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## SOME REMARKS ON THE CHRONOLOGY AND COINAGE OF THE PARTHIAN “DARK AGE”

A. M. Simonetta, in an interesting contribution to the present memorial volume honouring the Late Professor Josef Wolski, once again treats the chronological and numismatic difficulties of the years 91–55 BC in Parthia. He recommends to examine “the available evidence without any reference to previous opinions”, including his own, and then “try to reach some conclusions”. However, it appears that Simonetta’s primarily objective is to “invalidate” my revised chronology and associated coin attributions that differ from his deductions. I have used elsewhere<sup>1</sup> a series of Late Babylonian cuneiform colophons and historical notes to support the sequence of Parthian “Dark Age” drachms and tetradrachms proposed respectively by D. Sellwood and O. Mørkholm.<sup>2</sup>

As Simonetta confirms, I have had the opportunity of reviewing his earlier drafts, detecting and pointing out to him several inconsistencies. Yet, his revised note does not accommodate all of my recommendations. For example, while Simonetta gives Mithradates II 30 “annual” Susian bronzes, he claims that I have erroneously assigned to this ruler 28 coins.<sup>3</sup> A glance at my work would confirm that I too have attributed to Mithradates II 30 “annual” bronzes,<sup>4</sup> not 28, nor even 32 as Le Rider mistakenly does.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, and after consultations with the editor of *Electrum*, it was agreed that to offer the readers the opportunity of assessing Simonetta’s latest work, it would be advantageous if I set out my objections to his preferred solutions in a separate note.

Having read the final draft of Simonetta’s paper, I believe his intended chronology and identification of the kings and coinages of this difficult period are untenable. I will, therefore, attempt to show here that Simonetta has simply reintroduced to us the same uncertain views and hypotheses he had expounded in his earlier articles concerning the chronology and numismatics of the Parthian “Dark Age”.<sup>6</sup> Sellwood and Mørkholm

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<sup>1</sup> Assar 2006b: 55–96.

<sup>2</sup> Sellwood 1976: 2–25 (S34 interposes the earlier and later S30 emissions); Mørkholm 1980: 33–47.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. footnote 11 in Simonetta’s paper in this volume.

<sup>4</sup> Assar 2006a: 151 (Table 1).

<sup>5</sup> Le Rider 1965: 389. Using Le Rider’s own arguments, I will further show that his LR118 and LR123 Susian bronzes constitute a single issue, so do LR133 and LR134. This reduces his 32 emissions to 30.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. for example, Simonetta 1953–1957: 111–121; Simonetta 1966: 15–40; Simonetta 2001: 69–108.

have already questioned these and, despite Simonetta's disagreements, established for us the correct sequence of coins in this period.

I contend that Simonetta is not justified in vitiating the meticulous investigations of Sellwood and Mørkholm, discarding the work of the latter and labelling it as "worthless".<sup>7</sup> As demonstrated below, most of Simonetta's currently held views are either subjective or founded on incomplete and/or misinterpreted numismatic, documentary and literary material. For instance, he is either unaware of the inscription of S44 tetradrachms that he persistently attributes to Pacorus I, son and designated heir of Orodes II, or that he is simply circumventing the evidence, selecting only those parts that agree with his views.<sup>8</sup> To be clear, Simonetta claims that Pacorus styles himself "King of Kings" on S44 tetradrachms. In other words, the Parthian prince employs the same title as that adopted by his father, Orodes II, on S45–48 emissions. This is incorrect. The primary regal epithets on S44 tetradrachms are ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ, i.e. "(the coin of the) Great King of Kings Arsaces", while Orodes II appears as ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ, that is, "(the coin of) King of Kings Arsaces" on S45–48 series. As far as the extant evidence is concerned, the Arsacid princes were subordinate to their overlords.<sup>9</sup> Thus Pacorus could not have conceivably ranked himself above his father in imperial titulature. This simple and unambiguous discrepancy invalidates Simonetta's efforts to assign to Pacorus the S44 tetradrachms and so overturns his associated theories.

Another example concerns Simonetta's views on the significance of coin hoards that have been accidentally or clandestinely excavated and therefore "inaccurately" recorded. It is true that the finders often "cherry pick" from their finds the rare and/or desirable pieces for financial reasons. Or, that they "salt" an uninteresting find with attractive examples to enhance its overall commercial value. However, the absence of a very common type in a hoard consisting mainly of common issues cannot be dismissed as irrelevant or attributed to insufficient knowledge of the true composition of the original find.

As shown below, Simonetta readily lists in his latest paper the Parthian types in the Mardin-I hoard he published in 1966.<sup>10</sup> Yet he uncharacteristically ignores the coins in

<sup>7</sup> Cf. footnote 34 in Simonetta's paper in this volume.

<sup>8</sup> Sellwood/Simonetta 2006: 290–292. I should point out that Sellwood vehemently objects to Simonetta's attribution to Pacorus I of S44 tetradrachms. In footnote 19 of his paper in this volume, Simonetta advises that: "Hypotheses should not be advanced except when really necessary". Regrettably, his arguments that S44 tetradrachms were minted by Pacorus are purely speculative. He theorizes that: "the title 'King of Kings' stresses the position of the Arsacid ruler vis-à-vis the minor vassal kings and dynasts such as those of Elam, Characene, Persis, etc., thus it may be expected that the heir apparent could equally wish to stress his position. Obviously 'Great King' could do, but there might have been circumstances when 'King of Kings' was advisable. One such could have been if another Arsacid prince was specially charged to rule some important provinces"! He then goes on to qualify this with an unrelated piece of evidence that: "in late Roman imperial times it was not exceptional that the son(s) of the Emperor could be made joint 'Augustus' or 'Augusti' ". As for their place of mint, Simonetta tentatively assigns the S44 tetradrachms to a workshop in Syria or Palestine with no supporting evidence.

<sup>9</sup> According to several published Babylonian date formulas, dated colophons, and a handful of Greek inscriptions, the Seleucid kings Seleucus I, Antiochus I, Antiochus III and Antiochus IV reigned jointly with their heirs. Conversely, there are no attested Parthian co-regencies or coins in the joint names of the senior monarch and his successor.

<sup>10</sup> Simonetta 1966: 28–29; Thompson/Mørkholm/Kraay 1973: 246.

another hoard, Mardin-II (Diyarbakir, *IGCH* 1744), that he reported in the same article. Le Rider too inspected the latter group and summarily registered its content, highlighting the chronological significance of its Parthian portion.<sup>11</sup> As argued further, beyond the fact that the S36, S38, and S39 drachms were minted close in time, Mardin-I hoard offers very little information on the sequence of early "Dark Age" coin series. However, the absence of the common S30 drachms in Mardin-II hoard agrees with the order of Parthian issues put forward by Sellwood and Mørkholm. This conflicts with Simonetta's preferred chronology and hence explains the absence of Mardin-II hoard from his latest paper. There are, however, three additional hoards whose compositions too overturn Simonetta's conclusions. He has, for unknown reasons, neglected these but I shall presently discuss their importance briefly.

As for the remaining points in Simonetta's paper, I have made the following observations:

1. Simonetta considers, under the heading "On matters of method and principles", three hypothetical Babylonian records from three successive years: Records 1 and 3 precisely mention a certain king identified either by his personal name or that of his queen. On the other hand, record 2 merely gives "King Arsaces". Simonetta argues that the latter would tell us nothing except that its scribe considered the local ruler as unchallenged by a pretender. This obvious oversight results from Simonetta's unfamiliarity with the composition of date formulas and historical notes in different classes of Babylonian cuneiform records. One particular group, the Goal-Year Texts, contains large quantities of non-contemporary data concerning the moon and planets Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. The date lines at the beginning of lunar and planetary paragraphs in these texts are usually abbreviated and in some cases incorrect. For example, a date formula from 111/110 BC in the Goal-Year Text of 247 SEB (65/64 BC) gives: [*Year*] 201 (*SEB*), *Arsaces*, mistakenly dropping the title King.<sup>12</sup> Another one from 112/111 BC in a further Goal-Year Text dated 247 SEB reads: [*Year* 200 (*SEB*)], *Arsaces King of Kings*.<sup>13</sup> Our contemporary records show that the *terminus post quem* for the adoption by Mithradates II of the epithet King of Kings is 1.VIII.203 SEB (10/11 Nov. 109 BC).<sup>14</sup> This illustrates that we have, in the second Goal-Year Text from 247 SEB, an erroneous non-contemporary date formula with no historical significance. Depending on the type of cuneiform text, Simonetta's proposed second record, only mentioning "King Arsaces", could simply be a scribal slip.

As for the contemporary Babylonian evidence, we may consider the following three records. The first is from month XII of 224 SEB (15/16 Feb.–15/16 Mar. 87 BC) and reads: "King Arsaces, whose name is Gotarzes, fell on them, and in enmity among themselves ...".<sup>15</sup> This agrees with the date formulas from 221–225 SEB, recording the

<sup>11</sup> Le Rider 1965: 394 n. 2, and 396–397.

<sup>12</sup> Hunger/Sachs 2006: 358–359.

<sup>13</sup> Hunger/Sachs 2006: 360–361. The restoration of the year number is secure.

<sup>14</sup> Sachs/Hunger 1996: 360–361, No. –108B; Assar 2006a: 141. Although the corresponding tablet covers months I–VII of 203 SEB, the colophon titles are unfortunately incompletely preserved. We cannot therefore date the adoption of the title to any of the first seven months of 203 SEB. It may, nevertheless, be possible to move back by one day the *terminus post quem* of the arrogation of "King of Kings" and place it at the end of month VII of 203 SEB (9/10 Nov. 109 BC).

<sup>15</sup> Sachs/Hunger 1996: 454–455, No. –87C; Assar 2006b: 67–68.

personal names of the Arsacid ruler, Gotarzes I (91–87 BC), and his queen, Ashiabat. <sup>16</sup> The second is dated to month VII of 234 SEB (30 Sep./1 Oct.–29/30 Oct. 78 BC). It reads: “That month, I heard that King Arsaces together with his troops [departed] to the surroundings of the city ...”. <sup>17</sup> The third is a Babylonian horoscope dated 25.V.236 SEB (3/4 Sep. 76 BC) and subscribed to *King Arsaces* only. <sup>18</sup>

Our extant records confirm Orodes I (80–75 BC) as King Arsaces together with queen Ispubarza throughout 13.I.232 SEB–30.VI.234 SEB (10/11 Apr. 80 BC–29/30 Sep. 78 BC). <sup>19</sup> These take us down to less than a month before the historical note from month VII of 234 SEB mentioning King Arsaces only (cf. also Paragraph 23 below). We then have King Arsaces (Orodes I) and queen Ispubarza attested around month I of 236 SEB (13/14 Apr.–11/12 May 76 BC), month IX of 236 SEB (5/6 Dec. 76 BC–3/4 Jan. 75 BC) and probably even as late as month XII of the same year (3/4 Mar.–1/2 Apr. 75 BC). <sup>20</sup> Following Simonetta, we would have Orodes’ authority challenged down to the end of month VI of 234 SEB. Then the Parthian king either reigned unopposed in month VII of that same year or was supplanted by another prince who faced no opposition in that month. There followed a period of political uncertainty throughout month VIII of 234 SEB and early 236 SEB at which point in time King Arsaces (Orodes I) and his sister-queen Ispubarza were once again recognised in Babylon. However, by month V of 236 SEB an unidentified King Arsaces mounted the throne, reigning untroubled for an unspecified number of months. Finally, King Arsaces (Orodes I) and queen Ispubarza re-emerged in month IX and reigned perhaps as late as XII of 236 SEB. I believe this complicated scenario is unwarranted and that there must be a simpler explanation for the apparent discrepancy between the earlier record from 224 SEB concerning King Arsaces called Gotarzes and those from months VII of 234 SEB and V of 236 SEB, both mentioning King Arsaces unaccompanied by his personal name and/or queen. It is possible that the Babylonian scribes did not always observe a rigid formula when composing their date lines and colophons, and/or reporting the activities of the reigning monarchs at times of civil strife. This entailed occasional variations in the contents of their tablets.

2. Simonetta further claims that: “when a document simply gives us a date and barely mentions ‘Arsaces King’ or ‘King of Kings’ it means that the king’s rule was unopposed”. This is not always so. The date line of Avroman Parchment-I begins with: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΟΝΤΟΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ, excluding the personal name of the Arsacid ruler. This text is dated to Apellaios 225 SEM (Oct.–Dec. 88 BC) <sup>21</sup> and so falls within the reign of Gotarzes I. Given that the extant Babylonian records from 91–87 BC include Gotarzes’ personal name and that of his queen, we are assured of a dynastic struggle between at least two Arsacid contenders down to 1.I.225 SEB (15/16 Apr. 87

<sup>16</sup> Assar 2006b: 62–69.

<sup>17</sup> Sachs/Hunger 1996: 498–499, No. –77B; Assar 2006b: 78.

<sup>18</sup> Rochberg 1998: 134–136, No. 26.

<sup>19</sup> Assar 2006b: 75–78. Cf. Sachs/Hunger 1996: 498–499, No. –77A. The dated colophon covers months I–VI 234 SEB.

<sup>20</sup> Sachs/Hunger 1996: 506–507, No. –75; Assar 2006b: 80.

<sup>21</sup> Depending on the Macedonian-Babylonian calendar month alignment, Apellaios 225 SEM covers 19/20 Oct.–17/18 Nov. 88 BC (if Dios = Tashritu) or 18/19 Nov. –16/17 Dec. 88 BC (if Dios = Arahsamnu).

BC).<sup>22</sup> Yet the Avroman Parchment-I omits the personal name of the reigning monarch and simply gives his throne name and title “King of Kings”. This suggests that imperial titulature alone distinguished the Arsacid prince of the parchment from his rival.

Conversely, the inscription of the rock monument at Bīsītūn (near Kirmānshāh in western Iran) registers the personal name of Mithradates II: [ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΜΕΓΑΣ ΜΙΘΡΑΔΑΤΗΣ].<sup>23</sup> Since the Parthian King of Kings is depicted here in tiara, the monument may be dated to the period 96–91 BC.<sup>24</sup> As commented below, the inclusion of Mithradates’ name in this inscription possibly heralds the beginning of the dynastic feud in Parthia that lasted for about four decades after the death of Mithradates II.<sup>25</sup>

3. While briefly sketching the movements of Mithradates I (165–132 BC), I had proposed elsewhere that the Great Arsacid monarch annexed the two Bactrian satrapies of Aspionus (eastern Tapuria?)<sup>26</sup> and Turiva (Traxiane,) sometime after 163 BC and before his capture of Media around June/July 148 BC.<sup>27</sup> Simonetta questions this and comments that: “indeed the classical sources tell us that after the capture of Media, Mithradates moved to the East, so that it is quite possible that Mithradates’ conquests were the results of repeated campaigns”. Unfortunately, Simonetta fails to identify his intended “classical sources”. The only ancient author reporting the Bactrian conquests of Mithradates I is Strabo (11.11.2). He relates that: “the satrapy Turiva and that of Aspionus were taken away from Eukratides by the Parthians”. This follows an earlier passage in Strabo (11.9.2) that the Parthians “also took a part of Bactriana, having forced the Scythians, and still earlier Eukratides and his followers, to yield to them”. Justin (41.6.2–4) confirms the latter and comments that: “the Bactrians, harassed with various wars, lost not only their dominions, but their liberty; for having suffered from contentions with the Sogdians, the Drangians, and the Indians, they were at last overcome, as if exhausted, by the weaker Parthians”. Justin (41.6.5) then briefly recounts Eukratides’ Indian expedition and seemingly places the assassination of the Bactrian ruler before the conclusion of Mithradates’ campaigns against Media. Unfortunately, we are unaware of the exact date of Eukratides’ death. It could have happened sometime around 150–145 BC or a couple of years earlier or later.<sup>28</sup> What is clear from Strabo (11.11.2) is that Mithradates

<sup>22</sup> The date of the last record mentioning “King Arsaces called Gotarzes and his queen, Ashiabatara”. Cf. Hunger/Sachs 2006: 330–331 (the queen’s name is given as “Asitu...gura” instead of “Ashiabatara”); Assar 2006b: 68.

<sup>23</sup> Assar 2006a: 143–144.

<sup>24</sup> The inception date of S28 coinage, showing Mithradates II in tiara, depends on the sequence of the “annual” bronze issues from Susa. The corresponding S28.20–23 emissions fall in the period 96/95–93/92 BC. Cf. Assar 2006a: 151 (Table 1).

<sup>25</sup> Colledge 1977: 90, confirms Mithradates II in tiara and remarks that: “in official documents in Greek such as coins or an inscribed letter to the city of Susa dated AD 21 the reigning Parthian monarch is customarily called Arsaces (only), and is named personally only in times of disturbance”. There are also several earlier and later inscribed parchments from Avroman and Dura, respectively. They all include in their date lines the throne name and honorific epithets of the reigning Parthian kings only.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Polybius (10.49.1) on the location of Tapuria with respect to the river Arius in western Bactria. This Tapuria may not be confused with that on the southern shores of the Caspian Sea and to the west of Hyrcania.

<sup>27</sup> Assar 2005: 42–43; Assar 2006a: 89.

<sup>28</sup> Wilson/Assar 2007: 24–25; Jakobsson 2007: 61–77. Justin’s accounts of the history of this period are quite confused. He hastily records the key events of the reign of Eukratides I and ends his Book 41.6.5 with the assassination of the Great Bactrian king. Justin (41.6.6) then continues that: “During the course of these

took Turiva and Aspionus while Eukratides was still alive<sup>29</sup> and moved against Media probably after the Bactrian ruler had died. Of course, Mithradates' subsequent eastern anabasis, summarily narrated by Diodorus (33.18.1) and Orosius (5.4), followed his victories in Media and Babylonia. These saw him subjugate "all the nations that dwelt between the Hydaspes and Indus rivers" and extend "his power even to India".

4. Simonetta states, in footnote 2 of his paper, that:

as shown by Assar, Vagasis (= Baghaasha = Baggayash) is repeatedly mentioned in cuneiform documents between 174 SE and 177 SE as a top officer in Media and Babylonia and a son of him is mentioned in 179 SE by which time he was obviously dead.

This is inconsistent with my analysis of the Babylonian material and I have no knowledge of a son of Bagāyāsh as early as 179 SEB (133/132 BC). The only reference to an "Artaban son of Bagāyāsh" is from month II of 192 SEB (19/20 May–16/17 Jun. 120 BC). This Artaban was a leading Parthian troop commander in Babylonia but, for reasons unknown to us, dismissed by Mithradates II.<sup>30</sup> As for Bagāyāsh himself, we have nothing to show that "he was obviously dead" in 179 SEB. In fact, he may still have been alive in May/June 120 BC and hence his son's patronymic.<sup>31</sup>

5. Simonetta claims that Mithradates I apparently moved against Babylonia in the spring of 171 SEB (141 BC) while the Seleucid king Demetrius II (145–138 BC, 1<sup>st</sup> reign) was there to counter the Elymaean raids into the province. As far as the extant evidence is concerned, Seleucid authority is attested from Babylon as late as month XII of 170 SEB (13/14 Mar.–11/12 Apr. 141 BC).<sup>32</sup> This does not, however, document Demetrius' presence in Mesopotamia. Furthermore, an incompletely preserved cuneiform record confirms Parthian capture of Babylon and Seleucia on the Tigris in month III of 171 SEB (10/11 Jun.–8/9 Jul. 141 BC).<sup>33</sup> Although acknowledging Arsacid power in Babylonia from 1.IV.171 SEB (9/10 Jul. 141 BC) onwards,<sup>34</sup> this text gives no indication of Mithradates' personal supervision of the military campaigns. The Parthian king may have arrived in Babylonia after his generals pacified the province.

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proceedings among the Bactrians, a war arose between the Parthians and the Medes". It is unclear whether Mithradates I moved against Media before or after the murder of Eukratides. Perhaps the latter's demise heartened the Parthian king and paved the way for his invasion of Media.

<sup>29</sup> Unless Strabo confused Eukratides I with a later king of that name, perhaps the immediate successor of the Great Bactrian ruler.

<sup>30</sup> Assar 2006a: 138. It is possible the Simonetta is confusing this Artaban with an earlier Parthian general, Philinus, who was removed from his position in month VII of 179 SEB (Oct./Nov. 133 BC). Cf. Sachs/Hunger 1996: 216–217, No. –132B.

<sup>31</sup> Lucian (*Makrobioi*, 15) reports that Sinatruces (93/92–69/68 BC) was 79/80 years old on his accession to the throne. Assuming that Bagāyāsh was about 35 years old when Mithradates I appointed him as the governor of Media Magna and Atropatene in 148/147 BC, he would have been around 63 years in 120 BC.

<sup>32</sup> Sachs/Hunger 1996: 128–129, No. –141F.

<sup>33</sup> Sachs/Hunger 1996: 134–135, No. –140A. The authors restore [... *Ajr-ṣā-kām*<sup>1</sup> LUGAL BAR 1 ... in Obv. 1 of this cuneiform fragment. The previous record extends the reign of Demetrius II to 30.XII.170 SEB while the current entry places the Parthian conquest of Seleucia on the Tigris and Babylon in month III of year 171 SEB. It is, therefore, highly likely that the first three months of this text were dated to the Seleucid rather than the Parthian king. After consultation with Dr. I.L. Finkel and Mr. C.B.F. Walker (Department of the Ancient Near East of the British Museum), discussions with Professor H. Hunger, and further collation of the tablet (on 9.11.2000), the traces of the royal name in this line were read as [... *'De]-em<sup>2</sup>-met-ri<sup>1</sup>*.

<sup>34</sup> Sachs/Hunger 1996: 136–137, No. –140A.

6. Simonetta is seemingly unaware of the publications on the Susian issues of Demetrius II. After a curt reference to the recent comprehensive catalogue of Seleucid coins that includes Demetrius' silver and bronze emissions from Susa,<sup>35</sup> he remarks, in footnote 3 of his paper, that: "it is however surprising that if the mint of Susa operated for Demetrius II not a single coin of his either in silver or bronze was found in the excavations there". The French excavations actually unearthed one silver tetradrachm and seven bronze coins whose obverse portraits bore little resemblance to Demetrius I (162–150 BC). Although Mørkholm had already argued that this issue was minted by Demetrius II during his brief hold on Susa in 145 BC,<sup>36</sup> Le Rider provisionally attributed the coins to Demetrius I.<sup>37</sup> However, further studies of the content of a hoard discovered at Susa in 1965, yielding at least four more tetradrachms with similar obverse busts,<sup>38</sup> overturned Le Rider's original identification and assigned the coins to Demetrius II.<sup>39</sup>

7. We have a series of vague and contradictory remarks concerning the early Parthian bronze issues (chalkoi) from Susa. On the one hand Simonetta assigns a coin with no obverse portrait (one of the S12.26–27 and S12.29 bronzes) to Mithradates I and relates that this "may indicate that he got control also of Susa". Yet in footnote 5 of his paper he tentatively attributes the S12.26–27 and S12.29 bronzes, all inscribed with ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ, to the "crisis following the death of Phraates II". Footnote 4 is even more confusing. Here Simonetta refers to 7 Susian chalkoi with long-bearded obverse busts (S12.8, S18.3 and S21.5–9) which he believes "may belong either to Mithradates I, Vagasis or Artabanus I". Yet he claims that: "the ones without obverse portrait" (S12.26–27 and S12.29 referred to above) possibly correspond "to emergency times such as those during Hyspaosines campaigns in Babylonia, when Susa may have been a sort of Parthian outpost more or less cut off from contact with the remaining Arsacid domains". He further comments that: "the rather poor condition of the coins prevents a definite attribution, but I think that Sellwood's attribution of four of the issues to Artabanus is correct". At this point, one would be at a loss as to the identity and number of Arsacid rulers who minted these early chalkoi in Susa. Unfortunately, the latter are undated coins and, therefore, their proper identification and sequence heavily depend on the iconography of their obverse portraits. However, Le Rider reports that one LR95 (S12.26) chalkous from among the 31 similar pieces recovered at Susa is overstruck on an earlier type. He then tentatively identifies the undertype as a LR93 issue of Kamnaskires.<sup>40</sup> This runs against Simonetta's transfer of the Susian chalkoi with no obverse portrait to the period after the death of Phraates II. Elsewhere, I have ascribed to Mithradates I the S12.26–29 bronzes, given S18.3 to "Bagasis" and S21.5–9 to Artabanus I.<sup>41</sup> In a future note covering the whole of Parthian coin series from Susa, I aim to propose the following (cf. Table 1 below): Mithradates I: S12.26–7, S12.29(?) and LR113; Phraates II: S14.3–6, S17.5(?) and LR112.8; "Bagasis": S18.3; "Artabanus I":

<sup>35</sup> Houghton *et al.* 2008: 246 and 313, nos. 1995 and 1995A.

<sup>36</sup> Mørkholm 1965: 150–151; Assar 2004/2005: 42–43 and 55–58.

<sup>37</sup> Le Rider 1965: 68–71. The silver tetradrachm (LR 66) derives from *trésor no 5* while the bronzes (LR73) were excavated individually.

<sup>38</sup> Houghton/Le Rider 1966: 111–127; Strauss 1971: 109–140.

<sup>39</sup> Le Rider 1969: 19–20; Strauss 1971: 118 and 128; Houghton 1983: 107.

<sup>40</sup> Le Rider 1965: 78–79.

<sup>41</sup> Assar 2004/2005: 45–86; Assar 2006: 150–151 (Table 1).

S12.28 (after his pacification of Elymais), S21.6-8 and S21.9(?). I should, nevertheless, hasten to add that the sequence and attribution of the Susian chalkoi before the advent of Mithradates II in 121 BC are rather uncertain and further discoveries and reassignments cannot be entirely ruled out. It is, therefore, impossible to employ these small coins, as Simonetta does, to confirm the duration of Arsacid reigns in Susa prior to 121 BC.

**Table 1.** Arrangement of the “Annual” Susian Bronze Issues in the Period 143/142–122/121 BC

Year SEM	Year SEB	Year BC	Ruler	Le Rider No.	Sellwood No.	Comments
170	169/170	143/142	Kamnaskires	91	–	
171	170/171	142/141		92	–	
172	171/172	141/140		93	–	
173	172/173	140/139		94	–	
			Mithradates I	95	12.26	Conquers Elymais
174	173/174	139/138		96	12.27	
175	174/175	138/137		319	12.29	
			Tigraios	101	–	Usurps power in Susa
176	175/176	137/136		102	–	
177	176/177	136/135		103	–	
178	177/178	135/134		104	–	
179	178/179	134/133		105–107	–	
180	179/180	133/132		108	–	
			Mithradates I Phraates II	113 98+99	21.5 14.3	Recaptures Elymais Ascends the throne
181	180/181	132/131		100	14.4	Arsacid power attested from Susa
182	181/182	131/130		–	17.5	
			Antiochus VII	?	–	Invades Babylonia
183	182/183	130/129		110	–	Captures Susa
184	183/184	129/128	Phraates II	109	14.5	Antiochus VII is eliminated
185	184/185	128/127		111	14.6	Hyspaosines takes Babylon
186	185/186	127/126		112.8	–	Phraates II is killed in battle
			Darius “Bagasis”	? 112	? 18.3	Briefly holds Susa Recognised at Susa
187	186/187	126/125		?	?	Bagasis dies
			Artabanus I	114	21.6	Holds Susa
188	187/188	125/124		97	12.28	Suppresses the revolt of Pittit
189	188/189	124/123		115	21.7	
190	189/190	123/122		116	21.8	
191	190/191	122/121		Pl. 74.27	21.9	Artabanus I is killed in battle
			Arsaces X Mithradates II	? 117	? –	Ascends the throne Begins his reign



8. The remainder of Simonetta's comments on the aftermath of Parthian triumph in Babylonia are purely hypothetical. He believes that Mithradates' hold on Seleucia on the Tigris was tenuous and that Demetrius II apparently recaptured the city from a Parthian general. He then adds that Mithradates began a new campaign almost immediately, ultimately defeating and capturing Demetrius. This scenario disagrees with our extant cuneiform records, confirming Arsacid jurisdiction in Babylonia throughout 171–174 SEB. We have King Arsaces attested in month VII of 171 SEB in Uruk,<sup>42</sup> and then in Babylon during months IX–X of the same year.<sup>43</sup> These are followed by attestations around month I<sup>44</sup> and also in VI<sup>45</sup> of 172 SEB, months I<sup>46</sup> and II<sup>47</sup> of 173 SEB in Babylon as well as month II of 174 SEB in Borsippa,<sup>48</sup> month III of 174 SEB<sup>49</sup> and finally month IV of 174 SEB in Babylon wherein Mithradates I defeated and took Demetrius II captive.<sup>50</sup>

9. Referring to McDowell's study of dates and monograms (or mint magistrate marks) on coins excavated at Seleucia on the Tigris,<sup>51</sup> Simonetta remarks that: "we may be practically sure that Mithradates issued undated coins (tetradrachms and drachms) in Seleucia in the second semester of 172 Sel. (April–September 140 BC)". This is almost a year after the Parthian capture of Babylonia in July 141 BC with no supporting evidence. McDowell postulates that each type started at Seleucia with an undated issue "whereas, apparently, the second issue was given a date to distinguish it from the first". The S13.1–2 and S13.6 undated tetradrachms and drachms respectively could have been minted no later than the beginning of year 172 SEM, approximately three months after Babylonia fell to the Parthians. Contrary to Simonetta's claim, McDowell has not established "that the magistrates represented on the coins of Seleucia by a monogram were changed every semester". He has simply demonstrated that if arranged according to their reverse monograms, the Macedonian months on a small group of autonomous bronze issues from Seleucia on the Tigris can be shown to have been arranged during AD 15–17 according to the SEB and not SEM reckoning.<sup>52</sup> Taking Artemisios = Nisānu, McDowell argues that one magistrate supervised the output from Gorpiaios (the 5<sup>th</sup> month) through to Audnaios (the 9<sup>th</sup> month) in 326 SEB (AD 15/16), while the second magistrate took over and oversaw the issue from Peritios (the 10<sup>th</sup> month) through to Xandikos (the 12<sup>th</sup> month) of the same year and also Artemisios (the 1<sup>st</sup> month) through to Peritios (the 10<sup>th</sup> month) of 327 SEB (AD 16/17). This does not prove that each mint controller was active for one semester in a given Macedonian year. In fact, McDowell's table is incomplete and additional specimens with similar monograms have since come to light. The issue can now be satisfactorily arranged according to the Macedonian reckoning too.

<sup>42</sup> Schroeder 1916: viii, No. 37 and 49 (VAT 8548).

<sup>43</sup> Sachs/Hunger 1996: 142–152, No. –140C.

<sup>44</sup> Sachs 1955: 157, LBAT 1038.

<sup>45</sup> Rochberg 1998: 111–112, Text 19.

<sup>46</sup> Hunger/Sachs 2006: 224–225, No. 57.

<sup>47</sup> Hunger/Sachs 2006: 332–333, No. 83.

<sup>48</sup> Epping/Strassmaier 1891: 244; Hunger 1968: 54, No. 137.

<sup>49</sup> Sachs/Hunger 1996: 164–165, No. –137B.

<sup>50</sup> Sachs/Hunger 1996: 160–161, No. –137A.

<sup>51</sup> McDowell 1935: 147–177.

<sup>52</sup> McDowell 1935: 147–153.

10. As shown above, Simonetta's theory that Mithradates I probably "captured Seleucia (on the Tigris) late in the first semester of 172 Sel." is unsupported by contemporary cuneiform evidence. The latter confirm Arsacid authority in Babylon as early as 1.IV.171 SEB (9/10 Jul. 141 BC). The middle of the first semester of 172 SEM covers 3/4 Dec. 141 BC–1/2 Jan. 140 BC, if Dios = Tashritu, or 2/3 Jan.–31 Jan./1 Feb. 140 BC, if Dios = Arahsmnu.<sup>53</sup> Simonetta's "late in the first semester" of 172 SEM as the date of the capture of Seleucia on the Tigris falls in Feb.–Apr. 140 BC. However, the historical notes from month III of 171 SEB (10/11 Jun.–8/9 Jul. 141 BC) preclude such a late date. The Parthian forces overran Mesopotamia and took both Seleucia on the Tigris (*ca.* 50 km north of Babylon) and Babylon in Jun./Jul. 141 BC.<sup>54</sup>

11. The rest of Simonetta's arguments concerning the early Parthian chalkoi from Susa are confused. Without quoting Le Rider's inventory and/or Sellwood numbers, he continues that: "we have from Susa four bronze issues without the king's portrait and inscribed ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ and three with the same inscription but with a long bearded king who may be either Mithradates I or Bagasis". As shown earlier, Simonetta refers, in footnote 4 of his paper, to 7 coins with long bearded obverse portraits that he attributes either to Mithradates I, Vagasis or Artabanus I. Unfortunately, he offers no clues as to the identity of the 4 coins from this same group he assigns to Artabanus I to leave 3 for Mithradates I or Vagasis.

12. In footnote 7, Simonetta refers to an unattested Parthian bronze "with obv. bee, rev. standing deer" and claims that this was omitted by Sellwood although some specimens were recovered during French excavations at Susa, one example being in Simonetta's own collection. He, nevertheless, fails to explain the reasons why these coins are missing from Le Rider's Susian inventory. It is possible that Simonetta is confusing one of the Parthian bronze types from Uruk<sup>55</sup> with a Susian issue.

13. Having incorrectly related the date of the death of Mithradates I to the last tetradrachm issue of that king from 174 SEM (139/138 BC), Simonetta holds that the Great Arsacid ruler probably died "around the middle of 174 Sel. (138 BC)". This is inconsistent with other dated Parthian issues from Seleucia on the Tigris. Although the latest S21 tetradrachms were minted in 188 SEM (125/124 BC), they do not mark the death of "Artabanus I". The latter successfully campaigned in Elymais in January 124 BC and triumphed over the Characenean and Elymaean rebels.<sup>56</sup> As shown elsewhere,<sup>57</sup> while fighting the Scythian armies in northeast Parthia, "Artabanus I" died around Oct./Nov. 122 BC, some two years after his last dated tetradrachms. I have argued that Mithradates I was alive as late as month XII of 179 SEB (4/5 Mar.–2/3 Apr. 132 BC).<sup>58</sup> This indicates that absence of tetradrachms from Seleucia cannot confirm the death of the issuing authority.

<sup>53</sup> Numismatic evidence shows that Dios = Arahsmnu as early as 48 BC. Because of the lack of contemporary double-dated material, the relationship between the Macedonian and Babylonian calendar months is uncertain before this date. Cf. Assar 2003: 176–184 on the Macedonian style of the Seleucid calendar, employed by the Parthians at the mint of Seleucia on the Tigris.

<sup>54</sup> Sachs/Hunger 1996: 134–135, No. –140A; Assar 2006: 90–91.

<sup>55</sup> Le Rider 1965: 458–459 and Pl. LXXIV.

<sup>56</sup> Assar 2006a: 122–125.

<sup>57</sup> Assar 2006a: 126–128.

<sup>58</sup> Assar 2006a: 95–98.

14. As proof of his conjecture that Mithradates I died in 138 BC, Simonetta puts forward the Parthian bronzes minted at Susa before the accession of Mithradates II in 121 BC. He counts 23 emissions, including the above quoted unattested specimen with “obv. bee, rev. standing deer”. Using 11 pieces from this group, that is, 4 of Phraates II, 6 of Tigraios, and 1 of Antiochus VII, and taking late 128 BC as the sure date of the death of Phraates II, Simonetta determines the death-date of Mithradates I. Counting backwards 11 years, with no years having double issues, and also 8 years, with three years having double issues, he arrives at 138 BC and 135 BC respectively as possible death-years of Mithradates. He then concludes that Phraates II must have mounted the throne sometime in the period 138–135 BC. Simonetta finally adds that: “we have a tablet of 180 SEB in the name of King Arsaces and his mother Riinnu” and then recommends that: “it is better to suspend judgment as to the reasons of the scribes for using such a peculiar formula”. Unfortunately, not only Simonetta neglects the fact that he is obliged to interpret the evidence when dealing with the affairs of the reigns of Mithradates I and Phraates II, but also his views on this particular text are flawed. First, he inaccurately interprets the colophon titles of the tablet (a deed of gift to the house of gods), omitting the epithet of Rīnnu and thus diminishing her status. The correct reading is:<sup>59</sup>

- 11: ... .. UNUG.KI ITU.NE  
 12: [...] 1-me-1,20 1 Ar-šák-'a u 1 Ri-in<sup>1</sup>-nu AMA-šú  
 13: LUGAL.MEŠ  
 11: ... .. Uruk. Month V,  
 12: [...] 180, Arsaces and his mother, Rīnnu,  
 13: (are) Kings.

This unequivocally confirms Phraates’ mother as a king. It thus shows that she shared the throne with her son for some time. Considering Phraates’ very youthful portrait on his Susian tetradrachms (S14.1–2), it is possible that the Arsacid prince was a minor on his accession in 132 BC. This led to the appointment of his mother as co-king until Phraates came of age and reigned independently some months later.

Second, as briefly pointed out above and discussed in some detail elsewhere, we have strong indications that Mithradates I was still alive as late as month XII of 179 SEB (4/5 Mar.–2/3 Apr. 132 BC).<sup>60</sup> In one piece of crucial evidence we find Bagāyāsh attested as the “*Brother of the King*” from month I of 179 SEB (13/14 Apr.–12/13 May 133 BC).<sup>61</sup> Placing the accession of Phraates II in 138 BC, as proposed by Simonetta, rather than 132 BC, as the contemporary evidence indicates, renders Bagāyāsh a brother of Phraates. However, according to Moses of Chorene (2.8), Valarsaces (Bagāyāsh) was the brother of Mithradates I and his appointed ruler of “Armenia” for 22 years. He was later elected as “substitute king” when Mithradates I suffered a stroke. A partially preserved Babylonian chronicle illustrates his royal status and reports sacrifices at Babylon for the lives of King Arsaces and Bagāyāsh.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Assar 2006a: 95.

<sup>60</sup> Assar 2003: 186 n. 25; Assar 2005: 44–45; Assar 2006a: 95–96.

<sup>61</sup> Sachs/Hunger 1996: 216–217, No. –132B.

<sup>62</sup> BM 35229 (and several joins) to be edited and published in a forthcoming paper by Professor R.J. van der Spek.

We may also consider the brief comment by Moses of Chorene (2.8) that the successor of Arshak the Great (Mithradates I) ascended the throne of Parthia in the “thirteenth year of Valarshak, king of Armenia”. This information, when coupled with 138 BC as the death-year of Mithradates I, places the capture of Media Atropatene in 151/150 BC and so creates chronological difficulties elsewhere. I am, therefore, inclined to believe that the sum of contemporary and later evidence agrees with the death of Mithradates I and accession of Phraates II in 132 BC. I also hold that Simonetta’s suggestion to postpone judgement as to why the scribes at Uruk decided to register the unprecedented co-regency of Phraates II and his mother is unacceptable.

15. A further problem arises when Simonetta attempts to review the political situation in Susa after the accession of Phraates II. He claims that: “as suggested by Le Rider, we must place in Susa the 6 bronze issues of Tigraios (clearly pointing to a rule lasting from about 177 Sel. (136/35 BC) to 182 Sel. (131/30 BC)”. Le Rider, in fact, places the reign of Tigraios in *ca.* 138/137–133/132 BC,<sup>63</sup> that is, 175–180 SEM, and sequences his Susian bronzes as follows: LR101 (138/137 BC), LR102 (137/136 BC), LR103 (136/135 BC), LR104 (135/134 BC), LR105–107 (134/133 BC), and LR108 (133/132 BC). Simonetta is seemingly unaware that Parthian authority is attested from Susa in Xandikos of 181 SEM<sup>64</sup> and hence extends Tigraios’ reign to 182 SEM. It is noteworthy that Le Rider separates the LR105–107 chalkoi into three groups according to their inscription: *Les modifications successives dans l’arrangement de la légende permettent de classer cette émission à la palme en trois groupes.*<sup>65</sup> The inscription on LR105 reads ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ↓ on the right and ΤΙΓΡΑΙΟΥ↓ on the left of a palm branch. On the other hand LR106 has ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ↓ on the right and retrograded ΤΙΓΡΑΙΟΥ↑ on the left. Finally, we find retrograded ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ↓ and ΤΙΓΡΑΙΟΥ↓ respectively on the left and right of a palm branch on LR107. Yet, in spite of their differently dispossessed inscription, Le Rider combines these chalkoi into a single issue. This would serve to explain later the amalgamation of certain Parthian bronze types from Susa.

16. Simonetta then continues, with reference to unspecific cuneiform texts, that the Babylonian tablets “tell us that in 185 and 186 SEB (June 127 and June 126 BC) Hyspaosines of Characene was in control of Babylon”. These dates disagree with our extant records. The *terminus post quem* of Hyspaosines’ reign in Babylon is 24.II.185 SEB (29/30 May 127 BC).<sup>66</sup> Although the exact terminal date of his occupation of the city is unknown, Hyspaosines is attested from Babylon on 4.VIII.185 SEB (3/4 Nov. 127 BC) without his royal title.<sup>67</sup> The corresponding text, on the other hand, mentions King Arsaces and a Parthian army commander, Timarchus, who leads into Babylon the “troops of Media”. There is also a reference to the resumption of sacrifices to the gods Bel, Beltija and Ištar. These may have been interrupted in the Akītu temple in Babylon at the command of Hyspaosines. The contemporary evidence strongly indicates that Arsacid power had been re-imposed in Babylon before the end of 127 BC. Thereafter, we have

<sup>63</sup> Le Rider 1965: 381, and Appendix III under “Liste des rois Parthes”.

<sup>64</sup> Cumont 1932: 279–281 (“Dedication of a Salve”).

<sup>65</sup> Le Rider 1965: 82–83.

<sup>66</sup> Schuol 2000: 31–34. Hyspaosines is styled King.

<sup>67</sup> Sachs/Hunger 1996: 254–255, No. –126A.

Parthian presence in the city in month XII of 185 SEB (26/27 Feb.–27/28 Mar. 126 BC)<sup>68</sup> and early 186 SEB (*ca.* Mar./Apr. 126 BC).<sup>69</sup> These preclude Simonetta's extension of the reign of Hyspaosines in Babylon to June 126 BC. The Characenean ruler had already been supplanted in Babylon in or before early Nov. 127 BC and so the mint of Seleucia on the Tigris once again reverted to Parthian control.

17. We then enter another confused section in Simonetta's exposé, covering the reigns of "Bagasis", Hyspaosines and "Artabanus I" in Babylon throughout the years 187 and 188 SEM. Having accepted the attribution of the S18.1 tetradrachms (and its dated variety) to a living rather than fictitious Parthian king, Simonetta claims that: "whether his much more common undated coins represent a separate issue is impossible to tell". As summarily commented in Paragraph 9 above, McDowell argues that the second tetradrachm issue (under the early Parthian kings in Seleucia) was dated to distinguish it from the first which remained undated. This suggests that the undated S18.1 tetradrachms were minted in 186 SEM followed by the dated variety in 187 SEM. To the latter year also belongs the undated S21.4 tetradrachms of "Artabanus I" whose subsequent output from Seleucia is dated 188 SEM.

18. As for power struggle in Seleucia on the Tigris, Simonetta remarks that:

as far as the purely numismatic evidence goes (the cuneiform documents do not come from Seleucia), the probability favours first an occupation by Vagasis ending in the first semester of 187 Sel. followed by the issues of Hyspaosines and the Parthian recapture of Seleucia in the same semester of 188, but some sort of "ding-dong" fight is equally possible.

Regrettably, here Simonetta incorrectly mixes the Characenean issues of Hyspaosines<sup>70</sup> with two contemporary Parthian emissions from Seleucia.<sup>71</sup> After his tenuous hold over the city for less than a year in 185 SEB, Hyspaosines was expelled by "Bagasis". Two extant S18.1 overstrikes, showing clear traces of the undertype, indicate that "Bagasis" demonetized Hyspaosines' Seleucia tetradrachms (minted in 185 SEM) and overstruck them with his own dies in 186 SEM.<sup>72</sup> Our documentary and numismatic evidence leave little room for Hyspaosines' return to Seleucia sometime after the first semester of 187 SEM and before the end of 188 SEM as Simonetta suggests. He is nevertheless correct that the Babylonian cuneiform material do not come from Seleucia. Yet it is inconceivable that with Arsacid power attested in Babylon throughout 186–188 SEB<sup>73</sup> Hyspaosines with his base in Charax in southern Mesopotamia would have held Seleucia on the Tigris, some 50 km north of Babylon, to mint tetradrachms.

<sup>68</sup> Sachs/Hunger 1996: 256–257, No. –126B.

<sup>69</sup> Hunger/Sachs 2006: 244–245, No. 62. Cf. also Sachs/Hunger 1996: 260–261, No. –125A, Obv. 20 where Hyspaosines is mentioned without the title King in month I of 186 SEB (28/29 Mar.–25/26 Apr. 126 BC).

<sup>70</sup> Sachs/Hunger 1996: 282–283, No. –123A, Obv. 18–20 registers the death of Hyspaosines, King of Mesene, on 9.III.188 SEB (10/11 Jun. 124 BC). This strongly suggests that a successor of Hyspaosines, also called Hyspaosines, minted the subsequent Characenean tetradrachms dated 190–192 SEM.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Assar 2006a: 106–134 on the tetradrachms in the name of King Hyspaosines from years 184 SEM (Charax), undated variety from Seleucia (minted in 185 SEM), 187–188 SEM (Charax), and 190–192 SEM (Charax).

<sup>72</sup> Assar 2006a: 115. The second overstrike is in my collection.

<sup>73</sup> Assar 2006a: 112–126.

19. To determine the inception of the reign of Mithradates II, Simonetta once again turns to the Parthian chalkoi from Susa. He repeats that the 4 Susian bronzes with no obverse portrait but reverse inscription ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ (S12.26–27, S12.29, and the example with “obv. bee, rev. standing deer”) should be “dated to the period between the death of Phraates II and the arrival of Artabanus”. Since Simonetta places Phraates’ demise in “late 128 BC”, we may take this to be sometime in the first quarter of 185 SEM (128/127 BC). Assigning the first Susian bronze with no obverse portrait to this year, the 4<sup>th</sup> example would fall in 188 SEM, which date Simonetta takes as the beginning of the reign of “Artabanus I”.<sup>74</sup> The latter, according to Simonetta, reigned for three years and some months. This takes us down to 191 SEM (192/191 BC) during the second half of which Mithradates II ascended the throne. However, as commented in Paragraph 7 above, we have a rather incomplete series of Parthian chalkoi from Susa before the reign of Mithradates II and so any argument using these coins would be tentative. The pre 191 SEM Susian bronzes could, therefore, date the accession of Mithradates to 122–121 BC and not 121 BC. It is unclear why Simonetta ignores the incontrovertible evidence of the inception of Mithradates’ reign. This is preserved in a special type of Babylonian astronomical tablet discussed elsewhere.<sup>75</sup> Coupled with the S23.4 overstrikes dated 191 SEM, the beginning of the reign of Mithradates II can be placed anywhere after 1.I.191 SEB (31 Mar./1 Apr. 121 BC) and before the start of 192 SEM some six months later.

20. Simonetta then ascribes to Mithradates II 30 “annual” Susian bronzes as follows: 10 examples inscribed with ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ (this should be counted as LR117, LR118+123, LR119–122 and LR124–127);<sup>76</sup> 3 with ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ ΕΠΙΦΑΝΟΥΣ (LR128–130); 13 with ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ (this must be taken as LR131–132, LR133+134, LR135–144);<sup>77</sup> and 4 with ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ ΕΠΙΦΑΝΟΥΣ (LR145–148). Overlooking the fact that 30 distinct emissions would take us down to  $191 - 1 + 30 = 220$  SEM (93/92 BC), Simonetta asserts that: “such a total of 30 issues brings us down to 221 Sel. = 92–91 BC, and we now know from a tablet dated ‘Kislimu 157 Ars = 221 SEB (= December 91 BC) that Mithradates II died probably in November or possibly in October 91 BC’ ”. Simonetta’s arguments concerning the death-date of Mithradates II are unfortunately incorrect. Using the information in several contemporary Babylonian cuneiform texts, I have shown elsewhere that Mithradates’ death preceded 1.VII.221 SEB (25 Sep. 91 BC) but was, nevertheless, sometime after 3.III.221 SEB (30/31 May 91 BC).<sup>78</sup>

21. As briefly pointed out above, having ascribed to Mithradates II 30 Susian chalkoi,<sup>79</sup> Simonetta alleges, in footnotes 11 and 15 of his paper, that I have reduced this number to 28 “by pooling as just two issues Le Rider’s (1965) numbers 118+123 and 133+134”. He then comments that this entails “a gap of two years between the last

<sup>74</sup> The undated S21.5 tetradrachms indicate that “Artabanus I” took the diadem sometime in 187 SEM.

<sup>75</sup> Assar 2006a: 131.

<sup>76</sup> Separating LR118 and LR123 into two types would yield 11 issues with ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ.

<sup>77</sup> Taking LR133 and LR134 as two different types gives 14 issues with ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ.

<sup>78</sup> Assar 2006a: 146–149.

<sup>79</sup> Assar 2006a: 151 (Table 1).

issue of Mithradates in Susa and his death". It is possible that instead of 30, Simonetta intended to ascribe 32 bronzes to Mithradates II as Le Rider uncharacteristically does<sup>80</sup> (cf. below). I should stress that having no knowledge of the above mentioned cuneiform tablet that firmly places the inception of the reign of Mithradates II in 191 SEB, Le Rider proposes a series of uncertain dates.<sup>81</sup> For the inception of Mithradates II he suggests 125/124–122/121 BC. The former is the date 188 SEM of the last tetradrachm issue of "Artabanus I" from Seleucia on the Tigris (S21.1–3). The latter, 191 SEM, is noted on the S23.4 overstrikes of Mithradates II, using as their undertype a bronze issue of Hyspaosines. For the termination of Mithradates' bronze output in Susa, Le Rider gives *ca.* 96/95 BC, taking 124/123 BC as the advent of the Parthian king's reign. He further relates that this date could be lowered to 95/94 BC if future discoveries increase by one or two the number of "annual" bronzes prior to Mithradates' adoption of the tiara. Taking these possibilities into consideration, Le Rider ends the Susian chalkoi of Mithradates II in 94/93 BC at the earliest, and 92/91 BC at the latest. He then comments that the 32 bronzes of Mithradates II nearly correspond with that king's regnal years.

As for the date of Mithradates' death, Le Rider draws from the passage in Josephus (*Jewish Antiquities*, 13.384–386) that Demetrius III Eucuerus Philopator (96–87 BC) was captured in battle and delivered to a Parthian king Mithradates. Since the last tetradrachms of Demetrius III are dated 225 SEM,<sup>82</sup> Le Rider places the death of Mithradates II shortly after 88/87 BC. Despite conflicting with the contemporary evidence, Le Rider's proposed chronology illustrates that he too allows a gap of about 4–6 years between the last Susian bronze of Mithradates and the death of that king. Yet Simonetta rejects my suggested 220 SEM (93/92 BC) as the terminal date of the "annual" Susian bronze of Mithradates and ends the emission in 91 BC to render it coterminous with the death-year of the Parthian King of Kings. Unfortunately, while counting the "annual" Susian chalkoi of Mithradates II, Le Rider commits two elementary errors. Simonetta overlooks these and so argues that LR118, LR123 and LR133–134 constitute four separate issues. As maintained in footnote 11 of his note, Simonetta believes that: "the king's portrait on no. 118 has a much shorter beard than that on no. 123". This sharply contrasts with Le Rider's description of the obverse portraits on these two coins. For the first entry, LR117, in his 1<sup>st</sup> group of Mithradates' Susian bronzes, Le Rider gives: "Le roi a la barbe courte, porte un gorgerin".<sup>83</sup> The inscription on the reverse of the coin reads ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ↓ on the right and ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ↓ on the left of a thunderbolt. The next coin, LR118, is described as: *Comme le précédent, de même style*, while LR119 is given as: *Comme le précédent. Le buste est plus petit*. Each of the next three coins in this group, LR120–122, is characterized as: *Comme le précédent*.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> group begins with LR123 whose obverse is specified as: *Comme les précédents. Même style, même fabrique*.<sup>84</sup> However, the inscription on this coin reads: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ↑ on the left with retrograded ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ↓ on the right of a thunderbolt. Differing clearly from Simonetta's description, the two royal portraits on LR118 and

<sup>80</sup> Le Rider 1965: 389.

<sup>81</sup> Le Rider 1965: 389–391.

<sup>82</sup> Houghton *et al.* 2008: 591–593, nos. 2451.11 and 2454.12.

<sup>83</sup> Le Rider 1965: 86.

<sup>84</sup> Le Rider 1965: 87.

LR123 are virtually identical (both have short beard) although the overall size of the latter is smaller. Given that Le Rider considers the three LR105–107 Susian bronzes of Tigraios as one issue despite their differently dispossessed reverse inscriptions (cf. Paragraph 15 above), LR118 and LR123 ought to be taken as a single emission also. This better agrees with the date of the adoption by Mithradates II of the epithet King of Kings. According to the colophon of an incompletely preserved astronomical diary, Mithradates took the vainglorious title on 1.VIII.203 SEM (10/11 Nov. 109 BC) at the latest. This would be either month Apellaios 204 SEM, if Dios = Tashritu, or Dios 204 SEM if Dios = Arahsmnu. Taking LR118 and LR123 as a single issue would entail 13 bronzes without the epithet King of Kings (LR117, LR118+123, LR119–122, and LR124–130). Assigning these to the regnal years of Mithradates II would take us down to 191 SEM – 1 + 13 = 203 SEM, leaving 204 SEM free for the first of the series with ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ (LR131). If, on the other hand, LR118 and LR123 are viewed as two separate outputs, the number of issues without the title King of Kings would increase to 14, taking us down to 204 SEM where we expect to find the first emission with ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ.

As for LR133 and LR134, the situation is rather straightforward. Le Rider asserts that: “Nous considérons en effet que les n<sup>os</sup> 133 et 134, malgré la différence dans l’arrangement de la légende, constituent une seule émission”. Taking the two issues as a single type reduces the total number of “annual” Susian bronzes of Mithradates II to 30 and so places the last output in this series in 220 SEM (93/92 BC). I have failed to find an explanation as to why Le Rider ignored his own observations and ascribed to Mithradates II 32 rather than 30 “annual” Susian bronzes. What is clear is that the arrangement of inscription lines plays no part in separating the Susian chalkoi into different groups. Each output is identified by its obverse portrait, regal epithets and reverse motif.

22. Against my theory that Mithradates II lost Susa to a rival (Sinatruces) about a year before his death,<sup>85</sup> Simonetta argues, in footnote 11, that:

of much greater weight is the fact that the colophons published by Assar for the last years of Mithradates take us down to just a few months before the tablet announcing the death of the King of Kings and they give no hint of a civil war in progress, while the very same tablet reporting the death of Mithradates has the typical formula of the periods of internecine wars.

As briefly commented in Paragraphs 1 and 2 above, so long as a dynastic struggle was in progress in Parthia, the Babylonian scribes almost always incorporated in their “historical notices” and date formulas the personal name of the reigning Arsaces and, where appropriate, also of his consort to distinguish him from his rival. Yet the reasons for the inclusion of a queen’s name are not entirely clear. First, with the personal name of the ruling monarch already registered in the corresponding colophons, we do not know the significance or function of a named queen accompanying the king. Unless the Arsaces on the throne and his rival had identical personal names the queen’s name

<sup>85</sup> Cf. Le Rider 1965: 92 and 391–397 on the inception in *ca.* 91/90 BC of the Susian bronzes of “Arsaces Theopator Evergetes”, the successor of Mithradates II, and also the events of the Parthian “Dark Age”. Given that Le Rider 1965: 391 places the death of Mithradates II shortly after 88/87 BC, he must have conceded that a rival seized Susa and began issuing coins there before Mithradates II died.



would be superfluous. However, we have no evidence from the Parthian “Dark Age” of two claimants called Gotarzes or Orodes contesting the crown at the same time and yet both Gotarzes and Orodes appear in the dated colophons from their respective reigns associated with a consort.<sup>86</sup>

Second, as shown elsewhere, a reigning Arsaces was not always named in the Babylonian colophons and date formulas when challenged by a rival.<sup>87</sup> For example, we have “King Arsaces called Orodes” attested from Babylon on I.I.232 SEB (10/11 Apr. 80 BC) followed by “Arsaces called King Orodes and Ispubarza his sister-queen” on 14.VII.232 SEB (4/5 Oct. 80 BC). Yet further date lines down to month IX of 236 SEB (5/6 Dec. 76 BC–3/4 Jan. 75 B) simply read “King Arsaces and Ispubarza his sister-queen”. We also have two preserved cases, quoted in Paragraphs 1 and 23, where Orodes simply appears as King Arsaces about the middle of his troubled reign. There is no simple explanation for the exclusion of Orodes’ personal name and inclusion of queen Ispubarza in some dated colophons, given that naming Orodes would have set him apart from his rival.

Returning to the reign of Mithradates II, we know that he styled himself King of Kings Arsaces in 109 BC. With no compulsion for involving a named queen, this would probably have sufficed to distinguish Mithradates from a pretender who rose as King Arsaces. After all, as already noted, the king of Avroman Parchment-I is entitled King of Kings without his personal name although he reigned during the troubled period after the death of Mithradates II in 91 BC. There can be little doubt that the regal epithets of this prince set him apart from his rival who contested the crown as King Arsaces. In any case, as shown earlier, the personal name of Mithradates II appears in the text of his rock monument at Bīsītūn. Given that the official name of all Parthian rulers was Arsaces, as Justin (41.5.6) confirms, it is possible that the inclusion in this rock carving of the personal name of Mithradates II signals the start of the dynastic strife shortly before the King of Kings died.

At this point, Simonetta sums up his analysis of the evidentiary material down to the end of the reign of Mithradates II and begins addressing the numismatic and chronological difficulties of the Parthian “Dark Age”. His primary objective is to establish for us the following sequence of coins and reigns after the death of Mithradates II in 91 BC:

Drachms:

S29→S30→S34→S31→S33→S36→S35→S38→S39→S40.16

Tetradrachms:

S32→S30→S34→S31→S36→S37→S38→S39

Reigns:

Gotarzes I (90–87 BC): S29 and S32; Mithradates III, (90–79 BC): S30; Orodes I (79–76 BC): S34; Sinatruces (79–69 BC): S31; Phraates III (69–65 BC, 1<sup>st</sup> period): S33; Arsaces XVI Vonones I, (64–60 BC): S36 and S37; Arsaces XVII (*ca.* 60 BC): S35; Arsaces XVIII (60–57 BC): S38; Phraates III (65–57 BC, 2<sup>nd</sup> period, probably with gaps): S39.

Unfortunately, as with Simonetta’s earlier analyses, the above reconstructions involve erroneous and/or misrepresented evidence, and ignore several pieces of relevant material. For example, Simonetta concludes that:

<sup>86</sup> The exceptions concern the reign of Orodes I (cf. the date lines in Paragraph 23 below).

<sup>87</sup> Assar 2006b: 75–80.

at the death of Mithradates II a son of him takes his crown, but is almost immediately challenged by at least one pretender, the war lasting inconclusively until the spring of 87 BC and at least one of the theatres of operation is more or less along the Tigris, approximately on the road to Susa, the operations being led by a Mithrates = Mithradates (who may or may not be the same Mithrates/Mithradates, “the overseer” of the Behistun relief).

He then adds, in footnote 42 of his text, that: “as the relief is at least some 20 years earlier than the operations mentioned in the tablets, I am rather sceptical of the identification”. Simonetta’s scepticism is unfounded since this particular rock monument could not have been carved 20 years before 87 BC for the simple fact that it depicts Mithradates II in tiara.<sup>88</sup> Given that the S28 coinage of Mithradates II, showing him wearing tiaras of various decorations, may be dated to 96/95–93/92 BC, Simonetta’s suggested date *ca.* 107 BC for Mithradates’ rock carving is unacceptable.

Another example involves certain dated colophons from the reign of Orodes I (80–75 BC) that Simonetta labels as having been curiously composed. He writes that:

in some colophons from 80 BC instead of the expected formula “Arsaces whose name is Orodes” we have simply “the king named Orodes”, then in the same year we have “the king named Orodes and Izbubarza the queen” and in the following years “king Arsaces and Izbubarza the queen”. Obviously this may be just the result of the whims of the scribe but there is an equal possibility that the different colophons were meant to be meaningful; in this case, we should suppose that in 80 BC Orodes was acknowledged as king, but not as “Arsaces”, that is that he was a sort of “sub-king” to someone.

23. Insofar as the extant evidence is concerned, we have the following date lines and associated information from the reign of Orodes I:<sup>89</sup>

- a) 13.I.232 SEB (10/11 Apr. 80 BC):  
Year 168 (AE) = year 232 (SEB), King Arsaces who is called King Orodes
- b) Months VI–VII of 232 SEB (23/24 Aug.–29/30 Oct. 80 BC):  
Arsaces who is called ...
- c) [14.VII].232 SEB (4/5 Oct. 80 BC):  
[Year 168 (AE)] = year 232 (SEB), Arsaces who is called King Orodes and Isp[ubarza his sister-]queen
- d) Month I of 234 SEB (6/7 Apr.–4/5 May 78 BC):  
Year 170 (AE) = year 234 (SEB), King Arsaces and Ispubarza his sister-queen
- e) Month I through to VI of 234 SEB (6/7 Apr.–29/30 Sep. 78 BC):  
Year 170 (AE) = year 234 (SEB), King Arsaces and I[spubarza his sister-queen]
- f) Month VII of 234 SEB (30 Sep./1 Oct.–29/30 Oct. 78 BC):  
King Arsaces (unaccompanied by a royal consort) *together with his troops [departed] to the surroundings of the city ...*
- g) Month I of 236 SEB (13/14 Apr. 76 BC):  
Year 172 (AE) = year 236 (SEB), King Arsaces and Ispubarza his sister-queen
- h) 25.V.236 SEB (3/4 Sep. 76 BC):  
King Arsaces (unaccompanied by a royal consort)

<sup>88</sup> Colledge 1977: 90. Cf. also footnote 25 above.

<sup>89</sup> Assar 2006b: 75–80.

## i) Months IX–XII. 236 SEB (5/6 Dec. 76 BC–1/2 Apr. 75 BC):

Year 172 (AE) = year 236 (SEB) King Arsaces and Ispubarza his sister-queen

Contrary to Simonetta's above comments, we do not have a date formula from 80 BC mentioning "the king named Orodes". All date lines from 80 BC register Arsaces, although he is styled King and also called King Orodes in the earliest record, "a" above, while the later documents from that year have "Arsaces who is called King Orodes". The anticipated form is "King Arsaces who is called Orodes". Perhaps the scribes unintentionally omitted the royal epithet in the second and third records above. Alternatively, this may be put down to the fact that Orodes had to eliminate one rival before facing another about the middle of year 232 SEB (cf. Paragraph 27 below). In any case, the absence of the imperial title in conjunction with the throne name Arsaces need not be taken to imply that Orodes was a sub-king in 80 BC as Simonetta prescribes. He is, after all, consistently called Arsaces in the extant records from his reign, either as king or King Orodes.

24. We also have an erroneous reference to the employment of the epithet ΝΙΚΑΤΩΡ and its derivatives ΝΙΚΗΦΟΡΟΣ and ΝΕΙΚΗΣΑΣ on Parthian coins. ΝΙΚΗΦΟΡΟΣ, often corrupted to ΝΙΚΙΦΟΡΟΥ, also appears on the S62.6–11 Susian drachms of Artabanus II, minted during AD 13–15, and not exclusively on the S17 coinage of Phraates II.

25. Another obvious inconsistency involves the definition of "mules" or hybrid coins. Simonetta claims that:

all mules tell very much the same story: old dies were evidently stored and, in case of a sudden requirement of significant quantities of currency, if they were found to be sufficiently similar to the regular ones as to be readily acceptable on the market they were used as such, otherwise, either the old dies or the coins themselves were modified so as to eliminate some symbols, the name of the past king, details of the tiara and so on.

This disagrees with our extant numismatic evidence. First, we have the S61.16 "mule" chalkous, with obverse of Artabanus II, reverse of Vonones I and inscription: ΒΑCΙΑΕΥC ΟΝΙΙΝΗC ΝΕΙΚΗCΑC ΑΡΤΑΒΑΝΟΝ, i.e. "King Vonones Conqueror of Artabanus". It is unlikely that this small bronze was minted under Artabanus II. A better explanation is that while the two Parthian rivals were contesting the throne, a moneyer at the mint of Ecbatana mistakenly paired two contemporary dies, one from the stock of each king. Furthermore, aside from the early Parthian "mules" involving the S1/S2, S3/S4, S4/S3, S3/S5, S4/S5 and S5/S6 dies, we have several late Parthian hybrid examples. These include two S78.4/S82.1 of Vologases III/Mithradates V; one S82.1/S78.5 of Mithradates V/Vologases III; one S88.18/S89.1 and one S88.18/S89.3 of Vologases VI/Artabanus IV and one S89.1/S88.19 of Artabanus IV/Vologases VI. These suggest that contemporary or near contemporary dies were occasionally but probably only mistakenly paired and that the "mules" are not always the products of old and new die-parings.

Now, as alluded to above, Sellwood and Mørkholm have already painstakingly worked out for us the correct sequence of Parthian "Dark Age" drachms and tetradrachms, respectively: These are summarised below:

Drachms:

S29→S33→S31→S34→S30→S36→S35→S38→S39→S40→S41

Tetradrachms:

S32→S31→S34→S30→S36→S37→S38→S39→S41→S44→S45

The earlier parts of these series disagree with those adduced by Simonetta who gives S29→S30→S34→S31→S33 for the drachms and S32→S30→S34→S31 for the large silver. To promote his preferred sequence of coins, Simonetta advances the following thesis:

26. The sequence S30→S34: Simonetta argues, in relation to the common controller's monogram ΣYM on S30.10, S30.12 and S34.1 tetradrachms, that this "can be taken to support the early dating for the coinage of type 30 as we shall see that the Iranian coinage proves beyond dispute that S34 immediately precedes type 31, so that type 30 should then precede type 34 as argued further". Unfortunately, Simonetta offers, under the heading "The Iranian issues" in his note, no explanation concerning this particular sequence save the application of Ockham's razor to attribute to a single ruler both the S29 drachms and S32 tetradrachms. Mørkholm has already confirmed the S34→S30 sequence through their common monogram ΣYM and engravers. I shall presently illustrate that this link is also supported by Simonetta's own undisputed evidence, i.e. the modified S34 drachms that he believes to be approving his suggested chronology only (cf. below).

27. The S34→S31 sequence: While discussing "The link between types 31 and 34", Simonetta perceptively comments that large numbers of S34 drachms "have been modified by always removing the 'anchor' symbol, often the crest and rarely (probably for technical difficulties) the 'fleur-de-lys'. Indeed the coins struck by modified dies are more common than the intact ones. The obverse of coins so modified becomes very similar to that of type 31". He also refers to a "mule" which he neglects to include in a subsequent list of such examples in his note. This coin is supposed to have been struck from a modified S34 obverse and a normal S31 reverse. Finally, Simonetta refers to the S31.7 drachms (his Fig. 14.e-f) with a "fleur-de-lys" on the tiara rather than the usual star. This virtually sums up the evidence Simonetta considers to be supporting his preferred sequence. He claims that:

The only possible interpretation of this evidence of a complete transition from type 34 to 31 is that the king of type 31, at the beginning of his rule, having got a number of dies of type 34, either because he was short of engravers or because he was in a hurry to strike his own money, had the dies of 34 modified and only later he had his own new dies manufactured, but that the engraver of the new dies began by putting on the side of the tiara the old decoration of type 34, and only later he was instructed to substitute it by the star.

Simonetta then qualifies this by asserting that:

there is no possible doubt that, as dies of type 34 were modified to look like those of type 31, 34 precedes 31 and the modified coins should be credited to the same king as the coins of type 31. To suppose that the modified dies of type 34 were used at the end or even in the middle of the rule of type 31 is definitely incredible given the extraordinary amount of coins of the regular type 31 (and obviously of their dies) available, as they are indeed among the commonest Parthian drachms. Had king 31 captured coins of type 34 late in his life he would simply have had them melted down or overstruck by his own dies.

Unfortunately, Simonetta overlooks the political situation during the first few months of the reign of Orodes I (cf. below). This fact explains, to some extent, why a substantial portion of S34 drachms and corresponding dies were modified. He also ignores the possibility that a rival of Orodes who wore the diadem instead of tiara and at the same time desired to alter Orodes' drachms and dies would have had no choice but to assimilate them to a less objectionable earlier type also depicting a short bearded king in tiara. As-

suming, at this point, that S31 preceded S34, Orodes' diadem wearing challenger would have altered the royal bust on S34 drachms in such a way that it resembled the issuer of S31 series. The latter carries on its obverse the short bearded bust of an Arsacid ruler in tiara. This makes the king of S31 coinage a better candidate than Gotarzes I and Mithradates II who appear with considerably longer beards on their respective S29 and S28 drachms. After all, Simonetta himself advocates, under "The problem of the 'engraver's sequence'", that: "More particularly it is perfectly indifferent to place 34 previous to 31 or vice versa; therefore the evidence of the modified obverse of type 34 and of a gradual transition from 34 to 31 makes it safe to assume that 34 comes just before 31". Since the modified S34 drachms can be interpreted differently, it is unsafe to assume that they support the sequence S34→S31 exclusively. Further material involving several overstrikes, hoard evidence and engravers' sequence would confirm the arrangement S31→S34→S30 already concluded by Sellwood and Mørkholm (cf. below).

28. Simonetta then proceeds to strengthen his theory at different points throughout the remainder of his text, but offers no additional proof. Thus we find him, for example, under the heading "Assessment of the evidence from the Iranian drachms", replicating his earlier comments that:

the issue of type 34 immediately precedes that of type 31, as it is clear that we have a series: intact coins of type 34→coins of type 34 where the peculiarities of the symbol and tiara (anchor symbol, crest of the tiara, rarely the fleur-de-lys on its side) have been obliterated but with intact reverse→modified obverse of type 34 coupled with typical reverse of type 31→coins of type 31, but still with side fleur-de-lys on the tiara (very rare)→common type 31. Thus I reiterate that to suppose that the modified dies were used well along, possibly at the end of the rule of type 31, is impossible: indeed the common issues of type 31 are among the commonest Parthian coins and are struck by a number of dies, it is obvious that, had king 31 captured any amount of coins or dies from an opponent late in his reign, he would have discarded the dies and had the coin overstruck by his own normal dies rather than taking the pains to have dies and coins modified. This series not only tells us 34 that precedes 31, but also that the king of type 31 at the beginning of his rule had a number of dies of type 34 at his disposal and was in a hurry to produce currency, so that he had a need to re-use his predecessor's dies and coins, while clearly showing the change in ruler by obliterating the most obvious features of his predecessor's and presumably enemy's portrait and symbol. Then as already mentioned the monogram link between some tetradrachms of type 30 and that of type 34 would fit if we assume that 30 immediately precedes type 34.

Again, under "A comprehensive assessment", we note that: "Next comes the pair 34–31 and here we are on firm ground. The coins themselves tell us that type 31 follows type 34..." These culminate, under the heading "The problem of the 'engraver sequence'", in a further unproven claim that:

The second point of Assar's reconstructions which is plainly untenable is placing type 31 before type 34 (type 31 being attributed to "Mithradates III" (dated 87–80 BC) and 34 to Orodes I (dated 80–75 according to Assar). This point has been discussed before and, while I agree with attributing type 34 to Orodes, I think that it is absolutely plain that 34 is immediately followed by 31 (who, therefore, is necessarily Sinatruces and all the evidence confirm it) and that type 30 cannot possibly come after 34 (and we have seen the reasons to pair 30 with 29/32 and how the evidence of the "engravers sequence" which originally suggested to place type 30 after 34 and 31 should be revised).

I shall presently invoke Simonetta's revised "engravers sequence" together with certain overstrikes and hoard evidence to overturn his suggested order S30→S34→S31.

29. As remarked on above in Paragraph 27, the political circumstances of the first half of Orodes' first regnal year may hold the key to some of the questions as to why most of his extant S34 drachms are modified. These coins have had certain parts of their obverse design deliberately obliterated, either on the original dies or the coins themselves (S34.5–8). It is generally agreed that this was intended to assimilate the royal bust of S34 to that on the S31 drachms.

Beginning with 13.I.232 SEB (10/11 Apr. 80 BC), our cuneiform records acknowledge an Arsacid prince called Orodes in Babylon. He reigned down to 3/4 January 75 BC and probably as late as 1/2 April 75 BC. However, Orodes' authority must have been constantly disputed because his personal name appears in the majority of the texts from his reign (cf. also Paragraph 23 above). These show that shortly after his accession in April 80 BC, Orodes was ousted by a rival but regained the crown some months later. Support for this may be found in three records from the first year of Orodes' reign, two of which are somewhat fragmentary and already briefly discussed in Paragraph 23 above. The first of these texts places the *terminus post quem* of the reign of Orodes in April 80 BC while the second record confirms him on 4/5 Oct. 80 BC. Yet the third text, an incomplete note in a partially preserved astronomical diary, signifies that Orodes re-established himself in Babylon some five months later on 1.VII.232 SEB (21/22 Sep. 80 BC).<sup>90</sup> The preserved text from months VI and VII of 232 SEB reads as follows:

Reverse: Month VI (23/24 Aug.–20/21 Sep. 80 BC):

9: ... .. That month, the 20<sup>th</sup>, a message of .... [...]

10: [...] ... Arsaces who is called [Orodes ...]

11: [...] ... [...] (uncertain text)

Month VII (21/22 Sep.–20/21 Oct. 80 BC):

12: [Year I]68 which is year 232, Arsaces who is c[alled Orodes ...]

Since, as listed above in Paragraph 23 text "c", Orodes is attested from Babylon on 14.VII.232 SEB (4/5 Oct. 80 BC), it is likely that he was also acknowledged in the city at the beginning of that same month. The unambiguous date formula in line 12 of the above text, starting off the astronomical entries in month VII, confirms Orodes as the reigning Arsaces in Babylon for a second time after his earlier appearance on 13.I.232 SEB (10/11 Apr. 80 BC). A similar situation, opening the first line of a month with a date formula that heralds a reign change, prevails in two older records, one from the Macedonian epoch and the other from the Arsacid period. According to a brief notice in an astronomical diary fragment, Alexander III the Great died on 29<sup>th</sup> day of month Ayyāru in his 14<sup>th</sup> regnal year (11 June 323 BC).<sup>91</sup> A further astronomical tablet confirms that the next month was given to Philip III Arrhidaeus and hence the date line:<sup>92</sup>

<sup>90</sup> Sachs/Hunger 1996: 484–485, No. –79, Rev. 12. The text in Rev. 9–11 implies that a message was sent to Babylon, confirming Orodes' success against a contender for the throne.

<sup>91</sup> Sachs/Hunger 1988: 206–207, No. –322B. Month Ayyāru was hollow with 29 days in 323 BC.

<sup>92</sup> Hunger/Sachs 2001: 90, No. 39 (Lunar Text).

- 1: [Y]ear 1, Phi[lip]  
 2: (Month) III (Simānu), (the first of which was identical with) the 30<sup>th</sup> (of the preceding month, ...) ...

As for the second record, we know that Parthian forces overran Babylonia in month III of 171 SEB, terminating Seleucid sway and capturing Babylon and Seleucia on the Tigris in July 141 BC. The corresponding astronomical diary begins the first line of month IV with: [... year] 171, King Arsaces to acknowledge Mithradates I in Babylon after the end of Seleucid power in Mesopotamia.<sup>93</sup> It is possible that having secured the throne in April 80 BC, Orodes was deposed by a rival. Yet he successfully challenged his adversary, regained the crown and once again established himself in Babylon in September of that same year. Hence the date line mentioning Orodes at the beginning of month VII of 232 SEB after his initial attestation from 13.I.232 SEB. Assuming that Orodes inaugurated his S34 coinage both in Seleucia and the Iranian mints soon after his first accession, some of his drachms and dies may have been altered by his rival during the transitional period April–September 80 BC. Hence my allocation to this latter interval<sup>94</sup> of S31.7 drachms (Fig. 14e–f in Simonetta’s paper). These depict on their obverse a royal bust resembling Orodes I and yet the reverse inscription is identical with that on the S31 coinage of Mithradates III (87–80 BC). The extreme rarity of this special issue also agrees with a short production period.

However, Orodes’ success in early autumn 80 BC did not discourage the same or a different contender to bid for the throne. The surviving colophons and date formulas from Orodes’ reign confirm that he was persistently challenged. It may, therefore, not be impossible that while Orodes still held power in Parthia, an active rival continued to obstruct his coinage, removing the undesired tiara decorations and/or the anchor symbol from his S34 drachms and dies. This could have lasted until after Orodes was finally overthrown in early 75 BC. The contemporary documents, therefore, lend little support to Simonetta’s incessant claim that S34 dies and drachms were modified *after* the termination of Orodes’ reign only. As shown below, numismatic evidence too indicates that both Mithradates III and Arsaces XVI (78/77–62/61 BC), the issuers of S31 and S30 coinages respectively, sanctioned alterations to S34 dies and drachms throughout and after the reign of Orodes I.

This scenario agrees with the sequence S31→S34→S30 expounded by Sellwood and Mørkholm. Given the Babylonian colophons and scanty historical notes from the reign of Orodes I, it appears that he ousted Mithradates III in early 80 BC and swayed Babylon. Orodes probably had enough time to issue his S34 silver and bronze denominations. However, Mithradates took the field and overthrew Orodes, seizing his dies and the bulk of his coinage. With an ongoing war in Parthia and high demand for coin to sustain it, the mint masters took the unusual step of combining normal production with modification of S34 dies and drachms for some months. Although Orodes regained the throne in September 80 BC, he either failed to eliminate Mithradates fully or that soon after the latter was expelled, another claimant, Arsaces XVI, emerged to dispute Orodes’ supremacy. In either case, Orodes’ active rival would have had sufficient time

<sup>93</sup> Sachs/Hunger 1996: 136–137, No. –140A, Rev. 10.

<sup>94</sup> Assar 2006b: 75.

to interfere with the obverse design of S34 dies and drachms while Orodes held the throne. Alternatively, Arsaces XVI could have demonetized S34 drachms soon after defeating Orodes and capturing his war chest. We know that unlike Mithradates III and Orodes I who appear in tiara on their coins, Arsaces XVI took the traditional diadem. Given the opportunity to seize Orodes' S34 drachms, he would have had their royal bust modified in such a way as to replicate the portrait of S31 series. Further support for the sequence S31→S34→S30 comes from a small number of Susian bronze overstrikes, hoard evidence and the arrangement of Parthian die engravers discussed below.

30. While describing the Susian chalkoi from the Parthian "Dark Age" under the heading "The coinage from Susa", Simonetta lists an otherwise unattested S35 bronze variety. He then suggests that this issue was overstruck by the king of S36 series for less than a year.

To validate his theory, Simonetta further remarks, in footnote 17 of his paper, that:

Le Rider gives an exhaustive discussion of these overstrikes and proves that although the inscription of the undertype includes the title Theopator, these coins could not have been issued by the king of type 30 and considers just as a possibility the king of type 35 (Fig. 13)

(cf. also Simonetta's additional comments in footnote 32 of his paper). However, not only Simonetta's identification with the issuer of S35 coinage of the undertype of these pieces disagrees with the preserved traces on the overstrikes themselves (cf. below), but also it defies his own chronology. Simonetta agrees, under the heading "Comprehensive assessment of the numismatic evidence", that: "type 35, because of its partly evolved monogram for Ecbatana must be at least there, later than type 36 and earlier than type 38. His coins being rather rare, the issuer must have probably been active for just a short time". Accordingly, Simonetta dates the S36.23–37 (LR184–188) Susian chalkoi to the period 64–60 BC. Yet, under a separate heading, "A comprehensive assessment", he assigns the same emissions to 65–61 BC and the single S35 issue from Susa to "about 62 BC". It is interesting to note Simonetta's further observations regarding these same Susian overstrikes. He asserts, under the heading "The overstrikes", that:

I must call attention to some overstrikes from Susa that have been incorrectly quoted. There is a small group of coins (Le Rider 1965, nos. 184–188) that Le Rider attributed to Orodes II, while Sellwood, I think with good reasons, has considered to belong to type 36 and which are overstruck on coins of a ruler who includes in his inscription the title ΘΕΟΠΑΤΟΡΟΣ. Though Le Rider in his exhaustive discussion proves that the undertype of these coins cannot be an issue of type 30 and concludes that either they are referable to type 35 or to an otherwise unknown prince, they have been quoted as overstrikes of type 36 on 30, probably by having overlooked Le Rider's discussion. As several overstrikes of type 36 on type 30 would support a late date for type 30, it is important to stress that such overstrikes do not exist. Considering that no coins corresponding with the undertype of these overstrikes have ever been found, one is tempted to consider that they may be the result of an ephemeral occupation of Susa by someone who was promptly eliminated, at least there, before the coins were put into circulation and thus the whole issue was captured by the king of type 36; a sequel of events similar to that by which we know the tetradrachms of Mithradates IV only as overstrikes by Orodes II. As the choice would then be that the king concerned was either the issuer of type 35 or an otherwise entirely new one who left no trace, by Ockham's razor we should tentatively assign the undertype to type 35, whom we know by his monograms to be contemporary or almost so with the king of type 36.



Keeping in mind Simonetta's claim that the undertype of these overstrikes should be assigned to a ruler who tenuously held Susa about 62 BC, we may turn to his contradictory comments and misrepresentation of my views in footnote 28 of his paper. He stresses that:

Clearly the inscription of these overstrikes has been pieced together by Le Rider from the evidence of different coins, but there is no doubt that it is correct. In his correspondence Dr. Assar has advanced the hypothesis that as there is a single specimen where the word "Theopatoros" is undisputed, but that on this specimen the top lines of the inscription cannot be read, yet while this specimen could still be an overstrike of S36 on S30, on the other overstruck coins the corresponding word could be Philopatoros and these be overstrikes of S36 on itself. True: very rare occasional overstrikes of a king on his own coins are known (see fig. 29), but as all the coins of type 36 from the Susa excavations are overstrikes, this clearly points to a massive overstriking, apparently of a whole issue, so that it is incredible that we have a systematic overstriking by type 36 on type 36 with but a single specimen of 36 on 30. As to the objection that the undertype of the overstruck coins has a profile portrait, while the other coinage of type 35 has a facing portrait I may point to the converse example from the same mint: the issue of Mithradates I (or perhaps of Vagasis) with facing portrait: the one exception in a coinage consistently showing the king in profile! Finally, the reconstructed inscription is just one known from the coinage of a king who everyone agrees to be contemporary or almost so with the king of type 36.

To be clear, I have listed below the relevant points from Simonetta's above observations:

- a) He agrees that S36 precedes S35.
- b) He first dates the LR184-188 Susian bronzes to the period 64–60 BC.
- c) He later assigns the same bronze issues to 65–61 BC.
- d) He dates a hypothetical S35 Susian issue to "about 62 BC".
- e) He suggests that the issuer of this hypothetical coinage occupied Susa briefly.
- f) He alleges that all of the known examples of S36 chalkoi from Susa are overstrikes.
- g) He concedes that we have a "massive overstriking" here.

Yet he fails to explain how an issue dated to "about 62 BC" was overstruck in 65 or 64 BC some 2–3 years earlier! Given Simonetta's two discrepant dates for both the inception and termination of LR184–188 chalkoi, the first S36 Susian issue (LR184) should be assigned to 65–64 BC and the last emission in this series (LR188) placed in 61–60 BC. Furthermore, following Simonetta that the entire S36 Susian bronzes are S36/S35 overstrikes, his hypothetical S35 chalkoi from Susa too should be dated to 65–64 BC at the latest and not "about 62 BC" as he postulates. Otherwise the dies of the first S36 Susian emission in 65–64 BC could not have overstruck this hypothetical coinage to yield S36/S35 pieces. Unlike Simonetta, Le Rider reports that most of the 14 known specimens of LR184–188 are overstrikes: "Nous avons signalé dans l'inventaire que la plupart des exemplaires connus étaient surfrappés, ..." <sup>95</sup> I have listed in Table 2 below the extant S36 Susian chalkoi to counter Simonetta's allegation:

<sup>95</sup> Le Rider 1965: 99–100 (lists the LR184–188 emissions) and 402–404 (discusses the chronological significance of the overstrikes).

**Table 2.** The Number and Sate of the S36 Susian Bronzes

LR	Number of Recovered Coins	Definite Overstrikes	Questionable Overstrikes	Intact Coins
184	3	2	–	1
185	3	2	1	–
186	3	3	–	–
187	4	2	–	2
188	1	–	1	–
Total	14	9	2	3

Although Table 2 shows that around 20% of the excavated specimens are not overstrikes, it nevertheless suggests that one or more earlier types were extensively overstruck. Given that the five LR184–188 emissions correspond to a minimum of three and a maximum of five years mint activity, one wonders how Simonetta’s suggested *ephemeral* occupation of Susa by the issuer of S35 coinage *about 62 BC* entailed so many coins so that it took the ruler of S36 series 3–5 years to eliminate them. Unfortunately, Simonetta’s hypothesis that there are no S36/S30 and S36/S36 overstrikes suffers from several errors of interpretation and misrepresentation of evidence. As shown below, the extant LR184–188 (S36.23–27) Susian bronzes form a coherent mixture of overstrikes with S30 and S36 issues as their undertypes. However, before discussing the relevant material, it is imperative to consider some earlier overstrikes involving coins of the same rulers.

31. Le Rider, in his pioneering analysis of the Susian chalkoi, places the twelve LR149–160 emissions of Arsaces XVI (his “Arsaces Theopator Evergetes”) immediately after the last issue of Mithradates II from Susa (LR148 = S28.23).<sup>96</sup> Influenced by the old chronology that dated the accession of Sinatruces to 78/77 BC and gave him a 7-year reign, Le Rider concludes that the king of LR149–160 series ruled for about twelve years, roughly covering the period 92/91–78/77 BC from the death of Mithradates II through to the advent of Sinatruces. However, given that his proposed reign-length for the issuer of LR149–160 Susian bronzes is 13–15 years (or up to 16 years if counted from 92 through to 77 BC), and that the coins themselves cover a minimum of 10 and a maximum of 12 regnal years, Le Rider is obliged to adjust his chronology. He thus maintains that because five emissions in this series (LR152–153, LR157–158 and LR160) are known from single examples recovered at Susa, future discoveries may increase the overall number of these “annual” issues by one or two.

Le Rider then refers to several overstrikes among the Susian bronzes of “Arsaces Theopator Evergetes” and comments that these create certain chronological difficulties. To identify the issuer(s) of the undertype(s) of these specimens Le Rider proposes the following two solutions:

a) A rival may have occupied Susa and initiated his own bronze coinage until “Arsaces Theopator Evergetes” re-imposed his authority and overstruck the interloper’s issues with his own dies.

<sup>96</sup> Le Rider 1965: 92–95 and 394–395. LR 149–160 = S30.33–43 with the exception of LR 150 that Sellwood overlooked. The latter shows on the reverse naked Apollo standing right, supporting a lyre on his left arm and holding a plectrum in his dropped down right hand.

b) Because the recovered examples do not permit proper identification of the undertype(s), one may assume that "Arsaces Theopator Evergetes" probably overstruck some of his own coins. Here Le Rider refers to the Seleucid kings Seleucus I, Seleucus II, and Antiochus III, who are known to have overstruck some of their own issues.<sup>97</sup>

As Simonetta has shown (Fig. 29 in his paper), we now have a Parthian bronze overstrike involving two issues of Mithradates II. A similar specimen in my collection is struck at Rhagae from the S27.13/S26.29 dies of the same Arsacid ruler. Another bronze overstrike in my collection, a S30.34 (LR151) Susian chalkous, has retained clear undertype traces. These closely resemble the naked figure (Apollo) on the reverse of LR151.5 overstrike that, according to Le Rider, continues over the head of standing Artemis. Given the Seleucid and Parthian overstrikes, one may assume that the issuer of S30 coinage (Arsaces XVI) overstruck some of his earlier emissions at Susa. This agrees with the below listed vestiges of earlier types on some of the extant Susian overstrikes of "Arsaces Theopator Evergetes".<sup>98</sup>

**LR 151.3:** One can detect (on the obverse behind the head) traces of an earlier inscription: ...ΩΣ→, ΜΕΓ...↓. The two words ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ are similarly disposed on the S30 series.<sup>99</sup>

**LR151.5:** Uncertain signs of an undertype are discernible both on the obverse and reverse of this overstrike. One can note, on the reverse and across the head of standing Artemis, traces of a naked(?) figure standing right, probably holding an object in front of him. This is similar to the lyre of nude Apollo on LR150 bronzes. However, Le Rider stresses that his identification of the earlier type is not entirely certain.

**LR155.1:** Evidence of a different issue can be found on the reverse of this piece. It was published by Simonetta who argued that the undertype showed the head of Mithradates II in tiara.<sup>100</sup> However, Le Rider emphatically rejects this: *Cette identification est impossible*, because the royal head of the undertype is clearly diademed and faces left. This excludes Mithradates II whose diademed head on his earlier Susian bronzes always faces right. Le Rider then comments that one ought to assume that "Arsaces Theopator Evergetes" either overstruck his own coinage or that of a rival.

**LR156.2:** This was originally published by Simonetta<sup>101</sup> who suggested that the undertype was a bronze of Mithradates II in tiara. However, Le Rider disagrees with this identification and abandons Simonetta's reconstruction of the undertype.

Given the above overstrikes, we may question Le Rider's positioning of the LR149–160 Susian bronzes immediately after the final emission of Mithradates II about 92/91 BC and the resultant S28→S30 sequence. The left-facing diademed head of the undertype of LR155.1 requires an Arsacid contender, also wearing a diadem and facing left on his coinage, to have been active sometime during 92/91–78/77 BC. Yet there are no parallel silver and/or bronze issues with a left-facing royal head in diadem either preceding or contemporary with the S30 series. The extant material suggests that of the

<sup>97</sup> Le Rider 1965: 395 n. 6.

<sup>98</sup> Le Rider 1965: 93–94.

<sup>99</sup> Simonetta 1957: 52 and pl. 2, no. 3, mis-identifies this bronze as an overstrike involving S30 (his Orodes I)/S36, S35, or S37 (all minted by his Gotarzes I).

<sup>100</sup> Simonetta 1957: 52 and pl. 2, no. 2.

<sup>101</sup> Simonetta 1957: 52 and pl. 2, no. 1.

above listed overstrikes some may be S30/S30 specimens. Perhaps future discoveries would yield S30/S34 overstrikes also. In any case, we are now assured that at least two Arsacid rulers, one immediately preceding and the other associated with the Parthian “Dark Age”, overstruck one or more of their own bronzes. It is, therefore, possible that S36/S36 examples may also be present among the known S36 overstrikes. Considering Simonetta’s vehement disagreement that S36 might have overstruck S30 bronzes, I have described below the main features of the known S36 overstrikes in order to decide their correct undertypes:<sup>102</sup>

**LR184.1:** The obverse shows traces of a left-facing diademed bust from an earlier type. On the reverse, one notes ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ|ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ on the left, ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ above, and [-]ΟΠΙΑΤ[ΟΡΟΣ] below. Rotating these by 90 degrees clockwise, we get the following disposition of the partial inscription:

[-]ΟΠΙΑΤ	ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ	
ΤΟΡΟΣ	ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ	ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ
?	?	?
?	?	?

Overlooking the possibility that the issuer of LR184–188 Susian bronzes too may have overstruck some of his own coins, Le Rider commits an elementary error here. He pieces together the inscription of the undertype of LR184.1 from the preserved traces on LR184.2, LR186.2 and LR186.3 rather than a single specimen. This causes him to ignore the fact that [-]ΟΠΙΑΤ[ΟΡΟΣ] may be the leftover from ΦΙΛΟΠΙΑΤΟΡΟΣ on a S36 undertype instead of ΘΕΟΠΙΑΤΟΡΟΣ on S35. The erroneously reconstructed inscription leads Le Rider to conclude that the undertype of LR184.1 might have been an issue of the king of S35 coinage,<sup>103</sup> appearing in profile in Susa rather than *en face* as on the S35 silver drachms and non-Susian bronze denominations. Simonetta follows Le Rider’s flawed reconstruction and, as illustrated above, insists that: “Clearly the inscription of these overstrikes has been pieced together by Le Rider from the evidence of different coins, but there is no doubt that it is correct”. Simonetta then unwisely comments that: “as all the coins of type 36 from the Susa excavations are overstrikes, this clearly points to a massive overstriking, apparently of a whole issue, so that it is incredible that we have a systematic overstriking by type 36 on type 36, with but a single specimen of 36 on 30”. Simonetta’s observations are incorrect. Of the known S36 Susian overstrikes, only two specimens, LR184.1 and LR185.3, are definite S36/S36 overstrikes (or S36/S35 as Le Rider suggests) while seven, LR184.2, LR185.2, LR186.1, LR186.2, LR186.3, LR187 (2 examples) and LR188, could be either S36/S30 or S36/S36 overstrikes.

**LR184.2:** The letters ΕΟΠ↓ can be read in the left field in front of the obverse bust. Since the second letter of this incomplete word closely resembles *epsilon*, we may restore ΘΕΟΠΙΑΤΟΡΟΣ as one of the epithets of the undertype’s issuer. However, since

<sup>102</sup> Le Rider 1965: 99–100.

<sup>103</sup> Le Rider 1965: 403–404 n. 1.

it is impossible to decide the arrangement of the remaining titles on the original undertype, one cannot insist that the reconstructed [Θ]ΕΟΠ[ΑΤΟΡΟΣ] exclusively corresponds with the inscription of S35 coinage. It could equally be from the legend of a S30 bronze undertype.

**LR185.2:** On the obverse, we have an incompletely preserved left-facing diademed head from the undertype. The reverse has retained unintelligible traces of an inscription.

**LR185.3:** Traces of a left-facing diademed head can be noted on the reverse. On the obverse, ΒΑΣΙΛ[ΕΩΣ]|ΜΕΓΑΛ[ΟΥ] is easily recognisable as well as remnants of some uncertain letters. This agrees with the inscription of LR184–188 (S36.23–27) Susian bronzes as well as S35 silver drachms.

**LR186.1:** One can note, on the reverse, unintelligible vestiges of some letters from an earlier inscription.

**LR186.2:** A partially preserved [Θ]ΕΟΠ[ΑΤ[ΟΡΟΣ]]|[Ε]ΥΕΠ[ΕΤΟΥ] can be read in the left field, in front of the obverse bust. However, the first two words of the complete inscription are lost. This makes it impossible to ascertain whether they were originally arranged as ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ|ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ, forming the top two lines on the reverse of a S35 bronze undertype, or ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ→ above, ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ↓ to the right as on the S30 coinage. The incomplete inscription on this overstrike cannot, therefore, be used to amend the partial legend of the above discussed LR184.1 overstrike. It could well be the leftover from the inscription of a S30 Susian bronze (LR149–160).

**LR186.3:** There appears, on the reverse of this coin, a rather complete bust of the king of the undertype. On the obverse and over the royal bust, one can read ΘΕΟΠ[ΑΤ[ΟΡΟΣ]]|[Ε]ΥΕΠ[ΕΤΟΥ]. However, as in the case of LR186.2, this does not exclusively accord with the inscription of S35 coinage because the position of ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ with respect to ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ is unknown here. The partial inscription equally agrees with the S30 legend.

**LR187:** Of the four recovered specimens at Susa, two are overstrikes with unidentifiable traces of the undertypes.

**LR188:** The only extant piece is an overstrike with an unrecognizable undertype.

The above evidence demonstrates that the LR184–188 series probably includes both S36/S30 and S36/S36 overstrikes and hence the sequence S30→S36 in the Parthian “Dark Age” coin issues.

We may now turn to the material from three Parthian hoards to decide whether or not they agree with Simonetta’s proposed chronology and sequence of coins.

32. Under the heading “Hoards”, Simonetta correctly comments that: “The evidence from hoards is commonly a difficult one to assess. The historical significance of hoards largely depends, on the one hand, on the possibility of being certain of their original composition and on the other, on the circumstances of their entombment”. He then concludes that: “The evidence from hoards acquired on the market should be used with a very conservative approach”. It is true, as commented earlier, that rare and/or attractive pieces are separated from and coins from unrelated sources added to the clandestinely unearthed or accidentally discovered hoards. This is motivated by financial gains and so undeniably diminishes the overall historical and numismatic significance of the find. However, Simonetta’s justified scepticism does not apply to hoards that mainly

or exclusively consist of common pieces. These retain, in most cases, their original composition by the time they reach the collectors and dealers, and are thus viewed as an important primary source material. For example, no finder or middleman would gain much from adding to or withholding from his find several common S30.14–17 drachms. Whereas if the hoard contained one or two rare S34 and/or S35 pieces, these may well be separated from the bulk of coins because they realise higher prices when sold individually. In any case, absence of S34 and S35 drachms from unscientifically recovered hoards of common Parthian types of the period *ca.* 93–57 BC is of little consequence. It can readily be explained and does not affect the agreement between the remaining types and the sequence of “Dark Age” coin issues. Hence my below analysis and discussion of the Mardin-II,<sup>104</sup> Kuh-dasht,<sup>105</sup> and “Senior-1996”<sup>106</sup> hoards to counter Simonetta’s proposed chronology. To these I have added the composition of a fourth hoard, Mardin-I,<sup>107</sup> which lends little help with establishing the correct order of the S28, S29, S30, S31 and S34 emissions. Yet the state of the preservation of the tail end of this hoard, the “*mint conditions*” of the solitary coins of S36, S38 and S39 according to Simonetta, puts the latter three after the former five issues. Table 3 below lists the contents of the aforementioned four hoards according to the sequence of reigns advanced by myself. This is modelled on the Sellwood-Mørkholm scheme with minor adjustments.

**Table 3.** Arrangement of Issues in Four Parthian “Dark Age” Hoards Using Assar’s Chronology (after Sellwood and Mørkholm)

Sellwood Types	Mardin-I	Mardin-II	Kuh-dasht	“Senior-1996”
Before S27	–	–	S10 (1 coin)	–
S27	6	11	–	“a few, worn”
S28	7	14	–	“many, most EF”
S33	9	21	–	“many, most EF”
S29	3	7	–	“few, all EF”
S31	9	28	–	–
S34	1 (anchor removed)	–	–	–
S30	14	–	150+	–
S36	1	–	80+	–
S35	–	–	20+	–
S38	1	–	80+	–
S39	1	–	20+	–
S40	–	–	125+	–
S41	–	–	(combined types)	–

I should add that under the heading “Comprehensive assessment of the numismatic evidence” Simonetta briefly refers to a portion of the “Senior-1996” hoard that came into my possession. Although I am unaware of the original number of coins in this hoard,

<sup>104</sup> Simonetta 1966: 28–29; Thompson *et al.* 1973: 246 (Diyarbakir, *IGCH* 1744).

<sup>105</sup> Weiskopf 1981: 126–136.

<sup>106</sup> Senior 1996: 7–8 comments that the hoard surfaced in Peshawar and consisted of about 100 drachms.

<sup>107</sup> Simonetta 1966: 29; Thompson *et al.* 1973: 254 (*IGCH* 1784).

I can confirm that I received 6 drachms of Mithradates II (S28), all in mint state. Of these, 2 coins (barbarous style) share the same obverse while of the remaining 4 (S28.7) three are from the same die-pair. The fourth coin shares its obverse die with the previous three and is struck from a different reverse. I also received about 95% of the S33 drachms, 58 coins in total, all in mint state and many die-duplicates.<sup>108</sup> These include 6 (S33.2) drachms sharing the same die-pair, 7 coins (S33.2) struck from a common obverse and 3 reverse dies: 2 coins each from two different dies and 3 coins from a third die. Finally, I purchased one S29.1 drachm that Senior believes to have come from the same source.<sup>109</sup> Simonetta comments, in relation to the coins from the "Senior-1996" hoard in my collection, that: "Obviously the lack of coins of 29 and 31, which usually occur in the hoards of this period, coupled with the unworn conditions of the coins seems to suggest that types 28 and 33 were rather close in time, rather than separated by 18 years as argued on all the other pieces of evidence". Unfortunately, Simonetta fails to disclose the relevant information on "the hoards of this period" that include S28 and S33 drachms but lack S29 and S31. I am personally unaware of such hoards and convinced that none has been reported so far.

Returning to Table 3, we find agreement between the order of Parthian "Dark Age" reigns, as concluded by Sellwood and Mørkholm, and the various types in the above listed four hoards. We also note hoarders' impartiality in all four groups. While assembling the pieces, they set aside what came to hand irrespective of the identity of the issuers and/or their head-dresses. For example, most of the types in Kuh-dasht hoard depict the Arsacid rulers in diadem. Yet there are also present in the same group over 20 drachms of Phraates III (S39) showing him wearing his father's tiara, decorated on the side with a bull's horn and a row of recumbent stags around the crest.<sup>110</sup> Mardin-I, Mardin-II and "Senior-1996" hoards also exhibit similar tendencies. They all contain both tiara and diadem types.

As for the coins' state of preservation and its significance, I can only comment on the specimens from the "Senior-1996" hoard in my collection. These are practically in mint state. The condition and number of pieces sharing one or both dies suggest that the hoard was assembled over a short period of time and before the coins travelled far and away from their mints. Simonetta stresses, in footnote 36 of his paper, that:

Assar (personal communication) considers the unworn conditions of the coins as decisive evidence for a close temporal connection of types 28 and 33 and that this is corroborated by the absence of coins of type 31, which would be expected if 31 precedes 33. I do not agree as to the crucial significance of the condition of the coins in the hoard, given the fact that the hoard having been purchased on the market, it lacks any corroborating evidence as to the circumstances of its accumulation and loss and the well known fact that hoarders tend to select for storage the best specimens they can find. The absence of coins of type 31 is indeed disturbing, but to me it can not outweigh all the other pieces of evidence.

<sup>108</sup> I failed to secure 5 or possibly 6 examples of S33 drachms from the hoard, including no. 14 in Senior's list (Senior no. 13 is now in my collection).

<sup>109</sup> Senior 1996: 7 referring to the coin in Spink's Numismatic Circular CIV/5 (1996), no. 2584.

<sup>110</sup> The absence of types preceding S30 suggests that good quality specimens were less abundant than the types present in the hoard, all in very fine and better conditions. Most of the S35 and S38 drachms in the Kuh-dasht hoard were in mint state. Cf. Malter 1971: 22–26 and 34–36.

It is encouraging to note that Simonetta acknowledges the chronological difficulties the absence of S31 drachms in the “Senior-1996” creates. However, it is disturbing to find that he ignores a more serious problem in his arguments: if we follow his preferred sequence S28→S29→S30→S34→S31→S33, we are obliged to explain the exclusion of the common S30 drachms from the same hoard also. Of course, the absence of S34 may be attributed to the rarity of the issue or “cherry-picking”. But the complete lack of two common Parthian types S30 and S31 cannot be dismissed lightly or explained in terms of our insufficient knowledge of the circumstances of find and true composition of the “Senior-1996” hoard.<sup>111</sup> To reveal the weaknesses in Simonetta’s conclusions, I have listed in Table 4 below the contents of the same four hoards according to his latest chronology and sequence of Parthian “Dark Age” issues. The resulting inexplicable gaps in the arrangement of types are due to Simonetta’s incorrect sequencing of the S30, S31, S33, and S34 issues.

**Table 4.** Arrangement of Issues in Four Parthian “Dark Age” Hoards  
According to Simonetta’s Latest Chronology

Sellwood Types	Mardin-I	Mardin-II	Kuh-dasht	“Senior-1996”
Before S27	–	–	S10 (1 coin)	–
S27	6	11	–	“a few, worn”
S28	7	14	–	“many, most EF”
S29	3	7	–	“few, all EF”
S30	14	unexplained gap	150+	unexplained gap
S34	1 (anchor removed)	–	–	–
S31	9	28	unexplained gap	unexplained gap
S33	9	21	unexplained gap	“many, most EF”
S36	1	–	80+	–
S35	–	–	20+	–
S38	1	–	80+	–
S39	1	–	20+	–
S40	–	–	125+ (combined types)	–
S41	–	–		–

33. Similar disagreements between the sequence of coins and Parthian die-cutters of the “Dark Age” prevail using Simonetta’s latest chronology. To highlight these without addressing the associated problems in detail, I have set against the four engravers F, H, K and L in Table 5 below, Simonetta’s preferred sequence and the one adduced by Sellwood.<sup>112</sup> It is unclear why Simonetta fails to discuss in his paper the career of engraver F. This particular artisan was active at Rhagae and cut the S30.18 dies with an extra line of inscription giving the full mint name ENPAΓAΙΣ. Considering that apart from celator E we have F also preparing reverse dies for S30–31, S34–36, and S38–39 drachms, placing

<sup>111</sup> Mørkholm 1980: 39–40, relates that: “S33, consisting of both drachms and Susa bronzes, must belong before S30 because of the composition of the hoard from Diyarbekir (IGCH 1744), where the very common issues of S30 are all missing”.

<sup>112</sup> Sellwood 1976: 4. Although confirmed by Sellwood, Simonetta omits engraver L for S35 drachms. I have amended Simonetta’s Table 2 by recording engraver F for S35 and S38.



S33 immediately after S31 requires engraver F to have cut dies for this common type too. Yet he did not and the resultant lacuna cannot be ignored. It is true that artificer L is also unattested for S34 drachms of Orodes I. However, this gap may be put down to the general rarity of the issue rather than engraver inactivity. Given that S31 and S33 constitute two of the most common types from the “Dark Age”, Simonetta is obliged to account for the absence of celators F from S33, K from 31 and 33, as well as L from S33 series. While his Table 2 reveals some unexplained breaks, arranging the Parthian “Dark Age” issues according to Sellwood’s scheme or the combined Sellwood-Mørkholm system in Table 5 below ensures engraver continuity with no unnecessary or inexplicable gaps.

**Table 5.** Arrangement of Issues According to Four Parthian “Dark Age” Die-Cutters

Type	Sellwood/Assar				Type	Simonetta			
	F	H	K	L		F	H	K	L
33	—	—	—	—	29	—	—	—	—
29	—	—	—	—	30	+	+	+	+
31	+	+	—	+	34	+	+	—	—
34	+	+	—	—	31	+	+	—	+
30	+	+	+	+	33	—	?	—	—
36	+	—	+	+	36	+	—	+	+
35	+	—	+	+	35	+	—	+	+
38	+	—	—	+	38	+	—	—	+
39	+	—	—	+	39	+	—	—	+

34. Under the heading “The literary and documentary evidence” in Simonetta’s paper we meet a series of inconsistent statements involving several primary sources. He asserts that shortly after the accession of Gotarzes I in December 91 BC, a challenger “appears on an ostrakon from Nisa and, notably, does not substantiate his claim by reference to any of the recent kings”. He then reports what he believes the wording of the colophon would have been had the king of this ostrakon intended to validate his challenge. According to Simonetta “the colophon would have read something like ‘the son of the Great King of Kings’ or ‘the grandson of the Great Arsaces’, instead the pretender traces his claim to a more distant past, almost to the beginning of the dynasty”. Unfortunately, Simonetta overlooks the fact that Nisa ostrakon 2638 (1760) indeed follows the royal lineage back to the founder of the Parthian dynasty, Arsaces I, through a significant ancestor, Phriapatius. It registers: “King Arsaces, grandson of Friyapātak, son of the nephew of Arshak”.<sup>113</sup> Combining ostrakon 2638 with two further Parthian “accession records”,<sup>114</sup> Nisa ostraca 2L and Nova 307, we may hold that the corresponding texts are merely abbreviated dynastic links although they invariably include the first Arsaces. Apparently the primary objective of the scribes in Nisa was to trace the lineage of each reigning monarch back to the founder of the kingdom in a thrifty manner, dropping in the process as many intervening rulers as possible but including an illustrious forefather. We thus find, on Nisa 2L ostrakon, the genealogy of Arsaces IV (*ca.* 170–168

<sup>113</sup> Cf. Assar 2004/2005b: 74 (transliteration and translation) and n. 31 for extensive bibliography.

<sup>114</sup> Assar 2004/2005: 71 and 75–76, respectively.

BC) given as: “King Arsaces, great-grandson of Arsaces” while that of a later prince from 180 AE (68/67 BC) on Nova 307 ostrakon reads: “King Arsaces, great-grandson of Friyapātak [son of the nephew of Arshak]”.

35. Under the same heading, Simonetta identifies King Arsaces of Avroman Parchment-I with the Parthian ruler Mithradates (III) in Josephus (*Jewish Antiquities*, 13.384–386) and ascribes to him the S30 coinage. He then relates that this prince was probably a son of Mithradates II. However, Simonetta’s proposed identification leads to unexplained discrepancies elsewhere. According to his preferred chronology, Gotarzes I (the issuer of S29 and S32 series) and Mithradates III (the king of S30 coinage) were contemporary rivals. The inscription on S29 drachms of Gotarzes reads: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ ΔΙΚΑΙΟΥ ΕΥΕΡΓΕΤΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΦΙΛΕΛΛΗΝΟΣ. The S30 drachms are, on the other hand, inscribed with: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ ΘΕΟΠΑΤΟΡΟΣ ΕΥΕΡΓΕΤΟΥ. Turning to the opening lines of Avroman Parchment-I<sup>15</sup> we find the royal titulature given as: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΟΝΤΟΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ ΕΥΕΡΓΕΤΟΥ ΔΙΚΑΙΟΥ ΕΠΙΦΑΝΟΥΣ ΚΑΙ ΦΙΛΕΛΛΗΝΟΣ. This agrees rather better with the inscription of Gotarzes’ S29 drachms than that of S30 coinage. It also lacks the epithet ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ which is conspicuously absent on Gotarzes’ Iranian issues. Simonetta gives no reasons as to why the scribe of Avroman Parchment-I, writing in the late autumn of 88 BC, refused to adopt the epithets of Mithradates III as given on his S30 coinage (according to Simonetta) and instead recorded a string of honorific titles closely resembling those on S29 drachms of Gotarzes I. He is nevertheless right to stress that the name of Gotarzes’ Babylonian consort, Ashiabat, is unlike any of the three named queens Siake, Aryazate and Azate of Avroman Parchment-I. Unfortunately, our knowledge of the geographical dispersal of Parthian queens is extremely meagre. Perhaps queens Siake, Aryazate and Azate permanently resided at the royal palace in Ec-batana while Ashiabat remained at the imperial court in Babylon.<sup>16</sup>

36. Simonetta then concludes that the “Arsaces who sat on his throne in Babylon” in month IV of 225 SEB (13/14 Jul.–10/11 Aug. 87 BC)<sup>17</sup> was Mithradates III (as the issuer of S30 coinage) who received the captive Seleucid ruler Demetrius III sometime in 88–87 BC. This is highly unlikely. The extant Assyrian chronicles and cuneiform documents from the Achaemenid, Macedonian and Seleucid epochs reveal that the phrase “sat on his throne” follows the demise of a previous ruler. After all, Simonetta maintains that soon after his accession in December 91 BC, Gotarzes I was challenged by Mithradates III. To this Arsacid contender Simonetta assigns both the S30 coinage and Avroman Parchment-I. Given that the latter already confirms the reigning monarch from Media as “King of Kings Arsaces” in late autumn of 88 BC, it is implausible that having deposed his rival, the same prince would have had a second accession in July/August 87 BC as “King Arsaces”.

To end, I would briefly refer to three additional points in Simonetta’s exposé. This is to highlight further the inconsistencies in his methodology and approach to the numismatic and chronological complexities of the Parthian “Dark Age”.

First, Simonetta relates, under the heading “The monograms on Parthian issues”, that:

<sup>15</sup> Minns 1915: 28 and 31.

<sup>16</sup> Minns 1915: 49, n. 47.

<sup>17</sup> Sachs/Hunger 1996: 458–459, No. –83; Assar 2006b: 69.

Of the coins struck during the "Dark Age" by the Iranian and Eastern mints, types 29, 30, 31, 33, 34 never have monograms except two unique specimens in the Sellwood collection, one of type 30 and one of type 31, both, however, of a very peculiar fabric which may betray an unofficial issue, engraved by someone who, not being entirely familiar with the current practices of the regular mints, engraved an unnecessary feature in his dies.

However, further on and under the heading "Assessment of the evidence from the Iranian drachms", Simonetta stresses that:

Anyway types 33 and 39 are also connected by a transitional coin (countermarked by Otanes) inscribed ΘΕΟΠΙΑΤΟΡΟΣ ΦΙΛΕΛΛΗΝΟΣ and with monogram of Rhagae and by a second coin, not counter-stamped that joins a very fine obverse with a reverse with a rather incorrect inscription, which, however, clearly was meant to read as the other one (Fig. 16) and I consider these two coins as critical evidence that the engraver and his controllers considered that they were preparing the die for a continuation with minor changes of the issue of type 33. These coins are perfectly regular issues as proved by comparison with a sufficiently large series of coins of types 33 and 39, the comparative series available to me (coins, casts and photos) numbering, as I said, 373 specimens".

The contrast is startling. While the two unique S30 and S31 drachms with unexpected monograms are labelled as "an unofficial issue", with little or no chronological significance, two further unique coins of unusual fabric and style are considered as "critical evidence" as well as "perfectly regular issues" in order to confirm for us the link between S33 and S39 drachms. Of the latter two, we have the first one illustrated by Simonetta (his Fig. 16). Although he claims to have compared both pieces with 373 specimens, Simonetta fails to identify for us their reverse die-engravers. The craftsman for the piece illustrated in his Fig. 16 is certainly not attested from Rhagae despite the fact that the coin carries the monogram of that mint. This drachm is simply an eastern imitation and does not belong to the main Parthian series. After all, two coins with some unusual features cannot be taken as "critical evidence" for establishing the link between two types from the Parthian "Dark Age". To achieve this one requires a large number of similar pieces from several major Parthian mints including those at Ecbatana and Rhagae.

Second, under the heading "Some objections to the proposals by Assar and Vardanyan", Simonetta criticises my reconstruction of the reign of Sinatruces who, I have concluded, ruled intermittently in the period 93/92–69/68 BC. He writes that:

Sinatruces is known to us merely by the brief statements of Lucian and Phlegon and from them we can just say that he was recalled from exile and won the crown with the support of Scythian tribes, that he was eighty when he attained the crown and that he ruled for about 7 years.

Yet, under the heading "A comprehensive assessment", he gives the duration of Sinatruces' reign as 79–69 BC. This entails a minimum of 9 and a maximum of 11 years. Apparently, Simonetta overlooked the fact that unless he confirmed the 7-year allocated to Sinatruces by Lucian (*Makrobioi*, 15), there is no difference between his 9–11 years and my suggested 23 years with several gaps. Mørkholm too dispenses with Sinatruces' 7-year reign and gives him 15–17 years (*ca.* 86/5–70 BC).<sup>118</sup>

<sup>118</sup> Mørkholm 1980: 42–45 and *ns.* 40–41.

Third, Simonetta is disturbed by my allocation to Phraates III of the S35-S39 issues. He maintains that it is more credible to distribute these among different kings “than to consider that the same king, contrary to the main Parthian tradition before and after the ‘dark age’ used at the same mints entirely different types, not to mention considerable portrait differences”. Here Simonetta is obviously unaware of Parthian mint practices throughout the empire. As an example, we have Mithradates II appearing diademed and with a short beard on his S24 drachms. Later, while he maintains the diadem, his beard grows increasingly longer on his subsequent S26 and S27 emissions. Then, Mithradates dispenses with his diadem and adopts a tiara with varying designs on his S28 drachms. These indicate that the transition from a diademed portrait with a short beard on S36 to diadem and longer beard on S38 and finally to tiara and long beard on S39 is not unprecedented. As for a Parthian king appearing both in profile and *en face* on his concurrent or near contemporary issues, we have several attested cases:

- a) S46.23 drachm of Orodes II from Aria showing on the obverse the profile bust of the king. However, S46.24 variety, also from Aria, has on the obverse a “short bearded bust facing, head only turned left”.
- b) While S63.1–5 tetradrachms of Artabanus II from Seleucia show the royal bust facing, the parallel S63.6–16 Iranian drachms depict the king in profile.
- c) S68.1–11 tetradrachms of Vologases I from Seleucia have a facing bust with head turned left. On the other hand, his S70.1–12 tetradrachms from the same mint show the king with a profile bust.
- d) Pacorus II is depicted in profile on his S73.1 tetradrachms from Seleucia. However, on his S75.1–6 tetradrachms struck at the same mint Pacorus is depicted with a facing bust and left-facing head. He also appears in profile and wearing diadem on his S76.1 tetradrachms and also in profile but wearing a tiara on his S77.1–7 tetradrachms from Seleucia.
- e) We have Vologases III appearing in profile on his S79.39–49 and also S79.50–58 bronzes, all struck at Seleucia. Yet on S79.50 dichalkous, we note a facing bust of the king. Moreover, the S79.30–31 silver tetradrachms of Vologases III dated ANY (451 SEM = AD 139/140) and minted at Seleucia show him in profile. But the aforementioned S79.50 bronze with a facing bust is also dated ANY. Clearly, we have here both profile and facing busts on two “contemporary” issues from a single mint.
- f) We note a similar situation concerning the Seleucia bronze emissions S80.7–29 of Osroes I. Some of these depict Osroes diademed whereas others show him in tiara. However, while Osroes appears in profile on his S80.10 tetrachalkous dated ΘKY (429 SEM = AD 117/118), he is depicted facing on his S80.27 chalkous, also dated ΘKY.
- g) Vologases IV too appears both in profile and facing on his Seleucia bronzes. His S84.134 tetrachalkous as well as S84.144–153 and S84.155–160 chalkoi show the king in profile. His S84.136–143 dichalkoi, on the other hand, depict him facing while S84.154 have Vologases on horseback on the obverse. The parallel S84.1–126 Seleucia tetradrachms all have a left-facing profile bust.
- h) Vologases V appears both facing and in profile on his S86.1–2 and S87.1–26 tetradrachms from Seleucia.

As highlighted polemically throughout this note, Simonetta has declined to address several key numismatic and chronological issues in his latest exposé. Whether or not

this stems from his unfamiliarity with modern scholarship and lack of access to latest publications remains debatable. What is clear here is that his preferred chronology consistently disagrees with our primary and secondary sources and persistently conflicts with the conclusions adduced by Sellwood and Mørkholm. I have carefully gauged Simonetta’s arguments against the sequence of Parthian “Dark Age” reigns and coin issues expounded by the aforementioned two numismatists. Although their proposed schemes too suffer from certain shortcomings, mostly minor, they least violate the recovered material from this complex period of Parthian epoch. Given our present knowledge of the topics debated by Simonetta, I believe his conclusions should be treated with caution and that those seeking to utilise them in future studies ought to ascertain their credibility.

Finally, following the Sellwood-Mørkholm scheme, I have listed in Table 6 below the 121/120–58/57 BC “annual” Parthian bronze emissions from Susa.<sup>119</sup> Setting aside Simonetta’s criticisms and disapproval, I believe these better agree with the extant numismatic, documentary and literary evidence from the Parthian “Dark Age”.

**Table 6:** Arrangement of the “Annual” Susian Bronze Issues in the Period 122/121-57/56 BC

Year SEM	Year SEB	Year BC	Ruler	Le Rider No.	Sellwood No.	Comments
192	191/192	121/120	Mithradates II	118+123	23.6	
193	192/193	120/119		119	23.7	
194	193/194	119/118		120	23.8	
195	194/195	118/117		121	23.5	
196	195/196	117/116		122	23.9	
197	196/197	116/115	Mithradates II	124	24.41	
198	197/198	115/114		125	24.42	
199	198/199	114/113		126	24.43	
200	199/200	113/112		127	24.44	
201	200/201	112/111	Mithradates II	128	26.30	
202	201/202	111/110		129	26.31	
203	202/203	110/109		130	26.32	
204	203/204	109/108		131	27.14	Adopts the epithet King of Kings
205	204/205	108/107		132	27.15	
206	205/206	107/106		133+134	27.16–17	
207	206/207	106/105		135	27.19	
208	207/208	105/104		136	27.18	
209	208/209	104/103		137	27.20	
210	209/210	103/102		138	27.21	
211	210/211	102/101		139	27.22	
212	211/212	101/100		140	27.23	
213	212/213	100/99		141	27.24	
214	213/214	99/98		142	27.25	
215	214/215	98/97		143	27.26	
216	215/216	97/96		144	27.27	
217	216/217	96/95	Mithradates II	145	28.21	Adopts the tiara

<sup>119</sup> Assar 2006a: 151; Assar 2006b: 59.

Year SEM	Year SEB	Year BC	Ruler	Le Rider No.	Sellwood No.	Comments
218	217/218	95/94		146	28.20	
219	218/219	94/93		147	28.22	
220	219/220	93/92	Mithradates II Sinatruces	148 170	28.23 33.13	Loses Susa to Sinatruces Begins his first reign in Iran
221	220/221	92/91	171	33.16		Mithradates II dies and Gotarzes I begins his reign
222	221/222	91/90	172	33.17		
223	222/223	90/89	173	33.18		
224	223/224	89/88	174	33.15		
225	224/225	88/87	Mithradates III	175 161	33.19 31.16	Sinatruces loses Susa to Gotarzes Mithradates Begins his reign
226	225/226	87/86		162	31.17	
227	226/7	86/5	Mithradates III	163	31.18	
228	227/8	85/4		164	31.19	
229	228/9	84/3		165	31.20	
230	229/30	83/2		166	31.21	
231	230/1	83/1		167	31.22	
232	231/2	81/0		168	31.23	
233	232/3	80/79	Mithradates III Orodes I	169 176	31.24 34.10	Orodes I defeats Mithradates III
234	233/4	79/8		177	34.11	
235	234/5	78/7	Orodes I Arsaces XVI	178 149	34.12 30.33	Orodes I raids Elymais but loses Susa to Arsaces XVI
236	235/6	77/6		150	—	
237	236/7	76/5		151	30.34	Orodes I is eliminated
238	237/8	75/4		152	30.35	
239	238/9	74/3		153	30.36	
240	239/40	73/2		154	30.37	
241	240/1	72/1		155	30.38	
242	241/2	71/0		156	30.39	
243	242/3	70/69		157	30.40	
244	243/4	69/8		158	30.41	Sinatruces is eliminated
245	244/5	68/7		159	30.42	Phraates III at Nisa (180 AE)
246	245/6	67/6	Arsaces XVI Phraates III	160 184	30.43 36.23	Phraates III captures Susa
247	246/7	66/5		185	36.24	Arsaces XVI flees to the East
248	247/8	65/4		186	36.25	
249	248/9	64/3		187	36.26	
250	249/50	63/2		188	36.27	
251	250/1	62/1		179	38.24	Arsaces XVI is eliminated
252	251/2	61/0		180	38.25	
253	252/3	60/59		181	38.26	
254	253/4	59/8		182	38.27	
255	254/5	58/7		183	38.28	Phraates III is murdered and “annual” Susian bronzes end
256	255/6	57/6		—	—	—

## ABBREVIATIONS

- AE Arsacid Era, beginning 1 Nisānu (14/15 April) 247 BC (cf. Assar 2003)
- IGCH *An Inventory of Greek Coin Hoards* (cf. Thompson *et al.* 1973)
- LR Prefix to the entries in Le Rider 1965
- S Prefix to the Parthian types and varieties in Sellwood 1980
- SBE Seleucid Era of the Babylonian Calendar, beginning 1 Nisānu (2/3 April) 311 BC (cf. Assar 2003)
- SEM Seleucid Era of the Macedonian Calendar, beginning 1 Dios (6/7 October) 312 BC (cf. Assar 2003)

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