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ANTIOCHUS OF COMMAGENE

ANTIOCHUS OF COMMAGENE (full title Theos Dikaios Epiphanes Philoromaios Philhellen, Theos signifying his divinity), Seleucid ruler, the son of Mithradates Callinicos and Laodice, the daughter of the Seleucid king Antiochus VIII Grypos , reigned in Commagene from 69 (or, less probably, 64) to ca. 31 B.C. According to the horoscope on the large monument which he set up on Nimrud Dag, his likely date of birth was 16 July 98 B.C. Commagene, a small kingdom in the mountainous region of north Syria, bordering on Cappadocia to the north and Osrhoene to the south, had two strongly fortified cities, Arsameia (founded by Arsames [Aršāma], the founder of the kingdom, on the Nymphaios) and the capital Samosata, dominating the north-south road connection. It is clear from the Nimrud Dag monument that Antiochus claimed Achaemenid descent on his father's side and Seleucid descent on his mother's (W. Dittenberger, ed., *Orientis Graeci inscriptiones selectae*, Leipzig, 1903, repr. Hildesheim, 1960, p. 389; cf. the improved reading of F. Dörner, "Zur Rekonstruktion der Ahnengalerie des Königs Antiochos I. von Kommagene," *Ist. Mitt.* 17, 1967, pp. 195f.). Commagene was a dependency of the Seleucid Kingdom, which probably became independent after the death of Antiochus III in 187. Its situation became difficult when Rome started its Eastern expansion with the wars of Lucullus and Pompey against Mithradates of Pontus and Tigranes of Armenia. When Tigranes extended his rule over northern Syria and Mesopotamia, Antiochus came within his sphere of influence, but in 64 B.C. Pompey made war against him and forced him into an alliance with Rome (Appian *Mithridatius* 106). In his inscription on Nimrud Dag, Antiochus calls himself a friend of the Romans (*philoromaios*), but he was looked upon with

some suspicion by some of Cicero's informants (Cicero *Ad fam*. 15.1,2). His Iranian descent made him gravitate toward Parthia; he had friendly relations with Darius, the king of Media Atropatene, who seems to have assisted him against Pompey (Appian 106). After the Roman defeat at Carrhae in 53, Antiochus remained loyal to the Romans and reported to Cicero who was proconsul of Cilicia in 51, about the movements of the Parthian army under Pacorus (Pākōr), the heir to the throne (Cicero *Ad. fam*. 15.3,1; 4,3), but Antiochus had given his daughter in marriage to Orodes (Hurōd), the father of Pacorus (Dio Cassius 49.23) and ultimately went over to the Parthian side. When the great Parthian invasion of 38 B.C. ended in disaster and Pacorus was slain in battle, the surviving Parthians took refuge with Antiochus. The victorious Roman general Ventidius Bassus now tried to punish Antiochus for his desertion and besieged him in Samosata. Antiochus finally promised to pay 1,000 talents as an indemnity and to resume his position as an ally of Rome. Antony, then the Roman commander-in-chief in the Near East, rejected this offer, relieved Ventidius of his command, and took over the siege, but Antiochus defended his capital successfully, and Antony had to be content with 300 talents. Nothing is known of Antiochus after this. According to Dio Cassius (49.23.4) he was murdered by Phraates IV of Parthia (see Dio Cassius 49.2.; Plutarch *Antony* 34).

Antiochus left monuments on Nimrud Dag and at Arsameia along with several Greek inscriptions written in the highly rhetorical style of the period, called "Asianic." At Arsameia Antiochus built a "hierothesion" dedicated to the dynastic cult, *perì patrṓōn daimónōn*, for the paternal *daímones*, and for his own honor (*Arsameia Inscr*. 1.8.f.). This expression is comparable to the Iranian conception of the *fravashi*s. The original cult was instituted by his father but Antiochus reorganized it and made regulations concerning the days of festival and the duties of the priest responsible for the rites. An inscription from Nimrud Dag (Dittenberger , *Orientis Graeci inscriptiones selectae*, I, 383, 1. 54f.) enumerates the deities of the dynastic pantheon. Following the dual tradition of the kingdom, the gods receive both Greek and Iranian names: Antiochus worships Zeus-Oromasdes, Apollo-Mithras-Helios-Hermes, Artagnes-Herakles-Ares, and finally the all-nourishing fatherland of Commagene. These deities are arranged according to the tri-functional system discovered by Dumézil: 1) Ohrmazd (< Ahura Mazdā) and Mithra representing the religious-juridical function; 2) Artagn (< Vərəθraγna), the warrior function, and 3) the all-nourishing fatherland, both collective and nourishing function, in this case another symbol for the Iranian *Daēnā*, the spiritual

element in its collective and nourishing function (Nyberg, Widengren). The inscription mentions a deity of Fate and Time, and Xronos Apeiros, Unlimited Time, corresponding to the Iranian Zurvān ī Akanārak (Av. *Zrvan akarana*), (ibid., 383 1. 114f.; *Arsameia* 1.83f.). It has been argued that the first four deities, Oromazdes, Mithras, Artagnes, and Commagene, are the well-known aspects of the fourfold god Zurvān, the all-embracing deity of Time and Destiny (Schaeder, Nyberg, but see Zaehner for an opposing view). In a clear allusion to eschatological belief, Antiochus expresses the conviction that while his body is reposing in its tomb until eternity his soul will have been sent in advance up to the heavenly thrones of Zeus-Oromazdes (ibid., 383 1. 42f.). The heavenly ascent of the soul that takes place on a throne with Oromazdes is clearly an Iranian conception, found in Avestan texts (*Vd*. 19.31f., *Hadōxt Nask* II) and in many passages of Pahlavi literature.

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(G. Widengren)