JOHN D. GRAINGER, *THE RISE OF THE SELEUKID EMPIRE (323–223 BC): SELEUKOS I TO SELEUKOS III*, BARNSLEY: PEN AND SWORD MILITARY, 2014, XIV+242 S.

Even if John Grainger (further G.) is right in his observation that two real comprehensive accounts of the Seleukid kingdom, E.R. Bevan's of 1902 and A. Bouche-Leclerq's of 1913, are old and dated by now (xiii–xiv), last decades have brought plethora of new books on the Seleukids and their empire: the topic seems to have regained the full interest of scholarship. The best testimony is G.'s prolific production of no less than nine books,[1] now augmented with this monograph, by the author's announcement, the first in three-book series on Seleukid history.

G.'s newest book is organized into 15 chapters, basically in chronological order. The first two relate to political events from the death of Alexander until Seleukos' return to Babylon. His chapter three begins with characteristic of Babylonia in the late-Achaemenid and early--Hellenistic period, with right attention paid to the strength of local culture and importance of local elite and Akkadian language in business and administration, even if G.'s statement on purely Babylonian Uruk (33–34) is clearly exaggerated since there was a Greek community there too. With chapter four ("Seleukos' First Kingdom") the regular narrative of military--cum-political history resumes, covering the events from the beginning of Seleukos' expedition to Babylonia after the battle of Gaza to the end of hostilities between him and Antigonos in 308 or 307 BC, with a presumed peace treaty between the two. In the chapter five ("Expedition to the East") G. persuasively argues for the dates of the expedition 306–302 rather than 308–302 BC, while his chapter six ("The Grand Alliance") contains a detailed reconstruction of the Ipsos campaign. In the chapter seven ("New Enmities, New Cities") the battle narrative largely gives way to description of political developments after Ipsos and to Seleukos' colonization in Syria. G. maintains that in the king's original plan Seleukeia in Pieria and not Antioch on the Orontes was to be the "royal city", the principal settlement in Seleukid Syria (94). G. prudently admits that his calculations of population of Seleukid cities is speculative (97–98). Chapter eight ("Antiochos in the East") introduces Antiochos whose

[1] *Seleukos Nikator: Constructing a Hellenistic Kingdom*, London 1990; *The Cities of Seleukid Syria*, Oxford 1990; *Hellenistic Phoenicia*, Oxford 1991; *A Seleukid Prosopography and Gazetteer*, Leiden 1997; *The Roman War of Antiochos the Great*, Leiden 2002; *Alexander the Great Failure: The Collapse of the Macedonian Empire*, London 2007; *The Syrian Wars*, Leiden 2010; *The Seleukid Empire of Antiochus III (223–187 BC)*, Barnsley 2015; *The Fall of the Seleukid Empire 187–175 BC*, Barnsley 2015; *Syria: An Outline History*, Barnsley 2016.

joint kingship with Seleukos G. dates to 292 BC (102–103), apparently being unaware of the cuneiform evidence to the joint kingship already on 18 November 294 BC.[2] G. claims that Seleukos felt the necessity to remove Antiochos and his Antigonid wife Stratonike from the Mediterranean where they might be susceptible to Antigonid influence and thus dangerous to Seleukos as the principal reason of Antiochos' appointment to run the East of the empire. More in line with mainstream historiography G. credits Antiochos with extensive program of founding or re-founding cities in Central Asia. The best known of them is Ai Khanoum. The city's unusual urban plan with over half of its taken over by public space has lead G. to the conclusion that it was not as much a regular city as an administrative center stuffed by imperial bureaucracy (109–110). Chapter nine ("Seleukos in the West") covers the events down to the death of Seleukos I at the hand of Ptolemy Keraunos, with much stress upon Seleukos' urban foundation program in Syria. Chapter ten ("Antiochos I and the Galatians") deals with the turbulent events in Asia Minor after the death of Seleukos I to reasserting Seleukid authority by Antiochos I through his successful dealings with the Galatians. G. prefers the traditional date of 275 BC over recently popular 268 of 267 BC dates for Antiochos' famed battle of elephants which was the high point of the war with Galatians (139–141) from which the Seleukid rule emerged much weakened to the benefit of Greek cities and local lords who had to handle the Galatians largely on their own. Chapter eleven ("The New State") is evenly split between a cautious reconstruction of political events in Syria and the East of the empire mostly from fragmentary Babylonian evidence and analysis of the shape the Seleukid kingdom took under Antiochos I. G. tries to build arguments for its development from a satrapy-based empire into one in which larger units, governed by viceroys, dominated, with the special position of the Syrian Seleukis, split between cities and ruled directly by the king (146–149). G. convincingly shows that the Seleukid policy towards various parts of their realm and cities within them was nuanced, from respecting semi-independence of Greek cities in Asia Minor, to Macedonian-style government in Seleukis where responsibilities were shared between kings' *epistatai* and local councils and assemblies, to cities of Babylonia dominated by priests of local gods (149–154). He shows this patchwork system as clumsy but effective. In chapter twelve ("Creeping Imperialsim") G. reviews the extensive activity of Antiochos I in planting new or re-founding existing cities in Asia Minor in relation to his strategy of keeping local powers (Pergamon, Galatians) in check,

[2] *BM* 109941. Cf. T. Boiy, *Late Achaemenid and Hellenistic Babylon*, Leuven–Paris–Dudley, MA 2004, 138–139.

securing the Royal Road and diminishing the Ptolemaic influence in the region. In chapter thirteen ("Antiochos II") G. continues the narrative of the reign of Antiochos II, first with developments in Asia Minor where he links the emergence of a string of independent or semi--independent states to the Second Syrian War which G., nevertheless, perceives as ending on Seleukid terms. Chapter fourteen ("War, Collapse and Fragmentation") relates the troublesome period after the death of Antiochos II. G. shows that although the Third Syrian War brought very limited territorial loss, it dented the prestige of Seleukos II, while the war with Antiochos Hierax brought about a division of the empire. G., following Holt's reconstruction of events in the east of the empire, has Arsakes conquer Parthia in 247 BC and beat off Seleukos' II counterattack in the mid-230s BC, pointing out to a string of incidents of fighting in Babylon which further debilitated Seleukos' war-making potential in the East. Chapter fifteen ("Failure") continues the narrative of setbacks faced by Seleukos II: the breakup of the Seleukid order in Asia Minor where Attalos proclaimed independence having defeated both the Galatians and Seleukid forces. The chapter (and the whole book) ends with the death of Seleukos II and his son Alexander/Seleukos III, none of whom was able to reverse the seemingly unstoppable disintegration of the Seleukid empire, around one hundred years after the death of Alexander the Great with whose passing the book begins.

Any book on Hellenistic history is source-dependent with much more limiting influence of inadequate evidence than in the case of academic works on any other period of Greek and Roman history. And so is this one, covering the first one hundred years of Seleukid history, yet with bulk of narrative devoted to Seleukos I and Antiochos I (323–281 BC) in chapters 1–12 (1–171), leaving only three chapters and 62 pp. to the remaining 48 years of the period covered in it. This is largely due to the fact that Diodorus ends with the battle of Ipsos, usable Plutarch's lives with the death of Demetrios which leaves G. with much reduced input in the realm of classical literature. And, as almost always in books on Seleukid history, the dearth of ancient continuous accounts inhibits modern historians' ability to handle the matter in the same way they do while making use of their colleagues' from classical antiquity books.

For the most part this book is a traditional rendition of political and military history, with a large number of speculative reconstructions of the decision-making process and movements of armies, often tedious to follow, among other things, for lack of maps in the text. G. takes interest as well in the marriage policy of the Seleukids showing how, by the mid-third c. BC, the dynasty became integrated in the network of royal families of Asia Minor. Apart from military and political affairs G. pays a lot of attention to founding new cities or re-founding

the existing ones by Seleukos I and Antiochos I, in general following his earlier books and those of G. Cohen, and with unmasked appreciation of Seleukos' urban program in the Syrian Seleukis (93–98, 113–115). G.'s interest lies primarily in classical literary sources and in the sort of history they cover. Thus he is much less involved in what has been the primary interest of modern historiography of the recent decades: analyzing archaeological evidence and plentiful cuneiform sources (e.g. by Jursa and Boiy, neither referred to by G.), unless they provide information of direct importance to reconstructing political and military events. G.'s approach is traditional also in the way how it is kings-orientated, with other entities, cities in the first place, cast to the role of subjects and not free agents in politics. In G.'s narrative cities are almost always controlled by a king, not allied with a king. One reason for this approach certainly is underuse of inscriptions generated by Hellenistic cities, even those of the first range, fielding armies and waging wars on their own, like Miletus. Thus both his bibliography and reference do not betray much familiarity with copious modern literature on Greek cities of Asia Minor, except for J. Ma's book.[3] Or with all his interest in royal history, G. largely stays clear of issues of organization of the Seleucid empire, referring neither to Bickerman nor to Capdetrey.[4] Nor is G. interested in economic history, to the exclusion even of the most important modern books, e.g. of Jursa;[5] nor in culture, citing neither standard works on archaeology, architecture, art, not the innovative book of A. Primo on the Seleucid court as a place of literary production.[6]

At places G. is cavalier with his sources, e.g.: "Seleukos … had been born in Macedon about the same time as Alexander the Great, in the mid-350s. (This near-coincidence was later developed into an actual by his flatterers)", is allegedly based on Just. XV 4.2–10 (13, n. 1), but in Justin there not a hint to support any of G.'s claims. The same goes for G.'s invention of Seleukos' position of Philip's II royal page (13), or that G. shares often repeated false statement that all Alexander's commanders, except for Seleukos, repudiated their Iranian wives once Alexander died (14), even if we know that some kept them, e.g. Eumenes. In places G. follows antiquated academic literature, e.g. dating the invasion of Egypt by Artaxerxes III to 343 BC (15), even if L. Depuydt has shown convincingly that it happened

[3] J. Ma, *Antiochos III and the Cities of Western Asia Minor*, Oxford 2000.
[4] E.g.: E.J. Bickerman, *Institutions des Séleucides*, Paris 1938; L. Capdetrey, *Le pouvoir séleucide: territoire, administration, finances d'un royaume hellénistique, 312–129 avant J.-C.*, Rennes 2007.
[5] M. Jursa, *Aspects of the Economic History of Babylonia in the First Millennium BC: Economic Geography, Economic Mentalities, Agriculture, the Use of Money and the Problem of Economic Growth*, Münster 2010.
[6] A. Primo, *La storiografia sui Seleucidi da Megastene a Eusebio di Cesarea*, Pisa 2009.

ca. 340 BC.[7] G. believes or lets his readers believe that the army assembly was a traditional Macedonian institution (20), not making reference to better-founded opposite interpretations of assemblies of soldiers.[8] While discussing Antigonos' declaration of freedom of Greeks G. writes that it was contrary to Macedonian dictatorial policy (20–21), completely overlooking Alexander's restoration of freedom of Greeks of Asia.[9] In spite of the vast modern scholarship on Mesopotamia under the Persian rule,[10] G. believes that in the 4th c. BC Babylon was in decline, having been harmed by the Persians whom the Babylonians allegedly opposed (28). There is a fair number of misspelling both of modern and ancient names, e.g. Polymelitos (63, 64, 108) for Polytimetos, although not much above regular editorial standards. More serious shortcoming are inadequate maps, only three in number and quite schematic without important geographical features, relief in the first place.

G.'s book will be surely appreciated by the general reader interested in the traditional political and military history. The other will still have to wait for a comprehensive modern account of the Seleukid history.

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[7] L. Depuydt, "New Date for the Second Persian Conquest, End of Pharaonic and Manethonian Egypt: 340/39 B.C.E.", *JEH* 3.2 (2010), 191–230. Now see also A. Wojciechowska, *From Amyrtaeus to Ptolemy: Egypt in the Fourth century B.C.*, Wiesbaden 2016, 7–20.
[8] E.g. E.M. Errington, "The Nature of the Macedonian State under the Monarchy", *Chiron* 8 (1978), 77–133.
[9] On that see: K. Nawotka, "Freedom of Greek Cities in Asia Minor in the Age of Alexander the Great", *Klio* 85 (2003), 15–41.
[10] E.g. A.L. Oppenheim, *The Babylonian Evidence of Achaemenian rule in Mesopotamia*", [in:] I. Gershevitch (ed.), *Cambridge History of Iran*, II, Cambridge 1985, 529–587; A. Kuhrt, S. Sherwin-White, *The Transition from Achaemenid to Seleucid Rule in Babylonia: Revolution or Evolution?*, [in:] H. Sancisi-Weerdenburd (ed.), *Achaemenid History* 8 (1994), 311–327; T. Boiy, *Late Achaemenid and Hellenistic Babylon*, Leuven–Paris–Dudley, MA 2004.