CHAPTER EIGHT

THE SELEUKID COLLAPSE

The Seleukid kingdom had been put together piece by piece, and it fell apart in the same way. Seleukos I had begun as satrap of Babylonia and, after losing that land for a time, had recovered it, and then quickly added Media, Susiana, and Persis to it. But it was then several more years before he took over the eastern provinces, centred on Baktria, and then Syria—the northern part. Asia Minor was added after another twenty years. Only twenty years later Baktria was in the hands of a satrap, Diodotos, who was soon cut off by the incursions of the Parni into Parthia. And during the reign of Seleukos II, two decades later still Diodotos’ son made himself fully independent.

The history of the Central Asian region moved to its own rhythm, and it is perhaps better to see its inclusion within the Seleukid kingdom as a temporary aberration, a brief continuation of the Akhaimenid position. But it had also become clear that the Seleukid state as constituted in the mid-third century was incapable of holding on to other marginal areas besides Baktria. Attempts to conquer Bithynia had failed; Pontos similarly; Pergamon went from subject to independent city by means of victory in a single minor battle; Kappadokia became an independent kingdom. All these sections of Asia Minor were originally parts of Seleukos’ share of the kingdoms of Antigonos and Lysimachos, but they could not be held. In part, of course, this was due to the Galatian incursions and raids, but even after these enemies were brought under some control, the ‘lost’ lands were unrecoverable. The marriages of Stratonike and Laodike, the daughters of Antiochos II, to the kings of Kappadokia and Pontos (Ariarathes III and Mithradates II), symbolized the independence of those kingdoms from the Seleukid state, as well as their attachment to its king. These relationships, of course, encircled the Galatians, and are obviously intended for that purpose. But the continued presence and independence of the Galatians within Asia Minor was still another indication of the basic Seleukid fragility.

These marriages also indicate one of the methods by which the Seleukid kings were dealing with the decline and shrinkage of their patrimony. By marrying daughters to these kings the new kingdoms were attached
in a loose way to the parent state, just as the intermarriages of Seleukids and Antigonids attached Macedon to the Seleukid interest. The linking of the family of Akhaios, who was probably the youngest son of Seleukos I, into the intermarriage scheme was of the same pattern. In Asia Minor, by the time of the reign of Seleukos II, the Seleukid family was linked by marriage to the Attalids, the Akhaiids and the Antigonids, and to the kings of Pontos and Kappadokia. The result was an intricate familial web covering much of Asia Minor, plus Macedon.¹

This may have been an intended result, though the marriages were usually contacted for short-term political reasons and the overall structure simply emerged. One consequence was simultaneously to exalt those families which moved into the Seleukid system, and to reduce the social superiority of the Seleukids. The Akhaiids also married into the Seleukid family, the Attalids and the Mithradatids of Pontos. Seleukos II was the son of Laodike, who was an Akhaiid, and married Laodike, daughter of Andromachos, the son of the first Akhaios—she was also his cousin. The king was thus related by marriage to the Attalids, Ariarathes of Kappadokia, and Mithradates of Pontos—as well, of course, as the Antigonids of Macedon. In this process in Asia Minor the Seleukids became just one more ruling family, not the overall Great Kings they were in the rest of the kingdom.

Asia Minor also had the dynasts mentioned earlier—the Lysiads, Dokimos, Eupolemos, Olympichos—some of whom had faded away or died out, though others emerged. Karia was particularly fertile in such men, and in the 240s Olympichos was governor for the Seleukid king; he developed into an independent dynast, and he then linked himself with the Antigonids.² Nearby was Telmessos, now and possibly earlier the possession of Ptolemy son of Lysimachos, from whom the city descended in the possession of his family until 188.³ These men and families did not marry into the more exalted and powerful royal families (at least so far as we know), but they were locally important and the kings had to take heed of them. Add to this the series of Ptolemaic posts and bases and cities

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