Abstract: The present paper addresses the cases of temple plunder or attempt of plunder in the Seleukid Kingdom during the period 211/0-164/3 BCE by kingly order. The paper aims at shedding some light on the motives of Antiochos III, Seleukos IV, and Antiochos IV, who—as it is attested by the literary sources—ordered the plunder of temples in several regions of their Kingdom. The despoliation of temples by the Seleukids is often connected, according to many modern historians, with the difficult economic conditions of the Empire after the treaty of Apamea with the Romans in 188. It is therefore stressed that the Kings constantly sacked temples in order to be able to fulfill their unbearable financial obligations to Rome. By examining though the socio-political as well as the economic conditions of Seleukid Kingdom during 211/0-164/3, I am arguing in this paper that the motives of these Kings varied, and were not exclusively related to the economic profit temple pillage would offer them, especially in the cases of Seleukos IV and Antiochos IV.

Keywords: Plunder of temples, Seleukid Kingdom, Antiochos III, Seleukos IV, Antiochos IV, Jerusalem, Elam, Treaty of Apamea

I. ANTIOCHOS III. THE GREAT

Antiochos III reigned from 223 to 1872 succeeding Seleukos III, also known as “Ceraunos”. After his Anabasis, the successful expedition to the upper satrapies of Seleukid Kingdom (212-205), Antiochos received the prosonym “the Great” (ὁ Μέγας).3

1. Plunder in Ecbatana

Only one year after his expedition in the East and the upper satrapies of the Kingdom4, Antiochos, while he was still in Media (211/0), plundered the temple of Ainē in Ecbatana5, gaining wealth equal to at least 4000 talents. The description of Polybius6 on this plunder underlines the growth of profit for the King:

1 All dates given are BCE.
2 On the chronology of Antiochus’ reign see SCHMITT 1964, 1-3 with references.
3 APPIAN, Syriaca, 1. See also MA 1999, 272-273.
5 This temple in particular had already been sacked several times in the past; see POLYBIUS 10.27.11.
6 10.27.12-13
Livy's prosopographicusen to tois koinas eixe tois periex khrusosmeneos, kai kekramides argyra kai pleioi en auth sunevttetine, plinto de chrusi tines olinan mera, argyra die kai pleioi upelemon. Eik de panton toin prorhimenon to xaraghein eis to basileikn hirisedi nomicia mikreis leitou tetrarkaissilin talantov.

The motives of Antiochus for this temple plunder in Ecbatana are clearly related to the King's need to continue financing his both ambitious and costly expedition in the East, whose needs were constant, and to some extent unpredictable. This particular plunder consisted undoubtedly of a measure of precaution on behalf of Antiochus to create a sufficient stock in the royal vault in case he needed to cover further expenses that would probably come up during his campaign. It should also be highlighted that there is no indication whatsoever of a possible uprising in the area of Ecbatana, which would partially explain the temple plunder by the King as a form of retaliation to a reaction of local populations against his will to impose his power upon them. The aim of Antiochus' decision to despoil the temple of Ainē was undoubtedly related to the great economic benefits a temple plunder entailed, which in this case were going to supply the royal vault during his highly costly and lasting Anabasis.7

2. The Treaty of Apamea, and the Economic Conditions of Seleukid Kingdom after 188

After the defeat of Antiochus III by the Romans in the battle of Magnesia in Sipylus (190/89)3, the peace of Apamea soon followed, which was attached to the so-called "Treaty of Apamea" that defined -short- the following terms for the defeated Seleukids:

- The boarders of Seleukid Kingdom from now on would be extended no further than the so-called "line of Taurus", which was defined by the river Tanais (also known today as "Gökṣu").
- Antiochus should withdraw his armies from the areas beyond Taurus, and he should also not sail beyond the cape Sarpedon. Furthermore, the King should stop breeding war elephants as well as withdraw the existing

It is highly possible that the profits from this plunder were even bigger, as the Seleukids, and not only them, maintained great quantities of uncut metal, meaning that usually not all of the metal was used in the coinage. It is also possible that Antiochus sent some of this metal to other mints, beyond Ecbatana, such as to that of Antioch, Nisibis and elsewhere. Cf. Rider 1993, 58. See Will 1982, vol. II, 55-66; Schmitt 1964, 101-102; Taylor 2014, 228-229.


See Kuhrt/sherwin-white 1993, 197; Taylor 2014, 229.

As Schmitt (1964, 102) explicitly underlines: "...so ist eher zu vermuten, dass der eigentliche Zweck dieser Maßnahmen eine Zwangsanleihe war, mit der der Herrscher seine leeren Kassen wieder auffüllen wollte- vermutlich ohne die Absicht, sie jemals wieder zurückzuerstatten". Next steps of Antiochus expedition: Partia (209); Bactria (208-206), and "India" (206-205).

See Appian, Syraca, 32-36; Titus-Livius 37.40 (on the battles), 59.2.


On the terms of the treaty see in detail Mcdonald 1967, 1-8; Mcdonald/Walbank 1969, 30-39.

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Undoubtedly the economic conditions of Seleukid Kingdom soon after the defeat of Antiochus III by the Romans in Magnesia, and the ratification of the Treaty of Apamea, must have been affected harshly. The costs of Antiochus' expedition in the East as well as of his war against the Romans were enormous, and we should always bear in mind that the royal vault would have been emptied by that time (188), financing these lasting military activities of Antiochus. In addition, after 188, the war expenses, which the Seleucid Kingdom owned both to the Romans and the Kingdom of Pergamum, consisted of a further factor of temporal instability for the royal economy. Antiochus had already been forced to pay immediately 3000 talents (500 + 2500) to the Romans and 400 talents to Eumenes II, and perhaps this fact was one of the most decisive reasons because of which the King attempted to plunder the temple of Ba'ali in Elam, only one year after the treaty.20

It is moreover an indication of the financial difficulties,8

7 This is a term which was never enforced (cf. Bar-Kochva 1976, 75-83), as we are informed by Polybius (30.25.11) of the existence of elephants in the Seleukid military forces during the magnificent parade of the army in Daphne (166). We also know that Antiochus used war elephants at almost every war he conducted. Cf. I Maccabees 1.17, 630, 8.6. On the Seleucid army under the reign of Antiochus IV cf. Couvenhes 2014, 181-208. See also Appian, Syraca, 46; Polybius 31.2.11 on the existence of elephants as well as battleships in the Seleukid forces until the reign of Antiochos V (164-162/1). It is therefore evident the fact that the Romans were tolerant enough towards the Seleukids regarding the compliance of all the terms of the treaty.

8 500 talents as an immediate repayment, 2500 soon after the ratification of treaty in Rome, and the rest of war expenses (12,000 talents) should be paid in a year basis for the next twelve years (until 177/6). The King should also pay to Eumenes II 400 talents immediately (Polybius 21.17.4-6; Titus-Livius 37.45.14-15), and the sum of 350 talents in the next five years (meaning until 184/3). On the financial clause of the treaty see Appian, Syraca, 39; Polybius 21.42.19-21; Titus-Livius 38.13-14. See also Mcdonald 1967; Paltiliel 1979; Burstine 1981; Rider 1992, 267-277, 1995, 50-52; Gera 1997, 90. The spoils that fell into the hands of Romans consist of a big loss for the Seleukids as well.

17 On the ratification of the treaty in Rome in the summer of 188 and its engraving on bronze steles see Appian, Syraca, 39.

18 70 talents per year for the next five years. See Polybius 21.42.19-21; Titus-Livius 38.38.


20 Schmitt 1964, 101-102, and in detail at the following subsection.
the Seleukid Kingdom faced after Apamea\textsuperscript{21}, the fact that the last installment of the war expenses to the Romans was not to be paid until 174/3 by Antiochos IV\textsuperscript{22}.

However, it should always be noticed that the size of Seleukid economy was vast, even though it had now lost the incomes from the central and western Asia Minor. The Seleukids not only maintained great trade contacts in the East, but had them also renewed, thanks to the successful \textit{Anabasis} of Antiochos\textsuperscript{23}. This thriving trading activity in the eastern markets should definitely provide to the Seleukid Kingdom sufficient incomes for the yearly payment of 1000 talents to the Romans for the next twelve years\textsuperscript{24}. Furthermore, it should be stressed that it is not known the extent to which the Romans actually demanded from the Seleukids to comply with all the terms of the treaty within a strictly chronological schedule after the battle of Magnesia\textsuperscript{25}. Finally, the production of Seleukid coinage in general does not seem to be affected dramatically after 188\textsuperscript{26}.

In conclusion, the economic conditions of Seleukid Empire after the treaty of Apamea were surely not, on the one hand, the best ones the Kingdom had ever faced\textsuperscript{27}, on the other hand, they should not also be that bad to such an extent that could completely justify the fact that Antiochos III and Seleukos IV attempted to plunder the temples in Elam (in 187) and in Jerusalem (in ca. 180) respectively soon afterwards, due to purely economic scarcity.

### 3. Plunder in Elam

Antiochos, one year after the treaty of Apamea, is in Elem, where –as it is attested by the sources\textsuperscript{28}–, he attempts to plunder the temple of Ba’al. In the end, he fails to, because of great resistance by the locals. This incident would claim his life\textsuperscript{29}.

The causes of this attempt are unclear. Diodorus\textsuperscript{30} stresses that Antiochos accused the Elamites of uprising, and therefore he attempted to plunder their temple, as a punishment for their disrespectful behavior towards him. On the contrary, Strabo as well as Justin\textsuperscript{31} address that the Elamites upraised only after the King’s attempt to despoil their temple.

As it is mentioned above, Antiochos would undoubtedly need immediately a quick reinforcement of the royal vault, as it had already been emptied due to the King’s lasting and highly costly wars as well as to the immediate obligatory payment of war reparations to the Romans, equal to 3000 talents. Furthermore, as a year had already passed since the ratification of Apamea treaty, Antiochos was called again to pay immediately 1000 talents\textsuperscript{22}. The King should also ensure that this sum of money would be paid to the Romans for the next eleven years\textsuperscript{32}. Therefore, given these economic circumstances, Antiochos, passing through Elam\textsuperscript{33}, must have thought that one more temple plunder would offer him a necessary, quick, and above all easily-earned pillage, which would make it easier for the Kingdom to honor the fulfillment of its financial obligations towards both Rome and Pergamum on time\textsuperscript{34}. However, we cannot be sure if an uprising of the Elamites against Antiochos preceded the plunder, but even if it did, it would have probably been only the King’s excuse in order to sack this wealthy temple.

Finally, one should always bear in mind that the plunder of temples was a common practice of those times\textsuperscript{35}, and it is highly questionable that this kind of practice indicates in general absolute urgent financial needs, or clearly political aims. To gain quick and easy profit consists of a common practice throughout history, especially when

\textsuperscript{21} On the economic scarcity of Seleukids after the treaty of Apamea, which would impel Antiochos III and Seleukos IV to attempt to plunder temples in Elam and in Jerusalem respectively see BREVAN 1902, vol. II, 120; WILL 1982, vol. II, 55-56, 239-240; GREEN 1993, 372, KUHRT/SHERWIN-WHITE 1993, 215 (“…the regular Seleucid policy…of benefactions to temples and, for obvious reasons, was only resorted to in times of financial crisis”).

\textsuperscript{22} Cf. TITUS-LIVIUS 42.6-8.

\textsuperscript{23} Cf. ROSTOVZTEFF 1953, vol. II, 695-705 on the abundant incomes of Seleukid Kingdom, as an “enormously wealthy” Empire, even after Apamea, derived from the trading contacts in the East. It should also be taken into account the fact that the treasuries of coins, belonging to this period (2nd century) always contain a great deal of foreign coins (for example from Asia Minor). In general, this seems to indicate that trading funds move from the West to the East (Seleukid Kingdom), apparently for the purchase of mainly exotic products, the trade of which is controlled to a great extent and for quite a long time by the Seleukids. Furthermore, given the economic conditions of Seleukid Kingdom under the reign of following kings, it is easily attested the image of a Kingdom particularly rich, even if it had been limited territorially, by losing Asia Minor. It should therefore be noticed that the Seleukid Kingdom still controlled, after 188, vast possessions, such as Syria, Mesopotamia, Babylon, Susiana, Media, Cilicia, and a part of Pamphylia. See WLL 1982, vol. II, 228-229; SALLES 1987, 75-109; RIDER 1993, 52, 60 with n. 70.


\textsuperscript{25} See above n. 15, where it is attested by the sources that at least one condition of the treaty, concerning the war elephants and ships in Seleukid Empire, was not enforced. Perhaps the war reparations, which –as it appears- should not be that unbearable for an economy of the size of the Seleukid one, were not necessarily to be paid within a strict chronological framework. Cf. RIDER 1993, 61-62; RIDER/DeCALLATAŸ 2006, 201.

\textsuperscript{26} See RIDER 1993; HOWEGO 1985, 37; APERGHIS 2004, 232; RIDER/DeCALLATAŸ 2006, 202. RIDER (1993, 55) explicitly stresses “En ce qui concerne Séleucos IV, donc, aucune mesure ne traduit la hâte ou l'improvisation. Les grands ateliers demeurent en fonctionnement (Laodicee disparaît, mais Antioche suffisait pour la Sélécide)”; \textsuperscript{27} A quick comparison here between the Seleukid economy of the period after 188 with that of 223, the starting year of Antiochos III reign, confirms undoubtedly this statement.

\textsuperscript{28} DIODORUS 28.3, 29.15; JUSTIN 32.2.1-2; STRABO 16.1.18.

\textsuperscript{29} Antiochos the Great dies in Elam in 187. See DIODORUS 28.3.2; JUSTIN 32.2; STRABO 16.1.18.

\textsuperscript{30} 29.15.

\textsuperscript{31} JUSTIN 32.2.2; STRABO 16.1.18.

\textsuperscript{32} TAYLOR (2014, 230) explicitly mentions: “The underlying motive was again undoubtedly pecuniary. Following the Treaty of Apamea, the king badly needed coin and bullion to pay the Roman indemnity”. See also SCHMITT (1964, 102), who stresses: “Die verzweifelte finanzielle Lage, in der sich das Seleukidendreich nach dem Frieden von Apamea befand, erklärt das Vorgehen des Königs in der Elymais zur Genüge”.

\textsuperscript{33} APPIAN, Syriaca, 39; POLYBIUS 21.43.19.

\textsuperscript{34} Perhaps planning an expedition towards East once more; cf. TAYLOR 2014, 230. In that case, the motive of Antiochos’ attempt to plunder the temple in Elam must has been similar to that one concerning the plunder in Ecbatana in 211/0, in other words the pillage would be once more related to his need to finance an expedition of his.

\textsuperscript{35} The Taylor’s explanation (2014, 230) regarding the motives of Antiochos in Elam must have been quite close, as we believe, to the reality of that time: “...the king simply hoped to pilfer enough funds to keep his government running while he cobbled together cash for his next payment to the Romans”.

\textsuperscript{36} Cf. POLYBIUS 10.27.11-12 on the plunder of temple in Ecbatana during the past by Alexander, Antigonos, and Seleukos. Furthermore, Mithridates I, king of the Parthians, earned a profit by the holy treasures of Elam equal to 10000 talents (cf. STRABO 26.1.18). In addition, Cambyses (see DIODORUS 1.46.4) and Artaxerxes III (see DIODORUS 16.51.2) had pillaged temples in Egypt. See also TAYLOR 2014 on all the cases of despoliation of temples by Seleukid kings before Antiochos III and after Antiochos IV.
the risk taken is admittedly quite low[37]. In the case of Ba’al’s temple in Elam, Antiochos probably miscalculated the risk of earning this quick profit, which would boost immediately the royal economy, and found death.

II. SELEUKOS IV. PHILOPATOR, AND THE HELIODORUS’ EPISODE IN JERUSALEM

Seleukos IV succeeded his father, Antiochos III, in the Seleucid throne in 187, and maintained power until 175[38]. Very few details are attested by the sources concerning Seleukos’ personality and life[39] as well as the conditions of the Kingdom under his reign[40]. One of the most peculiar incidents during his reign is the so-called ‘Heliodorus’ affair’ in Jerusalem, which is perhaps related to a possible Seleukos’ attempt to plunder the temple there in ca. 180[41].

The writer of the second book of Maccabees[42] addresses an attempt of despoliation of Yahweh’s temple in Jerusalem by the King’s chancellor (ὁ ἐπὶ τῶν πραγμάτων), Heliodorus[43]. Heliodorus seems to have been sent to Jerusalem because of an internal dispute over the succession in the hierarchy for the administrative matters of the temple[44]. As there was also, according to Bickerman[45], an accusation for false book-keeping in the handling of the royal cash subventions[46], the King’s envoy should intervene, gaining also perhaps a profit equal to 400 silver as well as 200 golden talents[47]. For reasons of which our only source on the matter raises the whole incident, on purpose, into an imaginary level - in order the episode to be incorporated

53 ROSTOVZTEFF (1953, vol. II, 695-696) projects as de facto that the cases of temple plunders, especially by Seleukid kings, were connected mainly with the need for immediate profit; a need that would not necessarily derive from an urgent economic situation of the Kingdom after the treaty of Apamea. He explains that the Seleukids always turned their attention first of all to the treasuries of temples of foreign deities, who were worshipped by the local communities within the territory of Seleukid influence, in order to ensure a quick profit for the royal vault.


56 On the economic policy of Seleukos, we tend to agree with MILETA 2014, 165, who underlines: “dass es Seleukos IV. während seiner zwölfjährigen Regierungszeit gelungen ist, das in politischer und wirtschaftlich-fiskalischer Hinsicht enorm geschwächte Reich zu stabilisieren. Sein Bruder und Nachfolger Antiochos IV. Epiphanes fand es in einem Zustand vor, die ihm eher kraftvolle Innen- und Außenpolitik ermöglichte”. On the economic conditions of the Kingdom under his reign see also RIDER 1993, 49-67.

57 Cf. TCHERIKOVER 1959, 156; GRÜLL 2010, 16-18.

58 II MACCABEES, 3, 41-40. Also see FEYEL/GRASLIN-THOMÉ 2014, 12-14.


60 Simon, who had been made prostates of the temple, had a disagreement with the high-priest, Onias III, about the administration of the city market (II MACCABEES, 3, 4).


62 As Simon could not prevail over Onias, he went to Antonius of Thraceas, who was strategos (governor) of Coile Syria and Phoenike at that time. Then he reported to Apollonius that the treasures of Jerusalem temple were vast, and that a part of this wealth did not belong to the account of the sacrifices (they were the deposits of orphans, widows, and Hyrkanos, an ally of the Poterionis). Therefore, it would be possible for the Seleukid king to control it.

63 II MACCABEES, 3, 3-13.

into a divine plan of protection of the most holy place of the Jews- the mission of Heliodorus fails[48], and a few years later, in September of 175, Seleukos will be assassinated[49].

Given the fact that our only literary source concerning the attempt of temple plunder in Jerusalem by Seleukos IV can hardly be considered historically safe[50], only assumptions could be given regarding the reasons because of which the King attempted perhaps to take advantage of the holy treasures of Jerusalem. As it is mentioned several times in the present paper, the economic clause of the treaty of Apamea must have not been that unbearable for the vast Seleukid economy, and not that urgent; not at least to such an extent which would justify fully the constant Seleukids’ attempt to plunder temples of foreign deities of their Kingdom. We believe that the probable economic difficulties of Seleukid Empire, caused exclusively by the treaty of Apamea, were nothing more than temporal problems, which Seleukos IV successfully faced.

It seems likely that the fact that the last installment of the war expenses to the Romans was not paid twelve years after the ratification of the treaty (in 177/6), but a few years later, with some delay, by Antiochos IV[51], could indicate partially some financial problems in the Seleukid Kingdom during the reign of Seleukos IV[52]. Moreover, the possible reduced number of coins, as it is believed by many historians, the Seleukid kingdom at that time produced[53], could also indicate that the royal economy was not thriving. Admittedly, it is impossible for one to claim that the Seleukid economy under Seleukos IV was thriving, as it happened when Antiochos III came to power. Seleukos was still obliged to pay for the expenses of the lasting wars of Antiochos the Great as well as for the fiscal obligations of his Kingdom to the Romans after the defeat in Magnesia in 189[54]. However, he


45 Cf. APPIAN, Syriaca, 45; II MACCABEES, 3.4-40. Also see CAH 1989, vol. VIII, 340 n. 55 with references; MILETA 2014, 179-180 with n. 45.

46 Meaning the second book of MACCABEES, 3-4. There is also an epigraphical testimony related to the matter, the inscription of Marisha, which is mentioned below.

47 See TITUS-LIVIUS 42.6-8. The last installment of war expenses to the Romans, paid by Antiochos IV, was 2000 talents or 1000 (according some manuscripts). See BEVAN 1902, vol. II, 133; MØRKHOLM 1963, 41 with n. 57.

48 On the other hand, this delay of payment to Rome could indicate that the rest of Seleukids’ debt was not urgently to be paid or at least that the Romans did not force them regarding the time of payment; in other words, this delay is not necessarily related to big financial difficulties of the Empire during the reign of Seleukos IV. Cf. RIDER 1993, 60-61. If it is also possible that there was still a small debt of the Seleukids to the Romans until 165 (see II MACCABEES, 8.10), as it is believed for example by STARCKY 1961, 269 and WILL 1982, vol. II, 303-304, this fact strongly indicates that Rome did not force the Seleukid Empire to pay the war expenses strictly within twelve years after the ratification of the treaty.


50 See MILETA 2014, 178-179, who correctly concludes: “…so war Seleukos IV. während seiner Regierungszeit vor allem damit beschäftigt, das katastrophale politische und wirtschaftlich-fiskalische Erbe zu bewältigen,
was related to the unbearable economic conditions of the Kingdom after 188\(^{46}\). The most probable reason, because of which Seleukos sent Heliodorus to Judaea, must have been related to the King’s attempt to involve himself politically in administrative matters of the temples in Koilē Syria and Phoïnikē, which were traditionally controlled by the sanctuaries, as they were considered strictly as entirely independently religious affairs.\(^{57}\) This assumption derives from the examination of a newly discovered Greek inscription of the Hellenistic polis of Marisha (Bet Guvrin, Israel)\(^{58}\), which contains three letters, an order from Seleukos to Heliodorus about some Olympiadorus, who was to be put in charge –as a high-priest of the sanctuaries of Koilē Syria and Phoïnikē, a letter from Heliodorus to Dorymenes (who was probably the strategos of this region at that time), and a letter from Dorymenes to some Diophanes (probably the Hipparchos of the district of das sein Vater Antiochos III. hinterlassen hatte”. On the other hand, we also agree with RIDER 1993, 60-63, who concludes that Seleukos IV did not have any difficulties to pay the Romans, as it was prescribed in the financial clause of Apamea treaty: “les douze versements, en principe annuel, de 1000 talents aux Romains constituaient certes pour sa trésorerie (de Séleucos) une charge irritante, mais nullement aussi insupportable qu’on l’a souvent pensé” (p. 62).

\(^{55}\) It is though perhaps better for us not to be certain that this Heliodorus incident did actually happen in Jerusalem or at least that it happened after a royal command. It is highly possible that Heliodorus intruded into the temple in order to control personally the counting of money. The traditionally peaceful relations of the Seleukids with the Jews as well as the generally positive evaluation of Seleukos IV’s kingship by the Jews consist of a good reason to question the authenticity of the incident of Heliodorus, at least as far as the plunder part is concerned. See II MACCABEES, 3.2, where it is attested that Seleukos IV paid his respect to the Jerusalem temple, and glorified it with the finest gifts. Following the steps of his father, Antiochus III (JOSEPHUS, Antiquitates, 12.140), Seleukos had even provided “νάντια τί πρώς τῆς λειτουργίας τῶν θυσιῶν ἐπιβάλλων διανόηματα” (II MACCABEES, 3.3). See also BICKERMAN, vol. II, 1938, 123-124. On the good relations of Antiochos III with the Jews see II MACCABEES, 3.5 where it is attested that the Jews offered some help to the King during the fifth Syrian war (cf. also GERA 1997, 25-34). Antiochus, in return, issued an order, according to which the words mentioned were recognized (JOSEPHUS, Antiquitates, 12.3.3; cf. again GERA 2009, 147).


\(^{57}\) It is highly possible that Seleukos intended mainly to bring this former Ptolemaic possession, the satrapy of Koilē Syria and Phoïnikē, into line with the rest of Seleukid Kingdom, which would entail this stricter bureaucratic control over it, as it is mentioned above. See also COTTON/WÖRRLE 2007 in detail.

\(^{58}\) It must be though stressed here that, as we are not sure about the chronology of either two events (cf. COTTON/WÖRRLE 2007, 203; GRÜLL 2010, 16-18), it is not at all certain that the Heliodorus’ attempt to despoil the temple in Jerusalem happened at the same period, when Seleukos intended to appoint Olympiadorus as high-priest of Koilē Syria and Phoïnikē in order to intervene in the administrative matters of the temples of this satrapy (a fact that it is attested only by the inscription of Marisha). However, after a comparative study of II MACCABEES, 3-4, and the letter of Seleukos to Heliodorus, we tend to believe these two incidents are strictly connected, as they both indicate intention of the King to intervene to strictly religious affairs, traditionally controlled only by the temples. COTTON/WÖRRLE 2007, 203 conclude that: “the termination of Ptolemaisaios son of Thrasaean governorship in Koilē Syria and Phoïnikē made Olympiadorus’ appointment as the εἰπός τῶν θυσιῶν in the satrapy in late summer 178 both possible and necessary. These two events in turn set off the Heliodorus affair…. Accordingly the ‘temple robbery’ by Heliodorus […] should belong to the period between late summer 178 and Seleukos IV death in early September 175. […] There is no warrant to turn events around and posit the appointment of Olympiadorus as the consequence of an unsuccessful ‘temple robbery’”. It is not though unreasonable to think that Seleukos could have sent at first Heliodorus to Jerusalem in order to examine in close the conditions of Jewish religious autonomy, and then to have appointed Olympiadorus as an overseer of the sanctuaries in the region. In addition, we cannot be sure that the Heliodorus’ affair is connected with a kingly order for this temple despoilation; it could have been Heliodorus’ initiative, if it actually happened.

\(^{59}\) See above n. 55 and 60.

\(^{60}\) See RIDER/DeCALLATAY 2006, 201. On the contrary see GERA 2009, 148, according to whom: “the appointment of Olympiadorus seems to have been part of an effort by Seleukos IV to fulfill his financial obligations to Rome”.
supply of the royal vault. In addition, if the plunder actually happened by Seleukos’ order, and did concern the deposits of orphans, widows, and mainly Hyrkanos, to the temple, it would also consist of a political message of the Seleukid king that would show explicitly his displeasure on the sympathy of Onias III to an ally of the Ptolemites.

III. ANTIÓCHOS IV. EPIPHANES

“Antióchos IV. Epiphanes (175-164) war zweifellos eine der rätselhaftesten Herrschergestalten des Hellenismus. Manches ‹Rätselhaftes› verschwindet allerdings, wenn man seine Handlungen, die schon die Zeitgenossen in Erstaunen versetzt haben, als das zu verstehen versucht, was sie im Sinne des Königs zunächst waren, nämlich als Politik.”

Antióchos IV. “Epiphanes” reigned from 175, succeeding his brother, Seleukos IV, to the Seleukid throne, until 164. Even if he maintained power for just twelve years, the Seleukid Kingdom thrived under his reign both economically and militarily.

1. The situation in Judaea before the plunder

Even if the incident with Heliodorus did happen in Jerusalem during the reign of Seleukos IV, the relations between the Seleukids and the Jews were traditionally good; the Kings allowed them to live according to their own laws, customs, and religious faith. However, it is attested by the literary sources that a part of the sacerdotal aristocracy of Judaea, who had got, to a great extent, hellenized under the Ptolemies, took the initiative, during the reign of Antióchos IV, to adjust the Jewish nation to the Greek way of life.

In short, in 174, Jason, brother of the conservative high-priest of Jerusalem temple, Onias, presented himself to Antióchos, offering him a respectful sum of money in exchange of receiving the position of his brother in the temple, the high-priesthood. Moreover, he asked Antióchos to be permitted to adapt Jerusalem to the Greek way of organizing a city, renaming it to “Antióchia”, constructing furthermore a gymnasion as well as introducing a clearly Greek institution, the *Ephebeia*. Antióchos accepted Jason to replace his brother in the temple of Jerusalem, and within a short period of time the reforms were completed without extensive reactions on behalf of the Jewish people, as it is not attested in the sources that Jason intended to conduct reforms concerning the Jewish religion.

However, a few years later, some Menelaus offered to Antióchos a bigger bid in comparison to that of Jason, and therefore he received -as an exchange- the position of high-priesthood in the temple of Jerusalem. However, as Menelaus was less moderate than Jason, a conflict between Menelaus’ followers and their opponents would soon burst. This stasis would force Antióchos to intervene in order to stabilize politically the situation in Judaea. However, while the king was still in Egypt, he was informed that Jason invaded Jerusalem trying to seize power. This move of Jason was interpreted by Antióchos as an attempt of rebellion of all Jews, who should have taken advantage of the fact that the king was too busy with the affairs in Egypt, in order to make their region autonomous, by doubting and pulling away the influence of Seleukids in Judaea. It is also possible that Antióchos considered this crisis as an attempt of diversion for Jews’ part, aiming at distracting him from far more important issues for the Empire, such as of that of Egypt. The reaction of Antióchos was swift and decisive, serving clearly political purposes.

2. Plunder in Jerusalem

In 168, Antióchos arrived in Judaea in order to intervene, after Jason’s invasion in Jerusalem by military forces. It was then, as it is attested by the sources, when Antióchos plundered the temple gaining profit equal to 1800 silver talents. However, it is not known when exactly this plunder happened. According to the first book of Maccabees, Antióchos sacked the temple in the winter of 169. If this date is to be accepted as the right one, then the despoliation must be related to the finance of Antióchos’ expedition in Egypt. According though to the second book of Maccabees, the plunder happened after the stasis that had broken out in Judaea between Menelaus and Jason over the position of high-priest in the temple of Jerusalem. In this case, which sounds more possible, the King’s motives for the temple plunder were to a great extent political. Antióchos had to intervene in the conflict that had broken out over the leadership of the temple matters in Jerusalem, while he was

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64 On a combination of political with economic motives regarding the Seleukids’ attempt to plunder the temple in Jerusalem see GRÜLL 2010, 16-18; MILETA 2014, 175-178.
65 BUNGE 1976, 53.
66 After a short reign of Seleukos IV’s son, Antióchos, who was murdered by Antióchos IV, soon after the death of Seleukos IV. On the genealogical tree of the family of Antióchos III see SCHMITT 1964, 297; MITTAG 2006, 32-37.
67 On the life and work of Antióchos IV see in detail MÖRKHOLM 1966; MITTAG 2006.
68 On the economic conditions of Judaea under his reign as well as the coinage of the period see MÖRKHOLM 1963; APERGHIS 2004, 214-238; RIDER/DeCALLEATAY 2006, 30-35, 40-48, 115-130, 171-208, 218-221, DOYEN 2014, 261-299.
69 On the magnificent parade of Seleukid army in Daphne see ATHENAEUS, 5.194c-196a; POLYBIUS 30.25-26. See also MÖRKHOLM 1963, 33; BUNGE 1976, 53-71; MITTAG 2006, 282-295; ERSKINE 2013, 37-55, in particular 42-44. It should be though noticed that Antióchos started a serious conflict against the Jews, which would go on long after his reign and would entail nasty consequences for the Seleukid kingdom.
70 When Antióchos the Great had conquered Palestine, he allowed the Jews to maintain their right to live according to the standards they had set by themselves. Cf. JOSEPHUS, Antiquitates, 12.138-144 and 145-146.
71 I Maccabees, 1.11-15 and II 4.4-15.
74 For the so-called “sixth Syrian war” (179-168), during which Egypt tried to recover south Syria and Palestine, regions that were under Seleukid control since 200, and the reign of Antióchos the Great. On the war of Antióchos IV against Egypt see FISCHER/BOVET 2014, 209-239.
75 It seems that Jason thought that the proper moment to invade Judaea was when a rumor had spread, according to which Antióchos had found death in battle against the Egyptians. Cf. II Maccabees, 5.5.
76 Cf. BRINGMANN 1980, 176-190 and 1983. On the sources referring to Antióchos IV and the Jews from 174 until his death in 164 cf. CAH, vol. VIII, 346 n. 77 with references.
77 I Maccabees, 1.21-23; II 5.15-16, 21.
78 1.19-23.
79 II 5.11-15.
80 The BOOK OF DANIEL, 11.25-31, mentions that Antióchos visited twice the city; it offers though no further information regarding the sequence of events at that time.
also afraid of the contingency of a possible uprising of all the Jews, which would derive from their doubt over his political will to appoint Menelaus as a high-priest of the temple.

The plunder, however, is related to ideological motives as well. If the plunder did happen after the expedition in Egypt, then it is surely connected with the disgraceful incident of the day in Eleusis81, when the Roman envoy exposed politically Antiochos, disgracing his prestige before his troops and councilors. Therefore Antiochos, by interfering decisively into the stasis in Judaea, seized the opportunity to show off his military power82, but most importantly to confirm his political authority83.

Naturally, it should not be overlooked the fact that the plunder of a temple, as it is stressed constantly in the present paper, consists of a common practice of Antiochos’ era, as well as of a quick and enough secure way for a King to reinforce the royal vault. In other words, Antiochos, by intervening militarily into the conflict between Menelaus and Jason in Jerusalem, did not lose the opportunity to sack the temple as well, in order, on the one hand, to punish the Jews for their possible doubt over his political will, on the other hand, because he could do so, and probably did not believe that he was behaving in an unholy way84.

It is though unlikely that, when Antiochos plundered the temple in Jerusalem, he was moved by a particularly great economic need85. The economic conditions in his Kingdom had been stabilized during the reign of Seleukos IV, therefore this particular plunder of Antiochos IV in Judaea consisted basically of an act of political interference, and demonstration of military power86.

Soon afterwards, the religious reform of Antiochos in Jerusalem would follow87, which would trigger the so-called “uprising of the Maccabees”88 that would officially cease one year after Antiochos’ death, with the purification of the temple by Judah in 163. This uprising would lead to the final loss of Seleukid control in the region of Judaea and the creation of the Hasmonean Kingdom.

3. Plunder in Elam

While Antiochos IV was still in Elam in 164, it is attested by the sources that he attempted to plunder the temple of Nanaia, conducting a sacred marriage with the Goddess89. Facing though rough resistance by the Elamites, the King was forced to withdraw, and died soon afterwards by some disease90.

The motives of Antiochos for this pilage are not clear. This attempt though, as we believe, consists above all of one more example of his common practice to plunder temples during all his years as a King of the Seleukid Empire91. However, the fact that this particular despoliation took place in Elam indicates probably political motives. It is highly likely that Antiochos planned to carry out a new Anabasis92, following the footsteps of his father, in order to restore the lost political authority of his (especially after the Day in Eleusis) as well as of the Seleukid kingdom, which, after its defeat by the Romans in 189, and the treaty of Apamea, had succeeded no military triumph, worthy to the great expedition of Antiochos III in the East. But now his son, Antiochos IV Epiphanes, being highly ambitious –as far as it is at least indicated by the magnificent parade of Seleukid army in Daphne- was on the verge of conducting a new great expedition towards the upper satrapies (Parthia, Bactria, until perhaps India), in order to restore his Kingdom to the past glorious era before the war against the Romans.

In the spring of 165 Antiochos had already begun his expedition to the East, succeeding to recover the Seleukid control over Armenia, and the next logical step would be the recovery of lost grounds in Persis (protecting at the same time the western Iran from the Parthians and the local uprisings) as well as in Elam93.

However, it is possible that the motives of Antiochos for plundering the temple in Elam were partially economic

81 See POLYBIUS 29.27.4-9. See also MORGAN 1990, 37-39; MITTAG 2006, 224.
82 Besides, it is well known that Antiochos was particularly fond of demonstrating the military force of his Kingdom. In 166 a magnificent parade of the Seleukid army took place in Daphne. See above n. 69.
83 See BOOK OF DANIEL 11.30. See also GRUEN 1984, 661; TAYLOR 2014, 233.
84 To steal temple property was considered by the Jews as a crime of sacrilege (hierosylica); and the author of II MACCABEES (9.2) condemns the depredation of Antiochos IV. Antiochos, because of the despoliation of the Jerusalem temple, and of his religious reform in Judaea, would be considered by the Jews as the archetypal oppressor, and later on the Christians would call him the Antichrist. See I MACCABEES, 1.16; CYPRIAN, ad Fortunatum, 11.115: “immo in Antiocho antichristus expressus”. See also MØRKHOLM 1966, 142-143, who relates the plunder of Antiochos consimilis temple depraedationem, sed egestate pecuniarum ad hoc accessit, extra annulum quem unum omnium e deae donis reliquit”.
85 Cf. JOS rhaps, Contra Apionem 2.83-84: “quia auro Antiochos noque iustum facit templo depraedationem, sed egestate pecuniarum ad hoc accessit, cum non esset hostis, et super nos auxiliatores suos et amicos adgressus est nec iustam fecit templi depraedationem, sed egestate pecuniarum ad hoc accessit, extra annulum quem unum omnium e deae donis reliquit”.
86 See also MORGAN 1990, 37-39; MITTAG 2006, 224.
87 See BOOK OF DANIEL 11.30. See also GRUEN 1984, 661; TAYLOR 2014, 233.
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89 Cf. II MACCABEES, 1.14 where it is considered that Antiochos died during an attack against the Elamites. However, it is most probable that the author here confuses Antiochos IV with his father, Antiochos III, who actually died during a clash with the Elamites, when he attempted to plunder the temple there in 187.
90 DIONYSUS 31.18; POLYBIUS 31.9. See also APPIAN, Syriaca, 66 where it is attested that Antiochos did succeed to plunder the temple, but he died soon afterwards by a disease.
91 See ATHENAEUS 5.195F. See also POLYBIUS 30.26.9 who stresses that Antiochos had also plundered a few temples in Egypt during his expedition there. On the possible plunder of Antiochos IV in Hierapolis, Bambyme, northern Syria, see GRANIUS LICINIANUS 28.6.1, where it is attested, without given a certain chronological framework of the incident, that Antiochos conducted a sacred marriage with the Goddess Artemis of Hierapolis, receiving at the same time the treasure of her temple as a dowry (“...se simulabat Hierapoli Dianam ducere uxorem, et ceteris epulas instruens suo luxuriae status vasa et sacrum protulit et cenatus de mensis eu abstulit in dottum extra anulum qui unum omnium e deae donis reliquit”). See in detail MÖRKHOLM 1966, 132; MITTAG 2006, 149-151; TAYLOR 2014, 234-235. See also ASTRONOMICAL DIARIES, no 168 on the controversial plunder case by Antiochos IV of the temple of Nabu in Babylon.
as well. Although Antiochos had succeeded to pay off completely the debt of his Kingdom to the Romans⁶⁹, now he would probably need as much money as he could get in order to carry out all his ambitious plans that would undoubtedly give back to Seleukids their lost prestige worldwide. At first, as it is above-mentioned, Antiochos should need the booty of the pillage in Elam in order to finance possibly the continuation of his ambitious expedition in the East. Moreover, he had already begun a great military reform⁷⁰, which must have demanded further funds, and he was also financing the construction of Olympiaion in Athens⁷¹, which would restore the Seleukid influence -in a diplomatic level- in the Mediterranean east.

The ambitious military plan of Antiochos IV in the East⁷² as well as his ambitions to restore the political prestige of Seleukid Empire throughout Ecumene, as it had happened under the reign of Antiochos the Great, were going to consist perhaps of the last glorious era of Seleukid kingdom, at least in a political level. This era would end too soon, due to the immature death of Antiochos Epiphanes in 164 in Elam.

CONCLUSIONS

The present paper offered an overview of the cases of temple plunderes by Seleukid kings, during the period 211/0-164/3, to which the literary sources referred in some detail. The paper examined the extent to which these plunderes by Antiochos III, Seleukos IV, and Antiochos IV were connected with an urgent Seleukid need for fundraising, particularly because of the financial clause of the treaty of Apamea. Until now, a specific historical view had prevailed in the study of Seleukid Empire, according to which the pillage of temples by the Seleukids was mainly related to the desperate need of Kingdom for raising money in order to fulfill its unbearable financial obligations to Rome, after the defeat in Magnesia. By studying though –on a case by case basis- the specific military, economic, and political conditions of the Kingdom during that period, the present paper suggests that the despoliation of temples was a common practice of the Seleukids, and their motives varied, without necessarily being related to compelling economic needs after 188. As it is stressed here, only the temple plunder cases during the reign of Antiochos III seemed to serve mainly economic purposes. On the other hand, the motives of Seleukos IV and Antiochos IV were basically political, as the Seleukid economy under their reign was vast and still powerful, and it should not have been affected to such an extent by the treaty of Apamea, that would force Seleukos IV and Antiochos IV to plunder constantly temples of foreign deities in order to fulfill their economic obligations to the Romans.

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⁶⁹ Even though with some delay in 174/3; see TITUS-LIVIUS 42.6.6.
⁷¹ See GRANIUS LICINIANUS 28.10-13; POLYBIUS 26.1.11; STRABO 9.1.17; TITUS-LIVIUS 41.20.8-9; VITRUVIUS 7.15, 17.
⁷² On the expedition of Antiochos IV in the East in order to confront mainly the Parthians see BEVAN 1902, vol. II, 158; DEBEVOISE 1938, 20. It is though not attested by the sources that Antiochos did plan to recover control in Parthia and Bactria, therefore the whole theory of a new Anabasis on behalf of Antiochos towards these regions is highly hypothetical, although yet enough reasonable.


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