



PHILIPPIKA
Marburger altertumskundliche Abhandlungen 50

Herausgegeben von
Joachim Hengstl, Torsten Mattern,
Robert Rollinger, Kai Ruffing
und Orell Witthuhn



2011
Harrassowitz Verlag · Wiesbaden



Seleucid Dissolution

The Sinking of the Anchor

Edited by Kyle Erickson
and Gillian Ramsey



2011

Harrassowitz Verlag · Wiesbaden



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

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche
Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the internet
at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

For further information about our publishing program consult our
website <http://www.harrassowitz-verlag.de>

© Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden 2011

This work, including all of its parts, is protected by copyright.

Any use beyond the limits of copyright law without the permission
of the publisher is forbidden and subject to penalty. This applies
particularly to reproductions, translations, microfilms and storage
and processing in electronic systems.

Printed on permanent/durable paper.

Printing and binding: Hubert & Co., Göttingen

Printed in Germany

ISSN 1613-5628

ISBN 978-3-447-06588-7

Contents

Contents	5
List of Contributors.....	7
Abbreviations.....	9
Acknowledgements.....	11
Gillian Ramsey and Kyle Erickson	
Introduction: the Sinking of the Anchor?	13
David Engels	
Middle Eastern ‘Feudalism’ and Seleucid Dissolution	19
Gillian Ramsey	
Seleucid Administration –Effectiveness and Dysfunction Among Officials	35
Kyle Erickson	
Apollo-Nabû: the Babylonian Policy of Antiochus I	45
G.G. Aperghis	
Antiochus IV and his Jewish Subjects: Political, Cultural and Religious Interaction.....	57
Altay Coşkun	
Galatians and Seleucids: a Century of Conflict and Cooperation	71
Cristian E. Ghiță	
Nysa – A Seleucid Princess in Anatolian Context	89
Nicholas L. Wright	
The Last Days of a Seleucid City: Jebel Khalid on the Euphrates and its Temple	97
Heather Jackson	
A Late Seleucid Housing Insula at Jebel Khalid in North Syria: Archaeological Evidence for Chronology and Lifestyle	111
Daniel Ogden	
Seleucid Dynastic Foundation Myths: Antioch and Seleuceia-in-Pieria	125

Paola Ceccarelli

Kings, Philosophers and Drunkards: Athenaeus' Information on the Seleucids..... 135

Johannes Engels

Posidonius of Apameia and Strabo of Amasia on the Decline of the Seleucid Kingdom..... 151

Zohreh Baseri

Seleucid Coins from the National Museum of Iran 163

Index 171

Apollo-Nabû: the Babylonian Policy of Antiochus I

Kyle Erickson

When scholars have examined the shift in royal iconography and focus between Zeus and Apollo in the Seleucid empire they have tended to concentrate on the reign of Antiochus IV and his successors. This period represents the best examples of the two deities being used by the monarchs for the purposes of legitimation: indicating and advertising from which branch of the Seleucid family they were descended. However, the causes for this shift under Antiochus IV are difficult to understand. The most influential article on this topic by Jan Zahle in 1990 suggested that the reappearance of local, non-dynastic deities (not Zeus, Apollo, and Athena) was the result of the breakdown of Seleucid power and resulted from an increase in local autonomy.¹ Therefore the shift to Zeus was part of a move by Antiochus IV towards a more broadly acceptable deity, to counter the expansion of local autonomy with the introduction of a locally significant deity. While this view has been modified more recently, at its heart remains the notion that the Seleucid kings failed to create any sort of religious iconography that was acceptable to the whole of their empire, and that they only focused their dynastic imagery on the Greek portions of the empire.² This paper will examine the shift from Zeus to Apollo that occurred under Antiochus I and question the assumption that the images which Antiochus' court chose to display were solely aimed at Greeks, or at a population familiar with Greek religious imagery; it also proposes that Apollo can be associated with the Babylonian scribal god Nabû and that this combination may be suggested on Antiochus' coins.

1. Apollo, Seleucus and Antiochus

It is important to note the difference in focus on Apollo coinage between Seleucus I and Antiochus I. Apollo appeared in limited issues of Seleucus I, most prominently on the gold staters issued in the east, where Antiochus was king.³ In all other cases Apollo appeared on bronze coinage with limited circulation, once again, limited mostly to the east, the one exception being his foundation at Antioch.⁴ A cult of Apollo was developed at Antioch and the linkage between the local cult figure and the city is the likely cause of this coinage

¹ Zahle 1990.

² Zahle 1990: 133.

³ The Apollo only appears on gold coins from the upper Satrapies that are minted c. 187. Cf. Houghton and Lorber 2002: nos. 163 and 257; Will 1967: 271 rightly connects these issues with Antiochus I's activity in the region.

⁴ These were issued at Seleucia-on-the-Tigris (Houghton and Lorber 2002: nos. 148–150), an uncertain Babylonian mint (Houghton and Lorber 2002: nos. 112–113), and at Antioch (Houghton and Lorber 2002: nos. 15–20).

rather than an over-arching Seleucid policy.⁵ The cult of Apollo may have been created as a piece of dynastic propaganda; however the name of the city links the god not to Seleucus, but rather to his father and to his son, the future Antiochus I. Although Apollo did appear on coins minted under the name of Seleucus, these coins differ greatly from what Antiochus I established as the Seleucid image of Apollo. On all of Seleucus I's coins, the image of Apollo was confined to the obverse of the coins, while his attributes the bow and cithara were displayed on the reverse. The full figure of Apollo on the omphalos did not appear on Seleucus' coins. While the image of Apollo appeared on the obverse of the Seleucus' coins, these obverses largely depict the laureate or diademed bust of the god. The image of a god on the obverse was generally replaced in the royal coinage of Antiochus I by the diademed image of the reigning monarch, a practice followed by the rest of the Seleucid dynasty. This may have had the intended effect of replacing the divine authority represented on the coins with the regal authority of the king. It may also have been an attempt to associate the king with the gods he replaced. By this I am not suggesting the full deification of the king, but rather an acknowledgment of the importance of god-given kingship, a concept common both to Greek, Macedonian and Persian kings.

There are three main reasons for associating the introduction of Apollo as the Seleucid patron deity with Antiochus I rather than Seleucus I. The first is that the Seleucid association with Apollo did not largely begin until Antiochus was co-regent and then largely in areas under his suzerainty.⁶ The second is that the standard Seleucid image of Apollo was created and essentially standardized during Antiochus I's reign. Finally in the priest list from Seleucia-in-Pieria from 187–175 BC (reign of Seleucus IV) Antiochus I is listed Antiochus Apollo Soter whereas Seleucus is listed as Seleucus Zeus Nicator⁷, which suggests that while Seleucus may have been viewed as the son of Apollo⁸, it is his son that was most closely associated with the god.

I suggest that the choice of Apollo was conscious political decision made by Antiochus and his court in order to accomplish a political goal, a part of which was to establish a legitimate divine heritage for Antiochus to bolster his right to rule. If this is the case, then why should he have chosen a patron deity with limited appeal outside of Asia Minor and Greece? As Zahle and others have pointed out, Zeus was a better deity for representing the diverse religious environment of the empire.⁹ I suggest that the figure of Apollo was selected with not only the Greek population in mind; but also with the advantage of being able to project subtle hints of other native gods. Antiochus relations' with Apollo developed as he was elevated to co-king. While he had early in his career demonstrated interest in the city of Miletus and its accompanying temple, this interest does not reveal any attempt to link his ancestors to the cult of Apollo. After Antiochus became co-king the images of Apollo on coins increased. Finally, when Antiochus became sole king and elder co-king the image of Apollo on his coinage began to be codified and took on its more permanent form.

5 Downey 1961: 42–43.

6 The introduction of Apollo as the Seleucid royal deity does not appear to have begun until 288, several years after the assignment of Antiochus to co-ruler of the Upper Satrapies.

7 OGIS 245.

8 Cf. RC 22 for Seleucid descent from Apollo in the reign of Seleucus II.

9 Zahle 1990.

It is therefore necessary to examine all possible causes for this shift towards Apollo. While the connection between the Milesian general Demodamas and his home city's patron deity, Apollo, with Antiochus and Apame may have had an impact on the choice of Apollo as a patron deity,¹⁰ it seems unlikely in such a diverse empire that the sole ideological background of the patron deity was tied to a deity whose most important local shrine (Miletus/Didyma) they did not always control. It seems probable that Zahle over-emphasises the lack of potential broad appeal of the Apollo coinage, when she states:

A quick survey of the coins, however, reveals that the target group of the coin messages will clearly have been Greeks and Macedonians, and *not* the vast majority of their subjects, the Orientals, who were of a quite different background. The motifs are Greek, the style is Greek and the inscriptions are in Greek. Of course, the division into "Greeks" and "Orientals" became less and less marked during the Hellenistic period as did the distinction between "Greek" and "Oriental" gods.¹¹

Zahle appears to understate the importance of Greek design as the dominant image type, and Greek as the dominant legend type, both in Greek kingdoms and non-Greek kingdoms. Non-Greek dynasts often minted coins with legends in Greek and produced similar images.¹² It is therefore rather unsurprising that the legends on Seleucid coins after Seleucus I were always in Greek, the official language of the royal administration. And although the image of Seleucid Apollo is purely Greek, this does not require the Seleucid deity to appeal only to Greek sensibilities. I believe that to understand the choice of Apollo, we must look at the deities and other possible sources of inspiration who were present in the Seleucid empire and who were identified with Apollo. There are two deities with whom Apollo is identified in the post-Seleucid period, Mithras and Nabû. The Apollo-Mithras identification is clearly shown in the tomb of Antiochus I of Commagene at Nemrud Dağı.¹³ This identification is problematic for the Seleucid period because the monument represents an attempt by Antiochus I of Commagene to place himself as the divine descendant of both the Seleucid monarchs and the Persian kings, and therefore may be creating new Graeco-Persian assimilations rather than adopting them from the Seleucids. As there is little evidence for an early Seleucid period connection between these two deities,¹⁴ it seems prudent to focus on the identification of Apollo and Nabû. This is for two reasons, first because there is range of evidence for Apollo-Nabû connections outside of Babylon, and secondly because of the importance of Babylonia in the early Seleucid empire.

2. Antiochus and Babylon

The importance of Babylonia for Antiochus can be shown through four cuneiform texts which reveal that Antiochus, as crown prince, had taken care to clear and rebuild the temple

¹⁰ Robert 1984.

¹¹ Zahle 1990: 127–128; cf. Dijkstra 1995: 9 and Downey 1988: 3–5 for the difficulty of determining the purely Greek or purely Oriental nature of a city based on architecture.

¹² Some of the finest examples of "Greek" coinage come from the Indo-Greek kingdom, cf. Lahiri 1965; For the Pontic kingdoms, cf. Waddington, Babelon et al. 1925.

¹³ Sanders 1996: 184–187, 197–199, 437–440.

¹⁴ For the suggestion of a connection between Apollo and Mithras see: Iossif and Lorber 2009a and Iossif and Lorber 2009b.

of Esagil in Babylon. Esagil was the temple complex of Marduk at Babylon where, among the other functions, the Babylonian *Akitu* (New Year's) festival was held. Three of these documents are not clearly dated; however, their content appears to suggest a date between 301 and 281, most likely after Antiochus had been elevated to joint-King in 293.

The first document, the "Chronicle concerning Antiochus and Sin"¹⁵ is also unclearly dated, but relates to the movement of Macedonians in Babylon to the new city of Seleucia-on-the-Tigris. The document therefore must postdate the creation of the city by Seleucus in c. 300, although a fragment of the year sign in the document may date the document after Antiochus is joint monarch. Although Antiochus is referred to as crown prince,¹⁶ the uniqueness of a younger and subordinate king who was king at Babylon may have led to the creation of the title crown prince.¹⁷ This may serve to explain the discrepancy between Antiochus' formal role as co-ruler in the Empire but crown prince at Babylon. Regardless of title and of document date, Antiochus acted as ruler in Babylon as he visited temples, made offerings, ordered the dust cleared from Esagil, and arbitrated in disputes. This tablet shows that Antiochus performed regular offerings for the moon god Sin at both of his temples.¹⁸ If we assume that Antiochus was generally only interested in Greek festivals or Greek offerings then it is difficult to understand Antiochus' interest in the Sin temple. Instead here, we may discern a serious interest in the religious practices of the local population. The reverse of the tablet is filled with lacunae; however, there seems to be an additional strong concern in a dedication to Bel(Marduk), Nabû, and Beltia(?).¹⁹ This again seems to reflect Antiochus' interest in local deities, especially those connected to Esagil.

The second document, "Ruin of Esagil Chronicle" documents a visit by Antiochus to the rebuilding and cleaning efforts at the temple. While there the king tripped on the ruins of Esagil, he then offered a sacrifice of oxen and sacrifice in Greek fashion in order to assuage negative omens.²⁰ That Antiochus fell on the ruin appears to have been taken as a bad omen by both the Babylonian chronicler and Antiochus himself may explain the Greek ritual which was apparently abhorrent to the scribe who recorded it. Plutarch's *Life of Demetrius* contains a close parallel:

Moreover, Antigonus, when his phalanx was already forming and he was leaving his tent, stumbled and fell prone upon his face, injuring himself severely; but he rose to his feet, and stretching out his hands towards heaven prayed that the gods would grant him victory or a painless death before his defeat.²¹

Thus Antiochus, even while aware of the religious importance of the temple, felt it necessary to sacrifice in a traditional Greek manner in order to assuage bad omens, suggesting an underlying Greek practice even while demonstrating respect for local gods. A second interesting parallel for this event was Seleucus tripping over an anchor when leaving

15 Grayson 1975: 11; BHP 5.

16 BHP 5.

17 BHP 5.

18 BHP 5: obverse 8–12.

19 BHP 5: reverse 12–14.

20 BHP 6.

21 Plut. Vit. Demetr. 29.2: Ἀντίγονος δὲ παραταπτομένης ἤδη τῆς φάλαγγος ἐξίων προσέπταισεν, ὥστε πεσεῖν ὅλος ἐπὶ στόμα καὶ διατεθῆναι χαλεπῶς· ἀναστὰς δὲ καὶ τὰς χεῖρας ἀνατείνας πρὸς τὸν οὐρανόν, ἡτήσατο νίκην παρὰ τῶν θεῶν ἢ θάνατον ἀνάσθητον πρὸ τῆς ἡττης.

for Babylon, however in this case the anchor, while initially interpreted as a bad omen, was reinterpreted by Ptolemy to be an omen of safety.²² It is possible that Antiochus' emphasis on clearing the temple and subsequently rebuilding it was an attempt to turn a negative omen into a positive symbol of Seleucid power, just as the anchor had been for his father.

Antiochus' interest at Esagil is clear; what actually occurred there is not. According to Strabo, Alexander had ordered the area of Etemenanki (the Ziggurat tower within the temple complex) cleared and rebuilt.²³ Classical authors state that the project was never completed on account of a lack of Seleucid interest.²⁴ However, the archaeological evidence reveals that the tower area was cleared and rebuilt on a reduced scale.²⁵ More problematically, the name Etemenanki never occurs in a Hellenistic cuneiform text, only Esagil is mentioned, which most scholars assume refers to the entire Marduk complex. While the site of Etemenanki was razed and rebuilt, the same is not true for the entire site of Esagil, and the "clearing of debris from Esagil" refers either to the normal and necessary upkeep of a mud brick temple, or the clearing of the site for rebuilding. It is unclear from the passage which is meant.²⁶ What is clear is that by 268 Esagil and Ezida (the Nabû temple at Borsippa) had been re-founded and were either reconstructed or in the process of being so. Regardless of the actual activity at the site, this tablet demonstrates that Antiochus was clearly interested in the temple complex, and therefore was interested in the gods who inhabited it, as does the Sin tablet.

The third document which refers to the reconstruction or clearing of the temple is the "Chronicle concerning Antiochus, Bactria, and India".²⁷ The date of the tablet is unclear but the references to Bactria, India and elephants suggest that it postdates Seleucus' return from the east in 302. Line 6 of the obverse refers to repairs at Ezida, and line 2 may refer to repairs to Esagil.²⁸ Line 3 of the reverse refers to an offering in Greek fashion; however it is unclear where this occurs.²⁹ Again, the tablet demonstrates an interest in the reconstruction of the important temples of Marduk and Nabû.

The final tablet, the "Juniper Garden chronicle", records the orders of a certain Greek official to the temple officials to do work for the king (most likely military service), which they at first reject and only after negotiations agree to work on an irrigation ditch.³⁰ This tablet demonstrates that the Greek officials considered the Babylonian temples under their control, however they were willing (perhaps when forced) to accept the traditional power structure and allow the temple workers to continue to work for the benefit of the temple rather than for the king. This represents a significant deference by the Seleucids to the traditional religions suggesting that Antiochus sought not to undermine the traditional religious organisation but to utilise the traditional power structures in support of his rule.

22 Appian Syr. 56.

23 Strabo 16.1.5.

24 Strabo 16.1.5; Diod. Sic. 2.9.9; Pliny NH 6.121–122.

25 Wetzell, Schmidt et al. 1957: 30–1.

26 BHP 6.

27 BHP 7; Grayson 1975: 13.

28 BHP 7: obverse line 2 and 6.

29 BHP 7: reverse line 3.

30 BHP 8.

All of these documents demonstrate that Antiochus I was carefully involved in the redevelopment of Babylonia and would have been well acquainted with its gods and customs. This makes it possible to suggest that the Macedonian king was able to associate a Babylonian god, Nabû, with Apollo and utilise the iconography of both to justify his reign where appropriate.

The most notable interaction between Antiochus and Nabû deity is that recorded on a Borsippian foundation cylinder which commemorates Antiochus' rebuilding of the god's temple. The cylinder is written in cuneiform script and in the Akkadian language. As Kuhrt and Sherwin-White have demonstrated, the text is traditionally under-utilized in examining Seleucid relations with Babylon.³¹ And although it is included in Austin's source book³² as an example of Seleucid relations with local cults, scholars still assume that the Seleucids after Seleucus I took little interest in local cults³³ except in cases where the king raided a temple.³⁴ This interpretation derives from the relative lack of written evidence of direct Seleucid involvement in major local cults. However, the Borsippa cylinder and Seleucus III's celebration of the *Akitu* festival³⁵ demonstrate that the Seleucids either directly engaged with local religion (although not always in a respectful manner) or considered the temples under their regulatory power.³⁶ The traditional Babylonian nature of this cylinder cannot be under-estimated, and demonstrates a clear reverence for local tradition.³⁷ The cylinder explicitly links the King to the traditional Babylonian gods by proclaiming them as his protectors:

Prince Nabû, son of Esagil, first-born of Marduk, noble child of Erua, the queen, on your entry to Ezida, the true house, the house of your Anu-ship, the dwelling which pleases your heart, with rejoicing and jubilation, may – at your true command which cannot be denied – may my days be long, my years many, my throne firm, my reign long-lasting, under your lofty sceptre which sets the boundary between heaven and earth. May my good fortune be in your pure mouth, may I conquer the countries from sunrise to sunset, may I gather their tribute with my hands and bring (it) for the perfection of Esagil and Ezida.³⁸ (Translation Kuhrt)

This section clearly reflects the importance of Nabû as well as his role as a patron deity who supports the royal house. The importance of Nabû in the cylinder dedicating his temple is not surprising; however both acts, the rebuilding of the temple and the choice to set a new foundation cylinder, demonstrate a significant royal interest in the temple. Additionally, the choice to make this dedication in a traditional fashion with only a single reference to Antiochus' Macedonian origin highlights the King's receptiveness towards local traditions. The final piece of evidence for Antiochus' interest in Babylonian affairs is

31 Sherwin-White 1991: 71.

32 Austin 1981 and 2006: no. 189.

33 Zahle 1990: 125–129.

34 The great attention paid to Antiochus III's raids on eastern temples and Antiochus IV's relations with the Jews are the general exceptions.

35 Sherwin-White 1983: 156–159.

36 For a discussion of Seleucid relations with native temples in Asia Minor see Dignas 2002.

37 Sherwin-White 1991: 71–91.

38 Shewin-White 1991: 77.

the work of Berossus produced for Antiochus around 290 BC.³⁹ Although Berossus's text survives only in fragments and differs from cuneiform texts that have survived, it contains a version of the Creation Epic (the *Enūma Eliš*) which was recited during the *Akītu* festival as well as at other times of the year.⁴⁰ It is therefore likely that Antiochus had knowledge of at least the creation epic and a narrative of Babylonian history until his father's reign available to him and was thus able to place himself within a Babylonian tradition of kingship.⁴¹ This leads to the logical question of who was Nabû and why was he important to Antiochus?

3. Nabu

The god Nabû was originally an insignificant Babylonian deity who rose to prominence by the Neo-Babylonian empire, 626–539 BC. Nabû began as a scribal god associated with Marduk and housed in his temple. By the end of the Kassite period, about 1595–1125 BC, he was considered to be Marduk's son. As Zeus was generally associated with Marduk as the chief god of the pantheon by the Greeks, his son Apollo could be equated with Nabû. Both as a scribal god and in imitation of his father Nabû became the god of divine wisdom, who was often associated with the tablets of destiny. From the Kassite period on, Nabû grew in importance, by the first millennium BC becoming the chief god of Borsippa with his temple in Ezida, replacing his father Marduk as chief god of the city. By the Neo-Babylonian empire (626–539 BC), Nabû was equal in prominence to his father, and celebrated as “lord of the gods” (*bel ili*) and “king of the gods of heaven and underworld” (*lugal dimmerankia*).⁴² The equally powerful and related roles of Marduk and Nabû in the Seleucid era are revealed by Antiochus' emphasis on building the temples of both gods in his Nabû cylinder. This parallels the description of the Babylonian king Marduk-apla-iddina II as “worshipper of Nabû and Marduk, worshipper of Esagil and Ezida”.⁴³ Additionally, in Seleucid era documents from southern Mesopotamia, Nabû also received the title “lord of the universe”.⁴⁴

Thus, by the Seleucid era Nabû was a popular deity throughout Babylonia and western Mesopotamia/Eastern Syria.⁴⁵ The popularity of Nabû in this area was likely a significant factor in Seleucid reverence for this deity. Additionally, it appears likely to explain the post-Seleucid connection between Apollo and Nabû which can be seen at Dura-Europos, Palmyra, Edessa, and Hierapolis.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, the evidence for the association between Apollo and Nabû all dates from after the end of the Seleucid dynasty, however the most likely time for the connection to develop was during the Seleucid era and at the earliest during the reign of Antiochus I. The material evidence comes largely from the cities of Dura-Europos (founded by Seleucus I), Palmyra, and Edessa. Literary evidence for the

39 Verbrugghe and Wickersham 2001: 13 cf. 13–15 for argument on the biography of Berossus and whether there were two men of the same name.

40 For repetition of the myth throughout the year see Çağırangan and Lambert 1991–1993: 89–106.

41 Cf. Kuhrt 1987a: 32–56.

42 Lambert 1978: 79.

43 Lambert 1978: 79.

44 McEwan 1981: 35, 123, and 125.

45 Bounni 1976: 46–48.

46 For Dura and Palmyra see: Dirven 1999: 128–156 and for Edessa see: Drijvers 1980: 41–75 For Hierapolis see Lucian Syr. D. 35–37 and Lightfoot 2003: 456–466; Macrobius Saturnalia 1.17.66–67.

connection is largely associated with the temple at Hierapolis, although the connection is also made by Strabo when referring to Borsippa.⁴⁷

4. Apollo and Nabû

The best material representation of the connection between the two gods was found in the temple of the Gaddê of Dura-Europos. This small statue is identified by a Palmyrene dedication as the god Nabû, and represents a god in a long tunic and mantle, striking a lyre with a plectrum, crowned with a laurel wreath. Although the face is missing on the statue, it appears to have been bearded. Except for the beard and inscription, the statue could easily be mistaken for a small statue of Apollo. Furthermore, Nabû can be identified on seven tesserae from Palmyra, four which specifically identify the god.⁴⁸ Nabû is in all cases beardless although otherwise represented in oriental style, and on one bust holds a lyre as he does in all cases where he is standing. These representations of Nabû from Dura-Europos and Palmyra appear to have derived from Hellenistic art, perhaps the statue of Apollo Citharoedus set up by the Seleucids at Daphne or from the variety of Seleucid coin types that depict the deity with similar attributes.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, the beard is evidence for his Babylonian origin, as a bearded Apollo was not common among the Greeks: the only instance is from the description of the statue of Apollo at Hierapolis described by both Lucian and Macrobius. Lucian describes the statue as bearded: “yet these alone show a statue of Apollo bearded”.⁵⁰ Macrobius describes the statue in greater detail:

Moreover the Hierapolitians, who are of the Assyrian (Syrian) race, attribute all the effects and virtues of the sun to the one with the bearded face, whom they call Apollo, whose face is figured with a long beard that comes to a point, and on whose head is a projecting *calathos*. The image is protected by a breast plate, holds in its right hand an upright spear on the top of which is a small image of Victory. In its left hand extends the image of a flower and from the top of its shoulders its back is wrapped by a gorgonian covering covered with a snake.⁵¹

While this description of a statue seems fairly fantastic, it was confirmed by a statue found at Hatra which portrays the same figure.⁵² Finally, the clearest literary connection between the two gods is Strabo’s statement that Borsippa was a city holy to Artemis and Apollo (Nanaia⁵³ and Nabû).⁵⁴ There is little other direct evidence that the gods Apollo and

47 Strabo 11.1.7.

48 Dirven 1999: 132.

49 Cf. Newell 1941: 96.

50 Lucian Syr. D. 35: μούνοι δὲ οὗτοι Ἀπόλλωνος γενεῖται ξόανον δεικνύουσιν.

51 Macrobius Saturnalia 1.17.66–67 Hieropolitani praetera, qui sunt gentis Assyriorum, omnes solis effectus atque virtutes ad unius simulacra barbata speciem redigunt eumque Apollinem appellant. huius facies proluxa in acutum barba figurata est, eminente super caput calathos. simulacrum thorace munitum est, dextera erectam tenet hastam superstante Victoriae parvulo signo, sinistra floris porrigit speciem summisque ab umeris Gorgoneum velamentum redimitum anguibus tegit scapulas. aquilae propter expriment instar volatus, ante pedes imago feminea est, cuius dextera laevaue sunt signa feminarum, ea cingit flexuoso volumine draco.

52 Seyrig 1972: 104–108 esp. fig 7.

53 See Dirven 1999: 133–134 for connection on Artemis and Nanaia.

54 Strabo 11.1.7 τὰ δὲ Βόρσιππα ἱερὰ πόλις ἐστὶν Ἀρτέμιδος καὶ Ἀπόλλωνος.

Nabû were otherwise identified with each other during the Seleucid period⁵⁵ (the interpretation of Strabo written about 80 years after the end of the Seleucids reflect may not reflect the interpretation of the Seleucids themselves). However, it seems very likely that given the focus of Seleucid kings on Babylonian religion and Borsippa and the *Akītu* festival in particular and their particular interest in Apollo that the connection between the two deities was easily established. The final link between the two gods is that they are used in translations of names containing the theophoric element (usually Nabû/Nebo).⁵⁶

The relationship between Apollo and Nabû appears to be based on two factors; they are both sons of the head of their respective pantheons and it is possible to attribute oracular functions to both. It is unclear if Nabû is an oracular god outside of Hierapolis, where the bearded god identified as Apollo/Nabû gives oracles. If the oracular nature of Nabû at is a result of his interaction with Apollo at Hierapolis, it is still possible to deduce an origin for Nabû as an oracular god in Greek terms. As the keeper of the tablets of destiny, Nabû may easily have been confused with the oracular Apollo by Greeks.

Nabû was in origin a scribal god, and although his relative prominence rose, he never lost his scribal connotations, he was often represented by an oversized stylus.⁵⁷ Drijvers suggests that the stylus, owing to its size, may have been confused with an arrow or spear, and this “may have given rise to confusion and to an assimilation of the stylus to the arrow of Apollo, usually borne in the left hand too”.⁵⁸ This may have resulted from a deliberate conflation of Apollo and Nabû by Antiochus and subsequent monarchs, which may also account for the early iconographic variance of the number of arrows that Apollo holds being reduced to a single arrow. The usefulness of a god who could be interpreted as Apollo by Greco-Macedonians and as Nabû by other portions of the population could provide the necessary propaganda for a divinely supported ruler in a form acceptable to both Greek and non-Greek populations. This combined image of Apollo-Nabû may be visible on a clay seal from Seleucia-on-the-Tigris, the seal depicts a bearded figure standing holding a single arrow.⁵⁹

5. *Akītu* festival

The clearest use of Nabû as a legitimating influence in Babylon is his importance in the *Akītu* Festival.⁶⁰ The festival took place on the first to the twelfth of Nisan, centred on the Esagil complex in Babylon. The reconstruction of this festival is problematic as the longest preserved description of it is incomplete and likely dates to the reign of Seleucus III.⁶¹ Although its Hellenistic date is problematic for reconstructing the early history of the

55 For some further instances of the connection between the two gods in Palmyra see: Bounni 1981.

56 Bounni 1976: 48.

57 Pomponio 1978: 207ff.; Drijvers 1980: 63.

58 Drijvers 1980: 63.

59 “Nabu/Apollo Seal.”

60 For translated text see: Pritchard 1955: 331–334; see Pallis 1926: 200–243 for problems with the idea of resurrection in the ceremony and 139–143; see Kuhrt 1987b: 33, 51 for the role of the King; for Nabû’s see Pomponio 1978: 117–132 role in the festival; see also Linssen 2004: 78–86 for the festival in general.

61 Sherwin-White 1983: 156–159.

festival it is more useful in determining the Seleucid version of the festival.⁶² Nabû played an important role in the festival.

On the second day of the festival the *urigallu*-priest recited prayers to Bel and opened the gate of the temple and rites were performed in a traditional manner, on the third day the same was done, and a metal worker made two images of gold and precious stones for the ceremonies of the sixth day. On the fourth day more prayers were offered to Bel, and the entire *Enūma Eliš* (creation myth) was recited. On the fifth of Nisan, more prayers were offered to Bel and then the temple was purified by priests who then left the city and could not return until Nabû had returned to Borsippa. The same day Nabû arrived from Borsippa having been sent a boat the day before. Nabû was greeted by the king who then travelled to the Marduk's temple alone, where he was stripped of his royal regalia, slapped in the face by the chief priest, and finally gave a negative confession, in which he stated:

I did [not] sin, lord of countries. I was not neglectful (of the requirements) of your godship. [I did not] destroy Babylon; I did not command its overthrow (425) [I did not]... the temple Esagil, I did not forget its rites. [I did not] rain blows on the cheek of a subordinate. ... I did [not] humiliate them. [I watched out] for Babylon; I did not smash its walls.⁶³

Then the priest replied with the god's favour, and the king received his regalia and was again slapped in the face, to obtain an omen. On 6 Nisan the images made by the craftsmen on the second day had their heads cut off by the slaughterer when Nabû arrived at the temple Ehursagtila and then were thrown into a fire started in the presence of Nabû. The images destroyed appeared as follows:

those two images (which the artisans are to make) shall be 7 finger(-widths) high. One (shall be made) of cedar, one of tamarisk. *Four dušu*-stones shall be mounted in settings of gold weighing four shekels. [One image] shall hold in its left hand a snake (made) of cedar, raising its right [hand] to the god Nabû. The second (image) shall hold in its [left hand] a scorpion, raising its right hand [to the god] Nabû. They shall be clothed in red garments, [bou]nd in the middle [with] a palm [br]anch.⁶⁴

Following the negative confession by the king the tablets break off, the only part remaining from the sixth day of the festival occurs in reference to the statues created on the second day. The festival continued with the arrival of more gods on the sixth and seventh, on the eighth the chief priest offered water to Marduk and sprinkled it on the king and people, the king then 'took Bel by the hand' and led him out into the court and enthroned him in a canopy. Then Marduk was led to the shrine of destinies, where the other gods acknowledged his supremacy, and he pronounced the destinies both in general and for the king. On the ninth day there was a procession in which the king again led Bel by the hand on a triumphal procession through the city to the festival house, where the statues of the gods were situated and a banquet held. After the tenth day little is known of the festival

⁶² See Sommer 2000: 82–87 for analysis of problems of reconstructing the pre-Seleucid festival from the texts.

⁶³ Pritchard 1955: 334.

⁶⁴ Pritchard 1955: 331–332.

although it possibly included a sacred marriage.⁶⁵ At what point (or if) the ritual battle between Marduk and Ti'âmat took place is unknown,⁶⁶ although the fragmentary nature of our knowledge after day six of the festival allows for ample opportunity.

The text is problematic for Babylonian scholars attempting to reconstruct the original ritual as the composite text is formed from two Seleucid era texts (likely from the reign of Seleucus III⁶⁷). The Seleucid era date is extremely useful for studying the ritual in the Seleucid period, though it is not without problems. The lack of description of the pre-Seleucid festival makes it impossible to determine whether the ritual remained unchanged or if Seleucid attention to the ritual changed either its form or function. The general consensus has been that the festival was closely related to the original Babylonian festival and focused on the recreation of cosmos and the reestablishment of order and the king by Marduk, both on a worldly level and a cosmological level.⁶⁸ Smith has sought to reject this interpretation based on the negative confession by the king, suggesting that a native king would not need to state that he did not destroy his own city.⁶⁹ While Smith is correct in pointing out that the king being slapped is not associated either with a death-rebirth ritual, a scapegoat ritual, or a saturnalian overturning of societal roles,⁷⁰ he is incorrect to state that a negative confession can only have come from a foreign king.⁷¹ The most important part of Smith's argument for the Seleucid king's involvement in the ritual emphasises the nationalistic aspect of the Seleucid festival:

Read in this light, the ritual of the *Akîtu* festival becomes, in part, a piece of nationalistic religious propaganda. If you act as the evil foreign kings have acted, you will be stripped of your kingship by the gods; if you act in the opposite manner and 'grasp the hand of Marduk,' your kingship will be established and protected by the gods.⁷²

In Smith's reading the text is a reaction of the Babylonian priesthood to the conditions of foreign domination, with the original festival dating no earlier than Sargon II's domination Babylon in 709 BC.⁷³ The text is therefore a political reaction that was reapplied to the foreign Seleucid kings. If Sommer is correct and the festival represents the destruction and recreation of the cosmos and worldly and cosmological order,⁷⁴ then it is necessary to examine the Seleucid role in the ceremony. Smith correctly asserts that there are two possibilities presented to the king in the ceremony, he either adopts the role of a proper Babylonian king or he is an evil foreign king who will be overthrown. If we deny that it is only possible for a non-native king to give a confession, then the choice presented by Smith is a false one. If the king takes part in the festival he is demonstrating his

65 For a rejection of the sacred marriage in the festival see Sommer 2000: 92.

66 Lambert 1963: 189–190; See Sommer 2000: 94 for a rejection of the battle in the Babylonian festival (although not in the Akkadian festival).

67 Sherwin-White 1983: 156–159.

68 For examples see: Frankfort 1948: 320; Pritchard 1955: 331–334; Sherwin-White 1983: 156–159; Sommer 2000: 91.

69 Smith 1976: 4.

70 Smith 1976: 4.

71 See Sommer 2000: 85.

72 Smith 1976: 4–5.

73 Smith 1976: 5.

74 Sommer 2000: 95.

allegiance to Marduk and establishing himself as king. Therefore, the negative confession rather than asserting the subjugation of the foreign king to Babylon reinforces the king's (either foreign or native) place in the cosmological order created by Marduk during the festival. Thus Smith is correct in pointing out the political implications of the ceremony however this does not exclude the cosmological importance, rather the two reinforce the position of the king and place him as the earthly power comparable to Marduk's cosmological rule.

The role of Nabû in the festival is unclear; however, it must have been significant given the amount of description applied to fetching him from Borsippa and his arrival in Babylon, as well as the destruction of the statues. Dirven has suggested that the king received his sceptre of kingship from Nabû in Borsippa, and then travelled with him to Babylon, and that this indicates that Nabû acted as the tutelary deity for the king.⁷⁵ Antiochus may have been consciously recalling this function of Nabû in his rebuilding of his temple and the Marduk temple in Babylon that was importantly associated with the *Akītu* festival. While there is no evidence for Antiochus' involvement in an *Akītu* festival, the festival was celebrated by Seleucus III. It is possible that Antiochus was unable to participate in the festival if the construction/reconstruction of Esagil was not complete. The attention paid to Babylonian deities and his stay there make it likely that Antiochus could have considered holding the *Akītu* festival which would have further legitimated the Seleucid monarch as the Babylonian king.

*

I believe that the Apollo-Nabû connection is evidence for a greater interest in local cults in royal propaganda than has been previously acknowledged. This interest was more fully developed than a general acceptance of local cults, and was an active utilization of these cults in order to legitimate Seleucid rule. This model of interaction with the Babylonian elite may provide a framework through which we may interpret changing Seleucid priorities. Further research into various connections between royal Seleucid gods and local deities on similar lines to Nabû may reveal a more inclusive royal propaganda. This should also lead to a re-examination of the causes of Antiochus IV's shift from Apollo to Zeus. The successful creation of this complex image for the east may explain the longevity of the Apollo type in the region even after the shift to Zeus in the west.

If the Apollo coinage and royal myth had more varied origins then it is unlikely that the shift to Zeus is purely a shift towards more easily syncretised deities as an accommodation to local opinion and more complex factors drove the decisions in different parts of the empire. This paper has attempted to show that the Seleucids paid deference to traditional Babylonian religion, not only by rebuilding temples but also in their iconography. This may demonstrate the significance of the Babylonian elite as a political factor within the empire. The close interaction with the Babylonian elite proposed under this model may provide a reason why the region remained loyal to the Seleucids and actively resisted foreign conquest. Further studies on other regions may draw more attention to groups previously

⁷⁵ Dirven 1999: 138; cf. Brinkman 1968: 138 for pushing the importance of the king receiving the cylinder into the post-Kassite period.

considered marginalised as essential for Seleucid control of their empire even as it dissolved.

Bibliography

- Austin, M.M. 1981. *The Hellenistic World from Alexander to the Roman Conquest: A Selection of Ancient Sources in Translation*. Cambridge.
- Austin, M.M. 2006. *The Hellenistic World from Alexander to the Roman Conquest: A Selection of Ancient Sources in Translation*. 2nd ed. Cambridge.
- Bounni, A. 1976. "Nabû Palmyrénien." *Orientalia* 45: 46–52.
- Bounni, A. 1981. "Les représentations d'Apollon en Palmyrene et dans le milieu Syrien." In *Mythologie Gréco-Romaine, Mythologies Périphériques Etudes d'iconographie*. L. Kahil and C. Augé. (eds.). 107–112. Paris.
- Brinkman, J.A. 1968. *A Political History of Post-Kassite Babylonia 1158–722 BC*. Rome.
- Çağıraran, G. and W.G. Lambert 199–1993. "The Late Babylonian Kislîmu Ritual for Esagil." *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 43: 89–106.
- Dignas, B. 2002. *Economy of the Sacred in Hellenistic and Roman Asia Minor*. Oxford.
- Dijkstra, K. 1995. *Life and Loyalty. A study in the Socio-Religious Culture of Syria and Mesopotamia in the Graeco-Roman period based on the Epigraphic Evidence*. Leiden.
- Dirven, L. 1999. *The Palmyrenes of Dura-Europos: A study of religious interaction in Roman Syria*. Leiden.
- Downey, G. 1961. *A History of Antioch in Syria: from Seleucus to the Arab conquest*. Princeton.
- Downey, S.B. 1988. *Mesopotamian Religious Architecture: Alexander through the Parthians*. Princeton.
- Drijvers, H.J.W. 1980. *Cults and Beliefs at Edessa*. Leiden.
- Frankfort, H. 1948. *Kingship and the Gods: A Study of Ancient Near Eastern Religion as Integration of Society and Nature*. Chicago.
- Grayson, A.K. 1975. *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*. Locust Valley, New York.
- Houghton, A. and C. Lorber. 2002. *Seleucid Coins: A Comprehensive Catalogue: Part I: Seleucus I through Antiochus III*. New York.
- Iossif, P.P. and Lorber, C.C. 2009a. "Celestial Imagery on the eastern coinage of Antiochus IV." *Mesopotamia* 44: 129–146.
- . 2009b. "The cult of Helios in the Seleucid East." *Topoi. Orient-Occident* 16: 19–42.
- Kuhrt, A. 1987a. "Berossus' Babyloniaka and Seleucid Rule in Babylonia." In *Hellenism in the East: The interaction of Greek and non-Greek civilizations from Syria to Central Asia after Alexander*. S. Sherwin-White and A. Kuhrt. (eds.) 32–56. London.
- . 1987b. "Usurpation, conquest and ceremonial: from Babylon to Persia." In *Rituals of Royalty: Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies*. D. Cannadine and S. Price (eds.). 20–55. Cambridge.
- Lahiri, A.N. 1965. *Corpus of Indo-Greek Coins*. Calcutta.
- Lambert, W.G. 1963. "The Great Battle of the Mesopotamian Religious Year: The Conflict in the Akîtu House." *Iraq* 25: 189–190.
- . 1978. "Nabû Hymns on Cylinders." In *Festschrift Lubor Matouš*. B. Hruška and G. Komoróczy (eds.). Budapest. Vol 2.
- Lightfoot, J.L. 2003. *Lucian on the Syrian Goddess*. Oxford.
- Linssen, M.J.H. 2004. *The cults of Uruk and Babylon : the temple ritual texts as evidence for Hellenistic cult practises*. Leiden and Boston.
- McEwan, G.J.P. 1981. *Priest and Temple in Hellenistic Babylon*. Wiesbaden.
- "Nabû/Apollo Seal." *Centro Ricerche Archeologiche e Scavi di Torino*. Retrieved Jan 06 2009, from <http://www.centroscavitorino.it/progetti/iraq/images/seleucia/sigillature/large/nabu.jpg>.
- Newell, E.T. 1941. *The coinage of the western Seleucid mints from Seleucus I to Antiochus III*. New York.
- Pallis, S.A. 1926. *The Babylonian Akîtu Festival*. Copenhagen.

- Pomponio, F. 1978. *Nabû: Il culto e la figura di un dio del Pantheon babilonese ed assiro*. Rome.
- Pritchard, J.B., (ed). 1955. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*. Princeton.
- Robert, L. 1984. "Pline VI 49, Demodamas de Milet et la reine Apame." *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellenique* 108: 467–472.
- Sanders, D.H., (ed.). 1996. *Nemrud Daği: The Hierothesion of Antiochus I of Commagene*. Winona Lake.
- Seyrig, H. 1972. "Bas-relief des dieux de Hierapolis." *Syria* 49: 104–108.
- Sherwin-White, S. 1983. "Ritual for a Seleucid King at Babylon?" *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 103: 156–159.
- Sherwin-White, S. 1991. "Aspects of Seleucid Royal Ideology: The Cylinder of Antiochus I from Borsippa." *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 111: 71–86.
- Smith, J.Z. 1976. "A Pearl of Great Price and a Cargo of Yams: A Study in Situational Incongruity." *History of Religions* 16.1: 1–19.
- Sommer, B.D. 2000. "The Babylonian Akītu Festival: Rectifying the King or Renewing the Cosmos?" *JANES* 27: 81–95.
- Verbrugge, G.P. and J.M. Wickersham. 2001. *Berosus and Manetho, Introduced and Translated: Native Traditions in Ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt*. Ann Arbor.
- Waddington, W.H., E. Babelon, et al. 1925. *Recueil Général des Monnaies Grecques d'Asie Mineure: Pont et Paphlagonie*. Paris.
- Wetzel, F., E. Schmidt, et al. 1957. *Das Babylon der Spätzeit*. Berlin.
- Will, E. 1967. *Histoire Politique du Monde Hellénistique (323–30 av. J.-C.)*. Nancy.
- Zahle, J. 1990. "Religious Motifs on Seleucid Coins." In *Religion and Religious Practice in the Seleucid Kingdom*. P. Bilde, T. Engberg-Pedersen, L. Hannestad and J. Zahle (eds.). 125–139. Aarhus.

