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Arsacids, Romans, and Local Elites

Cross-Cultural Interactions of the Parthian Empire

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Chapter 2

The Seleucids Imprisoned: Arsacid-Roman Hostage Submission and Its Hellenistic Precedents

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From around 200 BCE, the chief political development in the ancient Mediterranean and Near East was the defeat and annexation of the Hellenistic kingdoms by two groups of barbarians, each at the head of an expansionist empire: the Parthians in the east and the Romans in the west. In the following centuries these two powers steadily conquered their way towards one another and, ultimately, carved up nearly the entire Greek world between them – a world that exerted profound influence even as the political formations that ruled it collapsed.

Long before Rome and Parthia shared a border along the Euphrates, then, the two empires were already connected through their mutual experiences with the Hellenistic monarchies, first and foremost as their conquerors, but also as the students and adapters of their ruling strategies and cultural practices.¹ The most direct aspect of this connection was their common engagement with the Seleucid empire, the most expansive of all the Hellenistic polities and a victim of both Parthian and Roman imperialism. Both Rome and Parthia fought the Seleucids, they both negotiated with the Seleucids, and they both – as this contribution examines – took members of the Seleucid royal family as hostages and prisoners.

The following discussion investigates whether and to what extent a shared historical experience with captive Seleucid monarchs prefigured Roman-Parthian relations during the Julio-Claudian period. From c. 30 BCE to 66 CE, numerous members of the Arsacid family (Parthia's ruling dynasty) were held captive in Rome for extended periods of time; in several cases, individuals from this group returned to Parthia, where they sought the Arsacid kingship.² How did the Seleucid prisoners of Rome and Parthia shape later ideas about how captive dynasts were to be used? Were the Arsacid hostages of the Julio-Claudian period cut from the same cloth as the Seleucids of the Hellenistic era, or were they something different?

Much of the literature on Seleucid prisoners has described them as the tools of imperialism, a way of subordinating the Seleucid kingdom to a Parthian or Roman imperial order through the creation of an obedient and submissive client king.³ But if such logic did underpin the Roman and Parthian utilization of their royal captives, there were distinct grounds for disappointment: released Seleucid hostages and prisoners do not seem, on balance, to have done much to further the interests of their former captors. So while there were some similarities between the imprisoned Seleucids of the Hellenistic era and the Arsacid hostages of early imperial Rome, the royal prisoner's poor performance as an agent of empire in the former period may have contributed to an important change in the latter. In a world divided between Rome and Parthia, the royal prisoner became a way for leaders in both empires to pursue domestic political goals through their counterparts across the Euphrates, sustaining an international connection that was built on the mutual pursuit of internal objectives.

The Prisoners

The evidence for Seleucid and Arsacid hostages and prisoners is collected in the following tables, which include all members of these families held involuntarily and under compulsion in either Parthian or Roman custody. Cases of doubtful historicity are indicated with an asterisk. The disparities in the level of documentation are considerable. Since almost all the relevant evidence is Greco-Roman and literary, there is much less information available on Seleucid-Parthian relations. The lack of Parthian literary sources means that Greco-Roman accounts of Arsacid “hostages” (Greek ὄμηροι, Latin *obsides*) cannot be taken at face value. A Sasanian inscription from the late third century CE preserves the Parthian word for hostage (*nēpāk*).⁴ But there is no way to know whether the Arsacids would have used this term for the members of their family who went to Rome. As discussed below, their understanding of the exchange may have been considerably different.

Although several cases are obscure, it is clear that a relatively high number of Seleucids spent time in captivity. Most conventional chronologies count 26 kings from the founder Seleucus I Nicator to Antiochus XIII, whose dethronement by Pompey in 65/64 BCE is usually understood to mark the end of the dynasty.⁵ Of these kings, four were held in custody in either Rome (Antiochus IV, Demetrius I) or Parthia (Demetrius II, Demetrius III). There are an additional three (Seleucus II, Seleucus V, Antiochus X) whose stories are unclear or ambiguously reported in the sources, but they too may have been prisoners among the Parthians. Ultimately, at least 15% of the monarchs who sat on the Seleucid throne were captives in either Rome or Parthia at some point during their lives, and the figure may well be higher.

No cases of Parthian kings held captive among the Seleucids are known. Their absence from the historical record might simply be due to the meagerness of the ancient sources for Seleucid-Parthian affairs. On the other hand, the Seleucids were on the back foot against the Parthians for most of the two empires' coexistence,

Table 2.1: Seleucids in Parthia

Name	Date	Sources
Seleucus II*	c. 236 BCE	Athen., <i>Deip.</i> 12.438, 153a–b = Posidonius, <i>BNJ</i> 87 F 12; cf. Just. 41.4.9–5.2; Strab. 11.8.8; Lerner 1999, 35–37; Plischke 2014, 239
Demetrius II	139/138 BCE	Just. 36.1.1–6, 38.9.2–3; Sachs and Hunger 1996, no. –137 ‘Rev.’ 8’–11’ (=p. 160–161); Joseph., <i>AJ</i> 13.184–186; App., <i>Syr.</i> 67; <i>1 Maccabees</i> 14.1–3; Euseb., <i>Chron.</i> 117.1–124.5 [Karst] = Porphyry, <i>BNJ</i> 260 F 32 = <i>FrGH</i> 260 F 32.16; Diod. 33.28; Oros. 5.4.18; Moses Khorenats’i 2.2 (= Thomson 1978, 131–132)
Seleucus, son of Antiochus VII*	129 BCE	Euseb., <i>Chron.</i> 117.1–124.5 [Karst] = Porphyry, <i>BNJ</i> 260 F 32 = <i>FrGH</i> 260 F 32.19–20
Daughter of Antiochus VII	129 BCE	Just. 38.10.10
Seleucus V*	129 BCE	Ath., <i>Deip.</i> 12.438, 153a–b = Posidonius, <i>BNJ</i> 87 F 12; cf. Bouché-Leclercq 1913–1914, 1.386, 1.393, n. 2, 2.600
Antiochus X ^{ki}	c. 90–88 BCE	Euseb., <i>Chron.</i> 117.1–124.5 [Karst] = Porphyry, <i>BNJ</i> 260 F 32 = <i>FrGH</i> 260 F 32.27; cf. Joseph., <i>AJ</i> 13.370–371; App., <i>Syr.</i> 69
Demetrius III	c. 88/87 BCE	Joseph., <i>AJ</i> 13.384–386

*Porphyry has Antiochus X going into exile with the Parthians, not imprisonment. I include him in the table here on the grounds that, if he did reach the Parthians, his position at the Arsacid court presumably would have been similar to that of Demetrius III, who according to Josephus was a Parthian captive (if one held in honor).

Table 2.2: Seleucids in Rome

Name	Date	Sources
Antiochus IV	189/188 BCE	Polyb. 21.43.22; Liv. 38.38.15; Diod. 29.10; Ascon., <i>In Pison.</i> p. 13 [Clark] = Atticus, fr. 6P = FRH 33 F 7; App., <i>Syr.</i> 39; Memnon, <i>FrGH</i> 434 F 18.9 = <i>BNJ</i> 434 F 1.9; Just. 34.3.2; <i>1 Maccabees</i> 1.10
Demetrius I	178 BCE	Polyb. 31.2, 31.11–15; Liv., <i>Per.</i> 46.12; Diod. 31.18; App., <i>Syr.</i> 45; Just. 34.3.6; Granius Licinianus 28.39.1–40.1 [Criniti]; Euseb., <i>Chron.</i> 117.1–124.5 [Karst] = Porphyry, <i>BNJ</i> 260 F 32 = <i>FrGH</i> 260 F 32.14

so their failure to capture an Arsacid dynast would be understandable.⁶ There is of course no royalty to speak of in the Roman Republic. But a member from one of Rome’s most prestigious families was temporarily a prisoner among the Seleucids: Lucius Cornelius Scipio, son of the famous Publius Scipio Africanus, was captured by Antiochus III during the run-up to Magnesia.⁷ Antiochus treated him generously and returned him to Africanus with no conditions attached. Africanus’ political enemies would later highlight this kindness while prosecuting the commander for collusion with Antiochus, among other crimes.⁸ A charge of collaboration with his son’s former captor – whether true or not – helped bring down one of the most illustrious figures in Roman politics. This sort of accusation was frequently encountered by royal hostages and prisoners, as discussed below.

Rome hosted a considerable number of Arsacids during the early empire. Precise figures are rarely available, but an estimate of one or two dozen seems reasonable as

Table 2.3: Arsacids in Rome

Name	Date	Sources
Son of Phraates IV	c. 30 BCE	Dio 51.18.2–3, 53.33.1–2; Just. 42.5.6–9; <i>cf. Mon. Anc.</i> 32.1
Vonones, Phraates, Seraspadanes, Rhodaspes, two wives, four sons	c. 19–10 BCE	<i>Mon. Anc.</i> 32.2; Vell. Pat. 2.94.4; Strab. 6.4.2, 16.1.28; Joseph., <i>AJ</i> 18.42; Tac., <i>Ann.</i> 2.1.2; Suet., <i>Aug.</i> 21.3; Just. 42.5.11–12; Fest. 19.4; Oros. 6.21.29; Eutrop. 7.9; <i>CIL</i> 6.1799
Darius	c. 36/37 CE	Joseph., <i>AJ</i> 18.96, 18.101–5; Suet., <i>Calig.</i> 14.3; <i>Vit.</i> 2.4; Dio 59.27.2–3
Several Arsacids	55 CE	Tac., <i>Ann.</i> 13.9.1
Daughter of Tiridates, ⁱ other Arsacids*	63 CE	Tac., <i>Ann.</i> 15.30.2; Dio 62.23.4
Several Arsacids	66 CE	Dio 63.1.2; <i>cf. Plin., HN</i> 6.23
Daughter of Osroes, other Arsacids* ⁱⁱ	c. 114 CE	SHA, <i>Had.</i> 13.8; Aurel. Vict., <i>Lib. Caes.</i> 13.3
Zalaces* ⁱⁱⁱ	c. 117 CE	Juv. 2.164

ⁱTiridates' daughter may only have remained a hostage until peace was ratified: Elbern 1990, 100, 140.

ⁱⁱThis hostage transfer (Aurel. Vict., *Lib. Caes.* 13.3) is not mentioned in any of the other extant sources for Trajan's Parthian campaign, and it is quite possibly not historical.

ⁱⁱⁱZalaces appears only in Juvenal's second Satire, which was written near the end of Trajan's reign or the beginning of Hadrian's: Syme 1984, 1135–1157; Braund 1996, 16. It cannot be determined when his hostageship began or ended. He may have been an Arsacid; see Wheeler 2002, 290; Ferguson 1987, 249. On the passage, see further Courtney 1980, 149–150; Braund 1996, 164–167; Isaac 2004, 232–233.

a ballpark figure. Royal women were among them, which means that at least some contenders for the Parthian throne were born and raised at Rome.⁹ Over the course of the Julio-Claudian period the emperors released one Arsacid at the request of a Parthian king, and four at the request of certain Parthian noblemen.¹⁰ Of those released, three (Vonones I, Tiridates II, Meherdates) would hold brief kingships. The evidence for continued Arsacid hostage submission after the reign of Nero is slight, and it may have ceased altogether.

No Arsacid king ever captured his Roman counterpart; the Sasanian Shapur I's seizure of Valerian in 260 CE was the only time an emperor fell into enemy hands.¹¹ Arsacid-Roman hostage submission was apparently not reciprocal: there is no record of any Roman dynast, Julio-Claudian or otherwise, imprisoned in Nisa or Ctesiphon. A few non-royal but still high-ranking Romans are occasionally seen in Parthian custody. But these seem to have been temporary arrangements and far less consequential than the Arsacids at Rome.¹² Upon the collapse of his regime in 218 CE, the emperor Macrinus is said by Dio to have dispatched his son and co-ruler Diadumenian to the Parthian king Artabanus V. Had Diadumenian lived, it is conceivable that his position at the Arsacid court might have resembled that of the Seleucid captives of an earlier age. But he was caught and killed in Roman territory.¹³ The gaps in the historical record may conceal similar cases, but this can be no more than speculation.

Royal Prisoners and Foreign Policy

What was a royal prisoner or hostage good for? Many ancient sources and modern discussions provide one answer: they were a way to project power and integrate territory into a new imperial order. After a lengthy captivity, the royal prisoner's release and installation on the throne of his native land would – in theory – subordinate his kingdom's possessions to the interests of his former captors. His acquiescence, it is sometimes thought, was insured through a process of acculturation to the norms and views of his hosts, a transformation that helped reconcile him with their imperial project and expansionist aims. These arguments are found most frequently in the literature on royal hostages and prisoners in the Roman Republic and Principate, but they have been applied to Parthian history as well. For both Parthia and Rome, Seleucid captives supply important case studies.¹⁴

But if this logic did underpin the Parthian and Roman use of their Seleucid captives, it is difficult to see the practice as a strategic masterstroke. The Seleucids who took the throne after confinement in either the Arsacid court or in Rome do not appear to have been the pawns of their former captors. And while it is safe to assume that these prisoners and hostages were profoundly shaped by their years of confinement, it is less clear that their transformations obtained any benefits for Parthia or Rome in the realm of international politics.

The hostageship of Antiochus IV is an illustrative example for the Roman side. Antiochus became a hostage in compliance with the terms of the Peace of Apamea, signed in 189/188 BCE. Among other conditions, the treaty required Antiochus III to furnish twenty hostages between 18 and 45 years of age who were to be exchanged every three years.¹⁵ It is not entirely clear whether Antiochus met these age requirements, since the year of his birth cannot be firmly established. But the stipulation that the hostages be switched after three years clearly did not apply to him. He would not leave Rome until 178/177 BCE, when Seleucus IV sent his son Demetrius to take his place.¹⁶

While at Rome, Antiochus moved in the highest circles of power. A house was erected for him at public expense, and since the wealthy poet Lucilius lived there a few decades later, the dwelling was probably a comfortable one and commensurate with Antiochus' royal status.¹⁷ Polybius' description of the Roman life of Antiochus' successor Demetrius – a personal acquaintance of the historian – shows that Seleucid hostages enjoyed several amenities. Demetrius could roam within the city and even outside of it at will; slaves attended him; he owned dogs and nets for hunting trips in the nearby town of Circeii. He apparently was not guarded. After his escape to Syria, it took four days for his absence to arouse any suspicion.¹⁸ Antiochus probably lived under similar conditions. A Seleucid envoy would later exclaim before the Senate that, during Antiochus' time at Rome, "he was treated by all classes as a king, not as a hostage." The context of the speech is diplomatic and Antiochus had reasons to lay it on thick, but the claim might not have been too far from the truth.¹⁹

Privilege meant not only material comforts, but also contact with Rome's ruling elite and exposure to Roman political life. The ancient sources give the impression that association with the powerful left its mark on the hostage, who is said to have later adopted certain Roman customs. After his return to Syria, Antiochus would sometimes exchange his kingly attire for a simple toga, canvass the neighborhoods of Antioch for votes, and dispense judgments from a curule chair. He is also supposed to have built a temple for Jupiter Optimus Maximus in Antioch and staged Roman gladiatorial displays.²⁰

It is unclear where these reports originated, and whether they are reliable. The evidence permits no firm conclusions, but it may be useful to consider a range of possibilities. Antiochus' Romanized habits could simply be the invention of Polybius, who may have fabricated or exaggerated such behavior to support his portrayal of a mad and undignified king.²¹ Another suggestion is that Antiochus really did mimic Roman customs, but as "gentle mockery rather than serious imitation" of his former captors.²² It is also worth noting, though, that the negative reports of Romanized behavior are all tied to Antioch near Daphne. The connection suggests that the tales of the king's Roman antics might have originally come from Antiochenes hostile to his regime.²³ The possibility exists, therefore, that certain inhabitants of the Seleucid kingdom used Antiochus' hostageship to caricature him as a Romanized quisling.

The idea that Antiochus' enemies within the Seleucid realm used his Roman hostageship as a propaganda weapon against him is supported by comparanda. The most pertinent case from Hellenistic history is the successful campaign of the Antigonid Perseus to cast his younger brother Demetrius – a hostage at Rome from 197–191 BCE – as a traitor and a Roman collaborator.²⁴ Although the evidence for Demetrius' treason was meager, Perseus was nevertheless able to convince their father Philip V of his brother's guilt, and Demetrius lost his life.²⁵ At one point during an interrogation, Livy has Demetrius complain that the favor shown to him by the Romans as a result of his hostageship was more of a detriment than an asset once he returned home.²⁶ He was right; their support left him vulnerable to accusations of betrayal that eventually got him killed. Antiochus was never thrust into a position quite so dire, but the reports of his "madness" at Antioch highlight the possibility that his enemies, too, tried to tar the former hostage with the brush of Romanization.

Whatever the truth about Antiochus' Roman habits, one thing about his kingship is reasonably clear: his years at Rome did not prevent him from later pursuing an independent and aggressive foreign policy, even to Rome's displeasure.²⁷ It is possible that Rome supported Antiochus' suspiciously quick installation on the Seleucid throne, and some scholars have seen the king's adoption of Roman customs as an intention to reform along Roman lines.²⁸ But if the Romans expected their hostage's acculturation to lead to political subservience, they must have been disappointed. In short order, Antiochus set about flouting the terms of the very treaty that had brought him to Rome. Apamea forbid the Seleucid possession of elephants and warships as well as the recruitment of mercenaries from Roman territories. Antiochus violated all of

these conditions.²⁹ To be sure, the king made no secret of these transgressions, which evidently did not alarm the Romans overmuch, and it is unclear whether the treaty signed by Antiochus III was still binding for his son.³⁰ But the Romans later referenced Apamea to justify their intervention in 163/162 BCE against Antiochus V, so it would appear that compliance with the treaty still mattered.³¹

Antiochus' independence was most on display during the Sixth Syrian War and the "Day of Eleusis" that marked its climax. The king's invasion of Egypt was embedded in a long-running struggle between the Seleucids and Ptolemies and showed that a hostageship in Rome did little to diminish the Hellenistic drive for spear-won land. In the end Antiochus did back down, of course, and Popilius Laenas' ultimatum had its intended effect. But Antiochus yielded because of credible Roman threats to use force, not because he was a former hostage. It was the hard power of Rome's military, not the soft power of cultural imperialism, that ended Antiochus' adventure in Egypt.³²

For the Romans, Antiochus' case would have shown that confinement in their city and association with Republican elites were no guarantee that a former hostage would help to create the sort of international order that Rome wanted to see. Moreover, if the negative reports of Antiochus' Roman behavior indeed originated in Antioch, then the Romans might have learned a second lesson: Antiochus' hostageship had left him vulnerable to accusations from his subjects that he was a Romanized quisling. As a tool of empire, Antiochus had performed poorly. The record of Rome's first Seleucid hostage as an agent of Roman imperialism was marked by distinct shortcomings.

Much the same can be said of the Parthian experience with captive Seleucid monarchs. In 139 BCE, Demetrius II turned aside from his kingdom's domestic conflicts in order to deal with the Parthian threat in the east.³³ Having campaigned successfully against the Greco-Bactrians in central Asia, the Arsacid king Mithridates I was now encroaching on Seleucid possessions in Media and Mesopotamia.³⁴ In the first few clashes between the Parthian and Seleucid armies Demetrius appears to have had the upper hand, but whether by treachery or battlefield defeat he was eventually taken alive by his Parthian opponents along with several of his closest friends and advisors.³⁵

Mithridates' first move was to put the captive king on display for local populations. Several sources report dissatisfaction in Mesopotamia and Iran with the initial imposition of Arsacid control, and the exhibition of a defeated and humiliated Seleucid monarch may have been meant to discourage further resistance.³⁶ Demetrius was then brought to a royal palace in Hyrcania, where his close proximity to the king meant that he no doubt remained a visible sign of Arsacid military prowess. This practice is paralleled in Rome, where there is evidence for the participation of hostages in the triumphs of conquering generals.³⁷ In both cases, the exhibition of royal prisoners enhanced the prestige of the commanders who captured them. Success on the battlefield led to a strengthened domestic position.

Like Antiochus at Rome, Demetrius' treatment during his decade-long Hyrcanian captivity was commensurate with his royal rank. He was held in honor and provided with the comforts due to a king. Mithridates even married Demetrius to his daughter, Rhodogune. How willingly Demetrius entered into this union is impossible to say, though his two attempts to escape Parthian custody in the following years might provide some indication. Still, the pair had children together. Demetrius' bids for freedom ended in failure, and he was returned to his Parthian family both times. Like his father, the Roman hostage Demetrius I, the Seleucid captive grew restless and unhappy in his imprisonment. Unlike his father, he could not escape.³⁸

What was the motive behind the Arsacid treatment of their prisoner? Justin's epitome of Trogus is clearest: the Parthians had designs on the kingdom of Syria and intended to use Demetrius as a tool against Antiochus VII, who had taken the Seleucid throne in his absence. Demetrius' involuntary incorporation into the Arsacid family has accordingly been seen as an effort to subordinate the Seleucid territories to an expanding Parthian imperial order.³⁹ The marrying of Arsacid royal women to local dynasts is attested in other contexts, though to be sure these matrimonial ties went both ways.⁴⁰ And just as intermarriage was one practice in the Arsacid imperial toolkit, so too was the cultivation of potential client-kings at the Arsacid court. Tigranes II of Armenia is a clear case in point. Kamnaškiri the Younger of Elam and Artabazos of Characene are other possibilities.⁴¹

But in Demetrius' case, the course of events seems to have forced Phraates' hand, and the eventual release of his Seleucid captive was calculated less to add to the Arsacid empire than to disrupt the Seleucid one. Antiochus VII gathered an army and in 131 BCE won a series of battles against the Parthian forces in Mesopotamia. The Arsacids, who were also beset on their eastern frontier by nomadic incursions, buckled and nearly broke.⁴² Peace talks began. But Antiochus grew overconfident, demanding not only the release of Demetrius but also the return of all territories taken from the Seleucids and the resumption of Parthian tribute payments. This was too much for Phraates, who broke off the negotiations.⁴³

It was just at this point that the Arsacid king decided to release Demetrius "so that in this way Antiochus would be recalled from Parthia to protect his own possessions."⁴⁴ In view of the dire military situation, Phraates' immediate goal at this point was probably not at the annexation of Syria but rather the derailment of Antiochus' campaign through the fomenting of domestic strife.⁴⁵ But the tactic proved unnecessary. Antiochus VII died in a decisive battle with the Parthians in 130/129 BCE; his daughter and perhaps also a son fell into the hands of the enemy. Too late Phraates realized his release of Demetrius had been to no purpose, but an attempt to recapture him failed. Demetrius reached Syria, where after a ten-year interregnum he resumed his kingship.⁴⁶

Demetrius' Parthian captivity left an indelible mark on his second reign. In a departure from established numismatic traditions, the king now wore a full beard on his coins. Several motives have been proposed for the innovation, but it is often

explained as a consequence of his captivity among the Arsacids, who usually wore beards in their own coin portraits.⁴⁷ His subjects may also have noticed a change. According to Justin, the residents of Antioch revolted, “upbraiding the arrogance of the king, which because of his association with the Parthians had become unbearably cruel.”⁴⁸ It is unclear whether this explanation for the change in Demetrius’ nature was part of Antiochene propaganda or is an authorial interjection of Justin or Trogus, whose history he epitomated.⁴⁹ The former is at least a possibility, which means that the Antiochenes may have justified their rebellion against Demetrius on the grounds that his Parthian captivity had rendered him an unsuitable ruler. Demetrius’ nickname “Seripides/Siripides” may also be relevant in this context.⁵⁰ The epithet could be a diminutive of the Aramaic *’swr* and mean “the little bound prisoner.” It might also be a corruption of the Greek Σιδηρίτης, “iron-man,” a likely reference to chains.⁵¹ In either case, the contemptuous reference to Demetrius’ captivity is clear.

But despite these Parthian connections both real and imagined, it would be a mistake to see Demetrius’ second reign as an incorporation of Seleucid Syria into the Arsacid empire. Phraates himself had no illusions about Demetrius’ independence; he reportedly contemplated an invasion of Syria, which was only prevented by a massive rebellion in his army.⁵² Almost immediately upon his return, Demetrius set out for Egypt to intervene in a Ptolemaic civil war.⁵³ This campaign, a manifestation of the kingdom’s deep-seated tendency to pursue gain at the expense of the Ptolemies, showed that traditional Seleucid priorities were what mattered to Demetrius, not Parthian ones. Moreover, Demetrius’ wife Cleopatra Thea was reportedly incensed by his marriage to Rhodogune, though neither the Arsacid princess nor her children returned with the king to Syria. Her anger led her to abandon Demetrius and, in some accounts, to plot his murder. Appian attributes the deed to jealousy, though one suspects that Cleopatra – wife to three kings, mother to two, and murderer of two – acted from political rather than personal motives.⁵⁴

From an Arsacid point of view, then, Demetrius’ record as an agent of Parthian imperialism left much to be desired. The king showed no sign of accepting Parthian vassalage once back in power, and if the Parthians did have immediate designs on Syria, he did nothing to advance them. Worse still, Demetrius’ Parthian captivity was used as a political weapon against him. The Antiochenes may have used it to explain what they perceived as the king’s cruelty, or at least as a justification for rebellion. And Cleopatra Thea may have taken umbrage at his marital connections to the Arsacid family for either personal or political reasons. In short, with Demetrius the Parthians may have incurred the resentment of empire-building without the tangible benefits that the addition of new territory usually brought.

As tools of foreign policy, Seleucid hostages and prisoners had come up short for both the Romans and the Parthians during the second century BCE. But one aspect of the Parthian experience with Demetrius held an important lesson: royal prisoners might create unrest on the domestic level if returned to their native kingdom at the

right moment. That observation helps explain the continuity between the Seleucid captives of the Hellenistic period and the Arsacid hostages of Julio-Claudian Rome – and also the more consequential changes.

Royal Prisoners and Domestic Politics

For the Arsacids, the lesson from Demetrius' captivity was that it was easier to use royal prisoners to destroy than to use them to build: they were better as the tools of disruption than the instruments of an imperial order. One student who seems to have learned this lesson well was not an Arsacid king, but a Roman emperor.

After Parthia and Rome completed their respective conquests of the Hellenistic world in the mid-first century BCE, the new status quo between the two empires took shape in the old Seleucid territories. In Syria, the Euphrates provided a surprisingly stable boundary that endured to the days of Trajan and beyond. But Armenia remained a point of contention, and sparring between the two empires for prestige and influence was a frequent occurrence there.⁵⁵ One such conflict began in 35 CE, when the Parthian king Artabanus II invaded Armenia and installed his son Arsaces on the Armenian throne.⁵⁶ The move violated the Roman-Parthian settlement concluded under Augustus and Phraates IV, and Rome had to take action.

But the emperor Tiberius had two things that allowed him to deal with the crisis without resorting to military force. The first was an embassy from certain Parthian noblemen asking him for assistance against Artabanus, who Dio says “was treating the Parthians in an arrogant manner.”⁵⁷ The second was a group of Arsacid family members living in captivity in the city of Rome, several of whom were viable candidates for the Arsacid throne. The delegation from the nobility was asking for one of them to be released as a replacement for the reigning Arsacid, an event that had happened once already during the reign of Augustus.⁵⁸ Tiberius consented. The first choice was Phraates, the eldest remaining son of Phraates IV who had now been at Rome for some 40 years, but he died in Syria on the way to his native land. A replacement was quickly found in Tiridates, a young Arsacid who probably had been born at Rome.⁵⁹

As Tiridates approached the Euphrates, Artabanus' campaign in Armenia collapsed. The Syrian governor Lucius Vitellius escorted the young Arsacid to the river, where he built a bridge and released him to his Parthian supporters. Although Rome provided no further military assistance, the rumor of a Roman war and Tiridates' considerable support among the Parthian nobles led to mass desertions in Artabanus' army. The king fled to central Asia, where he would bide his time and gather new forces. Meanwhile Tiridates claimed the Arsacid throne to what seemed like broad acclaim.⁶⁰

Just a few months later, Artabanus was back on the throne, and Tiridates had fled to Roman territory.⁶¹ What had gone wrong? Tiridates, it turned out, was vulnerable to the accusations of acculturation that a returning hostage often faced: his captivity had imparted a “foreign effeminacy;” he was a tool of those that installed him on the throne (in this case, the Parthian nobleman Abdagaeses); and – a charge frequently

leveled in Parthia – he effectively had lost Arsacid status by virtue of his hostageship in Rome.⁶² This invective against Tiridates is reported only by Tacitus, and to be sure, its inclusion is part of the author's literary designs.⁶³ But it also reveals a typical domestic political reaction against a returning royal captive. As seen above, the argument that a royal hostage or prisoner had become a puppet of his former captors was a useful weapon in political discourse; it gave the dynast's enemies a means of discrediting him and a justification for rebelling against his reign. The fate of Tiridates' kingship was decided on the battlefield, of course. But the Parthian rhetoric preserved in Tacitus suggests that criticism of his hostageship played a role in uniting the forces that defeated him.

Should the release of Tiridates accordingly be reckoned a failure on Tiberius' part? Just the opposite. The emperor had deftly used an Arsacid hostage to eject the Parthians from Armenia without committing Roman legions to the cause – a successful application of his preference for “managing foreign affairs through plots and stratagem, and keeping arms at a distance.”⁶⁴ Tiberius' expectations of what Tiridates would accomplish within Parthia were probably modest: his release would trigger a civil war, create domestic disturbance, and undercut Artabanus' expansionist campaign by striking at the base of his power. And while Artabanus did recover his throne in the end, his designs on Armenia did not return with him. He patched up relations with Rome at a conference on the Euphrates with Vitellius, and even handed over hostages to seal the deal.⁶⁵

In Tiberius' use of Tiridates, then, some continuity between Seleucid and Arsacid royal captives is evident. Just as Phraates II released Demetrius to distract Antiochus Sidetes from his Parthian campaign, so Tiberius' repatriation of Tiridates was a measure designed to foment dynastic strife to foil a Parthian initiative in Armenia. Tiberius had learned a lesson that both the Roman and the Parthian experience with Seleucid prisoners could have taught him: if royal prisoners were poor tools of imperial expansion, their return to their native lands was a reliable way to stir up domestic chaos.

But while there were some similarities between the Seleucids of the Hellenistic period and the Arsacids of Julio-Claudian Rome, there were also differences between them that, in the end, count for more. The realization that royal prisoners operated first and foremost at the domestic level brought to the fore a function that, while not unprecedented, now assumed a new significance: both the Parthians and the Romans began to use Arsacid hostages for their own domestic political purposes. The royal prisoner's traditional deployment as an instrument of foreign policy was superseded by applications in the realm of internal affairs – though, to be sure, the international dimension of hostage submission remained relevant.

This development began with political conditions within the Parthian kingdom, where a persistent tension between the Arsacid king and recalcitrant factions of the Parthian nobility was a central dynamic throughout the empire's history. The contours of these domestic struggles appear only in their barest outlines in the

Greco-Roman literary sources.⁶⁶ Neither the Arsacid family nor the Parthian nobility was a monolithic entity, and throughout Parthian history actors from both of these groups will have arranged themselves in constellations that can only be guessed at in the absence of detailed literary narratives. But one aspect of their relationship is reasonably clear: on occasion, factions of Parthian nobles acting in concert would conspire to unseat an unpopular Arsacid monarch only to replace him with another member of the dynasty. Fear of such plots sometimes led to purges within the Arsacid family as the reigning king systematically assassinated his relatives and rivals.⁶⁷ Such dynastic strife was not unique to the Arsacids, of course, though in their case the problem may have been compounded by royal polygamy and the large families that this custom produced.⁶⁸

It is against this backdrop that the beginning of Arsacid-Roman hostage submission must be understood. The first coordinated transfer of Arsacid hostages to Augustus was primarily an event in Parthian domestic politics: Phraates IV sent his family members to his Roman counterpart in an effort to deprive his political enemies of a suitable Arsacid rival who might supplant him. The paramount importance of Parthian domestic politics is highlighted in Strabo, Josephus, and Tacitus, and while their assessments differ in certain respects, their collective emphasis on Phraates' agency is nonetheless clear.⁶⁹ That is not to say that Rome played no part whatsoever; although the date of the hostage submission cannot be securely determined, it seems to have happened while Roman legions were active on Parthia's western frontier, and Phraates may have been looking to head off a potential Roman invasion.⁷⁰ But no source – not even the *Res Gestae* of Augustus himself – reports a Roman demand for Parthian hostages. If Phraates acted to avoid Roman aggression, he did so in a manner of his own choosing and, in a way, that dealt simultaneously with domestic and external challenges to his position.⁷¹

Artabanus' submission of his son Darius at the Euphrates conference in 36/37 CE was more closely connected to international affairs; in this case, the Roman emperor did demand hostages from his Parthian counterpart.⁷² But in the next major hostage transfer under Vologaeses I in 55 CE, Arsacid initiative was again the primary factor. Vologaeses had installed his brother on the Armenian throne and started another war with the Romans, but he was forced to withdraw to deal with an internal rebellion by another Arsacid.⁷³ According to Tacitus, at this point Vologaeses gave hostages "in order to prepare war from an advantageous position – or, in the name of 'hostages' to remove those suspected of rivalry."⁷⁴ Vologaeses' hostage transfer was a purge of Arsacid rivals rather than a legitimate concession to Roman demands.⁷⁵ As a negotiating ploy, it was all the more effective for playing on Roman expectations that, once hostages were surrendered, Parthia's contestation for Armenia would be over.⁷⁶ The fact that the Armenian war would drag on for another eight years shows that the submission of hostages did not indicate political or military submission.

It is true, of course, that while the Arsacid kings could shore up their domestic position by shipping rivals to Rome, the Roman emperor could always send those

rivals back to Parthia. But with the exception of Tiberius, the emperors do not seem to have used their Arsacid hostages in an offensive capacity. Two of the three Arsacid kings who submitted hostages (Phraates IV and Vologaeses I) never had to deal with the threat of an Arsacid rival returning from Rome. Artabanus II faced this situation twice, but both cases were before he sent his son Darius to Rome. After his conference with Vitellius in 37 CE, he would not have to deal with the problem a third time. Moreover, no emperor ever released a hostage without a request from the Parthian king or nobility.⁷⁷ When the former hostage Vonones returned to Parthia in c. 8 CE, the Arsacid throne was empty. And when Claudius released Meherdates in 49 CE, his opponent Gotarzes had spent virtually his entire kingship fighting civil wars; he posed little or no threat to Rome.⁷⁸ The idea that the Romans used their Arsacid hostages to keep Parthia weak and divided is difficult to reconcile with such cases.

But if the Romans didn't simply use their Arsacid hostages to enfeeble their imperial neighbor, how else did they employ them? An important part of the answer is once again to be found in the domestic political arena. The Arsacids of Rome were showpieces, a way for the emperors to proclaim Rome's supremacy over the Parthian empire in absence of the military success that had fueled the imperialism of the late Republic. Not long after the first Arsacids arrived in Rome, Augustus made a prominent display of them at one of his many public spectacles, leading them through the middle of the arena and then seating them prominently above him in the second row.⁷⁹ Presumably clad in Parthian costume, Phraates IV's children would have offered the Romans a living example of the subdued Parthian, a caricature they knew through the coins, poetry, and art of the Augustan period.⁸⁰ The arena spectacle would have recalled the display of hostages in the triumphs of the middle and late Republic, where the exhibition of captive royalty was a sign of the conquering general's power over the kingdoms from which they had been taken.⁸¹ But there was a key difference: Augustus never defeated Parthia militarily. Hostages created the appearance of Roman domination in the east, even though the realities of power on the ground were much different.

The staging of spectacles featuring the Arsacids of Rome was continued under later emperors. Caligula's famous Baiae procession in 39 CE made prominent use of Darius, the son of Artabanus II who had recently arrived in Italy. Whether as an honored guest or as the *spolia* of a triumph (the sources do not agree), the Arsacid prince accompanied the emperor as he traversed his massive pontoon.⁸² Darius took part on the second day of the procession as Caligula rode from Baiae to Puteoli. The fact that he was once again traversing a bridge from east to west suggests that Caligula's spectacle was, among other things, a recreation of Vitellius' pontoon over the Euphrates – the very structure Darius crossed, from east to west, in order to enter Roman custody.⁸³ Once again, the prominent display of a hostage celebrated Roman success against Parthia in the east, even though the status quo with Parthia remained basically the same.

Finally, Nero may have made use of a fresh shipment of hostages during the famous “Golden Day” of 66 CE.⁸⁴ The event celebrated the arrival of the Arsacid Tiridates, the brother of Vologaeses I who was to be crowned king of Armenia by Nero.⁸⁵ In his retinue Tiridates brought not only his own children, but numerous others from the Arsacid family.⁸⁶ Dio does not say whether they stayed on in Rome after Tiridates’ departure, but a reference in Pliny to a group of royal hostages from Corbulo’s campaigns suggests that at least some were detained.⁸⁷ While the highlight of the day was Tiridates’ obeisance to Nero, the prostration of the entire Arsacid retinue is supposed to have drawn a loud roar of acclamation from the crowd of onlookers.⁸⁸ To the extent that the status quo had changed, it was in Parthia’s favor; an Arsacid now held the Armenian throne. But the apparent subservience of Tiridates and the hostages that came with him allowed the emperor to maintain the appearance of Roman domination in the east. And for Nero especially, the glitter of prestige may have mattered rather more than the reality of political control.⁸⁹

The repeated use of Arsacid hostages in Roman *spectacula* shows that these dynasts were indispensable tools for crafting an image of Roman supremacy over Parthia. It mattered little that this image was, by and large, illusory. The Arsacids of Rome were props with which the emperor played to a domestic audience. They were not just a tool through which Parthian policy was carried out; they were an end at which that policy aimed. Arsacid hostages were a resource obtained from across the Euphrates, but put to work at the center of Roman imperial power.

To be sure, domestic applications were not unprecedented, and the international dimension remained significant. As discussed above, hostages and prisoners graced the triumphs of victorious generals during the Republic, boosting their captor’s prestige in the intense competition among Roman aristocrats for honor and advancement. Details are unavailable for the Parthian side, but Mithridates’ exhibition of Demetrius II suggests that the Arsacids too may have made use of such displays. Moreover, hostages were involved in nearly every Roman-Parthian interaction throughout the Julio-Claudian period. An Arsacid captive could be used to ward off Parthian aggression, as Tiberius’ release of Tiridates shows, or to mend and preserve ties between the two empires, as Augustus may have done by returning Phraates IV’s young son in c. 23 BCE.⁹⁰ The dynastic prisoner still played a part in international politics.

Yet with Parthian and Roman conquests halted at the Euphrates, the royal captive’s role in the realm of internal affairs now took on a new importance. While the submission of Arsacid hostages was a key feature of the Roman-Parthian relationship, this international connection was forged and sustained largely because it suited the domestic political interests of the major players on both sides of the Euphrates. Such exploitation of the royal captive for domestic gain by both the surrendering and the receiving party represented a real break from the Hellenistic past and was a new feature of the Roman-Parthian status quo. Through hostages, each empire had become part of the internal functioning of the other.

Conclusion

Seleucid clashes with the growing empires of both Parthia and Rome led to the imprisonment of several members of the kingdom's royal family. Much scholarship holds that these captive dynasts were the instruments of imperialism, a means for the Romans and Parthians to shape the international order to their liking. But if this was the end that Seleucid hostages and prisoners were meant to achieve, there were grounds for disappointment. Released Seleucids did not help either empire bend the Seleucid kingdom to its will. They acted independently, pursuing traditional Seleucid agendas. And they may in some cases have stirred up anti-Roman and anti-Parthian sentiment, particularly in the key Seleucid city of Antioch.

As Parthia and Rome completed their conquest of the Hellenistic world, the stage was therefore set for a change in how the royal prisoner was used in relations between empires. To be sure, there were continuities. Tiberius' release of Tiridates to stir up civil war within Parthia echoed the repatriation of Demetrius by Phraates II as a way to derail Antiochus Sidetes' eastern campaign. The Seleucids of the Hellenistic period showed that, if it was difficult to build an international order with royal prisoners, it was easier to unleash dynastic strife by releasing them at the right moment. Tiberius' management of the Armenian crisis in 35 CE was a skillful application of this lesson.

But the changes were more significant. As leaders in both Rome and Parthia looked east or west at where the Seleucid kingdom used to be, the dismal record of Seleucid captives as tools of foreign policy may have suggested new uses for the royal prisoner in the domestic political arena. The Arsacid kings used hostage submission for their own purposes, shoring up their hold on power by shipping potential rivals to Rome. The emperors then used these hostages to project an image of Roman suzerainty over Parthia to an internal audience. The Arsacid royal prisoner became, for both the Parthians and the Romans, a way of managing internal political problems through the international medium of hostage submission.

Long after the Seleucid empire was gone, then, the legacy of Rome and Parthia's Seleucid prisoners lived on, underpinning a new kind of relationship between the joint conquerors of the Hellenistic world's largest polity. Even in decline, even as hostages, prisoners, and captives, the Seleucid royal family shaped the age to come.

Notes

- * I thank Benjamin Rubin, Jason Schlude, and Barry Strauss for comments that greatly improved this piece. All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.
- 1. Some key studies in the large literature on the Greek world's influence on Rome: Gruen 1984, 250–272; Zanker 1988; Wallace-Hadrill 2008, 17–37; Spawforth 2012. Parthia's engagement with Hellenism is less studied, but was no less consequential; see Wolski 1983b; Wiesehöfer 2000; Fowler 2005, 151–155.
- 2. For previous discussions of Rome's Arsacids, see Dąbrowa 1987; Wiesehöfer 2010; Nedergaard 1988; Strothmann 2012; Gregoratti 2015.
- 3. See below, n. 14 for literature.

4. The Parthian word *nyp'k/nēpāk* is found in the inscription of Narseh at Paikuli (section 94 = Skjærvø 1983, 73, 114). See also Durkin-Meisterernst 1998, 239, for the word in Manichaean Middle Persian and Parthian.
5. This reckoning excludes the usurper Tryphon and the Armenian king Tigranes II on the grounds that, although they both ruled Seleucid territory for a time, neither was a member of Seleucid family. For Antiochus XIII as the last king, see, e.g. Green 1990, 724; Ehling 2008, 263.
6. Cf. Elbern 1990, 131; Álvarez Pérez-Sostoa 2012, 385, on the general absence of Roman hostages in the sources – largely, if not entirely, attributable to Rome's military superiority.
7. Polyb. 21.15.2–3; Liv. 37.34.4–6; Diod. 29.8.1; Val. Max. 2.10.2, 3.5.1; Plin. *HN* 35.22; Dio, fr. 62.2 = 19.20.2; App. *Syr.* 29 (who confuses this Scipio with the later Scipio Aemilianus). This son was probably Lucius rather than Publius, Africanus' other son: Balsdon 1972, 228; Walbank 1979, 107–108; Briscoe 1981, 339. The accounts vary on the exact date and manner of his capture.
8. Liv. 38.51.2: *filium captum sine pretio redditum*. The ancient sources for Africanus' trial are listed in Scullard 1973, 290, n. 1; Briscoe 2008, 170. For discussion, see Kienast 1954, 57–67; Scullard 1970, 210–224; 1973, 290–303; Ruebel 1977; Briscoe 2008, 170–179. Lucius himself was later expelled from the Senate: Liv. 41.27.2. There is no indication in Livy that his former captivity was a factor, but in Valerius Maximus (3.5.1) his Seleucid imprisonment is mentioned in the same context as his political failure. On Lucius' career, see further Liv. 41.21.1 with Briscoe 2012, 109; Val. Max. 4.5.3. The gifts of Antiochus VII to Scipio Aemilianus (Liv., *Per.* 57.8) might be evidence for continued ties between the two families in the later second century BCE.
9. E.g. the wives who accompanied the sons of Phraates IV (Strab. 16.1.28). On Arsacid royal women generally, see Hartmann and Huber 2006; Bigwood 2004; 2008.
10. See below, n. 77.
11. Sources for the capture of Valerian: ŠKZ 18–22; SHA, *Valeriani Duo* 1–4.2; Eutrop. 9.7; Lactantius, *De Mortibus Persecutorum* 5; Aurel. Vict., *Epit. de Caes.* 32.5–6; al-Ṭabarī in Bosworth 1999, 29–31. For discussion, see Kettenhofen 1982, 97–100; Potter 2004, 255–256; Ando 2012, 167–170; Dignas and Winter 2007, 180–182.
12. Pompey's envoy C. Lucilius Hirrus was imprisoned by Orodes II: Caes., *BC* 3.82; Dio 41.55.3–4, 42.2.5; Debevoise 1938, 104–105. But Hirrus evidently supplied fish for Caesar's triumph in 45 BCE (Plin., *HN* 9.171), so his captivity cannot have been long. In 63 CE the general Corbulo sent his stepson Annius Vinicianus and the knight Tiberius Alexander into the Parthian camp as hostages: Tac., *Ann.* 15.28.3. But both are later found active in Roman territory (Dio 62.23.6; Suet., *Ner.* 36.1; Joseph., *BJ* 2.309), and their term as hostages was almost certainly limited to the duration of the battlefield negotiations (cf. Elbern 1990, 101).
13. Dio 79.39–40; cf. Ziegler 1964, 135; Potter 2004, 151–152. The other ancient sources (SHA, *Macr.* 10.3–6; *Diad.* 9.4; Herod. 5.4.12) do not mention the attempted flight to Artabanus and report that father and son died together.
14. Hostages and prisoners as part of Roman imperialism, especially via acculturation or education: Matthei 1905, 231–243; Lécivain 1916, 131; Aymard 1961, 140–142; Moscovich 1974, 425–426; 1983, 299; Walker 1980, 42, 119, 207–209; Braund 1984, 12–17; Elbern 1990, 118–124; Lee 1993, 366–367; Ndiaye 1995, 154–155; Noy 2000, 106–109; Burns 2003, 100–101; Allen 2006, 34, 149–177. As part of Parthian imperialism: Wolski 1980, 257–267; 1987, 169; 1993, 82; Dąbrowa 2011a, 24; Shayegan 2003, 92–97; 2011, 140–150.
15. Polyb. 21.43.22; Liv. 38.38.15; Diod. 29.10; App. *Syr.* 39; Memnon *FrGH* 434 F 18.9 = *BNJ* 434 F 1.9. For discussion of the settlement and its impact, see Mørkholm 1966, 22–32; Gruen 1984, 640–643; Green 1990, 421–423; Sherwin-White and Kuhrt 1993, 210–216; Ma 1999, 247–250; Austin 2003, 131–132. For discussions of the regular exchange of hostages (*mutatio obsidum*), see Allen 2006, 15, n. 46 with references.

16. Antiochus' age and birthdate: Mittag 2006, 32–37. Exchange with Demetrius: App., *Syr.* 45. The date of Antiochus' release from Rome depends in part on an inscription that may put him in Athens in 178/177 BCE: Tracy 1982, 61–62; but *cf.* now Scolnic 2014; Knoepfler 2014.
17. Ascon., *Pis.* 13C = Atticus, fr. 6P = *FRH* 33 F 7; Walker 1980, 106 and n. 31; Mittag 2006, 37–40; 2014, 119–121.
18. Demetrius' amenities: Polyb. 31.14.1–3; *cf.* Diod. 31.18.1; Walker 1984, 120. His escape from Roman captivity: Polyb. 31.15.6; Mørkholm 1966, 39; Braund 1984, 13–14; Matthews 1989, 39–40. Like Demetrius, the Arsacid Vonones would later attempt to escape Roman custody while under guard in Pompeiopolis under the pretense of a hunting expedition: Tac., *Ann.* 2.68.1.
19. Liv. 42.6.9: *ut pro rege non pro obside omnibus ordinibus fuerit*. Gruen 1984, 648–650 highlights Antiochus' desire for Roman support in his looming conflict with the Ptolemies. Walker 1980, 199, holds that Livy's version of the speech plays up Roman civility and generosity. Antiochus also had to excuse a late tribute payment due to financial difficulties: Liv. 42.6.6; *cf.* 2 Macc. 8:10; Briscoe 2012, 173.
20. Polyb. 26.1.5–6 = Athen. 10.439a; Liv. 41.20.1, 41.20.9–13; Dio. 29.32; *cf.* Heliodorus, *FrGH* 373 F 8 = *BNJ* 373 F 8. Granius Licinianus writes that Antiochus erected two colossi, one for Olympian and the other for Capitoline Jupiter (28.10.1–11.1; *cf.* Briscoe 2012, 107). On the lack of archaeological evidence for a Jupiter temple in Antioch, see Allen 2006, 168–169. For the festival at Antioch near Daphne, which featured (among other attractions) men armed in Roman fashion and gladiators, see Polyb. 30.25–26; Diod. 31.16.2–3.
21. See Mittag 2006, 334; Mørkholm 1966, 183–188; Green 1990, 437–438; Grainger 1990, 156 and n. 80; *cf.* MacMullen 2000, 16. It is usually assumed that Polybius' friendship with Demetrius I darkened his portrayal of Antiochus, but *cf.* Paltiel 1979b, who argues for a friendly relationship between the two Seleucid hostages.
22. Gruen 1984, 662.
23. *Cf.* Mittag 2006, 147, 335. Green 1990, 432, 437 sees Antiochenes behind the pun on Antiochus' epithet (*Epimanes*/"Madman" for *Epiphanes*/"Manifest"). On Antioch near Daphne (also known as Antioch on the Orontes) see Downey 1961, especially 112–118; Cohen 2006, 80–93.
24. For the background on Demetrius' hostageship and return to Macedon, see Edson 1935; Allen 2006, 1–13.
25. The "smoking gun" was a letter from Flamininus to Philip V, which at any rate contained nothing overtly incriminating: Liv. 40.23.7–8; *cf.* Diod. 29.25. The ancient sources held this document to be a forgery, on which point see Walbank 1940, 251; Briscoe 1972, 25–26; 2008, 469; Gruen 1974, 243–244; Pfeilschifter 2005, 358–359; Newey 2009, 79–83.
26. Liv. 40.12.6.
27. Allen 2006, 166–169. Gruen 1984, 665, makes the same point for Antiochus' successor and fellow hostage, Demetrius I.
28. Antiochus installed with Roman help: Will 1979–1982, 2.256–257; Walbank 1979, 285; but *cf.* Green 1990, 429 and n. 156. Roman-inspired reforms: Goldstein 1976, 104–125.
29. Elephants: Polyb. 21.42.12 (treaty); Polyb. 30.25.11; 1 *Maccabees* 1.17, 3.34; Joseph. *AJ* 12.295 (violation). Ships: Polyb. 21.42.13 (treaty); Liv. 44.19.9, 45.11.9; 1 *Maccabees* 1.17; 2 *Maccabees* 4.18–20 (violation). See McDonald and Walbank 1969 for a discussion of the naval clauses. Mercenaries: Polyb. 21.42.15 (treaty); Polyb. 30.25.4–5; 1 *Maccabees* 6.29; *cf.* 2 *Maccabees* 5.24 (possible violations). The treaty of Apamea forbid Seleucid mercenary recruitment from territories under Roman rule, but it is not clear how far Rome's writ extended: see Paltiel 1979a, 32, for discussion.
30. Popilius Laenas seems to have seen the Seleucid navy personally in Egypt and Cyprus without taking any punitive action: Liv. 45.12.7; Polyb. 29.27.9–10. Polyaeus (4.21) even reports that Antiochus presented the Romans with war elephants before Pydna, though this seems to conflict with Livy (45.13.3) and has been rejected: see Mørkholm 1966, 66, n. 7. On whether the Treaty

- of Apamea remained in force during Antiochus IV's reign, see Paltiel 1979a, 41; Morgan 1990, 48 and n. 49.
31. That Rome used the violation of Apamea as grounds for destroying the Seleucid navy and elephants in 162 is clear in App., *Syr.* 46 and Dio 20.25, but absent from earlier sources (Polyb. 31.2.9–11; Cic., *Phil.* 9.2.4). If the treaty could be used as a pretext for intervention even after his reign, Antiochus clearly ran a risk in ignoring its provisions. For discussion, see Mittag 2006, 224.
 32. Cf. Green 1990, 431–432, 437–438. On the Sixth Syrian War in general, see the sources and discussion in Fischer-Bovet 2014, 219–242; Grainger 2010, 288–308. Sources for the Day of Eleusis: Polyb. 29.27.1–10; Liv. 45.12.3–8; Cic., *Phil.* 8.23; Vell. Pat. 1.10.1; Diod. 31.2; Val. Max. 6.4.3; Just. 34.3.1–4; Plin., *HN* 34.24; Plut., *Mor.* 202f; App., *Syr.* 66; Porphyry, *BNJ* 260 F 50; Zon. 9.25; for discussion, see Gruen 1984, 657–663; Morgan 1990. On an evident reference to Antiochus' departure in Egyptian evidence, see Fischer-Bovet 2014, 230–231.
 33. Demetrius' motive for marching east is debated; see the discussion in Shayegan 2003, 86, with references.
 34. Parthian war with Greco-Bactria under Mithridates I: Just. 41.6.1–3; Strab. 11.11.2; Wolski 1993, 79–80. A Greek inscription at Behistun dating to 148 BCE "for the welfare of Kleomenes, commander of the upper satrapies," may reflect Seleucid apprehension over an impending Parthian attack: see Hackl *et al.* 2010, 2.476 (III.1.3.F.3).
 35. See Table 2.1 for the sources, which do not agree on how Demetrius came into Arsacid captivity. Justin has him treacherously double-crossed by the Parthians during a peace conference, while Josephus and *1 Maccabees* say he was captured after losing a battle. For discussion of the campaign, see Dąbrowa 2011b; Ehling 2008, 182–186; Shayegan 2003, 84–87.
 36. Just. 36.1.3–5, 38.10.5; Joseph., *AJ* 13.186; Dąbrowa 2011a, 17; Kosmin 2014, 173. For a more nuanced story of local reactions to Arsacid invasion based partly on the evidence from the Babylonian astronomical diaries, see Shayegan 2011, 81; and Potts 1999, 388, noting that the Elymaeans were opposed to both Arsacid and Seleucid suzerainty.
 37. *E.g.* at Flamininus' triumph in 193 BCE: Liv. 34.52.9; Eutrop. 4.2.3; Oros. 4.20.2; and at Pompey's in 61 BCE: Plut., *Pomp.* 45.4; App., *Mith.* 117. Walker 1980, 98, plausibly suggests that other generals may have followed suit. On Pompey's triumphs, see further Beard 2007, 7–41.
 38. Demetrius' generous treatment and marriage to Rhodogune: Just. 36.1.6, 38.9.3; App., *Syr.* 67–68; Hartmann and Huber 2006, 500. On the apparent contradiction between Justin and Appian as to the giver of the Arsacid princess, see Shayegan 2003, 85. Escape attempts and despair in captivity: Just. 38.9.4–9. On Demetrius I's escape from Rome, see Gruen 1984, 663–667; Allen 2006, 210–212.
 39. Just. 38.9–10. See Dąbrowa 2011a, 18; Wolski 1993, 82; Shayegan 2003, 97.
 40. The Arsacid king Phraates III married his daughter to Tigranes, son of Tigranes II the Great of Armenia, whom he attempted to put on the Armenian throne: Dio 37.6.4; cf. 36.51; App., *Mith.* 104. For marriages between the daughters of local dynasts and the Arsacid kings, see Hartmann and Huber 2006, especially 502.
 41. Hostageship of Tigranes: Just. 38.3.1; cf. Sachs and Hunger 1996, no. –95 C 'obv.' 5'–7'; no. –95 C 'rev.' 12'; no. –95 D 'obv.' 11' (=p. 418–423). Kamnaškiri: see the arguments in Shayegan 2003, 94; 2011, 77–94. Artabazos of Characene: see Lucian, *Macr.* 16; Schuol 2000, 310–312, with Shayegan 2011, 92.
 42. Antiochus' campaign and initial success: Just. 38.10.5–6; Joseph., *AJ* 13.250–252; *BJ* 1.50, 1.62; Poseidonius, *BNJ* 87 F 9a = Ath. 540b–c; Val. Max. 9.1.ext.4; Oros. 5.10.8. For the Parthian struggle against eastern invaders at this point, see Dąbrowa 2011a, 19–20; Ehling 2008, 203, n. 743; Olbrycht 1998, 85–88.
 43. Diod. 34/35.15; App., *Syr.* 68; cf. Green 1990, 536.
 44. Just. 38.10.7: *ut eo pacto Antiochus ad sua tuenda a Parthia revocaretur*; cf. App., *Syr.* 68; Euseb., *Chron.* 117.1–124.5 [Karst] = Porphyry, *BNJ* 260 F 32 = *FrGH* 260 F 32.19.

45. It was probably fear of this tactic that had prompted Antiochus to demand Demetrius' return: see Debevoise 1938, 31.
46. Death of Antiochus VII: Just. 38.10.10; Diod. 34/35.16–17; Joseph., *AJ* 13.253 (death in battle); App., *Syr.* 68; Ael., *NA* 10.34 (suicide after defeat); cf. Poseidonius, *BNJ* 87 F 11. Capture of Antiochus' daughter: Just. 38.10.10. Capture of a son named Seleucus: Euseb., *Chron.* 117.1–124.5 [Karst] = Porphyry, *BNJ* 260 F 32 = *FrGH* 260 F 32.19–20; for discussion, see Shayegan 2003, 94–96. Failed attempt to recapture Demetrius: Just. 38.10.11.
47. Dürr 1979, 8; Green 1990, 536–537; Ehling 2008, 206–207, with n. 777 for further literature.
48. Just. 39.1.3: *execrantes superbiam regis, quae conversatione Parthicae crudelitatis intolerabilis facta erat*.
49. Grammatically speaking, one would expect a subjunctive verb in the relative clause if the claim were part of the speaker's original statement, whereas *facta erat* is indicative. But this may be an overly subtle reading of a text that has been substantially reworked from the original, and at any rate the two possibilities are not mutually exclusive. On Justin's relationship to Trogus, see the introduction in Yardley and Heckl 1997, especially 15–19.
50. The name survives only in Armenian sources: Euseb., *Chron.* 117.1–124.5 [Karst] = Porphyry, *BNJ* 260 F 32 = *FrGH* 260 F 32.16; Moses Khorenats'i 2.2 (=Thomson 1978, 131–132). On Moses' misreporting of the name as Siripindēs (“with bound feet”) see Thomson 1978, 132, n. 8.
51. For the Aramaic derivation, see Kosmin 2014, 173; for the Greek, see Toye 2015. Another case of a possible Aramaic nickname for a Seleucid king is Alexander Balas, whose epithet “Zabinas” is Aramaic for “The Bought One” – a likely Antiochene reference to their “purchase” of Alexander from Ptolemy Physcon. See Bevan 1902, 2.249; Green 1990, 540.
52. Diod. 34/35.18; Just. 42.1.1–5.
53. Just. 39.1.2; Euseb., *Chron.* 117.1–124.5 [Karst] = Porphyry, *BNJ* 260 F 32 = *FrGH* 260 F 32.21; cf. Ehling 2008, 208–209.
54. Cleopatra Thea's jealousy and murder of Demetrius: App., *Syr.* 68; Liv., *Per.* 60.11; but cf. Just. 39.1.8; Joseph., *AJ* 13.268; Euseb., *Chron.* 117.1–124.5 [Karst] = Porphyry, *BNJ* 260 F 32 = *FrGH* 260 F 32.21.
55. On the Euphrates boundary, see Edwell 2013. On the role of Armenia, see Wolski 1983a; Wheeler 2002, 287.
56. Tac., *Ann.* 6.31.1; Joseph., *AJ* 18.96; Dio 58.26.1. Cf. Philost., *Vit. Apoll.* 2.2, who mentions an Armenian king named Arsaces. On possible mentions of this campaign in later sources, see Wiesehöfer 1986, 179–180. This Artabanus used to be reckoned the third of his name but is now generally acknowledged as the second: see Fowler 2005, 125, n. 1.
57. Dio 58.26.1: ὑπερφηανώτερον καὶ τοῖς Πάρθοις ἐχρήτο.
58. The first Arsacid to return from Rome was Vonones in c. 8 CE: see *Mon. Anc.* 33; Joseph., *AJ* 18.46; Tac., *Ann.* 2.2.1.
59. Tac., *Ann.* 6.31–2; Dio 58.26.2. On Tiridates' youth, cf. Tac., *Ann.* 6.43.3. If Tiridates had been part of Phraates IV's hostage submission between 19 and 10 BCE, he could hardly qualify as young in 35/36 CE, even in the reckoning of a political enemy like Hiero. The inclusion of Arsacid women in Phraates IV's submission (Strab. 16.1.28) further supports the idea that he was born at Rome.
60. Tac., *Ann.* 6.36–37; Debevoise 1938, 158–160; Ziegler 1964, 60–62. On Vitellius' use of the language of paternalism, see Allen 2006, 136.
61. Tac., *Ann.* 6.44; Dio 58.26.3. Tiridates then disappears from the historical record.
62. Tac., *Ann.* 6.43.3.
63. Namely, the critique of the Principate through a Parthian mouthpiece. On the literary aspects of Tacitus' Parthian digressions, see Keitel 1978; Martin 1981, 179–180; Gowing 1990; Malloch 2013, 114–175; Clark 2011.
64. Tac., *Ann.* 6.32.1: *destinata retinens, consiliis et astu res externas moliri, arma procul habere*. Cf. *Ann.* 2.26.3. On Tiberius' non-expansionism in general, see Levick 1976, 142–144; Seager 2005, 147–150.

65. Joseph., *AJ* 18.96, 101–105; Suet., *Calig.* 14.3; *Vit.* 2.4; Dio 59.27.2–3; Debevoise 1938, 162–163; Bivar 1983, 73–74; Allen 2006, 117–118. Contradictions in the sources make it difficult to date this conference precisely, and it is unclear whether Tiberius or Caligula was emperor when it took place: see Täubler 1904, 33–40; Garzetti 1956.
66. On the Parthian nobility and their representation in the Greco-Roman literary sources, see Hauser 2005, 185–199; Dąbrowa 2013. Evidence for the nobility in the Sasanian period might shed some light on how the Parthian nobility was structured: see Lukonin 1983, 698–699; Hauser 2005, 193–194.
67. Instances of Arsacid dynastic strife: Orodes II: Dio 39.56.2; cf. Just. 42.4.1–4. Phraates IV: Plut., *Crass.* 33.5; *Ant.* 37.1; Dio 49.23.3–4; Just. 42.4.16, 42.5.1–2. Artabanus II: Tac., *Ann.* 6.31.2. Gotarzes II: Tac., *Ann.* 11.8.2, 12.10.1. On the hostility of the nobility to Arsacid kin-slaying, see, e.g. Just. 42.5.2, where the nobility becomes angry at Phraates IV for this reason. Cf. Dąbrowa 1983, 75; Ehrhardt 1998, 298; Bigwood 2004, 45–46.
68. Orodes II, for example, is supposed to have had 30 sons among his various concubines: Justin 42.4.14. On royal polygamy, cf. Scheidel 2009, 272–295.
69. Strab. 16.1.28 (but cf. 6.4.2 and n. 74 below); Joseph., *AJ* 18.42; Tac., *Ann.* 2.1.2; cf. Taylor 1936, 162; Ziegler 1964, 51–52; Nedergaard 1988, 107. Josephus assigns the initiative to Phraates' Italian wife Thea Musa and her desire to secure the succession for her son, Phraataces. But Musa's agency and that of Phraates IV need not be mutually exclusive. On Musa, see further Bigwood 2004; Strugnell 2008; Hartmann and Huber 2006, especially 495.
70. See esp. Vell. Pat. 2.94.4. In contrast to his other assessment of the event, Strab. 6.4.2 attributes Phraates' hostage submission to Parthian subservience; see further Allen 2006, 146–147 on this inconsistency. On the date, see the discussion in Rose 2005, 36–38.
71. Cf. Wiesehöfer 2010, 187. On Augustus' account of Phraates' hostage submission, see Lerouge 2007, 105–115.
72. Joseph., *AJ* 18.96. For the date and problems with the source tradition, see the literature cited above, n. 65.
73. The identity of this rival is unclear due to textual uncertainties in Tac., *Ann.* 13.7.2, but most identify him as an unnamed son of the earlier Arsacid king Vardanes: see Kahrstedt 1950, 23, and n. 23; Sinisi 2012, 16; Wiesehöfer 2015, 338; Schottky 1991, 117.
74. Tac., *Ann.* 13.9.1: *quo bellum ex commodo pararet, an ut aemulationis suspectos per nomen obsidum amoveret*. On the date of this hostage submission, see Wheeler 1997, 385.
75. Cf. Heil 1997, 79.
76. Gilmartin 1973, 588–589; Dąbrowa 1983, 137; Wheeler 1997, 385.
77. Augustus returned Phraates IV's young son at the king's request: Dio 53.33.2; Just. 42.5.9. Embassies from the nobility for the return of Vonones: *Mon. Anc.* 33; Joseph., *AJ* 18.46; Tac., *Ann.* 2.2.1. Phraates: Tac., *Ann.* 6.31.2; Dio 58.26.2. Tiridates: Tac., *Ann.* 6.32.2–3; Dio 58.26.2. Meherdates: Tac., *Ann.* 11.10.4, 12.10–11.
78. For Meherdates' contest with Gotarzes, see Debevoise 1938, 172–174; Schippmann 1980, 53–54; Olbrycht 1997, 94–95; Malloch 2011, 114–131; Braund 2015, 130.
79. Suet., *Aug.* 43.3–4. These were probably the hostages sent by Phraates IV between 19 and 10 BCE rather than the young son that arrived with Tiridates some ten years earlier: see Wardle 2014, 328–329.
80. Sonnabend 1986, 256–257; Wiesehöfer 2010, 188. For the subdued Parthian on coins, see, e.g. *RIC* 1 (Sutherland and Carson 1984) 62, no. 287; Rose 2005, 23. Poetry: Meyer 1961, 52–53; Wissemann 1982. Art: Zanker 1988, 186–192; Schneider 1986, 18–97; 2007, 61–72.
81. For the use of hostages and prisoners in Roman triumphs, see Beard 2007, 107–142; Östenberg 2009, 128–167; and above, n. 37.
82. Suet., *Calig.* 19.2 may imply that Caligula acted as Darius' charioteer: see Allen 2006, 122. But Dio (59.17.5; cf. *Epit. de Caes.* 3.9) puts Darius walking behind Caligula as though he were spoils,

- which suggests a triumphal procession: Hurley 1993, 74; Barrett 1989, 211; Winterling 2011, 128; but cf. Wardle 1994, 192; Malloch 2001, 211. Seneca (*De Brev. Vit.* 18.5) mentions the Baiae procession, but not Darius' participation.
83. Hurley 1993, 74. Vitellius' pontoon over the Euphrates: Joseph., *AJ* 18.102–103.
84. For the decorations that gave the day its name, see Dio 63.4.1–6.1; Plin., *HN* 33.54; Champlin 2003, 119. Cf. Suet., *Ner.* 13; Tac., *Ann.* 16.23.2.
85. Tac., *Ann.* 15.24.2; Dio 62.22.3; Campbell 1993, 230–231.
86. Dio 63.1.2. Tiridates' retinue included the children of Vologaeses I, his brother Pacorus, and Monobazus, the last of whom was not an Arsacid but the king of Adiabene.
87. Plin., *HN* 6.23. On these hostages as a source for Pliny's research on eastern geography, see Matthews 1989, 40.
88. Dio 63.4.3–5.1.
89. The Golden Day as a loss for Rome: Fest., *Brev.* 20; Wolski 1987, 175. Loss concealed by theatrics: Wheeler 2002, 289; cf. Champlin 2003, 233–234; Braund 2015, 126. See also Heil 1997, 78–80 on Nero's response to the Parthian hostage submission in 55 CE.
90. See Schlude and Rubin in chapter four in this volume, and above, n. 77.

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