



Iconography of Power: the Bearded King on the Coinage of Seleucus II Callinicus

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Abstract

Seleucus II Callinicus was the first Seleucid king (from 246 to 225 BC) who portrayed himself on coins bearded and wearing a diadem. This seems to be due to the wars that were waged in the Seleucid Empire during the reign of this king, including the separation of Parthia and Bactria from the Seleucid Empire, and the invasion of Arsaces. Seleucus II Callinicus embarked on an unsuccessful campaign against the Parni, and after this event he issued coins showing himself with a beard. In fact, such imagery presented the king both as a worshiper who had made vows to the gods - Apollo and Artemis - for his victory, and as a military commander. What is more, it cannot be ruled out that Seleucus also consciously referred to the iconography of the Achaemenid kings, who were always depicted with a beard, thus showing himself to his subjects as the legitimate king of Iran.

Keywords: Seleucid coinage, iconography of power, royal ideology.

Article Type: Research Article

Introduction

Seleucus II Callinicus (246-226 BC) was the fourth king of the Seleucid dynasty. During his reign, the empire was faced with a serious crisis. The war was waged against Egypt from 246 to 241 BC (the Third Syrian War, also known as the Laodicean war) (App. Syr. 11.65; BCHP 11=van der Spek, Finkel 2013; FGrH 160=Bagnall and Derow 2004; Iust. 27.1.9; Jer. In Dan. 11.7-9=Archer 1958; OGIS 54=Bagnall and Derow 2004; Polyæn. Strat. 8.50)¹, and the war with his brother, Antiochus Hierax from 241 to 239 BC (Iust. 27.2.4-12) also weakened the Syrian kingdom. The king's involvement in the west was used by Andragoras, the satrap of Parthia (Iust. 41.4.7; Bickerman 1983: 19; Wolski 1969b; 1975), and Diodotus, the satrap of Bactria (Iust. 41.4.5; Strab. 11.11.1; Wolski 1960; 1969a; 1982), who detached the lands they had ruled from the Seleucid Empire and proclaimed their independence. Several years after the revolt, Andragoras was beaten by

the Parni under the leadership of Arsaces (247-217 BC) (Iust. 41.4.7; Trog. Prol. 41; Strab. 11.9.2). In 232-231 BC Seleucus II made a failed attempt to re-establish his power over the lost Iranian provinces (Dąbrowa 2012: 168; Lerner 1999: 33-36; Olbrycht 1998: 62-66; Will 1979: 278-281; Wolski 1996: 51-67; 1999: 59-62). His reign can be considered as the beginning of the disintegration of the Seleucid Empire, which was unable to control secessionist tendencies and effectively prevent the invasion of the Parni (Wolski 1999: 43).

The most popular images on the coins of Seleucus II included the king's head with a clean-shaven face and with a diadem which was depicted on the obverse; the reverse showed Apollo holding an arrow in his right hand, with his left elbow resting on a tripod or holding a bow (Erickson 2009:

¹ For the course of the war, see Hub 2001: 338-354; Grainger 2010: 153-170; Piejko 1990: 13-27.



167-168; Houghton and Lorber 2002: cat. no. 656, 671, 701, 703, 781-784, 786, 809) (Figure. 1). This manner of depicting Foibos was a break with the traditional Seleucid imagery of Apollo seated on the omphalos as this reverse motif used to be dominant on the Seleucid coinage (Erickson 2009: 168; Houghton and Lorber 2002: cat. no. 750; Mørkholm 1991: 113-114). Apart from Apollo, other deities appeared on Seleucus' coins, such as Athena, Nike, Poseidon, and Heracles (Erickson 2009: 171-175, 177).



Figure. 1: The silver tetradrachm of Seleucus II Callinicus from Antioch. Obverse: Diademed head of Seleucus II; Reverse: Apollo standing holding an arrow in his right hand and resting his left elbow on a tripod, ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΣΕΛΕΥΚΟΥ.

(After: <http://numismatics.org/collection/1944.100.75086?lang=en>).

Around 228-226 BC Seleucus began to issue coins whose obverses featured the bearded head of a king in a diadem facing right, and the various images shown on the reverses were accompanied by the inscription ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΣΕΛΕΥΚΟΥ. On the coinage of Seleucus II, two types of images of the bearded king can be distinguished; one with a short beard and one with a pointed beard. These images do not seem to be linked to specific reverse types.

The coins showing the head of the bearded Seleucus II on the obverse from the mint of Nisibis (silver tetradrachms [Houghton and Lorber 2002: 271-272, cat. no. 749-750; Iossif and Lorber 2009: Figure. 3; Newell 1941: 61, cat. no. 818-823, Pl. VIII, 1-7, and Figure. 2], silver obols [Houghton and Lorber 2002: 271-272, cat. no. 752; Newell 1941: 62, cat. no. 824, Pl. VIII, 8]), Susa (silver tetradrachms [Houghton and Lorber 2002: 279, cat. no. 788; Newell 1938: 135-136, cat. 364, 367, Pl. XXVII, 13, XXVIII, 3]) and an unknown mint in the western part of the empire (silver tetradrachms

[Houghton and Lorber 2002: 267, cat. no. 735A]) bear on their reverses the image of a standing Apollo holding an arrow in his right hand and resting his left elbow on a tripod. An identical image of the king can be seen on the obverse of bronze coins from Nisibis (Houghton and Lorber 2002: 273, cat. no. 759; Newell 1941: 62, cat. no. 825, Pl. VIII, 9) and Susa (Houghton and Lorber 2002: 281, cat. no. 795; Newell 1938: 136, cat. no. 370, Pl. XXVIII, 5; Wright 2013) (Figure. 3), which featured the goddess Nike holding a wreath and a palm leaf on the reverse. The reverse of another bronze coin of the same type, minted in Susa, shows the image of Artemis standing and holding a bow and pulling out an arrow from a quiver, with an animal at the foot of the goddess (Houghton and Lorber 2002: 281, cat. no. 796, Newell 1938: 136, cat. no. 372, Pl. XXVIII, 7). The head of Seleukos II with a longer, pointed beard is shown on the obverse of silver tetradrachms and drachmas struck in an unknown mint on the coast of Cilicia, probably in Tarsus (Newell 1941: 227-229), with the reverse depicting a standing Apollo holding an arrow in his right hand and resting his left elbow against a tripod (Houghton and Lorber 2002: 252, cat. no. 685-686; Iossif and Lorber 2009: Figure. 10, Newell 1941: 227, cat. no. 1321-1322, Pl. L, 8-9). This image is also shown on the obverse of bronze coins from Ecbatana with a bow in a bowcase-quiver set shown on the reverse (Houghton, Lorber 2002: 286, cat. no. 822-824; Newell 1938: 208-209, cat. no. 563, Pl. XLI, 8) (Figure. 4), and those from Antiochia with the image of Pegasus depicted on the reverse (Houghton and Lorber 2002: 260, cat. no. 711-712) (Figure. 5). Another bronze coin from Susa features the portrait of Seleucus II wearing the kausia and having a pointed beard on the obverse, and the goddess Nike in a biga accompanied by the legend ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΣΕΛΕΥΚΟΥ on the reverse (Houghton and Lorber 2002: 281, cat. no. 797-798). In spite of the lack of a diadem, this coin's imagery seems to

All coins showing a bearded Seleucus II were minted in ca. 228-226 BC, thus after the king's expedition against the Parni. Some of the reverse images depicted on them such as the goddess Nike with a wreath and a palm leaf or a bow in a bowcase-quiver set seem to refer directly to this event (Lerner 1999, 37). In the past, they were wrongly associated



Figure 2: The silver tetradrachm of Seleucus II Callinicus from Nisibis. Obverse: Diademed head of Seleucus II with short beard; Reverse: Apollo standing, holding an arrow in his right hand and resting his left elbow on a tripod, ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΣΕΛΕΥΚΟΥ.

(After: http://www.wildwinds.com/coins/greece/seleucia/seleukos_II/SC_749@1.jpg).



Figure 3: The bronze coin of Seleucus II Callinicus from Susa. Obverse: Diademed head of Seleucus II with short beard; Reverse: Nike holding a wreath and a palm leaf, ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΣΕΛΕΥΚΟΥ.

(After: <http://numismatics.org/collection/1944.100.73382?lang=en>).



Figure 4: The bronze coin of Seleucus II Callinicus from Ecbatana. Obverse: Diademed head of Seleucus II with long beard; Reverse: The reflex bow in a bowcase-quiver, ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΣΕΛΕΥΚΟΥ.

(After: <http://numismatics.org/collection/0000.999.35586>).

with the alleged imprisonment of Seleucus II, who was supposed to have been captured by the Parni (Linfred 1976: 196). However, this event is not confirmed by the sources and results from the confusion of this king with another Seleucid ruler, Demetrius II (145-139 BC) (Iossif and Lorber 2009: 90).



Figure 5: The bronze coin of Seleucus II Callinicus from Antioch. Obverse: Diademed head of Seleucus II with long beard; Reverse: Pegasus, ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΣΕΛΕΥΚΟΥ.

(After: http://www.wildwinds.com/coins/greece/seleucia/seleukos_II/Newell_1167.jpg).

The image of the bearded ruler was a novelty on Seleucid coinage, and there are no analogical iconographical motifs on the coins issued by the kings preceding Seleucus II (Iossif and Lorber 2009: 91, 94-95; Mørkholm 1991: 114. Wright 2013: 22). This formed a break with the previous way of representing the ruler as a clean shaven man which was common in the Hellenistic world¹. On the Seleucid coins only gods had previously been depicted with beards², mainly Zeus³. Attempts have been made to associate

¹ Hellenistic rulers were inspired by Alexander the Great, who was always depicted without a beard, as opposed to his father, Philip II, and other Argead kings (Stewart 1993: 75). This was a departure from the tradition of depicting not only kings but also adults with beards which was common in ancient Macedonia and Greece. In conjunction with the longer hair, known from multiple depictions of the great conqueror, the lack of a beard is interpreted as a symbol of the heroization of Alexander, but it also indicates his young age (Iossif and Lorber 2009: 86-89; Troncoso 2010).

² A bronze coin, dated to the times of Seleucus II, featuring Poseidon's head with a beard and seaweed wreath on the obverse and the goddess Nike driving a quadriga and the legend ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΣΕΛΕΥΚΟΥ on the reverse comes from an unknown mint in the western part of the Seleucid Empire (Houghton and Lorber 2002: 268, cat. no. 738).

³ Images of Zeus were used on Seleucid coinage from the times of Seleucus I Nicator, with Zeus Aetophoros (Zeus carrying an eagle) being the earliest appearance. Coins depicting this image were imitations of Alexander the Great's issues. After the battle of Ipsus c. 301 BC, a new motif called Zeus Nikephoros (Zeus carrying Nike) was introduced. The latest coin type with the image of Zeus, struck in the times of Seleucus I, showed the head of the god with a laurel wreath (Erickson 2009: 57-63; Houghton and Lorber 2002: 8; Wright 2009: 193; Wójcikowski 2017). From the reign of Antiochus I Soter, it was Apollo who was featured on Seleucid coins most often, but representations of Zeus were still depicted. This should be associated with the changes that took place in the dynastic cult of the Seleucids. During Seleucus' reign, Zeus was the most important god and the patron saint of the dynasty. From the time of Antioch, this role was clearly performed by Apollo, which was reflected in the coinage.

the images of the bearded man shown on the coins issued by Seleucus II with the latter (Dodd 2009). Zeus, however, was never depicted with a diadem, let alone the kausia, but always with a laurel wreath, which makes it possible to reject this association and unequivocally interpret the image of the bearded man as the portrait of Seleucus II.

The idea that the new coin image reflected the actual appearance of the king at the moment of issuing his coins seems to be the most reasonable and convincing assumption. The king had supposedly grown a beard during the expedition against Arsaces I. Thus, the two types of royal beard shown on the coins could reflect two phases of its growth from a shorter to a longer, pointy one. The coin images with a beard were preceded by the images of the king with shorter and longer sideburns, which could indicate that Seleucus II had already had some form of a beard, and growing a beard could have resulted from the hardships he experienced during the expedition against the invaders.

Representing rulers with a beard is sometimes a reflection of their status as military commanders. It is not improbable that coins having such obverse types were issued as payment for soldiers taking part in the fight. The appearance of the so-called campaign beard is also interpreted as a vow to the gods to ensure success in a specific war (Iossif and Lorber 2009: 91). In the case of Seleucus II, the coin issues showing the king with a beard were undoubtedly connected with his expedition against Arsaces, which fits in perfectly with the above interpretations of the meaning of the beard. The military context of those issues is emphasized by reverse images such as Apollo with an arrow, the goddess Nike, Artemis with a bow (the bow in a bowcase-quiver set, associated with the weapon used by the Parni (Newell 1938: 202), or Pegasus, which should probably be considered as a reference to the cavalry (Ericsson 2009: 177). Taking the presence of the representations of gods on the coins into account, it is probable that Seleucus II's beard could also symbolize the vows he made to the gods for the success of his expedition against the Parni (Iossif and Lorber 2009: 108-109).

Coins bearing the motif of a bearded male head were first struck not by Seleucus but by Andragoras. The obverses of the golden staters featured the diademed head of a rebellious satrap with a beard. The reverse depicted the goddess Nike driving a quadriga, as well as a warrior behind her, accompanied by the legend ΑΝΔΡΑΓΟΡΟΥ (Mørkholm 1991: 119-120). While having identical reverse images, some coins bear the legend in Aramaic, which reads WHŠW or WHŠWWR, and which refers to Vaxšu, the Iranian deity of the Oxus River (Lerner 1999: 24-25). In the case of Andragoras, the beard shown on his coins was interpreted as a reference to his old age (Wolski 1999: 46).

A comparison between Andragoras' coins and those of Diodotus, who rebelled at about the same time¹, leads to interesting conclusions. The obverse of the coins issued by the satrap of Bactria, struck after an open rebellion against the Seleucids, shows the diademed head of a clean-shaven Diodotus, and the reverse features the image of Zeus standing and hurling a thunderbolt, accompanied by the legend ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΔΙΟΔΟΤΟΥ (SNG 9 Pl. 5-6). In contrast to the Parthian dynast, the self-appointed king of Bactria, presenting himself without a beard, continued the Seleucid tradition. It proves that the differences in the manner of presenting both satraps had a deeper basis and one should not connect the presence or lack of a beard only with a faithful rendering of their appearance (Hekster and Fowler 2005: 17).

The coins of Seleucus II, showing the king with a beard, present clear analogies to the coinage of Andragoras as both rulers are presented in a similar way. Another similarity concerns the image of the goddess Nike driving a chariot which is depicted on some coin issues of Seleucus. It seems unlikely that the coins of Andragoras were a direct model for

¹ Diodotus rebelled around 250 BC, after Andragoras. The satrap of Bactria showed separatist tendencies much earlier, during the reign of Antioch II Theos, which is indicated by the coins of Diodotus bearing his portrait on the obverse, and a legend that reads ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΝΤΙΟΧΟΥ (Kalita 1999: 52; Mørkholm 1991: 120-121).

the coins of the Seleucid king, for whom he was only a rebellious satrap. Moreover, at the time of issuing the coins showing the king with a beard, the Parthian dynast was already dead. Thus, there was no reason why Seleucus should refer to the coinage of a dead, rebellious satrap when striking his own coins. Rather, it was Andragoras, who, in order to present his rule in Parthia as legitimate, should refer to the Seleucid coin types.

Most of the coins of Seleucus II depicting the king with a beard come from the mints of Nisibis, Susa and Ecbatana. This area was a natural base for Seleucus during his campaign against the Parni¹, which seems to confirm the thesis that the coins depicting the king in this way are connected with this event. The presence of the bearded ruler's head with a diadem on Andragoras' coins clearly suggests that the iconographical motif itself could have had a wider meaning. The diadem as a royal insignium was introduced by Alexander the Great (Olbrycht 1997: 39-40; 2011: 16-17; 2014: 40-43; Ritter 1987: 298-299; Strootman 2007: 366-368) and widely adopted by Hellenistic rulers (Haake 2012; Kakavas 2016: 73-76; Wright 2010: 43). Its origins are to be found, however, in Achaemenid Iran, where it was one of the symbols of the royal power and authority of the Persian Great Kings (Alföldi 1985: 106-108; Olbrycht 1997; 2004: 283-287, 290-293; Strootman 2007: 369; Wright 2010: 77-78), who were always depicted with beards².

Hence, it may be assumed that both Andragoras and Seleucus II referred to Achaemenid traditions and iconography on their coins. The presence of a legend in Aramaic³, the lingua franca of the Achaemenid Empire (Bea 2004; Dandamayev 1999: 55; Gzella 2015: 158-159; Rosenthal, Greenfield and Shaked 1986), on some of Andragoras' coins seems to be an obvious gesture towards the Iranians and a clear reference to the period before the establishment of Seleucid rule in Iran. The existence of the continuity of Achaemenid traditions is proven by Arsacid coinage. Initially, the obverses featured the images of the rulers' heads, clean-shaven, wearing a satrapal tiara and a diadem, while the reverse showed a man sitting on a diphros, dressed

in an Iranian outfit and holding a bow⁴, which obviously referred to Seleucid issues (Iossif 2011: 273), as well as Achaemenid satrapal coinage from IV BC⁵. In the times of Mithratades I (c. 171-138 BC), who through his conquests turned the Arsacid kingdom into an oriental empire⁶, the king's head with a diadem and with a beard appeared (Curtis 2012: 69, Pl. I: 3; Dąbrowa 2010: 127) on coins⁷, and this is considered to be a direct reference to the Achaemenids (Dąbrowa 2010: 130; 2012: 179).

When considering Seleucus II's conscious use of Achaemenid iconographic schemes in order to depict the ruler on his coins, it is worth noting that Babylonian sources from the Hellenistic period clearly indicate that the Seleucids wanted to present themselves as legitimate rulers, ruling in accordance

¹ Nisibis was located between Antioch and Ecbatana. In the time of Seleucus I, or shortly after his death, a Macedonian military colony was established there. Until the time of Seleucus II, it did not play a significant role. The growing importance of the city during the reign of this ruler, which is indicated by the existence of the active mint, is connected with his expedition against the Parni (Newell 1941: 63).

² In this way Achaemenid kings were represented on coins, seals, reliefs and sculpture. See Garrison 2011; 2013; Lushey 1983; Moorey 1978; Root 1979; Yoyotte, 2010.

³ Greek was the official language of the Seleucid Empire. The administration also used other languages, including Aramaic, which was clearly associated with the multi-ethnic character of the empire. Never, however, were the inscriptions on coins struck by the Seleucids in Aramaic (Venetis 2012: 155).

⁴ For the discussion on the meaning of the archer motif on coins, see Lerner 2017.

⁵ The image of the head with a satrapal tiara on the obverse resembles images known from the coins of Tissaphernes and Autophrades, who were satraps ruling in the fourth century BC, while the reverse bearing the image of the seated male Figure in Iranian costume holding a bow resembles Tarkumawa's (Datames') satrapal issues (Bodzek 2011: 97, Pl. VII, 3; Curtis 2007: 416-417, Figure. 3-6; 2012: 68, Pl. I: 1; Erickson and Wright 2011: 166; Wright 2010: 79, Figure. 49).

⁶ Mithratades I conquered central and eastern Iran, and in the west he extended his lands to include Media, Babylonia and Elymais (Bivar 1983: 33-35; Dąbrowa 1999; 2005; 2012: 169-170; Olbrycht 2010: 166, 168; Wolski 1996: 99-102).

⁷ Mithratades I's coins bear various types of royal portraits, including those referring to the earliest Arsacid issues (Curtis 2012: 69, Pl. I: 2).

with local traditions¹. There is no reason to believe that they would act differently in the case of Iran, which constituted the largest part of their empire². Most of the extant coins of this type come from Nisibis, Susa, and Ecbatana - the mints located in the Upper Satrapies, which were the core of the Achaemenid Empire (Wolski 1999: 25). This can hardly be considered a coincidence.

New coin issues of Seleucus II referring to the iconography of Achaemenid kings could have been part of a broader policy aimed at restoring the authority of the Seleucids, clearly weakened in the eastern part of the empire, resulting in the successful revolts of Andragoras and Diodotus, and the invasion of Arsaces. Although Seleucus organized the eastern campaign in 232-231 BC, he was unable to restore his power over the lost provinces. It is noteworthy that after the barbarians invaded the Upper Satrapies (Plin. N.H. 6.47-49, 167; Strab. 11.10.2)³, Antiochus I Soter (281-261 BC) not only drove away the invaders, but also undertook a military expedition to Central Asia (Plin. N.H. 2. 167; 4.49)⁴, which was an obvious demonstration of the empire's power. Seleucus II limited himself to defensive actions, which in fact ended in failure. Moreover, by entering into an alliance with Diodotus (Iust. 41.4.8), *de iure* satrap, against Arsaces he *de facto* recognized Diodotus as an independent ruler (Wolski 1999: 60). This could not have left the position of Seleucus II in Iran unaffected.

¹ The Seleucids in Babylon used local titular, referring to the Neo-Babylonian times, i.e. before Persian rule, and their rule was associated with respect for local traditions. This policy ensured the support of the local population and peace in the state (Anagnostou-Laoutides 2012: 9-10; 2017: 149-150; Grainger 2014a: 28-31; Holloway 2002: 226; Sherwin-White and Kuhrt 1993: 37-39).

² For the economic potential of Iran under the Seleucids, see Aperghis 2004: 40-44.

³ An invasion of nomads from the north, most likely the Massagetae or the Dahae (Wolski 1996: 36), took place at the end of Seleucus I's life or just after his death (Olbrycht 1998: 42-43; Sherwin-White and Kuhrt 1993: 19; Turn 1938: 117; Wolski 1996: 35-36, note 21; 1999: 27).

⁴ It cannot be ruled out that the military actions of Antiochus I in Central Asia were undertaken with the aim to expand the empire and attach new territories to it. See Sherwin-White and Kuhrt 1993: 19; Wolski 1996: 37-38, note 23).

Maintaining such a large territory as the Iranian provinces (with the continued wars in the western part of the empire that had been waged since the reign of Seleucus I Nicator), required the Seleucids to win and maintain the loyalty of the Iranian aristocracy. In the absence of major structural reforms, the Iranian aristocracy still had enormous economic and military potential (Kreissing 1978; Venetis 2012: 157; Wolski 1999: 25-26). As for the Seleucid policy towards the Iranians, it is noteworthy that owing to Seleucus I Nicator's marriage to Apama, a Sogdian princess⁵, his newly established dynasty was of a mixed, Macedonian-Iranian origin. Antiochus I, the son and successor of Seleucus, was of mixed Macedonian and Iranian descent⁶, which perfectly reflected the multicultural character of the empire. It was also reflected in the royal ideology of the Seleucids, which was based on both Macedonian⁷ elements and Iranian

⁵ Seleucus married Apama in 324 BC at Susa at the great marriage ceremony in which Alexander the Great and the Macedonian Companions married aristocratic Iranian women, celebrated in the Persian style (Arr. An. 7.4.4-8; 7.6.2; Diod. 17.107.6; Iust. 12.10.9-10; Plut. Alex. 70.3; Demetr. 31.3-4). The marriage with Apama undoubtedly helped Seleucus I during his expedition to the east and the conquest of the Iranian provinces (Grainger 2014a: 13-14; 2014b: 12; Olbrycht 2013: 169-171). However, it is difficult to agree with E. Venetis, who claims that: "Seleucus married Apame probably as a sign of political unity between the two cultures, the Iranian and the Greek, aiming to legitimize his rule" (Venetis 2012: 153-154). Indeed, at the time of his wedding, when Alexander was still alive, nothing foretold Seleucus' future successes, or that the Iranian provinces up to Bactria would be under his rule.

⁶ Before becoming a king, Antiochus I acted as a co-regent administering the Upper Satrapies, and must have been well received by the Iranian elite (Wolski 1996: 33-34; 1999: 25). Antiochus was born and brought up in Asia (Wright 2010: 42). His mother was Iranian and hence it cannot be ruled out that he knew the Iranian language.

⁷ "Still, the Seleukids and Ptolemies were Macedonian kings, too. They had Macedonian personal names which led their ancestry directly back to pre-Hellenistic Macedonia. Macedonian culture prevailed, too, in the kings' appearance; the king normally wore Macedonian clothing and armour. Indigenous Egyptian, Babylonian, or Iranian attire was only assumed during specific ceremonial occasions before indigenous audiences...Also vis-à-vis non-Macedonian subject peoples kings often presented themselves as Macedonians" (Strootman 2007: 103).

traditions¹This undoubtedly had an impact on the way the Iranians treated the Seleucids and may explain the peacefulness reigning in the Upper Satrapies, which enabled the first Seleucid kings, having the support of the Iranian elites, to engage significant military forces in the west.

Andragoras and Diodotus broke away from the Seleucid Empire which undoubtedly happened with the powerful support of a local population, who was constantly threatened by invasions of the Iranian-speaking tribes from the north. When the king was far away, engaged in fighting in the west, the people naturally saw the satraps as their defenders, which intensified separatist tendencies and damaged the loyalty not only to Seleucus II, but also to the whole dynasty. These new tendencies posed a huge threat to Seleucid authority and prestige in Iran. Seleucus II Callinicus must have been aware of this problem. The obverse of his coins depicted him with the diadem, one of the symbols of the royal power of Iranian kings, and with a beard, with which the Achaemenids were invariably depicted. Such coin types undoubtedly presented him as the legitimate ruler of Iran². Referring to the Achaemenid iconography, Seleucus may have also referred to his Iranian ancestry, reminding the Iranians that he was not only a legitimate king, but also a king with Iranian blood in his veins, unlike Andragoras and

Diodotus, who were merely rebels and usurpers, or Arsaces, a foreign invader from the north.

Apollo holding an arrow on the reverse represented the patron saint of the Seleucid dynasty³. The arrow referred to the bow, one of the attributes of Apollo (Iossif 2011: 230-231). It cannot be ruled out that this attribute was adopted from the Eastern iconographic tradition (Graf 2009: 112). This weapon could symbolize a military victory (Iossif 2011: 267-267), but in the Middle East it was also treated as a symbol of royal power (Iossif 2011: 252; Wilkinson 1991). In Achaemenid Iran, the bow was one of the attributes of Persian kings who were often portrayed with a bow⁴. The coins issued by the Achaemenids always depicted the king as an archer (Bodzek 2011: 50-70, Pl. I 8-17; Erickson and Wright 2011: 163, Pl. I, 3-4; Garrison 2011: 50-51, Figure. 29; Gitler 2011: 108; Godard 1962: Pl. 76; Iossif 2011: 255-256; Root 1979: 116-118). The motif of Apollo as an archer on the Seleucid coinage clearly draws on Persian patterns⁵. The Greek god was identified with the Iranian Mithra (Venetis 2012: 158; Wright 2010: 77), who also used the bow as a weapon (Yt 10.102), although due to the lack

¹ Engels 2017; Strootman 2007: 18-19; Venetis 2012: 153-154.

²Essentially, it is believed that the imperial model was chosen by the Seleucids. This was natural given that the state created by Seleucus I was largely based on the territorial structure created by the great Argead (Eckhardt 2015: 271-271; Tuplin 2009: 121). On the other hand, the attitude of the first Seleucid king and his successors to Alexander III was neither unambiguous nor absolutely positive (Wolski 1999: 25, 28-29, note 4). At the beginning of the third century BC, the Seleucids tried to present Apama as the daughter of Alexander the Great and Roxana, who was supposedly the illegitimate daughter of Darius III (Tarn 1929, 138). This would clearly indicate that the Seleucids tried to present themselves as legitimate successors to both the Argeads and the Achaemenids, referring to the East Iranian ancestry of Apama at the same time (Wójcikowski 2017: 64). The Babylonian sources clearly show that the Seleucids tried to establish links with the local dynasties. In the case of Iran, given Babylon as an example, it would be natural to refer to the Achaemenids. It is possible that they used the Iranian royal title (xšayatiya) (Olbrycht 2013: 171) in Iran. However, this theory cannot be more than pure a speculation due to the lack of sources.

³The ancient authors (App. Syr. 56; Diod. 19.90.3-4; Iust. 15.4.3) clearly associate Seleucus I, the founder of the dynasty and empire, with Apollo. Epigraphic sources from his reign and his coinage, where Apollo was often depicted, clearly indicate the strong ties between the first Seleucid king and this deity (Iossif 2011: 234-238). For the issue of Apollo as the patron saint of the Seleucids, see Erickson 2009: 37-41; Hoover 1996: 88; Parker 2017: 219; Mørkholm 1991: 113; Wright 2010: 59.

⁴The bas-reliefs (Behistun, the palaces at Persepolis and Pasargadae) often depicted Achaemenid Great Kings holding a bow, with its lower limb placed by their feet. Such a way of representing the bow clearly indicated that its meaning went beyond the military context and it was clearly connected with royal power (Kleiss and Calmeyer, 1975: 81-98; Garrison 2010; Luschey 1968; Root 1979: 59-61, 73-76, 182-198, pl. 12-14; 1989; Sarre and Herzfeld 1910: 57-66; Schmidt 1970: 80-90, 108-118, pl. 18-39; Trümpelmann 1967).

⁵Apollo seated on the omphalos and holding the bow, the most popular iconographic motif on the Seleucid coinage (Erickson and Wright 2012: 163; Hoover 1996: 92; Mørkholm 1991: 113-114; Wright 2010: 60-62), refers directly to the coins of Tarkumuwa, the Achaemenid satrap of Cilicia (Erickson and Wright 2011: 164; Wright 2010: 81-82). For the discussion on the origin and meaning of the motif of Apollo holding the bow on Seleucid coins, see Erickson and Wright 2011; Iossif 2011.

of sources it is difficult to state whether it was his typical attribute (Grenet 2006). The reverse of the bronze coins of Seleucus II from Ecbatana bear the image of a bow in a bowcase-quiver set. This not only referred to military expeditions, but also to Apollo, since the bow was his attribute; it was, at the same time, the symbol of royal power. Most importantly, these meanings and associations were not mutually exclusive. A bow in an identical bowcase can also be seen on bronze coins of Antiochus I from Mint 24 (Drangiana, or Eastern Arachosia)¹. It was not, therefore, a new motif as far as Seleucid coinage is concerned.

The reverse of another bronze coin minted at Susa, which was also the capital of the Achaemenid Empire, features a representation of the goddess Artemis with a bow, pulling an arrow out of the quiver. This image, which is difficult to interpret in the absence of an analogy on earlier Seleucid coins, acquires a clear meaning when it is interpreted as an *interpretatio iranica* of the Greek goddess. The bow and arrow are a clear reference to the attributes of the Achaemenid kings. The Greeks identified Artemis with Anahita (Iossif and Lorber 2009: 109), who was one of the three most important deities of the Iranian pantheon. Interestingly, another bronze coin with the portrait of a bearded Seleucus II wearing the *kausia* on the obverse and the goddess Nike driving a biga on the reverse comes from the same mint. The *kausia* was worn by Macedonian commanders belonging to the higher aristocracy, who formed a unit of royal *philoi*. It was also worn by kings whose costume was essentially identical to that of the *philoi*. *Kausia*, however, cannot be treated as the same symbol of royal power as the diadem and it did not belong to the official royal iconography of the Seleucids. Although the *kausia* is present on the Greco-Bactrian coinage as the headgear of kings (Kalita 1997: 16-17), it is usually interpreted as a reference to their descent rather than as a symbol of power (Strootman 2007: 164-

166, 360-363). By engraving his portrait with the *kausia* on coins, Seleucus II perhaps emphasized his Macedonian ancestry and his ties with the western part of the empire. The representation of the goddess Nike featured on the coins seems to clearly present the king as the victor, which is also connected with the symbolism of the *kausia* as the headdress of Macedonian military commanders.

The image of a driving goddess can be found on other Seleucid coins. The head of Zeus is seen on the obverse of the tetradrachms of Seleucus I from Babylon and the reverse of those coins bears the image of Athena brandishing a shield and spears, driving a quadriga drawn by four horned elephants, and accompanied by a legend that reads ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΣΕΛΕΥΚΟΥ. This issue refers to the coins of Philip II featuring the head of Zeus on the obverse (Mørkholm 1991: 71). The motif of a goddess driving a quadriga or biga has parallels on the Argead and Seleucid coinage. Xenophon mentions three empty chariots drawn by horses in the procession of Cyrus II (Xen. Cyr. 8.3.12). The first one was to be dedicated to Zeus or Ahura Mazda, the second one to Helios or Mithra. The Greek historian does not mention the name of the deity symbolized by the third empty chariot. Herodotus (Hdt. 7.40.4) and Curtius Rufus (Curt. An. 3.3.11) also wrote about empty chariots accompanying the Achaemenid army, but only Ahura Mazda is mentioned by the sources with reference to that fact. According to contemporary scholars, the third chariot was to symbolize the King of Kings (Briant 2002: 224) or the goddess Anahita (Finer 2003: 293). In the case of Seleucus I's issue, it seems reasonable to interpret the image of Athena driving a quadriga as referring to Iranian Anahita, just as the goddess Nike on Seleucus II's coins does. Significantly, a bronze coin depicting Artemis, carrying a bow and arrow, comes from the same mint at Susa, which seems to indicate Iranian connotations. Both Greek goddesses, Nike and Artemis, can be identified with Iranian Anahita.

¹The coins were issued in 294-281 BC, i.e. in the period when Antiochus I acted as a co-regent with his father Seleucus I. The obverse features the head of the young Heracles in the lion's scalp, while the reverse shows the bow in a bowcase-quiver set with a legend that reads ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΝΤΙΟΧΟΥ (Houghton and Lorber 2002: 94, cat. no. 243).

The aforementioned depictions on the reverses, including Apollo with an arrow, Artemis with an arrow, quiver and bow, Nike holding a wreath and a leaf or driving a biga, and the bow in the bowcase-

quiver, clearly refer to Seleucus II's eastern expedition against Arsaces, presenting the king as the winner of this conflict. On the other hand, though, in the context of Iranian monarchic culture and ideology, these images are associated with the idea of royalty due to the depictions of attributes such as a bow and arrow, and the depiction of the goddess driving the chariot indicates divine support for Seleucus royal power and authority.

The preceding analysis has made it clear that the significance of Seleucus II's coinage should be seen in a new light. His diadem, as well as his beard, indicated that he was the legitimate ruler of Iran. His royal status was also emphasized by the image of Apollo with an arrow, which within the context of the Achaemenid iconography could represent the king himself. Artemis with an arrow, as well as Nike driving a quadriga or biga, referred to the goddess Anahita. The cult of this goddess was very popular in the Hellenistic period. Depicting Pegasus could emphasize the significance of the cavalry as an elite formation in the army of Seleucus II, or refer directly to Arsaces' cavalry units. The proposed interpretation is not in contradiction to the interpretation of a beard featuring on the issues of Seleucus II as a symbol of his military command in the campaign against the Parni, or as a symbol of a vow made to the gods for victory, but should be understood as an *interpretatio iranica* of the images. Showing the images of gods and symbols on coins was a typical feature of Hellenistic coinage, and these images could be interpreted with consideration not only to the Greek context, but also the to religion and culture of the non-Greek inhabitants of the empire, as well as religious syncretism, which characterized the Hellenistic period (Wright 2009).

The introduction of the issues of Seleucus II with the obverses depicting the king's diademed head with a beard should be linked to the crisis of the empire and, above all, the rebellions of Andragoras and Diodotus, and the invasion of Arsaces, which led to the establishment of kingdoms in Iran that were independent from the Seleucids. Despite the efforts undertaken by Seleucus II, he was unable to restore his power over the rebellious provinces or effectively repel the invading Parni. The Seleucid

king undoubtedly sought to diminish the scale of his defeat by employing propaganda techniques and striking the above mentioned coins with a new image of the king on the obverses could be one such technique.

By presenting himself with a beard, Seleucus II presented himself as a commander and worshiper who made vows to the gods for victorious battles, as is indicated by the images of gods and goddesses on the reverses, depicted with an arrow and a bow (Apollo, Artemis), a laurel wreath, or in a biga (Nike), as well as the image of the bow alone, in a bowcase. Pegasus referred to cavalry units that constituted an important component of both Seleucus' and Arsaces' armies. On the other hand, Seleucus with a beard and diadem drew on the patterns of representing the Iranian ruler, that were used by Andragoras on his coinage. Although the Parthian dynast referred to the Achaemenid period, i.e. before Seleucid rule, and the legend in Aramaic emphasized this reference, Seleucus' main intention was to present himself as the legitimate king of Iran. The arrow and the bow, often depicted on the reverses as the weapon of Apollo and Artemis, were the symbols of power and authority of the Achaemenids. Moreover, in the Iranian context Nike driving the chariot can be identified with the goddess Anahita and interpreted as a sign of divine support for Seleucid's authority.

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