SYLLOGE NUMMORUM PARTHICORUM

Herausgegeben von
Michael Alram, Vesta Sarkhosh Curtis und Daryoosh Akbarzadeh

In Zusammenarbeit mit
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The British Museum
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NATIONAL MUSEUM OF IRAN (MUZEH MELLI)
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Sylloge Nummorum Parthicorum


Volume VII

Vologases I – Pacorus II
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CONTENTS

FOREWORD ........................................................................................................ 7

I. INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................ 11
  I.1 General remarks ......................................................................................... 11
  I.2 Historical overview .................................................................................... 15

II. NUMISMATIC STUDY ................................................................................... 25
  II.1 Typology .................................................................................................. 25
    II.1.1 Obverse typology .............................................................................. 27
      II.1.1.1 Specific typological features according to denomination .......... 35
      II.1.1.1A Tetradrachms .......................................................................... 35
      II.1.1.1B Drachms ..................................................................................... 39
      II.1.1.1C Bronzes .................................................................................... 42
    II.1.2 Reverse typology .............................................................................. 44
      II.1.2.1 Specific typological features according to denomination .......... 51
      II.1.2.1A Tetradrachms .......................................................................... 51
      II.1.2.1B Drachms ..................................................................................... 52
      II.1.2.1C Bronzes .................................................................................... 53
     II.1.2.2 Tetradrachms legends ................................................................... 54
    II.1.3 Types description .............................................................................. 56
      II.1.3.1 Vologases I .............................................................................. 56
        II.1.3.1.1 Obverse ................................................................................ 56
        II.1.3.1.2 Reverse ............................................................................... 67
      II.1.3.2 Son of Vardanes ...................................................................... 80
        II.1.3.2.1 Obverse ................................................................................ 80
        II.1.3.2.2 Reverse ............................................................................... 82
      II.1.3.3 Pacorus II ............................................................................... 84
        II.1.3.3.1 Obverse ................................................................................ 84
        II.1.3.3.2 Reverse ............................................................................... 95
      II.1.3.4 Artabanus III .......................................................................... 104
        II.1.3.4.1 Obverse .............................................................................. 104
        II.1.3.4.2 Reverse ............................................................................... 106
      II.1.3.5 City issues ............................................................................... 110
        II.1.3.5.1 Obverse .............................................................................. 110
        II.1.3.5.2 Reverse ............................................................................... 110
    II.1.4 Uncertain coins and forgeries ............................................................. 112
  II.2 Metrology ............................................................................................... 117
    II.2.1 Drachms ........................................................................................ 117
    II.2.2 Tetradrachms ................................................................................. 123
    II.2.3 Bronzes .......................................................................................... 129
  II.3 Chronology and history .............................................................................. 137
    II.3.1 Vologases I and the Son of Vardanes ................................................... 137
    II.3.2 Pacorus II and Artabanus III ............................................................. 171
Arsacid/Parthian coins are one of the most important primary sources for the history of Iran from the 3rd century BC until the end of Parthian rule in 224 AD. For more than 400 years these coins were in circulation. They provide a variety of information about the succession of rulers, organisation of the mints, political and economic conditions. They also reflect the power and prestige of the Parthian state and provide important evidence about the royal dress of the Parthian kings. Other sources are far less common and often unclear. It is therefore not surprising that coins are used time and time again for comparative purposes in historical and archaeological studies of Parthian material culture. This, however, requires a thorough examination and classification of the numismatic material.

The foundation for the classification of Parthian royal coins was laid by Warwick Wroth with his Catalogue of the Coins of Parthia in the British Museum, published in 1903. It also summarises the most important older literature on Arsacid numismatics, extending back to Jean Vaillant (1632-1706). Based on Wroth, E.T. Newell in 1938 put together a comprehensive summary of Arsacid imperial coinage and proposed new attributions in “The Coinages of the Parthians”, published in Arthur Upham Pope’s A Survey of Persian Art.

The next milestone is the comprehensive study of George Le Rider, Suse sous les Séleucides et les Parthes, 1965, which deals with coins excavated at Susa. It is considered exemplary in its methodology, structure and presentation. Le Rider’s thesis provides a methodical criterion for the classification of the coins, but it can be critically tested only by comparison with a complete structural analysis of Arsacid/Parthian imperial coinage.

The second, revised edition of David Sellwood’s catalogue of coin types, An Introduction to the Coinage of Parthia, 1980, is a resource which is commonly used today. There is no doubt that this must be counted among the milestones of Arsacid numismatics. In an extremely concise form Sellwood succeeds in organising and presenting the types and denominations of the royal Parthian coins with an exact description of the individual images, legends and mint marks. It is a practical book that makes it possible for specialists and non-specialists to identify Parthian coins, but does not explore the historical and economic dimensions of this coinage. The remarkable study of François de Callatay’s Les tétradrachmes d’Orodès II et de Phraate IV in 1994 meets all the methodological demands of scholarly numismatics. He shows in an exemplary manner what can be achieved in Arsacid/Parthian numismatics by applying a consistent methodology to the coinage of two rulers.

The Sylloge Nummorum Parthicorum (SNP) project has been devised to provide at last a scientifically sound and complete numismatic reconstruction, and at the same time to offer a reliable tool for the study of Parthian history as a whole. Its primary aim is to tackle the question of Parthian coinage in its entirety anew with a radically different and ambitious approach. By examining these coin series on a large scale, it will be possible to recreate the complete system of their production. The model for the analysis and treatment of the material is provided by the Sylloge Nummorum Sasanidarum (SNS), jointly carried out by Vienna, Paris and Berlin with the express aim of making available the largest possible body of Sasanian coin data.
The SNP project has the support of a much large number of institutions, including several of the world’s most important museums. The international dimension which already formed the basis of the SNS is now much enlarged. The SNP offers a model of international cooperation for the study of materials from the Ancient Near East. Indeed the involvement of an institution such as the National Museum of Iran is worthy of note and it is hoped that it will pave the way for further joint research enterprises. The full list of the institutions involved is as follows:

- American Numismatic Society, New York
- Bibliothèque nationale de France (Cabinet des Médailles), Paris
- The British Museum (Department of Coins and Medals), London
- The British Institute of Persian Studies (BIPS), c/o The British Academy, London
- Institut für Numismatik und Geldgeschichte, University of Vienna
- Kunsthistorisches Museum (Münzkabinett), Vienna
- Műze-ye Mellı-ye Irân (National Museum of Iran), Tehran
- Staatliche Museen (Münzkabinett), Berlin

To which the collection of David Sellwood must be added. While BIPS is taking part as research institution, the other participants are directly contributing data from their coin collections. Edward C. D. Hopkins (USA) who has compiled one of the largest databases for Parthian coins (www.parthia.com) is also a member of the project, and has been providing technical support.

Altogether there are approximately 17,000 coins, which will be fully published. Where types are not directly attested, evidence from outside the collections is included. Every single coin is illustrated and relevant technical data presented. The detailed study of the coins will provide a typological classification for obverses and reverses, following the pattern of the SNS. This classification is achieved by examining all relevant features of the image in order to define objective criteria. The results will provide the basis for a structural study which detects different series and issues and reconstructs their relationships. Specific features of coin production such as mintmarks, and dates on tetradrachms, as well as the technical aspects of the coins themselves, provide additional evidence.

This numismatic study will be accompanied by historical essays that link the results of the coin analysis with evidence drawn from non-numismatic sources. This process will highlight, as was the case with the SNS, the fundamental contribution of coin series to our understanding of the historical development of ancient Iran.

As mentioned above, the *Sylloge Nummorum Parthicorum* (SNP) will provide a detailed numismatic corpus of Arsacid royal coinage organised on the basis of chronology and mints. The following preliminary plan divides the coins into nine volumes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volume I</th>
<th>Arsaces I (c. 238-211 BC) – Mithradates I (c. 171-138 BC) [Sellwood, types 1–13]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Volume II</td>
<td>Phraates II (c. 138-127 BC) – Mithradates II (c. 123-88 BC) [Sellwood, types 14–29]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volume III</td>
<td>Parthian “Dark Age”: Gotarzes I (c. 95-90 BC) – Phraates III (c. 70-57 BC) [Sellwood, types 30–39]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volume IV</td>
<td>Mithradates III (c. 57-54 BC) – Orodies II (c. 57-38 BC), Pacorus I (c. 39 BC) [Sellwood, types 40–49]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volume V</td>
<td>Phraates IV (c. 38-2 BC), Tiridates (c. 29-27 BC), Phraataces (c. 2 BC- AD 4), Orodies III (c. AD 6) [Sellwood, types 50–59]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volume VI</td>
<td>Vonones I (c. AD 8-12), Artabanus II (c. AD 10-38), Vardanes I (c. AD 40-45), Gotarzes II (c. AD 40-51), Vonones II (c. AD 51) [Sellwood, types 60–67]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volume VII</td>
<td>Vologases I (cf. Sellwood Vologases I and II, c. AD 51-79), Son of Vardanes (cf. Sellwood Vardanes II, c. AD 55-58), Pacorus II (c. AD 75-110), Artabanus III (c. AD 80-82) [Sellwood, types 68–77]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is hoped that the publication of the SNP series will foster a new interest in Parthian studies which is long overdue. An understanding of this Iranian dynasty placed between the Achaemenids and the Sasanians is vital for our interpretation of Near Eastern history, art and culture beyond the political boundaries and the chronological confines of the Parthian Empire. We also hope that the SNP will draw attention to the importance of the numismatic material as a primary source that sheds light on the material culture of the post-Hellenistic period in the Near East.

This is truly an international cooperation which goes beyond institutional and geographical boundaries. We regard the SNP as an exemplary project which makes accessible to scholars and those interested in Parthian numismatics a vital resource.

It is a matter of regret that David Sellwood is no longer with us to see the result of this work which includes his collection. We are grateful to his executors for enabling us to collect any missing data regarding his coins. We would like the Sylloge Nummorum Parthicorum to be a testament to his memory in recognition of his fundamental contribution to Parthian numismatics.

The Editors
I. INTRODUCTION

I.1 GENERAL REMARKS

This is the first of the nine volumes of the *Sylloge Nummorum Parthicorum* (SNP) to be published. It is the seventh in the sequence and covers the reigns of the Arsacid kings of the second half of the 1st century AD from 51 to c. 110, i.e., from Vologases I to Pacorus II.\(^1\)

The imperial Arsacid issues of Vologases I (AD 51-79), the Son of Vardanes (AD 55-58), Artabanus III (AD 80-82) and Pacorus II (c. AD 75-110) are therefore included,\(^2\) as well as some civic issues from Seleucia minted outside Arsacid control at various times during this period. Outside the scope of this study are the roughly contemporary silver issues of uncertain attribution believed to be from Fars,\(^3\) as well as the series from Margiana, which was no longer directly ruled by the Arsacid imperial house from the middle of the 1st century AD.\(^4\) This volume examines only the Ecbatana and Seleucia mints, for which significant documentation exists for the period under discussion, although limited series from Mithradatkart and possibly Rhagae are also included.

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\(^1\) All references to coin series throughout the book are to Sellwood 1980, in the abbreviated form commonly used in the literature with the series number preceded by S.

\(^2\) As is well known, the nomenclature and numbering of the Arsacid kings are subject to periodical revision as research progresses. With regard to the kings examined in the present work, the name of Vologases presents no difficulties as it has no antecedents in Arsacid royal onomastics. The alleged Vologases II and Vardanes II have been direct object of study and are accordingly discussed throughout. The case is different for the kings by the name of Artabanus and Pacorus who appear in the period dealt with here, for whom I have opted to keep the numbering used by Sellwood 1980, i.e., Artabanus III and Pacorus II. According to recent works by Assar (2011: 147 f.), Artabanus III should be styled Artabanus V, since the real name of Arsaces II would be Artabanus (I), and the same name should then be assigned to two kings ruling one after the other from 127 to 122 BC (Assar 2009: 2011: 115, 119). These would be father and son, so far believed to be a single king (Artabanus I in Sellwood 1980). Somewhat easier to assess is the case of Pacorus, as the question pertains to the royal status of Pacorus son of Orodes II, normally styled Pacorus I in the literature. First of all, regardless of whether he might have struck coins or not (see the detailed discussion in Sellwood/Simonetta 2006: 288 ff.), his mention as king in Tacitus (*Hist.*, V, 9) cannot be dismissed lightly (see Gaslain 2007). Clearly the proposal by Assar (2006b: 81 and more extensively 2011: 132 f., where Tarn 1932 is explicitly followed) to attribute the drachms and bronzes usually ascribed to Pacorus I (S49) to a prince Phraates, son of Phraates IV, subtracts the evidence constituted by such coin series from the hypothesis that Pacorus might in fact have ruled as king. Leaving aside the textual reference for a moment, Assar’s hypothesis is in fact more problematic than the old one he is attempting to contest. What remains unexplained is the significant problem of how this prince Phraates, allied to Tiridates against his father Phraates IV, could have wrested control of Ecbatana and its mint, as this would have resulted in Phraates IV being ousted not only from Mesopotamia but from the largest part of the Parthian empire by the Roman-backed Tiridates and his party. This of course might still be possible, given the limited chronological horizon indicated by Assar, amounting to a few months. However, one is left wondering why this prince, clearly the minor character in Tiridates’ bid for power against Phraates IV, would have struck drachms in Ecbatana while Tiridates did not. The simplest answer – and the one presumed by all reconstructions – to explain the absence of drachms by Tiridates is that Ecbatana had remained outside his control. Consequently it appears difficult to ascribe to his protégé Phraates the series under discussion. Taking all this into account, I think that for the time being we may still regard the Pacorus ruling at the end of the 1st century AD as the second king with this name.


\(^4\) Margiana was outside direct Arsacid control from the end of the reign of Artabanus II, see Loginov/Nikitin 1996.
All institutions participating in the SNP Project have provided coins from their collections for the period discussed in this volume. These consist of 824 silver and bronze coins (Table 1) and a further 121 specimens come from the David Sellwood Collection, bringing the total of coins from the collections published in this catalogue to 945.6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>4A</th>
<th>Α</th>
<th>AE</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>ANS New York</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BM London</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BNF Paris</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ING Wien</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KHM Wien</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMB Berlin</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MM Tehran</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sellwood (UK)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1

Due to the current state of Parthian numismatic research, it has been necessary for the SNP to adopt a broader approach than the traditional sylloge, following the model of the Sylloge Nummorum Sasanidarum.7 Accordingly, in addition to the publication of the coins, a detailed structural appraisal of the series has been undertaken. This was in equal measure a necessity and an opportunity, representing both a fundamental step towards adequately tackling the material and a unique chance to be exploited due to the sheer volume of the documentation.

This approach has produced a work which, although not conceived as a corpus, has a much wider scope than that normally conveyed by the term sylloge, and in most instances the material available from the collections has been substantially augmented and enriched. In the first instance this was necessary in order to illustrate all the typological details, since part of the image on Parthian coins is frequently off-flan, but was also crucial for the stylistic analysis, particularly on drachms, as well as for showing die links when necessary. All this is over and above the primary provision of exhaustive documentation of types not directly available in the material deriving from the collections.

The supplementary material is drawn from several sources. Chief among these are the Numismatische Zentralkartei (NZK) of the Institut für Numismatik und Geldgeschichte of the University of Vienna and Chris Hopkins’s database www.parthia.com, which records coins that have appeared on the market as well as in other publications of various natures. These resources have proved invaluable. As a result, a further 1,331 coins have been added to this study, more than doubling the 945 specimens in the various collections (Table 2) and amounting to a grand total of 2,276.8

5 For several reasons it has been not possible to include all the technical data for the coins from the Sellwood collection before the completion of the work. Only for a very small group of coins were data available, thanks to C. Hopkins, and these have been used in the relevant statistics (thirteen tetradrachms, Nos. 7, 30-31, 41, 62, 411, 418, 668, 720, 771, 850, 1183, 1191, and a drachm, No. 1009). All the remaining data from the Sellwood collection became available in a later stage and were subsequently included in the catalogue, even if they could not be used for the statistics.

6 Some in fact re-published, such as the holdings of the British Museum dealt with by Wroth in his catalogue of 1903. However, here no selection has been made and all the specimens are illustrated individually. Moreover, together with some acquisitions added after Wroth published his work, several specimens (a total of c. 800 coins, mostly bronze) deriving from the Department for Greek coins of the British Museum have joined the Parthian collection there and have been included in the SNP material.

7 Cf. the analogous remarks in Alram-Gyselen 2003: 8, 13.

8 This supplementary material is mostly relevant to the silver series only. However, this bias has been compensated by the large holdings of bronze coins in the museum collections.
### 1.1 General remarks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collections</th>
<th>Suppplementary Material</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4Δ</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Δ</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AE</td>
<td>441</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>945</td>
<td>1331</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2

The supplementary material also includes coins from other museums, such as the small but important selection of coins, mostly bronze, from the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology at Ann Arbor, deriving from the American excavations conducted at Seleucia on the Tigris from the late 1920s. Specimens have also been drawn from scientific publications, e.g. various volumes of the *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum* and catalogues such as that of the State Museum of Georgia. Several other coins, mostly drachms, have been found in various sources but the lack of accompanying technical data has made their inclusion in this study impossible.

Of the total of 2,276 coins for the period covered by this volume, 1,315 have been individually catalogued and illustrated. They can be broken down by issuer as shown in Table 3, where coins that appear in the catalogue are listed beside the total numbers of specimens studied (shown in brackets), including those which do not appear in the catalogue individually.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issuer</th>
<th>4Δ (324)</th>
<th>4Δ (377)</th>
<th>201 (246)</th>
<th>558 (947)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vologases I</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Son of Vardanes”</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3 (3)</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacorus II</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>184 (215)</td>
<td>468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artabanus III</td>
<td>30 (30)</td>
<td>33 (82)</td>
<td>98 (106)</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Issues</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10 (15)</td>
<td>10 (15)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3

This work is divided in two main parts, the study and the catalogue. The former consists of an historical overview of the Parthian period AD 51 to c. 110, incorporating the results of the present coin study. This is followed by a numismatic section with chapters on typology and metrology, and a chronological analysis where the relationships between the different types are illustrated with explanations of their bearing on attributions as well as on the historical reconstruction. In this section, coin types are normally arranged by denomination. By contrast, the aim of the catalogue is to provide a chronological reconstruction of the coin system. Therefore the various types are arranged and numbered according to their chronological sequence, regardless of their typological relationships.

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9 Mostly published by McDowell 1935, even if only a tiny minority were actually illustrated. Still unpublished are the findings of successive American excavations on the site, even though for his 1998 work, focused on the findings of the Italian missions in Seleucia which took place between 1964 and 1989, Le Rider also had access to the collection of the Kelsey Museum.

10 Sherozia/Doyen 2007. It is to be hoped that similar publications of materials from museums in the regions where Parthian coins actually circulated will increase in the future.

11 This is a problem with many excavation reports, where the material would be extremely important if it were properly registered. The sad reality is that most excavation records merely list coins with no illustration whatsoever, often without any technical data, and as such they are completely unusable.

12 Coins 1316-1320 and 1321-1326A in this catalogue are dealt with under Uncertain Coins and Forgeries respectively.

13 This means, for example, that Type II coins of Vologases I come after his Type VIII. This kind of transposition is inevitable when analyzing a full coinage system in all its complexity.
The sad news of the death of David Sellwood came after work on this volume had already been completed. Given his crucial contribution to Parthian numismatic studies it would be redundant to remark here on the importance of his work, without which the field would today be very different. I would like to think that this book could also be read with this debt in mind.

I would like to take the chance to express my sincere thanks to all who made this work possible, first and foremost the two co-directors of the SNP project, Michael Alram and Vesta Sarkhosh Curtis, for their personal support and also on behalf of their respective institutions, the Münzkabinett of the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna and the Department of Coins and Medals of the British Museum, London. As directors of the coin cabinets of the American Numismatic Society, New York, of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, and of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, I would like to thank Ute Wartenberg-Kagan and Andrew Meadows, Michel Amandry and Bernd Kluge, as well as the former and current directors of the Institut für Numismatik und Geldgeschichte of the University of Vienna, Wolfgang Hahn and Reinhard Wolters. With regard to the Mûże-ye Melli-ye Irân, Tehran, my thanks go to the former directors Mohammad Reza Kar gar, Mohammad Reza Mehrandish and Azadeh Ardakani, and to the present director Daryoosh Akbarzadeh, as well as to the former and the current Head of the Department of Coins and Seals, E. Askari and K. Basseri.

I am also indebted to two people whose help has been fundamental for the completion of this work, Chris Hopkins and Klaus Vondrovec. C. Hopkins provided documentary material for the coin series covered by this volume, a large part of the photographs of the museum collections and also took on the task of reviewing the first draft of the English text. K. Vondrovec designed the database used throughout all the stages of the project and patiently dealt with my requests for clarifications and modifications, generously giving his time on innumerable occasions.

After the revision of part of the English text by Vesta S. Curtis and Elizabeth Pendleton, whom I sincerely thank, the final version was copy-edited by Sophie Kidd, while the graphic layout of the book was undertaken by Andrea Sulzgruber.

I would like to thank several people who helped me in various ways, starting with my friends and colleagues at the Numismatische Kommission in Vienna, Anna Filigenzi, Nikolaus Schindel, Alexander Ruske and Bernhard Woytek, together with Domenico Agostini, Chiara Barbati, Mariacarmela Benvenuto, Robert Bracey, Pierfrancesco Callieri, Carlo Cereti, Joe Cribb, Frederique Duyrat, Hubert Emmerig, Anna Fabiankowitsch, Barbara Faticoni, Erika Forte, Jerome Gaslain, Dominique Gerin, Hermann Hunger, Antonio Invernizzi, Carlo Lippolis, Niccolo’ Manassero, Flavia Marani, Vito Messina, Michael Metlich, Elizabeth Pendleton, Cristina Pecchia, Matthias Pfisterer, Paola Piacentini, Bernhard Prokisch, Massoumeh Safinia, Sara Sorda and Wolfgang Szaivert, as well as Bernhard Weisser from the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin and Sharon C. Herbert and Michelle Fontenot from the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology in Ann Arbor. This list would be truly incomplete without my wife Viviana, whom I thank for her patience and support as well as for the concrete help she provided on several occasions.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this book to the memory of the scholar to whom I principally owe my involvement in the study of ancient Iran, Gherardo Gnoli, who passed away on 7 March of this year. Caro Professore, I would have welcomed the chance to discuss this book with you, as well as so much else. Everything has changed now. I shall hold in my memory so many images and moments, several of them shared with other former students of yours. Above all, your presence will remain beside me.
I.2 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The period covered here extends from the second half of the 1st century to the first decade of the 2nd century AD. It is divided almost equally into two parts, the reign of Vologases I from AD 51 to 79, and that of his son and successor Pacorus II from AD 79 to c. 110, although the latter had already been associated to the throne by Vologases around AD 75. Another two issuers of Arsacid coin series appeared at different times during those decades: the first was probably a rebel against Vologases I and responsible for coins struck AD 55-58 in Seleucia, while the latter was Artabanus III who held the office of regent for two years on behalf of the young Pacorus II in AD 80-82.14

With his coronation in the summer of AD 51,15 Vologases I inaugurated a twenty-eight year reign over Arsacid Iran that proved to be of major importance. It is clearly apparent from the perspective of the modern scholar that, quite apart from its length, its significance for Parthian history is mainly due to the personality of Vologases and to the remarkable clarity of his political vision, the goals of which were pursued with all available means. Indeed, his successes have earned Vologases a place beside Artabanus II as one of the two most important figures of Arsacid history of the 1st century AD.16

The first half of the decade immediately preceding his accession to the throne had been a troubled period following the death of Artabanus II, marked by an inner crisis at different levels: the great polis of Seleucia had been in open rebellion since the last years of Artabanus, while the prolonged struggle for the throne between Vardanes and Gotarzes II had directly involved the dynasty itself. Furthermore, once finally victorious over Vardanes, in AD 49 Gotarzes II had to face Meherdates,17 the last of a line of Parthian pretenders descended from Phraates IV sent by Rome and supported by sections of the Parthian nobility. Even the demise of Gotarzes II in AD 51 might have been due to court intrigues,18 as had that of Vardanes before him,19 making it very hard to reconstruct the dynamics of the relations within the Parthian aristocracy of the time.20 Also unclear is the background of Vologases himself, said to be the son of the short-lived Vonones II by Tacitus,21 even if it appears certain that his advent was uncontested.

On the eastern frontier, Vologases’ predecessors had to devise new solutions to the problems of controlling a large territorial entity. Margiana was entrusted to a vassal dynasty after Artabanus II,22 while the Gondopharids had already carved out an autonomous political entity between eastern Iran and Afghanistan, absorbing the Saka kingdom and starting to clash with the coalescent Kushan power in the process.23 Furthermore, the troubles in Hyrcania and the nomadic incursions during the reign of Vologases I show how dangerous the situation in the east could become even well within Parthian territory.

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14 The standard general works on Parthian history are Debevoise 1938; Schippmann 1980; Bivar 1983; Frye 1984; Wolski 1993. See also Karras-Klapproth 1988. Specifically devoted to the 1st century AD, Dąbrowa’s reconstruction (1983) from a Parthian perspective of events mainly known from Roman authors shows brilliantly what a really critical approach to the sources can achieve. Also very interesting and focused on the period between Vologases I and the middle of the 2nd century AD is Olbrycht 1999b.

15 His first tetradrachms are dated to September, while the latest ones of Gotarzes II were issued in April. Into this time-frame the possible reign of Vonones II should be inserted, preceding the enthronement of Vologases.


17 Dąbrowa 1983: 122 f.

18 Josephus Ant. XX, 74.

19 Tacitus Ann. XI, 10.

20 Despite the efforts of Dąbrowa 1984, 1989. See also Chaumont 1979; Boyce 2000.

21 Ann. XII, 14.

22 Loginov/Nikitin 1996.