Panagiotis P. Iossif, Catharine C. Lorber. *The Cult of Helios in the Seleucid East*

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- 1 Amongst the many representations of Seleucid sovereigns on their coins or on official and unofficial seals are the portrayals of kings that clearly link them to Helios or a solar god. In these representations, which do not seem to go back prior to the accession of Seleucus IV, the king's head "radiates", sometimes floral patterns. This should probably be interpreted as a symbol of prosperity. The iconography of the king should, of course, be related to the political situation, as many studies on self-representation in several regions of the Seleucid Empire have shown. Nonetheless, the origin and purpose of such representations remain unclear. The present article presents the evidence from numismatic, epigraphic and sphragistic sources about the evolving, complicated policy of the Seleucids with respect to eastern cults, in particular the close, manifest connection of certain sovereigns (at least starting from the reign of Seleucus IV) with eastern solar gods but mediated by the figures of the Greek gods Helios and Apollo. This connection reflects the Seleucid kings' need of legitimacy in the ancient Near East. The authors' allusion to the Iranian notion of *xwarənah*, which, since the Achaemenid period, refers to royal legitimacy, is worth mentioning and worthy of further study.

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