

The First Royal Coinages of Pontos (from Mithridates III to Mithridates V)

François de Callataÿ

A magnificent coin portrait of Mithridates III¹ illustrates the jacket of the last and posthumous book by the great numismatist Otto Mørkholm, *Early Hellenistic Coinage*. Cambridge, 1991 (Fig. 1). The coin was acquired in 1978 by Mørkholm for the Copenhagen Coin Cabinet as a New Carlsberg Foundation gift. It is not the only coin he purchased in those years to fill a gap in the splendid Greek collection kept in Copenhagen: as far as Pontic kings are concerned, Mørkholm succeeded in purchasing one specimen for three out of the four main varieties,² and thus provided a monetary portrait of all the kings decently available on the market. Jugate portraits of queen Laodike with

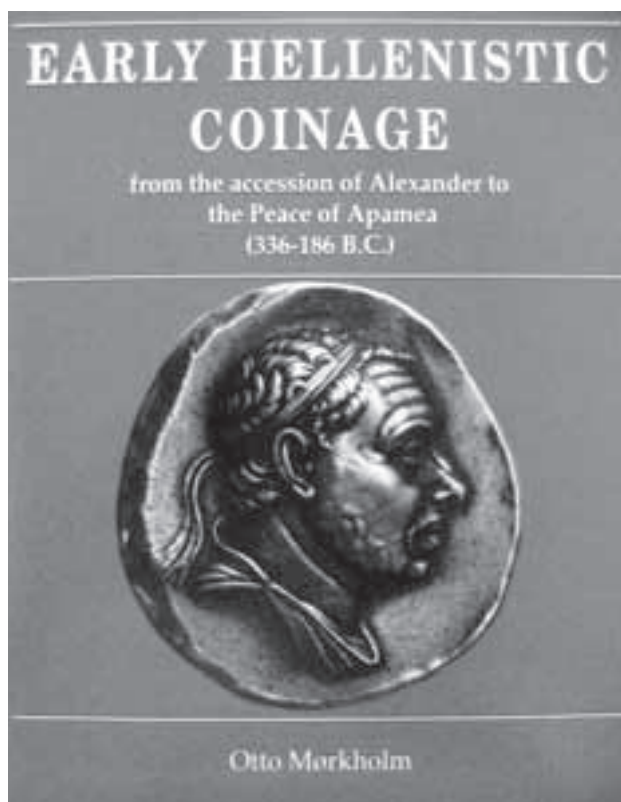


Fig. 1. Front cover of O. Mørkholm, *Early Hellenistic Coinage*. Cambridge 1991.

her husband Mithridates IV are extremely rare (5 specimens) while portraits of her alone are unique, as is the portrait of Mithridates V, known from only one specimen now in Athens.

Commenting on these Pontic coins, Mørkholm wrote: "The first interest of this coinage, however, resides in the royal portrait. The Pontic kings were proud of their Iranian descent, and although they soon married into the Seleucid dynasty their attachment to their oriental roots remained strong. This gave a series of excellent Greek die engravers a unique opportunity to create a gallery of semi-barbarian royal portraits that has no real parallel in Hellenistic portraiture. The first of these excellent likenesses is that of Mithridates III, probably created about 200. His head or bust is rendered with extreme realism, emphasizing his oriental features that are so different from Greek idealization or Macedonian heaviness. The Pontic portraits are equal to the best Bactrian portraits as far as realism is concerned, and seem to me to surpass them in psychological insight. The meeting of Greek artists with oriental models has created a unique and exceptional portrait art that stands quite isolated and outside the main development of portraiture in the Hellenistic age".³

Indeed, the coinages of the first Pontic kings were praised and discussed above all for the excellence of their portraits. We are not of course required to endorse the usual comments made by past art historians about the "oriental features" and what some deduced about the limited cleverness of these kings (very much in the line with the spirit of Gobineau).⁴ Some like Jean Babelon or, more recently, Peter Green reached summits of political incorrectness. I quote Peter Green: "The early kings of Pontus resemble nothing so much as a family of escaped convicts: Pharnaces I has the profile of a Neanderthal, and Mithridates IV that of a skid-row alcoholic".⁵

Iconography is the other main point of interest: the eight-rayed star and the crescent, generally taken as symbols of the Pontic house, the composite deity on the coins of Pharnakes, Perseus on the coins of Mithridates IV, arguably emblematic of the king's Persian roots, and the figures of Hera and Zeus on the tetradrachms struck in the names of Mithridates IV and his wife Laodike.⁶

This article takes a different approach. Its main aim is to provide at last a die-study, never attempted so far, for these coinages and to contextualize them in terms of monetary volumes, purposes and diffusion.

As a matter of fact, royal Pontic coins from the period before Mithridates VI Eupator are very rare nowadays and, as we will see, it is likely that they were never abundant. In the present catalogue, which does not claim to be a complete *corpus*, but which on the other hand is unlikely to be missing much, 4 staters (for the unique one of Laodike, see below), 64 tetradrachms and 18 drachms have been gathered (Table 1). In other words, we now possess less than 100 coins for roughly a century of coinage by an important Hellenistic dynasty.

Table 1. The number of coins and obverse dies for each of the major royal Pontic coinages.

Kings	Staters		Tetradrachms		Drachms	
	no	obv	no	obv	no	obv
Mithridates III	2	2	19	5	2	1
Pharnakes I	1	1	24	9	16	5
Mithridates IV	1	1	14	6	-	-
Mithridates IV & Laodike	-	-	5	2	-	-
Laodike	-	-	1	1	-	-
*Mithridates V	-	-	1	1	-	-
Total	4	4	64	24	18	6

As a result of this scarcity, our knowledge about these royal Pontic coinages has been slow to develop.⁷ Jean Foy-Vaillant made a first and misleading attempt, with very limited material in 1725. Only two types, out of a total of 11 (or 12) recorded today, were known as late as 1850. At the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century, Joseph Hilarius Eckhel (1737-1798) and Thédodore-Edmé Mionnet (1770-1842) both gave a poor catalogue: out of the four types known to them, two prove to be modern fantasies, duly recognized as such.⁸ Many types were unknown as late as 1880 and three or four⁹ major types surfaced only after WWII (see Table 2).

Table 2. The first appearance of each major coin type.

1706	Tetradrachm of Pharnakes I (Spanheim 1706, 481) ¹⁰
1759	Tetradrachm of Mithridates III (Pellerin 1765 – KAI = KIA for Kios)
1860	Drachm of Pharnakes I (Waddington 1863)
1877	Tetradrachm of Mithridates IV (Sallet 1877)
1888	Stater of Mithridates III (Reinach – Waddington)
1888	Tetradrachm of Laodike (Reinach – Waddington)
1900	Tetradrachm of Mithridates IV and Laodike (Reinach 1902)
1900	Drachm of Mithridates III (Reinach 1900)
1955?	Stater of Mithridates IV (von Aulock – published by Kleiner 1955)
1973	Stater of Pharnakes I (Sale Kastner, 27-28 Nov. 1973, no. 52)
1976	Tetradrachm of Mithridates V (Oikonomides 1976)
2001 ¹¹	Stater of Laodike (Sale Tkalec & Rauch, 19 Febr. 2001, no. 97)

Mistakes were often made: Domenico Sestini (1750-1832) wrongly read the letters KΘ on some tetradrachms of Mithridates III, and interpreted them as a date (year 29).¹² Ennio Quirino Visconti (1751-1818) restored to Mithridates III the tetradrachms given to Mithridates II by Eckhel.¹³ The numbering of the kings is also merely an illusion. The sequence of kings itself was by no means secure when, finally, at the end of the 19th century, Théodore Reinach (1860-1928) took a serious look at the subject.¹⁴ But Reinach himself changed his mind with the discovery of new pieces of evidence. And, recently, Harold Mattingly dared to propose a radical change in the sequence of kings (attributing the coins of Mithridates III to Mithridates IV, that is after the coinage of Pharnakes), which – as we will see – is not to be adopted.¹⁵

Catalogue

Mithridates III (c. 220-200 BC)

Staters (2 coins, 2 obverses and 2 reverses)

Obv.: Helmeted head of Athena to the r.

Rev.: ΜΙΘΡΑΔΑΤΟΥ (in outer r. field) – ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ (in outer l. field). Standing Nike to the l., holding a crown in her extended r. hand; different letters or monograms in the inner fields.

Σ and ME (inner l. field) – KO and ΓΑ (inner r. field)¹⁶

O1 R1 a-Paris, BN, 1 = Waddington 109 – found in Ordu, the ancient Kotyora (8.48g [holed]-12h-19mm; see Reinach 1888, pl. XVI, no. 2 (Fig. 2); *RGAM*, pl. I, no. 1 and Alram 1986, no. 22).

Σ and Π (inner l. field) – K (inner r. field)

O2 R2 a-SNG von Aulock, no. 1 (8.52g (Fig. 3) – see Kleiner 1955, pl. 2, no. 10) = Vinchon, 24-25 Nov. 1994 (Velkov Coll.), no. 51 (8.48g-17.25mm).

Tetradrachms (19 coins, 5 obverses and 13+ reverses)

Obv.: Diademed head of the king to r.¹⁷

Rev.: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ (outer r. field) – ΜΙΘΡΑΔΑΤΟΥ (outer l. field). Seated Zeus to l. He holds an eagle on his extended r. hand and a sceptre in his l. hand; eight-rayed star and crescent in the inner l. field.



Figs. 2-3. *Staters of Mithridates III.*

(KAI) (inner l. field)

- O1 R1 a-IGCH 1544 (Latakia Hoard 1759) Paris, BN (16.85g; see *RGAM*, pl. I, no. 2; Seyrig 1973, 51, pl. 19, no. 11.39 [16.87g (Fig. 4)] and Mattingly 1998, pl. 56, no. 2).
b-IGCH 1544 (Latakia Hoard 1759) Paris, BN, Pont 3 (14.91g-12h-33mm – see Seyrig 1973, 51, pl. 19, no. 11.40 [14.93g (Fig. 5)]).
- O1 R2 a-M&M, 61, 7-8 Oct. 1982, no. 131 (16.90g) = Sotheby's (New York), 4 Dec. 1990 (Hunt Coll.), no. 53 (16.90g-33mm-12h [enlarged ill.]).
- O1 R3 a-IGCH 1774 (Babylon Hoard 1900) Berlin, 367/1928 (13.31g [in 6 parts]-12h-34mm – see Regling 1928, pl. 11, no. 60 [13.34g (Fig. 6)]).

Becker Forgeries (copied on O1-R1a)

- OA RA a-Hill, no. 72 (Fig. 7).
b-New York, forgery, gift Robinson (18.18g-30mm-12h).
c-New York, forgery, A.M. Huntington Coll. (14.43g-29mm-12h).
d-Gorny, 30, 19-20 Nov. 1984, no. 3034 (20.02g).
e-Baron von Prokesch-Osten (16.95g – see Köhne 1865, 262).

Obv.: Draped bust of the king, diademed, to r.

Rev.: Idem.

(IIA) (inner l. field)

- O2 R1 a-IGCH 1774 (Babylon Hoard 1900) Berlin (17.11g; see *RGAM*, pl. I, no. 3 (Fig. 8)).

(MT) (inner l. field)

- O3 R1 a-Berlin, Imhoof-Blumer 1900 – acquired in 1899 (16.98g-12h-32mm).
O3 R2 a-NFA, 25, 29 Nov. 1990 ("Northern California Coll."), no. 118 (16.29g-12h) = NFA, 29, 13 Aug. 1992, no. 120 (16.29g-12h) = Sotheby's (Zurich), 27-28 Oct. 1993 (Fund sold by NFA), no. 574 (16.29g-12h (Fig. 9)).
O? R3 a-Berlin, Löbbecke 1906/7644 (16.96g-12h-31mm).

(IΣ) and (EMT) (in inner l. field)

- O4 R1 a-Rollin & Feuarent, 22 mars 1886, no. 582.

(EMT) (under throne), (IΣ) (in inner r. field)

- O4 R1 a-New York, Jameson Coll. (16.07g-33mm-12h) = Sotheby's, 23-28 March 1896 (Montagu Coll.), no. 470 (249gr.) = Weber Coll., no. 4787 (16.11g) = Jameson Coll., no. 2151 (16.07g – see *RGAM*, pl. Suppl. A, no. 3 (Fig. 10)) = Leu-Hess, 7 Apr. 1960, no. 198 (16.10g-32mm).

(MII) (under throne), (IΣ) and A (in inner r. field)

- O4 R1 a-Bruxelles, L. de Hirsch Coll. 1411 (17.11g-29.2mm-12h – see *RGAM*, pl. Suppl. A, no. 1).



Figs. 4-13. Tetradrachms of Mithridates III.

- O3 R1 a-Copenhagen, New Carlsberg Foundation gift 1978 (see Mørkholm 1980, 71, no. 1; 1991, cover; Zahle 1992, 39, fig. 37) = Paravey Coll. 1879 = Paris (see Reinach 1900, 225 [drawing]; *RGAM*, pl. I, no. 4) = Herzfelder Coll. (exchange in 1956 with Paris duplicates) = Leu, 20, 25-6 Apr. 1978, no. 109 (17.13g-12h (Fig. 11)).
b-SNG *BM* 1024 = London, 1869-11-2-1 Feuardent (17.16g-31mm-11h – see *BMC*, pl. VIII, no. 2; *RGAM*, pl. I, no. 4 [wrongly attributed to Paris]; Head 1932, pl. 32, no. 1; Seltman 1933, pl. 56, no. 8; Newell 1937, 42, no. 1; Kraay & Hirmer 1966, pl. 210, no. 769; Jenkins 1972, no. 585; Davis & Kraay 1973, no. 198, 199 and 202; Green 1993, 350, fig. 122 [wrongly attributed to Paris]).
c-Paris, Armand Valton 396 (17.09g-30mm-12h – see *RGAM*, pl. Suppl. A, no. 2).
d-M&M, 75, 4 Dec. 1989, no. 253 (16.37g).

(MII) (under throne) and (AII) and A (in inner r. field)

- O3 R1 a-Hoffmann, 24 Apr. 1867 (Dupré Coll.), no. 240 = Sotheby's, 23 May 1894 (Carfrae Coll.), no. 187 = Sotheby's, 28-31 May 1900 (Rotschild Coll.), no. 304 (265gr. = 17.19g) = Leu and M&M, 28 May 1974 (Gillet Coll.), no. 243 (17.19g, 12h) = Leu, 81, 16 May 2001, no. 236 (17.19g-12h (Fig. 12)).
b-SNG *Salting*, 30 (17.16g-12h).
O4 R2 a-Berlin, C.R. Fox 1873 – acquired in 1862 to Borrell (17.03g-29mm-12h – see Reinach 1888, pl. XVI, no. 3 (Fig. 13)).

(EMI) (under throne) and B and (AP) (in inner r. field)

- O5 R1 a-*IGCH* 1372 (Amasya Hoard 1860) Paris, 5 = Waddington 110 (16.95g-33mm-12h – see Waddington 1863, pl. 9, no. 1 [drawing]; *RGAM*, pl. I, no. 5; Alram 1986, no. 24 and Mattingly 1998, pl. 56, no. 4).

Drachms (2 coins, 1 obverse and 1 reverse)

Obv.: Diademed head of the king to r.

Rev.: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ (outer r. field) – ΜΙΘΡΑΔΑΤΟΥ (outer l. field). Seated Zeus to l.
He holds an eagle on his extended r. hand and a sceptre in his l. hand.
Eight-rayed star and crescent in the inner l. field.

(ΣΑ) (in inner l. field)

- O1 R1 a-Paris, no. 6 – M2632 (3.85g-18mm-12h – see Reinach 1900, 229 [drawing] and 1902, pl. 3, no. 2; *RGAM*, pl. I, no. 6 and Alram 1986, no. 25).
b-Bayer Vereinsbank, 11, 1976, no. 32 (3.96g) = M&M Deutschland, 11, 7-8 Nov. 2002, no. 676 (3.96g (Fig. 14)).

Pharnakes I (c. 200-169 BC)

Staters (1 coin)

Obv.: Diademed head of the king to r.

Rev.: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ (outer r. field) – ΦΑΡΝΑΚΟΥ (outer l. field). Uncertain male figure standing facing front with a flat hat and a dress; he holds, in his l. hand, a cornucopia and a caduceus, and, in his r., a vine branch, upon which a young deer feeds; eight-rayed star and crescent in the inner l. field.

(ΜΑ) (outer r. field)

O1 R1 a-Kastner, 4, 27-28 Nov. 1973, no. 52 (8.33g-12h – see Alram 1986, no. 26) = Leu, 22, 8-9 May 1979, no. 116 (8.47g-12h) = Tkalec & Rauch, 25-26 Apr. 1989, no. 105 (8.47g) = Lanz, 70, 21 Nov. 1994, no. 81 (8.44g-11h (Fig. 15)).

NB: Same obverse die as O5 used for drachms. Mionnet (1807, 359 and Suppl. 4, 1829, 464-465) denounces a doubtful gold medallion in Florence (the Mus. Mag. Ducis) as a modern forgery, presented as genuine by Visconti.

Tetradrachms (24 coins, 9 obverses and 13+ reverses)

Obv.: Idem.

Rev.: Idem. Horizontal thunderbolt above the head of the standing male figure.

Without monogram

O1 R1 a-Berlin, Imhoof-Blumer 1900 – acquired in 1893 (16.87g-32mm – see *RGAM*, pl. I, no. 9 (Fig. 16)).
b-Egger, 28 Nov. 1904 (Prowe Coll.), no. 958 (16.55g-35mm).
O2 R2 a-M&M, 47, 30 Nov. 1972, no. 475 (16.88g) = NFA, 5, 23 Feb. 1978, no. 123 (16.85g) = NFA, 25, 29 Nov. 1990, no. 119 (16.85g-12h) = Leu, 81, 16 May 2001 (Wahler Coll.), no. 237 (16.85g-12h – “probably the finest known tetradrachm of Pharnakes” (Fig. 17)).

ΙΣ (in inner r. field)

O3 R1 a-Glasgow, Hunterian Coll., pl. 45, no. 1 (10.84g = 167.2gr. [holed] – see Waddington 1863, pl. 9, no. 4 [drawing]; Mattingly 1998, pl. 56, no. 5).¹⁸
b-St Petersburg (17.00g – see *RGAM*, pl. I, no. 8 (Fig. 18)).



Fig. 14. Drachm of Mithridates III.



Fig. 15. Stater of Pharnakes I.

(ΠΑΣ) (in inner r. field)

O4 R1 a-Berlin, Löbbecke 1906 – 7592 (16.80g-35mm-12h).

Obv.: Idem.

Rev.: Idem (as the staters, without thunderbolt).¹⁹



Figs. 16-23. Tetradrachms of Pharnakes I.

(IYYM) (in inner r. field)

- O5 R1 a-Leu & Hess, 36, 17-18 Apr. 1968, no. 244 (15.27g-12h) = NFA, MBS
18 Oct. 1990, no. 701 (15.26g) = Sotheby's (Zurich), 27-28 Oct. 1993, no.
575 (15.26g-12h) = CNG, 55, 13 Sept. 2000, no. 418 (15.28g (Fig. 19)).

(MH or MT) (in inner r. field)

- O5 R1 a-Brussels, de Hirsch Coll., no. 1412 (17.01g-31.6mm-12h).
O5 R2 a-Berlin, Prokesch-Osten 1875 (17.00g-30mm-12h).
O5 R3 a-IGCH 1372 (Amasya Hoard 1860) Paris, Waddington Coll. (16.99g – see
Waddington 1863, pl. 9, no. 2; RGAM, pl. Suppl. A, no. 4 and Seltman
1933, pl. 56, no. 9).
O6 R4 a-Berlin, Löbbecke 1906 (16.90g-32mm-12h).
b-Vecchi (London), 14, 5 Feb. 1999, no. 518 (16.80g) = Vecchi (London),
16, 9 Oct. 1999, no. 189 (16.80g) = Berk, 116, 17 Oct. 2000, no. 274 (16.81g
– “probably the finest known of this issue” (Fig. 20)).
O6 R5 a-Gorny, 44, 4 Apr. 1989, no. 335a (16.95g) = Gorny, 48, 2 Apr. 1990, no.
347 (16.95g).
O6 R6 a-Lisbon, Gulbenkian Coll., no. 932 (16.99g-11h – see Mørkholm 1991,
pl. 52, no. 623).

(EMI), B and AP (in inner r. field)

- O7 R1 a-Berlin, C.R. Fox 1873 (16.97g-31mm-12h – see Waddington 1863, pl.
9, no. 2 [drawing]; Reinach 1888, pl. 16, no. 4 (Fig. 21)).
b-SNG BM 1025 = London, 1872-7-9-131 Wigan (17.00g-30mm-12h – see
BMC, pl. 8, no. 3; Head 1932, pl. 39, no. 2; Newell 1937, 42, no. 2; Jenkins
1972, no. 586; Davis & Kraay 1973, nos. 200, 201 and 203; Alram 1986,
no. 27 and Mattingly 1998, pl. 56, no. 1).
c-IGCH 237 (Sitichoro-Larissa Hoard 1968)? Spink, *NCirc*, 78 (3), March
1970, no. 15 (16.34g) = NAC, A, 27-28 Feb. 1991, no. 1412 (16.35g)
d-Leu, 33, 3 May 1983, no. 349 (16.91g-12h) = NFA, 16, 2 Dec. 1985, no.
181 (16.83g).
e-Superior Galleries, 12-14 Dec. 1987, no. 399 (16.79g).
f-Leu, 45, 26 May 1988, no. 191 (16.80g-12h).
g-Gorny, 55, 14 May 1991, no. 242 (16.74g (Fig. 22)).

(EMI), IA and B (in inner r. field)

- O7 R1 a-Paris, Pont 7 – B829 (16.96g-31mm-12h – see RGAM, pl. I, no. 7
(Fig. 23); Kraay & Hirmer 1966, pl. 210, no. 770; Green 1993, 350, fig.
121 [wrongly attributed to London]; Saprykin 1996, 2-3 and Oikono-
mides 1996, no. 178).

To be classified

- O8 R? a-St Petersburg, Hermitage? (see Zograph 1977, pl. 15, no. 2 [only the
obverse]).

- O9 R? a-St Petersburg, Hermitage? (see Zograph 1977, pl. 15, no. 3 [only the obverse]).

Drachms (16 coins, 5 obverses and 12 reverses)

Obv.: Idem.

Rev.: Idem (with a thunderbolt).

Without monogram

- O1 R1 a-SNG von Aulock, no. 3 (4.06g) = M&M, 52, 19-20 June 1975, no. 157 (4.10g (Fig. 24)).

(MT) (inner r. field)

- O2 R1 a-Copenhagen, acquired in 1972 (4.19g – see Mørkholm 1980, 71, no. 2) = Spink, *NCirc*, 80 (7/8), Jul.-Aug. 1972, no. 7161 (4.19g).
O3 R2 a-NFA, 8, 6 June 1980, no. 188 (3.97g (Fig. 25)).

Obv.: Idem.

Rev.: Idem (without thunderbolt).

(MT) (inner r. field)

- O4 R1 a-SNG BM 1026 (4.12g-12h) = London, 1938-10-7-130 Robinson (4.15g-17mm-11h).
O5 R1 a-Boston, MFA, no. 1353 – 35.184 (3.10g [sic!]-20mm – see Brett 1955, pl. 69 (Fig. 26)) = *Ars Classica*, 1, 4 Apr. 1921 (Pozzi Coll.), no. 2090 (4.01g-18mm) = *Ars Classica*, 10, 15-8 June 1925, no. 629 (4.01g-18mm).
O4 R2 a-New York, K (4.03g-18mm-1h).
b-Jameson Coll., no. 2152 (4.18g – see *RGAM*, pl. Suppl. A, no. 6 (Fig. 27)) = Sternberg, 27, 7-8 Nov. 1994, no. 5 (4.28g).
O5 R3 a-M&M, 41, 18-19 June 1970, no. 116 (4.07g) = Leu, 79, 31 Oct. 2000, no. 609 (4.08g-11h (Fig. 28)).
O5 R4 a-Lanz, 34, 25 Nov. 1985, no. 249 (4.1g-12h).
O5 R5 a-Brussels, de Hirsch Coll., no. 1413 – acquired to Hoffmann, March 23, 1882 (4.15g-20mm-11h – see *RGAM*, pl. Suppl. A, no. 5 (Fig. 29)).
b-New York, BYB 890 (4.11g [holed]-20mm-12h – see *SNG Berry*, no. 890 [4.12g]).
O5 R6 a-Aufhäuser, 16, 16-17 Oct. 2001 (Egon Beckenbauer Coll.), no. 84 (4.11g).
b-Kastner, 6, 26 Nov. 1974, no. 61 (3.29g [corroded edge]-11h) = *Athena*, 4 [after 1976], no. 19.
O5 R7 a-New York, BYB 891 (4.05g-18mm-12h – see *SNG Berry*, no. 891 [4.05g-12h]).
O5 R8 a-SNG von Aulock, no. 2 (4.07g) = Leu, 28, 5-6 May 1981, no. 126 (4.08g-12h).



Figs. 24-30. Drachms of Pharnakes I.

(MI) and Z (in outer r. field)

O5 R1 a-IGCH 1372 (Amasya Hoard 1860) Paris, 8 – Waddington, no. 111 (4.33g-17mm-12h – see Waddington 1863, pl. 9, no. 3 [4.29g – drawing]; RGAM, pl. I, no. 10 (Fig. 30) and Alram 1986, no. 28).

Mithridates IV (c. 169-150 BC)

Staters (1 coin)

Obv.: Diademed head of the king to r.

Rev.: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ (outer r. field) – ΜΙΘΡΑΔΑΤΟΥ (outer l. field). Hera standing facing; she wears a long dress and holds a sceptre in her r.; crescent and eight-rayed star in the outer l. field.

? (in outer r. field)

O1 R1 a-SNG von Aulock, no. 4 (8.53g – see Kleiner 1955, pl. 2, no. 12; Alram 1986, no. 23; Callataÿ 1997, pl. 50, no. R and Mattingly 1998, pl. 56, no. 3) = Vinchon, 24-25 Nov. 1994 (Velkov Coll.), no. 52 (8.49g-19.07mm (Fig. 31)).



Fig. 31. Stater of Mithridates IV.

Tetradrachms (14 coins, 6 obverses and 14 reverses)

Obv.: Diademed head of the king to r.

Rev.: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΜΙΘΡΑΔΑΤΟΥ (outer r. field) – ΦΙΛΟΠΑΤΡΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΦΙΛΑΔΕΛΦΟΥ (outer l. field). Perseus standing facing front, wearing helmet, chlamys and winged sandals; he holds in his r. hand the head of Medusa and, in his l. hand, a harpa. Eight-rayed star and crescent above his head.

Without monogram

- | | | |
|----|----|--|
| O1 | R1 | a-Berlin, 1876/617, acquired in Athens to Lambros (16.80g-35mm-12h – see Sallet 1877, 232 [16.85g]; Reinach 1888, pl. 16, no. 5 (Fig. 32) and <i>RGAM</i> , pl. I, no. 12). |
| O1 | R2 | a-Paris, 10 = Waddington, no. 112 (11.91g [broken]-12h). |
| O2 | R3 | a-Leu and M&M, 28 May 1974 (Gillet Coll.), no. 244 (16.83g-12h [enlarged ill.] – see Richter 1965, fig. 1927) = M&M, 61, 7-8 Oct. 1982, no. 132 (16.83g) = Leu, 72, 12 May 1998, no. 226 (16.84g-12h (Fig. 33)). |

(BAII) (in inner l. field)

- | | | |
|----|----|---|
| O3 | R1 | a-New York, D. Kellad VII/40 (16.31g-35mm-12h). |
| O4 | R2 | a-SNG von Aulock, no. 6674 (16.87g – see Kraay & Hirmer 1966, pl. 210, no. 771; Alram 1986, no. 29 and Green 1993, 351, fig. 123) = Leu, 48, 10 May 1989, no. 209 (16.83g-12h (Fig. 34)). |

(IIAIZ) (in inner l. field)

- | | | |
|----|----|--|
| O2 | R1 | a-M&M, 85, 11 Apr. 1997, no. 104 (16.94g) = Triton, 3, 30 Nov.-1 Dec. 1999, no. 468 (16.93g). |
| O2 | R2 | a-Paris, 9 – L173 (16.12g-34mm-12h – see Reinach 1887, pl. IV, no. 4; 1902: pl. 3, no. 1 and <i>RGAM</i> , pl. I, no. 11). |
| O2 | R3 | a-Hess, 208, 14 Dec. 1931, no. 519 (15.52g-33mm). |
| O2 | R4 | a-Lisbon, Gulbenkian Coll., no. 934 (16.98g-11h) = <i>Ars Classica</i> , 1, 4 Apr. 1921 (Pozzi Coll.), no. 2091 (16.98g – “le plus bel exemplaire connu”). |
| O2 | R5 | a-Lisbon, Gulbenkian Coll., no. 933 (17.08g-11h) = Jameson Coll., no. 2153 (17.09g – see <i>RGAM</i> , pl. Suppl. A, no. 7 (Fig. 35); Seltman 1933, pl. 56, no. 10). |



Figs. 32-38. Tetradrachms of Mithridates IV.

- | | | |
|----|----|---|
| O4 | R6 | a-M&M, 47, 30 Nov.-1 Dec. 1972, no. 476 (16.32g) = NFA, 4, 24-25 March 1977, no. 232 (16.29g (Fig. 36)) = Sotheby's (New York), 4 Dec. 1990 (Hunt Coll.), no. 54 (16.32g-32mm-12h [enlarged ill.]). |
| O4 | R7 | a-Copenhagen, acquired in 1980 (16.97g – see Mørholm 1980, 71, no. 3 and Mattingly 1998, pl. 56, no. 11). |
| O5 | R8 | a-Boston, MFA, no. 1354 – 35.187 (16.89g-32mm – see Brett 1955, pl. 69 (Fig. 37)) = Ars Classica, 4, End 1922 (Grand Duke Michailovitch Coll.), no. 666 (16.90g-32mm). |



Figs. 39-41. Tetradrachms of Mithridates IV and Laodike.

- O6 R9 a-Berlin, Imhoof-Blumer 1900 – acquired in 1895 (14.77g [broken]-32mm-12h – see Imhoof-Blumer 1897, pl. 9, no. 14 [14.85g] (Fig. 38)).

Mithridates IV and Laodike (c. 162-150 BC)

Tetradrachms (5 coins, 2 obverses and 4 reverses)

Obv.: Draped busts of the diademed heads of the king and the queen to r.

Rev.: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΜΙΘΡΑΔΑΤΟΥ ΚΑΙ (outer r. field) – ΒΑΣΙΛΙΣΣΗΣ ΛΑΟΔΙΚΗΣ ΦΙΛΑΔΕΛΦΩΝ (outer l. field). Hera (l.) and Zeus (r.), standing facing front; Hera holds a sceptre in her r. hand.; Zeus, laureate, holds a sceptre in his r. hand and a thunderbolt in his l. hand.

() (inner l. field)

- O1 R1 a-IGCH 1374 (Samsun Hoard 1900) Egger, 28 Nov. 1904 (Prowe Coll.), no. 957 (16g-34mm) = Jameson Coll., no. 1365 = SNG von Aulock, no. 6675 (16.02g) = NAC, 2, 21-2 Feb. 1990, no. 173 (15.99g – see RGAM, pl. Suppl. A, no. 8 (Fig. 39) and Mørkholm 1991, pl. 42, no. 624).
- O2 R1 a-IGCH 1374 (Samsun Hoard 1900) Paris, 11 – M4624 (17.05g-33mm-12h – see Reinach 1902, pl. 3, no. 3; RGAM, pl. I, no. 13 (Fig. 40); Regling 1924, pl. 42, no. 854; Seltman 1933, pl. 57, no. 1; Davis & Kraay 1973, no. 204-6; Kraay & Hirmer 1966, pl. 210, no. 772; Alram 1986, no. 30; Oikonomides 1996, no. 179; Callataÿ 1997, pl. 50, no. S and Mattingly 1998, pl. 56, no. 8).

- O2 R2 a-Leu and M&M, 28 May 1974 (Gillet Coll.), no. 245 (17.00g-12h).
 O2 R3 a-Münzhandlung, 10, 15 March 1938, no. 287 (16.81g) = *Crédit de la Bourse*, 21-22 Apr. 1994, no. 46 (16.70g (Fig. 41)) = *Parsy*, 7 June 2000, no. 30 (16.70g).
 O2 R4 a-IGCH 1374 (Samsun Hoard 1900) Lisbon, Gulbenkian Coll. 935 (16.95g-12h) = *Ars Classica*, 1, 4 Apr. 1921 (Pozzi Coll.), no. 2092 (16.95g).

Laodike alone

Staters (1 coin)

Obv.: Veiled bust of the queen to l.

Rev.: ΒΑΣΙΛΙΣΣΗΣ ΛΑΟΔΙΚΗΣ (outer r. field) – ΕΠΙΦΑΝΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΦΙΛΑΔΕΛΦΟΥ (outer l. field). Double cornucopiae; six-rayed star above.

? (inner r. field)

- O1 R1 a-Tkalec & Rauch, 19 Feb. 2001, no. 97 (8.49g (Fig. 42)).

Tetradrachms (1 coin)²⁰

Obv.: Veiled head of the queen to r.

Rev.: ΒΑΣΙΛΙΣΣΗΣ (outer r. field) – ΛΑΟΔΙΚΗΣ (outer l. field). Hera standing facing front; she wears a long dress and holds a sceptre in her r. hand.

- O1 R1 a-Paris, 12 = Waddington, no. 113 (14.63g [broken in 3 parts]-33mm-12h – see Reinach 1888, pl. 16, no. 6; Reinach 1902, pl. 3, no. 5; *RGAM*, pl. I, no. 14 (Fig. 43) and Callatay 1997, pl. 50, no. Q).

Mithridates V (c. 150-119 BC)

Tetradrachms (1 coin)

Obv.: Diademed head of the king to r.

Rev.: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΜΙΘΡΑΔΑΤΟΥ (outer r. field) – ΕΥΕΡΓΕΤΟΥ (outer l. field). Apollo standing l., his r. leg ahead; he holds a bow in his l. hand and a little figurine in his r. hand.

- O1 R1 a-Athens, given in 1976 by Euripides Seferiadis (15.92g-29mm-12h – see Oikonomides 1976, pl. 3, no. 29; Alram 1986, no. 30A; Callatay 1991, 34, no. 1; Callatay 1997, pl. 50, no. P (Fig. 44) and Oikonomides 1996, no. 180).

Forgeries

A fantasy described by Vaillant (1725, 187) “*ex cimelio cardinalis Maximi*” = “from the collection of Cardinal Massimo” and never seen again since. Monogram and ΓΟΡ



Fig. 42. Stater of Laodike (not to scale).



Fig. 43. Tetradrachm of Laodike.



Fig. 44. Tetradrachm of Mithridates V.

(= year 173 = 124 BC). See Eckhel 1794, 364; Mionnet 1807, 359-360, no. 5 and Suppl. 4, 1829, 465 ("Ce médaillon, publié par Vaillant dans son ouvrage posthume sur les rois du Pont, à en juger sur la gravure, paroît être de coin moderne"); Sallet 1877, 234; Waddington 1863, 221; Reinach 1888, 250 (n. 1: "On serait tenté de croire que notre pièce est un tétradrachme bithynien ou arsacide démarqué"); 1902, 59 and 1905, 117. But the legend is still problematic.

General comments about the catalogue

1) The first Pontic staters struck by Mithridates III (rather than I or II)

The sequence of reigns presented here is the same as the one established by Reinach with one noticeable exception: I prefer to attribute to the same

king, *i.e.* Mithridates III, the silver and the gold issues with Alexander types, dismissing thus any strike to Mithridates I. Reinach argued that 1) staters with the types of Alexander the Great were no longer struck long after the death of Alexander the Great and 2) the placement of the legend with ΜΙΘΡΑΔΑΤΟΥ in the right field and ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ in the left field is typical of the fourth century, to be replaced later by the reverse order.²¹ These two statements are broadly correct but with exceptions.²² Particularly interesting is no. 1014 (= Newell 1941, 1689) of the comprehensive catalogue of the Seleukid coins published by Houghton and Lorber (2002, 386 and pl. 51). This issue of staters, with the legend ANTIOXΟΥ (r. field) – ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ (l. field), has been attributed by Newell to Aspendos, a Pamphylian mint, either under Antiochos Hierax (c. 228 BC) or Antiochos III (in c. 203 or 197 BC). It is fair to recognize that, even if this attribution has been supported by Seyrig (1963, 52-56), it cannot be taken for granted. The Pontic staters look similar to this issue (including – but this must be coincidental – the two monograms in the lower fields).

Another remarkable feature of these first royal Pontic gold staters are precisely the control-marks. No less than 4 sets of control marks may be found on the Paris specimen (3 for the von Aulock specimen). This high number too looks to me a bit problematic with a date about 300 BC. Yet the more convincing argument for a later dating of these staters comes from Amisos. Indeed, the same four control marks of the Paris specimen may be found in the same places on a civic issue of *sigloi* of reduced (or “Rhodian”) weight in the name of Amisos.²³ In both cases, we find, on two lines, the letters Σ-KO and ME-ΓA. Since any coincidence may be discarded, we are forced to consider two consequences: first, the royal strike was performed in Amisos, not in Amaseia, then the capital of the Pontic kingdom, or Gazioura as proposed without conviction by Reinach (1888, 242). Second, this introduces some new evidence concerning the autonomy of the mint of Amisos. It may be that the Pontic kings did not entirely control the monetary strikes in the name of Amisos but they were at least able to requisition the mint for their personal needs.

The historical circumstances for this strike may have involved the events c. 220 BC, when Mithridates III tried unsuccessfully to seize Sinope. It may be tempting to connect, as Martin Price did (1991, 198-199), to the same event the Sinopean issue of Alexander staters. The two strikes would have had the same purpose: to pay the mercenary troops hired by both sides.

2) *The hypothesis of Harold Mattingly (Mithridates III, Pharnakes and Mithridates IV)*

In a short and highly provocative article, dedicated to the memory of Martin Price “who was never afraid of proposing an exciting new answer to an old problem”,²⁴ Harold Mattingly challenged the classical sequence of the Pontic

kings with his favorite tools: that is he introduced into the numismatic debate some epigraphic novelties and, at the same time, focused on the question of hoards either to dismiss or to make use of them. In this case, he noticed that “three of the very rare first tetradrachms attributed to Mithridates III were found in splendid condition in two Seleukid hoards from the period c. 160-156 BC” and that “now that we know that this king was dead by 196/195 BC”.²⁵ The hoards mention here are the Latakia hoard (*IGCH* 1544 – found in 1759 and the first hoard of Greek coins ever published!) and the Babylon hoard (*IGCH* 1774 – found in 1900). For Mattingly, the coins of Mithridates would not have been so fresh in c. 150 BC if struck in 200 BC or even before. Instead, he thinks that Mithridates III never struck any coinage and that coins attributed to him so far may be assigned as the first phase of the coinage of Mithridates IV. Then comes the joint coinage of Mithridates IV and his sister Laodike and finally the coinage of Mithridates IV alone.

This construction cannot be accepted for several reasons. The starting point is simply not true: the three tetradrachms coming from “Seleukid hoards” are *not* “in splendid condition”. Not only are they in a poor state of preservation (corroded [Latakia] or broken into 6 pieces [Babylon]) but they are also worn. I would add that, although the Babylon hoard (*IGCH* 1774) is supposed to come from official excavations, I have my doubts about it, at least concerning a possible burial date of c. 150 BC.²⁶ A misleading guide, it is by any standard a most atypical hoard, with several rare coinages and others which would be otherwise unattested so far east.

A second reason is that the portraits depicted on the tetradrachms of Mithridates III (Reinach’s classification) can hardly be compared with those on the coins of Mithridates IV. Conversely, the portraits for Mithridates IV alone are quasi-identical with those where he is flanked by his sister Laodike. As far as physiognomy is concerned, the sequence of issues advocated by Mattingly for the same king looks untenable (1-Mithridates III, 2-Mithridates IV and Laodike and 3-Mithridates IV alone). Not only are the portraits of Mithridates III and IV incompatible but, on his coins, Mithridates III looks appreciably older. From an iconographic point of view too, the Mattingly sequence goes against probabilities. More than an “interesting development”,²⁷ it is a most unlikely sequence which puts the most innovative type first (the pantheistic Asiatic divinity of Pharnakes), followed by the most conventional one (the Zeus Aitophoros of Alexander the Great).

As shown in Table 3, weights also favor the Reinach sequence since tetradrachms of Mithridates III are slightly heavier (median at 16.97g) than those of Pharnakes (median at 16.85g) or Mithridates IV, with or without Laodike (median at 16.83g). That makes perfect sense and follows the general tendency of a slow decrease in tetradrachm’s weights during the third and second centuries BC.

Table 3: Weights of the royal Pontic tetradrachms

Weight-classes	Mithridates III	Pharnakes	Mithridates IV	Mith. IV & Laodike	Total
[17.20-17.29g]	-	-	-	-	-
[17.10-17.19g]	113669	-	-	-	6
[17.00-17.09g]	39	0001	8	05	9
[16.90-16.99g]	0568	05679	478	5	13
[16.80-16.89g]	7	001378	0379	-	11
[16.70-16.79g]	-	49	-	1	3
[16.60-16.69g]	-	-	-	-	-
[16.50-16.59g]	-	5	-	-	1
[16.40-16.49g]	-	-	-	-	-
[16.30-16.39g]	7	5	12	-	4
[16.20-16.29g]	9	-	-	-	1
[16.10-16.19g]	-	-	2	-	1
[16.00-16.09g]	7	-	-	2	2
< 16.10g	14.93g	15.27g	15.52g		7
	13.31g	10.83g	14.77g		
			11.91g		
n	18	21	14	5	58
Mode	[17.10-17.19g]	[16.80-16.89g]	[16.80-16.89g]	-	[16.90-16.99g]
Median	16.97g	16.85g	(16.57g)	-	16.80g
Interquartile sp.	[16.33-17.12g]	[16.76-16.98g]	-	-	[16.36g-17.08g]

Finally, control-marks too militate against the Mattingly sequence, since, as noticed by Reinach, we may observe some identities between civic issues of Amisos and some royal Pontic issues of Mithridates III and Pharnakes.²⁸ The two monograms RA and EM may be seen on coins belonging to Amisos and Mithridates III. For the Amisos variety, Reinach made the adventurous hypothesis that the letters BA-ΛΛ above the two monograms may point to BA(ΣΙΑΙΣΣΗΣ) ΛΑ(ΟΔΙΚΗΣ).²⁹ This has to be firmly rejected. Unlike what



Fig. 45. Drachm of Amisos with the legend BA-ΛΛ.

was still supposed a century ago, these control-marks, as a rule, never refer to kings or queens.³⁰ In this particular case, the letters must be read BA-ΛΛ (and not BA-ΛA) (Fig. 45). On other varieties, we read BAΛ-ΛI³¹ or BA-ΛΛI³², a reference to a personal name.³³ Whatever the real date of these silver coins of Amisos (struck on a reduced “Rhodian” standard), it seems unlikely that they were as late as c. 170 BC (as required by the Mattingly sequence).

The conclusion is firm: the daring hypothesis of H. Mattingly is better to be forgotten.³⁴

3) A unique and problematic stater of Laodike

A unique and previously unknown stater of the queen Laodike (ΒΑΣΙΛΙΣΣΗΣ ΛΑΟΔΙΚΗΣ – ΕΠΙΦΑΝΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΦΙΛΑΔΕΛΦΟΥ) appeared in a recent auction sale catalogue (Tkalec & Rauch, 19 Feb. 2001, no. 97) (Fig. 42). This spectacular coin (which was bought for 220,000 Swiss Francs) has failed to receive any scientific comment so far. According to the cataloguer, it depicts the sister and wife of Mithridates IV, the daughter of Mithridates III, “als junge Frau”.

A question that always arises with such unexpected *unica* is that of their authenticity. In this particular case, the weight is perfect (8.49g) and the style of the engraving is plausible. We do not know about the die-axis (which must be at or near 12 o'clock) and we have no idea of the metal composition. But, for those who dare (or like) to doubt, there are reasons to be sceptical. The iconography of the reverse is problematic: a six-rayed star on top of double cornucopiae. The “dynastic badge” of the Mithridatids was, without exception, an eight-rayed star and a crescent.³⁵ To figure a six-rayed star would have had no meaning in this context. The double cornucopiae itself looks strange with only one bunch of grapes (instead of two) to the right and one fillet of the royal diadem (instead of two) to the left, just as if the engraver choose to adapt a Ptolemaic model without a true understanding of both contexts. The queen Laodike is said to be “epifanous”. It is worth noticing that this would be the only appearance of this epithet on a Greek coin for a queen.

The portrait of Laodike differs from the one found on the tetradrachms, even if we accept that she is pictured at a younger age here, while the style of this portrait with its large eyes looks more Ptolemaic than Pontic. Turning to the fabric, the surface of the reverse is extremely, astonishingly flat (as modern forgeries tend to be). Moreover, the coin is in nearly mint condition and well centred (a common placement on modern forgeries).

All in all, I would say that, if there is no definitive proof to condemn this unique stater of Laodike as a modern forgery, there is ample reason however to be very suspicious.

4) *The volume and diffusion of these royal Pontic coinages*

The die-study presented here does not lead us to suppose an abundant coinage for the first Pontic kings. Table 4 presents for each major issue of tetradrachms the frequency with which each obverse die is represented in the catalogue and an estimate (method of G.F. Carter 1983) of the original number of obverse dies (O), where 'o' is the number of attested obverse dies and 'n' is the size of the sample.

Table 4: Summary of the die-studies of the royal Pontic tetradrachms

	Mithri- dates III	Pharnakes	Mithri- dates IV	Mith. IV & Laodike	Total
Frequency	Obverses (no.)	Obverses (no.)	Obverses (no.)	Obverses (no.)	Obverses (no.)
1	2,5	2,4,8,9	3,5,6	1	10
2	-	1,3	1	-	3
3	-	-	4	-	1
4	1,4,6	5,6	-	2	6
5	-	-	-	-	-
6	-	-	2	-	1
7	-	-	-	-	-
8	3	7	-	-	2
n	22	24	14	5	65
o	6	9	6	2	23
n/o	3.67	2.67	2.33	2.50	2.83
O (Carter 1983)	7.2 (± 0.9)	12.1 (± 1.8)	8.7 (± 2.0)	2.8 (± 1.2)	30.1 (± 2.6)

The general ratio between the number of specimens and the number of obverse dies is not very high but never less than 2.33, a value high enough to give an idea of the original number of obverses.

No Pontic king seems to have put into circulation an abundant number of tetradrachms. With c. 12 obverse dies, Pharnakes comes first. All together, Pontic kings did not strike more than the equivalent of 30 obverses. That is,

in about 70 years (c. 220-150 BC), six times less than Mithridates VI Eupator in 30 years.³⁶ From Mithridates III to Mithridates IV, the average production of royal tetradrachms was thus only one fourteenth of that of Mithridates VI Eupator. A comparison with the Bithynian Kingdom is also impressive: there we know that no less than 450 different obverse dies may have been engraved for royal tetradrachms for the period 128/127-74/73 BC.

To put these numbers differently, the yearly production of the Pontic kings (between c. 220 and 150 BC), calculated in number of obverse dies for Attic drachms, was c. 1.7. For a postulated production of 20,000 coins per obverse-die, that makes c. 34,000 drachms a year (or 5 2/3 talents or the possibility of paying in new coins c. 113 qualified employees, as mercenaries at c. 300 drachms a year). Table 5 gives some yearly estimates calculated in number of obverse dies for Attic drachms.³⁷

Table 5: Yearly estimates for issues of Hellenistic royal tetradrachms (calculated in number of obverse dies for Attic drachms)

Kings or dynasties	Calculations (O x 4 / years)	Average
Tetradrachms of Alexander the Great (c. 332-290 BC)	c. 3,000 x 4 / 42	285.7
Demetrios Poliorketes (c. 306-287 BC)	229 x 4 / 19	48.2
Antiochos III (c. 223-187 BC)	c. 400 x 4 / 36	44.4
Kings of Bithynia (128/127-74/73 BC)	445 x 4 / 52	34.2
Mithridates Eupator (c. 97-67/66 BC)	190 x 4 / 31	24.5
Attalids (c. 263-190 BC)	206 x 4 / 73	11.3
Kings of Pontos (c. 220-c. 150 BC)	30 x 4 / 70	1.7

Admittedly, the sample gathered for the coins of the predecessors of Mithridates VI Eupator does not protect us against some biased information. What is to be done with issues attested to by only one specimen? Statistical methods are unable to give any estimate and, theoretically, one could postulate a huge but lost production for them. All the more so, since we have to deal with gold stater issues whose potential production may seriously affect this frame (for a similar productivity, which is not the best guess we can make, each obverse die engraved to strike staters has 5 times the value of an obverse die for tetradrachms).

Coin hoards are our best friends in safeguarding us against lost information. The list of hoards with royal Pontic coins before Mithridates Eupator is short (Table 6).

Table 6: Hoards with royal Pontic coins before Mithridates Eupator

IGCH 237 = CH IX 247 (Sitichoro or Larissa [Thessaly], 1968)	Burial date: c. 165 BC
1 tetradrachm of Pharnakes out of 2500-3000 silver coins (c. 1500-2000 Rhodian drachms)	
IGCH 1372 (Amasya [Pontos], 1860)	Burial date: c. 185-170 BC
4-5 tetradrachms and 1 drachm of Pharnakes out of 300+ silver coins (c. 200-300 Alexanders)	
IGCH 1374 (Samsun [Pontos], 1900)	Burial date: c. 150 BC
3 tetradrachms of Mithridates IV and Laodike (may be part of a larger hoard – Regling)	
IGCH 1544 (Latakia [Syria], 1759)	Burial date: c. 169 BC
2 tetradrachms of Mithridates III out of 92 silver coins (48 Alexanders)	
IGCH 1774 (Babylon [Babylonia], 1900)	Burial date: c. 155-150 BC (?)
1 tetradrachm for Mithridates III out of 100 silver coins (43 Alexanders)	

Except the Larissa hoard (Thessaly) found in 1968 with just one tetradrachm of Pharnakes, no reported hoard in this list was found later than 1900. The Babylon hoard, as already mentioned, is of no use – I think – with such an extraordinary content. This scarcity of results, in comparison with the hundreds of Hellenistic hoards found in modern Turkey (including many with silver royal issues for the third and the second century BC),³⁸ offers to a certain extent the proof that royal Pontic coins were never abundant.

A better proof is provided by large silver hoards found in Pontos without any royal Pontic coinage (Table 7).

Table 7: Hoards found in Pontos with no royal Pontic coins (before Mithridates Eupator)

IGCH 1369 = CH VIII 324 (Kirazlı [Pontos], 1939)	Burial date: c. 230-220 BC
13 staters (6 Alexander, 5 Lysimachos and 2 Seleukos II) and 822 silver: 740 Alexanders, 44 Seleukids, 31 Lysimachos, 2 Sinope, etc.	
IGCH 1373 = CH VIII 442 = CH IX 530 (Ordu [Pontos], 1970)	Burial date: c. 140-120 BC
207+ tetradrachms: 97 Lysimachos from Byzantion, 23 Seleukids (from Antiochos IV to Demetrios I), 20 Prusias II, 20 stephanephoroi of Athens, 15 Macedonian first Meris, etc.	

The Kirazlı hoard (IGCH 1369), found near Amasya in the territory of the village of Kürtler, already argued for this conclusion.³⁹ Buried in c. 230-220 BC, this deposit does not contain any Pontic coins. It is certainly worthwhile to add that, out of the 822 silver coins of the hoard, 636 (77.5%) received a chisel-cut. This phenomenon affects every kind of coinage, forcing G. le Rider to conclude: “Si nous admettons que les exemplaires de notre trésor étaient entaillés près de l’endroit où ils ont été enfouis, nous en déduirons que l’usage de la monnaie n’était pas encore très répandu au II^e siècle (*sic!*) dans certains cantons du territoire pontique”.⁴⁰ But the perfect documentation is to be found now in the Ordu hoard (the ancient Kotyora), found in 1970.⁴¹ Out of the 207 tetradrachms buried after 150 BC (140-120 BC?), there is still not a single piece struck by a Pontic king.

To strengthen the idea that royal Pontic coins were never struck on a large scale, we may also turn to the provenances of these hoards. Three out of the five recorded hoards (Table 5) have very distant provenances: Thessaly, Syria and Babylon. Moreover, Delian inventories mention twice a tetradrachm of Pharnakes: in the inventory of the temple of Apollo in c. 162 BC,⁴² and in the inventory of the temple of Artemis in c. 141 BC.⁴³ In other words, there is no reason to suppose that royal Pontic coins were kept for internal uses (and disappeared there, being massively melted down at the time of Eupator for example).

Finally, the absence of bronzes is another distinctive characteristic of the royal Pontic coinage.⁴⁴ Hellenistic monarchies were behaving differently, starting with the Seleukids and the Ptolemies and the huge amount of bronzes they put into circulation. Especially noticeable in this respect are bronzes of several denominations, including large ones, struck by the neighbouring kingdom of Bithynia during the second century BC.

A similar phenomenon may be observed for the cities of Pontos: with unimportant exceptions, Amisos or Sinope failed to strike bronzes before Mithridates Eupator. I have shown elsewhere how their silver issues, despite their civic appearance, were never put into circulation for trade activities or to facilitate the daily transactions of the city.⁴⁵ Under Persian rule, these civic silver issues were controlled totally or partially by a higher level of power than the cities (*i.e.* the satraps). With no bronzes and only large silver coins, Pontos remained from the fifth to the second century BC a poorly monetized area, where coins were not integrated into the domestic economy.

Conclusion

We may be confident, I think, that the predecessors of Mithridates Eupator never struck vast amounts of coins.⁴⁶ They did nothing in this respect to encourage trade or facilitate the small transactions of their citizens. They cannot be suspected to have ever had any policy of this kind.

The coinages they issued were intended for specific and limited purposes, most probably military ones. And, as is usual with royal Hellenistic issues, it is tempting to connect them with hired mercenaries who asked to be paid with coins. It is also likely that Pontos, as a country, was not a monetized area until the end of the third century BC. By monetized area, one understands an area for which a political entity is able to give legal tender (which means over-evaluated value) to a form of payment. Chances are few that this was the case in Pontos. As a consequence, this highly restricted use of royal coins requires us not to emphasize too much the propagandistic value of their iconography.

The final word will be on Mithridates Eupator. Considering the state of art of monetary matters he found in his kingdom when he became king, his achievements look even more impressive. He multiplied by ten or twenty the rate of strikes. His coins were the most precisely dated (by year and month) of the known world. From a numismatic point of view, his greatest achievement is elsewhere: there is no doubt indeed that Mithridates Eupator was behind the pattern of bronze civic issues sharing the same iconography. We ignore the question of what kind of agreement caused these pseudo-civic bronzes to be produced. Was it entirely favourable to the king or was it a matter of a subtle balance of power?⁴⁷ Considering that some places like Pimolisa or Talaura were fortresses and not cities or even villages, I am inclined to think that these strikes too had nothing to do with municipal autonomy but were intended primarily to pay soldiers in garrisons (and that is why these Mithridatic bronzes are so frequently found in the Bosporos).

*Appendix 1: Bronzes of Mithridates II of Kommagene
(c. 34-20 BC) sometimes attributed to Pontic kings.*

Obv.: Head with bashlyk to the l.

Rev.: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ (above?) – ΜΙΘΡΙΔΑ ΦΙΛΟ (beneath). Club in a crown.

- O1 R1 a-Peus, 340, 2, Nov. 1994 (Jamgochian Coll.), no. 447 (3.72g).
See Beger 1696, III, 8 (with an attribution to Mithridates of Pontos) and
Aram 1986, no. 248.

Obv.: Head with bashlyk to the l.

Rev.: Bee surrounded by a border of dots in an incuse circle.

- O1 R1 a-Peus, 340, 2, Nov. 1994 (Jamgochian Coll.), no. 334 (6,36g – attributed
to Mithridates Ktistes of Pontos).

Obv.: Head with bashlyk to the l.

Rev.: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ (in outer r. field) – ΜΙΘΡΑΔΑΤΟΥ (in l. field). Standing Zeus to l.; he holds an eagle on his extended r. hand and a sceptre in his l. hand.

- O1 R1 a-Private Coll. (8.69g-20mm-12h).

Notes

- 1 For the sake of clarity, this article adopts the traditional numbering of the Pontic kings.
- 2 A tetradrachm of Mithridates III, a drachm of Pharnakes and a tetradrachm of Mithridates IV. He could also have added a tetradrachm of Pharnakes.
- 3 Mørkholm 1991, 131.
- 4 Joseph Arthur de Gobineau (1816-1882) is the author of *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* (1853-1855) as well as the wonderful *Nouvelles asiatiques* (1877). On these judgments by modern scholars, see Callataÿ 2003, 218-219 (with references to Reinach 1888, 248, Babelon 1950, 72-73 and others). We may add Reinach 1902, 53: "Mais aussi quelle différence entre les profils sans beauté, mais vivants, énergiques, presque brutaux, de ces Perses mal frottés d'un vernis hellénique, et les silhouettes affadies, déjà alourdies de graisse, d'un Ptolémée Philadelphie et d'une Arsinoé! C'est toute la distance entre une médaille de Pisano et un élégant chef-d'œuvre de Roettiers ou de Duvivier", and Davis & Kraay 1973, 266: "his portrait shows an ungracious and impatient face".
- 5 Green 1993, 350.
- 6 For the iconography of the Pontic coins, see recently Callataÿ 1991 (Mithridates V), McGing 1996, 24, 32-33, 35-36 and 40, and Erciyas 2006 (with caution), 15-17 and 125-129.
- 7 Reinach 1888, 233-234.
- 8 Eckhel 1794, 362-364; Mionnet 1808, 358-360; 1829, 464-465.
- 9 Depending on whether we accept the authenticity of the unique stater of Laodike, which appeared on the market a couple of years ago.
- 10 Tetradrachm of Pharnakes without monogram illustrated in Spanheim 1706, 481. This coin was seen "olim" by Spanheim at Cimmeliarcho Maecenatis Hetrusci, Leopoldi Cardinalis. Another coin very similar is in the Pembroke Coll. (see Mionnet 1807, 359, no. 4).
- 11 See *infra* for a comment on this unique stater.
- 12 Sestini 1794, 36-38.
- 13 Eckhel 1811, 125.
- 14 In 1898, describing the Waddington collection, Ernest Babelon placed the coins of Eupator under the title: "Mithridate V Eupator (121-62)" (Babelon 1898, 8).
- 15 Mattingly 1998.
- 16 It is best to forget the suggestion made, tentatively, by Köhne (1865, 263) and Reinach (1888, 242) that the letters ΓΑ may refer to the mint of Gazioura.
- 17 To most of us, consciously or unconsciously, the natural order is the one which begins with the simplest and goes to the most elaborate. Monetary types fall under the same assumption. It seems to us normal to place the coins with a head of Mithridates III first, and second the coins with his draped bust. For the same reason, Reinach placed first the Pharnakes tetradrachms without a thunderbolt upon the head of the pantheistic divinity and then the few specimens with the thunderbolt (Reinach 1888, 247). Notice that all the Pharnakes tetradrachms depict the head and not the bust of the king, which – according to the general principle described here – would mean a step backwards. Now, some reverses without a thunderbolt do not have any control-mark, which is never the case of the reverses with a thunderbolt and this encourages us to place first the coins with a thunderbolt. On the other hand, one could argue – although this kind of argument seems rather weak – that the king looks younger on a specific obverse-

- die without a thunderbolt. In the absence of a conclusive die-link, we do not know what the exact order was. The two may have been contemporaneous as well. This is possibly a bigger problem for our understanding of typology than it is for our historical understanding.
- 18 Waddington (1863, 220) wrote that the Hunterian tetradrachm served as prototype for moulded silver or gold specimens of Pharnakes such as those in the Pembroke coll. or that of the Grand-Dukes of Tuscany.
 - 19 For Reinach, the issue without thunderbolt comes first (Reinach 1902, 56, no. 2). I prefer the other sequence since 1) some coins with thunderbolt appear without monogram and 2) some monograms of the coins without thunderbolt were also used on coins of Mithridates IV.
 - 20 For Reinach, this Laodike was the wife of Mithridates V Euergetes and the mother of Eupator (Reinach 1888, 257-258; 1890, 50). The similarity of portraits with the Laodike associated with Mithridates IV speaks for a different attribution (McGing 1996, 35-36 and Callataÿ 1997, 240).
 - 21 Reinach 1888, 241 ("Plus tard, l'ordre inverse (ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ Ε...) prévalut universellement et, au moins sur les statères d'or, l'autre ne reparut plus jamais").
 - 22 For late Seleukid staters of these types, see Houghton & Lorber 2002, pl. 34, no. 726 (Seleukos II), pl. 39, no. 847 (Antiochos Hierax), pl. 41, no. 873 (Antiochos Hierax) and pl. 51, no. 1014-1015 (Antiochos Hierax or Antiochos III?).
 - 23 Reinach 1900, 228-289; *RGAM*, 10, no. 53 and 60, pl. I, no. 1, and VI, no. 31; Malloy 1970, 3 and 7, varieties 7q and 7r.
 - 24 Mattingly 1998, 255.
 - 25 Mattingly 1998, 255 – with a reference to Tracy 1992, 307-313.
 - 26 Among the content of the Babylon hoard supposed to have been buried c. 155-150 BC, we find a late posthumous Alexander of Mesembria of Group 2 (Callataÿ 1997, 115), a late posthumous Lysimachos of Byzantion of Style 1 (Callataÿ 1997, 136), 2 tetradrachms of Kos, which are all better dated to a little after 150 BC.
 - 27 Mattingly 1998, 256.
 - 28 Reinach 1900, 226; 1902, 56-57; Malloy 1970, 7, no. 7g.
 - 29 Reinach 1900, 226-227 ("Je ne vois qu'une seule manière plausible de les compléter"); 1902, 56-57 – see also Erciyas 2006, 128.
 - 30 Reinach 1900, 227: "Ainsi les Amisériens, par une flatterie politique, avaient décerné à la reine de Pont la principale magistrature annuelle de la cité".
 - 31 Malloy 1970, 7, no. 7c.
 - 32 Malloy 1970, 7, no. 7f.
 - 33 Malloy 1970, 7, no. 7c-7h.
 - 34 The Mattingly order was rejected by Alan Walker (Bank Leu catalogues) but accepted by Erciyas 2006, 128.
 - 35 Concerning the many hypotheses for these symbols, see McGing 1996, 97, n. 51.
 - 36 Callataÿ 1997, 27 (c. 190 obverses dies for the years c. 97-67).
 - 37 See Callataÿ 2005, 84-87.
 - 38 Davesne 1990, 507-512 gives an overview (given before by Le Rider) of the most important published hoards buried in between 275 and 190 BC. Except for the hoard of Kirazlı, all these hoards were found far from Pontos.
 - 39 Le Rider & Olçay 1987; Davesne 1990, 507.
 - 40 Le Rider & Olçay 1987, 30.
 - 41 *CH* IX 530, see Boehringer 1975 and Arslan 1997, 1999 and 2000.

- 42 *IDelos*, no. 1408, face A, column II, line 4-5: τέτραχμον Φαρνάκειον, see Melville Jones 1993, 196-197, no. 265.
- 43 *IDelos*, no. 1444, face A, fragment a, line 17: Φαρνάκειον τέτρανομον, see Melville Jones 1993, 216-217, no. 280.
- 44 Lorenz Beger wrongly attributed a bronze struck at Pharnakeia under Mithridates Eupator to the king Pharnakes (1696, 271). For other bronzes wrongly attributed to Pontic kings, see Appendix 1: *Bronzes of Mithridates II of Kommagene (c. 34-20 BC) sometimes attributed to Pontic kings*.
- 45 Callataÿ 2002.
- 46 A similar conclusion already in Callataÿ 1997, 35, n. 44 and 238.
- 47 Concerning the identity of monograms between Amisos and some royal issues, Reinach wrote: "L'étendue des franchises accordées à ces communautés (like Amisos) explique leur attachement durable à la dynastie" (1900, 226). This is pure fiction.

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Abbreviations

- CH *Coin Hoards* 1-9 (1972-2002). London.
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- IGCH M. Thompson, O. Mørkholm & C.M. Kraay 1973. *An Inventory of Greek Coin Hoards*. New York.
- RGAM W.H. Waddington, E. Babelon, & Th. Reinach 1904-1912. *Recueil général des monnaies grecques d'Asie Mineure*. Paris.