

# Brill's New Jacoby

## Simonides

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English

Ancient Greek

### BNJ 163 T 1

FGrH

*Suda s.v. Σιμωνίδης*

**Source genre: encyclopedia**

**Fragment Subject: biography**

**Source date:** 10th century AD

**Historian's date:** 3rd century BC

Σιμωνίδης· Μάγνης <ἀπὸ> Σιπύλου<sup>1</sup>· ἐποποιός· γέγονεν<sup>2</sup> ἐπὶ Ἐπιόχου τοῦ Μεγάλου<sup>3</sup> κληθέντος, καὶ γέγραφε τὰς Ἐπιόχου<sup>4</sup> [τοῦ Μεγάλου]<sup>5</sup> πράξεις καὶ<sup>6</sup> τὴν<sup>7</sup> πρὸς Γαλάτας μάχην, ὅτε μετὰ τῶν ἐλεφάντων τὴν ἵππον αὐτῶν<sup>8</sup> ἔφθειρε.

### Translation

Simonides: of Magnesia on the Sipylos, epic poet. He flourished in the time of Antiochos called the Great, and he wrote on the deeds of Antiochos and on the battle against the Galatians, when he defeated their cavalry with his elephants.

### Apparatus Criticus

1. ἀπὸ Meineke: Μάγνης Σιπύλου Adler. ἐκ Σιπύλου? Adler.
2. γέγονεν : γέγραφεν A. (A: Parisinorum 2625 et 2626 vetus manus)
3. Μεγάλου : Πρώτου Meineke.
4. κληθέντος - Ἐπιόχου om. A.
5. post Ἐπιόχου, τοῦ Μεγάλου add. M (M: Marcianus 448)
6. καὶ codd.: κατὰ Bernhardt

7. τὴν om. V (V: Vossianus Fol. 2)

8. αὐτοῦ codd.: αὐτῶν Cuper.

## Commentary on the text

1. No fragments have survived of this Hellenistic poet of historical subjects, born in the Seleukid military settlement of Magnesia on the Sipylos. The only *testimonium* of Simonides' activity, the *Suda* passage (= *Supplementum Hellenisticum* 723), presents serious textual and interpretive problems, regarding the period in which Simonides was active, the subject of his work, and its possible later reception in Loukianos.

Because Simonides seemed to have written about the accomplishments of Antiochos I, and not of Antiochos III (the Great), many scholars have corrected the first part of the *Suda* notice so as to have him live at the time of Antiochos I (list in S. Barbantani, *Phatis Nikephoros. Frammenti di elegia encomiastica nell'età delle Guerre Galatiche: Supplementum Hellenisticum* 958 e 969 (Milan 2001), 183-4 and n. 11). However, an epic poet named Simonides, born in Magnesia, and living at the time of Antiochos the Great (223-187) as one of the poets and artists who thrived at his court, poses no problem. As pointed out by Jacoby, *FGrH* 2D, *Kommentar*, 594 (see also A. Cameron, *Callimachus and his Critics* (Princeton 1995), 285), such a poet might have chosen to celebrate the deeds of the king's homonymous great predecessor, all the more so since, as has been forcefully argued by J. Ma, *Antiochos III and the Cities of Western Asia Minor* (Oxford 1999), 32, allusion to the past played a legitimizing role in the attempts of the king to restore the Seleukid empire to its original grandeur.

There are problems, however, with the definition of the subject of his poem in the second part of the notice. Among the authoritative *codices*, one (M: the Marcianus gr. 448) has, after the second τοῦ Ἀντιόχου, the specification τοῦ Μεγάλου ('the Great', that is, Antiochos III, as in the first part of the notice). With this reading, Simonides, active at the court of Antiochos III, would have written about a victory of this same king against the Galatians. But while Antiochos I is known to have repeatedly defeated the Galatians, nothing is known of battles between the Galatians and Antiochos III. For this reason, most scholars have followed Bernhardt's proposal (in his 1853 edition of the *Suda*) to consider it a gloss, a later insertion by a copyist. This solution also accounts for the fact that the second τοῦ Μεγάλου is absent in the other authoritative *codices* (A, V and G). It has been adopted by Adler in her edition of the *Suda*, by Cameron, *Callimachus*, 285, by G. Nachtergaele, *Les Galates en Grèce et les Sôtéria de Delphes. Recherches d'histoire et d'épigraphie hellénistique* (Brussels 1977), 53-4, by K. Brodersen, *Appians Abriss der Seleukidengeschichte* (Munich 1989), 195, and by Jacoby, *FGrH* 2D *Kommentar*, 594. Simonides may thus have celebrated a battle won by Antiochos I. Since the last clause of the *Suda* mentions elephants, the battle could be the famous 'Battle of the Elephants', in which Antiochos I launched sixteen elephants against the Galatian cavalry, perhaps around 269/68 BC. This is the opinion of M. Wörrle, 'Antiochos I, Achaïos der Ältere und die Galater. Eine neue Inschrift in Denizli', *Chiron* 5 (1975), 59-87, followed by Barbantani, *Phatis Nikephoros*, 208-14, while K. Strobel, *Die Galater. Geschichte und Eigenart der keltischen Staatenbildung auf dem Boden des hellenistischen Kleinasien* 1 (Berlin 1996), 257-61, reconstructs two main conflicts between Antiochos I and the Galatians, a first one c. 278-275, and another one c. 269, which was decided by the 'Elephants' battle'. Earlier scholarship favoured a date around 275 BC: B. Bar-Kochva, 'On the sources and

chronology of Antiochus I's battle against the Galatians', *PCPhS* 19 (1973), 1-8. E. Will, *Histoire politique du monde hellénistique* 1<sup>2</sup> (Nancy 1979), 143-4, has left the question open.

The last clause of the *Suda*, with its mention of the destruction of the cavalry by the elephants, has also come under close scrutiny. Scholars have debated its relation to the colourful description of the battle of the elephants in Loukianos' *Zeuxis* 8-11 (the same author, in *Pro Lapsu inter Salutandum* 9, does not mention elephants but speaks of τὴν θαυμαστὴν ἐκείνην νίκην, 'that extraordinary victory'). Jacoby, *FGrH* 2D *Kommentar*, 594, denied any relation between the two texts, on the grounds that Loukianos would have preferred to use a historical source rather than a poetic one. On the other hand, Bar-Kochva, 'On the sources', 1-3, has strongly defended the thesis that Simonides' epic is the source of the description of the battle in Loukianos (a thesis first advanced by Wernsdorff, *De republica Galatarum* (Norimbergae 1744), 41-3); see now also A. Primo, *La storiografia sui Seleucidi. Da Megastene ad Eusebio di Cesarea* (Pisa-Roma 2009), 256-7. Although the vividness and the highly strung language of Loukianos' account make the assumption of a poetic source reasonable (Barbantani, *Phatis Nikephoros*, 183-4 n. 11), it is impossible to say anything definite on the relationship between Loukianos' account and Simonides' lost poem. A completely different interpretation of the relationship between the text of the *Suda* notice and Loukianos should also be mentioned. According to A. Momigliano, 'Un'ignota irruzione dei Galati in Siria al tempo di Antiocho III?', *BFC* 36 (1929), 151-2, the last sentence of the *Suda* notice should be considered a later addition tacked on by someone familiar with Loukianos' account (this is accepted as possible by Cameron, *Callimachus*, 285). After eliminating, thus, the reference to an elephants' battle, Momigliano looked for another victory against the Galatians, which might account also for the τοῦ Μεγάλου attested by the *codex* M. On the basis of II *Maccabees* 8.20 (the Hebrews claiming the merit of a victory against the Galatians in a battle fought at Babylonia) and *SH* 958 (menacing words of a king against Galatians and Medes: Antiochos III?) Momigliano proposed to locate the battle celebrated by Simonides during the reign of Antiochos III, after 197 but before 189. His proposal, however, has not gained acceptance among scholars (see the discussion in Nachtergaele, *Les Galates*, 53-4 n. 134).

Making sense of our only source, the *Suda*, becomes even more difficult when we try to identify the specific genre of Simonides' epic. Jacoby, *FGrH* 2B, *Text*, 889, treated the description of the subject in the *Suda* as if it were a title, and classified it as a fragment. Yet a title such as 'Deeds of Antiochos and the battle against the Galatians' sounds distinctly odd. Arguing on the basis of the absence of a specific title, Cameron, *Callimachus*, 285, has suggested that these epic compositions were perhaps only *encomia*: 'While we cannot exclude the possibility of a multi-book epic, there are no positive grounds for crediting Simonides with anything more than encomia on Antiochos'. At the same time, Cameron prefers not to tamper with the text of the *Suda* and dates Simonides' activity to the time of Antiochos III. This is slightly problematic: the principal addressee of such *encomia* is usually the living king and patron (a representative example of the genre has survived in Theokritos' *Encomion of Ptolemy*). This is why other scholars, who also consider Simonides an encomiastic poet, and who accept that the poem referred to the battle of the elephants, or at any rate to a victory against the Galatians by Antiochos I, prefer to date Simonides' activity to the reign of Antiochos I (so *SH* and Barbantani, *Phatis Nikephoros*, 183-4).

Clearly, the discussion is still open on almost all points. The tidiest solution, the one most respectful both of the text of the *Suda* as we have it and of the historical data from other sources, seems to be to place the activity of Simonides of Magnesia in the time of Antiochos III, and to admit that in his epic poem(s) he sung of the battles of Antiochos I and of his

victory against the Galatians. He may have written *encomia*; but we cannot rule out the possibility of a relatively important epic poem (so K. Ziegler, *L'epos ellenistico. Un capitolo dimenticato della poesia greca*, seconda ed. a cura di F. De Martino, con premesse di M. Fantuzzi (Bari 1988), 16-9), that contributed to the construction of a 'Seleukid past' (on this notion, see Ma, *Antiochos III*, 26-33, 94), and which was forgotten after the defeat of Apamea.

## Commentary on T1

The *Suda* is a 10<sup>th</sup> century encyclopedia. Tracking the provenance of the information found in it is very complex; the entry concerning Simonides probably comes from the epitome of an earlier encyclopedia, the sixth century *Onomatologos* of Hesychios of Miletos, a collection of short biographies of Greek writers arranged by literary categories (so A. Adler, *Suidae Lexicon* v. 4 (1935), 362, 21-24, marginal note: 'Hesy.'). On Hesychios and his work see F. Tinnefeld, s.v. 'H. Illustrios (4)', *BNP* 6 (2005), 289-290; A. Kaldellis, 'The Works and Days of Hesychios Illoustrios of Miletos', *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 45 (2005) 381-403; V. Costa, 'Esichio di Mileto, Johannes Flach e le fonti biografiche della *Suda*', in G. Vanotti (ed.), *Il lessico Suda e gli storici greci in frammenti* (Tivoli 2010) 43-55). It is impossible to go back earlier than that.

## Biographical Essay

Simonides of Magnesia was active at the court of a Seleukid, either Antiochos I (king 281-261), or, as seems more likely, Antiochos III (king 223-187), as one of the many court poets who wrote on the clash between the Hellenistic kings and the Galatians (references in S. Barbantani, *Phatis Nikephoros. Frammenti di elegia encomiastica nell'età delle Guerre Galatiche: Supplementum Hellenisticum 958 e 969* (Milan 2001), 181-4). Nothing of his work survives. A. Momigliano, 'Un'ignota irruzione dei Galati in Siria al tempo di Antioco III?', *BFC* 36 (1929), 154, proposed to identify a fragment of a Hellenistic elegy (SH 958) with Simonides' poem; most scholars do not accept this attribution (discussion and bibliography in Barbantani, *Phatis Nikephoros*, 64-6). Nor are there any traces of Simonides' contribution to the historical tradition on the Galatian wars; cf. G. Nachtergaele, *Les Galates en Grèce et les Sôtéria de Delphes. Recherches d'histoire et d'épigraphie hellénistique* (Brussels 1977), 54: 'Il est néanmoins peu probable que ce poète de cour ait longuement évoqué l'invasion de Grèce dans son poème épique. Rien, en tout cas, ne permet d'affirmer qu'il ait contribué d'une façon ou d'une autre à la formation de la tradition historique'. See on him also the notices by M. Fantuzzi, in K. Ziegler, *L'epos ellenistico. Un capitolo dimenticato della poesia greca*, tr. it. di Das *hellenistische Epos* (Leipzig 1966), 2, a cura di F. De Martino, con premesse di M. Fantuzzi (Bari 1988), lxxxiv, and A. Primo, *La storiografia sui Seleucidi. Da Megastene ad Eusebio di Cesarea* (Pisa-Roma 2009), 87-8, who both tend to put his activity under Antiochos III the Great; and further C. Carsana, *Le dirigenze cittadine nello stato seleucidico* (Como 1996), 165 with some interesting comments at 189-90 on the rupture of the link with their native cities by the poets and historians (in particular, Simonides of Magnesia and Mnesiptolemos of Cumae) recruited by Antiochos III: they do not seem to have written anything on their own cities, and are only known for works furthering royal propaganda.

## Bibliography

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