

VOLOGASES I, PAKOROS II AND ARTABANOS III: COINS AND PARTHIAN HISTORY¹

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Abstract: This article focuses on certain aspects of Parthian coinage under Vologases I (51-79) and Pakoros II (78-110). Most studies convey a picture of extreme political confusion in Parthia at the close of Vologases I's reign to that of the beginning of Pakoros II's. They also tend to clump together Vologases I, "Vologases II", Artabanos III, and Pakoros II as though they were all rival kings, each striving to usurp the throne. Changes in the minting practice of the Arsacids were strictly connected with political transformations that were occurring in Parthia at that time. Any attribution of coin types along with an analysis of the nature of monetary issues depends on an accurate reconstruction of the political developments that effected them.

Keywords: Arsacids, Parthian coinage, Vologases I, Pakoros I, Artabanos III

This article focuses on certain aspects of Parthian coinage under Vologases I (51-79) and Pakoros II (78-110). Changes in the minting practice of the Arsacids were strictly connected with political transformations that were occurring in Parthia at that time. Any attribution of coin types along with an analysis of the nature of monetary issues (including new royal titles, kings' names or insignia) depends on an accurate reconstruction of the political developments that effected them, an area subject to impassioned controversy and prone to shaky conclusions. One of the chief aprioristic assumptions some specialists tend to adopt is the belief that any temporal overlap of monetary issues is a sure indication of internal strife in Parthia. This applies especially to the period from the close of Vologases

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I's reign to that of the beginning of Pakoros II's.² The issue of S72 coinage overlaps for a period of time with the first issues of Pakoros II S73 (S = Sellwood 1980). Researchers using this concurrence mistakenly speculate that S72 coinage was minted by a usurper whom they identify as "Vologases II" in order to conclude that around 79-80 there was a civil war in Parthia, involving Pakoros II, Vologases I, and perhaps a certain Vologases II.³ In addition, Artabanos III, the issuer of S74 coinage, comes into play as the supposed rival of Pakoros II. To establish a more accurate chronology of the political developments in the 70s and 80s and to ascertain a more reliable attribution of S72 issues, we must reconsider several problems. First, we need to determine the relation of S72 coins to Vologases I's issues. Secondly, we must identify the issuer of S72 coinage, taking into account the historical context in which events occurred. Lastly, we will need to reconstruct the interactions between Vologases I and Pakoros II.⁴

Under Vologases I (51-79) the Parthian Empire was in military terms substantially strengthened and entered a phase of considerable military might. The legacy that Vologases inherited from his predecessors was a series of conflicts that had been ravaging the Arsacid empire for half a century. The weakness of the central authority in the state had encouraged a number of rebellions, especially in Babylonia, Hyrcania, and Sakastan involving the Indo-Parthians. Vologases' first moves reflect his dynastic policy: he was astute enough to share power with two of his brothers. He placed Pakoros, the elder one, in charge of Media Atropatene and he assigned his younger brother, Tiridates, Armenia, while Vologases ruled as the King of Kings (Jos. *Ant.* 20.74; Tac. *Ann.* 12.50; 15.2; 15.31). Vologases' principal adversary on the domestic front was the Dahaeon-Hyrcanian faction. The distribution of power within the Arsacid clan

² See, e.g., Sellwood 1983: 295: "Dated tetradrachms show a continuous conflict for two years between Pacorus and Vologases, concluded with the disappearance of Vologases." See also Karras-Klapproth 1988: 199; Schippmann 1980: 59.

³ See McDowell 1935: 229 ("A revolt against Vologases I broke out under the leadership of Pacorus II in the spring of 78"); Bivar 1983: 86.

⁴ These issues were systematically explored by the author in Olbrycht 1999. That article relied on a paper that I had delivered at the University of Münster in 1995. In addition, I dealt with the joint rule of Vologases I and Pakoros II, and the attribution of S72 to Vologases I in Olbrycht 1997: 32. Sinisi 2012 (see his comments on p. 163) largely relies on my work concerning these topics. For a review of Sinisi's study, see Olbrycht 2013a: 280-284.

helped Vologases govern the empire more effectively, since the brothers formed a mighty political bloc which provided Parthia with a strong central core comprising Greater Media, Atropatene, Babylonia and (northern) Mesopotamia, allowing Vologases to embark on campaigns to consolidate his dominions. Armenia, which was to become an integral part of his empire, was key from the very beginning. By putting Tiridates on the Armenian throne, Vologases was harking back to the policy pursued by Artabanos II (Olbrycht 1998a: 140-141; Wolski 1987), who had appointed his sons rulers of Armenia, in the face of Roman opposition (see Dąbrowa 1983: 131-176; Olbrycht 1998b). Vologases turned out to be a challenging opponent for the Roman emperors Claudius, Nero, and Vespasian. Vologases I's imperial policy was continued by his successor, Pakoros II (ca. 78-110), whose political initiatives extended to Dacia in the west, the lands of the Sarmatians in the north, and China in the east (for details, see Olbrycht 1998: 176-190; 1998b: 125-138).

Vologases I's monetary issues comprise several types, the largest of which are tetradrachms and bear the date when they were issued.⁵ The first of these dated coins ascribed to Vologases I are S68 minted in Seleukeia in 362 SE (Gorpiaios) — 365 SE (Dystros), i.e. A.D. 51 (August) — A.D. 54 (February) (SE = Seleucid era).⁶ The obverse contains the bust of the king portrayed with a clearly visible necklet and a quadrangular medallion; the king's head is shown in profile. Curiously, there are no S68 drachms or bronzes. As we know, Parthian drachms were in circulation chiefly in Iran. It would seem more than likely that Vologases I, whose opening years on the throne were marked by military engagements in Iran and Armenia, could not have failed to mint drachms for his large army (for drachms and bronzes struck in Iranian mints, see Sinisi 2012: nos. 88A-332. For Vologases' first issues, see Sinisi 2012: 138-148). His next issues, S70, were tetradrachms minted in the 60s (373 SE = A.D. 61/62 – 380 SE = A.D. 68/69), alongside drachms and bronzes issued in Iran in the 50s and 60s (Sinisi 2012: nos. 451-495 (tetradrachms). For the drachms (type IVa), see Sinisi 2012: 159).

⁵ The fundamental study is now Sinisi 2012. Cf. Wroth 1903: 178-189, 209-210; McDowell 1935, 74; Newell 1938, 490; Jacobsen, Mørkholm 1965: nos. 190-202; Sellwood 1980: 223-234; Sellwood 1983: 295; Shore 1993: nos. 370-393; Le Rider 1998: 29-31; Olbrycht 1999; 2013a: 280-284.

⁶ Sinisi 2012: 136, note 137 published new S68 specimens which enable us to date the beginning of Vologases I's coinage more exactly than had previously been the case.

The titles on S68 tetradrachms and S70 drachms and tetradrachms carry the honorifics: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ ΕΥΕΡΓΕΤΟΥ ΔΙΚΑΙΟΥ ΕΠΙΦΑΝΟΥΣ ΦΙΛΕΛΛΗΝΟΣ, “of Arsakes, King of Kings, the Benefactor, the Just, the God-manifest, the Philhellene.” There are no innovative details regarding the king’s attributes, which follow earlier issues. The king sports a diadem. On S68 tetradrachms he is depicted in the act of receiving the diadem from a standing goddess with a long sceptre, although on S70 coins the sceptre is replaced with a palm branch.




Fig. 1. Tetradrachmon of Vologases I. Münzkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin. Item no. 18202786. Picture: Münzkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin. Aufnahme durch Lutz-Jürgen Lübke. Obverse: bust of king, left. Reverse: King on throne, receives diadem from goddess. Legend [BA]CΙΑ[ΕΠΙC] ΒΑΣΙΛΕΨ[Ν] ΑΡCΑ[ΚΟΥ] ΕΥΕΡΓΕΤ[ΟΥ] ΔΙΚΑΙΟΥ ΕΠΙΦΑΝΟ[ΥC] [ΦΙΛ]ΕΛΛΗΝ[ΟC]. Year ΕΞΤ = 365 SE = A.D. 53/54. Mint Seleukeia on the Tigris. Weight 13,47 g; diameter 27 mm; die-axis 12 h. Sellwood 1980, type 68.10-11; Sinisi 2012, 258 no. 83 (this coin).

An examination of Vologases I’s monetary issues cannot preclude this monarch’s political affairs. In 51-66 Vologases’ main concerns focused on setting up his brother Tiridates in Armenia, the conflict with Rome, and the domestic struggles in Parthia. Around 54/55 a rebellion erupted under the leadership of one *filius Vardanis*, viz. the Son of Vardanes, who for four years issued his own coinage (S69) at Seleukeia on the Tigris (366-369 SE = A.D. 54/5-57/8).⁷ This preoccupation allowed in ca. 58-61 the powerful province of Hyrcania to rebel (Olbrycht 1998: 180-183).

However, not only was Vologases I not ousted from power, but on the contrary, his hold on it increased. His greatest success was to vanquish the

⁷ Sinisi 2012: nos. 333A-450A (Seleukeia issues). For *filius Vardanis*’ tetradrachms issued in 366 SE, see de la Fuyé 1904: 370; Assar 2008. Contrary to Sellwood 1980: S69, Sinisi 2012: 152 maintains that *filius Vardanis* did not mint coins in Ekbatana.

Romans in Armenia. A compromise was affected with Rome in 63, and in 66 the official coronation of Tiridates, Vologases' brother, in Rome, brought the Armenian conflict to a close. His victory over Rome gave him a tremendous propaganda boost — not surprisingly, then, new portraits and legends appeared at this time on his coinage mirroring new trends in royal ideology. These representations are seen on S71 coins, which include drachms issued at Ekbatana and Mihrdatkirt (S71.1-3; Sinisi 2012: nos. 527-569, 597-621A, p. 160 (Ekbatana and Mihrdatkirt). Their obverse bears the abbreviation *wl* for *wlgšy* - Walgaš, the name of the king (Gignoux 1972: 66; Keller 2010: 624-630), and the so-called Arsacid symbol —  — which occurred earlier on the coinage of Vardanes (S64.39). From this time the majority of Parthian coins contain the monarch's personal name (see Henning 1958: 40 and the list of legends in Sellwood 1983: Appendix 2, 316-317. Cf. also Alram 1986: nos. 405-428).

The issue classified by D. Sellwood as S72 is dated to the end of the reign of Vologases I and the beginning of Pakoros II's (Wroth 1903: 209-210; McDowell 1935: 74-76; Sellwood 1967: 28, F; Sellwood 1983: 295; Alram 1986: nos. 406-408). It comprises tetradrachms, drachms, and bronzes (chalkoi). The Greek legend on the tetradrachms reads ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ ΟΛΑΓΑΣΟΥ ΔΙΚΑΙΟΥ ΕΠΙΦΑΝΟΥΣ ΦΙΛΕΛΛΗΝΟΣ (Tetradrachms: S72.1-7; Sinisi 2012: nos. 689A-722; 752-770). A noteworthy innovation is the occurrence of the king's personal name ΟΛΑΓΑΣΟΥ instead of the title ΕΥΕΡΓΕΤΟΥ. "Vologases" is the Latinized spelling of the name found in Roman sources. Parthian names were inscribed in a variety of spellings in the Greek legends on the coinage (Chaumont 1989: 574). On Vologases II's coins (2nd century A.D.) the spelling is the same as on S72 issues, i.e. ΟΛΑΓΑΣΟΥ (S79; Alram 1986: no. 415). But during Vologases III's reign, the legends read either ΟΛΑΓΑΣΟΥ or ΟΛΟΓΑΣΟΥ (S84; Alram 1986, no. 417). A similar inconsistency is observed on the coinage bearing the name of Gotarzes II, which is inscribed either as ΓΩΤΑΡΖΟΥ or as ΓΩΤΕΡΖΗΣ (Alram 1986: nos. 403-404; Olbrycht 1997a: 90-91).

On S72 coins there are a diadem and a tall, elaborately decorated tiara with hook-shaped ornaments on the monarch's head. Next to the image of the king is a single Greek letter (Α, Β, Γ, or Δ; Sinisi 2012: 169. On the Vologases I's tiara, see Olbrycht 1997: 32-33). A similar custom is observed on Gotarzes II's S66 issues. These Greek letters are most probably the control marks or symbols of the mint. On the obverse of S72 tet-



Fig. 2. Tetradrachmon of Vologases I. Former Collection of Robert Gonnella (no. 689). Obverse: bust of king, with diadem and tiara, left. Reverse: king on throne, receives diadem (?) from standing goddess. Central part of the obverse erased. Legend [BACIAEΩC] BACIA[EΩN] [APCAKOY] [O]ΛAΓA[ΣOY] ΔΙΚΑΙOY EΠIΦAHOY[Σ] [ΦIΛ]EΛΛHNO[C]. Year [Θ]ΠT = 389 SE = A.D. 77/78. Month: probably Daisios/May. Mint Seleukeia on the Tigris. Weight 14,11 g; die-axis 12 h. Sellwood 1980, type 72.2; Sinisi 2012, no. 699A (this coin).



Fig. 3. Tetradrachmon of Vologases I. Former Collection of David Sellwood. Obverse: bust of king, with diadem and tiara decorated with hooks, left, sequential letter B behind head. Reverse: king on throne left, receives diadem (?) from standing goddess. Legend [BACIAEΩC] [B]ACIAEΩ[N] APCA[KOY] OΛAΓAΣ[OY] ΔΙΚΑΙOY EΠIΦAHO[YΣ] [ΦIΛEΛΛHNOC]. Year ΘΠT = 389 SE = A.D. 77/78. Month off-flan. Mint Seleukeia on the Tigris. Weight 13,87 g; die-axis 12 h. Sellwood 1980, type 72.1-2var; Sinisi 2012, no. 720 (this coin). The New York Sale XXXIV. Courtesy of A H Baldwin & Sons Ltd, www.baldwin.co.uk. Lot number 316, 6 January 2015.

radrachms there is a scene showing the king on the throne receiving a diadem from a goddess. A similar type is known for the reverse of Vologases I's S68 issues and the S69 coinage of the usurper known as *filius Vardanis*.

The S72 drachms depict the king in a diadem and tiara decorated with hook-shaped appliquéés (S72.8-10; Alram 1986: no. 407; Sinisi 2012: nos. 782A-803, 821-826, p. 169-170). There is usually a horn on the side panel

of the tiara (Alram 1986: no. 408; S 72.9). The obverse depicts a male seated archer. The legend reads: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ ΕΥΕΡΓΕΤΟΥ ΔΙΚΑΙΟΥ ΕΠΙΦΑΝΟΥΣ ΦΙΛΕΛΛΗΝΟΣ. The abbreviation *wl* (as on S71) or *wl M* appear on the obverse of drachms. Letter *M* denotes the title *MLK'* - *šāh*, i.e. “king” (Gignoux 1972: 57). The letters *wl M* refer to “king Walgaš”. S72 coinage also includes chalkoi issued in Seleukeia, bearing the date ΗΠΤ = 388 SE = A.D. 76/77 (S72.11) (McDowell 1935: 76, no. 97; Le Rider 1965: 174, no. 380; S72.11; Le Rider 1998: no. 51, inventory no. 668; Olbrycht 1999: 74-75; Sinisi 2012: nos. 622A-628A). The obverse portrays the monarch in a tiara, while the reverse contains an eagle or falcon. In terms of the chronology of S72 tetradrachms’ issues, the earliest are dated from the month of Dystros 389 SE (February 78) to the months of Loios 390 SE (July 79) and the extra, or “Embolimos,” month likewise of 390 SE.⁸

A few essential innovations are observed in the iconography of S72 coins. One of the novelties is the monarch wearing a high tiara, which subsequently became a predominant trend in the coinage of the Arsacids (Olbrycht 1997: 32; 49). Vologases I’s inspiration for the re-introduction of the tiara could have come from the Indo-Parthians, one of whom, Gondophares (ca. 20-50), was depicted with tiaras modelled on the crowns of Sinatrukes and Phraates III (See Olbrycht 2013; 2013b: 125-131. On Gondophares’ coins, see Alram 1986: nos. 1158-1175).

A significant change came with the appearance of Vologases’ personal name in the legend. There had been instances of the use of a monarch’s personal name earlier on Parthian coinage, but they were sporadic (Alram 1986: nos. 394-404; Keller 2010: 624-630), sometimes coming about due to domestic strife involving diverse factions, as had happened under Vonones I and Gotarzes II (Olbrycht 1998: 185; 2013b: 36-40; 192-193). From S72 onward, the monarch’s name (written in Greek) appeared regularly on Parthian tetradrachms. Another innovation was the presence of the

⁸ Pestman 1981, 218 states that in Ptolemaic Egypt the Embolimos month of the “Macedonian calendar was inserted at the end of every other year, after the last complete month and before the month during which the next year began (i.e., before the month during which the anniversary of the king’s accession to the throne was celebrated).” In Parthia, however, the Embolimos appears to have been inserted according to the Babylonian pattern within cycles of 19 years and with intercalary months falling at the end of year 1 and in the middle of years 4, 7, 10, 12, 15, 18. The position of this intercalary month within a given year varied during the Arsacid period. See Sinisi 2012, 53, note 195.

Parthian name *wl < wlgšy* (Walgaš/Vologases: the Parthian version of the name had first occurred on S71 issues) alongside the title *M < MLK'* - *šāh*, “king”. Some (but not all) of the details of the king’s portrait on S72 allude to images of Vologases I (see the face features in S72.2, and in Alram 1987: Taf. 11, no. 23; S68.5). However, we must bear in mind that the conditions prevailing in Parthian workshops were not conducive to the maintenance of a standard portrait of the monarch. Vologases I was variously depicted: on some coins he appears with a straight nose, while on others he has a hooked nose (Wroth 1903: Pl. XXIX 5; Petrowicz 1904: Taf. XIX 1; Sellwood 1983: Pl. 7/11).

W. Wroth associated coins minted by a Vologases in 389-390 SE (later classified as S72) with a hypothetical Vologases II, whom he conjectured reigned for nearly 70 years (77/78 - 146/147) (Wroth 1903: 209-210). E.T. Newell seconded Wroth’s hypothesis (Newell 1938: 490-491; Pl. 144 h, L, M.). G. Le Rider also supported this notion, but reduced Vologases II’s alleged reign to about 77/8 - 106/108 (Le Rider 1965: 174-176). To this day, numismatists and historians ascribe S72 issues to a monarch named Vologases II (Sellwood 1967: 19-20; 1980: 232-3; 1983: 295; Alram 1986: nos. 406-408; Schippmann 1989: 576; Assar 2011: 146-147). R. McDowell was nearer the truth with his attribution of the coins minted in 389-390 SE in the name of a Vologases to Vologases I (McDowell 1935: 119-121). Ockham’s razor — the principle of avoiding the multiplication of entities beyond necessity (*Entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem*) — may justifiably be applied to many of the hypotheses concerning Vologases II as an alleged rival of Vologases I and Pakoros II. There is no evidence to suggest that a Vologases II ruled Parthia beginning in A.D. 76-77 or 78-79. S72 coins were issued under Vologases I as his latest known coinage. Chronologically (tetradrachms minted in 389-390 SE = A.D. 77/78 - 78/79; chalkoi minted in 388 SE = A.D. 76/77), they were a continuation of S70-S71 issues. Their style and use of the monarch’s personal name link S72 emissions with Vologases I’s earlier issues.

A paucity of records from the last years of Vologases I’s reign has hindered many historians to give a convincing reconstruction of the period. We are informed that in A.D. 75 Vologases I solicited Roman assistance against the Alans (Dio 65.15.3. Cf. Olbrycht 1998: 203). S71 issues, which were undoubtedly minted on Vologases I’s order, ended in A.D. 77/78. Unfortunately, none of the Roman sources makes a direct reference to the

king's death. Vologases' last tetradrachms were minted in Loios 390 SE (July A.D. 79), and in the Embolimos month (Sinisi 2012: type 767A). In view of the S72 issues we may conclude that Vologases I died in the late summer of A.D. 79 at the earliest.

The coins of Pakoros II (S73, 75-77) are easy to identify, as most of them carry the monarch's personal name (Alram 1986: 409-413; Shore 1993: nos. 394-403). Some scholars assume that the successor to Vologases I was the first king with the name Pakoros in Parthia (Assar 2011: 200). The numbering of Arsacid homonymous kings is in some cases subject to controversy. This pertains especially to the rulers named Pakoros. Notwithstanding doubts that have been raised, Pakoros, son of Orodes II (ca. 57-37 B.C.), should be styled as Pakoros I for there is evidence pointing to his royal status.⁹ Thus we may justifiably speak of a Pakoros II who succeeded Vologases. Concerning Pakoros II's coinage, an evolution is distinctly visible in the representation of the monarch on his coins: from the visage of a young, beardless prince to that of a mature man sporting a beard. Pakoros II reigned for over thirty years, from about 78 to about 110 (Olbrycht 1998b: 131). On his earliest coins (S73) he is shown as a beardless youth — a rare phenomenon in the Parthian minting tradition (the king - issuer of the S49 coinage, usually identified as Pakoros I, is also portrayed as a young beardless prince). On the reverse of the tetradrachms, the king in profile wears a diadem (S73.1-10). A Greek letter (Α, Β, Γ or Δ) appears beside the king's head. The reverse shows the king receiving the diadem from a standing goddess. The legend (frequently off-flan) contains the monarch's personal name: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ ΠΑΚΟΡΟΥ ΔΙΚΑΙΟΥ ΕΠΙΦΑΝΟΥΣ ΦΙΛΕΛΛΗΝΟΣ.

S73 also includes drachms (S73.11-14; Sinisi 2012: nos. 570-596A), some of which contain the letters *pk* on the obverse (Alram 1986: no. 410; S73.13), an abbreviation for the name *pkwry*, or Pakōr (Gignoux 1972: 31. Cf. Justi 1895: 238-240). The obverse shows in profile the young beardless ruler. The legend, in many cases illegible, reads: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ

⁹ Pakoros I was co-regent with Orodes II (58/7 - 38/7 B.C.) and perhaps even used the title "King of Kings" (Liv. *Ep.* 128 (38 B.C.); Tac. *Hist.* 5.9; Iust. 42.4.10; Front. 1.1.6). Gaslain 2007: 9-20 rightly calls him Pakoros I. Coins of S49 were attributed to Pakoros I by Wroth (1903: 97-98). See also Gaslain 2007. Sellwood and A. Simonetta 2006: 288-292 maintain that S49 coins were struck by Phraates IV. Simonetta 1978 linked S44 coins (in Sellwood 1980 viewed as Orodes II's issues) with Pakoros I, but this was rejected by Mørkholm 1980: 38, n. 19.

ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ ΕΥΕΡΓΕΤΟΥ ΔΙΚΑΙΟΥ ΕΠΙΦΑΝΟΥΣ ΦΙΛΕΛΛΗΝΟΣ.
The mint marks suggest that they were emitted at Ekbatana (S73.11; Sinisi 2012: nos. 1004-1035A) or Margiana (S73.14). S73 also includes bronzes (S73.15-18. Cf. Sinisi 2012: nos. 629A-632A, 1036-1099).



Fig. 4. Tetradrachmon of Pakoros II. Münzkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin. Item no. 18212993. Picture: Münzkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin. Aufnahme durch Lutz-Jürgen Lübke. Obverse: bust of king, left, letter B behind head. Reverse: king on throne, receives diadem from goddess. Legend: [ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ Π]ΑΚΟΡ[ΟΥ] ΔΙΚΑΙΟΥ Ε]ΠΙΦ]ΑΝΟΥ [ΦΙΛΕ]ΛΛΗΝ[ΟC]. Year ΘΠΤ = 389 SE = A.D. 77/78. Month ΔΑΙCΙΟΥ (May). Mint Seleukeia on the Tigris. Weight 11,79 g; diameter 27 mm; die-axis 12 h. Sellwood 1980, type 73.3; Sinisi 2012, no. 656 (this coin).

The dates engraved on S72 coins reveal that many are contemporary with Pakoros's first issue, S73, which covers the interval Dystros 389-391 SE (February 78-79, for 391 SE no month is legible: Sinisi 2012: nos. 637A-688, 723A-751A, 771-781), while S72 encompasses years 388-390 SE (from A.D. 76/77 to Loios/July 79). Contrary to what some have argued (see, e.g., McDowell 1935: 229), there is no indication that a conflict of any kind occurred during this period: the mint at Seleukeia was working simultaneously for two rulers. The purpose of the king's personal name on the coins of Vologases I and Pakoros II, respectively, was to distinguish between the father and the son, and did not signify the existence of some sort of rivalry between the two (Olbrycht 1999).

Pakoros II's S76 tetradrachms (S76.1; Alram 1986: 412; Sinisi 2012: 1173A-1178) show a mature king, with a beard of middling length. The obverse carries an image of the king on the throne receiving a diadem (or a ring) from a goddess holding a sceptre. They contain the date of 404 SE = A.D. 92/3. Pakoros II does not wear the tiara, but does sport a long beard on his coinage until his last tetradrachms dated 404-408 SE = A.D. 92-96/7

(Afram 1986: 413; S77.1-7; Wroth 1903: 200, no. 45; Sinisi 2012: nos. 1179-1219A). The tiara is decorated with hook applications, similar to those on Vologases I's S72 coins. Next to Pakoros II's head is a Greek letter, Α, Β, Γ, or Δ. The portrait type on Pakoros II's last tetradrachm issue (S77) clearly alludes to his earlier images and to the portrait of Vologases I on the S72 coinage.

Pakoros II imitated several aspects of S71 and S72 on his own issues. He had his personal name and a tiara depicted on his coinage. This continuity is not surprising, considering the fact that S71 and S72 were his father's issues. Pakoros II's minters continued to use some of the dies that had been used to produce S72 coins, which implies a continuity in time (Sellwood 1983: 296).

By and large, the Parthian coinage of the late A.D. 70s shows that in his old age Vologases I decided to designate his young son Pakoros II as his heir.¹⁰ This move was in perfect harmony with Vologases' policy, which was always far-sighted, especially as regards the avoidance of the chronic family conflicts that had plagued the Arsacid clan (Parthian internal struggles: Olbrycht 1997; 1998: 176-190; 2013; 2013b). Already at the beginning of his reign, he had cut short dynastic quarrels by appointing his brothers to rule separate kingdoms (Olbrycht 1998b: 126). It seems self-evident that at the close of his reign the ever-prudent Vologases I settled the matter of succession by making Pakoros his heir. Perhaps Artabanos III, who may have been another of Vologases' sons, played a part in this decision. If so, he would have ruled northern Mesopotamia. Sinisi (2012: 178) assumes that Artabanos III was the brother of Vologases I and regent on behalf of Pakoros II. The available sources do not mention any of Vologases' brothers except for the well-known figures of Tiridates and Pakoros. Thus it seems more probable that Artabanos III was the son of Vologases I and brother of Pakoros II. Roman records mention one Artabanos, prince of lands along the Euphrates (viz. Mesopotamia), who came out in support of the Roman usurper Pseudo-Nero. Cassius Dio¹¹ and

¹⁰ This was assumed, although not corroborated, by Schur 1949: 2020-21: "Es würde meines Erachtens der Art des Vologases mehr entsprechen, daß er durch die Königswahl und Krönung des Nachfolgers schon bei seinen Lebzeiten für einen ungestörten Übergang der Herrschaft zu sorgen gesucht hätte".

¹¹ Dio 66.19.3b-c (= Zonaras 11.18 p. 55D): ἐπὶ τούτου καὶ ὁ Ψευδονέρων ἐφάνη, ὃς Ἀσιανὸς ἦν, ἐκαλεῖτο δὲ Τερέντιος Μάξιμος, προσεικῶς δὲ τῷ Νέρωνι καὶ τὸ εἶδος καὶ τὴν φωνὴν (καὶ γὰρ καὶ ἐκιθαράδει). ἔκ τε τῆς Ἀσίας τινὰς

Joannes Antiochenos¹² furnish the pretender's true name as Terentius Maximus, active in the reign of the Emperor Titus (ruled 24 June 79 - 13 September 81). Cassius Dio does not accord Artabanos the title of *basileus*, i.e. "king": instead he calls him *archegos* (ἀρχηγός), i.e. a "ruler" — a meaningful difference: Artabanos was not the "King of Kings" but a governor or prince with a status that was not fully clear to the Romans. Dio adds that "Artabanos supported Terentius because of his anger against Titus." This is a crucial statement, because it allows us to understand Artabanos' position. In late A.D. 70, the king of Parthia, Vologases I, sent a deputation to Titus, son of Vespasian, at Zeugma on the Euphrates expressing his congratulations on the Roman victory over the Jews (On the Parthian-Roman diplomatic contacts in A.D. 68-70, see Jones 1985). Vologases offered Titus a gold crown. Titus accepted this gift and provided a banquet for the Parthian messengers (Ios. *BJ* 7.105-106). It is probable that Artabanos, conceivably a son of Vologases I, was the Parthian chief envoy. During the ceremonial banquet there must have been some differences between Titus and Artabanos. Artabanos' support for a False-Nero may have been a result of serious tensions between Parthia and Rome in the 70s.¹³ Alternatively, Artabanos' anger may have resulted from the refusal of Titus to support his claim to the Parthian throne (Gallivan 1973: 364-365). I find the former possibility to have greater attractions, but there can be no certainty due to meager evidence.

Artabanos III is known from S74 coinage with his personal name engraved on issues minted from Gorpaios 391 SE (= August A.D. 80) to Audynaios 393 SE (December A.D. 81).¹⁴ The first coins of Pakoros II dated in 393 SE appeared in Hyperberetaios, i.e. September A.D. 82

προσεποιήσατο καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν Εὐφράτην προχωρῶν πολλῶ πλείους ἀνηρτήσατο, καὶ τέλος πρὸς Ἀρτάβανον τὸν τῶν Πάρθων κατέφυγεν ἀρχηγόν, ὃς καὶ δι' ὀργῆς τὸν Τίτον ποιούμενος καὶ ἐδέξατο τοῦτον καὶ καταγαγεῖν εἰς Ῥώμην παρεσκευάζετο.

¹² Ioan. Ant. *FHG* IV Frg. 104: Ὅτι ἐπὶ Τίτου τοῦ Ῥωμαίων βασιλέως, ἀνήρ τις [Ἀσιανὸς] ὃν [ἦν?] τὸ γένος, Τερέντιος Μάξιμος ὄνομα, τὰ τε ἄλλα καὶ τὴν φωνὴν προσεικὼς τῷ Νέρωνι.

¹³ In the 70s, the mutual relations between Vologases and his house and Rome under Vespasian remained rather chilly: there were some diplomatic and military tensions between Parthia and Rome concerning Kommagene, Iberia, Albania and the Parthian fightings against the Alans. For details, see Debevoise 1938: 198-202; Tuplin 1989: 372-377; Olbrycht 1998b: 133-134.

¹⁴ See Sinisi 2012: nos. 836-865A. Sellwood 1980 did not know that Artabanos III's coins dated to 393 SE. The multiplication of Parthian kings named Artabanos, proposed by Assar (2011: 115, 119, 147-148) remains unconvincing and should be treated with caution.

(S75.1; Sinisi 2012: no. 1100A). This implies that Artabanos III was eliminated from the political stage of Parthia at some point between January and August of 82: no details are known but on the evidence of some coin series (see below) one may suppose that he was forced to surrender and was deposed by Pakoros. He issued tetradrachms at Seleukeia on the Tigris and had mints in Media (Ekbatana and Rhagai; Sinisi 2012: 873A-1003). Although D. Sellwood attributes some drachms and bronzes to this prince (S74.6-12), he nevertheless emphasizes that they are hard to distinguish from other issues, particularly S63, 65, and 66 of Artabanos II and Gotarzes II (Sellwood 1980: 241).



Fig. 5. Tetradrachmon of Artabanos III. Münzkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin. Item no. 18202786. Picture: Münzkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin. Aufnahme durch Lutz-Jürgen Lübke. Obverse: bust of king, left. Reverse: king on throne, receives (untied?) diadem from goddess. Legend: [BA]CI[AEΩC] BACIAEΩ[N] [APCAKOY] APTABA[NOY] ΔΙΚΑΙΟΥ ΕΠΙΦΑΝΟ[ΥC] [ΦΙΛ]ΕΛΛΗΝ[OC]. Year ΒΘΤ = 392 SE = A.D. 80/81. Month name off-flan. Mint Seleukeia on the Tigris. Weight 13,33 g; diameter 27 mm; die-axis 12 h. Sellwood 1980, type 74.2-5 varia (month illegible); Sinisi 2012, no. 852 (this coin).

The fact that Artabanos III endeavoured to attain the crown of Parthia implies that he was an Arsacid. No other candidate except a member of the Arsacid clan could have stood a chance of ascending to the throne. The ancient sources uniformly speak of the law that was recognized throughout Iran that only someone of Arsacid blood was eligible to rule. The Iranians' adherence to the Arsacid dynasty was an extremely strong and an enduring factor in the Parthian empire (Strab. 16.1.28; Amm. 23.6.6. See Olbrycht 2013b: 13-14).

Judging by the coins, which show a bearded man, Artabanos III was older than Pakoros II. His career was short-lived but he became a powerful ruler endangering Pakoros' royal aspirations. Pakoros' final victory was

significant enough to find reflection on the tetradrachms that Pakoros II issued in A.D. 82-85 (S75). The first of these are dated 393 SE in the month of Hyperberetaios, viz. September A.D. 82. The image on these tetradrachms (Alram 1986: no. 411; S75.1-6; Sinisi 2012: nos. 1100A-1016A) shows a young king with a short beard. The layout (with the head in profile and the torso en face) is reminiscent of Vologases I's S68 coins. On the reverse, there is a rare scene with historical connotations: the king mounted on horseback receives a diadem from a standing goddess with a long sceptre. Behind the goddess is another male figure holding a ribbon (probably an unravelled diadem). The scene appears to be a commemoration of Pakoros II's victory over his rival Artabanos III.

Artabanos III had begun his career as the governor of northern Mesopotamia and perhaps the adjacent regions. He could exercise some sort of control of the dependent kingdoms of Osroene, Adiabene and Gordyene under Vologases I. We cannot rule out that his first monetary issues were minted under an agreement with Pakoros II on the basis of the division of the Parthian Empire, and perhaps even in accordance with the will of Vologases I. Soon afterward, Artabanos challenged his brother Pakoros II for the throne and was quickly defeated.

A form of synarchy, in which there was the joint rule of a father and son, was sometimes practised in Parthia. Perhaps the prototype for this institution came from the Achaemenids and/or the Seleucids (Calmeyer 1976: 68-95). Moreover, we know that the Sasanian Shapur I was crowned during the lifetime of his father, Ardashir I (Calmeyer 1976: 64-65). There are several instances of co-regency on record for Parthia. Orodes II appointed Pakoros I his co-regent (Karras-Klapproth 1988: 107-108; Gaslain 2007), Phraates III was most probably his father Sinatrukes' co-regent (Mørkholm 1980: 43-44; Nikitin 1998: 17, n. 8), and Mithradates III was co-regent to Phraates III. Both co-regents struck their own coinage (Mørkholm 1980: 45; Nikitin 1995: 227-229). Phraates IV probably made Phraatakes his co-regent (Karras-Klapproth 1988: 146-147). Vologases I continued the tradition, appointing his son Pakoros II a *rex iunior* and joint ruler (see also Schottky 1991: 130).

The hypothesis that Pakoros II succeeded Vologases I is unexpectedly confirmed in the *Thebaid* by the Roman poet Publius Papinius Statius (ca. 40-96). Statius wrote the *Thebaid* over the course of a dozen years (*o mihi bis senos multum vigilata per annos Thebai*), ca. 79/80 - ca. 90/91 (See the last verse of the poem: *Theb.* 12.811-12. Cf. Vessey 1973: 55).

The poem tells the story how after the death of the bard Amphiarus young Thiodamas is chosen as his successor (*Theb.* 8.275-285). But the young appointee finds it difficult to assume his new office. Thereupon Statius undertakes an elaborate comparison of Thiodamas' situation with the "Achaemenid boy" (*puer Achaemenius*: cf. Vessey 1973: 266, n. 2):

*Sicut Achaemenius solium gentesque paternas (286)
 exceptit si forte puer, cui uiuere patrem
 tutius, incerta formidine gaudia librat
 an fidi proceres, ne pugnet uulgus habenis,
 cui latus Euphratae, cui Caspia limina mandet;
 sumere tunc arcus ipsumque onerare ueretur
 patris equum uisusque sibi nec sceptrum capaci
 sustentare manu nec adhuc implere tiaran.¹⁵*

Overwhelmed by the high honour and confounded by the unlooked-for glory he humbly reverences the proffered leaves, and pleads that he is unequal to the task, and must needs for his merit be constrained: even as when perchance a young Achaemenian prince has succeeded to the throne and all his father's realms (though safer were it for him that his sire still lived), his delight he balances with uncertain fear, whether his nobles be loyal, whether the folk will fight against his governance, to whom he shall entrust the frontier of Euphrates or the Caspian gate; then does he feel awe to wield the bow and to mount his father's own steed; in his own judgement his hand is not broad enough to hold up the sceptre, nor yet can he fill out the tiara.¹⁶

Statius uses the proper adjective "Achaemenius" and its derivative "Achaemeniae" (cf. *Theb.* 1.718: *gentis Achaemeniae ritu*), as a reference to the Parthians, the contemporary lords of Iran, and not to the Achaemenids of the Battle of Salamis or Kunaxa.¹⁷ His terminology is archaic, but the reality referred to is current. He names the Euphrates as the frontier

¹⁵ *Theb.* 8.286-293. Edition: Lesneur 1991: 118.

¹⁶ Translation based on the Loeb edition and Hollis 1994, 205, with my own corrections.

¹⁷ Both terms appear in Roman poetry, cf. *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, Bd. I, Lipsiae 1900: s.v. *Achaemenius*, 382. Statius uses the notion *Persae* and its variants sporadically (*Silvae* 3.62; 5.187).

river, separating the Occident from the Orient. In Statius' era indeed the Euphrates marked the border between Rome and Parthia, whereas in the Achaemenid period it did not. He lists the attributes of Achaemenius' royal authority: the bow, the sceptre, and the tiara — the principal Arsacid insignia. In addition, he mentions the horse (cf. *Silvae* 2.19: *Parthus equum*), an animal associated with the Parthians in the literary sources (Olbrycht 2003: 89-90). The tiara is an intriguing detail, which reappeared on Parthian tetradrachms precisely when Statius began composing the *Thebaid* (A.D. 78-79). The key position of the great clans, referred to as the *proceres*, was characteristic of the Parthian political system (Olbrycht 2003: 82-83; 2013b, *passim*). The young ruler is not sure to whom to entrust the provinces on the Euphrates and the lands around the Caspian, which is also an exact reflection of the contemporary situation in Parthia. Quite possibly the anticipation of the conflict with Artabanos III, who controlled the lands on the Euphrates, is lurking behind the young Achaemenian's uncertainty. Statius compares the situation of the successor to a great monarch like Vologases I with young Thiodamas' predicament. The prince succeeding to the Oriental throne is the son of his great predecessor, i.e. the son of Vologases. The situation corresponds to the opening years of the reign of Pakoros II. A.S. Hollis is absolutely right: "So unusual and so detailed is the picture drawn here that one naturally wonders whether Statius had in mind a real situation from recent Parthian history" (Hollis 1994: 205-206). Curiously, Statius never mentions Vologases and Pakoros II by name. However, Pakoros II appears in the Roman poetry of Domitian's reign as a powerful monarch of the Orient: Martial 9.35.3 writes of him: *scis quid in Arsacia Pacorus deliberet aula* ("you know what Pakoros is pondering in his dynastic palace of Arsacia"). The last dated issues of Pakoros II's tetradrachms (S77) were minted when Martial was composing this epigram in c. A.D. 96.

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Abbreviations

- SE = Seleucid era.
S = Sellwood 1980.