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**“Seleucid Power – An Empire of Reconceptualization”  
(19 October 2022)**

(The paper will be in English, not in French, as previously announced)

**Seleukid Lecture Series 4.2**(11 am EDT / Toronto Time)

Joint Event with the Nancy Study Group, hosted at the French School at Athens  
as part of the Conference

**Crises, effondrements et rétablissements de l’autorité séleucide  
Crisis, Collapse and the Recovery of Seleukid Royal Authority  
(6 pm Athens Time)**

Abstract:

How does one understand crisis and recovery in the Seleucid empire? In its c. 250 years of existence, the empire faced multiple crises: 1) the instability of monarchy, particularly following military losses or when kings were young and inexperienced; 2) Peripheral pressures whereby the size of the empire required the state to adopt creative solutions with local dynasts and power-holders in order to uphold its power and authority in these peripheral regions of the empire; 3) The presence of multiple kings which led to the state’s loss of its monopoly of power and enabled local actors used the presence of multiple kings to their advantage; and, 4) finally, the influence of foreign powers, the Ptolemies, the Attalids and ultimately Rome, whose presence further undermined the Seleucid kings’ monopoly of power. Yet despite these challenges, the Seleucid kings recovered from many of these crises and reinvented their empire.

But how are historians to interpret these phenomena more conceptually? Was the Seleucid state an empire that fundamentally reacted threats and challenges? Was the king essentially a fire marshal of his empire, not only in geographic terms but also in the reimagination of both the royal persona and the administrative apparatuses responding to the challenges of its time? Much of the evidence may support this conclusion.

At the same time, our focus on crisis and recovery assumes an unspoken form of the state that would exist if crises did not occur. This paper shall interrogate the notion of royal reaction and of the Seleucid state without crises, and will question whether instead the Seleucid empire had innovation build into its fabric—i.e., a kingdom and empire where the need to pivot was part of the normal course of events. In this framework, this paper will also investigate whether conservative elements—hearkening back to memories of the past—may ultimately be outliers in a series of new directions performed by the kings.