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**Seleukid Lecture Series II, Fall Term 2021 (October 20)**

**How Iranian was the Seleukid Empire?**

How Iranian was the Seleukid Empire? In this lecture I argue that the Seleukid Empire was quite Iranian, for two reasons. First, because the Seleukid Empire was in essence a military organization and the empire’s Iranian territories (above all Media, Baktria, and Sogdia) were major sources for manpower, war horses, and elephants. Second, because Iranian elites, including those in Anatolia, were coopted by the empire as local (vassal) rulers and allies. Beginning with the marriage of Seleukos and Apama in 324 BCE, Iranian dynasties were entangled with the imperial family in an increasingly complex web of kinship relationships. Some Iranian powerholders became stakeholder in the Seleukid imperial project, enabling a more gradual transition from Seleukid to Arsakid rule in Iranian lands. Part of the argument is that Seleukid involvement in Iran lasted longer than is usually assumed. It extended chronologically from the conquests of Alexander in the late fourth century to the conquests of Mithradates I in the mid-second century BCE.