

PARTHIA DURING THE TIME OF MITHRIDATES III¹ (58/57-56 B.C.). AN ATTEMPT TO RECONSTRUCT HISTORICAL EVENTS

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DOI: 10.52837/27382702-2024.4.1-14

Abstract

In the huge number of scientific works on the history of Parthia, there are no special studies devoted to the activities of the Parthian king Mithridates III (Mithridates IV – according to Assar’s chronology [4:96-97])². The exception is the scanty lines (5-10 sentences) in generalizing works on the political history of Parthia [7:83-83;6:42-44;22:31], a number of scientific articles [12:2211;17:57-58:19:168;39:211;4:96-97;44:442-443; 11:212-213] and dissertations [18:108;30:75], which in passing refer to the period of the reign of this king or his action. In all these studies circulates one and the same point of view that the Parthian king Phraates III was killed by his sons – Mithridates and Orodes, after which Mithridates III ascended the throne and started a war with Great Armenia. At the end of the war with Great Armenia, Mithridates III was sentenced by the Parthian Council of Elders to banishment from the kingdom of the “cruelty” he had shown. In his place, his brother Orodes II was appointed king, who was returned from exile by Surena. Interpreting the data of the sources in this way, the researchers did not try to find out what Marcus Justinus meant by Mithridates’s III “cruelty” and what

The article was submitted on May 14, 2024. The article was reviewed on June 03, 2024.

¹ Mithridates IV – according to G.R.F. Assar’s chronology [4:96-97]

^{**} With love and respect, I dedicate this work to my mother – Kobzar Tetiana Volodymyrivna

² G.R.F. Assar had intentions of devoting a separate study to Mithridates IV biography in his future publication [4:96]. But as far as I know, he has not yet published anything on this subject, with the exception of a small note about the coins of Mithridates IV [4:96-97].

meaning contemporaries of the events put into the notion of “exile”. Meanwhile, a thorough analysis of sources and the correct interpretation of these terms allows us to doubt Orodes II involvement in the murder of his father. Unsolved problems require solutions. At the same time, the lack of detailed studies on the biography of the king Mithridates III and the political history of Parthia in the era of king Mithridates III make this study quite timely.

Keywords: Mithridates III (or Mithridates IV), Orodes II, Phraates III Teos, Tigranes II the Great, Artavazdes II, Great Armenia, Parthia, “cruelty”, “excessive cruelty” (“overkill”), “exile” (“outlaw”).

Around 58/57 BC serious upheavals occurred in Parthia. As Dio Cassius testifies [8:390-391], Phraates III Theos, who had previously ruled Parthia, was treacherously killed. Rumors about this, which reached Rome, said that, most likely, this was the work of the king’s sons [8:390-391]. Dio Cassius himself, mentioning this, does not say which of the sons was suspected of this incident, but the mention of murderers in the plural suggests that there were at least two of them. We know the names of three people involved in the murder of Phraates III - Orodes II, Mithridates III and Orsanes. Two of them, Mithridates III and Orodes II, are directly named in the sources as the sons of Phraates III. As for Orsanes, the degree of his relationship to the murdered king will become clear as the story progresses.

Marcus Justinus, citing information relating to the murder of the Parthian king Orodes II by his son Phraates IV, briefly notes that in Parthia it has already become a tradition that pat

ricides become kings [28:360;32:629;33:417]. And since in the history of Parthia, before the murder of Phraates III, such incidents were not recorded by sources, this allows us to assert that one of the murderers of Phraates III is his immediate successor on the throne. However, the inconsistency of sources regarding his successor does not immediately make it possible to clearly answer this question. A detailed analysis is needed here.

This inconsistency is due to the fact that the sources at our disposal, which in this matter are “The Philippic History” by Pompeius Trogus (as summarized by Marcus Justinus), “Roman History” by Dio Cassius, “Roman History” by Appian of Alexandria, “The Jewish War” and “Jewish Antiquities” by Josephus Flavius interprets the development of events differently.

As Gholamreza Assar correctly noted in his work, the issue is complicated by the fact that we do not have at our disposal late Babylonian cuneiform sources from 255-262 SEB (57/56-50/49 BC), which forces us to reconstruct the events of the reign of Mithridates III (IV) based on his coins and a small number of fragmentary information from classical sources [4:96].

The first of these sources is an extremely difficult work to interpret, if only because it is a short version of the once more extensive work of Pompeius Trogus. By abridging it, Justinus chose at his own discretion those subjects from it which he considered most worthy of attention. Naturally, the criterion of selection was entirely Justinian's own inference. From the work of Pompeius Trogus the prologues to his books have also been preserved, but the name of their creator is still unknown.

A comparative analysis of Justinian's epitome and the prologues from the work of Pompeius Trogus shows inconsistencies in many details and allows us to conclude that the epitomator omitted too much information. In view of this, one must sincerely regret the loss of the work of Pompeius Trogus himself.

Marcus Justinus claims that the immediate successor of Phraates' III was Mithridates III, who “after the war with Armenia was expelled by the Parthian Council of Elders for his cruelty” [28:357]. Justinus does not directly say what this “cruelty” was for which the king was sentenced to expulsion from the kingdom, but if we turn, once again, to the part of his epitome that deals with Parthia, we find another reference to “cruelty”, which he characterises as “excessive cruelty”. Note that the described case is also related to patricide, and the underlined “excessiveness” is a reflection of the particular burden caused by the number of victims, because in addition to his father, Phraates IV killed his thirty brothers and even children [28:360]. Seeing that he was hated by the nobility for the crimes he was committing, he ordered his adult

son to be killed as well, so that there would be no one to be made king in his place [28:360]. Note that Marcus Justinus, narrating this incident and knowing that this is already other case of patricide known to him, does not say a word that Orodes II suffered the same fate that he had previously prepared for his father. Although if Orodes II had been involved in this murder, he could have said that this was a well-deserved punishment. This suggests that the tradition mentioned by Marcus Justinus (the having patricides as kings), direct evidence that the son of Phraates III who was involved in the murder, also ruled in Parthia. And since it could not be Orodes II, then the “shadow” of Phraates III Teos’ murder directly falls on two other persons – Mithridates III and Orsanes. It is them, as fugitives, that Josephus Flavius mentions [14:54-55;13:84-85]. Marcus Justinus clearly says that Mithridates III, for his cruelty, by which, as it turns out, is meant the patricide, was expelled by the Parthian Council of Elders outside the kingdom, and the empty throne was taken by another king, Orodes II. Dio Cassius, narrating about the accession of Orodes II, says that the latter, occupying the Parthian throne, expelled one of his brothers, whose name was Mithridates III, from Media, where he ruled [8:390-391]. Dio Cassius does not say what was the reason for the expulsion, but if we remember that his sons were suspected of Phraates III death [8:390-391], and take into account that Mithridates III fled with Orsanes [14:54-55;13:84-85], then the reason why Orodes II pursued them becomes clear. Taking into account that Dio Cassius suspected several sons in Phraat III Teos’ murder, it is highly probable that Mitridates’s III companion Orsanes, mentioned by Josephus Flavius, is also Phraates III Teos’s son, and taking into account their joint escape, their mutual involvement in his father’s murder increases.

It is important to note that Dio Cassius, narrating the murder of Phraates III, has some doubts about the absolute involvement of the king’s sons in the murder, as evidenced by his phrase “most likely” [8:390-391]. It is difficult to say what cast doubt on this matter and made Dio Cassius hesitate. But here it is important to remember that after the Parthian Council of Elders decided to expel Mithridates III from the kingdom, the outcast fled to Babylon, whose inhabitants sheltered him. Orodes II, who had already become king, was

subjected to a long siege of Babylon and only the hungry forced the Babylonians to surrender. Because of what or because of whom the Babylonians endured a long siege and months of hunger, it is known of certain. But there can hardly be any doubt that the support of the residents of Babylon provided to Mithridates III came from the personal benefit that the citizens could have from this conflict. Otherwise, why would the inhabitants of Babylon and Seleucia, whom Plutarch calls “invariably hostile to the Parthians” [32:617;34:366-367], endure so many hardships for the sake of a Parthian? It is hardly worth believing that the Babylonians knew any details about the murder of Phraates III, which allowed them to come to Mithridates III defense, because then another completely logical question arises: why was the information known to them not used by the accused in their justification?

According to a number of sources, Mithridates III, after his exile, found refuge with the proconsul of Syria, Aulus Gabinius. During his stay, Mithridates III persuaded Aulus Gabinius to help him restore himself on the Parthian throne, with the help of Roman troops [2:287;3:199-201]. I believe that in the question of restoration of Mithridates III hardly there was a question about its statement on the Median throne, where it, judging by information of Dio Cassius, ruled before his expulsion by Orodes II. For in this case, he would have to get along with the immediate Parthian king in the person of Orodes II. Consequently, Dio Cassius’ mention of Media, where he ruled before his expulsion by Orodes II, requires another explanation. It is important to remember that the city of Ecbatana – the capital of Media, was the summer residence of the Parthian kings [42:493], and previously provided the same amenities and security to the Seleucids and Achaemenids, but only in winter time [42:494]. Isidore of Charax clarifies that the residence of those who sat in Ecbatana was the Adrapanana fortress [15:6-7;16:410]. This allows us to understand another important detail – summer, like the time of year in which Mithridates III was exiled. It is also possible that the reign of Mithridates in Media is an echo of his governorship during the reign of his father. Here it is necessary to remember that the same Dio Cassius mentions a certain Mithridates from Media, who courageously defended the interests of his

father-in-law Tigranes II the Great in his fight against the Romans [8:20-21]. It is quite possible that this is the same person. And although this assumption is not without a certain portion of speculation, it can explain a lot in the network of data from other sources.

According to Memnon, it is known that Tigranes II the Great sent an embassy to Phraates III, inviting him to join the anti-Roman alliance on the side of the Armenians, promising to cede to him Mesopotamia, Adiabene and Great Glen³ (Μεγάλους Αυλώνας) [29:283-316]. It is not known for certain what Phraates III responded to the proposal of Tigranes the Great, but if it can be proven that Mithridates of Media, the son-in-law of Tigranes II the Great and the Parthian king Mithridates III are one and the same person, then it will turn out that Phraates III and Tigranes II not only concluded this union, but also sealed it with a dynastic marriage. Naturally, with this scenario, Tigranes II the Great was obliged to transfer the promised territories to the Parthian king Phraates III, since the newly-minted son-in-law zealously defended the interests of his father-in-law in the fight against Lucullus. When Lucullus was dealt with, the kingdom of Tigranes II plunged into a new round of problems. The youngest son of Tigranes II the Great from Cleopatra of Pontus, who was also called Tigran, dissatisfied that his father gave him only Sophene to rule, and probably counting on more, rebelled against his father. When the uprising was suppressed, Tigran the Younger went over to the Parthian king Phraates, who married him to his daughter, and then, on the side of his son-in-law, invaded Armenia with an army and besieged Artashat. The siege dragged on, and soon Phraates III and part of the army returned to Parthia, which Tigranes II the Great took advantage of and defeated his son's troops. The latter went on the run and decided to turn to Pompey for help, who in 66 BC. was appointed to replace Lucullus. In fact, Tigran the Younger brought Pompey to Armenia, and he, before the invasion of Tigran's kingdom, previously agreed with the Parthian king Phraates III on his neutrality.

³ Great Glen (Μεγάλους Αυλώνας) – according to translated by Andrew Smith from Jacoby's text FGrH. 434 (Memnon: History of Heracleia), <https://bit.ly/42tDfvr>.

Phraates III did not hesitate for a long time, since his relationship with Tigran the Great was already damaged. Deprived of allies, Tigran came to Pompey's headquarters and admitted defeat, but retained Armenia itself and was included in the number of allies of Rome. The neutrality of Phraates III in this war led to the fact that Tigranes II refused to give him all the previously promised territories, which led to an even greater complication of the Armenian-Parthian relations. In 64 BC, when Pompey was in Syria, ambassadors came from Tigranes and Phraates who asked to resolve the border dispute between Armenia and Parthia. To resolve this issue, Pompey sent three representatives. From the data of Pompey's dedicatory inscription, which was preserved in the work of Diodorus Siculus, it is known that Pompey "... defended Armenia, ... Mesopotamia, Sophene and Gordiene [10:286-289]. If we compare these data with the information of Memnon [29:283-316] about the promises of Tigranes II, it turns out that as a result of the dispute, Phraates III received only Adiabene, while Gordiene and Mesopotamia remained with Tigranes II. After this, Tigranes and Phraates concluded a general non-aggression pact between themselves, since they understood that the war between them would be exhausting for both sides, and the weakened winner would appear as easier prey for the Romans. However, by the beginning of the 50-s BC. most of Mesopotamia, right up to Zeugma on the Euphrates, as Aulus Gabinius and Crassus were able to verify in turn, was already under the control of the Parthians. It is important to note that the ruling Abgar of Osroene, whom Plutarch calls the leader of the Arabs, adheres to a pro-Parthian orientation in the Roman-Parthian contradictions, although during the time of Pompey he took the exact opposite position. In this regard, one can completely agree and support the opinion of S.D. Litovchenko [18:108;19:168], who believed that "the likelihood of a clash between Armenia and Parthia in northwestern Mesopotamia around 57 BC is quite high." It is logical to believe that the tacit consent of Phraates III to the result of the verdict of the judges sent by Pompey to resolve the border dispute is explained by the existing facts of personal mistakes of Phraates III, who, through his actions, first spoiled family relations with Tigranes II the Great, supporting his son-in-

law Tigranes the Younger, and then took a neutral position in the struggle of the Armenians against the Romans. Understanding all this, Phraates III easily agreed to normalize relations with Tigranes II the Great. However, the dissatisfied party in this balance of power remained Mithridates, the son-in-law of Tigranes II and the son of Phraates III. As heir to the throne, he understood that Parthia, which he would inherit, would be deprived of control over Mesopotamia, both through the fault of his father-in-law and the fault of his father. It is quite possible that this pushed him to end his life with his father and go to war against his father-in-law. And for the latter it was necessary to seize the throne.

The fact that such a scenario could well have taken place is clearly demonstrated by the example of the relationship between Orodes II and his son Phraates IV. Let us recall that the latter killed his father, since his, in his opinion, “could not possibly get ready to die” [28:360]. Plutarch claims that at first Phraates IV tried to poison his father and gave him aconite, but this had the opposite effect on Orodes II, who was suffering from dropsy, the poison acted like a medicine, after which he chose a more effective method and simply strangled him [32:629;33:417]. The possibility that he would have killed his father so that his brother Orodes II could become king is hypothetically possible. It could have taken place against the background of personal or mutual hostility, hatred, envy, especially considering that the shadow of involvement in the murder of Phraates III falls on his two sons - Mithridates III and Orsanes, although Orsanes did not rule, but he committed the murder. But in reality, it is minimal, especially considering the nature of the relationship between Mithridates III and Orodes II. Let us remember that the latter considered him “rather his enemy than his brother” [28:357]. If he were not the main contender for the Parthian throne, then there would be no point in killing his father in order to quickly take possession of it. After the murder of his father, he ruled Parthia for a short time [2:287;3:199-201;28:357], until irrefutable facts of his involvement in the murder of his father came to light. We have to talk about “irrefutable facts” because when the charges were considered by the Parthian Council of Elders, Mithridates

III, even if he was not actually involved in the murder, for some reason could not prove the opposite.

In view of this, one has to believe that the “cruelty” mentioned by Marcus Justinus, applied as a characteristic to the personal qualities of Mithridates III, was given to him precisely for the murder of his father. It was precisely because of this reason that he was sentenced by the Parthian Council of Elders to expulsion from the kingdom, which had never happened before.

According to Posidonius, the Council of the Parthians consists of two groups, one part includes the king’s relatives, and the other that of wise men and Mags. Kings are chosen (appointed) in both groups [42:487]. From the context of Marcus Justinus’ message [28:357], with the comparison of information preserved by Posidonius (in Strabo’s retelling), it appears that the Parthian Council of Elders, could not only elect kings, but also depose them.

After his exile, Mithridates III stayed in Babylon for some time. However, it is not clear from the context whether this was before he appeared in Syria with Aulus Gabinius or not. It all depends on how to interpret Marcus Justinus information “was banished by the Parthian Council of Elders outside the kingdom”, about what we are talking about before his appearance in Babylon. If these words are to be taken literally, as a *fait accompli*, i.e., a court decision with the carrying out of the sentence in a traced execution, it would clearly indicate that must be connected with the events after his stay in Syria with Aulus Gabinius. But if we interpret it simply as the verdict of the council of elders mentioned by Justin, which Mithridates III had to fulfil on his own, then his stay in Babylon can be either before his appearance in Syria or after. We know only that Orodes II took the already empty throne, i.e., after Mithridates III had been deprived of legitimacy [28:357]. But he managed to leave the territory of the kingdom before Orod II became king, or he took refuge in Babylon wanting to continue the fight, we don’t know for sure. Sources are conflicting about this. If we proceed from the information of Justin, it turns out that Mithridates III was expelled not by Orodes, but by the Parthian council of elders, and that Orodes “took possession of the kingdom that was left without a ruler.” [28:357].

Therefore, if we follow the Justinus presentation, it would be logical to place the Babylonian period of Mithridates III life after his stay with Aulus Gabinius. But according to Appian of Alexandria and Dio Cassius, Mithridates III was expelled by Orodes II himself, after the latter's accession to the throne [2:287;3:199-201;8:390-391]. It is also possible that both information took place and simply reflects the phased result of the development of events, between which there is a difference of several months. It is important to note date Appian of Alexandria and Dion Cassius place the expulsion of Mithridates by Orodes before the appearance of Mithridates in Syria by Aulus Gabinius [8:390-391]. However, the problem is that neither Justin nor the surviving prologues to the books of Pompeius Trogus mention the stay of Mithridates III with Aulus Gabinius, and in view of the absence of the work of Pompeius Trogus himself, it is difficult to say whether it contained information about the stay of Mithridates III with Aulus Gabinius in Syria. It is also strange that neither Josephus Flavius, nor Appian of Alexandria, nor Dio Cassius report anything about the stay of Mithridates III in Babylonia and the long siege of the city. A strange picture is emerging. Three ancient authors (Flavius Josephus, Appian of Alexandria and Dio Cassius) know about the stay of Mithridates III with Aulus Gabinius and know nothing about his stay in Babylon, while Justin, on the contrary, knows about the stay of Mithridates III in Babylon, but says nothing about his stay in Syria.

Here it is important to remember that according to Plutarch [32:619-620], Orodes II himself had been in exile before, but was returned to the Parthians by Surena, who enjoyed the ancient and hereditary privilege of being first to set the crown upon the head of the Parthian king at the time of accession. Having brought Orodes II back to power and restored him to his throne, Surena captured for him Seleucia the Great, having been the first to mount its walls and having routed with his own hand his opponents [32:619-620]. Who these opponents were is not known? Plutarch does not name them. However, it can hardly be doubted that these are Mithridates's III supporters, at least, this conclusion is suggested by an analysis of the iconography of coins minted during this period.

On the city coins of Seleucia of the era of Mithridates III, the patron goddess of this city is depicted with a palm of victory in her hand, greeting Mithridates III, and after the capture of the city by Surena and the transfer of power over it to Orodes II, the iconography of the coins of Seleucia of the era of Orodes II changes dramatically, now the patron-goddess of the city, depicted kneeling before Orodes II seated on the throne [17:58].

Plutarch does not disclose the reason for the expulsion of Orodes II, but it clearly has nothing to do with the murder of Phraates III Teos, because what was the point of enthroning his accomplice instead of Mithridates III, who was found guilty of murdering his own father and was sentenced to exile because of this, and if not an accomplice, then a man with the reputation of a patricide. It is important to note that Mithridates III, who was expelled from the kingdom, is replaced on the throne by Orodes II, who was previously in exile. So, the term “exile” equally applied to both Mithridates III and Orodes II, has a different meaning. A contemporary of the events, Cicero, in “The Speech concerning his House delivered before the College of Pontiffs”, dated September 29, 57 BC, gives a clear explanation of the term «exile». He says it can have “shameful” and “not shameful” meaning. “Not shameful” (not disgraceful) in itself means “misfortune”, but “shameful” (disgraceful) “when it comes as a retribution for misdoing, and according of common opinion (in the eyes of society), as well when it is the punishment that follows upon an adverse verdict” (condemnation, judgement) [26:79]. It is clear from Cicero explanation that the “non-disgraceful” meaning of the word was applied to Orodes II and the “disgraceful” meaning of the word was applied to Mithridates III, which was a “punishment” for the offence of condemnation.

It is also necessary to thoroughly check whether this Orodes, who is traditionally considered Orodes II, as well as Orodes I, who previously judging by the cuneiform tablets, ruled in Parthia for a short time (from April 80 BC to 76 BC), be one and the same person. This thought is suggested by the fact that Orodes II, at the time of his death in 38 BC, was of advanced age. And 15 years earlier, he already had an adult son, Pacorus, which allowed Orodes II to marry him to the sister of the Armenian king Artavazdes II, i.e., daughter

of Tigranes II the Great [32:629]. At that time (53 BC), judging by the information of Plutarch [32:617-618;34:368-369] Orodes II was younger than Crassus, for he was lenient about his age, and Crassus at this time was already over 60 years old [32:617;34:364-365]. Even if we assume that at the time of his death, he was not a long-liver, like Tigranes II the Great or the Parthian king Sinatruk (Sanatruk), who lived 85 and 87 years, respectively [20:234-235;21:717], and let's say he was even 60 years old, then this is quite enough that in 80 BC., at the age of 18, he fought for the Parthian throne. It is important to emphasize that on these cuneiform tablets, he is mentioned under his personal name, which suggests his conflict with the reigning Arsaces (probably Gotarzes I), about whom we know nothing from this time. If it turns out that Orodes I and Orodes II are the same person, then it will be possible to connect his short reign with the fact that he was in exile and returned from there by Surena. It is important to recall here that Orodes II is the grandson of the aforementioned Parthian king Sinatruk, who was returned to the kingdom by the Sakavrak Scythians when he was 80 years old, and he reigned for another 7 years [20:234-235;21:717]. According to the chronology clarified by Assar, he ruled until 69/68 BC [4:56-62]. Therefore, he was born around 156/155 BC, and Orodes, if he was born around 100 BC. could very well be his grandson. So, the question of identifying Orodes I and Orodes II as the same individual may well have a basis.

If the information mentioned by Appian of Alexandria, Dio Cassius and Plutarch reflects the real development of events, then the following must be stated. First, Mithridates III, together with his brother Orsanes, killed their father and took possession of the kingdom. Soon after this, he started a war with the Armenian king Tigran, thereby violating the Armenian-Parthian non-aggression treaty of 64 BC, which was concluded by Phraates III and Tigran II the Great. Shortly after this, he was convicted of murdering his own father. The accusation was considered by the Parthian council of elders, where he could not prove his innocence and was sentenced to exile from the kingdom. After his removal from the throne and deprivation of legitimacy, his brother Orodes II, returned from exile by Surena, takes possession of the empty

throne, but Mithridates, instead of leaving the borders of Parthia, gradually takes refuge in Media, then in Seleucia, then in Babylon. Orodes II subjected Babylon to a long siege for this. From the besieged city, Mithridates and Orsanes flee to Syria to Aulus Gabinius; this is precisely the conclusion that can be drawn if we combine the information of Justin and Appian of Alexandria, for the latter clearly says that it was Orodes who expelled Mithridates [2:287;3:199-201]. It is important to note that since it is logical to see Mithridates and Orsanes as the opponents of Orodes indicated by Plutarch in the rebellious Seleucia, it must be emphasized that their flight to Syria, to Aulus Gabinius, does not fit in with this episode, since the capture of Seleucia was carried out by Surena without the participation of Orodes II himself. Consequently, the information preserved by Justin about the hiding of Mithridates in Babylon and the long siege of the city by Orodes II must be separated in time from the decision of Mithridates to surrender to the mercy of Orodes II, since between these events there should be chronologically the flight of Mithridates with Orsanes to Syria to Aulus Gabinius. Now it is clear that even after the court verdict, Mithridates III did not immediately leave the territory of Parthia, but continued to fight. It is not known exactly how long he shared the hardships of siege and famine with the besieged Babylonians. But Babylon itself was subjected to a long siege and famine. The inhabitants probably resisted, expecting Mithridates to come with a Roman army. This fits especially interestingly with the initial scope of powers that Aulus Gabinius was endowed with as proconsul of Syria.

After this, we already meet Mithridates in the camp of Aulus Gabinius. At the time of his arrival, Gabinius was preparing to go on a campaign against the Arabs, but Mithridates, deprived of power by his brother Orodes II, began to encourage him to go on a campaign not against the Arabs, but against the Parthians [2:287;3:199-201]. According to Appian [2:287;3:199-201], Mithridates' request, supported by money, prevailed. Even one of the dependent kings, Archelaus, king of Comana, appeared to participate in the supposed war [42:523-524]. However, the Senate did not allow him to do this, and Archelaus decided to abandon this hope, but found another, even greater

one. It so happened that at this time the Alexandrians expelled Ptolemy XII Auletes, the father of Cleopatra, and his eldest daughter, whose name was Berenice, Cleopatra's sister, ruled the kingdom. Since they were looking for a husband of royal origin for her, Archelaus proposed himself to her as a candidate, claiming that he was the son of Mithridates VI Eupator. Secretly from Gabinus, some people brought him to the queen. His proposal was accepted [42:523-524], and he was proclaimed king [42:734-735].

Usually, when interpreting this passage, researchers believe that we are talking about the decision of the Senate regarding the intentions of Aulus Gabinus [39:210;30:75]. However, we believe that they are mistaken; they were clearly talking about a ban on participation in the Parthian campaign for Archelaus. This is indicated primarily by a chronological gap of approximately six months, meanwhile, when the ban came from the Senate, Archelaus departed for Egypt, Aulus Gabinus was preparing for the Parthian campaign, crossed the Euphrates (or reached it) and was caught up with a letter from Pompey and Ptolemy Auletes. Even if we take into account that the senate's ban concerned Aulus Gabinus or both of them, it must be admitted that, unlike Archelaus, Aulus Gabinus was not at all worried about the decision of the senate. If it were otherwise, he would not have started either the Parthian campaign or the Egyptian one. Judging by further events, information about which is described in the sources, Gabinus continued to prepare for the Parthian campaign for almost the entire period while Archelaus ruled Egypt (about six months). The seriousness of Aulus Gabinus's intentions regarding Parthia is also supported by the information of Josephus that he crossed the Roman-Parthian border - the Euphrates [13:84-85], and in another book reached it [14:54-55]. In any case, the answer to the question of whether the Senate's decision to ban the Parthian campaign was intended for Archelaus or Aulus Gabinus depends on what initial powers Aulus Gabinus was given in Rome before being sent to Syria. Cicero, in his speech "On His House," says that Aulus Gabinus received "unlimited empire" [26:64].

It should be recalled that at the end of his Syrian activities, Aulus Gabinus arrived in Rome, where he was brought to trial on the basis of the Lex Cornelia

de maiestatis in connection with his campaign in Egypt [39:204]. The law for violation of which Aulus Gabinius was tried, among other things, implied punishment for recruiting troops and unauthorized initiation of military actions against another state [5:186], which suggests that even “unlimited empires” had limitations. That is, without the permission of the Senate, Aulus Gabinius did not have the authority to recruit troops and begin military operations against another state. But the absence of powers due to the existence of the law, of course, does not imply the absence of the right to choose. And the right to choose allows you to break any laws, albeit with the caveat that you will have to answer for breaking the law. It should be noted that Aulus Gabinius, in addition to the perfect Egyptian campaign, was actively preparing for the Parthian campaign: he recruited troops and crossed the border. But in Rome, he was tried specifically for the Egyptian campaign; he was not charged with the Parthian campaign as a violation of the law, which can have a double interpretation. Either this was due to the fact that Aulus Gabinius had the right to do so (and the ban on participation in it entirely and completely without reservation was intended purely for Archelaus), or the lack of real clashes with the Parthians, despite the preparations, did not have sufficient grounds for accusations. The final answer to the question of which option should be chosen is decided on the basis of information from Cicero, who twice names the territories subject to Gabinius. Addressing Clodius, he says: “You gave up for plunder... Syria, Babylonia, Persia...” [26:74]. And then he claimed that Clodius gave Gabinius “all the Syrian, Arabian and Persian kingdoms” [26:94]. This list gives a clear idea of the scope of the borders and powers of Aulus Gabinius - Syria, Arabia, Persia (Persian kingdoms) and Babylonia.

The writing of Persia and Babylonia in an archaic guise, put E. Smykov into a perplexity and misconception [39:203], which can be easily removed thanks to Pliny who in his Natural History, writes: “The kingdom of the Persians, which we now know as Parthia, lies between the two seas, the Persian and the Caspian, on the heights of the Caucasus range” [31:366-369]. The list of sources is easy to continue. Ammianus Marcellinus in his

information identifies the Persians and Parthians [1:350-353;1a:309]. But, even if there was no direct information from sources, then we, one way or another, would have to mean Parthia by the Persian and Babylonian kingdoms, since the territories of both kingdoms in the realities of that time were part of it.

That is why there is every reason to say that, unlike Egypt, Aulus Gabinius initially had sufficient grounds to act in the territory of Syria, Nabatea and Parthia. That is why, preparations for the Parthian campaign (for almost another 5-6 months after Gabinius left Archelaus), as well as the crossing of the Roman-Parthian border, had legal grounds and for the same reason were not taken into account during the trial of Gabinius in Rome. Without these permissions, Gabinius would have had to justify himself in Rome from these accusations. Consequently, the Senate's ban on participation in the Parthian campaign was intended specifically for Archelaus, and not for Gabinius.

Ptolemy Auletes, meanwhile, headed to Rome. Pompey the Great accepted him, recommended him to the Senate and achieved not only his restoration to the throne, but even the death of most of the ambassadors who were sent by the Egyptians against him. Having received the necessary sums and a letter from Pompey to Aulus Gabinius, he left Rome and headed to Syria.

Aulus Gabinius, meanwhile, having completed preparations for the Parthian campaign, set out from Syria and crossed the Euphrates [13:84-85]. On the way, he was overtaken by a letter from Pompey, which was brought by Ptolemy XII. He said that he would provide large sums of money to both himself and the army, part of which would be paid immediately, and the rest after the restoration of Ptolemy to the Egyptian throne. Having sold his services at a higher price [2:287;3:199-201], at the very height of the Parthian campaign, [13:84-85;14:54-55;8:390-391] Aulus Gabinius turned from the Euphrates towards Egypt [13:84-85;14:54-55]. Although the law prohibited the governors from intruding beyond the boundaries of their powers, he crossed them, although the Senate and the Sibylla declared that Ptolemy XII should not be restored to his rights [8:390-391;2:287;3:199-201]. But this did not

stop Aulus Gabinius. This further confirms that the abandonment of the Parthian campaign was not due to a senate ban, but to a letter from Pompey, backed by larger bribes received from Ptolemy [2:287;3:199-201;8:390-391].

As we can see, Strabo's information that the Senate banned Gabinius from the Parthian expedition contradicts the available data from other sources. It is clearly visible that he not only prepared for the campaign, but also began it and even crossed the Euphrates. That Pompey had influence on Gabinius and that Aulus Gabinius acted on his instructions in the matter of the Egyptian campaign can hardly be doubted, especially after the words of Plutarch, who characterizes the latter as "the most unbridled (extravagant) of Pompey's flatterers" [33:91-92;35:240-241]. If we add to this the epithets that Cicero did not skimp on in his "Speech" "On the Consular Provinces" (*De Provinciis Consularibus*), the second half of May 56 BC) - "monster", "gravedigger of the state" [26:205], "destroying consul" who caused as much evil as Hannibal would not have wished for" [26:206], "the worst of all scoundrels", [26:209], "the worst enemy of the equestrian class and all honest people," "a two-faced evil for the allies," "the destroyer of our soldiers," "the ruiner of tax farmers and the devastator of provinces", "a shameful stain on our empire", [26:209], "a man who has stained himself with the most vile crimes and atrocities", "the dirtiest and most vile person", "recognized as a traitor and enemy of the state", [26:209], as well as a list of such personal qualities and deeds of Aulus Gabinius as: "unreliability", "greed", "arrogance", "insatiable cruelty", [26:205,208], "insolence" [26:210], a list of which he also lists in "The Speech concerning his House delivered before the College of Pontiffs" on September 29, 57 BC: "shamelessness from childhood, debauchery in his youth", "robbery during the consulate" [26:95] and in the same "Speech" he recalls that the post of consul of Syria was bought by him from Clodius for a huge bribe [26:63-64], then there is hardly any doubt that everything this man did, was aimed at his personal enrichment and saturation of his own ego, and not at caring for the state.

According to Strabo [42:524], Archelaus of Comana managed to reign in Egypt for only six months before the return of Ptolemy XII. Gabinius, during the restoration of Ptolemy to the throne, killed him in some skirmish [42:524].

The date of the restoration of Ptolemy XII to the throne is established on the basis of a letter from Cicero to Atticus, which dates back to April 22, 55 BC, in which he reports that, according to rumors circulating in Puteoli, Ptolemy reached Egypt [27:254]. For some time, it was necessary for the rumor to reach Rome, so the return of Ptolemy itself can be attributed to approximately the end of March - beginning of April. Archelaus's journey to Egypt itself must have taken some time, from the time he said goodbye to Gabinius (approximately September 56 BC). Consequently, approximately from the end of September to the beginning of October 56 BC. Archelaus already ruled in Egypt. And the ban that Archelaus received from the Senate was received even earlier, when he was still under Gabinius and preparing for the Parthian campaign. Thus, the height of the beginning of preparations for the campaign falls in the summer of 56 BC. That is, at least from the middle of 56 BC. Mithridates and Orsanes were already in Syria with Aulus Gabinius. However, it is difficult to agree with E. Smykov, who believes that at this time Gabinius moved to Parthia [39:211]. It was Archelaus who moved to Egypt, and while he ruled it (about 5-6 months), Gabinius continued to prepare for the Parthian campaign and even crossed the Euphrates. Later, he would be condemned to exile by the Roman Senate for attacking Egypt without a Senate resolution, starting a war that was considered fatal for the Romans, for there was a certain Sibylline prediction that forbade them to start this war (Appian of Alexandria, XI, 51). It is important to note that before going to Aulus Gabinius in Syria, where his stay is recorded from mid-56 BC, Mithridates must have spent some time in besieged Babylon. And even if we assume that Babylon recognized the exile as a legitimate king for some reason, even despite the verdict of the council of elders, we have no reason to see Mithridates III as king after mid-56 BC. It is unlikely that the Babylonians would have continued to confront Orodes II in a besieged city and suffer hunger after they learned that Aulus Gabinius, having crossed the Euphrates, turned

to Egypt (February 55 BC). Thus, it is easy to establish that Babylon was under siege for at least 7-8 months, therefore the expulsion of Mithridates by the council of elders must have taken place somewhere in late 57 - early 56 BC. Thus, the war with Armenia, if it took place, would have occurred in 57 BC. When starting it, the Parthians, of course, had to take into account the climate of Armenia, the mountainous terrain of the country and the fortification system, which it was necessary to take by storm. Therefore, it was logical to do this from the onset of warmth until the onset of frost, which, if it took place, was from the end of spring to mid-autumn of 57 BC. Justin, mentioning the war of Mithridates III against Armenia, does not say which Armenian king Mithridates III fought with. However, given the fact that according to late Babylonian sources [36:418-419;36:422-423] and Plutarch [32:565], Tigranes II the Great came to the throne in the middle of 96 BC, and the presence of coins of Tigranes dating to the 41st year of his reign (55 BC) [38:86-87, pl. I, 4b], as well as the mention of Tigranes II as reigning king in a speech Cicero, dated March 56 BC. [26:122-123], there is no doubt that Mithridates III fought with him. This means that the treacherous murder of Phraates III occurred before the war with Armenia, and it can be dated to the end of 58 - beginning of 57 BC.

There is every reason to believe that from the time of their flight to Syria to Aulus Gabinius, Mithridates III and Orsanus were with him for more than a year. During this time, Aulus Gabinius restored Ptolemy XII Auletes to the Egyptian throne, fought at Mount Itavirion with Alexander, son of Aristobulus, and after defeating him, entered Jerusalem, where he changed the government structure at the will and desire of Antipater. From here he went against the Nabateans and defeated them completely. Only after this did he help Mithridates III and Orsanus, who fled from Parthia. He sent them ahead, announcing to his soldiers that they had disappeared [13:84-85;14:54-55], and he himself, after some time, departed for Rome. We do not know where Aulus Gabinius sent them. Josephus Flavius, Appian of Alexandria and Dio Cassius are silent about their future fate. And only Justin claims that after all his wanderings, Mithridates III, counting on family relations, surrendered to

the mercy of Orodes II, but he ordered to kill him, considering him more of an enemy than a brother [28:357]. We don't know what Orsanes' future fate was.

Concluding the analysis of information from narrative (classical) sources concerning the biography of Mithridates III (IV), let us move on to the analysis of numismatic monuments, and especially to the interpretations on them and their iconography. A summary analysis of the inscriptions on the Mithridates III (IV) coins, in comparison with the information from classical sources ordered above, allows us to draw important observations and conclusions.

After the accession of Mithridates III (IV) to the throne after the physical removal of his father, coins with the inscription "Great King Arshak" were initially minted in his name. This conclusion comes both from the analysis of narrative sources and the coinage of the king of Great Armenia, Tigranes II the Great, with the title of "king of kings Tigran."

Soon, after establishing himself on the Parthian throne, Mithridates III (IV), judging by Justin's information, started another war against Armenia, grossly violating the terms of the Armenian-Parthian non-aggression treaty concluded between Tigranes II and Phraates III in 64 BC [8:110-113]. The specific reasons (objective or subjective) that prompted Mithridates III (IV) to attack Tigranes II the Great are unknown to us. But the presence of coins of Mithridates III (IV) with the legend of the "great king of kings Arshak", the attribution of which to Mithridates III (IV) is not controversial, as well as the absence of the title of "king of kings" from Tigranes II (judging by its absence on the coins of the last years of his reign Tigranes [38:86-87, pl. I, 4b] and in the first years of the reign of his son Artavazdes II [23:18-21;43:26] suggests that as a result of a military defeat, the title of "king of kings" passed from Tigranes II to Mithridates III (IV). The coins of Mithridates III (IV) with the legend of the "great king of kings Arshak the founder" also belong to the same period. One can fully agree with the point of view of Sellwood, who believed that the appearance of the epithet "Ktist" on coins. Mithridates III (IV), is associated with the restoration of the power of Parthia and its role in

the region, after a long period of superiority of Armenia and Rome over Parthia [37:131;4:97].

After this came the era of the exposure of Mithridates III (IV), his trial and the sentence to expulsion from the kingdom. As mentioned above, after the verdict was passed, Mithridates III (IV) spent some time in Babylon, where he was attacked by the commander of his brother Orodes II, who tried to finally put an end to him. It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that it was during this same period that coins with the inscription “King Arshak Philhellen, called Mithridates” were minted and put into circulation in his name. The appearance on this type of coin, in contrast to previous issues, of the king’s personal name with the epithet Philhellene, is intended to clearly demonstrate that in the Parthian state, in addition to King Orodes II, there is also King Mithridates III (IV), who, despite the court decision, supports the Greek population of Seleucia and Babylon.

Thus, the above-described biography of Mithridates III (IV) clearly shows that the foreign and domestic policy of the Armenian king Artavazdes II on the eve of and during the Parthian campaign of Crassus was entirely developed and implemented not on the basis of the Armenian-Parthian non-aggression treaty of 64 BC [8:110-113;23:8], as Manaseryan R.L. believed in his work [23:8-9], and taking into account the gross violation of this agreement by the Parthian side during the reign of Mithridates III (IV).

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**ՊԱՐԹԵՎԱԿԱՆ ՏԵՐՈՒԹՅՈՒՆԸ ՄԻՆՐԴԱՏ III-Ի
(Ք.Ա. 58/57-56 ԹԹ.) ԺԱՄԱՆԱԿԱՇՐՋԱՆՈՒՄ: ՊԱՏՄԱԿԱՆ
ԻՐԱԴԱՐՁՈՒԹՅՈՒՆՆԵՐԻ ՎԵՐԱԿԱՆԳՆՄԱՆ ՓՈՐՁ**

Ռուսլան Կոբզար

Հիմնաբառեր. Միհրդատ III, Օրոդես II, Տիգրան II Մեծ, Հրահատ III Թեոս, Մեծ Հայք, Հռոմ, Պարթևական տերություն, «դաժանություն», «արտակարգ մեծ դաժանություն», «արտաքսման», «արտաքսյալ»:

Ամփոփում

Անտիկ աղբյուրները վկայում են որ Ք. ա.՝ մոտ 58 թ. պարթևական Հրահատ III Թեոս արքան սպանվեց իր որդիների կողմից, որից հետո գահին անցավ նրա որդի Միհրդատին: Հաստատվելով գահին Միհրդատ III-ը պատերազմ սկսեց Հայաստանի դեմ, դրանով իսկ խախտելով Տիգրան II Մեծի և պարթևական արքա Հրահատ III Թեոսի միջև Ք. ա. 64 թ. կնքված հայ-պարթևական խաղաղության և չհարձակման մասին պայմանագիրը: Դատելով դրամագիտական տվյալներից Միհրդատ III-ին անցավ ոչ միայն «արքայից արքա» տիտղոսը, որը մինչ այդ կրում էր Տիգրան II Մեծը, այլև որոշ տարածքներ Միջագետքի հյուսիս-արևմուտքում: Կարճ ժամանակ անց պարթևական ավագների խորհուրդը «դաժանության» մեղադրանքով «արտաքսման» դատապարտեց Միհրդատ III-ին: Նրա փոխարեն գահակալ նշանակվեց եղբայրը՝ Օրոդես II-ը: Մանրամասն վերլուծության ենթարկելով անտիկ աղբյուրների հաղորդած տեղեկությունները և Հուստինիոսի կողմից կիրառված «դաժանություն» ու «արտաքսյալ» տերմինների ենթատեքստը, հեղինակը փորձ է արել պարզելու թե ինչու՞ արտաքսման դատապարտված երկու եղբայրներից Միհրդատ III-ին զրկեցին գահից, իսկ մյուսին՝ Օրոդես II-ին, կարգեցին գահին: Վերլուծության արդյունքում հեղինակը պարզում է ոչ միայն Հրահատ III արքայի սպանությանը մեղսակից անձանց շրջանակը և ապացուցում իր հոր սպանության մեջ Օրոդեսի մասնակից չլինելու հանգամանքը, այլև վերականգնում է այդ ժամանակաշրջանի պատմական իրադարձությունները և Միհրդատ III-ի կերպարը: