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Athenaios

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Athenaios, Deipnosophistae 5.47, 211 a-d

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ἐπαινῶ δ' ἐγώ, ἄνδρες φίλοι, τὸ γενόμενον παρ' Ἀλεξάνδρωι τῶι βασιλεῖ τῆς Συρίας συμπόσιον. ὁ δ' Ἀλέξανδρος οὖτος ὢν¹ Ἀντιόχου τοῦ Ἐπιφανοῦς υἰὸς ὑποβληθείς ... διὸ² εἶχον μῖσος πάντες ἄνθρωποι εἰς Δημήτριον περὶ οὖ ἱστόρησεν ὁ ἑταῖρος ἡμῶν Ἀθήναιος ἐν τοῖς περὶ τῶν ἐν Συρίαι βασιλευσάντων.

τὸ³ οὖν συμπόσιον τοῦτο τοιόνδε τι ἐγένετο. Διογένης ὁ Ἐπικούρειος, ἕξιν ἔχων ἱκανὴν ἐν οἶς μετεχειρίζετο λόγοις, τὸ μὲν γένος ἦν ἐκ Σελευκείας τῆς ἐν Βαβυλωνίαι, ἀποδοχῆς δ' ἐτύγχανε παρὰ τῶι βασιλεῖ⁴ καίτοι τοῖς ἀπὸ τῆς στοᾶς λόγοις χαίροντι.

ἐπολυώρει οὖν αὐτὸν ὁ Ἀλέξανδρος καίπερ ὄντα τῶι βίωι φαῦλον, ἔτι δὲ βλάσφημον καὶ βάσκανον ἕνεκά τε τοῦ γελοίου μηδὲ τῶν βασιλέων ἀπεχόμενον καὶ αἰτησαμένωι αὐτῶι φιλοσοφίας ἀλλοτρίαν αἴτησιν, ὅπως πορφυροῦν τε χιτωνίσκον φορήσει καὶ χρυσοῦν στέφανον ἔχοντα πρόσωπον Ἀρετῆς κατὰ μέσον, ἦς ἱερεὺς ἠξίου προσαγορεύεσθαι, συνεχώρησε καὶ τὸν στέφανον προσχαρισάμενος. ἄπερ ὁ Διογένης ἐρασθείς τινος λυσιωιδοῦ γυναικὸς ἐχαρίσατο αὐτῆι.

ἀκούσας δ' ὁ Ἀλέξανδρος καὶ συναγαγὼν φιλοσόφων καὶ ἐπισήμων ἀνδρῶν συμπόσιον ἐκάλεσε καὶ τὸν Διογένη· καὶ παραγενόμενον ἠξίου κατακλίνεσθαι ἔχοντα τὸν στέφανον καὶ τὴν ἐσθῆτα. ἄκαιρον δ' εἶναι εἰπόντος νεύσας εἰσαγαγεῖν ἐκέλευσε τὰ ἀκούσματα, ἐν οἶς καὶ ἡ λυσιωιδὸς εἰσῆλθεν ἐστεφανωμένη τὸν τῆς Ἀρετῆς στέφανον, ἐνδῦσα καὶ τὴν πορφυρᾶν ἐσθῆτα. γέλωτος οὖν πολλοῦ καταραγέντος ἔμενεν ὁ φιλόσοφος καὶ τὴν λυσιωιδὸν ἐπαινῶν οὐκ ἐπαύσατο. τοῦτον τὸν Διογένη ὁ μεταλαβὼν τὴν βασιλείαν Ἀντίοχος οὐκ ἐνέγκας αὐτοῦ

την κακολογίαν ἀποσφαγηναι ἐκέλευσεν. ὁ δ' Ἀλέξανδρος προσηνης ην πασι καὶ φιλόλογος ἐν ταῖς ὁμιλίαις...

Translation

But I commend, dear friends, the symposion which was held at the court of Alexander, the king of Syria. This Alexander was the son of Antiochos Epiphanes, or rather, the pretended son... on account of which all mankind cherished a hatred against Demetrios; on him, our friend Athenaios has provided a historical record in his *On the Kings of Syria*.

This symposion, then, was held in the following manner. Diogenes the Epicurean, who had a disposition appropriate to the doctrines which he professed, was by birth from Seleukeia in Babylonia, and he used to be received by the king in spite of the fact that the king delighted in the doctrines of the Stoics. Alexander paid him much attention, notwithstanding Diogenes' lowly lifestyle and his being slanderous and malicious, to the point of not even sparing the royal house if he could provoke a laugh. And once he advanced a request alien to philosophy, namely that he might wear a short purple tunic and a gold crown bearing in the middle the face of Virtue, whose priest he demanded that he should be called. The king granted this, even adding the crown as a present. Then Diogenes, falling in love with a woman who was a Lysissinger, gave her these very things as gift.

When Alexander heard of this, having gathered a symposion of philosophers and distinguished men, he invited also Diogenes. When the latter arrived, the king demanded that he take place on the couch with the crown and the tunic. At Diogenes' answer that it was inconvenient, the king with a nod ordered the entertainers to be brought in, and among them entered also the Lysis-singer, crowned with the crown of Virtue, and dressed in the purple tunic. A loud burst of laughter broke out, but the philosopher did not stir, and kept praising the actress. When Antiochos succeeded to the kingship he could not tolerate this Diogenes' abusive manners, and ordered his throat to be cut. But Alexander was gentle towards everyone, and learned in his conversations...

Apparatus Criticus

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<sup>1</sup> ὢν A; ἦν Jacoby
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Commentary on the text

The likelihood that the beginning of the passage is corrupt renders interpretation complex. Most scholars have assumed a lacuna there, except for Jacoby, *FGrH* 2B, *Text*, 891, who prefers to slightly alter the text, so as to supply the missing main verb. However, even with his correction the text does not yield a very good sense: see Braund, 'Athenaeus', 516, and for an interesting, if by no means certain, proposal of restoration, Radicke, *FGrH* 4A (*Biography*)

 $^{^2}$ ὑποβληθείς <τὴν βασιλείαν μετέλαβε> Radicke, exempli gratia; διὸ A; δι' ὃ Jacoby, Radicke; δι' ὃν Kaibel in apparatu.

³ <μèν> Jacoby

 $^{^4}$ παρὰ τῶι βασιλεῖ Villebrun, Kaibel, Olson; παρὰ τοῦ βασιλέως Α, Jacoby

7, 218-20. Possibly Masourios, after describing the beginning of Alexander's rule, added a few more words about his death by the hands of Demetrios II Nikator: Demetrios II' unpopularity would then, according to Athenaios, have been due to his removal of the popular Alexander Balas. According to Diodoros 33.4.1-4, however, his unpopularity was due to more general reasons of violence, tyrannical behaviour, banishments and murders. Alternatively, the passage may refer to Demetrios I, and his unpopularity, which, according to Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 13.35-36 and Diodoros 33.4.4, was due to his arrogance, aloofness, laziness and lack of care for the public affairs, was adduced here as the reason for the success of Alexander in seizing the throne. Particularly interesting in this connection is another passage of Athenaios (10.55 (440b), quoting Polybios 33.19) on Demetrios I's constant drunkenness which is relevant to the success of Demetrios' opponents; cf. F.W. Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius* 3 (Oxford 1979), 561-2.

If the entire passage derives from the On the Kings of Syria, then the work must have been anecdotal in character. Alexander here appears as a philosopher-king. His career, however, was rather that of an adventurer. In 158 BC Attalos II of Pergamon decided to support the claims of a young man named Balas (from Smyrna, Diodoros 31.32a1) to the Seleukid throne. Alexander Balas based his claims on his resemblance to Antiochos IV Epiphanes. Diodoros 31.32a1, Appian, Syrian wars 67.354, Justin 35.1.6-7, 35.2.4, and Livy, Periocha 52, all concur with Athenaios in presenting Balas as an impostor, while Polybios 33.15.1-2 and 33.18.6-14 takes a noncommittal stance. Alexander is implicitly acknowledged as the legitimate son of Antiochos IV in Livy, Periocha 50 and Strabo 13.4.2 (C624), and explicitly in I Maccabees 10.1 and Josephus, Jewish Antiquities 13.35 (the reason being Balas' favourable policy towards the Jews). Walbank, Commentary on Polybius, 3, 557, concludes: 'He may in fact have been Antiochos IV's bastard'. For a good, synthetic analysis of the stance of our various sources on this point, see C. Habicht, 'The Seleucids and their Rivals', CAH² 8 (Cambridge 1989), 362 n. 142. Thanks to the support of the Pergamene king and of Ptolemy VI Philometor, who both had reason to dislike Demetrios I, Alexander Balas succeeded in seizing the Seleukid throne in 150 BC after defeating and killing Demetrios I in battle (Josephus, Jewish Antiquities 13.58-61, Justin 35.9-11, Appian, Syrian Wars 67, 355; for the date, cf. the Babylonian astronomical diary edited in A.J. Sachs and H. Hunger, Astronomical Diaries and Related Texts from Babylonia 3 (Wien 1996), 149 A and G.F. Del Monte, Testi dalla Babilonia ellenistica 1 (Pisa 1997), 91-4; there is a detailed narrative of events in J. Hopp, Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der letzten Attaliden (Munich 1977), 79-85. When Demetrios II Nikator in 147 tried to recover his father's Seleukid throne, the city of Antiochia went over to his side. Ptolemy VI seized this opportunity to invade Koile-Syria, but at that moment Alexander Balas made a show of resistance and conspired to eliminate him. A subsequent rapprochement between Ptolemy and Demetrios II led to the defeat of Alexander Balas in battle by Ptolemy VI and to his death a few days later (145 BC, Strabo 16.2.8). On these events, see E. Will, Histoire Politique du Monde Hellénistique 2 (Nancy 1967), 373-9 and 404-10; Habicht, 'Seleucids and their Rivals', 356-65; and K. Brodersen, Appian's Abriss der Seleukidengeschichte (Syriake 45,232-70, 369) (München 1989), 213-16.

The Epicurean philosopher Diogenes is known only from this passage of Athenaios, in which he plays a ludicrous role. On this Diogenes, see von Arnim, 'Diogenes (47)', *RE* 5 (1905), col. 777 and Th. Noters, *Athenaios. Das Gelehrtenmahl, Buch I-VI* 2 (Stuttgart 1998), 566, who express themselves against his identification with the two only possible candidates, the Stoic philosopher Diogenes from Seleukeia (*RE* s.v. Diogenes, n. 45) and the homonymous second century Epicurean from Tarsos (*RE* s.v. Diogenes 37, 46). Note also the discussions of I. Savalli-Lestrade, *Les Philoi royaux dans l'Orient hellénistique* (Geneva 1998), 75-6; C.

Carsana, *Le dirigenze cittadine nello stato seleucidico* (Como 1996), 169, in favour of the identification with Diogenes of Tarsus (already W.W. Tarn, *The Greeks in Bactria and India* (Cambridge 1938), 40-41 had assumed that Diogenes might have been born in Seleucia and have moved to Tarsus); and A. Primo, *La storiografia sui Seleucidi. Da Megastene ad Eusebio di Cesarea* (Pisa-Roma 2009), 42-43, who thinks of an otherwise unknown philosopher.

There is an ambiguity, possibly intended by the author, in the terms used to describe the philosopher's ability: ἔξιν ἔχων ἰκανὴν may mean 'having a considerable command of the doctrines which he professed' (so C.B. Gulick, *Athenaeus. Deipnosophistae* 2 (London 1928), 455, and before him I. Casaubon, in J. Schweighäuser, *Animadversiones in Athenaei Deipnosophistas* t. III, in lib. V-VI, 191: *usum habens non parvum in ea philosophia quam profiteatur, id est, doctrinae Epicureae non mediocriter peritus*. But it may also be translated, as above, with 'having a disposition appropriate to the doctrines he professed' (thus Braund, 'Athenaeus', 515), in which case it is a pointer to the rest of the anecdote. Braund, 'Athenaeus', 521, nicely shows how Alexander demonstrates his own superior control and tolerance, and more generally the superiority of Stoic over Epicurean philosophy, by granting Diogenes his absurd wish to become the realization of a metaphor (cf. Athenaios 7.14. 281d).

The identity of the Antiochos who, according to Athenaios, ordered Diogenes' death is unclear. A. Momigliano, in an aside to his review of B. Farrington, *Science and Politics in the Ancient World* (London 1939), in *JRS* 31 (1941), 156, identified him with Antiochos VI Epiphanes Dionysos, the son of Alexander Balas (so already Gulick, *Athenaeus*, 2, 457 note b). However, the extremely young age of Antiochos VI and the very short duration of his reign (144 to 142/1 BC, under the guardianship of the military commander Diodotos Tryphon: Will, *Histoire politique* 2, 340-1) speak against this interpretation. The only other candidate is Antiochos VII Sidetes, brother of Demetrios II, who held the Seleukid throne from 138 to 129 BC: so J. Malitz, *Die Historien des Poseidonios* (Munich 1983), 272 n. 123 (on the career of Antiochos VII, see Will, *Histoire Politique* 2, 344-8). If this is correct, then Athenaios is misleading in juxtaposing so closely the reigns of Alexander and Antiochos.

Given these difficulties, one may be inclined to hesitate as to the historicity of the anecdote (M.M. Austin, 'Krieg und Kultur im Seleukidenreich', in K. Brodersen (ed.), Zwischen West und Ost: Studien zur Geschichte des Seleukidenreichs (Hamburg 1999), 154 suggests that it should be taken cum grano salis); one may even wonder whether in discussing Diogenes we are actually dealing with a historical character or a playful invention of Athenaios. Much more is known about a homonymous philosopher, the famous Diogenes of Seleukeia on the Tigris (born c. 240 BC to c. 150 BC), a Stoic nicknamed 'the Babylonian', student of Chrysippos, who was sent by the Athenians as an envoy to Rome in 156/5 (H. von Arnim, 'Diogenes (45)', RE 5 (1905), cols. 773-6). A simple confusion between the two, as suggested by S.D. Olson, Athenaeus. The learned banqueters books III. 106e-V (Cambridge, Mass. and London 2006), 513, seems unlikely; but a playful reversal of characters is a distinct possibility in light of some other instances of character-naming in Athenaios: see the examples in K. Mengis, Die schriftstellerische Technik im Sophistenmahl des Athenaios (Paderborn 1920), 23-45. Here, we have an Alexander Balas who, contrary to all tradition, appears as a learned and tolerant Stoic philosopher, and who confronts an Epicurean Diogenes coming from the same city as his famous Stoic homonym. Such an inversion of roles and situations is striking, especially in an anecdote centering on role inversions (a Lysis-singer is a female actress playing male roles), and even more so in a context where no real authority is cited.

Although it is impossible to prove this hypothesis, a similar case has been made by G.R. Bugh, 'Athenion and Aristion of Athens', *Phoenix* 46 (1992), 108-23, for the passage immediately following our extract (see especially p. 120: 'I believe that Athenaios knew that there had been two tyrants in Athens in this period and purposedly conflated the two careers', with further references to instances of deliberate alterations or distortions by Athenaios). On Athenaios' 'textual transgressions', see also C. Pelling, 'Fun with Fragments: Athenaeus and the Historians', in D. Braund and J. Wilkins (eds.), *Athenaeus and his World* (Exeter 2000), 171-90; P. Ceccarelli, 'Kings, philosophers, and drunkards: Athenaeus' information on the Seleucids', in K. Erickson and G. Ramsey (eds.), *Seleucid Dissolution: The Sinking of the Anchor* (Wiesbaden 2011), 162-79.

Aside from the possibility that the anecdote was manipulated by Athenaios, its general framework very likely derives from either Polybios or the *Histories* of Poseidonios, a continuation of Polybios' work (so Jacoby, FGrH 2D, Kommentar, 595). Malitz, Historien des Poseidonius, 9 n. 42 and 271-3, discusses the anecdote at length, and identifies Poseidonios as Athenaios' source, mainly because of the anti-Epicurean tenor of the fragment. Part of Malitz's argument, however, presupposes without evidence a negative attitude of Polybios against Balas, and conversely a positive appreciation of the same character by Poseidonios. Diodoros 33.4.4 makes a distinction between two Seleukid princely houses, but his text does not allow further inferences as to who supported which. In favour of a derivation of the anecdote from Polybios stands Athenaios' citing of Polybios for facts presumably linked to Demetrios I's demise (such as his drunkenness, see above). Yet Poseidonios is probably the better choice: he is cited both before our passage, à propos of Syrian things (in Athenaios 5.46, 210c-f, which includes a passage on Antiochos VII Sidetes, BNJ 87 F 9b = F 61b Kidd, one on Antiochos VIII Grypos, BNJ 87 F 21b = F 72b Kidd, and one on luxury in Syrian cities, BNJ 87 F 10 = F 62b Kidd), and immediately after it with another anecdote also concerning the relations between philosophers and political power (Athenaios 5.47-53 (211d-215b) = BNJ 87 F 36 = F 253 Kidd, on the tyranny of Athenion in Athens). Remarkably, the same Poseidonios is the source for an anecdote in Athenaios concerning a Syrian from Antioch, Hierax, who used to accompany Lysis-singers on the aulos and who later had a career as a powerful parasite of Ptolemy VI Philometor and Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II, before falling out of favour and being executed (Athenaios 6.61 (252e) = BNJ 87 F 4 = F 56 Kidd). In discussing this passage, Jacoby, FGrH 2C, Kommentar, 164, endorses the identification of this Hierax with one who was active as a military commander or as a functionary under Demetrios I. In 150 BC Hierax deserted Demetrios for Alexander Balas, and in 146 he abandoned Balas for Ptolemy Philometor (Diodoros 32.9c and 33.3). This is the context in which our anecdote might have taken its shape. As can be seen from the numerous surviving fragments of Poseidonios on Syrian matters, it cannot have been easy for Athenaios to demarcate his historical work (if he ever did write it) from that of this 'towering' predecessor (Braund, 'Athenaeus', 519).

Commentary on F 1

Athenaios refers here, through his character Masourios, to one of his own works. (He similarly refers in 7.138 (329c) to his monograph on the play *Fishes* by the comic poet Archippos). If the wording of the allusion can be trusted, his *On the Kings of Syria* should have included more than one book. It must have predated the *Deipnosophists*, whose dramatic date is c. 193-197 AD, and whose date of composition may not have been much later. The decision to write a work about Syria cannot thus be attributed to the influence of the circle of

Julia Domna: see D. Braund, 'Athenaeus, *On the Kings of Syria*', in D. Braund and J. Wilkins (eds.), *Athenaeus and his World* (Exeter 2000), 517-18.

We can only speculate about the content of *On the Kings of Syria*. The character of the single fragment we have of it points to a collection of anecdotes loosely strung together around the theme of Syrian rulers. It is impossible to establish the upper chronological limit of the work (so Jacoby, *FGrH* 2D, *[Kommentar]*, 595); it might have included, in addition to the Seleukids, earlier kings of Syria, such as Sardanapalos, who is mentioned in *Deipnosophists* 12.39 (530a), where however Kleitarchos (*BNJ* 137 F 2) is quoted as the source (Braund, 'Athenaeus', 517). The entire passage on those who have ruled over Asia (12.38-40, 528e-531a) is generally instructive of Athenaios' interests. The lower limit of the work must have been the formation of the Roman province of Syria by Pompeius (64 BC).

The way this work is introduced in the *Deipnosophists* deserves consideration. On the Kings of Syria is known only from this citation, introduced with a remarkable, studied casualness (so Braund, 'Athenaeus', 512), which renders the definition of the fragment's limits problematic at both ends. Masourios' reference to Athenaios' work is introduced as a parenthesis in the context of his description of Alexander Balas' symposion, with a relative clause (περὶ οὖ ίστόρησεν) whose referent is unclear (Alexander? Demetrios? the symposion?): see the discussion in J. Radicke, FGrH 4A (Biography) 7, Imperial and Undated Authors (Leiden 1999), 220-1. Similarly, the end of the fragment is not explicitly marked. Because of the allusive nature of the passage, it remains unclear whether Athenaios' work is cited only in reference to the contrast between Alexander Balas and one or the other of the Demetrioi, or as the source for the anecdote on Alexander and Diogenes. Most scholars have chosen the second possibility, even though, as Braund, 'Athenaeus', 516-17, admits, there are no solid grounds for deciding either way. Thus, Jacoby (FGrH 2B, Text, 892) stops at 5.47 (211d), while Braund, 'Athenaeus', 515-16, includes in his discussion also 5.47 (211e), thus overlapping with the beginning of a fragment from Poseidonios. Yet L. Edelstein and I.G. Kidd (eds.), Posidonius 1: The Fragments (Cambridge 1972), 220, think that 5.47 (211d) already derives from Poseidonios. More radically, Radicke, FGrH 4A (Biography) 7, 218-21, leaves out the description of the symposion, suggesting that the quotation from the On the Kings of Syria extends only to 211b. A certain vagueness in introducing and closing citations is typical of Athenaios' way of quoting, but this is a remarkable case, which should make us wary of assuming that we have a *verbatim* citation from *On the Kings of Syria*.

Biographical Essay

What is known about Athenaios comes from his one preserved work, the *Deipnosophists*. A sophist (so the *Epitome* of the *Deipnosophists*) or a grammarian (*Suda*, s.v. Athenaios) from Naukratis, he was active at the end of the second century / beginning of the third century AD: internal allusions show that the *Deipnosophists* were composed after the death of Commodus (192 AD). According to the *Deipnosophists*, Athenaios composed also a historical work *On the Kings of Syria*, and a monograph *On Thracian Women*, whose focus was a play, *The Fishes*, by the comic poet Archippos.

The *Deipnosophists* purports to be a description by Athenaios to his friend Timokrates of a banquet in Rome that lasted several days, and which was hosted by the Roman aristocrat Larensis (on whom, see D. Braund, 'Learning, Luxury and Empire: Athenaeus' Roman Patron', in D. Braund and J. Wilkins (eds.), *Athenaeus and his World* (Exeter 2000), 3-22). The symposiastic theme serves as a relatively loose frame for rambles into all sorts of

philological questions, as well as political or socio-cultural ones, which were hotly debated by the guests, who support their points with citations from ancient authors. (On the literary aspect, A. Lukinovich, 'The Play of Reflections between Literary Form and the Sympotic Theme in the Deipnosophistae of Athenaeus', in O. Murray (eds.), Sympotica: a Symposium on the Symposion (Oxford 1990), 263-71). The guests are not simply Athenaios' mouthpieces, but have distinct personalities, yet it is very difficult, both in the case of the participants' names and of the subjects discussed, to distinguish between allusion and invention (cf. K. Mengis, Die schriftstellerische Technik im Sophistenmahl des Athenaios (Paderborn 1920), 29). If we could form a clearer idea of the purpose of this monumental work, we might gain a better insight into Athenaios' own personality, his choice of quotations and his reliability. Some of the problems in his text have been explained by the hypothesis that it is an epitome in fifteen volumes of an original edition in thirty books, for the manuscript tradition bears traces of a subdivision into thirty books. Recent research, however, shows that the fifteen original books were simply divided in thirty rolls, and it is of this division that traces have remained: see G. Arnott, 'Athenaeus and the Epitome. Texts, Manuscripts and Early Editions', and L. Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén, 'Are the Fifteen Books of the Deipnosophistae an Excerpt?', both in D. Braund and J. Wilkins (eds.), Athenaeus and his World (Exeter 2000), 41-52 and 244-55, respectively. For recent work on different aspects of the Deipnosophists see the chapters in D. Braund and J. Wilkins (eds.), Athenaeus and his World. Reading Greek Culture in the Roman Empire (Exeter 2000); a synthetic overview in E. Bowie, 'Athenaeus [3]', BNP 2 (Leiden 2003), 240-243. The fragments of historians in Athenaeus are discussed in D. Lenfant (eds.), Athénée et les fragments d'historiens (Paris 2007). For a general discussion of Athenaeus' views on the Seleukids see A. Primo, La storiografia sui Seleucidi. Da Megastene ad Eusebio di Cesarea (Pisa-Roma 2009), 257-62, as well as 42-3 for a sweeping discussion of the anecdote from the On the Kings of Syria; P. Ceccarelli, 'Kings, philosophers, and drunkards: Athenaeus' information on the Seleucids', in K. Erickson and G. Ramsey (eds.), Seleucid Dissolution: The Sinking of the Anchor (Wiesbaden 2011), 162-179.

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