

Heliodorus

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Heliodorus of Antioch (ca. 220–175 BCE), the son of Aischylos, was a Seleucid courtier and high official in the first half of the second century BCE. Heliodorus was one of the leading *philoï* (“friends”) of SELEUKOS IV PHILOPATOR (187–175), and after the king’s death he became regent for his infant son. Seleukos and Heliodorus were of the same age and had served together as royal pages at the court of ANTIOCHOS III MEGAS, Seleukos’ father – hence Heliodorus’ court title “foster-brother of the king.” He finally rose to the rank of *epi ton pragmaton*, “chief minister,” and was honored with a statue on DELOS, which was dedicated by the king himself (OGIS 247). Heliodorus remains, however, best known for his role in 2 Maccabees: while ordered by the king to expropriate the treasure of the temple of Jerusalem, he was almost destroyed by a sudden epiphany of the temple god, who appeared in the guise of a fearsome horseman aided by two angelic youths (2 Macc 3:24–7). Heliodorus’ presence in Jerusalem ca. 180 is indirectly confirmed by a royal decree appointing him caretaker of the sanctuaries of Phoenicia and Syria (Cotton and Wörrle 2007; Jones 2009), and he may be the same man as the tax collector Heliodoros mentioned in a papyrus from Dura-Europos (*P.Dura* 15). After the assassination of Seleukos in September 175 – of which Appian (*Syr.* 45) accuses Heliodorus – Heliodorus became regent for the king’s five-year-old successor, Antiochos the Child, together with his mother, Laodike. When ANTIOCHOS IV EPIPHANES seized power one month later, Heliodorus was executed.

SEE ALSO: Appian of Alexandria; Court, Hellenistic; Epiphany, Greece and Rome; Friends of the king; Phoenicia, Phoenicians; Seleucids; Syria (pre-Roman).



Figure 1 Heliodorus driven from the Temple. Illustration by Gustave Doré, 1865.

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