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Genealogy and Coinage of the Early Parthian Rulers · I

In a cuneiform text inscribed after Cyrus II the Great (559-529 BC) triumphantly entered Babylon in the autumn of 539 BC, the founder of the Achaemenid Empire declared:

I (am) Cyrus, King of the world, the Great King, the Mighty King, King of Babylon, King of the land of Sumer and Akkad, King of the four rims of the world, son of Cambyses, the Great King, King of Anshan, grandson of Cyrus, the Great King, King of Anshan, great-grandson of Teispes, the Great King, King of Anshan.

Around two decades later in 520 BC, Darius I the Great (522-486 BC) defeated the pretender Gaumata and several rebellious satraps in the empire. He then commemorated his victories at Bisutun, near Hamadān, Iran, tracing his ancestry back to his great-great-great-grandfather in a trilingual inscription with the following opening lines:4

I am Darius the Great King, King of Kings in Persia, King of Countries, son of Hystaspes, grandson of Arsames, an Achaemenian. Saith Darius the King: My father was Hystaspes; Hystaspes' father was Arsames; Arsames' father was Ariarames; Ariarames' father was Teispes; Teispes' father was Achaemenes.

Later Achaemenid records show that the successors of Darius I down to Artaxerxes III (359-338 BC) emulated the earlier kings and registered their descent at palaces in Persepolis and Susa. One of these texts reveals that the most distant ancestor directly alluded to is Darius I, attested in a memorial document from Susa, as the great-grandfather (op apantyāka) of Artaxerxes II (405-359 BC).

We also have a series of rock inscriptions which trace the lineage of several Sasanian kings. The earliest of these,3 carved under Ardashīr I (AD 224-241) at Naqsh-i Rustam in Fars, Iran, reads:

This is the image of the Mazda-worshipping god Ardashīr, King of Kings of Iran, who (is) a scion of the gods, son of King Pāpak.

Next come the four inscriptions at Naqsh-i Rustam,4 Naqsh-i Rajab,5 Hājiābād,6 and Tang-i Borāq7 in Fārs, with the genealogy of Shāpūr I (AD 241-272):

The Mazda-worshipping god Shāpūr, King of Kings of Iran and an-Iran, who is a scion of the gods, son of the Mazda-worshipping god Ardashīr, King of Kings of Iran, who is a scion of the gods, grandson of the god Pāpak, the King.

The latest extant Sasanian text is that of Shāpūr III (AD 383-388), located in a small cave in Tāq-i Bustān near Kirmānshāh, Iran, giving the king's ancestry as:8

The Mazda-worshipping god Shāpūr, King of Kings of Iran and an-Iran, who is a scion of the gods, son of the Mazda-worshipping god Shāpūr (II), King of Kings of Iran and an-Iran, who is a scion of the gods, grandson of the god Hormizd (II), King of Kings.

Today, thanks to the Achaemenid kings' desire to retain their ancestral records, we can trace back the lineage of Cyrus II, Darius I, and Artaxerxes III, through successive generations to Achaemenes, the eponymous founder of their imperial house. Likewise, using the royal lines of Narseh (AD 293-
303") and Shēnpūr II (AD 309-379), we can conveniently follow Shēnpūr III’s descent as far back as Ardashīr I and Pāpāk.

Unfortunately, we have no Parthian inscriptions with royal genealogies as complete as those found in the Achaemenid and Sasanian records. What we do have from the Arsacid epoch is a very small number of texts and coin legends with abridged and ambiguous allusions to the forbears of several Parthian kings. However, I believe we can now invoke the extant numismatic and textual evidence to construct a more reliable stemma of the rulers from Arsaces I (247-210 BC) through Vonones I (c. AD 8-12). In this paper, I shall consider certain Aramaic-script Parthian documents from Nisa, Justin’s statements on the early Arsacid rulers and a series of Parthian coin legends to investigate the dynastic links between Arsaces I and his successors down to Mithradates I (c. 170-132 BC). The subject is entirely appropriate in a volume honouring a great scholar, Professor Gennadij A. Koshelenko, who convincingly elucidated the problems of the early Arsacid genealogy in an earlier publication. I must add that this contribution would not have been possible without generous assistance from another great scholar and a long-standing friend, David Sellwood. Responsibility for errors and misinterpretation of evidence is mine alone.

Back in 1877, at the beginning of his pioneering publication on the coinage of Parthia, Sir Percy Gardner wrote: 14

...The only consecutive history of the earlier Arsacid kings is the meagre narrative of Justinus, who frequently contradicts both himself and the author, Trogus Pompeius, whom he professes to abridge...

This was indeed so for about a century after Gardner when the history and genealogy of the early Arsacid rulers largely depended on what Justin had hastily summarised in books 41 and 42 of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus. But the discovery of a handful of special ostraca among hundreds of inscribed potsherds, unearthed in the course of excavations at the ruined cities of Old Nisa in 1951-1955 and 1959-1961 by the staff under M. E. Masson, prompted re-evaluation of Justin’s statements on the relationship between the Parthian princes from Arsaces I to Mithradates I as early as 1960. Three of these documents, recording the accession to the throne of new kings, were originally published by I. M. Diakonoff and V. A. Livshits with brief discussions of their genealogical implications. However, Livshits has recently suggested that a poorly preserved text on a wine-jar, published by Masson in 1949, attests a King Arsaces and his father. Moreover, we now have at least two additional texts with historical importance. I will, therefore, begin with listing these documents and then examine their chronological and genealogical significance.

NISA-I TEXT (INSCRIPTION ON THE SIDE OF A JAR) 15

The jar was discovered in Room No. 1 to the south of the wine-store in Old Nisa. It has on its side the name ‘rōk = Aršāk (Arsaces) engraved before firing. The authors of the Parthian economic texts in cur argue that the standard ‘Royal jar’ for checking the capacity of other vessels would probably have borne the inscription ‘rōk MLK = Aršāk šāh (King Arsaces). However, numismatic evidence shows that both Arsaces I and his successor, Arsaces II (c. 210-190 BC), were called ἈΡΣΑΚΟΥ on their coins without the royal title ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ. 16 As briefly discussed below, the third Parthian ruler, Phraapti, (c. 190-176 BC), also placed on his coins the generic throne name Arsaces before adopting the title king later in his reign. Furthermore, the extant genealogical records from Nisa clearly refer to the founder of the Parthian dynasty as ‘rōk only and not ‘rōk MLK’ (cf. below). It is, therefore, possible that the inscription on this jar was engraved either under Arsaces I or II, or perhaps during the early years of Phraapti. Since this document is without a number in PION, I have assigned to it here the designation ‘Nisa-i text’ for convenience.

14. GARDNER 1877, 1.
17. BADER 1996, 254, believes the jar would have served as a ‘Royal standard’ of volume for measuring wine brought in by various wine-bearers.
NISA-II TEXT (= Livshits’ NISA 21)\(^{18}\)

This is inscribed on an ostracaon found by the star in 1955 at Old Nisa. Although not included in PEDN, Nisa-II text has already appeared in three different publications.\(^{19}\) It is a record of the offering of about 70 tonnes of barley and reads:

Line 1: ‘riz MLK’ BRY npt
Line 2: ‘riz QYLW
Line 3: NDBT’ ZNH ŠRN’ II ILP

King Arāš, great-grandson
(of) Arāš. Accounted
this offering of barley – 2000 ’e(phas)

Apart from being the most legible accession record from Nisa, this is an important text on several counts. Firstly, it has no Arsacid Era date whose epoch was on 14-15 April 247 BC.\(^{20}\) Considering that the earliest dated Nisa ostraca were so far discovered, no. 2673 (257),\(^{21}\) is from year AE 97 (= 151/150 BC) followed by another one, no. 2663 (Nova 82 ext.), dated AE 100 (= 148/147 BC),\(^{22}\) Nisa-II text is likely to have been written before 151 BC. It therefore shows that Arsacid time reckoning was not in vogue prior to the reign of Mithradates I or earlier than the accession of Phraates I (c. 175-170 BC).

Secondly, it gives the earliest attestations in the extent Arsacid records of the ideogram BRY (Aramaic ‘my son’)\(^{23}\) in place of the Parthian puhr (= son),\(^{24}\) and npt (or napūt = grandchild).\(^{25}\) It is possible that the scribes of Nisa employed BRY npt to avoid the cumbersome substitute BRY BRY BRY for great-grandson (cf. ostraca 2640 below). Thirdly and most significantly, as the oldest extant text, it explicitly confirms the historicity of Arsaces I. However, the absence of the royal title MLK strongly suggests that although Arsaces I was the founder and first ruler of the Parthian dynasty, he was not the first Arsacid king (βασιλεύς) as reported by Isidore of Charax.\(^{26}\) This agrees with the inscriptions of coins attributed to Arsaces I which read, in genitive case, ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ ΑΥΤΟΚΡΑΤΟΡΟΣ (S1-S2), ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ kmy (S3-S4), and ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ (S5), but not ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ. Fourthly, Nisa-II text establishes the link between Arsaces I and his great-grandson through a son and a grandson. Of these, according to Justin (41.5-7), Arsakes II succeeded his father on the throne as the second Parthian ruler. But the above record gives no indication of the status of the grandson of Arsaces I and unless future discoveries provide the missing information, we cannot ascertain whether this grandson reigned after Arsaces II. Finally, the absence of a name reference to Arsaces II in this text confirms that unlike the Achaemenid and Sasanian kings who recorded all the intervening generations between themselves and their distant ancestors, with perhaps one exception (Nisa-III text discussed below), all abbreviated Parthian genealogies from Nisa invariably omit at least one ruler from the royal lineage.

NISA-III TEXT\(^{27}\)

There appears to be a genealogical record in the inscription on a pithecus published by M. E. Masson in 1949.\(^{28}\) However, the only illustration of this badly preserved text, which is, alas, heavily retouched, shows several unintelligible words and characters (Fig. 1). I have given below what is discernible in the photograph, incorporated Professor Livshits’ proposed transliteration of lines 2 and 3, and added a brief commentary on possible restoration of some incomplete words and on a gold tablet from Hamadan, Arriarmanes is given as Hαζαμανιασάγα napūt = grandson of Achaemenes; (b) – in two inscriptions at Bisutun where Darius I says he is Arzāmānyā napūt = grandson of Arzāman, (c) – in an inscription at Persepolis, Artaxerxes I records that he is Dāmīyavāhā napūt = grandson of Darius I.

26. Schoff 1914, 9; Jacoby 1998, 781. Isidore claims that Arsaces I was thus proclaimed king in the city of Asarak.
27. I am grateful to Professor V. A. Livshits for bringing this document to my attention and also for transcribing what is left of its lines 2 and 3. He informed me on 25 October 2003 that the inscribed pithecus had been lost during the earthquake of 6 October 1948 in Ashkhabad, Turkmenistan.
detectable traces in this text:

Line 1: [...]/d x x x [...]/x x x
Line 2: [r]j/k MLK M x x
Line 3: BR[Y]/r/k MLK [...]
Line 4: MN x x [...]/x x x

[...]/d [...] [...]/...
King [Aršak, [...]
[son! (of)] King Aršak [...]
From [...] [...]/...

The first uncertain character in line 1 seems to be either R or D, or possibly even K. But when compared with the subsequent lines, the beginning of line 1 appears markedly indented. This is uncharacteristic of the legible texts on the recovered Nisa ostraca, none of which show heavy indentation of the consecutive lines. It is highly likely that the initial character in line 1 is part of a phrase or a longer word. We then find, on the same line, traces of three evenly spaced vertical strokes followed by a seemingly clear gap and then the remains of another three evenly spaced and almost vertical lines.

The transliteration of lines 2 and 3 of the above text by Livshits shows that the two letters 'r'- are missing from the beginning of line 2. The required space for these, deduced from the word 'r/k' in line 3, gives an indication of the number of lost letters at the start of line 1.

The first discernible character in line 2 appears to be an unclear combined -j/k. But the following word, MLK', is reasonably clear and so are an M and traces of three vertical signs.

Starting with line 3 we seem to have a poorly restored BR perhaps from BR[Y] although both B and R are inconsistent with the usual Nisa palaeography. In fact, what we find at the beginning of this line may be part of a longer word imperfectly preserved. On the other hand, while the first two letters of the next word are clearly 'r-', it is difficult to verify Livshits' reading of the following -j/k. Unless he has detected 'r/k in line 3 of the original text or its photograph, what follows 'r-' in the same line of the illustration by Masson resembles -g/k. Of course, it is possible that what

Fig. 1. Nisa III Text (reproduced from *Siria*, 1, 1949, 50).
appears to be a composite -gn- in fact a carelessly restored -x-. At the same time, unlike Livshits who reads MLK in line 3, Masson's given partial letters at the end of this line do not resemble the same word. The best interpretation of the visible traces and of the only legible letter of the last word in this line is [MULK] although even this is by no means certain. Therefore, I believe the proposed reading of 'rkr MLK' in this line by Livshits must be regarded as doubtful.

Finally, while the first word in line 4 seems to be a clear MN, the remaining letters of the next word or words are quite unclear. What we find in Masson's illustration after MN appears to be either kr- or even kd- and then a very uncertain letter followed by a possible -yn-. Unfortunately, these do not resolve into anything meaningful (cf. Addendum).

Accepting Livshits' transliteration of the text in lines 2 and 3, the space occupied by -y- of 'rkr in line 3 indicates that there may have been as many as three or four more letters before the R or D in line 1. Now, given that the following three memorial texts begin with an AB date and then record the genealogy of their respective kings, it may just be possible to suggest that line 1 of Nisa-III text also began with an AB date. If so, we may be able to estimate its year number from the known approximate accession dates of several Arsacid kings.

The first clue as to the possible date of this text comes from the royal epithet MLK'. It indicates that both the ruling Arsaces and his father before him, mentioned in lines 2 and 3 respectively, were kings. This automatically excludes Arsaces I and II. The former is attested as 'rkr and APEAKOY but not 'rkr MLK' and BAZIEFOG AEAKOY in the Nisa texts and his coin inscriptions, respectively, while Arsaces II appears as APEAKOY on his silver and bronze emissions (cf. below). At the same time, there seems to be insufficient space at the beginning of line 1 to accommodate the large sign for number 100 without creating unexpected indentation in the next three lines. This places the possible date of Nisa-III text before AB 100 (148/147 BC). Considering that unlike the Arsaces of this text Phriapatus' father was not king (cf. below), we may postulate that Nisa-III text inaugurates the reign of a son of Phriapatus. Sadly, we do not have the precise accession dates of Phraates I and Mithradates I although it is generally accepted that the former began to rule about 175 BC and passed the crown to his brother around 170 BC. These figures set the inauguration of the reigns of Phraates I and Mithradates I in c. AB 73 and 78, respectively.

Now, having established that as many as three or four letters are missing from the beginning of line 1 of Nisa-III text and that this same line could have had an AB date, it may be possible to show that the date formula of the text was SNT XX XX X III [1] III, i.e., 'Year 76-77 AB'. To do this, we have to consider that the sign for number 20 in Nisa texts is a vertical line slightly bent to the left at the top and sometimes with a left facing 'kink' in the middle although the latter is frequently omitted. On the other hand, number 10 is given as a short horizontal stroke often placed very close to the sign for 20 to form number 30. Accordingly, we may take the only visible letter in line 1 to be a retouched composite sign made from numbers 20 and 10 in the original text. This could easily be confused with the letter R or D.

Having ruled out number 100 in the possible year date of this text and considering that numbers from 30 to 99 consist of multiples of 20 plus a single 10 and then the required units, restoring two 20s before the already present 30 would give number 70 of the date. These, together with the ideogram SNT (Parthian sard = year) would easily have fitted into the available space at the beginning of line 1 of Nisa-III text. As for the remainder of the year number, we may take the traces of six and perhaps one missing vertical strokes at the end of line 1 as number 6 or 7. This would give either AB 76 (172/171 BC) or 77 (171/170 BC) as the date of our text and the beginning of the reign of Mithradates I. Alternatively, the first three partial vertical strokes may represent number 3 with the remaining traces corresponding to the ideogram YRH' (Parthian māḥ = month) followed by a month name such as those found in several ostraca from Nisa. The date AB 73 (175/174 BC) would then mark the beginning of the reign of Phraates I.

It is reasonable to assume that line 4 of this text was independent of the royal genealogy and only registered the name of the deliverer of wine or the estate from which wine had been brought.

to the store at Nisa. We are then left to restore the partially preserved word or phrase at the end of line 2 beginning with an M. One possibility is that it was simply MH or ME (Parthian čē = who/which/that is), attested in two texts from the Arsacid period and also in Parthian versions of two Sasanian inscriptions. Alternatively, it may have been the beginning of a phrase giving the personal name of the king such as Mrt DQRY (called Mithradates), Mrt MLK DQRY (called King Mithradates) or MH Mrt MLK' DQRY (who is called King Mithradates). Yet Masson's unclear illustration fails to confirm any of these proposed interpretations and the single legible M may, after all, belong to a word other than Mrt or MH/ME.

It is obvious that Nisa-11 text can have far reaching genealogical and historical implications. Sadly, however, its only available illustration, with a single legible MLK' in line 2, is hopelessly incomplete and thus seriously the significance of this document. Accordingly, I have precluded Nisa-11 text from further discussions in this note.

Nisa Ostraca 2638 (1760)

This was discovered by the star during the 1951-1955 excavations and subsequently published as ostraca No. 1760 by Diakonoff and Livshits. It is an accession record and provides the abbreviated genealogy of an Arsacid king who ascended the throne in 91-90 BC:

Line 1: ŠN'T IC XX X X III I 'rēk MLK' BRY B'RY' Z/Y 'Prýprk
Line 2: BRY 'HY BRY' Z/Y 'rēk
Line 1: Year 197 (AI). King Arsāk, grandson of Priyapāthak,
Line 2: son of the nephew of Arsāk

Like Nisa-11 text, this document has significant genealogical, historical, and etymological implications. While the first two points will be discussed in some detail later, it is important to point out that ostraca 2638 contains the earliest attestations of BRY BRY and 'HY BRY. These were only piecemeal transpositions and not proper Aramaic equivalents of the Parthian words puhrēpuhrē, written as prēprēprē (literally son of son = grandson), and barādēpūrē or barādē-zādāg (= nephew), respectively. In fact, unlike npt (napāt = grandchild) when neither the child's nor grandchild's gender mattered or was known, BRY BRY (or BRY LBRY) had the ability to express the gender of both the child and grandchild of a grandfather. The Babylonian parallel for this is found in a cuneiform text where the Sumerogram DUMU (Akk mānr = son) is doubled to form DUMU DUMU (Akk māmr = grandson) in order to express that Cyrus II the Great was not merely a grandchild but the grandson of Cyrus I by the latter's son, Cambyses I. On the other hand, with the exception of the following two texts and one or possibly two further inscriptions from Nisa, the ideogram 'HY BRY is unique to ostraca 2638 and remains unattested in other Arsacid documents or the Parthian versions of Sasanian inscriptions.

It is also noteworthy that in addition to Arsaces I, attested in the earlier Nisa-11 text, ostraca 2638 confirms the historicity of both Phraapatius and the putative brother of the founder of the Parthian dynasty, called Tiridates by Arrian as who was followed by Syncellus and Zosimus. Yet unlike the genealogy of Darius I at Bisutun where his father, Hystaspes, is included in the royal line although he never rose above the rank of satrap of Parthia and Hyrcania, Nisa ostraca 2638

31. Diakonoff, Livshits 1960a, 20-21 and 113; Diakonoff, Livshits 1960b, 38; Diakonoff, Livshits 1966, 143-144, n. 28; Diakonoff, Livshits 1999, pl. 97; Diakonoff, Livshits 2003, 174; Diakonoff, Livshits 1976, 2, mention that the published ostraca in 1960 were among those found in 1951-1955.
32. Herzfeld 1934, 67, inscription of Shapir 1 in Hajjibash; Gaop 1969, 234-5, inscription of Shapir 1 in Tang-i Borq. 33. Ibidem, 86, line 4 of the Parthian version of the inscription of Shapir 1 at Naqi-i Rajab; Gigonoux 1972, 40; Husein 1999, 22, line 1 of the Parthian version of the inscription of Shapir 1 at Kaba-i Zardusht.
34. Grishevitch 1973, 74/77.
35. Lajub 1976, 101, no. 144.
37. Diakonoff, Livshits 2003, 175, no. 2647, possibly 'HY BRY in line 18; ibidem, 176, no. 2658, line 6.
38. Jacoby 1920, 888 (F30); Henry 1919, 31; Ross 1968, 224-226; Stauffer 1960, 137. On Tiridates, cf. also Beckerian 1949, 81-83; Gaslade 2000, 133-133. Wolle 2003, 42 comments that Nisa ostraca 2638 (1760) attests a cousin of Arsaces 1. This must be amended to read a brother of Arsaces 1.
39. Nisibis 1169, 559-569; Jacoby 1929, 899 (F30); Ross 1968, 224-226; Mosherit 1884, 343.
40. Pashou 1980, 19-20; Zosimus 1.82.1.
41. According to Herodoto (5.70), Hystaspes was the vice-
excludes the names of Phriapatius' father and grandfather from the lineage of the King Arsaces who was attested in Nisa in 91-90 BC. This king was Sinatraces (93/92-70 BC), an older son of Mithradates I. The portraiture and inscription of his S33 drachms and certain Babylonian evidence imply that the Saca invaders captured him after defeating and slaying Phraates II (132-126 BC) but later aided Sinatraces to wrest the throne from Mithradates II (122-91 BC). 44

**Nisa Ostracon 2639 (Nova 366)**

Like the majority of the ostraca found during 1959-1961 in a pit situated to the north of the wine-stores in Old Nisa, no. 2639 was in a very poor state of preservation. 45 It was, nevertheless, published by Diakonoff and Livshits who proposed the following reading: 46

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Line 1: [SNT IC] XX XX X 'ršk MLK'
Line 2: [BRY BRY ZY Pṛyptk BRY ḤY BRY ZY 'ršk]
Line 3: (faint traces)

Line 1: Year 170 (AE). King Aršak,
Line 2: [grandson of Fṛyāpāšak, son of the nephew of Aršak]
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However, in a more recent publication, the authors have amended their earlier reading as: 47

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Line 1: [SNT IC] XX XX XX 'X' 'ršk MLK' [BRY(?)]
Line 2: [BRY(?)] x x x x x x
Lines 3-4: [x x x x x x x]
Line 1: Year 170 (AE). King Aršak, son (?)
Line 2: (of) son (?) (very faint traces of some signs)
Lines 3-4: (very faint traces of some signs)
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Unfortunately, beyond the fact that a King Arsaces acceded to the throne in AE 170 (78/77 BC), Nisa 2639 text offers very little information of genealogical value.

**Nisa Ostracon 2640 (Nova 307)**

This is the latest extant accession record from Nisa. It too was discovered in 1959-1961 in the same pit as ostracon 2639. Yet unlike the latter, the inscription on ostracon 2640 was in a somewhat better state of preservation prompting Diakonoff and Livshits initially to publish the following: 48

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Line 1: [SNT IC] XX XX XX 'ršk MLK'
Line 2: [B]RY† np ZY Pṛyptk
Lines 3-4: (faint traces)
Line 1: Year 180 (AE). King Aršak,
Line 2: [great-grandson of Fṛyāpāšak,)
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But what appeared at first to be ZY in line 2 was in fact a partially legible -t of np. The latest publication of the same record gives the following reading although examination of an original photograph fails to show a fourth line of text on this ostracon: 49

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Line 1: [SNT IC] XX XX XX 'ršk MLK'
Line 2: [B]RY† np Pṛyptk
Line 3: [fṛ[k]
Line 4: [fṛ[k (?)]
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regent of Persia. Cf. COOLEY 1928, 92-3. This is obviously incorrect since in his trilingual inscription at Bisutun, Darius I refers to his father as the satrap of Parthia and Hyrcania only. Cf. KENT 1950, 124-127; BADIAN 1985, 420.
42. ASSAR 2006, 16; ASSAR 2003a, 37-41.
43. DIAKONOFF, LIVSHITS 1976, 2.
44. DIAKONOFF, LIVSHITS 1966, 143-144. N. 28 and pls. x and xii. Cf. also, CHAUMONT 1968, 15; CHAUMONT 1971, 145; BADER 1994, 236 (read no. 2679 for 2539).
46. DIAKONOFF, LIVSHITS 1966, 143-144, n. 28 and pls. x and xii. Cf. also, CHAUMONT 1968, 15; CHAUMONT 1971, 145-146; BADER 1994, 236 (read 2678 for 2538).
47. DIAKONOFF, LIVSHITS 1999, pl. 918; DIAKONOFF, LIVSHITS 2003, 174.
Given that Phriapatius is attested as the grandnephew of Arsaces I on ostracon 2638, it is likely that to trace the lineage of the Parthian king in AE 180 (68/67 BC) back to the founder of the dynasty, the Nisa scribe simply wrote BRY 'HY BRY ZY 'tik in line 3 of ostracon 2640.

As stated above, Diakonoff and Livshits had perceptively argued in 1960 that 'HY BRY on ostracon 2638 was read off as barādār-paḥr or barādār-zādag in Parthian. Following this, they correctly took BRY 'HY BRY as the son of nephew and concluded that Phriapatius was a grandnephew of Arsaces I. However, although there was, at the time, no serious objections to their identification of the King Arsaces of Nisa ostracon 2638 with a grandson of Phriapatius called Gotarzēs, this has recently turned out to be inconsistent with the historical notice in a contemporary Babylonian cuneiform record. Thanks to the clear testimony in an Astronomical Diary, we now know that Gotarzēs I was a son of Mithradates II and that he ascended the Parthian throne after the death of his father in late 91 BC and ruled until the middle of 87 BC. This obviously precludes Mithradates II from being a son of Phriapatius as he would have been an octogenarian in 91 BC and an appropriate subject for Lucian who refers in his Makrobioi to several lesser oriental rulers living beyond eighty. It has been shown that the king responsible for the demise of Mithradates II was Sinatruces, an older son of Mithradates I who in turn was a son of Phriapatius. Hence the inclusion of the epithets ΝΙΚΑΤΟΡΟΣ and ΘΕΟΠΑΤΟΡΟΣ in the royal titulature on S33 drachms of Sinatruces to celebrate his victory over Mithradates II and honour his father, Mithradates I, whose deification had already been recognised by his other sons Phraates II and Artabanes I (126-122 BC). In fact, our identification of King Arsaces in line 1 of ostracon 2638 with Sinatruces is supported by ostracon 2640. The date 68/67 BC of the latter marks the recognition in Nisa of the reign of Phraates III (c. 70-58 BC). According to Appian (Mithradatic Wars, 12.104), Phraates succeeded his father, Sinatruces. This agrees with the epithets ΦΙΛΟΠΑΤΟΡΟΣ and ΘΕΟΠΑΤΟΡΟΣ on Phraates' S36 and S35 coinages, respectively. Since Phriapatius is attested as the great-grandfather of Phraates III in Nisa ostracon 2640, he would obviously be Sinatruces' grandfather.

Several years later, influenced by H. L. Ginsberg, Bickerman questioned Diakonoff's and Livshits' interpretation of the text of Nisa ostracon 2638 and proposed a radically different translation. He stressed that in genealogical statements all indications of lineage refer to the subject of the statement and thus concluded that King Arsaces of ostracon 2638 was a grandson of Phriapatius and a grandnephew of Arsaces I simultaneously. In other words Phriapatius and the first Arsaces were brothers. This proved to be an unlikely premise requiring about a century between the birth dates of Phriapatius and his grandson, Sinatruces, who acceded to the throne in 91 BC (cf. below).

Still later, Chaumont suggested that BRY 'HY BRY literally meant nephew of a son (nèvè du fils). This was clearly an awkward way of saying a grandson and led to difficulties elsewhere compelling the author to concede that the ideogram may have implied descendant (cf. her reference to arrière nèvè). Soon after Chaumont's initial publication, Altheim and Stiehl discussed the genealogical implications of the same text but their interpretation of BRY 'HY BRY too led to Arsaces I being the grandfather not great-uncle of Phriapatius. Finally, in discussing the coins of the Parthian 'Dark Age', c. 91-54 BC, Dobbins concluded that Nisa ostracon 2638 referred to a grandnephew of Mithradates I, the true founder of the Parthian Empire and the Arsaces of the immediate past in c. 90 BC. However, since this required the king who began his rule in 91 BC to be a great-grandson of Phriapatius, the writer suggested that either there was a mistake or lacuna in the primary statement of descent on ostracon 2638, a missing son of, or that BRY BRY was intended in a general sense.

50. Assar 2000, 14; Assar 2003a, 41-47.
51. Harmon 1996, 232-233. Given that Phriapatius' reign ended in c. 176 BC, if Mithradates II were a son of that king, he would have been born no later than 175 BC and therefore about 85 years old at his death in 91 BC.
52. Sellwood 1962, 81-82; Sellwood 1971, 89-91; Assar 2000, 26; Assar 2003a, 37-41.
55. White 1912, 436-439. Phlegon of Tralles reports that Sinatruces' successor was Phraates III. But he fails to give the father-son relationship between the two kings. Cf. Jacoby 1929, 164 (File 6); Henty 1960, 64.
57. Chaumont 1968, 16; Chaumont 1971, 147.
The genealogical problems in the early Parthian period were, to a large extent, resolved when Koshelemko\textsuperscript{60} combined Justin's statements on dynastic relations of the rulers from Arsaces I to Mithradates II with what Diakonoff and Livshits had gleaned from Nisa ostracon 2638. His proposed stemma, adopted by most of the later commentators,\textsuperscript{61} is depicted below:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Arsaces I} \\
\text{Tiridates (did not rule)} \\
\text{Arsaces II} \\
\text{Son (did not rule)} \\
\text{Phriapatus} \\
\text{(Arsaces III)} \\
\text{Phrates I} \\
\text{(Arsaces IV)} \\
\text{Mithradates I} \\
\text{(Arsaces V)} \\
\text{Artabanus I} \\
\text{(Arsaces VII)} \\
\text{Son} \\
\text{Phrates II} \\
\text{(Arsaces VI)} \\
\text{Mithradates II} \\
\text{(Arsaces VIII)} \\
\text{Gotarzes I} \\
\text{(Arsaces IX)}
\end{array}
\]

However, using the information from further Nisa ostraca, historical notices in contemporary Babylonian cuneiform texts and recently discovered Parthian coins, it is now possible to improve upon Koshelemko's proposed genealogy of the early Arsacid rulers. To achieve this, it is necessary to briefly review the early history of Parthia in conjunction with the relevant textual and numismatic evidence.

**Arsaces I (247-210 BC)**

It is generally believed\textsuperscript{62} but not yet conclusively proven that early in the third century BC the Aparni tribe of the Dahae confederacy moved westward and settled along the eastern shores of the Caspian Sea in what was then Northern Parthia. Some years later, perhaps in 247 BC, they elected as their chieftain a man of unknown antecedents but undisputed bravery called Arsaces. In about 238 BC and after some earlier setbacks, Arsaces won Parthian autonomy by attacking and slaying Andragoras, the Seleucid satrap of Parthia, who had himself revolted around 245 BC from allegiance to Seleucus II Callinicus (246-226 BC). Justin (4.4.8) relates that not long after his victory over Andragoras, Arsaces annexed the satrapy of Hyrcania and then began to raise a large army to counter the Seleucid and Bactrian threats. But the death of Diodotus I (c. 255-235 BC) led to a peace treaty between Arsaces and the new Bactrian king, Diodotus II (c. 235-230/225 BC). This enabled the Parthian leader successfully to repel the punitive expedition of Seleucus II in about 228 BC and perhaps even temporarily hold him captive.\textsuperscript{63} Justin (41.5.6) comments that having won and consolidated the Parthian kingdom, Arsaces died at an advanced age and the succeeding rulers revered and perpetuated his memory by piously adopting his name.

Unfortunately, there are no fixed dates for the beginning and end of the reign of Arsaces I. Yet certain facts indicate that he was active during the period 247-210 BC. The former date is confirmed by the double dated Babylonian cuneiform documents and the Greek inscriptions of the Parthian period most of which use, in addition to the Seleucid calendar, the Arsacid time reckoning with 14-15 April 247 BC as its epoch. However, it must be borne in mind that our earliest accession record

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\textsuperscript{60} Koshelemko 1976, 33-34; Koshelemko 1982, 138-139.


\textsuperscript{63} Lerner 1999, 33-37.
from Nisa is undated while at least two texts from 151 and 148 BC carry AE dates (cf. above). This strongly indicates that the Parthians employed Arsacid Era dating no earlier than the reign of Mithradates I or probably Phraates I. Perhaps, having learned that on assuming the diadem and title βασιλεὺς in 305 BC Seleucus I (311-281 BC) had backdated his coronation to 1 Nišānu (2/3 April) 311 BC, the Parthians pushed back their c. 238 BC independence to coincide with the 247 BC election of their eponymous leader or the insurrection of the Aparni tribe. 64

It is noteworthy that the 247 BC accession of Arsaces I may be estimated independently of the AE reckoning in Parthian documents. As shown below, the extant numismatic evidence suggests that Arsaces II succeeded his father about 210 BC. At the same time we now know that Arrian’s, Synceillus’ and Zosimus’ stories about the brother of Arsaces I called Tiridates are relatively late pieces of propaganda. Assuming that Synceillus erroneously assigned to Tiridates the 37 year rule of Arsaces I, the latter’s reign must have begun about 247 BC.

Alternatively, we may consider the version given by the Armenian writer, Moses Chorene, that Arsaces I’s rule lasted for 31 years while that of his son and successor was 26 years long. It is interesting to note that the 57 years given by Moses to the first and second Parthian rulers is identical with the sum of 37 years for Tiridates (instead of Arsaces I) in Synceillus and the commonly accepted 20 years rule of Arsaces II. We may, therefore, argue that the Armenian author mistakenly transferred six years from the reign of Arsaces I to that of his successor. But if Moses’ figures are taken prima facie, then we would have to either move the date of Parthia’s independence from 238 to c. 240 BC, taking c. 210 BC as the end of Arsaces I’s reign, or retain 247 BC as the beginning of his rule and place its end in c. 217 BC. As shown below, the latter is inconsistent with the numismatic evidence from Arsaces II’s reign.

Regarding the coinage, Sellwood attributed types S1-S5 silver and bronze to Arsaces I (Fig. 2: 1-5). I must, however, add that although S5 had been assigned to Arsaces II, due to extensive maling of its reverse with S3 and S4 obverse dies (Fig. 2:6-7), this has now been considered by Sellwood and myself to be the terminal issue of Arsaces I. A unique specimen, with a S5 type obverse and a S6 reverse of Arsaces II (Fig. 2:8), confirms the contiguity of the two issues and that the S5 dies were withdrawn soon after Arsaces I died.

With the exception of two published pieces, 65 the known silver coins of Arsaces I come from a single hoard (IČCH, 1798) unearthed in 1965 in the river Atrak west of Bojnūr in North-East Iran. Accepting Newell’s theory that the presence of the characteristic weapons of the Parthians – the bow in case and the quiver full of arrows – on the Ecbatana minted small silver and bronze coins of Seleucus II implies success against the Parthians, then the introduction of the bow-in-case symbol on certain bronze denominations of Arsaces I may likewise suggest Parthian triumph over the Seleucids. 66

Finally, assuming that Arsaces I was about 30-35 years old when elected to lead the Aparni tribe in 247 BC, his birth date would fall in c. 280-275 BC. This agrees with Justin’s statement that Arsaces died at an advanced age (cf. above). But his absence from Lucian’s Makrobiōt that suggests that the founder of the dynasty was not an octogenarian at his death.

Recalling Bickerman’s theory that Arsaces I and Phriapatius were brothers (cf. under Nisa ostraco 2640), it can be shown that this leads to serious difficulties. According to the combined statements of Lucian and Philoegen, Satiracuclus was an octogenarian on his accession to the Parthian

64. ASSAR 2003b, 179-176.
65. NEHRU 1820, 539-540; JACOBY 1929, 859 (F31); ROOS 1960, 224-226; MOHSSIMM 1984, 343.
66. THOMPSON 1978, 131.
67. DROUIN 1890, 288, an S1 drachm of Arsaces I (not illustrated); DROUIN 1890, 5-6, the same coin; PETROWICZ 1904, 134, Taf. 113, an S5 drachm attributed to Arsaces I.
69. NEWBLL 1978, 202; GASLAIN 2004 (forthcoming). The Parthian bronzes have all appeared after the publication of Sellwood’s catalogue in 1960. These include an S2 type dichalkous (Private collection, US) having on its reverse the bow-in-case-with-attachment symbol and the typical monogram of Mithradatkart. We then have similar denominations for types S3 (cf. Numismatik Lanz München, Auction 102, 28 May 2001, Lot 306) and S4 (cf. Jacques, Numismatique Antique, List 16, Autumn 1994, Lot 204). It is possible that Arsaces I minted the earlier S2 bronze after winning Parthia’s independence from the Seleucids while S3 and S4 dichalkous were issued to mark his victory over Seleucus II. This view is corroborated by the presence of a bow behind the obverse bust of S2,3 drachms. Since Mithradates I issued S2,2-5 and S2,4-5 after capturing Ecbatana in 147 BC, it is quite likely that S2,3 was minted to mark the Parthian victory in Rha-

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Fig. 2. Coins of the Early Parthian Rulers. No. 1 = S1.1 silver drachm of Arsaces I (Author's Collection); no. 2 = S2.1 silver drachm of Arsaces I (reproduced from NC, 1971, Pl. 23); no. 3 = S3.1 silver drachm of Arsaces I (Author's Collection); no. 4 = S4.1 silver drachm of Arsaces I (Author's Collection); no. 5 = S5.1 silver drachm of Arsaces I (Author's Collection); no. 6 = S6/S7 'mule', same obverse as no. 3 (Author's Collection); no. 7 = S4/S5 'mule', same obverse as no. 4 (Author's Collection); no. 8 = S5/S6 'mule' (Author's Collection); no. 9 = S6/S7 silver drachm of Arsaces II (Author's Collection); no. 10 = S7/S8 (early), silver drachm of Phraupatam (reproduced from NC, 1971, Pl. 23); no. 11 = S7.1 (late), silver drachm of Phraupatam (D. Sellwood's Collection); no. 12 = S8.1 silver drachm of Phraupatam (reproduced from Wroth 1903, Pl. 1).
throne in 77/76 BC. This places that king's birth date in 357/56 BC at the latest. Assuming that there was as much as seventy years between the birth of Sinatruces and his grandfather, Phriapatius, the latter should have been born around 230 BC, i.e., about fifty years after the birth of Arsaces I. Although not entirely impossible, it is highly improbable that two brothers were born to the same parents fifty years apart. Besides, if Phriapatius were indeed a brother of Arsaces I, Justin's lack of reference to such an important fraternal link seems wholly unjustified. This is more so when we find that in his books 41.5.9-10, 42.2.1 and 42.4.1, respectively, Justin mentions the brother-brother relationship between Phraates I and Mithridates I, the uncle-nephew link between Phraetes II and Artabanus I, and the brother-brother bond between the sons of Phraates III, Mithridates IV (formerly III) and Orodes II. We thus seem to have further confirmation that as correctly interpreted by Diakonoff and Livshits, Phriapatius was the grandnephew of Arsaces I, not his brother.

**ARSACES II (c. 210-190 BC)**

According to Justin (41.5.7) Arsaces I's son and homonym, Arsaces II, followed him on the Parthian throne. On the other hand, Moses Chorene states that the son and successor of Arsaces I was Artaēs who reigned for 26 years. Although there are no explicit mentions of Arsaces II and his relationship to Arsaces I in the extant contemporary Parthian documents, the statements by Justin and Moses Chorene and the implicit reference to a son of Arsaces I in Nisa-i text establish the father-son relationship between the first and second Parthian rulers. However, unlike his father's victory over Seleucus II, Arsaces II appears to have had far less success against Antiochus III (223-187 BC). Polybius (10.4.27-31) narrates that, having looted the temple of Aine in Ecbatana of four thousand talents of gold and silver (equivalent to about twenty five million drachms), Antiochus marched against Arsaces II in 209 BC and after several battles won a decisive victory. Yet, in spite of giving details of military operations and Parthian retreat, defeat and eventual surrender in the city of Syrinx, the capital of Hycania, Polybius fails to clarify whether Antiochus overcame the Parthian ruler or only a detachment of his forces. It is possible that upon hearing the fate of his troops in Hycania, Arsaces II retreated to the less accessible regions in Parthia, e.g., the city of Dara on Mount Apaortenon which, according to Justin (41.5.2), was defended on all sides with sheer cliffs and so required no troops to guard it. Justin (41.5.7) further reports that Arsaces II fought with admirable gallantry against Antiochus and was finally accepted as an ally of the Seleucid monarch. Perhaps Arsaces II minted at Mithradatkart the S62 dichalkoi with bow-in-case motif to mark some sort of Parthian triumph. One may, therefore, conclude that in order to secure his rear and continue the expedition into Bactria and then India confidently, Antiochus sealed an agreement with Arsaces II whereby the Parthians retained, at least nominally, their independence but conceded the right to strike further coinage with the effigy and titulature of their ruler. It is also noteworthy that on examining fifty-nine S6 drachms of Arsaces II with the inscription ἈΡΣΑΚΟΥ (Fig. 2:9) from roughly five hundred specimens of the same type in the Bojnurd hoard, Sellwood *et al.* identified fourteen obverse and twenty-eight reverse dies. Comparing this with the twelve obverses utilised in the minting of the extant St-S5 drachms of Arsaces I, and that the S6 drachms may have been struck from many more dies with each die-pair producing ten to twenty thousand or more coins, one can assume that a relatively massive coinage was minted in a very short space of time. This was, most probably, in response to the Seleucid attack and may explain the mint state condition of the S6 drachms in the hoard and their absence before 1965. Obviously, non-

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70. Harmon 1996, 222-231; Jacoby 1929, 1164 (Pl.6.6); Henry 1960, 64. According to Lucian, Sinatruces ruled for seven years. Phiegon places the death of that king in Olympiad 177,3 (= 70/69 BC). Sinatruces was on the Parthian throne twice, once during c. 93/92-87 BC, and then c. 77-70 BC. Cf. Assar 2000, 66; Assar 2002a, 37-41.
71. Assar 2000, 16-18, Mithridates III son of Mithridates II and 20-22, Mithridates IV son of Phraates II; Assar 2002a, 47-52, Mithridates III, and 66-67, Mithridates IV.
74. Sellwood 1985, 27, with unclear inscription; Numismatik Lanz München, Auction 102, 28 May 2001, Lot 310, with clear inscription and mint monogram.
76. Ibid, 104-106 and 112-113.
77. Sellwood 1985, 226-231.
78. Argarian, Sellwood 1971, 107 and 114.
Seleucid coins were simply nummi non grati and therefore effectively removed from circulation after the Seleucid-Parthian peace treaty.

Accepting the reason for the suppression of the early Parthian drachms, the 1965 hoard appears to have been interred not long after 209 BC. Combining this with the state of preservation of the S6 specimens, a date close to 210 BC can be taken as the inception of the coinage and the beginning of the reign of Arsaces II.

It has been suggested that following their defeat by Antiochus III, the Parthian elite dethroned Arsaces II in a coup d’état and installed Phriapatius. However, as shown below, the numismatic evidence agrees more closely with a reign considerably longer than 2-3 years for Arsaces II.

**ARSACES III, PHRIAPATIUS (C. 190-176 BC)**

Of all the Arsacid rulers reported in books 41 and 42 of Justin, the only one without a dynastic link with his predecessor is Phriapatius. However, thanks to the text of Nisa ostracon 2638, we now know that he was a grandnephew of Arsaces I and therefore a second cousin of Arsaces II. Yet, the transfer of rule from the line of Arsaces I to that of his brother, named Tiridates in some classical literature, has never been fully explained. To further compound the existing problems, we have the Nisa-n text attesting a king Arsaces who was the great-grandson of Arsaces I, and Justin’s statement that after Phriapatius, his son Phraates I mounted the Parthian throne. These indicate that the shift of kingship from the descendants of Arsaces I to those of Tiridates occurred more than once. Sadly, there is no contemporary or later evidence to explain this clear alternation of authority between the houses of Arsaces I and his brother. It is possible that this was caused by Arsaces II’s lack of a mature heir to succeed him. He may have lost his sons in the war with Antiochus III or to premature death and, following Zoroastrian traditions, bequeathed the kingship to Phriapatius as his closest kinsman.

It has been shown that the Arsacids were demonstrably devout Zoroastrians, and in some details of doctrine more orthodox than their successors, the Sasanians. By the Avestan tradition Zoroastrian males became adults at the age of fifteen whereupon they could marry or be appointed as heirs to their fathers. There are also strong indications that well before the Parthians, the Iranian community comprised agnatic families each limited to three or four generations and bonded together by a system of strict rights and obligations. The nucleus of the agnatic community included families whose heads had at least one common ancestor on the father’s side, namely, a dead father, grandfather or great-grandfather. In such a group, an adult man’s status determined the extent of his responsibilities, including guardianship over women and orphans, and subsidiary or substitute successorship to an agnate who died without an heir.

Returning to the accession of Phriapatius and ignoring the possibility that the Parthians dethroned Arsaces II, we may conclude from the Nisa-n text that on his death the latter had a minor grandson but no mature son to succeed him. Considering that both Arsaces II and Phriapatius were members of an agnatic group headed by the father of Arsaces I and Tiridates, i.e., grandfather of Arsaces II and great-grandfather of Phriapatius, in the absence of a natural successor to Arsaces II, Phriapatius could have been appointed as his heir. However, to comply with Zoroastrian traditions, if fifteen or older on Phriapatius’ death and also acknowledged by the Parthian nobility as a worthy successor, the grandson of Arsaces II would have been crowned as the next Parthian king.

Our only classical source on Phriapatius is Justin (41.5.8-9) who explicitly gives him a fifteen year reign. Assuming that the Parthians did not resume minting until after the defeat of Antiochus III by the Romans at the Battle of Magnesia in 189 BC, we may attribute S7 drachms with the reverse inscription ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ to Phriapatius as his inaugural coinage.

It is commonly accepted that royal portraits on the early Parthian coins are only conventional representations of the Arsacid rulers and therefore hardly indicative of their age. Nonetheless, the earlier varieties of S7 (Fig. 2:10) seem to depict on their obverse the head of a king probably as

young as that on S6 drachms of Arsaces II. In any case, apart from obvious differences in fabric, style and iconography between S6 and S7 types, the most salient feature of the latter is that for the first time we find the reverse archer representing Arsaces I seated, in the typical Seleucid fashion, on the Delphic omphalos of Apollo rather than the backless throne of the earlier Parthian drachms. This may indicate a considerable lapse of time between the S6 and S7 emissions and also a strong Seleucid influence in the region where the coins were struck and circulated. Adding to this the marked fabric, stylistic and iconographical differences between the S6 and S7 types and the fact that the obverse head on the early S7 specimens does not appear to be twenty years older than the one on S6 drachms, we may exclude attribution of S7 to Arsaces II as his terminal issue in 189 bc. Given that Moses Chorenes assigns a twenty-six year reign to Arsaces II, the combined numismatic and literary evidence suggests that the latter’s rule ended before 189 bc and perhaps no earlier than 190 bc. Accordingly, we may place the enthronement of Phriapiatus in c. 190 bc.

As stated above, the stylised physiognomy of the early Parthian rulers on their coins prevents estimation of their age. This naturally rules out evaluation of the size and duration of the S7 issue from the changes in its obverse portrait. Yet, considering the general rarity of the coinage, it is possible that S7 drachms were minted for only a few years with later examples depicting a slightly older head of Phriapiatus (Fig. 2:11).

Stylistic differences also reveal that S7 was ultimately superseded by S8 with the obverse bust (not head) of the ruler and the reverse inscription ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ (Fig. 2:12). The new type too was struck rather briefly. The overall rarity of both S7 and S8 drachms suggests a combined minting period comparatively shorter than the next issue under Phriapiatus. This consisted of S9 silver with a more mature obverse bust and the reverse inscription ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ, giving the earliest attestation of the title king on Parthian coinage (Fig. 2:13). Some varieties of this type (S9.2-S9.3) carry, in the exergue of their reverse, monograms Ν and Σ, representing Nisa and Syria, respectively (Fig. 3:14-15) while others have unidentifiable mint symbols C (S9.4) and K (S9.4 var.) under the bow of the seated archer. These may allude to territorial expansion. Perhaps Phriapiatus recovered what Arsaces II had earlier ceded to the Seleucids and once again extended Parthian sway over Hyrcania and probably the neighbouring regions. It is noteworthy that Nisa monogram appears, for the first time, on S9.2 drachms of Phriapiatus while the one from Mithradatkart, found on S2 dichalkoi, and S3 and S4 silver of Arsaces I, disappears until c. 68 bc and then turns up on subsequent Parthian drachms and bronze coins. Although somewhat inconclusive, the numismatic material suggests that at some point in his reign Phriapiatus moved the Parthian seat and its principal mint from Mithradatkart to Nisa.

Finally, it can be shown (cf. below) that as his closing issues, Phriapiatus minted S10.15 drachms with the reverse legend ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΘΕΟΥ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ (Fig. 3:16) and the earliest S10 varieties with ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ (Fig. 3:17). The title ΘΕΟΥ was probably conferred on him for his efforts to restore Parthian prestige and power after the earlier setbacks against Antiochus III under Arsaces II. Alternatively, it may have been a response to the inclusion of the same epithet in the coin titulature of Phriapiatus’ two contemporary Bactrian kings, Agathocles (c. 190-180 bc) and Antimachus I (c. 189-170 bc), the former posthumously commemorating Diodotus I or II and Euthydemus I, while the latter claiming self divinization.8 At the same time, the obverse link between coins numbers 16 and 17 in Figure 3 and the presence of a noticeable die flaw on the latter establish the sequence and contiguity of the ΘΕΟΥ and ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ emissions. These point out that Phriapiatus’ successful reign culminated in his deification and ended with the adoption of the title the Great.

ARSACES IV (c. 176-175 bc)

Nisa-ii text confirms that a great-grandson of Arsaces I ascended the Parthian throne, most probably after Phriapiatus. However, the absence of his personal name and compilation date of the text prevents this Arsacid prince from being properly identified. According to Justin (41.5.9-10), the immediate successor of Phriapiatus was the elder of his two sons, Phraates I, who was

Fig. 3. Coins of the Early Parthian Rulers. No. 13: S9.1 silver drachm of Phriapatius, Arsaces IV, Phraates I or Mithradates I (Author's Collection); no. 14: S9.2 silver drachm of Phriapatius, Arsaces IV, Phraates I or Mithradates I from Nisa (Author's Collection); no. 15: S9.3 silver drachm of Phriapatius, Arsaces IV, Phraates I or Mithradates I from Syrinx (reproduced from Dr. Busse Peus Nachfolger Münzhandlung, Katalog 371, Auktion 24-26 April 2002, Lot 240); no. 16: S10.15 silver drachm of Phriapatius (D. Sellwood’s Collection); no. 17: S10.1 silver drachm of Phriapatius, same obverse as no. 16 (D. Sellwood’s Collection); no. 18: S10.17 silver drachm of Mithradates I (D. Sellwood’s Collection); no. 19: S15.2 silver drachm of Phraates II (reproduced from Ars Classica – Naville & Co., Auction 12, 18-23 Octobre 1926, Pl. 61, No. 2075); no. 20: S15.3 silver drachm of Phraates II (D. Sellwood’s Collection); no. 21: S16.24 silver drachm of Phraates II (D. Sellwood’s Collection).
a great-grandnephew of Arsaces I. On the other hand, in summing up the deeds of the younger son of Phriapatus, Justin (41.6.9) seemingly contradicts his own earlier statement and alleges that Arsaces I was the great-grandfather (I. prœparus) and not great-great-uncle (I. prœpatruus) of Mithradates I: *Atque ita adversa valetudine addeptus, non minor Arsace prœavo, gloriosa senectute decedit*. This last claim implies that Nisa-ru text may have been written either under Phraates I or Mithradates I. However, assigning the document to one of the two brothers leads to the transfer of the sons of Phriapatus from the line of Tiridates to that of Arsaces I. It also demands the inclusion of an otherwise unattested Parthian king (grandson of Arsaces I) in the line of descent from the first Arsaces and entails serious difficulties in Sinaturces’ lineage (cf. below). Yet there are several ways to account for this anomaly.

Firstly, it is possible that either Trogus or the abridger of his work, Justin, or even a later untrained copyist of the latter’s text mistook prœparus for prœpatruus. In fact, genealogical errors of this nature are not unknown in Justin’s manuscript. For example, in dealing with the Spartan and Athenian conflicts in his Book 5, he claims that the Persian king, Darius II (424-405 BC), recalled the hostilities of his father and grandfather towards Athens and so aided the Spartans. Yet it is known that apart from sending some gold to the Spartans and recalling part of it for operations in Egypt, Darius’ father, Artaxerxes I (465-425 BC), sued for peace with Athens while his grandfather, Xerxes I (486-465 BC), and great-grandfather, Darius I, certainly waged major wars against that city. Following this, we meet Justin’s most telling genealogical blunder concerning some of the Epirote kings in the period late 5th-early 4th centuries BC. He claims (17.3.14-16) that Tharybas (Tharypous) was succeeded by his son (mistake for grandson) Neoptolemus and thus omits the former’s son, Alcetas I, from the line of descent. He then goes on to say that Neoptolemus’ son, Alexander I, followed his father on the throne but was killed in battle leaving the crown to his brother Aeacides. But according to Justin (7.6.10) himself, Aeacides’ father, Artybas (Arymbas), was the paternal cousin of Alexander I and also his brother-in-law (he had married Troas, sister of Alexander). This implies that Aeacides was a nephew of Alexander I on his sister’s side and also his paternal grand-cousin but certainly not his brother. Sadly, aside from confusing brother with nephew and cousin, Justin has even misquoted the relationship between Artybas and Alexander I who were uncle and nephew and not cousins. There is also an apparent inconsistency in Justin (27.3.7) where he writes that following his defeat by King Eumenes of Bithynia, Antiochus Hierax (246-227 BC) fled to his father-in-law, Ariamenes, king of Cappadocia. However, the Cappadocian ruler was, in fact, the father-in-law of Antiochus’ sister, Stratounece.

Secondly, considering that prœparus also denotes maternal great-grandfather, it is possible that Justin was partly correct about the relationship between Arsaces I and Mithradates I although this was never officially acknowledged by the Parthians themselves. Support for this may be found in both Herodotus (7.2-3) and Justin (2.10-7-8). The former states that Darius I married Atossa, daughter of Cyrus II the Great, while the latter confirms that Cyrus II was a maternal grandfather of Xerxes I, son of Darius I. Yet descent from Cyrus through Atossa is unattested in the extant official records of Xerxes at Persepolis, Susa, Alvand, Van, and Hamadian. On the other hand, Hystaspes, the satrap of Parthia and Hycania under his son, Darius I, is acknowledged in Xerxes’ accession inscription from Persepolis as his paternal grandfather. It is obvious that the male oriented Achaemenid traditions ignored descent through a female member of the royal house and this may well have been practised under the Arsacids – cf. Justin (41.3.1-2) on the treatment of women by the Parthian men –. Had, for example, a daughter of Arsaces I married her cousin, son of Tiridates, or Phriapatus himself taken as his wife a grand-daughter of Arsaces I, then the founder of the dynasty would have been a maternal great-grandfather of Mithradates I. Naturally, the Parthians themselves would have known about this link between the two rulers and transmitted the knowledge to the later generations, including the classical writers, but never confirmed it in any of the official or administrative Arscadian documents.

It is noteworthy that Justin’s reference to the relationship between the two Arsacid rulers is at the end of a comparatively long chapter (41.6.1-9) covering in some detail the events of the reign

83. Smith 1895, 878; Wagner et alii 1878, 563.
84. Godley 1924, 302-303.
of Mithradates I. This signifies that Trogus’ original work must have contained a much fuller account of the long and exceptionally prosperous rule of this king, including his link with the founder of the Parthian dynasty. Perhaps Justin found little need to emphasise the maternal nature of the dynastic link between the two monarchs or was unable to determine this because Trogus had simply employed proavus to describe the relationship. What remains certain is that Justin’s statement in no way confirms a purely paternal link between Arsaces I and Mithradates I and that alternative interpretations are equally plausible.

Thirdly, aside from its strict generational limit, proavus also refers to a distant and unspecified but direct paternal and maternal ancestor. Unless the following example is another genealogical blunder by Justin, it appears to confirm the generic interpretation of proavus.

In dealing with the exploits of the reign of Mithradates VI (c. 120–63 BC), Justin (38.5.3) quotes the Pontic king as saying that Greater Phrygia had been given, as dowry, by Seleucus II Callinicus to his great-grandfather also called Mithradates. Considering that Pharnaces I (c. 185–159 BC) is correctly given by Justin (38.6.2) as Mithradates’ grandfather, the great-grandfather quoted earlier must refer to Mithradates III (c. 220–185 BC). However, according to Eusebius, Seleucus II’s sister, Laodice, had married Mithradates II of Pontus (c. 250–220 BC) and was therefore mother of Mithradates III. This very strongly suggests that the ancestral reference in Justin (38.5.3) must be to Mithradates II who was the great-great-grandfather (L. abavus) of Mithradates VI and not his great-grandfather. The only plausible explanation for this apparent error is that Justin wrote proavus to indicate that Mithradates II was a remote forefather and not necessarily the great-great-grandfather of Mithradates VI.

A fourth possibility arises from a permissible adoption of a descendant of Arsaces I into the line of Tirdates. For example, following the death of Arsaces I in c. 220 BC, if Tirdates had adopted a younger son of his brother and given him in marriage a daughter, a son (Phriapatus) born to his adopted son would have been officially a grandson of Tirdates with Arsaces I as his natural grandfather. A similar situation may have prevailed under Artabanus II (c. AD 10–38). According to Tacitus (Annals, 6.31–35), the eldest son of Artabanus and his appointed king of Armenia, Arsaces, was murdered in a plot by his attendants in AD 35. A second son, Orodes, was despatched to avenge his brother but wounded in the head he probably died in battle. Considering this and that the corrupt inscription on S66.4 drachms of Gotarzes II (c. AD 40–51) may be read as BACIAEYC BACIAEON APCAKHC GΩΤΕΡΖΗC KEKAHMENOC YIOC APTABANOY, King of Kings, Arsaces, Gotarzes, having been called son of Artabanus, Lindsay concluded that Gotarzes was a son of Orodes and, following his father’s death, adopted by his grandfather, Artabanus. It is possible that the intentional inclusion of KEKAHMENOC in the royal titulature on the S66.4 drachms was to stress that Artabanus and Gotarzes were not natural father and son otherwise BACIAEYC BACIAEON APCAKHC GΩΤΕΡΖΗC YIOC APTABANOY would have established that link between the two. Yet, the inscription accompanying Gotarzes’ rock carving at Sar-i Pol-i Zohāb in Kirmānshāh, Iran, gives: piter ZNH : NPSH gwtrz : MLK1 : BRY1 : ’rthwv : MLK, This is the very image of King Gotarzes, son of King Artabanus. The evident disparity between the two inscriptions strongly implies that the Arsacids did not acknowledge adoption in their official records, written in Aramaic-script Parthian, although, as shown by Gotarzes’ above given coin legend, they may have recorded this in their Greek documents.

Unfortunately, the bulk of the original classical literature, including those written by Trogus and Justin, has not survived and what we have today are merely later copies of these works. Hence our lack of knowledge of the perpetrators of the errors we nowadays habitually attribute to Justin as a hasty epistemiser. But we may just be able to show the nature, and perhaps even extent, of the changes in at least some of our classical material resulting from copying, translation or emendation by later authors.

The text of the Historianum adversum Paganos Libri Septem, compiled in AD 418 by Orosius, has not survived but today there are over 250 manuscript copies of it still in existence. Among these

86. Smith 1855, 878.
87. Kast 1911, 118.
89. Lindsay 1852, 64-65 and 153.
are, aside from other discrepancies, conflicting remarks about Mithradates I of Parthia in the Latin versions. Some copies give: «Mithridates tunc siquidem, rex Parthorum sextus ab Arsaces, victo Demetrii praefecto Babylonam urbem finesque eius universos victor invasit», stressing that he was the sixth king of the line of Arsaces I. Others simply quote: «Mithridates tunc siquidem, rex Parthorum, victo Demetrii praefecto, Babyloniam urbem victor invasit». On the other hand, the Old English translation of Orosius' text by the Anglo-Saxon King Alfred consistently gives: On pere tider Mitradiatis, Partha cyning, geode Babyloniam...», without the ordinal reign number of the Parthian king. This implies that the Latin copy available to Alfred in the late 9th century may not have referred to Mithradates I as the sixth Arsacid ruler. In any case, one modern English translator of the Alfred's version, untrained in the history of Parthia, identifies Mithradates I with a king of Pontus who conquers Babylon and all the lands between the two rivers Indus and Hydaspes, going as far as India and defeating and capturing the Seleucid ruler, Demetrius II (145-138 BC, 1st reign).  

Given the inherent errors and major inconsistencies in the copies, translations, epitomes and redactions of the classical material, and also differing interpretations of prævus, it is difficult to maintain an exclusive paternal link between Arsaces I and Mithradates I. Accordingly, I have not identified the latter with King Arsaces of the Nisa-ni text. It is possible that this document was compiled under a grandson of Arsaces II who was a minor in c. 190 BC when his grandfather died and therefore unable to ascend the throne. Depending on his birth date, he may have been as young as about sixteen or as old as thirty when he took the diadem after the fifteen year reign of Phriapatius ended about 176 BC.

Sadly, there is no reference to Arsaces IV in Justin although we have a curious citation of a King Artabanus as one of the successors of Arsaces I in Trogus' 41st Prologue. However, the confusion by a later copyist in the same Prologue of the name of the most illustrious Parthian king, Mithradates I, with that of the Armenian ruler, Tigranes II (95-55 BC), enhances the likelihood that Artabanus too is an error perhaps for Arsaces II. It is equally possible that Arsaces IV was called Artabanus since Justin's statement (41.5.7): «Huius filius et successor regni, Arsaces et ipse nomine...» implies that Arsaces II's personal name was not Artabanus. In any case, because Trogus summarises Parthian affairs down to and including the reign of Mithradates I in Prologue 41 and then begins with Himerus and Phraates II in his 42nd Prologue, if there were an earlier Parthian king called Artabanus, he must have come after Arsaces I and before Mithradates I.

Now, the reasons for Justin's omission of the reign of Arsaces IV from his book 41 merit brief analysis and clarification.

Sellwood had suggested that the period between the death of Phraates II at the hands of the Saca raiders and the accession of Artabanus I constituted an interregnum wherein the Parthian mint of Seleucia on the Tigris temporised by placing the effigy of Mithradates I on certain tetradrachms. But three Babylonian cuneiform texts and some recently discovered Parthian tetradrachms have confirmed that an Arsacid prince was on the throne during this very period. He ruled for less than a year and bequeathed the kingship to Artabanus I. While observing other possibilities, I have identified this king with Bagayash, mentioned in a series of cuneiform documents from Babylon. One of these supports the statement of Moses Chorene that Mithradates I appointed his brother, Valarsaces, «king of Armenia», and Justin (41.6.7) that a certain Bagases (Vagases) was given the governorship of Media Magna and Atropatene when Mithradates captured the two provinces in about 147 BC. Yet, Justin (42.2.1) claims that Phraates II was succeeded by his paternal uncle, Artabanus I, who was later killed in a battle with the Tochari.

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92. ZANGEMEISTER 1883, 287; ARNAUD-LINDET 1994, 92.
93. SWEET 1883, 318 (Old English translation), and 219 (original Latin text).
94. BOSWORTH 1895, 199.
95. RUHL 1886, 264, after «In Parthicus ut est constitutum imperium per Arsacem regem», neither mentions Artabanus nor Tigranes of Armenia; SMIG 1956, 176, following the above quoted text gives: «Successores deinde eius Artabanus et Tigranes cognomine Deus, a quo subacta est Media et Mesopotamia»: YARDLEY 1994, 284.
The apparent conflict between the contemporary evidence and Justin can be removed by assuming that he conflated the short and transient reign of Bagaces (also an uncle of Phraates II) with the longer and more eventful rule of Artabanus I and thus excluded a king in the process. On the other hand, Justin (42.2.7; 42.4.1) skips an important section of the Parthian history, termed the 'Dark Age' by Sellwood. This spanned the period from the death of Mithradates II in 91 BC to the accession of Orodes II (c. 54-38 BC). According to an abundance of Parthian numismatic and Babylonian literary sources, and also Trogus in Prologue 42, several Parthian kings were crowned in this period. Justin's intentional omission of the Parthian 'Dark Age' can only be attributed to the sheer complexity of its events involving roughly four decades of intra-dynastic strife when different Arsacid claimants fought for the throne. Finally, numismatic and Babylonian cuneiform evidence has led to the identification of the issuer of S23.1-2 tetradrachms with an Arsacid prince who very briefly ruled after the death of Artabanus I and before the accession of Mithradates II. As in the case of Bagaces, it appears that the sheer brevity of this reign prompted its omission by Justin.

From the above cursory analysis of the literary and numismatic evidence, one may conclude that although in dealing with the history of Parthia Justin consistently removed very short reigns and long and complex periods, he always included a rule of about three or more years. The clear examples of the latter case are the reigns of Phraates I (c. 175-170 BC), Artabanus I (126-122 BC), and Mithradates IV (c. 57-54 BC), the elder son of Phraates III, reported by Justin in his books 41 and 42. Accordingly, I have assigned a reign of just over a year to Arsaces IV and taken its brevity as the excuse for Justin's omission of it. As suggested earlier, this king cannot have been older than thirty at his accession. It is quite likely that he died shortly after ascending the throne and either left no heir or his successor was still too young to be crowned king. This ultimately led to the extinction of the original line of descent from Arsaces I and prompted the permanent transfer of crown to the descendants of Tiridates. Perhaps one reason for the later historians' assignment of a 37 year long and prosperous reign to Tiridates and at the same time relegation of Arsaces I to a pseudo-mythical figure, ruling for a mere two years, was that the old line of kings ended with the death of Arsaces IV. This may even have been encouraged by the successors of Phriapatius who strove to emphasise the legitimacy of their own line of descent.

As for coinage, we may exclude S7 and S8 types, with the simple inscription ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ, as having been minted under Arsaces IV since he is obviously styled 'τριάδ ΜΗΓ' in Nisa-II text. On the other hand, S10 issue may not be assigned to him because its reverse inscription reads ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΜΗΓΑΛΟΥ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ and there is nothing to justify that this Arsaces adopted the title the Great during his brief reign. The only type whose inscription agrees with the royal titulature in Nisa-II text is S9 silver. Sadly, lack of date coupled with the multitude of dies of different style and workmanship used in minting this coinage prevents its separation into distinct varieties for attribution to different rulers. Perhaps some of the normal and monogram bearing S9 drachms from Nisa, Syrinx and other mints can, after all, be assigned to Arsaces IV.

ARSACES V, PHRAATES I (c. 175-170 BC)

Our sole literary sources on this king are Justin (41.5.9-10) and Isidore of Charax. Their combined statements reveal that Phraates I was the elder son and heir of Phriapatius. He vanquished in war the powerful Mardi tribe who inhabited the area around the southern shores of the Caspian Sea, settled them in Charax near the Caspian Gates in the Median province, and died shortly afterwards. Beyond these facts the sources are silent and once again there are, regrettably, no dated coins or texts from before the reign of Mithradates I to indicate the duration and end date of the rule of Phraates I. It is probably at no other point than this that the present lack of information, including possibly the earliest attested AB date, in the above discussed Nisa-II text is felt so strongly. An accession date and/or a genealogical record of the ruler in that document would certainly

have removed at least part of the persisting difficulties in determining the length, inception and terminal dates of some of the reigns in the period under consideration. Sadly, the loss compels us to once more rely on Justin (41.6.1) for fixing an approximate date to the inauguration of the next Arsacid ruler, Mithradates I. This may have been coincident with the usurpation of power in Bactria by Eucratides I (c. 170-145 BC).

As stated earlier, lack of date or variations in royal tituclature on the later bashlyk type Parthian coinages prevents their definitive attribution to specific rulers. It is, nevertheless, possible that with the exception of S10.15 and S10.17 varieties (cf. below), Phraates I issued some of the S9 and S10 drachms, with and without mintmarks, and silver fractions.

**Arsaces VI, Mithradates I (c. 170-132 BC)**

I have, in an earlier note, already briefly dealt with the events of the reign of this king who ultimately transformed the Parthian kingdom into a world empire. He was a younger son of Phriapatius and succeeded his brother, Phraates I. Whether Justin (41.5.10) is correct in saying that it was because of his royal obligations and the interests of Parthia that Phraates passed over his sons and entrusted the kingdom to Mithradates I cannot be ascertained. Perhaps the growing power of Eucratides I in the East and Seleucid threat from Antiochus IV (175-165/164 BC) to the west compelled Phraates to transfer the crown to his able brother who was endowed with outstanding military skills and prudence. Although the consensus of opinion is that the successful reign of Mithradates I ended in 139/138 BC, thanks to the revised reading of the date of a cuneiform tablet from Uruk and certain references in a few other Babylonian tablets, I have shown that he was alive until about the middle of 132 BC and succeeded by his royal consort, Queen Rimn, and their minor son, Phraates II, as joint rulers.

Regarding the coinage, it is possible that Mithradates I initially minted S9 followed by S10 drachms and fractions, perhaps soon after his victory over Eucratides I. The S10.14 variety, sharing its mintmark with S12.2 drachms from Ecbatana, confirms that S10 was issued for over twenty years before Mithradates I conquered Media in about 147 BC. Another variety, the beardless and bashlyked S10.17 (Fig. 3:18) with the inscription ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ ΘΕΟΠΑΤΟΡΟΩΣ, establishes the father-son relationship between Phriapatius and Mithradates I; the former had issued S10.15 drachms with ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΘΕΟΥ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ to mark his deification (cf. above). Evidently, S10.17 cannot be assigned to Phraates II because the early coinage of this king depicts a young prince with a shallow beard and reverse inscription ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ, S15.2 (Fig. 3:19) or ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ ΦΙΛΟΠΑΤΟΡΟΙ, S55.3 (Fig. 3:20). At the same time, the S16.24 variety with ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ ΘΕΟΠΑΤΟΡΟΙ, disposed in the same way as the legend of S10.17, shows Phraates II with a short but full beard (Fig. 3:23). Accordingly, I have taken S10.17 as a special issue of Mithradates I to honour his deified father, Phriapatius. As for Mithradates’ remaining S11-S13 types, since these were minted after his conquests in Media and Mesopotamia, their analysis and discussion is deferred until a future publication on the Parthian chronology of the period 147-54 BC.

Combining the textual documents from Nisa with the numismatic evidence and later literary sources presented above, I have constructed the following stemma to illustrate the dynastic links between the Parthian rulers from Arsaces I through Orodies II. However, since our discussions in this note did not involve the successors of Mithradates I, I have added the Sellwood numbers of their various coinages to render them easily identifiable. Additional information on the kings from Phraates II to Orodies II is available in my earlier contribution.

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104. Assar 2001a, 17-18; Assar 2003a, 4-8.
105. Wroth 1903, xx-xii, and 15; Diebouh 1938, 26; Blau 1983, 36.
Genealogy and Coinage of the Early Parthian Rulers

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**Addendum**

On 23 March 2004, Professor Livshits kindly informed me that he has read the last line of Nisa-III text as follows:

Line 4: MN kr[št]y'x From the field/village of Karišt-[*] [...]

**Abbreviations**

| AD | Anno Domini |
| AH | Arsacid Era. Epoch = 1 Nisān (14-15 April) 247 BC = 65 Seleuco-Babylonian Era |
| Akk | Akkadian |
| BC | Before Christ |
| BM | British Museum |
| CHH | Cambridge History of Iran |
| CIR | Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum |
| IGCH | An Inventory of Greek Coin Hoards, cf. THOMPSON M. et alii 1973 |
| L | Latin |
| LCL | The Loeb Classical Library |
| NC | The Numismatic Chronicle |
| OP | Old Persian |
| S | Prefix to Parthian coin types and varieties in SELWOOD 1971 and 1980 |
| STAE | South Turkmenistan Archaeological Expedition |
| TYTAKT | Trudy Yuzhno-Turkmenskoyarkheologicheskoy kompleksnoy ekspeditsii |

108. DIAKONOFF, LIVSHITS 2003, 194.
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BICKERMAN E. J.

BIVAR A. D. H.

BOPARARCCHI O.

BOSWORTH J.

BOYCH M.

CHAUMONT M.-L.

COLLEDGHE M. A. R.

DEBIVIOIS E. N. C.

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Drouin E.

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