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Detail from above the entrance of Tehran's fire temple, 1286š/1917–18. Photo by © Shervin Farridnejad

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Special Issue: Hellenism and Iran

Andragoras, a Seleukid Governor of Parthia-Hyrkania, and his Coinage ¹

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(Rzeszow University)

Für Professor Dieter Metzler zum 18. Mai 2020

We learn of Andragoras from one mention by the Roman historian Justin (41.4.6-8) stating that it was this governor (*praefectus*) who was killed by Arsakes I, the founder of the Arsakid state.² Arsakes invaded Parthia when he heard the news of the defeat of Seleukos II at the hands of the Gauls at Ankyra in Asia Minor.³ In Latin sources, the title *praefectus* is usually equivalent to the Seleukid office of *strategos*. But it is possible that Justin's *praefectus* means in this case 'satrap' (σατράπης). A Greek inscription discovered in the Iranian province of Gorgān (ancient Hyrkania) around 1959 mentions a Seleukid official called Andragoras.⁴ In all likelihood, the mentions in Justin and the inscription refer to the same power-holder.

Parthia alongside Hyrkania made up a single administrative province in the Late Achaemenid and Hellenistic period. This large double satrapy encompassed Iranian Khorasan, the Gorgān region, and

1- I would like to express my gratitude to Touraj Daryaee for having organized a stimulating conference at UC Irvine, and for his hospitality. Research for this study was supported by the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, NJ, by the Gerda Henkel Stiftung, and by the Humboldt Stiftung.

2- For more on Andragoras, see Wolski 1969; 1975; Lerner 1999, 13-31; Balakhvantsev 2005; Bivar 2005; Olbrycht 2013.

3- Just. 41.4.6-8: *Hic solitus latrocinii et rapto vivere accepta opinione Seleucum a Gallis in Asia victum, solutus regis metu, cum praedonum manu Parthos ingressus praefectum eorum Andragoran oppressit sublatoque eo imperium gentis invasit.* Justinus 12.4.12 refers to the same Andragoras although this passage is garbled in terms of chronology.

4- See Olbrycht 2013. Cf. *SEG* 20-325 (1964); *SEG* 49-2440 (1973).

southern Turkmenistan. Several sources point to the fact that Parthia seceded from the Seleukid Empire in the 250s-240s B.C.⁵ What we chiefly perceive for this epochal change is the invasion of the nomadic ruler Arsakes, who killed Andragoras, but there are hints that Andragoras himself had revolted against Seleukid rule and tried to establish an independent principality. The Roman historian Appian (*Syr.* 65) says that the Parthians (*Parthyaioi*) began a revolt (*apostasis*), taking advantage of turmoil in the house of the Seleukids caused by the War of Laodike (which began in 246).⁶ According to a view put forward by J. Wolski, Appian's statement pertains to a rebellion of Andragoras, satrap of Parthia, against the Seleukids, around 245.⁷ Yet the Roman historian does not specify whether the revolt was that of Andragoras. Apparently, the passage refers to the invasion of Arsakes which should be dated to the late 240s.

Andragoras produced coins in his own name, although without the title of king.⁸ In the political realities of the time, coins issued by a governor indicated his desire for independence, as was the case in Bactria and in Persis. Furthermore, Andragoras is depicted on his coins with a diadem, which was perceived as a royal emblem at the time.⁹ The numismatic evidence is in line with the historical reconstruction of Andragoras as a rebellious governor. It is possible that the mutiny of Andragoras broke out owing to an agreement between the satrap and Parthia's Iranian elite, who desired to better safeguard their country against dangers. The main threat consisted of nomads attacking the northern territories of Parthia-Hyrkania, in the flatland north of the Kopetdagh (modern southern Turkmenistan) (Strabo 11.8.3).¹⁰

There are documented coins minted in the name of Andragoras, including gold (staters, type Mitchiner 1975, 19) and silver (tetradrachms, type Mitchiner 1975, 20) specimens. The present paper focuses on gold coins. These staters feature the name ΑΝΔΡΑΓΟΡΟΥ (without any title) inscribed in Greek. Six staters of Andragoras are known from publications; at least one, together with a tetradrachm of Andragoras, comes from the so-called Oxos treasure discovered in Bactria.¹¹ Recently another gold specimen appeared on the market, said to come from the second Mir Zakah deposit discovered in Afghanistan.¹²

The stater imagery is characteristic: a bearded man's head with a headband (diadem) on the obverse, and a winged goddess (Nike?) and a warrior in a quadriga on the reverse. The obverse features a monogram (a ligatur of the Greek characters H, A, and P).¹³

5- Olbrycht 1998, 51-76.

6- On the Laodikean War, see Lehmann 1998.

7- Wolski 1956/7, 38-39.

8- D'iakonov / Zeimal' 1988; Koshelenko / Gaibov / Bader 1999.

9- On the diadem on the coins of Andragoras, see Mitchiner 1975, type 19. On the function of the diadem in the Hellenistic period, see Olbrycht 2014.

10- Olbrycht 1998, 46-47.

11- On staters with the name Andragoras, see Mitchiner 1975, 19 (Type 19); *Numismatic Fine Arts* 25, 1990, lot 202; Olbrycht 2013. See also: www.parthia.com/parthia_coins_pre-Arsacid (accessed August 2018).

12- This coin was seen by Osmund Bopearachchi in 1994 and has been sold at a CNG auction, see <https://www.cngcoins.com/Coin.aspx?CoinID=222688>. The CNG description provides information about two further staters of Andragoras reportedly belonging to the Mir Zakah deposit. However, this statement cannot be verified.

13- D'iakonov / Zeimal' 1988, 5.



Stater of Andragoras. Specimen sold at a CNG auction (reportedly from the second Mir Zakah deposit in Afghanistan). Photograph after: <https://www.cngcoins.com/Coin.aspx?CoinID=222688>

On the staters of Andragoras, the quadriga is turned to the right and depicted in profile. There are two persons in the chariot, a driver (Nike?) and a warrior behind. The male figure in the quadriga is probably Andragoras: he has a long beard and wears a cuirass as well as a *kyrbasia* headdress with pointed top part. The winged figure may be identified as Nike.

The image of a quadriga occurs rarely on Seleukid coinage, almost exclusively as a quadriga of elephants. An elephant quadriga appears on the coins of Seleukos I.¹⁴ The chariot is led by Athena Promachos with a shield and spear. A few bronze coins of Seleukos II (246-223), struck in a western mint, feature Nike in a horse quadriga holding a wreath, but the imagery on the obverse (Poseidon) is linked to a naval victory, a topic unusual for eastern Iran (this type is classified into “unattributed western issues”).¹⁵ Thus the motif of a horse quadriga is hardly attested among eastern Seleukid coin issues and remains a marginal phenomenon in the extremely rich repertoire of Seleukid coinages. Apparently Andragoras was inventive in his iconography and chose the motif deliberately, but he hardly had at his disposal any exact Seleukid prototype minted east of the Euphrates.

In the Greek-Macedonian world, Nike in the quadriga symbolized military victory. But in Iranian tradition, the image of an armed goddess clearly alludes to Anahita (Arədvī Sūrā Anāhitā).¹⁶ Such an interpretation may be essential for understanding Andragoras’ political program. In the *Avesta*, Arədvī Sūrā Anāhitā drives a chariot with four horses, denoting wind, rain, clouds, and hail (*Yasht* 5.120; 5.11). The scene

14- SC I, 1, nos. 130-133, 177-180, 259-263, 272-283; minted at Seleukia-on-the-Tigris (both a *quadriga* and a *biga*); Susa; Uncertain Mint 19 (Bactra or another mint in the northern satrapies), and Ai Khanom.

15- SC I, 1, no. 738.

16- On Anahita, see Chaumont 1985; de Jong 1997, 268-86. See also the entry “Arədvī Sūrā Anāhitā”, in: Colpe (ed.) 1986, 275-286. Cf. the critical remarks by Brosius 1998.

including a prince in the chariot led by Anahita symbolizes a military victory and a divine patronage for the ruler. Under the Achaemenids, Anahita was linked to the concept of royal power; Artaxerxes II (Plut. *Artox.* 3.1-2) was crowned in a temple of “Athena,” i.e., of Anahita. He promoted her cult, built her temples, and installed her statues in cities of the empire. According to Berossos, the cult of statues of “Aphrodite Anaitis” was introduced by Artaxerxes, who was the first to set up the statue of “Aphrodite Anaitis in Babylon, Susa, Ekbatana, Persai [Persepolis], Bactra, Damascus, and Sardis, and showed how to worship it” (*BNJ* 680 F11). Herodotos (1.131.3) identified Aphrodite with Anahita.¹⁷ The name of Anahita occurs in some Old Persian inscriptions.¹⁸ The Hellenistic period witnessed a blend of different traditions concerning the cult of Anahita in Iran and the Near East: it was influenced by the veneration of Nanaia, Ishtar, Artemis and Aphrodite. In Parthia itself Nana/Nanaia was worshipped in the Arsakid period.¹⁹

One of the most significant cult places of Anahita at Ekbatana, a royal seat of the Achaemenids. Isidoros of Charax (*Stathmoi* 6) locates a temple of Anahita at Ekbatana (cf. Polyb. 10.27), and a temple of goddess Artemis at Konkobar in Media. Parthia, closely linked to Media (cf. Iust. 41.2.3), must have witnessed roughly the same religious developments, including the cult of Anahita, and other female deities.

Concerning the quadriga on the staters of Andragoras, close analogies in terms of composition point to the coins of Phoenician Sidon depicting an Achaemenid king behind a driver in a horse chariot (mid-fourth century B.C.).²⁰ Coins from the Levant were certainly known in north-eastern Iran as they were transported as far as Bactria and some pieces are attested in the Oxos treasure.²¹ The motif of a quadriga resembles chariots depicted on the coins minted in the name of Vakhshuvar.²² These coins raise a number of questions in terms of chronology and attribution: they may be assigned to Andragoras, although some scholars prefer an attribution to a Bactrian ruler named Vakhshuvar.²³ The quadriga motif on the coins of Andragoras features an impact of Greek style elements what is understandable in Hellenistic period when Greek iconography deeply influenced imagery in the art of Asia.

The bearded head on Andragoras' staters is interpreted as Zeus,²⁴ or else the issuer himself. The latter view is much more probable, as a diadem, which was not an attribute of Zeus, is visible on the head. The diadem was an acknowledged royal attribute in post-Achaemenid Asia.²⁵ The ribbon of Andragoras is relatively narrow but it is rather impossible to interpret the headband as a tainia. The tainia (Greek ταινία) was a term for a variety of headbands that were worn at festivals in the Greek world.²⁶ As a rule, the tainias were ascribed to gods (Paus. 1.8.4),²⁷ cult images (Paus. 8.31.8; 10.35.10), and the deceased (Luk. *Dial. mort.* 13.4). Besides, the

17- See de Jong 1997, 103-10.

18- A²Sa; A²Sd and A²Ha. See Kent 1953, 154-155.

19- Shenkar 2014, 127.

20- D'iakonov/Zeimal' 1988, 10.

21- Dalton 1964; Bellinger 1962. Recently, an Achaemenid satrapal specimen has been discovered at Termez on the Amu Daryā in Uzbekistan (personal communication by A. Gorin, Tashkent).

22- Coins of Vakhshuvar: *NPIIN* 382-383. A summary of information on coins with the name Vakhshuvar is offered by D'iakonov/Zeimal' 1988. See Mitchiner 1975 I, 24, types 34-35.

23- Mitchiner I, 1975, type 34.

24- Diademed head of bearded Zeus: Mitchiner 1975, I, 19.

25- Olbrycht 2014.

26- Pl. *Symp.* 212d.e, 213d; Xen. *Symp.* 5.9. On headbands in Greek art, see Krug 1967.

27- Thus, e.g., some coins of Amphipolis minted under Alexander III and Philip II show the head of Apollo with hair bound with a tainia. See Price 1991, 338.

tainia was a sign of a victor at competition (Paus. 4.16.6; 6.20.10; 9.22.3; Diod. 17.101.2). It is to be noted that images of Zeus with a tainia occur rarely in the early Hellenistic age. As a rule, such images do not appear in the Near East. There are scarce depictions of Zeus with a tainia on coins of Akragas, Sicily, dated to about 279-241.²⁸ Depictions of Zeus with a hairband or tainia occur predominantly in the late Hellenistic (1st century B.C.) and Imperial Roman periods.²⁹ Thus it would be difficult to assume that the image on coins of Andragoras should be identified as Zeus with a tainia, for there are hardly any prototypes for such images in the Seleukid Empire and beyond in the early Hellenistic period.

Sometimes it is difficult to determine what the intention of the ruler and his mint masters might have been, at a time when certain types of representations were not yet widely developed. The use of a diadem by Hellenistic rulers was modelled on a tradition initiated by Alexander the Great who in turn borrowed this attribute from the Achaemenids. The shape of the diadem was fairly diverse. In some cases what scholars assume to be a tainia functionally seems to be rather a diadem. An important case is the use of headbands as attributes of power on coins of Pergamon in the 3rd century B.C. The ruler of Pergamon Philetairos issued coins in the name of and with a portrait of the deceased Seleukos I on the obverse, and a reverse of the seated Athena (SC 1.1. 309). These coins, bearing the legend *Philetaïrou* on the reverse, stress the Attalids' relationship with the Seleukids and intentions of Philetairos: "An important political step was taken by this open declaration of independence from Seleucid rule."³⁰ On the coins of Philetairos, Seleukos I wears a narrow diadem without visible endings³¹ and thus interpreted by some experts as a tainia. Assuming this identification one must say that in this case the tainia refers to the royal status of Seleukos and alludes to his heroization. Alternatively it is possible that the headband was meant to be perceived as a diadem. This image is crucial, as it certainly was conceived as an invocation to Seleukos as a powerful king (posthumously). Comparable issues (with a horned portrait of Seleukos I) were minted under Antiochos I (281-261), but they depict a narrow headband with long endings.³² In both cases, the headband is above all a sign of royal power, but its shape slightly differs. The coinages of Pergamon with their imagery and emblems demonstrate intricacies of politics of rulers seeking independence in the early Hellenistic period.

Under Eumenes I (263-241), the successor to Philetairos, the images of Seleukos were superseded by the portraits of Philetairos, which feature a headband with long endings. U. Westermark writes of a tainia of Philetairos as a symbol of divinization of the deceased ruler.³³ However, O. Mørkholm identifies the headband as "a tubular taenia or diadem" and points to political nuances alluding to an implicated royal status of Philetairos in this case.³⁴ This intuition appears to be correct: Philetairos, like Eumenes I, clearly was aspiring to autonomous power, although he remained dependent on the Seleukids.³⁵ The royal title was assumed by Attalids only under Attalos I (began his rule in 241), but Eumenes I's coins showing Philetairos with headband feature an allusion to the intended royal status of this dynast. On his later coinages, Eumenes of Pergamon

28- LIMC s.v. Zeus, no. 585; SNG ANS 1127.

29- LIMC s.v. Zeus, no. 418-420, 425, 426. The same applies to such depictions on coins, ibidem, nos. 578-584 (s.v. Tainia).

30- Mørkholm 1991, 128. On the politics of Philetairos, see Chrubasik 2016, 26-30.

31- Westermark 1960, Taf. 17.5.

32- Westermark 1960, Taf. 17.6.

33- Westermark 1960, 21, coins V.I-V.X. She gives no corroboration for her assumption.

34- Mørkholm 1991, 128-129.

35- Chrubasik (2016, 26) assumes that the minting of independent coinage by Philetairos, who ruled under Seleukid authority, "should not be interpreted as evidence of political independence".

introduced a modification and the diadem/taenia of Philetairos was combined with a laurel wreath.³⁶ This was intended to demonstrate a further step in the quest for independence and can be linked with military victories of the issuer - Eumenes I defeated Antiochos I in a battle near Sardis (Strab. 13.4.2).

The political developments point to the conclusion that not only a diadem but also a tainia, in some cases combined with a laurel wreath, were linked in the early Hellenistic iconography with the status of an independent ruler aspiring to kingship or being a king. Besides, in the early Hellenistic period, the ways of depicting a diadem differed for there was no canonical prototype. Therefore, it is conceivable that some engravers modelled the depictions of diadems on images of tainia known from cultic artefacts.

In the Hellenistic world of Asia, the diadem was a royal attribute, so the image on the staters minted by Andragoras implies that he clearly strove for royal power. The fact that he minted coins in his own name implies that he declared independence from the Seleukids. Minting gold coins was certainly a display of his intentions to create an independent kingdom. The coins of Andragoras feature no attribute that clearly would identify the image of the bearded man as Zeus. Thus, the bearded person must be Andragoras himself, who aspired to monarchic rule. Apparently, he assumed royal dignity, as implied by the diadem, but he refrained from using the royal title of *basileus* on the coins. Still, Andragoras' likeness may have alluded to the laureate head of Zeus on the coins of Seleukos I, e.g. on specimens minted at Susa.³⁷

If the figure shown on coins with the legend *Andragorou* is indeed Andragoras himself, it should be noted that the issuer appears on the staters with an ample beard, while the dominant fashion at the time consisted of beardless images following the style of Alexander's coins. This fashion was displayed on the Seleukid coins of Seleukos I, Antiochos I, and Antiochos II. All of the Seleukids in the third century B.C. are portrayed as beardless on coins.³⁸ Exceptions are Seleukos II, who is often displayed with a full beard, and some rare bearded images of his brother Antiochos Hierax.³⁹ Wearing a beard was the usual practice among Iranian rulers (with the significant exception of the first Arsakid rulers, including Arsakes I and Arsakes II), but not among Macedonians or Greek kings or dynasts. Diodotos of Bactria, who was a contemporary of Andragoras, is depicted as beardless. Iranian rulers of Persis in the third century B.C., Vahbarz/Oborzoz, and Vadfradad/Autophratades, are depicted on coins as bearded.⁴⁰ Contrary to this, coins of Ariaramnes and Ariarathes III, kings of Kappadokia of Iranian descent in the mid-third century B.C., depict them without a beard (*NPIIN* 127-137). Andragoras's bearded image departs from the prevailing Seleukid fashion.

Apart from the staters, several tetradrachms are known that were issued in the name of Andragoras. On the obverse, these silver coins feature the head of a goddess in a turreted crown, and on the reverse a standing Athena left. The legend *ANΔPAΓOΠOY* is placed right vertically.⁴¹

Dating Andragoras' coins based on numismatic methods is difficult. Clearly they were produced in the early post-Achaemenid period and before the defeat of Andragoras at the hands of Arsakes.⁴² Mitchiner erroneously

36- See Westermarck 1960, coins of Group III (V.XI- V.XV).

37- SC 1.1. nos 177-180. See also elaborate Zeus' images on coins SC 1.1. no. 272, uncertain eastern mint, perhaps Ai Khanoum, or SC 1.1. nos 276-283, linked to Ai Khanum mint.

38- See Lorber / Iossif 2009; Alonso Troncoso 2010, 13-24.

39- See Mørkholm 1991, 116 and 124. SC 1.1. nos 685-686. The problem of bearded portraits of Seleukos II and Antiochos Hierax is discussed in SC 1.1., 250-251.

40- See Klose/Müseler 2008, 34-40.

41- See D'iakonov/Zeimal' 1988; Olbrycht 2013. On mural crown, see Metzler 1994.

42- Holt 1999, 61, n. 39, dates them at the years 320-240.

dates these issues to ca. 315 B.C.⁴³ The portraits on the Andragoras' staters display ornamentally arranged hair and a narrow diadem. The hair is styled in regular rows of curls and this resembles the headdress of the ruler on tetradrachms minted in the name of Antiochos II (261-246).⁴⁴ This provides an important chronological indication: apparently, coins of Andragoras were minted during the reign of Antiochos II or slightly afterwards. They were produced at Hekatompylos: there are strong indications that a Seleukid mint operated in that city.⁴⁵ While some of these coins were discovered in Bactria, the reason might be that Andragoras was probably involved with the satrap of Bactria Diodotos. Both governors revolted against the Seleukids and conceivably may have cooperated. As well, the coins and other items from the Oxos treasure, including coins of Andragoras, were actually included in a temple deposit that encompassed items of different origins.

In light of written literary, epigraphic, and numismatic evidence, Andragoras was an outstanding Seleukid governor who declared independence in the 250s and ruled for some time over Parthia and Hyrkania. The rule of Andragoras was suddenly interrupted by Arsakes, a nomadic ruler from the Trans-Caspian steppes. Andragoras' coinage, both in silver and in gold, is an indication of independent sovereignty.

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