

# GREEKS AND MACEDONIANS IN THE PARTHIAN EMPIRE: THE CASE OF SUSA

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Any attempt to display the role of the Greeks and Macedonians in the Parthian Empire will come up against numerous problems concerning the nature of mutual relations between Asians – including the Parthians, Babylonians, Susians, Elymaians, and other peoples of Asia – and the Greek/Macedonian communities<sup>1</sup>. The present paper focuses on the city of Susa in Khuzestan (Iran), the crossroads of civilizations. In the Arsakid period, among the inhabitants of the city were - alongside the local Susians - Greeks, Macedonians, and Parthians. Susa is one of the best known cities of Hellenistic and Parthian Iran due to abundant epigraphic evidence and intense archaeological excavations. This paper aims to show some characteristics of political and cultural developments and the role played by the Greek-Macedonian community at Susa during the Parthian period.

<sup>1</sup> See J. Wolski, *L'hellénisme et l'Iran*, in M.-M. Mactoux - É. Geny (éds.), *Mélanges Pierre Lévêque*, Vol. 2: *Anthropologie et société*, Besançon 1989, 439-446; L. Martinez-Sève, *Hellenism*, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 12, New York 2003, 156-164; Ead., *Les Grecs d'extrême Orient: communautés grecques d'Asie Centrale et d'Iran*, in Ead. (éd.), *Les diasporas grecques du VIIIe à la fin du IIIe siècle av. J.-C.*, Actes du colloque de la Sophau organisé à l'Université de Lille 3 les 11 et 12 mai 2012, «Pallas» 2012, 367-391; E. Dąbrowa, *Studia Graeco-Parthica. Political and Cultural Relations between Greeks and Parthians*, Wiesbaden 2011; M. J. Olbrycht, *Parthians, Greek Culture, and Beyond*, in K. Twardowska et al. (eds.), *Within the Circle of Ancient Ideas and Virtues. Studies in Honour of Professor Maria Dzielska*, Kraków 2014, 129-142; R. Boucharlat, *L'Iran à l'époque hellénistique et parthe: un état des données archéologiques*, in P. Leriche (éd.), *Art et civilisations de l'Orient hellénisé*, Paris 2014, 123-138.

The reigns of Alexander, the Successors, and the Seleukids in Western and Central Asia brought far-reaching consequences, tremendous changes and new phenomena both in the political sphere and in culture. Greek art left its indelible mark on Asia as far as India<sup>2</sup>. The expansion of Greek culture to regions as far away as Bactria, Sogdiana and India was brought about chiefly through Alexander's conquests and the colonization he and the Seleukid dynasty effected<sup>3</sup>. The stereotypes pertaining to this colonization, often encountered in scholarly publications, should be discarded from the start. Most of Alexander's colonies were founded on Iranian territories and in Babylonia, and they were peopled not only by Greek and Macedonian newcomers, but also by Iranian settlers, numerically the majority group (in Babylonia, the local population made up the corresponding segment), and they enjoyed the same status as Greeks and Macedonians in legal terms<sup>4</sup>. The nature of colonization may have varied depending on the region and the rulers conducting it after Alexander, but generally the participation and status of the Asian inhabitants during the post-Achaemenid colonization in Asia tends to be overlooked, although it was of paramount importance for subsequent developments in Iran and Central Asia. One should also note that the modern attitude towards the Greeks in Asia, which applies a misleading uniformity of regionally differentiated Greek-speaking populations, is fallacious<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> On the Greek impact in Western and Central Asia, see: M. J. Olbrycht, *Alexander the Great and the Iranian world (Aleksander Wielki i świat irański)*, Rzeszow 2004; B. A. Litvinskii, *Problems of the History and Culture of Baktria in Light of Archaeological Excavations in Central Asia*, «Anabasis. Studia Classica et Orientalia» 1, 2010, 23-48; R. Mairs, *The Archaeology of the Hellenistic Far East: A Survey*, Oxford 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Alexander's and Seleukid colonization in Asia: M. J. Olbrycht, *Alexander the Great, passim*; Id., *Macedonia and Persia*, in J. Roisman - I. Worthington (eds.), *Blackwell Companion to Ancient Macedonia*, Malden 2010, 342-369; Id., *Die Alexandergründungen in den nordiranischen Ländern im Lichte der geographischen Tradition der Antike*, in A. Podossinov (ed.), *The Periphery of the Classical World in Ancient Geography and Cartography (Colloquia Antiqua 12)*, Leuven - Paris - Walpole (MA) 2014, 95-121; G. M. Cohen, *The Hellenistic Settlements in the East from Armenia and Mesopotamia to Bactria and India*, Berkeley - Los Angeles - London 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Olbrycht, *Alexander the Great*, 261-268; Id., *Ethnicity of Settlers in the Colonies of Alexander the Great in Iran and Central Asia*, «Bulletin of the International Institute of Central Asian Studies» 14, 2011, 22-35.

<sup>5</sup> Meaningful is the fact that the Ephesian councillors of the second century A.D. speak of the «Greek peoples», see A. Spawforth, *Shades of Greekness: A Lydian Case Study*, in I. Malkin (ed.), *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity*, Washington (DC) 2001, 375.

The Greek urban colonies in Babylonia and Iran did not make up a homogenous group. They either sprang up as new settlements (Seleukeia on the Tigris), or developed as Greek enclaves within Oriental metropolises (Susa, Babylon). The Greek and Macedonian communities of the Parthian Empire continued living in the Greek/Macedonian style of their ancestors until the Later Arsakid period. Although the cities of Parthia had local government institutions, they were still subject to the king, just as they had been in Seleukid times<sup>6</sup>. They hosted some writers and philosophers, including Agathokles of Babylon and the Stoic philosopher Archidemos of Tarsos who founded a school for philosophy at Babylon<sup>7</sup>.

There were Greek communities in the cities of Seleukid and Parthian Babylonia (in particular, at Uruk and Babylon) with the largest concentration of Greeks east of the Euphrates at Seleukeia on the Tigris. Some Seleukid foundations were established in northern Mesopotamia (including Karrhai/Harran and Nisibis). Other cities existed in Iran that were renamed or established in the Seleukid period: Laodikeia (present Nahavand), Antiocheia in Persis, Ekbatana (called Epiphaneia), Hekatompylos, and Rhaga (called Europos). The city of Antiocheia in Margiana (Merv) deserves special attention as a border metropolis between Iran and Central Asia. The main focus of this article is on Susa, located in the borderland between the plains of Mesopotamia and the Iranian Plateau.

In post-Achaemenid times, Susiana, with its capital at Susa, and Elymais were separate lands<sup>8</sup>; however, despite their differences, close links existed between them for thousands of years. Susiana and Elymais formed two entities, although both areas shared the same cultural and political inheritance of ancient Elam<sup>9</sup>. In the age of the Seleukids and Arsakids, Elymais covered the mountainous areas and some of the plains in Eastern Khuz-

<sup>6</sup> S. Sherwin-White, A. Kuhrt, *From Samarkhand to Sardis. A New Approach to the Seleucid Empire*, London 1993, 180.

<sup>7</sup> Str. XIV 5, 14 C674; Plu. *De exil.* 605b. See A. Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom. The Limits of Hellenization*, Cambridge 1990, 138-140.

<sup>8</sup> This distinction is confirmed by Str. XV 3, 11-12 C731-732 and XI 13, 4-6 C524. Cf. XVI 1, 17-18 C744.

<sup>9</sup> On the history of Elam, see D. Potts, *The Archaeology of Elam. Formation and Transformation of an Ancient Iranian State*, Cambridge 2016<sup>2</sup>. On the history of Elymais and Susiana, see: G. Le Rider, *Suse sous les Séleucides et les Parthes (Mémoires de la Mission Archéologique en Iran 38)*, Paris 1965; J. Hansman, *Coins and Mints of Ancient Elymais*, «Iran» 28, 1990, 1-11; E. Dabrowa, *Zeugnisse zur Geschichte der Parthischen Susiane und Elymais*, in J. Wiesehöfer (Hrsg.), *Das Partherreich und seine Zeugnisse*, Stuttgart 1998,

estan, while Susiana extended over the plains around the river Eulaios/Karkheh. Susa, situated on the plain and easily accessible from Babylonia, strongly experienced the cultural and political impact of the Seleukid and Parthian states. In contrast, Elymais, situated partly in the mountains, remained more reluctant to the influence of external powers.

Elymais continued to be a powerful satrapy within the Seleukid state. Military contingents of archers from Elymais fought in the Seleukid armies at Raphia in 217 and at Magnesia in 190<sup>10</sup>. Elymais was liberated from Seleukid dominance - at least partly - late in the reign of Antiochos III, who infamously died there in 187 B.C. while trying to rob a rich temple of Bel<sup>11</sup>. In 164 B.C., Antiochos IV attacked the Elymaian temple of Nanaia/Artemis, but was resisted and died in Media<sup>12</sup>.

The country's principal city was Seleukeia on the Hedyphon. From the literary sources, we know that one of the Parthian kings took Seleukeia on the Hedyphon, the metropolis of Elymais, and laid waste to the country's grand temples (Str. XVI 1, 18 C744)<sup>13</sup>. The king mentioned in Strabo's account is probably Mithradates I (c. 165-133 B.C.), who conducted a punitive expedition around 138/7 to wreak vengeance for the Elymaian attacks on the lands of the Parthians and for the support they had given to the Seleukid Demetrios II (cf. Iust. XLI 6, 8). W. Henning argued that the sanctuary of Tang-i Sarvak (north of Behbahan) was one of the major religious centers of Elymais<sup>14</sup>.

Several rulers of Elymais were named Kamnaskires. This name seems to be associated with the office of treasurers of the Temple of Bel in Elymais<sup>15</sup>. The first coins issued by independent rulers of Elymais bear the name «Kamnaskires» and the titles «Soter» and «Nikephoros». Some historians

417-424; G. R. F. Assar, *History and Coinage of Elymais during 150/149-122/121 B.C.*, «Nāme-ye Irān-e Bāstān» 4, 2005, 27-91.

<sup>10</sup> App. Syr. 31; Liv. XXXVII 40, 10.

<sup>11</sup> Str. XVI 1, 18 C744; II Macc. 1, 13-17; D.S. XXVIII 3; XXIX 15.

<sup>12</sup> Plb. XXXI 9, 1-4; App. Syr. 66; D.S. XXXI 18a; Porphyrios *FGrHist* 260 F 53 and 56; I Macc. 6, 1-17; II Macc. 9, 1-4; Jos. AJ XII 358-9.

<sup>13</sup> Seleukeia is located at Jan-i Sheen/Daurak. A nearby place called Tel Tandy stands on the site of Soloke, a city largely abandoned after the foundation of Seleukeia, see J. Hansman, *Seleucia and the Three Dauraks*, «Iran» 16, 1978, 154-161.

<sup>14</sup> W. B. Henning, *The Monuments and Inscriptions of Tang-I Sarvak*, «Asia Major» 2, 1952, 151-178.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 164; J. Harmatta, *King Kabneškir son of King Kabneškir*, «AAntHung» 30, 1982-1984, 167-180.

think these coin legends refer to two princes, Kamnaskires I Soter<sup>16</sup> and Kamnaskires II Nikephoros<sup>17</sup>, while others are of the opinion that there was only one Kamnaskires at this time (the 140s-130s B.C.)<sup>18</sup>.

Susa was one of the most important cities of the Irano-Mesopotamian area for more than three millennia. Under the Achaemenids (550-330 B.C.), Susa enjoyed the status of one of the royal metropolises. Achaemenid Susa witnessed the presence of some Greeks deported from Miletus in 494/3 B.C. to Susa and the Erythreian Sea/Persian Gulf (Hdt. VI 19-20). Seleukid Susa lost its imperial status of Achaemenid times, but remained an important metropolis with a royal mint<sup>19</sup>. It was reinforced by a strong Seleukid garrison<sup>20</sup>. In 220 B.C., a certain Apollodoros was appointed commander (*strategos*) of Susiana (Plb. V 54, 12). The city remained a crucial center in political and economic terms. After being defeated in battle by the Romans, Antiochos III is believed to have fled for safety at Susa<sup>21</sup>. Susa had become independent of the Seleukids by c. 147 B.C., when it fell under the rule of Kamnaskires of Elymais<sup>22</sup>.

A number of Greek colonies were founded in Western Iran in the Seleukid period. A Seleukid foundation was Seleukeia on the Eulaios, being equated with Susa. Seleukeia on the Eulaios is first mentioned among several cities listed in an inscription found at Magnesia on the Maeander/Maiandros (Μαγνησία ἢ πρὸς Μαιάνδρῳ or Μαγνησία ἢ ἐπὶ Μαιάνδρῳ) dated to 206/205 B.C.<sup>23</sup>. It is not clear enough when exactly Seleukeia on the Eulaios was established.

<sup>16</sup> Cfr. M. Alram, *Nomina Propria Iranica In Nummis. Materialgrundlagen zu den iranischen Personennamen auf antiken Münzen* (Iranisches Personennamenbuch, Bd. IV), Vienna 1986 (henceforth *NPIIN*), 429-430.

<sup>17</sup> *NPIIN* 431; cfr. *ibid.* p. 137, n. 520; P. A. van't Haaff, *Catalogue of Elymaean Coinage, ca. 147 B.C.-AD 228*, Lancaster – London 2007, 6.

<sup>18</sup> Assar, *History and Coinage*, 29-42.

<sup>19</sup> B. Kritt, *The Early Seleucid Mint of Susa*, Oxford 1997; A. Houghton - C. Lorber, *Seleucid Coins. A Comprehensive Catalogue. Part I. Seleucus I through Antiochos III*, New York – Lancaster – London 2002, 67-76.

<sup>20</sup> R. Billows, *Kings and Colonists*, Leiden – New York 1995, 176 n. 85.

<sup>21</sup> Porphyrios *FGrHist* 260 F 47.

<sup>22</sup> Le Rider, *Suse*, 75; *NPIIN* 137-139.

<sup>23</sup> See F. Canali de Rossi, *Iscrizioni dell'estremo oriente greco*, Bonn 2004, no. 252 (*OGIS* 233); R. Merkelbach - J. Stauber, *Jenseits des Euphrat, Griechische Inschriften*, München – Leipzig 2005, no. 306.

Greek inscriptions attest to the vivid life of the Greek-Macedonian community at Seleukid Susa. All of the people mentioned in the Seleukid Susian inscriptions have Greek or Macedonian names<sup>24</sup>. The local Greek-Macedonian community was quite large, with a gymnasium and stadium<sup>25</sup>. The texts of the inscriptions contain all of the stereotypical phrases that are typical of the Greek inscriptions of the Hellenistic and post-Hellenistic periods in Western Asia<sup>26</sup>. Terracotta figurines of Susa were made by craftsmen who knew Greek tastes. Among the figurines, there were objects imported from the Mediterranean area<sup>27</sup>. There were also many figurines produced in the local Oriental style<sup>28</sup>.

Inscriptions found at Susa point to the fact that Seleukeia on the Eulaios was originally settled by military colonists. The evidence, dated mainly to the Parthian period (implying a long-lived existence of a garrison), mentions soldiers (*phrouroi*), commanders (*strategoï*), and the citadel (*akra*)<sup>29</sup>. Apparently, the garrison (*phroura*) resided on the Acropolis of Susa.

Around 142-141 B.C., or 139-138 B.C. at the latest, the city was taken by the Parthians<sup>30</sup>, but in the course of the next two decades it was occupied

<sup>24</sup> For the inscriptions of Susa, see G. Rougemont, *Inscriptions grecques d'Iran et d'Asie Centrale (Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum Part II: Inscriptions of the Seleucid and Parthian periods of eastern Iran and central Asia. Vol. I: Inscriptions in non-Iranian languages I)*, London 2012, nos. 1-50. Cf. Ph. Huyse, *Die Rolle des Griechischen im «hellenistischen» Iran*, in B. Funck (Hrsg.), *Hellenismus. Beiträge zur Erforschung von Akkulturation und politischer Ordnung in den Staaten des hellenistischen Zeitalters*, Tübingen 1996, 57-76, particularly 66-67; G. A. Koshelenko - S. V. Novikov, *Manumissii Selevkii na Evlee*, «Vestnik drevnei istorii» 1979/2, 41-54.

<sup>25</sup> Decree in honor of the *gymnasiarchos* Nikolaos (first half of the first century B.C.): Merkelbach - Stauber, *Jenseits*, no. 412; Rougemont, *Inscriptions*, no. 10.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Rougemont, *Inscriptions*, nos. 5, 32-33.

<sup>27</sup> L. Martinez-Sève, *Les coroplathes de Suse: statut des artisans dans une ville hellénisée*, «Topoi (Lyon)» 8, 1998, 653-656; Ead., *Les figurines de Suse. De l'époque néo-élamite à l'époque sassanide. Musée du Louvre, département des Antiquités orientales*, Paris 2002.

<sup>28</sup> Boucharlat, *L'Iran*, 127; Martinez-Sève, *Figurines*, 98-100.

<sup>29</sup> Cohen, *The Hellenistic Settlements in the East*, 194-195.

<sup>30</sup> The Parthians seem to have taken Susa for the first time around 142/141 B.C., in connection with their conquest of Babylonia completed by 141 B.C. Whoever controlled Susa found it much easier to defend Babylonia against the aggressive ambitions of the princes of Elymais, and hence we should see the conquest of Susa in connection with the Arsakid offensive in Babylonia. Most scholars assume the Parthian takeover of Susa in 139-138 B.C. See, e.g., J. Gaslain, *Mithridate Ier et Suse*, «Anabasis. Studia Classica et Orientalia» 1, 2010, 135-143.

for a short spell by the Elymaians, and again by the Seleukids<sup>31</sup>. We know of bronze coins minted by Mithradates I at Susa<sup>32</sup>. However, Mithradates I's military engagement in eastern Iran helped the Susians throw off the Arsakid yoke, which exposed them to renewed attacks from Elymais. Susa was ruled by one Tigraios at the time (130s B.C.)<sup>33</sup>. It is not clear whether he was an Elymaian appointee, or an independent local prince. The Parthians regained their hold over the city, but it was later occupied for a short spell by Antiochos VII (130/129), and it was only after his defeat in 129 that Susa became an established component of the Arsakid Empire. Contrary to many statements, Susa remained, with brief interruptions, under Arsakid control until the end of the empire in 224.

Several inscriptions discovered at Susa mention Seleukeia on the Eulaios. Relying on this evidence, Seleukeia on the Eulaios was identified with Susa by B. Haussoullier in 1903<sup>34</sup>. An inscription found in the Susa's «Donjon» names a slave dedicated to Apollo and Artemis Daitta (183/2 B.C.). It contains the city's name, given as Seleukeia on the Eulaios<sup>35</sup>. Apollo and Artemis Daitta were venerated in Syrian Daphne<sup>36</sup>. Apparently, there was a filial cult of these deities at Susa. It is possible that Artemis Daitta was the Greek alias for Nanaia/Nana at Susa. Strabo refers to Babylonian Borsippa as «a city sacred to Artemis and Apollo» (XVI 1, 7 C739). Here, the Greek names of the gods definitely relate to Babylonian deities and represent the standard Greek aliases for Nabu and Nanaia<sup>37</sup>. This way of denoting the names of Oriental gods using their Greek counterparts occurs in other sources<sup>38</sup>.

Another Susian inscription, a manumission dated to 177/6 B.C. found probably on the Acropolis, also names Seleukeia<sup>39</sup>. Another text mentioning

<sup>31</sup> See Assar, *History and Coinage*, 54-68.

<sup>32</sup> Le Rider, *Suse*, 78-79, types 95-97, 153, 319. Cf. D. Sellwood, *An Introduction to the Coinage of Parthia*, London 1980, 41, subtypes 12/26-29.

<sup>33</sup> Tigraios: *NPIIN* 447-453.

<sup>34</sup> B. Haussoullier, *Inscriptions grecques de l'Extrême-Orient grec*, in *Mélanges Perrot*, Paris 1903, 155-159.

<sup>35</sup> Rougemont, *Inscriptions*, no. 13.2-3: ἐν Σελευκείαι [τ]ῆι πρὸς τῶι Εὐλαίῳ.

<sup>36</sup> C. B. Welles, *Royal Correspondence in the Hellenistic Period*, New Haven 1934, no. 44.

<sup>37</sup> For Nanaia as Artemis/Isis/Astarte, see Isidoros of Narmuthis, *Hymnus* 1,18.

<sup>38</sup> M. Boyce - F. Grenet, *A History of Zoroastrianism, 3: Zoroastrianism under Macedonian and Roman Rule*, Leiden 1991, 36-41.

<sup>39</sup> Rougemont, *Inscriptions*, no. 14.3-4: ἐν Σελευκ[είαι τ]ῆι πρὸς τῶι Εὐλαίῳ.

Seleukeia on the Eulaios (actually the name of the city was restored on the basis of parallels) was discovered in the vicinity of the Apadana. It was executed by order of a soldier called Bakchios who dedicated a woman to Nanaia (the name of the goddess was restored)<sup>40</sup>. A badly damaged inscription, found in the Donjon, seems to contain the name «Eulaios» (the letters λαίωι are preserved), and this strongly implies that the city's name Seleukeia on the Eulaios is mentioned there<sup>41</sup>. By and large, the texts containing the name Seleukeia on the Eulaios were found in the Donjon, on the Acropolis, and near the Apadana. This distribution of finds of the Seleukid phase implies that the Seleukid settlement in the city of Susa was centered in the belt between the Donjon and the Apadana, next to the citadel (Acropolis).

The cult of Nanaia was vivid at Seleukid and Parthian Susa<sup>42</sup>. Nanaia's veneration took its root in the second millennium B.C.<sup>43</sup> Generally, three manumissions devoted to Nanaia have been discovered at Susa<sup>44</sup>, and another text probably contained the name of this goddess<sup>45</sup>. The temple of Nanaia itself has not been discovered, but it is mentioned by Pliny (*nat.* VI 31,7) as a temple of «Diana» on the Eulaios River. The temple was probably located in the Donjon area, explored between 1928 and 1933 under the direction of R. de Mecquenem. The only plan of the Donjon available, which is very inaccurate, displays a set of rooms with a central rectangular room with four pillars (5 m x 2.80 m), surrounded by narrow corridors<sup>46</sup>.

Susa has been excavated since the nineteenth century, but the archaeologists have not always used advanced archaeological methods and

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 17.2: ἐν Σελευκείαι τῆι πρὸς τῶι Εὐλαίωι].

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 19.3-4: [ἐν Σελευκείαι] τῆι [πρὸς τῶι Εὐ]λαίωι.

<sup>42</sup> Le Rider, *Suse*, 292-293.

<sup>43</sup> L. Martinez-Sève, *Les sanctuaires autochtones dans les mondes iraniens: quelques exemples*, in Ph. Clancier - J. Monerie (éds.), *Les sanctuaires autochtones et le Roi dans le Proche-Orient hellénistique*, «Topoi (Lyon)» 19, 2014, 253-254. An Oxyrynchus papyrus attests to the significance of Nanaia's cult at Susa (*P. Oxy.*, XI, 1380, l. 106).

<sup>44</sup> SEG 7.18 (Rougemont, *Inscriptions*, no. 20); SEG 8.22 (Rougemont, *Inscriptions*, no. 15; Merkelbach - Stauber, *Jenseits*, no. 418), SEG 7.24 (Rougemont, *Inscriptions*, no. 23).

<sup>45</sup> SEG 7.15 (Rougemont, *Inscriptions*, no. 17; Merkelbach - Stauber, *Jenseits*, no. 417). The name of Nanaia in this text was reconstructed, see Rougemont, *Inscriptions*, no. 17.4. Still another manumissions is poorly preserved (Rougemont, *Inscriptions*, no. 25) and it is not certain whether it contained the name of Nanaia.

<sup>46</sup> This type is reminiscent of the plan of the Takht-i Sangin temple in Bactria (south Tajikistan). See Martinez-Sève, *Sanctuaires*, 254-255.

have often disregarded post-Achaemenid finds or deemed Seleukid and Parthian finds as being from the same period. Unfortunately, the excavations of R. de Mecquenem largely destroyed the levels of the Seleukid and Parthian periods. Still, some observations on the range of Seleukid and Parthian settlement within the area of the great city can be formulated. The question arises as to the exact location of the Seleukid foundation of Seleukeia on the Eulaios. As in some other old Oriental cities like Merv or Babylon, a Seleukid colony may have arisen next to the old settlement clusters of the metropolis. At Merv (Antiocheia in Margiana), the Seleukids occupied the citadel of the Old City of Merv (Erk-kala) and established a settlement in the 'lower city' next to the citadel (Gyaur-kala)<sup>47</sup>. It seems that a similar pattern was employed at Susa.

In the Seleukid period, Susa's Achaemenid palaces were abandoned. At the Shahur River near the Apadana mound, a palace was erected in Greek style. It may have been a royal residence of Seleukid kings<sup>48</sup>, used when the rulers visited the city. The area of the 'Royal Town' ('Ville Royale') of Susa was actively used in the post-Achaemenid period. There were some Greek buildings on the Acropolis. A major residence with a peristyle court erected in the second half of the third century B.C. was discovered near the Achaemenid Propylaea<sup>49</sup>. Most Greek inscriptions of the Seleukid epoch were discovered in the Donjon area, i.e., the southernmost part of the 'Royal Town' ('Ville Royale'). R. Boucharlat assumes that it was this area that included most of the official buildings in the Seleukid city<sup>50</sup>. L. Martinez-Seve locates the sanctuary of Nanaia there<sup>51</sup>.

It is most likely that Seleukeia on the Eulaios, as the Seleukid foundation with a Greek-Macedonian community, was merely a part of ancient Susa, which must have had most of its districts inhabited by indigenous Susians. Generally, it seems that the Hellenistic settlement of Susa initially encom-

<sup>47</sup> M. J. Olbrycht, *Iranians in the Diadochi Period*, in V. Alonso Troncoso - E. M. Anson (eds.), *After Alexander. The Time of the Diadochi (323–281 B.C.)*, Oxford 2013, 174.

<sup>48</sup> A. Labrousse - R. Boucharlat, *La fouille du palais du Chaour à Suse en 1970 et 1971*, «Cahier de la DAFI» 2, 1972, 61-167, particularly 95-96.

<sup>49</sup> R. Ghirshman, *Travaux de la mission archéologique en Susiane dans l'hiver 1952-1953*, «CRAI» 97, 1953, 247-256.

<sup>50</sup> R. Boucharlat, *Suse, marché agricole ou relais du grand commerce. Suse et la Susiane à l'époque des grands empires*, «Paléorient» 11, 1985, 71-81, here 75.

<sup>51</sup> L. Martinez-Sève, *Susa IV. The Hellenistic and Parthian Periods*, in *Encyclopædia Iranica*, online edition, 2015, available at [www.iranicaonline.org](http://www.iranicaonline.org).

passed the Acropolis and western parts of the Royal Town between the Donjon and the Propylaea.

It is telling that the Seleukids did not use the old name of Susa in inscriptions. Epigraphic evidence from the Seleukid period displays only the name Seleukeia on the Eulaios; the designation Susa does not appear. In an inscription dated to Seleukid times, between 223 and 164/3 B.C., the term «Susiane» (Σουσιάνη) is used<sup>52</sup>.

A large Greek-Macedonian community continued to live at Susa under the Parthians, as is documented by numerous inscriptions and the impact of Greek art in the local production. Remarkably, however, a whole series of Iranian names like Phraates, Tiridates, and Zamaspes crept into the text; apparently, the Iranians occupied some high administrative offices in the city and satrapy<sup>53</sup>.

There are some inscriptions from Parthian times that turn out to be helpful in offering an explanation for the ethnic composition of Susa and the use of different names for the city. In a poem engraved on a stone (dated 9/8 B.C. or 1/2 A.D.), Ariston, son of Goras, praises Zamaspes for having supplied Susa with water from the river Gondeisos<sup>54</sup>. Zamaspes is described as the *stratiarchos* of Susa (στρατιάρχος Σούσων) and satrap. The name «Seleukeia» does not appear in this text, but mention is made of the «grateful people» (*demos*) of the city<sup>55</sup>. The text demonstrates that the soldiers of the garrison under Phraates IV retained the Greek tradition of displaying honors to its commanders through the erection of a statue.

A (second) dedication to Zamaspes contains the name Φραατίς πολις and Susa<sup>56</sup>. Both inscriptions show that under Phraates IV (38/7-3 B.C.), the city's name was changed into Φράατα or derivative forms. Indeed, Susa's coins from the reign of Phraates IV carry a double nomenclature: «Phraateans at Susa» (Φραατέων τῶν ἐν Σούσοις)<sup>57</sup>, implying that the residents of «Phraata» (Φράατα)<sup>58</sup> made up a part of the metropolis called

<sup>52</sup> Merkelbach - Stauber, *Jenseits*, no. 410; Rougemont, *Inscriptions*, no. 6. The text gives the title of *strategos* of Susiane.

<sup>53</sup> Le Rider, *Suse*, 280-287.

<sup>54</sup> Goras may be an Iranian name, see Boyce - Grenet, *A History*, 37 n. 11; Merkelbach - Stauber, *Jenseits*, 79, but there are other views on its descent, see Le Rider, *Suse*, 286.

<sup>55</sup> Merkelbach - Stauber, *Jenseits*, no. 405; Rougemont, *Inscriptions*, no. 12.

<sup>56</sup> Merkelbach - Stauber, *Jenseits*, no. 406; Rougemont, *Inscriptions*, no. 11.

<sup>57</sup> Le Rider, *Suse*, nos. 207-215, pp. 408-417.

<sup>58</sup> For this form, see Le Rider, *Suse*, 412.

Susa. Apparently, the name Seleukeia was stricken from official Arsakid usage, which seemed to prefer «Phraata» or «Phraateans at Susa» (probably for former Seleukeia on the Eulaios) or Susa (for the whole metropolis).

There is a famous letter of King of Kings Artabanos II (A.D. 8/9 - 39/40) to the City of Susa dated A.D. 21/22 (year 333 of the Seleukid era)<sup>59</sup>. In his letter, the Arsakid king enumerates the officials «at Susa» (ἐν Σούσοις). The inscription ends with the statement that it had been made by Leonides, the son of Artemon of «Seleukeia on the Eulaios». The use of two names for apparently the same city is striking. The text clearly implies that the Arsakids preferred the name Susa. Artabanos II abandoned the name Phraata and its derivatives, for it remembered Phraates IV, whose sons, including Vonones, were his bitter enemies and rivals. The letter of Artabanos supports Hestaios, king's «Friend» (*philos*) and «Bodyguard» (*somatophylax*), in his office of treasurer at Susa. Hestaios, «son of Asios», seems to be of Greek origin. The king's letter is addressed to Antiochos and Phraates, «the two archons at Susa and to the city (*polis*)». Phraates is a Parthian name, while Antiochos a Macedonian one. Two former archons (of the year 332 of the Seleukid era, i.e. A.D. 20/21) bear the Greek names Petasos and Aristomenes. Hestaios was not a court official but his titles of *philos* and *somatophylax* imply his close links to the Parthian King of Kings. Curiously there is no mention of the *strategos*, and of the *epistates*, who are attested to in several inscriptions in western cities of Parthia<sup>60</sup>.

Parthian Susa occupied more area than the Seleukid city. In Parthian times, the Apadana and Royal Town were covered with houses and residences from the second half of the second century B.C. The Seleukid residence next to the Propylaea was replaced by a large new building<sup>61</sup>. The southern part of the Royal Town yielded abundant material of the Parthian period. A sculptured head of the so-called Musa was discovered near the Donjon. It bears a Greek inscription<sup>62</sup>. In the Donjon area, the temple of Nanaia was still in use.

<sup>59</sup> R. Merkelbach, *Der Brief des Artabanos an die Stadt Susa (= Seleukeia am Eulaios)*, «EA» 34, 2002, 173-177; Merkelbach - Stauber, *Jenseits*, no. 407; Rougemont, *Inscriptions*, no. 3.

<sup>60</sup> See Welles, *Royal Correspondence*, 303.

<sup>61</sup> Martinez-Sève, *Susa IV. The Hellenistic and Parthian Periods*.

<sup>62</sup> Merkelbach - Stauber, *Jenseits*, no. 401. See P. Amiet, *La sculpture susienne à l'époque de l'empire parthe*, «IA» 36, 2001, 273.

The coroplasts of Susa provide further elements for reflection. L. Martinez-Sève points to the fact that these artisans were, for the most part, Easterners, but were able to assimilate new techniques introduced by the Greeks<sup>63</sup>. The Greek artistic influence at Susa is visible until the first century A.D. In the Later Arsakid period (after A.D. 50), Greek impact clearly weakened. Apparently, the Greeks and Macedonians mingled with the Asians and largely lost their political significance as well as ethnic distinction. The inscription on the Xwasak stele, dated to A.D. 215, is written in Parthian, and its iconography is far away from the canons of Greek art. Satrap Xwasak is displayed alongside the Arsakid King of Kings Artabanos IV (A.D. 213-226)<sup>64</sup>. The last Parthian satrap of Susa supported Artabanos IV against Ardashir but the city was subjugated by a Sasanian army. Under the early Sasanians Susa belonged to the largest metropolises of the Kings of Kings<sup>65</sup>.

The internal social structure of Parthian Susa seems to have been similar to the cities of Babylonia that had Greek communities, namely at Babylon, Uruk, and Seleukeia on the Tigris.<sup>66</sup> In view of the lack of a strong cultural interaction between Greeks and Babylonians in Seleukid-Parthian times, the term «parallel cultures» seems to be appropriate in Babylonia<sup>67</sup>.

Seleukeia on the Tigris was the largest Greek community in Parthia. The city is reported to have had 600,000 inhabitants (Plin. *nat.* VI 122). Under the Seleukids, the Greeks of Seleukeia were organized into the *politai/pulite* cluster<sup>68</sup>. In the Parthian period, the Babylonians made up the major part of the population. According to Flavius Josephus (*AJ* XVIII 372), Seleukeia was an ethnically mixed metropolis with two dominant communities: Macedonian-Greek and 'Syrian'. Conflicts erupted between

<sup>63</sup> L. Martinez-Sève, *La ville de Suse à l'époque hellénistique*, «RA» 33, 2002, 31-54; Ead., *Hellenism*, 156-165.

<sup>64</sup> T. S. Kawami, *Monumental Art of the Parthian Period in Iran*, Leiden 1987, 164-167.

<sup>65</sup> G. Gropp, *Susa V. In the Sasanian Period*, in *Encyclopedia Iranica* online 2005.

<sup>66</sup> R. J. van der Spek, *Ethnic Segregation in Hellenistic Babylon*, in W. H. van Soldt et al. (eds.), *Ethnicity in Ancient Mesopotamia*, Leiden 2005, 393-408; Id., *Multi-ethnicity and Ethnic Segregation in Hellenistic Babylon*, in T. Derks - N. Roymans (eds.), *Ethnic Constructs in Antiquity. The Role of Power and Tradition*, Amsterdam 2009, 101-115; J. Oelsner, *30 Thesen zum Thema Aramäisierung – Hellenisierung – Iranisierung Babyloniens*, in A. Luther et al. (Hrsg.), *Getrennte Wege? Kommunikation, Raum und Wahrnehmung in der Alten Welt*, Frankfurt 2007, 218-227.

<sup>67</sup> Oelsner, *30 Thesen*.

<sup>68</sup> T. Boiy, *Late Achaemenid and Hellenistic Babylon*, Leuven 2004, 166.

the Greeks and ‘Syrians’. Moreover, Seleukeia often participated in power struggles for the throne of Parthia, involving for some time Babylonian Jews (in the 20s-30s A.D.).<sup>69</sup>

Tacitus makes an observation that Seleukeia was a powerful, walled city that did not decline into barbarism, but retained the character of its founder, Seleukos: *civitas potens, saepta muris neque in barbarum corrupta, sed conditoris Seleuci retinens* (Tac. *Ann.* VI 42, 1). Some researchers take this to mean that the city’s Greek character was preserved. But Tacitus is not writing about its *Greek* character. He must have known that Seleukeia was inhabited by diverse ethnic groups, but for whatever reason he did not discuss them in detail<sup>70</sup>. Strabo (XVI 1, 16) is precise enough to use the proper noun Σελεύκεια («Seleukeians») as a general expression covering all of the diverse ethnic groups inhabiting the city.

Antiochos IV introduced a Greek community into Babylon. The citizens were called *politai* (πολίται)<sup>71</sup>. At Babylon, there was a Greek quarter that enjoyed the status of a *polis* alongside a larger indigenous Babylonian quarter. It seems that the Greeks constituted an enclave within metropolitan Babylon.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>69</sup> M. J. Olbrycht, *Imperium Parthicum*, Kraków 2013, 149-151. Tacitus (*Ann.* VI 42) throws light on the nature of the feud that occurred in Seleukeia on the Tigris, which was connected with the struggle for power in Parthia. Thus King Artabanos II (ca. A.D. 8/9 - 39/40) sought the assistance of the *primores* (aristocracy) of Seleukeia against the city’s *populus* (people).

<sup>70</sup> Tacitus’ description of Seleukeia forms part of his account about why the *populus* lent its support to the usurper Tiridates, who had been sent by Rome (A.D. 36), while Artabanos II backed the *primores*. Tacitus’ account implies that Seleukeia’s support for Tiridates and the rebellion were not the result of ethnic strife, but one of many factors that contributed to the power struggle in Parthia. Likewise the cities of northern Mesopotamia, both with Greek names and Parthian, sided with a usurper (Tac. *Ann.* VI 41, 2).

<sup>71</sup> van der Spek, *Multi-ethnicity*, 107.

<sup>72</sup> The council of the *polis* at Babylon was called the *peliganes*. There were three principal categories of the inhabitants of Babylon, each with their own administrative institutions: Babylonian citizens (*mārē Bābili*) under the *shatammu* (head of the temple) and *kinishtu* (council); Greek citizens (*pulitē* or *pulitānu*, a term derived from the Greek designation πολίται), under the «governor of Babylon» (*pāhāt Bābili* = Greek *epistates*), and royal slaves under «the prefect of the king». See T. Boiy, *Between the Royal Administration and Local Elite: the pāhātu in Hellenistic Babylonia as epistates?*, «Anabasis. Studia Classica et Orientalia» 1, 2010, 49–57; G. F. Del Monte, *Testi della Babilonia ellenistica*, Pisa - Roma 1997, 38-39, 76-77, 86-87, 96-97.

Archaeological studies have shown that apart from Seleukeia on the Tigris, the building traditions in Parthian Babylonia were entirely in keeping with the old Mesopotamian manner, and only a few structures exhibit a distinct Greek influence<sup>73</sup>. Greek impact may be observed in the Babylonian culture of the Parthian era chiefly in the arts. Hardly anything has survived of monumental art; what does remain is terracotta and glyptics, in which there is a palpable influence of Greek iconography<sup>74</sup>.

The Greeks living east of the Euphrates became an important component of the population of the Arsakid Empire, but they were certainly not its dominant part. At the same time, the Parthians appreciated the vivacity of Greek culture, and many of them were its avid enthusiasts. However, the Parthian cultural code did not accept full Hellenization.

The elite of the Arsakid state were composed primarily of representatives of the Parthian aristocracy<sup>75</sup>. Members of the principal aristocratic clans and of the Arsakids recur throughout the Parthian period as governors, viceroys, and high dignitaries like Zamaspes, Tiridates or Phraates at Susa. If we are to judge strictly by their names and family connections, they were Iranians. The Parthian nobility proper and the Arsakids did not use Greek names at all<sup>76</sup>.

Greek language was certainly widespread among the Parthian elite and in places where there were large communities of Greeks. Many scholars believe that the proliferation of Greek is proof of the profound Hellenization of the Parthians and other peoples of Asia. There have been voices of caution against blindly accepting this supposition<sup>77</sup>. Not only language, names and inscriptions, but also cultural context should be taken into ac-

<sup>73</sup> There were Greek buildings, including a theatre, in Babylon. See Oelsner, *30 Thesen*, 219.

<sup>74</sup> Oelsner, *30 Thesen*.

<sup>75</sup> See M. J. Olbrycht, *Parthia and Nomads of Central Asia. Elements of Steppe Origin in the Social and Military Developments of Arsakid Iran*, in I. Schneider (Hrsg.), *Mitteilungen des SFB «Differenz und Integration» 5: Militär und Staatlichkeit*, Halle - Saale 2003, 69-109.

<sup>76</sup> This is a telling phenomenon. For comparison, let us recall the Jews: the Hellenizing Jews built a gymnasium in Jerusalem, competed in international Greek games, and «removed their marks of circumcision and repudiated the holy covenant» (I *Macc.* 1, 15). Furthermore, among the Jewish elite one can discern a Menelaos, Jason, Alexander, Aristobulos, and other individuals bearing Greek and Macedonian names. See T. Ilan, *The Greek names of the Hasmonians*, «The Jewish Quarterly Review» 78, 1987, 1-20.

<sup>77</sup> See, e.g., J. Wolski, *Die Widerstandsbewegung gegen die Makedonenherrschaft im Osten*, «Klio» 51, 1969, 207-215.

count when trying to define the ethnic character of a community and of a city.

In general, under the Arsakids, Greeks and Macedonians were debarred from the highest offices in the Parthian monarchy, and in this respect their status deteriorated substantially compared to what they had enjoyed under the Seleukids. But in the Greek urban communities (like at Seleukeia on the Eulaios), and perhaps also in some satrapies, Greeks or Macedonians could hold magisterial offices on the local level. Greeks as *philoï* belong to that category of offices: as leaders on the local level, honored by the Arsakid king. There are inscriptions from Parthian Susa, Babylonia, and Dura Europos that mention «Friends» (φίλοι) of Parthian kings bearing Greek or Macedonian names<sup>78</sup>. Some of these «Friends» were military commanders who served in a particular city such as Susa or Dura Europos; some had the title of «Bodyguard» (σωματοφύλαξ)<sup>79</sup>. Taking into account the fact that the titles are transmitted in inscriptions produced in Greek-Macedonian clusters, the dignitaries (or at least their majority) were in all likelihood of Greek or Macedonian origin. Evidently, loyal Greeks or Macedonians – as was often the case at Susa (Hestaios, Petasos, Aristomenes) – could look forward to fairly high offices as royal appointees in cities with a significantly large Greek population.

By and large, Arsakid Susa was an ancient city with origins going back to the fourth millennium B.C. The Seleukids founded a colony there and called it Seleukeia on the Eulaios. But this Greek-Macedonian community must have been an enclave surrounded by a sea of indigenous folk: by no means did the Susians, inhabitants of one of the Achaemenid capitals, disappear. What do we know about the ethnic situation of Greek-Macedonian communities like Susa from the collection of a few dozen Greek inscriptions? Some scholars believe that this is proof of the predominance of Greek as the city's functioning language, or even that the majority of the city was composed of Hellenes and Hellenized citizens. The historical context, however, suggests that all one can say definitively is that there was a lively Greek enclave at Susa, but this is far from asserting that the whole city was Hellenized<sup>80</sup>. The city's names used in Parthian times – Susa, Se-

<sup>78</sup> I. Savalli-Lestrade, *Les Philoi royaux dans l'Asie hellénistique*, Genève 1998, 205-212.

<sup>79</sup> See SEG 2.815 (case of Lysias son of Lysanias from Dura Europos, the *strategos* and *epistates* of the city); Savalli-Lestrade, *Philoi*, 209.

<sup>80</sup> In the Parthian Empire, it was a custom of the Greeks to produce stone inscriptions, many of which still exist, whereas Aramaic and Parthian texts are not lapidary. They tended

leukeia on the Eulaios, or Phraata – actually point to the existence of major separate segments of the population, local Susian and Greek/Macedonian, with an influx of Parthians, at Arsakid Susa.

*SVMMARIVM - Susorum, quae fuerunt inter nobilissimas aetatis hellenisticae Parthicae-que urbes in Irania, notitia praecipue inscriptionibus et monumentorum reliquiis innititur. Selucidae Susis coloniam Seleuciam ad Eulaium appellatam statuerunt. Graeci et Macedones civitas ab indigenis seclusa fuerunt. Ex inscriptionibus apparet Parthos vetere urbis nomine, id est Susa, uti maluisse, ac certum temporis spatium urbem Phraatam appellasse. Varia urbis nomina, quae in servatis inscriptionibus et nummis se praebent - quae nomina erant Susa, Seleucia ad Eulaium, Phraata - indicat Susis discretos incolarum coetus, veterum indigenarum (Sussianorum) et Graecorum Macedonumque exstitisse, quibus Parthi se adiunxerunt. Parthi summos legatorum honores et legionum imperia Susis adepti sunt.*

*ABSTRACT - Susa is one of the best known cities of Hellenistic and Parthian Iran due to abundant epigraphic evidence and intense archaeological excavations. This paper aims to show some characteristics of political and cultural developments and the role played by the Greek-Macedonian community at Susa during the Parthian period. The Seleukids founded a colony at Susa and called it Seleukeia on the Eulaios. This Greek-Macedonian community must have been an enclave surrounded by a sea of indigenous folk. The city's names used in Parthian times – Susa, Seleukeia on the Eulaios, or Phraata – point to the existence of major separate segments of the population, local Susian and Greek/Macedonian, with an influx of Parthians, at Arsakid Susa.*

to be inscribed on papyrus or parchment, and not much of these materials has survived. Generally, the Parthians made widespread use of parchment. Parthia was famous for its production of parchment, and the word itself is possibly derived from the adjective «Parthicus». See M. J. Olbrycht, *Die Seidenstraße in der Geschichte der Antike*, in *Die Krim. Goldene Insel im Schwarzen Meer. Begleitbuch zur Ausstellung in Bonn, Darmstadt 2013*, 82.