



A Reader's Guide To

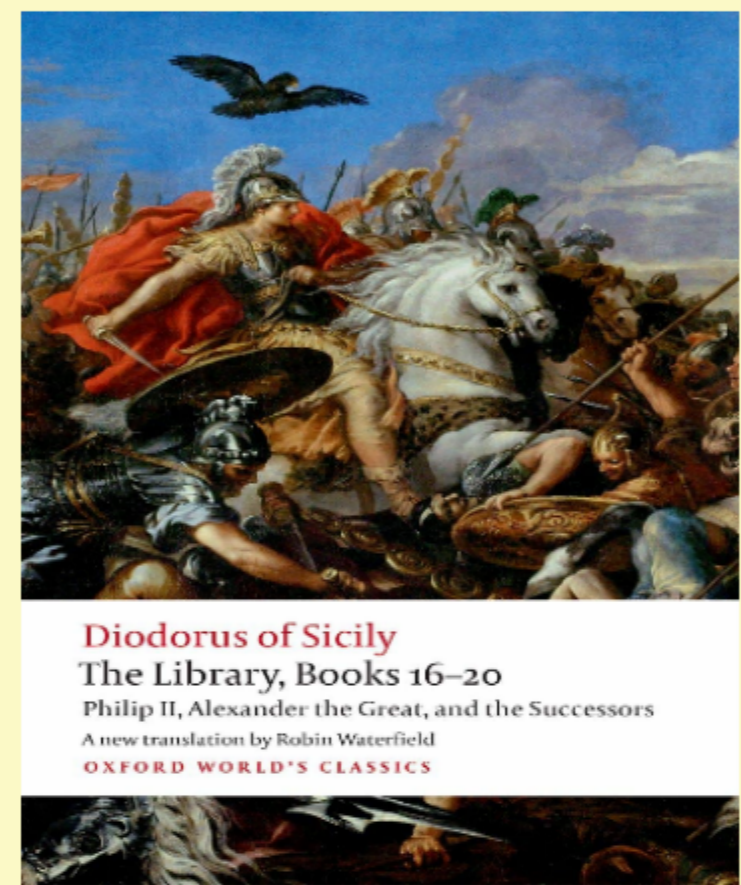
THE SELEUCID EMPIRE

Created by The Hellenistic Age Podcast

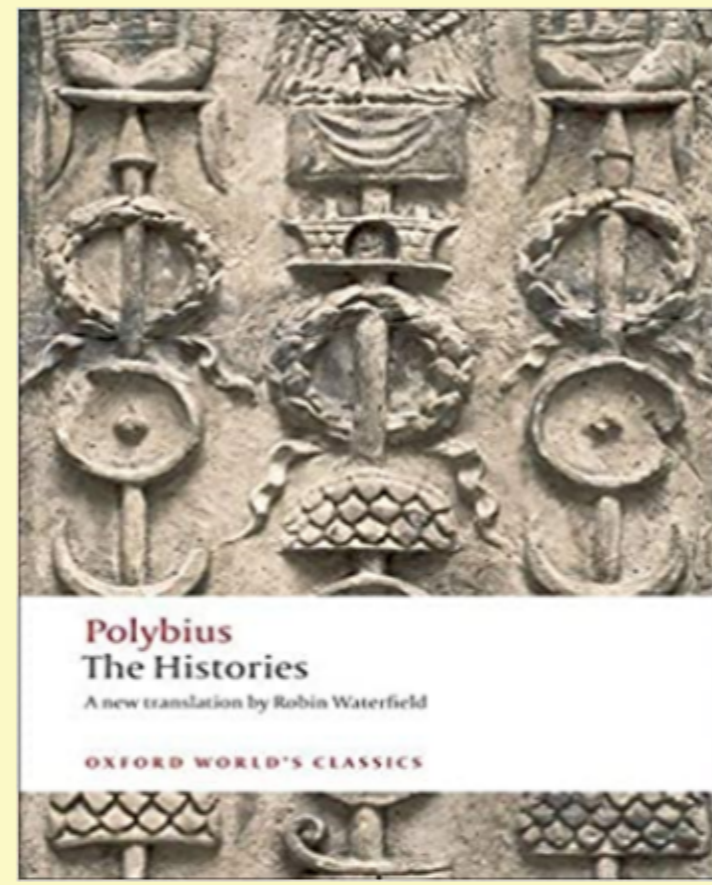


Ruling from the edges of Europe to the Hindu Kush, the Seleucid Empire (323 - 63 BC) was the largest of the Successor Kingdoms following Alexander's death in 323. Below are several works to help you start your journey to learning about the Syrian-based dynasty:

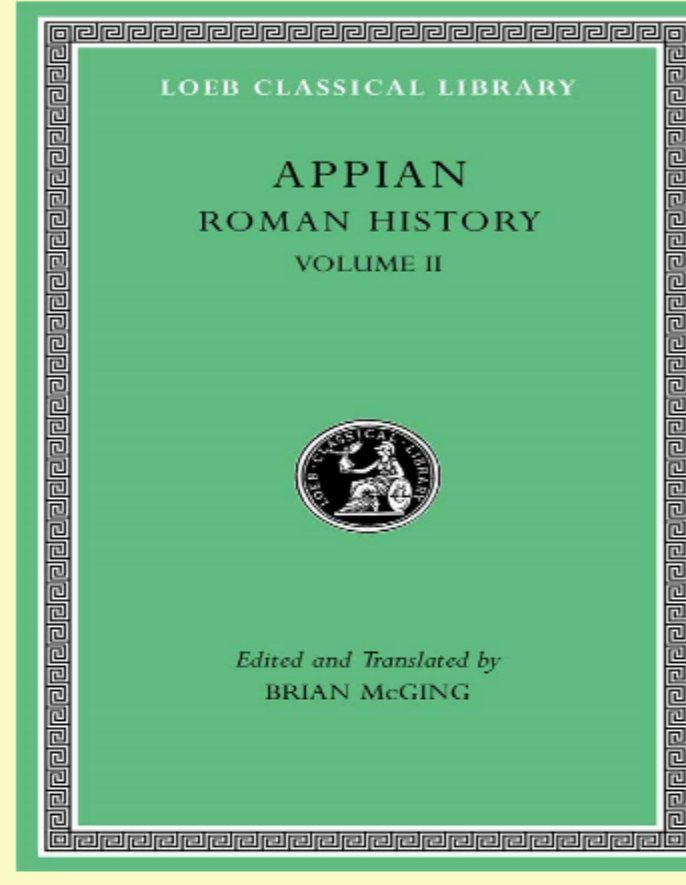
Primary



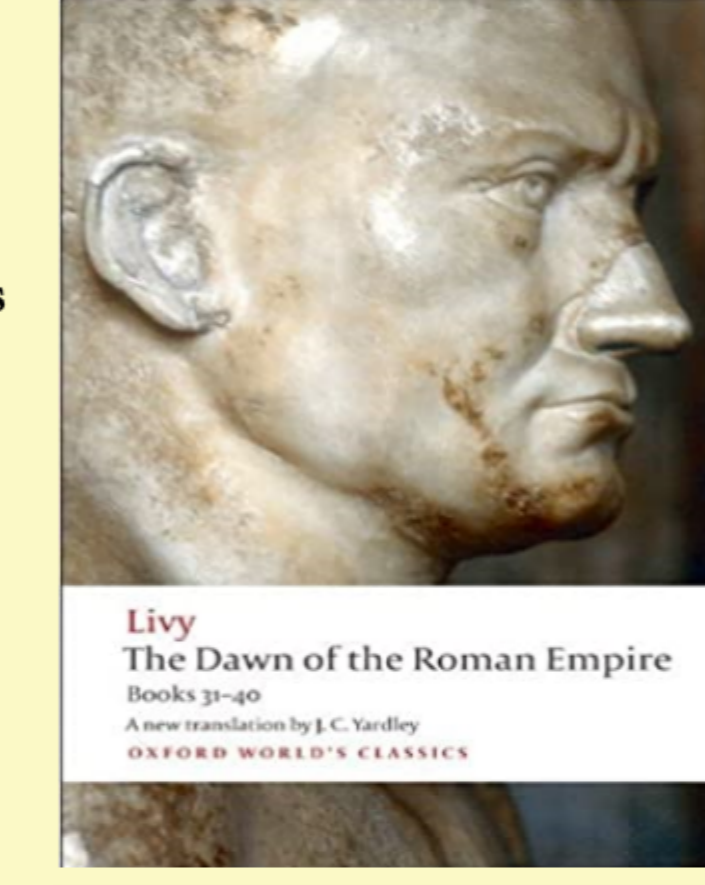
Diodorus Siculus - Library of History (Books 18-20)
Diodorus provides us the only complete narrative of events during the Wars of the Successors from Alexander until the Battle of Ipsus in 301 BC. Often criticized for being only as good as his sources, he nevertheless allows us to see the creation of the empire under Seleucus I Nicator. Oxford World Classics edition recommended.



Polybius - The Histories
One of the prominent historians of all antiquity, only books 1-5 are preserved in their entirety, the rest in fragments. We have the detailed account of the early career of Antiochus III, the greatest king after Seleucus I himself, and fragments deal with the Seleucids down to the middle of the 2nd century. No complete collection is published in one volume, but OWC provides 1-6, the rest are in Loeb.



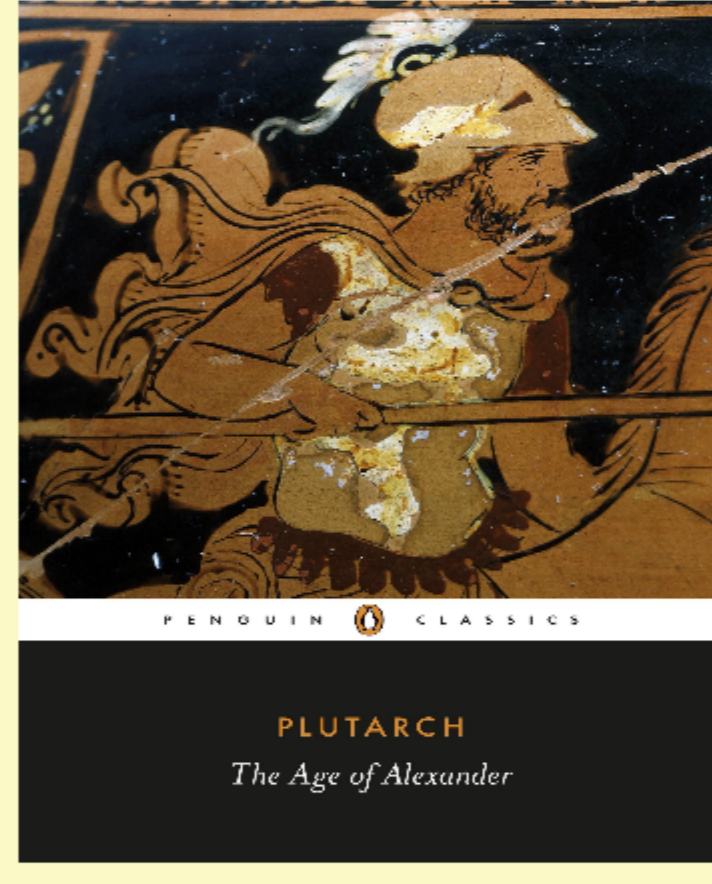
Appian - The Syrian Wars
While Appian focuses mainly on the conflict between Antiochus III and Rome, he also gives us one of the only "complete" histories of the Seleucid dynasty, though rather terse and summary in detail. Available through Loeb under "Roman History II".



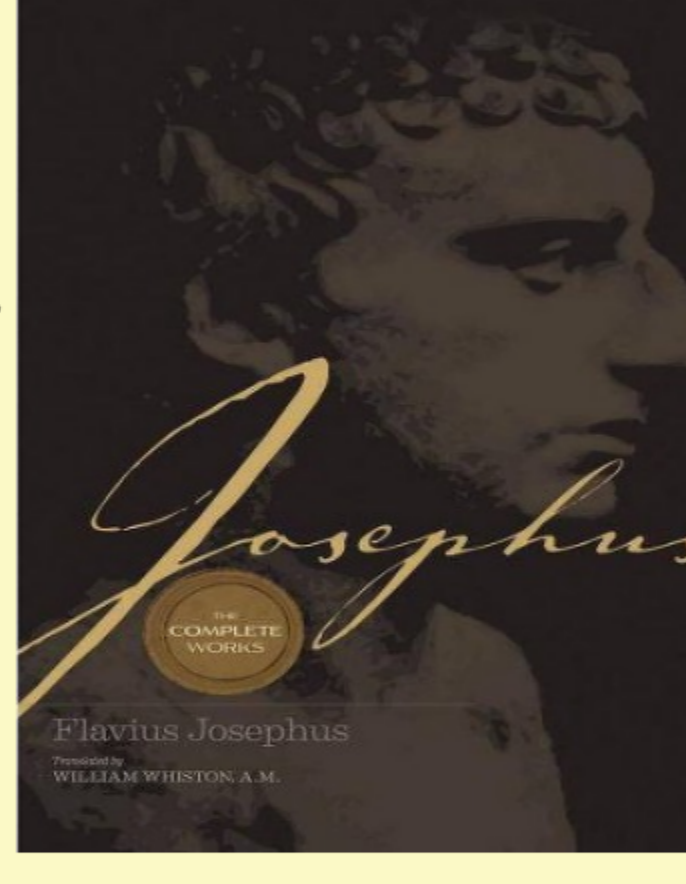
Livy - The History of Rome (Books 31-45)
A Roman historian of the 1st century, Livy picks up where we lose Polybius' work, albeit without the same level of skill (though he does rely extensively on Polybius' work). While not as technically rigorous, Livy covers the Roman war with Antiochus III in great detail, then follows the reign of Antiochus IV until the famous Day of Eleusis in 168 BC.



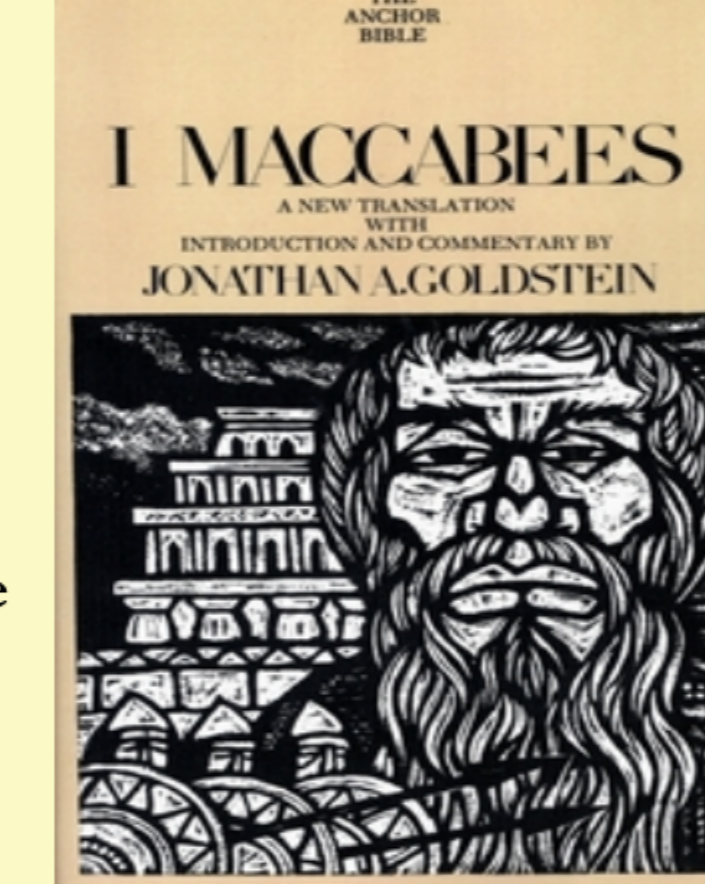
Justin - Epitome of the Philippic Histories
An epitome of an earlier work, Justin also gives a total history of the Seleucids, including events in Parthia and Bactria. His wide scope is also tempered by a narrative that toes the line between historical account and soap opera. A low-cost one volume edition is available via Sophron publishing, while a more rigorous multivolume translation by JC Yardley is also available.



Plutarch - Lives of the Greeks and Romans
A moralist and biographer, Plutarch does not dedicate any of his "Lives" to the Seleucids. However, the lives of Demetrius, Eumenes, Pyrrhus, Titus Flaminus, Lucullus, and Pompey all deal with the Seleucids to some extent or another. The editions by Penguin Classics are quite good.



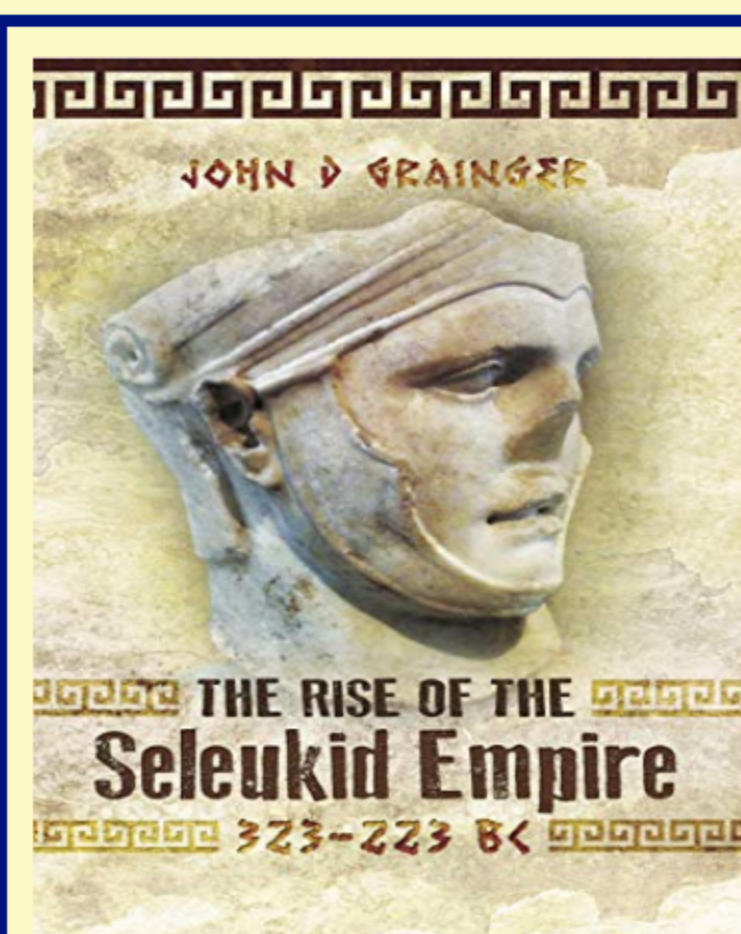
Josephus - The Antiquities of the Jews
Though more well known for his account of the Roman-Jewish War, Josephus composed a history of Jerusalem and the surrounding region, providing us great insight on Seleucid rule in the Levant. Despite its (understandably) pro-Jewish slant, we are able to reconstruct much of the events from the Maccabean Revolt until the end of Seleucid rule. A complete yet reasonably priced collection of his works is available through Thomas Nelson publishing.



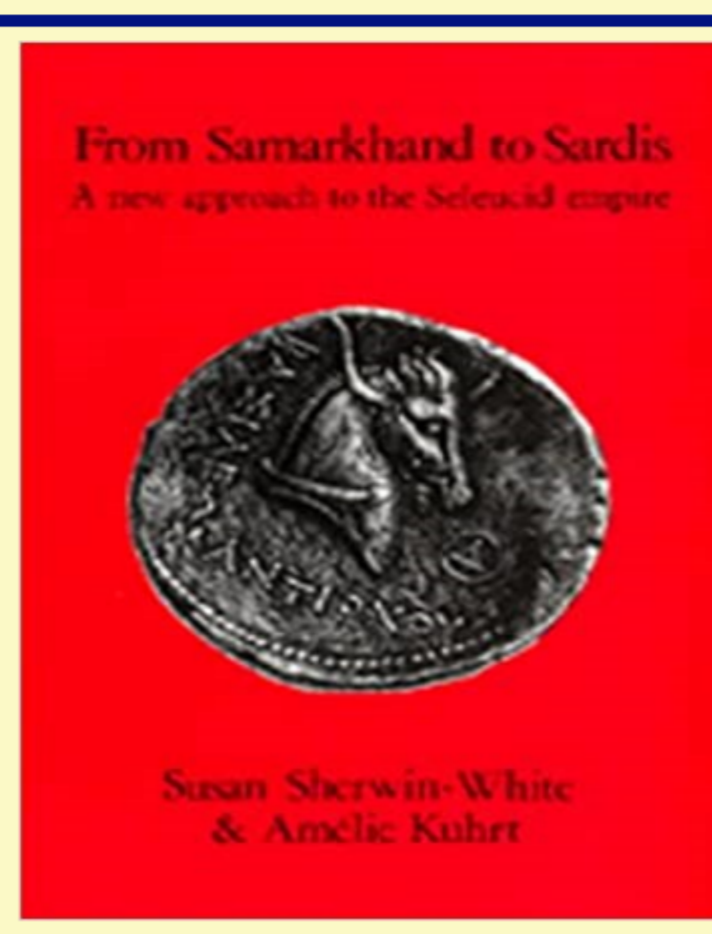
1 & 2 Maccabees
Biblical texts that need to be taken with great caution, these works primarily focus on the famous Maccabean Revolt, led by the Hasmoneans against Antiochus IV Epiphanes and his subordinates, down to the time of John Hyrcanus and an independent Judea. The author of 1 Maccabees is more even-handed, the author of 2 Maccabees fully demonizes the Seleucids as religious and cultural oppressors.

Secondary

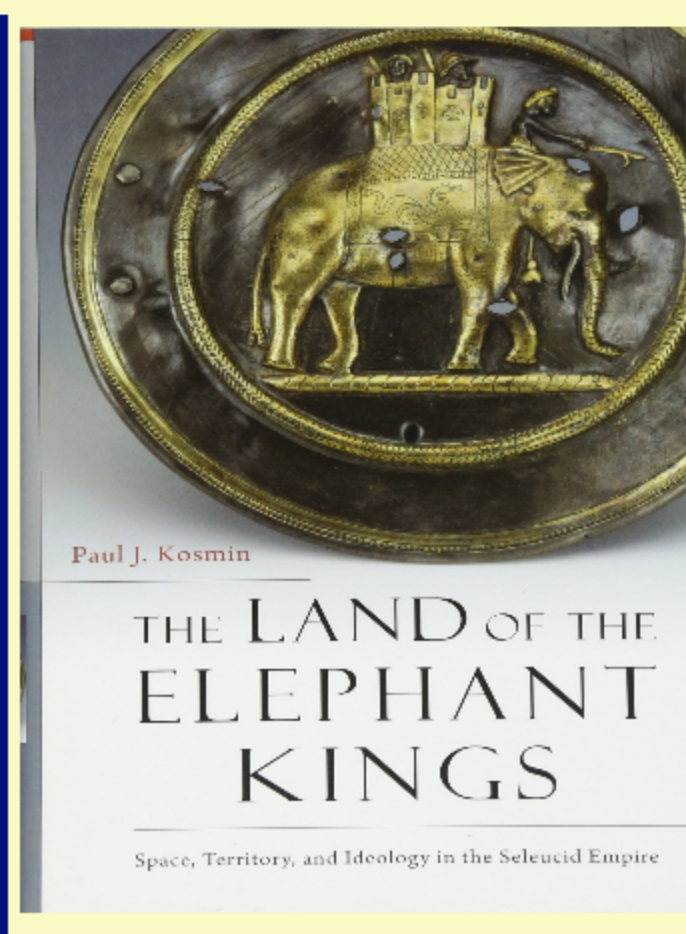
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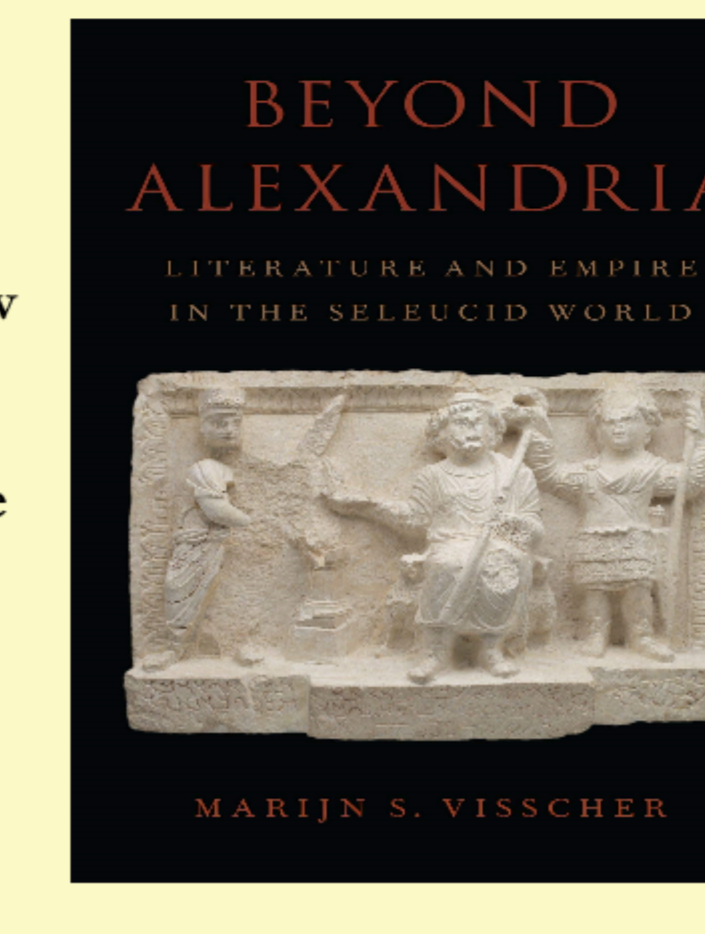
The Seleucid Empire Trilogy - J.D. Grainger
The only recent narrative history, Grainger covers the rise & fall of the Seleucid dynasty across three books. Somewhat dry at times, it nevertheless provides a clear and concise recounting of events from the death of Alexander in 323 to Pompey's abolishment of the kingdom in 63 BC.



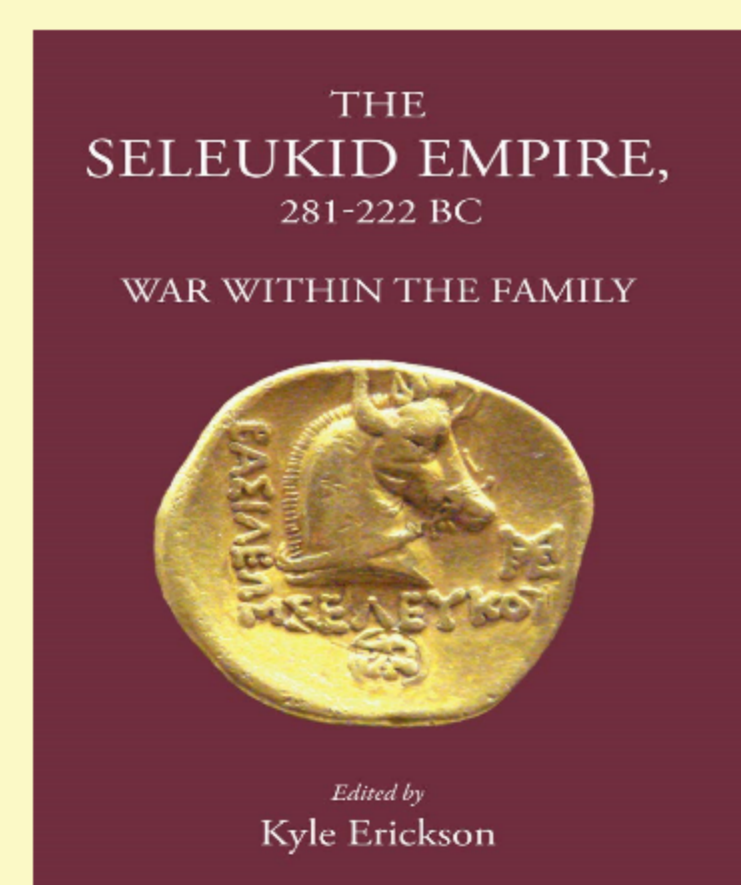
From Samarkand to Sardis - S. Sherwin-White and A. Kuhrt
A well-rounded look at the Seleucid Empire & its inner workings, the authors dispel the notion of the Seleucids as cultural oppressors & as the "sick man" of the Hellenistic period. Of special focus is the role of Seleucid rulers in relation to the traditions of the Ancient Near East, showing their willingness to adopt & patronize the customs of those like the Babylonians or Persians.



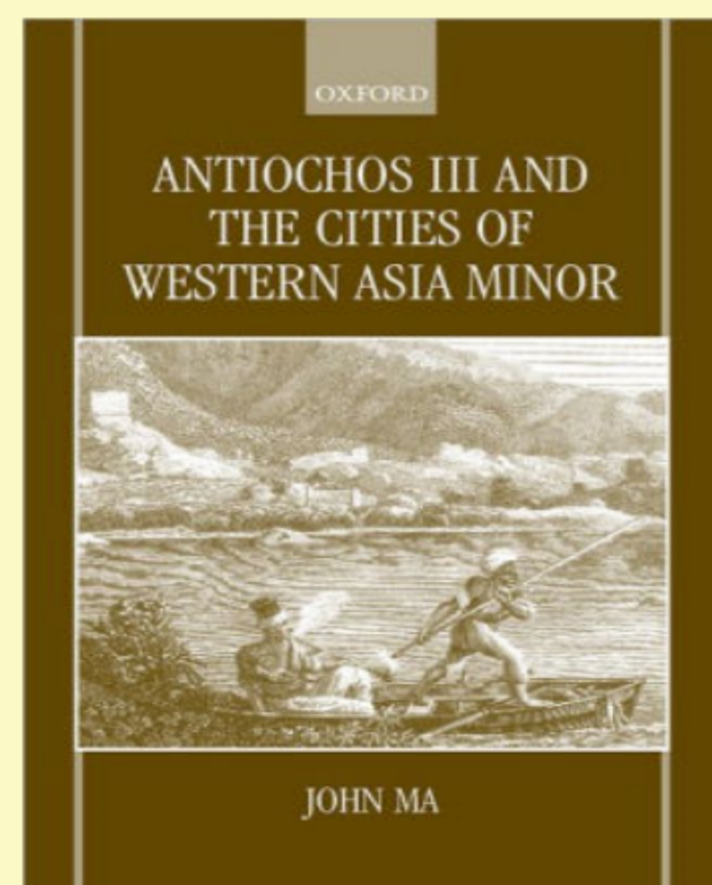
The Land of the Elephant Kings - P.J. Kosmin
In a well-written and fresh take, Kosmin focuses on the geography of the empire, & how Seleucid rulers interacted with and moved through their domains. Topics such as the transformation of Syria & Mesopotamia, & the creation of a "Seleucid world view" are stand-out elements.



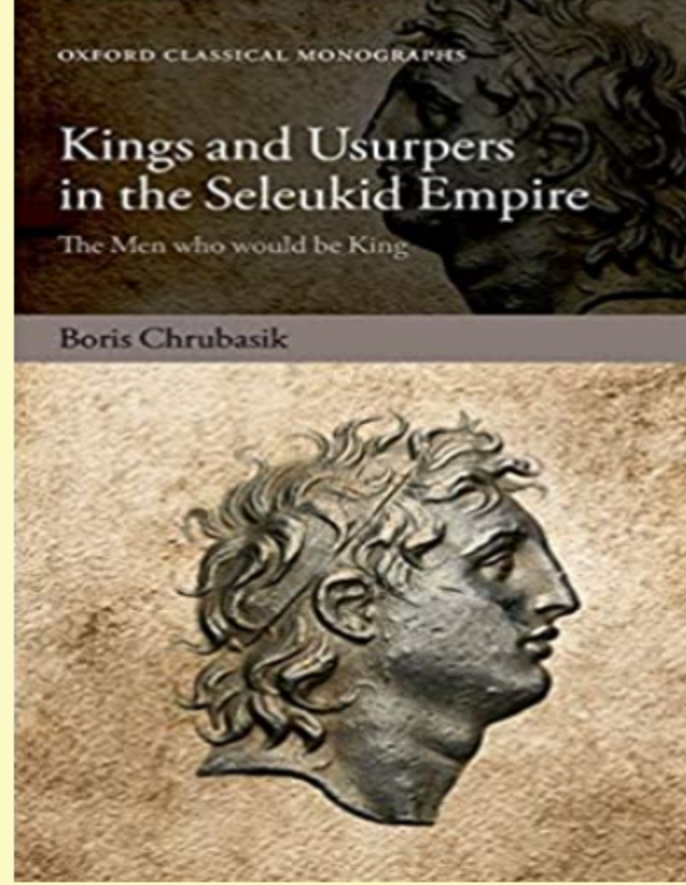
Beyond Alexandria: Literature & Empire in the Seleucid Empire - M.S. Visscher
While the Ptolemies cultivated Alexandria as the intellectual & cultural capital of the Hellenistic world, the Seleucids were also notable patrons of artists & scholars. From Megasthenes' Indica to Berossus' Babylonia, Visscher discusses the importance of intellectual patronage for the image of Seleucid kings, & how their influence is felt today.



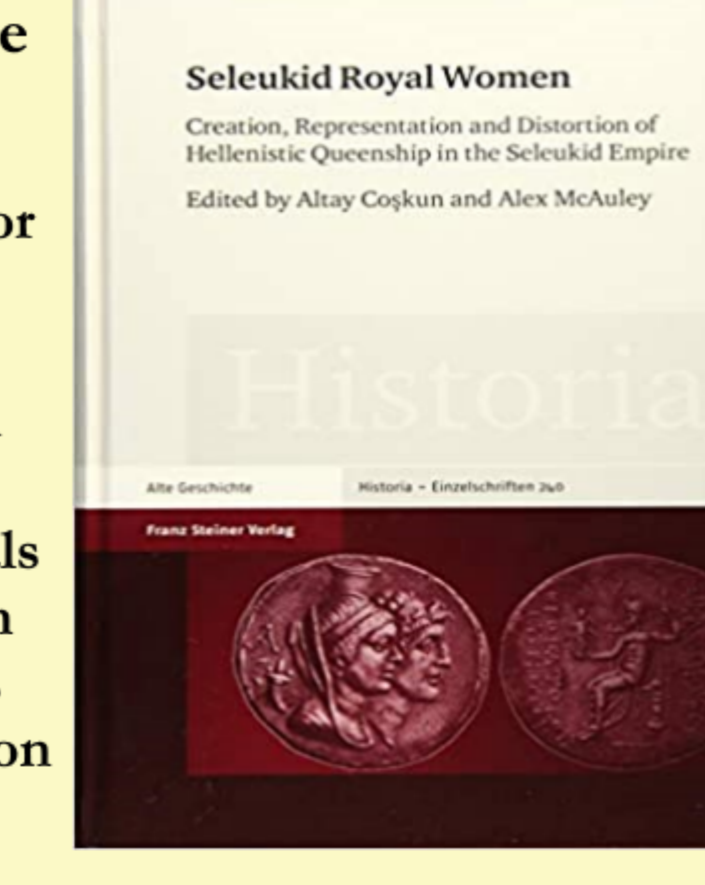
The Seleucid Empire, 281-222 BC: War Within The Family - K. Erickson (editor)
A series of essays focusing on themes & topics relating to the Seleucids during the 3rd century BC, a notoriously challenging period to reconstruct for the Hellenistic Age in general.



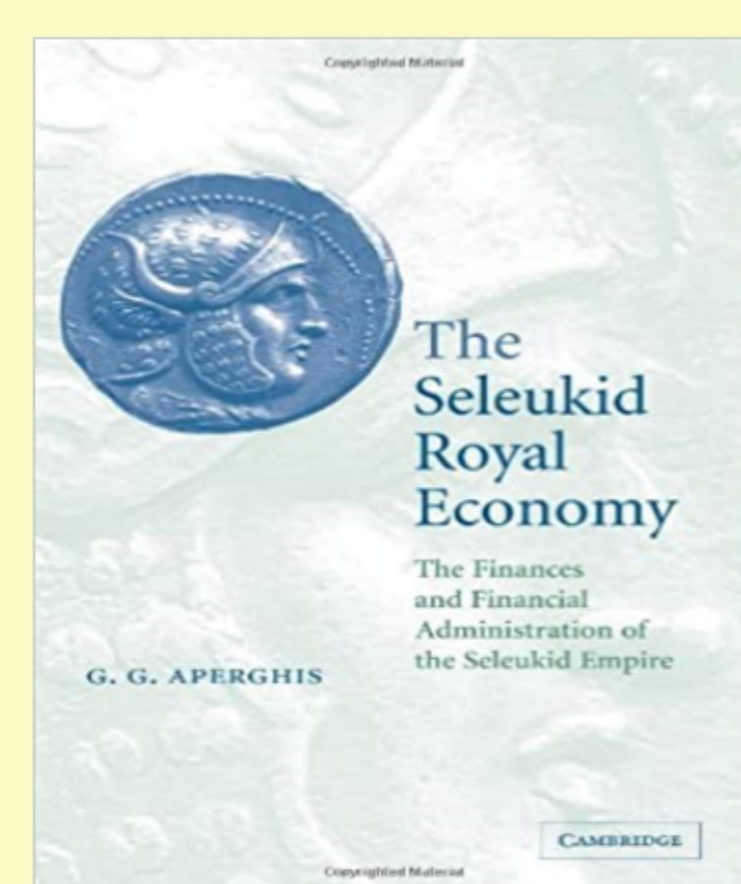
Antiochos III & The Cities of Western Asia Minor - J. Ma
The relationship between King & City, especially the Greek polis, forms the main body of this work. Ma points out the transactional and collaborative nature of Seleucid rule, showing how cities continued to have autonomy in the age of autocrats and monarchies.



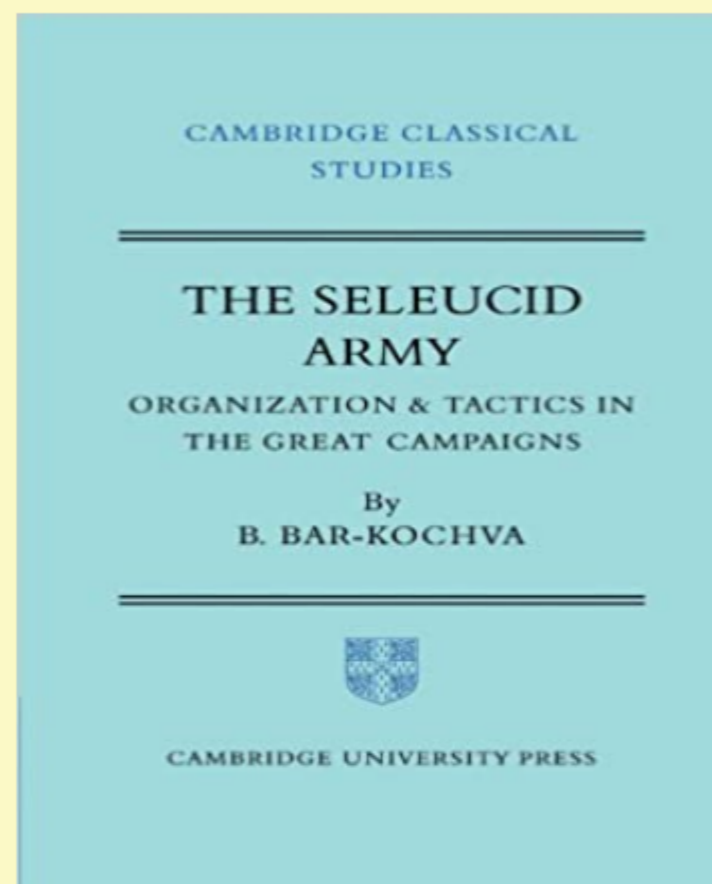
Kings & Usurpers in the Seleucid Empire - B. Chrusbasik
The Seleucid Empire is somewhat notorious for civil war & rebellious governors, leading some to call it a "fragile giant". Chrusbasik challenges this view, differentiating between a usurper versus a rebel, & argues that the Seleucids were comfortable with giving officials or "local power holders" greater autonomy in return for security and control, those such as the Diodotids in Bactria or Attalids in Pergamon.



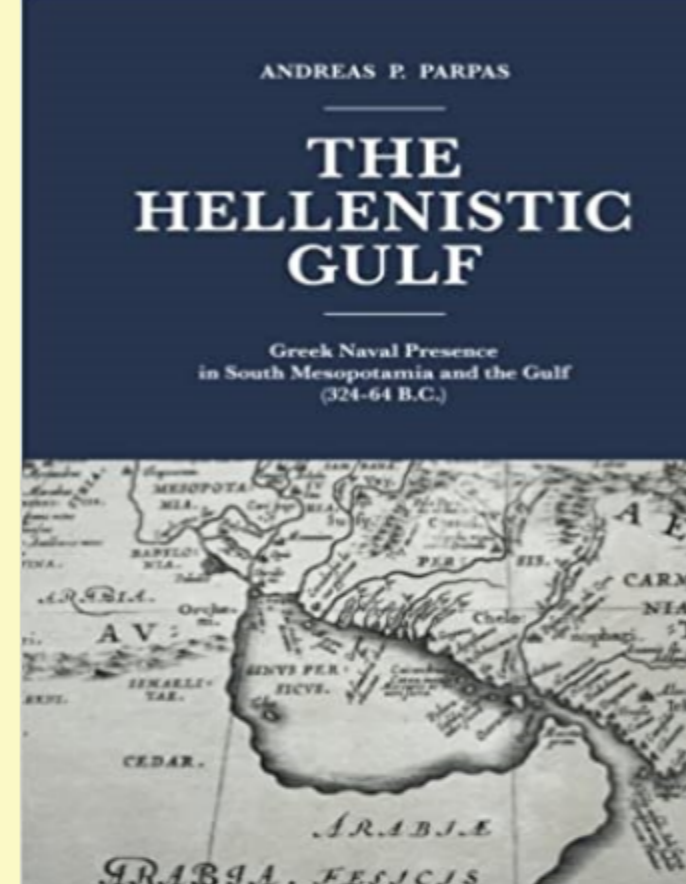
Seleucid Royal Women - A. Coskun & A. McAuley (editors)
While Ptolemaic queens like Cleopatra VII or Arsinoe II are rather well-known, their Seleucid counterparts are not as represented in the sources. This collection of essays attempts to reconstruct our understanding of the role of royal women within the Seleucid household.



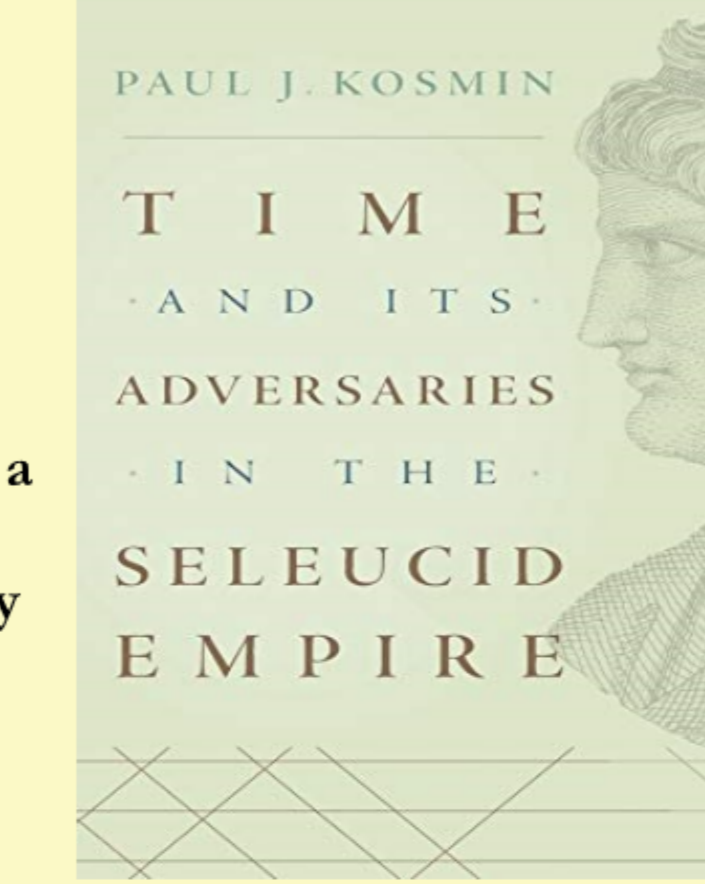
The Seleucid Royal Economy - G.G. Aperghis
Controlling a vast stretch of territory & some of the most productive regions in the world, the Seleucid Empire was a very wealthy state, though one plagued by financial issues. This book provides a comprehensive look at the Seleucid economy, ranging from agricultural production & demographics to the revenues & expenditures of the government.



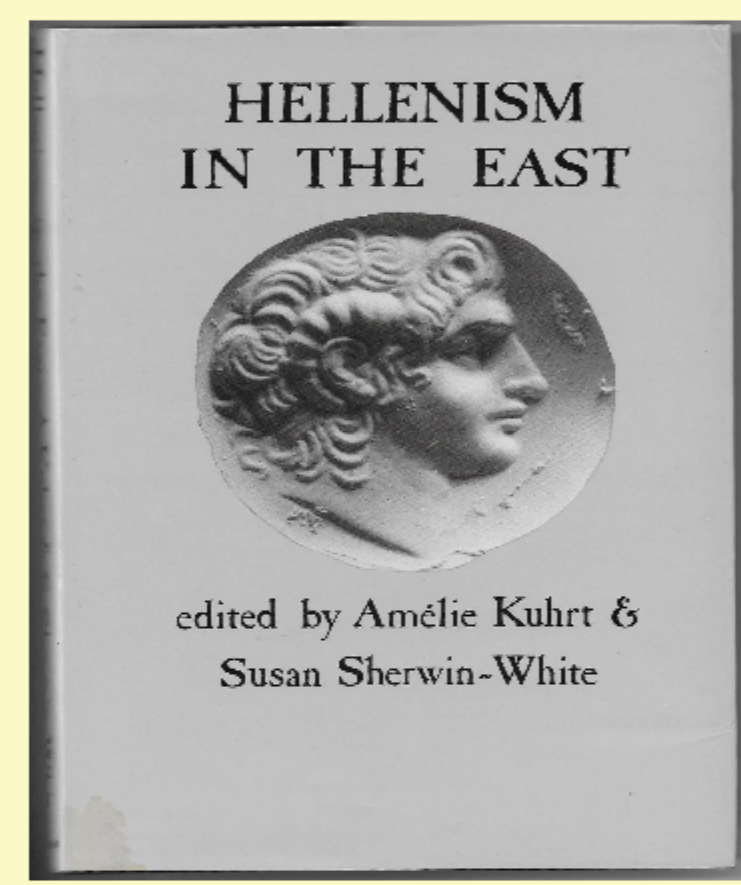
The Seleucid Army: Organization & Tactics in the Great Campaigns - B. Bar-Kochva
A classic survey on the composition & performance of the Seleucid military. His views on the ethnic makeup have been challenged, but it nevertheless remains an essential work for anyone interested in warfare during the Hellenistic period.



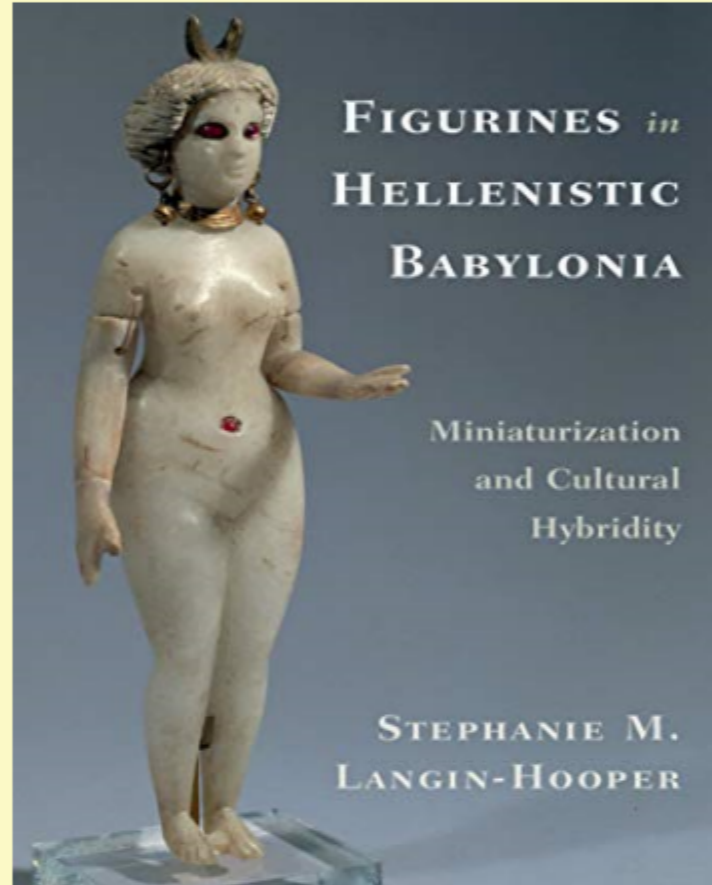
The Hellenistic Gulf - A.P. Parpas
Though not particularly well-known as a seafaring power, the Seleucids maintained an active naval network from the coast of East Arabia through the Persian Gulf & the waterways of Southern Iraq & Iran. Provides a survey of the region, giving insights on the Seleucid policies to maintain their hegemony over the Gulf.



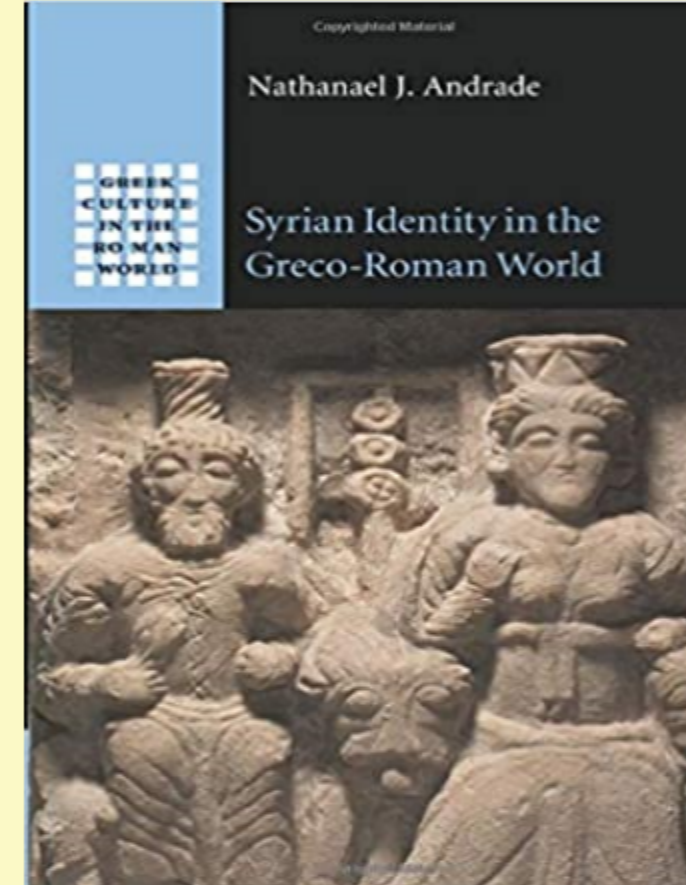
Time & Its Adversaries In The Seleucid Empire - P.J. Kosmin
A look at the Seleucid ideology from the perspective of time, this focuses on the creation of the Seleucid Era: a remarkable continuous dating system where 312/311 (the year of Seleucus I's return to Babylon) is "Year 0", & continues linearly thereafter. This system's influence can be found in the Christian Anno Domini, or the Islamic Hijra, & is used as far as China in the 14th century.



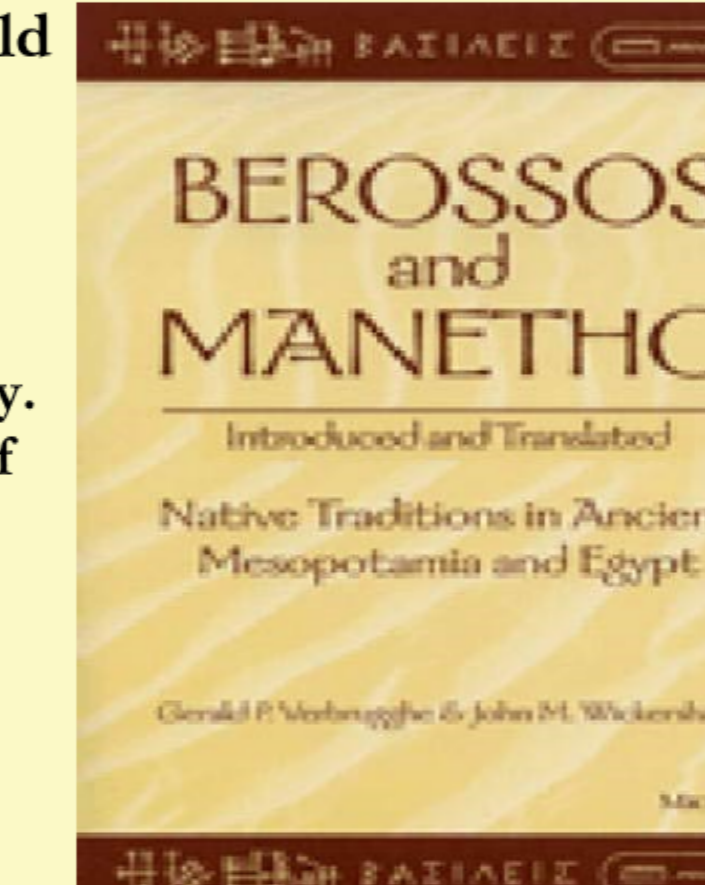
Hellenism in the East - A. Kuhrt & S. Sherwin-White
A series of essays focusing on various topics involving Seleucid rule from the Near East to Central Asia.



Figurines in Hellenistic Babylonia: Miniaturization & Cultural Hybridity - S.M. Langin-Hooper
A study on the nature of cultural exchange & "Hellenization", expressed through Langin's work on small figurines from Seleucid Babylonia. An interesting analysis on how cultural motifs can be shared in multiple directions, but also the question of how individuals expressed themselves in spite of labels like "Greek" or "Babylonian".

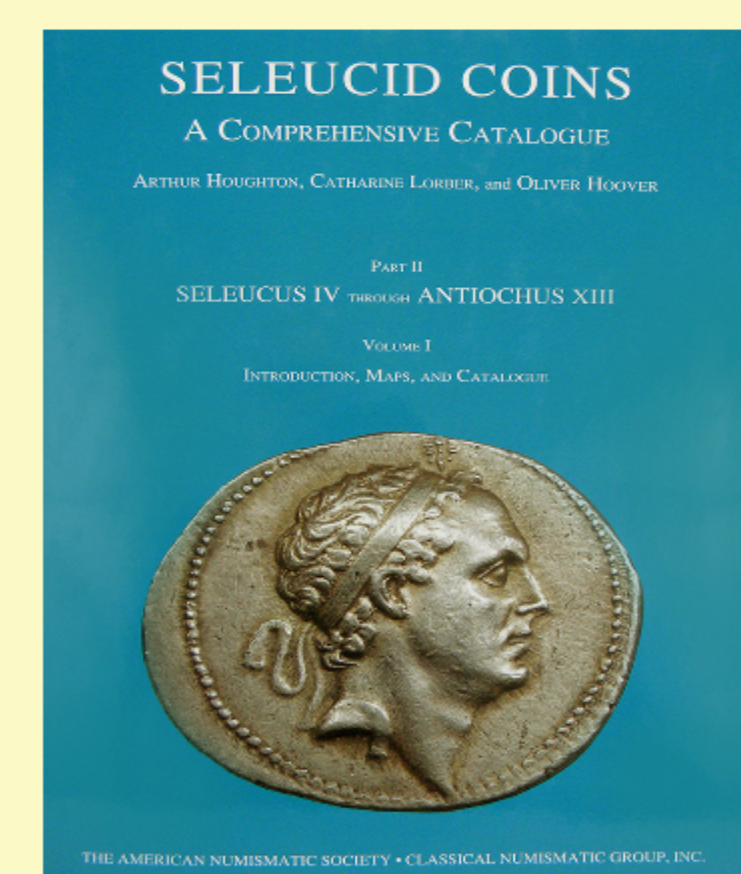


Syrian Identity in the Greco-Roman World - N.J. Andrade
Syria became a center of intensive activity during Greek rule, as it became the imperial heartland for the Seleucid dynasty. This work attempts to look at the response of the native Syrians to the arrival of Greek culture during the Hellenistic & Roman periods.

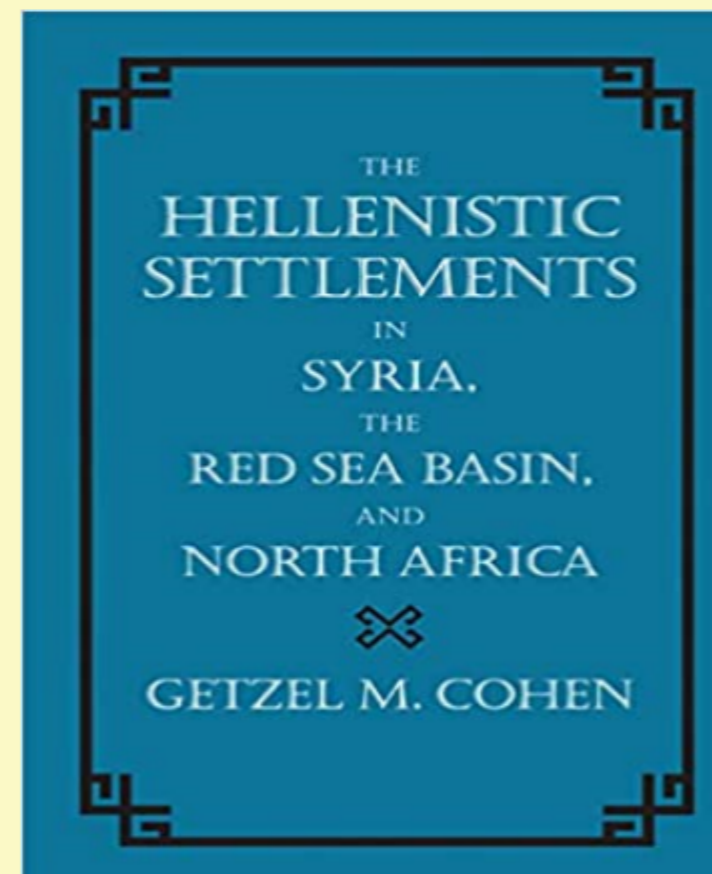


Berossos & Manetho, Introduced & Translated - G.P. Verbrugghe & J.M. Wickersham
Blending scholarly analysis & compilation/translation of fragments, this work deals with two contemporary non-Greek authors during the late 4th/early 3rd centuries. Berossos, a Babylonian priest serving under the patronage of the Seleucid court & author of the "Babylonia", demonstrates the continuity of & pride for Mesopotamian culture that continued to flourish well into Greek rule.

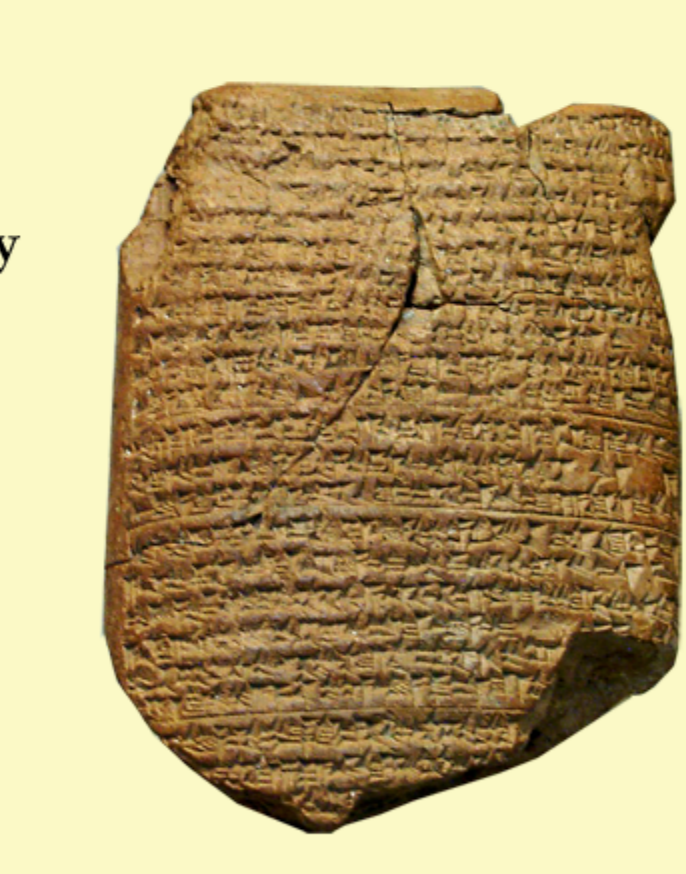
Miscellaneous/Reference



Seleucid Coins: A Comprehensive Catalogue - A. Houghton, C. Lorber, D. Hoover
A two-volume set that serves as the ultimate compendium of materials relating to the coins minted by the Seleucids.



The Hellenistic Settlements (Series) - G. M. Cohen
A series curating a list and description of every Hellenistic settlement, providing brief histories & an index of sources and papers. As the most prolific of city founders, the Seleucid settlements make frequent appearances.



The Babylonian Chronicles
The records of Babylonian priests, who documented major events in each year. While fragmented, the chronicles give a uniquely non Greco-Roman account contemporary to the events as they happened. Translations are freely available on Livius.org

