

BABYLONIAN, MACEDONIAN, KING OF THE WORLD: THE ANTIOCHOS CYLINDER FROM BORSIPPA AND SELEUKID IMPERIAL INTEGRATION

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‘Antiochos the Great King, [...] king of the world, king of Babylon, king of countries, [...], foremost son of Seleukos, the king, the Macedonian [...] am I’.¹ Thus begins the Cylinder of the Seleukid ruler Antiochos I Soter. This beautifully preserved cuneiform document from Seleukid Mesopotamia dated to 268 BCE has long been recognized as a crucial source for understanding Macedonian imperialism in the Middle East.² A foundation inscription found intact in the sanctuary of the Babylonian god Nabû at Borsippa, the Cylinder offers a unique snapshot of the empire’s attitude towards indigenous populations and local culture. Attempts at analysis are still rare, however, as the Cylinder has been appropriated as evidence in support of the postcolonial paradigm that emphasizes the continuity of

¹ *ANET*³ 317 = Austin 1981, no. 189, ll. i.1-6. Throughout the article I have used the translation of the Cylinder by M. Stol and R.J. van der Spek: preliminary edition online at www.livius.org. Abbreviations used in this paper: *ABC* = A.K. Grayson ed., *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles* (Locust Valley 1975); *ANET*³ = J.B. Pritchard ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (3rd ed. Princeton 1969); *CAD* = A.L. Oppenheim et al., eds., *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago* (Chicago 1965); *BCHP* = R.J. van der Spek and I.L. Finkel, *Babylonian Chronicles of the Hellenistic Period* (forthcoming; preliminary edition online at www.livius.org); *BM* = British Museum, London; *SE* = Seleukid Era.

² I define ‘empire’ with Barkey 2008, 9, as ‘a large composite and differentiated polity linked to a central power by a variety of direct and indirect relations, where the center exercises political control through hierarchical and quasi-monopolistic relations over groups different from itself. These relations are, however, regularly subject to negotiations over the degree of autonomy of intermediaries in return for military and fiscal compliance’. Cf. d’Altroy 2001, 125: ‘The outstanding feature of preindustrial empires was the continually metamorphosing nature of relations between the central powers and the societies drawn under the imperial aegis’. New approaches to premodern empires emphasizing network relations, negotiation and change go back to the basic notion of Mann 1986 that tributary land empires ‘are better understood as intersecting, often shifting networks of power than as rigidly structural polities’ (Hämäläinen 2008, 441), and supersede the ‘postcolonial’ association of premodern empires with the European colonial empires of the Modern Age, as was done especially in the 1970s and 1980s (cf. Bang & Bayly 2011, ix, who dismiss this equation by simply speaking of ‘precolonial land empires’). With ‘imperialism’ I mean the actual practice of empire (conquest, war-making, control of resources, tribute collecting, gift exchange, negotiation, patronage etc); see also the remarks on political diversity as a defining aspect of empires in n. 5, below.

Near Eastern culture in the Hellenistic East. Only very recently have new readings of the Cylinder been proposed.³

It is not my intention to give a full analysis of the Cylinder. I will take the Antiochos Cylinder as a point of departure to investigate the entanglement of the global and the local in an imperial context, viz., the Seleukid Empire. More specifically, the aim of this paper is to explore the hypothesis that the contact zone where the encounters between city and empire in the Seleukid Middle East took place was, apart from the court, the religious sphere, particularly local sanctuaries and local cults.

Taking my cue from Charles Tilly's model of state formation, I understand the Seleukid Empire as basically a negotiated enterprise.⁴ The empire was in essence a tribute-taking hegemonial system overlaying a variety of different peoples, religions, and, most importantly, different polities.⁵

In Tilly's model for understanding the dynamics of early modern state formation, which in an adapted form can work for the Hellenistic world as well,⁶ the fundamental entanglement of monarchies and cities is emphasized and explained: monarchies can in principle coerce cities into submission but they are also dependent on cities because they need the surpluses collected at civic markets to finance and support their coercive means. The use of military force against walled cities, often disposing of their own military apparatus or protected by rival imperial powers, moreover is costly and time-consuming.⁷ Cities in their turn can be

³ Erickson 2011; Kosmin forthcoming.

⁴ Tilly 1990; 1994.

⁵ As modern scholars often find characteristic of empires in general; cf. the definitions by, e.g., Sinopoli 1994, 159 ('composed of a diversity of localized communities and ethnic groups, each contributing its unique history and social, economic, religious, and political traditions'); Howe 2002, 15 ('by definition big, and they must be composite entities, formed out of previously separate units. Diversity [...] is their essence'); Barkey 2008, 9 ('large composite and differentiated polities'); and Turchin 2006, 3 ('given the difficulties of communication in pre-industrial times, large states had to come up with a variety of ad hoc ways to bind far-flung territories to the center. One of the typical expedients was to incorporate smaller neighbors as self-contained units [...] leaving their internal functioning alone. Such processes of piecemeal accumulation usually lead to complicated chains of command and the coexistence of heterogeneous territories within one state'). Pace Sommer 2000, who assumes a conscious choice for a policy of 'indirect rule' in Seleukid Babylonia: the Seleukids, like other imperial powers in the Ancient Near East, presumably did not have much of a choice in this respect.

⁶ Strootman 2007, esp. 26-30; 2011b.

⁷ In the Hellenistic Age, both the number of walled cities as well as the strength of civic fortifications increased greatly, notably in Greece, Asia Minor and the Black Sea region, as several archaeological sites still impressively show (e.g. Messene, Kaunos, Perge); for a quick overview consult Nossouf 2009, see further *i.a.*, Winter 1971 *passim*; McNicoll 1972 and 1997; Wassowicz 1986; Avram 2005. The archaeology of imperial strongholds such as Demetrias, Dura Europos, Jebel Khalid, or Antiocheia-in-Margiana (Merw), show that these were heavily fortified, too. The archaeological record from towns in early Hellenistic Palestine shows a strong increase in the building or reconstruction of fortifications, perhaps as a result of Ptolemaic-Seleukid rivalry, cf. Tal 2011. That cities had fighting capabilities of their own in the form of mercenaries and/or citizen troops is apparent from the active involvement of many of them in the wars of the Hellenistic Age; see in general Ma 2000; Chaniotis 2004, 18-43.

dependent on monarchies for their safety and the protection of their autonomy. Both parties then have something to gain and something to give and both parties usually prefer to negotiate. This accounts for one of the fundamental paradoxes of the Hellenistic world: that cities may gain or preserve independence and self-government in return for their submission to imperial rule.⁸

Babylonia was a core region of the Seleukid Empire for almost 175 years. It probably was the single most important source of agricultural wealth for the dynasty. The city of Babylon is important because of the relative abundance of (cuneiform) sources informing us about the relationship between monarchy and city – the Seleukids may have singled out the city as a showcase for imperial patronage⁹ – and the socio-cultural developments taking place in the city. How and where did encounters between the social systems of the imperial court and the Babylonian ruling families take place, and how did these encounters affect the development of social imaginaries in Babylon?

An additional source of inspiration is the notion, related to the concept of social imaginary of Middle Ground. The term was coined by the American Frontier scholar Richard White to explain the dynamics of cultural interactions between Native Americans and European colonists in the Great Lakes area between 1650 and 1815. His goal was to explain (to quote Irad Malkin's rendering of White's basic question) 'how individuals of different cultural backgrounds reached accommodation and constructed a common, mutually comprehensive world'.¹⁰ Middle Ground allows new social imaginaries to develop. To quote White himself:

On the Middle Ground diverse peoples adjust their differences through what amounts to a process of creative, and often expedient misunderstandings. People try to persuade others who are different from them by appealing to what they perceive to be the values and practices of those others. They misinterpret and distort both the values and the practices of those they deal with, but from these misunderstandings arise new meanings and practices – the shared meanings and practices of the Middle Ground.¹¹

Of course this concept was developed to explain colonial encounters in peripheral regions with extreme cultural differences. White's Middle Ground is a frontier phenomenon, a place in between two cultural spheres that was controlled by neither of the two completely, which in turn demanded flexibility. Middle Ground is more a cultural term than a physical space. I prefer therefore 'contact zone' – defined by Mary Louise Pratt as 'social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power'¹² – as the term to identify the place, time, and social context where negotiations between

⁸ On this paradox (and the need to accept cultural inconsistencies in general) see Versnel 1990.

⁹ Kuhrt 1996.

¹⁰ Malkin 2002, 152.

¹¹ White 1991, x.

¹² Pratt 1991, 33; I am grateful to Onno van Nijf for this reference.

empire and city take place. In White's colonial model, cultures are supposed to interact at the frontier. In the Hellenistic world, by contrast, we should look for the interaction of cultures not only in peripheral regions but especially in urbanized central regions like Phoenicia, Babylonia or Bactria where markets were located and where international trade took place. It was there that the empire concentrated its efforts to extract surpluses and control access to the main roads; it was there that the Greco-Macedonian ruling power and local elites met.

The problem that I seek to solve is the paradox of the simultaneous existence in the Seleukid Empire of, on the one hand, localized indirect rule founded on the cooperation of heterogeneous civic elites (or segments of those elites) and, on the other hand, imperial unity visualized by the consistent use – either centrally ordained or developing from local initiatives – of more or less similar images of imperial power for the entire empire, as well as the use by the empire of the Greek language and alphabet, especially on coins. These images of course vary from reign to reign, and develop through time. But the overall picture is one of relative consistency and unity. The Babylonian cities in particular were conspicuously loyal to the dynasty.

This prompts two fundamental questions. The first question is, how did Seleukid rulers try to get a grip on local, civic politics, especially in cities that were not integrated, or only loosely integrated, in the Hellenic system of 'peer polity interaction' connecting the *poleis* at the westernmost end of the Seleukid world?¹³ Cities within the reach of Seleukid hegemonial endeavors whose populations cultivated a Hellenic identity, the new as well as the old, were already potentially within the Seleukid king's orbit through *philia* and *xenia* systems. These international social networks of ritualized friendship connected civic elite families with each other and with the court, especially in Aegean *polis* communities.¹⁴ Royal *philoï* in the Hellenistic world have been the subject of ample research.¹⁵ But how did the Greek-speaking court relate to 'indigenous' elites in non-Greek cities in the Near East? These cities, too, were self-governing and at least de facto autonomous; it would be wrong to take Seleukid control of them simply for granted, or to explain away complexity in the relations between kings and cities by

¹³ For the *poleis* of the Hellenistic Aegean and Asia Minor as separate systems of interconnected communities exchanging ambassadors on a regular basis and sharing an increasingly similar civic culture see Ma 2003 and Michels, this volume; for the concept in general consult Renfrew 1986. Although such networks of interaction probably existed among the cities of Phoenicia, Babylonia, or Bactria, too, it is my contention that in imperial worlds the horizontal peer polity model alone does not suffice to explain inter-civic relations and the resulting social and cultural developments, as I will expound on later.

¹⁴ Herman 1997, 208; Strootman 2007, 134-139. Cf. Herman 1987.

¹⁵ For (*inter alia*) Seleukid *philoï* see, e.g., Savalli-Lestrade 1998; Capdetrey 2007, 383-394; Strootman 2007, 119-166. The fact that most *philoï* had an Aegean origin and cultivated a Greek identity has now been firmly established, cf. Habicht 1958; Herman 1997, 208; Capdetrey 2007, 389-392; Strootman 2007, 124-133. Kuhrt and Sherwin-White 1993, 124f., McKenzie 1994, and Carsana 1996, 20f., have argued for a strong non-Greek presence among the Seleukid *philoï* – but the non-Greeks at court probably were bound to the royal family by other means than *philia* (Strootman forthcoming; and 2011a, 83f.).

postulating an ahistorical distinction between ‘free’ cities and cities that were ‘under royal rule’.¹⁶

The strategies employed by the dynasty to secure the cooperation and formal submission of these cities’ elites – that is the local aspect. The second question is, by what means did the Seleukids succeed in integrating these elites of multifarious cultural backgrounds into the imperial framework as a whole? And that is the global aspect – how the empire was kept *together*. The latter aspect is often neglected because scholars tend to concentrate on the Seleukids’ policy towards specific ethnic groups or polities (e.g. the politics of euergetism in Greek *poleis*).

As a preliminary answer to these questions, I would suggest that local and global forms of interaction were interwoven. The most conspicuous form of *local* interaction between empire and city was the Seleukids’ well-attested patronage of municipal sanctuaries and the direct and indirect participation of the king and his entourage in local cults and festivals – the court moving *into* the various cities and cult centers of the empire. The *global* element evidently is the gravitational force of the imperial court: representatives of cities and/or temples were drawn to the court for specific, often cultic, occasions such as royal marriages, inaugurations or the celebration of religious festivals.

FROM THE CIVIC CENTER TO THE OUTER COURT

I have dealt with the court, the itinerant nodal point of the Seleukid imperial system, more extensively elsewhere.¹⁷ A brief summary will suffice to make the point.

The contact zone where civic elites encountered the imperial elite was the so-called ‘outer court’: a temporary expansion of the stable but much smaller ‘inner court’, the dynastic household comprising the extended family of the king and his queen(s), the household personnel, and various aulic title holders.¹⁸ The outer court came into existence for the occasion of great events, such as inaugurations, wedding ceremonies or religious festivals, that attracted elite persons from all over the empire to the place where at that time the imperial court resided. For instance in 2 *Macc.* 4.18-20 we read that when Antiochos IV was in Tyre to celebrate the quadrennial festival in honor of Herakles-Melkart, the Jerusalemite high priest Jason sent an embassy to the court bringing a gift of 300 silver drachms and some requests. At the imperial court, representatives of cities were ‘sojourners’ –

¹⁶ Cf. Strootman 2011b. For the autonomy of Babylonian cities see generally van de Mieroop 1999, and specifically for the Hellenistic period Boiy 2004, 193-225.

¹⁷ Strootman 2007; 2011a; 2012.

¹⁸ Cf. Asch 1991, 4; Duindam 1995, 92; cf. Strootman 2013a for the outer court as a Hellenistic phenomenon.

temporary between-culture travelers.¹⁹ At court, they would meet representatives of other cities and other cultures. Because the mediators between visitors and the monarch were the royal *philoï*, the friends of the king who were mostly Greeks, visitors from other cultural backgrounds would adopt what they believed to be the right manners of the court. They would take these prestigious manners home with them to signify their affiliation with the empire's central source of prestige, the king, and to distance themselves from rivals who did not enjoy royal favor.²⁰

The adoption of elements of Hellenistic court culture was a means by which elite members from different communities expressed their allegiance to, and structured their relations with, the imperial center, while at the same time distancing themselves from their rivals and inferiors at home. It furthermore helped them to relate to, and connect with, the leading families of other communities. The Hellenism of non-Greek civic elites will not have been viewed as Greekness in an ethnic sense or connected geographically with the Aegean. In the Seleukid east, Greekness more probably was what scholars of Bronze Age material culture have called *international style*: eclectic elite art that 'has *not* to be connected with a specific culture but with specific social groups around the Mediterranean that actively used it in the conception of oppositional categories'.²¹

THE ANTIOCHOS CYLINDER FROM BORSIPPA

Above, I have very briefly discussed the global aspect. We will now turn to the local aspect and have a closer look at the Antiochos Cylinder.

The Antiochos Cylinder is a cuneiform building inscription from Seleukid Mesopotamia, dated to 268 BCE (Fig. 1). It was found in the 1880s *in situ* and intact in the foundations of the Ezida, the temple of the Babylonian moon god Nabû at Borsippa, a town near Babylon. Presently it is part of the collection of the British Museum in London (BM 36277). The Cylinder carries an inscription in Akkadian, the old Babylonian language that was used for official and cultic purposes; the spoken language of Hellenistic Mesopotamia at that time was Aramaic. The script is a deliberately archaizing form of Babylonian cuneiform that was also used in propagandistic texts of Nabopolassar, Nebuchadnezzar, and Nabonidus to create a sense of permanence and perhaps a direct link to Nebuchadnezzar, the last

¹⁹ Ward, Bochner and Furnham 2003, 6f.; i.e., in contrast to long-term residents and immigrants; in the modern world, this category includes diplomats, businessmen, and exchange students.

²⁰ For the importance of favor (i.e., the degree of access one has to the court and the king) in the Hellenistic kingdoms see Strootman forthcoming.

²¹ Versluys 2010, 13f., with reference to Caubet 1998, who 'suggests that in the second millennium BC the kingdoms of inner Syria used a foreign, eclectic style with Egyptian elements in the formation of their own identity as cosmopolite', and to Feldman 2006, who is critical of the concept of international style because it 'presupposes the existence of "national" styles, which would be an anomaly for the period'.

to have rebuilt the Ezida temple.²² By suggesting a link with the Neo-Babylonian Empire, Seleukid propaganda erased the Achaemenids from Babylonian history.

The text of the Antiochos Cylinder describes the simultaneous rebuilding by the Seleukid ruler Antiochos I Soter (281-261 BCE) of the temple named Ezida at Borsippa and the important Marduk temple Esagila in the heart of Babylon itself. It is concluded by a prayer of the king to Nabû of Borsippa. Borsippa was at that time connected to Babylon by an artificial canal which was used to ritually transport the cult statue of Nabû to Babylon, where he would attend the *Akitu* Festival – the well-known Babylonian New Year Festival dedicated to Nabû’s father, Marduk, the principal deity in the Babylonian Pantheon. This yearly ritual of purification was also a (returning) coronation ritual of sorts, in which the king temporarily abdicated in order to be ritually reborn and reinstated.²³ The festival survived during the Achaemenid period, and was still performed under Seleukid rule.²⁴

In the opening lines of the Cylinder’s text, Antiochos identifies himself using the Babylonian formula of (universal) kingship:

Antiochos, the great king, the mighty king, king of the world, king of Babylon, king of countries, caretaker of Esagila and Ezida, foremost son of Seleukos, the king, the Macedonian, king of Babylon, am I.²⁵

The king then says that he (re)built Esagila and Ezida, presenting himself as the ‘caretaker’ (*za-ni-in*) of the two temples, a term also used in Neo-Babylonian royal documents.²⁶ The remaining three-fourths of the lines are a prayer to Nabû in which the king beseeches the god to grant him and his co-ruler and son Seleukos ‘the overthrow of the country of my enemy, the achievement of my triumphs, the predominance over the enemy through victory, kingship of justice, a reign of prosperity, years of happiness, [and] the full enjoyment of very old age’ (ll. i.25-30). In the concluding lines, the king again asks the god for rather commonplace imperial success, but this time it is ultimately Babylon that will benefit from the Seleukid king’s accomplishments:

May my hands conquer the countries from sunrise to sunset so that I might inventory their tribute and bring it to make perfect Esagila and Ezida. O Nabû, foremost son [of Marduk],

²² Kosmin forthcoming; cf. Waerzeggers 2011.

²³ For *Akitu* as a ritual of reversal see Versnel 1993, 32-37.

²⁴ The evidence for the Babylonian *Akitu* Festival in Hellenistic times is collected and discussed in Linssen 2004, 79-87; for the processional routes see Pongratz-Leisten 1994. For the Ezida temple at Borsippa consult Waerzeggers 2010, and for Hellenistic Babylonia in general van der Spek 1987, and Boiy 2004.

²⁵ *ANET*³ 317 = Austin 1981, no. 189, ll. i.1-6.

²⁶ *CAD* Z 46, s.v. *zāninu*; cited after van der Spek’s commentary to l. i.3.

when you enter Ezida, the true house, may the good (fate) of Antiochos, king of countries, king Seleukos, his son, (and) Stratonike his consort, the queen, be established by your will.²⁷

Scholars have mostly considered the Antiochos Cylinder the foremost example of how king Antiochos, and the Seleukids in general, respected local traditions and carefully embedded their kingship in indigenous, viz., Babylonian culture.²⁸ But this cannot be the whole story. Emphasis on adaptation alone would eventually culminate in a view of the empire as lacking cohesive qualities, apart from the king's personal charisma, strong enough to unite individuals, groups and communities, and create a sense of imperial commonwealth.²⁹ The fact that the Seleukids managed to remain in control of the Fertile Crescent and western Iran for more than one and a half century strongly suggests that such a view of the empire is incorrect.

The Cylinder has also been used to support the postcolonial 'continuity paradigm', i.e., the line of thought that conceptualizes the empire of Alexander and the Seleukids as essentially a continuation of the Achaemenid Empire and emphasizes the continuity of Near Eastern cultural 'traditions', as opposed to the outdated notion of a one-sided Hellenization of the east.³⁰ Thus, Amélie Kuhrt and Susan Sherwin-White, in an article that was for a long time the only lengthy historical analysis of the Cylinder, characteristically urged scholars to 'evaluate [this] evidence within its own social and cultural context'.³¹ This 'eastern' approach to the Hellenistic World, which became popular in the late 1980s, continues to dominate the debate despite various heuristic difficulties. It suffices to summarize only the three most problematic. First, this view capitalizes on an ahistorical antithesis of Greek ('European') and non-Greek ('Oriental') cultural systems. Second, pointing out continuities in itself has little explicative value for our understanding of the

²⁷ *ANET*³ 317 = Austin 1981, no. 189, ll. ii.17-29, trans. Stol and van der Spek.

²⁸ Cf. *inter alia* Herz 1996; Sommer 2000; this author, too (Strootman 2007, *passim*), was once convinced that 'the manifestation of royal rule was adapted to local and regional traditions and expectations' (p. 2), but also argued that diversity was integrated at the highest level by the development of a supranational culture of empire and the cohesive qualities of the royal courts.

²⁹ According to many (e.g., Davies 2002; Paschidis 2008), the only cohesive aspect in the Hellenistic empires was the king's personal charisma, and that this 'did not form a link between individuals, groups and communities sufficiently strong to form a unitary and cohesive structure to which people [...] could feel they belonged' (Paschidis 2008, 288f.).

³⁰ See *inter alia* Sherwin-White 1987; Briant 1990; 2010; Kuhrt and Sherwin-White 1993; 1994; McKenzie 1994; Oelsner 2002; Aperghis 2008. The continuity paradigm developed from, and superseded, the reinterpretation in the late 1970s and early 1980s of Macedonian (Seleukid and Ptolemaic) imperialism in the Hellenistic period through the lens of the European nation-state's colonial experience, e.g., by Briant 1978, Will 1985, and, more nuanced, Bagnall 1997; this earlier paradigm conceptualized the Hellenistic empires as *mutatis mutandis* 'European' systems of exploitation and repression (on the colonial paradigm see Mairs 2006, 22-24; Ma 2008, 371; and Manning 2009, 11-18). There is also a connection between the continuity paradigm and the New Achaemenid History School that flourished between 1983 and 1994, on which see now Harrison 2011 and McCaskie 2012.

³¹ Kuhrt and Sherwin-White 1991, 71.

cultural and political processes that took place in the Near East in the Hellenistic period – the identification of continuity or discontinuity is in itself, as Christopher Tuplin pointed out, not non-banal.³² Finally, the continuity paradigm conceptualizes Near Eastern cultures as essentially static.

In sum, conventional historiography sees the Antiochos Cylinder as evidence for the continuity of local traditions in the Seleukid Empire and thus this piece of evidence has been fitted into the postcolonial view of the Seleukid Empire as an ‘eastern’ empire – a continuation of the Achaemenid Empire and various pre-existing monarchical traditions rather than an autonomous phase in the (cultural) history of the Middle East. In this paper I work from a different premise, taking issue with the prevalent view that Seleukid imperial policy should be understood as merely succumbing to pre-existing traditions. Instead of the model of continuity I prefer to approach Seleukid Babylon with the starting point of the Heidelberg Social Imaginaries conference in mind, namely the conviction that social discourses and practices are constantly in flux and bi-directional.³³ As we will see, monarchical-religious texts such as the Antiochos Cylinder were the result of a vital, two-way interaction of city and court.³⁴

ADOPTION OR MANIPULATION?

How ‘traditional’ was the Antiochos Cylinder, really? If the Seleukids were so conscientious about local identities, then why did members of local communities adopt a (partial) Greek identity, as they did most famously in Jerusalem and, *nota bene*, Babylon? And why then do most of the central representations of the Seleukid monarchy, notably the monarchical iconography on coins, look so very Greek (not to mention the use of the Greek language and alphabet for coin legends)? Was numismatic representation directed primarily at Greek immigrants only, with no more than an ‘oriental’ subtext behind the various images of Apollo and Zeus and diademed kings? Or was monarchical representation aimed at (the elites of) all peoples of the empire? And perhaps more importantly, did ancient

³² Tuplin 2008, 110. Skepticism of the still prevailing view that the Seleukid Empire should be understood as essentially a continuation of the Achaemenid Empire has earlier been expressed by Hoover 1996, 1; Austin 2003, 128; Strootman 2005 and 2007, 18f.; and later also forcefully by Harrison 2011, 113. Instead of merely identifying continuity and change, it may be more fruitful to investigate whether or not the Seleukids themselves, in their own monarchical and imperial representation, presented their rule as a continuation of the Achaemenid Empire, and *why* they chose to do so or not.

³³ Stavrianopoulou in this volume; cf. Baker, this volume, arguing that the replacement of native Babylonian rule by imperial rule necessarily entailed a shift in the relationship between the Babylonian cities and the new centers of power.

³⁴ *Contra* the now orthodox view, as expressed pithily by Sherwin-White 1983, 159: ‘The king’s actions are shaped to a thoroughly Babylonian mould. It may well be that the king left his image-making in religious matters to Babylonian authorities’. Only recently have reciprocal models of cultural interaction begun to make their mark on the study of Seleukid Babylon.

observers approach culture using the same ‘static ethnic interpretations’ as we tend to do today, distinguishing relative degrees of ‘Greekness’ in material culture, values, and practices?³⁵

Regarding the Antiochos Cylinder, the reverse question may be asked: how traditional and local was the monarchical rhetoric of Antiochos I? The conspicuously archaizing quality of the Akkadian, as well as the use of divine images (as we will see below), is suggestive of *manipulation* of ‘tradition’ rather than the adoption of pre-existing cultural currents by the Seleukids.

In contrast to Kuhrt and Sherwin-White’s influential instruction to view the text on the Antiochos Cylinder in what they have termed ‘its own cultural and social context’ (sc., Babylon), I believe that it would be more fruitful to evaluate the significance of the Antiochos Cylinder (as well as other Babylonian documents pertaining to Seleukid imperial rule) in a wider context of the Seleukid practice of empire. That is, to focus on the entanglement of the local and the global, rather than to study the local in isolation.

ROYAL PARTICIPATION IN CIVIC CULT

Elsewhere I have dealt more substantially with the entry of Hellenistic kings into cities, arguing that the key act in ceremonies of entry was the king’s sacrifice in the city’s principal sanctuary.³⁶ The king’s participation in local cult made him a citizen of sorts – he became ‘one of us’ – but by assigning to the king the honor of performing the crucial ritual act of offering, surpassing the local (high) priest(s), the king was singled out as the city’s most important citizen. The patronage of sanctuaries in the king’s absence meanwhile was instrumental in the creation and upkeep of contact zones where the interaction of empire and city could take place. Amélie Kuhrt has shown that under the Achaemenids the absence of the king did not affect his legitimacy as king of Babylon: in the absence of the king a curtailed ritual could be enacted, in which perhaps a royal robe served as substitute for the king’s physical presence.³⁷ The Akkadian *Chronicle of Seleukos III* (*BCHP* 12 = *ABC* 13B), an important but understudied cuneiform document, records for the year 224/223 BCE how the Seleukid king provided for the offerings and gave instruction to the *šatammu* – the high priest responsible for the Esagila sanctuary – for the performance of the *Akitu* rituals in his absence:³⁸

3. [...] That month [...] a certain Babylonian, the *šatammu* of Esagila, provided

4. [for the x] x of Esagila, at the command of the king, in accordance with the parchment letter that the king had sent before,

³⁵ Versluys 2010, 23; cf. Nitschke in this volume.

³⁶ Strootman 2007, 289-298.

³⁷ Kuhrt 1987, 49f.

³⁸ *ABC* 13B; *BCHP* 12, ll. 3-9; preliminary translation by I. Finkel and R.J. van der Spek. Cf. van der Spek 1985, 557-561; Kuhrt and Sherwin-White 1993, 203.

5. [wit]h money from the royal treasury from his own estate 11 fat oxen, 100 fat sheep
6. (and) 11 fat ducks for the food offering within Esagila,
7. for Bēl, Bēltia,³⁹ and the great gods and [f]or the ritual of Ki[ng] Se[leu]kos
8. and his sons. The portions of the oxen and the sacrificial animals aforementioned
9. he designated /to\ the lamentation-priests and the šatammu. [...]

An interesting aspect of this text is that it seems to suggest that during the ritual meal following the offering the best parts of the sacrificial meat that the king had paid for are distributed among the *šatammu* and the other priests, confirming their supreme status and their enjoyment of royal favor.⁴⁰ The ‘ritual for King Seleukos and his sons’ mentioned in line 7 is problematic. According to van der Spek’s commentary, the king in question probably is the previous ruler, the deceased Seleukos II Kallinikos, since Seleukos III ruled only briefly (from 224 to 223/222 BCE) and no sons of his have been recorded. The ‘ritual’ (*dullu*, an unusual word in this context) has been interpreted by some as a form of ruler cult.⁴¹ It may also have been a regular ritual *for* Seleukos II and his sons, as van der Spek suggests, or some form of ritual connected with the death of Seleukos II, who had died some months earlier after a fall from his horse (December 225), and/or the inauguration of his successor, Seleukos III. The equally problematic lines 11-15 rev. record how a ‘brother of the king’ entered ‘the royal city’ Seleukeia on 14 Nisannu (April 13, 224 BCE) and ‘the satrap of the land and the people of the land went out to meet him and a festival was held in the land’ (ll. 14-15). Seleukos II’s second son, the later Antiochos III, is known to have been in Babylonia in 223/222,⁴² although on the Chronicle his name seems to be given as *Lu-xxx* in l. 11. As this festival takes place at the beginning of the new year 224/223 BCE, following almost immediately on the celebration of *Akitu* (4-11 Nisannu), it was perhaps a festival celebrating the new reign or even the ascendancy of Seleukos II’s *two* sons, whose relationship to each other seems to have been strangely harmonious, with the elder brother Seleukos III campaigning in Anatolia and his brother Antiochos (III) acting as some kind viceroy in Babylonia supervised by the powerful *philos* Hermeias.⁴³

The personal participation in Babylonian cult is documented, too, by the *Chronicle of Antiochos and Sin* (BCHP 5), a cuneiform tablet recording a visit of Seleukos I’s son and co-ruler, Antiochos I, to Babylon in c. 287 BCE. Lines 6-12

³⁹ Lit. ‘Lord’ and ‘Lady’, i.e. Marduk and his wife Sarpanitum (= Erša).

⁴⁰ The commentary of Finkel and van der Spek follows the interpretation of Joannès 2000, that the *šatammu* is accused of corruption. For the office of *šatammu* in the Hellenistic Age see van der Spek 2000.

⁴¹ For references see Sherwin-White 1983, 158, who herself argues strongly against a Seleukid ruler cult in Babylon, and Pirngruber 2010, who neither believes that this passage is evidence for a Greek-style ruler cult in Babylon.

⁴² Jer. *In Dan*. 11.10.

⁴³ Cf. Strootman 2011a, 72-74; for the entanglement of funerary and inaugural rites in the Hellenistic monarchies see Strootman 2007, 262-279.

describe how King Antiochos makes offerings in two temples of the moon god Sin:⁴⁴

6. [...] That month, the 20th day, Antiochos, the [crown] prince
7. [entered Babylon. Day 2]7, [they moved] the animals to the [east (or: west)] side (of the river) to outside regions/for putting out to pasture.
8. [Month ..., ..]th [day], the crown prince at the instruction of a certain Bab[ylonian]
9. [performed] regular [offerings] for Sin of Egišnugal and Sin of Enit[enna].
10. [Antiocho]s, the son of the king, [entered] the temple of Sin of Egišnugal and in the tem[ple of Sin of Enitenna]
11. [and the s]on of the king aforementioned prostrated himself. The son of the king [provid- ed] one sheep for the offering
12. [of Sin and he bo]wed down in the temple of Sin, Egišnugal, and in the temple of Sin, En[itenna].

This text provides us with additional information, for in line 8 obv. we read that Antiochos performed the offerings ‘at the instruction of a certain Babylonian’, possibly the *šatammu*.

There is an interesting parallel with 1 and especially *2 Maccabees*, where the high priest Menelaos is accused of guiding and aiding the Seleukid king Antiochos IV in his sacrilegious acts against the cult of Yahweh in Jerusalem. For instance in *2 Macc.* 5.15 we read that ‘Antiochos dared to enter the most holy temple in all the world, guided by Menelaos, who had become a traitor both to the laws and to his country’. I have elsewhere made a case that accusations of sacrilege and impiety against one’s enemies are a standard element of religious conflicts, especially in civil wars, and that it is not very plausible that the official priests would willingly desecrate their own sanctuary – they in their turn probably considered the religious radicalism of the Makkabeans and their supporters as a form of heresy (but left no written records expressing their point of view).⁴⁵ I

⁴⁴ Antiochos’ status is given as Sumerian *DUMU LUGAL* = Akkadian *mar šarri*, i.e., a ‘crown prince’. Like the other Macedonian royal houses, the Seleukid dynasty had no concept of an official *dauphin* but since the reign of Seleukos I tried to regulate the succession by appointing one son co-ruler and giving him the title of *basileus* prior to his father’s death; hence the use of the title of crown prince (*mar šarri ša bît redûti*, ‘the son of the king of the succession house’) as the Akkadian designation for a Seleukid co-ruler (Strootman 2007, 111-114 and 296; cf. van der Spek’s commentary to l. 1 obv. of *BCHP* 5 at www.livius.org, explaining that in Babylonian dating formulas the co-ruler could be called ‘king’ but in running texts this apparently was found inappropriate). On the Antiochos Cylinder, Seleukos, the son and co-ruler of Antiochos I, is called *Si-lu-uk-ku LUGAL DUMU-šú* = ‘King Seleukos, his son’ (*ANET*³ 317 = Austin 1981, no. 189, l. ii.25). The date is given as the twentieth year of the reign of Seleukos + 5? years; the text at any rate postdates Antiochos’ appointment as co-*basileus* in 292.

⁴⁵ Strootman 2006. See also Honigman 2011, showing how the author of *2 Maccabees* evokes a traditional world view to brand Antiochos IV as a ‘wicked king’. Of course, *Antiochos* can have desecrated the Temple in retaliation of a perceived revolt of Jerusalem: desecration of a city’s principal sanctuary by an imperial ruler as punishment for rebellion is plausible enough

think that it is possible that these accusations go back to the actual cooperation of the priests, viz., the leading Judean families, with the Seleukid (and before them Ptolemaic) kings in paying homage to the city god of Jerusalem, just as these kings were accustomed to doing in other cities.⁴⁶

If participation in local cults was important, then one would expect that the movements of the court were not only determined by military rationale, logistics, and the climate, but also by the sequence of festivals celebrated at important cities and shrines. The statement in 2 *Macc.* 4.18, also cited above in the context of the outer court, that the quadrennial festival in honor of Herakles-Melkart at Tyre was celebrated in the presence of the king (Antiochos IV), points in that direction. Lines i.8-15 of the Antiochos Cylinder from Borsippa, too, seem to confirm this hypothesis:

(...) the bricks of Esagila and Ezida in the land of Hatti with my pure hand(s) I molded with fine quality oil and for the laying of the foundation of Esagila and Ezida I transported them. In the month of Addaru, on the 20th day, of year 43, I laid the foundation of Ezida, the true temple, the temple of Nabû, which is in Borsippa.

The movement from ‘the land of Hatti’ (probably Syria) to Babylonia where the king laid the foundation of the Ezida temple on 20 Addaru 43 SE (= March 27, 268 BCE) at the very end of the Babylonian year – just in time for the *Akitu* Festival, which began some time later on the fourth day of the month Nisannu (March-April) – is highly suggestive of an itinerant monarchy following a festival calendar.⁴⁷ Antiochos’ claim to have personally performed two rituals, viz., the molding of the (first) bricks of the two temples in Syria and the laying down of the bricks in Borsippa and Babylon, is complemented by the fragmentary *Ruin of Esagila Chronicle*, an undated cuneiform document attesting the personal involvement in building activities at the Esagila temple in Babylon of an unnamed Seleukid ruler (*BCHP* 6).⁴⁸ I quote only lines 2-9 of the new translation by Finkel and van der Spek:

2. [... ..] to Babylon

– and that may be exactly what happened in Jerusalem in the 160s – but the accusation that a temple is desecrated by the responsible, native priests is hardly credible, especially when this accusation is made in a political pamphlet that has the aim of legitimizing in retrospect a violent regime change, viz. the usurpation of the high priesthood by the Makkabeans.

⁴⁶ The principal evidence is collected and discussed in Strootman 2007, 289-305; specifically with regard to Jerusalem see *inter alia* Joseph *AJ* 11.326-339 (Alexander the Great, a story presumably based on the entry of a Ptolemaic or Seleukid king, cf. Belenkiy 2005; Strootman 2007, 290), Joseph *AJ* 12.4 (Ptolemy I); 3 *Macc.* 1.9 (Ptolemy IV); 2 *Macc.* 4.22 (Antiochos IV).

⁴⁷ For the dates of *Akitu* see Cohen 1993, 300-353.

⁴⁸ Only the obverse of the tablet is legible. The ruler is identified in l. 7 obv. as a co-ruler (*DUMU LUGAL / mar šarri*, ‘crown prince’). The ‘offerings in the Greek fashion’ made by Greeks occur also in the *End of Seleukos Chronicle* (280 BCE; *BCHP* 9 = *ABC* 12) and the *Invasion of Ptolemaios III Chronicle* (246/5 BCE; *BCHP* 11).

3. wi[th^{??}] . . . of Bel [= Marduk]
4. to the Bab[ylon]ians (of) [the assembly of Esa]gila he [gav]e and an offering
5. on the ruin of /Esagila\ they^{??} [arran]ged. On the ruin
6. of Esagila he fell. Oxen [and] an offering according in the Greek fashion
7. he made. The son of the king, his [troop]s, his wagons,
8. (and) <his> elephants removed the debris of Esagila.
9. /x x\ on the empty lot of Esagila they ate. [...]

The actual participation of Seleukid kings in the *Akitu* Festival is evidenced by a fragmentary astronomical diary from the reign of Antiochos III (223/222-186 BCE) that was first published in 1989. The tablet is dated to April 6, 205 BCE, the second day of *Akitu*, and it records: ‘That [month,] on the 8th (day), King Antiochos and the [...] went out (from) the palace to the gate . . . of Esagila . . . [.] of Esagila he made before them. Offerings to (?) [...] Marduk-etir . . . [.] of their descendants (?) were set, entered the Akitu Temple [...] made [sacrifices for] Ishtar of Babylon and the life of King Antiochos [...]’.⁴⁹

There is more cuneiform evidence of the presence of the king and his entourage in Babylon (see below). Although it is of course impossible to ascertain how often exactly Seleukid royals visited Babylon, the evidence from Babylon attesting to the presence of the royal court is actually better than for Antioch in the third century. From this evidence it may be assumed that the imperial court was in the region quite often, as is also likely given the great prestige that Babylon still had at that time, the proximity of the ‘royal city’ Seleukeia–on-the-Tigris, and the geopolitical centrality of Babylonia within the Seleukid Empire.

SHIFTING SOCIAL IMAGINARIES IN HELLENISTIC BABYLON

The evidence discussed in the previous section suggests that in Babylon encounters between empire and city took place above all in the religious sphere, and that this is where we may locate the processes of negotiation between the court and the city’s oligarchy. It follows that the chief intermediaries representing the city were the priests, led by the *šatammu*. As was theorized at the beginning of this paper, both of the parties involved will have tried to persuade the other by appealing to what they perceive to be the values and practices of those others. As Charles Taylor has pointed out, such discourses and modifications will inevitably be followed by the social imaginary of those involved.⁵⁰ So can we indeed see new meanings

⁴⁹ Sachs and Hunger 1989, no. 204 C, ll. 14-18 rev.; Kuhrt and Sherwin-White 1993, 130f.; cf. the diary fragment cited on pp. 202f., where a Seleukid general (^{lit} GAL.ERIN) makes offerings to Bēl, Bēltiya, and Ishtar of Babylon in the *Akitu* Temple (Sachs and Hunger 1989, no. 171, and the diary cited on p. 216 recording how Antiochos III participates in what probably is the *Akitu* Festival in 188/187 BCE (Sachs and Hunger 1989, no. 187, ll. 4-18 rev.).

⁵⁰ Taylor 2004, 23-30.

and practices arise from a process of adoption and alteration of the values and practices of the Seleukid court through the agency of those who had dealings with the court (viz., the Babylonian priestly elite)? Due to a lack of personal documents it is not possible to ascertain the worldview even of aristocratic Babylonians of the Hellenistic period. But the relatively rich cuneiform material does give two clues.

First, we do know fairly well (also from some Greek sources) that members of the Babylonian (priestly) elite cultivated some kind of multiple identity, i.e. to assume different socio-cultural roles that were respectively local and imperial, viz., Babylonian and Greek.⁵¹ The assumption of both a Greek and a Babylonian personal name is the clearest indication of this ‘biculturality’. People’s adoption of some of the self-defining aspects of Greek ethnicity to suggest an ‘imperial’ identity, can have been purely situational, i.e., that is as done specifically for the sake of communication with the royal court, whereas in a purely local, Babylonian context a ‘native’ Babylonian persona was maintained. I hold that it is more plausible, however, that these spheres were not so strictly separated and that elements of the imperial identity were also espoused in the local context, because the adoption of elements of a global elite culture expressed one’s affiliation with the empire, with elites in other cities, and thereby presumably improved one’s status locally. Modern instances of biculturality suggest that a strict separation of the respective cultural roles, especially among immigrants (e.g. a ‘German’ identity in the public sphere versus a ‘Turkish’ identity in the private sphere) is extremely difficult to sustain, and that sooner or later ‘the divisions between spheres in the “double life” will melt away’.⁵²

This leads us to the second indication: the appearance in the second century BCE of ‘Greek’ *polis* institutions in Babylon. I will briefly review the most pertinent sources.

In several astronomical diaries and chronicles, mention is made of *politai*, Greek-style citizens. Whether these ‘Greeks’ were local people who became Greeks of sorts, just like the ‘Hellenizing’ Jews in 1 and 2 *Maccabees*, or ‘real’ Greeks (whatever that means), must remain an open question.⁵³ And like the Hellenizers in Jerusalem, these *politai* do Greek things. In the *Greek Community Chronicle* (BCHP 14, 163 BCE), the *politai* (*pulitanu*, ll. 2 and 9 obv.) ‘anoint

⁵¹ Cf. Strootman 2007, 130f. for the ‘imperial’ aspect; On multiple identity (or ‘biculturality’) see Burke 2009, esp. 90-3 and 111-2, who describes this type of identity as ‘participating in world culture but retaining a local culture’; on ethnic identity in Hellenistic Baylonia see esp. van der Spek 2009.

⁵² Burke 2009, 112.

⁵³ Cf. Blok 2005, showing that in Late Classical Athens the term *politēs* acquired the specific meaning of having the rights and duties of the *polis*, in contrast to the previously nearly identical *astos*, which now meant being a citizen by descent. The first certain Babylonian rendering of *politai* occurs in the *Politai Chronicle* (BCHP 13), dated to 172/1 BCE, but possibly earlier in the astronomical diary mentioning Antiochos III’s visit to the *Akitu* House in 187 BCE (Boiy 2004, 204-209); according to van der Spek (1987, 65-70; 2005) the ‘Greek community’ in Babylon was established around 173/172 (see also below).

themselves with oil just like the *politai* who are in Seleukeia, the royal city' (ll. 4-5 obv.). In addition to this probable link of Greek-style citizenship with activities in a gymnasium, the *politai* of Babylon possibly disposed of a *boulē*, too (l. 10 obv.).⁵⁴ This document furthermore claims that the privileged community of *politai* had previously been established by a King Antiochos (III or IV).

More pertinent to the present discussion is the *Diary of the Messengers of the Politai*. In ll. 3-7 of this fragmentary astronomical diary of unknown date the *politai* of Babylon appear in connection with the high priest of Esagila and the Seleukid *stratēgos*, who resided in Seleukeia-on-the-Tigris:

3.] entered^{sg}. That day, the *šatammu* x [.....
4.] together with their troops with the tr[oops^{??}.....
5. the *satrap of*] Akkad, the *šatammu* of Esagila x [.....
6.] the messengers of the *polit[ai*
7.] Seleukeia, the cities and x [.....⁵⁵

This brings me to presume that the Greek community consisted, at least in part, of the 'Hellenized' upper echelon of Babylonian society. The introduction of a body of *politai* into Babylon by Antiochos III or IV that the *Greek Community Chronicle* speaks of was not the wholesale implantation of a prefabricated body of pure Greeks to Babylon, but the royally sanctioned establishment among the Babylonian citizenry of a *politeuma* of citizens who had the rights and duties of the members of a *polis* (and who did Greek things like competing in a *gymnasium*), such as already existed in cities like Seleukeia or Antioch. Where would, this late in Seleukid history, real ethnic Greeks have come from? From Greece? It is furthermore puzzling that the Greek community of Seleukid Babylon has left no Greek epigraphic traces; the earliest Greek record we know of is the *Gymnasium Inscription* from the early Parthian period (110/109 BCE), listing victors in athletic contexts: there is a gymnasiarch, there are epebes and *neoi*, and all the victors have Greek personal names.⁵⁶ But half of the victors bear theophoric names, which may mean that these names are translations of Babylonian personal names.⁵⁷ Royal decrees such as the establishment of a body of *politai* have only been preserved indirectly on astronomical diaries and in chronicles written cunei-

⁵⁴ For more cultural 'boundary markers' of the *politai* community in Babylon consult van der Spek 2009. The presence of a *gymnasium* in Hellenistic Babylon is attested in a document from the early Parthian Period, the so-called Gymnasium Inscription of the later Second Century BCE (see below).

⁵⁵ *BM* 34434, unpublished; cited from the preliminary translation by Finkel and van der Spek at www.livius.org.

⁵⁶ Haussoullier 1909, 352f., no. 1; *SEG* 7.39.

⁵⁷ Kuhrt and Sherwin-White 1993, 157f.; van der Spek 2005, 406f. It is perhaps no coincidence that three of the four gods invoked by these names – Apollo-Nabû, Artemis-Nanaia, and Dio/Zeus-Marduk/Bêl – are principal imperial deities promoted by the former imperial dynasty; the parents of the epebes and *neoi* were all born under Seleukid rule, which ended only 30 years before this document was created.

form in old Akkadian, a cultural signifier for the Babylonian elite.⁵⁸ Even though there is circumstantial evidence for the use of the Greek language in Babylon – Berossos wrote in Greek and the Stoic philosopher Diogenes of Babylon presumably was a ‘native’ Babylonian – wholly absent is that other key signifier of ethnic identity: religion. No archaeological remains of Greek or Greek-style cult have ever been unearthed in Babylon. In a recent article on the ethnicity of the *politai*, van der Spek leaves open the possibility that Greek sanctuaries may be discovered in the Homera district of Babylon, the neighborhood where also a theater from the late third century was found, and draws attention to the fact that the Babylonian astronomical diaries ‘often report that newly appointed “governors of Babylon” were ‘one of the *politai*’ and that these newly appointed governors made offerings in the Esagila, the temple of the Babylonian supreme deity, to the Babylonian gods’. But this should make us wary of thinking in terms of ethnic segregation rather than surmising that ‘the Babylonian temple was considered to be a main sanctuary for the Greek community *as well*’ (my emphasis).⁵⁹

To sum up, whether or not Greek colonists migrated to, or were settled in, Babylon must at the present state of our knowledge remain an open question. But it is safe to assume that in Hellenistic Babylon ‘Greek’ was first a cultural and socio-political construct. And although there were cultural boundaries demarcating the Babylonian *politai* as a social group, these boundaries were permeable and the *politai* must at least partly have consisted of ‘native’ Babylonians.

Meanwhile we do have another, notorious, case of a Seleukid king’s acknowledgment of the polis rights of a ‘Hellenized’ non-Greek citizen body: the account in 1 and 2 *Maccabees* of the institutionalization, in the reign of Antiochos IV, of a community of *politai* in Jerusalem, named ‘Antiochenes’ after the king.⁶⁰ Precisely because of the hostile treatment they receive, it is clear that these ‘Hellenizers’ represent a segment of the fiercely divided elite, namely that part of the Judean aristocracy that derived its political dominance from cooperation with the empire, viz., its good relations with the court.⁶¹ The books of the *Maccabees* also inform us that in Hellenistic Jerusalem the upper echelon of the elite consisted of land-owning priestly families.⁶² And notwithstanding their apparent assumption of an imperial identity through partial Hellenization – Droysen’s concept of *Hellenismus* was not without reason based on their activities – they also retained a distinct Judean identity, especially in the field of religion. Just as in Babylon, no Greek temples are known to have existed in Jerusalem, where the cult of Yahweh retained its place of central importance. The fact that the sanctuary on the Temple

⁵⁸ Joannès 2009.

⁵⁹ van der Spek 2009, 110f. On the Seleukid ‘Governor of Babylon’ (*pāhāt Bābili*) see Boiy 2004, 207.

⁶⁰ 1 *Macc.* 11-15; 2 *Macc.* 4.9.

⁶¹ Strootman 2006.

⁶² Cf. i.a. 1 *Macc.* 2.1.

Mount was rededicated to Zeus Olympios (or, more literally, to *Dios Olympios*, 2 *Macc.* 6.2) proves the point.⁶³

In conclusion I would tentatively suggest that if Babylonian social imaginaries were shifting under new influences in the early Hellenistic period, as they probably were, the result was a new elite culture in which Greek institutions and Babylonian culture interacted and went hand in hand with religious developments that were taking place, too, as a result of the interaction of the Babylonian elite within the global context of empire.

THE ANTIOCHOS CYLINDER FROM BORSIPPA, AGAIN

At the beginning of this paper it was suggested that the rhetoric of power on the Borsippa Cylinder of Antiochos I was only superficially *traditional* Babylonian. Although old Babylonian formulas of universal kingship were used – Great King (*LUGAL GAL-Ú*), King of Countries (*LUGAL KUR.KUR*), *et cetera* – it is doubtful that this was done to appease the Babylonians by appealing to their traditions. As the new imperial dynasty in a Near East that had been accustomed to the ontological notion of a unified world under a single Great King for many centuries, the Seleukids had no choice but to present themselves as the rulers of totality.⁶⁴ Their Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian predecessors had done so in the past; their Parthian, Sasanian, Byzantine, Ummayyad, Abbasid, and Ottoman successors would do so in the future. Making universalistic claims is a standard element of imperial ideology from China to pre-Columbian America, and is closely connected with the *practice* of empire.⁶⁵ The paradigm of continuity will not help us understand that phenomenon.

Of relevance, too, is Antiochos' self-presentation as simultaneously a Macedonian and a Babylonian king in the Cylinder's opening lines:

4. Foremost son of Seleukos, the king,
5. the Macedonian, King of Babylon,
6. am I. [...]

⁶³ Zeus, the principal god of what may be called the 'Seleukid Imperial Trinity', further consisting of Artemis and Apollo, was (like Artemis and Apollo) regularly associated with various local cults that were patronized by the Seleukid court, cf. e.g. Lichtenberger 2008; Zeus Olympios was especially favored by Antiochos IV Epiphanes and later Seleukid kings of his line; on Antiochos' preference for Zeus and Zeus' syncretic nature see Zahle 1990, connecting this with the growing importance of local cults for sky gods who could be better associated with Zeus than with Apollo in the later Seleukid Near East; against the idea of a special connection between Epiphanes and Zeus see Mittag 2006, 139-145, with many bibliographical references.

⁶⁴ Strootman 2013b.

⁶⁵ Sinopoli 1994; Pagden 1995; Bang 2011.

To be sure, the designation ‘the Macedonian’ (^{lu}*Ma-ak-ka-du-na-a-a*) may also refer to Antiochos’ father, Seleukos; but that would still indicate that the king identified himself as a Macedonian, too.⁶⁶ Antiochos’ claim that he is Babylon’s king is not at odds with the claim that he is universal ruler: the position of local king is naturally taken by the emperor. The emphasis on his Macedonian identity, in combination with the special respect for Babylon expressed throughout the text, characterizes Antiochos as both an outsider and an insider.⁶⁷ It is evidence of an awareness of the entanglement of the global and the local. The two worlds are connected in the *Akitu* cult, where the imperial ruler legitimately takes on the role of a local king.

It seems safe to assume that the agents who informed the court about Babylonian monarchical-religious practices were representatives of the Babylonian priesthood. The example of Berossos – who wrote a well-informed but Greek-style history of Babylon, in Greek, for Antiochos I – shows that such connections existed and that there were Babylonians who had mastered Greek only one generation after the Macedonian conquest. But the Cylinder carries also the marks of external influences. The Ezida, the temple of Nabû in Borsippa, is constantly connected with the Esagila, the temple of Marduk in Babylon. Nabû is singled out as Marduk’s ‘foremost son’ (l. ii.22). Both Kyle Erickson and Paul Kosmin have recently argued that Antiochos singled out Nabû’s cult as the main object of his religious patronage in Babylonia because he identified Nabû with the Seleukid tutelary deity, Apollo.⁶⁸ This led to a new prominence of the Ezida temple in Borsippa, which had been neglected in the previous period, and a new prominence of Nabû in the *Akitu* cult. Kosmin rightly argues that the Cylinder ‘made use of a deeply-embedded Babylonian tradition of building inscriptions and royal rituals, but it elaborated these within the framework of a genuinely Seleucid imperial program’.⁶⁹

If this is true, as I think it is, it shows that the Seleukids did not simply conform to tradition at the instruction of local agents, but actively created tradition by manipulating cult practices to suit their own objective, viz., the creation of cohesion by the systematic patronage of local cult throughout the empire, especially of indigenous deities that could be associated with the principal imperial deities Apollo, Artemis, and Zeus. From the reign of Antiochos an association of Apollo with the reigning king was constantly propagated, notably on coins (Fig. 2).

⁶⁶ Pace Kuhrt and Sherwin-White 1991, 83, who characteristically force the material into the postcolonial paradigm by claiming that Antiochos’ self-representation as a Makedonian is a continuation of ‘the titulary of their Persian predecessors, whose imperial style was so influential in the formation and articulation of the Hellenistic monarchies’.

⁶⁷ Note that with his Macedonian identity Antiochos distances himself from the Greeks as well.

⁶⁸ Teixidor 1990; Dirven 1997. Erickson 2011 argues that the association of Apollo and Nabû is also apparent from the iconography of Antiochos’ coins; cf. Erickson 2009.

⁶⁹ Kosmin forthcoming; I am grateful for an advance text. For an overview of the archaeological backdrop of the continuity – ‘or perhaps more accurately the revival’ – of Mesopotamian cults under the Seleukids, see Downey 1988, 7-15 (Babylon) and 15-47 (Uruk); cf. Baker in this volume.

It can therefore hardly have been a coincidence that on the Borsippa Cylinder Nabû and Antiochos are each presented as their respective fathers' 'foremost son'. Given the prominence of the queen mother at the Hellenistic courts, a result of the practice of polygamy and the absence of primogeniture in the Macedonian royal houses,⁷⁰ the prominence of Nabû's mother Erûa, 'the queen who creates offspring', is of significance, too. But here the association points towards the future: a perfect mirror image is created of, on the one hand, Marduk, his wife Erûa, and their 'foremost son' Nabû, and, on the other hand, king Antiochos, his consort Stratonike, and the (at that time) foremost son, viz., heir apparent Seleukos (II. ii.24-27).⁷¹ Erûa is a manifestation of Marduk's divine consort Sarpanitum as a goddess of pregnancy and childbirth; this form may have been used to underline the association of the three Babylonian gods with the Seleukid 'Reigning Triad' of king/father, queen/mother and heir/son.⁷²

CONCLUSION

In this paper, written evidence from Babylon has been used for a case study of the connectivity of the global and the local as a parallel to the connectivity of the imperial and the civic. It was argued that the contact zone where the imperial court and the civic elite interacted was the sphere of religion. This was an international phenomenon. The Seleukids approached other communities, too, by protecting and actively participating in local cults, utilizing the entanglement of 'sacred' and 'secular' that is so peculiar to the Ancient World.⁷³ Meeting in sacred spaces dedicated to a particular deity perhaps allowed that deity to be involved in the decision-making, as Hugh Bowden suggested for inter-Greek negotiations in the Classical Period.⁷⁴

The Seleukids not only structured negotiations and relationships with civic elites through the patronage of indigenous sanctuaries and the (often personal) participation in civic cults, they also actively encouraged syncretism between those cults as a strategy to integrate the local into the empire. A fascinating aspect of this interaction is that local, Babylonian agents must have been actively involved in the translation of supranational, imperial ideology into the local rhetoric

⁷⁰ Ogden 1999.

⁷¹ King Antiochos later regretted his choice and had Seleukos executed (Just. *Epit.* 26, *Prol.* 7-9; cf. Boiy 2004, 144f.); the new *co-basileus* and successor of Antiochos I Soter was Antiochos II Theos.

⁷² The term 'Reigning Triad' is used by McAuley 2011, 18-23, to describe the harmonious union of king, queen and heir in third century Seleukid propaganda.

⁷³ Cf. Bowden 1990, 68, with further literature.

⁷⁴ Bowden 1990, 67 and 174: 'By approaching a *polis* through its sanctuary, the ambassador or supplicant can be seen to be making his request to the gods of the *polis* as well as the mortal inhabitants; [...] The citizens themselves will have seen the gods as part of the *polis*'.

of religion and monarchy (instead of the other way round, as conventional historiography claims).

Far from simply adopting pre-existing traditions and conforming to varying local expectations, the Seleukids consistently sought to integrate into their system of imperial control culturally diverse peoples by (a) consistently patronizing sanctuaries dedicated to deities that could be associated with the imperial gods Apollo and Artemis (and their father Zeus), and (b) by cultivating an umbrella culture of empire that connected civic elites of manifold cultural backgrounds. This overarching imperial culture was in essence ‘Hellenistic’ – or rather: *Seleukid* – because it preferred Greek cultural forms. Local elites adopted and adapted elements of the culture of the court to express their allegiance to the empire and to better communicate with the empire.

Thus, the Seleukids manipulated tradition by associating local cults with imperial ideology, subtly altering practices and values in close collaboration with local agents, who must have gained considerable advantages from that. Instead of a process of creative misunderstanding, the Babylonian material reveals a process of negotiation, of creative adaptation. Both parties involved in civic-imperial negotiations will have looked for a ‘Middle Ground’ of congruencies to achieve desired ends.⁷⁵

We see therefore a converse process of cultural translation taking place in the partial adaptation by the Babylonian elite of the practices and values of the imperial elite. This argument in favor of a partial ‘Hellenization’ of the elite is not meant to reintroduce the Hellenocentric view of a unidirectional flow from a sending culture to a culture of receivers, and neither to endorse the conceptualization of Hellenism as a simple ‘merging’ of cultures (as it was originally conceived by Droysen). Instead, I propose to understand the elements of Greek style and Greek material culture that were adopted by local cultures as ‘international style’, which contemporaries initially considered to be *imperial*. It was what Bob Dylan in his autobiography *Chronicles* observed about his role as a Roman soldier in a Christmas play in school: ‘[It was] a nonspeaking role, but it didn’t matter. I felt like a star. I liked the costume. It felt like a nerve tonic [...]. As a Roman soldier I felt like a part of everything, in the center of the planet, invincible’.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Cf. Malkin 2002, 153.

⁷⁶ Dylan 2004, 125.

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List of illustrations

Fig. 1. Antiochos Cylinder. Transcription of the text from Rawlinson and Pinches 1884, no. 66.

Fig. 2. Antiochos I. Silver tetradrachm from Seleukeia on the Tigris, showing a seated Apollo on the reverse. Courtesy of the Classical Numismatic Group