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P H I L I A

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Altay COŞKUN*

The Chronology of the *Asyilia* Dossier from Kos Revisited in Light of Some Recent Epigraphic Discoveries

ABSTRACT: While the Third Syrian War was raging, the Koans deployed substantial diplomatic efforts to have the *asyilia* of their Asklepieion and the panhellenic penteteric games recognized throughout the Mediterranean world. In the 1950s, Günther Klaffenbach and Mortimer Chambers presented what was to become the consensus chronology: they saw the *theoroi* visit several royal courts and many more Greek poleis largely in summer 242 BCE, before the first games were held at Kos around May 241 BCE. This consensus has now been challenged by Dimitris Bosnakis and Klaus Hallof (Chiron 50, 2020, 287–326), who suggest dating the events one year earlier, based on six recently-found documents. These include a letter of king ‘Zigelas’ (sc. Ziaelas of Bithynia), dated to year 39 of an uncertain era. The present article tries to argue instead that the grant of *asyilia* by several kings likely happened in 243, whereas the campaign in support of the Asklepieia unfolded from spring to autumn 242, before the first Asklepieia were held in 241 BCE. This chronological revision has important ramifications for other aspects of 3rd-century BCE history, such as the biography of Antigonos Gonatas (whose *basileia* began in 283/82 BCE) and the start of the first dynastic era of Bithynia (281 BCE). Moreover, queen Laodike, the author of another new letter, should be identified with the wife of Antiochos Hierax, and further with the author of the anonymous royal letter earlier attributed to Seleukos II. The letter previously assigned to the Bosporan king Spartokos IV may rather be from Mithradates II of Pontos. The epigraphic evidence shows the Koans steadfast in their loyalty to Ptolemy III Euergetes, whereas the second letters from the courts of Nikomedeia and Sardeis may hint at a gradual shift of Ziaelas and Hierax towards Seleukos II.

KEYWORDS: Kos, Asklepieia, *asyilia*, *theoroi*, dynastic Bithynian eras, Ziaelas of Bithynia, Laodike (wife of Antiochos Hierax), Ptolemy III Euergetes, Antigonos II Gonatas, Spartokos IV of the Bosphoros, Mithradates II of Pontos.

The island of Kos had enjoyed fame as a centre of healing since the 5th century BCE, but the major sanctuary of Asklepios was not established before around 350 BCE, that is some 15 years after the synoecism of the island communities.¹ It took about another century before the sanctuary was distinguished by an internationally recognized *asyilia* and the establishment of panhellenic penteteric games in honour of Asklepios.² Dozens of (mostly fragmentary) inscriptions attest to the wide recognition of the status that the Koan Asklepieion enjoyed. Originally, all documents that the Koan *theoroi* (‘ambassadors in cultic

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¹ See Herzog 1899; 1932; Sherwin White 1978; Sonnabend 2021; Cojocar 2021.

² The penteteric cycle is made explicit in a decree of an Ionian city (Rigsby – Hallof 2001, 333, no. 1, l. 4). Victor lists of the Asklepieia have been preserved until 169 BCE, see Habicht 2004, 61–62. OGIS 42 attests to a Ptolemaic delegation under the head *theoros* Kaphisios, possibly on the occasion of the first games in 241 (thus Bosnakis – Hallof 2003, 228), though a later game cannot be excluded; *pace* Dittenberger *ad* OGIS 42, who opts for a date under Ptolemy II (283–246 BCE), though based on erroneous assumptions on the loss of Kos early under Ptolemy III.

matters’) brought home from their mission to the kings and cities of the Greek world would have been exhibited in a gallery of *stelai*, to boast the site’s pre-eminence to its international visitors.³

The first pieces came to light in the excavations conducted by Rudolf Herzog in 1903, and the more important fragments of the royal letters among them were published by the same scholar, some in due course (1905), others with significant delay (1930),⁴ while a major part of the documents accounted for in his *schedae* were published only generations later. First in line was Günther Klaffenbach (1952), who procured a small corpus of sixteen items. Nearly half a century later, the comprehensive catalogue of Kent Rigsby (1996) counted as many as 51 fragments, including references to some illegible items. Some more inscriptions, partly recorded by Herzog, partly hailing from new discoveries, were submitted to the press by Rigsby, Klaus Hallof and Dimitris Bosnakis at the beginning of the 21st century. With this, the ground was laid for the first fascicle of the IG XII 4 volume on Kos, which contains the entirety of the documents known by 2010.⁵

Until very recently, the large consensus was that all the royal letters and civic decrees of this dossier reflect Koan diplomacy in and around summer 242 BCE, before the first penteteric games would take place in May 241 BCE. This absolute chronology was first established by Klaffenbach and then endorsed by Mortimer Chambers.⁶ However, the way to conceiving the whole dossier as part of a unified diplomatic effort had already been paved by Herzog himself,⁷ though with the exception of one uncertain Ptolemaic

³ On the full epigraphic evidence, see ns. 4–5 below. On the practice and political goals of establishing *asylia* in general, see Rigsby 1996, e.g., 15–17; Buraselis 2004, 18; Raynor 2016, e.g., 254–255; Knäpper 2018, *passim*, summarized on pp. 270–276; also Michels 2009, 61–64; further Rutherford 2014 and Daubner 2018, 137–149 on several aspects of ancient *theoriai*.

⁴ Herzog 1905; Herzog 1930; cf. Welles, RC nos. 21, 25–28.

⁵ Klaffenbach in Herzog – Klaffenbach 1952; Rigsby 1996, 107–153; Rigsby – Hallof 2001; Bosnakis – Hallof 2003, 228–245; Rigsby 2004; Hallof 2010 = IG XII 4.1.208–245 = PHI 349778–349816 (each listed inscription comprises one to five individual documents or fragments thereof; not included is the early Ptolemaic letter, quoted in n. 8 below). See also IG XII 4.1.282–289 on further rules concerning the Asklepieia; Knäpper 2018, 277–289 for inscriptions published or augmented after the edition of Rigsby 1996 (cf. Habicht 2007, 133–134 for an earlier survey); Bosnakis – Hallof 2018, 153–155, no. 44 for a new fragment of the decree that established the games in the first place; it is to be connected with IG XII 4.1.289. As far as I see, these more recently published texts (except Bosnakis – Hallof 2020) provide no new clues for the fine chronology or the political dependency of Kos. On the obstacles inhibiting the completion of an epigraphic corpus of Kos for over a hundred years, see Hallof – Hallof 2004; cf. Habicht 2007, 123–124.

⁶ Klaffenbach in Herzog – Klaffenbach 1952, 20; Chambers 1954a, 173; 1954b, 389: ‘it is to be assumed that the embassy executed its entire circuit within a single summer’ (though this requires us to ‘disengage’ one of the Ptolemaic inscriptions); Rigsby 1996, 107–109; 2004, 9 and 11 (dating the beginning of the Cretan tour to September 242 BCE). One or more of them are followed by, e.g., Sherwin-White 1978, 111–114; Buraselis 1982, 133; Walbank et al. 1984, 228; Hammond – Walbank 1988, 581–583; Errington 1990, 231 and 296, n. 6 as well as Gabbert 1997, 60 and 75, n. 18 (although both indicate the timeframe for the documents from Macedonia as 242/41); Rigsby – Hallof 2001, 333, 343; Bosnakis – Hallof 2003, 40; Buraselis 2004, 15; Habicht 2007, 133; Errington 2008, 104; Michels 2009, 56; Carlsson 2010, 210; Hallof 2010; Raynor 2016, 253; Bosnakis – Hallof 2018, 153; Coşkun 2018, 228; 251–252; Knäpper 2018, 87–88; Dana 2021, 145; Cojocaru 2021, 1: ‘The games of Asklepios were declared Panhellenic ... and the temple was declared inviolable in 242 BCE.’ 241 BCE is also the chronological anchor for the victor lists of the Asklepieia, on which, in return, the *fasti* of the Koan eponymous magistrates (*monarchoi*) largely hinge, see Habicht 2004, 61–62 and 66–67. Somewhat inconsistent is Will 1979, 261 (243/42 BCE for the 41st year of Gonatas) and 293 (ca. 240 for the letter of Ziaelas). Kuzmin 2019, 71–72 (with n. 76) is undecided between 243 and 242 BCE, and Daubner 2018, 145 is non-committal (‘late 140s’).

⁷ Herzog 1930, 466: ‘Allerdings ist in dem Antwortdekret von Delphi an Smyrna wegen dieses Heiligtums OGI 228 nur von der Asylie die Rede, nicht auch von einem Agon. Da aber sonst immer Asylie und Agon zusammengehören, hat schon Boesch S. 142² und 128ff. ausgeführt, daß aus dem Schweigen von einem Fest in den Antworten nicht geschlossen werden dürfe, daß kein Fest angesagt worden sei, wie ja auch der Ziaelasbrief und A und B mit keinem Wort auf den ἄγῶν der Asklepieia Bezug nehmen. 1) Die Asylie war ja praktisch für das Heiligtum und den Staat

letter. This document is somewhat puzzling, since it mentions the ‘Sister Arsinoe’. It hence seems to be suggesting Ptolemy II Philadelphos (283–246 BCE) as its author, and the business alluded to may thus have been a Koan *theoria* participating in the dynastic cult celebrations at Alexandria. Rigsby, however, offered the alternative explanation that we might be looking at a letter from Ptolemy III Euergetes (246–222 BCE) that encapsulated a letter from his father.⁸ The major bone of contention is the Asklepieia festival mentioned in l. 14, though the extant text does not specify whether these were the annual traditional games of Kos or the new penteteric version of the festival.⁹

None of the younger additions to the dossier challenged this consensus reconstruction, until Bosnakis and Hallof published six further documents in *Chiron* 50, 2020. In light of this new evidence, they suggest dating the diplomatic mission of the Koan *theoroi* to autumn 243 and the first game to 242 BCE.¹⁰ Their chronological analysis involves several problems, some of which are minor,¹¹ whereas others are more

das Wichtigste, an ihrer Garantie lag den Gesandten daher das meiste. Die zum Fest eingeladenen Städte und Könige gewährten diese, ohne auf die Festeinladung zu reagieren, wenn sie keine Verpflichtung für die Beschickung übernehmen wollten.’ Cf. Herzog 1905, 180–181 for a similar view; also Wells, RC, pp. 132 (heterogeneous views) vs. 120 (unified view). Cf. Curty 1995, 49–50, who explains the inconsistent evidence with the unsystematic approach taken by the different ambassadors. Rigsby 1996, 120 (cf. Michels 2009, 57, n. 268) surmises that the letter writers were unconcerned with detail. Knäpper 2018, 92–94 emphasizes that different local diplomatic traditions or perspectives account for the discrepancies.

⁸ Uncertain early Ptolemaic letter: SEG XII 368 = Rigsby no. 13 = PHI 229508 = Welles, RC 21 = Herzog – Klaffenbach 1951, no. 1; cf. the overly speculative restoration by Piejko 1986, as reproduced in SEG XXXVI 756 (though still worthwhile considering is his l. 11: [εἰς Ἀλεξάν]δρει[αν ...]: I here quote the first 16 (of 29) lines as given by Rigsby:

A 1 [- - - - -]I[- - - - -]
 [- - - - -]ΣΤΑΣ[- - - - -]
 [- - - - - τὰ πε]ρὶ τὰς θυσίας [- - - - -]
 A 4 [- - - - -]ν μεθ’ ἡμῶν, ἔ | [- - - - -]
 [- - - - - τ]ῆς ἀδελφῆς Ἀρ[σινόης - - - - -]
 [- - - - -]σαν · καὶ ἐπεὶ προσ[- - - - -]
 [- - - - -] ἐνετύχανον ἡ[μῖν - - - - -]
 A 8 [- - - - - τῆ]ν πανήγυριν, καὶ τ[- - - - -]
 [- - - - -]αν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν [- - - - -]
 A 10 [- - - - -]ὲ καὶ μετὰ τη[- - - - -]
 B 11 [- - - - -] ΛΡΓΙε ... Τ ... Λ[- - - - -]
 B 12 [- - - - -]ΜΗΟΗ καὶ εἴ τισι τ[ῶν - - -]
 [- - - - -]εἶν καὶ παρ’ ἡμῶν [- - - - -]
 [- - - - -] εἰς τὰ Ἀσκληπεία νῶ[v - - - - -]
 [- - - - -] εσθαι · ἡμεῖς δὲ καὶ π[- - - - -]
 B 16 [- - - - -]ς ἐγράψαμεν περὶ [- - - - -]

⁹ Welles, RC 21 and Herzog – Klaffenbach 1951, no. 1 thought of Ptolemy III, and this interpretation gains support from OGIS 42, on which see n. 2 above. However, Piejko 1986 (cf. SEG XXXVI 756) explains the Koan mission with a request for the recognition of *asylia* and an invitation to participate at the Asklepieia in Kos as early as 246 BCE. More convincing is his suggestion that the Koan *theoroi* also participated at an Alexandrian celebration; likewise Rigsby 1996, 126, who prefers Ptolemy III, though leaving the matter undecided. Rigsby is followed by Bosnakis – Hallof 2003, 245, n. 95 (though the sentence is grammatically incomplete and thus not entirely clear), and perhaps also by Knäpper 2018 (e.g., 99; 221–222) and Bosnakis – Hallof 2020, who omit to mention this early letter.

¹⁰ Bosnakis – Hallof 2020, 316–320 on the new chronology, esp. p. 319: ‘dementsprechend das gesamte Asylieurkunden-Dossier in den Herbst 243, die Abhaltung der ersten panhellenischen Asklepieia in den Mai 242 zu datieren’. For a similar chronology, see Hatzopoulos 1996, vol. I 139–143; II 54–55, no. 36 (Philippi); 60, no. 41 (Amphipolis); 64–65, no. 47 (Kassandreia); 74, no. 58 (Pella).

¹¹ It remains unclear whether ‘Herbst’ (autumn) is meant to fall into the earlier or later Macedonian calendar year, when, in actuality, it could be split over both. On p. 318, their argument only seems to make sense if autumn started

serious and might invalidate at least part of their reconstruction.

The main purpose of the present paper is to re-instate the traditional timeline, albeit with some modification: the new source material compels us to distinguish at least two major stages of the diplomatic activities. In a first step, various kings of the Hellenistic world were approached to recognize the *asylia* of the Asklepieion, probably beginning with Ptolemy III, whose rule over Kos appears to have been stable through the relevant years (late summer 243 BCE is the *terminus ad quem* for this initial visit. It is possible, though not necessary, that the aforementioned Ptolemaic letter attests to this early stage of the Koan diplomacy for their Asklepieion. A probably younger and more complete Ptolemaic letter, perhaps from autumn 242 BCE, attests to the even more energetic effort that the Koans had made to establish panhellenic and penteteric games over the previous months: after obtaining a positive response from the Amphictyonic Council of Delphi (probably in early spring 242 BCE), several teams of *theoroi* were sent out (by early summer) to request the monarchs and Greek *poleis* to support the Asklepieia, most importantly by allowing for an *ekecheria* ('armistice') around the time of the games henceforth. The same opportunity was used to endorse the *asylia* of the Koan sanctuary. For the kings who had previously been requested the same, this resulted in a mere repetition.¹²

In the first three sections, I shall unfold my three main arguments concerning

- 1) the attribution of the documents to a first and a second diplomatic campaign by 243 and in 242 BCE respectively;
- 2) the regnal years of Antigonos Gonatas;
- 3) the first dynastic era of Bithynia.

These will be followed by digressions on

- 4) two Seleukid documents, which I shall attribute to Laodike, wife of Antiochos Hierax,
- and 5) another dedicated to the putative Bosporan letter.

Brief conclusions (6) will summarize the results of this study.

1) Disentangling the Evidence for Two Distinct Diplomatic Campaigns of the Koans

The previous scholarly consensus emphasized that the omission of a reference to the games in some documents need not imply that these were introduced only at a later stage; the silence may rather be explained by the fragmentary condition of our sources, differing approaches of the ambassadors, varying local traditions, or the hesitation of some kings to make any commitments regarding the games.¹³ This view was actually problematic all along, not only for its circularity, but also for the fact that limited support of the Koan initiative might have caused some hesitation regarding the public display of disappointing letters at the sanctuary of Asklepios. Moreover, the (later) letter by Ptolemy III summarizes part of the process from hindsight, beginning with a request of the Amphictyonic Council of Delphi and continuing with the visit to several kings and cities in the Greek world; their positive responses were already reported back to Ptolemy, before he endorsed the requests of the Koans. It would be most surprising if he had not been

with the new calendar year, so that the recently-found letter by 'Zigelas' would date to autumn 243 BCE; but the argument of Bosnakis – Hallof actually requires the conclusion of the embassies by the end of 244/43 BCE (to be consistent with the 41st regnal year of Gonatas, on which see section 2 below). Moreover, on p. 320, they argue (convincingly) that this letter of 'Zigelas' was dispatched in the 9th month beginning on 24 May – thus still in spring of whatever year, whereas the decrees from Beroia and Amphipolis date from Gorpiaios, i.e. July/August. The attested months are thus incompatible with confining the whole diplomatic activity to autumn 243 BCE. Add to this that Bosnakis – Hallof 2020, 313 rightly acknowledge the fact that the letter by 'Zigelas' is later than the first letter from Bithynia by Ziaelas and that we should distinguish different time layers in the dossier.

¹² E.g., the decree of Ainos (IG XII 4.1.224 III = PHI 349794 = Rigsby 1996, no. 28, ll. 11–13): [...] | ἐκεχειρίας καὶ ἀγῶν[ας καὶ] αἰ[τοῦσι δέχεσθαι τὴν ἄσυ]λίαν τοῦ ἱεροῦ τοῦ Ἀσκληπιοῦ. On the Amphictyony, see below with n. 14.

¹³ See ns. 6–7 above.

asked for permission and support in the first place, before swarms of ambassadors had been sent out through the Mediterranean, though seemingly except for Egypt.¹⁴ In fact, the decree from Ainos which mentions ‘king Ptolemy and queen Berenike’ may refer to a document issued at the earlier consultation in Alexandria.¹⁵

Be this as it may, we now have positive evidence to refute more firmly the previous assumption that royal courts were attended only once by Koan *theoroi* in the later 240s BCE: there are two pairs of royal letters that can be attributed with a high level of certainty to the same courts, namely to Ziaelas of Bithynia¹⁶ and to a Seleukid ruler¹⁷ respectively. In each case, the earlier epistle fails to address the Koan games when recognizing the *asyilia*, whereas the later ones address the games explicitly while repeating the recognition of *asyilia*. In contrast to the royal correspondence, all near-to-complete civic decrees unanimously refer to both matters.

Another royal letter can be added that does not yet show any concern for the Asklepieia. It was potentially authored by Antigonos Gonatas.¹⁸ If this attribution is correct, then we have a less problematic explanation

¹⁴ Later Ptolemaic letter: IG XII 4.1.212 = PHI 349782 = Bosnakis – Hallof 2003, 242–245, no. 19 (with p. 244: l. 19 reveals the author’s identity; cf. Habicht 2007, 134) = SEG LIII 855 = PHI 229503; cf. the shorter fragment in Rigsby 1996, 112–114, no. 8 (see n. 57 below for a partial translation); also Herzog 1930, 469–471 and Welles, RC 28, who still thought of Attalos I, with a date of ca. 240 BCE):

[βασιλεὺς Πτολεμαῖος Κώϊων τῆι βου]-
 [λῆι κ]αὶ τῶι δήμωι χα[ίρειν· ...c.10...]
 [...].iv, ὅτι ἐπαγγέλλουσιν οἱ παρ’ ὑ-
 4 [μ]ῶν ἀρχιθέωρος τε Φαῖνις καὶ θεω-
 [ρο]ὶ Φιλόφρων καὶ Ἀρχέπολις περὶ
 [τῆ]ς θυσίας, ἣν συντελεῖτε τῶι [Ἀσ]-
 [κ]ληπιῶι, καὶ περὶ τοῦ ἄσυλον εἶν[αι]
 8 [τ]ὸ ἱερὸν τοῦ Ἀσκληπιοῦ· καὶ γὰρ [φασι]
 [τ]οὺς Ἀμφικτύονας ἐψηφίσθαι πε-
 [ρὶ] τούτων καὶ πρὸς τοὺς λοιποὺς
 [βα]σιλεῖς καὶ τὰ ἔθνη καὶ τὰς πό-
 12 [λε]ις ἀφεστάλθαι τοὺς ἀξιώ[ον]-
 [σο]ντας τὴν τε δὴ θυσίαν καὶ τὴν
 [πα]γήγυριν καὶ τὴν τοῦ ἱεροῦ ἀσυλί-
 [αν δε]χόμεθα μάλιστα μὲν διὰ τὸ
 16 [θεῖον, ἐ]πειτα δὲ καὶ δι’ ὑμᾶς· προσήγ-
 [γειαν] δὲ κα[ὶ ὅ]τι ἡ εἰκὼν ἔστηκεν,
 [ἦν ἐ]ψηφίσ[ασθε], καὶ τὸν ἀγῶνα, ὃν τί-
 [θη]μι ἐν Ἱερᾶ[ι Νή]σωι, ἀποδέχεσθε·
 20 ἔ[ρρ]ωσθε.

¹⁵ See ns. 58–59 below on Ainos. In theory, the above-quoted early Ptolemaic letter mentioning ‘our sister Arsinoe’ (n. 8) above could have formed such an opportunity, but such a claim would necessarily be very speculative, given the fragmentary nature of the letter.

¹⁶ First Bithynian letter by Ziaelas: IG XII 4.1.209 = PHI 349779 = Herzog 1905 (including a discussion of some below-standard Greek expressions and their implications on pp. 176–178) = Rigsby no. 11 = Michels 2009, 57–58; second Bithynian letter by ‘Zigelas’: Bosnakis – Hallof 2020, no. 45 B III, more on which below in section 3. And for the different view of Gabelko, see n. 62 below.

¹⁷ First Seleukid letter: IG XII 4.1.210 = PHI 349780 = Rigsby no. 9 (cf. Wells, RC 26), with ll. 8–12 and 21–23 on *asyilia*. This letter was generally ascribed to Seleukos II; in 2018, I preferred Antiochos Hierax, because Seleukos never crossed the Tauros Mountains into Asia Minor again after his defeat at Ankyra in early autumn 246 BCE (Coşkun 2018, *passim*, esp. p. 228 on Hierax), but now I suggest that the same Laodike who authored one of the most recently published letters (Bosnakis – Hallof 2020, text no. 45 B IV, ll. 76–90) had authored this letter as well: on this ‘queen Laodike’, the wife of Hierax, see section 4 below for documentation and discussion.

¹⁸ IG XII 4.1.208 = PHI 349778 = Rigsby no. 10: letter of unknown king (Antigonos Gonatas?); cf. Habicht 2007, 134, 136; Knäpper 2018, 99. Herzog 1930, 463–471 and Welles, RC 27 still thought of Ptolemy III; Bosnakis –

for why the citizens of Pella do not refer to their king, whereas those of Kassandreia, Amphipolis and Philippi do. If the king had shown himself very supportive regarding the *asylia* of the Asklepieion one or a few years before, it would have been less offensive to invite the Pellaians to the games before addressing the king. This may not even have been the intention, but since Gonatas happened not to be in his main residence when a second team of *theoroi* from Kos arrived and their tight travel schedule did not allow them to return to Pella, this must have appeared a feasible choice to all involved.¹⁹ There is, in fact, nothing special about this explanation, as becomes clear from the latest epigraphic finds published by Bosnakis and Hallof: the same *theoria* had already been travelling through southern Macedonia, visiting Aig(e)ai, Beroia and probably some further cities, most likely without having attended the royal court before. In their decrees for the Koans, the Aig(e)aians and Beroians make no particular mention of a royal grant, but the dating of the former decree by the priest of Antigonos and of the latter document to the 41st year of Antigonos' kingship leave no doubt about the subject status. It is thus futile to speculate about differing channels of communication or levels of autonomy among the Macedonian cities.²⁰

There is yet another royal letter by an unknown king that supports the reconstruction here proposed. It is mostly ascribed to Spartokos IV of the Bosphoros (245–240 BCE), although we should not exclude an Anatolian origin, such as Mithradates II of Pontos. The extant fragment only mentions the announcement of games, but acknowledges a previous cordial exchange between the Koans and the king's father. The context of this earlier visit escapes us, so that the least speculative assumption appears to me to connect it with the first diplomatic campaign of the Koans to seek recognition of *asylia*. Concerning the later embassy, the young ruler was thrilled about his invitation to the games and keen on establishing further links with Greek communities, but excused himself this time in the face of current inconveniences.²¹

The further royal letters unfortunately remain too fragmentary to draw any conclusions from them.²² But the attested names of the *theoroi* seem to provide yet additional support for the view that the documents only concerned with the grant of *asylia* are earlier than the royal letters and civic decrees that also recognize the panhellenic games for Asklepios. The first Bithynian letter names the *theoroi* Diogetos, Aristolochos, Theudotos (listed as *theoria* VII by Bosnakis – Hallof), while the first Seleukid letter mentions only Diogetos (as the leader). With some caution, this seems to suggest that the first Bithynian and the first Seleukid letter resulted from the first early mission of the same team of Koan ambassadors. As we shall see below in section 4, the circumstantial evidence for the later letters from Bithynia and the Seleukid court also points to a single Koan *theoria* as the diplomatic background.

Hallof 2003, 244–245 remain agnostic.

¹⁹ According to Rigsby 1996, 134–135, the ambassadors had come to Macedon from the south and continued their way eastwards; cf. Knäpper 2018, 99. This is also implied by the most recently published inscriptions that date the earliest presence of the *theoroi* Aristolochos and Makareus (*theoria* Ia after Bosnakis – Hallof 2020, 218, without Herakleitos) in Beroia (Bosnakis – Hallof 2020, 219, no. A III ll. 27–29) on 2 Gorpaios, shortly after their visit to Aigeai (A II ll. 10–11), before they are attested in Amphipolis on 19 Gorpaios (Rigsby 1996, no. 26 = IG XII 4.1.220 II l. 20 = PHI 349790). See Bosnakis – Hallof 2020, 301–304 for a reconstruction (with map), though dated to 243 BCE. They admit that visiting eight cities in 17 days caused a great 'Hatz der Gesandten durch Makedonien' (p. 304).

²⁰ The tortuous discussion of Raynor 2016, 256–260 reveals how unsatisfactory all the musings about differing power relations are. Cf. Buraselis 2004, 19: while still assuming that Gonatas had been approached before the Pellaians, he believes that no official document was needed for them to know their king's view; cf. Errington 2008, 104.

²¹ IG XII 4.1.213 = PHI 349783 = Rigsby no. 12, on which see section 5 below.

²² The few letters or words preserved in IG XII 4.1.211 = PHI 349781 have been identified as royal letter only because they follow upon the letter traditionally attributed to Seleukos II (IG XII 4.1.210, see n. 17 above). Since a letter by the Leukadians proves that cities under king Alexander II of Epeiros were also approached by the Koans (Rigsby – Hallof 2001, 342–345, no. 5 = IG IX 1².4.1194), this king was probably also among the senders of supporting letters; see Bosnakis – Hallof 2003, 245, n. 95; Knäpper 2018, 98; 277–278.

None of the three aforementioned ambassadors is attested again among the delegations that I attribute to 242 BCE, but Aristolochos (identified as son of Zmendron) then reappears as *architheoros* in the Peloponnese and central Greece, together with a certain Makareus and Herakleitos (listed as *theoria* I). If only we admit that this is the same Aristolochos as encountered in the early embassy to the Bithynian and Seleukid courts, then we can conclude that the early delegations to Western Asia Minor and the only attested delegation to central and southern Greece could not have taken place simultaneously. In fact, the latter mission shows Aristolochos as more senior, which further implies that the involvement of the cities came at a later stage than the (first) visit to the kings.

Further confirmation of this reconstruction seems to come from the fact that Aischron, the son of Theudotos, served as a junior *theoros* in Ionia, Aiolia and Bithynia (*theoria* III).²³ While in itself this may not prove much, it is yet another valid assumption that the father Theudotos had served in an earlier mission than the son Aischron.

2) Antigonid Dynastic Chronology

It was in the month Gorpaios (ca. July/August) of Antigonos' 41st regnal year that the decree of the Amphipolitai and, as now we know thanks to the new discoveries, also the psephisma of the Beroians were expedited. Most scholars agree that Antigonos Gonatas was acclaimed king in 283 BCE. According to the traditional reconstruction, his 41st year of rule equals (243/) 242 BCE. In contrast, Bosnakis and Hallof date the two aforementioned letters to summer 243 BCE, hence claiming 284/83 BCE as the first year of the king.²⁴ They are certainly right to criticize Chambers for basing Gonatas' regnal years on a non-inclusive count (i.e. starting year 1 with the calendar year *after* the assumption of the diadem). However, they fail to observe that Chamber's chronological framework (which they continue drawing on) suffers from similar arithmetic shortcomings that effectively neutralize the inaccuracy of the exclusive count. In other words, when we carefully reconsider the evidence for Antigonid dynastic chronology, the result still aligns with the traditional interpretation of Gonatas' 41st year as 243/42 BCE.²⁵

Most important is a fragment from Porphyry's *Chronicle*, preserved in the Armenian translation of a fragment of Eusebios' *Chronographia*, which I here quote in David Toye's English translation (BNJ 260 F 3.12):²⁶

... Antigonos (II), the son of Demetrios and Phila, the daughter of Antipater, became the master of the kingdom. He was named Gonatas as he happened to be raised in Gonnos in Thessaly. **Around 43 years** would be numbered to him. He had already been king before; the Macedonians had made him their king for a total of 10 years. He had been hailed as king in the second year of the 123rd Olympiad (287/86 BCE), but by the Macedonians in the first year of the 126th Olympiad (276/75 BCE). He was the one who subjugated the Greeks with a strong hand. **He lived altogether for 83 years and he died in the first year of the 135th Olympiad (240/39 BCE).**

²³ Bosnakis – Hallof 2020, 288–289 for documentation and context, though not for the argument. The *theoroi* of the (later) mission to Alexandria (listed as *theoria* VIII by the same scholars) were Phaines, Philophron and Archepolis. They do not reappear.

²⁴ Amphipolitai: IG XII 4.1.220 II 18–34 = PHI 349790 = Rigsby no. 26, ll. 19–20: βασιλεύοντος Ἀντιγόνου ἔτους ἑνὸς καὶ τεσσαρακοστοῦ, ἐπιστάτου Ξενίου τοῦ Ὀργέως, ἐφ' ἱερέως Λυσιμάχου· ψηφίσματα Γορπιαίου ἐνάτη ἐπὶ δέκα. – Beroia: Bosnakis – Hallof 2020, no. 45 A III, ll. 26–27 (on p. 291); cf. p. 297: 'Wie bereits erwähnt, hatte sich Klaffenbach im Anschluss an J. Beloch auf das Jahr 243/242 festgelegt und damit angenommen, dass Anti{o}gonos' Jahr 1 das erste volle Kalenderjahr gewesen ist, in dem er regiert habe, also 283/282, und hierin sind ihm mit z.T. erweiterter Argumentation M. Chambers und N. G. L. Hammond gefolgt'. See the further references in n. 6 above.

²⁵ The present section is a condensed version of Coşkun 2021b.

²⁶ Porphyr. *Chron.* FGH / BNJ 260 F 3 = Eus. *Chron.* 109.8–113.32.

As a compilation of heterogeneous sources, this report is quite confusing, especially the middle part, which is disconnected from the count of the regnal years: it conveys the wrong impression that Gonatas became king soon after his father was expelled from Macedon (in 288/87 BCE: § 6), but is probably right about Gonatas establishing himself as king of Macedon in (276/75 BCE: § 12), before confusing the readers with the claim that the intervening period comprised ten (§ 12) instead of twelve years (or even thirteen: § 9). The decade of his early rule (though not yet kingship) may have started when Demetrios left Greece for his final campaign to Asia Minor, or rather up to two more years later, when he was captured by Seleukos in Kilikia in 285/84 BCE. This is the year we achieve, if counting back a decade (inclusively) from 276/75 BCE. We obtain the same result, when considering that Plutarch has him die in his third year of captivity. Demetrios' last year 283/82 BCE is thus the same as the first of Gonatas' 43 regnal years, calculated from his year of death 240/39 BCE.²⁷ This revised reconstruction still maintains the *communis opinio* that Gonatas officially assumed kingship only after his father had died in captivity.²⁸ There is one seeming difficulty: the Greek tradition of the Porphyry-Eusebios fragment specifies the number of Gonatas' regnal years as 44, which is even confirmed by Pseudo-Lukian (*Makrobioi* 11). Scholars have so far failed to observe that this tradition surmises that Gonatas died in 239/38 BCE. Although this is not made explicit, it is implied in the claim that his successor Demetrios II ruled for ten years, before passing away in spring 229 BCE (§ 13 and Polybios 2.44.1–2). We can thus be sure that Gonatas' 41st regnal year equals 243/42 BCE. The Koan *theoroi* hence visited the Macedonian cities (and Gonatas' court for the second time) in and around August 242 BCE.

3) The First Dynastic Era of the Prusiads

Quite spectacular is the previously unknown letter of king 'Zigelas' (sc. Ziaelas), most of all due to its earliest attestation of a Bithynian era (year 39).²⁹ I agree with Bosnakis – Hallof that we should surmise the same era as the one attested on the coinage minted under the proconsul C. Vibius Pansa in 47 or 46 BCE, and I further accept their argument that the Bithynian month *Briettios* equals *Preieteios*, the ninth month of the Bithynian calendar in Roman times, which fell into May/June.³⁰ It may further seem sound to follow the general assumption that the year 236 on the Pansa coinage implies an era start of 282/81 BCE, the year which saw Lysimachos lose his kingdom and life in the Battle of Korupedion (February 281 BCE).³¹ However, this previous consensus was built on the unproven premise that the (pre-Augustan)

²⁷ For a more detailed outline of Demetrios' last campaigns from Macedon over Greece to Asia Minor and Syria, see Plut. *Demetr.* 44–52. His capture is mostly dated to 286 (Will 1979, 95; Walbank et al. 1984, Chron. Table; Gabbert 1997, vii; Kosmetatou 2012) or 285 (Chambers 1954b, 387: ca. mid-285; Gehrke 2008, 42; Wheatley 2012), but Plutarch's narrative points to the second or third spring of his campaign in 284 BCE. His death and Gonatas' succession are believed to have occurred 284/83 (Tarn 1913/69, 112, n. 3; Chambers 1954b, 387) or 283 (Will 1979, 95; Buraselis 1982, 108; Walbank et al. 1984, Chron. Table; Errington 1990, 154; Kosmetatou 2012) or 282 (Wheatley 2012) BCE. The beginning of Gonatas' first rule in Macedon is put in 277 (Walbank et al. 1984, Chron. Table; Adams 2010, 219), 277/76 (Errington 1990, 163) or 276 BCE (Will 1979, 210; Errington 2008, 79; Gehrke 2008, 42; cf. Kosmetatou 2012: he 'spent the decade of 286–276 BCE in search of a kingdom'); cf. Toye 2011 on Porphyry, BNJ 260 F 3.12: 'either 277/6 BC or 276/5 BC'. 240/39 is generally accepted for the death of Gonatas and succession of Demetrios II (Chambers 1954, 386–387, with n. 6; Will 1979, 337; Walbank et al. 1984, Chron. Table; Errington 1990, 173; 2008, 94; Kuzmin 2019, 78), or 239 BCE (Buraselis 1982, 108; Gabbert 1997, vii; Errington 2008, 79; Adams 2010, 222; Kosmetatou 2012; Kuzmin 2019, 64–66).

²⁸ Tarn 1913/69, 112, n. 3 and 434, n. 6 and Chambers 1954b, 387; cf. Buraselis 1982, 151–152: 'Aus dynastischem Kontinuitätsgefühl und seiner auch sonst bezeugten Loyalität gegenüber seinem Vater, hat Antigonos erst von dessen Tod (283) an die Jahre seines eigenen Königtums zählen lassen, woran auch die spätere Gewinnung des makedonischen Throns ... nichts änderte'; also Hammond and Walbank 1988, 582; Rigsby 1996, 107, n. 6, and see the previous n. for further references.

²⁹ Bosnakis – Hallof 2020, no. 45 B III, ll. 68, 74–75 on p. 293.

³⁰ Bosnakis – Hallof 2020, 320.

³¹ Thus is also the view of Vitucci 1953, 17–18; Stumpf 1991, 56–74; Leschhorn 1993, 191–197; Marek 1993, 21–

Bithynian calendar began with the equivalent to the Macedonian month *Dios* (ca. September/October).³² If we combine the evidence from Kos, especially the firm Antigonid chronology, with that provided by the Roman provincial coinage, we should rather understand that ‘Zigelas’ received Koan ambassadors for the second time in June 242 BCE, not much later than another group of *theoroi* is attested on Korkyra (on 13 Panemos, May/June) and a few days before yet others were travelling through Macedon (on 2 Gorpaios in Beroia).³³ Accordingly, Pansa’s proconsulship fell in the Bithynian calendar years 47/46 and 46/45 BCE and the aforesaid coinage was minted most likely in the latter of those years. The combined evidence thus implies that the early-Bithynian dynastic era began in 281/80 BCE, i.e. the year following upon the Battle of Korupedion and the murder of Seleukos I, when Bithynia, Pontos and the Northern League of Herakleia were fighting for their independence against the troops of Antiochos I.

4) Queen Laodike, Wife of Antiochos Hierax

The new documentation published by Bosnakis – Hallof includes a letter authored by ‘queen Laodike’.³⁴ The editors identify her with Laodike I, widow of Antiochos II (266/261–246 BCE), and thus reject my claim that this royal lady was killed in combat against Ptolemy around August 246 BCE.³⁵ I agree with my critics in so far as the *basilissa* Laodike who authored the letter to the Koans was a Seleukid queen. This is indeed revealed by the motif of the seal that is specified immediately following her name: ‘the (Seleukid) anchor’ (l. 76). Obviously, neither the wife of Ziaelas of Bithynia nor the spouse of Mithradates II of Pontos are plausible alternatives. But two further possibilities remain to be considered.

I begin with Laodike II, the wife of Seleukos II (246–226/5 BCE). Traditionally, her name and royal title have been taken for granted, just as for Laodike I. But since neither the literary evidence nor the epigraphic record for the wife of Antiochos II (inscriptions attest to her through the years 254–246 BCE) ascribes her the *basilissa* title, I previously expressed a preference for Laodike II.³⁶ However, upon revisiting the

24; cf. Bosnakis – Hallof 2020, 318–320. They surmise an urban rather than dynastic context of celebrating liberation from Lysimachos, although they admit that not all of the Bithynian cities had been founded by 281 BCE. For a new historical interpretation of the two dynastic Bithynian eras, see Coşkun 2022.

³² Cf. Bosnakis and Hallof 2020, 316, n. 88, on the later Hellenistic era introduced by Nikomedes II in 149 BCE: ‘Die Frage, ob das Jahr 297, auf das die Münzzahlen führen, Anfang Oktober endete oder begann, d. h. ob das Epochenjahr 298/297 oder 297/296 war (was einige historisch wichtige Implikationen hat, besonders für das Ende des bithynischen Königreiches und den Beginn des 3. Mithridatischen Krieges), kann hier außer Acht bleiben.’ – To be distinguished are the Roman eras of Bithynian cities as documented by Marek 1993, 129–134.

³³ Korkyra: IG XII 4.1.220 IV 56–63 = PHI 349790 = Rigsby no. 45, l. 57. Beroia: Bosnakis – Hallof 2020, no. 45 A III, ll. 26–27 (on p. 291).

³⁴ Bosnakis – Hallof 2020, 293 + 295 (text no. 45 B IV, ll. 76–90), 320–321 (photograph and German translation), 322–326 (discussion).

³⁵ Coşkun 2016a, esp. 133 on her death in 246 BCE: this is supported by App. Syr. 65.346, whereas Plutarch’s claim (mor. 489a) that she had instigated the revolt of Hierax conflicts even with Justin’s account (27.1–3), where she is loyal to her older son; considering the role of her brother Alexander in Porphyry / Eusebios FGH / BNJ 260 F 32.8 ed. Jacoby / ed. Toye, it should be obvious that Plutarch just conflated the evil agency. Cf. Coşkun 2018 on a detailed reconstruction of the War of Brothers, 246–242 BCE, and the largely contemporary Third Syrian War. Bosnakis – Hallof fail to engage with those arguments, as does Hämmerling 2019, 86–98, who likewise adheres to the traditional chronology, dating Laodike I’s death to sometime after 241 BCE. Documentation for all members of the Seleukid family mentioned in the following section can be completed from Grainger 1997; 2014; Monerie 2014; Coşkun 2016; McAuley 2018; Hämmerling 2019, though with partly differing reconstructions.

³⁶ For a negative conclusion regarding the queenship of Laodike I, see Coşkun 2016a, 112–127 and 133, esp. 116–118 for the inscriptions from Asia Minor and Babylon. The most compelling piece of evidence is the so-called Lehmann text, which attests to Laodike I as the wife of king Antiochos II from the later 250s to 246 BCE; the most important edition is now by Wallenfels and van der Spek 2014, no. 148A, although they implausibly date the relevant timeframe to 237/36 BCE. I shall discuss her case in much more detail in Coşkun forthcoming. Cf. Ramsey 2020 for the latest treatment of her political and economic activities (although she is labelled Laodike II by mishap); see also

evidence for her, it turns out that neither the name nor the title of Seleukos II's wife are firmly attested. Most probably, she was not a *basilissa* either.

A better identification of the author of the new letter is therefore with the daughter of Ziaelas and wife of Antiochos Hierax.³⁷ Hierax began controlling Asia Minor as early as 246 (probably at the instigation of his uncle Alexander), married the Bithynian princess perhaps in 244 or 243 BCE, and assumed the royal title ca. 243 BCE when campaigning in Armenia.³⁸ The latter date would also be the *terminus a quo* for his wife adopting the *basilissa* title, thus a good match with the chronology of the Koan dossier here proposed.³⁹ This is fully in line with the complete lack of evidence for the assumption that Seleukos II might have returned to Western Asia Minor after the Battle of Ankyra (October 246 BCE) or that his mother Laodike I survived the attack of Ptolemy III on Ionia in summer 246 BCE.⁴⁰

Moreover, both Seleukid letters are tied to their Bithynian counterparts in unique fashion: the same team of *theoroi* approached the Seleukid court after visiting Ziaelas in Nikomedia,⁴¹ which speaks against Syrian Antioch and for Sardeis, the latter being the main Seleukid residence in Western Asia Minor.

In addition, there is a somewhat unusual indication introducing the letter of 'Zigelas' (B III 1. 67): ἐπιστολαὶ δὲ ταῖδε ἦλθον παρὰ Ζιγήλα ἔχουσαι ἐπίσημον ἵππῆ – 'And these letters came from Zigelas, having as seal a horse.' Bosnakis – Hallof have concluded convincingly that, in this singular case, the Bithynian and Seleukid epistles (B III and IV) reached Kos not by the *theoroi*, but by a royal messenger from Nikomedia (as implied by the horse seal), and further that this delivery included also the letter by Laodike (B IV), which was sealed once more with the anchor.⁴² This implies a close connection between the two courts. Such a relation only makes sense in the context of or after the marriage of Hierax and Laodike, at least as long as the relations between the courts of Sardeis and Nikomedia remained close, after Ziaelas had broken with Seleukos II.

Hämmerling 2019, 86–98, often with different views; he is undecided about her time of death (p. 98, n. 413), yet does not even exclude that she might have been alive in the 230s BCE (p. 65). Evidence for a *basilissa Laodike* whom I regarded as Laodike II comes from Labraunda: I.Labraunda 8 ll. 19–20, cf. Coşkun 2016b, 213, n. 8, whereas van Bremen 2016, 16–18, 21 dates the attested transaction to 254/53 BCE and thus equates the queen with Laodike I; for a full discussion of the Olympichos dossier, see Coşkun in preparation. Add an inconclusive fragment from Miletos: Kotsidou 2000, no. 273: [?*basiliss*]a *Laodike*. For an optimistic view on Laodike II, see Hämmerling 2019, 64–66.

³⁷ She has been considered though quickly dismissed by Bosnakis – Hallof 2020, 321–322. Ziaelas is mentioned as the father of Hierax' (unnamed) wife in Porphyry / Eusebios FGH / BNJ 260 F 32.8 ed. Jacoby / ed. Toye. And the daughter of Hierax was called Laodike (Polyb. 8.20.11, despite frequent claims that Polybios confused her with a daughter of Mithradates II, but see Coşkun forthcoming). It is a plausible assumption that also the wife of Ziaelas and his daughter were called Laodike, even if only at the time of their wedding; cf. McAuley 2018 on this standard name of Seleukid brides married to vassal dynasties; see Coşkun forthcoming for the latest prosopographical discussions.

³⁸ See Coşkun 2018, 205–211 (revolt in 246 BCE: Porphyry / Eusebios FGH / BNJ 260 F 32.8, misdated by Justin 27.2 to after the Third Syrian War, with an unconvincing reconstruction of events); 233 (wedding at an uncertain date, but see the previous note); 222–226 (assumption of the diadem during Hierax' Armenian campaign: Polybios 4.17). See also the references in ns. 17, 35–37 above.

³⁹ See Bosnakis – Hallof 2020, 325–326 for a different view.

⁴⁰ I have tried to show that the whole confused evidence for the War of Brothers and Third Syrian War only makes sense if we admit the Porphyrian tradition, according to which the Battle of Ankyra fell into autumn 246 BCE; no later campaign of Seleukos II can be located in Asia Minor, see n. 38 above. Not even loyalist statements from around 244 BCE, as issued by the Smyrnaeans (OGIS I 229 = I.Magnesia am Sipylus 1 = I.Smyrna II 1.573 = Austin² 174) or Olympichos in his correspondence with Mylasa (on which see n. 36 above) imply Seleukos' return to Asia Minor.

⁴¹ See n. 14 on the *theoroi*.

⁴² Bosnakis – Hallof 2020, 312–313.

If this reconstruction is accepted, then we should go one step further and identify Laodike also as the author of the first Seleukid letter. She may have been in charge either during Hierax' campaign in Armenia in ca. 243 BCE, but perhaps she was also a few years older than the teenage ruler and controlled the diplomacy in close connection with her father's administration. At least, the author's name of the earlier Seleukid letter is lost to us, and the description of the relation between the monarch's relation with the Koans is vague and non-committal, and thus adequate for the situation before 242 BCE.⁴³ As I have explained elsewhere in more detail, Hierax abandoned the Ptolemaic side in ca. 242 BCE. It is thus interesting to observe that Ziaelas was still adhering to Ptolemy III when granting his first letter (ca. 243 BCE), while there is no such mention in the more recent one. Although this silence should not be overly pressed,⁴⁴ it is worthwhile pointing out that the changing attitude of Ziaelas seems to match perfectly the political choices of Hierax. This usurper prince had first risen against his brother Seleukos II with Ptolemaic support at the age of 14 in 246 BCE, but eventually accepted Asia Minor as a price for peace around 242 BCE, and thus abandoned the alliance with Ptolemy III. Bithynia apparently maintained its closer ties with Hierax, not least thanks to the marital ties.⁴⁵

5) A Royal Letter from the Bosporos?

The prevailing view attributes IG XII 4.1.213 = PHI 349783 = Rigsby no. 12 to Spartokos IV of the Bosporos. This suggestion goes back to Jeanne Robert – Louis Robert, who realised that the king who authored the letter was not Greek himself.⁴⁶ Christel Müller has endorsed this interpretation by pointing to the dynastic instability after the death of Pairisades in 245 BCE. Katharina Knäpper finds further support in the unique mention of 'our citizens', which, in her eyes, seems to point to the fact that the Bosporan kingship was an extended rule of the city of Pantikapaion. In fact, royal coinage was issued in Pantikapaion only as of Leukon II (ca. 240–220 BCE). Likewise, Madalina Dana contextualizes the letter among the sustained efforts of the Spartokids to network among Greek communities.⁴⁷

Uncertainties do, however, remain. Without specifying them, Kostas Buraselis indicates that 'the interior of Asia Minor might provide alternative candidates'. Reservations against Kappadokia or Pontos are voiced by Christoph Michels, since evidence for their engagement as *euergetai* of Greek *poleis* is much later.⁴⁸ And yet, it is quite uncertain if the Spartokids ever presented themselves or the citizens of Pantikapaion (collectively) as non-Greeks. Moreover, as long as we lack a parallel for the unique expression 'our citizens', this may be related, at least tentatively, to any *politai* directly or indirectly under a king's control, even though one would prefer a ruler less familiar with Greek political traditions.

In addition, sibling marriages, whether effective or only nominal (i.e. reflecting mythical traditions in ritual or titulature) are well attested for the Ptolemies (as of Ptolemy II) and Seleukids (as of Antiochos

⁴³ IG XII 4.1.210 = PHI 349780 = Rigsby no. 9, ll. 12–16: ἡμεῖς δὲ τὸν τε | δῆμον ἐπηνόμην διὰ | τὴν πρὸς τοὺς θεοὺς ἐν|σέβειαν καὶ ἐπὶ τῷ τὰ πρὸς | ἡμᾶς φανερὰ ποεῖν. Compare this with the reference to the previous encounter in the second letter, Bosnakis – Hallof 2020, text no. 45 B IV, ll. 82–83: ἡμεῖς δὲ καὶ πρότερον μὲν οἰκείως εἴχομεν τὰ πρὸς τὸν δῆμον καὶ νῦν ἀποδεδέγμεθα ... A worthwhile endeavour would be a stylistic comparison of the two letters. Riet van Bremen kindly drew my attention to some striking parallels, such as the use of the first person plural throughout as well as the repeat of *πειρασόμεθα* (in Welles, RC 26, l. 24 / Bosnakis – Hallof 2020, no. 45, B IV l. 86) and of circumstantial considerations in the very same contexts. However, to fully draw on this argument, the Seleukid epistolary style would have to be investigated in more detail than is possible in the present study.

⁴⁴ Admittedly, the first Seleukid letter (n. 17 above) does not mention the Ptolemies either.

⁴⁵ See n. 38 above on the Third Syrian War and the War of Brothers.

⁴⁶ Robert – Robert, BE 1953, 155–158; cf. Rigsby ('Letter of unknown (Spartocid?) king') and Hallof *ad* IG XII 4.1.213.

⁴⁷ Müller 2010, 70–71; Knäpper 2018, 101–103 (add MacDonald 2005, 13–30 on the coinage of the Spartokids); Dana 2021, 146–147; for a similar argument on the letter of Ziaelas, see Herzog 1905.

⁴⁸ Buraselis 2004, 15; Michel 2009, 122–123, n. 604.

I), but would be puzzling in a Spartokid context. Incest is often claimed for Mithradates IV of Pontos in the mid-2nd century BCE, though I would rather explain his epithet *Philadelphos* by his caring relation with his brother Pharnakes I (and his nephew Mithradates V), so that we would have to wait for Mithradates VI.⁴⁹ Be this as it may, Mithradates II was the first to marry a Seleukid princess around 244/42 BCE.⁵⁰ She may thus have imported the sister title, unless this was a legacy within the Mithradatid dynasty from Achaemenid times. If either of these suggestions should be right, then the king's 'citizens' would likely denote the Amastrians, whom Mithradates I (and Ariobarzanes) had conquered as first Greek subjects of Pontos.⁵¹

A firm decision cannot be made, except that we should rule out the king's identity with a Bithynian king, lest we end up with three royal letters from this modest realm.⁵²

6) Conclusions and Outlook

I have argued above that the 41st regnal year of Antigonos Gonatas provides a firm chronological anchor to date the Koan embassies to the Greek cities to summer 242 BCE (section 2). My discussion of the early Bithynian era year 39, in which the letter of king 'Zigelas' (i.e. the second Bithynian epistle) was composed, is fully compatible with this date; it points to a second visit of a Koan *theoria* at the Nikomedian court in spring 242 BCE (section 3). The second Seleukid letter authored by queen Laodike must have been written a few days later (section 4). At the beginning (section 1), I have tried to show that the pairs of Bithynian and Seleukid letters reveal two separate diplomatic missions of the Koans. The earlier embassies were only concerned with the recognition of *asylia* for the sanctuary of Asklepios. The later *theoriai* in 242 BCE requested the kings to repeat the recognition of the *asylia* of their Asklepieion and to express support for the new panhellenic festival that would be hosted in the upcoming spring of 241 BCE for the first time.

While this distinction is explicit in the aforementioned letter pairs, the same pattern also seems to emerge from the more limited evidence we have for the (earlier) response from Antigonos Gonatas and the (later) response by a king traditionally identified with Spartokos IV of the Bosporos, but tentatively addressed as Mithradates II of Pontos by me (section 5). This possibly Pontic letter reveals that the previous diplomatic exchange had been with the father of the current king (thus perhaps Ariobarzanes), which might

⁴⁹ Ptolemies and Seleukids: Jones 1993, 81–88; cf. Hämmerling 2019, 30–58. Problems with Spartokids: Rigsby 1996, 124. Mithradates IV Philadelphos: Hämmerling 2019, 58–62; Roller 2020, 74–76; *contra* Coşkun 2021a, 17–18.

⁵⁰ Just. 38.5.3 with Coşkun 2018, 209; 226–227; 250 with n. 135; and 2021a, 10 with n. 41; cf. Hämmerling 2019, 139–149.

⁵¹ Cf. Roller 2020, 36–39; Coşkun 2021a, 10.

⁵² *Pace* Gabelko, who has been advocating for a Bithynian origin, following the idea of Archil Balakhvantsev. In Gabelko 2005, 209–218 (cf. 167, 482–83), they suggested that IG XII 4.1.209 = PHI 349779 = Rigsby no. 11 represents an initial recognition of *asylia* by Ziaelas in 246 BCE, thus at a time before it was even requested by the Koans. This is fiercely rejected by Knäpper 2018, 103, n. 192, although I would concede that at least the distinction of two different diplomatic stages maintains its merit. The idea of Gabelko and Balakhvantsev has gradually changed over time, but they continue objecting a Bosporan interpretation of the letter (Gabelko 2015, with English summary on p. 134). Gabelko now prefers to contextualize the putative Bosporan letter within a split Bithynian kingdom, assuming that Ziaelas never controlled the whole territory. He believes that his stepbrother Zipoites III (attested as revolting against Prusias I in 220 BCE by Polyb. 4.50.8–9 on 'Tiboites') already controlled an independent Bithynian territory since the 250s (cf. Gabelko 2017, 325–326, with further references in n. 47) and could thus author IG XII 4.1.209 in the 240s (also Gabelko *per litteras*, 25 August 2021). This seems to stretch the evidence of Polybios, since the conflict he refers to is explicitly about the succession of Ziaelas. Gabelko's argument is thus lacking positive evidence for a split Bithynian territory anytime after the revolt of Ziaelas until the revolt of Sokrates Chrestos early in the 1st century. At any rate, the discovery of the letter of 'Zigelas' has led to a further nuance. As laid out at a conference dedicated to the Koan dossier, held at the Russian State Humanitarian University, Moscow, 23 April 2021, Gabelko now abandons the identification of the author of IG XII 4.1.213 = PHI 349783 = Rigsby no. 12 with Ziaelas and suggests instead that he was also Zipoites III.

point to a significant time gap between the two embassies. The same could be implied in the fact that one of the *theoroi* of the later missions (Aischron) was the son of an ambassador (Theudotos) who had been on the earlier mission to Ziaelas. Since this Bithynian king succeeded to his father Nikomedes I later in the 250s BCE, several years may have passed between the first and the second ‘promotion’ of Kos. However, if I am right to identify the author of the first Seleukid letter likewise with Laodike, wife of Antiochos Hierax (section 4), then the earlier embassy was likely on its way in 243 BCE.

The distinction of two separate diplomatic moves that I am proposing is thus emerging quite clearly from our sources. In addition, it is entirely plausible from a political perspective. The first stage of diplomatic activities could safely ignore most or all cities, since only kings (perhaps with the exception of Rhodes) had the power to harm the island of Kos. They were obviously asked first to respect the *asyilia* of the island’s major sanctuary. In contrast, the second move was authorized by the Amphictyonic Council,⁵³ in which the Greek cities or city leagues had a significant say. The *theoroi* of this younger mission could thus draw on the combined authorities of the kings and the council of Delphi, before they approached the Greek cities with their requests, while also visiting the royal courts once more. The second Bithynian letter is very explicit in that the request of *asyilia* had already been granted before,⁵⁴ and the reference to a previous benevolent reception of a Koan embassy in the second Seleukid letter essentially means the same.⁵⁵ In 242 BCE, the support of every single city and territorial ruler was required to warrant a full *ekecheiria* for a while before, during and after the Asklepieia, so that everyone willing to participate had ensured his free access to Kos and return from it. The announcement and the request of recognition of the Asklepieia were thus much more arduous tasks. They may have been part of the plan from the inception of Koan diplomacy for Asklepios, unless the highly favourable responses to the first request might have encouraged the Koans to be even bolder and host panhellenic games.

Some scholars have understood the letter of Ptolemy III as implying that the Koans confronted their king with a *fait accompli*, and that he had to give in when told that all other kings and cities had already expressed their consent.⁵⁶ While possible in theory, I am rather inclined to turn this reconstruction upside down. Euergetes’ explicit statement on the broad support for the Koans appears to me as the formal conclusion of a complex diplomatic move, conducted in full agreement between the supportive king and his loyal subjects.⁵⁷ Considering the repeated expression of either loyalty to the Ptolemaic king (and queen)

⁵³ See the letter of Ptolemy III, I. 9, as quoted in n. 14 above.

⁵⁴ Bosnakis – Hallof 2020, B III II. 73–74: καὶ τὸ ἱερόν, καθάπερ ὑμῖν καὶ πρότερον ἐπέστείλαμεν, νομίζομεν εἶναι ἄσυλον.

⁵⁵ Bosnakis – Hallof 2020, B IV II. 82–84: ἡμεῖς δὲ καὶ πρότερον μὲν οἰκειῶς εἶχομεν τὰ | πρὸς τὸν δῆμον καὶ νῦν ἀποδεδέγμεθα ὡς ἐνδέχεται φιλ[αν]θρωπότατα.

⁵⁶ See Rigsby 1996, 114; cf. Knäpper 2018, 222. For a mitigated position, see Buraselis 2004, 19: ‘The Ptolemaic umbrella over Kos did not cease to exist, but it was apparently not enough any more to keep away all rain, as recent storms might have shown. This was certainly no neutralization of Kos but rather a prudent move towards a more cautious, pluralistic foreign policy ...’. For yet another view, see Carlsson 2010, 210: she concludes that the naval Battle of Kos (dated to 262/256 BC by her) resulted in the loss of Ptolemaic control of the island. While she admits that Ptolemy III began expanding his hegemony into the north-east Aegean and further infers from the *asyilia* dossier that Kos entertained ‘good relations’ with the Alexandrian court by 242 BC, she seems to be surmising that the relation to Antigonos Gonatas was closer around those years. More convincingly, Habicht 2007, 133–134 claims an active involvement of Ptolemy III in the process; cf. Michels 2009, 57, n. 267. The close relation between Alexandria and Kos is also illustrated by the existence of a sanctuary for Alexander and the Ptolemies on the island at some point in the mid-3rd century BCE: Bosnakis – Hallof 2003, 226–228. Without addressing the Ptolemaic-Koan relations specifically, Daubner 2018 concludes his study of the *theorodokoi* lists by stating that peer polity interaction in the field of religious diplomacy remained lively in the Hellenistic world that was dominated by kings. For general references on the political implications of establishing *asyilia*, see n. 3 above.

⁵⁷ Letter of Ptolemy III (IG XII 4.1.212), as quoted in n. 14 above, esp. II. 7–16: ‘For [they say] too that the Amphictyons have voted on these things and that requesters have been sent to the other kings and nations and cities. We

or friendship with him also in other documents,⁵⁸ and further the letter of Ptolemy III himself endorsing the *asylia* and penteteric games, the plan of the multilayered initiative should have been duly discussed at the Alexandrian court, perhaps in connection with a Koan *theoria* visiting the Egyptian capital to attend other festivals.⁵⁹ In the later course of the Third Syrian War (246–241 BCE), when Seleukos was unexpectedly overcoming the heavy setbacks suffered early in his reign and eventually managed to induce Antiochos Hierax and Ziales to change sides (in ca. 242 BCE), he started to pose a serious threat to the Ptolemies.⁶⁰ In this situation, the promotion of Kos might have heralded the prosperity that Greek cities could expect to gain and maintain under Ptolemaic rule.

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accept the sacrifice and festival and the inviolability of the temple, especially for the sake of the god but next on your account.’ (transl. Rigsby 1996, 113). That we can be sure to ascribe this undated letter to Ptolemy III and not II is indicated further by the decree of Ainos, which expresses its devotion for ‘king Ptolemy (III) and queen Berenike (II)’ (IG XII 4.1.224 III = PHI 349794 = Rigsby 1996, no. 28, ll. 15–16; cf. Will 1979, 261). Also note the yearly ‘*pompe* for king Ptolemy’ organized by the Gymnasion of Kos (IG XII 4.1.281 I 12–14, though without date, but noted in a calendar that also prescribed a *pompe* for king Attalos: II 41–42).

⁵⁸ Thus, e.g., in the decree of Ainos (see previous note) or the first Bithynian letter (above, n. 16, cf. Michels 2009, 61), which thus proves that the Koans had been granted permission by Ptolemy before they went on their mission.

⁵⁹ Thus perhaps implied in the first Ptolemaic letter, see above, n. 5. Active Ptolemaic support is also emphasized by Bosnakis – Hallof 2003, 244.

⁶⁰ On the course of the Third Syrian War, see Grainger 2010 (traditional chronology, cf. Errington 2008, 123) and Coşkun 2018 (revised chronology).

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Yeni Epigrafik Belgeler Işığında Kos *Asyilia* Dosyasının Kronolojisinin Tekrar Gözden Geçirilmesi

Öz: Üçüncü Suriye Savaşı tüm şiddetiyle devam ederken, Koslular Asklepieion’larına *asyilia* imtiyazı elde etmek, ayrıca tüm Akdeniz Dünyası’na tanınan ve 4 yılda bir kutlanan panhellenik oyunlara sahip olmak için önemli diplomatik çabalar sarf etmişlerdir. 1950’lerde Günther Klaffenbach ve Mortimer Chambers, daha sonra üzerinde fikir birliği oluşacak şu kronolojiyi sunmuşlardır: Onlara göre *theoroi* MÖ 242 yazında, yani Kos’ta ilk oyunların kutlandığı İÖ 241 yılı mayıs ayı civarından önce, birkaç kraliyet sarayını ve çok sayıda Yunan *polis*’ini büyük oranda İÖ 242 yazında ziyaret etmişlerdi. Şimdiye kadar genel kabul gören bu kronoloji, yakın zamanda bulunan ve içlerinde Kral Zigelas’ın (Bithynia Kralı Ziaelas) bilinmeyen bir eranın 39. yılına tarihlenen bir mektubunu da bulunduğu altı belgeye dayanarak olayları bir yıl önceye çekmeyi öneren Dimitris Bosnakis ve Klaus Hallof (*Chiron* 50, 2020, 287-326) tarafından artık reddedilmektedir. Makalede bu görüşün yerine *asyilia* imtiyazının bazı krallar tarafından muhtemelen İÖ 243’te tanındığı, buna karşın Asklepieia’yı desteklemek için yürütülen diplomatik girişimlerin ilk Asklepieia’nın İÖ 241’de düzenlenmesinden önce 242 yılı ilkbaharından sonbaharına kadar sürdüğü iddia edilmektedir. Kronolojideki bu düzeltme, başta Antigonos Gonatas’ın biyografisi (hükümlerliliği İÖ 283/82’de başlar) ile Bithynia’nın ilk hanedanlık erasının başlangıcı (MÖ 281) olmak üzere İÖ 3. yüzyıl tarihinin diğer yönleri için de önemli sonuçlar doğurmaktadır. Ayrıca, yeni mektubun yazarı olan kraliçe Laodike, Antiokhos Hieraks’ın karısı ve daha önce II. Seleukos’a atfedilen anonim kraliyet

mektubunun yazarı ile özdeşleştirilmelidir. Öte yandan daha önce Bosporos Kralı IV. Spartokos'a atfedilen mektup da olasılıkla Pontos Kralı II. Mithradates'e ait olmalıdır. Epigrafik kanıtlar Kosluların III. Ptolemaios Euergetes'e sadakatlerinde kararlı olduklarını gösterirken, Nikomedeia ve Sardeis saraylarından gelen ikinci mektuplar, Ziaelas ve Hieraks'ın yönlerini giderek II. Seleukos'a doğru çevirmeye başladıklarının işareti olarak değendirilebilir.

ANAHTAR SÖZCÜKLER: Kos, Asklepieia, *asylia*, *theoroi*, Bithynia hanedanlık eraları, Bithynia Kralı Ziaelas, Laodike (Antiokhos Hieraks'ın eşi), III. Ptolemaios Euergetes, II. Antigonos Gonatas, Bosporos Kralı IV. Spartokos, Pontos Kralı II. Mithradates.