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THE RETURN OF THE KING

Pharnakes II and the Persian Heritage

Luis Ballesteros Pastor

Abstract: Pharnakes II is mainly known for his war against Julius Caesar, but also for having been the instigator of the uprising which led his father Mithradates VI Eupator to suicide. Some sources even directly attribute the death of the great Pontic king to his son. As is well known, Pompey acknowledged Pharnakes as ruler of the Bosphorus after the Mithradatic Wars in 63 BC, and he would reign over Kolchis as well at some point. In 48 BC, he went back to Anatolia and seized the old domains of his father. This chapter analyses how Pharnakes tried to be seen as a great Achaemenid ruler, following the official genealogy established in the court of Pontos which traced back the lineage of the Mithradatids to Cyrus and Darius the Great. Pharnakes' return to the realm of his ancestors represented an exaltation of the Iranian roots of this king. One may gain the impression that this particular emphasis on his genealogical and ideological connections with the ancient Persian kings was also intended to set him apart from his (uneasy) father.

Абстракт: Возвращение царя: Фарнак II и Ахеменидская традиция: Фарнак II известен в основном своей войной против Юлия Цезаря, а также тем, что подстрекал к восстанию, которое довело его отца Митридата VI Евпатора до самоубийства. Существуют даже некоторые источники, которые напрямую приписывают смерть великого понтийского царя его сыну. Как хорошо известно, Помпей признал Фарнака правителем Боспора после Митридатовых войн в 63 г. до н.э., и чуть позже он также начал править Колхидой. В 48 г. до н.э. он вернулся в Анатолию и захватил старые владения своего отца. В этой главе автор анализирует, как Фарнак пытался сделать так, чтобы его считали великим Ахеменидским правителем, следуя за официальной генеалогией, установленной при понтийском дворе, которая прослеживает происхождение рода Митридата до Кира и Дария Великого. Возвращение Фарнака в царство его предков представляло собой возвышение иранских корней этого царя. Может сложиться впечатление, что этот особый акцент на его генеалогические и идеологические связи с древними персидскими царями был также положен, чтобы отделить Фарнака от его (проблематичного) отца.

I. INTRODUCTION

With the death of Mithradates Eupator in 63 BC,¹ the Persian world seemed to be definitely subjugated by the West. As in the case of Antiochus III, the Pontic king

¹ On Eupator's suicide, see App. *Mith.* 111.537–539; Plut. *Pomp.* 41.5; Cass. Dio 37.10.4; Flor. 1.40.26; Liv. *Per.* 102; Oros. 6.5.6f.; *Vir. Ill.* 76.8; Eutr. 6.12.3; Fest. *Brev.* 16.1; Just. 37.1.9; Gell. *NA* 17.16.5; Paus. 3.23.5; Val. Max. 9.2 ext. 3; Servilius Damocrates, *Theriaca* 101–106 (*Poetae Bucolici et Didactici* ed. Didot, vol. 3, p. 120); Galenos, *De Theriaca* ed. Kühn, vol.

had appeared before the eyes of the Romans as a reincarnation of the Achaimenids.² Pompey, as a new Alexander, emerged as the dominator of the hereditary enemies of western civilization. But immediately upon this success of the Republic, various Oriental monarchies were striving to extol their Persian heritage and, in certain cases, their Achaimenid descent. Paradoxically, the phenomenon of so-called ‘Persianism’ was reinvigorated around the same time: the rulers of Armenia, Kappadokia, Kommagene or Media Atropatene stressed their Iranian ancestry as a source of pride.³ They were aware that Rome exerted a decisive influence over their respective territories, although it should also be borne in mind that the Parthians defeated the Roman Republic in 53 BC, a remarkable event that may well have changed some points of view.⁴ In this context, Pharnakes II played an outstanding role, because he defied Rome and enjoyed an ephemeral glory, like a lightning flash, before being defeated by Caesar (48–47 BC). This king did not just reconquer the territories formerly ruled by his father in Anatolia,⁵ but he was

16, 283f.; Suda s.v. Πομπήϊος; Ὠφῶς; Φύσει; cf. Luc. *Phars.* 1.335f.; Mart. 5.76; Juv. *Sat.* 6.661f.; 14.252; *Schol. Juv. Sat.* 6.661, 10.273; Sidon. *Carm.* 7.79–82. Pharnakes is accused of having murdered his father by Cass. Dio 37.12.4; 37.14.2; App. *BCiv.* 2.13.92; Jos. *AJ* 14.3.4 (53); Zonar. 5.6; 10.5; *Schol. Bern. Lucan.* 1.336 (cf. Vell. 2.40.10); *Schol. Juv. Sat.* 14.252.2. Cassius Dio followed two different sources on Mithradates’ end, because he reports that the king committed suicide and was murdered by his enemies: see Portanova 1988, 516 n. 794. On the revolt, see Reinach 1890, 406–410; Gajducevič 1971, 321f.; Ballesteros Pastor 1996, 279–281; Goukowsky 2001, 245–247, ns. 1036–1047; Abramzon & Kuznetsov 2011. On Pharnakes’ image in literary sources, see in general Ballesteros Pastor 2005b.

- 2 On the Mithradatic conflict as an evocation of the Persian Wars, see Ballesteros Pastor 2011. In general, on the persistence of the Persian Wars in Roman memory, see Spawforth 1994; Hardie 2007; Russo 2014a; 2014b; Makhelaiuk 2015; Almagor 2019.
- 3 See Ballesteros Pastor 2018a, 148f. and *passim*. On these monarchies in general, see Hoben 1969; Sullivan 1990. On the debate around the concepts of ‘Persianization’ and ‘Persianism’, see Strootman & Versluys 2017. Regarding Persianism in the Mithradatid dynasty, see Canepa 2010, 11–13; 2014, 61; 2017, 217–222; Lerouge-Cohen 2017; Gatzke 2019; Strootman 2020, 205–210; cf. McGing 2014; Michels 2017. On the vindication of Achaimenid descent by several eastern royal houses, see further Ballesteros Pastor 2012; 2018a, 174–176; 2018b, 273, 276; Lerouge-Cohen 2016; 2017.
- 4 On the uncertain situation of the eastern dynasties in regards with Roman rule towards the middle of the 1st century BC, see Coşkun 2008; Strootman 2016, 225.
- 5 Pharnakes defeated Cn. Domitius Calvinus, who probably was a legate of Caesar: *BALex.* 34–40; 65.4; 69.1; 74.3; Cic. *Deiot.* 14; 24; Liv. *Per.* 112; Plut. *Caes.* 50.1; Suet. *Jul.* 35.2; 36; App. *Mith.* 120.591; *BCiv.* 2.13.91; Cass. Dio 42.46.1f.; 42.47.1. Cf. Sweeney 1978, 183; Carlsen 2008, 74; Gaertner & Hausburg 2013, 88. On Pharnakes’ war with Caesar, see *BALex.* 34–40; 65; 69–77; Cass. Dio 47.1–3; Plin. *NH* 6.3.10; App. *Mith.* 120.593f.; *BCiv.* 2.13.91; Plut. *Caes.* 50.2; *Mor.* 206e; Liv. *Per.* 113; Flor. 2.3.11; Suet. *Jul.* 37; Strab. *Geogr.* 12.3.14 (547C); Frontin. *Str.* 2.2.3; Luc. *Phars.* 10.475f.; Sen. *Suas.* 2.22; Eutr. 6.22.2; Oros. 6.16.3; *Vir. Ill.* 78.7; Ampel. 34.1. Cf. Hoben 1969, 17–25; Gajducevič 1970, 322–324; Sherwin-White 1984, 299f.; Sullivan 1990, 156–158; Freber 1993, 81–83; Heinen 1994; Dobesch 1996; Gaertner & Hausburg 2013, 91f., 101–104, 120f.; Coşkun 2019, 132–135. On Pharnakes’ rule over Kolchis, see Cass. Dio 42.45.3; Strab. *Geogr.* 11.2.17 (498C); cf. Braund 1994, 147–149. For a comprehensive discussion of Pharnakes’ campaigns, see now Coşkun ca. 2020.

also eager to be regarded as an heir of the Persian tradition. He not only meant to claim the inheritance of the Mithradatids, but he also aimed more generally at being recognized as a continuator of the Achaimenids. As Eupator had done before, Pharnakes regarded them as the former legitimate masters of Asia Minor.⁶

Pharnakes' position with respect to his father is ambiguous. He had led the revolt that made Mithradates commit suicide, and he was recognized as a friend and ally of the Roman people in return. Nevertheless, Pharnakes did not disown his roots: to some extent, he decided to appear as a continuator of his father's policy, but, at the same time, seemed to emphasize perhaps even more his Iranian descent. This policy, however, did not imply denying the Hellenic features of his reign, which are likewise evident. Thus, Pharnakes' rule appears before us as a complex combination of influences, whose interpretation is very difficult, even more so when considering the scarcity of the extant evidence for this monarch. His ephemeral rule in Anatolia was accompanied by a strong reminder of some old Achaimenid practices. They were not only designed to convey legitimacy to Pharnakes' conquest of Pontos, but also emphasized more broadly the Iranian tradition in which he wanted his rule to be viewed. This may be seen as a matter of pride before the Romans, as had been the case with Mithradates, and furthermore as an element of competition with other eastern monarchies. The very name *Pharnakes* was related to the concept of **Xvarenah*, the 'glory', 'majesty' and 'legitimacy' of the ancient Persian rulers.⁷ It is no abject idea that his own name thus further inspired Pharnakes to seek the charisma and grandeur of his most famous ancestors, perhaps trying to make forgotten his inglorious accession to the throne this way.

In short, the present chapter argues that Pharnakes went beyond claiming legitimacy as king of Pontos through his Mithradatid lineage, but evoked the return of Achaimenid government over Anatolia.

II. AN ACHAIMENID RULER

The kingship of Pharnakes II had common features with that of his father. As a son of Mithradates, Pharnakes had a double genealogy, Persian and Hellenic, and this was likewise reflected in several facets of his reign. As in Eupator's case, Pharnakes' coins bear a Hellenized face of the king, who appears without beard and wears a diadem.⁸ Just as his father, however, he wore a tiara before his subjects in the Bosphoros. As Appian tells us, when Pharnakes rose against Eupator, his men put upon his head a sheet of papyrus, as if it were a tiara: that is, the sol-

6 On Eupator's perspective on Achaimenid rule over Anatolia and the Black Sea, see Ballesteros Pastor 2013a; 2013c, 280; 2018a, esp. 156f.

7 Melikian-Chirvani 1993, 28f.; cf. Gnoli 1999; De Jong 1999.

8 On Pharnakes' coins, see Gajducevič 1971, 322f.; Golenko & Karyzskovsky 1972; Zograph 1977, 301f. On Eupator's coins, see above all De Callataÿ 1997. On the double genealogy of the Pontic dynasty, see below, n. 10.

diers recognized in the new king a sovereign with one of the symbols of Persian royalty.⁹

Pharnakes must have kept alive the memory of the official Mithradatid genealogy, which was connected with the Achaimenid branch of Darius.¹⁰ As we know, Mithradates VIII of the Bosphorus solemnly claimed descent from Achaimenes (Tac. *Ann.* 12.18.2) about a century later, thus echoing a tradition which probably had been cherished for many generations. The exaltation of Achaimenid ancestry is clearly reflected in the names Pharnakes chose for his own offspring, among whom we only know two sons (Darius and Arsakes)¹¹ and a daughter (Dynamis).¹² We can trace back this practice to his father, though not yet to the beginning of his reign, when he chose more typically dynastic names, such as Mithradates and Ariarathes. But later, possibly while he was at war with Rome and designed a more outspoken Achaimenid dynastic propaganda, he begot his sons Cyrus, Darius and Xerxes; we may well wonder whether there also was a Kambyses, who would have escaped recording in our sources.¹³

In a certain way, Pharnakes imitated his father in his attempt to be regarded as the founder of a new line of Persian kings. The ruler of the Bosphorus was thus competing with other royal houses who also claimed to belong to the Achaimenid house, precisely because of their kinship with Mithradates Eupator. This would be the case with the rulers of Armenia,¹⁴ Kappadokia,¹⁵ Atropatene,¹⁶ Judaea¹⁷ and

- 9 App. *Mith.* 111.533; cf. Ritter 1965, 163. On the other symbols, see Briant 1996, 187, 239f.
- 10 On this genealogy of the Pontic dynasty, see Just. 38.7.1; App. *Mith.* 9.27; 112.540; Sall. *Hist.* F 2.73 ed. Maurenbrecher *apud* Ampel. 30.5; Tac. *Ann.* 12.18.2. Cf. Panitschek 1987/8; Ballesteros Pastor 2012; 2013b, 272–285; Lerouge-Cohen 2017. The Kappadokian Ariarathids, who claimed descend from Darius as well (Diod. 31.19.1–3), established kinship ties with the Pontic house in the 2nd century BC, see Just. 38.2.5; App. *Mith.* 9.29; 10.31; 12.39; cf. Ballesteros Pastor 2014. See also below, n. 34.
- 11 Darius, Pharnakes' son, ruled over a part of Pontos for a brief time after Philippi: see App. *BCiv.* 5.8.75; Hoben 1969, 34–39; Olshausen 1980, 909f.; Sullivan 1990, 160f.; Primo 2010, 162. Arsakes: Strab. *Geogr.* 12.3.38 (560C); cf. Marek 1993, 50; Syme 1995, 172; also see below, with n. 62.
- 12 It is debated whether Dynamis was the daughter Pharnakes offered to Caesar (App. *BCiv.* 2.13.91). See Rostovtzeff 1919, 98; Hoben 1969, 32; Braund 1984, 178f. n. 79; Coşkun & Stern, chapter IX in this volume for a positive conclusion.
- 13 Ballesteros Pastor 2015a, esp. 436f. The name of his son (and vice-regent in the Bosphorus until 65 BC) Machares is of uncertain etymology. Other known sons of Eupator born before his first war with Rome were named after former satraps of western Anatolia: Pharnakes, Xiphares (Oibares) and Artaphernes. Taking into account that Persian adulthood began at 24 (Strab. *Geogr.* 15.3.18 [733C]), we may understand why Appian (*Mith.* 108.513) called Cyrus, Darius, Xerxes and Oxathres 'handsome children' in 64 BC. See further Ballesteros Pastor 1996, 321–323.
- 14 Tigranes II of Armenia (ruled ca. 95–55 BC) married Kleopatra, daughter of Eupator: Just. 38.3.2; 40.1.3; App. *Mith.* 13.44; 15.54; 104.487; Plut. *Luc.* 14.6; 22.1, 5; Memn. *FGrH* 434 F 1.29.6; 31.1f.; Cass. Dio 36.50.1; Ballesteros Pastor 2013b, 207f.
- 15 The wife of Archelaos I of Kappadokia (ruled 36 BC–17 AD) belonged to the Armenian royal house: Aug. *RG* 27.2; cf. Sullivan 1990, 185; Ballesteros Pastor 2013b, 29.
- 16 The wife of Mithradates I of Atropatene was a daughter of Tigranes II: Cass. Dio 36.14.2; Plut. *Luc.* 31.7; cf. Sullivan 1990, 101; 283; 447 n. 12; Ballesteros Pastor 2020. The identity

Kommagene.¹⁸ As regards the name Arsakes, it could reflect a change in Pharnakes' policy, implying an affiliation with the Parthians, with whom we cannot discard some (otherwise unattested) kinship ties.¹⁹

III. PHARNAKES, GREAT KING OF KINGS

According to the preserved inscriptions, as well as to the gold staters issued between 55/4 and 51/50 BC, Pharnakes adopted the title 'Great King of Kings'.²⁰ Konstantin V. Golenko and Pyotr J. Karyszkowski suggested that this coinage appeared coinciding with the death of the Great King Tigranes II of Armenia, to whose throne Pharnakes would have aspired.²¹ However, we consider that this title was probably related to other factors, since Tigranes had male descendants who guaranteed the dynastic succession.²² In fact, Pharnakes was resuming a title formerly held by his father, namely 'King of Kings', while, at the same time, omitting any Greek epithet on his coins, such as 'Philorhomaïos', which he had borne formerly.²³ At any rate, Pharnakes ruled over a conglomerate of peoples settled around the Maiotis and the Kimmerian Bosphorus: the dynasts of these tribes were described as 'kings', so the sovereigns of the Bosphorus could justify the adoption of the title 'King of Kings'.²⁴ Thus, this use of the imperial titulature

and regnal years of this Mithridates are hard to determine: see further the assumptions by Schippmann 2014.

- 17 Glaphyra, Archelaos' daughter, espoused Alexander, prince of Judaea, ca. 17 BC: Sullivan 1980, 1161–1164; 1990, 185; Wilker 2007, 30; 52 n. 17; 59; 72.
- 18 Mithradates III of Kommagene married Jotapa, princess of Atropatene: Sullivan 1990, 299; 326. On the role of royal women in the transmission of kingship in Hellenistic times, see Strootman 2016, 219–221.
- 19 On Mithradates Eupator and the Parthians, see Olbrycht 2009; Lerouge-Cohen 2014, 144–148. On the Parthian dynastic name Arsakes and its relationship with the Achaimenids, see Olbrycht 2019. On Arsakid marriage policy in Hellenistic times, see Dąbrowa 2018.
- 20 *CIRB* 28; Griffiths 1953, 146; Yaïlenko 1985, 619–627; Golenko & Karyszkovsky 1972; Primo 2010, 160; Muccioli 2013, 276; Ballesteros Pastor 2017.
- 21 Golenko & Karyszkovsky 1972, 32.
- 22 Tigranes II was succeeded by his son Artavasdes II: Aug. *RG* 27; Strab. *Geogr.* 11.14.10 (530C); Jos. *AJ* 15.4.3 (104); Cass. Dio 40.16.2; Moses of Chorene 2.22.
- 23 On Eupator as King of Kings, see Ballesteros Pastor 1995; 2018a; Muccioli 2013, 409–412. On Pharnakes' title 'Philorhomaïos', see Heinen 2001, 360; 2008, 192; Muccioli 2013, 270f. with n. 688; 276. Primo 2010, 160 does not consider the change in the coin legends.
- 24 Ballesteros Pastor 2017, 299. On the rule of the Bosporan monarchs over these peoples, see also Gourova 2014. Some of those dynasts were 'kings', see, for instance, *Syll.*³ 709, ll. 7 and 23; Polyain. 8.56; Strab. *Geogr.* 7.4.3 (309C); 11.5.8 (506C); Tac. *Ann.* 12.15.2; 12.20.1. For the interpretation of 'King of Kings' as 'ruler over other kings' in the late Hellenistic period, see App. *Syr.* 48.247, referring to Tigranes II, and further Cass. Dio 63.4–6; Amm. Marc. 19.2.11; cf. Strootman 2014, 52; 2016, 219–221; Ballesteros Pastor 2017, 299 with n. 11; also Coşkun 2020b, section 3, who emphasizes that Pharnakes' title has no clear anti-Roman implication. Some scholars, however, propose that this title was just a claim of legitimacy: Wiesehöfer 1996, 29; 56; 121; 133; cf. Muccioli 2013, 401–409 (with further bibliography).

probably had something to do with certain achievements over peoples of the northern Black Sea coast, which we cannot specify.

Besides, we must bear in mind the peculiarity of the title ‘Great King of Kings’ borne by Pharnakes II, Mithradates II of Parthia, Artavasdes I of Atropatene and perhaps Mithradates Eupator.²⁵ As we can infer from the monument at Nemrud-Dağı, *Basileus Basileon Megas* was the Greek term used in the Late Hellenistic period to designate the titlature of the old Achaimenid emperors.²⁶ Therefore, by proclaiming himself ‘Great King of Kings’, the ruler of the Bosphorus was trying to exalt himself as the legitimate successor of the glorious Persian monarchs of the past. It is noteworthy that, unlike Eupator, Pharnakes included this title on his coins. This would be a proof of Pharnakes’ eagerness to proclaim his Achaimenid descent. Mithradates Eupator, even on his stater issued between 89 and 85 BC, which count after a new era, avoided the title ‘King of Kings’ on his coins. In other words, he refrained from spreading this Persian titlature among his Greek or Hellenized subjects. In contrast, Pharnakes chose this title for his issues, thus following a more recent trend that had been established by the Parthian and Armenian rulers.

Just as under the Achaimenids and Alexander the Great, the title ‘King of Kings’ implied the dominion over the two parts of the world, that is, Europe and Asia. This was one of the principles of the imperial idea which had been formerly developed by the Achaimenids and would continue during the Hellenistic period.²⁷ By crossing the Hellespont from Asia to Europe, Darius I had proclaimed his ecumenic rule, thus confirming the universalistic dimension of his empire. Analogously, Alexander the Great thought he was conquering the two parts of the world, not only when he arrived in Asia in 334 BC, but also when he crossed the Jaxartes, allegedly returning to Europe from Asia.²⁸ In the case of Pharnakes, who ruled the Kimmerian Bosphorus, this sovereignty over lands on the two continents was easy to argue and contributed to promoting an image of grandeur of the

25 On Pharnakes, see above n. 20. On Mithradates II, see *I.Délos* 1581; Muccioli 2013, 405f.; on Artavasdes, De Callatay & Lorber 2011, 438; Ballesteros Pastor 2017, 297f. ns.1 and 5 (with bibliography). Eupator’s title has been reconstructed on some inscriptions: Yaïlenko 1985, 618; Arsen’eva, Böttger & Vinogradov 1995, 205–207; Ivantchik & Tokhtas’ev 2011 (*SEG* XLV 1020–1023; *AE* 2009, 1225–1226; Avram, *BE* 2010, 471); Yaïlenko 2010, 199–204 (*AE* 2010, 1444).

26 See *OGIS* 388f.; 392, and two letters attributed to Hippokrates (Smith 1990, 48–51). Cf. Darius’ title in the inscription at Behistun (*DB* I.1; Kuhrt 2007, 141): ‘I am Darius, Great King, King of Kings’. For further remarks, see Engels 2014, 345; Ballesteros Pastor 2017, 297f. Alternatively, the title could appear as *Megas Basileus Basileon*: *CIRB* 29; cf. Muccioli 2013, 410.

27 On the ecumenic perspective among the empires of the Hellenistic period, see Walbank 1984, 66; Briant 2002, 178–183; Tuplin 2010, 290–292; Strootman 2014, 49; 2016, 221–226.

28 Tuplin 2010, 290f.; Ballesteros Pastor 2013b, 205; 2015b, 93. See also Just. 12.16.5: two eagles were seen when Alexander was born, which is interpreted as an omen of his future rule over both Europe and Asia; cf. Curt. 7.8.30; Ballesteros Pastor 2003, 34. On the dominion over the two parts of the world as a feature of Hellenistic royal charisma, see further Polyb. 11.34.14–16; Gehrke 1982, 254.

Bosporan kingdom: despite its limited extension, it could boast an exceptional strategic location at the very border between Asia and Europe.²⁹ This ecumenic perspective had also been spread by Mithradates Eupator, who was acclaimed as the master of the two parts of the world, and was glorified as *kosmokrator*.³⁰ Pharnakes' claim to be a 'Great King of Kings' thus followed in the footsteps of his father, although at a far more modest level. The use of a title reminiscent of the one borne by the Achaimenids was, once more, a proclamation of legitimacy and aspirations, rather than a mere geopolitical reality.

IV. THE EMASCULATION OF THE BOYS OF AMISOS

One of the most relevant episodes of Pharnakes' brief reign in Pontos was undoubtedly the castration of the young boys of Amisos, a punishment of the city for having sided with the Romans.³¹ This measure recalled an old Achaimenid practice: as we know from Herodotos, the generals of Darius castrated the young Greeks in 494 BC after the Ionian revolt (Hdt. 6.6.9). By inflicting such a punishment, the Persians ensured that there would be no new generation of rebels. Moreover, the Achaimenid kings used to impose as a tribute the delivery of young eunuchs destined to functions in the court.³² But, at the same time, the punishment of Amisos was evoking actions of the satraps of Daskyleion, ancestors of Pharnakes' family. As Arrian reports, the satrap Pharnabazos ordered the emasculation of the boys of Chalkedon during the Peloponnesian War, probably in 409 BC, to suppress a rebellion against the Persians. The memory of this dramatic event had remained alive in the city of the Propontis throughout the centuries. When Arrian

29 This idea may be expressed in *CIRB* 29: [Φαρνάκης(?) μέγας βασιλεὺς βασιλέων | [ὑποτάξας βαρβάρους τοὺς κατὰ τὴν Εὐρώπην | [καὶ τὴν Ἀσίαν? ἀνέθηκε] Διὶ Γενάρχηι. Cf. *SEG* XL 627 (1); Vinogradov, *BE* 1990, 580. On Pharnakes' dominion over both sides of the Bosphorus, see further Strab. *Geogr.* 11.2.11 (495C); Luther 2002, 268f.; Heinen 2005; Engels 2014, 346.

30 Ballesteros Pastor 2013b, 205; 2018a, 142; Palazzo 2016, 336; cf. Flor. 1.40.3. On Mithradates as *kosmokrator*, see in particular Poseidonios, *FGrH* 87 F 36 *apud* Ath. 5.213b.

31 App. *BCiv.* 2.13.91; *BAlex.* 70.6: *Nam neque interfectis amissam vitam neque exsectis virilitatem restituere posse; quod quidem supplicium gravius morte cives Romani subissent.* Cf. 41.2: *bona civium Romanorum Ponticorumque diripuit, supplicia constituit in eos qui aliquam formae atque aetatis commendationem habebant ea quae morte essent miseriora*; Ballesteros Pastor 2013a, 189. Gaertner & Hausburg 2013, 104, 109, suppose that only Roman citizens were castrated, but Appian does not specify this aspect; in fact, *BAlex.* 41.1 speaks of confiscations among both Romans and Pontics. On the circumstances of the resistance of Amisos and the time of its conquest, see Coşkun 2020b, section 5.

32 The annual tribute from Babylon included 500 young eunuchs (Hdt. 3.92.1). The castration of male children was repudiated by the Greeks (Hdt. 8.105.1). Cf. Bosworth 1997, 301 with n. 17; Fisher 2002, 215; Hornblower 2003; Kuhrt 2007, 229; 577; 591; 674; Ballesteros Pastor 2013a, 189. This punishment was also used by Periander of Corinth: Hdt. 3.48f.; cf. Desmond 2004, 35f.

was writing in the 2nd century AD, the anniversary day of this disastrous event was still a *dies nefastus*.³³

By this cruel order, Pharnakes was therefore remembering his Persian ancestors, a dynasty of satraps that had ruled for much time over the south-western part of the Black Sea coast. It was, in short, a way to proclaim that the king had returned: Pharnakes was not only the son of Mithradates Eupator, but also a descendant of Artabazos, the valiant commander of Xerxes' army who saved his troops from the Battle of Plataia and was appointed to rule over Daskyleion by the Great King.³⁴

V. THE GREAT KING AT WAR: PHARNAKES' SCYTHED CHARIOTS

One of the peculiarities of the army of Pharnakes II was no doubt the use of scythed chariots.³⁵ Although their invention could be traced back to the neo-Assyrian period, these chariots were probably associated with Persian kings, who had utilized them in their wars with the Greeks.³⁶ In the Hellenistic period, scythed chariots were also included in the armies of the Seleukids, and the Romans learned how to dodge them during the war with Antiochos III.³⁷ Mithradates Eupator employed scythed chariots against Ariarathes VII of Kappadokia and the legions of Sulla. In this way, the Pontic king was remembering his ancestors, the satraps of Daskyleion, who had used this type of weapon. Eupator, however, noticed its scarce effectiveness and probably avoided it in his combats with Lucullus and Pompey.³⁸ However, Pharnakes had scythed chariots with him on his Pontic campaign and deployed them against Caesar's army, despite the experience of Mithradates. This was certainly not due to tactical reasons, but in the first place of symbolic importance: an exaltation of the Iranian elements of his reign. Once more, the son of Mithradates showed off his lineage and demonstrated that the ancestral kings were ruling Pontos again.

33 Arr. *Bith. FGrH* 156 F 79f.; Bosworth 1997. According to Bosworth 1997, 299, a reference to this episode may also be found in Plut. *Cam.* 19.9, where the Carthaginians are mistakenly cited instead of the Chalkedonians.

34 The Mithradatids' descent from Artabazos is explicitly mentioned in Sall. *Hist.* F 2.85 ed. Maurenbrecher; Flor. 1.40.1; cf. Ballesteros Pastor 2012. See also above, n. 10.

35 *BAlex.* 75.2f.; Cass. Dio 42.47.5.

36 See Rop 2013; cf. Nefiodkin 2004; Ballesteros Pastor 2013b, 183.

37 Liv. 37.41.5–12; Baker 2003, 380; Bugh 2007, 278–280; Sekunda & De Souza 2007, 348.

38 Just. 38.1.8; Plut. *Sulla* 15.1; 18.2f.; *Luc.* 7.4; App. *Mith.* 18.66; 42.163f.; Frontin. *Str.* 2.3.17; Veget. *Mil.* 3.23.1; cf. Plut. *Luc.* 37.3; Sall. *Hist.* F 3.21 ed. Maurenbrecher; Couvenhes 2009, 421f.; Ballesteros Pastor 2013b, 183. On the scythed chariots and the satraps of Daskyleion, see for instance Xen. *Hell.* 4.1.17.

VI. PHARNAKES II AND THE UNFINISHED TOMB OF AMASEIA

The monarchs of Pontos had their monumental tombs in Amaseia by the river Iris. Amaseia had been the capital of the kingdom for some time, until the court was moved to Sinope, probably by Pharnakes I.³⁹ Altogether, there are five tombs, one of which was left unfinished. These burial monuments are carved into the cliffs above the city, and corridors provide access to them. The identification of the kings buried in each of these graves has been a matter of discussion. The traditional hypothesis maintains that Mithradates I Ktistes and the three kings who followed him – Ariobarzanes, Mithradates II and Mithradates III – were buried in Amaseia. The next ruler, Pharnakes I, left his tomb unfinished presumably because he decided to be buried in Sinope, his new capital. The fact that there is an inscription dedicated to the wellbeing of king Pharnakes not too far from this monument might support this view.⁴⁰

But this reconstruction implies some problems. Neither the number nor the identity of the rulers buried in Amaseia can be determined: except for the one inscription mentioned (whose king is also hard to specify), there are no other epigraphic documents identifying the respective owner of each tomb; furthermore, each chamber may have kept more than one corpse.⁴¹ There is no proof that the first monarchs of Pontos conquered lands east of the Halys. Mithradates I Ktistes first settled in Kimiata, on the slopes of Mount Olgassys, located in Paphlagonia. From there, the Mithradatids extended their realm combating the Galatians and taking also possession of Amastris.⁴² Therefore, Amaseia, placed in Pontic Kappadokia, may have become the capital of the kingdom at the earliest in the time of Ariobarzanes, the successor of Mithradates Ktistes, or rather Mithradates II, the

39 On the royal tombs at Amaseia, see Fleischer 2009; 2017; Højte 2009b. We do not know which king moved the capital to Sinope. Rostovtzeff & Ormerod 1933, 218, thought it was Pharnakes I, who conquered this Greek city; see further Olshausen 1978, 436f.; Avram 2016, 225; Payen, chapter VII in this volume. McGing 1986b, 250f. doubts that this measure can be attributed to either Pharnakes I or Mithradates V with any certainty; cf. Barat 2012, 55. In general, on Amaseia, see Olshausen & Biller 1984, 112 (with further bibliography).

40 Rostovtzeff & Ormerod 1933, 217f.; Fleischer 2009, 111–115; 2017, 85–87. For the inscription, see *OGIS* 365; cf. Reinach 1890, 456; Anderson, Cumont & Grégoire 1910, 114f., no. 94; Fleischer 2017, 87f.: Ὑπὲρ βασιλείας / Φαρνάκου / [Μη]τρόδωρος / [...]του φρουρα- / χήσ]ας [τὸ]ν βω- / [μ]ὸν καὶ [τ]ὸν / ἀνθεῶνα / θεοῖς. ‘On behalf of King Pharnakes (dedicated) [Me]trodoros, son of [...]os, the commander of the garrison, an altar and a flower garden to the Gods.’

41 Cf. Højte 2009b, 126. For this discussion, see Reinach 1890, 293; Rostovtzeff & Ormerod 1933, 218; McGing 1986b, 250f.; Burstein 1980, 11 n. 35; Fleischer 2009; 2017, 85–88, 107–109; Ballesteros Pastor 2013a, 226 n. 23; Avram 2015, 115.

42 Memn. *FGrH* 434 F 1.11.4; 1.16.1; Ballesteros Pastor 2013a, 186, 196 n. 23. Galatians were nonetheless recruited as mercenaries in the Pontic army by Mithradates I: Apollon. Aphr. *FGrH* 740 F 14; Olshausen 1978, 404; Coşkun 2011, 88 with n. 11. We can see a similar circumstance in the case of Eupator, who seized Galatia and slaughtered the tetrarchs, but still had Galatians in his service: see Just. 37.4.6; 38.3.6; 38.5.3–6; Plut. *Mor.* 259a–d; App. *Mith.* 46.178f.; 54.218; 111.539; Liv. *Per.* 102.3; *Vir. Ill.* 76.8; Oros. 6.5.6; Ballesteros Pastor 2013a, 23, 85–87, 165–167, 215.

first Pontic king who established a marriage alliance with the Seleukids.⁴³ For his part, Højte proposed to ascribe the first tomb of the Pontic royal cemetery to Mithradates III.⁴⁴ The burial place of Mithradates Eupator has not yet been identified with certainty. Claire Barat's study has reached the conclusion that Mithradates Euergetes and his son Eupator were presumably buried in Sinope.⁴⁵ For our part, we therefore think that the construction of the unfinished tomb at Amaseia began in the brief reign of Pharnakes II.

Upon recovering Pontos, Pharnakes II sought above all to be seen as the heir of the ancestral kings of that country, in order to be recognized as a legitimate sovereign. The construction of a monumental tomb beside the ones of his royal ancestors would have endorsed this claim. This context notwithstanding, the design of the tomb for Pharnakes II differed from the other funerary monuments in Amaseia. Three of the tombs were built according to the Hellenistic model, with a portico formed by fronton and columns. In contrast, the unfinished grave has a portico without columns and with stone revetments, following the same pattern of the second grave built there.⁴⁶ Robert Fleischer noted this difference, and attributed the original design 'to a local tradition, unknown to us'.⁴⁷ One rationale may have been to speed up the work, but perhaps the most likely explanation is that Pharnakes just wanted to imitate his ancestor in tomb B.

Apart from these considerations, the non-Hellenic design of Pharnakes' grave without a portico may reflect the aim to emphasize the king's Iranian roots. Even in the case of the monuments that followed the Hellenistic fashion, the conception of the Pontic royal tombs at Amaseia is essentially Persian. The burial is placed inside the rock, in order to prevent the dead body from polluting, in accordance with Iranian rules of purity.⁴⁸

Pharnakes' monument was left unfinished after Caesar defeated the king in the Battle of Zela on 2 August 47 BC. Not much later, the king died fighting against Asandros in the Bosporean kingdom, and his burial place remains unknown.⁴⁹ We do not know how much time the construction of this funerary monument might have taken. At any rate, it is worth remembering that Darius, the son of Pharnakes, ruled over Amaseia sometime after the Battle of Philippi (42 BC) and may well have continued working on the tomb.⁵⁰

43 On this alliance, see Petković 2009; Ballesteros Pastor 2013b, 240f.; D'Agostini 2016; Coşkun 2018, 226f., arguing for 244/2 BC. When the offspring of this marriage, princess Laodike, left home to marry Antiochos III, Polyb. 5.43.2 says that she departed from 'Pontic Kappadokia'.

44 Højte 2009b, 127.

45 Barat 2012, 58–60. See also Højte 2009b, 128.

46 Fleischer 2009, 111–116 and *passim*; Id. 2017.

47 Fleischer 2009, 118. For a detailed description of the tomb, see Fleischer 2017, 71–88.

48 Fleischer 2009, 115; 2017, 130; Canepa 2010, 12; 2014, 53, 61.

49 On Pharnakes' defeat at Zela, see above, n. 5. On his death that followed within not much more than a month, see App. *Mith.* 120.595; Strab. *Geogr.* 13.4.3 (625C); Cass. Dio 42.47.5; cf. Coşkun 2019, 132–137; 2020.

50 See above, n. 11.

VII. CONCLUSION

We can conclude that Pharnakes II represents the survival of the Persian conception of kingship in the Bosporan kingdom and, if only ephemerally, also in Pontos. Despite some opposition to him, because his arrival meant a new confrontation with Rome, the native Anatolian population largely recognized Pharnakes as the legitimate king, as heir to an ancestral royalty, which was basically Iranian. Once the former Mithradatid kingdom of Pontos had been divided between Rome and local dynasts most loyal to Rome (first Deiotaros Philorhomaïos, then Polemon Eusebes),⁵¹ this Iranian conception of kingship may have fallen into oblivion in that region. However, in the Bosporan kingdom, the idea of Iranian royalty survived under the successors of Pharnakes, despite their political affiliation with the Roman Emperors. The titles ‘King of Kings’ or ‘Great King of Kings’ remained the most distinguished elements of royal titlature under the successors of Pharnakes until the 2nd century AD.⁵²

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51 See Strab. *Geogr.* 11.2.18 (499C); 12.3.13 (546f.C); 12.3.29 (555f.C); 12.3.38 (560C); cf. Coşkun, chapter X in this volume.

52 See Funck 1998; Ballesteros Pastor 2017, 301 with n. 28.

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