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The Genealogy of the Seleucids: Seleucid Marriage, Succession, and Descent Revisited

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THE GENEALOGY OF THE SELEUCIDS

SELEUCID MARRIAGE, SUCCESSION, AND DESCENT REVISITED

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All errors, oversights, omissions, and misjudgements are, and remain, mine alone.

-AJPM
INTRODUCTION

The Seleucid dynasty is perhaps better described as inconsistent rather than inherently unstable. While at first the family enjoyed relative tranquillity of marriage and succession, as early as the second generation cracks had begun to appear in the foundational unity of the family with the first hints of jealousy, bickering, and conspiracy that gradually widened to create an unbridgeable rift between rival branches of the dynasty. As much as heredity could be an asset to a Seleucid by elevating them to the heights of influence, it could just as easily be a hindrance relegating them to secondary obscurity. The same duality characterises the family itself: when harmoniously unified, it was an invaluable asset to imperial administration, but as it turned against itself with increasing desperation the tremors of domestic strife were felt throughout the Hellenistic world.¹ For the Seleucids the stakes were particularly high: the ill-fitting pieces of their Empire were joined together only by common loyalty to the same king, and as dissent within the royal house over succession or legitimacy made for an ambiguity of royal authority, tiles began to slip out of the mosaic that was their dominion.²

As such there is perhaps a more intimate link between the health of the dynasty and the health of the Empire amongst the Seleucids than any of the other successor dynasties, but for all of its consequence its internal structure remains elusive. The ties of blood and marriage that bound the Seleucids to one another are obscured by fragmentary source material, and lines of descent have been tangled by competing scholarly interpretations. If even the Ancient authors, befuddled by the array of Antiochuses and Laodices, frequently confused father with son, or sister with daughter, then our task at present is far from easy.

¹ Capdetrey (2007), 117.
² Bikerman (1938), 7, and Vandengeerde (1984), 66.
The evidence is vexatious to say the least: literary and epigraphic sources alike only identify individuals patronymically (if that), and determining precisely which ‘Antiochus son of Seleucus,’ for instance, an author or inscription is referring to can be remarkably difficult given the sheer number of possibilities. The narrow taste of the Seleucids when it comes to naming their children does little to help dispel the ambiguity. This vagueness is coupled with a surprising lack of insight from ancient authors: while they are quick to mention the inspiration behind military stratagems or political manoeuvres, they are uncharacteristically silent when it comes to analyzing dynastic events.

My aim in light of this double ambiguity is not only to attempt to unravel the jumbled genealogy of the Seleucids by formulating a new *stemma* of the dynasty, but moreover to consider why the *stemma* emerged as it did. With some grasp of the Seleucid dynastic model gleaned from more ‘sure’ cases of marriage and succession, we might then employ it to resolve the many ambiguities and gaps. It is my hope that by considering the ideology and mechanisms that lay beneath the patterns of marriage and succession we may gain some insight into the character of the troubled house, and, in so doing, into their Empire.

The genealogy of the Seleucids seems to be something between a scholarly mirage and Rorschach test: every modern scholar who has looked at the various paths of descent has seen something different, and their sight has often been guided as much by the framework of their research as by the evidence itself. The ambiguity of the material allows one plausibly to see the dynasty as representing everything from a haphazard imitation of the Ptolemies to a revival of Achaemenid practices.³ While scholars are quick to acknowledge how the internal stability of the family affected the relative stability of the

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empire, few have sought to consider the family itself head-on. Instead, dynastic models form the substructure of much larger narratives. While not overtly visible, the decisions an author makes about descent and heredity subtly guide the course of their more general interpretations. Amidst recurrent disagreement over specificities, there is one striking vector of consensus: it was the escalation of strife within the family that gradually caused the house and empire of Seleucus to crumble and fall.

Where and when this internal division first appeared is more contested. To the great historian of the Seleucids, Edwyn Bevan, the fissures had begun to appear as early as Antiochus I, and the downfall of the house came with the introduction of Ptolemaic women.\(^4\) Myriad diplomatic marriages outside the kingdom, and varying endogamic marriages within the house provided for some measure of stability to the kingdom, but the ‘universal domestic quarrels’ of the dynasty’s end were both the symptom and the cause of its demise.\(^5\) Bouché-leclercq espouses many of the points raised by Bevan though disagrees on specific cases of marriage or heredity, and sees a Ptolemaic precedent often at work with contested cases of sibling-marriage.\(^6\) The earlier Seleucid historians have a sensitivity to dynasty borne out of their contemporary milieu that many modern scholars have increasingly cast aside in favour of considering the Seleucid empire from the ground-level rather than from the lofty heights of the palace. For several decades only isolated cases of heredity were resolved mainly through epigraphy and numismatics, and historians of the period by and large seemed more content to limit themselves to analysis of narrow scope.\(^7\)

I am greatly indebted to Daniel Ogden’s Seleucid model put forth in 1999 which revives the dynastic interest of the past century. Ogden views the Seleucids as perhaps the

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\(^4\) Bevan (1902a), 1.169 and 2.212.
\(^5\) Bevan (1902a) 1.303 and 2.204.
\(^6\) Bouché-Leclercq (1913), 2.545-6.
\(^7\) Bellinger (1945), Le Rider (1986), and Lockhart (1961), for instance.
most unstable of the Hellenistic dynasties, and as one whose internal structure and notions of legitimacy were recurrently complicated by the intervention of foreign powers.\(^8\) He identifies three broad phases of the dynasty’s trajectory. First, the early (polygamous) Seleucids responded with varying degrees of success to potential (or realized) amphiometric strife – rivalry between sons born of different mothers but the same father. Next, Antiochus III attempted to introduce Ptolemaic full-sibling marriage with his children as a sort of levirate technique that failed with the premature death of Antiochus Neos. The third and final phase begins with Alexander Balas, at which point Ogden argues that the dynasty fell under the indirect control of the Ptolemies and was later fractured by civil wars amongst rival branches of the dynasty.\(^9\) Though Ogden’s research is thorough and comprehensive, I suspect that at times he is too eager to force the Seleucids to fit into the mould of polygamous amphiometric strife that he argues shapes Hellensitic dynasteia, and he has a tendency to base much larger conclusions on contested cases that provide only shaky ground at best.\(^10\) His selectively liberal interpretation of the evidence, I would argue, has identified a level of polygamy and endogamy in the dynasty that a more restrained approach seriously calls into question. Ogden, along with many others, is quick to see the advent of ‘Ptolemaic’ women into the stemma as the beginning of the end for the Seleucids, but seems to overlook that the ‘Ptolemies’ who married into the dynasty were in fact Seleucids, barely two generations removed from their maternal descent.\(^11\) With this in mind I argue for a more reciprocal view of the interaction between the two troubled dynasties, instead of discussing them simply in terms of dominance and submission.

\(^8\) Ogden (1999), 117.
\(^10\) For instance, in his discussion of the potential wife of Antiochus I: Ogden (1999), 124-5, and Laodice vi: 140-1.
The most recent scholars to approach the topic have done so almost exclusively from the angle of royal women. Ogden’s work has provided the genealogical foundation for their respective analyses, and we can sense the persistent influence of his conclusions on subsequent authors. The work of Sherwin-White and Kuhrt, of course, also merits recognition by virtue of their Eastern interest and inclusion of previously marginalized source material that shifted the focus of Seleucid scholarship. Bielman-Sanchez sees Seleucid marriage as aimed at securing a base of power by creating ethnic ties throughout the empire; a policy which then changed with the introduction of consanguineous marriages under Antiochus III – creating a mix of exogamy and sibling marriage that he views as inspired by the Achaemenids. Kyra Nourse, in a brilliant thesis on early Seleucid women, sees the dynasty as being constructed from an ad hoc process of ‘adoption and adaptation’ which ‘emerged from both immediate circumstances and the influence of the dynasty’s predecessors in Macedonia and the East.’ The promotion of the Seleucid family as a dynastic unit is a mechanism identified by Elizabeth Carney, who nuances the East-West dialectic with the inclusion of the Hecatomnids in addition to the Ptolemies as the inspiration behind consanguineous marriage. While undeniably beneficial to understanding the internal dynamics of the house, this exclusively female focus has caused us to lose sight of the broader imperial context. Glaring discrepancies nevertheless persist: we have yet to forge any sort of consensus on such basic notions as polygamy, endogamy, and even legitimacy.

In light of all of this I have taken a rather more minimalist approach to tracing the genealogy and dynastic model of the Seleucids. As I mentioned above the nature of the

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evidence allows one to see what they would like in the source material, and to avoid falling into this trap I aim to let the evidence speak for itself, ambiguities and all. J.M. Helliesen, in a rather obscure note on Laodice RE#20 – the wife of Demetrius I – shrewdly observed that ‘some historians have felt compelled to tidy up by a series of imaginative cross-identifications the amorphous mass of Laodices transmitted in texts and inscriptions.’\textsuperscript{16} Her remark regarding Laodices is true of many Seleucids, and it is often these tenuous cross-identifications that have had the greatest impact on our conception of the dynasty. Bearing this in mind I have shied away from making identifications out of convenience, preferring to introduce another unknown Laodice, for instance, into the stemma than identify her with some other roughly contemporary Laodice as an easy way to tie off a dynastic loose end. Convenience, though tempting for its own sake, is a poor guide when it comes to this particular family. While the model that emerges may be messier than those with more heavy-handed approaches, I hope that at the very least it will better reflect the materials that we have our disposal. With this approach a more diverse picture snaps into focus, figures of whom we can know precious little come to the fore, while others who were once given a pivotal role fade into relative obscurity. The Seleucid House that arises is one whose complexity stems from its diversity of both inspiration and innovation.

Even the very use of the term model brings with it an array of connotations that raise questions of agency and self-consciousness. When I speak of a dynastic model I do not do so in the anthropological sense of retrospectively grafting a system onto the Seleucids that they themselves would not have recognised was at work. It is not my intention to argue that there is a consistent template within which the dynasty fits neatly for the entirety of its history. Instead, I mean to speak of the Seleucid model as the underlying ideology and self-

\textsuperscript{16} Helliesen (1980), 295.
identity that they themselves formed and cultivated. Throughout their history we can see attempts by various Seleucids to promote a certain distinct image of the dynasty, the perpetuation and reinforcement of which guided everything from numismatic iconography to cultic patterns. What informs a dynast’s choice of spouse, successor, or son-in-law, the self-consideration that leads a family to style themselves in a certain way, and the traits they felt ought to be broadcast and preserved, are all part and parcel of how I conceive of a dynastic model. It is this, ultimately, that ought to cause the stemmata to emerge as they should rather than us attempting to fit the dynasty into a construct of our making.

Considering the shifting relationship between this theoretical ideology and the practical business of perpetuating a dynasty reveals the degree to which each informed the other. How this evolved in response to changing exigencies of circumstance tells of much more than just the dynasts themselves.

For the sake of convenience and accessibility, I have organized and presented the stemma on the Internet; the flexibility and adaptability of which allows me to overcome the hindrances of paper while presenting multiple layers of information. The website – http://www.seleucid-genealogy.com - is meant to serve as a detailed appendix outlining the paths of descent that I have traced, and justifying them with more detailed commentary. I ask the reader to refer to it for more in-depth descriptions of figures whom I have mentioned only in passing as brevity dictates, and to seek further clarification of the many contestations that I have either smoothed over or summarized in the most brief detail. If the website provides the building blocks, then this paper represents the interpretative structure I have constructed with them.

In order to make sense of the stemma, I shall begin by discussing the dynastic precedents that may have served as some source of inspiration to the Seleucids. It is
remarkably difficult to formulate a structure for discussing what is at times such a disorderly dynasty; the topic by nature does not lend itself naturally or cleanly to thematic divisions. In light of this I have opted to let the Seleucids organise themselves, as it were, along the lines in which they recurrently reappear. First, the nuclear family that forms the nexus of Seleucid dynastic ideology will be discussed as it evolves throughout the dynasty’s history by considering those most centrally involved in marriage and succession. My scope will then broaden with an analysis of the ‘extended’ Seleucid family – the web of diplomatic and inter-dynastic arrangements that tied them to their dynastic contemporaries. Of course there is substantial overlap between the two and individuals tend to fall in or out of each. I do not intend the distinction between nuclear and extended to be categorical but rather a grouping of discursive convenience. Finally, I shall attempt to gather these various strands together and weave them into a more general approach to the dynasty as a whole.
CHAPTER I:
COMPARATIVE DYNASTIC MODELS AND APPROACHES

When Seleucus and his progeny set about the task of consolidating their royal control over a vast and otherwise disparate empire, they were departing the more comfortable turf of the battlefield and entering the alien realm of dynastic politics. The transference of royal power and legitimacy from one man to a lineage was a task that came neither naturally nor easily to the Seleucids, but was accomplished through a combination of improvisation and imitation. The various corners of the Seleucid Empire had witnessed the evolution and refinement of different approaches to monarchy and dynasty over the course of millennia, providing the budding dynasts with a wealth of paradigms which they could adapt to themselves, and to which they could adapt themselves. It was by responding to, creatively borrowing from, and innovating on such traditions that the Seleucids improvised the composition that was their own dynastic identity. Considering what was at hand to the Seleucids grants us some insight into their sources of inspiration – and also allows us to identify those areas of unique Seleucid innovation. While the Seleucid model does not mimic any one precedent alone, the characterisation of individual aspects gives us some taste of its more general flavour. I do not mean to presume that there was a static or consistent model at work throughout the dynasty’s history, but rather considering its evolution in this context allows us to track the various currents of influence and inspiration.

Mirroring the polarity of East and West that dominates Seleucid scholarship, scholars have identified Argead Macedon and Achaemenid Persia as the principal dynastic archetypes, but I would like to nuance this dualistic opposition by also including the Assyrian/Babylonian, Biblical/Hebrew, and Pharaonic models by virtue of their incorporation in – or proximity to – the Seleucid sphere of influence. The dynasts of Caria have recently
come to the fore as contributors to the model of Hellenistic succession and certainly merit consideration as well. The bonds of antagonistic rivalry and intermarriage linking the Seleucids to the Ptolemies proved strong to the point of rendering their later history inseparable, and thus we must bear in mind the Ptolemaic model. I am hesitant to discuss or even to characterise the more general model of the diadochoi, as others have done, chiefly because the constant competition, interaction, and intermarriage between the immediate Successors makes it nearly impossible to identify precisely who was influencing whom, making any attribution of agency or inspiration conjectural.

The Argead monarchy casts as long a shadow over contemporary scholarship as it did over the Successors, and has garnered by far the most attention. A decidedly ad hoc arrangement, the Argeads provide something of a messy model: plagued by constant strife over succession, interfamilial violence, and incessant rivalry between potential claimants, the monarchy achieved some measure of stability more through the perpetuation of the clan’s power and influence than that of any one individual. The king himself had fairly vague and undefined powers, and functioned more as a primus inter pares than an absolutist figure. By the reign of Philip II, royal polygamy had become an established mechanism for maintaining the dynasty’s network of domestic and foreign alliances. The composition of Philip’s retinue of seven wives neatly encapsulates this strategy: five of them were ‘foreign’ brides betrothed for diplomatic reasons, while the remaining two were taken from noble Macedonian houses. Neither exclusively exogamous nor endogamous, the Argeads seem

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17 E.g., Carney (2005), and Nourse (2002), 73-109.
18 For instance, Nourse (2002) devotes an entire chapter to attempting to outline a model of royal female influence among the diadochoi, with mixed results, also Cohen (1973).
22 Satyrs in Athenaeus 557b-3.
to have had no qualms about close-kin marriage, though this seems to be limited to uncle-niece marriages. While beneficial to the maintenance of a web of diplomatic relations, such polygamy created an ambiguity of status that recurrently proved problematic. The tenuous position of wives and their offspring led to persistent competition for primacy in succession and made amphimetric strife all too routine. In such heated contests, questions of legitimacy were frequently answered in terms of ethnicity and paternity, with rival claimants branding each other foreigners or bastards to bolster their own standing.

The Argead model gave women the potential to be principal actors on the political stage; the degree to which that was realized was dependent on the character and charisma of the individual woman. The importance of the clan gave Argead women a visibly public role as perpetuators of the dynasty, and their proximity to the king made them valuable intercessors. A similar strategy guiding royal polygamy was at work with the marriages of royal daughters who were given either to foreign potentates for diplomatic reasons, or betrothed to prominent Macedonians to strengthen noble ties to the dynasty. While it was a haphazard and often chaotic arrangement the Argead model nevertheless proved fairly successful at ensuring the continued pre-eminence of the royal clan, though the internecine strife that plagued succession would bring the dynasty to an abrupt end after Alexander.

While the straightforward Argead model operated at the top of a rather small, remote region of Greece, the Achaemenid system sat at the head of an immense empire and is marked by a complexity concurrent with its dominion. An exponentially larger royal family, intricate hierarchy of royal wives and offspring, and the supremely dominant position of the

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23 Ogden (1999), 10-25.
king serve to set the Achaemenids apart from their formerly-subject Macedonians. The Persian web of diplomatic relations confirmed by marriage similarly outshined its Argead counterpart, and necessitated much more nuanced language of rank to make the entire system coherent. While Darius I, taking wives from various lines of the Achaemenid family to bolster his legitimacy, was certainly polygamous, he cannot by any means be considered paradigmatic and his successors seem to have acted differently. According the pact made between Darius and the seven families, the wife of the king could only be chosen from amongst the Persian nobility, and marriage to foreign princesses was forbidden. Polygamy amongst the successors of Darius is at once more complicated and difficult to grasp. The dynastic terminology of the Persians made distinctions between a principal (Persian) wife or consort of the king, and secondary wives or concubines – as many as 300, in the case of Darius III - drawn from all corners of the Empire filled the rest of the Great King’s harem. The sharp distinction between wife and concubine in the Greek world is far more nebulous in the Achaemenid context. Diplomatic marriages were commonplace but distinctly one-sided: wives and concubines were chosen from satraps and client kings and taken as a symbol of submission to royal authority, but royal daughters were never given to outside kings as this would imply an equality of status that was unthinkable to the Persian monarch. Instead, they were reserved for Persian nobles to whom they were married as a sign of royal favour. Several ‘principal marriages’ of the Achaemenids were endogamic and marrying close relatives appears commonplace: Cambyses married his sister Atossa, Darius II his half-

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29 Badian (2000), 244-6, and Brosius (1996), 22.
31 Hdt. 3.84.2.
33 Brosius (1996), 80-1.
sister Parysatis, and Artaxerxes III married his niece.34 On the whole, it seems that all endogamic marriages save those between uterine siblings were permissible.35

The sheer size of the *harem* and number of potential claimants to the throne made succession ambiguously subjective. While the king would select an heir from amongst his children there was little guarantee his favourite would accede to the throne.36 Despite having what was perhaps a dubious claim, an aspiring king would claim legitimacy through patrilineal descent, which was then bolstered by levirate marriage to his predecessor’s widow and secured by the murder of other potential claimants.37 Although Persian royal women had the potential to influence the king and were treated as symbols of the Empire’s grandeur, they generally lacked the public prominence of Argead women as their clout was derived solely from their relationship with the King.38 Despite the vast size of the royal household, the Achaemenid model ultimately had the individual king as its focus, rather than the more diffuse concerns of the Argeads.

With their inheritance of the Persian Empire, the Seleucids also came into contact with the neo-Assyrian/Babylonian traditions that had inspired many aspects of the Achaemenid model. While polygamous and sharing the same female hierarchy as the Achaemenids, the Assyrian kings were far less overtly domineering in their marriage relations.39 The practice of marrying royal daughters to nobles and foreign potentates alike was undertaken for the common goals of confirming and perpetuating allegiance and

36 Badian (2000), 244-9.
38 Nourse (2002), 156-70.
The underlying structure that emerges is one led by a principal wife, followed by a group of secondary wives, and a large number of royal concubines – though foreign princesses could hold a high status. Royal marriages were not unilateral as with the Achaemenids, as royal daughters could be - and often were - given in marriage to the king’s noble entourage and foreign magnates alike. Siring a large group of children was seen as a means of dynastic perpetuation, though interestingly legitimacy was frequently expressed in terms of matrilineality that reveal the importance of the queen mother. Queenship was a rather more complicated concept in Assyria, with a distinction made between the principal wife who was the consort of the reigning king, and sarratu – a goddess or woman, usually foreign, who ruled in her own right. The title hirtu – meaning wife of equal status with her husband and implying some isonomy in the marriage – is used rarely, but the nuanced titulary reappears amongst the Seleucids.

As with the Achaemenids, levirate marriage was a common practice of legitimation, and forms part of a tradition which spans almost the entirety of the ancient Near East. The Biblical model in particular almost necessitates the marriage of a predecessor’s widow as part of inheritance and the legitimation of rule, a precedent set by David marrying the daughter of Saul. The book of Deuteronomy expresses a tradition common throughout Asia Minor that viewed marriage as part of the process of inheritance, making levirate marriage a mark of the transfer of legitimacy while allowing for the continuity of the line of

40 Melville (2004), 41-2, 47.
43 Melville (2004), 53.
44 Ibid.
45 Burrows (1940), 15.
46 Murray (1915), 315, and I Kings 14.
the predecessor.\textsuperscript{47} The influence of the Queen Mother in steering the course of succession is also a characteristic that arises in the Biblical tradition with David and Bathsheba, and which we shall recurrently see amongst the Seleucids.\textsuperscript{48}

The infamous incestuousness of the Ptolemies that has fascinated or scandalized ancient and modern commentators has been the subject of such attention that the entire model need not be repeated here; instead I defer to Ogden’s analysis.\textsuperscript{49} What I feel are most interesting and pertinent to our discussion are Ager’s remarks on the ideology behind royal incest, and the Pharaonic marriage traditions that at least partially informed the Ptolemaic adaptation thereof. Ager lucidly argues that incestuous marriage was the ‘dynastic signature’ of the Ptolemies which so removed them from the norms and constraints of the quotidian life of the commoners that it served to underscore their near-divine entitlement and prestige.\textsuperscript{50} In addition to the practical motivations of such closely endogamous marriage, the sheer symbolic import attached to this dynastic signature led the Ptolemies to advertise it blatantly as a fundamental part of the indulgence and excess that broadcast their power.\textsuperscript{51} Incest and 	extit{tryphe} formed the two pillars of Ptolemaic dynastic identity.\textsuperscript{52} That such sibling marriage was so publicly flaunted is fundamental to grasping its ideological weight.

The much older Pharaonic tradition was at least partly the inspiration behind the Ptolemaic practice, especially during the 18\textsuperscript{th} dynasty in which the majority of marriages were brother-sister unions.\textsuperscript{53} What is most interesting to us is the relationship between the general security of the Egyptian kingdom and evolving Pharaonic attitudes toward royal

\textsuperscript{47} Burrows (1940), 25, Deuteronomy 25.5-10, and Genesis 38.
\textsuperscript{48} Murray (1915), 314-6.
\textsuperscript{49} Ogden (1999), 67-102, also see Pomeroy (1990), 16-23.
\textsuperscript{50} Ager (2005), 1.
\textsuperscript{51} Ager (2005), 18-21, and Carney (2003), 206-7.
\textsuperscript{52} Ager (2005), 25-8.
\textsuperscript{53} Middleton (1962), 604-5.
marriage. The 18th dynasty, seemingly the peak of sibling marriage, was also marked by the same sense of self-superiority with regards to dynasty that we see amongst the Persians, as exemplified by Amenhotep III’s bold statement that the daughter of an Egyptian king has never been given in marriage to anyone.\textsuperscript{54} With tranquility within the kingdom and Egyptian pre-eminence abroad secured, Amenhotep and his successors were in a position to entertain such a haughty attitude towards exogamy.\textsuperscript{55} When the fortunes of the Kingdom waned in the face of rising Hittite power, the Pharaohs began to sing a different tune. The marriages of princesses Tany and Herit to the Hyksos Apopi, and Ankhesamun’s futile bid to marry a Hittite prince, were the result and symptom of a weak and feeble Egypt.\textsuperscript{56} The marital practices of Pharaonic Egypt vacillated in accordance with the health of the Kingdom, and this responsiveness of dynastic practice to broader imperial developments ought to be borne in mind when considering the Seleucids.

Finally, the customs of a dynasty whose geographical and temporal proximity almost necessitates their influence on the emergent Seleucid dynasty merits mention. The Greek-speaking satrapy of Caria, ruled in the fourth century by the Hecatomnid dynasty, has recently been the deserving subject of scholarly attention as a prototypical model for Hellensitic dynasteia. After the death of the dynast Hecatomnus, the Satrapy passed not into the hands of one son but to a pair of married siblings, Mausolus and Aretemisia.\textsuperscript{57} While Mausolus was alive, he and Aretemisia ruled together.\textsuperscript{58} Though the brother was often the dominant party in this co-rule, after his death Artemisia assumed sole sovereignty and

\textsuperscript{54} Schulman (1979), 179.
\textsuperscript{55} Schulman (1979), 189-92.
\textsuperscript{56} Schulman (1979), 187-9.
\textsuperscript{57} Carney (2005), 65-8, and Nourse (2002), 98-100.
\textsuperscript{58} Carney (2005) 74-80, and Nourse (2002), 73-6 and 90.
enjoyed Persian recognition.\textsuperscript{59} After her rule, marked by remarkable political activity and public benefaction, the throne passed smoothly to the younger brother/sister husband/wife pair, Idrius and Ada, who returned the region to married-sibling co-rule.\textsuperscript{60} After the death of Idrius, Ada took the reigns and remained an authoritative figure until the advent of Alexander - despite the revolt of her brother Pixodarus.\textsuperscript{61} While the ideology and tradition behind this Carian instance of sibling marriage is obscure, it gave them instant recognition at home and abroad, all the while regulating the smooth transfer of power.\textsuperscript{62} The institutional use of sibling co-rule, and the inclusion of powerful royal women first as titular equals, and then as independent sovereigns, was as innovative as it was striking. While the Carian model is perhaps too circumstantially specific to copy, various aspects of it - the ideology of co-rule, and the symbolic joint regency of brother and sister, husband and wife - clearly left a lasting impression the House of Seleucus after it acquired control of the region.

As stated earlier, though the Seleucids do not mimic or adopt any one of the aforementioned precedents singly, if we consider the various sources of inspiration behind elements of their dynastic model we can begin to track patterns of inspiration and adaptation.

\textsuperscript{59} Diod. 16.36.2, Strabo 14.2.16, discussed at Carney (2005), 68.
\textsuperscript{60} Nourse (2002), 103-6.
\textsuperscript{61} Carney (2005), 68-9, Arr.1.23.7-8, Strabo 14.2.17, Diod.16.74.2. For Alexander and Ada: Arr. 1.23.8.
\textsuperscript{62} Nourse (2002), 103-7.
CHAPTER II:
THE SELEUCID NUCLEAR FAMILY

When Seleucus I began the task of transferring the authority he had won through military prowess and personal charisma from himself to his progeny, he made the innovative choice of privileging not any individual successor but rather the immediate nuclear family. Perhaps cautioned by the examples of the other diadochoi whose fleeting claims to authority had been too inherently personal to persist, in the emergent Seleucid context sovereignty was made familial, not individual. While the King remained the primary figure in this construct, the manner in which the Seleucids privileged the Royal Family meant that their dynastic claim transcended any one monarch.63 This echoes the way in which the Argeads privileged the ‘clan’ over the individual, but on a smaller scale: Seleucus and his successors presented themselves as a simplified nuclear family that was the sole possessor of both present authority and future legitimacy.64 This formed the fundamental link in their dynastic chain that was perpetuated by the entire dynasty, albeit with modifications and adaptations to make the image fit a particular situation. Consciously promoted as a buttress to royal authority and as a means of simplifying the course of succession, the nuclear family of husband and wife / king and queen ruling in conjunction with their chosen heir is the fundament of both dynasty’s self-conception and public image.

The nuances of this ideology as it was introduced, refined, and modified over the course of the dynasty’s history were determined as much by preference as by necessity; understanding its evolution and eventual degeneration is pivotal to understanding the dynasty as a whole. To tease out these often-subtle concepts, I shall discuss the marriages, births, and successions that relate to the immediate nuclear royal families, namely the king,

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63 A notion briefly touched on by Carney (2011), 205.
64 For general legitimation the Seleucids: Nourse (2002), 227-8.
queen, and selected heir as it is these three figures who feature most prominently in Seleucid dynastic thought. While I realize that ‘nuclear’ is somewhat loaded modern terminology that perhaps has no place in the ancient world, I believe that there is something fitting in the ideological connotations of stereotyped gender roles and expectations of conduct that capture the concepts at play amongst the Seleucids. Although the complexity of a particular situation – especially amongst the later Seleucids - often does not allow for the application of such a simplistic model, it nevertheless provides a convenient point of departure for discussing the long-term impacts of such ideology.

**Setting the Precedent: Seleucus I and Antiochus I**

The first marriage in the dynasty’s history was one of many at Alexander’s mass weddings at Susa in 324.\(^{65}\) Seleucus married Apama, the daughter of the Bactrian rebel Spitamenes, and while in the years to come Apama would prove to be an invaluable link between Seleucus and his Eastern domains, her potential for political utility took nearly a decade to be realized and it seems that their marriage was held together by far more than diplomatic convenience.\(^{66}\) Neither her influence nor her activity were limited to the East, as her epigraphical presence in the Hellenic world proves the *basilissa* to be a valuable contributor to the pan-imperial designs of her husband.\(^{67}\) As she gave birth to Antiochus I she assured the continuity of Seleucus’ lineage, which now united Macedonian nobility with Persian royalty. Marital ambiguities arise almost immediately, however, making it uncertain if the Seleucids were polygamous as early as the founding generation. Whether or not Apama was alive when Seleucus, in a purely diplomatic manoeuvre, married Stratonice –

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\(^{65}\) *Arr.Anab.* 7.4.6, discussed at Ogden (1999), 119, and Tarn (1929), 140-1.

\(^{66}\) Grainger (1990), 12.

\(^{67}\) Nourse (2002), 237-43. For her Greek involvement: OGIS 213.
daughter of Demetrius Poliorcetes and Phila - to seal his alliance with the Antigonids in 299 cannot be known, though I suspect she was.\textsuperscript{68} His subsequent dismissive treatment of Stratonice, however, suggests to me that Apama remained first in his eyes.

Seleucus wasted neither time nor effort in promoting the legitimacy, prestige, and unity of his family. A master at bridging the gap between ideology and topography, Nicator created monumental testaments to his family’s past and present with his city foundations.\textsuperscript{69} Seleucia-Zeugma on the Euphrates, with its link between his eponymous foundation and the nearby town (Apameia) named after his wife, provided a geographical testament to their marriage. The early nuclear family is best captured in the Syrian tetrapolis: at once he honoured his own parents Antiochus and Laodice with Antioch-on-the-Orontes and Laodikeia-ad-Mare and his own marriage with Apameia and Seleucia-in-Pieria, while the naming of Antioch has a double resonance as a tribute to his son and successor.\textsuperscript{70} In this we can perhaps see a tribute to both reigning triads of the early Seleucids: first, Antiochus-Laodice-Seleucus, and then the next generation of Seleucus-Apama-Antiochus. Myths not only of the city’s respective foundations, but of Seleucus’ divine parentage by Apollo were propagated to add some measure of divinity to the royal family. Such mythical privilege, borne first by the divinely-impregnated Laodice, mother of Seleucus, became another hereditary attribute.\textsuperscript{71}

The most innovative and influential precedent was set by Seleucus when he gave Antiochus I co-regency in the East and transferred his wife Stratonice to him.\textsuperscript{72} As a means of simultaneously stabilising succession, delegating imperial control, and finding a clever way

\textsuperscript{68} Grainger (1990), 146, Bevan (1902a), 1.145, Ogden (1999), 122, and Grainger (2010), 60-3.  
\textsuperscript{70} Strabo 16.2.3-6,  
\textsuperscript{71} Nourse (2002), 227-8. For city foundation myths: Ogden (forthcoming).  
out of a diplomatic predicament the move was as unprecedented as it was brilliant. Cooling relations with Demetrius led Nicator to search for a convenient but inoffensive way to do away with his Antigonid bride.\textsuperscript{73} Antiochus presented him with the perfect match: how better to reinforce his new co-regent’s authority in the East than by giving him his wife as a sign of his favour? A tale of a son’s irresistible love satisfied by a father’s generous benevolence – either real or fictional – was disseminated to become one of the most famous in antiquity and beyond.\textsuperscript{74} But the shrewd calculation behind this mechanism of pre-mortem levirate marriage must not be underestimated: Seleucus was assuring the perpetuation of his diplomatic relations, his hold on his empire, and the continuity of his bloodline.\textsuperscript{75} With this, the ruling triad of husband-wife-heir was reconfigured by the transfer of the royal woman, making her both a carrier and signifier of legitimacy. Although the precise circumstances were so unique that they were almost impossible for later Seleucids to mimic, the ideology of pre-mortem succession, the mechanism of levirate marriage, and the symbolic role of royal women persisted.

The reign of Antiochus I witnesses the perpetuation and modification of the paradigmatic nuclear family, along with the first hints that cracks were beginning to appear underneath the public façade of solidarity. After the sudden assassination of his father in 281 by Ptolemy Ceraunus, Antiochus sought to stabilise his accession by creating a sense of continuity. Privileging his lineage over his own prestige, Antiochus chose to continue the dating system of his father and in so doing, as Kuhrt and Sherwin-White aptly phrase it, ‘time became Seleucid, dynastic, and continuous.’\textsuperscript{76} Association with his father was emphasized with numismatic iconography and his own filial piety put on display with his deification of

\textsuperscript{73} Breebart (1967), 163, and Grainger (2010), 64.  
\textsuperscript{74} Breebart (1967), 163. For artistic receptions: Stechow (1945), 221-237.  
\textsuperscript{76} Sherwin-White and Kuhrt (1993), 27.
Nicator.\textsuperscript{77} His father’s strategies similarly endured along with his memory: Antiochus associated his eldest son Seleucus as co-regent in late 269, wasting little time in filling the vacancy in the nuclear family.\textsuperscript{78} The system, however, did not function as smoothly as it had in the previous generation. The young co-regent was murdered on grounds of conspiracy, only to be replaced by the seemingly more-trustworthy younger son of the King, also named Antiochus, in March/April 265.\textsuperscript{79} Primogeniture was now discarded in favour of paternal preference. Tampering aside, the speed with which Antiochus appointed his two successive co-regents shows how immediate were the concerns of succession, and how automatic the tendency to revert to diarchy.

In the public expression of the relationship between Antiochus and Stratonice we begin to see the dynamic of power within the nuclear family become more nuanced. In the ‘Antiochus I Cylinder’ from Borsippa, an Akkadian dedicatory inscription from a temple complex renovated with royal patronage, the King asks Nabu for a happy reign for himself, his co-regent Seleucus, and wife Stratonice. It is the language with which she is described that is most revelatory.\textsuperscript{80} Identified as \textit{hirtu} and \textit{sarratu}, Stratonice’s titulary is as odd as her epigraphical presence: both terms in this period are reserved for designating female deities, not reigning consorts.\textsuperscript{81} The archaic term \textit{hirtu} - when it is seldom used - means ‘wife of equal status,’ while \textit{sarratu} is typically used to describe wives of deities or foreign queens who have some measure of power.\textsuperscript{82} We would expect to find the typical word for wife – \textit{assatu} – used here, not such archaic or religious terminology. Equality, participation, almost partnership in marriage and rule are concepts that, here expressed in Akkadian, are echoed

\textsuperscript{77} Sherwin-White and Kuhrt (1993), 205.
\textsuperscript{78} Parker and Dubberstein (1946), 19-20.
\textsuperscript{79} Trog.Prol.26, John of Antioch fr.55, Parker and Dubberstein (1946), 19-20, and Bevan (1902a), 1.169-72.
\textsuperscript{81} Sherwin-White and Kuhrt (1991), 77-8.
in Greek elsewhere. An inscription from Ilium that has been tentatively dated to the reign of Antiochus I in which the queen is identified as the king’s sister – τῆς ἀδελφῆς αὐτοῦ βασιλίσση – has been taken by Ogden and others as proof that Antiochus had an earlier marriage to a sister that predates Stratonice.\(^8^3\) Other problems with such a claim aside, I would argue instead that given the later usage of the title during the reign of Antiochus III – which I shall soon discuss – and bearing in mind the aforementioned Akkadian example, it is not meant to be taken literally but as a metaphorical expression of the collaboration between king and queen in the language of siblings.\(^8^4\) The model of the nuclear family had, by this point, been put into practice and had begun to be realigned by preference as early as the second generation.

**Dynastic Strife, Civil War: Antiochus II**

Precisely how the paths of succession and marriage were steered after the death of Antiochus I is again obscure. Pre-mortem succession via co-regency seems to have ensured the ascent of Antiochus II as planned. With his marriage to Laodice of the Anatolian client dynasty of Achaeus, Antiochus II, as his grandfather had done, showed himself averse neither to diplomatic nor exogamous marriage.\(^8^5\) Laodice gave birth to the ill-fated brothers Seleucus and Antiochus Hierax, though unlike his predecessors Antiochus II did not explicitly associate one of them as co-regent.\(^8^6\) The ambiguous situation was only worsened with the

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\(^8^3\) For the sister-marriage: Ogden (1999), 125, and Bielman-Sanchez (2003), 50. For the dissenting view: Nourse (2002), 236, 251-5, and Jones (1993), 82-92, line 23 of the inscription.

\(^8^4\) Jones (1993), 91-2, and Bouché-Leclercq (1913), 2.545.

\(^8^5\) Refer to appendix for my argument for the identification of this Laodice as wife of Antiochus II. Also Por.F.32.6, Grainger (1997), 47-8.

\(^8^6\) Diod.31.19.6, Justin 28.5.3.
marriage of Antiochus to Berenice Phernophorus, daughter of Ptolemy II, whose entrance into the house of Seleucus closed the Second Syrian War in April, 252.87

It is unclear whether Antiochus II was married to two women simultaneously. While some scholars see something of an ancient divorce settlement in OGIS 225, the uncertainty of the inscription's dating along with the consistent prominence of Laodice throughout the entire affair lead me to believe that such a repudiation was expected for nor enacted.88 Rather than institutionalizing primacy of succession, Antiochus II let obscurity reign. His departure from the (then pregnant) Berenice at Antioch to Ephesus where Laodice was resident could be taken as an implicit nod towards the primacy of Laodice, or it could have simply been strategic convenience because of trouble in the north.89 Even with his tacit promotion of Laodice over Berenice, Antiochus still did not specify whether he intended Seleucus or Hierax to succeed him. His death in the summer of 246 left a double vacancy in the ruling family as it currently had neither a clear king nor heir.90

The disarray of the royal house was manifested in the disarray of the kingdom as territories aligned themselves with either side of the family.91 While Ogden is quick to point to this incident as a quintessential instance of Argead-style amphimetric strife in the dynasty, the speed with which Laodice did away with her younger rival’s infant son compared to the longevity of War of the Brothers that ensued shows this episode to be merely prelude to the real crisis of succession.92 The struggle would not come to a head until Antiochus Hierax, perhaps spurred on by his mother or not, revolted against his brother in 239 and in so doing opened nearly a decade of division within the kingdom along jagged

87 App.Syr.65, Por.F43, Downey (1961), 87-9, and Macurdy (1932), 83.
88 Grainger (2010), 153. Also, for the inscription: Nourse (2002), 263.
89 Grainger (2010), 135-42.
91 Justin 27.1.1-2, Porphyry F.43, App.Syr.65.
92 Ogden (1999), 117.
fraternal lines. The battle for military supremacy was matched by a battle over perceived legitimacy, as Hierax minted coinage bearing the portrait of his father and grandfather in order to, to quote Dodd, 'sell himself as a better king on grounds of family piety.' Given that their father had not explicitly conferred legitimacy on either, they had to take matters in their own hands. For the first of many instances in the dynasty’s history, strife within the family translated into civil war.

Seleucus II however did not neglect his dynastic future. Following in the footsteps of his father, he married a Laodice from the allied house of Achaeus – likely a niece of his mother – in marriage that blurs the line between exo- and endo-gamic. He sired two sons by this Achaean Laodice – Alexander and Antiochus – and the easy succession of Alexander after his father’s death in a riding accident suggests that he had made his intentions clearly known. Alexander took the throne at around eighteen and changed his name to Seleucus III in honour of his father, and presumably for lack of either wife or heir on account of youth he creatively modified the paradigmatic nuclear family. He seems to have recognized his need to appoint a successor while also appeasing the potential ambition of his younger brother, which he simultaneously accomplished by simply appointing Antiochus co-regent and despatching him to rule in the East. In this we can see a conscious attempt restore a modified form of traditional co-regency that in this case is organised along fraternal rather than filial lines.

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93 Plut.Mor.489a mentions Laodice pushing him to rebel. For the war in general: Strabo 16.2.4, Porphyry F.32.6, and Grainger (2010), 174-8.
94 Dodd (2009), 74.
95 Pol.4.51.4, 8.33.1, Polyaen.4.17, and Bevan (1902a), 1.203-4.
96 Justin 27.3.12.
97 Porphyry F.32.9, Eus.Chron.1.40.11, Grainger (1997), 63.
98 Pol.2.71.4, Porphyry F46, Eus.Chron.1.40.12.
Paradigm Shift: The Reign of Antiochus III

The reign of Antiochus III was as monumental for dynastic ideology as it was for the wider Hellenistic world. On the death of the childless Seleucus III primogeniture was not an option and instead the throne passed to his younger brother. This in itself set an uneasy precedent for later Seleucids by which legitimacy could be claimed both fraternally and paternally; the primacy of either mechanism was never resolved. In what by now seems to be a family tradition, Antiochus III married a Laodice from a dynasty of Asia Minor to secure his hold on the region, though this time she was of the Mithridatic Pontic House.99 This pairing is again rather difficult to classify: one the one hand she was drawn from a regional dynasty for diplomatic purposes (exogamic), but she was also Antiochus’ first cousin (endogamic).100 Her titular proximity of relation to the king, however, was much more intimate than in reality and was publicised in such a way that makes the paradigmatic nuclear family a tighter unit. In the same manner as Ptolemy III and Berenice II, Antiochus and Laodice frequently identified themselves publically as ‘brother and sister’ - τὸν ἀδελφὸν and τῆς ἀδελφῆς βασιλίσσης Λαοδίκης, respectively – even though they were not actually siblings, and spoke of loyalty in relation to τὸν ὦκὸν ἡμῶν.101

Such titular cannot of course be taken literally but is rather meant to show that in marriage Laodice had become so intimately a part of the family that she can be considered her husband’s sister.102 Addressing the king as her brother in letters recounting their collaboration reinforced the public perception of family loyalty and harmony - certainly a

99 Pol.5.43.1-4, 6-8, and Grainger (1997), 17-21.
100 Bevan (1902a), 1.303, Holleaux (1912), 482-5.
101 Ma (2000) provides a comprehensive appendix with all of the decrees of Antiochus III and Laodice referred to here. Laodice identifying Antiochus as her brother and the reference to τὸν ὦκὸν ἡμῶν: Letter to Iasos, #26, line 4 in Ma (2000) dossier, also Austin 1981 no. 156. Antiochus identifying Laodice: #37, line 13 in Ma (2000) dossier, also OGIS 224. Also, Nourse (2002), 237 eruditely discusses the titulary dynamic. For other such identifications, see Ma (2000) dossier, numbers 28, 17, 18, 20, and 26.
102 Nourse (2002), 237.
necessary task given the troubles of the previous decades. The underpinnings of equality and partnership in the title echo the Akkadian language of Antiochus I and Stratonice, and were so effectively broadcast that Livy and other ancients retroject the title as far back as the reign of Seleucus I.\textsuperscript{103} In reward for her devotion and affection the queen was given an eponymous priesthood separate from that of Antiochus and his ancestors.\textsuperscript{104} By so elevating his wife Antiochus sought to help define legitimacy in the dynasty while also conveying an underlying sense of domestic harmony.\textsuperscript{105} Despite his later marriage to Euboea of Chalcis during his campaign in Greece – another diplomatic manoeuvre – it was abundantly clear that Laodice III and her children were the present and future core of the dynasty.\textsuperscript{106} Euboea was never referred to as $\text{βασίλισσα}$, given a royal cult, or referred to as ‘sister;’ such honours were reserved for Laodice.\textsuperscript{107} The public expression of their relationship introduced another level of metaphorical intimacy to the family, which Antiochus III would try put into actual practice with the marriage of his children.

In the Winter of 196-5 the King arranged the first and only attested instance of brother-sister marriage in the Seleucid dynasty with the union of his son and heir Antiochus Neos and his daughter Laodice.\textsuperscript{108} Suddenly the image of adelpheic intimacy he had promoted with his queen was made manifest in his children. In the process Antiochus III was attempting to set a new, perhaps Ptolemaic or Achaemenid-inspired, precedent to rewrite the conventions of legitimacy within his House, making consanguinity a prerequisite of the nuclear family.\textsuperscript{109} Clear succession based on the purest Seleucid bloodline, assured by the

\textsuperscript{103} For instance, Livy 38.13.
\textsuperscript{104} van Nuffelen (2004), 283-4, and Bielman-Sanchez (2003), 53-6.
\textsuperscript{105} Nourse (2002), 276.
\textsuperscript{106} Pol.20.8.1-5, App.Syr.16.2, Liv.36.11.1-2, Athenaeus 439e-f.
\textsuperscript{107} Bielman-Sanchez (2003), 49.
\textsuperscript{108} App.Syr.4, Bevan (1902a), 2.52-3.
\textsuperscript{109} Ogden (1999), 135, and Grainger (2010), 284-6.
marriage of siblings was meant to be the new paradigm; king and queen were meant to be brother and sister in fact as well as in title. The royal family would become exclusive to the point of being impenetrable, and had this precedent been fully implemented it seems likely that exogamy and legitimacy would have been mutually exclusive.\textsuperscript{\textcircled{110}} The marriage, as with that of Antiochus I to Stratonice, confirmed the earlier appointment in 207 of Antiochos Neos as co-regent.\textsuperscript{\textcircled{111}} The future of his dynasty and kingdom should have been secured, but the crystalline dynastic designs of Antiochus III were shattered with the sudden death of his son in 192.\textsuperscript{\textcircled{112}}

\textit{The Manipulation of Tradition: Seleucus IV, Antiochus IV, and Demetrius I}

After this brief but profound shift the paradigm returned to normal, as it were, with Antiochus III’s appointment of his next eldest son, Seleucus IV, as co-regent in October 189.\textsuperscript{\textcircled{113}} Nearly every scholar of the Seleucids has presumed that Antiochus III transferred Laodice, wife of Antiochus Neos, to her brother Seleucus IV, and that she was then married to Antiochus IV in a triple instance of sibling marriage. I go against the vast majority in rejecting this cross-identification due to the extremely tenuous nature of the evidence by which it is supported, and ask the reader to refer to my online appendix for justification. Seleucus IV and Antiochus IV were, in my opinion, married to the same Laodice, but I find it

\textsuperscript{110} Bielman-Sanchez (2003), 46.

\textsuperscript{111} For the co-regency of Antiochus Neos: App.Syr.4-5, Pol.5.55.4, Pol.16.18.6-8, and Grainger (1997), 37.

\textsuperscript{112} On the death of Antiochus Neos: Aymard (1950), Liv.35.15.2.

\textsuperscript{113} Parker and Dubberstein (1946), 20.
highly unlikely that she was their sister who been married to Antiochus Neos.\textsuperscript{114} Instead I assume that Seleucus IV, in a more conventional match, took one of the many Laodices present in the Seleucid client dynasties as a bride. By all accounts order had been restored at the outset of Seleucus IV’s reign following a smooth succession: the new king was married to a Laodice (IV), had an elder son Demetrius whom all presumed to be the next heir, and a younger son Antiochus.\textsuperscript{115} Seleucus included his wife’s portrait on his coinage to convey a sense of stability and family harmony in the wake of the disastrous terms of the Roman peace.\textsuperscript{116} If the royal family was stable, the implicit message was that the empire was stable, but by this point the immediate members of the royal family no longer held exclusive sway over its affairs.

During the reigns of Antiochus III and Seleucus IV a new player had entered the dynastic arena of the Seleucids who would recurrently influence the pattern of succession: Rome. When Seleucus IV was murdered in 175, Rome refused to release the hostage – and by all accounts rightful heir – Demetrius I, preferring the younger Antiochus to take the throne in the hopes that the kingdom would be as infantile as its monarch.\textsuperscript{117} Antiochus IV, however, was the party that everyone seems to have underestimated: with the support of Eumenes, he seized Syria, killed Heliodorus, and took Antioch.\textsuperscript{118} The means by which Antiochus legitimated his place on the throne speak to the persistent centrality of the nuclear family to Seleucid dynastic ideology. Antiochus first married his brother’s widow

\textsuperscript{114} See Hoover (2002) for the numismatic justification behind identifying the same Laodice as the wife of Seleucus IV and Antiochus IV.
\textsuperscript{115} Grainger (1997), 63-4 for a complete primary source list.
\textsuperscript{116} Hoover (2002), 83-5.
\textsuperscript{117} 2.Macc.3.4-40, and Grainger (2010), 285.
Laodice then adopted his brother’s son as his own co-regent.\textsuperscript{119} With this the reigning triad was seemingly restored, but only temporarily: as soon as Laodice had given birth to a son, Antiochus IV murdered his adopted nephew/co-regent and quickly replaced him with his own heir the summer of 168.\textsuperscript{120} In the reign of Antiochus IV we can see the persistence of the public façade of the royal nuclear family, but by now it was maintained more by murder and manipulation than by established convention.

Despite his best efforts in Antioch, while Demetrius I was still alive in Rome Antiochus IV was unable to tie off all of his brother’s dynastic loose ends. Epiphanes’ creation of his own royal nuclear family while Demetrius still lived created two rival lines whose competition for legitimacy and supremacy would never be resolved. In this contest the two mechanisms of succession compete, and neither emerges ahead: Demetrius was backed by the much older precedent of primogeniture dating to the reign of Seleucus I, while Antiochus IV justified his reign through the newer phenomenon of fraternal succession. Demetrius I repaid his uncle’s usurpation in kind by using Epiphanes’ own mechanism of accession against the young Antiochus V: after his escape from Rome, Demetrius arrived in Syria, seized Antioch, and immediately ordered the murder of his predecessor’s family.\textsuperscript{121} The murder of one’s rivals had by now become a more convenient levirate technique than marriage or adoption.

As with Laodice IV, the identification of Demetrius’ wife with his sister Laodice is accepted by many \textit{a silentio} and touted as another instance of brother-sister marriage in the dynasty. I however find Helliesen’s arguments for the implausibility of such an identification convincing beyond doubt and thus discard the possibility that Laodice, wife of Perseus, was

\textsuperscript{119} Parker and Dubberstein (1946), 20-1.
\textsuperscript{120} Austin no.131, Grainger (2010), 286-7, and Parker and Dubberstein (1946), 20-1.
later the wife of Demetrius.\textsuperscript{122} Like the previous generation, we are never lacking Laodices in either this period or region of the Hellensitic world and I think it highly likely that Demetrius perpetuated the family tradition of marrying a daughter of one of many neighbouring dynasts. This union produced three sons – Antiochus, Antiognus, and Demetrius.

\textit{No Clear Victor: Alexander Balas to the Dynasty’s End}

It is during the reign of Demetrius that the tumult that ultimately tears the dynasty asunder first appears, and I concur with many in considering the advent of Alexander Balas as the ‘beginning of the end.’\textsuperscript{123} Despite the arguments of ancient and modern commentators alike for the illegitimacy of Alexander Balas, I have little difficulty in attributing at the very least his paternity to Antiochus IV.\textsuperscript{124} With the vast financial and military support of Philometor behind him, however, in reality his lineage mattered little.

Ptolemy VI gave Balas his fifteen year-old daughter Cleopatra Thea as further substantiation of his endorsement, and the pair were married at Ptolemais in 150.\textsuperscript{125} Though many have seen this as the moment at which Ptolemaic women infiltrate the Seleucid bloodline to the dynasty’s ultimate demise, they overlook Cleopatra’s maternal descent: her grandmother was a full Seleucid, the name Cleopatra itself was a Seleucid importation, and the two dynasties had been interrelated since Berenice II’s marriage to Ptolemy III.\textsuperscript{126} The entire sequence should be understood as the return of Seleucid women to their matrilineal roots. With the support of Ptolemy, the Attalids, and the endorsement of Rome, Balas quickly ousted Demetrius, murdered his wife and son Antigonus, and took the throne in what the

\textsuperscript{122} Helliesen (1980).
\textsuperscript{123} Bellinger (1949), 56-7, for instance.
\textsuperscript{124} Dodd (2009), 98-100 reviews conflicting scholarly viewpoints, also Ogden (1999) 145-7.
\textsuperscript{126} Ogden (1999), 147, Bevan (1902a), 2.212, and Macurdy (1932), 97-101.
enemies of the former king would have seen as a return to legitimate succession.\textsuperscript{127} Murder of one’s potential rivals was again the most automatic mechanism of legitimation. Yet in this instance again we can see the shadow of Antiochus IV’s fraternal succession: both Demetrius and Alexander claimed the same throne through two different fathers. Neither, in theory, had a more legitimate claim than the other.

Nevertheless Balas was still careful to cultivate a certain image of his family. As with Antiochus IV and Seleucus IV, he included the portrait of his queen on his coinage to provide some sense of family stability. Balas’ depiction is quite unique: he and Cleopatra are shown together in a jugate portrait – a first for the Seleucids – with the queen taking precedence.\textsuperscript{128} While in this instance he is emphasizing his Ptolemaic connection, elsewhere in his reign he fell back on the ages-old Seleucid precedent of depicting his father Antiochus IV on his coins.\textsuperscript{129} The features of his individual portraits are all conventionally Seleucid, and perhaps continuity of portraiture was meant to imply continuity of dynasty.\textsuperscript{130} By the time of his reign, however, there were far more hands at work in fashioning the royal family than just its immediate members. The Ptolemites, Romans, Attalids, and the ever-more preferential citizens of Antioch all had a vested sense of entitlement. Popular distaste for Balas quickly translated into support for Demetrius II. With the transfer of Cleopatra Thea to Demetrius II legitimacy was taken away from the line of Antiochus IV and returned to the progeny of Seleucus IV.\textsuperscript{131}

To discuss each spasm in the dying convulsions of the dynasty would take a work of far larger scope, so I shall instead defer to Bellinger, Grainger, and Whitehorne for the

\textsuperscript{128} Dodd (2009), 100.
\textsuperscript{129} Dodd (2009), 100-1.
\textsuperscript{130} Dodd (2009), 101-2.
\textsuperscript{131} Diod.32.37, Jos.AJ.13.108, Whitehorne (2001), 151.
broader narrative and limit myself to particular manifestations of broader thematic
trends. It is extremely difficult – perhaps impossible – to see any sort of unity to royal
ideology amidst such disparity, but despite the sheer tumult of the period I argue that we
can still see various aspects of the Seleucid tradition at work. This is not to say that profound
changes did not occur. With the accession of Demetrius II the royal family was too large ever
to be reconciled, possessed of far too many male claimants squabbling over an inheritance
that was rapidly diminishing. The pace at which dynastic change occurred became almost
frantic. The fates of the Ptolemies and Seleucids were intertwined to the point of being
inseparable, with defeated or ousted parties from either side seeking some measure of
retribution by involving themselves in the affairs of the other. The Seleucid Cleopatrae
had not returned to their maternal dynasty empty-handed. The intervention of Demetrius II
in support of Cleopatra II, the arrival of Cleopatra IV in Syria and her subsequent quarrel with
her sister Tryphaena, as well as the various Seleucid and Ptolemaic husbands of Cleopatra
Selene show just how entangled the two dynasties had become. The systemic problems that
plagued the Ptolemies were mixed with the plurality of Seleucid systems of succession to
produce a dynastic situation that was nigh incomprehensible.

Amidst the maelstrom there are nevertheless identifiable mechanisms at work. Royal
women took on unprecedented symbolic weight as tokens of legitimacy – but even this was
diluted by the multiple marriages of Cleopatra Thea and Cleopatra Selene. Such royal
women giving birth to multiple sons by multiple fathers created a large group of contenders
for the throne who on the surface all shared an equal claim. Assassination and murder
became commonplace tools in a progressively more desperate struggle to regulate

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133 Notably Cleopatra IV and Cleopatra Selene.
134 Marriages of each discussed in Ogden (1999), 149-157, and Whitehorne (2001), 149-185.
succession. Cleopatra Thea’s murder of her own son Seleucus, and her later attempt to poison Antiochus VIII reveals both the agency of such royal women and their mercuriality.\footnote{135} The entire episode is particularly telling: a Seleucid – Seleucus V – claimed the throne through patrilineal descent only to be assassinated for lacking maternal endorsement, was then succeeded by his younger brother – Antiochus VIII via fraternal succession - who then spent eight years fighting his uterine half-brother (amhipatric dispute) only to be murdered by his minister.\footnote{136} The chain of events could go on ad nauseum. The case of Antiochus X provides another illustrious example of just how tangled the dynastic lines had become: the young heir had himself crowned, married Cleopatra Selene – who was at once the widow of his father, his aunt / widow of his uncle, and niece of his maternal grandmother – and then avenged his father’s death by defeating his cousin Seleucus VI.\footnote{137} Legitimacy was being claimed via patrilineal succession, fraternal succession, maternal appointment, and co-regency in the midst of persistent amhipatric strife brought on by polyandry on the part of royal women.

\textit{The Convergence of Tradition}

The end of the Seleucids in this sense is not so much characterised by the breakdown of royal ideology but rather by the tumultuous implementation of nearly all the precedents and mechanisms the dynasty had to offer at the same time. Perhaps it was the manner in which legitimacy had been diffused throughout the nuclear family during the preceding generations of the dynasty that gave each member – king/husband, queen/wife, and son/co-regent – the sense of entitlement and legitimacy necessary to attempt imposing their will on

the course of the dynasty. The primacy of the king had been discarded in reality just as it had been streamlined in ideology. Dynastic precedent and ideology informed each member of the royal nuclear family that in some ways they were an equal shareholder in the present and future of the lineage, and thus it comes as little surprise that at the end of the dynasty we see husbands, wives, and sons all trying to exercise their authority simultaneously. Each in turn could point to a different episode in the dynasty’s history as justification. Seleucus V would feel himself supported by the patrilineal precedent of Antiochus I and II, Antiochus VIII through the fraternal succession of Antiochus III and IV, while any number of later Seleucids would identify with Demetrius I’s attempt to right a wrong path of succession. Even Cleopatra Thea could, emboldened by the ideology of partnership and cooperation that empowered Seleucid queens, feel herself following in the footsteps of Antiochus I by doing away with a pretentious son. It was when all of the various strands of Seleucid dynasteia, from the privileged position of each family member to the twin mechanisms of succession, were simultaneously grasped at by competing parties, that the dynasty and the empire were brought to their knees. With so many rival claimants turned so fully inwards in trying to resolve an insoluble dynastic stalemate, it comes as little surprise that the Armenians and Parthians were able to step in with such relative ease.

What distinguished the later Seleucids from their predecessors was the basic scale of the dynasty: in its early generations the dynasty was a much smaller group, and regulating succession with only or two sons was a much more straightforward affair than managing the dozen potential claimants of the later dynasty. The precedent set by Seleucus I, as successful as it was, was almost impossible to replicate for his later progeny. Though the precise circumstances that had given the nuclear family such prominence were fleeting, the ideology endured throughout the dynasty. But for all of its artificially-narrowed simplicity, the
paradigm still had a remarkable flexibility: wives taken from Persia, Pontus, or elsewhere could be brought into the fold quite easily, heirs could be substituted for one another according to the currents of favour, and many Seleucid co-regents did ultimately step into their father’s place. Placing such ideological importance in the hands of such a small group, however, meant that many Seleucids were excluded from it. It was, perhaps more than anything else, the attempts of those who were not given a place in the nuclear family – Antiochus Hierax, Antiochus IV, and many others – to somehow cram themselves into its narrow confines that created such recurrent cracks in the ideological framework. As they bent and tailored it to bolster their own specific situation, they gave rise to a plurality of dynastic precedent and tradition that gradually contributed to the slow fragmentation of the kingdom.
CHAPTER III:  
THE EXTENDED SELEUCID FAMILY

The ideological primacy of the simplified nuclear family has a tendency to make the other immediate members of the royal family slip into background obscurity. Although they were not publicised with the same flair as their relations, the sisters, brothers, sons and daughters who compose the rest of the Seleucid royal family were equally involved in the perpetuation of the dynasty and its dominion. The links with other dynasties that were sealed with the marriages of these Seleucids were just as instrumental in administration of the empire as they were in weaving a web of dynastic relations that stretched from Egypt and Anatolia to Cappadocia, Pontus, and mainland Greece.\(^{138}\) Unlike the Achaemenid Kings and Egyptian Pharaohs, the Seleucid kings had no qualms about marrying their sisters or daughters to other dynasties. Exactly which of these marriages qualify as internal or external is rather ambiguous given the ease with which the Seleucids adopted the Persian precedent of governing via subordinate dynasts who blur the line between satrap and king.\(^{139}\) In the same vein we must fight the temptation to view such inter-dynastic marriages as purely exogamous: the simplicity of a model in which internal succession marriage is endogamic and external diplomatic marriage is exogamic conceals the remarkably intimate relations that developed between the Seleucids and their client dynasts.\(^{140}\)

The perennial dearth or ambiguity of Seleucid source material arises again in this context and obfuscates the long-term effects of these alliances. Most of the marriages and relations under consideration involve recurrently under-represented royal women who tend to appear in our sources only once at the moment of their marriage and then fade into

\(^{139}\) Capdetrey (2007), 113.  
\(^{140}\) For such a model, see Bielman-Sánchez (2003), 47.
silence. We ought not, however, equate such obscurity in our sources with irrelevance or
detachment from Seleucid affairs, and neither should we think that upon marriage a
Seleucid woman ceased being Seleucid.\textsuperscript{141} Rather they served to maintain lines of
communication between client dynasts and the royal family, and just as they represented
the Seleucid dynasty in their person, so too did they actively represent its interests in their
actions. The case of several Seleucid women shows that even after thirty years of marriage
they were still closely attuned to the affairs of the royal house and were perfectly content to
intervene, often to the detriment of their spouses. Whether such affairs were simply spur-
of-the-moment responses to contemporary developments or part of longer-term designs is
difficult to gauge, but I argue that we can see instances of both throughout. To discuss the
ideology, mechanisms, and lasting effects of Seleucid inter-dynastic relations, I shall consider
the marriages and conduct of those who were left out of the immediate path of succession.
The establishment of such relations was at once the key to the perpetuation of Seleucid
influence, and one of the principal causes of the fragmentation of the empire.

\textit{Forging the Ties, Allies and Alliances}

The reign of Seleucus I is strikingly quiet when it comes to such inter-dynastic
relations, and it seems the budding dynast preferred to gather Persian and Antigonid strands
to himself – with his marriages to Apama and Stratonice – rather than vice versa. During
their early reigns, however, the \textit{diadochoi} were still more concerned with marrying
themselves into the vestiges of the Argead house than amongst one another, and it comes
as little surprise that we should see relatively few instances of inter-successor relations.\textsuperscript{142}

\textsuperscript{141} Elaborating on Carney’s point at Carney (2011), 201.
\textsuperscript{142} Cohen (1973), 354-5.
Although it is not explicitly attested, there is one ‘dynasty’ with which Seleucid relations seem almost certain: the budding ‘House of Achaeus’ that would later spawn the homonymous rival to the young Antiochus III. Many have surmised that Achaeus, a figure who emerged as a prominent landowner in Asia Minor, was an unattested younger son of Seleucus I.\textsuperscript{143} While we cannot ever be certain of his parentage, his family bears all the signs of both Seleucid royal favour and relation: given territory in Anatolia, clearly wealthy, and later quite influential, the family begins using quintessentially Seleucid names such as Antiochis and Laodice as early as its second generation.\textsuperscript{144} The presence of these names must indicate some sort of marriage connection, and while I suspect that Laodice, a seldom-mentioned sister of Seleucus, might be the best vector of marital connection, such an inference is tenuous at best.\textsuperscript{145} At any rate, that some sort of dynastic ties with a regional subordinate were cultivated, and that said subordinate quickly began cultivating his own ties with other dynasts, shows the emergence of an early structure of Seleucid relations and governance via secondary dynasts.

As the lines dividing the emergent Hellenistic world became more clearly drawn, Antiochus I was quick to employ his female relatives in the maintenance of his father’s dynastic relations while also forging some of his own. In 278, his sister Phila was married to Antigonus Gonatas after he emerged as the one able ruler in Macedon.\textsuperscript{146} The marriage of Phila was meant as a mirror of Antiochus’ own marriage to Stratonice, and thus the two houses were doubly joined. Phila’s own proximity of relation to her husband shows how

\textsuperscript{143} Most recently: Grainger (2010), 68, 80-1, and Grainger (1997), 5. Also, DNP Achaeus (4) agrees with Grainger’s assumption. 

\textsuperscript{144} Strabo 13.264, FGrH 260F 32.6, Grainger (2010), 68, and OGIS 229. Also Ma (2000), 55. 

\textsuperscript{145} Marriage to this particular Laodice in the first generation of the Achaeids would at the very least account for the presence of both the names ‘Laodice’ and ‘Antiochis’ amongst the children of Achaeus. Naming their daughter Antiochis would be in accordance with the patronymic naming tradition. Eustathius 916 mentions her, and she is included in Grainger (1997) as Laodice (3), 48. 

\textsuperscript{146} OGIS 216, and Grainger (1997), 52.
quickly interrelated the houses had become, in turn making it difficult to classify this marriage as endogamic or exogamic. The speed with which Antiochus arranged his sister’s marriage after his accession to the throne reveals the deeply personal nature of such alliances: these agreements were between individual monarchs, not necessarily their dynasties, and thus had to be renewed on the succession of a new king.

The anti-Ptolemaic purpose of these Antigonid-Seleucid alliances becomes more apparent when we consider the marriage of his daughter, Apama, to Magas of Cyrene a few years later. Cyrene was a highly valuable asset in the growing rivalry between Antiochus and Ptolemy II, and Apama’s marriage seems to be a signifier of a broader pact in which Magas would be given Seleucid recognition as an independent king if he marched against Ptolemy. Although his invasion failed and he was later reconciled with his Ptolemaic half-brother, Apama remained true to her Seleucid roots. She would later decisively intervene in Cyrenaean succession in the 250s by replacing her daughter Berenice’s intended husband Ptolemy III with the Antigonid Demetrius Kalos – in so doing attempting to realign the kingdom with the Seleucids and Antigonids. Although her plan was foiled by Demetrius’ indolence and Berenice’s resourcefulness, that she made such an effort nearly 25 years after her marriage speaks to the depth of her loyalty to her brother.

*Marriage, Administration, and Empire*

Antiochus II similarly followed in his father’s footsteps while adding one more strand to the growing Seleucid dynastic web with the marriages of his sister and daughter, respectively. At an indeterminate date (c.255 BC) before he took the Antigonid throne,

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147 Grainger (2010), 75-80, 145.
149 Justin 26.3.1-7.
Demetrius II of Macedon was married to Stratonice, Antiochus II’s sister, to form a third marriage linking the dynasties in which, to quote Grainger, ‘husband and wife were almost as closely related as in the Ptolemaic family marriages.’\(^{150}\) The ideology of the privileged position of Seleucid females certainly seems to have taken hold in the young bride: after her repudiation by Demetrius, the indignantly slighted Seleucid made her way back to Syria and attempted to stage a coup in Antioch after her brother Seleucus II refused to marry her.\(^{151}\) Though the details of rebellion are decidedly vague, the agency and verve of Stratonice are nonetheless striking. The marriage of Antiochus’ sister, also named Stratonice, set a rather more lasting precedent. After the recovery of his patrimony from the Galatians, the Iranian Ariarathes of Cappadocia was proclaimed as king and at roughly the same time took Stratonice as his bride in the mid-250s as the symbol of Seleucid support.\(^{152}\) Aside from being remarkable as the marriage of a Macedonian/Seleucid princess to a non-Greek dynast, the union marks a strategic shift towards the acceptance of client kingdoms as a stable mechanism of rule over the edges of the empire.\(^{153}\) Local dynasts were now seen as part of the Seleucid imperial structure, not a threat to it, and in the process the first seeds of Hellenism were sown in new fields. While at the moment a unified, well-organised Cappadocian kingdom relieved the burden of administration from the already-weakened Seleucids, the perpetuation of the system depended entirely on the recognized primacy of the Seleucids. When that evaporated, so would their control over the region.

Seleucus II inherited his father’s dynastic mechanisms along with the problems besetting the empire, as the sole attested marriage during his reign created another client kingdom in Cappadocia as a simple means of administration. In around 245, at the outset of

\(^{151}\) Justin 28.1.2-4, Nourse (2002), 272, and Grainger (2010), 177.
\(^{152}\) Diod.31.19.6, Por. F. 32.6, Macurdy (1932), 83.
\(^{153}\) Grainger (2010), 131, and Bevan (1902a), 2.57-9.
his reign, the new king married his sister Laodice to Mithridates II of the emergent Pontic house.\textsuperscript{154} Though the precise chronology of the marriage is unclear, I suspect – along with Erciyas and Bevan – that the marriage took place before the Battle of Ançylla and was meant to ensure Pontic support for Seleucus over Hierax.\textsuperscript{155} Mithridates, for his part, gained Seleucid recognition at home and renown abroad as he had now entered the wider Seleucid sphere, while the Pontic adoption of Seleucid dynastic time demonstrates that they were still modelling themselves after their dominant patrons.\textsuperscript{156} With this, the Seleucid family was now linked by marriage or relation to the Attalids, Achaeids, Antignoids, and the emerging families of Pontus and Cappadocia in a web that now spanned Syria, Asia Minor, and Macedon.\textsuperscript{157} Yet for all of its dynastic strength this can also be seen as a symptom of decline: wracked by domestic disputes, their dominion was rapidly shrinking and the easiest means of salvaging some sort of control in contested regions was promoting such client kings by marriages which reinforced their subordination to the Seleucid lineage. Such a mechanism, however, was far from a sustainable means of imperial control.

Ever the most grandiose of Seleucid monarchs, Antiochus III proved to be as active in shaping the extended Seleucid family as he was in his attempts to redefine the nuclear family. While up to this point the web of Seleucid marriages seems to have been more the product of responsiveness than preconception, the marital manoeuvrings of Antiochus III hint at a more conscious strategic design. Shortly after coming to throne Antiochus conducted a successful campaign against Xerxes of Armenia, but rather than punish the

\textsuperscript{154} Just.28.5.3, Eus.Chron.1.40.6, Grainger (1997), 48, Marcoury (1932), 83.
\textsuperscript{155} Bevan (1902a) 1.22-8 and Erciyas (2006), 13-5 provide the best overview of conflicting arguments, and justification for the conclusion adopted here.
\textsuperscript{156} McGing (1986), 253-5, Grainger (2010), 172-7.
\textsuperscript{157} Grainger (2010), 172.
vanquished he opted to show clemency.\textsuperscript{158} Leaving the humbled Xerxes in power, Antiochus confirmed his subordination and exhibited his generosity by giving the Armenian king his sister Antiochis in 212 BC.\textsuperscript{159} Antiochis, like Apama, stayed loyal to the Seleucid cause: after her husband again became a thorn in his overlord’s side, she murdered him in accordance with her brother’s instructions.\textsuperscript{160} The episode, if nothing else, reveals the potential for danger as well as security that came with a Seleucid bride.

Subordination via marriage following military defeat is a theme that recurs with the monumental marriage of Ptolemy V to Cleopatra I Syra, daughter of Antiochus III, which marked the end of the Seleucid triumph that was the Fifth Syrian War. Celebrated in 194 B.C. at Raphia, the marriage confirmed the terms of peace between the two dynasties and, some would argue, reduced the Ptolemy to Seleucid clients.\textsuperscript{161} Whatever the precise dynamics of power at work, the union inseparably united the two dynasties in blood as well as in common fate, leading perhaps inevitably to the upheavals at the end of the dynasty that I have discussed in the previous chapter. From then onwards, every Ptolemy – male or female – would be part Seleucid, and Cleopatra entered the ranks of Ptolemaic dynastic names.\textsuperscript{162} For her part, Cleopatra fit the role of Ptolemaic queen with remarkable ease: popular in Alexandria, she had enough prestige to act as her son’s regent after the death of her husband. While she never overtly sided with her natal family, the abandonment of any

\textsuperscript{158} Bevan (1902a), 2.16-8, Ma (2000), 92-3.
\textsuperscript{159} Pol.8.23.5, John of Antioch FGrH 4.557.
\textsuperscript{160} Bevan (1902a), 2.15-6, Pol.8.25, John of Antioch FGrH 4.557. Also Grainger (2010), 283.
\textsuperscript{162} Pomeroy (1990), 23.
designs for an invasion of Syria during her regency is perhaps a subtle indication of residual allegiance. 

Doubtless aware, as Appian suggests, that his invasion of Thrace would inevitably invoke the wrath of Rome, Antiochus sought to bolster his pre-war position by reinforcing his ties to the Cappadocian houses. His sister Antiochis and daughter Nysa were married to Ariarathes IV of Cappadocia and Pharnaces of Pontus, respectively, with the former marriage re-establishing a dynastic link first forged in the reign of Antiochus II, and the latter seeming to follow up on Antiochus III’s own Pontic marriage. Given the intermarriage between the two houses over the past three generations, both unions are difficult to classify - but yet again the Seleucids have no scruples when it comes to marrying their cousins. In solidifying his reconquest of Asia Minor both unions were rather more successful than they were at assuring the outcome of his war against the Romans, but the premeditation involved in each divulges some sense of the long-term designs of Antiochus. For the moment, he had succeeded at perpetuating the system of rule via client proxy. His sister’s intervention in the succession of her sons after the death of Ariarathes IV is another episode in which a Seleucid bride tried to steer the course of her nuptial house to align with Seleucid interests. But in the midst of Antiochus III’s weaving of such an intricate marital web we can begin to see further signs of declining Seleucid prestige.

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165 Ma (2000), 92, Bevan (1902a), 2.15–8, Grainger (2010), 22.
166 Diod.31.19.7, App.Syr.11.5, and Bevan (1902a), 2.157.
**Decline and Irrelevance:**

Perhaps the most striking marriages of his reign were those that did not happen: despite the enticing dowry of several cities, Eumenes of Pergamon refused Antiochus’ proposed nuptial alliance in favour of marrying a daughter of Ariarathes, and the Great King’s plan to marry his daughter to Demetrius of Bactria likewise never came to fruition.\(^{167}\) Already, it seems, a Seleucid bride was not as prized a commodity as it had been some decades ago, and neither was association with the waning fortunes of the dynasty. In the face of such Seleucid decline, the client dynasties began to look to one another for marriage prospects, and as they did so the Seleucid inter-dynastic web began to unravel.

From the reigns of Seleucus IV and Antiochus IV onwards we begin to see a striking shift in the extended Seleucid family that seems to be an odd reversal of fortune. In the midst of the general decline we can still see some vestige of Seleucid marital practice at work with the union of Laodice, sister of Seleucus IV, with Perseus of Macedon in 177 BC.\(^ {168}\) A strong political gesture of solidarity with Perseus at the time to be sure, but with Perseus’ defeat the alliance was ultimately futile. As the Seleucids turned their attention ever more inwards in response to succession struggles, the dynasties which they had previously controlled by marriage now began to interfere in Seleucid affairs. That the Attalids intervened in favour of the succession of Antiochus IV is telling, as is the general increase in conflict amongst former client dynasties in the wake of Seleucid decline.\(^ {169}\) The previously ominous spectre of Seleucid authority no longer cast an intimidating shadow over Asia Minor, and in its place arose the Hellenized kingdoms of Pontus, Cappadocia, Armenia, and Pergamon.

\(^ {167}\) Proposed marriage to Eumenes: App. Syr. 5, Pol. 32. 30. 8, and Bevan (1902a), 2. 59-62. Proposed marriage to Demetrius: Pol. 11. 39. 9, Bevan (1902a), 2. 23. Also Hansen (1947), 73.


This general trend set during the reign of Epiphanes continues under Demetrius and Balas, and the near-complete absence of inter-dynastic marriages at a time when the Seleucids hardly retained any of their former prestige is far from surprising. Despite the occasional effort to maintain the influence over former client dynasts, the Seleucids seemed ever more impotent in regions they used to dominate. Ariarathes V of Cappadocia refused a marriage alliance offered by Demetrius, who was so irate at the rebuke that he tried and ultimately failed to replace him with his brother Orophernes. The intervention of the Attalids and Ptolemies in favour of Balas again speaks to the growing influence of external dynasties in internal Seleucid affairs, while a royal marriage between the two Cappadocian houses hints at the irrelevance of Seleucid opinion. With their royal women no longer desirous as brides, their prestige no longer recognized, and their patrimony shrinking, the Seleucids began to turn almost exclusively to their equally-troubled relatives in Egypt for marriage.

The last two generations of Seleucids and Ptolemies looked inward almost to the point of total exclusion. The decline of imperial prestige along with the essential prerequisite of an Egyptian bride as qualification for the throne meant that intermarriage with other dynasties was far from a top priority. The incessant conflict over succession makes it nearly impossible to distinguish between immediate and extended family, and the sources make no mention of the sort of inter-dynastic marriages we have seen in previous generations. Yet the trend of the past thirty years continues to accelerate first with the attempt of Phraates II to link his house with the Seleucids by marrying his daughter Rhodogune to the captive Demetrius II, and later with the coercive incorporation of Laodice, daughter of Antiochus VIII, into his Parthian harem. The two episodes reveal an almost complete reversal of the

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170 Bevan (1902a), 2.204-5.
balance of power, which would later be incontrovertibly confirmed with the invasion of Syria by Tigranes of Armenia. The decline and fall of the Seleucids, it seems, occurred at least partially at the hands of the very dynasts whose power they had previously bolstered by marriage and recognition. Yet in spite of the gradual erosion of its influence and prestige, even in the darkest moments of the dynasty’s end the Seleucid name still had some glimmer of its former celebrity. Laodice Thea, the last recorded Seleucid royal female, was still seen as an object of dynastic desire by Mithridates of I of Commagene, who reached deeply into her more glamorous hereditary past to justify his tenuous claim to present authority. That their progeny would continue to identify themselves as Seleucids demonstrates that if nothing the else, the repute of the Seleucid extended family outlasted its pre-eminence.

It is somewhat perplexing to try and classify the long-term trajectory of the Seleucid extended family. On the one hand, its development presents an almost complete reversal of the Pharaonic tradition: when the Empire was at its largest, and the Seleucids seemingly most powerful, Seleucid brides were desirous commodities for emergent dynasts seeking recognition from their overlords who in turn were able to delegate imperial control while ensuring lasting influence. On the other hand, beneath the superficial veneer of such contemporary Seleucid prominence we can see these marriages as desperate attempts on the part of Seleucid kings preoccupied with trouble elsewhere to stave off decline temporarily with a convenient family mechanism.

Even though all of the individuals mentioned above are not what would have been considered ‘primary’ Seleucids, they nonetheless played a pivotal – albeit different – role in the perpetuation of the dynasty and its interests. Different standing within the family created different potential for influence in different arenas, and in this sense the various women whose marriages wove such an expansive web of relations guided the course of the
dynasty and empire just as much as their more renowned relatives. While this web served to hold many pieces of the empire together for several generations, when the Seleucids became more absorbed in their own affairs their dynastic subordinates became their equals, and eventually their superiors as their prestige slowly decayed. What had been monetarily beneficial proved ultimately deleterious.
CONCLUSION

The barrier between the ‘nuclear’ and ‘extended’ in the Seleucid family is not, of course, as impenetrable as it may seem given the discussion of the preceding chapters. Throughout the history of the dynasty there were numerous individuals who were able to pass from one to the other, either to their benefit or their detriment, because of promotion or demotion, divorce or estrangement, or the ebb and flow of circumstance. Antiochus IV in his early career, Antiochus II, Laodice IV, even Laodice III all exemplify how the nuclear family was not the closed, exclusive group that Antiochus III would have had it be, but rather how it could be sculpted to fit a particular situation, and how responsive it was to modification – or manipulation. Seleucids seemingly relegated to the extended family and closed off from the course of succession – younger brothers, sisters, and the like – were recurrently able to penetrate the innermost echelon of the dynasty by various means. Antiochus IV, Demetrius I, and even Alexander Balas provide the best examples of this. In the process, some who had enjoyed primacy in turn found themselves displaced or killed. I do not mean for the distinction between nuclear and extended family to be absolute, but instead to reflect the duality of Seleucid royal ideology, and the diversity of expectation and potential for every member of the family. In spite of how the Seleucids presented themselves in such an artificially narrowed paradigm as the nuclear family, in reality it was a sprawling house, possessed of far more members than simply a king, queen, and heir, and all with an essential part to play in the perpetuation of the lineage and empire. The dynasty is far too diverse to be characterised by such a simple bifurcation, but it nonetheless provides a convenient vector of analysis and a starting point for exploring such complexity.

The diversity of inspiration and innovation that gave rise to the dynastic tradition of the Seleucids does not allow for one single model or precedent to be hailed as archetypal,
but rather we can see glimmers of inspiration from sources as diverse as the empire. The
Seleucids were not, I hope I have shown, simply a replica of the Argeads, though they did
adopt the Macedonian tendency to disperse legitimacy to a group and not an individual. But
in their titles, cults, defined roles and expectations, and royal trappings the Seleucids were
clearly not mere imitations of their ancestral predecessors. Their Persian inheritance seems
to have informed their strategy but perhaps not their attitude with regards to marriage, as
the Seleucids were eminently aware of the administrative and imperial utility of diplomatic
marriage to subordinates who were somewhere between satrap and client king. Yet they
discarded the haughtily unilateral approach of the Achaemenids, instead preferring the
more reciprocal attitude of the Neo-Assyrian and Babylonian tradition. Seleucid adoption of
the nuanced vocabulary of king and queen, but not the hierarchical structure of the court,
from their Neo-Assyrian predecessors again divulges their selectivity, as they picked and
chose various elements of inspiration to be included in their developing tradition. Levirate
marriage, steeped in Hebrew and Ancient Near Eastern tradition, became commonplace as a
mechanism of taking the place of one’s deceased predecessor. In turn women became
privileged as both bearers and tokens of legitimacy, gaining more strategic, but not
necessarily ideological, gravitas as the dynasty developed.

Informed by the reconsidered stemma of the dynasty and working with revised
genealogical identifications, I fail to see the prevalence of Ptolemaic influence on their
Seleucid relatives that so many other scholars have identified. With the two or three
instances of consanguineous marriage typically hailed as paradigmatic rejected by weighing
the evidence and finding it wanting, the potential for Ptolemaic influence falls through the
cracks along with such tenuous identifications. The Hecatomnids, however, almost certainly
inspired the Seleucids ideologically if not mechanically with the notion of co-regency, of
shared rule as indicative of the future path of succession. The collaboration between royal siblings who were also co-regents, of intimacy within the ruling family, of the equality and partnership of king and queen were mimicked metaphorically but not entirely in actuality. The Seleucids eagerly adopted the ideology and self-representation of their Carian predecessors, but were less ready to mimic their habits in practice.

The Seleucids, however, were not merely selective copyists of dynastic tradition. To classify them simply as a mix of re-appropriated tradition would gloss over the innovation inherent in such aspects as their particular type of institutional co-regency, the paradigmatic nuclear family, and the unique place of women in the Seleucid dynastic construct. The fluid mix of endogamy and exogamy as a means of at once perpetuating the dynasty internally while creating or reinforcing external relations wove a web of relations that was fundamental to the administration of the empire. The such marriage and relation was allowed, if not encouraged, to be reciprocal by bringing relatives born to external dynasties back into the main house – as with the Pontic and Achaean houses – reveals an inherent permissiveness or open-mindedness in Seleucid dynastic thought. They did not see themselves as bound to one particular ethnic group, source of inspiration, monarchic precedent, or even source of identity. This, I believe, accounts for the sheer diversity of the *stemma*.

While it is perhaps hypocritical to assert this in a paper devoted to a discussion of the Seleucid dynasty, I firmly believe that the *stemma* – and the narrative – of the later Seleucids reveals the futility of attempting to distinguish between the later history of the Seleucids and the Ptolemies. Ptolemaic women were not, as many of my predecessors have claimed,
infiltrating the Seleucid house and introducing some sort of dynastic poison. If anything, Seleucid women – two generations removed from their maternal heritage – were returning home, and in this sense the later Ptolemies can just as easily be viewed as having been infiltrated by Seleucid women as the Seleucids can by Ptolemaic women. The shared territory, strategic concerns, descent, and relations of the two dynasties render them inseparable. It is ineffectual to discuss two so inseparably bound groups in terms of dominance and submission, or even opposition.

As much as the above discussion has, I hope, illuminated some of the intricacies of Seleucid dynastic thought, it has provided just as many questions as answers. It is easy to focus exclusively on the most visible and renowned members of the dynasty and take them as representative of all of their less prominent contemporaries and relations. But to do so would be to make royalty a far smaller group than it was. The role of those who either fell or were pushed out of the immediate path of succession, the brothers who never came to the throne, the sisters and daughters whose marriages were pivotal to the administration of the dynasty and empire, require much further research to understand Seleucid dynasteia in all of its variety. Without further knowledge of them, we are merely looking at one part of the picture and presuming it represents the rest. Fundamental questions regarding the dynasty have yet to be answered to satisfaction: the issue of polygamy, of whether the Seleucids had multiple wives in succession or simultaneously, still must be resolved, and the intricacy of the troubled last generations of the dynasty ought to be examined in all of its tumultuous detail. Yet I hope that in the very least I have shown what a vastly different approach to a dynasty can be made by reconsidering it at the most basic level of genealogy. Revised identifications inform revised conclusions, revised conclusions lead to revised models; all of

171 See note 4.
this forces us to reconsider our prior reasoning and interpretation. The surface has only been scratched, however, and there is much work yet to be done.
APPENDIX I: GENEALOGICAL COMMENTARY AND JUSTIFICATION OF THE STEMMATA

Please visit http://www.seleucid-genealogy.com
APPENDIX II: STEMMA OF THE EARLY SELEUCIDS
THE REIGN OF SELEUCUS I TO ANTIOCHUS III
WWW.SELEUCID-GENEALOGY.COM
APPENDIX III: STEMMA OF THE LATER SELUCIDS
THE REIGN OF SELUCUS IV TO THE DYNASTY’S END
WWW.SELEUCID-GENEALOGY.COM
APPENDIX IV: LIST OF THE PRIMARY MARRIAGES OF THE DYNASTY

- Seleucus I = Apama, daughter of Spitamenes (324 B.C.)
- Seleucus I = Stratonice, daughter of Demetrius Poliorcetes (299 B.C.)
- Antiochus I = Stratonice, daughter of Demetrius Poliorcetes (294/3 B.C.)
- Antiochus II = Laodice I, daughter of Achaus (before 261 B.C.)
- Antiochus II = Berenice ‘Phernophorus,’ daughter of Ptolemy II (252 B.C.)
- Seleucus II = Laodice II, daughter of Andromachus (date unknown)
- Antiochus III = Laodice III, daughter of Mithridates II of Pontus (221 B.C.)
- Antiochus III = Euboea of Chalcis (190 B.C.)
- Seleucus IV = Laodice IV, parentage unknown (date unknown)
- Antiochus IV = Laodice IV, parentage unknown (175 B.C.)
- Demetrius I = Laodice V, parentage unknown (date unknown)
- Alexander Balas = Cleopatra Thea, daughter of Ptolemy VI (150 B.C.)
- Demetrius II = Cleopatra Thea, daughter of Ptolemy VI (145 B.C.)
- Demetrius II = Rhodogoune, daughter of Mithridates I of Parthia (139 B.C.)
- Antiochus VII = Cleopatra Thea, daughter of Ptolemy VI (138 B.C.)
- Antiochus VIII = Cleopatra Tryphaena, daughter of Ptolemy VIII (125 B.C.)
- Antiochus VIII = Cleopatra Selene, daughter of Ptolemy VIII (103/2 B.C.)
- Antiochus IX = Cleopatra IV, daughter of Ptolemy VIII (113 B.C.)
- Antiochus IX = Cleopatra Selene, daughter of Ptolemy VIII (96 B.C.)
- Antiochus X = Cleopatra Selene, daughter of Ptolemy VII (95 B.C.)
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