

## I AM YOUR FATHER! DYNASTIES AND DYNASTIC LEGITIMACY ON PRE-ISLAMIC COINAGE BETWEEN IRAN AND NORTHWEST INDIA\*

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**Abstract:** The present paper intends to explore the way in which the new kingdoms born from the dissolution of the Greco-Macedonian powers east of the Tigris employed coinage in order to promote kingship ideology based on kinship and family relationships. At the same time, it will try to show the interplay as well as the differences between Greco-Macedonian and local cultures in using family as a tool of propaganda.

**Key words:** kingship ideology, Seleucids, Bactria, India, Arsacids, Persis, Elymais, Characene, Sakas, Indo-Scythians, Kushans, Sasanians.

### 1. Coins and communication

Aside from being a financial instrument, coinage has always been an important means of spreading messages related to ideology from a central power towards subjects. This practice became all the more widespread from the Hellenistic period onwards,<sup>1</sup> when the dynasties emerging from the disintegration of Alexander's empire had to claim their legitimacy to rule in the face of their opponents. Thus, coins were a suitable way of communicating basic concepts of kingship, legitimacy and even ethnic identity. This kind of communication operated at several levels: the most immediate was the use of a particular iconography, which included the portrait of the ruling king, images recalling the myths of foundation of the dynasty, military victories, gods or personification of virtues protecting the king and his family. At a regional level, iconography would refer to indigenous features and traditions such as local shrines and deities. A second level was represented by written communication, which was intended for all those people

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<sup>1</sup> For a recent discussion, see Meadows 2014, 169–195.

capable of reading the messages carved on one or both the faces of the coin. Apart from giving more technical details such as the location of the mint, the weight of the coin and the name of the magistrate charged with the task of supervising the mintage, coin legends provided information about the identity of the ruler, the royal titles he bore and, accordingly, the ideology of his kingship. Those who were able to understand both the non-written and the written messages of a coin could then access a small but effective compendium of the public image a sovereign wanted to show to his subjects (as well as to those living outside his kingdom).

Eastern civilisations under the rule of the Persian Empire were not accustomed to coins; rather, they used weighted metal bars for their commercial and fiscal needs or had recourse to other form of exchanges such as payments in kind or barter. Once these regions became part of the Seleucid Empire, this new means of exchange spread throughout the large area between Mesopotamia and Afghanistan and was not discarded after the Seleucids lost control of the Upper Satrapies. In fact, the new powers succeeding the Seleucids in the East continued striking coins and using them to convey messages on dynastic ideology.

## 2. Looking for a model. Greco-Macedonian coinage in the East

In order to detect the model(s) which may have exerted a certain influence in the creation of dynastic messages on the coinage of the new rulers, our survey will begin from the Seleucid coinage struck or likely to have circulated in the areas under study here. We will then take into account the issues struck by the Greco-Macedonian dynasties of Bactria and India.

### The Seleucids

In 294 BC, Antiochos, the young son of the Bactrian princess Apama and Seleukos I, was appointed joint king by his father and entrusted with the government of the Upper Satrapies. In this period coins do not feature particular signs ascribable to an intention of promoting the dynasty and his rightful heir. Coin legends insist on the names of the joint kings rather than on the relation which identified them as father and son (see e.g. ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΣΕΛΕΥΚΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΑΝΤΙΟΧΟΥ, “Of King Seleukos and Antiochos” or ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΣΕΛΕΥΚΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΑΝΤΙΟΧΟΥ, “Of the kings Seleukos and Antiochos”, etc.).<sup>2</sup> Likewise, the iconography neither reveals nor suggests any family relation between the two kings.

We have to wait until the beginning of the second century BC to find examples of promotion and/or commemoration of members of the royal family on Seleucid coins.

<sup>2</sup> See also an issue, possibly from Western Arachosia, with the reverse legend R/ ΑΝΤΙΟΧΟΥ ΣΕΛΕΥΚΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ, “of Antiochos (and) King Seleukos”: *SC* 1, no. 235.

The veiled portrait of Queen Laodike, (second?) wife to Seleukos IV,<sup>3</sup> makes its appearance on the obverse of Antiochene royal bronze issues in association with a reverse image showing an elephant head, a tripod or a prow.<sup>4</sup> These coins, a specimen of which was also found in excavations at Dura Europos, were meant to serve military purposes, possibly a *sitarchia*,<sup>5</sup> even if the reasons for pairing Laodike with such iconography is not yet clear. This series continued to be struck during the first part of the reign of Antiochos IV. Other Seleucid queens were portrayed in this way, as is the case, for example, with Cleopatra, wife of Alexander Balas, who was associated with the reverse image of a cornucopia because of her royal epithet, i.e. *Thea Eueteria*, “goddess of the good harvest,” and accordingly goddess assuring prosperity to the kingdom.

If we come back to Laodike, wife of Seleukos IV, we may see that she is also present on a series of gold octadrachms in the name of his young son Antiochos V which were struck in the autumn of 175 BC, in the period between the murder of Seleukos IV and the accession of the latter’s brother Antiochos IV. The jugate busts of the king’s widow (put into the foreground) and her son were meant to promote the role of Laodike as regent against the plots of the prime minister, Heliodorus, who had murdered the king and wanted to rule through the tutorship of Antiochos. However, this figurative typology was not an innovation of the Seleucids, but was already customary in the coinage of the Ptolemaic kingdom and later adopted by other non-Greek Hellenistic monarchies such the Artaxiads of Armenia (attested for Tigranes IV and his sister-queen Erato)<sup>6</sup> or the Pontic house (Mithridates IV and his sister-queen Laodike).<sup>7</sup> A similar portrait of Laodike, this time with Antiochos IV, is attested by a quasi-municipal bronze issue from Tripolis.<sup>8</sup> Coins depicting jugate busts of members of the royal family were issued throughout the history of the Seleucid dynasty; the prominence in the representation depends on which of the pair held the real power or more political influence. Thus, we have portraits with kings in the foreground (Demetrios I and Laodike<sup>9</sup>), queens (Cleopatra Thea and Alexander Balas<sup>10</sup>), queen-mothers acting as regent for their sons (Cleopatra Thea and Antiochos VIII Grypos<sup>11</sup> – see Fig. 1; Cleopatra V Selene and Antiochos XIII<sup>12</sup>), and brothers reigning jointly (Antiochos XI and Philip I<sup>13</sup>).

<sup>3</sup> The identification of Laodike IV was proposed by Hoover (2002), 81–87; see also *SC 2*, pp. 4, 13. However, the akkadian sources clearly state that the queen died in the summer of 182 BC, cf. del Monte 1997, 70. One could suppose, as Savalli-Lestrade 2005, 193–200 suggests, a second marriage of Seleukos IV with a woman who possibly took the dynastic name of Laodike (V) after her accession. See also *IGIAC*, no. 13 and 14.

<sup>4</sup> *SC 2*, no. 1318, 1407, 1421–1422 (imitations), 1477.

<sup>5</sup> Hoover 2002; *SC 2*, p. 17.

<sup>6</sup> Kovacs 2008, 339–341.

<sup>7</sup> Callataÿ 2009, 77–78. The stater presenting the portrait of Laodike alone is probably a modern forgery, see again Callataÿ 2009, 83–84.

<sup>8</sup> *SC 2*, no. 1441.

<sup>9</sup> *SC 2*, no. 1683, 1684, 1686–1688, 1689.2, 1691.

<sup>10</sup> *SC 2*, no. 1841, 1843–1846, 2258.1b.

<sup>11</sup> *SC 2*, no. 2259–2260, 2261b, 2262.1d, 2265, 2267.2a, 2268–2269, 2270-AV, 2271.1, 2271.2, 2272.3a, 2273, 2276.1, 2277.1a.

<sup>12</sup> *SC 2*, no. 2484–2486.

<sup>13</sup> *SC 2*, no. 2435.2, 2436–2439.



Fig. 1. Tetradrachm with jugate busts of Cleopatra Thea and her son Antiochos VIII Grypos;  
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The adoption by a king of official epithets recalling the memory of a member of the royal family was another common form of conveying legitimacy. Among the Seleucids it is possible to enumerate several examples: the title *Eupator*, “he whose father is good,” borne by Antiochos V, appears on most of the monetary legends of his coinage.<sup>14</sup> The choice of such a title honouring the late Antiochos IV should be ascribed to the prime minister and tutor of the young king, Lysias, in the attempt to support the cadet branch of the dynasty – originating from Antiochos IV – against the claims of Demetrios I.<sup>15</sup>

The same Antiochos IV is remembered through the epithet of his alleged son and successor Alexander Balas, *Theopator*, “He whose father is a god,” or maybe “The one who deified his father.”<sup>16</sup> This title focuses attention on the divinisation of Antiochos IV and put the king in a position of pre-eminence when compared to the *Eupator* of Antiochos V.

As for the title of *Philopator*, “Father-Loving,” it not only expresses feelings of affection from the son towards his father, but also conveys the message that the son was the heir designated for succession.<sup>17</sup> Even though this epithet is not attested on coins, we know from other sources that it was attributed to Seleukos IV. Neither was this usage unique to this generation of Seleucid monarchs: Antiochos IX, for his part, adopted it on his coinage in order to commemorate his father Antiochos VII.<sup>18</sup> Antiochos X did the same for his father Antiochos IX, while the members of the other branch of the family, namely Demetrios III and Antiochos XII,<sup>19</sup> likewise employed the same title in reference to Antiochos VIII.

<sup>14</sup> SC 2, no. 1572–1576, 1578, 1582–1583, 1585–1586. On *Eupator* and its significance, see Muccioli 2013, 236–242.

<sup>15</sup> Muccioli 2013, 236–239.

<sup>16</sup> See Muccioli 2013, 297–298. The epithet *Theopator* was accompanied by *Euergetes*, “Benefactor.” Among the Seleucid mints only that of Ecbatana struck coinage of all metal bearing this monetary legend; see SC 2, 213.

<sup>17</sup> See Muccioli 2013, 220–236.

<sup>18</sup> SC 2, 524; Muccioli 2013, 227–228.

<sup>19</sup> Antiochos X see SC 2, 567; Muccioli 2013, 228. For Demetrios III and Antiochos XII, see SC 2, 583 and 608; Muccioli 2013, 229.

On the other hand, the epithet *Philometor* – “Mother-Loving” – was less common in the early stages of the Hellenistic age, when the transfer of power according to a patrilineal system was practically the rule. But later, from Laodike IV onwards (as for the Seleukids), and Cleopatra Syra (as for the Ptolemies), we observe a growing importance of matrilineality in these dynasties. Accordingly, it was assumed when there was the intention of honouring and/or stressing the prominence of a female member of the family, especially when she acted as a tutor and/or coregent for a young prince.<sup>20</sup> Antiochos VIII used this title during his joint rule with his mother Cleopatra Thea and even after her death; Demetrios III, in turn, appealed to the authority of his mother Cleopatra Selene on coins struck at Seleukeia Pieria and possibly Tarsos. The same Cleopatra Selene is honoured in the joint coinage showing the jugate busts of the queen and her son Antiochos XIII, the latter bearing the epithet *Philometor*.<sup>21</sup>

Finally, the official title of *Philadelphos*, “Brother-Loving,”<sup>22</sup> has a complex range of nuances which varies from dynasty to dynasty. As a general rule – but not one set in stone – *Philadelphos* denotes, in a dynastic framework, the intention of celebrating brotherly concord. For instance, it may appeal to feelings of unity and loyalty between two brothers who are joint kings, or an endogamous union between brother and sister; or again, the respect the cadet has towards the elder brother and vice versa. In the Seleucid dynasty, *Philadelphos* occurs quite late on coinage under the first reign of Demetrios II (145–139 BC) and should be seen as an homage to his younger brother, the future Antiochos VII.<sup>23</sup> Other Seleucid kings assumed this epithet on coins: in this way, Antiochos XI<sup>24</sup> paid homage to his twin brother Philip I – who was also joint king before Antiochos’ death – and probably his elder brother Seleukos VI. The same Philip later kept the title in the coinage of his sole reign.<sup>25</sup>

### Greek kings of Bactria and India

After the death of Demetrios I (ca. 185 BC), the kingdom of Bactria witnessed a period of dynastic strife between different houses leading to a gradual and irreversible crisis, which in the end brought the loss of Greek sovereignty over Central Asia and Northwest India. However, this crisis gave the various contenders the opportunity to promote their legitimacy to rule through coins. I am referring here to the so-called *pedigree coins* issued by Antimachos I and Agathokles. It is by this name that numismatists refer to the series struck during the reign of Antimachos I or Agathokles but presenting the portraits and the

<sup>20</sup> Muccioli 2013, 242–243.

<sup>21</sup> I leave apart the discussion concerning the identification of the son of Cleopatra Selene as Antiochos XIII or Seleukos Cybiosactes, see SC 2, 615–616; Muccioli 2013, 248–249.

<sup>22</sup> See Muccioli 2013, 203–220.

<sup>23</sup> Other possibilities are his brother Antigonos or his bride Cleopatra Thea, who, like other Seleucid queens, had the honorific title of “sister” of the king; see Muccioli 2013, 213–214.

<sup>24</sup> SC 2, 574.

<sup>25</sup> SC 2, 597.

monetary types of former kings of Bactria.<sup>26</sup> While only two kings are commemorated by Antimachos, i.e. Diodotos I and Euthydemos I, Agathokles instead follows a fairly precise chronological order celebrating Alexander the Great and Antiochos II, the two Diodoti, Euthydemos I (Fig. 2), Demetrios I and finally Pantaleon, who might be Agathokles' brother and was king for a short period before him. The choice of Alexander the Great and the Seleukid Antiochos II should be interpreted in an ideological sense, in that these two sovereigns were probably seen as the ideal founders of the kingdom: in a sort of dynastic passing of the baton, Agathokles wanted to link his reign to the memory of the conqueror of Central Asia and India as well as to the last Seleukid king ruling over Bactria. It is also interesting to note that the only Bactrian king not to be celebrated by Agathokles was Euthydemos II, young heir of Demetrios I, who reigned for a few years before Antimachos I in Bactria, and Pantaleon and Agathokles in Northwest India, seized power. The absence of Euthydemos II from the *pedigree coins* of Agathokles might be explained by a lack of recognition of his sovereignty. As for Antimachos I, his limited choice can perhaps be attributed to an attempt to emphasise what Tarn called a "Bactrian local patriotism"<sup>27</sup> in order to assert his ideal (and real?) ties with the founders of the two dynasties of independent Bactria.



Fig. 2. "Pedigree coin" of Agathokles commemorating Euthydemos I; © Numismatica Ars Classica

The immediate ruler who succeeded in unifying under his control the whole of the kingdom was Eukratides I (ca. 171–145 BC). He too asserted his right to rule by striking four series portraying the jugate busts of his parents, Heliokles and Laodike (Fig. 3), accompanied by the composite coin legend:

Ob/ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΜΕΓΑΣ ΕΥΚΡΑΤΙΔΗΣ

R/ (Ο ΥΙΟΣ ΤΟΥ) ΗΛΙΟΚΛΕΟΥΣ ΚΑΙ ΛΑΟΔΙΚΗΣ

"The Great King Eukratides, (the son) of Heliokles and Laodike"<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> For the pedigree coins as well as the political history of the kingdom of Bactria during the reigns of Antimachos I and Agathokles, see Holt 1984, 69–91; Bernard 1985, 152; Boppearachchi 1991; Coloru 2009, 195–203.

<sup>27</sup> Tarn 1951, 451.

<sup>28</sup> Boppearachchi 1991, *Eucratide I*, sér. 13–16.



Fig. 3. Tetradrachm of Eukratides I commemorating his parents Heliokles and Laodike;  
© Numismatica Ars Classica

It seems clear that such a precise statement of kinship must have had a considerable weight in Eukratides' assertion of legitimacy. What is more, his mother Laodike wears a diadem, a clue indicating that she belonged to a royal family.<sup>29</sup> Other examples of jugate busts featuring a member of the royal family may be found in the coinage dating to the joint rule of Queen Agathocleia (ca. 130–125 BC), widow of the Indo-Greek king Menander I Soter, and her son Strato I,<sup>30</sup> as well as on the first two series of the coins struck by King Hermaios (ca. 90–70 BC), who is portrayed together with his wife Calliope. Moreover, the name of the queen is also present in the obverse legend ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΣΩΤΗΡΟΣ ΕΡΜΑΙΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΚΑΛΛΙΟΠΗΣ, “Of King Hermaios the Saviour and Calliope.”<sup>31</sup>

Among the official epithets relating to kinship or dynastic ties, the only one we can find is *Philopator*. As a matter of fact, there are only two cases dating to a later phase of the Greek presence in Northwest India: Apollodotos II (ca. 80–65 BC), who ruled over an area that stretched between Gandhara and the Eastern Punjab, adopted this title after he managed to regain the kingdom from the Indo-Scythian king Maues (ca. 90–80 BC). Quite probably Apollodotos chose this epithet in order to link himself to the memory of his father<sup>32</sup> while at the same time proclaiming dynastic continuity. The second case is that concerning Strato II (ca. 25 BC–10 AD),<sup>33</sup> the last Greek king to rule in India. From his coin legends we learn that he had associated his son Strato III on the throne and the latter had taken up the title of *Philopator* in homage to his father:

<sup>29</sup> For discussion and bibliography on the identity of Eukratides' parents, see Coloru 2009, 209–212.

<sup>30</sup> Bopearachchi 1991, *Agathocleia et Straton*, sér. 5–6; Coloru 2009, 246.

<sup>31</sup> This portrait could celebrate the dynastic union between the house of Hermaios and that of another Indo-Greek king, Philoxenos, who would also be the father of Calliope, see Bopearachchi 1991, *Hermaios*, sér. 1–2; Coloru 2009, 256. A reference to Calliope would be detectable, even if implicitly, in the representation of an Amazon queen on horseback on the obverse of a series struck in the name of Hermaios, see Bopearachchi 1991, *Hermaios*, sér. 6.

<sup>32</sup> According to Bopearachchi 1991, 139–141 Apollodotos' father was Strato I; on the contrary, Coloru 2009, 259 thinks that Archebios may be more likely.

<sup>33</sup> Bopearachchi 1991, *Straton II et son fils Straton*, sér. 6–7; Coloru 2009, 260–261.

Ob/ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΣΩΤΗΡΟΣ ΣΤΡΑΤΩΝΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΦΙΛ(ΟΠΑΤΩΡΟΣ) ΣΤΡΑΤΩΝΟΣ  
 “Of King Strato the Saviour and Strato the Father-Loving”

Finally, we should mention the peculiar case of King Artemidoros, who ruled in the area of Taxila around 85 BC. For want of more evidence, Artemidoros was usually considered a Greek monarch both on onomastic grounds and in terms of the iconography of his coinage until the discovery of a silver hemiobol,<sup>34</sup> whose reverse legend in prakrit states the following:

R/ *Rajatirajasa Moasa putrasa Artemidorasa*  
 “Of Artemidoros son of the King of kings Maues”

As we have seen, Maues was the Indo-Scythian chief who seized power in Gandhara. What is worth noting here is that Artemidoros does not claim his (half-?)Scythian origins in the obverse Greek legend – which is in fact quite customary in style and phraseology – but in the legend intended for the local population. This choice cannot be casual, and might be understood as an attempt to appeal to his Indian-speaking subjects by drawing attention to his direct familial ties with Maues. A new specimen<sup>35</sup> has been found inside a hoard allegedly discovered by local people in Barikot (Swat, Pakistan). The town occupies the site of the ancient Barygaza, which during the Indo-Greek rule knew a period of urban expansion, here including the building of a massive defence system designed according to Hellenistic techniques of military architecture.<sup>36</sup> In comparison with the first specimen, the reverse legend of this new coin seem to be more readable and different in meaning owing to the presence of the conjunction *cha*, i.e. “and.” R.C. Senior proposes the following reading and translation:

R/ *Rajatirajasa Moasa putrasa cha Artemidorasa*  
 “Of the King of kings Maues and his son Artemidoros”

If the above reading proposed by Senior is correct, this should mean that Artemidoros had been reigning jointly with his father for a certain period. As the obverse legend still mentions Artemidoros alone, the hypothesis that the message concerning his lineage was only intended for Indian-speaking subjects seems to be strengthened. We can only speculate about the reasons for such a choice. In my opinion, the most plausible scenario could be that Artemidoros wanted to style himself as a Greek ruler to gain the support of the Greek aristocracy of the Gandhara region, so he preferred to use the reverse legend of a bronze series with very limited circulation in order to show the not irrelevant detail that he was the son of a Saka king responsible for the overthrowing of the former dynasty of Greek sovereigns. Of course, his relationship to Maues must be known, and we have to expect that a certain number of Greek settlers in the Swat valley were also bilingual, and therefore capable of understanding the message written in the legend. Thus, Artemidoros could have tried to keep a Greek style and appearance while revealing his real origins “in a low voice.”

<sup>34</sup> MacDonald/Senior 1998, 55–56; Coloru 2009, 258–259.

<sup>35</sup> *ICH* 2, XI, 151–152.

<sup>36</sup> For an overview on the archaeological findings, see Callieri 2007, 133–164.



### 3. Appropriation of a paradigm

We must now turn to the coinage of local dynasties in the area under study and see in which ways messages on kinship were transmitted in order to put forward claims of legitimacy or strengthen a dynasty through the promotion of familial affection and unity.

#### The Arsacids

As an absolutistic and hereditary monarchy, the proclamation of a successor to the kingdom of Parthia depended solely on the decision of the king. The heir was usually the elder son, but this tradition was not always followed, because the king's will was the only rule which mattered in the end. Thus, it was not unusual for a younger son or even a brother of the king to be proclaimed sovereign in his own right.<sup>37</sup>

Among the Parthian kings, the habit of stating dynastic and family ties on coins makes its appearance by the second half of the second century BC with Phraates II (138–127), for whom the epithets<sup>38</sup> *Philopator* and *Theopator* are attested in order to recall the memory of his father Mithradates I (ca. 171–138). As Federicomaria Muccioli points out,<sup>39</sup> these titles became all the more frequent in the period of dynastic conflict and scarcity of documentation known as the *Dark Age* of the Parthian Empire (first century BC). It was then that a group of sovereigns, namely Gotarzes I (95–87), Orodes I (90–77), Sinatruces (77–70), Phraates III (70–57) and Orodes II (57–38), adopted these titles on their coinage to claim their legitimacy and filial piety towards their fathers. To these rulers we have to add Mithradates III (57–54) and Phraates IV (38–2), who also bore the epithet *Eupator*.<sup>40</sup>

The representation of other members of the royal family besides the king occurs only once in Parthian coinage, specifically in the joint reign of Musa<sup>41</sup> and her son Phraatakes (2 BC–4 AD). A gift to Phraates IV (38–2 BC) from Augustus, Musa soon became the favourite concubine of the king, to whom she gave birth to Phraatakes. Taking advantage of her sway on Phraates, Musa persuaded the king to send his other sons to Rome as hostages, and then poisoned her husband and married her own son in order to hold power, although she did so under the appearance of a joint rule. Unlike the Greek precedent, the couple is not depicted together, but separately on either side. Edward Dąbrowa<sup>42</sup> explains that sometimes Parthian queens seem to have enjoyed the recognition of their status as public persons, even if the available evidence prevents us from having a clearer picture of their specific condition. The way Musa gained power was exceptional, and possibly the separate portrait instead of a jugate one might suggest her position of queen not subject to her husband but on an equal level with him. In fact, in jugate portraits one of

<sup>37</sup> For a study on Parthian kingship, see Dąbrowa 2010, 124–126.

<sup>38</sup> On the official epithets of the Arsacids, see Muccioli 2013, in particular 171, 192, 195, 199, 219, 232–233, 257–258, 314–315, 320–326, 341–342, 346, 403–407, 419–420.

<sup>39</sup> Muccioli 2013, 232.

<sup>40</sup> Muccioli 2013, 232–233, 239 and n. 496.

<sup>41</sup> For a biography of this queen, see Strugnell 2008, 275–298.

<sup>42</sup> Dąbrowa 2010, 126.

the members of the couple is more prominent than the other, and this position is usually held by the one who holds real power, as we have already seen in the case of Cleopatra Thea. Musa's status must have been high, if we consider that her image is accompanied by the title of *Thea Ourania* – “Heavenly Goddess.”<sup>43</sup> To a Greek audience, this epithet recalled Aphrodite, but in the Iranian world it was connected to Anahita, a warlike goddess also tied to the water element and fertility who occupied an important place in Iranian religion.



Fig. 4. Separate portraits of Phraatakes and Musa; © Roma Numismatics Ltd.

### The *frataraka* of Persis

In the first decades of the second century BC, Persis was made independent from the Seleukids thanks to a dynasty of local rulers bearing the old Persian title *frataraka*, or “leader, governor,” (literally “before/ahead of us”).<sup>44</sup> After Mithradates I's conquest of Parthia in 140 BC, these dynasts continued to reign in the region as vassal kings of the Parthians, but the title *frataraka* disappeared from their set of titles. Bayḏād (second century BC), one of the last *fratarakas* before the Parthian conquest, states his lineage on the Aramaic legend: *bgdt prtrk' zy 'lhy' br bgwrt*, “Bayḏād the *frataraka* of the gods, son of Bagawart.” This statement is justified by the fact that Bayḏād may have been in need of legitimacy against a rival, possibly Wāḏfradād I.<sup>45</sup>

It is also noticeable that the coin inscriptions of the *frataraka* Ardašir and Wahbarz add to their personal name the phrase *br prs*, i.e. “son of a Persian,” clearly with the scope of emphasising their ethnic lineage.<sup>46</sup>

To once again find a reference to the ruler's ancestry one must go to a later period of the history of Persis, between the first century AD and the rise of the Sasanian dynasty in the third century AD. The coin legends are usually standardised, so I will limit myself to quoting, for the sake of example, that of Dārāyān II, the first king of Persis to put his father's name in the coin legend:

<sup>43</sup> On this title and bibliography, cf. Muccioli 2013, 325–326.

<sup>44</sup> On the translation of the title *frataraka*, see Skjærvø 1997, 102; on the phrase *prtrk' zy 'lhy'*, see Panaino 2003.

<sup>45</sup> Sarkhosh Curtis 2010, 388.

<sup>46</sup> Klose 2005, 96; Klose/Müseler 2008, 25.

R/ d'ryw MLK' BRH wtrprt MLK'  
 "King Dārāyān, son of King Wādfraad"

In addition, two other rulers of Persis, Manūčīhr I and Ardašīr III, seem to have had joint rule with an individual called Mihr in the first half of the second century AD.<sup>47</sup> Who exactly was Mihr, and was he somehow related to those rulers? The problem remains unresolved, although Frye thought the existence of such a king questionable.<sup>48</sup>

### The Kingdom of Elymais

A small kingdom that emerged in the second century BC from the gradual disintegration of the oriental possessions of the Seleukids, Elymais covered the area of the modern Iranian province of Khuzestan. Throughout its history, the status of Elymais was often that of a vassal state to the Parthians. Elymaean coinage begins to exhibit statements of family ties under the reign of Kamnaskires III (82–75 BC): the king is represented with his wife Anzaze,<sup>49</sup> (Fig. 5) and both their names are expressed in the reverse legend:

R/ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΚΑΜΝΑΣΚΙΡΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΒΑΣΙΛΙΣΣΗΣ ΑΝΖΑΖΗΣ  
 "Of King Kamnaskires and Queen Anzaze"



Fig. 5. Tetradrachm with jugate busts of Kamnaskires III and Anzaze; © Roma Numismatics Ltd.

His son Kamnaskires IV might have been put on the throne by the Parthian king Phraates III in 61 BC as a reward for his reconciliation with Pompey. This is hardly a verifiable hypothesis, owing to the lack of more data.<sup>50</sup> What we can say, judging by the coin legends, is that he wanted to put emphasis on his ascendance from Kamnaskires III:

R/ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΚΑΜΝΑΣΚΙΡΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΕΓ(γόνου) ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΚΑΜΝΑΣΚΙΡΟΥ  
 "Of King Kamnaskires, born of King Kamnaskires"

That is the general reading of the legend, and to my knowledge it has always been referred to under this form: if this is the case, then the legend is worth noting for the

<sup>47</sup> See Alam 1986, no. 627 and 629.

<sup>48</sup> Frye 1984, 272, note 5.

<sup>49</sup> Alam 1986, 143–144, no. 454–455; van't Haaf 2007, 63–67.

<sup>50</sup> See Shayegan 2011, 118, 325.

choice of the word ἔκγονος instead of the more common υἱός. However, there is no need to think of ΕΓ as an abbreviation for ἔκγονος, given that the expression “Χ τοῦ ἐγ βασιλέως Υ,” denoting a pronominal function of the article, is well attested in the Greek language in both literary and documentary sources,<sup>51</sup> so there is no reason for an abbreviated word here. As a consequence, one may read the legend simply as it is: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΚΑΜΝΑΣΚΙΠΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΕΓ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΚΑΜΝΑΣΚΙΠΟΥ.

The same coin legend is attested for another namesake who ruled in the first century AD, Kamnaskires V.<sup>52</sup> By the second half of the first century, the ancient Elymaean dynasty was replaced by a new line, possibly of Arsacid descent if we have to rely only on the onomastics of these individuals, who nevertheless also seem to have kept the name Kamnaskires as a royal title. The coin legend attesting the king’s lineage is no longer in Greek, but rather in Aramaic characters, and it occurs in the issues by Orodes III<sup>53</sup> (R/ *wrwd MLK’ BRY wrwd*, “King Orodes, son of Orodes”) Kamnaskires-Orodes<sup>54</sup> (*kbnhzyr wrwd MLK’ BR wrwd MLK’*, “King Kamnaskires Orodes, son of king Orodes”). Another king Orodes (third century AD)<sup>55</sup> not only mentions his queen Ulfān in the coin legend (Ob/ *wrwd MLK’*, “King Orodes; R/ *ulp’n*, “Ulfān”), but she is also portrayed in the reverse. The disposition of the portraits recalls that of the issues by Musa and Phraataces, although the role of Ulfān seems less stressed than that of Musa, as her portrait is accompanied neither by the title of queen nor by any other court epithet.

### The Kingdom of Characene

The history of this southern Mesopotamian kingdom<sup>56</sup> centred on its capital of Spasinou-Charax (a former Alexandria founded by Alexander the Great, then re-founded as Antioch by Antiochos IV)<sup>57</sup> on the Persian Gulf, was established by a king of Iranian descent, Hyspaosines, around 127/126 BC. References to familial relations on coins can be observed only in the short reign of Artabazos I (49/48 BC),<sup>58</sup> who presents the title of *Philopator* among his royal epithets. This is the only reference to kinship in Characene coinage until the reign of Meredates (ca. 130/131–150/151 AD),<sup>59</sup> who in the coin legend refers to his father Pacoros II, king of Parthia:

R/ ΜΕΡΕΔΑΤΗΣ ΥΙ[ΟΣ] ΦΟ[ΚΟΡΟΥ] ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΟΜΑΝΑΙΩΝ  
“Meredates, son of the King of kings Pacoros, king of the Omani”

<sup>51</sup> See e.g. *IDélos* 1542, ll. 2–3 or *CIRB* 3, 356, ll. 1–4.

<sup>52</sup> See Alram 1986, no. 463.

<sup>53</sup> Orodes II in Alram 1986, no. 477.

<sup>54</sup> Kamnaskires-Orodes III in Alram 1986, no. 479.

<sup>55</sup> Orodes IV in Alram 1986, no. 488.

<sup>56</sup> For the history of Characene, see Schuol 2000.

<sup>57</sup> Schuol 2000, 108–109; Cohen 2013, 109–117.

<sup>58</sup> Schuol 2000, 223–224.

<sup>59</sup> Alram 1986, no. 506; Schuol 2000, 232–233; Wiesehöfer 2005, 169–170. Apart from his coinage Meredates is known from a bilingual Greek-Parthian inscription carved on a statue of Heracles discovered in 1984 at Seleukeia-on-the-Tigris. This source celebrates the victory of Vologases IV of Parthia over Meredates in 151 AD, see Bernard 1990, 3–68.

King Orabazes II may have mentioned his father in the reverse legend, provided that the word ΠΑΤΑ (or ΠΑΤΑ) is intended as an abbreviation of the patronymic Phraata or Phraataphernes.<sup>60</sup> Finally, the last ruler of Characene, Māga (ca. 195–210 AD),<sup>61</sup> mentions his father Attambelos VIII in the coin legend in Aramaic script: R/ m'g zy 'tmb'y'z MLK', "Māga, the son of king Attambelos." Māga does not bear any royal title, probably because of his status as a vassal of the Parthians. However, the reference to Attambelos is meant to stress clearly his belonging to a royal lineage.

### Sakas and local dynasties between Seistan and Northwest India

Coins are often the only source by which we might gain some understanding of the history of Central Asia and India during the troubled and poorly documented period following the fall of the Greek kingdom of Bactria in the second half of the first century BC. Nomadic people gradually occupied Bactria, Drangiana (whose name changed into Sakastan, "Land of the Sakas" after the Scythian tribes who settled in the region), Arachosia and Northwest India, and created their own dynasties. Those tribal chiefs struck coinage imitating Greek, Indo-Greek as well as Parthian models, but also introduced new features in style, and of course in kingship ideology.<sup>62</sup>

According to Strabo,<sup>63</sup> the migration of the Scythian tribe of the Sakaraucae together with other Central Asian nomads was the cause of the fall of the Greco-Bactrian kingdom. In the first century BC, Tanlis Maidates,<sup>64</sup> possibly a tribal chief belonging to the Sakaraucae, struck a series of coins representing himself and his wife Raggodeme (Fig. 6). The linguistic analysis conducted by Weber<sup>65</sup> on this ruler's name suggests that the first part, Tanlis (of unknown etymology), might be considered as a title, whereas the second one is more certainly an Iranian personal name which can be translated as "Given by the Moon." The model adopted by Tanlis Maidates closely recalls that attested for Musa of Parthia: the helmeted head of Maidates occupies the obverse of the coin, while the veiled portrait of Raggodeme, accompanied by the Greek title KYPIA, i.e. "the Lady," is represented on the reverse. Raggodeme's Greek title is often related to deities, and in this particular case it could stand for an honorific epithet denoting the divine status of the queen as already attested for Musa *Thea Ourania* or Cleopatra *Thea Eueteria*. The same title would later become part of the Sasanian court ceremonial, since it is attributed to a Princess Chashmak as well as to Myrrōd, mother of Šabuhr I.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>60</sup> See Schuol 2000, 234.

<sup>61</sup> Schuol 2000, 235–237.

<sup>62</sup> See *ICH*; Frölich 2008.

<sup>63</sup> Strabo, XI.8.2.

<sup>64</sup> Alram 1986, no. 1269; Weber 2004, 247–250.

<sup>65</sup> Weber 2004, 248–249.

<sup>66</sup> *Res Gestae Divi Saporis* (ed. Huyse 1999) 37.4; 37.6.



Fig. 6. Separate portraits of Tanlis Maidates and Raggodeme; © CNG Inc.

Almost at the same time as Tanlis Maidates, in a chronological span ranging from 50 BC to 30 AD, but in an area located between Kandahar and Peshawar, we find Naštēn, another local chief of Iranian origins who states his lineage on the coin legend.<sup>67</sup> This ruler is known from one tetradrachm discovered in 1992 in the mountainous region of Badakhshan (Northeast Afghanistan). Naštēn was probably a member of the local Iranian aristocracy, but the engraver used Greco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek models to carve his portrait. The reverse legend states the following:

R/ ΝΑΣΤΗΝΗΣ / [Ξ]ΑΤΡΑΝΝΟΥ  
 “Of Naštēn, (the son) of Xatrannos”

Unlike his contemporaries, the Indo-Scythians, we can observe that this Iranian prince does not have any title to specify the nature of his rule: the patronymic seems sufficient to convey his noble lineage as well as his right to reign.

The Sakas who settled in Arachosia and India, the so-called Indo-Scythians, provide remarkable examples about the representation of family relations. Following chronological order, we can begin with the aforementioned Maues, father of Artemidoros. In the coinage of this Saka king we can find a tetradrachm where the obverse legend mentions his wife M/Nachene (the reading of the first letter is uncertain) accompanied by the same royal epithet, *Theotropos*, already borne by Agathocleia during her regency for Strato I.<sup>68</sup> The name of Maues, on the contrary, appears on the reverse: this specimen is all the more interesting if one considers that the obverse of the coins is usually reserved for the king. Should this fact suggest that M/Nachene held a significant position at court even more important than her husband’s? We do not have enough data to support this view; nevertheless this joint issue, as isolated as it may be, attests the high status a woman of the royal family could attain among the Indo-Scythians.

Also noteworthy are the joint issues of the Indo-Scythian king Vonones, who at the beginning of the first century AD controlled the area between the Kabul valley and Taxila. He was helped in this task by his brothers Spalahores and Spalirises, and his nephew Spalagadames, Spalahores’ son<sup>69</sup> (Fig. 7). All of them are mentioned in Vonones coin

<sup>67</sup> Boppearachchi 1993, 609–611; Boppearachchi/Grenet 1993, 299–307. On the contrary, Muccioli 2013, 421 reads Xatrannos as *tyrannos* and suggests understanding the word as a title of Naštēn rather than a patronymic.

<sup>68</sup> Le Rider 1967; Widemann 2003, 95–125; *ICH* 2, type 4.

<sup>69</sup> See *ICH* 2, types 65–71.

legends, which also state their familial relation to the king. They were probably joint kings entrusted with the government of a particular area. In addition, Spalahores had a joint issue with his son Spalagadames, while Spalirises gained increasing autonomy and struck coins of his own – although still stating his being brother to Vonones, until he proclaimed himself King of kings.

**Tab. 1. Coin legends mentioning family ties in the Vonones dynasty**

Authority	Ob/ legend (in Greek)	R/ legend (in prakrit)
Vonones + Spalahores	ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΟΝΩΝΟΥ, “The Great king of kings Vonones”	<i>Maharajabhata dhramikasa Spalahorasa</i> , “Of Spalahores the Just, brother of the king”
Vonones + Spalirises	ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΟΝΩΝΟΥ, “The Great king of kings Vonones”	<i>Maharajabhata dhramikasa Spalarishasa</i> , “Of Spalirises the Just, brother of the king”
Vonones + Spalagadames	ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΟΝΩΝΟΥ, “The Great king of kings Vonones”	<i>Spalahoraputrasa dhramiasa Spalagadamas</i> , “Of Spalagadames, son of Spalahores the Just”
Spalahores + Spalagadames	ΣΠΑΛΥΡΙΟΣ ΔΙΚΑΙΟΥ ΑΔΕΛΦΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ, “Of Spalahores the Just, brother of the king”	<i>Spalahoraputrasa dhramiasa Spalagadamas</i> , “Of Spalagadames, son of Spalahores the Just”
Spalirises	ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΔΕΛΦΟΥ ΣΠΑΛΙΡΙΣΟΥ, “of Spalirises the Just, brother of the king”	<i>Maharajabhata dhramiasa Spalarishasa</i> , “Of Spalirises the Just, brother of the king”

As we can see from the above table, kinship with Vonones is always stated as a means to suggest the subordinate role of his brothers towards him. Apparently, the only exception is that of the joint issue of Vonones and Spalagadames, for whom only the name of his father is specified, while that of his uncle, which should be more relevant in terms of legitimacy, is omitted. This is not a secondary detail, as in the next pages we will see that other rulers in Northwest India preferred to state their position as nephews of a powerful uncle instead of recalling their father’s memory.



Fig. 7. a) tetradrachm of Vonones + Spalahores; b) hemiobol of Spalahores + Spalagadames;

The crisis of the Indo-Greek kingdoms in the first century BC gave rise to several local states ruled by powerful families and dynasts. They adopted a plethora of titles in order to define their rank, such as the old Persian *satrap* or a mixed Indo-Persian *mahasatrap*, i.e. “great satrap” or Indian *raja*, which denotes a king of lesser status in the face of a *maharaja*, lit. “great king” – which is also the Indian translation of the Greek term *basileus*. The highest title was *King of kings*, which was quite popular among Iranian people, because it was borne by the Achaemenid monarchs. In time, titles such as “satrap” lost their original meaning and in turn acquired the connotation of an independent sovereign: in several dynasties like that of the Western Satraps, *mahasatrap* was employed to define the status of a king in his full right, while *satrap* was reserved for his heir.

**The Apracharajas.** The Indo-Scythian dynasty of the kings of Apracha, or Apracharajas, ruled the Bajaur area in Pakistan between the last decades of the first century BC and the first century AD.<sup>70</sup> As was the case with other dynasts, they struck coinage bearing legends with an indication of the king’s lineage. Among the issues we can quote are those by Indravasu (ca. 32–33 AD):

R/ *Vijayamitraputrasa Itravasusa apracharajasa*  
 “Of Indravasu king of Apracha, the son of Vijayamitra”

On the other hand, Vijayamitra’s grandson Aspavarma (ca. 30–60 AD) bore the Greek military title of *strategos*. He struck coins<sup>71</sup> jointly with the Indo-Scythian king Azes II, for whom he may have controlled a certain district in Northern India:

R/ *Imtravarnaputrasa Aspavarmasa strategasa*  
 “Of Aspavarma the *strategos*, son of Indravarma”

**The Northern and Western Satraps.** Saka rulers bearing the title of *satrap* or *mahasatrap* are attested in several parts of the north-western side of the Indian subcontinent between the second half of the first century BC and the fourth century AD, when the expansion of the Gupta kingdom put an end to their rule. Depending on their area of political influence, modern historians divide them into the Northern Satraps and Western Satraps.

**Northern Satraps:** they controlled the regions of Northwest India and Mathura. These dynasties were sometimes related by means of intermarriage. Zeionises (ca. 10 BC–10 AD),<sup>72</sup> satrap of Chukhsa – possibly Chach in modern Pakistan – mentions his father Manigula on the bilingual coin legends:

Ob/ (M)ANNIOAOY YIOY ΣΑΤΡΑΠΙΟΥ ΖΕΙΩΝΙΣΙΟΥ  
 R/ *Manigulasaputrasa chatrapasa Jihuniasa*  
 “Of Zeionises the satrap, son of Manigula”

On the other hand, the satrap Kharaostes,<sup>73</sup> a contemporary of Zeionises in Gandhara, remembers his father Arta:

<sup>70</sup> Salomon 1996a, 233–246; Falk 1998, 85–108; *ICH* 1, 89–94; *ICH* 2, 136–143; Salomon 2007, 267–282.

<sup>71</sup> *ICH* 2, type 182–185.

<sup>72</sup> *ICH* 2, type 130–135.

<sup>73</sup> Salomon 1996b, 353–358; *ICH* 1, 95–100; *ICH* 2, type 143.



Ob/ ΧΑΡΑΗΩΣΤΕΙ ΣΑΤΡΑΠΠΟΥ ΑΡΤΑ ΥΙΟΥ

“Of Kharaostes the satrap, son of Arta”

R/ *chatrapasa pra Kharaostasa Artasaputrasa*

“Of Kharaostes the satrap, son of Arta”

Kharaostes, in turn, was mentioned on the issues of his son Hajatria.<sup>74</sup> By doing so, these rulers could show their subjects a dynastic sequence which strengthened their claims of legitimacy:

R/ *chatrapasa Kharaostaputrasa Hajatriasa*

“Of Hajatria the satrap, son of Kharaostes”

**Western Satraps.** The satraps based in the coastal area of Gujarat and Saurashtra acquired wealth and power because they held control on the maritime trade routes between Rome and India. One of the ruling dynasties, the Kshaharatas, gained momentum under Nahapana (first half of the first century AD), the king Mambanos mentioned by the *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*, 47. Another important member of the Western Satraps was Chastana, ruler of Ujjain, who was reported by Ptolemy<sup>75</sup> as Tiastanos. The Kshaharatas were defeated by King Gautamiputra Satakarni, a member of the Satavahanas family, who subsequently established his own dynasty. As was the case after the demise of the Kshaharatas, the coin legends usually report the name of the king’s father and always follow the same syntactical structure. For the sake of brevity, I limit myself to citing those of Chastana and Rudradaman:

- Chastana  
R/ *rajno kshatrapasa Ghsamotikaputrasa Chastanasa*  
“Of Chastana king and satrap, son of Ghsamotika”
- Rudradaman  
R/ *rajno kshatrapasa Jayadamasaputrasa rajno Rudradamasa*  
“Of Rudradaman king and satrap, son of King Jayadaman”

**Pārata kingdom.** In the period between the second and fourth century AD, the north-eastern part of Baluchistan was controlled by the Pāratarajas, i.e. kings of the *Pāratas* (or *Pāradas*), a tribe of Iranian origin whose history is almost unknown, even if we can grasp some amount of information by the issues they struck. The kingdom was established by a certain Bagareva, of whom no coin has been found so far. To our knowledge, the Pāratarajas coinage begins under Bagareva’s son and successor Yolamira. The Pāratarajas used to provide the name of their fathers in the coin legends, meaning that we have a good knowledge of their genealogical tree, especially after the analysis led by Pankaj Tandon.<sup>76</sup> Once again, I will mention just a few of them:

- Yolamira (ca. 125–150 AD)  
R/ *Yolamirasa Bagarevaputrasa pāratarāja*  
“Of Yolamira the Parataraja, son of Bagareva”

<sup>74</sup> *ICH* 2, type 145–148.

<sup>75</sup> Ptolemy, VII.1.63: Ὀζηνή βασιλειον Τιαστανου̅.

<sup>76</sup> Tandon 2006; Tandon 2009; Tandon 2010. See also *ICH* 2, 190–193.

- Kozana (first quarter of the third century AD)  
R/ *Kozanasa Bagavharnaputra pāratarāja*  
“Of Kozana the Parataraja, son of Bagavharna”

### The Indo-Parthians

In the first decades of the first century AD (ca. 20–45),<sup>77</sup> a prince possibly from the noble house of Suren, known by his Iranian title of Gondophares (o. P. *Vindapharna*, “May he find glory”), left his home in Seistan to begin a series of campaigns towards the east which finally made him master of a large area between Seistan and Gandhara. With Gondophares began the Indo-Parthian dynasty, which lasted until the third century AD.<sup>78</sup> The king managed to hold his conquests partly by letting local rulers remain in their place as vassals, while also putting his relatives in command of certain regions. The latter aspect is significant in that it will form the basis of the claims to legitimacy of some of Gondophares’ successors. In fact, after the death of Gondophares some of his heirs (Sases, Orthagnes, Hybouzanes and Sarpedones) took the name of the founder of the dynasty as a royal title, like Arsaces among the Parthians and Caesar in the Roman Empire.<sup>79</sup> In addition, they stated their kinship with Gondophares, such as Abdagases I, the king’s nephew, as we can read on the coin legends of his bilingual series issued in Gandhara:<sup>80</sup>

Ob/ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥ ΑΒΑΔΑΓΑΣ ΥΝΔΙΦΕΡΟ ΑΔΕΛΦΙΔΕΩΣ  
“Of King Abdagases the nephew of Gondophares”

R/ *Gudvharabhrataputrasa maharajasa tratarasa Avadagashasa*  
“Of King Abdagases the Saviour, nephew of Gondophares”

It is interesting to note that Abdagases’ kinship is stated on issues from the Gandhara area, but it is absent from specimens circulating in northern Arachosia as well as the Kabul valley, which seems to demonstrate his need for obtaining more recognition in northern India.

On the other hand, the Indo-Parthian king Hybouzanes claimed to be the son of Orthagnes,<sup>81</sup> one of Gondophares’ subkings and successors in Seistan and Southern Arachosia:

R/ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΥΒΟΥΖΑΝΗΣ ΥΙΟΣ ΟΡΘΑΓΝΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ  
“King Hybouzanes, the son of King Orthagnes”

<sup>77</sup> The majority of the scholars tend to place Gondophares’ reign in the first half of the first century AD, see Frölich 2002, no. 173; *contra* R.C. Senior in *ICH* 1, 123–126 who proposes an earlier date in the last decades of the first century BC (ca. 20 BC) for the beginning of his rule.

<sup>78</sup> *ICH* 1, 108–128; Frölich 2004, 100–103; Bivar 2007, 26–36.

<sup>79</sup> Cribb 1985, 295; MacDowall 1991, 246; MacDowall 2007, 106.

<sup>80</sup> *ICH* 2, types 226–230. Several variants exist because of the corrupt legend and the bad state of preservation of the coins, see e.g. Alram 1986, no. 1148: ΑΒΔΑΚ; *ICH* 2, type 226: ΑΒΔΑΚΑΣΟΥ; type 228: ΑΒΔΑΓΑΣΟΥ.

<sup>81</sup> Alram 1986, no. 1176; *ICH* 2, type 259.

King Sases, on the contrary, points to his relationship with an individual named Aspa.<sup>82</sup> The latter could be an abbreviated form of Aspavarma, the Indo-Scythian commander in Bajaur (Pakistan) who, as we have already seen, bears the Greek title of *strategos* in his coin legends:<sup>83</sup>

R/ *Maharajasa Aspabhrataputrasa tratara Sasasa*  
 “Of King Sases the Saviour, nephew of Aspa”

In 1999 the discovery of a new golden coin struck by Abdagases II (ca. 90 AD) sheds more light on the genealogy of the Indo-Parthians.<sup>84</sup> In fact, the Pahlavi inscription reports:

Ob/ *'bdgšy MLKYN MLK' BRY s 'nbry MLK'*  
 “Abdagases King of kings, son of King Sanabares”

Kinship with Sanabares is also stated on the composite coin legend of the last Indo-Parthian ruler of which we are aware, Farn-Sasan (third century AD),<sup>85</sup> whose reign was limited to the Seistan area:

Ob/ *prssn BRY 'twrssn*  
 R/ *BRY BRY tyrdy BRY npy s 'nbry MLKYN MLK'*  
 “Farn-Sasan, son of Adur-Sasan, grandson of Tiridates / great-grandson of Sanabares King of kings”

## The Kushans

Founded by Kujula Kadphises (ca. 40–90/95 AD) around 40 AD, the Kushan Empire ruled over an area stretching from modern Uzbekistan to Northwest India. On the obverse, Kushan coins have quite standardised legends mentioning the title *King of kings* (ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ in Greek, then *shaonaoshao* in Bactrian, after the reform of Kanishka I in the second century AD), the king's name followed by the clan denomination, i.e. *Kushan*. The reverse, on the contrary, depicts a number of deities of various origins (Greek, Iranian and Indian) accompanied by a legend stating their names. No members of the royal family are present, except in two cases. The first one is formed by a commemorative series struck by Wima Kadphises (100/5–127 AD) in honour of his father Wima Taktu (90/95–100 AD):<sup>86</sup>

Ob/ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΟΟΗΜΟ ΚΑΔΦΙΣΗΣ  
 R/ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΟΟΗΜΟΤΑΚΤΟΟΥ ΚΟΡΡΑΝΟΥ ΥΙΟΣ  
 “King Wima Kadphises, son of King Wima Taktu the Kushan”

According to Osmund Bopearachchi,<sup>87</sup> the commemoration of Wima Taktu by his son served the purpose of celebrating the end of the usurpation of the anonymous ruler

<sup>82</sup> Alram 1986, no. 1203; *ICH* 2, type 245.

<sup>83</sup> *ICH* 2, types 182–185.

<sup>84</sup> Bopearachchi/Grenet 1999, 73–82.

<sup>85</sup> Nikitin 1994, 67–69.

<sup>86</sup> Bopearachchi 2006, 1433–1447; Bopearachchi 2008, 3–56.

<sup>87</sup> Bopearachchi 2006, 1438–1445; Bopearachchi 2008, 43–52.

(92/97–110 AD), known only by his Greek epithet of Soter Megas, “The Great Saviour.” Furthermore, it seems that the general pattern of these coins followed the model of the *Pedigree coins* by Agathokles.

The second case is more enigmatic. Apparently, it was issued for a Kushan ruler named Kanishka, who seems to have exerted some rule in India between the second and third century AD. In fact, a unique specimen in copper discovered in the district of Mathura in 1973 specifies Kanishka’s lineage in the combined legend in brāhmi:<sup>88</sup>

Ob/ *Huvishkasya-*  
R/ *-pūtra Kaṇikasa*  
“Of Kanishka, son of Huvishka”

We know that a king Huvishka (ca. 153–191 AD) – renowned for his beautiful gold coinage representing Iranian, Indian and Greco-Roman deities – was especially active in the area of Mathura, as attested by numerous epigraphical records.<sup>89</sup> If the Huvishka mentioned in the coin legend is the same king, we should infer that Kanishka was a royal prince exerting some authority in the region.<sup>90</sup> As Huvishka’s successor to the throne was Vasudeva, it is hard to say whether or not Kanishka should be identified with Kanishka II, who was king in the third century AD. In the coin legend neither Kanishka nor Huvishka is qualified with any titles, but as we are dealing with a local issue with a very limited circulation we may not expect a strict compliance of the official court titles. Unfortunately, there is not enough information we can ascertain from this unique specimen, not to mention that Kushan genealogy after the reign of Kanishka I is practically impenetrable.

### The Sasanians

In Sasanian coinage, the depiction of other members of the royal family is quite unusual, and coin legends generally do not mention individuals other than the king himself. The only two exceptions to which we can refer with any certainty are 1) the coins belonging to the period of the rise of the Sasanian dynasty, and 2) the issues struck for Wahrām II (276–293 AD). Around 211/212, Ardaxšīr I and his brother Šabuhr started fighting each other for supremacy in Fārs:<sup>91</sup> both struck coins with their portrait on the obverse (Fig. 8), while the reverse displayed the image of their father Pābag. Their composite legends read as follows:

Ob/ *bgy šhpwhly* (or *'rthštr*) *MLK'*  
R/ *BRH bgy p'pky MLK'*  
“The divine Šabuhr (or Ardaxšīr) the king, son of the divine Pābag, the king”<sup>92</sup>

<sup>88</sup> Göbl 1984, 984; Gupta 1985, 201–205; Alram 1986, no. 1347; Gupta 1989, 124–139, n. 6, pl. 14.1.

<sup>89</sup> See e.g. Konow 1931/1932, 55–61; Lüders 1912, no. 56; Lüders 1961, 68.

<sup>90</sup> Gupta 1989, 124–139 suggests that Kanishka might have been an otherwise unknown son of King Huvishka.

<sup>91</sup> See Daryaei 2010, 245–246, 249–250.

<sup>92</sup> Alram 1986, n° 653–659; Alram 2008, 17–18; Daryaei 2010, 236–255, especially 243–245.



Fig. 8. Hemidrachm of Šabuhr commemorating his father Pābag; © Paul-Francis Jacquier – Numismatique Antique

As for Wahrām II, he is portrayed in jugate busts together with his queen, Shapurdukhtak.



Fig. 9. Drachm with jugate busts of Wahrām II and his wife; © Paul-Francis Jacquier – Numismatique Antique

Apart from these examples, the depiction and/or mention of other relatives in Sasanian issues is still a matter of debate. This is mostly the case of the small figure appearing in front of the ruler's portrait on the obverse of issues of Ardashīr I (d. 242), Wahrām II (276–293 AD), Šabuhr III (383–388) and Jāmāsp (496–498), whose identification is far from certain (Fig. 9). Part of the extent scholarship tends to see a portrait of the crown prince, while other commentators are more inclined to identify it with a god, possibly Ahura Mazdā, and Anāhitā in the case of Wahrām II.<sup>93</sup> Be that as it may, this particular iconography could have drawn inspiration from the many specimens of Roman coins showing the opposite portraits of members of the imperial house. For instance, we could compare a bronze coin struck at Edessa (Mesopotamia), thus in an area close to the Sasanian Empire, representing Alexander Severus and his mother Julia Mamaea (Fig. 10),

<sup>93</sup> On the main features of the Sasanian coinage, see Göbl 1971; Schindel 2005. For a discussion on the identification of the small busts, see Göbl 1971, 42–45; Choksy 1989, 117–135; Alram/Gyselen 2003, 101–103, 178; Schindel 2004, 64, 261–263, 266, 450–451; Schindel 2009, 49–50.

with a bronze issue of Ardashir I and an individual that might be identified with his son and heir Šabuhr I (Fig. 11):



Fig. 10–11. Alexander Severus and Julia Mamaea; Ardashir and an individual (deity? His son Šabuhr I?); © CNG Inc.

There is not enough space to examine the question in depth, but we can conclude with an open hypothesis: if Ardashir adopted this iconographical model from Rome, he could also have adopted the message of dynastic legitimacy profoundly connected to the representation of the members of a ruling house. If so, the mysterious individual facing the Sasanian king might well be identified with a crown prince.<sup>94</sup>

#### 4. An appraisal

Reflecting on the possibility of family connections between the Indo-Parthian dynasty and the Sasanians, the late Richard N. Frye once wrote, “Family connections always have been more important in the East than in Europe, and certainly America, so the continuation in station and influence of the noble Parthian families, such as the Suren and Karen, in Sasanian times is not surprising. It is purely conjecture but not unusual to suggest that when the Suren liege lord of Sistan heard that another liege lord of the Parthian king, Ardashir in Fars, had overthrown the Parthian king it was easy to transfer allegiance to the new emperor. This was especially true because of the previous connections between the East and Fars.”<sup>95</sup> One might discuss the alleged importance which should be assigned to family connections by eastern populations in comparison with Europeans who are perhaps less interested in the matter. Nevertheless, at the end of this quick survey, I think we can detect some differences in how messages concerning kinship and dynastic propaganda were transmitted through coinage by Greco-Macedonian kingdoms in the East and local dynasties. Family held an important place in both the groups, but they chose different strategies of communication which were not limited to coins but included other means such as inscriptions, literary works, works of art, etc. Coins, however, had the advantage of holding multiple functions concentrated in one item, as they were not only a means of exchange, but also an official document from the

<sup>94</sup> On this hypothesis, see Göbl 1971, 43–45.

<sup>95</sup> Frye 2004, 131.

court and a work of art. Entrusting explicit and implicit messages about kingship to the coins allowed them to be disseminated more quickly and widely than any other form of official communication.

As for coinage, the Seleucids seem to have preferred suggesting family ties in two ways: on the one hand, through a series of royal epithets recalling messages of affection and unity between father/son, mother/son, and brother/brother, and on the other hand by portraying the ruler together with another member of the family in jugate busts or reserving the coin reverse for the portrait of the family member that the king intended to honour.

The Seleucid coinage has without a doubt exerted a direct influence on the Arsacid dynasty as well as the petty kingdoms based in Southern Mesopotamia and on the coasts of the Persian Gulf. As for the Greco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek coins, their influence can be detected particularly in areas closer to Central Asia and India. Because of the manner in which they found themselves in-between different cultures, the kings of Bactria and India could thus represent a sort of unifying link between different traditions. In fact, one can notice the use of iconographic features such as the jugate busts and the use of royal epithets related to family, but it is also possible to notice written statements about a king's kinship.

Nevertheless, the non-Greek dynasties studied in this paper adapted their coinage to their own culture, creating new ways of communication using kinship-based propaganda. From an iconographic point of view, we may see that the jugate bust (e.g. Kamnaskires and Anzaze) was not the most popular form of acknowledging the importance of the role played by a certain individual within a family: Parthian and Saka rulers, for example, opted for separate portraits on either side (e.g. Phraataces and Musa, Tanlis Maidates and Raggodeme). And this detail betrays the intention of marking a distinction in the prominence of individuals on the basis of the position occupied by their portrait. However, the most interesting feature of the oriental issues concerning messages on family relationships is the overwhelming preference for written statements via coin legends rather than visual depictions of the members of the family. While among the Seleucids this option is almost absent – except for the royal epithets belonging to the sphere of familial harmony – oriental coinages present a varied set of solutions not only in Greek, but in local languages too. As a result, we can observe a vocabulary expressing different degrees of kinship. Moreover, messages illustrating a ruler's lineage could be entrusted to a particular language and not to another. In my opinion, the evidence suggests that different languages could be used in order to convey different messages for a different audience. While the bilingual coinage of the Indo-Greek kings usually showed a uniform version in both Greek and its prakrit translation, the situation was different for the non-Greek rulers who took over the power in Northwest India. For instance, in the case of the joint coinages of Vonones and his family, kinship of his co-rulers and relatives is stated only in prakrit in the reverse legend, while the obverse, in Greek, is reserved for the only Vonones. But once Spalahores and Spalirises gained more independence and struck their own coinage, their relationship to Vonones was stated in Greek on the obverse, which was the most important side of the coin. Whereas the case of the brothers and nephew of Vonones may be ascribed to considerations of priority in visibility, in other situations such as the coinage of Artemidoros, information on his familial ties with

the Indo-Scythian king Maues appears to be intentionally directed to his Indian-speaking subjects, and most limited in terms of the circulation of the message. Even if the Greek and Indian legends expressed distinct contents, this does not mean that the messages were false. On the contrary, they could coexist without any problem as they provided complementary information; for instance, the combined message of the bilingual legends of Vonones' coins is that the latter is the King of Kings; Spalahores and Spalirises are rulers, but only because they are nephews of Vonones. From this point of view, coins were the ideal tool to keep these different messages together. Bilingual individuals could learn more about the partition of powers among the members of the dynasty of Vonones. On the other hand, subjects proficient in only one language could nonetheless understand the basic message, i.e. Vonones was the highest in command.

In many cases, the mention of kinship was due to the presence of rivals or usurpers aiming for the throne (see e.g. Ardaxšīr and Šabuhr), while in other situations it was just a means of asserting his right to rule by inscribing himself in an established lineage. In this framework, written messages about family relationships may have been perceived as more explicit and immediate than a portrait or an epithet. Although the evidence I have surveyed may at first sight appear less interesting compared to more detailed categories of documents such as inscriptions, papyri and parchments, I am nevertheless convinced that it retains a wealth of untapped potential for further research. At the same time, once again it bears witness to the complexity of the cultural interactions which sprang from the encounter of Greek and Eastern civilisations in the Hellenistic period and its aftermath.

**Summary table of the expressions of kinship on Eastern coinages in Antiquity  
(Iran – Northwest India)**

Words denoting father/son relationship	Words denoting brother/brother relationship	Words denoting other familial relationships (uncle/nephew; grandfather/grandson)		Royal epithets denoting father/son; brother/brother relationship	Iconography
ΥΙΟΣ	ΑΔΕΛΦΟΣ	ΑΔΕΛΦΙΔΟΥΣ		<i>Eupator</i>	Jugate busts
<i>BRY</i> = Parth. <i>puhr</i> (son); <i>BRH</i> MPers. = <i>pus</i>		<i>BRY BRY</i> = Parth. <i>puhrēpuhr</i> ; MPers. <i>nab</i> (grandson)	<i>BRY npt</i> = Parth. <i>puhrēnapāt</i> (great-grandson)	<i>Philopator</i>	Separate portrait on either side
<i>-putra</i> (son of)	<i>-bhrata</i> (brother of)	<i>-bhrataputra</i> (nephew of)		<i>Theopator</i> <i>Philadelphos</i>	Busts facing each other ( <i>uncertain</i> )



ABBREVIATIONS

- AD II – A.J. Sachs, H. Hunger (1989), *Astronomical Diaries and Related Texts from Babylonia*, vol. II: *Diaries from 261 B.C. to 165 B.C.*, Wien
- CIRB – B. Latyshev (1965), *Corpus Inscriptionum regni Bosporani Graecae et Latinae*, Hildesheim
- ICH – R.C. Senior (2001–2006), *Indo-Scythian Coins and History*, vol. I–IV, Lancaster–London
- IDélos – P. Roussel, M. Launey (1937), *Inscriptions de Délos, nos. 1497–2879 : décrets, dédicaces, listes, catalogues, textes divers, postérieurs à 166 av. J.-C.*, Paris
- IGIAC – G. Rougemont (2012), *Inscriptions grecques d’Iran et d’Asie Centrale*, (*Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum* II, 1, 1), London
- SC 1 – A. Houghton, C. Lorber (2002), *Seleucid Coins. A Comprehensive Catalogue*, part I: *Seleucus I through Antiochus III*, New York
- SC 2 – A. Houghton, C. Lorber, O. Hoover (2008), *Seleucid Coins. A Comprehensive Catalogue*, part II: *Seleucus IV through Antiochus XIII*, New York

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