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0521837073 - The Seleukid Royal Economy: The Finances and Financial Administration of the Seleukid Empire

G. G. Aperghis

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THE SELEUKID ROYAL ECONOMY

The Seleukid empire, the principal successor-state of the empire of Alexander the Great, endured for over two hundred years and stretched, at its peak, from the Mediterranean to the borders of India. This book provides a wide-ranging study of the empire's economy and the methods used by the Seleukid kings to monetize and manage it so as to extract tribute, rent and taxes as efficiently as possible. It uses a variety of Greek literary sources and inscriptions, cuneiform texts and archaeological and numismatic and comparative evidence to explore in detail the manner of exploitation of their lands and subjects by the Seleukid kings, their city-building activity, the financing of their armies and administration, the use they made of coinage and their methods of financial management. The book adopts a highly original numerical approach throughout, which leads to a quantified model of the economy of an ancient state.

MAKIS APERGHIS originally studied engineering at the University of Cambridge. He returned to the study of ancient history and was awarded a doctorate from University College London (2000).

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Contents*

<i>List of figures</i>	<i>page</i> viii
<i>List of tables</i>	ix
<i>Preface</i>	xi
<i>List of abbreviations</i>	xiii
<i>Map. The Hellenistic Near East</i>	xiv

Introduction	I
--------------	---

PART I PRELIMINARIES

1 Sources and methods	7
1. Classical literature	7
2. Ps.-Aristotle's <i>Oikonomika</i> , Book 2	7
3. Greek inscriptions, papyri, parchments and <i>ostraka</i>	8
4. Local language sources	9
5. Archaeology	12
6. Numismatics	16
2 Historical summary	19
3 The posing of a problem	29

PART II THE UNDERLYING ECONOMY

4 Geography and population	35
1. Mesopotamia	36
2. The Upper Satrapies	40
3. Northern Syria and Kilikia	44
4. Asia Minor	46
5. Koile Syria	49
6. A different approach to population	51
7. Total population	56

Cambridge University Press

0521837073 - The Seleukid Royal Economy: The Finances and Financial Administration of the Seleukid Empire

G. G. Aperghis

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

vi

Contents

5	Production and exchange	59
	1. Agriculture	59
	2. Animal husbandry	63
	3. Natural resources	64
	4. Industry	69
	5. Trade	70
	6. Prices	78
6	The granting of land	87
	1. Land ownership	87
	2. The new cities	89
	3. Land grants to individuals	99
	4. The treatment of temples	107
	5. Conclusions on the granting of land	112
PART III THE ROYAL ECONOMY		
7	Ps.-Aristotle's <i>Oikonomika</i> , Book 2	117
	1. Text and translation (Book 2, section 1)	118
	2. Intended audience	129
	3. Date of the work	129
	4. Conclusions on the <i>Oikonomika</i> , Book 2	135
8	Revenue	137
	1. Revenue from land	137
	2. Revenue from natural resources	152
	3. Revenue from market centres	157
	4. Revenue from travel and transport by land and from sales	160
	5. Revenue from animals	163
	6. Revenue from head taxes	164
	7. Case study – Seleukid Judaea	166
	8. Extraordinary revenue	171
	9. Revenue in silver or commodities?	176
	10. Conclusions on revenue	179
9	The handling of surpluses	181
	1. Evidence from the Achaemenid empire	181
	2. Evidence from Hellenistic texts	185
	3. Conclusions on the handling of surpluses	188
10	Expenditure	189
	1. Military expenses	189
	2. Cost of the provincial administration	205
	3. Cost of the king and his court	207

Cambridge University Press

0521837073 - The Seleukid Royal Economy: The Finances and Financial Administration of the Seleukid Empire

G. G. Aperghis

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

<i>Contents</i>		vii
4. Extraordinary expenditure		207
5. Conclusions on expenditure		211
II Coinage		213
1. Mints		214
2. Coinage issues		216
3. Coin categories		218
4. Coinage circulation		226
5. 'Peacetime' and 'Wartime' coinage		236
6. The special issues		243
7. Conclusions on coinage		245
12 A model of the Seleukid economy		247
1. Population		247
2. Royal revenue		248
3. Production		251
4. Royal expenditure and surplus		259
5. Coinage		260
6. Conclusions on the model		262
13 Financial administration		263
1. Achaemenid practice		264
2. The change with Alexander		266
3. The period of the Successors		267
4. Seleukid financial administrators		269
5. The <i>dioikētēs</i> , the <i>oikonomos</i> and the <i>epi tōn prosodōn</i>		269
6. The <i>eklogistēs</i> and the <i>logeutēs</i>		281
7. Other financial officials		284
8. Comparison with Achaemenid practice		289
9. A need to reinterpret some texts		290
10. Antiochos I as financial administrator		293
11. Conclusions on financial administration		294
General conclusions		297
1. The solving of a problem		297
2. The nature of the Seleukid royal economy		298
<i>Appendix 1 Coin hoards lists</i>		304
1. Large silver		304
2. Small silver		307
3. Gold		308
<i>Appendix 2 Documents and translations</i>		310
<i>References</i>		332
<i>Index</i>		350

Cambridge University Press

0521837073 - The Seleukid Royal Economy: The Finances and Financial Administration of the Seleukid Empire

G. G. Aperghis

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Figures*

4.1	Estimated population of the Seleukid empire over time	<i>page 57</i>
5.1	A simple model of local trade using silver as its medium of exchange	71
5.2	Barley prices	79
5.3	Sesame prices	82
5.4	Cardamom/cress prices	83
5.5	Wool prices	83
5.6	Date prices	84
5.7	Mustard prices	85
12.1	Estimated annual revenue of the Seleukid kings	252

Cambridge University Press

0521837073 - The Seleukid Royal Economy: The Finances and Financial Administration of the Seleukid Empire

G. G. Aperghis

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Tables*

4.1	Estimated population of the Seleukid empire by region	<i>page 56</i>
10.1	Seleukid army numbers in major campaigns	191
11.1	Pattern of Seleukid coinage issues	217
11.2	Estimated percentage of large Seleukid silver within the circulation pool	229
11.3	Coin production at eastern mints under Antiochos III and Seleukos IV	240

Cambridge University Press

0521837073 - The Seleukid Royal Economy: The Finances and Financial Administration of the Seleukid Empire

G. G. Aperghis

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Preface

This book is likely to be controversial. It reflects a view on how ancient economic history could be written that is probably not shared by the majority of scholars. It also ventures across a number of disciplines, where those more knowledgeable than I am may well find fault with my methods.

The book is influenced by several factors. It reflects an original training in engineering, where I was taught two things well: mathematics and how to go about analysing a problem from first principles. A career followed in the computer-software business, where I learned that the logical approach of systems analysis can also be put to good use in the field of ancient history. A side benefit is that the ability to actually program a computer certainly gives one greater freedom in exploring problems.

The study of ancient history had occupied me for many years, and when I received formal training, it was at the hands of excellent teachers at University College London. This resulted in a Ph.D. in February 2000 and the dissertation on which this book is based. Amélie Kuhrt, my main supervisor, first interested me in the Seleukids, but it was, more importantly, the influence of her teaching of the history of the ancient Near East that decided me to embark upon a study of the Seleukid empire as, in many ways, a continuation of its predecessors in the region. Amélie painstakingly read and corrected my work and continuously added to my knowledge as I progressed. Michael Crawford, my second supervisor, encouraged me to break away from the trodden path and develop original ideas, but he also controlled my excesses in the many areas of his expertise, whether an incorrect translation of a Greek text or a shaky interpretation of a source or a dubious calculation. I owe a great deal to both of my supervisors and a particular debt to Robert van der Spek for his detailed criticism and many useful suggestions as the book matured into its final form. I would also like to thank several other scholars for having gone to the trouble to read the entire text at various stages in its development and for their

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0521837073 - The Seleukid Royal Economy: The Finances and Financial Administration of the Seleukid Empire

G. G. Aperghis

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xii

Preface

comments, advice and encouragement: Dominic Rathbone, John Davies, Andrew Meadows, Joe Manning and Miltos Hatzopoulos.

Finally, this book has, no doubt, been influenced by the fact that I am Greek, but it is, I hope, an honest attempt to view the Seleukid empire from a distinctly non-Hellenocentric standpoint. Accordingly, I have placed myself very firmly in Asia, in Mesopotamia mostly, where the Greek heartland of the Aegean was as peripheral as Baktria. From such a stance, it is clear how considerable the debt owed by the Seleukid empire was to those that preceded it in the Near East.

On a personal note, I could never have attempted and completed this very enjoyable study of the ancient world without the consideration and support of my wife, Myrto, and children, Dimitris and Atalandi, to whom I dedicate it.

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0521837073 - The Seleukid Royal Economy: The Finances and Financial Administration of the Seleukid Empire

G. G. Aperghis

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Abbreviations*

<i>BE</i>	<i>Bulletin Epigraphique</i> , in <i>Revue des études grecques</i> , cited by year and entry number.
<i>C. Ord. Ptol.</i>	M.-Th. Lenger (1980) <i>Corpus des ordonnances des Ptolémées</i> , 2nd edn. Brussels.
<i>ESM</i>	E. T. Newell (1978) <i>The Coinage of the Eastern Seleucid Mints</i> . New York.
<i>IG</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i> .
<i>IGCH</i>	M. Thompson, O. Mørkholm and C. M. Kraay (eds.) (1973) <i>An Inventory of Greek Coin Hoards</i> . New York.
<i>IGRR</i>	R. Cagnat, J. Toutain and P. Jouguet (eds.) (1927) <i>Inscriptiones Graecae ad res Romanas pertinentes</i> . Paris.
<i>I. Cos</i>	M. Segre (1993) <i>Iscrizioni di Cos</i> , 2 vols. Rome.
<i>I. Labraunda</i>	J. Crampa (1969) <i>The Greek Inscriptions, in Labraunda</i> , vol. III/I. Lund.
<i>I. Priene</i>	F. Hiller von Gaertringen (1906) <i>Die Inschriften von Priene</i> . Berlin.
Loeb	Loeb Classical Library (1988) <i>Oeconomica</i> , included in <i>Aristotle</i> , vol. XVIII. Harvard.
LSJ	H. G. Liddell and R. Scott (1996) <i>A Greek–English Lexicon</i> , 9th edn with a revised supplement. Oxford.
<i>OGIS</i>	W. Dittenberger (1903–5) <i>Orientalis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae</i> , 2 vols. Leipzig.
<i>RC</i>	C. B. Welles (1934) <i>Royal Correspondence in the Hellenistic Period: a Study in Greek Epigraphy</i> . New Haven, Conn.
<i>SEG</i>	<i>Supplementum epigraphicum Graecum</i> (1923–). Leiden.
<i>Syll.</i> ³	W. Dittenberger (1915–24) <i>Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum</i> , 4 vols., 3rd edn. Leipzig.
<i>WSM</i>	Newell, E. T. (1977) <i>The Coinage of the Western Seleucid Mints</i> . New York.



The Hellenistic Near East

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