

### Seleukid Lecture Series III

March 16, 2022

#### Dynastic versus Civic Ideology: Reinterpreting the Apameia Foundation Mosaics

A three-layered foundation mosaic probably from the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE was unearthed in Syrian Apameia in an illegal excavation of 2011. It disappeared on the black market and is still searched for by Interpol, but photographs began circulating from early on. The ensemble is significant not least because they depict the only extant portraits of four named individuals: Archippos, Antipatros, Kassandros and Apama.

The upper registry shows Archippos performing a bull sacrifice while surrounded by Kassandros and Antipatros. Previously, Archippos was regarded as the mythical founder king of Apameia's predecessor Pella (following Oppian, *Cyneg.* 2.100–158), whereas Antigonos Monophthalmos was considered the historical *ktistes* of the first Hellenistic colony (as in Syrian Antioch). Based on the mosaic, M.T. Olszewski and H. Saad now regard Archippos as a Macedonian official serving Kassandros or Antipatros around the time of the conference at Triparadeisos (320 BCE).



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The second registry seems to be depicting the refoundation of the city as Apameia around 300 BCE: Seleukos I oversees the construction of the city wall, while his wife Apama and his son Antiochos I are offering money to the city. Peculiarly, the three main agents of the upper registry reappear, most prominently Archippos, who is seated between Seleukos and Apama, whereas Antipatros and Kassandros take rear positions.



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Olszewski and Saad maintain the view of A.S. Hollis that the foundation legends gained their official shape through Euphorion, a court poet under Antiochos III around 200 BCE. However, the assumption that non-Seleukid rulers were given a prominent role in an account crafted at the court of Antiochos III does not strike me as very likely. I would rather suggest that the Seleukid legend supported a dynastic ideology. It may well be that the figure of Archippos was invented by Euphorion to help obliterate the historical founders of Pella and create a heroic model for Seleukos instead. Hollis suggestion that Archippos is a speaking name ('Horse Ruler') inspired by the royal stables of Apameia (cf. Strabo 16.2.10) remains very plausible. In contrast, the model for the Late Roman mosaic should be dated into the post-Seleukid period, when the nobility of the city was to be praised. The heterogeneous composition points to the time of Hadrian when Apameia was rebuilt after an earthquake and legendary Greek founders were *en vogue*.

But this is not yet where a critical investigation should halt. A closer look at the figures on the mosaic reveals inconsistencies between the indicated status of certain figures and their alleged identities. Once suspicious, one will also observe that the portraits of Antipatros and Archippos differ significantly between the two registries. The problems can be resolved if we separate the iconographic tradition of the mosaics from the legends. I shall argue that the sources of the upper and middle registry depicted Seleukos and his family in two different phases of the same foundation of Apameia. In contrast, a Roman probably of the Hadrianic period reinterpreted the upper scene as the second foundation of the place (then as Pella) by Kassandros and Antipatros with the help (or blessing?) of Archippos. The middle scene then represents a third foundation (then as Apameia) by Seleukos and his family, who are shown as enjoying the support of the previous founders.

#### Selected References

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