

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: THE DIALECTICS OF SELEUKID IDEOLOGY

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The Seleukid Empire (312–64 BCE) was forged in the crucible of war. Alexander III of Macedon had only just subjugated the territories of the erstwhile Achaemenid world under his yoke, when his sudden death in 323 BCE, at thirty-three years of age, unleashed a series of power struggles among his generals, hungry to succeed him as ruler over the newly-minted Macedonian hegemony. The ensuing wars lasted from 322 to 281 BCE, ending only with the death of Seleukos I, the last of the Diadochs, although the impacts of these struggles continued among their successors well beyond 281 BCE.¹ Yet, starting in 306 BCE, the most successful of Alexander’s would-be successors (Antigonos I and his son, Demetrios, as well as Lysimachos, Ptolemy I Soter, and Seleukos I Nikator) began styling themselves ‘kings’ (*basileis*), with none recognizing any territorial limits over their claims to power as such.² These kings ruled over any territory their spears could reach.³

The tenth-century Byzantine compilation, the *Suda*, thus defines monarchy (*basileia*) in this period after Alexander as one that rested neither on descent (*phusis*) nor justice (*dike*), but on the ability to competently command an army.⁴ Insatiable

- 1 Recent accounts of the Diadochs include Bennett and Roberts 2011/19; Alonso Troncoso and Anson 2013; Hauben and Meeus 2014; Wrightson 2019; Matyszak 2019; Capdetrey 2022. A bit more specific are Champion 2014 (Antigonos); Worthington 2016 (Ptolemy); Howe 2018 (Ptolemy); Grainger 2014 (Seleukos) and 2019 (Antipatros); Hannestad 2020 (Seleukos); Wheatley and Dunn 2020 as well as Romm 2022 (Demetrios).
- 2 On the Year of the Kings, see Plut. *Demetr.* 17f. On the universal claims, symbols, titles, and the courts of Hellenistic kingship, see Bikerman 1938; Ritter 1965; Virgilio 2003; Alonso Troncoso 2005; Michels 2009; Muccioli 2013; Strootman 2014; Engels 2017; Anagnostou-Laoutides and Pfeiffer 2022.
- 3 On the ideology of spear-won land and military victory as the essence of Hellenistic, and especially Seleukid, kingship, see, in addition to the references quoted in the previous note, Mehl 1980/81; Gehrke 1982; Bikerman 1938; Barbantani 2007; Koehn 2007; Coşkun 2012; Nelson 2022; for a more complete bibliography, see Coşkun 2022d, 36f.
- 4 *Suda* B 147.2f. (ed. E. Adler) = *Suda Online* ed. D. Whitehead: Βασιλεία. οὔτε φύσις οὔτε τὸ δίκαιον ἀποδίδουσι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις τὰς βασιλείας, ἀλλὰ τοῖς δυναμένοις ἡγεῖσθαι στρατοπέδου καὶ χειρίζειν πράγματα νουνεχῶς; οἷός ἦν Φίλιππος καὶ οἱ διάδοχοι Ἀλεξάνδρου. τὸν γὰρ υἱὸν κατὰ φύσιν οὐδὲν ὠφέλησεν ἡ συγγένεια διὰ τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς ἀδυναμίαν. τοὺς δὲ μηδὲν

ambition and the spectre of all-encompassing wars thus run like a red thread throughout the history of the Hellenistic monarchies.⁵ Yet, while scholars have long recognized the significance of the role warfare played in shaping the character of Hellenistic kingship in general, and Seleukid kingship in particular, it has also long been recognized that no king could rule only on the basis of violent coercion for very long. Seleukid kings, just like their Antigonid, Ptolemaic, and Attalid counterparts, had to find ways to clothe their rule with *dike*, as the Suda would say.

To that end, Seleukid kings developed an elaborate repertoire of practices, behaviours, and propaganda aimed specifically at rendering their and their family's claims to royal authority more acceptable to those they had subjugated.

One way or another, ideological messages imply – or even state explicitly – the positive force that the rule of a king or dynasty brings to the subjects and vassals: victory, salvation and divine presence are most often enshrined in the epithets borne by or bestowed on a Seleukid king, as in Seleukos I *Nikator*, Antiochos I *Soter* and Antiochos II *Theos*. The notion of benefaction was reflected in the dynasty's titulature officially only under Ptolemaic influence in 150 BCE with Alexander (Balas) *Euergetes* Philadelphos, although it had been attested in the king's exchanges with cities inside and outside his territory from early on. The theme of noble ancestry and legitimate succession was most creatively developed under the first two kings but did not result in a royal title before Seleukos IV *Philopator*.⁶

Yet the development and dissemination of such ideological themes was an exceedingly difficult and complicated endeavour in the Seleukid context, as the polities over whom Seleukid kings claimed royal authority were incredibly diverse in terms of culture, language, ethnicity, and religion, as well as in social and political organization. Each of the polities encompassed by Seleukid domains, whether Greek city-states, temple states, nomadic tribes, or quasi-feudal polities all had their own ideas as to what constituted acceptable political authority, and these ideas no doubt shifted and changed over the long arc of Seleukid history.⁷

Seleukid kings thus found themselves in the position of having to be all things to all people if they were to maintain their status as kings. That the Seleukid dynasty managed to maintain royal authority for about two and a half centuries testifies to

προσήκοντας βασιλεῖς γενέσθαι σχεδὸν ἀπάσης τῆς οἰκουμένης. 'Neither nature nor justice gives kingdoms to men, but to those who are able to lead an army and to handle affairs intelligently; such as Philip was, and the successors of Alexander. For family relationship did not benefit the natural son at all because of the weakness of his soul. But those who had no relationship becoming kings of almost the whole inhabited world.' The provenience of this description is unknown, but it is generally regarded as pertinent for all Diadochs; cf. Austin 2006, no. 45; Wheatley and Dunn 2020, 37. And see the previous note on the military character of Hellenistic kingship.

5 Cf. Chaniotis 2005.

6 The most comprehensive treatment of royal epithets is by Muccioli 2013. For documentation, see Houghton and Lorber *SC I*; Houghton, Lorber, and Hoover *SC II*.

7 Major recent accounts or studies of the Seleukids after 281 include Mittag 2006; Ehling 2008; Taylor 2013; Feyel and Graslin-Thomé 2014; 2017; 2021; Grainger 2015a and 2015b; Erickson 2018; Coşkun and Engels 2019; Oetjen 2020; du Plessis 2022; Kosmin and Moyer 2022; Wrightson 2022.

the fact that they were, in the main, successful in compelling local acceptance of their claims to the rightful exercise of royal power. How Seleukid kings went about trying to win over the hearts and minds of the peoples they subjugated has been the subject of a flurry of recent scholarship. These studies have proven to be a tremendous boon to Seleukid scholars, and to our grasp of the social and political histories of the Hellenistic world more generally.⁸

As one might expect, the approaches to the question of the reactions and responses to Seleukid hegemonic claims are highly varied, as are the conclusions that have been reached. The reasons for this should be immediately obvious. As the contributions in this volume will demonstrate, the nature of Seleukid power – how it was exercised and how it was presented to the diverse communities of the Seleukid Empire – was circumscribed to a considerable degree by local social, cultural, and political conditions and expectations. While much of Seleukid royal image and royal propaganda was fashioned at the Seleukid royal court, none of it was developed in a vacuum. Ideas and iconography rather emerged in reaction to the same efforts being made by competing kings and dynasts, and in dialogue with local conditions prevailing on the ground in subject communities. Seleukid kings thus perforce donned many different guises, depending on local contexts, even if there were certain common elements present in each one.⁹

Yet examining the construction of Seleukid royal propaganda and royal identity, and assessing its effectiveness, based solely on the self-representations coming out of the Seleukid court would be a bit like listening to only half a conversation: much would be lost. The primary aim of this volume is, therefore, to not only explore further the construction of the Seleukid dynastic ideology and image of kingship, but also to provide the voice of the Seleukid interlocutors in their myriad responses to Seleukid rule in specific local milieus. One of the great challenges inhering in the recovery of the voices of subject communities revolves around sources, which are unfortunately few, scattered, and diverse. However, many a Greek inscription can still be revealing, if read against the grain, while the Jews with their rich literary tradition and the Babylonians with their prolific epigraphic bequest allow for recovering very specific local voices from the Near East.

A detailed understanding of the required languages and material cultures is crucial for reconstructing the many local contexts and reactions relevant to the question of the reception of Seleukid royal propaganda. Some of the contributors to this volume do indeed bring such specialized skills to the table and have thus shed much-needed light on important facets of Seleukid claims to royal authority. Yet other contributors have undertaken a re-examination of various aspects of Seleukid royal propaganda and ideology emerging from the royal court itself, effectively reading

8 In addition to the references cited in the previous notes, see Brodersen 1999/2000; Capdetrey 2007; Kosmin 2014 and 2018; Chrubasik 2016; Coşkun and McAuley 2016; Ogden 2017; Erickson 2019; Fischer-Bovet and von Reden 2021; Anagnostou-Laoutides and Pfeiffer 2022; Lorber 2022. Also note the more immediate context in which this volume has been produced, the *Seleukid Study Days* (2011–2019) and the *Seleukid Lecture Series* (2021–2022), which are introduced a bit further in the *Preface* to this volume.

9 See notes 2, 3 and 7 above.

the more traditional evidence against the backdrop of concrete local historical conditions to which royal propaganda was meant to respond, and which can then be used to suggest how local polities reacted to Seleukid royal authority.

Another great challenge confronting the contributors to this volume is just the question of defining political ‘legitimacy’ in the Hellenistic context. The scholarly literature on this question is rather thin and there is really no agreement.¹⁰ And this may simply be for the good reason that formalist approaches to the question of ‘legitimacy’ are better avoided. The Hellenistic world, stretching as it does from the fringes of the Western Mediterranean to the Indus River in modern Pakistan, and from the Republics of Central Asia to the Arab peninsula and North Africa was inhabited by countless peoples bearing a bewildering variety of languages, cultures, and social and political organizations. Each of these peoples had their own ideas about what constituted an acceptable claim to the rightful exercise of political authority, royal or otherwise. And it should not be taken for granted that these perspectives remained the same throughout the Hellenistic period.

All of the contributors to this volume were hence left to employ their own ideas about how royal authority was constituted, either explicitly or implicitly, in the variety of Seleukid domains. Our approach to the question of what constituted an acceptable claim to, and exercise of, royal authority thus remains impartial, agnostic, and without prejudice either for or against any particular theory of ‘political legitimacy’. As one mild exception to this open-minded approach, we would like to stress that this very notion of ‘legitimacy’ is post-Hellenistic and that we should look for other factors more conducive to the acceptance or rejection of the rightful claim to royal authority and its exercise in distinctively Hellenistic contexts. Consequently, we feel that an overarching definition of ‘political legitimacy’ uniquely applicable to the Hellenistic period would be both anachronistic and inappropriate.¹¹ Seleukid, Ptolemaic, Antigonid, and Attalid kings no doubt all saw their right to rule as in some sense ‘legitimate’, but it is not clear that their subjects always or necessarily shared their understanding of what such a claim to ‘legitimate’ royal rule entailed.¹² Be this as it may, it is nevertheless possible to gauge local reactions toward Seleukid claims to, and exercise of, royal authority, as a proxy for measuring local acceptance or rejection of Seleukid royal pretensions in specifically local social, cultural, and political contexts. This understanding will be exemplified by many studies gathered in the present volume.

How to arrange the papers comprised in this volume has been a challenging question that occupied its editors until shortly before its submission to the press. Given the wide range of examples that most chapters draw on, a mere chronological or geographical structure would have been insufficient. One possible way of

10 The introductions to Trampedach and Meeus 2020 or Anagnostou-Laoutides and Pfeiffer 2022 do not reach very far in terms of theoretical reflection, nor do most other works referenced in notes 2–4 and 7 above. Cf. Coşkun 2023 on the ideological framework of Seleukid diplomacy.

11 For further discussion and references, see the last two chapters in this volume.

12 Besides the works listed in notes 1–4, 7, and 9 above, we point to Müller 2009 as an outstanding study on the construction of Ptolemaic royal status (cf. Coşkun 2022b). For the minor Hellenistic kingdoms, see especially Koehn 2007 and Michels 2009.

organizing the individual contributions might have been by splitting them according to royal or dynastic ideology, as some are more concerned with the appeal of the king himself, others exhibiting the greatness of his family and the noble line of succession observed within.¹³ Another option would have been an arrangement by ideological concepts. The choice that was eventually made was meant to emphasize various stages of the dialectic process in which ideology is shaped, communicated, received, reflected, nuanced, modified, or rejected. The contributions fall somewhat organically into two major parts, those dealing with the ambitions of the royal court to create and endorse ideological concepts in their dialectical contexts, and others focusing more directly on the manifold responses to them outside the court. We finally settled on a further subdivision into five distinct sections.

The articles in Section I explore the dialectical formation of Seleukid royal ideology, identity, and strategies for establishing the acceptance of Seleukid claims to rightful royal authority, often in dialogue with ideas regarding acceptable claims to and exercise of political power prevailing in local cultures. Each of the authors has attempted to understand the construction of a specific iteration or face of Seleukid royal imagery and legitimacy as a response to specific, concrete local conditions. The articles in Section II shift attention away from the Seleukid court and toward local polities themselves in an effort to come to terms with the range of possible reactions and responses to Seleukid royal pretensions and the exercise of royal authority in local settings.

In Chapter 2, 'Royal Propaganda and the Creation of Royal Status for Seleukos I', Kyle Erickson attempts to reconstruct how Seleukos I made full use of the various means he had at his disposal in order to garner acceptance for his rule. Seleukos developed his royal propaganda not in a vacuum, but as part of a dialogue between his court and various local political stakeholders, including other great dynasts such as the Antigonids and the Ptolemies, as well as the image of kingship established under Alexander. Seleukos' strategies were thus both proactive and reactive. Erickson traces the development of Seleukos' efforts to establish the acceptability of his reign through a close examination of his coin production and his city foundations and their accompanying foundation myths, noting that the longevity of Seleukid coin types and mythmaking beyond the Seleukid dynasty itself testifies to the effectiveness of those efforts.

Seleukos, like Ptolemy and Lysimachos, employed imagery on coins, as well as a series of cleverly crafted myths, in order to present himself as Alexander's worthy successor. Unlike his competitors, however, he appears to have abandoned this strategy after the Battle of Ipsos (301 BCE) and began to cultivate a new iconography and dynastic mythology that effectively effaced any connections with Alexander as a source of political authority, and presented Seleukos as a divinely ordained king in his own right. Erickson contends that this Seleukid mythmaking, both with regard to the divine sanction of Seleukos' rule and with respect to his

13 Royal persona: K. Erickson, E. Anagnostou-Laoutides, S. Harrison, R. Strootman, B. Edelmann-Singer, B. Scolnic (on Panion), G. Ramsey, R. Wenghofer. Dynastic lineage or family: A. Coşkun (on Miletos); D. Klokov, B. Scolnic (on Śar Wars).

city-foundations, is neatly, if incompletely, encompassed in Appian's *Syrian Wars*, a series of narratives that originated in the Seleukid court and comprised both traditional Graeco-Macedonian and Near Eastern elements. Erickson's treatment of Seleukid city foundation narratives is particularly helpful for shedding light on the varied reactions to Seleukid kingship in the reign of Seleukos I. He notes that Appian's account of the foundation of Seleukeia-on-the-Tigris contains negative overtones suggestive of hostility and resistance among the nearby Babylonians, while the stories surrounding the foundation of Antioch-on-the-Orontes and Seleukeia-in-Pieria points to a more positive local reception of Seleukid royal authority in Syria, thus highlighting the varied local reactions to Seleukid claims to royal authority.

With Chapter 3, 'The King-Ship of the Seleukids: An Alternative Paradigm for the Anchor Symbol', Eva Anagnostou-Laoutides presents what is in some respects a companion piece to Erickson's study, as she undertakes an examination of how the Seleukids attempted to create a sense of acceptable royal authority in their Babylonian domains specifically. Anagnostou-Laoutides reevaluates much of the scholarship on how the anchor became the Seleukid dynastic symbol *par excellence*, ubiquitous on Seleukid coinage and prominent in Seleukid court mythologizing. Modern scholarship traditionally connects the Seleukid anchor to the dynastic myth of Seleukid descent from the god Apollo, or else as a symbol evoking Seleukos' I brief stint as an admiral for Ptolemy I between 315 and 312 BCE.

Without rejecting either of these positions outright, Anagnostou-Laoutides, utilizing a variety of Babylonian and other Near Eastern sources, in addition to the more standard numismatic and literary evidence, argues that the use of the anchor symbol on Seleukid coins and in Seleukid myth was intended as a conciliatory gesture, meant to establish dynastic royal authority not only for Greeks and Macedonians settled in Seleukid domains, but for Seleukid subjects in Babylonia as well. Anchors, and nautical imagery more generally, Anagnostou-Laoutides contends, are surprisingly common in Babylonian myth and religious iconography, and are replete with political significance in Near Eastern images of legitimate kingship. In Babylonian, Neo-Assyrian, and Kilikian contexts, to name but a few, ships and their associated paraphernalia adorned temples and are frequently referenced in royal inscriptions. These nautical images appear to represent a 'ship of state' motif, common in Near Eastern myth and royal imagery, the stability, security, and good order of which is the prerogative of kings as the gods' representative on earth. The meaning of the anchor is thus polyvalent, establishing images of Seleukid royal authority not only among their Graeco-Macedonian subjects, but among their Mesopotamian subjects as well.

Altay Coşkun continues the theme of creating a sense of royal legitimacy in Chapter 4, 'The First Seleukid Benefactions in Miletos and the Creation of a Dynastic Ideology', undertaking a close examination of the Milesian honorary decrees. Coşkun argues that Seleukos I drew upon his warm relations with Miletos, established in 300 BCE through his marriage to the daughter of Demetrios I Poliorketes, who was then holding sway over Miletos, in order to articulate the prosperity of his kingship. It is Seleukos' first wife Apama who is given prominence in the Milesian epigraphic decree. While recent scholarship has shed much light on the use of the

basilissa role in the public representation of the king and his family, and further claimed some political importance for this specific queen, Coşkun infers from the inscriptions that the diplomacy with the sanctuary city was intended to give status to her as the mother of the designated successor Antiochos, rather than showing any specific individual agency.

More importantly, the Milesian honorary decrees allow for reconstructing the character of relations between the Milesians and the Seleukid dynasty in the brief interval between the Battles of Ipsos and Korupedion. Coşkun notes that in the period between 301 and 279 BCE, Miletos, though under the sway variously of Demetrios I Poliorketes and then Lysimachos, Seleukos I, and Ptolemy, largely maintained both its independence and its democracy in the face of competing royal ambitions in the region. Moreover, Seleukos I, like Lysimachos, Ptolemy, and Demetrios, attempted to leverage the widespread popularity of the Didymeion as part of its broader strategy to advertise Seleukid rule in Asia Minor and beyond.

Further, the arrival of the Milesian, Demodamas, at the Seleukid court of Antiochos I, together with the dynasty's patronage of the Didymeion, was the catalyst for the Seleukid dynasty's adoption of Apollo as their central divinity. Apollo was himself a polyvalent figure with deep political significance in both Greek and Near Eastern contexts. Coşkun's analysis thus underscores the complexity of the entangled relations between king and city, as Miletos managed to pursue cordial relations with competing dynasts whilst maintaining its democracy and independence as a *polis* in the period covered by his analysis. Those relations could and did shift according to contingent circumstances on the ground, yet the case of the Milesian decrees specifically reveals what positive relations between Seleukid kings and Greek *poleis* might look like.

Section II explores how later Seleukid kings reminded their subjects of their royal persona, while also reshaping and adapting its design.

In Chapter 5, Babett Edelmann-Singer undertakes an examination of the famous *pompe* at Daphne in 'Material Culture, Ritual Performance, and Seleukid Rule: Antiochos IV and the Procession at Daphne in 166 BCE'. Edelmann-Singer looks beyond the event as an expression of imperial power in answer to the triumph of Aemilius Paullus, and toward the procession as an expression of the legitimation of Antiochos' rule. She focuses particular attention on the religious objects carried in the procession, as described by Polybios and Athenaios, arguing that while it is true that Paullus' procession looms in the background of Daphne, Antiochos in fact intended his procession as a means to communicate his unique vision of kingship to all the peoples over whom he claimed royal authority.

Edelmann-Singer notes that a Hellenistic *pompe* would typically maintain a strict separation between the spectators and the actors. In contrast, similar processions in most Greek *poleis* would not maintain such a separation (thus representing the city as a whole). But Antiochos did not follow the royal fashion of *pompe* and thus deliberately conflated his *basileia* and the *oikumene*. The universality of Antiochos' claims is underscored by the presence of all the divinities, both Greek and non-Greek, which processed to the temple of Apollo and Artemis. This is modelled on Babylonian and Assyrian precedents. The *pompe* at Daphne thus unites Near

Eastern and Greek traditions, and the enthusiastic participation of envoys from the various communities summoned represents a positive response to the claims to legitimacy that Antiochos intended to convey.

In Chapter 6, Stephen Harrison provides a comparative analysis of Persian royal processions described by Herodotos, the Apadana relief carvings, the Behistun inscriptions, and the account of the *pompe* of Antiochos IV at Daphne in 166 BCE as found in Polybios, Athenaios, and Diodoros. In ‘Antiochos at Daphne and Xerxes at Sardeis: A Comparative Perspective on the Seleukid Vision of Empire and the Creation of a Dynastic Ideology’, Harrison examines how Xerxes used royal processions to provide a visual representation of the extent and hierarchical order of Achaemenid rule. The aim of such displays was to establish a sense of royal legitimacy by creating a sense of unity among the peoples under his rule, a unity that ultimately centred on the person of the king in both a figurative and real sense.

In the Persian processions, the physical position of the king, relative to his diverse subjects, is made to be seen as the source of order and justice. Harrison then turns to accounts of Antiochos IV’s procession at Daphne, to argue that Antiochos similarly used the royal *pompe* as a vehicle to reconfigure dynastic space in a way that was consistent with the Seleukid view of empire. He next compares the discrepancies between the Achaemenid and Seleukid conceptualizations of imperial space through the lens of the royal procession. Ultimately, both the Achaemenid and Seleukid representations of kingship aim at establishing unity among ethnically diverse peoples, but do so in different ways according to their respective political ideals.

In Chapter 7, ‘Ritual Mutilation and the Construction of Treason: The Execution of Molon and Achaïos by Antiochos III’, Rolf Strootman continues the examination of the Seleukid construction of royal authority in a distinctively Persian cultural idiom. He undertakes a close analysis of Antiochos III’s *post mortem* treatment of the corpses of the usurpers Achaïos and Molon as recorded in Polybios. Strootman establishes Persian and other Near Eastern precedents for those actions. He adds further context by examining Alexander’s treatment of Bessos’ corpse, which he sees as the link between Antiochos’ ritual mutilation and the earlier Persian and Near Eastern customary ways of dealing with rebels and usurpers.

Strootman addresses the question of ideology and its reception in two key ways. First, the act of ritually mutilating a rebel’s corpse establishes the king’s authority by publicly and visually placing the rebel beyond the pale of civilized society. He is literally rendered monstrous and criminal. Second, the urgent extremity of the act of mutilation suggests a certain level of fear or anxiety on the part of the challenged king, fear that his authority is indeed in question, and not merely by the rebel himself. Ritual mutilation of a rebel, in the Near Eastern context, leverages not only the fear that such a gruesome act would engender in the minds of those contemplating rebellion, but is also a moral pronouncement that places rebels beyond the bounds of civilized humanity.

Section II is rounded out with Ben Scolnic’s article, ‘Second-Hand Propaganda: Polybios and Zeno on the Role of Antiochos IV at the Battle of Panion’ (Chapter 8). Scolnic undertakes a reading of Polybios’ account of the Battle of Panion against

the grain, in order to bring the pro-Seleukid sympathies of Polybios' source, Zeno of Rhodes, to the surface. Zeno appears to have produced a rather tendentious and pro-Seleukid account of the actions of Antiochos IV at the Battle of Panion in pursuit of what, for Zeno, was ultimately a Rhodian political agenda. According to Scolnic, Zeno leverages propaganda from the court of Antiochos IV that aimed at the legitimization of his rule, especially in Koile-Syria and Judea. The narrative of the participation of a young Antiochos IV at the Battle of Panion is a fiction, modelled on the stories of Alexander's precocious participations in Thrace and elsewhere, and must be rejected as unhistorical for a variety of reasons.

Polybios is especially critical of Zeno's narrative, noting that it is not uncommon for historians to engage in sensationalism or patriotic pride, when narrating certain events, notably not excluding himself from such criticism. Yet Polybios singles out this specific narrative from Zeno, whom he otherwise admires. Polybios' (harsh) rejection of this specific account turns not merely on a penchant for accuracy, but on a profound personal dislike for Antiochos IV. In the tension that exists between Zeno's characterization of Antiochos IV's actions at Panion and Polybios' perceptions of Antiochos, we can glimpse the range of reactions that could arise toward the possibility of Seleukid royal authority and attempts to promote it with illegitimate means.

While the papers in Sections I–II address the question of the how the Seleukid dynasty attempted to create a sense of royal authority that was acceptable to the polities under their sceptre, each with implications for the question of the reception of and reaction to those efforts, the papers in Sections III–V explore more fully the variety of possible local reactions to those efforts. Those reactions could range widely from warm, enthusiastic endorsement of Seleukid claims to royal authority over passive indifference to outright violent resistance. Underpinning the scope of responses is the interplay between Seleukid claims to local authority on the one hand, as well as its variegated exercise in specific local contexts, local ideas about what constituted the legitimate exercise of political power, and local concerns and interests on the other hand. This interplay was far from stable, but shifting and changing according to geography, chronology, and the approaches to the exercise of royal authority adopted by specific Seleukid kings and courtiers, to name just a few of the factors conditioning the relationships between the dynasty and local populations.

Section III presents to case studies of local resistance. It opens with Chapter 8 by Deirdre Klokow, 'Connectivity and Rural Spaces in the Seleukid Empire'. She examines the close relationship between changing land use patterns within Seleukid dominions and what those changing patterns tell us about the relations between the kings and their subjects. Klokow analyses two pieces of evidence, *OGIS 225*, an inscription providing details of Laodike I's purchase of Pannuokome in Hellespontine Phrygia from her husband Antiochos II, and the Lehmann Text, a cuneiform inscription which records a land grant of the same Laodike I and her sons Seleukos and Antiochos Hierax to the citizens of Babylon, Borsippa, and Kutha. Through a close reading of these two documents, Klokow argues that the Seleukid dynasty shaped land-use patterns to solidify their grip on the territory they claimed as their

own. She further attempts to gauge the effectiveness of those efforts by identifying local responses.

Both inscriptions show the attention paid by Laodike, and hence by the dynasty through her, to local concerns, while manifesting the effective omnipresence of Seleukid rule even in remote rural regions. Klokow concludes that both texts can be read as evidence for the active participation of local landholders in different areas of the Seleukid dominions in the negotiation of Seleukid royal authority in two distinct localized contexts as well as of the positive, or at least willing, reception of Seleukid claims to the legitimate exercise of royal authority.

In Chapters 10, ‘Rebel *Poleis*: The Politics of Anti-Seleukid Violence’, Gillian Ramsey examines the causes and character of popular urban revolt in the Seleukid dominions. She notes that violent revolt can be identified across the myriad polities throughout Seleukid realms, often driven by economic, political, and cultural concerns of local import. And yet the local character of such violent revolts is often obscured by the tendency of the surviving historical narratives to fold those revolts into the stories of great and powerful men seeking personal glory. Ramsey focuses her attention squarely on the *polis*, which she contends never relinquished its ideals of political autonomy and autarky, even in the teeth of an imposed royal authority. She notes that *polis* revolts against the Seleukid dynasty were not uncommon. Moreover, *polis* revolts appear to have been driven primarily by concerns of the citizens themselves, and not necessarily by the ambitions of rebel generals and satraps, although ‘rebel *poleis*’ might lend active support to such powerful figures.

Polis revolts, Ramsey argues, arose when there was a failure of constructive communication between king and city. Such urban revolts were motivated by local issues of *polis* identity and function, such as economic security and self-determination. However, historiographic and epigraphic evidence documenting such revolts often occludes any reference to why the citizens revolted against the king, describing them generically as chance mishaps. Kings tended to assent to such language, in order to distract from the fact that their authority had indeed been rejected. Such assent to the diplomatic language used to describe urban revolts thus ironically contributed to the propagandistic pretensions of Seleukid kings, even if it masked rather different, less congenial sentiments on the part of *polis* citizenry.

Next comes Section IV with three studies that look back onto Seleukid rule or else treat it as the distant or surreal frame of political existence within which Jewish sensitivities are redressed.

In Chapter 11, Germain Payen examines the reception of Seleukid claims to royal authority by the Artaxiad dynasty in Armenia in ‘Le royaume artaxiade dans l’empire séleucide: de dominé à dominant (190–55 a.C.)’. Payen notes that Armenia was always peripheral to the Seleukid world, as it had been for the Achaemenids, in spite of some evidence of Hellenizing influence. But more important was a longstanding preference for freedom from outside imperial control. While it is generally thought that Armenia moved toward independence in the wake of the Peace of Apamea in 188 BCE, Payen contends that there is evidence that first steps were already made shortly before the *anabasis* of Antiochos III, thus adding weight to the observation concerning the preference for autonomous local rule.