

EVA ANAGNOSTOU-LAOUTIDES – STEFAN PFEIFFER (eds.): *Culture and Ideology under the Seleukids: Unframing a Dynasty*. Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology and Literature 183. De Gruyter, Berlin – Boston 2022. ISBN 978-3-11-075557-2; ISBN (e-book) 978-3-11-075562-6. XII, 360 pp. EUR 113.95.

*Culture and Ideology under the Seleukids* is a collection of works based on a conference *Culture and Ideology under the Seleukids: An Interdisciplinary Approach*, held at Macquarie University in 2019. As the name of the volume implies, the focus is on multi-disciplinary inquiries into the elusive subject of the Seleukid dynasty and their empire – if, indeed, “empire” is the correct choice of words. The perspectives presented are based on history, archaeology, numismatics, and epigraphical sources. Several articles offer alternatives to the traditional Hellenocentric approach, bringing to life the diversity and ambiguousness of the whole Seleukid project.

It can be said that the Seleukids have been a difficult subject for research, even among the other states formed by Alexander’s successors. Direct written sources are very sporadic, and the multitude of rulers and the geographic extent of the Seleukid power make it exceedingly difficult to grasp. In this note, it is refreshing to see that this volume shows that the study of the Seleukids has reached a clearer and more mature status, with multiple skilled scholars presenting well-defined results that seem for the most part to agree with each other.

The volume contains an introductory chapter and 16 articles divided into four sections, as follows: I Representations and Perceptions: Ideology and the Beginnings of a Monarchy; II Political Culture: A Contested Monarchy; III Local Ideology: The Babylonian Tradition and Greek Culture; and IV Cultural Interdependencies: Empires and Ideologies in Dialogue. As the titles show, many of the themes require wide-ranging expertise, which has been one of the reasons for the Seleukid realm having been so understudied earlier. For example, the theme “The Babylonian Tradition and Greek Culture” demands extensive knowledge on both Babylonian and Greek cultures and languages, and mastery of both is indeed rare.

The introductory chapter, written by the editors, sets up the themes and the tone of the other works. The paradigm of the modern Seleukid studies is explored, for instance, by analysing the terminology that is applied to the Seleukid realm. The problematisation of it being called an ‘empire’ is understandable in a post-colonial historiographic perspective, but the authors agree that it is useful as a framework. Signs of entanglements and engagements between different ethnic, religious and cultural groups are prevalent all around the volume, and this theme is neatly introduced by Pfeiffer and Anagnostou-Laoutides.

Starting from section I, the role and formation of the Seleukid kingship is examined from various standpoints. Alex McAuley in his article “The Seleukid Royal Family as a Reigning Triad” presents a theory of Seleukid kings, starting from Seleucus I, as having portrayed themselves possibly

as part of a triad of ruler – spouse – heir. The conclusions are highly interesting, but explicit proof is sparse. Other writers expand on various ways the Seleukid rulers attempted to legitimize their rule: Gunnar R. Dumke's engaging article about Alexander's, Ptolemy I's and Seleucus I's legacies in the light of their followers' positions sheds light on the basis of Hellenistic ruler's logic of power. Matthew Trundle and Christopher de Lisle lay some groundwork on early Seleukid coinage (which is studied more in section IV), while Daniel Ogden brings forth examples of Heracles' role in the Seleucid iconography and mythological origin stories. Apameian mosaics are used both by Ogden and also in Marek T. Olszewski's article about the ideology of the diadochoi.

Part II is more focused on written sources. Paul McKechnie writes about the contested status of Seleukid kingship and especially the "War of the Brothers" between Seleucus II and Antiochus Hierax. Altay Coşkun examines the Judaeian reception of the Seleukid rule, especially using 1. and 2. Maccabees as a source. Richard Wenghofer's article is about popular resistance against the ruling power and the examples he uses are very convincing. In general, some comparisons in the larger framework of other multinational empires might have supported the thesis even more.

In the third section, many different details of Seleukid kingship and its peculiar connection to Babylonian concepts are explored. Andreas Mehl places the title "Great King" under further inspection. Perhaps surprisingly, the shadow of the Persian kingship did not prevent Hellenistic rulers from taking this or similar titles. Patrick M. Michel and Marie Widmer in turn compare the royal garments of Seleukid and Babylonian kings. Their results show how Seleukids were capable of absorbing some traits from the Babylonian culture, while others they did not absorb, such as the idea of the king's garment representing the king himself. Paul-Alain Beaulieu's article about the death of Antiochus IV reads closely the different narratives describing his death, and places it within the context of Babylonian Hellenistic historiography – an interesting concept by itself.

The final section, part IV, is about dialogues between empires and ideologies. Daniel Hunter shows what reasons led to the significant influence of Seleukid iconography in Bithynian and Pontic coinages. Hellenistic Bactria, a difficult subject due to the sparse source material, is treated informatively by Rachael Mairs, who focuses on the forms of ruler cult possibly upheld in Bactria during and after the Seleukid rule. Thomas Brüggemann closes the volume by inspecting both contemporary and historiographical naming conventions for the Seleukid realm.

The whole volume has been refreshingly well edited and proofread. Informative maps and especially the many colour images make the articles focusing on material culture easy to grasp – concerning numismatics or the study of mosaics, one picture is worth a thousand words. The subpar quality of some of the mosaic photos is due to the photos being taken by looters for the black market, not because of the authors.

*Culture and Ideology under the Seleukids* is a good example of very approachable yet highly interdisciplinary scholarship. Written sources, epigraphy, archaeology and numismatics are used extensively, but still allow easy access for non-experts. This is also supported by many articles that share the same evidence – in addition to the Apameian mosaic mentioned above, various coin issues are analysed from different perspectives, for instance. All in all, the volume is an important milestone in modern Seleukid research.

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SOPHIA M. CONNELL (ed.): *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle's Biology*. Cambridge Companions to Philosophy. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge – New York 2021. ISBN 978-1-107-19773-2 (hardcover); ISBN (paperback) 978-1-316-64787-5; ISBN (e-book) 978-1-108-18179-2. XVII, 355 pp. GBP 24.99.

Questo volume raccoglie 18 contributi dedicati alle opere aristoteliche che comunemente vengono classificate come biologiche. Per chiarezza, gioverà qui ricordare che a tale gruppo afferiscono, da un lato, i *Parva naturalia*, 7 trattati – o 8, a seconda delle ripartizioni dell'ultimo di essi – che indagano temi quali la percezione, il sonno e la veglia, la durata della vita e le sue età, e, dall'altro, gli scritti propriamente zoologici, vale a dire la *Historia animalium*, il *De partibus an.*, il *De motu an.*, il *De incessu an.* e il *De generatione an.* Da sole, queste opere corrispondono all'incirca a un quarto del *Corpus Aristotelicum* superstite, ma solo in tempi piuttosto recenti – almeno da D'A. W. Thompson in poi – è invalsa la consuetudine di designarle con l'aggettivo “biologiche”, sebbene questo sia un termine di coniazione moderna risalente agli inizi del XIX sec., più precisamente agli studi di G. R. Treviranus e J.-B. Lamarck (cfr. la voce *Biology* in *The Oxford English Dictionary Online*: [www.oed.com/view/Entry/19228](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/19228)).

Prima di dare uno sguardo alla struttura e ai tratti salienti del libro, occorre premettere che intorno alla biologia aristotelica è venuto a crearsi un dibattito non ancora del tutto esauritosi. Da una parte, infatti, coloro che ritengono che, in seguito alla morte di Aristotele (322 a.C.) e di Teofrasto (287 a.C.), l'avanzamento nell'indagine di tipo naturalistico e biologico abbia subito una sostanziale battuta d'arresto sino agli studi compiuti da Alberto Magno, nel XIII sec. (è la tesi sostenuta da J. G. Lennox in un articolo non a caso intitolato “The Disappearance of Aristotle's Biology: A Hellenistic Mystery”, *Apeiron* 27/4 (1994) 7–24, rist. in Id., *Aristotle's Philosophy of Biology: Studies in the Origins of Life Science*, Cambridge – New York 2001, 110–25). Dall'altra parte si colloca chi propone di