

The Horned Horse and Bow on Bronze Coins of Antiochus I Soter from Europos (Dura) in the Context of Early Seleucid Royal Ideology¹

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Keywords

Seleucid coinage, ancient Iran, royal ideology, iconography of power

Abstract

The images of a horned horse's head and a bow or a bow in a quiver on the coins of Antiochus I are associated with the Seleucid royal cult and ideology. The horse, horns and bow were Eastern symbols of divinity and royal power. The first Seleucids (Seleucus I and Antiochus I) adopted these attributes in their coinage to signal the continuity of the Eastern monarchical tradition. Zeus and Apollo, two of the most important gods in the Seleucid royal cult, were identified with Marduk/Ahura Mazda and Nabu/Mithra. The horse with horns symbolised Zeus/Marduk/Ahura Mazda, and the bow symbolised Apollo/Nabu/Mithra. The relationship between these gods (father-son) was identical to the one between Seleucus I and Antiochus I and was an important part of Seleucid royal ideology.

Antiochus I Soter (281-261 BCE), the second king of the Seleucid dynasty, ruled the largest kingdom in the Hellenistic period. As a result, his kingdom was a multi-ethnic and multicultural state. Ruling such a vast and diverse empire, Antiochus I had to present himself as a legitimate ruler supported not only by the Greek gods but also by Eastern gods. This necessity was also apparent in the imagery on his coins. The images of a horned horse's head and a bow on Antiochus I's coins from Dura Europos (frequently misunderstood by scholars) should especially be interpreted in this context. The aim of this paper is to attempt to explain the significance of these motifs in the context of the Seleucid royal cult and dynastic ideology.

The images of a horned horse's head and a bow appear together only on two rare bronze coins² struck in the mint at Europos (Dura) in Syria during the reign of Antiochus I. The coins have different diameters: the bigger one, denomination B,³ has a diameter of 20-21 mm; the second, denomination C, has a diameter of 16 mm.⁴ The obverse of these coins depicts a horse's head with a bridle and a bull's horn, facing left. The reverse shows an unstrung bow with a legend reading ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΝΤΙΟΧΟΥ (Fig. 1). A. Houghton and C. Lorber date

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² For bronze issues from the times of the early Seleucids, see Lorber/Houghton 2010.

³ Houghton/Lorber 2002, 137, cat. no. 367; Newell 1941, 81, cat. no. 882, pl. XIII 9.

⁴ Houghton/Lorber 2002, 137, cat. no. 368; Newell 1941, 81, cat. no. 883, pl. XIII 10.

the coins to the beginning of the king's rule.⁵ In turn, T.E. Newell supposed the bronze coins from Europos minted in the years 270-265 BCE.⁶

The image of the horned horse on Antiochus I's coins refers to the issues of Seleucus I (Fig. 2),⁷ where it can be seen for the first time.⁸ In light of the present state of knowledge, the meaning of this motif is unclear. The horned horse is identified in various ways:⁹ as the famous Bucephalus of Alexander the Great,¹⁰ which was also Alexander the Great's symbol of support for Seleucus I Nicator;¹¹ as the horse of Seleucus, on which he was supposed to flee from Babylonia and triumphantly return to it,¹² as his personal emblem,¹³ or even as a reference to the value of Seleucid cavalry.¹⁴

Horns were definitely indicators of the supernatural character of the animal.¹⁵ In the ancient Near Eastern tradition, horns were not only an attribute of the gods and an element of buildings and altars devoted to them, but also of deified rulers from the times of the Akkadian king Naram-Sin (2254-2218 BCE).¹⁶ Images of people with horns dated to 3000 BCE and onwards have also been discovered in western Iran, mostly in Susa.¹⁷ Images of horned bulls' heads from the Achaemenid period that adorned royal palaces in Susa, Ecbatana and

⁵ Houghton/Lorber 2002, 136.

⁶ Newell 1941, 80.

⁷ Hoover 1996, 96-97; Newell 1941, 81.

⁸ The silver tetradrachm was minted in Pergamon in 281 BC to commemorate the victory of Seleucus I at Corupedium. The obverse features the head of a horned horse with a bridle. A similar image is known from the coins of Antiochus I. The reverse features the image of an elephant and the legend ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΣΕΛΕΥΚΟΥ (Houghton/Lorber 2002, 15, cat. no. 1.2). Another silver tetradrachm with the same obverse and reverse types and an identical legend was minted in an unknown mint, probably in Asia Minor (Houghton/Lorber 2002, 15, cat. no. 2). From the time of Seleucus I, there are a few more variations of this motif: a horned rider with a spear riding a horned horse shown on the reverse of the coins minted at Ecbatana in the years c. 295-293 BCE (Houghton/Steward 1999, 27, pl. P.5.1, 1A; Houghton/Lorber 2002, 81, cat. no. 203; Krittr 1997, 85; Newell 1938, 188-189; no. 481-482, pl. XXXVI 9-10), or images of half of a horned horse from the eastern part of the empire (Houghton/Lorber 2002, 474, add. 16, 18).

⁹ For a presentation of various hypotheses regarding the meaning of the motif of the horned horse, see Houghton/Steward 1999.

¹⁰ Houghton/Steward 1999; Mørkholm 2001, 73; Nefedov 2011, 20-21; Svenson 1995, 42.

¹¹ Nefedov 2011, 19.

¹² Dahmen 2007, 104; Hoover 1996, 50, note 27; Ogden 2017, 87; Plischke 2014, 169; Svenson 1995, 43; Troncoso 2014, 61.

¹³ Miller/Walters 2004, 50-51.

¹⁴ Iossif 2012; Mørkholm 2001, 75-76.

¹⁵ Erickson 2013, 124; 2018, 45; Troncoso 2014, 61-62; Svenson 1995, 40.

¹⁶ Garrison 2011, 28; Kosmin 2014, 181; Michalowski 2008, 34-42; Plischke 2014, 170; Süring 1984, 328-330; Winter 2008, 76-78.

¹⁷ Porada 1995, 40-41.

Persepolis are also known. This may indicate that this animal played a significant role in religious beliefs in Iran.¹⁸ Horns were attributes of Zeus,¹⁹ Poseidon and Dionisos²⁰ in Greek religion as well; however, this was not the typical way of representing the Olympian gods.²¹ The Seleucids in all likelihood borrowed this image from Mesopotamia, where it was common.²² In Seleucid coinage, the horned horse probably symbolised the divine legitimacy of royal power.²³

Zeus played a special role in the Seleucid royal cult. The Macedonian dynasty of the Argeads claimed lineal descent from Heracles, and therefore also from his father Zeus (Hdt. 5.22, 8.137-139, 8.140.1; Curt. 4.7.8; Diod. 17.1.5; Paus. 2.6.7, 2.18.7, 4.3.3).²⁴ It is noteworthy that Alexander the Great considered himself to be the son of Zeus / Ammon (Arr. 7.8.3; Iust. 11.11.7-8; Curt. 4.7.25, 30; Diod. 17.51.1-2; Plut. *Alex.* 27.3-4).²⁵ Apollo was the second-most important god and was regarded as the patron of the dynasty founded by Seleucus I Nicator.²⁶ Moreover, the rulers of Babylon, the Seleucids, worshiped the Babylonian king of the gods, Marduk, whom they identified with Zeus.²⁷ None of the aforementioned gods (Zeus, Apollo, Marduk) were symbolised by a horned horse.

Herodotus (Hdt. 7.40.4), Xenophon (Xen. *Cyr.* 8.3.12) and Curtius Rufus (Curt. *An.* 3.3.11) mention that the chariot of the Great King was preceded by an empty chariot pulled by white horses that symbolised Ahura Mazda.²⁸ The supreme Iranian god, like Marduk, was identified with Zeus.²⁹ All of these deities were

¹⁸ Hoover 1996, 31-32; Troncoso 2014, 61-63.

¹⁹ Kerényi 2015, 71; McInerney 2010, 112-116.

²⁰ Iossif, 2012; Svenson 1995, 40.

²¹ Thonemann 2016, 155-156.

²² Anagnostou-Laoutides 2012, 3-5; 2017, 155-156; Hoover 1996, 28-29; Iossif 2012.

²³ Hoover 1996, 97; Troncoso 2014, 64.

²⁴ On the Argeads claiming descent from Heracles, see Anson 2013, 19; Erickson 2013, 116; Patterson 2010, 170; Sprawski 2014.

²⁵ Anson 2013, 99; Cawkwell 2006; Turn 2002, 350-373.

²⁶ Erickson 2014, 97; Stančo 2012, 32-33.

²⁷ Anagnostou-Laoutides 2012, 3-5; 2017, 151, 155-156; van der Spek 2009, 110-111.

²⁸ Boyce 1984; Hoover 1996, 48. On images of Ahura Mazda in the Achaemenid period, see Shenkar 2014, 47-50.

²⁹ The names Zeus Megistos (Ahura Mazda), Athena Basileia, Artemis (Anāhita) and Apollo (Mithra) are inscribed in Greek in the stone tablets from Persepolis from the early Hellenistic period (Boyce 1984; Lorber/Iossif 2009, 32; Sherwin-White/Kuhrt 1993, 76; Olbrycht 2016, 100). The identification of Iranian Ahura Mazda with Greek Zeus in the Hellenistic era is implied by the inscription from the Hierathesion of Antiochus I, the King of Commagene, at Nemrud Dağ where the deity is called Zeus-Oromazdes. However, at present, Zeus-Oromazdes is identified with Ahura Mazda, who was associated with Zeus in written sources (Colledge 1986, 14; Facella 2005, 89; Shenkar 2014, 61). Fragments of the statue of the god from the temple at Aī Khanoum were previously identified with Zeus, owing to the Greek manner of representation present in Hellenistic culture (Shenkar 2014, 61).

patrons of royal power. Ruling over the large empire, Seleucus I was eager to be seen as the legitimate ruler and thus adopted local traditions, including royal attributes.³⁰ In this respect, he imitated Alexander the Great.³¹ In Iran, the symbol of Ahura Mazda was a horse; in Babylon, horns symbolised Marduk and the divine status of the king. The motif of the horned horse bound both traditions. Thus, the horned horse on coins issued by the Seleucids could consequently be regarded as a symbol of divine support and of the legitimacy of divine power wielded by this dynasty.³²

On the reverse of the bronze coins of Antiochus I Soter from Europos (Dura), a bow is depicted. The bow was one of the attributes of Apollo,³³ and the influence of Eastern tradition is indicated through the use of this image.³⁴ *Foibos* was a very important deity in the Seleucid tradition.³⁵ In the East, Apollo, like

³⁰ Erickson 2013, 123; Troncoso 2014, 64.

³¹ Olbrycht 2011, 26.

³² There is no record indicating that Seleucus I used the Iranian titlature. This is surprising since his wife was an Iranian princess and the territory of Iran constituted the biggest part of the empire. M.J. Olbrycht does not reject the assumption that in Iran Seleucus could use the Iranian title *khshayatiya* (king), as was perhaps done by Alexander the Great before him (Olbrycht 2013, 171). According to R. Strootman, the first Seleucids were cautious with regard to the Achaemenid title of the Great King (*khshayatiya vazraka*), which became popular in the later period (Strootman 2012, 12-13). Seleucus, following the example of Alexander III, used the title of the King of Asia (*βασιλεὺς δὲ τῆς Ἀσίας*) (Plut. *Alex.* 34.1). Still, the writer remarks that according to a Babylonian document from the time of Antiochus I (BM 35603), the first and most important royal title was *lugal galú* (The Great King). This clearly indicates that the title was used by the Seleucids at least from the time of this king's reign. One cannot preclude that Seleucus I did not use the Achaemenid titlature in every context for political reasons. He was the only successor close to consolidating the empire of Alexander the Great, not only its Asiatic part but also its European portion (Anagnostou-Laoutides 2017, 149; Kosmin 2014, 80; Thonemann 2016, 27-28; Waterfield 2011, 210-111). He must have taken into consideration the Macedonians' negative reception of the Persian title of the Great King, as they had once been against Alexander the Great adopting elements of the Iranian costume and court practices (Mielczarek 2006, 9; Olbrycht 2004, 26-41).

³³ Fontenrose 1988, 116; Iossif 2011, 230-231; Lerner 2017, 3; Moore 1977, 89-90.

³⁴ Graf 2009, 112.

³⁵ Diodorus Siculus mentions that the oracle of this god at Didyma prophesied that Seleucus I would be the future ruler and saluted him as the king (Diod. 19.90.3-4). According to Appian, on the other hand, the oracle advised him not to return to Europe because Asia would be better for him (App. *Syr.* 56). Seleucus was associated with Apollo not only through the prophecies; he was supposed to be his son and was to receive a signet ring with the image of an anchor, which eventually became the emblem of this king (App. *Syr.* 56). For analysis regarding the interpretation of the symbol of the anchor, see Hoover 1996, 65-83; Ogden 2016, 142-152. These were the accounts of bygone events and reflect later traditions regarding Seleucus. According to N.J. Wright, the Seleucids began to claim descent from Apollo at the end of Seleucus' life or at the beginning of Antiochus I's reign as an independent king (Wright 2010, 59).

Zeus, was identified with local deities. In Babylon, for example, Apollo was identified with Nabu.³⁶ Epigraphic sources from the time of Seleucus I³⁷ and representations of Apollo on Seleucus' coins³⁸ confirm the significant role this god played in the ruler's life. It was Antiochus I, though, who worshipped Apollo as the patron god of the dynasty with a greater devotion than Seleucus, who preferred to associate himself with Zeus.³⁹ According to T.E. Newell, the bow on the coins from Dura is not only related to Apollo; it could also refer to the weaponry used by the military units stationed in Europos (Dura).⁴⁰

The bow on the coins of Antiochus I from Europos is clearly a reflex bow. The bow's upper limb is longer than the lower one, which results in a riser being located at the bottom part of the bow. Such asymmetry was an important feature of bows made to be used by horse riders because the shorter lower limb did not get caught on the horse's side, thus allowing bowshots to be more precise.⁴¹ The shape of the bow is clearly of a horsebow type, most likely of Iranian origin.⁴²

In Achaemenid Iran, the bow was the symbol of royal power. The Great Kings were commonly depicted with a bow or as archers, as can be seen on gold and silver coins (Fig. 3).⁴³ The rock reliefs from the Achaemenid period at Behistun⁴⁴ and Naqsh-e Rostam⁴⁵ show kings holding the upper limbs of bows in their left hands, whereas the tips of the bottom limbs are placed on the ground. Their right hands are in a gesture of adoration.⁴⁶ Another type of image featuring an archer should be mentioned here: the type known from the satrapal coin issues. The coins issued by Tarkumuwa, the satrap of Cilicia (c. 380-360 BCE), have on their obverse the image of Baaltarz seated on a diphros, with the legend BLTRZ. The reverse shows a man, the satrap himself, seated on a diphros in

³⁶ Iossif 2011, 250-251.

³⁷ Iossif 2011, 234-236.

³⁸ For a discussion concerning a corpus of representations of Apollo which are presented on the coins of Seleucus I, see Iossif 2011, 237-238, Tab. I.

³⁹ Erickson 2018, 38-39, 63; Hoover 1996, 88; Parker 2017, 219; Wright 2010, 59.

⁴⁰ Newell 1941, 81.

⁴¹ Baumer 2012, 38; Melyukova 1964, 14-15.

⁴² On the Iranian bows in the Achaemenid period, see Bittner 1987, 146-153; Litvinsky 1966, 55; 2001, 38-39; Zutermann 2003, 140-141.

⁴³ Bodzek 2011, 50-70, pl. I 8-17; Garrison 2011, 50-51, fig. 29; Gitler 2011, 108; Godard 1962, pl. 76; Huyse 2005, drawn on page 104; Lerner 2017, 5; Root 1979, 116-118.

⁴⁴ Gitler 2011, 108; Lushey 1968; Root 1979, 59-61, 182-198; Schmitt 2013; Trümpelmann 1967.

⁴⁵ Garrison 2011, 33-40, fig. 5-6; Gitler 2011, 108; Kleiss/Calmeyer 1975, 81-98; Root 1979, 73-76, pl. 12-14; Sarre/Herzfeld 1910, 57-66; Schmidt 1970, 80-90, 108-118, pl. 18-39.

⁴⁶ This manner of depicting archers drew on New Assyrian models. It cannot be precluded that the Persians came across Median iconography using this artistic motif, although the present state of knowledge of Median art is not ample enough to draw firm conclusions (Root 1979, 164-169).

the Iranian costume with a tiara on his head.⁴⁷ He holds an arrow in his right hand, but the arrow's tip is in his left hand, which at the same time is holding the upper limb of a reflex bow whose bottom tip is placed on the ground. Above his left hand, in the upper field, there is a winged disk, and on the left an Aramaic legend reads TRKMW (Fig. 4).⁴⁸ Needless to say, the bow from the aforementioned examples should be understood as a symbol of status and probably a symbol of royal power.

In conclusion, the significance of the bow in Iranian culture and tradition is undeniable. The Iranians were celebrated archers, and they were often represented as such in both Achaemenid⁴⁹ and Greek⁵⁰ iconography. Moreover, the significance of archers and horse-archers in the Achaemenid army is undisputable.⁵¹ The Seleucid army included units of Iranian archers (Diod. 20.113.4). Apollo was depicted as seated on an omphalos with a bow in his left hand on Seleucid coins from the time of Seleucus I.⁵² This image is taken to represent Apollo as the god of war and the protector of the dynasty,⁵³ or to symbolise military victory.⁵⁴ Apollo was represented in Greek iconography as an archer. The motif of the god seated on the omphalos with a bow was known from Greek coins. The obverse of the silver tritartemorions (3/4 obol) minted in the years 400-350 BCE at Sikyon on the Peloponnese featured the image of the god seated on a rock, holding a bow in his left hand.⁵⁵ The reverse of the silver tetradrachms of the king Nikokles of Paphosin Cyprus, issued in c. 316 BCE, depicts Apollo seated on the omphalos in a draped dress with a bow in his left hand and an arrow in his right.⁵⁶ Although the above examples are proof of the use of the image of the seated Apollo with a bow on Greek coins, the motif was not at all predominant among the stock of the god's representations.⁵⁷

⁴⁷ On the tiara as a symbol of power in the Achaemenid and Hellenistic period, see Olbrycht 1997.

⁴⁸ Bodzek 2011, 97, pl. VII, 3; Lerner 2017, 6; Wright 2010, 79, fig. 49.

⁴⁹ Conolly 1998, 52-53, 56; Godard 1962, pl. 54-55; Khorasani 2006, 286-287, fig. 364, drawn a-b.

⁵⁰ Bittner 1987, Taf. 6-7.1, 8.3.

⁵¹ Head 1992, 26, 29, 39-40, 60-62, fig. 12-13; Olbrycht 2004, 88; Sekunda 1992, 18.

⁵² It was one of the most popular motifs used in the coinage of the Seleucids until the time of Seleucus IV (Erickson/Wright 2011, 163; Hoover 1996, 92; Mørkholm 2001, 113-114; Stančo 2012, 33). According to M. Mielczarek, the image of Apollo on Seleucid coins, seated on an omphalos with a bow, was a reference to the Seleucid dynasty's divine descent from Apollo (Mielczarek 2006, 12).

⁵³ Hoover 1996, 94.

⁵⁴ Iossif 2011, 266.

⁵⁵ Iossif 2011, 258, fig. 8.

⁵⁶ Iossif 2011, 259-261, fig. 11; Mørkholm 2001, 58, pl. IV, 62.

⁵⁷ Iossif 2011, 262.

On coins issued by the Seleucids, Apollo holds the upper limb of an undrawn bow, which stands on the ground, in his left hand. Apart from the existing link between this kind of representation of the god and images known from Greek iconography,⁵⁸ the image of Apollo on the omphalos clearly draws on Achaemenid traditions. Furthermore, it needs to be stressed that the image of an archer seated on a diphros and dressed in the Iranian costume provides a clear parallel. This type was minted by Tarkumuwa, the satrap of Cilicia.⁵⁹ The Asian subjects of the Seleucids were acquainted with this imagery, which drew on local traditions, and the bow was interpreted as a symbol of royal power.⁶⁰ In Iran, Apollo was assimilated with Mithra,⁶¹ who was one of the major Iranian deities.⁶² Mithra, like Apollo, used a bow as his weapon. Yasht 10 (Mihra Yasht) mentions the quick arrows (xshviwi-ishūm) (Yt 10.102) he used while riding a horse, and this passage evidently refers to a bow. We can also find the description of the god's chariot accompanied by a thousand bows (hazangrem thanvareitinām) and a thousand arrows (hazangrem ishunām) (Yt 10.128-129). Hence, the representation of Apollo seated on the omphalos with a bow was evidently intentional.⁶³

⁵⁸ Wright 2010, 62.

⁵⁹ P.P. Iossif claims that this iconographic motif is modeled on much older New Assyrian prototypes (Iossif 2011, 252-254).

⁶⁰ Iossif 2011, 257. According to N.C. Wright, the nudity of Apollo, which was typical for Greek iconography but not present in Iranian culture, was the Iranian/Asiatic symbol of royal power when combined with the image of a bow. This conveyed the message that the king should be recognised as *a Greek king ruling over Iranian lands* (Wright 2010, 81). This thesis seems to be an overstatement and is not supported by written testimonies. The very same author remarks that the motif of Zeus Aetophoros that was used in the coinage of Alexander the Great and then continued to be used in the coinage of Seleucus I was borrowed from the Achaemenid satrapal issues featuring the image of an enthroned Baaltarz because it was very popular at that time (Wright 2010, 57-58, fig. 3-4). One may assume, thus, that Macedonian rulers were aware of and acknowledged local iconographic traditions and tried not to impose their own, but rather attempted to use the local ones for their political program and royal ideology (Erickson/Wright 2011, 167). The structure of the population inhabiting the territory of the empire was one of the reasons for such a political attitude since the Asians outnumbered the Macedonians and Greeks (Thonemann 2016, 66). In the opinion of J.F. Lerner, Apollo with a bow on Seleucid coins was a clear reference to Eastern monarchical tradition (Lerner 2017, 15).

⁶¹ Lerner 2017, 13-14; Wright 2010, 77

⁶² Mithra was the patron of contracts and was regarded as a judge as well as the god of war. He rode his chariot across the sky, which expresses the solar aspect of this deity. On Mithra in the Iranian religion, see Boyce 1969; 1982, 15-17, 28-29; 1996, 24-69; Kellens 1978; Malandra 1983, 55-58; Schmidt 2006; Thieme 1960; 1978. No image of Mithra is attested from the Achaemenid period (Shenkar 2014, 102).

⁶³ The motif of a seated man in Iranian costume holding a bow in the manner known from the Seleucid coins was also used in the coinage of the Arsacids (Erickson/Wright 2011, 163, 165-166; Lerner 2017; Wright 2010, 83-85).

It is noteworthy that the bow depicted on the reverse of the coins of Antiochus I from Europos (Dura) is of the reflex type, and therefore it is different from the weapon Apollo is featured with on the coins struck by Antiochus and his father, Seleucus I. The choice of this type of bow was intentional, as the reflex type can also be seen on the bronze coins of Antiochus I, which are dated to the period of the co-regency of Antiochus and Seleucus I (294-281 BCE) and were minted in the so-called Mint 24, located in Drangania or the eastern Arachosia. The obverse bears the head of the young Heracles in a lion scalp, and the reverse depicts a bow in a quiver. The upper limb of the bow helps identify the weapon as a reflex bow. The legend reads ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΝΤΙΟΧΟΥ.⁶⁴ It must be stressed here that the bow was indeed depicted on the coins struck under Seleucus I, but was only a piece of weaponry accompanying Apollo. The bow as an independent motif can be seen on coins issued by Antiochus I, and thus it was he who introduced it to the Seleucid coinage.

The image of Heracles' head is a clear continuation of the imagery used by Seleucus I. The reflex bow in the quiver, though, was a novelty in the Seleucid coinage. Curiously enough, the image appeared on coins minted in the eastern part of the empire where the bow was a commonly used weapon. The image of the mighty hero on the obverse and the weapon on the reverse might be a reference to a battle. There are, however, no written testimonies suggesting which specific battle could be connected with these issues. Nevertheless, it is not implausible to interpret the images from those coins in such a general manner, since Heracles was associated with Verethraghna, the god of Victory. This association was established in Hellenistic times,⁶⁵ but there is no evidence that it occurred during Seleucus I's reign.

The Iranian character of the bow and the quiver might be connected to Mithra, who, according to the Avesta, used a bow (Yt 10.102, 128-129). Furthermore, Verethraghna was his comrade in arms (Yt 10.72, 80). If Heracles was associated with this Iranian god at this time, the image could be related to warfare. It could in fact commemorate an actual battle fought on the eastern outskirts of

⁶⁴ Houghton/Lorber 2002, 94, cat. no. 243

⁶⁵ Bonnet 1992; De Jong 1997, 32-33, 302-304; 2003; Stančo 2012, 137-138. The popularity of Heracles was not limited to the territory of the Iranian Plateau. Representations of the hero have been found in Central Asia, in the northern part of present-day India and as far as China. In each of these regions, the hero received local characteristics and was identified with local counterparts. It needs to be stressed, however, that he never fully lost his typical traits and the features characterising his representation, which were created in Greece. Therefore, he can still be recognised in the iconography of the Far East. For a fuller analysis of this issue, see Hsing 2005.

the Seleucid Empire. At the end of Seleucus' life,⁶⁶ nomads invaded northern Iran and managed to devastate several cities and colonies.⁶⁷ Consequently, Antiochus organised two military campaigns into the enemy's territory.⁶⁸ Unfortunately, the lack of written sources prevents us from connecting the aforementioned coin issues with this military event.

If the bow itself was a symbol of power, it could be interpreted as a symbol of Antiochus' authority as the co-regent of the kingdom. As the ancestor of the Argeads, Heracles was associated with Macedon and the Iranian bow could symbolise the Iranian provinces or, generally speaking, the Asian ones composing the Seleucid kingdom. Such a combination of images could reflect the Macedonian/Greek/Asian character of the empire.

The reflex bow in the quiver was also depicted on the bronze coins of Antiochus struck in Mint 23, located in eastern Syria or Mesopotamia, after Seleucus' death. The obverse depicts a tripod on a round Macedonian shield. The reverse shows a bow in a quiver and the abbreviated or full, depending on the coin issue, version of the royal title and name of Antiochus (Fig. 5).⁶⁹ The interpretation of these coins remains ambiguous. The Iranian bow and the Macedonian shield may refer to the ethnically and culturally heterogeneous character of the empire ruled by Antiochus I Soter. The bow and the shield are general military motifs and do not necessarily refer to a specific military struggle.

⁶⁶ In light of the extant sources, the precise date of this event remains unknown. It is assumed that the earliest probable date would be 293 BC, thus before the appointment of Antiochus I as co-regent to rule over the Iranian provinces. It is usually suspected, though, that the invasion took place at the end of Seleucus I's reign, in the time of the co-regency of Seleucus and his son in the years 292-281 BC. It is most likely that the invasion happened in 281 BC, just before Seleucus' death or after his death in 281 BC (Sherwin-White/Kuhrt 1993, 19; Turn 2002, 117; Wolski 1996, 35-36, note 21; 1999, 27).

⁶⁷ ... *et ipsa contra Parthiae tractum sita, in qua Alexandriam condiderat, qua diruta a barbaris* (Plin. N.H. 6.46-47). When mentioning the invasion, Pliny did not specify the ethnicity of the barbarians. According to J. Wolski, the invaders could have been the Massageteans or Dahae. Those tribes inhabited the regions north of the territory of the Seleucid Empire, and therefore an attack on the Upper Satrapies would be reasonable (Wolski 1996, 36). Taking into account the later invasion of the Parni under the leadership of Arsaces I, who set up the Parthian kingdom, it seems more plausible that the Dahae were the invaders (Olbrycht 1998, 42-43).

⁶⁸ Antiochus I organised two military campaigns in eastern Iran and Central Asia. The army crossed the Jaxartes River (Syr-Daria) (Plin. N.H. 6.49). According to several scholars, the goal of both campaigns was not only to ensure security for the northern frontier of the empire, but also to prepare the army for the conquest of new territories in Central Asia (Olbrycht 1996, 158-162; Sherwin-White/Kuhrt 1993, 19; Wolski 1996, 37-38, note 23; 1999, 27-28).

⁶⁹ Houghton/Lorber 2002, 138, cat. no. 372-374.

One should bear in mind that being an excellent warrior and military commander were extremely important traits in the Hellenistic royal ideology.⁷⁰

However, it is not easy to determine a concrete interpretation of the imagery. The image of the tripod is not a military motif at all, but it was indeed associated with Apollo in the Seleucid coinage. The bow seen on the coins described above was also an attribute of this god. Among the depicted images, only the shield remains controversial. It could nevertheless symbolise the Macedonian origins of Seleucus' dynasty.

To sum up the above-mentioned descriptions of coin issues, it can be stated that when a bow is depicted individually (shown either with or without a quiver) on the coins struck by Antiochus I Soter, it is always a reflex one of the type common in Iran. When the image of Apollo seated on the omphalos is taken into consideration, it can be seen that, on the coins struck by Seleucus I, a kind of deflex bow is always depicted next to Apollo. It has proven to be impossible to determine whether a different bow type conveyed a different symbolic meaning or whether it was the result of applying a different stylistic manner. The representations of Apollo with a bow are in fact a result of the strong

⁷⁰ As P. Thonemann noted: 'War was at the heart of Hellenistic kingship' (Thonemann 2016, 53). Hellenistic monarchies were of a military character, and that feature was common for the Macedonian and Near Eastern cultures (Sherwin-White/Kuhrt 1993, 129-132). E. Bickerman noticed that out of fourteen Seleucid kings ruling between the years 312/311 and 129 BCE, ten kings died during their military campaigns (Bickerman 1983, 10). This was reflected in the manner of representing rulers, as they were often depicted wearing cuirasses or as mounted figures. The image of a helmeted head appeared in the Seleucid coinage in the time of Seleucus I, for instance on the coins from Sardes (Houghton/Steward 1999, pl. P.5.1, 1A; Houghton/Lorber 2002, cat. no. 203; Newell 1938, no. 481-482, pl. XXXVI, 9-10). The image of a rider with a spear featured on coins from Ecbatana (Houghton/Lorber 2002, 260, cat. no. 709), and he was identified as the king (Erickson 2013, 120; Hoover 2002; Newell 1938, 189; Ogden 2017, 61-62; Wright 2010, 43) or Alexander the Great/Dionysos (Houghton/Stewart 1999; Mørkholm 2001, 73; Nefedov 2011; Smith 1988, 60). Representations of the king as a rider with a spear can also be found on the coins of Seleucus II Callinicus (Houghton/Lorber 2002, 274-275, cat. no. 767-768) and Antiochus III the Great (Houghton/Lorber 2002, 461, cat. no. 1259-1963). In Turkey, a head in the Attic helmet was discovered and dated to the second half of the second century BC and has been identified as the portrait of Seleucus I, being a fragment of a statue that has not survived (Houghton 1986; Erickson 2013, 121; Ogden 2017, 61-62). In the temple of Gada at Dura-Europos, there is a relief dated to 159 AD with the representation of Seleucus I wearing a muscle-cuirass with pteryges, a long-sleeved tunic underneath the cuirass and long boots that were typical for riders. He holds a spear in his left hand and has a sword along his left side (Dirven 1999, 112-113; Lichtenberger 2008, 141, pl. LXI; Wright 2010, 44). On fragments of the representations of seven Seleucid rulers found in the Hierothesion at Nemrud Dağ, built by Antiochus I of Commagene, the rulers are presented in muscle-cuirasses (Wright 2010, 44). The aforementioned examples prove that images of kings wearing military attire played an important role in the royal iconography of the Seleucids.

influence of Greek iconography. On the other hand, many types of bows were used in the Seleucid Empire, as in the former Achaemenid Empire,⁷¹ and the implication that one type of weaponry was more prominent than another does not have any firm basis. Therefore, it can be assumed that regardless of the type of bow that is represented on the coins, its symbolic meaning is the same. In the coinage of Antiochus I, the bow was an accompanying motif for the image of Apollo. The bow depicted as an individual motif can be perceived as a reference to this god as well. The tripod shown on the above-mentioned coins from Mint 23 supports this conclusion. The Babylonian written sources indicate that Antiochus I Soter identified Apollo with Nabu, whom he regarded as the son of Marduk. Such associations were an element of the Seleucid dynastical ideology according to which Seleucus I was identified with Marduk/Zeus and Antiochus I was identified with Nabu/Apollo. These identifications and relations drew on the Babylonian tradition.⁷² What is important, however, is that both Babylonian deities were patrons of royal power.⁷³ However, it should be mentioned that similar ideas can be found in the Greek religion as well, supposedly under Oriental (Anatolian or West Semitic) influence.⁷⁴

The dynastic political concepts of Antiochus I, together with the recognition of Seleucus I's primacy⁷⁵ and consequent deification,⁷⁶ were reflected in the

⁷¹ B.A. Litvinsky thought that during the Achaemenid period the Iranians used at least three types of bows: a Median bow, a Persian bow and a Bactrian bow, which was typical for the inhabitants of eastern Iran (Litvinsky 1966, 55; 2001, 38-39). According to Chr. Zutterman, Persians used an Elamite bow ended with nocks in the shape of a duck's head. They also used a much smaller bow that looked similar to the bows used by the Urartian cavalry. Greek iconography offers many examples of representations of the Iranians equipped with Scythian bows. Persian seals and Greek coins bear the image of another type of a bow whose shape is similar to the shape of a Parthian bow found in Yrza (Syria) (Zutermann 2003, 140-141).
Anagnostou-Laoutides 2012, 13-15; 2017, 148-151; Erickson 2011; Hoover 1996, 91; Lerner 2017, 13.

⁷³ In Babylon, the Seleucids clearly drew on the pre-Achaemenid royal ideology and monarchic traditions. By doing so, they were able to present themselves as the legitimate successors of local rulers reigning before the Persian domination. This was evidently a part of their political program, which aimed to garner the loyalty of the Babylonian elites – including priests, who played a significant role in the society – and ensured the internal peace and stability of the kingdom (Anagnostou-Laoutides 2017, 149-150; Sherwin-White/Kuhrt 1993, 39). Antiochus I referred directly to Nabuchodonozor II, who ruled the Chaldean Empire, being the most powerful during his reign when reintroducing the titulature and official formulas from that time into the Babylonian texts (Kuhrt 1987, 55-56; Sherwin-White/Kuhrt 1993, 37).

⁷⁴ F. Graf remarks that in the tradition passed down by Hesiod and Homer, 'Apollo is the oldest son of Zeus... Apollo is his crown prince and, so to speak, designated successor, if Zeus were ever to stop back' (Graf 2009, 112).

⁷⁵ Hoover 1996, 86.

⁷⁶ Iossif 2012.

coinage. In the Bactrian mint, the so-called Mint 26, gold staters⁷⁷ and silver tetradrachms⁷⁸ were struck under Antiochus. The head of Seleucus I, diademed and with horns, was depicted on the obverse; the reverse shows the head of a horned horse and bears the legend reading ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΣΕΛΕΥΚΟΥ. According P.P. Iossif the coins minted in the years 281-278 BCE.⁷⁹ A parallel combination of images and an identical legend can be observed on gold staters,⁸⁰ silver tetradrachms⁸¹ and drachms,⁸² all minted in Carrhae and dated by T.E. Newell to the period after 279 BC.⁸³ Other coin issues, such as silver tetradrachms minted at Sardes,⁸⁴ bronze coins from Europos (Dura)⁸⁵ and gold staters,⁸⁶ silver tetradrachms⁸⁷ and silver drachms⁸⁸ minted at Mint 26, had similar imagery and thus featured the head of Seleucus diademed and with horns on the obverse and the head of a horned horse on the reverse. These coins, however, bear a different legend reading ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΝΤΙΟΧΟΥ. The coins minted at Ai Khanum depict the head of Antiochus I a bit differently. On the obverse of the gold staters,⁸⁹ silver tetradrachms (Fig. 6),⁹⁰ silver drachms⁹¹ and silver hemidrachms,⁹² his head is diademed, but there are no horns. The reverse similarly depicts the head of a horned horse and has the legend ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΝΤΙΟΧΟΥ. A comparative obverse and reverse type can be seen on the bronze coin struck at an unknown mint located in the eastern part of the Seleucid Empire.⁹³

A thematic connection between the above-mentioned coin types is clearly visible. The first two coin types refer to the deification of Seleucus, and this is indicated by the addition of horns to the diadem, symbolising his new super-human or divine status. The first type has the royal title and the name of Seleucus, whereas the second type bears the name of Antiochus, his son and successor. The legends are different, but the images are analogous. As for the third type of the coins that were mentioned in the previous paragraph, the ob-

⁷⁷ Houghton/Lorber 2002, 161, cat. no. 469; Iossif 2012, fig. 21; Wright 2010, 117-118, fig. 67.

⁷⁸ Houghton/Lorber 2002, 161, cat. no. 471; Iossif 2012, fig. 22.

⁷⁹ Iossif 2012.

⁸⁰ Newell 1941, 47-48, cat. no. 784, 786.

⁸¹ Newell 1941, 48, cat. no. 785.

⁸² Newell 1941, 48, cat. no. 787.

⁸³ Newell 1941, 47.

⁸⁴ Houghton/Lorber 2002, 124, cat. no. 322; Wright 2010, 117, fig. 66.

⁸⁵ Houghton/Lorber 2002, 136-137, cat. no. 363; Newell 1941, 79, cat. no. 878-879.

⁸⁶ Houghton/Lorber 2002, 161, cat. no. 470.

⁸⁷ Houghton/Lorber 2002, 161, cat. no. 471.

⁸⁸ Houghton/Lorber 2002, 161, cat. no. 472.

⁸⁹ Houghton/Lorber 2002, 151, cat. no. 426-427.

⁹⁰ Houghton/Lorber 2002, 151-152, cat. no. 428-430.

⁹¹ Houghton/Lorber 2002, 152, cat. no. 431-432.

⁹² Houghton/Lorber 2002, 152-153, cat. no. 433-434.

⁹³ Houghton/Lorber 2002, 475, add. 21.

verse features the name of Antiochus as well as the image of his head. The modifications of coin types should be perceived as the result of Antiochus' royal ideology, resembling that of Seleucus. Seleucus made use of Alexander III's portrait on his coins to draw parallels to the great king in order to legitimise his claim to govern. The addition of horns to Seleucus' diadem and their absence in the case of Antiochus' portrait clearly communicates the gradation of the importance of both rulers.

Antiochus symbolically accepted his father's antecedence, as was the case with Zeus/Marduk and Apollo/Nabu, respectively. Depictions of the horned horse and the fact that the aforementioned coin issues were struck at the mints in Iran suggest that we should view the iconography as the *interpretatio iranica*, along with other connotations and interpretations. In this context, the image of the horned horse may be interpreted as the symbol of Ahura Mazda identified with Zeus/Marduk. The presentation of such images was an advertisement of the major deities' divine support for the Seleucid rulers. Ahura Mazda, like Zeus and Marduk, was the patron of royal power;⁹⁴ this was recorded in the inscription of Darius I where we can read his own words stating that he ruled *vašnā Auramazdāha* (by the favour of Ahura Mazda).⁹⁵

On the coins featuring Seleucus' portrait, the image of the horse's head with horns underlines his relationship with the gods and perhaps the divinity of the king himself.⁹⁶ The same interpretation can probably be assigned to bronze coins depicting the horned head of the horse on the obverse and showing the image of an anchor, which was the personal emblem of Seleucus I, and the legend reading ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΑΝΤΙΟΧΟΥ on the reverse.⁹⁷ These coins were minted at the 'Uncertain Mint 24' in Mesopotamia or the eastern part of the Seleucid kingdom. With regard to the portrait of Antiochus I, the horned horse probably not only alluded to Zeus/Marduk/Ahura Mazda, but also symbolised Seleucus⁹⁸ and, more importantly, was the symbol of the legitimacy of royal power, which Antiochus was eager to establish.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Tuplin 2017, 97-98.

⁹⁵ DB I 11=Kent 1953, 17.

⁹⁶ In the ancient Near Eastern iconographic tradition, the king was often represented with attributes that were typical for the images of gods. However, they do not have to allude to the divine status of the ruler (Winter 2008, 86, 88). This remark is undoubtedly interesting when attempting to interpret the image of horns in the coinage of Seleucus I.

⁹⁷ Houghton/Lorber 2002, 138-139, cat. no. 376-377.

⁹⁸ According to S. Sherwin-White and A. Kuhrt, the image of the horse's head with horns was the personal emblem of Seleucus I, along with the image of an anchor (Sherwin-White/Kuhrt 1993, 23). However this opinion seems to be an overstatement since there are no records supporting this thesis.

⁹⁹ Hoover 1996, 97.

When analysing the imagery on the coinage of Antiochus I Soter, we should bear in mind the context of the coins' production. Taking his dynastic ideology into consideration helps with the interpretation of the images depicted on the coins from Europos (Dura) under examination in the present paper. The horned head of the horse seen on the obverse ought to be interpreted as the symbol of Zeus/Marduk/Ahura Mazda, but may also refer to the deified Seleucus I, who is associated with these gods. The bow depicted on the reverse alludes to Apollo/Nabu/Mithra, but also symbolises Antiochus I.¹⁰⁰ Placing these images on the obverse and the reverse of one coin indicates the close relationship between Seleucus I and his son Antiochus. The relationship between Zeus/Marduk/Ahura Mazda and Apollo/Nabu/Mithra is a divine counterpart to the relationship between the rulers.

Can the bow be understood and interpreted as the personal emblem of Antiochus, much like the anchor is interpreted as the emblem of Seleucus I? Both symbols were evidently associated with Apollo, and they fit with the ideology of the Seleucids, which relates the dynasty with this god. On the other hand, the bow played a particularly large role in the Iranian territories, where, according to testimonies, it was the royal attribute in the Achaemenid period and thus often appeared in representations of the Great Kings.

The iconography of the aforementioned coins corresponds to the imagery on the coin issues struck in Bactria, Sardes, Europos (Dura) and Ai Khanoum, which feature a portrait of Seleucus I wearing the diadem with the bull's horn and a portrait of Antiochus with the diadem lacking any horns whatsoever. The head of a horned horse is the motif that is common for all the described obverse types. Comparative types for the bronze coins minted at Europos (Dura) bearing the images of the horned horse and the bow are the issues from Ai Khanoum and the eastern part of the Seleucid Empire presenting the image of the horned horse's head, the diademed portrait of Antiochus and the legend reading ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΝΤΙΟΧΟΥ. In both cases, the horned horse alludes to Seleucus I and the bow seen on the coins from Europos is replaced by the portrait of Antiochus I on the coins from Ai Khanoum. In spite of the differences regarding the obverse and reverse types of the coins, their iconography fits in with the ideological program of Antiochus. The images were chosen in order to confirm the legitimacy of Antiochus, to present him as both the son of the king and the son of the god. Alexander the Great provided the model for this

¹⁰⁰ This interpretation of the image of a bow as the simultaneous symbol of Apollo and Antiochus I was proposed by T.E. Newell (Newell 1941, 81).

ideology, for he wanted to be perceived as the son of Zeus/Ammon.¹⁰¹ However, this kind of ideology is also reminiscent of the traditions established by monarchies of the ancient Near East.

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¹⁰¹ On the issue of deification, see Badian 1981; Balsdon 1950; Bosworth 1977; 1988, 278-279; Cawkwell 2006; Dreyer 2009; Worthington 2004, 278.

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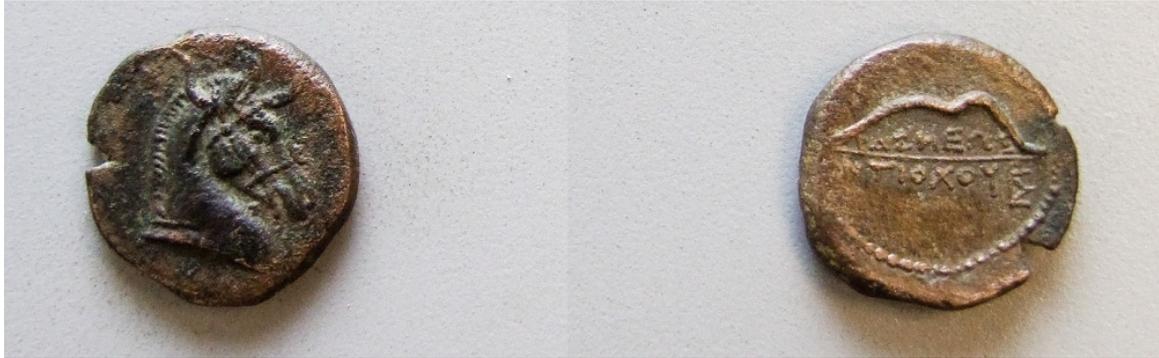
Figures:

Fig. 1. The bronze coin of Antiochus I Soter from Dura (Europos). Obverse: the horned horse's head; Reverse: a reflex bow, ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΝΤΙΟΧΟΥ. <http://b02.deliver.odai.yale.edu/ba/f5/baf5e6af-fd62-4dc4-a8fa-495140bbca5d/ag-obj-164745-001-rpd-large.jpg>. 2001.87.25081. With permission from Yale University Art Gallery.



Fig. 2. The silver tetradrachm of Seleucus I Nicator from Lampsakos. Obverse: the horned horse's head; Reverse: the horned elephant, ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΣΕΛΕΥΚΟΥ. http://www.wildwinds.com/coins/greece/seleucia/seleukos_I/Newell_152_8f_var.jpg. With permission from www.wildwinds.com, ex Tkalec Auction 2000 (February 2000). Unfortunately, the coinage is so far only known from the art market, which means that the origin of the piece quoted here cannot be traced beyond doubt.



Fig. 3. Gold daric of Darius I or Xerxes I. Obverse: the king holding a spear and bow; Reverse: incuse punch. <http://www.cngcoins.com/Coin.aspx?CoinID=84751>. With permission from www.cngcoins.com. Unfortunately, the coinage is so far only known from the art market, which means that the origin of the piece quoted here cannot be traced beyond doubt.



Fig. 4. The silver stater of Tarkumuwa (Datames), satrap of Cilicia and Cappadocia, struck circa 370 BC. Obverse: Baaltarz enthroned, seated on a diphros, BLTRZ; Reverse: a man seated on a diphros with an arrow in his right hand, a reflex bow whose bottom tip is placed on the ground and, in the left upper field, a winged disk, TRKMW. <https://www.numisbids.com/n.php?p=lot&sid=2787&lot=206>. With permission from www.nomosag.com. Unfortunately, the coinage is so far only known from the art market, which means that the origin of the piece quoted here cannot be traced beyond doubt.



Fig. 5. The bronze coin of Antiochus I Soter from Uncertain Mint 23 (in eastern Syria or Mesopotamia). Obverse: a tripod on a Macedonian shield; Reverse: the reflex bow in a quiver, ΒΑΣ (ΙΑΕΩΣ) ΑΝΤ(ΙΟΧΟΥ). <https://www.numis-bids.com/n.php?p=lot&sid=2956&lot=137>. With permission from www.cngcoins.com. Unfortunately, the coinage is so far only known from the art market, which means that the origin of the piece quoted here cannot be traced beyond doubt.



Fig. 6. The silver tetradrachm of Antiochus I Soter from Ai Khanoum or Baktra. Obverse: the diademed head of Antiochus I; Reverse: the head of a horned horse, ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΝΤΙΟΧΟΥ. <https://www.cngcoins.com/Coin.aspx?CoinID=140125>. With permission from www.cngcoins.com. Unfortunately, the coinage is so far only known from the art market, which means that the origin of the piece quoted here cannot be traced beyond doubt.