Achaemenid and Greco-Macedonian Inheritances in the Semi-Hellenised Kingdoms of Eastern Asia Minor

Submitted by Cristian Emilian Ghiţă to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Classics, January 2010.

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I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.
The present thesis aims to analyse the manner in which the ethnically and culturally diverse environment of Eastern Anatolia during the Hellenistic era has influenced the royal houses of the Mithradatids, Ariarathids, Ariobarzanids and Commagenian Orontids.

The focus of analysis will be represented by the contact and osmosis between two of the major cultural influences present in the area, namely the Iranian (more often than not Achaemenid Persian) and Greco-Macedonian, and the way in which they were engaged by the ruling houses, in their attempt to establish, preserve and legitimise their rule.

This will be followed in a number of fields: dynastic policies and legitimacy conceptions, religion, army and administration. In each of these fields, discrete elements betraying the direct influence of one or the other cultural traditions will be followed and examined, both in isolation and in interaction with other elements, together with which they form a diverse, but nevertheless coherent whole.

The eventual result of this analysis will be to demonstrate how the intersection of cultures and the willing appropriation by the ruling houses of what we might call, using a modern term, ‘multiculturalism’ has created a new, interesting and robust tradition, whose influence would endure well into the Roman era.
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The present research aims to analyse the manner in which the apparently irreconcilable traditions of Achaemenid Persia and Greece are nevertheless present simultaneously in the institutions of three Hellenistic kingdoms, Pontic Cappadocia, Greater Cappadocia and Commagene and the way these have coalesced to create a new, hybrid tradition.

Many clarifications and definitions are necessary before even beginning such a study, but also a number of fundamental considerations: the motivation for initiating this project and whether it is theoretically possible. This issue will be illustrated with a case study, focusing on the manner in which sources portray Mithradates VI Eupator, designed firstly to underline the difficulties faced by Ancient History in general and by this study in particular and secondly to indicate a number of strategies used to overcome them. This introductory section will conclude with a few considerations about the usefulness of the present study.

I. Definitions

I.1. Geographical span

Throughout this study, the phrase “Eastern Asia Minor” will be used to designate the territory in the Anatolian peninsula that was part of any of the following three kingdoms: Pontic Cappadocia, Greater Cappadocia and Commagene.

While this definition may seem quite straightforward, it is by no means impervious to dilemmas, given that borders in ancient times were much more fluid than they are since the modern era. What to make, therefore, of regions only temporarily or partly included in the territories of these kingdoms? For example, parts of Paphlagonia were annexed to the Pontic kingdom at various times in history, but enough remained to form an independent – albeit weak – kingdom (Pol., 25.2.5-9; Just., 37.4.1); Colchis was of extreme importance for the kingdom of Pontus, but only during the relatively short period when it was subjected to it, during the reign of Mithradates Eupator (Str., 12.3.1). Similarly, the Kingdom of Cappadocia included Cataonia only after it was conquered during the reign of Ariarathes III (Str., 12.1.2) and held certain parts of Cilicia, but only for a brief period of time (Str., 12.1.4).
The decision to include in the present research the three kingdoms of Pontic Cappadocia, Greater Cappadocia and Commagene was made based on the consideration that they formed a continuum in terms of cultural background (for reasons explained below, in the Geographical and Historical Overview) so the same will apply in deciding which regions to consider as relevant and which peripheral to our interest. Thus, for example, Paphlagonia, Cataonia or Armenia Minor were sufficiently integrated in the cultural network of the region to afford inclusion in the discussion throughout the period under scrutiny.

Other regions have a clearly defined and fully independent cultural identity during most of the Hellenistic era, but were included at a certain moment in the statal structures of one of the three kingdoms and this period of dominion left behind an important legacy. Prominent examples are Tauric Chersonesos and Colchis: while the present study will not concern itself with their history for the better part of the Hellenistic era, the wealth of information they supply about the last stages of the Pontic rule will be of major importance.

There are yet other regions that have been included in the territory of the said kingdoms in one form or another, but the occupation was so brief and the traces left behind so tenuous that they will not be considered in the present study. As mentioned above, an example of one such region is Cilicia, briefly held by Cappadocia. Another is Galatia, held in at least two occasions by Pontic kings (Pharnakes I and Mithradates VI Eupator) and the list may be expanded to include nearly all of Western Asia Minor, occupied by Eupator in the initial stages of the First War with Rome.

I.2. Chronological span

The meaning of the phrase “Hellenistic times” in the present work also requires definition. While the conventional limits for this era are 323 BC (the death of Alexander) and 31 BC (Octavian’s victory at Actium), the study of Eastern Anatolia requires a certain amount of flexibility.

The terminus post quem is the moment when these kingdoms were founded as independent entities, whether or not their rulers took the title of basileus. Thus, Greater Cappadocia is the oldest among them, with an autonomy gained as early as 330 BC, under Ariarathes I, former satrap of Dareios III. One sees, therefore, that this event precedes the death of Alexander and consequently the ‘official’ beginning of the Hellenistic era by some seven years. Although the independence of Cappadocia was subsequently lost to Perdiccas

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1 The ambiguity of the verb “to hold” is, in this context, intentional, as the process domination is not very clear: it might be military occupation, alliance, “vassalage”, or simply influence of a more powerful entity over a weaker one.
and his protégé, Eumenes, the nephew and successor of Ariarathes I – also bearing the dynastic name of Ariarathes – was to make an energetic comeback and re-established the hold of the dynasty on the kingdom. Pontic Cappadocia is next in line, founded by Mithridates I Ktistes around 300 BC. Finally, Commagene becomes independent in 163 BC, in the turmoil that followed the defeat of Antiochus III at Magnesia.

However different in their foundation, these kingdoms ended up as part of the Roman state, either as the result of forceful annexation or upon the extinction of the dynasty. However, Rome’s influence in the area was felt so strongly even before this terminal point, that it managed to alter the entire mechanism of legitimising a monarch’s and a dynasty’s sway over a kingdom. Thus, when the Ariarathid dynasty of Cappadocia becomes extinct following the more or less direct intervention of their powerful Northern neighbours, they try in the first place to resort to the expedient of αὐτονομία, but after it was refused, they gave their blessing (and military support) to the one elected by the nobility, Ariobarzanes I (Str., 12.2.11). Roman interventionism was brought to a far greater level only two generations later, when Antony appoints kings as he sees fit. Strabon makes this point quite clear when talking about the last king of Cappadocia, Archelaos: “καὶ εἵλοντο Ἀριοβαρζάνην· εἰς τριγον ίαν δὲ προελθόντος τοῦ γένους ἐξέλιπε, κατεστάθη δ’ ὁ Ἀρχέλαος οὐδὲν προσήκων αὐτοῖς Ἀντωνίου καταστίσαντος.” (12.2.11). It was not Archelaos’ belonging to a dynasty (although his grandfather had managed to contract a highly honourable, though extremely short marriage to Berenike IV, queen of Egypt) but quite simply the will of Marcus Antonius that put him on the throne. I would argue that this moment represents more than a simple dynastic hiatus and calls into question the very principles of monarchic rule as they had operated along the centuries (cf. infra, n. 58). It is, therefore, more cautious to exclude Archelaos’ reign from the present investigation. Much the same applies to Dareios, son of Pharnakes II, who is appointed king of Pontus by the same Antony. Although in his case there is an obvious dynastic continuity, his rule may also be excluded for the simple reason that the information available – little besides a short notice in Appian – does not offer much evidence for characterisation. Although established in the same rather arbitrary manner by Rome, the rule of Antiochos IV in Commagene (38, 41-72) deserves closer scrutiny. Also in his case, the dynastic ties were evident. What we know about Antiochos IV and his general policy makes him a continuator of his ancestors and justifies his inclusion in the present research. Furthermore, in the limited

2 App., Civ., 5.8.75: “ὡς δ’ ἐ<Ἀντώνιος> πι καὶ βασιλέας, οὖς δοκιμάσειεν, ἐπὶ φόροις τεταγμένως, Πόντου μὲν Δαρείαν τὸν Φαρμακίου τοῦ Μιθριδάτου, Ἰδαμιαίων δὲ καὶ Σαμαρείων Ἡρώδην, Αμύνταν δὲ Πισιδῶν καὶ Πολέμων μέρους Κιλικίας καὶ ἔτερους ἐς ἄλλα ἔθνη εἶναι”.
field of dynastic representation such a striking monument as Philopappos’ mausoleum in Athens is of great enough importance not to be ignored. I consider, therefore, the following dates as appropriate markers of the end for the states: 47 BC for Pontus, 36 BC for Cappadocia and 72 AD for Commagene. One sees, therefore, that the Battle of Actium, fateful though it was in other respects, does not offer a suitable landmark for the end of the Hellenistic era in the whole of Eastern Anatolia.

I.3. “Achaemenid” and “Greco-Macedonian”

I will consider Achaemenid all the traits in various fields such as the army, religion or dynastic principles identified in the official documents issued by the Achaemenid Empire (from inscriptions in Old Persian to papyri in Aramaic), whether or not they represent an inheritance from previous Mesopotamian powers, Iranian tradition or Achaemenid innovation. Under the same heading will be considered those traits designated by foreign sources (most notably Greek: Herodotos, Ktesias and others) as being of Persian origin, unless, of course, there is data that suggests the author was misinformed or misinforming. Thirdly, common features of the organisation of such states as Armenia and Parthia, related only through their real or constructed descent from the Achaemenid Empire, will be labelled as such. While basically the terms „Achaemenid” and „Iranian” will be used quite loosely and will generally be used as meaning the same thing, they will, at times, be used stricto sensu: Achaemenid to mean things that characterise the said monarchy and implemented by its administration, Iranian to mean traits more likely to have been introduced slowly and silently by the very fact of living in the same area with Iranian tribes, of which the Persians were but a rather small branch.

The Greco-Macedonian traits may be defined as features that may be found primarily in the Macedonian kingdom under the Argeads and the Antigonids, but also in the other Successor states, like the Seleukid and Ptolemaic Empires (provided, of course, that these cannot be explained by the common Achaemenid background), as gathered from the rather extensive collection of treatises concerned with politics by philosophers such as Aristotle, rhetoricians such as Isocrates or collectors of miscellaneous philosophical thought such as Diogenes Laertios, from official documents issued by these kingdoms (inscriptions, papyri etc.) or from historical works such as the Histories of Polybios. It is only with great difficulty that one might operate the distinction between what is Greek and what is Macedonian in a certain trait. For example, increasing monetisation of society is promoted in Asia by Alexander and his successors and may thus be deemed “Macedonian”, but

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3 For a brief, but useful synthesis of Greek political thought relating to monarchy, cf. Virgilio, 2003, pp. 17-30. See also an older, but informative account in Aalders, 1975, in particular pp. 17-38.
it is undertaken using Greek standards (the Attic drachm) and invariably promotes the use of the Greek language. This is the reason why I prefer the otherwise cumbersome compound “Greco-Macedonian”.

One major difficulty in interpreting certain traits as stemming from either of the two traditions is represented by the fact that there are phenomena which originated in one culture, but were transplanted, adapted and expanded in another. One example will illustrate this case fairly clearly: the Royal Pages and the Friends of the king were initially Persian institutions, but they were adopted by Argead Macedon and acquire increasing importance throughout the Hellenistic period. The institution of the philoi, for example, while retaining a certain fluidity according to the preferences of the king, becomes hierarchical and rigid as much as the Friends of a deceased king would expect to maintain their position under his successor as well. Such cases need to be analysed on an individual basis and they will be judged as mirroring one tradition or another only in those instances where documentation allows a clear characterisation. Continuing with the example given above, it will be considered that in Pontic Cappadocia the institution of the philoi reflects Macedonian influences, due to the fact that there are indications of hierarchy among the Friends and that the titles they bear match those present in other Hellenistic kingdoms.

II. The Motivation

Why is it important to study the reflexes that the two traditions, the Achaemenid and the Greco-Macedonian, have left in Eastern Anatolia? One easy answer would be “Because a systematic study in this area has yet to be produced.” Scattered observations can be found in every important work in the field, but no one has, to my knowledge, attempted to piece them all together. However, it is not an inexorable horror vacui that represents the inspiration for this task. Rather, it is fascinating that two worlds, so different if we are to believe what the Greeks constantly claimed ever since the time of the Median Wars, have managed to find a modus vivendi, even an osmosis. Perhaps the two were not so different, after all. Traces of interaction between these cultures have been identified very early, well before the Median Wars, and continue to show up well into the Parthian era, being identifiable from mainland Greece to the heart of the Iranian plateau. However, this investigation will not focus on the two cultural centres, but

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4 The issues of Ariarathes I with Aramaic legends are a notable exception, but might very well be satrapal issues, not independent Cappadocian.

5 Momigliano, 1975, p. 132.
rather on a particular area of interaction: Eastern Asia Minor. This “frontier study” will prove, I believe, at least as fruitful as that of the two centres (taken either separately or conjointly), providing results that will illuminate the study of the entire phenomenon. This should not surprise: individuals living within a culturally uniform environment adopt it unquestioningly in most cases, while individuals having contact with different traditions are forced to make a more or less conscious choice between them. Defining, discovering or even fabricating an identity in this context becomes thus a complex phenomenon and a rewarding object of study.

III. Theoretical Considerations

This invites the question: to what extent is it possible to observe the historical phenomenon represented by this identity-shaping process? Why pursue the observation in the first place? And do the conclusions possess any degree of epistemological validity? The articulation of the methodological observations presented below, many of which will represent nothing more than stating the obvious, is nevertheless necessary, as even the obvious tends to become obscured when confronted with certain aspects of Ancient History.

III.1. The Purpose of History

The purpose of this study, and ultimately the purpose of history itself, is to facilitate empathy, to make a past event or nexus of events intelligible to modern man. In a charming book, written with all the pathos one could expect from a historian who believes his craft lies at the crossroads between science and literature, Neagu Djuvara describes the process thus:

"Historical writing cannot spring primordially from reasoning. It blooms initially from a moment of illumination, a spiritual, emotional meeting with another human being, even separated by centuries and continents."

What separates, then, the diligent historian from the inspired novelist? In Djuvara’s own opinion, not very much, given that, according to his final observations, the test of perennity is passed more often by “the Poet” than by “the Historian”. This concern for the opinion of posterity, however, can become quite detrimental, as it is not very far from the ciceronian judgement that, although history is ‘magistra vitae’, the teacher of life (Cic., De Orat., 2.36), it remains a helpless ancillary to the higher art of rhetoric.

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6 Stretching the comparison a little, it is in the same way that psychology, by investigating the border between the “normal” and the “abnormal” produces results that illuminate both.

7 Djuvara, 2004, p. 57. His style is elaborate and highly idiomatic, and therefore the translation I have attempted is much drier than the original.

8 ibid., p. 137.
While not denying the purpose of facilitating empathy with human beings separated by us through time, the opposite view with regard to the role of posterity as judge of value is favoured in the English speaking countries, where Collingwood, for example, notes that:

Every new historian, not content with giving new answers to old questions, must revise the questions themselves; and—since historical thought is a river into which none can step twice—even a single historian, working at a single subject for a certain length of time, finds when he tries to reopen an old question that the question has changed.\(^9\)

The same idea is further developed by John Lewis Gaddis,\(^10\) who persistently likens history to sciences such as astrophysics or palaeontology, which deal with non-repeatable events. The argument is, rightly to my mind, that history is fundamentally a science,\(^11\) and tied consequently to the present by two aspects. One is the ever-changing body of evidence it must take into account and outside whose borders it is never allowed to step:\(^12\) being at all times fragmentary, this foundation only allows a “work in progress” approach to emitting conclusions. The other is the inescapable connection between the historian-observer and the concerns of his own times, which consciously or not bring different questions and different methods to the attention of different generations. For example, historians at the end of the 19\(^{th}\) century and at the beginning of the 20\(^{th}\) often made “race” an important factor in their analysis; after the 1960s studies regarding the status of women or sexuality began to emerge; nowadays, in an increasingly globalised society, we are concerned with cultural interaction and hybridity. Veyne was thus too optimistic to say ‘On ne voit pas ce qui empêcherait en droit les esprits de se mettre d’accord sur l’impérialisme séleucide ou sur mai 1968, à part le manque des documents’ (Veyne, 1971, p. 192).

This view might appear to invite a radical scepticism with regard to the validity of history as scientific discipline (and, implicitly, with regard to the meaningfulness of

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\(^9\) Collingwood, 1946, p. 248.
\(^10\) Gaddis, 2002.
\(^11\) Contrary to Veyne’s opinion, that history is primordially a narration ‘Les histoires racontent des événements vrais qui ont l’homme pour acteur, l’histoire est un roman vrai’ (Veyne, 1971, p. 10). This view, however, would conflate historical writings and journalistic pieces, both of which focus on human activities and strive for objectivity.
\(^12\) ‘History has this in common with every other science: that the historian is not allowed to claim any single piece of knowledge, except where he can justify his claim by exhibiting to himself in the first place, and secondly to any one else who is both able and willing to follow his demonstration, the grounds upon which it is based.’ (Collingwood, 1946, p. 252).
undertaking the present study), but in fact, it merely recommends prudence. Asking the question ‘Is there such a thing as true history?’, which articulates the fundamental question of the “critical philosophy of history”, Djuvara mentions two criteria that must be met: verifiability within the theoretical system (of general logic, of general knowledge in the field or of the particular study undertaken) and verifiability against the evidence.

III.2. Verifiability within the Theoretical System

Verifiability within the theoretical system is elusive. The principles of logic are relatively clear and prevent, to give but one example, ‘inappropriate generalisation’: from the true statements that Mithradates VI Eupator was a Pontic king and minted abundant bronze issues, one is not justified to derive the statement that all Pontic kings have done the same. Also, consistency within the body of the same work ought to be achieved with a minimum of attention from the author. However, the reference to generally accepted historical knowledge proves much riskier, as this communis opinio is far from immutable. For example, among North American archaeologists the “Clovis First Theory”, the theory which professed that the Clovis population was the first to have penetrated the Americas, was nearly a dogma, which influenced and restricted all research in the field of prehistory, deeming it useless to dig below the 11,000 BC threshold. However, new finds, both genetic and archaeological seem to finally disprove this view held for nearly half a century. Thus, fresh perspectives, new interpretations or recently discovered pieces of evidence can change radically previously accepted theses, which brings into question the other major criterion: verifiability against evidence.

III.3. Verifiability against evidence

Evidence, in the field of historical research, represents any item surviving from the past that carries intelligible and relevant information. For example, cave paintings represent evidence in so far as the history of weapon-making is concerned, for they depict scenes of hunt with harpoons and bows. They do not represent, however, evidence in so far as the history of religious ideas is concerned, for they either do not contain the relevant information or this information is unintelligible to us. This underscores a major difficulty: there is no such thing as bare evidence, for evidence is – and should be – permanently subjected to a process of interpretation. In a similar manner, at the Delphic oracle, Pythia’s ramblings required the mediation of the priests in order to be understood.

13 This discipline which concerns itself with analysing and providing the epistemological fundament for the methods historians use and is thus distinct from the philosophy of history, the branch of philosophy which concerns itself with identifying “laws” of historical development that have guided the course of history and will necessarily shape the future of mankind. The latter has, understandably, aroused the displeasure of professional historians, whose study is fundamentally that of the singular and unique events: ‘L’historiographie a affaire à des phénomènes qui ne se répètent pas’ (CIZEK, 1998, p. 81).
The evidence pertaining to the Ancient World at the disposal of the historian is primarily of three types: archaeological, epigraphical and literary. Archaeological evidence—such as remnants of amphorae or objects of art, to give but two random examples—represents the most trustworthy evidence available, often candid and unfiltered through the judgement of future generations. It is, unfortunately, also the most silent type of evidence, requiring the most effort of interpretation and placing into context on the part of the historian. The epigraphical evidence is also a direct link between the ancients and us. Though far more articulate than archaeological evidence, the latter lacks, nevertheless, the fundamentally candid character of the former. The last type of evidence taken into account here, the literary one, is the most treacherous. Historians of the past—for they represent the bulk of documents included in this category—have offered their contemporaries a digest of events, resulting at times from a lengthy process of documentation, including interviews with eye witnesses, at other times from a less arduous process of compilation of earlier works. This digest of events is more often than not clear, easy to follow and not infrequently enjoyable to read. Herein lays the greatest trap—that modern historians might take at face value what their predecessors have left behind. It is this situation, only in art, that Plato criticised so vehemently in his Politiea, 598.b: an imitation of an appearance (“φαντάσματος […] μίμησις”) can hardly aspire to represent the truth.

III.4. Scientific Theorising and ‘Truth as Correspondence’

The process follows to a good extent the theory of scientific development as outlined by K. R. Popper. Translating neo-Darwinian theory into epistemological terminology, he states that a multitude of hypotheses or theories are devised as tentative answers in order to solve a posited problem, much like genetic mutation attempts to deal with changes in the environment. If a theory manages to solve the problem, it is accepted as valid, i.e. it survives, but only for a period of time, after which the inevitable happens and a new fact is discovered which falsifies this theory, i.e. proves it to be wrong. Under these circumstances, a new set of theories appears, out of which the fittest will pass the test of survival, the one accounting for all the facts the previous theory took into consideration, plus all the facts it could not.

In the context of Ancient History this vision about the evolution of problems and theories does have its value, but special attention must be given to the critical point of “problem-solving”: when is it that a problem is considered to be solved? In chemistry, for example, a science of repetitive events, a theory solves a problem if the outcomes it postulates are verified in numerous experiments as actually happening. In history,
however, as in palaeontology, sciences of non-repetitive events, no such experiment can be run. Instead, according to Gaddis, the researcher conducts a thought experiment, running in his mind a scenario. A theory will then be considered valid, or as “solving a problem” if a number of different historians, with different backgrounds, different views and different personalities perform the same thought experiment and their results are reasonably close to each other’s.

It is important to note that there is one important criterion which is gracefully side-stepped: that of truth. Truth, however, viewed as an immutable, absolute value – almost in Platonic sense – is impossible to achieve through the scientific, falsifiable theorising. Instead, what Popper and others propose is the notion of ‘truth as correspondence’. In everyday life, it is ‘true’ that which corresponds to facts: the statement “Britain is an island” is considered true if one can see that Britain is a mass of land surrounded on all sides by water, and thanks to navigators since Antiquity and nowadays to satellite photography, this is amply demonstrated to be, indeed, the fact. In chemistry or physics, ‘truth’ can, likewise, be ascertained through observation. What about history?

III.5. Facts in History

In history, ‘correspondence to facts’ is harder to achieve, due to a paradoxical situation: facts elude us completely. The problem is present with the same acuteness in Modern History as in Ancient History. Take, for example, the account of an eye witness, obtained through an interview. He or she only perceived a small segment of what constitutes a ‘fact’, such as the Romanian Revolution of 1989: some watched it broadcast on television, so only experienced what the cameras could catch; others were present in Bucharest, but not in Timișoara; some were in the Palace Square, but not in front of the University. What he or she perceived in those moments is distorted by the emotional tumult of the moment, by rumours or fears: there were numerous sightings of ‘terrorists’, and many shots were fired at them, but among the victims no terrorists could be found. Furthermore, these partial perceptions are then altered through the mechanisms of imperfect human memory and are contaminated by hindsight: the heroes of the day are now viewed as plotters and even condemned for their participation in the events, as happened very recently with generals Victor Atanasie Stânculescu and Mihai Chițac, and this, in turn, shapes the narrative our hypothetical eye witness is likely to offer today.16

16 This contradicts again Veyne, who, after describing a fairly similar scenario, concludes with a defense of human objective knowledge: ‘Il demeure que tout ce que les substances hommes font dans la rue, de quelque manière qu’on les considère, est parfaitement objectif.’ (VEYNE, 1971, p. 58) However, it is not the objectivity of events that is problematic, but that of human perception, particularly in the heat of action.
Thus, even such recent events, or ‘facts’, are inaccessible to us in their raw form: they are mediated by accounts or material proof. The same applies to Ancient History as well: our only window towards the facts is represented by the evidence discussed above (cf. supra, pp. 12-13). What renders the situation more difficult, however, is the scarcity of evidence, archaeological, epigraphical and literary.

Again, this situation needs not cause despair, but merely invite caution. That we do, in fact, have access to past events or at least to essential aspects of past events is proven by criminology, for example. The task of the historian, then, is to discriminate the facts, then establish the theory making sense of them. ‘Discriminating the facts’ consists, in fact, of isolating errors: again, applying Popper’s ideas, by eliminating demonstrable errors or falsities in the body of available evidence, we come closer to delineating a set of ‘true’ facts, which then, in turn, serve as the reference point for ‘true’ theories.

III.6. Analysis of Evidence

The critical test which must be administered to the ‘inimical’ evidence is, borrowing a term from J.L. Gaddis,\(^\text{17}\) that of consilience.\(^*\)

Internal consistency is the first form of consilience to be sought, in case the piece of evidence under scrutiny is a narrative text. If contradictions appear within the body of the same work – which is a fairly rare occurrence – a problem arises which must be resolved. An example from the Bible will illustrate this point very well. Between Gen., 1:20 and 2:19 in the Septuagint there is a clear contradiction: in the former, God creates birds from the waters; in the latter, He creates them from the ground. Thus,

\begin{align*}
\text{Καὶ ἔητεν ὁ θεός Ἐξαγαγέτω τὰ ὤδατα ἑρπετὰ ψυχῶν ζωσῶν καὶ πετεινὰ πετόμενα ἐτά τῆς γῆς κατὰ τὸ στέρεωμα τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, καὶ ἐγένετο οὕτως. (Gen., 1:20)}

\text{but}

\text{καὶ ἔπλασεν ὁ θεὸς ἐτι ἐκ τῆς γῆς πάντα τὰ θηρία τοῦ ἄγροῦ καὶ πάντα τὰ πετεινὰ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ ἤγαγεν αὐτὰ πρὸς τὸν Άδαμ ἰδεῖν, τί καλέσει αὐτά, καὶ πάν, ὃ ἐὰν ἐκάλεσεν αὐτὸ Άδαμ ψυχήν ζωσῆν, τοῦτο ὄνομα αὐτοῦ. (Gen., 2:19)}

This contradiction has been perpetuated in the Latin Vulgate and henceforth in the King James Bible. The team which produced the translation published in the ‘New International Version’ eliminated this problem by translating the first verse in the form ‘And God said, Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth

\(^{17}\) GADDIS, 2002, p. 49.
across the expanse of the sky’.

This illustrates the basic strategy when coming across lack of consilience within the body of the same work: resolving the conflict in favour of one version, by demonstrating the alternative to be an error. In our example, it happened to be an error of translation from the original Hebrew, but other types of errors may conceivably occur: from faults of manuscript transmission, to simple, perfectly human slips on the part of the author, particularly in vast works, composed sometimes over decades.

Wherever possible, independent sources will be compared, on the presumption that if they agree, that particular detail has a higher chance of being true. The issue of independence, however, is particularly thorny in the Ancient World, where extensive quotations from previous works are not a mark of plagiarism, but of deference. Much philological knowledge has been invested, particularly in Germany, in the field of Quellenforschung, with mixed success: while in some cases it helps draw convincing links, in others it merely leads to dead ends. One must always wonder, therefore, if two concurring sources are truly independent.

There are numerous instances, however, when sources do not concur. It is sometimes possible to identify cases in which both sources are (partially) correct, but more often than not the historian must decide which source is more likely than the other to correspond to reality.

For example, it is well known from the second Book of Livy’s Ab Urbe condita that Porsenna never managed to conquer Rome: terrified after the Mucius Scaevola incident, he sends ambassadors to Rome to negotiate a peace, after whose conclusion, he leaves the Roman territory: ‘his condicionibus composita pace, exercitum ab Ianiculo deduxit Porsinna et agro Romano excessit’ (T. Liv., 2.13.4). Yet, a century later Tacitus seems convinced Porsenna had, in fact, conquered the City:

Id facinus post conditam urbem luctuosissimum foedissimunque rei publicae populi Romani accidit, nullo externo hoste, propitiis, si per mores nostros liceret, deis, sedem Iovis Optimi Maximi auspicato a maioribus pignus imperii conditam, quam non Porsenna dedita urbe neque Galli capta temerare potuissent, furore principum excindi. (Tac., Hist., 3.72)

The decision in this context requires much careful deliberation. Everything must be taken into account: the reason why a certain author writes a book, the meaning of a certain detail in its context, the general reliability of one author by comparison with another, how many other independent sources corroborate the information presented, possible sources
of the information and their own reliability and the list could be extended further. In the example offered above, given Livy’s purpose of glorifying Rome at every possible occasion, he is more likely to have preferred an embellished version of the story than Tacitus is to have concocted a denigrating one. Livy could have written the glorifying version himself, but he may also have recorded a legend. In this case, both he and Tacitus rely on oral tradition, a mutable and untrustworthy witness at best. However, while it is clearly conceivable that a capitulation would be glossed over in subsequent tales, the opposite phenomenon – describing a victory as a defeat – is very hard to imagine. It is therefore more probable that Tacitus’ version corresponds more closely to facts and has, therefore, more chances of being ‘true’.

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It is not only lack of consilience, however, which should arouse the suspicions of the historian. Too much consilience should also be regarded with circumspection. This indicates the likely existence of a single authoritative source for all later views: a historian so highly esteemed that later writers adopt his views unquestioningly, such as Polybios, for example; or the ‘official’, state-sanctioned version of events. Needless to say, the danger is that these trend-setting authorities are biased, and are thus unlikely to lead us to a ‘true’ set of facts.

Perhaps the best defence against such traps is the age-old common sense: reason, personal experiences of the historian and the accumulated experience of generations which offer us an insight into what is possible and probable that another human being or group of human beings could have done. There is always a danger that a historian will commit anachronisms, applying to a certain age – in our case, to Antiquity – evaluative criteria borrowed from other eras, including the modern one. Yet the risk is balanced by the observation that human nature has not changed, or has changed only superficially, i.e. in terms of technological evolution. For comparison, one may turn to the development of language, which according to recent studies seems to have become a fully functional tool, very similar to what we now proudly call ‘modern languages’, some 40,000 years ago.18

In the following pages, I will attempt a brief excursus through a selection of the surviving texts (the list is not meant to be exhaustive, but merely illustrative) surrounding one of the pivotal personalities of Eastern Anatolia in Hellenistic times – Mithradates VI Eupator. I will use this case study to better illustrate the difficulties faced by the researcher in disentangling the truth or the semblance of truth from the jungle of information under very harsh conditions: the personality of the king dominates his times, so exaggerations will be numerous; his external policy brought him into conflict with the Romans, the big

18 JANSON, 2002, pp. 3-5
winners of the Antiquity, whose point of view dominated historiography for millennia, so vilifications will abound; his own perception-creation machinery strived to present him as a complex personality, so misunderstandings will not lack; finally, his almost peripheral position in relation to the Mediterranean, this true ‘central nervous system’ of the oikoumene, made him an easy target for preconception-spinners.

IV. Whose Mithradates?

IV.1. Internal Sources

Unfortunately, the nature of Mithradates’ involvement with Rome has made it so that few examples remain today of accounts of his life which treated him favourably or at least dispassionately. We know that among his courtiers there were men of letters and of these, some must have written histories. The most famous of them, Metrodoros of Scepsis, might offer us a profile of such a man, although it is by no means certain that he tried himself the historical genre. A Mysian by birth, educated most likely in Athens, he found his fortune in Chalkedon: he married a local wealthy girl and may even have obtained citizenship there. He courted Mithradates VI while Fortune still smiled upon the king, and was rewarded with a high judicial status (in all likelihood ἐπὶ τῶν ἀνακρίσεων) and with the position of ambassador. On this occasion, he acquitted himself less than honourably of his duties, as he seems not to have hesitated in betraying the Pontic king in favour of Tigranes. Sometime afterwards, nevertheless, an indiscretion of the Armenian king made it so that the Scepsian lost his life.19 A learned man, albeit of doubtful loyalties, Metrodoros made remarks in his writings about the geography and ethnography of Northern Anatolia,20 which is not uncommon in historical prose and was nicknamed “the Roman-hater”,21 which may indicate that he was quite vehement in the treatment of the Eupator’s foes and, consequently, quite favourable – even adulatory – to him. This should warn us that even if we did possess an extensive piece by him that treated the historical context of the day, in all likelihood it would carry as much propaganda as the pro-Roman histories, the difference being merely the target of insults. As it happens, however, no such work survives today, neither by Metrodoros, nor by any other literate at the Pontic court.

The few texts emanating from the Court or from people in the proximity of the court are preserved in occasional inscriptions. Those preserved in the so-called ‘Delian heroon’ (ID, 1569-1574) are too schematic to allow a thorough analysis at this point. Much more

19 This biographical sketch is based on Str., 13.1.55 and Plut., Luc., 22.2-5.
20 Str., 11.5.1; Plin., 8.36; Plin., 28.78.
21 Plin., 34.34: ‘Metrodorus Scepsius, cui cognomen a Romani nominis odio inditurum est’.
rewarding is the ‘Diophantos inscription’ (JosPE 1, 352) set up by the Chersonesitans following the successful campaign of the Pontic general against the barbarians in the Crimean Hinterland, sometime in the last decade of the 2nd century BC. Here, young Mithradates is portrayed as energetic and animated by generosity, as he leaves no call for help unheeded, even if it comes at a very bad time, at the beginning of winter (v. 18); as a lover of justice, since he punishes the perfidious Pairisades (v. 43); finally, as a great king, crowned by eternal glory after his victory over the Scythians through the agency of the capable Diophantos (vv. 26-7). Given the context, grateful for having been liberated from the Scythian pest and eager to please their new de facto master, it is not surprising that the Chersonesitans painted the portrait of the king in such bright colours.

* The largest cohesive body of information about Asia Minor in Hellenistic times and at the same time the closest thing to an internal source about Eupator’s reign we now possess remains Strabon’s Geographika. This is a crucially important source, for a number of reasons. Firstly, Strabon has intimate knowledge of the geographical area and its oral traditions, having been born in Amaseia and having, to his own confession, travelled widely and seen things for himself: in 2.5.11 he claims to have travelled from Etruria to Armenia and from the Euxine to Ethiopia. He is particularly well informed with respect to Eastern Anatolia. Thus, in his description of Cappadocian Comana, he invokes his visit there (Str., 12.2.3) or in his account of the rites performed by the Persian magi, he claims to have witnessed them, again in Cappadocia (Str., 15.3.15). Secondly, his family connections make him privy to information only available to the close collaborators of the king: Strabon’s grandfather was in a position to hand over to Lucullus fifteen strongholds (Str., 12.3.33); his great-uncle, Moaphernes, was the king’s friend and governor of Colchis (Str., 11.2.18) and one of the few to remain faithful to the old king to the bitter end (Str., 12.3.33); his great-great-grandfather was Dorylaos, nicknamed ‘the Tactician’, a close collaborator of
Mithradates V Eupator (Str., 10.4.10); his great-grandfather’s cousin, also called Dorylaos, attained the position of High Priest of Comana (Str., 12.3.33), being thus ‘second to the king’. Thirdly, he sees things from a vantage point, having a clear perspective of the entire trajectory followed the king’s career, because he is writing in the Augustan period. There are three main theories regarding the date at which the Geography has been written. One is endorsed among others by Anderson, stating it has been created in two stages – the first finished in about 7-2 BC, the second being a revision undertaken in the early years of Tiberius’ reign. This hypothesis no longer enjoys favour among scholars. The second, advocated mainly by Pothecary, argues for a relatively brief period of composition, within the chronological span of Tiberius’ reign (AD 17/18 - 23). The third theory is proposed by Clarke and Bowersock, contending that the process of writing this work was continuous and took several decades, from as early as 7 BC to about 23 AD.

While doubtlessly of great importance, Strabon’s account must be read with a number of important caveats in mind: he writes specifically for a contemporary audience, made up of statesmen and educated men, who have an interest in the current state of affairs. He emphasizes in the introduction the practical usefulness of his work for statesmen and generals, who do not and need not have antiquarian interests. That is why the historical sketches he inserts are presented in order to illuminate an aspect of the present. Moreover, Strabon is likely to have omitted from his geographical account items he had already discussed in his now lost Histories. Furthermore, in the Geography there are some differences between his treatment of Asia Minor and the treatment he offers to other regions of the oikoumene, which suggests Books 11-13 have been written with a certain agenda in mind. Desideri believes Strabon is consistently trying to emphasize the importance of the contribution brought by Asia Minor to the world in terms of culture, attempting in a way to demonstrate it is by no means a periphery of the Greco-Roman world. One must be on guard, therefore, because this intention might distort, ever so slightly, his description of the area.

Mithradates VI Eupator is a character who appears in numerous passages of the Geography, and is endowed with a complex personality, sometimes even contradictory,

22 Anderson, 1923.
24 Clarke, 1997; Bowersock, 2000.
25 “ὅ τι δ’ ἂν διαφύγῃ τῆς παλαιᾶς ἱστορίας, τοῦτο μὲν ἐστέον (οὐ γὰρ ἐνταῦθα τὸ τῆς γεωγραφίας ἔργον), τὰ δὲ νῦν ὀντα ἐλεκτέον.” (Str., 12.8.7).
26 Str., 1.1.22.
27 “τῆς γεωγραφίας τὸ πλέον ἐστὶ πρός τὰς χρείας τὰς πολιτικάς.” (Str., 1.1.16).
a man almost larger than life. His first appearance is in the guise of a civilising hero, who, alongside Alexander, the Romans and the Parthians, has done much to expand the boundaries of the known world.

There is a perceivable sense of admiration for the king in those passages where his campaigns against the barbarians in Crimea are described. This is, however, counterbalanced by the observation that these campaigns were ill-intended, as they were simply a preparation for the war on Rome.

The king is capable of organising successful campaigns, crowned by outstanding victories, such as the one obtained on the river Amnias against Nicomedes (Str., 12.3.40), but also disastrous ones, such as the one concluded with the defeat at Orchomenos (Str., 9.2.37), Moreover, he is outgeneralled by Pompey (Str., 12.3.28).

The king is extremely generous towards friends, but also brutal in the extreme with them at the slightest suspicion of betrayal: such happened with Dorylaos and his relatives or with Metrodoros, who is rumoured to have died on the order of the king.

His ruthlessness (besides his bad luck in the conduct of the war with Rome) incites some of his collaborators to defect, but his personality is strong enough to command the loyalty of others even in the hour of defeat (both cases are illustrated in Strabon’s own family: Str., 12.3.33).

Eupator is a true euergetes, showing his generosity towards a number of cities and sanctuaries, such as Sinope (Str., 12.3.11), Amisos (Str., 12.3.14) or the Artemision at Ephesos (Str., 14.1.23). At the same time, however, he – unlike the Romans – despises the freedom of Athens (Str., 9.1.20) and appears to bring nothing but destruction to the cities of Asia Minor which happened to stand in the way of his troops (Str., 10.5.4; 12.8.16; 13.1.66).

Eupator reigned over vast territories, many of which he had acquired himself (Str.,...
12.3.1-2) and his riches were almost fabulous (Str., 7.4.6; 12.3.31), but his subsequent conduct made it so that his fame was greatly diminished. Thus, what makes the city of Dardanos worthy of remembrance is the peace concluded here between Sulla and himself: significantly, he is the second, inferior party of this contract.33

He is the representative of a highly respected dynasty, and even impostors claiming descent from him are assured an honourable position, even as kings: such happened to Archelaos (Str., 12.3.34; 17.1.11) or to Mithradates of Pergamon (Str., 13.4.3). At the same time, Eupator was responsible for reducing the dynasty to insignificance34 and his dispute with the Romans eventually made it so that his realm was taken over by them, much like Cleopatra’s (Str., 6.4.2).

Thus, one sees in Strabon’s treatment of Eupator – on the one hand admiration for having outdone his predecessors in extending the boundaries of his kingdom, protecting the interests of Greeks, or practicing evergetism and, on the other hand, reproach for unwisely starting the war with the Romans, which ultimately brought the downfall of his kingdom and that of his dynasty – the reflexes of Strabon’s own family interests and the position of his intended audience.

IV .2. External sources: Greek authors

Writing in the mid- and late 1st century BC, Diodoros of Sicily was a contemporary of Mithradates Eupator, studying in the relative calmness of Alexandria. A bookish man, he patched together information he gathered from very diverse sources, to create a monumental work in forty books. For the books we possess in more or less complete form, his sources are often transparent (Ktesias, Herodotos, Hieronymos of Cardia, Polybios or Poseidonios). Unfortunately, not the same could be said about the last books, which contain the bulk of information about the Mithradatic Wars, and of which we possess but disjointed fragments. While the very title of his work would lead us to believe he relied exclusively on written documents – books, in particular –, it is not inconceivable that he also used oral sources. After all, between the Ptolemaic and the Mithradatid court there had been numerous contacts, not the least of which was the arrival in Alexandria of Archelaos, who pretended to be a son of Mithradates VI and who reigned Egypt for about six months (56-55 BC), as husband of Berenike IV, until killed while battling the forces of A. Gabinius, the Roman governor of Syria, though unfortunately any speculation about who may have been his immediate source on Pontic affairs is hazardous.

33 “ἐνταῦθα δὲ συνῆλθον Σύλλας τε Κορνήλιος ὁ τῶν Ῥωμαίων ἡγεμὼν καὶ Μιθριδάτης ὁ κληθεὶς Εὐπάτωρ, καὶ συνέβησαν πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἐπὶ καταλύσει τοῦ πολέμου.”, Str., 13.1.28
34 “Μιθριδάτης ὁ κτίστης προσαγορευθεὶς κατέστη τοῦ Πόντου κύριος, καὶ οἱ ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ τὴν διαδοχὴν ἑφύλαξαν μέχρι τοῦ Εὐπάτορος”, Str., 12.3.41. It is relevant that Strabon ignores Pharnakes II, which can only mean that he does not see him as a ruler of any significance.
If he did use a source close to the Pontic court, it would explain the treatment received by the king in the *Bibliotheke*, which varies between neutral and slightly appreciative. Thus the first bit of information we receive is that he has his greatest palace in Sinope, which must be therefore his capital (*Diōd.*, 14.31.2). He appears next in the context of the Social War, when his aid is requested by the rebellious Italians (*Diōd.*, 37.2.11). The author refrains from making any judgement as to whether the king’s negative answer stemmed from prudence or from lack of foresight. Diodoros is careful to mention the existence of more stages in the king’s difficult relation with Rome. While in 14.31.2 he is simply “Μιθριδάτης ὁ πρὸς Ῥωμαίους διαπολεμήσας” (the preverb δια– may indicate here either that the battle was of very long duration, almost permanent, or that the battle was fought to the bitter end), in 37.2.12 he is the unwilling target of Roman avarice. Finally, after being defeated by Sulla, he is turned into an ally of Rome. The personality of Mithradates is not devoid of royal charisma: even though his troops are inferior in quality to their opponents, his presence among them inspires much zeal (*Diōd.*, 37.28.1). At the siege of Cyzicos, he has the courage to abandon royal decorum and expose his person to danger by descending into a pit to meet with a centurion who had promised to betray the city (*Diōd.*, 37.22b.1).

Given the fragmentary state of the narrative focusing on Mithradates, it is unwise to formulate any definitive conclusions about Diodoros’ view of the Pontic king and how this view was influenced by the circumstances in which the historian lived and worked. Suffice to say that there must have existed sources at least neutral to the king, if not altogether favourable to him, that our historian took the trouble to record, helping us in the process to gain a more nuanced picture of the era.

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A very important account is provided by Memnon of Herakleia, who wrote a large monograph on the history of his home town throughout the Hellenistic times. It only survived in a reasonably detailed summary made by the 9th century Byzantine patriarch and polymath Photios. It is impossible to date his work with precision, but the nature of his histories is obviously apologetic: the main purpose of our author seems to be to excuse the Heracleotes of any anti-Roman attitude they may have appeared to show, particularly during the wars Mithradates waged against the Romans. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Pontic king is portrayed as a menacing villain.

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35 “ἀντιποιουμένων πολλῶν ἐνδόξων τυχεῖν τῆς κατὰ Μιθριδάτου στρατηγίας διὰ τὸ μέγεθος τῶν ἐπάθλων.”

36 “Σύλλας γὰρ, […] Μιθριδάτην σύμμαχον ποιησάμενος καὶ παραλαβόντος αὐτοῦ τὸν στόλον ἐπανήλθεν εἰς τὴν Ἰταλίαν.” (*Diōd.*, 38/39.6.1)
Throughout the account, Mithradates is seen as a persistent murderer, from childhood to his old age. He started by killing his mother and brother, he murdered his nephew (Mεμν., 22.1) and had his own wives executed (Mεμν., 30.1). No wonder, then, that he also instigated the butchery of all Italians in Asia (Mεμν., 22.9). He is a formidable and intimidating foe, and the Heracleotes naturally fear him (Mεμν., 26.2), all the more so as he leads innumerable hosts. He is a capable general, to whom Tigranes entrusts the leadership of the Armenian troops (Mεμν., 38.6), and a very cunning plotter, succeeding in overpowering the city of Heracleia without striking a blow. Mithradates is an unabated despot, and he treats the Chians cruelly (Mεμν., 23.1). As a consequence, any self-respecting Greek will abandon his cause as a matter of course.

The purpose of the histories – explaining why the inhabitants of Heracleia were compelled at times by constraining circumstances to take a stance unfriendly to Rome – determines therefore the main characteristics of Eupator, the one responsible for exerting such pressures on the city: he is a complete alien to the Greek and Roman world, an oriental despot, almost a latter-day Xerxes. Needless to say, one must treat this account with the utmost prudence.

Appian of Alexandria flourished in the 2nd century AD, belonged to the equestrian class and obtained a high position in the Roman administration of Egypt. In his Mithridatika, the Pontic king is a cruel despot, with immense resources and evil intentions. His first extended description is found in the speeches delivered by ambassadors before the Roman commanders in Asia just before the outbreak of the First War. Bithynian envoys portray him as a plotter and a murderer, making unrelenting preparations with a view to fighting not only his neighbours, but Rome herself (App., Mithr., 13), while Pelopidas, the Pontic envoy describes him as a ruler over both Asia and Europe, over Greeks and barbarians alike, and enjoying the friendship of the most important rulers of the East (App., Mithr., 15-16).

In victory, he is most cruel: he executes Aquilius by pouring molten gold down his throat (App., Mithr., 21); masterminds the massacre of Italians in Asia (App., Mithr., 22);
treats harshly the inhabitants of Chios for a personal grudge (App., Mithr., 25 and 46-47); murders the Galatian tetrarchs (App., Mithr., 46). In defeat, however, he behaves almost like a coward, being intimidated by Sulla during the Dardanos conference (App., Mithr., 58).

Throughout the account, the king acts as a suspicious despot, punishing harshly all those he caught in the act of treason or merely suspected of plotting, be they friends (App., Mithr., 48; 90; 102) or even members of his own family (App., Mithr., 64; 107). He even ordered his wives killed, not because they were guilty of anything, but so they would not fall into the hands of the Romans (App., Mithr., 82).

The Oriental odour of his personality is ensured by numerous references to his appointing satraps over conquered regions (App., Mithr., 21), sacrificing to Persian gods (App., Mithr., 66 and 70), defying the gods of Greece, in particular Persephone, by continuing the siege of Cyzicus (App., Mithr., 75-6), being surrounded by eunuchs and mysterious healers, such as those Agari of Scytian stock who cure him using snake venom (App., Mithr., 88) or by the exotic tortures he uses to punish deserters (App., Mithr., 97).

The obituary, however, containing the final assessment of Mithradates’ personality (App., Mithr., 112) puts him in a completely different light. The nobility of his race is underscored, as is his personal bravery and physical strength, his resourcefulness and energetic nature and his patronage of Greek letters.

The contrast between these apparently conflicting portrayals can be explained quite easily. Appian needs to explain how, as a consequence of the Mithradatic Wars, Rome ended up ruling a significant portion of Asia. Thus, in the initial stages, Mithradates is cast into the role of ruler of the East, with all the traits enumerated above. As soon as he ceased to be a threat, however, he became a trophy, whose virtues only serve to enhance the glory of his victors. Appian’s stereotypical portrayal of the Pontic king must be therefore handled with the greatest care.

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The view Plutarch had about Mithradates does not seem to be very coherent, for the traits of the king vary according to the work in which he is portrayed. In the ‘Parallel Lives’, he is present to various degrees in four narratives: Sulla, Lucullus, Pompeius and Sertorius. While in the last of these he makes but an episodic appearance, being little more than a prop to underscore the noble character of Sertorius, who refuses to concede him Asia (Plut., Sert., 23.4-24.2), in the other three narratives his character is sketched in much more detail. He is the epitome of the oriental despot: wealthy beyond belief (Plut., Sulla, 11.2; 16.2-3; Luc., 7.4-5; 18.1; Pomp., 32.8; 42, 2-3), leader of immeasurable hosts (Plut., Sulla, 11.2-3; 15.1; Luc., 7.4), plunders holy sites (Plut., Luc., 13.4), disposes
arbitrarily of the lives of those around him, such as his sisters, wives, sons or sick and wounded soldiers (Plut., Luc., 18.1-4; Pomp., 32.3, 37.1), behaves like a tyrant in the hour of glory and like a coward in the moment of crisis (Plut., Sulla, 23.6; Luc., 17.2; 31.7). From this point of view, there are many similarities between Plutarch’s and Memnon’s portrayal of Mithradates.

However, in the so-called ‘minor works’, Mithradates is freed from the restrictions demanded by these *topoi*, only to be integrated in other literary motifs. Thus, in the ‘Womanly virtues’ he is almost a herodotean character: haughty in the hour of glory, but once exposed to danger becoming wiser and even compassionate (Plut., Mul.Virt., 259.A-C). There is even a partial overlap with the well-known tragic scenario from Sophocles’ *Antigone*: Mithradates, however, does not follow in Creon’s footsteps and by his conduct shows himself to have evolved from the stance of tyrant to that of true king:

> ὁ δ’ Ἐπορηδόριξ κατακοπεὶς ἄταφος ἐξεβέβλητο, καὶ τῶν φίλων οὐδεὶς ἔτόλμησε προσελθεῖν γύναιον δὲ Περγαμηνὸν ἐγνωσμένον ἀφ’ ὥρας ζῶν [τι] τῷ Γαλάτῃ παρεκινδύνευσε διάφως καὶ περιστεῖλαι τὸν νεκρὸν ἠσθῶντο δ’ οἱ σφήκας καὶ συλλαβόντες ἀνήγαγον πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα. λέγεται μὲν οὖν τι καὶ πρὸς τὴν ὄψιν αὐτῆς παθεῖν ὁ Μιθριδάτης, νέας παντάπασι καὶ ἀκάκου τῆς παιδίσκης φανείσης· ἔτι δὲ μᾶλλον ὡς ἔσθε ἐκ τῶν ἐκείνου λαβοῦσαν. (Plut., Mul.Virt., 259.C-D)

Another instance in which the Pontic king shows himself above common human beings is his privileged relation to the divinity, in particular Dionysos, as he repeatedly and miraculously survives lightning strikes (Plut., Quaest.Conviv., 624.A-B).

Plutarch’s greatest vulnerability (and one he seems perfectly aware of) is that, focusing on making a point, he is often uncritical in his use of sources. For example, when narrating the story of the Roman generals, he uses the documents they had issued themselves (such as Sulla’s own *Memoires* or Lucullus’ report to the Roman Senate41); when he is interested in exploring the connections between a regal person and a god, he seems to be using materials provided by courtly propaganda.

The account of Pausanias will focus, quite predictably, on the impact the Mithradatid Wars had on Greece. Without exception, the traces left behind by the Pontic soldiers
are those of destruction and desolation. Mithradates is introduced bluntly as a barbarian king: “Μιθριδάτης ἐβασίλευε βαρβάρων τῶν περὶ τὸν Πόντον τὸν Εὔξεινον.” (PAus., 1.20.4) and this discourse of alterity will be perpetuated throughout the account. If any Greeks join his cause, they are the lowest and most foolish Hellas has to offer. Eupator is a patron of murderers and robbers (PAus., 3.23.2), but he and his henchmen are eventually punished by the divinity.

While the individual bits of information – such as the presence of Mithradatid troops at a certain location and their eventual defeat at the hands of the Romans – are in all likelihood accurate, other pieces of information, such as details about the conduct of soldiers and interpretations regarding motives, intentions and responsibilities have probably been contaminated by Pausanias’ anger at encountering the traces or memories of past destruction in his beloved Hellas and must therefore be thoroughly questioned.

* Aelianos the Sophist records a most unusual piece of information about Mithradates:

Μιθριδάτης ὁ Ποντικὸς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ φρουρὰν καθεύδων ἐπίστευεν ἠττον καὶ τοῖς ὅπλοις καὶ τοῖς δορυφόροις, καὶ διὰ τούτο ἠμέρας ἐλαφον. καθεύδοντα οὐν ἔφρούρουν αὐτὸν οἶδε οἱ θῆρες, εἰτὶ προσιοί τάχιστα ἐκ τῆς ἀναπνοῆς αἰσθανόμενοι. καὶ ὃ μὲν τῷ μυκήματι, ὃ δὲ τῷ χρεμετίσματι, ὃ δὲ τῇ μηκῇ διύπνιζον αὐτὸν. (Ael., Nat.Anim., 7.46).

On practical grounds, it seems quite hard to believe in the literality of this guardianship by a bull, a horse and a deer. If one remembers, however, that the Pontic coinage minted under Mithradates Eupator did, in fact, feature quite prominently the stag and the (winged) horse, one is tempted to think twice before discarding this account as utterly fantastic. Given that that these three animals enjoy a special relation with the Anatolian Great Mother, it is perhaps not far-fetched to surmise that the initial story told that the king was under her protection (perhaps in her Cappadocian hypostasis, Ma: cf. infra, pp. 131-132), through the agency of these three sacred animals. Aelian may have
rationalised the story, reducing it to yet another instance of royal paranoia.

* 

Galenus, one of the great medical writers of Antiquity, seems to have been interested in one aspect alone of Mithradates’ life: his experiments with poisons and their antidotes. Thus, mentions of the mithridation, a panacea, are very abundant in a number of treatises, dealing with the composition of medicines or antidotes. The king is presented as a great personality (“Μιθριδάτην ἐκείνον τὸν μέγαν πολεμιστήν [...]”, Galen., Theriac., 14.283) and inspiring love, at least to his daughters, who decide on their own to commit suicide with their father.44 The story about how he met his end, forced to use a sword due to the burdensome effectiveness of his antidote is a recurrent one. One description of an experiment is particularly disturbing, however:

ὁ γάρ τοι Μιθριδάτης οὗτος, ὅσπερ καὶ ὁ καθ’ ἡμᾶς Ἀτταλος, ἐσπευσθὲν ἐμπειρίαν ἄντην σχεδόν τῶν ἁπλῶν φαρμάκων, ὥσα τοῖς ολεθριοῖς ἀντιτείχαται, πειράζων αὐτῶν τὰς δυνάμεις ἐπὶ πονηρῶν ἀνθρώπων, ὡν θάνατος κατέγνωστο. (Galen., Antid., 14.2).

In a post-Holocaust world, such disrespect for human beings – whatever their social or racial status – in the name of medical science is nothing short of monstrous, but Galenus seems to comment the incident quite calmly. Clearly we are dealing here with a semi-mythical account, based entirely on oral tradition, as Mithradates is not known to have written a book about his scientific exploits (unlike, for example, the last of the Attalids, Attalos III Philometor Euergetes). One must be therefore be extremely careful before taking this account at face value and comparing Mithradates with Josef Mengele or other modern monsters.

* 

Mithradates in the “Roman Histories” of Cassius Dio is mostly present as an effigy of the worthy opponent. True enough, he has a history of mischief towards the interests of Rome, instigating the Thracians to plunder Greece down to Zeus’ temple at Dodona (Cass. Dio, 30-35.101.2) and he instigated the murder of all Romans in Asia (Cass. Dio, 30-35.101.1), but even this crime pales in comparison to Sulla’s treatment of his own compatriots in the context of the Civil War.45

44 “πιὼν < Μιθριδάτης > τὸ φάρμακον καὶ πολὺ γε αὐτοῦ λαβὼν αὐτὸς μὲν οὐκ ἀπέθνησε, τάς δὲ θυγατέρας πᾶν υπολογίσας αὐτῷ διὰ τὴν φόβον συναποθάνειν πιῶσας τὸ αὐτὸ φάρμακον ταχέως ἀποκτανήσας” (Galen., Theriac., 14.284)

45 “ἀλλ’ αὐτοὶ μὲν ἀνεβίβλητο, οἱ δ’ ἄλλοι κατεσφάγησαν καὶ ἐς τὸν ποτάμον ἔφυμεν, ὡστε τὸ τοῦ Μιθριδάτου πολὺ δεινὸν νομισθῆναι, ὅτι ποτὲ πάντας τοὺς ἐν τῇ Ασίᾳ Ρωμαίους ἐν μιᾷ ἡμέρᾳ ἀπέκτεινεν, ἐν βραχέι πρὸς τὸ πλῆθος καὶ πρὸς τὸν τρόπον τῶν τότε φασινευθέντων νομισθῆναι.” (Cass. Dio, 30-35.109.8)
The king has a magnetic personality and commands the loyalty of his subjects when he returns from exile (Cass. Dio, 36.9.2). Even his former mercenaries, who had served the Romans during his exile, are eager to side with him at the first opportunity (Cass. Dio, 36.9.3). The slaves, also, to whom he had proclaimed freedom, join his cause (ibid.). Mithradates is endowed with great personal courage and amazing physical prowess, in spite of old age, riding forward to meet the enemy and receiving a wound in the process. Undeterred by this incident, he continues to lead his armies in the field, receiving another severe wound.

He has a sense of royal dignity which no hardship manages to tame, even bordering on hybris. Even in the midst of the greatest distress, he does not lose hope and conceives bold plans, dreaming to take the battle into the heart of the enemy territory. Mithradates had proven himself worthy of the royal title (“σοφώτατος ὁ Μιθριδάτης ἐς πάντα τὰ βασιλικά”, Cass. Dio, 37.12.2). An extraordinary man, almost a Romantic figure avant la lettre, he meets with a fitting end, equally extraordinary.

The nature of these generally sympathetic comments is partly explained by the fact that Dio, a native of Asia Minor, may have felt somehow proud of his ‘neighbour’. Another explanation might be that in the age when Dio writes, from the time of Caracalla to that of Alexander Severus, the legacy of Alexander the Great and the Hellenistic monarchies which succeeded him was being re-evaluated and finally incorporated in the political universe of Rome. Alexander and his imitators had by now become acceptable role-models for Roman emperors, and this may have prompted Dio to create an idealised portrait of the Pontic king, among whose qualities virtus / ἀρετή and maiestas seem to be quite prominent.

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The often jocose nature of Athenaios’ *Deiphosophistai* will bring to the fore a different aspect of Mithradates’ personality. In various sections of this great work, Eupator is seen in continuity with other royal figures, such as Seleukids or Ptolemies, in the performance of kingly duties. Thus, he dutifully befriends men of letters, such as Athenion (*Athen.*, 5.48) or the seer Sosipatros (*Athen.*, 6.61). He possesses immense wealth and this transforms him into an effigy of *tryphē*. Thus, he starts a contest of drinking and eating.\(^a\) He wins it, thus displaying royal arête, and confers the price upon the runner-up, displaying thus royal magnificence. His generosity is mentioned in another context as well: the inhabitants of Arykandis put their hopes in him to clear them of debts (*Athen.*, 12.35), but we do not know whether Eupator actually met their fairly insolent demands. When at the height of his glory, he casts a truly magnificent figure: a vivid impression of that is offered through a fictitious discourse of Athenion (*Athen.*, 5.50). He is sometimes harsh, as when he punishes the inhabitants of Chios.\(^b\) Interestingly enough, even this incident fails to put him in a bad light, as he is seen to act as nothing more than an agent of Nemesis.\(^c\)

The relative sympathy enjoyed by Hellenistic kings in general in the “*Banqueting sophists*” may be responsible for Athenaios’ mild stance with regard to certain aspects of Mithradates’ conduct. While this represents a very useful exercise, allowing us to view the king through the eyes of a sympathetic court, one must also be on guard to spot any instances in which the author may have glossed over serious incidents.

**IV.3. External sources: Roman authors**

In the work of Cicero, Mithradates acquires diverse attributes and roles, according to the immediate purpose of the orator. While he is at all times a *hostis*, and even “*hostis in ceteris rebus nimis ferus et immanis*” (*Cic.*, *Verr.*, II.2.51), he oscillates between cowardly tyrant and worthy opponent. Thus, when the discourse demands him to step into the shoes of the arch-enemy of Rome, so as to excuse, for example, the less than courageous conduct of a fellow Roman, or to allow the appointment of Pompey as a general, Mithradates exercises cruelty against the toga-bearing Romans, wherever he

\(^a\) “Νικόλαος [...] Μιθριδάτην φησὶ τὸν Ποντικὸν βασιλέα προθέντα ἀγῶνα πολυφαγίας καὶ πολυποσίας ἤν δὲ τὸ ἄθλον τάλαντον ἀργυρίου$ \text{λογοτετα νικῆσαι. τὸν μέντοι ἄθλου ἐκστῆναι τῷ μετ' αὐτὸν κριθέντι Καλαμόδρυι τῷ Κυζικηνῷ ἀθλητῇ.” (*Athen.*, 10.9)

\(^b\) “Νικόλαος δ’ ὁ περιπατητικὸς καὶ Ποσειδώνιος ὁ στωικὸς ἐν ταῖς ἱστορίαις ἑκάτερος τοὺς Χίους φασὶν ἐξανδραποδισθέντας ὑπὸ Μιθριδάτου τοῦ Καππάδοκος παραδοθῆναι τοῖς ἰδίοις δούλοις δεδεμένους, ἵν’ εἰς τὴν Κόλχων γῆν κατοικισθῶσιν” (*Athen.*, 6.91)

\(^c\) “οὕτως αὐτοῖς ἀληθῶς τὸ δαιμόνιον ἐμήνισε πρώτοις χρησαμένοις ἄνητοις ἀνδραπόδοις τῶν πολλῶν αὐτουργῶν ἄντων κατὰ τὰς διακοινίας.” (*Athen.*, 6.91)
happens to meet them and he is responsible for the criminal act of having killed all Romans in Asia. However, when Cicero’s task is to acquit a man accused of rapine in the same province of Asia, the orator strives to offset the guilt of Mithradates and focus more on the complicity of the Greek cities in the process (Cic., Pro Flac., 57), who even had the impertinence to deem him their saviour. Then, when the immediacy of the war disappeared, Mithradates remained solely a trophy obtained by Rome, and the glory of the victor could only be augmented if an occasional good word was said about the valour and huge resources of the king. Thus, in Pro Murena, he is considered to have been, beyond doubt, Rome’s greatest foe, while in Pro Archia, his confrontation with Lucullus is fully worthy of a great epic poem (Cic., Pro Arch., 21).

Given the nature of Cicero’s discourses, each delivered with a particular purpose, each placed in a different context and each demanding a different approach, it is hard to determine what Cicero truly thought about Mithradates. It is even harder, therefore, to extract those items which ‘correspond to facts’ and could bring modern historians closer to the ‘true’ Mithradates.

*Pompeius Trogus, whose Historiae Philippicae have reached us, unfortunately, only through the work of a 4th century AD epitomiser, Iustinus, treats Mithradates in surprisingly favourable fashion: ‘cuius <Mithridatis> ea postea magnitudo fuit, ut non sui tantum temporis, uerum etiam superioris ac turris omnes reges maiestate superauerit’ (Iust., 37.1.7). The greatness of Mithradates is recognised even by the skies, which send forth a comet to signal his birth (Iust., 37.2.2-3).

The king may appear at first sight to be brutal, murdering his sister-wife (Iust., 38.1.1) and his nephew (Iust., 38.1.10), but the former gesture is in fact an act of justice, as it punishes her for attempted poisoning, while the latter is an act of martial cunning, for by eliminating the leader of the opposing army, he wins the victory in the least risky manner for his own men: “incertum belli timens consilia ad insidias transfert”.

54 “Facilius certe P. Rutilium Rufum necessitatis excusatio defendet; qui cum a Mithridate Mytilenis oppressus esset, crudelitatem regis in togatos vestitus mutatione vitavit.” (Cic., Pro Rab., 27)
55 “delenda vobis est illa macula Mithridatico bello superiore concepta quae penitus iam insedit ac nimis inveteravit in populi Romani nomine, quod is qui uno die tota in Asia tot in civitatis uno nuntius omnibus regis maiestate superuerit’ (Iust., 37.1.7).
56 “Mithridatem dominum, illum patrem, illum conservatorem Asiae, illum Euhium, Nysium, Bacchum, Liberum nominabant. Vnum atque idem etiam tempus cum L. Flacco consuli portas tota Asia claudebat, Cappadocem autem illum non modo recipiebat suis urbibus verum etiam ultero vocabant.” (Cic., Pro Flac., 60-61)
57 “Atqui si diligenter quid Mithridates potuerit et quid effecerit et qui vir fuerit consideraris, omnibus quibuscum populus Romanus bellum gessit hunc regem nimirum antepones.” (Cic., Pro Mur., 31) Further considerations about the importance of Mithradates and, by ricochet, of those who defeated him are made in subsequent sections (Cic., Pro Mur., 31-34).
In a substantial discourse (Iust., 38.4-7), Mithradates encourages his soldiers in a number of ways, from highlighting the weakness of Rome to underscoring his own qualities. He wages a just war, as he had been wronged in a number of occasions by Rome (Iust., 38.5.3-10); moreover, the Romans are responsible for the war, which started due to their atavistic hatred of kings, around which their entire foreign policy revolved (Iust., 38.6.1-8); the nobility of his birth is far superior to that of any Roman (Iust., 38.7.1); and his previous victories recommend him as an excellent general (Iust., 38.7.4-5).

This last point reminds the reader of the comments made in Book 37, namely that he had managed to vanquish the previously undefeated Scythians, a feat neither Zopyrion, nor Cyrus, nor even Philip had achieved:

“Ad regni deinde administrationem cum accessisset, statim non de regendo, sed de augendo regno cogitauit. Itaque Scythas inuictos antea, qui Zopyriona, Alexandri Magni ducem, cum XXX milibus armatorum deleuerant, qui Cyrum, Persarum regem, cum CC milibus trucidauerant, qui Philippum, Macedonum regem, fugacem fecerant, ingenti felicitate perdomuit.” (Iust., 37.3.1-2)

It would be interesting to determine the source Trogus used for this information. One possibility is that his uncle, a cavalry officer in Pompey’s army during his Pontic expedition, may have come into contact with local informants, and he may have passed on the information he had gathered to his nephew. Another possible source is his father, who specialised in the affairs of the East and served under C. Caesar (Augustus’ adopted son, according to Arnaud-Lindet, and not the dictator C. Iulius Caesar). Yet another possibility is that Trogus used a Greek source, having close connections with the Pontic court. As previously noted, even though this perspective is likely to have been contaminated by royal propaganda, its major value resides in the fact that it documents a different point of view from the ‘mainstream’ pro-Roman opinion and offers an insight into what the Mithradatid court wished to publicise.

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Velleius Paterculus, a contemporary of Tiberius, writes of Mithradates with a sense of awe. The Pontic king is introduced with the following comments:

Mithridates, Ponticus rex, uir neque silendus neque dicendus sine cura, bello acerrimus, uirtute eximius, aliquando fortuna, semper animo maximus, consiliis dux, miles manu, odio in Romanos Hannibal [...]. (Vell. Pater., 2.18.1)

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58 In note 20 to his translation of Book 43, published on-line, at: http://www.forumromanum.org/literature/justin/trad43.html (retrieved 04.08.2010).
While the king is defeated on numerous occasions, by Sulla, Fimbria (although the adverb ‘forte’ does diminish to a good extent this victory: Vell. Pater., 2.24.1), Lucullus (‘saepe multis locis fuderat’, Vell. Pater., 2.33.1) and Pompeius (‘memorabile [...] bellum gessit’), his ability to recover is extraordinary (Vell. Pater., 2.37.1). The final comment made by the historian is that Mithradates was the last proper king, apart from the Parthian monarchs.50

The account of Velleius Patreculus is not very rich in factual details, but is nevertheless important in so far as it attests a certain perception of Mithradates in Rome nearly a century after his death, in which his crimes against the Romans in Asia are not yet forgotten, but his towering personality inspires admiration. This appears to be the beginning of a mythologizing trend, which will slowly but surely reduce the memory of Mithradates to a few striking facts and associate his personality with the extraordinary.

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Plinii Maior, the great encyclopaedist, did not intend to write history. Therefore, he does not treat Mithradates in a consistent and structured manner. In his work, the anecdotic, the unusual detail takes precedence. Thus, he notes that the king reigned over twenty two nations and spoke as many languages: “Mithridates, duarum et viginti gentium rex, totidem linguis iura dixit, pro contione singulas sine interprete adfatus” (Plin., 7.88). He courted the medic Asklepiades of Prusa and, unusually, the man scorned his legates and promises (Plin., 7.124). The story of the mithridateion, the royal antidote, could not be ignored either,60 even though Plinii himself is sceptical about its composition61, which seems to be based more on ostentation than on proper reason and experiment. He punishes the avarice of Aquilius by pouring molten gold down his throat. While the act is cruel, the comment “haec parit habendi cupidio!” (Plin., 33.49) seems to place most of the responsibility on the shoulders of Aquilius himself. The king has fabulous wealth, for he can afford to possess a silver statue of his ancestor,

50 “Mithridates, ultimus omnium iuris sui regum praeter Parthicos.” (Vell. Pater., 2.40.1) The point made here by Paterculus is that Mithradates did not owe his royal status to the intervention of Rome, drawing thus attention to the mechanisms of legitimacy that had functioned in the East for centuries and granted to a king iure sui greater majesty.

51 “trita cum aceto aurium dolori. in sanctuariis Mithridatis, maximi regis, devicti Cn. Pompeius invenit in peculiari commentario ipsius manu compositionem antidoti e II nucibus siccis, item ficis totidem et rutae foliis XX simul tritis, addito salis grano: e<i>, qui hoc ieiunus sumat, nullum venenum nociturum illo die.” (Plin., 23.149)

60 “Mithridatium antidotum ex rebus LIII componitur, inter null<a>s pondere aequali, et quarundam rerum sexagesima denarii unius imperat<υ>ρ, quo deorum, per Fidem, ista monstrante! hominum enim subtilitas tanta esse non potuit; ostentatio artis et portentosa scientiae venditatio manifesta est.” (Plin., 29.25)
Pharnakes, and one of himself, besides many chariots of silver and gold (Plin., 33.151) and a collection of gems and cameos (Plin., 37.11). All things considered, Mithradates was the greatest king of his age: “maximus sua aetate regum” (Plin., 25.5).

It is interesting to see Mithradates reduced here to a number of anecdotic traits, collected by Pliny partly from books, partly from the oral tradition. If they have something in common, it is the extraordinary, the larger-than-life aspect, which becomes Mithradates’ most persistent epithet.

*Aurelius Victor included Mithradates in his De viris illustribus, a list of illustrious men that shaped the history of Rome. The presentation is sketchy and again the anecdotic permeates the presentation. Thus, the king is of extreme vigour, both mental and physical: “magna ui animi et corporis” (Aur. Vict., Vir. Illustr., 76.1). Thus, he can drive a six-horse chariot and can speak no less than fifty languages. His authority is so great, that on his command, every Roman in Asia is put to death, while his personality is so powerful, that his would-be assassin, the Gaul Bithocus, is terrified by the king’s fierce looks and tries to leave, only to be recalled by Mithradates:

Mithridates […] in turre obsessus uenenum sumpsit. Quod cum tardius combiberet, quia aduersum uenena multis antea medicaminibus corpus firmarat, immissum percussum Gallum Bithocum auctoritate uultus territum reuocauit et in caedem suam manum trepidantis adiuuit. (Aur. Vict., Vir. Illustr., 76.7-8)

In spite of his doubtless royal charisma, Mithradates is defeated on numerous occasions by Sulla, Lucullus and Pompeius.

It is interesting to note that in the space of nearly three centuries that separate Aurelius Victor from Plinius Maior, some of the king’s attributes expand. For example, the number of languages he speaks more than doubles. This is a feature of oral tradition and is indicative of how the legend of Mithradates lived on in the Roman consciousness.

**IV.4. Asking the right questions**

It can be easily noted that between the numerous sources discussed above, there are both common elements and dissimilarities. A number of facts are indicated (Mithradates was king of Pontus, had expanded his kingdom, launched an invasion of Greece, was defeated by a number of Roman generals, committed suicide etc.) and many opinions are expressed (he was the greatest king of his age or even of all ages; he was a cruel tyrant etc.). Some historians even attempt to trace his motives and intentions (he is animated by hatred towards the Romans, he bears a grudge
against the Chians etc.). It is quite hard to isolate fact from fiction in this avalanche of information, almost invariably presented to the readership as true.

The question remains: even after proceeding with the necessary prudence, even after seeking the necessary consilience, as discussed above, can we be sure to have come any closer to the ‘true’ Mithradates? I believe we can, to a certain extent, and the analogy with criminology is very useful here. With respect to determining facts, neither criminology nor history strive to determine more than the essential traits, or outline of events. The motivation of the thief, his fears, his thoughts in the act of theft may be completely inaccessible to any other human being, but certain essential aspects of the act itself can, nevertheless, be determined with the aid of informants, such as when it occurred or who performed it. In a similar manner, we may never be sure from our testimonies what Mithradates felt during his meeting with Sulla, or what his initial hopes may have been, or if he was indeed terrified by Sulla’s response. We can be reasonably certain, nevertheless, that Sulla had defeated the Pontic troops in a number of occasions and that, subsequently, the two did conclude a peace.

Again in common with criminology, an ‘oblique’ approach to the available testimonies is very likely to conduct the historian to a true fact, for even heavily biased sources contain items corresponding to reality, otherwise they would become utterly unintelligible. One may take, for example, one of the most fervently anti-Mithradatic sources discussed above, Memnon. In 30.1, Mithradates is said to have decided the death of the royal ladies: “Οὕτω Μιθριδάτῃ τῶν πραγμάτων περιφανῶς ἀποκεκλιμένων τῶν τε βασιλίδων γυναικῶν ἡ ἀναίρεσις ἐπεποίητο”. One may believe or not that Mithradates himself, despairing of the future, took this cruel decision. On the other hand, one may be reasonably certain that there existed, indeed, a number of royal ladies – wives, concubines and sisters of the king – who lived in one place. While this text may or may not be useful in determining the character of the Pontic king, it is very useful in determining whether the Pontic kings practiced polygamy.

It is here that similarities between history and criminology end. While for the latter establishing the true facts represents the ultimate purpose, for the former facts are merely bricks, which are then interconnected in a hopefully resistant edifice.

V. THE USEFULNESS OF THE PROJECT

The result of investigations within the field of Ancient History is necessarily a hypothetical construct, to be sure, but a construct that is informative about a particular period and about human nature in general.
This brings us to the usefulness of this study in particular. Firstly, it is relevant to the field, as a synthesis. While there exist excellent studies about cultural exchanges in the Ancient World, about the transformation and adaptation of Persian structures by the new Hellenic kingdoms, and abundant literature on Mithradates VI, a synthesis focusing on the interplay between the Persian and Hellenic traditions in Eastern Anatolia has – to the best of my knowledge – yet to be produced.

Secondly, it is useful outside the strict domain of Hellenistic history as a study of osmosis and of the manner in which this broad process is influenced by the willful intervention of authorities, in particular royal figures. In the context of multiculturalism and diversity that characterises the modern world in general, and the European Union in particular, a study of how cultures interact, how local traditions adapt creatively to globalisation is not completely devoid of use.
As mentioned in the General Introduction, the geographical scope of the present thesis will be represented mainly by Eastern Anatolia. It is the purpose of the following pages to draw a necessarily sketchy picture of the region, in order to provide a background for the subsequent analysis.

I. GEOGRAPHICAL LIMITS

While the borders of states in Antiquity were characterized by a good degree of fluidity, as a consequence of military, diplomatic or even commercial activity, it is nevertheless possible to draw a fairly clear line of separation between the regions that will make the object of the current investigation and those that fall outside its scope.

In the following chapters, the focus of investigation will be represented mainly by “Eastern Anatolia”. In Figure II.1, the regions that comprise this relatively broad
geographical designation have been highlighted. The core of the region is represented by Pontic Cappadocia, Greater Cappadocia and Commagene. By virtue of similarities in terms of geographical features, ethnic composition or historical development, other regions will also be included in the analysis, such as Paphlagonia, Colchis, Lesser Armenia or Tauric Chersonese (not included in Figure II.1).

II. GEOGRAPHICAL CHARACTERISTICS

The most prominent geographical feature in the landscape of the regions enumerated above is represented by the two large connected chains of the Pontic and the Taurus Mountains, one of block-faulted, the other of folding origin, but marked also to a good extent by volcanic activity¹.

Although slightly different geological forces have contributed to the elevation of these converging chains, their activity has produced similar results in terms of aspect – almost parallel strings of peaks separated by deep valleys –, and in terms of underground deposits – metal (iron, copper, silver, gold etc.) and valuable building materials (such as marble or basalt). The ancients divided these chains into segments, calling them by different names: Olgassys, Paryadres and Seydises, or Taurus and Antitaurus (see above, Figure II.2).

The long, narrow valleys that cross the mountains (most of them arranged neatly on latitudinal lines, although there are a number of major corridors that intersect them at almost straight angles) form ideal passageways for streams that develop into major rivers. One of the most important rivers of the area is the Euphrates, which, once released from the grasp of the Antitaurus, opens up into the fertile plain of Mesopotamia. Another important river is the Halys (today’s Kızılırmak), which carves its way through the tufa that covers the Cappadocian plateau and flows into the Euxine. Inside the broad arc described by the Halys, there is the hydrographic basin of three shorter rivers, the Skylax (Çekerek Irmağı), the Iris (Yeşilırmak) and the Lykos (Kelkit Çayı). Unlike the Halys, whose salty waters are of little use for agriculture, these last three form an alluvial plain of almost legendary fertility: in Antiquity, the area alongside the Iris and the Lykos was named Khiliokomon (“Thousand Villages”), which points to the abundance of agricultural production so praised by Strabon,² which remains unchanged even today.

Another geographical feature of great importance is the vicinity to the Black Sea. Its shores are fairly abrupt and only narrow strips of flat land separate mountain from sea. Aside from the major benefits afforded in terms of transportation and fishing (cf. infra), the Euxine has an important influence on the climate of its neighbouring regions. Thus, Pontic Cappadocia, although further North than Greater Cappadocia, enjoys much milder weather and significantly higher rate of rainfall, with obvious consequences on the vegetation.

III. Economic situation

The economic landscape of Eastern Anatolia is shaped in equal measure by physical and ethnic factors, as different cultures exploit the environment following their specific know-how. The purpose of the following lines is to provide an overview of the main resources available, while the issues of property, wealth and their relation to power will be analysed later, in Chapter ‘Power Structures and Wealth Distribution’.

III.1. Agriculture

Agriculture is, not surprisingly, a very important segment of the economy, if not the most important, and a number of regions receive praise for their general fertility, such as Themiskyra, Melitene or Commagene. Grain production appears to occupy the most important place, but other cultures also receive notice in the most important survey of the area to survive, namely Strabon’s, such as millet and sorghum, which are abundant in Themiskyra (STR., 12.3.15). Fruit-bearing trees are also an important element of the flora

² STR., 12.3.39.
and they are present in Themiskyra (Str., 12.3.15), Melitene (Str., 12.2.1) or Cataonia (Str., 12.2.2). The Augustan geographer is particularly careful to record the presence of those plantations which from the Greek perspective represent landmarks of civilisation,\(^3\) vine and olive. These are present in Phanaroia (12.3.30), Pontic Comana (12.3.36), and particularly in Melitene, which produces the Monarite wine, said to rival its Greek competitors (12.2.1).

Animal husbandry represents another segment of agriculture that is well developed in Eastern Anatolia. The preferred animals seem to be bovines and sheep. Even royalty appear to be involved in this activity, from Strabon’s statement that the kings of Cappadocia preferred Mazaka as their capital due, among other things, to its pastures: “Ἀφυὲς δ’ οὖν κατὰ πολλὰ τὸ τῶν Μαζακηνῶν χωρίον ὅν πρός κατοικίαν μάλιστα οἱ βασιλεῖς ἔλεσθαι δοκοῦσιν, ὅτι τῆς χώρας ἁπάσης τότος ἦν μεσαίτατος οὗτος τῶν ξύλα ἐχόντων ἁμα καὶ […] χόρτον, οὗ πλεῖστον ἐδέοντο κτηνοτροφοῦντες” (Str., 12.2.9) Special mention is made of the region Gazelonitis, where sheep are bred with wool so soft it must be protected with leather coatings (Str., 12.3.13). Horse rearing may be included in this sector of the economy, animal husbandry, although horses do not seem to be put to lucrative uses, being reserved, on the contrary, for war. Cappadocia was famed for its horsemen and their mounts,\(^4\) as was Lesser Armenia or Paphlagonia.\(^5\) Amisene is also mentioned as providing good pasturage for horses (Str., 12.3.39).

III.2. Fishing

The Euxine was famous in Antiquity for the quantity and quality of the fish it produced. A possible cause for the luxurious fauna may be represented by the number of great rivers flowing into it, such as the Danube, Don or Kuban, whose deltas offer excellent breeding conditions.

The periodical migration along the coast of large schools of tunny, which in turn attract dolphins, has created ample opportunities for fishing from the Tauric Chersonese to Byzantium. Some places, nevertheless, were better positioned for this activity and Strabon mentions Pharnakeia and Sinope\(^6\) as having the most advantageous location. The

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\(^3\) For Strabon’s cultural agenda, cf. supra, pp. 21-22

\(^4\) Cf. infra, p. 154, n. 43.

\(^5\) Xen., Anab., 5.6.8.

\(^6\) Str., 12.3.11; 12.3.19.
importance associated with this business is made patent by the presence of a sea creature (a dolphin, to be precise) on the independent coinage of Sinope, as seen in Figure II.3.

Once caught, the fish was processed: chopped and salted, it was either pickled with herbs in ceramic jars, dried in the sun or smoked. It was thereafter either consumed locally (Xenophon, in the course of his expedition, finds such pickled dolphin slices in the settlements of the Mossynoikoi: Xen., Anab., 5.4.28) or exported to the Mediterranean market, which seemed to appreciate it greatly: Diodorus informs us that a jar of Pontic pickled fish was sold for as much as three hundred drachms in Rome (Diod., 31.24.1). Evidence for the lively fish-processing industry and subsequent trade with fish is represented by an abundant archaeological record: fishing equipment, vats designed for salting, amphorae with specific, wide-mouth design or even amphorae with fish remains found in the context of shipwrecks.

III.3. Timber processing

Timber in Antiquity represented a major asset, as wood was indispensable not only for military purposes (building warships and artillery pieces), but also for any construction project. So important, in fact, that one of the reasons mentioned by Strabon for choosing the otherwise inhospitable site of Mazaka as capital of Cappadocia was the availability of wood from the nearby Argaios Mountain (Str., 12.2.7).

According to Strabon, the Bithynian and Paphlagonian coast as far East as Sinope afforded excellent timber for ship-building (Str., 12.3.12, confirmed by Theophr., HP, 4.5.5), which usually means mountain pine and fir. That, however, seems not to have been sufficient for Mithradates VI. He preferred Colchis as his naval construction site (Str., 11.2.18), possibly due to the fact that in Colchis other indispensable materials, such as linen and pitch, were also readily available, whereas in Pontus they would have needed to be imported.

Coniferous trees were not the only ones to be present and utilised in the area. Again according to Strabon, maple and mountain-nut from Sinopitis were excellent for furniture (Str., 12.3.12), as was the boxwood from the region of Amastris (Str., 12.3.10). To what extent these products were exported in the Mediterranean or remained in the basin of the Black Sea remains very hard to determine, given the rarity of literary sources and the easily understandable absence of archaeological finds.

8 Ibid., pp. 141-156.
III.4. Mineral wealth exploitation

Anatolia seems to have been a centre for metallurgy from the earliest times, doubtlessly as a result of the richness of underground deposits present there.

Iron ore was particularly abundant, from the Paryadres Mountains, in the region inhabited by the Chalybes (it is significant that the Greek word for “steel” or “hardened iron”, χάλυψ, seems to have been derived from the name of this tribe), to Commagene, “ubi ferrum nascitur”.11

Other important deposits included copper, lead, silver and even gold. It is unfortunate that the ancient sources sometimes restrict themselves to mentioning the presence of “mines” in the area, without being any more specific. Thus, Strabon describes very briefly Kabeira: “ἐν δὲ τοῖς Καβείροις τὰ βασίλεια Μιθριδάτου κατεσκεύαστο καὶ ὁ υδραλέτης καὶ τὰ ζωγρεῖα καὶ αἱ πλησίον θῆραι καὶ τὰ μέταλλα.” (Str., 12.3.30) Unfortunately, modern exploitations in the vicinity only include bentonite and diatomite, neither of which seems to fit the Greek μέταλλον. Copper, lead and zinc deposits have been identified at various distances (60-80 km) from modern Niksar, but none so easily accessible that would fit the phrasing “ἐν τοῖς Καβείροις“. This illustrates the difficulties encountered when attempting to match ancient mining sites with metal deposits known and worked at the present time.

11 CIL IV, 30947: “Iovi Optimo Maximo / Dolicheno ubi ferrum nascitur / C(aius) Sempronius Rectus / cent(urio) frumentar(ius) d(onom) d(edit)”. The same formula appears in CIL III, 11927 or CIL XIII, 07342b.

Figure II.4. Eastern Anatolia: Mineral wealth
From Strabon’s account we know of other minerals that were extracted in the region: one is the ruddle (Greek μίλτος, Latin rubrica), a reddish pigment that was useful, according to Plin., 33.115, for painting ships; the other is realgar (an arsenic sulphide: Greek σανδαράκη, Latin sandaraca), which was used, again according to Pliny the Elder (34.177) mostly as medicine. As a cruel irony, Strabon describes the horrendous conditions in which slaves laboured to extract realgar from Mountain Sandarakourgion (“Realgar-mine mountain”).

III.5. Construction materials and semi-precious stones

Strabon insists on a number of occasions on the availability of stone fit for construction at a number of sites in Eastern Anatolia. Indeed, the geology of the area, marked by volcanic episodes (cf. supra) had created ideal conditions for the formation of such rocks. Marble, for example, one of the most sought-after materials for its hardness and pleasant appearance, can be extracted at various sites, such as Pharmakeia, Nyssa, Mazaka or Melitene.

Semi-precious stones have also been found and extracted, particularly in Cappadocia. In 12.2.10, for example, Strabon informs us that crystal and onyx was found by the miners of Archelaos (reigned 36 BC-17AD) around the Galatian border. Also in Cappadocia one could find small white stones that looked like ivory, from which sword handles were made, as well as large panes of lapis specularis, a transparent stone, which were apparently exported with profit.

III.6. Trade

Trade is a very lively activity in the area and the following lines do not attempt to exhaust the subject (that would certainly be impossible), but rather to offer a few brief indications about the general axes of commerce that helped integrate the area in the wider geographic context.

The geography of the area dictated the main overland trade routes. The main North-South axis connected the port Amisos on the Euxine with Amaseia in the fertile Iris valley, with Mazaka across the Halys and, through the Cilician Gates, with the Cilician ports and Eastern

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12 Cary (Cary, 1949, p. 155, n.1) supports the view that this mineral is not the cheap pigment rubrica, but rather the more expensive cinnabar. While this is not entirely impossible, the hypothesis is rendered unlikely by the fact that in modern times mercury – a crucial component of cinnabar – is all but absent in Cappadocia, while iron – which forms the basis for the ochre pigment ruddle – is fairly common.

13 “τὸ δὲ σανδαρακουργεῖον ὄρος κοῖλόν ἐστιν ἐκ τῆς μεταλλείας, ὑπεληλυθότων αὐτὸ τῶν ἐργαζόμενων διώρυξι μεγάλαις· εἰργάζοντο δὲ δημοσιῶν μεταλλευταῖς χρωμένοι τοῖς ἀπὸ κακονομίας ἀγχοφώμενοι ἀνδραπόδοι· πρὸς γὰρ τῷ ἐπιπόνῳ τοῦ ἔργου καὶ θανάσιμον καὶ δύσοιστον εἶναι τὸν ἀέρα φασὶ τὸν ἐν τοῖς μετάλλοις διὰ τὴν βαρύτητα τῆς τῶν βώλων ὀδμῆς, ὥστε ὀκύμορα εἶναι τὰ σώματα, καὶ δὴ καὶ ἐκκελίεσθαι συμβαίνει πολλὰς τὶν μεταλλείαν διὰ τὸ ἀλυσιτελές, πλεῖστον μὲν ἡ διακοσίων ὀντῶν τῶν ἐργαζόμενων, συνεχῶς δὲ νόσοις καὶ φθοραῖς διαπανομένων.” (Str., 12.3.40)
Mediterranean. There were three main West-East axes. One connected Bithynia, Paphlagonia across the valley of the river Amnias, the agricultural heartland of Pontic Cappadocia represented by Khiliokomon, Gazakene and Phanaroi and thereafter, through the valley of the Lykos, Lesser Armenia and Greater Armenia. The second followed to some extent the route of the Persian Royal Road, connecting the Aegean shore to Phrygia, Cappadocia and its capital, Mazaka, crossing the Taurus through the valley of the river Melas and finally reaching Northern Mesopotamia by crossing the Euphrates near Melitene. The third connected Cilicia and Northern Syria with Mesopotamia by crossing the Euphrates at Zeugma.

Trade was active in all these directions, but the best documented one is that taking place within the Euxine, followed by that taking place in Eastern Mediterranean. The items traded have various degrees of visibility in the literary, epigraphical and archaeological sources. In general, it appears that this area is an exporter of raw materials. To the resources mentioned above (representing, naturally, but the most important in a list which could have been greatly expanded) one should probably add slaves. Slave trade was apparently quite well established, with Sinope and Amisos functioning as important markets, intermediating between the Hinterland and the large slave emporia of the Mediterranean, such as Delos or Rhodes. On the other hand, Eastern Anatolia appears to have been a keen importer of fine wares, from oil and wine to fine pottery and jewellery.

The importance of these trading links consists not merely in creating a degree of prosperity in the area, but perhaps more importantly, in integrating Eastern Anatolia in a complex system where ideas and culture in general travelled the same routes as commodities and money.

IV. ETHNIC COMPOSITION

IV.1. From the dawn of history to the Classical Age

The Anatolian peninsula has been for millennia a corridor used by hominids and humans travelling from one continent to another. It is not surprising, therefore, that many

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14 The description of the route taken by the Royal Road in Cappadocia as given by Herodotus at 5.52 is fairly confusing: “Ἐκδέχεται δὲ ἐκ τῆς Φρυγίης ὁ Ἅλυς ποταμός, ἐπ’ ὧν πύλαι τε ἐπέστη ταῖς διεξελάσαι πάσης ἀνάγκης καὶ οὐδὲν διεκπεράσαν τὸν ποταμόν, καὶ φυλακτήριον μέγα ἐπ’ αὐτῷ. Διαβάντι δὲ ἐς τὴν Καππαδοκίαν καὶ ταύτῃ πορευομένῳ μέχρι οὖν τῶν Κιλικίων [...]. Ταῦτα δὲ διεξελάσαντι καὶ διὰ τῆς Κιλικίας ὁδόν ποιεῖσθαι τρεῖς εἰς θάλασσαν, παραστάγαται δὲ πεντεκαίδεκα καὶ ἡμέρα. Ὅρος δὲ Κιλικίας καὶ τῆς Αρμενίας ἦστι ποσεῖμος ἐπιστευτικός, τῷ σύνομα Εὐφρήτης.” Many scholars (Calder, Dilleman, Levick and others) have taken the reference to Cilicia as an indicator that the road veered South through the Cilician Gates, passing through Tarsus. However, it is clear from Strabon’s description of Cappadocia that “Cilicia” was also the name of a Cappadocian district, which had Mazaka for its capital. Cf. French, 1998 for a more accurate description of the route.
ethnic groups have left their mark on the history of the place. The peninsula represents one of the early seats of Indo-European colonisation – a theory even identifies it with the elusive Indo-European homeland, though it has so far failed to meet wide scholarly approval. Yet the first written documents have come to us from a Semitic population – the Assyrian merchants who had come from Mesopotamia eager to trade their fine wares for raw materials, in particular metallic ores, and who had formed some 21 settlements, both large and small, of which archaeologists have uncovered only three, all located within the basin of the Kızılirmak: at Kıltepe (the most important of them), Boğazköy and Alişar.

The political importance of these colonies, which – according to the information yielded by the tens of thousands of clay tablets discovered on site – appear to have formed a loose federation, has varied in the space of roughly two and a half centuries from their establishment to their destruction. Most of the time, they seem to have been content maintaining a lucrative neutrality to all the local powers, but there were times when they were under attack or were subjected by these, as happened when the Kussaran dynasty – of uncertain ethnicity – established practically a hegemonic power, dominating the princedoms from the Pontic Alps in the North to the Cilician shores in the South.

Great though it was, the power of this dynasty seems to have been short-lived and the empire of the Hittites, one of the oldest Indo-European nations, rose in its stead. The Hittites have developed their own powerful civilisation and spread their influence over large parts of the peninsula. The heart of their kingdom was the plateau around Hattusa. Their presence is attested in many places: urban settlements which continued to exist well into the Roman Era, such as Gazzuira, in which one may recognise the later Gazioura; sacred centres or

17 Renfrew, 1987, revised in Renfrew, 1999 to make Anatolia the home of the Pre-Proto-Indo-Europeans, who then migrated in the Balkans area.

18 Renfrew stated in his 1999 study that Anatolia represented the homeland of the Pre-Proto-Indo-Europeans, who lived there around 7000 BC, and who migrated by 5000 BC to the Balkans, to become there Proto-Indo-Europeans. He correlated this movement with the spreading of agriculture in Europe. The glottochronological study undertaken by Gray and Atkinson (Gray & Atkinson, 2003), which sets the date of the initial Indo-European divergence between 5,800 and 7,800 BC, seems to support his view. However, a glottochronological study, which relies on the assumption that core elements of language are replaced at a steady, universally-valid rate of about 4% per millennium, is not entirely trustworthy. Moreover, genetic studies based on the mitochondrial DNA (passed on by mother to offspring) such as Richards, 2000 have indicated that Near-Eastern migration into Europe occurs mostly in Paleolithic and Mesolithic, with a marginal Neolithic contribution, which is inconsistent with the hypothesis of an entire Indo-European population – including not only men, but also their women – migrating into the region at the time of the agricultural revolution.

19 Orlin, 1970.

20 This timespan would be extended if one believed the historical tradition according to which King Sargon of Akkad (~23rd century BC) defeated the ruler of Purushanda (South of the wide salt lake) after Akkadian merchants in the latter’s kingdom complained about various forms of oppression.

21 For the relations between the Assyrians and their Anatolian neighbours, cf. Orlin, 1970.

22 Bryce, 2005.
‘sacred cities’ such as Kummanni, Nerik or Zippalanda which seem to be continued by the ‘temple estates’ in the Classical Age; or patterns of territorial control involving a fortified point entrusted to a nobleman, controlling a certain rural area and the interconnecting roads.\textsuperscript{23} The Hittites, though they represented the hegemonic ethnic group, were not the only important people in Anatolia. The Kaska to the North, the Haya (ancestors of the Armenians) to the East, the Hurrians to the South-East and the Luwians to the West represented mighty foes.

Once the mighty Hittite kingdom crumbled in the 12\textsuperscript{th} century BC, its place was taken by other civilisations: between the 11\textsuperscript{th} and the 7\textsuperscript{th} century BC, one may notice a steady expansion of the Phrygian influence towards the East, which may or may not have been accompanied by an actual population influx,\textsuperscript{24} which is then broken off in the 7\textsuperscript{th} century by the great Cimmerian invasion from the North-East. The Cimmerians campaigned vigorously throughout Anatolia, but with the exception of certain toponyms and a few burial grounds\textsuperscript{25}, they seem to have left little behind them. In the wake of the Cimmerian horde, other empires vied for influence over Eastern Anatolia. For a while, the Halys formed the boundary between the Median and the Lydian Kingdoms,\textsuperscript{26} which were in turn replaced by the Persians.

IV.2. Ethnic composition in Hellenistic times

IV.2.1. The (Leuco)Syroi

For the Greek writers of the Classical period, Eastern Anatolia is “the land of the Syrians”. Thus, Pindar, as early as the 5\textsuperscript{th} century BC, states that the Amazons (whose abode was Themiskyra, in the region of Amisos) led a “Syrian hoast armed with broad spears”\textsuperscript{27}; Hecataios appears to place the cities of Chadisia and Teiria in the land of the ‘Leucosyroi’\textsuperscript{28}; Herodotus mentions that those who inhabit Cappadocia are called ‘Syrians’, but sometimes, for added precision, he also uses the term ‘Cappadocian Syrians’\textsuperscript{29}, a certain Maiandrios (apparently a Hellenistic logographer from Miletus) hypothesized that the Eneti, allies of the Trojans, had come from the land of the Syrians and that those Eneti who did not join the expedition lived on to become Cappadocians\textsuperscript{30}, Apollonios of

\textsuperscript{23} Matthews, 2004.
\textsuperscript{24} Crespin, 2001.
\textsuperscript{25} Summener, 2005, p. 136.
\textsuperscript{26} Hdt., 1.74. Rollinger, 2003 disputes, nevertheless, the idea that Asia Minor was under direct Median control.
\textsuperscript{27} As quoted by Strabon: “αἱ Ἀμαζόνες Σύριον εὐρυαίχμαν δίεπον στρατόν”, Str., 12.3.9.
\textsuperscript{28} FGrHist. 1.200-201. Stephen of Byzantium appears to be quoting Hecataios’s work “Asia”.
\textsuperscript{29} “<Αλυς>, ὃς ἄνου απὸ μεσαμβραίας μεταξὺ Συρίων τε καὶ Παφλαγόνων εὔει πρὸς βορέην”, Hdt., 1.6; “Καππαδόκαι, τοὺς ἡμεῖς Συρίους καλέομεν”, Hdt., 5.49; “Οἱ δὲ Καππαδόκαι ὑπὸ Ἑλλήνων Σύριου ὀνομασκότα”, Hdt., 1.72; “ἄνων ἂν πρὸς βορέην ἀνέμου ἐνθὲν μὲν Συρίως Καππαδόκας ἀπέργη, ἐξ εὐονύμου δὲ Παφλαγόνας”, ibid.
\textsuperscript{30} Str., 12.3.25.
Rhodes called the coast around Sinope ‘Assyrian’; Pseudo-Skymnos states that Amisos is “a city in the land of the Leukosyroi”; later, in the Imperial Age, Lucian of Samosata would use for the inhabitants of the area the term ‘Assyroi’. It is, however, Strabon’s testimony that is the most ample and possibly the most trustworthy: he repeatedly calls the Cappadocians ‘Leukosyroi’ and even attempts to explain the ethnonym in a rather literal fashion, distinguishing between the brown-skinned Syrians who live South of the Taurus and the white-skinned Syrians who live in Asia Minor.

The universal agreement between ancient authors that the inhabitants of Cappadocia are ‘Syrians’ cannot be explained away as a literary convention or topos, and must reflect an ethnic reality: a significant Semitic element must have been present. Rollinger, on the other hand, supports another interpretation, namely that

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31 APoll., Argon., 2.946.
32 Periegesis, 956.
33 LUC., DSyr., 33; ibid., 56. While the terms Syroi and Assyroi are used interchangeably in Greek since the beginning, reflecting pre-Greek particularities of pronunciation found in Asia Minor (cf. ROLLINGER, 2006b), by the end of the Hellenistic Age the terms had separated their semantic area. Lucian is either willingly reviving archaic uses (which, being an exponent of the Second Sophistic, is by no means unexpected), or reflecting the pronunciation of his home region, Commagene.
34 STR., 12.3.5; 12.3.9; 12.3.12; 12.3.24 etc.
35 STR., 12.3.9. For a more detailed discussion of the passage, cf. infra, pp. 53-54.
36 Thus, Frye, 1992.
37 ROLLINGER, 2006a, pp. 81-82.
the Cappadocians are of Urartean origin. His argument is based on the assumption that the Greeks, in naming the locals ‘Σύροι’ and their country ‘Συρία’ must have used a term borrowed either directly from them or from their commercial partners in the area. He then argues, perhaps rightly, that the Greek term “Συρία” could be traced back not only to ‘su+ra/i’, which in Assyrian documents designates Assyria (thus supporting the view that Cappadocians were of Semitic origin), but also to ‘sû+ra/i’, which is used in Assyrian documents to describe Urartu. Even though linguistically this hypothesis appears to be very sound and is very seductive by sheer ingenuity, there is a major objection, of historical nature: it postulates a massive Urartean migration in Asia Minor, for which there is absolutely no corroborating evidence. Rollinger’s hypothesis is also disproved by circumstantial evidence, such as aetiological myths. Thus, in a *scholium* to Apollonios’s verses 2.946-948 it is mentioned that Sinope had in fact been brought to the Pontic shore by Apollo, from Syria, and that from their union a son was born, by the name Syros, whose name would be perpetuated by the inhabitants of the place. A myth with a similar implication is narrated by Arrian, in which the Assyrians in Cappadocia change their names to Cappadocians out of respect for Kappadox, the son of Ninyos, son of Ninos, the mythical founder of Nineveh.

However, a number of differences between the Semites of Anatolia and those living South of the Taurus range are hinted at in the sources. For example, Strabon states that the Cappadocians are fairer-skinned than the inhabitants of Syria and this explains the particle ‘*Leuko-*’ attached to their ethnonym. To what extent this observation corresponds to reality remains debatable, but even if it does not represent a simple topos and is based on actual observations, this phenomenon should not be interpreted as definite proof of distinct ethnicity, as climatic factors may also serve as an explanation.

Given the presence of the Semitic element, one would expect the Cappadocians to speak a Semitic language, which could only be reinforced by the use of Aramaic as administrative language during the time of Persian rule (as demonstrated, for example, by the legends of coins struck in the area in Classical and early Hellenistic times), a habit which was continued even during Hellenistic and Roman times. The evidence, however, is far

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38 Even Rollinger is aware of this difficulty: “wie dieses Συρία weiter nach Westen nach Kappadokien und in den Halys-bogen wanderte, bleibt uns im Detail verbogen”, *ibid*.


40 καὶ τοὺς Καππαδόκας δὲ οὕτω ποτὲ ἱστορεῖ λέγεσθαι, ἐν οἷς φησι Καππαδόκα παῖδα Νινύου, ἕφ’ ὅτωι Λασύριοι μεταβαλόντες τὸ ὄνομα Καππαδόκαι ὄνομα Ἀσσυρίου, *ibid*.
from clear. For example, Basil’s testimony about the language of the Cappadocians is hard to interpret: after talking about the way in which a person of Mesopotamian origin is forced by the nature of his mother tongue to offer the doxology (a short praise of the divinity) by introducing it with the conjunction ‘and’, he adds “Καὶ Καππαδόκαι δὲ οὕτω λέγομεν ἐγχωρίως”. While this “We too, as Cappadocians, speak in the same manner in our native speech” may be interpreted as an admission that Cappadocians speak Aramaic or a dialect closely related to it, it may also be understood as simply pointing that the Cappadocian language, whatever its origin, shares this doxological peculiarity with the Aramaic language.

On the other hand, there is evidence suggesting that Cappadocians did not speak Aramaic. Thus, in describing the Cappadocian people, Strabon states that “οἱ δὲ οὖν ομόγλωττοι μάλιστα εἰσὶν οἱ ἀφοριζόμενοι πρὸς νότον μὲν τῷ Κλικίῳ λεγομένῳ Ταύρῳ κτλ.” (Str., 12.1.1), suggesting that the Taurus represented the separation point between two distinct linguistic areas. In support of this view, G. Neumann analysed the slender evidence for the language used in historical times by the Cappadocians and drew the conclusion that it represented a descendant of the Hittite. One might also add that the names quoted by Strabon as being shared by Capadocians and Paphlagonians (Bagas, Biasas, Aeniates, Rhatotes, Zardoces, Tibius, Gasys, Oligasys, Manes) or the other names that have been preserved in the epigraphic record (Iazemis, Sagarios, Maidates etc.) contain items that are not analysable in the Semitic framework, being, most of them, of distinctive Indo-European origin (Thracian, Iranian, etc.).

None of these factors taken individually is sufficient to disprove the idea that the Leukosyroi were Semites. Thus, Strabon merely states that those who live on either side of the Taurus do not speak exactly the same language, but this does not exclude the hypothesis that they spoke different dialects sharing a common origin; Neumann’s study does not constitute irrefutable evidence that the language used in Classical and Hellenistic times by Cappadocians is a continuation of Hittite and is not simply a Semitic dialect with Hittite loans, because it is the nature of scholia to focus on the unusual and omit the usual; finally, the onomastic argument is also weak, because on the one hand, names represent an area that is much more dynamic than language as a whole and suffers to a much higher degree the influence of contiguity with a different cultural/linguistic entity and on the other hand Semitic names are not absent from the

41 “Ὡς δὲ ἐγὼ τινος τῶν ἐκ Μεσοποταμίας ἦκουσα, ἀνδρὸς καὶ τῆς γλώσσης ἐμπείρος ἐχοντος, καὶ ἀδιαστρόφου τὴν γνώμην, οὐδὲ δυνατὸν ἐπέχειν τῇ ἐγχωρίῳ φωνῇ, κἂν ἐθέλειν, ἀλλὰ διὰ τῆς καὶ συλλαβῆς, μᾶλλον δὲ τῶν ἰσοδυναμισθῶν αὐτή φωνῆν, κατὰ τὴν ἰδίωμα πάροικον, ἀνάγκην αὐτοῖς εἶναι τὴν δοξολογίαν προφέρειν.”, (De Spiritu Sancto, 29.74).

42 Neumann, 1961, pp. 28-33. A more detailed discussion of the passage may be found in Janse, 2002.
record: the Anisa inscription alone (MbBerlin, 1880:646) seems to provide at least three examples (Abbas, Balasopos and Sasai). However, when considered in conjunction, the image they seem to convey is that of a population speaking a language that may or may not be of Semitic origin, but which is certain to contain at least some Hittite elements; which uses names that are preponderantly non-Semitic; which might have differed in terms of facial features from their Southerly neighbours; but which at the same time designates itself with a word with clear Semitic implications, ‘Σύρος’ or ‘Λευκοσύρος’. The situation is not unlike that of the Franks or the Bulgars, who settled in certain regions as the ruling elite and subsequently became assimilated by the ruled population, though they lent their name and a number of linguistic particularities to the newly created ethnic group.

The exact significance of the distinctive particle ‘Leuko-’ has yet to be explained in a satisfactory manner. Strabon’s explanation is fairly blunt:

> For up to this date the Cappadocians are called Leukosyroi, while those on the other side of the Taurus are called Syroi. Compared with those on this side of the mountain range, the latter have a tanned complexion, whereas the former do not.

While some modern authors tend to take Strabon’s explanation at face value, there is another possible explanation, namely that the colour would have geographical rather than physiognomic implications. Schmitt has identified four colours that would be associated with the cardinal points: black for North, blue for East, red for South and white for West. This system applies very well to the otherwise hard to explain “coloured” seas: the Black Sea in the North and the Red Sea to the South. Thus, the opposition is not between “white / pale” and “black / tanned” Syrians, as Strabon seems to believe.

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44 καὶ γάρ ἔτι καὶ νῦν <Καππαδοκεῖς> Λευκοσύροι καλοῦνται, Σύρων καὶ τῶν ἐξ Ἱωνίων ἔθεων τῶν Ταῦροι λεγομένων κατὰ δὲ τὴν πρὸς τὰς ἐντὸς τοῦ Ταῦρου συγκρισιν, ἐκείνων ἐπικεκαυμένων τὴν χρώμαν τούτων δὲ μὴ ἀπειροῦσαν, Str., 12.3.9. Similarly, the lexicographer Hesychios has under the lemma Λευκοσύρος the explanation “Βαβυλώνιος λευκόχροος”.
45 Thus, Rollinger, 2006a, p. 82.
46 Schmitt, 1996.
47 Around the name of the Black Sea there has been a lively debate. Cf. Vasmer, 1921; Moorhouse, 1940; Allen, 1947; Moorhouse, 1948; Mitchell, 2002; West, 2003. Today, however, the derivation of the Greek Ἀξείνος from an Iranian term meaning “black / of dark colour” reflected in Avestan as axšaēna seems well established.
48 Modern research in genetics demonstrates a surprising continuity of communities in ancestral realms (thus, among others, Sykes, 2002), so a look at the inhabitants of modern Turkey and Syria is not as inconclusive as it may appear at first hand, and this will reveal no abrupt discrepancies in terms of skin colour between the two communities. Moreover, recent studies seem to suggest the genetic makeup of modern Turks is not substantially different from their Near-Eastern neighbours, with a high occurrence rate of the haplotypes J1 and J2 (average 33%): cf. Cin gloğlu, 2003.
but between “Western” and “Southern” Syrians.

According to the geographic colour-code, one would therefore expect a reference to the existence of “red Syrians” South of the Taurus. It is conceivable that the Phoenicians were just that. The term φοῖνιξ in Greek initially described the colour bright red and not infrequently the etymological connection is established with this colour by virtue of the prosperous trade with purple dyes the Canaanites would develop in historical times, but this might be, again, a simplification on the part of our sources.

IV.2.2 Other ethnic groups

While the Leukosyroi seem to represent the majority of the population in the region, there are numerous other ethnic groups in the area that forms the object of the current investigation. To the North-West lived the Paphlagones, a warlike nation, proud in Xenophon’s time for their cavalry, which made them peers of the Persians themselves in this respect (XEN., Anab., 5.6.8) but who had become by the end of the Hellenistic Age the victims of their more powerful neighbours, Pontus and Bithynia (IUST., 37.4).

To the North-East, we have knowledge of numerous ethne, like the Mossynoikoi, the Tibarenoi, the Chalybes49 and many others, tribal communities surviving in relative isolation, generally in mountainous areas. We might never know much about the ethnicity of these tribes, given that we have little information about them and the little we have is sometimes stained with clichés and exaggerations. For example, Xenophon’s Anabasis is a precious source and the ethnographic account it contains is most of the times credible, but even he goes as far as claiming the Chalybes wield huge 6 metre long pikes (the famed Macedonian sarissa was no more than 5 metres long), while being adamant they are light infantry who often stop to chop the heads of fallen enemies (5.4.7; 5.4.15-16). The Mossynoikoi in his description are the epitome of otherness, doing in public what people normally do in private, such as having intercourse with women, and in private what other people normally do in public, such as singing or dancing (5.4.34), which reminds one of the topos going back at least as Herodotus’ description of the Egyptian other. They could be descendents of the Hittites or of their perpetual enemies, the Kaska, or they could represent enclaves of later invaders, like the Cimmerians. There are hints to support this last hypothesis, though admittedly one could not build a very solid case. Firstly, the Aeschilian verse “Χάλυβος Σκυθῶν ἄποικος” (Septem contra Thebas, 728) seems to indicate such a tradition, given that the Cimmerians were believed to have been exiled from the area North of the Black Sea. While some traditions consider the Cimmerians and the Scythians completely distinct, even violently opposed (HDT.,

49 Mossynoikoi: HDT., 3.94; XEN., Anab., 5.4; STR., 12.3.18; Tibarenoi: HDT., 3.94; XEN., Anab., 5.5; STR., 12.3.28; Chalybes: HDT., 1.28; XEN., Anab., 4.7; STR., 12.3.19, but he mentions that in his time they were more commonly known as ‘Chaldaioi’.
4.1), others see them as one and the same group (the neo-Babylonian texts use the same word, Gimirri, for both tribes),\textsuperscript{50} which may explain the phrase of the tragic poet. Secondly, Xenophon is amazed by the skin of certain Mossynoikian children, which is extremely white and decorated with tattoos of floral design, which cannot fail to remind one of the spectacular Pazyryk tombs, where the Scythian chieftains have intricate tattoos with zoomorphic and floral designs. However, one may not rule out the possibility that these mountain tribes may represent some other ethnic group, whose story can no longer be reconstructed.

IV.2.3. Significant minorities: Greeks and Iranians

Two minorities deserve special attention. One is the Greeks who have founded numerous settlements along the shores of the Black Sea. Though few in number, the Greeks represent one of the most influential communities in Eastern Asia Minor, both before Alexander, when they appear to have solid economic and political ties with the non-Greek populations of the Hinterland\textsuperscript{51} and after the Conqueror, when Greeks are copiously attested around the royal figures. The other is the Iranian element, which is most visible in the case of local aristocracy and in its observance of Achaemenid traditions, reflected not only on onomastics, but also in many aspects of religion.

IV.3. Ethnic dynamics

The ethnic situation of Eastern Anatolia is far from static during the Classical and Hellenistic Ages, when changes occur mainly in two ways: by colonisation and by cultural influence (which may range from acculturation to assimilation).

IV.3.1. Colonisation

Colonisation is well attested in the case of Greek population, and it started as early as the 8\textsuperscript{th} century BC.\textsuperscript{52} The main foundations were Sinope and Herakleia on the Paphlagonian coast, Amisos and Trapezous on the Pontic coast, followed by Phasis in Colchis. Besides these large settlements, there were also others of smaller sizes, such as Kromna, Kytaros, Abonuteichos, Armene, Themiskyma, Kotyora, Kerasous and many others. These smaller communities have different trajectories. Some become little more than fishing villages, even inspiring jocose remarks, as the one recorded by Strabon about the walls of Armene.\textsuperscript{53} Others follow the path of synoecism, though often not of their own volition. An example is represented by Sesamos, Kromna, Kytaros and Tieion, brought together by the will of Queen

\textsuperscript{50} Cf. Encyclopaedia Iranica, s.v. ‘Cimmerians’.

\textsuperscript{51} For the relations established between a polis and its surrounding territories and communities, cf. infra, pp. 187-189.

\textsuperscript{52} H\o{}nser & N\o{}elsen, 2004 provide excellent orientation. On the specific issue of Black Sea colonisation, cf. Drews, 1976.

\textsuperscript{53} "ὅστις ἔργον οὐδὲν εἶχεν Ἀρμένην ἐτείχισεν", Str., 12.3.10.
Amastris into a city bearing her name (of these, Tione would later regain independence); another by Kytos and Kerasous, refounded by king Pharnakes I as Pharnakeia. Colonization sometimes has more than one phase. For example, Amisos, though founded in the first instance by Milesians, received in later centuries an Athenian colony and changed its name to Peiraeus, after the harbour-city of Athens. Colonisation may also appear as a result of deportation. Of that, we have a single, but dramatic example: the inhabitants of Chios, accused (rightly or wrongly) by Mithradates VI of conspiring against his interests, were deprived of their possessions and forcibly moved to Colchis.

Colonisation of Eastern Asia Minor is not exclusively a Greek phenomenon. Iranians too penetrated this area during the extended period of Achaemenid rule, although from what we can discern this colonisation involved fewer individuals. Another significant trait of this process is that it appears to involve primarily aristocratic elements who, after settling in the area, helped develop a highly efficient administration. One example illustrating how smoothly the Persian administration functioned is the Royal Road, which traversed Cappadocia from one end to the other. Of these Iranian aristocratic families, some with venerable pedigree, would emerge in the Hellenistic era the dynastai and even royal families.

### IV.3.2. Cultural Influence

Two ethnic groups in close proximity will generally experience mutual influences, i.e. a process of acculturation. Of the two parties, one may be more receptive than the other or, on the contrary, more preoccupied than the other with maintaining a sense of identity by preserving those traits it perceives as defining this identity. Thus, the process of influence often appears as asymmetrical, with one partner more visibly transformed than the other. The extreme scenario is represented by assimilation, as a result of which one group ostensibly loses its ethnic identity. The ethnically diverse landscape of Eastern Asia Minor has ensured prolonged and intense contact between the various ethnic groups and as such both acculturation and assimilation may be observed.

Classical scholarship has been until recently almost exclusively interested in the

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54 STR., 12.3.14.
55 MEMN., 23; APP., MITHR., 25 and 46-47; ATHEN., 6.91. It is interesting to observe that while in Memnon’s account, highly apologetic of his native city, it is the Heracleotes who boldly save the Chians from slavery, in Appian’s version the return of the Chians to their island is made one of the conditions of the peace with Sulla, which concluded the First Mithradatic War.
57 For the claims of the Mithradatids and Ariarathids of descent from none other than Dareios I, cf. infra, pp. 94-99.
process whereby Greek culture (or various traits thereof) was gradually adopted by non-
Greek populations, *i.e.* in Hellenisation. This is a very visible and complex process,
manifested both in the private and the public sphere.

Onomastics is one field of private life where Greek influence is felt quite strongly.
It is true that proving that a certain person bearing a Greek name is in fact non-Greek
may seem at times impossible, but in several instances the probability of this happening
is quite high: for example a certain Dionysios, eunuch in service of Mithradates VI (*App.*,
*Mithr.*, 76) is very likely to be one such man, given that it was not at all common for a
Greek to be submitted to such treatment.\[58\]

Adopting the Greek form of organisation is a manifestation of Hellenisation in the
sphere of public life. One may observe, for example, non-Greek cities copying Greek
institutions, such as small Anisa, which sets up an inscription (adopting the epigraphic
habit is in itself another instance of Hellenisation) naming the *boule, demos* or the *prytany.*\[59\]

Adopting the Greek language – which encompasses both the private and the public
spheres – is at the same time patent and difficult to assess. On the one hand the administration
appears to use exclusively Greek in its transactions. All coin legends, for example, are written
in Greek, as are the other inscriptions with official character to be found in the area, from
Amaseia, where Metrodorus, an official of Pharnakes I dedicates an altar (*St.P.* III, 94), to
the great Commagenian *hierothesion* at Nemrut. But to what extent could Greek have spread
beyond the poleis and the relatively narrow confines of the court? One short inscription from
Gazioura is interesting from this point of view and is worth quoting in full:

\[
\text{ξένον μηδένα ἐντὸς} | \text{τοῦ διαγράμματος} | \text{παρἀπορεύθησι τοῦ} | \text{τοῦ} \\
| \text{άλογο} | \text{θάλακος} | \τῆς ὑπ' ὀφθ' | \τοῦ | \οὶ [μὲν] | \οὶ [μὲν] | \οὶ [μὲν] | \οὶ [μὲν] | \οὶ [μὲν] | \οὶ [μὲν] | \οὶ [μὲν]
\]

This inscription has been used to argue that the *xenoi* must have been able to read
the decree in order to heed it. A number of issues remain unclear, though. Who were the
*xenoi*? It seems unlikely that Gazioura ever had a polis structure (in Strabon’s words, it
was ‘*παλαιὸν βασίλειον, νῦν δ' ἔρημον*’, 12.3.15), so it seems hard to believe they were
inhabitants of the urban community without full citizenship. In this case, one is left to
wonder not only if they were able to really read Greek, but also if they were able to read at all. Perhaps the inscription was not intended to be read by the xenoi, but rather to the xenoi. The reason to display such a decree in the form of an inscription might be quite simply that the written word carries more weight than the spoken word. This inscription, therefore, while not being irrefutable proof that Greek enjoyed large circulation, even among the masses, constitutes yet another proof it was the official language of the administration.

Following the type of colonisation, one would expect Persian cultural influence to be exerted mainly at the level of local aristocracy. Indeed, there is data demonstrating the adoption of Achaemenid conventions by the wealthy strata, not only in the form of Iranian names, but also the adoption of items of clothing and furniture of Persian type, as demonstrated by reliefs carved in stone. The influence has, nevertheless, penetrated other strata as well, most notably in the domain of religious life, where Magi, for example, are called upon to perform numerous rites.

The Semitic element of the population is equally dynamic. Thus, the power of assimilation of the Leukosyroi is visible right up to the end of the Hellenistic age: Strabon informs us (12.1.2) that although in the past the Cataonians had formed a distinct ethnic group, they had become, in the relatively short time between their annexation by Ariarathes III and Strabon’s own time, indistinguishable from the rest of the Cappadocian population.

The image that all these developments form is one of intense cultural dialogue, which forms an excellent premise for research.

V. Historical developments

For the sake of clarity, a brief outline of the major historical developments from the Achaemenid conquest to the Roman one in order to frame the analysis in the following chapters is perhaps useful at this point. More attention will be given to those periods or aspects that have drawn less attention from scholars, while offering only the sketchiest of treatments to those ages for which there is abundant bibliography, such as the rule of Mithradates Eupator and his wars against Rome.

V.1. The period of Persian rule

The Persians obtained the territory East of the Halys from their predecessors, the

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61 Paspalas, 2000, p. 540.
62 For the worship of Iranian divinities and the importance of the Magi, cf. infra, pp. 123-124.
63 Strabon’s phrasing, “προσεκτήσατο δ’ αὐτοὺς Ἀριαράθης ὁ πρῶτος προσαγορευθέν τις Καππαδόκων βασιλεύς”, seems to imply he is talking about Ariarathes III (c.255-220), rather than about Ariarathes I, the Persian satrap who was killed by Eumenes and who, by adopting his nephew, founded the Ariarathid dynasty.
Medians, at the moment when the revolt of Cyrus the Great, the ruler of Anšan, ended successfully with his defeat of Astyages, the Median king, at some point between 554 and 549 BC, and transfer of treasury from Ekbatana to Pasargadae. Cyrus proceeded to expand his dominion in Asia Minor by defeating the Lydian Kingdom around 547 BC, tradition has it, after Croesus attacked and captured a Cappadocian town, Pteria, enslaving its inhabitants.

After the successful plot of the Seven Wise, Dareios is said by Diodorus to have granted Anaphas, the satrap of Cappadocia, special rights, such as tribute exemption. Dareios certainly did not do that: none of the collaborators he mentions in the great Behistun inscription (Vindafarnā, Utāna, Gaūbaruva, Viḏrā, Bagabuxša, Ardumanîš) has a name that could possibly be corrupted in such a way as to become Anaphas in a Greek source. Behind the tradition recorded by Diodorus (and Ktesias before him) there seems to be an aulic mythology created at the Cappadocian satrapal and subsequently royal court. It remains, however, an important piece of information that Cappadocia figured in Achaemenid tradition as a very important satrapy, perhaps even with special status.

According to Strabon, it was in Persian times that the region was divided in two administrative districts, but this seems to be an instance of projecting into the past a contemporary reality. What we can discern from literary and numismatic sources shows a single satrap in charge of this entire region: Datames, for example struck coins from Tarsus to Sinope, while Ariarathes I, the founder of the Cappadocian dynasty, struck coins at Gazioura, which is situated at the very heart of what would become the Pontic Kingdom.

V.2. From Alexander’s Anabasis to the birth of the Cappadocian kingdoms

In Arrian’s account, Alexander passes briefly through Cappadocia, on his way from Ancyra – where he receives the submission of the Paphlagonians – to the Cilician Gates. It is unclear what the phrase “αὐτὸς δὲ ἐπὶ Καππαδοκίας ἐλάσας ξύμπασαν τὴν ἑντὸς Ἀλυς ποταμοῦ προσηγάγετο καὶ ἕτι ύπὲρ τὸν Ἀλυς πολλήν” implies in terms of conquered territory, but Alexander nevertheless appointed a certain Sabiktas as satrap of Cappadocia. The superficial character of this conquest is demonstrated by

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64 Cf. DANDAMAEV, 1989, p. 17, n. 1 for the main chronological hypotheses.
65 HDT., 1.76; Diod., 9.31.3.
67 DB IV, 80-86.
68 Cf. infra, pp. 92-97.
69 STR., 12.1.4.
71 Arr., Anab., 2.4.2.
72 Thus Arr., Anab., 2.4.2. Curtius, however, calls him Abistamenes (Curt., 3.4.1).
the fact that, after the battle of Issos, the fleeing Persians found shelter and support in Cappadocia, which they then used as a base of operations against Antigonos Monophthalmos, then satrap of Phrygia. They failed, but due more to the generalship of Antigonos that from lack of manpower, if we are to believe Curtius’ words: “Darei praetores [...] adsumpta etiam Cappadocum et Paphlagonum iuventute Lydiam recipere temptabant.” (Curt., 4.1.34).

The age of bitter struggle between Alexander’s generals left an indelible mark on the political landscape of the region. Ariarathes, the aged satrap of Cappadocia (he was around 80 years old, according to Hieronymos of Kardia, quoted by Lucian), had ousted the Macedonian satrap at some unknown moment, but his defiance of Macedonian authority was overlooked by Alexander, whose attention was fixed on his Eastern exploits. Being able to collect unmolested the revenues of his lands, he succeeded in raising an army of thirty thousand infantry and fifteen thousand cavalry. Even so, he was defeated twice by Perdiccas and eventually executed. Cappadocia was subsequently given by the victor to his protégé, Eumenes, according to the division of satrapies agreed upon at Babylon.

Eumenes the courtier turned into a successful field commander and was able to forge an excellent army by combining Macedonian and local elements. He was accompanied, for example, by a certain Mithradates, son of Ariobarzanes, who claimed to descend from one of the Seven Wise. It is conceivable that this man was the one known to modern scholars as Mithradates II of Cius, whose father is also called Ariobarzanes. If so, he held sway – according to the Diodoran manuscript tradition – over Kios and Arrhine. Bosworth and Wheatley have argued quite convincingly, however, that at this point the tradition is most likely corrupt and that Mithradates must have exercised authority over Mysia and Mariandynia. It remains obscure how Mithradates behaved when Parmenion established a bridgehead into Asia for Philip II and afterwards, during Alexander’s

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73 Curt., 4.1.34-35.
75 Luc., Macr., 13.
76 Diod., 18.16.2.
77 Arr., MetAlex., 1.11.
78 Diod., 19.40.2.
79 The tradition preserved by Diodoros (Diod., 15.90.3) names as his father the famous Ariobarzanes, satrap of Phrygia who took part in the satrapal revolt against Artaxerxes Mnemon, only to be betrayed by no other than his own son and executed. This tradition has been supported by Reinach, 1890, pp. 5-7 and McGing, 1986b, p. 248-9. Bosworth and Wheatley take the opposite stance and argue that there must have existed two prominent Persian dynasts by the same name, one ruling Mariandynia, the other Phrygia (Bosworth & Wheatley, 1998, pp. 160-161).
80 Diod., 20.111.4.
expedition, but as the Persian seems to have maintained his authority and the Macedonian king is known to have preferred to maintain the Persian collaborators in their positions, it is not unlikely that Mithradates chose the path of collaboration. After the death of the Conqueror, Mithradates, as mentioned above, lent his forces to Eumenes and with his substantial help the latter even succeeded in overpowering the much more experienced Crateros. Almost simultaneously, Perdiccas was assassinated in Egypt and the subsequent Triparadeisos agreement, having for main beneficiaries Antigonos Monophthalmos, Ptolemaios and Seleukos, gave Antigonos a free hand in dealing with Eumenes.

After many daring operations on both sides, sometimes interrupted by brief episodes of reconciliation, Eumenes was betrayed by his own troops after the battle of Gabiene, in Persia, and executed. Asia Minor was now firmly in the hands of Antigonos, who industriously eliminated all remaining pockets of resistance. It happened, however, that the other diadochs soon allied against him and issued an ultimatum, among the conditions of which was that he should cede Cappadocia and Lycia to Kassandros and Hellespontine Phrygia to Lysimachos. These requirements aimed to undermine the main powerbase of Antigonos, which was represented by Asia Minor. Monophthalmos predictably refused to comply and thus the stage was set for the next stage in the conflict of the diadochi. Victory eluded all combatants and by 311 they concluded a peace which sanctioned the status quo. It was to be a short-lived peace. A number of epic encounters marked the following years. The one which could be said to have had the most far-reaching consequences was Demetrios’ defeat of Ptolemaios off Cyprus, which offered the opportunity for Antigonos and Demetrios to have themselves acclaimed βασιλεῖς by the army, in 306.

Events took a turn for the worse for Antigonos early in 302, when, as he was about to finish off Kassandros, he found himself facing a coalition of four kings: Kassandros, Lysimachos, Ptolemaios and Seleukos. The invasion of Asia Minor by Lysimachos and Seleukos that year (Kassandros personally led part of his troops in Greece, trying to pin down Demetrios, while Ptolemaios was busy occupying Coile Syria and consolidating his position there) created the optimum environment for two Persian dynasts who tried to carve up a kingdom for themselves.

One of them was Mithradates, who would later be called “Ktistes”, “the Founder”, the son of Mithradates who had sided with Eumenes and was now deemed a subject of Antigonos. The old man was accused – perhaps rightly – of having negotiated with

81 Ἐνάρεστος δ’ εἰς τὴν ἄνω Συρίαν Ἀντιγόνου παρεγένοντο πρέσβεις παρά τε Πτολεμαίου καὶ Λυσιμάχου καὶ Κασάνδρου, οἵτινες δ’ εἰσαχθέντες εἰς τὸ συνέδριον ἠξίουν Καππαδοκίαν μὲν καὶ Λυκίαν Κασάνδρῳ δοθῆναι, Φρυγίαν δὲ τὴν ἐν’ Ἑλλησπόντῳ Λυσιμάχῳ (Diod., 19.57.1). The emendations proposed to the passage, namely “Ἀσάνδρῳ” for “Κασάνδρῳ” and “Λυδίαν” or “Κιλικίαν” for “Λυκίαν” have been rejected convincingly by Ed. Will in favour of the original text: cf. Will., 1966, pp. 49-50.
Kassandros (or perhaps with Kassandros’ general, Prepelaos, who was in Asia Minor, alongside Lysimachos) and duly executed.

Ktistes was in danger of suffering the same fate, but it seems he was warned by Demetrios, whom he had befriended. Such, at least, is the story offered by Plutarch, but the biographer uses this event from Demetrios’ youth, in which he displays at the same time magnanimity and loyalty, in order to build up a more striking contrast with Demetrios’ personality in later years. It is, therefore, not unlikely that the story as outlined by Plutarch is guided by literary motifs rather than by actual facts. What remains certain is that Mithradates fled speedily in the direction of Paphlagonia, partly because this region was close to his original holdings, partly because it was now under the authority of Lysimachos, who, as the enemy of his enemy, was likely to be his friend. His first centre of power was the fortress of Kimista (textual tradition had preserved the reading Kimiata – a palaeographical error easy to explain – but epigraphic documents have recently shown the real name of the place), at the foot of the Olgassys Mountains, and from this area he expanded his authority into the fertile valley of the river Iris, which had Amaseia for centre.

The other Persian nobleman who took advantage of the strategic situation created by the conflict of the diadochi in Asia Minor was Ariarathes. He was the nephew and adopted son of Ariarathes, the old satrap of Cappadocia defeated and executed by Perdiccas (cf. supra). The younger Ariarathes succeeded in finding refuge in Armenia. He tried to regain his ancestral holdings when situation allowed it: Diodoros (Diod. 31.19.5) mentions his attempt was occasioned by the strife between Antigonos and Seleukos. While conflicts between these two have been numerous, the only context that would have allowed a successful expedition (for we obviously know it was successful) by the Cappadocian prince was that of the initial phases of the Ipsos campaign, in 302/301, when the main actors – Seleukos and Lysimachos – were preoccupied with damaging Antigonos’ position in terms of financial resources, manpower and not least prestige. Ariarathes was granted by Orontes II (Ardoates, according to Diodoros) a small army, and by Seleukos his complicity. In the decisive battle, he defeated Antigonos’ general Amyntas and took control of the country.

Thus, if in the Pontic Cappadocia Mithradates found an ally or at least an accomplice in Lysimachos, to the South, in Greater Cappadocia, Ariarathes was aided by Seleukos. As

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82 Plut., Dem., 4.1-5.
83 Marek, Kat.Kaisareia, 6; 14. See also the results of the Paphlagonian survey led by Roger Matthews, which identified Asar Kale as the most likely site for the ancient fortress of Kimista: Matthews, 2004, pp. 206-207.
84 Both Orontes and Ardoates are Greek variants of the Iranian name Aruuanta, or Ervand in Armenian.
in the final battle against Antigonos the coalition of the four diadochi emerged victorious and old Monophthalmos lost his life, the two Persian princes could expect to reap the benefits of having supported the winning side.

V.3. From the foundation of the dynasties to the Treaty of Apameia

The coalition of Kassandros, Lysimachos, Ptolemaios and Seleukos, cemented only by the common enmity towards Antigonos, was not destined to live long beyond the victory at Ipsos.

In so far as Asia Minor was concerned, the greatest winner was Lysimachos, who greatly expanded his area of control. However, this large territory was far from having any sense of unity. Rather, it was a patchwork of principalities and poleis held together in a fairly loose manner by different forms of allegiance to the person of the king. As such, the cracks in the system became apparent in a relatively short time.

By the 280s the relations between the former allies were strained. Kassandros had died in 297, which gave Demetrios the opportunity to gain Macedon. In these circumstances, it was in Ptolemaios’ and Lysimachos’ common interest to eliminate Demetrios and limit the influence of Seleukos, which lead not only to an alliance between the first two, but also brought about a temporary rapprochement of the other two. Events took a favourable turn for Seleukos when his rivals faced dynastic difficulties: Ptolemaios I Soter died in 283, leaving on the throne Ptolemaios II Philadelphos, who was preoccupied by the claims of his half-brother Ptolemaios Keraunos; in 284 Lysimachos was persuaded to eliminate his promising heir, Agathocles, in favour of Arsinoe’s offspring, Ptolemaios. This act of bitter dynastic intrigue, coupled with the perceived despotism of his rule85 prompted many allies to rebel. After having ensured the neutrality of the Lagid king, possibly under the threat of supporting the claims of Keraunos,86 Seleukos proceeded to eliminate his old friend. Asia Minor would, once again, be the decisive battleground.

In this campaign, which would culminate with the battle of Korupedion, the diplomatic manoeuvres were at least as important as the military ones. Twenty years previously Ariarathes and Mithradates had been aided more or less actively by the then allied Seleukos and Lysimachos. Now, when their original benefactors were at odds, the two Persian dynasts were probably forced to choose sides. One would be well advised,

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85 Lund (Lund, 1992, pp. 107-152) calls to question the veracity of ancient sources which dwell on the avarice and high-handedness of Lysimachos’ rule, drawing sensible parallels with similar patterns of behavior of other, less maligned diadochs. It remains clear, however, that hostile propaganda had managed to erode his image significantly, even during his lifetime.

when trying to determine which camp the two chose, to treat with caution the natural impulse of considering that Mithradates would continue to support Lysimachos and Ariarathes Seleukos. Treachery promised, in this context, to be highly profitable and there were many who changed sides, most notably Philetairos, governor of Pergamon. Yet a notice in Trogus pertaining to this period is very likely to demonstrate that old loyalties might still be functioning:

Septimo decimo volumine continentur haec. Ut Lysimachus occiso filio Agathocle per novercam Arsinoen bellum cum rege Seleuco habuit, quo victus interiit: ultimumque certamen conmilitonum Alexandri fuit. Ut Seleucus amissis in Cappadocia cum Diodoro copiis interfactus est ab Ptolomaeo fratre Arsinoes uxor Lysimachi […] (Trog., Prol., 17).

Two issues require attention in this highly elliptic phrase. One would be the precise location of the battle lost by the troops of Seleukos. Magie has suggested that “Cappadocia” is an abbreviation for “Pontic Cappadocia”. Indeed, strategic considerations make the reading “Greater Cappadocia” unlikely: Seleukos would not have ventured so deeply in Lysimachos’ territory had Greater Cappadocia been hostile to him in the initial phases of the campaign and it is improbable that Ariarathes chose the path of disobedience after the final victory was secured by the Seleukid king. On the other hand, it is more reasonable to see Seleukos sending a punitive expedition against Mithradates (who would have been allied to Lysimachos) after Korupedion, during the period of seven months before he embarked on the fateful European campaign.

The other issue is far more difficult to settle. The nature of the ablative absolute construction allows for a number of nuances: temporal, causal, even concessive. What was so important about this Cappadocian event that made it worth including in the Prologue alongside events of prime importance, such as the war between the diadochs and the deaths of Lysimachos and Seleukos? The causal and concessive values of the phrase, though theoretically possible, must probably be discarded in favour of the temporal value. Is the defeat in Cappadocia then merely a point of chronological reference (‘soon after the troops lead by Diodoros were lost in Cappadocia, Seleukos was murdered’)? In that case, one would expect the event of greater significance to act as the reference point for the other, and not vice versa.

Perhaps one should consider, as scholarly opinion usually holds, that this event gave Mithradates the opportunity to assume the royal title and thus explain the apparent importance of the Cappadocian incident. Corroborating information to support such a

87 Magie, 1975, p. 1087, n. 36.
88 Thus, McGing, 1986a, p. 19.
view is provided by Strabon:

τὴν δὲ Καππαδοκίαν [...] παραλαβόντες Μακεδόνες περιεῖδον τὰ μὲν ἐκόντες τά’ ἄκοντες εἰς βασιλείας ἀντί σατραπείων περιστᾶσαν ὡν τὴν μὲν ἰδίως Καππαδοκίαν ὠνόμασαν [...], τὴν δὲ Πόντον, οἱ δὲ τὴν πρὸς τῷ Πόντῳ Καππαδοκίαν. (Str., 12.1.4)

The designation ‘Macedonians’ in this context appears to cover two distinct political entities: those who took over Cappadocia from the Persians are obviously the Macedonians under Alexander, while those who witnessed the transition of the two Cappadocian regions from satrapies to kingdoms must be the Seleukids.

It would appear, however, that the enmity between the Mithradatid and the Seleukid court was quick to disappear, for we see Ktistes and Ariobarzanes (his son and apparently co-ruler) fight alongside the newly arrived Galatians against Ptolemaios II. Another episode which supports the view that the Mithradatids had become reconciled with the Seleukids by the end of the reign of Ktistes is that Eumenes, the governor of Amastris and brother of Philetairos (the founder of the Attalid dynasty, who had sided with Seleukos I and maintained this allegiance at least nominally to the end of his life) chose in 279 to hand over the city not to the inhabitants of Heracleia, in spite of the tempting offers they had made, but rather to the Pontic house. As Mitchell has argued, it is unlikely that Philetairos was not consulted in the matter and equally improbable that he would have allowed this important settlement to fall into inimical hands.

There followed a period of good collaboration between the two Cappadocian dynasties and the great Macedonian house, which took in around 245 the form of a dynastic alliance: Seleukos II gave two sisters in marriage to Mithradates II (son of Ariobarzanes) and Ariarathes III (son of Ariaramnes), respectively. By this time both of them had taken the royal title, as is demonstrated by numismatic evidence.

Two staters bearing the legend ΜΙΘΡΑΔΑΤΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ (now held by the Bibliothèque Nationale and the von Aulock Collection, respectively) have been attributed by various scholars to three Pontic kings: Mithradates I Ktistes, Mithradates II and, recently, Mithradates III (cf. infra, Figure IV.3). Their imagery closely resembles that of the staters struck by Alexander, which are popular enough to be copied by Seleukids as well (Houghton & Lorber, no. 1014, attributed either to Antiochos Hierax or to

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89 Steph.Byz., s.v. Ἀγκύρα.
Antiochos III). Callataÿ\textsuperscript{91} observed that the control marks are identical with those of civic issues by Amisos and therefore proposes to attribute them to Mithradates III, even offering a possible context for the issues, namely the attack on Sinope mentioned by Polybios in 220. There are, however, a few problems with this attribution. The presence of Amisene control marks does not point exclusively to Mithradates III, for we know the city had already been taken over by the Ariobarzanes: soon after his death, his successor – young Mithradates II – is besieged there by the Galatians.\textsuperscript{92} Moreover, one can hardly see a reason for using on staters the archaic formula ΜΙΘΡΑΔΑΤΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ,\textsuperscript{93} while on tetradrachms he used the modern one, with inversed terms: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΜΙΘΡΑΔΑΤΟΥ. Furthermore, it was Mithradates II who was in the best position to derive inspiration from Seleukid issues, whether by Hierax or by Antiochos III: he was the former’ brother-in-law and the latter’s father-in-law. It is probably safe to consider therefore that the royal title had been assumed by the Mithradatids probably as early as Ktistes’ victory, but certainly no later than Mithradates II’s reign (usually taken to last from around 250 to around 210).

In neighbouring Cappadocia, Ariarathes II apparently did not issue coins,\textsuperscript{94} while his successor, Ariaramnes, struck exclusively bronze coins, whose legend written in Greek letters mentions his name, but no trace of the royal title. It was only under Ariarathes III that the dynasty acquired this status, at an unknown date. The year 245, when Ariarathes takes as his bride Stratonike, daughter of Antiochos II Theos and sister of Seleukos II and Antiochos Hierax, serves as a \textit{terminus ante quem}, for it is unlikely that the Seleukid court would have considered such a dynastic alliance had the Cappadocian been merely a \textit{dynastes}. It is possible that he assumed the title βασιλεύς upon his annexation of Cataonia,\textsuperscript{95} an event of great importance. This region hosted the great temple of Ma from Comana, and it is now, during the reign of Ariarathes III, that the goddess makes her appearance on Cappadocian coins – in the guise of Athena Nikephoros – and would remain thereafter almost omnipresent on the reverse of Cappadocian coins. Numismatically, the elevation to royal status is attested by both bronze and silver issues with the legend ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΡΙΑΡΑΘΟΥ,\textsuperscript{96} which follow chronologically the bronze issues that

\textsuperscript{91} Callataÿ, 2009.
\textsuperscript{92} Mem., 16.1.
\textsuperscript{93} The arguments in favour of considering this formula as archaic are presented in Reinach, 1888, p. 241, accepted in broad terms by Fr. de Callataÿ (\textit{cf. supra}, n. 91).
\textsuperscript{94} Reinach attributes one bronze coin with Aramaic legend to Ariarathes II (\textit{Reinach}, 1888, p. 30), but Simonetta denies such an attribution (Simonetta, 1977, p. 16).
\textsuperscript{95} Str., 12.1.2.
\textsuperscript{96} Simonetta, I.9; I.10.
mention only the ruler’s name, either in Greek or Aramaic alphabet.

Throughout this early period the two Anatolian dynasties were busy consolidating their positions. The Pontic kings tried to extend their influence along the shores of the Black Sea: they had acquired Amastris and Amisos by the time of Ariobarzanes; Mithradates (either II or III) initiated an attack on Sinope, which failed due to the energetic support lent by Rhodos to its fellow polis. The Cappadocian kings expanded their authority in the opposite direction, towards the South, taking Cataonia under Ariarathes III, as mentioned above.

The two kingdoms quickly became important players in microasiatic politics. Their geographical position, which enabled them to control to a good degree the traffic between Western Asia Minor on the one hand, and the Syrian coast, Mesopotamia and the “upper satrapies” on the other hand often made them part of the conflicts that involved the Seleukids and their rivals, some of which – and by no means the least important – were themselves Seleukids. Therefore, the friendship of the Cappadocian kings was often courted. The two marriages mentioned above, those arranged by Seleukos II in around 245, can be placed within the context of the Third Syrian War, when he more or less abandoned Syria, but needed to keep Asia Minor safe. Shortly thereafter, during the conflict which opposed Seleukos II to his brother, Antiochus Hierax, the latter had with him Laodike, the daughter of Mithradates II “ἐν παρακαταθήκῃ” (Pol., 5.74.5), which probably means both hostage and prospective wife. This marriage was never consummated, but the same Laodike would afterwards become the wife of another charismatic rebel, Achaios. Her sister, also named Laodike, was given in marriage to Antiochos III in 222, and their daughter, Antiochis, would marry the Cappadocian king Ariarathes IV.

This network of dynastic alliances (which are treated in more detail below, in the chapter detailing Dynastic Policies and Politics) is indissolubly linked to the political context in which they were established and defines the major lines of the political agenda of the parties involved. Thus, before the critical battle of Apameia the Seleukids, Mithradatids and Ariarathids intermarried frequently, and relations between them were generally good. As explained by McGing, “The Mithradatids got Hellenistic recognition, the Seleucids Iranian respectability”. The good relations went beyond mutually advantageous matrimonial ties, and one may observe them also in the military sphere, for Ariarathes IV contributed a contingent to Antiochos III’s army at Magnesia (Liv., 37.31.4; 37.40.10).

The Roman victory there, and the treaty which followed, concluded at Apameia, whereby Seleukid influence across the Taurus was severely reduced, signalled drastic and far-reaching changes in the political options of the regions under scrutiny.

97 McGING, 2009, p. 205.
V.4. From Apameia to the reign of Eupator

After the conclusion of the Apamean treaty, the Cappadocian house was quick
to align its foreign policy to that of Rome and her ally in Asia Minor, Pergamon. This
materialized in a hasty marriage between the Pergamenian king, Eumenes II and the
young daughter of Ariarathes IV, Stratonike.

Pergamon was now perhaps the most influential power in Asia Minor, having gained
not only large territories, but also, by virtue of having staunchly supported Rome, gained
the ear of the super-power. However, these territorial gains also brought about a degree of
political instability. Eumenes was forced, for example, to wage war against the Bithynian
king Prusias over Phrygia Epiktetos and Galatia promised renewed trouble, in spite of
Vulso’s successful expedition in the area. His rule may have been contested in other
places as well, and this left the newly expanded Pergamenian kingdom open to challenge.

In this context the Pontic throne was occupied by a young and very ambitious king,
Pharnakes. He succeeded in 182 in taking the city of Sinope and may have shown some interest in
Galatia as well. The former earned him an enemy in Rhodos, the latter in Eumenes II of Pergamon.
They complained before the Senate of Rome and the Elders sent a senatorial commission, which
would become their standard response and the main instrument of Roman foreign policy in the
area in the years to come. Encouraged by the apparent lack of involvement of the Republic,98
Pharnakes took an even more aggressive stance. He ordered his troops to push at various
moments of the campaign towards Tion (Diod., 29.23.1), Galatia, which was ravaged by some
ten thousand soldiers (Pol., 24.14.1), Paphlagonia, where they sacked the treasury of Morzios, the
local ruler (Pol., 25.2.9) and the king prepared to lead in person an expedition into Cappadocia
(Pol., 24.14.2). Besides these actions, Pharmakes tried to persuade Seleukos II to cross the Taurus
(Diod., 29.24.1) and, from the terms of the peace treaty, he seems to have also been allied with
Artaxias, the dynast of Lesser Armenia, Akousilochos and Gatalos the Sarmatian.99

The alliance between Eumenes II and Ariarathes IV could only be strengthened
by Pharmakes’ behaviour and the two did in fact join efforts for a major expedition into

98 Many scholars have seen this as an instance of cooling relations between Rome and her ally, Pergamon,
less than a decade after Magnesia. A. Primo (PriMo, 2006, pp. 622-627) prefers to see in the four senatorial
commissions sent to Asia Minor to investigate the conflict between Pharmakes and Eumenes a gesture of
unequivocal support for Pergamon. It remains beyond doubt, however, that Rome sent her ally nothing
except ambassadors and even took steps to prevent Eumenes from delivering what was promising to be a
fatal blow to the Pontic king.

99 The Polybian text: “περιελήφθησαν δὲ ταῖς συνθήκαις τῶν μὲν κατὰ τὴν Ἀσίαν δυναστῶν Ἀρταξίας ὁ
τῆς πλείστης Ἀρμενίας ἄρχων καὶ Ἀκουσίλοχος, τῶν δὲ κατὰ τὴν Εὐρώπην Γάταλος ὁ Σαρμάτης, τῶν δὲ
αὐτονομούμενῶν Ἡρακλεῶται, Μεσσηνιανοί, Χερσονησίται, σὺν δὲ τούτους Κυζικηνοί.” (Pol., 25.2.12-
13) is not clear enough with regard to the side taken by each ruler. Suppositions can only be made judging
from the overall strategic situation or from parallels with later events. Cf. also McGing, 1986a, pp. 28-30.
Pontus.\textsuperscript{100} Pharnakes was finally persuaded to ask for peace and the text of the treaty drafted on this occasion has been preserved by Polybios (25.2.1-13). Conditions are quite harsh for the Pontic king: besides relinquishing all territorial gains (apart from Sinope, whose conquest does not appear to have grieved the victors), he must also return the booty captured and pay a fairly large war indemnity. Defeated, Pharnakes would spend the following years trying to re-establish his position financially and diplomatically.

While these events took place in Northern Anatolia, to the South of the Taurus a Seleukid official with blood connections to the Orontids by the name of Ptolemaios entertained thoughts of rebellion. The context was quite advantageous. After the conclusion Treaty of Apameia the Seleukids suffered a marked – though far from fatal – decline. The great king Antiochos III died in 187 in Elymais and was followed by Seleukos IV, who was assassinated in 175 by his minister, Heliodoros. Antiochos IV then ousted the usurper, ignoring the claims of his nephew, Demetrios, held in Rome. Antiochos IV would die in 164, while leading his armies East, and the throne was occupied by his son, the child Antiochos V, whose position was seriously endangered by Demetrios, now an energetic young man who demanded ever more vocally to be allowed to return to Syria.

During these two decades of political instability within the Seleukid realm, a number of regions attempted to detach themselves from the Seleukid network of alliances or to gain independence. In 163 Ptolemaios was a high official in the Seleukid administration in Commagene. His title appears in our only source, Diodoros, as \textit{ἐπιστάτης}, but scholars\textsuperscript{101} have hypothesized that this is highly unlikely, as this title describes a royal representative in a \textit{polis}. Ptolemaios, who appears from his actions to have been the governor of the region, is much more likely to have possessed the rank of \textit{strategos}. Whatever his title, Ptolemaios chose to turn into an \textit{ἀποστάτης}:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Ὅτι ὁ τῆς Κομμαγηνῆς ἐπιστάτης Πτολεμαῖος ἔτι μὲν καὶ πρότερον καταφρονήσας τῶν Συριακῶν βασιλέων ἀποστάτης ἐγένετο, καὶ διὰ τοὺς ἰδίους ἐκείνων περισπασμοὺς ἀδεῶς τῆς χώρας ἐδυνάστευσε} (Diod., 31.19a.1)
\end{quote}

He was taking advantage of a number of circumstances. To the North-West, his neighbour, Ariarathes IV of Cappadocia, had already abandoned Seleukid alliance. To the North-East, Artaxias and Zariadris, former generals of Antiochos III (\textit{Str.}, 11.14.5) had each declared himself king in a region of Armenia (the former in Greater Armenia, the latter in Sophene), being or at least claiming to be continuators of the Orontid

\begin{footnotes}
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dynasty, and therefore related to Ptolemaios. Further East, Timarchos had rebelled in Media. Most importantly, on the Seleukid throne now sat a weak king, Antiochos V.

His next action was an attempt to take over Melitene, which not only possessed an extremely fertile soil (cf. supra), but also controlled an important crossing over the Euphrates. He may have counted on a slow reaction of the Cappadocian king (it is unknown whether this rival was the old Ariarathes IV or the young Ariarathes V) and on the help of his kinsmen, the kings of Armenia, but Ariarathes arrived swiftly with a large army and defeated him.

The arrival in Antioch of Demetrios in late 162 or early 161 and his swift elimination of Antiochos V hailed the last era of significant Seleukid involvement in the affairs of Asia Minor. This energetic king embarked on more campaigns designed to reassert Seleukid authority, even at the cost of upsetting Rome. In Media, he defeated Timarchos. In Judea, his troops defeated Judas Maccabeus.

With regard to Cappadocia and Pontus, regions technically outside his area of influence according to the terms of the Apamean treaty, he tried to play the card of diplomacy: he offered his sister, Laodike, in marriage to Ariarathes V and his cousin, Nysa, to the old Pharnakes. The latter accepted gladly the proposal, showing more preoccupation with his own interests than with the sensibilities of the Roman Senate but the former was dissuaded by a timely intervention of Ti. Sempronius Gracchus. Politically rejected and personally insulted, Demetrios attempted to eliminate Ariarathes in 158, by supporting his brother, Orophernes. Initially, the attempt was successful, and the Senate even recognised the two as joint kings. However, Orophernes’ rapacity towards his subjects, coupled with the military intervention of Attalus II in favour of Ariarathes (whom he had befriended back in the days when they both studied in Athens) would decide the issue in 156. Orophernes was exiled and would soon find his death.

Demetrios would die in 150, after being defeated by Alexandros Balas, who had the support of – among others – Attalos II and Ariarathes V. During his last years his political

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105 Ed. Will argues convincingly (Will, 1966, pp. 313-314) that the story related by Diodorus (31.19.7), according to which Antiochis, the Cappadocian queen, was sterile at first and adopted in secret two boys before giving birth to Ariarathes IV’s true children, two daughters and a son, is mere propaganda, originating from Ariarathes V who was eager to consolidate his position against his brother, Orophernes.
106 According to Trogus, he tried to rouse the mob of Antioch against his benefactor, Demetrios, but the Seleukid king apprehended him and had him imprisoned in Seleukeia (Iust., 35.3-4).
influence in Asia Minor had all but disappeared. The rulers of the three houses that form the object of the current investigation, the Mithradatids, the Ariarathids and the Commagenian Orontids are known or are very likely to have obtained the friendship of Rome. In so far as Ptolemaios I is concerned, we do not possess enough data to go beyond reasonable suppositions, but fortunately information is available for Ariarathes V and Pharnakes I. The former continued the philo-Roman policy initiated by his father and soon after his accession to the throne sent an embassy to Rome bearing as gift a golden wreath worth ten thousand gold pieces and renewing on this occasion the ties of friendship with the Republic.\(^{107}\) The latter concluded in around 155\(^ {108}\) a treaty with the city of Chersonesos, among whose clauses was that both sides would abide by the Roman philia: “τάν τε ποτὶ Ῥωμαίους φιλίαν διαφυλά[σοντος και μηδὲν ἐναντίον αὐτοῖς πράσοντος]” (IosPE I, 402, 3-5); “τὴν τε πρὸς Ῥωμαίους φιλίαν διαφυλασσόντων και μηδὲν ἐναντίον αὐτοῖς πρασσόντων” (IosPE I, 402, 26-28).

Shortly thereafter (late 155 – early 154) Pharnakes died and was followed on the throne by his brother, Mithradates IV. By this time, the relations between the Mithradatids and Ariarathids seem to have improved greatly since the 183-179 war. For example, they both send troops to Attalos against Prousias, “according to the terms of the alliance”\(^ {109}\) and the overall command is exerted by Demetrios, the son of Ariarathes.\(^ {110}\)

The reign of Mithradates IV, who ruled alongside his sister-wife Laodike, was short, ending in about 150. A tetradrachm with the legend ΒΑΣΙΛΙΣΣΗΣ ΛΑΟΔΙΚΗΣ and depicting Hera standing on the reverse\(^ {111}\) may attest a period when Laodike ruled as sole regent of the still young Mithradates V, son of Pharnakes and Nysa.

In the mean time, Ariarathes V was pursuing in Cappadocia the philhellenic policy which brought him the praise of Diodoros: “οὗτος [...] φιλοσοφίᾳ προσανέχων, ἐξ οὗ καὶ ἡ παρὰ τοῖς Ἕλληνσι ἀγνοουμένη πάλαι Καππαδοκία τότε τοῖς πεπαιδευμένοις ἐμβιωτήριον ὑπῆρχεν.” (Diod., 31.19.8)

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\(^{107}\) Pol., 31.3; Diod., 31.19.8; Diod., 31.28.1; T.Liv., per. 46.


\(^{109}\) “Ὅτι κατὰ τὴν Ἀσίαν Ἀτταλὸς ἔτι κατὰ χειμῶνα συνήθροιζε μεγάλας δυνάμεις, ὅτε καὶ τῶν περὶ τὸν Ἀριαράθην καὶ τὸν Μιθριδάτην ἐξαπεσταλκότων αὐτῶν στρατιῶν ἱππέων καὶ πεζῶν κατὰ τὴν συμμαχίαν, ὃν ἤγειτο Δημήτριος Ἀριαράθου.” Pol., 33.12.1.

\(^{110}\) McGing (McGing, 1986a, p. 35, n. 103) rightly suggest Demetrios was the son of Ariarathes IV and the brother of Ariarathes V, and not the son of the latter. Given that in 163, when he becomes king, Ariarathes V is described as a young man, it is unlikely that by 154 he would have a son old enough to command an army. Moreover, in around 160, when Demetrios proposes to Ariarathes the marital alliance, the Cappadocian king must have appeared as available. It is true that polygamy was practiced by the Eastern Anatolian houses (cf. infra, pp. 120-121) and thus in theory Ariarathes might have already had a wife, but in practice a Seleukid princess could hardly expect to be one of many wives.

\(^{111}\) Babelon & Reinach, 1925, p. 13, no. 8.
The year 133, which saw the disappearance of the Attalid dynasty, changed dramatically the Anatolian political landscape. Rome transformed from a distant – if nosy – arbiter, who operated mostly through senatorial commissioners, of varying skill, intelligence and moral standards into a palpable, physical presence in Asia Minor, operating through tax farmers and an entire administrative apparatus. This metamorphosis did not occur without opposition, and the revolt of Aristonikos required a sustained military effort to eliminate.\textsuperscript{112} Rome’s by now traditional allies in the area, Cappadocia and Pontus, helped with troops. The Cappadocian king, Ariarathes V, even died on the battlefield.

His son and successor, Ariarathes VI, inherited a kingdom enlarged by the gratitude of Rome – for Lykaonia was added to the Cappadocian dominion in recognition for his father’s diligence – but weakened by the sudden death of the former monarch, coupled with the young age and lack of experience of the current one, who for a while shared the power with his mother, Nysa.\textsuperscript{113} This queen, possibly a daughter of Pharnakes, but not necessarily so, seems to have been so enamoured with power that she murdered her five eldest sons, in order to ensure as long a regency as possible. The people of Cappadocia were, predictably, enraged, and executed her after a short period of time (\textit{Iust.}, 37.1).

Mithradates Euergetes took advantage of the situation to invade the neighbouring kingdom, as if it were a foreign country: “ὡς ἀλλοτρίαν” (\textit{App.}, \textit{Mithr.}, 10). This phrase need not evoke any acts of barbarity on his part: Appian considers it worthy of mention because in his opinion the Mithradatids and the Ariarathids were members of the same dynasty and Euergetes would have been the first to break the fraternity between the two kingdoms and ruling houses. Appian is blatantly wrong: not only were the two dynasties distinct, but, as mentioned previously, Pharnakes I at least prepared an expedition against his Southern neighbour if he did not execute it.

The military operations did not lead to an annexation of Cappadocia. According to Glew,\textsuperscript{114} this is indicative that Euergetes at no time had an inimical attitude towards Ariarathes, but actually intervened on his behalf, in order to strengthen his position in the face of internal opposition. This friendly attitude is thereafter confirmed and strengthened by the marriage between Ariarathes and Mithradates’ daughter, Laodike. This hypothesis not only goes against Appian’s express statement, but is moreover not the only scenario that can account for the main facts in the equation, namely the Pontic invasion and the subsequent marital alliance. As McGing rightly points


\textsuperscript{113} As attested by a numismatic issue depicting jugate busts of Nysa and Ariarathes, with the legend “ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΙΣΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΡΙΑΡΑΘΟΥ | ΕΠΙΦΑΝΟΥΣ ΤΟΥ ΥΙΟΥ”: cf. \textit{Simonetta}, 1977, p. 29.

\textsuperscript{114} Glew, 1977.
out, just because Cappadocia maintained its territorial integrity and independence does not demonstrate Mithradates was defeated, nor that he merely lent a hand to a neighbour in difficulty. The Pontic king, who was careful at all times to maintain the goodwill of Rome, even lending them troops during the Third Punic War (App., Mithr., 10) and was confirmed as a friend of the Roman people (ibid.) could not afford to displease the Senate and annexing a large kingdom itself a Roman ally would certainly have had such an effect. The most Mithradates could hope to achieve was to extend his political influence Southwards and that, it seems, he succeeded in doing. He probably did not count exclusively on Laodike to make sure her husband treated Pontic interests with due consideration, but also on those who must have followed her to Cappadocia as part of her retinue. This episode is of great importance, as it sets a trend in Pontic-Cappadocian relations that would have critical consequences in the following generation.

While these events took place in Cappadocia, across the Taurus, in Commagene, Samos I was consolidating his position. His reign, which is placed in the latter half of the 2nd century, from around 130 to around 96, coincides with the age of bitter conflict between the Parthians and the Seleukid Empire, during which the latter try mostly in vain to regain the provinces lost by 139 to Mithradates I of Parthia. As such, Samos is very careful to cultivate a dual persona, which could accommodate with the same ease Eastern as well as Western characteristics. His coinage is telling from this point of view, for his portrait is depicted both with Persian royal attributes (the high tiara) and with late Hellenistic radiate diadem.

V.5. The age of Mithradates VI Eupator Dionysos

In 120, the Pontic king Mithradates V fell victim to a plot organized by his closest collaborators – his friends and even his wife. As a result, the diadem was passed to his young sons, both named Mithradates, who ruled for a while under the watchful eye of their mother. The elder of the two sons, who took the epithet Eupator, soon proved as ruthless as he was gifted. Having survived various assassination attempts, he in turn eliminated his mother and then his brother.

His policy built on the legacy of his ancestors, from Pharnakes to Mithradates V. It promoted the assertion of Pontic influence wherever possible, but not necessarily

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115 McGing, 1986a, p. 38.
116 One wonders if this gesture, of extolling his dead father’s memory in the context of courtly intrigue that – sources tell us – surrounded his early years, is not meant as a teenager’s act of defiance in the face of the murderers rather than as a mere marker of youth and implicit vulnerability, as Muccioli would have it (Muccioli, 1996).
in the form of territorial expansion. Appointing a trustworthy king (a son, more often than not) seemed to offer Eupator enough guarantees. Such was the case of Colchis, a region critical in the strategic architecture of Mithradates’ war effort, acquired at an unknown date, possibly at the beginning of the 1st century: Mithradates attempted to control it through two sons, one also named Mithradates, the other called Machares. Both ended ill: the former came under suspicion of treason at the close of the First Mithradatic War and the king had him bound in chains and executed (App., Mithr., 64); the other betrayed his father during the Third War (Memn., 37.6) and committed suicide when Eupator approached him with an army (App., Mithr., 102). The same Machares seems to have been appointed king over the Cimmerian Bosphorus (App., Mithr., 67). The appointment of Moaphernes as ὕπαρχος καὶ διοικητὴς τῆς χώρας (Str., 11.2.18) may be either simultaneous, in which case he could only have overseen part of Colchis, or subsequent to these events, which would attest a shift of opinion from the king, who now preferred to have the area under tighter control.

Eupator attempted to apply the same model in Cappadocia as well. When Ariarathes VI died (quite possibly assassinated by Gordios, who may or may not have acted under Pontic impulse), his wife Laodike became regent. Eupator may have hoped his sister would be his faithful ally, but the queen seems to have put her own interests first. Thus, when Nicomedes III of Bithynia invaded Cappadocia, she placated the invader by marrying him. Mithradates intervened militarily, but following his victory he did not annex Cappadocia, but preferred to install Ariarathes VII, his nephew. When the young Cappadocian king proved too strong-willed, opposing him militarily with the aid of neighbouring kings (one of whom, according to Sullivan, may have been Samos, the king of Commagene), Mithradates personally assassinated him and replaced him with his own son, Ariarathes IX. When the Cappadocians drove Ariarathes IX away and recalled from exile Ariarathes VIII, Eupator intervened again and won another victory. The Ariarathid king died soon afterwards and with him the line became extinct. Laodike counterattacked by presenting publicly a third – in all likelihood spurious – son of Ariarathes VI.

If the case had not attracted the attention of Rome, it did now, for both Laodike and Mithradates sent envoys to Rome to plead the cause of their own candidate to the Cappadocian throne. From the Senate’s perspective, allowing Cappadocia to fall in the sphere of influence

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118 “Igitur cum in aciem eduxisset Mithridates peditum LXXX milia, equitum X milia, currus falcatos sexcentos, nec Ariarathi auxiliantibus finitimis regibus minores copiae essent […]”, Iust., 38.1.8.
of either Bithynia or Pontus would have upset the balance of forces, by creating a powerful block too close to the province of Asia for comfort. Their first reaction was to announce that Cappadocia would become “free”. Since the days of Monophthalmos the concept of freedom had been proffered many times in Anatolia, with different meanings.

The gesture of the senators could be explained according to two plausible scenarios. One has them act without a true understanding of affairs in Asia Minor. Having in mind the magnanimous proclamation of Flamininus at the Isthmian Games a century before and the enthusiastic response it elicited, they decide to apply the same procedure, with as little forethought as they demonstrated in the case of the similar and nearly simultaneous declaration of independence for Cyrene. The Cappadocians, however, aware of the inevitable dissolution of the state under these circumstances and eager not to fall under Pontic or Bithynian influence, beg the Senate to reconsider and to appoint a king. The senators, somewhat taken aback by the Cappadocian rejection of the gift of freedom, appoint, nevertheless, Ariobarzanes.

The other plausible scenario has the senators and the Cappadocian delegation (or those Cappadocian delegates who were opposed to Mithradates) play a diplomatic game: Rome could not afford Cappadocia to fall into the hands of another king, either whole or in part, so they needed to reject both the Pontic and the Bithynian candidate and produce a third candidate. Thus, Rome was forced to take an unprecedented measure, appointing a new dynasty. In order to provide more legitimacy to such an act, Rome offers complete freedom to Cappadocia, on the understanding that the ethnos (who had a privileged relation with the Republic, as it was mentioned as a distinct party in the treaty of alliance, besides the monarch) would reject it and demand another king instead.

This situation could not please Mithradates, so he determined to oust Ariobarzanes as well. He was, nevertheless, trying not to open hostilities with Rome, so he avoided a direct attack. He appealed, therefore, in 96 or 95 to his son-in-law, Tigranes, the king of Armenia. Tigranes had recently occupied the throne after having been held hostage by Mithradates II of Parthia and was quick to cement an alliance with the Pontic king by marrying his daughter, Cleopatra. With Ariobarzanes ousted, the Cappadocian throne was again occupied by Ariarathes IX.

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120 *Iust.*, 38.2.7; Str., 12.2.11.
122 “οἱ δὲ θαυμάσαντες εἰ τινες οὕτως εἶεν ἀπειρηκότες πρὸς τὴν ἐλευθερίαν”, Str., 12.2.11.
123 Rome had, on occasion, sanctioned new kings, who had seceded from larger entities: such was the case of Timarchos in Media, for example. However, anointing a new king in a state with well-established ties of alliance after the previous dynasty had disappeared was quite unusual.
124 “Συνέβη δὲ, ἡνίκα πρῶτον Ῥωμαῖοι τὰ κατὰ τὴν Ἀσίαν διῴκουν νικήσαντες Αντίοχον, καὶ φιλίας καὶ συμμαχίας ἐποιοῦντο πρὸς τε τὰ ἔθνη καὶ τοὺς βασιλέας, τοῖς μὲν ἄλλοις βασιλεύσαντες αὐτοίς καθ’ ἐαυτοὺς δοθῆναι τὴν τιμὴν ταύτην, τῷ δὲ Καππάδοκι καὶ αὐτῷ δὲ τῷ ἔθνει κοινῆ”, Str., 12.2.11.
125 The delicate matter of the chronology of the period is addressed in DMITRIEV, 2006.
Ariobarzanes, who dutifully took the title Φιλορώμαιος, sought help from the Senate, and his hopes were not deceived. The Elders ordered their young proconsul in Cilicia, Sulla,\textsuperscript{126} to reinstate their protégé. The young aristocrat did just that, apparently without much effort, if one is to believe Plutarch (\textit{Plut.}, \textit{Sulla}, 5.3), using mostly local troops and slaying many Cappadocians and Armenians. Sulla used the opportunity to meet a Parthian envoy, somewhere on the banks of the Euphrates (\textit{Plut.}, \textit{Sulla}, 5.4), probably at Tomisa.

The Parthians had become by the time of their great king Mithradates II the most important power in the East, having dealt a series of blows to the Seleukid might that had reduced the Macedonian dynasty to insignificance. Now they were establishing a formal relation of friendship and alliance with the great power of the West,\textsuperscript{127} and Sulla made sure his peers were well aware it was him who had achieved this. When he returned to Rome, he was accused of having extracted money illegally from “a friendly and allied kingdom”. The accusations were dropped and Sulla could thus claim to have been the first in yet another enterprise: demanding money from the Cappadocian king in order to have him restored to power. In subsequent decades his example was followed by others and this would set Cappadocia on the brink of bankruptcy.

By 90, however, Ariobarzanes was again being chased from his kingdom. The Armenians who did so, Mithraas and Bagoas (\textit{App.}, \textit{Mithr.}, 10), may have been the generals of Tigranes or may have been subordinates of Mithradates himself. At the same time the Pontic king supported Socrates Chrestos in his successful attack against his brother, Nicomedes IV. The Senate, irritated by the Pontic king’s activities, decided to reinstate both kings at the same time.

The Roman representative, Manius Aquilius, succeeded in doing so relying mostly on local forces (the detachments of Cassius from the province of Asia, supplemented by large numbers of Galatians and Phrygians). As soon as the two kings were back in command, their Roman patron incited them to ravage the lands of Mithradates. It is unclear what the intentions of Aquilius were and to what extent he was following instructions from Rome. In all likelihood he was feeling prepared for any reaction from Eupator: if the king did nothing, he could go back to

\textsuperscript{126} Sulla’s career in the 90s has produced much scholarly debate, starting with \textit{Badian}, 1959. Cf. the \textit{status quaestionis} in \textit{Hatscher}, 2001.

\textsuperscript{127} One should not, however, read too much into this event. What the three people present (Sulla, Ariobarzanes and the Parthian ambassador, Orobazos) discussed remains unknown, but we can safely assume they did little more than exchange polite remarks, while remaining convinced they had obtained from the other side guarantees they would not interfere in what they perceived as being their sphere of influence. The subject has been treated in Gareth Sampson – \textit{The Dual Threat: Rome, Parthia and the Fall of the Seleukid Empire}, paper delivered at the Seleukid Dissolution conference, Exeter, 2008.
Rome and boast he had taught him a lesson; if the king responded militarily, he felt confident he would win an easy victory and earn even more reputation. It was the reaction of Nicomedes and Ariobarzanes that surprised him, however, as the two were extremely reluctant to attack Pontus. Eventually, Nicomedes complied, but only after being reminded in no unclear terms of his great debt of money to Aquilius and other prominent Romans.

Eupator refrained from reacting, at least in the beginning and his first reaction was diplomatic, appealing to Roman help against the aggressor by invoking the old ties of amicitia that linked his dynasty and Rome. Aquilius forbade any attack on Nicomedes and by doing so he placed himself in an extremely delicate political position, because in the eyes of the world he was effectively denying Mithradates justice and offered him an excellent propaganda opportunity.

Mithradates could chose to let matters as they were and accept loss of face or punish the invader and draw Rome into the conflict. The matter of the responsibility for the initiation of the First Mithradatic War has been a matter of heated political debate in Antiquity and no less heated scholarly debate in the modern age. Some, such as McGing, tend to agree with ancient sources which see in Mithradates the aggressor who only needed a pretext. Others, such as Fr. de Callataý, argue that the minting pattern, which demonstrates a sharp surge in May/June 89, is indicative that Mithradates was taken by surprise by the Bithynian invasion and rapidly minted the coins he needed in order to pay hastily assembled troops.

It remains clear that Mithradates had tried to avoid war for a fairly long time. Could he avoid it again in 89, after Rome had transparently instigated his neighbours to ravage his territories? He would have lost face, and his royal vanity alone would have probably prompted him to respond militarily. Yet it seems Mithradates was facing an even more serious threat, as is demonstrated by the initial stages of the campaign. After the pillaging expedition, Nicomedes is said to have returned home laden with booty. Yet the first military encounter with the king’s troops, led by Archelaos and Neoptolemos takes place somewhere in the valley of the river Amnias (App., Mithr., 18), in the region named Domanitis (Str., 12.3.40). Since the region thus named covers the area where the river Amnias flows into the Halys, and that is East of Sinope, one could say this first encounter took place within Mithradates’ own territory, which can only mean Nicomedes.

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130 Talbert, 2000, 86.
had returned with an even greater army. In Mithradates’ mind, there could have been no doubt that the Romans were ordering Nicomedes to change tactics from raiding to invasion and that the Romans were now fully bent on war.

The Romans may have wanted the war, but, if one looks at the large armies that seem to appear almost instantaneously, Mithradates certainly was ready for it. His son, Ariarathes IX, was dispatched with a considerable force into Cappadocia, ousting the unfortunate Ariobarzanes yet again, while the king led another, even larger force, Westwards into Bithynia. Thus, it seems, responsibility for the beginning of the First Mithradatic War does not lay with one party alone. Rather, provocation followed provocation, each bringing the military showdown closer.131

The Roman generals had not prepared an in-depth defensive of Asia: they probably had not expected to fight a defensive war. Therefore, as soon as Mithradates overcame the army of Manius Aquilius (and possibly of Cassius also, although that is not expressly mentioned in our sources), he was able to take possession of the province of Asia. From here, he launched an ambitious expedition to Greece. His general Archelaos was welcomed by Athens, which became his base of operations. Mithradates seemed at the height of his glory, but things took a turn for the worse when Sulla, in spite of the complicated situation in Rome, arrived in Greece with his legions and defeated his troops in a number of major battles: at the siege of Athens, at Chaeronea and at Orchomenos.

Faced with catastrophic defeats in Greece and with a serious situation developing in Asia Minor itself, following the intervention of another Roman army, led first by Flaccus, then by Fimbria, Mithradates had to capitulate. He profited from the fact that Sulla and Fimbria did not act in concert, being bitter enemies in the context of the Civil War and chose the lesser of two evils, negotiating with Sulla. The terms of the peace were agreed at a conference at Dardanos, held in 85 between the Roman general and the king in person. They stipulated a return to the statu quo in territorial and political terms: Mithradates would abandon all his conquests in Asia Minor, but would be reinstated as a friend of Rome. Moreover, Eupator was supporting Sulla in his fratricide war, by giving over to him the remainder of his Navy and a detachment of archers.

In the mean time, Mithradates’ Armenian ally, Tigranes, was busy in the East. Following the death of the great king Mithradates II in 88, Tigranes took advantage of the Parthian

131 The abundant bibliography dedicated to the subject of the Mithradatic Wars makes it unnecessary to follow here all the details of the events. Cf. HIND, 1994 for a synthesis; REINACH, 1890, MCGING, 1986a, BALLESTEROS-PASTOR, 1996 for monographs dedicated to Eupator’s reign; CALLATAY, 1997, MASTROCINQUE, 1999 for monographs dedicated to the Mithradatic Wars; and many others.
turmoil to extend his rule. He was so successful he took the title “King of Kings”, highly reminiscent of Achaemenid tradition. By 85, his eyes were set upon Syria. In his path lay the small kingdom of Commagene, whose ruler Mithradates claimed Orontid descent, but who had strong ties with the Seleukids, being married to Laodike, daughter of Antiochos VIII Grypos and borrowing his father-in-law’s epithet, Kallinikos. In 83 Tigranes was the master of Syria, which implies Commagene had submitted or had been forced to submit. The former seems more probable for, although it remains unknown how the Commagenian king negotiated the complicated international situation, he seems to have made the right choices, as he remained in power. As he did so, he embarked on a programme of dynastic consolidation that had an important religious component, which would fully bloom under his son, Antiochos I.

Further north, the existing tensions had not been diffused by the conclusion of the peace. Ariobarzanes accused Eupator he did not completely evacuate Cappadocia, while the Pontic king grew worried by the fact that although the peace had been concluded de facto, its ratification by the Senate was delayed (App., Mithr., 64). This gave Murena an opportunity to commence hostilities again in 83, incited by a number of factors: Eupator’s military preparations, allegedly against rebel tribes; Archelaos’ accusations (for the Pontic general, faced with the charge of treason had fled the kingdom and sought refuge with the Romans); and not least Murena’s own political ambitions, which would have been greatly aided by a victory – an easy one to obtain, as he thought – against a wealthy Oriental monarch.

The Roman general met with initial success, as the king purposefully offered no opposition. Only when, after receiving a deputation from the Senate, Murena persisted in his aggression, did Mithradates decide to retaliate. A major victory for the Pontic king ensued, which he followed by reoccupying Cappadocia (App., Mithr., 65). It took another deputation from the Senate, which transmitted in no unclear terms to Murena that the war was against the wishes of Sulla, to put an end to military operations. During the negotiations Mithradates claimed “to keep those parts of Cappadocia he already held and others besides”. The conflict between Pontus and Cappadocia appeared to be solved when Mithradates’ demands were accepted and his daughter married Ariobarzanes’ son and took the name of her new husband’s mother, Athenais Philostorgos, as a sign of

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132 According to Trogus (Iust., 40.1), Tigranes had been invited to rule by the people of Syria after the candidacy of Mithradates Eupator had been deemed inopportune due to his war with Rome. Tigranes had been eventually chosen not only due to his personal qualities and his alliance to Parthia, but also because of his marriage with Eupator’s daughter, Cleopatra.

133 “λαβὼν ἔχειν Καππαδοκίας ὅσα τε εἶχε, καὶ ἔτεσα ἐπ’ ἐκείνοις”, App., Mithr., 66.
respect for the Cappadocian house. Thus ended the Second Mithradatic War, in 81.

The following decade witnessed two important events which convinced the Pontic king that another war with Rome was inevitable: with Sulla dead in 78, the Senate postponed *sine die* the ratification of the peace agreement with Mithradates (*App.*, *Mithr.*, 67) and in 74 Nicomedes IV died and bequeathed his kingdom to the Republic, bringing the Roman presence dangerously close to Pontus. A series of factors strengthened Eupator’s resolution to fight, as they gave him the hope of success: Sertorius rose in revolt in Hispania; the Gauls were again restless; the Getic king Boirebistes grew in power and promised to antagonize Rome in his area; the activities of the pirates grew in scale and boldness. In spring 73 Mithradates launched his attack on Bithynia and gave the signal for the beginning of his third and most bitter war with Rome.

His advance was held up in front of the walls of Kyzikos. It was here that Lucullus intercepted him and inflicted upon him the first in a long series of serious defeats (*App.*, *Mithr.*, 73-76; *Plut.*, *Luc.*, 9-11). Mithradates found himself ousted from his ancestral holdings and sought refuge with his son-in-law, Tigranes. The Armenian king, in all likelihood alarmed by the perspective of seeing Rome so close to his own lands, joined forces with Mithradates, only to be defeated in turn by Lucullus (*Plut.*, *Luc.*, 24-32; *App.*, *Mithr.*, 84-87).

This gave the signal for many kings who had been subjected to the rule of the Armenian King of Kings to change sides and seek the friendship and the protection of the Republic. Among them was the new king of Commagene, Antiochos I, who styled himself “Theos”, although it is still uncertain to what extent this act of submission was preceded by a defeat at Roman hands: Cassius Dio presents Antiochos as making overtures to Lucullus, whereas Plinius Maior has him endure a siege by the Roman general. It is conceivable that Plinius confused Lucullus with Pompeius, who would besiege Antiochos into friendship in 64.

Unfortunately for the Roman general, his troops, unhappy with their share of the loot, mutinied. Eupator took advantage of the situation and regained, with Armenian support, his ancestral holdings by defeating Triarius, who had been left behind to guard the Pontic region (*App.*, *Mithr.*, 89; *Cass. Dio*, 36.9.2). Lucullus, sapped by political

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134 "Βοιρεβίστας ἀνήρ Γέτης [...] ἀνέλαβε κεκακωμένους τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ὑπὸ συχνῶν πολέμων καὶ τοσοῦτον ἐπῆρεν ἀσκήσει καὶ νήψει καὶ τῷ προσέχειν τοῖς προστάγμασιν, ὡσ’ ὀλίγων ἐτῶν μεγάλην ἀρχὴν κατεστήσατο καὶ τῶν ὁμόρων τοὺς πλείστους ὑπέταξε τοῖς Γέταις· ἤδη δὲ καὶ Ῥωμαίοις φοβερὸς ἦν”, *Str.*, 7.3.11.

135 "τὸν τε τῆς Κομμαγηνῆς βασιλέα Ἀντίοχον [...] καὶ τινα Ἀράβιον δυνάστην Ἀλχαυδόνιον ἄλλους τε ἐπικηρυκευσαμένους οἱ ἐδέξατο”, *Cass. Dio*, 36.2.5

machinations back in Rome and by the disobedience of his own soldiers in the field, was finally replaced with Pompeius.

Pompeius reinstated discipline among the soldiery and decisively defeated Mithradates, who found himself compelled to flee, once again, from his lands (App., Mithr., 100; Plut., Pomp., 32). Since he could no longer find refuge with Tigranes, he decided to withdraw to Colchis and thereafter to his Bosporan possessions. Old, but never lacking energy, he eliminated Machares, his own son, who had proven too independently minded and had sided with the Romans. It was, however, the rebellion of another son, Pharnakes, which would prove too much for Eupator. In 63 the great king committed suicide and gave the Romans (who were by now haunted by absurd fears they would be invaded overland by renewed Mithradatic forces), a reason to celebrate.

V.6. *At the whim of Rome*

Pompey’s intervention and subsequent administrative decisions in the East, which can be said at the same time to have been inspired by a broad vision and by petty personal interests, drastically changed the political environment of the area, but also brought about social and cultural transformations. Politically, the direct consequence of Mithradates’ disappearance was the transformation of much of his Anatolian holdings into a Roman province, which joined the recent province of Bithynia. The rest of the lands were apportioned to various dynasts who had been helpful not so much to Rome in general, but to Pompey in particular.

In order to ensure a better administration and control of the land, Pompey promoted a type of government that was far more familiar to Rome than the previous mosaic of municipalities, temple estates and villages dominated by dynasts: the *polis* whose *demos* utilises and is held responsible for the surrounding territory, the *chora*. Pompey refounded *poleis* (Amaseia), transformed older urban or semi-urban communities into *poleis* (Zela), or quite simply founded new *poleis* where none had existed before (Nicopolis). This new pattern of social organisation soon influenced the cultural context of the region, with Greco-Roman features of civilisation becoming quite prominent. Of these, one of the most visible is the epigraphic habit, which only now acquires momentum.

Ariobarzanes I and II of Cappadocia and Antiochos of Commagene may have found, in 63, reason to celebrate. Relieved from their oppressors, Mithradates Eupator and

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137 App., Mithr., 109; Cass. Dio, 37.11.1.
138 Pompey’s activities are well covered by modern bibliography, from Fletcher, 1939 to Magie, 1950 and to Højte, 2006. The new province of Bithynia-Pontus is described in vivid detail in Marek, 2003.
139 Ariobarzanes I abdicated in favour of his son in 63 or 62, but his departure from office is described as calm and serene: “laetus erat qui regnum deponebat, tristis cui dabatur” (Val. Max., 5.7.2).
Tigranes respectively, the three kings could thank Rome for their freedom and territorial expansion: Cappadocia received parts of Cilicia, while Commagene received Seleucia on the Euphrates. These favours, however, came at a fairly high price. With Rome’s sphere of interest and influence extended by Pompey to the Euphrates and beyond, these two kings found it highly advisable to respect the wishes of the Republic in most matters pertaining to external policy. The epithet “Philoromaioi” two of kings (Ariobarzanes I and Antiochos I) used in official documents is a clear attestation of the fact. Another reason for concern, at least for the Ariobarzanids, was represented by the large sums of money they owed their Roman patrons, among whom Pompey and Brutus ranked high, which would seriously undermine the Cappadocian finances in the following decades.

Pompey returned to Rome and eventually celebrated a magnificent triumph. The image this ceremony projected was that Rome, through the agency of Pompeius, now had the entire Orient at her feet. A tablet bore the following inscription, enumerating a dazzling array of regions and kings with exotic names:

Πομπήιος Γναίου υἱὸς Μέγας [...] ὑπερασπίσας δὲ Παφλαγονίαν τε καὶ τὸν Πόντον, Αρμενίαν καὶ Αχαϊν, ἐτιὲ Ἰβηρίαν, Κολχίδα, Μεσοποταμίαν, Ὠσφηνῆν, Γορδυηνῆν, ὑποτάξας δὲ βασιλέα Μήδων Δαρεῖον, βασιλέα Αρτώλην Ἰβηρῶν, βασιλέα Αριστόβουλον Ἰουδαίων, βασιλέα Αρέταν Ναβαταίων Ἀραβίαν, καὶ τὴν κατὰ Κιλικίαν Συρίαν, Ἰουδαίαν, Ἀραβίαν, Κυρηναϊκὴν ἐπαρχίαν, Ἀχαιοὺς, Ιοζυγοὺς, Σοανοὺς, Ἡνίοχους καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ φῦλα τὰ μεταξὺ Κολχίδος καὶ Μαιώτιδος λίμνης κτλ. (Diod., 40.4.1)

In a Rome where wealth and military triumph was the certain path towards political honours, the ambitious longed for commands in the East, as that seemed to offer both in abundance.

It was therefore only a matter of time before someone would start hostilities against the most powerful kingdom in the area that was not already obedient to Rome: Parthia. It was a member of the First Triumvirate, the one with least military experience (though by no means completely devoid thereof) that would choose this path, with catastrophic consequences: Crassus. Rome and Parthia had been at peace for a generation, since the meeting between Sulla, Ariobarzanes and the Parthian envoy Orobasos on the banks of the Euphrates. A formal relation of amicitia must have been in place at least since the Roman arbitration in the conflict between Armenia and Parthia over Gordyene, during Pompeius’ command in the East, although the perspective of a conflict between the Republic and Parthia was evoked in this context, only to be discarded for logistic as well
as political reasons. It may be true that the mutual interest the two super-powers shared in Armenia or in Syria put them on a collision course, but the campaign itself which led to the catastrophic defeat at Carrhae in 53 was not inevitable, as was demonstrated by the vigorous domestic opposition.

With Crassus defeated and the Roman legionary standards captured, the Parthian king Orodes II was expected to take the conflict into the Roman lands. In this context, Pompeius’ policy ten years previously of strengthening the friendly kingdoms of Cappadocia and Commagene by offering them control over strategic points proved well-timed and wise.

A vivid picture of the tense situation is drawn by Cicero’s letters, who complains vehemently about his appointment to Cilicia (51/50), from which province he was expected to keep a keen eye on Parthian activities and on the positions of the Roman allies in the area. A series of letters to friends in Rome – Atticus in particular – bear testimony of the situation on the ground.

Thus, in his letter to Cato from the 28th of August 51 ( Cic., Ad Fam., 15.3), he announces the leader of the optimates party that he received grave news from Antiochus of Commagene about an imminent crossing of the Euphrates by massive Parthian forces under the leadership of the king’s son, Pacorus, simultaneously with an Armenian raid on Cappadocia. This Parthian invasion and the fragility of the Roman position would represent a most delicate subject reflected in his correspondence throughout his office. In Ad Att., 5, 18 (September 51) he expresses the belief that his best ally against the Parthian invasion would be winter (“certissimum subsidium est hiems”) and describes frantic Roman preparations to meet an imminent attack: stockpiling of resources, calling on allied kings such as Deiotarus for assistance and levying Roman citizens for the legions. In an official dispatch (Ad Fam., 15.2, September 51) he informs the Senate of a plot against Ariobarzanes III Philoromaios (his father, Ariobarzanes II had recently been assassinated), apparently with Parthian participation since the presence of Roman troops at Cybistra prompt many to divulge the secret they had kept out of fear. In a subsequent letter (Ad Fam., 15.1, late September 51) he paints a most discouraging picture of the situation: the soldiers at hand are few, the levies are hard to enact as the citizens are scattered and demoralised, Bibulus – the appointed commander in Syria – is cowardly and the allies, due to the ill-treatment received at Roman hands, are alienated or impoverished: “Cappadocia est inanis, reliqui reges tyrannique neque opibus satis firmi nec voluntate sunt”.

Thus, Sampson: ‘the war that broke out in the 50s BC was not due to the actions of any one man, but was the result of the wider forces of history’ (SAMPSON, 2008, pp. 83–4). The author has since nuanced his position substantially: cf. supra, n. 127.
It is with great relief that he announces his friend Caelius Rufus at the end of November (*Ad Fam.*, 2.10, late November 51) that the Parthian forces in Syria had been defeated by Cassius and that the Parthian threat had been if not eliminated altogether, at least postponed until the following summer, by which time he hoped to be replaced.

After military action is over, having on his part nothing more serious than eliminating some forts in the Ammanus range, Cicero takes the time to boast of his achievements to Cato (*Ad Fam.*, 15.4, January 50), highlighting again his rescue of Ariobarzanes III, this time adding a few interesting details: that the queen-mother was still active politically, for she effected the exile of two prominent *philoi*, Metras and Athenaios; and that the priest at Comana had pressed his personal agenda, relying on “iis qui novari aliquid volebant”, on his financial resources and on the soldiers at his disposal, even threatening a civil war. Cicero’s timely intervention saved the day and kept the peace in a kingdom whose security remained an important pillar of the Roman policy in the region.

The dire economic state of Cappadocia, a direct consequence of the loans taken by the kings from prominent Romans is evoked in a letter to Atticus from the 22nd of February 50:

> primum ab Ariobarzane sic contendi, ut talenta quae mihi pollicebatur illi daret. quoad mecum rex fuit, perbono loco res erat; post a Pompei procuratoribus sescentis premi coeptus est. Pompeius autem cum ob ceteras causas plus potest unus quam ceteri omnes, tum quod putatur ad bellum Parthicum esse venturus. ei tamen sic nunc solvitur: tricesimo quoque die talenta Attica XXXIII, et hoc ex tributis; nec id satis efficitur in usuram menstruam. [...] alii neque solvit cuiquam nec potest solvere; nullum enim aerarium, nullum vectigal habet. Appi instituto tributa imperat; ea vix in faenus Pompei quod satis sit efficient. amici regis duo tresve perdvides sunt, sed ii suum tam diligenter tenent quam ego aut tu. equidem non desino tamen per litteras rogare, suadere, accusare regem. Deiotarus etiam mihi narravit se ad eum legatos misisse de re Bruti; eos sibi resonsum rettulisse illum non habere. et mehercule ego ita iudico, nihil illo regno spoliatius, nihil rege egentius. (*Ad Att.*, 6.1)

Thus, thirty three talents per month is as much as the king can afford to pay and that does not even cover the interest rate to one creditor alone, Pompeius, who is given preference over all the others due to the information that he would take up command in the area against the Parthians.

Luckily for Cicero, the attention of the Parthians was directed elsewhere and he could leave his province at the end of July 50 with a feeling of deep satisfaction. This, however, was not to last long. Rome was soon to be caught in a civil war, and all the Eastern dynasties within its sphere of influence would be dragged into it. In spring 49
Caesar crossed the Rubicon and Pompeius fled to Greece. From here, he called on his Eastern clientele for military support. Ariobarzanes III of Cappadocia and Antiochos I of Commagene each sent him a small detachment: the Cappadocian sent five hundred horsemen who seem, according to their place in the list, to have been heavy cavalrymen (C\textit{aes}., \textit{BC}, 3.4.3); the Commagenian sent two hundred soldiers, most of whom were horse archers (C\textit{aes}., \textit{BC}, 3.4.5). These took part in the decisive battle of Pharsalus and were either killed or taken prisoner.

In the Bosporan kingdom, Eupator’s son Pharnakes II had consolidated his position since the death of his father. His coinage shows him taking the pompous title \textit{ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΦΑΡΝΑΚΟΥ}.\textsuperscript{141} Observing the conflict between the most prominent Roman generals, he thought the time was ripe for action and quickly overrun Colchis, Armenia Minor and finally Pontus. He may have been welcome in certain areas, but in many others he had to assert his rule in a violent manner and a layer of destruction attests to this.\textsuperscript{142} Pharnakes could only hope to become so entrenched by the time the Roman civil war was over so as to present the Republic with a \textit{fait accompli} and begin negotiations from a position of strength. Things seemed to go according to plan, as he succeeded in inflicting a severe defeat at Nicopolis on the combined forces of Cn. Domitius and Deiotarus which amounted to three legions and to which an auxiliary force of cavalry from Ariobarzanes III was added (\textit{BAlex}., 34-40).

Not long afterwards, however, after having settled the matters of Egypt, Caesar himself came to Asia Minor. At Zela, in the same place where Eupator had defeated Triarius, Caesar thoroughly overpowered Pharnakes II (\textit{BAlex}., 72-76) and put an end to his Anatolian ambitions. The king withdrew to Sinope and from there crossed back to Bosporus. His fate was sealed when he was attacked and defeated by the rebel Asandros. Pharnakes is said to have fallen in battle after having fought valiantly and having received numerous wounds (\textit{App.}, \textit{Mithr.}, 120).

The elimination of Mithradatid ambitions in Asia Minor might have brought about a period of stability in the area, particularly in Cappadocia which had been their victim even as late as Pharnakes’ expedition. But the Ariobarzanids were confronted with serious domestic problems. The apparent concord between Ariobarzanes III and his brother Ariarathes which seemed to exist at the time of Cicero’s governorship of Cilicia had given way to enmity. Caesar attempted to reconcile the two by confirming the elder brother as king and appointing the younger as High Priest at Cappadocian

\textsuperscript{141} Frolova & Ireland, 2002, p. 33.
\textsuperscript{142} Braund, 1994, p. 147 sqq.
Comana. That, however, did not please Ariarathes and he is soon to be found in Rome attempting to find himself a kingdom.

In neighbouring Commagene, Antiochos was busy consolidating the political, cultural and religious project initiated by his father, whose most striking expression was the syncretistic cult of Greco-Iranian divinities, to whom the person of the king was added. The king was careful to advertise both his Western and his Eastern connections and this ideological position found a faithful reflection in the political activities of the king: his daughter was given in marriage to the Parthian king Orodes II, but during the Parthian expedition of 51/50, the Commagenian king was careful to keep the Roman officials well informed of the movements of their enemies.

The assassination of Caesar in 44 brought new troubles in the East. Cassius’ proconsulship brought him back to Syria, which he had previously defended with much vigour against the Parthian attack. From this position, he also controlled the allied kingdoms of Cappadocia and Commagene. When Ariobarzanes showed some inclination to collaborate with the Caesarians in the months preceding Philippi, Cassius moved swiftly to eliminate him and seize his treasury. Ariobarzanes, whose epithet Philoromaioi had not helped him in the face of Roman avarice, was succeeded by his brother, Ariarathes X.

The same year, 42, Cassius and Brutus were defeated in mainland Greece by the leaders of the Caesarian party, Marcus Antonius and Octavianus, who decided to settle their differences in the face of the common enemy. After Caesar’s murderers were eliminated, the victors attempted to maintain a degree of security in the Roman world by effectively separating it into spheres of influence. The opulent East fell to Antonius, while Rome itself remained in the hands of Octavianus.

In the East, Antonius was busy exacting tributes and living in luxury. In summer 41 he met again with Cleopatra VII, queen of Egypt and by winter he was following her in Alexandria. While a few modern scholars attempt to excuse his behaviour and assert he was still master of his heart and his actions, his contemporaries had a different opinion. Thus, in spring 40 the renegade Q. Labienus (son of Titus Labienus, Caesar’s lieutenant in Gaul and Pompeius’ lieutenant in Greece) led together with Pacorus a powerful Parthian attack on Roman-held territories, no doubt spurred on by the triumvir’s perceived softness. After defeating Decidius Saxa, the two leaders split forces: Pacorus turned south, towards Palestine, while Labienus advanced in Asia Minor all the way to Lydia and Ionia, benefiting at least from the neutrality of the Cappadocian and Commagenian rulers, if not

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143 Thus, GOLTZ HUZAR, 1978, pp. 153-155.
144 PLUT., Ant., 30.
from their active cooperation. The Roman counter-attack led by Ventidius was decisive, and the Parthian forces were scattered, while Labienus and Pacorus remained dead in the field. The Eastern kings could only wait with anxiety the reaction of Marcus Antonius.

Antiochos I was subjected to a siege in his own capital, Samosata, and he could count himself fortunate for being able to extricate himself from this delicate situation through a substantial bribe, three hundred talents. \(^{145}\) Ariarathes X seems not to have been so lucky, for by 36 the throne of Cappadocia is occupied by a man, Archelaos, \(^{146}\) with no dynastic credentials other than descending from the High Priest at Comana Pontica. The will of the triumvir Marcus Antonius replaces the entire logic of dynastic legitimacy which had existed in Cappadocia since its beginning, three centuries previously.

Antiochos I himself, sensing his end near, associated his son, Mithradates II, to the throne. By 36 he had reached the end of a tumultuous life, \(^{147}\) during which he had succeeded in maintaining and even extending the territories of his kingdom mostly through his diplomatic ability. It is not known what part Mithradates II took in Antonius’ Parthian campaign, but he was certainly ranged in his camp and attended in person at the decisive battle of Actium. In spite of this, he was forgiven by Octavianus and continued to rule. He was even aided by Octavianus, not yet bearing the title Augustus, when his brother Antiochos II entertained thoughts of rebellion. No doubt, the position of Commagene at the border between the Romans and the Parthians would have been strengthened by the diplomatic marathon of Augustus, which produced a relaxation of tensions between the two super-powers, marked symbolically in the year 20 by the returning of the standards captured from Crassus at Carrhae. Mithradates’ own balanced policy is indicated by the fact that he used in official documents, like his father, the epithet ‘Philoromaioi’ and at the same time had himself represented wearing the Eastern tiara.

Yet there seem to have existed tensions within Commagene of which we know little, for Mithradates II was succeeded by Mithradates III, his nephew, in the year 20, by the order of Augustus. The new king quickly married a princess from Emessa, Iotape. Apart from this important event, little is known about Mithradates’ reign.

His successor was Antiochos III, who married his sister, Iotape, and courted the favour of Rome. It has been suggested that he was the first representative of this dynasty to have been awarded Roman citizenship. The names ‘Gaius Iulius’ that his descendants

\(^{145}\) Plut., Ant., 34.

\(^{146}\) Sullivan raises the possibility that Archelaos Philopatris Ktistes is one and the same as the rebel Sisines, who had opposed Ariarathes X a few years previously (Sullivan, 1990, p. 182). It is unlikely, not least because when adopting a dynastic name upon accession to the throne, one tends to use a well-established name (in our case, Ariarathes or Ariobarzanes) and ‘Archelaos’ rang in Cappadocia with the same dynastic exoticism as ‘Sisines’.

\(^{147}\) Dio Cassius (Dio Cass., 49.23.3) has him assassinated by Phraates IV.
use indicate that the grant of citizenship was made either by Caesar or by his adopted son, Augustus. Upon his death, in AD 17, there was a debate about the future of Commagene. While the lower classes preferred to be ruled by Antiochos’ successors, the upper classes preferred to see Commagene transformed in a Roman province. Not surprisingly, the will of the latter prevailed and Germanicus was sent to oversee the process.

In Rome, Antiochos’ son and daughter lived well, enjoying the respect of their hosts. Antiochos befriended the Julio-Claudian family and it was due to his close friendship with Caligula that he succeeded in becoming king again, not only in name, but also in fact. To his ancestral Commagenian possessions Rome added parts of Cilicia as well. Although deposed again by the same Caligula, Antiochos IV was reinstated by Claudius, as part of his wider strategy concerning the security of the Eastern border of Rome. His reign was contemporary with renewed tensions between Rome and Parthia and he had a good share of military campaigns, though they seem to have been of rather limited scale and not always successful.

When Vespasian came to the throne, his strategic vision differed markedly from that of Claudius, and required not buffer-states between Rome and Parthia, but rather strong and energetic Roman presence. Thus, in AD 72 Antiochos IV was again deposed, after accusations of collaboration with Parthia had been put forward. His sons, Epiphanes and Kallinikos, fled indeed in that direction as soon as the Roman forces invaded, but this need not represent proof that the accusation had been grounded in truth. Indeed, soon thereafter one finds the entire family reunited in Rome, under the strict, but respectful surveillance of the emperor Vespasian.

Members of the dynasty would continue to occupy positions of authority within the Roman administration. Thus, Epiphanes and Kallinikos, integrated in the senatorial aristocracy of the Empire, would be sent as governors in the East. Epiphanes’ son, Philopappos, could still style himself king in the Greek inscription from his funerary monument in Athens, although the Latin version only mentions his consulship.

With Philopappos ended a long line of kings who stood at the crossroads between East and West. The geographic, cultural and strategic position of Pontic Cappadocia,

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149 "Ετελεύτησεν δὲ καὶ οἱ τῆς Κομμαγηνῆς βασιλεῖς Αντίοχος, διέστη δὲ τὸ πλῆθος πρὸς τοὺς γνωρίμους καὶ προεβείωσιν ἀν' ἐκατέροις μέρεισιν, οἱ μὲν δυνατοὶ μεταβάλλειν τὸ σχῆμα τῆς πολιτείας εἰς ἐπαρχεῖν αὐξώμενες, τὸ πλῆθος δὲ βασιλεύεσθαι κατὰ τὰ πάτρια", Ioseph., A.Iud., 18.53. The position of the masses is probably a testimony of the success enjoyed by the royal propaganda, an example of which is the great complex at Nemrut Dağ.
151 Ioseph., B.Iud., 7.237.
152 IGL Syr 6, 2796.
Greater Cappadocia and Commagene interwove their destinies. The dynasties in these regions were confronted with a similar set of challenges and not infrequently proposed the same solutions. How they dealt with different aspects of politics, administration, military and religious matters will be addressed in the following chapters.
III. Dynastic Policies and Politics

In spite of the oft-quoted words under the heading ‘βασιλεία’ from the Byzantine encyclopaedic compilation Suda, which claims that it is neither birth nor law that confer kingship upon men, but solely their ability to lead armies and manage affairs, one notices that in the Hellenistic world (increasingly so after the generation of the ‘Epigonoi’ replaces that of the ‘Diadochoi’) and particularly in Eastern Anatolia dynastic links are very important. The following pages will examine how dynastic identity was built, propagated and used by the ruling houses of Pontus, Cappadocia and Commagene, while paying attention to Achaemenid and Argead antecedents, as well as to contemporary Hellenistic parallels.

I. Establishing Dynastic Legitimacy

1. The Achaemenid Court

“I am Cyrus, king of the world, great king, mighty king, king of Babylon, king of Sumer and Akkad, king of the four quarters, the son of Cambyses, great king, king of Anšan, grandson of Cyrus, great king, king of Anšan, descendant of Teispes, great king, king of Anšan, of an eternal line of kingship” 2 . When Cyrus the Great conquered Babylon in 539 BC, he had every reason to be proud, having conquered the Medes and the Lydians. Yet, on the cylinder he interred in Babylon, he mentions only two elements that define his elevated status – favour of the god Marduk and his belonging to an “eternal line of kingship”, to a dynasty.

While this was the image he wished to project, it is interesting to note that some of his Semitic subjects of whose opinion we are better informed, the Jews, seem to have found worthy of note only the first half of his statement (and even that in a distorted fashion, so as to become concordant with their own beliefs): the idea of divine favour:

“Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.” (Ezra, I, 2), reiterated, even more forcefully, in Isaiah, XLV, 1-2: “Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him;

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1 “οὔτε φύσις οὔτε τὸ δίκαιον ἀποδίδοι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις τὰς βασιλείας, ἀλλὰ τοῖς δυναμένοις ἡγεῖσθαι στρατοπέδου καὶ χειρίζειν πράγματα νουνεχῶς”, Suda, s.v. βασιλεία.
3 The term propaganda might be somewhat inappropriate in this historical context, when the whole issue here is one of self-representation, all the more so as the cylinder was buried and arguably ceased to directly influence people the moment it was removed from sight.
[...] I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron". However, the idea of Cyrus’ legitimacy as a result of his descent does not appear to carry any relevance in the eyes of the Jewish people. This seems to indicate that, while attempting to accommodate the desires of his subjects, the Achaemenid had his own conceptions about the fundamentals of kingship, which would be carried on by his Achaemenid successors and beyond.

The importance of ancestry in Achaemenid eyes is quite evident in the propaganda efforts of Dareios I to legitimise his position. He had been a high court official (this might explain his prominence among his fellow conspirators) and he proved in a short time to be an excellent strategic manager and a fairly competent military leader. And yet, in order to justify in the eyes of the world that he held the royal title by right, he chooses to stress two elements above all others: divine favour and royal descent. The latter is all the more surprising as he was not the legitimate successor to the throne, as convincingly argued by both Dandamaev and Briant. In pragmatic terms, it is clear that his success as founder of a dynasty is due primarily to his abilities in court politics, general management and generalship, but this should not obscure the fact he tried to instil in the mind of the “general public” a completely different perception: while in reality victory gives him legitimacy, he wishes people to believe it is legitimacy that gives him victory. Thus, tellingly, even in such a triumphantalist account of his deeds as that carved in rock at Behistun, he allows certain military setbacks to be recorded, like the defection of his guards. On the contrary, he is extremely careful to strengthen his claim of dynastic legitimacy, even commissioning a fake inscription on Cyrus the Great’s tomb by which that monarch appeared to include himself in the Achaemenid dynasty. The spuriousness of the inscription is proven by the fact that dynastic records of Persian kings before Dareios, like Cyros’s cylinder quoted above, do not list Achaemenes as their ancestor, but Teispes. The fake inscription may be assigned with a fair degree of certitude to Dareios, because subsequent kings naturally took fewer pains to find arguments in favour of their dynastic legitimacy. Having fabricated a noble genealogy, Dareios mentions it repeatedly (DBa 9-13, DB I 6-8), anticipating by two and a half millennia the dictum often attributed to Goebbels that “If you repeat a lie often enough, it becomes the truth”.

4 The phraseology is remarkably similar to that used on the Cyrus Cylinder itself: “He [Marduk] ordered him to go to his city Babylon. He set him on the road to Babylon and like a companion and a friend, he went at his side. […] He made him enter his city Babylon without fighting or battle”.

5 DANDAMAEV, 1989, pp. 107-108; BRIANT, 2002a, p. 109 sqq. The main argument used by scholars to discredit his claims is: had it been true that the Achaemenids were of royal lineage related to the branch of Cambyses and Bardiya, then after the demise of the two, kingship would have more naturally fallen to Dareios’ grandfather, Arsames, or his father, Vistaspa, both of whom were still alive at the time.

6 Briant discusses at length (BRIANT, 2002b, passim) the importance of military factors in deciding succession in the Achaemenid realm, elevating in a fairly perilous manner pragmatic elements to the rank of ideology, similar to the Greek Hellenistic and Roman Imperial ideologies.

7 True enough, this does not appear in the Old Persian version, but rather in the Elamite one.
1.2. Philip, Alexander and the diadochi

A somewhat different approach is taken by founders of dynasties in the Macedonian world. Before the extinction of the Argead line, there existed the custom that the eldest son would succeed his father, but some prominent exceptions preclude absolute statements. One such exception was Philip II, brother of the late king Perdiccas and uncle of the natural successor, Amyntas, and who did not rule as regent, but directly as king, interrupting thus the usual sequence of transmission of the royal title from father to son. It is only Justin that mentions a period during which Philip was regent (“Itaque Philippus diu non regem, sed tutorem pupilli egit. At ubi graviora bella imminebant serumque auxilium in exspectatione infantis erat, compulsus a populo regnum suscepit.”, Iust., 7.5), while the other authors either indicate that Philip was king from the very beginning (Diod., 16.1.3) or simply make no mention of anything out of the ordinary about Philip’s status (not even his bitter enemy, Demosthenes). To these arguments, J.R. Ellis (Ellis, 1971) adds epigraphical, but also circumstantial evidence to support the idea that Philip was soundly seated on the throne of Macedon as king from the very beginning.

As opposed to the Achaemenid kingship, the Macedonian monarchy, probably emerged from the heroic monarchy of archaic Greece, preserves a number of specific features. One of the most striking is the role of the assembly of the Macedonians in the process of the coronation. It has been argued that the acclamation was a mere formal gesture: the “people in arms” did not represent an elective assembly, but merely sanctioned the choice reached through other political means. It is nevertheless significant that this event remained throughout the Hellenistic Age an integral part of the ceremony through which a new king acceded to the throne.

Alexander’s epic conquest spread Macedonian power over an immense territory, which made inevitable a number of changes, one of the more important being that the centre of power was moved from mainland Macedonia to Babylon. Thus, it became inevitable that the only body of Macedonians at hand to ratify important decisions was the army. After the unexpected death of the Conqueror, the Macedonian leadership fragmented, with several centres of power emerging quickly: mainland Macedonia, Asia Minor, Babylonia, Egypt and so forth. Each leader had about him a body of soldiers and each troop was in potentia an assembly holding as much “constitutional” power as the next. After Kassandros fulfilled the secret wish of all the other diadochs by eliminating Alexander’s offspring, the royal title came within reach for the Conqueror’s former officers. Each the founder of a new dynasty, they were compelled to find ways to justify their new positions.  

8 Ellis, 1994, pp. 727-728.
Ptolemaios alone – in so far as we can determine – tried to establish a link between himself and the Argead line,\textsuperscript{11} by claiming to be the bastard son of Philip II and therefore half-brother of Alexander.\textsuperscript{12}

Others tried to perpetuate the myth of Alexander and emphasize their own privileged relation with the Conqueror – without, however, inventing any familial relations with him – and derive their legitimacy from this vague concept of proximity. Thus Demetrios and Lysimachos minted coins which bore Alexander’s image, but whose legend mentioned their own names accompanied by the royal title, as if to signify they were Alexander’s legitimate successors.\textsuperscript{13} Eumenes (though apparently more concerned to preserve his position as general than to acquire royal status) went even further, placing an empty throne in the royal tent where the war council was to be held and convincing the Macedonians that Alexander was having conversations with him (\textit{Plut.}, \textit{Eumen.}, 13.5-8).

The other diadochs – and many subsequent usurpers, such as the successful ones from Pergamon or Bactria or the many unsuccessful ones – seemed to believe that victory in battle and the subsequent acclamation by their troops was sufficient to give them the royal aura they needed.\textsuperscript{14} In a way, by doing so, they were returning to the heroic type of regality from archaic Greece, to the very roots of the Macedonian kingship.

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If considered therefore through the lens of the Weberian power-theory, the Achaemenid model of kingship tends towards the traditional type, whereby the position of the ruler is justified mainly by recourse to ancestral customs, whereas the Macedonian model tends towards the charismatic type, whereby the ruler’s personal deeds and abilities justify his position. Naturally, the didactic division between apparently antagonistic monarchic models cannot accurately cover the entire spectrum of royal strategies and power relations in either of the two traditions, but examination from this perspective remains a useful exercise, as it helps to draw attention to the relevant details.

\textbf{I.3. Strategies of dynastic legitimacy in Eastern Anatolia}

When Polybios needed to introduce Mithradates II (\textit{Pol.}, 5.43.2, in a context of crucial political importance: offering a wife to the Seleukid king Antiochos III) to an audience likely to know little or nothing about him, he pointed to a few crucial bits of information: after mentioning briefly the fact that he was king and ruled over Pontic Cappadocia, Polybios seems to insist on the fact that Mithradates traced his lineage to one of the Seven

\textsuperscript{11} Some traditions make Apame, Seleukos’ wife, the daughter of Alexander (\textit{cf. infra}). It is surprising, however, that Seleukid official mythology rejected this association.

\textsuperscript{12} A reflection of this courtly legend may be found in Theocritos, \textit{Idyll 17}, 20-25. Cf. also \textsc{Collins}, 1997, who argues – only in part successfully – that the story of Soter’s being the illegitimate son of Philip II would not have benefitted so much Ptolemaios I as his son, Ptolemaios Keraunos, who briefly occupied the throne of Macedon.

\textsuperscript{13} It is true that continuation of monetary types may have pragmatic reasons, rather than ideological, since certain types acquire great prestige and credibility, due to their stability, but in this case it seems hard to dismiss the idea that the diadochs wished to project themselves as continuators of Alexander: \textit{cf. Plut.}, \textit{Alex.}, 4, 2.

\textsuperscript{14} \textsc{Gehrke}, 1982.
Wise Persians and that his title to rule was based on the fact that Dareios I had appointed his ancestor as dynast over the region bordering the Black Sea. In all likelihood, Polybios presents here the official version, which he may have obtained from a Seleukid source, which in turn relayed that which the Pontic house itself wished to publicize.

The first two ideas describe his status, whereas the last two provide what the Mithradatids perceive as the foundation for their position. Their claim for nobility rests almost entirely – in this account – upon their Persian roots, both in terms of genealogy (being descendants of Persian aristocracy) and in terms of institutionalised authority (having been entrusted with a satrapy in the area by the Achaemenid kings). Very similar claims may be identified in the literary and epigraphic record in the case of the Ariarathids and the Commagenian Orintids.

This is of particular interest, since this strategy, although widely used in Eastern Anatolia, is not used all over Asia Minor. The Attalids, for example, did all they could to erase from memory any connection with their Persian past. The story of Philetairos’ becoming a eunuch is related by Strabon (Str., 13.4.1) as having happened not through a deliberate act of castration (as was widely practiced in the Eastern tradition on young boys of subject communities), but rather as a result of an unfortunate accident. This is, in all probability, the official version of the Attalid court, designed to avoid embarrassing questions. Not surprisingly, since this dynasty was throughout its history eager to pose as champion of the Greek cause and associations with Persian practices would have damaged this image. It is symptomatic that in the sculptural complex at Pergamon their victory over the Gauls is equated to the Greek victory over the Persians in the 5th century BC and even to the victory of the Olympians over the giants: all of the defeated symbolising the forces of the barbarity, irrational, monstrous.

Therefore the perspective of Eastern Anatolian dynasties, emphasizing Persian tradition and advertising proudly their blood connections with the Achaemenid kings, stands out as an important pillar of their identity and self-presentation.

II. Dynastic History and Mythology in Eastern Anatolia

II.1. The Mithradatids

The claims to noble ancestry made by the Pontic house differ widely, depending on the source of information. Thus, some authors credit them with being descended from one of the Seven Wise Persians. As mentioned above, Polybios – our most important source for Pontic affairs before the reign of Mithradates Euergetes – falls into this category:

ο δὲ Μιθριδάτης εὐχετο μὲν ἀπόγονος εἶναι τῶν ἑπτὰ Περσῶν ἕνος τῶν ἑπανελομένων τὸν μάγον, διατετηρήκει δὲ τὴν δυναστείαν ἀπὸ προγόνων τὴν ἐξ ἀρχής αὐτῶς διαδοθέσαν ὑπὸ Δαρείου παρὰ τὸν Εὐξεῖνον πόντον. (Pol., 5.43.2)

An isolated piece of information from Diodoros seems to imply that this view may
have been shared by Hieronymos of Cardia (Diodoros’ most likely source) although, since no connection is made between the character described in the passage and the future Pontic House, the question remains whether or not this Mithradates, son of Ariobarzanes and supporter of Eumenes is the same as Mithradates, son of Ariobarzanes and father of Mithradates Ktistes, killed by Antigonus Monophthalmos at Kios:

συνην δ’ αὐτοῖς καὶ Μιθριδάτης ὁ Αριοβαρζάνου μὲν υἱός, ἀπόγονος δ’ ἐνὸς τῶν ἐττα Περσῶν τῶν συγκαθελόντων τὸν μάγον Σμέρδιν, ἀνήρ ἀνδρείας διαφέρων καὶ τεθραμμένος ἐκ παιδός στρατιωτικός. (Diod., 19.40.2).

A few Roman authors agree with this pedigree. Thus, Florus, by means of introduction to his summary of the Mithradatic Wars, writes a brief archaeologia, making a swift transition from the mythical history of Pontus to the mythologised past and lastly to Eupator himself. The genealogical note agrees with the previous two writers in making one of the Seven Persians the distant ancestor of the founder of the Mithradatid dynasty:

harum <Ponticarum> gentium atque regionum rex antiquissimus Aeetas, post Artabazes, a septem Persis oriundus, inde Mithridates, omnium longe maximus. (Florus, 1.40)


On the other hand, particularly Latin authors of later times – who lived at the same time as or later than Mithradates Eupator – credit the dynasty with the more noble origins. Instead of being descendants merely of Persian aristocracy, they are said to have for ancestor Dareios the Great. Thus writes Sallustius: “Ita Darius regnum obtinuit, a quo Artabazes originem ducit, quem conditorem regni Mithridatis fuisse […]” (Sall., Hist., II, 73). Tacitus says the same thing when referring to one ruler of Bosporus, Mithridates VIII. His testimony, however, holds good for the Mithradatid dynasty of Pontus as well, as the Bosporans claimed to be their direct descendants:

Mithridates terra marique Romanis per tot annos quaesitus sponte adsum: utere, ut voles, prole magni Achaemenis, quod mihi solum hostes non abstulerunt. (Tac., Ann., 12.18.4)

Iustinus, epitomising Pompeius Trogus, adds another illustrious king to the list of Mithradatid ancestors: Cyrus the Great:

<Mithridates> […] paternos maiores suos a Cyro Darioque, conditoribus Persici regni, maternos a magno Alexandro ac Nicatore Seleuco, conditoribus imperii Macedonici, referat. (Iust., 38.7.1).

Appianus, a Greek writer but heavily influenced by Latin historical tradition, agrees with the more noble ancestry:
How might this discrepancy be explained? The difference is not, obviously, between friendly and hostile sources, nor is it relevant that most Greeks favour one interpretation and most Latins another. In all likelihood, the distinction is to be made between phases of dynastic ideology. In the tumultuous period of the Diadochoi and the Epigonoi, during which the identities of most ruling houses were defined against the background of often mythical ancestries, the version in circulation was more “humble” and this is what Hieronymos of Cardia heard and recorded. We are assured by Lucianus of Samosata that the venerable Hieronymos did dedicate at least some passing remarks to the founder of the Pontic house:

Polybios, in mid-second century BC had access to the same story, passing it on to subsequent writers who used his *Histories* as a source, most notably Titus Livius (if we trust Florus to have faithfully recorded his ideas) and Diodoros (although for this particular piece of information, Diodoros may have drawn on Hieronymos of Cardia rather than on Polybios).

By the 1st century BC, however, the more “noble” claim is found in the sources, starting with Sallustius, a claim designed to accommodate the increased importance enjoyed in international politics by the Pontic house and the new scope of its ambitions. Although this later version may have appeared at the time of Mithradates Euergetes, it is more likely to have been disseminated by his more illustrious son, Eupator.
While many modern scholars tend to deny the factual truth of these claims, there have been researchers, like Bosworth and Wheatley, who have tried to go against the current and prove them by putting together the scraps of information we can gather from the Greek sources. While certain of their observations, like Mithradates’ sway over Mysia rather than over Cios, are likely to be true and their arguments concerning textual transmission make perfect sense, not the same may be said about their attempts to trace Mithradatic lineage through the onomastic jungle of Achaemenid Persia. The foundations of this enterprise are completely hypothetic (as the authors themselves agree, on page 160). For example, based on rather late testimonies (Sallustius and Florus), who name a certain “Artabazes” as the founder of the house, they authoritatively conclude that “it is hard to see who this individual might be other than Artabazos, son of Pharnakes”, ignoring the obvious answer: “another Artabazos”. Given the fragmentary state of our information regarding the Achaemenid prosopography, one may never rule out the possibility of there existing a number of people bearing the same name at the same time and sometimes active in the same geographical context, as the authors themselves are careful to note in the case of two Ariobarzanes active in Western Anatolia in early 4th century BC. Also, the argument relies very much on the assumption that Achaemenid offices were rigid, allowing long dynastic series to enjoy the same position in the same place. This, however, contradicts the available evidence, which suggests the Achaemenid administration was very fluid at its highest levels. More importantly, they take the phrase “descended from one of the Seven Persians” literally, ignoring the fact that it had become a mannerism well before the arrival of Alexander in Asia. This is very well illustrated by the fact that most of our sources never think it worthy to name which one of the Seven Persians was claimed as ancestor by the Mithradatids and that this phrase was used like a title, simply denoting illustrious ancestry rather than be taken literally.

Such a project remains, unfortunately, too deeply anchored in the hypothetical. The truth may forever elude us. In this particular context, however, factual truth is of secondary importance: what the Pontic court claimed and what the other courts accepted as being valid matters far more.

It is interesting to note that one source, Pompeius Trogus, mentions Alexander among the ancestors of the Mithradatids, in particular of Mithradates VI. It is somewhat unclear how the connection between Alexander and the Seleukids was made, given that the children of the Conqueror (Herakles by Barsine – if indeed he was his son and not a simple pretender manipulated by politicians far more powerful and cunning than himself

15 Thus, for example, McGing, 1986, pp. 13-14, in his status quaeestionis. McGing seems to have accepted later the historicity of such claims: McGing, 2007.
17 Klinkott, 2005.
18 ibid., pp. 49-52.
– and Alexander IV by Rhoxane) had been murdered before having offspring of their own. Even more peculiar is the fact that the connection is advertised by “secondary dynasties”, the Mithradatids and the Orontids of Commagene (cf. infra), but not by the Seleukids themselves, who preferred to extol Apollo as ancestor. It is unlikely the connection is to be seen through the Ptolemaic blood brought to the Seleukids by Cleopatra Thea (there had been a previous marital connection between Antiochos II and Berenice Phernephoros, but this blood tie has been severed by the murder of Berenike and her young son). Firstly, the ancestor claimed by Mithradates Eupator is Seleukos, not Ptolemaios. Secondly, Ptolemaios claimed to be the bastard son of Philip II of Macedon, being a blood relation of Alexander, but not his descendent. Thirdly, the last certain tie between the Pontic house and the Seleukids is made through Nysa, daughter of Antiochos IV Epiphanes, wife of Pharmakes I, therefore before the arrival of Cleopatra Thea on Seleukid soil.

A possible solution has been put forward by Tarn, who, while trying to find the propagandistic foundation for the Alexander connection claimed by the Bactrian king Agathocles in his “pedigree” coinage, suggests there may have existed a legend which made the Iranian noblewoman Apama, Seleukos I’s wife, into the daughter of Alexander and Rhoxane. Tarn explains that within the space of a few generations factual truth becomes obscured in oral tradition, which tends to ignore the facts proper historians are bound to take into account. It remains curious, however, that such a gratifying legend has the character of a folk tale and is not picked up by the official Seleukid propaganda, but only by collateral dynasties, which used this fabricated ancestry to add another dimension to their dynastic claims and implicitly, to their political ambitions.

II.2. The Ariarathids

The claims of dynastic ancestry made by the Ariarathid house of Cappadocia have been recorded in detail by Diodorus Siculus, and deserve to reproduced here:

This genealogy looks suspicious: Pharmakes, the husband of Atossa is deemed anachronistically “king of Cappadocia”; the name Gallos fits ill in a list of Persian names (unless one recalls that sacred eunuchs, important characters at the Achaemenid court, were sometimes called in the Greek sources Γάλλοι; even so, the insertion of such a man in a dynastic line is hard to accept); finally, the name of Dareios’ accomplice, Anaphas,

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is a late creation. In Dareios’ own words, set in stone at Bisitun, his companions were Vindafarnā, Utāna, Gaubaruva, Vidarna, Bagabuxša and Ardumaniš (DB, IV, 80-86). Herodotos, on the other hand, gives a slightly different list: Otanes, Aspathines, Gobryas, Intaphernes, Megabyxos and Hydarnes (Hdt., 3.70). The substitution of Ardumanish by Aspathines is a sign that already by the time of the Father of History being “one of the Seven” had become a title rather than a fact. The list of conspirators is even more distorted in Ktesias: Onophas, Idernes, Norondabates, Mardonios, Barisses and Ataphernes (Fragmenta 3c, 688), recording the official version accepted at the court of Artaxerxes II.

It is only now, in early 4th century, that one finds the Anaphas mentioned by Diodorus (provided, of course, that we are not dealing here with a homonymous, but not related character). Whether or not the connection between Ariarathes I and Anaphas is real (the space of two centuries between this – putative? – ancestor said to be a contemporary of Dareios, and the proper founder of the dynasty, Ariarathes, who dies in 322 at the ripe age of 82, is enough to accommodate the five generations enumerated by the Diodoran – read: official – genealogy, although the pattern of generations is deeply unbalanced), the literality of the claim of royal Achaemenid descent put forward by the Cappadocian house must be doubted. It is perhaps interesting to note that the Ariarathids make no mention in their family tree of Alexander, although their history of intermarriage with the Seleukids is just as respectable as that of the Mithradatids. This could be due to the relative scarcity of the sources (only Diodorus mentions this subject) or perhaps to the enmity towards the Seleukids installed after the battle of Magnesia, when the Cappadocian house embrace the Roman alliance.

II.3. The Ariobarzanids

When the line of the Ariarathids became extinct, the Romans are said to have offered freedom to the Cappadocians and that the latter, terrified by the prospect, have begged to

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20 Dandamaev, 1989, p. 103.
21 Again, according to Lucian, quoting Hieronymos, in Macrobioi, 13.
remain a monarchy and chose (since “elected” does not seem to cover the political reality of the process) Ariobarzanes. He was a nobleman – his prestigious Iranian name appears to confirm this – and belonged to the anti-Mithradatid faction, but sources are unusually discrete with regard to his origins. That may reveal the fact that the king himself claimed no illustrious ancestor and was content with being a “bourgeois king”. Since his main source of support lay not within Cappadocia, but was rather represented by Rome, this strategy may not have been unwise and may account for the “veristic” style in which his portrait is represented on the coins he managed to issue.

II.4. Commagenian Orontids

In order to establish the dynastic claims of the Commagenian house, one must look not towards the Greek authors, but rather to the epigraphical record, in particular two grand monuments: that of Antiochos I Theos at Nemrud Dağ and that of Philopappos in Athens. Both are monumental tombs and both use sculpture and inscriptions to identify and describe the ancestors of the interred king, informing the audience (Commagenian

![Orontid Genealogy](image)
subjects through the centuries in the case of the former, Athenian contemporary co-
citizens in the case of the latter) about the way in which they perceived their ancestry and,
consequently, themselves. The Commagenian list of ancestors starts with Dareios and lists
four more Persian kings, Xerxes, Artaxerxes, Dareios II\(^{22}\) and Artaxerxes II\(^{23}\). Next in line
is the satrap Aroandes (generally known from Greek sources as Orontes\(^{24}\)), followed by his
son or grandson, whose name was also Aroandes and who is, in turn, succeeded by his son.

Unfortunately, of his name only the final part remains, -danes, which may be
reconstructed in many ways: Bardanes, Ordanes, Abandanes and others\(^{25}\). The name
of his successor has not been preserved epigraphically, but historical record (mainly
Diod., 21.19.5) mentions an Orontes, satrap of Sophene who enjoyed a fair degree of
independence from the Seleukids. Next in line are two more satraps of Sophene, Samos
and Arsames. The twelfth stele is completely lost, so we are not informed on the link
existing between the satraps of Sophene and the first man to be properly designated as
ruler of Commagene, Ptolemaios, honoured in the thirteenth stele. He is followed by
his son, Samos, and by his grandson, Mithradates Kallinikos. Kallinikos is honoured
throughout the Nemrud Dagi complex, as the father of Antiochos I Theos and with him
ends the list of paternal ancestors.

On his mother’s side, Antiochos wished to pay homage first and foremost to
Alexander the Great, then to Seleukos Nikator, Antiochos I Soter, Antiochos II Theos,
Demetrios I Soter, Demetrios II Nikator and his own wife, Isias Philostorgos. These are
just the monarchs whose name has been spared by the passage of time, for in fact the list of
maternal ancestors contains seventeen names, two more than the paternal forefathers. The
discrepancy is explained by Facella\(^{26}\) as representing a later stage of construction, initiated
by Antiochos after the death of his wife, Isias and his daughter Antiochis.

The visual setting of the two lists is symptomatic for the dynastic conception of the
Commagenian king, for the two are presented in parallel lines, facing each other over the
causeway, and being given, therefore, equal weight. The king is careful to underline this
also in writing, for while referring to the Greek and Persian tradition, he calls them “ἐμοῦ
γένους εὐτυχεστάτη ῥίζα” (IGLSyr 1, 1, vv. 30-31).

This balanced vision, or, at the very least, this balanced public statement, is
discarded in the later phases of the dynasty, for C. Iulius Antiochus Philopappus chose
to be represented on his Athenian funerary monument in the company of just two male

\(^{22}\) The stele is badly damaged; this reconstruction has been suggested by Dörner. Jalabert and Mouterde
have suggested, instead, Rhodogune, daughter of Artaxerxes II Memnon: cf. Facella, 2006, p. 91, n.70.
\(^{23}\) The few letters remaining of the inscription have been read by Dörner to indicate Artaxerxes; Puchstein
\(^{24}\) Xen., Anab., 2.4.8; Plut., Artax., 12.1-3; Diod., 35.90.3 and others.
\(^{25}\) Facella, 2006, p. 142. In fact, due to the poor state of conservation, the ending of the name might also
be read as -lanes, which, however, does not seem to be shared by many names. On the other hand, as noted
above, the Commagenian orthography differed sometimes substantially from regular Greek orthography.
ancestors, identified in the inscriptions as *king Antiochos, son of king Antiochos* (which refers, in all probability, to Antiochos IV, his grandfather, the last true ruler of Commagene) and *king Seleukos Nikator, son of Antiochos*. Two ancestors stand out by their conspicuous absence: one is Dareios, the other is Alexander.

It would be hard to believe their absence is due to ignorance on the part of Philopappos, so perhaps it would be better to seek an explanation through the political context of the day. Due to the fact that the emperor Traianus is named *Optimus*, but has only two martial titles, *Dacicus* and *Germanicus*, the monument must have been built between 114 and 116 AD. At the time, the emperor was waging a successful, but nevertheless taxing war against the Parthians. The Eastern rivals of Rome made much of the Achaemenid tradition and, therefore, had Philopappos placed on his tomb an inscription honouring Dareios, he would have certainly been accused of open Parthian sympathies, which, as a public figure, he could hardly have afforded. Another hypothesis, less attractive though, is that the dynast was mindful of Athenian sensitivities, since Dareios had been, after all, one of the great enemies of the city. Perhaps, in their public speeches, the exponents of the Second Sophistic may have brought back to the ear of 2nd century AD hearers some of the anti-Persian ethos present in the speeches of Isocrates, which, being by that time half a millennium old, were sure to excite these lovers of antiquated stories. It is doubtful, however, weather such literary enterprises were politically significant enough to make a dynast reassess his dynastic origins.

The omission of Alexander has probably been prompted by the status of the Macedonian in the high imperial age: from a symbol of the despotic monarch in Seneca (‘ille <Gaius> pontes naubis iungit [...], rerum omnium ruina furiosi et externi et infeliciter superbi regis imitatio’, *Sen.*, *Dial.*, 10.18.6, this “unfortunately vain king” being an allusion to Alexander), he became the epitome of the virtuous king, who treasures education and who can successfully serve as a model for the Roman emperor: these are the main coordinates alongside which his image is constructed in Dion Chrysostomos’ series of speeches *Peri Basileias*. Moreover, it is known that Traianus himself sought to imitate Alexander (*Cass. Dio*, 68.29). It is, therefore, not improbable that claiming descent from the great Macedonian king in that political context would have been assimilated to putting forward ambitious political claims.

A great difference is therefore to be noted between the dynastic representations of these two representatives of the Commagenian house: if Antiochos I portrayed himself

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27 *IG II² 3451 c and e.*
28 Sullivan and Facella are not explicit about the reason they believed to stand behind this choice, implying perhaps that it was a matter of fashion: *Sullivan 1977*, p. 797; *Facella*, 2006, p. 358.
29 *IG II² 3451 a.*
as great as he could, through the magnifying glass of his ancestry, C. Iulius Antiochus Philopappus portrayed himself as great as he could without attracting the wrath of the truly great people of his age – in particular Traianus.

II.5. Dynastic myths in evolution

As seen from all of the above, the dynastic conception of the royal houses under scrutiny is not static, as an immutable truth, but rather fluid, adapting itself to suit the needs of the day, that is, attracting positive responses from an increasingly diverse audience.

All houses claim to descend from Persian nobility and this is, as far as we can reconstruct, perfectly true, though the connections to the Achaemenid kingship, either indirect (by claiming descent from one of the Seven Persians with whose daughters the king was expected to marry) or direct (claiming descent from Cyros and Dareios), are highly speculative. It is conceivable that these claims were put forward before the arrival of Alexander in Asia, but must have been reinforced by the elevated status of these dynasties as they took the leap forward from the condition of satrapal house to that of royal house. Given the ethnic composition and the history of their realms (cf. supra, pp. 48-54), it is conceivable that such a step was prompted by the expectations of their subjects, for whom, in good Achaemenid tradition, royalty was not won through the spear, but inherited through blood. As the Hellenistic Age developed, bringing with it new connections and new demands in terms of legitimacy, the Seleukid ancestry began to be advertised and finally Alexander was brought into play.

III. Dynastic and mythical memory

Given the sometimes very detailed character of genealogies put forward, one must naturally wonder what the source was for such reconstructions, whether it was oral history we may no longer possess traces of, internal dynastic narrative or even Greek written sources. The fluidity of memory in dynastic context has been analysed with great success in the case of the Sassanians. Similarities may be found with Eastern Anatolian royal families, in so far as it can be argued that in both cultural areas the memory of the Achaemenids is to a good extent preserved in oral histories, passed on by the masses as myths, particularly foundational myths, and by aristocrats as genealogies underlining their own prestige.

An example of foundational myth designed to strengthen internal cohesion might be the information found in Strabon (Str., 12.1.4), that the division between the two Cappadocian regions, Pontic Capadocia and Greater Cappadocia, is to be attributed to the Persians, whereas our historical record (mainly Greek literary sources, satrapal coinage and Achaemenid epigraphical records) points to the existence of only one administrative unit.

It is unfortunate that we do not possess examples of aristocratic genealogies apart

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32 DARYAEE, 2006.
from those of the royal houses, but these alone – coupled with the numerous attestations of Iranian names among the aristocracy – are enough to stand as proof that Persian descent was prestigious. It is hard to tell to what extent the written sources have influenced the image the royal houses had of themselves, but it is relatively easy to point that there must have been an independent dynastic tradition, given the differences in names that sometimes appear: the Ariarathids claim to descend from Anaphas, whereas some Greek sources have Onophas,\(^{33}\) while the Orontids of Commagene claim descent from Aroandes, a much closer approximation of the Iranian \textit{*Aruuanta} than the form \textit{Ὀρόντας} or \textit{Ὀρόντης} preserved in the Greek histories.\(^{34}\)

IV. \textit{Constructing and projecting the dynastic image}

As often happens in politics, merely generating a set of ideas or representations is never enough. These ideas need to be conveyed to the community in such ways as to be at the same time comprehensible and acceptable. In the complex social and cultural environment of Eastern Asia Minor, delivering a comprehensible and acceptable message with regard to nobility of descent and implied legitimacy proved a particularly complicated task. We possess only meagre traces of evidence for the way in which the dynasties advertised their descent to their own subjects. Though few, these pieces of evidence are sometimes of striking artistic quality and must have impressed their intended audience as much as they do in the case of the modern public and deserve therefore a more detailed analysis.

IV.1. \textit{Public gestures}

The \textit{imitatio maiorum} performed in public gestures is a very potent message that a monarch may send forth. Echoing an ancestor’s iconic gestures – those that had become defining to his character in the public mind – can be said to have almost ritual significance, as it places the monarch in a direct line of continuity with the heroicised ancestor. Some gestures seem to be unambiguous, in the sense that they appear to vibrate with the memory of a clearly identifiable ancestor (who is sometimes mentioned by name). For example, Mithradates VI sacrificed to Zeus Stratios on a mountaintop as was the habit of Achaemenid kings: “οἷόν τι καὶ ἐν Πασαργάδαις ἐστὶ τοῖς Περσῶν βασιλεὺσι θυσίας γένος” (\textit{APP.}, Mithr., 66).

A similar illustration of the constant re-affirmation of ancestry performed by the three dynasties under scrutiny is the education of the crown prince. Two models were available: the Greek and the Persian \textit{paideia}, each characterised by certain defining acts, each embraced by various monarchs and each having particular cultural and political connotations.

Some of the Ariarathids, for example, embraced with much enthusiasm the Greek

\(^{33}\) Provided, of course, that manuscript tradition has not become corrupt along the way, which is not to be entirely excluded.

\(^{34}\) cf. \textit{Facella}, 2006, p. 304, n. 36.
ideals of paideia: Ariarathes V is praised for his Greek education – which he had received in Athens, alongside Attalos II – and for his open support of Greek letters. Later, during his reign, his court becomes a hub of cultural activity:

τοῦτον δὲ ἀνδρωθέντα καὶ Αριαράθην φασὶ μετονομασθῆναι, παιδείας τε Ἑλληνικῆς μετασχεῖν [...] καταλαβόντος διεδέξατο τὴν βασιλείαν, τὴν τε ἄλλην ἀγωγὴν τοῦ βίου ἀξιολογωτάτην ἐνδεικνύμενος καὶ φιλοσοφία προσανέχων, ἐξ οὐ καὶ ἡ παρὰ τοῖς Ἑλληνισμόνι τι παλαιόνι καταλαβόντος ἐμβιωτήριον ὕπηρξεν. (Diod., 31.19.7-8).

Not the same may be said about the Mithradatids, who seem to have preferred the Persian education. It has been convincingly argued that the story of Eupator’s early years (found, with most details, in Iust., 37.2) is full of elements characteristic of this type of paideia (hunting on horseback, various trials, including poisoning, survival in isolation, designed to remind the future king of the humble, but vigorous beginnings of the Achaemenids).

The imitation of Alexander represents an important act by the monarch. The aforementioned Greek paideia of the Ariarathids may be an attempt to emulate the great king, who is known to have been educated by Aristotle, with whom he maintained a lively correspondence even while on campaign (or so the legend ran, in the Hellenistic era, taken up later, in the Imperial Age, by Plutarch). Another example of outspoken imitation of the Macedonian king is offered by the Commagenian Antiochos IV Epiphanes, who comes to the aid of Titus at the head of a body of cavalrymen trained from a young age to rival Alexander’s Companions. It seems, however, that the most and clearest examples of imitatio Alexandri are – not surprisingly – offered by Mithradates VI Eupator, who seemed to programatically imitate the great conqueror. For example, he stays overnight in a Phrygian inn rumoured to have been visited once by the great Conqueror; he is said to possess Alexander’s purple cloak; he makes a generous donation to the Temple of Artemis in Ephesos paralleling that of Alexander; etc.

On the other hand, Mithradates’ personality is complex enough to accommodate the imitation of another distinguished ancestor: Dareios, for he is said to possess a number of

35 The base of the statue found near the Stoa of Attalos bearing the inscription “Καρνεάδην Ἀζηνιέα Ἀτταλος καὶ Αριαράθης Συπαλήττιοι ἀνέθηκαν” demonstrates, according to most scholars, that Ariarathes V was an Athenian citizen. Cf. HABICH, 1990, pp. 571-572, for a discussion of the subject, including Mattingly’s arguments against identifying the person named in the inscription with the Cappadocian prince. Whatever the solution to this dilemma, it remains epigraphically attested that there was Cappadocian influence in Athens at the time and this may have resulted from a prolonged presence of the young Cappadocian in Attica.
37 PLUT., Alex., 7.
38 JOS., B.Jud., 5.460.
39 APP., Mithr., 20.
40 APP., Mithr., 117.
41 STR., 14.1.23.
objects which had belonged to the Achaemenid king and passed on from one negation to
another as heirlooms.\textsuperscript{42}

If the gestures listed above – certainly, just a brief overview with illustrative
purpose, which does not nurture ambitions of exhaustiveness – other gestures seem
to us (and may have seemed to the ancients, as well), more ambiguous. For example,
Eupator appointed satraps over the newly conquered territories in Asia Minor.\textsuperscript{43} This
gesture may be interpreted as an attempt at emulating the Achaemenids or, equally
well, as emulating his Macedonian ancestors, Alexander and the Seleukids, by returning
the land to the state of affairs before Magnesia. After all, Mithradates had, by force of
arms, annulled the right of the Romans to determine the status of Western Asia Minor,
which they had wrested, again by force of arms, from Antiochos III. It is not surprising
that Eupator is mentioned abundantly in this section: not only do we possess about him
vastly more information than about any other king of the region, he was also masterful
in his efforts of image creation and manipulation.

IV.2. \textit{Oral traditions and written texts}

As elsewhere in the Hellenistic world, monarchs in Eastern Anatolia welcomed at
their court intellectuals of all sorts: historians, poets, astronomers and so forth: the case
of the Pontic court (as exemplified under Mithradates VI Eupator) has been discussed in
the Introduction, while the Ariarathids have been mentioned in the section above. These
men of letters would strive to enhance the glory of their patrons, much in the same vein as
Theocritos, for example, had praised Ptolemaios II Philadelphos in his works. A common
strategy in order to do so was to refer to the honourable origins of the monarch. Such
references would naturally integrate and elaborate on oral traditions already in existence.
When we are not fortunate enough to possess internal and direct evidence for a dynasty’s
mythology – as we do in Commagene, thanks to Antiochos I’s love for epigraphical
documents – references to this subject found in literary works created by writers who
lived in the proximity of the monarch are our only means of recovering, at least in part,
the royal ideology.

One interesting example of what must have been part of the oral tradition
which was subsequently absorbed into the written record is the story of Mithradates I.
Three main sources document the story or its immediate context: App., \textit{Mithr.}, 9;
Plut., \textit{Dem.}, 4; and Dio\textit{D.}, 20.111.4. Appian mentions that Antigonos had with
him Mithradates, a descendant of Persian kings; that he had a dream according to
which Mithradates reaped the golden field and carried the treasure to Pontus; that
the diadoch attempted to have Mithradates killed; and that the latter succeeded in
evading him and fleeing accompanied by six horsemen. Plutarch’s version includes
the same dream, but this time Mithradates owes his escape to his friend Demetrios

\textsuperscript{42} App., \textit{Mithr.}, 115; App., \textit{Mithr.}, 116.

\textsuperscript{43} Welles, 1974, inscription 73, 1.
and he flees in the middle of the night, apparently without escort. Diodoros’ story is the briefest and the most pragmatic: Mithradates the father, a subject of Antigonos, treacherously negotiated with Kassandros and was subsequently put to death; his son took over as the head of the dynasty and ruled Cappadocia and Paphlagonia for thirty six years.

Diodoros’ unembellished treatment of Mithradates’ execution and his son’s escape to Cappadocia (no omen is invoked, and the execution is motivated by clear political reasons, while the blame is shouldered fully by the treacherous dynast) may point to an external source – quite possibly Hieronymos of Cardia –, while the care to indicate with precision the number of years during which Ktistes ruled might point equally well to an internal source.

The versions presented by Appian and Plutarch bear, on the contrary, the imprint of an internal source: firstly, they focus on the image of Ktistes, the founder of the dynasty and make him the main character; secondly, the treacherous intentions are transferred onto Antigonos; thirdly, the omen announces the future glory of Ktistes and of his descendants. Plutarch’s version then brings Demetrios into play and shifts attention to the exploits of the young man in shrewdly finding a way to reconcile filial duty with friendship, thus indicating that an external influence – it remains uncertain if this influence was exerted by Plutarch himself or not – altered substantially an internal narrative. The end of the story as presented by Appian, however, is most in tune with what we may suppose to have been the royal tradition: by escaping the excesses of an abusive monarch, accompanied by six companions, and subsequently defeating the monarch (for having survived him in this context may be assimilated to a victory) Ktistes was in effect re-enacting the conspiracy of Dareios I.

It is also interesting to note that this story contains a number of literary motifs commonly found in legends about royal figures across the Eastern Mediterranean basin, whose origin may well be Near-Eastern. Thus, the tyrant’s dream warning of the future greatness of a humble (or currently disgraced) young man is also present in the legend of Cyrus (Hdt., 1.108); the young man’s flight from the tyrant is also associated with Perdiccas, founder of the Argead house (Hdt., 8.138), with Ardashir, founder of the Sassanian dynasty (Karnamak, 3) and even with Alexander (Ps.-Callist., 2.14-15); the last two also share with Mithradates’ legend the image of the young man taking with himself some of the king’s gold, doubtlessly in a symbolic assumption of the royal attributes (and even Perdiccas’ gesture of gathering the sunlight reflected on the floor of the king’s house may be seen as an equivalent).

This story and its branches is a good indicator of how oral traditions and widely known legends, preserved primarily by the royal family and by the Court, found their way into the writings of favourable writers and from there passed into the works of neutral or openly hostile writers, who choose to either keep the details of the story as close to the original as possible or, on the contrary, distort the narrative according to their own agenda.
IV.3. *Artistic depictions*

As public gestures were accessible only to a limited number of people (those who were present at the specific time and place in which the gesture was being performed) and written accounts could only reach the literate (who in all likelihood represented a minority in Eastern Anatolia at the time), monarchs needed more potent means of communicating their ideas regarding ancestry and its legitimising power. Thus, they resorted to artistic depictions, whose appeal cut across social and cultural strata.

**IV.3.1. Architectural Monuments**

Edifices erected by the ruling elite and most importantly by the monarchs themselves were powerful statements, given that the choice of style or decoration was not fortuitous. Sometimes this choice was consciously integrated in a broader communicational strategy. Even if at times it simply reflected the artistic trends, it is just as important, since trends or fashions could only find favour if they responded to the world view and expectations of those who ordered the erection of the edifices. While all monuments are important for determining the preferences of a certain monarch or a certain dynasty, funeral monuments are particularly relevant to the subject discussed in the present chapter, as they reveal the monarch in relation with both the past and the future: how he places himself (as, very often the monarch would commission his tomb while still alive) within a tradition and how he desires to be perceived by future generations.

The most important architectural complexes within the geographical area under scrutiny are the Pontic “royal tombs” from Amaseia and the Commagenian hierothesion from Nemrut Daği.\(^4^4\)

The “royal tombs” of Amaseia are thus called due to a phrase of Strabon, who while describing with pride his native city, mentions that within the walled perimeter one could see the royal palace and the “monuments of the kings”, “μνήματα βασιλέων” (Str., 12.3.39). Since the most visible monuments – certainly now, but in all likelihood also in Strabon’s times (*cf. Figure III.4*) – are the tombs carved in stone, scholars have deduced that these

![Figure III.4. ‘Royal’ tombs at Amaseia](image-url)

\(^{44}\) The tomb from Amisos described in detail by Burcu Erciyas, 2006, pp. 67-115, though extremely important in terms of grave goods cannot qualify as an architectural monument, given its apparent lack of exterior pomp (p. 68).
must be the monuments Strabon had in mind. Some, such as Fleischer, attribute the five tombs (designated each by a letter, A to E, counting from the right to the left) to each of the five kings from Mithradates I Ktistes to Pharnakes I, who moved the capital to the newly conquered Sinope and consequently abandoned the construction of Tomb E. This is certainly an appealing theory, but there are some observations which do not fit well with it. Firstly, though Fleischer has been able to determine a relative chronology based on construction details (Tomb A has been built first, followed by Tomb C, then B, D and E), little evidence has been found upon which to establish a convincing absolute chronology, other than the terminus ante quem provided by the inscription carved above Tomb E, mentioning King Pharnakes, who is in all likelihood Pharnakes I. Secondly, some tombs include more than one bench and – if one may use the analogy with the tomb from Amisos, which had five graves, of which three or four were used – it is likely that they were intended to accommodate more than one corpse. Thirdly, in the proximity of the citadel there are other tombs of similar design, some of which are known to have belonged to people of high status, but not kings, such as Tes, the archiereus. Therefore, it may probably be wiser to consider these monuments as the belonging to the high aristocracy, including persons of royal blood, though not necessarily bearing the royal title.

Though virtually nothing remains of the original decoration of the tombs, R. Fleischer and his team have done much to investigate all the telling details and have discovered that the complex of monuments presented a distinctly eclectic sight. Thus, tombs A, B and D had facades with six or four Ionic columns (cf. Figure III.5) and in all likelihood an entablature and tympanum of the same style (although no traces of sculptural decoration could be identified). By contrast, Tombs C and E, with their columnless facades and vaulted roofs, would have appeared alien to the eyes of any Greek. So far, scholars have been unable to determine precisely the sources of inspiration.

Figure III.5. Tomb A in Amaseia. Reconstruction

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45 Fleischer, 2009.
46 The case is supported by the triangular shape of the letter phi, which has parallels in 2nd century BC Macedonian inscriptions. Cf. Bernard, 1993, p. 12.
47 According to the description, in Grave 1 archaeologists could not identify skeletal remains, although there were grave goods deposited there (Erçiyas, 2006, p. 69).
48 St.P. III, 95.
for such a design. Given its popularity in the Pontic area, Fleischer suggests plausibly that it is an indigenous design.

The eclectic appearance of the complex was generated not only by the contrast between the different tombs, but also by the contrast between the architectural elements of the same tomb. Thus, even in the case of the tombs with Greek facades, the entrance into the funeral chambers was not carved at the level of the column base, in accordance with Greek customs, but rather at a higher level, reminding of the Naqš-i Rustam tombs of Dareios the Great and his descendants. This placement was in all likelihood determined not only by artistic choice, but also by religious reasons.

The architectural complex of Nemrut Dağı is an equally interesting illustration of architectural eclecticism. The general design gravitates physically and symbolically around the central mound, which forms in effect the mountaintop, and it is well-known that Persian kings were said to offer sacrifice in such dramatic spots. Yet the arrangement of the different items that form the complex had been determined after painstaking calculations inspired by astrology, itself a field of knowledge that resulted from the osmosis of Oriental and Hellenic influences.

IV.3.2. Large-scale statuary

It is not only the architectural details that give the Nemrut Dağı complex its great importance for the study of the way in which Persian and Greek traditions were combined in artistic representations in order to convey a sense of equal respect for both nurtured by the ruling elite, but also the great sculptures that adorn it, and which represent the epitome of Commagenian style. Similar images have been discovered elsewhere in Commagene, indicating a sustained effort of image creation and propagation.

In terms of general style, the combination of traditions creates a striking effect. The majestic heavity of the volumes of Middle-Eastern inspiration complements well the elegant poses and realistic treatment of certain bodily features, such as the eyes and beards, inspired from Classical Greek art.

Royal iconography is revealing for the manner in which Commagenian kings (and Antiochos I in particular) wished to be perceived by the participants in the rituals at Nemrut Dağı. The king is portrayed as an equal of the gods, both on the great East and West terraces – where he is enthroned besides deified Commagene – and on the bas-reliefs lined next to the colossal sculptures – in which he is represented as standing as tall as they are and engaging in the ritual gesture of *dexiosis*. While there are Oriental precedents to this imagery, most notably in Egypt, the idea of the deified ruler seems rather rooted in the royal Hellenistic ideology.

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49 See, for example, the aforementioned tomb of Tes, but also the dramatic tomb of Hikesios from Laçın (FLEISCHER, 2005; MAREK, 2003, figs. 54, 55 & 56).
50 FLEISCHER, 2009, p. 115.
52 ROLLINGER, 2007.
The costume of the king is equally charged from the imagological perspective: he invariably wears the tiara, a symbol of Oriental – in particular Persian and Armenian – regal power entwined with the diadem, a symbol of Macedonian kingship. The decoration of the tiara varies from one relief to another. It is sometimes decorated with the image of a lion, sometimes with an eagle flanked by stars or even with a thunderbolt. The presence of the lion may be explained as a reference to the king’s zodiacal sign, while both the eagle and the thunderbolt may be interpreted as symbols of royalty in Greek key, given that the eagle was the iconic bird of Zeus and the thunderbolt his weapon of choice; moreover, these two symbols are highly reminiscent of Alexander, on whose coins the thunderbolt and eagle hold a prominent place and who appeared in a painting by Apelles as holding himself the thunderbolt.

The rest of the royal attire bears the mark of the same distinctive combination of traditions: Antiochos wears a tunic with long sleeves and trousers, which are reminiscent of the Persian tradition, but also a mantle, which is part of the Macedonian king’s regular outfit (cf. infra, p. 138). The decoration of the tunic features prominently the “Macedonian” eight-rayed star, laurel leaves (reminding one of the Greek symbol of Olympic victory) and oak leaves, which in all likelihood point again to a privileged relation with Zeus-Oromasdes, the king of all gods.

In his left hand the king carries a long sceptre, an ancient Indo-European symbol of royalty, present both in Achaemenid imagery, as demonstrated by the audience scenes at Persepolis and that depicted on the inside of a shield in the “Alexander” sarcophagus, and in Greek representations of gods – Zeus in particular – and kings. On his right thigh the king has a short sword, of the akinake type, the iconic sidearm of the Persian soldiers, which gained in time ritual significance, becoming, for example, the weapon used by Mithras to slay the bull.

The visual representation of the king is therefore complementary to his vision as expressed in epigraphic form and synthesized best in the formula “[…] Περσῶν τε καὶ Ἑλλήνων - ἐμοὺ γένους εὐτυχεστάτη ὁίζα” (JGLSyr., 1.1, 29-31). The union of the two

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53 Young, 1967, argues convincingly that Antiochos wears at all times the Armenian tiara.

54 The association of the noble bird with royalty was further cemented when the image was used by Seleukids and Ptolemies alike to underscore their status and privileged relation with the supreme god of the Greek pantheon, in foundation legends and in artistic depictions.
traditions in the person of the king is communicated programmatically through the means of monumental art.

Antiochos I’s monuments are extremely important, because they are – at least for the time being, until archaeologists uncover new monuments in Eastern Anatolia – unique in their quality of being an “internal” document: they are addressed to the king’s own subjects, to whom they communicate the king’s own vision about the manner in which his heritage justified his rule, and have been in all likelihood carved by indigenous artisans, whose work has at least received the final approval from the king personally, if it was not guided to a good degree by him. Such “internal” documents existed elsewhere in Anatolia, but the vicissitudes of nature or of history have destroyed them. Such, for example, was the silver statue of Pharnakes I (*Plin.*, 33.11.54) or the golden one of Mithradates VI, with a height of 6 feet (*Plut.*, *Luc.*., 37) or even 8 cubits⁵５ (*App.*, *Mithr.*, 116), both taken by Pompeius from somewhere in Pontus and shown on the occasion of his triumph in Rome.

Kings, however, advertised a certain vision of themselves not only to their own subjects, but also to friendly communities. In this case, the royal message was transformed: on the one hand because it was adapted to fit the expectations of the audience, on the other hand, because the message was reproduced using the artistic vocabulary of the local craftsmen, who were more often than not charged with creating the sculpture, as is implied for example, by the Delian decree honouring Pharnakes I: “οἱ ἐπιμελησόμενοι τῆς κατα[σκ]ευῆς καὶ τῆς ἀναθέσεως τῶν εἰκόνων κατὰ τὸ ψήφισμα οἵδε κεχειροτόνησιν· Λέων Αἰξωνεύς, Φιλόξενος Πειραιεύς, Διονύσιος ἐγ Μυρρινούττης” (*ID* 1497bis). Two examples illustrate very well this shift in tone: the funerary monument of Philopappos in Athens (*cf. supra*, pp. 99-100) and the statue of Mithradates VI Eupator identified on Delos, believed to have been housed within the *heroön* dedicated to the king by the priest Helianax.⁵⁶

As demonstrated by the inscription, this statue is dedicated by the same person, Helianax, an Athenian citizen (*ID*, 1563). It is not at all surprising, therefore, that the appearance of the statue – at least in so much as it is preserved – has nothing distinctively non-Greek about it, but presents Mithradates in the typical outfit of the Hellenistic kings.

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⁵⁵ Approximately 3.5 metres.

Some have considered that the military costume is of Roman type and deduced that the Pontic king was careful at the time (102-101 B.C.) to show a conciliatory attitude towards the super-power of the day.\textsuperscript{57} A comparative study with similar Hellenistic torsos will show, nevertheless, that the \textit{linothorax} with the elaborately knotted belt is not specifically Roman (other examples can be identified, for example, on the Telephos Frieze from the Pergamon Altar). The mantle – though clearly similar to a number of representations of the Macedonian cloak such as the Pella mosaics – has been considered to be the Roman \textit{paludamentum}. However, as demonstrated convincingly by Hallett,\textsuperscript{58} the Roman general’s mantle in the Republican period was simply a form of \textit{chlamys} and only acquired its particular shape and iconic value in the Early Imperial Age. It is therefore more appropriate perhaps to consider that the appearance of Mithradates on Delos was not influenced by his desire to please Rome, but was fully Hellenic, created by a Greek and aimed at a Greek audience, complementing well his other declarations of Greek descent and phil-Hellenism which brought him the support of the Greek communities particularly during the First War with Rome.

IV.3.3. \textit{Small-scale statuary}

If large-scale statuary is indicative rather of the tastes of the ruling elites (in particular of the king who commissions the most important projects), small-scale terracotta statuary, by its very nature accessible to a wider public, is important as a reflection of the horizon and expectations of the middle or even lower social strata. Since artists would use moulds to produce numerous identical terracotta statuettes, customers could not influence their appearance directly, but could do so – at least in theory – through the offer-and-demand mechanisms of the market.

The subjects covered by this genre are extremely varied, from everyday characters to gods. The overview of the terracotta production of Amisos published by Summerer\textsuperscript{59} shows, for example, a preference for decorative elements (\textit{protomai}) and representations of gods, in particular Dionysos. Examples of representations of royal figures are extremely sparse and quite often it is very hard to

\textsuperscript{57} For example, McGing, 1986a, pp. 90-91.
\textsuperscript{58} Hallett, 2005, pp. 334-335.
\textsuperscript{59} Summerer, 1999.
discriminate between royal portraits and standardised representations of heroic figures, on the one hand because the reduced dimensions and the material allow relatively little detail to be included, on the other hand because the resemblance between king and hero may be in fact intentional. An example of such blurring of boundaries is perhaps provided by a terracotta portrait now exhibited in the Sinop Archaeological Museum (cf. Figure III.8): Summerer compares the features of this portrait with those of Mithradates V Euergetes on his silver coins and identifies similarities in the facial features. In case the portrait belongs indeed to the Pontic king, the lion headdress and the specific head tilt may represent a genealogical statement, namely the link with Alexander the Great and, through the Argead line, with Herakles. It must be avowed, nevertheless, that the identification is by no means certain and that the figure may, after all, be simply a representation of a youthful, beardless Herakles or even of Alexander himself.

Thus, by contrast with large-scale statuary, which is produced under close guidance of the king or the Court, and which is consequently very attentive to the messages conveyed, terracotta statuettes are rather more ambiguous.

IV.3.4. Coins and cameos

Numismatic imagery was certainly a potent means of communication, but extreme care must be exercised when analysing this type of evidence, given the irregular character of issues and apparent distinctions between intended targets for different types of coins.

It has been argued that the main purpose for striking coins was to pay the professional troops that had become essential in the Hellenistic Age. While there is no evidence that troops were paid different wages while on campaign and while performing garrison duties, it could be argued that troops hired for shorter periods, which were subsequently disbanded and would be generally leaving the area under the control of their former paymaster, would be consequently eager to be paid in precious metal (commonly silver, but sometimes also gold), which would be worth just as much in other geographic areas. On the other hand, troops performing garrison duties, by the nature of their more stable employment and limited area of activity, would be equally content with bronze issues which would necessarily be accepted by local traders. This implies that coins of precious metal were expected (or intended) to reach an external “public”, whereas lower-value bronze coins were designed with an internal “public” in mind. This observation may be supported by numismatic issues such as those of Ariarathes III, who depicts himself on bronze coinage wearing a Persian tiara, whereas on the silver issues he depicts himself in usual Greek fashion (Simonetta 1977 p. 19, nos. 4 and 1, respectively) or by the issues of Mithradates VI Eupator, who strikes on his bronze coins (among many other designs) the image of Perseus (or perhaps himself in the guise of Perseus), the mythical founder of the Persian people, while on his silver or gold issues he adopts a Greek fashion, similar to Alexander.

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The reality, however, is much more nuanced than that. Firstly, soldiers on campaign are not entirely models of parsimoniousness, so the cash they received upon enrolling (true enough, only a part of the total amount they were due for the duration of the contract) tended to flow quite liberally out of their pockets, ending up in the hands of the locals, who would thus be exposed to a Greek portrayal of their ruler. Secondly, the allocation of Persian designs exclusively to bronze issues and of Greek designs exclusively on silver issues is disproved by a number of issues, for example the series of silver drachms depicting Ariarathes VI with an upright and diademed tiara (Simonetta, p. 32, no. 1), which means the image of king in good Achaemenid tradition was advertised to the Greek world as well. Thirdly, the relative scarceness of coins of some rulers in our possession today prohibits too general statements.

If coins were intended primarily for military and economic use, cameos and intaglios would be used almost exclusively by the very wealthy. Sometimes they were collected for their beauty, and Mithradates VI was famous in Antiquity for his daktylotheke (Plin., 37.11). More often, though, they were mounted on rings and used to sign letters and other documents. Besides deities and other mythological creatures, it is likely that the image of the king was present on many cameos. Courtiers would naturally try to impress their king and their peers by either using the royal portrait or by having their own image carved in such a way that it would resemble the style adopted by the king himself. That might explain why the numerous gem portraits assigned by scholars to Anatolian kings and to Mithradates VI in particular are sometimes so dissimilar from each other and from the portraits on coins.

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* Remaining content to identify trends and tendencies rather than general truths, one must conclude that Eastern Anatolian kings did their best to advertise their ancestry through all genres of art as a means of underlining the nobility of their descent and hence the legitimacy of their rule and exploited the complexity of their dynastic ties to underline different aspects of their personality to different audiences: the Greek world was generally presented with the image of a monarch of Greco-Macedonian inspiration, whereas their own subjects generally perceived a king in good Achaemenid tradition, although images incorporating both traditions are not uncommon.

V. SUCCESS OF DYNASTIC PROPAGANDA

The two main authorities in whose eyes Eastern Anatolian monarchs might wish to gain credibility were their own subjects and their peers. In both instances, the issue of descent would be of crucial importance. The fact that in the eyes of the subjects ancestry does provide legitimacy seems to be illustrated by Eupator’s return to Pontus during the third war with Rome, as described by Cassius Dio:

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61 I am grateful to François de Callataï for this observation.
62 See, for example, the plates illustrating Vollenweider, 1983, but also Hoitie, 2009a, p. 158.
οἱ γὰρ ἄνθρωποι ἐκείνου τε εὐνοιαν ἐκ τε τοῦ ὁμοφύλου καὶ ἐκ τῆς πατρίου βασιλείας καὶ τῶν Ῥωμαίων μίσως διὰ τὸ οἴδαν καὶ διὰ τὸ ὑπὸ τῶν ἐφεστηκότων σφίς κακουχεῖσθαι ἔχοντες, προσεχώρησάν τε αὐτῷ, καὶ μετὰ τούτο τὸν ἄρχοντα τῶν ἐκεί Ῥωμαίων Μάρκου Φάβιον ἐνίκησαν. (Cass. Dio, 36.9.2).

One might be suspicious when confronted with such a statement—what could Cassius Dio know of the motivations of the Pontic people? Does this vague ἄνθρωποι refer to the population at large or just to a segment of it? In this particular instance, however, factual truth remains of secondary importance: either a real piece of information, documented in the field by Romans or a false one, propagated by royal agents, it remains beyond doubt that the Pontic kings desired to project an image of themselves that underlined their ancestral claim on kingship, transmitted uninterruptedly from one generation to the other. It was not the recently obtained military success, reversing a series of ignominious defeats that endeared Eupator to the masses, but rather his high birth.

Another instance of popular adherence to the dynastic idea may be found in Josephus:

Ἐτελεύτησεν δὲ καὶ ο Ῥωμαίων βασιλεὺς Ἀντίοχος, διέστη δὲ τὸ πλῆθος πρὸς τοὺς γνωρίμους καὶ πρεσβεύουσιν ἁφ’ εκατέρου μέρους, οἱ μὲν δυνατοὶ μεταβάλλειν τὸ σχῆμα τῆς πολιτείας εἰς ἐπαρχίαν ἑξισύνες, τὸ πλῆθος δὲ βασιλεύεσθαι κατὰ τὰ πάτρια. (JOSEPH., A.Iud., 18.53).

If the wealthy desired the country to become a Roman province, possibly stimulated by the prospect of greater economic freedom or eager to obtain greater guarantees of security with regard to their Eastern neighbour, Parthia, the people wanted to preserve the dynasty and the ways of their forefathers, which is a testament to the success of the propaganda programme of the Commagenian Orontids.

In Cappadocia something similar may have happened when the Ariarathid dynasty was wiped out and, following arbitration attempts, Rome offered Cappadocians their freedom (as discussed above, in the historical overview). The delegation, nevertheless, begged the Senate to allow them to remain a kingdom. While this may demonstrate that the idea of royal legitimacy in Cappadocia, nurtured by more than two hundred years of Ariarathid rule, was deeply rooted in the local mentality, it may also be the reflex of political expediency, in particular of the realisation that Mithradates VI could only be repelled by a strong, united Cappadocia, led by a single ruler approved by Rome.

VI. INTER-DYNASTIC MARRIAGES

After having dwelled on the issue of how royal blood was claimed, the enquiry must now turn to examining how this was enriched over the centuries by inter-dynastic marriages, of which the sources have preserved abundant evidence.
VI.1. Inter-dynastic marriages: an overview

The earliest we know of seem to have been more or less simultaneous: we are told by Eusebios in his Chronicle (EUSEB., Chron., 95) and by Diodorus Siculus (DIOD., 31.9.6) that Seleukos II Kallinikos marries two of his sisters, Laodike and Stratonike, to Mithradates II and Ariarathes III, respectively. A number of years later, Mithradates II offers two of his daughters, both called Laodike, to Antiochos III63 and to Achaios (his Laodike had been a hostage – probably as prospective bride – of Antiochos Hierax).64 In turn, Antiochos III seems to have continued his father’s policy and gave one of his daughters, Antiochis, in marriage to Ariarathes IV.65

A major brake in the Anatolian dynastic policy is brought about by the political situation following the treaty of Apameia. The Mithradatids continue to cultivate their relation with the Seleukids, for Pharnakes accepts as bride Nysa,66 possibly a daughter of Antiochos IV,67 and later Mithradates V’s wife, Laodike, might have been a Seleukid princess (depending how much weight one attaches to the literality of Justin’s account that Mithradates VI Eupator claimed descent from the Seleukids on his mother’s side).68 Yet the Ariarathids choose to interrupt dynastic relations with the Seleukids: an intended marriage between Ariarathes V to Demetrios I’s daughter is cancelled following pressure from Rome.69

Following this episode, the infamous Nysa is preferred, who, given her name, may have been a daughter of Pharnakes. The following queen on the Cappadocian throne was certainly a Pontic princess: Laodike, the daughter of Mithradates V and sister of Mithradates VI, married to Ariarathes VI,70 while the last is Athenais Philostorgos, the very young daughter of Mithradates VI, married to the equally young Ariobarzanes II.

Eupator was very energetic in his efforts to establish marital ties with surrounding dynasties: among his sons in law were Tigranes the Great of Armenia, Ariobarzanes II of Cappadocia, numerous (we are told by Plutarch) Scythian princes; he even desired to include the Ptolemies in this list, but he failed.

The matrimonial activities of the Commagenian Orontids begin in earnest with the marriage between Mithradates I Kallinikos to Laodike Thea Philadelphos, daughter of Antiochos VIII Grypos and Cleopatra Tryphaina, a tie extolled in numerous epigraphic

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63 POL., 5.43.1-4.
64 POL., 5.74.5; WALBANK, 1967, p. 96.
65 DIOD., 31.19.7; Iscr. di Cos, ED 5.
66 ID 1497bis.
68 IUST., 38.7.
69 IUST., 35.1.
70 IUST., 38.1.
documents from Commagene. Their marital connections would, in later years, extend to the royal courts of Parthia (CASS. Dio, 49.23.4), Judaea (Joseph., A.lud., 19.355), Atropatene (CASS. Dio, 54.9.3), Armenia (Joseph., A.lud., 19.139) and Cilicia (Joseph., A.lud., 18.139-141).[

VI.2. The politics of inter-dynastic marriages

From this quick survey, one might draw the conclusion that whatever dynasty enjoyed higher authority would manage to impose princesses on the thrones of those with lesser power. While this view is mostly accurate in describing the Pontic-Cappadocian relations, where marriages occur mostly in order to seal a peace, it is not equally so in the other cases. One must certainly pause and wonder what exactly is it that the two sides expect to gain from such a contract.

Firstly, it is the political and military aspects that require consideration. Ideally, a princess who passes from one court to another will act as a mediator between the two, ensure good communication, mutual goodwill and generally act as the visible reminder of an alliance. Since, however, she did not travel between the two courts, her influence is exerted more on her husband than on her father and she is, in turn, subjected more to the authority of the former than to that of the latter, all the more so as she is interested in obtaining a prominent position at Court, not least because that would better serve the interests of her progeny. Quite often, the grim reality is that the father wants her to be his agent, while the husband wants her as a hostage. It is, therefore, no wonder that major military campaigns are preceded or followed by sustained matrimonial activities.

Seleukos II Kallinikos marries his sisters to the Pontic and Cappadocian kings in a bid to ensure stability at least in Anatolia, while he is engaged in reclaiming his Asiatic possessions, destabilised and devastated by the offensive of Ptolemaios III in the Third Syrian War. Antiochos III receives the hand of Laodike quite early in his reign, in 222 BC and since at this very early stage the influence of Achaios, himself married to another Laodike, is not yet eclipsed by that of Hermias, one might be lead to suppose the king’s cousin was no stranger to this marriage, meant to enforce Antiochos’ position in a West he had not had the time to familiarize himself with; some twenty years later, he is in a position to offer himself a daughter to the king of Cappadocia, in the turbulent period between 200-190 BC, during which Antiochos concentrates on gaining or regaining territories in Asia Minor and Thrace, engaging thus on the perilous trajectory that ended up with his disastrous defeat at Magnesia.

Demetrios I Soter, after having more or less satisfactorily finished his campaigns in Mesopotamia and Judaea, opened matrimonial negotiations with Ariarathes V (Diod., 31.28). One can only wonder if this was not done in an attempt to ensure an

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72 Although we might not establish with certainty the date of Achaios’ marriage to Laodike, his sustained activity in Western Asia Minor, where the princess was held, makes it plausible that the two had at least met, if they were not already married, by the time of Antiochos III’s accession to the throne.
alliance in view of a planned expedition into Cilicia, where Attalos was soon able to install the pretender Alexandros Balas, but it seems probable that by giving Nysa, the daughter of Antiochos IV to Pharnakes I of Pontus he was trying to regain by political means the Seleukid position of authority in Asia Minor, lost as a result of Roman armed intervention.\textsuperscript{73}

Marriage ties are concluded not only in the wake of military enterprises, but also at their end, with a famous precedent in the marriage proposed by Dareios III to Alexander. Thus, Ariarathes IV offered the hand of his daughter, Stratonike, to Eumenes II, thus putting an end to his opposition to Rome and, implicitly, to the Pergamenian king, which had culminated with the participation on the side of Antiochos III at the battle of Magnesia, itself prompted by a matrimonial tie with the Seleukid king, as shown above. It is tempting to see in Ariarathes V’s wife, Nyssa, the daughter of Pharnakes I by the Seleukid Nyssa, in all likelihood the daughter of Antiochos IV. If this is correct, then this marriage must have come as part of the wider network of alliances put in place by Pharnakes in the aftermath of his defeat in the Pergamenian war. The crimes of this queen, who murdered all but one of her sons in an attempt to secure the regency for herself have fundamentally destabilised the Cappadocian dynasty, which saw itself compelled to accept junior status in relation to Pontus. The betrothal of Laodike, daughter of Mithradates V to the very young Ariarathes VI came after a semi-successful military campaign of the former against the latter\textsuperscript{74}. Finally, the last act in this matrimonial cavalcade is the marriage between Athenais Philostorgos to Ariobarzanes II, both still children, concluded in an attempt to leave behind the bitter conflict between their parents, Mithradates VI and Ariobarzanes I.

Though a marriage may be significant in terms of political and military goals, one must also take into account the broader dynastic policies. Ever since the Macedonians had found themselves in the midst of a fascinating Orient that continued to revere their ancient royal traditions, which relied more on legitimacy of blood and rank than on military prowess, they had been trying to accommodate these expectations of their subjects: while the Ptolemies appealed to the pharaonic coronation ceremonies, the Seleukids needed to invoke close ties with the Achaemenid line. The first step had been done by the founder of the dynasty, Seleukos Nikator, who, as mentioned above, understandably kept the Iranian Apame as his wife. The fact that his descendent, Antiochos III, well acquainted with the Eastern satrapies, asked or was advised to ask the hand of Laodike, daughter of Mithradates II might have not only the strategic dimension discussed above, but also broader implications: since the Mithradatids claimed descent from one of the Seven Wise Persians and the King of Kings was expected to marry exclusively women from among these noble families, one might be

\textsuperscript{73} Cf. \textit{supra}, p. 117, note 67.

\textsuperscript{74} \textit{APP.}, \textit{Mithr.}, 30.
tempted to believe Antiochos was in fact perpetuating an Achaemenid tradition in a bid to ensure the loyalty of his Iranian subjects. It is not only the Seleukids, however, who profited from these marital ties. The prospect of obtaining “dynastic accreditation” from the greatest power in Asia, built on the frame of Alexander’s empire and even claiming Alexander’s blood – through the artifice of claiming Apame, the wife of Seleukos I, was in fact Alexander’s daughter – must have appealed enormously to the comparatively weak states of Asia Minor.75

VII. Marital practices

VII.1. Sibling marriages

One subject not yet touched on is the sibling marriages. A number of them are recorded within the Mithradatid and the Orontid dynasties: in Pontus between Mithradates IV and Laodike Philadelphos and between Mithradates VI and Laodike; in Commagene between Antiochos III and Iotape II and between C. Iulius Antiochos Epiphanes and Iotape IV Philadelphos. It is hard to discern if, in this respect, the dynasties were perpetuating an Achaemenid model, as presented by Cambyses, who married his sisters,76 or a Hellenistic model, as initiated by Ptolemaios II Philadelphos and also adopted by the Seleukids.

If in Roman Egypt sibling marriage was practiced by a significant minority of the population, according to the papyrological record,77 in Hellenistic Anatolia the phenomenon seems to be an exclusively royal prerogative. By the very fact of making a public statement that normal rules to not apply to the royal pair, the king and queen would see their position elevated above that of ordinary people and Ager’s comments with regard to Ptolemaic incest seem to apply very aptly to Eastern Anatolian incest as well.78 The question emerging from this statement is whether by breaking the taboo which appears to have good genetic motivations the royal couples were inviting disaster in the form of degenerate offspring. The incestuous marriages between the members of the Commagenian Orontids did produce children, but historical record does not preserve information about their physical and mental health. Such information is only available for one of Mithradates VI’s daughters, Drypetine, born from the union with his sister, Laodike. Drypetine is said to have possessed two rows of teeth, which made her a particularly

76 HDT., 3.31; for a discussion of the herodotean passage and the place of sibling marriage in Persian tradition, cf. BROSUS, 1996, pp. 45-47.
77 PARKER, 1996.
78 “It would be better to say that they fulfilled a taboo and gave it meaning by crossing a boundary that is barred to ordinary people. In so doing they demonstrated that they were extra-ordinary. This extraordinariness is about more than a simple assimilation of royalty to specific gods. It is about power, and about sub-conscious and perhaps universal human instincts that there is something ‘numinous’ about those who transgress such boundaries”, AGER, 2005, p. 20.
unpleasant sight, but she is given by Valerius Maximus as an example of filial love, as she faithfully accompanies her father, even in the hour of defeat.

VII.2. Monogamy and polygamy

Another important aspect of marital policies is the presence of polygamy. While this habit had been accepted by scholars as being used both by the Argead house and by the Achaemenids, there had been a long debate over whether or not the Hellenistic houses practiced it. The arguments put forward by D. Ogden seem convincing enough and the view must be adopted that by and large, royal polygamy was accepted as a natural and useful political device.

Unfortunately, the state of the historical record regarding the Eastern Anatolian dynasties is not entirely satisfactory: while we retain important pieces of information about the marital activities of Mithradates VI Eupator and we have sources talking about his harem (Plut, Luc., 18; App. Mithr., 368), not the same may be said about his ancestors or his neighbours, although they probably behaved in a similar manner.

It is interesting to note that sources operate a clear distinction between ‘wives’ and ‘concubines’: the former are named ‘γυναῖκες’ (App., Mithr., 27), ‘συνοικοῦσαι’ (Plut., Luc., 22.7) or ‘uxores’ (Oros., 6.5.5), while the latter ‘παλλακίδες’ (Plut., Pomp., 32.8) or ‘paelices’ (Oros., 6.5.5). While this distinction of status seems clear and has well-known parallels in the practices of other Hellenistic dynasties (adding strength to the belief that we are not dealing here with mere approximations in language made by authors incapable of representing Hellenistic realities with the aid of languages - Greek and Latin - rather more apt to describe ‘bourgeois’ realities), sources do not always agree if a particular “royal woman” was a wife or a concubine.

The best known example is Hypsicrateia, the one who followed Mithradates VI faithfully, even in the hour of defeat and even donned a manly suit, earning from the king the nickname ‘Hypsicrates’. Plutarch calls her a concubine: ‘παλλακίς’ (Plut., Pomp., 32.8), while Valerius Maximus insists that she was ‘regina’, that Mithradates was her ‘coniunx’ and that he considered her to be his ‘uxor’ (Val. Max., 4.6ext.2). On the one hand, Valerius Maximus may be suspected of raising Hypricrateia above his status because he needed her to fit in the chapter ‘De amore coniugali’, on the other hand Plutarch may be accused of robbing her of her title because he wanted to emphasize her extraordinary, almost hybristic personality (‘παράτολμος’ is the word used by the biographer): the status of concubine or even courtesan fits better a woman who abandons all decorum and crosses the gender border by dressing like a man out of love for the king than it fits a married woman and a queen. A statue base has been recently discovered at Phanagoria bearing the text “ΣΤΡΩΣΤΟΣ ΥΨΙΚΡΑΤΕΣ ΓΥΝΑΙ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΜΙΘΡΑΔΑΤΟΥ ΕΥΠΑΤΟΡΟΣ ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΥ ΧΑΙΠΕ” and thus confirming spectacularly the anecdote narrated by Plutarch that Eupator

79 Val. Max., 1.8ext.13.
80 Ogden, 1999, ix-xix.
liked to call her by a boy’s name, Hypsikrates, because she used to don a man’s suit and follow him everywhere. Her title in the inscription is interesting: it is neither ‘βασίλισσα’, nor ‘παλλακίς’. So, while her position was not as low as indicated by Plutarch, she seems to have been just one of Mithradates’ many wives, not his queen.

It would seem that the more elevated status of wife and queen was reserved for women who were themselves of royal blood. Ironically enough, this rule seems best illustrated by an exception, Monime, who rejected the king’s love until he offered her the status of wife and queen (Plut., Luc., 18, 3), which the king appears not to have been willing to offer her from the beginning. On the other hand, royal women for whom a suitable husband was not found tended to remain unmarried (as is the case with the two sisters of Mithradates named in the same passage from Plutarch’s biography of Lucullus, both rather elderly virgins). While this does not constitute definite proof, is may be an indication that “suitable husband” meant “royal husband”.

This would mean, in turn, that the Achaemenid policy of endogamy (the king was forced by tradition to marry into the select group of families generically labelled as having been founded by “one of the Seven” and royal women would find husbands in the same milieu, excluding foreigners, however noble or famous) was replaced by the Hellenistic practice of preponderant exogamy, whereby royalty would marry royalty, each house finding its status recognised and elevated in the process.

VIII. Conclusions

For the ruling houses of Pontus, Cappadocia and Commagene, establishing their dynastic legitimacy by tracing their lineage to the great kings of the Persians and the Macedonians, maintaining their legitimacy by intermarrying with their royal peers or even resorting to sibling marriages and propagating this image by any means available (myths, artistic representations, coin portraiture etc.) to as wide an audience as possible represented an important and constant preoccupation. This consistent policy represented not only a means of defining and enhancing their identity, but also provided net political advantages, both within their own kingdoms and in their international relations.
The purpose of the present chapter is to argue that the religious phenomenon in Eastern Anatolia during the Hellenistic times presents the same main characteristics as it does elsewhere in the Hellenistic world. The major trend which may be identified is the *syncretism*, the process whereby subtle similarities between divinities and religious concepts of different origins led to their assimilation and cross-fertilisation. In Eastern Asia Minor, the main religious traditions which interact are the Persian and the Greek, although older strata may still be visible. The monarchs of Pontus, Cappadocia and Commagene have participated or even encouraged the phenomenon, sometimes with the expectation that this would further their political aims.

In the following pages, the religious phenomenon will be analysed only in its institutional aspect, and, more narrowly, only in so far as it involved the king or those in his immediate proximity. Thus, the ‘private’ worship of different gods, hinted at by the many terracotta artefacts depicting divine figures produced in the area¹ or even local cults (such as, for example, the civic cults honouring founding heroes in the Greek *poleis*) will not form the object of this study: not because they might not yield important insights into the process of cultural dialogue and negotiation, but because doing so would narrow excessively the range of evidence (which, for this type of religious manifestation, is almost exclusively archaeological), whereas in the study of religion as practiced and encouraged by King and Court, one is aided by a much more varied range of evidence: literary, numismatic and, crucially, epigraphical.

**I. Religion at court**

The king, as ruler of the realm, could send powerful messages and had it in his power to set trends. He could even decide to introduce new gods or declare his own superhuman status. But even the king acted within a network: while he could influence to some extent the worship of the divine, he often had to seek confirmation of his status from the divine, invoking a privileged relation with it in order to set himself above his subjects. Both the Achaemenids and the Argeads took this step, using different strategies. A brief overview of these strategies will be provided below, in order to provide the necessary

background for the developments in Eastern Anatolia which will be analysed afterwards.

I.1. The Achaemenids: rule by divine consent

In a document crucial for understanding how an Achaemenid king saw his relation with the divinity, the great Bisitun inscription, Dareios I repeats almost obsessively the phrase “vašnā Auramazdāha adam xšāyaθiya”, ‘by grace of Auramazda I am king’. As discussed above (cf. infra, pp. 138-139), Dareios does not see his kingship as a result of his many victories, but rather the other way round: his victories were a natural consequence of the fact that he was rightful king, appointed by the grace of the supreme god. A very similar attitude may be perceived in another important text, the Cyrus Cylinder (cf. supra, pp. 88-89), in which the king explained his victories as a consequence of the favour shown by Marduk.

I.2. The Argeads: rule by divine descent

The relation the Argeads claimed to have was of a far more direct nature, namely that they were direct descendants from Zeus, through Herakles, and this was assiduously advertised through a variety of means, such as coin iconography. As the Greek conception of the divine was more flexible than that of other cultures (allowing, for example, semi-divine status for people who had done extraordinary things, such as founding a new city), it is not surprising that the Argeads eventually claimed super-human status, the most striking gesture being doubtlessly that of Philip II, who set up his own statue as the thirteenth Olympian. Later, when Alexander tried to impose the proskynesis in the court ceremonial, his Greek companions objected that this gesture was reserved for divine beings – whether or not Alexander had intended this or not remains a debatable matter.

The subsequent monarchs, who ruled over different portions of Alexander’s great empire, had before them these models of royal relation with the divine, as well as other local traditions, such as the Egyptian or Babylonian one. In their choices, they strived to find a balance between what was necessary, expedient, desirable and possible, taking into account their political needs, which demanded that they should establish as close a relation with the divinity as possible (going as far as identification), with the sensitivities of their subjects, who might have interpreted the claims of the monarchs as blasphemous.

II. King and priesthood

A particular dimension of the relation between the monarch and the divine is represented by the relation between the ruler and the representatives of the priestly class, a category which appears to have been more substantial, much better structured and hence more influential in the East than it did in Greece.¹

¹ ἐν δὲ τούτοις < εἴδωλοι τῶν δώδεκα θεῶν > αὐτοῦ τοῦ Φιλίππου τρισκαιδέκατον ἐπόμενε θεοπρεπὲς εἴδωλον, σύνθρονον ἑαυτὸν ἀποδεικνύντος τοῦ βασιλέως τῶι δώδεκα θεοῖς”, Diod., 16.92.5.

² Cf. Volkmann, 1937.
II.1. Political importance of priests

The political importance of priesthood is best illustrated in Pontus and Cappadocia by the fact that the High Priests of the two Comanas are often blood relations of the monarch and are considered to rank ‘second after the king’ – a honorific position with strong Iranian connections – and share with the monarchs the right to don the diadem during certain religious festivals. Another indication of the high status of priests is the wealth they enjoyed, in the form of temple lands, worked by numerous *hierodouloi*: Comana boasts a population of six thousand ‘sacred slaves’, while other centres such as Venasa number three thousand inhabitants.

Also, according to Strabon, the Magi represent in this region a highly respected class: “πολύ γὰρ ἐκεί < ἐν τῇ Καππαδοκίᾳ > τὸ τῶν Μάγων φῦλον, οἵ καὶ πῦραιθοι καλοῦνται: πολλὰ δὲ καὶ τῶν Περσικῶν θεῶν ἱερά” (Str., 15.3.15). This is visible not only in everyday cult, in which they seem to be always present, but also in the fact that the Iranian divinities they worshipped gained places of honour in the most important sanctuaries of the region, sanctuaries honoured by kings themselves.

II.2. Privileged sanctuaries as political messages

A policy of patronage towards religious centres was recognised quite early by monarchs as a wise attitude, consolidating their royal attributes of piety and generosity. It is not surprising, therefore, that both Achaemenid and Macedonian kings treated religious centres with generosity.

For example, Cyrus the Great takes pride in the text inscribed on the so-called Cyrus Cylinder in having revived the cult of Marduk, abandoned by his predecessor, Nabonidus, and in having returned to Sumer and Akkad the divinities whose cultic images had been removed by the same Nabonidus (§ 32). Dareios, in turn, claims to have done much the same, restoring temples and cults throughout his realm, all of which had been upset by Gautama (DB, 14).

Similar practices may be observed in the case of the representatives of the major Successor kingdoms, amongst whom there is a great competition for the title of *εὐεργέτης*, bestowed for aiding cities finance the erection and repairing of temples as well as for subsidising the cult therein. In this context, centres such as Athens, Delphi, Delos and others become important venues for the display of royal magnificence.

Similarly, the kings of Eastern Anatolia demonstrated their generosity to numerous sanctuaries, both within and outside the borders of their kingdoms. Not only did they...
respect the existing property of temples, but they also added to it, by erecting sacred edifices in different cities (Str., 12.3.14) or by dedicating portions of the ge basilike to sanctuaries (IGLSyr. 1, 1; St. P. III, 94).

The political motivations for supporting domestic sanctuaries (not taking into account here personal devotion to one god or another) are transparent: earning the support of the priesthood (a class important in all times and in all cultures, but particularly so in the Orient) as direct beneficiaries of this gesture and of the subjects in general, as people generally expect their leaders to show piety. In the particular case when at the receiving end of an act of evergetism was a sanctuary in a Greek city subject to the king, the gesture may be interpreted in the wider framework of the εὐνοια and φιλανθρωπία which ideally characterised the relation between polis and king, as civic inscriptions so emphatically state, a relation in which the ruler is expected to show magnanimity and the ruled gratitude.

Continuing a tradition quickly established by the great Hellenistic houses, the kings of Eastern Asia Minor bestowed many gifts on prominent sanctuaries in Hellas. Ariarathes V Euæbes Philopator is the monarch best known for his acts of evergetism, directed mainly towards Athens, whose citizen he was. Thus, he is known for having acted as a sponsor for the Dionysiac college of τεχνίται and to have been ἀγωνοθέτης for the Panathenaia. No wonder that Diodorus praises his philhellenism and his efforts to bring Greek culture into Cappadocia. In Pontus, Mithradates V Euergetes is the first Pontic king known for having bestowed generous gifts upon the Delians, whence his epithet. His successor, Mithradates VI Eupator, continued this tradition and has been honoured with a number of statues and inscriptions on the island, the most conspicuous being those set up by the priest Helianax in the heroon dedicated to the king.

The political motivation for offering gifts to sanctuaries outside one’s realm is probably emulation. Once the attributes of the ideal king were established and these included, besides martial virtues, the generosity towards Greek cities and in particular towards Greek sanctuaries, all kings strived to outdo their peers. Characteristically, the royal munificence was focused on a relatively limited number of venues (the most important being, as mentioned above, Athens, Delos and Delphi), which become true showcases, where kings show their wealth before their peers and before passers-by.

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7 Strabon, when describing Zela, states that “τὸ παλαιὸν μὲν γὰρ οἱ βασιλεῖς οὐχ ὡς πόλιν ἀλλ’ ὡς ἱερὸν διῷκουν τῶν Περσικῶν θεῶν τὰ Ζῆλα, καὶ ἦν ὁ ἱερεὺς κύριος τῶν πάντων” (Str., 12.3.37). this he contrasts with the treatment suffered by the precinct during Roman times, when ἀκάκοισαν δὲ πολλοὶ καὶ ἐμεῖναν τὸ πλῆθος τῶν ἱεροδούλων καὶ τὴν ἄλλην εὐπορίαν. ἐμειώθη δὲ καὶ ἡ παρακειμένη χώρα μεριθεῖα εἰς πλέον δυναστείας” (ibid.). In the same vein, a king who does not respect the inviolable character of temple properties is portrayed as a villain (Diod., 31.34.1).

8 IG II², 1330.


10 Cf. ID 1557 and 1558; Robert, 1978.

III. The King’s Gods

When setting out to study the particular divinities which receive most honour from the kings of the area, the obvious starting point is the great *hierothesion* at Nemrut Dağ. The importance of this monument cannot be overstated and it will serve as a starting point in the subsequent overview. Its importance resides not only in the fact it represents a striking and well-characterised artistic achievement, but also in the fact that the long inscription left by Antiochos I Theos spells out his religious conception, which is programmatically syncretistic. Thus, he states: “ἐἰκόνας παντοίαν τεχνη, καθ’ ἃ παλαιὸς λόγος Περσῶν τε καὶ Ἑλλήνων — ἐμοῦ γένους εὐτυχεστάτη ζίξα — παραδέδωκε” (*IGLSyr.* 1, 1, v. 28-31). He reveres equally divinities from Persia, Macedon or Commagene itself: “ἐγὼ πατρῴους ἅπαντας θεοὺς ἐκ Περσίδος τε καὶ Μακετίδος γῆς Κομμαγηνῆς τε […] εὔχομαι” (*ibid.*., vv. 224-227). The gods who receive particular attention are Zeus-Oromasdes, Apollo-Mithra-Helios-Hermes, Artagnes-Herakles-Ares and Kommagene.

III.1. Zeus-Oromasdes

The first to be honoured is the ruler of the universe, who in Greek thought was Zeus and in the Iranian conception, Aura Mazda, transparently hidden behind the Hellenised form Ωρομάσδης. They are connected by their royal function, by their celestial dominion, their patronage of justice and their common association with the planet Jupiter. The association had been well established in the Greek psyche: Herodotos, Xenophon, Strabon and others call the Persian supreme god “Zeus”.

The cult of Zeus is extremely popular throughout Eastern Anatolia and can be observed in a variety of contexts, betraying influences from a number of quarters: local Anatolian, Semitic, Iranian, as well as Greek.

At the dawn of the Hellenistic Age, Zeus figures prominently on the coinage of Ariarathes I (who continued the tradition initiated by Datames, satrap of Cilicia and Cappadocia) and already at that time it appears to have undergone a process of syncretism. Thus, the god is enthroned, his torso is naked and holds in his arms the sceptre and the eagle – elements of Greek origin; at the same time, he holds an ear of grain and a bunch of grapes, elements which point to a connection with fertility, which appears to be of local Anatolian origin; finally, the Aramaic legend reads ‘Ba’al Gazur’, identifying him as one of the numerous Semitic Ba’alim, celestial ‘Lords’ of a place or of a tribe, similar to those

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12 *Hdt.*, 1.131; *Xen.*, *Cyr.*, 8.7.3; *Str.*, 15.3.13.

13 In the subsequent analysis, coin imagery will occupy a prominent place. However, the exegesis is by no means easy. A correct interpretation of coin imagery rests to a good degree on the examination of large numbers of intertextually related coins, which is impossible at the present for Eastern Anatolian kingdoms, given both the limited number of coins so far discovered and – more importantly – the discontinuous character of issues (*Callatay*, 2009). Due care must be taken not to demand from coinage more evidence than it can provide: for example, the presence of a divinity or hero on the obverse of a coin or series of coins does not automatically prove the existence of a cult.

worshiped for example at Venasa or at Doliche\(^\text{15}\) (Figure IV.1a). Zeus would continue to appear on the coins struck in this area throughout the Hellenistic age. On the reverse of the silver tetradrachms struck by Mithradates III, Zeus is depicted as enthroned and holding the eagle, in a manner resembling closely the types struck by Alexander, indicating perhaps the greater integration of Pontus in the Hellenistic market of ideas and imagery or, more likely, an understandable timidity associated with the beginning of minting by a certain authority, whose credentials may not be so solid and which prefers to adopt images that are already well-known and which may, consequently, inspire confidence (Figure IV.1b). During the short reign of Mithradates IV, Zeus appears on coins together with his sister-wife Hera, justifying and adding prestige to the union between Mithradates and his sister-wife Laodike Philadelphos, in a manner reminding one of Theocritos’ *Idyll 17*, honouring Ptolemaios Philadelphos. Zeus would again figure prominently on Pontic coinage during Eupator’s reign, in the so-called ‘civic issues’ (Figure IV.1c). The representation is canonical, showing Zeus’s laureate bust on the obverse and the eagle clutching the thunderbolt on the reverse, a type familiar in Ptolemaic, Epiriote or Seleukid coinage, but also in the coinage of Greek poleis such as Knossos or Oinoanda. It is difficult, however, to decide if the deity represented is the Olympian Zeus or rather a syncretistic divinity, such as Zeus Stratios or Dikaiosynos, whom Eupator worshiped.

In Olshausen’s view,\(^\text{16}\) Zeus Stratios is associated closely with Persian and Anatolian traditions. Appian informs us that Mithradates performs in his honour a ritual that is Persian in nature, being careful to emphasise this is an ancestral practice:

\[< \text{Μιθριάτης} > \text{ ἐθύε τῷ Στρατίῳ Διὶ πάτριον θυσίαν ἐπὶ ὄρους ψυχλοῦ, κορυφήν μείζονα ἀλλήν ἀπό ξύλων ἑπιτιθείς. πρώτοι δ’ ἐς αὐτὴν οἱ βασιλεῖς ἐξυφοροῦσι καὶ περιθέντες ἐτέραν ἐν κύκλῳ βαρχυτέραν τῇ μὲν ἄνω γάλα καὶ μέλι καὶ οἶνον καὶ ἔλαιον καὶ θυμιάματα πάντα ἐπιφοροῦσι, τῇ δ’ ἐπιπέδῳ σῖτον τε καὶ ὄψιν ἐπὶ τους παροῦσιν ἐπιτιθέντες, οἱ δὲ καὶ ἐν Πασαργάδαις ἔστι τοῖς Περσῶν βασιλεῦσιν θυσίας γένος, ἀπτούσι τὴν ὕλην. ἡ δ’ αἰθομένη διὰ τὸ μέγεθος τηλοῦ τε χιλίων σταδίων γίγνεται τοῖς πλέουσι καταφανῆς, καὶ πελάσαι φασίν ἐς πολλὰς ἡμέρας, αἰθομένου τοῦ ἀέρος, οὐ δυνατὸν εἶναι. ὃ μὲν δὴ τὴν θυσίαν ἔγει πατρίῳ νόμῳ. (Ἀπ., Mithr., 66)\]

While the sacrifice on top of mountains and the pivotal role of fire in the ritual are of certain Persian origin, other details do not match what we know about the Zoroastrian

\(^{15}\) *Toorn, 1999, s.v. ‘Baal’; cf. also Merlat, 1960.*

\(^{16}\) *Olshausen, 1990, p. 1902.*
traditions. For example, the pouring of milk, honey, wine and oil on the fire would have appeared to an orthodox Zoroastrian not a mark of respect, but an abominable act of defilement: as fire is pure, it must not be tainted with impure things, not even a human’s breath and for this reason the Magi covered their mouths; the sacrilege would be even greater if honey were to be poured onto the fire, as the bee is a malefic being in the Zoroastrian tradition. One might suspect Appian is here simply inserting familiar elements (the libations of milk, honey, wine and oil are common in Greek chthonian sacrifices) into the account of an exotic rite. This is the explanation that seems to be favoured by de Jong.\footnote{Jong, 1997, pp. 140-142.} However, Strabon, a native from Pontus, gives a partly similar account of the rites performed by Persian magi: “έφάπτονται οἱ Μάγοι καὶ ἐπᾴδουσιν, ἀποσπένδοντες ἐλαίον ὁμοῦ γάλακτι καὶ μέλιτι κεκραμένον οὕκ εἰς πῦρ οὐδ’ ύδωρ, ἀλλ’ εἰς τοῦδαφος”.\footnote{Str., 15.3.14} Strabon claims to describe what happens in Persis and de Jong rightly points out that this is incongruent with the data we possess from Zoroastrian sources. However, rather than accusing Strabon (and Appian as well) of oversimplification, one might suppose he is in fact assigning to Persia rites that were performed and that he had witnessed in Cappadocia. After all, he had never travelled into the heart of Iran, but had firsthand experience with the Magi in Anatolia, which might have led him to suppose there was no significant difference between the religious practices in the two areas. If such is the case, then the figure of Zeus Stratios is indeed the result of syncretism, a conclusion further supported by the Gökcebağ relief, showing a bearded male figure holding a shield and a double axe, believed by Cumont and Olshausen to be a representation of Stratos, which would thus connect him to the plethora of Anatolian axe-wielding gods.\footnote{Cf. WaiteS, 1923. For Iuppiter Dolichenus, probably the most famous axe-wielding god of Anatolia, cf. MerlAt 1960.}

The question naturally emerging is why Mithradates worships this particular divinity. Zeus Stratios was certainly a very popular god, as attested by many inscriptions, both Hellenistic and Imperial,\footnote{“Διὶ Στρατίῳ Βασιλεὺς εὐχῇ”, St.P. III, 140 (the dedicand being a king or, more likely, a private individual whose name is Basileus – such a name, and its feminine counterpart, Basilissa, are attested in Pontus and Paphlagonia in Imperial times: cf. SEG, 13.532; Marek, Kat. Amastris, 32 and 103; St.P. III, 42, 71, 71a; etc.); “Διὶ Στρατίῳ [ὁ δῆμος ἐν ἐκκλησία] κυρίᾳ”, St.P. III, 141 (dedicated in 98/99 AD by the whole people of Amaseia). These and many other inscriptions and representations attest the popularity of the god.} and that may offer a plausible, but not entirely satisfactory answer. The military context of the sacrifice (in the midst of the second war against Rome, after a great victory against Murena, and before embarking on the third war) certainly represents part of the explanation, but by no means the whole explanation. After all, Zeus Stratios was not the only patron of armies – Ares, Nike and the native Ma all shared this function. Hind has proposed the theory that Stratos was the chief protector of the Mithradatid dynasty,\footnote{Hind, 1994, p. 137.} which would provide a good reason, but this does not corroborate...
well with the information in Strabon\textsuperscript{22} that Men Pharnakou fulfilled the function of dynastic patron. Perhaps Mithradates chose this divinity because of its Persian origin, using it as a pendant or counterweight to the other sacrifices, which he performs in parallel in Greek manner. Was then Mithradates performing the ceremony in honour of a divinity he believed to be of pure Persian origin, or was he promoting a divinity of whose composite, syncretistic nature he was fully aware? Unfortunately, the answer to this question will probably remain in the perilous domain of speculation, as the only measuring tools we have are the perceptions of his contemporaries reflected more or less faithfully in later written sources. If Appian offers a truthful testimony in only emphasising the ‘Persian’ character of the ceremony, then Mithradates was following a local, degenerate tradition. If, however, Eupator knew more about this divinity than later authors did, he may have chosen Stratios precisely because of his manifold character, as a unifying figure of East and West, much the same as he did when he used Perseus (cf. infra).

Another interesting divinity worshipped by those around the king is Zeus Dikaiosynos, which seems to be attested by an inscription found East of Sinope\textsuperscript{23}: “Διὶ Δικαιοσύνωι μεγάλωι Πύθης Διονυσίων στρατηγῶν χαριστήριον”. The date of the inscription is not beyond doubt, but in case it is Hellenistic, it offers another instance of syncretism promoted by the Mithradatid court, since the formula seems to merge Greek patterns with Achaemenid frames of mind. On the one hand, the sovereign god as patron of justice is common in both cultures: in Greek, the epithet ‘\textit{Dikaiosynos}’ associated with Zeus is rare, but not exceptionally so, while in the Achaemenid inscriptions Auramazda is often associated with the virtue of truthfulness or justice.\textsuperscript{24} On the other hand, the epithet ‘\textit{μέγας}’ seems to go back to a Persian formula: the common phrase ‘\textit{baga vazrka}’ (associated with Auramazda),\textsuperscript{25} rendered in Greek ‘\textit{θεὸς μέγας}’ corresponds perfectly to the equally common phrase ‘\textit{xšayathiya vazrka}’, translated by the Greeks as ‘\textit{βασιλεὺς μέγας}’.

The cult of Zeus Asbameios at Tyana seems to have received particular attention from the Cappadocian kings: in case the epithet is to be explained as a Hellenisation of a Persian word derived from ‘\textit{aspa-}’, ‘\textit{horse}’\textsuperscript{26}, one may correlate this with the numerous Cappadocian bronzes depicting a horse and rider.

\textbf{III.2. Apollo-Mithras-Helios-Hermes}

More intriguing than the association between Zeus and Auramazda is the association between Apollo, Mithras, Helios and Hermes. While Apollo and Helios are closely

\textsuperscript{22} \textsc{Str.}, 12.3.31.
\textsuperscript{23} \textit{IK Sinope}, 75, first published in \textsc{Robinson}, 1905, no. 24.
\textsuperscript{24} DNb, 5-11; DPd, 17-18; etc.
\textsuperscript{25} “A mighty god <\textit{i}s> Auramazda” or “Auramazda the mighty”: DNa, DNb, DPd, XPa and many other inscriptions.
\textsuperscript{26} \textsc{Mitchell}, 2007, pp. 167-8.
related in Greek mythology, they are never linked syncretically with Hermes.\textsuperscript{27} The binding element between these three Greek gods seems to be the Iranian Mithras, who has a solar element, is a guarantor of contracts and is a mediator himself.\textsuperscript{28} Interestingly enough, Mithras is not \textit{stricto sensu} a solar god in orthodox Zoroastrian tradition, a fact demonstrated by Gershevitch in a compelling paper,\textsuperscript{29} but is so in marginal areas such as the parts of Parthia and Sogdia which converted to Manichaeanism, where ‘\textit{mehr}’ has become a common noun, meaning ‘\textit{sun}’. A similar phenomenon seems to take place in Commagene, with Mithras taking on a much more ‘solar’ aspect than allowed by the Zoroastrian sacred texts.

It is doctrinal differences such as this, which bring the Iranian divinity closer to the Greek pantheon, that represent for scholars such as Bivar or Beck\textsuperscript{30} the evidence to support the hypothesis that Commagene was the interface between East and West in terms of Mithras cult, providing the missing link between two radically different religions – Zoroastrianism on the one hand and Western or “Roman” Mithraism on the other hand.

While Apollo is honoured in Pontus by Mithradates V Euergetes in his coinage, either marking a privileged relation with Delos\textsuperscript{31} or adopting a local cult from Sinope,\textsuperscript{32} the god Mithras is almost entirely absent from our documents pertaining to Pontus and Cappadocia, with the exception of the theophoric dynastic name of the Pontic house, which does not, in itself, constitute evidence of cult. Thus, many have tried to fill in this gap, with mixed results.

Bivar,\textsuperscript{33} for example, proposes to identify a cult of Mithras at Sinope, in the form of Sarapis, which was then exported to Alexandria. This hypothesis rests on the title \textit{xshatra-pati} given in a Carian inscription to Apollo, whom the author equates with Mithras, only to discover that the title \textit{xshatra-pati} evolves phonetically into \textit{shahrbed}, which may represent the true etymology of the name ‘Sarapis’. Bivar then attempts to find confirmation of his hypothesis in a Tacitean passage, which narrates how Ptolemaios Soter was visited by a vision of the god, asking to be taken from Pontus and brought to Alexandria and how the Egyptian deputations set sail for Sinope, where the king Skydrothemis was convinced, at the end of three long years of negotiations, to relinquish the effigy of the god (\textit{Tac. Hist.}, 4.83-4). This daring hypothesis rests, however, on three doubtful assumptions: that the god Mithras hides behind every mention of Apollo in Asia Minor, that Sarapis is etymologically connected with the Middle Persian \textit{shahrbed} and

\textsuperscript{27} There even exists a story that makes Apollo and the newly born Hermes antagonists, following a shrewd act of theft: cf. \textit{HymnHerm.}, vv. 17 sqq.
\textsuperscript{28} \textit{Merkelbach}, 1984, pp. 23-27.
\textsuperscript{29} \textit{Gershevitch}, 1975.
\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Bivar}, 1975; \textit{Beck}, 1998.
\textsuperscript{31} \textit{Robert}, 1978.
\textsuperscript{32} \textit{Callatay}, 1991 (\textit{non vidi}).
\textsuperscript{33} \textit{Bivar}, 2001.
that the tradition preserved by Tacitus is historically accurate, in spite of its anecdotic character. There is some evidence which clearly contradicts Bivar’s proposition. Firstly, the story of Sarapis’ exodus is clearly a myth: there is no record of a king in Sinope at the time of Ptolemaios Soter. Secondly, when Sarapis does arrive in the space of the Euxine, people receive him as a novelty: a 3rd century inscription from Histria records how a committee is sent to the oracle in Calchedon in order to inquire about this god, as the people of Histria were not certain what to do with him. Certainly, if the supposed cult of Mithras-Sarapis had been so old and so well-established in Sinope (a city with ample commercial connections in the Black Sea basin), the Histrians would have already been familiar with him.

Another hypothesis which has been proposed is that the hooded character represented on Pontic coinage was in fact the god Mithras, syncretised with Perseus. The argument runs in the following manner: the famous tauroctony scene in Roman Mithraism is but an artistic representation of a cosmic scene – the constellation Perseus appears on the night sky to be above the constellation Taurus, as if subduing it or slaying it. The primordial bull slayer must therefore have been Perseus, not Mithras. Ulansey then ingeniously discovers some links between Perseus and Mithras: they both look away from their victim; they are associated with a leonine monster; they are both venerated in Cilicia. The swapping of identities must have happened when the Perseus-worshipping Cilicians became closely associated with the Mithras-venerating Mithradates VI of Pontus. The logic of the argument is faulty for a number of reasons. Firstly, the author appears to eliminate completely the Iranian contribution to the doctrines of Western Mithraism (a stance as far from the truth as its opposite view, which held that Roman Mithraism had a fundamentally Zoroastrian character) and this is disproved by the fact that there are demonstrable linguistic ties between the Iranian world and the Roman manifestations of the Mithraic cult, which may point to other, more profound, points of contact. Secondly, the author postulates the existence of a powerful cult of Mithras at the Pontic court simply based on theophoric names within the dynasty, an argument that fails to corroborate with the other pieces of evidence. Thirdly, the author himself identifies a powerful cult of Perseus in Cilicia, even well after the Cilicians are said to have operated the transformation of Perseus to Mithras. Fourthly, while the looking away from the victim characterises most Roman relieves, not all of them obey this rule, nor does the analogy explain Mithra’s hypostasis as a hunter. Moreover, the leonine character in Western Mithraism is never the victim, as the Gorgon is – on the contrary, he even receives epigraphic dedications. Finally, the author postulates

34 *IsM* I, 5.
36 The main supporter of this stance was Fr. Cumont, followed by his disciple, M. Vermaseren. See, for example, Cumont, 1956 or Vermaseren, 1963.
the Cilician “Perseists” were very eager to hide their doctrine, while upholding the view their main doctrine was that the constellation Perseus stood on top of the Taurus — a secret that was immediately revealed to anybody who looked at the stars. In view of all these arguments, it is highly unlikely the youth wearing the Persian cap present on the Pontic coinage might be Mithras.

Tantalising though it may be, the absence of Mithras from the Pontic space must be accepted as a fact, at least until such time as more compelling evidence is uncovered.

An bilingual inscription from Farasha might provide for Cappadocia the evidence which is absent from Pontus, and it has been published by Grégoire in 1908. The Greek version reads “Σαγάριος Μανίφρνου στρατηγ[ὸ]ς Ἀριαραμνε̣ί̣(ας) ἐμάγευσε Μίθρῃ”, while the Aramaic one reads “sgr br mhyprn rb hyl’ | mgvś [lm]trh” (CIMRM, 19; KAI, 265). In case this inscription were Hellenistic, it would be of tremendous importance, not only for the study of Anatolian religion in general, as it would offer another instance of Mithras cult in Anatolia apart from Commagene before the Roman era, but also for the present investigation, as it emanates from a high official, a strategos, making a dedication to an Iranian divinity and continuing the epigraphic use of Aramaic, established since the Achaemenid times.

However, this inscription appears to have been set up in Roman times, as indeed Donner and Röllig, the editors of the KAI, are inclined to believe. The key term allowing some approximation of the date is ‘στρατηγὸς’ / ‘rb hyl’’. The Greek is highly ambiguous, designating a number of functions, from ‘district governor’ to ‘municipal official’ to ‘leader of a military formation’. Fortunately, the Aramaic phrase is much more precise, and it translates as ‘chief of the army’ or ‘chief of the garrison’. In Hellenistic terminology, this function would be best represented with the term ‘φρούραρχος’, but this is not the word used in the inscription. As a similar use of the term ‘στρατηγὸς’ appears in other bilingual dedications to the ‘Roman’ Mithras, for example that made by a certain Ethpeni at Dura,38 the view that Sagarios lived and acted as garrison commander at some point in the Roman era becomes more likely.

The matter is likely to remain under debate, and therefore it is safer not to draw definitive conclusions about the importance of Mithras for the Cappadocian elite before Roman times and remain content with the sole attestation of the god in Commagene.

III.3. Artagnes-Herakles-Ares

Artagnes is the Greek form for Verethragna, the Iranian divinity of force and violence, which naturally associates him with the Greek divinities most closely associated with war and feats of physical prowess, Ares and Herakles. Another point of contact between Ares and Verethragna is their common association with the planet Mars.

In the Hellenistic world, in which victory on the battlefield was one of the main

attributes of kingship, it is only natural that Ares and his companion, Nike, should receive veneration, and Eastern Anatolia is no exception: the ‘civic’ issues struck under Eupator’s direct coordination include many visual references to these two divinities, such as their portraits or depictions of weapons – the sword, the bow or the quiver (Figure IV.2).

The last two weapons, the bow and quiver, alongside the club, are tightly associated with Herakles, who is also represented on Pontic coins. The presence of the hero in the numismatic imagery may be a testament to his wide appeal, which is manifested throughout the oikoumene (from Iberia, where he is present on the coins struck by the Barcids, to Parthia, where statues of him are being erected), but may also be interpreted as a political gesture. As mentioned above, the Argeads claimed descent from Zeus through Herakles, and Eupator, in turn, claimed descent from Alexander the Great. Thus, it is conceivable that by placing Herakles on his coins, Eupator was reminding his audience of his noble origins.

III.4. The All-nurturing Commagene

The πατρὶς πάντροφος Κομμαγήνη, who is not explicitly associated with any other divinity – Greek or Iranian – is an interesting presence. The concept of divinised fatherland could perhaps be a transposition in Commagenian space of the ‘genius loci’ or of the ‘Tyche’ worshiped by many cities, such as Antiocheia on the Orontes. At the same time, the fertility attribute which characterises the divine being Commagene puts her on a par with other venerable divinities of Anatolia, the most important of them being Ma, the great goddess venerated at Comana.

Like many Mother-Goddesses originating in Anatolia (whose perpetual transformation is beautifully illustrated in the Museum of Anatolian Civilisations from Ankara), Ma is a union of contrasts. On the one hand, she is a goddess of destruction, as demonstrated by the fact that Strabon equates her with Enyo (12.2.3), and mentions a local tradition which held that the ritual had been brought there from Scythia by Orestes and Iphigeneia, being well known that the ritual described in the Greek tragedy was violent in the extreme. On the other hand, Ma possesses a kinder nature, one which presides over fertility and the cycle of life and rebirth. Thus, the land around her sanctuary at Comana is planted with vines – a symbol of plenty, and many women practice prostitution there, transforming Comana into a ‘second Corinth’ (Str., 12.3.36).

The importance of the sanctuary in political terms – namely that the High Priest was considered ‘second after the king’ – has already been mentioned above, but it was not limited to this aspect. The goddess figured prominently on Cappadocian coins, representing a type that changed little over the centuries. She is represented as carrying spear, helmet
and shield, either standing or sitting, and often holding Nike on an outstretched arm. The imagery is practically identical with that of Athena, as known from Greek mythology and parallel representations on coins issued by other Hellenistic dynasties and for this reason numismatists usually identify the goddess on the Cappadocian coins as Athena.

The association is not gratuitous and indicates in fact a syncretistic process, supported by functional parallelisms and by historical developments. Thus, both goddesses have a martial side and both preside over fertility (Athena, although a perpetual virgin, had won the contest for the patronage of the Attic metropolis by creating the olive-tree). This association could only be reinforced by the close relations between the Ariarathids and the city of Athens.

Given the great importance enjoyed by Ma both in Cappadocia and in Pontus, one would expect Athena-Ma to figure prominently on Pontic numismatic issues as well. Tellingly, the Pontic coinage starts with an issue of staters closely modelled on pre-existing Alexander types, depicting helmeted Athena on the obverse and Nike holding crown on the reverse (Figure IV.3). It is certain that Mithradates II, who seems to have been behind this issue, was attempting to mimic the popular Alexander types, but it is perhaps significant that from the multitude of images used by the Conqueror, the Pontic king chose the one most closely related to the goddess Ma. Athena appears again on Pontic coins during the reign of Eupator, and one must not exclude the possibility that the motivation for this return could be political, namely the close connections between Athens and the Pontic kingdom, well attested at least for Euergetes and for Eupator. There is, however, a supplementary element which characterises the iconography of the goddess at this moment – on her helmet one may notice the representation of the winged horse Pegasus: thus, she receives praise for protecting the Perseus, the ancestor of all Persians, and, through Dareios I, of Mithradates himself (cf. infra).

III.5. Ruler cult

The phenomenon of ruler cult is not entirely foreign to Eastern Anatolia in Hellenistic times. Ruler cult has two forms – ancestor worship and worship of the living monarch. An

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40 Cf., for example, Panichi, 2005.
41 Cf. supra, pp. 65-66. Callataj supports the view that this issue should be assigned to Mithradates III: Callataj, 2009.
42 For Mithradates Euergetes: cf. supra, n. 31 and 32; for Mithradates Eupator: cf. Callataj, 1997, pp. 303-304, where he demonstrates that the coinage of Athens offers important testimonies of this close cooperation: during the years 98/7 and 97/6 the reverse bears the symbols of the Gorgon and the Pegasus, while the coinage of the year 87/6 not only bears the Pontic star, but it is even issued in the name of King Mithradates and Aristion.
example of ancestor worship is possibly offered by the royal tombs at Amaseia, whose architecture seems to have been designed to accommodate a (modest) form of cult, but more strikingly by the Nemrut complex, with its long series of ancestors depicted in heroic poses.

The living monarch may also take on super-human status, and Hellenistic kings of Eastern Anatolia had many models from which to draw inspiration. Dareios, for example, does seem to imply in the Bisitun inscriptions he is restoring world order (acting, as it were, as a representative of Auramazda, on a quest to punish the Lie) and many seals of the Achaemenid age depict scenes in which the Persian king engages monsters or wild beasts: these seem to depict the mythical scenarios in which the hero battles the forces of evil, in the manner of Mesopotamian kings. The Hellenic monarchs took things one step further: as discussed above, Philip II set himself up as the thirteenth Olympian, and subsequent Hellenistic monarchs practiced on a wide scale this elevation of the monarch above the human level.

Monarchs in Eastern Anatolia were obviously sensitive to such models, adopting and adapting them to best suit their needs. For example, Mithradates IV and Laodike issue coins with their jugate busts on the obverse and with a representation of Zeus and Hera on the reverse: this was probably meant to send the signal that the royal couple were an earthly parallel or manifestation of the divine couple. Their nephew and successor may have represented himself with the lion’s mane, a symbol of Herakles, but the attribution of the small terracotta statuette is not entirely assured. Later, Helianax, a local priest of the Kabeiroi, would erect on the island of Delos a *heroon* dedicated to Mithradates VI. Eupator’s palette of self-representations was extremely rich and it even included an instance of near-deification, by the assumption of the title ‘Dionysos’. The possible explanation is that Eupator has managed to defeat the Scythians and has this, metaphorically, gone to the ends of the world, much like the god. The aetiology of this title is presented by Plutarch thus:

Μιθριδάτην δὲ τὸν πολεμήσαντα Ῥωμαίοις ἐν τοῖς ἁγῶσιν, οὕς ἐπετέλει, καὶ πολυφαγίας ἄθλα θείαι καὶ πολυτοσίας φασίν, νικήσας δὲ αὐτὸν αμφότερα, καὶ ὅλως πιεῖν πλείστον <τῶν> καθ' αὐτὸν ανθρώπων, διό καὶ Διόνυσον ἑπικληθῆναι, τοῦθ', ἐπεφθανέν ἐν τι τῶν εἰκή πεπιστευμένων εἶνα, τὸ περὶ τὴν αἰτίαν τῆς ἑπικλήσεως νηπίου γὰρ ὄντος αὐτοῦ κεραυνὸς ἑπέφλεξε τὰ σπάργανα, τοῦ δὲ σώματος οὐχ ἤματο, πλὴν ὅσου ἤκουσε τι τοῦ πυρός ἐν τῷ μετώπῃ κρυπτόμενον ὑπὸ τῆς κόμης <διαμένειν> εἰν αὐτῷ (Plut., Quaest.Conviv., 624.1)

43 Fleischer, 2009.
44 Garrison and Root, in their discussion of the ‘heroic encounter’ scene, argue that the male hero may not in fact be the king, but an abstraction representing ‘the Persian Man’. However, when this male figure is clearly represented in royal garments, the hypothesis does not seem very well grounded: cf. Garrison & Root, 2001, pp. 56-60
45 Summerer, 1999, p. 166.
There are two layers of explanation present in the text – one fabulous, depicting Mithradates as singled out by the divinity for privileged status, the other mundane, presenting him in the framework of the *tryphe* attitude, well-known at the Seleukid and Ptolemaic courts. Unfortunately, it is not easy to discern which of the two versions (if any) originated at the Pontic court.

Yet again, the most striking example of a religious phenomenon associated with the ruler comes from Commagene and has Antiochos I Theos for author. His epithet leaves no doubt he saw himself as divine and his bombastic tone in setting out sacred laws, valid “for all eternity”, and festivals in his own honour is fully appropriate in this context.

The phenomenon of ruler cult as present in the three kingdoms shows therefore more signs of Macedonian than of Achaemenid inspiration and is in keeping with the practices current within contemporary Hellenistic dynasties more than with the venerable Persian traditions.

III.6. Syncretism as deliberate policy and its political implications

In an environment as diverse as Eastern Asia Minor in terms of historical and ethnic background, cultural traditions and political structures, religious syncretism, performed as a means of mitigating differences and promoting unity, could serve as a potent political tool. Below will be analysed three instances of religious syncretism that have for main actor a king – Antiochos I Theos in Commagene, and in Pontus Pharnakes I, Mithradates IV and Mithradates VI, with the aim of discovering if the final product of the syncretistic process responded to their long-term needs.

When first making contact with the great sanctuary of Nemrut, the first item with which one comes into contact is its outwardly form, its artistic shell. Indeed, given that many of the people who attended the ceremonies held there were illiterate, the iconography was the most efficient way for the king to send his message and, accordingly, iconography offers significant evidence of syncretism. The style of the reliefs is highly evocative of Achaemenid art, with a certain hieratic heaviness of volumes. Some characters – the king himself, Apollo-Mithras and others – wear Persian dress (an item upon which Antiochus lays particular emphasis in the inscription), while some others are depicted according to Greek canons – such as Artagnes-Herakles, shown in the heroic nudity familiar from Greek representations. One detail is of particular importance, namely the pose of the characters that join hands in a *dexiosis*, a gesture with strong religious implications in the Eastern frame of mind, showing a particular degree of connectedness between the two parties.

The more educated would have perceived the pervasiveness of astrological references, not only in the sanctuary, but also in the coins struck by Commagenian


49 Campbell even states that the main criterion for syncretising Iranian and Greek divinities was their particular association with celestial bodies. While this factor was certainly important, it could not have been
kings,\textsuperscript{50} and in and this is in itself a syncretistic process, as astrology in the meaning and with the implications visible at Nemrut was the child of the Hellenistic Age, after Oriental mythology combined with Greek logos and philosophical ideas. Even more subtly, in the conception that lay behind the sanctuary, while there are interesting deviations from Zoroastrian orthodoxy, there are, nevertheless, discernable traces of Iranian influence. One passage in particular is extremely informative in this respect: “σῶμα μορφῆς ἐμῆς πρὸς οὐρανίους Διὸς Μομάσδου θρόνους θεοφιλή ψυχὴν προπέμψαν εἰς τὸν ἀπειρὸν αἰῶνα κοιμήςεται” (\textit{IGLSyr} 1, 1, vv. 40-44). The Greek is very cumbersome and almost meaningless without recourse to the Iranian concepts.\textsuperscript{51} The eternal sleep, the soul eager to return to the divinity after death (\textit{ruvān-fravahr}), the throne of Aura-Mazda which acts as a Treasury of souls (\textit{Garōdmān}), and the body of the form (the \textit{tan} of the \textit{advēnak}) are all Iranian ideas, which may only awkwardly be set into Greek.

The other example to be analysed is that provided by Pharnakes I and his god, Men Pharnakou, a composite divinity that is extremely puzzling in its syncretistic appearance. In his representation on the silver coins, he is dressed, on the one hand, in Greek fashion, with a broad \textit{petasos} and \textit{chlamys}, and holding in his left hand sometimes a caduceus, sometimes a cornucopia; on the other hand, he holds in the right hand a vine with grapes at which a young deer nibbles – a symbol of fertility specific to Anatolian deities. The thunderbolt it sometimes has over the head associates him with celestial deities such as the Greek Zeus, but also with the Semitic Baalit, lords of the mountains. He became very closely associated with the Mithradatid dynasty, to the extent that the royal oath was sworn in his name: “ἐτίμησαν δ' οἱ βασιλεῖς τὸ ἱερὸν τούτο ὅπως εἰς ὑπερβολὴν ἠστε τὸν βασιλικὸν καλούμενον ὁρκον τούτον ἀπέφηγαν τύχην βασιλέως καὶ Μῆνα Φαρνάκου”.\textsuperscript{52}

The last of the unifying characters to be analysed is Perseus. The hero and the symbols associated with him (the \textit{harpe}, the \textit{gorgoneion} and Pegasus) are of great importance in Pontic coinage. He first appears on a silver issue of Mithradates IV, but his presence becomes preponderant only under Mithradates VI, or so it would seem, given the scarcity of information relating to the monetary activities of Euergetes. His presence may be explained as a reference to the mythical ancestry of the Mithradatids, since they (or at least their most active representative, Eupator) claimed descent from both Alexander and Dareios I (\textit{cf. supra}, Chapter ‘Dynastic Policies and Politics’). The Argeads traced their lineage back to Herakles and Zeus. Herakles, however, was himself a descendant from Perseus (incidentally, another son of Zeus). At the same time, Perseus is consistently represented wearing a Persian leather cap on his head and this underlines another facet of

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\textsuperscript{50} This, Facella, 2008, p. 215.

\textsuperscript{51} The discussion here is based on Campbell, 1968, pp. 59-62.

\textsuperscript{52} Str., 12.3.31. This oath will also be discussed below, p. 169.
his mythological personality, that of Greek hero and ancestor of the Persian people. He was therefore a symbol of the integration of East and West, a potent message in the hands of an able propagandist, which Mithradates VI Eupator doubtlessly was.

The syncretistic figures that emerge during the Hellenistic times in Eastern Anatolia are complex, integrating influences not only from both Greek and Iranian sources, but also from other traditions as well, such as the Anatolian or the Semitic one. As such, they respond to the needs of a refined public, capable of appreciating these intricacies and in all likelihood eager to see these cultural inheritances valued and integrated in the new construct.

IV. Conclusions

The general conclusion which emerges from the analysis of all the data presented above is that, indeed, the major trend which may be observed in the Anatolian religious environment during the Hellenistic times is that of syncretism, the process whereby Anatolian, Semitic and Iranian divinities (or local varieties of Iranian divinities) are equated with Greek divine beings, and whereby Iranian theology is translated linguistically and conceptually into Greek. This phenomenon can be observed in equal measure in all three kingdoms, although its most articulate expression is the Commagenian epigraphical dossier. It has been actively encouraged by the high officials of the kingdoms, starting with the monarchs themselves, and used as a potent political tool, designed to act as a unifying factor in an otherwise diverse and dynamic environment.

The present chapter will attempt to pursue the data preserved in the ancient sources relating to Eastern Anatolian armies in Hellenistic times – frustratingly little for the early days and almost overwhelmingly much for the last days – and identify the residues of Achaemenid tradition intermingled with the novelties brought about by the Greco-Macedonian influence. It will try to prove that the two were not mutually exclusive and that while the latter prevailed in certain material aspects, like the equipment of the soldiers (although not all), royal control over training and manufacture of weapons or the divisions of the army, the former was still behind the mentality of the rulers in this area, most notably in the patterns of recruitment.

I. In the Shadow of Mithradates

Scholars who spend time in the study of Asia Minor in Hellenistic times in general and military matters in particular must be grateful to Mithradates VI Eupator and his indisputable skill which allowed him to remain at war with the Romans for a considerable number of years, thus attracting the attention of the ancient historians. Works dedicated to the military exploits of his Roman opponents – to whom he offered ample opportunities for glorious victories and spectacular comebacks – are treasure troves for modern historians, who find therein information relating to numerous aspects of his kingdom and its surroundings, but relating above all to military matters. It is, however, a mixed blessing. An extraordinary king in extraordinary circumstances, this monarch is the focus of attention, to the detriment of his ancestors, who receive but summary treatment. Moreover, while continuing to a certain degree the policy of his predecessors, he managed in the course of his career to change the status and the external perception of his kingdom. It is not surprising, therefore, that he introduced (or is very likely to have introduced) a number of changes and reforms. This makes generalizing statements and conclusions very risky, for what one may see as a trait defining the dynasty as a whole may, in fact, be a trait introduced by this man, who dominated his age.

II. The Antecedents

II.1. Macedon

It is perhaps not unfair to describe the Macedonian society as “militarised”. After all, one of the fundamental institutions, the one that sanctioned the accession to the...
throne of the new king, was the assembly of the people in arms. Also, even before the death of Alexander, the Macedonians were disposed to accept the rule of people who showed promising warlike qualities, even though not directly related to their predecessor (one such example being Philip II himself). After the Argead line was brutally extinguished, the role of the army as legal authority became even more prominent. It is characteristic that the new generation of Macedonian kings, beginning with Antigonos Monophthalmos, establish their legitimacy primarily on the grounds of their military achievements, which overshadow their complete lack of dynastic legitimacy. The Macedonian king continues to be a soldier, even in times of peace and he expresses that publicly in his outfit, which is military in nature: boots, *chlamys* and wide-brimmed hat: it is interesting to see in Plutarch a clear opposition between the outfit of the kings that followed Alexander’s tradition and those who followed the fashion of the “barbarians”:

> ἀμα δὲ καὶ προήγαγε τῶν παϊδῶν Αλέξανδρον μὲν ἔσθητι [τε] Μηδικῇ τιάραι καὶ κίταιρον ὀρθὴν ἑχούσῃ, Πτολεμαῖον δὲ κρηπῖσι καὶ ἱδιμμίδι καὶ καυσίᾳ διαδηματοφόρῳ κεκοσμημένον· αὕτη γὰρ ἦν σκευὴ τῶν ἀπ’ Ἀλέξανδρου βασιλέων, ἑκεῖνη δὲ Μήδων καὶ Ἀρμενίων. (Plut. Ant., 54.8).

II.2. The Achaemenid Empire

As opposed to that, the Achaemenid kingship was anchored in the idea of legitimacy through descent and divine favour. Within the text of the most important written document left behind by Dareios I, the Behistun inscription (in which he strives to glorify his achievements and publicise his vision of legitimacy), the accent is always laid on bloodline and favour of Ahura Mazda. Certainly, the many victories are important, but they do not appear to be the foundation of his claim to rule: he is not a legitimate king due to his irreproachable string of victories, but rather, he enjoys a flawless military record due to him being the exponent of truth and order. It is significant that numerous representations of the king depict him in the “audience scene”, as guarantor – or even embodiment – of peace: one such scene could once be seen on the inside of the shield wielded by a Persian soldier on the so-called Alexander Sarcophagus, now in the Archaeological Museum in Istanbul.

Briant discusses the pragmatic importance of victory on the battlefield for the succession to the throne in the Achaemenid Empire and his observations are perfectly

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4 Cf. Brosius, 2005, p. 148, although her interpretation of the symbolism (the shield protecting the interior image, would be symbolic of the soldier protecting the peace existing within the borders of the Persian state) is perhaps too poetic. It remains, nevertheless, significant that the image chosen as representative for the King of Kings, even in a military context, reminds one of his civil duties.

5 Briant, 2002b, passim.
valid from the point of view of Realpolitik, and further confirm Max Weber’s statement\(^6\) that power within any state is “the rule of man over man based on the means of legitimate, that is, allegedly legitimate violence”. This, however, does not account for the fact that, once the Persian king acquired power, he wished to project an image of himself that had little to do with violence on the battlefield: the imagery depicting him while battling wild animals or monsters translates, in fact, violence in a metaphysical setting.

Moreover, whereas kings who followed in Alexander’s footsteps considered it their duty to take active part in the battle (to give but one example, Antiochos III’s charges at the head of his personal guard during the battles of Raphia or Magnesia were epic, if fruitless, enterprises), physical courage is not required of the Persian king: the best example is represented by Xerxes, who is perfectly content to watch the battle of Salamis from a distance, without thinking this would damage his authority or the morale of his troops – quite the opposite is true.

Two counter-examples might be brought forward: Cyrus the Great and Cyrus the Younger. However, these two heroes must be regarded with some prudence, as the information pertaining to their bravery stems not from Persian sources, but rather from Xenophon’s apologetic and not infrequently mythologizing account. It is therefore not inconceivable that the Greek historian, while trying to convince a Greek audience of the virtues of barbarian leaders, chose to underscore or even invent those virtues that would have been familiar to his readership, and not those that either Cyrus would have presented to their own subjects.\(^7\)

### III. KINGSHIP AND THE MILITARY IN ANATOLIA

#### III.1. Assuming Kingship

The relation between kingship and the military in Asia Minor is not easy to discern. For instance, we lack an important criterion, for we cannot determine with certainty the moment when Mithradates I, Ariarathes III and Samos declared themselves kings. Scholarly tradition (based mainly on Syncellus)\(^8\) suggests 281 as a possible year for Mithradates,\(^9\) associating the event with a military victory over Diodoros, a general of Seleukos (based on Trogus’ Prologue to Book 17), but it is by no means certain that Mithradates, however much influenced by his friendship with Demetrios, would assume the royal title in Macedonian fashion. On the other hand, it is noticeable that a great victory, that over the Macedonian Amyntas (Diod., 31.19.5), does not prompt Ariarathes II to assume the title of king, something only his grandson, Ariarathes III, feels entitled

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\(^7\) What Cyrus the Great saw fit to advertise may be found in the Cyrus Cylinder: cf. supra, pp. 88-89.

\(^8\) Syncell., 523.5; 593.7.

\(^9\) Advocated (with caution), for example, by McGing, 1986, p. 17.
to do (according to numismatic evidence), while it is hard to associate the event with any notable military success on his part, except perhaps the conquest of Cataonia (Str. 12.1.2). For Samos, the scope of military action was even more restricted, and yet he managed to assume the royal title, at an unknown date.

III.2. Military Epithets

In other Hellenistic kingdoms, it is a common occurrence for kings to assume titles with military resonance (like Soter, Kallinikos or Nikator) in order to emphasize their prowess in battle and thereby gain greater authority over subjects and fellow kings alike. Such titles are extremely rare in all three dynasties examined here. Eastern Anatolian kings prefer titles that reflect either nobility of descent and familial solidarity (like Philopator, Philometor, Philadelphos or Eupator), benevolent attitude (like Euergetes or Dikaios), respect towards the gods (like Eusebes or Dionysos) or even outright divinity (like Theos or Epiphanes). There are only two exceptions. One is the atypical Orophernes, who briefly ruled Cappadocia jointly with Ariarathes V, a man closer by upbringing to the Seleukids than to the Cappadocians, and who boasted the title Nikephoros. The other is Mithradates Kallinikos of Commagene. However, his title might reflect more piety in familial relations than boast of military accomplishments, since Kallinikos is – not coincidentally, I believe – the title of his father-in-law, Antiochos VIII, whom the Commagenian king honoured in numerous inscriptions.

III.3. Official Imagery with Military Theme

It is true that coinage seems to document an arduous martial ethos of the monarch by the copious military imagery that can be found on it (particularly, but not exclusively so, on the so-called “civic” bronze issues, intended for mass circulation): the rider wielding a short spear, the quiver, the sword in sheath, the aegis, Ares, Nike, etc. However, the interpretation of coin types is notoriously difficult.

For instance, an otherwise pacific portrait of Zeus could be considered to convey a military message, given Eupator’s particular reverence towards Zeus Stratios (App., Mithr., 66), but the club (or even the quiver) might not: it is not unreasonable to believe this representation is set in the wider context of Pontic interference in the Aegean, indicating the attempt to connect the Mithradatids with the Argead dynasty and with Alexander in particular, whose mythical ancestor was Heracles (as discussed above, in chapter ‘Dynastic policies and politics’). Likewise, a representation of Athena/Ma in full military gear might represent rather a message of legitimacy and continuity (or attempts to gloss over dynastic brakes), than testify to the military prowess of the monarch.

III.4. The King on the Battlefield

In general, it would seem that the monarch was not expected to lead his army in the field of battle: the most warlike of the kings of Asia Minor, Mithridates VI Eupator,

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can easily delegate the waging of the war in Greece to his generals, while he spends his
time organising the territory newly acquired in Asia. Likewise, his grandfather Pharnakes
I had delegated the command to his generals and only once seems to have been prepared
to take the field in person, in a campaign against Cappadocia. It is, however, unclear if
the campaign ever materialised – our source, Polybios, only mentions the preparations.\footnote{11}

It is true that a number of Cappadocian kings die on campaign, but this fact needs to
be put in context: Ariarathes IX (Arcathias in the account of Appian) dies on campaign in
Greece, but he does so not as king of Cappadocia, but rather serving his father as Pontic
prince; Ariarathes VII dies at the hand of his uncle, Mithradates VI, but that was a murder
in a (feigned) diplomatic context, not in war; only Ariarathes V dies truly on the field of
battle, fighting in the war against Aristonikos.

At the same time, if we are to believe the words Appian puts in the mouth of
Eupator in \textit{App., Mithr.}, 70, he promises to lead his troops in person and he can derive
great pride from his military successes (or, rather, the absence of defeats). Moreover,
when his corpse is brought back to Pontus in an unfortunate state of preservation, it
is recognised from the numerous scars,\footnote{12} which must have been a matter of public
knowledge, advertised as a sure sign of prowess on the part of the monarch.

\textbf{III.5. Eastern Anatolian Kingship in the Light of the Two Traditions}

The point here is obviously not that Anatolian kings did not lead their armies in battle
at all and that physical courage was not considered a quality; rather, that they tended not
to follow the model of Alexander (leading from the front and engaging personally in the
slaughter) and in general preferred the Achaemenid model of the king who stood behind
and masterminded the operations, delegating the actual fighting to subordinate generals.

\textbf{IV. The Fleet}

The interaction between the two traditions can be traced not only in the attitude of
the monarch towards the army as a major pillar of power, but also in details such as army
composition and recruitment or even equipment of land forces and the fleet. The fleet
requires special treatment, because, on the one hand, of all the kingdoms I am to analyse,
Pontus alone possessed one (particularly strong at the time of Mithridates Eupator), on
the other hand because it offers an excellent case study for the complementarity of Greek
means and Persian conceptions.

\textbf{IV.1. The Fleet of Pontic Cappadocia}

\textbf{IV.1.1. Historical Development: The Fleet before Pharnakes I}

The development of the Pontic Navy is intimately connected with the territorial
expansion of the kingdom along the shores of the Black Sea. It is well known that the

\footnote{11} “αὐτὸς δὲ τῆς εαυτῆς ὡς υποσκαφιοῦσης ἤθεον ὡς δυνάμεις, ὡς εἰμι βασιλεὺς εἰς τὴν Καππαδοκίαν”,

\footnote{12} \textit{Plut., Pomp.}, 42, 2.
kingdom was formed *manu militari* by Mithridates I Ktistes around the nucleus offered first by the fortress of Kimista,\(^\text{13}\) then by the city of Amaseia, having no direct contact with the Pontus Euxinus.

Control of the shore meant control of the extremely rich trade routes that took the produce of the interior and distributed it all across the basin of the Black Sea, but also into the Mediterranean. The alliance between Mithridates I and Heracleia against Seleukos Nikator (*Memn.,* 7.2) might not have been entirely innocent: it is not hard to suppose that the king was trying to establish a sort of protectorate, if not a more strict form of control over this flourishing city. He did not succeed, though.

The first maritime settlement to have been won for the kingdom, at least as far as we can tell, was Amastris, turned over by its ruler, Eumenes, to Ariobarzanes, the son of Ktistes. The circumstances are not very clear and the historian gives no reason for Eumenes’ refusal of the Heracleote offer of money and his preference for Ariobarzanes, beside the fact that he was “caught by an inexplicable fit of anger”.\(^\text{14}\)

However, there is another city that is annexed quite early on: Amisos. The *terminus ante quem* is again offered by Memnon, in chapter 16, where he says that the people of Heracleia help the young Mithridates II to survive besiegement from the Galatians by sending him supplies there. Amisos lay at one end of a very important North-South trade route, which passed through Amaseia, the capital of the kingdom and which traversed Pontic Cappadocia, Greater Cappadocia and Cilicia.\(^\text{15}\) It is not unreasonable to believe that Ktistes and Ariobarzanes, his son, must have coveted this city and the wealth it brought. Strategically speaking, Amisos was more important than Amastris, which appears to be more of a “target of opportunity”. Yet, it is not possible to go beyond speculation and assert that the conquest of the former preceded that of the latter, because of the dire lack of hard evidence.

Between these two cities, now caught in a more or less intended pincer movement, lay Sinope. Strabo’s praise of it in 12.3.11 is well known. Such a splendid city was more than interesting to the dynasty and we have early proof of that: Mithridates II (or perhaps Mithradates III?) tries to mount an amphibious attack on it, or so the Sinopean ambassadors speedily sent to Rhodes believed (*Pol.*, 4.56). This is the first implicit proof of the existence of a Pontic Navy. It is intriguing that the city which ruled the sea inside the Cyaneai\(^\text{16}\) and which not long before that proudly issued coinage that shows on the obverse the prow of a trireme (for example BMC 26, SNGBMC 1506)

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\(^{13}\) *Plut. Dem.*, 4; for the discussion regarding the geographical position of Kimista and the necessary correction of the erroneous reading *Kimia* preserved by the manuscript tradition, cf. *Mitchell*, 2002, p. 53.

\(^{14}\) “*διὰ τὸ τῆς ὀργῆς ὑπαχθέντος ἀλόγιστον*”, *Memn.*, 9, 4. *Mitchell*, 2005, p. 526 sees in this gesture of Eumenes an order from Philetairos, his brother, who upon consolidating his Pergamenian domain, “broke his final link with his Paphlagonian homeland”.


\(^{16}\) “*κατασκευασαμένη δὲ ναυτικὸν ἐπῆρχε τῆς ἐντὸς Κυανέων θαλάττης*”, *Str*. 12.3.11.
does not take into consideration engaging in battle with the Mithradatid Navy and
prefers to shut itself up from the sea with palisades. It would be naïve to believe
Strabo’s statement indicates strictly a commercial dominion over the sea and that
the city lacked war-ships: Herakleia did not enjoy the same importance and yet it
managed to equip impressive vessels at a much earlier date, i.e. during the conflict
between Ptolemaios Keraunos and Antigonos, son of Demetrios Poliorcetes. It is
more probable that the king had managed to acquire a large fleet of his own, which could
only have been built in the two recently captured cities, Amisos and Amastris, perhaps
more in the latter, since Strabon (12. 3.12) states that the ship-building material is more
abundant in Sinopitis and on the rest of the coast towards Bithynia. The Mithridatic fleet
was, however, limited not so much by the lack of building materials (the greatest problem
the Ptolemies faced, for example), but rather by the lack of well-trained steersmen and
naval officers. On the one hand, the local Greeks were not so many: the passing note in
Diodorus, which would suggest a venerable tradition of ship-building and ship-manning
in the region, since Xerxes, in preparation for the invasion of Greece, has some of his fleet
built in Pontus, is quite likely to be an exaggeration meant to strike awe in the reader at
the sight of the greatness of the preparations for war made by the Oriental despot. On the
other hand, the sailors and steersmen bred in the Mediterranean basin had their attention
focused closer to their own homes. How, then, could be explained the complete idleness
or inexistence of the Sinopean fleet? One might venture to suppose it had been wiped out
in a previous engagement and try to use Polybios’ words: “καὶ τις οἷον ἄρχη τότε καὶ
πρόφασις ἐγένετο τῆς ἐπὶ τὸ τέλος ἀρχείσης ἀτυχίας Σινωπεῦσιν” to prove it. The
matter remains, however, shrouded in mystery.

IV.1.2. Historical Development: The Fleet, from Pharnakes I to Mithradates V

The Mithridatic Navy then disappears from history. There is little evidence of it at
the time of Pharnakes, although this warlike king waged many wars and finally managed
to reduce Sinope by siege: “ἐκ πολιορκίας ἐάλω καὶ ἐδούλευσε Φαρνάκη πρῶτον”
(Str., 12.3.11). Here, Strabo’s wording would indicate a regular siege, which was a fairly
lengthy process. However, further on in the same chapter, he states that the attack was
sudden: “ἔάλω, πρότερον μὲν τοῦ Φαρνάκου παρὰ δόξαν αἰφνιδίως ἐπιπεσόντος”. The
suddenness of the attack might be taken as an indication that it was sea-borne. It is not out of the
question, but the geographical features of the area make it relatively easy for an attack coming from the
land to remain undetected until the last moment: the configuration of the mountains in the Hinterland
makes travel on the shore difficult and instead forces land traffic to follow other routes, through the valleys
(therefore covered from the eyes of reconnaissance vessels).

17 Memn., 8, 5.
18 “ἤρεστο δὲ ὁ Ξέρξης > ναυπηγεῖσθαι κατὰ πάσαν τὴν παραθαλάττιον τὴν ὑπ’ αὐτῶν ταταμένην,
Ἀγισσόν τε καὶ Φοινίκην καὶ Κύπρον, πρὸς δὲ τούτοις Κελίκαν καὶ Παμφυλίαν καὶ Πιστίδηκα, ἐτὶ δὲ
Λυκίαν καὶ Καρίαν καὶ Μυσίαν καὶ Τρῳάδα καὶ τὰς ἐπὶ Ἑλλησπόντῳ πόλεις καὶ τὴν Βιθυνίαν καὶ τὸν
Πόντον.”, Dio., 11 2.1.
19 Pol., 4.56.1.
The two statements might be reconciled by supposing an initial assault, executed hastily in the hope of finding the Sinopeans unprepared which failed for some reason, after which the king went on with a siege, which was to prove successful. This might have involved a blockade of the sea, but there is simply not enough evidence either to confirm or to deny such a hypothesis.

There is an interesting suggestion by Reinach, who uses firstly the treaty which put an end to the war between Pharnakes, Eumenes and Ariarathes, in which the cities of Chersonesos and Mesembria, among others, are being named as signatories and secondly the bilateral treaty between the king and the city of Chersonesos (IosPE I, 402), as proof of an early policy of championship of Hellenism promoted by the Pontic king, resembling all too much that of Mithridates Eupator. Such a policy could only be substantiated with the help of a powerful navy and, if things are indeed so, this might be indirect proof that the Pontic Navy was being maintained at a high level of professionalism.

Doubts have been raised, however, that such a reading of the two sources is valid. Why would the Greek cities see in Pharnakes a champion? He was not known to favour the freedom of Greek cities (since he was the one who reduced Sinope to slavery, to quote Strabon) and neither were his ancestors, with the possible exception of Ktistes, who had a defensive alliance with Heracleia. Certainly Eumenes II could claim this title of protector for himself, capitalising both on his father’s exploits against the Celts and on his own role in the overthrowing of the tyrannical (or so the Roman propaganda claimed) Antiochos III and in helping Manlius Vulso against the Galatians. It would be more reasonable to see the Greek cities acting collectively against Pharnakes, who had probably disturbed the economical network in the basin of the Black Sea by his capture of Sinope: the Rhodian embassy to Rome immediately afterwards (Pol., 22.9.2) stands as proof of the degree of indignation the Greek merchants could feel in such a situation. It results therefore that the Sarmatian Gatalos is more likely to have acted against the cities at the instigation and with the support of the Pontic king. McGing’s hypothesis that the Sarmatians had an entire history of good relations with the Chersonesitans by extrapolating from the isolated episode of the victory the Sarmatians won under Queen Amage over the Scythians on behalf of the Greek city is not entirely convincing, for it does not offer sufficient grounds for Gatalos’ presence in the 179 BC treaty: if indeed he supported the city of Chersonesos and fought Pharnakes, it must be admitted that either Pharnakes dispatched a sizeable corps to operate on the Northern shores of the Black Sea (which is unlikely, given that his land forces were having a hard time holding on to the superficially occupied regions in

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21 Reinach, 1890, pp. 65-66.
22 Pol., 25. 2.11.
24 Str., 12.3.11.
Anatolia) or that Sarmatian troops have been transported to the main field of operations, in Asia Minor, something we never hear of. This is, admittedly, an *argumentum ex silentio*, but it cannot be entirely dismissed. Furthermore, the fact that Polybios deems Pharmakias “the most lawless of all the kings before him” (“Φαρνάκης πάντων τῶν πρὸ τοῦ βασιλέων ἐγένετο παρανομώτατος”, Pol., 27.17.1) and the stipulation in the treaty with Chersonesos that the king will not plot against the city, wage or instigate war against it nor do anything that might harm it might well be the result of his alliance with a barbarian against Greeks. All that seems to discredit Reinach’s theory.

One could, perhaps, argue that, after having conquered Sinope, Pharmakias would have had increased resources for and indeed increased need of a Navy, in order to protect his increased commercial network. That may be so, but there is no evidence that he took steps in this direction. An episode of the war with Pergamon, when Eumenes shuts off the Hellespont in order to impose an economic blockade on his enemy, clearly illustrates this. On the one hand, the Pergamenian king imposes this blockade primarily against the ships heading towards the Euxine (τοῦ βασιλέως Εὐμένους ἐφορμοῦντος ἐπὶ τοῦ κατὰ τὸν Ἐλλήσποντον στόματος χάριν τοῦ καλύειν τοὺς πλέοντας εἰς τὸν Πόντον), therefore primarily against those merchants (most of them of Rhodian origin) who maintained relations with Pharmakias rather than against Pontic ships bound for the Mediterranean. On the other hand, Pharmakias seems to have done nothing to lift the blockade, which was ended by the Rhodians (ἐπελάβοντο τῆς ἄρμης αὐτοῦ καὶ διεκώλυσαν Ῥόδιου). All these pieces of information seem to point to a decline of the Pontic navy during this period.

The next occurrence of the Navy is during the reign of Mithradates Euergetes, who sends the Romans an auxiliary force consisting of some ships and a small detachment to aid them during the final siege of Carthage. Unfortunately, Appian’s phrasing is extremely vague, but the Pontic participation must have been little more than symbolic. The obvious question to ask is weather this token participation was due to the smallness of the Pontic Navy, to the Roman self-sufficiency or to the lack of interest on behalf of the king to please the Republic by a grand gesture. I believe the last hypothesis can be easily cast aside as the least probable and that the answer is a combination of the first two. On the one hand, the Romans simply did not need to muster too large a fleet to confront the Carthaginians, whose control of the sea had been all but eliminated in the First Punic War. On the other hand, it is perfectly natural for a king whose interest lay not so much in the expansion of his kingdom across the sea, but rather towards the South and West, into Phrygia, to reduce the costs of maintaining a fleet to the minimum.

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26 IOSPE F, 402, lines 19-23.
27 Pol., 27.7.5.
28 “ναυὶς τινας ἐπὶ Καρχηδόνιους καὶ συμμαχιὰν ὀλίγην παρασχὼν βασιλεὺς Πόντου, Μιθριδάτης, ὁ Εὐεργέτης ἐπίκλητον” (App., Mithr. 10).
IV.1.3. Historical Development: The Fleet under Mithradates VI Eupator

The greatness and dissolution of the Pontic Navy are both due to the same king – Mithridates VI Eupator. Once again, development of the fleet and territorial expansion go hand in hand and form a sort of vicious circle: in order to secure possession of the new territories, Eupator needed a strong fleet, but in order to build a strong fleet, he needed to gain possession of more places suited for ship-building. The chronology of his conquests is many a time unclear. It would seem, though, that the first step he took was to conquer Crimea\(^\text{29}\) and instrumental in this action was the brilliant Diophantos, son of Asclepiodorus, a Greek from Sinope. The role the Navy played in his repeated expeditions to Crimea is secondary – almost entirely to transport troops from one shore to the other. The one mention of its presence is on the ‘Diophantos Inscription’, (\textit{IOSPE} I, line 37) and is very ambiguous: “παρῆν ἔχων ἄκρου τοῦ ἔαρος στρατόπεδον πεζικὸν τε καὶ ναυτικόν”. While the wording might suggest the presence of warships, the subsequent narrative simply states that the Pontic troops along with a local militia have been embarked on the ships and transported to the place of action. The enemy does not seem to have opposed them at sea with equal fierceness as on land.

It is true that Strabon mentions a naval engagement between Neoptolemos and the barbarians off the coast of Phanagoreia (first in 2.1.16, without naming the general, then with more precision in 7.3.18), but I do not think this episode should be seen as part of the initial campaign of conquest, for it does not really fit with the narrative offered by the epigraphical account and is more likely to be the expedition of punishment against tribes made rebellious by the king’s defeat at the hands of the Romans, described by Appian, in chapter 64.

Acquiring the vast territory of the Crimean Bosporus offered Mithridates excellent means to improve and enlarge his fleet. Strabon offers us a glimpse of that when he mentions that the city of Theodosia alone possessed a harbour capable of offering shelter to no fewer than a hundred ships.\(^\text{30}\) Panticapaion has a smaller port, with a capacity of only thirty ships. However, it would seem that the city with the largest port of all (or, rather, the city with access to most natural ports) was Chersonesos, but unfortunately no precise indication of the number of its ships is being given. We must assume, though, that these figures cover both the military and the commercial fleets, as not all cities were as fortunate as Athens, Carthage or Alexandria, for example, which could afford separate spaces for the two.

Some time after the conquest of the Tauric Bosphorus, Mithridates’ attention has been drawn by the Eastern coast of the Euxine, to Colchis. Little is known about the manner in which the annexation of this region was achieved and to what degree the Navy was involved. The

\(^{29}\) Cf. ReinaCh, 1890, p. 67, note 1, on the authority of Pompeius Trogus, Iustinus and Strabon.

\(^{30}\) “Μετὰ δὲ τὴν ὄρειν ἡν τὴν λεχθεῖσαν ἡ Θεοδοσία κεῖται πόλις, πεδίων εὐγεων ἔχουσα καὶ λιμένα ναυσὶ καὶ ἐκατόν ἐπιτήδειεν” (\textit{Str.}, 7.4.4)
long-lasting reputation of the Colchians as war-like and indomitable folk, well established since the times of Apollonios,\textsuperscript{31} might lead one to suppose this was no easy victory. The long-term rewards were more than worth the effort, for the victory not only provided excellent material for propaganda (and we see Pelopidas, Mithridates’ ambassador taking full advantage of the fact: \textit{App.}, \textit{Mithr.}, 15),\textsuperscript{32} but also first class material for ship-building. It is again Strabon who underlines the importance of this region for the Pontic Kingdom, in 11.2.17-18. We are thus being told that the territory around Phasis is marvellously endowed with all things necessary for naval constructions.\textsuperscript{33} It is natural, therefore, that Mithridates took the fate of the region to heart and made it so that the governor was invariably chosen from his closest friends, among whom Strabon proudly mentions his mother’s uncle, Moaphernes. Colchis soon became his main ship-yard.\textsuperscript{34} Since the geographer seems to bind these two statements by a link of causality, one is prompted to think that the strategic decision of expanding into the region was taken by Eupator precisely because of its abundance of ship-building material. This is hardly surprising: the king now controlled vast territories spread along the shores of the Euxine and such a dominion was hard, if not altogether impossible to maintain without the help of a mighty Navy. The Euxine was for Mithridates what the Aegean had been for the Athenians and what the Mediterranean was beginning to be for the Romans – either a vector of communication, if the fleet was successful in its main task, i.e. maintaining the illusion of the omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence of the central authority or a great barrier, in case the fleet was disrupted by any circumstance and failed. That this was true for the Pontic Kingdom as well is proven by the afore-mentioned rebellion of the Bosphoran tribes, which only takes place after Mithridates is finally forced to surrender his warships to Sulla, at the end of the first war.

The sources are unanimously in awe at the sight of the might of the Pontic fleet. Appian has the Bithynian ambassadors mention that it numbers no less then three hundred “decked” ships (“\textit{νῆες τε ἐἰσιν αὐτῷ κατάφρακτοι τριακόσιαι}”, \textit{App.}, \textit{Mithr.}, 13), and not much further he adds a hundred of the smaller biremes (“\textit{νῆες κατάφρακτοι τριακόσιαι, δίκροτα δὲ ἐκατόν, καὶ ἡ ἄλλη παρασκευὴ τούτων κατὰ λόγον}”, \textit{App.}, \textit{Mithr.}, 17). Appian is known for his tendency to inflate numbers so it is perfectly legitimate to pause and examine the information. The \textit{δίκροτα} are usually considered to be one and the same as the \textit{διήρεις}, being therefore manned by a crew of 48 rowers and some 10-12 officers and other sailors. When he says “\textit{νῆες κατάφρακτοι}” he must imply at least triremes, which means that they were manned by at least 200 sailors, of whom 170 were rowers.

\textsuperscript{31} He calls them, for example, “\textit{Κόλχοι ἀρηῖοι}” (\textit{Argonautika}, 2.397).
\textsuperscript{32} As always, one must be cautious when dealing with discourses in ancient historians. However, if a 2\textsuperscript{nd} century AD author had a useful image of warlike Colchians in his rhetorical repertoire, it is not unlikely a 1\textsuperscript{st} century BC orator (Pelopidas certainly, perhaps also Mithradates) would have it as well and would be eager to use it as soon as the opportunity arose.
\textsuperscript{33} ἰγαθὴ δ’ ἐστίν η ἄνω καὶ καρφῖος [...] καὶ τοις πρὸς ναυτηγιαν πᾶσιν ὑλήν τε γάρ καὶ φύει καὶ ποταμοῖς κατακομίζει, λίνον τε ποιεῖ πολύ καὶ κάνναβιν καὶ κηρὸν καὶ πίτταν” (\textit{Str.}, 11.2.17).
\textsuperscript{34} “ἡν δ’ ἐνθὲν ἡ πλεῖστη τῷ βασιλεῖ πρός τὰς ναυτικὰς δυνάμεις ὑποσχία” (\textit{Str.}, 11.2.18).
But greater ships were to be found under Mithridates’ command: his flag-ship was a quinquireme (App., Mithr., 24) and it was not likely to be the only ship larger than a trireme. Simple arithmetic shows that such a fleet (at least 65,000 men, excluding not only the other soldiers, either hoplites or archers, which were at least 6 per ship, but also the transport ships, without which ancient fleets are known to have been tied to the shore, because the design left little room for provisions)\(^35\) was quite impossible to sustain first and foremost for financial reasons.

However, one must not doubt that the Pontic fleet was indeed sizable. Sources agree that it outnumbered copiously the Rhodian fleet and that it had absolute mastery over the Aegean (App., Mithr., 25, Diod., 37.28, Plut., Luc., 2.2). The terms of the peace treaty also stand as proof of that – after so many maritime disasters, Mithridates is to hand over to Sulla either 70 ships (Plut., Sulla, 22.5 and 24.3) or even 80 (Memn., 25.2).

The sources are also aware of another thing – it was a young and inexperienced fleet, unable to match the skill of their opponents. The story of Lucullus’ early career under Sulla’s command (Plut., Luc., 2-3) and that of the siege of Rhodes (App., Mithr., 24-27) is full of episodes which prove it beyond doubt. While the episode of the mounting of the σαμβύκη on two ships which manoeuvred it close to the walls might stand as proof of certain skill, the collapse of the construction may have been caused not only by its own excessive weight, as Appian states (App., Mithr., 27), but also to miss-coordination between the two ships.

Try as they might, the officers Mithridates brought from Syria and Egypt (App., Mithr., 13) proved incapable of instilling into the newly formed fleet the skill required to face successfully their Greek counterparts. Local seamen such as the son of Philokrates, who was from Amisos, honoured by the Olbians for his navigation skills even in bad weather\(^36\) seem to have been relatively few. Therefore the king was trying (unsuccessfully, it would seem) to gain the advantage in numbers by an explosive programme of construction, while maintaining a decent level of excellence by using the experience of commanders formed in other communities, better acquainted with the sea. This strategy seems sensible enough in itself and not to require a Quellenforschung in order to be explained. It is interesting, however, how similar Mithridates’ approach is to that of the Achaemenid kings and how different from the Greco-Macedonian view.

IV.1.4. The Persian Approach to Navy Composition

It is quite hard to gather reliable information about the Persian navy, but two main sources are unavoidable: Herodotos’ Historiae and Arrianos’s Anabasis. The former contains a very instructive catalogue of naval contingents that take part in Xerxes’ European adventure (7.89-95), from which we can find out that the largest body of ships

\(^{35}\) It is also important to underline that in Appian’s view, these were only the “national” contingents, to which the allied forces were attached, like, for example, that of the ill-fated Chians.

\(^{36}\) IosPE 1\(^2\), 35.
was furnished by the Phoenicians (300), followed by the Egyptians (200), Cyprians (150) and by the Cilicians and the Ionians (100 each). That the Herodotean catalogue has more chance of being credible than the more celebrated parallel from the Homeric epic is proven by recurrent references to these contingents within the narrative: in the engagement from Artemision, the Egyptian contingent fights most gallantly, while the Ionians and Cilicians are confronted with different fates (8.10.14-17); before the battle of Salamis, Themistocles’ efforts are directed at bringing about a defection of the Ionians and Carians (8.18); in the battle itself, it is the Phoenicians and Ionians that are made to bear against the Athenians and Spartans, respectively (8.85); in the aftermath, Mardonios used Egyptian sailors as infantrymen (9.32).

Even before Xerxes, Cambyses had made use of the Phoenician sailors (3.19) and Darius of the Ionians (4.89). The situation seems to be unchanged in the final hour of the Achaemenid dynasty: the main force of the Persian fleet is made up of Cyprians and Phoenicians whose expertise surpasses that of their Greek foes by far, while in the final episode of the surrender of nearly the whole Persian navy following Alexander’s electrifying progress through Anatolia and Phoenicia, the following numbers are given: the king of Cyprus has 120 ships, the kings of Arados, Byblos and Sidon have 80 ships, Rhodes and Lycia 10 ships each (Arr., Anab., 2.20.1-3). In this situation, the absence of the Ionian contingents from the Persian fleet is not at all surprising, since they had been reduced to obedience towards Alexander in the early stages of the campaign, while the absence of the Egyptians can be fully explained by the fact they must have appeared to the Great King as untrustworthy, since the revolt lead by Nectanebo had been crushed only 11 years prior to Alexander’s invasion.

The pattern seems clear – the Achaemenids had a marked preference for temporarily using highly skilled subjects instead of fostering a much more expensive “national” fleet. The reasoning is simple: the fair degree of local and satrapal autonomy, which went as far as tolerated or encouraged inter-fighting provided the background for the training of skilled soldiers and sailors, while not being cumbersome for the royal treasury. This had both advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, the principle allowed the quick recruitment (or rather enlistment) of good fighters without forcing the Great King to spend enormous sums by maintaining a permanent Fleet. On the other hand, the large fleet thus created lacked terribly in mass coordination and the loyalty of one individual contingent was only as strong as that of its leader, as the above-mentioned episode of

37 However unreliable the numbers may be by themselves, the proportion of the participation does not appear to be wholly unfounded.

38 “ολίγαις τε γὰρ ναυσὶ πρὸς πολλῷ πλείοις ξὺν οὐδὲνι λογισμῷ ναυμαχήσειν καὶ οὐ μεμελετηκότι τῷ σφῶν ναυτικῷ <πρὸς> προησκημένον τὸ τῶν Κυπρίων τε καὶ Φοινίκων” (Arr., Anab., 1.18.7) While it’s true the stark contrast between the two fleets in terms of individual quality of the crews may be just a rhetorical device to extol the future success of the Macedonian fleet in 1.19 and particularly in 2.2, it is nevertheless from Alexander’s subsequent decision, of engaging the Persians exclusively on firm soil, that the fundamental truth of the gross imbalance in numbers between the two fleets clearly emerges.
the mass desertion undertaken by the Phoenician and Cyprian kings fully proves it. The
king tried to counter this tendency and maintain a fair degree of control over the fleet
by appointing Persian commanders (for example, in 8.89, concluding the account of the
battle of Salamis, Herodotos mentions the death of Ariabignes, brother of Xerxes and
one of the admirals, along with many other Persians, Medians and allies, while in Darius’
III Kodommanos days the navy had been entrusted to Autophradates), but this did not
mean non-Persian commanders were rare (Artemisia, queen of Ephesus, to name but the
most famous example from Herodotos, behaves much like an admiral, not like a simple
captain and is often convoked in the council of war, whereas in Arrian’s story Memnon,
Alexander’s gifted and energetic foe obtains the greatest honours from the Great King).

IV.1.5. The Greco-Macedonian Approach to Navy Composition

On this level, of the philosophy of the ideal fleet composition, the Greco-Macedonian
tradition is diametrally opposed, as may be observed from a very quick glance at the
Athenian fleet, which, since it was the most successful and influential Greek fleet of
the Classical Age, will be taken as the paradigm. It is known that Athens insisted on
maintaining a permanent fleet and that the city laid its confidence in its own citizen sailors
(only in emergency by metics and only in case of calamity by slaves), so much so that at
the moment of the short-lived abolishment of democracy in Athens in the final stages of
the Peloponnesian War, the navy stationed in Samos becomes the repository of national
identity and rebels in the name of traditional civic, democratic values.39 The information
given by Thucydides (1.121.3), that the Athenian fleet would be composed mostly of
mercenaries (“ὠνητὴ γὰρ ἡ Ἀθηναίων δύναμις μᾶλλον ἢ οἰκεία
”) is to be taken
cum grano salis – it comes from the discourse of the Corinthians inciting the Spartans to
war and, as such, is bound to portray the enemy as a mercenary band, lacking conviction
and easily turned aside with a few coins.

This model appears to have inspired the great Hellenistic dynasties, though in
their case, with the possible exception of Macedon, the concepts of ‘nationality’ and
‘citizenship’ are obviously much more elusive than in the case of the Classical polis
of Athens (thus, Philip V even appears to have converted phalangites into sailors:
“ἐγύμναζε τοὺς φαλαγγίτας καὶ συνείθιζε ταῖς εἰρεσίαις
”). The turbulent
times made it imperative for the great kingdoms to maintain permanent fleets, and this
situation inspired a greater degree of central (royal) control, as well as a higher degree
of professionalization of soldiers and, in time, a much greater degree of homogeneity
within the fleets. From this perspective, Hellenistic fleets were much more similar to the
Athenian model than to the Persian one.

39 Thouk., 8.25.
40 Pol., 5.2.4. Hatzopoulos, however, (Hatzopoulos, 2001, p. 28) warns against taking Polybios’ words for
granted and quotes other instances (such as Pol., 16.7.5) where the ‘Makedones’ were named side by side
with ‘ta pragmata’, which might suggest a heterogeneous structure of the crews in the Antigonid Navy.
IV.1.6. Pontic Ships

Since the time of the battle of Salamis, the sturdy trireme had proven its indubitable superiority over the competing Phoenician models, longer, slimmer and lighter and therefore both less able to pack a mighty punch and more vulnerable to a ramming attack. Consequently, the trireme becomes the queen of the waves and is quickly adopted by the Phoenicians and Cyprians serving the Great King (Arrian, Anabasis, 2.20.1).

It is therefore not surprising that the Pontic fleet, at least at the time of Mithridates VI, but conceivably also before him, is made up preponderantly of triremes. The sources mention other types of ships as well: δίκροτα (App., Mithr., 17), πεντηκοντήρεις (Memn., 27.1), κέρκουροι (ibid.). While these ships had certain Phoenician and Cypriote origins, they had seen service in the Greek fleets as well, confined to second-rank service, particularly as fast troop transport vessels or as heavy supply ships. It is therefore quite hard to assess if they are an Achaemenid inheritance or a Greek import. The sources always name them as auxiliaries of the main task force, which might make the balance tip in favour of the Greek side, but the sources are invariably Greek and may thus distort reality.

Not so in the case of the other major presence in the Pontic fleet, the πεντήρης, an entirely Greek construct. At the siege of Rhodos, the flagship is one such heavy vessel (App., Mithr., 24), but this is by no means the only one to have seen action under the Mithridatic flag: for instance, Neoptolemos seems to be on such a vessel when confronting Lucullus (Plut., Luc., 3.9), since Demagoras, the Rhodian captain fears a prow-to-prow impact, while during the Third Mithridatic War (Plut., Luc., 12.3), the Roman general must confront a squadron of thirteen πεντήρεις. It is interesting, however, that the quinquireme is the largest vessel to have been commissioned by Mithridates. While heavy when compared to the τριήρης, it is nevertheless insignificant when compared to the dreadnoughts that saw service in the Lagid or Antigonid fleets, from the yet reasonable δεκήρης to the huge, possibly double-keeled τεσσαρακοντήρης, which boasted a crew of no less than 4000 men. It is significant that Pontic ship production was entirely geared towards mass-production.

IV.1.7. The Pontic Fleet: Between Traditions

To sum up, the history of the Pontic fleet, as shaped by the individual kings and by punctual circumstances, seems to have followed in general terms the Achaemenid philosophy, which meant mass recruitment in times of need (Mithridates II and VI, less so Mithridates V), followed by periods of dissolution, when it was perceived as a needless expense (Mithridates III and IV, Pharnakes I, perhaps even Mithridates V). Even when Greek technical superiority was acknowledged, a fact reflected by the focus on the trireme

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41 The number of heavy ships of the quinquireme type seem to have increased dramatically in the eve of the Third War, and this is very likely a direct result of royal involvement in the building programme, a development perfectly parallel to the one followed by the Pontic infantry, for example (cf. infra).
as the main front-line vessel, it was guided by a Persian frame of mind, which appears to have valued above all else numerical superiority and financial parsimony.

V. LAND ARMIES

Land armies seem to be somewhat better documented and information sometimes extends to cover not only the Kingdom of Pontus, but also Cappadocia and, although rarely, even Commagene. However, more information does not necessarily mean more accurate information and this is the major obstacle in drawing accurate conclusions. All too often our sources are merely reproducing *topoi*, most notably the one regarding the immense number of soldiers in the Oriental armies, and their equally immense incompetence. It is perfectly true that the outcome of the different wars would indeed suggest they were quite simply no match for the fewer, but more disciplined soldiers of the “civilised” nations, Greeks, Macedonians and, when these have “gone native”, the Romans, but what histories often fail to mention is the difficulty with which they won: a campaign lasting a few years is sometimes reduced in the accounts to the final, decisive encounter.

V.1. The Cavalry

The sources are unanimous in considering cavalry the most prestigious branch of the land army, and they appear to be telling the truth. We are assured of this by the parallels in nearly every other culture, from the Atlantic to India. No wonder: breeding, maintaining and training a warhorse demanded great expenses and therefore cavalry was almost entirely the domain of the aristocracy.

The prestige enjoyed by the Eastern Anatolian cavalry in particular during the Hellenistic times and beyond was based not only on their superior social status, but also on a record of effectiveness on the battlefield. In a number of occasions, we hear of their thunderous charges that manage to break even through the ranks of such disciplined troops as the legions of Rome: at the battle of Chaeronea under Archelaos, at the battle on the river Lycus under Mithridates VI himself or at the battle of Nicopolis under Pharnakes II. They proved thus to be worthy descendants of the Cappadocian horseman that were more than a match for the Macedonian horse under the leadership of Eumenes and who,

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42 At least in those regions of Europe, Africa and Asia where horses did not live in abundance, supported by vast expanses of grass-covered flat land. Other ethnies, however, most notably the Scythians, managed to develop nomadic cultures that revolved around the horse. Yet, their supply of horses seems to have depended on the wild herds, which meant they had to rely on short, but agile and resilient horses, more apt for skirmishing duties than hand-to-hand combat.

43 See, for example, the eulogy of Cappadocian horses in Solinus, 45. Although this late Roman author preserves little data of real historical interest, he nevertheless testifies to the fame enjoyed by these animals as extremely intelligent and supremely apt for war.

44 APP., Mithr., 165; PLUT., Sulla, 19.1.

45 PLUT., Pomp., 32.7.

46 BAlex., 40.

47 PLUT., Eumen., 5.5; 7.1-5.
before that, had served the Achaemenid kings with loyalty and distinction: at the battle of Gaugamela, a strong Cappadocian contingent was present (in spite of Alexander’s expedition into their country and his appointing Sabictas as satrap) and it fought well on the prestigious right flank, alongside the Armenian detachment\(^4^8\), putting great pressure on the left flank of the phalanx\(^4^9\).

**V.1.1. Heavy Cavalry: the Two Traditions**

All these exploits belong to the heavy branch of the cavalry and are made possible by the special equipment they possess, namely good protection for the rider and ideally also for the horse, coupled with powerful offensive weapons. In this respect, the Persian tradition differed markedly from the Greek. While the Greeks preferred to leave their horses unprotected except by occasional forehead plates, the Persians tended to provide their horses with both head and chest guards\(^5^0\) (*Figure V.1a*). As for the protection of the rider, while both traditions advised the use of helmet and breastplate, the shapes and materials differed. The Greeks and Macedonians preferred the Boiotian helmet, coupled with either solid bronze muscular plate or the more flexible linen corselet (*Figure V.1b*). The Persians, on the other hand, preferred a different type of helmet, round or conical (as the example dedicated at Olympia sometime during the Median Wars, now preserved in the Archaeological Museum of Olympia) and breastplates made of scales – bronze, iron or bronze plated with gold. Interestingly enough, the Persian custom seems to have demanded that the armour be covered: Masistios, for example, the leader of the Persian cavalry at Plataia wears his gold-plated armour beneath a purple tunic\(^5^1\). In addition to these, the Persians also used thigh-protection in the form of leather blankets covered with metal scales attached to the saddle, which were then wrapped around the

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\(^4^8\) *Arr.*, *Anab.*, 3.11.7.

\(^4^9\) *Arr.*, *Anab.*, 3.14.5.

\(^5^0\) *Xen.*, *Anab.*, 1.8.7. The many details offered by *Ashley*, 1998, p. 60 should perhaps be taken *cum grano salis*. More reliable – to a certain extent, given for example his belief that *Xen.*, *Cyr.* may be confidently used as a source for the tactical realities of the 6th century BC – is *Neffodkin*, 2006. The available representations do not support Xenophon, but this should not lead us to discard completely the evidence he provides: the representations on Greek pottery are altogether too often marred by artistic convention (many examples also omitting, for instance, the saddle), while the representations on Persian stamp seals are incomplete, sketchy or depict light cavalry.

\(^5^1\) *Hdt.*, 9.22.2.
thighs—these are called by Xenophon παραμηρίδια. The Greeks, however, used no such devices, in spite of Xenophon’s advice in *Hipp.*, 12.10, which was probably inspired by his Persian adventures. The difference is clear also in so far as the offensive weapons are concerned: while the Persians used the παλτόν, a versatile short spear, which may be used equally well as a missile and a hand-to-hand weapon, the Greeks and Macedonians preferred the long lance, ξυστόν. In the hands of Alexander’s cavalrmen the latter proved to be much superior and Diodorus records attempts by Dareios to accustom his own troops with its use.

**V.1.2. Anatolian Heavy Cavalry in Hellenistic Times: Equipment**

One may be led to suppose that the superiority of the Greek model, amply demonstrated on the battlefield, would convince all subsequent generals to adopt it. Indeed, we find that the son of the Commagenian king Antiochos IV Epiphanes is helping Titus during the Judean War at the head of a body of cavalrmen nicknamed “the Macedonians”:

Ἐν δὲ τούτῳ καὶ ὁ Ἐπιφανής Αντίοχος παρὴν ἄλλους τε ὀπλίτας συχνοὺς ἔχων καὶ περὶ αὐτὸν στίφος Μακεδόνων καλοῦμενον, ἡλικιας πάντας, ύψηλους, ὀλίγων ὑπὲρ ἀντίπαιδας, τὸν Μακεδονικὸν τρόπον ὀπλισμένους τε καὶ πεπαιδευμένους, ὅθεν καὶ τὴν ἐπίκλησιν εἶχον ὑστεροῦντες οἱ πολλοὶ τοῦ γένους. (Ιοσεφ., *B.Jud.*, 5.460).

While it is possible that this late occurrence may be simply the extravagance of a prince dreaming of rivalling Alexander and his Companions, it may also be explained as an instance of reminiscence from the time of Alexander himself, or as a tradition inherited by the Commagenian court from their former Seleukid masters.

Nevertheless, Alexander’s model has not always been followed. We find, for example, that Mithradates VI’s mounted bodyguard is equipped in the Persian fashion. The evidence refers directly to Hypsicrateia, the king’s concubine, but she is mentioned as part of the eight hundred riders who accompany Eupator, so it is not unreasonable to suppose this was the outfit of them all. One is bound to wonder what exactly did “ἀνδρὸς […] Πέρσου στολῆν καὶ ἱππον” mean for Plutarch and if his view of Persian equipment concords with ours. It probably does, at least to a good extent, given that our own conception rests almost entirely on artistic depictions, such as the painting that served as model for the so-called Alexander Mosaic from Pompeii (confirmed here and

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52 *Ibid.* For additional info, cf. *Sekunda*, 1992, pp. 54-60, although this contribution to Achaemenid studies fails to rise to the level of his later works, mainly due to his uncritical use of artistic depictions as substitute for archaeological evidence.

53 *Diod.*, 17.53.1.

54 *Plut.*, *Pomp.*, 32.8.

55 For a detailed discussion of the original painting, cf. *Stewart*, 1993, pp. 130-150.
there by the occasional piece of equipment discovered in archaeological digs) and these were available to Plutarch as well.

It must be noted, nevertheless, that the Macedonian influence was not altogether absent. One of the most important changes brought about by Alexander’s successes was the adoption of the lance, which is demonstrated in the age of conflict that followed the Conqueror’s death: in the clash between Eumenes’ Cappadocians and Crateros’ Macedonians, the two forces both fight with long spears which break on impact.\(^{56}\) The other is the disappearance of the thigh-guards: when a Roman centurion manages to come near Eupator, it is at his exposed thighs that he chooses to strike, for wont of better target.\(^{57}\) It may be imagined that the relative rigidity of the παραμηρίδια, while not a major impediment in launching the javelin, would have prevented the solid grip imperative for the use of the lance as shock weapon and led to the discarding of this cumbersome form of protection.

V.1.3. Anatolian Heavy Cavalry in Hellenistic Times: Recruitment

Unfortunately, in the matter of the recruitment of heavy cavalry, we are reduced to reasonable guesses, as our sources are completely silent. It seems very likely that the majority (apart, that is, from the royal mounted guards and from mercenaries) were part of the corps offered by landed aristocrats, who had the necessary wealth for their equipment and maintenance. The following discussion will attempt to find arguments in favour of this hypothesis, by bringing together pieces of information relating to diverse eras, but all gravitating around a particular area, Armenia Minor, chosen as case-study. The information seems to indicate that: a) the landed aristocrats could and did employ bodies of soldiers; b) of these soldiers, a good proportion were cavalrymen; c) these cavalrymen were of the heavy type. The argument rests on many conjectures, but it may be fruitful to follow.

Plutarch (Plut., Crass., 17.9), assures us that Crassus was able to call on the dynastai\(^{58}\) for military assistance and that they were legally bound to heed his call. Their military obligations were at this time connected in all likelihood to the arrangements made by Roman generals such as Lucullus and Pompey, in the wake of their victories in Anatolia, namely rewarding those who had fought on their side – states, polities or dynastai – with lands or even whole cities\(^{59}\). It is significant that they tended to offer such gifts on the periphery of the territory they had wrested from Mithradates, in Armenia Minor and Colchis, areas where the power of the dynastai was traditionally very well established, which may indicate that the Roman victors were perpetuating a system already in place. The pattern that seems to emerge is that the landed aristocrats would

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\(^{56}\) Plut., Eumen., 7.5.

\(^{57}\) App., Mithr., 89.

\(^{58}\) For a more detailed discussion of these noblemen and their role in running the state, cf. infra, pp. 178-184.

\(^{59}\) Str., 12.3.1; 12.3.33; Plut., Pomp., 38.2.
receive gifts of land in exchange for military service and that this military service was not limited to their own person, since they are on a par with large communities: “ἐπιγράφων δὲ < ὁ Κράσσος > καὶ δήμως καὶ δυνάσταις στρατιωτῶν καταλόγους”. We may quite safely assume, therefore, that point a) is satisfied: the dynastai had both the obligation and the means to maintain bodies of retainers.

In order to proceed to point b) and determine the type of troops preferred, we must go back in time a considerable number of years, to the period of the First Mithradatic War. Thus, on the list of Pontic forces, one finds a very strong contingent of cavalry from Armenia Minor, under the leadership of Arcathias. It is not unreasonable to suppose that these were mainly “nobiliary detachments”, given firstly that Armenia Minor had always been in the hands of dynasts and secondly that, if we put any trust in the precision of Appian’s language (which, however, is not always advisable), these horsemen were not part of the royal detachments: “συμμαχικὰ δὲ ἦγον αὐτῷ Ἀρκαθίας μέν, αὐτοῦ Μιθριδάτου παῖς, ἐκ τῆς Βραχυτέρας Ἀρμενίας μυρίους ἵππεας” (App., Mithr., 17).

Although we do not possess detailed information about the total numbers of soldiers (infantrymen and cavalrymen) from Lesser Armenia serving under Mithradates, the number of horsemen we are given – ten thousand – is large enough to lead us to believe they represented a substantial segment of the entire detachment. It results, therefore, that point b) is also satisfied: a consistent proportion of the nobiliary detachments was, indeed, represented by horsemen.

Determining the answer to point c) is somewhat more difficult. Appian, for example, does not provide a description of the aforementioned troops, so the only way to determine their type is through analogies or deductions. The analogy with the situation in Greater Armenia is not decisive, for although one may notice a marked preference for heavy or even super-heavy, cataphract cavalry, the Armenian forces also employed highly proficient mounted skirmishers. The problem may be solved by yet another piece of information to be found in Appian: he notes that during the battle on the river Amnias, the cavalry of Arcathias is called upon to maintain a defensive line against oncoming Bithynian infantry. This particular task they could never have hoped to achieve had they been light troops, which are only suitable for skirmishing duties. It would appear, therefore, that point c) is also satisfied: nobiliary mounted corps tended to be of the heavy type.

V.1.4. Anatolian Heavy Cavalry: Persian and Greek Models

The picture that emerges from this perhaps contorted argument is that a good proportion of the heavy cavalry available to the kings in Eastern Anatolia was formed by the corps of retainers in the service of noblemen, bound to serve the monarch in exchange

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60 App., Mithr., 17.
61 “δυνάσται δ’ αὐτὴν < τὴν μικρὰν Ἀρμενίαν > κατείχον ἄει”, Str., 12.3.28.
62 Cass. Dio, 36.5.
63 App., Mithr., 18.
for lands. Thus, the situation appears to bear more similarities with the Achaemenid system than with the Macedonian, for while the Western tradition emphasised the personal liability of the owner of a relatively small plot to serve as cavalryman, the Eastern tradition, often compared to the Medieval feudal system, put greater pressure on the nobility, demanding that they arm and maintain a body of soldiers, while at the same time providing them with the revenue to do so by an offer of land. Perhaps a reflection of this system is to be found in the tablet of Gadal-iama from Nippur, who is hired by an aristocrat to serve as heavy cavalryman.\textsuperscript{64} One may notice, therefore, that while Greco-Macedonian ideas were adopted, particularly in the practical field of equipment and tactics, the underlying tradition followed in Eastern Anatolia remains the Achaemenid.

V.1.5. Light Cavalry

This is even more obvious when dealing with the other branches of the cavalry. It seems likely that the light cavalry had a good proportion of horse archers, a certain Eastern influence. This, however, is never clearly stated in the sources, unless one interprets the phrase in \textit{CASS. Dio}, 36.49.6: \textit{"ἱππης γὰρ καὶ τοξόται τὸ πλεῖστον ὄντες"} as a hendiadys. Yet, the Armenian parallels mentioned above make it very plausible that a body of horse archers would complement the striking force of the heavy cavalry.

V.1.6. Scythed Chariots and their Achaemenid Roots

We are far better informed about the situation of scythed chariots. These appear frequently in the armies of Pontus, both at the time of Mithradates Eupator and at the time of his son, Pharnakes II. These were used mainly as a terror weapon, similar to a certain extent to the use of elephants: by their irresistible charge, they were to smash through compact enemy formations, breaking their cohesion in order to allow other troops – cavalry and infantry – to exploit the gaps and achieve victory. They were, however, severely limited by a number of factors: they needed a fairly long space in order to gain the necessary momentum, they were quite fragile in rocky terrain, once engaged on a trajectory, they could not manoeuvre with ease, making them predictable and finally, driver and horses were very vulnerable to missiles. On the battlefield, their frightening presence sometimes brought about resounding victories, such as the one obtained by Archelaos against Nicomedes by the river Amnias (\textit{App.}, \textit{Mithr.}, 18), but rather more often they brought little but disappointment, such as at the battle of Chaeronea against Sulla or at Zela against Caesar (\textit{BAlex.}, 75.2).

Their prolonged career might perhaps be explained by their venerable Achaemenid roots. It is still rather unclear when and where they first evolved, but ancient sources are unanimous that this was a Persian invention.\textsuperscript{65} Nefiodkin’s theory,\textsuperscript{66} namely that they appeared specifically to counter the solid hoplitic formation, based on the observation that

\textsuperscript{64} \textit{Nefiodkin}, 2006, pp. 10-12.

\textsuperscript{65} \textit{Arr.}, \textit{Tact.}, 2.5; \textit{Xen.}, \textit{Cyr.}, 6.1.30.

\textsuperscript{66} \textit{Nefiodkin}, 2004.
historically, it was vulnerable to skirmishers and therefore could not have been designed
against them fails to take into account that it fared no better against disciplined heavy
infantry such as Alexander’s phalangites at Gaugamela or the Roman legionaries in the
two battles just mentioned. Also, the geography of Anatolia, with its rugged terrain, was
hardly inviting for a device that needed vast plains in order to function at its best. It would
perhaps be more fruitful to search for the origin of the scythed chariot in Mesopotamia.
Whatever its origins, however, the presence of these chariots in Eastern Anatolian armies
lent them an unmistakeable Persian appearance.

V.1.7. Camels

Camels were another Eastern oddity present on the battlefields and reminding of
long Achaemenid traditions, in spite of their obvious difficulties at coping with the rugged
terrain. As such, they must have been relegated to a secondary role and we only hear of
them incidentally, in two passages: Plut., Luc., 11.3-4 and Cass. Dio, 36.49.3.

V.2. The Infantry

5.2.1. The Infantry: Classical background

If the cavalry of the East had the reputation of being formidable, the same could not
be said about the infantry. The defeat of the invading Persian armies by the hoplite armies of
Greece, greatly inferior in numbers, during the Median Wars created the legend of Eastern
cowardice and effeminacy. Whatever the cause of the defeat (from bad generalship to lack
of motivation on the part of the lower ranks), it is certain that the traditional light infantry of
Persia was no match for the heavy Greek footmen in frontal encounter. The situation had not
changed significantly by the time of Alexander: the only significant segment of the infantry
was represented by the Greek mercenaries. It is true, however, that the image emerging
from Xenophon’s Anabasis is far more nuanced. Although the Greek hoplitic force emerges
victorious from most encounters (or so the narrator wants us to believe), admiration for the
effectiveness, valour and even discipline of Anatolian light infantrymen is often expressed.67

V.2.2. Hellenistic Anatolian Infantry: Facts and Clichés

An evaluation of the infantry in Eastern Anatolia during the Hellenistic times is made
very difficult by the aridity of our sources, which are, moreover, heavily biased, highly rhetoric
and not always careful to separate facts from clichés. For example, Plutarch seems to imply
that in the First Mithradatic War the Pontic troops were all covered in silver and gold:

αἱ τε μαρμαρυγαὶ τῶν ὀπλῶν ἥσκιμενῶν χυροὶ τε καὶ ἄργυρῳ
diaφρεττῶς, αἱ τε βαφαὶ τῶν Μηδικῶν καὶ Σκυθικῶν χιτῶνων
ἀναμεμιγμέναι χαλκῷ καὶ σιδήρῳ λάμβοντι πυρειδῆ καὶ φοβερὰν ἐν
tῷ σαλεύεσθαι καὶ διαφέρεσθαι προσέβαλον ὃψιν. (Plut., Sulla, 16.2-3)

and

This is certainly just an echo of the age-old beliefs that the East was a land of fabulous wealth and that Eastern men were prone to adorn themselves like women.

V.2.3. Light Infantry

From what one may discern in the sources, the light infantry continued to be an important segment of the infantry in Anatolian armies throughout the Hellenistic Age. It is, for example, a detachment of light infantry that is sent by Ariarathes IV to Antiochos III in the eve of the battle of Magnesia.

We do not know how well or badly they fared in that battle and one must wait until the First Mithradatic War for more information on the subject. Thus, Appian describes the engagement between the vanguard of the Mithradatid army, consisting of a body of light infantry, led jointly by Archelaos and Neoptolemos, and the entire Bithynian army under Nicomedes. The Pontic force is described as being outclassed and outnumbered\(^68\) (‘Νικομήδης μὲν ἅπαντας τοὺς ἑαυτοῦ, Νεοπτόλεμος δὲ καὶ Ἀρχέλαος τοὺς ἐξεύρανος μόνους’, App., Mithr., 18; ‘τῶν Βιθυνῶν, πολὺ πλειόνων ὄντων’, ibid.), and yet it manages to win the battle at the river Amnias due in equal measure to the leadership of the two brothers in command and to the general quality of the troops, capable of performing delicate manoeuvres, such as a controlled retreat while engaged in combat and spirited enough not to lose heart although the initial stages of the engagement were far from successful.

V.2.4. Light Infantry: Equipment

Because of the dire lack of archaeological evidence, it is neigh impossible to determine with precision the equipment of these infantrymen. Therefore, one must be very cautious when using the literary sources.

For example, Duncan Head’s reconstruction of the Cappadocian contingent present at Magnesia\(^69\) as bearing the heavy thureos and the long Celtic sword is in all likelihood inaccurate, as it relies exclusively on a too literal understanding of Livy’s phrasing: “ab

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\(^68\) Since in the previous paragraph the total forces of Nicomedes were given as 50,000 foot and 6000 horse, one may venture to say that the Pontic advance party may have numbered about 40,000. The number may not, however, be used to determine the total of light infantry in the Pontic army: firstly because numbers relating to ancient armies are generally unreliable (and this is particularly true of Appian’s numbers), secondly because it is quite hard to believe that the vanguard was composed of the entire body of light infantry at Mithradates’ disposal.

\(^69\) Head, 1982, p. 122.
laeuo cornu phalangitis adiuncti erant Gallograeci pedites mille et quingenti et similib
his armati duo milia Cappadocum (ab Ariarate missi erant regi)” (T.Liv., 37.40.10).
However, Livy makes no comment about their actual pieces of equipment: he merely
indicates that these *pedites* belonged to the class of light infantry – not as heavy as the
phalanx, nor yet skirmishers, such as the Neocretans, Carians or Pamphylians (described
as *caetrati*) or as the Cyrtians (described as *funditores*), all of whom are placed by the
Roman historian at the extreme of the left flank.\(^{70}\)

Equal care must be exercised when reading other, particularly late, sources such
as Appian. The fact that in the description of the Pontic light infantrymen at the opening
stages of the First Mithradatic War he uses the technical term *εὐζώνοι* invites many
hypotheses. These had become in the Hellenistic times, particularly among the Aitolians,
a specialised body, with distinctive equipment: large *thureos* shield, but no other body
armour, javelins which double as short spears for hand-to hand combat and short sword
as side-arm. As such, they were not very different from the mountaineers inhabiting the
Paryadres that Xenophon describes in *Anab.*, 5.4.12-13.\(^{71}\) As Appian goes on to say that
the troops of Mithradates did include some mountaineers from the area, the Chalybes,\(^{72}\)
one might perhaps draw the conclusion that ancient traditions had been preserved and
adapted to suit the requirements of Hellenistic warfare. Unfortunately, things are not so
clearly cut. Firstly, Xenophon himself gives a description of the Chalybes\(^{73}\) that bears no
resemblance to the Hellenistic *εὐζώνοι*. Secondly, Appian is rather careless in his use
of technical military terms. To him, the word *εὐζώνοι* meant quite simply light infantry
or heavy infantry without baggage (the equivalent for the Latin *expediti*): “Σύλλας δέ [...]
ἀναπάυσας δὲ τὴν στρατιὰν ἐπ’ ὀλίγον ἐς τὸν Εὔριπον σὺν εὐζώνοις ἐπὶ τὸν Ἀρχέλαον ἤπειγέτο” (*App.*, *Mithr.*, 45). One must therefore remain content to notice that
the equipment of the Eastern Anatolian light infantrymen allowed them to engage with a
relative degree of success in hand-to hand combat, weather this equipment followed the
pattern of their ancestors from Achaemenid times or had evolved to match that current in
the Greek states.

V.2.5. Heavy Infantry

From a general reading of the ancient sources, it would seem heavy infantry

\(^{70}\) Cf. also Goldsworthy, 2000, pp. 72-73; Grainger, 2002, p. 322. Bar-Kochva, 1976, p 169 seems to be the source of Head’s reconstruction of the Cappadocians.

\(^{71}\) “ἐχοντες γέφορα πάντες λευκῶν βοῶν δασέα, ᾐκασμένα κιττοῦ πετάλῳ, ἐν δὲ τῇ δεξιᾷ παλτὸν ὡς ἔχον, ἐμπροσθεν μὲν λόγχην ἔχον, ὅπεθεν δὲ τοῦ ἕκελος σφαιροειδές, χιτωνίσκους δὲ εικεδύκεσαν ὑπὲρ γονάτων, πάχος ὡς λινοῦ στρωματοδέσμου, ἐπὶ τῇ κεφαλῇ δὲ κράνη σκύτινα ὡς Παφλαγονικά, κρωβύλον ἔχοντα κατὰ μέσον, ἐγχύτατα τιαροειδή εἶχον δὲ καὶ σαγάρεις σιδηρᾶς.”

\(^{72}\) *App.*, *Mithr.*, 45.
represented the most important segment of the infantry. Appian, for example, expressly states it is so (App., Mithr., 18). Yet, his statement needs to be corroborated with other pieces of evidence, not only because he is a relatively late author and one without extensive personal experience in military matters, but mainly because, like most other historians, he would have been best acquainted with the Roman, Greek and Macedonian Late Hellenistic systems, traditions that emphasized the role of heavy infantry, which would have inevitably distorted his perspective.

Fortunately, corroborating evidence does exist, both in the form of literary accounts and archaeological documents. On the one hand, all narratives of battles delivered by Eastern Anatolian armies describe these events as classical encounters, with heavy infantry placed in the centre and playing a major part in the fight. On the other hand, the surviving ‘Shield of Pharnakes’, a phalangite shield offered in all likelihood as a dedication to a deity, chosen therefore as representative for the whole army, demonstrates the prominence of heavy infantry over its light counterpart. Moreover, the senior rank of the heavy infantry commander is attested epigraphically: Dorylaos, known to have been the leader of the phalanx, is named in ID 1572 ἐπὶ τῶν δυνάμεων, one of the most important ranks in the Pontic administration.

V.2.6. Heavy Infantry: Equipment

What type of equipment did the heavy infantry carry, then? In their case, sources copiously attest the Macedonian influence, labelling them as phalangites. ‘Φάλαγξ’, however, is a deceiving term. While it may be applied to the hoplitic formation or to the Macedonian formation introduced by Philip II, it is also used in relation to any body of heavy infantry, like the Roman legionaries, so it is necessary to find additional evidence for the character of Eastern Anatolian heavy infantrymen.

Luckily, the evidence is available and it points to their equipment being of standard Macedonian type. Archaeology has an important contribution in this respect, by the discovery of a shield inscribed with the name of Pharnakes (Figure VI.2). Taking into consideration its shallowness (10.4 cm at the centre); its rimless design coupled with the triangular protrusions on edges, designed to be bent inwards in order to affix a wooden core; and its dimensions (79.8-81.4 cm in diameter), it appears to have been designed for

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74 “ἥγον […] Δορύλαος ἐν φάλαγγι ταττομένος”, App., Mithr., 17.
75 Cf. infra, p. 179.
76 Heavy infantry in general: App., Hann., 87; Roman legions: App., Celt., 1.9; etc.
a Macedonian-style phalangite rather than for a traditional Greek hoplite.

Another piece of evidence is now housed in the Sinop Archaeological Museum and consists of a stone sculpture: a male head, partially deteriorated, but which nevertheless preserves enough details to determine that the type of helmet worn is of the Thraco-Attic type (Figure VI.3). This helmet design was very popular among the Macedonian phalangites, as attested for example by the relieves of the Belevi Mausoleum, offered for comparison in the same illustration. Given the telling protrusion at the base of the neck, this sculptural piece must have been integrated in a larger ensemble, either an acrolithic sculpture or a *tondo* portrait similar to those present in the Delian Heroon. As such, one is bound to wonder whether this artistic depiction is indeed relevant for the Pontic space or whether it is merely an import item. Two elements seem to point to it being a locally manufactured item: the inferior quality of the marble and the absence of highly detailed finishes. The portrait should therefore be considered relevant to the equipment of local troops.

Further evidence for the equipment of the Pontic heavy infantry is provided by the literary sources. Thus, Plutarch mentions they used the long Macedonian pike, the σάρισα: “τῶν μὲν βαρβάρων προβαλλομένων τὰς σαρίσας μακρὰς καὶ πειρωμένων τῷ συνασπισμῷ τὴν φάλαγγα διατηρεῖν ἐν τάξει” (Plut., Sulla 18.4). Not only do they have the equipment of phalangites, they also use specific formations and adopt specific tactics: thus, as in the above passage, they form the συνασπισμός and strive to maintain at all cost a solid formation.

**V.2.7. Heavy Infantry: Organisation**

The Pontic army seems to have adopted not only the equipment specific to the Macedonians, but also the honorific names for at least part of their detachments. Thus, there existed a detachment of the “Brazen Shields”, the Χαλκάσπιδες, who seem to be an elite detachment, given that they receive particularly important and dangerous missions, such as occupying key positions in the face of the enemy:

δείξας αὐτοῖς τὴν πρότερον μὲν γενομένην ἀικρότολιν τῶν Παραπτοταμίων, τότε δὲ ἀνηρμένης τῆς πόλεως λόφος ἐλείπει τοπικόδης καὶ περικομμένος [...] συνεκτραχυνόμενος όχυρον ἐνστατοποιεύεται τὴν ἀκραν ποιεῖ διὸ καὶ τοὺς χαλκάσπιδας ὀρῶν τῶν πολεμίων ὡθουμένους ἐπ’ αὐτὴν ὁ Σύλλας ἐβούλετο φθηνὰς καταλαβὼν τὸν τόπον (Plut., Sulla, 16.6-7).

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78 This is by no means a singular occurrence: it is the same formation, described as “*συντεταγμένη φάλαγξ καὶ ὠπλισμένη καλῶς*” that carries the day in front of the barbarian Palakos, in Crimea (Str., 7.3.17).
Also, on the battlefield they are placed on the honorary right flank: at the battle of Chaeroneia, they are placed under the command of Taxilas and meet Murena, who was stationed on the left flank of the Roman army (Plut., Sulla, 19).

The term Χαλκάσπιδες is also used in the Antigonid (Polyb., 2.66.5) and Seleukid (Polyb., 30.25.5) armies. In Macedon, they simply represent one half of the phalanx (the other being represented by the Δευκάσπιδες)79, but in the Seleukid kingdom, they appear to have an elevated status. If the emendation of the Polybian text at 30.25.5 proposed by Kaibel is correct, as Bar-Kochva argues,80 the passage would read “τούτοις ἔπεβαλλον Μακεδόνες δισμύριοι, χρυσάσπιδες μὲν μύριοι καὶ Χαλκάσπιδες πεντακισχίλιοι, ἄλλοι δὲ ἀργυράσπιδες”, rendering thus the Χαλκάσπιδες equal in number to the elite Αργυράσπιδες, representing thus the middle tier in a threefold stratification. However, Walbank and Sekunda81 strongly disagree with this emendation, seen as excessive and unfounded. Even ignoring the proposed emendation, the status of the Brazen Shields at the Daphne Parade seems one of considerable prestige, being singled out from the mass of the “Macedonian phalanx”, alongside the Silver Shields. Given the apparent elevated status of the Pontic Brazen Shields and the general history of tight relations with the Seleukid court, it seems more likely that the Mithradatid kings had imported the Seleukid model and not the Antigonid.

It is difficult to determine when the corps appears, but the shield of Pharnakes, which seems not to have been painted over but must have been subjected to intense polishing seems to fit exactly the equipment of Χαλκάσπιδες in other kingdoms, making it tempting to set the reign of Pharnakes as the terminus ante quem.

It is interesting to note that the corps does not seem to exist as such during the lifetime of Alexander, being a Hellenistic innovation. This demonstrates that the armies of Eastern Anatolia remained open to innovations throughout the Hellenistic times. Also, it demonstrates that whereas in so far as the cavalry was concerned, the Achaemenid model was perpetuated with slight alterations, in the case of infantry, the Macedonian model was embraced wholeheartedly.

V.2.8. Heavy Infantry: Recruitment

The matter of the recruitment of the heavy infantry is shrouded to a good extent in mystery. In a number of occasions, we see local levies being integrated successfully in the Pontic battle array, be they citizen militias (as happened in Crimea, under the leadership of Diopahntos)82 or – shockingly for the Romans – even slaves liberated...
hoc (as in Greece, under the leadership of Archelaos).\textsuperscript{83} However, this does not clarify the background of the detachment of Brazen Shields. Seleukid parallels demand that they be recruited from the Macedonian settlers, but such settlements have not yet been traced in Eastern Anatolia: the few new settlements that bear dynastic names seem rather to have been synoikismoi and do not seem to present an essentially military character.

V.2.9. Heavy Infantry: Reforms and Royal Supervision

The military reform introduced by Mithradates Eupator, namely replacing either partially or wholly the Macedonian phalanx with the Roman manipular system (Plut., Luc., 7.5) is another instance of innovation and attempt to keep up with the times. It is interesting to note the importance of the king in the whole process and the degree of control he is capable of exerting on the weapon manufacture and training of the rank and file:

\[ \textit{ὁ δὲ Μιθριδάτης ὁπλα τε εἰργάζετο κατὰ πόλιν ἐκάστην καὶ ἐστρατολόγει σχεδὸν ἄπαντας Αρμενίους, ἐπιλεξάμενος δ’ αὐτῶν τοὺς ἀρίστους, ἐς ἑπτάκαισμορίας πεζοὺς καὶ ἐπιτέλεσε ἡμίσεις, τοὺς μὲν ἄλλους ἀπέλυσε, τοὺς δ’ ἐς ἱλας τε καὶ ἑπτακίσμων ἄγχοτατος τῆς Ταλικῆς συντάξεως καταλέγων Ποντικῶν ἀνδράσι γυμνάζειν παρεδίδου. (App., Mithr., 87).} \]

This is in line with the Macedonian tradition, initiated by Philip II and continued by Alexander and the Diadochs, who were heavily involved in the training of their armies and constantly promoted innovation, constantly fiddling with the length of the sarisa or even to the point of partially retraining the phalangites to fight as legionaries when the superiority of the Roman style of fighting had become evident.\textsuperscript{84} This is in stark contrast with the position adopted by the Achaemenid kings, who are rarely recorded to interfere with the military traditions of their subjects. For example, the invention of the scythed chariot is attributed to Cyros the Great, but the information (found in Xenophon’s highly mythologized Cyropaidia) is, as we have seen above, quite untrustworthy. At the other end of the dynasty, it is recorded that Dareios III ordered the manufacture of longer swords and spears for his cavalry: “τὰ μὲν γὰρ ἕπι ξίφη καὶ τὰ ἑντομά πολὺ μεῖζω τῶν προγεγευμένων ἐποίησε διὰ τὸ δοκεῖν διὰ τούτων πολλὰ τὸν Ἀλέξανδρον ἐν τῇ περὶ Κιλικίαν μάχῃ πεπλεονεκτηκέναι” (Diod., 17.53.1); this, however, was too little, too late.

VI. Conclusions

The general conclusion that emerges concerning the military in Eastern Anatolia is, as outlined at the beginning of the chapter that Macedonian influence was felt particularly with regard to the technical side of things – equipment and tactical use of different bodies of soldiers

\textsuperscript{83} Plut., Sulla, 18.5.

\textsuperscript{84} Pol., 30.25.3. Cf. also Bar-Kochva, 1976, p. 60.
– while the Achaemenid tradition was maintained at the level of mentalities, particularly regarding the recruitment of troops and the philosophy of their strategic deployment, but most importantly in the relation between king and Army as a pillar of power.
VI. Power Structures and Land Tenure

The present chapter will investigate how power and wealth (in particular land tenure) are related in Eastern Anatolia during the Hellenistic Age: how one generates the other and how losing one may – or may not – lead to losing the other. The analysis will start from power structures (in other words, the administration and the people who form it) and then proceed to discuss wealth distribution. This order of treatment has not been suggested by any conviction that the former necessarily precedes and generates the other, but rather by the need to impose a certain degree of clarity to the methodology and by the fact that documents are more generous in describing power structures than they are in indicating wealth distribution. The pattern that will become visible as the analysis unfolds is that power structures which appear to have an important Macedonian component combine with a system of wealth distribution that is specific to older historical strata, such as the Achaemenid one.

I. The King

The king in Eastern Anatolia, as throughout the Hellenistic world, represented the highest authority in his realm. His relations to various spheres (military, dynastic, religious) have been discussed in the previous chapters and in the following pages his role in the administration will be analysed, focusing, from the myriad of tasks both great and small that a monarch had to fulfil (from deciding issues of foreign policy to deciding the dress code at a certain festival), on just three aspects: his role in the administrative structure of the kingdom; the ruler’s role as dispenser and guarantor of justice; and, finally, his position as decision-making factor in the economy. The discussion of these aspects will hopefully illustrate better how the different traditions have coalesced in Eastern Anatolia.

I.1. Administrative roles of the king

I.1.1. The King and the administration of his realm

The king was the lord of his realm, but in order to be able to exert his power effectively over the entire span of the domain, he was compelled to delegate some of

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1 While this may have been the case at some point in the history of mankind, as demonstrated by the fact that many animals form groups in which there is a hierarchy, but possess nothing which may be labelled with the human term ‘wealth’, the biunivocous correspondence of power and wealth had been well established amongst humans well before the Hellenistic Age.
his authority to others, who governed certain regions in his name. In the Achaemenid kingdom, these officials were named ‘xšaçapāvan’, ‘satraps’, literally meaning ‘those who protect the kingdom’, while in Macedonia the title seems to have been ‘στρατηγός’. The Macedonian monarchies of the East, and in particular the Seleukids, seem to have hesitated between the two terms, using both in different contexts. The same hesitation may be noticed in the institutional usage of the kingdoms studied here.

In his description of Cappadocia, Strabon states that it was divided into ten ‘στρατηγίαι’, which he then names individually as Melitene, Cataonia, Cilicia, Tyanitis, Garsauritis, Laviansene, Sargarasene, Sarauene, Chamanene and Morinene. His testimony is particularly useful, as he specifically mentions that this division applies to the old administrative system, used under Archelaos and the previous kings, and does not apply to the current state of affairs, as the Romans had not yet decided the form in which the country, now a Roman province, would be organised. It is sometimes difficult to confirm Strabon and identify the governors of these regions in the historical record, due to the ambiguity of the term ‘στρατηγός’, which could be applied in equal measure to the governors of the στρατηγίαι, to lesser officials within the Greek cities or, quite simply, to those who led military contingents of varying sizes. However, we are fortunate to be able to identify a certain Mithratochmes (or Arsames) son of Iazemis, who fulfilled with certainty the role of regional governor: ‘...στρατηγὸν Καταονίας’.

Given that the Commagenian Apollas bears the same title, alongside other prestigious aulic titles, ‘πρῶτος καὶ προτιμωμένος φίλος’ and ‘ἐκλογιστής’, it is not unlikely that he, too, was governor of a region and that the Commagenian Orontids had adopted (or continued) the Hellenistic practice of dividing the land into strategiai.

A similar organisation may be conjectured for Pontus: to support this hypothesis, one may invoke the many similarities between Pontus and Cappadocia; the presence of a ‘στρατηγός’ at Abonouteichos (although it is somewhat unclear if this Alkimos, son of Menophilos, is a regional governor or rather a city official); and the distribution of the so-called ‘municipal issues’ of coins, which do not map out the geographical distribution of poleis, but must represent centres of royal administration.

Besides the strategoi, the Pontic administrative system included satraps (App., Mithr.,
21; 22; 35 etc.), such as Leonnepos, apparently satrap of Caria,9 to whom Mithradates writes a letter, setting a price of forty talents on the head of Chairemon and his sons, stout supporters of the Roman cause. It is, nevertheless, conceivable that the satraps existed only during the reign of Mithradates VI and possibly just outside the core of the Pontic kingdom. One may wonder if Eupator was trying to bring back to life a Persian custom, honouring his ancestry and emphasizing his claim to be a direct descendant of Dareios I. While this would appear as a sound political gesture in Eastern Anatolia, not the same could be said about Western Anatolia, an area in which the Greek population was denser and where there seems to have persisted certain anti-Persian feelings, at least if one may judge from the Pergamene statuary, in which giants, Amazons, Persians and Galatians represent the forces of darkness, while the Olympians, the Greeks and the Attalids themselves form a league of sorts, battling side by side for order and light. It is perhaps more likely that Mithradates tried to imitate Alexander, who had himself appointed satraps in Asia Minor, such as Antigonus Monophthalmos.

A special position in the Pontic system is enjoyed by the strategically important region of Colchis,10 which is governed by a ‘ὕπαρχος καὶ διοικητὴς τῆς χώρας’, who, according to Strabon, was always appointed from among the King’s closest collaborators, such as the geographer’s great-uncle, Moaphernes (STR., 11.2.18; 12.3.33). This makes it likely that this region was treated as γῆ βασιλικὴ (cf. infra).

I.1.2. The King in the judicial context

The King appears to be in Eastern Anatolia, as elsewhere in the Hellenistic world, the supreme judge of the realm. We see the king in action on a number of occasions, deciding the fate of individuals or even whole communities. Thus, Mithradates VI is known for convicting to death a rather large number of people, such as his son, Mithradates, accused of coveting the throne (APP., Mithr., 64), his Friend, the former Senator Attidius, accused of conspiring against his person (APP., Mithr., 90) or Manius Aquilius, accused of having started the war against him out of greed (APP., Mithr., 21). Mithradates also convicted the Chians to the payment of a large sum, 2000 talents, as well as to deportation, on accusation that they continuously favoured the Romans (APP., Mithr., 47).

In fulfilling this task, the king was aided by his Council of Friends (cf. infra), but also by specialised officials, the highest of which was the ἐπὶ τῶν ἀνακρίσεων (ID, 1573), an official position with clear parallels at other Hellenistic courts. Strabon describes this official’s task as being “ταχθεὶς ἐπὶ τῆς δικαιοδοσίας, ἀφ’ ἦς οὐκ ἦν τῷ κριθέντι ἀναβολὴ τῆς δίκης ἐπὶ τὸν βασιλέα”.11 The phrase does not clarify if he was in charge only of those trials in which the plaintiff could not appeal to the king (and if things were so, which were the cases in which the king himself could be involved?)

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10 Cf. supra, pp. 148-149.
11 STR., 13.1.55.
or if, on the contrary, his position was of such honour that his decisions could not be overturned, even by the king.

The king had yet another role in the judicial sphere, one more abstract than that of supreme judge: his august person seems to have acted as a guarantee in contracts and oaths. Strabon makes a reference to the holy oath by Men instituted by Pharnakes: “ετίμησαν δ’οἱ βασιλεῖς τὸ ἱερὸν τούτο ὑπὲρ πόλιον ὑπὲρ σαράντα ἐννομοὺς εἰς ὑπερβολὴν ὑπὲρ τὸν βασιλεύκον καλούμενον όρκον τούτον ἀπέδειξαν τὴν Ἰαννα βασιλέως καὶ Μήνα Φαρνάκου”12 and it is not clear in his description what the exact purpose of this oath was. It could represent an oath of allegiance, such as that sworn by troops:

ομνύω Δία, Γῆν, Ἡλίου, Ἀρη, Αθηνᾶν Ἀρείαν καὶ τὴν ταυροπολόν καὶ τῆ[μ] 1 Μητέρα τὴν Σιπυληνή καὶ Ἀπόλλω τὸν ἐμ Πάνδοις καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους θεούς πάντας καὶ πάσας καὶ τὴν τοῦ βασιλέως Σελεύκου τύχην. (OGIS, 229).

It could, on the other hand, represent a ‘commercial’ oath, for which an Achaemenid parallel may be identified: in Mesopotamia during the time of Achaemenid rule, the parties in a contract would take ‘the oath of the king’,13 which is clearly a continuation of earlier local practices of swearing by the name or the life of the king.14

1.1.3. The King and the economy

The king’s most important role in the economy of his kingdom was his capacity to impose the fiscal policy and the monetary policy, in other words, he decided how much his subjects were supposed to pay in taxes and with which coins. Besides being an important political statement, striking coins of all denominations helped the local economy develop15 and helped integrate the different parts of the kingdom into a coherent unity. While this process is less visible in Cappadocia and Commagene, it can be clearly noticed in Mithradates VI Eupator’s approach. Numismatists such as Callataj16 have helped dispel the myth that ‘civic mints imply civic autonomy’ also known as ‘lex Seyrigiana’, arguing that the remarkable similarity between the types struck by different cities points in fact to a strict central control over the minting process. This unifying tendency can also be noticed when looking at the North-Pontic dominions of Mithradates. A substantial amount of Pontic coins (most of them struck at Amisos) are being shipped at two key moments across the Euxine, to be used by the cities in that region either as such or as ‘blanks’ to

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12 Str., 12.3.31.
14 Postgate, 1992, p. 287.
15 The view that an increase in the quantity of coins minted demonstrates an economic boom, held by a number of modern scholars (such as Saprykin, 2007, p. 203: “At the same time, they <the large number of silver coins struck by Mithradates in the period of the first war with Rome>”, without a doubt, indicate a certain development of the Pontic economy”), is to a good extent without foundation. In the ancient world, there was obviously not even a rough estimation of the GDP and the monetary mass could not correlate with the state of the economy. However, an increase in the monetary mass – often caused by an increase in military activity – could facilitate economic development, by creating better conditions for trade.
be overstruck: at the turn of the century, when the Tauric Chersonese and the Bosporus came under Pontic rule and during the Third Mithradatic War.\footnote{Saprykin, 2007, pp. 201-205.} These were the moments when Mithradates tried first to crystallize the unity, both political and economic between his South- and North-Pontic possessions and then to recreate it after the defections which had intervened in the late 80s.

The other very important role of the king in the running of the economy was that of economic actor, in his capacity of major owner of economic assets, most importantly land, and this aspect will be described below.

1.2. Γῆ βασιλικῆ

The pattern which seems to emerge both from Strabon’s description of Eastern Anatolia and from modern surveys is that of a land of few cities, but many villages, controlled by fortifications built in conspicuous places. Of these citadels, φρούρια, some were entrusted to dynasts (\textit{cf. infra}), while others belonged to the king. Some were certainly used as treasuries and defensive points, having little or no economic value. For example, Kainon Chorion is said to be surrounded by dense forests and waterless spaces, which make it impossible for enemy armies to make camp anywhere within a radius of two kilometres.\footnote{Str., 12.3.31.} Others, nevertheless, controlled fertile land around them, such as Gazioura, which is situated in a fertile valley (modern Turhal), and noted by Strabon to be “an ancient royal residence, though now in ruins”.\footnote{Str., 12.3.15.} These fortresses controlled a considerable number of villages, if one is to take \textit{ad litteram} Appian’s statement that Murena plundered “τετρακοσίας τοῦ Μιθριδάτου κώμας”,\footnote{App., Mithr., 65.} and understand that these villages belonged to Mithradates personally and not in a more general sense to Mithradates’ kingdom. Land could be used not only for agriculture, but also as pasture, and this seems to be the main use for the land around Mazaka owned by the Cappadocians' kings.\footnote{Str., 12.2.9.}

The King also derived revenues from the mines he owned (Str., 12.2.10; 12.3.30). It appears, however, that not all mines belonged to him (as happened, for example, in Egypt), for the inhabitants of Pharnakeia are said to obtain their livelihood from working the mines near their city, which must mean that these were part of the γῆ πολιτική and not of the γῆ βασιλικῆ (although it is not inconceivable that they were originally part of the latter and were attributed by Pharnakes to his newly-founded city).

Kings in this region also possessed hunting grounds, “τὰ ζωγρεῖα καὶ ἀι παλαιόν θήραι”,\footnote{Str., 12.3.30.} doubtlessly a continuation of the old Achaemenid practice of maintaining παραδείσεως, such as those seen by Xenophon during his expedition.\footnote{Xen., Anab., 1.2.7.}
The king’s right of ownership over newly conquered lands, in the Macedonian spirit of the ‘spear-won land’, seems to have been used by kings in this area, although data is more visible, as in many other respects, in Eupator’s case. Thus, after conquering Colchis, he sent there a ‘διοικητής’, an administrator, which probably means that the land was viewed as his private property. There are indications that a similar phenomenon took place in the Bosporan region, where the previous pattern of settlement of villages dispersed widely across the chora is replaced at about the time when Mithradates took over the region by a different one, in which rural settlements gravitate around citadels, which at the same time dominate them and offer them protection.

The royal land offered the king not only material benefits, in the form of wealth, but it also provided him the means to exert munificence, offering to friends one of the most precious commodities of the ancient world: land, continuing at the same time an Achaemenid and a Macedonian tradition.

II. Court aristocracy and the dynastai

II.1. The Philoi

In all cultures, and particularly in the case of monarchic societies, the person or persons at the centre of power develop informal relations with certain people. These relations of personal friendship often gain political relevance, as the notions of influence, authority and power tend to overlap, even in modern societies. Both at the Achaemenid and at the Argead court, the Friends of the King are a conspicuous presence. In both cases, accession to or removal from the group of Friends depended on the wish of the king, at whose discretion were also the privileges that came with this position. These privileges could have been ceremonial (such as, for example, the right to wear clothes dyed with the precious pigment purple, as happened both in Persia and Macedonia), financial (in the form of gifts from the king, attested at both courts) or political (having the king’s ear was an important asset and allowed one to obtain advantages not only for himself, but also for third parties).

The importance of the friendship between ruler and certain members of his court was enhanced during the Hellenistic Age by the Macedonian dynasties of the Successor Kingdoms, when a fairly clear hierarchy of the philoi was established and when the position of philos became increasingly stable (though it has never lost the essentially dynamic character it had from the beginning), as a Friend could move from one court to another.

24 Str., 11.2.18.
25 Høfte, 2009b, pp. 102-103. One could argue, nevertheless, that this shift in pattern is due to the increasingly violent environment of the time, caused by Sarmatian incursions, and not by a change in administrative pattern.
26 One example is provided by Plutarch: Plut., Sull., 11.2.
27 The extent to which a courtier could have the king’s ear is illustrated well by an Achaemenid example: the Persian king was compelled by tradition to accept the visit of a descendant of the Seven Wise at any time, except when he was in bed with a woman. Cf. Wiesehöffer, 2001, p. 36.
and still maintain this status, could expect to see his position confirmed by the new king when the old one died and could have reasonable hopes his descendants would occupy a similar position at Court. Yet the situation of the philoi was never fully crystallised. The ambiguity of their position, even towards the end of the Hellenistic Age, is illustrated by a gesture of Mithradates Eupator: when he installed his son, Machares, as ruler of the Bosporan Kingdom, he assigned a number of his own Friends to follow his son; years later, when he returned to his Bosporan possessions after being defeated by the Romans, he punished his treacherous son and he killed those same Friends, while sparing the lives of Machares’s personal Friends, stating that their betrayal was more than justified by the personal allegiance they owed to Machares. This demonstrates that – at least from the Mithradates’s perspective – the relation between Friends and King is not one governed by institutional rigours (otherwise, he would have pardoned all of Machares’ Friends, both old and new), but exclusively by personal allegiance and faithfulness.

II.1.1. Recruitment of the philoi

In order to determine how the recruitment of the philoi was performed, it is necessary to determine first the identity of the Friends. Some of them, such as Dorylaos, owing to a long-term intimacy with the king – going back in this case as far as childhood –, develop a particularly close relation with him and receive proportional honours. Others, such as Athenion (the Epicurean philosopher from Athens who, sent on an embassy to Mithradates VI, became one of his Friends and gained the highest honour), or as Metrodoros of Scæpsis (whose rhetorical abilities earned him not only the title of “Father of the King”, but also the high position of ἐπὶ τῶν ἀνακρίσεων), are exceptional presences, people whose talent in certain areas (artistic, philosophical or otherwise) impressed the kings enough to grant them this important aulic title. There are others, such as Strabon’s great-uncle, Moaphernes, who belong to the group of the dynastai, the land-owning aristocracy or what one may call with a somewhat more modern term ‘landed gentry’. Their ownership of land and their role in the functioning of the army (discussed in more detail below, in Section II.2) brought them to the attention of the king.

28 Mithradates VI transfers some of his friends to the Court of his son, Machares: “ὁ δὲ Μιθριδάτης αὐτοῦ τῶν φίλων, οὓς μὲν αὐτὸς ἐς τὴν ἀρχὴν ἀποίην ἐδεδοκές, πάντας ἐκτείνει, τοὺς δὲ τοῦ παιδὸς ἀπαθεῖς ὡς υπηρέταις ἵδιον φίλου γενομένους ἀφῆκε”, App., Mithr., 102.
29 “monui regem ut omnem diligentiam ad se conservandum adhiberet, amicosque patris eius atque avi iudicio probatos hortatus sum regis sui vitam docti casu acerbissimo patris eius omni cura custodiaque defenderent”, Cic., Ad Fam., 15.2.4-8.
30 Such was the case of Dorylaos the Tactician, philos of Mithradates V Euergetes, and his nephew, Dorylaos, syntrophos of Mithradates VI Eupator (Str., 10.4.10), to quote but one example.
31 Cf. supra, n. 28.
32 In this respect, Savalli-Lestrade’s work (Savalli-Lestrade, 1998) is of particular value.
33 Str., 10.4.10.
34 “ὑπακομιῶν < Μιθριδάτην > τῶν βασιλείας τῶν φίλων εἰς ἐγένετο, μεγάλας τυχών προκατληπτικές”, Athen., 5.48.
36 Str., 11.2.18; Str., 12.3.33.
of the king, who selected a number of them to become his friends.

It is probably the same mechanism that helped promote to the position of philos important citizens of the major cities in Pontus, Amisos and Sinope, such as Diophantos of Sinope\textsuperscript{37} or Papias of Amisos,\textsuperscript{38} namely the wealth of their families and their personal services to the king.

II.1.2. Hierarchy of the philoi

As the Court became an increasingly complex structure, the need to distinguish between different classes of Friends, according to their degree of closeness to the monarch, became more stringent. This trend was felt firstly by the great monarchies of the East, the Ptolemies and the Seleukids, and the Houses of Pontus, Cappadocia and Commagene were quick to imitate them (drawing inspiration from the Seleukids, in particular, with whom they intermarried copiously).\textsuperscript{39} In the case of the Seleukids, for whom the documentation is more abundant, one may distinguish at least five classes of Friends: φίλοι, τιμωμένοι φίλοι, πρῶτοι φίλοι, πρῶτοι και προτιμωμένοι φίλοι and συγγενεῖς (which include the king’s σύντροφοι and his honorific parent, πατήρ).\textsuperscript{40}

The literary and epigraphic evidence allows us to reconstruct for the Eastern Anatolian kingdoms an identical structure. The first rank, that of φίλος, though it must have been the most common, is the hardest to pin down on an individual, mainly because the ancient authors tend to use it collectively, designating the entire group of Friends.

We are better informed about the next class, that of the τιμωμένοι φίλοι: we know of a certain Eteokles, a friend of Orophernes, who is honoured in an inscription from Priene (\textit{I. Priene}, 135), and of Dionysios, a friend of Euergetes, honoured on a Delian inscription (\textit{ID}, 1559). Diophantos, who led the victorious Crimean campaign on behalf of Eupator, may have been a τιμωμένος φίλος, if the inscription from Chersonesos which tells us his story may be trusted to convey accurately the aulic title: “Διόφαντος Ἀσκλαπιδώρου Σινωπεύς [...] πιστευόμενος δὲ καὶ τιμωμένος οὐθενὸς ἦσσον υπὸ βασιλέως Μιθραδάτου Εὐπάτορος” (\textit{JosPE} \textit{Γ}, 352, ).

Among the πρῶτοι φίλοι were Papias, whose name and title was recorded on the same Delian Heroon (\textit{ID}, 1573) and two persons, one of them being ‘son of Herakleides’, both of whose names were unfortunately lost, friends of Ariobarzanes III\textsuperscript{41} and who have

\textsuperscript{37} \textit{JosPE} \textit{Γ}, 352.
\textsuperscript{38} \textit{ID}, 1573.
\textsuperscript{39} \textit{Cf. supra}, pp. 114-117.
\textsuperscript{40} Bickerman (\textit{Bickerman}, 1938, pp. 41-42) identifies only four classes of Friends, placing the συγγενεῖς as a class different from the Friends, though this does not appear to be a sound distinction. If practices at the Pontic court in this respect closely resemble those of the Seleukid court, which appears to be the case, then the career of Metrodoros of Scepsis is evidence that the συγγενεῖς were not a class apart from the Friends, but rather the highest rank in their hierarchy: “όν ἦν καὶ Μητρόδωρος ὁ Σκήψιος, ἀνὴρ εἰτείν οὐκ ἀπής καὶ πολυμαθής, ἀκμή δὲ φίλιας τοσαύτη ἀρματθήνος, ὡστε πατὴρ προσαγωγεύεσθαι τοῦ βασιλέως.” (\textit{Plut.}, \textit{Luc.}, 22.2).
been honoured by the city of Tyana.

The rank of πρῶτοι καὶ προτιμωμένοι φίλοι is only attested in Commagene, and it was borne by a certain Apollas, son of Apollas. As his name is carved on the side of a relief representing Antiochus I, the natural assumption is that Apollas served this king, although a later date is not to be excluded entirely.

The highest tier of Friends, the συγγενεῖς is best represented in the Mithradatid Kingdom, and in relation to Mithradates VI Eupator. Metrodoros of Scepsis, who rose to the height of honours to be named ‘father’ by the king, has already been mentioned (see above, n. 40). Apart from him, the Delian Heroon preserves the memory of two σύντροφοι, Dorylaos (ID, 1572) and Gaios (ID, 1570, whose aulic title is confirmed by Plut., Pomp., 42).

II.1.3. Philoi in the administration

II.1.3.1. The Council of Friends

Being good courtiers, the Friends seem to have accompanied the King everywhere, in times of peace and in times of war, forming a council of advisors. As a consequence of this permanent and immediate contact, some of the King’s aura of command was imparted upon them and they were recognised as people endowed with authority, although this authority was somewhat vague (with the exception of those Friends who received specific administrative titles, which will be discussed below). The council of the Friends resembled more a gentlemen’s club than an institution, and the purple cloaks with golden brooches they apparently wore should probably be seen as a status symbol rather than a badge of office. Bickerman apparently conceived the Council of Friends as an institution whose relation with the monarch was clearly determined, as if by a Constitution, but this opinion, followed closely even by Habicht, seems somewhat exaggerated, as it relies too much on exceptional cases when kings invoke the necessity to consult with Friends, in circumstances when postponing the decision would have been clearly to their advantage and they may have overstated the importance of this consultation simply to buy time.

The will of the monarch was always supreme, although this will could be swayed in

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42 ibid., p. 201.
43 The gift of a purple cloak received from the king as a sign of elevation is well attested for the Seleukids and we have no reason to doubt it was practiced in Eastern Anatolia as well: for example, when Mithradates Eupator, in love with Stratonike, wished to impress her poor father, offered him besides many other gifts a purple cloak and a horse (Plut., Pomp., 36). Moreover, a certain general by the name Dorylaos wears a distinctive purple robe and is killed during a chaotic retreat precisely because of it (Plut., Luc., 17.3: the historian does not clarify if the person who killed Dorylaos did so to rob him of the valuable garment or because the purple identified him as a man close to the King, who had betrayed his soldiers by attempting to escape first from the camp, without their knowledge, and had thus enraged them).
44 In commenting the encounter between Antiochus IV and Popilius Laenas, he writes: “C’était plus qu’une humiliation. C’était la violation flagrante d’une loi organique, quoique non écrite du royaume, selon laquelle le monarque en référerait à ses amis dans toutes les circonstances graves et ne prenait aucune décision importante sans avoir demandé l’avis des amis”, Bickerman, 1938, p. 48.
one direction or another by persuasive friends. It was in this informal power (or ability) to persuade the monarch that the authority of a Friend ultimately resided and this was the reason why the φίλοι were so important in the eyes of third parties, as demonstrated among others by the numerous epigraphic documents in which the dedicators praise together the King, the Friends and the Army or extol the patronage of one Friend or another who had generously interceded in favour of a city or an individual.

A letter of Eupator to the hapless citizens of Chios illustrates well the situation of the council of Friends. After accusing the Chians of conspiring with the Romans, Mithradates concludes: “τοὺς οὖν ἐπιβουλεύοντας μὲν τῇ ἐμῇ ἀρχῇ, ἐπιβουλεύοντας δὲ καὶ τῷ σῶματι, οἱ μὲν ἐμοὶ φίλοι ἐδικαίωσαν ἀποθανεῖν, ἐγὼ δ’ ὑμῖν τιμώμαι δισχιλίων ταλάντων”. The king plays here a rather cynical game, exploiting the public knowledge that the opinion of the Friends was usually important, only to demonstrate in the end that he is the master of his own decisions, while at the same time using the opportunity to portray as generosity what was in effect a rather severe punishment.

In the military context, where authority tends to be respected more strictly than in civilian life, Friends have an increased profile. They form the King’s council of war and his general staff: they advise him and he sometimes seeks their advice. This privileged relation with the commander-in-chief emphasizes the authority of the Friends in the eyes of the army, who accept orders from them when the King himself is not present.

II.1.3.2. Friends as officials in the administration: The High Priest of Comana

Besides offering the King their advice whenever needed, the group of Friends also served as a useful pool of officers (as mentioned above) and representatives in the administration. Some of them were entrusted with a number of specific charges, which institutionalised their power. We do not possess the complete list of these official positions – this is hardly achievable even in the case of monarchies for which documents are much more abundant, such as the Seleukids or the Ptolemies – but the little we have will hopefully be sufficient to demonstrate that the administrative apparatus in Eastern Anatolia follows to a good extent the Macedonian model, although in some respects older

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46 SEG, 33, 675, vv. 18-21.
47 Žurnal ministerstva narodnogo prosveshcheniya, 1900:27,33.
48 APP., Mithr., 47.
49 APP., Mithr., 75.
50 APP., Mithr., 80.
51 APP., Mithr., 89.
strata are still visible.

In Pontus and Cappadocia, the second person in the kingdom after the king himself is said to be the High Priest of each of the two Comanas. The position of ‘second after the king’ has been demonstrated to have clear Iranian – in particular Achaemenid – roots. Benveniste, developing the theory put forward by Volkmann, has identified this title over a wide geographical span, from Armenia to Sogdia, and demonstrated that it remounts to an Achaemenid formula, whose earliest attestation seems to be an inscription commissioned by Xerxes: “Dārayavahuś puçā aniyaści āhantā; Auramazdām avaθā kama āha: Dārayavauś haya manā pita pasā tanūm mām maθiśtam akuṇaś” (XPf, 27-32). While Kent understood the formula as ‘Darius, my father, made me crown prince’, Schmitt preferred to give this passage a neutral translation: “Darius had also other sons, but thus was the desire of Auramazda: Darius, my father, made me the greatest <after himself>”. The latter appears to be correct, taking into account all the occurrences of the title which are not associated with the actual heir to the throne.

This position is well attested at the Achaemenid court under the name of ‘hazarapatiś’ and translated into Greek as χιλιάρχος and in Hebrew as ‘ptšgr’ (literally, ‘second <after the King>’). Alexander adopted this position and made first Hephaistion and then Perdiccas his χιλιάρχοι. Later in the administrative history of the Successor Kingdoms, the position of ἐπὶ τῶν πραγμάτων seems to fulfil exactly the same role.

Yet, the ‘second after the King’ in Cappadocia and Pontus, while clearly a descendant of the ‘hazarapatiś’ and thus cognate with the ἐπὶ τῶν πραγμάτων, is set apart by the fact that it represents a religious office. The explanation for this unusual fact must lie in the pre-Achaemenid history of Eastern Asia Minor, possibly as far back as the Hittites, who venerated assiduously their holy cities, among which a special place was occupied by Kummanni, in the region they called Kizzuwatna, and which is thought by scholars to have been the settlement which would later be called Comana. Here, documents attest the presence in the 14th century BC of a series of ‘princes-priests’, such as Kantuzzili and his successor Telepinu, sons of the Hittite king who were entrusted with the position of

52 “καὶ ἐστιν οὕτως < ὁ ιερεὺς > δεύτερος κατὰ τιμὴν [ἐν] τῇ Καππαδοκίᾳ μετὰ τῶν βασιλέων ὡς δ’ ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ τοῦ αὐτοῦ γένους ὥσπερ οἱ ιερεῖς τοῖς βασιλεῦσι, Str., 12.2.3. Although Strabon’s testimony is clear, that in most cases the High Priests were relatives of the kings, the only occupant of this position not to have been imposed by the Romans was Dorylaos, who was a syngenes, but not a blood relation of Mithradates Eupator.
53 BENVENISTE, 1966, pp. 64-65.
54 VOLKMANN, 1937.
55 KENT, 1953, s.v. maθiśta.
56 CASABONNE, 2009, tries unconvincingly to argue that the equation Kummanni-Comana is not tenable and proposes instead an etymology based on an unattested Hittite toponym, *Kamarra, meaning ‘the shady one’, which would be reflected in a Neo-Assyrian text as Kammanu. Equally hard to accept is the hypothesis put forward by Haas (HAAS, 1994, p. 580) that ‘Kummanni’ was in Commagene and later gave its name to the entire region, due mainly to phonetic difficulties, although historical fact alone does not entirely preclude this idea, as the land of Kizzuwatna, whose capital Kummanni was, did include the territory later occupied by Commagene.
High Priest of Tešub and Hebat at Kummanni and who, in this capacity, were not only in charge of the administration of the entire region, but were also expected to take part in the military expeditions in the area. It is tempting to see the similarities between the functions of the Hittite ‘princes-priests’ and those of the Hellenistic High Priest of Comana as the result of continuity, rather than of coincidence.

II.1.3.3. Friends as officials in the administration: Other positions

Apart from the High Priest of Comana, there were other important positions in the administration occupied by Friends. Even Dorylaos, Eupator’s syntrophos, before being appointed High Priest, had occupied the positions of ἐπὶ τοῦ ἐγχειρίδιου and τεταγμένον ἐπὶ τῶν δυνάμεων (ID, 1572). The first of these charges has been compared by Savalli-Lestrade with Philip’s and Alexander’s σωματοφύλακες, who, besides being the king’s most trusted bodyguards, were also entrusted with the repression of plots against the King or other acts of treason. The second office could probably be likened with the modern office of Minister of Defence, being charged with the administrative side of the running of the Army, though Dorylaos is also known for taking the field while on campaign, at the head of the all-important phalanx.

Doctors have always occupied positions of honour at the royal courts, in every culture. They are attested both at the Achaemenid and at the Argead court. During the Hellenistic age, the Successor Kingdoms proved hospitable to skilled doctors and the office of ‘Doctor-in-Chief’, ἀρχιατρός, was created. Given that Mithradates Eupator was renowned for his medical preoccupations (to such an extent that some of his Friends, eager to please him, offered their bodies for him to practice cauterisations and other medical procedures), it is not surprising that one of his most honoured Friends was Papias, the ἀρχιατρός (ID, 1573).

As it was part of the King’s duties to dispense justice, he was also surrounded by people who could help him in this capacity. Two people are known to have occupied the position of ἐπὶ τῶν ἀνακρίσεων, Papias (the same inscription as above, ID, 1573) and Metrodoros of Scepsis (Str., 13.1.55). The role of this official is also described by Strabon as “ταχθεὶς ἐπὶ τῆς δικαιοδοσίας, ἀφ’ ἧς οὐκ ἦν τῷ κριθέντι αναβολὴ τῆς δίκης ἐπὶ τὸν βασιλέα”.

The growing bureaucratic apparatus ensured a better control of the kingdom and at the Court there soon appeared those officials whose responsibility was to deal with the paperwork. Thus, we have knowledge of the existence at the Pontic Court of the position of ἐπὶ τοῦ ἀποφόρητου (a Friend by the name Kallistratos who had this role

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57 Freu, 2002.
59 App., Mithr., 17; App., Mithr., 49.
60 Plut., De adul., 14.
61 Cf. supra, p. 167.
is identified in Plut., Luc., 17; a certain ‘son of Antipatros’ receives a dedication in ID, 1571 and Reinach suggested restoring the same name, Kallistratos, in the lacuna); at the Commagenian court there appears to be a special position for the ἐκλογιστής (Savalli-LestraDe, 1998, p. 201) and so on.

Another group of friends was entrusted by the king with important administrative positions away from the court itself, being in charge of governing various administrative divisions. These could be said to belong to the ‘outer circle of Friends’, because while a governorship conferred upon one prestige and not infrequently avenues for personal enrichment, it also meant loss of direct contact with the King, which, as mentioned above, represented the philos’ most important asset.

We have knowledge of the existence of satraps (such as Leonippos or Eumachos), strategoi (such as Mithratochmes, son of Iazemis, and possibly the Commagenian Apollas) or ὑπαρχοι such as Strabon’s great-uncle, Moaphernes.

Friends of the King could be sent to represent his interests even at the lowest level, as officials in cities. Thus, the city of Tyana honours two men whose title seems to be ἐπὶ τῆς πόλεως and who, in this capacity, exercised benefactions towards the city. It is uncertain to what extent this title – quite vague in effect – was a more elegant rendering of the φρουράρχος, an official position much better represented in the historical record, particularly in the historical works dealing with the Mithradatic Wars.

A particular group of the king’s Friends who play a role in administration is represented by those who represent the interests of the king outside the borders of the kingdom stricto sensu. They are the governors sent to friendly or subjected cities who are better known in literature as tyrants. The best known among these is probably Athenion, whose triumphal return to Athens is narrated in colourful terms by Athenaios (App., Mithr., 28).

II.2. The dynastai

This section aims to shed more light on a prominent sector of Eastern Anatolian societies in Hellenistic times, the landed aristocracy, which, however, remains to this day shrouded to a good extent in mystery. In order to find out more, one must piece together scraps of information from literary sources and the frustratingly little offered by epigraphy.

In the present discussion, the term ‘landed aristocracy’, does not generally point to the aristocracy of the Greek poleis, but rather to the land-owners from the Hinterland, who appear to be quite different from the former from the point of view of their ethnicity, the régime of their property, and their military obligations.

62 Cf supra, p. 173, n. 41.

63 “αὐτὸς μὲν [...] ἐν Περγάμῳ καθῆστο, πλούτους καὶ δυναστείας καὶ τυραννίδας διανέμων τοῖς φίλοις”, Plut., Sull., 11.2.

II.2.1. Terms used to designate the landed aristocracy

In the sources, these men of elevated status are called δυνάσται, ἄριστοι or μεγιστάνες. The first term is rather common in Greek, being used indiscriminately for barbarian chieftains (Pol., 10.35.6), for Greco-Macedonian sovereigns (Pol., 9.1.4), for Anatolian ‘barons’ (Str., 12.3.1) etc. and stems from δύναμαι, therefore designating the authority founded upon some form of military pre-eminence.

The second term, ἄριστοι, is less frequent, but its use is not surprising, as it describes one’s superiority by birth, often in the form of belonging to a privileged family. Sometimes, however, the use of the word is ambiguous and one should abstain from drawing too many conclusions. For example, the reference in Plut., Luc., 31.8: “πρῶτος δ’ αὐτὸς ἀντέστη τοῖς Ἀτροπατηνοῖς κατ’ αὐτόν οὐσι μετὰ τῶν ἀρίστων καὶ […] ἐτρέψατο” could be translated, as indeed Bernadotte Perrin (the editor of the 1914 LOEB edition) does, as “He set upon the Atropateni, who were stationed opposite him with the magnates of the King’s following and […] routed them” or simply “He set upon the Atropateni, who were stationed right in front of him, among the best troops in the army and […] put them to flight”.

The last term, μεγιστάνες, is far more exotic, for it appears to be applied exclusively to Oriental noblemen: in Greek, the word is abundant in the Septuagint and in Flavius Josephus, while the Latin megistanes is being used in connection with the Armenian and Parthian courts. The formation of the Greek word appears quite transparent: the superlative μέγιστος + the suffix –αν, specialized in designating groups of people. However, the relative rarity of the term, its appearance at the dawn of Hellenism, corroborated with the fact that Latin perceived it almost as a technical term, suited to describe a very narrow group of noblemen, invites to closer scrutiny.

It is certainly interesting that Old Persian possesses a similar term to designate nobility: maθišta. The parallelism between the Old Persian maθišta, a superlative of the adjective maga (big, great) and the Greek μεγιστάν, derived from the superlative of the same adjective is, indeed, at the very least a striking coincidence. The similarities go even beyond the formal level and can also be traced in the functional level, for the Old Persian word seems to have evolved towards an “institutionalised” meaning. Thus, it was used not merely to designate an extraordinary military command, but also forms

66 It is interesting to note that R. Flacelière and E. Chambry, in their 1972 Les Belles Lettres edition turn the phrase, incorrectly, to my mind, to make the ἄριστοι the best of Lucullus’ own army: “Il marcha contre les gens d’Atropatène qui lui faisaient face avec ses meilleurs soldats”.
67 The early occurrence in Menandros (fr. 1035) is isolated and irrelevant. Being a comedy, we might suppose it was pointing indeed to an Eastern wealthy person, as part of a comparison not necessarily flattering to a character, but this is mere conjecture, impossible to prove unless new papyrological evidence comes to light.
68 Front., Strat., 2.9; Sen., Ad Luc., 21.4; Suet., Calig., 5.1; Tac., Ann., 15.27.
69 DB II, 19-20; DB III, 83-85 etc.
70 Cf. supra, n. 70.
of leadership which were primarily civil.\footnote{Kent 1953, s.u. mahišta. Cf. supra, p. 175.} Roland G. Kent goes even further, translating \textit{mah\'ista} by “crown prince”.\footnote{Gignoux 1972, s.v. m\'hysty and ms\'y\'st.}

It is useful to note that Old Persian could resort to a number of other words when describing the semantic area of nobility: \textit{Arya}- (which tends, however, to be restricted to designating the Iranian ethnicity) and the perfect participle \textit{āmātā} (stemming from the verb \textit{mā-} ‘to measure’ and the preverb/preposition \textit{ā-} ‘to’), but it is \textit{mah\'ista} which has the clearest parallels in Pehlevi and in Parthian: \textit{m\'hysty} and \textit{ms\'y\'st}, respectively.\footnote{Kent 1953, s.u. mahišta. Cf. supra, p. 175.} This may suggest that \textit{mah\'ista} has enjoyed the widest use and that it was by this term that the Iranian noblemen in Achaemenid and post-Achaemenid times described themselves.

What would the Eastern Anatolian land-owning aristocrats call themselves, then? Given the Iranian background of many and the reverence awarded to Iranian inheritance, one may be led to assume \textit{μεγιστάν} would be favoured. We possess, however, no evidence of self-definition from these men, no document in which they would refer to themselves. The closest thing we have to an inside voice is the work of Strabon.\footnote{For Strabon’s personal ties with the Eastern Anatolian aristocracy, cf. supra, pp. 21-22.} When writing about this subject, Strabon systematically used the term \textit{δυνάσται}. Whatever the geographer’s cultural agenda,\footnote{Desideri 2000, passim.} we must accept this term as being used not only referentially (Greek and Roman authors about Anatolian nobility), but also self-referentially (land-owning aristocrats about themselves).

II.2.2. Πη ἰδιόκτητος

The issue of land owned by private individuals, γῆ ἰδιόκτητος, is very hard to analyse due to the lack of sources. It is only the property of the dynasts that has left some traces in the historical record. The following analysis will, therefore, be devoted to what might be called γῆ δυναστική. As mentioned above, dynasts held one or more of the strongholds Eastern Asia Minor possessed in such abundance. However, the true regime of this property is not entirely clear. May their hold on the \textit{phrouria} be characterised as full property or just temporary possession? The Genitive in phrases such as “τὴν δ’ ἄλλην ἀσφάλειαν τὴν αὐτῶν τε καὶ σωμάτων καὶ τῶν χρημάτων εἶχον ἐν τοῖς φρουρίοις, ἃ πολλά ὑπάρχει τὰ μὲν βασιλικά τὰ δὲ τῶν φίλων”\footnote{Str., 12.3.1} is not particularly illuminating. The notice that Pompeius, following the rout of Eupator distributed the land towards Armenia and Colchis to the allied dynasts\footnote{“τὰ μὲν πρὸς Ἀρμνίαν καὶ τὰ περὶ τὴν Κολχίδα τοῖς συναγωγούμενοι δυνάσταις κατένειμε” (Str., 12.3.1).} may be interpreted in both ways,

\footnote{“Marguś nāmā dahyāŭś, haŭmaĭ hamiçiyā abava, aĭva martiya Frāda nāma Mārgava, avam maθiśtam akunavanta” (DB III 10-12: “There is a country, Margiana by name, that became rebellious to me. There was a man, Frada by name, a Margian – him they made their leader.”) or “avada aniyam maθiśtam akunavam, yaʃta mām kāma āha, pasāva dahyāŭś manā abava” (DB V 28-30: “There, <after the defeat of Skunkha>, I made another their chief, as was my desire. After that, the country became mine”).}

\footnote{Kent 1953, s.u. mahišta. Cf. supra, p. 175.}

\footnote{Gignoux 1972, s.v. m\'hysty and ms\'y\'st.}

\footnote{For Strabon’s personal ties with the Eastern Anatolian aristocracy, cf. supra, pp. 21-22.}

\footnote{Desideri 2000, passim.}

\footnote{Str., 12.2.9.}

\footnote{“τὰ μὲν πρὸς Ἀρμνίαν καὶ τὰ περὶ τὴν Κολχίδα τοῖς συναγωγούμενοι δυνάσταις κατένειμε” (Str., 12.3.1).}
since the verb κατανέμω, while conveying the meaning of “to divide, to allot” does not necessarily imply transfer of actual property. Otherwise, the references to fortresses passing from one hand to another are commonplace, especially as a victorious general, many times a Roman, rewards his allies. They seem to be, in a way, the “coin” used to purchase the allegiance of the nobility, and a very convenient one for both parts, since they were extremely valuable for the local nobility but virtually useless for the Romans, who sometimes preferred to pull them down rather than to bear the costs of manning and maintaining them.

Two incidents, both pertaining to the period of the Mithradatic Wars, may shed more light on this particularly delicate subject. Among the many Pontic commanders yielding more or less willingly to Pompeius, Stratoni, the concubine of Mithradates, was the most conspicuous. She had been left in charge of a fortress, which she surrendered to the victorious Roman general on condition that he would spare her son (App., Mithr., 107; Plut., Pomp., 36.3-6, Dio Cass., 37.7). In Plutarch’s words, she is the guardian of the richest of the king’s castles: “Στρατονίκη δέ, ἡ μέγιστον εἶχεν ἀξίωμα καὶ τὸ πολυχρυσότατον τῶν φρούριων ἐφύλαττεν κτλ.” (Plut., Pomp., 36.3), but a few paragraphs later, in Plut., Pomp., 36.6, what she hands over is the whole region, spiced up, as one would expect from an Oriental, with a generous bribe in cash: “τῷ δὲ Πομπείῳ καὶ τὸ χωρίον παρεδίδου τοῦτο καὶ δῶρα πολλὰ προσήνεγκεν”. While this incident may not be used to argue that the δυνάστης owns his stronghold, since Stratoni does not own, but merely guards the φρούριον (so what she gives Pompey is the military control of the surrounding region, not real estate), it does prove that the fortress may not be considered independently of the surrounding area, that the arable land (‘χωρίον’, besides the meanings of ‘place’ or ‘district’, may also indicate an ‘estate’) around it was part and parcel of the tenure.

In order to determine how the land was worked, a useful analogy may be drawn with the situation of the noblemen of Armenian origin who master Lesser Armenia, as well as Sophene:

δυνάσται δ’αὐτήν <χώραν> κατείχον ἀεί, [...] ύπηκόους δ’ εἴχον καὶ τοὺς Χαλδαίους καὶ Τιβαρηνούς, ὥστε μέχρι Ἰρανεζόντως καὶ Φαρνακίας διατείνειν τὴν ἄρχην αὐτῶν. (Str., 12.3.28)

The use of the word ύπηκόους is very likely to indicate that the Chaldeans and the Tibarenians were serfs, the half-way between slaves and free men, which has parallels in

78 What Strabon describes in 12.3.1 is not an isolated event. Further examples can be found in Plut., Pomp., 38.2 and other authors.
79 There was also a political message in tearing down the walls of phrouria, a very obvious marker of the new age brought about in Pontus by the Roman victories, the age of the polis as the administrative nucleus. For further discussion of the subject, cf. Hotte, 2009b.
the situation of the Mariandynoi around Herakleia, to name but one example, although the possibility that they were the subordinate partner in a purely military alliance may not be discarded.

More light is being shed on this juridical problem surrounding the φρούριον by a reference in Strabon to a financial transaction:

ἔστι δὲ φρούριον ἀξιόλογον τῶν Καππαδόκων ἐν τῇ περαίᾳ Τόμισα· τοῦτο δ’ ἐπράθη μὲν τῷ Σωφηνῷ ταλάντων ἑκατόν, ὕστερον δὲ ἐδωρήσατο Λεύκολλος τῷ Καππάδοκι συστρατεύσαντι ἀριστεῖον κατὰ τὸν πρὸς Μιθριδάτην πόλεμον. (Str., 12.2.1)

Thus, we find out that actual ownership was exercised over these strongholds, which could be bought, sold and made gift of. The hypothesis that it was merely the revenue of the land which was handed over, as many a time happened in the Seleucid kingdom is precluded by the fact that following this transaction, the fortress passed from one kingdom to another and in all likelihood the ruler of Sophene was purchasing, rather dearly, a strategic key point rather than a supplementary source of income.

However, there are many questions which remain unclear, like who was the ultimate owner of the place, since Strabo’s Genitive plural Καππαδόκων is ambiguous, all the more so as he points in 12.2.11 that the Romans concluded an alliance at the same time with the Cappadocian king and the Cappadocian ἔθνος (in this context, ἔθνος has been variously translated, from the general tribe to the more specific and more probable nobility), seen as equal partners:

Ῥωμαιοὶ [...] φιλίας καὶ συμμαχίας ἐποιοῦντο πρὸς τε τὰ ἔθνη καὶ τοὺς βασιλεῖς, τοῖς μὲν ἄλλοις βασιλεύσιν αὐτοῖς καθ’ ἑαυτοὺς δοθῆναι τὴν τιμὴν ταύτην, τῷ δὲ Καππάδοκι καὶ αὐτῷ δὲ τῷ ἐθνεὶ κοινῆ.

The one who receives it back is obviously the Cappadocian king and the only chronologically suitable candidate for identification is Ariobarzanes I. Although not clearly stated, it seems very likely that the one who sold the fortress to the ruler of Sophene in the first place was the same Ariobarzanes: his political destiny, being driven out time and again by his enemies and continuously reinstated by the Romans brought Cappadocia on the brink of bankruptcy (a situation that continued unchanged under his successors) and it must have been in this context of dire need of cash that the king decided to part with a formidably important fortress, which guarded one of the few crossings over

80 Str. 12.3.4. For a more detailed discussion of the situation of such tribes, cf. Papazoglou, 1997, particularly pp. 113-140.

81 For a detailed discussion of the epigraphical testimonies concerning the juridical status of purchased properties, particularly from the point of view of the people living on these properties, cf. Papazoglou 1997, passim.
the Euphrates. What makes this incident particularly interesting is that Ariobarzanes had been a dynast before being elected to kingship, so this opens up the possibility of him owning Tomisa not as king, but as δυνάστης.

When considered in ensemble, all these pieces of information seem to leave open the possibility that the dynasts enjoyed full property over their fortresses and adjacent plots, although they cannot serve to prove this hypothesis irrefutably.

It may be more prudent to assume that ultimate property lay with the king and it was him who bestowed various strongholds or the income of the same upon various favourites of him and could withdraw his gifts at his leisure. The rather obscure notice that Mithradates Eupator gave his father-in-law the estate of a recently deceased rich man may be used, with some caution, as proof of that: “πλουσίου τεθνηκότος ἔναγχος οἶκον αὐτῷ μέγαν ὁ βασιλεὺς δεδώρηται” (Plut., Pomp., 36.5). However, the main question, why was the king in a position to dispose of the property of a dead man, might have a plethora of answers: the estate may have been left in a will, the rich man may have been executed for treason and his goods confiscated, the estate may have been royal land given ἐν δωρεᾷ, which naturally returned to the crown upon the death of the beneficiary and others are all equally plausible explanations.

II.2.3. Dynastai as soldiers

The situation in which the king provides land in exchange for military service is not without precedent, nor without parallels in the Hellenistic world. The Achaemenid kings would give plots of land in return for military service (the size of the plot was directly proportional to the rank and specialisation of the soldier) and a similar system, though with notable differences, may be seen in the Hellenistic East in the guise of the κατοικίαι. As the dynasts’ role in the army has been discussed in more detail elsewhere (cf. supra, pp. 155-156), it will be sufficient to remind here that in exchange for land, they provided the king a substantial proportion of his heavily armed troops, in particular cavalry of exceptional quality.

II.2.4. The social status of the dynastai

Since they were the core of the army and had much of the wealth of the land in their hands, their social status can only be considered enviable. Indeed, the sources give every indication that they were generally quite close to royalty. As discussed above, many of the king’s philoi were recruited from their ranks and some, such as Moaphernes, were selected for important administrative positions.

If Plutarch’s account is to be believed, the daughters of the dynastai were not shunned by the king himself, who had them as concubines: “Ὅσαι δὲ τῶν Μιθριδάτου παλλακίων ἀνήχθησαν, ὀυδεμίαν ἐγνω [...]. ἦσαν γὰρ αἱ πολλαὶ θυγατέρες καὶ γυναῖκες στρατηγῶν καὶ δυναστῶν.” (Plut., Pomp., 36.2). While it is quite possible that the wives and daughters of important people within the kingdom would be housed in the palace, alongside the royal women (both as an honour, representing the feminine

82 Cf. DANDAMAEV & LUKONIN 1989, p. 231 sqq.
equivalent of the institution of the *paides*, the Royal Pages, and as hostages, ensuring the loyalty of their husbands and fathers), it seems quite unlikely that they – particularly the wives of other people – were indeed the concubines of the king and this appears to be just a literary exaggeration, meant to contrast the perverse Oriental despot (Mithradates) with the temperate and generous Roman general (Pompey).

Whether the δυνάσται themselves were considered dignified enough to wed princesses remains shrouded in mystery. Sullivan has proposed an affirmative answer, in order to justify the claim made by Archelaos (son of Eupator’s most conspicuous general, also named Archelaos, who eventually betrayed his king) to have been a descendent of Mithradates VI in order to gain Berenike IV’s hand. The argument went that in the tightly knit network of marital alliances in the Hellenistic East, Berenike must have been perfectly aware of Archelaos’ family and the only possible connection with the Mithradatid house would be through an otherwise unattested princess, given in marriage to Archelaos the father. However, the Strabonian text says clearly that Archelaos the younger claimed to be the son of Eupator:

밤ε δ’ ἀντ’ ἐκείνου προσποιησάμενος καὶ αὐτὸς εἶναι Μιθριδάτου υἱὸς τοῦ Ἐὐπάτορος Ἀρχέλαος, ὃς ἦν μὲν Ἀρχελάδου υἱὸς τοῦ πρὸς Σῦλλαν διαπολεμήσαντος καὶ μετὰ ταύτα τιμηθέντος ὑπὸ Ῥωμαίων, πᾶππος δὲ τοῦ βασιλέα τῶν Καππαδόκων Καππαδόκων οὐσίωτου καθ’ ἡμᾶς, ἱερεὺς δὲ τῶν ἐν Πόντῳ Κομάνων. (Str., 17.1.11)

Obviously, he was convinced that close scrutiny of his claim would be impossible, given the great number of children sired by the king. Therefore, while the possibility of marriage between dynastai and princesses should not be rejected entirely, it must not be taken as a certainty.

Perhaps the most important proof of the height of the esteem the δυνάσται enjoyed remains that when the Cappadocian dynasty had become extinct, it was Ariobarzanes, one from their ranks, who was judged fit to climb the throne.

Thus, by the fact that they owned a domain centred around a stronghold, they participated in the military expeditions of their king and formed an important segment of his court, one could justify the comparison made between the Eastern-Anatolian dynastai and the feudal lords of Europe during the Middle Ages. Their great importance in military, political and economic terms fully justifies considering the Eastern Anatolian δυνάσται a crucial segment in the social fabric of the Eastern Anatolian kingdoms.

### III. Local Communities

The reason to include a discussion about local communities in the chapter dealing with power and wealth is that a community is necessarily a structure of power (developing

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84 Perhaps a comparison with the Eastern or so-called “Byzantine” feudalism would be more appropriate than the comparison with the Western version, since the noblemen of the Antiquity were not, in so far as we can judge, organized in a strict, many-layered pyramid, but were connected directly to the king.
a certain hierarchy within itself; mastering and making use of the landscape around it; and finally, engaging with other communities in relations which range from emulation to outright hostility) which creates wealth and makes it possible for wealth to be distributed. In Eastern Anatolia, communities are numerous and come in different forms, according to their function and their degree of urbanisation. Thus, one may identify settlements which are geared towards agriculture or towards trade, serving military purposes or acting as religious centres, while occupying every level of urbanisation from the humble village to the imposing polis.

A study of the terms Strabo uses to describe the different types of settlement is revealing: besides the concept of πόλις, which seems to represent the measuring stick for settlements, he mentions a πολίχνιον such as Herpa (12.2.5), a κωμόπολις such as Garsauira (12.2.5), πολίσματα such as Kastabla and Kybistra (12.2.7), a πολίχνιον such as Abonou Teichos (12.3.10) or a κώμη such as Armene (12.3.10). It is interesting to note that Strabon’s assessment of these settlements does not always correspond to the language used by the communities themselves. Thus, Anisa describes itself as a polis (it has specific institutions, such as a demos, a boule and prytaneis), whereas Strabon emphatically states that in the Cilician district (στρατηγία) of Cappadocia there existed only one polis, namely Mazaka, also called ‘Eusebeia near the Argaeus’ (Str., 12.2.7). It is likely that Strabon himself was more interested in the outwardly aspects of urbanisation than in institutional details.

III.1. Villages

In Eastern Anatolia there appear to be entire regions where there are no urban settlements: “Πόλιν δ’ οὔτε τὸ τῶν Καταόνων ἔχει πεδίον οὔθ ἡ Μελιτηνή” (Str., 12.2.5). There are, instead, areas where villages are extremely numerous, as demonstrated not only by ancient literature, but also by modern surveys. Thus, Strabon mentions the Χιλιόκωμον, the ‘region of a thousand villages’, which stretched North-West of Amaseia, along one of the rivers that flows into the Iris (Str., 12.3.39). Appian describes a similar phenomenon: following an incursion into Mithradates’ territory, during which he had sacked some four hundred villages, Murena returned with much booty (App., Mithr., 65) – this incidentally demonstrates that villages in this area must have been not only numerous, but also relatively prosperous. Modern surveys come to confirm the information provided by the ancient writers: surveys undertaken in Paphlagonia and in particular in the Sinop Peninsula illustrate an increase of rural settlements during the Hellenistic Age, although it was only during the Roman times that settlements of all types increased in number and size.
Unfortunately, there is little to be said with any degree of certainty about the exact administrative regime of these small settlements or about the way in which they exercised property over the land (in case they did at all). What is reasonably certain, though, is that at least some of them were allotted to the numerous phrouria entrusted to the dynasts and even more of them must have been included in the γῆ βασιλική.

III.2. *Poleis* and *Γῆ πολιτική*

As mentioned above, Eastern Anatolia is not a land rich in Greek-style poleis, whether in the institutional sense or from the point of view of the urban facilities present therein. One may notice, however, a steady increase in the number of cities during the Hellenistic Age. The old Greek colonies on the Northern coast of Anatolia such as Sinope, Amisos, Trapezous or the equally old cities of non-Greek origin such as Mazaka in Cappadocia continued to thrive and often benefited from acts of evergetism from the kings. The rulers appear to have been keen to promote urbanisation: they refounded old cities, often marking the event by giving them a new dynastic name, such as Pharmakeia in Pontus, Mazaka-Eusebeia in Cappadocia or Samosata in Commagene. Besides these, there appeared a number of new urban communities whose names indicate royal intervention: Eupatoria or Laodikeia in Pontus, Ariarathieia in Cappadocia or Arsameia in Commagene.

III.2.1. *Case study: Sinope*

In order to understand better the types of relation in which one such urban settlement engaged, the situation of Sinope will be analysed as case-study. The story of the foundation of the city (dated in the late 7th century) is complex and shrouded in myths: on the site of a probable early Cappadocian settlement, the Thessalian hero Autolykos is said to have founded the first city, which was then occupied by Milesians under Habron (or Habrondas). Soon thereafter, the Cimmerians occupied the site, and were repulsed later by other Milesians, the exiles Koos and Kretines. Once firmly established, the city could finally take advantage of the surrounding landscape and interact with neighbouring communities.

The position of the city and the natural features of the landscape around it have been lauded by ancient authors, and with good reason. The place afforded very easy defence, as the city occupied a peninsula only two stades in width and the mountain behind it, while sloping gently towards the city, had cliffs almost impossible to scale on its seaward sides.

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89 The essential evidence pertaining to this city is usefully collected by A. Avram, J. Hind and G. Tzetkhladze in *Hansen & Nielsen, 2004*, pp. 960-963.
More importantly, the peninsula lay half-way between the Hellespont and Colchis and represented Asia Minor’s most Northerly point, closest to the Tauric Chersonese; it also formed two excellent harbours and this allowed Sinope to become a major maritime power, ‘ruling the sea inside the Kyaneai’, as Strabon puts it. It certainly helped that the configuration of the Black Sea (a great ellipse, constricted in the middle, resembling a Boeotian shield) created a circular water current in each of the two hemispheres, both rotating counter-clockwise and creating in the process two watery speedways, allowing ships to travel with celerity from Sinope to the Tauric Chersonese and back.\(^90\)

Besides serving as an avenue of communication and trade, in a manner befitting its name (scholars argue that the word Πόντος is etymologically related to the Latin pons, ‘bridge’ and Sanskrit pāṇthāḥ, ‘path’),\(^91\) the Black Sea offered Sinope excellent fishing grounds, the quality and quantity of tunny caught here being surpassed only at Byzantion (Str., 7.6.2; 12.3.11; 12.3.19). Although it lived mostly through and for the sea, Sinope made use also of the surrounding land, which was fairly fertile (Strabon mentions the beautiful gardens that existed on the terrace of Mount Skopelos and we know from the archaeological sites across the Euxine that Sinopean olive oil production was abundant – an exceptional phenomenon on the Anatolian shore of the Euxine) and rich in valuable wood, fit not only for making furniture, but also for ship-building.\(^92\)

While the geographical disposition of the city and the patterns of exploitation of natural resources it developed over time represented a necessary condition for wealth to be accumulated, it was by no means sufficient. It was only through constant interaction with other communities, through connectedness, that wealth was created. The following lines will look at the way Sinope interacted with a few key communities and the power structures that emerged as a result.

The city was fully integrated in the wider Hellenic world, tied by trading interests, military enterprises and a general sense of cultural identity. Trade was a lively activity within the basin of the Euxine and Sinope was at the forefront of this activity, and the shards of its stamped amphorae found on all corners of the coast are a testament to this. In order to consolidate its trading interests, Sinope, a colony of Miletus, became itself a source of colonists, founding Kotyora, Kerasous and Trapezous. As opposed to its metropolis, however, Sinope maintained a very close grip on its colonies, and exacted tribute from them (Xen., Anab., 5.5.10). The lively trade within the Euxine was complemented by solid commercial ties with the main cities of the Mediterranean,\(^93\) most importantly, it would seem, with Athens, Delos and Rhodes.

Experience has shown that a high level of connectedness brings strength to

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\(^{90}\) Doonan, 2004, p. 19, Fig. 1-15.

\(^{91}\) Cf. Chantraine, 1977, s.v. πόντος.


\(^{93}\) Fish trade: Diod., 31.24.1; Slave trade: Avram, 2007.
communities, but also generates important vulnerabilities. The first and most tangible benefit of the ties enumerated above was the prosperity enjoyed by the city, but no less important was the sense of participation in the Hellenic identity. Thus, Sinope participated and occasionally won prizes in some of the great Pan-Hellenic festivals, such as the Great Amphiaraia at Oropos (where Hestiaios won the juniors’ boxing competition: *IG VII, 414*) or the games in honour of Hera at Argos (a bronze hydria bearing the telling inscription “πάρο ἴερας Ἀργείας εἰς τὸν ἑαὐτό” has been found in Sinope: *SEG 30, 1456*). That Sinope was well attuned with the cultural trends of the day is also demonstrated by the fact that it produced men of value, recognised as such beyond its own borders. This is the order in which Strabon quotes them: Diogenes, the famous Cynic philosopher, Timotheus, another philosopher, the poet Diphilos and the historian Baton (*Str.*, 12.3.11).

The vulnerability created by this high degree of connectedness is represented by the fact that Sinope was sometimes dragged into conflicts it would have probably preferred to avoid. For example, in about 436 an Athenian expeditionary force occupied it, ousting the tyrant Timesileos (*Plut., Per.*, 20), and held it for approximately two decades. This event also had its advantages, as Sinope became a democracy with solid institutions, and whose Constitution has been noted down by those around Aristotle, who contributed materials to his monumental *Politeia*.

If the relation between Sinope and the other poleis covered the full spectrum from friendly competition in the Olympic spirit to fierce animosity⁹⁴ that one could expect from a relation between peers (with slight nuances when dealing with colonies), the relation with the ἔθνη of the Hinterland, the Paphlagonians and the Leucosyroi, was somewhat more complex. There existed, as one could expect, a fairly lively commerce, and one trace of that is preserved by Strabon, who, when discussing the quality of ruddle from Greater Cappadocia, calls the mineral ‘Sinopean ruddle’, because it was the merchants of Sinope who first brought it onto the Greek market.⁹⁵ Epigraphy has preserved traces of another type of merchandise with which our postcolonial sensitivities find it hard to cope—slaves.⁹⁶ Epigraphic documents in the Mediterranean basin record numerous slaves or likely slaves who have for ethnonym either ‘Παφλαγῶν’, ‘Κάππαδοξ’ or ‘Σινωπεύς’ and who are likely to have been brought as slaves to Sinope, on their way perhaps to an even larger slave market such as that on Delos. While warfare and piracy represent the most important sources of slaves, we should not automatically assume Sinope continuously attacked its neighbours in order to procure this valuable commodity. We do not even

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⁹⁴ The rivalry between Sinope and Sesamos was so great that the former, when approached by Datames and asked for support against the latter, gladly lent to the Persian satrap everything that he could possibly need during a siege, from materiel to skilled personnel, only to see with horror that Datames was actually intending to use the war machines against Sinope itself. (*Polyaen.*, 7.21.2)

⁹⁵ “Εν δὲ τῇ Καππαδοκίᾳ γίνεται καὶ ἡ λεγομένη Σινωπικὴ μίλτος ἀριστή τῶν πασῶν ἐνάμιλλος δὴ ἐστὶν αὐτὴ καὶ ἡ Ἱβηρικὴ ὁνομασία τῆς Σινωπικῆς διότι κατάγει ἐκεῖτε εἰσέθεναι αἱ ἐμπορίσσαι πρὸν ἢ τῶν Ἐφέσιων ἐμπόροι μέχρι τῶν ἐνθάδε ἀνθρώπων διάβαται”, *Str.*, 12.2.10.

⁹⁶ Avram, 2007.
possess information that they kept the ἔθνη of the Hinterland in a state of subjection, as the people of Herakleia Pontica did with the Mariandyes. On the contrary, Xenophon informs us that they were in formal relations of proxenia with the Paphlagones (Xen., Anab., 5.6.11), and in the 5th-4th century a certain Μάνης ἐλαιοπώλης, a Paphlagonian oil seller, is recorded on a gravestone just outside the city walls. Under the circumstances, it is more likely that the slaves had already been brought in this condition well before they came into contact with the Sinopeans, as a result of raids and small-scale warfare of the sort Xenophon encountered throughout Anatolia, from Cyrus the Younger’s feigned (but perfectly credible) campaign against Tissaphernes and the Pisidians (1.1.11) to the internecine war of the Mossynoikoi (5.4.2-34).

The Sinopeans had most trouble not with their immediate neighbours, the Paphlagonians (contrary perhaps to expectations in view of the often tensed relations between the Greek poleis of the Western and Northern shores of the Euxine and their Thracian and Scythian neighbours), but rather with the powerful monarchies from the mainland: the Achaemenids and later the Mithradatids. Datames’ stratagem (Polyaen., 7.21.2), in spite of its ingenuity, failed and the city maintained its independence. Mithradates II tried a less subtle approach, making his preparations in plain view and allowing the city to prepare adequately and benefit from a substantial aid from Rhodes, both material and diplomatic (Pol., 4.56.1-9), which illustrates very well the importance attached to this city by major players on the stage of international politics and how it was integrated in a structure of power gravitating around Rhodes and ultimately around Rome.

The situation changed radically when Pharnakes came to the throne. More ambitious and apparently endowed with more military sense than his ancestor, the young king attacked the city before it had the time to prepare its defences properly and conquered it. The term used by Strabon to describe the process, ‘ἐδούλευσε’ (Str., 12.3.11), is rather harsh, though it is probably not meant to be taken literally: it is unlikely Pharnakes simply sold into slavery all the inhabitants and then transferred his capital to an empty city. What the geographer probably intended us to understand is that Pharnakes robbed the city of its independence and extracted it forcibly from the network of relations it had built over time, at least from the political perspective (although the sudden cessation of the amphora stamping habit may point to other sudden changes as well). While the city lost a great deal through this contest, there was a bright side to the process, as Sinope became the new royal residence: though it was excluded from one network of interconnectivity – Rhodes’ friends and allies –, it was introduced in a new one – the nexus that was represented by the Kingdom of Pontus –, enjoying a position of great renown if not of great authority. During

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97 Similarly, Sinope’s colony, Trapezous, had relations of proxenia with their own neighbours, the Mossynoikoi (Xen., Anab., 5.4.3).

98 Doonan, 2006, p. 52.

99 The same solution is proposed by A. Avram (Avram, 2007) for the influx of Thracian slaves on the Greek market.
Mithradates VI Eupator’s reign, the city benefited greatly from its position as capital. Not only were the royal benefactions great (or so we may deduce from Strabon’s statement that “διαφερόντως δὲ ἐτίμησεν αὐτὴν μητρόπολιν τε τῆς βασιλείας υπέλαβεν”), but people from the city were numbered among Eupator’s closest collaborators, such as Diophantos, the one who led the king’s expedition against the Scythians of the Tauric Bosphorus. Sinope’s position would once again alter after Mithradates’ downfall, this time becoming a part of the Roman provincial universe.

This short case-study has shown how a polis of Eastern Anatolia managed its natural position and how it created and used an extensive network of relations with surrounding communities in order to obtain wealth and influence.

III.2.2. Γῆ πολιτικῆ

The poor state of epigraphy in Eastern Anatolia, due to a good extent to the degree of penetration of the epigraphic habit, far less profound than in Western Anatolia, for example, makes it fairly difficult to assess the status of the land owned by cities, ‘γῆ πολιτικῆ’, and it is only literary sources that help shed some light on the issue. For example, Strabon mentions that the inhabitants of Pharnakeia, although prevented from practicing the agriculture on a significant scale by the scarcity of lands, can still derive an income from working the iron mines in the vicinity (12.3.19), which implies that the mining region is part of the city’s chora. Scarcity of land appears to be the norm for the cities in this area, even if their geographic position would have allowed access to wider plains. Thus, Lucullus is said to have added 120 stadia to the chora of Amisos (Plut., Luc., 19.5), which is perceived as a significant addition, in spite of it being a relatively small gift (it is difficult to interpret the figure given by Plutarch, because the stadion is not a measure of surface, but of length, and must, therefore, indicate in this context a perimeter). Later, when Pompey decided to reorganise the land of Pontus for easier inclusion in the extended province of ‘Bithynia et Pontus’, he found it necessary to make substantial gifts of land to the existing cities or to the settlements he had just promoted to the rank of polis.

The situation appears to be slightly different in Bosporus, where cities had enjoyed in the Classical period a more substantial territorial expansion and where the very density of poleis was greater than on the Southern shore of the Euxine. For example, the city of Theodosia, a medium-sized settlement by North-Pontic standards, controlled in its initial stages a territory of 300-400 hectares, which was later expanded when its power grew, so as to include “60 unfortified settlements, two shepherd stations, one town site, one fortified settlement, four small fortresses, necropoleis with or without tumuli as well

\[100 \text{Str.}, 12.3.11.\]

\[101 \text{In a similar context, Strabon uses the phrase “προσώρισεν αὐτῷ χώραν δίσχοινον κύκλῳ∙ τοῦτο δ’ ἐστιν ἐξήκοντα στάδιο” (Str., 12.3.34). Thus, a perimeter of approximately 21,000 metres corresponds to a surface smaller than 5 km}^2.\]
as the remains of ramparts”. Even if during the Hellenistic period, the size of a polis’ *chora* tended to fluctuate depending on the intensity of the pressure exerted by Scythian and Sarmatian tribes, the extent of the γῆ πολιτική and its economic importance (in particular for grain production) remained substantial.

### III.3. Temple estates and Γῆ ἱερά

While humans across time and cultures have been of the opinion that divinities must receive certain portions of land (groves, mountaintops, whole mountains etc.) on which regular human laws did not apply, the creation of highly complex administrative entities around temples seems to be a distinctive Oriental phenomenon, and may be observed in Egypt, in Palestine, in Mesopotamia and not least in Asia Minor. To describe this structure, scholars coined the phrase ‘temple states’, but this term, rooted in a distorted understanding of Sumerian documents, tends to be replaced by the more moderate ‘temple estates’. The latter term is to be preferred when discussing the situation of Eastern Asia Minor, in view of a notice in Strabon, who discusses the situation of the inhabitants of Cappadocian Comana: ‘Κατάονες δέ εἰσιν οἱ ἐνοικοῦντες, ἄλλως μὲν ὑπὸ τῷ βασιλεῖ τεταγμένοι, τοῦ δὲ ἱερέως ύπακούοντες τὸ πλέον’ (Str., 12.2.3). Thus, if even the inhabitants of the most honoured temple precinct in Cappadocia were ‘in general’ or ‘in all other ways’ subject to the king, one must assume that the same was true of all temple-precincts. As the independence of these structures appears to be exclusively administrative, the phrase ‘temple states’, which tends to imply other areas of independence, must be abandoned.

Our most reliable guide through Eastern Anatolia, Strabon, is careful to mention and sometimes describe a number of temple estates: in Pontus: Comana (12.3.34-36), Ameria, near Kabeira (12.3.31) and Zela (12.3.37); in Cappadocia: Comana (12.2.3) and Ouenasa (12.2.6). For Commagene, one may reconstruct a very similar picture with the aid of the inscriptions set up by Antiochos I of Commagene (*IGLSyr.*, 1, 1; *IGLSyr.*, 1, 47, *IGLSyr.*, 1, 51 etc.).

The temple communities have different aspects from the urbanistic point of view, ranging from a ‘κωμόπολις’ such as Ameria to a ‘πόλις ἀξιόλογος’ such as Cappadocian Comana. What they have in common is the fact that they hold land, which is worked by ‘slaves of the sanctuary’, over whom the high-priest exerts his power within certain limits.

The sacred land, γῆ ἱερά or χώρα ἱερά, is rendered special by the fact that, being consecrated to the divinity, may not be subjected to taxation and may not (or should not) be expropriated. Thus, the high priest is often said to ‘enjoy the fruits of the sacred land’, which probably means not so much that he keeps everything for himself, but rather that he does not have to pay taxes on this income. In this respect, the text of Antiochos I Theos’

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103 *Saprykin*, 2006.

104 Sherwin-White & Kuhrt, 1993, pp. 59-60.

105 “χώραν ἱερὰν, ἣν ὁ ἱερώμενος ἀεὶ κατοικεῖται”, Str., 12.3.31.
sacred law is even clearer: “The priest [...] released from all other preoccupations, will devote himself to the service of this temple unhindered and without any allowance for pretexts not to do so.” The inviolability of the sacred land was protected by royal and divine warnings, such as those launched by Antiochos:

Likewise, with regard to the villages that I have consecrated to these divine beings, let nobody, whoever that may be, make them his own or alienate them or give them another purpose or injure in any way these villages or their income, which I have instituted as an inviolable property of the gods.

The kings appear to have been mindful of the right of these sacred properties, but in later times the Romans seem to have been less sensitive, at least in so far as the temple estate of Zela was concerned, whose land and whose sacred slaves were reduced on a number of occasions (Str., 12.3.37).

The ‘servants of the sanctuary’, the ‘ἱεροδούλοι’ represent a special class. If Antiochos’ injunctions are indicative of the general custom, they inherited not only this position from one generation to another, but also the specialisation, e.g. as musicians. At the same time, they enjoyed many advantages, such as being exempted from corvée or being protected against enslavement to a person and being sold off as a consequence. As the same thing is mentioned about the hierodouloi from Pontic Comana, it must be taken to represent the norm across Eastern Anatolia.

Scholars have yet to identify with precision the origin of this important institution. There are certain parallels from Mesopotamia and Egypt, and Hittite documents hint at similar phenomena. As Eastern Anatolia came under the Persian influence, the temple estates were integrated in a new system of power – the person of the high priest became either Iranised or was replaced with an Iranian and even the divine figures suffered the same fate, as the old gods were replaced with the Iranian divinities, such as Omanes (Iranian: Vahu-manah) and Anaitis at Zela. The political importance of the sacred precincts increased during the Hellenistic times when, as mentioned above, the kings respected the inviolable character of the sacred property. Moreover, the person of the High Priest became an important presence at the royal court,

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106 “ἱερεὺς [...] ἠλευθερωμένος ἄλλης / χρείας ἁπάσης ἁνεμπόδιστος ἀπροφάσιστός / τε ἱεροθεσίωι τούτωι προσκαρτερείτω.” IGLSyr., 1, 1.124-130.

107 “ὁμοίως δὲ / μηδὲ κώμας, ἃς ἐγὼ καθειέρωσα / δαίμοσιν τούτοις, μηδενὶ / ὅσιον ἔστω μήτε ἐξιδιάσασθαι μήτε ἐξαλλοτριῶσαι / μήτε μεταδιατάσαι μήτε / βλάψαι κατὰ μηδένα τρόπον κώμας ἐκείνας / ἢ πρόσοδον, ἢν ἐγὼ κτῆμα δαιμόνων / ἄσυλον ἀνέθηκα.”, IGLSyr., 1, 1.191-200.

108 IGLSyr., 1, 1.161-191.

109 Cf. supra, n. 105.

110 Sokmen, 2009, p. 278, although the author is misled into believing the Hittite Kizzuwatna is in the Pontic region and Kummanni is the same as Pontic Comana, when in fact Kizzuwatna lay in the area near the Taurus and Kummanni is probably to be identified with the Cappadocian Comana.

being considered ‘second after the King’ (at least the High Priests of the two Comanas) and possibly acting as regional governor, if Mithratochmes (or Arsames) son of Iazemis, ‘στρατηγον Καταοιας’ who is also the ‘priest of the Victory-Bearing Goddess’\textsuperscript{112} is to be identified with the High Priest of Ma at Cappadocian Comana.\textsuperscript{113} However, as a result of this integration in the political structures, the office of High Priest became the object of court politics and intrigues. The King had the authority to appoint the High Priest and, while the appointment was for life, nothing guaranteed that the life itself of the appointee would be long, as Dorylaos’ example demonstrates. The advent of the Romans would leave few things unchanged. While some important temple estates such as Pontic Comana continued to remain important (with the difference that the person of the High Priest would no longer be appointed by the king of the land, but by Roman generals, such as Pompey, who appointed Archalaos, Caesar, who installed Lycomedes, or Augustus, who gave the office to Dyctetos),\textsuperscript{114} others were transformed into poleis, such as Zela. While this may have represented an improvement in the situation of the \textit{hierodouloi}, it was certainly a blow to the reputation and influence of the High Priest and of the Temple Estate as an institution, whose relevance was limited to the provincial spectrum.

\textbf{IV. Conclusions}

As seen in all the cases examined above, power and wealth are interdependent. More importantly, it has become apparent that throughout Eastern Anatolia, Macedonian and Achaemenid structures (the king as owner of land, the aulic organisation, the dynasts, the temple estates etc.) combine to create a new system, whose persistence – even after the houses of the Mithradatids, Ariarathids, Ariobarzanids and Commagenian Orontids disappeared – is a testament to its solidity.

\textsuperscript{112} Or ‘High-Priest’: \textit{Tit.Coman.Capp.}, 2.04.

\textsuperscript{113} For the identification of Ma with Athena Nikephoros in Cappadocia, \textit{cf. supra}, p. 131-132.

\textsuperscript{114} Archelaos: \textit{Str.}, 12.3.34; Lycomedes: \textit{Str.}, 12.3.35; Dyctetos: \textit{Str.}, 12.3.35.
GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

Throughout the analysis of the institutions from Eastern Anatolia during the Hellenistic Age, cultural osmosis or syncretism has always emerged as the defining trend. The two great cultures – Iranian and Greco-Macedonian – have interacted with each other and with local traditions, in a fruitful dialogue, which has produced interesting results. This process was sometimes organic, changing habits, ideas and mentalities in subtle, almost imperceptible steps; sometimes the pace of change was quickened and its course steered by the rulers, who perceived how important it was to forge an identity – both for themselves and for their subjects – that would embrace difference while smoothing out dissonances. Provided their subjects identified in the new identity some of the traits with which they were familiar, some of the characteristics they held dear, the process offered a useful means of unifying their realms and allowed them a more solid grip on power.

Thus, in defining their identity, rulers took pride in their multi-ethnic background, cherishing the memory of both Dareios the Great and Alexander. This is all the more significant as the genealogies they put forward have weak points and are in all likelihood fabrications. The strategies for communicating this identity betray, in turn, influences from both areas, employing means specific to each, such as large-scale statuary or numismatic iconography.

Syncretism is present in the religious field. Not only in deciding how to engage the divine, but also in determining which divine figures to worship, kings of the region took extreme care to be inclusive in their approach, equating, whenever possible, Iranian divinities with Greek ones.

Even in the military domain, in which successful patterns tend to be adopted quickly and in which, therefore, the tradition of the winners would be expected to replace that of the defeated, Eastern Anatolian rulers found it important to preserve the experiences of Achaemenid Persia and combine them with the latest developments occurring in the Macedonian universe. Thus, patterns of recruitment of cavalry specific of Achaemenid Persia, for example, coexisted with heavy infantry tactics perfected by Alexander’s successors.
In the organisation of their kingdoms, Eastern Anatolian monarchs showed equal concern for achieving a balance between the two traditions, being surrounded not only by Friends, according to the Macedonian fashion, but also by dynasts. Likewise, while they encouraged to some extent the process of urbanisation, promoting the Greek polis experience, they also showed considerable respect to the temple estates.

Pontus, Cappadocia and Commagene are such an interesting object of study because, while the processes of cultural osmosis and hybridity may be observed at work in a vast geographic area, throughout the Hellenistic Age, they are nevertheless individualised by the specific mix of cultures that interact. Thus, the Hittite substratum (which is visible particularly in the field of religion, but also in certain details of social organisation and possibly even language) is complemented by a Semitic element (probably noticeable in language, certainly in religion). The Achaemenid stratum has pervasive influence in most fields of social, political and military life. To these the Greco-Macedonian ad-stratum was subsequently added – again, with far-reaching influences –, introducing thus the area in the wide stream of the Hellenistic world. This combination of cultural components sets the three kingdoms apart from the other major kingdoms of the age: Macedon and Pergamon were not very interested in the Achaemenid inheritance, the Ptolemies were careful to cultivate the pharaonic traditions, and the Seleukids adapted to the numerous local specificities; in Bithynia the interplay was between the Thracian background and the Greek influences, while in Armenia the Greek element never penetrated too deeply.

The result of this cultural convergence was durable. The strategic position in which Pontus, Cappadocia and Commagene lay, made it so that they continued to act as an interface between the Greco-Roman West and the Iranian East.

The local aristocracy maintained its position, traditions and wealth based primarily on cattle-breeding, while becoming integrated in the Roman provincial system. All the while, the Persian inheritance was not forgotten, and even as late as the 3rd century AD, there were enough people in Cappadocia, for example, to feel affinities for their Iranian relatives so as to hail Shapur I’s campaign of as a liberation (or so it would seem from Shapur’s inscription at Naqsh-i Rustam, called Ka’ba-ye Zardošt), and in the 5th century there were enough magi there to warrant a diplomatic intervention of king Peroz, who wrote to Emperor Leo demanding that they be allowed to continue their ancestral practices (Priscus, fr. 41).

Many of the royal innovations outlived the respective dynasties. Thus, the tradition of Mithradatid descent from the great Achaemenid kings was cherished by the Bosporan dynasty well into the Roman Age. Other examples can be found in the field of religion, where divinities promoted by the kings continued to be popular, as was the case with the cult at Nemrut Daği, which was continued for centuries.

However, it was the Greek culture that gained the dominant position. The seeds planted by the Hellenistic kings, who invited intellectuals to their courts in the attempt
to transform their capitals into hubs of Hellenic culture bloomed in later centuries. When Christianity became mainstream, Eastern Anatolian intellectuals were ready to speak up and to bring their contribution. Aquila of Sinope translated the Hebrew Bible into Greek, Evagrius Ponticus, born in Ibora, was a monk endowed with great oratorical talent, while Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa are recognised today as some of the most influential Fathers of the Church. Just as importantly, a Greek-speaking population remained in Pontus and Cappadocia even centuries after the Turkish occupation, and remains there in spite of great cultural pressures exerted on them during the agitated 20th century.

This field of study is far from having exhausted its possibilities. Further investigation and developments would be welcome. Thus, a more detailed study of the Hittite imprint, but also of the cultural interaction during Late Antiquity would be sure to illuminate greatly many of the issues dealt with throughout this thesis.
ABBREVIATIONS AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Abbreviations and Bibliography

Abbreviations


Abbreviations and Bibliography


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