



**Syria**  
Archéologie, art et histoire

**87 | 2010**  
**Varia**

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### Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/syria/669>

DOI: 10.4000/syria.669

ISSN: 2076-8435

### Publisher

IFPO - Institut français du Proche-Orient

### Printed version

Date of publication: 1 November 2010

Number of pages: 147-164

ISBN: 9782351591697

ISSN: 0039-7946

### Electronic reference

Panagiotis P. Iossif and Catharine C. Lorber, « The elephantarches bronze of Seleucos I Nikator », *Syria* [Online], 87 | 2010, Online since 01 July 2016, connection on 16 March 2020. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/syria/669> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/syria.669>

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## THE ELEPHANTARCHES BRONZE OF SELEUCOS I NIKATOR <sup>1</sup>

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**Résumé** – Un nouvel exemplaire de la monnaie en bronze de Séleucos I<sup>er</sup> Nicatôr portant les types d'un homme assis/tête d'éléphant cornu (SC 25) révèle d'importants détails qui permettent l'identification de la figure du droit en tant que Dionysos dans son rôle de patron des éléphants de guerre indiens. Les éléphants sont un motif prédominant dans le monnayage de Séleucos I<sup>er</sup> : ils symbolisent la royauté nouvellement acquise et la victoire fondatrice de celle-ci. Le dieu est représenté sur une importante émission en argent de Suse, qui commémore la victoire remportée par Séleucos I<sup>er</sup> à Ipsos. Les monnaies de bronze aux types Dionysos/tête d'éléphant cornu peuvent célébrer la même victoire ou, très probablement, celle remportée par le fondateur de la dynastie séleucide à Couropédion. Bien que Dionysos fut un dieu royal sous le règne de Séleucos I<sup>er</sup>, il disparaît mystérieusement du monnayage de ses successeurs jusqu'au règne de Séleucos IV. Néanmoins, les portraits cornus de Séleucos II et Antiochos III pourraient assimiler ces rois à Dionysos.

**Abstract** – A new specimen of Seleucos Nikator's bronze coin with the types seated figure/horned elephant head (SC 25) reveals details that identify the obverse type as Dionysos in his aspect as patron of Indian war elephants. Elephants are prominent on the coinage of Seleucos, where they serve as symbols of kingship and victory. Dionysos is represented on an important silver coinage of Susa that celebrates Seleucos' victory at Ipsos. The Dionysos/horned elephant head bronzes may celebrate the same victory, or possibly that at Korupedion. Though a royal god under Seleucos, Dionysos mysteriously disappeared from the coinage of his successors until the reign of Seleucos IV. However the horned portraits of Seleucos II and Antiochos III may assimilate these kings to Dionysos.

**خلاصة** – نموذج جديد لقطعة نقد برونزية لسيلوكوس الأول النيكاتوري، حيث يظهر بشكل رجل جالس/فيل ذو رأس مقرن (SC 25)، تفاصيل مهمة تسمح بالتحقق من صورة ديونيزوس، على وجه العملة، بصفته سيد لفيلة الحرب الهندية. إن الفيلة هي النموذج الأكثر ظهوراً في نقد سيلوكوس الأول، فهي ترمز إلى الملكية المكتسبة حديثاً والانتصار المؤسس لها. الإله يتمثل على إصدار فضي مهم من سوسا والتي تخلد النصر الذي حققه سيلوكوس الأول في إيبسوس. يمكن أن النقد البرونزي الذي يحمل نقش ديونيزوس برأس الفيل المقرن أن يمجّد النصر ذاته أو، وعلى الأرجح، الانتصار الذي حققه مؤسس السلالة السلوقية في كوروبيديون. بالرغم من أن ديونيزوس كان الإله الملكي خلال عهد سيلوكوس الأول، إلا أنه اختفى بغموض من مسكوكات خلفائه حتى عهد سيلوكوس الرابع. ولكن الصور المقرنة لسيلوكوس الثاني وأنطيوخوس الثالث على نقودهم يمكن أن تمثلهم بصفة ديونيزوس.

1. The authors thank Petr Veselý for helpful comments on the manuscript. The standard reference for Seleucid coinage is now A. HOUGHTON and C. LORBER, *Seleucid Coins, A Comprehensive Catalogue*. Part 1. *Seleucus I through Antiochus III*, New York/Lancaster/London, 2002, and A. HOUGHTON, C. LORBER, and O. D. HOOVER, *Seleucid Coins, A Comprehensive Catalogue*. Part 2. *Seleucus IV through Antiochus XIII*, New York/Lancaster/London, 2008, herein abbreviated SC.

### SELEUCOS I AND THE ELEPHANTARCHES ISSUE: POSING THE PROBLEM

The founder of the Seleucid kingdom, Seleucos I Nikator (312–281 BC), was highly original in his numismatic iconography. Some of his coin types are complex and cannot be fully understood without exegesis. An example from his bronze coinage is a scarce and beautiful issue of about 20 mm diameter, showing on its obverse a seminude male figure seated left on a rock, holding an attribute in his extended right hand and resting his left hand on the rock <sup>2</sup>. The reverse of the coin portrays the head of a horned elephant, facing right. In early publications the obverse type was described as a figure of Apollo holding an arrow in his right hand <sup>3</sup>. The great Hellenistic numismatist E. T. Newell offered a different reading. He argued that the figure could not represent Apollo, because this god did not appear on Seleucid coins until the reign of Antiochos I (281–261 BC) and was always portrayed seated on the omphalos. Two examples of the bronze coin in Berlin showed the attribute to be a pointed object with a hook near the end, which Newell identified as an *ankh* or elephant goad. He suggested that the seated figure might represent “an idealized representation” of Seleucos as *elephantarches* (master of elephants), invoking the reverse type in support of his interpretation. Having assigned this bronze variety to the Antioch mint, near the end of Seleucos’ reign, Newell proposed that it might represent a victory issue celebrating the defeat of Lysimachos at the battle of Korupedion in 281, a victory in which Newell inferred the involvement of Seleucos’ elephant corps <sup>4</sup>.

Newell’s interpretation has always been vulnerable to criticism. When he cited Plutarch, *Dem.* 25.4 as the source of the epithet *elephantarches*, he alleged that the courtiers of Demetrios Poliorketes used the term “half in derision, half out of sheer envy.” <sup>5</sup> But Plutarch states that Demetrios liked to ridicule his rivals, inspiring his companions to make mocking toasts to Seleucos as *elephantarches*, to Ptolemy as high admiral, to Lysimachos as treasurer, and to Agathokles as governor of Sicily. Nothing in the passage suggests admiration or envy, but rather a demotion of rival kings to positions of service rather than sovereignty. Even if Seleucos was aware of his derisive nickname, it is inconceivable that he would have alluded to it on his coinage. It is equally unthinkable that he would have represented himself in the guise of an ordinary elephant handler, a profession far below the rank of king <sup>6</sup>. Seleucos had a different way of advertising his command of elephants, through coin types depicting elephant chariots, single elephants, and elephant heads, as on this very bronze issue. Elephant imagery was, in fact, a major theme of his numismatic iconography, especially in the east (**fig. 1-6**) <sup>7</sup>. The only western examples, apart from the *elephantarches* bronze, are rare tetradrachms from western Asia Minor with an elephant reverse (**fig. 7**); a unique hemiobol doubtfully attributed to Antioch, with elephant head reverse (**fig. 8**); and the only bronze variety of Seleucos attributed to Apameia, with an elephant obverse (**fig. 9**) <sup>8</sup>.

A splendidly preserved new specimen of the *elephantarches* bronze issue, in the collection of Petr Veselý, Czech Republic, reveals two additional details of the type (**fig. 10**). It can now be seen that the male figure is bearded, conclusively eliminating Seleucos (and Apollo) from consideration <sup>9</sup>. In

2. *SC*, p. 22, no. 25; *WSM*, p. 102, no. 929.

3. IMHOOF-BLUMER 1895, p. 18, no. 22; MACDONALD 1905, p. 9, no. 31.

4. *WSM*, p. 102.

5. *WSM*, p. 102.

6. The charge of *elephantarches* remained an important title in the Seleucid military bureaucracy, at least until the middle of the 2nd century BC: Demetrios I named his *elephantarches* Nikanor governor of Judea with the mission to suppress the rebellion of the Maccabees (*II Macc.* 14.12-13).

7. Elephant chariot types were employed only in the east, at Seleukeia on the Tigris (*SC* nos. 130–133, and see *SC* nos. 155–159), at Seleukeia on the Eulaios (Susa) (*SC* nos. 163, 177–180), and in Bactria (*SC* nos. 257, 259–263, 272–283). Eastern coins with elephant types include issues of Seleukeia on the Tigris (*SC* nos. 128–129), Seleukeia on the Eulaios (Susa) (*SC* no. 187), and Bactrian mints (*SC* nos. 264–266). Eastern coins with elephant heads were struck at Seleukeia on the Tigris (*SC* no. 147) and Seleukeia on the Eulaios (Susa) (*SC* nos. 181–182).

8. Tetradrachms: *SC* nos. 1–2. Hemiobol: *SC* no. 14. Bronze: *SC* no. 35.

9. The beard is also partially visible on a specimen offered by Münzen und Medaillen Deutschland 17, 2008, lot 1011.



Figure 1. Head of Zeus/Elephant biga (Tetradrachm, Seleukeia on the Eulaios [Susa]), SC 177.1a.



Figure 2. Head of Athena wearing crested Corinthian helmet/Elephant (AE, Seleukeia on the Tigris, workshop I), SC 128a.



Figure 3. Laureate head of Zeus/Elephant (Silver stater, Seleukeia on the Eulaios [Susa]), SC 187.1a.



Figure 4. Bearded head of Heracles wearing lion skin/Horned and belled elephant (AE, Bactrian mint 19), SC 265.



Figure 5. Head of young Heracles wearing lion skin/Horned elephant head (AE, Seleukeia on the Tigris, workshop II), SC 147.



Figure 6. Head of Athena wearing crested Corinthian helmet/Elephant head (Drachm, Seleukeia on the Eulaios [Susa]), SC 181.



Figure 7. Horse head/Elephant (Tetradrachm, Pergamon), SC 1.2.



Figure 8. Macedonian shield/Elephant head (Silver hemiobol, Antioch), SC 14.



Figure 9. Elephant/Horned horse head (AE, Apameia), SC 35.



Figure 10. Male figure seated on rock/Horned elephant head (AE), SC 25. From Petr Veselý collection, Czech Republic.



Figure 11. Female head (Lamia?) wearing tainia and earring/Heracles seated on rock presenting his quiver, *BMC Thessaly*, p. 22, no. 8, pl. 4, 1.



Figure 12. Medusa/Bull (AE, Seleukeia on the Tigris, workshop II), SC 151.2.

addition, the figure has a cloth wrapped about his head, probably representing a turban. These new details deepen the mystery of the type, perhaps the most enigmatic of Seleucos' coinage. We shall examine the iconography in depth in order to reach an interpretation.

#### THE POSE AND ATTRIBUTE: AN ICONOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

The pose, showing a full figure seated in repose, holding an attribute in the right hand and resting on the left, has a well-established iconographic meaning. It probably derives from the Heracles Epitrapezios of Lysippos, a famous small sculpture that portrayed the hero relaxing after his labors, holding a wine cup in his right hand and resting his left on his club. Within a short time the Heracles Epitrapezios gave rise to a more widely applicable model, in which a hero or divinity—but never a mere mortal—reposes after some great achievement, proffering an object that was instrumental to his accomplishment. For example, a tetradrachm of Lamia in Thessaly, contemporary with the *elephantarches* bronze, shows Heracles sitting on a rock, presenting his quiver (fig. 11)<sup>10</sup>.

#### *The seated figure as Perseus?*

In the case of the *elephantarches* bronze, the attribute is ambiguous. Although Newell identified it as an elephant goad, it could also be a *harpe*. The *harpe* is a regular attribute of the hero Perseus, who used it as a weapon against the Gorgons<sup>11</sup>. The myth of Perseus and the Gorgons was commemorated on a kingdom-wide bronze coinage of Seleucos I (fig. 12), featuring a profile head of Medusa on the obverse; such bronzes were produced at Sardeis, Seleukeia on the Tigris, Seleukeia on the Eulaios (Susa), Ekbatana, the principal Bactrian mint, and in particular abundance at Antioch<sup>12</sup>. I. Visconti, followed by E. Babelon, saw in the Medusa type an allusion to the foundation legend of Antioch. After defeating the Gorgons in Kilikia, Perseus erected an altar to his father Zeus atop Mt. Silpios, at the site of the future Antioch. This altar, still to be seen in Seleucos' day, marked the spot where the king founded a temple to Zeus of Bottiaia<sup>13</sup>. A depiction of Perseus holding his *harpe* would thus fit with a known iconographic program of Seleucos I, and would be especially suitable for a coinage struck at Antioch. This interpretation is not entirely persuasive, however, because Perseus was normally depicted in the classical and Hellenistic periods as a clean-shaven youth, either bare headed or wearing a Phrygian cap<sup>14</sup>. If the *elephantarches* bronze indeed bears an image of Perseus, it is almost wholly original in conception and inspired no later imitations.

10. *BMC Thessaly*, p. 22, no. 8, pl. 4, 1.

11. The *harpe* is considered by L. J. Rocco, *LIMC* VII/1, p. 347 as the unique attribute that can securely identify the hero Perseus. This type appeared for the first time by the end of the 6th century BC.

12. Sardeis: *SC* nos. 6–7; Antioch: *SC* nos. 21–24; Seleukeia on the Tigris: *SC* nos. 151–153; Seleukeia on the Eulaios (Susa): *SC* nos. 191–193; Ekbatana: *SC* nos. 224–225; Bactria: *SC* no. 290.

13. BABELON 1890, p. xxxiii.

14. A bearded head of Perseus appears on some coins of Philip V of Macedon, but this seems to be a case of showing the hero with the facial features of the king, see MAMROTH 1930, p. 278–279 and 295; BOEHRINGER 1972, p. 103–104. On the iconography of Perseus, see *LIMC* VII/1, p. 332–348. The *harpe* was given to the hero by Hermes and Athena, with the rest of the magic equipment, in order to help him fight against Medusa. For the representations of Perseus with a sickle, see *LIMC* VII/1 nos. 2, 4, 6–7, 10, 12–14, 17–18, 22–23, 25, 31–33, 36–42, 46, 48–52, 54–55, 56c, 58–60, 76, 78–80, 90–91, 93–95, 97–99, 104–105, 107–108, 110, 123–124, 128, 140–142, 147, 150a, 161–163, 166b, 167, 169, 171, 175, 177, 178b, 179, 181–183, 188–190, 192, 194–195, 200–202, 205, 210, 213, 215, 221, 229 (these numbers refer to images depicting the *harpe* beyond any doubt). The only known bearded depictions of Perseus are nos. 113, 140, 152, 158, and 188 of the Archaic period and no. 18 on the coins of Philip V.



### *The seated figure as Kronos?*

The *harpe* was also associated with the Titan Kronos, the youngest son of Gaia and Ouranos. Ouranos, who feared that his children would depose him from the throne, confined them underground, until Gaia created an adamantine sickle (*harpe*) which Kronos used to castrate his father. Kronos then presided over a Golden Age of humanity until he, too, was overthrown by his son Zeus. Kronos seems a better match than Perseus for our coin type, because he was always depicted in Greek art as a mature, bearded man, and he was often shown veiled, providing a possible point of contact with the cloth wrapped round the head of the figure on the coin<sup>15</sup>. On a Macedonian bronze cup, now lost, Kronos was portrayed very much as on our coin type, seated on a rock, holding a sickle in his extended right hand, and resting his left hand on the rock<sup>16</sup>. This particular image was bare headed, and the sickle was of the simple crescent shape rather than the double-pointed form. In fact, all the illustrations of Kronos in *LIMC* show this simple form of the sickle, and when Kronos is veiled, the veil hangs to his shoulders; it is never wrapped about his head. A final, strong objection to seeing Kronos in our coin type is the lack of any known connection with Seleucos. Festivals in honor of Kronos, the Kronia, were celebrated at Olympia, at Athens, and on Rhodes, but not, so far as we know, in the Seleucid East<sup>17</sup>.

### *The seated figure as Zeus?*

Images of a mature, bearded god are most likely to represent Zeus. The chief god of the Olympic pantheon is a plausible subject of our coin type because of his prominence on Seleucos' silver coinage, sometimes in association with elephants. In addition to the Zeus Aetophoros reverse type inherited from Alexander, Seleucos devised a Zeus Nicephoros type employed at Sardeis, Tarsos, the Syrian mints, Seleukeia on the Tigris, and some unidentified mints in the western half of his kingdom (**fig. 13**)<sup>18</sup>. Seleucos also placed the head of Zeus on the obverse of some distinctly eastern issues, including elephant chariot coinage minted at Seleukeia on the Tigris, Seleukeia on the Eulaios (Susa), and certain Bactrian mints, and elephant staters minted at Susa (**figs. 1, 3**)<sup>19</sup>. There is even an obscure myth linking Zeus, a *harpe*, and Syria. According to Apollodoros, the serpent-man Typhon was born to Gaia in Kilikia and set about engendering monsters on the Gorgons' sister Echidna. Zeus pursued him to the border of Syria with an adamantine sickle, almost certainly the same *harpe* Kronos had used to unman Ouranos. But when Zeus and Typhon fought, Typhon seized the *harpe* and cut out the sinews of Zeus' hands. He then hid the mutilated god and his sinews, under guard, in a cave in Kilikia. Hermes managed to steal the sinews and to rescue and restore Zeus, who resumed the battle and ultimately destroyed Typhon<sup>20</sup>. This story, while colorful, is not the sort of triumphant *athlos* associated with the pose of our coin. On the contrary, such a humiliating adventure would never have been commemorated by a ruler who honored Zeus as the patron of kingship.

### TOWARD A NEW INTERPRETATION: DIONYSOS AND INDIA

For all their exoticism, none of the hypotheses explored above can explain the turban, a clear sign that the seated figure is either oriental in origin, or strongly associated with the Orient. Dionysos was the most oriental of all Greek gods, credited in myth with the conquest of India—a feat repeated by Heracles on a smaller scale, and fifteen generations later<sup>21</sup>. We have already cited an example of Heracles seated

15. *LIMC* VI/1, p. 142–145.

16. *LIMC* VI/1, p. 144, no. 4.

17. *LIMC* VI/1, p. 143. Paus. 6.20; Demosth. 24, 26; Porphyry *De abst.* 2.54.

18. *SC* nos. 3–5, 10, 13, 27–31, 58–59, 64–65, 74–75, 119, 122–124.

19. Elephant chariot: *SC* nos. 130–133, 177–180, 259–263, 272–283. Elephant staters: *SC* no. 187.

20. Apollodoros, *Bibliothēke* 1.39–45.

21. Arr. *Anabasis* 8.1, 7, 8, 9. The Indian reports of Heracles are treated in 8.8.



Figure 13. Head of young Heracles wearing lion skin/Zeus Nicephoros (Tetradrachm, Sardeis), SC 3.3b.

in the pose seen on the *elephantarches* bronze. But Heracles is depicted in Greek art either clean shaven, or with a short, thick, curly beard, whereas the figure on our coin has a long, straight, slightly wispy beard. Dionysos, too, is portrayed either beardless or bearded. In the latter cases his beard is usually long and relatively straight, as on our coin type. Dionysos is one of very few Greek gods to wear a beard of this sort. He is also strongly associated with the pose seen on the *elephantarches* bronze, so much so that even the headless statue from Olympia is identified as Dionysos (fig. 14)<sup>22</sup>. The pose of this statue closely resembles that of the coin: in both cases the figure sits on a rock partially covered by his *himation*, his left hand posed in the same way on the rock. In many of his depictions, Dionysos is seated on a rock, as here. The examples of Dionysos in repose are numerous, especially on coins and in sculpture<sup>23</sup>. Finally, there was a direct link between Dionysos and the turban: according to Megasthenes, Seleucos' ambassador to India, it was Dionysos who taught the Indians to wear turbans<sup>24</sup>.

### *Dionysos and the Indian elephants*

If the seated figure on our coin is Dionysos, it makes sense that the object in his right hand should be an elephant goad. Perhaps no other attribute could so effectively symbolize his aspect as the legendary first conqueror of India, the fabulous land of elephants. The practices of elephant handlers imply a close association between Dionysos and the pachyderms: sick elephants were given dark-colored wine to drink as a cure for their diseases<sup>25</sup>; the Seleucid elephants were prepared for the battle against the Maccabees at Beth-Zechariah by drinking a juice of grapes and mulberries<sup>26</sup>; Ptolemy VIII reportedly gave his elephants unmixed wine to enrage them so that they would trample the Jews collected in the hippodrome of Alexandria<sup>27</sup>. The fact that the Hellenistic armies gave wine (rice or cane) to their elephants is also confirmed by Aelian<sup>28</sup>. An association between Dionysos and elephants would be reinforced by the

22. *LIMC* III/1, p. 439, no. 142. The same is also true for the headless statue from Delos, no. 143. See also the representations of a seated and nude Dionysos: nos. 137 (Copenhagen), 138 (electrum stater from Kyzikos), 139 (silver stater issued at Mallos), 140 (silver tetradrachm from Herakleia-Bithynia).

23. The depictions of the god seated on a support and holding an object in his extended hand are far too numerous to be listed here. We can cite some indicative examples from *LIMC* III/1: electrum stater from Kyzikos dated to 400–350 BC (no. 138); statue of the *Philadelphia* type (no. 141a); bronze coin from Apulia from 250–217 BC (no. 146); statue of the monument of Thrasyllus at Athens (no. 147); red-figured vases (nos. 334, 335–341, 346, 741, 742); the famous Derveni bronze krater (no. 755), etc.

24. Arr. *Anabasis* 8.7.

25. Arr. *Anabasis* 8.14. For arguments against the association of Dionysos and elephants, see STEWART 1993, p. 234–236.

26. *I Macc.* 6.34–37.

27. Jos. *Contra Appionem* 2.53–55. *III Macc.* 6.34–37 attributes this plan to Ptolemy IV because the Jews refused to submit to the cult of Dionysos.

28. Ael. *NA* 8.8. Chr. Epplett discusses the motivations for giving wine to the war elephants and concludes that the most likely reason was to “rouse elephants’ fighting spirit for battle”; see EPPLETT 2007, p. 228–229, n. 80–83.

reverse type of the coin, the horned head of an Indian elephant. The horns, adapted from the Mesopotamian tradition, are symbols of supernatural power and divinity for both human beings and animals. They mark the elephant of our coin as something more than an ordinary mortal animal; rather this is a supernatural elephant, almost divine<sup>29</sup>. Furthermore, in the Hellenistic world elephants remained closely associated with India: ancient sources refer to the use of almost exclusively Indian personnel charged with the training and driving of the elephants. This relationship seems to possess an almost mythical dimension which becomes clear when Aelian attributes to the elephants a natural *mysterious ability* to understand the Indian language<sup>30</sup>. Elephants, Dionysos, and India formed a tight symbolic nexus.



Figure 14. Headless statue from Olympia (Dionysos?), *LIMC* III/1, p. 439, no. 142.

### *The Indian elephant as symbol of kingship*

It is not irrelevant for our purpose to point out the high value of the elephant as symbol of kingship and power in Indian society. The importance of the pachyderm becomes clear if we consider the role attributed to the elephant in Chandragupta's legendary assumption of kingship: a massive wild elephant voluntarily submitted to Chandragupta and this was considered an important sign of his future kingship<sup>31</sup>. Because of the symbolic value of elephants in Indian society, A. Mehl interpreted the elephants given as gifts by Indian rulers to Alexander and his successors as tokens of recognition of their royal status<sup>32</sup>.

### *Dionysos and Victory*

The artistry, imagery, and associations of the *elephantarches* bronzes suggest they commemorated a great military victory achieved by means of elephants, and under the protection of the patron god of

29. On the Oriental origin and significance of the horns, see ZERVOS 1979, p. 295–305; ZAHLE 1990, p. 125–139; IOSSIF 2004, p. 249–271, especially n. 109–115.

30. Ael. *NA* 4.24 and 13.22.

31. Justin 15.4.19. EPPLETT 2007, p. 216, establishes a parallel between this episode and the use of an immense elephant by Poros in the battlefield against Alexander.

32. MEHL 1986, p. 160–161 and 179. We agree with EPPLETT 2007, p. 223, who considers, against the generally accepted view, that the 480 elephants obtained by Seleucos I after the treaty with Chandragupta were of major importance and equal to the concession of territories made by the Seleucid, at least on the symbolic level. The major argument used by the author is the importance of elephants in Indian societies and the comparison of the above mentioned treaty with the one concluded between Alexander and Poros. We can push the author's argument further: the elephants were becoming the symbol for the recognition of the Hellenistic king's sovereignty —elephant equals recognition of royal status. If this interpretation is right, it offers an additional argument to the thesis defended by IOSSIF 2004, p. 254–255 who associates the assumption of the royal title by Seleucos I with his eastern *anabasis*.

elephants, Dionysos. The ancient sources attest to the decisive role of Seleucos' elephants in the battle of Ipsos (301 BC)<sup>33</sup>. Seleucos used Dionysiac imagery to celebrate this victory elsewhere, on silver tetradrachms and fractions of Seleukeia on the Eulaios (Susa) (**fig. 15**)<sup>34</sup>. Their obverse type is a beardless male bust with a panther skin tied around his neck, wearing a helmet covered with a panther's skin and adorned with a bull's ear and horns; the reverse type is a Nike crowning a trophy of arms, including a prominent round shield with a star device, implying that the vanquished foe was Macedonian<sup>35</sup>. If the *elephantarches* bronzes did indeed celebrate the victory at Ipsos, we might expect them to be among the earlier coin issues of Syria, since Seleucos occupied the region and founded his cities there in the aftermath of the victory. On the other hand, Newell dated the *elephantarches* bronzes near the end of Seleucos' reign and proposed an association with the victory at Korupedion. Our written sources do not mention the participation of elephants at Korupedion (*pace* Newell), and indeed Aelian implies that only one of Chandragupta's war elephants still survived at the time of Seleucos' death<sup>36</sup>. Nevertheless the rare horned horse head/elephant tetradrachms minted at the end of Seleucos' reign at Pergamon (and perhaps another mint in western Asia Minor) associate elephant imagery with Korupedion (**fig. 7**)<sup>37</sup>. These coins may imply the presence of elephants at Korupedion despite the silence of our sources; alternatively, they may indicate that Seleucid elephant symbolism was unrelated to the contemporary size and performance of the elephant corps. Either Ipsos or Korupedion might suitably be celebrated on the *elephantarches* bronze coins. At Ipsos Seleucos and his allies destroyed a very dangerous enemy, and the victory had a direct connection to Syria, since it allowed Seleucos to occupy the province. After Korupedion, according to Justin, Seleucos reveled in the thought that his victory had left him the sole survivor of the generation of Alexander, the conqueror of conquerors, and he boasted that the achievement was not human, but godlike<sup>38</sup>.

#### THE MINT: ANTIOCH OR APAMEIA?

The combination of Dionysos and the elephant head suggests that the *elephantarches* bronzes might be better placed at Apameia than at Antioch. Apameia was the site of the Seleucid elephant stables and home to an important cult of Dionysos<sup>39</sup>. The rarity of the *elephantarches* bronzes may also point to an origin at a minor mint, rather than Antioch. However the letter Ξ which appears on the *elephantarches*

33. Diod. 20.106–113 on the events of the battle, especially 20.113.4–5 for the 480 elephants used by Seleucos at Ipsos. An important role is also played by Seleucos' elephants in 287 BC, in the final struggle against and defeat of Demetrios Poliorketes; see Polyain., *Strat.* 4.9.3.

34. *SC* nos. 173–176.

35. The symbolism is interpreted by P. Iossif, who also corrects the chronology given in *SC*; see IOSSIF 2004, p. 249–271. Iossif argues that the bust assimilates Alexander to Dionysos and, through the bull's horns and ear, also associates (but does not assimilate) Seleucos. For other attempts to interpret the bust, see HADLEY 1974, p. 9–13 (Alexander); KRITT 1997, p. 53–56 (Dionysian hero); HOOVER 2002a, p. 51–60 (Seleucos); KROLL 2007, p. 119–120 (inconclusive, but favoring Alexander). If Hoover and Iossif are correct, this may be the very earliest numismatic portrait of a living ruler, for the chronology of Ptolemy's coinage has been lowered, see LORBER 2005, p. 45–64. Lorber (p. 60) suggests that gold staters bearing Ptolemy's portrait were not introduced until c. 298, an opinion anticipated by Iossif (p. 254) in a discussion of the advertisement of the royal title on the coinage of the Successors.

36. Just. 17.1.7–12; Paus 1.10.4–5; Ael. *NA* 9.58.

37. *SC* nos. 1–2.

38. Just. 17.2.2.

39. Strab. 16.2.10 reports the presence of the elephants, the royal stud, and the military headquarters at Apameia; the city was the only certain enclosure where the presence of elephants has been reported. C. Epplett discusses the possibility of other elephant-stations throughout the Seleucid kingdom; the cases of Babylon, Seleukeia on the Tigris, and Baktra are considered but the evidence, with the sole exception of the Bactrian capital, is meager; see EPPLETT 2007, p. 224. The possibility of Antioch as a station for the Seleucid elephants, reported by GRAINGER 1997, p. 804, is more than inconclusive and based on a Hellenistic, romanesque *topos*. See also Pol. 21.42.12 for the *surrender* of the elephants of Apameia as a clause of the treaty of Apameia. There is a difference between, on the one hand, Livy 38.38 and Appian *Syr.* 38, who report that *all* elephants were to be eliminated, and Polybios who refers only to the elephants of Apameia. This peculiar point is significant for the importance

bronzes also occurs on many Medusa/bull bronzes of Antioch (**fig. 16**), and these are not the mint's earliest bronze coins<sup>40</sup>. The control link to Antioch may signify that this commemorative bronze emission was produced at Apameia under the supervision of a moneyer from Antioch. Alternatively, it may indicate that Antioch produced this small special emission specifically for distribution in the military district of Apameia.

A possible parallel may be found in the coinage of Seleucos IV. At Antioch he issued serrate bronzes of five types: Apollo/Apollo resting on tripod, Dionysos/prow, Artemis/Artemis (**fig. 17**), Laodike IV/elephant head (**fig. 18**), and Apollo/Apollo on omphalos<sup>41</sup>. All of these varieties are extensively control linked and thus must have been minted concurrently, yet the Laodike/elephant head variety presents puzzles. It is very close in size and weight to the Artemis/Artemis bronzes. If it is counted as a separate denomination, the resulting system is anomalous in terms of the metrological relations observed by Newell, who deduced approximate ratios of 1 : 2 : 4 : 8 for Seleucid bronze coinage generally<sup>42</sup>. Yet if the Laodike/elephant head bronzes are considered to be the same denomination as the Artemis/Artemis variety, the duplication is also exceptional and requires explanation. Finally, alone among the bronze types of Seleucos IV, the Laodike/elephant head variety continued in production through the brief reign of his son Antiochos and under Antiochos IV<sup>43</sup>. A possible explanation for the superfluous coin type of Seleucos IV is that it was struck at Antioch for distribution at Apameia—and apparently also at other military colonies, since many of these elephant head bronzes were found in the excavations at Dura<sup>44</sup>. The pattern of production changed under Antiochos IV, and there is no particular reason to associate his Laodike/elephant head bronzes with Apameia.

#### DIONYSOS IN THE COINAGE OF SELEUCOS I: A CLAIM OF LEGITIMACY

Dionysos was portrayed in only three contexts on the coinage of Seleucos I. In addition to the Syrian *elephantarches* bronzes and the Dionysian trophy coins of Seleukeia on the Eulaios (Susa), a mint in Bactria struck bronzes with the head of Dionysos on the obverse and an anchor on the reverse (**fig. 19**)<sup>45</sup>. This Bactrian coregency issue shows the god young and beardless, wearing an ivy wreath upon his flowing hair. Its conventional depiction contrasts utterly with the imaginative depictions of Dionysos on the *elephantarches* bronzes and the trophy coins, both of which are unique in their iconography. These designs are prime examples of the creative imagery of Seleucos I, and also of the obscurity of his most original and elaborate coin types. In their different ways, both represent Dionysos as a god of military victory. The “message” of these types—and of other innovative designs including the elephant chariot reverses of several eastern mints and the horned horse head/elephant tetradrachms of western Asia Minor—is a claim of legitimacy for Seleucos' kingship based on his military accomplishments<sup>46</sup>.

The most widely disseminated of Seleucos' post-Ipsos precious metal coins—the Zeus/elephant chariot silver, Alexandrine tetradrachms with a Zeus Nicephoros reverse, and the trophy series (**fig. 1, 13, 15**)—advanced this claim of legitimacy throughout Seleucos' kingdom. They imply that Seleucos won his victories under the aegis of particular gods whom he advertises as his personal patrons: Zeus and Dionysos, both associated with Nike on the coinage, and Athena, who drives the elephant chariot.

of the Syrian city as center of the Seleucid elephant power. On Apameia, its foundation and location, see CAPDETREY 2007, p. 67–69, and n. 106 on the construction of the artificial ports at Apameia and Laodikeia. The evidence for the cult of Dionysos at Apameia is numismatic, see MØRKHOLM 1983, p. 57–63, especially p. 60.

40. SC nos. 21.2–4, 22.1, 24.

41. SC nos. 1315–1319. The veiled female head of the fourth bronze variety was identified as Laodike IV by HOOVER 2002b, p. 81–87.

42. *ESM*, p. 270.

43. SC nos. 1371, 1407, 1477.

44. BELLINGER 1949, no. 63.

45. SC no. 289.

46. IOSSIF 2004, p. 255.



Figure 15. Seleucus wearing helmet with Dionysiac attributes/Nike crowing trophy (“Trophy tetradrachm” Seleukeia on the Eulaios [Susa]), SC 173.14.



Figure 16. Winged head of Medusa/Bull butting (AE, Antioch), SC 21.2b.

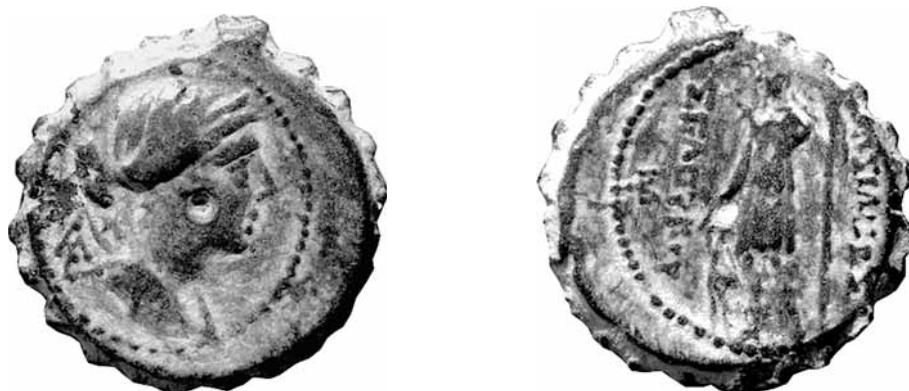


Figure 17. Bust of Artemis/Artemis huntress (serrate AE of Seleucus IV, Antioch), SC 1317.2c.

Seleucos also continued to strike gold staters of Alexandrine type, honoring Athena and associating her with Nike, at Tarsos, Antioch, Seleukeia on the Tigris, Seleukeia on the Eulaios (Susa), a Bactrian mint, and elsewhere (**fig. 20**)<sup>47</sup>. Zeus, Athena, and Nike are unsurprising as the patron deities of a king, having played comparable roles on the coinage of Alexander the Great. The addition of Dionysos reflects a new emphasis on the god as the first conqueror of India, an emphasis that emerged at the beginning of the third century<sup>48</sup>. The reports of Megasthenes, Seleucos' ambassador to India, contributed to this development. The preeminence of Dionysos among Seleucos' divine patrons is implied by literary references to horned portraits of the king (though the ancient authors offer different explanations for his horns), and it reinforces the royal legitimacy and status of the founder of the Seleucid dynasty through his association with the Indians, royal elephant<sup>49</sup>. Contemporary evidence is provided by coins that depict Seleucos with Dionysian attributes, arguably the young bust on the Susian trophy coins and the horned horseman on lifetime silver issues of Ekbatana (**fig. 21**), and undoubtedly the posthumous horned portraits of Sardeis, Dura-Europos, and a Bactrian mint (**fig. 22**), produced in the reign of Antiochos I and superseded by Antiochos' own portrait, without divine attributes<sup>50</sup>.

### DIONYSOS IN THE AFTERMATH OF SELEUCOS' REIGN

Most or all of Seleucos' innovative coin types disappeared under his successor Antiochos I. The possible exceptions are Zeus Nicephoros tetradrachms issued in the name of Antiochos (**fig. 23**), a few elephant chariot drachms in the name of Antiochos, and fractional denominations of the Dionysian trophy type issued in Drangiana in the name of Antiochos, all of which may belong either to the coregency of Seleucos and Antiochos or to the latter's sole reign<sup>51</sup>. By far the most significant development of Antiochos' numismatic iconography was the replacement of his father's personal types with the image of Apollo *Toxotes* (Archer) seated on the omphalos (**fig. 24**), which incorporated important oriental themes and became a dynastic badge for succeeding generations of Seleucids<sup>52</sup>. Nevertheless the bronze coinage of Antiochos continued to portray Zeus, Nike, and especially Athena, with whom Nike was often associated<sup>53</sup>. Dionysos, however, was excluded from his coinage and from that of his successors for nearly a century, reappearing at last on the bronze coinage of Seleucos IV<sup>54</sup>. It is possible that Dionysian allusions were revived in portraits of Seleucos II and Antiochos III with bull's horns, which occur only on eastern bronze coinages and, in the case of Antiochos III, only at Susa (**fig. 25** and **26**)<sup>55</sup>. But the rejection of the god himself and his rehabilitation by Seleucos IV are both curious phenomena that may merit further study.

47. *SC* nos. 9, 12, 137–138, 162, 258. Other gold issues of Alexandrine type that may belong to the post-Ipsos period include *SC* nos. 39, 55–56, 86, 114–115, 161, 200–201, 291–292.

48. GOUKOWSKY 1981, p. 9–19; IOSSIF 2004, p. 255.

49. *Ap. Syr.* 57; *Ps.-Call.* 2.28; *Lib. Or.* 11.92.

50. *SC* nos. 203, 209, 213, 322–323, 363–364, 469, 471–472; for the horned horseman, see HOOVER 2002a, p. 58–59.

51. *SC* nos. 64–65, 120, 132, 226–228.

52. IOSSIF forthcoming.

53. Zeus: *SC* nos. 343–346, 355–356. Nike: *SC* nos. 314–317, 319–320, 329, 388–390, 422, 452–460. Athena: *SC* nos. 312, 314–317, 319–320, 329, 332–334, 361–362, 381–387, 391–393, 401–402, 444, 452–454.

54. *SC* nos. 1316, 1353–1356.

55. *SC* nos. 767–768 (Seleukeia on the Tigris), 800–801 (Seleukeia on the Eulaios [Susa], with elephant reverse), 1216–1223. In *SC* the horns of Seleucos II are explained as “a mark of divinity implying identification with the dynastic founder” (p. 233) and those of Antiochos III as “denot[ing] divinity and link[ing] the Seleucid kings with Alexander the Great as conquerors of the Orient” (p. 360).



Figure 18. Veiled and diademed bust of Laodike IV/Elephant head (serrate AE of Seleucos IV, Antioch), SC 1318.1c.



Figure 19. Head of Dionysos wearing ivy crown/Anchor (AE, Baktrian mint), SC 289.



Figure 20. Head of Athena wearing crested Corinthian helmet/Nike standing holding wreath and *stylis* (AV stater, Babylonian mint 6A), SC 66.





Figure 21. Head of young Herakles/Horseman wearing helmet with Dionysiac attributes (Tetradrachm, Ekbatana), SC 203.



Figure 22. Horned head of Seleucos I/Apollo *Toxotes* seated on omphalos (Tetradrachm, Sardeis), SC 323.2b.



Figure 23. Head of young Herakles/Zeus Nicephoros (Tetradrachm, Seleukeia on the Tigris, workshop I), SC 120.1a.



Figure 24. Diademed head of Antiochos I/Apollo *Toxotes* seated on the omphalos (Tetradrachm, Seleukeia on the Tigris), SC 378.1.



Figure 25. Horned bust of Seleucos II depicted three-quarters left/Horseman spearing fallen enemy (AE, Seleukeia on the Tigris), SC 767.



Figure 26. Draped and horned bust of Antiochos III depicted three-quarters right/Apollo standing left and resting left hand on bow (AE, Seleukeia on the Eulaios [Susa]), SC 1222.

## ABBREVIATIONS

- ESM* E. T. NEWELL, *The Coinage of the Eastern Seleucid Mints from Seleucus I to Antiochus III* (Numismatic Studies, 1), New York, 1935, reprint 1978.
- BMC Thessaly* P. GARDNER *British Museum Catalogue of Greek Coins, Thessaly to Aetolia*, London, 1883.
- LIMC* L. KAHIL dir. *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*, Zürich, 1981-1999.
- SC* A. HOUGHTON and C. LORBER, *Seleucid Coins, A Comprehensive Catalogue*. Part 1. *Seleucus I through Antiochus III*, New York/Lancaster/London, 2002.  
A. HOUGHTON, C. LORBER, and O. HOOVER, *Seleucid Coins, A Comprehensive Catalogue*. Part 2. *Seleucus IV through Antiochus XIII*, New York/Lancaster/London, 2008.
- WSM* E. T. NEWELL, *The Coinage of the Western Seleucid Mints from Seleucus I to Antiochus III* (Numismatic Studies, 4), New York, 1941, reprint 1978.

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