

# How to remember one's father: paternal images in the Seleucid Court

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This paper explores how Antiochus II maintained and modified the official memory of his father, Antiochus I, as represented on coinage in order to enhance his own claim as the legitimate Seleucid sovereign. Antiochus I had been the first Seleucid king to put a clearly identifiable portrait of himself on the obverse of his coinage.<sup>1</sup> He had also minted the first Seleucid coins with the image of Apollo-on-the-omphalos on the reverse.<sup>2</sup> These two new features had been designed to reinforce his position as the legitimate king. His son and successor, Antiochus II, adopted both of these innovations. He also continued to mint the portrait of his father on his coinage, and he modified his father's image so that it became both more youthful and godlike. This served the dual purpose of having Antiochus I appear more like the youthful familial god as well as blurring the distinction between father and son. In these ways, Antiochus II manipulated the memory of his father and his familial god through his coinage in order to present himself as a legitimate successor. Furthermore, this paper examines how Antiochus II used the memory of his father to create his own image of a ruler that combined both continuity with the past and renewal.

Before looking at Antiochus II, I want to briefly examine how Antiochus I dealt with his father. With Seleucus' death in 281 BC, Antiochus I needed to determine how he was going to present his reign in relationship to that of his father. His father had begun to break away from the imagery of Alexander and may have included his own portraits on coinage,<sup>3</sup> but the sole reign of Antiochus I marked a clear break from this tradition. Antiochus I created a new image which dominated Seleucid coinage for the next century (portrait of reigning king/Apollo-on-the-omphalos), at the same time he promoted his father as the founder of the dynasty.<sup>4</sup> Appian relates that a cult was founded for Seleucus I at Seleucia-in-Pieria.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, a deified image of Seleucus I with bull horns was produced at Sardis along with the new Apollo-on-the-omphalos reverse. Antiochus I used this image of his father at the start of his time in Asia Minor to make his claims as his father's successor. However, he quickly moved to establish his own role as the legitimate sovereign by placing his own image on the obverse. Therefore, he placed Seleucus as

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<sup>1</sup> See Houghton, A. & Lorber, C. (2002) *Seleucid Coins: A Comprehensive Catalogue: Part I: Seleucus I through Antiochus III*, American Numismatic Society, New York, image no. 324 for the introduction of the portrait of Antiochus I.

<sup>2</sup> Introduction at Sardis: *Ibid.* image no. 323; the Apollo only appears on gold coins from the upper Satrapies that are minted c. 187. Cf. *Ibid.* image nos. 163 and 257; Will, E. (1979-1982) *Histoire Politique du Monde Hellénistique (323-30 av. J.-C.)*, La Faculté des Lettres et des Sciences humaines de l'Université de Nancy, Nancy, p. 271 rightly connects these issues with Antiochus I's activity in the region.

<sup>3</sup> Erickson, K. (Forthcoming). 'Seleucus I, Zeus and Alexander', in L. Mitchell and C. Melville (eds.) *Every Inch a King: Comparative Studies in Kings and Kingship in the Ancient and Medieval World*, Brill, Leiden.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Zahle, J. (1990) 'Religious Motifs on Seleucid Coins', in P. Bilde, T. Engberg-Pedersen *et al.* (eds.) *Religion and Religious Practice in the Seleucid Kingdom*, Aarhus University Press, Aarhus, pp. 125-139 for the shift from Zeus to Apollo under Antiochus I.

<sup>5</sup> Appian, *Syr.* 63; Cf. Hannestad, L. & Potts, D. (1990) 'Temple Architecture in the Seleucid Kingdom', in P. Bilde, T. Engberg-Pedersen *et al.* (eds.) *Religion and Religious Practice in the Seleucid Kingdom*, Aarhus University Press, Aarhus, p. 116 for the suggestion that the Doric temple at Seleucia-in-Pieria was the temple to Seleucus I.

ancestor and founder of the dynasty but not the sole focus of the royal house. The role of Seleucus as founder was further emphasised through the continued use of the date of Seleucus' return to Babylon as the starting point for Seleucid chronology.

Whereas Antiochus I generally did not use the image of his father on his coinage and replaced his reverse type, Antiochus II minted coinage with the rejuvenated/idealised image of his father and continued to use the Apollo-on-the-omphalos reverse. The major themes of Antiochus II's coinage appear to exploit the iconography established by his father and establish a coherent dynastic image. In this regard, the Apollo coinage and the idealised portraits of Antiochus I fostered the image of dynastic continuity which stemmed from the idea that Apollo was the ancestor of the Seleucid house.

Antiochus II therefore serves as a useful test case for the success of Antiochus I in establishing a coherent dynastic image that could be adopted by his successors. This dynastic image appears largely through the iconography of Apollo, although the anchor of Seleucus I still played a prominent role. Furthermore, Antiochus II may have sought to identify himself closely with his father's policy as a result of his brother's execution for treason. By not deviating from the established patterns, Antiochus II presented himself as a legitimate successor to Antiochus I and confirms his success in crafting a Seleucid image.

The choice to continue the Apollo origin myth through coinage demonstrates the success of this dynastic mythology in legitimising Seleucid rule. It appears that Antiochus II's policy was to emphasise dynastic continuity along the lines established by his father. One way in which Antiochus II attempted to do this was through the rejuvenation of his father's image. The image of an elderly Antiochus I was intermittently replaced by a younger more idealised portrait of the king.<sup>6</sup> The rejuvenated portrait of Antiochus I was not only younger, but his features are less stark and more godlike and recall many features of Lysimachus' portraits of Alexander.<sup>7</sup> The image of Alexander as an idealized young man contains many of the same elements that appear in the Seleucid imagery of Apollo, most notably his clean-shaven appearance.<sup>8</sup> These portraits attempt to further establish the connection between Antiochus I and his patron and ancestor Apollo and to recall the potent image of Alexander. Despite the fact that these portraits make Antiochus I appear more god-like there is no evidence that he was deified posthumously by his son. However, it is possible that a cult was established for him in the same manner as the one

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<sup>6</sup> Houghton & Lorber (2002) p. 169.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 196.

<sup>8</sup> The bibliography on Alexander's image is vast - for a general selection, see: Bieber, M. (1949) 'The Portraits of Alexander the Great', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 93, Issue 5, pp. 373-427; Dahmen, K. (2007) *The Legend of Alexander the Great on Greek and Roman Coins*, Routledge, London; Emerson, A. (1887) 'The Portraiture of Alexander the Great: A Terracotta Head in Munich (II)', *The American Journal of Archaeology and of the History of the Fine Arts*, Vol. 3 Issues 3/4, pp. 243-260; Fleischer, R. (1996) 'Hellenistic Royal Iconography on Coins', in P. Bilde, T. Engberg-Pedersen *et al.* (eds.) *Aspects of Hellenistic Kingship*, Aarhus University Press, Aarhus, pp. 28-40; Le Rider, G. (1986) 'Les alexandres d'argent en Asie Mineure et dans l'Orient séleucide au III<sup>e</sup> siècle av. J.C. (c. 275-225). Remarques sur le système monétaire des Séleucides et des Ptolémées', *Journal des Savants* (Jan - Sept 1986), pp. 3-51, plates I-IV; Reverdin, O. (ed.) (1976), *Alexandre le Grand: Image et Réalité*, Vandoeuvre, Geneva; Smith, R. R. R. (1988) *Hellenistic Royal Portraits*, Oxford University Press, Oxford and Stewart, A. (1993) *Faces of Power: Alexander's Image and Hellenistic Politics*, University of California Press, Berkeley.

which he had established for his father.<sup>9</sup> The establishment of this cult would have further enhanced Antiochus II's claim to the continuation of his father's empire. Interestingly, intermediate portraits of Antiochus I which possess features of both the idealised king and the elderly king suggest that the rejuvenation of the king was not a coherent empire-wide phenomenon but was instead a gradual process.<sup>10</sup> This may have been a result of Antiochus II gradually introducing the cult of his father while simultaneously bringing his image in line with that of his father. The transformation of the image of Antiochus I on his son's coinage reveals an attempt to link the two reigns, as the rejuvenated image brought Antiochus I's image closer in age and appearance to that of his son it glorified both monarchs, thereby stressing dynastic continuity and stability.

In addition to the Apollo coinage, Antiochus II also continued the Heracles coinage of his father. As in the case of Antiochus I, this coinage stressed the king's accomplishments in Asia Minor and his role as protector of the cities. The Heracles coinage stressed dynastic continuity but did so in a more specific manner than the Apollo coinage. On all of the Heracles coinage, Antiochus I is depicted on the obverse. In all cases he is depicted in various states of rejuvenation and idealisation.<sup>11</sup> This youthful image helped tie the memory of the king to Antiochus II. The issuing of this coinage would have helped to present Antiochus II as the legitimate successor to his father as the protector and saviour of the cities of Asia Minor. Just as Antiochus I had received his divine epithet, *Soter* (Saviour), from the Greek cities;<sup>12</sup> Antiochus II received his, *Theos* (God), from the Milesians.<sup>13</sup> The concentration of this coinage type in Asia Minor may have been due to an attempt by Antiochus II to link his father's victories with Antiochus II's successful expansion in Asia Minor during the Second Syrian War.<sup>14</sup> Thus the Heracles coinage helped continue the tradition of a divine saviour of the cities of Asia Minor. This likely also helped Antiochus II position himself as the legitimate and worthy successor to his father.

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<sup>9</sup> The most important discussions of ruler cult for the Seleucids are: Bevan, E. R. (1901) 'The Deification of Kings in the Greek Cities', *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 64, Issue 16, pp. 625-639; Bikerman, E. (1938) 'Anonymous Gods', *Journal of the Warburg Institute*, Vol. 1, Issue 3, pp. 187-196; Chanotis, A. (2003) 'The Divinity of Hellenistic Rulers', in A. Erskine (ed.) *A Companion to the Hellenistic World*, Blackwells, Oxford, pp. 431-445; Habicht, C. (1970) *Gottmenschen und Griechische Städte*, C.H. Beck Verlagbuchhandlung, München; Ma, J. (2000) *Antiochos III and the Cities of Western Asia Minor*, Oxford University Press, Oxford; Van Nuffelen, P. (1999) 'Le culte des souverains hellénistiques', *Ancient Society*, Vol. 29, pp. 175-189 and Van Nuffelen, P. (2004) 'Le culte royal de l'empire des Séleucides: une réinterprétation', *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*, Vol. 53, Issue 3, pp. 278-301. While a date during the reign of Antiochus III is normally considered the starting point for a central ruler cult, Altay Coşkun and I are currently working on a more convincing date and historical context.

<sup>10</sup> E.g. Houghton & Lorber (2002) image no. 499.

<sup>11</sup> Perhaps Temnus: *Ibid.*, image no. 597; Myrina: *Ibid.*, image nos. 500 and 501; Cyme: *Ibid.*, image nos. 503-505; Phocaea: *Ibid.*, image nos. 509-512 and perhaps Smyrna: *Ibid.*, image no. 516.

<sup>12</sup> See Coşkun, A. (Forthcoming). 'Galatians and Seleucids: A century of conflict and cooperation', in K. Erickson & Ramsey, G. (eds.) *Seleucid Dissolution: The Sinking of the Anchor*, Franz Steiner Verlag, Wiesbaden, pp. 109-132 *contra* Habicht (1970) for the argument that the Soter cults of Asia Minor may have been for Antiochus II rather than Antiochus I. I believe that the Soter cults were established for Antiochus I and possibly extended under Antiochus II to form a more extensive cult of both kings.

<sup>13</sup> Appian, *Syr.* 65.

<sup>14</sup> Houghton & Lorber (2002) p. 168.

The coinage of Antiochus II which features the portraits of his father is remarkably consistent with his father's coinage and therefore can best be explained as an attempt to represent dynastic continuity through the continuation of coin types. I will now turn to new innovations on bronze coinage which helped to create an image of dynastic continuity. One of the most interesting ways in which Antiochus II played with the memory of his ancestors was to combine the Apollo symbols adopted by Antiochus I and the personal symbols of Seleucus I on his bronze coinage. In Asia Minor, Antiochus II's most common bronze coinage was of an Apollo/Tripod type. This coinage which featured a laureate head of Apollo (with various lengths of hair) facing right on the obverse, and a tripod on the reverse.<sup>15</sup> Sardis produced seven series of this type which emphasised Seleucid relations to Apollo and his oracular power. The tripod often rests on an anchor in the series. This represents both the continuance of the Seleucid house, the Apollo symbolism of Antiochus I rests on the foundation of the anchor symbol of Seleucus I.

Coins produced at the Seleucia-on-the-Tigris combine the tripod with symbols of Seleucus rather differently. The reverse of these coins feature a tripod ornamented with two horned horse foreparts from which fillets hang.<sup>16</sup> These coins demonstrate the same ideological message as the tripod resting on the anchor, representing Seleucus by his horned horse image than the anchor.<sup>17</sup>

Antiochus II worked to foster the memory of his father in a way that enhanced his legitimacy in two ways. First, by issuing portraits of his father he reinforced his role as heir. The links between the heir and the former ruler would have been strengthened by the rejuvenation of the elder king, perhaps suggesting the new king was a rebirth of the old king linking both to the dynastic god Apollo. Secondly, on bronze coinage, Antiochus II stacked Seleucid dynastic images in a way that could represent the entire dynasty. In this way, he created a numismatic memory of the creation and rule of the dynasty by his family.

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<sup>15</sup> Sardis: *Ibid.*, image nos. 520, 522-527; Sardis types from other mint(s): *Ibid.*, image nos. 532-533; Perhaps Tralles: *Ibid.*, image no. 538; Antioch-on-the-Orontes: *Ibid.*, image no. 575.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, image nos. 594-597.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Erickson (Forthcoming) for the argument that the horned horse is a symbol associated with Seleucus I rather than Alexander and that it does not depict Bucephalus.

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**Simon – I've been in regular contact with Kyle regarding his referencing style, etc – he's seen this final copy of the article and is very happy for it to be published at it is now.**