

A Royal Signature Landscape

Our insight into the social and economic situation in Syria during the Seleucid reign no longer depends mainly on literary sources or assumptions based on sites heavily overlaid with Roman buildings. The aim of this paper is to present the picture that now emerges due to recent archaeological studies, i.e. of a region that flourished not only during the time of the first Seleucids but also after the Romans had defeated Antiochos III and during the troubled years of rivalry for the throne. From the very beginning of Seleucid domination northern Syria witnessed a transformation of the landscape including a strong growth of building activity attesting to heavy royal economic investments and a substantial influx of immigrants. Archaeology also attests that Syria was turned towards the west from the very beginning. Even cities on the Euphrates had stronger ties with Antioch than with Mesopotamia and its capital Seleukia on the Tigris.