decorative patterns and individual elements regarding the question of cultural influences. Figurative moulded elements of the plaster decoration have been used to determine the patrons' provenance or cultural tastes, but there is no agreement and no systematic assessment.¹⁸
3. Fixed decoration: Delos provides a corpus of paintings that decorated the exterior facades of houses (walls, niches and altars) and represented lares and other deities, sacrifices and competitions (*ludi*). 31 ensembles have been identified, related to 25 different houses, seven of which have not been fully excavated.¹⁹ These paintings are called liturgical and have commonly been connected with the cult

14 Tang 2005, 43.

15 Krause 1977; Trümper 1998, 17. 28–30.

16 Tang 2005, 43 does not cite any specific Pompeian houses with secure dates. Dickmann 1999, 355–358 identified the low walls and barriers between columns of peristyle courtyards in Pompeian houses as a fashion of the 1st c CE; these barriers were commonly added later. Cf. the brief discussion in Ernst 2018, 106 n. 363 who also refers to these "italianismes" in domestic architecture, albeit without any references to Italian houses. Recent research suggests that the 'House of Fourni' may have been influenced by Italian architectural traditions, but full assessment must await the final publication of this complex; Wurmser 2018.

17 For the relevant literature and critical discussion, Trümper 2005, esp. 393–394.

18 Cf. Alabe 1993, which has not been published. For example, Bruneau 1970, 437; Bruneau 1972, 73 n. 3 argued that plaster masques found in the 'House of the Trident' would wear hats typical of Syrian priests; this would underline the Syrian provenance of the house's builders and inhabitants. According to Marcadé 1952, 111 fig. 10, these were made by local workshops, which used Egyptianizing techniques.

19 Hasenohr, 2003, 220–223.

of the Lares Compitales. For a long time, these were taken as secure evidence that Italians or Romans inhabited a house, at least for a certain period, because it was assumed that the cult was practiced by slaves and *liberti* of Italians or Romans. Recently, however, this notion has been challenged, pointing to Graeco-Roman syncretistic features of these paintings; this would suggest that Greek and Orientals may also have decorated their façades with such paintings, “mêlant leurs propres traditions à celles des Italiens.”²⁰

4. Fixed decoration: The rich repertoire of well-known pavement types in Delos includes only a few examples of mortar pavements, a type well known in Western Mediterranean contexts of the Hellenistic period. Mortar pavements were identified in one niche of the ‘Agora of Italians’ (GD 52), the upper story of the ‘House of the Trident’ (GD 118), a partially excavated house at the north-western coast, the ‘House of Kleopatra’ (GD 119), and most prominently in number and execution in different rooms of the ‘House of Fourni’ (GD 124). While Philippe Bruneau was cautious in identifying mortar and even more specifically *opus signinum* pavements, Véronique Vassal adopted a broader definition of *opus signinum*.²¹ Birgit Tang has again been more restrictive in her identification of mortar pavements in Delos, but like Bruneau and Vassal, she linked the use of specific mortar pavements to Italian-Roman patronage. She pointed out, however, that mortar floors had a long tradition in the Greek East from the 5th c BCE onward and that single ethnic terms for these floors should be avoided.²² That Delian mortar pavements can, indeed, not be linked as easily and straightforwardly with Italian-Roman patrons as often assumed is supported by the fact that the ‘House of the Trident’, the ‘House of Kleopatra’ and the ‘House of Fourni’ also include other strong cultural markers.²³
5. Fixed decoration: Some houses show distinct iconographic motifs, such as a Tانيت symbol in an *opus tessellatum* mosaic (‘House of the Dolphins’) or protomes with the bulls of Hadad and lions of Atargatis (‘House of the Trident’). Their use in the fixed decoration of these houses has been attributed to Phoenician and Syrian patrons, who would have built these houses.²⁴ A Phoenician artist, Asklepiades of Arados, also signed the *opus tessellatum* mosaic in the courtyard of the ‘House of the Dolphins’. This does not necessarily point to a Phoenician patron,

20 Hasenohr 2003, 207–208; Ernst 2018, 85 n. 237: e. g., Italians may have sacrificed *rite Graeco* (without *capite velato*), or Greeks and Orientals may have adopted the Italian cult, using Greek rituals.

21 Bruneau 1972, 22–23. 113–115; Vassal 2006, 82. 134–135.

22 Tang 2019, 136–138. 192–195. 420.

23 Trümper 2006, 14; Trümper 2008, 155–156 n. 752; Trümper 2011, 69 n. 70; Ernst 2018, 100–103; Wurmser 2018, 114–115.

24 Bruneau 1968, 665–666; Bruneau 1970, 327–328. 473. 645–646; Bruneau 1972, 113–115; Trümper 1998, 134–135.

however²⁵, because many Delian inhabitants employed artists from all over the Eastern Mediterranean.²⁶

6. Movable finds: Among the 1500 terracotta figurines from Delos, Caitlin Barrett has recently identified 82 that display Egyptianizing iconography. Only nine of these terracotta figurines and one additional marble statuette can securely be attributed to houses, and only seven of these ten to six specific late-Hellenistic houses.²⁷ According to Barrett, these objects would reveal a detailed understanding of Egyptian theology on part of the local producers as well as buyers, and would only have been used and regarded as cult objects. Such a restricted use and perception has been rightly questioned by Eva Mol, however, who argues for a much broader spectrum of potential semantic values, among them aesthetic, social, and exotic values.²⁸ Similarly, one might ask the same question for the above-mentioned elements of fixed decoration (no. 5).
7. Fixed and movable: Several houses yielded inscribed objects. These include three inscribed bases of portrait statues, but in two of the three cases it is debated whether the donors or the honoured persons lived in the house where the statue was set up.²⁹ Inscribed bases of statuettes of gods are only helpful if the donors are mentioned.³⁰ Graffiti may mention names, but it cannot be securely determined who wrote them (owners/ household members or guests/visitors) and when.³¹ Signatures of artists were rarely found in houses, confined to one statue base and one *opus tessellatum* pavement. They reveal that patrons had access to certain artists and cultural styles represented by them.³²
8. Movable objects: Portrait statues and busts were found in several houses, mostly without inscribed bases that allow to reliably determined the identity of the portrayed person. Delian portraiture is probably the battlefield par excellence in determining cultural styles. Attempts to securely identify the many anonymous portraits as representations of Greeks or Italians and Romans have all failed.³³

25 Contra Bruneau 1968, 666.

26 Marcadé 1957.

27 Barrett 2011, 331–340.

28 Barrett 2011, *passim*, e. g. 121; Mol 2014.

29 ID 1724. 1802. 1987. See in detail below.

30 ID 2378; SEG 13, 423–425.

31 Trümper 2005, 349 n. 72. 355–356 n. 89; Ernst 2018, 70–76 for the prominent, but problematic graffiti from the 'House of the Seals'.

32 ID 1724, 2497. Signatures and dedicatory inscriptions were much more common in non-domestic contexts, particularly for statues, but also for mosaics; Marcadé 1957; Bruneau 1972, 111–115.

33 The debate is succinctly summarized in Papini 2004, 486–491; for portrait statues in houses Kreeb 1988, 47–50. 69–71. 80–81; Griesbach 2014; Ernst 2018, 60–69. – The main aim of Sanders's dissertation, Sanders 2001, was to examine how the international population of Delos affected domestic sculpture; Sanders 2001, 26. However, her study was never properly published, has many gaps and does not go beyond Kreeb 1988; therefore, it will not be considered in the following.

In sum, the identification of specific cultural styles and their interpretation is challenging. In several houses, elements of different cultural styles were found, further complicating the picture.³⁴ It cannot be securely determined whether these were used contemporaneously or introduced one after another and which cultural marker is conclusive for the provenance and potentially predominant cultural identity of the owners. While no clear hierarchy of markers can be established, the inscribed bases of portrait statues and votives, which name the donor and recipient of dedications, are the strongest indicator that one of the named persons inhabited the house for a certain period.

It must be explicitly emphasized that most of these markers can only be singled out because Delian domestic architecture is largely uniform: standard house types, standard architectural features and standard decoration have been recognized and form the solid background for evaluating ‘anomalies’ and ‘deviations’.³⁵ These standards represent the local cultural style, largely shaped by the Greek-Hellenistic koine.

Even if the uniformity of Delian houses has been recognized for a long time, scholars keep playing the ‘ethnic game’: Recently, Mantha Zarmakoupi has identified 20 houses that belonged to Italians (and Romans), among them a distinct new type, not so much in terms of design, but organization: the Italians would have the ground floors of their houses for commercial activities and luxurious upper floors for social aspirations.³⁶ Her approach has been criticized by Paul Ernst, who also attempted to identify houses of Italians, however, and reduced the number to seven. He did not recognize any specific type or organization of the Italian houses, only a “*volonté de distinction sociale*”, which was not specific to the Italians.³⁷

With the outlined problems in mind, I now examine three houses for the question whether the inhabitants’ strategies in choosing design and decoration can be determined. The case studies are precisely those three houses, where inscribed bases of portrait statues were found and which therefore provide secure information about the inhabitants: a couple from Athens, a banker from Ascalon, and an Italian/Roman.³⁸

34 Trümper 1998, 135–135; Trümper 2006: esp. in those houses with the presumably most distinct features nos. 4 and 5 of the list.

35 Bruneau 1972; Kreeb 1988; Alabe 1993; Trümper 1998: all with catalogues and quantitative analyses.

36 Zarmakoupi 2015, esp. 9.

37 Ernst 2018, 51–118.

38 Griesbach 2014 discusses the same houses, but with a focus on the portrait statues.

Case Studies

House of Kleopatra and Dioskourides

The 'House of Kleopatra' is located in the densely inhabited 'Quarter of the Theatre' (insula III, house I, GD 119). It was excavated in the early 20th century and briefly published by Joseph Chamonard in 1922/1924, with a strict focus on the architecture.³⁹ It is named after the portrait statues that Kleopatra set up for herself and her husband. The inscription on the base documents:

Κλεοπάτρα Ἀδράστου ἐγ Μυρρινούττης θυγάτηρ τὸν ἑαυτῆς
ἄνδρα Διοσκουρίδην Θεοδώρου ἐγ Μυρρινούττης ἀνατεθεικότα
τοὺς δελφικοὺς τρίποδας τοὺς ἀργυροὺς δύο ἐν τῷ τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος
ναῶι παρ' ἑκατέραν παραστάδα, ἐπὶ Τιμάρχου ἄρχοντος Ἀθήνησιν.

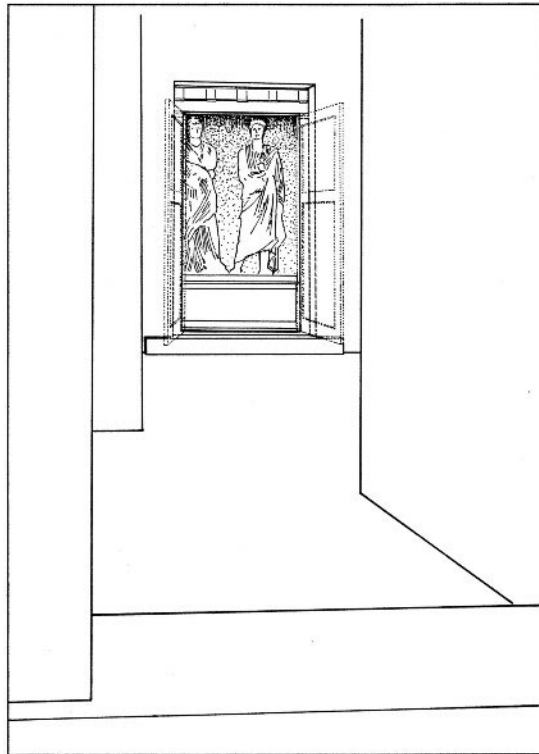


Fig. 1 'House of Kleopatra and Dioskourides' ('Quarter of the Theatre' III I), reconstruction of the statue group; Kreeb 1985, 58 fig. 8

39 Trümper 1998, 273–274 with earlier bibliography.

Kleopatra daughter of Adrastos, of Myrrhinoutte, (has dedicated) Dioskourides son of Theodoros, of Myrrhinoutte, once he had dedicated the Delphic tripods made out of the silver, two of them, in the temple of Apollo by each *parastas*, when Timarchos was Archon of Athens.⁴⁰

The office of the Archon Timarchos dates this inscription to 138/137 BCE or after. Dioskourides is praised for his probably most costly and prestigious donation on Delos. The statues were prominently and permanently set up right in the view axis of the house's main entrance, and were ambitiously staged on a 0,87 m high base and behind wooden doors, like precious cult images in a shrine (fig. 1).⁴¹

The reconstruction of the history of the house shows that the statues were set up during an embellishing remodelling process (fig. 2, phase 4), when the house also received a peristyle with ten columns (d), a large lavish room (e) and other amenities (latrine p, small rooms c/b, i). With a ground floor surface area of 405 m², this house was in the top tier of Delian houses.⁴² It cannot be determined, whether Kleopatra and Dioskourides owned the house before this transformation process and how long they or their family inhabited the house after the remodelling.⁴³ Since the statues were never remodelled or removed until the house was abandoned, presumably after 88 or 69 BCE, it seems likely that the house stayed in possession of the same family. Furthermore, very few changes occurred after the large remodelling process (fig. 2, phase 5).

The remodelled houses included many features of the most popular and simple standard house type in Delos.⁴⁴ The addition of a peristyle and a large lavish room has also many parallels in Delian houses. The pavements of the *impluvium* and rooms e and i betray certain pretensions, but do not belong to the top quality in the local hierarchy: polychrome figured *opus tessellatum* or even *vermiculatum* mosaics are missing here. Instead, the rooms were decorated with white *opus tessellatum* panels with simple patterns surrounded by pavements of marble chips. The *impluvium*, however, shows a mortar pavement with irregularly placed black and white tesserae, which has

40 ID 1987; translation Ma 2013, 172. For a detailed study of this base, Kreeb 1985.

41 Kreeb 1985, 53–57 for description and measures: a threshold (ca. 0,17–0,20 m high) served as foot of the base; orthostate (0,54 m high, 1,63 m broad, 0,13 m deep) with mouldings and inscription; originally two moulded crowning blocks with cavities for the marble statues (preserved block: 0,16 m high, 1,02 m broad, 0,63 m deep).

42 Trümper 1998, 166: place 11 of 91. The house had an upper story, the extension of which is unknown; Trümper 1998, 273.

43 Trümper 1998, 273. The statue base shows various anomalies and probably included reused material; Kreeb 1985, 55 n. 41. Contra Griesbach 2014, 115 n. 103 it seems likely that the ambitious shrine-like setting with wooden doors in front of the statue was installed from the beginning, and not later.

44 Called “normal house” by Trümper 1998, 106–108: long rectangular house with central courtyard, flanked by a vestibule and service rooms in the front and a group of three rooms (*oecus maior* and annexes) in the back; average surface area of 120 m².

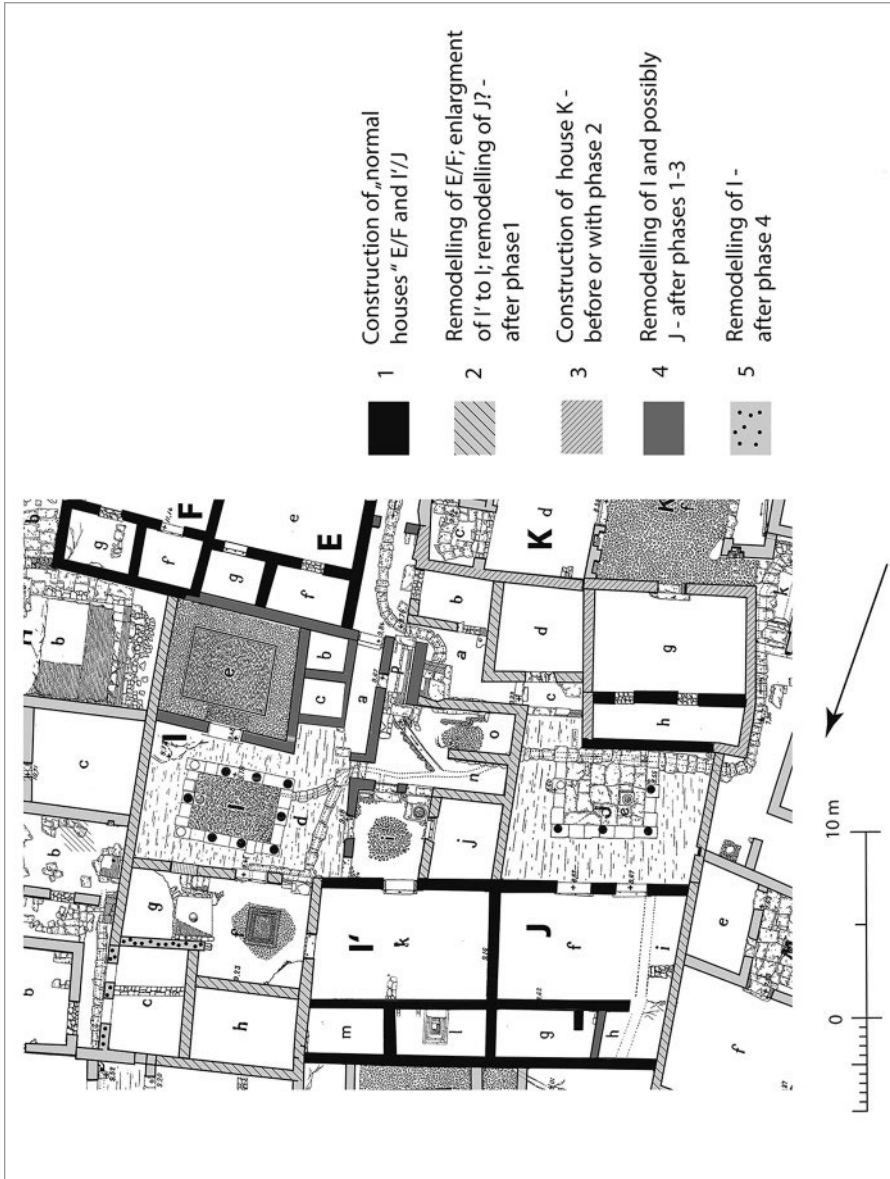


Fig. 2 'House of Kleopatra and Dioskourides' ('Quarter of the Theatre' III), phase plan; Trümper 1998, 332 fig. 64

no exact parallels in the local context. Bruneau classified this as a sort of *opus signinum* and Vassal as true *opus signinum*. Whether *opus signinum* or ‘just’ an innovative type of mortar pavement, it was certainly not linked with Italian-Roman patrons. Among the examples of mortar pavements in Delos, this would have been the earliest.⁴⁵ It seems more likely that this pavement was simply a local attempt to establish something less costly and fancy than true *opus tessellatum*, but a bit more elaborate than pavements with large marble fragments.⁴⁶ Only few remains of wall-decoration have been preserved and published, which belong to one of the upscale categories (polychrome, with elements *à refends et bossage*) in rooms e and f. A local style terracotta figurine of a standing veiled (Greek) goddess was found here, and Griesbach listed several marble furniture elements that may have further embellished the house.⁴⁷

Special attention deserves the practice of setting up portrait statues in the house. Martin Kreeb listed in total seven local examples for this practice, among them two where only inscribed bases were found; four, in which sculptural fragments were found; and only one, the ‘House of Kleopatra’, where an inscribed base and sculptures were found. The evidence in the ‘House of Kleopatra’ stands out for several reasons, which is often ignored: first, among the inscribed bases, the one in this house is the earliest; second, this is the only example, where two life-sized marble statues were displayed; third, this is also the only example, where a statue of a woman was set up; and finally, the only one, where the original setting is known.⁴⁸ The cultural provenance of the ‘residential portrait statue habit’ cannot be safely determined, but to date, Delos provides the earliest examples set up in ‘ordinary’ private houses.⁴⁹

The models and semantic significance of this practice can easily be identified. The marble statues represented Kleopatra and Dioskourides in standard Hellenistic civic

45 Bruneau 1972, 23. 270–273 figs. 224–226; Vassal 2006, 82. 134–135. Tang 2019 did not include this pavement in her catalogue.

46 I thank Frédéric Mège for discussion who argues that this should not be called *opus signinum* because the mortar aggregate does not include ceramics. Tang 2019, 16 identified five different types of mortar pavements, differentiated according to their aggregate. For pavements in *impluvia* of Delian peristyles, Trümper 1998, tab. 1, which clearly shows that Kleopatra and Dioskourides chose a medium quality. Since the fancier versions, such as in the ‘House of the Dolphins’, the ‘House of Philostratos’, the ‘House of Dionysos’ and the ‘House of the Lake’ cannot be securely dated, it is not clear whether these options would already have been available around 138/137 BCE.

47 Kreeb 1988, 283; Griesbach 2014, 114 n. 101.

48 Kreeb 1988, 80 n. 292: ‘House of the Seals’; ‘House of the Lake’; House I C in the ‘Quarter of the Stadium’; ‘House of Philostratos’; House B of the ‘Insula of the Masks’; House VI I in the ‘Quarter of the Theatre’ – and this here. A portrait head that was found in House II F in the ‘Quarter of the Theatre’ was not counted among the portraits from houses by Kreeb 1988, 241–242, but by Griesbach 2014, 108 fig. 9.

49 Royal palaces most likely included portrait statues of the royal family, but securely identified archaeological evidence is scarce; for a secure example from Samosata, Riedel 2018; for contested examples, e. g. in the palace of Pella, Kunze 1996; cf. Griesbach 2014, who does not cite any other earlier or Hellenistic parallels for portrait statues in houses.

types and costumes, with chiton and himation. The statues emulate portrait statues that were set up in public spaces and sanctuaries by official institutions or by family members, associations, friends or others, of which numerous examples survived in Delos. Family groups were set up from the 3rd c. BCE onwards, even with mixed public and private donors.⁵⁰ Furthermore, private associations had begun to set up statues of their *euergetes* in their meeting places at least around 150 BCE, as testified to by the 'Establishment of the Poseidoniasts' from Berytos (GD 57).⁵¹ The spectacular shrine-like setting of Kleopatra's and Dioskourides' statues has often been compared to the staging of portrait statues in various local contexts, namely the niches in the 'Agora of the Italians' (GD 52) and the gymnasium (GD 72), but both cases clearly post-date the statues of Kleopatra and Dioskourides. Kleopatra may have been inspired by ambitious settings such as the *cellae* for cult images in the 'Establishment of the Poseidoniasts', which was almost completed around 150 BCE.⁵²

Against this background, the portrait statues of Kleopatra and Dioskourides can be identified as something like a cultural innovation. From various local practices and styles, Kleopatra created a new style and setting, which is without exact parallel in Delos – and she may even have been among the first (if not the first according to the currently known evidence⁵³) to put up portrait statues in a house in Delos, and to thus introduce a new habit. Otherwise, the couple chose local styles of upper mid-range level to shape their house. Whether they invested particularly in the new style of portrait statues because their house served for public, and not just private events, as recently assumed by Jochen Griesbach, must remain open.⁵⁴

Kleopatra's and Dioskourides' extended family is well known from further inscriptions, which allow to closer assess the cultural interests and agency of this family (tab. 1, fig. 3).⁵⁵ Next to Dioskourides and his wife are known their two daughters Anniche and Theodote, furthermore Dioskourides' brother Kraton, as well as his nephews Apollonios and Theodoros and his niece Myro. The family was established in Delos by 163/162 BCE and still active in the last quarter of the 2nd c BCE. Dioskourides' daughter Theodote may have married Hermon, son of Thrasydeios from the Greek city Elea

50 Von Thüngen 1994; Trümper 2008; Palmer Baltes – Dillon 2013; Griesbach 2013; Ma 2013; Herbin 2014; Trümper 2014.

51 Trümper 2014, 71 n. 12: decree ID 1520, set up 153/152 or 149/148 BCE.

52 For ambitious settings in the 'Agora of the Italians', after 120 BCE, and the gymnasium, around 100 BCE, Trümper 2014; for the history of the Poseidoniasts' sanctuary, Trümper 2002b.

53 The portrait statues and busts that were found without inscribed bases cannot be securely dated; they are all smaller and of lower quality than the statues of Kleopatra and Dioskourides; Kreeb 1988, 122–123, 165–165, 233, 256.

54 Griesbach 2014, 115.

55 Kreeb 1985, 43–44; Griesbach 2014, 103 n. 28.

Tab. 1 Activities of Dioskourides and his family

ID	Material, size, function Size in m; h = high; b = broad; d = deep	Information D. = Dioskourides	Provenance, profession mentioned	Date	Findspot / original location	Bibliography
1417 B II I. 83	Marble stele; 1,40 h, 0,75 b, 0,086 d; inventory of Kallistratos	D. had rented land from the temple, which was now rented to somebody else	Myrrhinoutte	156/s BCE	'Treasury I'	Roussel 1915, 41; Kreeb 1985, 43
1444 B a I. 14–15	Marble stele, 3 frag- ments; inventory	Daughters of D. dedicated un- der priestess Moschine, daugh- ter of Demeas from Halai, two torches in the Thesmophorion	Myrrhinoutte	141/o BCE	Partially unknown, partially close to the treasuries	Kreeb 1985, 44
1508	White marble stele; 0,61 h, 0,365 b, 0,365 d; honorary decree;	Dioskurides and his daugh- ters Anniche and Theodote entertained Athenians from war ships; demos honored him with laurel wreath and the daughters with ivy wreaths and allowed them to set up a votive at a place of their choice	Myrrhinoutte	?	Reused in modern wall to east of 'Agora of the Competaliasts' (GD 2); originally to be set up in the Artemision (GD 46)	Kreeb 1985, 43-44
1922 I. 6–7	Bluish marble slab; 0,25 h, 0,50 b, 0,13 d	Apollonios, son of Lykon (nephew of D.), dedicated something as ephebe together with other ephebes to Hermes and Herakles	Myrrhinoutte	136/s BCE	At east end of street be- tween 'Antigonos Stoa' (GD 29) and 'Agora of the Italians' (GD 52)	Kreeb 1985, 44

ID	Material, size, function Size in m; h = high; b = broad; d = deep	Information D. = Dioskourides	Provenance, profession mentioned	Date	Findspot / original location	Bibliography
1975	White marble slab; 0,69 h, 0,53 b, 0,18 d	Theodoros, son of Philon (nephew of D.), and Myro, daughter of Theodoros, set up a statue of their wife and mother, Myro, daughter of Lykon (niece of D.),	Myrrhinoutte for Theodoros and both Myros (mother and daughter)	C. 130 BCE	Reused in wall of a house at the 'Agora of the Competalists' (GD 2); probably originally in front of the 'Stoa of Philip' (GD 3)	Kreeb 1985, 44; von Thüngen 1994, 105-106; Griesbach 2014, 103 n. 32
1987	White marble statue base; size see Kreeb 1985	D. dedicated two silver tripods in temple of Apollo; Kleopatra dedicated his statue	Myrrhinoutte for both Kleopatra and Dioskurides	138/7 BCE or later	'House of Kleopatra and Dioskurides'	Kreeb 1985, 44
2368	Blue marble slab: 0,08 h, 0,395 b, 0,395 d	Theodote, daughter of D., dedicated something on her behalf and that of her husband Hermon, son of Thrasycleios, from Elea, to Artemis	Elea for Thrasycleios		Close to the Artemision (GD 46)	Griesbach 2014, 103 n. 32
2463	White marble fragment, 0,11 h, 0,38 b, 0,33 d	Dedication of D. (basis of one of the silver tripods?, Griesbach)	Myrrhinoutte	?	?	Kreeb 1985, 44; Griesbach 2014, 103, n. 33
2589 l. 10	White marble stele; 1,89 h, 0,49–0,545 b, 0,18 d; list of gymnasiarchs	Kraton, son of Theodoros (brother of D.), listed as gymnasiarch	Myrrhinoutte	163/2 BCE	To north of gymnasium (GD 76)	Kreeb 1985, 43
2630 l. 13	White marble slab, 0,37 h, 0,43 b, 0,075 d; catalogue	Theodoros, son of Lykon (nephew of D.), in catalogue with other persons	Myrrhinoutte	Last quarter of 2 nd c. BCE	In the theatre	Kreeb 1985, 44

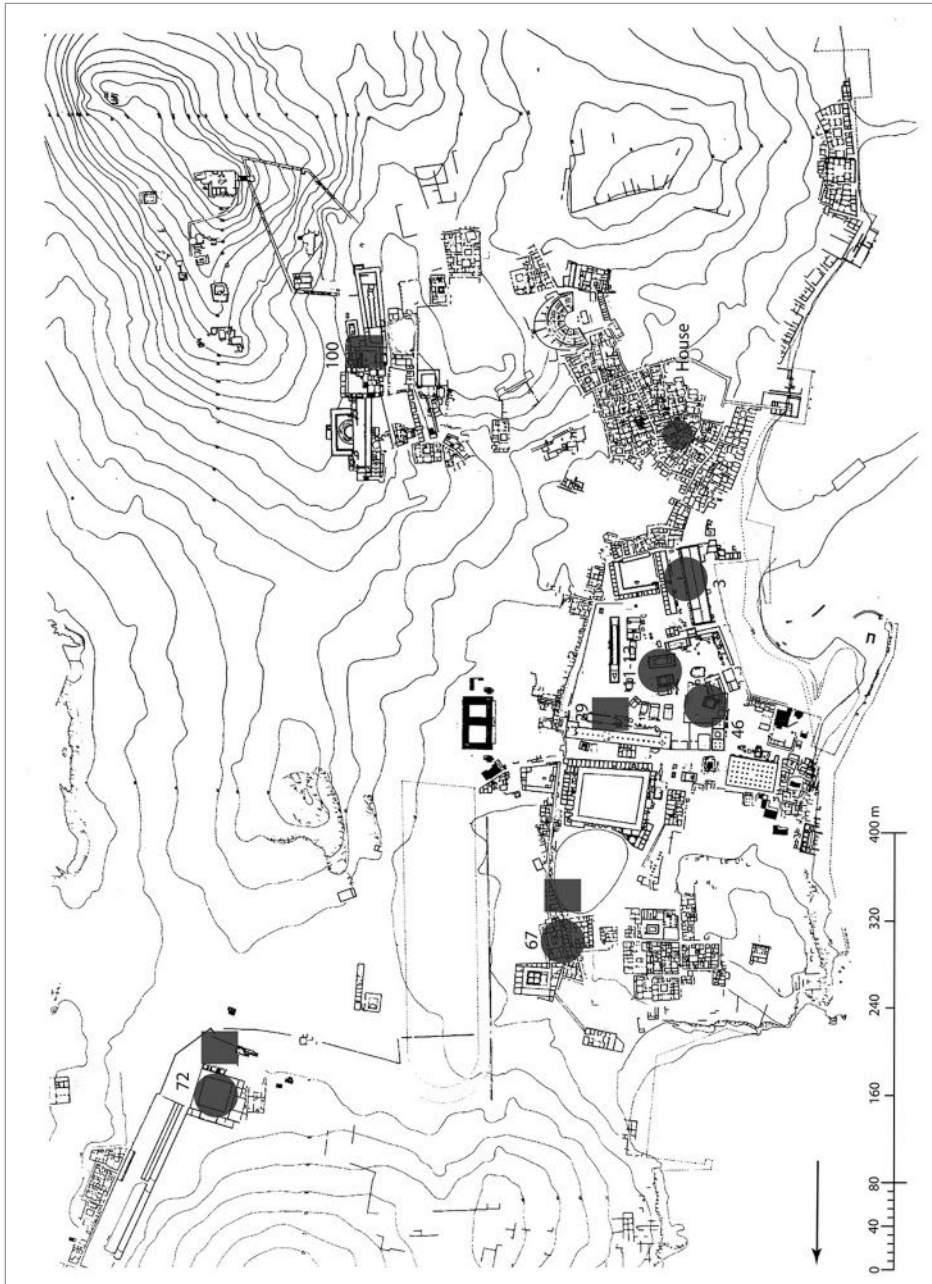


Fig. 3 Activities of Kleopatra and Dioskourides and their family (circles) and Hermon's family (squares) in Delos that can be localized; M. Trümper based on Trümper 1998, 173 fig. 1

in South Italy.⁵⁶ Hermon's family, in turn, was also well established in Delos, probably until the early 1st c BCE.⁵⁷

It is of major importance here that the family with its various activities remained firmly rooted in the local Greek-Athenian milieu: they were active in the sanctuaries of Apollo (GD 11–13), Artemis (GD 46) and Demeter and the gymnasium (GD 72 or GD 67). Dioskourides and his daughters donated to Apollo and Demeter and once fed the Athenians from war ships who temporarily stayed in Delos. For the latter, the demos of the Athenians issued an honorary decree to be set up in the sanctuary of Artemis; the decree documents public honours: wreaths, a decree, the right to set up a votive at a place of their choice, but no statues in Delos. The nephew of Dioskourides set up a statue of his wife (niece of Dioskourides), which was probably part of a family monument, set up in front of the 'Stoa of Philip' (GD 3). Dioskourides' family did not sponsor sanctuaries of foreign gods or intermingle with Phoenicians or Romans and Italians in their meeting places ('Establishment of the Poseidoniasts'; 'Agora of the Italians').

If Dioskourides' daughter was really married to Hermon from Elea, however, the family would have expanded its network. While Hermon's family frequented the gymnasium and dedicated a family monument in front of the 'Antigonos Stoa' (GD 29) in the last quarter of the 2nd c. BCE, in the early 1st c. BCE they were also engaged in the Sarapeion C (GD 100) and made a dedication together with other Italians and Romans.

Kleopatra and Dioskourides remained firmly committed to their provenance from Myrrhinoutte, which is always mentioned in the inscriptions. They may have been well integrated into a network of the local (Athenian) elite, but no official office or priesthood is mentioned for Dioskourides. It is not astonishing that he did not receive an honorary statue from official institutions, because official institutions issued only a few honorary decrees and dedicated one single statue of an epimelete between 167/166 and 145/144 BCE.⁵⁸ After a period of total silence between 145/144 and 130 BCE, the mixed groups of Athenians, Romans and others began dedicating statues of Athenian and Roman officials.⁵⁹ Therefore, in the period when Dioskourides was active in Delos,

56 ID 2368; while the members of Dioskourides' family commonly always list their provenance from Myrrhinoutte, this is missing here. Therefore, Kreeb 1988, 44 is cautious in attributing ID 2368 to Dioskourides' daughter, Griesbach 2014, 103 n. 32 is more optimistic.

57 ID 1713 (about 100 BCE); 1965; 2004; 2368; 2595 l. 8. 32; 2598 (119/118 BCE); 2602(?); 2619 b II l. 12(?) (early 1st c BCE). Von Thüning 1994, 120 argued that Hermon II and III (potential husband of Theodote) were adults in about 135 BCE because they appear as priest and gymnasiarch of the Hermaia in a list of about 130 BCE (ID 2595). Zenon and Theon, sons of Hermon (II or III), were among the [*elaio*]polai who dedicated a naos and statue of Herakles around 100 BCE (ID 1713). For a stemma of the family, Ernst 2018, 431 with much more cautious dating of ID 2595 (2nd c BCE).

58 ID 1497–1509. 1618; cf. Roussel 1916, 23. 50–51. The demos 'signed' crowns on statues set up by family members, e. g. ID 1979 (around 150–147 BCE). Cf. also Müller 2017, 106.

59 ID 1642–1678.

in the 140s and 130s BCE (and probably a bit earlier), he could not have received an honorary statue in a public space. The family would have had the choice to set up a family monument in public, which would have required permission. Instead, Kleopatra opted for a highly unusual, innovative format: honouring her husband to commemorate his generosity towards Apollo, and setting up a statue of herself without any specific reason in their private house. In contrast, on publicly displayed family monuments, all statues were dedicated by family members.⁶⁰ In this sense, the statue group was a compensation for lacking appropriate public honours, offices and visibility.⁶¹

House of Philostratos of Ascalon

The ‘House of Philostratos of Ascalon’ is located about 100 m to the north of the ‘Sanctuary of the Syrian Goddess’ (GD 98), on the slopes of the Kynthos hill. Pierre Paris excavated the house in 1883 only partially because an inscribed base was found here.⁶² He identified a peristyle courtyard with four by four columns and an *opus tessellatum* mosaic in the *impluvium* and compared the house to the nearby ‘House of the Dolphins’ (GD 111), which he had also excavated in the same year (fig. 4).

The inscribed base was an ambitiously high marble base (ca. 1,30 m), made of three blocks, of which the inscribed body and probably the moulded foot survived.⁶³ Since the (most likely moulded) crowning is missing, it cannot be determined whether the single standing, life-sized statue, which it supported, was made of bronze or marble. The inscription reads:

[Φιλ]όστρατον [Φ]ιλοστρά[του]
 Νεαπολίτην
 [τ]ὸν πρότερον [χ]ρηματί[ζ]ον[τα]
 [Α]σ[κα]λωνίτην, τραπεζίτη[ύοντα]
 ἐν Δήλῳ,

60 Dillon 2010, 49–50; Ma 2013, 48. 188 compared the couple to groups that showed an honoured person with a personification (of the demos or cities) that crowned the honouree; but Kleopatra was not a personification and did not crown her husband. Ma 2013, 172 discussed Dioskourides among statues of priests, because his “public piety” would be similar to a priestly office, but again an official office and an individual act of piety are different. It can naturally not be excluded that the family of Dioskourides had a public family monument in Delos, which is not preserved.

61 Contra Griesbach 2014, 103. Cf. Ma 2013, 239.

62 ID 1724; Paris 1884, 486–491; Bruneau 1972, 226–229; Kreeb 1988, 223–225; Leiwo 1989; Griesbach 2014, 104–105; Ernst 2018, 92–93.

63 0,70 m high, 0,54 m broad, 0,46 m deep; Schmidt 1995, 353–354; Griesbach 2014, 104–105 n. 41 discovered a fragment of a moulded foot nearby: 0,30 m high, 0,78 m broad, 0,635 m deep. The crowning was probably similarly high, suggesting a total height of 1,30 m. Cf. Schmidt 1995, 55–59 fig. 298 for heights of similar composite bases.

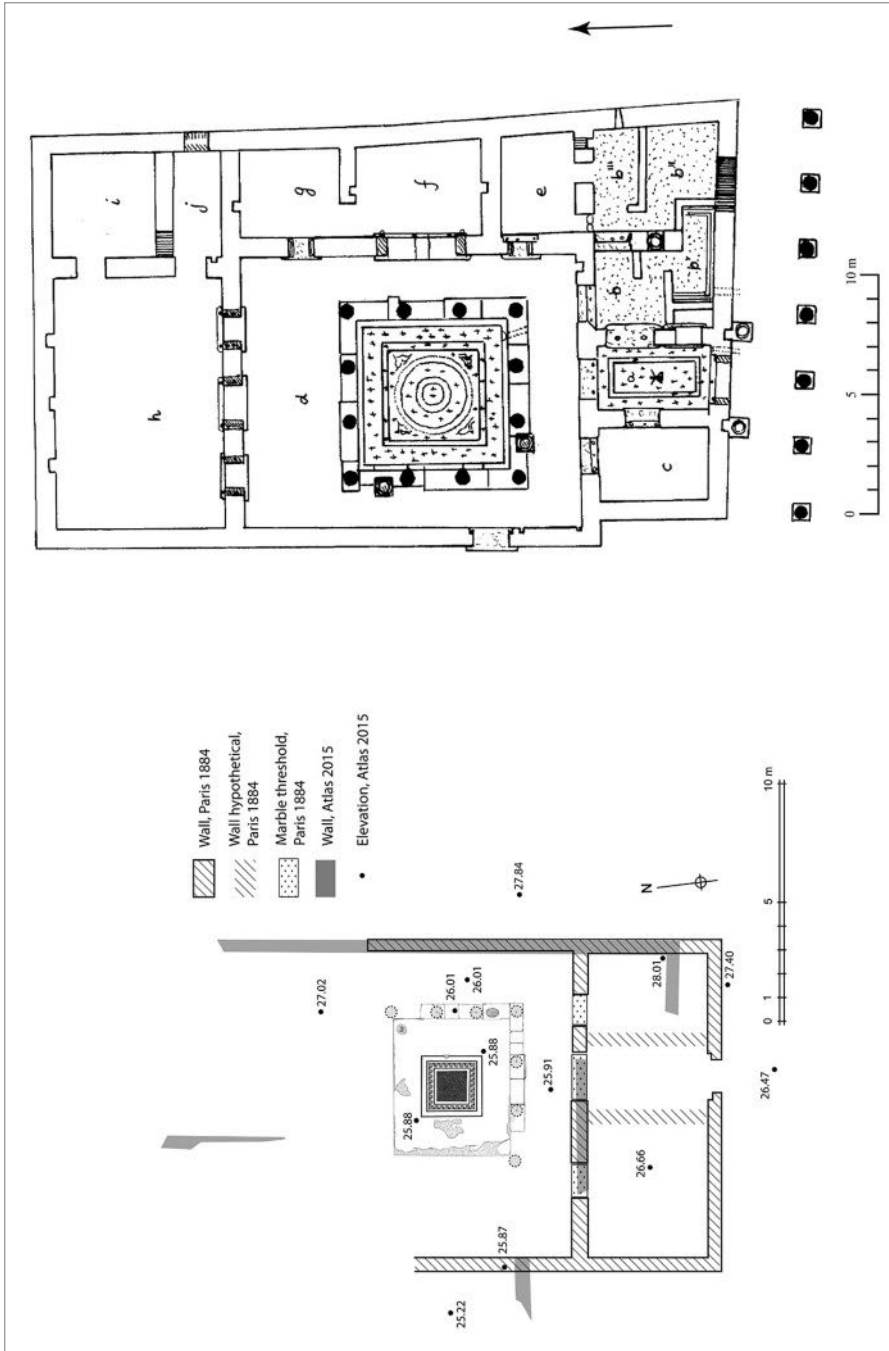


Fig. 4 'House of Philostratos' and 'House of the Dolphins'; M. Trümper based on Paris 1884, pl. XX; Bruneau 1972, 228 fig. 160; Moretti et al. 2015, plan 17; Trümper 1998, 247 fig. 35

[Π]ό[π]λιος καὶ Γάιος καὶ Γναῖος Ἐγνά-
 [τι]οὶ Κοίντου Ῥωμαῖοι τὸν ἑαυτ[ῶν]
 εὐεργέτην Ἀπόλλωνι.
 Λύσιππος Λυσίππου
 Ἡράκλειος ἐποίηει.

Philostratos, son of Philostratos, citizen of Naples, who previously was called a citizen of Ascalon, banker on Delos

Publius and Gaius and Gnaeus Egnatii, sons of Quintus, Romans, to their benefactor.

Dedicated to Apollo. Made by Lysippos, son of Lysippos of Herakleia.⁶⁴

Three Romans of the Egnatii gens honoured their benefactor Philostratos, emphasising his former and current citizenship as well as his profession or business on Delos. In analogy to Kleopatra and Dioskourides, it seems most likely that Philostratos himself inhabited the house where his statue was set up.⁶⁵ While the precise find spot of the base is unknown, the tall freestanding base was most likely set up in the peristyle courtyard.

It cannot be determined, however, when this house was built, whether Philostratos built it himself and how long it was inhabited and by whom. Too little is known of its size, design and decoration to fully assess the house and cultural styles that may have shaped it. But the remains allow some preliminary observations. In contrast to the 'House of Kleopatra', this house was built from the beginning with a large well-made peristyle with twelve columns. The size of the courtyard ranges on place 11 of 33 peristyle courtyards in Delos, but in terms of quality and number of columns the peristyle is in the top tier. Paris reconstructed the columns with a height of 3,25 m, which would be on the lower end of the spectrum of Doric peristyles; he did not indicate, however, how much is really preserved of the columns.⁶⁶ The *opus tessellatum* mosaic in the *impluvium* is significantly more lavish than the corresponding pavement in Kleopatra's house, but still less impressive than in other Delian houses, for example the 'House of the Dolphins'. Paris argued, however, that the quality of material and construction technique was better in this house than in the 'House of the Dolphins'.⁶⁷ Any further assessment is impeded by the fact that the three published plans cannot be easily correlated.⁶⁸ The comparison with the 'House of the Dolphins' (fig. 4) shows

64 ID 1724. Translation cf. Leiwo 1989, 578; Griesbach 2014, 104, translated *liberti*; Ernst 2018, 93 argued that it cannot be securely determined whether the Egnatii were freedmen or freeborn.

65 And not the Egnatii, as still assumed by Paris 1884, 490, Bruneau 1972, 226, Rauh 1993, 200; cf. also Griesbach 2014, 104–105; Ernst 2018, 93.

66 Trümper 1998, tab. 1, which also includes the 'House of the Diadumenos', which was probably a clubhouse of an association.

67 Paris 1884, 491.

68 Paris 1884, pl. XX provided an idealized plan with a square *impluvium* of 4,80 × 4,80 m; p. 490 he claimed to have seen three marble thresholds in the south wall of the courtyard and to have found

some intriguing similarities, but also problems, such as the unusual width of the western portico, as reconstructed by Paris, and the lack of rooms on the eastern or western side of the peristyle courtyard.⁶⁹

Philostratos is probably the most well-known and best documented person in Delos, securely mentioned in 16 inscriptions, dated from the 120s BCE to 92/91 BCE (tab. 2, fig. 5).⁷⁰ He was much more ‘internationally’ active and connected than Kleopatra and her family. His family was well established on the island for several decades, including his wife, children, and a nephew; one son and probably also the nephew were epehebes in the local gymnasium. Philostratos donated to the island’s traditional main gods Apollon, Artemis and Zeus several golden and silver vessels, probably in the early 120s BCE, shortly after his arrival, because these generous gifts are mentioned on a statue base set up around 120 BCE. He financed significant parts of the ‘Agora of the Italians’, the largest complex in Delos, which the Italian community built in the 120s BCE. Inscriptions testify that Philostratos donated the largest exedra 42, the ground floor north portico, probably also the ground floor east portico and another small item. In 108/107 BCE, he contributed to the construction of the theatre in the ‘Sanctuary of the Syrian Goddess’ with the generous sum of 50 drachmes, and was shortly afterwards recognized by his friend Midas in the dedicatory inscriptions of the exedra, located opposite of the theatre. His son and/or slave(s) were also active in the Sarapeion C and as competaliasts for the cult of the Lares Compitales.

While Philostratos could not choose the cultural styles of the ‘Agora of the Italians’ and the ‘Sanctuary of the Syrian Goddess’, and he therefore just decided to support them financially, he is commonly recognized as the patron of the small ‘Sanctuary of the Ascalonian Gods’ on Mount Kynthos (GD 107, fig. 6). Because of its open cour-

the main entrance of the house. Bruneau 1972, 228 fig. 160 and the Atlas plan, Moretti et al. 2015, plan 17, show an *impluvium* of 5,00 NS × 5,80 m EW. The Atlas plan does not show any thresholds, and the south wall of the house is located significantly further north than in Paris’ plan. The elevations indicated on the Atlas plan demonstrate that the area to the south of the peristyle courtyard is much higher, probably full of debris, and that the terrain is significantly higher to the east and lower to the west of the courtyard. Paris 1884, 491 stated that the west and north sides of the house were completely destroyed. Griesbach 2014, 105 n. 41 found several marble fragments of the base and other objects to the northwest and slightly below the peristyle courtyard.

- 69 The ‘House of Dolphins’ had a ground floor surface area of 404 m², place 12 in the ranking of Delian houses, but the house also had an upper story; Trümper 1998, 166. 246. Rauh 1993, 204 n. 22 suggested that Philostratos built and owned the ‘House of the Dolphins’ because it would better accord with his lifestyle; since there is no evidence to support this hypothesis, it will not be further discussed here.
- 70 ID 1720–1721 is counted as one inscription here, but ID 1722 and 2549 as two separate inscriptions, even if they most likely belonged to the same base. Mancinetti Santamaria 1982; Leiwo 1989; Trümper 2008, 140–142. 170–177. 211–213. 217; Wallensten 2014; Noy 2017. Mancinetti Santamaria 1982, 81 argued that Philostratos was active Delos between 140/130 and 90 BCE; but there is no securely dated evidence for his presence before the 120s BCE, when the ‘Agora of the Italians’ was built; Trümper 2008, 299.

Tab. 2 Activities of Philostratos and his family

ID	Material, size, function Size in m; h = high; b = broad; d = deep	Information	Provenance, profession mentioned	Date	Find spot/ original building	Bibliography
1717	Marble architrave, ground floor north portico	P. dedicated the north portico of the 'Agora of the Italians' to Apollo and the Italians	Ascalon, banker in Delos	120s BCE (construction of Agora)	'Agora of the Italians' (GD 32)	Trümper 2008, 126
1718	White marble base of an unknown votive, 0,27 h, 0,42 b, 0,39 d	P. dedicated something to Apollo and Italians; most likely from 'Agora of the Italians'	Banker in Delos		?	Trümper 2018, 170. 173
1719	Round marble altar with garlands and bucrania, 0,75 m h, diam. 0,75 m	P. dedicated the altar to Paestinian Aphrodite Astarte Urania; on behalf of the city Ascalon, himself, his wife and children	Ascalon, banker in Delos	Before 92/1 BCE	East slope of Kynthos, originally set up in 'Sanctuary of Ascalonian Gods' (GD 107)	Trümper 2008, 176 n. 866; Walsten 2014
1720–21	Round marble altar; 0,65 m h, diam. 0,55	P. dedicated the altar to Poseidon Askalonites, on behalf of the city Ascalon, himself, his wife and children; both sides inscribed with same text	Ascalon, banker in Delos	Before 92/1 BCE	'Sanctuary of Ascalonian Gods', Kynthos (GD 107)	Trümper 2008, 176 n. 866;
1722	Three marble fragments of crowning of a base; 0,37 h; 0,56, 0,08, 0,24 w; 0,35 d	Italians dedicated P. and his son(s) because of his dikaiosyne and philagathia to Apollo; combined with ID 2459	Banker in Delos	Around 120 BCE	'Agora of the Italians' (GD 32)	Trümper 2008, 173–177
1723	White marble composite base; corpus 0,62 h, 0,67 b, 0,52 d; foot; crowning missing	Diodotos, son of Antipatros, of Ascalon dedicated P., his own god, provider, soter, euergetes, to the Zeus Kynthios and Athena Kynthia	Ascalon, banker in Delos	Before 92/1 BCE	At the foot of Mount Kynthos, most likely set up in the Sanctuary of Zeus and Athena (GD 104)	

ID	Material, size, function Size in m; h = high; b = broad; d = deep	Information	Provenance, profession mentioned	Date	Find spot/ original building	Bibliography
1724	White marble composite base; corpus 0,70 h, 0,54 b, 0,46 d; moulded foot; crowning missing	Three members of Egnatii gens, Romans, dedicated their euergetes P. to Apollon; Lysippos from Heraclea made it	Naples, but before that Ascalon, banker in Delos	After 106/5 BCE	'House of P.'	Trümper 2008, 176 n. 867
1769	White marble cylinder; 0,72 h, diam. 0,49	Chaireas, (slave of) P., who had been competalist, dedicated this with other competalists to the gods		100 BCE	found at southeast corner of 'Agora of the Competalists' (GD 2)	
1934	White marble base of unknown votive; 0,17 h, 0,23 b, 0,186 d	Theophilos, son of P., of Naples, ephebe, dedicated this to Apollon, Hermes, Herakles; archon, gymnasiarch and paidotribe are mentioned	Naples	92/1 BCE	Reused in modern wall in SE corner of 'Agora of the Competalists' (GD 2)	
2253	White marble slab, in 5 fragments, 0,452 h, 0,75 b, 0,05–0,09 d	Midas, son of Zenon, of Heraclea, dedicated the exedra, stoa, oikos on behalf of the demos of the Athenians and Romans and his friend P. and others; when Zoilos was priest	Ascalon	106/5 BCE	found in cistern of 'Sanctuary of the Syrian Goddess' (GD 98)	
2254	Epistyle of exedra, many fragments	Similar to ID 2253	Ascalon	106/5 BCE	'Sanctuary of the Syrian Goddess' (GD 98), exedra of Midas	
2454	Marble architrave of exedra 42	P. dedicated the exedra and its furniture	Ascalon? (fragmentary)	120s BCE (construction of Agora)	'Agora of the Italians' (GD 52)	Trümper 2008, 139–140

ID	Material, size, function Size in m; h = high; b = broad; d = deep	Information	Provenance, profession mentioned	Date	Find spot/ original building	Bibliography
2549	White marble base, corpus 0,81 h, 0,705 b, 0,53 d; ID 1722 may have been the crowning	Two epigrams praise numerous donations and benefactions of P., to Zeus, Artemis, Apollo as well as of two porticoes in the 'Agora of the Italians', and mention that Italians dedicated a statue of P. and his son(s) in the Agora	Palestine	Around 120 BCE	'Agora of the Italians' (GD 52)	Trümper 2008, 173–177
2599	White marble base of unknown votive; 0,255 h, 0,374 b, 0,21 d	Son of Antipatros, of Ascalon, probably Diodotos (ID 1723) as ephebe, together with other ephebes dedicated something to Apollo and Hermes; archon, epimelete, gymnasiarch, paidotribe are mentioned	Ascalon	104/103 BCE	Reused in house to the east of the 'Tetragonos Agora' (GD 84)	Noy 2017, 124
2616 III l. 72–73	White marble stele in 11 fragments; 1,00 h, 0,61 b, 0,04 d; subscription list	Theodoros, son/slave? of P., on behalf of his own, 4 drachmes		End of 2 nd /early 1 st c. BCE	Sarapeion C (GD 100)	Mancinetti Santamaria 1982, 84, n. 35
2619 a l. 18; b I l. 21	White marble slab, 3 fragments; 0,27 h, 0,17 b, 0,08 d; subscription list	a: Theodoros, son/slave? of P., b: Theodoros, son/slave? of P. 4 drachmes		Early 1 st c. BCE	Sarapeion C (GD 100)	Mancinetti Santamaria 1982, 84, n. 35
2628 a I l. 29–31	Bluish marble slab, 2 fragments; 1,10 h, 0,60 b, 0,09 d; subscription list	P. on behalf of himself, his wife and his children, 50 drachmes; for the construction of the theatre in the 'Sanctuary of the Syrian Goddess'		108/7 BCE	Theatre of the 'Sanctuary of the Syrian goddess' (GD 98)	

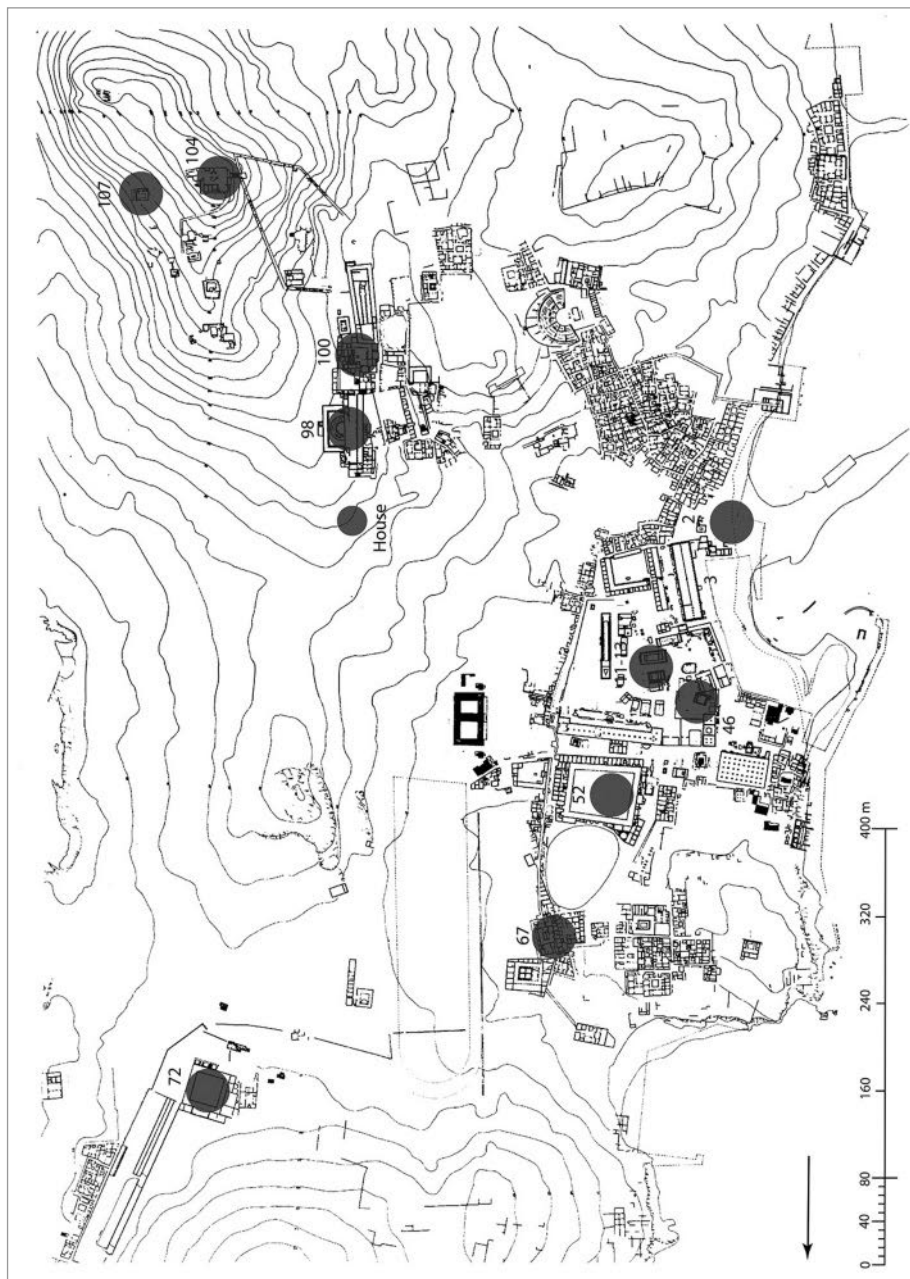


Fig. 5 Activities of Philostratos and his family in Delos that can be localized; M. Trümper based on Trümper 1998, 173 fig. 1

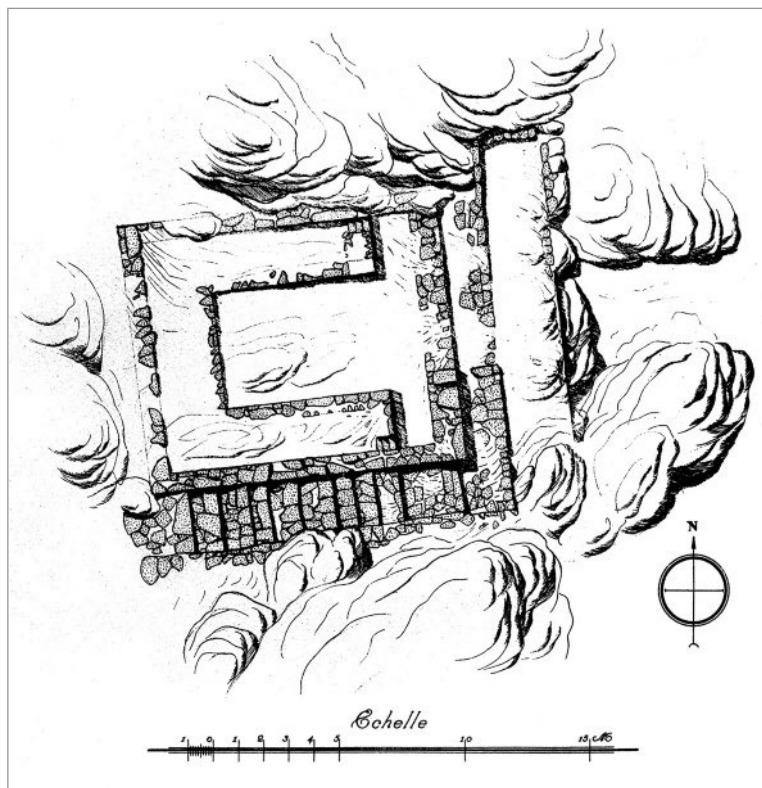


Fig. 6 'Sanctuary of the Ascalonian Gods' on Mount Kynthos, plan;
Plassart 1928, 289 fig. 233

tyard and raised high podia on three sides, the sanctuary has always been identified as typically oriental, certainly non-local (or non-Greek). Two round marble altars dedicated by Philostratos to Astarte Palestina Ourania Aphrodite and Poseidon Askalonites on behalf of the city of Ascalon and his family were found close-by and attributed to this sanctuary.⁷¹ The only evidence for dating the altars and probably the sanctuary is the fact that Philostratos still refers to his provenance from Ascalon, while sometime between 106/105 and 92/91 BCE he changed citizenship and became a citizen of Naples, for business reasons, as convincingly argued by Martti Leiwo.⁷² For these

71 Plassart 1928, 285–289.

72 Leiwo 1989; Mancinetti Santamaria 1982, 83 n. 29 dated ID 1724 to 98/97 BCE because a slave of the three Egnatii dedicated something as *competalist* in 98/97 BCE, ID 1761; but this is certainly not a *terminus ad quem* for ID 1724, also no secure *ante* or *post quem*; cf. Trümper 2008, 176 n. 867; according to Marcadé 1957, II 64, the artist Lysippos worked in Delos at the beginning of the 1st c BCE.

altars, Philostratos chose typical local styles. Jenny Wallensten recently argued that the juxtaposition of Astarte Palestina and Ourania Aphrodite reflects a conscious attempt of intercultural translation: Philostratos would clearly have marked his provenance (Ascalon) and the nature of his ancestral deity Astarte Palestina, who is similar, but not identical with Ourania Aphrodite, for a mainly non-Syro-Palestinian, local and Greek-speaking audience.⁷³ He would have used his knowledge of various cultures for communicating in terms intelligible to as many visitors as possible.⁷⁴

For his wide-ranging generosity, Philostratos was rewarded with three statues on Delos: first, by the Italians in the 'Agora of the Italians', set up for him and his son(s) probably shortly after completion of the building; second, by his nephew in the 'Sanctuary of Athena and Zeus' on Mount Kynthos (GD 105), when Philostratos was still citizen of Ascalon; and third by the three Egnatii in his own house. This was the latest statue, set up when Philostratos had changed citizenship, sometime after 106/105 BCE. Since the crowning is not preserved or sufficiently published for any of these three bases, the material, size and type of the statues cannot be determined. While the statues were certainly standing, their costume (civic himation/toga, or more ambitious in cuirass or nude) and cultural style cannot be assessed.⁷⁵ Since Caius Ofellius Ferus, who was honoured by the Italians at the same time as Philostratos, received a nude portrait statue (with small cloak) set up in one of the niches of the 'Agora of the Italians', one might assume a similarly ambitious costume for Philostratos' statue in the Agora. Portrait statues found in houses either wore a himation or were nude, except for a small cloak.⁷⁶ Thus, the Egnatii may have had a choice, but it must remain open how they preferred to represent their *euergetes*.

The Egnatii were well represented in Delos, at least between 108/107 BCE and 98/97 BCE: they appear in the same subscription lists for the Sarapeion C and the 'Sanctuary of the Syrian Goddess' as Philostratos and his family, and some of them were also competalists.⁷⁷ In the Republican period, Egnatii are attested in Etruria, Umbria, and Campania (Pompeii, Naples). Leiwo argued that the Egnatii were freeborn Romans who had close personal business connections with Philostratos and were not acting on behalf of the city of Naples. Their personal interests and benefits would have motivated them to dedicate a statue of Philostratos.⁷⁸

73 Wallensten 2014.

74 Cf. for a similar phenomenon and argument, Versluys 2017; Riedel 2018.

75 For the importance of costumes, see e.g. Smith 1998; note that to date, no toga statue has been securely identified in Delos; Trümper 2008, 214 n. 1098.

76 Kreeb 1988, 122–123, 165, 233, 256: three statues with himation; two nude busts with small cloak over the shoulder.

77 Ferrary et al. 2002, 195: eleven names, three of them mentioned in ID 1724; two on epitaphs; two in dedications of the competalists; three in a dedication and subscription catalogues from the Sarapeion C: ID 1761 (98/97 BCE), 1765, 1767, 2174, 2619 b I l. 13, 2628 b III l. 17 (108/107 BCE).

78 Leiwo 1989, 581–582.

Philostratos was a true ‘global player’, whose family was on good terms with a wide range of local Greek and foreign gods (Apollon, Artemis, Zeus, Hermes, Heracles, Syrian Goddess, Egyptian gods, Ascalonian Astarte, Ascalonian Poseidon, Lares Compitales) as well as different ethnic groups that resided in and frequented the free port. He (and his family) switched citizenships and possibly also religious and cultural identities quite swiftly, and he consciously employed different cultural styles, most notably in an innovative eclectic way in the sanctuary of his ancestral gods.

The ethnic identity of Philostratos and his family clearly mattered and was proudly displayed. Of the 16 partially fragmentary inscriptions, seven securely referred to the provenance from Ascalon, and two to the Neapolitan citizenship; importantly, seven also referred to Philostratos’ profession and main activity, banker on Delos (table 2). The location of his house may have been chosen because of its vicinity to a whole complex of sanctuaries for foreign gods. Philostratos may have bought, rented or even built this house when he came to Delos in the 120s BCE. His portrait statue was certainly set up later, but it is unknown whether this was correlated with any remodelling process, as in the case of Kleopatra’s house. Currently, Philostratos’ house does not reflect his cosmopolitan versatility but seems firmly rooted in local traditions. This includes the practice of setting up a portrait statue in a domestic context, which was no longer highly innovative in the period after 106/105 BCE. The dedicatory formula was standard and the single statue more modest than the group set up by Kleopatra. But the statue was clearly conceived as a prestigious work of quality because the base was signed by a Greek artist. This was particularly common for statues of private persons set up by private persons and groups in Delos, probably in order to emphasize the importance and cultural ‘cachet’: these statues were exclusively made by Greek artists.⁷⁹

Only full excavation of this house might show whether Philostratos used any architectural or decorative features to clearly mark his provenance from the Syro-Palestinian coast, like probably the first owner of the nearby ‘House of the Dolphins’ with the discreet display of a Tanit symbol in the mosaic floor of his vestibule.

House of Tullius

The ‘House of Tullius’ is located in the ‘Quarter of Stadium’, Insula I (House C). This quarter was excavated by André Plassart in 1912–1913 and published in a detailed report. House C was built as a simple standard house (‘normal house’) with a surface area of 190 m², together with its larger eastern neighbour (house D) (fig. 7).⁸⁰ The house received attention in scholarship for two reasons: the base of the portrait statue and two

79 Marcadé 1957; Trümper 2008, 329–332.

80 Place 41 in the size ranking of Delian houses, Trümper 1998, 167, but the house also had an upper story. With 321 m², House D occupied place 19, and also had an upper story. House D may original-

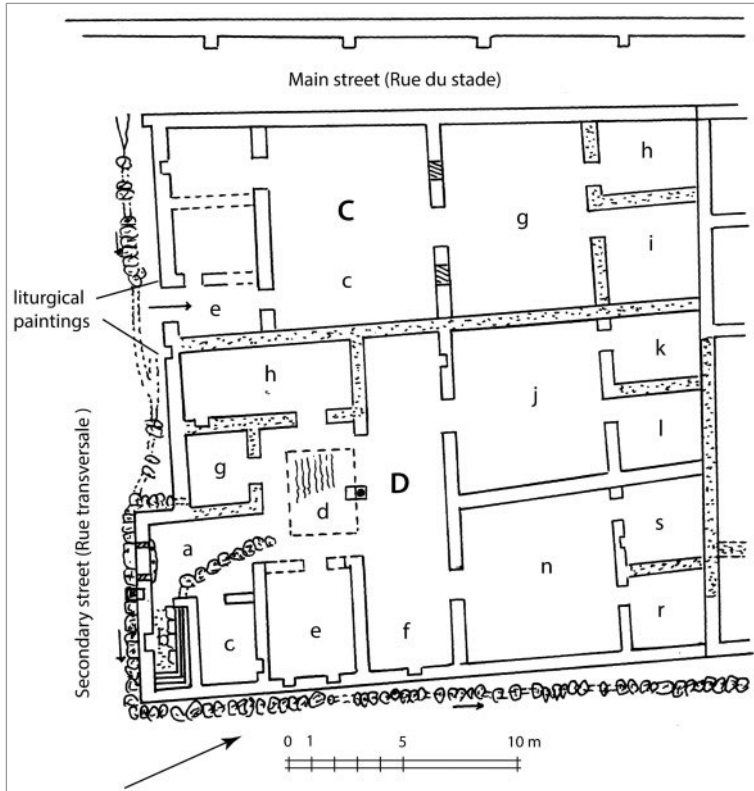


Fig. 7 'House of Tullius' ('Quarter of the Stadium' I C), plan of first phase; Trümper 1998, 219 fig. 23

complexes of liturgical paintings at the south and west façade were found here. Both were taken as proof that Italians or Romans owned and inhabited this house.⁸¹ But the history of the house has commonly been ignored in its importance for the question of ownership.⁸²

The original entrance opened off to a secondary street in the south. While the precise construction date of the house is unknown, it is commonly dated to the second half of the 2nd c BCE. The house saw a major remodelling process at an unknown period, which entailed the relocation of the main entrance to the main street in the west, the insertion of a double-storied peristyle with four columns on the ground floor and

ly have consisted of two narrow 'normal houses', or one large house with two adjacent groups of three rooms; Trümper 1998, 220–221.

81 Plassart 1916, 194–206; Kreeb 1988, 168–171; Rauh 1993, 199–200; Hasenohr 2003, esp. 194 n. 162; Zarmakoupi 2013; Griesbach 2014, 106–108; Zarmakoupi 2015; Ernst 2018, 83–88.

82 Trümper 1998, 218–220.

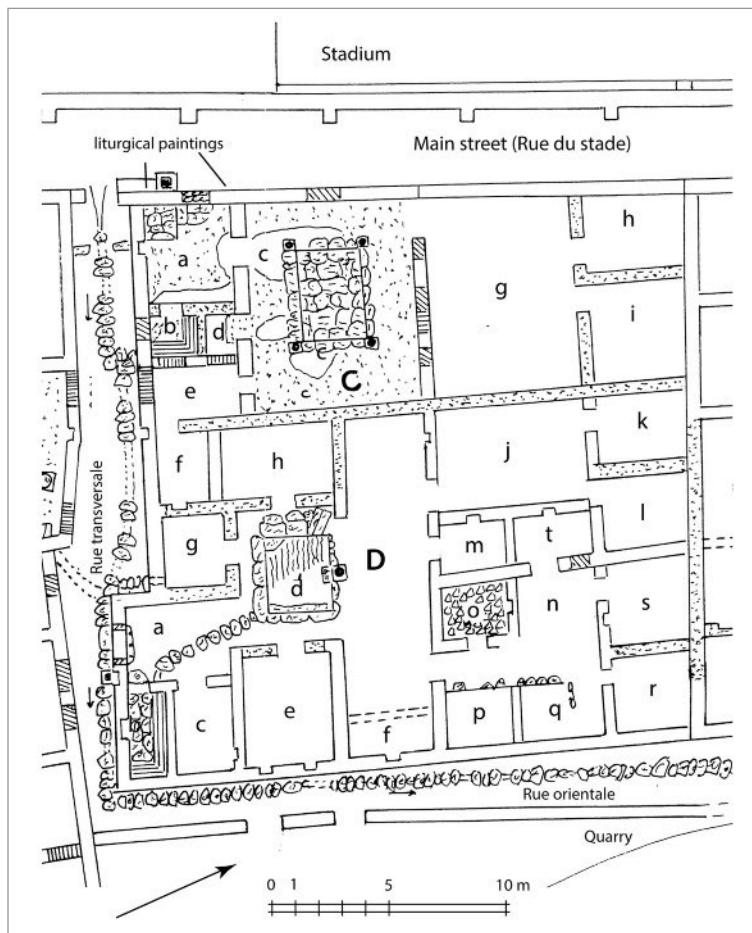


Fig. 8 'House of Tullius' ('Quarter of the Stadium' I C), plan of last phase; Trümper 1998, fig. 22

probably the construction of an upper story (fig. 8).⁸³ Room f was gained from the neighbour in this or another phase. These are all embellishing measures that have many parallels in Delos. In the last phase of use, the decoration of the ground floor was modest, including pavements of marble chips and gneiss slabs, a gneiss stylobate, simple unfluted marble columns, and white plaster in most of the rooms, with some

83 It cannot be excluded that the original house had already an upper story, but the later construction of the peristyle would have entailed changes in the roofing system and accessibility to the upper story. The courtyard of house D was also remodelled, possibly also in correlation with the construction or remodelling of its upper story. The rooms to the north of the courtyards of both houses were probably covered with a common roof.

green in room g. Plassart found apparently some rooms without plaster (e. g., b, e, f, h), but this may simply have been destroyed after the abandonment of the house. Three lines of a Greek graffito were found on the white plaster of the northern wall of annex room i, which testifies that an inhabitant or guest knew Greek and could write.⁸⁴ Plassart discovered a trench half filled with amphora and coarse ware sherds in room e and a large clay vessel in room i.

The upper story rooms were much more lavishly endowed and provided with polychrome decorated *opus tessellatum* mosaics and elaborate polychrome wall-decoration of the highest quality in the local context: fragments of fluted columns, cornices, figured friezes with garlands and cupids hunting animals and also many fragments with two different decoration systems were found in the northern rooms and the courtyard.⁸⁵ The upper story could be reached via a staircase from the vestibule (fig. 8, room a) without walking through any of the ground floor rooms, and may even have been inhabited independently.

At considerable height in the debris of the largest room (fig. 8, room g), two marble bases were found, one for an unknown object and without inscription, the other inscribed and for a bronze statue. Both were originally displayed in the room above g or in the upper northern portico. The round statue base is unique in design and composition and ambitiously high (1,54 m); it carries a bilingual inscription.

[Κόιντον Τύλλιον – – –]πον Κοίντου υἰὸν
 [Κόιντος Τύλ]λιος [Ἡρα]κλέων καὶ Κόιντος
 Τύλλιος Ἀλέξανδρος καὶ Κόιντος Τύλλιος
 Ἀρίσταρχος οἱ Κοίντου τὸν ἑαυτῶν πατέρων
 ἀρετῆς ἔνεκεν καὶ καλοκάγαθίας τῆς εἰς ἑαυτούς.

[Q. Tullium Q.f. – – –]pum
 Q. Tullius Q.l. A[ristarchus],
 Q. Tullius Q.l. Ale[xander],
 Q. Tullius Q.l. He[racleo p]atro[nem]
 suom honoris et be[nef]jici cau[sa].

Quintus Tullius Herakleon and Quintus Tullius Alexandros and Quintus Tullius Aristarchos, freedmen of Quintus, dedicated their patron [Quintus Tullius –]pus, the son of Quintus, because of his merits and generosity towards them.⁸⁶

84 Plassart 1916, 201; MNHC .../ ΕΚΠΑΓΓΛΘΟC/ ΠΑΓΑΘω; Zarmakoupi 2013; Zarmakoupi 2015.

85 Plassart 1916, 202–205; Kreeb 1988, 169–171: if anything, the later decoration was slightly more elaborate than the earlier.

86 ID 1802; Kreeb 1988, 169; Schmidt 1995, 75. 414–415 pointed out that the base is unique; Griesbach 2014, 106 n. 51 with full measures: total height 1,545 m; crowning block 0,23 m high, 0,772 m broad, 0,767 m deep, with imprints for life-sized bronze statue.

The three Greek *liberti* set up this statue sometime after 98/97 BCE because one of the dedicants, Quintus Tullius Herakleon, participated as a slave in the dedication of former competiasts in 98/97 BCE (ID 1761, tab. 3). Griesbach reconstructed the statue with a slightly striding pose, but showed that the costume cannot be reconstructed. Plassart assumed that the statue was destroyed in 88 BCE by soldiers of Mithridates, but the bronze could have been easily reused any time later.⁸⁷

It has been debated whether Tullius himself or his freedmen or both parties lived in this house. To Nicholas Rauh, the house seemed too modest for Tullius, whom he had identified as a Roman eques.⁸⁸ In analogy to the statues of Kleopatra and Dioskurides and Philostratos, it is much more likely that the honoured person lived in this house – in the case of Tullius, at least for some time between 98/97 BCE and probably 88 BCE. Tullii are less well known in Delos than the (extended) families of Diokourides and Philostratos (tab. 3, fig. 9). Except for the slave who had been competiast, a Quintus Tullius appears in a dedication of former Apolloniasts, which is not securely dated; a curse tablet from Rheneia; and the subscription list for the construction of the theatre in the ‘Sanctuary of the Syrian Goddess’ from 108/107 BCE. While Paul Ernst was (overly) cautious, arguing that it may not necessarily have been the same Tullius in all five Delian inscriptions, Claire Hasenohr attributed all of them to one and the same person.⁸⁹ According to her, Quintus Tullius was well established in Delos by 108/107 BCE at the latest. Interestingly, he and his slave Herakleon interacted in two dedications with Philostratos and a slave of the Egnatii.⁹⁰ Since the Egnatii and Tullius’ freedmen dedicated the statues of their benefactors at about the same time, hypothetically, there could have been some communication (or competition, emulation etc.) regarding this practice.

It remains to be discussed, at what point in the history of the house Tullius lived here and may have shaped it according to his cultural preferences and ideas: whether he built it, initiated the major remodelling, just had the upper story rooms newly painted or did nothing at all, just taking over a fully decorated house. This question has recently been addressed with two different arguments, liturgical paintings and the organization of the house, which yielded different answers. While one layer of paintings was found to both sides of the original southern entrance, eight were discovered to both sides of the later western entrance (fig. 10). It cannot be determined whether the paintings were immediately applied when the house was built, but the altar and bench were part of the remodelling, suggesting that the cult practice continued imme-

87 Plassart 1916, 163; Griesbach 2014, 107.

88 Rauh 1993, 195–203; Zarmakoupi 2015 and Ernst 2018, 84 both did not exclude that the house was inhabited by Tullius’ freedmen only.

89 Hasenohr 2017, 127; Ernst 2018, 84 n. 223.

90 ID 1761. 2628.

Tab. 3 Activities of Quintus Tullius and his family

ID	Material, size, function Size in m; h = high; b = broad; d = deep	Information	Provenance, profession mentioned	Date	Findspot	Bibliography
1802	See text	Three liberti of Q. Tullius Q.f. set up his statue because of his merits and generosity			House I C, 'Quarter of the Stadium'	
1761 l. 16–17	Bluish marble base of a Pistis statue; 1,05 h, 0,42 b, 0,31 d	Herakleon Tullios Kointou dedicated together with other former competitors (u. a. Kleomenes Egnatios Popliou Gaiou Gnaiou) Pistis to the gods; epimelete is mentioned		98/7 BCE	Reused in wall of a house close to the 'Agora of the Competaliasts' (GD 2)	Hasenohr 2017, 127
1730	Grey blue marble cylinder; 0,83 h, diam. 0,65	Kointos Tullios Kointou and five others Italians who had been Apolloniasts dedicated something to Apollo		Around 125 BCE (ID; Zarmakoupi 2015; Ernst 2018, 84 n. 223); last third of 2 nd / early 1 st c. BCE (Ernst 2018, 204); end of 2 nd / early 1 st c. BCE (Ernst 2018, 378 n. 739); no date (Ferrary et al. 2002, 218)	'Agora of the Competaliasts' (GD 2), originally set up probably at the south end of the 'Stoa of Philip' (GD 3)	Hasenohr 2008, 57; Ernst 2018 2018, 84 n. 23; 204; 258 n. 390; 378 n. 739
2534 l. 2	Copper slab; 0,198 h, 0,14 w; curse tablet from Rheneia	Q. Tullius Q.f.			Rheneia necropole	
2628 b III l. 6	Bluish marble slab, 2 fragments; 1,10 h, 0,60 w, 0,09 d; subscription list	Kointos Tullios contributed an unknown sum		108/7 BCE	Theatre of the 'Sancuary of the Syrian Goddess' (GD 98)	

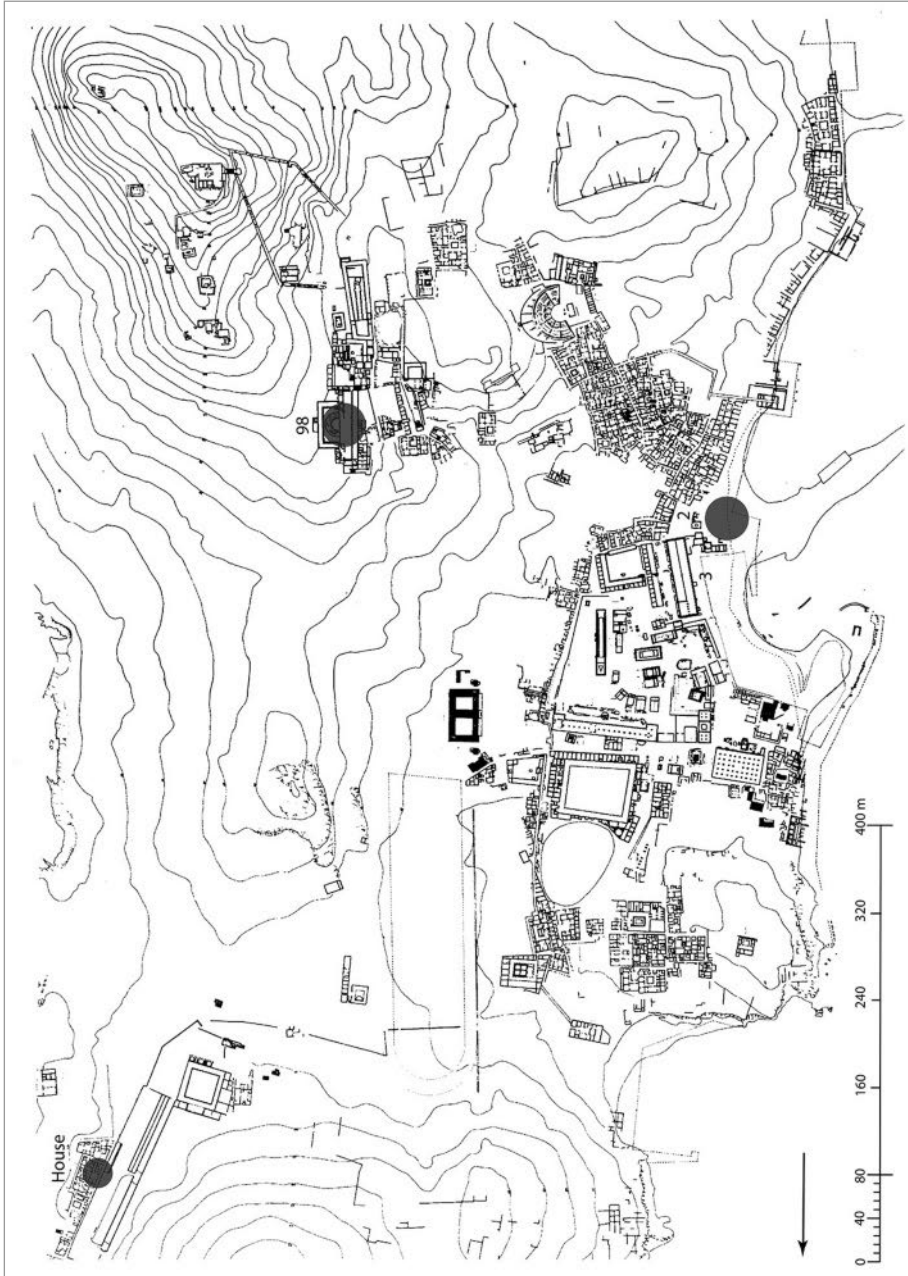


Fig. 9 Activities of Quintus Tullius and his family in Delos; M. Trümper based on Trümper 1998, 173 fig. 1

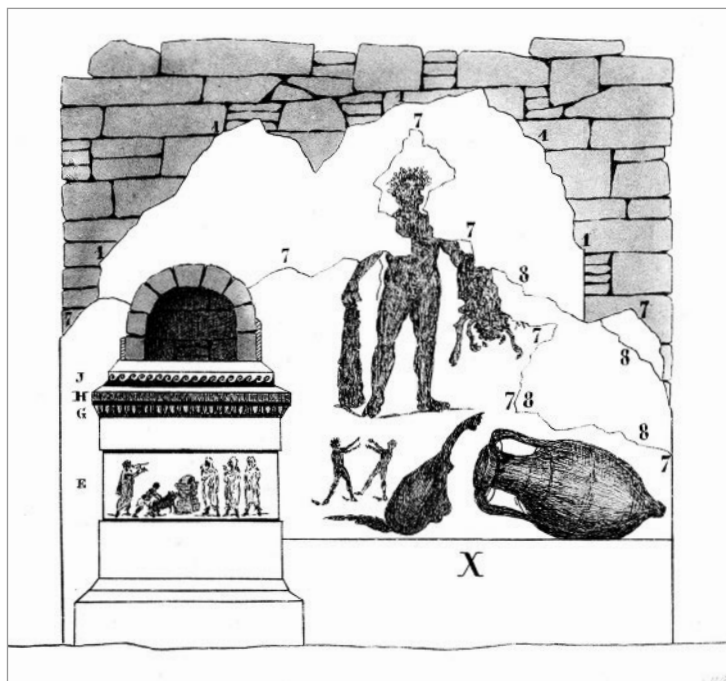


Fig. 10 'House of Tullius' ('Quarter of the Stadium' I C), west entrance: liturgical paintings on altar (layer 7) and wall (layer 7); Bulard 1926, pl. XIII 1

diately after the relocation of the entrance.⁹¹ Recent research suggests that the liturgical paintings were renewed on average every five years, which – if taken seriously – would speak for 40 years of practicing this cult, and use of the house for at least 40 years.⁹² Ernst argued that only the very last eighth layer on the western side could be correlated with the Tullii: three persons in white togas (heads not preserved) and with nude feet would represent the three *liberti* sacrificing to the Lares Compitales.⁹³ But three persons in toga praetexta *capite velato* with *calcei* were also shown on the seventh layer, and probably similar scenes on earlier layers, which are not sufficiently preserved.⁹⁴ Three (or two or five) sacrificing persons in toga appear also in other liturgical paintings, and one wonders whether these were precisely linked to the number of household members who had celebrated the sacrifice when the paintings were made.⁹⁵ The veiled heads

91 Hasenohr 2003, 195.

92 Hasenohr 2003, 195; Ernst 2018, 84 n. 222. 288 n. 139.

93 Ernst 2018, 84–88. 287–294.

94 Bulard 1926, 133–149: both sacrificial scenes were represented on the western face of the altar.

95 Bulard 1925, 123 pl. XI,1; Hasenohr 2003, 172.

of the men in togas suggests that the sacrifice was executed *rite Romano* and that the patrons of this painting emphasized Italian-Roman cultural belonging.

Zarmakoupi argued that Tullius would have owned and remodelled (but not necessarily inhabited) the house, in order to provide space for commercial activities on the ground floor and a lavishly decorated upper floor for social aspirations.⁹⁶ The three *liberti* would have managed Tullius' affairs in Delos and set up the statue for their own benefit, to advance their social standing in the Delian community. On the ground floor, Herakleon may have managed a storage room, Alexandros a workshop and Aristarchos may have rented a room, possibly room i to the slave or *libertus* Epagathos who would have left his signature on the north wall.⁹⁷ While this close reading is intriguing, there is too little evidence to support it. The upper floors of many Delian houses were more lavishly decorated than the ground floors⁹⁸; the sherds and vessel in rooms e and i can only be attributed to the very last phase of use, not necessarily to the entire period after the remodelling process, and they may also come from domestic needs, not necessarily commercial. In contrast to many other houses in Delos, this one did not include any rooms with openings to the street (shops, *tabernae*), appropriate for (retail) sale. The evidence of House C cannot serve to identify a distinct Italian style of living in Delos, the more so because most other foreigners frequented Delos for the same commercial reasons and may also have attempted to combine living and profit in their houses.⁹⁹ The asymmetry of knowledge is detrimental to systematically deriving cultural lifestyles from the archaeological evidence – even for the very last phase of use of the houses.¹⁰⁰

The situation of this house is apparently complex. But a matter-of-fact approach, based on the available evidence, suggests the following relative chronology of different processes in House I C.

96 Zarmakoupi 2015; it is not specified whether Tullius owned the house from the beginning and what 'social aspirations' entailed for the use of the upper floor rooms.

97 Zarmakoupi 2013, n. 60–61 also attributed the statuette of an oriental Aphrodite (inv. No. A 2498) to this house, mentioned by Plassart as coming from room i (which she confuses with room h); Barrett 2011, 335–336. 500–501 figs. D19. F1. F2. Its religious importance is far from certain in this context, and it may simply have served as 'exotic, aesthetic' decoration; see above n. 28.

98 Trümper 1998, 99–105.

99 Similarly, Ernst 2018, 77.

100 Zarmakoupi's argument is particularly based on the 'House of Seals', one of the very few houses in Delos that was destroyed and included significant remains of its furniture and household assemblage; Trümper 2005.

Relative chronology, measures	Date BCE; reference to relative chronology	Measure
1	Sometime after 167/166 BCE	Construction of house
2	At the same time / after measure 1 (128 BCE at the latest)	Liturgical paintings at southern door; 128 BCE at the latest, if paintings were changed every five years
3	After measure 1	Room f gained from neighbour as latrine?
4	After measures 1 and 2	Remodelling of the house; 123 BCE at latest, if paintings were changed every five years; first layer of liturgical paintings at western door
5–11	After measure 4 (if the 8 th layer or paintings was applied 88 BCE, then the first layer would have been applied 123 BCE)	Seven more layers of liturgical paintings, applied every five years?
12	After 98/97 BCE, before 88 BCE	Statue of Quintus Tullius; relationship to liturgical paintings unknown
13	After measure 4	Wall decoration of upper story renewed; graffiti on north wall of room I (horse, boat, Greek inscription)
14	After measure 4	Large clay vessel in room i; trench along e wall of room e, half-filled with fragments of amphorae and coarse ware
15	88 BCE	Destruction and abandonment? ¹⁰¹

Since the statue of Tullius was not integrated into an architectural setting, it cannot be linked to any remodelling phases. In contrast to Kleopatra, Tullius did not dedicate his own statue and thus may not have been able to include it into a carefully planned building program. One can only hypothesize, but not prove, that Tullius bought the house when he came to Delos around 120 or 110 BCE and initiated its major embellishment; or that he redecorated the upper story rooms when his statue was set up.

Despite the many vexing uncertainties, the development of this house is highly revealing for the question of cultural choices. The original two or three standard row-type houses (C and D) were built either jointly by two or three owners or by an entrepreneur, who sold or rented them. The construction of blocks with two or more 'normal houses' was a common practice in late-Hellenistic Delos, identified in three

101 If the house was only abandoned in 69 BCE, the sequence could have started 19 years later – always assuming that the five-year span between layers of liturgical paintings has any validity and credibility.

different quarters.¹⁰² House C may right away or soon after its construction have been taken over by a household that celebrated the *compitalia* and decorated the southern door. The remodelling may again have been coordinated with the neighbour or by an entrepreneur, if both houses received an upper story and common roof at the same time. The embellishment of House C included the facilities for practicing the cult of the Lares Compitales, because now an altar and a bench were constructed, at the expense of the public street; this made adherence to this cult much more prominent and visible. The house was from the beginning conceived as a kind of ‘typical single family home’, and the remodelling did not change its core design; but it cannot be determined, whether it was ever inhabited by a standard family: did Tullius live here with his wife and children – like Dioskourides and Philostratos presumably did in their houses – or did he share the house with his three slaves and later *liberti*?

Conclusion

In conclusion, I come back to the main question whether the inhabitants’ strategies and cultural preferences in choosing the design and decoration of their houses can be determined. This was only possible for Kleopatra and Dioskourides, because they could be linked to at least one specific embellishing remodelling process. In contrast, Philostratos and Tullius could not be securely identified as the builders of their houses or initiators of any major remodelling phases. However, it could be clearly shown that, without the inscribed statue bases, it would have been impossible to attribute the three houses to inhabitants from Athens, Ascalon, and a city in Italy. At best, House I C could have been identified as the residence of people who celebrated the cult of the Lares Compitales. The astonishing uniformity of houses in the cosmopolitan trade port and the possible reasons for this phenomenon have long been discussed:¹⁰³

- Socio-cultural reasons: many elements of the Delian life-style were part of the Hellenistic koine, well known in the East and West. When building, remodelling, or simply renting a house, inhabitants may consciously have adhered to a common language, which facilitated integration and communication.
- Practical reasons: the availability of materials and of artisans, artists and architects with their specific skills and cultural knowledge will have limited choices, particularly for those who did not stay for a long period and did not want to invest unnecessarily in their houses.
- Legal reasons: foreigners (all non-Athenians) may not have been able to buy land and houses; they may only have been able to rent available houses. The

102 Trümper 1998; Trümper 2001, 804–805; Trümper 2002a; Trümper 2003, 21–23.

103 Bruneau 1968, 666; Bruneau 1972, 116 n. 2; Trümper 1998, 136–137; most recently Ernst 2018, 109–118.

above-mentioned phenomenon of the development of quarters with row-type houses and its implications have been severely neglected in the entire debate: entrepreneurs may have built houses for profit, renting them to the fast changing, passing population of the free port that did not want to or was not allowed to buy houses.¹⁰⁴

The possibility to make conscious cultural choices in domestic architecture may simply have been limited, particular individual choices may not have been desired or not a major priority or they may have been made in areas that can no longer be assessed: furniture and *instrumentum domesticum*, or practices, habits and activities in the actual use of the houses that leave no traces in the archaeological record.

However, two practices stood out in the three case-studies: the practice to set up portrait statues in the houses and to advertise specific cultic preferences – cult of the Lares Compitales – on the house façade. The portrait habit was identified as a new cultural habit here, introduced possibly by the Athenian population on Delos (Greek inscription, Greek/local-style statues, Athenian actors), but later adopted and adapted by foreigners: Philostratos of Naples honoured in Greek by three Roman Egnatii with an unknown statue type; the Roman/Italian Tullius honoured in Greek and Latin by three Greek *liberti* with an unknown statue type.¹⁰⁵

Even if the liturgical paintings cannot serve as secure indicator that Italians or Romans inhabited a house, they clearly reveal a conscious cultural choice: to practice the Italian-Roman cult and to publicly announce this on the house façade. The modifications observed by Hasenohr suggest that, at least in some cases, a new cultural eclectic style emerged in the Delian context when Greek elements were adopted in the liturgical paintings (and probably also the cult).¹⁰⁶

In the three cases presented here, it proved to be particularly helpful to assess the activities and strategies of the inhabitants of the houses in the larger context of the entire city. This approach made their cultural choices and identities much more obvious (tab. 1–3; figs. 3, 5, 9): Dioskourides and his family focused initially entirely on Athenian-Greek contexts ('local players'), and may only later (in the second and third generation) have expanded their radius of action. Philostratos and his family were most broadly engaged, right from the beginning, namely in Athenian, Roman-Italian and other foreign contexts, including specific Ascalonian settings, which Philostratos introduced to Delos in an eclectic innovative combination of Ascalonian and local styles ('global players'). Tullius focused almost exclusively on Italian-Roman and marginally on other foreign contexts. He (and his family) may have stayed significantly shorter

104 See above, n. 101. For legal aspects Müller 2017, 98–100; Ernst 2018, 109–111.

105 It cannot be determined how the domestic portrait habit developed in the about 40 years between Kleopatra's dedication and that of the Egnatii and Tullius' *liberti*.

106 Hasenohr 2003, 207–208: she refers to this as syncretism.

on Delos than the other two families. His restricted (documented) radius of action in Delos may not have made it necessary to explicitly refer to his provenance; in contrast to Dioskourides and Philostratos, whose home cities were usually mentioned in the inscriptions, even in the dedications set up within their own houses, Tullius' home city and precise socio-political status remain unknown.

Methodological problems notwithstanding, the concept of cultural choices and styles clearly sharpens the perspective and forces to make clear definitions. The focus on agency and more particularly on specific agents allows analysing how inhabitants of the free port negotiated between local and global cultural styles, lifestyles and networks. It has frequently been emphasized that the cosmopolitan free port was unusual in many – political, economic and socio-cultural – aspects, but the analysis provided here has shown that the design and decoration of its domestic architecture were predominantly coined by solidly local norms and styles.

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Decoscapes in Hellenistic Italy

Figurative Polychrome Mosaics between Local and Global

ANNETTE HAUG

Recent developments in research on Commagene have shown how the region is part of a global Hellenistic world from which the royal house at least makes very specific choices. This article will deal with similar questions regarding specific, local appropriations from a wider koine by investigating Hellenistic figurative polychrome mosaics. I will thereby focus on Hellenistic Italy and the specific choices made in that part of the Hellenistic world.

From Ampurias to Samosata: Hellenistic Figurative Mosaics beyond East and West

The Mediterranean constitutes a geographical framework that is structured around proximity and distance in the transportational sense, but also in the political, military, social, and cultural senses.¹ In the centuries before Christ there were constantly changing constellations of proximity and distance, with constantly shifting centres. This complex network, interwoven with many different groups of actors, gained a new significance during the 2nd c. BCE through Rome's intervention in the Eastern Mediterranean. The political actors are relatively easy to identify, as is the range of their power, defined by various political borders. We can even follow the shifting of these borders.

Arjun Appadurai has drawn attention to the roles different types of media and resources play in the construction of such overarching networks in our current, globalised world. He introduces the suffix *-scape*, "to indicate that all these [ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes, ideoscapes] are not objectively given relations [...] but rather that they are deeply perspectival constructs, inflected very much

¹ This contribution is partly funded by the ERC Consolidator Grant DECOR, grant no. 681269. I owe many thanks to Marta Kipke and Natalie Beyer for creating a catalogue of the mosaics which are not included in Zapheirópoulou 2006, as well as for the mapping of the mosaics (figs. 1–3).

by historical, linguistic and political situatedness of different sorts of actors”². Consequently, the adherence to widespread cultural techniques create a feeling of belonging to “imagined worlds”³. These de-spatialized practices, however, go hand in hand with their spatially (regionally) specific application, their ‘anchoring’⁴. In the following, this perspective will be transferred to the uses of material culture which actively constitute social relations.⁵ Every object is part of practices that transcend its spatial placement – techniques of production, a language of forms, and specific visual types.⁶ At the same time, it occupies a concrete place. As a working hypothesis, the Hellenistic Mediterranean will be conceived as such a globalized network, characterized by widely available techniques, materials, objects, decorative forms and image types.⁷ This ‘Hellenistic world’ or ‘koine’ produced a strong desire of belonging.⁸ However, cultural ideas, as well as material products, were locally modified with regard to specific needs and ideas. In this sense, then, I will refer to objectscaapes, technoscapes, decoscapes and imagescaapes. In place of a supposedly homogenous Hellenistic koine, we should instead reconstruct a network, structured by areas, actors, objects, and situations.

The starting point for this discussion is the appearance of similar objects and forms of decoration in different parts of the Mediterranean during the course of the 2nd and 1st c. BCE. This new comparability was not only apparent in the choice of techniques, styles and subjects; it could also be observed in the appearance of comparable image-types and image schemes. Current research is mostly interested in determining the origins of such artistic phenomena. In numerous cases, this origin has been localised, most often without sufficient proof, in Alexandria. For phenomena such as the

2 Appadurai 1990, 1181.

3 Appadurai 1990, 1181.

4 See for this phenomenon in the Roman context Versluys 2015. He argues (Versluys 2015, 159) that traditional forms of connectivity in the Mediterranean moved towards a new scale of intensity “through the Roman political and military dominance over the whole *oikumene*”. He thus considers globalization in the narrower sense as a Roman phenomenon: “Indeed Rome is globalised and is globalising”.

5 Leidwanger – Knappet 2018a, 2.

6 For mosaics, see Westgate 2000, 266. She already recognizes that “[...] no two of the copies are alike”.

7 On maritime networks in the ancient Mediterranean world, in different historical contexts, see Leidwanger – Knappet 2018; on Archaic networks Malkin 2011, with a definition of networks on p. 8–9: “Networks explain their own evolution in terms of self-organization of complex systems especially when applying new insights from network theory concerning the dynamics of network formation of small worlds, where connectivity and ‘distance’ among nodes is measured by their degrees of separation rather than by physical distance [...]”; on Hellenistic networks (with a focus on ceramic production and distribution, without an explicit theoretical founding of the network concept, though) Fenn – Römer-Strehl 2013; on networks of our own time, see Castells 1996, esp. 469.

8 Westgate 2013 with regard to the ‘Hellenistic’ uniformity of Delian houses.

'Roman' wall paintings or *opera vermiculata*, a Greek origin has been more generally assumed.⁹

The following discussion reverses this perspective: instead of focussing on the supposed origin of image-themes and -types, here we will thematise the local forms of image presentation, and the consequent strategies for their active adoption. Recently, Dietrich Boschung has shown very clearly that widespread image-schemes were 'tailored' with respect to the relevant medium so that they fit the form and function of each image.¹⁰ The application of common schemes was largely determined by the medium used, and the contexts of placement and function implied by that medium.

In this paper, I will turn my attention to the contextually specific form of presentation of one single medium that can be documented from all over the Hellenistic world: images on floor mosaics.¹¹ In doing so, I will consider the following aspects:

- (1) The use of specific techniques of production.
- (2) Specific forms of visual staging and decorative framing.
- (3) The use – and variation – of specific image schemes. They should be understood as set-pieces, which provide a mode of visual argumentation that takes into account specific viewing conditions.¹²

I will argue that the technique, setting and tailoring of mosaic images refers to their general cultural setting as well as to their more particular spatial embedding. More specifically, I will refer to 2nd and 1st c. BCE polychrome, figurative *tessellata*. The use of images as floor decoration is a highly significant and specific cultural habit. Even more so is the use of specific techniques for their production. In the 2nd and 1st c. BCE, the most complex images were produced in *opus vermiculatum*, high quality mosaic pavements with tiny *tesserae*. Nevertheless, similar themes and visual schemes could also be carried out with larger *tesserae* in *opus tessellatum*. In fact, the transition between *opus vermiculatum* and *opus tessellatum* was fluid. In one room, the central image could be produced in *opus vermiculatum*, with the flanking images in *opus tessellatum*. In the

9 Daszewski 1985, 74–77 discusses an Alexandrian origin of the *vermiculatum* technique; critically Dunbabin 1999, 23; see also Zapheirou 2006, 33: "Tatsächlich ist jede künstlerische Tätigkeit in der Zeit von etwa 330 bis 200 v. Chr. vom königlichen Milieu abhängig gewesen". See also p. 37: "Die *emblemata* in Italien können als die ältesten Kopien hellenistischer Gemälde gelten". For fish mosaics, Leonhard 1914, 11; Meyboom 1977, 71–72 and Meyboom 1977/1978, 209 are suggesting an Alexandrian origin. For Palestrina specifically, see Andrae 2003, 139: "Auch das vorauszusetzende Gemälde, das in den Fischmosaiken nachgeahmt wird, dürfte in Alexandria geschaffen worden sein, von wo auch die Mosaikwerkstätten stammen, die in Rom, Praeneste, Pompeji und an anderen Orten die Fußböden mit ihren Bildern geschmückt haben".

10 Boschung 2017, 67–79.

11 Perry 2005, 62–63.

12 For the rhetoric, Quintillian speaks of *tropus* – see Quint. Inst. 8,6,1–59. 8,6,67–76. 9,1,3–7. 9,2,44–53. The extraction of elements from their original narrative context allows for a more abstract usage. Cf. Brilliant 1984, 73.

court (E) of the Maison des Masques in Delos, for example, the central *emblema* depicts Dionysos riding a leopard in *vermiculatum*, while the flanking image fields with centaurs are rendered in *tessellate*.¹³ This interlacing of techniques becomes even more evident when different *tesserae* sizes are used in a single mosaic. This is the case for the *impluvium* mosaic in court (D) of the Maison des Dauphins in Delos (fig. 11).¹⁴ The central tondo is surrounded by four pairs of dolphins, with a tiny winged figure riding on each. Only these winged figures are produced in *vermiculatum*. A strict distinction between the techniques is thus arbitrary.¹⁵

On a more general level, the use of *tesserae* constitutes a culturally significant technique. A distribution map reveals that throughout the 2nd and in the beginning of

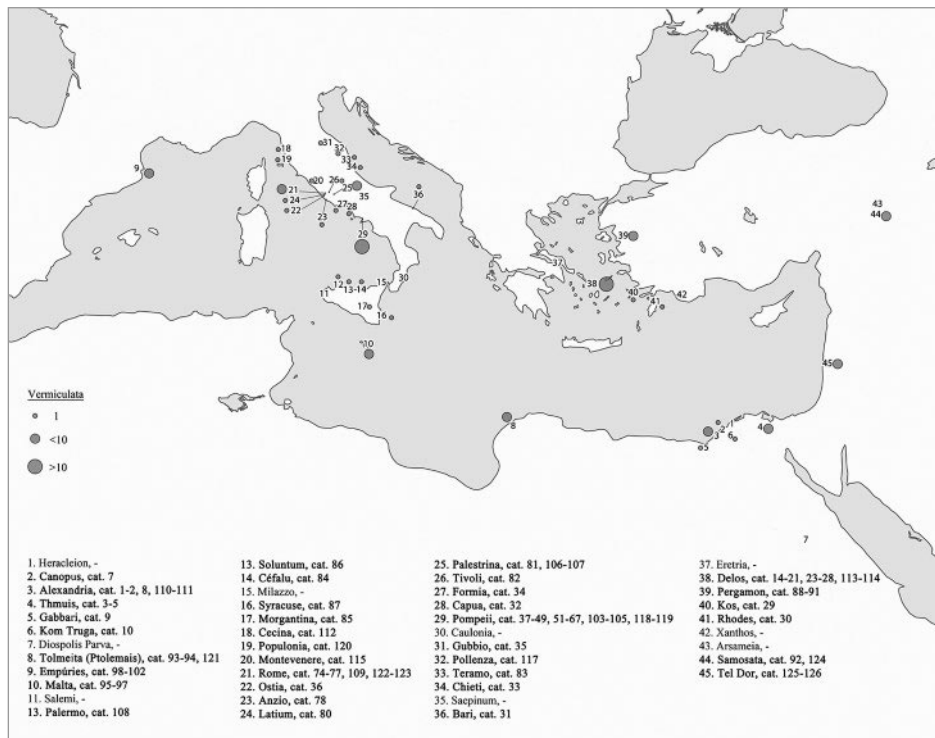


Fig. 1 Map of 2nd and 1st c. BCE in *opus vermiculatum* (Annette Haug with Marta Kipke and Natalie Beyer)

13 Bruneau 1972, no 214; Zapheirpoulou 2006, 98.

14 Bruneau 1972, no. 210; see Dunbabin 1999, 33.

15 See Dunbabin 1979, 267: “[...] fineness of the technique varies from one part to another according to their importance, and can vary even within the figures themselves”. Consequently, when addressing *opera vermiculata* as a refined technique for creating mosaic pavements, we must consider the relative – rather than absolute – quality.

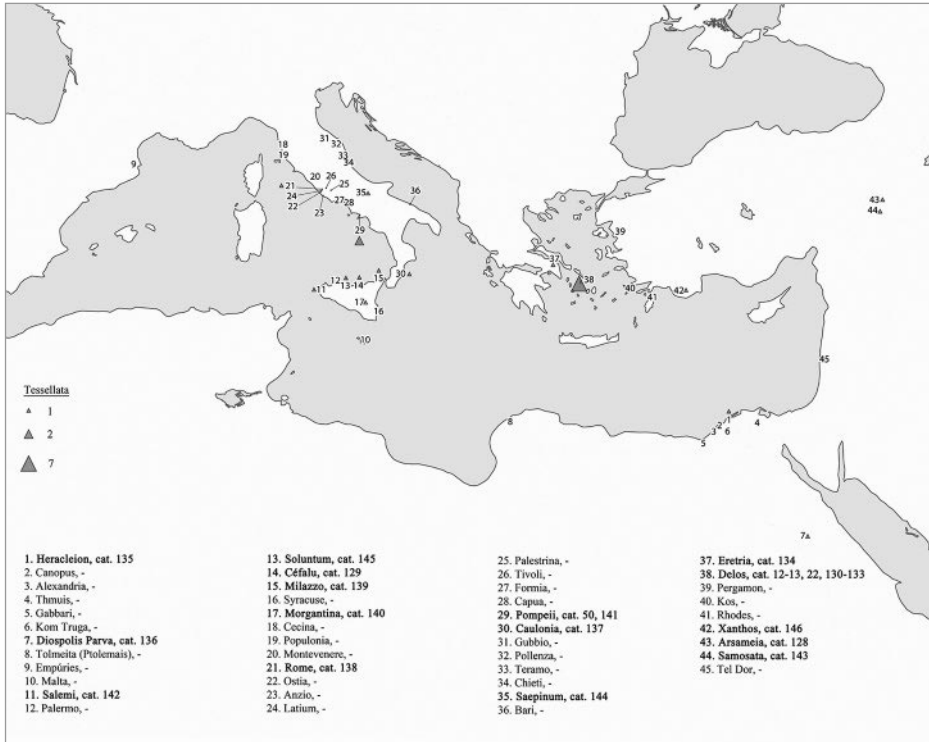


Fig. 2 Map of 2nd and 1st c. BCE fish mosaics in *opus tessellatum*
(Annette Haug with Marta Kipke and Natalie Beyer)

1st c. BCE, figurative polychrome mosaics appear all over the Mediterranean area – from Samosata in the East to Ampurias in the West (fig. 1–2).¹⁶ Even though the map is significantly biased by the circumstances of preservation, as the particularly high concentration of extant examples from around the Gulf of Naples shows, it still reflects the broad popularity of mosaics. In the Eastern Mediterranean, this prestigious form of floor paving appeared first in high-status Hellenistic residences: the palaces of Pergamon, Alexandria, Ptolemais, and Samosata. In the Western Mediterranean, Italian elites showed special appreciation for this kind of decorative feature.

The differentiated mapping of *vermiculata* (fig. 1) and *tessellata* (fig. 2) shows that both techniques spread all over the Mediterranean. However, the quantity of figurative, polychrome mosaics in *tessellatum* is higher in the eastern part, including Sicily – a region with probably more intense contacts to the eastern regions. A prominent case

16 Since the transition from the First Style to the Second Style did not involve a significant break in continuity for the production of *emblemata*, we will examine the floor mosaics of the late 2nd c. BCE and the early 1st c. BCE together.

is Delos, where different techniques were employed within one house, and, as noted above, even in a single room and a single mosaic. In Hellenistic Italy, instead, figurative mosaics were most often rendered in *vermiculata*.

This difference in techniques goes hand-in-hand with different forms of production and visual staging. In the Eastern Mediterranean, figurative (and non-figurative) *emblemata* were most often placed in the centre of a room and surrounded by a large number of frames (lines, meanders, or waves)¹⁷, while in the western regions the *emblemata* were presented in isolation amidst an undifferentiated pavement.¹⁸ The mosaic decoration of the Hellenistic palace of Samosata – the easternmost location in the sample – fits perfectly into the eastern decorative principles. The *opus vermiculatum* tondo, which displays a *pornoboskos*, occupies the centre of the largest room in the

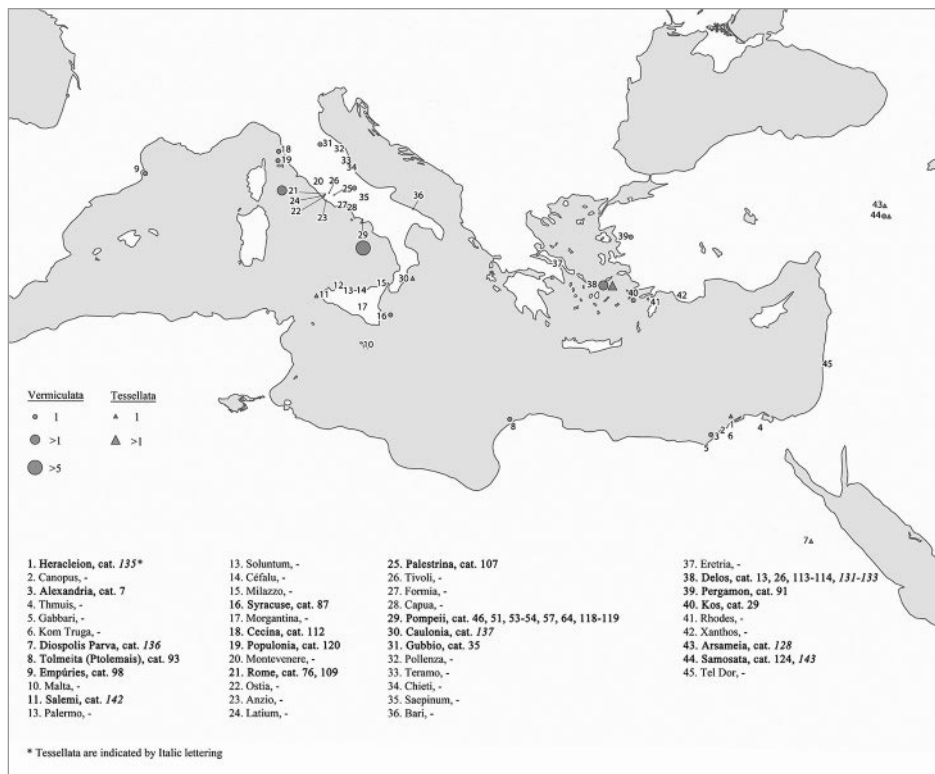


Fig. 3 Map of 2nd and 1st c. BCE fish mosaics; *opera vermiculata* (circles) and *opera tessellata* (triangles) (Annette Haug with Marta Kipke and Natalie Beyer)

17 See Dunbabin 1999, 32 with examples from Delos; generally with regard to Hellenistic design principles Scheibelreiter 2005, 762–763; Zapheirou 2006, 115–116.

18 Westgate 2002, 244; Zapheirou 2006, 129–130.

complex (121 m²), and was surrounded by a dense sequence of ten ‘frames’ in black-and-white *tessellatum*.¹⁹ Consequently, the preferences for specific techniques correlate with specific forms of visual staging. In the following section, it will become evident that technique and visual staging go hand-in-hand with the choice of topics, the use of specific image schemes and the visual function of an image.

To address the role of images, image schemes and forms of visual staging, we will use fish mosaics as an example. They are particularly suitable because they are preserved in a significant number, were realized in *opus vermiculatum* and *opus tessellatum*, and spread all over the Mediterranean (fig. 3). Traditional research approaches view fish mosaics as a group of Italian *vermiculata* that are connected to each other typologically.²⁰ Here, we consider the topic more globally instead, by taking into consideration all mosaics showing fish or marine worlds, only excluding nilotic topics (which form a group of their own), dead fish (still life) and mythological scenes including fish (e. g. images of Triton). This also includes mosaics showing dolphins in various iconographic contexts. The fish topic thus allows for a comparative analysis of *vermiculata* and *tessellata*, of different visual concepts and, within one image type, the analysis of different forms of adaptation of the topic to their contextual use. The focus will be on mosaics in known contexts.

Fish *vermiculata* in Pompeian Houses (fig. 4)

Our starting point for the contextual analysis of fish mosaics will be four polychrome fish *vermiculata* from Pompeian houses.²¹ They were found in the *triclinium* (12/35) of the Casa del Fauno, in the *triclinium* (o) of the Domus VIII 2, 14–16, in the *exedra* (22) of the Casa dei Capitelli Colorati (VII 4, 31.51), as well as in the *cubiculum* (e) of the Casa di Cippius Pamphilus (VII 6, 38). The mosaics differ in size and shape. The square *emblema* from the Casa del Fauno measures 80 × 80 cm without its frame (with frame 117,3 × 117,5 cm)²², the similarly square *emblema* from the Domus VIII 2, 14–16 is 89 × 87 cm without its frame (with frame 150 × 145 cm)²³, the rectangular *emblema* from the

19 Room G5, see Bingöl 2013, 73–77; Bingöl 1997, 107; Zoroğlu 2000, 82 fig. 116; Zapheirou 2006, 90. cat. 92; Kropp 2013, 107–109; Brijder 2014, 425–429. Cf. also the contribution by Kruijer and Riedel in this volume.

20 Gullini 1956, 20–32; De Puma 1969; Meyboom 1977.

21 For figures of almost all fish mosaics mentioned below, see Meyboom 1977.

22 Naples, NM 889 (formerly 9997); measurements in Meyboom 1977, 51; see also PPM V (1994) 80–141 s. v. VI 12,2, Casa del Fauno (A. Hoffmann – M. de Vos) 106–107 fig. 30; Zapheirou 2006, 252–253 cat. 46.

23 Naples, NM 888 (formerly 120177); measurements in Meyboom 1977, 51; see also PPM VIII (1998) 72–93 s. v. VIII 2,14–16 (V. Sampaolo) 89 Fig. 29; Zapheirou 2006, 261–262 cat. 57; De Puma 1969, 5 indicates that this is an *impluvium* pavement – probably due to its marble frame. However, it is located within an enclosed room, the marble frame has to be interpreted as a basin (see below).

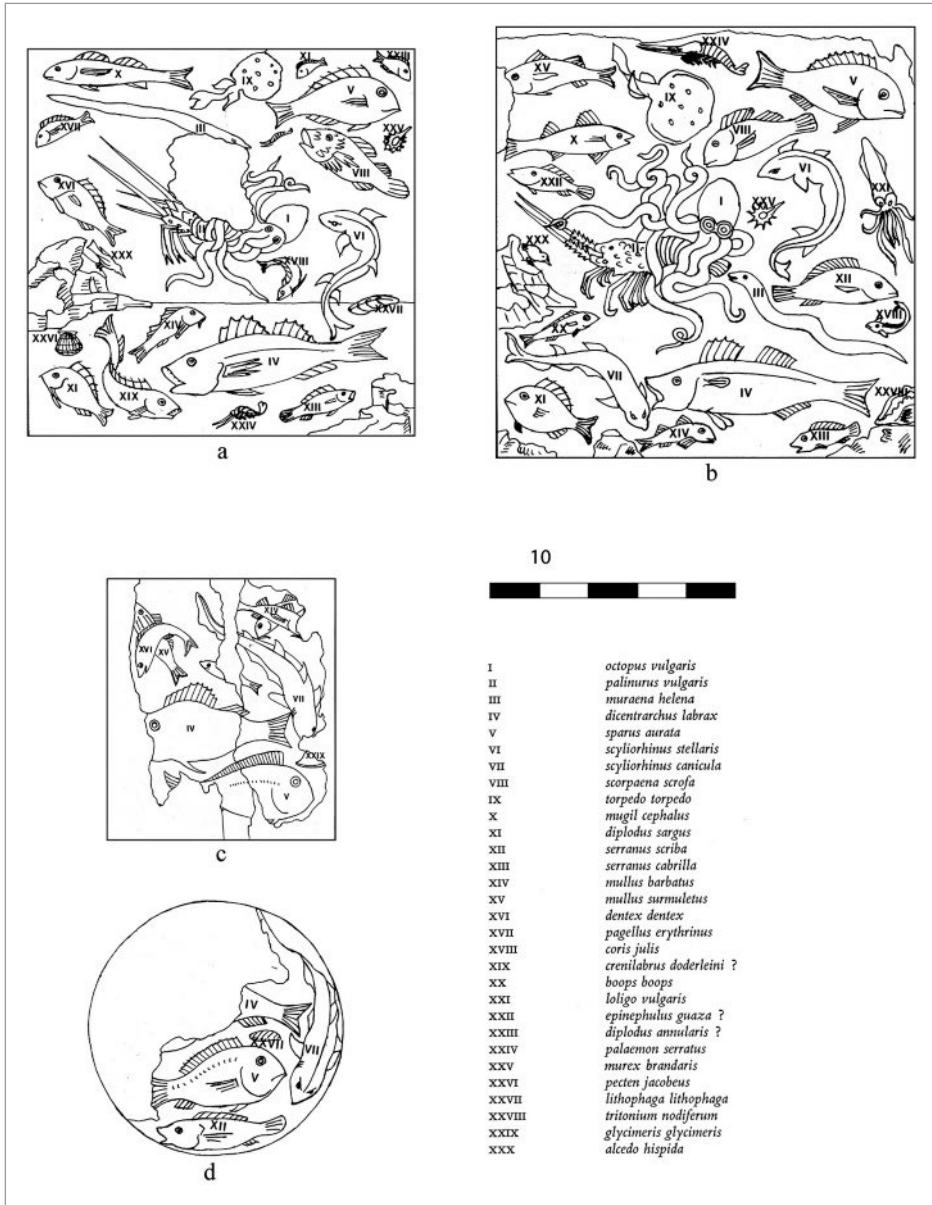


Fig. 4 Pompeian fish *vermiculata* – a) Casa del Fauno; b) Domus VIII 2,14–16; c) Casa dei Capitelli colorati; d) Casa di Cippius Pamphilus; scaled (referring to Meyboom 1977)

Casa dei Capitelli Colorati (VII 4, 31.51) is 48×55 cm without its frame (with two bands: 77×84 cm)²⁴, and the round *tondo* from the Casa di Cippius Pamphilus (VII 6, 38) is 52 cm in diameter without its frame (with border 56 cm).²⁵

If we consider the contextual presentation more closely, both parallels and dissimilarities can be recognised. All of the *emblemata* are found in the centre of a prestigious recreation room, and were surrounded by an indifferent paving (where present): a white *lithostroton* in the Casa del Fauno, and a polychrome *lithostroton* in the Casa di Cippius Pamphilus (VII 6,38). Consequently, the image attracted the attention of the viewer in the room. However, the frames of the *emblemata* vary greatly. In the case of the Casa del Fauno, the fish mosaic is framed by a rectangular mosaic frieze with a garland enlivened by Eroses and birds. The frame thus constitutes a conceptual transition from the marine world in the centre to the 'onshore' world that 'happens' within the room. Simultaneously, the lavish garland border competed with the image itself. By contrast, the fish *emblema* in the Domus VIII 2, 14–16 is surrounded by a profiled



Fig. 5 Context of fish mosaic in Domus VIII 2,14–16, Pompeii (photo: Jashemski archive, no. J68f1183)

24 In situ; measurements in Meyboom 1977, 52. PPM VI (1996) 996–1107 s.v. VII 4,31.51, Casa dei Capitelli Colorati (J. P. Descoeudres) 1030–1031 figs. 46–47; Zapheiroupolou 2006, 259–260.

25 Measurements in Meyboom 1977, 52; see also PPM VII (1997) 210–223 s. v. VII 6,38, Casa di Cippius Pamphilus (V. Sampaolo) 217–218 figs. 13–14.; Zapheiroupolou 2006, 260 cat. 54; Blake 1930, 138–139 pl. 50; more comprehensively Pernice 1938, 149–154.

marble frame (fig. 5), and in the Casa dei Capitelli Colorati there is (in addition to the black-and-white mosaic frame) a raised and modelled tile frame. In the Casa di Cippius Pamphilus (VII 6,38) the mosaic with a black and white ring is contained in a round terracotta plaque. Marion Blake hints to the interplay of mosaic colours and frame: “[...] in the rougher background near the terra-cotta rim, [...] stones [show] [...] the same peculiar variety of orange as those found in the fish themselves.”²⁶ The visual effect of frames is apparently carefully calculated. This is especially true for raised and modelled mosaic frames made from marble and tiles. They appear to have been used exclusively for fish mosaics, whereby we can assume that the presentation is motivated by the theme: In fact, the *emblemata*-frames could facilitate the covering of the fish mosaics with real water, allowing for the fantasy, so to speak, of a ‘fishpond’ set in the middle of the room.

In all four cases, however, the fish mosaics take the form of a rectangular or circular *emblema* which pre-defines the composition of the images. The two square mosaics in the Casa del Fauno and the Domus VIII 2,14–16 are especially closely related. The image fields are comparable with respect to their size, and rely on a set of visual formula. Both represent a lobster (*paliinurus vulgaris*) fighting with an octopus (*octopus vulgaris*) in the centre of the picture-field, and in both cases the marine creatures that surround this central scene do not overlap. The drawings by Paul Meyboom (fig. 4) show that several of the other, surrounding marine creatures are comparable with regard to their positioning, size and direction of movement.²⁷ Some creatures, however, are shown quite differently, and some species only appear in one of the two images. Comparable is the fact that in both mosaics an island is placed at half-height of the image, on the left image border. Both the central combat-group and the island suggest that both images adopt a frontal view. On the mosaic of the Casa del Fauno, though, the island marks the horizon, while on the mosaic of the Domus VIII 2,14–16 there is no distinction between the water and the sky. It is clear, then, as Meyboom has shown, that both images draw on a common prototype²⁸, as the lobster-octopus group and the island demonstrate, but both represent variations of this image concept.

There are even greater differences with the other two mosaics, which are significantly reduced in size. But instead of shrinking the size of the fish, they change the selected species. They contain neither the lobster fighting scene, nor the island. In the tondo at the Casa di Cippius Pamphilus fish swim in circles. In the rectangular *emblema* at the Casa dei Capitelli Colorati two fish cross each other, but more importantly all the fish are orientated in different directions, following the angles of the mosaic’s form. We

26 Blake 1930, 139.

27 Meyboom 1977, 52–54 tab. 46–47, with detailed comparison; see also Andreae 2003, 150–153.

28 For a first analysis, see De Puma 1969, 56–57; more in detail Meyboom 1977, 54–55; Meyboom 1995, 173–174 suggests all four Pompeian mosaics (as well as the one from Palestrina, see below) were produced in the same workshop.

could, at this point, continue the analysis in greater and greater detail, but it is already clear that the mosaics stem from one workshop and represent certain motivic set-pieces that were more or less freely combined.²⁹ The composition was obviously dependent on both the form and the size of the image: it is no coincidence that the fight scene mentioned above is only found in the larger *emblemata*.

However, the visual form and the mode of presentation refer to the context of perception. All four fish mosaics show edible creatures. As such, they call up associations of luxuriously bedecked dining tables. The presentation under water, within a basin, alludes to the fishponds that made luxury fish available.³⁰ In fact, artificial fish breeding pools were considered a valuable aesthetic, but also practical part of Italian villa architecture.³¹ However, there are also aspects that run counter to a linear conceptualization of the images as edible fish. The two larger mosaics (Fauno; Domus VIII 2,14–16) present the fish within their natural surrounding, indicating an island. Consequently, they lead the viewer to a maritime world. This outer world is not conceptualized as a peaceful counter-world, but as an action setting where maritime creatures endanger one another and fight against each other (lobster/octopus). The smaller two mosaics, on the other hand, avoid any reference to a landscape setting, but also to ‘danger’.

Fish *vermiculata* in Italian Bath Complexes and *nymphaea*

In the following section, we will widen the perspective and include all other Hellenistic fish *vermiculata* from Italy with known contexts. Three stem from private *thermae*, and one from a *nymphaeum* in Palestrina. All four fish mosaics refer thematically to their context of perception: they are chosen for locations within which water plays an eminent role.

The *laconicum* of a residential complex in Via Sistina (Regio VII), Rome, consisted of a circular main room, two entrances opposing each other (east/west) and two niches on the transverse axis (fig. 6–7). The main room was paved with a polychrome fish *emblema*.³² The tondo was placed in the centre of the circular bathroom and was itself surrounded by a mosaic frame with geometric motifs. The whole tondo was embedded into a white *tessellatum*. The circular mosaic employs a specific design to represent

29 Blake 1930, 139; De Puma 1969, 59; Meyboom 1977; see also Westgate 2000, 266. She observes that some image concepts (such as the satyr and maenad) follow a more coherent visual tradition than others (such as the dove mosaics): “Many of the themes, however, such as the doves, seem to be variations on a theme rather than copies of a specific original”. With regard to fish mosaics, see Westgate 2000, 268: “It appears that an idea, rather than an image, has been transmitted [...]. In other words, it is a stock motif or topos – which is exactly how it functions in the mosaics”.

30 See also Zapheiropoulou 2006, 80–81, 130.

31 Grüner 2006.

32 Fiorini 1988, 45–57; Werner 1994, 51–52; Angelelli 2016, 68, fig. 4.17.

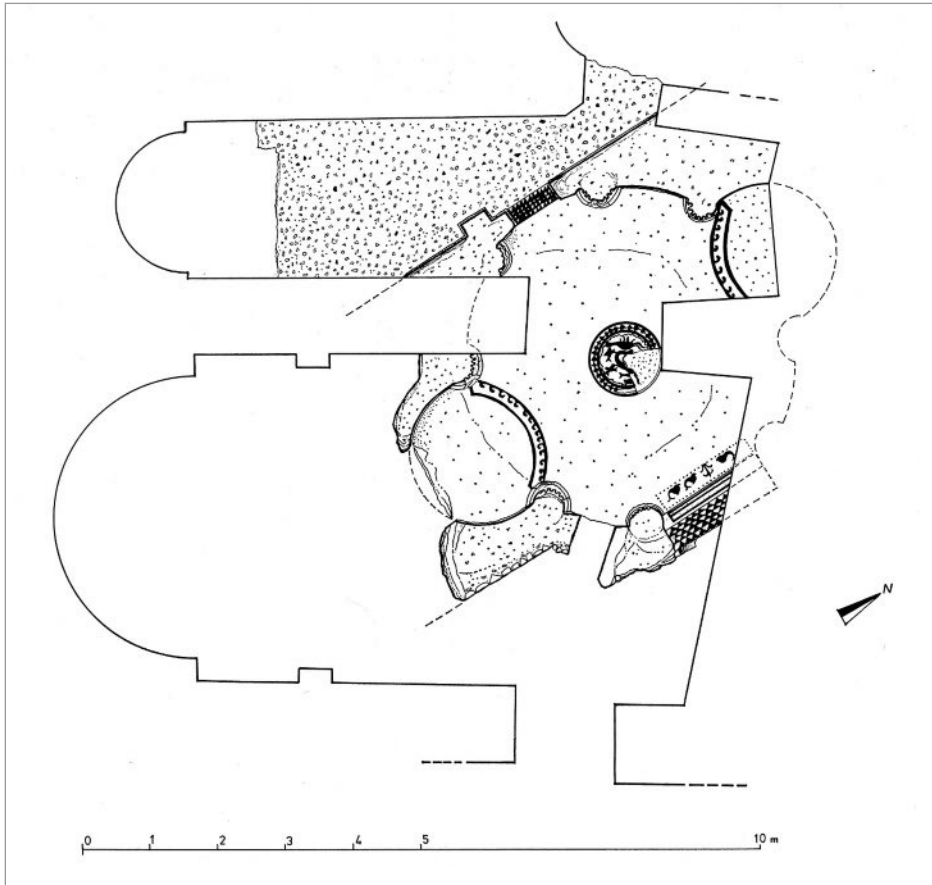


Fig. 6 Via Sistina, Rome (Regio VII), circular bathroom with pavement (Fiorini 1988, 48 fig. 2)

the shore and deep water: along the rim of the mosaic runs a sequence of rocks that denotes the shore, while the fish occupy the centre of the image. Consequently, the form of the medium determines the composition of the image. Here the mosaic was not in direct contact with water. Instead, the tondo evokes the presence of a fish basin that was enclosed by a virtual frame. This was, however, not the only fish mosaic in the room. While the western entrance was paved with a simple grid ornament, a doormat in front of the two steps at the eastern entrance shows a tessellated dolphin design – polychrome dolphins and a black palmette on white background.³³ The mosaic is thus of reduced iconographic complexity and colourfulness. Nevertheless, it contributes to the visual conception of the space as a ‘water space’.

33 Fiorini 1988, pl. 5a; Werner 1994, 52 (with fig.).



Fig. 7 Via Sistina, Rome, central *emblemata* of bathroom (Fiorini 1988, 50 pl. 4b)

In the thermal baths of a Republican house on the Viminal in Rome, under the garden of the church of San Lorenzo in Panisperna (Regio VI)³⁴, an evocation of a fish basin was enhanced by the mode of presentation. The mosaic originally covered the entire floor of the 14 m² room, and cannot therefore be considered an *emblemata*. The walls were covered in waterproof *calcestruzzo*, so that the floor (as Carlo Visconti already suspected correctly) could be covered with a layer of water.³⁵ This created an especially effective sensual experience of the mosaic fish ‘under water’. Only fragments of the mosaic survive, but it is possible to see how the background changes between lighter and darker tones, just as it would appear beneath water of varying depths. Various water creatures were depicted swimming freely against this background, above all numerous fish, as well as a central octopus group.³⁶ The mosaic was framed by a large dentil ornament and a meander with acanthus leaves, enlivened by various bird species.

We can deduce from the form of a third mosaic from a villa at Populonia that it must have filled an apsidal space. This was probably a bath. In the middle of the mosaic, a rectangular field is filled with white *tesserae*; presumably, a *labrum* stood on this ‘blank’

34 See Visconti 1888; four fragments of the mosaic preserved in Rome, Palazzo dei Conservatori; see Gullini 1956, 21 pl. VI, 1–3; De Puma 1969, cat. 13; Werner 1994, 37–38; Tacalite 2016, 198.

35 Visconti 1888, 263; again Andrae 2003, 141–142.

36 Meyboom 1977, 57; Meyboom 1995, 174.

field.³⁷ Marine creatures fill the remaining space of the room and thus ‘move’ under the feet of the bathers.

In Palestrina, the endpoint of the narrow northern side of the forum’s basilica forms a grotto, the so-called Grotta delle Sorti (fig. 8–9). This natural grotto was transformed into an artful *nymphaeum*, with three niches in the apse; its entire floor was filled with a sumptuous fish mosaic.³⁸ Water flowed directly onto the mosaic floor from the niches at the back, with a water drain at the front edge of the grotto’s floor. What we have here, then, is an especially refined form of this sensual way of displaying mosaics in a setting using water. The iconographic choices differ in certain aspects from those observed in the houses discussed above. The central area of the grotto refers to the models of fish swimming in the sea (octopus-lobster fight included). The foreground, however, shows a detailed representation of the shore: on the right edge of the picture, there is a sanctuary with an altar set on land and a typical votive column positioned

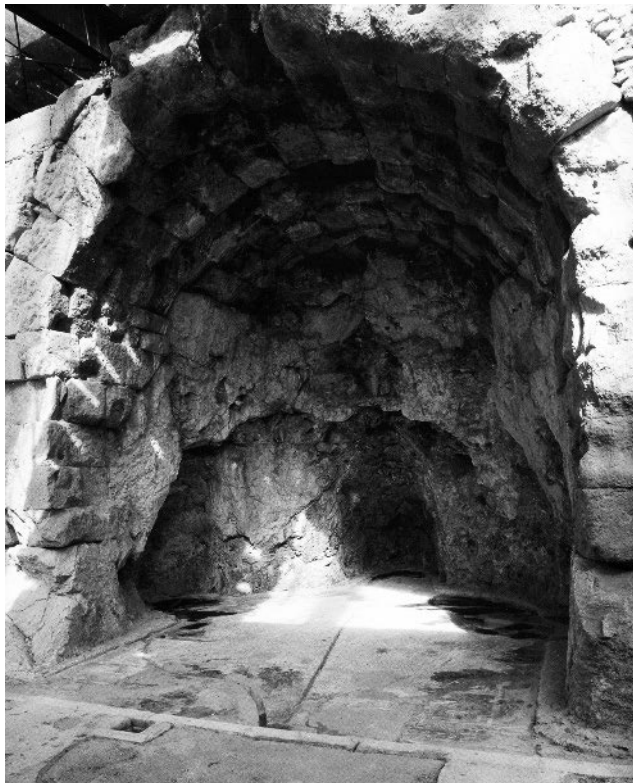


Fig. 8 Grotta delle Sorti, Palestrina (Andreae 2003, fig. 126)

37 Bueno 2011, 346–347 pl. 81,1–2.

38 Andreae 2003, 136.

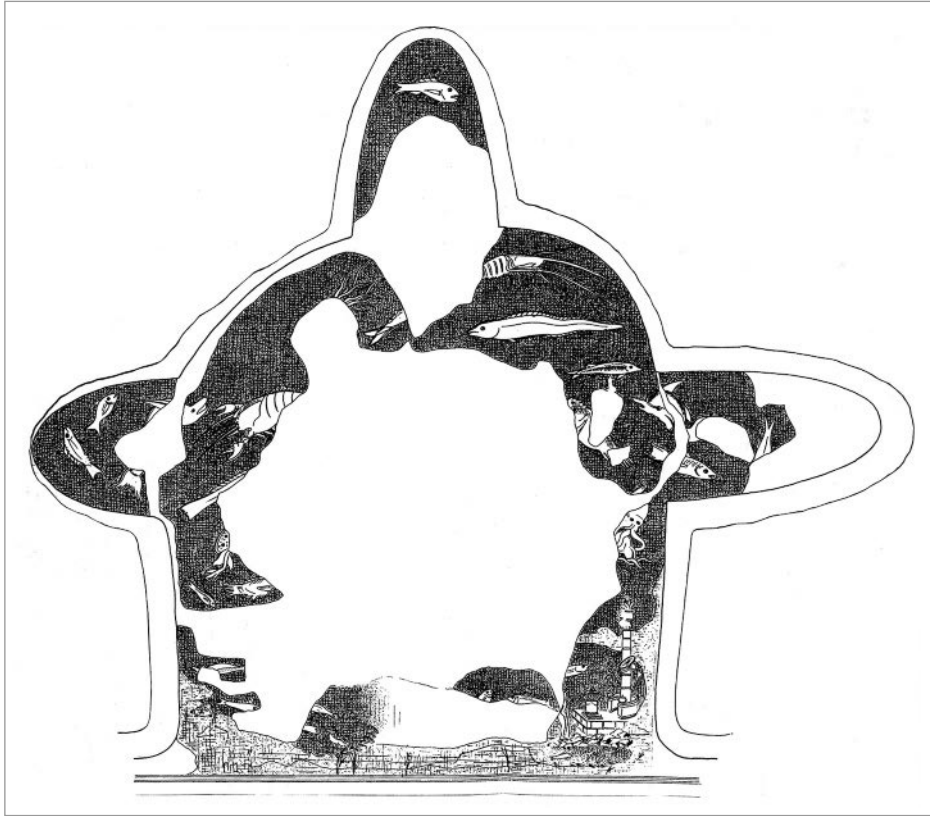


Fig. 9 Grotta delle Sorti, Palestrina, mosaic pavement (Andreae 2003, fig. 132)

on a small peninsula stretching out into the water. A naked fisherman, about to cast his net, is shown. Consequently, the image concept takes the viewing perspective of the spectator into consideration. He looks ‘from the shore’ towards the ‘open waters’ of the grotto.

The mosaics in the baths and the *nymphaeum* are associated more directly with the use of water. In at least three cases, the use of water is directly connected with the mosaic. The *labrum* is visually surrounded by fish, and in two cases the fish floor was covered by a thin ‘curtain’ of water.³⁹ Therefore, these latter settings created the impression that fish really swam in the water. However, in all four cases, the fish topic is not related to the consumption of luxury fish; rather, it evokes a natural water setting. This different setting didn’t hinder the recourse to visual formulae also known from houses. The fish mosaic of Palestrina, for example, shows the lobster-octopus fight. Other motifs,

39 Andreae 2003, 136.

such as a more elaborate definition of the shore zones, however, appear. Consequently, the fish mosaics in baths and *nymphaea* adopt well-known motifs, but modify the image concept for the representation of a 'natural' space. The image then fills the whole room. Consequently, it is the different form of presentation and the functional context that specify the perception of the visual formula.

Fish Mosaics in the East

Let us now compare this use of fish mosaics in the West to the visual practices in the East. Unfortunately, most marine mosaics of this region lack information concerning their contextual use. One telling example that we will examine more closely is the fish *vermiculatum* in the Hellenistic Palace IV of Pergamon.⁴⁰ Here, we meet a completely different mode of placement and staging. The biggest of the 'feasting' rooms on the east side of the peristyle, room (A), measuring 44,6 m², has received a lavish mosaic. Fragments have been found between a (later) hearth-altar in the centre of the room and the back wall in the east.⁴¹ The central fish *emblema*, which depicts a seabass in *opus vermiculatum*, was apparently surrounded by several friezes, including a garland and a perspective meander.⁴² This disposition probably left enough space for the placement of *klinai* along the walls.⁴³ As in Pompeian houses, the mosaic represents an edible luxury fish. However, the framing bands run counter to an impression of a water environment. They evoke a carpet-like surface that alludes to a different kind of materiality and perception context: the carpet is an indoor room furnishing.

As noted above, this type of disposition applies to most of the eastern *vermiculata*. This is also testified by a fish *emblema* of the Maison de Fourni, exedra (AN), in Delos. The *emblema* – only a fragment showing a fish against a black background is preserved – was surrounded by several tessellated bands.⁴⁴ Unfortunately, the contexts of the other high quality fish *emblemata* from Rhodos (Palazzo del Gran Maestro) – showing also landscape elements – and Kos (Casa Romana) are unknown.⁴⁵ In terms of iconographic choices, they lack the more specific octopus-lobster fight.

The Sicilian mosaics seem to refer to different decorative traditions. The fish mosaics in Syracuse and Soluntum show the characteristic octopus.⁴⁶ However, Sicilian *emblemata* were often surrounded by many frames, as was the case in the eastern tra-

40 Andrae 2003, 140; Kopsacheili 2012, 160–166.

41 Salzmann 1995, 103 considers altar contemporary; Kopsacheili 2012, 164 argues for a later dating.

42 Salzmann 1995, 101–103 pls. 6, 1. 7–10.

43 Kawerau – Wiegand 1930, 54–56; Salzmann 1995, 103; Kopsacheili 2012, cat. P2.

44 Bruneau 1972, no. 328 fig. 281 pl. C,4; Zapheirpoulou 2006, 110 cat. 26.

45 Rhodos: Meyboom 1977, fig. 17; Kos: Meyboom 1977, fig. 18.

46 Meyboom 1977, 58; see also for Syracuse Boeselager 208, s. v. Syrakus cat. 1; for Soluntum Boeselager 63–64 figs. 35–37.

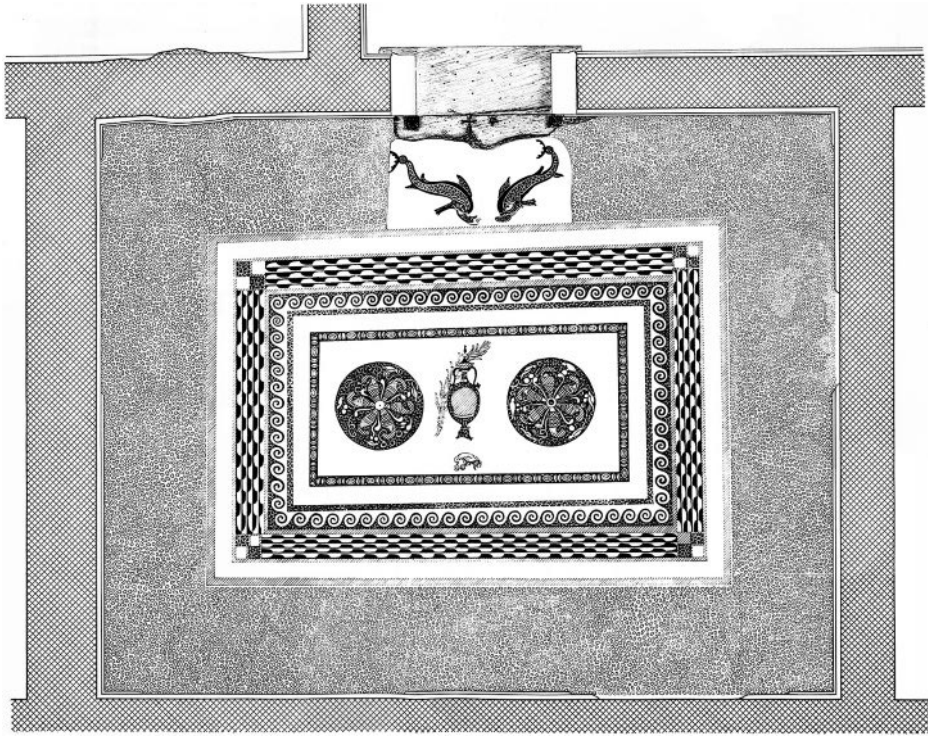


Fig. 10 Maison des Masques, Delos; mosaic pavement in room (I) (Bruneau 1972, fig. 204)

dition. Consequently, they combine presentational aspects stemming from different visual traditions.

Alongside these representations, a significant number of eastern fish mosaics depict dolphins, an entirely different marine topic. While the marine mosaics usually represent fish against a water-simulating 'dark' background (black, blue, green), dolphins often (but not always) appear against a white background. The motif itself is even more flexible, as can be seen in various domestic contexts in Delos. In the Maison Inopos B, an *emblema vermiculatum* depicts polychrome dolphins, some of them entwining a trident as well as marine monsters, against a white background. They are surrounded by several frames alluding to landscape elements (leaves/plants, waveband/water).⁴⁷ In room (I) of the Maison des Masques (fig. 10), the central image field of the room shows an amphora flanked by two rosettes enlivened with minute birds. The entrance zone is marked by its own image field showing two antithetic polychrome dolphins on

47 Bruneau 1972, no. 166 figs. 131–140.



Fig. 11 Maison des Dauphins, Delos; *impluvium* pavement (by Zde – Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=36566504>)

a white background.⁴⁸ In the Maison III N, room (I), the image field of the entrance zone is filled by a tessellated polychrome dolphin entwining an anchor.⁴⁹ However, dolphins do not only appear in interior rooms but also in courtyards. This applies to the *tessellatum* mosaic of the portico in the Maison du Trident (IIA), which is interrupted by square image fields with reduced motifs: a trident and a (black) dolphin bending around a (red) anchor.⁵⁰ In the *impluvium* of the Maison des Dauphins (fig. 11), the topic is more closely related to water.⁵¹ A non-figurative *emblema* is inscribed into a square field while the pendentives are filled with pairs of dolphins ridden by small winged figures. A rectangular crenelated frame surrounds the whole decorative zone.

Dolphin images are usually reduced in their complexity, and function as visual signs that refer to a marine world. Every reference to luxury food is missing. Instead, the topic is usually combined with other ‘signs’ that specify their meaning: anchors, for example, connote seafaring and amphorae refer to trade. Usually, dolphin mosaics are not created in *vermiculatum*, although this technique can be employed for specific parts of the composition (such as the dolphin riders in the Maison des Dauphins).

48 Bruneau 1972, no. 217 figs. 204–210.

49 Bruneau 1972, no. 261 figs. 228–231.

50 Bruneau 1972, no. 228 figs. 211. 213–214; Zapheiroupolou 2006, 101.

51 Bruneau 1972, 239 no. 210; Dunbabin 1999, 33–34 figs. 34–35.

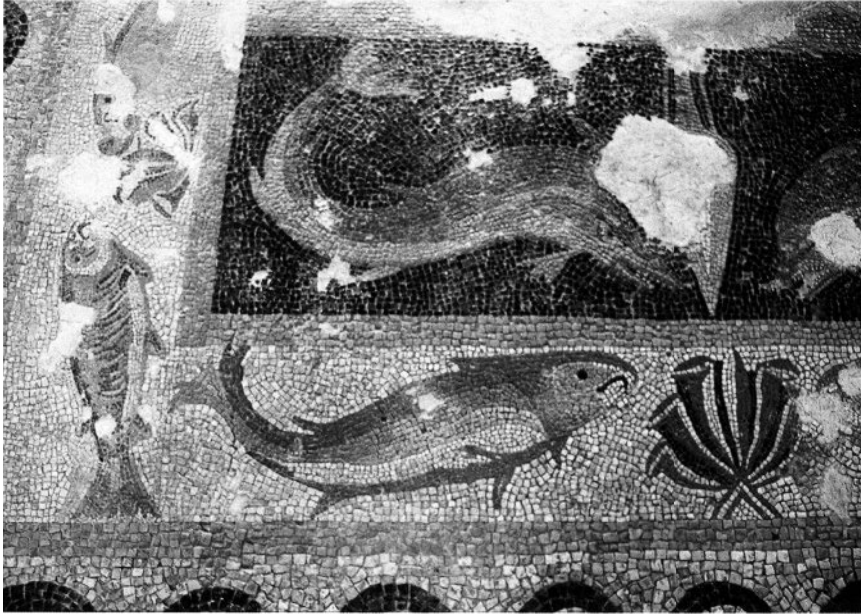


Fig. 12 Samosata, Hellenistic palace; fish mosaic (Zoroğlu 2000, 82 fig. 114)

While dolphins were apparently a fashionable topic on Delos, dolphin *tessellata* also appear in other eastern contexts. In Hû (Diospolis Parva, upper Egypt) the pavement of a thermal tholos is filled with concentric bands, one of which contains a dolphin, an octopus and a fish.⁵² In room (I) of the Hellenistic palace of Samosata, polychrome dolphins flank a Rhodian amphora set against a black background (fig. 12). This *emblemata* is framed by a band composed of contrasting fish and fine foliage on all four sides. The background of this framing frieze is white.⁵³ The combination of two different image concepts – dolphins and swimming fish – is spectacular. The dolphins in the centre make allusion to (maritime) trade, and probably also to wealth. Considering the Mediterranean as a ‘centre’ of (maritime) connectivity, Samosata is located in a remote place. However, the city forms a centre with regard to the trading network of the Euphrates region.⁵⁴ However, the dolphin-amphora-sign is surrounded by a frieze of swimming fish. The ‘remote’ palace of Samosata thus shares an iconography that refers more generally to open waters, but also to luxury dining.

52 Daszewski 1985, no. 46.

53 Bingöl 1997, pl. 24,2; Zoroğlu 2000, 82 fig. 114; Kopsacheili 2012, cat. S6; Brijder 2014, 427; a re-numbering of the rooms in Bingöl 2013, 20, the room is here named “B1”; see in detail Bingöl 2013, 65–69.

54 Versluys 2017, 83.

Fish Mosaics: A Summary

Hellenistic fish mosaics are a significant case for the understanding of the delocalized (but contextually specified use of) techniques, forms of presentation, image themes and visual formula/image-schemes.

It has become apparent that the **technique** chosen (*vermiculatum/tessellatum*) was a consequence of the cultural strategies of image production. While in the East, a much broader spectrum of techniques was in use for the production of polychrome figurative images, in the West they were mainly made in *opus vermiculatum*. Simultaneously, in the East, the choice of techniques was dependent on the complexity of the topic. While fish mosaics were most often produced in *vermiculatum*, the 'simple' dolphin 'sign' was usually made in *tessellatum*.

This leads us to the **iconographic choices**. Fish were a relevant topic for the whole Mediterranean world. However, different iconographies could fill this topic with different associations: these include the idea of food (and more precisely: luxury food), the allusion of water landscapes, the reference to seafaring and trade.

Representations of the marine world that allude to luxury food and marine landscapes show swimming fish against a dark (black, green, blue) background, which simulated water. This iconography was common in all parts of the Mediterranean – yet with different perspectives. While the eastern mosaics represent these marine creatures moving freely against a water-background, Italian and especially Campanian mosaics increase the dramatic effect by involving several creatures in a struggle. However, the different Italian contexts (baths, nymphaea, houses) do not differ with respect to the fish iconographies: 'Sea dramas' appear in Italian domestic contexts and the *nymphaeum* alike, also do eatable fish.

In contrast to this 'lively' iconography, dolphin images are reduced in complexity and polychromy, and they often lack a coloured background. It has become evident that representations of dolphins were particularly popular in the Hellenistic East long before this formula entered the spectrum of Italian black-and-white mosaics (during the 1st c. BCE).

In fact, the different regional preferences become most evident when comparing the fish mosaics of Pompeii and Delos. In the trading post of Delos, the reference to seafaring and trading was the main priority and thus the dolphin was a widespread image concept. In 2nd and early 1st c. BCE Pompeii, on the other hand, several houses chose the much more complex iconography of marine worlds alluding to luxury food and seascapes. It is of high cultural significance that these different habits also relate to the decoration of spaces connected to water. In Delos, the *impluvium* of the Maison du Trident received a dolphin decor to refer to the water topic, in the thermal tholos of Hù the combination of dolphins and other fish referred to the marine world. In Italy, instead, private baths as well as a public *nymphaeum* were equipped with a more complex iconography of marine worlds to refer to the water topics.

The **use of image schemes** also differed from region to region. Italian (and more specifically Campanian) fish *emblemata* relied on a specific set of visual formulae (image schemes) that were adopted to the size and form of the image field, as well as to the context of perception. While various maritime species were the focus of fish *emblemata* within houses, bath and *nymphaeum* mosaics displayed shore elements in much more detail. But there were also limits to this contextual tailoring of image schemes: despite different contexts of perception, houses and baths/*nymphaea* relied on the same representative species. Consequently, the same species could be perceived both as edible luxury fish and as sea creatures, depending on the context of perception.

In the Eastern Mediterranean, fish images used the visual formulae more freely. None of the specific formulae (e.g. octopus-lobster-battle) of the Campanian images can be traced in eastern fish *vermiculata*. The dolphin images, however, follow comparable composition principles – e.g. the antithetic framing of an amphora. This very simple composition, however, is not adjusted to the specifics of single contexts.

This leads us to the question of the **visual staging** of fish mosaics. In the Hellenistic East, *emblemata vermiculata* (with swimming fish) as well as *emblemata tessellata* (with dolphin images) are usually surrounded by a large number of framing bands that filled the entire room. A telling example is the fish mosaic of Palace (IV) on the acropolis of Pergamon. The opulent frames do not simply compete visually with the central *emblemata*, they also replicate the experience of a precious carpet and thus run counter to the impression of a basin. This holds true for residential contexts as well as for contexts involving water.

Italy, instead, was much more committed to a concept of *decorum*: a contextually (e.g. spatially, ambientally) appropriate form of design (*quid deceat*).⁵⁵ Within Pompeian houses, fish mosaics are presented as *emblemata* in the centre of a reception room (*triclinium*, *exedra*, *cubiculum*). Usually, they receive a single or double frame, and the surrounding floor – a *tessellatum* or *lithostroton* – lacks further decoration. Consequently, the disposition of the decoration allows for a use of the ‘blank’ space for the placement of *klinai* along the walls. Such a staging leads to a concentration of the attention on the *emblemata* in the centre – a disposition which is generally chosen for Italian *emblemata*.⁵⁶ A stunning feature, however, is the choice of raised frames. In Pompeii, raised frames that create a basin in the middle of the room only appear in combination with fish *emblemata*. Consequently, they are not purely a functional feature to facilitate the cleaning of the room, but become part of a complex artificial setting. We must consider that these plastic frames of three Pompeian fish mosaics can have served the purpose to evoke the presence of a fishpond in the middle of the room. The complex multimedia staging thus provided a highly artistic substitute for real fishponds. In fact,

55 Cic. De or. 70–71; see Perry 2005, 31.

56 Zaphiropoulou 2006, 129.

plastic frames surrounding *emblemata* are not only known from Pompeii but also from other find spots. In Delos, Philippe Bruneau refers to two contexts, potentially dining rooms, where a central *emblema* receives a marble frame. These are the mosaics in room (AL) in the Ilôts des Bijoux (Bruneau 1972, No. 68), and room (R) in the Maison des Comédiens (Bruneau 1972, No. 73).⁵⁷ In room (AL) the central *emblema* (in *opus vermiculatum*) shows a mythological scene without any connection to a water setting, in room (R) the central *emblema* was robbed in antiquity. Consequently, the use of marble frames for the evocation of fishponds in dining rooms might have been a specific Italian desire.⁵⁸

This sensibility for a contextual staging of the fish topic becomes especially evident in Italian *thermae* and *nymphaea*. Here, however, the imaginative presence of fish fulfilled a different function. They did not refer to potential food but triggered the idea of a natural water setting. Consequently, the fish were not contained by a rectangular frame. Instead, the images covered the whole floor, without any framing – suggesting that the space was a real ‘water space’.⁵⁹ Specific installations made it possible to cover the mosaics with real water so that the fish images appeared ‘under water’. *Balnea* and *nymphaea* thus turned into natural spaces. This different focus was underlined, as we have seen, by specific iconographic choices: in contrast to residential forms of staging, the visual presentation of shore elements became more important.

Conclusion

The example of fish mosaics allows for a specification of the concept of objectscares, decoscapes and imagescares. The use of figurative floor images reflects an active par-

57 Bruneau 1972, 40–41; room (AL): Bruneau 1972, no. 68; room (R): Bruneau 1972, no. 73; see Zapheiroupolou 2006, 229 cat. 15 for oikos (AL).

58 For Delos, Bruneau 1972, 40–41 refers to two contexts where a central *emblema* receives a marble frame. It is the mosaic of room (AL) on the Ilôts des Bijoux (Bruneau 1972, No. 68), and room (R) of the Maison des Comédiens (Bruneau 1972, no. 73). Both rooms may have served as dining spaces, the marble frame surrounds a basin – see Bruneau 1972, 40: “La raison de cette disposition est tout autant utilitaire que décorative, car le lavage de la pièce en était facilité: à l’intérieur du cadre de marbre, la partie centrale du pavement se trouvait un peu en contrebas de la partie marginale et formait une sorte de bassin où l’eau s’amassait et d’où elle était directement évacuée; un dispositif d’écoulement a été en effet reconnu dans le deux cas”. In room (AL) the central *emblema* has shown a mythological scene without any connection to a water setting, in room (R) the central *emblema* was robbed in antiquity. Consequently, the use of marble frames for the evocation of fish basins in dining rooms might have been a specific Italian desire.

59 Zapheiroupolou 2006, 168 observed that *vermiculata* in Italy were most often realized as *emblemata* while in the East they would fill the whole surface of a room. She explains this difference by different techniques of production of the workshops (pre-production and work *in situ*). However, the case of fish mosaics clearly shows that the workshops did adopt their production procedure to the purpose the mosaics have been intended for.

participation in Hellenistic cultural practices. The whole area of the Mediterranean (including the Commagene region) had access to workmen employing culturally specific paving techniques (*vermiculata*; *tessellata*) and they shared common iconographic ideas (fish and dolphin topics). However, within this 'globalized' visual culture, it is possible to distinguish local/regional forms of 'framing' of such a practical 'knowledge'. Consequently, the Hellenistic koine functions as a network which is constituted by agents playing on different spatial, but also social and situational scales. Some spatially defined regions within such a network are characterized by a more intense form of connectivity than others.

It has become clear that the use of fish mosaics presupposes specific forms of knowledge and practice. The distribution of techniques (*vermiculata/tessellata*), but also of iconographic particularities show that regional forms of appropriation do not follow a dichotomy of 'East' and 'West'. Italy, however, proves to be a specific sub-region. This becomes particularly visible in the choice of spatially adequate forms of *decor*. The idea of *aptum/prepon* can be traced back to the Greek Classical tradition – it is far from being a 'Roman' concept. However, in Italian contexts this strategy comes most explicitly into effect: It is in Italian houses and baths where fish mosaics are most directly related to the use and performance of water. These observations lead to the conclusion that the Italian elites had not only achieved great wealth, they were committed to the most precious forms of decoration (*vermiculata*), the most complex iconographies which have been developed for them, and the strictest application of 'Greek' concepts of *prepon/aptum*.⁶⁰

Annex I: List of Figurative *opera vermiculata*

Addenda to Zapheiroupolou 2006: List of *opera vermiculata* missing in the comprehensive catalogue of Zapheiroupolou 2006, in alphabetical order.

Abbreviations for list:

P = Provenience

L = present location/museum, eventually inventory number

E = Excavation details

R = Description of representation

C = Presentation mode within a given context

D = Date

B = Bibliography

60 Pl. Hp. mai. 291a; Aristot. Rh. 1408a; Cic. De or. 70–74; Quint. Inst. 11,1,31–34; Vitruv. De arch. 1,2,5–7.

No. 110

- P: Alexandria, Chantier Finney, between Av. Alexander the Great and Rue du Consulat Angleterre
 L: Alexandria, GRM, inv. 25659
 E: found together with Daszewski 1985, cat. 6 (here No. 111)
 R: running centaur; head in *opus vermiculatum*, body in fragments
 C: centaur is galloping to the left, on a dark grey and black ground, ground is closely resembling the *opus vermiculatum*
 D: 250–225 BCE (Daszewski)
 B: Daszewski 1985, cat. 5, pls. 13. 15a

No. 111

- P: Alexandria, Chantier Finney, between Av. Alexander the Great and Rue du Consulat Angleterre
 L: Alexandria, GRM, inv. 25660
 E: found together with Daszewski, cat. 5 (here No. 110)
 R: running stag; head in *opus vermiculatum*
 C: stag runs to the left on an uneven ground (brown)
 D: 250–225 BCE (Daszewski)
 B: Daszewski 1985, cat. 6, pls. 14. 15b

No. 112

- P: Cecina (not Populonia)
 L: London, Victoria and Albert Museum, inv. VA 536–1855
 E: Villa di San Vincenzino, *caldarium* (11)
 R: centre: marine fauna (crab, fish, octopus)
 C: square *emblema*; 0,71 × 0,79 m
 D: 70–60 BCE (Meyboom); 1st c. BCE (Bueno)
 B: Meyboom 1977/1978, fig. 7 f.; Andrae 2003, fig. 158; Bueno 2011, pl. 92,1

No. 113

- P: Delos
 L: in situ
 E: Quartier de l'Inopos, Maison Inopos B, upper floor
 R: centre: dolphins with trident and marine monsters on white ground (*opus vermiculatum*)
 C: surrounded by various framings in different colours in *opus tessellatum*
 D: 100–90 BCE (Bruneau)
 B: Bruneau 1972, no. 166, figs. 131–140

No. 114

- P: Delos
 L: in situ
 E: Maison des Dauphins, *impluvium*
 R: round *emblema* (no figures) in square field, in pendentives: small winged figures with chiton (erotes?) riding on dolphins; rectangular framing by crenellation decor,
 C: figures and crenellation decor in square field realised in *opus vermiculatum* surrounding *impluvium* floor in *opus tessellatum*
 D: around 150 BCE; 130–88 BCE (Dunbabin)
 B: Bruneau 1972, no. 210, fig. 168, pl. B,1–2; Dunbabin 1999, figs. 34–35

No. 115

- P: Monteverene
 L: Chiusi, Museo Archeologico Nazionale
 E: villa romana (?)
 R: boar and stag hunt in two registers
 C: *emblema* in *opus vermiculatum* in centre, surrounding floor *opus tessellatum*
 D: 80–60 BCE (Buono)
 B: Buono 2011, pl. 59, 1

No. 116

- P: Nile Delta
 L: Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery, inv. 43.7
 E: unknown
 R: three human figures, a bird, a dog, and a goat
 C: centre: in a cave-like structure: young man, possibly Ganymede; above him eagle (?)
 D: 1st c. BCE (Tammisto)
 B: Daszewski 1985, cat. 50, pls. 40 b. 41; Tammisto 1997, cat. LS4

No. 117

- P: Pollenza
 L: unknown
 E: unknown
 R: hunting scene
 C: *emblema*
 D: First half 1st c. BCE (Buono)
 B: Buono 2011, fig. 259; Percossi 2006, fig. 5

No. 118

- P: Pompei VIII 2, 16
 L: Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, inv. 888
 E: found in a room (?)
 R: marine fauna (octopus, fish, lobster)
 C: framed by marble strip on all sides
 D: 90–80 BCE (Meyboom)
 B: Meyboom 1977, pl. 47, figs. 2B, 2aB; Pernice 1938, 151

No. 119

- P: Villa dei Misteri
 L: unknown
 E: room left to the *atrium*
 R: marine fauna (fish)
 C: round figurative field, set in the middle of the room
 D: 90–80 BCE (Pernice)
 B: Meyboom 1977, pl. 48, fig. 4D; Pernice 1938, 153

No. 120

- P: Populonia
 L: unknown
 E: on property of a roman villa, room (2)
 R: marine fauna (fish, octopus, shells)
 C: filling an apsidial space (2,205 m wide; 1,90 m high); marine fauna surrounded by a rectangular *emblema*-field; *emblema* in the centre consisting of white *tesserae* (here: placement of *labrum*)
 D: 80–70 BCE (Meyboom); beginning 1st c. BCE (Buono)
 B: De Puma 1969, cat. 17; Meyboom 1977/1978, figs. 3–4; Buono 2011, pl. 81,1–2

No. 121

- P: Ptolemais
 L: unknown
 E: Palazzo delle Colonne, Oecus della Medusa (12); 5 × 6,2 m
 R: central *emblema* with Gorgoneion
 C: polychrome Gorgoneion surrounded by *tondo* with scale pattern, surrounded by rectangular frame; rectangular framing zone with stars and squares (black and white) filling the whole floor
 D: 100 BCE (?)
 B: Pesce 1950, figs. 43, 50

No. 122

- P: Rome, Rione i Monti, via Merulana, Orti Mecenatiani
 L: Rome, Palazzo dei Conservatori, Uffici
 E: via Merulana, near via Leopardi
 R: *emblema*: Orestes on light ground and Iphigenia on dark ground
 C: framed by monochrome dentil
 D: end first half of 1st c. BCE
 B: Werner 1994, K 22

No. 123

- P: Rome, Villa Maccarani
 L: Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano – Palazzo Massimo alle Terme, inv. 171
 E: Villa Maccarani, near San Saba on the Aventine
 R: central square field with Nile scenery and hunting pygmies
 C: framed on all sides by long rectangular panels: 2 × birds, 2 × masques mosaic:
 3,35 × 3,35
 D: second half 2nd c. BCE (Andreae)
 B: Andreae 2003, figs. 120–121

No. 124

- P: Samosata
 L: unknown
 E: Hellenistic palace, room G5 (Bingöl 2013)
 R: male head with ivy-wreath (satyr or comic mask/*pornoboskos*)
 C: polychrome mosaic covering the whole room (3 × 4 m), no *vermiculatum*, but relatively small *tesserae*; central field with dolphins on either side of an *amphora* on black ground; surrounding frieze with fishes and plants on white ground
 D: 100–70 BCE
 B: Bingöl 1997, pl. 24,1; Kopsacheili 2012, cat. 6; Bingöl 2013, 73–77

No. 125

- P: Tel Dor
 L: Nahsholim, Mizgaga Museum – Nautical and regional archaeology
 E: not in situ, in a ditch with pottery
 R: mask-and-garland mosaic; fragments
 C: on a background of fruit and flowers, bordered below and above by red bands which are separated by a white band
 D: mid 2nd c. BCE
 B: Stewart – Martin 2003, fig. 8

No. 126

- P: Tel Dor
 L: Nahsholim, Mizgaga Museum – Nautical and regional archaeology
 E: not in situ, in a ditch with pottery
 R: fruit (pomegranate) and flowers
 C: bordered above by two red stripes, separated by a strip of white
 D: mid 2nd c. BCE
 B: Stewart – Martin 2003, fig. 9

No. 127

- P: unknown
 L: Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, inv. 10003
 E: unknown
 R: two cocks after a fight, midget with a palm leaf (cocks and midget in *opus vermiculatum*)
 C: unknown
 D: 1st c. BCE
 B: Bieber – Rodenwaldt 1911, fig. 3; Ruesch – Basso 1911, 244; Tammisto 1997, cat. LS

**Annex II: List of Polychrome Figurative *opera tessellata* (2nd – mid 1st c. BCE);
 in Alphabetical Order (Black-and-White Mosaics Excluded)**

No. 128

- P: Arsameia on the Nymphaios
 L: unknown
 E: Hierothesion, room (I)
 R: central field with *amphora*, flanked on either side by a dolphin
 C: 13 framing friezes, filling the whole room
 D: first half 1st c. BCE
 B: Bingöl 1997, fig. 71; Brijder 2014, fig. 179a

No. 129

- P: Cefalù
 L: Museo di Fondazione Mandralisca, inv. 119
 E: so-called stalla di Via Veterani, possibly a city house
 R: large bird flying to the left, carrying a naked winged figure
 C: several frames (waveband, different patterns)
 D: late 2nd/early 1st c. BCE
 B: Boeselager 1983, figs. 40–41; Tammisto 1997, MF2

No. 130

P: Delos

L: in situ

E: Ilôt de la Maison des Masques, Maison B (Maison des Masques), room (G)

R: central *tessellatum*- carpet with perspectival rhombesC: on both sides framed by masque and ivy frieze in *opus tessellatum*D: end of 2nd/beginning 1st c. BCE (Dunbabin)

B: Bruneau 1972, no. 215, figs. 184–195

No. 131

P: Delos

L: in situ

E: Ilôt de la Maison des Masques, Maison B (Maison des Masques), room (I)

R: centre with flower *tondi*, framing an *amphora*, various framingC: various framing surrounding flower *tondi* and amphora, entrance area: two dolphinsD: end of 2nd / beginning 1st c. BCE (Dunbabin)

B: Bruneau 1972, no. 217, figs. 204–210

No. 132

P: Delos

L: in situ

E: Maison du trident (IIA), *peristyle* ambulatoryR: *peristyle*, with *impluvium* in mosaic (geometrical) *peristyle* ambulatory: square fields with reduced motifs, trident and dolphin with anchorC: depictions set in framing by all white *tesserae*D: end of 2nd / beginning 1st c. BCE (Dunbabin)

B: Bruneau 1972, no. 228, figs. 211. 213–214

No. 133

P: Delos

L: in situ

E: Maison (III N), room (I)

R: dolphin with anchor

C: mosaic on threshold

D: end of 2nd/beginning 1st c. BCE (Dunbabin)

B: Bruneau 1972, no. 261, figs. 228–231

No. 134

P: Eretria, Temple of Isis

L: in situ

- E: entrance of the court (T)
 R: two large water birds in white against a black ground
 C: framed by red band, waveband, white band
 D: second half 2nd c. BCE
 B: Tammisto 1997, cat. FSP2

No. 135

- P: Heracleion
 L: unknown
 E: floor of a pool
 R: four swimming dolphins,
 C: black framing, inner *tondo* on white ground
 D: 2nd or 1st c. BCE (Bruneau)
 B: Bruneau 1972, no. 351, figs. 298–300

No. 136

- P: Hû (Diospolis Parva)
 L: in situ
 E: found in the tholos of a bath
 R: circular disposition (diam. 5,23 m), several bands
 C: one outer band with the depiction of sea-creatures on white ground: dolphin, octopus, fish; isolated representation
 D: beginning 1st c. BCE
 B: Daszewski 1985, cat. 46, pls. 38–39; fig. 11

No. 137

- P: Caulonia
 E: public bath complex 'Casa matta', room (H), on the west side with pool
 L: in situ
 R: irregular *tesserae*, separated in square fields, filled with flower decor
 C: right side framed by marine monster (fishtail)
 D: second half 2nd c. BCE
 B: Iannelli – Cuteri 2014, figs. 4–5

No. 138

- P: Lucus Feroniae (near Rome), so-called Villa dei Volusii Satrunini
 L: in situ
 E: room (18)
 R: different birds and flowers, barbarian/gladiator helmets
 C: several framings

- D: 60–50 BCE
 B: Tammisto 1997, cat. SO1

No. 139

- P: Milazzo
 L: in situ
 E: cellar of S. Francesco di Paola
 R: polychrome mosaic; isolated male figure with bird in his hands; on white ground
 C: filling whole room, pavement partially excavated (4,84 × 2,9 m) centre: *tessellatum*; frame: *cocciopesto*
 D: 2nd c. BCE
 B: Boeselager 1983, figs. 38–39

No. 140

- P: Morgantina
 L: in situ
 E: House of Ganymede, oikos 3
 R: abduction of Ganymede, fragments
 C: *emblema* surrounded by perspectival meander
 D: second half 3rd c. BCE
 B: Zapheiroupolou 2006, cat. 85; Tammisto 1997, cat. MF 1; Boeselager 1983, 20–21

No. 141

- P: Pompeii
 L: Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, inv. 9981
 E: unknown
 R: flying winged female and pigeon
 C: framed in white and black
 D: 90–60 BCE (Tammisto)
 B: Tammisto 1997, cat. MF4; Pernice 1938, 177–178

No. 142

- P: Salemi
 L: Palermo, Museo Archeologico Regionale 'Antonino Salinas', inv. 2277
 E: Via Daguirre
 R: middle of inner field: naked male figure with *kantharos* and dolphin, inscription: XAIPE
 C: corners of the room with diagonal placed dolphins, oriented towards middle field
 D: 2nd c. BCE
 B: Boeselager 1983, fig. 7

No. 143

P: Samosata

L: unknown

E: Hellenistic palace, room (I)

R: central *emblema* with dolphins flanking amphora; surrounding fish frieze

D: 100–70 BCE

B: Zoroğlu 2000, 82 fig. 114; Kopsacheili 2012, cat. 6

No. 144

P: Saepinum

L: Rome, Museo Porta Benvento

E: under the basilica; room with polychrome pseudo-*emblema*R: *emblema*: dog hunting a stag (?); *tessellatum*C: surrounded by *opus signinum* with meander, rhombesD: second half 2nd c. BCE

B: del Vecchio 2014, figs. 3–5. 9

No. 145

P: Soluntum

L: in situ

E: *thermae*, corridor

R: image field with vessel, on black ground

C: vessel is standing on a green base, framed by strips of white

D: 100 BCE

B: Boeselager 1983, fig. 32

No. 146

P: Xanthos, Letoon

L: in situ

E: temple (B), *cella*R: mosaic with three *pinakes* – cithara, quiver/bow, on brown groundC: framed by all white *tesserae*D: 1st c. BCE

B: Bingöl 1997, fig. 64

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Concluding Remarks

Hellenistic Commagene in Context *Is 'Global' the Answer and Do We Have to Overcome Cultural 'Containers'?*

ACHIM LICHTENBERGER

The monument of the Commagenian king Antiochos I (70–36 BCE) on Nemrud Dağ has attracted researchers' interest since its discovery in the late 19th century, and every generation has looked at it with fascination and through the interpretative lens of its own time.¹ The interpretations have encompassed approaches drawn from orientalism and syncretism, as well as labels such as degeneration, eclecticism or megalomania. Given that the era of globalization is well underway, it seems both timely and apposite to apply the concept of globalization to the monument and the region in which it is embedded, which is precisely the aim of this volume.

Globalization

Globalization in the sense of a well-connected world that is far larger than the local horizon has been a topic of classical studies for some time.² Mediterranean Studies in particular, since the monumental work *The Corrupting Sea* by Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell (2000), have placed the concept of connectivity at the core of understanding multi-scalar exchange processes in the ancient world.³ Clearly, such a new interpretative model of the Mediterranean has to be seen against the background of the ongoing globalization debate and accelerated connectivity and exchange following the end of the Cold War.⁴ Connectivity as it relates to the Mediterranean means that a global ancient world enabled choice from a variety of objects, ideas and traditions and their integration into local lifestyles and worlds. The intermingling of the

1 Versluys 2017 (with history of research and previous bibliography).

2 Pitts – Versluys 2015; Hodos 2017.

3 It is remarkable that none of the contributions in the volume refers to Horden – Purcell 2000.

4 Shaw 2001.

global and the local, the receptions, transformations and adaptations are often termed glocalization, and this concept, too, has been absorbed successfully into classical studies.⁵ Looking at local cultures in their own cohesive right, with their own specifics and characteristics in a relational framework to the outside world as well as their inherent multiculturalism, is one of the outcomes and indeed merits of glocalization studies.

Globalization creates a multi-polar world that is closely connected. The editors of this volume suggest taking Commagene as “exemplary” for socio-cultural developments in the Hellenistic world. Most of the previous interpretations of Nemrud Dağ focused on an ‘in-betweenness’ of the monument, an intermediary status, between East and West, and it is the declared aim of the volume to do away with this dichotomy for Commagene and replace it with a complex model of (inter and intra) cultural exchange and with the questioning of cultural labels. In the introduction, the editors emphasize that instead of conceiving of Nemrud Dağ and Commagene as something in-between two entities, they wish to understand it as something that was able to choose from global cultural options. This also implies that the options from which Antiochos I could select were not necessarily genuinely Greek or Persian anymore, but at best constructed Greek or Persian elements. Therefore, they ask that ethnic or cultural labels in the late-Hellenistic period be used only in inverted commas. The idea is that what is usually called Greek is in fact something constructed as Greek – its Greekness says nothing about a Greek origin.

This idea of non-ethnic but constructed (doing) Greekness is underlined by the fact that many elements that are deemed Greek are found outside Greece proper and belong to a Mediterranean koine. This observation is not new, of course. The wide distribution of the Greek language, style, political institutions etc. in the Mediterranean has long been acknowledged. Also, material culture studies have radically questioned the correlation of ethnicity/cultural origins and objects: *Pots are pots, not peoples*.⁶ Both trends underline the notion that culture is constructed and objects can easily be adopted. Meanings ascribed to objects were dynamic. This is the overall theoretical basis of the volume, and the in-betweenness of Commagene is not to be seen as in-between cultural entities (Greece and Persia) but rather as adaptive to Greek, Persian and other cultural concepts.⁷

Detaching objects from their origins and assuming that their contemporary meaning is not necessarily dependent on and determined by such origins is a useful change of perspective, as it puts the focus on attributions and meaning at a specific point in time. We have to examine the transformations that cultures and objects are going

5 Versluys 2017; Riedel 2018.

6 Kramer 1977. See also the contribution by Helen Fragaki in this volume emphasizing the mutability of ethnicity as a social construct with the example of Hellenistic Alexandria. See also Versluys 2017, 142–148.

7 Cf. for ‘Persianism’ Strootman – Versluys 2017.

through over time. There is, however a caveat: Suspecting traditions a priori as being invented requires due caution. The contributions by Bruno Jacobs and Albert de Jong in this volume have made us aware that even if an uninterrupted continuity to earlier traditions cannot be proven, we have to consider that – notwithstanding the piecemeal evidence (especially for Commagene) – a gap does not necessarily prove cultural discontinuity. Even if no direct cultural continuity exists, the claims of tradition should not be dismissed as invented traditions but as *longue durée* traditions in their own right.

Commagene, a Node in a Large Hellenistic Network?

The wide distribution of Greek elements throughout the Mediterranean and beyond (“from the Atlantic to the Oxus”) is seen by the editors of this volume as evidence of a Hellenistic network, and Commagene is regarded as an “important node in a large Hellenistic network”. However, one has to ask whether many dots on a distribution map make a network. Do, for example, fish mosaics or the crenellation motif on mosaics all over the Hellenistic world allow us to construct and claim a network that is responsible for the spread? And if so, how can we describe this network, if we have no evidence of its agents and how it works? If the existence of the dots on the map is the only evidence for such a network, then it becomes something like *dark matter*, something that must exist yet is invisible and so cannot be qualified. Of course, it is important to operate with such modelling, but the heuristic gain in terms of better understanding the ancient world is quite limited. Therefore, the questions raised in the introduction – “What did the Eurasian⁸ network that Hellenistic Commagene was part of look like? How did it function? And what was the relation between Commagene and other nodes in the network?” – remain unanswered. Continuously, we must confront these questions, but if undertaken without the sources needed for an answer, it remains a sophisticated yet ultimately fruitless exercise.

The Hellenistic network “from the Atlantic to the Oxus” claimed by the editors of the volume contains a crucial difference to the concept of Mediterranean *connectivity* of Horden and Purcell. Horden and Purcell firmly embed their concept – in the tradition of Fernand Braudel⁹ – in an environmental history model that takes into account the natural conditions, namely the Mediterranean Sea that creates specific conditions of connectivity, a world of proximity and distance. The Hellenistic network “from the Atlantic to the Oxus” somehow remains in a spatial vacuum and especially with regard to Commagene it would have been interesting to see whether a ‘terrestrial’ environment leads to different modes of connectivity compared to a ‘marine’ environment

8 “Eurasia” is a term often used in the introduction to this volume. However, Egypt and North Africa are included in this world.

9 Braudel 1966.

such as the Mediterranean.¹⁰ Or, are we, at least in the case of the royal dynasties, dealing with a kind of *Jet Set society* for which no natural obstacles to mobility of people and objects existed?¹¹ The apparently reluctant reception of new elements within the societies of dynasts such as the Orontids of Commagene or the Herodians of Judaea is proof of superficial and exceptional processes driven by single elite agents. If we look at a king like Herod of Judaea and see how little the innovative ‘globally Hellenistic’ elements introduced by the king into his own palaces infiltrated into the broader society¹², it is doubtful whether we can indeed call kings such as the Orontids “cosmopolitan brokers in Commagene”, as claimed by the authors of the introduction.

What Does Global Mean?

To understand how a Hellenistic network worked on a global scale requires a definition of the term ‘global’ itself. Is global here only the addition of several local phenomena from which global Hellenistic communities could choose? Or is there any added value in being able to make global choices? The editors imply that because something is global, it is detached from its origins and solely dependent on contemporary attributions, as also outlined by Lennart Kruijer and Stefan Riedel in their contribution to the volume. This results in a de-contextualization or de-territorialization and a “global genealogy”. However, one has to ask why traditions were labeled culturally in antiquity. Antiochos I in his famous *nomos* inscription explicitly references “the ancient lore of the Persians and the Greeks”.¹³ Several of the papers in this volume underline that these references were not ‘invented traditions’ but we have reasons to assume that there is a *longue durée* of these traditions – of course with transformations and redefinitions, but still it is worth keeping in mind that it is something *real* (an old-fashioned word, but acceptable as meaning the opposite of *invented*).

The mention of “the ancient lore of the Persians and the Greeks” reminds me of the story of Augustus in Capri ordering a playful exchange of dress and language between Romans and Greeks (Suet. Aug. 98,3). Such an episode underlines that there was a quite specific meaning in labels such as ‘Greek’ or ‘Roman’ as there was in ‘Persian’, and that these ethnic labels were explicitly related to objects and iconography that are not only contemporary attributions but directly connected to a cultural past.¹⁴ It is

10 Annette Haug in her contribution reflects on this in passing.

11 Cf., for example, the naming of a city after Marcus Agrippa in the kingdom of Herod and in the Bosporan kingdom. This naming is no coincidence, but probably needs to be related to a journey made by Herod to the Black Sea (Lichtenberger 2009, 47).

12 Lichtenberger 2011.

13 OGIS 383, ll. 24–34; Versluys 2017, 255–260.

14 The same is true for the story reported by Plut. Antonius 54,3–6 that Mark Antony and Cleopatra dressed their children as a Greek king or as king of Media and Armenia. The text is discussed by

also clear that those living in antiquity knew this specific terminology, and so we have to take it seriously. The editors of this volume want to dispense with such labels, or containers. They do not want to have “distinct ethnic, geographical or cultural ‘containers’ at the core of their explanatory model”. If, however, we downgrade or dismiss such containers – labels that are well-attested to in antiquity – and replace them with the term ‘global’, then we choose a new terminology that has no direct equivalent in antiquity. Although the Greek term *oikumene* comes closest to global, that term is not comparable conceptually to globalization theory.¹⁵ Therefore, applying the term global runs the risk of patronizing antiquity with our ideas and terminology. Of course, globalization theory or glocalization can be used as excellent and powerful tools for understanding cultural processes in the ancient world on an abstract level, opening our eyes to multiculturalism. However, to blur the terminological line between ancient self-designations (that are rooted in tradition) and modern concepts is problematic. If we shift the focus from looking at origins to contemporary meaning, we have to be aware that we relativize cultures to the extent that we lose labels and are left with mere -isms. Ultimately, this can feed into a perilous narrative of degeneration and decline.

Cultural Containers

Arguing against cultural containers is like tilting at windmills. Today, no serious scholar claims that cultures in classical antiquity were to any degree pure and sharply separated from other cultures.¹⁶ Not even the *Strukturforschung* that considered specific and characteristic properties of cultures claimed such purity, but knew that cultures were constantly in exchange with one another.¹⁷ Putting cultural labels in inverted commas is a catchy postulation, but what is to be gained thereby if that concept is already thought of as dynamic? Such a distancing from terms describing cultures is a distancing from the terminology of the ancients. Antiochos I would not have put Greek and Persian in inverted commas, nor would Augustus have done so with Greek and Roman.

Both Antiochos I and Augustus would have been fully aware of the broad spectrum and dynamics of the cultural terms. Also, research has always understood that, for example, Augustus’ conspicuous return to *mos maiorum* (“Make Rome Great Again”) is a kind of invented tradition, but one that is deeply rooted in a culture that is Roman, and there is no advantage in not calling this culture Roman. Also, a late-Hellenistic man like Zoilos of Aphrodisias had a very clear container-like thinking regarding cultures

Rolf Strootman in this volume. Again, we do not have bricolage but well-defined concepts, in this case even dichotomous.

15 But cf. Versluys 2017, 23.

16 Gotter 2001.

17 Lichtenberger 2015a, 96.

when we look at the Zoilos monument with Zoilos depicted on one side as a Roman and on the other as a Greek citizen of his hometown.¹⁸ The same is true for kings like Herod of Judaea or later the Commagenian king Philopappos in Athens¹⁹: They had multiple identities, related to cultural labels or containers, and these containers were not merged in the sense of Droysen's *Verschmelzung*²⁰; they were not fused in the sense of Versluys' bricolage²¹ but these multiple identities were juxtaposed like containers or like the languages in the bilingual inscriptions, discussed by Jacobs in this volume.

Of course, cultural containers are not stable, but, like with every container, you can add and remove things, but the container remains a container. For this reason, I believe that there is nothing to be gained by dismissing them, but it is important to look in a processual way at the content of cultural containers. I am convinced that everybody, including the editors of this volume, agree to that, and therefore fighting against cultural containers ultimately brings little of value or use.

Are Commagenian Studies in Need of a Paradigm Shift?

Evidently, I am somehow sceptical about the idea of replacing labels such as Greek or Persian through 'globally Hellenistic', and I am also reluctant to dismiss container thinking to a greater extent than is anyhow archaeological mainstream. In my opinion, Commagenian Studies have fared well in looking at specific cultural influences on monuments such as Nemrud Dağ. What is needed is further investigation of the cultural complexity and this must be done in a synchronic and diachronic manner. The papers in this volume do exactly this and so we have to thank the editors for putting Hellenistic Commagene into a larger context.

It is questionable, however, whether the 'global' perspective is the clue to understanding Hellenistic Commagene, and it is striking that most papers (with the exception of Kruijer – Riedel and Vito Messina) hardly ever use the term global, instead they apply cultural designations as heuristic tools. Most papers use the terms Greek or Persian without inverted commas and as useful categories. What is needed is greater study of the cultural complexity of the region of Commagene, and this volume significantly contributes to this. Hellenistic Armenia is probably a crucial link in understanding the 'Persian' (now I start using inverted commas) cultural influences in Commagene, as Matthew Canepa, de Jong and Giusto Traina emphasize in their contributions, too. This means that when we look at the torus bases in Commagene, for example, we

18 Smith 1993; Lichtenberger 2015b.

19 Lichtenberger 2015b.

20 Rebenich 2008, 136.

21 Versluys 2017.

probably should not only consider Iran but Armenia, too – as Kruijer and Riedel do – where we also find such architectural decoration. But are these torus bases ‘globally Hellenistic’? No, they are Armenian, Iranian or maybe even locally Commagenian, and thinking in such containers does not distract us from understanding cultural complexity but rather helps us to give structure to the same. We need to look at the local and regional aspects, we need more in-depth studies of Commagene and its closest neighbors. Of course, at the same time we must consider dominant cultural trends, which often go hand in hand with political dominance, as the case with the Seleucids, the Arsacids or the Romans.

The editors of this volume surely agree that more focus on regional studies is needed, and by including here neighboring regions of Commagene and explicitly focusing on the dynamics of cultural contacts, they exactly do this. However, the conceptual focus on the *global* and the *local* is in danger of weakening the *regional* perspective in the model (not in the case studies in this volume). What is needed is a strong *meso-regional* dimension, something that to a certain degree gets lost – or at least loses focus – in the glocalization approach.²² Such a meso-region is not confined by states, religions, civilizations or societies but traverses these borders and encompasses various combinations of structural characteristics.

Especially in a region such as Commagene that is dominated by terrestrial connectivity, the meso-region is the dominant factor, with the cultural influences stemming from past and present activities of the Achaemenids, Seleucids, Arsacids and Armenians within the meso-region and not from a ‘de-territorialized’ global culture. Also, the contribution by Werner Oenbrink in this volume clearly shows that architectural decoration is influenced by meso-regional models and not by global models and that Asia Minor, Northern Mesopotamia and Northern Syria need to be looked at, rather than analysis on an abstract global level. An important element of such a meso-regional approach is also more focus on settlement history. More data is needed on how life looked like locally and how it developed regionally to be able to situate Commagene in a global world. This is also required to better understand the infrastructure of Commagene and the regional connections necessary to perhaps position Commagene in a Hellenistic network one day.

This volume contains excellent contributions that present new insights and provide food for thought. In the future, we should shift the perspective from the global towards the meso-regional and to environmental history. At the same time, we must not balk at using containers as heuristic tools to structure and understand the ancient world. To conclude: Although my remarks on this volume might sometimes seem to

22 On the concept of “historical meso-regions” in modern history, cf. Troebst 2012. Kruijer and Riedel in their contribution to the volume include the concept of the “(macro-)region” which at least in terms of size comes close to the meso-region.

express dissent, my criticism relates more to nuances than to the overall considered and critical methodology. I am convinced that the approach taken in this volume will further stimulate Commagenian Studies; moreover, that it represents a call for deeper meso-regional studies and for greater focus on the crucial zone between the local and the global.

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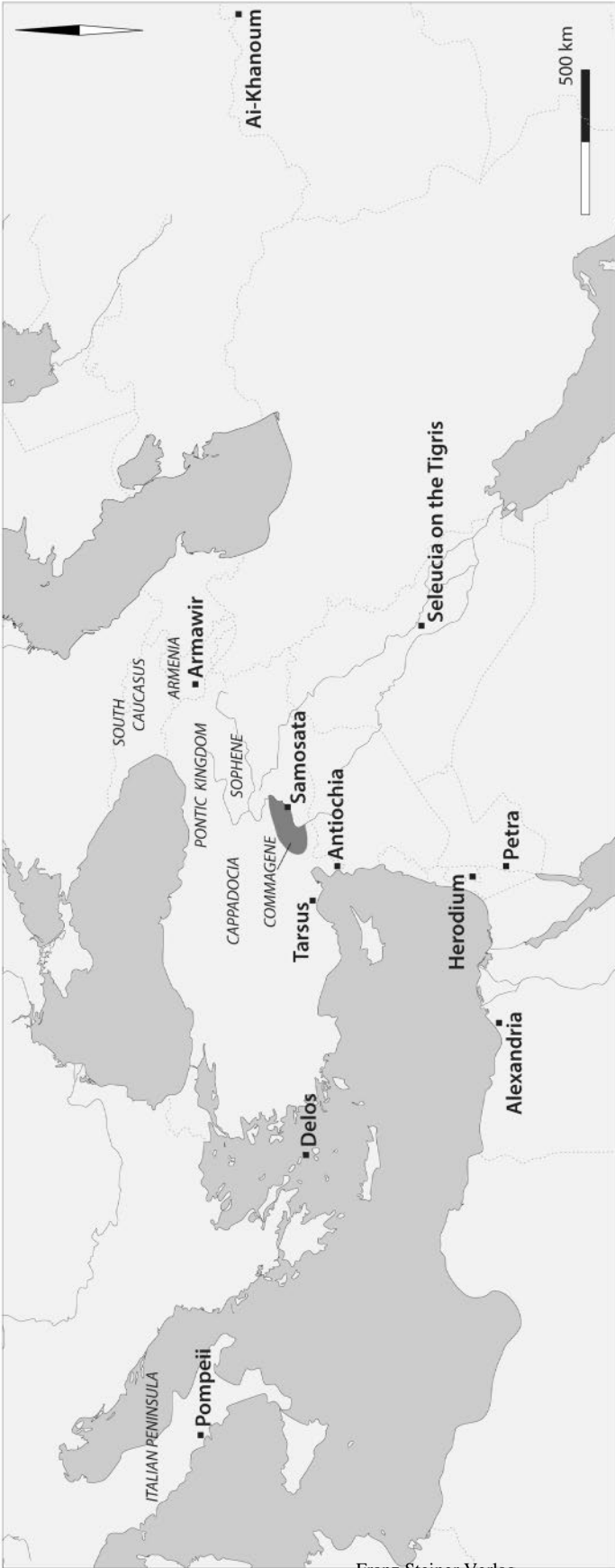
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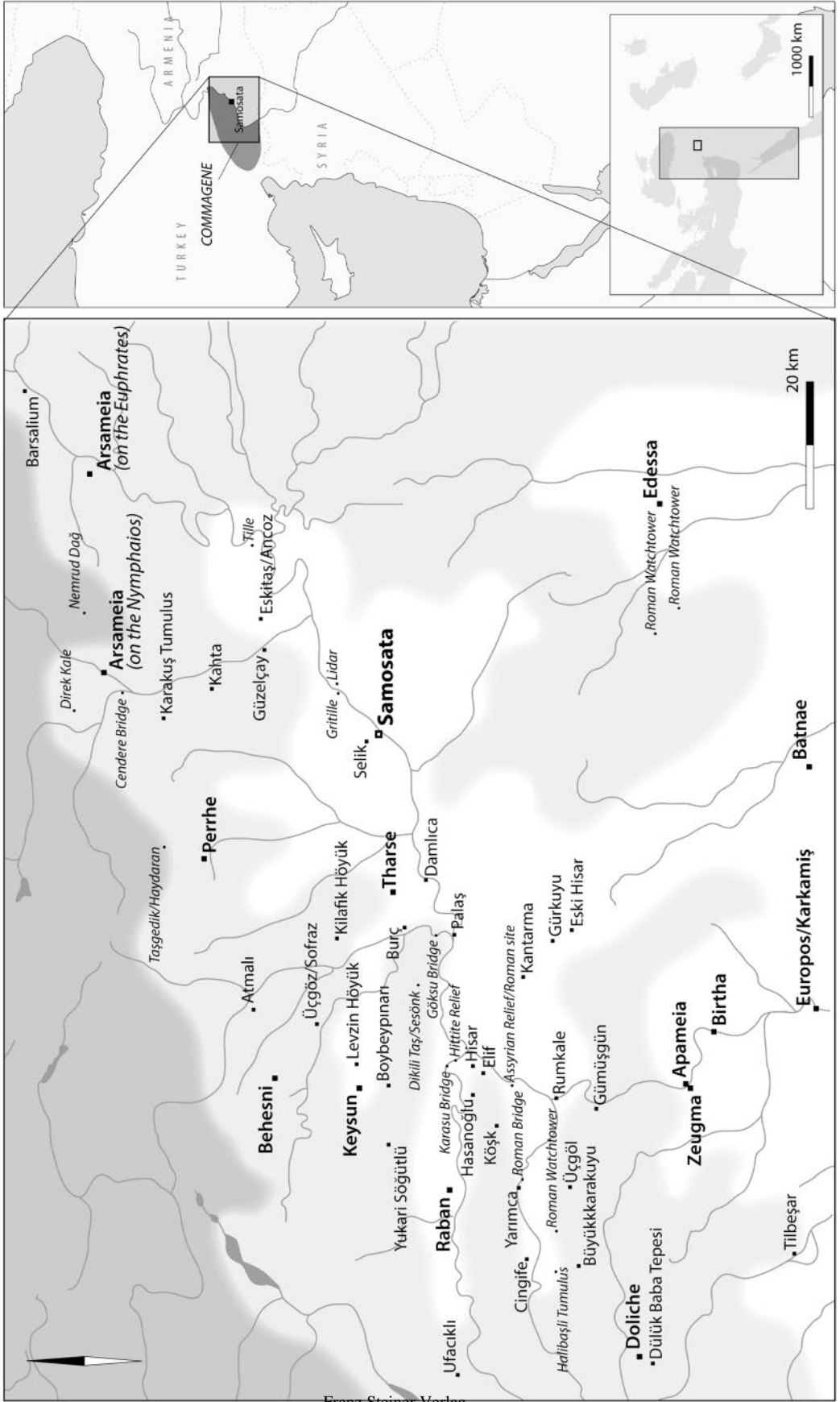
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Map of Eurasia indicating locations dealt with in this volume and their geographical references to Commagene, © J. Porck, Faculty of Archaeology, Leiden University



The history and archaeology of Hellenistic Commagene is a rich field of study, not in the least because of the remarkable monuments and inscriptions of king Antiochos I (c. 70–36 BC). Over the last decades important new work has been done on Commagene proper, providing novel interpretations of the epigraphical and historical record or the archaeological data and individual sites, like Nemrud Dağ, Samosata or Arsameia. Simultaneously scholars have tried to better understand Hellenistic Commagene by situating the region and its

history in a wider Mediterranean and Near Eastern context. This long-awaited book provides a critical evaluation of all these new data and ideas on the basis of a theoretically embedded, state-of-the-art overview for the history and archaeology of Hellenistic Commagene. From this volume a new picture emerges in which Hellenistic Commagene is no longer understood as peripheral and out-of-the-ordinary, but as an important node in a global Hellenistic network, from Ai-Khanoum to Pompeii and from Alexandria to Armawir.

ISBN 978-3-515-12925-1



9 7 8 3 5 1 5 1 2 9 2 5 1

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