

GREEK AND HELLENISTIC STUDIES

edited by
Edward Dąbrowa



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Barbara Widlak

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REDAKTOR

Renata Włodek

KOREKTOR

Jerzy Hrycyk

SKŁAD I ŁAMANIE

Wojciech Wojewoda

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tel. 012-631-01-97, tel./fax 012-631-01-98
tel. kom. 0506-006-674, e-mail: wydaw@if.uj.edu.pl
Konto: BPH PBK SA IV/O Kraków, nr 62 1060 0076 0000 3200 0047 8769

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Gholamreza F. Assar

A REVISED PARTHIAN CHRONOLOGY OF THE PERIOD 165–91 BC

It is generally accepted that aside from chance references in a small number of classical sources the history of Parthia has been to a large extent reconstructed from coinage. Yet experience has shown that a history based on this factor alone would undoubtedly fail to identify the Arsacid rulers and extent of their reigns in the period 247–55 BC. This is primarily due to two factors. Firstly, absence of personal names of the issuing authorities and secondly, lack of date on the majority of Parthian coins before the reign of Phraates IV (c. 38–2 BC).

To counter these difficulties most students in the past century or so have been compelled to draw additional information from a handful of alternative sources. Among these, the Babylonian cuneiform records of the period 141–57 BC have been especially important. They offer not only a fresh insight into the political situation in Babylonia, but also occasionally give the personal names of certain Parthian kings and their queens. These are of particular chronological significance in several instances when we find more than one claimant to the Arsacid throne. However, frequent errors in the transcription of some of these records and conflicting interpretations of a particular Akkadian verb form¹ have regrettably given rise to chapters of differing hypotheses on the sequence and duration of reigns in this period.

Such was the state of affairs when I began, over a decade or so ago, a fresh analysis of the extant material in the hope of answering some, if not all, of the seemingly impenetrable Parthian numismatic and historical questions. But it quickly became obvious that the only way to clarify the persisting ambiguities was to re-examine the original cuneiform sources for accuracy and review the numismatic material for relevancy. Having collated the tablets,

¹ *ittaridu* = "called, named". Cf. Strassmaier 1888: 135, reads *it-tar-ri-is* without translation; Oppert 1888: 467; Oppert 1889: 511–514; Schrader 1890: 1327–1329; Epping and Strassmaier 1891: 222 and 226; Schrader 1891: 3; Minns 1915: 34–35 and 40, n. 53 (after L.W. King); Herzfeld 1932: 71; Debevoise 1938: 50, n. 82; Lewy 1944: 209, n. 59; Bickerman 1966: 17, n. 18 (after I. Mendelsohn); Simonetta 1966: 19, n. 2 (after Ch. Flugge); Chaumont 1971: 153–154, n. 1; Simonetta 1974: 126–128; Oelsner 1975: 40–42, n. 48; Dobbins 1975: 20–21, n. 9 (after N. Weeks); Sellwood 1976: 24–25 (after M. J. Bottéro); Oelsner 1986: 276–277, n. "w"; McEwan 1986: 92–93; Sachs and Hunger 1996: 260–262 and 456; Del Monte 1996: 4; Del Monte 1997: 136, n. 239; Van der Spek 2000: 441–442; Simonetta 2001: 73–74.

studied the latest publications of several classes of Babylonian astronomical records and the most recently discovered Parthian coins, I believe it is now possible to offer a more accurate chronology for the period 247–55 BC of the Arsacid rule in Iran. What follows is a brief revision of my earlier contributions and a summary of a detailed analysis of the extant material from the period 165–91 BC. The chronological problems of the period 91–55 BC will be discussed in a forthcoming publication.² I must, nevertheless, stress that this work would not have been possible without the kind assistance of many scholars and friends. While they will all be duly acknowledged and credited for their contributions later, I would like to express my gratitude here to Professors Herman Hunger, Giuseppe Del Monte, Robartus Van der Spek and Stephan Maul, and Messrs David Sellwood and Christopher Walker for their unflagging support. Responsibility for any remaining errors of fact or interpretation is mine alone. I am also indebted to, Messrs Nader Rastegar and Samir Masri for their efforts. This work was sponsored by a grant from the Maclaren Foundation and the Morteza Rastegar Endowment.

Arsaces VI – Mithradates I (165–132 BC)

Using the literary, numismatic and documentary evidence, I have argued elsewhere³ that the founder of the Arsacid monarchy, Arsaces I (247–211 BC), began his struggle for independence about 250 BC. He then scored an epoch making victory against the Seleucid forces in 247 BC, attacked and slew the Parthian satrap, Andragoras, around 238 BC, and finally annexed Hyrcania about 230 BC. Having secured Parthia's freedom, Arsaces I died in 211 BC and was succeeded by his son Arsaces II (211–185 BC). The latter bore the brunt of the eastern expedition of Antiochus III (223–187 BC) in 209 BC but was ultimately accepted as an ally of the Seleucid king. Unfortunately, nothing more is known about the political circumstances of the reign of Arsaces II. Justin (41.5.8) reports⁴ that the third Parthian ruler was Phriapatius (185–170 BC) but omits his dynastic link with Arsaces II. On the other hand, our documents from Nisa indicate that Arsaces II had no mature heirs. This obliged him to bequeath the crown to his grand-cousin Phriapatius. Whether the latter governed the kingdom as a regent remains unclear. We are told by Justin (41.5.9) that Phriapatius died after a fifteen-year reign and his elder son, Phraates I, assumed the reins of power. Yet an inscribed ostrakon from Nisa clearly shows that a great-grandson of Arsaces I too ascended the Parthian throne. I have identified this new ruler with Arsaces IV (170–168 BC) and concluded that he reigned briefly after Phriapatius and died without a successor.⁵

The fifth Arsaces was Phraates I (168–165 BC). He flouted the 209 BC Seleucid-Parthian treaty of alliance and began the westward expansion of his kingdom. According to Isidore of Charax (*Parthian Stations* 2.7)⁶ and Justin (41.5.9), Phraates defeated the Mardi tribes in Hyrcania and settled them at the foot of Mount Caspius, probably to guard the Caspian Gates (Tang-e Sar-Darreh, some 80 kilometres southeast of modern Tehran). I have argued elsewhere that the *revolt of Arsaces* in Tacitus (*Histories* 5.6) which induced Antiochus IV (175–164 BC) to postpone his war against the Jews and turn east to subdue

² Assar 2006.

³ Assar 2004: 77–80; Assar 2005b. Cf. also my earlier contribution in the present volume.

⁴ For references to Justin throughout the text cf. Watson 1882; Rühl 1886, and Yardley 1994.

⁵ Assar 2004: 82–87; Assar 2005b.

⁶ Schoff 1914: 6–7; Jacoby 1958: 781.

his rebellious subjects echoes Phraates' manoeuvres in Hyrcania and western Media.⁷ Josephus (*AJ* 12.293) places Antiochus' eastern expedition in the spring of 165 BC. Justin (41.5.9–10) is silent about the Seleucid incursion but comments that Phraates died shortly after his Hyrcanian campaign and passed the crown and command to his younger brother, Mithradates I, who was renowned for his prudence and military abilities. Taken together, these suggest that Phraates I died in 165 BC. There are, however, no independent records on the manner of succession from Phraates to Mithradates or an allusion to it (e.g. ΦΙΛΑ-ΔΕΛΦΟΥ) on any one of the coins ascribed to the latter.⁸ Perhaps the Parthian Council, fully aware of the growing power of Bactria in the east and the Seleucid threat in the west, passed over Phraates' less experienced heirs and installed Mithradates on the merits of his achievements.⁹ With the accession of this king Parthia's true growth began and eventually culminated in the formation of one of the most successful oriental monarchies.

In a series of campaigns following the death of Antiochus IV in Nov./Dec. 164 BC,¹⁰ Mithradates extended Parthian frontiers in the east and west. He first took advantage of Bactrian weaknesses, caused by prolonged and violent wars between Eucratides I (c. 171–145 BC) and Demetrius II (c. 175–170 BC) and invaded Bactria. Following Strabo (11.9.2 and 11.11.2),¹¹ Mithradates must have annexed the two strategically important eparchies of Tapuria and Traxiane sometime after 163 BC.¹²

With the eastern frontiers secured, Mithradates turned west and attacked Media Magna and Atropatene. According to Justin (41.6.6), the war with the Medes went on for some time with both sides enjoying intermittent success. But Mithradates ultimately prevailed. Although we have no precise accounts of his wars in the western satrapies, the inscription of the reclining statue of Heracles in Bīsitūn, dated Panemos 164 SEM (Jun./Jul. 148 BC), implies that they were completed after this date.¹³

Mithradates then appointed his brother, Bagasis (Bagāyāsh), governor of the newly won provinces in the west¹⁴ and recorded his victory by issuing a series of silver obols (S12.4–5) and copper coins (S12.13, S12.17–18, and S12.23–24) in Ecbatana (Fig. 1). These have, on

⁷ Assar 2005b.

⁸ Types S9–S13 coinages. Cf. Sellwood 1980: 30–43.

⁹ Strabo (11.9.3) relates: *the Council of the Parthians, according to Poseidonius, consists of two groups, one that of kinsmen, and the other, that of wise men and Magi, from both of which groups the kings were appointed.* Cf. Jones 2000: 276–277.

¹⁰ Sachs and Wiseman 1954: 204 and 208; Parker and Dubberstein 1956: 23; Del Monte 1997: 208–209.

¹¹ Jones 2000: 274–275 and 280–281.

¹² Strabo (11.11.2) gives the names of these two eparchies as *Ἀσπιώνου* and *Τουριού* while Tarn 1930: 122–126 identifies them with the eastern Tapuria and Traxiana, respectively. Cf. also Tarn 1932: 579; Debevoise 1938: 19; Bivar 1983: 33. Torday 1997: 350–351 gives Turiva and Aspiönus. Cf. also Bopparachchi 1991: 65–66 on the clashes between Eucratides I and Demetrius II.

¹³ This was erected for the safety of the serving Seleucid viceroy Cleomenes. Cf. Roberts 1963: 76; Roberts 1967: 283 and 291; Bivar 1983: 33.

¹⁴ Justin (41.6.7) gives the name as Vagasis. Cf. Rühl 1886: 232. For Bacasis and Bocasis cf., respectively, Watson 1882: 277, and Yardley 1994: 257. Moses of Chorene refers to Valarsaces, a younger brother of Arsaces the Great (Mithradates I), who was installed by the latter as the first Parthian king of Armenia. Cf. Thomson 1978: 32, 91, 124, 129, 132–145, 166 and 215. A. M. Simonetta 1978: 162, n. 9, equates Bagāyāsh with Vagasis of Justin. I have identified Valarsaces with Bagāyāsh (Bagasis) mentioned in several Babylonian cuneiform records of the Parthian period. Cf. Assar 2001a: 18. Simonetta 2001: 75.

their obverse and reverse, respectively, the right-facing busts of Mithradates and Bagasis; the latter depicted in the typical satrapal headgear, *bashlyk*.



Fig. 1. S12.5 silver obol of Mithradates I with the reverse bust of Bagasis

The fall of Media paved the way for further conquests. In Jun./Jul. 141 BC Arsacid forces under Mithradates overran Mesopotamia and first captured Seleucia on the Tigris and then Babylon on 28.III.171 SEB (5/6.7.141 BC). The evidence of Parthian triumph, contained in a broken fragment of an Astronomical Diary from year 171 SEB, reads:¹⁵

- 2: [...] Ṛx¹ [...] ^{mes} Ṛx x x¹ LUGAL šá² Ṛx¹ [...]
 3: [...] DU^{mes} ina ^{kušr} GÍD.DA x¹ [...] MU-1-me-7-K]ÁM² šá Ṛšⁱ-i² MU¹-1-me-1,11-KÁM SAR^{mes} Ṛx x GÙ¹-D[É² [...]
 4: [...] URU^{mes} šá KUR Ma-da-a-a [...] al-te-me um]-ma¹ A-Ṛza-x¹-a-Ṛx-x¹-a šá TA^{uru} Ur-qa-na²-a-nu¹⁶ SIG² Ṛx¹ [...]
 5: [...] ṚSAG² ITU BI U₄-22-KÁM ^{kuš} GÍD.D[A [...] m]ub-bi¹⁶ pa-hat E^{ki} u¹⁶ pu-li-te-e MU-a-ti SAR x x Ṛx¹ [...]
 6: [...] ina¹⁶ GAL-ú-qu-tu ina KUR URI^{ki} Ṛx¹ [...] Ṛx¹ ina É IGI-DU₈-A GÙ-DÉ U₄ BI al-te-me um-ma¹ Ti-'u-ú-gi² [...]
 7: [...] A-šá-ka-a LUGAL ana^{uru} Se-lu-ke-'a-[a [...] Ṛx¹ U₄-24-KÁM¹ An-ti-'u-uk-su A šá Ar-'a-a-bu-za-na-a LUGAL [...]
 8: [...] KUR Aš-šur^{ki} šá ina IGI-ma² Ar-šá-ka-a ṚLUGAL² [...] m]ub-bi¹⁶ 4¹⁶ GAL ú-qu-tu šá KUR URI^{ki} pa-qid KU TUK šá GIM GIŠ-S[AR [...]
 9: [...] ^{uru} Se-lu-ke-'a]-a URU LUGAL-ú-tu KU₄-ub ITU BI U₄-28-KÁM¹ [...] Ar-šá]-ka-a LUGAL GAL-ú mun-nu-ú TA^{uru} Se-lu-ke-'a-a ana E^{ki} KU₄-u[b [...]

2: [...] king of² [...]

3: [...] went, were written on a parchment [...] year 107,] which is² year 171, [...] they were read² [...]

¹⁵ Sachs and Hunger 1996: 134–135, No. –140A.

- 4: [...] cities of Media [...] I heard] that Aza-[x], who from the city of Hyrcania, a famous [...]
 5: [...] That month, the 22nd day, a parchment written [...] to the governor of Babylon and these² (Greek) citizens [...]
 6: [...] in² the position of general in Babylonia [...] was read in the House of Observation. That day I heard as follows: Tiogi² [...]
 7: [...] King Arsaces to Seleucia [...] the 24th day, Antiochus, son of King Aryabozan², [...]
 8: [...] of Assyria who before King Arsaces [...] was appointed [...] above the four generals of Babylonia. A [...] which was like a gar[den² [...]
 9: [...] entered [Seleu]cia, the Royal City. That month, the 28th day, [...] Arsa]ces, the recognised Great King, from Seleucia entered Babylon [...]

At this point in time, Mithradates celebrated his victories by striking silver tetradrachms and drachms (S13.1–10) at Seleucia (Figs. 2–3). These lasted until at least Oct./Nov. 139 BC (Dios 174 SEM) and perhaps even as late as Sep./Oct. 138 BC (Hyperberetaios 174 SEM). Yet his stay in Babylonia must have been short-lived since we next find him in Hyrcania perhaps preparing for the defence of Parthia's northern frontiers against the steppe invaders.¹⁶ At the same time Mithradates' generals extended his campaigns into Elymais and ultimately established Parthian suzerainty over the greater part of that province.¹⁷ A historical note from month IX of 171 SEB (3/4.11.141–1/2.1.140 BC) gives:¹⁸



Fig. 2. S13.1 silver tetradrachm of Mithradates I from Seleucia on the Tigris (Author's Collection)

¹⁶ Strabo (11.9.2) comments that having forced the Scythians to yield to them, the Parthians annexed part of Bactria. This may well be a reference to Mithradates' campaigns against the Sacae after his triumph in Babylonia.

¹⁷ For a detailed discussion of the Elymaean affairs under the Seleucids and Parthians cf. Potts 1999: 354–412.

¹⁸ Sachs and Hunger 1996: 146–147, No. –140C.



Fig. 3. S13.10 silver drachm of Mithradates I from Seleucia on the Tigris

- 34: ITU BI *al-te-me um-ma* ¹Ár-šá-ka-a LUGAL u ^{lú}ERÍN^{mes}-šú ina ^{uru}Ár-qa-ni-'a-a TUḪ-ár
- 35: [*al-te-me um-ma* 6 ^{lú}NIM-MA^{ki} u ^{lú}ERÍN^{mes}-šú ana tar-ša ^{uru}A-pa-am-a šá ana muḫ-ḫi ^{lú}Ši-il-ḫu ana LÚ.NE TUḪ-á[r]
- 36: ITU⁷ BI ^{lú}UN^{mes} šá ina ^{uru}A-pa-am-a TUŠ-u' ana É ^{uru}Kar-ku-di-i È-ú ^{uru}A-pa-am-a ina IZI ig-da-¹lu-u'¹
- 37: [x x] ¹An ^{lú}GAL ERÍN^{mes} šá ana muḫ-ḫi 4 ^{lú}GAL ERÍN^{mes} ú-qa šá ana ku-um ¹Ár-šá-ka-a LUGAL TA ^{uru}Se-l[u-ke-'a-a šá ana muḫ-ḫi]
- 38: [^{lú}JIDIGNA a-na IGI šá ^{lú}NIM-MA^{ki} ana LÚ.NE È ina ^{lú}Ka-ba-ri TUḪ u ^{lú}ERÍN^{mes} MEŠ-tú 'x' [x x x x]
- 39: [(ana) L]Ú.NE È-ú ^{lú}UN^{mes} šá ina ^{uru}Se-lu-ke-'a-a u ^{lú}UN^{mes} šá ina E^{ki} TUŠ-u' ú-nu-tú 'x' [x x x]
- 40: [x] IGI na šú⁷ mu ú šá ^{lú}NIM-MA^{ki} i-na-ša-ru-ú *al-te-me um-ma* ^{lú}ERÍN^{mes} šá ina É [...]
- 41: [(x) ^{lú}JERÍN^{mes} šá⁷ ^{lú}NIM-MA^{ki} GAR-u' ITU BI ^{lú}UN^{mes} ^{lú}A^{mes}-šú-nu NÍG.ŠU-šú-nu u DAM^{mes}-šú-[nu]
- 42: [x] ^{lú}GAL^{mes} šá LUGAL šá ina E^{ki} KU⁴^{mes} u ^{lú}UN^{mes} i-šu-tú ana ŠÀ ti-amat ú-še-ri-d[u'⁷]
- 43: [x x]-tu⁴ šá a-gur-ru šá KÁ-GAL^d AMAR-UTU i-na-qa-ru-ú ù a-gur-r[u]
- 44: [x x mu]ḫ⁷-¹ḫi¹ ^{lú}BURANUN TA mu-še-pi-šú šá kin ši x x 'x x' [...]

- 34: That month, I heard as follows: King Arsaces and his troops departed from Hyrcania.
- 35: I heard as follows: (on the) 6th, the Elamite and his troops departed towards Apamea which is on the river Šilḫu for fighting.
- 36: That [month⁷], the people who dwell in Apamea went out to Bit-Karkudî; they burned Apamea.
- 37: [...] An(tiochus) the general who is above the four generals, who was representing King Arsaces, went out from Sel[eu]cia which is on
- 38: the Tigris towards the Elamite for fighting; from the river Kabari he departed, and the numerous troops [...]
- 39: went out for fighting. The people who were in Seleucia and the people who dwell in Babylon, [...] the belongings [...]
- 40: to guard (them) before the of the Elamite. I heard as follows: the troops who were in Bit-Karkudî⁷ [...]

- 41: set up [...] of the troops of the Elamite. That month, the people [...] their children, their possessions, and their wives [...]
- 42: the nobles of the king who had entered Babylon and the few people they led to the sea [...]
- 43: [...] of the brickwork of the Marduk Gate they tore down and the brickwork [...]
- 44: [...] on⁷ the Euphrates from [...]

Several references in the Astronomical Diaries of years 171 and 174 SEB attest prolonged military operations in Elymais.¹⁹ But three “annual” bronze emissions from Susa (Table 1), inscribed with ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ (S12.26–28), confirm Parthian control of that city’s mint in the period 173–175 SEM (140–138 BC).²⁰ Nevertheless, continuous occupation of the satrapy must have been difficult. At that point in time a local usurper, Tigraios (138–132 BC), emerged and began to strike a limited silver issue and also uninterrupted bronze coinage in Susa during 175–180 SEM (Table 1).²¹

Mithradates’ last known triumph was against the Seleucid king Demetrius II (145–138 BC, 1st reign) son of Demetrius I (162–150 BC). Justin (36.1.1–6) and Josephus (*AJ* 13.184–186)²² state that having eliminated Alexander Balas, Demetrius II succumbed to the vices of youth and was spoiled by his good fortune. To remove the stigma of indolence he decided to march on Parthia. The people of the east, unhappy with the cruelty of Arsacides (Mithradates I),²³ greeted the news of his approach. Assisted by auxiliary troops from the

¹⁹ Sachs and Hunger 1996: 150–153, No. –140C, Rev. 29–35 (month X of 171 SEB); 152–153, No. –140D, Obv. 11 (month X of 171 SEB); 168–171, No. –137D Obv. 8–14 and Rev. 1–3 (month IX of 174 SEB). According to Justin (41.6.8) Mithradates waged a successful war against Elymais after the capture of Media and before the conquest of Mesopotamia. This is highly unlikely since the Parthian king would have been forced to cross over the ragged and mountainous terrain lying between Media and Susiana to enter Elymais. Also, absence of Parthian coins and presence of Elymaean issues prior to 141 BC preclude an invasion before Mithradates’ victories in Mesopotamia (cf. Table 1). Unfortunately, with the exception of Kamnaskires, the Elymaean rulers’ names have not survived in any of the extant cuneiform fragments. Le Rider 1978: 35 argues that the reign of Alexander Balas (150–145 BC) was interrupted in 147 BC by the arrival of Kamnaskires at Susa. The latter was in turn supplanted in 145 BC by Demetrius II Nicator. Then another King Kamnaskires took over and reigned until 139 BC. He was succeeded by Okkonapses who occupied the throne briefly in 139/138 BC before the arrival of the Parthians. I have shown that Kamnaskires Megas Soter terminated Alexander Balas’ authority in Susa in 149/148 BC. He was subsequently expelled when the city briefly fell to the forces of Demetrius II in 145 BC. Soon afterward, Diodotus Tryphon (141–138 BC) set up Antiochus VI (144–141 BC), son of Alexander Balas, in opposition to Demetrius II. The ensuing dynastic strife gave Okkonapses the opportunity to reign briefly until the victorious return of Kamnaskires Nikephoros in 144/143 BC. Cuneiform texts and numismatic evidence illustrate that Kamnaskires was eventually removed by the Parthians in 140/139 BC. Cf. Assar 2005c. Cf. also Le Rider 1965: 68 and 346–347 on the bronze coins and reign of “Hyknapses”.

²⁰ Le Rider 1965: 78–79, LR 95–97; Sellwood 1980: 41. Sellwood attributes LR 319 (S12.29) bronze to Susa. On the other hand Le Rider 1965: 153 assigns the issue to Seleucia on the Tigris. But he admits that this variety was absent from the thirty thousand or so coins found at Seleucia by Professor Leroy Waterman. Cf. McDowell 1935: vii, 183 and 200–204 on the coinage of Mithradates I. In a more recent publication Le Rider 1998: 14 reports an isolated example of LR 319 bronze among the same group of coins. This had probably escaped McDowell’s attention. Given the stylistic differences between LR 95 and LR 319 emissions and the fact that the extant specimens of the latter type all have ↑ die alignment, I am inclined to accept Le Rider’s attribution of the type to Seleucia on the Tigris rather than Susa.

²¹ Le Rider 1965: 81–83 and 378–381; Le Rider 1978: 34–37 discusses a silver tetradrachm of Tigraios from Susa. Another piece has turned up in Dr. Busso Peus Nachfolger Auction 363, 26 April 2000, # 5073.

²² Marcus 1943: 318–319.

²³ Cf. Assar 2005b for the interpretation of this patronymic.

Persians, Elymaeans and Bactrians, he defeated the Parthians in a series of battles. In the end he was deceived by an offer of peace, captured, paraded in the cities that had aided him, and finally despatched to Hyrcania where he received treatment befitting his former status. But in another passage Justin (38.9.2–3) relates that having emerged victorious in numerous battles, Demetrius was surprised by an ambush, lost his army and taken prisoner by the Parthians. Arsacides treated him with royal magnanimity and sent him off to Hyrcania. There he gave Demetrius his daughter in marriage and promised to recover for him the throne of Syria that Tryphon had usurped. According to Appian (*Syrian Wars* 11.67) Demetrius lived in the palace of King Phraates and married his sister, Rhodogune.²⁴

Although quite brief and somewhat fragmentary, our contemporary accounts of Mithradates' victory against Demetrius are preserved at the end of month IV of the Astronomical Diary of 174 SEB (7/8.7.–4/5.8.138 BC).²⁵

- 3: ITU BI U₄-28-KÁM ¹rAr²1-[šá-ka-a² LUGAL²]
 4: [...¹ GAL ERÍN^{mes} šá ana muḫ-ḫi 4 ¹GAL ERÍN^{mes} ana E^{ki} KU₄^{mes}-nu ITU BI ŠUB-ti ÁB. GU₄^{bá} r_x x¹ [...]
 5: [... UNUG^{ki} u URU^{mes} šá ana muḫ-ḫi ÍD GÚ-DU₈-A ÍD su-ú-ru ÍD pi-qu-du u ÍD^{mes} [...]
 6: [... r_x x¹ ú ni ŠĀ^{mes}-šú-nu TI-ú ana KUR NIM-MA ú-še-lu-ú UN^{mes} URU^{mes} šú-nu-tú ina gi-lit EN r_x x¹ [...]
 7: [... su]-un²-qa² u SU-KÚ ina MÚŠ.ŠÉŠ^{ki} u URU^{mes} šá KUR NIM-MA GAR-an al-te-me um-ma ¹UNUG^{ki}-a-a si r_x x¹ [...]
 8: [... r_x x¹ ik-pu-du-ú ḪUL-ti ITU BI al-te-me um-ma r_x x¹ ¹De-meṭ-ri LUGAL šá ina IGI-ma ERÍN-šú TA URU^{mes} [...]
 9: [... URI^{ki} DÚ-uš u ¹Ar-šá-ka-a LUGAL an-na-a TA URU^{mes} šá KUR Ma-da-a-a ana KUR URI^{ki} GIN-ma x [...]
 10: [... ^mERÍN-ni-šú GAR-ma šá-a-šú u ¹GAL^{mes}-šú ina ŠU^{II} iṣ-bat um-ma ¹Ar-šá-ka-a LUGAL sa-lim SIG₅-ka TA r_x x¹ [...]
 11: [... ina nu-ḫu-uš DÜG.GA ŠĀ-bi u sa-lim SIG₅ ina URU^{mes} šá KUR Ma-da-a-a ina ta-ḫu ¹Ar-šá-ka-a LUGAL šak- [...]

- 3: That month, the 28th day, [King²] Ar[saces²]
 4: who was above the four generals entered Babylon. That month, dying of cattle [...]
 5: [...] Uruk and the cities which are on the Kutha canal, the Sūru canal, the Piqudu canal and the canals [...]
 6: [...] their they took and brought (them) up to Elam. The people of these cities in fear of [...]
 7: [...] and famine occurred in Susa and the cities of Elam. I heard as follows: the Urukeans [...]
 8: [...] planned evil. That month, I heard as follows: (scribal error²) King Demetrius who before [...] his troops from the cities of [...]

²⁴ White 1999: 232–233. Cf. also Bevan 1902: 232–235; Habicht 1989: 368 and 371, dating Demetrius' defeat and capture to 140/139 BC. For a detailed analysis of the evidence cf. Dąbrowa 1999: 9–17.

²⁵ Sachs and Hunger 1996: 160–161, No. –137A. Cf. Justin (36.1.2–6, and 38.9.2–3) on the defeat and capture of Demetrius.

- 9: [...] made [...] of Babylonia, and this King Arsaces went from the cities of Media to Babylonia, and [...]
 10: [...] brought about [the defeat] of his troops, and seized him and his nobles, saying: King Arsaces [...] good peace for you⁷ from [...]
 11: [...] in plenty, happiness and good peace in the cities of Media next to King Arsaces [...]

It is generally believed that Mithradates' latest dated coinage (S13.5 and S13.10) marks the end of his reign before October 138 BC.²⁶ However, cuneiform records indicate that he might well have lived until early 132 BC but gradually languished into an insensate state as a result of a progressively debilitating illness after 138 BC.

The first indication of Mithradates' extended reign is found in the partially preserved colophon of a tablet compiled in month V of year 180 SEB (30/31.7.–27/28.8.132 BC) in Uruk:²⁷

- 11: UNUG^{ki} inu^{NE}
 12: [U₄-x-KÁM MU-1-me-16 šá ši-tu₄] ¹r1-me-1,20 ¹Ar-šak-'a u ¹Ri-'in¹-nu AMA-šú
 13: LUGAL^{mes}

- 11: Uruk. Month V,
 12: [day x, year 116, which is year] 180, Arsaces and Rinnu, his mother,
 13: (are) Kings.

Our traditional date of Mithradates' death (139/138 BC) is therefore inconsistent with this attested and dated co-regency that heralds the beginning of his successor's reign. Furthermore, there are incomplete references in two tablets from years 175 and 177 SEB regarding an individual who had suffered a stroke and perhaps later become gravely indisposed.²⁸ Although similar citations concerning men and women of no prominence are not entirely uncommon in the Late Babylonian Astronomical Diaries, the combination of these and two further supporting lines of evidence from year 179 SEB weigh heavily in favour of extending Mithradates' reign to early 132 BC.

The first of these is found in month VII of the Astronomical Diary of 179 SEB (7/8.10.–5/6.11.133 BC):²⁹

²⁶ Debevoise 1938: 26; Sellwood 1980: 29; Biver 1983: 38; Assar 2001a: 21.

²⁷ Clay 1913: 13, 87, and pl. 48 (MLC 2153: Deed of Gift to the House of Gods), dates the tablet to c. 173 SEB; Oelsner 1975: 30–31, n. 14, year 180 SEB; Doty 1977: 377, year 180 SEB; Oelsner 1986: 275, n. "s", and 408, n. 570, year 180 SEB; Oelsner 1995: 147–148, year 180 SEB; Del Monte 1997: 245, year 180 SEB; Simonetta 2001: 76 ascribes to year 174 SEB. It should be added that an earlier text from month VII in 177 SEB (Oct. 135 BC) too strongly implies that Mithradates I was still alive at that point in time:

[... ITU² BI²] U₄-20-KÁM ^{kuš}šá-tár^{mes} šá ¹Me-nu-pi-lu-su šá a-na LUGAL AD r_x x¹ [...]
 [...] That² month²], the 20th, leather documents of Menupilus, who to the king, the father² of [...]

It is highly unlikely that the reference to *the king, the father of* applied to Phraates II. But the sign following AD (= father) is unintelligible and so renders the translation of the latter part of the text quite uncertain. Cf. Sachs and Hunger 1996: 194–195, No. –134B₁+B₂, Obv. 15.

²⁸ Sachs and Hunger 1996: 182–183, No. –136B, Obv. 16; Sachs and Hunger 1996: 194–195, No. –134B₁+B₂, Obv. 16.

²⁹ Sachs and Hunger 1996: 216–217, No. –132B; A. M. Simonetta 1978: 162, n. 9 gives 165 BC as the date of the corresponding text; Torday 1997: 349 takes the phrase *brother of the king* to imply co-regency.

- 21: ITU BI *al-te-e'* *um-ma* ¹Pi-li-nu-us-su ¹⁶GAL ERÍN-ni KUR URI^{ki} *šá ana muḫ-ḫi* 4 ¹⁶GAL ERÍN-ni
 22: *šá ina* ^{11u}BAR *a-na* URU^{mes} *šá* KUR *Ma-da-a-a ana* IGI ¹Ba-a-ga-a-a-šá-a ¹⁶ŠEŠ LUGAL GIN-ma

21: That month, I heard as follows: Philinus, the general of Babylonia who is above the four generals,

22: who in month I had gone to the cities of Media before Bagāyāsh, the brother of the king

The second forms the colophon of a hitherto unpublished astrological omen text dated 9/10.12. 133 BC:³⁰

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| 16: ^{11u} GAN U ₄ - ¹⁵ KÁM MU-1-me-.... | Month IX, day 5, year 100+ |
| 17: 15-KÁM <i>šá ši-i</i> MU-1-me-1,19-KÁM | 15, which is year 179, |
| 18: ¹ Ar-šá-ka-a | Arsaces (is), |
| 19: LUGAL KUR-KUR ^{mes} | King of Lands. |

There is little doubt that the reference to Bagāyāsh as *the brother of the king* in the above text dated Oct./Nov. 133 BC concerns a living rather than dead Parthian ruler. This agrees with the proposed revised date for the end of the reign of Mithradates as the brother of Bagasis (Bagāyāsh).

We also find several references to intense fighting in Elymais – after a break of about five years – during months VII–XI of 179 SEB (7/8.10.133–3/4.3.132 BC).³¹ These begin with an attack on and plunder of a harbour of ships in the river Tigris by the Characenean ruler, Hyspaosines, who is viewed as *a friend of the Elamite enemy*. The hostilities nevertheless end with the defeat of the enemy forces and probably even capture of the Elymaean leader.³² Accordingly, I now believe that the epithet *King of Lands* in the last text above rather suits a man of Mithradates' power and prestige than his young and less experienced son and successor, Phraates II.³³ He was undoubtedly a great conqueror and succeeded in transforming Parthia from a small kingdom on the eastern extremities of the Seleucid realm into a world empire.

The latest record from the reign of Mithradates I is an Astronomical Diary covering months VII–XII of 179 SEB (7/8.10.133–2/3.4.132 BC).³⁴ It contains only sketchy references to intense fighting in Elymais during months VIII–IX of that same year. Yet it shows that the Elymaean enemy was decisively defeated and the satrapy finally pacified in early 132 BC. The incomplete historical notices from month X (4/5.1.–1/2.2.132 BC) read:

³⁰ BM 45715 (SH 81–7–6,122); Strassmaier 1893: 111; Minns 1915: 31, Text “e”; Kugler 1924: 446 and 448, Text 8; Oelsner 1964: 269, n. 23; Oelsner 1975: 31, n. 15; Van der Spek 1997/8: 173, n. 28.

³¹ Sachs and Hunger 1996: 216–217, No. –132B, Rev. 18–19 (month VII); 226–227, No. –132D₂, Obv. 9 (month VIII); 230–231, No. –132D₂, Rev. 16–21 (month X).

³² Sachs and Hunger 1996: 232–233, No. –132D₁, Rev. 9 (month XI).

³³ Assar 2001a: 23. I had previously assigned the text to the reign of Phraates II. The epithet LUGAL KUR–KUR^{mes} should simply be interpreted as *King of Lands* and not *King of all Lands*. Cf. also Assar 2005b.

³⁴ Sachs and Hunger 1996: 220–235, No. –132C+D₁+D₂+E.

- 13: [ITU BI ¹⁶KIN-GI₄-A LUGAL *šá* ^{kuš}SAR^{mes} *na-šu-ú ana* E^{ki} KU₄-ub ¹⁶Š]À-TAM É-sag-gíl u ¹⁶E^{ki,mes} ¹⁶UKKIN *šá* É-sag-gíl 1-en GU₄ ù 5 SISKUR
 14: [*ina* KÁ-DUMU-NUN-NA *šá* É-sag-gíl *ana* ¹⁶KIN-GI₄-A LUGAL MU-a-ti NIDBA GUB^{mes} -niš-šú *ana* ^dE]N ^dGAŠAN-iá DINGIR^{mes} GAL^{mes} *ana* bul-^rḫi *šá* LUGAL ù *a-na* bul-ḫi-šú GAR-an ITU BI
 15: [^{kuš}GÍD.DA *šá* *ana* muḫ-ḫi ¹⁶pa-ḫat u ¹pu-li-ḫa-an-nu *šá* *ina* E^{ki}[^r]S]AR-u' *ina* É *ta-mar-tú* *šá*-su-ú ak-ka-'i-i
 16: [... ¹Ur-'a-a A *šá* ¹Ka-a]m-na-āš-ki-i-ri ¹⁶KÚR ¹⁶NIM-MA^{ki} *šá* si-ḫi *ana* muḫ-ḫi ¹⁶AD-šú is-se-ḫi-'u
 17: [...] *ina* KUR URI^{ki} TUŠ-u' UGU [¹⁶]ERÍN^{mes}-šú-nu *ú-ka-ḫi-ru* *ú-zi-bu*
 18: [...] ^rx¹-ár-ra-ta-āš ÍD [KUR NI]M-MA^{ki} *i-bi-ru-ú a-na* 1 DANNA.ÀM *id-du-ú*
 19: [... M]AḪ^{mes} *a-na* LÚ.[NE *a-na*' tar]-ša *a-ḫa-meš ip-ḫu-ru-ú* *ina* ^{11u}APIN U₄-7 ¹⁶ERÍN^{mes}
 20: [... ¹ERÍN^{mes} [x x] ^rx¹ BAD₅.BAD₅ ¹⁶ERÍN^{mes} KÚR GAR-u' EN ŠÚ *šámaš re-ḫe-e-tú*
 21: [... K]U₄-ub ¹Ur-'i-a A *šá* ¹⁶KÚR ¹⁶NIM-MA^{ki} MU-a-ti
 22: [...] 1-en GU₄ ù 5 SISKUR *ana* tar-ša ¹⁶DUMU šip-ri MU-a-ti
 23: [...] -u' u *ana* bul-ḫi-šú GAR-an

13: [That month a messenger of the king who carried a message entered Babylon]. The administrator of Esangil and the Babylonians, the assembly of Esangil, [provided] one bull and 5 (sheep) sacrifices

14: [at the 'Gate of the Son of the Prince' of Esangil for that messenger of the king as offering, and to B]el and Beltija, the great gods, for the life of the king and for his (own) life, he sacrificed them. That month,

15: [a parchment letter] which was written [to] the (Greek) citizens who are in Babylon, was read in the House of Observation; according to

16: [... Uria, son of K]amnaškir, the Elamite enemy, who had revolted against his father

17: [...] lived in Babylonia, organised against their troops and left?

18: [...] -arrataš, the river of Elam, they crossed, for one bēru distance they pitched camp

19: [...] departed [...] many [troops] for fighting [against] each other. In month VIII, the 7th, the troops

20: [...] the troops [...] they brought about the defeat of the troops of the enemy?. Until sunset, the remainder

21: [...] entered. Uria, the son of this Elamite enemy,

22: [...] one bull and 5 (sheep) sacrifices opposite this messenger

23: [...] and performed (it) for his life.

The partially preserved upper edge text of the above tablet confirms that the dated colophon was subscribed to King Arsaces alone:

3: [... MU]-1-me-1,19-KÁM ¹Ar-šá-ka-a LUGAL

3: [... Year] 179, Arsaces (is) King.

This illustrates that the original record was compiled under Mithradates I and not Phraates II. As shown below, the latter began to reign as a co-ruler with his mother, Rinnu, sometime in the period 3/4.4.–27/28.8.132 BC.³⁵

Finally, it is noteworthy that our hypothesis on the state of Mithradates' health towards the end of his reign agrees with Justin (41.6.9) who reports that *He* (Mithradates I) *then succumbed to illness and died with glory at an advanced age, as great a man as his great-grandfather Arsaces*.³⁶

Arsaces VII – Phraates II (spring 132 – autumn 127 BC)

Given the portraits on his earliest extant coinage, depicting an adolescent in early teens but nevertheless bearded as is common in Mesopotamia even today (Figs. 4–5), it is possible that Phraates was born not long after Mithradates I captured Media in 148/147 BC. His mother, Queen Rinnu, may have been the daughter of a local chieftain or the head of a noble family (Karen[?]) in Ecbatana who joined the Parthians in expelling the Seleucids. We learn from the combined statements of Lucian (*Makrobioi* 15)³⁷ and Phlegon of Tralles (Fr. 12.7 in Photius)³⁸ that Sinatruces was about eighty years old on his accession in 77/76 BC. He must, therefore, have been born in 157/156 BC and thus approximately 25 when Phraates began his reign. Considering that Sinatruces too was a son of Mithradates I³⁹ the only plausible reason for his younger brother, Phraates, to accede to the throne is that the latter's mother was the principal queen in the royal court. The resultant resentment of Mithradates' older sons may have contributed to the later internecine conflicts in the Arsacid dynasty.

The scanty evidence from the reign of Phraates illustrates his preoccupation with fighting Antiochus VII Sidetes (139/138–129 BC) in the west and Sacae in the east. However, the "annual" Susian bronze coins (Table 1) indicate that he began his reign with consolidating Arsacid hegemony in Elymais,⁴⁰ a task that had already started in the closing months of his father's reign.



Fig. 4. S14.1 silver tetradrachm of Phraates II from Susa

³⁵ Dąbrowa 2005: 73, n. 1 also dates the end of Mithradates' reign to 132 BC.

³⁶ Cf. Assar 2004: 84–87 on the correct dynastic link between Arsaces I and Mithradates I.

³⁷ Harmon 1996: 232–235.

³⁸ Jacoby 1929: 1163–1164; Jacoby 1930: 842; Henry 1960: 64.

³⁹ Assar 2005a: 16–29; Assar 2005b.

⁴⁰ Assar 2005c.



Fig. 5. S14.2 silver tetradrachm of Phraates II from Susa

Although extremely rare, Phraates' initial silver tetradrachms (S14.1–2 and S15.1)⁴¹ too show that he inaugurated his reign in Susa and Ecbatana instead of Seleucia on the Tigris. This agrees with a double-dated dedicatory Greek text from that city. It opens with the following lines and confirms Parthian jurisdiction in Elymais in Feb./Mar. 131 BC:⁴²

1: Ἔτους [CIP ὡς ὁ]	In the year [116 according to
2: βασιλεὺς ἀγ[ει]	king's recko[ning (but)]
3: ὡς δὴ πρότε[ρον]	(according) to the form[er (reckoning)]
4: ἀπρ μηνῶς (year)	181, month
5: ξανδικοῦ	Xandikos,

There are practically no records of Phraates' activities in the period leading to the Seleucid invasion of Parthia in the summer of 130 BC. According to the combined statements in Justin (38.10.1–10), Diodorus (34/35.15–19)⁴³ and Josephus (*AJ* 13.250–253),⁴⁴ Antiochus VII led a large army of cavalry and foot soldiers against the Parthians and secured the support of many eastern princes who expressed great detestation of Arsacid pride. He then engaged the Parthian forces, won three battles, seized Babylon and began to be dubbed *the Great*. This encouraged the neighbouring people to join the Seleucid camp and leave Phraates with nothing except the land of his forefathers.

I had concluded elsewhere that Antiochus arrived at Babylon shortly after the beginning of month I in 183 SEB (30/31.3.–27/28.4.129 BC).⁴⁵ This was hinged upon the date for-

⁴¹ A third variety of S17 with no exergual monogram on the reverse has recently come to light. The only known S15.1 tetradrachm is in Baku Museum, Azerbaijan. Cf. Le Rider 1965: 317, n. 5; 321; 384, n. 4, and pl. LXX.11. Cf. also Houghton 1989: 65 and pl. 6.A, and Assar 2005b for the historical implications of the gold stater of Antiochus VII dated ΘOP (179 SEM = 19/20.9.134 – 6/7.10.133 BC).

⁴² Cumont 1932: 279–284; Debevoise 1938: 30, n. 5 wrongly restores the Arsacid era and Julian dates as 117 and 13.3. – 10.4.130 BC, respectively; Potts 1999: 367 (Table 10/1, no. 25). Cf. Also Assar 2000: 6–12 and Assar 2003b: 176–184 on the 64- and 65-year differences between the SEM and AE dates.

⁴³ Walton 1967: 102–109.

⁴⁴ Marcus 1943: 352–355.

⁴⁵ Assar 2001a: 23–24.

mulas of three separate cuneiform records from the early months of that year. The first two, forming the colophons of an unpublished Normal Star Almanac⁴⁶ and an Almanac,⁴⁷ respectively, read:

- 1: [meš-ḫ]i šá MU-1-me-1,23-KÁM¹Ar-šá-ka-¹a¹ [LUGAL]
 1: [Compu]tations for year 183, Arsaces (is) [King.]

and

- 1: [meš-ḫi šá KUR-ád^{meš} šá^dJUDU-IDIM^{meš} šá MU-1-me-1,23-KÁM
 2: [An-ti-'u-uk-¹su LUGAL¹

- 1: [Computations of the entries of] the planets (into zodiacal signs) for year 183,
 2: Antiochus (is) King.

while the third, the colophon of a Sumero-Babylonian hymn dated 19/20.5.129 BC, gives:⁴⁸

- 27: E^{ki}GU₄U₄-22-KÁM MU-1-me-1,23-KÁM
 28: [blank]
 29: [An-ti-'u-uk-su EŠ₅MAN

- 27: Babylon. Month II, day 22, year 183,
 28: [blank]
 29: Antiochus (is) King.

The gist of my arguments was that the first of these three records attests Parthian authority and thus precludes Antiochus' presence in Babylon prior to spring 129 BC. However, there are certain insurmountable difficulties with this interpretation. First and foremost, for the Seleucid expedition to reach Babylon about Nisānu 183 SEB (Apr. 129 BC), Antiochus' huge army and the equally large number of camp followers would have been required to leave Antioch in Syria at least two to three months earlier in mid winter 129 BC. Such a militarily ill-conceived move would have compelled the army to pass through a difficult terrain depleted of provisions for both men and horses. Secondly, given that the following text,⁴⁹ reporting the lunar eclipse of 5 November 129 BC, is dated to King Arsaces, the Seleucid ruler would have had little time in the intervening period (Apr.–Nov. 129 BC) to

⁴⁶ BM 33448+33466+33743+47727; Sachs 1955: xxii, LBAT *1045+*1046 (only). For the description and content of Normal Star Almanacs cf. Sachs 1948: 281–282.

⁴⁷ Sachs 1955: 171, LBAT 1137; Oelsner 1975: 32; Del Monte 1997: 248; Van der Spek 1998: 233. For the description and content of Almanacs cf. Sachs 1948: 277–280.

⁴⁸ Reisner 1896: viii, No. 25 (VATH 406+1782), date given as 183 SEB; 51, copy gives 182 SEB; Clay 1913: 12, year 82 for 182 SEB; Debevoise 1938: 32, n. 18, year 182 SEB; Oelsner 1975: 32, n. 21, year 183 SEB; Oelsner 1986: 276; 308, n. 108; and 506, year 183 SEB; Del Monte 1997: 247, year 183 SEB; Van der Spek 1998: 233, year 183 SEB. Collation by Professor S. M. Maul (Ruprecht-Karls-Universität, Heidelberg) has confirmed year 183 SEB.

⁴⁹ Sachs 1955: xxxiii, LBAT 1441; 227 (copy by Pinches) gives year 120 AE = 184 SEB but collation has confirmed 119 AE = 1[83] SEB; Oelsner 1975: 31, gives year 120 AE = 1[84] SEB; Hunger and Sachs 2001: 64–65, give year 119 AE = 1[83] SEB.

extend his sway over Mesopotamia, pacify Elymais and then move north to Media to challenge Phraates:

- 1: MU-1-me-19-KÁM šá šī-i MU-1-m[e-1,23-KÁM]
 2: ¹Ar-šá-ka-a LUGAL
 3: APIN GE₆ 13 7¹ 30 ME DIR muš [x]
 4: ár MAŠ-MAŠ ziq-pi sin AN-KU₁₀ Á [x]

- 1: Year 119, which is year 1[83],
 2: Arsaces (is) King.
 3: (Month) VIII, night of the 13th, moonrise to sunset: 7^o 30', measured (despite) clouds.
 4: (When) the rear part of Gemini culminated, lunar eclipse (occurred);

It is equally difficult to harmonise the above quoted conflicting date formulas with a Parthian victory shortly before the completion of the corresponding Normal Star Almanac and Almanac of 183 SEB. If Phraates had overcome Antiochus in early spring 129 BC, it is highly likely that he would have re-asserted Parthian power in Mesopotamia by mid summer of that same year. This, in turn, would have given him ample time to strike at Seleucia his undated celebratory coinage (S17.1–5)⁵⁰ inscribed with ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ ΝΙΚΗΦΟΡΟΥ (Fig. 6). Following the mint practices at Seleucia and in line with the dated tetradrachms of Bagasis and Artabanus I discussed below, Phraates' next issue, beginning in the autumn of that same year, would have been dated ΔΙΠ (184 SEM).⁵¹ The fact that all of the known S17 tetradrachms remain undated⁵² strongly indicates that they were minted during a single Macedonian year spanning the period 24/25.9.129–11/12.10.128 BC. Accordingly, I have considered the following amendments to my previous notes. Firstly, the Seleucid army arrived in Babylon in late summer 182 SEB (Jul./Aug. 130 BC) and not spring 183 SEB (Mar./Apr. 129 BC). Secondly, King Arsaces in the colophon of the Normal Star Almanac of 183 SEB is a mere scribal error and that this tablet was undoubtedly compiled under King Antiochus.

⁵⁰ Newell 1924: 168–180, attributes to Himerus; Hill 1927: 206, hesitatingly assigns to Himerus; Dayet 1925a: 64–65, gives to Phraates II; Dayet 1925b: 137, attributes to Phraates II; Newell 1938: 478, ascribes to Phraates II.

⁵¹ McDowell 1935: 147. There are no known dated Seleucid issues from Seleucia on the Tigris. The practice of noting the year of the issue began after Mithradates I conquered Babylonia in 5/6.7.141 BC (28.III.171 SEB). Assuming that he immediately struck coinage, his first and second emissions, corresponding to the last two months of year 171 SEM and the next twelve of year 172 SEM, respectively, must have been undated (S13.1 tetradrachms and S13.6–7 drachms). However, during a private conversation with Arthur Houghton, he informed me that the style and fabric of Mithradates' S13.1–5 tetradrachms are visibly different from those of the last issues of Demetrius II from Seleucia. This suggests that the first Parthian issue may have been minted in that city sometime in 172 SEM and not in late 171 SEM. The known specimens from Seleucia clearly show that the first issue of the early Parthian emissions remained undated while the following output was dated. Accordingly, there is no reason to believe that Phraates had two undated emissions, one in late 173 SEM and the other in 174 SEM.

⁵² There is, in the Berlin Museum cabinet, a cast copy of an originally authentic S17 drachm with a partially legible year date. This has been read as ΘΠΠ (= 189 SEM) and the coin thus attributed to Himerus. Closer inspections, however, reveal that what remains of the first letter of the date is in fact consistent with E rather than Θ. The new reading ΕΠΠ (= 185 SEM) agrees with the extant evidence and confirms that S17 coinage ended in about October 128 BC. For a brief discussion of the Berlin Museum drachm cf. Prokesch-Osten 1869/70: 255–256; Von Sallet 1874: 311–312; Prokesch-Osten 1874/5: 21–23; Gardner 1877: 34, pl. II.16; Wroth 1900: 193–194; Wroth 1903: 23, n. 2.



Fig. 6. S17.1 var. silver tetradrachm of Phraates II from Seleucia on the Tigris

The relevant material concerning these changes will be thoroughly analysed in a future contribution. It suffices to comment here that of the surviving colophons of the Normal Star Almanacs and Almanacs, the only one mentioning King Arsaces in conjunction with a single Seleucid era date is the one from 183 SEB. This clear omission of the corresponding Arsacid era date in a text purported to have been compiled under a Parthian king strengthens the likelihood of a mistaken ascription.⁵³

Unfortunately, our fragmentary cuneiform records remain inconclusive about Antiochus' Parthian expedition although two brief references could decide the *terminus post quem* of his arrival at Babylon. The first is from month II of 182 SEB (10/11.5–8/9.6.130 BC) where mention is made of Himerus who probably acted as the chief bursar of the Parthian royal treasury in that city.⁵⁴ If this is the same individual whom Phraates appointed to oversee the Parthian affairs in Babylonia in his absence, then Antiochus' presence in Babylon must naturally post date May/June 130 BC.

The second, an incomplete reference in month III (9/10.6.–8/9.7.130 BC) of the same tablet, reads: [That month on] the 20th I heard that [King⁵] Arsac[es ...].⁵⁵ This style of reporting events was consistently employed by the scribes of the Late Babylonian Astronomical Diaries and almost always involved an action whether of ephemeral value or conversely of historical significance. Owing to the uneasy situation in Babylon shortly before the Seleucid assault, it is possible that the scribe simply recorded here Phraates' departure on 28/29 June 130 BC to Media or Hyrcania.

⁵³ Unless the tablet was compiled after the re-assertion of Parthian authority in Babylonia in early autumn of 183 SEB. This may have prevented the scribe from dating the colophon to Antiochus retrospectively. But there are no indications that the corresponding Normal Star Almanac was completed so late.

⁵⁴ Sachs and Hunger 1996: 228–229, No. –129A₂, Obv. 21. I have tentatively translated *rab kumar* in Himerus' title as "the Chief Bursar" and thus taken ¹⁶GAL *ku-mar šá É LUGAL-ú-tú* to imply "Chief Bursar of the Royal Treasury". For the interpretation of É LUGAL as "treasury" cf. McEwan 1981: 138; Van der Spek 1987: 63, n. 10. Cf. also Sachs and Hunger 1996: 496–497, No. –77, Rev. 30 for the interpretation of É LUGAL-ú-tú as *the royal treasury*.

⁵⁵ Sachs and Hunger 1996: 228–229, No. –129A₂, Rev. 1. The right hand side of the fragment is lost. It is therefore impossible to ascertain whether LUGAL (= King) followed the name *Aršaka* in this line.

The numismatic legacy from Antiochus' invasion of Babylonia fares rather better than the contemporary cuneiform documents. We have three different bronze issues from Seleucia on the Tigris in his name. The first, dated BIIP (182 SEM = 16/17.10.131–4/5.10.130 BC), depicts the helmeted head of Athena on the obverse and a tripod on the reverse flanked by the inscription ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΝΤΙΟΧΟΥ to the right and ΕΥΕΡΓΕΤΟΥ to the left (Fig. 7).⁵⁶ This clearly illustrates that Antiochus arrived at Babylonia well before the spring of 129 BC. The second is a celebratory bronze emission. It shows on its obverse the right-facing and diademed royal head. The reverse bears the same inscription as the previous variety. But it replaces the tripod with a left-facing standing Nike holding a laurel wreath and a palm branch in her right and left hands, respectively (Fig. 8).⁵⁷ These are all dated 183 SEM and thus fall in the period 5/6.10.130–23/24.9.129 BC. The final bronze of Antiochus from Seleucia is known from a unique piece. It is identical with the first type but dated 'Δ'IIIP (184 SEM = 24/25.9.129–11/12.10.128 BC).⁵⁸ This strongly implies that the Seleucid king was defeated and slain shortly after 1 Dios 184 SEM.

There are also a dozen or so silver tetradrachms and a much smaller number of corresponding drachms struck for Antiochus at Seleucia on the Tigris (Fig. 9).⁵⁹ These bear the same obverse bust and reverse inscription as the aforementioned bronze dated 183 SEM. Moreover, they share their monograms with those on S17 tetradrachms of Phraates II. But unlike the bronze, the silver denominations are undated. The overall numismatic evidence clearly indicates that silver and bronze emissions were dated differently at Seleucia on the Tigris. While the first silver output remained undated, the corresponding bronze was always dated. I shall invoke this obvious anomaly later to decide the inception date of the reign of Mithradates II.

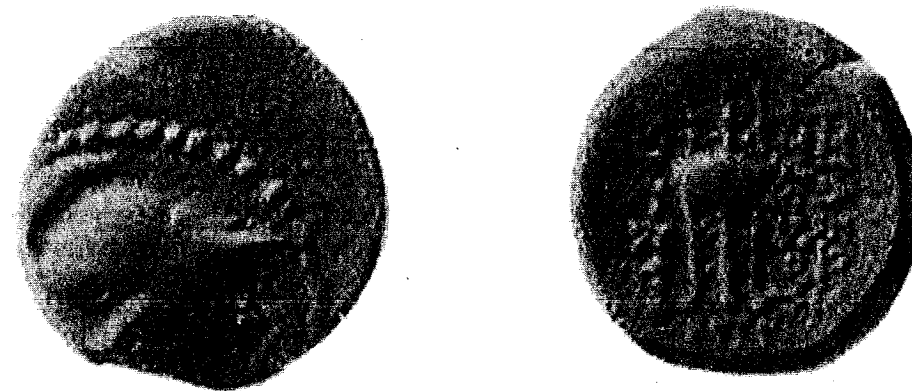


Fig. 7. Bronze of Antiochus VII from Seleucia on the Tigris, dated 182 SEM

⁵⁶ Le Rider 1965: 155, 337–338 and pl. XXXI.321 and D.

⁵⁷ Gardner 1878: 73, no. 45, and pl. XX.9; Le Rider 1965: 155–156, 337–338 and pl. XXXI.E–L.

⁵⁸ British Museum cabinet (BM 1956, 4–9–75, T. W. Armitage Bequest).

⁵⁹ Newell 1938: 478, and pl. 140.O and T; Le Rider 1965: 154–155, and pl. XXXI.A–C; Le Rider and Seyrig 1968: 36, nos. 199–200, and pl. VIII.200.

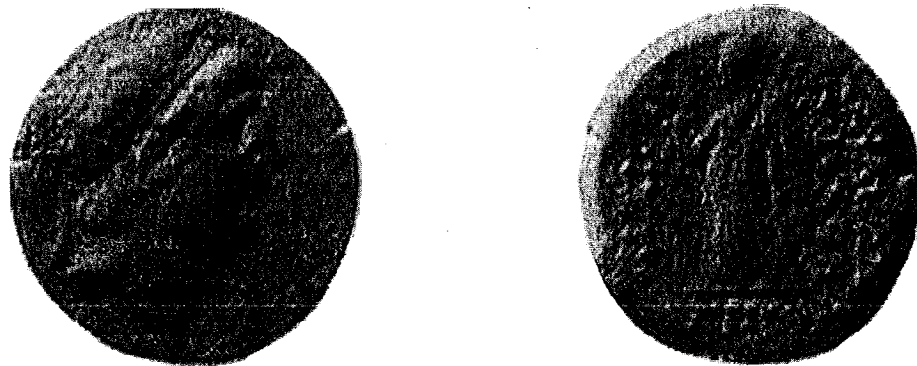


Fig. 8. Bronze of Antiochus VII from Seleucia on the Tigris, dated 183 SEM



Fig. 9. Silver tetradrachm of Antiochus VII from Seleucia on the Tigris

The cuneiform and numismatic evidence therefore places Antiochus' sojourn in Babylonia in the period *c.* Jul. 130–Oct. 129 BC. This conflicts with Justin's account but agrees with Porphyry's statement. Justin (38.10.8–10) claims that the Seleucid king distributed his vast army in winter quarters throughout the Parthian cities and ordered the subjects to supply provisions. As the spring drew closer, the offensive behaviour of the soldiers became increasingly intolerable and eventually forced the citizens to switch allegiance to the Parthians.⁶⁰ At this point, Phraates despatched the captive Demetrius to Syria to create a diversion. He then surprised the Seleucid forces in Media, defeating and slaying Antiochus in battle. Porphyry (FGH 260, F32.19), on the other hand, states that as *winter* of Olympiad 162.4 (129/128 BC) was closing in, the Parthians attacked Antiochus, defeated his army and slew him.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Cf. also Wolski 1993: 28 and 84; Wolski 1999: 110–114, 118–119, and 123.

⁶¹ Jacoby 1929: 1217–1218; Jacoby 1930: 874; Bevan 1902: 242–246.

It has already been indicated that Phraates' S17 coinage excludes a Parthian victory in early spring 129 BC while its lack of date remains consistent with an autumn triumph. Moreover, in addition to the 184 SEM bronze of Antiochus from Seleucia, we have at least one more bronze from the same year struck at Antioch.⁶² These imply that the Seleucid forces were defeated close to autumn of 129 BC and hence the news of Antiochus' death did not reach the western Seleucid mints until after the turn of the year 183 SEM. Accordingly, the date 5.11.129 BC of the above eclipse text may be taken as the *terminus ante quem* of Antiochus' authority in Babylonia.

As for Phraates' fate, Justin (42.1.1–5) states that having crushed the Seleucid army the Parthian king led the Greek captives into battle against the Scythians. The latter is said to have been induced by an offer of payment to aid the Parthians to counter Antiochus. But they were dismissed and refused payment for their late arrival. The nomads, in turn, took offence and began to lay waste Parthian territory. In the ensuing battle, when the Greeks found their captors in trouble, they deserted to the enemy and massacred the Parthian army including Phraates. There is, of course, little value in this version of the events.

The evidence presented earlier unequivocally precludes Antiochus' stay in Babylon after 5.11.129 BC. Granted that Phraates died in autumn 127 BC (cf. below), we have a hiatus of roughly two years between the demise of the two contenders that Justin overlooks. However, I believe an analysis of the extant cuneiform and numismatic material can shed a new light on the history of this short period.

One of the earliest records from Babylonia following the Parthian victory is dated Nisānu 184 SEB (17/18.4.–16/17.5.128 BC) and ascribed to Phraates and perhaps his queen.⁶³

9: UNUG^{ki} itūBAR U₄-[x-KÁM]

10: MU-1-me-20 šá šī (text: PI)-tu₄ 1-me-1,24 ¹Ar-šak-'a LUGAL u ¹Ú-bul-na-[a² DAM²-šú GA-ŠAN²]

9: Uruk, month I, day [x],

10: year 120, which is (year) 184, Arsaces (is) King and Obolna [his wife², (is) Queen².]

This is followed by two further brief texts both confirming Parthian control of Babylon around Apr./May 128 BC.⁶⁴ But there are unfortunately no more references of historical significance in the scanty records from the remainder of that year and until May/June 127 BC when Hyspaosines is on the throne in that city (cf. below). Consequently, one could place Phraates' departure to counter the nomad invaders as well as the fluid situation in the south involving Himerus' brutal treatment of the Babylonians and Hyspaosines' rebellion

⁶² Houghton and Spaer 1998: 262, no. 1968 (obverse bust of Eros and reverse head-dress of Isis).

⁶³ Oelsner 1975: 32; Oelsner 1986: 276, n. "u"; Weisberg 1991: 16, No. 43 = A3689, and pl. 107 (copy); Del Monte 1997: 248. Justin (38.10.10) states that having given Antiochus VII a royal burial, Phraates became enamoured of the daughter of Demetrius II, whom Antiochus had brought with him, and married the girl. But Justin unfortunately omits the name of the Seleucid princess. It is therefore difficult to identify her with the Obolna or Opolna of this text.

⁶⁴ Sachs 1955: 159, LBAT 1048 (Normal Star Almanac for 184 SEB); xxvi, LBAT *1284 (unpublished Goal-Year Text for 192 SEB), Obv. 3, Venus paragraph, preceding the colophon date by 8 years. For the description and content of Goal-Year Texts cf. Sachs 1948: 282–265.

anywhere in the period Apr. 128–Jun. 127 BC.⁶⁵ But the overall lack of Arsacid issues from Seleucia dated ΕΠΠ (185 SEM) points to Phraates' absence from Mesopotamia before the beginning of that year (12/13.10.128 BC).⁶⁶ This agrees with the date on one class of the recently discovered tetradrachms of the Characenean ruler discussed below. The underlying documentary and numismatic evidence therefore indicates that the above period could be narrowed down to Apr.–Oct. 128 BC.

Of the new finds, at least three specimens from Charax are dated ΔΠΠ (184 SEM) and inscribed with ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΥΣΠΑΟΣΙΝΟΥ (Fig. 10). Although not impossible, it is highly improbable that Hyspaosines minted his inaugural issue while Babylonia was still under the Seleucid sway or when it fell to the Parthians before Nov. 129 BC.



Fig. 10. Silver tetradrachm of Hyspaosines from Charax, dated 184 SEM

We have already established that Antiochus VII perished about the beginning of 184 SEM (24/25.9.129 BC) and that an Arsaces was attested at Babylon in Apr./May 128 BC. These naturally place Hyspaosines' revolt from Parthian dominion and his initial coinage after the latter date. But while the extreme rarity of the early Characenean coins moves them closer to the beginning of year 185 SEM, the unique S17 *drachm* dated ΕΠΠ (185 SEM) suggests Phraates' presence in Babylonia after the start of that same year. The evidence of dated Characenean and Parthian coins therefore hints at a rather chaotic situation in Mesopotamia in early autumn 128 BC.

Accepting that the Parthian piece is a cast copy of an originally genuine coin (cf. n. 52), the latter must have been minted after Hyspaosines' inaugural tetradrachms from Charax dated 184 SEM. It is, of course, not inconceivable that shortly before his departure Phraates permitted the Characenean ruler to issue coinage in his own name as a Parthian vassal. But this was, at that juncture, unprecedented.

⁶⁵ In the absence of evidence to the contrary one may assume that Phraates left Mesopotamia a few months earlier. But this requires the Parthian king and his troops to have crossed the Zagros and arrived at Ecbatana in the dead of winter in 128 BC.

⁶⁶ Cf. n. 52 above for a possible limited coinage for Phraates from year 185 SEM.

The Augustan historian, Pompeius Trogus (*Prologue* 42), briefly comments that Phraates appointed Himerus *viceroi of Parthia* and that he brutally treated the inhabitants of Babylon and Seleucia, and then waged a war against Mesene.⁶⁷ As briefly remarked above, Himerus was probably the chief bursar of the Parthian royal treasury under Phraates. His promotion to the rank of *viceroi* may have earned him the right to continue minting S17 coinage at Seleucia to finance his own operations in Mesopotamia. This explains why Phraates' *drachm* dated 185 SEM could not be taken as proof of his presence in Babylonia in autumn 128 BC.

Insofar as the extant evidence is concerned Hyspaosines struck no tetradrachms dated 185 SEM in Charax. On the other hand, he issued an undated coinage at Seleucia on the Tigris. This is known from at least two specimens of which one shares one of its two mint magistrate marks with type S17 issue of Phraates (Fig. 11).⁶⁸ Given that most mint officials at Seleucia held office for no more than a year, the association of a single monogram with two separate emissions strongly points to their contiguity.⁶⁹



Fig. 11. Silver tetradrachm of Hyspaosines from Seleucia on the Tigris

As shown below, we find Hyspaosines as king in Babylon in late spring – early summer of 127 BC. It is conceivable that after Phraates' triumph over Antiochus VII in early autumn 129 BC, Parthian presence in Mesopotamia deterred the Characenean rebel from both attacking Babylon and minting coins in his own name. But it is equally likely that having found Phraates and his main army fighting in northeast Parthia, Hyspaosines revolted and began to style himself king. This prompted Himerus to launch an attack on Mesene. Perhaps joined by the enraged Babylonians, the Characenean ruler defeated the Parthian *vice-*

⁶⁷ Rühl 1886: 264; Yardley 1994: 285.

⁶⁸ The second piece appeared in the Classical Numismatic Group Auction 69, 8 June 2005, # 763. It was, unfortunately, a rather poorly preserved specimen with no mint official monograms (possibly lost to corrosion).

⁶⁹ The undated S13.2 tetradrachms and S13.6–7 drachms of Mithradates I confirm two different mint magistrates each holding office perhaps for half-a-year. The next issue, dated 173 SEM (S13.3–4 and S13.7–8), also displays two distinct monograms that differ from those of the previous year. Cf. Sellwood 1980: 42–43. The known examples of S17 coinage indicate that at least three officials oversaw their production in a single year. Cf. Sellwood 1980: 52–53. Likewise, we find at least two monograms on the undated S21.4 tetradrachms of Artabanus I and also two new marks on the dated S21.1–3 varieties. Cf. Sellwood 1980: 60.

roy and forced him to retreat. He then overran Babylon undeterred, banished Himerus and held southern and central Mesopotamia. Taking his tetradrachms dated 184 SEM to mark the beginning of his rebellion in Charax in late summer 128 BC, Hyspaosines' undated coinage from Seleucia could be assigned to year 185 SEM following his victory over Himerus in early autumn 128 BC. Yet it must be admitted that in the absence of a definitive piece of evidence, one could move the beginning of Phraates' expedition against the nomads to late spring 128 BC. This anticipates an interval of about three months between his journey out of Babylon and Hyspaosines' capture of the city. Assuming that the Characenean ruler had rebelled before the Parthian army crossed the Zagros on its northward march into Media, it is possible that Phraates would have returned to suppress the revolt in person. Yet we find the Characenean ruler unchecked, issuing coins in Charax and then occupying the throne in Babylon and striking a new coinage at the royal Parthian mint in Seleucia. These strongly indicate that the bulk of the Parthian forces had already been at a considerable distance from Babylonia and probably reached Hyrcania by the end of summer 128 BC. Provided that Hyspaosines revolted in late summer, Phraates' expedition may be dated to late spring 128 BC.

It is likely that Hyspaosines' domination of Babylonia led to the decline of Parthian influence in Elymais and so paved the way for Darius to usurp power at Susa. Unfortunately, we know nothing about the origins of this rebel ruler and the extent of his power. I have argued elsewhere that he reigned for a few months before Oct. 127 BC (Table 1).⁷⁰

A single tablet confirms Hyspaosines as king in Babylon during 24.II.185–13.III.185 SEB (29/30.5.–17/18.6.127 BC).⁷¹ The Babylonian sources show that his occupation of that city entailed widespread destruction perhaps of the Parthian royal residence and related dwellings. A casual reference in a passage from month Nisānu of 186 SEB (28/29.3.–25/26.4.126 BC) reflects Hyspaosines' mischievous conduct in Babylon some months earlier:⁷²

20: [ina² IGI²]-ĀM ina MU-1-me-1,25-KĀM ina a-mat¹As-pa-a-si-né-e na-qar inalib-bi ul-te-ru-ú [...]

20: [...] in year 185 at the command of Hyspaosines they began tearing down in it [...]

Yet a text from month VIII of 185 SEB (31.9./1.10.–29/30.10.127 BC) makes no reference to the Characenean as king while it strongly implies that Babylon and Seleucia were, once again, administered by the Parthians:⁷³

Obverse

6: ITU BI U₄-4¹Ti-mar-ku-us-su

7: šá ina IGI-a TA DA¹Ar-šá-ka-a LUGAL ina² GAL EN-NUN mun-nu-ú u ina³ŠU ina IGI

8: ¹As-pa-si-né-e iš-ši-i-ši TA DA¹In-du-pa-né-e KI¹⁶ERÍN^{mes} KUR Ma-da-a-a

9: GIN^{mes} ana E^{ki} KU₄^{mes} U₄ BI¹⁶ŠĀ-TAM É-sag-gíl u¹⁶E^{ki,mes} 1-en GU₄ à SISKUR^{mes}

⁷⁰ Assar 2005c. Cf. Dr. Busso Peus Nachfolger Münzhandlung Auction 368, 25–28 April 2001, # 330 for the illustration of the only known tetradrachm of Darius.

⁷¹ Pinches 1889/90: 131–135; De Lacouperie 1889/90: 136–144; Van der Spek 1985: 548–551; Del Monte 1997: 114–117; Van der Spek 1998: 211, n. 13; Schuol 2000: 31–34.

⁷² Sachs and Hunger 1996: 260–261, No. –125A. Cf. also Obv. 19 with an almost similar statement.

⁷³ Sachs and Hunger 1996: 254–255, No. –126A.

Reverse

(Obv. text continued)

1: ina KĀ-DUMU-NUN-NA šá É-sag-gíl NIDBA ul-te-zi-zu-ni-šú U₄²-6 ana Bar-sip^{ki} GIN^{mes} U₄-8

2: TA Bar-sip^{ki} È ana DA¹In-du-pa-né-e ana li-mit^{uru}Se-lu-ke-'a-a šá ina UGU

3: ¹⁶IDIGNA GIN^{mes}

Obverse

6: That month, on the 4th Timarchus,

7: who previously from the side of King Arsaces was appointed the guard commander and who in month IV

8: had escaped from Hyspaosines, came from the side of Indupanê with troops of Media;

9: they entered Babylon. That day, the administrator of Esangil and the Babylonians provided for him one bull and 3 (sheep) sacrifices

Reverse

1: as an offering at the 'Gate of the Son of the Prince' of Esangil. The 6th, they went to Borsippa. The 8th,

2: they came out from Borsippa and went to the side of Indupanê to the area of Seleucia which is on

3: the Tigris.

Unfortunately, except for the fact that Indupanê had probably camped near or in Seleucia, there are no further references to him or his status in the remaining cuneiform records. But judging from the context of the above text and in comparison with a handful of similar remarks in other tablets, he may well have been the newly appointed satrap of Babylonia or even the leading commander of the Parthian garrison in that province.

We also find, in obverse lines 6–7 of the above record, a rather ambiguous allusion to Timarchus who had been King Arsaces' *guard commander* before Hyspaosines annexed Babylon in late spring 127 BC. Again the context reveals that the Parthian king who appointed Timarchus was still alive in Sep./Oct. 127 BC. Otherwise, the scribe would have given his personal name, patronymic, or even the dynastic link between him and his successor. Since it is highly unlikely that Phraates engaged the marauding Sacae in northeast Parthia in the winter of 127 BC, he must have been active in the early spring of that year. This then implies that he was the King Arsaces of the record dated Sep./Oct. 127 BC.

A later text from month XII of 185 SEB (26/27.2. – 27/28.3.126 BC) extends Arsacid presence in Babylonia and indicates that both Phraates and Bagasis may have been alive in early spring 126 BC:⁷⁴

Obverse

1: [... MU-1-me-22-KĀM šá ši-i MU-1-me-1,25-KĀM¹Ar-šá-ka]-a LUGAL ŠE 30

1: [... year 112, which is year 185, Arsac]es (is) King. (Month) XII, (the 1st of which was identical with) the 30th (of the preceding month),

⁷⁴ Sachs and Hunger 1996: 256–259, No. –126B.

Reverse

- 1: [... T]A ^{uru}Se-[u-k]e-'a-[a]
- 2: [... ¹Ba-ga]-r¹a¹-a-a-šá ú-še-piš 4 ^{1d}GAL ERÍN^[mes]]
- 3: [...]-r¹TA-nu¹ E^{ki} ana muḥ-ḥi ID^{mes} ana r^x^{mes} šul [...]
- 4: [... ^{1d}GAL ERÍN^[mes] MU-a-ti TA ma-dak-ta-šú ina šá ^{1d}pít-ḥal-la-šú [...]
- 5: [...] ú ^{1d}e-piš dul-la-a-tú NIDBA šá GIM ú r^x¹ [...]
- 6: [... ul]-te-zi-zu-ni-šú ^{1d}ŠÀ-TAM É-sag-gíl u ^{1d}E^[ki,mes]]
- 7: [... SISK]UR^[mes] ina KÁ-DUMU-NUN-NA šá É-sag-gíl ana ^{1d}GAL ERÍN^[mes]]
- 8: [... DINGIR ^mes GAL^[mes] ana bul-tu šá ¹Ar-šá-ka-a LUGAL [...]
- 9: [...] r¹È¹ U₄-17 ^{1d}GAL ERÍN^[mes] MU-a-ti TA AN-T[A E^{ki}]
- 10: [...]-r¹nu¹ E^{ki} ina a r^x x la¹ a ina É^dU.GUR [...]
- 11: [...] r^x¹ ki e r^x¹ [...]

- 1: [...] from Seleucia [...]
- 2: [... Bagā]yāsh ordered the 4 generals to [(enter Babylon from Seleucia)⁷]
- 3: [...] above Babylon towards the rivers to the [...]
- 4: [...] this [general] from his camp with his riders [...]
- 5: [...] and workmen an offering which was like [...]
- 6: [...] they provided for him. The administrator of Esangil and the Babylon[inas]
- 7: [...] performed] sacrifices at the 'Gate of the Son of the Prince' of Esangil for the general [...]
- 8: [...] to great [gods] for the life of King Arsaces [...]
- 9: [...] went out. The 17th, this general from above [Babylon]
- 10: [...] of Babylon in in the temple of Nergal [...]
- 11: [...] [...]

It should be noted that the editors of the above text have read the partially preserved sentence in line 2 of the reverse as follows:

[...]-r¹x¹-a-a šá ú-še-piš 4 ^{1d}GAL ERÍN^[mes]][...] which had made four generals [...]

But here šá may not be the relative particle. Rather, it could be part of the previous word.⁷⁵ Given that *ušepiš* is the Š-stem of the preterite tense of the verb *epēšu(m)* = *to do, perform, build, etc.*, whose basic sense is causative, it must be translated as *caused/made (someone) to do/perform (something) or had it done, performed, or made*.

It is noteworthy that *ušepiš* also appears in a longer sentence from month V of 187 SEB (cf. n. 105). Although still somewhat incomplete, the context strongly implies that in Aug./Sep. 125 BC the Babylonian satrap commanded or requested the marshal of the provincial army to move from Seleucia into Babylon. Using that sentence as model, I have amended the above text accordingly.

Further collation of this same record has shown that the partial sign in r¹x¹-a-a-šá is 'a. This indicates that the original word ended in -yāshā. Although other possibilities cannot be ruled out, it is likely that we have here the incomplete personal name *Bagāyāsha* or

⁷⁵ This was communicated to Professor Hunger on 23.1.2003 and 18.9.2003. He responded favourably on 2.2.2003 and 17.10.2003, confirming my view that šá is part of the previous word. He also added that in a relative clause introduced by šá, the correct form should be *ušepišu*, with the subjunctive ending -u. Also, in spite of the fact that the late Babylonian cuneiform texts are not always grammatically consistent, word order is still mostly followed. This requires the verb to be at the end of the sentence. Therefore, *ušepiš* in this text ought to be the end of the previous and *four Generals* the beginning of the next sentence.

Bagāyāsh. However, this is not followed by the royal title LUGAL (king) while line 8 of the reverse text clearly gives *Aršaka* LUGAL. Perhaps what we have here is a partial record of Bagasis' adoption of the throne name Arsaces, or an indication that both Phraates II (King Arsaces) and Bagasis were still active when this record was compiled in March 126 BC. Unfortunately, the context remains unclear and the original sentence may have conveyed a different message.

The final coinage of Phraates with both full and abbreviated mint names (S16 drachms) indicates a prolonged and successful military campaign in north and northeast Parthia against the Sacae. Of these, the majority are inscribed with TAM (S16.11) or TAMB in a unique case, for Tambrax. According to Polybius (10.31.6), Tambrax was a town not very far from Sirynx, the capital of Hyrcania.⁷⁶ It is likely that the Parthian king had his headquarters in that city whence he pushed as far as Nisa (modern Ashqābād), Margiane (Marv), and Areia (with its mint near modern Herāt) to repel the invaders.⁷⁷

The historical section in month Nisānu of 186 SEB (28/29.3.–25/26.4.126 BC) in the tablet mentioned earlier contains a vague reference to a seemingly disastrous military operation:⁷⁸

16: [x x x] r¹di¹-ik-tú ina ŠÀ-šú-nu DÜ-u' BAD₅.BAD₅-šú-nu ina ^{1d}ŠTUKUL GAR-u' URU BI iḥ-pu-ú u r¹iš-lu¹-lu-ú

16: [...] massacred them and brought about their defeat in battle. This city they destroyed and plundered.

I had assumed that this reflected the battle in which Phraates perished, although it is none too clear whether the war was waged against the Sacae in the north or another enemy elsewhere.⁷⁹ But the number of recently discovered tetradrachms of Bagasis (S18.1 and 18.1

⁷⁶ Paton 2000: 176–177.

⁷⁷ Sellwood 1995: 98–101 discusses a unique silver obol of Phraates II. It shows on its obverse the diademed bust of the king left wearing, for the first time in the Parthian series, also a radiate crown similar to the ones on some Seleucid issues, e.g. Antiochus VI (144–142/141 BC). The reverse depicts Nike walking right and holding in her right hand a semi-circular arc. According to Sellwood, this may have had a religious or regal implication for the nomad peoples. The same "object" appears on certain coins of the descendant of the Indo-Scythian prince Maues and reigning about 50 BC. The combined obverse and reverse features of Phraates' obol raise the possibility of both Greek and Saca contingents in Phraates' army. Sellwood further states that the counter attack carried the Parthian flag as far as Herāt prior to the disastrous defeat. This is now confirmed by a few S16 type drachms of Phraates II with the abbreviated mint names MA (unpublished) and MAP representing Margiane (Marv). Cf. Loginov and Nikitin 1996: 40–41 and Fig. 1.1; Nikitin 1998: 14–15 and pl. I.1.

⁷⁸ Sachs and Hunger 1996: 260–261, No. –125A.

⁷⁹ The preceding line reads:

15: [x x] r¹U₄-2-KÁM ^{1d}mu-<ma>-i-ir KUR URI^{ki} TA E^{ki} È U₄-5-KÁM al-te-e šá r¹[ERÍN^[mes] ba-az-za-ni-ta-a šá ina ID A^{mes} GAR-an ZI r¹x x x x x¹ [...] r¹x x TA² x¹ [...]

15: [...] On the 2nd, the satrap of Babylonia went out from Babylon. On the 5th, I heard that [troops⁷] *bazzaniā* who put⁷ water in the river [...]

Cf. Sachs and Hunger 1996: 260–261, No. –125A. However, Del Monte has correctly read A^{mes}-šá-an (instead of A^{mes} GAR-an) for Mesene. Perhaps the incomplete text implies that certain troops marched between the rivers of Mesene. Cf. Del Monte 1997: 117 and 136–137. Since the end of the text is not preserved, it is unclear whether the historical notes here and in the next line are connected. If they were, then the reference to the defeat and massacre of a force and destruction of a city in line 16 could be placed in Charax. Accordingly, Phraates' involvement in that battle must be ruled out.

var.) and their corresponding die-pairs indicate that the issue was minted for approximately a year.⁸⁰ This places the death of Phraates II and the beginning of the reign of Bagasis somewhere around month VII of 185 SEB (Oct./Nov. 127 BC).

Justin believes the Parthian fiasco was due to the defection of the Greek prisoners in Phraates' army. Although grossly exaggerated, the number of slaughtered men from Antiochus' camp is given by Diodorus (34.17.1) as three hundred thousand.⁸¹ It is, of course, possible that apart from those who took flight, some prisoners were taken by the Parthians. However, the great majority of the wounded and captives must have been slain because to maintain a large hostile force in an empire constantly at war with different foes would have been ill-advised and reckless. But it is possible that after the Seleucid army was routed a battalion of Antiochus' mercenaries defected to the Parthians (cf. the eastern drachms of Artabanus I and Mithradates II examined below). They subsequently fought faithfully alongside their new masters to expel the Sacae from a number of towns and districts. However, when the final battle was joined and the fickle mercenaries realised that the Parthian line was yielding, they once more switched sides and ensured the destruction of Phraates and his army.

Yet the blame for such a disastrous end to an otherwise successful campaign by Phraates in the north may lie with the hostilities in Parthia's southern states. In the above quoted text from month VIII of 185 SEB the presence of the *troops of Media* in Babylon, Borsippa and Seleucia is in no doubt. Perhaps to defend those major cities against chronic threats from the Elymaean and Characenean enemies and Arab dwellers, a garrison had to be maintained in Mesopotamia. This lessened the fighting power of the army on the offensive in the northeastern regions and thus ensured its defeat by the combined forces of the invading hordes (perhaps a Tochari-Saca coalition) and the Greek defectors.

Arsaces VIII – Bagasis (c. Oct./Nov. 127–Sep./Oct. 126 BC)

With the death of Phraates II, Parthian history enters a "Dark Age" that lasts until the accession of Mithradates II in about Apr./May 121 BC. Our principal literary source, Justin (42.1.4–42.2.6), hastily summarises the events of this period and writes that having pillaged Parthia, the Scythians returned home and Phraates was succeeded by his paternal uncle, Artabanus. The latter waged a war against the Tochari but was almost instantly killed by a poisoned arrow he received in his arm. There follows a brief account of the first decade or so of the reign of Mithradates II who fought against the Scythians and conquered Armenia. However, detailed examination of the extant cuneiform and numismatic evidence has led to the discovery of two additional kings between Phraates II and Mithradates II, each occupying the throne for only a short period.⁸² Indeed the sheer brevity of these reigns may explain their omission by Justin and conflation with a comparatively longer and prosperous reign of the interposing king.

⁸⁰ The dated variety of S18 tetradrachms of Bagasis was minted from 1 Dios 187 SEM (1.VII.186 SEB = 20/21.9.126 BC) onward, albeit quite briefly. This renders 1 Dios 186 SEM (1.VII.185 SEB = 2/3.10.127 BC) as the *terminus post quem* of the undated S18.1 tetradrachms. Depending on the speed with which the news of his death reached Babylon to effect a change of reign, Phraates may have been killed a few weeks earlier or later than the latter date.

⁸¹ Walton 1967: 104–105.

⁸² Assar 2001a: 25–26; Assar 2001b: 17–22.

The first of these was an elderly prince who succeeded Phraates II in the autumn of 127 BC. Although the numismatic legacy of his reign (S18.1 tetradrachms) was already known in 1893 (Fig. 12), he was originally tentatively identified with Artabanus I and then Mithradates I.⁸³ Later, with the discovery of the "annual" Susian bronzes, his coins were assigned to an interregnum period between Phraates II and Artabanus I with no Parthian king on the throne.⁸⁴ But these attributions remained doubtful and left a number of historical and numismatic questions unanswered.



Fig. 12. S18.1 silver tetradrachm of Bagasis from Seleucia on the Tigris

The analysis of a very small number of extant cuneiform records has already shown that after a brief occupation by Hyksosines, Babylon was once again under Parthian authority in Nov. 127 BC. Accordingly, in spite of some uncertainty over the above proposed date of Phraates' demise, we are still assured that an Arsacid king was acknowledged in that city during 17.XII.185–1.I.186 SEB (14/15–28/29.3.126 BC).⁸⁵ For the period after the latter date, I had quoted elsewhere⁸⁶ a non-contemporary tablet that attested a King Arsaces in Babylon around 14.IV.186 SEB (7/8.7.126 BC).⁸⁷ To this can now be added a further non-contemporary text dated 4.II.186 SEB (29/30.4.126 BC),⁸⁸ and a contemporary document from 1.V.186 SEB (23/24.7.126 BC), giving:⁸⁹

⁸³ Rapson 1893: 213 (no attribution); Wroth 1900: 194–195, (Artabanus I); Wroth 1903: xxvii and 10 (Mithradates I); Dayet 1925a: 65 (Mithradates I); Dayet 1925b: 137 (Mithradates I); Newell 1938: 477 (Mithradates I).

⁸⁴ Le Rider 1965: 84, and 365–368; Sellwood 1980: 54–55; Sellwood 1983a: 283.

⁸⁵ Sachs and Hunger 1996: 256–257, No. –126B (dated month XII, year 185 SEB), Obv. 1 and Rev. 1–10. In particular, Rev. 7–8 refer to sacrifices performed for the life of King Arsaces and the General of Babylonia. Cf. also Sachs 1955: 196, LBAT 1297 (Goal-Year Text for 186 SEB), Rev. 1–3. The partially preserved colophon is clearly double-dated and thus attests Parthian sway over Babylon. It should also be noted that an earlier text mentioning Indupanē and omitting Hyksosines' royal epithet proves the latter's expulsion from Babylon before Oct./Nov. 127 BC.

⁸⁶ Assar 2001b: 17–8.

⁸⁷ Sachs 1955: 201, LBAT 1300 (Goal-Year Text for 245 SEB), Obv. 16, Saturn paragraph preceding the colophon date by 59 years.

⁸⁸ Sachs 1955: 198, LBAT 1285 (Goal-Year Text for 194 SEB), Obv. 8, Venus paragraph preceding the colophon date by 8 years. The text is only partially legible but King [Arsaces] can be confidently restored.

⁸⁹ Rochberg 1998: 113–115, Text 20 (Horoscope dated month V of 186 SEB); Rochberg 1999: 44–45.

Obverse

- 1: 'MU-1-me-22-KÁM šá ši-i'
 2: 'MU-1-me-1,26-KÁM' 'Ar-šá-ka-a LUGAL
 3: 'NE 30

- 1: Year 122, which is
 2: year 186, Arsaces (is) King.
 3: Month V, (the 1st of which was identical with) the 30th (of the preceding month). ...

Reverse

- 2: MU BI ŠU '3' šamaš GUB
 3: 'KIN 14 AN-KU₁₀ sin ina zib^{me}
 4: BAR DIB 28 AN-KU₁₀ šamaš

- 2: That year, (on the) 3rd (of month) IV, (summer) solstice.
 3: Month VI, (on the) 14th, lunar eclipse in Pisces
 4: (which was) omitted. (On the) 28th, solar eclipse,

Now, the latest S18.1 tetradrachms are known from half a dozen examples in a large hoard unearthed in 1998/9 (Fig. 13). They are dated 187 SEM (20/21.9.126–7/8.10.125 BC) and share some of their obverse dies with those of the undated examples (S18.1). The extreme rarity of these specimens confirms a very brief minting period perhaps not far beyond Dios 187 SEM and possibly even confined to that same month. Given that the comparatively larger number of undated S18.1 tetradrachms suggests an emission lasting at least several months before 1.I.187 SEM (= 1.VII.186 SEB), there is little doubt that the above mentioned contemporary text dated 1.V.186 SEB was compiled under the issuer of these coins. The combined cuneiform and numismatic evidence therefore proves that following the death of Phraates II, an Arsacid prince indeed assumed the diadem and reigned for a short period. After all, in the absence of a living Arsacid monarch it is extremely unlikely that the mint of Seleucia would have struck a regal issue at the behest of its officials alone.



Fig. 13. S18.1 var. silver tetradrachm of Bagasis from Seleucia on the Tigris, dated 187 SEM



Fig. 14. S18.1 tetradrachm of Bagasis overstruck on a tetradrachm of Hyspaosines from Seleucia on the Tigris

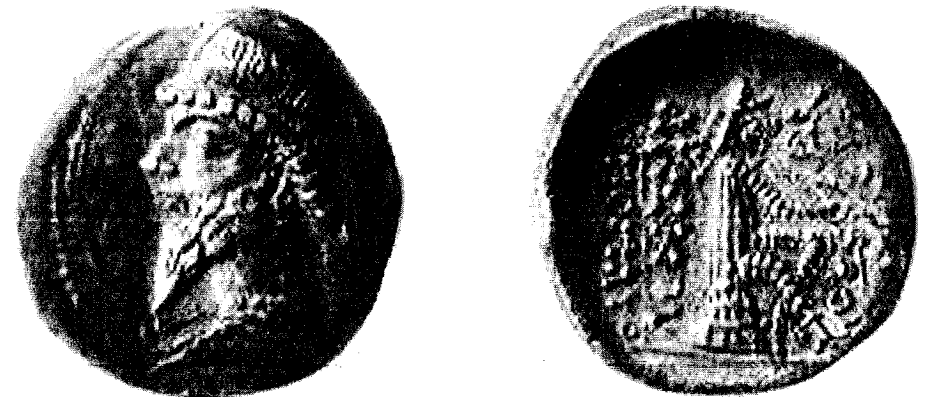


Fig. 15. Silver drachm of Bagasis

The reverse design of the S18.1 tetradrachms, depicting a seated female deity holding a small wreath-bearing flying Nike (Tyche⁷ Nikephoros), heralds a celebratory issue. Yet little was known about the nature and circumstances of the triumph that prompted this emission until the discovery of an overstruck tetradrachm of Hyspaosines (Fig. 14).⁹⁰ It can now be confirmed that Arsaces VIII expelled the Characenean rebel from Babylonia and used his own dies to restrike the latter's coinage. At the same time, the apparent lack of drachms from the Iranian mints on the plateau indicates that he exercised little control beyond Mesopotamia and Elymais while the whole of Parthian heartland remained occupied by the ravaging steppe invaders. John of Antioch (Fr. 66.2) intimates that after the massacre of the Parthian army and death of Phraates II, the victorious nomads penetrated as far as Mesopotamia.⁹¹ However, at least two drachms with obverse portraits virtually identical with that on S18.1 tetradrachms have come to light. The imperial titulature on one of these (Fig.

⁹⁰ Assar 2001a: 41; Assar 2001b: 17–21.

⁹¹ Muller 1851: 561; Debevoise 1938: 36, n. 32; 37, n. 37.

15)⁹² reads [ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ] ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ (sic.) ΘΕΟΠΑΤΟ (sic.). It thus confirms that the issuer was son of a divine father. But the visibly aged obverse bust of the coins precludes the king from being a son of Mithradates I who had been posthumously deified by his son, Phraates II (cf. the inscription of S16 drachms). At the same time, the inclusion of the epithets ΘΕΟΥ and ΘΕΟΠΑΤΟΡΟΣ in the legends of S10.15 and S10.17 drachms of Phriapatius and Mithradates I, respectively, suggests that the former had been divinized before his death.⁹³ Unless the above mentioned drachms were struck from fresh obverse of Arsaces VIII but unused S16 reverse dies of Phraates II with ΘΕΟΠΑΤΟΡΟΣ (i.e. “mule” specimens), the former could well be a son of Phriapatius. In any case, the fabric and workmanship of these rare drachms link them with the mint of Ecbatana and thus indicate that Arsaces VIII had, after all, a tenuous hold over Media.

Unfortunately, we do not know when and how the reign of this Parthian ruler ended. But judging from the scarcity of his dated tetradrachms, it is highly likely that he reigned for about a year and probably died from unknown causes.

The presence of S18.3 “annual” Susian bronze (Table 1) and absence of Hyspaosines’ coins dated 186 SEM suggest that Arsaces VIII spent his entire short reign reasserting Parthian influence in southern Mesopotamia and Susiana. I have tentatively identified him with Bagasis (Bagāyāsh), a brother of Mithradates I, who was appointed satrap of Greater Media and Atropatene when those provinces fell to the Parthians shortly after 148 BC.⁹⁴ However, in the absence of a definitive piece of evidence proving that Bagasis out-lived Phraates II, this identification remains somewhat uncertain. An alternative is that he was the Artabanus mentioned by Justin (42.2.1–2) and succeeded his nephew but died fighting the Tochari. Given that the overall absence of drachms at this juncture implies occupation of the eastern and central Parthia by steppe invaders, a war with an arm of the enemy forces in the vicinity of Media may have ended with the death of the aged Parthian ruler (but cf. the eastern drachms of Artabanus I discussed below).

Arsaces IX – Artabanus I (c. Sep./Oct. 126–Oct./Nov. 122 BC)

It is theoretically possible that Phriapatius fathered several sons in his last year and even that some were born posthumously.⁹⁵ Counting from the traditional 176 BC as the terminal date of his reign, Phriapatius’ youngest offspring would have been about fifty in 126 BC. Naturally, any son born before the former date would have been over fifty by the time Bagasis died.

The general consensus of opinion among Parthian historians and numismatists is that the successor of Phraates II was his paternal uncle and hence a son of Phriapatius.⁹⁶ This

⁹² British Museum Cabinet (No. 1906, 4–6–1). The second example is in a private collection. Its inscription reads ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ ΘΕΟΠΑΤΟΡΟΣ.

⁹³ Assar 2004: 82 and 88. Cf. also Assar 2005b for the re-attribution of the early Parthian coinages.

⁹⁴ Assar 2001a: 25–26.

⁹⁵ We are told by *al-Ṭabarī* that the Sasanian King Shapur II (AD 309–379) was born after the death of his father Hormizd II (AD 303–309). Cf. Bosworth 1999: 50.

⁹⁶ Lewis 1728: 44; Lindsay 1852: 13; Rawlinson 1873: 111; Prokesch-Osten 1874/5: 18–19; Gardner 1877: 6; Markoff 1877: 4; Wroth 1903: xxi; Petrowicz 1904: 36–37; De Morgan 1923–36: 153; Tarn 1932: 583; Debevoise 1938: 37; Newell 1938: 478; Le Rider 1965: 368; Colledge 1967: 31; Sellwood 1980: 156; Bivar 1983: 38–39; Frye 1983: 212; Sellwood 1983a: 283; Shore 1993: 20; Wolski 1993: 63 and 87; Wolski 2003: 88.

stems from the statement of Justin (42.1.1) on the successor of Phraates II and, perhaps to a lesser extent, the royal titulature on three of the four different classes of coins assigned to Artabanus.

The inscription on the earliest of these emissions (S19.1–2) reads ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ ΘΕΟΠΑΤΟΡΟΣ with the last title alluding to an illustrious and deified father. This confirms Artabanus’ sway over Media with its principal mint at Ecbatana. But the newly discovered varieties of the same issue from some east Parthian mints (Fig. 16) suggest that he was also in control of most, if not all, of the eastern provinces at the outset of his reign. Perhaps Justin (42.2.1) is, after all, right that having ravaged Parthia, the Sacae returned home.

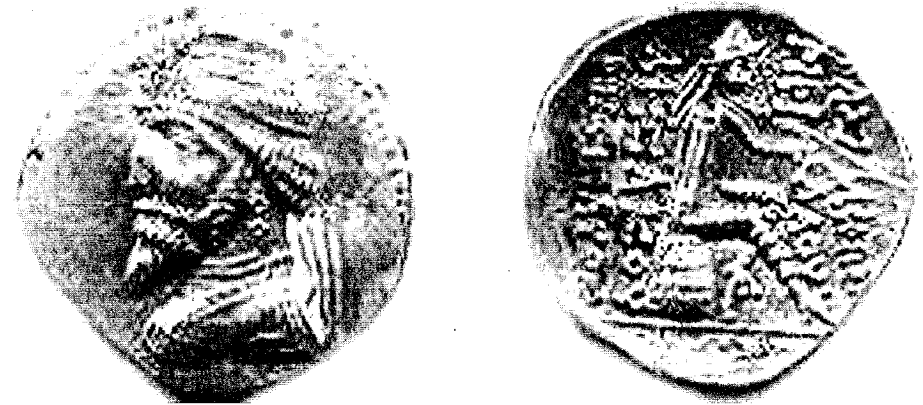


Fig. 16. S19.1 var. silver drachm of Artabanus I from an east Parthian mint (Author’s Collection)

The second and third types, S20 and part of S22 drachms, have ΦΙΛΑΔΕΛΦΟΥ for ΘΕΟΠΑΤΟΡΟΣ to acknowledge Artabanus’ affections for a distinguished brother. However, although these titular references are seemingly to Phriapatius and Mithradates I, when compared with both the preceding and succeeding issues, the portraiture on Artabanus’ coinage does not relate to a man in his fifties or older. Accordingly, I had concluded elsewhere that Artabanus I was a son of Mithradates I and a half-brother of Phraates II.⁹⁷ But a revision of the early Parthian chronology and regnal dates has shown that Phriapatius’ kingship ended in 170 BC.⁹⁸ Coupled with a later dynastic link attested at Babylon (cf. below), I have used this date to restore the father-son relationship between Phriapatius and Artabanus I.⁹⁹

The surviving literature on Artabanus’ reign indeed amounts to very little. Justin (42.2.2) merely tells us that he went to war with the Tochari and died in battle from an arrow wound. The cuneiform, on the other hand, reveals that his reign was marred by Characenean and Elymaean rebellions, and persistent Arab incursions into Babylonia and its major cities. While much of Parthia’s political history after the death of Phraates II and

⁹⁷ Assar 2003a: 18–19.

⁹⁸ Assar 2005b.

⁹⁹ Assar 2005b.

accession of Mithradates II still remains obscure, a close inspection of Artabanus' coinage and a small but significant group of cuneiform texts has shed some fresh light on the events of his four-year reign.



Fig. 17. Silver tetradrachm of Hyspaosines from Charax, dated 187 SEM

The recent discovery of a number of previously unknown tetradrachms of Hyspaosines attests resumption of minting at Charax-Spasinu in 187 SEM (Fig. 17).¹⁰⁰ Given that a year earlier Bagasis had expelled him from Babylon and suppressed his coinage in Seleucia, it is highly unlikely that the Characenean could have issued coinage while the Parthian king remained active in Babylonia. A possible explanation for the presence of coins inscribed with ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΥΣΠΙΔΟΣΙΝΟΥ and dated ΖΠΡ (187 SEM) is that Hyspaosines began minting when southern Mesopotamia lapsed into a period of instability following the death of Bagasis or his northward advance into Media in early autumn 126 BC. According to a meagre entry in a cuneiform tablet, referring to possible raids by Arabs on Babylon and the neighbouring settlements, the upheavals in the southern states had begun as early as month VI of 186 SEB (22/23.8–19/20.9.126 BC).¹⁰¹ Yet the undated S21.4 tetradrachms (and its recent varieties) from Seleucia strongly suggest that Artabanus inaugurated his reign in Babylonia at some point in time in 187 SEM. As shown below, following his victory over the Elymaean rebel, Pittit, in late Jan. 124 BC, Artabanus granted Hyspaosines the right to style himself *King of Mesene*. It is possible that the Characenean ruler had already been accepted as a Parthian tributary and allowed to mint coinage in his own name as early as 187 SEM. But owing to the fragmentary state of the relevant cuneiform records, it is more likely that Hyspaosines minted these tetradrachms soon after Artabanus left for Media to tackle the persisting nomad menace in the Iranian satrapies. All the more so when we note that the Characenean ruler appears in a cuneiform text from late 127 – early 126 BC without his royal epithet (cf. below).

Unfortunately, our incomplete cuneiform records offer no indication of Parthian administration in Babylonia during autumn 126 BC – spring 125 BC although the following

¹⁰⁰ Assar 2001a: 25, Fig. 15.

¹⁰¹ Sachs and Hunger 1996: 262–263, No. –125A, Rev. 20. Several references to *Arabs* and their raids on Babylon are contained in both earlier and later cuneiform records.

texts unequivocally acknowledge an Arsacid king in Babylon in the period 10.XII.186–1.I.187 SEB (25/26.3.–15/16.4.125 BC):

Colophon¹⁰²

- | | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| 10: ¹⁰⁰ DIRIG.ŠE U ₄ -10-KÁM | Month XII ₂ , day 10, |
| 11: MU-1-me-22-KÁM šá ší-i | year 122, which is |
| 12: MU-1-me-1,26-KÁM | year 186, |
| 13: ¹⁰¹ Ar-šá-ka-a LUGAL | Arsaces (is) King. |

and

Colophon titles¹⁰³

- | |
|--|
| 10: [U ₄ -1-KÁM IGI-DU ₈ -A ^{meš} DI]B-qa ^{meš} u AN-KU ₁₀ ^{meš} šá ana MU-1-me-23-KÁM |
| 11: [šá ší-i M]U-1-me-1,27-KÁM ¹⁰¹ Ar ¹ -šá-ka-a L[UGAL] |
| 12: kun-nu-[‘u] |

- | |
|--|
| 10: [Day 1 (of month I), appearances, passi]ngs and eclipses which are for year 123, |
| 11: [which is ye]ar 187, Arsaces (is) [Kin]g, |
| 12: have been established. |

But in spite of these references, celebratory tetradrachms from Seleucia and an “annual” Susian bronze issue (Table 1), it will be presently shown that Artabanus remained chiefly preoccupied in Media up until autumn 125 BC. Having re-established Parthian influence over that important province and extended his sway as far as the eastern borders of Parthia, he moved down to Babylonia to counter the Characenean and Elymaean revolts.

The sketchy historical notices in the *Astronomical Diary of 187 SEB* reveal that audacious attacks by Arabs on Babylon and destruction and plunder had become chronic in the first four months of that year while fire repeatedly raged in the Parthian king’s palace.¹⁰⁴ We then find a possible reference to the departure of the satrap of Babylonia to Media in month V of year 187 SEB (10/11.8.–8/9.9.125 BC) for an audience with King Arsaces:¹⁰⁵

- | |
|--|
| 18: ITU BI U ₄ -x ₁ -KÁM ¹⁰¹ mu-ma-ir KUR URI ^{ki} TA ¹ [E ^{ki} ana ¹⁰⁰ Se-lu-ke-‘a-a šá ana muḥ-ḫi ¹⁰¹ IDIGNA KU ₄ -ub ...] |
| 19: [...] ‘x ¹ ú-še-pe-eš ¹⁰¹ GAL ERÍN ^{meš} KUR URI ^{ki} šá É 4 ¹⁰¹ GAL ERÍN ^{meš} TA ¹⁰⁰ [S]-[lu-ke]-‘a-‘a ¹ [šá ana muḥ-ḫi ¹⁰¹ IDIGNA ana E ^{ki} KU ₄ -ub ...] |
| 20–23: (text concerning offerings to gods and appointment of the administrator of Esangil) |
| 24: [...] ITU BI U ₄ -x ₂ -KÁM ¹⁰¹ mu-ma-ir KUR URI ^{ki} T]A ¹⁰⁰ Se-lu-ke-‘a-a šá ana muḥ-ḫi ¹⁰¹ IDIGNA ana URU ^{meš} šá KUR Ma-da-a-a ‘at-taḫ LUGAL ¹ [È ...] |

¹⁰² Kugler 1924: 446, Text 10; Kennedy 1968: pl. 33.143 (BM 45629); Del Monte 1997: 249, n. 471; Van der Spek 1998: 210–211, no. 1.

¹⁰³ Sachs 1955: 197, LBAT 1280+1281 (Goal-Year Text for 187 SEB); Del Monte 1997: 249, n. 471.

¹⁰⁴ Sachs and Hunger 1996: 264–269, No. –124A, months I–IV (Apr. – Jul. 125 BC). The burning and destruction of the royal palace strongly suggest that Artabanus was absent from Babylon.

¹⁰⁵ Sachs and Hunger 1996: 270–271, No. –124A; Del Monte 1997: 140. The restored texts are in line with a number of similar citations in other tablets concerning the movements of the *satrap of Babylonia* between Babylon and Seleucia on the Tigris. The restoration in line 24 follows the statement in Obv. 31 of *Diary No. –77A*. Cf. Sachs and Hunger 1996: 490–491.

- 18: That month, on the xth day, the satrap of Babylonia from [Seleucia which is on the Tigris entered Babylon]
- 19: [...] ordered the general of Babylonia who was above⁷ the four generals from Seleucia [which is on the Tigris to enter Babylon]
- 20–23: (text concerning offerings etc.)
- 24: [...] That month, on the xth day, the satrap of Babylonia from Seleucia which is on the Tigris [went out] to the cities of Media to the side of the king [...]

Although this may be viewed as a passing remark, its significance transpires when we find, in a later record from month VIII of 187 SEB (7/8.11.–6/7.12.125 BC), confirmation of royal presence in Babylonia in a camp perhaps not far from Seleucia. It is possible that in response to a request from the satrap who had gone to Media three months earlier, Artabanus resolved upon personal intervention in the critical state of affairs in that province. The relevant text reads:¹⁰⁶

- 3: ITU BI ina SAG ITU
- 4: [...] u¹⁰ mu-ma-'i-ir KUR URI^{ki} TA ma-da[k-tá] LUGAL ana^{uru} Se-lu-ke-'a-a šá ana muḫ-ḫi¹⁰ IDIGNA KU₄-u' U₄-16¹⁰ mu-'i-ma-ir KUR URI^{ki} TA^{uru} Se-lu-ke-'a-a ana E^{ki} KU₄-ub
- 5: [...] '1-en GU₄ ù 2' SISKUR ana tar-ša¹ KÁ^d[LA]MA-ra-bi GUB^{mes}-niš-šú ana^d EN DÛ-uš ITU BI 'Ti-i'-mu-ú-tu-su A šá¹ As-pa-a-si-né-e TA E^{ki} ana^{uru} Se-lu-ke-'a-a
- 6: [...] GAL¹ ERÍN-ni KUR URI^{ki} È

- 3: That month, at the beginning of the month,
- 4: [...] and the satrap of Babylonia from the camp of the king entered Seleucia which is on the Tigris. The 16th, the satrap of Babylonia entered Babylon from Seleucia.
- 5: [...] provided for him one bull and 2 (sheep) sacrifices opposite the Lamassu-rabi gate; he performed (offerings) for Bel. That month, Timotheos son of Hyspaosines [went] from Babylon to Seleucia
- 6: [...] general of Babylonia went out.

I have taken the date of this text as the *terminus post quem* of Artabanus' direct involvement in Babylonian affairs although his undated tetradrachms suggest that he inaugurated his reign in Babylon some months earlier.

But what about the intervening period after the death of Bagasis until Artabanus' arrival in Babylonia, i.e. Sep./Oct. 126–Nov./Dec. 125 BC? To answer this, we have to consider the importance of a seemingly neglected symbol on the initial tetradrachms of Artabanus from Seleucia minted after 1 Dios 187 SEM (20/21.9.126 BC).

The northern and southern plains of Media were exceedingly rich in corn and pasturage for breeding the famous Nisaeen horse under the Medes and the Achaemenids. We find unequivocal references in Herodotus, Arrian, Ammianus Marcellinus, Strabo, Polybius and other classical writers to Media and the number of excellent fighting men and horses it produced. It is, therefore, not unusual to find that horse's figure became a mint-indicator of most coinages struck at Ecbatana during the Hellenistic period in Iran. Originally, it was present as a left-facing forepart of a grazing horse on the issues of Seleucus I (312–281 BC)

¹⁰⁶ Sachs and Hunger 1996: 272–273, No. –124B.

down to Seleucus II (246–226 BC). Thereafter, it took the shape of a left-facing horse's head and continued to appear on the emissions from Ecbatana until late in the reign of Demetrius I (162–150 BC).¹⁰⁷ However, unlike the *protome* of the grazing horse, in a minority of cases the head also faces right.¹⁰⁸

The same symbol appeared on the "annual" Susian bronzes of Demetrius I, Kamnaskires I and four different Parthian rulers.¹⁰⁹ But as a distinct feature of that mint, the head is consistently facing right. It has been suggested that at least in the case of the Elymaean rulers, the presence of a right-facing horse's head on Susian emissions implies control of the border area in north Susiana and south Media.¹¹⁰



Fig. 18. S21.4 silver tetradrachm of Artabanus I from Seleucia on the Tigris

Now, we have already shown that Artabanus was absent from Babylonia for about a year although acknowledged in Babylon and had celebratory coinage minted for him at Seleucia on the Tigris. The first of these (Fig. 18), struck during 187 SEM (20/21.9.126–7/8.10.125 BC), are undated and form a single variety (S21.4). However, in addition to the known reverse design, the large hoard of 1998/9 yielded two sub-varieties of this type: the first had a right- and the second displayed a left-facing horse-head symbol (Fig. 19–20). I believe an explanation for this is that the left-facing head on Artabanus' celebratory coinage signals Parthian presence in Media while the right-facing symbol implies an extension of Arsacid power into northern Susiana.¹¹¹ We may, therefore, postulate that having

¹⁰⁷ Imhoof-Blumer 1913: 176–177; Newell 1978: 162–227; Houghton 1983: 109–117; Houghton and Spaer 1998: 30, 50, 108, 112, 114, 190.

¹⁰⁸ Newell 1978: 208, nos. 589–590 (Antiochus III); 225, no. 652 (Antiochus III); Houghton 1983: 116, no. 1265 (Demetrius I); Houghton and Spaer 1998: 114, no. 819 (Antiochus III); 190, no. 1388 (Demetrius I).

¹⁰⁹ Le Rider 1965: 72, LR 78 (Demetrius I); 77 and 349, LR 92 (Kamnaskires I); 81, LR 100 (Phraates II, 1st reign); 95, LR 160 ("Arsaces Theopator Euergetes"); 96, LR 169 ("Sinatruces"); 99, LR 182 (Phraates III). Cf. also Le Rider 1965: 271 on the connection between the horse-head symbol and Susiana.

¹¹⁰ Hansman 1990: 1–5.

¹¹¹ In a group of sixty-two coins, I found twenty-two undated examples of which six were without while fourteen had a left-facing and two showed a right-facing horse's head; the latter was inside the 2-line legend and in front of the seated goddess' knee. The remaining were dated 188 SEM. In the absence of a month date, it is impossible to arrange these coins chronologically. We may assume that the ones with the left-facing horse-head symbol were minted after Artabanus' arrival at Babylon to confirm Arsacid sway over Media. Thereafter, the ones without the symbol were issued to mark the re-capture of Babylonia while the

inaugurated his reign in Babylon in autumn of 126 BC, Artabanus indeed spent the greater part of his first year in Iran to re-establish Parthian power and prestige and to prepare for further campaigns east of Media. As briefly commented above, this agrees with the presence of Artabanus' S19 drachms from eastern Parthia. It also indicates that the undated S21.4 tetradrachms ceased to be minted after Artabanus left Babylonia for an initial expedition into the Parthian heartland perhaps in early spring 125 BC.¹¹²



Fig. 19. S21.4 var. silver tetradrachm of Artabanus I from Seleucia on the Tigris, with the reverse horse-head symbol facing right



Fig. 20. S21.4 var. silver tetradrachm of Artabanus I from Seleucia on the Tigris, with the reverse horse-head symbol facing left

With the king's return to Babylonia in Nov./Dec 125 BC, Parthian fortunes took a new turn. Although no record of his activities in Babylon has survived, Artabanus' dated tetra-

right-facing head followed the re-imposition of Parthian power in north Susiana. Cf. McDowell 1935: 67 (horse-head symbol not mentioned), and pl. IV, 67; Le Rider 1965: 366, n. 7, and pl. LXXI.8.

¹¹² The stylistic differences between the obverse portraits on the undated S21.4 and dated S21.1-3 tetradrachms indicate a gap between the two emissions.

drachms (S21.1-3) confirm that the satrapy was mostly under Parthian jurisdiction throughout the year 188 SEM (8/9.10.125-26/27.9.124 BC). We have, on the other hand, explicit evidence that the Arsacid ruler pacified both Mesene and Elymais before the end of Jan. 124 BC. The historical records at the end of month IX of 187 SEB (7/8.11.125-4/5.1.124 BC) give clear indications of the impending war and also of Hyaspasines' acknowledgement of Parthian overlordship:¹¹³

- 19: [...] ¹Ar-šá-kám LUGAL UGU² da-kil-tú šá ^{uru}Šu-šá-an ana li-mit NIM-MA^{ki} ana tar-ša ¹Pi-it-ti-ti ¹⁶KÚR NIM-MA^{ki} [x¹] šal-tú DUḪ [ITU²] BI [T¹]i-mu-tu-su¹ A šá ¹[As-pa-a-si-né-e]
 20: [...] ¹⁶mu-ma-'i]-ir KUR URI^{ki} ana ^{uru}Se-lu-ke-'a-a il-lik ina KA LUGAL ina ḪAR AN.BAR ŠUB-di ù at-ta-aḫ ¹As-pa-a-si-né-e ¹⁶AD-šú uš²₄-te-bil² ITU BI al-te-e [um-ma]
 21: [...] ITU BI al-te-e] ¹um²₇-ma² ¹Ur-ri-'a-a ina ^{uru}Šur-ru G[A]Z ITU BI ¹⁶Ar-ba-a-a GIM IGI-ú SAR-u' ḫat-tu₄ ¹⁶Ar-ba-a-a GIM IGI-ú ina KUR MAḪ [x x x x¹] [...]
 22: [...] TIN-TIR^{ki} GÁL-ši

- 19: [...] King Arsaces (from) above² a district² of Susa departed to the area of Elam opposite Pit-tit, the Elamite enemy, for² fighting. That month², Timotheos, son of [Hyaspasines]
 20: [...] the sat[r]ap of Babylonia went to Seleucia; at the command of the king he was thrown into an iron ring and brought² next to his father Hyaspasines. That month, I heard [...]
 21: [...] That month, I heard that Uria was killed in Šurru. That month, the Arabs plundered as before; panic of the Arabs as before was much in the land [...]
 22: [...] happened in the district of Tintir.

This culminates in the conquest of Elymais on 15.X.187 SEB (19/20.1.124 BC):¹¹⁴

- 12: ITU BI U₄-2-KÁM [x^{ku}]SAR^{mes} šá ¹As-pa-a-si-né-e LUGAL A^{mes}-šá-nu-ú šá ana muḫ-ḫi ¹⁶GAL ERÍN-ni KUR URI^{ki} iš-ṭur iṭ-ṭaḫ-ḫi
 13: [ina DA pu-li-te-e šá ina E^{ki} šá-su-ú um-ma ina ITU BI U₄-15²-KÁM ¹Ar-šá-kám LUG[AL] u ¹Pi-i-[t-ti-i]t ¹⁶KÚR NIM-MA^{ki} šal-tu₄ KI a-ḫa-meš DÜ-u' LUGAL BAD₅BAD₅ ¹⁶ERÍN-ni KUR NIM-MA^{ki} ina ^{gis}TUKUL GAR-'an¹ ¹Pi-it-ti-it
 14: [¹⁶KÚR NIM-MA^{ki}] iš-bat ITU BI U₄-7-KÁM ina E^{ki} MÍ.ŠAḪ Û-TU-ma iz-bu GIM [x x¹] [x x] [x UR-GI₇¹ šá-kin ITU BI U₄-15-KÁM ^{gis}GU-ZA LUGAL šá GIM GIŠ.ḪUR LÚ mu-'šir² šá iṣ-ṣi eš-š[i²] u K]Û.BABBAR it-ti-ti
 15: [...] šá MU-šú i-'a-ma-na-a tu-ru-nu-us šá pa-na-ma² ¹As-pa-a-si-né-e [LUGA]L TA É-GAL LUGAL šá ina E^{ki} TI-ú šul-lu-man-nu ana ^dEN id-din-nu ¹⁶pa-ḫat E^{ki} u ¹⁶pu-li-te-e šá ina E^{ki}
 16: [...] ^{mes}-nim-ma [x x x x x¹] ^{gis}IG^{mes} É-U₄-1-KÁM BAD^{mes}-nim-ma [x x¹] [...] [x¹-ḫu-su e-pu-šú NU KU₄^{mes} ^{gis}GU-ZA LUGAL MU-a-ti šul-lu-man-nu šá ^dEN TA É-U₄-1-KÁM È-ú² at-ta-aḫ-šú-nu TI-ú²
 17: [ITU BI U₄-x-KÁM] ¹⁶KIN-GI₄-A LUGAL šá ^{kuš}SAR^{mes} na-šu-ú ana E^{ki} KU₄-ub U₄ BI ^{kuš}SAR^{mes} [šá LUGA]L šá ana muḫ-ḫi ¹⁶pa-ḫat E^{ki} u ¹⁶pu-li-te-e šá ina E^{ki} SAR^{mes} ina É IGI-DUḪ-A šá-su-ú um-ma šal-tu₄

¹¹³ Sachs and Hunger 1996: 274-275, No. -124B, Obv. text.

¹¹⁴ Sachs and Hunger 1996: 278-279, No. -124B, Rev. text. For additional restorations cf. Van der Spek 2001: 451-453.

- 18: [it-ti¹]Pi-it-ti-it¹⁶KUR NIM-MA^{ki} DÙ-ma 15 lim ERÍN-ni MÈ ina ŠÀ ERÍN-ni-šú ina^{giš}-TU[KUL ú-šam]-qit⁷-ma ha-x-ru-ú ina lib-bi ERÍN-ni-iá NU GAR-an KUR NIM-MA^{ki} pa-at gim-ri-šú ina^{giš}TUKUL ŠÌG-aš¹Pi-it-ti-it
- 19: [...] x x x¹ aš-bat U₄ BI¹⁶ŠÀ-TAM É-sag-gíl u¹⁶E^{ki,meš} 16¹⁶UKKIN šá É-sag-gíl 1-e[n GU₄] ù 2 SISKUR.SISKUR ina KÁ-DUMU-NUN-NA šá É-sag-gíl ana¹⁶KIN-GI₄-A LUGAL MU-a-ti NIDBA GUB^{meš}-niš-šú ana^dEN
- 20: [dGAŠAN-i]á DINGIR^{meš} GAL^{meš} DÙ-uš [x] E⁷ KI⁷ KIN²-GI₄ LUGAL GÙ-DÉ-ú ITU BI SA[R-tú⁷ 16]Ar-ba-a-a GIM IGI-ú

- 12: That month, the 2nd, a message of Hyspaosines, king of Mesene, which he had written to the general of Babylonia was brought near
- 13: and was read [to the (Greek) cit]izens who are in Babylon as follows: In this month, on the 15th⁷, King Arsaces and Pittit, the Elamite enemy, fought with each other. The king defeated the troops of Elam in battle. Pittit
- 14: [the Elamite enemy] he seized. That month, the 7th day, in Babylon a sow gave birth, and the newborn was like [...] had of a dog. That month, the 15th, the king's throne which like the drawing of a designer of n[ew⁷] wood [and sil]ver
- 15: [was made,] whose Greek name is "thoronos" which in the past [Kin]g Hyspaosines had taken from the king's palace in Babylon, and given as an honorific present to Bel. The governor of Babylon and the (Greek) citizens who were in Babylon
- 16: [...] and the doors of the Akītu Temple they opened and, [...] they made; (but) they did not enter. That throne of the king, an honorific present to Bel, they brought out from the Akītu Temple and they took it to themselves.
- 17: [That month, the xth day] a messenger of the king who carried a message entered Babylon. That day, the message of the king which was written to the governor of Babylon and the (Greek) citizens who were in Babylon, was read in the House of Observation, as follows: Fighting
- 18: [with] Pittit, the Elamite enemy, I made, and 15,000 battle troops among his troops I [over]threw in battle; among my troops no disagreement⁷ took place. Elam in its entirety I hit with weapons. Pittit
- 19: [the Elamite enemy] I seized. That day, the administrator of Esangil and the Babylonians, the assembly of Esangil, provided one bull and 2 (sheep) sacrifices at the 'Gate of the Son of the Prince' of Esangil for that messenger of the king as offering, and to Bel
- 20: [and Belti]ja, the great gods, he sacrificed them. [...] a message⁷ of the king was read. That month, there was plundering by the Arabs as before.

The Elymaean rebel, Pittit, is almost certainly the *Pitthides* mentioned by Diodorus (34/35.19.1).¹¹⁵ Although the above text makes no mention of his fate, the Parthians appear to have blinded and detained him perhaps to deter further revolts in Elymais. Moreover, the fact that Hyspaosines is spoken of as the *King of Mesene* in this text while he is not so in the preceding record implies that he must have acknowledged Parthian suzerainty at this juncture. But whether or not he was permitted to strike coins remains doubtful and his tetradrachms dated H11P (188 SEM) may have been issued before submitting to the Parthians

¹¹⁵ Walton 1967: 106–107. Either Diodorus or the excerptor of his work obviously confused Artabanus I and Phraates II.

(Fig. 21). In any case, their extreme rarity suggests that they were probably suppressed and re-struck by Artabanus.



Fig. 21. Silver tetradrachm of Hyspaosines from Charax, dated 188 SEM

Following his victory in Elymais the Arsacid ruler minted his S18.2 silver tetradrachms at Susa (Fig. 22) to mark the occasion. But a date closer to the beginning of his reign for this issue cannot be entirely ruled out.

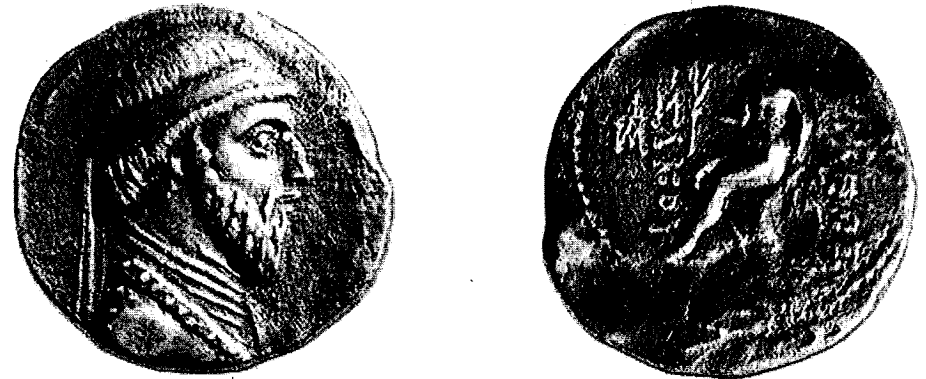


Fig. 22. S18.2 silver tetradrachm of Artabanus I from Susa

There are no records of Artabanus' movements in the last two months of 187 SEB (4/5.2.–3/4.4.124 BC). It is possible that he took advantage of the mild winter conditions in Elymais and stayed at Susa before heading for Ecbatana to prepare for his campaign in the eastern regions of the empire. Meanwhile, the Arabs benefited from royal absence in Babylon and continued their raids on that city. This started during the Parthian operations in Elymais and lasted until the end of Artabanus' reign.¹¹⁶ Yet, as evidenced by a text compi-

¹¹⁶ Sachs and Hunger 1996: 280–285, No. –123A, statements in months II and IV (188 SEB); 288–289, No. –123C, month V (188 SEB); 290–291, No. –122A, month I (189 SEB); 298–299, No. –122D, month VI₂ (189 SEB).

led at the beginning of year 188 SEB (Apr./May 124 BC), Babylon remained under Parthian control.¹¹⁷

The rest of the fragmentary texts from that same year offer very little on the political situation in Babylonia except a noteworthy entry reporting the death of Hyspaosines on 9.III.188 SEB (10/11.6.124 BC) and the accession of his young son.¹¹⁸

18: [... ¹As-p]a-¹a-si¹-né-e LUGAL ¹x¹ [x A^{me}]^s-šá-nu-ú [...] ¹x¹ KI TA i ¹x¹ U₄-5-KÁM šá ITU an-na-a GIG-ma U₄-9-KÁM ina GIG-šú NAM^{mes} ár-tú ¹⁶NUN^{me^s} [...]

19: [...] ¹x¹ [...] ¹x¹ LÚ⁷ x¹ [...] ¹⁶šá-ma-la-nu ¹šú⁷-nu EŠ.BAR-a gab-bi la i-par-ra-as ina amat⁷Ta-la-si-¹a-a-šu-u DAM-šú ¹⁶NUN^{me^s} [...]

20: [...] nu-ú ár-tú ¹⁶DUMU ša-ab-ri ¹⁶DUMU-šú ina ^{me^s}GU-ZA LUGAL-tú šá ¹As-pa-a-si-né-e LUGAL AD-šú tu-ul-te-ši-i[b [...]

18: [... Hysp]aosines, king of [M]esene, [...] on the 5th day of this month he became ill and on the 9th he died of his illness. Afterwards, the nobles [...]

19: [...] [...] [...] these apprentices² must not give any decisions. At the command of Talasiasu, his wife, the nobles [...]

20: [...] Afterwards, she made one small boy, his son, sit on the royal throne of his father Hyspaosines [...]

The name of this young Characenean prince has not survived in our cuneiform documents. Pliny (6.31.139) calls Hyspaosines *son of Sagdodonacus, king of the neighbouring Arabs*¹¹⁹ while Lucian (*Makrobioi* 16) reports that *he fell ill and died at (the age of) eighty-five*.¹²⁰ But his contemporary as well as posthumous coin portraits from years 184, 187, 188, 190, 191, and 192 SEM do not depict a man in his eighties. In any case, the fact that he is again styled here as *king of ... Mesene* confirms that he remained a Parthian tributary under Artabanus and was probably permitted to issue coinage in his own name.

In the following year a *King Arsaces* is attested at Babylon in month I of 189 SEB (25/26.3.–22/23.4.123 BC).¹²¹ He could be identified with Artabanus although lack of tetradrachms from the period 189–190 SEM indicates his absence from Babylonia during 26/27.9.124–5/6.10.122 BC. Meanwhile, Susa remained under the Parthians and minted two more “annual” bronzes for Artabanus (Table 1). But a small number of later silver drachms from Ecbatana indicates that the Parthian king may have reached Media by about the middle of year 188 SEB (Sep./Oct. 124 BC). These are the S22.2 variety (Fig. 23) inscribed with ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ ΦΙΛΑΔΕΛΦΟΥ ΦΙΛΕΛΛΗΝΟΣ and dated EKP (125 AE = 189 SEB). Assuming that the three exergual letters on the reverse of these drachms are an Arsacid era date and not a mint official’s mark,¹²² their general rarity

¹¹⁷ Kugler 1924: 446 and 532, Text 11; Schaumberger 1935: Taf. XII (Nr. 20b); Sachs 1955: 160, LBAT 1051 (Normal-Star Almanac for 188 SEB). The colophon is dated to *King Arsaces*.

¹¹⁸ Sachs and Hunger 1996: 282–283, No. –123A, Obv. 18–20.

¹¹⁹ Rackham 1942: 442–443.

¹²⁰ Harmon 1996: 234–235.

¹²¹ Le Page Renauf 1886: 70, no. 26 (without museum number); Epping 1889: 158–159, Taf. 3; Kugler 1924: 446, Text 12; Sachs 1955: xxii, LBAT **1055 (Normal-Star Almanac for 189 SEB).

¹²² Prokesch-Osten 1874/5: 6 and pl. I.6 (reads 125 SEM and attributes the coin to Phriapatius); Gardner 1877: 27, and pl. I.10 (accepts 125 SEM and attribution to Phriapatius); Rapson 1893: 211–213 and pl.

implies that they were minted about the end of Artabanus’ reign. However, a series of silver drachms with abbreviated mint names PA (Rhagae – S20.4) and MAP (Margiane – S20.5–6, and S22.4) confirm that Artabanus had successfully expelled the invaders and extended Arsacid power as far as Parthia’s northeastern frontiers.¹²³ Unfortunately, our cuneiform records offer nothing on Artabanus’ military operations throughout the Parthian heartland. But one particular text from month VI₂ of 189 SEB (17/18.9.–15/16.10.123 BC) suggests an excessively chaotic situation in and around Babylon. It reads:¹²⁴

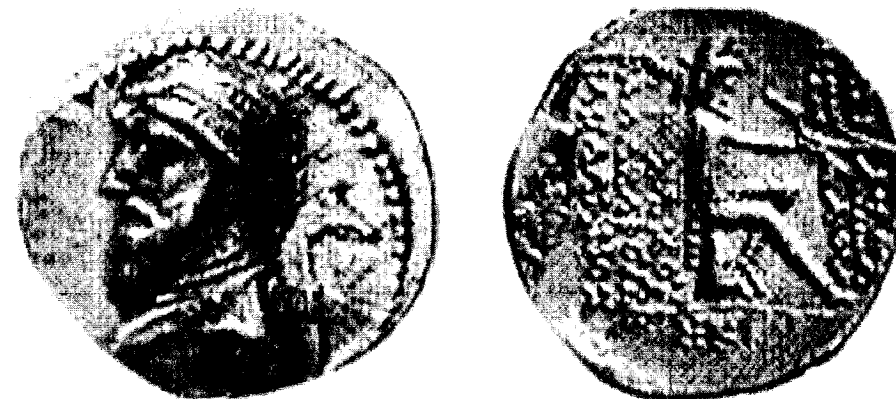


Fig. 23. S22.2 silver drachm of Artabanus I from Ecbatana, dated 125 AE

9: ITU BI ¹⁶Ar-ba-a-a [...]

10: [...] KU]R URI^{ki} gab²-bi NIGIN-ú UD^{mes} MAH^{mes} KÁ-[GAL^{7me^s}]^s E^{ki} L[Ú.N]E NU BAD-te ITU [BI [...]

9: That month, the Arabs [...]

10: [...] all² Babylonia were surrounded². Many² days, the ga[tes²] of Babylon were not opened (because of)² fighting. [That] month, [...]

XVI.3 (first to suggest an AE date and attribution of the coin to Artabanus I); Wroth 1900: 185 (accepts 125 SEM but also suggests the letters could be the abbreviation of a proper name); Wroth 1903: xvi; 21, no. 10 and n. 3; pl. V.7 (125 AE); Petrowicz 1904: 12, no. 10, and Taf. I.16 (125 SEM); Minns 1915: 37, n. 41 (suggests EKP could be a monogram); Ars Classica-Naville 1926: 130, no. 2126, and pl. 62 (125 AE); Le Rider 1965: 43, n. 2 (suggests the possibility of a mint magistrate’s mark); Sellwood 1980: 62 (125 AE); Sellwood 1983a: 283 (125 AE); Shore 1993: 98, no. 63 (125 AE).

¹²³ These drachms are similar to S16 coinage of Phraates II with both full and abbreviated mint or district names. Perhaps with each city liberated, both Phraates and Artabanus minted coins to mark their victory and also pay the troops. It is noteworthy that Artabanus’ titulature on his S22.1–2 and S22.4 drachms from Ecbatana and Margiane, respectively, includes the epithet ΦΙΛΕΛΛΗΝΟΣ. This was originally employed by Mithradates I on his S13.1–10 tetradrachms and drachms after he conquered Mesopotamia in the summer of 141 BC. It lasted until autumn 139 BC but abandoned by Mithradates’ successors. Its reappearance on the final issues of Artabanus I suggests an attempt by the Parthian king to ensure the loyalty or neutrality of the Hellenic settlers in Margiane and around the eastern borders of Parthia. They may have harboured the remnant of the Greek force whose defection to the Saca army led to the demise of Phraates II. Cf. Loginov and Nikitin 1996: 40; Nikitin 1998: 14–15.

¹²⁴ Sachs-Hunger 1996: 298–299, No. –122D.

Considering that the severity of winter in Media and northeast Parthia would have prevented a large-scale military expedition in those regions in late autumn,¹²⁵ I had argued elsewhere that Artabanus may have perished in a campaign about the date of this text.¹²⁶ In fact, given the apparent lack of authority in Babylon, expressed in no unclear terms in the above record, one may assume that the news of his death had reached that city in early autumn 123 BC. But having discounted such an early date and instead taken S21.8 as Artabanus' terminal "annual" Susian bronze from year 190 SEM, I extended his reign beyond 1 Dios 190 SEM (16/17.10.123 BC) and placed it first in Apr./May 122 BC¹²⁷ and then in Sep./Oct. of that same year.¹²⁸ However, this still left out one more bronze with a rather doubtful attribution to Susa. The piece, S21.9, first appeared in A. von Petrowicz's catalogue of Parthian coins as an issue of the Armenian king Arsaces I and subsequently given to Mithradates I.¹²⁹ It was finally correctly identified as a bronze emission of Artabanus I by Le Rider but attributed to Seleucia on the Tigris in view of its reverse inscription.¹³⁰ Yet Sellwood's arguments on the Susian origin of the coin are quite reasonable.¹³¹ Accordingly, I have now accepted S21.9 as Artabanus' final output from Susa and extended his reign by about a month beyond the end of 190 SEM (5/6.10.122 BC). In fact, the amended date is consistent with the earliest cuneiform and numismatic evidence from the next two reigns.

The extant material clearly shows that Mithradates II ascended the throne after 1.I.191 SEB (31.3./1.4.121 BC). This entails an interval of over a year-and-a-half between the above text from month VI₂ of 189 SEB and accession of Mithradates II on or soon after 31.3./1.4.121 BC (cf. below). There are also at least four contemporary and later records confirming Parthian authority in Babylonia in the first months of both 190 SEB and 191 SEB.¹³² However, the extant S23.1–2 tetradrachms of the successor of Artabanus I are all undated and share one of their two monograms with some of the S24 tetradrachms of Mithradates II. This suggests that the output did not straddle the two consecutive Seleucid years 190 SEM and 191 SEM and was issued entirely in the latter year before Mithradates

¹²⁵ Recording the Parthian fighting habits, Dio Cassius (40.14.4–5) states: *and the atmosphere there (in Parthia), which is very dry and contains no moisture, keeps their bow-strings tense, except in the dead of winter. For that reason they make no campaigns anywhere during that season;* Cf. Cary 2001: 426–427.

¹²⁶ Assar 2001a: 27.

¹²⁷ Assar 2003a: 25.

¹²⁸ Assar 2005b.

¹²⁹ Petrowicz 1904: 187, pl. XXV.2; *Ars Classica-Naville* 1926: 129, no. 2100, pl. 61.2100, ascribed to Mithradates I.

¹³⁰ Le Rider 1965: 18, n. 2, pl. LXXIV.27.

¹³¹ He maintains that the S21.9 bronze is not from Seleucia since its inscription reads ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ instead of ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ of the S21.1–4 tetradrachms. Also, in common with S21.5–8 Susian bronzes, it has a right- rather than left-facing obverse bust and therefore is not the product of one of the Iranian mints. Finally, its fabric is quite similar to other Parthian bronze emissions from Susa. Taken together, these exclude Seleucia on the Tigris or another mint-city in Mesopotamia. The presence of the epithet ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ in the inscription of this bronze indicates that it could be the latest Susian issue of Artabanus. Cf. Assar 2005c on the Parthian coinages from Susa.

¹³² Kugler 1924: 446, Text 14; Sachs 1955: 171, LBAT 1144 (Almanac for 190 SEB); Sachs 1955: 199, LBAT 1287 (Goal-Year Text for 198 SEB), Obv. 3, Venus paragraph, beginning with 5.I.190 SEB (16/17.4. 122 BC); Epping and Strassmaier 1890: 357; Epping and Strassmaier 1891: 229 (copy); Kugler 1924: 446, Text 13, LBAT**1297 (Goal-Year-Text for 236 SEB), Obv. 16, Mercury paragraph, beginning around 6.II.190 SEB (c. 17/18.5.122 BC); Sachs 1955: 197, LBAT 1283 (Goal-Year Text for 191 SEB), Rev. colophon.

II ascended the throne. Given the number of both S18.1 tetradrachms of Bagasis and S23.2 of Arsaces X in the 1998/9 hoard (cf. n. 142), it is possible that the latter ruled for about six months. This in turn suggests that the reign of Artabanus I ended in Oct./Nov. 122 BC.

Assuming that this king spent his last days fighting the nomad invaders around Parthia's northeastern frontiers, it may, after all, be possible to identify him with Justin's Artabanus who succumbed to a Tocharian poisoned arrow.

Arsaces X – Son of Artabanus I (c. Nov. 122–c. Apr. 121 BC)

In his 1893 article, Rapson briefly discussed a newly acquired Parthian tetradrachm (S23.2) by the British Museum.¹³³ He concluded that although that coin's obverse portrait bore considerable resemblance to the one on a drachm from Seleucia (S17.4 var. of Phraates II, wrongly dated 189 SEM; cf. n. 52), the two specimens belonged to different rulers (Fig. 24). But he did not venture to identify the issuer of the tetradrachm and remarked that it offered a puzzle in Parthian numismatics.



Fig. 24. S23.2 silver tetradrachm of Arsaces X (son of Artabanus I) from Seleucia on the Tigris

Several years later, Wroth studied the same coin and classified its obverse bust as that of Himerus, an erstwhile minion of Phraates II and a despotic governor of Seleucia and Babylon in 128/127 BC. Nevertheless he added that if his proposed ascription proved to be unsafe, the coin in question might be regarded as the earliest issue of Mithradates II on the grounds that it shared the epithet ΕΠΙΦΑΝΟΥΣ and one of its two mint magistrate marks, ΤΥ, with some later tetradrachms of that king (S24.4 and S24.6–7).¹³⁴

With the discovery in 1922/3 of a relatively large hoard of Greek and Parthian coins near Tehran, Iran,¹³⁵ containing, among other types, the only known example of S23.1 tetra-

¹³³ Rapson 1893: 214–215 and pl. XVI.5.

¹³⁴ Wroth 1900: 194 and pl. 8.6; Worth 1903: xxi, 23, n. 1 and pl. V.9 (tentatively attributes to Himerus); xxiii, n. 1 (possible attribution to Mithradates II).

¹³⁵ Dayet 1925a: 63; Dayet 1925b: 131; Newell 1924: 141–142; Thompson et al. 1973: 261, no. 1813 (Media).

drachm (Fig. 25), Wroth's attribution to Himerus was largely accepted.¹³⁶ But later the coinage was firmly assigned to Mithradates II and taken as his inaugural emission from Seleucia on the Tigris.¹³⁷ However, as early as 1900, Wroth had conceded that if these coins were minted for Mithradates II then it must be admitted that the "appearance of that king significantly changed in the course of years".¹³⁸



Fig. 25. S23.1 silver tetradrachm of Arsaces X (son of Artabanus I) from Seleucia on the Tigris

It is generally believed that beginning with S17 coinage of Phraates II, struck at Seleucia after Antiochus VII was defeated and slain in early autumn of 129 BC, and ending with S23 tetradrachms, Parthian numismatic art attained its zenith. One can even argue that some earlier varieties of S24 tetradrachms of Mithradates II too exhibit the same artistic qualities as the immediately preceding types (Fig. 27). Accordingly, the portraits on the regal emissions from Seleucia at this juncture can be regarded as plausible representations of their issuing authorities, showing subtle differences during a single year of striking and only gradual changes over longer periods.

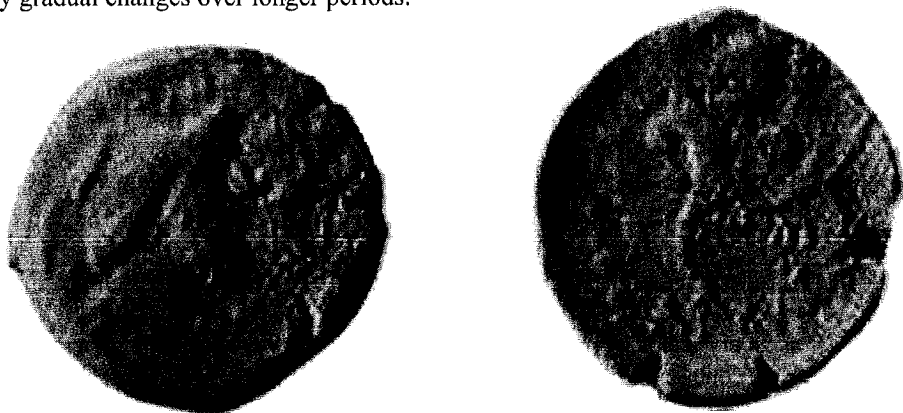


Fig. 26. S23.4 bronze of Mithradates II from Seleucia on the Tigris, dated 191 SEM

¹³⁶ Dayet 1925a: 65–66; Dayet 1925b: 131 and 138, no. 65.

¹³⁷ Newell 1938: 479 and n. 3; Brett 1955: 290, no. 2215; Le Rider 1965: 366, n. 8; 386 and n. 2; Sellwood 1971: 59; Sellwood 1980: 65.

¹³⁸ Wroth 1900: 194.

Now, owing to the presence of the TY monogram on both S23 and S24.4 and S24.6–7 tetradrachms, the two issues may be regarded as contiguous. Yet the sudden pronounced facial differences of their obverse portraits strongly imply that they were minted by two different rulers. This is further strengthened by the fact that a series of bronze coins from Seleucia (S23.4, dated AQP = 191 SEM)¹³⁹ depicts Mithradates II with fully developed beard and moustache (Fig. 26) while those of the young prince on S23 tetradrachms are visibly meagre. However, the most compelling evidence for the presence of an additional king between Artabanus I and Mithradates II is concealed in an obscure cuneiform tablet that furnishes us with the date of several of the latter's regnal years. This is a rather mutilated Babylonian eclipse record for years 177 (at least) to 199 SEB. In the left hand margin of one of its remaining columns, containing astronomical elements, are a series of figures which seem to be consecutive year numbers [3], 4, [5], 6, 7, 8, and [9]. Further manipulations of the preserved data have revealed that these correspond to years 193–199 SEB and could, therefore, be the 3rd – 9th regnal years of Antiochus VIII's adult reign (121–96 BC) although he never held Babylon.¹⁴⁰ But the ruling Parthian king at that time was Mithradates II whose reign is habitually but incorrectly believed to have spanned the period c. 123 – 87 BC. He is probably attested in the colophon of another Babylonian astronomical tablet¹⁴¹ dated 1.1.191 SEB (31.3./1.4.121 BC) and hence the above numbers must necessarily represent his regnal years. From this it follows that the first year of Mithradates II in Babylon officially began on 1 Nisānu 191 SEB and not some two years earlier. Given that Artabanus I perished about Oct./Nov. 122 BC, we have a hiatus of roughly one year between his death and the end of 191 SEM (24/25.9.121 BC) to which the short reign of our young prince can be assigned. However, owing to the date 191 SEM of S23.4 bronze of Mithradates II and the relative rarity of S23.1–2 tetradrachms of Arsaces X,¹⁴² the latter's reign may be limited to approximately half-a-year in this period.



Fig. 27. S24.4 silver tetradrachm of Mithradates II from Seleucia on the Tigris

¹³⁹ De la Fuyé 1919: 74–75; Newell 1925: 1–18; Bellinger 1942: 60–61; Le Rider 1959: 232–233; Nodelman 1959/60: 91; Le Rider 1965: 387–388 and pl. LXXI.12–14.

¹⁴⁰ Neugebauer 1955a: 109–112; Neugebauer 1955b: pls. 41 (transcription) and 229 (photo).

¹⁴¹ Sachs 1955: 197, LBAT 1283 (Goal-Year Text for 191 SEB), possibly compiled under Arsaces X.

¹⁴² Based on the information available to me, the number ratio of S18.1 (including the half-a-dozen dated variety) to S23 tetradrachms in the hoard of 1998/9 was about 3 to 1.

As briefly discussed earlier, numismatic evidence shows that prior to the reign of Mithradates II dated silver issues from Seleucia always followed an earlier undated emission that ceased at the end of its corresponding Macedonian year.¹⁴³ Whether or not this tradition continued under Mithradates is by no means clear. As far as the extant evidence is concerned his silver coins and those of the succeeding kings down to about the end of the reign of Orodes II (c. 56–38 BC) remain undated.

The same material also reveals that while the first silver emission of Antiochus VII from Seleucia bore no date, his initial bronze was clearly dated. Assuming that the same mint protocols were still in force a decade later, 1 Nisānu 191 SEB may be taken as the *terminus post quem* of the S23.4 bronze issue.

Unfortunately, we have no knowledge of the precise inception date of the reign of Mithradates II during 31.3.–25.9.121 BC. This would prevent us from deciding the terminal date of his predecessor. Yet, as discussed earlier, numismatic evidence indicates that Arsaces X ruled for approximately six months. This places his death in about Apr. 121 BC.

The contemporary cuneiform and later material offer nothing on the personal name of Arsaces X and his relationship with the earlier or later Parthian kings. Assuming that aside from its brevity one reason for Justin's conflation of the reign of Arsaces X with that of Artabanus I was that the two were homonymous, the young prince may be called Artabanus. Alternatively, he may have been called Mithradates and hence his short reign was amalgamated with that of the succeeding king, Mithradates II. Given that the portraits on S23.1–2 tetradrachms are comparable with those on S14.1–2 and S17 of Phraates II, it is possible that Arsaces X was also about 15–16 years old on his accession in 122 BC. He could therefore have been born about 137/138 BC. Owing to the fact that Mithradates I died in early 132 BC, it is possible that he also fathered Arsaces X. But it is equally likely that the latter was a son of Bagasis or Artabanus I.

We are regrettably hampered by the dearth of historical notices from the period 190–192 SEB (12/13.4.122–18/19.4.120 BC) and therefore unable to give an insight into the political circumstances of this short reign. The only extant contemporary record from the reign of Arsaces X may be the following incomplete colophon-titles dated to the beginning of 191 SEB (31.3./1.4.121 BC):¹⁴⁴

1: [U₄-1-KÁM IGI-DU₈-A^{meš} DIB-qa^{meš} u AN-KU₁₀^{meš} šá ana] MU-1-me-27-KÁM [šá ší-i MU-1-me-1,31-KÁM]

2: [Ar]-[šá¹-ka-a LUGAL kun-nu-[u]

1: [The 1st day, appearances, passings, and eclipses] which have been establis[ed for] year 127, [which is year 191]

2: [Ar]saces (is) King.

Returning, once again, to our numismatic material, we note that the celebratory scenes on the three earlier emissions S17, S18.1 and S21 are repeated on the S23.1–2 tetradrachms of Arsaces X. But nothing is known about the nature and circumstances of the triumph that

¹⁴³ McDowell 1935: 147.

¹⁴⁴ Sachs 1955: 197, LBAT 1283 (Goal-Year Text for 191 SEB).

prompted the issue of the latter coinage. However, unlike the previous series, the two tetradrachm emissions of Arsaces X are inscribed differently.

The first variety (S23.2) bears the modest inscription ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ ΕΠΙΦΑΝΟΥΣ ΦΙΛΕΛΛΗΝΟΣ, the latter title was perhaps intended to placate the Greeks in Babylonia. On the other hand, the second issue (S23.1) introduces into the royal titlature the epithet *the Great*, presumably to emphasise the significance of a memorable victory in Mesopotamia. While curiously dropping the reference to the Hellenic citizens, its inscription reads ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ ΕΠΙΦΑΝΟΥΣ. Yet lack of both silver drachms from the Iranian mints and “annual” Susian bronze strongly implies that the entire brief reign of Arsaces X was dominated by the political turmoil in Babylonia.



Fig. 28. Silver tetradrachm of Hyspaosines from Charax, dated 190 SEM



Fig. 29. Silver tetradrachm of Hyspaosines from Charax, dated 191 SEM

It is interesting to note that the hoard of 1998/9 also yielded several tetradrachms dated ϘΡ (190 SEM), ΑϘΡ (191 SEM), and ΒϘΡ (192 SEM) in the name of King Hyspaosines (Figs. 28–29). Given that the Characenean ruler had died on 10/11.6.124 BC some fifteen

months prior to the beginning of 190 SEM, his later issues may be taken as posthumous (cf. below). Yet Hyspaosines and his young son and successor may have been homonymous. This may explain why the 190-192 SEM issues were modelled on the original coinage of the founder of the Characenean dynasty and minted in his name.

Arsaces XI – Mithradates II (c. Apr. 121–c. Sep. 91 BC)

According to Justin (42.2.3–6 and 42.4.1–4) the king following Artabanus I on the Parthian throne was his son, Mithradates II, whose achievements ultimately earned him the title *the Great*. He fought many wars with his neighbours, including Armenia, and conducted a number of successful campaigns against the Scythians, avenging the injury inflicted on his predecessors. After a brief digression into the geography and foundation of Armenia, Justin sums up the reign of this king and concludes that the Parthian senate expelled Mithradates on charges of cruelty after his war with Armenia and installed his brother Orodes. The latter laid a long siege to Babylon where Mithradates had taken refuge and starved the inhabitants into submission. Mithradates finally surrendered to Orodes who had him executed at once.

Unfortunately, Justin's accounts of Mithradates' fate and the events following his death are confused and inaccurate. Yet the extant cuneiform and numismatic material can, to some extent, help us construct a better picture of both the long and to a very large extent successful reign of Mithradates, and the history of Parthia during the four decades of dynastic feud after his death in 91 BC.

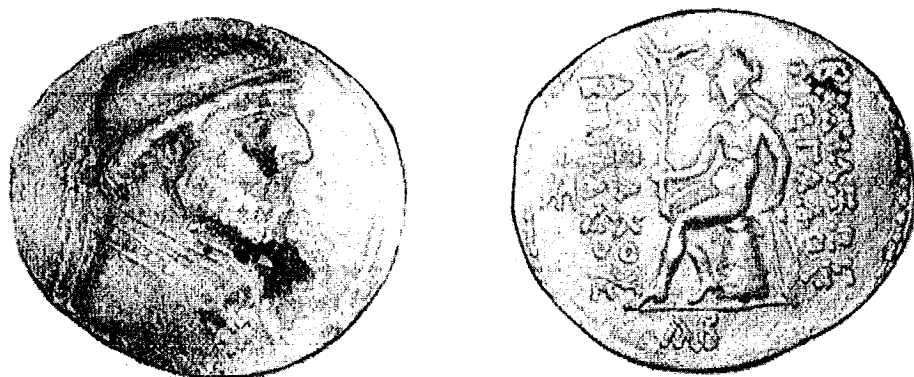


Fig. 30. Silver tetradrachm of Mithradates II from Susa

Given the evidence of dated coins and cuneiform material already discussed, it is clear that Mithradates ascended the throne shortly after 1 Nisānu 191 SEB. This date agrees well with a run of thirteen "annual" Susian bronzes,¹⁴⁵ starting in 191 SEM and ending in 203 SEM (Table 1) before the adoption of the grandiloquent epithet King of Kings by Mithra-

¹⁴⁵ Le Rider 1965: 86–88; Sellwood 1980: 66 (with ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ); 71 (with ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ); and 76 (with ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ ΕΠΙΦΑΝΟΥΣ).

dates in 204 SEM. The first of these, LR 117–123 (S23.5-9),¹⁴⁶ depict on their obverse a right-facing bust of the king with a medium length but nevertheless well-developed beard. A similar portrait is repeated on at least two recently discovered silver tetradrachms of Mithradates II from Susa (Fig. 30). But while the bronzes are inscribed with ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ, the inscription on the large silver reads ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ ΕΠΙΦΑΝΟΥΣ. The latter is identical with the one on S23.1 tetradrachm of Arsaces X. It is possible that the large silver inaugurated Mithradates' reign at Susa in the second half of year 191 SEM shortly after the death of Arsaces X. The obvious disparity between the royal busts on S23.1–2 tetradrachms on the one hand and those on Mithradates' Susian silver and bronze issues on the other further supports their attribution to different rulers.

There is practically nothing on the political circumstances of the first year of Mithradates' reign in our Late Babylonian cuneiform archive. His seizure and overstriking of the Characenean bronze with S23.4 dies dated 191 SEM suggest that Mithradates liquidated the insurgency in Mesene in that year. Yet a handful of posthumous tetradrachms dated 190, 191 and 192 SEM and inscribed with ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΨΕΥΔΑΙΩΝΟΥ once again reminds us of the fluctuating fortunes in the southern states. These were derived from the hoard of 1998/9 whose burial can be safely placed before Oct. 109 BC whereupon Mithradates styled himself King of Kings (cf. below).¹⁴⁷ It is possible that they were accepted in trade during the period 123–120 BC in Mesopotamia and hence their presence in the aforementioned hoard. This then implies that the successor of Hyspaosines was a Parthian vassal and authorised to issue a limited coinage. Alternatively, they may be stray pieces relating to several brief intervals of secession from Parthian hegemony. Their extreme rarity strongly implies that they were probably suppressed by Mithradates and his predecessors although no overstruck specimen has so far come to light. In any case, whether or not Mithradates succeeded in pacifying the Characenean state completely at this juncture remains open to speculation.

Beginning with the reign of this king we find resumption of drachm production after a break of about half a year that followed the death of Artabanus I. The earliest of these (S23.3) bears the inscription ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ ΕΠΙΦΑΝΟΥΣ ΦΙΛΕΛΛΗΝΟΣ and remains the only variety now attributed to Mithradates using the latter epithet – perhaps he too temporarily employed this title to appease the Greek elements in Babylonia and elsewhere in his empire. However, its obverse monogram, given as Ζ, does not correspond to any of the known mints in Iran. In fact, with the exception of S27.6–8 tetrachalkoi, struck after 109 BC, the title Philhellene never appears on Mithradates' coinage from outside Mesopotamia. It is also found in his titulature in the following two Greek inscriptions from Babylon, implying that he too issued his first drachms at Seleucia. After all, there are strong indications that perhaps emulating Mithradates I and Phraates II, Mithradates II also minted a small number of drachms at Seleucia.¹⁴⁸ But given the overall stylistic similarities between the reverse designs of a S22.4 drachm of Artabanus I, with the obverse monogram ΜΑΡ, and a S23.3 of Mithradates II, there is little doubt that the latter was also issued in Margia-

¹⁴⁶ Le Rider 1965: 85–87, pl. XII; Sellwood 1980: 66.

¹⁴⁷ No specimens later than the S24 tetradrachms of Mithradates II were present in the hoard. Following the evidence of Susian bronzes in Table 1, this issue was superseded by S26 in 112/111 BC. However, it is possible that S24 tetradrachms (but not drachms) continued to be minted at Seleucia until 110/109 BC.

¹⁴⁸ Simonetta 1979: 363 and 364 (Fig. 6.17).

ne.¹⁴⁹ This signifies that the Arsacid ruler had extended his sway over the northeastern regions of Parthia at the outset of his reign. It further implies that following Artabanus I, Mithradates too employed the epithet Philhellene probably to win over the Greek mercenaries who joined the Saca fighters and destroyed the Parthian army under Phraates II less than a decade earlier. These conjectures are supported by another drachm with the same reverse inscription but the expanded obverse symbol MI (rotated 90° clockwise), probably representing Mithradatkart.¹⁵⁰ We may therefore surmise that during his first year as king, Mithradates was partially successful in subjugating Characene and Elymais in the south and southeast, and suppressing the nomad menace in northeast Parthia.

The earlier of the two Babylonian Greek inscriptions from the reign of Mithradates II is a rather mutilated rectangular limestone fragment dated 191 SEM with the remnants of seven lines of text.¹⁵¹ The opening line is now virtually unintelligible while the traces in the last two cannot be resolved with any certainty. What remains has been restored as follows:¹⁵²

- 1: [traces]
- 2: [Βασιλεύον]τος Μεγάλου Ἀρσάκο[υ]
- 3: [Ἐπιφανοῦ]ς Φιλέλληνο[ς] ἔτου[ς]
- 4: (vacat) ὡς ὁ Βασιλεύς ἄγ-
- 5: [ει ὡς δὲ τὸ πρό]τερον ΑΦ καὶ Ρ
- 6-7: [traces perhaps of a month name in line 7]

.... (in the reign of the) Great King Arsaces, 'God' Manifest (and) Philhellene. In the year (vacat), according to the king's reckoning, (but) according to the former (reckoning), 191.

The second record, also a rather poorly preserved inscription, opens with:¹⁵³

- 1: [Βα]σιλεύοντος [Μεγάλου Ἀρσά]κου]
- 2: Ἐπιφανοῦς Φιλέλλη[νο]ς ἔτους]
- 3: ΙΑ καὶ Ρ ὡς ὁ Βασιλεύς [ἄ]γει ὡς δὲ τὸ πρότερον]
- 4: ΒΣ

¹⁴⁹ Loginov and Nikitin 1996: 40-44 and Fig. 1, nos. 5 and 6; Nikitin 1998: 14-15, 18, and pl. I.3-4. Note the engraver link between the S22.4 drachm at the Hermitage Museum (no. 35156) and the S23.3 in the British Museum trays (no. 1920.6.11-314). It is noteworthy that with the introduction of ΦΙΛΕΛΛΗΝΟΣ, the epithet ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ is omitted from the royal titlature on both drachms.

¹⁵⁰ Sellwood 1998: 102.

¹⁵¹ Haussoullier 1909: 353-354, erroneously restores [κατὰ νόμον] ἱερὸν ΑΦ καὶ Ρ in line 4; Minns 1915: 36; Marshall 1916: 185, No. 1052; Assar 2003b: 171. The SEM date places this record in the period 6/7.10.122 - 24/25.9.121 BC, covering the short reign of Arsaces X who too styled himself ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ ΕΠΙΦΑΝΟΥΣ. But given the royal titlature in the later text dated 202 SEM, it is more likely that the earlier record too was compiled under Mithradates II.

¹⁵² Rostovtzeff and Welles 1931: 40-41.

¹⁵³ Haussoullier 1909: 352-353; Minns 1915: 36 gives erroneous restorations in lines 2 and 3. For the 65- and 64-year differences between the Seleucid and Arsacid Era dates cf. Assar 2003b: 177.

(in the reign of the) [Great] King [Arsaces], 'God' Manifest (and) Philhell[ene. In the year] 137, according to the king's reckoning, (but) according to the former (reckoning), 202.

These clearly illustrate the persistent application of the epithet Philhellene in Babylon until at least 202 SEM (5/6.10.111-23/24.9.110 BC). Yet the S23.3 drachms have already shown that the same title was in vogue, albeit temporarily, in the northeastern province of Margiane and perhaps even in Mithradatkart in the early part of the reign of Mithradates.

The scanty cuneiform texts from year 192 SEB begin by attesting Arsacid authority in Babylonia.¹⁵⁴ They further give an indication of the turbulent situation in that satrapy with relentless Arab incursions. One of these also reports the departure of an army commander in month Nisānu (19/20.4.-18/19.5.120 BC) to the royal court in Media without an indication of the purpose of the journey. Yet it proves that Mithradates' power had already been acknowledged in that important satrapy early in 120 BC:¹⁵⁵

- A₂15: ITU BI [...] r^x1 E^{ki} GÁL-ši
 A₂16: [ITU BI al-te]-me šá¹⁶ GAL ERÍN^{mes} šá ana mu[b-bi 4¹⁶ GAL ERÍN^{mes} TA E^{ki} a]-na^{uru} Se-lu-<ke>-a-a
 A₂17: [šá ana mu]b-bi¹⁶ IDIGNA KU₄-u[b¹⁶ GAL ERÍN^{mes} MU-a-ti la-pa-ni
 A₂18: [x x x] GAL ú-qu-tú i-n[a]^{r^{ki}1} mu-un-nu-ú
 A₂19: [.... u ERÍN²-šú ana KUR Ma-da-a-a [at-taḫ¹ Ar-šá-ka]-a LUGAL È
 B₁13: [.... ITU] BI SAR-tú¹⁶ Ar-ba-a-a ina KUR UR^{ki}1ⁱ]

A₂15: That month, there was [...] in Babylon.

A₂16: [That month, I hea]rd that the general who was above [the four generals from Babylon] entered Seleucia

A₂17: [which is on] the Tigris. [...] this [gener]al (who) before

A₂18: [...] was appointed as general in [...]

A₂19: [...] and] his [troo]ps² went out to Media [to the side of] King [Arsac]es.

B₁13: [...] That [month], plundering by the Arabs in Babylonia [...]

Obviously, the low quality evidence on Mithradates' absence from Babylonia and sojourn in Media conceals the reasons for the above quoted troop movements. This could have been in response to preparations for a war against the steppe invaders or another campaign elsewhere. But there may be a connection between this text and the one from the following month where two troop commanders in Babylonia are reported to have been removed from their positions. In any case, it is possible that the Characenean royal house took advantage of a depleted Parthian garrison in Babylonia at this juncture, seceded and resumed a coinage in the name of Hyspaosines dated BQP (192 SEM).

¹⁵⁴ Sachs 1955: xxvi, LBAT *1284, colophon of the unpublished Goal-Year Text dated 1.I.192 SEB (19/20.4. 120 BC); Kugler 1924: 464, Text 15; Sachs 1955: 227, LBAT 1442, report of lunar eclipse of 14.II.192 SEB (1/2.6.120 BC); Hunger and Sachs 2001: 64-67.

¹⁵⁵ Sachs and Hunger 1996: 310-311, No. -119A₂+B₁.

A further text from month Aiiāru of the same year (19/20.5.–16/17.6.120 BC) provides the personal name of the senior Parthian army commander in Babylonia and his filial relationship with Bagāyāsh (Bagasis):¹⁵⁶

C11: ITU BI U₄-4-KÁM [k]^{us}SAR^{mes} šá LUGAL šá ana muḫ-ḫi l⁶pa-ḫat E^{ki} u l⁶pu-li-te-e šá ina E^{ki} SA[R^{mes}]

C12: [ina É IGI-TUḪ-A šá-su-ú um-ma ¹Ar-ta]-¹ba¹-na-a A šá ¹Ba-ga-a-a-a'-šá ¹šá ana¹ muḫ-ḫi 4 l⁶GAL ERÍN-ni^{mes} ù ¹Ur-ra-ab²-šú² l⁶GAL ú-qa TA l⁶GAL ERÍN-ni^{mes} [ma-tu-qa²]

C11: That month, the 4th, a leather document of the king which was written to the governor of Babylon and the (Greek) citizens who are in Babylon

C12: [was read in the House of Observation as follows: Artab]ban, son of Bagāyāsh who was above the 4 generals, and Urrahshu², the general, [were removed²] from the position of general.

Regrettably, the critical part of the text at the end of line C12 and beginning of the next is now completely lost. But the context strongly implies that the royal message concerned both the senior commander, Artaban, and his subordinate general, Urrahshu. This agrees with a similar statement in a record from year 179 SEB, reporting the dismissal of the leading Parthian general in Babylonia.¹⁵⁷ It is, therefore, almost certain that the two officers in the above text were either relieved of their duties, perhaps for misconduct and inability to protect Parthian administration in the southern satrapies, or assigned to posts elsewhere. However, it is obvious that for some reason, the leading officer, Artaban, had to be distinguished by his patronymic *son of Bagāyāsh* from either a living or recently deceased homonym. While the presence of a second active Artaban at this point remains a possibility – perhaps a Parthian prince or a senior general – the nature of the historical notices in the cuneiform material requires him to have been associated with Babylon and also known to the scribe for his eminence. At present, the most likely candidate is the young King Arsaces X. He probably perished in some tragic circumstances barely a year earlier while defending his realm. Perhaps, having valiantly confronted the Guti, he was overwhelmed by the sheer strength of the enemy and died on the field of battle.

Unfortunately, the extant cuneiform fragments offer very little on the state of affairs in Babylonia during the remaining months of 192 SEB and the first half of the following year. Likewise, there are no further Characenean coins after the last posthumous issue of Hyspaosines dated 192 SEM and until the first emission of Apodakos in 203 SEM. Perhaps the Characenean ruler in the intervening period was a Parthian tributary but not permitted to issue coinage.

¹⁵⁶ Sachs and Hunger 1996: 312–313, No. –119C. Cf. Hunger's comments on page 314 regarding line C12 and the possibility that both Artaban, son of Bagāyāsh, and Urrahshu "were removed from the position of general" or the like.

¹⁵⁷ Sachs and Hunger 1996: 216–217, No. –132B, Rev. 23 reads:

.... TA l⁶GAL ERÍN^{mes} KUR URI^{ki} ma-tu-qa

.... from the position of general of Babylonia he was removed

A few incomplete lines at the end of month I of 193 SEB (Apr./May 119 BC) refer to a possible royal presence near Babylon and a temporary halt in the Arab raids and pillage.¹⁵⁸ It was perhaps at this point in time that in conjunction with his S24 tetradrachms, Mithradates struck a limited issue of silver drachms at Seleucia on the Tigris with visibly more mature facial features.¹⁵⁹ Although these are undated, for reasons discussed earlier, they belong to the period before 204 SEM.

After a further break, the first unambiguous reference to the Parthian triumph over the invading hordes (most probably the Royal Saca tribe, Sacaraucae) emerges in month VII of 193 SEB (3/4.10.–1/2.11.119 BC):¹⁶⁰

A18: [ITU] BI U₄-15-KÁM ^{ku}SAR^{mes} šá ¹Ar-šá-ka-a LU[GAL a-na]

A19: ¹pa-ḫat¹ E^{ki} u l⁶pu-li-ta-an šá ina E^{ki} SAR^{mes} ina É IGI-TUḪ-A šá-su-ú ak-ka-i šá l⁶ER-ÍN^{mes} MAḪ^{mes} NIGIN-ma ù ana LÚ.NE GIN^{mes} ana UGU DUMU LUGAL u l⁶ERÍN^{mes}-šú šá URU^{mes} S[UD^{mes}]

A20: [šá KUR G]u-ti-i^{ki} šá a-na ¹Ar-ta-ba-na-a ŠEŠ-ia GAZ-ku ù as-di-ir ana tar-ši-šú-nu u LÚ.NE e-pu-šú it-ti-šú-nu GAZ-tu₄ GAL-tu₄ ina lib-bi-šú-nu áš-kun e-lat 2 LÚ x [...]

A21: [x x x] ul GAZ^{mes} u DUMU LUGAL u ERÍN^{mes}-šú TA LÚ.NE BAL-ma a-na ár-ki-šú a-na KUR^{mes} dan-nu-tú iḫ-ḫi-is ITU BI l⁶GAL ERÍN^{mes} šá [ana] UGU 4 l⁶GAL ERÍN^{mes} áš-šú se-ke-[ri⁷ ...]

A22: [x x x] x TUḪ-ir ITU BI l⁶Ar-ba-a-a GIM šá ina IGI-ma KÚR^{mes} ḫu-ub-tu SAR^{mes} ITU BI ¹Ar-šá-ka-a LUGAL ina URU^{mes} SUD^{mes} šá KUR Gu-ti-i^{ki} áš-šú LÚ.NE D[Ú⁷ x]

A18: ... That [month], the 15th, a leather document of King Arsaces

A19: [which] was written to the governor of Babylon and the (Greek) citizens who were in Babylon, was read in the House of Observation; accordingly, many troops assembled and went to fight against the son of the king and his troops of the [remote] cities

A20: [of the G]utian (country) who killed my brother Artaban, and I set up (troops) opposite them, and fought with them; a great killing I performed among them; except two men [...]

A21: [...] were not killed; and the crown prince and his troops fled from the fight and withdrew to the difficult mountains. That month, the general who is above the four generals for damming²

A22: [...] departed. That month, the Arabs became hostile, as before, and plundered. That month, King Arsaces [went] to the remote cities of the Gutian country in order to fight.

It is noteworthy that Mithradates undertook this particular campaign to avenge the death of his brother, Artaban, who had fallen victim to the northern warriors (the Guti) aided by

¹⁵⁸ Sachs and Hunger 1996: 320–321, No. –118A, Obv. A19–A22. The critical text in line A21 reads: [... after²] 10 days he removed his camp there. (On) the 25th (of month I), when he withdrew, he did not enter Babylon. Yet it is not clear whether it was the Parthian king or one of his army commanders who had originally camped outside Babylon. Comparison with similar notes elsewhere in the cuneiform records favours the presence of Mithradates in Babylonia to oversee the military operations. But there is no doubt about the outcome of the campaign since we find in line A22: The people went out from Babylon to the rivers and fields which were without Arabs.

¹⁵⁹ Newell 1938: 479–480, and pl. 141.D–E, note the striking similarities between the style and iconography of the drachm D and tetradrachm E although the author does not assign the former to Seleucia; Simonetta 1979: 363, Fig. 6.17, correctly attributes the same drachm to Seleucia.

¹⁶⁰ Sachs and Hunger 1996: 326–327, No. –118A; Del Monte 1997: 149–150.

an unattested royal contingent. With little information on the identity of Artaban in the above text and the time and circumstances of his death, the fraternal allusion was postulated to involve Artabanus I and Mithradates II.¹⁶¹ We are indeed informed by Justin that Artabanus succumbed to a poisoned arrow while combating the Tochari. Yet taking 176 BC as the traditional date of Phriapatius' death rendered such a link inadmissible on several counts.¹⁶² Firstly, coupled with Justin's genealogy of the early Arsacid rulers, the above reference confirms Mithradates II as a son of Phriapatius. He would therefore have been at least fifty-four years old on his accession in 121 BC. Given that he reigned for thirty years, he would have been well over eighty in 91 BC and therefore an appropriate candidate for Lucian (*Makrobioi* 14–17) who reports a number of lesser oriental octogenarians.¹⁶³ Yet the portraits with a medium length beard on Mithradates' early tetradrachms imply that he was probably not in his fifties at the time of striking these coins. Secondly, following Artabanus' example, Mithradates is expected to have employed the honorific title ΘΕΟΠΙΑΤΟΡΟΣ on at least some of his coins. The fact that this epithet is missing from Mithradates' titlature proves that he was not the son of a deified father. The most likely interpretation of the above evidence is that Mithradates and the young Arsaces X were brothers and that it was the latter who, following his predecessor, Artabanus I, led a war against the nomad invaders but was defeated and slain during a possible Guti onslaught. However, granted that Phriapatius died in 170 BC¹⁶⁴ it is possible that he, after all, fathered Mithradates II just before his death, and that the latter was born in 169 BC. If so, Mithradates would have been about 78 years old in 91 BC and therefore not an octogenarian.

Another scenario involves the father-son relationship between Bagasis and Mithradates II. As mentioned above, an earlier Artaban was probably dismissed as the chief Parthian commander in Mesopotamia in May/June 120 BC. But it is not impossible that he was installed in the east some months later, confronted the Guti and was killed in battle. Unfortunately, this will leave the question of why he was not called *the brother of the king* unanswered. We have already noted that Bagāyāsh was styled so in Oct./Nov. 133 BC when his brother, Mithradates I, was still alive. If the troop commander Artaban and Mithradates II were indeed brothers, one expects the former too to have been credited with the patronymic *brother of the king* and not *son of Bagāyāsh*. It is hoped that future discoveries will clarify the paternity of Mithradates II and finally establish his true link with the founder of the Parthian dynasty.

To mark his liquidation of the nomad danger and salvation of the Parthian Empire from total disintegration Mithradates issued a series of drachms at Ecbatana and Rhagae (S25.1 and S25.1 var. with the obverse monogram PA). These depict on their obverse and reverse, respectively, the royal bust with a medium-length beard and the conventional seated archer surrounded by the inscription ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ ΣΩΤΗΡΟΣ. Although undated, the S25 coinage can be placed, on iconographical and titular grounds, in the autumn of 119 BC when Mithradates is known to have triumphed against the Guti.

¹⁶¹ Van der Spek 2001: 453–454. Cf. also Del Monte 1997: 150 on the possibility of the confusion in the relationship between Mithradates II and Artabanus I.

¹⁶² Assar 2003a: 33–34.

¹⁶³ Harmon 1996: 232–235.

¹⁶⁴ Assar 2005b.

Beyond the fact that Parthian authority was acknowledged in Babylon and that an Arab raid was defeated in month IV of 200 SEB (19/20.7.–17/18.8.112 BC),¹⁶⁵ our cuneiform records from the period 194–200 SEB (29/30.3.118 – 9/10.4.111 BC) are lamentably incomplete.¹⁶⁶ We are, therefore, at a loss to explain Mithradates' movements during these years, perhaps involving further battles against the nomads and also his Armenian campaigns. The only indication of a Parthian involvement in Armenia may be gleaned from a badly preserved reference in month V of year 201 SEB (7/8.8.–5/6.9.111 BC) with nothing to justify a military expedition.¹⁶⁷

As for the remaining years of Mithradates' reign, the few noteworthy developments that have survived in the Babylonian texts may be summarised as follows.

Owing to his successful wars, leading to the expansion of the Parthian Empire, Mithradates was obliged to install subordinate local rulers and consequently adopt the title King of Kings. He then inaugurated the occasion by striking both silver drachms and bronze fractions (S27.1–13 and S27.28) inscribed with ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ ΕΠΙΦΑΝΟΥΣ at Ecbatana (Fig. 31), Rhagae, Nisa, and possibly even Margiane. The mint of Susa also issued a series of "annual" bronzes (S27.14–27) with a right-facing royal bust on the obverse and the reverse legend ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ. According to our contemporary cuneiform records, the *terminus post quem* for Mithradates' titular change from King Arsaces to King of Kings Arsaces in Babylon is month VIII of 203 SEB (10/11.11.–9/10.12.109 BC).¹⁶⁸ However, the imperial titlature on the corresponding "annual" Susian bronzes implies that the shift from Great King Arsaces Epiphanes (on S26.30–32) to King of Kings Arsaces (on S27.14–27) may have occurred in 1 Dios of 204 SEM (Table 1), i.e. the beginning of month VII in 203 SEB (12/13.10.–9/10.11.109 BC). We have, at the same time, silver tetradrachms from Charax-Spasinu in the name of King Apodakos dated 203, 204, 207, 209, and 210 SEM,¹⁶⁹ drachms struck at Susa for King Kamnaskires dated 208 SEM,¹⁷⁰ and tetradrachms of the Characenean King Tiraios I dated 218 SEM.¹⁷¹ These confirm that while remaining Parthian tributaries, the two kingdoms of Characene and Elymais had been granted autonomy by Mithradates.

¹⁶⁵ Sachs and Hunger 1996: 342–343, No. –111B.

¹⁶⁶ Sachs and Hunger 1996: 328–347.

¹⁶⁷ Sachs and Hunger 1996: 346–347, No. –110. For the identification of the *land of Habigalbat* with Armenia cf. Sachs and Hunger 1989: 496–497, –164B, Obv. B15' where we have:

... .. šá^u Ha-bi-gal-bat šá KUR Ar-mi-il' MU-šú SA₄-ú

... .. of (the city of) Habigalbat, which is called the land of Armenia,

Cf. also Del Monte 1997: 80–81, and 153–154.

¹⁶⁸ Sachs and Hunger 1996: 360–361, No. –108B, the upper edge text reads:

[... M]U-2-me-'3-KÁM¹ Ar-šá-ka-a LUGAL LUGAL^{mes}

[... ye]ar 203, Arsaces (is) King of Kings.

The authors, however, restore [... Ar-šá-ka-a LUGA]L LUGAL^{mes}, i.e. [... Arsaces Kin]g of Kings, at the beginning of an earlier text dated, on astronomical grounds, to 201 SEB (cf. pp. 346–347, No. –110A in the same work). This is highly suspect and close inspections of the tablet itself and the transcription of the text show that we have in this line [...] u LUGAL^{mes} = [...] and the kings.

¹⁶⁹ Le Rider 1959: 251; Le Rider 1969: 22–23, and pl. II.2. For the specimen dated 204 SEM cf. Classical Numismatic Group Auction 63, 21 May 2003, # 892. For the coin dated 210 SEM cf. Dr. Busso Peus Nachfolger Auction 368, 25–28 April 2001, # 338.

¹⁷⁰ Dilmaghani 1986: 217 and pl. 24.2.

¹⁷¹ Le Rider 1969: 24.

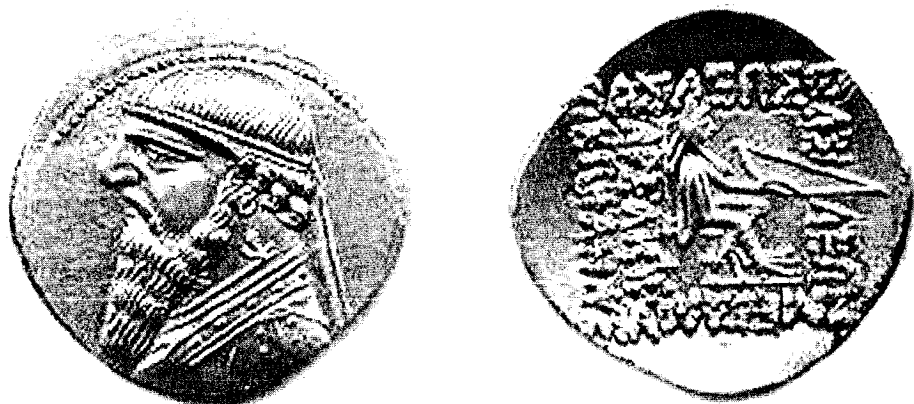


Fig. 31. S27.2 silver drachm of Mithradates II from Ecbatana (Author's Collection)

Of historical interest is also a reference to the death of the Armenian king, Tigranes I,¹⁷² in month I of 216 SEB (26/27.3.–23/24.4.96 BC) and a rather incomplete notice regarding Tigranes II's sojourn at the Parthian court. The corresponding text reads:¹⁷³

5: [... a]l-te¹-me um-ma LUGAL šá^{uu} Ar-mi-ni-i NAM^{mes} r^x1 [...]
 6: [...] r^x1 UŠ pi-qi^d ana^{uu} Ar-mi-ni-i MU-a-ti ana LUG[AL ...]
 7: [... K] UR UR^{ki} TUŠ-u' ú-pe-ši-ir-ma ana ERÍN.DAĤ^{mes} šú it- [...]

5: [...] I heard as follows: the king of (the city) Armini died [...]
 6: [...] was entrusted [with], to this (city) Armini for king[ship]? [...]
 7: [...] who lived in Babylon, he gathered and to his support he [...]

Furthermore, a cursory remark on the Armenian prince's departure in month II of 216 SEB (24/25.4.–23/24.5.96 BC) to take up the reins of power in his country establishes the father-son relationship between Tigranes and the dead Armenian king.¹⁷⁴ Unfortunately, the latter's name has not survived in the cuneiform records:

¹⁷² Justin (42.2.6) writes that Mithradates II *made war on Artoadistes (Artavasdes), king of Armenia*. Building on the earlier works of Seyrig 1955 and Bedoukian 1968, Lang 1983: 513 gives the following chronology for the early Armenian kings: Artaxias (Strategos, 200–190 BC; King, 190–159 BC); Tigranes I (son of Artaxias, 159–123 BC); Artavasdes I (son of Tigranes I, 123–95 BC); Tigranes II (son of Tigranes I and brother of Artavasdes, 95–55 BC). On the other hand, Mousheghian and Depeyrot 1999: 31 give: Zariadres (before 189 BC); Artaxias (189–160 BC); Artavasdes I (160–123 BC); Tigranes I (123–96 BC); Tigranes II (95–55 BC). Judging from the evidence of cuneiform records, it is clear that the king preceding Tigranes II was his father and not brother. Therefore, the latter chronology gives a better sequence of reigns. As for Justin's statement, he may well have confused Mithradates I, who probably wrested Media-Atropatene from Artavasdes I, with Mithradates II. Appian (*Syrian Wars* 11.8.48) gives: *Tigranes, the son of Tigranes, king of Armenia, who had subdued many of the neighbouring nations which had kings of their own, and from these exploits had acquired the title of King of Kings, ...* and thus confirm the father-son relationship between Tigranes II and his predecessor. Cf. White 1912: 196–197.

¹⁷³ Sachs-Hunger 1996: 418–419, No. –95C.

¹⁷⁴ Sachs and Hunger 1996: 422–423, No. –95D.

11: [... T]i-ig-ra-nu DUMU LUGAL šá^{uu} Ar-mi-ni KASKAL 'ana' URU DU' [...]

11: [... T]igranes, crown prince of (the city) Armini, [took?] the road to the city [...]

Towards the end of his reign Mithradates adopted a highly decorative tiara of various patterns but including invariably a central six or eight pointed star as seen on his S28 coinage (Fig. 32). According to the "annual" Susian bronze issues (Table 1), this happened in 96/95 BC and lasted until the end of his reign in 91 BC.¹⁷⁵ It is highly likely that while remaining the supreme ruler, Mithradates delegated further powers to his subordinates sometime in the intervening period. The rock monument at Bīsītūn near Kirmānshāh in Media, showing the investiture of four dignitaries, indicates the creation of a true feudal state by Mithradates after his adoption of the tiara. The scene, now mostly destroyed by a modern carving, did in fact have an inscription simply enumerating the four names and titles besides that of the Parthian king.¹⁷⁶ However, with the aid of some earlier sketches and the identity of the successors of Mithradates II, it is now possible to reconstruct the original text.

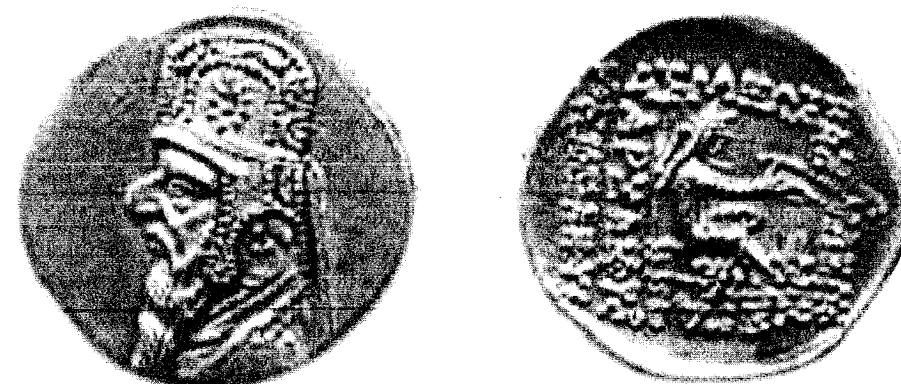


Fig. 32. S28.1 silver drachm of Mithradates II from Rhagae (Author's Collection)

The four dignitaries in the setting are named from right to left as they pay homage to the king. The first is Gotarzes, Satrap of Satraps and the elder son and immediate successor of Mithradates II in Babylon (cf. below). The second figure and his name are now completely

¹⁷⁵ One of the Susian bronzes in this series (LR 146.4) depicts an obverse bust with a beard somewhat shorter than those on the remaining illustrated examples. It is possible that having supplanted Sinatruces (93/92–69/68 BC) in Susa, Gotarzes I (91–87 BC) struck a single bronze issue in that city at the end of his reign. This may have been modelled on the S28.20 bronze of his father, Mithradates II. However, detailed analysis of the events following the death of Mithradates II is beyond the scope of this paper. The relevant material will be presented and discussed in a forthcoming contribution. Cf. Le Rider 1965: 91, pl. XV for the description and illustration of the piece.

¹⁷⁶ Rawlinson 1873: 260, n. 1; Dittenberger 1903: 641–642, No. 431, without restoration; Herzfeld 1920: 35–40, gives Mithradates II's epithets as *Great King* only; Herzfeld 1932: 80; Herzfeld 1935: 54–55; Debevoise 1938: 44–45; Colledge 1977: 89–91, questions Herzfeld's restoration on the grounds that Mithradates II had already assumed the title *Great King of Kings* before adopting the tiara; Bivar 1983: 41.

effaced and cannot be confidently restored. Yet it is possible that he was Mithradates, a younger son of Mithradates II who followed Gotarzes on the Parthian throne in Jul./Aug. 87 BC.¹⁷⁷ The third name is Mithrates with the honorific epithet *Pepisteuēnos*, “Confidant” or “Privy Councillor”. Although his identity remains obscure, he may have been the Mitratu (Mithrates), *the chief of the troops* attested in several cuneiform records from the period 221–228 SEB (91–83 BC) and perhaps an ancestor of the house of Mihrān princes of Rhagae.¹⁷⁸ Finally, the fourth name, Kophasates¹⁷⁹ is given without a title. He was probably a member of the Sūrēn family¹⁸⁰ or alternatively the satrap during 85–80 BC of the northeastern province of Parthuene mentioned by Isidore of Charax.¹⁸¹ In any case, the name Kophasates is attested as *kwp̄yzt* = Kōfzāt in several ostraca from Nisa.¹⁸²

Considering that space constraint precludes the second name from having an epithet, the inscription at Bisitūn may be restored to read:

ΚΩΦΑΣΑΤΗΣ ΜΙΘΡΑΤΗΣ ΠΕΠΙ[ΣΤΕΥΜΕΝΟΣ ΜΙΘΡΑΔΑΤΗΣ] ΓΩΤΑΡΖΗΣ
ΣΑΤΡΑΠΗΣ ΤΩΝ ΣΑΤΡΑ[ΠΩΝ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΜΕΓΑΣ ΜΙΘΡΑΔΑΤΗΣ

Kophasates, Mithrates, the Con[fidant, Mithradates], Gotarzes,
Satrap of Satra[ps (and) the Great King of Kings, Mith]radates.

We are told that Mithradates took advantage of the chronic strife in the Seleucid court and pushed westward as far as Euphrates. This may have happened in 93/92 BC shortly before the close of his reign. Josephus (*AJ* 13.371) states that when Laodice, the queen of the Γολιηνῶν or Σομηνῶν (an unknown tribe), was attacked by the Parthians, she summoned Antiochus X Eusebes (c. 94–92 BC, possibly also 84–83 BC) who came to her as an auxiliary. Although he fought courageously, Antiochus died on the field of battle.¹⁸³ But Appian (*Syrian Wars* 8.49 and 11.69) makes no reference to the Parthian incursion. Instead he relates that the Seleucid ruler was attacked and expelled from his kingdom by Tigranes II of Armenia in 83 BC.¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁷ Assar 2000: 16–18; Assar 2003a: 47–52.

¹⁷⁸ For “Mithratu” cf. Sachs and Hunger 1996: 434–435 and 436–437, No. –90; 456–457, No. –87C; 470–475, No. –83. For *the house of Mihrān* cf. Herzfeld 1935: 55.

¹⁷⁹ Schmitt 1998: 181.

¹⁸⁰ Herzfeld 1935: 55 writes that *this name occurs only as Kōh̄zād in an episode of Sīstān origin, supplementarily inserted into the Shāhnāme (of Firdousī), and until today localised at the ruins of Kūh-i Khw-āja. Since Sīstān was the fief of the Sūrēn family, Kophasates may be an early member of it.*

¹⁸¹ Schoff 1914: 8–9.

¹⁸² Gignoux 1972: 55, *kwp̄yzt* = Kōfzāt; Diakonoff and Livshits 1960a: 88 (No. 590), and 99 (No. 890); Diakonoff and Livshits 1960b: 22 (No. 476, year 148 AE = 100/99 BC). The authors restore [*kwp̄yzt* *h̄s[trp]*] = [Kōf]zāt, the Sat[rap], in line 3 of the text; Diakonoff and Livshits 1977: 78 [No. 862 (29), year 100 BC] without the restoration in No. 476 given by Diakonoff and Livshits 1960b: 22; Diakonoff and Livshits 1998: 81 [Nos. 996 (85/84 BC); 997 (84/83² BC); 998 (84/83 BC); 999 (84/83 BC); 1000 (84/83 BC); 1002 (83/82 BC)], 82 [Nos. 1003 (83/82 BC); 1004 (83/82 BC); 1005 (83/82 BC); 1006 (83/82² BC); 1007 (83/82 BC)], 83 [No. 1023 (82/81 BC)], 85 [Nos. 1038 (80/79 BC); 1039 (80/79 BC); 1040 (80/79 BC); 1041 (80/79 BC)], 85–86 [No. 1042 (80/79 BC)], 86 [No. 1050 (80/79 BC)], 86–87 [No. 1051 (no later than 80/79 BC)], 87 (Nos. 1052 and 1053, both no later than 80/79 BC).

¹⁸³ Marcus 1943: 410–411; Bellinger 1949: 74–75.

¹⁸⁴ White 1999: 196–197 and 236–237.

Unfortunately, owing to the confused and conflicting reports in the extant sources, the history of the last few decades of the Seleucid rule in Syria is rife with uncertainty. It is, therefore, difficult to gauge the extent of the Parthian triumph and Mithradates’ penetration, if any, into the Seleucid territory.

The downfall of Mithradates II was precipitated by a dynastic feud that was to preoccupy the subsequent Arsacid rulers and continue into the succeeding centuries down to the very end of the Parthian rule in AD 224. Regrettably, details of the struggle between Mithradates and his opponent, Sinatruces (reigned intermittently during 93/92–69/68 BC),¹⁸⁵ have not survived in the Babylonian cuneiform records. Perhaps an early indication of the impending wars between the two antagonists could be inferred from a partially preserved record dated month V of 218 SEB (30/31.7.–28/29.8.94 BC).¹⁸⁶

23: [... a]l-te-me šá¹Ar-šá-ka-a LUGAL LUGAL^{meš} <ana> KUR ma-di-na-at šá KUR Ma-da-a-a GIM IGI-ú TUḪ ITU BI MÍ.PEŠ⁴^{meš}

24: [... ÍJD ṽá¹ AN-TA^{uu}Se-lu-ke-ṽ¹a¹-a šá ana UGU^dBURANUN GIM IGI-ú BAL-ú il-ki dan-nu

25: [... ITU BI U₄-x-KÁM^{kuš}SAR^{meš} šá LUGAL šá ana m]uḫ-ḫi^{lúš}ŠA-TAM É-[s]ag-gíl u^{lú}E^k-i^{meš}SAR^{meš} ina É mil-ki šá i-na^{gíš}KIRI⁶^{šim}LI šá-su-ú

26: [... lú]E^{ki}^{meš} šá MU^{meš}-šú-nu ina^{kuš}SAR^{meš} MU-a-ti SAR^{meš} šá il ṽ¹x x¹ nu ú-lam-ṽ¹ma¹-du-ú KI-šú

23: [...] I heard that Arsaces, King of Kings, departed to the province of Media as before. That month, pregnant women

24: [...] dug the river which is above Seleucia which is on the Euphrates, as before. A heavy work obligation

25: [...] That month, the xth day, a leather document of the king which was] written to the administrator of Esangil and the Babylonians, was read in the House of Counsel which is in the Juniper Garden

26: [...] the Babylonians whose names were written in this leather document who ..., they informed him.

Although the purpose of the fatiguing task is unclear, it was perhaps anticipated to reinforce the line of defence around certain quarters.

The sequence of the “annual” Susian bronzes (Table 1) places Mithradates’ last emission in year 220 SEM (219/220 SEB).¹⁸⁷ The same year also inaugurates in Susa Sinatruces’ first issue. This is inscribed with ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ ΘΕΟΠΑΤΟΡΟΣ ΝΙΚΑΤΟΡΟΣ and records his triumph over Mithradates II. Apparently, before his death in 91 BC, Mithradates had relinquished to Sinatruces the greater part of the eastern,

¹⁸⁵ Assar 2000: 16; Assar 2003a: 37–41; Assar 2005a: 16–33; Assar 2005b.

¹⁸⁶ Sachs and Hunger 1996: 430–431, No. –93A; Van der Spek 2001: 454–455.

¹⁸⁷ Le Rider 1965: 391 comments that Mithradates’ Susian emission ended in 94/93 BC at the earliest or 92/91 BC at the latest; Sellwood 1965: 130–131 takes 93 BC as the date of the end of Mithradates’ bronzes from Susa; Sellwood 1976: 6–7 makes 95/94 BC as the date of the last bronze of Mithradates; Sellwood 1983a: 285 writes that Mithradates II had been supplanted by some other king as early as 94 BC. Obviously the error in these dates stems from the mistaken accession year of Mithradates II which was commonly taken to be 123/122 BC.

central and southern provinces. A “mule” drachm in Sellwood’s collection with the obverse of Sinatruces (type S33) and reverse of Mithradates II (type S28) not only establishes the contiguity of the two issues, but also shows that the former had access to the mints in Ec-batana and Rhagae (Fig. 33).

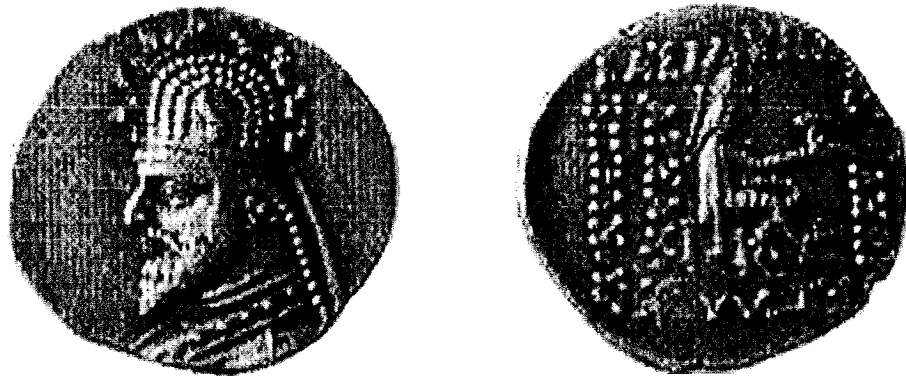


Fig. 33. S33/S28 “mule” silver drachm of Sinatruces/Mithradates II (Sellwood Collection)

The latest contemporary text attesting Mithradates’ authority in Babylon is the colophon of a bilingual Sumero-Babylonian hymn dated 3.III.221 SEB (30/31.5.91 BC).¹⁸⁸

37: E^{ki} i^{nu} SIG U₄-3-K[ÁM]
38: MU-1-me-57-KÁM šá ší-i MU-2-me-21-[KÁM]
39: ¹Ar-šá-ka-a LUGAL LUGAL^{meš}[š]

37: Babylon. Month III, day 3,
38: year 157, which is year 221,
39: Arsaces (is) King of King[s.]

This is followed by the earliest extant record from the reign of Gotarzes I (c. Sep. 91–Jul./Aug. 87 BC), son and successor of Mithradates II.¹⁸⁹ It is dated to month IX of 221 SEB (22/23.11.–20/21.12.91 BC) and reads:¹⁹⁰

30: [... ^{1á} DUMU šip]-ri² šá ¹Ar-šá-ka-a LUGAL^{kuš} SAR^{meš} [ana²] UGU² ^{1á} pi-*bat* E^{ki} u ^{1á} pu-li-te-e
šá ina E^{ki}
31: [...] šá TA u₄-mu šá ¹Ar-šá-ka-a LUGAL LUGA[L^{meš} ^{1á} AD-*ia* ina ší-im-tú i-tu-ur EN u₄-mu
šá ana-ku² r^x]

¹⁸⁸ Reisner 1896: viii, No. 46 (VATH 245+426+1729+1792+ 4 Fragments), and 82 (copy); Minns 1915: 34, n. 21, reads month VII (Tašritu); Oelsner 1975: 44 confirms month III (Simānu); Del Monte 1997: 169, n. 281; and 250–251 (transliteration and translation). Collation by Professor S. M. Maul (Ruprecht-Karls-Universität, Heidelberg) has confirmed month III.

¹⁸⁹ Assar 2003a: 14–16; Assar 2005b.

¹⁹⁰ Sachs and Hunger 1996: 436–437, No. –90; Del Monte 1997: 169–170.

30: [... a messeng]er of King Arsaces (Gotarzes I) [carried] a leather document to the governor of Babylon and the (Greek) citizens who are in Babylon

31: [...] which from the day when my father Arsaces, King of Kings, had turned to fate (i.e. died), until the day when I

Although the above record places the *terminus ante quem* of the reign of Mithradates in 20/21.12.91 BC, it fails to reveal whether he died of age, disease, or perished in a war against Sinatruces. Yet whatever the cause of his demise, an incomplete entry from month VIII of 221 SEB (23/24.10.–21/22.11.91 BC) suggests that Mithradates’ death occurred before the end of Nov. 91 BC. It reports that fear¹⁹¹ and anxiety (from a catastrophic event now lost) had subsided thus allowing people from the neighbouring cities to leave Babylon and return home.¹⁹²

17: ITU BI ^{1á}UN^{meš} URU^{meš} šá ina IGI-ma la-pàn gi-lit-tú ana E^{ki} KU₄^{meš} ana URU^{meš}-šú-nu
[...]

17: That month, the people of the towns who before had entered Babylon for fear [returned] to their towns [...]

Given the fragmentary state of the above text, it is difficult to determine the nature of the calamity that compelled some inhabitants to take refuge inside the city. Yet it is possible that what we have here reflects the aftermath of the final battle between Mithradates II and Sinatruces that had sealed the fate of the King of Kings some months earlier.

As briefly mentioned above, the Parthians were quite reluctant to fight in winter. Nevertheless, the surviving cuneiform records place several military expeditions against Elymais in the temperate autumn and winter months in that satrapy.¹⁹³ It is possible that the last war between the two Parthian contenders was fought in early autumn around Susa and ultimately led to the downfall of Mithradates II. Naturally, the news of that major setback caused widespread panic and fear in and around Babylon and forced the Babylonians to seek temporary protection from the enemy within the city’s walls.

However, it is now possible to improve upon the terminal date of the reign of Mithradates II and show that it preceded 1.VII.221 SEB (24/25.9.91 BC).

A Hellenistic King List places the death of Antiochus II Theos (261–246 BC) in month V of 66 SEB (30/31.7.–28/29.8.246 BC) although it omits the corresponding day number.¹⁹⁴ But an Astronomical Diary fragment reports that the news of his death reached Babylon on 20.V.66 SEB (18/19.8.246 BC) and led to widespread fear in the land.¹⁹⁵ This

¹⁹¹ Sachs and Hunger 1989: 70–71, No. –245A, Rev. 5–6 reports the death of the Seleucid king, Antiochus II and the ensuing fear in the land.

¹⁹² Sachs and Hunger 1996: 434–435, No. –90; Del Monte 1997: 168–169.

¹⁹³ Sachs and Hunger 1996: 146–147 (month IX, 171 SEB = Dec. 141 BC); 152–153 (month X, 171 SEB = Jan. 140 BC); 160–161 (month IV, 174 SEB = Jul. 138 BC); 168–171 (month IX, 174 SEB = Dec. 138 BC); 226–227 (month VIII, 179 SEB = Nov. 133 BC); 230–231 (month X, 179 SEB = Jan. 132 BC); 232–233 (month XI, 179 SEB = Feb. 132 BC); 274–275 (month IX, 187 SEB = Dec. 125 BC); 278–279 (month X, 187 SEB = Jan. 124 BC); 438–439 (month X, 221 SEB = Dec. 91 – Jan. 90 BC); 502–503 (month XI, 234 SEB = Feb. 77 BC).

¹⁹⁴ Sachs and Wiseman 1954: 203 and 206; Del Monte 1997: 208–209.

¹⁹⁵ Sachs and Hunger 1989: 70–71, No. –245A, Rev. 5; Del Monte 1997: 48–49.

entailed a change of reign from Antiochus to his elder son and successor, Seleucus II Callinicus (246–225 BC). It also induced the scribes to date the events of the following month accordingly.

Unfortunately, the beginning of the entry for month VI of our Diary fragment is now lost. But while the opening line of its obverse, beginning with month I of 66 SEB (3/4.4.–2/3.5.246 BC), is dated to Antiochus II, its colophon gives:¹⁹⁶

1: *na-šar šá gi-ne-é šá TA BAR EN KIN* ¹*An-ti-'u-ku-su* LUGAL TA IZI KIN ¹*Se-'lu¹-k[u]* ¹*A-šú¹* LUG[AL]

1: Diary from (month) I to (month) VI, Antiochus (was) King, from (month) V to (month) VI, Seleucus, his son, (is) King.

This unequivocal transfer of authority in the Seleucid court confirms that following the demise of Antiochus in month V, the next month in the above record was almost certainly dated to Seleucus II. However, proof for this is found in two later texts from the Parthian epoch. The first of these is the Astronomical Diary of 171 SEB (141/140 BC). It has its first month dated to the Seleucid ruler Demetrius II.¹⁹⁷ But following the report of the capture of Mesopotamia in month III of that same year by Mithradates I, the entry for its month IV is clearly dated to King Arsaces.¹⁹⁸

The second reference is contained in the poorly preserved Astronomical Diary of 232 SEB (80/79 BC).¹⁹⁹ The dynastic wars between the two Arsacid claimants, Mithradates III (Jul./Aug. 87–Aug./Sep. 80 BC) and Orodes I (Mar./Apr. 80–Mar./Apr. 75 BC), culminated in the elimination of the former in month VI of the same year.²⁰⁰ This led to the insertion of a new date formula subscribed to Orodes at the beginning of month VIII of the Diary.

Returning to our short Astronomical Diary fragment, covering months VII–XII₂ of 221 SEB, the partial text on its lower edge reveals that the original date formula was a single-line inscription. This is consistent with another dated colophon from the Parthian “Dark Age” (the 91–55 BC period of dynastic strife) with an almost fully preserved text.²⁰¹ Given that the news of Mithradates’ death was announced by his son, Gotarzes I, in month IX of 221 SEB (cf. above), the former must naturally have died some months earlier. However, if this had happened in month VII or VIII of 221 SEB, King of Kings Arsaces would have been included in the colophon of the short Diary. This would have entailed a two-line date formula both at the end of the reverse text and on the lower edge of the tablet.²⁰² The fact

¹⁹⁶ Sachs and Hunger 1989: 68–69, No. –245B, Lower edge 1; Del Monte 1997: 48–49.

¹⁹⁷ Sachs and Hunger 1996: 130–131, No. –140A, Obv. 1 give [... ¹A]r-¹šá-kám¹ LUGAL but collation on 9.11.2000 by I. L. Finkel and C. B. F. Walker, Department of the Ancient Near East of the British Museum, confirmed [... ¹De]-¹em-met-ri¹ LUGAL.

¹⁹⁸ Sachs and Hunger 1996: 136–137, No. –140A, Rev. 10; Del Monte 1997: 103–104.

¹⁹⁹ Sachs and Hunger 1996: 482–485, No. –79, Rev. 12; Del Monte 1997: 177.

²⁰⁰ Assar 2000: 16–18; Assar 2003a: 47–56.

²⁰¹ Sachs and Hunger 1996: 498–499, No. –77A (234 SEB), Lower edge text, pl. 292.

²⁰² Cf., for example, Sachs and Hunger 1996: 444–445, No. –88, Upper edge 1–2. On 13.4.1999, I joined this fragment to BM 41479+new join. The latter is LBAT 869 in Sachs 1955: 138. The dated colophon on the reverse and upper edge of this tablet now reads:

that the single-line colophon of this short Diary ends with the following incomplete text strongly suggests that it was subscribed to King Gotarzes alone.²⁰³

1: [... MU-2]-me-21-KÁM ¹*Ar-šá-ka-a* [¹*šá it-tá*]r-ri-du ¹*Gu-tár-za-a* LUGAL [...]

1: [..., year 2]21, Arsaces, who is called King Gotarzes [...]

Furthermore, the sketchy historical notes at the end of month VIII of the same Diary do not indicate that the King of Kings had died in that month. They begin with the following report and end with the aforementioned departure of the refugees from Babylon:

15: ITU BI ¹*Mi-it-ra-at-tu* ¹⁰GAL.GAL ¹*ú-qa-an* TA ¹⁰⁰*Ma-x*-[x ...]

16: [... u ¹⁶ERÍN^{mes?}] ¹šá KI[?]-šú ^{1d}IDIGNA *i-bi-ru-ú ina a-ḥu-la-a* ^{1d}šá ^{1d}IDIGNA TUḤ-ár ¹šá-šá-¹x¹ [...]

15: That month, Mitratu, the chief of the troops [... went out?] from the city of Ma[...]

16: [... and the troops?] who were with him, crossed the Tigris, on the other side of the Tigris, he departed. Šaša[...]

If Mithradates II had died in that same month, it is inconceivable that the news of his death would have been overshadowed by the movements of the Parthian troop commander.

As for the historical notices in month VII, unfortunately very little has survived. But the patchy report [... *the peo*]ple of the cities above [*Babylon*? ...] suggests that having learned about the death of Mithradates II, the inhabitants of some cities in Babylonia had withdrawn to Babylon. Taken collectively, the above incomplete texts indicate that our short Diary fragment of 221 SEB was compiled under Gotarzes I. If so, it is possible that the reign of the Great King of Kings and true saviour of the Parthian Empire ended sometime in month VI of 221 SEB (25/26.8.–23/24.9.91 BC).

Reverse

5: EN-NUN *šá gi-ne-é šá* T[A ¹⁰⁰BAR EN TIL ¹⁰⁰KIN *šá MU-1-me-59-KÁM* *šá ši-i MU-2-me-23-KÁM* ¹*Ar-šá-ka-a*]

6: *šá it-tár-ri-du* ¹*Gu-tár-za* LUGAL ¹à [¹A¹-[x DAM-šú GAŠAN]

5: Diary fr[om month I until the end of month VI of year 159, which is year 223, Arsaces]

6: who is called King Gotarzes and A[... his wife, Queen]

Upper edge

1: EN-NUN *šá gi-ne-é šá* TA ¹⁰⁰BAR EN TIL [¹⁰⁰KIN *šá MU-1-me-59-KÁM* *šá ši-i MU-2-me-23-KÁM*]

2: [¹Ar-šá-ka-a *šá it-tár-ri-du* ¹*Gu-tár-za* LUGAL ¹à [¹A¹-x DAM-šú GAŠAN]

(similar translation as above)

²⁰³ Sachs and Hunger 1996: 442–443, No. –90.

Table 1

Arrangement of the "Annual" Susian Bronze Issues in the Period 150/149–91/90 BC

Year SEM	Year SEB	Year BC	Ruler	Le Rider No.	Sellwood No.	Comments
163	162/3	150/49	Alexander Balas	84	–	Briefly holds Susa
164	163/4	149/8	Kamnaskires I Megas Soter	–	Mø F ²⁰⁴	Begins his first reign
165	164/5	148/7		86	–	
166	165/6	147/6		87	–	
167	166/7	146/5		88	–	
168	167/8	145/4		89	–	Temporarily supplanted at Susa
			Demetrius II	73	–	Briefly holds Susa
169	168/9	144/3	Okkonapses	65	–	Briefly holds Susa
			Kamnaskires I Nikephoros	90	–	Begins his second reign
170	169/70	143/2		91	–	
171	170/1	142/1		92	–	
172	171/2	141/0		93	–	
173	172/3	140/39		94	–	
			Mithradates I	95	12.26	Captures Elymais
174	173/4	139/8		96	12.27	
175	174/5	138/7		97	12.28	
			Tigraios	101	–	Usurps power in Susa
176	175/6	137/6		102	–	
177	176/7	136/5		103	–	
178	177/8	135/4		104	–	
179	178/9	134/3		105–107	–	
180	179/80	133/2		108	–	
			Mithradates I	?	?	Recaptures Elymais
			Phraates II	98+99	14.3	Ascends the throne
181	180/1	132/1		100	14.4	
182	181/2	131/0		–	17.5	
			Antiochus VII	?	?	Invades Babylonia
183	182/3	130/29		110	–	Captures Susa
184	183/4	129/8		?	–	Antiochus VII is eliminated
			Phraates II	109	14.5	Recaptures Susa
185	184/5	128/7		111	14.6	Hyspaosines takes Babylon
186	185/6	127/6		112.8	–	Phraates II is killed in battle
			Darius	?	?	Briefly holds Susa
			Bagasis	112	18.3	Recognised at Susa
187	186/7	126/5		?	?	Bagasis dies

²⁰⁴ Mørholm 1965: 151, n. 35, pl. VI.F; Alram 1986: 141, no. 442, Tafel 14.442.

Year SEM	Year SEB	Year BC	Ruler	Le Rider No.	Sellwood No.	Comments
			Artabanus I	113	21.5	Holds Susa
188	187/8	125/4		114	21.6	Suppresses the revolt of Pittit
189	188/9	124/3		115	21.7	
190	189/90	123/2		116	21.8	
191	190/1	122/1		P.74.27	21.9	Artabanus I is killed in battle
			Arsaces X Mi- thradates II	? 117	? –	Ascends the throne Begins his reign
192	191/2	121/0		118+123	23.6	
193	192/3	120/19		119	23.7	
194	193/4	119/8		120	23.8	
195	194/5	118/7		121	23.5	
196	195/6	117/6		122	23.9	
197	196/7	116/5	Mithradates II	124	24.41	
198	197/8	115/4		125	24.42	
199	198/9	114/3		126	24.43	
200	199/200	113/2		127	24.44	
201	200/1	112/1	Mithradates II	128	26.30	
202	201/2	111/0		129	26.31	
203	202/3	110/9		130	26.32	
204	203/4	109/8		131	27.14	Adopts the epithet King of Kings
205	204/5	108/7		132	27.15	
206	205/6	107/6		133+134	27.16–17	
207	206/7	106/5		135	27.19	
208	207/8	105/4		136	27.18	
209	208/9	104/3		137	27.20	
210	209/10	103/2		138	27.21	
211	210/1	102/1		139	27.22	
212	211/2	101/0		140	27.23	
213	212/3	100/99		141	27.24	
214	213/4	99/8		142	27.25	
215	214/5	98/7		143	27.26	
216	215/6	97/6		144	27.27	
217	216/7	96/5	Mithradates II	145	28.21	Adopts the tiara
218	217/8	95/4		146	28.20	
219	218/9	94/3		147	28.22	
220	219/20	93/2		148	28.33	Loses Susa to Sinatruces
			Sinatruces	170	–	Begins his first reign in Iran
221	220/1	92/1		171	33.16	Mithradates II dies
222	221/2	91/90		172	33.17	

ABBREVIATIONS

A	Prefix to registration numbers of tablets in <i>The Oriental Institute</i> (Chicago)
AD	<i>Anno Domini</i>
ADRTB	<i>Astronomical Diaries and Related Texts from Babylonia</i> .
ACT	<i>Astronomical Cuneiform Texts. Babylonian Ephemerides of the Seleucid Period for the Motions of the Sun, the Moon, and the Planets</i>
AE	Arsacid Era, beginning 1 Nisānu (14/15 April) 247 B.C. (cf. Assar 2003b)
AfO	<i>Archiv für Orientforschung</i>
AOAT	<i>Alter Orient und Altes Testament</i> . Veröffentlichungen zur Kultur und Geschichte des Alten Orients und des Alten Testaments. Münster
AoF	<i>Altorientalische Forschungen</i>
BC	Before Christ
BibMes	<i>Bibliotheca Mesopotamica</i>
BM	British Museum
BO	Bibliotheca Orientalis
BOR	<i>The Babylonian and Oriental Record: A Monthly Magazine of the Antiquities of the East</i>
BRM	Babylonian Records in the Library of J. Pierpont Morgan (Yale University)
CBS	Catalogue of the Babylonian Section (University Museum. Pennsylvania University, Philadelphia)
CHIr	Cambridge History of Iran
CIr	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum</i>
JCS	<i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i>
LBAT	<i>Late Babylonian Astronomical and Related Texts</i> (cf. Sachs 1955). Here the abbreviation is used as a prefix to the tablets included in the same publication
LCL	The Loeb Classical Library
LR	Prefix to the entries in Le Rider (1965)
MLC	Morgan Library Collection (Yale University)
N.A.B.U.	<i>Nouvelles Assyriologiques Brèves et Utilitaires</i>
PEDN	<i>Parthian Economic Documents from Nisa</i> = D.N. MacKenzie (ed.), <i>CIr</i> . Part II: <i>Inscriptions of the Seleucid and Parthian Periods and of Eastern Iran and Central Asia</i> , vol. II: <i>Parthian</i> . London
S	Prefix to the types and varieties of Parthian coins in Sellwood 1971 and 1980
SEB	Seleucid Era of the Babylonian Calendar, beginning 1 Nisānu (2/3 April) 311BC (cf. Assar 2003b)
SEM	Seleucid Era of the Macedonian Calendar, beginning 1 Dios (6/7 October) 312 BC (cf. Assar 2003b)
SH	Shemtob Collection (British Museum)
SKPAWB	<i>Sitzungsberichte der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin</i> . Berlin
SSB	<i>Sternkunde und Sterndienst in Babel. Assyriologische, Astronomische und Astralmythologische Untersuchungen</i>
VAT/VATh	Vorderasiatische Abteilung Tontafeln. Vorderasiatischen Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
ZfA	<i>Zeitschrift für Assyriologie</i>

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