

ABSTRACT

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THE IDENTITY OF AUTHORITY THROUGH
MATERIAL CULTURE IN THE
HELLENISTIC EAST, 140-38 BCE

HyoSil Suzy Hwang, Doctor of Philosophy,
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During the late-second to first century BCE, Tigranes II the Great of Armenia (140-55 BCE), Antiochos I Theos of Commagene (ca. 86-38 BCE), and Mithridates VI Eupator of Pontus (134-63 BCE) employed multivalent imagery to legitimize their positions and assert their authority amid the changing political landscape of the Hellenistic East. Each king's visual program shaped and reflected the political dynamics of his reign, the mixed cultural identity of his population, and the threats posed by foreign powers. As the kings negotiated their positions within an environment rife with military conflict and in territories composed of multi-ethnic populations, they created nuanced visual programs that layered ties to multiple historic precedents and religious authorities. Each king's program intended to communicate differently to diverse audiences – both foreign and domestic – while simultaneously asserting the king's position as the ruler of a powerful and unified

realm. This dissertation considers the rulers' creation and dissemination of such imagery, revealing new dimensions of ruling ideologies and visual culture in the Late Hellenistic East.

EMPOWERING IMAGES: NEGOTIATING THE IDENTITY OF AUTHORITY
THROUGH MATERIAL CULTURE IN THE HELLENISTIC EAST, 140-38 BCE

By

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
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2014

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Dedication

To my family, with all of my love and thanks.

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process, and I was fortunate enough to find strength in all of them. Their love and encouragement saw me through the most difficult times, and I dedicate this dissertation wholeheartedly to my entire family.

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INTRODUCTION

This project explores three kings of the Hellenistic East and their use of visual programs during their reigns to affirm power in the mercurial environment of the late Hellenistic period. Tigranes II the Great of Armenia (140-55 BCE), Antiochos I Theos of Commagene (ca. 86-38 BCE), and Mithridates VI Eupator (134-63 BCE) of Pontus, each actively engaged in both foreign and domestic policies in hopes to secure authority among themselves, as well as among greater potentates such as those who ruled Parthia and Rome. Expansions of their kingdoms were hard won and frequently only temporary, and the threat of Rome's conquest of the entire Hellenistic *oikoumene* ("inhabited world") constantly lurked on the horizon. Each monarch —Tigranes II, Antiochos I, and Mithridates VI — mined imagery to further his aspirations, and the art and visual culture associated with each ruler reflects his politics and attitudes towards his own peoples and to foreign affairs. Moreover, the artistic programs further elucidate the king's ruling policies and actions, filling in gaps in the historical record and clarifying uncertainties in historical knowledge.

This dissertation recognizes commonalities utilized by Tigranes, Antiochos, and Mithridates in their use of visual media to legitimize their authority. One common trait among the three monarchs is that they all situated themselves within a greater history, calling forth significant figures from the past and drawing references to them, in hopes to secure their authority and rule. Tigranes, Antiochos, and Mithridates emphasized their illustrious ancestries, often tracing their lineage back to royal bloodlines. When such a

familial connection was missing, as in the case of Tigranes, he positioned himself as the successor to a well-established dynasty by assuming power over its territory. Claiming legitimacy through a call to historical precedents proved effective as each king actively engaged in both foreign and domestic policies in hopes to secure authority among themselves, as well as among greater potentates such as those who ruled Parthia and Rome. Each monarch mined imagery to further his aspirations, and the art and visual culture associated with each ruler reflects his politics and attitudes towards his own peoples and to foreign affairs.

The multi-ethnic populations that the three kings governed further nuanced their decisions to draw historical ties. As they aimed to appease both their Greek and eastern subjects alike, the monarchs identified themselves as true Hellenistic-Eastern rulers, embracing and advertising their association with both royal Iranian and Macedonian lineages and claiming a legitimacy that derived from the traditions of their multi-ethnic populations. The regions Tigranes, Antiochos, and Mithridates occupied once belonged to the Persian Empire. As such, the lands and people celebrated a long history steeped in Iranian traditions, and the three kings exploited their association to the Achaemenid Dynasty that once ruled the area. Concurrently, the kings also drew ties to Alexander and his *Diadochoi*, exploiting any ancestral lineages they possessed or forging connections in other ways.

Religious figures and belief systems also informed the programs of all three rulers, and once again, the multi-ethnic composition of the late-Hellenistic kingdoms affected the character of religion and the reception of concepts set forth. The monarchs asserted their right to rule through a claim to religious authority sanctioning their reign,

often forging close relationships to divinities. This project examines each king's artistic program with these common traits in mind through the lens of his activity both at home and abroad, and also situates the visual culture associated with the rulers within the political climate in which they lived, revealing new dimensions to their ruling ideologies.

The discussion of the three rulers positions them within the late-second- to first-century BCE politics that informed the region of the world in which they operated. Utilizing previous scholarship and recent theories developed in the fields of history, classics, archaeology, art history, and other humanities, the analysis of three individual artistic programs situates this study among other explorations of these rulers and the objects associated with them. Simultaneously, this project offers new interpretations of artistic objects created under their reigns through the analysis of the visual programs within the larger framework of each king's rule.

Background

Armenia, Commagene, and Pontus were kingdoms of the Hellenistic East in close proximity to one another (see Map 1). Throughout their history, the kingdoms interacted, especially during the rule of the three kings upon whom this dissertation focuses.

Comprising parts of Anatolia, the regions Tigranes, Antiochos, and Mithridates occupied once formed parts of the Persian Empire under the control of the Achaemenid Dynasty.

As such, the lands and people celebrated a long history steeped in Iranian traditions, and the ruling authorities exploited their association to the Achaemenids. Concurrently,

Tigranes, Antiochos, and Mithridates each traced his ancestry back to Alexander and his *Diadochoi* (Successors), particularly to Seleukos I Nikator ("the Victor"). Seleukos was

Alexander's former general who founded the Seleukid Empire in 312 BCE, which governed much of the Near Eastern territories Alexander had conquered, so the association to the early Hellenistic leader was particularly useful for the later eastern kings.

Following the lead of his father, Philip II of Macedon, Alexander the Great had succeeded in defeating the Persian Empire in 333 BCE, and subsequently claimed the regions of Asia Minor and beyond as his own. With his newly amassed territory added to his realm, Alexander created an amalgamate empire that combined numerous cultures, religious beliefs, languages, and peoples, as Greeks and Macedonians mixed with native populations of Egypt, Syria, Armenia, and other polities.

When the Macedonian emperor died suddenly in Babylon in 323, there was no clear or capable heir to his throne, leaving the question of succession unanswered.¹ His former generals and military advisors fought for control over the empire, resulting in the drawing of new boundaries and the blending of others. Ruling Egypt and other North African territories was Ptolemy I Soter ("Savior"). Antipater attained the position of viceroy in Macedonia, and Antigonos Monophthalmus ("One-Eyed") and his son Demetrios Poliorketes ("the Besieger") vied for control over Asia Minor but lost the area to Seleukos I. Each of these rulers continued to define themselves through their connection to Alexander and his line.

Although controlled by western rulers, the territories did not undergo a complete Hellenization. In fact, in Asia Minor, Seleukos had to solicit support from the satraps of

¹ Arr. *Anab.* 7.26.3 and Diod. Sic. 17.117.4-5 describe that just before his death, Alexander uttered his last words, "to the strongest," in response to whom he bequeathed his kingdom and further added to the vague reply by stating, "all of his foremost friends would hold a great funeral contest over him."

provinces in Anatolia before claiming hegemony over these territories. The necessity of Seleukos seeking approval from the native leaders indicates that Alexander had left the provincial rulers – those established under the Achaemenid Empire – governing the territories even after the final Persian defeat at the Battle of Issos.² As Seleukos looked to the satraps for support, he was reaffirming their significance and the modicum of independence that they maintained as the native rulers of the eastern lands.

In the centuries that followed the *Diadochoi*'s reign, a similar tension remained in eastern territories of the former Macedonian empire. The populations of Armenia, Commagene, and Pontus included ethnic Greeks and those peoples native to Asia Minor. Tigranes, Antiochos, and Mithridates remained sensitive to the multi-ethnic populations that they governed, and they aimed to appease both Greek and eastern constituents alike. Moreover, the kings identified themselves as true Hellenistic-Eastern rulers. They embraced and advertised their association with both royal Iranian and Macedonian

² The exploration of the extraordinary impact the Achaemenid Empire had on the Seleucid and other Hellenistic kingdoms is the impetus behind such scholarship as that found in Amélie Kuhrt and Susan Sherwin-White's edited volume, *Hellenism in the East: The Interaction of Greek and Non-Greek Civilizations from Syria to Central Asia after Alexander* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987). See especially Susan Sherwin-White, "Seleucid Babylonia: A Case Study for the Installation and Development of Greek Rule," 1-31, and Malcolm Colledge, "Greek and Non-Greek Interaction in the Art and Architecture of the Hellenistic East," 134-62. See also Kuhrt and Sherwin-White, "The Transition from Achaemenid to Seleucid Rule in Babylonia: Revolution or Evolution?" *Achaemenid History* 8 (1994): 311-327, where the two authors discuss Babylonia as a case-study of the changes that occurred in a region previously under Achaemenid rule that was later absorbed by Alexander and his Successors. The authors note: "the ruling group and royal court, however close its links with some members of the Iranian nobility were, was predominantly constituted by Macedonian aristocrats heir to different cultural and religious traditions." And, "...several new cities were founded in Babylonia. Undoubtedly this also meant that the numbers of Macedonian, Greek (and perhaps other non-Babylonian) settlers in the region was intensified," quotes at 327. See also Amélie Kuhrt, "Alexander and Babylon," *Achaemenid History* 5 (1990): 121-30.

lineages, claiming a legitimacy that derived from the traditions of their multi-ethnic populations. This allowed the kings to forge connections to historically important figures from both sides of the historic divide and informed the images that they used to legitimize their authority.

Organization of the Study

With a chapter devoted to each ruler and his programs, this dissertation examines three case studies of late Hellenistic rulers negotiating their own and their kingdoms' roles in the world at a time when foreign powers constantly threatened their autonomy. The unique challenges each ruler faced and the policies he enacted are considered in the analysis of the images that each king produced, revealing new insights and new approaches to these ancient works of material culture.

In the first chapter, I investigate Tigranes the Great, who had extended the reaches of the Armenian kingdom to its greatest size in all of its history. Soon after his entry into Syria ca. 83 BCE, Tigranes initiated a visual program that featured the Tyche of Antioch on his coinage. While the appearance of the statue group on Tigranes' coins has traditionally been regarded as a signal of his capture of Antioch and the rest of Syria, the use of the image on Tigranes' coins minted in other cities, namely his capital city, Tigranokerta, indicates that the appropriation held further significance.

This chapter traces the statue's history from its original inception upon Seleukos' founding of the city and examines how its iconography would have been viewed differently by the Greeks than by the native Syrians that composed the population of Antioch. The visual program, legible to audiences of both backgrounds, albeit with

different connotations for each, resulted in a multivalent image made for all of Antioch. Furthermore, as time passed, the significance of the image became even more nuanced. Seleukos had founded the Seleukid Dynasty and was the most successful ruler of that line; Antioch flourished as one of the greatest and most prosperous Hellenistic cities. By the time Tigranes adopted the image for his coinage, the associations the Tyche of Antioch held with its original commissioner and his city, as well as with the favorable reputations enjoyed by both, were well-established. Thus, through Tigranes' harnessing of the image of Tyche for his coinage – the first extant representation of the statue – the Armenian king drew upon the connections to Seleukos and his prosperous city and also exploited the Tyche of Antioch's potential to communicate to both the eastern and western audiences of his empire.

The second ruler this project examines is Antiochos I of Commagene and his monumental *hierothesion* at Nemrud Dagh. An intricate visual program nearly identical on both the East and West Terraces of the complex includes colossal statues in-the-round and numerous reliefs featuring different types of scenes. Five seated figures make up the colossal statues. Across the back of the colossi, a lengthy inscription called the *Nomos* ("Sacred Law") survives, identifying the five as Zeus-Oromasdes, Apollo-Mithras-Helios-Hermes, Tyche-Commagene, Artagnes-Herakles-Ares, and Antiochos I himself. The same four deities reappear in relief panels engaging with Antiochos in a ritual handclasp, blessing the king and sanctioning his rule.

Other reliefs at the site feature Antiochos' paternal and maternal ancestors. While the king traced his ancestry to Alexander through his lineage from the Seleukids on his mother's side, he also claimed descent from Darius I the Great of the Persian

Achaemenid Dynasty. Antiochos celebrates this dual royal legacy with a relief devoted to each ancestor, showing reverence for both sides of his heritage. The four syncretic deities at his *hierothesion* also pay homage to his mixed lineage as each is comprised of one or more Greek deities and one Zoroastrian god (or a personification of the kingdom as in the case of Tyche-Commagene). The choice of these particular divinities, however, is curious and has not been sufficiently accounted for yet. The key to uncovering the significance of these gods for Antiochos and a more recondite message at the peak of Nemrud Dagh lies in reading the sculptural program through the lens of Zoroastrianism – the religion Antiochos primarily practiced. Using Zoroastrian texts and beliefs in conjunction with viewing the sculptures, an esoteric spell evoking the particular divinities and other sculpted elements at the site simultaneously honors Antiochos while protecting the king and Commagene against their enemies.

Lastly, I examine Mithridates VI Eupator who ruled the Pontic kingdom from 120-63 BCE. Like Antiochos of Commagene, Mithridates also traced his lineage back to royal Persian lines as well as celebrating his Macedonian roots in efforts to appeal to both Greek and eastern populations that formed his kingdom. His adoption of the name Dionysos – a god with eastern origins – and his use of Pegasus (the mythical winged horse associated with Perseus, to whom the Persians traced their own legacy) in royal imagery indicates his embrace of his eastern background. As for his Macedonian heritage provided through his mother – a Seleukid princess – Mithridates firmly associated himself with Alexander the Great. In fact, the Pontic king forged a stronger connection to Alexander than any other Hellenistic ruler had before or after him.

Mithridates' emulation of Alexander, supported by literary accounts, coincides with his fierce opposition to Roman rule over Asia as he battled the great western power in the three so-called Mithridatic Wars. In these wars, which waged on for over twenty years, Mithridates fought against some of Rome's most formidable generals, Lucullus, Sulla, and Pompey.³ Significantly, during the peak of his power, Mithridates minted two types of coinage, both portraying the Pontic king in the likeness of Alexander the Great. Visually connecting himself to Alexander is not reserved to Mithridates' coinage as sculpted portraits of the king reveal the likeness as well. Yet, the ruler's visage on coins differs from other portrait statues of Mithridates, in which he evoked a demi-god Alexander with divine associations to Herakles. In his numismatic images, the monarch specifically evokes Alexander devoid of any divine qualities or connections. By emphasizing Alexander's humanness, Mithridates posed himself as being capable of achieving similar political and military feats that his predecessor had performed and advertised this connection on a valuable, portable, and widely-circulated medium that would have found audiences not only in the multi-ethnic populations of his realm, but also his enemy – the Romans.

The visual programs produced under Tigranes, Antiochos, and Mithridates align with each king's governing policy and ideologies. By privileging the images of each ruler, this project offers new insight into the Late Hellenistic East and the powers that reigned during this pivotal moment in ancient history. Taken separately, each ruler's use of images emphasizes his individuality and, at the same time, documents the differences in the artistic programs of the three rulers. Viewed together, these three kings are shown

³ App. *Mith.* 111-12. On the parading of statues of Mithridates mentioned by ancient sources, see Plut. *Vit. Luc.* 37; Plin. *HN* 33.11.54; App. *Mith.* 116-117.

to exhibit similarities in their use of visual objects to assert their authority amid tension from other ruling powers. Yet, just as they responded differently to the foreign powers that threatened their kingdom, they produced images that negotiated their personal concepts of authority. In the context of the larger framework of their biographical histories and governing tactics, the visual program of each monarch announces legitimizing devices and exposes ruling ideologies.

Past Scholarship and New Contributions

The messages transmitted by each ruler's artistic program align with his foreign policies and military activity. Examining each king's visual programs within the larger frame of his political authority, this project expands our understanding of each monarch's attitudes regarding his power and position in the late Hellenistic world. Ruling at a time when smaller kingdoms and regions began to fall beneath the penumbra cast by the looming Roman Republic, each king reacted differently to the threat. Histories and legends that survive through ancient sources inform previous scholarship that treats these three rulers (among others) responding to the loss of their autonomy.⁴ This project, however, investigates the art and material culture of Tigranes II the Great of Armenia, Antiochos I of Commagene, and Mithridates VI Eupator of Pontus as a reflection of each king's politics.

Furthermore, the application of modern theories to the images provokes new discussions regarding their significance. Following more recent studies, such as those

⁴ See especially Richard D. Sullivan, *Near Eastern Royalty and Rome, 100-30 BC* (Buffalo, NY: University of Toronto Press, 1990).

published by Graham Zanker and Jas Elsner,⁵ this project examines the varied reception of an ethnically diverse audience that comprised the population of these regions.

Particularly pertinent to this study is Zanker's explication of "reader or viewer supplementation," which invites the audience to participate in the viewing experience by filling in details that an abbreviated depiction may leave out.⁶ Likewise, "reader or viewer integration," which turns the audience into actual participants in the work of art, narrative, or dialogue, provides a useful framework, especially for the second chapter of this dissertation.

The blending of culturally distinct forms present in the artistic programs of all three kings invited viewers from multiple backgrounds to engage with the images. In each case, the multiple groups that formed the audience for the visual programs performed an act of supplementation or integration that relied on their unique interpretation of the images and the meanings they engendered. Considering the multi-ethnic populations that formed the viewers of the art and material culture of Tigranes, Antiochos, and Mithridates, the reception of the images by each ruler's subjects added nuanced layers of significance to the art objects.

⁵ Graham Zanker, *Modes of Viewing in Hellenistic Poetry and Art* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2004); Jas Elsner, *Roman Eyes: Visuality and Subjectivity in Art and Text* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007). Both sources are applicable to the theoretical framework of audience and reception that this dissertation utilizes although Elsner's deals almost exclusively with cultural and visual constructs that determined how Romans viewed art.

⁶ Zanker, *Modes of Viewing*, 72-102; for example, the Farnese Herakles focuses on the hero standing alone after he has only barely completed his final trial despite his strength and intelligence. The apples in Herakles' hand references this trial and assigns the viewer the task of completing the narrative to which the statue alludes to.

Employing these modes of research, this dissertation expands on current studies that focus on the three monarchs and the objects associated with them. Richard D. Sullivan's *Near Eastern Royalty and Rome, 100-30 BC*,⁷ provides an excellent historical source for the kings referenced in this project, and his examination of them in relation to Rome further enhances the benefit of his study. R. R. R. Smith's *Hellenistic Royal Portraits* functions as both a guide and catalogue of many of the objects discussed in the following pages.⁸ Smith's quick dismissal of Antiochos' project at Nemrud Dagh as the work of a "megalomaniac," and a "minor potentate," however, leaves room for further discussion.⁹ Fortunately, Donald Sanders scrupulously collected and edited Theresa B. Goell's numerous essays, reports, and notes to produce a detailed monograph on the Commagenian site.¹⁰

Regarding Tigranes and Tyche, Marion Meyer's recent scholarship comprises the most current and comprehensive study on the Tyche of Antioch, while Hakob Manandyan provides ample background on the reign and politics of Tigranes the Great.¹¹ As for Mithridates, Brian C. McGing writes comprehensive and well-informed analyses

⁷ (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).

⁸ (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

⁹ *Ibid.*, 103.

¹⁰ *Nemrud Dagi: The Hierothesion of Antiochus I of Commagene*. Edited by Donald H. Sanders. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1996.

¹¹ Marion Meyer, *Die Personifikation der Stadt Antiocheia: Ein Neues Bild für eine neue Gottheit* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2006), and Hakob Manandyan, *Tigranes II and Rome: A New Interpretation Based on Primary Sources*, trans. George A. Bournoutian (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, Inc. 2007).

of the king's policies and beyond,¹² while Diana Spencer's publications provide studies on the Roman engagement of Alexander the Great.¹³

This dissertation fits within the frame of past scholarship that investigates the subject matter involved here in historical, political, and art historical ways. By connecting the artistic programs to each ruler and considering the motivations behind such projects, however, this study offers a new approach to the art and material culture associated with Tigranes the Great, Antiochos I, and Mithridates VI. Moreover, the trends discovered in all three kings' use of images to negotiate their authority in the late Hellenistic East takes the cases in tandem, rather than as isolated studies of one ruler, one object, or one policy. Explorations in the use of visual media to convey power and claim a right to rule could even invite further inquiry into other similar rulers' engagement of art objects, including the applications by the successors to the Hellenistic world – the Romans.

Facing threat to their kingdoms, the rulers of Armenia, Commagene, and Pontus who were active between 140 and 38 BCE sought retaliation to varying degrees. Tigranes succumbed only after suffering devastating defeat at the hands of the Roman general Lucullus. Antiochos fluctuated in whom and how he sought support to protect his small but wealthy kingdom. And Mithridates met Rome in battle in three separate wars, causing

¹² See especially, *The Foreign Policy of Mithridates*.

¹³ *Roman Alexander: Reading a Cultural Myth*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2003. Idem., "Roman Alexanders: Epistemology and Identity," in *Alexander the Great: A New History*, ed. Waldemar Heckel and Lawrence A. Tritle (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2010), 251-74. See also Mary Beard, "Alexander: How Great?" *The New York Review of Books*, October 27, 2011, accessed March 10, 2014, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2011/oct/27/alexander-how-great/>, who praises Spencer's exploration of the Roman reception of Alexander amid other contemporary scholarship that fails to advance studies on the Macedonian king.

the Senate to dispatch its strongest generals to fight him. All three rulers, however, explored a common route to legitimize the right to govern their respective regions. Using various artistic media, Tigranes, Antiochos, and Mithridates negotiated their individual authority through their employment of empowering images.

CHAPTER ONE

Tigranes the Great of Armenia and the Tyche of Antioch

The Tyche of Antioch, a sculptural image created for Seleukos I ca. 300 BCE, resonates as the archetypal city image. A female figure wearing a mural crown rests her foot upon the personification of the river Orontes that ran beside the city of Antioch while she sits upon a rocky outcrop that represents the nearby Mount Silpios. The statue stands as a monument to a ruler's aspirations to express victory, fertility, and fortune, legible to a mixed population in order to unite them as citizens of a new Hellenistic city and Seleukid capital.

The earliest example of a coin bearing an image of the Tyche of Antioch (fig. 1.1) belongs, not to Seleukos, but to Tigranes the Great who ruled the kingdom of Armenia from 95-55 BCE. Tigranes' appropriation of the image on his coinage references the sculpture's history, significance, and ideology of its initial creation while simultaneously fulfilling Tigranes' own agenda as he expanded the Armenian kingdom to the greatest extent in its entire history. Minted after Tigranes' entry into Antioch in 83, the coins not only indicate the ruler's control over the city but also speak to Tigranes' imperial interests. Tracing the statue's original conception and what it came to embody reveals Tigranes' interests in securing the image as his own so as to legitimize his rule as he expanded the Armenian kingdom. In order to appreciate Tigranes' use of the Tyche of Antioch imagery on his coinage, Seleukos' commission of the original statue needs examining.

The Founding of Antioch

According to accounts by the fourth century CE orator Libanius (a citizen of Antioch) and the sixth century CE chronicler Ioannes Malalas (another Antiochene),¹ Seleukos I Nikator was on Mount Casius in April of 300 BCE when he made a sacrifice to Zeus asking his tutelary deity where he should found his city. Having recently defeated Antigonos I Monophthalmus (“Antigonos the One-Eyed”) at the Battle of Ipsos in 301 BCE, Seleukos had divided Antigonos’ kingdom between himself and his ally in the battle, Lysimachos.² He then quickly set out to found new cities to add to his own realm in the mode of his Macedonian predecessors, Philip II and Alexander the Great, who had established their rule in the regions they conquered by building cities.³

¹ On the works of Malalas and Libanius, see Glanville Downey, “Libanius’ Oration in Praise of Antioch (Oration XI),” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 103 (1959): 652-86; Elizabeth Jeffreys, Brian Croke, and Roger Scott, eds., *Studies in John Malalas* (Sydney: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1990); Downey, *A History of Antioch in Syria from Seleucus to the Arab Conquest* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 37-41, 56. As in reading many ancient texts, the reader must be wary of the two authors having biased opinions or agendas that affect their descriptions. For instance, Libanius’s oration was delivered at the local Olympic games (either 356 or 360 CE), and therefore he sang high praises of Antioch. As for Malalas, Downey characterizes him as such: “The author appears to have had a poor knowledge of history, to have used his sources uncritically, and to have been credulous of material that he ought not to have accepted,” *A History of Antioch*, 38. Nonetheless, these accounts remain crucial to the studies of ancient Antioch and are the closest to actual Hellenistic records that have survived.

² Seleukos was awarded Mesopotamia and Syria as a result of the victory, but Ptolemy I already occupied half of Syria including its richest part – Phoenicia. Concurrently, Demetrios Poliorketes controlled Tyre and Sidon. Seleukos was not in a position at the time to stand up against either of them so was left with some “peasant land with some Macedonian-Greek garrisons and one city, Antigoneia,” see John Grainger, *Seleukos Nikator: Constructing a Hellenistic Kingdom* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 125-26.

³ *Ibid.*, 127-31.

The legend continues that an eagle descended from the sky, grabbed the sacrificial meat, and carried it to the site where the city Seleukia Pieria was founded. After giving thanks to Zeus in the nearby town of Iopolis, Seleukos went to Antigoneia (the former capital of his defeated enemy Antigonos) to make further sacrifices to Zeus. With the guidance of the priest Amphion, Seleukos asked Zeus whether he should change the name and occupy Antigoneia or build another city elsewhere. Once again, an eagle snatched the sacrificial meat and Seleukos followed, this time to the village of Bottia opposite Mount Silpios.⁴ Here, he laid the foundations of the walls of the new city, and named his newly founded realm Antioch after his father Antiochos.⁵

Establishing the new city required not only numerous building projects, but also a population to claim their titles as citizens of Antioch.⁶ Ancient sources describe Seleukos populating his city with Athenians, Macedonians, former inhabitants of Antigoneia, those

⁴ Ioannes Malalas, *Chronographia* 8.199-200; Lib., *Oration II, Antiochikos* 11.85ff. Although, in 11.76, Libanius describes Alexander as founding the temple of Zeus Bottios, see Downey, *A History of Antioch*, 68, n.62. All these sources greatly post-date the event; they reflect legends current in Antioch from the 4th through the 6th centuries and are out main sources for these legends.

⁵ Seleukos named no fewer than fifteen other cities Antioch. Downey, *A History of Antioch*, 57.

⁶ Downey, *A History of Antioch*, 69-73, discusses the buildings that made up Seleukos's city the ruler funding public building projects including the construction of the agora, two grain elevators, and most likely a citadel on the top of Mount Silpios as well as a theater for the enjoyment of the citizens. The two grain elevators, which were raised on arches, is attested by an anonymous Arabic inscription; see I. Guidi, "Una descrizione araba di Antiochia," *Rendiconti della R. Accademia dei Lincei, Cl. Di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche* ser. 5, vol. 6 (1897): 156. Although none of the surviving sources mention a theater, Downey finds it hard to believe that Seleukos would not have provided one for the well-being of the citizens and suggests one could have easily been set up on the slopes of the mountain. He also supposes the likelihood of a citadel since "the presence of citadels in the other major Seleukid foundations makes it seem almost beyond question that there was one at Antioch," quote at 71.

who had previously lived on Mount Silpios (Cretans, Cypriotes, Argives, and Heraclids alike), Jews, and indigenous Syrians.⁷ As historian Glanville Downey writes, "...thus, in its ethnic composition Antioch was at the time of its foundation, a typical example of Seleukid policy of settling Macedonians and Greeks at strategic points in the newly conquered territory in order to assure the security of the new regime."⁸

With such a diverse population to govern, Seleukos undoubtedly faced challenges trying to unite the citizens of his newly founded cities. He not only faced opposition from the native Syrians, a group that had never welcomed Seleukid rule,⁹ but also from the Greeks and Macedonians settled in and around Antioch, many of whom were still loyal to Seleukos' enemy, the Antigonids. Until the Battle of Ipsos, these Greeks and Macedonians were the subjects of Antigonos and Demetrios. Demetrios could easily have rallied his (and his late father's) supporters to revolt against Seleukos, but he chose to leave Syria to battle Lysimachos at Thrace instead.¹⁰ Fortunately for Seleukos, this left him time to develop and mold the region to serve as the center of his kingdom.¹¹

⁷ Malalas, *Chronographia* 8.201-02; Lib., *Oration* 11.91-92; Joseph, *Ap.* 2.39, *AJ* 12.119, *BJ* 7.43ff. Strabo informs us that Seleukos founded the first of the quarters and transferred the Antigoneians there, *Geographica* 16.2.4. Downey elaborates that the native Syrians were assigned to a separate area next to Seleukos's principal city, either walled off next to the original foundation or an unwalled area that was later enclosed to become the second of the four quarters of the city, *A History of Antioch*, 80. As for the numbers, Downey estimates circa 5,300 adult male citizens at Antioch, which brings the number of residents including women and children to ca. 17,000-25,000 (not counting slaves), 81-82; Grainger estimates Seleukos was settling at least 500,000 people in his cities, and they were all founded in the course of one year; *Seleukos Nikator*, 128-29.

⁸ Downey, *A History of Antioch*, 80.

⁹ Grainger, *Seleukos Nikator*, 126; Grainger remarks, "...all indications are that Greek rule was less welcome than that of the Persians, for it had been the Persians who had been the liberators of Syria from, as it happens, the rule of the Babylonians."

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 126.

In less than a year, Seleukos developed four cities, naming them after places in Greece and Macedon, and founded four other cities, which he named after his family – Antioch, Seleukia Pieria, Laodikeia-on-the-Sea, and Apamea.¹² The establishment of these cities worked brilliantly for Seleukos since the king gave the citizens of these new cities a common identity. The Athenians, Macedonians, Antigoneians, and Syrians all became members of a Hellenistic kingdom, and Seleukos remained at the head of that kingdom. As John Grainger succinctly states, through the founding of these cities, “Seleukos had converted a potentially hostile population into one which was potentially loyal.”¹³

Two centuries later, well after the break-up of the Seleukid Empire, Tigranes faced a similar potential for hostility when he absorbed Syria into his kingdom in 83 BCE. As he sought to ensure his position, he appropriated the Seleukid image of Tyche to enact a similar conversion. By the time of his rule, however, the statue had come to symbolize more than just the good fortune of Antioch. In adopting the image, Tigranes also accessed the history of Antioch, Seleukos, and Seleukos’ artistic patronage.

¹¹ Ibid., 126-7. Downey writes that the divergence of the Antigonids away from Syria allowed Seleukos to “solve the extraordinarily difficult political problem of Syria...difficult because of the intricate connections between internal and external factors, and it had to be dealt with in a way which damped down internal tensions and warded off external dangers.”

¹² Ibid., 127. Each of these four cities measured ca. 220-300 acres in area with Antioch being the smallest and Seleukia Pieria the largest.

¹³ Ibid., 130.

The Goddess Tyche and the Tyche of Antioch in Ancient Sources

Ancient sources make numerous mentions of the goddess Tyche. According to Hesiod (*Theog.* 339-371), Tyche is one of the oldest daughters of Tethys and Okeanos whereas Pindar (*Nem.* 12.1) records her as the daughter of Zeus Eleutherios, and Orphic Hymn 72 names her as Zeus Eubouleos' progeny.¹⁴ The seventh century BCE Spartan poet Alcman calls Tyche the sister of Eunomia and Peitho, with Prometheus having fathered all three of them.¹⁵ Pausanias (4.30.3) reports that Homer first mentioned Tyche in his Hymn to Demeter, "where he enumerates the daughters of Okeanos, telling how they played with Kore the daughter of Demeter, and making Tyche one of them."¹⁶ Tyche is also likened to the constellation Virgo by one ancient source,¹⁷ and in her role as guide of world affairs, Tyche is correlated to the Fates.¹⁸ She, however, is most often cited as the goddess of fortune, fate, and chance. When her nature as fortune is preferable, she

¹⁴ *LIMC* VIII.1 sv. *Tyche*; 115, Laurence Villard, adds that being the daughter of Eleutherios makes Tyche one of the Fates, and the strongest one at that. See Amy Smith, "Athenian Political Art from the Fifth and Fourth Centuries BCE: Images of Political Personifications," in C.W. Blackwell, ed., *Dēmos: Classical Athenian Democracy* (A. Mahoney and R. Scaife, edd., *The Stoa: a consortium for electronic publication in the humanities* [www.stoa.org]) edition of January 18 2003, 25, for more ancient references to Tyche.

¹⁵ Fragment 64, in *Greek Lyric II: Anacreon, Anacreontea, Choral Lyric from Olympus to Alcman*, translated by David A. Campbell (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 439.

¹⁶ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, trans. W. H. S. Jones (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1977); 339. Cf. *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* 5, 415ff.

¹⁷ Pseudo-Hyginus, *Astronomica* 2.25.

¹⁸ Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 7.26.8, states that he is in agreement with Pindar that Tyche is one of the Moirai, and she is more powerful than any of her sisters.

becomes Agathe Tyche or she gains the prefix “eu” to her name making her Eutykhia – the goddess of good luck, prosperity, and success.

Conversely, the negative aspects of Tyche’s character liken her to the goddess Nemesis, who as Tyche, is associated with one’s fate. The pair appears together on a fifth-century Attic amphora in Berlin¹⁹ where Nemesis points Tyche’s attention to Helen, who in the scene has been persuaded by Aphrodite to elope with Paris (fig. 1.2).²⁰ The two goddesses also share an attribute – the wheel, which is used to signify visually both Tyche’s and Nemesis’ unpredictability in determining one’s fate.²¹

As a representation of the city of Antioch’s good fortune, the Tyche of Antioch was an artistic expression of Seleukos’ civic policy to unite the otherwise heterogeneous population. Appealing and readable to the diverse group of citizens, Seleukos’ Tyche was a source of pride for Antiochenes and a symbol of grandiose achievement for the Hellenistic ruler. While Seleukos commissioned other statues that spoke to the multi-

¹⁹ Berlin 30036, ARV² 1173.1, a red-figure pointed amphoriskos by the Heimarmene Painter.

²⁰ Nemesis’ name is related to the word, “νεμειν” meaning, “to give what’s due.” The Berlin amphora labels the figures, but the figure identified as Tyche is missing a full inscription (only _ Y _ E survives) Lack of identifying attributes has led to her identification as Tyche, however, since she is seen consorting with the goddess Nemesis, who is clearly labeled.

²¹ Tyche is more often depicted holding a rudder. Michael B. Hornum, *Nemesis, the Roman State, and the Games* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1993), 25-28, observes that while the wheel appears earlier in the iconography of Nemesis, literary references to the “wheel of Fortune” (Cicero, *In Pisonem* 22) are earlier than those connecting the wheel to Nemesis. Besides the rudder, Dio Chrysostom, *Orations* 63.7, describes that some imagine Tyche on a razor’s edge to signify the abruptness with which fortune can change, while others put her on top of a sphere or orb to represent the unsteadiness of fortune rolling either for or against one’s favor. VIII.1 sv *Tyche*; 118-25, Laurence Villard and VIII.1 sv. *Tyche/Fortuna*; 125-41, Federico Rausa, provide ample late Hellenistic to early Imperial examples depicting Tyche and Tyche/Fortuna with these attributes.

cultural population of the city including another Tyche,²² the Tyche of Antioch, sculpted by Eutychedes of Sikyon was the most notable, and its discussion by ancient authors as well as its survival through numerous copies attests to its popularity from Hellenistic times and beyond.²³

The first century CE Roman author Pliny the Elder gives the first mention of the sculptor Eutychedes in extant ancient literature. He tells us that Eutychedes was active during the 121st Olympiad, or between 296 and 293 BCE, and that he created a statue of the river Eurotas “of which has been frequently remarked, that the work of the artist appears more flowing than the waters even of the river.”²⁴ The second century CE traveler Pausanias (6.2.6-7) also mentions Eutychedes and elucidates another aspect of his career. While describing the statues of victors at Olympia, Pausanias remarks on a statue of Timosthenes of Elis created by Eutychedes of Sikyon, the pupil of Alexander the Great’s court sculptor, Lysippos. As an addendum, the ancient writer recalls that this same Eutychedes “made for the Syrians on the Orontes an image of Tyche, which is highly valued by the natives.”²⁵ The two descriptions align with one another since the date Pliny provides for Eutychedes’ activity matches with Pausanias’ statement that

²² Besides the Tyche of Antioch, Seleukos erected other statues to celebrate and adorn his newfound city. Malalas, *Chronographia* 8.202, says that the King commissioned works such as the commemorative statue of the eagle of Zeus that marked the spot where the city was founded as well as a statue of the priest Amphion, who had aided the King in his sacrifices to Zeus.

²³ Figures of the Tyche of Antioch were sold as souvenirs to the city’s visitors; Downey, *A History of Antioch*, 75.

²⁴ Plin., *NH* 34.19, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), 185.

²⁵ Trans. Jones, 11. Pausanias mentions Eutychedes once again (6.3.6), but only to name his pupil, Kantharos of Sikyon.

Lysippos was the Sikyon sculptor's teacher. Furthermore, the *ekphrasis* Pliny provides about the fluid nature of the river Eurotas finds resonance in the figure of the river Orontes in many versions of the Tyche of Antioch group.

In his description of his hometown, the chronicler Malalas also speaks of the Tyche of Antioch as well as two other Tychai. The Tyche of Antigoneia will be discussed further below; the other Tyche Malalas describes is the Tyche of Rome, which Julius Caesar had erected in the Temple of Ares at Antioch.²⁶ While Malalas informs us that it was Seleukos I Nikator who commissioned the Tyche of Antioch, and his description of the group's composition was tantamount in identifying surviving copies, the account offers other details that complicate matters.

Malalas first mentions the Tyche of Antioch in a reference to the city's foundation in 300 BCE:

Through the agency of Amphion, the chief priest and wonder worker, he [Seleukos, the king] sacrificed a virgin girl named Aimathe, between the city and the river... He set up a bronze statue of a human figure, the girl who had been sacrificed, as the Tyche of the city, [sitting] above the river, and he immediately made a sacrifice to this Tyche.²⁷

Next, Malalas connects Tyche to Trajan, describing that the Emperor finished the theater of Antioch and placed within it a bronze statue of the girl, Kalliope, whom he had sacrificed to purify the city following the earthquake of 115 CE. Malalas continues, "the

²⁶ Malalas, *Chronographia* 9.216.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.200-201, trans. Elizabeth Jeffreys, Michael Jeffreys, and Roger Scott (Melbourne: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1986), 106. Richard Förster first added the word, "sitting" to the text, connecting this account with the second time Malalas mentions the sculpture in relation to Trajan (see below), Richard Förster, "Antiochia am Orontes," *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts* 12 (1897): 145.

statue stood above four columns in the middle of the nymphaion in the proscenium; she was seated above the Orontes and was being crowned by the emperors Seleukos and Antiochos in the guise of the city's Tyche."²⁸

Most scholars agree that the latter reference to the Tyche of Antioch by Malalas refers to another statue that was a copy of the original by Eutyichides.²⁹ Nevertheless, as Mark D. Stansbury-O'Donnell keenly points out, "although the passage therefore describes a Trajanic copy dedicated to another deity, it does reconfirm the nature of the original composition, with a seated woman above the figure of the river god."³⁰

Therefore, the numerous versions of the original such as the bronze statuettes, larger marble statues, reliefs, and impressions on gems and coins are highly likely to be close emulations of the original. According to Marion Meyer, a large group of bronze statuettes and the marble reproduction in Budapest portray common features that can trace back to the appearance of Eutyichides' Tyche.³¹ Using plaster casts of two bronze statuettes,

²⁸ Malalas, *Chronographia* 11.275-76, trans. Jeffreys, 146.

²⁹ Mark D. Stansbury-O'Donnell, "Reflections of the Tyche of Antioch," 52-53; Ridgway, *Hellenistic Sculpture I*, 233; idem., "Musing on the Muses," 269; Downey, *A History of Antioch in Syria*, 217.

³⁰ Stansbury-O'Donnell, "Reflections of the Tyche," 53.

³¹ These bronze statuettes include the J. Paul Getty Museum 96.AB.196, (fig. 1.3) the Yale University Art Gallery 1986.65.1 (fig. 1.4), the Louvre Br 4453 (fig. 1.5), the Budapest Ungarisches Nationalmuseum Inv. 4.1933.8 (fig. 1.6), the Paris Bibliothèque National Cabinet des Médailles 607 (fig. 1.7), and one from a private collection in Germany (fig. 1.8). Meyer, *Die Personifikation der Stadt Antiocheia*, 410, 413-16, 419, pls. 11-16.

Meyer reconstructs a possible representation of the original.³² As will be shown further below, all of these versions find resonances in the image of the Tyche of Antioch on Tigranes' coinage.

Recovering the Tyche of Antioch through Later Copies

The numerous extant copies Eutychides' sculptural group attests to the popularity that the statue continued to hold for centuries after its original creation. Reproductions in smaller bronze, silver, glass, and terracotta statuettes, large marble copies and its feature on coins, gems, reliefs, and mosaics from Antioch as well as parts of the Mediterranean, prove that the Tyche of Antioch enjoyed widespread acclaim.

With the original bronze statue lost,³³ the modern viewer is resigned to refer to later copies and reproductions. In 1790 E. Q. Visconti first identified the marble statue in the Vatican collection (see fig. 1.9) as the Tyche of Antioch based on numismatic and literary comparisons,³⁴ and using this and other versions of Tyche, Tobias Dohrn

³² Ibid., 512, features the tentative reconstruction using casts of the Tyche statuette from Paris (Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Médailles 607) and the river Orontes statuette also from Paris (Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Médailles 608bis) on pl. 47.

³³ It is assumed that the original was in bronze since Pliny discusses Eutychides in the section on statues in bronze, *Naturalis Historia* 34.19; see also Marion Meyer, *Die Personifikation der Stadt Antiocheia*, 66-67.

³⁴ The Vatican version (GC 49) generally appears similar to the coin images and bronze and stone versions, but the drapery is rather more simplified. Also, although the Vatican statue is restored, Tyche's right arm bends at the elbow and is held upright in front of her face. In other versions (on the coins of Tigranes included), her arm lowered onto her lap and stretched forward away from her knee. The Tyche of Antioch at the Budapest Museum of Fine Arts preserves the details of the chiton and himation as they appear on bronze statuettes better than the Vatican one. See Brunhilde Sismondo Ridgway, *Hellenistic Sculpture I: The Styles of ca. 331-200 B.C.* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 233-37. On 267, Ridgway uses the detailed drapery of the

surmises that the original comprised the goddess seated with her right leg crossed over her left one.³⁵ Tyche wears thick-soled sandals, a ribbed *chiton*, and a *himation* on most representations and beneath her crown, her hair is parted in the middle.³⁶ The crown, which appears as miniature city walls complete with crenellated towers in some cases, is known as the mural crown from the French “mur,” meaning wall. The female figure rests her left hand upon the rock on which she sits, and in most representations she is shown holding an object in her right. The high rock flattened on top upon which she sits represents Mount Silpios, the mountain situated near Antioch. Tyche’s right foot rests on the right shoulder of the personification of the river Orontes, which served as a natural boundary for Antioch; the river is depicted as a nude youth swimming in mid-stroke. Thus the Greek-style goddess massively occupies and controls the physical landscape, imposing a Greek identity on it.

Speculations on what Tyche holds, along with the style of her mural crown and her exact setting abound, and discrepancies occur in the extant reflections with some frequency. For example, in some versions of the group (figs. 1.10-1.12) the relationship

Budapest Tyche to liken the Tyche of Antioch to the Muses. Ridgway also notes that the stone statues are all headless (including the Vatican version, which has been restored), so it is impossible to determine with certainty what the original headdress looked like.

³⁵ See Tobias Dohrn, *Die Tyche von Antiochia* (Berlin: Verlag Gebr. Mann, 1960).

³⁶ Some scholars believe one version more faithful to the original than another for various reasons. Waldemar Deonna, “Histoire d’un Emblème: La Couronne Murale des Villes et Pays Personnifiés,” *Genava – Bulletin de Musée d’Art et d’Histoire de Genève* 18 (1940): 137, no. 3, prefers the Budapest bronze statuette and others like it. On the other hand, Brunhilde Sismondo Ridgway, “Musing on the Muses,” in *Beiträge zur Ikonographie und Hermeneutik. Festschrift für Nikolaus Himmelmann* (Mainz am Rhein: P. von Zabern, 1989), 265-66, sees the Vatican version as the closest to the original Tyche because of the raised right forearm, albeit arguing for Tyche as a representation of a Muse; Ridgway is quick to agree with others, however, that it is a “classicizing, simplified variant.”

of Tyche to the river Orontes changes, and sometimes Orontes is omitted completely. The lack of the swimming Orontes figure is easily reconciled, however, by the notion that when other cities adopted Eutychides' Tyche as their own city emblem, they lacked a nearby river so they dispensed with representing a swimming figure.³⁷ The goddess' attributes – the crown and the item she holds in her hand – however, are more problematic. The objects Tyche holds in her right hand alternate between sheaves of wheat, grain, a palm branch, grapes, and poppy, and the appearance of her mural crown is not fixed either (figs. 1.13-1.14).³⁸

On Tigranes' coins from Antioch (see fig. 1.1), the seated goddess is shown in profile with her right foot resting on the right shoulder of the river Orontes. A mural crown rests atop her head and she carries a palm branch in one hand. This same profile view is found on coins of Tigranes from his other cities (figs. 1.15-1.17) as well as on those of rulers of the early Roman Empire (figs. 1.18-1.19).³⁹ I argue the version stamped onto these coins is a faithful reproduction of the original. By appropriating the authentic image as his own, Tigranes attempted to harness both the significance of the statue's

³⁷ Tyche is represented with “attributes related to the locality that she was meant to protect, e.g., a river, a rocky outcrop, or in the case of two Tychai protecting a desert city or settlement, a camel,” Susan B. Matheson, “The Goddess Tyche,” in *Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin, An Obsession with Fortune: Tyche in Greek and Roman Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), n. 23.

³⁸ Meyer, *Die Personifikation der Stadt Antiocheia*, 107-8, believes the combinations of the harvest of both Demeter and Dionysos, which ripen at different times during the year, assured that Tyche consistently participates in all the blessings of fertility and prosperity.

³⁹ These include coins of the emperors Augustus, Tiberius, and Domitian. The other coins of Tigranes are from Tigranokerta in Armenia, which will be further discussed below. See Tobias Dohrn, *Die Tyche von Antiochia*, 26-27; *LIMC* I.1 sv. *Antiocheia*; 845, nos. 34-41, I.2: pl. 674, Jean Charles Balty; Stansbury-O'Donnell, “Reflections of the Tyche of Antioch,” 55.

individual aspects and of its whole. To fully express these points, the meaning of the particular attributes of the original statue and what the Tyche came to represent to the citizens of Antioch and beyond require explication. Greeks and Syrians, the major population groups of Antioch, each read the statue in its own way.

The Greek Reading of the Palm and Mural Crown

In 1935, Clemens Bosch proposed that Eutyichides' Tyche held a palm branch, a suggestion that has found support in subsequent decades.⁴⁰ The palm branch as a sign of victory in Greek art is confirmed by a number of ancient sources as well as surviving works of art. Pausanias (8.48.2-3) describes how the victor of athletic contests was often awarded a crown of palm leaves and carried a palm branch in his right hand, explaining that this custom began when Theseus, having defeated the Minotaur in Crete, organized games in honor of Apollo in Delos and crowned the winners with palm.⁴¹ In Plutarch's *Moralia* (*Quaest. conv.* 8.4) Sospis, Herodes, Protogenes, Praxiteles, and Caphisus debate why the palm frond was given to victors at athletic games. The speakers offer reasons such as the ability for the palm tree to resist pressure:

If you impose weight on a piece of palm-wood, it does not bend down and give way, but curves up in the opposite direction, as though resisting him who would force it. This is the way with athletic contests, too. Those who cannot stand the strain because of weakness and softness are pressed down and forced to bend, but those who stoutly

⁴⁰ Clemens Bosch, *Die Kleinasiatischen Münzen der Römischen Kaiserzeit* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1935), 258; Margaret Bieber agrees in her review of *Die Tyche von Antiochia*, by Tobias Dohn, *American Journal of Archaeology* 66 (1962): 215; see also Stansbury-O'Donnell, "Reflections of the Tyche," 59.

⁴¹ Plutarch also makes this remark in *Vit. Thes.* 21.2.

bear up under training are raised up and exalted, not in body only but in mind as well.

Sospius adds that the palm does not shed its leaves and “it is this strength that it has which people particularly associate with the vigor that brings victory.”⁴² Helena Fracchia Miller outlines the representation of the palm in Greek art as markers of victory and finds that the motif appears as early as the late-sixth or early-fifth century BCE on a Panathenaic prize amphora in Naples.⁴³ Therefore, the view that the original palm branch held by the Tyche of Antioch symbolized victory for Seleukos at the Battle of Ipsos is well-founded and bolsters the argument that Eutychides had sculpted the Tyche holding a palm branch rather than sheaves of grain that would indicate the fertility of the land.

For in his examination of the Cypselos dedication at the sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi, Waldemar Deonna discusses the palm as a symbol of fertility as well.⁴⁴ Deonna argues that since the palm tree is an attribute of the gods of vegetation and since Apollo is (among other things) a god of vegetation, one of the palm’s symbolical meanings is fecundity.⁴⁵

⁴² This section of the *Moralia* is discussed and translated in Helena Fracchia Miller, *The Iconography of the Palm in Greek Art: Significance and Symbolism* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1979), 35, Appendix I.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 36-37, 148-52. Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples, 81294. *CVA Naples* 1 (20), III H, g, Tav. 1, 1 and 3 (941). See Martin Bentz, *Panathenäische Preisamphoren: eine athenische Vasengattung und ihre Funktion vom 6-4 Jahrhundert v. Chr.* (Basel: Vereinigung der Freunde Antiker Kunst, 1998): 146, pl. 70, who dates the vase ca. 500-450 BCE.

⁴⁴ See especially Waldemar Deonna, “L’ex-voto de Cypselos à Delphes: le symbolisme du palmier et des grenouilles.” *Revue de L’Histoire des Religions* 139 (1951): 196-98.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 198.

Miller expands on Deonna's statement, but the connotation of fertility she finds in images involving the palm is instead related to sexuality, regeneration, and immortality.⁴⁶ Identifying the palm tree in scenes where sexual activity is pictured or implied, Miller widens the scope to view "the progression from sexual interest or activity to generation," and "the progression from generation to regeneration," and finally to immortality.⁴⁷ Yet, the symbolization of fertility through the palm in Greek art is more abstract, and even Deonna concludes his two-part essay by saying the palm on the Cypselos dedication is a "tree of power...a tree of force...a tree that announces glory and success; it is less a commemoration of a victory that the prince won against his adversaries than it is a wish for victory and triumph in the future."⁴⁸

Along these lines, Margarete Bieber believes that Tyche originally held a palm branch to signify the victory Seleukos had at the Battle of Ipsos. It should be noted that on gems and coins from the era of Trajan and slightly before, Tyche holds sheaves of grain or poppies, but all the known examples were struck outside Antioch. After Trajan, however, even dies from Antioch produced Tyche holding grain, and the change most likely occurred contemporaneously with the Roman emperor.⁴⁹ According to Bieber, the change occurred under Trajan, who made a copy of the Tyche to be placed in the theater of Antioch. In this version, the palm was replaced with wheat – a species of fauna with

⁴⁶ Miller, *The Iconography of the Palm in Greek Art*, 19-34.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 26, 33-34.

⁴⁸ Deonna, "L'ex-voto de Cypselos à Delphes," 16.

⁴⁹ Nevertheless, the dearth of literary evidence on this particular point has not prevented Stansbury-O'Donnell from imagining that a refurbishing of the Antiochene statue is connected to Trajan's entry into the city; "Reflections of the Tyche," 58.

more explicit iconography of fertility and prosperity in the Roman world.⁵⁰ In contrast, Tigranes, as an eastern ruler of the late Hellenistic period, chose to mint his coins with the Tyche of Antioch on the reverse, that remained faithful to Seleukos' original design of the goddess holding the palm as a symbol of both fecundity and victory.

As for the mural crown, variations cap classical deities of fertility such as Aphrodite, Hera, Artemis, and Demeter.⁵¹ The motif, however, is concentrated in the eastern regions of Greece according to Deonna "where Greek art adopts foreign details"⁵² and it is likely that the East supplied the mural crown for Tyche. Before the Tyche of Antioch, the crown appears on female figures on a stater of Pythagoras of Salamis and on a didrachm of Euagoras II also from Salamis, both dated to the mid-fourth century BCE (figs. 1.20-1.21).⁵³ The coin figures are identified as Tyche solely on the basis of the mural crown, following the logic that since they share an attribute with the Tyche of

⁵⁰ Bieber, review of *Die Tyche von Antiochia*, 215.

⁵¹ For examples of the above, see: *LIMC* I.1 sv. *Aphrodite*; 15-16, nos. 54, 59.61.63, II.2: pl. 9-10, Angelos Delivorrias. *LIMC* IV.1 sv. *Hera*; 666-68, 683, 684, nos. 47-57, 59-62, 65-66, 199, 206, IV.2: pl. 406-407, 415, Anneliese Kossatz-Deissmann. *LIMC* II.1 sv. *Artemis*; 627-32, 665-67, 671, nos. 48, 53, 64, 78, 86, 88, 97, 100, 569, 575, 578, 595, 607, 659, II.2: pl. 447-50, 491-93, 498, Lilly Kahil. *LIMC* IV.1 sv. *Demeter*; 855-60, nos. 86-89, 91, 93-94, 96-97, 100, 102-103, 105-106, 107, 121, 144, 148, 154, 189, 202, 211, 269, 330, IV.2: pl. 570-72, 574-75, 579, 584, Luigi Beschi.

Deonna, "Histoire d'un Emblème: La Couronne Murale des Villes et Pays Personnifiés," *Genava – Bulletin de Musée d'Art et d'Histoire de Genève* 18 (1940): 142-44, fig. 12, points out a mural crown coiffing the personification of the city of Thebes on a red-figure krater signed by the South Italian (Paestan) painter Asteas (*LIMC* VII.1 sv. *Thebe*; 914, no. 4, Christina Vlassopoulou). Deonna also offers archaic examples such as vase paintings featuring the *Potnia Theron* and reliefs and statuettes from Sparta, Rhodes, and Boeotia.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 143.

⁵³ Matheson, "The Goddess Tyche," 24-25, cat. 22. Pythagoras coin: American Numismatic Society 1967.152.551. Euagoras coin: British Museum (BMC 67 C.144.10)

Antioch, they too must be Tychai. Yet, as discussed further below, it is debated whether the identity of Tyche was originally attached to the Antioch statue.

The meaning of the city walls forming Tyche's crown that was most significant for the Greeks was one that signaled important aspects of mythic city identity.⁵⁴ Thus, Seleukos reinforced the message of Greek possession of Antioch in Syria by placing an emblem of the city as center of power on the goddess' head. The unmistakable imitation of city walls seen on Tyche would have been striking to a Greek audience and may have led at least some viewers to see an image of the city as divinely inspired. Yet, the Greeks were not the only citizens to comprise the population of Antioch. And for the native Syrian population, the palm and mural crown offered other connotations.

The Syrian Reading of the Palm and Mural Crown

In the Ancient Near East, the palm held a connotation different from victory, complicating its role in the statue. H. F. Mussche points out that while the palm is rare in Greece, and hence did not develop readily as a symbol of fecundity, in Mesopotamia,

⁵⁴ Examples from Greek art and literature indicate that wall motifs represented cities to the Greek viewer. See for example, William A. P. Childs, *The City-Reliefs of Lycia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), and Evelyn B. Harrison, "Motifs of the City-Siege on the Shield of Athena Parthenos," *American Journal of Archaeology* 85 (1981): 281-317. In Harrison, see especially 294-311, where she argues that the city walls forming the background of the Amazonomachy scene form the setting of the battle taking place on and around the Athenian Acropolis.

I would like to thank Eva Stehle for also pointing out that in both the *Iliad* (22.470, 16.100) and the *Odyssey* (1.334, 13.399), the word "*kredemnon*," which normally means a woman's headdress or veil that signals her modesty, is used to express city walls.

palm trees were numerous and bore fruit.⁵⁵ In fact, Herodes (through Plut. *Mor.* 8.4) compares the palm trees of Greece to those in Syria and Egypt stating that the Greek ones remain immature and do not ripen, and therefore it is curious that the palm frond is awarded to victors of competitions. Herodes continues in the passage to remark that the palms of Syria and Egypt, on the other hand, “bore dates, [so that they were] the most pleasant of all sights to see and the sweetest of all dried fruits, [and] there would be no other tree to compare it with.”⁵⁶

The use of the palm as an attribute of fertility in the Near East is found as early as the late-fourth to early-third millennium on the Warka Vase from Uruk (fig. 1.22), on which the bottom register displays ears of grain alternating with date palm trees.⁵⁷ Mussche thus interprets the palm as a symbol of fertility and the deities associated with the tree as gods of fecundity as well.⁵⁸ Thus, for the Syrian citizens of Antioch, the statue

⁵⁵ H. F. Mussche, “Le Rameau de palmier et la grebe d’épis, attributs de la Tyché gréco-romaine,” *L’Antiquité Classique* 24 (1955): 435.

⁵⁶ Plut., *Mor.*, trans. Edwin L. Minar, Jr., F. H. Sandbach, and W. C. Helmbold (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), 145.

⁵⁷ E. Douglas Van Buren, *Symbols of the Gods in Mesopotamian Art. Analecta Orientalis: commentationes scientificae de rebus Orientis antiqui* 23 (Roma: Pontificium institutum biblicum, 1945), 13, notes that the palm was a symbol of a goddess honored on the vase, Inanna; see Mussche, “Le Rameau de palmier,” 436, for other uses of the palm in Near Eastern art.

⁵⁸ Mussche, “Le Rameau de palmier,” 436, however, believes that Eutychides’ Tyche originally held sheaves of wheat, not a palm branch, and later images of Tyche with the palm was instituted possibly by Tigranes I as an Eastern reaction against decadent Hellenism. Hélène Danthine, *Le Palmier-Dattier et les arbres sacrés dans l’iconographie de l’Asie occidentale ancienne*. Paris: P. Guethner, 1937, 211-12, first noted the palm’s connection with fertility in the Ancient Near East.

of Tyche holding a palm would have evoked the promise of fertility and abundance in their new city.

The motif of the mural crown, too, can be traced back to the Ancient Near East, appearing first on a seal belonging to the daughter of the Akkadian ruler Naramsin (fig. 1.23). Dated ca. 2225 BCE, Princess Tutanapsum's seal features a seated goddess wearing a crenellated crown while an attendant plays a musical instrument before her.⁵⁹ About a millennium later, in the capital city of the Hittite Empire, Yazılıkaya, a rock relief dated to the thirteenth century BCE shows the mother goddess of the Hurrians, Hebat, with a similar turreted mural crown (fig. 1.24).⁶⁰ Besides deities, those who early wear the mural crown in Ancient Near Eastern representations are members of royalty. From Nineveh, a glazed tile shows the Assyrian king Ashurnasirpal II (r. 883-859 BCE) with a crown made of three towers and two gates (fig. 1.25), and city walls crown the heads of Assyrian queens from the seventh century BCE as well (fig. 1.26).⁶¹ The tradition continues through the Achaemenid era (ca. 550-330 BCE), when royalty and the fertility goddess Anahita alike wear the crown.⁶²

⁵⁹ Dominique Collon, *First Impressions: Cylinder Seals in the Ancient Near East* (London: British Museum Publications, 1987), n. 530.

⁶⁰ Robert L. Alexander. *The Sculpture and Sculptors of Yazılıkaya* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1986), plates 27-44; Dieter Metzler, "Mural Crowns in the Ancient Near East and Greece," in *Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin, An Obsession with Fortune: Tyche in Greek and Roman Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 76-76. J. L. Lightfoot notes the connection between the Hurrian goddess Hebat and Atargatis in Lucian of Samosata's, *On the Syrian Goddess*. Introduction and commentary by J. L. Lightfoot (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 6.

⁶¹ See Metzler, "Mural Crowns," 77, for specific examples.

⁶² See H. von Gall, "Die Kopfbedeckung des Persischen Ornats bei den Achämeniden," *Archaeologische Mitteilungen aus Iran* 7 (1974): 145-61, as well as Bernard Goldman,

That the original iconography was still familiar in 300 BCE is not certain, but it is certainly plausible. To the eastern citizens of Antioch, however, the crown would have resonated even further beyond the original meaning. In Syria, the goddess Atargatis, or Dea Syria, wears the mural crown in examples dating as early as the second half of the fourth century BCE. Atargatis was an “all-embracing mother goddess, who gives water and fertility, protection and safety, and functioned as the Tyche of various Syrian cities.”⁶³ Silver coins from Hierapolis Bambyce (modern Membij)⁶⁴ depict the goddess capped with a gemmed and dentated *polos* (fig. 1.27).⁶⁵ Inscriptions on the coins identify

“Women’s Robes: The Achaemenid Era,” *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 5 (1991): 83-103, for numerous examples.

⁶³ *LIMC* III.1 sv. *Dea Syria*; 355, Han J. W. Drijvers.

⁶⁴ See Lucian, *on the Syrian Goddess*, 38-39, for a discussion on the many names of Hierapolis.

⁶⁵ The term *polos*, normally thought of as a flat high cap worn by sphinxes and korai in the Greek world has been used as a term for variants of the mural crown. In an article focusing on the Tyche of Antioch, Deonna identified and differentiated types of “*poloi*” and demonstrated that the various types of crowns – *polos dentelé*, *couronne à gradins*, and *couronne tourelée*, as he termed them – were all independent variants of a mural crown that each existed in Ancient Near Eastern imagery since at least the third millennium BCE. See Deonna, “Histoire d’un Emblème,” 119-236, especially 142-46.

Decades later, Louis vanden Berghe utilized Deonna’s research in his study of a third-century CE Sasanian rock relief at Darabgird, and systematized the crown types, naming them *couronne dentelée* (a crown terminating in triangular peaks), *couronne crénelée* (one with square tips), *couronne crénelée à gradins* (one with more than one crenellation level), and *couronne tourelée* (a crown featuring true turrets). Though the terms differ slightly from Deonna’s, vanden Berghe considered all as varieties of a mural crown.

Louis vanden Berghe, “La découverte d’une sculpture rupestre à Darabgird,” *Iranica Antiqua* 13 (1978): 135-47. See also P. Calmeyer, “Mauerkrone,” *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie* VII: 595-96. The English translation is a dentated, crenellated, crenellated and tiered, and turreted respectively; in German: *gezähnte Krone*, *Zinnenkrone*, *Stufenzinnenkrone*, and *Turmkrone*. Vanden Berghe separated Deonna’s *polos dentelé* into two separate types: the *couronne dentelée* and the *couronne crénelée* based on the shape of the terminating tips.

her in Aramaic as “‘*Atar’ateh, Tar’ateh, or ‘Teh,*” which yielded the Greek spelling of her name, *Atargatis*.⁶⁶

Another source for the mural crown as a symbol associated with *Dea Syria* is *Lucian of Samosata*, who described the goddess’ sanctuary in *Hierapolis* in the second century CE. Although he equates the goddess with *Hera*, *Lucian* also sees similarities between *Dea Syria* and the goddesses *Athena, Artemis, Selene, Aphrodite, Rhea, and Cybele*.⁶⁷ Most importantly for this thesis, the author also compares the Syrian goddess to *Nemesis* and the *Fates* – a juxtaposition that *Tyche* shares.

In describing the temple, the rituals, priests, and stories revolving around the cult, *Lucian* also refers to the lavish statue in two sections of the text. First, he remarks that the statue of *Dea Syria* is “borne by lions, holds a drum, and wears a tower on her head.”⁶⁸ *Lucian*’s next observations are more detailed and include more information on the statue and other parts that made up the cult figures:

In it [the temple] are enthroned the cult statues, *Hera* and the god, *Zeus*, whom they call by a different name. Both are golden, both seated, though *Hera* is borne on lions, the other sits on bulls.

⁶⁶ *Henri Seyrig* studied these coins in “Le monnayage de *Hiéropolis de Syrie* à l’époque d’*Alexandre*,” *Revue Numismatique* 13 (1971): 11-21, following *S. Ronzevalle*, “Les monnaies de la dynastie de ‘*Abd-Hadad* et les cultes de *Hiéropolis-Bambycé*,” *Mélanges de l’université Saint Joseph* 23 (1940): 3-82. Ordering them in a series, *Seyrig* determined that first a priest of *Manbog* (the Semitic name of *Hierapolis*) named ‘*Abd-Hadad* minted the coins in his name then believed it more appropriate to use *Alexander*’s (presumably the Great) name. The city’s two main deities, *Hadad* and *Atargatis* decorate the reverse sides of these coins. *Deonna* juxtaposes examples of the dentated *polos* to *Assyrian* reliefs depicting walls to illustrate the translation of a fortification to a form of headgear, “*Histoire d’un Emblème*,” 144-45, fig. 13.

⁶⁷ *Lucian, On the Syrian Goddess* §32.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, §15.

...when you examine Hera, her image appears to be of many forms. While the overall effect is certainly that of Hera, she also has something of Athena and Aphrodite and Selene and Rhea and Artemis and Nemesis and the Fates. In one hand she has a scepter, in the other a spindle, and on her head she wears rays, a tower, and the *kestos* with which they adorn Ourania alone. Outside she is coated with more gold and extremely precious stones... In the centre of both stands another golden statue, not at all like the other statues. It has no shape of its own, but bears the forms of the other gods. It is called the ‘standard’ [σημίον] by the Assyrians themselves, who have not given it a name of its own, nor have they anything to say about its place of origin and form.⁶⁹

Further below, Lucian also describes the setting surrounding the temple. Of particular note is his mention of a nearby lake that housed many sacred fish and was the site of a variety of great festivals. On these occasions, “all the cult images go down to the lakeside...Hera takes first place on account of the fish, lest Zeus catch sight of them first...”⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Ibid., §31-33. Lucian uses the word πύργος to indicate the towers in both instances; πυργοφορέει in §15 and πύργον in §32. Lightfoot, along the lines of previous Lucian scholars before him, acknowledges the problems the two descriptions pose since the goddess’ attributes seem too numerous for one cult statue; Lucian, *On the Syrian Goddess*, 361. Like Tomasz Polański, *Oriental Art in Greek Imperial Literature* (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verl. Trier, 1998), 112-14, Lightfoot wonders if Lucian is describing another image of Atargatis in §15 and the Hierapolis cult statue in §32. As for the *kestos*, Lightfoot discusses it at length as a jeweled headband rather than breast-bands as Homer suggests, 441-43.

⁷⁰ Lucian, *On the Syrian Goddess* §45-47, while the lake at Hierapolis today was converted into a football pitch by at least September 1999, another pool at nearby Edessa (another former cult site of Dea Syria) is home to enormous carp considered still to be sacred, albeit to the “patriarch Ibrahim” now, not Atargatis, 65-72, 489-97. Examples of Atargatis depicted with fish include a limestone relief from northern Mesopotamia where Atargatis sits in a throne made of fish, a tessera from Palmyra showing a seated Atargatis with a large fish before her, and a relief from Khirbet-Tannur in Jordan that displays the goddess with a crown made of fish. *LIMC* III.1 sv. *Dea Syria*; 355-58, nos. 12, 24, 25, III.2: pl. 264-27, Han J. W. Drijvers.

A small votive relief from the Dea Syria's sanctuary at Hierapolis in the Louvre (Inventory no. AO 4817), contemporaneous with Lucian's account, shows the Syrian goddess flanked by lions, and J. L. Lightfoot and Monika Hörig both see the figure depicted in the relief as an imitation of the cult statue.⁷¹ The fragmentary nature of the piece, however, finds the head of the goddess missing. Thus, it is impossible to extract the appearance of her headdress from this votive. Fortunately, another relief excavated from the courtyard of the temple of Atargatis at Dura Europos (fig. 1.28), also dated to the second century CE preserves the image of the deity more fully.

This relief displays the goddess again flanked by lions, while a bull accompanies her as does her male consort, Hadad. As Lightfoot acknowledges, "Zeus is the standard *interpretation Graeca* of Hadad in Hierapolis,"⁷² and the two deities on the relief certainly echo Lucian's description of the cult statues at Hierapolis. Moreover, between the two gods is a cultic standard that also accords with the object Lucian referred to as a *σημῆιον*.⁷³ The multiple parallels this relief finds with Lucian's description of the cult statues at Hierapolis – Atargatis and Hadad seated with their respective animals, the standard between them, a space in Atargatis' left hand for the insertion of a scepter or

⁷¹ Lucian, *On the Syrian Goddess*, 362-63, for Lightfoot's discussion; Monika Hörig, *Dea Syria: Studien zur religiösen Tradition der Fruchtbarkeitsgöttin in Vorderasien* (Kevelaer: Butzon und Bercker, 1979), 111.

⁷² Lucian, *On the Syrian Goddess*, 436.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, §33, 446-48, Appendix II.

spindle, and a high crown with a dentated design carved into it – make it credible that the relief aligns closely, if not directly copies, the Hierapolis cult statues.⁷⁴

With these accounts confirming a variant of the mural crown as an established part of Atargatis' iconography, it is likely that to the Syrians, any female capped by a mural crown would evoke their Great Goddess. Therefore, when the Antiochenes of Syrian descent viewed Eutychemes' Tyche, they recognized the mural crown as an attribute of Atargatis. By recalling their goddess, who offered protection and promised prosperity and fertility, the Syrian audience, through their agency, transferred those ideals to the Tyche of Antioch. Furthermore, the Syrians could understand Seleukos as inserting his city, and indirectly himself, into Near Eastern traditions of kingship and thereby implicitly promising continuity of their traditions, making the Hellenistic statue as accessible to them as to the Greek population.

The Tyche(?) of Antioch for Multiple Audiences

In her impressive study on the statue, Meyer argues – incorrectly from my point of view – that Eutychemes' Tyche was not a figure of the goddess of Fortune, at all, but rather a personification of the city of Antioch. Meyer's thesis relies on the notion that city *tychai* are undocumented before Roman Imperial times.⁷⁵ She claims that Pausanias misidentified Eutychemes' statue as the personification of Antioch's fortune rather than as

⁷⁴ Lightfoot agrees that the Dura Europos relief closely aligns with the Hierapolitan evidence, *ibid.*, 51-52.

⁷⁵ More specifically, Meyer traces the appearance and discussion of the *tychai* of individuals and concludes that with the development of the personal *tyche* came the *tychai* of cities; *ibid.*, 335-77. Henceforth, italicized *tyche/tychai* refer to the personification of fortune, luck, success, etc.

simply a personification of the city. Meyer maintains that it was the prosperity Antioch later enjoyed that imbued the statue with the added identity of the *tyche* of Antioch and that the original sculpture served, instead, as a cult statue for the new cult of “Antiocheia” to foster unity among the diverse population of the city.⁷⁶ It was Eutyichides’ statue that firmly affixed this attribute to the goddess Tyche,⁷⁷ and after the creation of the Tyche of Antioch, the mural crown was one of the central elements of the deity’s iconography.

Despite Meyer’s certainty, discussions of other Tychai found in ancient literature can be adduced to complicate the debate. In his *Guide to Greece* (4.30.3), Pausanias mentions a temple dedicated to Tyche at the city of Pharai in Messenia, housing a cult

⁷⁶ Meyer, *Die Personifikation der Stadt Antiocheia*, 110-11, 166-75. Meyer believes the statue was linked to the foundation of the city of Antioch during the Roman Imperial Period (and not before that), and Malalas was transferring the later founding myth to the original use of the statue. Meyer is also adamant that Antiochos I dedicated the statue, not Seleukos I. Her reasons for this include Seleukos’ seeming preference for Seleukia in Pieria over Antioch as his capital city (Antioch did not become the capital of the Seleukid Empire until after Seleukos’ death) and his preference for the gods Zeus and Apollo. Meyer conjectures that although the population of Antioch was a mixed bag, Seleukos aimed to keep it Greek-Macedonian. Antiochos, on the other hand, spent time in Mesopotamia and was more open to the concept of a “royal city.” With this background, Meyer argues that the establishment of a cult of Antioch and a statue to represent that city would have been attractive to Antiochos. As for the population, the second generation was all “Antiocheians,” so they would have accepted a cult celebrating their city and their inclusion as its citizens. Meyer does admit herself however, “*Angesichts der Tatsache, dass wir über die Geschichte der Stadt zur Zeit Antiochos (z.B. über Stadtfeste) wie auch über die Innenpolitik dieses Königs so wenig wissen, muss dies eine Hypothese bleiben*”; quote at 175.

⁷⁷ After Eutyichides’ creation, a mural-crowned Tyche as a symbol of the personification of a city’s good fortune was widespread and copies and adaptations of Eutyichides’ version proliferated throughout the Hellenistic and later Roman world. VIII.1 sv *Tyana*; 114-15, nos. 3-5; VIII.2: pl. 84, Susanne Maugère, where the personification of the Cappadocian city clearly borrows iconography from the Tyche of Antioch.

statue to the goddess.⁷⁸ The peregrinator also describes three other statues of Tyche: the Tyche of Thebes (9.16.1-2), the Tyche of Megara (1.43.6), and the Tyche of Smyrna (4.30.6). He remarks that the first was housed in her sanctuary and carried the personification of wealth (Ploutos), who was represented as an infant, in her arms.⁷⁹ The second Tyche dates to the fourth century BCE, and was sculpted by Praxiteles to be set up in a shrine near the temple of Aphrodite in Megara.⁸⁰ As for the third, the sixth century BCE sculptor Bupalos of Chios sculpted the Tyche of Smyrna, and Pausanias remarks that the statue of the goddess held a cornucopia in her hand and bore a *polos* on her head. As mentioned above, the term *polos* has been construed under certain circumstances as a variant of the mural crown, and Metzler argues that the Tyche of Smyrna, indeed, did wear a type of mural crown.⁸¹ Hence, the Tyche of Antioch was not the first Tyche to exhibit that attribute, and the mural crown might well have been fixed in the goddess' iconography long before Eutychedes sculpted the Tyche of Antioch.

Beyond the writings of Pausanias, other ancient sources attest that examples of the *tyche* of individuals, groups, and cities did exist before Eutychedes' Tyche of Antioch,

⁷⁸ Based on Pausanias' description of the lost statue as "ancient," it likely dates to the Archaic period. See Broucke, "Tyche and the Fortune of Cities in the Greek and Roman World," in *Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin, An Obsession with Fortune: Tyche in Greek and Roman Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 36, n. 12, and Matheson, "The Goddess Tyche," 20, n.8.

⁷⁹ Xenophon the Athenian reportedly sculpted the hands and face of Tyche, but a native Theban, Kallistonikos, was responsible for the rest.

⁸⁰ Ael., *VH* 9.39, says Praxiteles made another Tyche – this time for Athens – but only describes the passion the statue induced in a young Athenian, not the appearance of the work. Plin., *NH* 36.4, relates that this statue was later taken to Rome.

⁸¹ Metzler, "Mural Crowns," 82, agrees that the *polos* on the Smyrna Tyche is, in fact, a mural crown.

and therefore refute Meyer's statement that city *tychai* are undocumented before Roman Imperial times. An inscription notes that Lycurgus (396-323 BCE) repaired a Temple of Agathe Tyche in Athens, and reverence for the goddess in Athens as a "protector of civic fortune" is further attested from 360 through 318 BCE by over 1000 inscriptions.⁸² Representations of Tyche feature the goddess with the god Ploutos (wealth) and the horn of Amaltheia (cornucopia). Early to mid-fourth-century Attic reliefs depict Agathe Tyche holding the cornucopia in her hands as a symbol of her plentiful bounty.⁸³ A public decree from Athens dated to 337/6 BCE exhorts the "tyche of the Demos of the Athenians" to rise up against tyranny, and Amy C. Smith astutely remarks, "when the people still 'ruled,' it is the *tyche* of the Demos that is invoked. The people and the city have been conflated, moreover, so that the *tyche* of the Demos can correspond to the Tyche of the city."⁸⁴ Even earlier, the late Archaic/early Classical lyric poet Pindar

⁸² Smith, "Athenian Political Art," 25, see Lycurgus inscription at *IG II*², 333.19-20 [335/4]. Smith notes that the goddess receives sacrifices alongside the Twelve Olympians even earlier in an inscription dated to the first half of the fourth century in *IG II*², 4564.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 25, examples 1, 2, 10. Agathe Tyche is also depicted and described as the consort of Zeus Epiteleios Philios and Agathos Daimon in other Attic reliefs.

⁸⁴ Amy C. Smith, "Queens and Empresses as Goddesses: The Public Role of the Personal Tyche in the Graeco-Roman World," in *Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin, An Obsession with Fortune: Tyche in Greek and Roman Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 87-88. The Athenian inscription was translated and published by Benjamin D. Meritt, "Greek Inscriptions," *Hesperia* 21 (1952): 356. Furthermore, Plutarch (*Moralia* 542E) recalls how in the 340s BCE, the Syracusans presented the restorer of their autonomy, Timoleon, a house which the statesman dedicated to Agathos Daimon, the male equivalent to Agathe Tyche.

evokes the Tyche of Himera, a Greek colony in Sicily in his Olympian Ode 12.2-5 praising the winner of a foot race in the fifth century BCE.⁸⁵

Furthermore, as Pieter B. F. J. Broucke argues, the mural crown served as a shorthand symbol of a city especially on that city's coinage, but it "also provided a suiting and effective medium for promoting the Tyche of a city."⁸⁶ On coins featuring the goddess, such as the two mid-fourth century BCE coins from Salamis on Cyprus (see figs. 1.20-1.21) the mural crown fitted with fortification walls and towers indicates her protection over the city and "increasingly became the most essential attribute of Tyche in her role as civic deity."⁸⁷ So while the rocky base on which she sits acts as Mount Silpius and the nude, swimming youth personifies the river Orontes to situate the Tyche of Antioch in her city's geographical setting, the mural crown could signify the statue as more than just Meyer's personification of the city.

With examples to contradict Meyer's argument, the debate over when Eutyichides' statue became the Tyche of Antioch (versus just the personification of Antioch) remains undetermined. Fortunately for this study, what matters is that once the goddess figure had a named identity as the Tyche of Antioch – whether from the statue's original inception

⁸⁵ Diod. Sic. 11.68, and Cic., *Verr.* 2.4.117-19, both mention the τυχαιον or a temple to Tyche at Syracuse "which gave its name to a district in the northern part of the city, indicating Tyche's importance early on in the city's history," quote by Broucke, "Tyche and the Fortune of Cities," 36.

⁸⁶ Pieter B. F. J. Broucke, "Tyche and the Fortune of Cities in the Greek and Roman World," in *Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin, An Obsession with Fortune: Tyche in Greek and Roman Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 36.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 36-37. Moreover, Broucke ascertains that "such examples of literary and numismatic evidence, however occasional, indicate that representations of Tyche as a city goddess were already a geographically widespread phenomenon in the Archaic and Classical periods."

or applied to her later – she could be adopted and modified by other communities. Regardless of whether the statue represented a personification of the Fortune of the Antioch or merely a personification of the city, the attributes remain to hold different connotations for the Greek and for the eastern Antiochenes. Seleukos succeeded in creating a sculptural program both legible to his entire citizenry and one able to convey layers of significance.

Previous scholars have suggested viewing the Tyche of Antioch as a mixed program that accommodated both the Greek and indigenous Syrian population of Seleukos' new city. Erika Simon proposed that the statue merged features of Aphrodite, Demeter, and the Phrygian Cybele to appeal to the amalgamate citizenry of Antioch.⁸⁸ Burkhard Fehr approached the issue from the audience's point of view and differentiated the Greek versus eastern conception of the statue based on their respective viewing habits.⁸⁹ Fehr credits Seleukos I for having designed the statue "that was acceptable to both Greek and eastern subjects without compromising their cultural identity," and he includes the mural crown in his discussion of how Greeks and easterners each interpreted the statue.⁹⁰ He sees, however, the Tyche of Antioch evoking the goddess Anahita by invoking the associations with water that both goddesses share. Based on the reasons

⁸⁸ Erika Simon, "Götter – und Heroenstatuen des frühen Hellenismus," *Gymnasium* 84 (1977): 348-68, pl. I-XII.

⁸⁹ Burkhard Fehr, "Lectio Graeca – Lectio Orientalis. Überlegungen zur Tyche von Antiocheia," *Visible Religion* 7 (1990): 83-97.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, quote at 84: "die sowohl für die griechischen als auch für die orientalischen Untertanen ohne Abstriche an ihrem kulturellen Identitätsbewusstsein akzeptabel waren."

discussed above, I argue that a connection to Atargatis would have resonated more explicitly to a Syrian audience.

Moreover, by including the palm branch in this visual program, Eutyichides created a work of art for Seleukos I that accommodated the multi-cultural population of Antioch. Seleukos' choice for the goddess' attributes were deliberate – he omitted the wheel, orb, or rudder (symbols associated with the deity with possible negative connotations), thereby avoiding the possibility of her steering Antioch's fate toward an unfavorable direction. Instead of a cornucopia or grain, the Tyche of Antioch holds a palm branch that can simultaneously signify victory to a Greek audience and fertility to an eastern one. The mural crown evoked iconography familiar to the Syrians, whose Great Goddess promised protection and prosperity to her citizens, and imbued those sentiments within the statue. And along with the geographical elements, the mural crown personified Tyche as the Good Fortune ensured to the city of Antioch. Through Eutyichides' brilliant execution, Seleukos succeeded in representing his new city as one marked with a glorious fortune and one that incorporated the traditions of both eastern and Hellenistic audiences.

The Antiochenes of Syrian descent would have read the mural crown on the Tyche of Antioch as an attribute of their great goddess, Atargatis, and interpreted the palm branch as an affirmation of fertility and a promise of prosperity. They were placated by these familiar motifs that recalled – if not called upon – their Great Goddess. She commanded her post on Mount Silpios and controlled the life-giving river Orontes.

Speculations that the statue sat in or by a water source are probable,⁹¹ and if true, another connection to Atargatis would have been apparent to a Syrian viewer. If the Tyche of Antioch sat in a pool herself, it is not far-fetched to imagine the body of water as Lucian describes the sacred lake near Dea Syria's sanctuary.⁹² With these vivid similarities to the Syrian Goddess, it is easy to see an eastern audience accepting Eutychemes' Tyche as a variation of the Dea Syria, the "all-embracing mother goddess, who gives water and fertility, protection and safety, and functioned as the Tyche of various Syrian cities."⁹³

When the Antiochenes of Greek or Macedonian descent viewed the image, they would have been well aware of the motif's Hellenistic associations, as deities of fertility and personifications of cities both previously donned the mural crown. Rather than thinking of Dea Syria, they would have recalled the crown adorning such deities as Aphrodite, Demeter, Hera, and Artemis, and hence, conjured up associations with fertility. They would have seen the palm branch as a symbol of victory celebrating the feats of their leader, Seleukos I Nikator. All these associations were methodically wrapped up in a multi-dimensional statue group characteristic of the Hellenistic style of sculpture.

⁹¹ Karl Otfried Müller, *Antiquitates Antiochenae: Commentationes Duae* (Göttingen: Dieterich, 1839), 39-40; Burkhard Fehr, "Lectio Graeca – Lectio Orientalis," 87-88; Ridgway, *Hellenistic Sculpture I*, 234. Downey, *A History of Antioch*, 75, n. 93 disagrees with the placement of the original statue over a river.

⁹² The pool that Tyche sat in could have contained fish just like the fish sacred to Dea Syria described by Lucian; fish are associated with the Syrian goddess in a number of reliefs.

⁹³ *LIMC* III.1 sv. *Dea Syria*; 355, Han J. W. Drijvers.

The Tyche of Antioch meant to represent the identity, glory, and good fortune of the city employed forms common to Antioch's diverse population, and required that each group supplemented their viewing of the image with their own knowledge and experience of Tyche's form, identity, and various attributes. Using features common to the Great Syrian Goddess, Atargatis, which were also translatable to the Greek audience, Seleukos I commissioned a statue that unified a diverse population into a single one. Personifying the fortune of Antioch, Eutyichides' Tyche represented the city situated on the Orontes River near Mount Silpios characterized by fertility, abundance, and victory – qualities that would appeal to any member of its citizenry.

This close correspondence between Tyche and Atargatis is certainly not an isolated case. Two examples of closely correlating the goddesses were found during the excavations at Dura Europos, a site that also comprised part of Seleukos I's kingdom. The first, discovered on the portico of the Adonis Temple, is a first century CE relief of Tyche/Atargatis wearing a mural crown with doves (the sacred animal of Atargatis) topping her throne (fig. 1.29).⁹⁴ Another limestone relief dated to 159 CE, found at the Temple of the Gaddê, depicts Tyche/Atargatis as a direct quotation of the Tyche of Antioch (fig. 1.30). Wearing a mural crown, a thick mantle over her body, and labeled as the Gad of Tadmor (Tyche of Palmyra),⁹⁵ the Tyche of Palmyra rests her foot on the shoulder of a personification of the water source (female this time) Ephqa at Palmyra.

⁹⁴ Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos 1935.46. Matheson, "The Goddess Tyche," 22-30, fig. 7.

⁹⁵ *Gad* can either mean "luck" or "good fortune," but inscriptions in Palmyra reveal that the association of Gaddê with a place or group indicates that the Gaddê are tutelary deities of something or someone, see Lucinda Dirvens, *The Palmyrenes of Dura-Europos: A Study of Religious Interaction in Roman Syria* (Boston: Brill, 1999), 101.

The lion crouching next to her side, however, is a feature of Atargatis, and the relief shows a clear hybridization of the two deities.⁹⁶

While Seleukos maintained Macedonian traditions in the footsteps of Philip and Alexander, in commissioning Tyche, he presented a bilingual monument as the symbol of the city Antioch. Tyche's legibility to both the new and native population in this part of the Hellenistic world signals Seleukos' intention to govern likewise.⁹⁷ The advantages for Seleukos to commission a monumental statue group commemorating his founding of Antioch were numerous. As Broucke elaborates, Tyche "functioned as the point around which all citizens could rally; despite their different cultural backgrounds or religious beliefs, all had an interest in the communal fate of their city."⁹⁸ Through the Tyche of Antioch, Seleukos provided the amalgamated population of his new city a physical reminder and symbol of their memberships as Antiochenes.

⁹⁶ Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos 1938.5313. Part of a pair, the second relief (Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos 1938.5314) found alongside this one shows the Tyche of Dura-Europos as a male figure being crowned by Seleukos I Nikator while the Palmyran priest, Hairan, burns incense on an altar. See, "*LIMC* III.1 sv. *Dea Syria*; 355, no.21, Han J. W. Drijvers; Matheson, "The Goddess Tyche," 26, figs. 11-12. Dirvens, however, interprets the Tyche of Palmyra as Astarte instead of Atargatis, 107-10. The Tyche of Palmyra reappears in a wall painting at the Temple of Bel at Dura-Europos dated ca. 239 CE (Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos 1931.386). Showing the Roman tribune Julius Terentius sacrificing to the gods, the Tyche of Palmyra sits next to the Tyche of Dura-Europos. The two deities are almost exact copies of one another; *Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin, An Obsession with Fortune: Tyche in Greek and Roman Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), fig. 23, cat. 32.

⁹⁷ As Wallace-Hadrill hypothesizes, "the outcome of imperial rule was not to create a new consistent blend at local level, but to enable the coexistence of elements of Roman and native culture," *Rome's Cultural Revolution*, quote at 13. In fact, Wallace-Hadrill lists Antioch as one of the cities which "retained highly distinctive local identities alongside new and old common elements," 14.

⁹⁸ Broucke, "Tyche and the Fortune of Cities," 44.

Seleukos was no stranger to such tactics to unify his citizens. To appease the Antigoneians, whose population he brought to Antioch after razing their city, Seleukos set up a bronze statue of their Tyche, the Tyche of Antigoneia, who held the horn of Amaltheia (cornucopia).⁹⁹ The statue acted as a “symbol of reconciliation effected by Seleukos between his own followers and those of Antigonos,” and from this example it is clear Seleukos was a master of propaganda.¹⁰⁰ As such, representing the fortune of Antioch as one characterized by nothing but prosperity and victory in ways legible to both Greeks and Syrians alike, Seleukos carved out the fate of Antioch. His prophecy was correct and Antioch’s fortune was so resplendent that the geographer Strabo remarked three centuries after the city’s founding that in both power and size, Antioch rivaled even Alexandria in Egypt.¹⁰¹ And even before Strabo’s time, King Tigranes the Great considered his incorporation of Antioch into his realm one of his greatest dynastic successes.

⁹⁹ Malalas, *Chronographia* 8.201. According to Malalas, after razing the city of Antigoneia, Seleukos brought the citizens and salvageable materials of that city to Antioch and set up a statue of Tyche Antigoneia. Like the Antiocheia, this statue was also bronze, but she held a cornucopia and was placed in a lofty position in a four-columned shrine with an altar before her. Even though Malalas does not specify, Karl Otfried Müller first suggested that the Tyche of Antigoneia was probably brought from the destroyed city and not one that Seleukos had newly created; *Antiquitates Antiochenae*, 40; Downey, *A History of Antioch*, 76, n. 102. In return for their statue, the Antigoneians commemorated Seleukos with a bronze statue in his likeness adorned with bullhorns. See Lib. 11.92; App., *Historia Romana* 11.57, describes the reason for the bullhorns: the king showed great strength by restraining with his bare hands a bull brought for sacrifice in honor of Alexander.

¹⁰⁰ Grainger, *Seleukos Nikator*, 131.

¹⁰¹ Strabo, *Geographia* 16.2.5.

The History and Politics of Tigranes the Great of Armenia

Plutarch (*Vit. Luc.* 21.1) writes that Tigranes II, better known as Tigranes the Great, ascended the throne to rule the kingdom of Armenia in 95 BCE. The land Tigranes ruled comprised two of the three principalities that made up Armenia – Tsop’k’, or Sophene, and Greater Armenia – the third being Armenia Minor (see Map 1). Its geographical setting informed many of the strategic maneuvers of Tigranes and many of the political relationships that he formed during this reign.¹⁰²

As a member of the eastern Artaxiad Dynasty, Tigranes was the grandson of Artaxias I (r. 189-160 BCE), a general of the Seleukid Antiochos III who had proclaimed himself king of Greater Armenia and founded the city Artaxata or Artaxiasata in 166 BCE.¹⁰³ Set in the Ararat Valley, Artaxata was situated on the trade route from Central Asia and China to the Black Sea ports, while its strategic location in the center of the Armenian plateau afforded it protection from attacks.¹⁰⁴ Little is known of the history of Armenia between Artaxias I’s rule and that of Tigranes, but Justin (*Epit.* 42.2.3-6) reveals another Artaxiad – Tigranes’ uncle, Artavasdes – who battled the Parthian king

¹⁰² Tigranes’ alliance with Mithridates VI Eupator, the king of Pontus who served as Tigranes’ neighbor to the north, will be further discussed in Chapter Three. Tigranes’ Greater Armenia reached the Caspian Sea and a tributary, the Araxes River, ran through more than half its width and supplied trade routes. By Tigranes’ era, Armenia Minor was absorbed into the Pontic kingdom by Mithridates’ conquests; see Manandyan, *Tigranes II and Rome*, 21. During the Achaemenid period, only two Persian satrapies made up Armenia, but the Seleukids split the land into three principalities. See Herodotus, *Historia* 3.93-94; Xenophon, *Anabasis* 3.4.13, 4.3.4; 4.4.4.

¹⁰³ Manandyan, *Tigranes II and Rome*, 16.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 16-17; Strabo, *Geographia* 11.1.6 and Plut. *Vit. Luc.* 31.5, both mention the founding of Artaxata by Artaxias by the recommendation of Hannibal the Great, but Manandyan finds Hannibal’s role in the story doubtful.

Mithridates II the Great. Artavasdes, who reigned ca. 160-115 BCE, was the son and heir to Artaxias, but with no sons himself, Artavasdes passed the throne to his brother, Tigranes I (ca. 115-95) – the father of Tigranes II.¹⁰⁵

Strabo (*Geographia* 11.14.15) and Justin (*Epit.* 38.3.1) recount how the Parthians, who consistently posed a threat to the kingdom of Armenia, defeated Armenia and took the young Tigranes II as hostage. There he remained until he bought his freedom from the Parthians with a gift of seventy valleys.¹⁰⁶ Upon his release in 95 BCE, Tigranes crowned himself at the same location he would later found his capital city, Tigranokerta, and his first task as king was to annex Sophene to his kingdom.¹⁰⁷

In annexing Sophene, Tigranes' territory now abutted the kingdom of Cappadocia, a land sought after by Mithridates VI Eupator for its shared border to his kingdom and its similar ethnic and religious background to that of Pontus.¹⁰⁸ Thus, Tigranes and Mithridates formed a treaty declaring Cappadocia as a mutual enemy. Justin (*Epit.* 38.3.1-5) informs us that they reached an agreement that the cities and lands would

¹⁰⁵ Artavasdes (r. ca. 160-115 BCE) was the son and heir to Artaxias, but with no sons himself, Artavasdes passed the throne to his brother, Tigranes I (ca. 115-95 BCE) – the father of Tigranes II. Historical sources debate the relationships in the Artaxiad dynasty: App., *Historia Romana* 11.48 states Tigranes II descended from Tigranes I; Strabo, *Geographia* 11.14.15 writes that Tigranes II descended from Artaxias I. Manadyan, *Tigranes II and Rome*, 19-20, argues for Appian's version since it is corroborated by Moses of Khoren, a fifth-century CE historian of Armenia; Moses Khorenats'i, *History of the Armenians* 2.61, trans. Robert W. Thomson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 203-04.

¹⁰⁶ Strabo, *Geographia* 11.14.15.

¹⁰⁷ Manadyan, *Tigranes II and Rome*, 20.

¹⁰⁸ In the year 99 BCE, Mithridates VI had secured Cappadocia for his own and placed his eight-year-old son, Ariarathes IX as king, but by 95 BCE, the Roman Senate replaced the young ruler with Ariobarzanes I; *ibid.*, 22.

belong to Mithridates, while the population and everything moveable would belong to Tigranes – a measure Tigranes took full advantage of when he later needed to populate his new city Tigranokerta. The marriage of Tigranes to Mithridates' daughter, Cleopatra, strengthened the alliance between Armenia and Pontus,¹⁰⁹ and with this friendship secured, Tigranes concentrated his efforts on defeating the Arsacids of Parthia.

Weakened by the death of their king Mithridates II ca. 87 BCE, the Parthians posed little threat to Tigranes. The Armenian king rescinded his offering of seventy valleys that had earlier bought his freedom and also conquered more land to add to his expanding territory.¹¹⁰ He then marched his armies southeast to defeat the Arsacids and as the power shifted from Parthia to Armenia, former vassal states of the Parthian empire now pledged their allegiance to Tigranes in the form of taxes and troops.¹¹¹ Moreover, the defeated Parthians ceded Mesopotamia, Mygdonia, and Osrhoëne to Armenia, and upon his victory in the Armeno-Parthian wars Tigranes adopted the traditionally Parthian title, “King of kings,” for himself.¹¹²

The arrangement not only opened up further trade routes for the Armenian kingdom, but it also positioned Tigranes to enter and conquer Syria from the fractured

¹⁰⁹ Plut., *Vit. Luc.* 22.1; App., *Historia Romana* 2.104.

¹¹⁰ Strabo, *Geographia* 11.13.2, reports that Tigranes captured the province of reater Aghbak (present day Bash-Kale. See also Manandyan, *Tigranes II and Rome*, 36-37.

¹¹¹ Manandyan, *Tigranes II and Rome*, 37; a marriage between the Atropatene king (another Mithridates) and Tigranes' daughter only confirms the alliance.

¹¹² Just., *Epit.* 40.3.

remains of the Hellenistic Seleukid's empire.¹¹³ The treaty Tigranes made with the successors of Mithridates II of Parthia and alliances he made with chieftains and other kings along the Euphrates River allowed him to cross securely into Syria.¹¹⁴ By at least 83 BCE, Tigranes had marched a reputed 300,000 to 500,000 of his men to face the weakened Seleukids.¹¹⁵ The remaining Seleukids, Philip II Barypous and Antiochos XIII Asiaticus retreated to Cilicia, and Tigranes installed himself to rule in their place.¹¹⁶

Controlling Mesopotamia, Tigranes now had access to Syria and at least by 83 BCE, he reigned over all of northern Syria and the multi-ethnic society that Seleukos had engaged with his Tyche.¹¹⁷ Whether welcomed by the whole population or not, Tigranes' entry into Antioch appealed at least to the merchants of the city since the King of kings brought with him entry to prime trade routes. Tigranes used Antioch as his royal residence in the south, and here the king perceived himself as the successor to the Seleukids. Nowhere is this more evident than in the coinage he struck at Antioch.

¹¹³ As Sullivan, *Near Eastern Royalty and Rome*, 65-68, notes, "between the years 96 and 83, the five sons of Antiochos VIII Grypus and Antiochos X Eusebes took turns as head of the Seleukids, attempting to consolidate the amassed territory but finding factions and in-fighting instead."

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 102.

¹¹⁵ Joseph, *AJ* 13.419; Strabo, *Geographia* 11.9.2; App., *Historia Romana* 11.48.

¹¹⁶ Sullivan, *Near Eastern Royalty and Rome*, 68.

¹¹⁷ Just., *Epit.* 40.1.1-3, and Strabo, *Geographia* 11.14.15, give slightly different accounts. The former relates that the Syrians invited Tigranes to rule after factions in the present kings' dynasty threatened the kingdom. The latter attests that Tigranes took Syria by force.

The Tyche of Antioch on the Coinage of Tigranes the Great

Remarking on the inexplicable peculiarity that the Tyche of Antioch does not appear on coins before those of Tigranes despite the statue's popularity before the first century BCE, Stansbury-O'Donnell continues: "That Tigranes (and the early Roman emperors) turned to the statue is understandable as an act of political propaganda, appropriating a symbol of the city for the legitimization of their own rule over it."¹¹⁸ There is no refuting Stansbury-O'Donnell's opinion, and most scholars share his view. The extent of this propaganda, however, remains unexplored. By virtue of what the statue represented, Tigranes' incorporation of it into his coinage was a strategic maneuver more complex than merely a means to showcase the Armenian "capture" of Antioch. Tigranes minted a variety of coins in his lifetime with his profile on the obverse and with other images on the reverse, including a cornucopia on a stand, a head of wheat, a tripod, scenes featuring Herakles and Nike, and even an elephant (figs. 1.31-1.33).¹¹⁹ Most common, however, are the coins whose reverse features the Tyche of Antioch.

On these (see fig.1.1), the obverse always shows a clean-shaven Tigranes facing to the right and wearing the typical Armenian headdress – an ornate five-pointed tiara often edged with beads. Flaps from under the tiara cover his ears and neck while a diadem that encircles the head is knotted on the back and falls down the nape of his neck. The scene on his tiara differ slightly, but most coins depict two eagles in profile standing back-to-back yet turning their heads to face each other while an eight-pointed star floats

¹¹⁸ Stansbury-O'Donnell, "Reflections of the Tyche of Antioch," 59.

¹¹⁹ Paul Z. Bedoukian, *Coinage of the Artaxiads of Armenia* (London: Oxford University Press, 1978), 12-25, 47-70, pl. 1-6, lists all known coins of Tigranes.

between them.¹²⁰ On the reverse, the Tyche of Antioch is also shown in profile, seated upon a rocky outcrop while the personified river Orontes swims below her. He appears mid-stroke with his left arm stretched out before him, but he turns his head back to look up at Tyche. The interaction between the two is further intensified by Tyche's right foot resting upon Orontes' shoulder. The goddess, draped in garments, holds a palm branch in her right hand and wears the mural crown on her head. When viewed jointly, the message conveyed by obverse and reverse is striking. Tigranes affirms his eastern roots through his Armenian finery on the one side, while adopting the emblem of a great Hellenistic city and its original ruler/founder on the other.

While most coins featuring the Tyche of Antioch were minted in the former Seleukid capital, contemporary coins were also minted in Tigranokerta, the capital of Tigranes' empire. Although the exact site of the ancient city is unknown, scholars deduce that Tigranokerta was located somewhere in the southwestern region of Greater Armenia known as Arzanene.¹²¹ Tigranes' expanded territory called for the move of the old Artaxiad capital, Artaxata in northern Greater Armenia, to a location more central to the expanded Armenian kingdom. Antioch was also a poor choice since it too lay on the

¹²⁰ The coins of Tigranes II gained attention when some interpreted a star on his tiara with an extended "tail" as the appearance of a comet (fig. 1.34). V. G. Gurzadyan and R. Vardanian, "Halley's Comet of 87 BC on the Coins of Armenian King Tigranes?," *Astronomy & Geophysics* 45 (2004): 4.06, believe Tigranes' reign was marked by the appearance of Halley's Comet and the king celebrated it on his coinage. The comet-type coins, however, are significantly less common than the pair of eagles and star motif.

¹²¹ Levon Avodyan, "Tigranocerta: The City 'Built by Tigranes,'" in *Armenian Tigranokert/Diarbekir and Edessa/Urfa*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, Inc., 2006) 81-95.

fringes of his empire.¹²² Thus, founded circa 80 BCE on the site where Tigranes had legendarily assumed his role as king, Tigranokerta gave Tigranes equal access to all parts of his kingdom and was to serve as the political and cultural center of Tigranes' kingdom.

With this new capital, Tigranes made deliberate attempts at preserving and promoting Hellenization, an attempt that followed the precedent of earlier generations and complemented that of Tigranes' contemporaries from neighboring regions. By the second century BCE, for example, Cappadocia not only welcomed Greek artists and writers but also transformed its own cities into autonomous Hellenistic ones.¹²³ The Hellenism of Mithridates VI Eupator of Pontus is particularly pronounced and will be further discussed in Chapter Three of this dissertation.¹²⁴ Richard D. Sullivan points to Tigranes' "enforced Hellenization" through his populating of his older territories with Greek immigrants from cities he conquered to the west of the Euphrates all the while concentrating his own nobles in the capital city of Tigranokerta.¹²⁵ Through efforts like

¹²² Manandyan, *Tigranes II and Rome*, 48.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 45, cites King Ariarathes V of Cappadocia as the instigator of Hellenism for his kingdom.

¹²⁴ See also *ibid.*, 45-47, for more on the spread of Hellenism in Pontus in relation to Tigranes' own attempts.

¹²⁵ Sullivan, *Near Eastern Royalty and Rome*, 102. Strabo, *Geographia* 11.14.15, trans. Horace Leonard Jones and J. R. Sitlington Sterrett (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 339, remarks: "exalted to this height, he [Tigranes] also founded a city...and having gathered peoples thither from twelve Greek cities which he had laid waste, he named it Tigranocerta." Strabo, *Geographia* 12.2.9 also mentions how Tigranes forced the citizens of the Cappadocian city Mazaca to populate his capital. Tigranes also installed those close to him in his newly amassed territory. He transformed Seleukid Syria into an Armenian prefecture, appointing his own men as leaders. Magadates or Bagarat, one of Tigranes' generals, was named governor of Antioch (App., *Historia Romana* 2.48), and Tigranes' brother Gouras served as prefect of the city Nisibis north of Antioch; see Manandyan, *Tigranes II and Rome*, 37-38, 43. Plut., *Vit. Luc.* 21.5,

these, Tigranes “sought to represent not only the Iranian world of his ancestors, but also the Greek world of the dying Seleukids.”¹²⁶

Tigranes, for these reasons, also employed the Tyche of Antioch on his coinage minted at Tigranokerta. Instead of creating a novel motif, Tigranes’ adoption of the Tyche of Antioch at his newly founded capital signals his desire to propagate Hellenization since this particular image was connected to the Seleukid Empire, its capital city, and the founder of that empire. This appropriation was deliberate. Tigranes not only wanted to conquer the city and become the successor to the Seleukids, but by incorporating Seleukos I’s statue into his own coinage, Tigranes claimed the Tyche of Antioch and all it represented as his.

Certainly by the time of Tigranes the Great, over two hundred years after the creation of the original Tyche of Antioch, the statue’s multivalent meanings were well-formed,¹²⁷ and one of these was certainly Fortune. For that reason, the adoption of the famed symbol of Antioch’s Fortune on Tigranes’ coinage functioned as more than an expression of his conquering the city. It is significant that most scholars believe that the Tyche of Antioch would have sat under a baldachin as a cult statue. Indeed, coins dating

offers another account – albeit most likely exaggerated – where four kings waited upon Tigranes like attendants or bodyguards running alongside Tigranes as he rode on horseback or standing by while the king conducted business transactions. Manadyan, 44-45, explains that these were probably former kings of small states that Tigranes had conquered.

¹²⁶ Sullivan, *Near Eastern Royalty and Rome*, 102.

¹²⁷ Moreover, examples such as a Ptolemaic *oinochoe* associated with Arsinoe II bear inscriptions that read, “of the Agathe Tyche of Arsinoe Philadelphos.” Dated ca. 270 BCE, examples like this indicate that the *tyche* of individuals did exist in the Hellenistic world before Imperial times. See Smith, “Queens and Empresses as Goddesses,” 88-89.

to the third century CE depict Tyche in such a manner: the goddess sits framed under a four-columned baldachin facing frontally.¹²⁸ On Tigranes' coins, however, the Tyche of Antioch appears devoid of the sacred setting that identifies her as a cult statue.¹²⁹ The removal of the image from its cultic space alters its function. Here on the coin, it operates as an emblem through which the Tyche of Antioch's various attributes and its entirety creates an all-encompassing image for Tigranes. It incorporated good fortune, prosperity, and fertility of a city imbued by the successes Antioch enjoyed, and signaled military might and victory of a Hellenistic ruler through its connection to Seleukos I, from whose kingdom Tigranes ambitiously attempted to claim succession.

The program was so effective that Tigranes not only minted coins with this motif at Antioch, but as previously mentioned, also at his capital, Tigranokerta, ensuring distribution of the image throughout the kingdom. While this served an important end, it was not Tigranes' exclusive program. Indeed, the deliberate choice to strike coins with this Tyche, which was once solely associated with Antioch, is further complicated by the fact that a few coins from his reign survive that depict an image of the goddess slightly different from the Antiochene version.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ The first appearance of this motif occurs on a coin during the rule of Elagabalus (r. 218-222 CE), and the latest dates to the reign of Valerian (r. 253-260 CE), *LIMC* I.1 sv. *Antiocheia*; 846, nos. 54-62, I.2: pl. 674, Jean Charles Balty. The debate whether the Tyche sat under a baldachin or not is ongoing; Stansbury-O'Donnell argues that the Tyche sat under a baldachin and remarks that the coins that show a frontal view of the Tyche most often show the baldachin while the coins that show profile views of the statue eliminated the columns since they would have blocked the view, "Reflections of the Tyche," 56-57.

¹²⁹ Some other coins after the rule of Tigranes follow the same depiction of the statue, perhaps signaling an emulation of the Armenian king's use of the image.

¹³⁰ Bedoukian, *Coinage of the Artaxiads of Armenia*, 21-22, 66, nos. 114-16.

When Tigranes captured Damascus from the Nabataean king Aretas III Philohellenos (“Lover of Greece”) in 72 BCE, he appropriated the conquered ruler’s image of the Tyche of Damascus for his own coins minted at that city (fig. 1.35).¹³¹ Though the goddess in the Damascus image faces left instead of right and holds a cornucopia in her left hand instead of a palm, King Aretas III deliberately referenced the Tyche of Antioch in creating the image of the Tyche of Damascus, specifically by picturing the goddess also sitting on a rock with a swimmer below her.¹³² In Tigranes’ day, these coins also recalled his coins minted in Antioch and Tigranokerta.

As such, Tigranes’ appropriation of the Tyche of Damascus on that city’s coins reveals an important nuance in his use of numismatic imagery. In adopting Aretas’ visual imagery as his own, he maintained a visual continuity that suggests the new city was enfolded into Tigranes’ realm in a manner that demphasized the city’s recent defeat. Instead, as with his original adoption of the Seleukid Tyche, this program suggests Tigranes’ attention to using visual imagery to appeal to the diverse citizens of his expanding kingdom as a just ruler. At the same time, and because the imagery derives from the Tyche of Antioch, it also evokes Tigranes’ own creation of Tyche coins in Antioch and Tigranokerta. In this way, it further established the ruler’s direct connection

¹³¹ Ibid., 21, 48-49, 65-66. Bedoukian, 65, no. 112, also mentions a copper coin from Damascus featuring a standing Tyche resting her hand on a tiller and holding a cornucopia, but he does not include an image of the coin or provide further information on it.

¹³² Ibid., 21, 65, nos. 109-111. Stansbury-O’Donnell, “Reflections of the Tyche,” 58, argues that the geographical distance from the original statue allowed die-makers greater liberties on reproduction, which could account for discrepancies between the Damaskan coins and more faithful versions such as those found on Tigranes’ Antioch and Tigranokerta coins.

with Eutychides' third-century BCE statue, cementing this image of Tyche as an emblem firmly associated with Tigranes. Now associated with the ruler himself – and not restricted to the originating city – images derived from the Tyche of Antioch could be diffused throughout the kingdom to celebrate Tigranes' link to Seleukos as the coin objects themselves circulated in the realm.

Despite other versions, the mass production of the Tyche of Antioch coins indicates Tigranes' affinity towards this particular image of Tyche. Furthermore, through the removal of the Tyche of Antioch from its ceremonial context, the image on Tigranes' coins undermines its exclusive connotation of a civic cult statue. This change created a new visual rhetoric that stands contrary to the belief by some scholars that Tigranes' appropriation of the Tyche of Antioch merely shows his control over the city. Instead, he attempts to operate with a different strategy that unhinges the image from its original function and allows it to operate within a new context that references much more than a personification of a city's good fortune. When Tigranes adopted the sculpted image for his coinage, he not only absorbed all that the statue represented, but his coupling of the Hellenistic symbol on the reverse with his Armenian portrait on the obverse proclaimed that he was indeed the "King of kings."

Conclusion

Tigranes lost much of his amassed territory as the Roman Empire moved farther and farther east, and he suffered terribly when Lucullus initiated battle at his capital,

Tigranokerta, in 69 BCE.¹³³ During the years immediately after his conquest of Syria in 83, however, Tigranes enjoyed a “*tranquillissimo regno*” and at the peak of his reign, he had given Armenia “its greatest period of empire, and a legacy of stability.”¹³⁴ It was under these conditions that Tigranes was able to harness in one material object his and others’ Hellenistic successes and honor his own heritage all the while representing the far reaches of his conquests that characterized the greatest extent that the Armenian kingdom reached in its history. Simultaneously, by virtue of the Tyche of Antioch’s significance, Tigranes ruled under the auspices and blessings of the goddess of Fortune.

Numerous examples attest to the popularity of the Tyche of Antioch in later Hellenistic and Roman times, and variations on the original statue abound as the Tyche of Antioch became a model for other cities’ Tychai. Tigranes the Great, however, was drawn to the original Eutychedes statue commissioned by Seleukos I for all it symbolized, and that first version devoid of substitutions or changes functioned best for his propaganda. His adoption of the motif on coinage minted at his capital Tigranokerta, which lacked any connection to Antioch and the latter city’s famous statue, affirms that this adoption went far beyond the statue’s original association solely with the city of Antioch. Tigranes clearly intended more than to reproduce faithfully Eutychedes’ statue for Antioch and its citizens. He hoped to harness the program and the significance it gained by the reception of its constituent parts by both its Greek and eastern audience.

¹³³ Strabo, *Geographia* 11.14.15; App., *Historia Romana* 12.84; Plut., *Vit. Luc.* 14.5, 26.1. After the Roman defeat, Tigranes’ rule was restricted to the confines of his own, original kingdom. Large sums of money ensured his position as a “friend and ally of Rome,” see Sullivan, *Near Eastern Royalty and Rome*, 282.

¹³⁴ Sullivan, *Near Eastern Royalty and Rome*, 104, quote at 284. Tigranes lived until ca. 56 or 55 BCE and left the throne to his son Artavasdes II. His other son and original heir, Tigranes the Younger, was unfit for the throne; see 284-90.

For that reason, it was imperative to portray the reproduction with the same attributes as the original statue – the mural crown, the swimming figure, and the palm branch – so that all the statue’s ideals would be immediately transferred to him and his reign. Moreover, the subsequent fortune of both Seleukos and Antioch imbued the statue with further beneficial implications – all of which Tigranes hoped to express through the emblem of the Tyche of Antioch.

By the time Tigranes the Great of Armenia came to power, the Tyche of Antioch sculpted by Eutykhides of Sikyon was over 200 years old. The fame of the statue and Tigranes’ incorporation of Antioch to his kingdom explains the reproduction of the sculpture on the Armenian king’s coinage. The significance of the image’s adoption, however, exceeds a mere expression of Tigranes’ capture of Antioch. The deliberate choice to depict the statue devoid of its sacred setting signals an attempt to view and represent the Tyche of Antioch as an emblem rather than a simple cult statue on Tigranes’ coinage.

The complex set of symbols that engaged both constituencies of the mixed population of Antioch, and the commission of the statue by Seleukos I, to whose kingdom Tigranes wished to become the successor, underlies the Armenian king’s agenda in appropriating the Tyche of Antioch as his own. Numerous extant examples of coinage minted both at Antioch and the Armenian capital city Tigranokerta evidence Tigranes’ attempts at harnessing all that the Tyche of Antioch symbolized throughout his realm. By pairing the Hellenistic image with his eastern visage on his coinage, Tigranes the Great adroitly packaged his lineage, military endeavors, and dynastic ambitions into one mass-produced and widely circulated material object.

CHAPTER TWO

Antiochos I of Commagene's Zoroastrian Program at Nemrud Dagħ

At the peak of Mount Nemrud or Nemrud Dagħ in southeastern modern Turkey lies the *hierothesion* or temple tomb of Antiochos I Theos, the Hellenistic ruler of the Commagene kingdom between 69-34 BCE.¹ The monumental limestone and sandstone sculptures that cap the mountaintop form a visual program that held political, religious, and personal significance for the Commagenian king. Colossal sculptures of deities formed by combining Greek and Persian gods as well as reliefs depicting Antiochos' ancestors from both Macedonian and Achaemenid royal houses honor the king in the dynamic program.

Antiochos honored both sides of his alleged regal heritage and traced his lineage back to the Macedonian rulers, Alexander the Great and the Seleukids, as well as to the Persian Darius I the Great and his successors, in order to legitimize his authority. Antiochos' representation of various Greek and Iranian deities collapsed into four discrete, syncretic gods also points to a reverence for both cultures. Yet, examination of Antiochos' religious practices reveals that the monarch primarily followed the traditional belief system of his Persian ancestors – Zoroastrianism.

¹ The term *hierothesion* only appears in inscriptions at Nemrud Dagħ and its vicinity so it appears to be a specialized term used only in Commagene by Antiochos I and his relatives. Besides Nemrud Dagħ, the term is found at Arsameia-on-the-Nymphaios, at the burial site of Antiochos' father, Mithridates I Kallinikos; on the fortification wall at Gerger Kalesi built by Antiochos' grandfather, Samos II; and on a drum of a column standing beside a tumulus at Karakuş, the burial site of royal Commagenian women. Goell, *Nemrud Dagı*, 1, and see 91-100 for further discussion and description of the term. Nemrud Dagħ is located in the modern province of Adiyaman.

Reading Antiochos' sculptural program at his *hierothesion* with Zoroastrian beliefs and sacred texts in mind, the choice of deities and other sculpted elements at the complex uncovers a recondite message that simultaneously honors the monarch while protecting his kingdom against its enemies. Concurrently, the esoteric nature of the sacred spells reflects Antiochos' insecurity in maintaining his power among greater potentates that vied for his land and wealth. As his vacillating foreign policies demonstrate, Antiochos pledged loyalty to one kingdom or empire at times advantageous for Commagene while turning his back on the same allies to side with opposing powers in other instances. Analyzed within this context, Antiochos' visual program at Nemrud Dag, which evokes divine assistance, signals the king's apprehensions about the security of his rule and about the future of Commagene.

The History of Commagene

Scholars agree that the name Commagene is the Greek form of the Hittite-Assyrian city-kingdom Kummuha/Kummuhu.² From the twelfth to eighth centuries BCE, Kummuhu is mentioned as a Syro-Hittite city-kingdom and one sought after by Assyrian rulers for its wealth and resources. Invaded a number of times, including several times by Ashurnasirpal II (r. 884-858 BCE), Kummuhu joined a Hittite confederacy to gain support against Assyrian attacks. The threat proved too severe, however, as Adad-Nirari II (r. 810-782 BCE) incorporated Kummuhu into the Assyrian Empire in 805 BCE. Kummuhu resisted the Assyrian conquerors through the eighth century, and in 708 BCE,

² Ibid., 18; Leonard William King, "Kummukh and Commagene," *Journal of Manchester Egyptian and Oriental Society* 2 (1912-913): 47-56; Albrecht Goetze, *Kizzuwatna and the Problem of Hittite Geography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940), 5.

angered by Kummuhu's refusal to pay annual tribute, Sargon II defeated the city, scattering its original citizens and repopulating it to create a wholly Assyrian province.³

After the Achaemenid ruler Darius the Great (r. 521-486 BCE) conquered Northern Syria and Kummuhu, the city became a part of the coastal satrapy of Syria. Little else referencing Kummuhu remains after this period until the Seleukids gained the land and Hellenized the name to Commagene. A local satrap, who claimed descent from the Orontids (a Persian satrap family ruling Armenia in the fourth and third centuries BCE), named Ptolemaios/Ptolemy (201-130 BCE) claimed the independence of Commagene from Seleukid rule in 163/162 BCE and named himself ruler of Commagene.⁴ Ptolemaios remained so until his succession by his son Samos/Sames, who later founded the fortress and capital of the kingdom, Samosata.

When his son Sames succeeded him, Seleukid power had diminished significantly, but empires to the east endangered Commagene. Mithridates II Euergetes Epiphanes Philhellene ("Benefactor-Illustrious One-Lover of Greece") was growing the Parthian Empire while Tigranes the Great (of Chapter One) posed a threat from Armenia. A marriage alliance between Mithridates II and Tigranes insured fidelity between Parthia and Armenia, posing an even larger threat to Commagene.⁵ Upon Mithridates II's death, Tigranes claimed the title, "King of kings," and Commagene fell subject to his

³ Goell, *Nemrud Dagi*, 18-20.

⁴ Richard D. Sullivan, "The Dynasty of Commagene," *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II.8 (1978): 742-53, discusses Ptomelaios and his son Sames in much further detail.

⁵ Sullivan, *Near Eastern Royalty and Rome*, 112-19 for Mithridates II and 96-105 for Tigranes.

overarching claim to throne.⁶ Commagene officially became a separate kingdom in 80 BCE under Mithridates I Kallinikos (“Beautiful Victor”) with the complete dissolution of the Seleukid kingdom. Both Mithridates I Kallinikos and Antiochos, however, reigned as sub-kings under the auspices of Tigranes the Great until the defeat of the “King of kings” by the Roman general Lucullus at Tigranokerta in 69 BCE.

The territory’s past thus established a set of roots traceable to both the Persian and Macedonian royal lines, allowing Antiochos to exploit a dual regal heritage. Antiochos also forged a connection to Tigranes, even when he ruled independently after the Armenian king’s defeat. On his coinage and at Nemrud Dagħ, Antiochos appears adopting the Armenian tiara (*kitaris*) – a distinguishing marker that differentiates him from the gods at the *hierotherion* and one that corresponds to that on Tigranes’ own coinage.⁷ Furthermore, on the back of a stele featuring a *dexiosis* scene between the king and Apollo Epekoos from Sofraz Köy, Antiochos announces in an inscription that he is “first to adopt the *kitaris*.”⁸ Similar to his embracing of his Iranian and Greek roots,

⁶ Sullivan expands: “The grand design of Tigranes included succession to the Seleucids, which required possession of Syria. Hence occupation of Commagene, which lay on his way to Antioch and which it was prudent to secure behind him.” *Ibid.*, 61.

⁷ Early on in his reign Antiochos did not wear the Armenia *kitaris*, but rather a Seleukid crown. See Jörg Wagner, “Dynastie und Herrscherkult in Kommagene: Forschungsgeschichte und neuere Funde,” *Istanbuler Mitteilungen* 33 (1983): 177-224, especially 222-24.

⁸ Sullivan, *Near Eastern Royalty and Rome*, 62; Jörg Wagner and Georg Petzl, “Eine neue Temenos-Steile des Königs Antiochos I. von Kommagene,” *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, Bd. 20 (1976): 201-23; Wagner, “Die Könige von Kommagene und ihr Herrscherkult,” in *Gottkönige am Euphrat: Neue Ausgrabungen und Forschungen in Kommagene*, ed. Jörg Wagner (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2012), 49-51; Charles V. Crowther and Margherita Facella, “New Evidence for the Ruler Cult of Antiochos of Commagene from Zeugma,” in *Neue Forschungen zur Religionsgeschichte*

which will be discussed below, Antiochos' association with another, more powerful ruler signals his habit of aligning himself with influential, commanding predecessors.⁹

Previous Scholarship on Commagene

The first modern mention of Commagene is by a Leiden classicist named David Jacobus van Lennep (1774-1853) in 1828. Van Lennep presents the history of Commagene, its kings from the third century BCE on, and a description of the area. His assessment is based to some extent on coinage but primarily on ancient literary sources.¹⁰ In the nineteenth century as well, travelers to Commagene wrote of their experiences. General Field-Marshal Helmuth von Moltke wrote about the Commagenian landscape while he was stationed there as the military advisor to the Turkish army in 1838-1839.

Kleinasiens: Elmar Schwertheim zum 60. Geburtstag gewidmet, ed. Gudrun Heedemann and Engelbert Winter, Asia Minor Studien 49 (Bonn: Habelt, 2003), 71-74.

⁹ The Commagenian dynasty lasted almost another 150 years after Antiochos' death with its demise occurring under the rule of Antiochos IV (r. 38-72 CE), a client king of Rome who was suspected of conspiring against the Romans. As a result, the Commagene kingdom was dissolved into Roman North Syria (subdivided into four territories: Samosata, Caesarea Germanicea, Perrhe, and Doliche) and was given the name Euphratensis. Goell, *Nemrud Dagı*, 20; King, "Kummukh and Commagene," 47; Arnold H. M. Jones, *The Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 263-64. The last to be called "king" of the Commagenian dynasty is Antiochos Philopappos, the grandson of Antiochos IV. A Roman consul, Philopappos gained honorary posthumous Athenian citizenry for the great works he did for the city. As an ostentatious display of gratitude, the Athenians erected him a monumental tomb on the peak of the Hill of the Muses facing the Parthenon; see Diana E. E. Kleiner, *The Monument of Philopappos in Athens*, Archaeologica 30 (Rome: Bretschneider: 1983).

¹⁰ David Jacobus van Lennep, *Disputatio de regibus Commagenes et Ciliciae Seleucidarum posteris, lecta D. XVII mensis augusti et VIII mensis decembris MDCCCXXVIII*, 1828. Eric M. Moormann and Miguel John Versluys, "The Nemrud Dağ Project: First Interim Report," *BABesch* 77 (2002): 75.

Oddly, von Moltke describes monuments of Commagene but the statues on Nemrud Dagh escape his discussions.¹¹

Theodor Mommsen published an article on Commagene in 1876, but organized explorations in the region did not begin until 1881,¹² when a German road engineer named Karl Sester alerted the archaeologist Otto Puchstein about the colossal monuments on Nemrud Dagh. The two led a short expedition the following year and in the spring of 1883, Puchstein with another German archaeologist, Karl Humann, the anthropologist Felix von Luschan, and other technicians came to photograph, make plaster casts, and survey the site on behalf of the *Königlich preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* in Berlin. Their final report published in *Reisen in Kleinasien und Nordsyrien* in 1890 details their finds and travels through the region.¹³ Yet, before the German team ascended the mountain, the director of the Imperial Ottoman Museum of Constantinople, Osman Hamdy Bey, and Osgan Effendi, an Armenian technician, came to Nemrud Dagh in May 1883 and published their findings.¹⁴

While the publications by the two teams sparked interest in the site, the monuments' inaccessibility, aggravated by the harsh conditions of the mountain (more than four meters of snow covered the statues when Hamdy Bey and Osgan Effendi

¹¹ Helmuth von Moltke, *Briefe über Zustände und Begebenheiten in der Türkei aus den Jahren 1835 bis 1839* (Berlin: E. S. Mittler, 1876), 225-29. Goell, *Nemrud Dagi*, 26, informs that the British explorer William F. Ainsworth mentions a peak he called "Assur" in his travels to Gerger Kalesi, but it is uncertain if Assur is Nemrud Dagh.

¹² Moormann and Versluys, "First Interim Report," 75.

¹³ Karl Humann and Otto Puchstein, *Reisen in Kleinasien und Nordsyrien*, 2 vol. (Berlin: Reimer, 1890).

¹⁴ Osman Hamdy Bey and Osgan Effendi, *Le tumulus de Nemroud-Dagh: voyages, description, inscriptions* (Constantinople: Impr. F. Loeffler, 1883).

arrived in May), limited further travel until the twentieth century.¹⁵ Using the reports of Humann and Puchstein and Hamdy Bey and Osgan Effendi, scholars of history, “oriental studies,” art history, numismatics, religious studies, and epigraphy in the late-nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries included the finds at Nemrud Dagh in their studies in respective fields.¹⁶ Scholars of religious studies and epigraphy have especially devoted time and scrutiny to the site while others – those in art history in particular – deemed the monuments “too Classical for Orientalists, too Oriental for Classicists, and too remote and inaccessible for continued research or prolonged visits.”¹⁷

Further research proved entirely necessary, however, as the original German and Turkish discoverers reported incomplete and often conflicting observations. For example, Humann and Puchstein, utilizing the Lion Horoscope relief (figs. 2.69-2.70), dated the monuments to the first century BCE, placing them during the reign of Antiochos I.¹⁸ Hamdy Bey, on the other hand, concluded that the monuments belonged to Antiochos IV, who reigned in the first century CE, based on the style of the inscriptions, the monument’s absence in Strabo’s accounts, and the observation that the monument appeared unfinished – evidence in his opinion of Antiochos IV’s reign cut short by Vespasian.¹⁹

¹⁵ See Goell, *Nemrud Dagi*, 26-29, for merits and drawbacks of Humann and Puchstein’s and Hamdy Bey and Osgan Effendi’s explorations and publications.

¹⁶ See *ibid.*, 30-31, for a detailed list of sources.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹⁸ Humann and Puchstein, *Reisen in Kleinasien und Nordsyrien*, 329-36; Goell, *Nemrud Dagi*, 28.

¹⁹ Hamdy Bey and Effendi, *Le tumulus de Nemroud-Dagh*, xiv-xvii.

Not until the German epigrapher Friedrich Karl Dörner and the art and architectural historian Theresa Goell from the Institute of Fine Arts of New York University separately, yet simultaneously, focused on the region, joined forces, and planned excavations in 1953 did the much-needed archaeological work finally continue.²⁰ Having traveled there and around its surroundings from 1939 on, Dörner contributed tremendously to current knowledge of the area through his examination of other sites of significance in the region. These sites include Arsameia-on-the-Nymphaios, known today as Eski Kale (Old Castle) or Koca Hisar (Great Castle), which lies below the southwestern base of Nemrud Dagh on an isolated limestone outcrop on the south side of the Nymphaios River.²¹ The site is the start of the Processional Way that leads to the West Terrace of Nemrud Dagh five hours on foot today as it did during Antiochos' time.²² Modern shepherds and other locals have preserved the ancient routes that connected much of the Commagenian landscape. Other important Commagenian sites

²⁰ Goell, *Nemrud Dagi*, 31-32. The Muenster University and German Exploration Committee sponsored Dörner's excavations of the tomb of Mithridates I at Arsameia while the American Schools of Oriental Research provided Goell with the permit to excavate the tomb of Antiochos I at Nemrud Dagi. Through their collaboration, they quickly found that the tombs and sanctuaries of father and son complemented each other. Excavations at Arsameia am Nymphaios are published in two volumes: Friedrich Karl Dörner and Theresa Goell, *Arsameia am Nymphaios: Die Ausgrabungen im Hierothesion des Mithridates Kallinikos von 1953-1956* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1963), and Hoepfner and Hübner, *Das Hierothesion des Königs Mithridates I. Kallinikos Kommagene nach den Ausgrabungen von 1963 bis 1967* (Tübingen: E. Wasmuth, 1983). See also, Goell's preliminary publication, "The Excavation of the 'Hierothesion' of Antiochus I of Commagene on Nemrud Dagh (1953-1956)," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 147 (1957): 4-22.

²¹ The site is also known as Eski Kâhta on the Kâhta Cay. A Mamluk border fortress stands nearby called Yeni Kale (New Castle); Dörner and Goell, *Arsameia am Nymphaios*, 305-16.

²² Goell, *Nemrud Dagi*, 5, 93-94, for more on the path and its discovery.

include Samsat, or ancient Samosata (the capital of Commagene), which lies to the south of Nemrud Dagh, and another Arsameia, Arsameia-on-the-Euphrates (modern day Gerger Kalesi), which is located to the mountain's east.²³

It soon became evident that Arsameia-on-the Nymphaios shared many similarities to Nemrud Dagh. In 1951, Dörner discovered a great inscription on a wall at Arsameia, and he started investigations at the site in 1953.²⁴ Dörner soon realized that Antiochos I was the author of the inscription that described the location as the royal residence and cult place for the Commagenian dynasty and a place of refuge during difficult times.²⁵ As at Nemrud Dagh, Antiochos recorded a *Nomos* ("Sacred Law") here that indicates that the site was founded by Antiochos' ancestor Arsames.²⁶ Also as at Nemrud Dagh, Arsameia-on-the-Nymphaios features a *hierothesion* – this time dedicated to Antiochos' father, Mithridates Kallinikos. Collaborations with Goell in working at Nemrud Dagh confirmed that the tombs and sanctuaries of father and son complemented one another.

²³ Ibid., 91, 152-53 n.3 for ancient and modern routes.

²⁴ Ibid., 31, for details regarding the discovery. For more on Dörner, see his Festschrift, *Studien zur Religion und Kultur kleinasiens: Festschrift für Friedrich Karl Dörner zum 65. Geburtstag am 28. Februar 1976*, ed. Friedrich Karl Dörner, Sencer Şahin, Elmar Schwertheim, and Jörg Wagner (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978).

²⁵ Dörner, "Arsameia am Nymphaios: eine neue kommagenische Kultstätte," *Biblioteca Orientalis* 9 (1952): 93-95; idem., "Die grosse Königsinschrift von Kommagene," *Die Umschau* 53.5 (1953): 143-46.

²⁶ Dörner and Goell, *Arsameia am Nymphaios*, 40-59. Arsameia-on-the Euphrates was most likely founded by the same Arsames, but here, the names of ancestors in inscriptions are destroyed "beyond hope," Goell, *Nemrud Dagı*, 269; see also 269-70 for her hypothesis of Arsames as the ruler of Armenia around the time of Seleukos II. For more on Antiochos' inscriptions, see Charles Crowther, "Inscriptions of Antiochus I of Commagene and other Epigraphical Finds," *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 51 (2003): 57-67, and Sencer Şahin, "Forschungen in Kommagene I: Epigraphik," *Epigraphica Antatolica* 18 (1991): 99-111.

Similar features embellished each: stepped platforms topped with single or double relief stelai, *dexiosis* reliefs, and long genealogical and ritual prescriptions carved into stone characterized both monuments.²⁷

Goell and Dörner continued excavations in the summers of 1954, 1955, 1956, 1958, 1961, 1963, 1964, 1967, and 1973 recording, cleaning, reconstructing, and surveying Nemrud Dagh.²⁸ A team of geophysicists also accompanied Goell in 1963 and 1964 with the hope of uncovering the tomb of Antiochos, which has remained lost to this day. Inconclusive results in these two seasons prompted the desire for further research and a season was planned for 1976, but lack of funding deterred fieldwork from occurring that year and Goell never returned.²⁹

Goell's work at the site is crucial. She showed that the West and East Terraces are akin to one another with similar elements and a similar iconographic program featured in both. Unfortunately, Goell only published short reports and few articles so a compilation of hers and others' notes on the history, excavation, and hypotheses titled, *Nemrud Dağı: the Hierothesion of Antiochus I of Commagene*, by Donald Sanders remains the most valuable work for all subsequent scholarship on the site and its impressive monuments.

Research on the site is currently controlled by the International Nemrud Foundation, which granted the Amsterdam Archaeological Centre of the University of

²⁷ See Goell, *Nemrud Dağı*, 148-49 and Table 7 for a comparison of features at these two and other Commagenian sites.

²⁸ Their efforts sparked interest from other scholars such as Helmut Waldmann and Sencer Şahin. See Waldmann, *Die kommagenischen Kulturreformen unter König Mithridates I. Kallinikos und seinem Sohne Antiochos I*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973) and *Der kommagenische Mazdaismus* (Tübingen: E. Wasmuth, 1991); Şahin, "Forschungen in Kommagene."

²⁹ Goell, *Nemrud Dağı*, 35-85.

Amsterdam, under Eric Moormann and Miguel John Versluys to recommence work since July 14, 2001. A team of archaeologists, epigraphists, and other specialized technicians have aimed to protect Nemrud Dagħ from further deterioration, reconstruct the colossal statue groups, reevaluate the remains, and create a virtual reconstruction.³⁰ This more recent archaeological work has allowed for a new consideration of the site’s visual program, which has spurred new considerations of the dual Hellenistic-Persian program, including my own.

Antiochos I’s Hierothesion at Nemrud Dagħ

At the time of Antiochos’ reign, Commagene shared borders with powerful realms, which involved Antiochos and his kingdom in numerous foreign affairs throughout his rule, but Commagene’s propinquity to these larger neighbors was not the only factor that lent it significance. The kingdom’s silver and iron mines, fertile river valleys, dense forests lush with fruit trees, and wines to rival even those of Greece contributed to its prosperous nature.³¹ Control over one of the main crossings of the Euphrates River as well as easy passes over the Taurus and Amanus mountain ranges to the lands of Mesopotamia and Asia Minor enriched Commagene even further and endowed it great geographic importance (see Map 2).³²

³⁰ Moormann and Versluys, “First Interim Report,” 73-111; idem., “The Nemrud Dağ Project: Second Interim Report.” *BABesch* 78 (2003): 141-66; idem., “The Nemrud Dağ Project: Third Interim Report.” *BABesch* 80 (2005): 125-43.

³¹ Strabo, *Geographia* 12.2.1.

³² Mary Boyce, Frantz Grenet, Bertold Spuler, Hady R. Idris, and Otto Eissfeldt, *Zoroastrianism under Macedonian and Roman Rule*, vol. 3 of *A History of Zoroastrianism* (Leiden, Brill: 1991), 309.

Antiochos I ruled this prosperous and geographically significant kingdom in the first century BCE and chose the summit of Nemrud Dagh for his *hierothesion*. Although not the tallest peak in the region, a conical tumulus measuring about fifty meters high caps Nemrud Dagh, and the *hierothesion* is prominently visible from all directions.³³ A walkway encircles the tumulus and leads to three rock-cut terraces – the North Terrace, the East Terrace (actually on the northeast side of the mountain), and the West Terrace (more precisely situated on the southwest) (fig. 2.1). The North Terrace’s primary function was to provide access to the more decorated and visually interesting East and West Terraces where the ruler commissioned two similar sculptural programs.

The function of Antiochos’ temple-tomb complex depends on its fusion of Hellenistic and Persian visual elements. On the East and West Terraces, Antiochos installed five colossal seated statues – four syncretic deities and a portrait of himself. Relief stelai depicting Antiochos with these same deities, other stelai displaying the Persian, Macedonian, and Commagenian ancestors of Antiochos, enormous sets of guardian lion and eagle statues, reliefs of subsidiary figures, and a visual representation of a horoscope augment the artistic program, nuancing the ruler’s self-fashioning.

The largest of the three terraces, the East Terrace, opens up to the northeast with a square, stepped platform sometimes referred to as the “stepped pyramid,” which likely housed a central altar and two pairs of guardian lions and eagles (figs. 2.2-2.3).³⁴ Closer to the mountain’s peak with the tumulus as their backdrop are the *Synthronoi Theoi*, or five Cyclopean statues (originally measuring ca. 8-9 meters tall) of deities as well as a

³³ Goell, *Nemrud Dagi*, 2.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

statue of Antiochos sitting on a raised, two-tiered podium (figs. 2.4-2.5). An inscription in Greek of the *Nomos* or Sacred Law runs along the backs of these statues (figs. 2.6-2.7), identifying the figures:

Therefore, as you see, I have set up these divine images of Zeus-Oromasdes and of Apollo-Mithras-Helios-Hermes and of Artagnes-Herakles-Ares, and also of my all-nourishing homeland Commagene; and from one and the same quarry, throned likewise among the deities who hear our prayers, I have consecrated the features of my own form, and have caused the ancient honor of great deities to become the coeval of a new Tyche. Since I thereby, in an upright way, imitated the example of the divine Providence, which as a benevolent helper has so often been seen standing by my side in the struggles of my reign.³⁵

The composition of the colossal statues seats hybridized Zeus-Oromasdes (the latter part of the name is a variant of Ahura Mazda) in the center flanked to his left by Apollo-Mithras-Helios-Hermes and Artagnes-Herakles-Ares. On Zeus-Oromasdes' right, the goddess Tyche-Commagene and Antiochos I sit. The West Terrace offers a similar arrangement – though there are slight differences in the representation of the figures. For instance, Antiochus and the male deities of the East Terrace wear cloaks fastened on their left shoulder with tunics underneath (figs. 2.8-2.9). Their counterparts on the West Terrace wear a simple *candys* with a broad center band and narrower bands over each shoulder (figs. 2.10). All male figures on both terraces wear low boots that are tongued and show double-lacing (fig. 2.11).

Despite these slight variations, the representation of the deities and their attributes is largely consistent from one terrace to the other. Zeus-Oromasdes (fig. 2.12-2.13) wears a high Persian tiara with a nodding tip and lappets that fall down over his ears. A diadem

³⁵ The inscription is recorded in Greek and translated to English in Goell, *Nemrud Dagi*, 206-17; quote found at 214. See the *Nomos* in its entirety in Appendix A.

decorated with winged thunderbolts covers his tiara across his forehead, ties in the back, and extends down as tassels. In his left hand, Zeus-Oromasdes' holds a *barsom*, a bundle of twigs from a tamarisk (or other) tree bound by a band or ribbon. In Iranian and sometimes in Indian cultures, the *barsom* signified a ritual occasion – prayer, the making of a sacrifice or incantation, or other acts of devotion. The representation of the device here imbued the sculptural program with ritual significances.³⁶

On Zeus-Oromasdes' left sits the hybrid deity, Apollo-Mithras-Helios-Hermes (figs. 2.14-2.15). Like Zeus-Oromasdes, Apollo-Mithras wears the Persian tiara and carries a *barsom* in his left fist, but unlike Zeus and as the Classical imagery of his component parts dictates, he is youthful and beardless. A diadem, this time decorated by alternating discs and lozenges, covers the god's forehead, and it, with the tiara, completely covers any hair on his head.

At the left side of the group, another syncretized god sits at the edge of the composition. This representation of Artagnes-Herakles-Ares (figs. 2.16-2.18) wears a heavy beard and – like its neighbors – dons the Persian tiara. Instead of a *barsom*, however, and following the attribute of Herakles, he carries an upright club in his left hand that rests against his left shoulder.

To Zeus-Oromasdes' right sits Tyche-Commagene (fig. 2.19-2.20) who wears a sleeveless chiton covered by a himation that covers the back of her head. Her arms and torso remain bare. Simple slippers dress her feet while heavy, plain bracelets encircle each of her wrists, and pendant earrings dangle from her ears. The better-preserved Tyche-Commagene from the West Terrace reveals that the goddess holds a cornucopia in

³⁶ Goell, *Nemrud Dagi*, 392. See 182-206 for detailed analyses of all the colossi on both East and West Terraces.

her left hand with fruit spilling over the edge.³⁷ In her right hand, she grasps the stems of flowers that, along with more fruit, lie across her lap. A heavy wreath of fruit (grapes, pomegranates, and apples have been identified), flowers, and grain crown her head, which is then topped by a comparatively plain *kalathos*.

Antiochos I sits to the right of Tyche-Commagene garbed similarly as the other males in the group on each terrace (figs. 2.22-2.24). His tiara, however, differs from that of the male deities in both colossal versions. Narrowing sharply as it reaches its point, the tiara's top shows five ray-like points when viewed in profile. From the front and back, the motif appears as a line of discs. This is the Armenian tiara, and it identifies this figure as Antiochos rather than as a deity, since the ruler wears this headdress on his coins.³⁸ The lappets of his headdress are folded up so his ears are visible but only these two signs distinguish the king from Apollo-Mithras since Antiochos, too, is carved youthful and beardless. In his left hand he, like Zeus-Oromasdes and Apollo-Mithras, holds the *barsom* against his lap.

At either end of the seated group is an eagle and lion pair (figs. 2.25-2.29). Massive beaks and claws characterize the eagles. A large head features sharp, open eyes beneath protruding brows while a line separates the thicker upper beak from the thinner bottom one. Their wings are simply rendered and lie flat against either side of the body, and the artists have delineated feathers only near the claws of the birds. The lions are

³⁷ A lightning bolt struck the East Terrace Tyche-Commagene between 1961-1963 leaving the originally intact statue in ruins like the rest of her counterparts, *ibid.*, 10. (fig. 2.21)

³⁸ John H. Young, "Commagenian Tiaras: Royal and Divine," *American Journal of Archaeology* 68 (1964): 29-34. Before Young's astute analysis, the identity of the Antiochos statue and the Apollo-Mithras-Helios-Hermes statue on both the East and West Terrace was switched.

shown seated with tails curled beneath them. Uniform, tightly-packed locks of hair form the mane that rises above the forehead and reveal a finer row of hair framing the face. Alert eyes stare out while an open mouth exposes rows of teeth. The muzzle is large and stylized while the ears are small and deeply-cut.

A set of five stelai – four of them showing Antiochos holding the hand of each of the same four deities above – are set parallel to the colossi on a lower tier. Termed the “*dexiosis*” (“reception” in Greek) reliefs, they order from left to right (south to north): Tyche-Commagene, Apollo-Mithras-Helios-Hermes, Zeus-Oromasdes, and finally Artagnes-Herakles-Ares. The *dexiosis* reliefs of the East Terrace suffered great damage when blocks from the colossi fell on top of them. The few surviving sections, however, exhibit carving of extraordinary detail (figs. 2.30-2.31), and their better-preserved counterparts on the West Terrace help in imagining the reliefs intact.³⁹ The fifth, northernmost stele, which will be discussed in fuller detail below, consists of a lion with stars and planets carved on its body and on the background of the scene – earning it its name, the Lion Horoscope relief.⁴⁰ Once again, a pair of guardian lions and eagles flank either end of the stele group. In what is known as the Southwest Annex, five sockets cut into the living rock indicate the original presence of five stelai, of which only the largest, central one remains. The relief depicts an investiture or *stephanophoros* scene (fig. 2.32), where two partially preserved figures are seen grasping diadems in their hands to crown Antiochos.⁴¹

³⁹ Goell, *Nemrud Dagı*, 224-29.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 252-54.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 230-31.

The East Terrace is defined to the north and south by rows of stelai once set into sockets on a low plinth (figs. 2.33-2.34). Although almost all are in fragmentary states or completely obliterated, each would have measured about two meters high intact. Oriented so that the reliefs face the open court in the center, the two rows of stelai depict the ancestors of Antiochos I: his Persian and Commagenian lineage on the north and his Macedonian ancestry on the south. Inscriptions on the back once again identify the figures. On the north side, the reliefs – fifteen in all – start with Darius I the Great positioned closest to the colossi and terminate on the eastern edge of the Terrace with Mithridates Kallinikos, Antiochos' father.

The best-preserved stele, which features Darius (figs. 2.35-2.36), provides a glimpse of how all the reliefs would have appeared. Darius stands facing right with his head, arms, and right leg in profile. His right arm extends to pour a libation from a *phiale* while he holds a *barsom* close to his body in his left. His slightly upward gaze indicates that Darius' acts of devotion are focused on the seated colossi. Extreme detail on his long-sleeved, ankle-length *candys* show cross-hatching patterns and elaborate laurel leaves decorating his outfit. A twisted, spiral torque encircles Darius' neck and culminates in lions' heads, while an eagle brooch fastens his *candys*. His nodding-tip tiara and its lappets feature eight-pointed stars, while a diadem decorated with standing eagles covers the lower edge of his tiara.⁴² Unfortunately, this amount of detail – certainly to have been found originally – is lacking in the other extant ancestor reliefs from either terrace.

⁴² Ibid., 256-58. The Darius stele from the West Terrace also survives mostly intact although the surface details are not as clear; 281-82.

Lined up on the south side of the East Terrace are seventeen sculpted representations that include Alexander the Great and members of the Seleukid Dynasty, culminating in Antiochos' mother, Queen Laodike, daughter of Antiochos VIII Epiphanes Grypus of Syria and a Seleukid princess. Compared to the paternal ancestors on the north side of the terrace, the maternal ancestors' order is reversed, so that the earliest ancestor stands farthest to the east. The weathering and subsequent destruction of the sandstone has not left any of these reliefs on either terrace fully intact, but fragments (figs. 2.37-2.41) evince Greek costumes and accoutrements including cuirasses, rhytons, chitons, scepters, and brooches decorated with profile busts of Seleukid rulers.⁴³ Behind both sets of ancestor stelai stood a shorter row of parallel stelai depicting subsidiary figures.⁴⁴

The geography of the West Terrace led to a tighter arrangement of the monuments than on the East Terrace (figs. 2.11, 2.42-2.57). The giant enthroned pantheon still sits with the tumulus at its back, but the *dexiosis* scenes have been set adjacent to the seated deities to the north, rather than parallel to the colossal gods. These *dexiosis* reliefs, each standing over two meters high, have survived a better fate than those on the East Terrace.

In the scene featuring Antiochos with Tyche-Commagene (figs. 2.58-2.60), the king wears his usual Armenian tiara, which features a striding lion on its cylindrical upper portion. Underneath a cloak that is covering his shoulders is a short-sleeved cuirass embellished with lozenge patterns and six-pointed stars. Rhythmic folds on his arms signal that Antiochos wears an undershirt beneath his cuirass made of a thin, soft material. A sash tied at his waist holds up a heavy skirt that falls in undulating folds over

⁴³ Ibid., 306-49.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 276-80, 318-21.

his legs, and on the king's right side, a dagger encased in a decorated case hangs from the sash. Similar patterns to those on his arms indicates that he is wearing thin pants, as well, and the trousers tuck inside boots that fasten with laces in the front and end just below the ankle. Two heart-shaped brooches each decorated with an eagle fasten the cloak at Antiochos' right shoulder, and a simple torque encircles his neck four times while a plain bracelet adorns his right wrist. Finally, Antiochos holds a scepter in his left hand, carved in low relief to indicate its recession into the background of the relief.⁴⁵

Tyche-Commagene wears a chiton and a thicker himation, which crosses her body to cover the right knee. Atop her head is a heavy wreath of fruit – grapes, apples, citrus fruits, and others – while a *kalathos* rises from the center of her head. The deity holds a cornucopia overflowing with grapes, apples, other fruit, a pine cone, and cakes, in her left hand while she reached out her (now missing) right arm to Antiochos to offer him grapes.⁴⁶

Antiochos is similarly outfitted in the *dexiosis* relief (fig. 2.61) with Apollo-Mithras-Helios-Hermes as in the Tyche-Commagene *dexiosis* scene, but this stele survives more fully intact. Apollo-Mithras wears a high Persian tiara with its characteristic nodding tip, and the entire headdress is decorated with six-pointed stars and central dots in low relief. A similarly embellished neckpiece and long lappets fall along the back of his shoulders, and a diadem with disc and lozenge pattern wraps around the god's head. Behind Apollo-Mithras' head is a nimbus formed by a slightly raised disc

⁴⁵ Ibid., 232-35.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 235-36.

with rays emanating from it to identify the sun god. Apollo-Mithras' dress and attributes mimic that of Antiochos, except that the god holds a *barsom* in his left hand.⁴⁷

The *dexiosis* scene featuring Zeus-Oromasdes (figs. 2.62-2.65) is the central stele and the largest of all reliefs on the West Terrace measuring over three meters high at the center. Antiochos is once again represented as he is on the other scenes, but instead of a lion featured on his Armenian tiara, a winged thunderbolt flanked on either side by a sprig of oak takes central place. It is difficult to make out the costume of Zeus due to weathering, but the god does wear a Persian tiara covered by a diadem decorated with a row of winged thunderbolts. Although the headdress accords better with the Zoroastrian Ahura Mazda (of which, his name, Oromasdes, we remember, is a variant), Zeus-Oromasdes wears a simple chiton and himation typical of Greece. Unlike the other deities, Zeus sits enthroned on a lion-embellished chair,⁴⁸ holding a scepter as he greets Antiochos. His body turns toward the viewer, but he faces Antiochos as they grasp hands.⁴⁹

The final *dexiosis* relief on the West Terrace (figs. 2.66-2.68) depicts Antiochos much in the same way as before. The lion returns to its central place on the king's Armenian tiara, this time surrounded by winding grape leaves and flowers, and his diadem also portrays lions. Artagnes-Herakles-Ares wears a wreath of grape leaves on his

⁴⁷ Ibid., 237-40.

⁴⁸ The front legs of the throne are lions' legs terminating in carefully rendered clawed feet. The legs end at the top in lion heads with lolling tongues and long, wavy manes.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 240-43.

head, but is otherwise nude. His slightly bent left arm holds a club replete with gnarled knots while the head and paws of the lion skin appear behind his left leg.⁵⁰

Farther north on the West Terrace stands the investiture scene reliefs. Antiochos' paternal ancestors demarcate the southern boundary of the terrace while the maternal ancestors face the colossi on the western edge of the terrace. Without a stepped platform or a high double podium supporting the colossi (they, and the *dexiosis* reliefs, are set on a level only two steps higher than the court floor), the West Terrace does not exude the same grandeur as the East Terrace.⁵¹

The Artistic and Religious Program at Nemrud Dagh

The deliberate pluralistic name choices for the gods at Nemrud Dagh by Antiochos signal no departure from the practice of Hellenistic rulers embracing both the gods of Greek religion and others – in this case, the Zoroastrian deities traditional to Iran. Antiochos' embrace of his Greek ancestry on his mother's side is evident in the partially Greek names of the gods, his engagement employing the *dexiosis* pose as he greets the gods on the stelai reliefs, and use of iconography specifically associated with the Greek deities. Still, the Zoroastrian aspects resonate at Nemrud Dagh as well.

Scholars evaluate the artistic program at Nemrud Dagh in a variety of different ways. Some quickly dismiss the monuments as an ostentatious display of Antiochos' megalomania and paranoia, one stating, “the synthetic style of the sculptures has a certain hollowness that well expresses Antiochos' dynastic vision. The monuments of

⁵⁰ Ibid., 243-45.

⁵¹ Ibid., 3-4.

Commagene were probably the atypical products of a troubled time and a troubled mind.”⁵² Others, however, remark on its style as a symptom of the multicultural late Hellenistic world. Bruno Jacobs, for example, finds Antiochos trying to integrate separate populations under rule with the mixed visual imagery present at the site.⁵³

Wolfram Hoepfner introduced another possibility that the different cultural visual languages present at Nemrud Dagh could have signified. For Hoepfner, the Greek elements showcased Antiochos’ (and other Hellenistic rulers’) desire and political savvy to play a part in the Hellenistic world. The Persian elements and assertion of Iranian ancestry, on the other hand, signaled the Commagenian ruler’s right to reign over a land traditionally controlled by the Persian Empire.⁵⁴ Hoepfner continues that Antiochos was

⁵² R. R. R. Smith, *Hellenistic Sculpture: A Handbook* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1991), 226-28, quote at 228. Smith berated the monuments earlier: “The monuments existed in the first place due to the megalomania of a minor potentate and survive because he ruled high in the Taurus mountain range and built them on tops of hills out of limestone which few subsequently thought it worth their energy to remove,” in *Hellenistic Royal Portraits*. (New York: Oxford University press, 1988), 103.

⁵³ Bruno Jacobs, “Die Religionspolitik des Antiochos I. von Kommagene,” in *Gottkönige am Euphrat: Neue Ausgrabungen und Forschungen in Kommagene*, ed. Jörg Wagner (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2012), 108: “Das Reich von Antiochos I befand sich im Schnittpunkt der Interessen einer östlichen und einer westlichen Grossmacht, Parthiens und Roms. Ein analoger Gegensatz bestand im Lande selbst zwischen Iranern und Makedonen, die gewiss jeweils für sich eine Führungsrolle beanspruchten. Es galt also, die Untertanen aus diesem Antagonismus zu lösen ...Dieses komplexe Gedankengebäude sollte gewiss der Sicherung der eigenen Herrschaft dienen, wie dies verschiedentlich betont wurde. Es sollte aber in erster Linie innenpolitische Stabilität gewährleisten. Auf dieser Basis gewann Antiochos I die notwendige Handlungsfreiheit, um jene kritische politische Situation zu meistern, in der sich die Kommagene befand. Unter diesem Aspekt war seiner Kultreform womöglich mittelbar auch ein aussenpolitisches Ziel gesteckt.”

⁵⁴ Wolfram Hoepfner, “Arsameia am Nymphaios und der Allgötterkult Antiochos’ I: Schriften, Bilder und Säulen als Zeugnisse späthellenistischer Kultur,” in *Gottkönige am Euphrat: Neue Ausgrabungen und Forschungen in Kommagene*, ed. Jörg Wagner, (Mainz: Philip von Zabern, 2012), 116-33.

the harbinger of the development of ruler cults functioning as state religion – a concept later adopted by many Roman emperors.⁵⁵ Miguel John Versluys expands on Hoepfner’s statement and discusses how the discrete Greek and Persian elements joined in a type of visual *bricolage* read by the contemporary viewer – and more specifically the rival Hellenistic rulers – as Hellenism and Persian dynastic legitimacy.⁵⁶

Still others direct focus to the religious program presented at Nemrud Dagh. While noting the deliberate fusion of Greek and Iranian heritage, Helmut Waldmann recognizes the worship of Ahura Mazda, the highest deity in Zoroastrianism, as the center of Antiochos’ program at Nemrud Dagh. He determines that this focus is also consistent at the site of Arsameia-on-the-Nymphaios, constructed by Antiochos’ father.⁵⁷ Another scholar who carefully examines Nemrud Dagh from a religious perspective is Mary Boyce. Devoting generous attention to Commagene in her three volume series on Zoroastrianism,⁵⁸ Boyce recognizes that the official religion of Commagene was

⁵⁵ Ibid., 132-33.

⁵⁶ I would like to thank Dr. Versluys for offering me the first chapter of his manuscript for his forthcoming book, *Nemrud Dağ and Commagene under Antiochos I: Material culture, identity, and style in the late Hellenistic world* (forthcoming). Versluys defines the use of Persian elements to claim “Persianism,” but the exact definition of the term will be discussed in the fourth chapter of his book. See his entry also in *Encyclopedia of Global Archaeology*, ed. C. Smith (New York: Springer Science & Business Media, 2013), s.v. “Nemrud Dağ, Archaeology of.”

⁵⁷ Helmut Waldmann, *Der kommagenische Mazdaismus*. In his earlier book, *Die kommagenischen Kultreformen*, Waldmann considered Mithras as the primary deity of Commagenian religion, but lack of evidence of the cult of Mithras at Commagene led him to revise his argument.

⁵⁸ Mary Boyce, *The Early Period*, vol. 1 of *A History of Zoroastrianism* (Leiden, Brill: 1975); *Under the Achaemenians*, vol. 2 of *A History of Zoroastrianism* (Leiden, Brill, 1982); idem., et al, *Zoroastrianism under Macedonian and Roman Rule*. The last volume contains the largest section on Commagene.

essentially Zoroastrian with Greek elements mixed in – a concept, in Boyce’s opinion, initiated by Antiochos I himself.⁵⁹ Boyce believes that Antiochos’ cult “shared the general character of Hellenistic ruler-cults, which made limited and clearly defined demands on heterogeneous populations.” She adds that “Its unusual complexity was due to the fact that the Perso-Macedonian king sought to link worship of himself with veneration of gods to two distinct pantheons.”⁶⁰ Yet Boyce draws attention to the difficulty, or even the impossibility, of true syncretism by citing examples such as Apollo represented entirely in the Greek fashion at numerous Commagenian sites.⁶¹ And while the other three syncretic deities appear in some form at other cult sites in Commagene, Tyche-Commagene is exclusive to Nemrud Dagh.⁶²

The deliberate choice of representing some gods rather than others at the sanctuaries established by Antiochos invites the question: why were these four syncretic deities specifically chosen to be represented with Antiochos in monumental form at the peak of Nemrud Dagh? Boyce answers that the key lies in the fifth relief that stands with

⁵⁹ Boyce, et al., *Zoroastrianism under Macedonian and Roman Rule*, 343-49.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 348.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 347 for examples.

⁶² Boyce specifically looks at Nemrud Dagh and the two Arsameias because all three have long inscriptions that she concludes were written near the end of Antiochos’ life when he had had time to fully define his cult; and therefore, they should be treated synchronically; *ibid.*, 344-45. Boyce also gives reasons for missing deities (Ares is omitted at the Arsameias) or deities whose separateness was stressed at the Arsameias when they are collapsed into one at Nemrud Dagh (for example, Helios with Hermes), see 345-46. She is unable, however, to find a suitable correlation to Tyche-Commagene at the other two sites (or elsewhere in Commagene for that matter). Instead, Boyce relates the goddess to Hera Teleia, “protector of marriage...guardian also of bounteous earth, most probably worshipped by Zoroastrians in Antiochos’ cult through the concept of the ‘all-nourishing land’ of Commagene.” Quote at 345.

the four *dexiosis* reliefs – the Lion Horoscope (figs. 2.69-2.70). Although similar reliefs are found on both the East and West Terraces, the west stelai has survived in a much better state.⁶³

Quite possibly the strangest and most puzzling component of the sculptural program at Nemrud Dagh, the Lion Horoscope has engendered multiple theories regarding its significance. Carved in high relief, an over-lifesized lion with its body in profile and its head and chest turned to the viewer stares out from its stone background with wide open eyes beneath two protruding brows. With his left leg forward, the lion walks on a low ledge toward the viewer's right. A wide tongue lolls out from his partially open mouth while stylized curls wrap flame-like around his head down past his shoulders and chest. The artist delineated other parts of the lion such as the paws, the back of the legs, tail, and underneath the torso to represent fur. Sharp claws and teeth and defined muscles and sinews also contribute to the naturalistic details.

The more decorative elements, however, are what draw scholars to this work. A crescent moon dangles across the lion's chest while nineteen – the number then assigned by Babylonian astronomers to the sign Leo⁶⁴ – eight-pointed stars adorn both the lion and the ground of the stone. Above the lion's back are three larger sixteen-pointed stars, each labeled in Greek from left to right: Πυρόεις Ἡρακλ[έους] (Fiery one of Herakles), Στίλβων Ἀπόλλωνος (Gleaming one of Apollo), and Φαέθων Διός (Radiant one of

⁶³ The West Terrace Lion Horoscope was discovered by Humann and Puchstein, *Reisen in Kleinasien und Nordsyrien*, 329-36, pl. 40, and was almost entirely intact, but has suffered since. Goell's team uncovered the East Terrace Lion Horoscope; see Goell, *Nemrud Dagi*, 252-54.

⁶⁴ Boyce, et al., *Zoroastrianism under Macedonian and Roman Rule*, 323.

Zeus).⁶⁵ This intentional labeling of the stars encouraged scholars to perform astronomical calculations to determine the date the relief refers to. Humann and Puchstein consulted Paul Lehmann, who dated the constellations, and as a result, the entire *hierothesion*, to July 17, 98 BCE.⁶⁶ Puchstein took this date as Antiochos' conception date, and although others followed Puchstein's conclusions, disagreements arose as well.⁶⁷

Vladimir S. Tuman assesses the depiction and arrangement of the four deification reliefs accompanying the Lion Horoscope and offers a new date of February 4-5, 55 BCE, believing the stelai honor Antiochos' deification on his birthday.⁶⁸ Otto Neugebauer, on the other hand, reads the relief as a calendrical horoscope and includes the crescent moon as a feature of Leo. Above the moon on the relief is one of the nineteen stars, which Neugebauer determines as Regulus, the chief star of Leo and the star under which kings are born.⁶⁹ Setting the parameters between 120-35 BCE, a plausible date range for Antiochos' life, Neugebauer determined only July 7, 62 BCE satisfied all the astronomic and historical terms and suggested it as the date of Antiochos'

⁶⁵ Goell, *Nemrud Dagi*, 253-54.

⁶⁶ Humann and Puchstein, *Reisen in Kleinasien und Nordsyrien*, 329-33; Lehmann took the arrangement of the three planets literally and determined the date based on the alignment of Jupiter, Mercury, and Mars, in that order.

⁶⁷ Goell, *Nemrud Dagi*, 88-89, for further discussion and the refutation by Otto Neugebauer. Moormann and Versluys, "First Interim Report," 97, also points out the flaws of Lehmann's method.

⁶⁸ Vladimir S. Tuman, "The Tomb of Antiochus Revisited: Planetary Alignments and the Deification of the King," *Archaeoastronomy* 7.1-4: 56-69.

⁶⁹ Otto Neugebauer and Henry Barlett Van Hoesen, *Greek Horoscopes*, American Philosophical Society Memoirs 48 (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1959), 14-16; see also Boyce, et al., *Zoroastrianism under Macedonian and Roman Rule*, 323-24.

coronation.⁷⁰ Concurring with the dating, Boyce remarks, “the great significance of this stellar event for King Antiochus was evidently that the planets concerned could, with priestly learning and ingenuity, be linked with gods much venerated by the king, while Regulus could be interpreted as his own celestial representative. Revered divinities thus appeared, through heavenly conjunctions, to be offering divine greetings to Antiochus, exalting him above all other mortals.”⁷¹

Yet Boyce presents a convoluted theory in order to account for all the divinities represented by the four syncretic deities at Nemrud Dagh: Zeus-Oromasdes/Ahura Mazda, Artagnes-Herakles-Ares, Apollo-Mithras-Helios-Hermes, and Tyche-Commagene. While convincingly arguing for the representation of the three male syncretic deities in the labeling of stars/planets depicted on the Lion Horoscope, Boyce likens Tyche-Commagene to the crescent moon shown hanging from the lion’s neck, relying primarily on the deity’s gender. She connects the waxing each month with seed-sowing and fertility, which in her opinion “must have had corresponding divinity the spirit of Antiochus’ ‘all-nourishing homeland,’ Commagene.” Boyce adds that, “For Greeks (but not Iranians) the moon was female; and this being is the only one of the colossi to be presented in Greek and not Iranian guise, as a cornucopia-carrying Tyche.”⁷²

Finally, Maurice Crijns argues that the relief refers to an astronomical event and determines the exact date of the occurrence. According to Crijns, Jupiter, Mars, and

⁷⁰ Neugebauer and Van Hoesen, *Greek Horoscopes*, 14-16, for more on the date and the movement of the planets in relation to the star Regulus; see also Neugebauer, *A History of Ancient Mathematical Astronomy*, vol. 2 (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1975), 575, and Goell, *Nemrud Dagi*, 89-91.

⁷¹ Boyce, et al., *Zoroastrianism under Macedonian and Roman Rule*, 324. The date on the Lion Horoscope is not yet universally agreed upon.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 324-28; quotes at 327.

Mercury passed over Regulus from above (just as they are positioned on the relief) on June 10, June 21, and July 6, 109 BCE respectively. And on July 14, 109 BCE, the Moon passed below Regulus (as the crescent lies below the star on the relief).⁷³ With Crijs' evaluation, Moormann and Versluys contemplate an earlier building phase at Nemrud Dagh initiated by Antiochos' father, Mithridates I Kallinikos, and wonder if the Lion Horoscope refers to this alleged construction. The two authors, however, quickly conclude that speculating building phases at this time is a dangerous task. They, too, are puzzled by the choice of the particular gods represented at Nemrud Dagh and are unable to offer a conclusive theory.⁷⁴

There exists, I believe, an unexplored avenue that offers an explanation for the specific choice of deities at Nemrud Dagh. The religious beliefs of Antiochos I are obviously a motivator for the project, and it is generally accepted that the religion of his Persian ancestors – Zoroastrianism – presides at this *hierothesion*. For example, Boyce points to the section of the *Nomos* in which the king decrees the provisions of, “an unceasing cult and chosen priests arrayed in such vestments as are proper to the race of the Persians I have inaugurated,” and cogently argues the significance of this statement.⁷⁵ The passage should not be dismissed as a superficial comment, but rather indicates that the priests who served Antiochos were magi, “and that by the requirement that the priests

⁷³ Crijs reports his findings in Moormann and Versluys, “First Interim Report,” 97-99.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁷⁵ Significantly, the dress of the priests is mentioned again in the *Nomos*: “On the birthdays which I [Antiochos] have established forever as monthly and annual festivals of the gods and of my own person, throughout the whole year he [the priest] shall, himself decently garbed in Persian raiment, as my benefaction and the ancestral custom of our race have provided...” Goell, *Nemrud Dagı*, 215.

of his cult should always wear Persian dress the king was seeking to maintain the dominance of the Zoroastrian tradition.”⁷⁶ Therefore, I propose a closer look at some of the surviving Zoroastrian doctrines, for when juxtaposed with the monuments at Nemrud Dag, these texts offer illuminating insight into Antiochos’ design and his intent for the purpose of the site.

Zoroastrian Doctrines

The sacred texts of Zoroastrianism are divided into two main collections of scriptures, the Gathic Avesta and the Standard Avesta. Although usually termed the Old Avesta and the Young/Younger/Late Avesta, the Gathic and Standard Avesta respectively are more accurate names since the terms eliminate a necessary chronological order to the body of texts.⁷⁷ The Gathic Avesta comprises six Gathas, or hymns, and the Yasna Haptanghaiti, a set of rhythmic prayers and liturgical formulas. Five of the six Gathas are believed to be the work of Zoroaster/Zarathushtra himself, the namesake priest-prophet of the religion, and it is only through these Avestan texts that we know anything about him.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Boyce, et al., *Zoroastrianism under Macedonian and Roman Rule*, 329; see also Waldmann, *Der kommagenische Mazdaismus*, where he traces the worship of Ahura Mazda at this and other Commagenian sites by Antiochos and his father, Mithridates Kallinikos.

⁷⁷ Ilya Gershevitch, “Approaches to Zoroaster’s Gathas,” *Iran* (British Institute of Persian Studies) 33 (1995): 3-4, parts of the “Younger Avesta” show pre-Zoroastrian thematic material so may pre-date parts of the “Old Avesta.”

⁷⁸ See Peter Clark, *Zoroastrianism: An Introduction to an Ancient Faith* (Portland, OR: Sussex Academic Press, 1998), 1-25 for Zoroaster’s life viewed through the Gathas. S.A. Nigosian, *The Zoroastrian Faith: Tradition and Modern Research* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993), 49, points out that there is no consensus on which of the

The Standard Avesta is formed by the Khordeh Avesta (Little Avesta) – short prayers to individual divine beings – the Yashts – translated as “acts of devotion” or “worship,” twenty-one invocations or hymns that each one praise a single divinity – and the Visparad (Vispared, Visprat) and Videvdat (Vendidat). The Visparad consists of praise and offerings to the prime Zoroastrian deity, Ahura Mazda, as well as other divine beings. And the Videvdat, which translates to “anti-demonic law,” proclaims the initial giving of “the law” to humans by Ahura Mazda followed by laws involved in religious, civil, and purifying deeds.⁷⁹

There is general consensus that tribes from the eastern parts of Iran compiled the Gathic and Standard Avestan texts as a whole. From there, the western magi received them and altered the texts only very slightly if at all. As Boyce remarks, “Avestan was already a dead church language even for the eastern Iranians before the faith was carried to the west...the texts which then existed were already all being memorized and transmitted in more or less fixed form.”⁸⁰ Dating both the religion and its texts has proved difficult, and a precise date is impossible to determine since the main source for dating is part of the text itself – the Gathic Avesta, the supposed words of the prophet Zoroaster. Based on the clues in the text about the type of society in which Zoroaster lived – which animals were domesticated, what type of chariots were employed, how social

five Gathas Zoroaster composed himself, to what extent, and how they were recorded. Although written in the same dialect as the others, one Gatha is not attributed to Zoroaster because it is theologically different from the rest.

⁷⁹ Nigosian, *The Zoroastrian Faith*, 53-60.

⁸⁰ Boyce, *Zoroastrianism: Its Antiquity and Constant Vigour*, Columbia Lectures on Iranian Studies 7 (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 1992), 27-28.

stratification was formed, and so on – the Gathic Avestan texts are generally dated between ca. 1500-1200 BCE.⁸¹

Boyce sees the Standard Avestan texts developing during the ninth and eighth centuries BCE and becoming fixed by the end of that period.⁸² T. Burrow's research accords with this dating, and he concludes that the Yashts "are to be dated before the migration of the Iranians to central and western Iran," ca. 900 BCE.⁸³ Prods Oktor Skjærvø gives a *terminus ante quem* of ca. 700 BCE, since the oldest of these texts, the Yashts, contain no reference to western Iran – particularly Media. Skjærvø believes this absence indicates that the Yashts were composed in eastern Iran before the Medes conquered the region ca. 700 BCE.⁸⁴ Skjærvø is willing to date other parts of the Standard Avesta, such as parts of the Videvdad, to the Median Period, ca. 700-550 BCE, and even as late as the second half of the Achaemenid period, ca. 400 BCE, proposing that while these texts also lack references to western Iran or to contemporary events,

⁸¹ Ibid., 30-45. See also Cyrus R. Pangborn (*Zoroastrianism: A Beleaguered Faith* [Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd, 1982], 4, n. 6.) for alternate dates by followers for Zoroastrianism who evade the historical problems and rely solely on the mythical tradition.

⁸² Boyce, *Zoroastrianism: Its Antiquity*, 29. See also Boyce, *The Early Period*, 189-91; Gherardo Gnoli, *Zoroaster's Time and Homeland: A Study on the Origins of Mazdeism and Related Problems* (Naples: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1980) for issues with dating the Avesta.

⁸³ T. Burrow, "The Proto-Indoaryans," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 2 (1973): 136-39. Burrow traces family names of supporters of the faith and mention (or the lack thereof) of geographical sites.

⁸⁴ Prods Oktor Skjærvø, "The Avesta as a Source for the Early History of the Iranians," in *The Indo-Aryans of Ancient South Asia: Language, Material Culture and Ethnicity*, ed. George Erdosy (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1995), 166.

unlike the Yashts, these sections have no need for mentioning such matters.⁸⁵ Regardless of their precise date, the Standard Avestan texts pre-date the *hierothesion* at Nemrud Dagh by at least six centuries.

The Avestan texts of primary concern for the sculptural program at Nemrud Dagh are the Yashts, the collection of hymns in the Standard Avesta.⁸⁶ All twenty-one Yashts follow a similar program: prayers are addressed to deities who give the name of the days of the month and to genii who form the five divisions of each day. Each Yasht exhibits

⁸⁵ Ibid., 166-7, Skjærvø proposes a “late-date” chronology placing the Yashts down to the early Median period, but that is the absolute latest plausible date; see also 160-61 for more on Avestan chronology.

Several Pahlavi texts (Persian literature of the first millennium CE) explain that the *nasks*, or books, of the Avesta created by Ahura Mazda were brought to king Vishtaspa, who made two copies of the text. During Alexander’s conquest, the copies were allegedly destroyed with the Greeks only keeping and translating into their language the scientific passages they found useful. Under the Parthian Empire and later under the Sasanians, kings ordered the collection of fragments of the Avesta and the recording of those which had been transmitted orally. See *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. “Avesta: the holy book of the Zoroastrians” (by J. Kellen), <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/avesta-holy-book> (accessed November 11, 2013); see also Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 134-36.

By the third century BCE, the first Sasanian king, Ardashir I, collected all the Avestan texts together, and by the mid-Sasanian period, ca. 4th-6th centuries CE, the texts were committed to writing. See Dhanjishah Meherjibhai Madan, ed., *The Denkard* (Bombay: Ganpatrao Ramajirao Sidhe, 1911), 412.5f; Boyce, *Textual Sources for the Study of Zoroastrianism*, *Textual Sources for the Study of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 114. Skjærvø, *Avesta as Source*, 155-76, quote at 159, relates, “the Pahlavi translation of an Avestan *nask* is quoted in the visionary inscription of the high-priest Kirdēr, ca. 270 AD, and a *nask* is referred to in a Manichean text describing the meeting of Mani [an Iranian prophet who lived between 216-274 CE] with a Sasanian king; Boyce, et al., *Zoroastrianism under Macedonian and Roman Rule*, 121-4, push the date to the later Sasanian period.

⁸⁶ Sarah Stewart, “Worship According to the Yasts,” *Iran* 45 (2007): 137-51, discusses how the Yashts were used, by whom, and with what purpose.

dedicated worship to one personified virtue of Ahura Mazda, or *yazata*,⁸⁷ and it also contains spells for certain occasions such as the blessing of departed souls or the warding off of danger.⁸⁸ For example, Yasht 1 evokes Ahura Mazda and follows a conversation between the supreme deity and the priest Zoroaster. Ahura Mazda recites his twenty names and instructs the prophet to repeat likewise in order to overcome any hostilities.⁸⁹

As stated above, the chronology places the compilation of the Yashts somewhere around 700 BCE, making it more than likely that the Orontids of Commagene were aware of and probably reciting these hymns. Problems of error in transmission that are more common in other Avestan texts are unlikely for the Yashts. The less linguistically uniform texts of the Standard Avesta are attributed to the differing degrees of sacredness – those most revered were carefully memorized and transmitted more faithfully than those less often recited.⁹⁰ The Yashts, along with the Gathic Avestan texts, were orally

⁸⁷ Literally means “adorable one” or “worthy of worship,” and represents a beneficent divinity. The *yazata*’s foil is the *Daeva* or devils/demons, who Zoroaster specifically instructed his followers not to worship; Boyce, *Zoroastrianism: Its Antiquity*, 93. See also Farhang Mehr, *The Zoroastrian Tradition: An Introduction to the Ancient Wisdom of Zarathustra* (Rockport, MA: Element, 1991), 32-36. Helmut Humbach, *The Gathas of Zarathushtra and the Other Old Avestan Texts. Part 1: Introduction – Text and Translation* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1991), 17, discusses the word’s origins.

⁸⁸ Nigosian, *The Zoroastrian Faith*, 58.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 59-60; see also Ernestine G. Busch, ed., *The Avesta: Major Portions* (El Paso, TX: Ernestine G. Busch, 1985), 57-66.

⁹⁰ Boyce, *Zoroastrianism: Its Antiquity*, 28, states that the Zoroastrian texts were recorded with “a fidelity close to that of the [Indian] Rgveda.”

transmitted and then faithfully recorded.⁹¹

The Visual Representation of the Yashts at Nemrud Dagħ

One Yasht is particularly pertinent to this chapter. Yasht 14 honors Verthragna/Verethraghna, the god of victory and the companion of the god Mithra, on the twentieth day of each month (see Appendix B for the entire Yasht). The god of victory Verthragna (literally, “smashing of resistance”),⁹² named Artagnes in Greek, finds himself depicted Nemrud Dagħ as the compound deity Artagnes-Herakles-Ares. Here as elsewhere, it is evident that Verthragna was one of the most revered deities of Western Iran from the Seleukid period onward.⁹³ Verthragna is etymologically related to the main epithet of Indra, *vrtrahán-*, which means “resistance-slayer,” and some suggest that Verthragna and Indra are one in the same.

More likely, however, Verthragna is a pre-Zoroastrian divinity who, because of his virility and strength in battle, became the embodiment of orthodoxy in the service of Zoroastrianism.⁹⁴ His similarity to the Greek hero Herakles was not lost on the Hellenized population of Asia Minor, and as Martha L. Carter argues, the popularity of

⁹¹ Skjærvø, *Avesta as Source*, 161.

⁹² William W. Malandra, trans. and ed., *An Introduction to Ancient Iranian Religion: Readings from the Avesta and Achaemenid Inscriptions* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 80-88, for Verthragna’s name and character.

⁹³ Albert De Jong, *Traditions of the Magi: Zoroastrianism in Greek and Latin Literature*, vol. 133 of *Religions in the Graeco-Roman World*, eds. R. Van Den Broek, H. J. W. Drijvers, H. S. Versnel (New York: Brill, 1997), 302, refers to many references to Verthragna’s cult in Armenia.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 303. R. C. Zaehner, *The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1961), 102-04, discusses the relationship between Verthragna and Indra.

Herakles in the Hellenistic world coincides with an increase in the prominence of Verthragna.⁹⁵

In Yasht 14, Verthragna is able to take ten different forms: the healing wind, a beautiful bull, a stallion, a burden-bearing camel, a fearsome boar, a fifteen-year-old youth, a wild ram, a fighting buck, a bright and beautiful warrior, and the Varegna/Vârengana bird. Each incarnation acts as a supreme example of male virility, and each incarnation of Verthragna offers its specific power to protect Zoroaster from his enemies and offer him healing. Verthragna is also a companion of the solar god Mithra⁹⁶ and brings victory to those favored by Mithra and punishes his enemies. In verse 14.35, Ahura Mazda instructs Zoroaster to brush his body with feathers from one of Verthragna's forms, the Varegna bird, not only to protect his own body, but also to conjure a curse against his enemies. Verse 14.36 continues: "the feather of that bird of birds brings him help; brings to him homage of men; it maintains in him his glory."

Scholars of Zoroastrianism most often associate the Varegna bird with either an eagle or a falcon. Skjærvø and Satnam Mendoza Forrest favor the eagle since the bird also acts as a symbol of royalty for the Iranians, Greeks, Romans, and other peoples.⁹⁷ Yet, in addition to representing royal sovereignty, in Zoroastrianism, the eagle is also a

⁹⁵ Martha L. Carter, "Aspects of the Imagery of Verethragna: The Kushan Empire and Buddhist Central Asia," in *Proceedings of the Second European Conference of Iranian Studies*, eds. Bert G. Fragner, Christa Fragner, Gherardo Gnoli, Roxane Haag-Higuchi, Mauro Maggi, and Paola Orsatti (Roma: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1995): 119-40.

⁹⁶ Zaehner, *The Dawn and Twilight*, 101-02, describes Verthragna as Mithra's "principal agent of his vengeance."

⁹⁷ Skjærvø and Forrest, *Witches, Whores, and Sorcerers: The Concept of Evil in Early Iran* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), 129.

solar symbol. Closer examination of the Varegna bird in other Zoroastrian verses reveals another significance.

Verse 14.40 introduces a hero named Thraētaona who slew the giant three-mouthed, three-headed, and six-eyed dragon Aza Dahâka. What may appear as an irrelevant anecdote nevertheless ties Verthragna and the Varegna bird even more closely together; the former helped Thraētaona defeat the dragon. A further examination of the Varegna bird's connection to Thraētaona shows an even deeper significance.⁹⁸ For besides an eagle or another bird of prey, the Varegna bird is the form assumed by *khwarnah* (*khvarenah/xvarenah*), the personification of Glory or Fortune and a divine entity associated with heroes in various Avestan doctrines.

Yasht 19, dedicated to *khwarnah* describes that *khwarnah* resided with Yima, the first man and first king in the epic tradition of Iran subsumed into the Gathas.⁹⁹ Yima's reign was originally a glorious one where “nourishing food and drink were never failing for feeding creatures, flocks and men were undying, waters and plants were undrying.”¹⁰⁰ Yet, Yima learned to lie and that is when Fortune – in the form of the Varegna bird – left him.

The Yasht continues that Fortune flew from Yima three times: first it went to Mithra; the second time to the hero in Yasht 14, Thraētaona; and the third time to the

⁹⁸ Calvert Watkins, *How to Kill a Dragon: Aspects of Indo-European Poetics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 313-20.

⁹⁹ Wolfgang Lentz, “Yima and Khvarenah in the Avestan Gathas,” in *A Locust's Leg: Studies in honour of S. H. Taquizadeh* (London: Percy Lund, Humphries & Co. Ltd, 1962), 131-38.

¹⁰⁰ Yasht 19.32.

“manly-hearted Keresâspa,” who went on to kill the demon Srvara, “the horse-devouring, men-devouring, yellow, poisonous snake, over which yellow poison flowed a thumb’s breadth thick.”¹⁰¹ *Khwarnah*, in the form of the Vareгна bird, continues to flee from different characters represented in the Yasht with the bird’s strength compared to that of a horse, a camel, a man, (coincidentally three of Verthragna’s forms) and with kingly glory. Wherever Fortune went, it created a world where “living creatures may keep away hunger and death, living creatures may keep away cold and heat. Such is the kingly Fortune, the keeper of the Aryan nations of the five kinds of animals, made to help the faithful and the Law of the worshipers of Mazda.”¹⁰²

One of the individuals mentioned as graced by *khwarnah* is Kavi Usa, who also appears in Yasht 14.39. Included in a list in this Yasht, Kavi Usa is one of the select, who are described as: “all of them brave, all of them strong, all of them healthful, all of them wise, all of them happy in their wishes, all of them powerful kings.”¹⁰³ Finally, Fortune reached Zoroaster, the most powerful man – the holiest, the best-ruling, the brightest, the most glorious, and the most victorious.¹⁰⁴ The connection is telling: if one of the forms of Verthragna is the Vareгна bird, and the bird is the physical embodiment of *khwarnah* or Fortune, then Verthragna is not only the god of Victory but also that of Fortune.

As William M. Malandra points out, Verthragna has the “unique epithet *baro xwarenah*, ‘bearing *xwarenah* [*khwarnah*],’ which means...that he bore it as his battle

¹⁰¹ Yasht 19.35-44.

¹⁰² Yasht 19.68-69.

¹⁰³ Yasht 19.72.

¹⁰⁴ Yasht 19.79.

standard, though the implication is that he bestows the *xwarenah* upon the victor.”¹⁰⁵ And Carter elaborates: “in Iranian religion *xwarenah* and Verethragna are inextricably linked together. *Xwarenah* or ‘glory’ is the heaven-set charisma bestowed on heroes and kings. It represents their power to conquer, succeed in just rule, and prosper; and it may be given or taken away by the Varagna bird, which is a prominent avatar of Verethragna.”¹⁰⁶

This association between Verethragna and the Varagna bird is made even clearer in the later verses of Yasht 14. The ritual involved with the feather magic should be conducted when “armies meet together in full array,” and more specifically, Yasht 14.44 instructs the user of the spell to hold out four feathers to each of the four roads that meet at an intersection. Besides protecting against personal bodily harm to one who rubs himself with a feather from the Varagna bird, the four feathers at a crossroads promises aid to the army casting the spell so that it “conquers and is not crushed, and smites and is not smitten.”¹⁰⁷ The remaining verses of the spell concern the importance of teaching this spell to a select few – namely family members of Zoroaster and priests. Ignoring this command and other warnings listed in Yasht 14.46-58 brings on the wrath of Mithra, Rashnu (the embodiment of justice), and Verethragna.

The mention of priests as one of an elite group to learn this spell is intriguing since the *Nomos* of Antiochos I at Nemrud Dagh devotes special attention to the priests’ roles at the site. It decrees:

The priest who is appointed by me for these gods and
heroes, whom I have dedicated at the sacred tomb of my

¹⁰⁵ Malandra, *Introduction to Ancient Iranian Religion*, 82.

¹⁰⁶ Carter, “Aspects of the Imagery of Verethragna,” 135.

¹⁰⁷ Yasht 14.34.

body, on the topmost ridges of the Taurus range, and who shall at a later time hold this office, he, set free from every other duty, shall without let or hindrance and with no excuse for evasion keep watch at this memorial and devote himself to the care and proper adornment of these sacred images.¹⁰⁸

In the *Nomos* inscription, Antiochos I continues that the priest be “decently garbed in Persian raiment, as my benefaction and the ancestral custom of our race have provided,”¹⁰⁹ and the significance of this passage for the fulfillment of Zoroastrian duties has already been discussed. The importance of the priests and their roles in fulfilling the sacred duties, sacrifices, and festal assemblies continues to be stressed in the *Nomos*, and Antiochos promises severe judgment on any who interfere:

Whoever shall presume to rescind or to injure or guilefully to misinterpret the just tenor of this regulation or the heroic honors which an immortal judgment has sanctioned, him the wrath of the daemons and of all the gods shall pursue, both himself and his descendants, irreconcilably, with every kind of punishment.¹¹⁰

With such responsibility delegated to the office, the priests were undoubtedly carefully chosen and prized as masters of their station.¹¹¹ And as experts on *yazatas* (personified virtues of Ahura Mazda), the priests would have been more than acquainted with Verthragna, the Vargna bird, *khwarnah*, and the relationship among these three.

¹⁰⁸ Goell, *Nemrud Dagi*, 215.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 215.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 216.

¹¹¹ It goes without saying that they would have been intimately familiar with the Avestan texts including the Yashts. And the *yazatas* that the Yashts honored are argued to have been introduced to Zoroastrianism by Magis, members of a priestly clan who according to Farhang Mehr, *The Zoroastrian Tradition*, 32-33, “exerted great influence on the course and contents of the religious evolution.”

The resonances between these Yashts and Antiochos' program at Nemrud Dagh ring even truer when the sculptures are considered. The supreme deity is Zeus-Oromasdes enthroned in the center, who, in his Persian aspect, is consonant with Ahura Mazda, the supreme deity narrating Yasht 14. Like Ahura Mazda, Zeus holds the most important position in his religious tradition. To Zeus-Oromasdes' left sits Apollo-Mithras-Helios-Hermes, followed by his companion, Verthragna, or Artagnes-Herakles-Ares as he is known here. These same three male deities – Ahura Mazda, Mithras, and Verthragna – feature prominently in the spell recorded in Yasht 14, and the representation of Antiochos alongside these gods indicates his role in invoking their protection. The presence of Tyche-Commagene to Zeus-Oromasdes' right further bolsters the connection to Zoroastrianism of the monuments of Antiochos' *hierothesion*.

As noted in the previous chapter, Tyche is the Greek personification of Fortune, who also became the embodiment of whole cities and kingdoms during the Hellenistic period. At Nemrud Dagh, Fortune is also *khwarnah*, which takes the physical form of the Vargna bird. In the *Nomos*, Antiochos proclaims that he has “set up these divine images of Zeus-Oromasdes, Apollo-Mithras-Helios-Hermes, and of Artagnes-Herakles-Ares, and also of my all-nourishing homeland Commagene; and from one and the same quarry, throned likewise among the deities who hear our prayers, I have consecrated ancient honor of great deities to become the *coeval of a new Tyche* (emphasis my own).”¹¹² I propose that this new Tyche was the Persian personification of Fortune – *khwarnah* –

¹¹² Goell, *Nemrud Dagi*, 214.

which in Persian context, not unlike the Tyche of Greek culture, conveyed the concept of fortune transmitted from one king to another as well as the fortune of a whole nation.¹¹³

Cementing the association between the named deities and the Yashts are the eagles and lions that flank each end of the seated colossi. Both beings are symbols of royalty, but they are also connected to *khwarnah*. The Varegna bird is often associated with the eagle, and in later Sogdian art at least, a lion-headed bird represents *khwarnah*. And though the Sogdian examples are dated to the early Medieval period (ca. seventh-eighth centuries CE), their genesis may be found earlier. As Guitty Azarpay argues, Sogdian symbols of *khwarnah* are traceable to popular Sogdian legends and religious lore especially the Persian variants circumscribed by Zoroastrian tradition.¹¹⁴

Images of lions and eagles are found elsewhere at Nemrud Dagh. The former is the subject of the Lion Horoscope and is used as a decorative motif on the costume of Antiochos – on his tiara, diadem, and neckband in the *dexiosis* reliefs.¹¹⁵ The eagle, in profile view with its wings partly spread, decorates the diadems of Antiochos' Iranian ancestors – namely Darius I, Darius II, and Orontes II – on the ancestor stelai. Eagles with outstretched wings in frontal view and their heads turned in profile, appear as

¹¹³ Guitty Azarpay, *Sogdian Painting: The Pictorial Epic in Oriental Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 112.

¹¹⁴ Azarpay, "Iranian Iconographic Formulae in Sogdian Painting," *Iranica Antiqua* 11 (1975): 168-77; quote at 177.

¹¹⁵ Goell points out that the motif is not found on Antiochos' tiara on coins so the lion is not a standard device of the king. Instead, she sees the lion as attributes of Apollo-Mithras-Helios-Hermes, Artagnes-Herakles-Ares, and the goddess Commagene. Goell omits Zeus-Oromasdes from this group because in this *dexiosis* scene, thunderbolts adorn Antiochos' tiara, diadem, and neckband instead of the lions; *Nemrud Dagl*, 406. Remnants of a three-headed lion were also found at the site. Goell, however, dismisses the prevalence of lions as a typical occurrence in Anatolia, 415-17.

ornaments on brooches of other Persian ancestors and one Seleukid ancestor on the East Terrace, and on the throne of Zeus on both terraces.¹¹⁶

Viewing the sculptural program at Nemrud Dagh with the Yasht as a guide offers an explanation for the choice of the colossal deities presented alongside the statue of the project's commissioner, Antiochos I. All the divinities referenced in Yasht 14 are present in the colossal statues of both terraces: Ahura Mazda (in the form of Zeus-Oromasdes), Mithras, Verthragna (as Herakles-Artagnes-Ares), and Tyche. In hopes to add himself to the list of kings and heroes beginning with the legendary first king Yima, Kavi Usa, and Zoroaster himself, Antiochos would have aligned his glory and fortune to those listed in Yasht 19 endowed with *khwarnah*.¹¹⁷

Focusing further attention on the ritual action evoked by the Yasht is the *barsom*. Aside from the deities on both East and West Terraces, at least five of Antiochos' Iranian ancestors also carry a *barsom*, which as a symbol of Iranian ritual occasion underscores the Persian religious tradition at the site.¹¹⁸ Other visual elements at the complex also support a relationship between the sculptural program and Zoroastrian beliefs and texts. The handclasp in the *dexiosis* scenes held significance for Iranian rituals. Called the *hamazor*, the handclasp in Zoroastrianism was performed in liturgical services and

¹¹⁶ Goell relates that Puchstein identified eagles on the brooches of Antiochos in the West Terrace's Commagene *dexiosis*, but no trace remained at the time of her observation. *Ibid.*, 407.

¹¹⁷ See Pallan R. Ichaporia, "The Legendary History of Iran in the Religio-Historical Account of the Zamyad Yast. (Yt. 19)," in *Irano-Judaica IV: Studies Relating to Jewish Contacts with Persian Culture throughout the Ages*, eds. Shaul Shaked and Amnon Netzer (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1999): 106-10, where he determines that Yasht 19 is a narrative history of legendary figures comparable to Firdawsi's *Shahnameh*.

¹¹⁸ Goell, *Nemrud Dagi*, 392.

signified not only unity between the two, but also a wish that the two participants might be righteous.¹¹⁹

C. Brian Rose further remarks on the unusual nature of the *dexiosis* scenes between the Commagenian king and the gods, since in other visual representations gods shake hands with each other and rulers are instead shown in *dexiosis* with personifications. Antiochos' handclasp with the divine beings, however, stands as the lone known example of a human/divine *dexiosis*. Therefore, the *dexiosis* scenes at Nemrud Dagh are unique and signify Antiochos' direct union and participation with the gods present at the site.

Furthermore, the identical height and stance of Antiochos and the gods is another atypical feature of these sculptures since Hellenistic royal iconography never features visual equality of kings and deities.¹²⁰ Rose attributes these unique visual traits to the strife Antiochos faced throughout his reign and his need for divine aid. Likewise, the entire program at Nemrud Dagh serves a similar function: Antiochos affirms in the *Nomos* that the gods "have so often been seen standing by his side in the struggles of his reign," and this last remark proves particularly significant when comparing this visual program to the policies that characterized Antiochos I's rule.

¹¹⁹ Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin, *Symbols and Values in Zoroastrianism: Their Survival and Renewal*, vol. 15 of *Religious Perspectives*, edited by Ruth Nanda Anshen (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1966), 64, references the handshakes at Nemrud Dagh as royal investiture scenes from the gods to the king.

¹²⁰ C. Brian Rose, "A New Relief of Antiochus of Commagene and other Stone Sculpture from Zeugma," in *Excavations at Zeugma conducted by Oxford Archaeology*, ed. William Aylward (Packard Humanities Institute, 2013), 220-31, quote at 223.

The Political Climate of Commagene during Antiochos I's Reign

Antiochos I of Commagene's earliest appearance in historical documents dates to 69 BCE when he is listed as an ally of Armenia during the Third Mithradatic War (75-63 BCE).¹²¹ The reference involving Antiochos in an alliance is typical of the ancient sources that remark on him since, during his reign, Commagene's many shared borders engaged the kingdom in numerous foreign affairs. Strabo (*Geographia* 16.2.3) describes that Syria bordered Commagene to the south, while the Parthian Empire lay to its southeast. Armenia served as its eastern neighbor with the Euphrates River acting as a natural boundary in between the two kingdoms. Pontus lay to its north, while beyond the Taurus Mountains Cappadocia bordered its west and Cilicia its southwest. The land that Strabo termed "small, but extremely fertile" acted as a natural buffer between Parthia and Rome – increasing its importance even further.

In 64 BCE when Pompey the Great succeeded Lucullus and attacked Commagene, Antiochos I's agreement to an alliance with Rome against Parthia won autonomy for Commagene. Pompey even added the city of Seleukia of Mesopotamia to the Commagenian kingdom possibly to act as a "wedge and spearhead against Parthia," since it was located on the eastern bank of the Euphrates River between the two kingdoms.¹²² Pompey had good reason to placate Antiochos and his kingdom since Commagene's contiguity to Parthia and its rich resources were key to Rome's tactics to overcome the Parthian control of the Near East. In fact, Roman sources mention that

¹²¹ Goell, *Nemrud Dagi*, 23. He is mistaken for Antiochos XIII Asiaticus of the Seleukid Empire by some.

¹²² Quote at *ibid.*, 23.

rather than subject Antiochos to public humiliation by marching him through the streets of Rome as one of the defeated foreign monarchs, Pompey settled for a placard featuring Antiochos' name as a suitable substitute.¹²³ Antiochos later meddled in Rome's internal affairs as he sided with Pompey against Julius Caesar.

Commagene, and Antiochos in particular, did not remain entirely loyal to Rome, however, as Antiochos married his daughter to Orodes II (r. 54-37 BCE), the king of Parthia. They produced a son, Pacorus, who battled the Romans led by Ventidius in 38 BCE, and in that battle, Antiochos sided with his Parthian grandson.¹²⁴ As a result, the capital city, Samosata, suffered attack first by Ventidius and then by Marc Antony, who alongside Herod the Great of Judea seized the opportunity to demand payment from Antiochos rather than deposing him from the throne and gaining control over the city that controlled the Euphrates crossing point to the East.¹²⁵

Early in his reign, Antiochos engages in behavior that anticipates this type of hedging in the creation of his foreign alliances. He initially supported Tigranes against

¹²³ Ibid., 23; App., *Mith.* 12.106, 114, 117; *B Civ.* 2.49; David Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor, to the End of the Third Century after Christ* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), 377.

¹²⁴ Ventidius slew Pacorus, and Cass. Dio (49.20, 23) relates that in his grief over his favorite son's passing, Orodes passed his throne to his eldest yet illegitimate son, Phraetes IV, born of a concubine. In order to secure his royal title, Phraetes IV killed his four legitimate brothers, the grandsons of Antiochos I, and when the Commagenian king protested the murders, Phraetes executed him as well. The death of Antiochos is generally dated between 36-34 BCE; see Goell, *Nemrud Dagi*, 32, n. 5 for references to 34 BCE, but Donald Sanders corrects Goell that 36 BCE is more likely. See also Sullivan, "The Dynasty of Commagene," 736-40; *Near Eastern Royalty and Rome*, 196-97; Hoepfner and Hübner, *Das Hierothesion des Königs Mithridates I*, 74-75, dates the death to 35 BCE.

¹²⁵ Joseph, *AJ* 14.439-47; *BJ* 1.321-22; Plut., *Vit. Ant.* 34.1-4; Cass. Dio 48.41, 49.20-22.

Lucullus, but at the former's defeat, Antiochos is listed as one of the first monarchs to approach Lucullus offering alliance.¹²⁶ Sullivan attributes his wavering politics to the standing temptation that wealthy Commagene imposed to its large neighbors, threatening its survival if it were not allied with a more powerful nation.¹²⁷ For the remainder of his rule, Antiochos positioned his kingdom and himself alongside differing spheres of power. When the kingdom was annexed to the Roman Empire in 72 CE, the benefits of an alliance proved to greatly outweigh the drawbacks, and Antiochos adopted the term *Philoromaïos* or "lover of the Romans" for himself.¹²⁸ Under Antiochos' reign, however, this epithet was not entirely accurate since the king still sought relations with Parthia, and as mentioned earlier, married his daughter to the Parthian king Orodes II.¹²⁹

As argued by J. L. Ferrary, calling oneself a *Philoromaïos* was more of a typical Hellenistic practice than an actual paean to Rome, and Antiochos' actions against the Romans on a number of occasions certainly testifies to the accuracy of this notion.¹³⁰ On and off support and reliance on Parthia evidences that Antiochos' relationship with his eastern neighbor was no different. The marriage was no more successful in fully securing

¹²⁶ Cass. Dio, 36.2.5; Plut., *Vit. Luc.* 29.5; see also Jacques Jean Marie de Morgan, *Histoire du Peuple Arménien* (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1919), 68-82, and René Grousset, *Histoire de l'Arménie, des origines à 1071* (Paris: Payot 1947), 92-100.

¹²⁷ Sullivan, *Near Eastern Royalty*, 62, 194, 403 n.4.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 194, 403 n.4.

¹²⁹ Cass. Dio 49.23; J. Wagner, "Dynastie und Herrscherkult in Kommagene," 177-224, esp. 208 where Wagner discusses an inscription from Karakuş confirming the identities of Orodes II and Antiochos' daughter.

¹³⁰ J. L. Ferrary, *Philhellénisme et imperialism. Aspects idéologiques de la conquête romaine du monde hellénistique* (Rome: École française de Rome, 1988), 501.

Antiochos' loyalty since the Commagenian king maintained some fidelity to the Romans. In 64 BCE, Commagene suffered attacks from Pompey, but Antiochos secured autonomy by swearing itself an ally to Rome against the Parthians. Pompey approved the gesture and extended Antiochos' territory to include Seleukia of Mesopotamia, a city on the eastern bank of the Euphrates bordering Parthia.¹³¹

Antiochos' politics continued to waver in his involvement in the battles between Rome and Parthia in the late 50s BCE. When the Parthians broke through Commagene in their western march in 51 BCE, Antiochos sent legates to Cilicia to warn Cicero of their approach.¹³² And when civil war threatened Rome, Antiochos sided with Pompey only to join Julius Caesar in Syria to battle Pharnakes II of Pontus in 47 BCE.¹³³ Then from 40-38 BCE, Antiochos joined his Parthian grandson Pacorus against Rome once more – a decision that incited Marc Antony and Herod the Great to invade Samosata. Antiochos was able to reconcile with Antony and Herod by offering great monetary compensation as punishment for his deceit.¹³⁴

The vacillating politics of Antiochos described above quelled under his son Mithridates II, who honored the alliance with Marc Antony originally instituted by his

¹³¹ Goell, *Nemrud Dagi*, 23.

¹³² Cicero was wary of Antiochos' duplicity. He called the eastern king an *amicus* of Rome but also named him as an ally unwilling to break openly with Parthia. See *Fam.* 15.1.2; 15.1.6; 15.4.4; and *Q Fr.* 2.11.2. See also Sullivan, "Dynasty of Commagene," 766-68; *idem.*, *Near Eastern Royalty*, 195, 404 n.9.

¹³³ App., *B Civ.* 2.49; Sullivan, *Near Eastern Royalty*, 196, conjectures the importance Antiochos and Commagene's strategic location would have had against Caesar's campaign against Parthia had he lived to carry it out.

¹³⁴ Joseph, *AJ* 14.439-47; *BJ* 1.321-22; Plut., *Vit. Ant.* 34.1-4; Cass. Dio, 48.41, 49.20-22.

father.¹³⁵ Remarking on the unique style of monuments at Commagene, Versluys sees it as an attempt by Antiochos to create a Commagenian identity, but the intent died soon thereafter.¹³⁶ The remains of Mithridates II's monuments indicate some attempt at continuing his father's legacy created by material culture, but the *hierothesion* at Karakuş, which houses his burial and that of three royal women, is nowhere near the scale of the temple-tomb at Nemrud Dagh. As Sullivan notes, Antiochus had prepared his dynasty to lead among the rulers of the Near East in the following century through his cultural and political achievements.¹³⁷ As one of these achievements, Nemrud Dagh sought to guard Antiochos' often precarious rule and to ensure his successors enjoyed less tumultuous reigns.

In fact, the remaining generations of the Commagenian dynasty seem to have endured fewer problems by far. Vespasian dissolved the kingdom into his North Syrian territory in 72 CE, but even still, the then-king Antiochos IV received an honorable place in Rome. Antiochos' grandson – the last king of Commagene, C. Iulius Antiochos Epiphanes Philopappos, is commemorated by the Philopappos Monument on the Museion Hill in Athens – and his granddaughter Julia Balbilla traveled to Egypt with Hadrian and inscribed poetry on the Colossi of Memnon.¹³⁸ As Sullivan points out, the

¹³⁵ See Sullivan, "Dynasty of Commagene," 775-80, for more on Mithridates II.

¹³⁶ Versluys, "Cultural Responses from Kingdom to Province: the Romanisation of Commagene, Local Identities and the Mara Bar Sarapion Letter," in *The Letter of Mara bar Sarapion in Context: Proceedings of the Symposium Held at Utrecht University, 10-12 December 2009*, ed. Annette Merz and Teun Tieleman (Boston: Brill, 2012), 43-66.

¹³⁷ Sullivan, "Dynasty of Commagene," 778.

¹³⁸ Sullivan, *Near Eastern Royalty*, 198.

strife during Antiochos' reign must have ranked among the "great dangers" Antiochos records in his *Nomos* at Nemrud Dagh.¹³⁹ Rome, Parthia, the kingdom of Pontus, even other small neighboring kingdoms, and then later Herod the Great of Judea were all potentially hazardous to Antiochos and his kingdom.¹⁴⁰

Conclusion

As Pliny (*NH* 5.85) notes, though it was small, Commagene was unmatched in its wealth, natural resources, and most importantly its strategic location between the "two greatest empires of Rome and Parthia," and Antiochos constantly felt the need to secure protection. As a result, he sought alliances with the Parthian royal house, meddled in Rome's civil affairs to show support, announced his Seleukid and Greek heritage, and involved himself in creating a series of cult-complexes throughout his kingdom. Nemrud Dagh, where his final resting place was to be, certainly boasts the most audacious program.

The lengths to which Antiochos went to gain allies and to keep those allies when he was caught in acts of fealty to other groups attest that his real loyalties lay within his kingdom and himself. Protection, security, victory, and fortune of his reign and that of his Commagenian kingdom were Antiochos' utmost priorities, and the *hierothesion* at Nemrud Dagh houses these ideologies. In ostentatious form, Antiochos sits enthroned with four Greek/Zoroastrian deities atop a mountain while he engages, uniquely, with the

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 196.

¹⁴⁰ Boyce, et al., *Zoroastrianism under Macedonian and Roman Rule*, 344, briefly discusses the Roman threat to Commagene under Antiochos' rule in her discussion of Commagenian inscriptions.

same deities in an act of both devotion and protection in the *dexiosis* reliefs. Additional relief decorations at the site denote Antiochos' commemoration of his royal ancestry from two important lineages while devotees carry wreaths and crowns to celebrate the king in the investiture scenes, substantiating his rule.¹⁴¹

On a more abstract level, the Lion Horoscope honors some memorable event in Commagenian history, and as I argue, a Zoroastrian spell is evoked by the identity of deities and the display of particular animals and other religious paraphernalia. Antiochos' priests called upon Verthragna in his various forms to ensure victory and good fortune for the king and kingdom no matter who his "enemy." Through her Zoroastrian associations, Tyche-Commagene embodied *kwarnah*, monumentalized at the peak of the mountain, and her Greek identity reinforced the Fortune she personified. What Tyche came to symbolize in the Hellenistic period added another dimension to her persona. Affirmed by Antiochos' choice to name her Tyche-Commagene, the king ensured that she encompassed all that the Hellenistic version of Fortune offered. In the wake of expanding empires and stressed relations with neighbors, allies, and enemies alike, the goddess Tyche-Commagene promised glory or *kwarnah* not only to the king but his entire kingdom. Through the melding of Zoroastrian and Greek deities, the visual program at Nemrud Dagh simultaneously honored Antiochos' dual heritage while drawing on qualities of both religions to affirm and protect the king's rule.

In his latest publication, Bruno Jacobs concludes that the Commagenian *hierothesia* were not merely tombs, but also social institutions that offered a place for mass gatherings permitting ideal opportunities for the king to reach large masses of the

¹⁴¹ See Goell, *Nemrud Dagi*, 230-31, 248-52, for more on the fragments that comprise the investiture scenes.

population.¹⁴² I argue that at Antiochos I's *hierothesion* at Nemrud Dagh, the message combined socio-political and religious attitudes of the time. Antiochos sat enthroned, blessed and more importantly, protected, by the gods. And as he honored his ancestors, he also aimed to protect his progeny and the whole kingdom of Commagene. The grand design atop Mount Nemrud formed the multi-cultural backdrop of the kingdom whose ruler embraced and protected the ethnicities, traditions, and religions that informed his identity throughout his reign, and because of its significance became the final resting place of Antiochos I Theos of Commagene.

¹⁴² Bruno Jacobs, "Das Heiligtum auf dem Nemrud Dağı: Zur Baupolitik des Antiochos I. von Kommagene und seines Sohnes Mithridates II," in *Gottkönige am Euphrat: Neue Ausgrabungen und Forschungen in Kommagene*, ed. Jörg Wagner (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2012), 86: "Die großen Hierothesia waren nicht nur Grabstätten der vergangenen und des lebenden Herrschers, sondern auch soziale Einrichtungen und boten als Orte von Massenversammlungen die ideale Gelegenheit, weite Kreise der Bevölkerung zu erreichen. Entsprechendes wissenschaftliches Interesse muss sich auf die Entschlüsselung der vermittelten Botschaften richten."

CHAPTER THREE

Mithridates VI Eupator's *Imitatio Alexandri* on Royal Pontic Coinage

In 120 BCE, Mithridates VI Eupator ascended the throne to rule the kingdom of Pontus. Throughout much of his reign, the king posed a serious threat to Roman imperial ambitions, battling some of Rome's most formidable generals – Lucullus, Sulla, and Pompey – in the three so-called Mithridatic Wars. As part of his nuanced fashioning of a dynastic image for audiences both at home and abroad during this time, Mithridates called on the visual legacy of Alexander the Great of Macedon. In various media, Mithridates portrayed himself in the likeness of Alexander, forging a connection between himself and his Macedonian predecessor while evoking Alexander's legacy as unifier of the Hellenistic world.

Specifically, during his fierce conflicts with Rome, which began in 89 BCE and led to his ultimate demise in 63 BCE, Mithridates minted two types of coinage with his image in the guise of Alexander on the obverse (figs. 3.1-3.2). Whereas other portraits Mithridates employed insisted on his link to the deified Alexander, his coinage affirmed his connection to the mortal Alexander, asserting himself as the successor to Alexander's legacy of military valor. Deliberately evoking the Macedonian emperor's qualities as a brilliant general and leader in coin images that circulated throughout his empire, and which were accessible to his own subjects and to Roman citizens as well, Mithridates disseminated a message throughout Asia Minor and farther west that he was the New Alexander.

Past scholarship has remarked on the message that these images would have conveyed to the Greeks over whom Mithridates ruled, but this chapter explores the resonances that the images would have had on other ethnic groups found among the population of the Pontic kingdom,¹ and analysis of ancient sources and application of recent scholarship on Roman attitudes toward Alexander reveal the implications that Mithridates' Alexander propaganda would have had for Romans of the Late Republic as well. Relying on new investigations into the significance of Mithridates' coins and determining the reception of such a multivalent image reveals his project as a deliberate and audacious self-fashioning that indicates that Mithridates' dynastic policy was aimed at multiple audiences for diverse effects.

The Heritage of Mithridates VI Eupator

Mithridates was born to one of the noble Persian families that had ruled regions in the fifth and fourth centuries BCE surrounding the Propontis (Sea of Marmara) and continuing around the south shore of the Black Sea.² One of these dynasts, Mithridates

¹ Monographs on Mithridates VI Eupator apply apt literary, historical, and archaeological sources at varying levels. Alfred Duggan, *King of Pontus: The Life of Mithridates Eupator* (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1959), supplies a brief bibliography and reads more as a biographical novel of the Pontic king. More recent publications include Philip Matyszak, *Mithridates the Great: Rome's Indomitable Enemy* (South Yorkshire: Pen and Sword Military, 2008), and Adrienne Mayor, *The Poison King: The Life and Legend of Mithridates, Rome's Deadliest Enemy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), which better engage previous scholarship. McGing, *The Foreign Policy of Mithridates*, provides the most detailed and well-documented analysis of Mithridates' background, life, and policies.

² For more on the Pontic royal family, see A. B. Bosworth and P. V. Wheatley, "The Origins of the Pontic House," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 118 (1998): 155-64; Brian McGing, "The Kings of Pontus: Some Problems of Identity and Date," *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 129 (1986): 248-59.

Ktistes (“The Founder”), moved to the mountains of Paphlagonia in the late-fourth century and there established the beginnings of the Pontic kingdom. Little is known about the early history of Pontus until the time of Mithridates VI, whose exploits earned recognition for the kingdom,³ but the little that is known of the kingdom’s earlier history is transmitted primarily through the medium of coins.

The earliest royal Pontic coins are gold staters from the reign of Mithridates Ktistes (r. 302-266 BCE) that imitate those from the reign of Alexander the Great. The head of Athena appears in profile on the obverse while a standing Nike crowns the king’s name written in Greek on the obverse (fig. 3.3).⁴ The evocation of Alexander’s coin type could signal Mithridates Ktistes’ desire to present himself as a successor to Alexander, but with little additional historical evidence to support this thesis, any interpretation must remain conjectural. Several generations later, consonant with the times, Mithridates III minted a coin with his portrait on the obverse. He portrayed himself as a bearded, old man with cropped hair over which he wore a diadem (fig. 3.4). Yet the reverse of Mithridates III’s coins show an enthroned Zeus holding an eagle (which references another Alexander type) with star and crescent – symbols of the Pontic kingdom – in the field.⁵

³ See McGing, *The Foreign Policy of Mithridates*, 15-42, and J. Hind, “Mithridates,” in *Cambridge Ancient History, Vol. 9: Last Age of the Roman Republic, 146-43 B.C.*, ed. J. A. Crook, A. W. Lintott, and Elizabeth Rawson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 129-33, for more on the early history of Pontus.

⁴ William Henry Waddington, Ernest Charles François Babelon, and Théodore Reinach, *Recueil general des monnaies grecques d’Asie Mineure. Pont et Paphlagonie* (Paris: Académie des inscriptions & belles lettres, 1904), 10, no. 1.

⁵ For Mithridates III’s coins, see *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum: The British Museum. Part 1, The Black Sea* (London: British Museum Press, 1993), 1024.

Later Pontic kings continued to employ naturalistic portraits on their coins. For instance, two of Mithridates III's sons, Pharnakes I and Mithridates IV, each prioritized numismatic imagery with individualized and realistic details (figs. 3.5-3.6).⁶ The coins of Pharnakes depict the king with cropped hair, a protruding lower lip, and sideburns connected to a short beard. Mithridates IV, on his coinage, appears with curlier, slightly longer locks of hair than his brother, full lips, and a thick beard covering his plump cheeks.

The coinage of Mithridates V Euergetes, Mithridates VI Eupator's father, marks a break in this tradition (fig. 3.8). The obverse of Euergetes' tetradrachms shows the king portrayed as an idealized Hellenistic ruler – an image that his son cultivates and one examined fully below.⁷ The change in portrait type from the veristic ones of his

⁶ Hans von Aulock and Gerhard Kleiner, *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum: Sammlung von Aulock, Deutschland: Pontus, Paphlagonien, Bithynien* (Berlin: Mann, 1957), 2-3. On the reverse of Pharnakes I's coins, a young god, whose identity is not secure, appears adorned in a chiton, *chlamys*, and a flat cap. The deity holds a caduceus and a cornucopia in his left hand while feeding a doe with a branch held in his right. See Deniz Burcu Erciyas, *Wealth, Aristocracy, and Royal Propaganda under the Hellenistic Kingdom of the Mithradatids in the Central Black Sea Region of Turkey* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 126, for brief scholarship on the identity of the deity. A second type of Pharnakes' coin depicts a male figure with a thunderbolt on the obverse. Erciyas, *Wealth, Aristocracy, and Royal Propaganda*, 126.

As for Mithridates IV, some coins from his reign feature Perseus on the reverse while others celebrate his marriage to his sister/wife, Laodike Philadelphoi, by picturing a double portrait of the couple on the obverse (fig. 3.7). On the reverse, an image of a standing Zeus and Hera echoes the union of Mithridates and Laodike. This is the first time Perseus appears on the coins of the Pontic kings, but Mithridates Eupator forges an allusion to the deity frequently on his coinage. See Friedrich Imhoof-Blumer, "Die Kupferprägung des mithradatischen Reiches und andere Münzen des Pontos und Paphlagoniens," *Numismatique Zeitschrift* 5 (1912): 169-92, for more regarding Perseus on Pontic coins. See Aulock and Kleiner, *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum*, 4, for Mithridates IV's joint coinage with Laodike.

⁷ On the reverse of these coins, a male figure stands holding a bow in one hand and a miniature figurine in the other. Louis Robert, "Monnaies et texts grecques: II Deux

predecessors to an idealized one signals Euergetes' aims to promote his Greek side more than his Persian ancestry.

Accordingly, when Mithridates VI Eupator minted his coins, he was participating in a multi-generational legacy through which numismatic imagery served important dynastic purposes. Mithridates was indeed conscious of his familial heritage, taking the name "Eupator" ("of a Noble Father") to emphasize his lineage. Yet ancient sources concur that from his birth in 134/3 BCE, Mithridates was destined to be the most important ruler of the Pontic kingdom, a man whose greatness was allegedly foreshadowed by the heavens.

Mithridates VI Eupator and the Instigation of War against Rome

When Mithridates V Euergetes was assassinated in 120 BCE, his wife organized an assassination attempt on Mithridates VI Eupator in hopes of securing the throne for herself.⁸ The effort to end his life prematurely proved futile, however, since starting at an early age, Mithridates allegedly experimented with toxicology to build an immunity to poisons. In fact, he had become so skilled in dosing himself with poisons that Appian (*Mith.* 111) describes that at the end of his reign, the poisons Mithridates took in an

tétradrachmes de Mithridate V Éuergètes, roi du Pont,” *Journal des Savants* (July-September 1978): 151-63, identifies this god as Apollo. See François de Callataÿ, “The First Royal Coinages of Pontos (from Mithridates III to Mithridates V),” in *Mithridates VI and the Pontic Kingdom*, ed. Jakob Munk Højte (Oakville, CT: Aarhus University Press, 2009), 63-94, for a detailed study on the early Pontic coins.

⁸ Just., *Epit.* 37.2. McGing, *The Foreign Policy of Mithridates*, 43, points out slight discrepancies with Euergetes' state of succession: Memnon 22.2 says Euergetes had arranged a joint rule between the queen and Mithridates while Strabo (*Geographia* 10.4.10) states that the rule was also extended to a second son. Alternatively, Euergetes could have arranged for a regency.

attempted suicide were ineffective in bringing about his death. Besides his experiments with pharmacology, Mithridates took further measures to protect himself against his mother, since, as Justin (*Epit.* 38.8.1) reports, Mithridates escaped threats to his life by leaving his kingdom and living in the wilderness for seven years.⁹

Upon his return, Mithridates quickly ascended the throne and extended the part of the Pontic kingdom that bordered the Black Sea (the Euxine) (see Maps 3-4). He gained control over all the land areas surrounding the Euxine by first annexing Chersonesos,¹⁰ thus fulfilling an imperial ambition of his grandfather Pharnakes I (r. 189/8-160 BCE).¹¹ Mithridates continued in Pharnakes' footsteps, invading Paphlagonia, a region neighboring Pontus to its southwest. Strabo notes (*Geographia* 12.3.41) that several rulers governed Paphlagonia and the fractured state of the region helped make its annexation a simple task for Mithridates,¹² but the Pontic king also had help from Nikomedes III Euergetes ("The Benefactor") of Bithynia.¹³ Pontus and Bithynia, the two greatest kingdoms of western Asia Minor, had clashed in the past. Mithridates and

⁹ Material evidence, however, suggests otherwise. McGing, *The Foreign Policy of Mithridates*, 43-44, points out two inscriptions from Delos that puts Mithridates back in power in 116/15 and references H. Pfeiler, "Die frühesten Porträts des Mithridates Eupator und die Bronzeprägung seiner Vorgänger," *Schweizer Münzblätter* 18 (1968): 75-76, who demonstrates coinage bearing Mithridates' portrait at the beginning and through the early years of his rule.

¹⁰ Strabo, *Geographia* 7.4.3; Brian McGing, "Subjection and Resistance: To the Death of Mithridates," in *A Companion to the Hellenistic World*, ed. Andrew Erskine (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2003), 85.

¹¹ McGing, *The Foreign Policy of Mithridates*, 30-32, for Pharnakes and Chersonesos.

¹² *Ibid.*, 66.

¹³ Just., *Epit.* 37.4.3-9, 38.5.4, 38.7.10, tells that in 108, the two kings joined forces, defeated any resistance they met from Paphlagonia, and split the land between them.

Nikomedes, however, formed an alliance early in their reigns,¹⁴ though the symbiotic relationship was not to last, as the two kings both turned their attention to Cappadocia.

Fighting for control over the neighboring region, the conflicts between Mithridates and Nikomedes drew the attention of Rome, but Rome's first attempts to quell the eastern kings proved futile.¹⁵ As the Senate sensed an increase in hostility from Mithridates, it attempted to strengthen its presence in the East. Plutarch (*Marius* 31.2-3) reports that in 98 BCE, the Senate sent Gaius Marius east to issue the warning to Mithridates: "Be stronger than the Romans or obey their commands in silence."¹⁶ Mithridates' opposition against Rome was not as audacious at this point as it later

¹⁴ See *ibid.*, 67-68, for similarities, differences, and brief history of Pontic-Bitynian relations before Mithridates and Nikomedes' alliance.

¹⁵ Rome's attentions were more focused elsewhere, however, as she attempted to suppress Jugurtha in the North African wars. Dennis G. Glew, "Mithridates Eupator and Rome: A Study of the Background of the First Mithridatic War," *Athenaeum* 55 (1977): 387. Glew sees Jugurtha's successes (he had yet to be defeated by Rome in 108 BCE) as an inspiration for Mithridates and Nikomedes to test Rome. Yet, the Senate did send an embassy to order Paphlagonia's release, but the two eastern rulers reacted defiantly. Refusing to restore Paphlagonia's independence, Mithridates moved even farther south to occupy parts of Galatia, and Nikomedes placed one of his sons as king of the region he now controlled; *ibid.*, 387. Nikomedes bestowed the Paphlagonian royal name Pylaemenes to his son upon his placement on the throne. Théodore Reinach and A. Goetz, *Mithridates Eupator: König von Pontos* (Leipzig, 1895), 88, believes Nikomedes also invaded part of Galatia because he would need access through it to invade Cappadocia later on. McGing, *The Foreign Policy of Mithridates*, 69-70, dismisses this necessity. See Robert Morstein Kallet-Marx, *Hegemony to Empire: the Development of the Roman Imperium in the East from 148 to 62 B.C.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 239-50, for Roman perspective on the Cappadocian affairs.

¹⁶ McGing, *The Foreign Policy of Mithridates*, 76, and "Subjection and Resistance," 85. McGing maintains that Marius was sent only to investigate if war was on the horizon, not to instigate one.

became,¹⁷ and in his obedience of Rome's commands, Mithridates relinquished the land he had amassed in Asia Minor.

Mithridates, however, quickly set his eyes east toward Tigranes II of Armenia, and sought an alliance there that resulted in an increase of not only territory, but also provided him the confidence to oppose threats to both his kingdom and authority.¹⁸

Between 94 and 89 BCE, Mithridates survived attacks both from his former ally, Bithynia, and Roman forces led by Sulla and other formidable generals.¹⁹ Thus in the summer of 89 BCE, Mithridates entered confidently into the First Mithridatic War

¹⁷ Mithridates seems to have heeded Marius' advice, for when the Senate ordered both Nikomedes and Mithridates to relinquish Cappadocia as well as Paphlagonia and demanded the return of independence to both regions in 96/95 BCE, the two eastern kings complied. Just., *Epit.* 38.2.8; 38.5.9; Strabo, *Geographia* 12.2.11; McGing, *The Foreign Policy of Mithridates*, 77.

¹⁸ The marriage of Mithridates' daughter Cleopatra to Tigranes the Great solidified the alliance between Pontus and Armenia. See Sullivan, *Near Eastern Royalty and Rome*, 14-15, for the importance of intermarriages in the Hellenistic period.

¹⁹ In 94 BCE, Tigranes upon Mithridates' urging invaded Cappadocia, whose citizens had chosen to install Ariobarzanes as their king after Rome had declared it a free state, but finally determining that Mithridates with Tigranes' aid posed a real threat, Rome sent Sulla to settle the dispute. Sulla succeeded in driving the two eastern kings back and Ariobarzanes resumed his reign over Cappadocia in 94/3 BCE. Around the same time, Nikomedes III died, leaving the kingdom of Bithynia to his son Nikomedes IV to rule. McGing, *The Foreign Policy of Mithridates*, 78-79, believes that Mithridates would have tried to reinstall his son Ariarathes IX to the Cappadocian throne upon his recapture of the territory.

With a strong ally in Tigranes, and sensing that Rome's main attention was focused on the Social War, Mithridates fought back. In 92 BCE, the Pontic king invaded Cappadocia once more, and this time he also added Bithynia to his realm. In 91 BCE, however, Rome restored Nikomedes IV back on the Bithynian throne and Ariobarzanes on the Cappadocian throne; *ibid.*, 79-80. All of the above dates are collaborated by François de Callatay, *Histoire des guerres mithridatiques vue par les monnaies* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Séminaire de numismatique Marcel Hoc Collège Erasme, 1997), 206. McGing differs slightly, but in his review of Callatay, 382, he admits to finding the latter's dates convincing.

against Rome. Appian (*Mith.* 13) writes about Mithridates' preparedness for battle, and through his words, the Pontic king's aggression towards Rome becomes clear:

...[he has set forth] not merely with his own army, but with great force of allies, Thracians, Scythians, and many other neighboring peoples. He has formed a marriage alliance with Tigranes of Armenia, and has sent to Ptolemaic Egypt and Seleukid Syria to make friends with the kings of those countries. He has 300 ships of war and is still adding to the number. He has sent to Phoenicia and Egypt for naval officers and steersman. These things, that Mithridates is collecting in such vast quantities, are not designed for Nikomedes, nay, o Romans, but for you.²⁰

Mithridates' hostile attitudes directed at Rome are likewise apparent in the material culture produced during this time.

The Two Royal Coin Types of Mithridates VI

By 88 BCE, Mithridates' forces had scattered the Roman and Bithynian armies, and the king moved confidently into Bithynia and farther south into the territory of Phrygia.²¹ It is at this time that a profound change occurs in the coinage of Mithridates. The earliest royal coins of Mithridates date to 96/5 and feature the king's idealized profile on the obverse and an image of Pegasus encircled by a wreath of grapes on the reverse (fig. 3.9).²² On the second issues of Mithridates' coinage, which appear beginning in 89/8

²⁰ Trans. Horace White (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1899), 332.

²¹ See McGing, *The Foreign Policy of Mithridates*, 109, no. 96, for more on the dating on Mithridates' move into Phrygia.

²² Erciyas, *Wealth, Aristocracy, and Royal Propaganda*, 7, points out the difference between royal and civic coins for the Pontic kingdom. Royal coins were minted in gold and silver and portrayed an image and name of the ruler. City or civic coins were minted in bronze and featured the city's name on the reverse and varying iconography. For the

BCE, a grazing stag replaces Pegasus on the reverse (fig. 3.10) and though Mithridates' portrait still adorns the obverse, the two images of the monarch differ noticeably.

On the early type, of which extant versions date from 96/5 to 86/5 BCE, Pegasus on the reverse recalls the legend of Perseus, since the winged horse was born from the body of the Gorgon Medusa after Perseus beheaded her. This indirect reference to the hero was especially apt for Mithridates since the Pontic royal house claimed descent from Persian kings who identified Perseus as their mythical ancestor.²³ The star and crescent – symbols of the Pontic house following Iranian tradition²⁴ – that decorate the reverse of these coins also reference Mithridates' Persian lineage.

This imagery, in the context of his idealized portrait on the obverse, corresponds to the reported rhetoric. Justin (*Epit.* 38.7.1) writes that on the eve of the First Mithridatic War, the king announced to his troops that he was a descendant of the founders of the Persian kingdom, Cyrus and Darius, on his father's side and a descendant of Seleukos

different types of civic coins, see Friedrich Imhoof-Blumer, "Die Kupferprägung des Mithridatischen Reiches," 169-84.

²³ Mithridates issued five coin types featuring Perseus: 1) the head of Perseus with wings on his temples, 2) Perseus wearing a Phrygian cap with a *Harpe* in one hand and the head of Medusa in the other with the Gorgon's body laying at his feet, 3) aegis with Medusa's head, 4) Perseus wearing a winged helm, and 5) Perseus as Mithridates on the obverse with a grazing Pegasus on the reverse. See McGing, *The Foreign Policy of Mithridates*, 94, for more the specific types.

²⁴ The star and crescent appears on royal coins of the Pontic dynasty from Mithridates III (r. 200-185 BCE) on; Erciyas, *Wealth, Aristocracy, and Royal Propaganda*, 119-20, 131-32. See also Norman Davis and Colin M. Kraay, *The Hellenistic Kingdoms: Portrait Coins and History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973), 200-09; Gerhard Kleiner, "Pontische Reichsmünzen," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts* 6 (1955): 13; and Kleiner, "Bildnis und Gestalt des Mithridates," *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts* 68 (1953): 82, for the star and crescent as a symbol of the Pontic dynastic family.

and Alexander the Great on his mother's. The earlier coins from 96/5 to 86/5 BCE, then, echo the two royal lineages that Mithridates claimed. The image of Pegasus evoked his Persian background, and the star and crescent attached him to this ancestral royal house. His portrait, however, departing as it did from the veristic, native portraits of earlier Pontic kings, connected him with his Greek heritage, since it, as Martin Jessop Price notes, followed in the tradition of the Hellenistic monarch.²⁵

The later issues, which began in 89/8 BCE and continued to 67/6 BCE, and which show an idealized profile view of the king on the obverse and a grazing stag on the reverse (once again encircled by a wreath of grapes), drew on both eastern and Hellenistic visual traditions and appear rooted in stories from Mithridates' youth as well. Plutarch (*Moralia* 624B, *Quaest. conv.* 1.6.2) reports that as a baby, the young prince was struck by lightning in his crib. Whether the anecdote is true or not, the link between Mithridates and the thunderbolt proved central to establishing a revered ancestry connected to the god Dionysos, whose "birth" was also marked by a lightning bolt – a manifestation of his father, Zeus, revealing his divinity to the pregnant Semele. To insist

²⁵ Mithridates, however, was not the first of the Pontic kings to portray himself in this fashion since tetradrachms belonging to his father, Euergetes, also show a more idealized Greek type; *ibid.*, 99. Martin Jessop Price, "Mithridates VI Eupator, Dionysus, and the Coinages of the Black Sea," *Numismatic Chronicle* 8 (1968): 1-4. Dating of these coins is so precise because all of Mithridates' royal coinage can be separated into two eras: the dynastic era and the "Pergamene era" as termed by Théodore Reinach, *Numismatique ancienne: trois royaumes de l'Asie Mineure, Cappadoce, Bithynie, Pont* (Paris: C. Rollin et Feuardenet, 1888), 193-95. The dynastic era dating system was also in use in Bithynia and Bosphorus from 297/6 BCE on. Mithridates' coins that utilize this system date from the year ΒΣ (96/5) to ΑΛΣ (67/6). The Pergamene era dating began when Mithridates entered Pergamon in 88 and exist from year Α (88) to year Δ (85).

on his relationship to the deity, Mithridates also adopted the god's name as a nickname, and he was known as Mithridates VI Eupator Dionysos.²⁶

These correlations with the god and the eastern origins of Dionysos reflecting Mithridates' Persian ancestry lead Price to determine that when Mithridates entered Asia, he changed his portrait style to reflect Dionysos,²⁷ but acute visual analysis contradicts this hypothesis. First, though Price suggests that the stag on the reverse of all the newer coins might be considered to point to Mithridates' conquest in Asia with the animal referencing the eastern cult of Artemis at Ephesus, the stag also appears on drachmae and gold coins from 96/5 BCE before Mithridates was active in his eastern campaigns. Therefore, the animal must have held Pontic significance as well.²⁸

Second, while the images of grape leaves that encircle the reverse of the coins provide an allusion to Dionysos, the iconography does not fully explain the coins' complex visual symbolism. Indeed, Mithridates wearing a diadem, instead of a wreath of grapes, on the reverse signals that the portrait was intended to provide a different

²⁶ App., *Mith.* 10, says that the name could have also been a tribute to his maternal ancestor Antiochos VI Dionysos of Syria. Inscriptions from Delos identify Mithridates with this name; see *Inscriptions de Délos*, ed. Félix Durrbach, Marcel Launey, and Pierre Roussel (Paris: 1926), nos. 1563, 2039-2040. See also Erciyas, *Wealth, Aristocracy, and Royal Propaganda*, 119, 135, Pl. II.14-17, who offers examples of Dionysos on bronze civic coins minted in Amisos (which along with Sinope was a great commercial center of the southern Black Sea coast) from Mithridates' time. The reverse of these coins shows common attributes of the deity: a *thyrsus*, a panther, and a *cista mystica* ("sacred chest" associated with Dionysian mystery cult rituals). The obverse features an image of Dionysos in profile and a wreath of grape leaves around his head clearly references the deity.

²⁷ Price, "Mithridates VI Eupator," 4, argues that the later versions depict a "soft, fleshy portrait" that would recall Dionysiac imagery, but the visual analysis seems presumptuous and frankly, incorrect.

²⁸ McGing, *The Foreign Policy of Mithridates*, 98, states that the stag appears on coins as early as those of Pharnakes I.

meaning, and Price's argument of a direct identification of Mithridates with Dionysos seems unlikely. Despite Mithridates' intended genealogical connection to Dionysos, and despite the connection of Dionysos with the East, it appears more likely that on his coinage Mithridates sought to depict himself in the likeness of Alexander. A visual analysis of the image reveals that the physical resemblance to the Macedonian king is much clearer than any reference to Dionysos.²⁹

On the obverse of both coin types – the earlier and the later – Mithridates' eyes are open and alert, and a diadem encircles his head.³⁰ On Mithridates' later coins, strands of hair curl back to reveal the king's forehead in a style that imitates the iconic *anastole*³¹ that characterized the portraits of Alexander as seen on Roman statues such as the Azara Herm³² (fig. 3.11) and the Dresden Alexander (fig. 3.12).³³ Moreover, on the later issues,

²⁹ Gerhard Kleiner, "Bildnis und Gestalt," 73-96, first noted that the portraits of Mithridates on coins reflected Alexander's portraits. Kleiner compares Mithridates' coins to portraits of Alexander on Roman provincial coins of Macedonia, which were based on Lysimachean issues. See also Margarete Bieber, *Alexander the Great in Greek and Roman Art* (Chicago: Argonaut, 1964), Pl. 40, no. 87; Pl. 22, no. 43; Pl. 24, no. 46 for examples.

³⁰ On the significance of the diadem worn by Hellenistic kings, see Smith, *Hellenistic Royal Portraits*, 37. In the later issues (89/8-67/6 BCE), however, the king appears more youthful than in the earlier coins, which would have been at odds with his actual appearance, since he would have been about forty-five years of age at the time of the second issue.

³¹ See Andrew Stewart, *Faces of Power: Alexander's Image and Hellenistic Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 76-78, for more detail on the *anastole*.

³² The Azara Alexander is known in two or three marble copies dated to the Roman period: two at the Louvre (MA 436 and MA 234) and one in the British Museum in London (Cat. 1859), although the London head may be modern. MA 436 in the Louvre survives as a herm with the inscription, "ALEXANDROS PHILIPPOU MAKED[ON]" written on the front. The similarity between this herm and the other Paris head evidences that the Azara Alexander was a recognized type. See Smith, *Hellenistic Royal Portraits*, 155 for bibliography on the type.

Mithridates' hair is delineated into individual strands, and the curls that lay flat against his skull earlier are now energized and blow back giving the impression that he is rushing forward. The effect echoes a similar one achieved in the Alexander Mosaic from the House of the Faun in Pompeii (fig. 3.13) (copying an earlier painting), in which the tesserae comprising Alexander's hair depict strands of hair streaming backward.

In representing himself as Alexander, Mithridates was participating within a tradition that dated from the fourth century BCE. A number of the *Diadochoi*, Ptolemy I, Seleukos I, and Lysimachos, for example, sought to claim their legitimacy by minting coinage with a portrait of the deified Alexander or by showing themselves in his likeness. Lysimachos' widely circulated coins (fig. 3.14) depict a diademed Alexander in profile with eyes wide-open, locks formed into the *anastole*, and rams' horns curling downward from his head – a reference to Alexander's demi-god status as a son of Zeus Ammon. The portrait heads of Ptolemy I and Seleukos I (figs. 3.15-3.16) deliberately recall that of Alexander through their exaggerated facial features, curly leonine hair, and the diadem they wear. Seleukos even includes the ram horns on his coin portraits, echoing the portraits of his predecessor as seen on Lysimachan coins.³⁴

³³ Ibid., 156. The Dresden Alexander also survives through two marble copies from the Roman period. One belongs to the Skulpturensammlung in Dresden and the other is in Fulda, Schloss Fasanerie. There are also three versions of the Erbach Alexander type. Both the Dresden and Erbach Alexanders are identified as the fourth-century BCE ruler through their comparison with the Azara Alexander. A full chin, strong features, similar physiognomy in all three types, and a distinctive *anastole* helps to secure the identification.

³⁴ Robert Fleischer, "True Ancestors and False Ancestors in Hellenistic Rulers' Portraiture," in *Images of Ancestors*, ed. Jakob Munk Højte (Oakville, CT: Aarhus University Press, 2002), 59-74. See also Andrew Stewart, "Alexander in Greek and Roman Art," in *Brill's Companion to Alexander the Great*, 44-51, for more on the *Diadochoi*'s use of Alexander's image.

Mithridates, however, forged his image closer to that of Alexander than any other ruler before or after him. The self-fashioning was a part of a grander strategy of rule, through which Mithridates explicitly referenced Alexander in both visual image and in action.

In addition to minting coins that referenced Alexander, Mithridates looked west to Greece in hopes of securing a Hellenic foothold to implement his role as Alexander's successor. The desire to expand westward aligned with Mithridates' Alexander propaganda, since the Macedonian had freed Greece from an eastern oppressor. Mithridates' claim to be "the great liberator of the Greek world" would not have functioned properly if he failed to control Greece itself.³⁵

Additionally, moving into Greece would increase the landmass of his kingdom and his wealth and resources, as well as making him a more formidable foe. A firm foothold in Greece would also better position Mithridates for an invasion of Italy, providing him a place from which he could more easily, if necessary, confront Rome on her soil. Finding Athens willing to open her gates to him,³⁶ Mithridates ordered his generals to continue their campaigns in Greece, and they were successful in capturing parts of the Peloponnese including Sparta, most of Boeotia, and Euboea.³⁷ The Pontic

³⁵ McGing, *The Foreign Policy of Mithridates*, 122.

³⁶ See McGing, *The Foreign Policy of Mithridates*, 118-20, for more on Mithridates' gaining favor in Athens through the Peripatetic philosopher Athenion. Meanwhile, Mithridates' general Archelaos sailed across the Aegean with a large fleet winning islands for Pontus and sacking those like Delos that revolted; App., *Mith.* 28; Plut., *Vit. Sull.* 11; Flor. 1.40.8; Strabo, *Geographia* 10.5.4.

³⁷ App., *Mith.* 29; Memnon 22.7, 22.10. Mithridates' grand plan to extend his rule further west, however, did not play out as he had hoped, and attacks by Sulla depleted Pontic influence in Greece. Plut., *Vit. Sull.* 24, describes that Sulla's troops stormed Athens on

Kingdom now extended from the Euxine, through Asia Minor, to islands in the Aegean and parts of mainland Greece, comprising a mixed population of Iranian, native Anatolian, and Greek citizens.³⁸

Securely dated, the second issues of his coins – those that explicitly connected Mithridates to Alexander – coincide with the years during which Mithridates was at the height of his power. François de Callataÿ, who has studied the coins minted during Mithridates' lifetime, connects their production to years that Mithridates was actively engaged in wars. Based on this assessment, Callataÿ concludes that Mithridates needed to increase activity at mints in order to pay his troops. The correlation seems probable since

March 1st, 86 BCE, and Archelaos fled his base at the port city of Piraeus only to be followed to Boeotia and defeated at the Battle of Chaeronea. Archelaos fled again, but Sulla decimated the Pontic army one more time at the Battle of Orchomenos. In 85 BCE, Mithridates met Sulla at Dardanus in the Troad to form a treaty that would conclude the First Mithridatic War. As a result of the treaty, Mithridates was pushed back to Pontus and forced to pay a war indemnity, release prisoners, and relinquish control over Asia Minor. Mithridates was, however, allowed to remain in control over the Pontic kingdom as it was before the war.

The second war was short-lived and began when the Roman general Lucius Licinius Murena, who was left in charge of the province of Asia Minor, acted hastily without consulting the Senate and launched an attack against Mithridates in 83 BCE. After Mithridates won a battle in Cappadocia, Sulla sent word from Rome in 82/81 BCE to end the war. App., *Mith.* 64-66; Memnon 36; see also A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Foreign Policy in the East: 168 BC to AD 1* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984), 149-52. Dennis G. Glew, "Between the Wars: Mithridates Eupator and Rome 85-73 BC," *Chiron* 11 (1981): 109-30, offers analysis of the events and diplomatic relations that led up to the Third Mithridatic War.

³⁸ See McGing, *The Foreign Policy of Mithridates*, 9-11, for more on the ethnicities that made up Pontus.

the greatest number of coins were struck in May and June of 89 BCE and May of 75 through 74 BCE, in other words, at the time of the First and Third Mithridatic Wars.³⁹

Of the coins Mithridates minted during the wars, the greatest number are the silver and gold tetradrachms that feature his portrait in the likeness of Alexander. Others, of lesser metals and of lesser number, also show the same design.⁴⁰ The coins' mass production and their portability ensured their widespread distribution. In fact, coin hoards found in Greece (Piraeus, the Dipylon in Athens, Delos, Thessaloniki, and Limani Chersonisou in Crete), Çeşme in Turkey, Granica in Bulgaria, Khinisly in Azerbaijan,

³⁹ Callataÿ, *Histoire des guerres mithridatiques*, 407-19, adds that Mithridates would not have had enough time to prepare for Murena's hasty attacks in the Second Mithridatic War.

The Third Mithridatic War began and ended with two deaths: Nikomedes IV's in 74 BCE and Mithridates' in 63 BCE. Upon the Bithynian king's death, Rome inherited the region formally controlled by Nikomedes, which infuriated Mithridates. Turning to a former Roman magistrate by the name of Sertorius, who was preoccupying the Senate in the west by leading revolts in Spain, Mithridates sought an alliance with him. App., *Mith.* 68. McGing, *The Foreign Policy of Mithridates*, 144, thinks Mithridates was planning war against Rome before Bithynia became a Roman province. According to McGing, the actions resulting from Nikomedes' death just gave Mithridates an excuse to seek alliance with Sertorius.

In the spring of 73 BCE, Rome sent the consuls Lucius Licinius Lucullus and Marcus Aurelius Cotta to defend Cilicia and Bithynia against Mithridates' advances. McGing, *The Foreign Policy of Mithridates*, 145. See also, Brian McGing, "The Date of the Outbreak of the Third Mithridatic War," *Phoenix* 38 (1984): 12-18. Lucullus succeeded in his battle against Mithridates' son-in-law, Tigranes the Great, fought at the latter's capital city, Tigranokerta in 69 BCE. The Roman general, however, suffered a major defeat against the Armenians in the summer of 68 BCE. Strabo, *Geographia* 11.14.15; App., *Historia Romana* 12.84; Plut., *Vit. Luc.* 14.5, 26.1. This led the Senate to send Pompey to take over Roman command in the East.

⁴⁰ The same imagery appears on drachms and staters of Mithridates, but these were not as plentiful as the tetradrachms; Callataÿ, *Histoire des guerres mithridatiques*, 4-7, 28.

Sarnakunk in Armenia, and Poggio Picenze in Italy testify that these tetradrachms enjoyed diffuse use in the Mediterranean and the East.⁴¹

Other Portraits of Mithridates

The imagery on Mithridates' coins was part of a broader visual and biographical strategy through which the Pontic king established his connections to Alexander. In fact, in addition to the story of the lightning bolt allowing Mithridates to assert his connection to Dionysos, the anecdote also had resonance with Alexander. As Plutarch explains (*Vit. Alex.* 2.2), Alexander's mother Olympias dreamt during her pregnancy that her womb had been struck, and the lightening episodes of both Alexander and Mithridates marked their survival as equally miraculous. This likening to Alexander was the first of many instances when Mithridates fashioned a connection between himself and his great Macedonian predecessor.

Two additional accounts, contributed by Strabo, indicates that Mithridates sought to emulate Alexander in action as well as visual image: in one (*Geographia* 14.1.23), he recounts how Mithridates shot an arrow from the roof of the temple of Artemis at Ephesus and extended the sacred precinct to where the arrow landed, just as Alexander had done in a previous year. In another (*Geographia* 12.8.18), Strabo writes that Mithridates donated one hundred talents to repair Apameia after an earthquake damaged the city – another action that repeated one Alexander had performed.

Appian (*Mith.* 89) offers another anecdote. He describes Mithridates' physician lifting him up on high so that his troops could see he was alive after suffering a serious

⁴¹ Erciyas, *Wealth, Aristocracy, and Royal Propaganda*, 171. Some Mithridatic staters were also found in some of the hoards.

wound. The historian mentions that Alexander had similarly shown himself to assure his troops of his safety after a battle in India. Appian (*Mith.* 20.76) also writes that Mithridates lodged at a place named “Alexander’s Tavern” while in Phrygia, believing it to be a good portent to copy his Macedonian predecessor. Whether these anecdotes are true is incidental: the comparison to Alexander that Mithridates’ actions evoked indicates that Mithridates had created a legendary identity sufficient to permit his ancient biographers to compare his exploits to that of Alexander.

A number of sculpted portraits of the king insist on this connection, while revealing the nuances that animated his various representational strategies. Yet while it is possible to date the production of the coins to a specific moment in the Mithridatic Wars, the exact time of production of portraits of the king in stone and other materials prove harder to fix. Regardless, they reveal the king’s negotiation of Alexander’s dual human and deified nature.

Specifically, Mithridates evoked Alexander’s divine status by copying the Macedonian emperor’s penchant for fashioning himself as the demi-god Herakles. In fact, of the statuary featuring Mithridates that has survived, three ostensibly show the monarch in the guise of Herakles. In a marble sculpture in the Louvre (MA 2321) (fig. 3.17), the head of Mithridates appears in lion *exuviae* garb.⁴² The resemblance between the profile of the sculpted head and the king’s portrait, especially that seen on the first

⁴² Identification of this statue as Mithridates VI was first made by Frederick Winter, “Mithridates VI Eupator,” *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts* 9 (1894): 245-48, and is collaborated by most scholars. See J. M. C. Toynbee, *Roman Historical Portraits* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 115; Smith, *Hellenistic Royal Portraits*, 99; Margarete Bieber, *Sculpture of the Hellenistic Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 121; Andrew Stewart, *Greek Sculpture: An Exploration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 223.

version of his coins, secures the identification as Mithridates.⁴³ In both, heavy brows, a pronounced, rounded chin, and sideburns characterize the head.⁴⁴ Another head in lion *exuviae* (fig. 3.18) was found in the Pontic capital, Sinope.⁴⁵ Though it is in a fragmentary state, the Sinope head bears a resemblance to the one in the Louvre in the slight turn of its head and its lion-skin headdress. A further Herakles figure (identifiable again by the lion skin) in a group from the North Stoa of the Athena sanctuary at Pergamon that features the Greek hero freeing the giant Prometheus has also been identified as Mithridates (fig. 3.19). Gerhard Krahmmer first made the connection, proposing that the monument celebrated Mithridates' liberation of Pergamon from Rome in 88 BCE, and the statue group was sculpted in his honor.⁴⁶ Discrepancies on the date

⁴³ Smith, *Hellenistic Royal Portraits*, 99, and Erciyas, *Wealth, Aristocracy, and Royal Propaganda*, 148, agree that the statue resembles the first issue coins more than the second issues.

⁴⁴ As noted by Jakob Munk Højte, "Portraits and Statues of Mithridates VI," in *Mithridates VI and the Pontic Kingdom*, ed. Jakob Munk Højte (Oakville, CT: Aarhus University Press, 2009): 145-62. Højte states, "the only objection one could raise is that if it wasn't for the identification with Mithridates we might have guessed the [Louvre] portrait to be somewhat earlier than Mithridates," quote at 150.

⁴⁵ Ekrem Akurgal and Ludwig Budde, *Vorläufiger Bericht über die Ausgrabungen in Sinope* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1956), Pl. XIV; Latife Summerer, *Hellenistische Terracotten aus Amisos* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1999), 131-32.

⁴⁶ Gerhard Krahmmer, "Eine Ehrung für Mithridates VI Eupator in Pergamon," *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts* 40 (1925) 183-205; Frederick Winter, *Die Skulpturen mit Ausnahme der Altarreliefs* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1908), 179, had earlier identified Herakles as one of the Attalid kings of Pergamon, Attalos II. Thomas Brogan, "The Prometheus Group in Context," in *Stephanos: Studies in Honor of Brunilde Sismondo Ridgway*, ed. Kim J. Hartswick and Mary J. Sturgeon (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania for Bryn Mawr College, 1998), 39-53, on the other hand, reads the diadem under the lion skin as a sign that Herakles represented the ideal Hellenistic ruler. Brigitte Hintzen-Bohlen, "Die Prometheus-Gruppe in Athenaheiligtum zu Pergamon. Ein Beitrag zur Kunst und Repräsentation der Attaliden," *Istanbul Mitteilungen* 40 (1990): 145-56, believes Herakles represents the Attalid king Eumenes II.

and significance of the group continue today, but until further evidence for the contrary emerges, the possibility that this Herakles features the portrait of Mithridates cannot be ruled out.⁴⁷

The connection serves a clear purpose. While the lion-skin headdress references Herakles, it also refers to Alexander, whose portrait on coins and sculpture don the lion skin as well.⁴⁸ While unknown if contemporary portraits of Alexander featured him with the lion-skin headdress, R.R.R. Smith points out that the so-called “Alexander Sarcophagus” from Sidon (fig. 3.20), which at least *refers* to his lifetime, depicts Alexander in lion *exuviae*.⁴⁹ For Alexander, the lion scalp referenced Herakles, whom Alexander’s family, the Antigonids, identified as its forebear.⁵⁰ Alexander also looked to Herakles as an exemplary model of a hero who later earned divine status through his legendary victories and his virtues while on earth. Thus, as Smith argues, when later kings such as Mithridates wear the lion skin, there is a “double or ambiguous evocation of Herakles and/or Alexander; but the latter was clearly the more important.”⁵¹

⁴⁷ Erciyas, *Wealth, Aristocracy, and Royal Propaganda*, 153-54, argues for a Mithridatic identification because of the similarities in the profile view of the state and those on Mithridates’ coins.

⁴⁸ See Bieber, *Alexander the Great in Greek and Roman Art*, fig. 30, 31, 33, 31, 36-39, for examples. Højte, “Portraits and Statues,” 151, writes that Mithridates associated himself with Herakles to claim his mastery over Colchis and the Caucasus – regions in which Herakles is said to have freed Prometheus.

⁴⁹ Smith, *Hellenistic Royal Portraits*, 40; see 63-64, for more on the Alexander Sarcophagus.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 40.

Mithridates' forging a connection to Alexander is more direct in other statues likely to represent the Pontic king that do not feature the lion skin head garb, but do exhibit similarities to the Lysippan Alexander portrait ideal. A fragmentary head from Pantikapaion now in the St. Petersburg Museum (fig. 3.21), a portrait in the Odessa Museum (fig. 3.22), which preserves the *anastole* typical of Alexander portraits,⁵² and one at the National Museum in Athens (NM 3556)(fig. 23) all show a dramatically turned head with eyes looking upward.⁵³ All three were recovered in locations where Mithridates was active – Pantikapaion, where the king escaped to avoid Pompey's advances in the Third Mithridatic War; Odessa, on the coast of the Black Sea; and Athens, where Mithridates sought an alliance during the First Mithridatic War – supports the identification.⁵⁴ (See Appendix C for more possible portraits of Mithridates on statues and gems.)

From these examples, it becomes clear that Mithridates had a choice in the way of visually associating himself with Alexander the Great and thus evoking specific traits of his Macedonian predecessor. In the versions in which the monarch wears lion-skin headgear, he alludes to Alexander by referencing the fourth-century ruler's association

⁵² The Pantikapaion head's top has broken off making it impossible to determine what the hairstyle would have been. The Athens head is most often associated with Mithridates' son Ariarathes IX, but father and son are nearly identical on coin portraits so the exact identity remains elusive. See Robert Fleischer, "True Ancestors and False Ancestors," 69. See also Højte, "Portraits and Statues," 150-55 for more statues possibly representing Mithridates although besides the ones mentioned above, Højte questions the identifications himself.

⁵³ Højte, "Portraits and Statues," 151-53, and Erciyas, *Wealth, Aristocracy, and Royal Propaganda*, 151. The Athens head is usually identified as Mithridates' son Ariarathes IX, but portraits of the son closely resemble his father's; see further below.

⁵⁴ Højte, "Portraits and Statues," 151-53.

with Herakles. The insistence on the Heraklean attribute acknowledges more than Alexander's human capacities; it engages the "cult of Alexander," and the legends of his demi-god status that circulated during and after his lifetime.

In the portraits that depict Mithridates without any reference to Herakles, he also references Alexander, but this time through his emulation of an Alexander's portrait type created during the Macedonian's lifetime. A turn of the neck, a fluidity of the eyes, and the lion-mane-like *anastole* recall portraits of the king in a style that asserts the humanity of the Macedonian king.⁵⁵

Thus, while Mithridates chose in some of his portraits to portray himself endowed with the divine and super-human qualities that marked Alexander, following the tradition of the *Diadochoi* such as Ptolemy, Seleukos, and Lysimachos as mentioned above, in other images, Mithridates chose to imitate the humanized version of Alexander. And this portrait style, devoid of any divine attributes, is precisely the type Mithridates chose to decorate his coinage. Functioning as part of his greater visual program, coinage remained transportable and valuable, reserving it a particular place within Mithridates' visual program. In their widespread use and exposure, the coins reached the diverse populations Mithridates controlled.

Greek and Eastern Reception of Mithridates as Alexander

While no one disputes that Mithridates' self-fashioning as Alexander the Great would have resonated with the Greeks, who would have viewed the Pontic king as the

⁵⁵ Bieber, *Alexander the Great in Greek and Roman Art*, 28, writes that Lysippos' representation combined, "the military virtues of his father with the romantic personality of his mother, [and] an intellect developed by Aristotle."

“new champion of Hellenism,” this assessment is often followed by the insistence that the propaganda would not have appealed to easterners.⁵⁶ Scholars consider that Mithridates’ connection to Dionysos would have addressed the latter group, thereby attributing simultaneous, but different, programs to reach the two groups – Greek and once-Persian/native Anatolian – that formed the major ethnicities of his kingdom.⁵⁷ The king’s employment of different religious and historical figures to appeal to each ethnicity is possible, but the claim that easterners would not have received the New Alexander message well needs reexamining.

Marek Jan Olbrycht recently explored the relationship between Macedonia and Persia from the latter’s rule over the former region in the late-sixth to early-fifth century BCE to Alexander’s incorporation of the defeated Persian Empire into his own.⁵⁸ Among Olbrycht’s keen observations is Alexander’s recruitment and promotion of the conquered Iranians into his army and subsequently assigning the elite among them to be governors

⁵⁶ See for example, McGing, *Foreign Policy of Mithridates*, 107-08, who recognizes Mithridates-as-Alexander propaganda and remarks, “his coin portraits depicted a new Alexander, a new champion of Hellenism: he would rescue the Greeks from their money-loving, oppressive overlords, the Romans.” He adds, however, that the idea of a new Alexander – the conqueror of the East – would not have been as appealing to the Asiatics. See also, Smith, *Hellenistic Royal Portraits*, 122-23.

⁵⁷ McGing, *Foreign Policy of Mithridates*, 97-99, 107, also believes that Mithridates promulgated his Persian heritage, presenting himself as a prince of royal Persian ancestry. For example, Mithridates sacrificed to Ahura Mazda, wore Persian garb, and emphasized his Iranian descent in speeches and in coins. McGing also presses that a large part of Mithridates’ propaganda was also presenting the Romans as “unjust, hostile to kings, and greedy for empire and riches,” 104-108, quote at 108. See also Smith, *Hellenistic Royal Portraits*, 123-24.

⁵⁸ Marek Jan Olbrycht, “Macedonia and Persia,” in *A Companion to Ancient Macedonia*, ed. Joseph Roisman and Ian Worthington (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2010), 342-69. See also his essay, “Alexander the Great Versus the Iranians – An Alternative Perspective.” *Folia Orientalia* 42/43 (2006/07): 159-72.

under his new regime. After Alexander's defeat of Darius III at the Battle of Gaugamela in October 331 BCE, he gained control over the Achaemenid capital city, Babylon. There, Alexander installed the Persian Mazaeus, who had recently fought against him at the battle, as satrap. He also appointed other former enemies into high offices and admitted Persians to join his ranks – an action that only intensified as the Macedonian moved farther east.⁵⁹

During the Indian War (327-325 BCE), Greeks, Macedonians, Anatolians, and Iranians joined in arms against a new, foreign enemy, solidifying a feeling of unity among the disparate peoples of Asia Minor that had not previously existed. Alexander's eagerness to reference the Battle at Hydaspes River, in which he defeated the Indian king Poros, on his decadrachms supports the notion that Alexander viewed the Indian War as building camaraderie and boosting morale among his ethnically diverse troops, and he exploited it as propaganda.⁶⁰ He had incorporated so many conquered peoples into his army that by 323 BCE, Alexander led "7000 Macedonians, several thousands of Anatolians, and about 75,000 Iranians."⁶¹

⁵⁹ Olbrycht, "Macedonia and Persia," 353, 364; see also Olbrycht, "The Military Reforms of Alexander the Great during his Campaign in Iran, Afghanistan, and Central Asia," in *Understanding Eurasia: from Ancient Times to the Present Day*, ed. Cezary Galewicz, Jadwiga Pstrusinska, and Lidia Sudyka (Krakow: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2007): 309-21. See A. B. Bosworth, "Alexander and the Iranians," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 100 (1980): 1-21, and "Alexander the Great and the Decline of Macedon," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 106 (1986): 1-12, who prefers to see Alexander's employment of Iranians into his military as a calculating maneuver to ensure total obedience from all subjects to lead to personal autocracy.

⁶⁰ Olbrycht, "Macedonia and Persia," 360-61, points out that on the decadrachms Alexander wears headgear that combines an Iranian tiara with elements of a Macedonian helmet, fusing the two cultures in one image.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 365.

Adding non-Macedonians to his ranks was not the only tactic Alexander had employed to win favor in the former Persian Empire. Plutarch (*Vit. Alex.* 5.1.9.1, *Mor.* 342B-C) recalls the king's early interest in Persia and how as a youth, he questioned Persian envoys to Macedonia about their kingdom.⁶² Alexander even manifested these fascinations in his presentation, manner, and ceremonies. Alexander's reforms were so blatantly pro-Iranian that it even angered some of his own countrymen. The Macedonians of Alexander's army criticized his adoption of the defeated Persians' customs and spoke openly in their opposition against the king's "Persian resplendence."⁶³

Diodorus Siculus (17.77.4-7), Justin (*Epit.* 12.3.8-12), and Plutarch (*Vit. Alex.* 45, *Mor.* 330A-D) tell us that Alexander imitated the luxurious and extravagant displays of the Asian kings, wore the Persian diadem, and dressed himself, his companions, and even his horses in Persian garments. The king also adopted the Persian form of expressing obeisance – the *proskynesis*,⁶⁴ introduced the Achaemenid tradition of the harem to the

⁶² Ibid., 352, Olbrycht strongly believes Alexander would have also been familiar with information regarding the Persians through his reading of Herodotus and Xenophon.

⁶³ Just., *Epit.* 12.4.1; Curt. 6.6.9-12, 11.22-26; Olbrycht, "Macedonia and Persia," 358, also cites Lucian of Samosata's *The Dialogues of the Dead*, where Philip chastises Alexander for aping the habits of his defeated enemies. Some Macedonians favored Alexander's actions and those were in the king's good graces; Olbrycht, 360.

⁶⁴ Curt., 6.6.3; Plut., *Vit. Alex.* 45.1; see also Dawn L. Gilley and Ian Worthington, "Alexander the Great, Macedonia, and Asia," in *A Companion to Ancient Macedonia*, ed. Joseph Roisman and Ian Worthington (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2010), 195. Regarding *proskynesis*, Worthington writes that it "set Persians apart from Greeks, who thought the act was akin to worship. Alexander's attempt to enforce it on his own men looks like he was trying to fashion some common social protocol between the races, to get West to meet East," from "Alexander the Great, Nation Building, and the Creation and Maintenance of Empire," in *Makers of Ancient Strategy: From the Persian Wars to the Fall of Rome*, ed. Victor Davis Hanson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 129.

Macedonians,⁶⁵ and employed Iranians familiar with eastern customs and fluent in Persian language to organize audiences for him.⁶⁶ Alexander not only pardoned Persian nobles, but he also employed them as his personal guards,⁶⁷ and he left leaders in Asia to continue ruling their provinces under his sovereignty.⁶⁸ The king's marriage to the Bactrian princess Roxane was yet another tactic that signaled his interest to join with his former enemies.⁶⁹

On the other hand, some scholars argue that Alexander was a brutal conqueror with little regard for the lands he invaded. Alexander's alleged destruction of the sacred Zoroastrian books is often-cited as support for his disregard for the peoples he conquered, and some scholars merely focus on such accounts to deduce total disrespect and ruthlessness on the part of Alexander.⁷⁰ For the reasons discussed above, this criticism is one-sided and contradicted by other accounts of Alexander's efforts and actions. And from 330 BCE on, Alexander was busy building an empire that "was an amalgam of Iranian, including Achaemenid, elements with Macedonian notions."⁷¹

⁶⁵ Diod. Sic., 17.77.6-7; Curt., 6.6.8; and Just., *Epit.* 12.3.10.

⁶⁶ Olbrycht, "Macedonia and Persia," 355-36.

⁶⁷ Curt., 7.10.9, offers the example of Alexander admitting some of the thirty Sogdian nobles into his immediate circle after he conquered the Central Asian province in 329.

⁶⁸ Arr., *Anab.* 4.21.1-10.

⁶⁹ Plut., *Vit. Alex.*, 47.58; Curt., 8.4.25; Gilley and Worthington, "Alexander the Great," 196-97.

⁷⁰ See Sulochana R. Asirvatham, "Perspectives on the Macedonians from Greece, Rome, and Beyond," in *A Companion to Ancient Macedonia*, 118-19, for previous scholarship that focused on anti-Alexander sentiment.

⁷¹ Olbrycht, "Macedonia and Persia," 366; he further notes that while some view Alexander's pro-Iranian policies as purely pragmatic, some actions clearly demonstrate

This “amalgam” of peoples who supported Alexander, which included pro-Macedonian elites, is evident even after the death of Alexander. The new Macedonian rulers, the *Diadochoi*, who divided up the lands he had conquered, had to gain the support of the provincial rulers Alexander had appointed in Anatolia. These native governors continued to rule after the final Persian defeat at the Battle of Issos, and as evidence shows, Alexander and his Successors worked to maintain the ways familiar to the local ruling groups of the regions they settled, continuing the traditions of the Achaemenids.⁷² The support that Alexander achieved in the Achaemenid Empire is indicative of his program of inclusiveness. In Asia Minor – a region already populated by Greeks and one with more interactions with the west than Central Asia had – he would have found an even greater appeal.⁷³ By the time of Mithridates’ rule, populations in Asia Minor had become even more ethnically mixed and to proclaim that all Greeks praised Alexander while all easterners despised him for bringing an end to the Persian Empire would be a disservice and a misinformed stereotype.

the contrary. For example, the preference of the Iranian phalanx over the traditional Macedonian war methods, and Alexander’s marrying of Roxane instead of placing her as a concubine in his court exhibit more than mere “pragmatism,” 367-68.

⁷² Pierre Briant, “The Seleucid Kingdom, the Achaemenid Empire, and the History of the Near East in the First Millennium BC,” in *Religion and Religious Practice in the Seleucid Kingdom*, ed. Per Bilde, Troels Engberg-Pedersen, Lise Hannestad, and Jan Zahle (Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 1990): 40-65. See also his essay, “Alexander and the Persian Empire: Between ‘Decline’ and ‘Renovation’ History and Historiography,” in *Alexander the Great: A New History*, ed. Waldemar Heckel and Lawrence A. Tritle (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2010): 171-88.

⁷³ See Marek Jan Olbrycht, “Ethnicity of Settlers in the Colonies of Alexander the Great in Iran and Central Asia,” *Bulletin of International Institute for Central Asian Studies* 14 (2011): 22-35, for supporting evidence of ethnically mixed populations of Asia after Alexander.

What emerges from this rehearsal of Alexander's policies in the East is that although he defeated the Achaemenid power, he did not exactly *conquer* the East. Instead, Alexander's actions show his attempts to incorporate many Persian customs and practices as his own. At the same time, he did not claim the Achaemenid throne or name himself the successor of Darius III.⁷⁴ Rather, he aimed to form an amalgamate kingdom with an army composed of soldiers from the entire expanse of his territory, a court and immediate circle composed of Macedonians, Greeks, and Iranians, and an administration that placed native governors as rulers of the various regions of his realm.

Mithridates followed similar strategies – he named his governors “satraps” and left them to oversee provinces under his supervision. Diodorus Siculus (37.26) relates that when Mithridates expanded his territory, he treated the citizens of the captured lands with kindness and generosity. Moreover, he emphasized his connection to the Persians, which the fates seemed to have ordained. According to Justin (*Epit.* 37.2.1-3), a comet appeared in the sky on the year of Mithridates' birth and eclipsed the sun for seventy days.⁷⁵ Upon Mithridates' accession to the throne, the comet is said to have reappeared, marking the beginning of his reign with good omen. This led the king to use the celestial object as an attribute in his program of visual propaganda. When combined with

⁷⁴ Worthington, “Alexander the Great, Nation-Building,” 133, offers evidence: “he streamlined the satrapal system and created the office of imperial treasurer. He involved the powerful Persian aristocratic families, whose support he needed, in his administration, and he started wearing Persian dress and the upright tiara (in 330 after Darius III was killed) to endear himself to the Persians...”

⁷⁵ Chinese sources confirm that the comet appeared in the year 134. Whether that year was the year of Mithridates' conception or birth causes the slight discrepancy in dating his birth year to either 134 or 133. See McGing, *The Foreign Policy of Mithridates VI Eupator*, 43, n.1, 46.

Mithridates evocation of the thunderbolt, the celestial symbol signaled the king's fated connections to Iranian royalty, which had used the comet and the lightning bolt as part of its royal insignia, dating back to the Achaemenid Period.⁷⁶

Elsewhere, Mithridates' policies of *philanthropia*, or liberality, had its benefits: many cities chose to side with the conqueror and even welcomed him as a god and savior.⁷⁷ Ancient authors report that as Mithridates moved through Asia Minor many cities received his entrance openly,⁷⁸ and the king set up provincial and city governors in the regions he occupied.⁷⁹ Coins bearing Mithridates' image also attest to a city's welcoming of Mithridates as we see from those of Smyrna and Pergamon (fig. 3.24).⁸⁰ Besides regions such as, Chios, and Ilium, Magnesia on the Maenander which had an historic or important Greek population, a large portion of Asia Minor not inhabited primarily by Greeks pledged fealty to Mithridates by early 88 BCE.⁸¹

⁷⁶ See Geo Widengren, "The Sacral Kingship of Iran," in *The Sacral Kingship: Contributions to the Central Theme of the VIIIth International Congress for the History of Religions, Rome, April 1955* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1959): 242-57; see especially 248 regarding the star, which along with the thunderbolt, was a prevalent symbol in Iranian traditions.

⁷⁷ App., *Mith.* 18.69, 19.71, 19.73, collaborates with Diodorus.

⁷⁸ Cic., *Flac.* 61; App., *Mith.* 21; Just., *Epit.* 38.3.8; Diod. Sic., 37.26.

⁷⁹ McGing, *The Foreign Policy of Mithridates*, 98-99.

⁸⁰ The coins minted at Pergamon led to the designation of all Mithridatic coins struck with the same date markers as "Pergamene era" coins. See Reinach, *Numismatique ancienne*, 193-95, and n. 26 above; see also Reinach, 195-96, and Barclay V. Head, *Catalogue of the Greek Coins of Ionia in the British Museum* (Bologna: Arnaldo Forni, 1964), 247, no. 118, pl. XXV.17, for the Smyrna coin.

⁸¹ McGing, *The Foreign Policy of Mithridates*, 110-12.

According to Dennis G. Glew, this quality of *philanthropia* is one aspect of Mithridates' propaganda that the monarch utilized in order to win favor with the people of Asia Minor.⁸² As the etymology of the word suggests, the concept originated in Greece, and Glew remarks that for years, the Greeks saw liberality as one of the greatest qualities of a ruler and had admired it most in Alexander. Mithridates' *philanthropia* also went hand in hand with his fashioning himself as Alexander: his liberality proved that he was another Alexander and this "reputation 'proved' his *philanthropia*."⁸³

By embracing both his Greek and eastern identities, which for him were already established through his lineage, and by forging positive connections to Alexander that would have resonated with both Greek and eastern populations around the Black Sea and in Asia Minor, Mithridates successfully presented himself as the next Alexander the Great. On his coinage, his portrait as a new Alexander did not seek divine attributes of his Macedonian predecessor as some of the *Diadochoi* had by portraying him with the horns of Zeus Ammon or as his own statuary had by referencing Alexander through his association with Herakles.⁸⁴ Instead, Mithridates in the likeness of Alexander evokes a supreme, but mortal Hellenistic ruler, seeking to imitate the Macedonian's human qualities and achievements.

⁸² Dennis G. Glew, "The Selling of the King: A Note on Mithridates Eupator's Propaganda in 88 BC," *Hermes* 105 (1977): 253-56.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 255; Glew identifies another mode of propaganda – Mithridates publically committed himself to release the conquered of their debts and redistribute their property.

⁸⁴ See Karsten Dahmen, *The Legend of Alexander the Great on Greek and Roman Coins* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 39-42, for a brief overview of coins featuring a deified Alexander.

That Mithridates intensified the allusion to Alexander in the second issue of his coins, struck after he conquered Asia Minor, is telling. This period, marked by his defeat of Bithynia, the scattering of the Romans who were sent to oppose him, and the successful alliance with Tigranes the Great of Armenia must have invigorated Mithridates. His later decision to seek more allies in Greece, and as a result encroach nearer to Rome, attests to his growing confidence. Modeling his portrait on that of Alexander devoid of any divine attributes demonstrates that Mithridates sought to compare his life's actions to those of Alexander and his aspirations of empire to those that Alexander had achieved during his lifetime.

By doing so, Mithridates downplays Alexander's divinity, and specifically the Heraklean association, and insists on his humanity as a man who brought about a union of peoples through a cult of personality, not through Olympian power. I argue, thus, that Mithridates' portrait as Alexander was not solely meant for Greeks to indicate his imperial intentions. He recognized the heritage of his once-Persian subjects, as he recognized that of those once-Greek, and the two groups found common ground in Alexander, who championed both of their ethnic heritages. Mithridates exploited this feature of Alexander, and sought associations with his Macedonian predecessor in his images to promote himself to the citizens of his empire. This New Alexander propaganda had another audience as well; the portraits of Mithridates – especially those on coins – would have caught the attention of citizens of Late Republican Rome.

The Roman Reception of Mithridates' *Imitatio Alexandri*

In most of the uncovered coin hoards, the tetradrachms of Mithridates were found with other tetradrachm types, which signals their use in international business.⁸⁵ As Deniz Burcu Erciyas points out, the hoards function as good indicators of Mithridatic soldiers' travel, and the recovery of coins in northern Greece, the islands, Athens, and Italy evidences their widespread use.⁸⁶ Recently, Callataÿ argued that Romans played a major role in using and replicating coinage of regions they conquered even before the client kingdoms were fully absorbed into the Empire.⁸⁷ Therefore, these Roman monetary practices lead Callataÿ to conclude that the appearance of Mithridatic tetradrachms in Roman territory and regions in which Romans were active evidences the Romans' close contact with these coins. Callataÿ's assumption of a purely practical reason for the Romans' use of foreign coinage that rejects any notion that the coins continued to function as an influential tool of visual propaganda seems a reductive analysis. The visual imagery – and especially when connected to Alexander – would continue to communicate regardless of its new owners' allegiances.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ The other types were New Style Athenian and Lysimachan tetradrachms, and the different coins were mixed in all the hoards except those at Thessaloniki, Bulgaria, and Armenia; Erciyas, *Wealth, Aristocracy, and Royal Propaganda*, 171.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 172.

⁸⁷ François de Callataÿ, "More Than It Would Seem: The Use of Coinage by the Romans in Late Hellenistic Asia Minor (133-63 BC)," *American Journal of Numismatics* 23 (2011): 55-86. In these coins, the Romans varied the metal alloy, adjusted the weight, and controlled the rate of production. Specifically he traces their free use of Athenian stephanephoric tetradrachms and cistophoric tetradrachms in mainland Greece and Asia respectively.

⁸⁸ See for example, Dahman, *The Legend of Alexander the Great on Greek and Roman Coins*, for a brief overview of the significance of Alexander's image on rulers' and cities' coinage.

With the coins in such broad circulation, their production in great quantities, and their use in the international market, coupled with the evidence of Roman monetary activity in the East before, after, and during the Mithridatic Wars, it is extremely likely that Romans encountered Mithridates' coins. The image of Mithridates with close physiognomic resemblances to Alexander the Great as aided by his adoption of Alexander's *anastole*, and coupled with the inscription, "King Mithridates Eupator" struck on the reverse, carried a clear message: Mithridates, the New Alexander, was king in Asia and ready to fight to maintain and expand his empire.⁸⁹ As ancient sources reveal Roman attitudes towards Alexander, the reception of this message would have been profound and complex:

This is the resting place of that lucky soldier of fortune Philip of Macedon's son, a mad adventurer cut off full in his prime by death, which thereby avenged the subjected world: his mortal remains, which should by rights have been scattered over the face of the earth, were laid instead in a hallowed shrine, and Fortune was kind to his body; the fate that sustained him while he reigned has endured until now. For if liberty ever reasserted itself in the world, perhaps we should find that he had been kept out of malice, an awful warning to show us how so many lands could come under the power of one man. Leaving behind the obscure and narrow realm he was born to, spurning Athens, the city his father had brought to subjection, driven by destiny, he swept through the cities of Asia; havoc was left in his wake, and he plunged his sword

⁸⁹ Stewart, *Faces of Power*, 337, n. 42, writes: "the radical 'Alexandriizing' of his [Mithridates'] coinage took place *after* the beginning of the war, not in preparation for it; it presents him as Alexander's successor as king of Asia and cannot be constructed as announcing a specifically anti-Roman crusade." Stewart bases this on the idea that Mithridates tried to avoid war with Rome at all costs, but finally succumbed with no other options. As McGing, "Mithridates VI Eupator: Victim or Aggressor?" in *Mithridates VI and the Pontic Kingdom*, 203-16, shows though, Mithridates' actions before the start of the wars do not present him such an innocent victim.

through the heart of every nation he met. He reached new rivers – Euphrates, Ganges; he stained them red with the blood of Parthia and India. Alexander, a plague on the world, an all-destructive thunderbolt, a comet that boded ruin for mankind! If he had lived, he was planning to launch his fleet on the Ocean out beyond Asia. Nothing could stop him, not heat or the wide seas, Libya's barrenness or the sandy wastes of the Syrtes. He would have marched round the curve of the earth from the east to the West, and passed beyond both the poles, and drunk from the source of the Nile; but Death overtook him in time, with Nature the only agent able to put a stop to this king of chaos and madness.⁹⁰

Lucan's words, which introduce Alexander into his narrative of the Civil War fought between Julius Caesar and Pompey, describe the former's visit to the Macedonian king's tomb in Alexandria. Though this passage evinces the type of invective against Alexander that circulated in the early Imperial Period,⁹¹ other ancient sources praise Alexander's nobility and military prowess, and viewed him as a visionary.⁹² Scholars have explored the use of Alexander as a historical figure whom Roman writers use to exemplify specific qualities.⁹³ In contrast to diatribes such as the Lucan's above, Plutarch

⁹⁰ Luc., 10.20-44, translated by P. F. Widdows (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1988), 249-50.

⁹¹ As Asirvatham, "Perspectives on the Macedonians," states, "many Latin authors seemed to use Alexander and the Macedonians to encapsulate their own (and their audience's) fear of mistreatment at the hands of autocratic rulers," 116.

⁹² Arrian's praise of Alexander is so high that it has been criticized for being too sycophantic by some; see especially A. B. Bosworth, "Errors in Arrian," *Classical Quarterly* 26 (1976): 117-39; *A Historical Commentary on Arrian's History of Alexander, 1, Commentary on Books I-III* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980); 2, *Commentary on Books IV-V* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

⁹³ Jacob Isager, "Alexander the Great in Roman Literature from Pompey to Vespasian," in *Alexander the Great: Reality and Myth*, ed. Jesper Carlsen, Bodil Due, Otto Steen Due, and Birte Poulsen (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1993), 76, writes that Greek and Roman writers showed Alexander as two types of paragons: "the good ruler and the

remarks on Alexander's divine heritage as a descendant of Achilles and Herakles and also addresses Alexander's high excellent education provided by Aristotle.⁹⁴ While the earliest extant literary sources that speak of Alexander date to the Roman Empire, they derive information from older Greek sources contemporary or near contemporary with Alexander.⁹⁵

Diana Spencer explores the engagement of Alexander the Great in Rome especially through the study of literary and historiographical texts. She finds a multivalent concept of Alexander within Roman political and cultural discourse in which patterns shift from the Late Republic to the Early Empire.⁹⁶ In the latter environment, Spencer identifies Roman writers comparing figures such as Caligula, Nero, and Domitian to Alexander in a negative light – one characterized by excess, depravity, tyranny, and treachery.⁹⁷ For the purposes of this dissertation, however, Spencer's

despotic tyrant.” See also Alfred Heuss, “Alexander der Große und die politische Ideologie des Altertums,” *Antike und Abendland* 4 (1954): 65-104; Gabriella Amiotti, Marta Sordi, et al. *Alessandro Magno tra storia e mito* (Milan: Jaca Book, 1984). Classicists and historians also point out the use of Alexander by Roman writers as an exemplum to criticize Rome's own decadence and to caution against its demise (see further below). Eric Adler, *Valorizing the Barbarians: Enemy Speeches in Roman Historiography* (Austin: University of Texas, Press, 2011), 15-58, argues likewise for critiques of Mithridates in Sallust's *Epistula Mithridatis* and Pompeius Trogus' *Speech of Mithridates*.

⁹⁴ Plut., *Vit. Alex.* 2.1, 5.8, 7-8, 15.8-9, 17.9, 24.5, 54.1, 68.1, 75.5; *Mor.* 327F, 331D-E, 332A, 334D, 340C, 341E-F, 343B.

⁹⁵ See Elizabeth Baynham, “The Ancient Evidence for Alexander the Great,” in *Brill's Companion to Alexander the Great*, ed. Joseph Roisman (Boston: Brill, 2003), 3-29.

⁹⁶ Spencer, *Roman Alexander*, quote at 119.

⁹⁷ Spencer, “Roman Alexanders,” 262-65.

analysis of the Late Republic's reception and emulation of Alexander is more pertinent and valuable.

Beginning with the Roman general Scipio Africanus, Spencer draws our attention to an account by Livy. The Roman historian writes in the Augustan era of an encounter between Scipio and the Carthaginian general Hannibal:

When Africanus asked who, in Hannibal's opinion, was the greatest general, Hannibal named Alexander, the king of the Macedonians, because with a small force he had routed armies innumerable and because he had traversed the most distant regions, even to see which transcended human hopes. To the next request, as to whom he would rank second, Hannibal selected Pyrrhus; saying that he had been the first to teach the art of castrametation; besides, no one had chosen his ground or placed his troops more discriminatingly; he possessed also the art of winning men over to him, so that the Italian peoples preferred the lordship of a foreign king to that of the Roman people, so long the master in that land. When he continued, asking whom Hannibal considered third, he named himself without hesitation. Then Scipio broke into a laugh and said, "What would you say if you had defeated me?" "Then, beyond doubt," he replied, "I should place myself both before Alexander and before Pyrrhus and before all other generals."⁹⁸

Spencer rightly draws a direct connection between this account and a similar one recorded by Cicero (*Acad.* 2.2) except in Cicero's version, Scipio's character is replaced by Lucullus, and Hannibal is now none other than Mithridates Eupator. Cicero presents Mithridates as the "greatest [king] that has ever lived since the time of Alexander,"⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Livy, *Ab urbe condita* 35.14.6-11, trans. Evan Taylor Sage (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), 43.

⁹⁹ Cic., *Acad.* 2.1.3, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 467.

forging a connection between the two and acknowledging that Romans held the Pontic king in high regard.¹⁰⁰

In both accounts Alexander is presented as the greatest military commander ever to have lived and the one against whom all others must measure up. These accounts also demonstrate that the Romans perceived themselves as possessing the ability to supersede Alexander the Great. In order to engage with the Macedonian, however, and place himself within the dialogue in comparison to Alexander, the Roman needed to go east. Conquests in the East not only echoed Alexander's defeat of the Persian Empire, but also provided personal power for the generals in Rome.

Many ancient sources record Scipio Africanus' successes in the Punic Wars, and according to Spencer, similarities between Scipio's campaigns and Alexander's are apparent: She points to the supposed *proskynesis* of the waves before Scipio at New Carthage not only to signal the city's fall but also to echo the story of the sea's deference to Alexander at Mt. Climax.¹⁰¹ In Scipio, it becomes clear that while the Romans believed themselves to be the greatest power, they also used Alexander as the general *par excellence* on whom other Late Republicans modeled themselves in hopes to emulate and eventually surpass in greatness. Scipio's success in Africa is not isolated. Sulla reigned as dictator from 82-79 BCE when he returned from his eastern victories, and Marius' triumph over Jugurtha won him prestige and power through seven consulships.¹⁰² One

¹⁰⁰ Mithridates then acknowledges Lucullus' fantastic factual memory and natural skills in warfare and concedes that the Roman is "better than any storybook general." Spencer, *Roman Alexander*, 168.

¹⁰¹ Spencer, "Roman Alexanders," 253.

¹⁰² Spencer, *Roman Alexander*, 15-17.

can also see Plutarch's (*Vit. Mar.* 31.3) recounting of the latter's encounter with Mithridates in 98 BCE as a type of *imitatio Alexandri*. Marius' warning to Mithridates to either be stronger than Rome or obey her commands recalls an episode from Memnon of Heraclea (a first-century CE Greek historian) in which Alexander threatens Rome to either defeat him or submit themselves to the stronger.¹⁰³

Even those who had not self-fashioned after Alexander could now be conceived to have matched and even exceeded Alexander's achievements.¹⁰⁴ That a comparison between Late Republican generals and Alexander was invoked is inevitable, but before Lucullus and Sulla were successful, Mithridates issued a powerful message to Rome: the New Alexander was already ruling in the East.

Mithridates' threat was significant, for in 88 BCE, Mithridates ordered the massacre of Romans and Italians residing in Asia in an event called the Asian Vespers.¹⁰⁵ Appian (*Mith.* 22-23) provides the most gruesome details stressing that Mithridates planned this genocide secretly with his satraps and magistrates as he himself prepared ships for an attack on Rhodes. Mithridates wrote to his governors that "they should set upon all Romans and Italians in their towns, and upon their wives and children, and their domestics of Italian birth, kill them and throw their bodies out unburied, and share their

¹⁰³ Luis Ballesteros Pastor, "Marius' Words to Mithridates Eupator (Plut. Mar. 31.3)," *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 48 (1999): 506-08.

¹⁰⁴ Spencer, *Roman Alexander*, 18, further argues that Alexander was already a significant enough comparison for generals in the Roman consciousness for Pompey's appropriation of him (discussed below) to be useful.

¹⁰⁵ A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Foreign Policy in the East*, 124-25, argues for a date in the winter of 89/8 based on Cicero's statement in *De Imperio cn. Pompei* 7, which dates to 66. Cicero recalls the Vespers as occurring 23 years ago. See McGing, *The Foreign Policy of Mithridates*, 113, n. 118, for more on the discrepancies of the exact date.

goods with himself.”¹⁰⁶ Children were killed in front of mothers, wives in front of husbands, and those seeking refuge in sacred precincts were slain regardless. Slaves betraying their masters and those revealing hiding places were rewarded with freedom and money, and debtors killing money-lenders were promised relief of their obligations. Noteworthy is that Appian writes, “it was made very plain that it was quite as much hatred of the Romans as fear of Mithridates that impelled the Asiatics to commit these atrocities.”¹⁰⁷

As much as his claim as a new Alexander may have inspired and invigorated his own subjects, the same claim following such a ruthless massacre of Italians evoking Alexander’s bellicosity and military might would have terrified the Romans. The Roman general to finally stand up against such an imposing foe successfully was Gnaeus Pompeius, better known as Pompey the Great.¹⁰⁸ Interestingly, Pompey forged the strongest ties to Alexander out of all the Late Republican Romans and caused the ultimate demise of Mithridates and the entire Pontic kingdom.

Pompey not only sought military glory, but looked to Alexander as a model for “intellectual inquiry, imperializing topography, and cultural colonialism” in the east, making him the first Roman to advocate widespread associations of himself with

¹⁰⁶ Trans. Horace White, 339.

¹⁰⁷ App., *Mith.* 23, trans. Horace White, 340.

¹⁰⁸ The Tribune Gaius Manilius mandated that Pompey replace Lucullus in the eastern campaigns during the Third Mithridatic War; thus, the command is referred to as the *Lex Manilia*. F. E. Peters, *The Harvest of Hellenism: A History of the Near East from Alexander the Great to the Triumph of Christianity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), 320. See Robin Seager, *Pompey: A Political Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 28-43, for the events that led up to Pompey’s control over the East.

Alexander.¹⁰⁹ Sallust (*Hist.* 3.88M) reports that Pompey engaged in *imitatio Alexandri* starting as a youth, and Plutarch (*Vit. Pomp.* 2.1) remarks on his countenance: “His hair was included to lift itself slight from his forehead, and this, with a graceful contour of face about the eyes, produced a resemblance, more talked about than actually apparent, to the portrait statue of King Alexander.”¹¹⁰

A portrait in the Carlsberg Glyptothek in Copenhagen (fig. 3.25) is a visual counterpart to this *ekphrasis*: a familiar *anastole* coils Pompey’s head, but the facial features hardly resemble the Macedonian. Catherine Rubincam recently argued that “Pompey the Great” was later used by his contemporaries to draw attention to the general’s boastfulness, but Pompey adopted “Magnus” as his cognomen nonetheless.¹¹¹ The adulation of his friends and troops originally earned him the title, and his adoption of it shows another way in which he hoped to emulate Alexander.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Spencer, “Roman Alexanders,” 253-54.

¹¹⁰ Plut., *Pomp.* 2.1, trans. Bernadotte Perrin (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1917), 119.

¹¹¹ Catherine Rubincam, “A Tale of Two ‘Magni’: Justin/Trogus on Alexander and Pompey,” *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 54 (2005): 265-74. Plutarch, *Pompey* 13.1, *Sulla* 40.7; Livy, *Ab urbe condita* 30.45.6, mention that after successful battle against Marian veterans in 83, Pompey’s troops and friends bestowed on him the title, “Magnus,” furthering his association with Alexander. See also, Spencer, *Roman Alexander*, 17-18.

¹¹² The application of “Magnus” to Alexander’s own name appears first in a Roman source: Plaut., *Mostell.* 775, and the casual reference of the title in the play (Tranio compares himself to Alexander “the Great” and to Agathokles of Syracuse) likely indicates the longevity of the cognomen, and Ian Worthington finds it hard to ascribe the tradition to someone like Plautus; see “How ‘Great’ was Alexander?” *The Ancient History Bulletin* 13.2 (1999), accessed February 18, 2014, <http://www.utexas.edu/courses/citylife/readings/great1.html>

With Pompey forging connections to Alexander himself, the impact of Mithridates' portrait as Alexander as seen on statues and especially his royal coins on Rome would have been powerful.¹¹³ Through this fashioning, Mithridates proclaimed to Rome that he was already Alexander incarnate and at least in 88 BCE, when he had Asia Minor under his control, Mithridates had considered that he had conquered the East. With Late Republican Romans familiar with the language and implications of comparing oneself to the greatest of the Macedonians, Mithridates fashioning himself as Alexander threatened Rome and warned it against engaging him in battle.

With the end of his career, which occurred fighting Pompey in the Third Mithridatic War that sent him hiding, and with his eventual suicide (effected as it was through the actions of his bodyguard),¹¹⁴ Appian's anecdote in describing the victory march of Pompey seems apt: "Pompey himself was borne in a chariot studded with gems, wearing, it is said, a cloak of Alexander the Great, if any one can believe that. This was

¹¹³ Niels Hannestad, "Imitatio Alexandri in Roman Art," in *Alexander the Great: Reality and Myth*, ed. Jesper Carlsen, Bodil Due, Otto Steen Due, and Birte Poulsen (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1993): 61-69, points out the high impact of Alexander on Roman society, citing examples from Pompey's, Julius Caesar's, Augustus', Trajan's, and Hadrian's reigns.

¹¹⁴ Mithridates fled to Armenia to avoid Pompey's advances, but now found no sympathy from Tigranes. Plut., *Vit. Pomp.* 32.9; Dio Cass. 36.50.1, says Tigranes refused Mithridates because he thought Eupator had conspired and persuaded his son to join the Parthian attacks on Armenia. See Seager, *Pompey*, 44-55, for more detailed background on the political and military engagements of the Roman general with Tigranes and Mithridates.

Mithridates had no choice but to move further east and by 65 BCE, he had reached Pantikapaion in the Crimea; Plut., *Vit. Pomp.* 32.9; App., *Mith.* 101-2; Dio Cass. 36.50.2. There, he lived until 63 BCE, and App., *Mith.* 111-12, describes that Mithridates took poison to take his own life, but having built up a tolerance to toxins, the drought was ineffective against him. Eupator had his Gallic bodyguard, Bituitus, finish the job. Dio Cass. 37.13.3, tells a different story: Mithridates' son Pharnakes kills his father. Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor*, 1229, no. 25, suggests that Appian's version was made to dispel accusations of patricide.

supposed to have been found among the possessions of Mithridates that the inhabitants of Cos had received from Cleopatra.”¹¹⁵ Pompey, the New Roman Alexander, as he claimed to be, literally took the mantle of Alexander from its previous possessor, Mithridates VI Eupator of Pontus.

Conclusion

Pompey certainly was not the last Roman general to evoke the power of Alexander through imitation and emulation. Caesar, Crassus, and Augustus all benefited from a connection to the Macedonian ruler, as well, at a time before ancient authors began to forge a negative comparison between Roman rulers and Alexander.¹¹⁶ This negativity did not exist during the reign of Mithridates, and portraits of his sons even share Alexander-like qualities. Ariarathes IX, the king of Cappadocia, and Pharnakes II, who reigned as king of the Bosphorus under Rome’s authority, both show a resemblance to their father, and hence, to Alexander, on their coinage and in their sculpted portraits.¹¹⁷ Although Mithridates’ failure to maintain an independent kingdom and the loss of all of his allies led to his death (whether by his own hands or by an organized rebellion ordered by his son Pharnakes II), he proved a formidable and worthy foe of Rome.

¹¹⁵ App., *Mith.* 117, trans. Horace White, 410.

¹¹⁶ Stewart, “Alexander in Greek and Roman Art,” 57-61; Spencer, *Roman Alexander*, 22-38. Later rulers such as Caligula and Nero were criticized for possessing qualities such as megalomania, being prone to drunkenness and excessive luxuriousness, and being barbarous despots – characterizations they were thought to have shared with Alexander; see especially Spencer, “Roman Alexanders,” 262-65.

¹¹⁷ Fleischer, “True Ancestors and False Ancestors,” 69-71, see above p. 135, n. 51, for a probable statue of Ariarathes IX.

As such, Mithridates struck his portraiture on his coinage to show himself in the guise of Alexander the Great – a historical figure revered for his nobility, military and strategic acumen, as well as the Hellenistic ruler *par excellence* for Romans of the Late Republic. Thus, Mithridates' connection to Alexander not only resonated with the Greek and eastern populations that composed his kingdom, but also resounded to his enemy. This strategy seems to have remained effective even upon Mithridates' defeat.

Plutarch (*Vit. Pomp.* 41.3-5) relates that Pompey was near Petra in the midst of a campaign against the Nabataean kingdom, when he received word of Mithridates' death in 63 BCE.¹¹⁸ Pompey journeyed to meet the body of his enemy, which had already deteriorated badly, in either Amisos (Plut., *Vit. Pomp.* 42.2) or Sinope (App., *Mith.* 113), and marveled at the size and splendor of the finery and raiment that accompanied the dead king's body.¹¹⁹ Dio Cassius (37.13) stresses that Pompey did not desecrate Mithridates' body or subject it to any indignities. Instead, Pompey ordered the burial of Mithridates in the tomb of his forefathers and even provided the funds for the burial.¹²⁰ As Jakob Munk Højte points out, this honorary act had never before been applied to an

¹¹⁸ Jakob Munk Højte, "The Death and Burial of Mithridates VI," in *Mithridates VI and the Pontic Kingdom*, 121, discusses the irritation Pompey must have felt in reaction to the news. Besides Plutarch's statement that Pompey was in the middle of his afternoon exercise and therefore had no tribunal to address his troops, Højte points out that Mithridates' death terminated Pompey's legal grounds to campaign in the East. He was forced to return to Rome without putting in place a permanent eastern settlement.

¹¹⁹ Plut., *Vit. Pomp.* 42.

¹²⁰ Højte, "Death and Burial," 123-28, discusses where the burial site could have been.

adversary of Rome, and especially not to one who had fought so determined a battle against Rome for so long a time.¹²¹

Significantly, the historical parallel to this type of treatment of one's deceased enemy is an anecdote involving none other than Alexander. The Macedonian ruler had famously interred Darius III's body in the Persian ancestral tombs outside of Persepolis, and Pompey was undoubtedly referencing Alexander's deed in his own burial of Mithridates.¹²² This act of reverence not only showed Pompey's respect for Mithridates as a worthy enemy but also determined once and for all which one of the two was the ultimate successor to Alexander the Great. Mithridates may have robbed Pompey of the satisfaction of defeating him face to face, but through this final act that echoed Alexander, Pompey buried the pretender and claimed legitimacy for himself.

As McGing writes, "he [Mithridates] was an anachronism... although small independent kingdoms might continue to exist and squabble among themselves, Rome was the dominant power and there was no room for competition."¹²³ Mithridates, however, had no reason to suspect this fate, especially in the late-second and early-first century BCE. While Rome battled and waged wars around him, Mithridates slipped by her notice until he established a large and powerful kingdom covering most of Asia Minor and one that threatened the great power in the West. Mithridates envisioned himself as Alexander the Great, as his coinage asserts, and his coins carried that message both to his own subjects and to the Romans of the Late Republic. As the "last, truly

¹²¹ Ibid., 122-23.

¹²² Ibid., 122-23. See also, Mayor, *The Poison King*, 352-54.

¹²³ McGing, *The Foreign Policy of Mithridates*, 171.

autonomous monarch in the Greek East,”¹²⁴ he stood against Rome and was ultimately defeated by another who usurped not only his kingdom but also his title as the New Alexander.

¹²⁴ Vell. Pat., 2.40.1, trans. Frederick W. Shipley (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1924), 135, remarks this about Mithridates.

CONCLUSION

Tigranes II the Great of Armenia, Antiochos I Theos of Commagene, and Mithridates VI Eupator of Pontus all reigned in the Hellenistic East during a period when their kingdoms and others like theirs fought for autonomy against larger empires that threatened to absorb them into their ever-expanding realms. Their histories live on, to varying extents, through extant ancient sources that narrate the kings' lives and politics. The gaps in knowledge have often left historians and other scholars to offer speculative conclusions and conduct educated guesswork woven into more substantiated claims. Monographs on each king – both dated and recent – evidence such trends.¹

Fortunately, other forms of documentation exist, which help to complete the overall picture of these monarchs and their ruling agendas. The visual programs produced under Tigranes, Antiochos, and Mithridates align with each king's governing policy and ideologies. By privileging the images of each ruler, this project offers new insight into the Late Hellenistic East and the powers that reigned during this pivotal moment in ancient history.

Taken separately, each ruler's use of images emphasizes his individuality and, at the same time, documents the differences in their artistic programs. Tigranes the Great of Armenia harnessed in one material object – the Tyche of Antioch – his and a previous

¹ For example, Herant K. Armen, *Tigranes the Great: A Biography* (Detroit: Avondale Press, 1940), and Duggan, *He Died Old: Mithridates Eupator, King of Pontus*, both read as historical biographies of each monarch. Even Mayor's more recent publication, *The Poison King*, relies on conjectural data to complete the overall study of Mithridates' reign.

Hellenistic monarch's successes while simultaneously honoring his own bi-cultural heritage. The meaning of the statue to the mixed population of Antioch and its connection to Seleukos I, to whose kingdom Tigranes wished to succeed, exposes Tigranes' agenda in adopting the image of the statue as his own. Through iconography such as the mural crown and palm branch, which were legible to both Greeks and easterners alike, the Tyche of Antioch represented fertility, protection, victory, and prosperity for the city and its founder, Seleukos I. Tigranes' appropriation of the image signals his desire to apply what the Tyche of Antioch symbolized to his own rule. Furthermore, the imagery on his coinage functioned to represent the far reaches of his conquests and his feat of extending his Armenian kingdom to its greatest size and power in its entire history.

Antiochos' political waverings attest that the king's real loyalties lay within Commagene and his own position in the kingdom. The *hierothesion* at Nemrud Dagh displays this behavior and shows that protection, security, and fortune of his reign and kingdom were Antiochos' utmost priorities. A Zoroastrian spell evoked by the specific choice in deities and other religious symbols sought to ensure victory and good fortune for the king and his realm. Combining socio-political and religious sentiments of the time, the sculptural program at Antiochos' *hierothesion* at once honored ancestors while also aiming to protect Commagenian posterity. At the peak of Nemrud Dagh, Antiochos embraced the multiple backgrounds, traditions, and religions that informed his identity as a ruler of the kingdom of Commagene. The colossal monuments still appear today, commemorating the ruler even as he has purportedly lay beneath them for over two millennia.

Mithridates evoked the visual legacy of Alexander the Great in the creation of his dynastic image for audiences both domestic and abroad. Specifically in the coinage he minted during the Mithridatic Wars against Rome, he affirmed his connection to Alexander as a general and leader by calling upon Alexander's human qualities instead of exploiting his divine status. Accessible to his own subjects and Roman citizens as well, Mithridates' connection to Alexander not only resonated with the Greek and eastern populations that made up his kingdom, but also resounded to his enemy. The coins and the different audience's reception of Mithridates' *imitatio Alexandri*, supported by literary accounts shows that his project was a deliberate and audacious self-fashioning that showcased the Pontic king's dynastic policy.

Viewed together, these three kings are shown to exhibit similarities in their use of visual objects to assert their authority amid minacity from other ruling powers. Yet, just as they responded differently to the foreign powers that threatened their kingdom, they produced images that negotiated their personal concepts of authority. In the context of the larger framework of their biographical histories and governing tactics, the visual program of each monarch announces legitimizing devices and exposes ruling ideologies.

The three monarchs situated themselves within a greater history, calling forth significant figures from the past and drawing references to them, in hopes to secure their authority and rule. The kings of Armenia, Commagene, and Pontus, all emphasized their illustrious ancestry, often tracing their lineages back to royal bloodlines. When such a familial connection was missing, as in the case of Tigranes, the monarch positioned himself as the successor to a well-established dynasty by assuming power over its territory. As the previous chapters have shown, Tigranes, Antiochos, and Mithridates all

employed multivalent images to allude to historical precedents that would legitimize their rule.

Religious figures and belief systems also informed the programs of all three rulers. Tigranes used the image of the Tyche of Antioch to reference Seleukos I, the most successful king of his namesake dynasty, and the city of Antioch, which enjoyed a reputation as one of the most prosperous Hellenistic cities. The deity's identity – Tyche, the goddess of Fortune – simultaneously blessed Tigranes' reign with connotations of prosperity, luck, fertility, and victory. Antiochos acknowledged his dual religious heritage in the use of both Greek and Persian gods to construct his four syncretic deities at Nemrud Dagh. Yet his main religion, Zoroastrianism, endowed the sculptural program at his *hierothesion* with divine blessings and aid offered to Antiochos. As for Mithridates, Alexander the Great served both as a historical predecessor and a religious authority figure, since by the first century BCE, the Macedonian ruler had achieved cult status. Forging intimate ties to Alexander in both actions and his portrait imagery, Mithridates emitted a powerful message both at home and abroad – he was the New Alexander.

Governing regions characterized by diverse, multi-ethnic populations, the three eastern kings also made concerted efforts to unify their subjects by using visual imagery that straddled the diversity of cultures that they ruled. Mithridates and Antiochos emphasized their own mixed backgrounds, identifying with each ethno-religious heritage in different ways. Mithridates likened himself to Dionysos and Perseus (through Pegasus), a god and a hero with eastern roots. Simultaneously, Mithridates identified himself as a new Alexander the Great, appealing to Greeks and the eastern populations that formed his kingdom. Antiochos ostentatiously honored both his Macedonian and

Persian lineages in monumentalizing them in the ancestor relief panels at his *hierothesion*. And although he was a devout practitioner of Zoroastrianism, Antiochos formed syncretic deities, incorporating both Greek and Iranian religious traditions at his temple-tomb.

Tigranes, on the other hand, introduced an emblem to the Armenians that was originally created with both a Greek and Syrian audience in mind. Legible to both groups of Seleukos' population, the Tyche of Antioch united them through their common citizenry of Antioch. When Tigranes appropriated the image for the reverse of his coinage, it harbored the combined reading of the statue's significance by Greeks and easterners. Coupled with his portrait in Armenian finery on the obverse, Tigranes' numismatic program effectively addressed the variety of backgrounds that formed his kingdom.

The common threads found among the art and material culture of Tigranes, Antiochos, and Mithridates prompts analyses of other visual material as media through which rulers of this time period explored and expressed their power. As case studies of regions encompassing parts of Asia Minor from 140-38 BCE, the three explorations feature commonalities but also exhibit nuanced differences reflective of each king. Studies on other Hellenistic Eastern kingdoms and the art, architecture, and material culture in relation to the rulers connected to them can follow. Bithynia, Cappadocia, Pergamon, as well as Syria under the rule of the last Seleukids, comprise other kingdoms participating in the same world of politics as Armenia, Commagene, and Pontus. Similarly, further explorations on the Parthian Empire and individual leaders of the Late Roman Republic – both active in the political conversations of the time – can also

contribute greatly to our knowledge. The resulting scholarship would produce a vast corpus of foreign relations among the kingdoms, empires, and provinces in the Hellenistic East that centers on the visual programs of monarchs and other authority figures as indicators of ruling agendas.

As the third chapter considers the Roman response to Mithridates' self-fashioning as Alexander the Great, other conversations among those vying for power can be sought as well. A more comprehensive analysis of all active participants in the politics of this time period would lead to a better understanding of all rulers and their individual projects involved. In some cases, the scope of this proposal is limited by the dearth of extant written sources and materials. Yet, the examination of images operating within the larger dialogue can further our understanding of their significance as well as fill in gaps or clarify uncertainties in historical knowledge.

As new archaeological finds in relation to these three rulers and their kingdoms surface and scholarship on each advances, additions and amendments to this project will be welcomed. As a result of the monarchs' interconnectedness, discoveries affecting our knowledge of one king hold the possibility of adjusting scholarship surrounding the others. The application of new technologies in the field of digital humanities can also further this study. For example, digital mapping projects may provide clear visualization of patterns of distribution of Mithridates' or Tigranes' coinage as well as revealing a previously unexplored connection between Antiochos' *hierothesion* at Nemrud Dagh with other Commagenian *hierothesia*.

Just as methodologies from other disciplines has shaped the study of Hellenistic art, architecture, and visual culture in recent years, and has also contributed to the

interpretation in parts of this dissertation, the emergence of new theories and methods could provoke similar innovative scholarship. Examining the kings' rules and the images produced under each monarch's reign through new modes of study would surely nuance the discussion even further.

Recognizing a common tactic utilized by these three Hellenistic Eastern kings in their employment of visual media to legitimize their authority, this project closely examines the images in relation to the ruler who produced them. Viewing each king and the images associated with him within the regional politics of his time not only lends broader significance to the art and material culture, but also helps expand our understanding of each king's self-fashioning rule. In allowing the objects to speak and in privileging the images, a more complete and clearer vision of the reigns of Tigranes II the Great of Armenia, Antiochos I Theos of Commagene, and Mithridates VI Eupator of Pontus emerges.

APPENDIX A: THE *NOMOS* AT NEMRUD DAGH

The *Nomos* or Sacred Law found at Nemrud Dagh is incised in Greek on the back of the colossal statues of both the East and West Terraces. The text differs very slightly in the two versions, but the West Terrace inscription survives in better condition.¹ Like many of the finds at Nemrud Dagh, Otto Puchstein first made records of the text and engendered much scholarly discussion about the carvings.² Frederick Clifton Grant first translated the *Nomos* into English and both Friedrich Karl Dörner and Helmut Waldmann examined the text in relation to other Commagenian inscriptions attributed to Antiochos.³ Recorded in its entirety in both Greek and English in Theresa B. Goell's *Nemrud Dagi: The Hierotheion of Antiochus I of Commagene*, edited by Donald H. Sanders, I have reproduced the English translation below:

I. Introduction

1. Significance and purpose of the inscription:

The Great King Antiochus, the God, the Righteous One, the Manifest, the Friend of the Romans and the Greeks, the Son of King Mithradates Callinicus and of Laodice the Brother-loving Goddess, the Daughter of King Antiochus Epiphanes, the Mother-loving, the Victorious, has recorded for all time, on consecrated pedestals with inviolable letters the deeds of his clemency.

2. Piety – the most secure possession for mankind:

¹ Goell, *Nemrud Dagi*, 207.

² Humann and Puchstein, *Reisen in Kleinasien und Nordsyrien*, 262-78; see Goell, *Nemrud Dagi*, 207 for following publications of the inscriptions.

³ Frederick Clifton Grant, *Hellenistic Religions: The Age of Syncretism* (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1953); Dörner and Goell, *Arsameia am Nymphaios*; Waldmann, *Die kommagenischen Kultreformen unter König Mithridates I. Kallinikos und seinem Sohne Antiochos I*, and *Der kommagenische Mazdaismus*.

I have come to believe that, for mankind, for all good things piety is both the most secure possession and also the sweetest enjoyment. This judgment became, for me, the cause of fortunate power and its blessed use; and during my whole life I have appeared to all men as one who thought holiness the most secure guardian and the unrivaled delight of my reign. By this means I have, contrary to all expectations, escaped great perils, have easily become master of hopeless situations, and in a blessed way have attained to the fullness of a long life.

3. Commagene – common dwelling place of all the gods:

After taking over my father's dominion, I announced, in the piety of my thought, that the kingdom subject to my throne should be the common dwelling place of all the gods, in that by means of every kind of art I decorated the representations of their form, as the ancient lore of Persians and of Greeks – the fortunate roots of my ancestry – had handed them down, and honored them with sacrifices and festivals, as was the primitive rule and the common custom of all mankind; in addition my own just consideration has further devised still other and especially brilliant honors.

II. Significance and Purpose of the *hierothesion*

1. The *hierothesion* – not only a tomb but a place of pious veneration of the gods and deified royal ancestors:

And as I have taken forethought to lay the foundation of this sacred tomb, which is to be indestructible by the ravages of time, in closest proximity to the heavenly throne, wherein the fortunately preserved outer form of my person, preserved to ripe old age, shall, after the soul beloved by God has been sent to the heavenly thrones of Zeus-Oromasdes, rest through immeasurable time, so I chose to make this holy place a common consecrated seat of all the gods; so that not only the heroic company of my ancestors, whom you behold before you, might be set up here by my pious devotion, but also that the divine representation of the manifest deities might be consecrated on the holy hill and that this place might likewise not be lacking in witness to my piety.

2. The erection of divine images and the establishment of the new Tyche:

Therefore, as you see, I have set up these divine images of Zeus-Oromasdes and of Apollo-Mithras-Helios-Hermes and of Artagnes-Herakles-Ares, and also of my all-nourishing homeland Commagene; and from one and the same quarry, throned likewise among the deities who hear our prayers, I have consecrated the features of my own form, and have caused the ancient honor of great deities to become the coeval of a new Tyche. Since I thereby, in an upright way, imitated the example of the divine Providence, which as a benevolent helper has so often been seen standing by my side in the struggles of my reign.

3. The organization of the cult and its revenues:

Adequate property in land and an inalienable income therefrom have I set aside for the ample provision of sacrifices; an unceasing cult and chosen priests arrayed in such vestments as are proper to the race of the Persians have I inaugurated, and I have dedicated the whole array and cult in a manner worthy of my fortune and the majesty of the gods. I have decreed the appropriate laws to govern the sacred observances thus established for everlasting, so that all the inhabitants of my realm may offer both the ancient sacrifices, required by age-old common custom, and also

new festivals in honor of the gods and in my honor. The birthday of my natural body, the sixteenth of Audnaios, and the tenth of Loos, the day of my accession to the throne, I have consecrated to the manifestation of the great deities, who were my guides in a prosperous beginning and have been the source of universal blessings for my whole kingdom. Because of the multitude of offerings and the magnificence of the celebration I have consecrated two additional days, each of them as an annual festival. The population of my empire I have divided up for the purpose of these assemblies, festival gatherings, and sacrifices, and directed them to repair by villages and cities to the nearest sanctuaries, whichever is most conveniently located for the festival observance. Moreover, I have appointed under the same title that, in addition to the observance just named, my birth on the sixteenth and my accession on the tenth shall be observed every month by the priests.

4. The proclamation of the Holy Law:

Now that these regulations have been established, to be observed continually as the pious duty of men of understanding, not only in my honor but also in the blessed hope of their own good fortune, I have, in obedience to the inspiration of the gods, ordered to be inscribed upon sacred, inviolable stelae a holy law, which shall be binding upon all generations of mankind who in the immeasurable course of time, through their special lot in life, shall successively be destined to dwell in this land; they must observe it without violation, knowing that the stern penalty of the deified royal ancestors will pursue equally the impiety occasioned by neglect as that occasioned by folly, and that disregard of the law decreed for the honor of the heroes brings with it inexorable penalties. For the pious it is all a simple matter, but godlessness is followed by backbreaking burdens. This law my voice has proclaimed, but it is the mind of the gods that has given it authority.

III. The Holy Law

1. Appointment, duties, and obligations of the priest:

(a) Exclusive service in the *hierotherision*; care and adornment of the sacred images:

Law

The priest who is appointed by me for these gods and heroes, whom I have dedicated at the sacred tomb of my body, on the topmost ridges of the Taurus range, and who shall at a later time hold this office, he, set free from every other duty, shall without let or hindrance and with no excuse for evasion keep watch at this memorial and devote himself to the care and proper adornment of these sacred images.

(b) Birthdays of the king as festivals and their financing, duties of the priest, guests to be invited:

On the birthdays which I have established forever as monthly and annual festivals of the gods and of my own person, throughout the whole year he shall, himself decently garbed in Persian raiment, as my benefaction and the ancestral custom of our race have provided, crown them all with the gold crowns which I have dedicated as the sacred honors due the deified ancestors; and out of the income from the villages, which I have designated for the sacred honors of the heroic race, he shall offer on these altars rich additional offerings of incense and aromatic herbs, and also splendid sacrifices in honor of the gods and in my honor, in worthy wise setting up sacred tables with

appropriate foods and filling jars from the winepress with precious drink (that is, wine mixed with water). He shall hospitably welcome the whole of the assembled people, both the native and the foreigners who stream hither, and he shall provide for the common enjoyment of the feast by the assembled multitudes, in that, as is the custom, he shall take for himself a portion, as a gift in honor of the priestly office, and then distribute the rest of my benefaction to the others for their free enjoyment, so that during the holy days everyone may receive a never failing sustenance and may thus be able to celebrate the festival without running the risk of malicious calumny. The drinking cups, which I have dedicated, are to be used by them as long as they remain in the holy place and participate in the general assembly for the feast.

2. The musicians in the *hierothesion*, their rank, and protection for them and their descendants:

The group of musicians whom I have chosen for the purpose and those who may later be consecrated, their sons and daughters, and also their descendants shall all learn the same art and be set free from the burden of every other responsibility; and they are to devote themselves to the observances which I have established to the end, and without any evasion are to continue their services as long as the assembly requests it. No one, no king or ruler, no priest or official shall ever make slaves of these hierodules, whom I have, in accordance with the divine will, consecrated to the gods and to my own honors, or their children or the descendants of their children, who shall continue their family to all later time; he shall neither enslave them to himself nor alienate them to anyone else in any way, nor injure one of them, nor deprive him of this ministry; but the priests shall take care of them; and the kings, officials, and all private persons shall stand by them, and the favor of the gods and heroes will be laid up for them as a reward for their piety.

IV. Provisions for the Continuation of the Cult in the *hierothesion*

1. Interdiction of any alterations in the statue of the *hierothesion* or its property and threat of punishment:

It is equally not permitted for anyone to appropriate or to alienate the villages which I have dedicated to these gods, to sell them or to devote them to some other purpose, or in any way to injure those villages; or to reduce the income from them, which I have dedicated to the gods as an inviolable possession. Nor shall anyone go unpunished who shall devise in his mind against our honor some other scheme of violence or of disparaging or suspending the sacrifices and festal assemblies which I have established. Whoever shall presume to rescind or to injure or guilefully to misinterpret the just tenor of this regulation or the heroic honors which an immortal judgment has sanctioned, him the wrath of the daemons and of all the gods shall pursue, both himself and his descendants, irreconcilably, with every kind of punishment.

2. The *hierothesion* as an example of piety for children and grandchildren:

A noble example of piety, which it is a matter of sacred duty to offer to gods and ancestors, I have set before this work; and I believe that they will emulate this fair example by continually increasing the honors appropriate to their line and, like me, in their riper years adding greatly to their personal fame.

3. Favor of the deified ancestors and gods for descendants who observe the law:

For those who do so I pray that all the ancestral gods, from Persia and Macedonia and from the native hearth of Commagene, may continue to be gracious to them in all clemency. And whoever, in the long time to come, takes over this reign as king or dynast, may he, if he observes this law and guards my honor, enjoy, through my intercession, the favor of the deified ancestors and all the gods. But if he, in his folly of mind, undertakes measures contrary to the honor of the gods, may he, even without my curse, suffer the full wrath of the gods.

APPENDIX B: YASHT 14

Unto Verthragna, made by Mazda, and unto the crushing Ascendant;

1. We sacrifice to Verthragna, made by Ahura.
Zarathustra asked Ahura Mazda: “Ahura Mazda, most beneficent Spirit, Maker of the material world, You Holy One! “Who is the best-armed of the heavenly gods?”
Ahura Mazda answered: “It is Verthragna, made by Mazda, O Spitama Zarathustra!”
2. Verthragna, made by Ahura, came to him (Zarathustra), first running in the shape of a strong, beautiful wind, made by Mazda; he bore the good Glory, made by Mazda, the Glory made by Mazda that is both health and strength.
3. Then he who is the strongest (Verthragna) said to him (Zarathustra): “I am the strongest in strength; I am the most victorious in victory; I am the most glorious in Glory; I am the most favoring in favor; I am the best giver of weal; I am the best-healing in health-giving.
4. “And I shall destroy the malice of all the malicious, the malice of Daêvas and men, of the Yâtus and Pairikas, of the oppressors, the blind and the deaf.”
5. For his brightness and glory I will offer to him a sacrifice worth being heard; namely, to Verthragna, made by Ahura. We worship Verthragna, made by Ahura, with an offering of libations, according to the primitive ordinances of Ahura; with the haoma and the meat, the baresma, the wisdom of the tongue, the holy spells, the speech, the deeds, the libations, and the rightly spoken words.
6. We sacrifice to Verthragna, made by Ahura.
Zarathustra asked Ahura Mazda: “Ahura Mazda, most beneficent Spirit, Maker of the material world, You Holy One! Who is the best-armed of the heavenly gods?”
Ahura Mazda answered: “It is Verthragna, made by Ahura, O Spitama Zarathustra!”
7. Verthragna, made by Ahura, came to him a second time, running in the shape of a beautiful bull, with yellow ears and golden horns; upon whose horns floated the well-shaped Strength, and Victory, beautiful of form, made by Ahura. Thus did he come, bearing the good Glory, made by Mazda, the Glory made by Mazda that is both health and strength.
8. We sacrifice to Verthragna, made by Ahura.
Zarathustra asked Ahura Mazda: “Ahura Mazda, most beneficent Spirit: Maker of the material world, You Holy One! Who is the best-armed of the heavenly gods?”

Ahura Mazda answered: “it is Verthragna, made by Ahura, O Spitama Zarathustra!”

9. Verthragna, made by Ahura, came to him a third time, running in the shape of a white, beautiful horse, with yellow ears and a golden caparison; upon whose forehead floated the well-shaped Strength, and Victory, beautiful of form, made by Ahura: thus did he come, bearing the good Glory, made by Mazda, the Glory made by Mazda, that is both health and strength.
10. We sacrifice to Verthragna, made by Ahura.
Zarathustra asked Ahura Mazda: “Ahura Mazda, most beneficent Spirit: Maker of the material world, You Holy One! Who is the best-armed of the heavenly gods?”
Ahura Mazda answered: “it is Verthragna, made by Ahura, O Spitama Zarathustra!”
11. Verthragna, made by Ahura, came to him a fourth time, running in the shape of a burden-bearing camel, sharp-toothed, swift urvatô, stamping forward, long-haired, and living in the abodes of men;
12. Who of all males in rut shows greatest strength and greatest fire when he goes to his females. Of all females those are best kept whom the burden-bearing camel keeps, who has thick forelegs and large humps, smarsnô, quick-eyed, long-headed, bright, tall, and strong:
13. Whose piercing look goes afar haitahê, even in the dark of night; who throws white foam along his mouth; well-kneed, well-footed, standing with the countenance of an all-powerful master:
Thus did Verthragna come, bearing the good Glory, made by Mazda, the Glory made by Mazda, that is both health and strength.
14. We sacrifice to Verthragna, made by Ahura.
Zarathustra asked Ahura Mazda: “Ahura Mazda, most beneficent Spirit: Maker of the material world, You Holy One! Who is the best-armed of the heavenly gods?”
Ahura Mazda answered: “it is Verthragna, made by Ahura, O Spitama Zarathustra!”
15. Verthragna, made by Ahura, came to him the fifth time, running in the shape of a boar, opposing foes, a sharp-toothed he-boar, a sharp-jawed boar that kills at one stroke, pursuing, wrathful, with a dripping face, strong, and swift to run, and rushing all around.
Thus did Verthragna come, bearing the good Glory, made by Mazda, the Glory made by Mazda, that is both health and strength.
16. We sacrifice to Verthragna, made by Ahura.
Zarathustra asked Ahura Mazda: “Ahura Mazda, most beneficent Spirit: Maker of the material world, You Holy One! Who is the best-armed of the heavenly gods?”

Ahura Mazda answered: “it is Verthragna, made by Ahura, O Spitama Zarathustra!”

17. Verthragna, made by Ahura, came to him a sixth time, running in the shape of a beautiful youth of fifteen, shining, clear-eyed, thin-heeled.
Thus did Verthragna come, bearing the good Glory, made by Mazda, the Glory made by Mazda, that is both health and strength.
18. We sacrifice to Verthragna, made by Ahura.
Zarathustra asked Ahura Mazda: “Ahura Mazda, most beneficent Spirit: Maker of the material world, You Holy One! Who is the best-armed of the heavenly gods?”
Ahura Mazda answered: “it is Verthragna, made by Ahura, O Spitama Zarathustra!”
19. Verthragna, made by Ahura, came to him the seventh time, running in the shape of a bird that urvatô below and pishatô above, and that is the swiftest of all birds, the lightest of the flying creatures.
20. He (the raven) alone of living things, - he or none, - overtakes the flight of an arrow, however well it has been shot. He flies up joyfully at the first break of dawn, wishing the night to be no more, wishing the dawn that has not yet come, to come.
21. He grazes the hidden ways of the mountains, he grazes the tops of the mountains, he grazes the depths of the vales, he grazes the summits of the trees, listening to the voices of the (other) birds.
Thus did Verthragna come, bearing the good Glory, made by Mazda, the Glory made by Mazda, that is both health and strength.
22. We sacrifice to Verthragna, made by Ahura.
Zarathustra asked Ahura Mazda: “Ahura Mazda, most beneficent Spirit: Maker of the material world, You Holy One! Who is the best-armed of the heavenly gods?”
Ahura Mazda answered: “it is Verthragna, made by Ahura, O Spitama Zarathustra!”
23. Verthragna, made by Ahura, came to him the eighth time, running in the shape of a wild, beautiful ram, with horns bent round.
Thus did Verthragna come, bearing the good Glory, made by Mazda, the Glory made by Mazda, that is both health and strength.
24. We sacrifice to Verthragna, made by Ahura.
Zarathustra asked Ahura Mazda: “Ahura Mazda, most beneficent Spirit: Maker of the material world, You Holy One! Who is the best-armed of the heavenly gods?”
Ahura Mazda answered: “it is Verthragna, made by Ahura, O Spitama Zarathustra!”

25. Verthragna, made by Ahura, came to him the ninth time, running in the shape of a beautiful, fighting buck, with sharp horns.
Thus did Verthragna come, bearing the good Glory, made by Mazda, the Glory made by Mazda, that is both health and strength.
26. We sacrifice to Verthragna, made by Ahura.
Zarathustra asked Ahura Mazda: "Ahura Mazda, most beneficent Spirit: Maker of the material world, You Holy One! Who is the best-armed of the heavenly gods?"
Ahura Mazda answered: "it is Verthragna, made by Ahura, O Spitama Zarathustra!"
27. Verthragna, made by Ahura, came to him the tenth time, running in the shape of a man, bright and beautiful, made by Mazda. He held a sword with a golden blade, inlaid with all sorts of ornaments.
Thus did Verthragna come, bearing the good Glory, made by Mazda, the Glory made by Mazda, that is both health and strength.
28. We sacrifice to Verthragna, made by Ahura, who makes virility, who makes death, who makes resurrection, who possesses peace, who has a free way.
To him did the holy Zarathustra offer up a sacrifice for victorious thinking, victorious speaking, victorious doing, victorious addressing, and victorious answering.
29. Verthragna, made by Ahura, gave him the fountains of manliness, the strength of the arms, the health of the whole body, the sturdiness of the whole body, and the eye-sight of the Kara fish that lives beneath the waters and can measure a rippling of the water not thicker than a hair, in the Rangha whose ends lie afar, whose depth is a thousand times the height of a man.
30. We sacrifice to Verthragna, made by Ahura, who makes virility, who makes death, who makes resurrection, who possesses peace, who has a free way.
To him did the holy Zarathustra offer up a sacrifice for victorious thinking, victorious speaking, victorious doing, victorious addressing, and victorious answering.
31. Verthragna, made by Ahura, gave him the fountains of manliness, the strength of arms, the health of the whole body, the sturdiness of the whole body, and the eye-sight of the male horse, that, in the dark of the night, in its first half and through the rain, can perceive a horse's hair lying on the ground and knows whether it is from the head or from the tail.
32. We sacrifice to Verthragna, made by Ahura, who makes virility, who makes death, who makes resurrection, who possesses peace, who has a free way.
To him did the holy Zarathustra offer up a sacrifice for victorious thinking, victorious speaking, victorious doing, victorious addressing, and victorious answering.

33. Verthragna, made by Ahura, gave him the fountains of virility, the strength of the arms, the health of the whole body, the sturdiness of the whole body, and the eyesight of the vulture with a golden collar, that, from as far as nine districts, can perceive a piece of flesh not thicker than the fist, giving just as much light as a needle gives, as the point of a needle gives.
34. We sacrifice to Verthragna, made by Ahura.
Zarathustra asked Ahura Mazda: “Ahura Mazda, most beneficent Spirit, Maker of the material world, You Holy One!
“If I have a curse thrown on me, a spell told upon me by many men who hate me, what is the remedy for it?”
35. Ahura Mazda answered: “Take you a feather of that bird with Peshô-parena (assault-saving) feathers, the Vârengana, O Spitama Zarathustra! With that feather you shall rub your own body, with that feather you shall curse back your enemies.
36. “If a man holds a bone of that strong bird, or a feather of that strong bird, no one can smite or turn to flight that fortunate man. The feather of that bird of birds brings him help; it brings to him homage of men, it maintains in him his glory.
37. “Then the sovereign, the lord of countries, will no longer kill his hundreds, though he is a killer of men; the Vaêsaêpa will not kill at one stroke; he alone who is protected smites and goes forward.
38. “All tremble before him who holds the feather, they tremble therefore before Me (Ahura); all My enemies tremble before Me and fear My strength and victorious force and the fierceness established in My body.
39. “He (the bird) carries the chariot of the lords; he carries the chariots of the lordly ones, the chariots of the sovereigns. He carried the chariot of Kavi Usa; upon his wings runs the male horse, runs the burden-bearing camel, runs the water of the river.
40. “Him rode the gallant Thraêtaona, who smote Aza Dahâka, the three-mouthed (lying), the three-headed (conniving), the six-eyed (seeing all around), who had a thousand senses (very much aware); that most powerful, fiendish Drûg that Angra Mainyu (Evil Spirit) created against the material world, to destroy the world of the good principle.”
41. We sacrifice to Verthragna, made by Ahura.
Verthragna confounds the glory of this house (of the evil man) with its wealth in cattle. He (Verthragna) is like that great bird, the Saêna; he is like the big clouds, full of water, that beat the mountains.
42. We sacrifice to Verthragna, made by Ahura.

Zarathustra asked Ahura Mazda: “Ahura Mazda, most beneficent Spirit, Maker of the material world, You Holy One!

“Where is it that we must invoke the name of Verthragna, made by Ahura? Where is it that we must praise him? That we must humbly praise him?”

43. Ahura Mazda answered: “When armies meet together in full array, O Spitama Zarathustra, asking which of the two is the party that conquers and is not crushed, that smites and is not smitten;
44. “Do you throw four feathers (in an arrow shaft) in the way. Whichever of the two will first worship the well-shaped Strength and Verthragna, beautiful of form, made by Mazda, on his side will victory stand.
45. “I will bless Strength and Victory, the two keepers, the two good keepers, the two maintainers; the two who â-dhwaozen, the two who vî-dhwaozen, the two who fra-dhwaozen, the two who forgive, the two who strike off, the two who forget.
46. “O Zarathustra! Let not that spell (of protection) be shown to anyone except by the father to his son, or by the brother to his brother from the same womb, or by the Âthraivan (priest) to his pupil. These (words) are awesome and powerful, awesome and assembly-ruling, awesome and victorious, awesome and healing. These are words that save the head that was lost, and chant away the uplifted weapon.”
47. We sacrifice to Verthragna, made by Ahura; who goes along the armies arrayed, and goes here and there asking, along with Mithra and Rashnu (Moral Integrity): “Who is it who lies to Mithra? Who is it who thrusts against Rashnu? To whom shall I, in my might, impart illness and death?”
48. Ahura Mazda said: “If men sacrifice to Verthragna, made by Ahura, if the due sacrifice and prayer is offered to him just as it ought to be performed in the perfection of holiness, never will a hostile horde enter the Aryan countries, nor any plague, nor leprosy, nor venomous plants, nor the chariot of a foe, nor the uplifted spear of a foe.”
49. Zarathustra asked: “What is then, O Ahura Mazda! The sacrifice and invocation in honor of Verthragna, made by Ahura, as it ought to be performed in the perfection of holiness?”
50. Ahura Mazda answered: “Let the Aryan nations bring libations to him; let the Aryan nations tie bundles of baresma for him; let the Aryan nations cook for him a head of cattle, either white or black, or of any other color, but all of one and the same color.

51. “Let not a murderer take of those offerings, nor a harlot, nor a (evil man) who does not sing the Gathas, who spreads death in the world, and withstands the law of Mazda, the law of Zarathustra.
52. “If a murderer take of those offerings, or a harlot, or a (Ashaovô) who does not sing the Gathas, then Verthragna, made by Ahura, takes back his healing virtues.
53. “Plagues will ever pour upon the Aryan nations; hostile hordes will ever fall upon the Aryan nations; the Aryans will be smitten by their fifties and their hundreds, by their hundreds and their thousands, by their thousands and their tens of thousands, by their tens of thousands and their myriads of myriads.”
54. There Verthragna, made by Ahura, proclaimed thus: “the Soul of the Bull (the Aryan people), the wise creature, does not receive from man due sacrifice and prayer; for now the Daêvas and the worshippers of the Daêvas make blood flow and spill it like water;
55. “For now the Vyâmbura Daêvas and the worshippers of the Daêvas bring to the fire the plant that is called Haperesi, the wood that is called Nemetka;
56. “When the Vyâmbura Daêvas and the worshippers of the Daêvas bow their backs, bend their waists, and arrange all their limbs, they think they will smite and smite not, they think they will kill and kill not; and then the Vyâmbura Daêvas and the worshippers of the Daêvas have their minds confounded and their eyes made giddy.”
57. We sacrifice to Verthragna, made by Ahura.
I offer up haoma, who saves one’s head; I offer up the victorious haoma; I offer him up, the good protector; I offer up haoma, who is a protector to my body, as a man who shall drink of him shall win and prevail over his enemies in battle;
58. That I may smite this army, that I may smite down this army, that I may cut in pieces this army that is coming behind me.
59. We sacrifice to Verthragna, made by Ahura.
The prince and his son and his sons who are chiefs of myriads offer him up a bright asânem sikhûirê, saying: “He is strong, and Victorious is his name; he is victorious, and Strong is his name;
60. “May I be as constantly victorious as any one of all the Aryans; that I may smite this army, that I may smite down this army, that I may cut in pieces this army that is coming behind me.”
61. We sacrifice to Verthragna, made by Ahura.

In the ox is our strength, in the ox is our need; in the ox is our speech, in the ox is our victory; in the ox is our food, in the ox is our clothing; in the ox is tillage that makes food grow for us.

62. We sacrifice to Verthragna, made by Ahura;
Who breaks the columns of the enemy asunder, who cuts the columns to pieces, who wounds the columns, who makes the columns shake; who comes and breaks the columns asunder, who comes and cuts the columns to pieces, who comes and wounds the columns, who comes and makes the columns shake, both of Daêvas and men, of the Yâtus and Pairikas, of the oppressors, the blind and the deaf.
63. We sacrifice to Verthragna, made by Ahura.
When Verthragna, made by Ahura, binds the hands, confounds the eye-sight, takes the hearing from the ears of the Mithra-drûgs (who lie to Mithra) marching in columns, allied by cities, they can no longer move their feet, they can no longer withstand.
64. I bless the sacrifice and prayer, and the strength and vigor of Verthragna, made by Mazda; and of the crushing Ascendant.¹

¹ Busch, ed., *The Avesta*, 196-208; James Darmesteter, trans., *The Zend-Avesta. Part II: The Sîrôzahs, Yasts, and Nyâyis* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1972), 231-48.

APPENDIX C: ADDITIONAL PORTRAITS OF MITHRIDATES VI EUPATOR

In addition to the portraits of Mithridates discussed in Chapter Three, other statues and engraved images on gems have been associated with Mithridates. A statue pair of a Hellenistic king and queen from the Sanctuary of Apollo on Delos has been identified as Mithridates and his sister-wife Laodike, though the identification has to remain uncertain since the figures are badly weathered (fig. A).¹ Another statue now at the Louvre (MA 855) (fig. B) was found in the Inopus spring below the Samothrakeion at Delos. With most of the head and half of the upper torso intact, the facial features and diadem can affix a probable identification of Mithridates to the statue.² Finally, a marble torso in the Delos Museum (A 4173) (fig. C) decorated by a cuirass and *paludamentum* (military cloak) has been associated with an inscription (*IDélos* 1563) on a statue base nearby. The inscription reads that the priest Helianax of Athens dedicated the statue of Mithridates Eupator on Mount Kynthos of Delos in 102/101 BCE.³

¹ The heads are now in the Athens National Museum (NM 429 and 522); Kazimierz Michalowski, *Les portraits hellénistiques et romains* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1932), 5-8, pl. 7, identifies this as Mithridates.

² Smith, *Hellenistic Royal Portraits*, 100, 123, 172, pl. 54.6-7.

³ Højte, "Portraits and Statues," 156-57; Jean Marcadé, *Au Musée de Délos: Etude sur la sculpture hellénistique en ronde bosse découverte dans l'île* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1969). Another head from Delos (A 4184) has been associated with Mithridates, but holes in the head suggest the statue once bore goat horns making the identification as Mithridates highly questionable; see Smith, *Hellenistic Royal Portraits*, 100, 173, pl. 55.5-7. Some also see Mithridates in a head now in the Venic Museum, but without a provenance, the attribution is tenuous; Smith, *Hellenistic Royal Portraits*, 99, 172, pl. 53.3-4, and Erciyas, *Wealth, Aristocracy, and Royal Propaganda*, 156.

Additionally, Gisela Richter identifies two gem portraits as representations of Mithridates. An amethyst ringstone (fig. D) bears a head in profile very similar in appearance to Mithridates on his second coin types. The curly locks are separated and dramatic in their unruliness, and the tassels of the diadem hang down the nape of his head.⁴ Another gem (fig. E) also exhibits animated hair and crowned with a diadem, but the figure's cheeks are slightly fuller and the nose and chin more pronounced than on the amethyst.⁵ The similarities between these gems and the coin portraits are close enough to consider these as representations of Mithridates and perhaps even can be proposed as Mithridates in Alexander's likeness.⁶

⁴ Gisela Marie Augusta Richter, *Engraved Gems of the Greeks, Etruscans, and Romans* (London: Phaidon, 1968), cat. no. 651, 657. See also John Boardman, Marie-Louise Vollenweider, Martin Henig, and Arthur MacGregor, *Catalogue of the Engraved Gems and Finger Rings I: Greek and Etruscan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), cat. no. 317.

⁵ Richter, *Engraved Gems*, cat. no. 649.

⁶ A sardonyx ringstone depicts a cuirassed male who Adolf Furtwängler, *Beschreibung der Glyptothek König Ludwig's I zu München* (Munich: A. Buchholz, 1900), pl. XXXII.17, labeled as Mithridates possibly based on the stars and thunderbolts above the shoulders. Physiognomic differences between this figure and other known portraits of Mithridates make the identification unlikely. See also Richter, *Engraved Gems*, cat. no. 652, and Erciyas, *Wealth, Aristocracy, and Royal Propaganda*, 160-61.

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